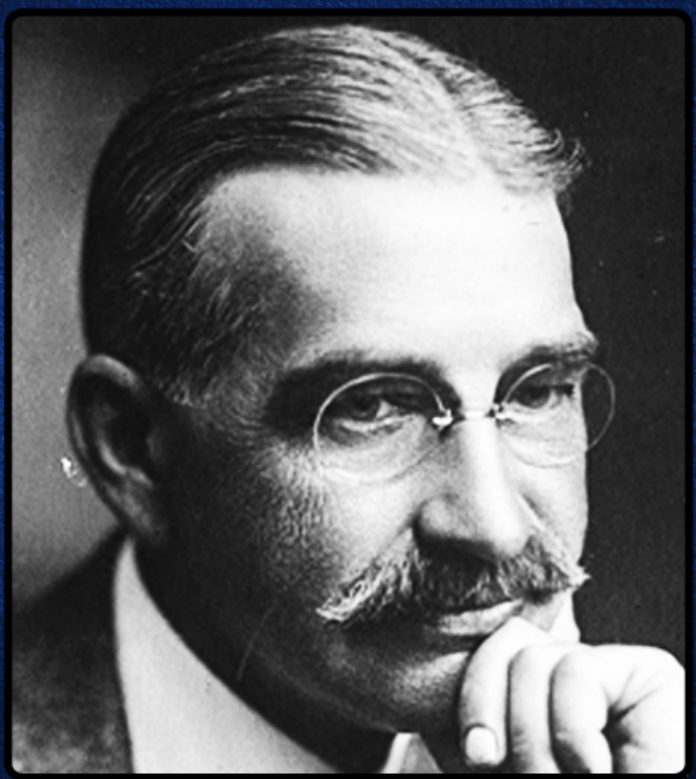
Complete Works of

L. FRANK BAUM



DELPHI CLASSICS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF

L. FRANK BAUM

(1856–1919)

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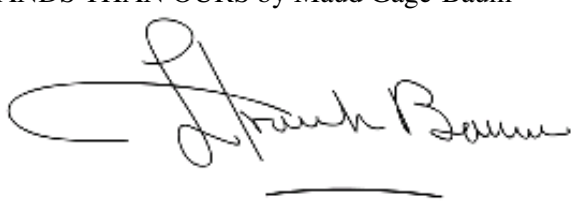

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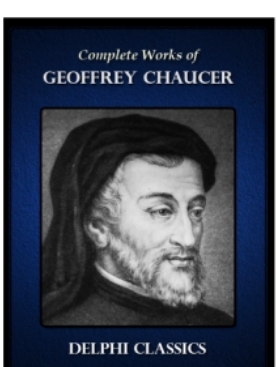

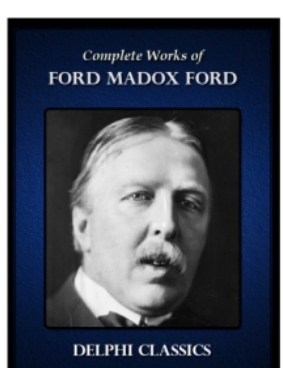

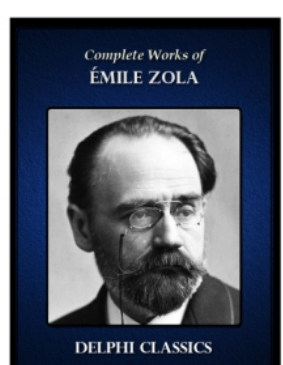

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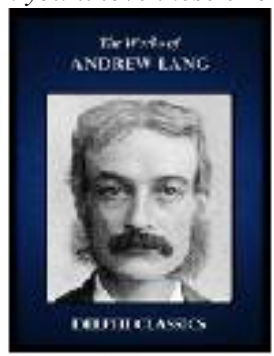

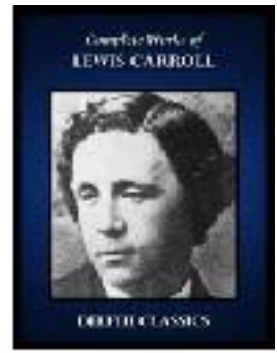

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The Oz Works

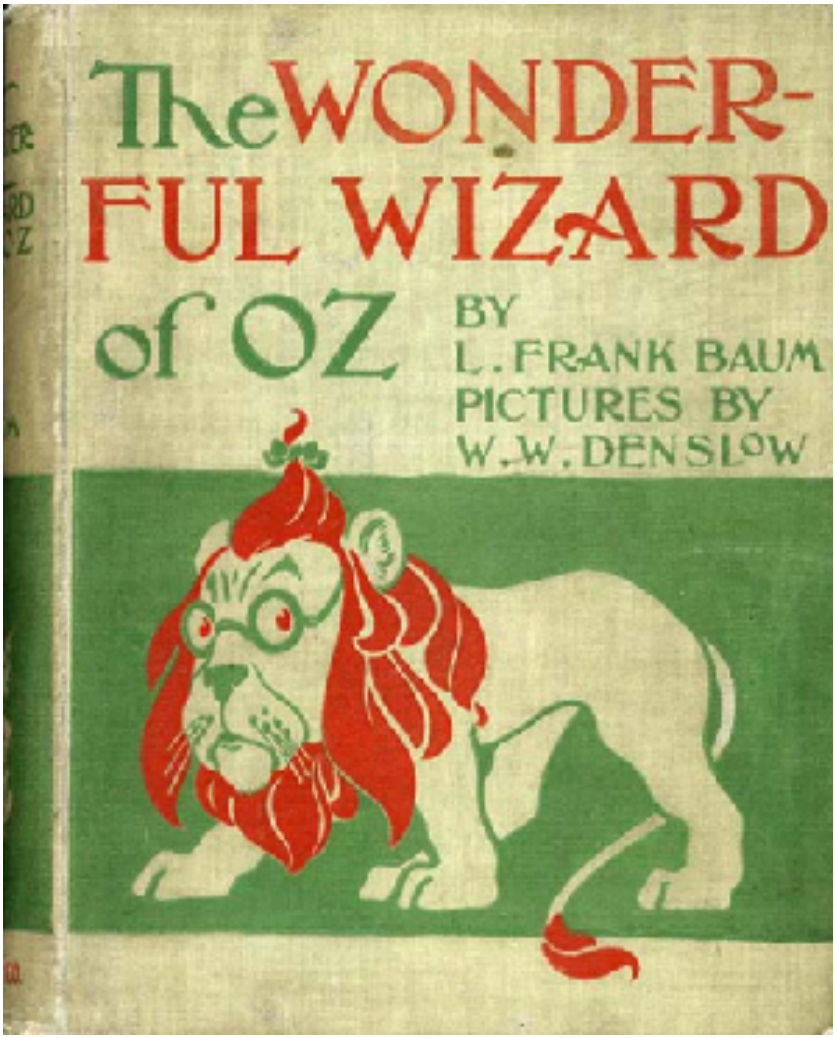
Baum's birthplace, Chittenango, New York

Baum, aged 12, dressed in his cadet uniform

1901 promotional poster for L. Frank Baum's books

THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ

L. Frank Baum's most famous book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, appeared in 1900, published by George M. Hill Company, and illustrated by noted Chicago artist and caricaturist, W. W. Denslow. He had worked with Baum on two earlier books, including the successful, *Father Goose: His Book*, published a year earlier. However, after Baum and Denslow quarrelled, they parted ways and John R. Neill became illustrator for the remainder of Baum's Oz tales. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was an immediate success, selling out its initial run of 10,000 copies and quickly selling out additional printings. Baum's classic tale of a young Kansas girl whisked off by a tornado to a magical land both enchanted and enchanting, continues to engage and thrill readers of all ages more than a century later, so popular that it led to a plethora of Oz books written at first by Baum and then by others. Its enduring popularity prompted numerous stage and film adaptations, most spectacularly the 1939 MGM Technicolor motion picture starring Judy Garland, which altered some of Baum's story, but brought to vivid life its spirit.



A first edition copy of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

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Poster for MGM's classic 1939 motion picture starring Judy Garland

Poster for 1939 MGM motion picture starring Judy Garland

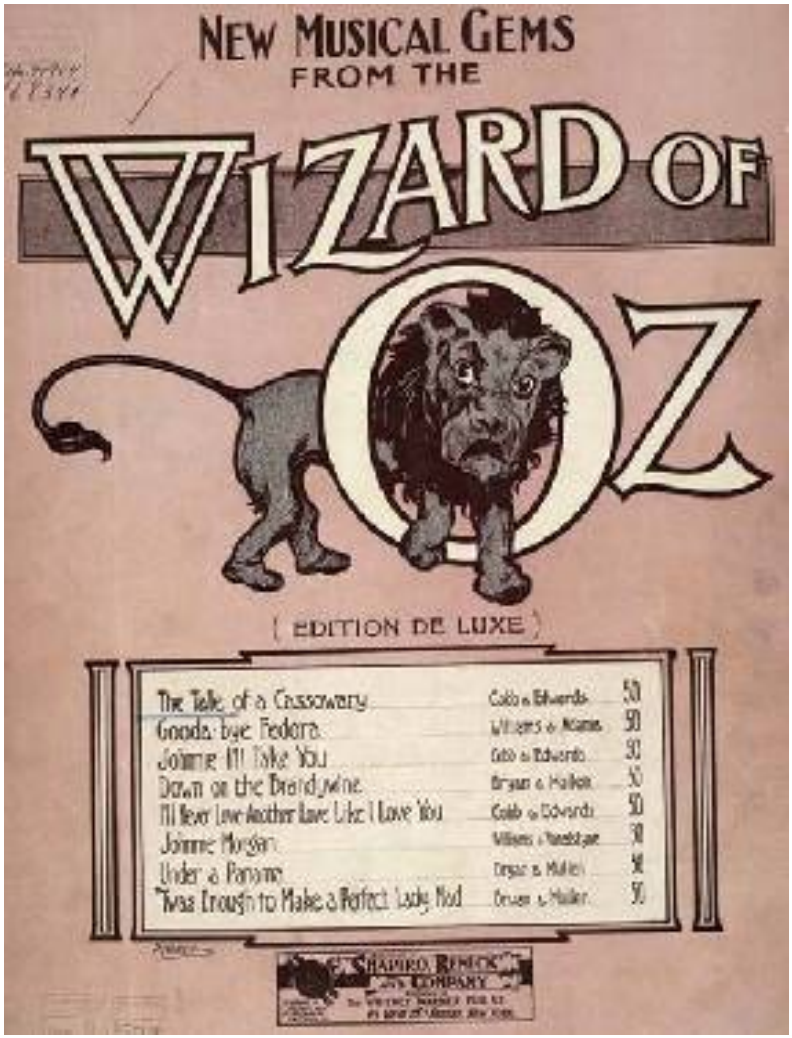
Judy Garland (as Dorothy Gale) reading The Wizard of Oz

Publicity still for 1939 MGM movie

Lobby Card for 1939 MGM film

Wizard of Oz sheet music from the 1939 film version

Poster promoting the release of the MGM movie in Spain, 1945

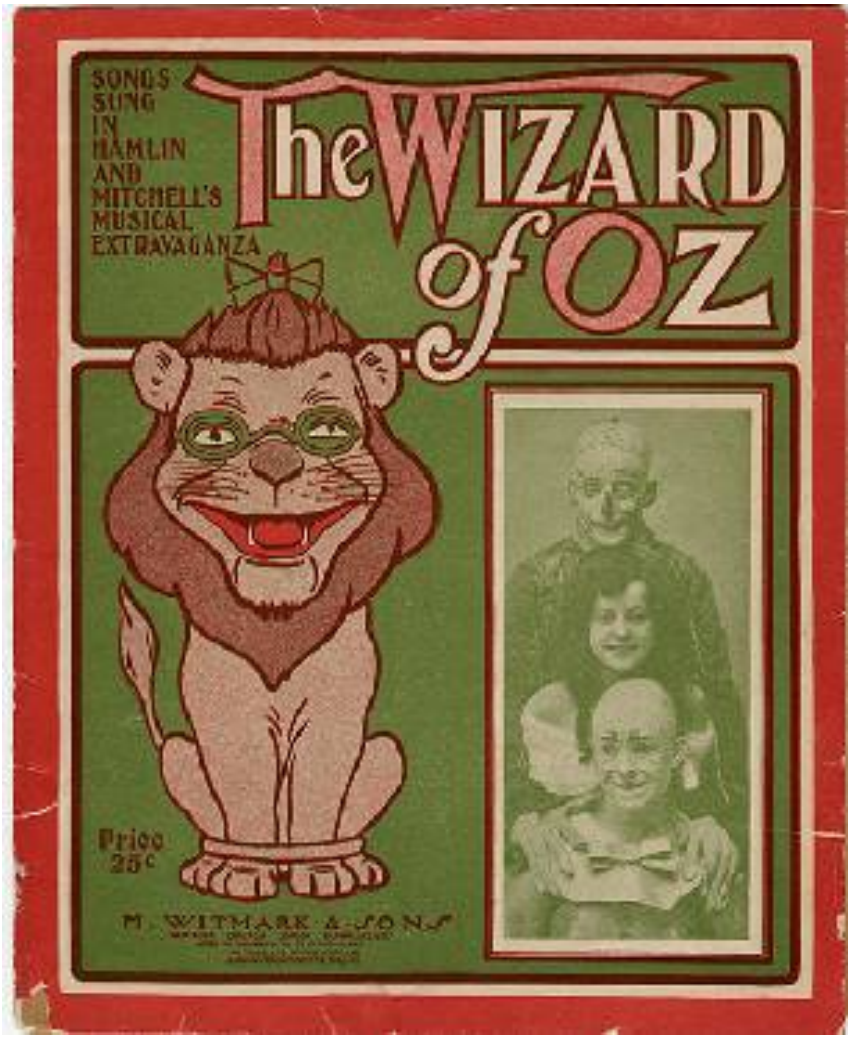


Sheet music from 1904

1903 Poster for Fred R. Hamlin's musical

1903 poster for Fred R. Hamlin's Musical

A scene from Fred R. Hamlin's 1903 musical



A songbook from the Fred R. Hamlin musical, 1903

Publicity photo for a Wizard of Oz production by the Jack Singers, early 1900s.

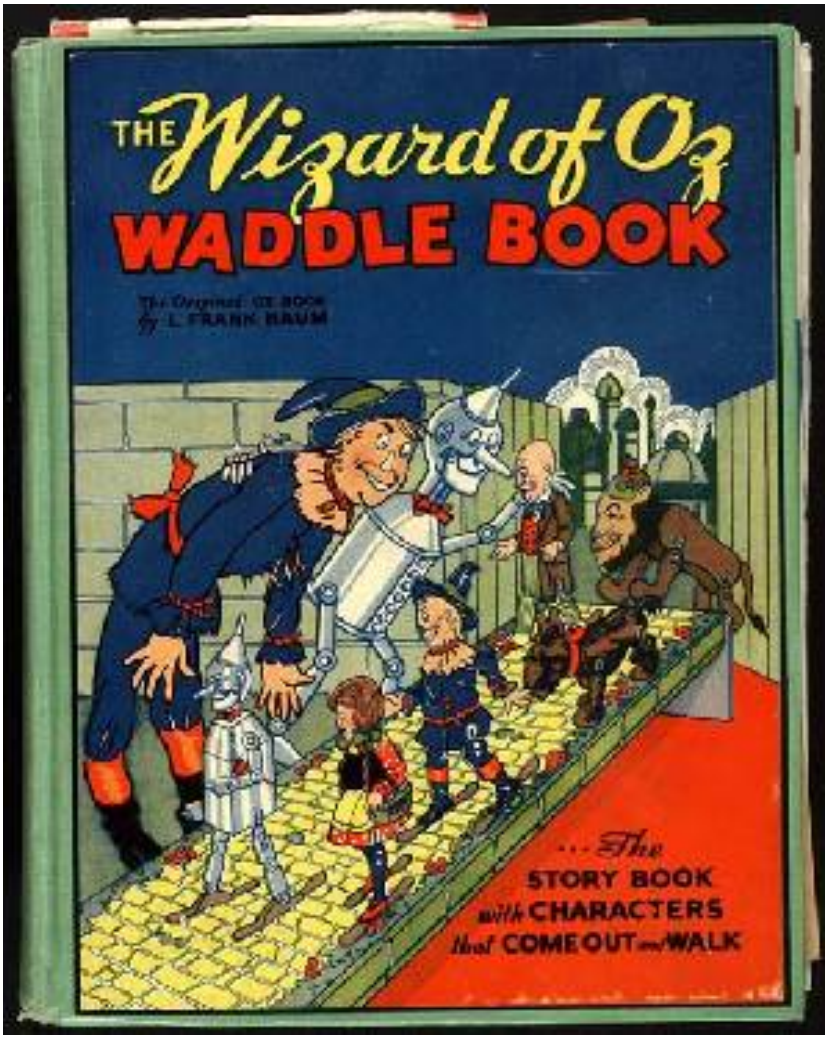
Publisher's advertising poster from 1901

1941 Spanish edition published in Buenos Aires

A 1940 Dutch translation

A 1940 Swedish translation

An Italian "movie" edition, published in 1944



A novelty edition from 1934 published by Blue Ribbon Books

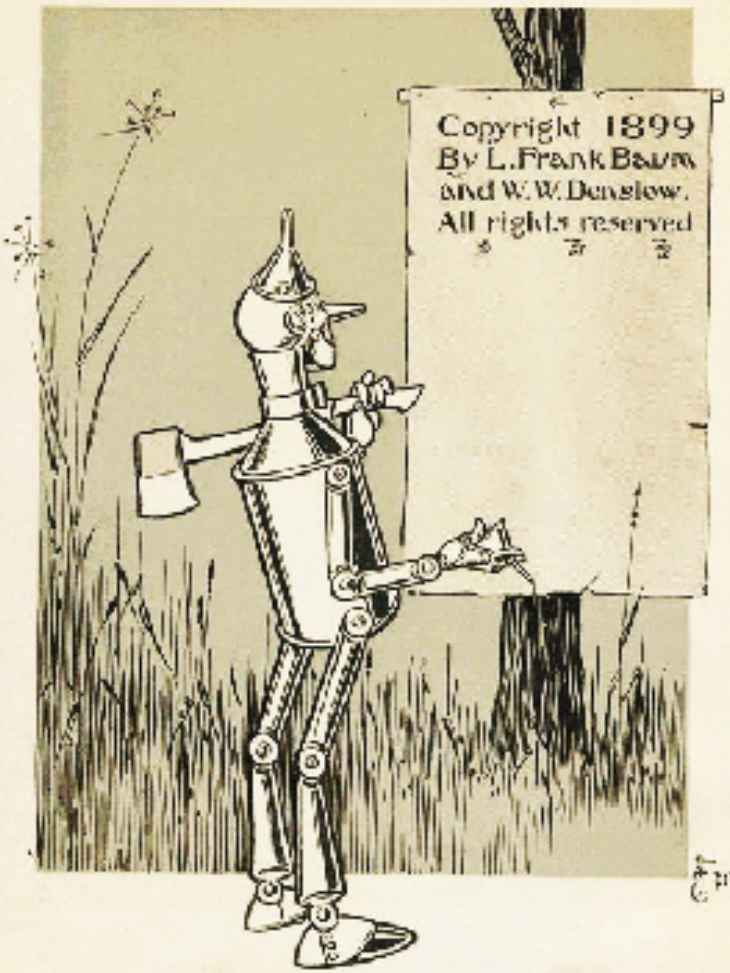
Introduction

Folklore, legends, myths and fairy tales have followed childhood through the ages, for every healthy youngster has a wholesome and instinctive love for stories fantastic, marvelous and manifestly unreal. The winged fairies of Grimm and Andersen have brought more happiness to childish hearts than all other human creations.

Yet the old time fairy tale, having served for generations, may now be classed as "historical" in the children's library; for the time has come for a series of newer "wonder tales" in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and blood-curdling incidents devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident.

Having this thought in mind, the story of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" was written solely to please children of today. It aspires to being a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out.

L. Frank Baum
Chicago, April, 1900.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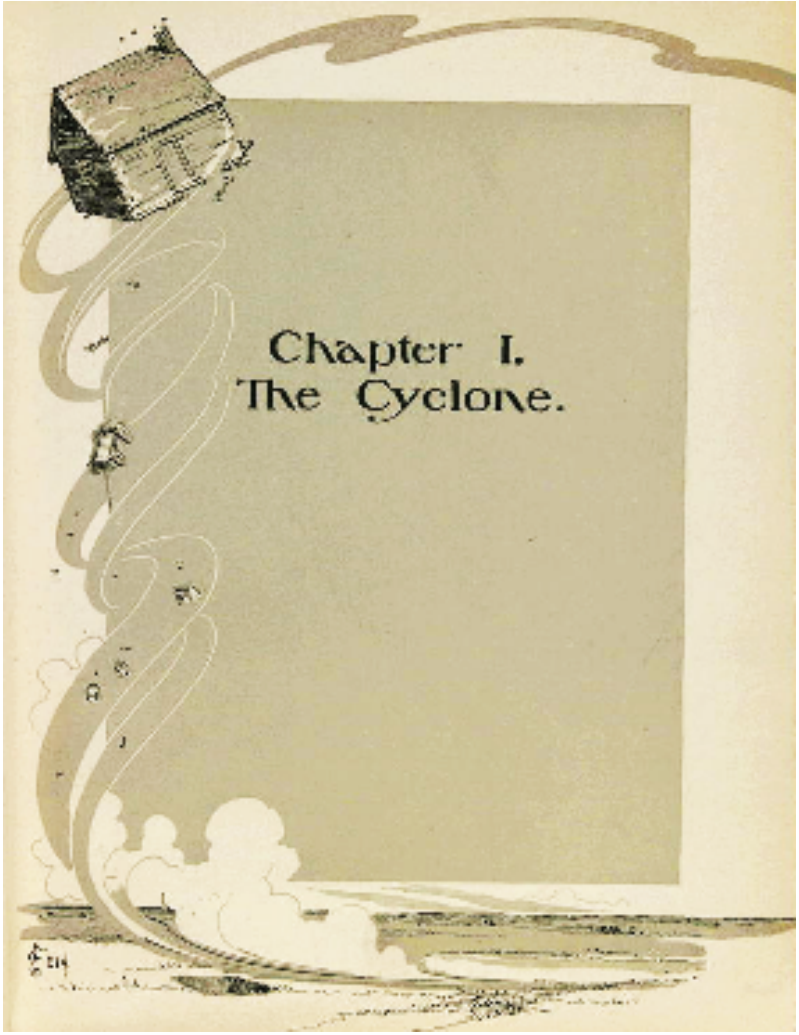
This book is dedicated to my good friend & comrade.
My Wife
L.F.B.



Chapter I.
The Cyclone.

1. The Cyclone

Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cookstove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner, and Dorothy a little bed in another corner. There was no garret at all, and no cellar--except a small hole dug in the ground, called a cyclone cellar, where the family could go in case one of those great whirlwinds arose,

mighty enough to crush any building in its path. It was reached by a trap door in the middle of the floor, from which a ladder led down into the small, dark hole.

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.

When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled now. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at.

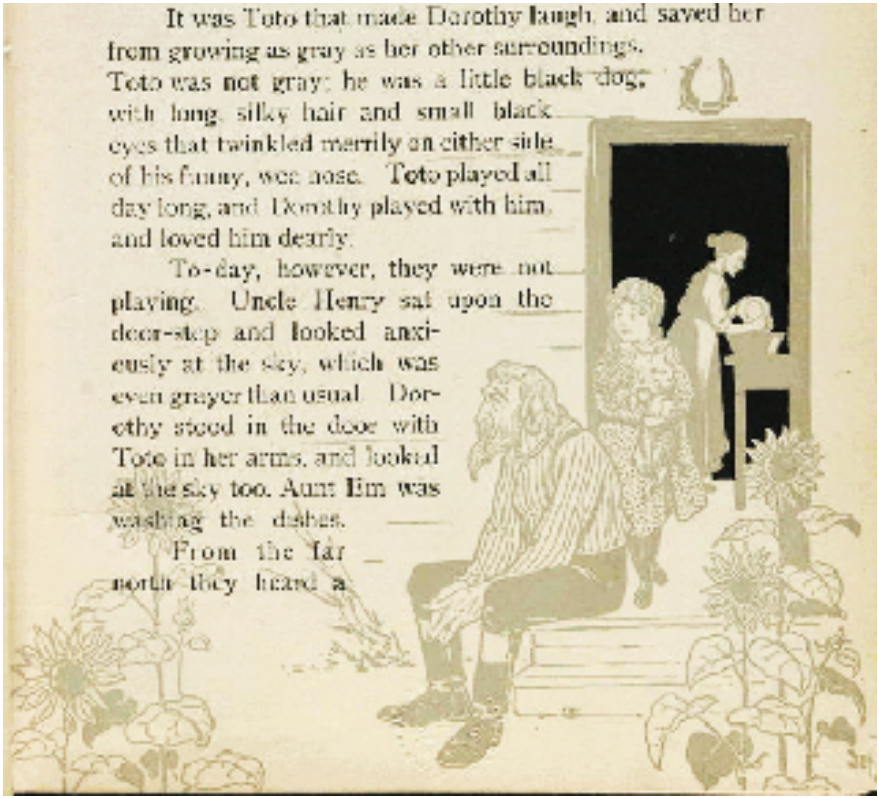
Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.

It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly.

Today, however, they were not playing. Uncle Henry sat upon the doorstep and looked anxiously at the sky, which was even grayer than usual. Dorothy stood in the door with Toto in her arms, and looked at the sky too. Aunt Em was washing the dishes.

From the far north they heard a low wail of the wind, and Uncle Henry and Dorothy could see where the long grass bowed in waves before the coming storm. There now came a sharp whistling in the air from the south, and as they turned their eyes that way they saw ripples in the grass coming from that direction also.

Suddenly Uncle Henry stood up.



"There's a cyclone coming, Em," he called to his wife. "I'll go look after the stock." Then he ran toward the sheds where the cows and horses were kept.

Aunt Em dropped her work and came to the door. One glance told her of the danger close at hand.

"Quick, Dorothy!" she screamed. "Run for the cellar!"

Toto jumped out of Dorothy's arms and hid under the bed, and the girl started to get him. Aunt Em, badly frightened, threw open the trap door in the floor and climbed down the ladder into the small, dark hole. Dorothy caught Toto at last and started to follow her aunt. When she was halfway across the room there came a great shriek from the wind, and the house shook so hard that she lost her footing and sat down suddenly upon the floor.

Then a strange thing happened.

The house whirled around two or three times and rose slowly through the air. Dorothy felt as if she were going up in a balloon.

The north and south winds met where the house stood, and made it the exact center of the cyclone. In the middle of a cyclone the air is generally

still, but the great pressure of the wind on every side of the house raised it up higher and higher, until it was at the very top of the cyclone; and there it remained and was carried miles and miles away as easily as you could carry a feather.

It was very dark, and the wind howled horribly around her, but Dorothy found she was riding quite easily. After the first few whirls around, and one other time when the house tipped badly, she felt as if she were being rocked gently, like a baby in a cradle.

Toto did not like it. He ran about the room, now here, now there, barking loudly; but Dorothy sat quite still on the floor and waited to see what would happen.

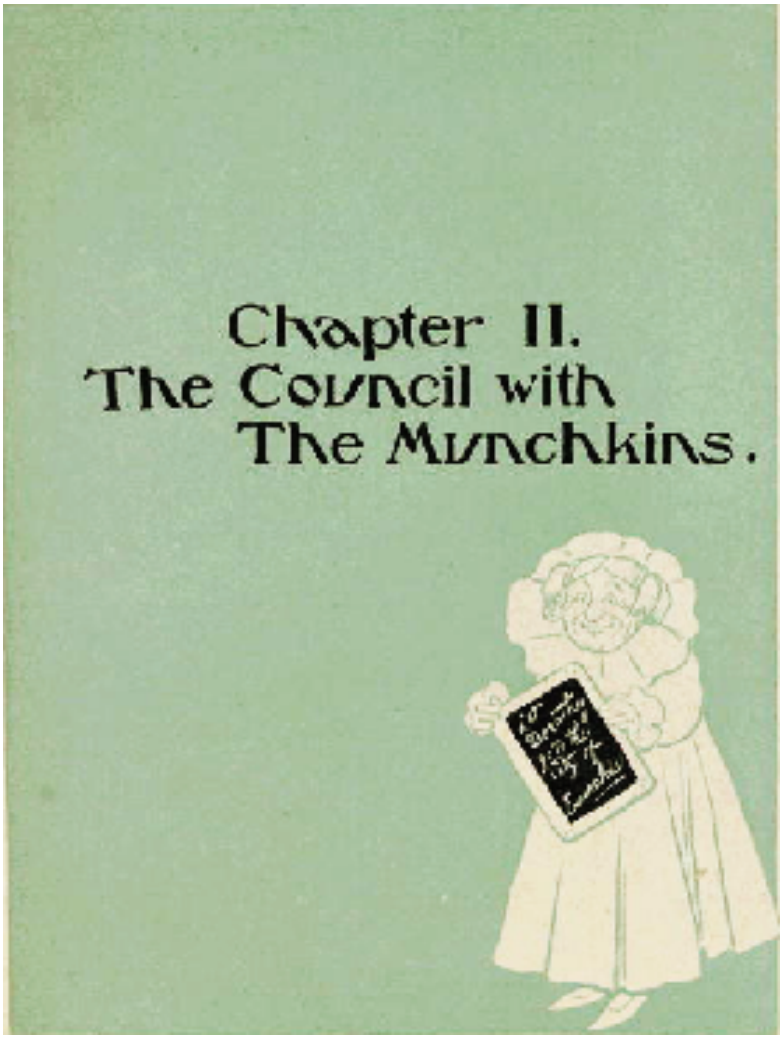
Once Toto got too near the open trap door, and fell in; and at first the little girl thought she had lost him. But soon she saw one of his ears sticking up through the hole, for the strong pressure of the air was keeping him up so that he could not fall. She crept to the hole, caught Toto by the ear, and dragged him into the room again, afterward closing the trap door so that no more accidents could happen.

"She caught Toto by the ears."

Hour after hour passed away, and slowly Dorothy got over her fright; but she felt quite lonely, and the wind shrieked so loudly all about her that she nearly became deaf. At first she had wondered if she would be dashed to pieces when the house fell again; but as the hours passed and nothing terrible happened, she stopped worrying and resolved to wait calmly and see what the future would bring. At last she crawled over the swaying floor to her bed, and lay down upon it; and Toto followed and lay down beside her.

In spite of the swaying of the house and the wailing of the wind, Dorothy soon closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.

2. The Council with the Munchkins



She WAS AWAKENED by a shock, so sudden and severe that if Dorothy had not been lying on the soft bed she might have been hurt. As it was, the jar made her catch her breath and wonder what had happened; and Toto put his cold little nose into her face and whined dismally. Dorothy sat up and noticed that the house was not moving; nor was it dark, for the bright sunshine came in at the window, flooding the little room. She sprang from her bed and with Toto at her heels ran and opened the door.

The little girl gave a cry of amazement and looked

She was awakened by a shock, so sudden and severe that if Dorothy had not been lying on the soft bed she might have been hurt. As it was, the jar made her catch her breath and wonder what had happened; and Toto put his cold little nose into her face and whined dismally. Dorothy sat up and noticed that the house was not moving; nor was it dark, for the bright sunshine came in at the window, flooding the little room. She sprang from her bed and with Toto at her heels ran and opened the door.

The little girl gave a cry of amazement and looked about her, her eyes growing bigger and bigger at the wonderful sights she saw.

The cyclone had set the house down very gently--for a cyclone--in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty. There were lovely patches of

greensward all about, with stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Banks of gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered in the trees and bushes. A little way off was a small brook, rushing and sparkling along between green banks, and murmuring in a voice very grateful to a little girl who had lived so long on the dry, gray prairies.

While she stood looking eagerly at the strange and beautiful sights, she noticed coming toward her a group of the queerest people she had ever seen. They were not as big as the grown folk she had always been used to; but neither were they very small. In fact, they seemed about as tall as Dorothy, who was a well-grown child for her age, although they were, so far as looks go, many years older.

Three were men and one a woman, and all were oddly dressed. They wore round hats that rose to a small point a foot above their heads, with little bells around the brims that tinkled sweetly as they moved. The hats of the men were blue; the little woman's hat was white, and she wore a white gown that hung in pleats from her shoulders. Over it were sprinkled little stars that glistened in the sun like diamonds. The men were dressed in blue, of the same shade as their hats, and wore well-polished boots with a deep roll of blue at the tops. The men, Dorothy thought, were about as old as Uncle Henry, for two of them had beards. But the little woman was doubtless much older. Her face was covered with wrinkles, her hair was nearly white, and she walked rather stiffly.

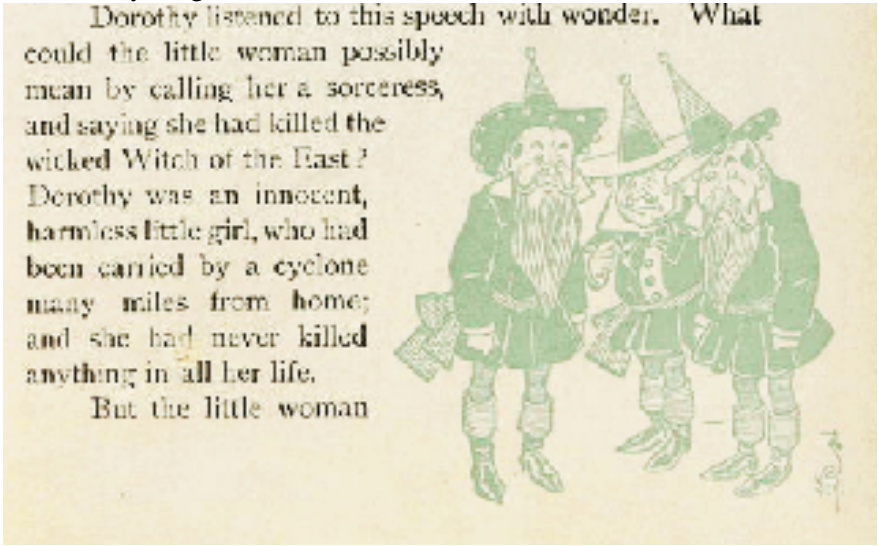
When these people drew near the house where Dorothy was standing in the doorway, they paused and whispered among themselves, as if afraid to come farther. But the little old woman walked up to Dorothy, made a low bow and said, in a sweet voice:

"You are welcome, most noble Sorceress, to the land of the Munchkins. We are so grateful to you for having killed the Wicked Witch of the East, and for setting our people free from bondage."

Dorothy listened to this speech with wonder. What could the little woman possibly mean by calling her a sorceress, and saying she had killed the Wicked Witch of the East? Dorothy was an innocent, harmless little girl, who had been carried by a cyclone many miles from home; and she had never

killed anything in all her life.

But the little woman evidently expected her to answer; so Dorothy said, with hesitation, “You are very kind, but there must be some mistake. I have not killed anything.”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But the little woman

“Your house did, anyway,” replied the little old woman, with a laugh, “and that is the same thing. See!” she continued, pointing to the corner of the house. “There are her two feet, still sticking out from under a block of wood.”

Dorothy looked, and gave a little cry of fright. There, indeed, just under the corner of the great beam the house rested on, two feet were sticking out, shod in silver shoes with pointed toes.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried Dorothy, clasping her hands together in dismay. "The house must have fallen on her. Whatever shall we do?"

"There is nothing to be done," said the little woman calmly.

"But who was she?" asked Dorothy.

"She was the Wicked Witch of the East, as I said," answered the little woman. "She has held all the Munchkins in bondage for many years, making them slave for her night and day. Now they are all set free, and are grateful to you for the favor."

"Who are the Munchkins?" inquired Dorothy.

“They are the people who live in this land of the East where the Wicked Witch ruled.”

“Are you a Munchkin?” asked Dorothy.

“No, but I am their friend, although I live in the land of the North. When they saw the Witch of the East was dead the Munchkins sent a swift messenger to me, and I came at once. I am the Witch of the North.”

“Oh, gracious!” cried Dorothy. “Are you a real witch?”

“Yes, indeed,” answered the little woman. “But I am a good witch, and the people love me. I am not as powerful as the Wicked Witch was who ruled here, or I should have set the people free myself.”

“But I thought all witches were wicked,” said the girl, who was half frightened at facing a real witch. “Oh, no, that is a great mistake. There were only four witches in all the Land of Oz, and two of them, those who live in the North and the South, are good witches. I know this is true, for I am one of them myself, and cannot be mistaken. Those who dwelt in the East and the West were, indeed, wicked witches; but now that you have killed one of them, there is but one Wicked Witch in all the Land of Oz--the one who lives in the West.”

“But,” said Dorothy, after a moment’s thought, “Aunt Em has told me that the witches were all dead--years and years ago.”

“Who is Aunt Em?” inquired the little old woman.

“She is my aunt who lives in Kansas, where I came from.”

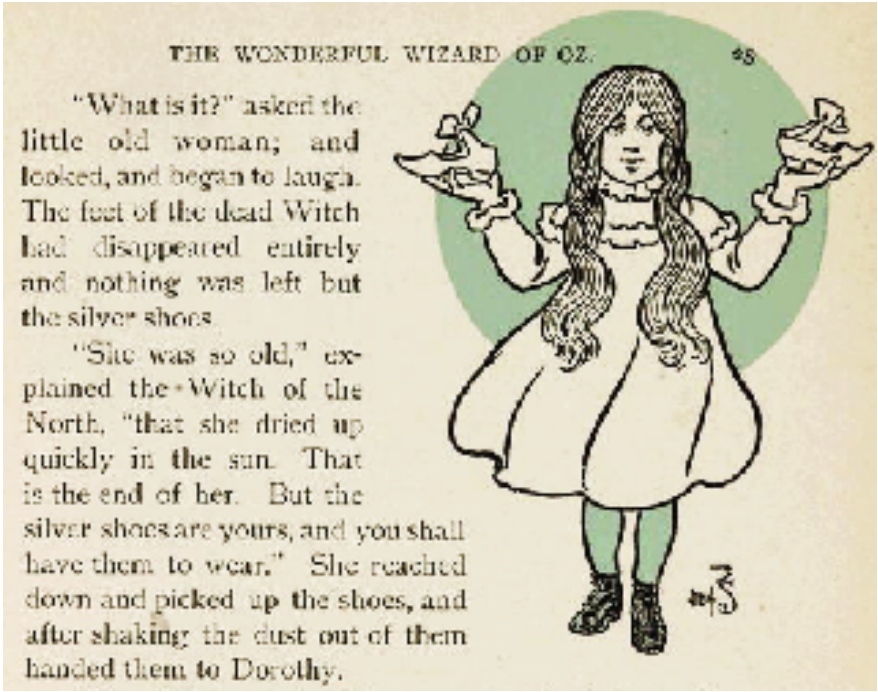
The Witch of the North seemed to think for a time, with her head bowed and her eyes upon the ground. Then she looked up and said, “I do not know where Kansas is, for I have never heard that country mentioned before. But tell me, is it a civilized country?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Dorothy.

“Then that accounts for it. In the civilized countries I believe there are no witches left, nor wizards, nor sorceresses, nor magicians. But, you see, the Land of Oz has never been civilized, for we are cut off from all the rest of the world. Therefore we still have witches and wizards amongst us.”

“Who are the wizards?” asked Dorothy.

“Oz himself is the Great Wizard,” answered the Witch, sinking her voice to a whisper. “He is more powerful than all the rest of us together. He lives in the City of Emeralds.”



THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ. 45

"What is it?" asked the little old woman, and looked, and began to laugh. The feet of the dead Witch had disappeared entirely and nothing was left but the silver shoes.

"She was so old," explained the Witch of the North, "that she dried up quickly in the sun. That is the end of her. But the silver shoes are yours, and you shall have them to wear." She reached down and picked up the shoes, and after shaking the dust out of them handed them to Dorothy.

Dorothy was going to ask another question, but just then the Munchkins, who had been standing silently by, gave a loud shout and pointed to the corner of the house where the Wicked Witch had been lying.

"What is it?" asked the little old woman, and looked, and began to laugh. The feet of the dead Witch had disappeared entirely, and nothing was left but the silver shoes.

"She was so old," explained the Witch of the North, "that she dried up quickly in the sun. That is the end of her. But the silver shoes are yours, and you shall have them to wear." She reached down and picked up the shoes, and after shaking the dust out of them handed them to Dorothy.

"The Witch of the East was proud of those silver shoes," said one of the Munchkins, "and there is some charm connected with them; but what it is we never knew."

Dorothy carried the shoes into the house and placed them on the table. Then she came out again to the Munchkins and said:

"I am anxious to get back to my aunt and uncle, for I am sure they will worry about me. Can you help me find my way?"

The Munchkins and the Witch first looked at one another, and then at Dorothy, and then shook their heads.

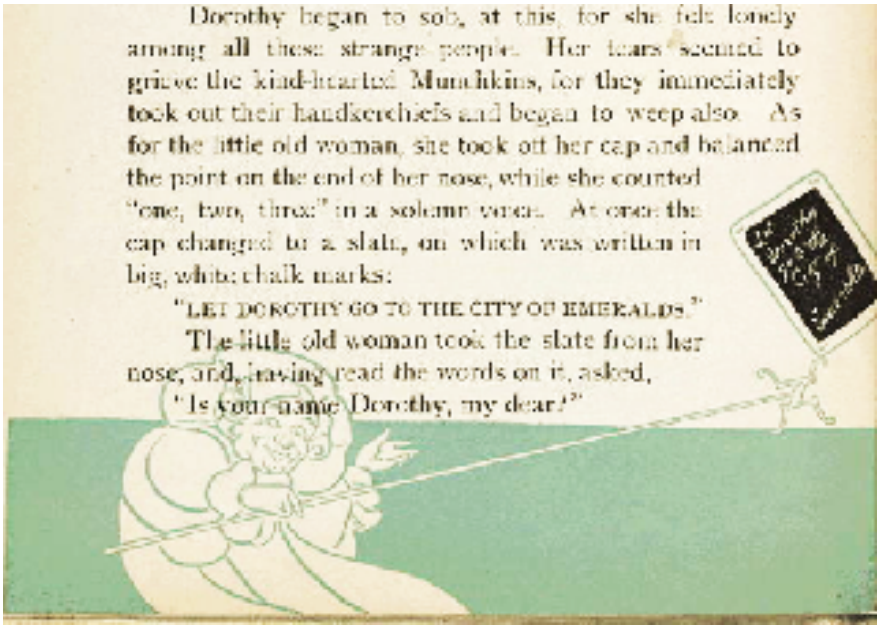
"At the East, not far from here," said one, "there is a great desert, and

none could live to cross it."

"It is the same at the South," said another, "for I have been there and seen it. The South is the country of the Quadlings."

"I am told," said the third man, "that it is the same at the West. And that country, where the Winkies live, is ruled by the Wicked Witch of the West, who would make you her slave if you passed her way."

"The North is my home," said the old lady, "and at its edge is the same great desert that surrounds this Land of Oz. I'm afraid, my dear, you will have to live with us."



Dorothy began to sob at this, for she felt lonely among all these strange people. Her tears seemed to grieve the kind-hearted Munchkins, for they immediately took out their handkerchiefs and began to weep also. As for the little old woman, she took off her cap and balanced the point on the end of her nose, while she counted "One, two, three" in a solemn voice. At once the cap changed to a slate, on which was written in big, white chalk marks:

"LET DOROTHY GO TO THE CITY OF EMERALDS"

The little old woman took the slate from her nose, and having read the words on it, asked, "Is your name Dorothy, my dear?"

"Yes," answered the child, looking up and drying her tears.

"Then you must go to the City of Emeralds. Perhaps Oz will help you."

"Where is this city?" asked Dorothy.

"It is exactly in the center of the country, and is ruled by Oz, the Great

Wizard I told you of."

"Is he a good man?" inquired the girl anxiously.

"He is a good Wizard. Whether he is a man or not I cannot tell, for I have never seen him."

"How can I get there?" asked Dorothy.

"You must walk. It is a long journey, through a country that is sometimes pleasant and sometimes dark and terrible. However, I will use all the magic arts I know of to keep you from harm."

"Won't you go with me?" pleaded the girl, who had begun to look upon the little old woman as her only friend.

"No, I cannot do that," she replied, "but I will give you my kiss, and no one will dare injure a person who has been kissed by the Witch of the North."

She came close to Dorothy and kissed her gently on the forehead. Where her lips touched the girl they left a round, shining mark, as Dorothy found out soon after.

"The road to the City of Emeralds is paved with yellow brick," said the Witch, "so you cannot miss it. When you get to Oz do not be afraid of him, but tell your story and ask him to help you. Good-bye, my dear."

The three Munchkins bowed low to her and wished her a pleasant journey, after which they walked away through the trees. The Witch gave Dorothy a friendly little nod, whirled around on her left heel three times, and straightway disappeared, much to the surprise of little Toto, who barked after her loudly enough when she had gone, because he had been afraid even to growl while she stood by.

But Dorothy, knowing her to be a witch, had expected her to disappear in just that way, and was not surprised in the least.

The three Munchkins bowed low to her and wished her a pleasant journey, after which they walked away through the trees. The Witch gave Dorothy a friendly little nod, whirled around on her left heel three times, and straightway disappeared, much to the surprise of little Toto, who barked after her loudly enough when she had gone, because he had been afraid even to growl while she stood by.

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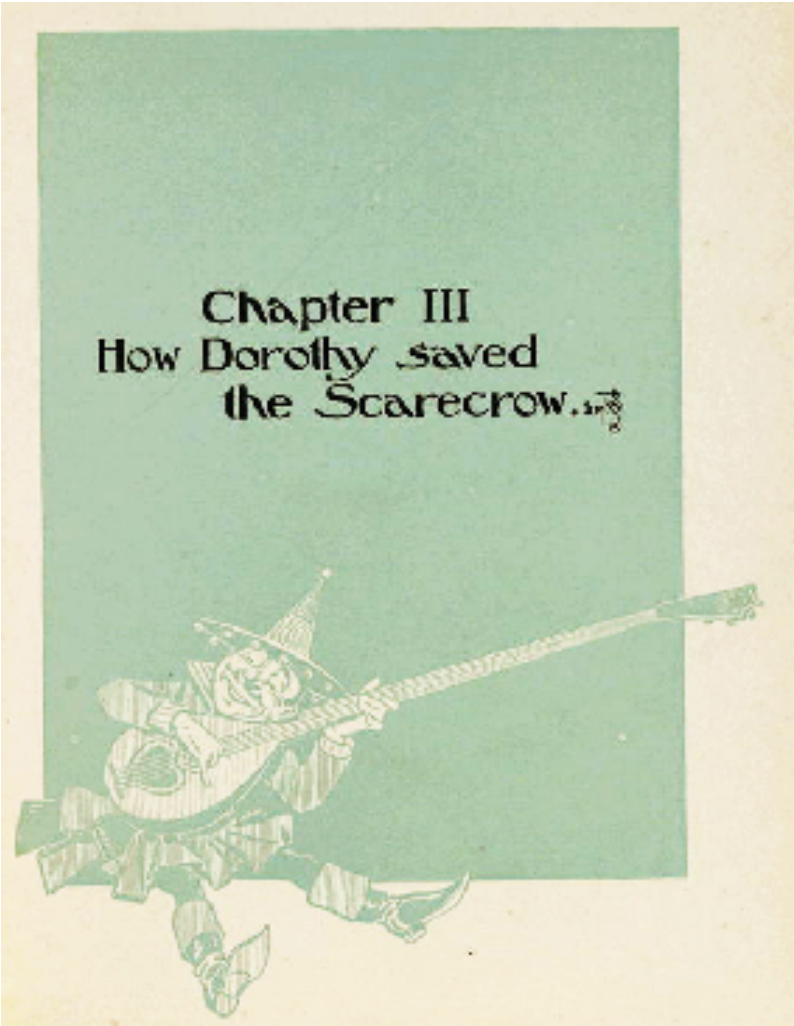
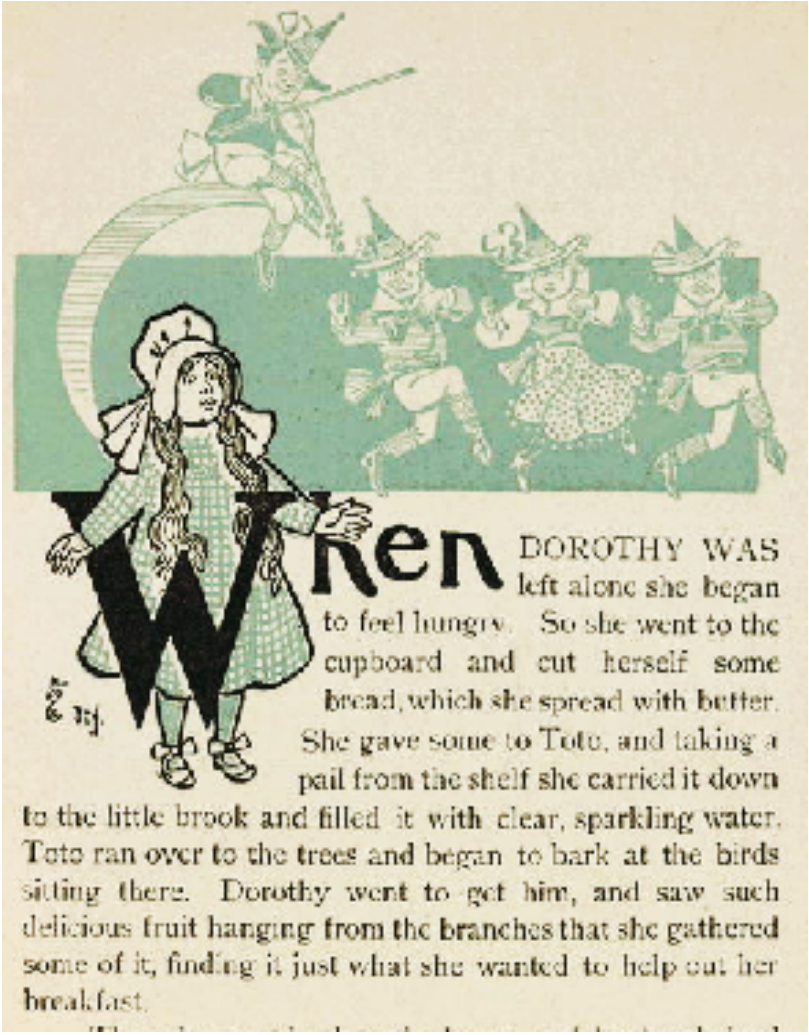
3. How Dorothy Saved the Scarecrow



When Dorothy was left alone she began to feel hungry. So she went to the cupboard and cut herself some bread, which she spread with butter. She gave some to Toto, and taking a pail from the shelf she carried it down to the little brook and filled it with clear, sparkling water. Toto ran over to the trees and began to bark at the birds sitting there. Dorothy went to get him, and saw such delicious fruit hanging from the branches that she gathered some of it, finding it just what she wanted to help out her breakfast.



Then she went back to the house, and having helped herself and Toto to a good drink of the cool, clear water, she set about making ready for the journey to the City of Emeralds.

Dorothy had only one other dress, but that happened to be clean and was hanging on a peg beside her bed. It was gingham, with checks of white and blue; and although the blue was somewhat faded with many washings, it was still a pretty frock. The girl washed herself carefully, dressed herself in the clean gingham, and tied her pink sunbonnet on her head. She took a little basket and filled it with bread from the cupboard, laying a white cloth over the top. Then she looked down at her feet and noticed how old and worn her shoes were.

“They surely will never do for a long journey, Toto,” she said. And Toto looked up into her face with his little black eyes and wagged his tail to show he knew what she meant.

At that moment Dorothy saw lying on the table the silver shoes that had belonged to the Witch of the East.

“I wonder if they will fit me,” she said to Toto. “They would be just the thing to take a long walk in, for they could not wear out.”

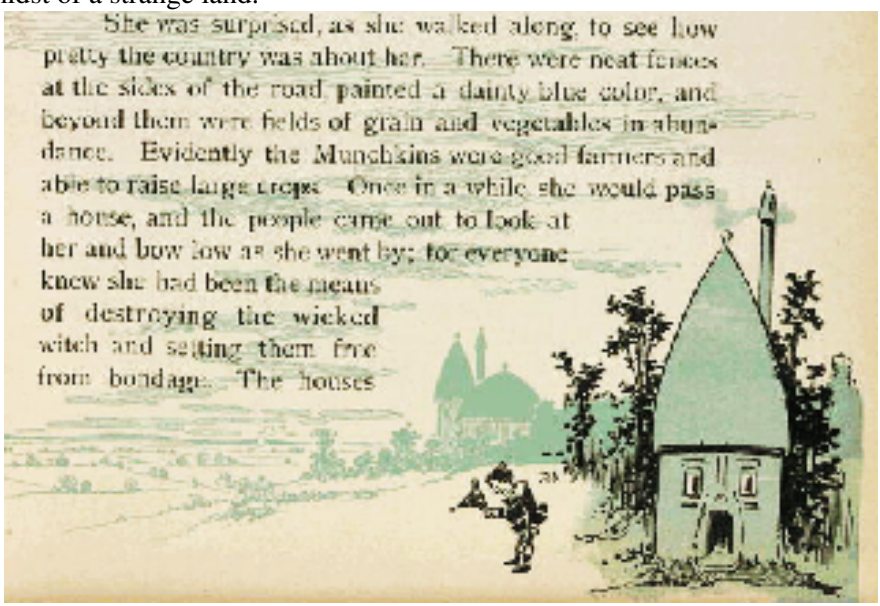
She took off her old leather shoes and tried on the silver ones, which fitted her as well as if they had been made for her.

Finally she picked up her basket.

“Come along, Toto,” she said. “We will go to the Emerald City and ask the Great Oz how to get back to Kansas again.”

She closed the door, locked it, and put the key carefully in the pocket of her dress. And so, with Toto trotting along soberly behind her, she started on her journey.

There were several roads near by, but it did not take her long to find the one paved with yellow bricks. Within a short time she was walking briskly toward the Emerald City, her silver shoes tinkling merrily on the hard, yellow road-bed. The sun shone bright and the birds sang sweetly, and Dorothy did not feel nearly so bad as you might think a little girl would who had been suddenly whisked away from her own country and set down in the midst of a strange land.



She was surprised, as she walked along, to see how pretty the country was

about her. There were neat fences at the sides of the road, painted a dainty blue color, and beyond them were fields of grain and vegetables in abundance. Evidently the Munchkins were good farmers and able to raise large crops. Once in a while she would pass a house, and the people came out to look at her and bow low as she went by; for everyone knew she had been the means of destroying the Wicked Witch and setting them free from bondage. The houses of the Munchkins were odd-looking dwellings, for each was round, with a big dome for a roof. All were painted blue, for in this country of the East blue was the favorite color.

Toward evening, when Dorothy was tired with her long walk and began to wonder where she should pass the night, she came to a house rather larger than the rest. On the green lawn before it many men and women were dancing. Five little fiddlers played as loudly as possible, and the people were laughing and singing, while a big table near by was loaded with delicious fruits and nuts, pies and cakes, and many other good things to eat.

The people greeted Dorothy kindly, and invited her to supper and to pass the night with them; for this was the home of one of the richest Munchkins in the land, and his friends were gathered with him to celebrate their freedom from the bondage of the Wicked Witch.

Dorothy ate a hearty supper and was waited upon by the rich Munchkin himself, whose name was Boq. Then she sat upon a settee and watched the people dance.

When Boq saw her silver shoes he said, “You must be a great sorceress.”

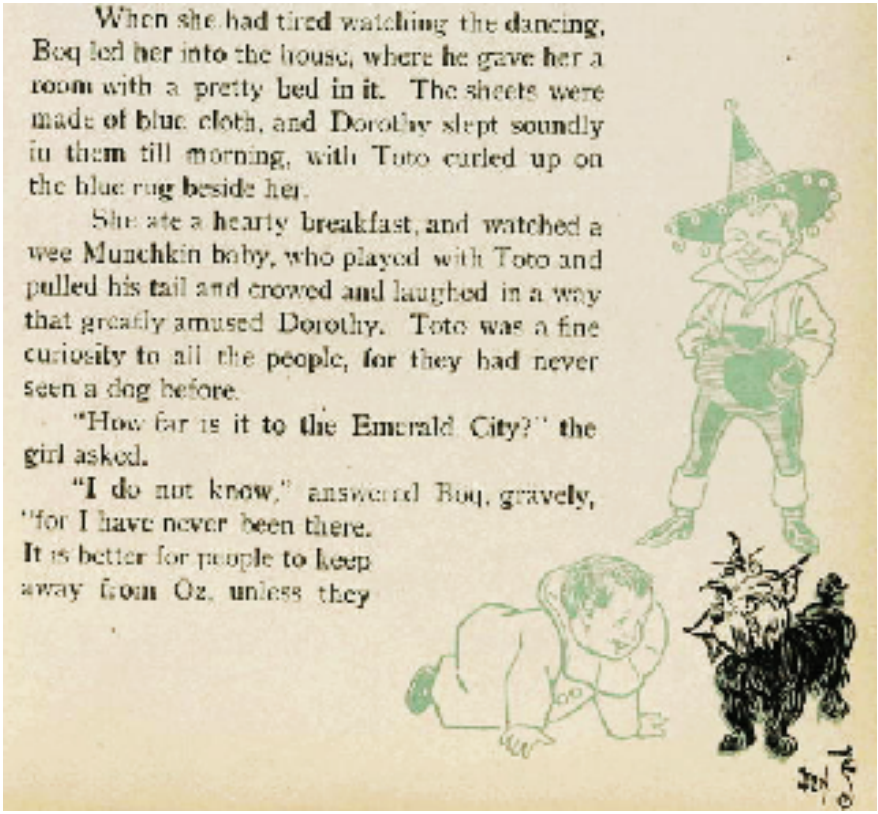
“Why?” asked the girl.

“Because you wear silver shoes and have killed the Wicked Witch. Besides, you have white in your frock, and only witches and sorceresses wear white.”

“My dress is blue and white checked,” said Dorothy, smoothing out the wrinkles in it.

"It is kind of you to wear that," said Boq. "Blue is the color of the Munchkins, and white is the witch color. So we know you are a friendly witch."

Dorothy did not know what to say to this, for all the people seemed to think her a witch, and she knew very well she was only an ordinary little girl who had come by the chance of a cyclone into a strange land.



When she had tired watching the dancing, Boq led her into the house, where he gave her a room with a pretty bed in it. The sheets were made of blue cloth, and Dorothy slept soundly in them till morning, with Toto curled up on the blue rug beside her.

She ate a hearty breakfast, and watched a wee Munchkin baby, who played with Toto and pulled his tail and crowed and laughed in a way that greatly amused Dorothy. Toto was a fine curiosity to all the people, for they had never seen a dog before.

“How far is it to the Emerald City?” the girl asked.

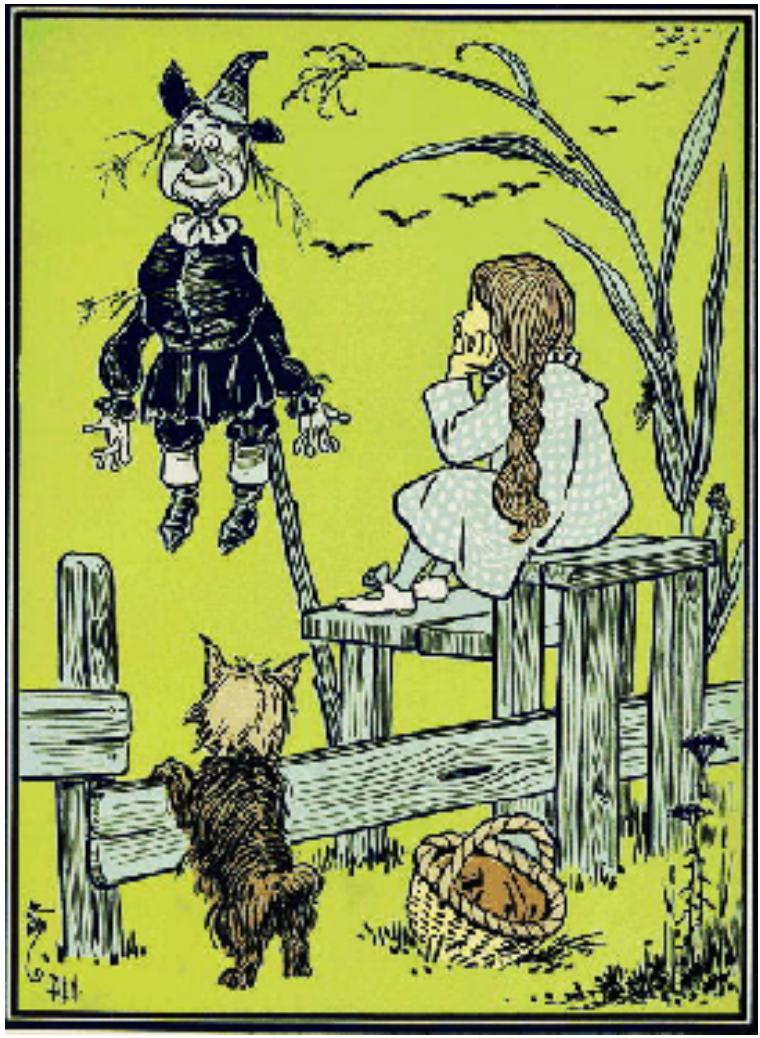
“I do not know,” answered Boq gravely, “for I have never been there. It is better for people to keep away from Oz, unless they have business with him. But it is a long way to the Emerald City, and it will take you many days. The country here is rich and pleasant, but you must pass through rough and dangerous places before you reach the end of your journey.”

This worried Dorothy a little, but she knew that only the Great Oz could help her get to Kansas again, so she bravely resolved not to turn back.

She bade her friends good-bye, and again started along the road of yellow

brick. When she had gone several miles she thought she would stop to rest, and so climbed to the top of the fence beside the road and sat down. There was a great cornfield beyond the fence, and not far away she saw a Scarecrow, placed high on a pole to keep the birds from the ripe corn.

Dorothy leaned her chin upon her hand and gazed thoughtfully at the Scarecrow. Its head was a small sack stuffed with straw, with eyes, nose, and mouth painted on it to represent a face. An old, pointed blue hat, that had belonged to some Munchkin, was perched on his head, and the rest of the figure was a blue suit of clothes, worn and faded, which had also been stuffed with straw. On the feet were some old boots with blue tops, such as every man wore in this country, and the figure was raised above the stalks of corn by means of the pole stuck up its back.



While Dorothy was looking earnestly into the queer, painted face of the Scarecrow, she was surprised to see one of the eyes slowly wink at her. She thought she must have been mistaken at first, for none of the scarecrows in Kansas ever wink; but presently the figure nodded its head to her in a friendly way. Then she climbed down from the fence and walked up to it, while Toto ran around the pole and barked.

"Good day," said the Scarecrow, in a rather husky voice.

"Did you speak?" asked the girl, in wonder.

"Certainly," answered the Scarecrow. "How do you do?"

"I'm pretty well, thank you," replied Dorothy politely. "How do you do?"

"I'm not feeling well," said the Scarecrow, with a smile, "for it is very

tedious being perched up here night and day to scare away crows."

"Can't you get down?" asked Dorothy.

"No, for this pole is stuck up my back. If you will please take away the pole I shall be greatly obliged to you."

Dorothy reached up both arms and lifted the figure off the pole, for, being stuffed with straw, it was quite light.

"Thank you very much," said the Scarecrow, when he had been set down on the ground. "I feel like a new man."

Dorothy was puzzled at this, for it sounded queer to hear a stuffed man speak, and to see him bow and walk along beside her.

"Who are you?" asked the Scarecrow when he had stretched himself and yawned. "And where are you going?"

"My name is Dorothy," said the girl, "and I am going to the Emerald City, to ask the Great Oz to send me back to Kansas."

"Where is the Emerald City?" he inquired. "And who is Oz?"

"Why, don't you know?" she returned, in surprise.

"No, indeed. I don't know anything. You see, I am stuffed, so I have no brains at all," he answered sadly.

"Oh," said Dorothy, "I'm awfully sorry for you."

"Do you think," he asked, "if I go to the Emerald City with you, that Oz would give me some brains?"

"I cannot tell," she returned, "but you may come with me, if you like. If Oz will not give you any brains you will be no worse off than you are now."

"That is true," said the Scarecrow. "You see," he continued confidentially, "I don't mind my legs and arms and body being stuffed, because I cannot get hurt. If anyone treads on my toes or sticks a pin into me, it doesn't matter, for I can't feel it. But I do not want people to call me a fool, and if my head stays stuffed with straw instead of with brains, as yours is, how am I ever to know anything?"

"I understand how you feel," said the little girl, who was truly sorry for him. "If you will come with me I'll ask Oz to do all he can for you."

"Thank you," he answered gratefully.

They walked back to the road. Dorothy helped him over the fence, and they started along the path of yellow brick for the Emerald City.

Toto did not like this addition to the party at first. He smelled around the stuffed man as if he suspected there might be a nest of rats in the straw, and he often growled in an unfriendly way at the Scarecrow.

"Don't mind Toto," said Dorothy to her new friend. "He never bites."

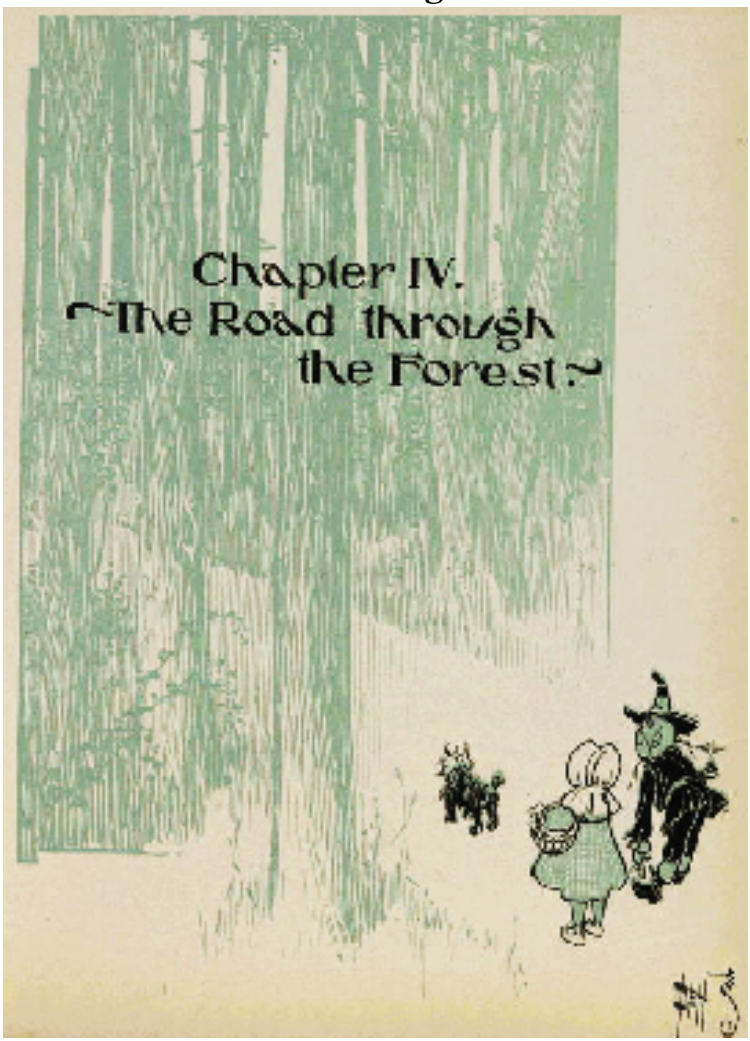
"Oh, I'm not afraid," replied the Scarecrow. "He can't hurt the straw. Do let me carry that basket for you. I shall not mind it, for I can't get tired. I'll tell you a secret," he continued, as he walked along. "There is only one thing

in the world I am afraid of."

"What is that?" asked Dorothy; "the Munchkin farmer who made you?"

"No," answered the Scarecrow; "it's a lighted match."

4. The Road Through the Forest



After a few hours the road began to be rough, and the walking grew so difficult that the Scarecrow often stumbled over the yellow bricks, which were here very uneven. Sometimes, indeed, they were broken or missing altogether, leaving holes that Toto jumped across and Dorothy walked around. As for the Scarecrow, having no brains, he walked straight ahead, and so stepped into the holes and fell at full length on the hard bricks. It never hurt him, however, and Dorothy would pick him up and set him upon his feet again, while he joined her in laughing merrily at his own mishap.

The farms were not nearly so well cared for here as they were farther back. There were fewer houses and fewer fruit trees, and the farther they went the more dismal and lonesome the country became.

At noon they sat down by the roadside, near a little brook, and Dorothy opened her basket and got out some bread. She offered a piece to the Scarecrow, but he refused.

“I am never hungry,” he said, “and it is a lucky thing I am not, for my mouth is only painted, and if I should cut a hole in it so I could eat, the straw I am stuffed with would come out, and that would spoil the shape of my head.”

Dorothy saw at once that this was true, so she only nodded and went on eating her bread.

“Tell me something about yourself and the country you came from,” said the Scarecrow, when she had finished her dinner. So she told him all about Kansas, and how gray everything was there, and how the cyclone had carried her to this queer Land of Oz.

The Scarecrow listened carefully, and said, “I cannot understand why you should wish to leave this beautiful country and go back to the dry, gray place you call Kansas.”

“That is because you have no brains” answered the girl. “No matter how dreary and gray our homes are, we people of flesh and blood would rather live there than in any other country, be it ever so beautiful. There is no place like home.”

The Scarecrow sighed.

"Of course I cannot understand it," he said. "If your heads were stuffed with straw, like mine, you would probably all live in the beautiful places, and then Kansas would have no people at all. It is fortunate for Kansas that you have brains."

"Won't you tell me a story, while we are resting?" asked the child.

The Scarecrow looked at her reproachfully, and answered:

"My life has been so short that I really know nothing whatever. I was only made day before yesterday. What happened in the world before that time is all unknown to me. Luckily, when the farmer made my head, one of the first things he did was to paint my ears, so that I heard what was going on. There was another Munchkin with him, and the first thing I heard was the farmer

saying, `How do you like those ears?'

"`They aren't straight,'" answered the other.

"`Never mind,'" said the farmer. "`They are ears just the same,'" which was true enough.

"`Now I'll make the eyes,'" said the farmer. So he painted my right eye, and as soon as it was finished I found myself looking at him and at everything around me with a great deal of curiosity, for this was my first glimpse of the world.

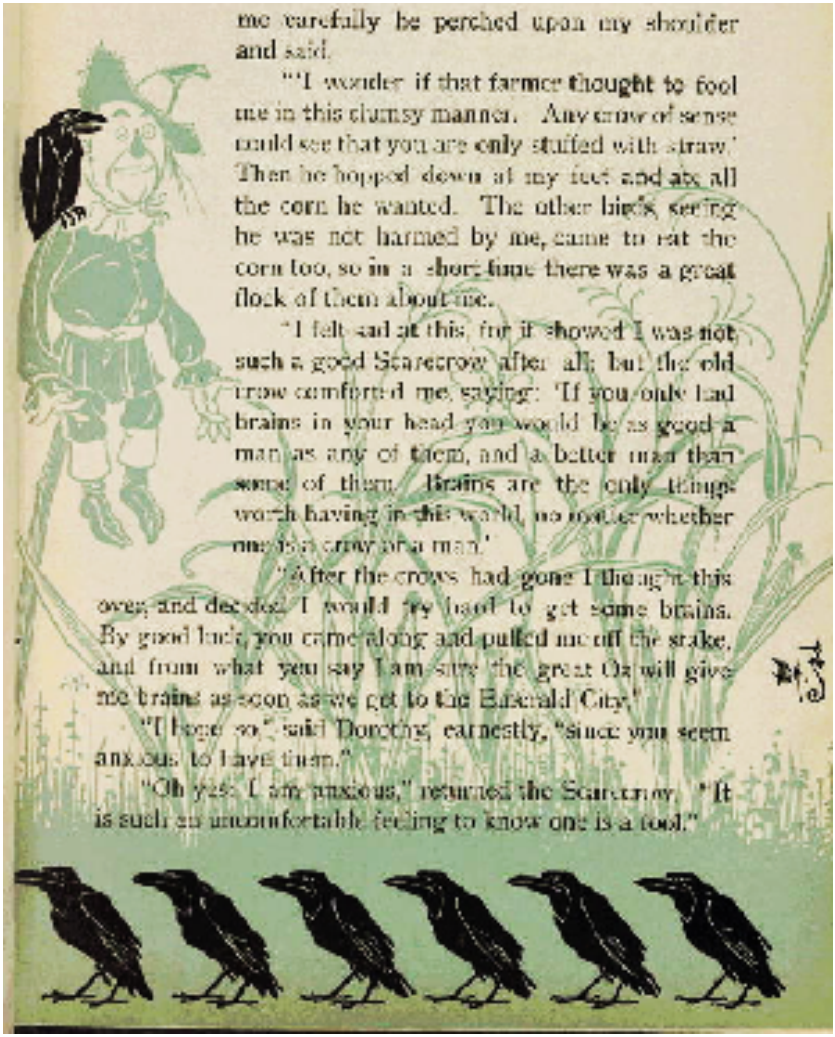
"`That's a rather pretty eye,'" remarked the Munchkin who was watching the farmer. "`Blue paint is just the color for eyes.'

"`I think I'll make the other a little bigger,'" said the farmer. And when the second eye was done I could see much better than before. Then he made my nose and my mouth. But I did not speak, because at that time I didn't know what a mouth was for. I had the fun of watching them make my body and my arms and legs; and when they fastened on my head, at last, I felt very proud, for I thought I was just as good a man as anyone.

"`This fellow will scare the crows fast enough,' said the farmer. `He looks just like a man.'

"`Why, he is a man,' said the other, and I quite agreed with him. The farmer carried me under his arm to the cornfield, and set me up on a tall stick, where you found me. He and his friend soon after walked away and left me alone.

"I did not like to be deserted this way. So I tried to walk after them. But my feet would not touch the ground, and I was forced to stay on that pole. It was a lonely life to lead, for I had nothing to think of, having been made such a little while before. Many crows and other birds flew into the cornfield, but as soon as they saw me they flew away again, thinking I was a Munchkin; and this pleased me and made me feel that I was quite an important person. By and by an old crow flew near me, and after looking at me carefully he perched upon my shoulder and said:



me carefully be perched upon my shoulder and said:

"'I wonder if that farmer thought to fool me in this clumsy manner. Any crow of sense could see that you are only stuffed with straw.' Then he hopped down at my feet and ate all the corn he wanted. The other birds, seeing he was not harmed by me, came to eat the corn too, so in a short time there was a great flock of them about me.

"I felt sad at this, for it showed I was not such a good Scarecrow after all; but the old crow comforted me, saying: 'If you only had brains in your head you would be as good a man as any of them, and a better man than some of them. Brains are the only things worth having in this world, no matter whether one is a crow or a man.'

"After the crows had gone I thought this over, and decided I would try hard to get some brains. By good luck, you came along and pulled me off the stake, and from what you say I am sure the great Oz will give me brains as soon as we get to the Emerald City."

"I hope so," said Dorothy, earnestly, "since you seem anxious to have them."

"Oh yes; I am anxious," returned the Scarecrow. "It is such an uncomfortable feeling to know one is a fool."

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"I hope so," said Dorothy earnestly, "since you seem anxious to have them."

"Oh, yes; I am anxious," returned the Scarecrow. "It is such an uncomfortable feeling to know one is a fool."

"Well," said the girl, "let us go." And she handed the basket to the Scarecrow.

There were no fences at all by the roadside now, and the land was rough and untilled. Toward evening they came to a great forest, where the trees grew so big and close together that their branches met over the road of yellow brick. It was almost dark under the trees, for the branches shut out the daylight; but the travelers did not stop, and went on into the forest.

"If this road goes in, it must come out," said the Scarecrow, "and as the Emerald City is at the other end of the road, we must go wherever it leads us."

"Anyone would know that," said Dorothy.

"Certainly; that is why I know it," returned the Scarecrow. "If it required brains to figure it out, I never should have said it."

After an hour or so the light faded away, and they found themselves stumbling along in the darkness. Dorothy could not see at all, but Toto could, for some dogs see very well in the dark; and the Scarecrow declared he could see as well as by day. So she took hold of his arm and managed to get along fairly well.

"If you see any house, or any place where we can pass the night," she said, "you must tell me; for it is very uncomfortable walking in the dark."

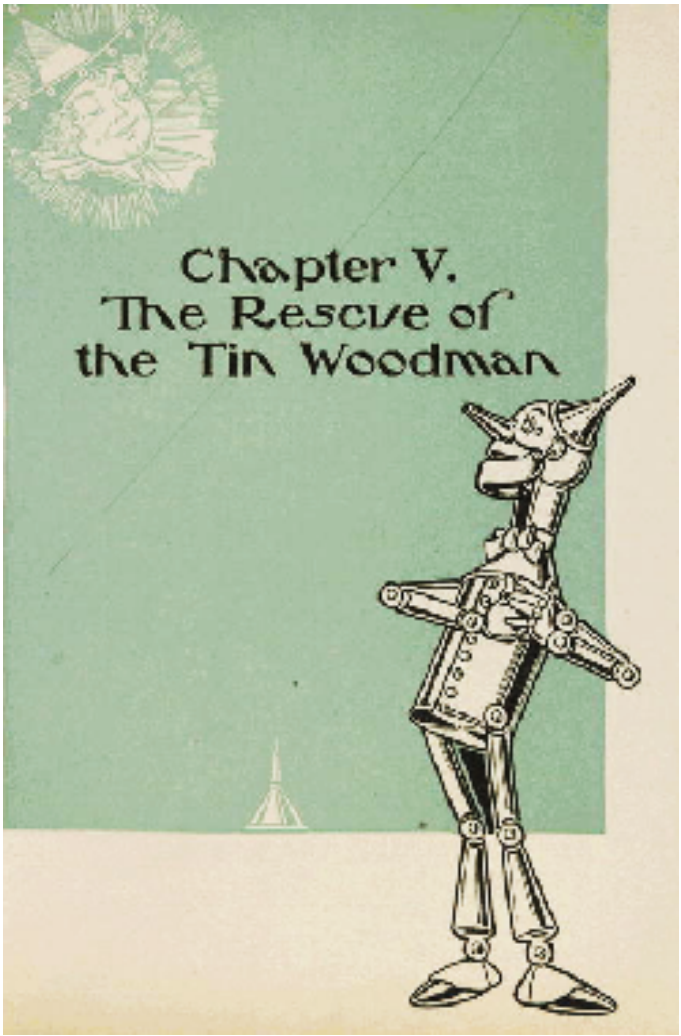
Soon after the Scarecrow stopped.

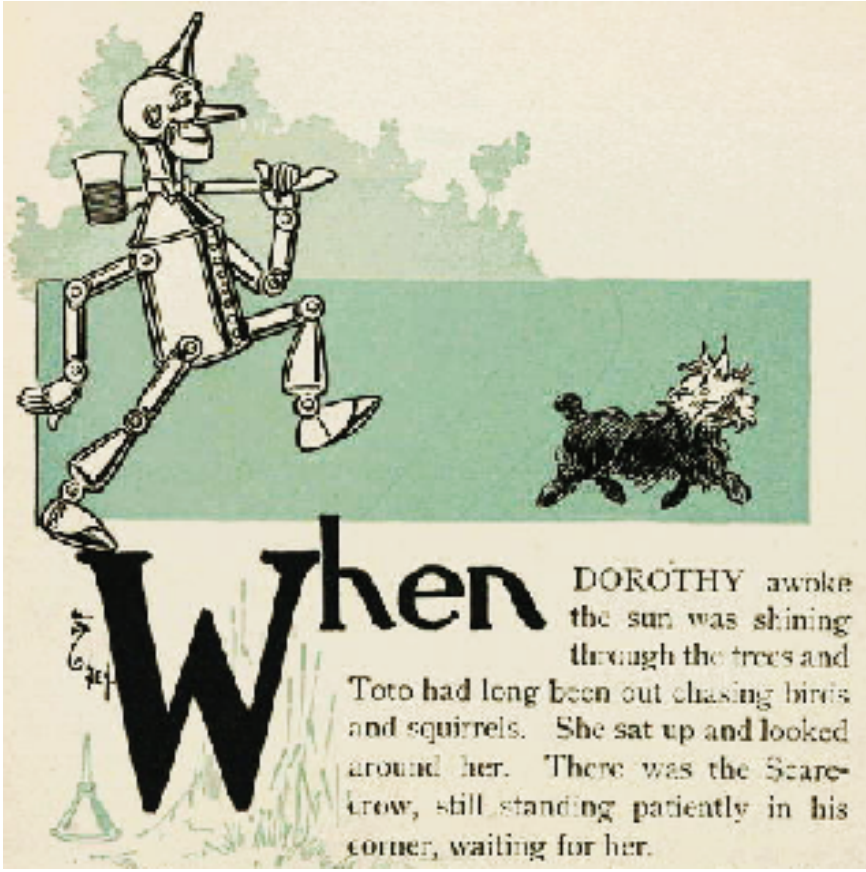
"I see a little cottage at the right of us," he said, "built of logs and branches. Shall we go there?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the child. "I am all tired out."

So the Scarecrow led her through the trees until they reached the cottage, and Dorothy entered and found a bed of dried leaves in one corner. She lay down at once, and with Toto beside her soon fell into a sound sleep. The Scarecrow, who was never tired, stood up in another corner and waited patiently until morning came.

5. The Rescue of the Tin Woodman





When Dorothy awoke the sun was shining through the trees and Toto had long been out chasing birds around him and squirrels. She sat up and looked around her. Scarecrow, still standing patiently in his corner, waiting for her.

"We must go and search for water," she said to him.

"Why do you want water?" he asked.

"To wash my face clean after the dust of the road, and to drink, so the dry bread will not stick in my throat."

"It must be inconvenient to be made of flesh," said the Scarecrow thoughtfully, "for you must sleep, and eat and drink. However, you have brains, and it is worth a lot of bother to be able to think properly."

They left the cottage and walked through the trees until they found a little spring of clear water, where Dorothy drank and bathed and ate her breakfast. She saw there was not much bread left in the basket, and the girl was thankful the Scarecrow did not have to eat anything, for there was scarcely enough for herself and Toto for the day.

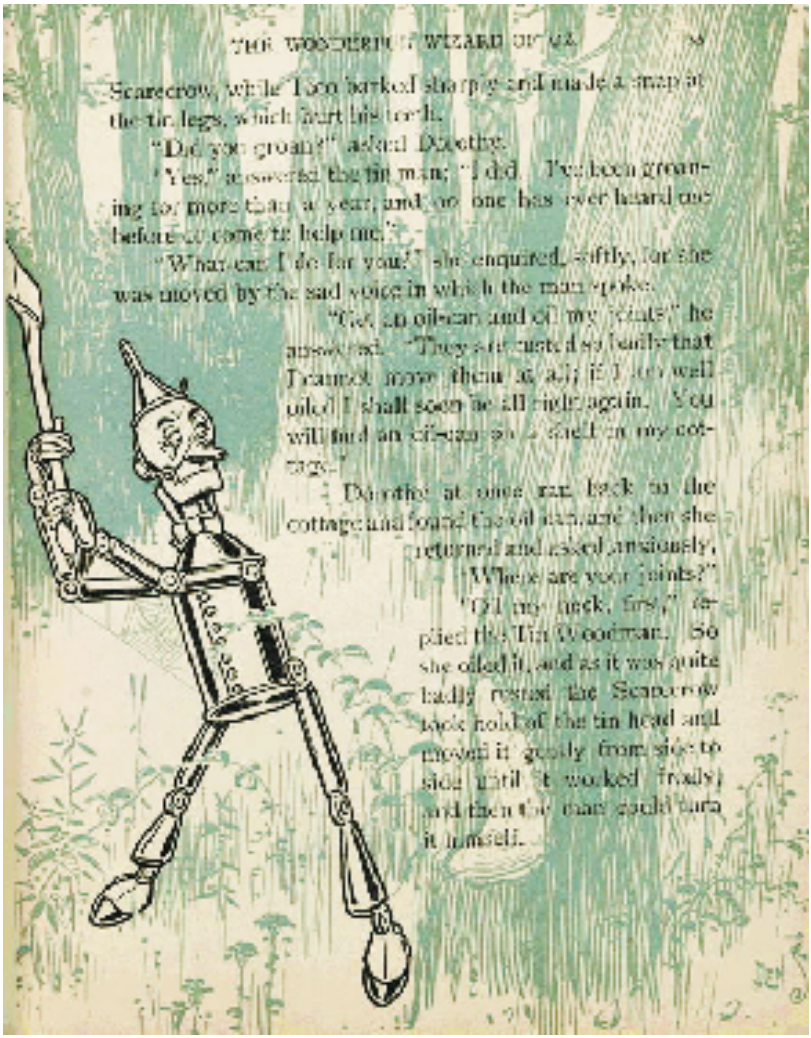
When she had finished her meal, and was about to go back to the road of yellow brick, she was startled to hear a deep groan near by.

“What was that?” she asked timidly.

“I cannot imagine,” replied the Scarecrow; “but we can go and see.”

Just then another groan reached their ears, and the sound seemed to come from behind them. They turned and walked through the forest a few steps, when Dorothy discovered something shining in a ray of sunshine that fell between the trees. She ran to the place and then stopped short, with a little cry of surprise.

One of the big trees had been partly chopped through, and standing beside it, with an uplifted axe in his hands, was a man made entirely of tin. His head and arms and legs were jointed upon his body, but he stood perfectly motionless, as if he could not stir at all.



Dorothy looked at him in amazement, and so did the Scarecrow, while Toto barked sharply and made a snap at the tin legs, which hurt his teeth.

"Did you groan?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," answered the tin man, "I did. I've been groaning for more than a year, and no one has ever heard me before or come to help me."

"What can I do for you?" she inquired softly, for she was moved by the sad voice in which the man spoke.

"Get an oil-can and oil my joints," he answered. "They are rusted so badly that I cannot move them at all; if I am well oiled I shall soon be all right again. You will find an oil-can on a shelf in my cottage."

Dorothy at once ran back to the cottage and found the oil-can, and then

she returned and asked anxiously, “Where are your joints?”

“Oil my neck, first,” replied the Tin Woodman. So she oiled it, and as it was quite badly rusted the Scarecrow took hold of the tin head and moved it gently from side to side until it worked freely, and then the man could turn it himself.

“Now oil the joints in my arms,” he said. And Dorothy oiled them and the Scarecrow bent them carefully until they were quite free from rust and as good as new.

The Tin Woodman gave a sigh of satisfaction and lowered his axe, which he leaned against the tree.

“This is a great comfort,” he said. “I have been holding that axe in the air ever since I rusted, and I’m glad to be able to put it down at last. Now, if you will oil the joints of my legs, I shall be all right once more.”

So they oiled his legs until he could move them freely; and he thanked them again and again for his release, for he seemed a very polite creature, and very grateful.

“I might have stood there always if you had not come along,” he said; “so you have certainly saved my life. How did you happen to be here?”

“We are on our way to the Emerald City to see the Great Oz,” she answered, “and we stopped at your cottage to pass the night.”

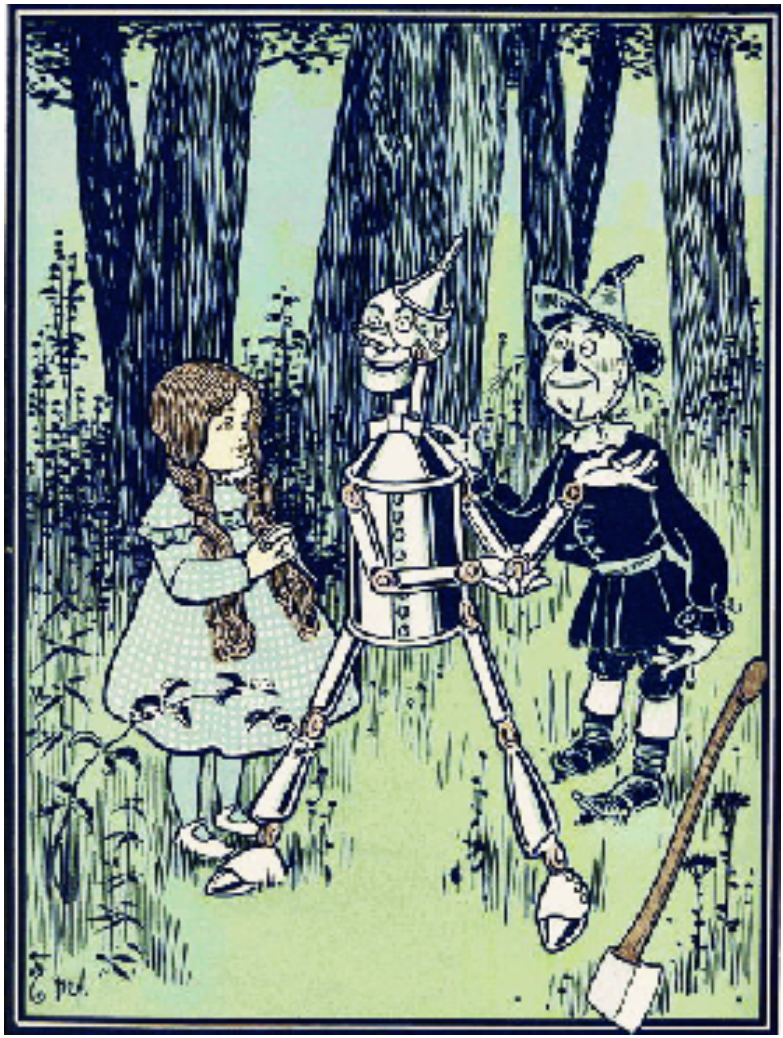
“Why do you wish to see Oz?” he asked.

“I want him to send me back to Kansas, and the Scarecrow wants him to put a few brains into his head,” she replied.

The Tin Woodman appeared to think deeply for a moment. Then he said:

“Do you suppose Oz could give me a heart?”

“Why, I guess so,” Dorothy answered. “It would be as easy as to give the Scarecrow brains.”



"True," the Tin Woodman returned. "So, if you will allow me to join your party, I will also go to the Emerald City and ask Oz to help me."

"Come along," said the Scarecrow heartily, and Dorothy added that she would be pleased to have his company. So the Tin Woodman shouldered his axe and they all passed through the forest until they came to the road that was paved with yellow brick.

The Tin Woodman had asked Dorothy to put the oil-can in her basket. "For," he said, "if I should get caught in the rain, and rust again, I would need the oil-can badly."

It was a bit of good luck to have their new comrade join the party, for soon after they had begun their journey again they came to a place where the

trees and branches grew so thick over the road that the travelers could not pass. But the Tin Woodman set to work with his axe and chopped so well that soon he cleared a passage for the entire party.

Dorothy was thinking so earnestly as they walked along that she did not notice when the Scarecrow stumbled into a hole and rolled over to the side of the road. Indeed he was obliged to call to her to help him up again.

“Why didn’t you walk around the hole?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“I don’t know enough,” replied the Scarecrow cheerfully. “My head is stuffed with straw, you know, and that is why I am going to Oz to ask him for some brains.”

“Oh, I see,” said the Tin Woodman. “But, after all, brains are not the best things in the world.”

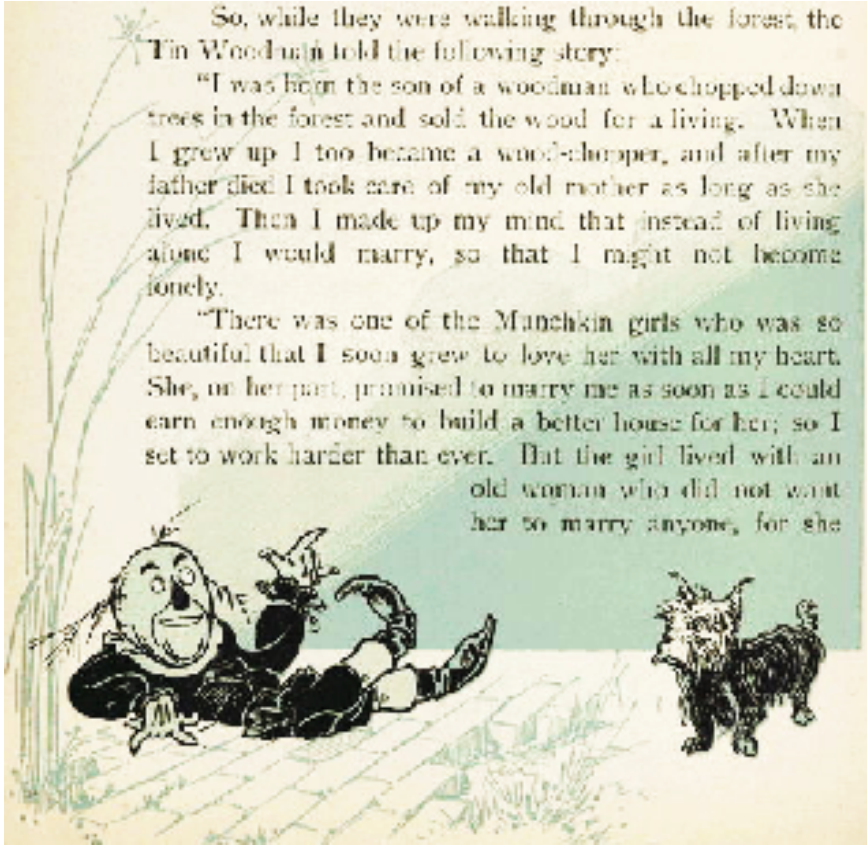
“Have you any?” inquired the Scarecrow.

“No, my head is quite empty,” answered the Woodman. “But once I had brains, and a heart also; so, having tried them both, I should much rather have a heart.”

“And why is that?” asked the Scarecrow.

“I will tell you my story, and then you will know.”

So, while they were walking through the forest, the Tin Woodman told the following story:


So, while they were walking through the forest, the Tin Woodman told the following story:

"I was born the son of a woodman who chopped down trees in the forest and sold the wood for a living. When I grew up I too became a woodchopper, and after my father died I took care of my old mother as long as she lived. Then I made up my mind that instead of living alone I would marry, so that I might not become lonely.

"There was one of the Munchkin girls who was so beautiful that I soon grew to love her with all my heart. She, on her part, promised to marry me as soon as I could earn enough money to build a better house for her; so I set to work harder than ever. But the girl lived with an old woman who did not want her to marry anyone, for she

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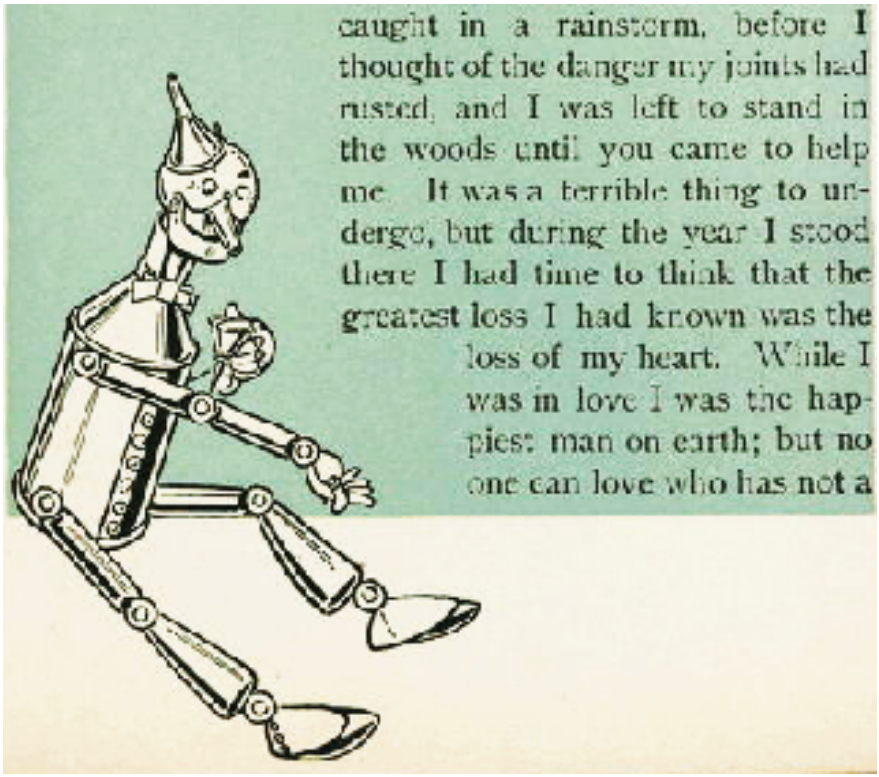
"There was one of the Munchkin girls who was so beautiful that I soon grew to love her with all my heart. She, on her part, promised to marry me as soon as I could earn enough money to build a better house for her; so I set to work harder than ever. But the girl lived with an old woman who did not want her to marry anyone, for she was so lazy she wished the girl to remain with her and do the cooking and the housework. So the old woman went to the Wicked Witch of the East, and promised her two sheep and a cow if she would prevent the marriage. Thereupon the Wicked Witch enchanted my axe, and when I was chopping away at my best one day, for I was anxious to get the new house and my wife as soon as possible, the axe slipped all at once and cut off my left leg.

“This at first seemed a great misfortune, for I knew a one-legged man could not do very well as a wood-chopper. So I went to a tinsmith and had him make me a new leg out of tin. The leg worked very well, once I was used to it. But my action angered the Wicked Witch of the East, for she had promised the old woman I should not marry the pretty Munchkin girl. When I began chopping again, my axe slipped and cut off my right leg. Again I went to the tinsmith, and again he made me a leg out of tin. After this the enchanted axe cut off my arms, one after the other; but, nothing daunted, I had them replaced with tin ones. The Wicked Witch then made the axe slip and cut off my head, and at first I thought that was the end of me. But the tinsmith happened to come along, and he made me a new head out of tin.

“I thought I had beaten the Wicked Witch then, and I worked harder than ever; but I little knew how cruel my enemy could be. She thought of a new way to kill my love for the beautiful Munchkin maiden, and made my axe slip again, so that it cut right through my body, splitting me into two halves. Once more the tinsmith came to my help and made me a body of tin, fastening my tin arms and legs and head to it, by means of joints, so that I could move around as well as ever. But, alas! I had now no heart, so that I lost all my love for the Munchkin girl, and did not care whether I married her or not. I suppose she is still living with the old woman, waiting for me to come after her.

“My body shone so brightly in the sun that I felt very proud of it and it did not matter now if my axe slipped, for it could not cut me. There was only one danger--that my joints would rust; but I kept an oil-can in my cottage and took care to oil myself whenever I needed it. However, there came a day when I forgot to do this, and, being caught in a rainstorm, before I thought of the danger my joints had rusted, and I was left to stand in the woods until you came to help me. It was a terrible thing to undergo, but during the year I stood there I had time to think that the greatest loss I had known was the loss of my heart. While I was in love I was the happiest man on earth; but no one can love who has not a heart, and so I am resolved to ask Oz to give me one. If he does, I will go back to the Munchkin maiden and marry her.”

Both Dorothy and the Scarecrow had been greatly interested in the story of the Tin Woodman, and now they knew why he was so anxious to get a new heart.



"All the same," said the Scarecrow, "I shall ask for brains instead of a heart; for a fool would not know what to do with a heart if he had one."

"I shall take the heart," returned the Tin Woodman; "for brains do not make one happy, and happiness is the best thing in the world."

Dorothy did not say anything, for she was puzzled to know which of her two friends was right, and she decided if she could only get back to Kansas and Aunt Em, it did not matter so much whether the Woodman had no brains and the Scarecrow no heart, or each got what he wanted.

What worried her most was that the bread was nearly gone, and another meal for herself and Toto would empty the basket. To be sure neither the Woodman nor the Scarecrow ever ate anything, but she was not made of tin nor straw, and could not live unless she was fed.

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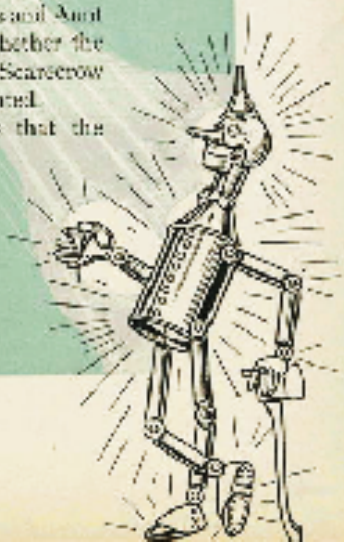
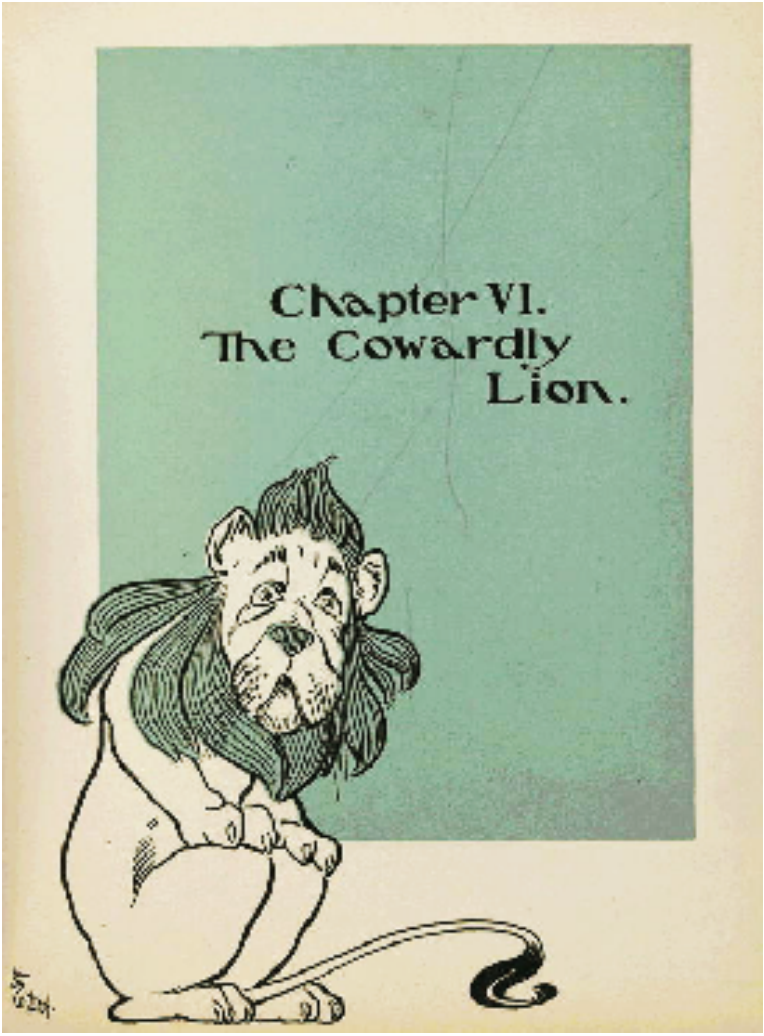


6. The Cowardly Lion



All THIS TIME DOROTHY and her companions had been walking through the thick woods. The road was still paved with yellow brick, but these were much covered by dried branches and dead leaves from the trees, and the walking was not at all good.

There were few birds in this part of the forest, for birds love the open country where there is plenty of sunshine; but now and then there came a deep growl from some wild animal hidden among the trees. These sounds made the little girl's heart beat fast, for she did not know

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There were few birds in this part of the forest, for birds love the open country where there is plenty of sunshine. But now and then there came a deep growl from some wild animal hidden among the trees. These sounds made the little girl's heart beat fast, for she did not know what made them; but Toto knew, and he walked close to Dorothy's side, and did not even bark in return.

"How long will it be," the child asked of the Tin Woodman, "before we

are out of the forest?”

“I cannot tell,” was the answer, “for I have never been to the Emerald City. But my father went there once, when I was a boy, and he said it was a long journey through a dangerous country, although nearer to the city where Oz dwells the country is beautiful. But I am not afraid so long as I have my oil-can, and nothing can hurt the Scarecrow, while you bear upon your forehead the mark of the Good Witch’s kiss, and that will protect you from harm.”

“But Toto!” said the girl anxiously. “What will protect him?”

“We must protect him ourselves if he is in danger,” replied the Tin Woodman.

Just as he spoke there came from the forest a terrible roar, and the next moment a great Lion bounded into the road. With one blow of his paw he sent the Scarecrow spinning over and over to the edge of the road, and then he struck at the Tin Woodman with his sharp claws. But, to the Lion’s surprise, he could make no impression on the tin, although the Woodman fell over in the road and lay still.

Little Toto, now that he had an enemy to face, ran barking toward the Lion, and the great beast had opened his mouth to bite the dog, when Dorothy, fearing Toto would be killed, and heedless of danger, rushed forward and slapped the Lion upon his nose as hard as she could, while she cried out:

"Don't you dare to bite Toto! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a big beast like you, to bite a poor little dog!"

"I didn't bite him," said the Lion, as he rubbed his nose with his paw where Dorothy had hit it.

"No, but you tried to," she retorted. "You are nothing but a big coward."

"I know it," said the Lion, hanging his head in shame. "I've always known it. But how can I help it?"

“I don’t know, I’m sure. To think of your striking a stuffed man, like the poor Scarecrow!”

“Is he stuffed?” asked the Lion in surprise, as he watched her pick up the Scarecrow and set him upon his feet, while she patted him into shape again.

“Of course he’s stuffed,” replied Dorothy, who was still angry.

“That’s why he went over so easily,” remarked the Lion. “It astonished me to see him whirl around so. Is the other one stuffed also?”

“No,” said Dorothy, “he’s made of tin.” And she helped the Woodman up again.

“That’s why he nearly blunted my claws,” said the Lion. “When they scratched against the tin it made a cold shiver run down my back. What is that little animal you are so tender of?”

“He is my dog, Toto,” answered Dorothy.

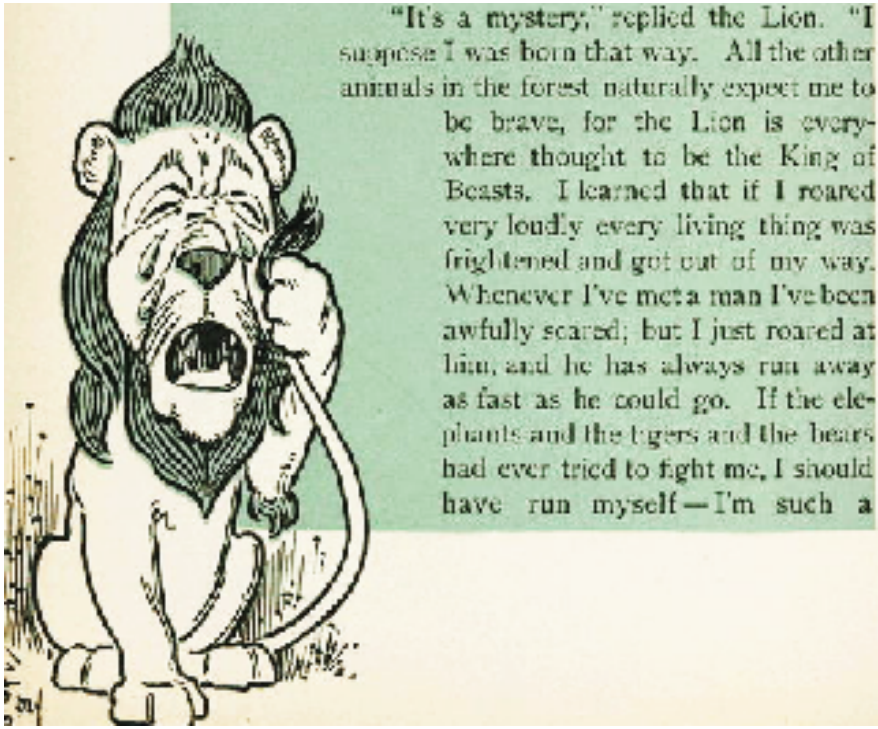
“Is he made of tin, or stuffed?” asked the Lion.

“Neither. He’s a--a--a meat dog,” said the girl.

“Oh! He’s a curious animal and seems remarkably small, now that I look at him. No one would think of biting such a little thing, except a coward like me,” continued the Lion sadly.

“What makes you a coward?” asked Dorothy, looking at the great beast in wonder, for he was as big as a small horse.

“It’s a mystery,” replied the Lion. “I suppose I was born that way. All the other animals in the forest naturally expect me to be brave, for the Lion is everywhere thought to be the King of Beasts. I learned that if I roared very loudly every living thing was frightened and got out of my way. Whenever I’ve met a man I’ve been awfully scared; but I just roared at him, and he has always run away as fast as he could go. If the elephants and the tigers and the bears had ever tried to fight me, I should have run myself--I’m such a coward; but just as soon as they hear me roar they all try to get away from me, and of course I let them go.”



"But that isn't right. The King of Beasts shouldn't be a coward," said the Scarecrow.

"I know it," returned the Lion, wiping a tear from his eye with the tip of his tail. "It is my great sorrow, and makes my life very unhappy. But whenever there is danger, my heart begins to beat fast."

"Perhaps you have heart disease," said the Tin Woodman.

"It may be," said the Lion.

"If you have," continued the Tin Woodman, "you ought to be glad, for it proves you have a heart. For my part, I have no heart; so I cannot have heart disease."

"Perhaps," said the Lion thoughtfully, "if I had no heart I should not be a coward."

"Have you brains?" asked the Scarecrow.

"I suppose so. I've never looked to see," replied the Lion.

"I am going to the Great Oz to ask him to give me some," remarked the Scarecrow, "for my head is stuffed with straw."

"And I am going to ask him to give me a heart," said the Woodman.

"And I am going to ask him to send Toto and me back to Kansas," added Dorothy.

“Do you think Oz could give me courage?” asked the Cowardly Lion.

“Just as easily as he could give me brains,” said the Scarecrow.

“Or give me a heart,” said the Tin Woodman.

“Or send me back to Kansas,” said Dorothy.

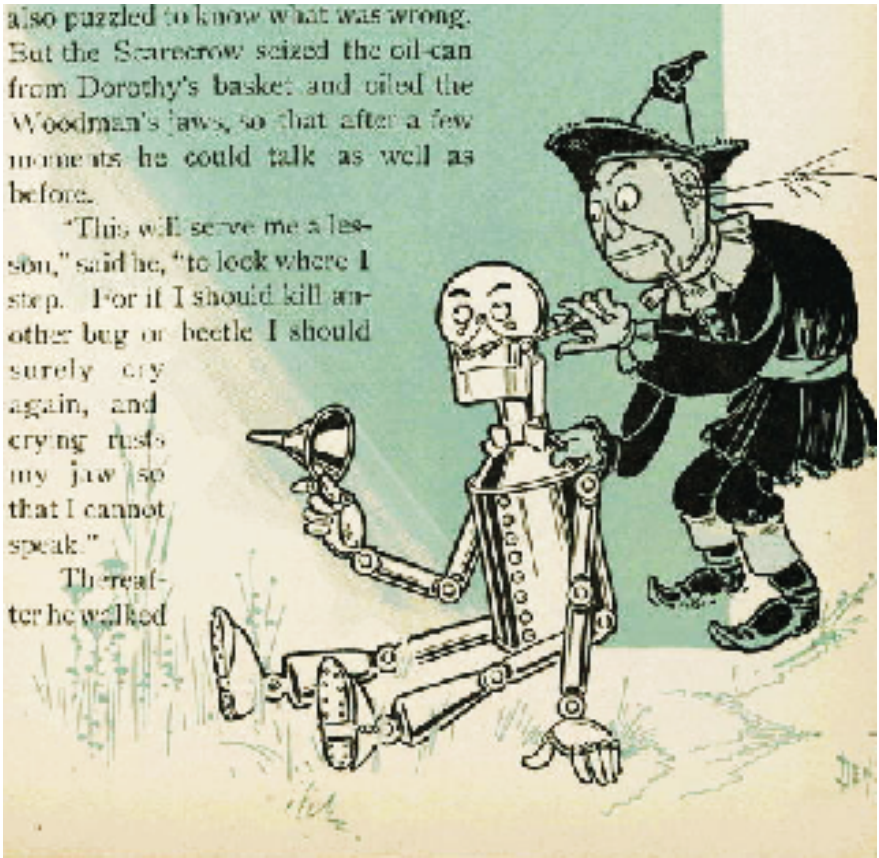
“Then, if you don’t mind, I’ll go with you,” said the Lion, “for my life is simply unbearable without a bit of courage.”

“You will be very welcome,” answered Dorothy, “for you will help to keep away the other wild beasts. It seems to me they must be more cowardly than you are if they allow you to scare them so easily.”

“They really are,” said the Lion, “but that doesn’t make me any braver, and as long as I know myself to be a coward I shall be unhappy.”

So once more the little company set off upon the journey, the Lion walking with stately strides at Dorothy’s side. Toto did not approve this new comrade at first, for he could not forget how nearly he had been crushed between the Lion’s great jaws. But after a time he became more at ease, and presently Toto and the Cowardly Lion had grown to be good friends.

During the rest of that day there was no other adventure to mar the peace of their journey. Once, indeed, the Tin Woodman stepped upon a beetle that was crawling along the road, and killed the poor little thing. This made the Tin Woodman very unhappy, for he was always careful not to hurt any living creature; and as he walked along he wept several tears of sorrow and regret. These tears ran slowly down his face and over the hinges of his jaw, and there they rusted. When Dorothy presently asked him a question the Tin Woodman could not open his mouth, for his jaws were tightly rusted together. He became greatly frightened at this and made many motions to Dorothy to relieve him, but she could not understand. The Lion was also puzzled to know what was wrong. But the Scarecrow seized the oil-can from Dorothy’s basket and oiled the Woodman’s jaws, so that after a few moments he could talk as well as before.

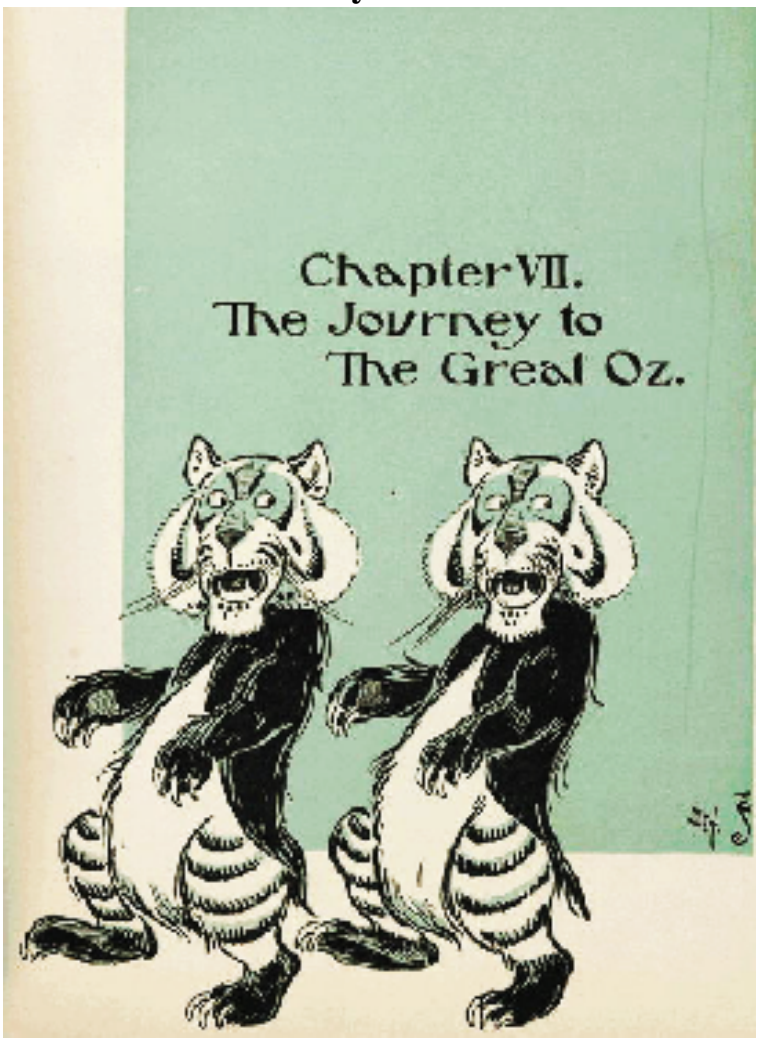


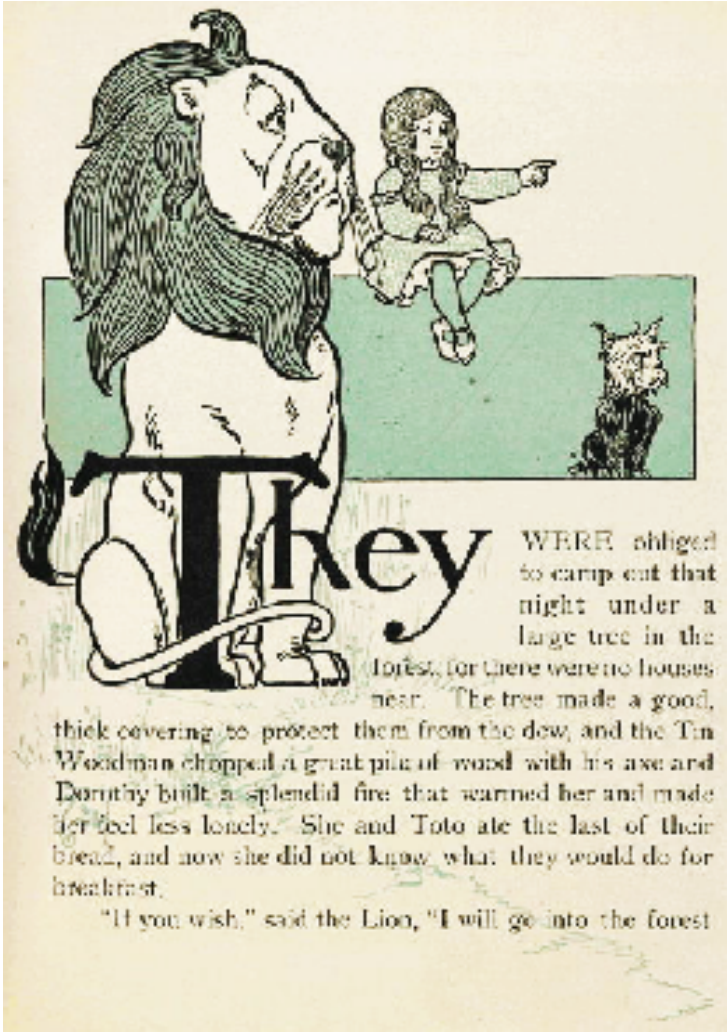
"This will serve me a lesson," said he, "to look where I step. For if I should kill another bug or beetle I should surely cry again, and crying rusts my jaws so that I cannot speak."

Thereafter he walked very carefully, with his eyes on the road, and when he saw a tiny ant toiling by he would step over it, so as not to harm it. The Tin Woodman knew very well he had no heart, and therefore he took great care never to be cruel or unkind to anything.

"You people with hearts," he said, "have something to guide you, and need never do wrong; but I have no heart, and so I must be very careful. When Oz gives me a heart of course I needn't mind so much."

7. The Journey to the Great Oz




They were obliged to camp out that night under a large tree in the forest, for there were no houses near. The tree made a good, thick covering to protect them from the dew, and the Tin Woodman chopped a great pile of wood with his axe and Dorothy built a splendid fire that warmed her and made her feel less lonely. She and Toto ate the last of their bread, and now she did not know what they would do for breakfast.

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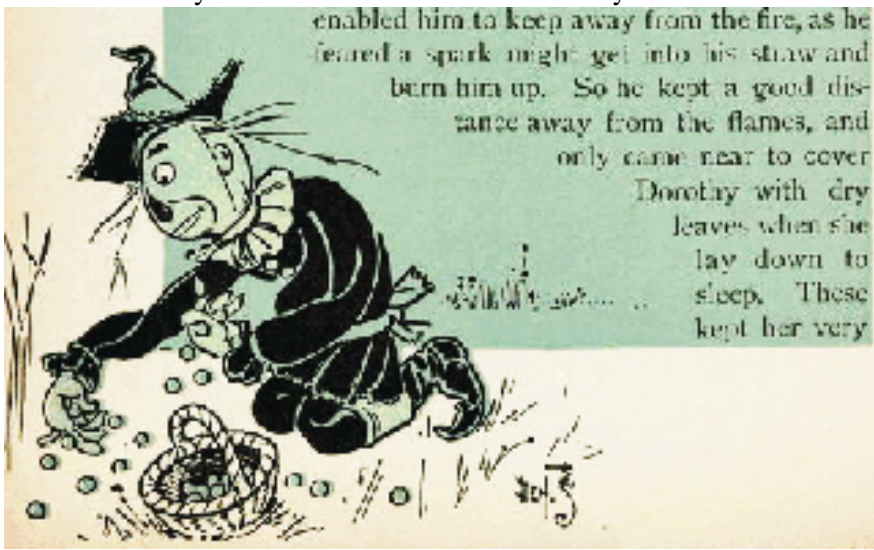
"If you wish," said the Lion, "I will go into the forest and kill a deer for you. You can roast it by the fire, since your tastes are so peculiar that you prefer cooked food, and then you will have a very good breakfast."

"Don't! Please don't," begged the Tin Woodman. "I should certainly weep if you killed a poor deer, and then my jaws would rust again."

But the Lion went away into the forest and found his own supper, and no one ever knew what it was, for he didn't mention it. And the Scarecrow found a tree full of nuts and filled Dorothy's basket with them, so that she would not be hungry for a long time. She thought this was very kind and thoughtful of the Scarecrow, but she laughed heartily at the awkward way in which the poor creature picked up the nuts. His padded hands were so clumsy and the nuts were so small that he dropped almost as many as he put in the basket. But the Scarecrow did not mind how long it took him to fill the basket, for it enabled him to keep away from the fire, as he feared a spark might get into his straw and burn him up. So he kept a good distance away from the flames, and only came near to cover Dorothy with dry leaves when she lay down to sleep. These kept her very snug and warm, and she slept soundly until morning.

When it was daylight, the girl bathed her face in a little rippling brook, and soon after they all started toward the Emerald City.



This was to be an eventful day for the travelers. They had hardly been walking an hour when they saw before them a great ditch that crossed the road and divided the forest as far as they could see on either side. It was a very wide ditch, and when they crept up to the edge and looked into it they could see it was also very deep, and there were many big, jagged rocks at the bottom. The sides were so steep that none of them could climb down, and for a moment it seemed that their journey must end.

"What shall we do?" asked Dorothy despairingly.

"I haven't the faintest idea," said the Tin Woodman, and the Lion shook his shaggy mane and looked thoughtful.

But the Scarecrow said, “We cannot fly, that is certain. Neither can we climb down into this great ditch. Therefore, if we cannot jump over it, we must stop where we are.”

“I think I could jump over it,” said the Cowardly Lion, after measuring the distance carefully in his mind.

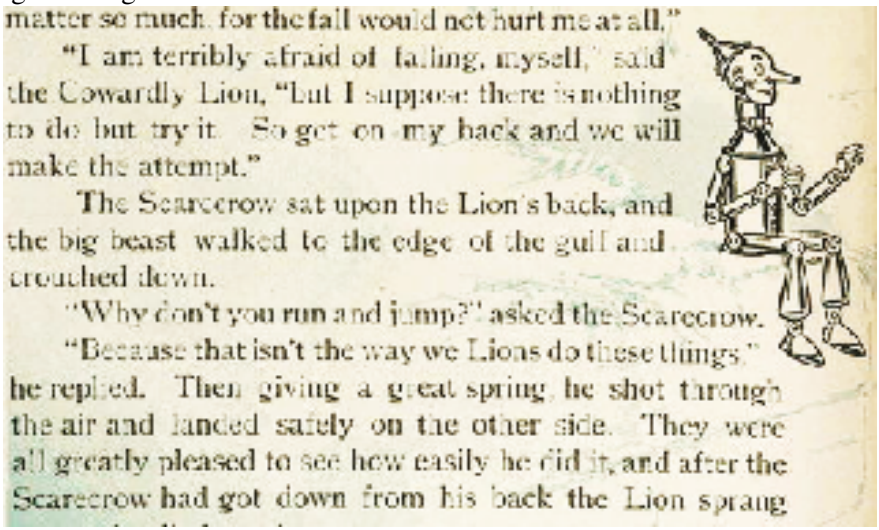
“Then we are all right,” answered the Scarecrow, “for you can carry us all over on your back, one at a time.”

“Well, I’ll try it,” said the Lion. “Who will go first?”

“I will,” declared the Scarecrow, “for, if you found that you could not jump over the gulf, Dorothy would be killed, or the Tin Woodman badly dented on the rocks below. But if I am on your back it will not matter so much, for the fall would not hurt me at all.”

“I am terribly afraid of falling, myself,” said the Cowardly Lion, “but I suppose there is nothing to do but try it. So get on my back and we will make the attempt.”

The Scarecrow sat upon the Lion’s back, and the big beast walked to the edge of the gulf and crouched down.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“Why don’t you run and jump?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Because that isn’t the way we Lions do these things,” he replied. Then giving a great spring, he shot through the air and landed safely on the other side. They were all greatly pleased to see how easily he did it, and after the Scarecrow had got down from his back the Lion sprang

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Dorothy thought she would go next; so she took Toto in her arms and climbed on the Lion’s back, holding tightly to his mane with one hand. The

next moment it seemed as if she were flying through the air; and then, before she had time to think about it, she was safe on the other side. The Lion went back a third time and got the Tin Woodman, and then they all sat down for a few moments to give the beast a chance to rest, for his great leaps had made his breath short, and he panted like a big dog that has been running too long.

They found the forest very thick on this side, and it looked dark and gloomy. After the Lion had rested they started along the road of yellow brick, silently wondering, each in his own mind, if ever they would come to the end of the woods and reach the bright sunshine again. To add to their discomfort, they soon heard strange noises in the depths of the forest, and the Lion whispered to them that it was in this part of the country that the Kalidahs lived.

"What are the Kalidahs?" asked the girl.

"They are monstrous beasts with bodies like bears and heads like tigers," replied the Lion, "and with claws so long and sharp that they could tear me in two as easily as I could kill Toto. I'm terribly afraid of the Kalidahs."

"I'm not surprised that you are," returned Dorothy. "They must be dreadful beasts."

The Lion was about to reply when suddenly they came to another gulf

across the road. But this one was so broad and deep that the Lion knew at once he could not leap across it.

So they sat down to consider what they should do, and after serious thought the Scarecrow said:

"Here is a great tree, standing close to the ditch. If the Tin Woodman can chop it down, so that it will fall to the other side, we can walk across it easily."

"That is a first-rate idea," said the Lion. "One would almost suspect you had brains in your head, instead of straw."

The Woodman set to work at once, and so sharp was his axe that the tree was soon chopped nearly through. Then the Lion put his strong front legs against the tree and pushed with all his might, and slowly the big tree tipped and fell with a crash across the ditch, with its top branches on the other side.

They had just started to cross this queer bridge when a sharp growl made them all look up, and to their horror they saw running toward them two great beasts with bodies like bears and heads like tigers.

"They are the Kalidahs!" said the Cowardly Lion, beginning to tremble.

"Quick!" cried the Scarecrow. "Let us cross over."

So Dorothy went first, holding Toto in her arms, the Tin Woodman followed, and the Scarecrow came next. The Lion, although he was certainly afraid, turned to face the Kalidahs, and then he gave so loud and terrible a roar that Dorothy screamed and the Scarecrow fell over backward, while even the fierce beasts stopped short and looked at him in surprise.

But, seeing they were bigger than the Lion, and remembering that there were two of them and only one of him, the Kalidahs again rushed forward, and the Lion crossed over the tree and turned to see what they would do next. Without stopping an instant the fierce beasts also began to cross the tree. And the Lion said to Dorothy:

"We are lost, for they will surely tear us to pieces with their sharp claws. But stand close behind me, and I will fight them as long as I am alive."

"Wait a minute!" called the Scarecrow. He had been thinking what was best to be done, and now he asked the Woodman to chop away the end of the tree that rested on their side of the ditch. The Tin Woodman began to use his axe at once, and, just as the two Kalidahs were nearly across, the tree fell with a crash into the gulf, carrying the ugly, snarling brutes with it, and both were dashed to pieces on the sharp rocks at the bottom.

"Well," said the Cowardly Lion, drawing a long breath of relief, "I see we are going to live a little while longer, and I am glad of it, for it must be a very uncomfortable thing not to be alive. Those creatures frightened me so badly that my heart is beating yet."

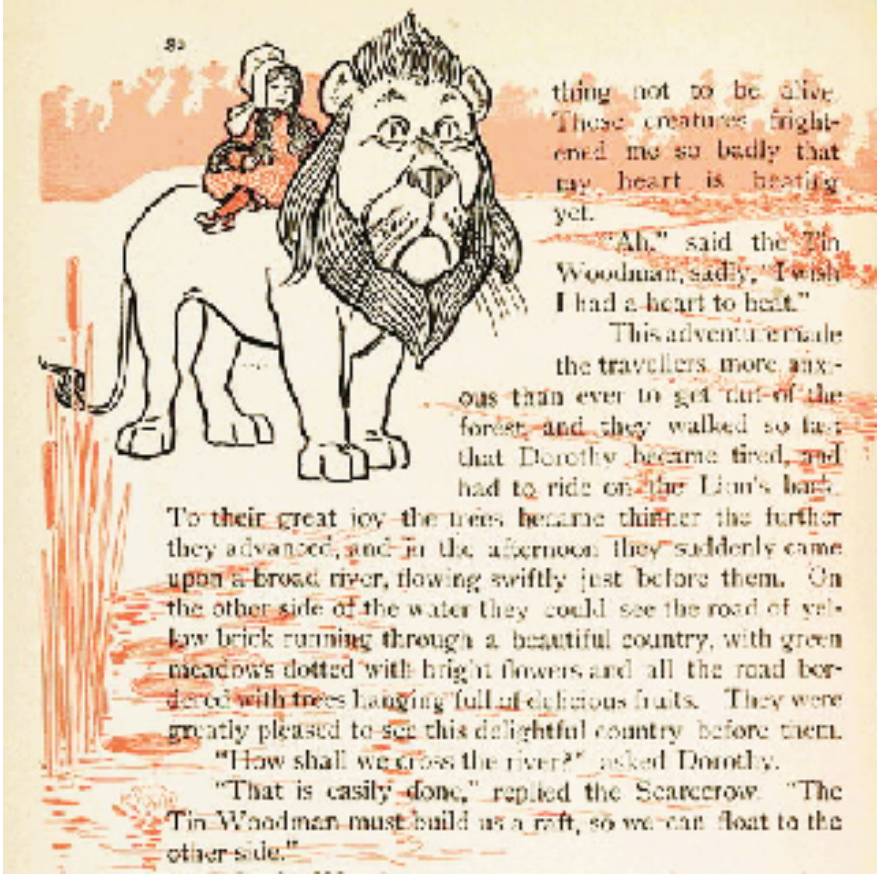
“Ah,” said the Tin Woodman sadly, “I wish I had a heart to beat.”

This adventure made the travelers more anxious than ever to get out of the forest, and they walked so fast that Dorothy became tired, and had to ride on the Lion’s back. To their great joy the trees became thinner the farther they advanced, and in the afternoon they suddenly came upon a broad river, flowing swiftly just before them. On the other side of the water they could see the road of yellow brick running through a beautiful country, with green meadows dotted with bright flowers and all the road bordered with trees hanging full of delicious fruits. They were greatly pleased to see this delightful country before them.

“How shall we cross the river?” asked Dorothy.

“That is easily done,” replied the Scarecrow. “The Tin Woodman must build us a raft, so we can float to the other side.”

So the Woodman took his axe and began to chop down small trees to make a raft, and while he was busy at this the Scarecrow found on the riverbank a tree full of fine fruit. This pleased Dorothy, who had eaten nothing but nuts all day, and she made a hearty meal of the ripe fruit.



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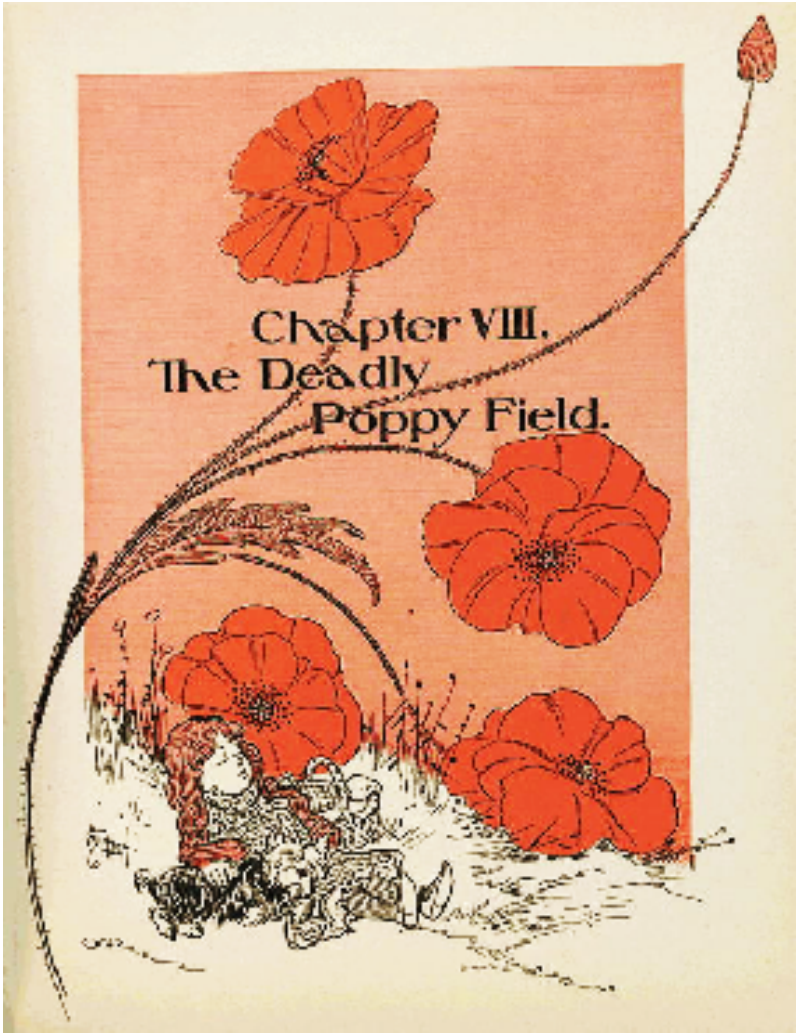
But it takes time to make a raft, even when one is as industrious and untiring as the Tin Woodman, and when night came the work was not done. So they found a cozy place under the trees where they slept well until the morning; and Dorothy dreamed of the Emerald City, and of the good Wizard Oz, who would soon send her back to her own home again.

8. The Deadly Poppy Field



Our little party of travelers awakened the next morning refreshed and full of hope, and Dorothy breakfasted like a princess off peaches and plums from the trees beside the river. Behind them was the dark forest they had passed safely through, although they had suffered many discouragements; but before them was a lovely, sunny country that seemed to beckon them on to the Emerald City.

To be sure, the broad river now cut them off from this beautiful land. But the raft was nearly done, and after the Tin Woodman had cut a few more logs and fastened them together with wooden pins, they were ready to start. Dorothy sat down in the middle of the raft and held Toto in her arms. When the Cowardly Lion stepped upon the raft it tipped badly, for he was big and heavy; but the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman stood upon the other end to

steady it, and they had long poles in their hands to push the raft through the water.

They got along quite well at first, but when they reached the middle of the river the swift current swept the raft downstream, farther and farther away from the road of yellow brick. And the water grew so deep that the long poles would not touch the bottom.

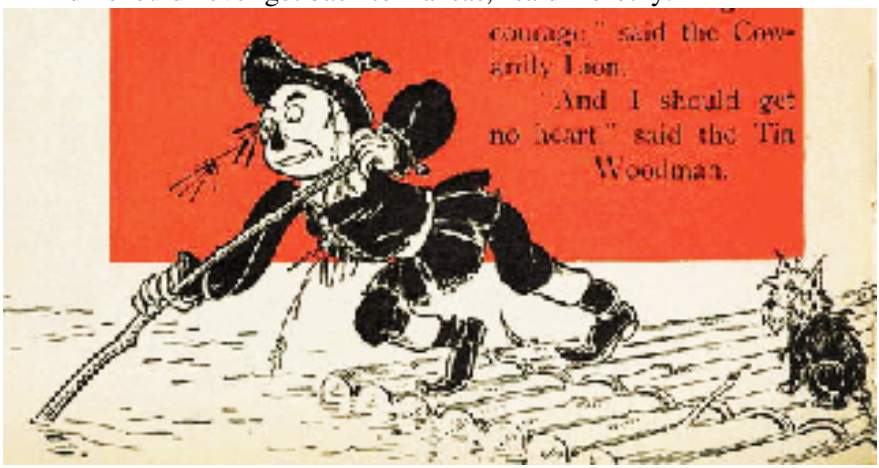
"This is bad," said the Tin Woodman, "for if we cannot get to the land we shall be carried into the country of the Wicked Witch of the West, and she will enchant us and make us her slaves."

"And then I should get no brains," said the Scarecrow.

"And I should get no courage," said the Cowardly Lion.

"And I should get no heart," said the Tin Woodman.

"And I should never get back to Kansas," said Dorothy.



"We must certainly get to the Emerald City if we can," the Scarecrow continued, and he pushed so hard on his long pole that it stuck fast in the mud at the bottom of the river. Then, before he could pull it out again--or let go--the raft was swept away, and the poor Scarecrow left clinging to the pole in the middle of the river.

"Good-bye!" he called after them, and they were very sorry to leave him. Indeed, the Tin Woodman began to cry, but fortunately remembered that he might rust, and so dried his tears on Dorothy's apron.

Of course this was a bad thing for the Scarecrow.

"I am now worse off than when I first met Dorothy," he thought. "Then, I was stuck on a pole in a cornfield, where I could make-believe scare the crows, at any rate. But surely there is no use for a Scarecrow stuck on a pole in the middle of a river. I am afraid I shall never have any brains, after all!"

Down the stream the raft floated, and the poor Scarecrow was left far behind. Then the Lion said:

"Something must be done to save us. I think I can swim to the shore and pull the raft after me, if you will only hold fast to the tip of my tail."

So he sprang into the water, and the Tin Woodman caught fast hold of his tail. Then the Lion began to swim with all his might toward the shore. It was hard work, although he was so big; but by and by they were drawn out of the current, and then Dorothy took the Tin Woodman's long pole and helped push the raft to the land.

They were all tired out when they reached the shore at last and stepped off upon the pretty green grass, and they also knew that the stream had carried them a long way past the road of yellow brick that led to the Emerald City.

"What shall we do now?" asked the Tin Woodman, as the Lion lay down on the grass to let the sun dry him.

"We must get back to the road, in some way," said Dorothy.

"The best plan will be to walk along the riverbank until we come to the road again," remarked the Lion.

So, when they were rested, Dorothy picked up her basket and they started along the grassy bank, to the road from which the river had carried them. It was a lovely country, with plenty of flowers and fruit trees and sunshine to

cheer them, and had they not felt so sorry for the poor Scarecrow, they could have been very happy.

They walked along as fast as they could, Dorothy only stopping once to pick a beautiful flower; and after a time the Tin Woodman cried out: “Look!”

Then they all looked at the river and saw the Scarecrow perched upon his pole in the middle of the water, looking very lonely and sad.

“What can we do to save him?” asked Dorothy.

The Lion and the Woodman both shook their heads, for they did not know. So they sat down upon the bank and gazed wistfully at the Scarecrow until a Stork flew by, who, upon seeing them, stopped to rest at the water’s edge.

“Who are you and where are you going?” asked the Stork.

“I am Dorothy,” answered the girl, “and these are my friends, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion; and we are going to the Emerald City.”

“This isn’t the road,” said the Stork, as she twisted her long neck and looked sharply at the queer party.

“I know it,” returned Dorothy, “but we have lost the Scarecrow, and are wondering how we shall get him again.”

“Where is he?” asked the Stork.

“Over there in the river,” answered the little girl.

“If he wasn’t so big and heavy I would get him for you,” remarked the Stork.

“He isn’t heavy a bit,” said Dorothy eagerly, “for he is stuffed with straw; and if you will bring him back to us, we shall thank you ever and ever so much.”

“Well, I’ll try,” said the Stork, “but if I find he is too heavy to carry I shall have to drop him in the river again.”

So the big bird flew into the air and over the water till she came to where the Scarecrow was perched upon his pole. Then the Stork with her great claws grabbed the Scarecrow by the arm and carried him up into the air and back to the bank, where Dorothy and the Lion and the Tin Woodman and Toto were sitting.

When the Scarecrow found himself among his friends again, he was so happy that he hugged them all, even the Lion and Toto; and as they walked along he sang “Tol-de-ri-de-oh!” at every step, he felt so gay.

“I was afraid I should have to stay in the river forever,” he said, “but the kind Stork saved me, and if I ever get any brains I shall find the Stork again and do her some kindness in return.”

“That’s all right,” said the Stork, who was flying along beside them. “I always like to help anyone in trouble. But I must go now, for my babies are

waiting in the nest for me. I hope you will find the Emerald City and that Oz will help you."

"Thank you," replied Dorothy, and then the kind Stork flew into the air and was soon out of sight.

They walked along listening to the singing of the brightly colored birds and looking at the lovely flowers which now became so thick that the ground was carpeted with them. There were big yellow and white and blue and purple blossoms, besides great clusters of scarlet poppies, which were so brilliant in color they almost dazzled Dorothy's eyes.

"Aren't they beautiful?" the girl asked, as she breathed in the spicy scent of the bright flowers.

“I suppose so,” answered the Scarecrow. “When I have brains, I shall probably like them better.”

“If I only had a heart, I should love them,” added the Tin Woodman.

“I always did like flowers,” said the Lion. “They of seem so helpless and frail. But there are none in the forest so bright as these.”

They now came upon more and more of the big scarlet poppies, and fewer and fewer of the other flowers; and soon they found themselves in the midst of a great meadow of poppies. Now it is well known that when there are many of these flowers together their odor is so powerful that anyone who breathes it falls asleep, and if the sleeper is not carried away from the scent of the flowers, he sleeps on and on forever. But Dorothy did not know this, nor could she get away from the bright red flowers that were everywhere about; so presently her eyes grew heavy and she felt she must sit down to rest and to sleep.

But the Tin Woodman would not let her do this.

“We must hurry and get back to the road of yellow brick before dark,” he said; and the Scarecrow agreed with him. So they kept walking until Dorothy could stand no longer. Her eyes closed in spite of herself and she forgot where she was and fell among the poppies, fast asleep.

“What shall we do?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“If we leave her here she will die,” said the Lion. “The smell of the flowers is killing us all. I myself can scarcely keep my eyes open, and the dog is asleep already.”

It was true; Toto had fallen down beside his little mistress. But the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, not being made of flesh, were not troubled by the scent of the flowers.

"Run fast," said the Scarecrow to the Lion, "and get out of this deadly flower bed as soon as you can. We will bring the little girl with us, but if you should fall asleep you are too big to be carried."

So the Lion aroused himself and bounded forward as fast as he could go. In a moment he was out of sight.

"Let us make a chair with our hands and carry her," said the Scarecrow. So they picked up Toto and put the dog in Dorothy's lap, and then they made a chair with their hands for the seat and their arms for the arms and carried the sleeping girl between them through the flowers.

On and on they walked, and it seemed that the great carpet of deadly flowers that surrounded them would never end. They followed the bend of the river, and at last came upon their friend the Lion, lying fast asleep among the poppies. The flowers had been too strong for the huge beast and he had given up at last, and fallen only a short distance from the end of the poppy bed, where the sweet grass spread in beautiful green fields before them.

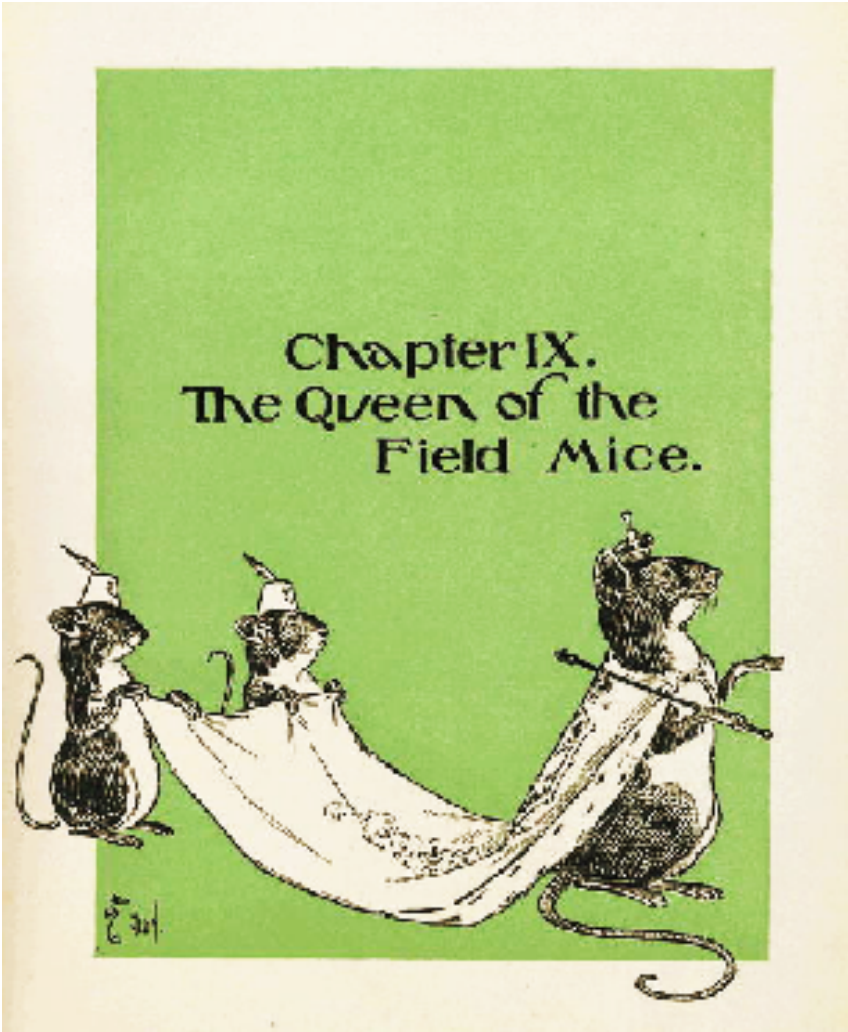
"We can do nothing for him," said the Tin Woodman, sadly; "for he is much too heavy to lift. We must leave him here to sleep on forever, and

perhaps he will dream that he has found courage at last."

"I'm sorry," said the Scarecrow. "The Lion was a very good comrade for one so cowardly. But let us go on."

They carried the sleeping girl to a pretty spot beside the river, far enough from the poppy field to prevent her breathing any more of the poison of the flowers, and here they laid her gently on the soft grass and waited for the fresh breeze to waken her.

9. The Queen of the Field Mice



"We cannot be far from the road of yellow brick, now," remarked the Scarecrow, as he stood beside the girl, "for we have come nearly as far as the river carried us away."

The Tin Woodman was about to reply when he heard a low growl, and turning his head (which worked beautifully on hinges) he saw a strange beast come bounding over the grass toward them. It was, indeed, a great yellow Wildcat, and the Woodman thought it must be chasing something, for its ears were lying close to its head and its mouth was wide open, showing two rows of ugly teeth, while its red eyes glowed like balls of fire. As it came nearer the Tin Woodman saw that running before the beast was a little gray field mouse, and although he had no heart he knew it was wrong for the Wildcat to try to kill such a pretty, harmless creature.

So the Woodman raised his axe, and as the Wildcat ran by he gave it a quick blow that cut the beast's head clean off from its body, and it rolled over at his feet in two pieces.

The field mouse, now that it was freed from its enemy, stopped short; and coming slowly up to the Woodman it said, in a squeaky little voice:

"Oh, thank you! Thank you ever so much for saving my life."

"Don't speak of it, I beg of you," replied the Woodman. "I have no heart,

you know, so I am careful to help all those who may need a friend, even if it happens to be only a mouse."

"Only a mouse!" cried the little animal, indignantly. "Why, I am a Queen--the Queen of all the Field Mice!"

"Oh, indeed," said the Woodman, making a bow.

"Therefore you have done a great deed, as well as a brave one, in saving my life," added the Queen.

At that moment several mice were seen running up as fast as their little legs could carry them, and when they saw their Queen they exclaimed:

"Oh, your Majesty, we thought you would be killed! How did you manage to escape the great Wildcat?" They all bowed so low to the little Queen that they almost stood upon their heads.

"This funny tin man," she answered, "killed the Wildcat and saved my life. So hereafter you must all serve him, and obey his slightest wish."

"We will!" cried all the mice, in a shrill chorus. And then they scampered in all directions, for Toto had awakened from his sleep, and seeing all these mice around him he gave one bark of delight and jumped right into the middle of the group. Toto had always loved to chase mice when he lived in Kansas, and he saw no harm in it.

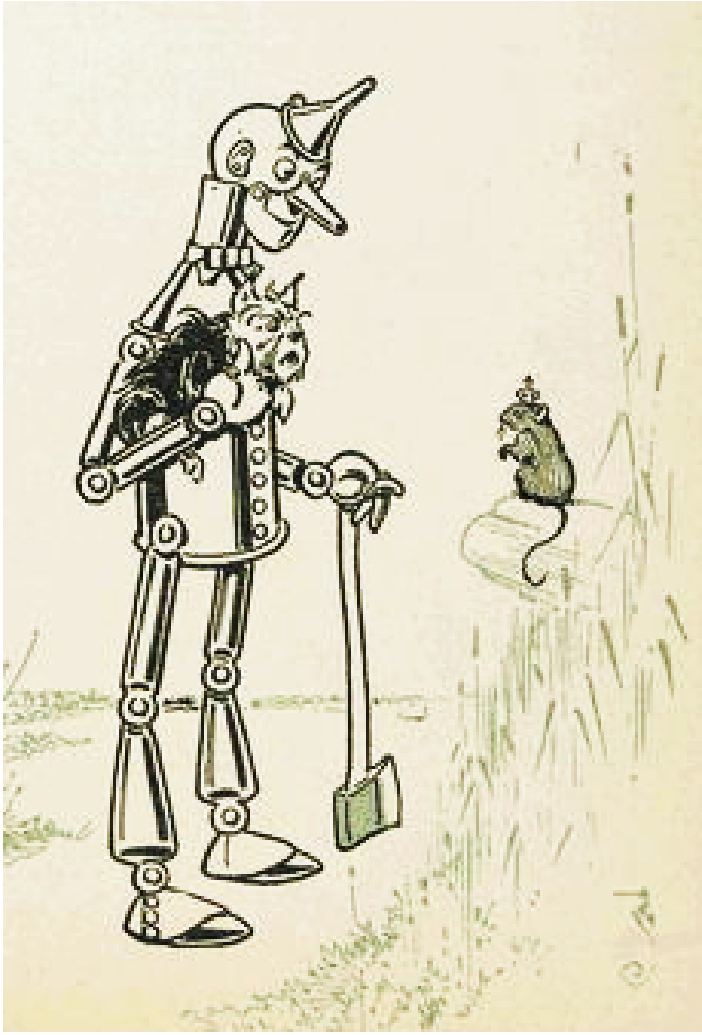
But the Tin Woodman caught the dog in his arms and held him tight, while he called to the mice, "Come back! Come back! Toto shall not hurt you."

At this the Queen of the Mice stuck her head out from underneath a clump of grass and asked, in a timid voice, "Are you sure he will not bite us?"

"I will not let him," said the Woodman; "so do not be afraid."

One by one the mice came creeping back, and Toto did not bark again, although he tried to get out of the Woodman's arms, and would have bitten him had he not known very well he was made of tin. Finally one of the biggest mice spoke.

"Is there anything we can do," it asked, "to repay you for saving the life of our Queen?"



“Nothing that I know of,” answered the Woodman; but the Scarecrow, who had been trying to think, but could not because his head was stuffed with straw, said, quickly, “Oh, yes; you can save our friend, the Cowardly Lion, who is asleep in the poppy bed.”

“A Lion!” cried the little Queen. “Why, he would eat us all up.”

“Oh, no,” declared the Scarecrow; “this Lion is a coward.”

“Really?” asked the Mouse.

“He says so himself,” answered the Scarecrow, “and he would never hurt anyone who is our friend. If you will help us to save him I promise that he shall treat you all with kindness.”

“Very well,” said the Queen, “we trust you. But what shall we do?”

“Are there many of these mice which call you Queen and are willing to obey you?”

“Oh, yes; there are thousands,” she replied.

“Then send for them all to come here as soon as possible, and let each one bring a long piece of string.”

The Queen turned to the mice that attended her and told them to go at once and get all her people. As soon as they heard her orders they ran away in every direction as fast as possible.

“Now,” said the Scarecrow to the Tin Woodman, “you must go to those trees by the riverside and make a truck that will carry the Lion.”

So the Woodman went at once to the trees and began to work; and he soon

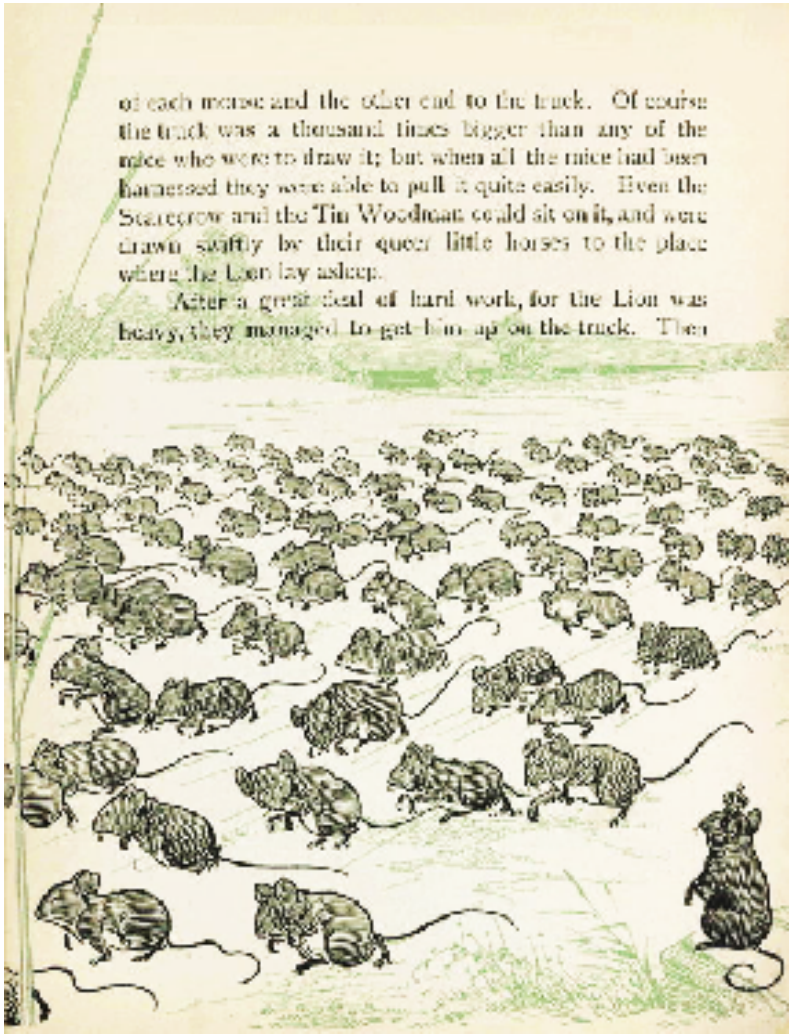
made a truck out of the limbs of trees, from which he chopped away all the leaves and branches. He fastened it together with wooden pegs and made the four wheels out of short pieces of a big tree trunk. So fast and so well did he work that by the time the mice began to arrive the truck was all ready for them.

They came from all directions, and there were thousands of them: big mice and little mice and middle-sized mice; and each one brought a piece of string in his mouth. It was about this time that Dorothy woke from her long sleep and opened her eyes. She was greatly astonished to find herself lying upon the grass, with thousands of mice standing around and looking at her timidly. But the Scarecrow told her about everything, and turning to the dignified little Mouse, he said:

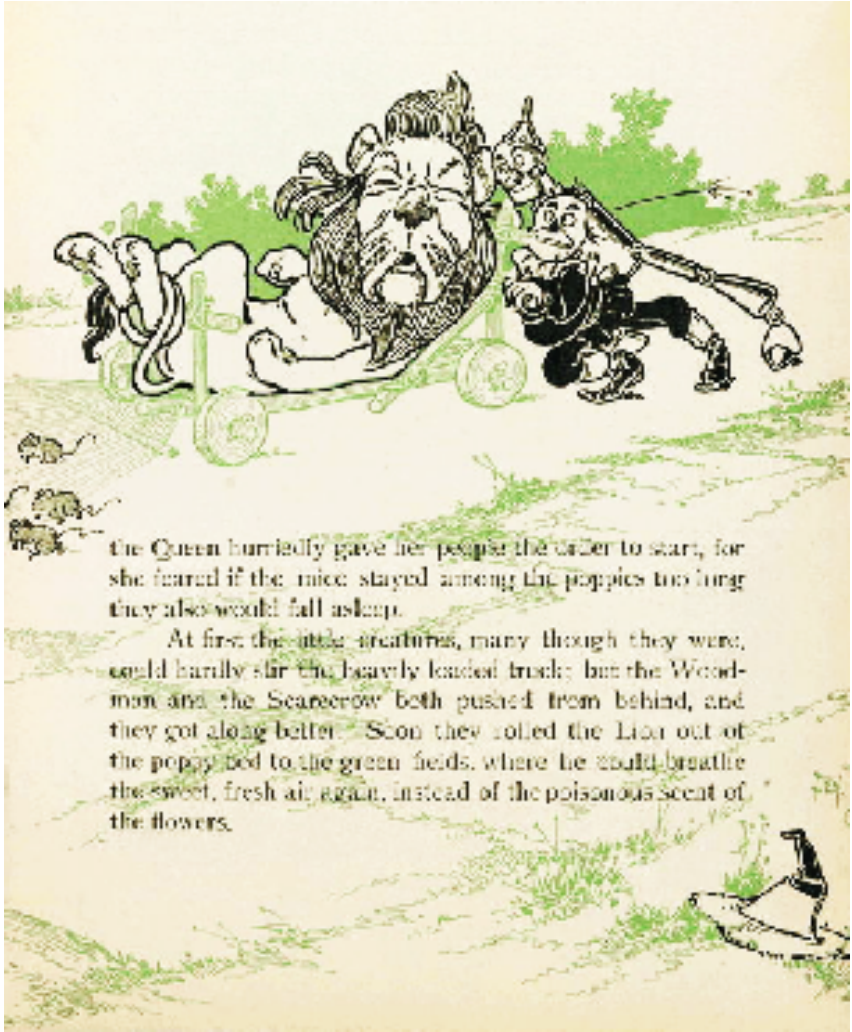
"Permit me to introduce to you her Majesty, the Queen."

Dorothy nodded gravely and the Queen made a curtsy, after which she became quite friendly with the little girl.

The Scarecrow and the Woodman now began to fasten the mice to the truck, using the strings they had brought. One end of a string was tied around the neck of each mouse and the other end to the truck. Of course the truck was a thousand times bigger than any of the mice who were to draw it; but when all the mice had been harnessed, they were able to pull it quite easily. Even the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman could sit on it, and were drawn swiftly by their queer little horses to the place where the Lion lay asleep.



After a great deal of hard work, for the Lion was heavy, they managed to get him up on the truck. Then the Queen hurriedly gave her people the order to start, for she feared if the mice stayed among the poppies too long they also would fall asleep.



At first the little creatures, many though they were, could hardly stir the heavily loaded truck; but the Woodman and the Scarecrow both pushed from behind, and they got along better. Soon they rolled the Lion out of the poppy bed to the green fields, where he could breathe the sweet, fresh air again, instead of the poisonous scent of the flowers.

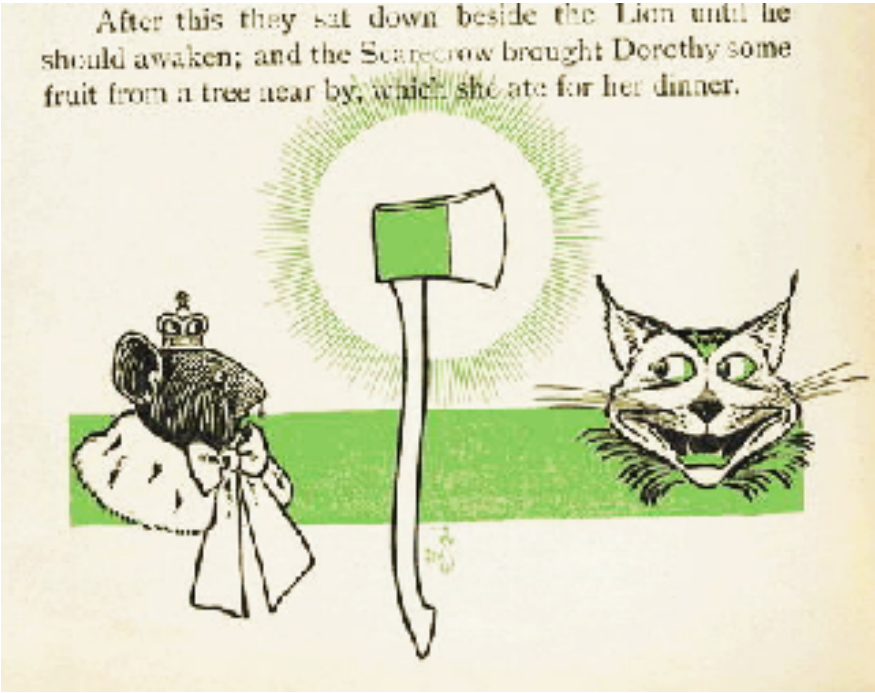
Dorothy came to meet them and thanked the little mice warmly for saving her companion from death. She had grown so fond of the big Lion she was glad he had been rescued.

Then the mice were unharnessed from the truck and scampered away through the grass to their homes. The Queen of the Mice was the last to leave.

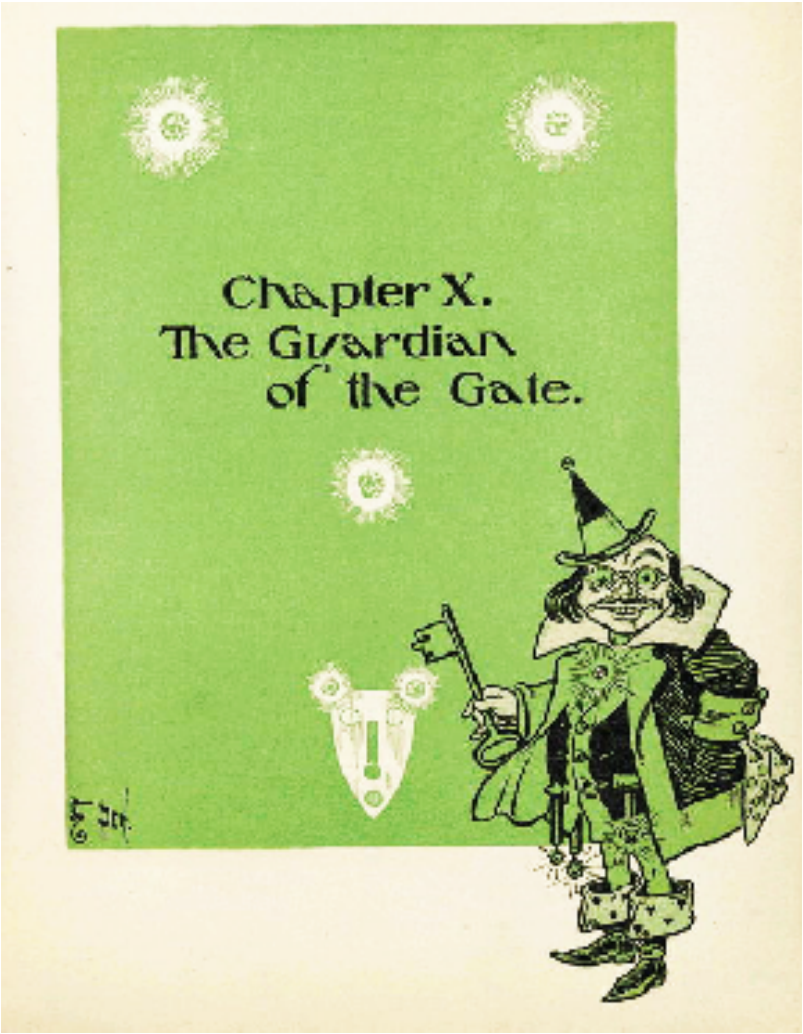
“If ever you need us again,” she said, “come out into the field and call, and we shall hear you and come to your assistance. Good-bye!”

“Good-bye!” they all answered, and away the Queen ran, while Dorothy held Toto tightly lest he should run after her and frighten her.

After this they sat down beside the Lion until he should awaken; and the Scarecrow brought Dorothy some fruit from a tree near by, which she ate for her dinner.



10. The Guardian of the Gate



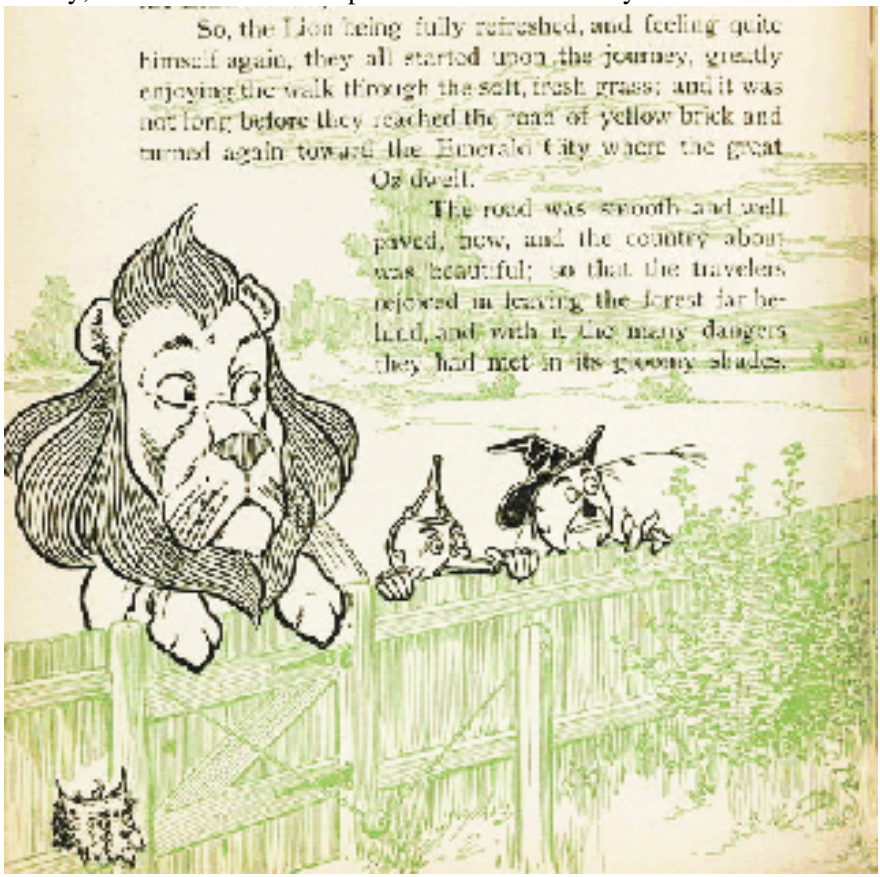
It was some time before the Cowardly Lion awakened, for he had lain among the poppies a long while, breathing in their deadly fragrance; but when he did open his eyes and roll off the truck he was very glad to find himself still alive.

"I ran as fast as I could," he said, sitting down and yawning, "but the flowers were too strong for me. How did you get me out?"

Then they told him of the field mice, and how they had generously saved him from death; and the Cowardly Lion laughed, and said:

"I have always thought myself very big and terrible; yet such little things as flowers came near to killing me, and such small animals as mice have saved my life. How strange it all is! But, comrades, what shall we do now?"

"We must journey on until we find the road of yellow brick again," said Dorothy, "and then we can keep on to the Emerald City."



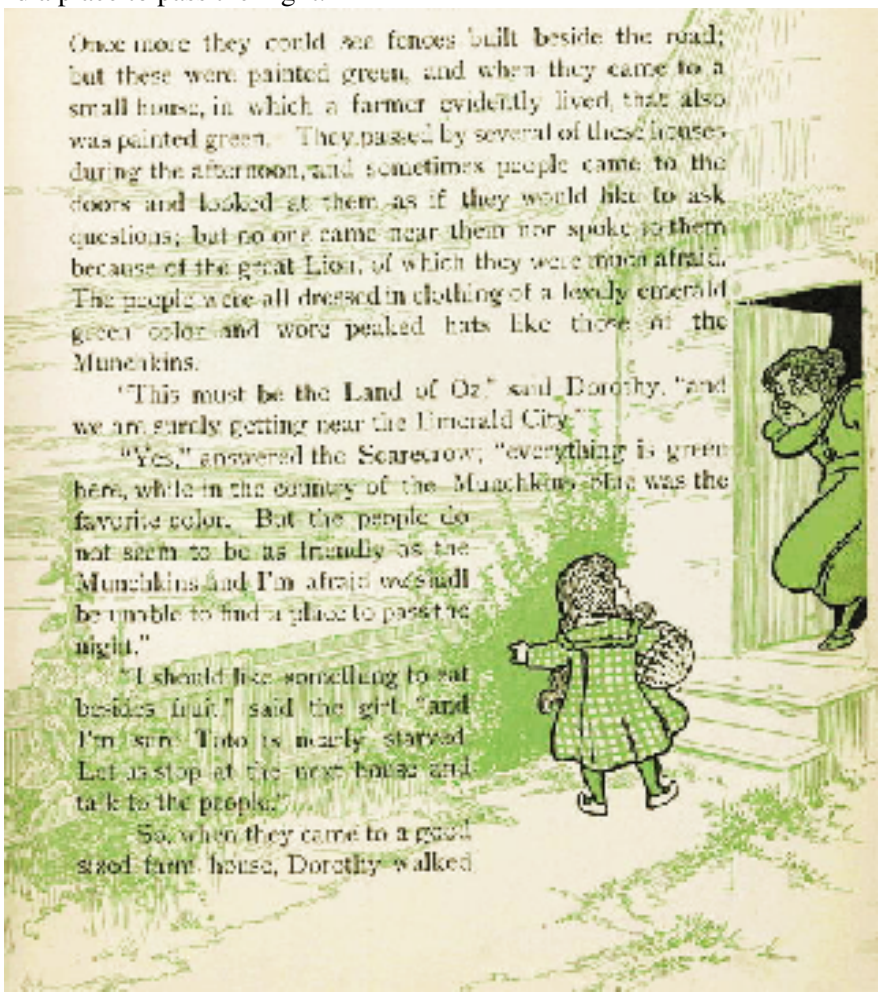
So, the Lion being fully refreshed, and feeling quite himself again, they all started upon the journey, greatly enjoying the walk through the soft, fresh grass; and it was not long before they reached the road of yellow brick and turned again toward the Emerald City where the Great Oz dwelt.

The road was smooth and well paved, now, and the country about was beautiful, so that the travelers rejoiced in leaving the forest far behind, and with it the many dangers they had met in its gloomy shades. Once more they could see fences built beside the road; but these were painted green, and when they came to a small house, in which a farmer evidently lived, that also was painted green. They passed by several of these houses during the afternoon, and sometimes people came to the doors and looked at them as if they would like to ask questions; but no one came near them nor spoke to them because of the great Lion, of which they were very much afraid. The

people were all dressed in clothing of a lovely emerald-green color and wore peaked hats like those of the Munchkins.

"This must be the Land of Oz," said Dorothy, "and we are surely getting near the Emerald City."

"Yes," answered the Scarecrow. "Everything is green here, while in the country of the Munchkins blue was the favorite color. But the people do not seem to be as friendly as the Munchkins, and I'm afraid we shall be unable to find a place to pass the night."



"I should like something to eat besides fruit," said the girl, "and I'm sure Toto is nearly starved. Let us stop at the next house and talk to the people."

So, when they came to a good-sized farmhouse, Dorothy walked boldly up to the door and knocked.

A woman opened it just far enough to look out, and said, “What do you want, child, and why is that great Lion with you?”

“We wish to pass the night with you, if you will allow us,” answered Dorothy; “and the Lion is my friend and comrade, and would not hurt you for the world.”

“Is he tame?” asked the woman, opening the door a little wider.

“Oh, yes,” said the girl, “and he is a great coward, too. He will be more afraid of you than you are of him.”

“Well,” said the woman, after thinking it over and taking another peep at the Lion, “if that is the case you may come in, and I will give you some supper and a place to sleep.”

So they all entered the house, where there were, besides the woman, two children and a man. The man had hurt his leg, and was lying on the couch in a corner. They seemed greatly surprised to see so strange a company, and while the woman was busy laying the table the man asked:

“Where are you all going?”

“To the Emerald City,” said Dorothy, “to see the Great Oz.”

“Oh, indeed!” exclaimed the man. “Are you sure that Oz will see you?”

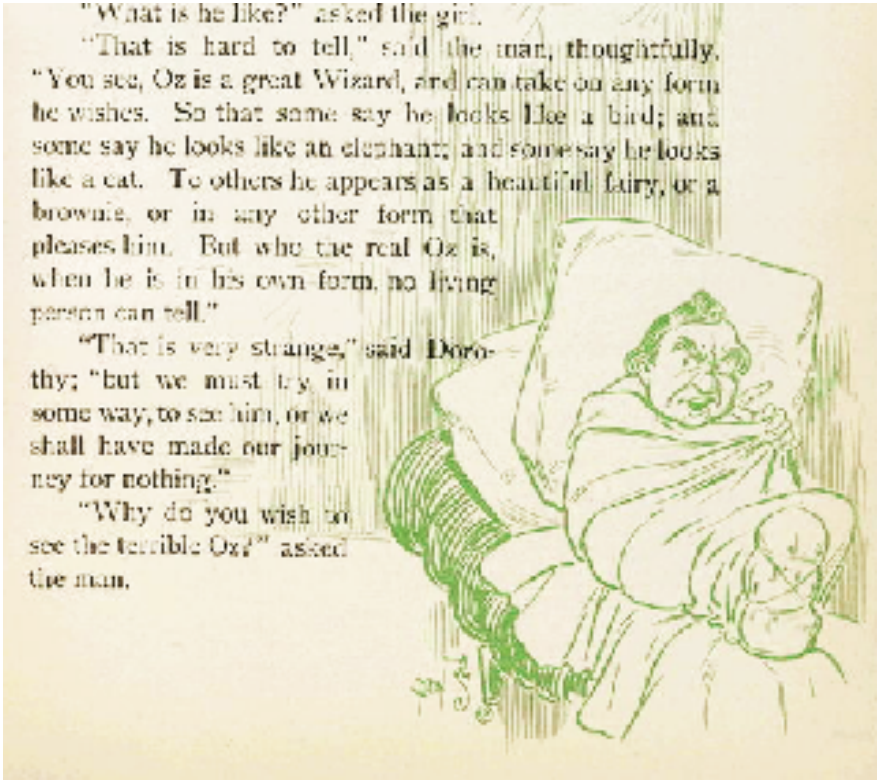
“Why not?” she replied.

“Why, it is said that he never lets anyone come into his presence. I have been to the Emerald City many times, and it is a beautiful and wonderful place; but I have never been permitted to see the Great Oz, nor do I know of any living person who has seen him.”

“Does he never go out?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Never. He sits day after day in the great Throne Room of his Palace, and even those who wait upon him do not see him face to face.”

“What is he like?” asked the girl.



"That is hard to tell," said the man thoughtfully. "You see, Oz is a Great Wizard, and can take on any form he wishes. So that some say he looks like a bird; and some say he looks like an elephant; and some say he looks like a cat. To others he appears as a beautiful fairy, or a brownie, or in any other form that pleases him. But who the real Oz is, when he is in his own form, no living person can tell."

"That is very strange," said Dorothy, "but we must try, in some way, to see him, or we shall have made our journey for nothing."

"Why do you wish to see the terrible Oz?" asked the man.

"I want him to give me some brains," said the Scarecrow eagerly.

"Oh, Oz could do that easily enough," declared the man. "He has more brains than he needs."

"And I want him to give me a heart," said the Tin Woodman.

"That will not trouble him," continued the man, "for Oz has a large collection of hearts, of all sizes and shapes."

"And I want him to give me courage," said the Cowardly Lion.

"Oz keeps a great pot of courage in his Throne Room," said the man, "which he has covered with a golden plate, to keep it from running over. He

will be glad to give you some."

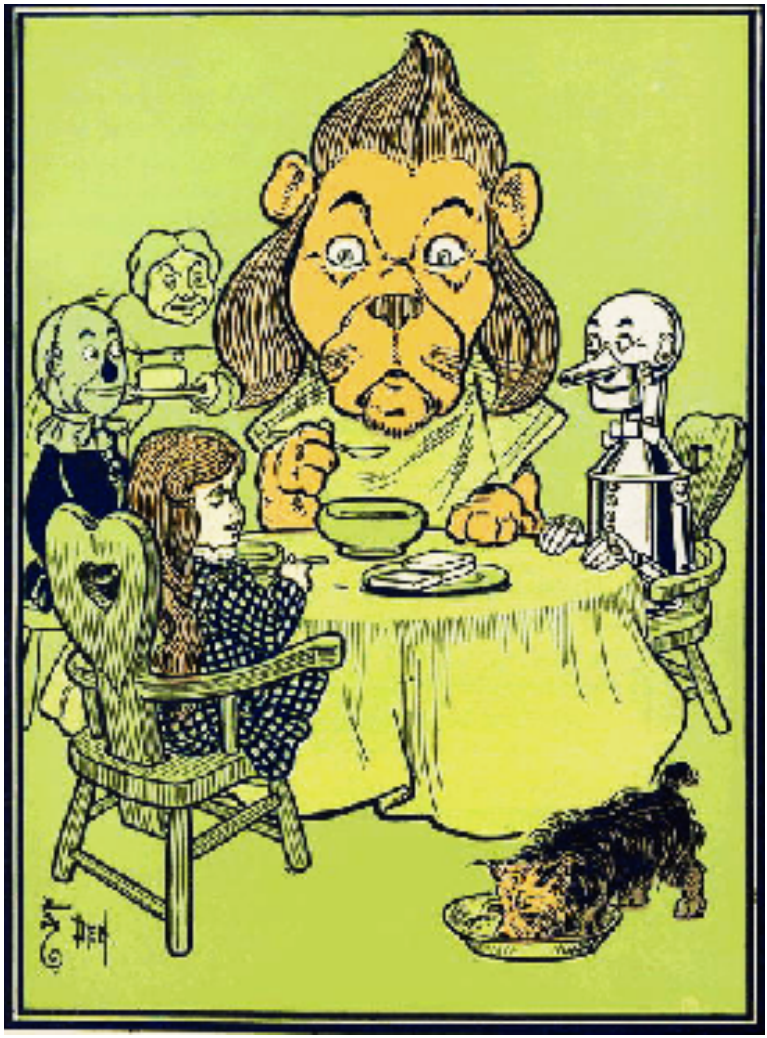
"And I want him to send me back to Kansas," said Dorothy.

"Where is Kansas?" asked the man, with surprise.

"I don't know," replied Dorothy sorrowfully, "but it is my home, and I'm sure it's somewhere."

"Very likely. Well, Oz can do anything; so I suppose he will find Kansas for you. But first you must get to see him, and that will be a hard task; for the Great Wizard does not like to see anyone, and he usually has his own way. But what do YOU want?" he continued, speaking to Toto. Toto only wagged his tail; for, strange to say, he could not speak.

The woman now called to them that supper was ready, so they gathered around the table and Dorothy ate some delicious porridge and a dish of scrambled eggs and a plate of nice white bread, and enjoyed her meal. The Lion ate some of the porridge, but did not care for it, saying it was made from oats and oats were food for horses, not for lions. The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman ate nothing at all. Toto ate a little of everything, and was glad to get a good supper again.



The woman now gave Dorothy a bed to sleep in, and Toto lay down beside her, while the Lion guarded the door of her room so she might not be disturbed. The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman stood up in a corner and kept quiet all night, although of course they could not sleep.

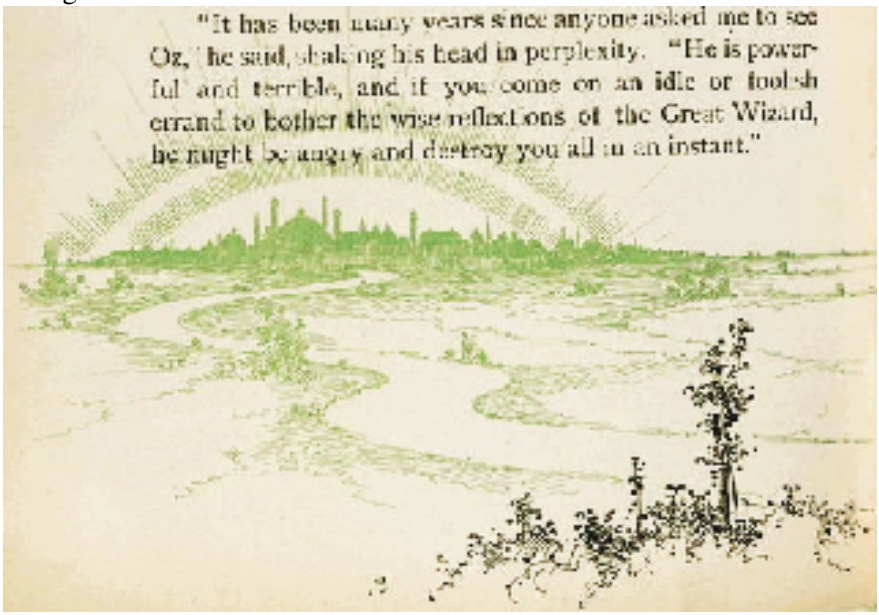
The next morning, as soon as the sun was up, they started on their way, and soon saw a beautiful green glow in the sky just before them.

"That must be the Emerald City," said Dorothy.

As they walked on, the green glow became brighter and brighter, and it seemed that at last they were nearing the end of their travels. Yet it was afternoon before they came to the great wall that surrounded the City. It was high and thick and of a bright green color.

In front of them, and at the end of the road of yellow brick, was a big gate, all studded with emeralds that glittered so in the sun that even the painted eyes of the Scarecrow were dazzled by their brilliancy.

There was a bell beside the gate, and Dorothy pushed the button and heard a silvery tinkle sound within. Then the big gate swung slowly open, and they all passed through and found themselves in a high arched room, the walls of which glistened with countless emeralds.



Before them stood a little man about the same size as the Munchkins. He was clothed all in green, from his head to his feet, and even his skin was of a greenish tint. At his side was a large green box.

When he saw Dorothy and her companions the man asked, “What do you wish in the Emerald City?”

“We came here to see the Great Oz,” said Dorothy.

The man was so surprised at this answer that he sat down to think it over.

“It has been many years since anyone asked me to see Oz,” he said, shaking his head in perplexity. “He is powerful and terrible, and if you come on an idle or foolish errand to bother the wise reflections of the Great Wizard, he might be angry and destroy you all in an instant.”

"But it is not a foolish errand, nor an idle one," replied the Scarecrow; "it is important. And we have been told that Oz is a good Wizard."

"So he is," said the green man, "and he rules the Emerald City wisely and well. But to those who are not honest, or who approach him from curiosity, he is most terrible, and few have ever dared ask to see his face. I am the Guardian of the Gates, and since you demand to see the Great Oz I must take you to his Palace. But first you must put on the spectacles."

"Why?" asked Dorothy.

"Because if you did not wear spectacles the brightness and glory of the Emerald City would blind you. Even those who live in the City must wear spectacles night and day. They are all locked on, for Oz so ordered it when

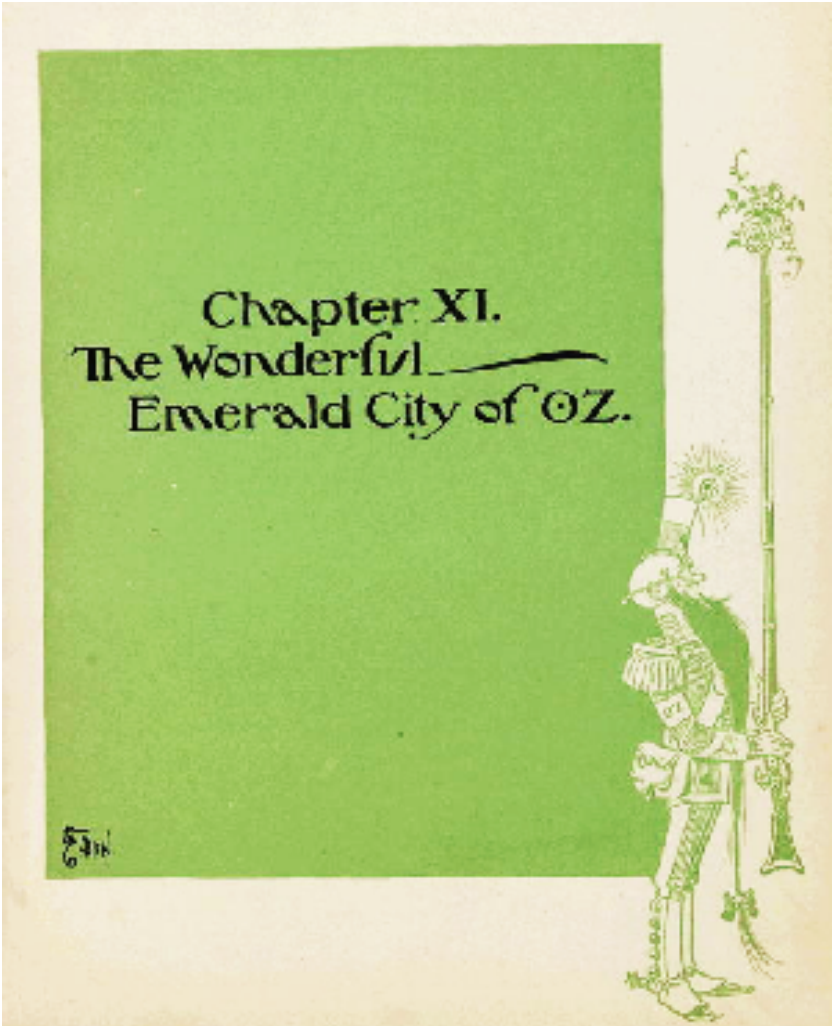
the City was first built, and I have the only key that will unlock them."

He opened the big box, and Dorothy saw that it was filled with spectacles of every size and shape. All of them had green glasses in them. The Guardian of the Gates found a pair that would just fit Dorothy and put them over her eyes. There were two golden bands fastened to them that passed around the back of her head, where they were locked together by a little key that was at the end of a chain the Guardian of the Gates wore around his neck. When they were on, Dorothy could not take them off had she wished, but of course she did not wish to be blinded by the glare of the Emerald City, so she said nothing.

Then the green man fitted spectacles for the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and the Lion, and even on little Toto; and all were locked fast with the key.

Then the Guardian of the Gates put on his own glasses and told them he was ready to show them to the Palace. Taking a big golden key from a peg on the wall, he opened another gate, and they all followed him through the portal into the streets of the Emerald City.

11. The Wonderful City of Oz



Even with eyes protected by the green spectacles, Dorothy and her friends were at first dazzled by the brilliancy of the wonderful City. The streets were lined with beautiful houses all built of green marble and studded everywhere with sparkling emeralds. They walked over a pavement of the same green marble, and where the blocks were joined together were rows of emeralds, set closely, and glittering in the brightness of the sun. The window panes were of green glass; even the sky above the City had a green tint, and the rays of the sun were green.

There were many people--men, women, and children--walking about, and these were all dressed in green clothes and had greenish skins. They looked at Dorothy and her strangely assorted company with wondering eyes, and the

children all ran away and hid behind their mothers when they saw the Lion; but no one spoke to them. Many shops stood in the street, and Dorothy saw that everything in them was green. Green candy and green pop corn were offered for sale, as well as green shoes, green hats, and green clothes of all sorts. At one place a man was selling green lemonade, and when the children bought it Dorothy could see that they paid for it with green pennies.

There seemed to be no horses nor animals of any kind; the men carried things around in little green carts, which they pushed before them. Everyone seemed happy and contented and prosperous.

The Guardian of the Gates led them through the streets until they came to a big building, exactly in the middle of the City, which was the Palace of Oz, the Great Wizard. There was a soldier before the door, dressed in a green uniform and wearing a long green beard.

"Here are strangers," said the Guardian of the Gates to him, "and they demand to see the Great Oz."

"Step inside," answered the soldier, "and I will carry your message to him."

So they passed through the Palace Gates and were led into a big room with a green carpet and lovely green furniture set with emeralds. The soldier made them all wipe their feet upon a green mat before entering this room, and when they were seated he said politely:

"Please make yourselves comfortable while I go to the door of the Throne Room and tell Oz you are here."

They had to wait a long time before the soldier returned. When, at last, he came back, Dorothy asked:

"Have you seen Oz?"

"Oh, no," returned the soldier; "I have never seen him. But I spoke to him as he sat behind his screen and gave him your message. He said he will grant you an audience, if you so desire; but each one of you must enter his presence alone, and he will admit but one each day. Therefore, as you must remain in the Palace for several days, I will have you shown to rooms where you may rest in comfort after your journey."

"Thank you," replied the girl; "that is very kind of Oz."

The soldier now blew upon a green whistle, and at once a young girl, dressed in a pretty green silk gown, entered the room. She had lovely green hair and green eyes, and she bowed low before Dorothy as she said, "Follow me and I will show you your room."

THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ 151

wipe their feet upon a green mat before entering this room, and when they were seated he said politely,

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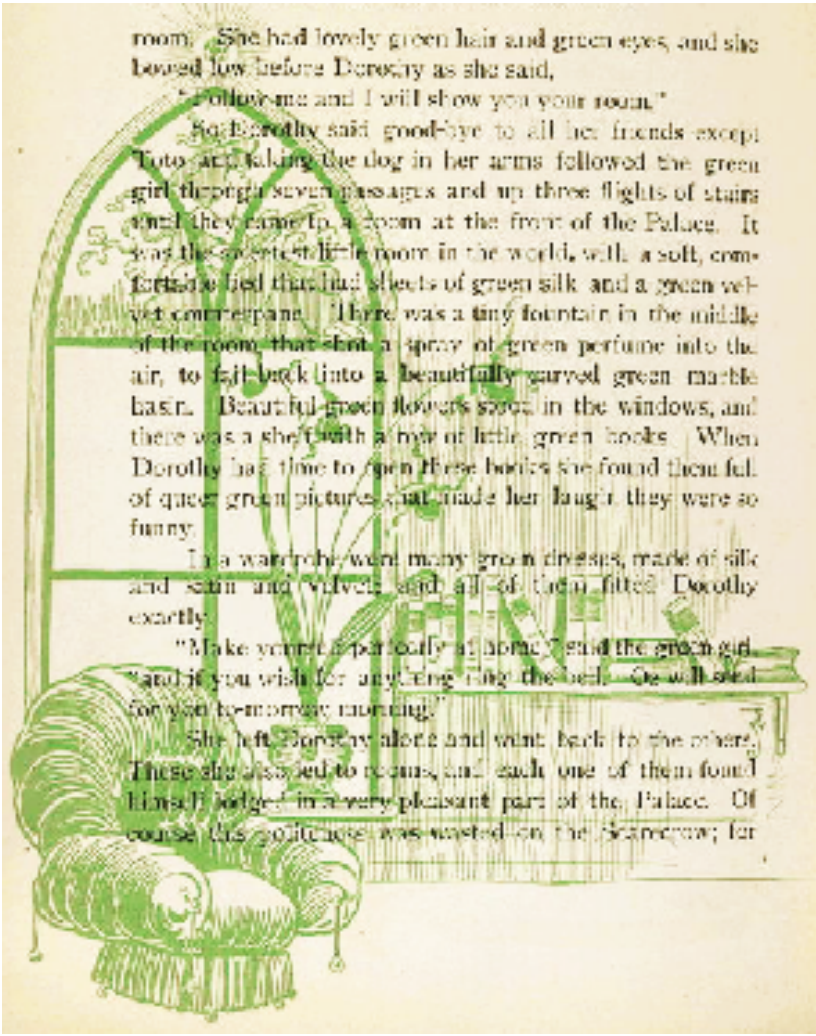
So Dorothy said good-bye to all her friends except Toto, and taking the dog in her arms followed the green girl through seven passages and up three flights of stairs until they came to a room at the front of the Palace. It was the sweetest little room in the world, with a soft comfortable bed that had sheets of green silk and a green velvet counterpane. There was a tiny fountain in the middle of the room, that shot a spray of green perfume into the air, to fall back into a beautifully carved green marble basin. Beautiful green flowers stood in the windows, and there was a shelf with a row of little green books. When Dorothy had time to open these books she found them full of queer green pictures that made her laugh, they were so funny.



In a wardrobe were many green dresses, made of silk and satin and velvet; and all of them fitted Dorothy exactly.

"Make yourself perfectly at home," said the green girl, "and if you wish for anything ring the bell. Oz will send for you tomorrow morning."

She left Dorothy alone and went back to the others. These she also led to rooms, and each one of them found himself lodged in a very pleasant part of the Palace. Of course this politeness was wasted on the Scarecrow; for when he found himself alone in his room he stood stupidly in one spot, just within the doorway, to wait till morning. It would not rest him to lie down, and he could not close his eyes; so he remained all night staring at a little spider which was weaving its web in a corner of the room, just as if it were not one

of the most wonderful rooms in the world. The Tin Woodman lay down on his bed from force of habit, for he remembered when he was made of flesh; but not being able to sleep, he passed the night moving his joints up and down to make sure they kept in good working order. The Lion would have preferred a bed of dried leaves in the forest, and did not like being shut up in a room; but he had too much sense to let this worry him, so he sprang upon the bed and rolled himself up like a cat and purred himself asleep in a minute.

The next morning, after breakfast, the green maiden came to fetch Dorothy, and she dressed her in one of the prettiest gowns, made of green brocaded satin. Dorothy put on a green silk apron and tied a green ribbon around Toto's neck, and they started for the Throne Room of the Great Oz.

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First they came to a great hall in which were many ladies and gentlemen of the court, all dressed in rich costumes. These people had nothing to do but talk to each other, but they always came to

First they came to a great hall in which were many ladies and gentlemen of the court, all dressed in rich costumes. These people had nothing to do but talk to each other, but they always came to wait outside the Throne Room every morning, although they were never permitted to see Oz. As Dorothy entered they looked at her curiously, and one of them whispered:

"Are you really going to look upon the face of Oz the Terrible?"

"Of course," answered the girl, "if he will see me."

"Oh, he will see you," said the soldier who had taken her message to the Wizard, "although he does not like to have people ask to see him. Indeed, at first he was angry and said I should send you back where you came from. Then he asked me what you looked like, and when I mentioned your silver

shoes he was very much interested. At last I told him about the mark upon your forehead, and he decided he would admit you to his presence."

Just then a bell rang, and the green girl said to Dorothy, "That is the signal. You must go into the Throne Room alone."

She opened a little door and Dorothy walked boldly through and found herself in a wonderful place. It was a big, round room with a high arched roof, and the walls and ceiling and floor were covered with large emeralds set closely together. In the center of the roof was a great light, as bright as the sun, which made the emeralds sparkle in a wonderful manner.

But what interested Dorothy most was the big throne of green marble that stood in the middle of the room. It was shaped like a chair and sparkled with

gems, as did everything else. In the center of the chair was an enormous Head, without a body to support it or any arms or legs whatever. There was no hair upon this head, but it had eyes and a nose and mouth, and was much bigger than the head of the biggest giant.

As Dorothy gazed upon this in wonder and fear, the eyes turned slowly and looked at her sharply and steadily. Then the mouth moved, and Dorothy heard a voice say:

"I am Oz, the Great and Terrible. Who are you, and why do you seek me?"

It was not such an awful voice as she had expected to come from the big Head; so she took courage and answered:

"I am Dorothy, the Small and Meek. I have come to you for help."

The eyes looked at her thoughtfully for a full minute. Then said the voice:

"Where did you get the silver shoes?"

"I got them from the Wicked Witch of the East, when my house fell on her and killed her," she replied.

"Where did you get the mark upon your forehead?" continued the voice.

"That is where the Good Witch of the North kissed me when she bade me good-bye and sent me to you," said the girl.

Again the eyes looked at her sharply, and they saw she was telling the truth. Then Oz asked, "What do you wish me to do?"

"Send me back to Kansas, where my Aunt Em and Uncle Henry are," she answered earnestly. "I don't like your country, although it is so beautiful. And I am sure Aunt Em will be dreadfully worried over my being away so long."

The eyes winked three times, and then they turned up to the ceiling and down to the floor and rolled around so queerly that they seemed to see every part of the room. And at last they looked at Dorothy again.

"Why should I do this for you?" asked Oz.

"Because you are strong and I am weak; because you are a Great Wizard and I am only a little girl."

"But you were strong enough to kill the Wicked Witch of the East," said Oz.

"That just happened," returned Dorothy simply; "I could not help it."

"Well," said the Head, "I will give you my answer. You have no right to expect me to send you back to Kansas unless you do something for me in return. In this country everyone must pay for everything he gets. If you wish me to use my magic power to send you home again you must do something for me first. Help me and I will help you."

"What must I do?" asked the girl.

"Kill the Wicked Witch of the West," answered Oz.

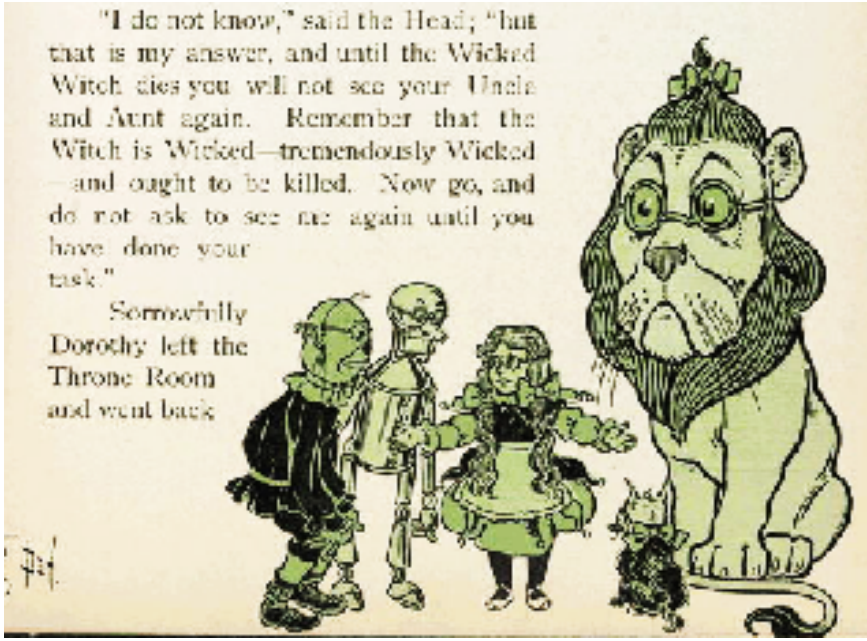
"But I cannot!" exclaimed Dorothy, greatly surprised.

"You killed the Witch of the East and you wear the silver shoes, which bear a powerful charm. There is now but one Wicked Witch left in all this land, and when you can tell me she is dead I will send you back to Kansas--but not before."

The little girl began to weep, she was so much disappointed; and the eyes winked again and looked upon her anxiously, as if the Great Oz felt that she could help him if she would.

"I never killed anything, willingly," she sobbed. "Even if I wanted to, how could I kill the Wicked Witch? If you, who are Great and Terrible, cannot kill her yourself, how do you expect me to do it?"

"I do not know," said the Head; "but that is my answer, and until the Wicked Witch dies you will not see your uncle and aunt again. Remember that the Witch is Wicked--tremendously Wicked--and ought to be killed. Now go, and do not ask to see me again until you have done your task."

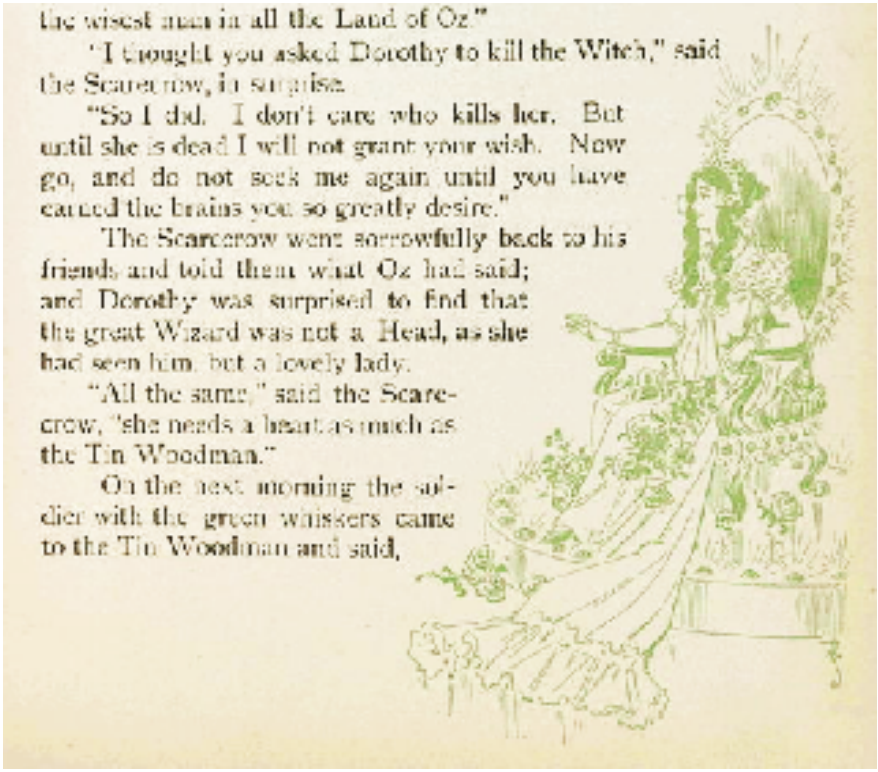


Sorrowfully Dorothy left the Throne Room and went back where the Lion and the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman were waiting to hear what Oz had said to her. "There is no hope for me," she said sadly, "for Oz will not send me home until I have killed the Wicked Witch of the West; and that I can never do."

Her friends were sorry, but could do nothing to help her; so Dorothy went

to her own room and lay down on the bed and cried herself to sleep.

The next morning the soldier with the green whiskers came to the Scarecrow and said:



the wisest man in all the Land of Oz."

"I thought you asked Dorothy to kill the Witch," said the Scarecrow, in surprise.

"So I did. I don't care who kills her. But until she is dead I will not grant your wish. Now go, and do not seek me again until you have earned the brains you so greatly desire."

The Scarecrow went sorrowfully back to his friends and told them what Oz had said; and Dorothy was surprised to find that the great Wizard was not a Head, as she had seen him, but a lovely lady.

"All the same," said the Scarecrow, "she needs a heart as much as the Tin Woodman."

On the next morning the soldier with the green whiskers came to the Tin Woodman and said,

"Come with me, for Oz has sent for you."

So the Scarecrow followed him and was admitted into the great Throne Room, where he saw, sitting in the emerald throne, a most lovely Lady. She was dressed in green silk gauze and wore upon her flowing green locks a crown of jewels. Growing from her shoulders were wings, gorgeous in color and so light that they fluttered if the slightest breath of air reached them.

When the Scarecrow had bowed, as prettily as his straw stuffing would let him, before this beautiful creature, she looked upon him sweetly, and said:

"I am Oz, the Great and Terrible. Who are you, and why do you seek me?"

Now the Scarecrow, who had expected to see the great Head Dorothy had told him of, was much astonished; but he answered her bravely.

"I am only a Scarecrow, stuffed with straw. Therefore I have no brains, and I come to you praying that you will put brains in my head instead of straw, so that I may become as much a man as any other in your dominions."

“Why should I do this for you?” asked the Lady.

“Because you are wise and powerful, and no one else can help me,” answered the Scarecrow.

“I never grant favors without some return,” said Oz; “but this much I will promise. If you will kill for me the Wicked Witch of the West, I will bestow upon you a great many brains, and such good brains that you will be the wisest man in all the Land of Oz.”

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“So I did. I don’t care who kills her. But until she is dead I will not grant your wish. Now go, and do not seek me again until you have earned the brains you so greatly desire.”

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“Oz has sent for you. Follow me.”

So the Tin Woodman followed him and came to the great Throne Room. He did not know whether he would find Oz a lovely Lady or a Head, but he hoped it would be the lovely Lady. “For,” he said to himself, “if it is the head, I am sure I shall not be given a heart, since a head has no heart of its own and therefore cannot feel for me. But if it is the lovely Lady I shall beg hard for a heart, for all ladies are themselves said to be kindly hearted.”

But when the Woodman entered the great Throne Room he saw neither the Head nor the Lady, for Oz had taken the shape of a most terrible Beast. It was nearly as big as an elephant, and the green throne seemed hardly strong enough to hold its weight. The Beast had a head like that of a rhinoceros, only there were five eyes in its face. There were five long arms growing out of its body, and it also had five long, slim legs. Thick, woolly hair covered every part of it, and a more dreadful-looking monster could not be imagined. It was fortunate the Tin Woodman had no heart at that moment, for it would have beat loud and fast from terror. But being only tin, the Woodman was not at all afraid, although he was much disappointed.

“I am Oz, the Great and Terrible,” spoke the Beast, in a voice that was one great roar. “Who are you, and why do you seek me?”

“I am a Woodman, and made of tin. Therefore I have no heart, and cannot love. I pray you to give me a heart that I may be as other men are.”

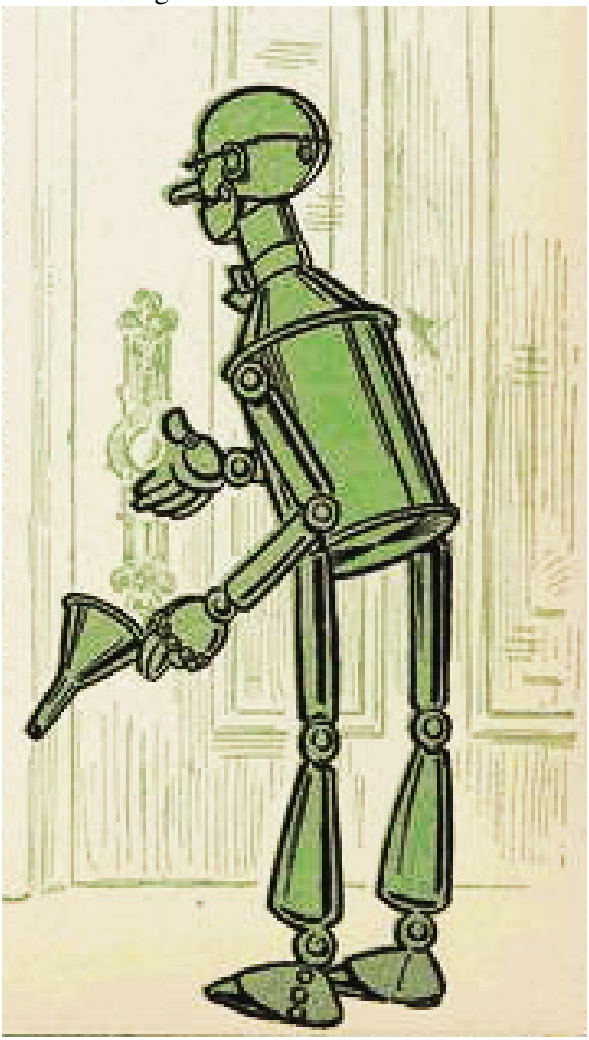
“Why should I do this?” demanded the Beast.

“Because I ask it, and you alone can grant my request,” answered the Woodman.

Oz gave a low growl at this, but said, gruffly: “If you indeed desire a heart, you must earn it.”

“How?” asked the Woodman.

“Help Dorothy to kill the Wicked Witch of the West,” replied the Beast. “When the Witch is dead, come to me, and I will then give you the biggest and kindest and most loving heart in all the Land of Oz.”

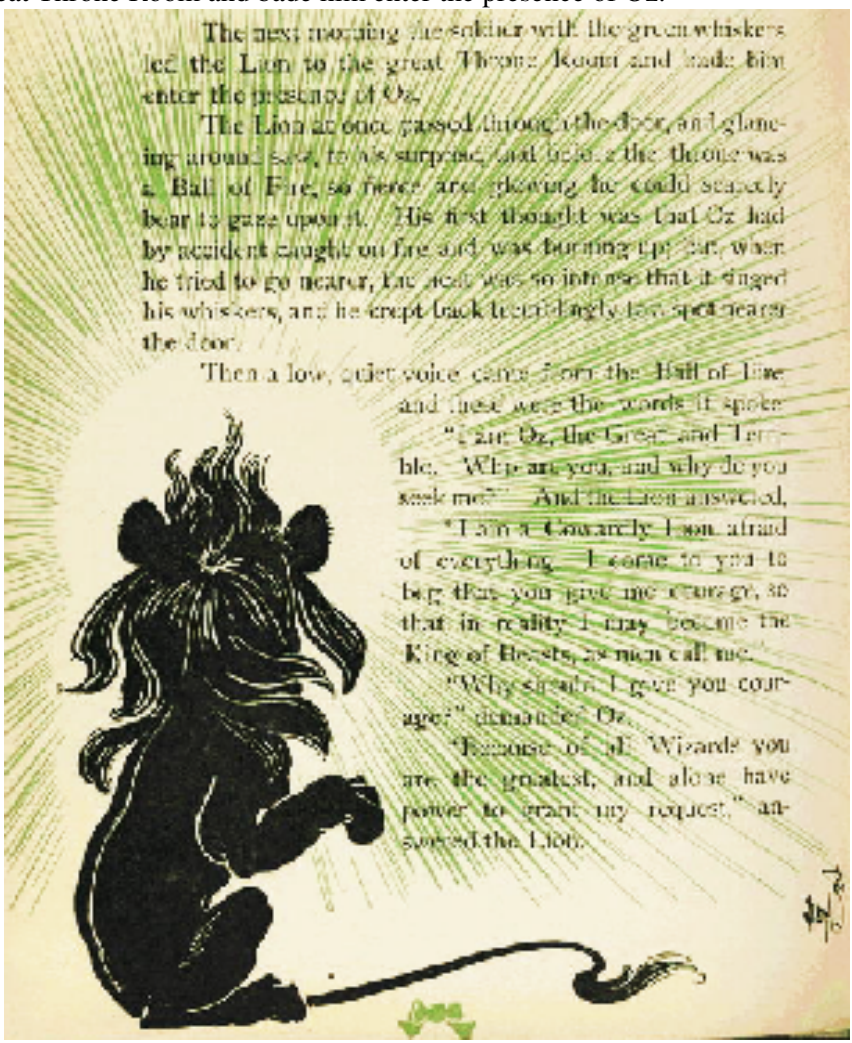


So the Tin Woodman was forced to return sorrowfully to his friends and tell them of the terrible Beast he had seen. They all wondered greatly at the many

forms the Great Wizard could take upon himself, and the Lion said:

"If he is a Beast when I go to see him, I shall roar my loudest, and so frighten him that he will grant all I ask. And if he is the lovely Lady, I shall pretend to spring upon her, and so compel her to do my bidding. And if he is the great Head, he will be at my mercy; for I will roll this head all about the room until he promises to give us what we desire. So be of good cheer, my friends, for all will yet be well."

The next morning the soldier with the green whiskers led the Lion to the great Throne Room and bade him enter the presence of Oz.



The Lion at once passed through the door, and glancing around saw, to his surprise, that before the throne was a Ball of Fire, so fierce and glowing he

could scarcely bear to gaze upon it. His first thought was that Oz had by accident caught on fire and was burning up; but when he tried to go nearer, the heat was so intense that it singed his whiskers, and he crept back tremblingly to a spot nearer the door.

Then a low, quiet voice came from the Ball of Fire, and these were the words it spoke:

"I am Oz, the Great and Terrible. Who are you, and why do you seek me?"

And the Lion answered, "I am a Cowardly Lion, afraid of everything. I came to you to beg that you give me courage, so that in reality I may become the King of Beasts, as men call me."

"Why should I give you courage?" demanded Oz.

"Because of all Wizards you are the greatest, and alone have power to grant my request," answered the Lion.

The Ball of Fire burned fiercely for a time, and the voice said, "Bring me proof that the Wicked Witch is dead, and that moment I will give you courage. But as long as the Witch lives, you must remain a coward."

The Lion was angry at this speech, but could say nothing in reply, and while he stood silently gazing at the Ball of Fire it became so furiously hot that he turned tail and rushed from the room. He was glad to find his friends waiting for him, and told them of his terrible interview with the Wizard.

"What shall we do now?" asked Dorothy sadly.

"There is only one thing we can do," returned the Lion, "and that is to go to the land of the Winkies, seek out the Wicked Witch, and destroy her."

"But suppose we cannot?" said the girl.

"Then I shall never have courage," declared the Lion.

"And I shall never have brains," added the Scarecrow.

"And I shall never have a heart," spoke the Tin Woodman.

"And I shall never see Aunt Em and Uncle Henry," said Dorothy, beginning to cry.

"Be careful!" cried the green girl. "The tears will fall on your green silk gown and spot it."

So Dorothy dried her eyes and said, "I suppose we must try it; but I am sure I do not want to kill anybody, even to see Aunt Em again."

"I will go with you; but I'm too much of a coward to kill the Witch," said the Lion.

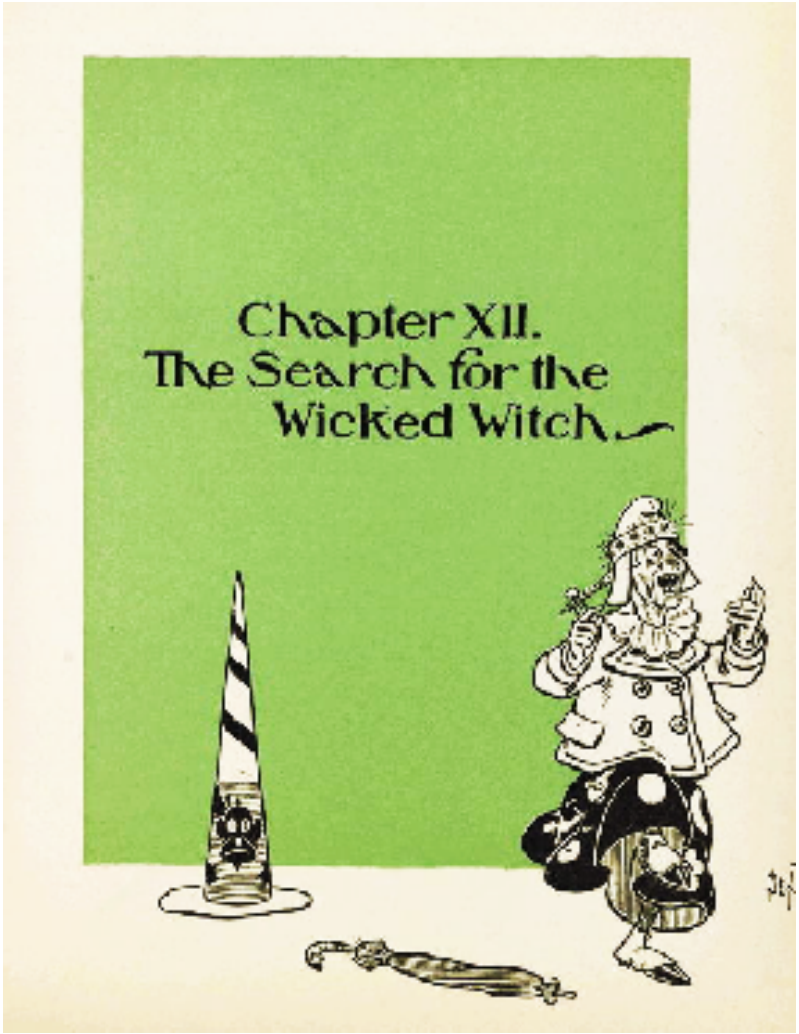
"I will go too," declared the Scarecrow; "but I shall not be of much help to you, I am such a fool."

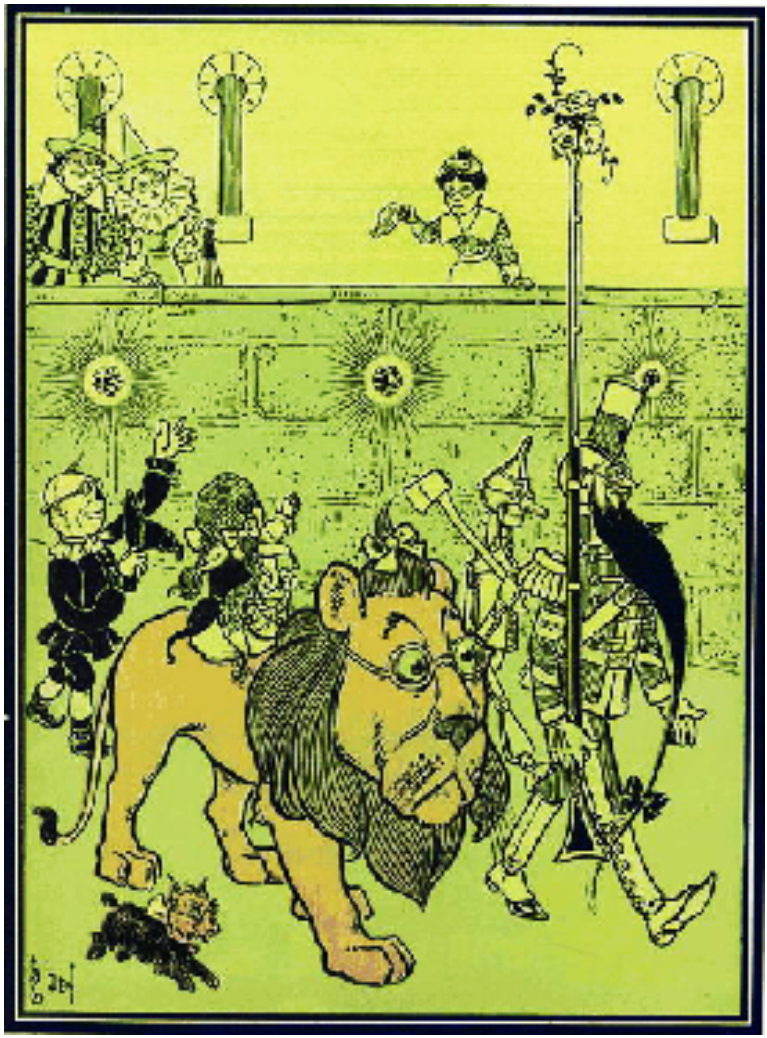
"I haven't the heart to harm even a Witch," remarked the Tin Woodman; "but if you go I certainly shall go with you."

Therefore it was decided to start upon their journey the next morning, and the Woodman sharpened his axe on a green grindstone and had all his joints properly oiled. The Scarecrow stuffed himself with fresh straw and Dorothy put new paint on his eyes that he might see better. The green girl, who was very kind to them, filled Dorothy's basket with good things to eat, and fastened a little bell around Toto's neck with a green ribbon.

They went to bed quite early and slept soundly until daylight, when they were awakened by the crowing of a green cock that lived in the back yard of the Palace, and the cackling of a hen that had laid a green egg.

12. The Search for the Wicked Witch





The SOLDIER WITH THE green whiskers led them through the streets of the Emerald City until they reached the room where the Guardian of the Gates lived. This officer unlocked their spectacles to put them back in his great box, and then he politely opened the gate for our friends.

"Which road leads to the Wicked Witch of the West?" asked Dorothy.

"There is no road," answered the Guardian of the Gates; "no one ever wishes to go that way."

"How, then, are we to find her?" enquired the girl.

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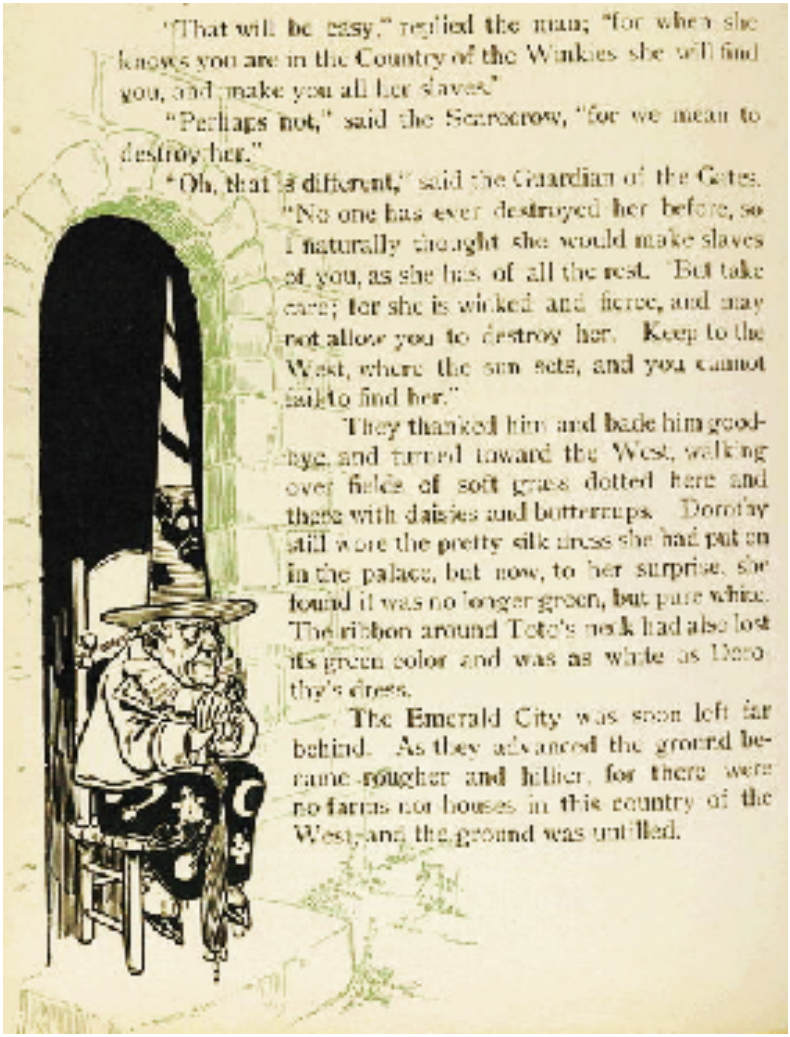
"That will be easy," replied the man; "for when she knows you are in the Country of the Winkies she will find you, and make you all her slaves."

"Perhaps not," said the Scarecrow, "for we mean to destroy her."

"Oh, that is different," said the Guardian of the Gates. "No one has ever destroyed her before, so I naturally thought she would make slaves of you, as she has of all the rest. But take care; for she is wicked and fierce, and may not allow you to destroy her. Keep to the West, where the sun sets, and you cannot fail to find her."

They thanked him and bade him good-bye, and turned toward the West, walking over fields of soft grass dotted here and there with daisies and buttercups. Dorothy still wore the pretty silk dress she had put on in the palace, but now, to her surprise, she found it was no longer green, but pure white. The ribbon around Toto's neck had also lost its green color and was as white as Dorothy's dress.

The Emerald City was soon left far behind. As they advanced the ground became rougher and hillier, for there were no farms nor houses in this country of the West, and the ground was untilled.

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In the afternoon the sun shone hot in their faces, for there were no trees to offer them shade; so that before night Dorothy and Toto and the Lion were tired, and lay down upon the grass and fell asleep, with the Woodman and the Scarecrow keeping watch.

Now the Wicked Witch of the West had but one eye, yet that was as powerful as a telescope, and could see everywhere. So, as she sat in the door of her castle, she happened to look around and saw Dorothy lying asleep, with her friends all about her. They were a long distance off, but the Wicked Witch was angry to find them in her country; so she blew upon a silver whistle that hung around her neck.

At once there came running to her from all directions a pack of great wolves. They had long legs and fierce eyes and sharp teeth.

"Go to those people," said the Witch, "and tear them to pieces."

"Are you not going to make them your slaves?" asked the leader of the wolves.

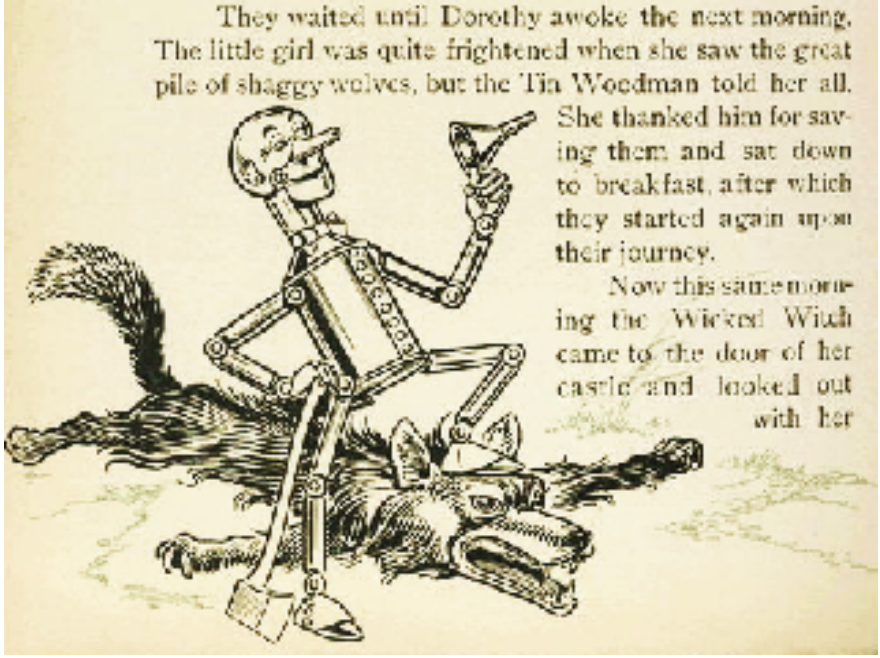
"No," she answered, "one is of tin, and one of straw; one is a girl and another a Lion. None of them is fit to work, so you may tear them into small pieces."

"Very well," said the wolf, and he dashed away at full speed, followed by the others.

It was lucky the Scarecrow and the Woodman were wide awake and heard the wolves coming.

"This is my fight," said the Woodman, "so get behind me and I will meet them as they come."

He seized his axe, which he had made very sharp, and as the leader of the wolves came on the Tin Woodman swung his arm and chopped the wolf's head from its body, so that it immediately died. As soon as he could raise his axe another wolf came up, and he also fell under the sharp edge of the Tin Woodman's weapon. There were forty wolves, and forty times a wolf was killed, so that at last they all lay dead in a heap before the Woodman.



Then he put down his axe and sat beside the Scarecrow, who said, “It was a good fight, friend.”

They waited until Dorothy awoke the next morning. The little girl was quite frightened when she saw the great pile of shaggy wolves, but the Tin Woodman told her all. She thanked him for saving them and sat down to breakfast, after which they started again upon their journey.

Now this same morning the Wicked Witch came to the door of her castle and looked out with her one eye that could see far off. She saw all her wolves lying dead, and the strangers still traveling through her country. This made her angrier than before, and she blew her silver whistle twice.

Straightway a great flock of wild crows came flying toward her, enough to darken the sky.

And the Wicked Witch said to the King Crow, “Fly at once to the strangers; peck out their eyes and tear them to pieces.”

The wild crows flew in one great flock toward Dorothy and her companions. When the little girl saw them coming she was afraid.

But the Scarecrow said, “This is my battle, so lie down beside me and you will not be harmed.”

So they all lay upon the ground except the Scarecrow, and he stood up and stretched out his arms. And when the crows saw him they were frightened, as these birds always are by scarecrows, and did not dare to come any nearer.

But the King Crow said:

"It is only a stuffed man. I will peck his eyes out."

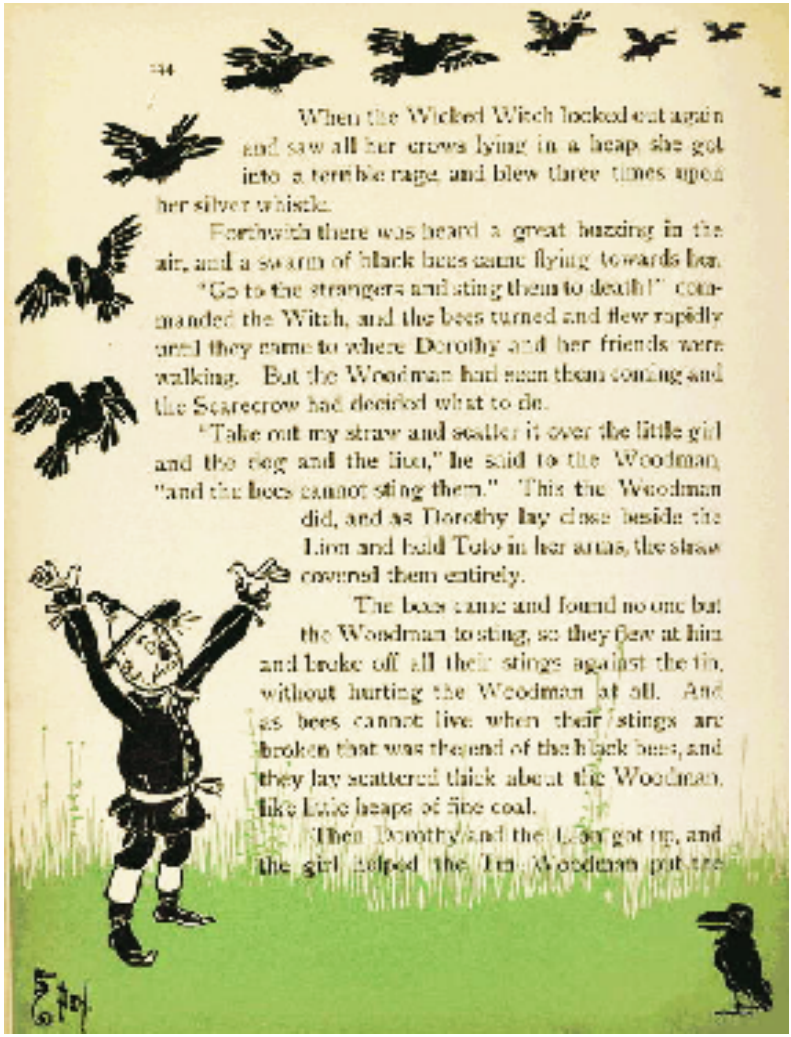
The King Crow flew at the Scarecrow, who caught it by the head and twisted its neck until it died. And then another crow flew at him, and the Scarecrow twisted its neck also. There were forty crows, and forty times the Scarecrow twisted a neck, until at last all were lying dead beside him. Then he called to his companions to rise, and again they went upon their journey.

When the Wicked Witch looked out again and saw all her crows lying in a heap, she got into a terrible rage, and blew three times upon her silver whistle.

Forthwith there was heard a great buzzing in the air, and a swarm of black bees came flying toward her.

"Go to the strangers and sting them to death!" commanded the Witch, and the bees turned and flew rapidly until they came to where Dorothy and her friends were walking. But the Woodman had seen them coming, and the Scarecrow had decided what to do.

"Take out my straw and scatter it over the little girl and the dog and the Lion," he said to the Woodman, "and the bees cannot sting them." This the Woodman did, and as Dorothy lay close beside the Lion and held Toto in her arms, the straw covered them entirely.



The bees came and found no one but the Woodman to sting, so they flew at him and broke off all their stings against the tin, without hurting the Woodman at all. And as bees cannot live when their stings are broken that was the end of the black bees, and they lay scattered thick about the Woodman, like little heaps of fine coal.

Then Dorothy and the Lion got up, and the girl helped the Tin Woodman put the straw back into the Scarecrow again, until he was as good as ever. So they started upon their journey once more.

The Wicked Witch was so angry when she saw her black bees in little heaps like fine coal that she stamped her foot and tore her hair and gnashed her teeth. And then she called a dozen of her slaves, who were the Winkies,

and gave them sharp spears, telling them to go to the strangers and destroy them.

The Winkies were not a brave people, but they had to do as they were told. So they marched away until they came near to Dorothy. Then the Lion gave a great roar and sprang towards them, and the poor Winkies were so frightened that they ran back as fast as they could.

When they returned to the castle the Wicked Witch beat them well with a strap, and sent them back to their work, after which she sat down to think what she should do next. She could not understand how all her plans to destroy these strangers had failed; but she was a powerful Witch, as well as a wicked one, and she soon made up her mind how to act.

There was, in her cupboard, a Golden Cap, with a circle of diamonds and rubies running round it. This Golden Cap had a charm. Whoever owned it could call three times upon the Winged Monkeys, who would obey any order they were given. But no person could command these strange creatures more than three times. Twice already the Wicked Witch had used the charm of the Cap. Once was when she had made the Winkies her slaves, and set herself to rule over their country. The Winged Monkeys had helped her do this. The second time was when she had fought against the Great Oz himself, and driven him out of the land of the West. The Winged Monkeys had also helped her in doing this. Only once more could she use this Golden Cap, for which reason she did not like to do so until all her other powers were exhausted. But now that her fierce wolves and her wild crows and her stinging bees were gone, and her slaves had been scared away by the Cowardly Lion, she saw there was only one way left to destroy Dorothy and her friends.

So the Wicked Witch took the Golden Cap from her cupboard and placed it upon her head. Then she stood upon her left foot and said slowly:

"Ep-pe, pep-pe, kak-ke!"

Next she stood upon her right foot and said:

"Hil-lo, hol-lo, hel-lo!"

After this she stood upon both feet and cried in a loud voice:

"Ziz-zy, zuz-zy, zik!"

Now the charm began to work. The sky was darkened, and a low rumbling sound was heard in the air. There was a rushing of many wings, a great chattering and laughing, and the sun came out of the dark sky to show the Wicked Witch surrounded by a crowd of monkeys, each with a pair of immense and powerful wings on his shoulders.

One, much bigger than the others, seemed to be their leader. He flew close to the Witch and said, "You have called us for the third and last time. What do you command?"

"Go to the strangers who are within my land and destroy them all except the Lion," said the Wicked Witch. "Bring that beast to me, for I have a mind to harness him like a horse, and make him work."

“Your commands shall be obeyed,” said the leader. Then, with a great deal of chattering and noise, the Winged Monkeys flew away to the place where Dorothy and her friends were walking.

Some of the Monkeys seized the Tin Woodman and carried him through the air until they were over a country thickly covered with sharp rocks. Here they dropped the poor Woodman, who fell a great distance to the rocks, where he lay so battered and dented that he could neither move nor groan.

Others of the Monkeys caught the Scarecrow, and with their long fingers pulled all of the straw out of his clothes and head. They made his hat and boots and clothes into a small bundle and threw it into the top branches of a tall tree.

The remaining Monkeys threw pieces of stout rope around the Lion and wound many coils about his body and head and legs, until he was unable to bite or scratch or struggle in any way. Then they lifted him up and flew away with him to the Witch’s castle, where he was placed in a small yard with a high iron fence around it, so that he could not escape.

But Dorothy they did not harm at all. She stood, with Toto in her arms, watching the sad fate of her comrades and thinking it would soon be her turn. The leader of the Winged Monkeys flew up to her, his long, hairy arms stretched out and his ugly face grinning terribly; but he saw the mark of the Good Witch’s kiss upon her forehead and stopped short, motioning the others not to touch her.

“We dare not harm this little girl,” he said to them, “for she is protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil. All we can do is to carry her to the castle of the Wicked Witch and leave her there.”

So, carefully and gently, they lifted Dorothy in their arms and carried her

swiftly through the air until they came to the castle, where they set her down upon the front doorstep. Then the leader said to the Witch:

"We have obeyed you as far as we were able. The Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow are destroyed, and the Lion is tied up in your yard. The little girl we dare not harm, nor the dog she carries in her arms. Your power over our band is now ended, and you will never see us again."

Then all the Winged Monkeys, with much laughing and chattering and noise, flew into the air and were soon out of sight.

The Wicked Witch was both surprised and worried when she saw the mark on Dorothy's forehead, for she knew well that neither the Winged Monkeys nor she, herself, dare hurt the girl in any way. She looked down at Dorothy's feet, and seeing the Silver Shoes, began to tremble with fear, for she knew what a powerful charm belonged to them. At first the Witch was tempted to run away from Dorothy; but she happened to look into the child's eyes and saw how simple the soul behind them was, and that the little girl did not know of the wonderful power the Silver Shoes gave her. So the Wicked Witch laughed to herself, and thought, "I can still make her my slave, for she does not know how to use her power." Then she said to Dorothy, harshly and severely:

"Come with me; and see that you mind everything I tell you, for if you do not I will make an end of you, as I did of the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow."

Dorothy followed her through many of the beautiful rooms in her castle until they came to the kitchen, where the Witch bade her clean the pots and kettles and sweep the floor and keep the fire fed with wood.

Dorothy went to work meekly, with her mind made up to work as hard as

she could; for she was glad the Wicked Witch had decided not to kill her.

With Dorothy hard at work, the Witch thought she would go into the courtyard and harness the Cowardly Lion like a horse; it would amuse her, she was sure, to make him draw her chariot whenever she wished to go to drive. But as she opened the gate the Lion gave a loud roar and bounded at her so fiercely that the Witch was afraid, and ran out and shut the gate again.

"If I cannot harness you," said the Witch to the Lion, speaking through the bars of the gate, "I can starve you. You shall have nothing to eat until you do as I wish."

So after that she took no food to the imprisoned Lion; but every day she came to the gate at noon and asked, "Are you ready to be harnessed like a

horse?”

And the Lion would answer, “No. If you come in this yard, I will bite you.”

The reason the Lion did not have to do as the Witch wished was that every night, while the woman was asleep, Dorothy carried him food from the cupboard. After he had eaten he would lie down on his bed of straw, and Dorothy would lie beside him and put her head on his soft, shaggy mane, while they talked of their troubles and tried to plan some way to escape. But they could find no way to get out of the castle, for it was constantly guarded by the yellow Winkies, who were the slaves of the Wicked Witch and too afraid of her not to do as she told them.

The girl had to work hard during the day, and often the Witch threatened to beat her with the same old umbrella she always carried in her hand. But, in truth, she did not dare to strike Dorothy, because of the mark upon her forehead. The child did not know this, and was full of fear for herself and Toto. Once the Witch struck Toto a blow with her umbrella and the brave little dog flew at her and bit her leg in return. The Witch did not bleed where she was bitten, for she was so wicked that the blood in her had dried up many years before.

Dorothy’s life became very sad as she grew to understand that it would be harder than ever to get back to Kansas and Aunt Em again. Sometimes she would cry bitterly for hours, with Toto sitting at her feet and looking into her face, whining dismally to show how sorry he was for his little mistress. Toto did not really care whether he was in Kansas or the Land of Oz so long as Dorothy was with him; but he knew the little girl was unhappy, and that made him unhappy too.

Now the Wicked Witch had a great longing to have for her own the Silver Shoes which the girl always wore. Her bees and her crows and her wolves were lying in heaps and drying up, and she had used up all the power of the Golden Cap; but if she could only get hold of the Silver Shoes, they would give her more power than all the other things she had lost. She watched Dorothy carefully, to see if she ever took off her shoes, thinking she might steal them. But the child was so proud of her pretty shoes that she never took them off except at night and when she took her bath. The Witch was too much afraid of the dark to dare go in Dorothy’s room at night to take the shoes, and her dread of water was greater than her fear of the dark, so she never came near when Dorothy was bathing. Indeed, the old Witch never touched water, nor ever let water touch her in any way.

But the wicked creature was very cunning, and she finally thought of a trick that would give her what she wanted. She placed a bar of iron in the middle of the kitchen floor, and then by her magic arts made the iron invisible to human eyes. So that when Dorothy walked across the floor she stumbled over the bar, not being able to see it, and fell at full length. She was not much hurt, but in her fall one of the Silver Shoes came off; and before she could reach it, the Witch had snatched it away and put it on her own skinny foot.

The wicked woman was greatly pleased with the success of her trick, for as long as she had one of the shoes she owned half the power of their charm, and Dorothy could not use it against her, even had she known how to do so.

The little girl, seeing she had lost one of her pretty shoes, grew angry, and said to the Witch, “Give me back my shoe!”

“I will not,” retorted the Witch, “for it is now my shoe, and not yours.”

“You are a wicked creature!” cried Dorothy. “You have no right to take my shoe from me.”

“I shall keep it, just the same,” said the Witch, laughing at her, “and someday I shall get the other one from you, too.”

This made Dorothy so very angry that she picked up the bucket of water that stood near and dashed it over the Witch, wetting her from head to foot.

Instantly the wicked woman gave a loud cry of fear, and then, as Dorothy looked at her in wonder, the Witch began to shrink and fall away.

“See what you have done!” she screamed. “In a minute I shall melt away.”

“I’m very sorry, indeed,” said Dorothy, who was truly frightened to see the Witch actually melting away like brown sugar before her very eyes.

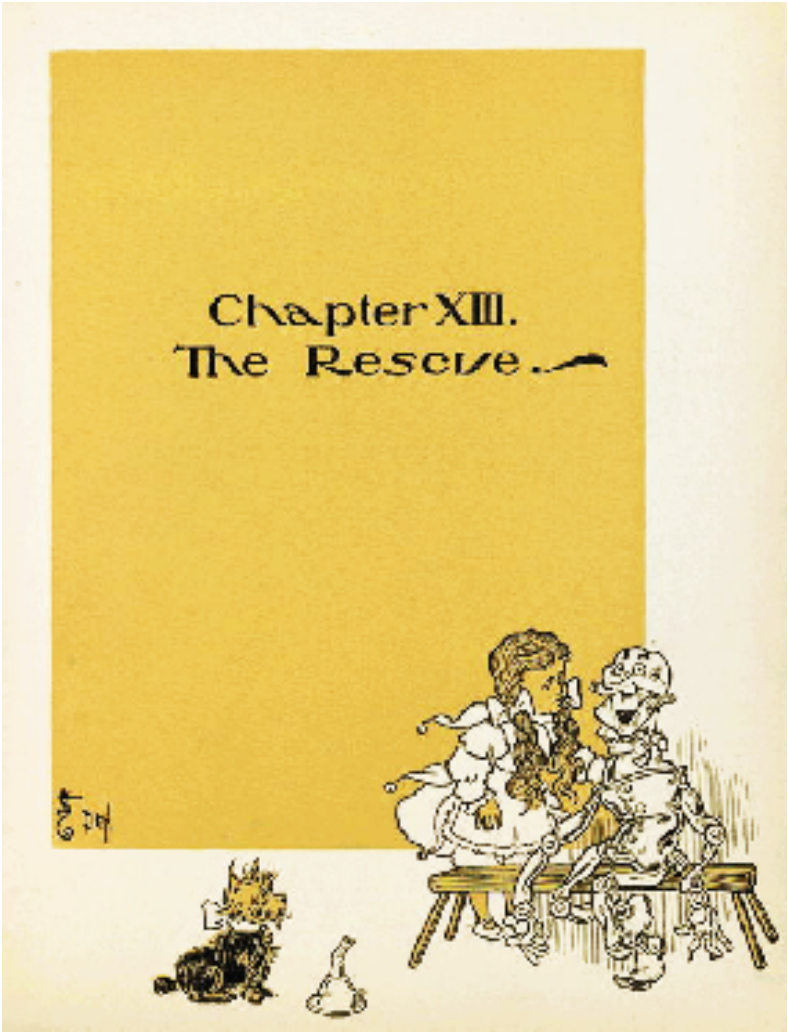
“Didn’t you know water would be the end of me?” asked the Witch, in a wailing, despairing voice.

“Of course not,” answered Dorothy. “How should I?”

“Well, in a few minutes I shall be all melted, and you will have the castle to yourself. I have been wicked in my day, but I never thought a little girl like you would ever be able to melt me and end my wicked deeds. Look out--here I go!”

With these words the Witch fell down in a brown, melted, shapeless mass and began to spread over the clean boards of the kitchen floor. Seeing that she had really melted away to nothing, Dorothy drew another bucket of water and threw it over the mess. She then swept it all out the door. After picking out the silver shoe, which was all that was left of the old woman, she cleaned and dried it with a cloth, and put it on her foot again. Then, being at last free to do as she chose, she ran out to the courtyard to tell the Lion that the Wicked Witch of the West had come to an end, and that they were no longer prisoners in a strange land.

13. The Rescue



The Cowardly Lion was much pleased to hear that the Wicked Witch had been melted by a bucket of water, and Dorothy at once unlocked the gate of his prison and set him free. They went in together to the castle, where Dorothy's first act was to call all the Winkies together and tell them that they were no longer slaves.

There was great rejoicing among the yellow Winkies, for they had been made to work hard during many years for the Wicked Witch, who had always treated them with great cruelty. They kept this day as a holiday, then and ever after, and spent the time in feasting and dancing.

"If our friends, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, were only with us," said the Lion, "I should be quite happy."

"Don't you suppose we could rescue them?" asked the girl anxiously.

"We can try," answered the Lion.

So they called the yellow Winkies and asked them if they would help to rescue their friends, and the Winkies said that they would be delighted to do all in their power for Dorothy, who had set them free from bondage. So she chose a number of the Winkies who looked as if they knew the most, and they all started away. They traveled that day and part of the next until they

came to the rocky plain where the Tin Woodman lay, all battered and bent. His axe was near him, but the blade was rusted and the handle broken off short.

The Winkies lifted him tenderly in their arms, and carried him back to the Yellow Castle again, Dorothy shedding a few tears by the way at the sad plight of her old friend, and the Lion looking sober and sorry. When they reached the castle Dorothy said to the Winkies:

"Are any of your people tinsmiths?"

"Oh, yes. Some of us are very good tinsmiths," they told her.

"Then bring them to me," she said. And when the tinsmiths came, bringing with them all their tools in baskets, she inquired, "Can you straighten out those dents in the Tin Woodman, and bend him back into shape again, and solder him together where he is broken?"

The tinsmiths looked the Woodman over carefully and then answered that they thought they could mend him so he would be as good as ever. So they set to work in one of the big yellow rooms of the castle and worked for three days and four nights, hammering and twisting and bending and soldering and polishing and pounding at the legs and body and head of the Tin Woodman, until at last he was straightened out into his old form, and his joints worked as well as ever. To be sure, there were several patches on him, but the tinsmiths did a good job, and as the Woodman was not a vain man he did not mind the patches at all.

When, at last, he walked into Dorothy's room and thanked her for rescuing him, he was so pleased that he wept tears of joy, and Dorothy had to

wipe every tear carefully from his face with her apron, so his joints would not be rusted. At the same time her own tears fell thick and fast at the joy of meeting her old friend again, and these tears did not need to be wiped away. As for the Lion, he wiped his eyes so often with the tip of his tail that it became quite wet, and he was obliged to go out into the courtyard and hold it in the sun till it dried.

"If we only had the Scarecrow with us again," said the Tin Woodman, when Dorothy had finished telling him everything that had happened, "I should be quite happy."

"We must try to find him," said the girl.

So she called the Winkies to help her, and they walked all that day and part of the next until they came to the tall tree in the branches of which the Winged Monkeys had tossed the Scarecrow's clothes.

It was a very tall tree, and the trunk was so smooth that no one could climb it; but the Woodman said at once, "I'll chop it down, and then we can get the Scarecrow's clothes."

Now while the tinsmiths had been at work mending the Woodman himself, another of the Winkies, who was a goldsmith, had made an axe-handle of solid gold and fitted it to the Woodman's axe, instead of the old broken handle. Others polished the blade until all the rust was removed and it glistened like burnished silver.

As soon as he had spoken, the Tin Woodman began to chop, and in a short time the tree fell over with a crash, whereupon the Scarecrow's clothes fell out of the branches and rolled off on the ground.

Dorothy picked them up and had the Winkies carry them back to the castle, where they were stuffed with nice, clean straw; and behold! here was the Scarecrow, as good as ever, thanking them over and over again for saving him.

Now that they were reunited, Dorothy and her friends spent a few happy days at the Yellow Castle, where they found everything they needed to make them comfortable.

But one day the girl thought of Aunt Em, and said, "We must go back to Oz, and claim his promise."

"Yes," said the Woodman, "at last I shall get my heart."

"And I shall get my brains," added the Scarecrow joyfully.

"And I shall get my courage," said the Lion thoughtfully.

"And I shall get back to Kansas," cried Dorothy, clapping her hands. "Oh, let us start for the Emerald City tomorrow!"

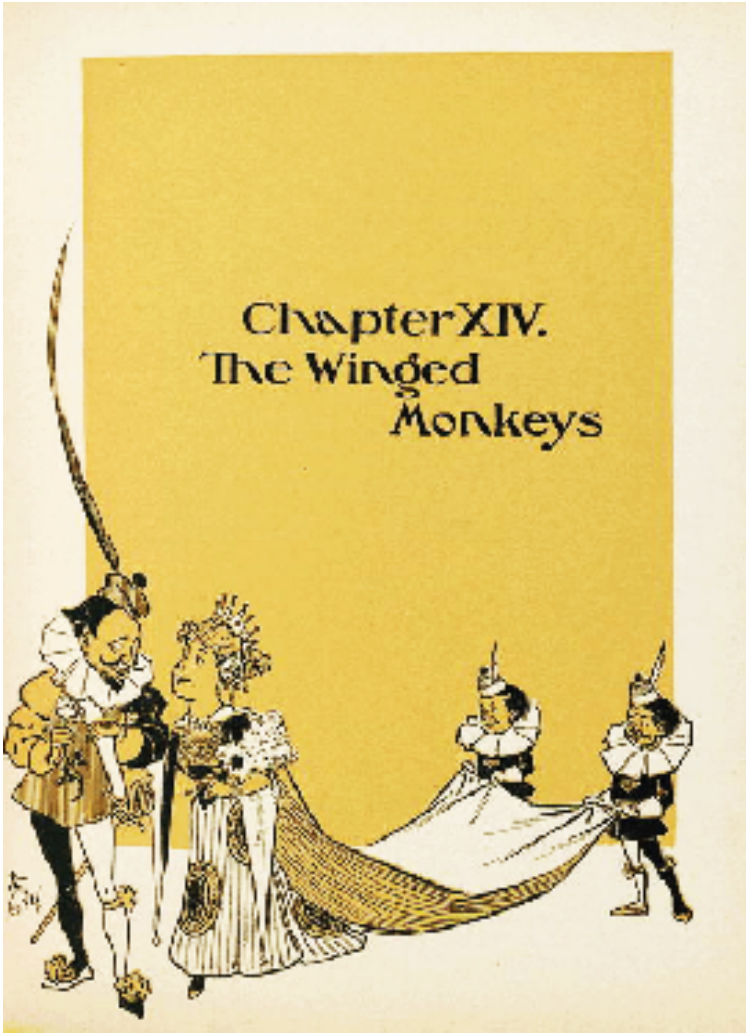
This they decided to do. The next day they called the Winkies together and bade them good-bye. The Winkies were sorry to have them go, and they had grown so fond of the Tin Woodman that they begged him to stay and rule over them and the Yellow Land of the West. Finding they were determined to go, the Winkies gave Toto and the Lion each a golden collar; and to Dorothy they presented a beautiful bracelet studded with diamonds; and to the Scarecrow they gave a gold-headed walking stick, to keep him from stumbling; and to the Tin Woodman they offered a silver oil-can, inlaid with gold and set with precious jewels.

Every one of the travelers made the Winkies a pretty speech in return, and all shook hands with them until their arms ached.

Dorothy went to the Witch's cupboard to fill her basket with food for the journey, and there she saw the Golden Cap. She tried it on her own head and found that it fitted her exactly. She did not know anything about the charm of the Golden Cap, but she saw that it was pretty, so she made up her mind to wear it and carry her sunbonnet in the basket.

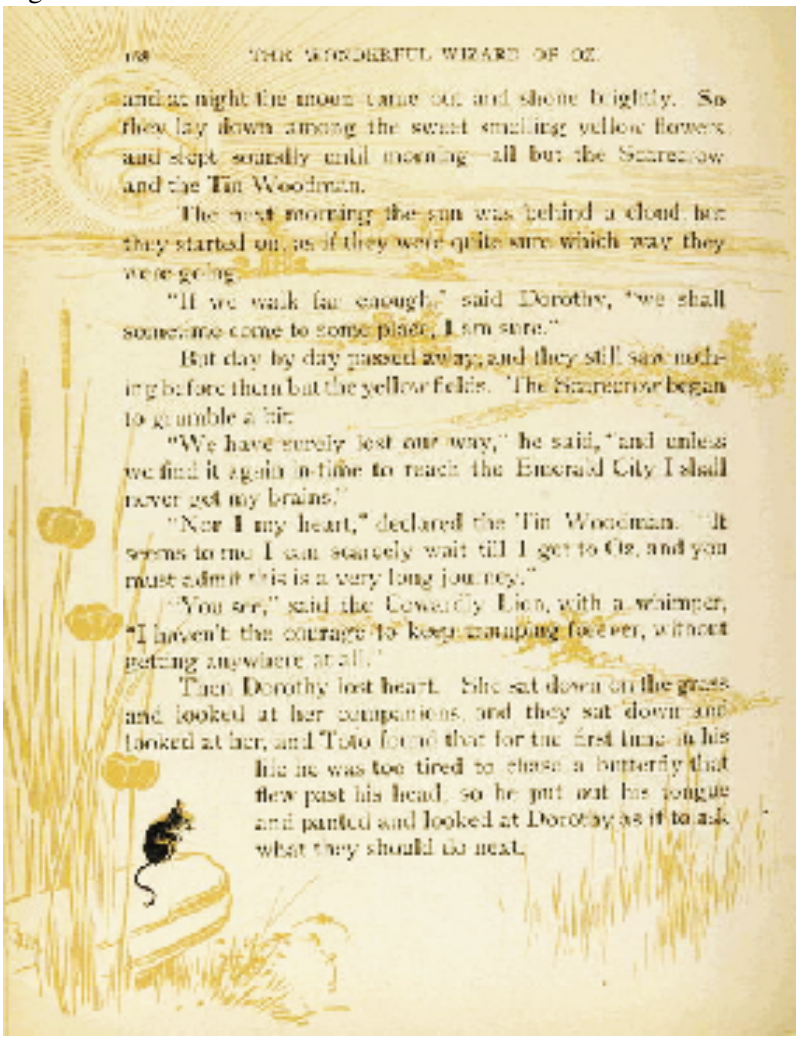
Then, being prepared for the journey, they all started for the Emerald City; and the Winkies gave them three cheers and many good wishes to carry with them.

14. The Winged Monkeys



You will remember there was no road--not even a pathway--between the castle of the Wicked Witch and the Emerald City. When the four travelers went in search of the Witch she had seen them coming, and so sent the Winged Monkeys to bring them to her. It was much harder to find their way back through the big fields of buttercups and yellow daisies than it was being carried. They knew, of course, they must go straight east, toward the rising sun; and they started off in the right way. But at noon, when the sun was over their heads, they did not know which was east and which was west, and that was the reason they were lost in the great fields. They kept on walking, however, and at night the moon came out and shone brightly. So they lay down among the sweet smelling yellow flowers and slept soundly until

morning--all but the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman.



The next morning the sun was behind a cloud, but they started on, as if they were quite sure which way they were going.

"If we walk far enough," said Dorothy, "I am sure we shall sometime come to some place."

But day by day passed away, and they still saw nothing before them but the scarlet fields. The Scarecrow began to grumble a bit.

"We have surely lost our way," he said, "and unless we find it again in time to reach the Emerald City, I shall never get my brains."

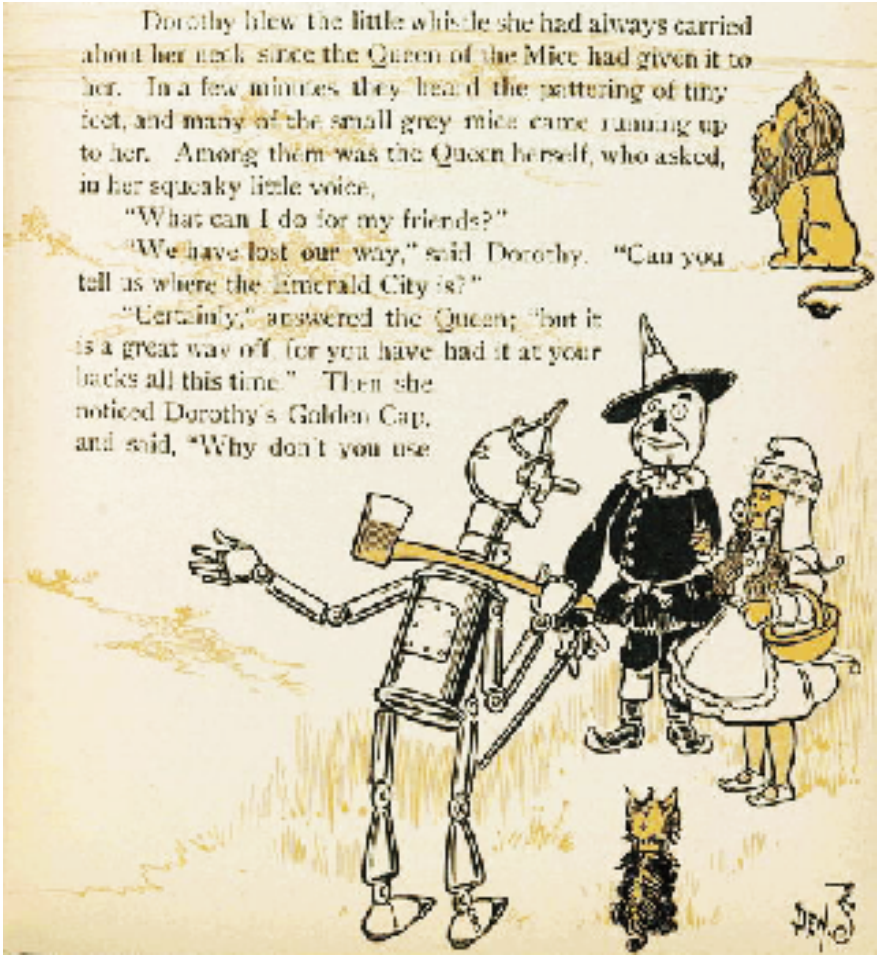
"Nor I my heart," declared the Tin Woodman. "It seems to me I can scarcely wait till I get to Oz, and you must admit this is a very long journey."

"You see," said the Cowardly Lion, with a whimper, "I haven't the courage to keep tramping forever, without getting anywhere at all."

Then Dorothy lost heart. She sat down on the grass and looked at her companions, and they sat down and looked at her, and Toto found that for the first time in his life he was too tired to chase a butterfly that flew past his head. So he put out his tongue and panted and looked at Dorothy as if to ask what they should do next.

"Suppose we call the field mice," she suggested. "They could probably tell us the way to the Emerald City."

"To be sure they could," cried the Scarecrow. "Why didn't we think of that before?"



Dorothy blew the little whistle she had always carried about her neck since the Queen of the Mice had given it to her. In a few minutes they heard the

pattering of tiny feet, and many of the small gray mice came running up to her. Among them was the Queen herself, who asked, in her squeaky little voice:

"What can I do for my friends?"

"We have lost our way," said Dorothy. "Can you tell us where the Emerald City is?"

"Certainly," answered the Queen; "but it is a great way off, for you have had it at your backs all this time." Then she noticed Dorothy's Golden Cap, and said, "Why don't you use the charm of the Cap, and call the Winged Monkeys to you? They will carry you to the City of Oz in less than an hour."

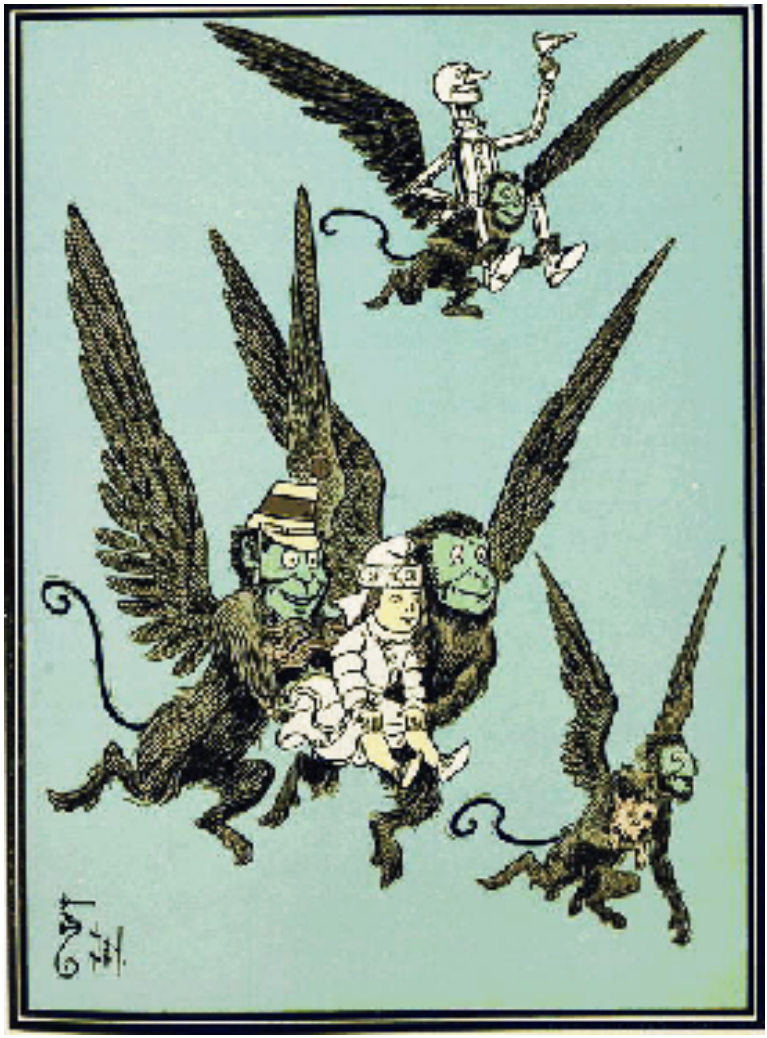
"I didn't know there was a charm," answered Dorothy, in surprise. "What is it?"

"It is written inside the Golden Cap," replied the Queen of the Mice. "But if you are going to call the Winged Monkeys we must run away, for they are full of mischief and think it great fun to plague us."

"Won't they hurt me?" asked the girl anxiously.

"Oh, no. They must obey the wearer of the Cap. Good-bye!" And she scampered out of sight, with all the mice hurrying after her.

Dorothy looked inside the Golden Cap and saw some words written upon the lining. These, she thought, must be the charm, so she read the directions carefully and put the Cap upon her head.



"Ep-pe, pep-pe, kak-ke!" she said, standing on her left foot.

"What did you say?" asked the Scarecrow, who did not know what she was doing.

"Hil-lo, hol-lo, hel-lo!" Dorothy went on, standing this time on her right foot.

"Hello!" replied the Tin Woodman calmly.

"Ziz-zy, zuz-zy, zik!" said Dorothy, who was now standing on both feet. This ended the saying of the charm, and they heard a great chattering and flapping of wings, as the band of Winged Monkeys flew up to them.

The King bowed low before Dorothy, and asked, "What is your command?"

“We wish to go to the Emerald City,” said the child, “and we have lost our way.”

“We will carry you,” replied the King, and no sooner had he spoken than two of the Monkeys caught Dorothy in their arms and flew away with her. Others took the Scarecrow and the Woodman and the Lion, and one little Monkey seized Toto and flew after them, although the dog tried hard to bite him.

The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman were rather frightened at first, for they remembered how badly the Winged Monkeys had treated them before; but they saw that no harm was intended, so they rode through the air quite cheerfully, and had a fine time looking at the pretty gardens and woods far below them.

Dorothy found herself riding easily between two of the biggest Monkeys, one of them the King himself. They had made a chair of their hands and were careful not to hurt her.

“Why do you have to obey the charm of the Golden Cap?” she asked.

“That is a long story,” answered the King, with a Winged laugh; “but as we have a long journey before us, I will pass the time by telling you about it, if you wish.”

“I shall be glad to hear it,” she replied.

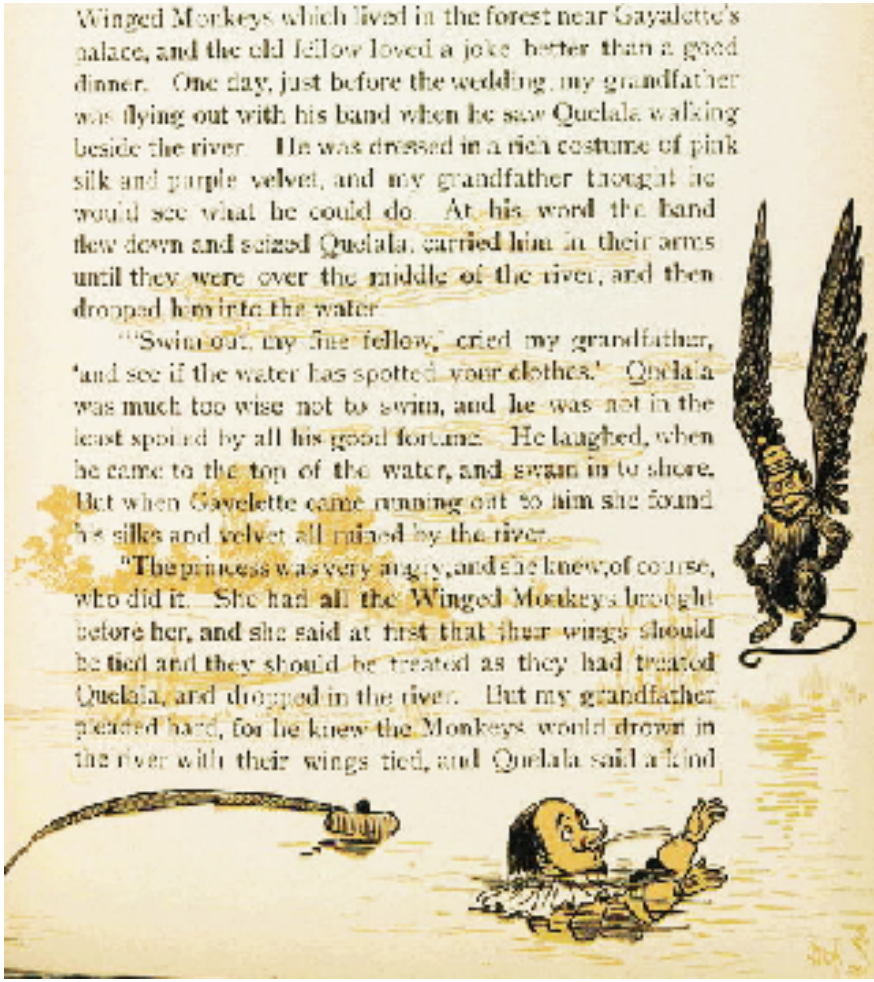
“Once,” began the leader, “we were a free people, living happily in the great forest, flying from tree to tree, eating nuts and fruit, and doing just as we pleased without calling anybody master. Perhaps some of us were rather too full of mischief at times, flying down to pull the tails of the animals that had no wings, chasing birds, and throwing nuts at the people who walked in the forest. But we were careless and happy and full of fun, and enjoyed every minute of the day. This was many years ago, long before Oz came out of the clouds to rule over this land.

“There lived here then, away at the North, a beautiful princess, who was also a powerful sorceress. All her magic was used to help the people, and she was never known to hurt anyone who was good. Her name was Gayelette, and she lived in a handsome palace built from great blocks of ruby. Everyone loved her, but her greatest sorrow was that she could find no one to love in return, since all the men were much too stupid and ugly to mate with one so beautiful and wise. At last, however, she found a boy who was handsome and manly and wise beyond his years. Gayelette made up her mind that when he grew to be a man she would make him her husband, so she took him to her ruby palace and used all her magic powers to make him as strong and good and lovely as any woman could wish. When he grew to manhood, Quelala, as he was called, was said to be the best and wisest man in all the land, while

his manly beauty was so great that Gayelette loved him dearly, and hastened to make everything ready for the wedding.

"My grandfather was at that time the King of the Winged Monkeys which lived in the forest near Gayelette's palace, and the old fellow loved a joke better than a good dinner. One day, just before the wedding, my grandfather was flying out with his band when he saw Quelala walking beside the river. He was dressed in a rich costume of pink silk and purple velvet, and my grandfather thought he would see what he could do. At his word the band flew down and seized Quelala, carried him in their arms until they were over the middle of the river, and then dropped him into the water.

"`Swim out, my fine fellow,' cried my grandfather, `and see if the water has spotted your clothes.' Quelala was much too wise not to swim, and he was not in the least spoiled by all his good fortune. He laughed, when he came to the top of the water, and swam in to shore. But when Gayelette came running out to him she found his silks and velvet all ruined by the river.



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"The princess was very angry, and she knew, of course, who did it. She had all the Winged Monkeys brought before her, and she said at first that their wings should be tied and they should be treated as they had treated Quelala, and dropped in the river. But my grandfather pleaded hard, for he knew the Monkeys would drown in the river with their wings tied, and Quelala said a kind

"The princess was angry, and she knew, of course, who did it. She had all the Winged Monkeys brought before her, and she said at first that their wings should be tied and they should be treated as they had treated Quelala, and dropped in the river. But my grandfather pleaded hard, for he knew the Monkeys would drown in the river with their wings tied, and Quelala said a kind word for them also; so that Gayelette finally spared them, on condition that the Winged Monkeys should ever after do three times the bidding of the owner of the Golden Cap. This Cap had been made for a wedding present to Quelala, and it is said to have cost the princess half her kingdom. Of course my grandfather and all the other Monkeys at once agreed to the condition, and that is how it happens that we are three times the slaves of the owner of the Golden Cap, whosoever he may be."

“And what became of them?” asked Dorothy, who had been greatly interested in the story.

“Quelala being the first owner of the Golden Cap,” replied the Monkey, “he was the first to lay his wishes upon us. As his bride could not bear the sight of us, he called us all to him in the forest after he had married her and ordered us always to keep where she could never again set eyes on a Winged Monkey, which we were glad to do, for we were all afraid of her.

“This was all we ever had to do until the Golden Cap fell into the hands of the Wicked Witch of the West, who made us enslave the Winkies, and afterward drive Oz himself out of the Land of the West. Now the Golden Cap is yours, and three times you have the right to lay your wishes upon us.”

As the Monkey King finished his story Dorothy looked down and saw the green, shining walls of the Emerald City before them. She wondered at the rapid flight of the Monkeys, but was glad the journey was over. The strange creatures set the travelers down carefully before the gate of the City, the King bowed low to Dorothy, and then flew swiftly away, followed by all his band.

“That was a good ride,” said the little girl.

“Yes, and a quick way out of our troubles,” replied the Lion. “How lucky it was you brought away that wonderful Cap!”

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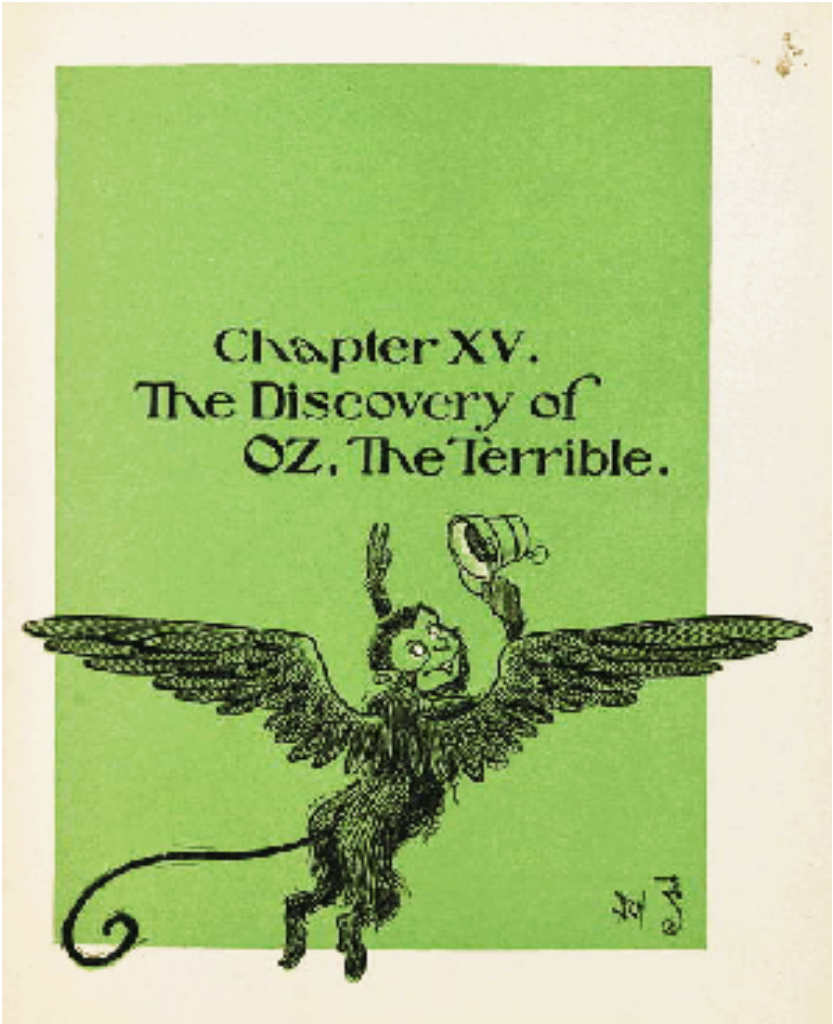
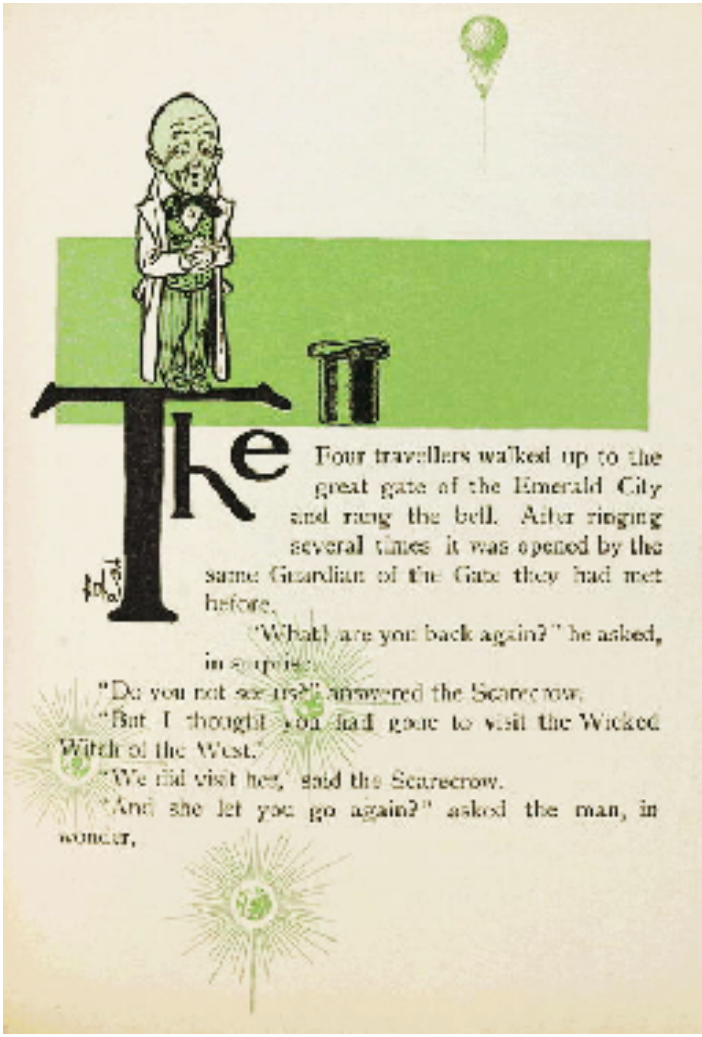
15. The Discovery of Oz, the Terrible





The four travelers walked up to the great gate of Emerald City and rang the bell. After ringing several times, it was opened by the same Guardian of the Gates they had met before.

"What! are you back again?" he asked, in surprise.

"Do you not see us?" answered the Scarecrow.

"But I thought you had gone to visit the Wicked Witch of the West."

"We did visit her," said the Scarecrow.

"And she let you go again?" asked the man, in wonder.

"She could not help it, for she is melted," explained the Scarecrow.

"Melted! Well, that is good news, indeed," said the man. "Who melted her?"

“It was Dorothy,” said the Lion gravely.

“Good gracious!” exclaimed the man, and he bowed very low indeed before her.

Then he led them into his little room and locked the spectacles from the great box on all their eyes, just as he had done before. Afterward they passed on through the gate into the Emerald City. When the people heard from the Guardian of the Gates that Dorothy had melted the Wicked Witch of the West, they all gathered around the travelers and followed them in a great crowd to the Palace of Oz.

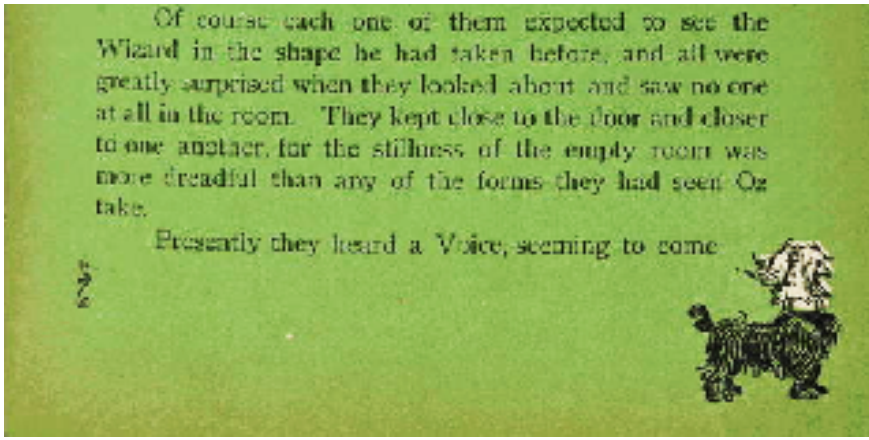
The soldier with the green whiskers was still on guard before the door, but he let them in at once, and they were again met by the beautiful green girl, who showed each of them to their old rooms at once, so they might rest until the Great Oz was ready to receive them.

The soldier had the news carried straight to Oz that Dorothy and the other travelers had come back again, after destroying the Wicked Witch; but Oz made no reply. They thought the Great Wizard would send for them at once, but he did not. They had no word from him the next day, nor the next, nor the next. The waiting was tiresome and wearing, and at last they grew vexed that Oz should treat them in so poor a fashion, after sending them to undergo hardships and slavery. So the Scarecrow at last asked the green girl to take another message to Oz, saying if he did not let them in to see him at once they would call the Winged Monkeys to help them, and find out whether he kept his promises or not. When the Wizard was given this message he was so frightened that he sent word for them to come to the Throne Room at four minutes after nine o’clock the next morning. He had once met the Winged Monkeys in the Land of the West, and he did not wish to meet them again.

The four travelers passed a sleepless night, each thinking of the gift Oz had promised to bestow on him. Dorothy fell asleep only once, and then she dreamed she was in Kansas, where Aunt Em was telling her how glad she was to have her little girl at home again.

Promptly at nine o’clock the next morning the green-whiskered soldier came to them, and four minutes later they all went into the Throne Room of the Great Oz.

Of course each one of them expected to see the Wizard in the shape he had taken before, and all were greatly surprised when they looked about and saw no one at all in the room. They kept close to the door and closer to one another, for the stillness of the empty room was more dreadful than any of the forms they had seen Oz take.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Presently they heard a Voice, seeming to come

Presently they heard a solemn Voice, that seemed to come from somewhere near the top of the great dome, and it said:

"I am Oz, the Great and Terrible. Why do you seek me?"

They looked again in every part of the room, and then, seeing no one, Dorothy asked, "Where are you?"

"I am everywhere," answered the Voice, "but to the eyes of common mortals I am invisible. I will now seat myself upon my throne, that you may converse with me." Indeed, the Voice seemed just then to come straight from the throne itself; so they walked toward it and stood in a row while Dorothy said:

"We have come to claim our promise, O Oz."

"What promise?" asked Oz.

"You promised to send me back to Kansas when the Wicked Witch was destroyed," said the girl.

"And you promised to give me brains," said the Scarecrow.

"And you promised to give me a heart," said the Tin Woodman.

"And you promised to give me courage," said the Cowardly Lion.

"Is the Wicked Witch really destroyed?" asked the Voice, and Dorothy thought it trembled a little.

"Yes," she answered, "I melted her with a bucket of water."

"Dear me," said the Voice, "how sudden! Well, come to me tomorrow, for I must have time to think it over."

"You've had plenty of time already," said the Tin Woodman angrily.

"We shan't wait a day longer," said the Scarecrow.

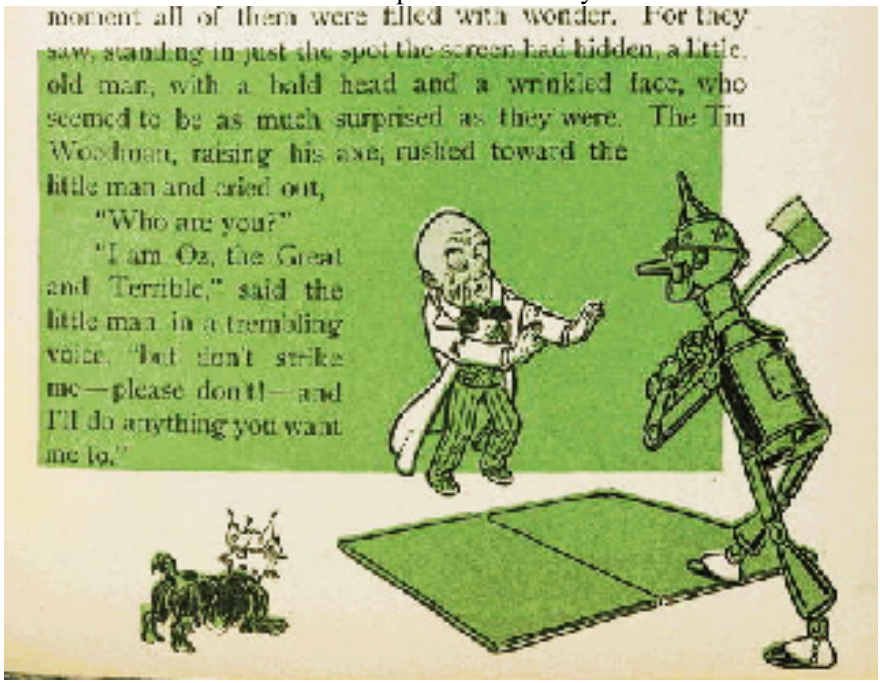
"You must keep your promises to us!" exclaimed Dorothy.

The Lion thought it might be as well to frighten the Wizard, so he gave a large, loud roar, which was so fierce and dreadful that Toto jumped away from him in alarm and tipped over the screen that stood in a corner. As it fell

with a crash they looked that way, and the next moment all of them were filled with wonder. For they saw, standing in just the spot the screen had hidden, a little old man, with a bald head and a wrinkled face, who seemed to be as much surprised as they were. The Tin Woodman, raising his axe, rushed toward the little man and cried out, “Who are you?”

“I am Oz, the Great and Terrible,” said the little man, in a trembling voice. “But don’t strike me--please don’t--and I’ll do anything you want me to.”

Our friends looked at him in surprise and dismay.



“I thought Oz was a great Head,” said Dorothy.

“And I thought Oz was a lovely Lady,” said the Scarecrow.

“And I thought Oz was a terrible Beast,” said the Tin Woodman.

“And I thought Oz was a Ball of Fire,” exclaimed the Lion.

“No, you are all wrong,” said the little man meekly. “I have been making believe.”

“Making believe!” cried Dorothy. “Are you not a Great Wizard?”

“Hush, my dear,” he said. “Don’t speak so loud, or you will be overheard--and I should be ruined. I’m supposed to be a Great Wizard.”

“And aren’t you?” she asked.

“Not a bit of it, my dear; I’m just a common man.”

“You’re more than that,” said the Scarecrow, in a grieved tone; “you’re a

humbug."

"Exactly so!" declared the little man, rubbing his hands together as if it pleased him. "I am a humbug."

"But this is terrible," said the Tin Woodman. "How shall I ever get my heart?"

"Or I my courage?" asked the Lion.

"Or I my brains?" wailed the Scarecrow, wiping the tears from his eyes with his coat sleeve.

"My dear friends," said Oz, "I pray you not to speak of these little things. Think of me, and the terrible trouble I'm in at being found out."

"Doesn't anyone else know you're a humbug?" asked Dorothy.

“No one knows it but you four--and myself,” replied Oz. “I have fooled everyone so long that I thought I should never be found out. It was a great mistake my ever letting you into the Throne Room. Usually I will not see even my subjects, and so they believe I am something terrible.”

“But, I don’t understand,” said Dorothy, in bewilderment. “How was it that you appeared to me as a great Head?”

“That was one of my tricks,” answered Oz. “Step this way, please, and I will tell you all about it.”

He led the way to a small chamber in the rear of the Throne Room, and they all followed him. He pointed to one corner, in which lay the great Head, made out of many thicknesses of paper, and with a carefully painted face.

“This I hung from the ceiling by a wire,” said Oz. “I stood behind the screen and pulled a thread, to make the eyes move and the mouth open.”

“But how about the voice?” she inquired.

“Oh, I am a ventriloquist,” said the little man. “I can throw the sound of my voice wherever I wish, so that you thought it was coming out of the Head. Here are the other things I used to deceive you.” He showed the Scarecrow the dress and the mask he had worn when he seemed to be the lovely Lady. And the Tin Woodman saw that his terrible Beast was nothing but a lot of skins, sewn together, with slats to keep their sides out. As for the Ball of Fire, the false Wizard had hung that also from the ceiling. It was really a ball of cotton, but when oil was poured upon it the ball burned fiercely.

“Really,” said the Scarecrow, “you ought to be ashamed of yourself for being such a humbug.”

“I am--I certainly am,” answered the little man sorrowfully; “but it was the only thing I could do. Sit down, please, there are plenty of chairs; and I will tell you my story.”

So they sat down and listened while he told the following tale.

“I was born in Omaha--”

“Why, that isn’t very far from Kansas!” cried Dorothy.

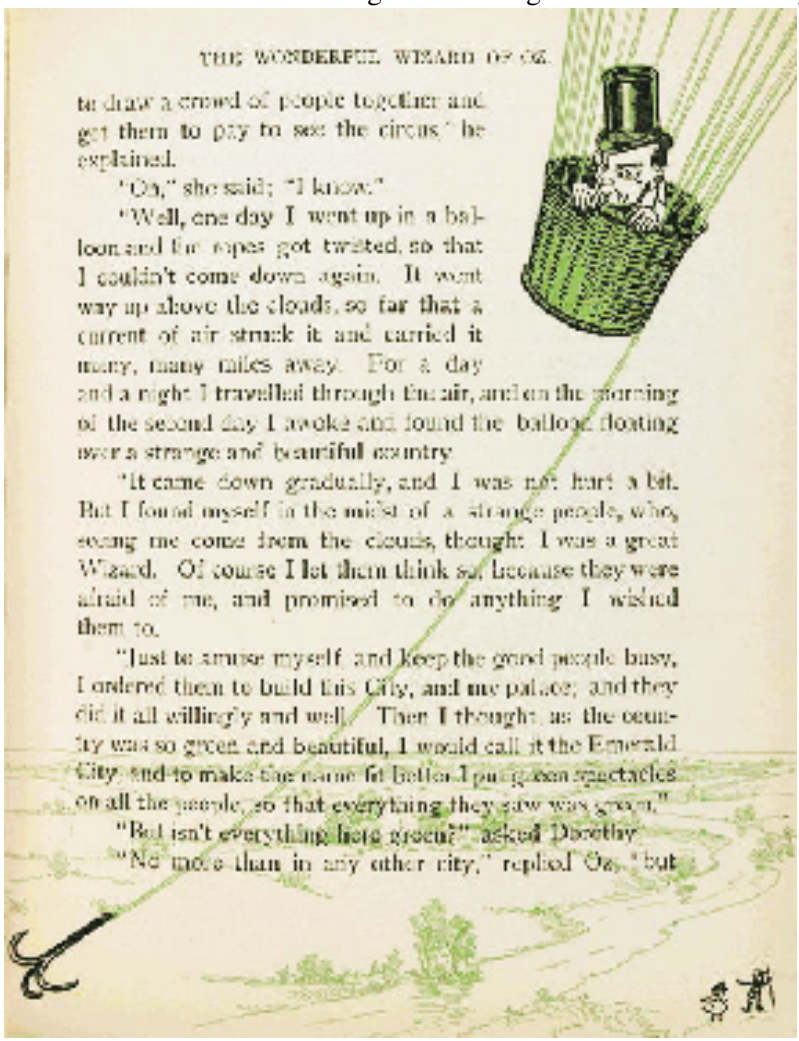
“No, but it’s farther from here,” he said, shaking his head at her sadly. “When I grew up I became a ventriloquist, and at that I was very well trained by a great master. I can imitate any kind of a bird or beast.” Here he mewed so like a kitten that Toto pricked up his ears and looked everywhere to see where she was. “After a time,” continued Oz, “I tired of that, and became a balloonist.”

“What is that?” asked Dorothy.

“A man who goes up in a balloon on circus day, so as to draw a crowd of people together and get them to pay to see the circus,” he explained.

“Oh,” she said, “I know.”

“Well, one day I went up in a balloon and the ropes got twisted, so that I couldn’t come down again. It went way up above the clouds, so far that a current of air struck it and carried it many, many miles away. For a day and a night I traveled through the air, and on the morning of the second day I awoke and found the balloon floating over a strange and beautiful country.



THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ.

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“It came down gradually, and I was not hurt a bit. But I found myself in the midst of a strange people, who, seeing me come from the clouds, thought I was a great Wizard. Of course I let them think so, because they were afraid of me, and promised to do anything I wished them to.

“Just to amuse myself and keep the good people busy, I ordered them to build this City, and my palace; and they did it all willingly and well. Then I thought, as the country was so green and beautiful, I would call it the Emerald City, and to make the name fit better I put green spectacles on all the people, so that everything they saw was green.”

“But isn’t everything here green?” asked Dorothy.

“No more than in any other city,” replied Oz, “but

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"But isn't everything here green?" asked Dorothy.

"No more than in any other city," replied Oz; "but when you wear green spectacles, why of course everything you see looks green to you. The Emerald City was built a great many years ago, for I was a young man when the balloon brought me here, and I am a very old man now. But my people have worn green glasses on their eyes so long that most of them think it really is an Emerald City, and it certainly is a beautiful place, abounding in jewels and precious metals, and every good thing that is needed to make one happy. I have been good to the people, and they like me; but ever since this Palace was built, I have shut myself up and would not see any of them.

"One of my greatest fears was the Witches, for while I had no magical powers at all I soon found out that the Witches were really able to do wonderful things. There were four of them in this country, and they ruled the people who live in the North and South and East and West. Fortunately, the Witches of the North and South were good, and I knew they would do me no harm; but the Witches of the East and West were terribly wicked, and had they not thought I was more powerful than they themselves, they would surely have destroyed me. As it was, I lived in deadly fear of them for many years; so you can imagine how pleased I was when I heard your house had fallen on the Wicked Witch of the East. When you came to me, I was willing to promise anything if you would only do away with the other Witch; but, now that you have melted her, I am ashamed to say that I cannot keep my promises."

"I think you are a very bad man," said Dorothy.

"Oh, no, my dear; I'm really a very good man, but I'm a very bad Wizard, I must admit."

"Can't you give me brains?" asked the Scarecrow.

"You don't need them. You are learning something every day. A baby has brains, but it doesn't know much. Experience is the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are on earth the more experience you are sure to get."

"That may all be true," said the Scarecrow, "but I shall be very unhappy unless you give me brains."

The false Wizard looked at him carefully.

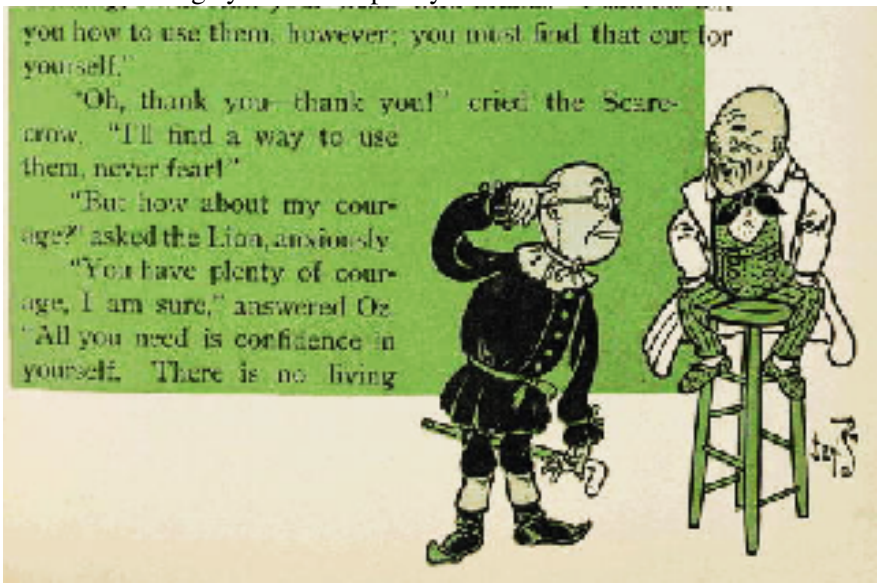
"Well," he said with a sigh, "I'm not much of a magician, as I said; but if you will come to me tomorrow morning, I will stuff your head with brains. I

cannot tell you how to use them, however; you must find that out for yourself."

"Oh, thank you--thank you!" cried the Scarecrow. "I'll find a way to use them, never fear!"

"But how about my courage?" asked the Lion anxiously.

"You have plenty of courage, I am sure," answered Oz. "All you need is confidence in yourself. There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The True courage is in facing danger when you are afraid, and that kind of courage you have in plenty."



"Perhaps I have, but I'm scared just the same," said the Lion. "I shall really be very unhappy unless you give me the sort of courage that makes one forget he is afraid."

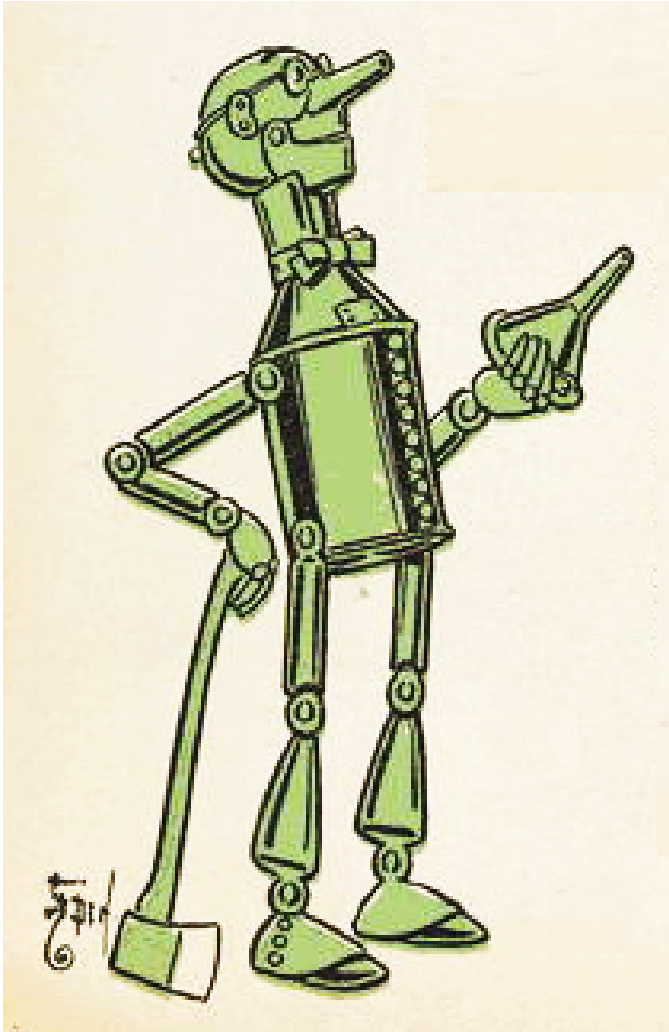
"Very well, I will give you that sort of courage tomorrow," replied Oz.

"How about my heart?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"Why, as for that," answered Oz, "I think you are wrong to want a heart. It makes most people unhappy. If you only knew it, you are in luck not to have a heart."

"That must be a matter of opinion," said the Tin Woodman. "For my part, I will bear all the unhappiness without a murmur, if you will give me the heart."

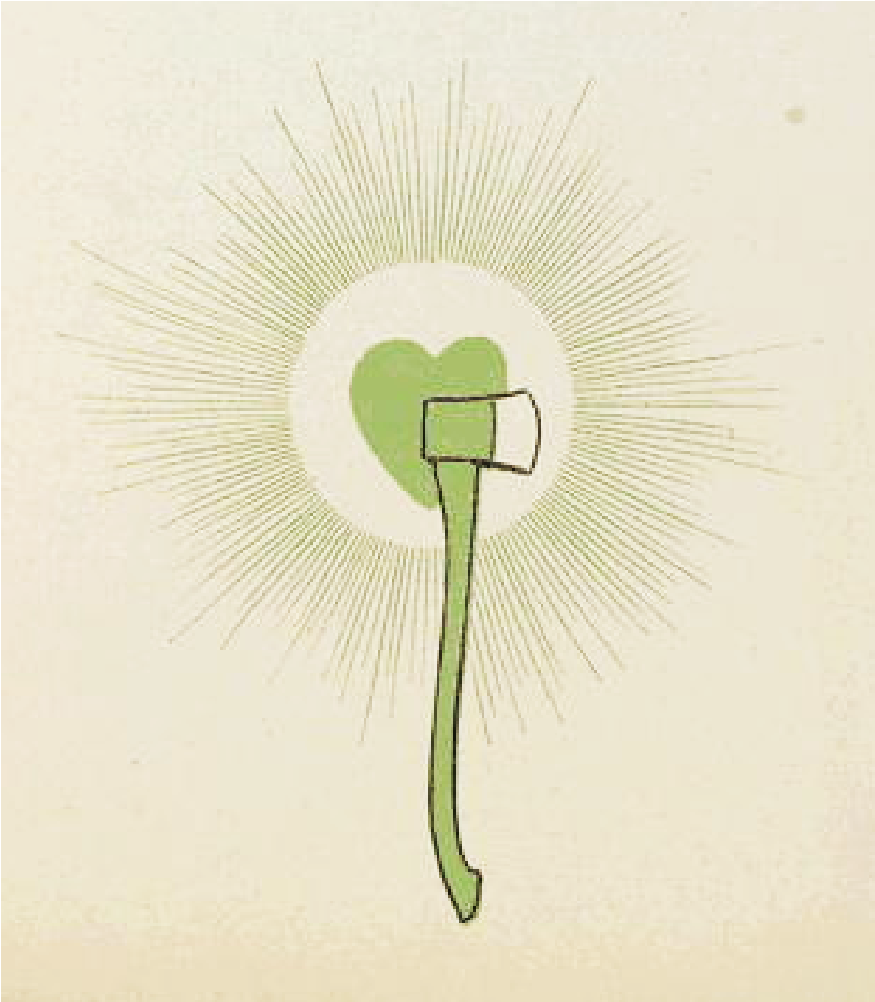
"Very well," answered Oz meekly. "Come to me tomorrow and you shall have a heart. I have played Wizard for so many years that I may as well continue the part a little longer."



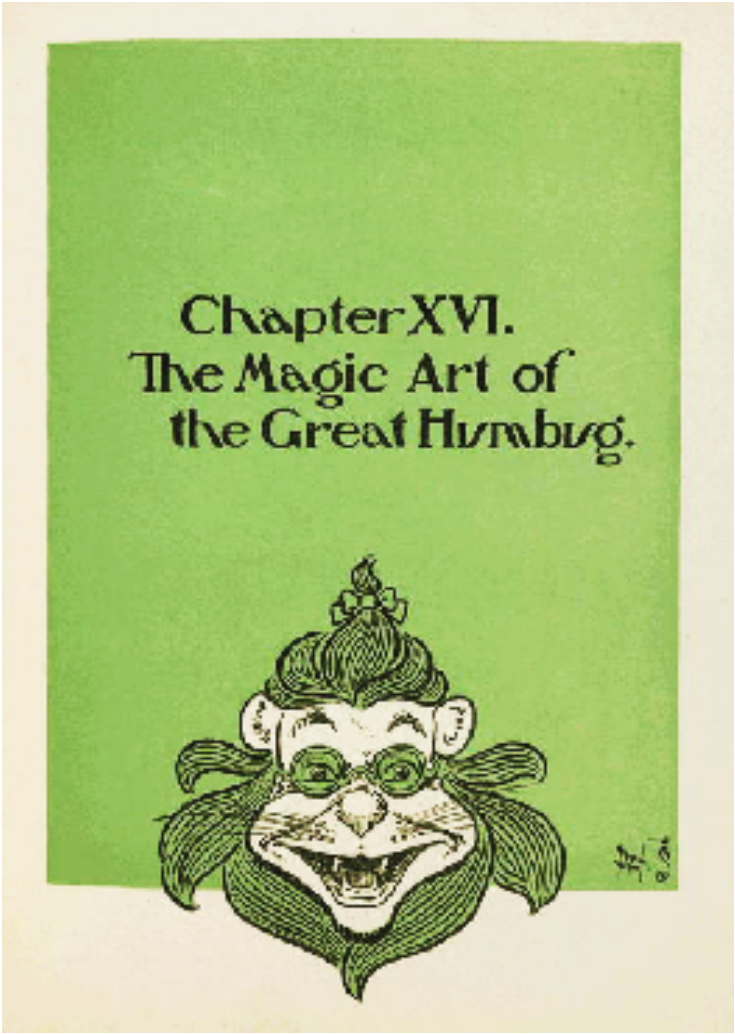
"And now," said Dorothy, "how am I to get back to Kansas?"

"We shall have to think about that," replied the little man. "Give me two or three days to consider the matter and I'll try to find a way to carry you over the desert. In the meantime you shall all be treated as my guests, and while you live in the Palace my people will wait upon you and obey your slightest wish. There is only one thing I ask in return for my help--such as it is. You must keep my secret and tell no one I am a humbug."

They agreed to say nothing of what they had learned, and went back to their rooms in high spirits. Even Dorothy had hope that "The Great and Terrible Humbug," as she called him, would find a way to send her back to Kansas, and if he did she was willing to forgive him everything.



16. The Magic Art of the Great Humbug



Next morning the Scarecrow said to his friends:
“Congratulate me. I am going to Oz to get my brains at last. When I return I shall be as other men are.”

“I have always liked you as you were,” said Dorothy simply.

“It is kind of you to like a Scarecrow,” he replied. “But surely you will think more of me when you hear the splendid thoughts my new brain is going to turn out.” Then he said good-bye to them all in a cheerful voice and went to the Throne Room, where he rapped upon the door.

“Come in,” said Oz.

The Scarecrow went in and found the little man sitting down by the window, engaged in deep thought.

“I have come for my brains,” remarked the Scarecrow, a little uneasily.

“Oh, yes; sit down in that chair, please,” replied Oz. “You must excuse me for taking your head off, but I shall have to do it in order to put your brains in their proper place.”

“That’s all right,” said the Scarecrow. “You are quite welcome to take my head off, as long as it will be a better one when you put it on again.”

So the Wizard unfastened his head and emptied out the straw. Then he

entered the back room and took up a measure of bran, which he mixed with a great many pins and needles. Having shaken them together thoroughly, he filled the top of the Scarecrow's head with the mixture and stuffed the rest of the space with straw, to hold it in place.

When he had fastened the Scarecrow's head on his body again he said to him, "Hereafter you will be a great man, for I have given you a lot of bran-new brains."

The Scarecrow was both pleased and proud at the fulfillment of his greatest wish, and having thanked Oz warmly he went back to his friends.

Dorothy looked at him curiously. His head was quite bulged out at the top with brains.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"I feel wise indeed," he answered earnestly. "When I get used to my brains I shall know everything."

"Why are those needles and pins sticking out of your head?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"That is proof that he is sharp," remarked the Lion.

"Well, I must go to Oz and get my heart," said the Woodman. So he walked to the Throne Room and knocked at the door.

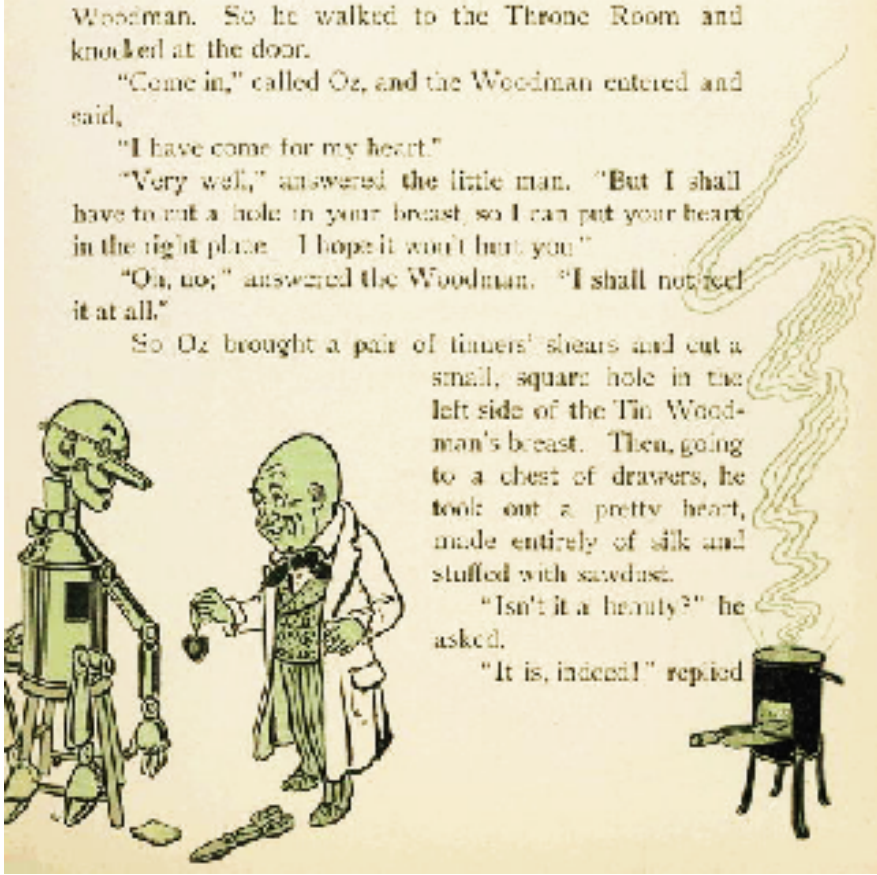
"Come in," called Oz, and the Woodman entered and said, "I have come for my heart."

"Very well," answered the little man. "But I shall have to cut a hole in your breast, so I can put your heart in the right place. I hope it won't hurt you."

"Oh, no," answered the Woodman. "I shall not feel it at all."

So Oz brought a pair of tinsmith's shears and cut a small, square hole in the left side of the Tin Woodman's breast. Then, going to a chest of drawers, he took out a pretty heart, made entirely of silk and stuffed with sawdust.

"Isn't it a beauty?" he asked.



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"Isn't it a beauty?" he asked.

"It is, indeed!" replied

"It is, indeed!" replied the Woodman, who was greatly pleased. "But is it a kind heart?"

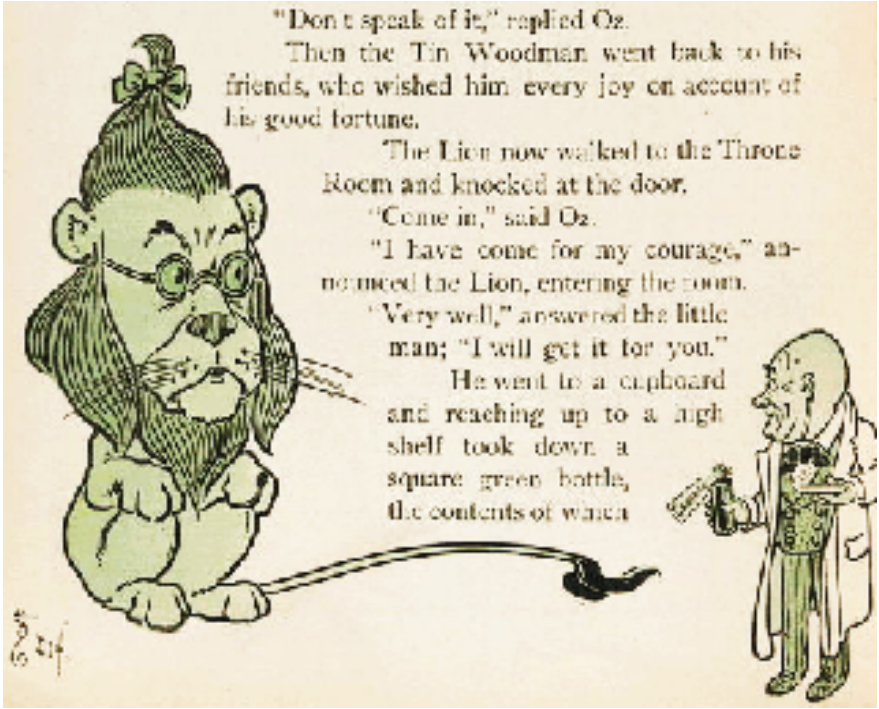
"Oh, very!" answered Oz. He put the heart in the Woodman's breast and then replaced the square of tin, soldering it neatly together where it had been cut.

"There," said he; "now you have a heart that any man might be proud of. I'm sorry I had to put a patch on your breast, but it really couldn't be helped."

"Never mind the patch," exclaimed the happy Woodman. "I am very grateful to you, and shall never forget your kindness."

"Don't speak of it," replied Oz.

Then the Tin Woodman went back to his friends, who wished him every joy on account of his good fortune.

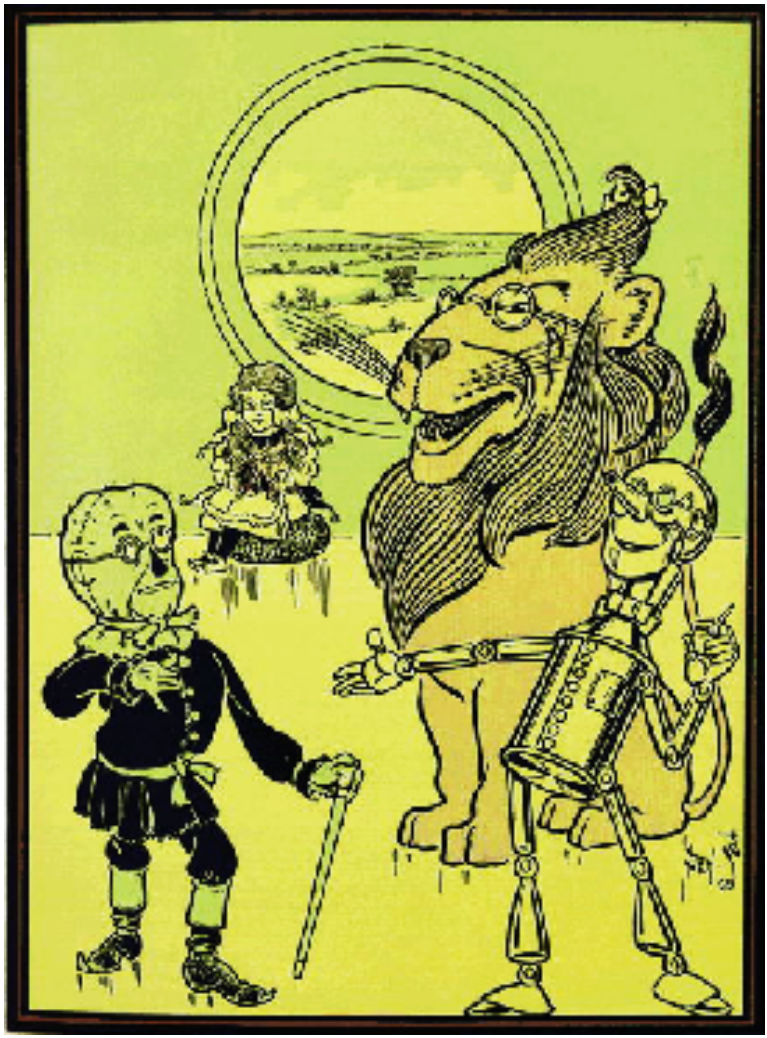


The Lion now walked to the Throne Room and knocked at the door.

“Come in,” said Oz.

“I have come for my courage,” announced the Lion, entering the room.

“Very well,” answered the little man; “I will get it for you.”



He went to a cupboard and reaching up to a high shelf took down a square green bottle, the contents of which he poured into a green-gold dish, beautifully carved. Placing this before the Cowardly Lion, who sniffed at it as if he did not like it, the Wizard said:

"Drink."

"What is it?" asked the Lion.

"Well," answered Oz, "if it were inside of you, it would be courage. You know, of course, that courage is always inside one; so that this really cannot be called courage until you have swallowed it. Therefore I advise you to drink it as soon as possible."

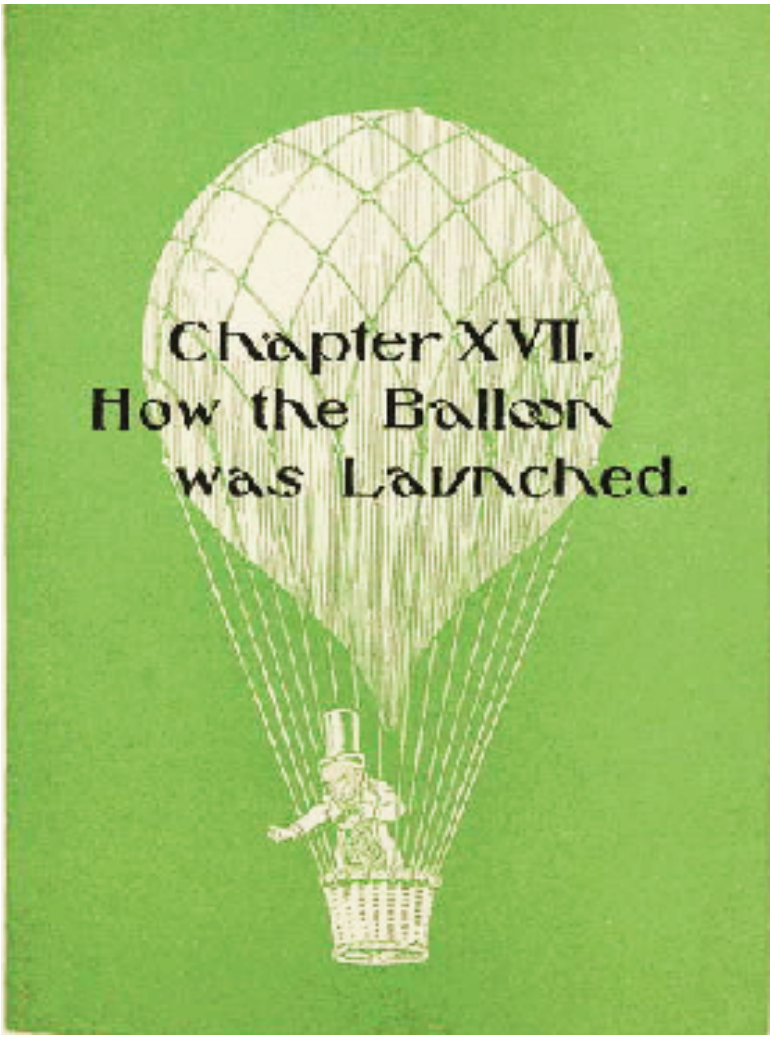
The Lion hesitated no longer, but drank till the dish was empty.

“How do you feel now?” asked Oz.

“Full of courage,” replied the Lion, who went joyfully back to his friends to tell them of his good fortune.

Oz, left to himself, smiled to think of his success in giving the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and the Lion exactly what they thought they wanted. “How can I help being a humbug,” he said, “when all these people make me do things that everybody knows can’t be done? It was easy to make the Scarecrow and the Lion and the Woodman happy, because they imagined I could do anything. But it will take more than imagination to carry Dorothy back to Kansas, and I’m sure I don’t know how it can be done.”

17. How the Balloon Was Launched



For three days Dorothy heard nothing from Oz. These were sad days for the little girl, although her friends were all quite happy and contented. The Scarecrow told them there were wonderful thoughts in his head; but he would not say what they were because he knew no one could understand them but himself. When the Tin Woodman walked about he felt his heart rattling around in his breast; and he told Dorothy he had discovered it to be a kinder and more tender heart than the one he had owned when he was made of flesh. The Lion declared he was afraid of nothing on earth, and would gladly face an army or a dozen of the fierce Kalidahs.

Thus each of the little party was satisfied except Dorothy, who longed more than ever to get back to Kansas.

On the fourth day, to her great joy, Oz sent for her, and when she entered the Throne Room he greeted her pleasantly:

“Sit down, my dear; I think I have found the way to get you out of this country.”

“And back to Kansas?” she asked eagerly.

“Well, I’m not sure about Kansas,” said Oz, “for I haven’t the faintest notion which way it lies. But the first thing to do is to cross the desert, and

then it should be easy to find your way home."

"How can I cross the desert?" she inquired.

"Well, I'll tell you what I think," said the little man. "You see, when I came to this country it was in a balloon. You also came through the air, being carried by a cyclone. So I believe the best way to get across the desert will be through the air. Now, it is quite beyond my powers to make a cyclone; but I've been thinking the matter over, and I believe I can make a balloon."

"How?" asked Dorothy.

"A balloon," said Oz, "is made of silk, which is coated with glue to keep the gas in it. I have plenty of silk in the Palace, so it will be no trouble to make the balloon. But in all this country there is no gas to fill the balloon with, to make it float."

"If it won't float," remarked Dorothy, "it will be of no use to us."

"True," answered Oz. "But there is another way to make it float, which is to fill it with hot air. Hot air isn't as good as gas, for if the air should get cold the balloon would come down in the desert, and we should be lost."

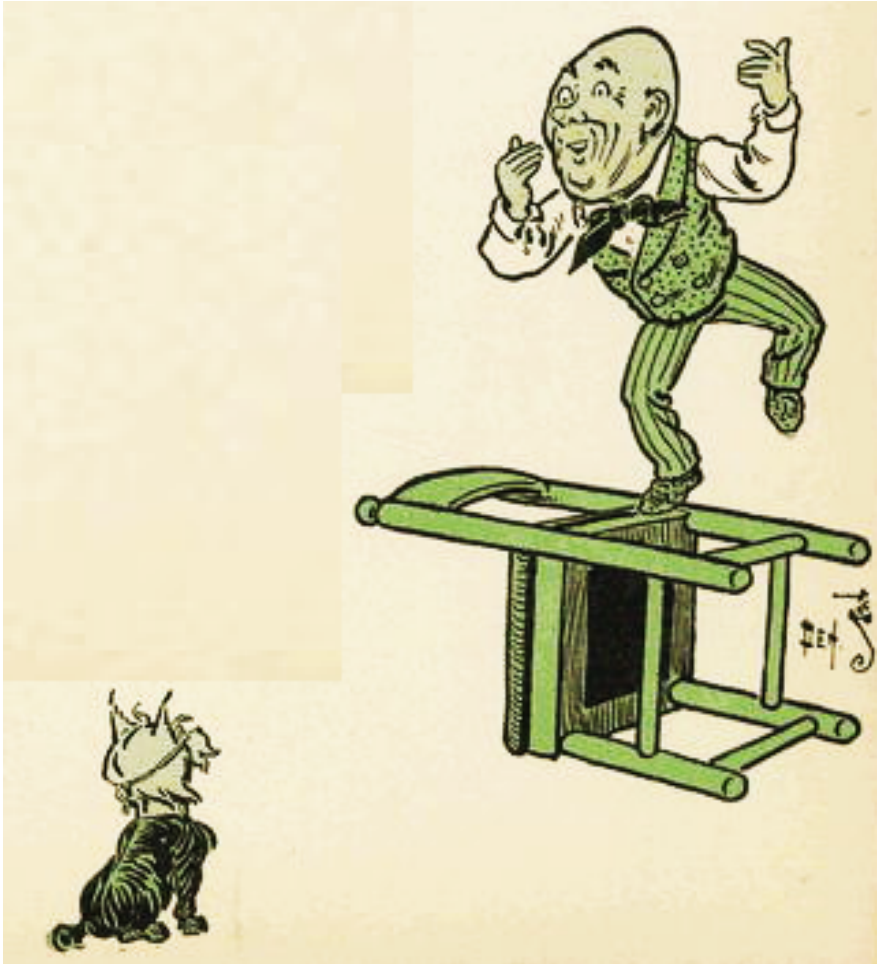
"We!" exclaimed the girl. "Are you going with me?"

"Yes, of course," replied Oz. "I am tired of being such a humbug. If I should go out of this Palace my people would soon discover I am not a Wizard, and then they would be vexed with me for having deceived them. So I have to stay shut up in these rooms all day, and it gets tiresome. I'd much rather go back to Kansas with you and be in a circus again."

"I shall be glad to have your company," said Dorothy.

"Thank you," he answered. "Now, if you will help me sew the silk together, we will begin to work on our balloon."

So Dorothy took a needle and thread, and as fast as Oz cut the strips of silk into proper shape the girl sewed them neatly together. First there was a strip of light green silk, then a strip of dark green and then a strip of emerald green; for Oz had a fancy to make the balloon in different shades of the color about them. It took three days to sew all the strips together, but when it was finished they had a big bag of green silk more than twenty feet long.



Then Oz painted it on the inside with a coat of thin glue, to make it airtight, after which he announced that the balloon was ready.

"But we must have a basket to ride in," he said. So he sent the soldier with the green whiskers for a big clothes basket, which he fastened with many ropes to the bottom of the balloon.

When it was all ready, Oz sent word to his people that he was going to make a visit to a great brother Wizard who lived in the clouds. The news spread rapidly throughout the city and everyone came to see the wonderful sight.

Oz ordered the balloon carried out in front of the Palace, and the people gazed upon it with much curiosity. The Tin Woodman had chopped a big pile of wood, and now he made a fire of it, and Oz held the bottom of the balloon

over the fire so that the hot air that arose from it would be caught in the silken bag. Gradually the balloon swelled out and rose into the air, until finally the basket just touched the ground.

Then Oz got into the basket and said to all the people in a loud voice:

"I am now going away to make a visit. While I am gone the Scarecrow will rule over you. I command you to obey him as you would me."

The balloon was by this time tugging hard at the rope that held it to the ground, for the air within it was hot, and this made it so much lighter in weight than the air without that it pulled hard to rise into the sky.

"Come, Dorothy!" cried the Wizard. "Hurry up, or the balloon will fly away."

“I can’t find Toto anywhere,” replied Dorothy, who did not wish to leave her little dog behind. Toto had run into the crowd to bark at a kitten, and Dorothy at last found him. She picked him up and ran towards the balloon.

She was within a few steps of it, and Oz was holding out his hands to help her into the basket, when, crack! went the ropes, and the balloon rose into the air without her.

“Come back!” she screamed. “I want to go, too!”

“I can’t come back, my dear,” called Oz from the basket. “Good-bye!”

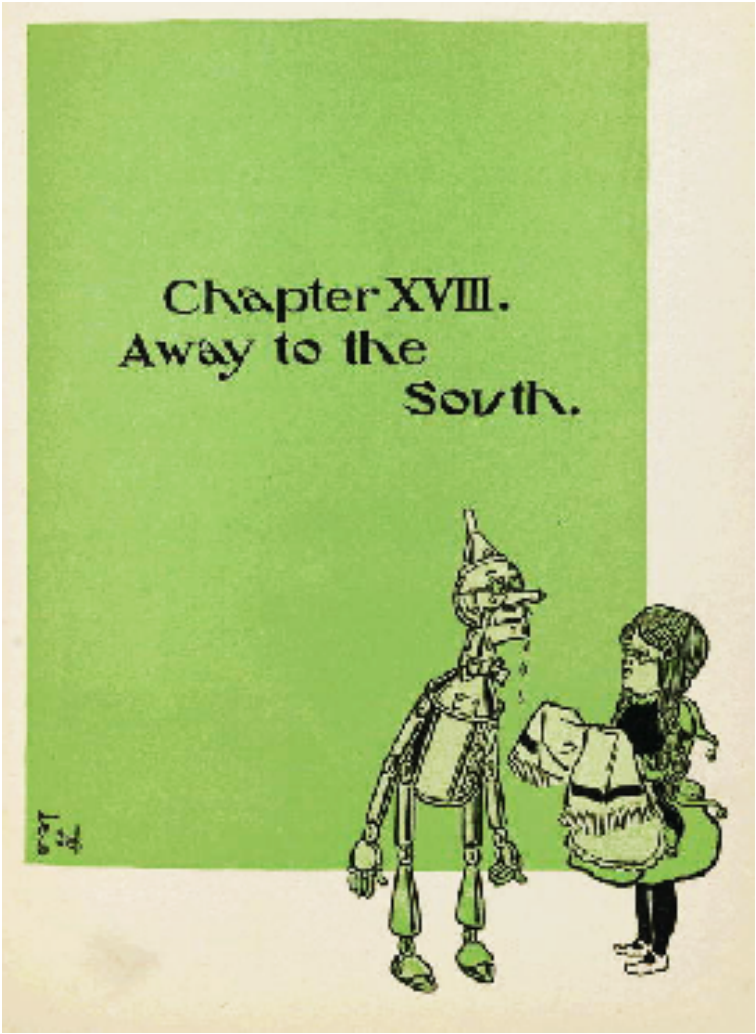
“Good-bye!” shouted everyone, and all eyes were turned upward to where the Wizard was riding in the basket, rising every moment farther and farther into the sky.

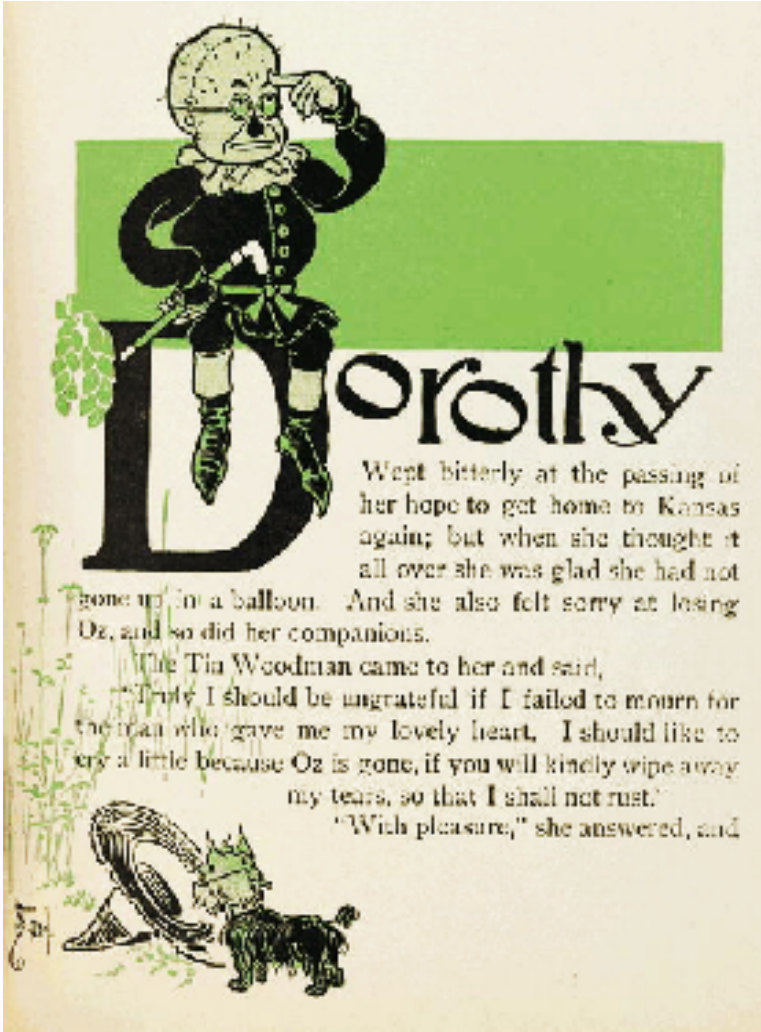
And that was the last any of them ever saw of Oz, the Wonderful Wizard, though he may have reached Omaha safely, and be there now, for all we know. But the people remembered him lovingly, and said to one another:

“Oz was always our friend. When he was here he built for us this beautiful Emerald City, and now he is gone he has left the Wise Scarecrow to rule over us.”

Still, for many days they grieved over the loss of the Wonderful Wizard, and would not be comforted.

18. Away to the South





Dorothy wept bitterly at the passing of her hope to get home to Kansas again; but when she thought it all over she was glad she had not gone up in a balloon. And she also felt sorry at losing Oz, and so did her companions.

The Tin Woodman came to her and said:

"Truly I should be ungrateful if I failed to mourn for the man who gave me my lovely heart. I should like to cry a little because Oz is gone, if you will kindly wipe away my tears, so that I shall not rust."

"With pleasure," she answered, and brought a towel at once. Then the Tin Woodman wept for several minutes, and she watched the tears carefully and wiped them away with the towel. When he had finished, he thanked her kindly and oiled himself thoroughly with his jeweled oil-can, to guard

against mishap.

The Scarecrow was now the ruler of the Emerald City, and although he was not a Wizard the people were proud of him. “For,” they said, “there is not another city in all the world that is ruled by a stuffed man.” And, so far as they knew, they were quite right.

The morning after the balloon had gone up with Oz, the four travelers met in the Throne Room and talked matters over. The Scarecrow sat in the big throne and the others stood respectfully before him.

“We are not so unlucky,” said the new ruler, “for this Palace and the Emerald City belong to us, and we can do just as we please. When I remember that a short time ago I was up on a pole in a farmer’s cornfield, and that now I am the ruler of this beautiful City, I am quite satisfied with my lot.”

“I also,” said the Tin Woodman, “am well-pleased with my new heart; and, really, that was the only thing I wished in all the world.”

“For my part, I am content in knowing I am as brave as any beast that ever lived, if not braver,” said the Lion modestly.

"If Dorothy would only be contented to live in the Emerald City," continued the Scarecrow, "we might all be happy together."

"But I don't want to live here," cried Dorothy. "I want to go to Kansas, and live with Aunt Em and Uncle Henry."

"Well, then, what can be done?" inquired the Woodman.

The Scarecrow decided to think, and he thought so hard that the pins and needles began to stick out of his brains. Finally he said:

"Why not call the Winged Monkeys, and ask them to carry you over the desert?"

"I never thought of that!" said Dorothy joyfully. "It's just the thing. I'll go at once for the Golden Cap."

When she brought it into the Throne Room she spoke the magic words, and soon the band of Winged Monkeys flew in through the open window and stood beside her.

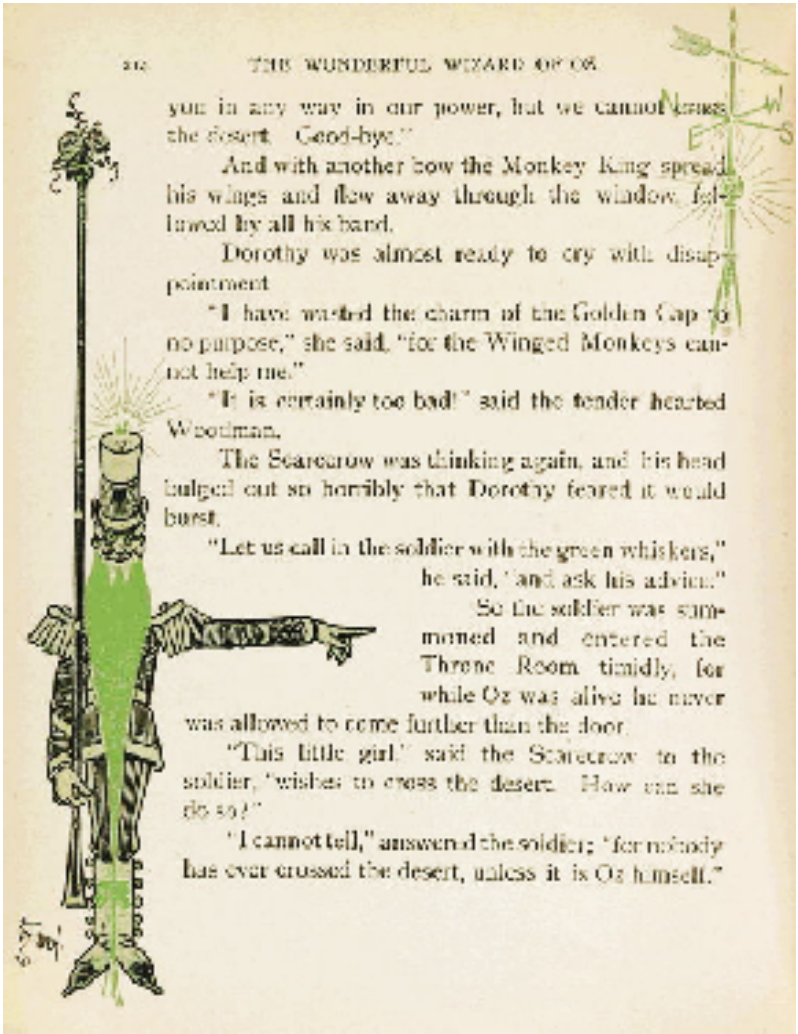
"This is the second time you have called us," said the Monkey King, bowing before the little girl. "What do you wish?"

"I want you to fly with me to Kansas," said Dorothy.

But the Monkey King shook his head.

"That cannot be done," he said. "We belong to this country alone, and cannot leave it. There has never been a Winged Monkey in Kansas yet, and I suppose there never will be, for they don't belong there. We shall be glad to serve you in any way in our power, but we cannot cross the desert. Good-bye."

And with another bow, the Monkey King spread his wings and flew away through the window, followed by all his band.



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you in any way in our power, but we cannot cross the desert. Good-bye."

And with another bow the Monkey King spread his wings and flew away through the window, followed by all his band.

Dorothy was almost ready to cry with disappointment.

"I have wasted the charm of the Golden Cap to no purpose," she said, "for the Winged Monkeys cannot help me."

"It is certainly too bad!" said the tender-hearted Woodman.

The Scarecrow was thinking again, and his head bulged out so horribly that Dorothy feared it would burst.

"Let us call in the soldier with the green whiskers," he said, "and ask his advice."

So the soldier was summoned and entered the Throne Room timidly, for while Oz was alive he never was allowed to come further than the door.

"This little girl," said the Scarecrow to the soldier, "wishes to cross the desert. How can she do so?"

"I cannot tell," answered the soldier; "for nobody has ever crossed the desert, unless it is Oz himself."

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“Is there no one who can help me?” asked Dorothy earnestly.

“Glinda might,” he suggested.

“Who is Glinda?” inquired the Scarecrow.

“The Witch of the South. She is the most powerful of all the Witches, and rules over the Quadlings. Besides, her castle stands on the edge of the desert, so she may know a way to cross it.”

“Glinda is a Good Witch, isn’t she?” asked the child.

“The Quadlings think she is good,” said the soldier, “and she is kind to everyone. I have heard that Glinda is a beautiful woman, who knows how to keep young in spite of the many years she has lived.”

“How can I get to her castle?” asked Dorothy.

“The road is straight to the South,” he answered, “but it is said to be full of dangers to travelers. There are wild beasts in the woods, and a race of queer men who do not like strangers to cross their country. For this reason none of the Quadlings ever come to the Emerald City.”

The soldier then left them and the Scarecrow said:

“It seems, in spite of dangers, that the best thing Dorothy can do is to travel to the Land of the South and ask Glinda to help her. For, of course, if Dorothy stays here she will never get back to Kansas.”

“You must have been thinking again,” remarked the Tin Woodman.

“I have,” said the Scarecrow.

“I shall go with Dorothy,” declared the Lion, “for I am tired of your city and long for the woods and the country again. I am really a wild beast, you know. Besides, Dorothy will need someone to protect her.”

“That is true,” agreed the Woodman. “My axe may be of service to her; so I also will go with her to the Land of the South.”

“When shall we start?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Are you going?” they asked, in surprise.

“Certainly. If it wasn’t for Dorothy I should never have had brains. She lifted me from the pole in the cornfield and brought me to the Emerald City. So my good luck is all due to her, and I shall never leave her until she starts back to Kansas for good and all.”

“Thank you,” said Dorothy gratefully. “You are all very kind to me. But I should like to start as soon as possible.”

“We shall go tomorrow morning,” returned the Scarecrow. “So now let us all get ready, for it will be a long journey.”

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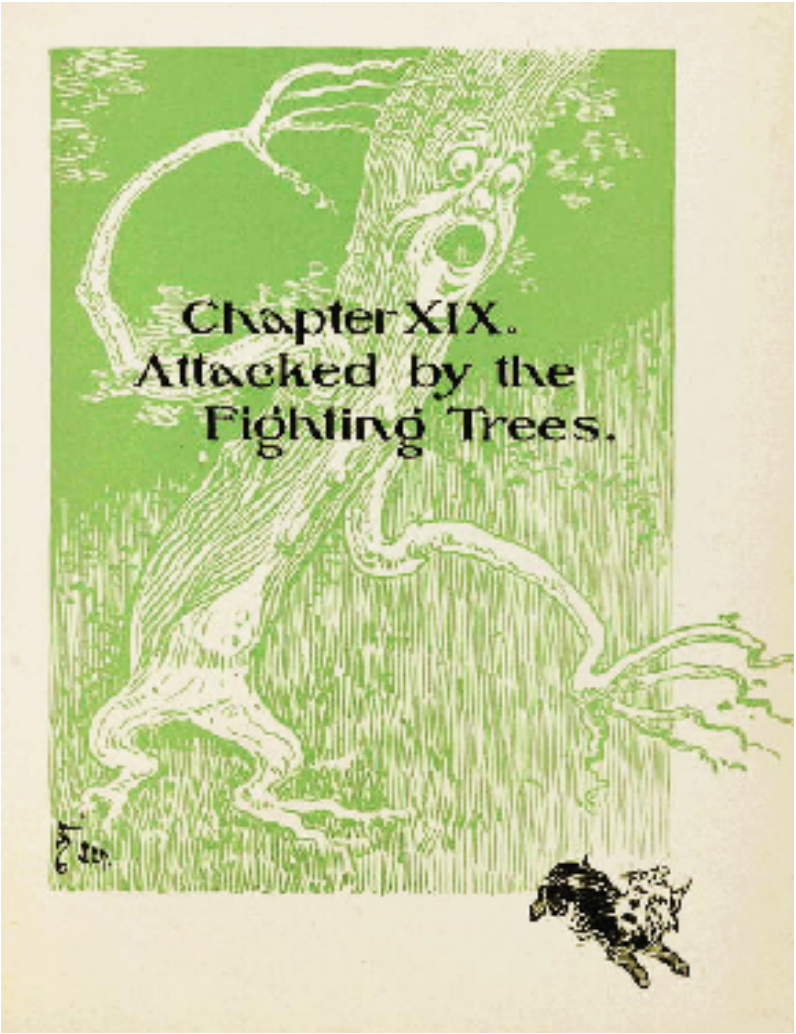
"Thank you," said Dorothy, gratefully. "You are all very kind to me. But I should like to start as soon as possible."

"We shall go to-morrow morning," returned the Scarecrow. "So now let us all get ready, for it will be a long journey."

19. Attacked by the Fighting Trees



The next morning Dorothy kissed the pretty green girl good-bye, and they all shook hands with the soldier with the green whiskers, who had walked with them as far as the gate. When the Guardian of the Gate saw them again he wondered greatly that they could leave the beautiful City to get into new trouble. But he at once unlocked their spectacles, which he put back into the green box, and gave them many good wishes to carry with them.

"You are now our ruler," he said to the Scarecrow; "so you must come back to us as soon as possible."

"I certainly shall if I am able," the Scarecrow replied; "but I must help Dorothy to get home, first."

As Dorothy bade the good-natured Guardian a last farewell she said:

“I have been very kindly treated in your lovely City, and everyone has been good to me. I cannot tell you how grateful I am.”

“Don’t try, my dear,” he answered. “We should like to keep you with us, but if it is your wish to return to Kansas, I hope you will find a way.” He then opened the gate of the outer wall, and they walked forth and started upon their journey.

The sun shone brightly as our friends turned their faces toward the Land of the South. They were all in the best of spirits, and laughed and chatted together. Dorothy was once more filled with the hope of getting home, and the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman were glad to be of use to her. As for the Lion, he sniffed the fresh air with delight and whisked his tail from side to side in pure joy at being in the country again, while Toto ran around them and chased the moths and butterflies, barking merrily all the time.

"City life does not agree with me at all," remarked the Lion, as they walked along at a brisk pace. "I have lost much flesh since I lived there, and now I am anxious for a chance to show the other beasts how courageous I have grown."

They now turned and took a last look at the Emerald City. All they could see was a mass of towers and steeples behind the green walls, and high up above everything the spires and dome of the Palace of Oz.

"Oz was not such a bad Wizard, after all," said the Tin Woodman, as he felt his heart rattling around in his breast.

"He knew how to give me brains, and very good brains, too," said the Scarecrow.

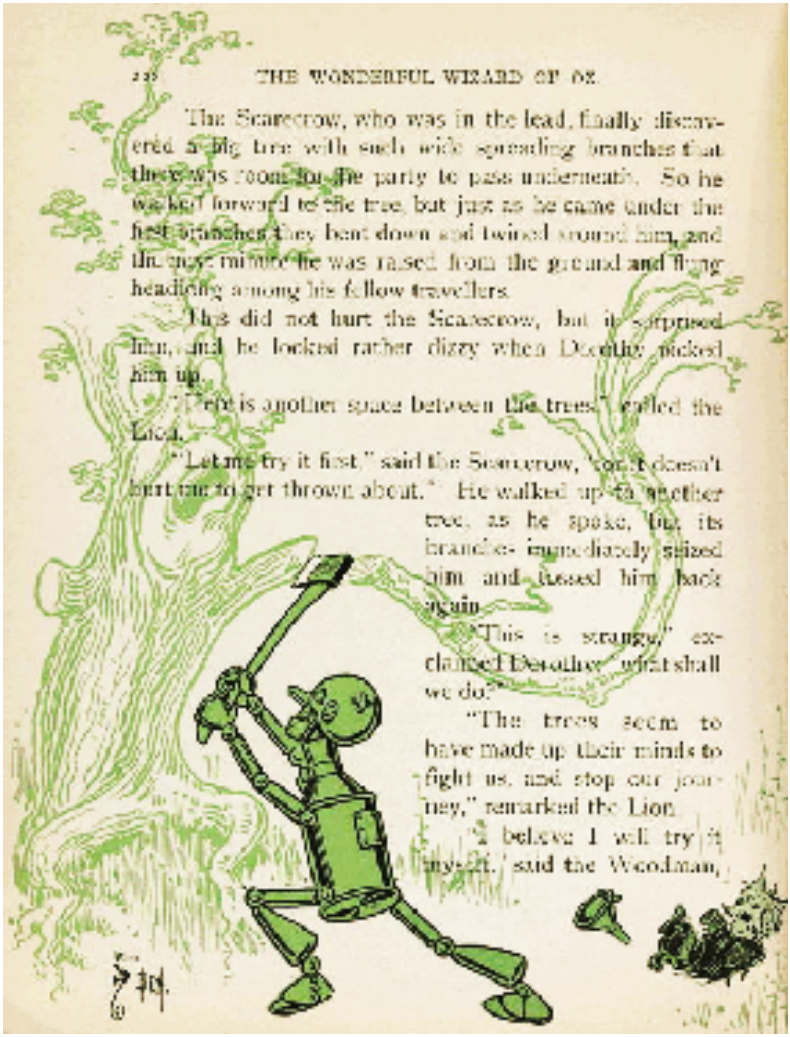
“If Oz had taken a dose of the same courage he gave me,” added the Lion, “he would have been a brave man.”

Dorothy said nothing. Oz had not kept the promise he made her, but he had done his best, so she forgave him. As he said, he was a good man, even if he was a bad Wizard.

The first day’s journey was through the green fields and bright flowers that stretched about the Emerald City on every side. They slept that night on the grass, with nothing but the stars over them; and they rested very well indeed.

In the morning they traveled on until they came to a thick wood. There was no way of going around it, for it seemed to extend to the right and left as far as they could see; and, besides, they did not dare change the direction of their journey for fear of getting lost. So they looked for the place where it would be easiest to get into the forest.

The Scarecrow, who was in the lead, finally discovered a big tree with such wide-spreading branches that there was room for the party to pass underneath. So he walked forward to the tree, but just as he came under the first branches they bent down and twined around him, and the next minute he was raised from the ground and flung headlong among his fellow travelers.



This did not hurt the Scarecrow, but it surprised him, and he looked rather dizzy when Dorothy picked him up.

"Here is another space between the trees," called the Lion.

"Let me try it first," said the Scarecrow, "for it doesn't hurt me to get thrown about." He walked up to another tree, as he spoke, but its branches immediately seized him and tossed him back again.

"This is strange," exclaimed Dorothy. "What shall we do?"

"The trees seem to have made up their minds to fight us, and stop our journey," remarked the Lion.

"I believe I will try it myself," said the Woodman, and shouldering his axe, he marched up to the first tree that had handled the Scarecrow so

roughly. When a big branch bent down to seize him the Woodman chopped at it so fiercely that he cut it in two. At once the tree began shaking all its branches as if in pain, and the Tin Woodman passed safely under it.

"Come on!" he shouted to the others. "Be quick!" They all ran forward and passed under the tree without injury, except Toto, who was caught by a small branch and shaken until he howled. But the Woodman promptly chopped off the branch and set the little dog free.

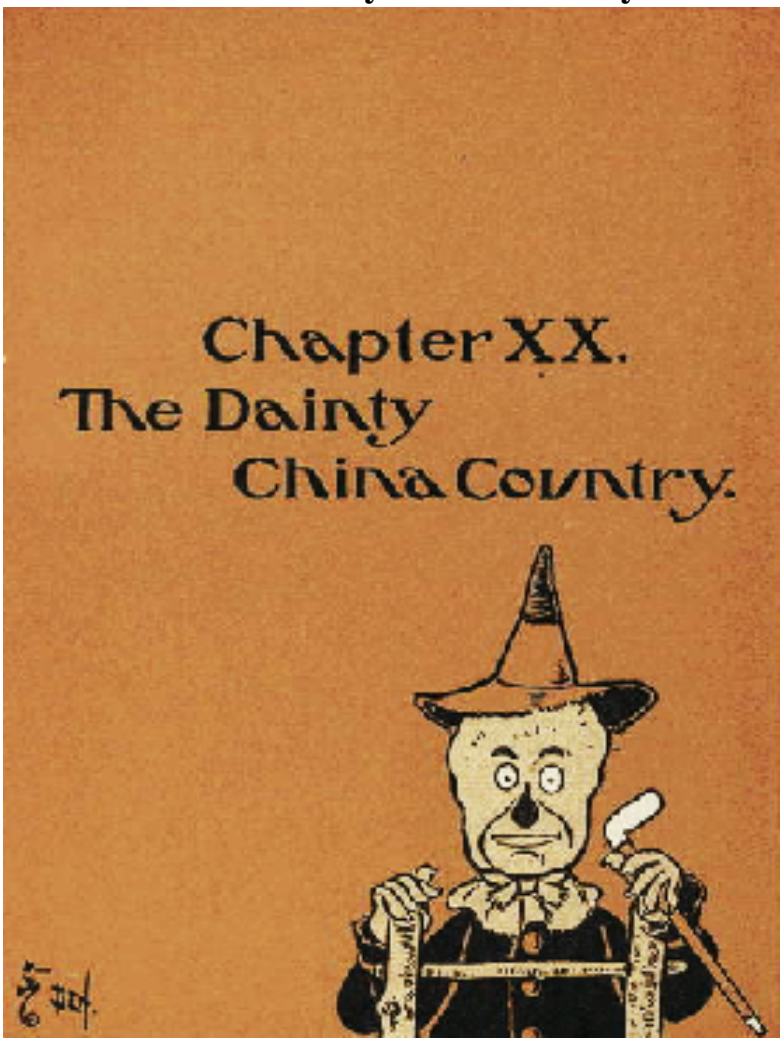
The other trees of the forest did nothing to keep them back, so they made up their minds that only the first row of trees could bend down their branches, and that probably these were the policemen of the forest, and given this wonderful power in order to keep strangers out of it.

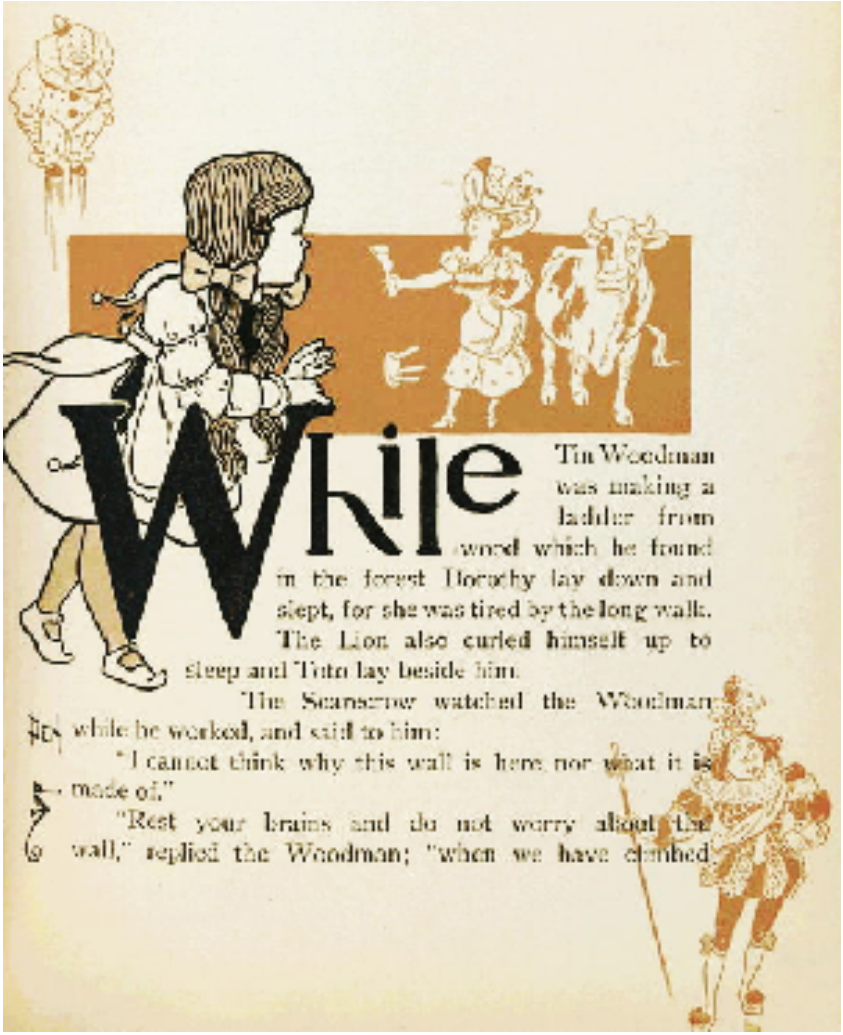
The four travelers walked with ease through the trees until they came to the farther edge of the wood. Then, to their surprise, they found before them a high wall which seemed to be made of white china. It was smooth, like the surface of a dish, and higher than their heads.

"What shall we do now?" asked Dorothy.

"I will make a ladder," said the Tin Woodman, "for we certainly must climb over the wall."

20. The Dainty China Country





While the Woodman was making a ladder from wood which he found in the forest Dorothy lay down and slept, for she was tired by the long walk. The Lion also curled himself up to sleep and Toto lay beside him.

The Scarecrow watched the Woodman while he worked, and said to him:

"I cannot think why this wall is here, nor what it is made of."

"Rest your brains and do not worry about the wall," replied the Woodman. "When we have climbed over it, we shall know what is on the other side."

After a time the ladder was finished. It looked clumsy, but the Tin Woodman was sure it was strong and would answer their purpose. The Scarecrow waked Dorothy and the Lion and Toto, and told them that the

ladder was ready. The Scarecrow climbed up the ladder first, but he was so awkward that Dorothy had to follow close behind and keep him from falling off. When he got his head over the top of the wall the Scarecrow said, “Oh, my!”

“Go on,” exclaimed Dorothy.

So the Scarecrow climbed farther up and sat down on the top of the wall, and Dorothy put her head over and cried, “Oh, my!” just as the Scarecrow had done.

Then Toto came up, and immediately began to bark, but Dorothy made him be still.

The Lion climbed the ladder next, and the Tin Woodman came last; but both of them cried, “Oh, my!” as soon as they looked over the wall. When they were all sitting in a row on the top of the wall, they looked down and saw a strange sight.

Before them was a great stretch of country having a floor as smooth and shining and white as the bottom of a big platter. Scattered around were many houses made entirely of china and painted in the brightest colors. These houses were quite small, the biggest of them reaching only as high as Dorothy’s waist. There were also pretty little barns, with china fences around them; and many cows and sheep and horses and pigs and chickens, all made of china, were standing about in groups.

But the strangest of all were the people who lived in this queer country. There were milkmaids and shepherdesses, with brightly colored bodices and golden spots all over their gowns; and princesses with most gorgeous frocks of silver and gold and purple; and shepherds dressed in knee breeches with pink and yellow and blue stripes down them, and golden buckles on their shoes; and princes with jeweled crowns upon their heads, wearing ermine robes and satin doublets; and funny clowns in ruffled gowns, with round red spots upon their cheeks and tall, pointed caps. And, strangest of all, these people were all made of china, even to their clothes, and were so small that the tallest of them was no higher than Dorothy's knee.

No one did so much as look at the travelers at first, except one little purple

china dog with an extra-large head, which came to the wall and barked at them in a tiny voice, afterwards running away again.

"How shall we get down?" asked Dorothy.

They found the ladder so heavy they could not pull it up, so the Scarecrow fell off the wall and the others jumped down upon him so that the hard floor would not hurt their feet. Of course they took pains not to light on his head and get the pins in their feet. When all were safely down they picked up the Scarecrow, whose body was quite flattened out, and patted his straw into shape again.

"We must cross this strange place in order to get to the other side," said Dorothy, "for it would be unwise for us to go any other way except due South."

They began walking through the country of the china people, and the first thing they came to was a china milkmaid milking a china cow. As they drew near, the cow suddenly gave a kick and kicked over the stool, the pail, and even the milkmaid herself, and all fell on the china ground with a great clatter.

Dorothy was shocked to see that the cow had broken her leg off, and that the pail was lying in several small pieces, while the poor milkmaid had a nick in her left elbow.

"There!" cried the milkmaid angrily. "See what you have done! My cow has broken her leg, and I must take her to the mender's shop and have it glued on again. What do you mean by coming here and frightening my cow?"

"I'm very sorry," returned Dorothy. "Please forgive us."

But the pretty milkmaid was much too vexed to make any answer. She picked up the leg sulkily and led her cow away, the poor animal limping on three legs. As she left them the milkmaid cast many reproachful glances over her shoulder at the clumsy strangers, holding her nicked elbow close to her side.

Dorothy was quite grieved at this mishap.

"We must be very careful here," said the kind-hearted Woodman, "or we may hurt these pretty little people so they will never get over it."

A little farther on Dorothy met a most beautifully dressed young Princess, who stopped short as she saw the strangers and started to run away.

Dorothy wanted to see more of the Princess, so she ran after her. But the china girl cried out:

"Don't chase me! Don't chase me!"

She had such a frightened little voice that Dorothy stopped and said, "Why not?"

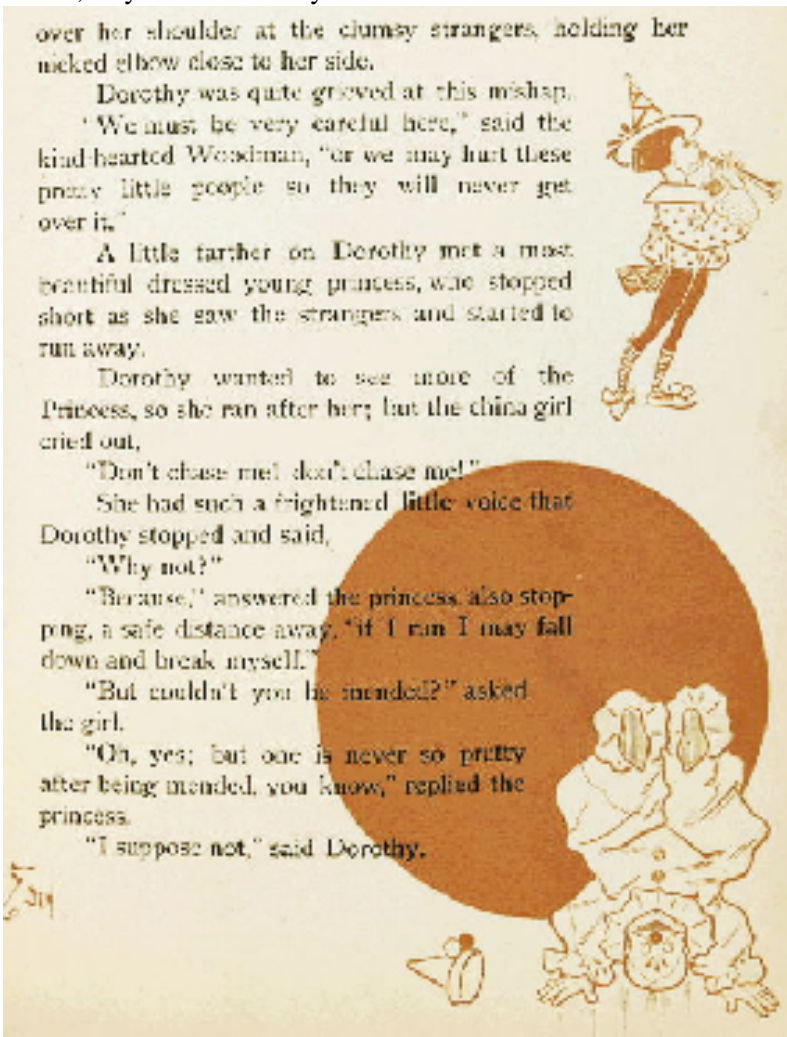
“Because,” answered the Princess, also stopping, a safe distance away, “if I run I may fall down and break myself.”

“But could you not be mended?” asked the girl.

“Oh, yes; but one is never so pretty after being mended, you know,” replied the Princess.

“I suppose not,” said Dorothy.

“Now there is Mr. Joker, one of our clowns,” continued the china lady, “who is always trying to stand upon his head. He has broken himself so often that he is mended in a hundred places, and doesn’t look at all pretty. Here he comes now, so you can see for yourself.”



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A little farther on Dorothy met a most beautiful dressed young princess, who stopped short as she saw the strangers and started to run away.

Dorothy wanted to see more of the Princess, so she ran after her; but the china girl cried out,

“Don’t chase me! don’t chase me!”

She had such a frightened little voice that Dorothy stopped and said,

“Why not?”

“Because,” answered the princess, also stopping, a safe distance away, “if I run I may fall down and break myself.”

“But couldn’t you be mended?” asked the girl.

“Oh, yes; but one is never so pretty after being mended, you know,” replied the princess.

“I suppose not,” said Dorothy.

Indeed, a jolly little clown came walking toward them, and Dorothy could

see that in spite of his pretty clothes of red and yellow and green he was completely covered with cracks, running every which way and showing plainly that he had been mended in many places.

The Clown put his hands in his pockets, and after puffing out his cheeks and nodding his head at them saucily, he said:

"My lady fair,
Why do you stare
At poor old Mr. Joker?
You're quite as stiff
And prim as if
You'd eaten up a poker!"

"Be quiet, sir!" said the Princess. "Can't you see these are strangers, and should be treated with respect?"

"Well, that's respect, I expect," declared the Clown, and immediately stood upon his head.

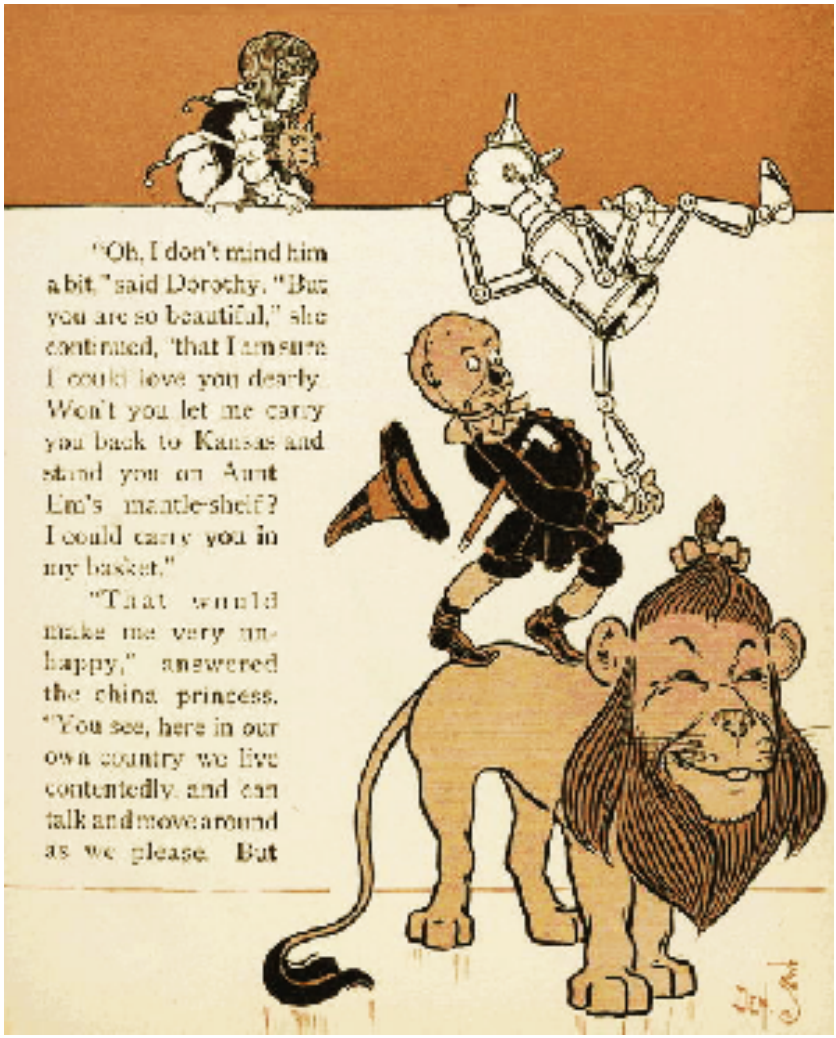
"Don't mind Mr. Joker," said the Princess to Dorothy. "He is considerably cracked in his head, and that makes him foolish."

"Oh, I don't mind him a bit," said Dorothy. "But you are so beautiful," she continued, "that I am sure I could love you dearly. Won't you let me carry you back to Kansas, and stand you on Aunt Em's mantel? I could carry you in my basket."

"That would make me very unhappy," answered the china Princess. "You see, here in our country we live contentedly, and can talk and move around as we please. But whenever any of us are taken away our joints at once stiffen, and we can only stand straight and look pretty. Of course that is all that is expected of us when we are on mantels and cabinets and drawing-room tables, but our lives are much pleasanter here in our own country."

"I would not make you unhappy for all the world!" exclaimed Dorothy. "So I'll just say good-bye."

"Good-bye," replied the Princess.



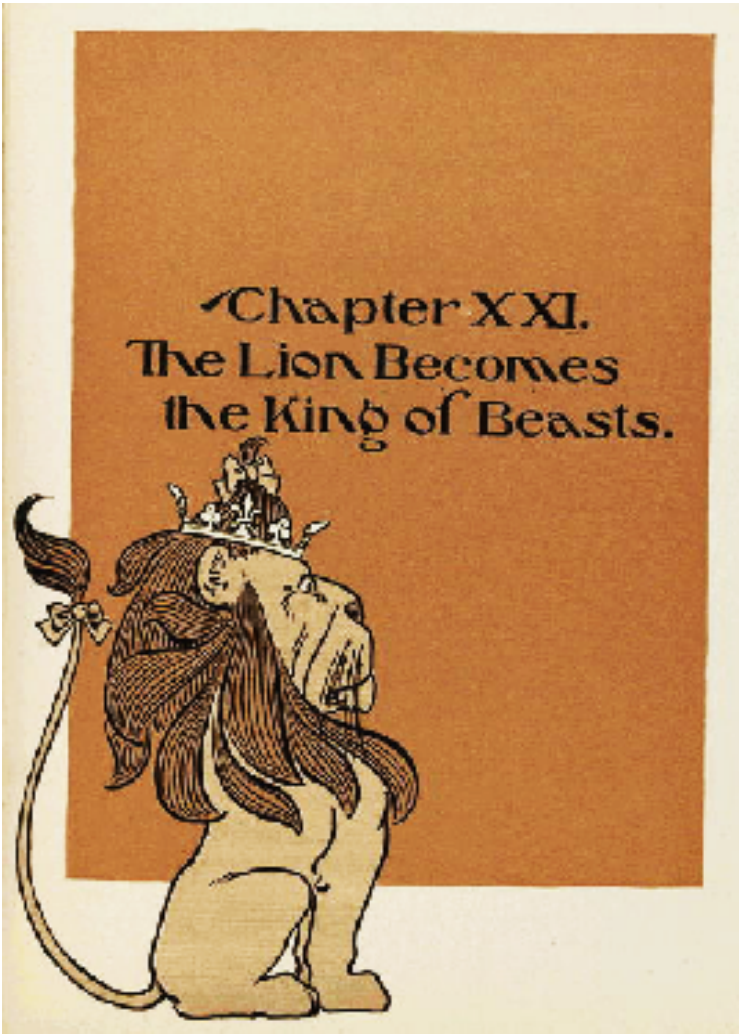
They walked carefully through the china country. The little animals and all the people scampered out of their way, fearing the strangers would break them, and after an hour or so the travelers reached the other side of the country and came to another china wall.

It was not so high as the first, however, and by standing upon the Lion's back they all managed to scramble to the top. Then the Lion gathered his legs under him and jumped on the wall; but just as he jumped, he upset a china church with his tail and smashed it all to pieces.

"That was too bad," said Dorothy, "but really I think we were lucky in not doing these little people more harm than breaking a cow's leg and a church. They are all so brittle!"

“They are, indeed,” said the Scarecrow, “and I am thankful I am made of straw and cannot be easily damaged. There are worse things in the world than being a Scarecrow.”

21. The Lion Becomes the King of Beasts



After climbing down from the china wall the travelers found themselves in a disagreeable country, full of bogs and marshes and covered with tall, rank grass. It was difficult to walk without falling into muddy holes, for the grass was so thick that it hid them from sight. However, by carefully picking their way, they got safely along until they reached solid ground. But here the country seemed wilder than ever, and after a long and tiresome walk through the underbrush they entered another forest, where the trees were bigger and older than any they had ever seen.

"This forest is perfectly delightful," declared the Lion, looking around him with joy. "Never have I seen a more beautiful place."

"It seems gloomy," said the Scarecrow.

“Not a bit of it,” answered the Lion. “I should like to live here all my life. See how soft the dried leaves are under your feet and how rich and green the moss is that clings to these old trees. Surely no wild beast could wish a pleasanter home.”

“Perhaps there are wild beasts in the forest now,” said Dorothy.

“I suppose there are,” returned the Lion, “but I do not see any of them about.”

They walked through the forest until it became too dark to go any farther. Dorothy and Toto and the Lion lay down to sleep, while the Woodman and the Scarecrow kept watch over them as usual.

When morning came, they started again. Before they had gone far they heard a low rumble, as of the growling of many wild animals. Toto whimpered a little, but none of the others was frightened, and they kept along the well-trodden path until they came to an opening in the wood, in which were gathered hundreds of beasts of every variety. There were tigers and elephants and bears and wolves and foxes and all the others in the natural history, and for a moment Dorothy was afraid. But the Lion explained that the animals were holding a meeting, and he judged by their snarling and growling that they were in great trouble.

As he spoke several of the beasts caught sight of him, and at once the great assemblage hushed as if by magic. The biggest of the tigers came up to the Lion and bowed, saying:

“Welcome, O King of Beasts! You have come in good time to fight our enemy and bring peace to all the animals of the forest once more.”

“What is your trouble?” asked the Lion quietly.

“We are all threatened,” answered the tiger, “by a fierce enemy which has lately come into this forest. It is a most tremendous monster, like a great spider, with a body as big as an elephant and legs as long as a tree trunk. It has eight of these long legs, and as the monster crawls through the forest he seizes an animal with a leg and drags it to his mouth, where he eats it as a spider does a fly. Not one of us is safe while this fierce creature is alive, and we had called a meeting to decide how to take care of ourselves when you came among us.”

The Lion thought for a moment.

"Are there any other lions in this forest?" he asked.

"No; there were some, but the monster has eaten them all. And, besides, they were none of them nearly so large and brave as you."

"If I put an end to your enemy, will you bow down to me and obey me as King of the Forest?" inquired the Lion.

"We will do that gladly," returned the tiger; and all the other beasts roared with a mighty roar: "We will!"

"Where is this great spider of yours now?" asked the Lion.

"Yonder, among the oak trees," said the tiger, pointing with his forefoot.

"Take good care of these friends of mine," said the Lion, "and I will go at once to fight the monster."

He bade his comrades good-bye and marched proudly away to do battle with the enemy.

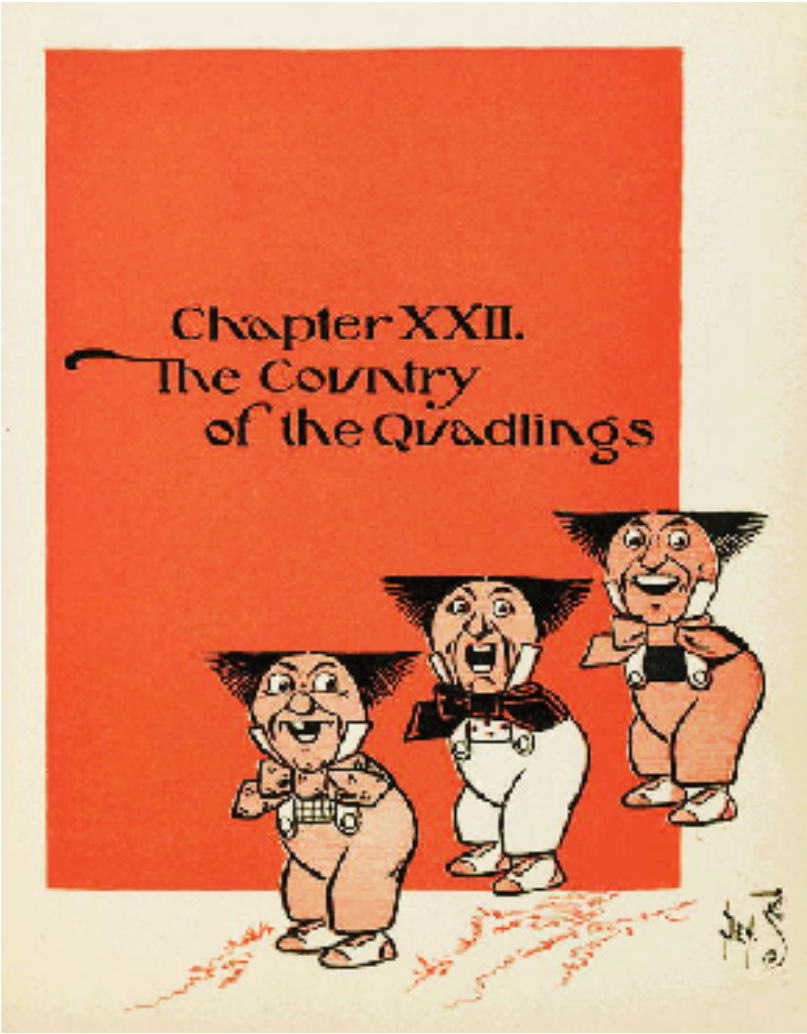
The great spider was lying asleep when the Lion found him, and it looked so ugly that its foe turned up his nose in disgust. Its legs were quite as long as the tiger had said, and its body covered with coarse black hair. It had a great mouth, with a row of sharp teeth a foot long; but its head was joined to the pudgy body by a neck as slender as a wasp's waist. This gave the Lion a hint of the best way to attack the creature, and as he knew it was easier to fight it asleep than awake, he gave a great spring and landed directly upon the monster's back. Then, with one blow of his heavy paw, all armed with sharp claws, he knocked the spider's head from its body. Jumping down, he watched it until the long legs stopped wiggling, when he knew it was quite dead.

The Lion went back to the opening where the beasts of the forest were waiting for him and said proudly:

"You need fear your enemy no longer."

Then the beasts bowed down to the Lion as their King, and he promised to come back and rule over them as soon as Dorothy was safely on her way to Kansas.

22. The Country of the Quadlings



THE FOUR TRAVELLERS passed through the rest of the forest in safety, and when they came out from its gloom saw before them a steep hill, covered from top to bottom with great pieces of rock.

"That will be a hard climb," said the Scarecrow, "but we must get over the hill, nevertheless."

So he led the way and the others followed. They had nearly reached the first rock when they heard a rough voice cry out,

"Keep back!"

"Who are you?" asked the Scarecrow. Then a head

The four travelers passed through the rest of the forest in safety, and when they came out from its gloom saw before them a steep hill, covered from top to bottom with great pieces of rock.

"That will be a hard climb," said the Scarecrow, "but we must get over the hill, nevertheless."

So he led the way and the others followed. They had nearly reached the first rock when they heard a rough voice cry out, "Keep back!"

"Who are you?" asked the Scarecrow.

Then a head showed itself over the rock and the same voice said, "This hill belongs to us, and we don't allow anyone to cross it."

"But we must cross it," said the Scarecrow. "We're going to the country

of the Quadlings."

"But you shall not!" replied the voice, and there stepped from behind the rock the strangest man the travelers had ever seen.

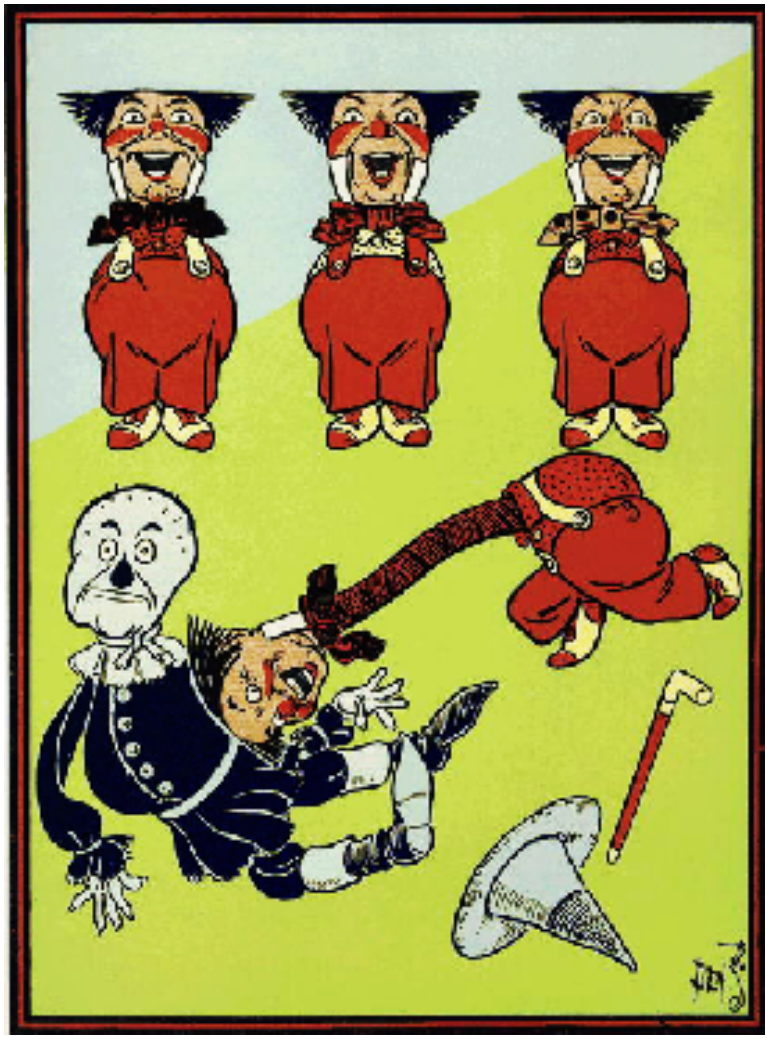
He was quite short and stout and had a big head, which was flat at the top and supported by a thick neck full of wrinkles. But he had no arms at all, and, seeing this, the Scarecrow did not fear that so helpless a creature could prevent them from climbing the hill. So he said, "I'm sorry not to do as you wish, but we must pass over your hill whether you like it or not," and he walked boldly forward.

As quick as lightning the man's head shot forward and his neck stretched out until the top of the head, where it was flat, struck the Scarecrow in the middle and sent him tumbling, over and over, down the hill. Almost as quickly as it came the head went back to the body, and the man laughed harshly as he said, "It isn't as easy as you think!"

A chorus of boisterous laughter came from the other rocks, and Dorothy saw hundreds of the armless Hammer-Heads upon the hillside, one behind every rock.

The Lion became quite angry at the laughter caused by the Scarecrow's mishap, and giving a loud roar that echoed like thunder, he dashed up the hill.

Again a head shot swiftly out, and the great Lion went rolling down the hill as if he had been struck by a cannon ball.



Dorothy ran down and helped the Scarecrow to his feet, and the Lion came up to her, feeling rather bruised and sore, and said, "It is useless to fight people with shooting heads; no one can withstand them."

"What can we do, then?" she asked.

"Call the Winged Monkeys," suggested the Tin Woodman. "You have still the right to command them once more."

"Very well," she answered, and putting on the Golden Cap she uttered the magic words. The Monkeys were as prompt as ever, and in a few moments the entire band stood before her.

"What are your commands?" inquired the King of the Monkeys, bowing low.

“Carry us over the hill to the country of the Quadlings,” answered the girl.

“It shall be done,” said the King, and at once the Winged Monkeys caught the four travelers and Toto up in their arms and flew away with them. As they passed over the hill the Hammer-Heads yelled with vexation, and shot their heads high in the air, but they could not reach the Winged Monkeys, which carried Dorothy and her comrades safely over the hill and set them down in the beautiful country of the Quadlings.

“This is the last time you can summon us,” said the leader to Dorothy; “so good-bye and good luck to you.”

“Good-bye, and thank you very much,” returned the girl; and the Monkeys rose into the air and were out of sight in a twinkling.

The country of the Quadlings seemed rich and happy. There was field upon field of ripening grain, with well-paved roads running between, and pretty rippling brooks with strong bridges across them. The fences and houses and bridges were all painted bright red, just as they had been painted yellow in the country of the Winkies and blue in the country of the Munchkins. The Quadlings themselves, who were short and fat and looked chubby and good-natured, were dressed all in red, which showed bright against the green grass and the yellowing grain.

The Monkeys had set them down near a farmhouse, and the four travelers walked up to it and knocked at the door. It was opened by the farmer’s wife, and when Dorothy asked for something to eat the woman gave them all a good dinner, with three kinds of cake and four kinds of cookies, and a bowl of milk for Toto.

“How far is it to the Castle of Glinda?” asked the child.

“It is not a great way,” answered the farmer’s wife. “Take the road to the South and you will soon reach it.”

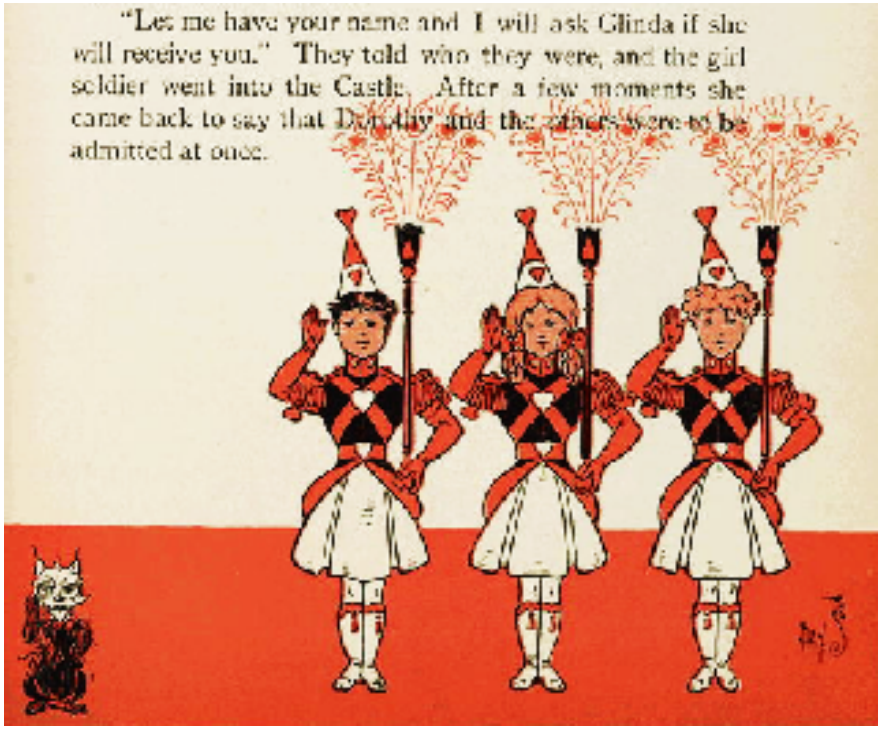
Thanking the good woman, they started afresh and walked by the fields and across the pretty bridges until they saw before them a very beautiful Castle. Before the gates were three young girls, dressed in handsome red uniforms trimmed with gold braid; and as Dorothy approached, one of them said to her:

“Why have you come to the South Country?”

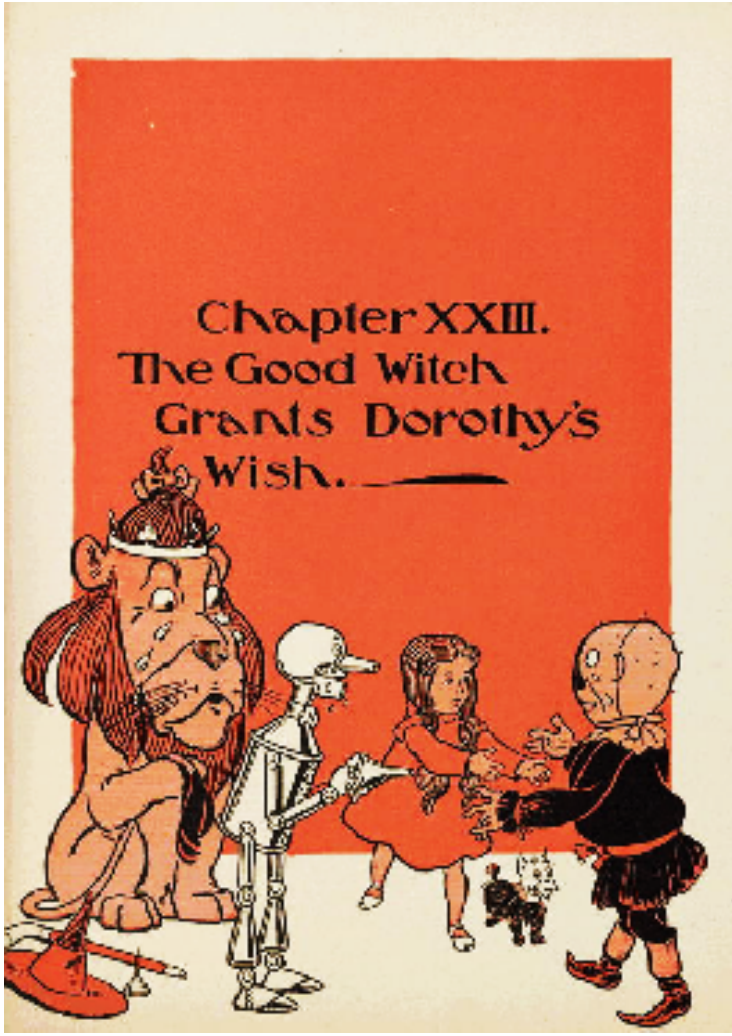
“To see the Good Witch who rules here,” she answered. “Will you take me to her?”

“Let me have your name, and I will ask Glinda if she will receive you.” They told who they were, and the girl soldier went into the Castle. After a few moments she came back to say that Dorothy and the others were to be admitted at once.

"Let me have your name and I will ask Glinda if she will receive you." They told who they were, and the girl soldier went into the Castle. After a few moments she came back to say that Dorothy and the others were to be admitted at once.



23. Glinda The Good Witch Grants Dorothy's Wish



Before they went to see Glinda, however, they were taken to a room of the Castle, where Dorothy washed her face and combed her hair, and the Lion shook the dust out of his mane, and the Scarecrow patted himself into his best shape, and the Woodman polished his tin and oiled his joints.

When they were all quite presentable they followed the soldier girl into a big room where the Witch Glinda sat upon a throne of rubies.

She was both beautiful and young to their eyes. Her hair was a rich red in color and fell in flowing ringlets over her shoulders. Her dress was pure white but her eyes were blue, and they looked kindly upon the little girl.

“What can I do for you, my child?” she asked.

Dorothy told the Witch all her story: how the cyclone had brought her to

the Land of Oz, how she had found her companions, and of the wonderful adventures they had met with.

"My greatest wish now," she added, "is to get back to Kansas, for Aunt Em will surely think something dreadful has happened to me, and that will make her put on mourning; and unless the crops are better this year than they were last, I am sure Uncle Henry cannot afford it."

Glinda leaned forward and kissed the sweet, upturned face of the loving little girl.

"Bless your dear heart," she said, "I am sure I can tell you of a way to get back to Kansas." Then she added, "But, if I do, you must give me the Golden Cap."

"Willingly!" exclaimed Dorothy; "indeed, it is of no use to me now, and when you have it you can command the Winged Monkeys three times."

"And I think I shall need their service just those three times," answered Glinda, smiling.

Dorothy then gave her the Golden Cap, and the Witch said to the Scarecrow, "What will you do when Dorothy has left us?"

"I will return to the Emerald City," he replied, "for Oz has made me its ruler and the people like me. The only thing that worries me is how to cross the hill of the Hammer-Heads."

"By means of the Golden Cap I shall command the Winged Monkeys to carry you to the gates of the Emerald City," said Glinda, "for it would be a shame to deprive the people of so wonderful a ruler."

"Am I really wonderful?" asked the Scarecrow.

"You are unusual," replied Glinda.

Turning to the Tin Woodman, she asked, "What will become of you when Dorothy leaves this country?"

He leaned on his axe and thought a moment. Then he said, "The Winkies

were very kind to me, and wanted me to rule over them after the Wicked Witch died. I am fond of the Winkies, and if I could get back again to the Country of the West, I should like nothing better than to rule over them forever."

"My second command to the Winged Monkeys," said Glinda "will be that they carry you safely to the land of the Winkies. Your brain may not be so large to look at as those of the Scarecrow, but you are really brighter than he is--when you are well polished--and I am sure you will rule the Winkies wisely and well."

Then the Witch looked at the big, shaggy Lion and asked, "When Dorothy has returned to her own home, what will become of you?"

"Over the hill of the Hammer-Heads," he answered, "lies a grand old forest, and all the beasts that live there have made me their King. If I could only get back to this forest, I would pass my life very happily there."

"My third command to the Winged Monkeys," said Glinda, "shall be to carry you to your forest. Then, having used up the powers of the Golden Cap, I shall give it to the King of the Monkeys, that he and his band may thereafter be free for evermore."

The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and the Lion now thanked the Good Witch earnestly for her kindness; and Dorothy exclaimed:

"You are certainly as good as you are beautiful! But you have not yet told me how to get back to Kansas."

"Your Silver Shoes will carry you over the desert," replied Glinda. "If you had known their power you could have gone back to your Aunt Em the very first day you came to this country."

"But then I should not have had my wonderful brains!" cried the Scarecrow. "I might have passed my whole life in the farmer's cornfield."

"And I should not have had my lovely heart," said the Tin Woodman. "I might have stood and rusted in the forest till the end of the world."

"And I should have lived a coward forever," declared the Lion, "and no beast in all the forest would have had a good word to say to me."

"This is all true," said Dorothy, "and I am glad I was of use to these good friends. But now that each of them has had what he most desired, and each is happy in having a kingdom to rule besides, I think I should like to go back to

Kansas."

"The Silver Shoes," said the Good Witch, "have wonderful powers. And one of the most curious things about them is that they can carry you to any place in the world in three steps, and each step will be made in the wink of an eye. All you have to do is to knock the heels together three times and command the shoes to carry you wherever you wish to go."

"If that is so," said the child joyfully, "I will ask them to carry me back to Kansas at once."

She threw her arms around the Lion's neck and kissed him, patting his big head tenderly. Then she kissed the Tin Woodman, who was weeping in a way most dangerous to his joints. But she hugged the soft, stuffed body of the Scarecrow in her arms instead of kissing his painted face, and found she was crying herself at this sorrowful parting from her loving comrades.

Glinda the Good stepped down from her ruby throne to give the little girl a good-bye kiss, and Dorothy thanked her for all the kindness she had shown to her friends and herself.

Dorothy now took Toto up solemnly in her arms, and having said one last good-bye she clapped the heels of her shoes together three times, saying:

"Take me home to Aunt Em!"

Instantly she was whirling through the air, so swiftly that all she could see or feel was the wind whistling past her ears.

The Silver Shoes took but three steps, and then she stopped so suddenly that she rolled over upon the grass several times before she knew where she was.

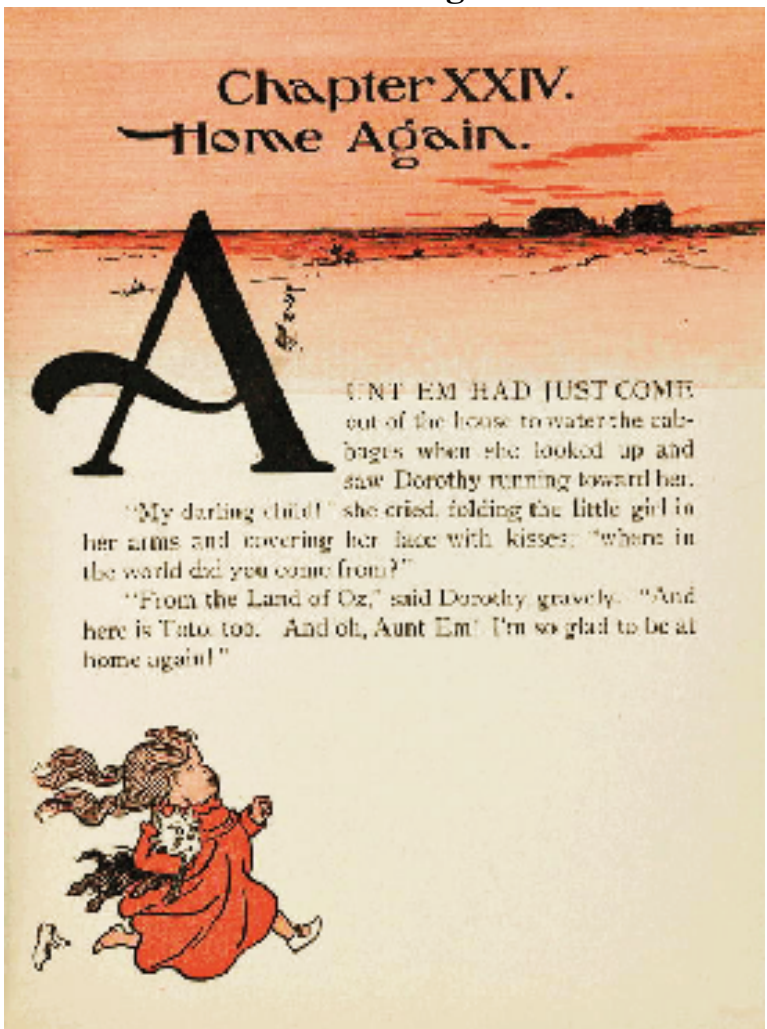
At length, however, she sat up and looked about her.

"Good gracious!" she cried.

For she was sitting on the broad Kansas prairie, and just before her was the new farmhouse Uncle Henry built after the cyclone had carried away the old one. Uncle Henry was milking the cows in the barnyard, and Toto had jumped out of her arms and was running toward the barn, barking furiously.

Dorothy stood up and found she was in her stocking-feet. For the Silver Shoes had fallen off in her flight through the air, and were lost forever in the desert.

24. Home Again



Aunt Em had just come out of the house to water the cabbages when she looked up and saw Dorothy running toward her.

"My darling child!" she cried, folding the little girl in her arms and covering her face with kisses. "Where in the world did you come from?"

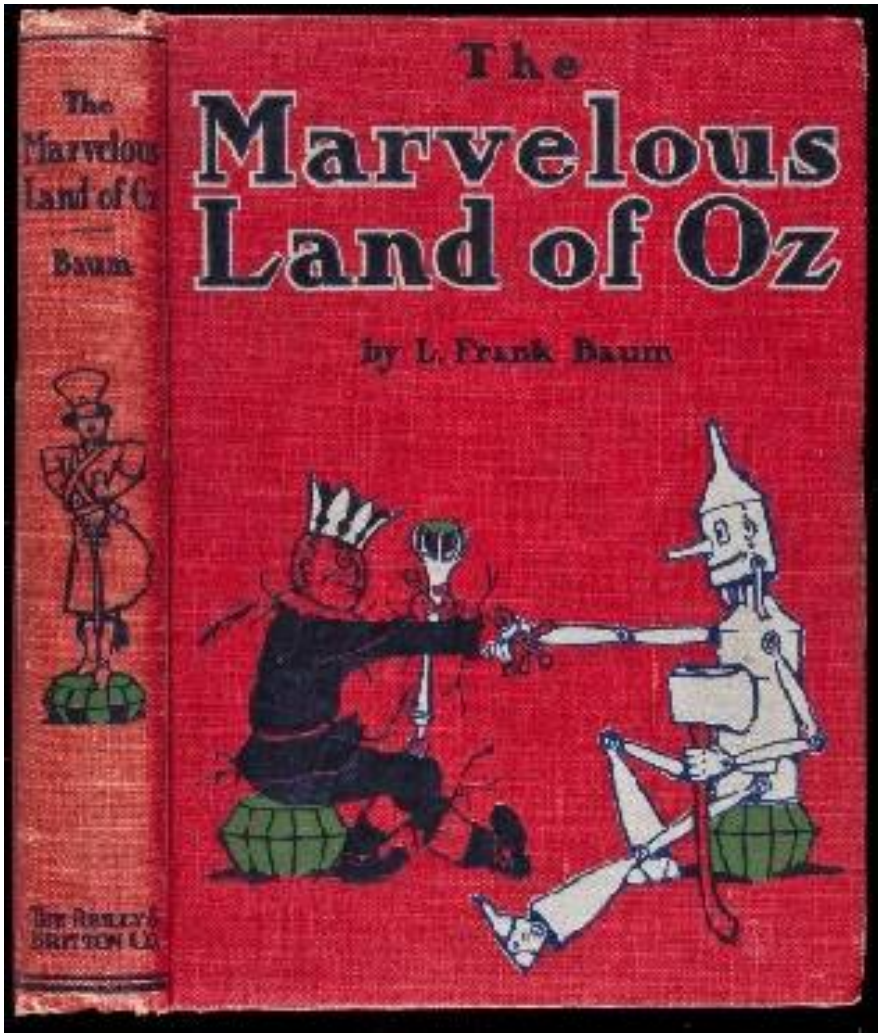
"From the Land of Oz," said Dorothy gravely. "And here is Toto, too. And oh, Aunt Em! I'm so glad to be at home again!"

HERE ends the story of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" which was written by L. Frank Baum and illustrated by William Wallace Denslow. The engravings were made by the Illinois Engraving Company, the paper was supplied by Dwight Brothers Paper Company, and Messrs. A. R. Davis & Company printed the book for the publishers, the George M. Hill Company, completing it on the fifteenth day of May, in the year nineteen hundred.

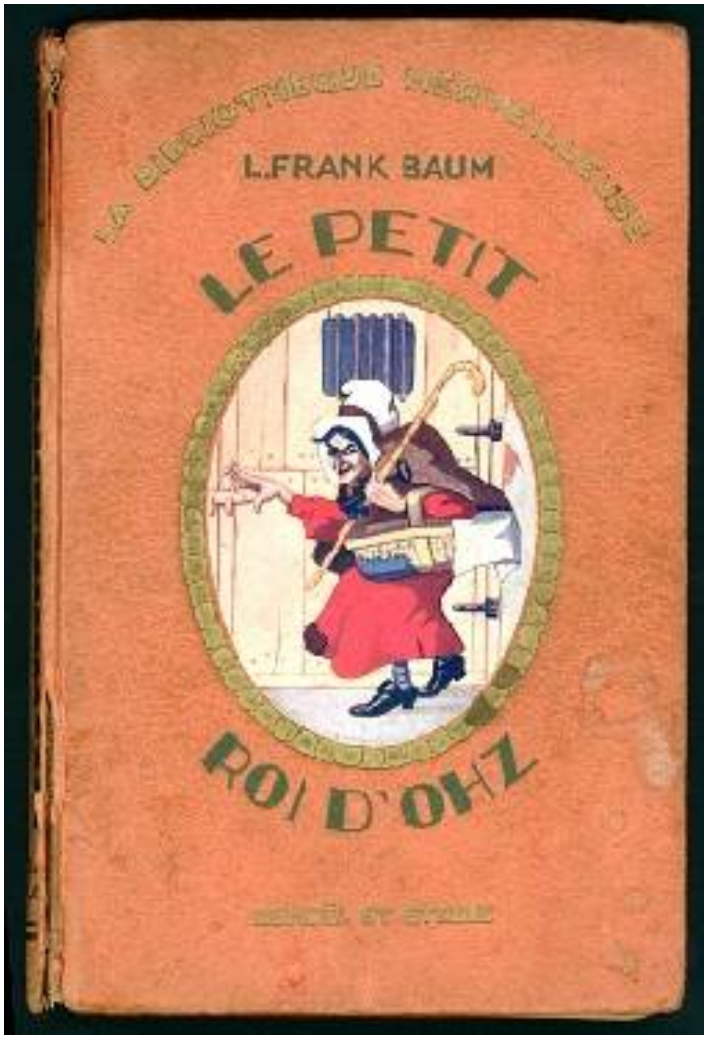
The WONDER-FUL WIZARD of OZ

THE MARVELOUS LAND OF OZ

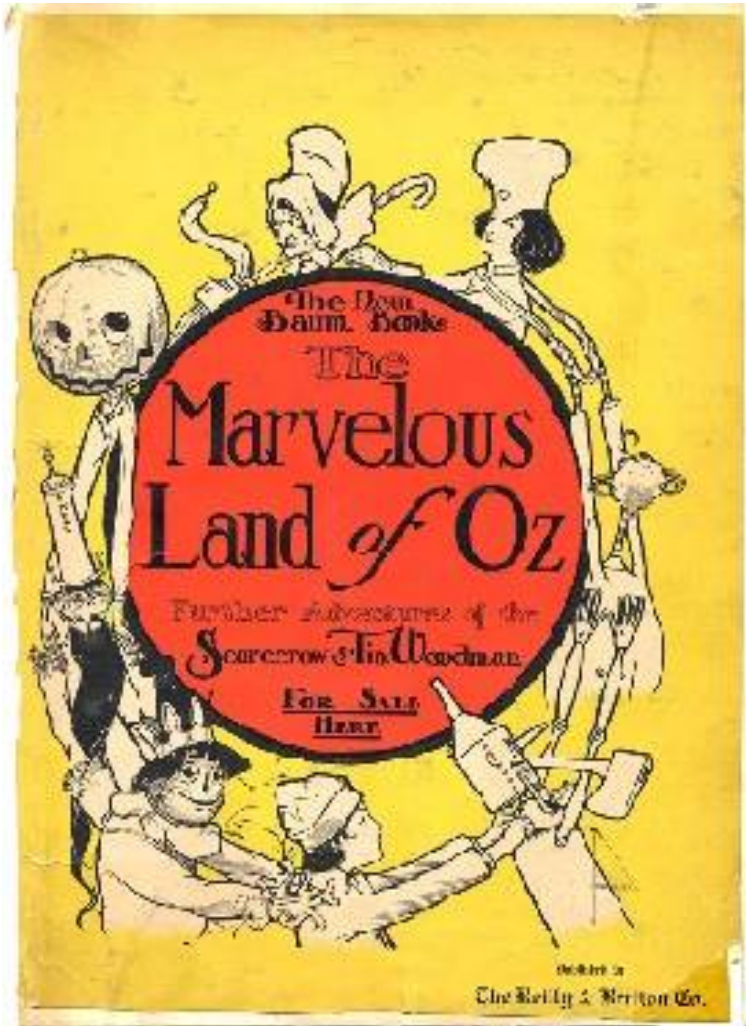
The Marvelous Land of Oz, best known in shortened form as *The Land of Oz*, is L. Frank Baum's second Oz book, published in 1904 by Reilly & Britton and initially considered simply a sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. John R. Neill provided the artwork after Baum fell out with original Oz artist, W.W. Denslow. Neill went on to illustrate all but one of Baum's remaining Oz books and became known as the "Imperial Illustrator of Oz." After Baum's death, Neill continued illustrating the many Oz books written by others and even wrote three. *The Marvelous Land of Oz* begins not long after the final scenes in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and follows the adventures of Tip, a young boy, whose guardian is the witch, Mombi. Intending to frighten Mombi, who is returning from a trip, Tip creates a man out of wood, topped with a pumpkin for a head. Not at all frightened, Mombi shakes some "powder of life" onto the tall figure and then captures Tip and threatens to turn him into a marble statue come morning. Tip escapes with "Jack Pumpkinhead" and they travel to the Emerald City. In this novel, Baum creates some of his most memorable and endearing characters, among them, a living sawhorse, the Highly Magnified and Thoroughly Educated Wogglebug, and the Gump. Along the way, readers learn about the mystery of a lost princess and once again meet old favorites, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman.



First edition copy of The Marvelous Land of Oz



A 1933 French translation of The Marvelous Land of Oz



Advertisement for The Marvelous Land of Oz, 1904

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The Marvelous Land of Oz

Being an account of the further adventures of the

Scarecrow and Tin Woodman

[illegible]

A Sequel to "The Wizard of Oz"

By

L. Frank Baum

[illegible]

Illustrated by

John R. Neill

[illegible]

The Reilly & Britton Co.
1904.

Author's Note

AFTER the publication of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," I began to receive letters from children, all of them of their pleasure in reading the story and asking questions about the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman. So I wondered these little letters, frank and sometimes naughty, were, with the light of prophecy and imagination, [illegible] during succeeding months and years.

Finally I promised one little girl, who made a long journey [illegible] and praise [illegible], — and she was a "Dorothy," by the way — that when a [illegible] I would [illegible] some little letters making [illegible] story of the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman. I [illegible] Dorothy was a [illegible] in Kansas, and [illegible] Uncle Henry, [illegible] success of the [illegible] "The Wizard of Oz" [illegible] many [illegible] children [illegible] long [illegible] many more followed them.

And now, although [illegible] long [illegible], I have kept my promise [illegible] here.

L. FRANK BAUM.

Chicago, June, 1904.

to those excellent
good fellows
and
eminent comedians
David C.
Montgomery
and
Fred A Stone
whose clever
personations of
the
Tin Woodman
and the
Scarecrow
have delighted
thousands of
children
throughout the land,
this book is
gratefully inscribed
by
THE AUTHOR

Author's Note

After the publication of "The Wonderful Wizard of OZ" I began to receive letters from children, telling me of their pleasure in reading the story and asking me to "write something more" about the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman. At first I considered these little letters, frank and earnest though they were, in the light of pretty compliments; but the letters continued to come during succeeding months, and even years.

Finally I promised one little girl, who made a long journey to see me and prefer her request, — and she is a "Dorothy," by the way — that when a thousand little girls had written me a thousand little letters asking for the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman I would write the book, Either little Dorothy was a fairy in disguise, and waved her magic wand, or the success of the stage production of "The Wizard of OZ" made new friends for the story, For the thousand letters reached their destination long since — and many more followed them.

And now, although pleading guilty to long delay, I have kept my promise in this book.

L. FRANK BAUM.

Chicago, June, 1904

To those excellent good fellows and comedians David C. Montgomery and Frank A. Stone whose clever personations of the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow have delighted thousands of children throughout the land, this book is gratefully dedicated by THE AUTHOR

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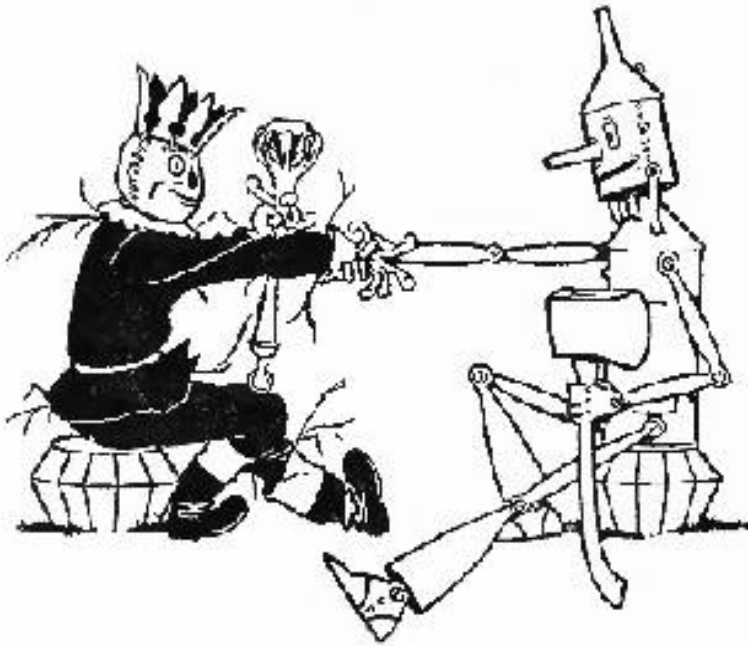


Tip Manufactures a Pumpkinhead

In the Country of the Gillikins, which

Tip Manufactures a Pumpkinhead

In the Country of the Gillikins, which is at the North of the Land of Oz, lived a youth called Tip. There was more to his name than that, for old Mombi often declared that his whole name was Tippetarius; but no one was expected to say such a long word when "Tip" would do just as well.

This boy remembered nothing of his parents, for he had been brought when quite young to be reared by the old woman known as Mombi, whose reputation, I am sorry to say, was none of the best. For the Gillikin people had reason to suspect her of indulging in magical arts, and therefore hesitated to associate with her.

Mombi was not exactly a Witch, because the Good Witch who ruled that part of the Land of Oz had forbidden any other Witch to exist in her dominions. So Tip's guardian, however much she might aspire to working magic, realized it was unlawful to be more than a Sorceress, or at most a Wizardess.

Tip was made to carry wood from the forest, that the old woman might boil her pot. He also worked in the corn-fields, hoeing and husking; and he fed the pigs and milked the four-horned cow that was Mombi's especial pride.

But you must not suppose he worked all the time, for he felt that would be bad for him. When sent to the forest Tip often climbed trees for birds' eggs or amused himself chasing the fleet white rabbits or fishing in the brooks with bent pins. Then he would hastily gather his armful of wood and carry it home. And when he was supposed to be working in the corn-fields, and the tall stalks hid him from Mombi's view, Tip would often dig in the gopher holes, or if the mood seized him — lie upon his back between the rows of corn and take a nap. So, by taking care not to exhaust his strength, he grew as strong and rugged as a boy may be.

Mombi's curious magic often frightened her neighbors, and they treated her shyly, yet respectfully, because of her weird powers. But Tip frankly

hated her, and took no pains to hide his feelings. Indeed, he sometimes showed less respect for the old woman than he should have done, considering she was his guardian.

There were pumpkins in Mombi's corn-fields, lying golden red among the rows of green stalks; and these had been planted and carefully tended that the four-horned cow might eat of them in the winter time. But one day, after the corn had all been cut and stacked, and Tip was carrying the pumpkins to the stable, he took a notion to make a "Jack Lantern" and try to give the old woman a fright with it.

So he selected a fine, big pumpkin — one with a lustrous, orange-red color — and began carving it. With the point of his knife he made two round eyes, a three-cornered nose, and a mouth shaped like a new moon. The face, when completed, could not have been considered strictly beautiful; but it wore a smile so big and broad, and was so Jolly in expression, that even Tip laughed as he looked admiringly at his work.

The child had no playmates, so he did not know that boys often dig out the inside of a "pumpkin-jack," and in the space thus made put a lighted candle to render the face more startling; but he conceived an idea of his own that promised to be quite as effective. He decided to manufacture the form of a man, who would wear this pumpkin head, and to stand it in a place where old Mombi would meet it face to face.

"And then," said Tip to himself, with a laugh, "she'll squeal louder than

the brown pig does when I pull her tail, and shiver with fright worse than I did last year when I had the ague!”

He had plenty of time to accomplish this task, for Mombi had gone to a village — to buy groceries, she said — and it was a journey of at least two days.

So he took his axe to the forest, and selected some stout, straight saplings, which he cut down and trimmed of all their twigs and leaves. From these he would make the arms, and legs, and feet of his man. For the body he stripped a sheet of thick bark from around a big tree, and with much labor fashioned it into a cylinder of about the right size, pinning the edges together with wooden pegs. Then, whistling happily as he worked, he carefully jointed the limbs and fastened them to the body with pegs whittled into shape with his knife.

By the time this feat had been accomplished it began to grow dark, and Tip remembered he must milk the cow and feed the pigs. So he picked up his wooden man and carried it back to the house with him.

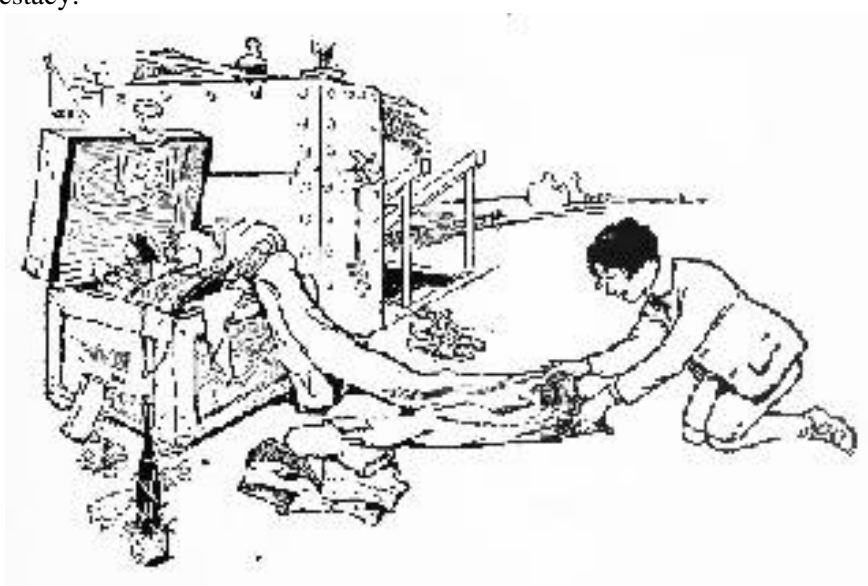
During the evening, by the light of the fire in the kitchen, Tip carefully rounded all the edges of the joints and smoothed the rough places in a neat and workmanlike manner. Then he stood the figure up against the wall and admired it. It seemed remarkably tall, even for a full-grown man; but that was a good point in a small boy's eyes, and Tip did not object at all to the size of his creation.

Next morning, when he looked at his work again, Tip saw he had forgotten to give the dummy a neck, by means of which he might fasten the

pumpkinhead to the body. So he went again to the forest, which was not far away, and chopped from a tree several pieces of wood with which to complete his work. When he returned he fastened a cross-piece to the upper end of the body, making a hole through the center to hold upright the neck. The bit of wood which formed this neck was also sharpened at the upper end, and when all was ready Tip put on the pumpkin head, pressing it well down onto the neck, and found that it fitted very well. The head could be turned to one side or the other, as he pleased, and the hinges of the arms and legs allowed him to place the dummy in any position he desired.

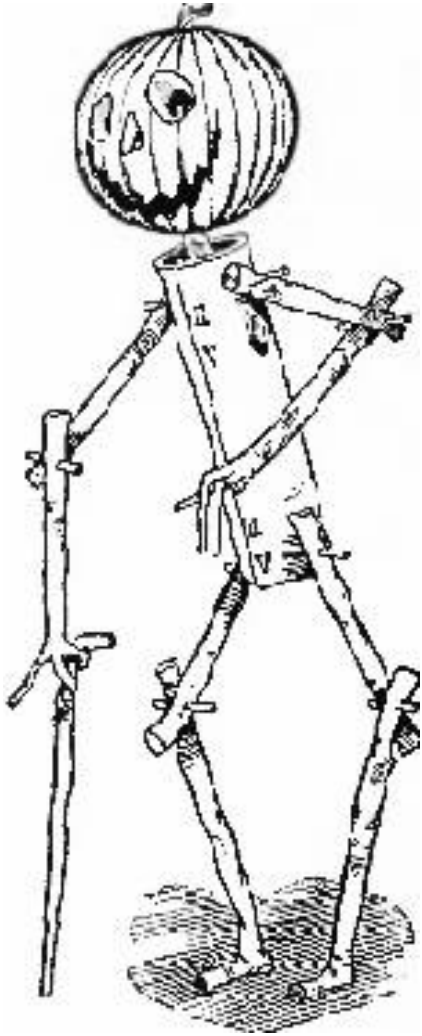
"Now, that," declared Tip, proudly, "is really a very fine man, and it ought to frighten several screeches out of old Mombi! But it would be much more lifelike if it were properly dressed."

To find clothing seemed no easy task; but Tip boldly ransacked the great chest in which Mombi kept all her keepsakes and treasures, and at the very bottom he discovered some purple trousers, a red shirt and a pink vest which was dotted with white spots. These he carried away to his man and succeeded, although the garments did not fit very well, in dressing the creature in a jaunty fashion. Some knit stockings belonging to Mombi and a much worn pair of his own shoes completed the man's apparel, and Tip was so delighted that he danced up and down and laughed aloud in boyish ecstacy.



"I must give him a name!" he cried. "So good a man as this must surely have a name. I believe," he added, after a moment's thought, "I will name the

fellow ‘Jack Pumpkinhead!’“



The Marvelous Powder of Life

After considering the matter carefully, Tip decided that the best place to locate Jack would be at the bend in the road, a little way from the house. So he started to carry his man there, but found him heavy and rather awkward to handle. After dragging the creature a short distance Tip stood him on his feet, and by first bending the joints of one leg, and then those of the other, at the same time pushing from behind, the boy managed to induce Jack to walk to the bend in the road. It was not accomplished without a few tumbles, and Tip really worked harder than he ever had in the fields or forest; but a love of mischief urged him on, and it pleased him to test the cleverness of his workmanship.

"Jack's all right, and works fine!" he said to himself, panting with the unusual exertion. But just then he discovered the man's left arm had fallen off in the journey so he went back to find it, and afterward, by whittling a new and stouter pin for the shoulder-joint, he repaired the injury so successfully that the arm was stronger than before. Tip also noticed that Jack's pumpkin head had twisted around until it faced his back; but this was easily remedied. When, at last, the man was set up facing the turn in the path where old Mombi was to appear, he looked natural enough to be a fair imitation of a Gillikin farmer, — and unnatural enough to startle anyone that came on him unawares.

As it was yet too early in the day to expect the old woman to return home, Tip went down into the valley below the farm-house and began to gather nuts from the trees that grew there.

However, old Mombi returned earlier than usual. She had met a crooked wizard who resided in a lonely cave in the mountains, and had traded several important secrets of magic with him. Having in this way secured three new recipes, four magical powders and a selection of herbs of wonderful power and potency, she hobbled home as fast as she could, in order to test her new sorceries.

So intent was Mombi on the treasures she had gained that when she turned the bend in the road and caught a glimpse of the man, she merely nodded and said:

"Good evening, sir."

But, a moment after, noting that the person did not move or reply, she cast a shrewd glance into his face and discovered his pumpkin head elaborately carved by Tip's jack-knife.

"Heh!" ejaculated Mombi, giving a sort of grunt; "that rascally boy has been playing tricks again! Very good! ve — ry good! I'll beat him black-and-blue for trying to scare me in this fashion!"

Angrily she raised her stick to smash in the grinning pumpkin head of the dummy; but a sudden thought made her pause, the uplifted stick left motionless in the air.

"Why, here is a good chance to try my new powder!" said she, eagerly. "And then I can tell whether that crooked wizard has fairly traded secrets, or whether he has fooled me as wickedly as I fooled him."

So she set down her basket and began fumbling in it for one of the precious powders she had obtained.

While Mombi was thus occupied Tip strolled back, with his pockets full of nuts, and discovered the old woman standing beside his man and apparently not the least bit frightened by it.

At first he was generally disappointed; but the next moment he became curious to know what Mombi was going to do. So he hid behind a hedge, where he could see without being seen, and prepared to watch.

After some search the woman drew from her basket an old pepper-box, upon the faded label of which the wizard had written with a lead-pencil:

"Powder of Life."

"Ah — here it is!" she cried, joyfully. "And now let us see if it is potent. The stingy wizard didn't give me much of it, but I guess there's enough for two or three doses."

"OLD MOMBI DANCED AROUND HIM"

Tip was much surprised when he overheard this speech. Then he saw old Mombi raise her arm and sprinkle the powder from the box over the pumpkin head of his man Jack. She did this in the same way one would pepper a baked potato, and the powder sifted down from Jack's head and scattered over the red shirt and pink waistcoat and purple trousers Tip had dressed him in, and a portion even fell upon the patched and worn shoes.

Then, putting the pepper-box back into the basket, Mombi lifted her left hand, with its little finger pointed upward, and said:

"Weaugh!"

Then she lifted her right hand, with the thumb pointed upward, and said:

"Teaugh!"

Then she lifted both hands, with all the fingers and thumbs spread out, and cried:

"Peaugh!"

Jack Pumpkinhead stepped back a pace, at this, and said in a reproachful voice:

"Don't yell like that! Do you think I'm deaf?"

Old Mombi danced around him, frantic with delight.

"He lives!" she screamed: "He lives! he lives!"

Then she threw her stick into the air and caught it as it came down; and she hugged herself with both arms, and tried to do a step of a jig; and all the time she repeated, rapturously:

"He lives! — he lives! — he lives!"

Now you may well suppose that Tip observed all this with amazement.

At first he was so frightened and horrified that he wanted to run away, but his legs trembled and shook so badly that he couldn't. Then it struck him as a very funny thing for Jack to come to life, especially as the expression on his pumpkin face was so droll and comical it excited laughter on the instant. So, recovering from his first fear, Tip began to laugh; and the merry peals reached old Mombi's ears and made her hobble quickly to the hedge, where she seized Tip's collar and dragged him back to where she had left her basket and the pumpkinheaded man.

"You naughty, sneaking, wicked boy!" she exclaimed, furiously: "I'll teach you to spy out my secrets and to make fun of me!"

"I wasn't making fun of you," protested Tip. "I was laughing at old Pumpkinhead! Look at him! Isn't he a picture, though?"

"I hope you are not reflecting on my personal appearance," said Jack; and it was so funny to hear his grave voice, while his face continued to wear its jolly smile, that Tip again burst into a peal of laughter.

Even Mombi was not without a curious interest in the man her magic had brought to life; for, after staring at him intently, she presently asked:

OLD MOMBI PUTS JACK IN THE WINE

"What do you know?"

"Well, that is hard to tell," replied Jack. "For although I feel that I know a tremendous lot, I am not yet aware how much there is in the world to find out about. It will take me a little time to discover whether I am very wise or very foolish."

"To be sure," said Mombi, thoughtfully.

"But what are you going to do with him, now he is alive?" asked Tip, wondering.

"I must think it over," answered Mombi. "But we must get home at once, for it is growing dark. Help the Pumpkinhead to walk."

"Never mind me," said Jack; "I can walk as well as you can. Haven't I got

legs and feet, and aren't they jointed?"

"Are they?" asked the woman, turning to Tip.

"Of course they are; I made 'em myself," returned the boy, with pride.

So they started for the house, but when they reached the farm yard old Mombi led the pumpkin man to the cow stable and shut him up in an empty stall, fastening the door securely on the outside.

"I've got to attend to you, first," she said, nodding her head at Tip.

Hearing this, the boy became uneasy; for he knew Mombi had a bad and revengeful heart, and would not hesitate to do any evil thing.

They entered the house. It was a round, domeshaped structure, as are nearly all the farm houses in the Land of Oz.

Mombi bade the boy light a candle, while she put her basket in a cupboard and hung her cloak on a peg. Tip obeyed quickly, for he was afraid of her.

After the candle had been lighted Mombi ordered him to build a fire in the hearth, and while Tip was thus engaged the old woman ate her supper. When the flames began to crackle the boy came to her and asked a share of the bread and cheese; but Mombi refused him.

"I'm hungry!" said Tip, in a sulky tone.

"You won't be hungry long," replied Mombi, with a grim look.

The boy didn't like this speech, for it sounded like a threat; but he happened to remember he had nuts in his pocket, so he cracked some of those and ate them while the woman rose, shook the crumbs from her apron, and hung above the fire a small black kettle.

Then she measured out equal parts of milk and vinegar and poured them into the kettle. Next she produced several packets of herbs and powders and began adding a portion of each to the contents of the kettle. Occasionally she would draw near the candle and read from a yellow paper the recipe of the mess she was concocting.

As Tip watched her his uneasiness increased.

"What is that for?" he asked.

"For you," returned Mombi, briefly.

Tip wriggled around upon his stool and stared awhile at the kettle, which was beginning to bubble. Then he would glance at the stern and wrinkled features of the witch and wish he were any place but in that dim and smoky kitchen, where even the shadows cast by the candle upon the wall were enough to give one the horrors. So an hour passed away, during which the silence was only broken by the bubbling of the pot and the hissing of the flames.

Finally, Tip spoke again.

"Have I got to drink that stuff?" he asked, nodding toward the pot.

“Yes,” said Mombi.

“What’ll it do to me?” asked Tip.

“If it’s properly made,” replied Mombi, “it will change or transform you into a marble statue.”

Tip groaned, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve.

“I don’t want to be a marble statue!” he protested.

“That doesn’t matter I want you to be one,” said the old woman, looking at him severely.

“What use’ll I be then?” asked Tip. “There won’t be any one to work for you.”

“I’ll make the Pumpkinhead work for me,” said Mombi.

Again Tip groaned.

“Why don’t you change me into a goat, or a chicken?” he asked, anxiously. “You can’t do anything with a marble statue.”

“Oh, yes, I can,” returned Mombi. “I’m going to plant a flower garden, next Spring, and I’ll put you in the middle of it, for an ornament. I wonder I haven’t thought of that before; you’ve been a bother to me for years.”

At this terrible speech Tip felt the beads of perspiration starting all over his body, but he sat still and shivered and looked anxiously at the kettle.

“Perhaps it won’t work,” he mutttered, in a voice that sounded weak and discouraged.

“Oh, I think it will,” answered Mombi, cheerfully. “I seldom make a mistake.”

Again there was a period of silence a silence so long and gloomy that when Mombi finally lifted the kettle from the fire it was close to midnight.

"I DON'T WANT TO BE A MARBLE STATUE."

"You cannot drink it until it has become quite cold," announced the old witch for in spite of the law she had acknowledged practising witchcraft. "We must both go to bed now, and at daybreak I will call you and at once complete your transformation into a marble statue."

With this she hobbled into her room, bearing the steaming kettle with her, and Tip heard her close and lock the door.

The boy did not go to bed, as he had been commanded to do, but still sat glaring at the embers of the dying fire.

The Flight of the Fugitives

Tip reflected.

"It's a hard thing, to be a marble statue," he thought, rebelliously, "and I'm not going to stand it. For years I've been a bother to her, she says; so she's going to get rid of me. Well, there's an easier way than to become a statue. No boy could have any fun forever standing in the middle of a flower garden! I'll run away, that's what I'll do — and I may as well go before she makes me drink that nasty stuff in the kettle." He waited until the snores of the old witch announced she was fast asleep, and then he arose softly and went to the cupboard to find something to eat.

"No use starting on a journey without food," he decided, searching upon the narrow shelves.

He found some crusts of bread; but he had to look into Mombi's basket to find the cheese she had brought from the village. While turning over the contents of the basket he came upon the pepper-box which contained the "Powder of Life."

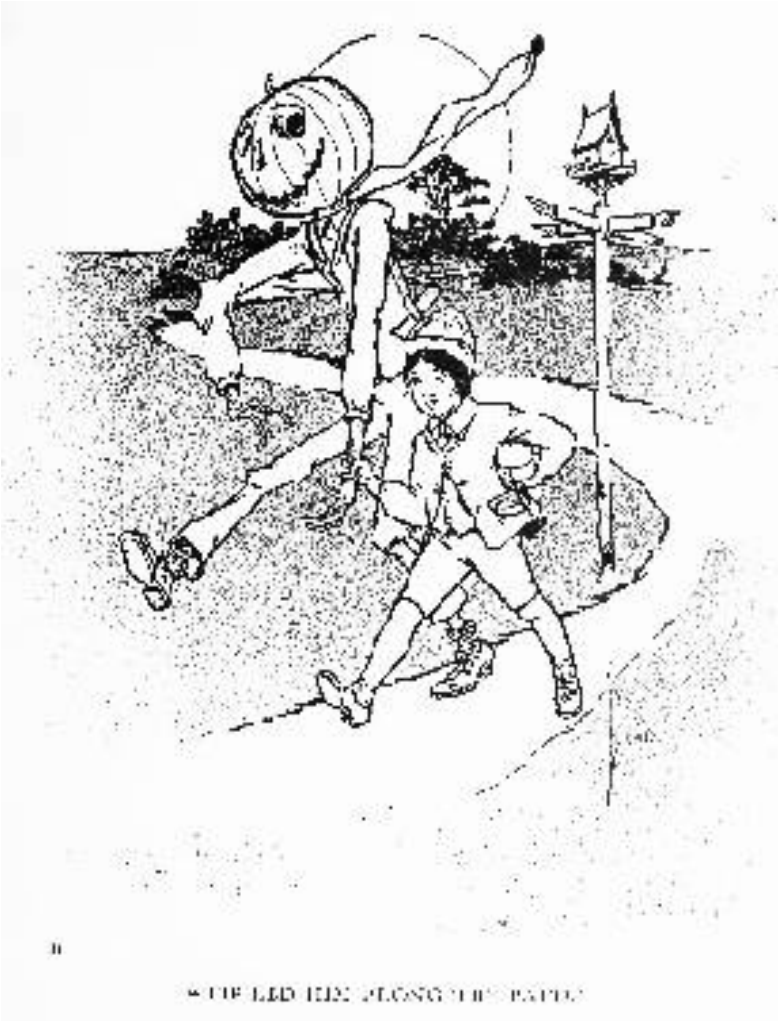
"I may as well take this with me," he thought, "or Mombi'll be using it to make more mischief with." So he put the box in his pocket, together with the bread and cheese.

Then he cautiously left the house and latched the door behind him. Outside both moon and stars shone brightly, and the night seemed peaceful and inviting after the close and ill-smelling kitchen.

"I'll be glad to get away," said Tip, softly; "for I never did like that old woman. I wonder how I ever came to live with her."

He was walking slowly toward the road when a thought made him pause.

"I don't like to leave Jack Pumpkinhead to the tender mercies of old Mombi," he muttered. "And Jack belongs to me, for I made him even if the old witch did bring him to life."



He retraced his steps to the cow-stable and opened the door of the stall where the pumpkin-headed man had been left.

Jack was standing in the middle of the stall, and by the moonlight Tip could see he was smiling just as jovially as ever.

"Come on!" said the boy, beckoning.

"Where to?" asked Jack.

"You'll know as soon as I do," answered Tip, smiling sympathetically

into the pumpkin face.

“All we’ve got to do now is to tramp.”

“Very well,” returned Jack, and walked awkwardly out of the stable and into the moonlight.

Tip turned toward the road and the man followed him. Jack walked with a sort of limp, and occasionally one of the joints of his legs would turn backward, instead of frontwise, almost causing him to tumble. But the Pumpkinhead was quick to notice this, and began to take more pains to step carefully; so that he met with few accidents.

Tip led him along the path without stopping an instant. They could not go very fast, but they walked steadily; and by the time the moon sank away and the sun peeped over the hills they had travelled so great a distance that the boy had no reason to fear pursuit from the old witch. Moreover, he had turned first into one path, and then into another, so that should anyone follow them it would prove very difficult to guess which way they had gone, or where to seek them.

Fairly satisfied that he had escaped — for a time, at least — being turned into a marble statue, the boy stopped his companion and seated himself upon a rock by the roadside.

“Let’s have some breakfast,” he said.

Jack Pumpkinhead watched Tip curiously, but refused to join in the repast. “I don’t seem to be made the same way you are,” he said.

“I know you are not,” returned Tip; “for I made you.”

“Oh! Did you?” asked Jack.

“Certainly. And put you together. And carved your eyes and nose and ears and mouth,” said Tip proudly. “And dressed you.”

Jack looked at his body and limbs critically.

“It strikes me you made a very good job of it,” he remarked.

“Just so-so,” replied Tip, modestly; for he began to see certain defects in the construction of his man. “If I’d known we were going to travel together I might have been a little more particular.”

“Why, then,” said the Pumpkinhead, in a tone that expressed surprise, “you must be my creator my parent my father!”

“Or your inventor,” replied the boy with a laugh. “Yes, my son; I really believe I am!”

“Then I owe you obedience,” continued the man, “and you owe me — support.”

“That’s it, exactly”, declared Tip, jumping up. “So let us be off.”

“Where are we going?” asked Jack, when they had resumed their journey.

“I’m not exactly sure,” said the boy; “but I believe we are headed South, and that will bring us, sooner or later, to the Emerald City.”

“What city is that?” enquired the Pumpkinhead.

“Why, it’s the center of the Land of Oz, and the biggest town in all the country. I’ve never been there, myself, but I’ve heard all about its history. It was built by a mighty and wonderful Wizard named Oz, and everything there is of a green color — just as everything in this Country of the Gillikins is of a purple color.”

“Is everything here purple?” asked Jack.

“Of course it is. Can’t you see?” returned the boy.

“I believe I must be color-blind,” said the Pumpkinhead, after staring about him.

“Well, the grass is purple, and the trees are purple, and the houses and fences are purple,” explained Tip. “Even the mud in the roads is purple. But in the Emerald City everything is green that is purple here. And in the Country of the Munchkins, over at the East, everything is blue; and in the South country of the Quadlings everything is red; and in the West country of the Winkies, where the Tin Woodman rules, everything is yellow.”

“Oh!” said Jack. Then, after a pause, he asked: “Did you say a Tin Woodman rules the Winkies?”

“Yes; he was one of those who helped Dorothy to destroy the Wicked Witch of the West, and the Winkies were so grateful that they invited him to become their ruler, — just as the people of the Emerald City invited the Scarecrow to rule them.”

“Dear me!” said Jack. “I’m getting confused with all this history. Who is the Scarecrow?”

“Another friend of Dorothy’s,” replied Tip.

“And who is Dorothy?”

“She was a girl that came here from Kansas, a place in the big, outside World. She got blown to the Land of Oz by a cyclone, and while she was here the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman accompanied her on her travels.”

“And where is she now?” inquired the Pumpkinhead.

“Glinda the Good, who rules the Quadlings, sent her home again,” said the boy.

“Oh. And what became of the Scarecrow?”

“I told you. He rules the Emerald City,” answered Tip.

“I thought you said it was ruled by a wonderful Wizard,” objected Jack, seeming more and more confused.

“Well, so I did. Now, pay attention, and I’ll explain it,” said Tip, speaking slowly and looking the smiling Pumpkinhead squarely in the eye. “Dorothy went to the Emerald City to ask the Wizard to send her back to Kansas; and the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman went with her. But the Wizard couldn’t send her back, because he wasn’t so much of a Wizard as he might have been. And then they got angry at the Wizard, and threatened to expose him; so the Wizard made a big balloon and escaped in it, and no one has ever seen him since.”

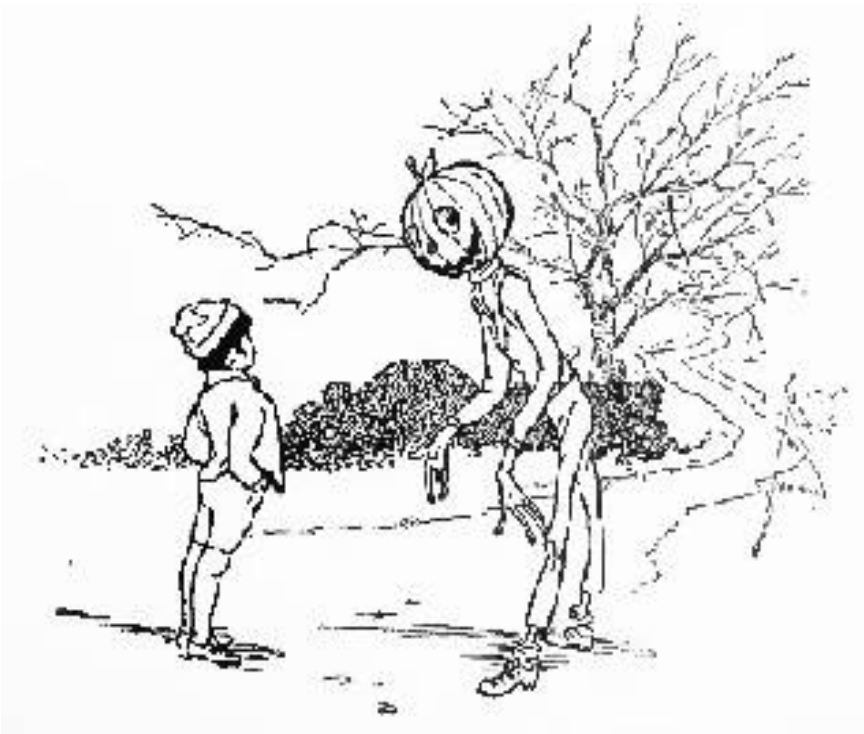
“Now, that is very interesting history,” said Jack, well pleased; “and I understand it perfectly all but the explanation.”

“I’m glad you do,” responded Tip. “After the Wizard was gone, the people of the Emerald City made His Majesty, the Scarecrow, their King; and I have heard that he became a very popular ruler.”

“Are we going to see this queer King?” asked Jack, with interest.

“I think we may as well,” replied the boy; “unless you have something better to do.”

“Oh, no, dear father,” said the Pumpkinhead. “I am quite willing to go wherever you please.”



Tip Makes an Experiment in Magic

The boy, small and rather delicate in appearance seemed somewhat embarrassed at being called "father" by the tall, awkward, pumpkinheaded man, but to deny the relationship would involve another long and tedious explanation; so he changed the subject by asking, abruptly:

"Are you tired?"

"Of course not!" replied the other. "But," he continued, after a pause, "it is quite certain I shall wear out my wooden joints if I keep on walking."

Tip reflected, as they journeyed on, that this was true. He began to regret that he had not constructed the wooden limbs more carefully and substantially. Yet how could he ever have guessed that the man he had made merely to scare old Mombi with would be brought to life by means of a magical powder contained in an old pepper-box?

So he ceased to reproach himself, and began to think how he might yet remedy the deficiencies of Jack's weak joints.

While thus engaged they came to the edge of a wood, and the boy sat down to rest upon an old sawhorse that some woodcutter had left there.

"Why don't you sit down?" he asked the Pumpkinhead.

"Won't it strain my joints?" inquired the other.

"Of course not. It'll rest them," declared the boy.

So Jack tried to sit down; but as soon as he bent his joints farther than usual they gave way altogether, and he came clattering to the ground with such a crash that Tip feared he was entirely ruined.

He rushed to the man, lifted him to his feet, straightened his arms and legs, and felt of his head to see if by chance it had become cracked. But Jack seemed to be in pretty good shape, after all, and Tip said to him:

"I guess you'd better remain standing, hereafter. It seems the safest way."

"Very well, dear father." just as you say, replied the smiling Jack, who had been in no wise confused by his tumble.

Tip sat down again. Presently the Pumpkinhead asked:

"What is that thing you are sitting on?"

"Oh, this is a horse," replied the boy, carelessly.

"What is a horse?" demanded Jack.

"A horse? Why, there are two kinds of horses," returned Tip, slightly

puzzled how to explain. “One kind of horse is alive, and has four legs and a head and a tail. And people ride upon its back.”

“I understand,” said Jack, cheerfully “That’s the kind of horse you are now sitting on.”

“No, it isn’t,” answered Tip, promptly.

“Why not? That one has four legs, and a head, and a tail.” Tip looked at the saw-horse more carefully, and found that the Pumpkinhead was right. The body had been formed from a tree-trunk, and a branch had been left sticking up at one end that looked very much like a tail. In the other end were two big knots that resembled eyes, and a place had been chopped away that might easily be mistaken for the horse’s mouth. As for the legs, they were four straight limbs cut from trees and stuck fast into the body, being spread wide apart so that the saw-horse would stand firmly when a log was laid across it to be sawed.

“This thing resembles a real horse more than I imagined,” said Tip, trying to explain. “But a real horse is alive, and trots and prances and eats oats, while this is nothing more than a dead horse, made of wood, and used to saw logs upon.”

“If it were alive, wouldn’t it trot, and prance, and eat oats?” inquired the Pumpkinhead.

“It would trot and prance, perhaps; but it wouldn’t eat oats,” replied the boy, laughing at the idea. “And of course it can’t ever be alive, because it is made of wood.”

“So am I,” answered the man.

Tip looked at him in surprise.

“Why, so you are!” he exclaimed. “And the magic powder that brought you to life is here in my pocket.”

THE MAGICAL POWDER OF LIFE

He brought out the pepper box, and eyed it curiously.

"I wonder," said he, musingly, "if it would bring the saw-horse to life."

"If it would," returned Jack, calmly for nothing seemed to surprise him "I could ride on its back, and that would save my joints from wearing out."

"I'll try it!" cried the boy, jumping up. "But I wonder if I can remember the words old Mombi said, and the way she held her hands up."

He thought it over for a minute, and as he had watched carefully from the hedge every motion of the old witch, and listened to her words, he believed he could repeat exactly what she had said and done.

So he began by sprinkling some of the magic Powder of Life from the pepper-box upon the body of the saw-horse. Then he lifted his left hand, with

the little finger pointing upward, and said: “Weaugh!”

“What does that mean, dear father?” asked Jack, curiously.

“I don’t know,” answered Tip. Then he lifted his right hand, with the thumb pointing upward and said: “Teaugh!”

“What’s that, dear father?” inquired Jack.

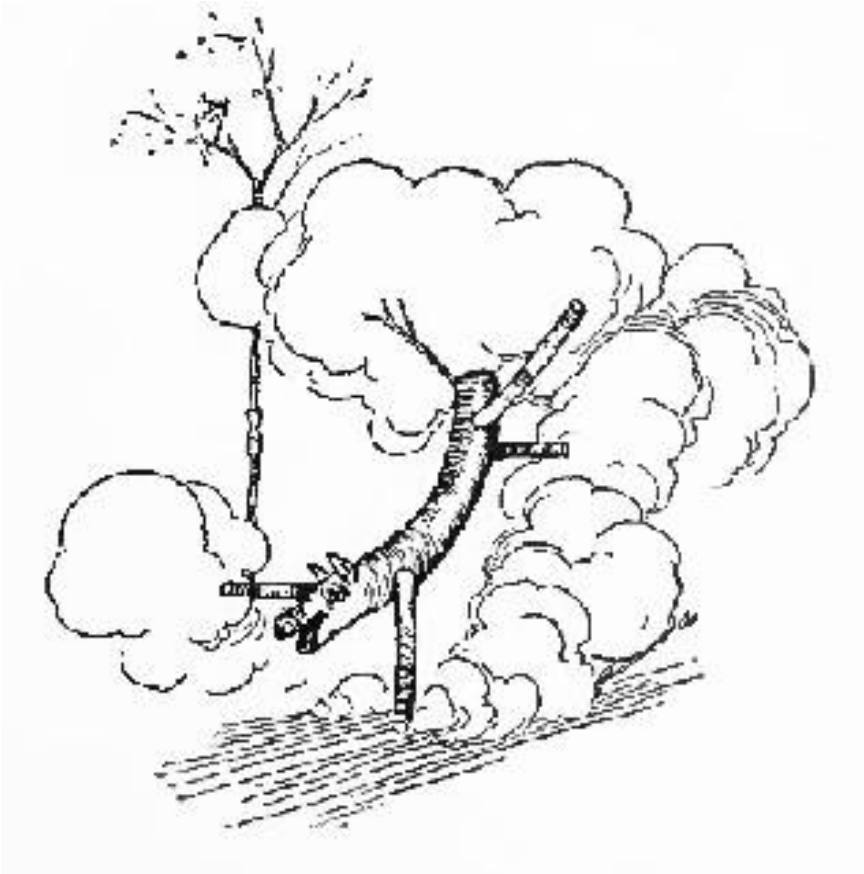
“It means you must keep quiet!” replied the boy, provoked at being interrupted at so important a moment.

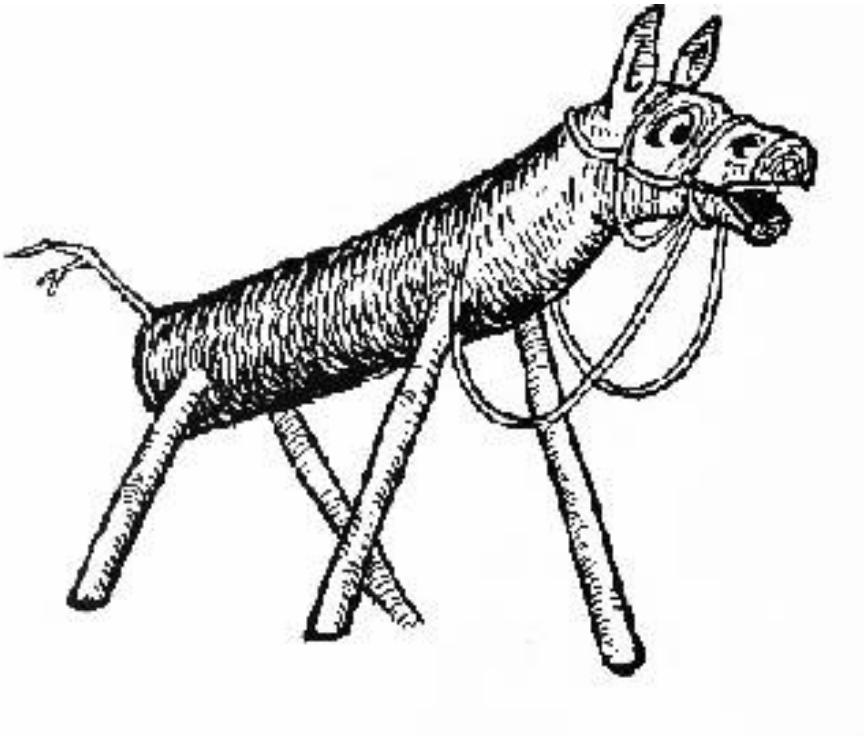
“How fast I am learning!” remarked the Pumpkinhead, with his eternal smile.

Tip now lifted both hands above his head, with all the fingers and thumbs spread out, and cried in a loud voice: “Peaugh!”

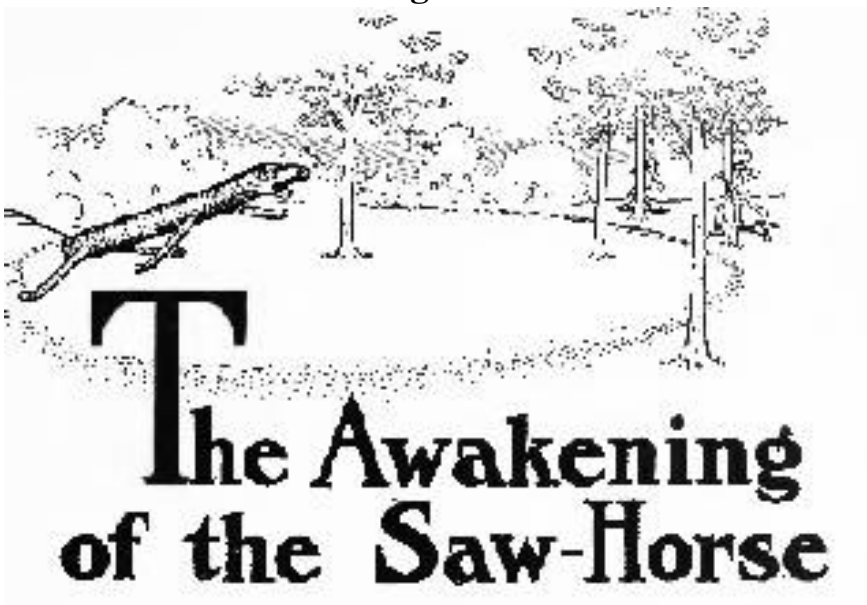
Immediately the saw-horse moved, stretched its legs, yawned with its chopped-out mouth, and shook a few grains of the powder off its back. The rest of the powder seemed to have vanished into the body of the horse.

“Good!” called Jack, while the boy looked on in astonishment. “You are a very clever sorcerer, dear father!”





The Awakening of the Saw-horse



The Saw-Horse, finding himself alive, seemed even more astonished than Tip. He rolled his knotty eyes from side to side, taking a first wondering view of the world in which he had now so important an existence. Then he tried to look at himself; but he had, indeed, no neck to turn; so that in the endeavor to see his body he kept circling around and around, without catching even a glimpse of it. His legs were stiff and awkward, for there were no knee-joints in them; so that presently he bumped against Jack Pumpkinhead and sent that personage tumbling upon the moss that lined the roadside.

Tip became alarmed at this accident, as well as at the persistence of the Saw-Horse in prancing around in a circle; so he called out:

"Whoa! Whoa, there!"

The Saw-Horse paid no attention whatever to this command, and the next instant brought one of his wooden legs down upon Tip's foot so forcibly that the boy danced away in pain to a safer distance, from where he again yelled:

"Whoa! Whoa, I say!"

Jack had now managed to raise himself to a sitting position, and he looked at the Saw-Horse with much interest.

"I don't believe the animal can hear you," he remarked.

"I shout loud enough, don't I?" answered Tip, angrily.

"Yes; but the horse has no ears," said the smiling Pumpkinhead.

"Sure enough!" exclaimed Tip, noting the fact for the first time. "How,

then, am I going to stop him?"

But at that instant the Saw-Horse stopped himself, having concluded it was impossible to see his own body. He saw Tip, however, and came close to the boy to observe him more fully.

It was really comical to see the creature walk; for it moved the legs on its right side together, and those on its left side together, as a pacing horse does; and that made its body rock sidewise, like a cradle.

Tip patted it upon the head, and said "Good boy! Good Boy!" in a coaxing tone; and the Saw-Horse pranced away to examine with its bulging eyes the form of Jack Pumpkinhead.

"I must find a halter for him," said Tip; and having made a search in his pocket he produced a roll of strong cord. Unwinding this, he approached the Saw-Horse and tied the cord around its neck, afterward fastening the other end to a large tree. The Saw-Horse, not understanding the action, stepped backward and snapped the string easily; but it made no attempt to run away.

"He's stronger than I thought," said the boy, "and rather obstinate, too."

"Why don't you make him some ears?" asked Jack. "Then you can tell him what to do."

"That's a splendid idea!" said Tip. "How did you happen to think of it?"

"Why, I didn't think of it," answered the Pumpkinhead; "I didn't need to, for it's the simplest and easiest thing to do."

So Tip got out his knife and fashioned some ears out of the bark of a small tree.

"I mustn't make them too big," he said, as he whittled, "or our horse would become a donkey."

"How is that?" inquired Jack, from the roadside.

"Why, a horse has bigger ears than a man; and a donkey has bigger ears than a horse," explained Tip.

"Then, if my ears were longer, would I be a horse?" asked Jack.

"My friend," said Tip, gravely, "you'll never be anything but a Pumpkinhead, no matter how big your ears are."

"Oh," returned Jack, nodding; "I think I understand."

"If you do, you're a wonder," remarked the boy "but there's no harm in thinking you understand. I guess these ears are ready now. Will you hold the horse while I stick them on?"

"Certainly, if you'll help me up," said Jack.

So Tip raised him to his feet, and the Pumpkinhead went to the horse and held its head while the boy bored two holes in it with his knife-blade and inserted the ears.

"They make him look very handsome," said Jack, admiringly.

But those words, spoken close to the Saw-Horse, and being the first sounds he had ever heard, so startled the animal that he made a bound forward and tumbled Tip on one side and Jack on the other. Then he continued to rush forward as if frightened by the clatter of his own foot-steps.

“Whoa!” shouted Tip, picking himself up; “whoa! you idiot whoa!” The Saw-Horse would probably have paid no attention to this, but just then it stepped a leg into a gopher-hole and stumbled head-over-heels to the ground, where it lay upon its back, frantically waving its four legs in the air.

Tip ran up to it.

“You’re a nice sort of a horse, I must say!” he exclaimed. “Why didn’t you stop when I yelled ‘whoa?’“

“Does ‘whoa’ mean to stop?” asked the Saw-Horse, in a surprised voice, as it rolled its eyes upward to look at the boy.

“Of course it does,” answered Tip.

“And a hole in the ground means to stop, also, doesn’t it?” continued the horse.

“To be sure; unless you step over it,” said Tip.

“What a strange place this is,” the creature exclaimed, as if amazed. “What am I doing here, anyway?”

"I'LL KEEP THOSE LEGS STILL."

"Why, I've brought you to life," answered the boy "but it won't hurt you any, if you mind me and do as I tell you."

"Then I will do as you tell me," replied the Saw-Horse, humbly. "But what happened to me, a moment ago? I don't seem to be just right, someway."

"You're upside down," explained Tip. "But just keep those legs still a minute and I'll set you right side up again."

"How many sides have I?" asked the creature, wonderingly.

"Several," said Tip, briefly. "But do keep those legs still."

The Saw-Horse now became quiet, and held its legs rigid; so that Tip, after several efforts, was able to roll him over and set him upright.

“Ah, I seem all right now,” said the queer animal, with a sigh.

“One of your ears is broken,” Tip announced, after a careful examination. “I’ll have to make a new one.”

Then he led the Saw-Horse back to where Jack was vainly struggling to regain his feet, and after assisting the Pumpkinhead to stand upright Tip whittled out a new ear and fastened it to the horse’s head.

“Now,” said he, addressing his steed, “pay attention to what I’m going to tell you. ‘Whoa!’ means to stop; ‘Get-Up!’ means to walk forward; ‘Trot!’ means to go as fast as you can. Understand?”

“I believe I do,” returned the horse.

“Very good. We are all going on a journey to the Emerald City, to see His Majesty, the Scarecrow; and Jack Pumpkinhead is going to ride on your back, so he won’t wear out his joints.”

“I don’t mind,” said the Saw-Horse. “Anything that suits you suits me.”

Then Tip assisted Jack to get upon the horse.

“Hold on tight,” he cautioned, “or you may fall off and crack your pumpkin head.”

“That would be horrible!” said Jack, with a shudder. “What shall I hold on to?”

“Why, hold on to his ears,” replied Tip, after a moment’s hesitation.

“Don’t do that!” remonstrated the Saw-Horse; “for then I can’t hear.”

That seemed reasonable, so Tip tried to think of something else.

"DOES IT HURT?" ASKED THE BOY.

"I'll fix it!" said he, at length. He went into the wood and cut a short length of limb from a young, stout tree. One end of this he sharpened to a point, and then he dug a hole in the back of the Saw-Horse, just behind its head. Next he brought a piece of rock from the road and hammered the post firmly into the animal's back.

"Stop! Stop!" shouted the horse; "you're jarring me terribly."

"Does it hurt?" asked the boy.

"Not exactly hurt," answered the animal; "but it makes me quite nervous to be jarred."

"Well, it's all over now" said Tip, encouragingly. "Now, Jack, be sure to hold fast to this post and then you can't fall off and get smashed."

So Jack held on tight, and Tip said to the horse:

"Get up."

The obedient creature at once walked forward, rocking from side to side as he raised his feet from the ground.

Tip walked beside the Saw-Horse, quite content with this addition to their party. Presently he began to whistle.

"What does that sound mean?" asked the horse.

"Don't pay any attention to it," said Tip. "I'm just whistling, and that only means I'm pretty well satisfied."

"I'd whistle myself, if I could push my lips together," remarked Jack. "I fear, dear father, that in some respects I am sadly lacking."

THE BOY STRETCHED HIMSELF UPON THE GRASS

After journeying on for some distance the narrow path they were following turned into a broad roadway, paved with yellow brick. By the side of the road Tip noticed a sign-post that read:

"NINE MILES TO THE EMERALD CITY."

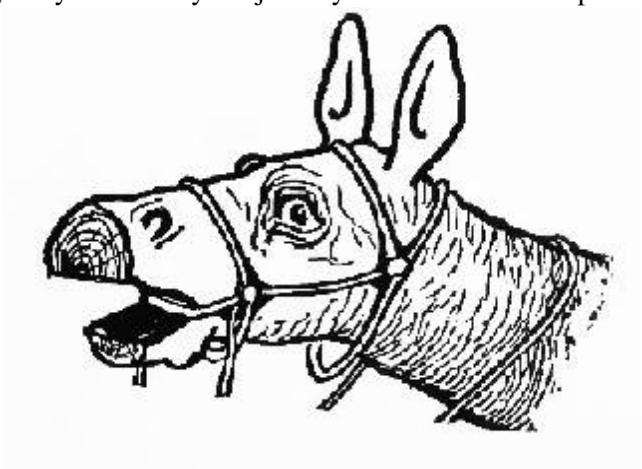
But it was now growing dark, so he decided to camp for the night by the roadside and to resume the journey next morning by daybreak. He led the Saw-Horse to a grassy mound upon which grew several bushy trees, and carefully assisted the Pumpkinhead to alight.

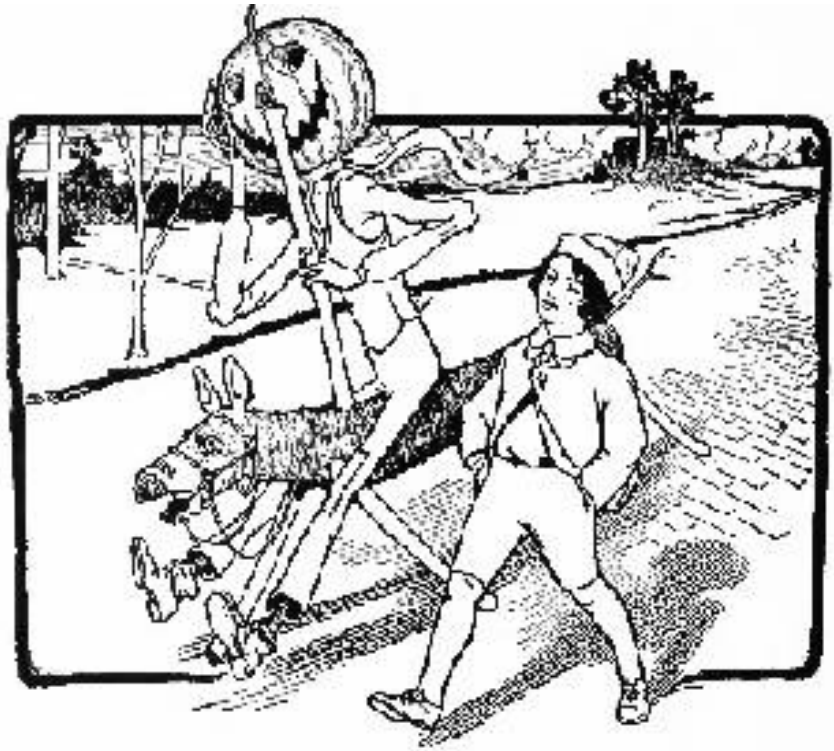
"I think I'll lay you upon the ground, overnight," said the boy. "You will be safer that way."

"How about me?" asked the Saw-Horse.

"It won't hurt you to stand," replied Tip; "and, as you can't sleep, you may as well watch out and see that no one comes near to disturb us."

Then the boy stretched himself upon the grass beside the Pumpkinhead, and being greatly wearied by the journey was soon fast asleep.





Jack Pumpkinhead's Ride to the Emerald City

At daybreak Tip was awakened by the Pumpkinhead. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes, bathed in a little brook, and then ate a portion of his bread and cheese. Having thus prepared for a new day the boy said:

"Let us start at once. Nine miles is quite a distance, but we ought to reach the Emerald City by noon if no accidents happen." So the Pumpkinhead was again perched upon the back of the Saw-Horse and the journey was resumed.

Tip noticed that the purple tint of the grass and trees had now faded to a dull lavender, and before long this lavender appeared to take on a greenish tinge that gradually brightened as they drew nearer to the great City where the Scarecrow ruled.

The little party had traveled but a short two miles upon their way when the road of yellow brick was parted by a broad and swift river. Tip was puzzled how to cross over; but after a time he discovered a man in a ferry-boat approaching from the other side of the stream.

When the man reached the bank Tip asked:

"Will you row us to the other side?"

"Yes, if you have money," returned the ferryman, whose face looked cross and disagreeable.

"But I have no money," said Tip.

"None at all?" inquired the man.

"None at all," answered the boy.

"Then I'll not break my back rowing you over," said the ferryman, decidedly.

"What a nice man!" remarked the Pumpkinhead, smilingly.

The ferryman stared at him, but made no reply. Tip was trying to think, for it was a great disappointment to him to find his journey so suddenly brought to an end.

"I must certainly get to the Emerald City," he said to the boatman; "but how can I cross the river if you do not take me?"

The man laughed, and it was not a nice laugh.

"That wooden horse will float," said he; "and you can ride him across. As for the pumpkinheaded loon who accompanies you, let him sink or swim it won't matter greatly which."

"Don't worry about me," said Jack, smiling pleasantly upon the crabbed ferryman; "I'm sure I ought to float beautifully."

Tip thought the experiment was worth making, and the Saw-Horse, who did not know what danger meant, offered no objections whatever. So the boy led it down into the water and climbed upon its back. Jack also waded in up to his knees and grasped the tail of the horse so that he might keep his pumpkin head above the water.

"Now," said Tip, instructing the Saw-Horse, "if you wiggle your legs you will probably swim; and if you swim we shall probably reach the other side."

The Saw-Horse at once began to wiggle its legs, which acted as oars and

moved the adventurers slowly across the river to the opposite side. So successful was the trip that presently they were climbing, wet and dripping, up the grassy bank.

Tip's trouser-legs and shoes were thoroughly soaked; but the Saw-Horse had floated so perfectly that from his knees up the boy was entirely dry. As for the Pumpkinhead, every stitch of his gorgeous clothing dripped water.

"The sun will soon dry us," said Tip "and, anyhow, we are now safely across, in spite of the ferryman, and can continue our journey."

"I didn't mind swimming, at all," remarked the horse.

"Nor did I," added Jack.

They soon regained the road of yellow brick, which proved to be a continuation of the road they had left on the other side, and then Tip once more mounted the Pumpkinhead upon the back of the Saw-Horse.

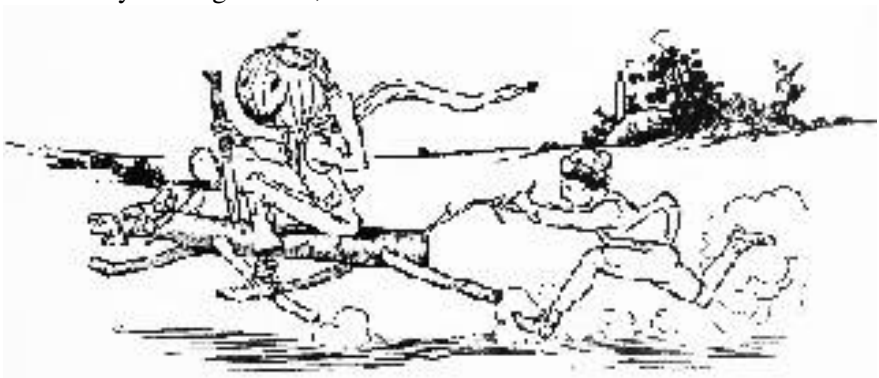
"If you ride fast," said he, "the wind will help to dry your clothing. I will hold on to the horse's tail and run after you. In this way we all will become dry in a very short time."

"Then the horse must step lively," said Jack.

"I'll do my best," returned the Saw-Horse, cheerfully.

Tip grasped the end of the branch that served as tail to the Saw-Horse, and called loudly: "Get-up!"

The horse started at a good pace, and Tip followed behind. Then he decided they could go faster, so he shouted: "Trot!"



Now, the Saw-Horse remembered that this word was the command to go as fast as he could; so he began rocking along the road at a tremendous pace, and Tip had hard work — running faster than he ever had before in his life — to keep his feet.

Soon he was out of breath, and although he wanted to call "Whoa!" to the horse, he found he could not get the word out of his throat. Then the end of the tail he was clutching, being nothing more than a dead branch, suddenly

broke away, and the next minute the boy was rolling in the dust of the road, while the horse and its pumpkin-headed rider dashed on and quickly disappeared in the distance.

By the time Tip had picked himself up and cleared the dust from his throat so he could say "Whoa!" there was no further need of saying it, for the horse was long since out of sight.

So he did the only sensible thing he could do. He sat down and took a good rest, and afterward began walking along the road.

"Some time I will surely overtake them," he reflected; "for the road will end at the gates of the Emerald City, and they can go no further than that."

Meantime Jack was holding fast to the post and the Saw-Horse was tearing along the road like a racer. Neither of them knew Tip was left behind, for the Pumpkinhead did not look around and the Saw-Horse couldn't.

As he rode, Jack noticed that the grass and trees had become a bright emerald-green in color, so he guessed they were nearing the Emerald City even before the tall spires and domes came into sight.

At length a high wall of green stone, studded thick with emeralds, loomed up before them; and fearing the Saw-Horse would not know enough to stop and so might smash them both against this wall, Jack ventured to cry "Whoa!" as loud as he could.

So suddenly did the horse obey that had it not been for his post Jack would have been pitched off head foremost, and his beautiful face ruined.

"That was a fast ride, dear father!" he exclaimed; and then, hearing no reply, he turned around and discovered for the first time that Tip was not there.

This apparent desertion puzzled the Pumpkinhead, and made him uneasy. And while he was wondering what had become of the boy, and what he ought to do next under such trying circumstances, the gateway in the green wall opened and a man came out.

This man was short and round, with a fat face that seemed remarkably good-natured. He was clothed all in green and wore a high, peaked green hat upon his head and green spectacles over his eyes. Bowing before the Pumpkinhead he said:

"I am the Guardian of the Gates of the Emerald City. May I inquire who you are, and what is your business?"

"My name is Jack Pumpkinhead," returned the other, smilingly; "but as to my business, I haven't the least idea in the world what it is."

The Guardian of the Gates looked surprised, and shook his head as if dissatisfied with the reply.

"What are you, a man or a pumpkin?" he asked, politely.

“Both, if you please,” answered Jack.

“And this wooden horse — is it alive?” questioned the Guardian.

The horse rolled one knotty eye upward and winked at Jack. Then it gave a prance and brought one leg down on the Guardian’s toes.

“Ouch!” cried the man; “I’m sorry I asked that question. But the answer is most convincing. Have you any errand, sir, in the Emerald City?”

“It seems to me that I have,” replied the Pumpkinhead, seriously; “but I cannot think what it is. My father knows all about it, but he is not here.”

“This is a strange affair very strange!” declared the Guardian. “But you seem harmless. Folks do not smile so delightfully when they mean mischief.”

“As for that,” said Jack, “I cannot help my smile, for it is carved on my face with a jack-knife.”

“Well, come with me into my room,” resumed the Guardian, “and I will see what can be done for you.”

So Jack rode the Saw-Horse through the gateway into a little room built into the wall. The Guardian pulled a bell-cord, and presently a very tall soldier — clothed in a green uniform — entered from the opposite door. This soldier carried a long green gun over his shoulder and had lovely green whiskers that fell quite to his knees. The Guardian at once addressed him, saying:

“Here is a strange gentleman who doesn’t know why he has come to the Emerald City, or what he wants. Tell me, what shall we do with him?”

The Soldier with the Green Whiskers looked at Jack with much care and curiosity. Finally he shook his head so positively that little waves rippled down his whiskers, and then he said:

“I must take him to His Majesty, the Scarecrow.”

“But what will His Majesty, the Scarecrow, do with him?” asked the Guardian of the Gates.

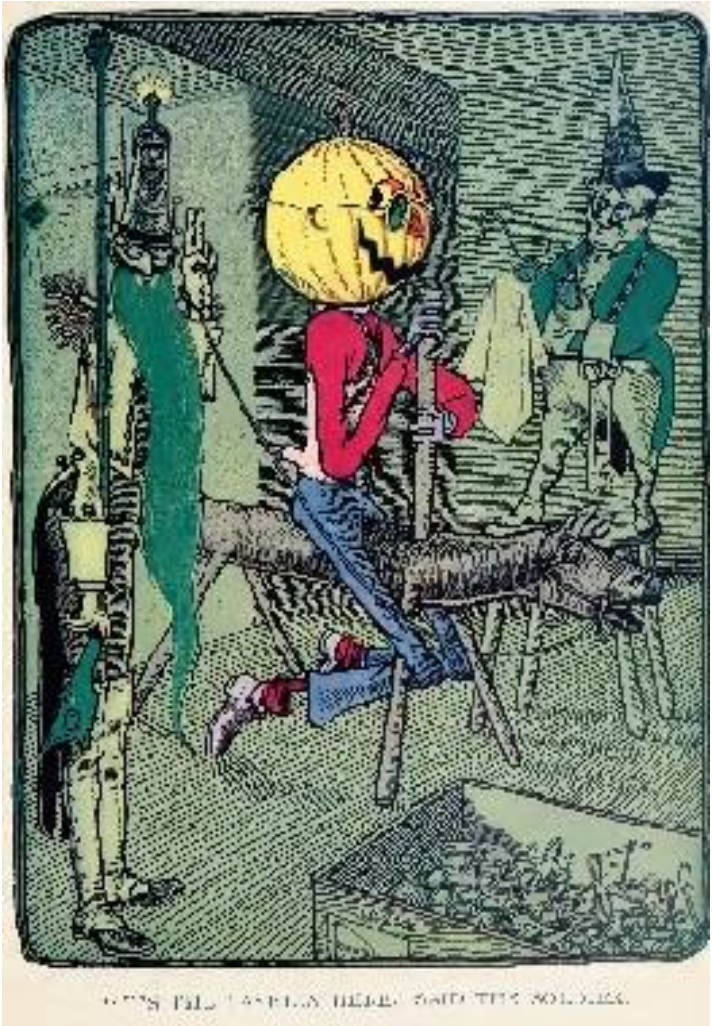
“That is His Majesty’s business,” returned the soldier. “I have troubles enough of my own. All outside troubles must be turned over to His Majesty. So put the spectacles on this fellow, and I’ll take him to the royal palace.”

So the Guardian opened a big box of spectacles and tried to fit a pair to Jack’s great round eyes.

“I haven’t a pair in stock that will really cover those eyes up,” said the little man, with a sigh; “and your head is so big that I shall be obliged to tie the spectacles on.”

“But why need I wear spectacles?” asked Jack.

“It’s the fashion here,” said the Soldier, “and they will keep you from being blinded by the glitter and glare of the gorgeous Emerald City.”



"Oh!" exclaimed Jack. "Tie them on, by all means. I don't wish to be blinded."

"Nor I!" broke in the Saw-Horse; so a pair of green spectacles was quickly fastened over the bulging knots that served it for eyes.

Then the Soldier with the Green Whiskers led them through the inner gate and they at once found themselves in the main street of the magnificent Emerald City.

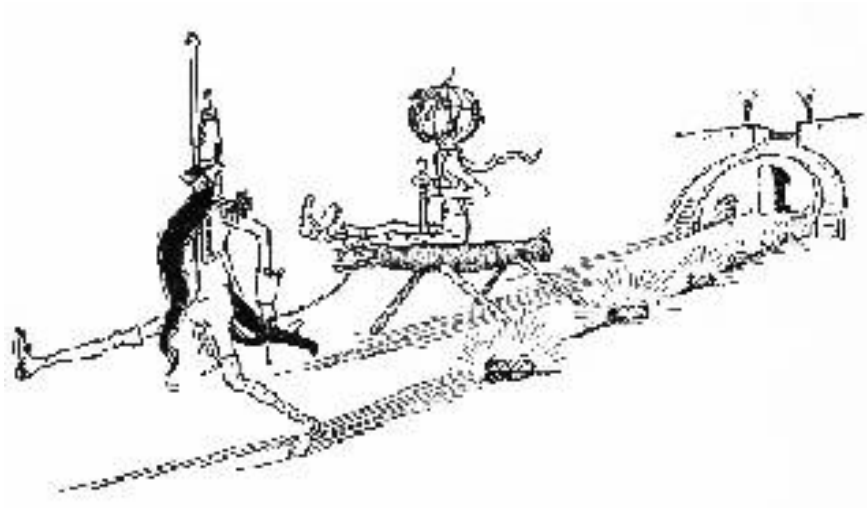
Sparkling green gems ornamented the fronts of the beautiful houses and the towers and turrets were all faced with emeralds. Even the green marble pavement glittered with precious stones, and it was indeed a grand and marvelous sight to one who beheld it for the first time.

However, the Pumpkinhead and the Saw-Horse, knowing nothing of wealth and beauty, paid little attention to the wonderful sights they saw through their green spectacles. They calmly followed after the green soldier and scarcely noticed the crowds of green people who stared at them in surprise. When a green dog ran out and barked at them the Saw-Horse promptly kicked at it with its wooden leg and sent the little animal howling into one of the houses; but nothing more serious than this happened to interrupt their progress to the royal palace.

The Pumpkinhead wanted to ride up the green marble steps and straight into the Scarecrow's presence; but the soldier would not permit that. So Jack dismounted, with much difficulty, and a servant led the Saw-Horse around to the rear while the Soldier with the Green Whiskers escorted the Pumpkinhead into the palace, by the front entrance.

The stranger was left in a handsomely furnished waiting room while the soldier went to announce him. It so happened that at this hour His Majesty was at leisure and greatly bored for want of something to do, so he ordered his visitor to be shown at once into his throne room.

Jack felt no fear or embarrassment at meeting the ruler of this magnificent city, for he was entirely ignorant of all worldly customs. But when he entered the room and saw for the first time His Majesty the Scarecrow seated upon his glittering throne, he stopped short in amazement.



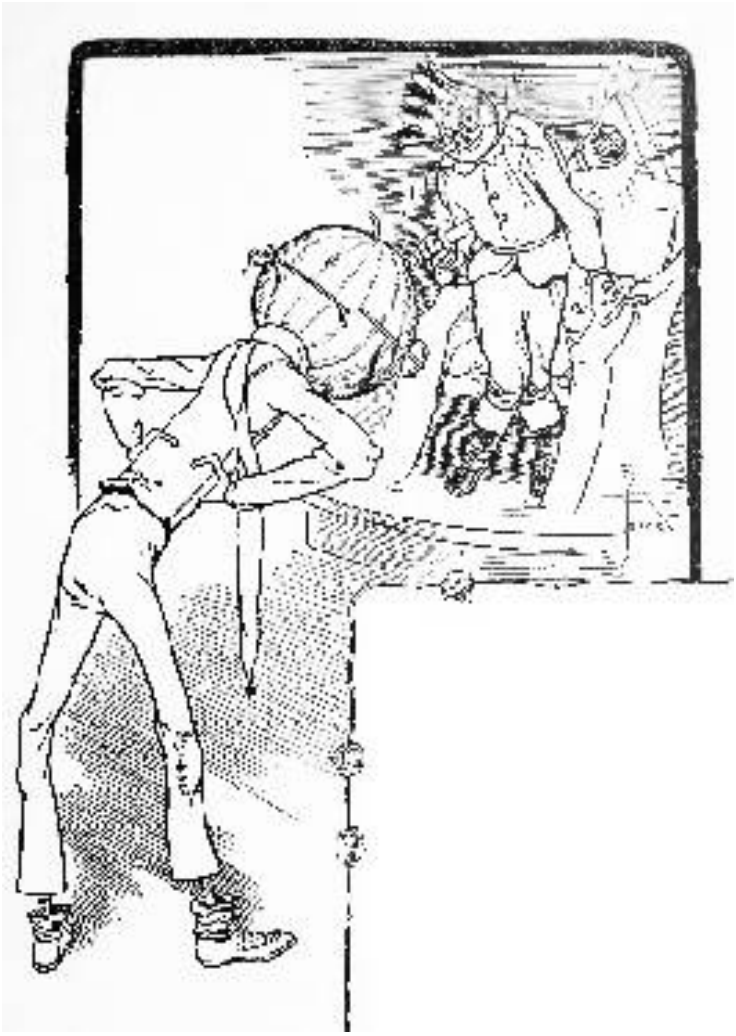
His Majesty the Scarecrow

I suppose every reader of this book knows what a scarecrow is; but Jack Pumpkinhead, never having seen such a creation, was more surprised at meeting the remarkable King of the Emerald City than by any other one experience of his brief life.

His Majesty the Scarecrow was dressed in a suit of faded blue clothes, and his head was merely a small sack stuffed with straw, upon which eyes, ears, a nose and a mouth had been rudely painted to represent a face. The clothes were also stuffed with straw, and that so unevenly or carelessly that his Majesty's legs and arms seemed more bumpy than was necessary. Upon his hands were gloves with long fingers, and these were padded with cotton. Wisps of straw stuck out from the monarch's coat and also from his neck and boot-tops. Upon his head he wore a heavy golden crown set thick with sparkling jewels, and the weight of this crown caused his brow to sag in wrinkles, giving a thoughtful expression to the painted face. Indeed, the crown alone betokened majesty; in all else the, Scarecrow King was but a simple scarecrow — flimsy, awkward, and unsubstantial.

But if the strange appearance of his Majesty the Scarecrow seemed startling to Jack, no less wonderful was the form of the Pumpkinhead to the Scarecrow. The purple trousers and pink waistcoat and red shirt hung loosely over the wooden joints Tip had manufactured, and the carved face on the pumpkin grinned perpetually, as if its wearer considered life the jolliest thing imaginable.

At first, indeed, His Majesty thought his queer visitor was laughing at him, and was inclined to resent such a liberty; but it was not without reason that the Scarecrow had attained the reputation of being the wisest personage in the Land of Oz. He made a more careful examination of his visitor, and soon discovered that Jack's features were carved into a smile and that he could not look grave if he wished to.



The King was the first to speak. After regarding Jack for some minutes he said, in a tone of wonder:

"Where on earth did you come from, and how do you happen to be alive?"

"I beg your Majesty's pardon," returned the Pumpkinhead; "but I do not understand you."

“What don’t you understand?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Why, I don’t understand your language. You see, I came from the Country of the Gillikins, so that I am a foreigner.”

“Ah, to be sure!” exclaimed the Scarecrow. “I myself speak the language of the Munchkins, which is also the language of the Emerald City. But you, I suppose, speak the language of the Pumpkinheads?”

“Exactly so, your Majesty” replied the other, bowing; “so it will be impossible for us to understand one another.”

“That is unfortunate, certainly,” said the Scarecrow, thoughtfully. “We must have an interpreter.”

“What is an interpreter?” asked Jack.

“A person who understands both my language and your own. When I say anything, the interpreter can tell you what I mean; and when you say anything the interpreter can tell me what you mean. For the interpreter can speak both languages as well as understand them.”

“That is certainly clever,” said Jack, greatly pleased at finding so simple a way out of the difficulty.

So the Scarecrow commanded the Soldier with the Green Whiskers to search among his people until he found one who understood the language of the Gillikins as well as the language of the Emerald City, and to bring that person to him at once.

When the Soldier had departed the Scarecrow said:

“Won’t you take a chair while we are waiting?”

“Your Majesty forgets that I cannot understand you,” replied the Pumpkinhead. “If you wish me to sit down you must make a sign for me to do so.” The Scarecrow came down from his throne and rolled an armchair to a position behind the Pumpkinhead. Then he gave Jack a sudden push that sent him sprawling upon the cushions in so awkward a fashion that he doubled up like a jackknife, and had hard work to untangle himself.

“Did you understand that sign?” asked His Majesty, politely.

“Perfectly,” declared Jack, reaching up his arms to turn his head to the front, the pumpkin having twisted around upon the stick that supported it.

“You seem hastily made,” remarked the Scarecrow, watching Jack’s efforts to straighten himself.

“Not more so than your Majesty,” was the frank reply.

“There is this difference between us,” said the Scarecrow, “that whereas I will bend, but not break, you will break, but not bend.”

At this moment the soldier returned leading a young girl by the hand. She seemed very sweet and modest, having a pretty face and beautiful green eyes and hair. A dainty green silk skirt reached to her knees, showing silk stockings embroidered with pea-pods, and green satin slippers with bunches of lettuce for decorations instead of bows or buckles. Upon her silken waist clover leaves were embroidered, and she wore a jaunty little jacket trimmed with sparkling emeralds of a uniform size.

"Why, it's little Jellia Jamb!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, as the green maiden bowed her pretty head before him. "Do you understand the language of the Gillikins, my dear?"

"Yes, your Majesty," she answered, "for I was born in the North

Country.”

“Then you shall be our interpreter,” said the Scarecrow, “and explain to this Pumpkinhead all that I say, and also explain to me all that he says. Is this arrangement satisfactory?” he asked, turning toward his guest.

“Very satisfactory indeed,” was the reply.

“Then ask him, to begin with,” resumed the Scarecrow, turning to Jellia, “what brought him to the Emerald City”

But instead of this the girl, who had been staring at Jack, said to him:

“You are certainly a wonderful creature. Who made you?”

“A boy named Tip,” answered Jack.

“What does he say?” inquired the Scarecrow. “My ears must have deceived me. What did he say?”

“He says that your Majesty’s brains seem to have come loose,” replied the girl, demurely.

The Scarecrow moved uneasily upon his throne, and felt of his head with his left hand.

“What a fine thing it is to understand two different languages,” he said, with a perplexed sigh. “Ask him, my dear, if he has any objection to being put in jail for insulting the ruler of the Emerald City.”

“I didn’t insult you!” protested Jack, indignantly.

“Tut — tut!” cautioned the Scarecrow “wait, until Jellia translates my speech. What have we got an interpreter for, if you break out in this rash way?”

“All right, I’ll wait,” replied the Pumpkinhead, in a surly tone — although his face smiled as genially as ever. “Translate the speech, young woman.”

“His Majesty inquires if you are hungry,” said Jellia.

“Oh, not at all!” answered Jack, more pleasantly, “for it is impossible for me to eat.”

“It’s the same way with me,” remarked the Scarecrow. “What did he say, Jellia, my dear?”

“He asked if you were aware that one of your eyes is painted larger than the other,” said the girl, mischievously.

“Don’t you believe her, your Majesty,” cried Jack.

"DON'T YOU BELIEVE HER, YOUR MAJESTY," CRIED JACK.

"Oh, I don't," answered the Scarecrow, calmly. Then, casting a sharp look at the girl, he asked:

"Are you quite certain you understand the languages of both the Gillikins and the Munchkins?"

"Quite certain, your Majesty," said Jellia Jamb, trying hard not to laugh in the face of royalty.

"Then how is it that I seem to understand them myself?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"Because they are one and the same!" declared the girl, now laughing merrily. "Does not your Majesty know that in all the land of Oz but one language is spoken?"

“Is it indeed so?” cried the Scarecrow, much relieved to hear this; “then I might easily have been my own interpreter!”

“It was all my fault, your Majesty,” said Jack, looking rather foolish, “I thought we must surely speak different languages, since we came from different countries.”

“This should be a warning to you never to think,” returned the Scarecrow, severely. “For unless one can think wisely it is better to remain a dummy — which you most certainly are.”

“I am! — I surely am!” agreed the Pumpkinhead.

“It seems to me,” continued the Scarecrow, more mildly, “that your manufacturer spoiled some good pies to create an indifferent man.”

“I assure your Majesty that I did not ask to be created,” answered Jack.

“Ah! It was the same in my case,” said the King, pleasantly. “And so, as we differ from all ordinary people, let us become friends.”

“With all my heart!” exclaimed Jack.

“What! Have you a heart?” asked the Scarecrow, surprised.

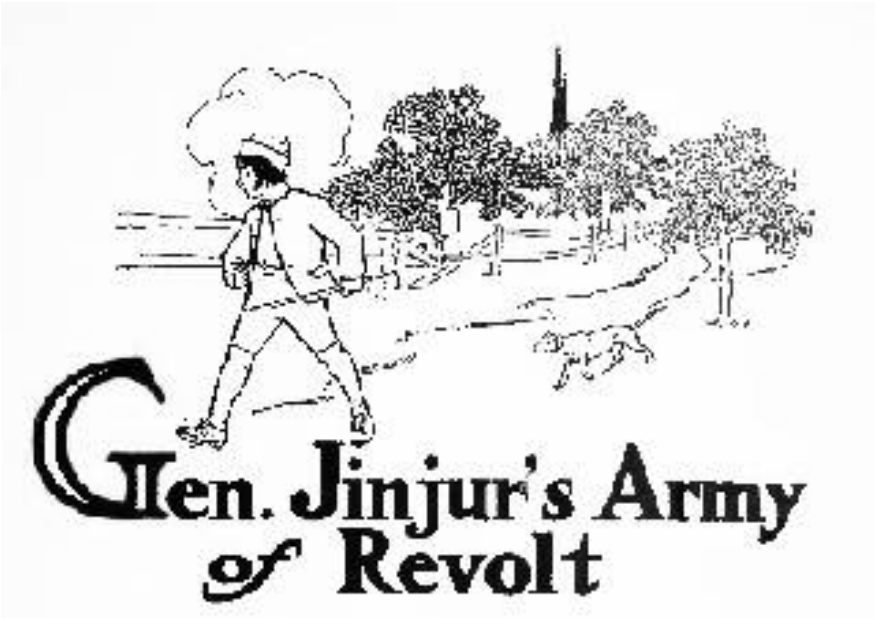
“No; that was only imaginative — I might say, a figure of speech,” said the other.

“Well, your most prominent figure seems to be a figure of wood; so I must beg you to restrain an imagination which, having no brains, you have no right to exercise,” suggested the Scarecrow, warningly.

“To be sure!” said Jack, without in the least comprehending.

His Majesty then dismissed Jellia Jamb and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, and when they were gone he took his new friend by the arm and led him into the courtyard to play a game of quoits.

Gen. Jinjur's Army of Revolt



Tip was so anxious to rejoin his man Jack and the Saw-Horse that he walked a full half the distance to the Emerald City without stopping to rest. Then he discovered that he was hungry and the crackers and cheese he had provided for the Journey had all been eaten.

While wondering what he should do in this emergency he came upon a girl sitting by the roadside. She wore a costume that struck the boy as being remarkably brilliant: her silken waist being of emerald green and her skirt of four distinct colors — blue in front, yellow at the left side, red at the back and purple at the right side. Fastening the waist in front were four buttons — the top one blue, the next yellow, a third red and the last purple.

The splendor of this dress was almost barbaric; so Tip was fully justified in staring at the gown for some moments before his eyes were attracted by the pretty face above it. Yes, the face was pretty enough, he decided; but it wore an expression of discontent coupled to a shade of defiance or audacity.

While the boy stared the girl looked upon him calmly. A lunch basket stood beside her, and she held a dainty sandwich in one hand and a hard-boiled egg in the other, eating with an evident appetite that aroused Tip's sympathy.

He was just about to ask a share of the luncheon when the girl stood up and brushed the crumbs from her lap.

"There!" said she; "it is time for me to go. Carry that basket for me and

help yourself to its contents if you are hungry."

Tip seized the basket eagerly and began to eat, following for a time the strange girl without bothering to ask questions. She walked along before him with swift strides, and there was about her an air of decision and importance that led him to suspect she was some great personage.

Finally, when he had satisfied his hunger, he ran up beside her and tried to keep pace with her swift footsteps — a very difficult feat, for she was much taller than he, and evidently in a hurry.

"Thank you very much for the sandwiches," said Tip, as he trotted along. "May I ask your name?"

"I am General Jinjur," was the brief reply.

"Oh!" said the boy surprised. "What sort of a General?"

"I command the Army of Revolt in this war," answered the General, with unnecessary sharpness.

"Oh!" he again exclaimed. "I didn't know there was a war."

"You were not supposed to know it," she returned, "for we have kept it a secret; and considering that our army is composed entirely of girls," she added, with some pride, "it is surely a remarkable thing that our Revolt is not yet discovered."

"It is, indeed," acknowledged Tip. "But where is your army?"

"About a mile from here," said General Jinjur. "The forces have assembled from all parts of the Land of Oz, at my express command. For this is the day we are to conquer His Majesty the Scarecrow, and wrest from him the throne. The Army of Revolt only awaits my coming to march upon the Emerald City."

"Well!" declared Tip, drawing a long breath, "this is certainly a surprising thing! May I ask why you wish to conquer His Majesty the Scarecrow?"

"Because the Emerald City has been ruled by men long enough, for one reason," said the girl.

"Moreover, the City glitters with beautiful gems, which might far better be used for rings, bracelets and necklaces; and there is enough money in the King's treasury to buy every girl in our Army a dozen new gowns. So we intend to conquer the City and run the government to suit ourselves."

Jinjur spoke these words with an eagerness and decision that proved she was in earnest.

"But war is a terrible thing," said Tip, thoughtfully.

"This war will be pleasant," replied the girl, cheerfully.

"Many of you will be slain!" continued the boy, in an awed voice.

"Oh, no", said Jinjur. "What man would oppose a girl, or dare to harm her? And there is not an ugly face in my entire Army."

Tip laughed.

"Perhaps you are right," said he. "But the Guardian of the Gate is considered a faithful Guardian, and the King's Army will not let the City be conquered without a struggle."

"The Army is old and feeble," replied General Jinjur, scornfully. "His strength has all been used to grow whiskers, and his wife has such a temper that she has already pulled more than half of them out by the roots. When the Wonderful Wizard reigned the Soldier with the Green Whiskers was a very good Royal Army, for people feared the Wizard. But no one is afraid of the Scarecrow, so his Royal Army don't count for much in time of war."

After this conversation they proceeded some distance in silence, and before long reached a large clearing in the forest where fully four hundred young women were assembled. These were laughing and talking together as gaily as if they had gathered for a picnic instead of a war of conquest.

They were divided into four companies, and Tip noticed that all were dressed in costumes similar to that worn by General Jinjur. The only real difference was that while those girls from the Munchkin country had the blue strip in front of their skirts, those from the country of the Quadlings had the red strip in front; and those from the country of the Winkies had the yellow strip in front, and the Gillikin girls wore the purple strip in front. All had green waists, representing the Emerald City they intended to conquer, and the top button on each waist indicated by its color which country the wearer came from. The uniforms were Jaunty and becoming, and quite effective when massed together.

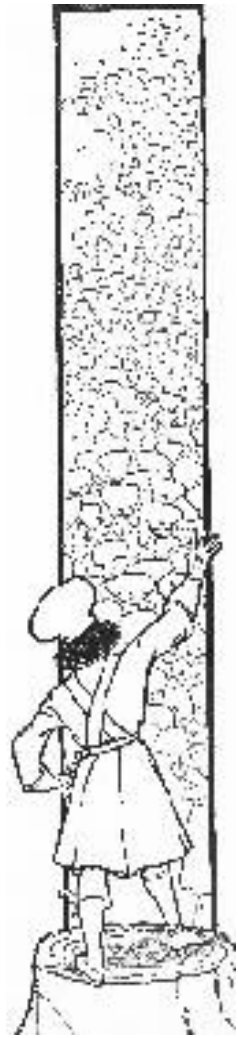
Tip thought this strange Army bore no weapons whatever; but in this he was wrong. For each girl had stuck through the knot of her back hair two long, glittering knitting-needles.

General Jinjur immediately mounted the stump of a tree and addressed her army.

"Friends, fellow-citizens, and girls!" she said; "we are about to begin our great Revolt against the men of Oz! We march to conquer the Emerald City — to dethrone the Scarecrow King — to acquire thousands of gorgeous gems — to rifle the royal treasury — and to obtain power over our former oppressors!"

"Hurrah!" said those who had listened; but Tip thought most of the Army was too much engaged in chattering to pay attention to the words of the General.

The command to march was now given, and the girls formed themselves into four bands, or companies, and set off with eager strides toward the Emerald City.



The boy followed after them, carrying several baskets and wraps and packages which various members of the Army of Revolt had placed in his care. It was not long before they came to the green granite walls of the City and halted before the gateway.

The Guardian of the Gate at once came out and looked at them curiously, as if a circus had come to town. He carried a bunch of keys swung round his neck by a golden chain; his hands were thrust carelessly into his pockets, and he seemed to have no idea at all that the City was threatened by rebels. Speaking pleasantly to the girls, he said:

"Good morning, my dears! What can I do for you?"

“Surrender instantly!” answered General Jinjur, standing before him and frowning as terribly as her pretty face would allow her to.

“Surrender!” echoed the man, astounded. “Why, it’s impossible. It’s against the law! I never heard of such a thing in my life.”

“Still, you must surrender!” exclaimed the General, fiercely. “We are revolting!”

“You don’t look it,” said the Guardian, gazing from one to another, admiringly.

“But we are!” cried Jinjur, stamping her foot, impatiently; “and we mean to conquer the Emerald City!”

“Good gracious!” returned the surprised Guardian of the Gates; “what a nonsensical idea! Go home to your mothers, my good girls, and milk the cows and bake the bread. Don’t you know it’s a dangerous thing to conquer a city?”

“We are not afraid!” responded the General; and she looked so determined that it made the Guardian uneasy.

So he rang the bell for the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, and the next minute was sorry he had done so. For immediately he was surrounded by a crowd of girls who drew the knitting-needles from their hair and began Jabbing them at the Guardian with the sharp points dangerously near his fat cheeks and blinking eyes.

The poor man howled loudly for mercy and made no resistance when Jinjur drew the bunch of keys from around his neck.

GENERAL JINJUR AND HER ARMY CAPTURE THE CITY.

Followed by her Army the General now rushed to the gateway, where she was confronted by the Royal Army of Oz — which was the other name for the Soldier with the Green Whiskers.

"Halt!" he cried, and pointed his long gun full in the face of the leader.

Some of the girls screamed and ran back, but General Jinjur bravely stood her ground and said, reproachfully:

"Why, how now? Would you shoot a poor, defenceless girl?"

"No," replied the soldier. "for my gun isn't loaded."

"Not loaded?"

"No; for fear of accidents. And I've forgotten where I hid the powder and shot to load it with. But if you'll wait a short time I'll try to hunt them up."

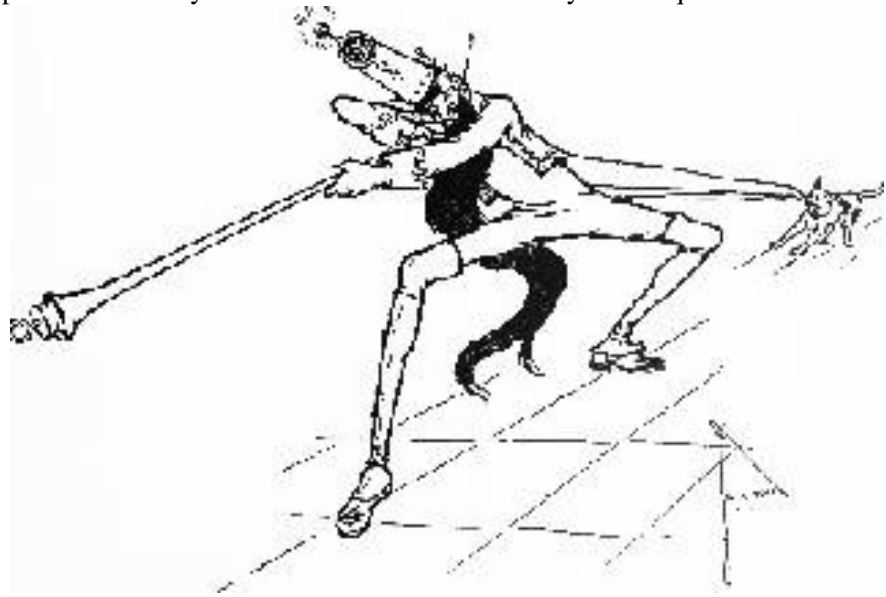
“Don’t trouble yourself,” said Jinjur, cheerfully. Then she turned to her Army and cried:

“Girls, the gun isn’t loaded!”

“Hooray,” shrieked the rebels, delighted at this good news, and they proceeded to rush upon the Soldier with the Green Whiskers in such a crowd that it was a wonder they didn’t stick the knitting-needles into one another.

But the Royal Army of Oz was too much afraid of women to meet the onslaught. He simply turned about and ran with all his might through the gate and toward the royal palace, while General Jinjur and her mob flocked into the unprotected City.

In this way was the Emerald City captured without a drop of blood being spilled. The Army of Revolt had become an Army of Conquerors!



The Scarecrow Plans an escape

Tip slipped away from the girls and followed swiftly after the Soldier with the Green Whiskers. The invading army entered the City more slowly, for they stopped to dig emeralds out of the walls and paving-stones with the points of their knitting-needles. So the Soldier and the boy reached the palace before the news had spread that the City was conquered.

The Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead were still playing at quoits in the courtyard when the game was interrupted by the abrupt entrance of the Royal Army of Oz, who came flying in without his hat or gun, his clothes in sad disarray and his long beard floating a yard behind him as he ran.

“Tally one for me,” said the Scarecrow, calmly “What’s wrong, my man?” he added, addressing the Soldier.

“Oh! your Majesty — your Majesty! The City is conquered!” gasped the Royal Army, who was all out of breath.

“This is quite sudden,” said the Scarecrow. “But please go and bar all the doors and windows of the palace, while I show this Pumpkinhead how to throw a quoit.”

The Soldier hastened to do this, while Tip, who had arrived at his heels, remained in the courtyard to look at the Scarecrow with wondering eyes.

His Majesty continued to throw the quoits as coolly as if no danger threatened his throne, but the Pumpkinhead, having caught sight of Tip,

ambled toward the boy as fast as his wooden legs would go.

"Good afternoon, noble parent!" he cried, delightedly. "I'm glad to see you are here. That terrible Saw-Horse ran away with me."

"I suspected it," said Tip. "Did you get hurt? Are you cracked at all?"

"No, I arrived safely," answered Jack, "and his Majesty has been very kind indeed to me."

At this moment the Soldier with the Green Whiskers returned, and the Scarecrow asked:

"By the way, who has conquered me?"

"A regiment of girls, gathered from the four corners of the Land of Oz," replied the Soldier, still pale with fear.

"But where was my Standing Army at the time?" inquired his Majesty, looking at the Soldier, gravely.

"Your Standing Army was running," answered the fellow, honestly; "for no man could face the terrible weapons of the invaders."

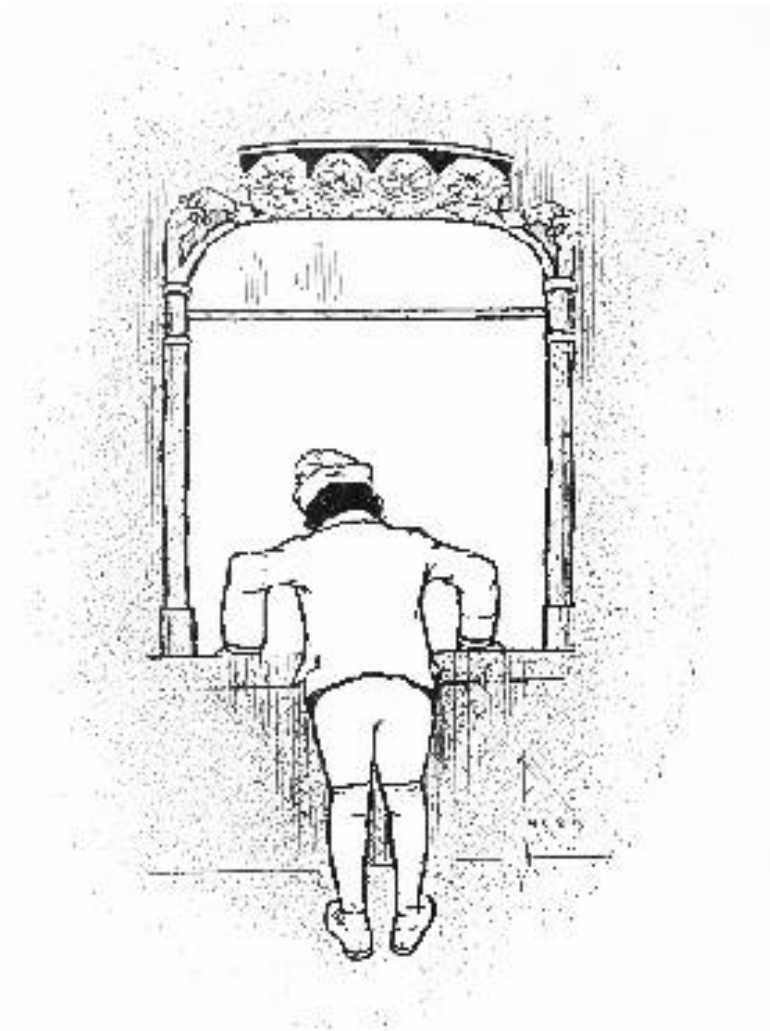
"Well," said the Scarecrow, after a moment's thought, "I don't mind much the loss of my throne, for it's a tiresome job to rule over the Emerald City. And this crown is so heavy that it makes my head ache. But I hope the Conquerors have no intention of injuring me, just because I happen to be the King."

"I heard them, say" remarked Tip, with some hesitation, "that they intend to make a rag carpet of your outside and stuff their sofa-cushions with your inside."

"Then I am really in danger," declared his Majesty, positively, "and it will be wise for me to consider a means to escape."

"Where can you go?" asked Jack Pumpkinhead.

"Why, to my friend the Tin Woodman, who rules over the Winkies, and calls himself their Emperor," was the answer. "I am sure he will protect me."



Tip was looking out the window.

"The palace is surrounded by the enemy," said he. "It is too late to escape. They would soon tear you to pieces."

The Scarecrow sighed.

"In an emergency," he announced, "it is always a good thing to pause and reflect. Please excuse me while I pause and reflect."

"But we also are in danger," said the Pumpkinhead, anxiously. "If any of these girls understand cooking, my end is not far off!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Scarecrow. "they're too busy to cook, even if they know how!"

"But should I remain here a prisoner for any length of time," protested

Jack, “I’m liable to spoil.”

“Ah! then you would not be fit to associate with,” returned the Scarecrow. “The matter is more serious than I suspected.”

“You,” said the Pumpkinhead, gloomily, “are liable to live for many years. My life is necessarily short. So I must take advantage of the few days that remain to me.”

“There, there! Don’t worry,” answered the Scarecrow soothingly; “if you’ll keep quiet long enough for me to think, I’ll try to find some way for us all to escape.”

So the others waited in patient silence while the Scarecrow walked to a corner and stood with his face to the wall for a good five minutes. At the end of that time he faced them with a more cheerful expression upon his painted face.

“Where is the Saw-Horse you rode here?” he asked the Pumpkinhead.

“Why, I said he was a jewel, and so your man locked him up in the royal treasury,” said Jack.

“It was the only place I could think of your Majesty,” added the Soldier, fearing he had made a blunder.

“It pleases me very much,” said the Scarecrow. “Has the animal been fed?”

“Oh, yes; I gave him a heaping peck of sawdust.”

“Excellent!” cried the Scarecrow. “Bring the horse here at once.”

The Soldier hastened away, and presently they heard the clattering of the horse’s wooden legs upon the pavement as he was led into the courtyard.

His Majesty regarded the steed critically. “He doesn’t seem especially graceful!” he remarked, musingly. “but I suppose he can run?”

“He can, indeed,” said Tip, gazing upon the Saw-Horse admiringly.

“Then, bearing us upon his back, he must make a dash through the ranks of the rebels and carry us to my friend the Tin Woodman,” announced the Scarecrow.

“He can’t carry four!” objected Tip.

“No, but he may be induced to carry three,” said his Majesty. “I shall therefore leave my Royal Army Behind. For, from the ease with which he was conquered, I have little confidence in his powers.”

“Still, he can run,” declared Tip, laughing.

“I expected this blow” said the Soldier, sulkily; “but I can bear it. I shall disguise myself by cutting off my lovely green whiskers. And, after all, it is no more dangerous to face those reckless girls than to ride this fiery, untamed wooden horse!”

“Perhaps you are right,” observed his Majesty. “But, for my part, not

being a soldier, I am fond of danger. Now, my boy, you must mount first. And please sit as close to the horse's neck as possible."

Tip climbed quickly to his place, and the Soldier and the Scarecrow managed to hoist the Pumpkinhead to a seat just behind him. There remained so little space for the King that he was liable to fall off as soon as the horse started.

"Fetch a clothesline," said the King to his Army, "and tie us all together. Then if one falls off we will all fall off."

And while the Soldier was gone for the clothesline his Majesty continued, "it is well for me to be careful, for my very existence is in danger."

"I have to be as careful as you do," said Jack.

"Not exactly," replied the Scarecrow. "for if anything happened to me, that would be the end of me. But if anything happened to you, they could use you for seed."

The Soldier now returned with a long line and tied all three firmly together, also lashing them to the body of the Saw-Horse; so there seemed little danger of their tumbling off.

"Now throw open the gates," commanded the Scarecrow, "and we will make a dash to liberty or to death."

The courtyard in which they were standing was located in the center of the great palace, which surrounded it on all sides. But in one place a passage led to an outer gateway, which the Soldier had barred by order of his sovereign. It was through this gateway his Majesty proposed to escape, and the Royal Army now led the Saw-Horse along the passage and unbarred the gate, which swung backward with a loud crash.

"Now," said Tip to the horse, "you must save us all. Run as fast as you can for the gate of the City, and don't let anything stop you."

"WE WILL MAKE A DASH TO LIBERTY OR TO DEATH!"

"All right!" answered the Saw-Horse, gruffly, and dashed away so suddenly that Tip had to gasp for breath and hold firmly to the post he had driven into the creature's neck.

Several of the girls, who stood outside guarding the palace, were knocked over by the Saw-Horse's mad rush. Others ran screaming out of the way, and only one or two jabbed their knitting-needles frantically at the escaping prisoners. Tip got one small prick in his left arm, which smarted for an hour afterward; but the needles had no effect upon the Scarecrow or Jack Pumpkinhead, who never even suspected they were being prodded.

As for the Saw-Horse, he made a wonderful record upsetting a fruit cart, overturning several meek looking men, and finally bowling over the new

Guardian of the Gate — a fussy little fat woman appointed by General Jinjur.

Nor did the impetuous charger stop then. Once outside the walls of the Emerald City he dashed along the road to the West with fast and violent leaps that shook the breath out of the boy and filled the Scarecrow with wonder.

Jack had ridden at this mad rate once before, so he devoted every effort to holding, with both hands, his pumpkin head upon its stick, enduring meantime the dreadful jolting with the courage of a philosopher.

THE WOODEN STEED GAVE ONE FINAL LEAP.

"Slow him up! Slow him up!" shouted the Scarecrow. "My straw is all shaking down into my legs."

But Tip had no breath to speak, so the Saw-Horse continued his wild

career unchecked and with unabated speed.

Presently they came to the banks of a wide river, and without a pause the wooden steed gave one final leap and launched them all in mid-air.

A second later they were rolling, splashing and bobbing about in the water, the horse struggling frantically to find a rest for its feet and its riders being first plunged beneath the rapid current and then floating upon the surface like corks.

The Journey to the Tin Woodman

Tip was well soaked and dripping water from every angle of his body. But he managed to lean forward and shout in the ear of the Saw-Horse:

"Keep still, you fool! Keep still!"

The horse at once ceased struggling and floated calmly upon the surface, its wooden body being as buoyant as a raft.

"What does that word 'fool' mean?" enquired the horse.

"It is a term of reproach," answered Tip, somewhat ashamed of the expression. "I only use it when I am angry."

"Then it pleases me to be able to call you a fool, in return," said the horse. "For I did not make the river, nor put it in our way; so only a term of, reproach is fit for one who becomes angry with me for falling into the water."

"That is quite evident," replied Tip; "so I will acknowledge myself in the wrong." Then he called out to the Pumpkinhead: "are you all right, Jack?"

There was no reply. So the boy called to the King "are you all right, your majesty?"

The Scarecrow groaned.

"I'm all wrong, somehow," he said, in a weak voice. "How very wet this water is!"

Tip was bound so tightly by the cord that he could not turn his head to look at his companions; so he said to the Saw-Horse:

"Paddle with your legs toward the shore."

The horse obeyed, and although their progress was slow they finally reached the opposite river bank at a place where it was low enough to enable the creature to scramble upon dry land.

With some difficulty the boy managed to get his knife out of his pocket and cut the cords that bound the riders to one another and to the wooden horse. He heard the Scarecrow fall to the ground with a mushy sound, and then he himself quickly dismounted and looked at his friend Jack.

The wooden body, with its gorgeous clothing, still sat upright upon the horse's back; but the pumpkin head was gone, and only the sharpened stick that served for a neck was visible. As for the Scarecrow, the straw in his body had shaken down with the jolting and packed itself into his legs and the lower part of his body — which appeared very plump and round while his upper half seemed like an empty sack. Upon his head the Scarecrow still wore the heavy crown, which had been sewed on to prevent his losing it; but the head was now so damp and limp that the weight of the gold and jewels sagged forward and crushed the painted face into a mass of wrinkles that made him look exactly like a Japanese pug dog.

Tip would have laughed — had he not been so anxious about his man Jack. But the Scarecrow, however damaged, was all there, while the pumpkin head that was so necessary to Jack's existence was missing; so the boy seized a long pole that fortunately lay near at hand and anxiously turned again toward the river.

Far out upon the waters he sighted the golden hue of the pumpkin, which gently bobbed up and down with the motion of the waves. At that moment it was quite out of Tip's reach, but after a time it floated nearer and still nearer until the boy was able to reach it with his pole and draw it to the shore. Then he brought it to the top of the bank, carefully wiped the water from its pumpkin face with his handkerchief, and ran with it to Jack and replaced the head upon the man's neck.

"Dear me!" were Jack's first words. "What a dreadful experience! I wonder if water is liable to spoil pumpkins?"

Tip did not think a reply was necessary, for he knew that the Scarecrow also stood in need of his help. So he carefully removed the straw from the

King's body and legs, and spread it out in the sun to dry. The wet clothing he hung over the body of the Saw-Horse.

"If water spoils pumpkins," observed Jack, with a deep sigh, "then my days are numbered."

"I've never noticed that water spoils pumpkins," returned Tip; "unless the water happens to be boiling. If your head isn't cracked, my friend, you must be in fairly good condition."

"Oh, my head isn't cracked in the least," declared Jack, more cheerfully.

"Then don't worry," retorted the boy. "Care once killed a cat."

"Then," said Jack, seriously, "I am very glad indeed that I am not a cat."

The sun was fast drying their clothing, and Tip stirred up his Majesty's straw so that the warm rays might absorb the moisture and make it as crisp and dry as ever. When this had been accomplished he stuffed the Scarecrow into symmetrical shape and smoothed out his face so that he wore his usual gay and charming expression.

"Thank you very much," said the monarch, brightly, as he walked about and found himself to be well balanced. "There are several distinct advantages in being a Scarecrow. For if one has friends near at hand to repair damages, nothing very serious can happen to you."

"I wonder if hot sunshine is liable to crack pumpkins," said Jack, with an anxious ring in his voice.

"Not at all — not at all!" replied the Scarecrow, gaily. "All you need fear, my boy, is old age. When your golden youth has decayed we shall quickly part company — but you needn't look forward to it; we'll discover the fact ourselves, and notify you. But come! Let us resume our journey. I am anxious to greet my friend the Tin Woodman."

So they remounted the Saw-Horse, Tip holding to the post, the Pumpkinhead clinging to Tip, and the Scarecrow with both arms around the wooden form of Jack.

TIP SLEIGHS THE SCARECROW WITH DRY STRAW.

"Go slowly, for now there is no danger of pursuit," said Tip to his steed.

"All right!" responded the creature, in a voice rather gruff.

"Aren't you a little hoarse?" asked the Pumpkinhead politely.

The Saw-Horse gave an angry prance and rolled one knotty eye backward toward Tip.

"See here," he growled, "can't you protect me from insult?"

"To be sure!" answered Tip, soothingly. "I am sure Jack meant no harm. And it will not do for us to quarrel, you know; we must all remain good friends."

"I'll have nothing more to do with that Pumpkinhead," declared the Saw-Horse, viciously. "he loses his head too easily to suit me."

There seemed no fitting reply to this speech, so for a time they rode along in silence.

After a while the Scarecrow remarked:

“This reminds me of old times. It was upon this grassy knoll that I once saved Dorothy from the Stinging Bees of the Wicked Witch of the West.”

“Do Stinging Bees injure pumpkins?” asked Jack, glancing around fearfully.

“They are all dead, so it doesn’t matter,” replied the Scarecrow. “And here is where Nick Chopper destroyed the Wicked Witch’s Grey Wolves.”

“Who was Nick Chopper?” asked Tip.

“That is the name of my friend the Tin Woodman, answered his Majesty. And here is where the Winged Monkeys captured and bound us, and flew away with little Dorothy,” he continued, after they had traveled a little way farther.

“Do Winged Monkeys ever eat pumpkins?” asked Jack, with a shiver of fear.

“I do not know; but you have little cause to, worry, for the Winged Monkeys are now the slaves of Glinda the Good, who owns the Golden Cap that commands their services,” said the Scarecrow, reflectively.

Then the stuffed monarch became lost in thought recalling the days of past adventures. And the Saw-Horse rocked and rolled over the flower-strewn fields and carried its riders swiftly upon their way.

Twilight fell, bye and bye, and then the dark shadows of night. So Tip stopped the horse and they all proceeded to dismount.

“I’m tired out,” said the boy, yawning wearily; “and the grass is soft and cool. Let us lie down here and sleep until morning.”

“I can’t sleep,” said Jack.

“I never do,” said the Scarecrow.

“I do not even know what sleep is,” said the Saw-Horse.

“Still, we must have consideration for this poor boy, who is made of flesh and blood and bone, and gets tired,” suggested the Scarecrow, in his usual thoughtful manner. “I remember it was the same way with little Dorothy. We always had to sit through the night while she slept.”

“I’m sorry,” said Tip, meekly, “but I can’t help it. And I’m dreadfully hungry, too!”

“Here is a new danger!” remarked Jack, gloomily. “I hope you are not fond of eating pumpkins.”

“Not unless they’re stewed and made into pies,” answered the boy, laughing. “So have no fears of me, friend Jack.”

“What a coward that Pumpkinhead is!” said the Saw-Horse, scornfully.

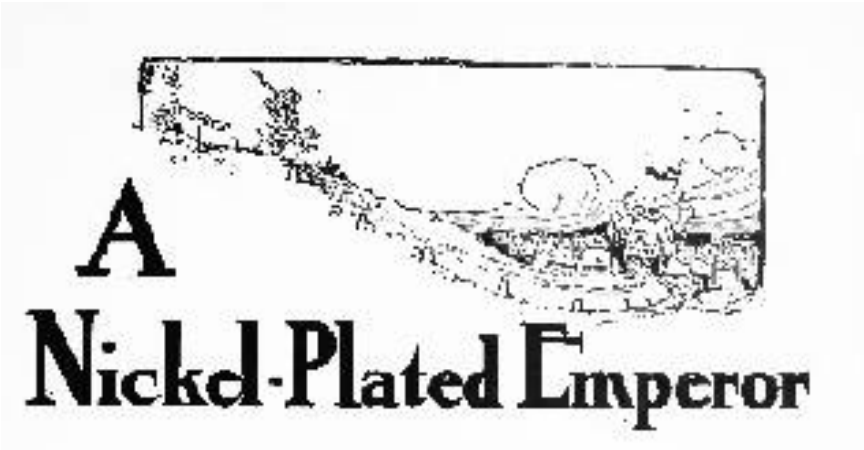
“You might be a coward yourself, if you knew you were liable to spoil!” retorted Jack, angrily.

“There! — there!” interrupted the Scarecrow; “don’t let us quarrel. We all have our weaknesses, dear friends; so we must strive to be considerate of one another. And since this poor boy is hungry and has nothing whatever to eat, let us all remain quiet and allow him to sleep; for it is said that in sleep a mortal may forget even hunger.”

“Thank you!” exclaimed Tip, gratefully. “Your Majesty is fully as good as you are wise — and that is saying a good deal!”

He then stretched himself upon the grass and, using the stuffed form of the Scarecrow for a pillow, was presently fast asleep.

A Nickel-Plated Emperor



Tip awoke soon after dawn, but the Scarecrow had already risen and plucked, with his clumsy fingers, a double-handful of ripe berries from some bushes near by. These the boy ate greedily, finding them an ample breakfast, and afterward the little party resumed its Journey.

After an hour's ride they reached the summit of a hill from whence they espied the City of the Winkies and noted the tall domes of the Emperor's palace rising from the clusters of more modest dwellings.

The Scarecrow became greatly animated at this sight, and exclaimed:

"How delighted I shall be to see my old friend the Tin Woodman again! I hope that he rules his people more successfully than I have ruled mine!"

"Is the Tin Woodman the Emperor of the Winkies?" asked the horse.

"Yes, indeed. They invited him to rule over them soon after the Wicked Witch was destroyed; and as Nick Chopper has the best heart in all the world I am sure he has proved an excellent and able emperor."

"I thought that 'Emperor' was the title of a person who rules an empire," said Tip, "and the Country of the Winkies is only a Kingdom."

"Don't mention that to the Tin Woodman!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, earnestly. "You would hurt his feelings terribly. He is a proud man, as he has every reason to be, and it pleases him to be termed Emperor rather than King."

"I'm sure it makes no difference to me," replied the boy.

The Saw-Horse now ambled forward at a pace so fast that its riders had hard work to stick upon its back; so there was little further conversation until they drew up beside the palace steps.

An aged Winkie, dressed in a uniform of silver cloth, came forward to

assist them to alight. Said the Scarecrow to his personage:

"Show us at once to your master, the Emperor."

The man looked from one to another of the party in an embarrassed way, and finally answered:

"I fear I must ask you to wait for a time. The Emperor is not receiving this morning."

"How is that?" enquired the Scarecrow, anxiously. "I hope nothing has happened to him."

"Oh, no; nothing serious," returned the man. "But this is his Majesty's day for being polished; and just now his august presence is thickly smeared with putz-pomade."

"Oh, I see!" cried the Scarecrow, greatly reassured. "My friend was ever inclined to be a dandy, and I suppose he is now more proud than ever of his personal appearance."

"He is, indeed," said the man, with a polite bow. "Our mighty Emperor has lately caused himself to be nickel-plated."

"Good Gracious!" the Scarecrow exclaimed at hearing this. "If his wit bears the same polish, how sparkling it must be! But show us in — I'm sure the Emperor will receive us, even in his present state"

"The Emperor's state is always magnificent," said the man. "But I will venture to tell him of your arrival, and will receive his commands concerning you."

So the party followed the servant into a splendid ante-room, and the Saw-Horse ambled awkwardly after them, having no knowledge that a horse might be expected to remain outside.

The travelers were at first somewhat awed by their surroundings, and even the Scarecrow seemed impressed as he examined the rich hangings of silver cloth caught up into knots and fastened with tiny silver axes. Upon a handsome center-table stood a large silver oil-can, richly engraved with scenes from the past adventures of the Tin Woodman, Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion and the Scarecrow: the lines of the engraving being traced upon the silver in yellow gold. On the walls hung several portraits, that of the Scarecrow seeming to be the most prominent and carefully executed, while a the large painting of the famous Wizard of Oz, in act of presenting the Tin Woodman with a heart, covered almost one entire end of the room.

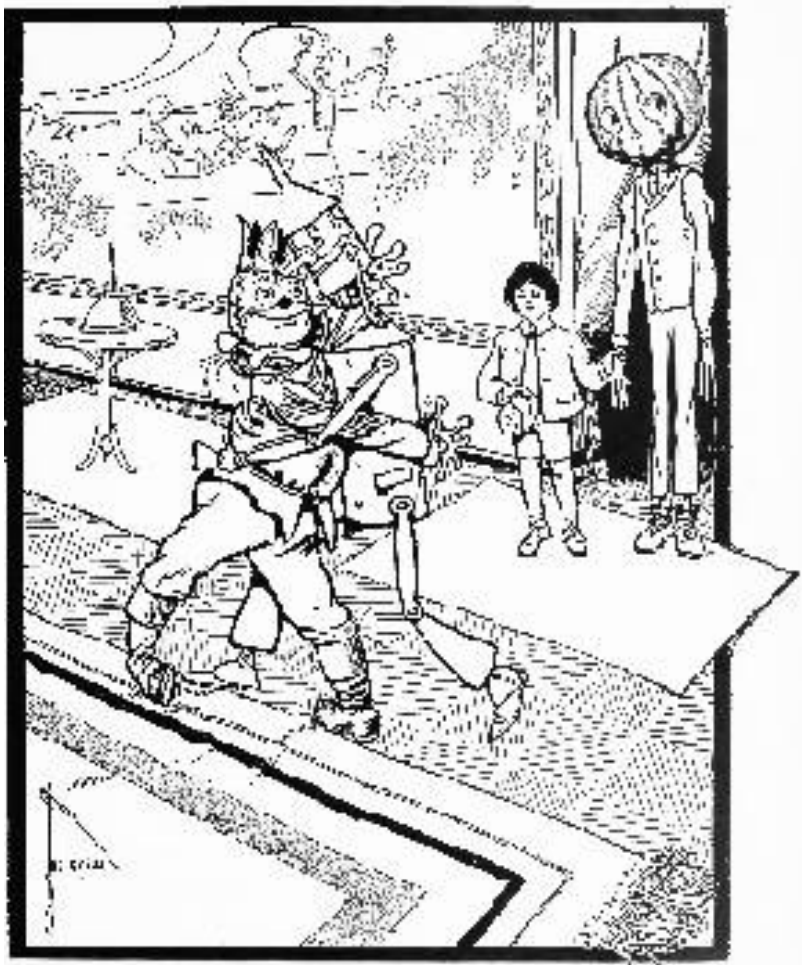
While the visitors gazed at these things in silent admiration they suddenly heard a loud voice in the next room exclaim:

"Well! well! well! What a great surprise!"

And then the door burst open and Nick Chopper rushed into their midst and caught the Scarecrow in a close and loving embrace that creased him

into many folds and wrinkles.

"My dear old friend! My noble comrade!" cried the Tin Woodman, joyfully. "how delighted! I am to meet you once again."



CAUGHT THE SCARECROW IN A CLOSE AND LOVING EMBRACE.

And then he released the Scarecrow and held him at arms' length while he surveyed the beloved, painted features.

But, alas! the face of the Scarecrow and many portions of his body bore great blotches of putz-pomade; for the Tin Woodman, in his eagerness to welcome his friend, had quite forgotten the condition of his toilet and had rubbed the thick coating of paste from his own body to that of his comrade.

"Dear me!" said the Scarecrow dolefully. "What a mess I'm in!"

"Never mind, my friend," returned the Tin Woodman, "I'll send you to

my Imperial Laundry, and you'll come out as good as new."

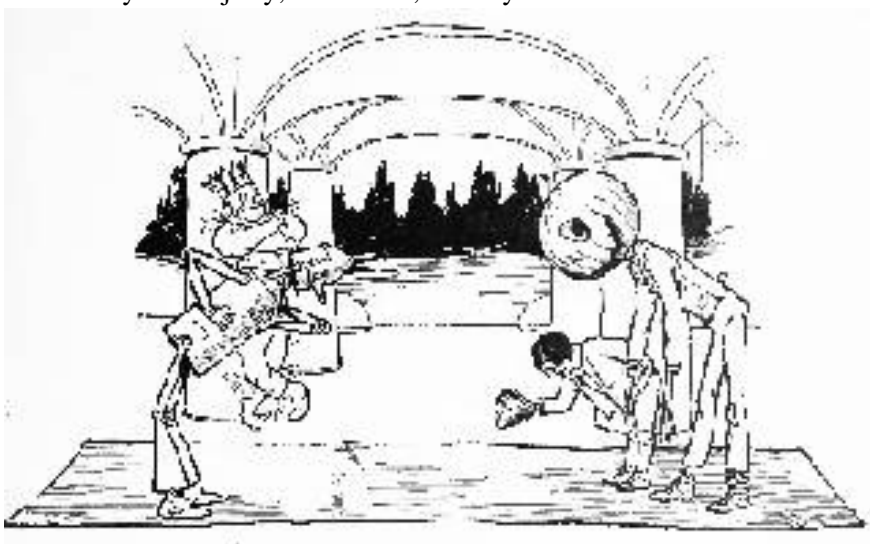
"Won't I be mangled?" asked the Scarecrow.

"No, indeed!" was the reply. "But tell me, how came your Majesty here? and who are your companions?"

The Scarecrow, with great politeness, introduced Tip and Jack Pumpkinhead, and the latter personage seemed to interest the Tin Woodman greatly.

"You are not very substantial, I must admit," said the Emperor. "but you are certainly unusual, and therefore worthy to become a member of our select society."

"I thank your Majesty," said Jack, humbly.



"I hope you are enjoying good health?" continued the Woodman.

"At present, yes;" replied the Pumpkinhead, with a sigh; "but I am in constant terror of the day when I shall spoil."

"Nonsense!" said the Emperor — but in a kindly, sympathetic tone. "Do not, I beg of you, dampen today's sun with the showers of tomorrow. For before your head has time to spoil you can have it canned, and in that way it may be preserved indefinitely."

Tip, during this conversation, was looking at the Woodman with undisguised amazement, and noticed that the celebrated Emperor of the Winkies was composed entirely of pieces of tin, neatly soldered and riveted together into the form of a man. He rattled and clanked a little, as he moved, but in the main he seemed to be most cleverly constructed, and his appearance was only marred by the thick coating of polishing-paste that

covered him from head to foot.

The boy's intent gaze caused the Tin Woodman to remember that he was not in the most presentable condition, so he begged his friends to excuse him while he retired to his private apartment and allowed his servants to polish him. This was accomplished in a short time, and when the emperor returned his nickel-plated body shone so magnificently that the Scarecrow heartily congratulated him on his improved appearance.

"That nickel-plate was, I confess, a happy thought," said Nick; "and it was the more necessary because I had become somewhat scratched during my adventurous experiences. You will observe this engraved star upon my left breast. It not only indicates where my excellent heart lies, but covers very neatly the patch made by the Wonderful Wizard when he placed that valued organ in my breast with his own skillful hands."

"Is your heart, then, a hand-organ?" asked the Pumpkinhead, curiously.

"By no means," responded the emperor, with dignity. "It is, I am convinced, a strictly orthodox heart, although somewhat larger and warmer than most people possess."

Then he turned to the Scarecrow and asked:

"Are your subjects happy and contented, my dear friend?"

"I cannot, say" was the reply. "for the girls of Oz have risen in revolt and driven me out of the emerald City."

"Great Goodness!" cried the Tin Woodman, "What a calamity! They surely do not complain of your wise and gracious rule?"

"No; but they say it is a poor rule that don't work both ways," answered the Scarecrow; "and these females are also of the opinion that men have ruled the land long enough. So they have captured my city, robbed the treasury of all its jewels, and are running things to suit themselves."

"Dear me! What an extraordinary idea!" cried the Emperor, who was both shocked and surprised.

"And I heard some of them say," said Tip, "that they intend to march here and capture the castle and city of the Tin Woodman."

CONFRONTING HIS MAJESTY, THE SCARECROW.

"Ah! we must not give them time to do that," said the Emperor, quickly; "we will go at once and recapture the Emerald City and place the Scarecrow again upon his throne."

"I was sure you would help me," remarked the Scarecrow in a pleased voice. "How large an army can you assemble?"

"We do not need an army," replied the Woodman. "We four, with the aid of my gleaming axe, are enough to strike terror into the hearts of the rebels."

"We five," corrected the Pumpkinhead.

"Five?" repeated the Tin Woodman.

"Yes; the Saw-Horse is brave and fearless," answered Jack, forgetting his recent quarrel with the quadruped.

The Tin Woodman looked around him in a puzzled way, for the Saw-Horse had until now remained quietly standing in a corner, where the Emperor had not noticed him. Tip immediately called the odd-looking creature to them, and it approached so awkwardly that it nearly upset the beautiful center-table and the engraved oil-can.

"I begin to think," remarked the Tin Woodman as he looked earnestly at the Saw-Horse, "that wonders will never cease! How came this creature alive?"

"I did it with a magic powder," modestly asserted the boy. "and the Saw-Horse has been very useful to us."

"He enabled us to escape the rebels," added the Scarecrow.

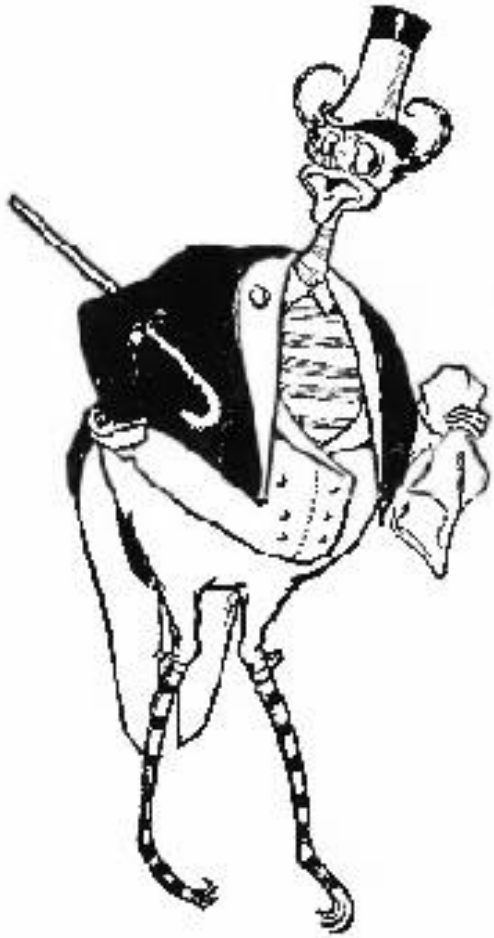
"Then we must surely accept him as a comrade," declared the emperor. "A live Saw-Horse is a distinct novelty, and should prove an interesting study. Does he know anything?"

"Well, I cannot claim any great experience in life," the Saw-Horse answered for himself. "but I seem to learn very quickly, and often it occurs to me that I know more than any of those around me."

"Perhaps you do," said the emperor; "for experience does not always mean wisdom. But time is precious just now, so let us quickly make preparations to start upon our Journey."

The emperor called his Lord High Chancellor and instructed him how to run the kingdom during his absence. Meanwhile the Scarecrow was taken apart and the painted sack that served him for a head was carefully laundered and restuffed with the brains originally given him by the great Wizard. His clothes were also cleaned and pressed by the Imperial tailors, and his crown polished and again sewed upon his head, for the Tin Woodman insisted he should not renounce this badge of royalty. The Scarecrow now presented a very respectable appearance, and although in no way addicted to vanity he was quite pleased with himself and strutted a trifle as he walked. While this was being done Tip mended the wooden limbs of Jack Pumpkinhead and made them stronger than before, and the Saw-Horse was also inspected to see if he was in good working order.

Then bright and early the next morning they set out upon the return Journey to the emerald City, the Tin Woodman bearing upon his shoulder a gleaming axe and leading the way, while the Pumpkinhead rode upon the Saw-Horse and Tip and the Scarecrow walked upon either side to make sure that he didn't fall off or become damaged.



Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E.

Now, General Jinjur — who, you will remember, commanded the Army of Revolt — was rendered very uneasy by the escape of the Scarecrow from the Emerald City. She feared, and with good reason, that if his Majesty and the Tin Woodman Joined forces, it would mean danger to her and her entire army; for the people of Oz had not yet forgotten the deeds of these famous heroes, who had passed successfully through so many startling adventures.

So Jinjur sent post-haste for old Mombi, the witch, and promised her large rewards if she would come to the assistance of the rebel army.

Mombi was furious at the trick Tip had played upon her as well as at his escape and the theft of the precious Powder of Life; so she needed no urging to induce her to travel to the Emerald City to assist Jinjur in defeating the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, who had made Tip one of their friends.

Mombi had no sooner arrived at the royal palace than she discovered, by means of her secret magic, that the adventurers were starting upon their Journey to the Emerald City; so she retired to a small room high up in a tower and locked herself in while she practised such arts as she could command to prevent the return of the Scarecrow and his companions.

That was why the Tin Woodman presently stopped and said:

"Something very curious has happened. I ought to know by heart and every step of this Journey, yet I fear we have already lost our way."

"That is quite impossible!" protested the Scarecrow. "Why do you think, my dear friend, that we have gone astray?"

"Why, here before us is a great field of sunflowers — and I never saw this field before in all my life."

At these words they all looked around, only to find that they were indeed surrounded by a field of tall stalks, every stalk bearing at its top a gigantic sunflower. And not only were these flowers almost blinding in their vivid hues of red and gold, but each one whirled around upon its stalk like a miniature wind-mill, completely dazzling the vision of the beholders and so mystifying them that they knew not which way to turn.

"It's witchcraft!" exclaimed Tip.

While they paused, hesitating and wondering, the Tin Woodman uttered a cry of impatience and advanced with swinging axe to cut down the stalks before him. But now the sunflowers suddenly stopped their rapid whirling, and the travelers plainly saw a girl's face appear in the center of each flower. These lovely faces looked upon the astonished band with mocking smiles, and then burst into a chorus of merry laughter at the dismay their appearance caused.

“Stop! stop!” cried Tip, seizing the Woodman’s arm; “they’re alive! they’re girls!”

At that moment the flowers began whirling again, and the faces faded away and were lost in the rapid revolutions.

The Tin Woodman dropped his axe and sat down upon the ground.

“It would be heartless to chop down those pretty creatures,” said he, despondently. “and yet I do not know how else we can proceed upon our way”

“They looked to me strangely like the faces of the Army of Revolt,” mused the Scarecrow. “But I cannot conceive how the girls could have followed us here so quickly.”

“I believe it’s magic,” said Tip, positively, “and that someone is playing a trick upon us. I’ve known old Mombi do things like that before. Probably it’s nothing more than an illusion, and there are no sunflowers here at all.”

“Then let us shut our eyes and walk forward,” suggested the Woodman.

“Excuse me,” replied the Scarecrow. “My eyes are not painted to shut. Because you happen to have tin eyelids, you must not imagine we are all built in the same way.”

“And the eyes of the Saw-Horse are knot eyes,” said Jack, leaning forward to examine them.

“Nevertheless, you must ride quickly forward,” commanded Tip, “and we will follow after you and so try to escape. My eyes are already so dazzled that I can scarcely see.”

So the Pumpkinhead rode boldly forward, and Tip grasped the stub tail of the Saw-Horse and followed with closed eyes. The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman brought up the rear, and before they had gone many yards a Joyful shout from Jack announced that the way was clear before them.

Then all paused to look backward, but not a trace of the field of sunflowers remained.

More cheerfully, now they proceeded upon their Journey; but old Mombi had so changed the appearance of the landscape that they would surely have been lost had not the Scarecrow wisely concluded to take their direction from the sun. For no witch-craft could change the course of the sun, and it was therefore a safe guide.

However, other difficulties lay before them. The Saw-Horse stepped into a rabbit hole and fell to the ground. The Pumpkinhead was pitched high into the air, and his history would probably have ended at that exact moment had not the Tin Woodman skillfully caught the pumpkin as it descended and saved it from injury.

Tip soon had it fitted to the neck again and replaced Jack upon his feet.

But the Saw-Horse did not escape so easily. For when his leg was pulled from the rabbit hole it was found to be broken short off, and must be replaced or repaired before he could go a step farther.

"This is quite serious," said the Tin Woodman. "If there were trees near by I might soon manufacture another leg for this animal; but I cannot see even a shrub for miles around."

THE TIN WOODMAN SKILLFULLY CAUGHT THE PUMPKIN

"And there are neither fences nor houses in this part of the land of Oz," added the Scarecrow, disconsolately.

"Then what shall we do?" enquired the boy.

"I suppose I must start my brains working," replied his Majesty the Scarecrow; "for experience has, taught me that I can do anything if I but take

time to think it out."

"Let us all think," said Tip; "and perhaps we shall find a way to repair the Saw-Horse."

So they sat in a row upon the grass and began to think, while the Saw-Horse occupied itself by gazing curiously upon its broken limb.

"Does it hurt?" asked the Tin Woodman, in a soft, sympathetic voice.

"Not in the least," returned the Saw-Horse; "but my pride is injured to find that my anatomy is so brittle."

For a time the little group remained in silent thought. Presently the Tin Woodman raised his head and looked over the fields.

"What sort of creature is that which approaches us?" he asked, wonderingly.

The others followed his gaze, and discovered coming toward them the most extraordinary object they had ever beheld. It advanced quickly and noiselessly over the soft grass and in a few minutes stood before the adventurers and regarded them with an astonishment equal to their own.

The Scarecrow was calm under all circumstances.

"Good morning!" he said, politely.

The stranger removed his hat with a flourish, bowed very low, and then responded:

"Good morning, one and all. I hope you are, as an aggregation, enjoying excellent health. Permit me to present my card."

With this courteous speech it extended a card toward the Scarecrow, who accepted it, turned it over and over, and handed it with a shake of his head to Tip.

The boy read aloud:

"MR. H. M. WOGGLE-BUG, T. E."

THE STRANGER REMOVED HIS HAT WITH A FLOURISH

"Dear me!" ejaculated the Pumpkinhead, staring somewhat intently.

"How very peculiar!" said the Tin Woodman.

Tip's eyes were round and wondering, and the Saw-Horse uttered a sigh and turned away its head.

"Are you really a Woggle-Bug?" enquired the Scarecrow.

"Most certainly, my dear sir!" answered the stranger, briskly. "Is not my name upon the card?"

"It is," said the Scarecrow. "But may I ask what 'H. M.' stands for?"

"'H. M.' means Highly Magnified," returned the Woggle-Bug, proudly.

"Oh, I see." The Scarecrow viewed the stranger critically. "And are you, in truth, highly magnified?"

“Sir,” said the Woggle-Bug, “I take you for a gentleman of judgment and discernment. Does it not occur to you that I am several thousand times greater than any Woggle-Bug you ever saw before? Therefore it is plainly evident that I am Highly Magnified, and there is no good reason why you should doubt the fact.”

“Pardon me,” returned the Scarecrow. “My brains are slightly mixed since I was last laundered. Would it be improper for me to ask, also, what the ‘T.E.’ at the end of your name stands for?”

“Those letters express my degree,” answered the Woggle-Bug, with a condescending smile. “To be more explicit, the initials mean that I am Thoroughly Educated.”

“Oh!” said the Scarecrow, much relieved.

Tip had not yet taken his eyes off this wonderful personage. What he saw was a great, round, buglike body supported upon two slender legs which ended in delicate feet — the toes curling upward. The body of the Woggle-Bug was rather flat, and judging from what could be seen of it was of a glistening dark brown color upon the back, while the front was striped with alternate bands of light brown and white, blending together at the edges. Its arms were fully as slender as its legs, and upon a rather long neck was perched its head — not unlike the head of a man, except that its nose ended in a curling antenna, or “feeler,” and its ears from the upper points bore antennae that decorated the sides of its head like two miniature, curling pig tails. It must be admitted that the round, black eyes were rather bulging in appearance; but the expression upon the Woggle-Bug’s face was by no means unpleasant.

For dress the insect wore a dark-blue swallowtail coat with a yellow silk lining and a flower in the button-hole; a vest of white duck that stretched tightly across the wide body; knickerbockers of fawn-colored plush, fastened at the knees with gilt buckles; and, perched upon its small head, was jauntily set a tall silk hat.

Standing upright before our amazed friends the Woggle-Bug appeared to be fully as tall as the Tin Woodman; and surely no bug in all the Land of Oz had ever before attained so enormous a size.

“I confess,” said the Scarecrow, “that your abrupt appearance has caused me surprise, and no doubt has startled my companions. I hope, however, that this circumstance will not distress you. We shall probably get used to you in time.”

“Do not apologize, I beg of you!” returned the Woggle-Bug, earnestly. “It affords me great pleasure to surprise people; for surely I cannot be classed with ordinary insects and am entitled to both curiosity and admiration from

those I meet."

"You are, indeed," agreed his Majesty.

"If you will permit me to seat myself in your august company," continued the stranger, "I will gladly relate my history, so that you will be better able to comprehend my unusual — may I say remarkable? — appearance."

"You may say what you please," answered the Tin Woodman, briefly.

So the Woggle-Bug sat down upon the grass, facing the little group of wanderers, and told them the following story:

A Highly Magnified History

"It is but honest that I should acknowledge at the beginning of my recital that I was born an ordinary Woggle-Bug," began the creature, in a frank and friendly tone. "Knowing no better, I used my arms as well as my legs for walking, and crawled under the edges of stones or hid among the roots of grasses with no thought beyond finding a few insects smaller than myself to feed upon.

"The chill nights rendered me stiff and motionless, for I wore no clothing, but each morning the warm rays of the sun gave me new life and restored me to activity. A horrible existence is this, but you must remember it is the regular ordained existence of Woggle-Bugs, as well as of many other tiny creatures that inhabit the earth.

"But Destiny had singled me out, humble though I was, for a grander fate! One day I crawled near to a country school house, and my curiosity being excited by the monotonous hum of the students within, I made bold to enter and creep along a crack between two boards until I reached the far end, where, in front of a hearth of glowing embers, sat the master at his desk.

"No one noticed so small a creature as a Woggle-Bug, and when I found that the hearth was even warmer and more comfortable than the sunshine, I resolved to establish my future home beside it. So I found a charming nest between two bricks and hid myself therein for many, many months.

"Professor Nowitall is, doubtless, the most famous scholar in the land of Oz, and after a few days I began to listen to the lectures and discourses he gave his pupils. Not one of them was more attentive than the humble, unnoticed Woggle-Bug, and I acquired in this way a fund of knowledge that I

will myself confess is simply marvelous. That is why I place 'T.E.' Thoroughly Educated upon my cards; for my greatest pride lies in the fact that the world cannot produce another Woggle-Bug with a tenth part of my own culture and erudition."

"I do not blame you," said the Scarecrow. "Education is a thing to be proud of. I'm educated myself. The mess of brains given me by the Great Wizard is considered by my friends to be unexcelled."

"Nevertheless," interrupted the Tin Woodman, "a good heart is, I believe, much more desirable than education or brains."

"To me," said the Saw-Horse, "a good leg is more desirable than either."

"Could seeds be considered in the light of brains?" enquired the Pumpkinhead, abruptly.

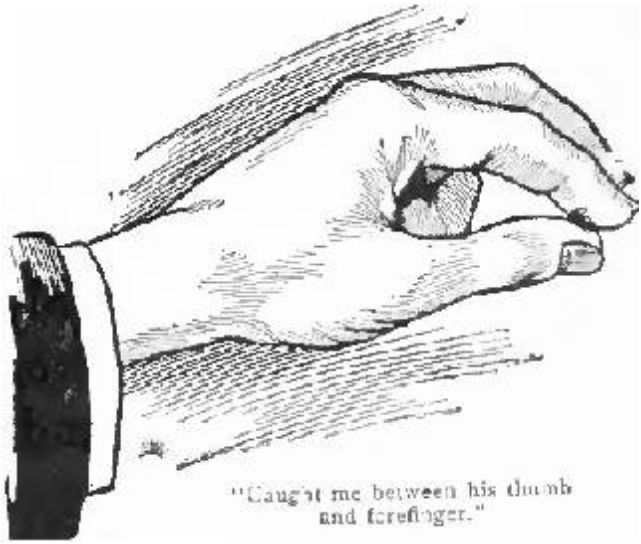
"Keep quiet!" commanded Tip, sternly.

"Very well, dear father," answered the obedient Jack.

The Woggle-Bug listened patiently — even respectfully — to these remarks, and then resumed his story.

"I must have lived fully three years in that secluded school-house hearth," said he, "drinking thirstily of the ever-flowing fount of limpid knowledge before me."

"Quite poetical," commented the Scarecrow, nodding his head approvingly.



"Caught me between his thumb and forefinger."

"But one, day" continued the Bug, "a marvelous circumstance occurred that altered my very existence and brought me to my present pinnacle of greatness. The Professor discovered me in the act of crawling across the hearth, and before I could escape he had caught me between his thumb and

forefinger.

"'My dear children,' said he, 'I have captured a Woggle-Bug — a very rare and interesting specimen. Do any of you know what a Woggle-Bug is?'

"'No!' yelled the scholars, in chorus.

"'Then,' said the Professor, 'I will get out my famous magnifying-glass and throw the insect upon a screen in a highly-magnified condition, that you may all study carefully its peculiar construction and become acquainted with its habits and manner of life.'

"He then brought from a cupboard a most curious instrument, and before I could realize what had happened I found myself thrown upon a screen in a highly-magnified state — even as you now behold me.

"The students stood up on their stools and craned their heads forward to get a better view of me, and two little girls jumped upon the sill of an open window where they could see more plainly.

"'Behold!' cried the Professor, in a loud voice, 'this highly-magnified Woggle-Bug; one of the most curious insects in existence!'

"THE STUDENTS STOOD UP ON THEIR STOOLS."

"Being Thoroughly Educated, and knowing what is required of a cultured gentleman, at this juncture I stood upright and, placing my hand upon my bosom, made a very polite bow. My action, being unexpected, must have startled them, for one of the little girls perched upon the window-sill gave a scream and fell backward out the window, drawing her companion with her as she disappeared.

"The Professor uttered a cry of horror and rushed away through the door to see if the poor children were injured by the fall. The scholars followed after him in a wild mob, and I was left alone in the school-room, still in a Highly-Magnified state and free to do as I pleased.

"It immediately occurred to me that this was a good opportunity to escape.

I was proud of my great size, and realized that now I could safely travel anywhere in the world, while my superior culture would make me a fit associate for the most learned person I might chance to meet.

“So, while the Professor picked the little girls — who were more frightened than hurt — off the ground, and the pupils clustered around him closely grouped, I calmly walked out of the school-house, turned a corner, and escaped unnoticed to a grove of trees that stood near”

“Wonderful!” exclaimed the Pumpkinhead, admiringly.

“It was, indeed,” agreed the Woggle-Bug. “I have never ceased to congratulate myself for escaping while I was Highly Magnified; for even my excessive knowledge would have proved of little use to me had I remained a tiny, insignificant insect.”

“I didn’t know before,” said Tip, looking at the Woggle-Bug with a puzzled expression, “that insects wore clothes.”

“Nor do they, in their natural state,” returned the stranger. “But in the course of my wanderings I had the good fortune to save the ninth life of a tailor — tailors having, like cats, nine lives, as you probably know. The fellow was exceedingly grateful, for had he lost that ninth life it would have been the end of him; so he begged permission to furnish me with the stylish costume I now wear. It fits very nicely, does it not?” and the Woggle-Bug stood up and turned himself around slowly, that all might examine his person.

“He must have been a good tailor,” said the Scarecrow, somewhat

enviously.

"He was a good-hearted tailor, at any rate," observed Nick Chopper.

"But where were you going, when you met us?" Tip asked the Woggle-Bug.

"Nowhere in particular," was the reply, "although it is my intention soon to visit the Emerald City and arrange to give a course of lectures to select audiences on the 'Advantages of Magnification.'"

"We are bound for the Emerald City now," said the Tin Woodman; "so, if it pleases you to do so, you are welcome to travel in our company."

The Woggle-Bug bowed with profound grace.

"It will give me great pleasure," said he "to accept your kind invitation; for nowhere in the Land of Oz could I hope to meet with so congenial a company."

"That is true," acknowledged the Pumpkinhead. "We are quite as congenial as flies and honey."

"But — pardon me if I seem inquisitive — are you not all rather — ahem! rather unusual?" asked the Woggle-Bug, looking from one to another with unconcealed interest.

"Not more so than yourself," answered the Scarecrow. "Everything in life is unusual until you get accustomed to it."

"What rare philosophy!" exclaimed the Woggle-Bug, admiringly.

"Yes; my brains are working well today," admitted the Scarecrow, an accent of pride in his voice.

"Then, if you are sufficiently rested and refreshed, let us bend our steps toward the Emerald City," suggested the magnified one.

"We can't," said Tip. "The Saw-Horse has broken a leg, so he can't bend his steps. And there is no wood around to make him a new limb from. And we can't leave the horse behind because the Pumpkinhead is so stiff in his Joints that he has to ride."

"How very unfortunate!" cried the Woggle-Bug. Then he looked the party over carefully and said:

"If the Pumpkinhead is to ride, why not use one of his legs to make a leg for the horse that carries him? I judge that both are made of wood."

"Now, that is what I call real cleverness," said the Scarecrow, approvingly. "I wonder my brains did not think of that long ago! Get to work, my dear Nick, and fit the Pumpkinhead's leg to the Saw-Horse."

Jack was not especially pleased with this idea; but he submitted to having his left leg amputated by the Tin Woodman and whittled down to fit the left leg of the Saw-Horse. Nor was the Saw-Horse especially pleased with the operation, either; for he growled a good deal about being "butchered," as he

called it, and afterward declared that the new leg was a disgrace to a respectable Saw-Horse.

"I beg you to be more careful in your speech," said the Pumpkinhead, sharply. "Remember, if you please, that it is my leg you are abusing."

"I cannot forget it," retorted the Saw-Horse, "for it is quite as flimsy as the rest of your person."

"Flimsy! me flimsy!" cried Jack, in a rage. "How dare you call me flimsy?"

"Because you are built as absurdly as a jumping-jack," sneered the horse, rolling his knotty eyes in a vicious manner. "Even your head won't stay straight, and you never can tell whether you are looking backwards or forwards!"

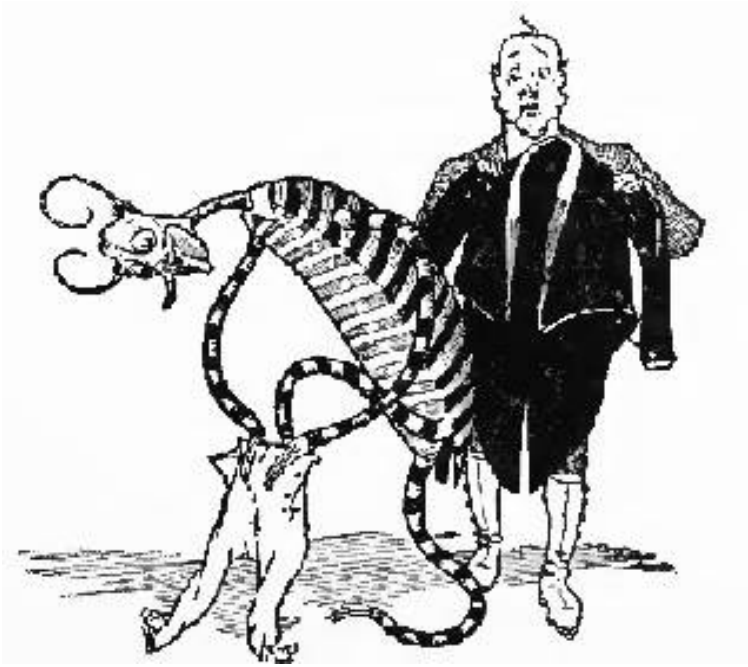
"Friends, I entreat you not to quarrel!" pleaded the Tin Woodman, anxiously. "As a matter of fact, we are none of us above criticism; so let us bear with each others' faults."

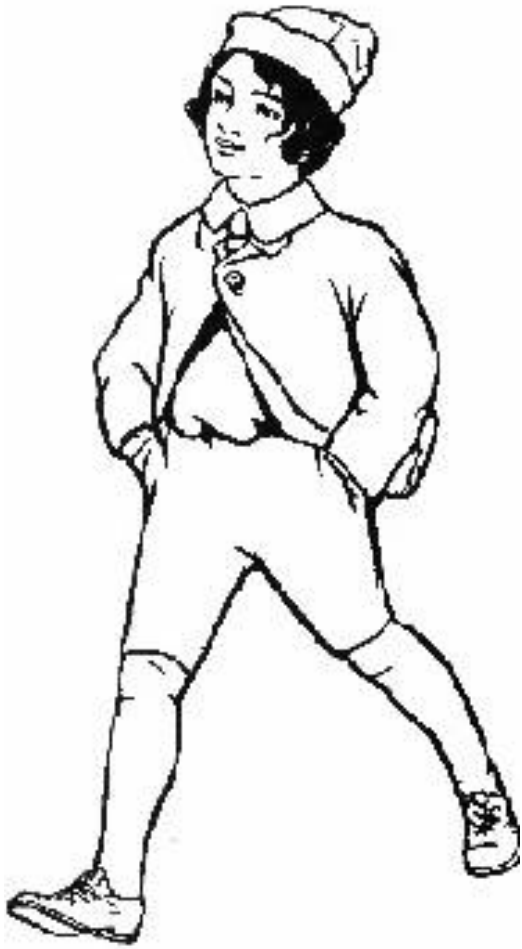
"An excellent suggestion," said the Woggle-Bug, approvingly. "You must have an excellent heart, my metallic friend."

"I have," returned Nick, well pleased. "My heart is quite the best part of me. But now let us start upon our Journey.

They perched the one-legged Pumpkinhead upon the Saw-Horse, and tied him to his seat with cords, so that he could not possibly fall off.

And then, following the lead of the Scarecrow, they all advanced in the direction of the Emerald City.





Old Mombi indulges in Witchcraft

They soon discovered that the Saw-Horse limped, for his new leg was a trifle too long. So they were obliged to halt while the Tin Woodman chopped it down with his axe, after which the wooden steed paced along more comfortably. But the Saw-Horse was not entirely satisfied, even yet.

"It was a shame that I broke my other leg!" it growled.

"On the contrary," airily remarked the Woggle-Bug, who was walking alongside, "you should consider the accident most fortunate. For a horse is never of much use until he has been broken."

"I beg your pardon," said Tip, rather provoked, for he felt a warm interest in both the Saw-Horse and his man Jack; "but permit me to say that your joke is a poor one, and as old as it is poor."

"Still, it is a Joke," declared the Woggle-Bug; firmly, "and a Joke derived from a play upon words is considered among educated people to be eminently proper."

"What does that mean?" enquired the Pumpkinhead, stupidly.

"It means, my dear friend," explained the Woggle-Bug, "that our language contains many words having a double meaning; and that to pronounce a joke that allows both meanings of a certain word, proves the joker a person of culture and refinement, who has, moreover, a thorough command of the language."

"I don't believe that," said Tip, plainly; "anybody can make a pun."

"Not so," rejoined the Woggle-Bug, stiffly. "It requires education of a high order. Are you educated, young sir?"

"Not especially," admitted Tip.

“Then you cannot judge the matter. I myself am Thoroughly Educated, and I say that puns display genius. For instance, were I to ride upon this Saw-Horse, he would not only be an animal he would become an equipage. For he would then be a horse-and-buggy.”

At this the Scarecrow gave a gasp and the Tin Woodman stopped short and looked reproachfully at the Woggle-Bug. At the same time the Saw-Horse loudly snorted his derision; and even the Pumpkinhead put up his hand to hide the smile which, because it was carved upon his face, he could not change to a frown.

But the Woggle-Bug strutted along as if he had made some brilliant remark, and the Scarecrow was obliged to say:

“I have heard, my dear friend, that a person can become over-educated; and although I have a high respect for brains, no matter how they may be arranged or classified, I begin to suspect that yours are slightly tangled. In any event, I must beg you to restrain your superior education while in our society.”

“We are not very particular,” added the Tin Woodman; “and we are exceedingly kind hearted. But if your superior culture gets leaky again — ” He did not complete the sentence, but he twirled his gleaming axe so carelessly that the Woggle-Bug looked frightened, and shrank away to a safe distance.

The others marched on in silence, and the Highly Magnified one, after a period of deep thought, said in an humble voice:

“I will endeavor to restrain myself.”

“That is all we can expect,” returned the Scarecrow pleasantly; and good nature being thus happily restored to the party, they proceeded upon their way.

When they again stopped to allow Tip to rest — the boy being the only one that seemed to tire — the Tin Woodman noticed many small, round holes in the grassy meadow.

“This must be a village of the Field Mice,” he said to the Scarecrow. “I wonder if my old friend, the Queen of the Mice, is in this neighborhood.”

“If she is, she may be of great service to us,” answered the Scarecrow, who was impressed by a sudden thought. “See if you can call her, my dear Nick.”

So the Tin Woodman blew a shrill note upon a silver whistle that hung around his neck, and presently a tiny grey mouse popped from a near-by hole and advanced fearlessly toward them. For the Tin Woodman had once saved her life, and the Queen of the Field Mice knew he was to be trusted.

“Good day, your Majesty,” said Nick, politely addressing the mouse; “I

trust you are enjoying good health?"

"Thank you, I am quite well," answered the Queen, demurely, as she sat up and displayed the tiny golden crown upon her head. "Can I do anything to assist my old friends?"

"You can, indeed," replied the Scarecrow, eagerly. "Let me, I intreat you, take a dozen of your subjects with me to the Emerald City."

"Will they be injured in any way?" asked the Queen, doubtfully.

"I think not," replied the Scarecrow. "I will carry them hidden in the straw which stuffs my body, and when I give them the signal by unbuttoning my jacket, they have only to rush out and scamper home again as fast as they can. By doing this they will assist me to regain my throne, which the Army

of Revolt has taken from me."

"In that case," said the Queen, "I will not refuse your request. Whenever you are ready, I will call twelve of my most intelligent subjects."

"I am ready now" returned the Scarecrow. Then he lay flat upon the ground and unbuttoned his jacket, displaying the mass of straw with which he was stuffed.

The Queen uttered a little piping call, and in an instant a dozen pretty field mice had emerged from their holes and stood before their ruler, awaiting her orders.

What the Queen said to them none of our travelers could understand, for it was in the mouse language; but the field mice obeyed without hesitation, running one after the other to the Scarecrow and hiding themselves in the straw of his breast.

When all of the twelve mice had thus concealed themselves, the Scarecrow buttoned his Jacket securely and then arose and thanked the Queen for her kindness.

"One thing more you might do to serve us," suggested the Tin Woodman; "and that is to run ahead and show us the way to the Emerald City. For some enemy is evidently trying to prevent us from reaching it."

"I will do that gladly," returned the Queen. "Are you ready?"

The Tin Woodman looked at Tip.

"I'm rested," said the boy. "Let us start."

Then they resumed their journey, the little grey Queen of the Field Mice running swiftly ahead and then pausing until the travelers drew near, when away she would dart again.

Without this unerring guide the Scarecrow and his comrades might never have gained the Emerald City; for many were the obstacles thrown in their way by the arts of old Mombi. Yet not one of the obstacles really existed — all were cleverly contrived deceptions. For when they came to the banks of a rushing river that threatened to bar their way the little Queen kept steadily on, passing through the seeming flood in safety; and our travelers followed her without encountering a single drop of water.

Again, a high wall of granite towered high above their heads and opposed their advance. But the grey Field Mouse walked straight through it, and the others did the same, the wall melting into mist as they passed it.

Afterward, when they had stopped for a moment to allow Tip to rest, they saw forty roads branching off from their feet in forty different directions; and soon these forty roads began whirling around like a mighty wheel, first in one direction and then in the other, completely bewildering their vision.

But the Queen called for them to follow her and darted off in a straight

line; and when they had gone a few paces the whirling pathways vanished and were seen no more.

Mombi's last trick was the most fearful of all. She sent a sheet of crackling flame rushing over the meadow to consume them; and for the first time the Scarecrow became afraid and turned to fly.

"If that fire reaches me I will be gone in no time!" said he, trembling until his straw rattled. "It's the most dangerous thing I ever encountered."

"I'm off, too!" cried the Saw-Horse, turning and prancing with agitation; "for my wood is so dry it would burn like kindlings."

"Is fire dangerous to pumpkins?" asked Jack, fearfully.

"You'll be baked like a tart — and so will I!" answered the Woggle-Bug, getting down on all fours so he could run the faster.

But the Tin Woodman, having no fear of fire, averted the stampede by a few sensible words.

"Look at the Field Mouse!" he shouted. "The fire does not burn her in the least. In fact, it is no fire at all, but only a deception."

Indeed, to watch the little Queen march calmly through the advancing flames restored courage to every member of the party, and they followed her without being even scorched.

"This is surely a most extraordinary adventure," said the Woggle-Bug, who was greatly amazed; "for it upsets all the Natural Laws that I heard Professor Nowitall teach in the school-house."

"Of course it does," said the Scarecrow, wisely. "All magic is unnatural,

and for that reason is to be feared and avoided. But I see before us the gates of the Emerald City, so I imagine we have now overcome all the magical obstacles that seemed to oppose us."

Indeed, the walls of the City were plainly visible, and the Queen of the Field Mice, who had guided them so faithfully, came near to bid them good-bye.

"We are very grateful to your Majesty for your kind assistance," said the Tin Woodman, bowing before the pretty creature.

"I am always pleased to be of service to my friends," answered the Queen, and in a flash she had darted away upon her journey home.

The Prisoners of the Queen

Approaching the gateway of the Emerald City the travelers found it guarded by two girls of the Army of Revolt, who opposed their entrance by drawing the knitting-needles from their hair and threatening to prod the first that came near.

But the Tin Woodman was not afraid.

"At the worst they can but scratch my beautiful nickel-plate," he said. "But there will be no 'worst,' for I think I can manage to frighten these absurd soldiers very easily. Follow me closely, all of you!"

Then, swinging his axe in a great circle to right and left before him, he advanced upon the gate, and the others followed him without hesitation.

The girls, who had expected no resistance whatever, were terrified by the sweep of the glittering axe and fled screaming into the city; so that our travelers passed the gates in safety and marched down the green marble pavement of the wide street toward the royal palace.

"At this rate we will soon have your Majesty upon the throne again," said the Tin Woodman, laughing at his easy conquest of the guards.

"Thank you, friend Nick," returned the Scarecrow, gratefully. "Nothing can resist your kind heart and your sharp axe."

As they passed the rows of houses they saw through the open doors that men were sweeping and dusting and washing dishes, while the women sat around in groups, gossiping and laughing.

"What has happened?" the Scarecrow asked a sad-looking man with a bushy beard, who wore an apron and was wheeling a baby-carriage along the

sidewalk.

“Why, we’ve had a revolution, your Majesty as you ought to know very well,” replied the man; “and since you went away the women have been running things to suit themselves. I’m glad you have decided to come back and restore order, for doing housework and minding the children is wearing out the strength of every man in the Emerald City.”

“Hm!” said the Scarecrow, thoughtfully. “If it is such hard work as you say, how did the women manage it so easily?”

“I really do not know” replied the man, with a deep sigh. “Perhaps the women are made of castiron.”

No movement was made, as they passed along the street, to oppose their progress. Several of the women stopped their gossip long enough to cast curious looks upon our friends, but immediately they would turn away with a laugh or a sneer and resume their chatter. And when they met with several girls belonging to the Army of Revolt, those soldiers, instead of being alarmed or appearing surprised, merely stepped out of the way and allowed them to advance without protest.

This action rendered the Scarecrow uneasy.

“I’m afraid we are walking into a trap,” said he.

“Nonsense!” returned Nick Chopper, confidently; “the silly creatures are conquered already!”

But the Scarecrow shook his head in a way that expressed doubt, and Tip said:

“It’s too easy, altogether. Look out for trouble ahead.”

“I will,” returned his Majesty. Unopposed they reached the royal palace and marched up the marble steps, which had once been thickly crusted with emeralds but were now filled with tiny holes where the jewels had been ruthlessly torn from their settings by the Army of Revolt. And so far not a rebel barred their way.

"IT'S TOO EASY, ALTOGETHER."

Through the arched hallways and into the magnificent throne room marched the Tin Woodman and his followers, and here, when the green silken curtains fell behind them, they saw a curious sight.

Seated within the glittering throne was General Jinjur, with the Scarecrow's second-best crown upon her head, and the royal sceptre in her right hand. A box of caramels, from which she was eating, rested in her lap, and the girl seemed entirely at ease in her royal surroundings.

The Scarecrow stepped forward and confronted her, while the Tin Woodman leaned upon his axe and the others formed a half-circle back of his Majesty's person.

"How dare you sit in my throne?" demanded the Scarecrow, sternly

eyeing the intruder. “Don’t you know you are guilty of treason, and that there is a law against treason?”

“The throne belongs to whoever is able to take it,” answered Jinjur, as she slowly ate another caramel. “I have taken it, as you see; so just now I am the Queen, and all who oppose me are guilty of treason, and must be punished by the law you have just mentioned.”

This view of the case puzzled the Scarecrow.

“How is it, friend Nick?” he asked, turning to the Tin Woodman.

“Why, when it comes to Law, I have nothing to, say” answered that personage. “for laws were never meant to be understood, and it is foolish to make the attempt.”

“Then what shall we do?” asked the Scarecrow, in dismay.

“Why don’t you marry the Queen? And then you can both rule,” suggested the Woggle-Bug.

Jinjur glared at the insect fiercely. “Why don’t you send her back to her mother, where she belongs?” asked Jack Pumpkinhead.

Jinjur frowned.

“Why don’t you shut her up in a closet until she behaves herself, and promises to be good?” enquired Tip. Jinjur’s lip curled scornfully.

“Or give her a good shaking!” added the Saw-Horse.

“No,” said the Tin Woodman, “we must treat the poor girl with gentleness. Let us give her all the Jewels she can carry, and send her away happy and contented.”

At this Queen Jinjur laughed aloud, and the next minute clapped her pretty hands together thrice, as if for a signal.

"You are very absurd creatures," said she; "but I am tired of your nonsense and have no time to bother with you longer."

While the monarch and his friends listened in amazement to this impudent speech, a startling thing happened. The Tin Woodman's axe was snatched from his grasp by some person behind him, and he found himself disarmed and helpless. At the same instant a shout of laughter rang in the ears of the devoted band, and turning to see whence this came they found themselves surrounded by the Army of Revolt, the girls bearing in either hand their glistening knitting-needles. The entire throne room seemed to be filled with the rebels, and the Scarecrow and his comrades realized that they were prisoners.

“You see how foolish it is to oppose a woman’s wit,” said Jinjur, gaily; “and this event only proves that I am more fit to rule the Emerald City than a Scarecrow. I bear you no ill will, I assure you; but lest you should prove troublesome to me in the future I shall order you all to be destroyed. That is, all except the boy, who belongs to old Mombi and must be restored to her keeping. The rest of you are not human, and therefore it will not be wicked to demolish you. The Saw-Horse and the Pumpkinhead’s body I will have chopped up for kindling-wood; and the pumpkin shall be made into tarts. The Scarecrow will do nicely to start a bonfire, and the tin man can be cut into small pieces and fed to the goats. As for this immense Woggle-Bug — ”

“Highly Magnified, if you please!” interrupted the insect.

“I think I will ask the cook to make green-turtle soup of you,” continued the Queen, reflectively.

The Woggle-Bug shuddered.

“Or, if that won’t do, we might use you for a Hungarian goulash, stewed and highly spiced,” she added, cruelly.

This programme of extermination was so terrible that the prisoners looked upon one another in a panic of fear. The Scarecrow alone did not give way to despair. He stood quietly before the Queen and his brow was wrinkled in deep thought as he strove to find some means to escape.

While thus engaged he felt the straw within his breast move gently. At once his expression changed from sadness to joy, and raising his hand he quickly unbuttoned the front of his jacket.

This action did not pass unnoticed by the crowd of girls clustering about him, but none of them suspected what he was doing until a tiny grey mouse leaped from his bosom to the floor and scampered away between the feet of the Army of Revolt. Another mouse quickly followed; then another and another, in rapid succession. And suddenly such a scream of terror went up from the Army that it might easily have filled the stoutest heart with consternation. The flight that ensued turned to a stampede, and the stampede to a panic.

For while the startled mice rushed wildly about the room the Scarecrow had only time to note a whirl of skirts and a twinkling of feet as the girls disappeared from the palace — pushing and crowding one another in their mad efforts to escape.

The Queen, at the first alarm, stood up on the cushions of the throne and began to dance frantically upon her tiptoes. Then a mouse ran up the cushions, and with a terrified leap poor Jinjur shot clear over the head of the Scarecrow and escaped through an archway — never pausing in her wild career until she had reached the city gates.

So, in less time than I can explain, the throne room was deserted by all save the Scarecrow and his friends, and the Woggle-Bug heaved a deep sigh of relief as he exclaimed:

"Thank goodness, we are saved!"

"For a time, yes;" answered the Tin Woodman. "But the enemy will soon return, I fear."

"Let us bar all the entrances to the palace!" said the Scarecrow. "Then we shall have time to think what is best to be done."

So all except Jack Pumpkinhead, who was still tied fast to the Saw-Horse, ran to the various entrances of the royal palace and closed the heavy doors, bolting and locking them securely. Then, knowing that the Army of Revolt could not batter down the barriers in several days, the adventurers gathered once more in the throne room for a council of war.

The Scarecrow Takes Time to Think

"It seems to me," began the Scarecrow, when all were again assembled in the throne room, "that the girl Jinjur is quite right in claiming to be Queen. And if she is right, then I am wrong, and we have no business to be occupying her palace."

"But you were the King until she came," said the Woggle-Bug, strutting up and down with his hands in his pockets; "so it appears to me that she is the interloper instead of you."

"Especially as we have just conquered her and put her to flight," added the Pumpkinhead, as he raised his hands to turn his face toward the Scarecrow.

"Have we really conquered her?" asked the Scarecrow, quietly. "Look out of the window, and tell me what you see."

Tip ran to the window and looked out.

"The palace is surrounded by a double row of girl soldiers," he announced.

"I thought so," returned the Scarecrow. "We are as truly their prisoners as we were before the mice frightened them from the palace."

"My friend is right," said Nick Chopper, who had been polishing his breast with a bit of chamois-leather. "Jinjur is still the Queen, and we are her prisoners."

"But I hope she cannot get at us," exclaimed the Pumpkinhead, with a shiver of fear. "She threatened to make tarts of me, you know."

"Don't worry," said the Tin Woodman. "It cannot matter greatly. If you stay shut up here you will spoil in time, anyway. A good tart is far more

admirable than a decayed intellect.”

“Very true,” agreed the Scarecrow.

“Oh, dear!” moaned Jack; “what an unhappy lot is mine! Why, dear father, did you not make me out of tin — or even out of straw — so that I would keep indefinitely.”

“Shucks!” returned Tip, indignantly. “You ought to be glad that I made you at all.” Then he added, reflectively, “everything has to come to an end, some time.”

“But I beg to remind you,” broke in the Woggle-Bug, who had a distressed look in his bulging, round eyes, “that this terrible Queen Jinjur suggested making a goulash of me — Me! the only Highly Magnified and Thoroughly Educated Woggle-Bug in the wide, wide world!”

THIS MORBID PICTURE CAST A GLOOM OVER THE ENTIRE PARTY.

"I think it was a brilliant idea," remarked the Scarecrow, approvingly.

"Don't you imagine he would make a better soup?" asked the Tin Woodman, turning toward his friend.

"Well, perhaps," acknowledged the Scarecrow.

The Woggle-Bug groaned.

"I can see, in my mind's eye," said he, mournfully, "the goats eating small pieces of my dear comrade, the Tin Woodman, while my soup is being cooked on a bonfire built of the Saw-Horse and Jack Pumpkinhead's body, and Queen Jinjur watches me boil while she feeds the flames with my friend the Scarecrow!"

This morbid picture cast a gloom over the entire party, making them

restless and anxious.

"It can't happen for some time," said the Tin Woodman, trying to speak cheerfully; "for we shall be able to keep Jinjur out of the palace until she manages to break down the doors."

"And in the meantime I am liable to starve to death, and so is the Woggle-Bug," announced Tip.

"As for me," said the Woggle-Bug, "I think that I could live for some time on Jack Pumpkinhead. Not that I prefer pumpkins for food; but I believe they are somewhat nutritious, and Jack's head is large and plump."

"How heartless!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman, greatly shocked. "Are we cannibals, let me ask? Or are we faithful friends?"

"I see very clearly that we cannot stay shut up in this palace," said the Scarecrow, with decision. "So let us end this mournful talk and try to discover a means to escape."

At this suggestion they all gathered eagerly around the throne, wherein was seated the Scarecrow, and as Tip sat down upon a stool there fell from his pocket a pepper-box, which rolled upon the floor.

"What is this?" asked Nick Chopper, picking up the box.

"Be careful!" cried the boy. "That's my Powder of Life. Don't spill it, for it is nearly gone."

"And what is the Powder of Life?" enquired the Scarecrow, as Tip replaced the box carefully in his pocket.

"It's some magical stuff old Mombi got from a crooked sorcerer," explained the boy. "She brought Jack to life with it, and afterward I used it to bring the Saw-Horse to life. I guess it will make anything live that is sprinkled with it; but there's only about one dose left."

"Then it is very precious," said the Tin Woodman.

"Indeed it is," agreed the Scarecrow. "It may prove our best means of escape from our difficulties. I believe I will think for a few minutes; so I will thank you, friend Tip, to get out your knife and rip this heavy crown from my forehead."

Tip soon cut the stitches that had fastened the crown to the Scarecrow's head, and the former monarch of the Emerald City removed it with a sigh of relief and hung it on a peg beside the throne.

"That is my last memento of royalty" said he; "and I'm glad to get rid of it. The former King of this City, who was named Pastoria, lost the crown to the Wonderful Wizard, who passed it on to me. Now the girl Jinjur claims it, and I sincerely hope it will not give her a headache."

"A kindly thought, which I greatly admire," said the Tin Woodman, nodding approvingly.

"And now I will indulge in a quiet think," continued the Scarecrow, lying back in the throne.

The others remained as silent and still as possible, so as not to disturb him; for all had great confidence in the extraordinary brains of the Scarecrow.

And, after what seemed a very long time indeed to the anxious watchers, the thinker sat up, looked upon his friends with his most whimsical expression, and said:

"My brains work beautifully today. I'm quite proud of them. Now, listen! If we attempt to escape through the doors of the palace we shall surely be captured. And, as we can't escape through the ground, there is only one other thing to be done. We must escape through the air!"

He paused to note the effect of these words; but all his hearers seemed puzzled and unconvinced.

"The Wonderful Wizard escaped in a balloon," he continued. "We don't know how to make a balloon, of course; but any sort of thing that can fly through the air can carry us easily. So I suggest that my friend the Tin Woodman, who is a skillful mechanic, shall build some sort of a machine, with good strong wings, to carry us; and our friend Tip can then bring the Thing to life with his magical powder."

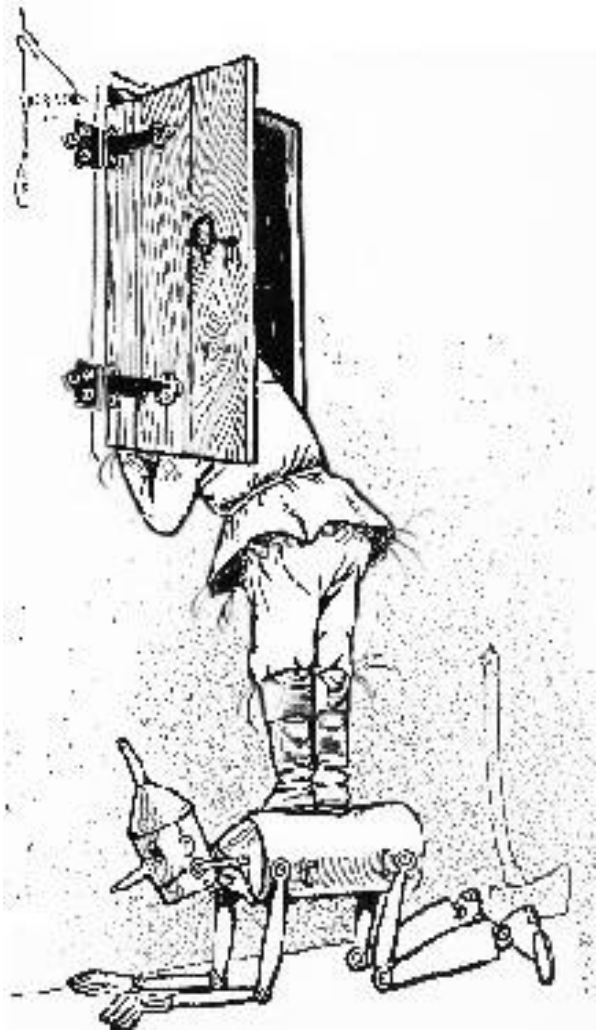
"Bravo!" cried Nick Chopper.

"What splendid brains!" murmured Jack.

"Really quite clever!" said the Educated Woggle-Bug.

"I believe it can be done," declared Tip; "that is, if the Tin Woodman is equal to making the Thing."

"I'll do my best," said Nick, cheerily; "and, as a matter of fact, I do not often fail in what I attempt. But the Thing will have to be built on the roof of the palace, so it can rise comfortably into the air."



"To be sure," said the Scarecrow.

"Then let us search through the palace," continued the Tin Woodman, "and carry all the material we can find to the roof, where I will begin my work."

"First, however," said the Pumpkinhead, "I beg you will release me from this horse, and make me another leg to walk with. For in my present condition I am of no use to myself or to anyone else."

So the Tin Woodman knocked a mahogany center-table to pieces with his axe and fitted one of the legs, which was beautifully carved, on to the body of Jack Pumpkinhead, who was very proud of the acquisition.

"It seems strange," said he, as he watched the Tin Woodman work, "that

my left leg should be the most elegant and substantial part of me."

"That proves you are unusual," returned the Scarecrow. "and I am convinced that the only people worthy of consideration in this world are the unusual ones. For the common folks are like the leaves of a tree, and live and die unnoticed."

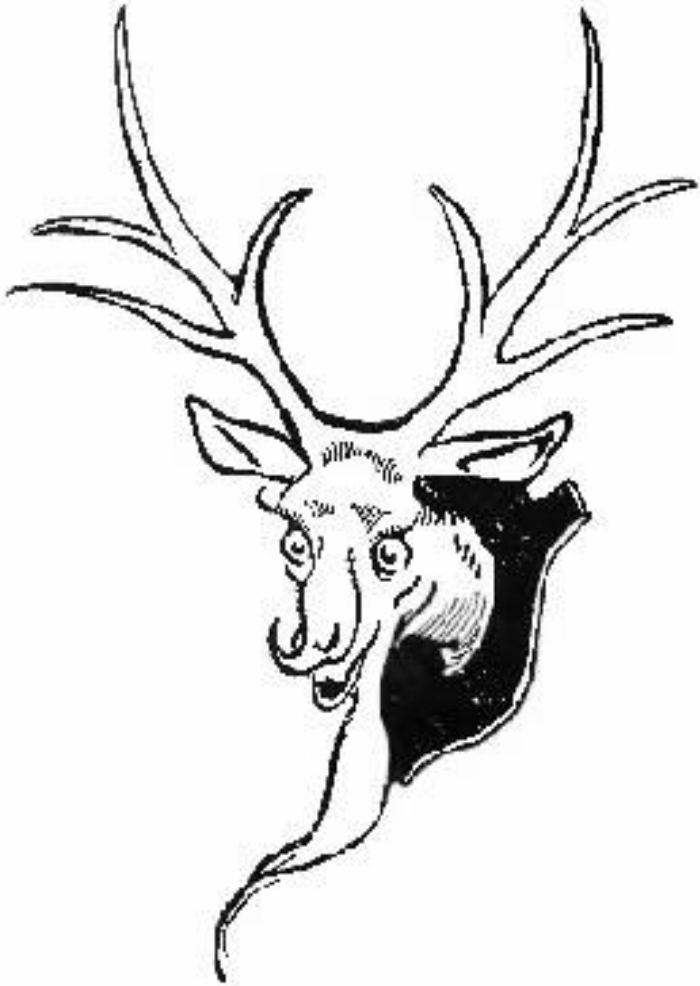
"Spoken like a philosopher!" cried the Woggle-Bug, as he assisted the Tin Woodman to set Jack upon his feet.

"How do you feel now?" asked Tip, watching the Pumpkinhead stump around to try his new leg.

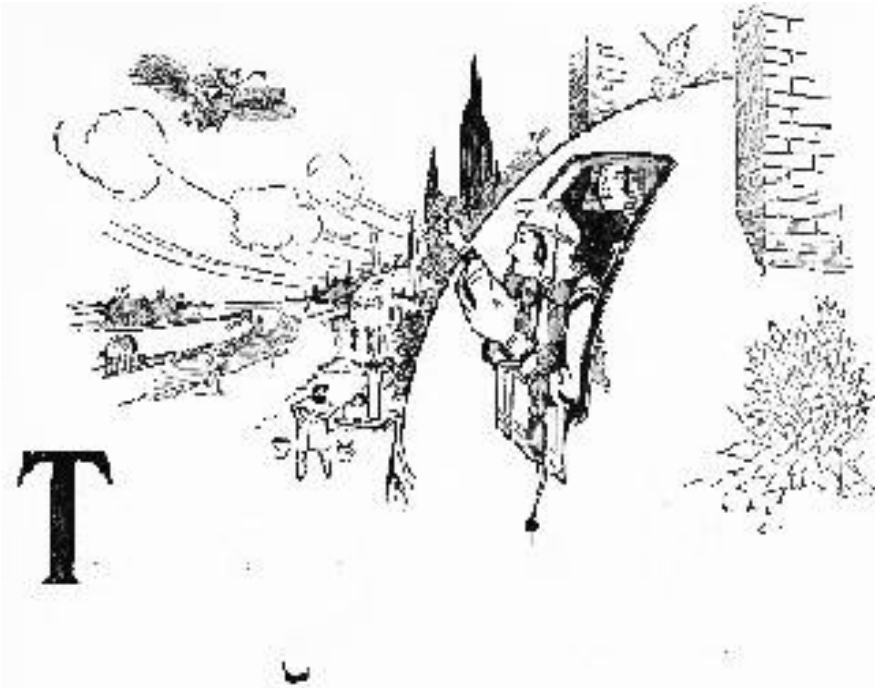
"As good as new" answered Jack, joyfully, "and quite ready to assist you all to escape."

"Then let us get to work," said the Scarecrow, in a business-like tone.

So, glad to be doing anything that might lead to the end of their captivity, the friends separated to wander over the palace in search of fitting material to use in the construction of their aerial machine.



The Astonishing Flight of the Gump



When the adventurers reassembled upon the roof it was found that a remarkably queer assortment of articles had been selected by the various members of the party. No one seemed to have a very clear idea of what was required, but all had brought something.

The Woggle-Bug had taken from its position over the mantle-piece in the great hallway the head of a Gump, which was adorned with wide-spreading antlers; and this, with great care and greater difficulty, the insect had carried up the stairs to the roof. This Gump resembled an Elk's head, only the nose turned upward in a saucy manner and there were whiskers upon its chin, like those of a billy-goat. Why the Woggle-Bug selected this article he could not have explained, except that it had aroused his curiosity.

Tip, with the aid of the Saw-Horse, had brought a large, upholstered sofa to the roof. It was an oldfashioned piece of furniture, with high back and ends, and it was so heavy that even by resting the greatest weight upon the back of the Saw-Horse, the boy found himself out of breath when at last the clumsy sofa was dumped upon the roof.

The Pumpkinhead had brought a broom, which was the first thing he saw. The Scarecrow arrived with a coil of clothes-lines and ropes which he had

taken from the courtyard, and in his trip up the stairs he had become so entangled in the loose ends of the ropes that both he and his burden tumbled in a heap upon the roof and might have rolled off if Tip had not rescued him.

The Tin Woodman appeared last. He also had been to the courtyard, where he had cut four great, spreading leaves from a huge palm-tree that was the pride of all the inhabitants of the Emerald City.

HE BROUGHT SOMETHING TO THE ROOF

"My dear Nick!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, seeing what his friend had done; "you have been guilty of the greatest crime any person can commit in the Emerald City. If I remember rightly, the penalty for chopping leaves from the royal palm-tree is to be killed seven times and afterward imprisoned for life."

“It cannot be helped now” answered the Tin Woodman, throwing down the big leaves upon the roof. “But it may be one more reason why it is necessary for us to escape. And now let us see what you have found for me to work with.”

Many were the doubtful looks cast upon the heap of miscellaneous material that now cluttered the roof, and finally the Scarecrow shook his head and remarked:

“Well, if friend Nick can manufacture, from this mess of rubbish, a Thing that will fly through the air and carry us to safety, then I will acknowledge him to be a better mechanic than I suspected.”

But the Tin Woodman seemed at first by no means sure of his powers, and only after polishing his forehead vigorously with the chamois-leather did he resolve to undertake the task.

“The first thing required for the machine,” said he, “is a body big enough to carry the entire party. This sofa is the biggest thing we have, and might be used for a body. But, should the machine ever tip sideways, we would all slide off and fall to the ground.”

“Why not use two sofas?” asked Tip. “There’s another one just like this down stairs.”

“That is a very sensible suggestion,” exclaimed the Tin Woodman. “You must fetch the other sofa at once.”

So Tip and the Saw-Horse managed, with much labor, to get the second sofa to the roof; and when the two were placed together, edge to edge, the backs and ends formed a protecting rampart all around the seats.

“Excellent!” cried the Scarecrow. “We can ride within this snug nest quite at our ease.”

The two sofas were now bound firmly together with ropes and clothes-lines, and then Nick Chopper fastened the Gump’s head to one end.

“That will show which is the front end of the Thing,” said he, greatly pleased with the idea. “And, really, if you examine it critically, the Gump looks very well as a figure-head. These great palm-leaves, for which I have endangered my life seven times, must serve us as wings.”

“Are they strong enough?” asked the boy.

“They are as strong as anything we can get,” answered the Woodman; “and although they are not in proportion to the Thing’s body, we are not in a position to be very particular.”

So he fastened the palm-leaves to the sofas, two on each side.

Said the Woggle-Bug, with considerable admiration:

“The Thing is now complete, and only needs to be brought to life.”

“Stop a moment!” exclaimed Jack. “Are you not going to use my broom?”

“What for?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Why, it can be fastened to the back end for a tail,” answered the Pumpkinhead. “Surely you would not call the Thing complete without a tail.”

“Hm!” said the Tin Woodman, “I do not see the use of a tail. We are not trying to copy a beast, or a fish, or a bird. All we ask of the Thing is to carry us through the air.”

“Perhaps, after the Thing is brought to life, it can use a tail to steer with,” suggested the Scarecrow. “For if it flies through the air it will not be unlike a bird, and I’ve noticed that all birds have tails, which they use for a rudder while flying.”

“Very well,” answered Nick, “the broom shall be used for a tail,” and he fastened it firmly to the back end of the sofa body.

Tip took the pepper-box from his pocket.

“The Thing looks very big,” said he, anxiously; “and I am not sure there is enough powder left to bring all of it to life. But I’ll make it go as far as possible.”

“Put most on the wings,” said Nick Chopper; “for they must be made as strong as possible.”

“And don’t forget the head!” exclaimed the Woggle-Bug.

“Or the tail!” added Jack Pumpkinhead.

“Do be quiet,” said Tip, nervously; “you must give me a chance to work the magic charm in the proper manner.”

Very carefully he began sprinkling the Thing with the precious powder. Each of the four wings was first lightly covered with a layer, then the sofas were sprinkled, and the broom given a slight coating.

“The head! The head! Don’t, I beg of you, forget the head!” cried the Woggle-Bug, excitedly.

“There’s only a little of the powder left,” announced Tip, looking within the box. “And it seems to me it is more important to bring the legs of the sofas to life than the head.”

“Not so,” decided the Scarecrow. “Every thing must have a head to direct it; and since this creature is to fly, and not walk, it is really unimportant whether its legs are alive or not.”

So Tip abided by this decision and sprinkled the Gump’s head with the remainder of the powder.

“Now” said he, “keep silence while I work the, charm!”

Having heard old Mombi pronounce the magic words, and having also succeeded in bringing the Saw-Horse to life, Tip did not hesitate an instant in speaking the three cabalistic words, each accompanied by the peculiar gesture of the hands.

It was a grave and impressive ceremony.

As he finished the incantation the Thing shuddered throughout its huge bulk, the Gump gave the screeching cry that is familiar to those animals, and then the four wings began flopping furiously.

Tip managed to grasp a chimney, else he would have been blown off the roof by the terrible breeze raised by the wings. The Scarecrow, being light in weight, was caught up bodily and borne through the air until Tip luckily seized him by one leg and held him fast. The Woggle-Bug lay flat upon the roof and so escaped harm, and the Tin Woodman, whose weight of tin anchored him firmly, threw both arms around Jack Pumpkinhead and managed to save him. The Saw-Horse toppled over upon his back and lay

with his legs waving helplessly above him.

And now, while all were struggling to recover themselves, the Thing rose slowly from the roof and mounted into the air.

“Here! Come back!” cried Tip, in a frightened voice, as he clung to the chimney with one hand and the Scarecrow with the other. “Come back at once, I command you!”

It was now that the wisdom of the Scarecrow, in bringing the head of the Thing to life instead of the legs, was proved beyond a doubt. For the Gump, already high in the air, turned its head at Tip’s command and gradually circled around until it could view the roof of the palace.

“Come back!” shouted the boy, again.

And the Gump obeyed, slowly and gracefully waving its four wings in the air until the Thing had settled once more upon the roof and become still.

"COME BACK!"

In the Jackdaw's Nest

"This," said the Gump, in a squeaky voice not at all proportioned to the size of its great body, "is the most novel experience I ever heard of. The last thing I remember distinctly is walking through the forest and hearing a loud noise. Something probably killed me then, and it certainly ought to have been the end of me. Yet here I am, alive again, with four monstrous wings and a body which I venture to say would make any respectable animal or fowl weep with shame to own. What does it all mean? Am I a Gump, or am I a juggernaut?" The creature, as it spoke, wiggled its chin whiskers in a very comical manner.

"You're just a Thing," answered Tip, "with a Gump's head on it. And we have made you and brought you to life so that you may carry us through the air wherever we wish to go."

"Very good!" said the Thing. "As I am not a Gump, I cannot have a Gump's pride or independent spirit. So I may as well become your servant as anything else. My only satisfaction is that I do not seem to have a very strong constitution, and am not likely to live long in a state of slavery."

"Don't say that, I beg of you!" cried the Tin Woodman, whose excellent heart was strongly affected by this sad speech. "Are you not feeling well today?"

"Oh, as for that," returned the Gump, "it is my first day of existence; so I cannot Judge whether I am feeling well or ill." And it waved its broom tail to and fro in a pensive manner.

"Come, come!" said the Scarecrow, kindly. "do try, to be more cheerful and take life as you find it. We shall be kind masters, and will strive to render your existence as pleasant as possible. Are you willing to carry us through

the air wherever we wish to go?"

"Certainly," answered the Gump. "I greatly prefer to navigate the air. For should I travel on the earth and meet with one of my own species, my embarrassment would be something awful!"

"I can appreciate that," said the Tin Woodman, sympathetically.

"And yet," continued the Thing, "when I carefully look you over, my masters, none of you seems to be constructed much more artistically than I am."

"Appearances are deceitful," said the Woggle-Bug, earnestly. "I am both Highly Magnified and Thoroughly Educated."

"Indeed!" murmured the Gump, indifferently.

"And my brains are considered remarkably rare specimens," added the Scarecrow, proudly.

"How strange!" remarked the Gump.

"Although I am of tin," said the Woodman, "I own a heart altogether the warmest and most admirable in the whole world."

"I'm delighted to hear it," replied the Gump, with a slight cough.

"My smile," said Jack Pumpkinhead, "is worthy your best attention. It is always the same."

"Semper idem," explained the Woggle-Bug, pompously; and the Gump turned to stare at him.

"And I," declared the Saw-Horse, filling in an awkward pause, "am only remarkable because I can't help it."

"I am proud, indeed, to meet with such exceptional masters," said the Gump, in a careless tone. "If I could but secure so complete an introduction to myself, I would be more than satisfied."

"That will come in time," remarked the Scarecrow. "To 'Know Thyself' is considered quite an accomplishment, which it has taken us, who are your elders, months to perfect. But now," he added, turning to the others, "let us get aboard and start upon our journey."

"Where shall we go?" asked Tip, as he clambered to a seat on the sofas and assisted the Pumpkinhead to follow him.

"In the South Country rules a very delightful Queen called Glinda the Good, who I am sure will gladly receive us," said the Scarecrow, getting into the Thing clumsily. "Let us go to her and ask her advice."

"That is cleverly thought of," declared Nick Chopper, giving the Woggle-Bug a boost and then toppling the Saw-Horse into the rear end of the cushioned seats. "I know Glinda the Good, and believe she will prove a friend indeed."

"Are we all ready?" asked the boy.

“Yes,” announced the Tin Woodman, seating himself beside the Scarecrow.

“Then,” said Tip, addressing the Gump, “be kind enough to fly with us to the Southward; and do not go higher than to escape the houses and trees, for it makes me dizzy to be up so far.”

“All right,” answered the Gump, briefly.

It flopped its four huge wings and rose slowly into the air; and then, while our little band of adventurers clung to the backs and sides of the sofas for support, the Gump turned toward the South and soared swiftly and majestically away.

THE GUMP SOARED SWIFTLY AND MAJESTICALLY AWAY

“The scenic effect, from this altitude, is marvelous,” commented the

educated Woggle-Bug, as they rode along.

"Never mind the scenery," said the Scarecrow. "Hold on tight, or you may get a tumble. The Thing seems to rock badly."

"It will be dark soon," said Tip, observing that the sun was low on the horizon. "Perhaps we should have waited until morning. I wonder if the Gump can fly in the night."

"I've been wondering that myself," returned the Gump quietly. "You see, this is a new experience to me. I used to have legs that carried me swiftly over the ground. But now my legs feel as if they were asleep."

"They are," said Tip. "We didn't bring 'em to life."

"You're expected to fly," explained the Scarecrow. "not to walk."

"We can walk ourselves," said the Woggle-Bug.

"I begin to understand what is required of me," remarked the Gump; "so I will do my best to please you," and he flew on for a time in silence.

Presently Jack Pumpkinhead became uneasy.

"I wonder if riding through the air is liable to spoil pumpkins," he said.

"Not unless you carelessly drop your head over the side," answered the Woggle-Bug. "In that event your head would no longer be a pumpkin, for it would become a squash."

"Have I not asked you to restrain these unfeeling jokes?" demanded Tip, looking at the Woggle-Bug with a severe expression.

"You have; and I've restrained a good many of them," replied the insect. "But there are opportunities for so many excellent puns in our language that, to an educated person like myself, the temptation to express them is almost irresistible."

"People with more or less education discovered those puns centuries ago," said Tip.

"Are you sure?" asked the Woggle-Bug, with a startled look.

"Of course I am," answered the boy. "An educated Woggle-Bug may be a new thing; but a Woggle-Bug education is as old as the hills, judging from the display you make of it."

The insect seemed much impressed by this remark, and for a time maintained a meek silence.

The Scarecrow, in shifting his seat, saw upon the cushions the pepper-box which Tip had cast aside, and began to examine it.

"Throw it overboard," said the boy; "it's quite empty now, and there's no use keeping it."

"Is it really empty?" asked the Scarecrow, looking curiously into the box.

"Of course it is," answered Tip. "I shook out every grain of the powder."

"Then the box has two bottoms," announced the Scarecrow, "for the

bottom on the inside is fully an inch away from the bottom on the outside."

"Let me see," said the Tin Woodman, taking the box from his friend. "Yes," he declared, after looking it over, "the thing certainly has a false bottom. Now, I wonder what that is for?"

"Can't you get it apart, and find out?" enquired Tip, now quite interested in the mystery.

"Why, yes; the lower bottom unscrews," said the Tin Woodman. "My fingers are rather stiff; please see if you can open it."

He handed the pepper-box to Tip, who had no difficulty in unscrewing the bottom. And in the cavity below were three silver pills, with a carefully folded paper lying underneath them.

This paper the boy proceeded to unfold, taking care not to spill the pills, and found several lines clearly written in red ink.

"Read it aloud," said the Scarecrow. so Tip read, as follows:

"DR. NIKIDIK'S CELEBRATED WISHING PILLS.

"Directions for Use: Swallow one pill; count seventeen by twos; then make a Wish. The Wish will immediately be granted.

CAUTION: Keep in a Dry and Dark Place."

"Why, this is a very valuable discovery!" cried the Scarecrow.

"It is, indeed," replied Tip, gravely. "These pills may be of great use to us. I wonder if old Mombi knew they were in the bottom of the pepper-box. I remember hearing her say that she got the Powder of Life from this same Nikidik."

"He must be a powerful Sorcerer!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman; "and since the powder proved a success we ought to have confidence in the pills."

"But how," asked the Scarecrow, "can anyone count seventeen by twos? Seventeen is an odd number."

"That is true," replied Tip, greatly disappointed. "No one can possibly count seventeen by twos."

"Then the pills are of no use to us," wailed the Pumpkinhead; "and this fact overwhelms me with grief. For I had intended wishing that my head would never spoil."

"Nonsense!" said the Scarecrow, sharply. "If we could use the pills at all we would make far better wishes than that."

"I do not see how anything could be better," protested poor Jack. "If you were liable to spoil at any time you could understand my anxiety."

"For my part," said the Tin Woodman, "I sympathize with you in every respect. But since we cannot count seventeen by twos, sympathy is all you are liable to get."

By this time it had become quite dark, and the voyagers found above them

a cloudy sky, through which the rays of the moon could not penetrate.

The Gump flew steadily on, and for some reason the huge sofa-body rocked more and more dizzily every hour.

The Woggle-Bug declared he was sea-sick; and Tip was also pale and somewhat distressed. But the others clung to the backs of the sofas and did not seem to mind the motion as long as they were not tipped out.

Darker and darker grew the night, and on and on sped the Gump through the black heavens. The travelers could not even see one another, and an oppressive silence settled down upon them.

After a long time Tip, who had been thinking deeply, spoke.

"How are we to know when we come to the pallace of Glinda the Good?" he asked.

"It's a long way to Glinda's palace," answered the Woodman; "I've traveled it."

"But how are we to know how fast the Gump is flying?" persisted the boy. "We cannot see a single thing down on the earth, and before morning we may be far beyond the place we want to reach."

"That is all true enough," the Scarecrow replied, a little uneasily. "But I do not see how we can stop just now; for we might alight in a river, or on, the top of a steeple; and that would be a great disaster."

So they permitted the Gump to fly on, with regular flops of its great wings, and waited patiently for morning.

Then Tip's fears were proven to be well founded; for with the first streaks of gray dawn they looked over the sides of the sofas and discovered rolling plains dotted with queer villages, where the houses, instead of being dome-shaped — as they all are in the Land of Oz — had slanting roofs that rose to a peak in the center. Odd looking animals were also moving about upon the open plains, and the country was unfamiliar to both the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow, who had formerly visited Glinda the Good's domain and knew it well.

"We are lost!" said the Scarecrow, dolefully. "The Gump must have carried us entirely out of the Land of Oz and over the sandy deserts and into the terrible outside world that Dorothy told us about."

"We must get back," exclaimed the Tin Woodman, earnestly. "we must get back as soon as possible!"

"Turn around!" cried Tip to the Gump. "turn as quickly as you can!"

"If I do I shall upset," answered the Gump. "I'm not at all used to flying, and the best plan would be for me to alight in some place, and then I can turn around and take a fresh start."

Just then, however, there seemed to be no stopping-place that would

answer their purpose. They flew over a village so big that the Woggle-Bug declared it was a city, and then they came to a range of high mountains with many deep gorges and steep cliffs showing plainly.

"Now is our chance to stop," said the boy, finding they were very close to the mountain tops. Then he turned to the Gump and commanded: "Stop at the first level place you see!"

"Very well," answered the Gump, and settled down upon a table of rock that stood between two cliffs.

But not being experienced in such matters, the Gump did not judge his speed correctly; and instead of coming to a stop upon the flat rock he missed it by half the width of his body, breaking off both his right wings against the sharp edge of the rock and then tumbling over and over down the cliff.

Our friends held on to the sofas as long as they could, but when the Gump caught on a projecting rock the Thing stopped suddenly — bottom side up — and all were immediately dumped out.

ALL WERE IMMEDIATELY DUMPED OUT.

By good fortune they fell only a few feet; for underneath them was a monster nest, built by a colony of Jackdaws in a hollow ledge of rock; so none of them — not even the Pumpkinhead — was injured by the fall. For Jack found his precious head resting on the soft breast of the Scarecrow, which made an excellent cushion; and Tip fell on a mass of leaves and papers, which saved him from injury. The Woggle-Bug had bumped his round head against the Saw-Horse, but without causing him more than a moment's inconvenience.

The Tin Woodman was at first much alarmed; but finding he had escaped without even a scratch upon his beautiful nickle-plate he at once regained his accustomed cheerfulness and turned to address his comrades.

“Our Journey had ended rather suddenly,” said he; “and we cannot justly blame our friend the Gump for our accident, because he did the best he could under the circumstances. But how we are ever to escape from this nest I must leave to someone with better brains than I possess.”

Here he gazed at the Scarecrow; who crawled to the edge of the nest and looked over. Below them was a sheer precipice several hundred feet in depth. Above them was a smooth cliff unbroken save by the point of rock where the wrecked body of the Gump still hung suspended from the end of one of the sofas. There really seemed to be no means of escape, and as they realized their helpless plight the little band of adventurers gave way to their bewilderment.

“This is a worse prison than the palace,” sadly remarked the Woggle-Bug.

“I wish we had stayed there,” moaned Jack.

“I’m afraid the mountain air isn’t good for pumpkins.”

“It won’t be when the Jackdaws come back,” growled the Saw-Horse, which lay waving its legs in a vain endeavor to get upon its feet again. “Jackdaws are especially fond of pumpkins.”

“Do you think the birds will come here?” asked Jack, much distressed.

“Of course they will,” said Tip; “for this is their nest. And there must be hundreds of them,” he continued, “for see what a lot of things they have brought here!”

Indeed, the nest was half filled with a most curious collection of small articles for which the birds could have no use, but which the thieving Jackdaws had stolen during many years from the homes of men. And as the nest was safely hidden where no human being could reach it, this lost property would never be recovered.

TURNED UP A BEAUTIFUL DIAMOND NECKLACE

The Woggle-Bug, searching among the rubbish — for the Jackdaws stole useless things as well as valuable ones — turned up with his foot a beautiful diamond necklace. This was so greatly admired by the Tin Woodman that the Woggle-Bug presented it to him with a graceful speech, after which the Woodman hung it around his neck with much pride, rejoicing exceedingly when the big diamonds glittered in the sun's rays.

But now they heard a great jabbering and flopping of wings, and as the sound grew nearer to them Tip exclaimed:

"The Jackdaws are coming! And if they find us here they will surely kill us in their anger."

"I was afraid of this!" moaned the Pumpkinhead. "My time has come!"

“And mine, also!” said the Woggle-Bug; “for Jackdaws are the greatest enemies of my race.”

The others were not at all afraid; but the Scarecrow at once decided to save those of the party who were liable to be injured by the angry birds. So he commanded Tip to take off Jack’s head and lie down with it in the bottom of the nest, and when this was done he ordered the Woggle-Bug to lie beside Tip. Nick Chopper, who knew from past experience Just what to do, then took the Scarecrow to pieces (all except his head) and scattered the straw over Tip and the Woggle-Bug, completely covering their bodies.

Hardly had this been accomplished when the flock of Jackdaws reached them. Perceiving the intruders in their nest the birds flew down upon them with screams of rage.

Dr. Nikidik's Famous Wishing Pills

The Tin Woodman was usually a peaceful man, but when occasion required he could fight as fiercely as a Roman gladiator. So, when the Jackdaws nearly knocked him down in their rush of wings, and their sharp beaks and claws threatened to damage his brilliant plating, the Woodman picked up his axe and made it whirl swiftly around his head.

But although many were beaten off in this way, the birds were so numerous and so brave that they continued the attack as furiously as before. Some of them pecked at the eyes of the Gump, which hung over the nest in a helpless condition; but the Gump's eyes were of glass and could not be injured. Others of the Jackdaws rushed at the Saw-Horse; but that animal, being still upon his back, kicked out so viciously with his wooden legs that he beat off as many assailants as did the Woodman's axe.

Finding themselves thus opposed, the birds fell upon the Scarecrow's straw, which lay at the center of the nest, covering Tip and the Woggle-Bug and Jack's pumpkin head, and began tearing it away and flying off with it, only to let it drop, straw by straw into the great gulf beneath.

The Scarecrow's head, noting with dismay this wanton destruction of his interior, cried to the Tin Woodman to save him; and that good friend responded with renewed energy. His axe fairly flashed among the Jackdaws, and fortunately the Gump began wildly waving the two wings remaining on the left side of its body. The flutter of these great wings filled the Jackdaws with terror, and when the Gump by its exertions freed itself from the peg of rock on which it hung, and sank flopping into the nest, the alarm of the birds knew no bounds and they fled screaming over the mountains.

When the last foe had disappeared, Tip crawled from under the sofas and

assisted the Woggle-Bug to follow him.

"We are saved!" shouted the boy, delightedly.

"We are, indeed!" responded the Educated Insect, fairly hugging the stiff head of the Gump in his joy. "and we owe it all to the flopping of the Thing, and the good axe of the Woodman!"

"If I am saved, get me out of here!" called Jack; whose head was still beneath the sofas; and Tip managed to roll the pumpkin out and place it upon its neck again. He also set the Saw-Horse upright, and said to it:

"We owe you many thanks for the gallant fight you made."

"I really think we have escaped very nicely," remarked the Tin Woodman, in a tone of pride.

“Not so!” exclaimed a hollow voice.

At this they all turned in surprise to look at the Scarecrow’s head, which lay at the back of the nest.

“I am completely ruined!” declared the Scarecrow, as he noted their astonishment. “For where is the straw that stuffs my body?”

The awful question startled them all. They gazed around the nest with horror, for not a vestige of straw remained. The Jackdaws had stolen it to the last wisp and flung it all into the chasm that yawned for hundreds of feet beneath the nest.

“My poor, poor friend!” said the Tin Woodman, taking up the Scarecrow’s head and caressing it tenderly; “whoever could imagine you would come to this untimely end?”

“I did it to save my friends,” returned the head; “and I am glad that I perished in so noble and unselfish a manner.”

“But why are you all so despondent?” inquired the Woggle-Bug. “The Scarecrow’s clothing is still safe.”

“Yes,” answered the Tin Woodman; “but our friend’s clothes are useless without stuffing.”

“Why not stuff him with money?” asked Tip.

“Money!” they all cried, in an amazed chorus.

“To be sure,” said the boy. “In the bottom of the nest are thousands of dollar bills — and two-dollar bills — and five-dollar bills — and tens, and twenties, and fifties. There are enough of them to stuff a dozen Scarecrows. Why not use the money?”

The Tin Woodman began to turn over the rubbish with the handle of his axe; and, sure enough, what they had first thought only worthless papers were found to be all bills of various denominations, which the mischievous Jackdaws had for years been engaged in stealing from the villages and cities they visited.

There was an immense fortune lying in that inaccessible nest; and Tip’s suggestion was, with the Scarecrow’s consent, quickly acted upon.

They selected all the newest and cleanest bills and assorted them into various piles. The Scarecrow’s left leg and boot were stuffed with five-dollar bills; his right leg was stuffed with ten-dollar bills, and his body so closely filled with fifties, one-hundreds and one-thousands that he could scarcely button his jacket with comfort.

"You are now" said the Woggle-Bug, impressively, when the task had been completed, "the most valuable member of our party; and as you are among faithful friends there is little danger of your being spent."

"Thank you," returned the Scarecrow, gratefully. "I feel like a new man; and although at first glance I might be mistaken for a Safety Deposit Vault, I beg you to remember that my Brains are still composed of the same old material. And these are the possessions that have always made me a person to be depended upon in an emergency."

"Well, the emergency is here," observed Tip; "and unless your brains help us out of it we shall be compelled to pass the remainder of our lives in this nest."

"How about these wishing pills?" enquired the Scarecrow, taking the box from his jacket pocket. "Can't we use them to escape?"

"Not unless we can count seventeen by twos," answered the Tin Woodman. "But our friend the Woggle-Bug claims to be highly educated, so he ought easily to figure out how that can be done."

"It isn't a question of education," returned the Insect; "it's merely a question of mathematics. I've seen the professor work lots of sums on the blackboard, and he claimed anything could be done with x's and y's and a's,

and such things, by mixing them up with plenty of plusses and minuses and equals, and so forth. But he never said anything, so far as I can remember, about counting up to the odd number of seventeen by the even numbers of twos."

"Stop! stop!" cried the Pumpkinhead. "You're making my head ache."

"And mine," added the Scarecrow. "Your mathematics seem to me very like a bottle of mixed pickles the more you fish for what you want the less chance you have of getting it. I am certain that if the thing can be accomplished at all, it is in a very simple manner."

"Yes," said Tip. "old Mombi couldn't use x's and minuses, for she never went to school."

"Why not start counting at a half of one?" asked the Saw-Horse, abruptly. "Then anyone can count up to seventeen by twos very easily."

They looked at each other in surprise, for the Saw-Horse was considered the most stupid of the entire party.

"You make me quite ashamed of myself," said the Scarecrow, bowing low to the Saw-Horse.

"Nevertheless, the creature is right," declared the Woggle-Bug; "for twice one-half is one, and if you get to one it is easy to count from one up to seventeen by twos."

"I wonder I didn't think of that myself," said the Pumpkinhead.

"I don't," returned the Scarecrow. "You're no wiser than the rest of us, are you? But let us make a wish at once. Who will swallow the first pill?"

"Suppose you do it," suggested Tip.

"I can't," said the Scarecrow.

"Why not? You've a mouth, haven't you?" asked the boy.

"Yes; but my mouth is painted on, and there's no swallow connected with it," answered the Scarecrow. "In fact," he continued, looking from one to another critically, "I believe the boy and the Woggle-Bug are the only ones in our party that are able to swallow."

Observing the truth of this remark, Tip said:

"Then I will undertake to make the first wish. Give me one of the Silver Pills."

This the Scarecrow tried to do; but his padded gloves were too clumsy to clutch so small an object, and he held the box toward the boy while Tip selected one of the pills and swallowed it.

"Count!" cried the Scarecrow.

"One-half, one, three, five, seven, nine, eleven," counted Tip. "thirteen, fifteen, seventeen."

"Now wish!" said the Tin Woodman anxiously:

But Just then the boy began to suffer such fearful pains that he became alarmed.

“The pill has poisoned me!” he gasped; “O — h! O-o-o-o-o! Ouch! Murder! Fire! O-o-h!” and here he rolled upon the bottom of the nest in such contortions that he frightened them all.

“What can we do for you. Speak, I beg!” entreated the Tin Woodman, tears of sympathy running down his nickel cheeks.

“I — I don’t know!” answered Tip. “O — h! I wish I’d never swallowed that pill!”

Then at once the pain stopped, and the boy rose to his feet again and found the Scarecrow looking with amazement at the end of the pepper-box.

“What’s happened?” asked the boy, a little ashamed of his recent exhibition.

“Why, the three pills are in the box again!” said the Scarecrow.

“Of course they are,” the Woggle-Bug declared. “Didn’t Tip wish that he’d never swallowed one of them? Well, the wish came true, and he didn’t swallow one of them. So of course they are all three in the box.”

“That may be; but the pill gave me a dreadful pain, just the same,” said the boy.

“Impossible!” declared the Woggle-Bug. “If you have never swallowed it, the pill can not have given you a pain. And as your wish, being granted, proves you did not swallow the pill, it is also plain that you suffered no pain.”

"Then it was a splendid imitation of a pain," retorted Tip, angrily. "Suppose you try the next pill yourself. We've wasted one wish already."

"Oh, no, we haven't!" protested the Scarecrow. "Here are still three pills in the box, and each pill is good for a wish."

"Now you're making my head ache," said Tip. "I can't understand the thing at all. But I won't take another pill, I promise you!" and with this remark he retired sulkily to the back of the nest.

"Well," said the Woggle-Bug, "it remains for me to save us in my most Highly Magnified and Thoroughly Educated manner; for I seem to be the only one able and willing to make a wish. Let me have one of the pills."

He swallowed it without hesitation, and they all stood admiring his

courage while the Insect counted seventeen by twos in the same way that Tip had done. And for some reason — perhaps because Woggle-Bugs have stronger stomachs than boys — the silver pellet caused it no pain whatever.

"I wish the Gump's broken wings mended, and as good as new!" said the Woggle-Bug, in a slow; impressive voice.

All turned to look at the Thing, and so quickly had the wish been granted that the Gump lay before them in perfect repair, and as well able to fly through the air as when it had first been brought to life on the roof of the palace.

The Scarecrow Appeals to Glenda the Good

"Hooray!" shouted the Scarecrow, gaily. "We can now leave this miserable Jackdaws' nest whenever we please."

"But it is nearly dark," said the Tin Woodman; "and unless we wait until morning to make our flight we may get into more trouble. I don't like these night trips, for one never knows what will happen."

So it was decided to wait until daylight, and the adventurers amused themselves in the twilight by searching the Jackdaws' nest for treasures.

The Woggle-Bug found two handsome bracelets of wrought gold, which fitted his slender arms very well. The Scarecrow took a fancy for rings, of which there were many in the nest. Before long he had fitted a ring to each finger of his padded gloves, and not being content with that display he added one more to each thumb. As he carefully chose those rings set with sparkling stones, such as rubies, amethysts and sapphires, the Scarecrow's hands now presented a most brilliant appearance.

"This nest would be a picnic for Queen Jinjur," said he, musingly. "for as nearly as I can make out she and her girls conquered me merely to rob my city of its emeralds."

The Tin Woodman was content with his diamond necklace and refused to accept any additional decorations; but Tip secured a fine gold watch, which was attached to a heavy fob, and placed it in his pocket with much pride. He also pinned several jeweled brooches to Jack Pumpkinhead's red waistcoat,

and attached a lorgnette, by means of a fine chain, to the neck of the Saw-Horse.

"It's very pretty," said the creature, regarding the lorgnette approvingly; "but what is it for?"

None of them could answer that question, however; so the Saw-Horse decided it was some rare decoration and became very fond of it.

That none of the party might be slighted, they ended by placing several large seal rings upon the points of the Gump's antlers, although that odd personage seemed by no means gratified by the attention.

Darkness soon fell upon them, and Tip and the Woggle-Bug went to sleep while the others sat down to wait patiently for the day.

Next morning they had cause to congratulate themselves upon the useful condition of the Gump; for with daylight a great flock of Jackdaws approached to engage in one more battle for the possession of the nest.

But our adventurers did not wait for the assault. They tumbled into the cushioned seats of the sofas as quickly as possible, and Tip gave the word to the Gump to start.

At once it rose into the air, the great wings flopping strongly and with regular motions, and in a few moments they were so far from the nest that the chattering Jackdaws took possession without any attempt at pursuit.

The Thing flew due North, going in the same direction from whence it had come. At least, that was the Scarecrow's opinion, and the others agreed that the Scarecrow was the best judge of direction. After passing over several cities and villages the Gump carried them high above a broad plain where houses became more and more scattered until they disappeared altogether. Next came the wide, sandy desert separating the rest of the world from the Land of Oz, and before noon they saw the dome-shaped houses that proved they were once more within the borders of their native land.

"But the houses and fences are blue," said the Tin Woodman, "and that indicates we are in the land of the Munchkins, and therefore a long distance from Glinda the Good."

"What shall we do?" asked the boy, turning to their guide.

"I don't know" replied the Scarecrow, frankly. "If we were at the Emerald City we could then move directly southward, and so reach our destination. But we dare not go to the Emerald City, and the Gump is probably carrying us further in the wrong direction with every flop of its wings."

"Then the Woggle-Bug must swallow another pill," said Tip, decidedly, "and wish us headed in the right direction."

"Very well," returned the Highly Magnified one; "I'm willing."

But when the Scarecrow searched in his pocket for the pepper-box

containing the two silver Wishing Pills, it was not to be found. Filled with anxiety, the voyagers hunted throughout every inch of the Thing for the precious box; but it had disappeared entirely.

And still the Gump flew onward, carrying them they knew not where.

“I must have left the pepper-box in the Jackdaws’ nest,” said the Scarecrow, at length.

“It is a great misfortune,” the Tin Woodman declared. “But we are no worse off than before we discovered the Wishing Pills.”

“We are better off,” replied Tip. “for the one pill we used has enabled us to escape from that horrible nest.”

“Yet the loss of the other two is serious, and I deserve a good scolding for my carelessness,” the Scarecrow rejoined, penitently. “For in such an unusual party as this accidents are liable to happen any moment, and even now we may be approaching a new danger.”

No one dared contradict this, and a dismal silence ensued.

The Gump flew steadily on.

Suddenly Tip uttered an exclamation of surprise. “We must have reached the South Country,” he cried, “for below us everything is red!”

Immediately they all leaned over the backs of the sofas to look — all except Jack, who was too careful of his pumpkin head to risk its slipping off his neck. Sure enough; the red houses and fences and trees indicated they were within the domain of Glinda the Good; and presently, as they glided rapidly on, the Tin Woodman recognized the roads and buildings they passed, and altered slightly the flight of the Gump so that they might reach the palace of the celebrated Sorceress.

"Good!" cried the Scarecrow, delightedly. "We do not need the lost Wishing Pills now, for we have arrived at our destination."

Gradually the Thing sank lower and nearer to the ground until at length it came to rest within the beautiful gardens of Glinda, settling upon a velvety green lawn close by a fountain which sent sprays of flashing gems, instead of water, high into the air, whence they fell with a soft, tinkling sound into the carved marble basin placed to receive them.

Everything was very gorgeous in Glinda's gardens, and while our voyagers gazed about with admiring eyes a company of soldiers silently appeared and surrounded them. But these soldiers of the great Sorceress were entirely different from those of Jinjur's Army of Revolt, although they were likewise girls. For Glinda's soldiers wore neat uniforms and bore swords and spears; and they marched with a skill and precision that proved them well trained in the arts of war.

The Captain commanding this troop — which was Glinda's private Body

Guard — recognized the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman at once, and greeted them with respectful salutations.

"Good day!" said the Scarecrow, gallantly removing his hat, while the Woodman gave a soldierly salute; "we have come to request an audience with your fair Ruler."

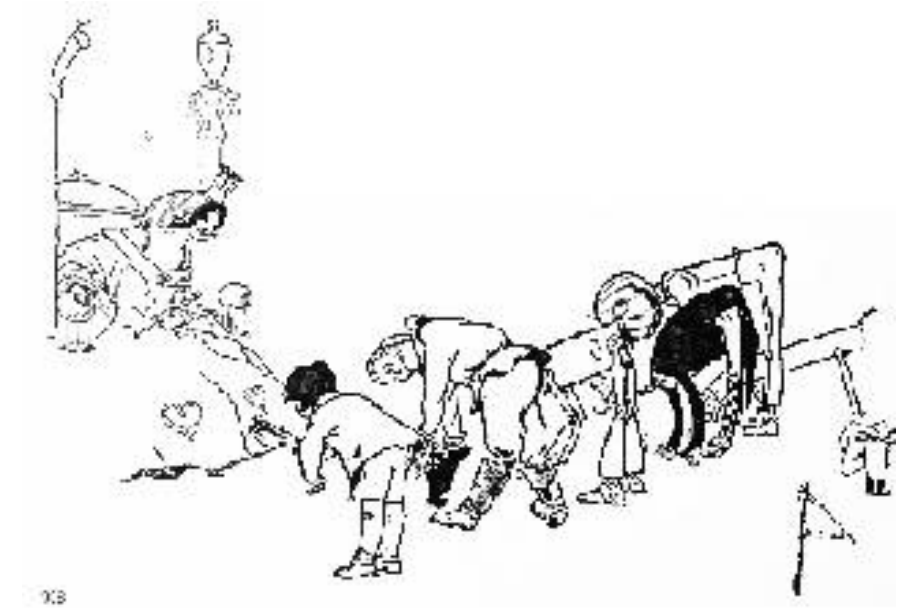
"Glinda is now within her palace, awaiting you," returned the Captain; "for she saw you coming long before you arrived."

"That is strange!" said Tip, wondering.

"Not at all," answered the Scarecrow, "for Glinda the Good is a mighty Sorceress, and nothing that goes on in the Land of Oz escapes her notice. I suppose she knows why we came as well as we do ourselves."

"Then what was the use of our coming?" asked Jack, stupidly.

"To prove you are a Pumpkinhead!" retorted the Scarecrow. "But, if the Sorceress expects us, we must not keep her waiting."



So they all clambered out of the sofas and followed the Captain toward the palace — even the Saw-Horse taking his place in the queer procession.

Upon her throne of finely wrought gold sat Glinda, and she could scarcely repress a smile as her peculiar visitors entered and bowed before her. Both the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman she knew and liked; but the awkward Pumpkinhead and Highly Magnified Woggle-Bug were creatures she had never seen before, and they seemed even more curious than the others. As for the Saw-Horse, he looked to be nothing more than an animated chunk of wood; and he bowed so stiffly that his head bumped against the floor, causing

a ripple of laughter among the soldiers, in which Glinda frankly joined.

"I beg to announce to your glorious highness," began the Scarecrow, in a solemn voice, "that my Emerald City has been overrun by a crowd of impudent girls with knitting-needles, who have enslaved all the men, robbed the streets and public buildings of all their emerald jewels, and usurped my throne."

"I know it," said Glinda.

"They also threatened to destroy me, as well as all the good friends and allies you see before you," continued the Scarecrow. "and had we not managed to escape their clutches our days would long since have ended."

"I know it," repeated Glinda.

"Therefore I have come to beg your assistance," resumed the Scarecrow, "for I believe you are always glad to succor the unfortunate and oppressed."

"That is true," replied the Sorceress, slowly. "But the Emerald City is now ruled by General Jinjur, who has caused herself to be proclaimed Queen. What right have I to oppose her?"

"Why, she stole the throne from me," said the Scarecrow.

"And how came you to possess the throne?" asked Glinda.

"I got it from the Wizard of Oz, and by the choice of the people," returned the Scarecrow, uneasy at such questioning.

"And where did the Wizard get it?" she continued gravely.

"I am told he took it from Pastoria, the former King," said the Scarecrow, becoming confused under the intent look of the Sorceress.

"Then," declared Glinda, "the throne of the Emerald City belongs neither to you nor to Jinjur, but to this Pastoria from whom the Wizard usurped it."

"That is true," acknowledged the Scarecrow, humbly; "but Pastoria is now dead and gone, and some one must rule in his place."

"Pastoria had a daughter, who is the rightful heir to the throne of the Emerald City. Did you know that?" questioned the Sorceress.

"No," replied the Scarecrow. "But if the girl still lives I will not stand in her way. It will satisfy me as well to have Jinjur turned out, as an impostor, as to regain the throne myself. In fact, it isn't much fun to be King, especially if one has good brains. I have known for some time that I am fitted to occupy a far more exalted position. But where is the girl who owns the throne, and what is her name?"

"Her name is Ozma," answered Glinda. "But where she is I have tried in vain to discover. For the Wizard of Oz, when he stole the throne from Ozma's father, hid the girl in some secret place; and by means of a magical trick with which I am not familiar he also managed to prevent her being discovered — even by so experienced a Sorceress as myself."

“That is strange,” interrupted the Woggle-Bug, pompously. “I have been informed that the Wonderful Wizard of Oz was nothing more than a humbug!”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed the Scarecrow, much provoked by this speech. “Didn’t he give me a wonderful set of brains?”

“There’s no humbug about my heart,” announced the Tin Woodman, glaring indignantly at the Woggle-Bug.

“Perhaps I was misinformed,” stammered the Insect, shrinking back; “I never knew the Wizard personally.”

“Well, we did,” retorted the Scarecrow, “and he was a very great Wizard, I assure you. It is true he was guilty of some slight impostures, but unless he was a great Wizard how — let me ask — could he have hidden this girl Ozma so securely that no one can find her?”

“I — I give it up!” replied the Woggle-Bug, meekly.

“That is the most sensible speech you’ve made,” said the Tin Woodman.

“I must really make another effort to discover where this girl is hidden,” resumed the Sorceress, thoughtfully. “I have in my library a book in which is inscribed every action of the Wizard while he was in our land of Oz — or, at least, every action that could be observed by my spies. This book I will read carefully tonight, and try to single out the acts that may guide us in discovering the lost Ozma. In the meantime, pray amuse yourselves in my palace and command my servants as if they were your own. I will grant you another audience tomorrow.”

With this gracious speech Glinda dismissed the adventurers, and they wandered away through the beautiful gardens, where they passed several hours enjoying all the delightful things with which the Queen of the Southland had surrounded her royal palace.

On the following morning they again appeared before Glinda, who said to them:

"I have searched carefully through the records of the Wizard's actions, and among them I can find but three that appear to have been suspicious. He ate beans with a knife, made three secret visits to old Mombi, and limped slightly on his left foot."

"Ah! that last is certainly suspicious!" exclaimed the Pumpkinhead.

“Not necessarily,” said the Scarecrow. “he may, have had corns. Now, it seems to me his eating beans with a knife is more suspicious.”

“Perhaps it is a polite custom in Omaha, from which great country the Wizard originally came,” suggested the Tin Woodman.

“It may be,” admitted the Scarecrow.

“But why,” asked Glinda, “did he make three secret visits to old Mombi?”

“Ah! Why, indeed!” echoed the Woggle-Bug, impressively.

“We know that the Wizard taught the old woman many of his tricks of magic,” continued Glinda; “and this he would not have done had she not assisted him in some way. So we may suspect with good reason that Mombi aided him to hide the girl Ozma, who was the real heir to the throne of the Emerald City, and a constant danger to the usurper. For, if the people knew that she lived, they would quickly make her their Queen and restore her to her rightful position.”

“An able argument!” cried the Scarecrow. “I have no doubt that Mombi was mixed up in this wicked business. But how does that knowledge help us?”

“We must find Mombi,” replied Glinda, “and force her to tell where the girl is hidden.”

“Mombi is now with Queen Jinjur, in the Emerald, City” said Tip. “It was she who threw so many obstacles in our pathway, and made Jinjur threaten to destroy my friends and give me back into the old witch’s power.”

“Then,” decided Glinda, “I will march with my army to the Emerald City, and take Mombi prisoner. After that we can, perhaps, force her to tell the truth about Ozma.”

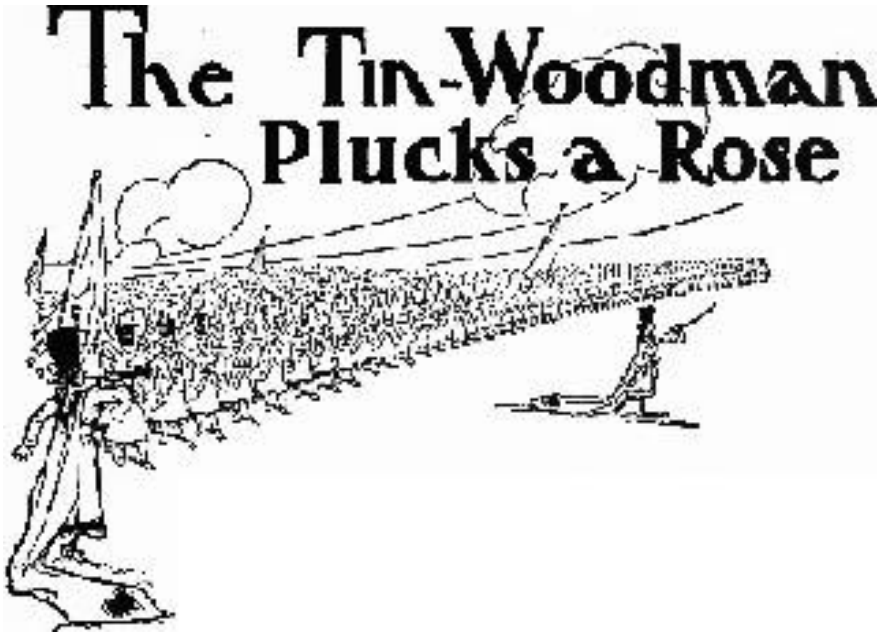
“She is a terrible old woman!” remarked Tip, with a shudder at the thought of Mombi’s black kettle; “and obstinate, too.”

“I am quite obstinate myself,” returned the Sorceress, with a sweet smile. “so I do not fear Mombi in the least. Today I will make all necessary preparations, and we will march upon the Emerald City at daybreak tomorrow.”

"She is a terrible old woman."

Jinjur

The Tin-Woodman Plucks a Rose



The Army of Glinda the Good looked very grand and imposing when it assembled at daybreak before the palace gates. The uniforms of the girl soldiers were pretty and of gay colors, and their silver-tipped spears were bright and glistening, the long shafts being inlaid with mother-of-pearl. All the officers wore sharp, gleaming swords, and shields edged with peacock-feathers; and it really seemed that no foe could by any possibility defeat such a brilliant army.

The Sorceress rode in a beautiful palanquin which was like the body of a coach, having doors andwindows with silken curtains; but instead of wheels, which a coach has, the palanquin rested upon two long, horizontal bars, which were borne upon the shoulders of twelve servants.

The Scarecrow and his comrades decided to ride in the Gump, in order to keep up with the swift march of the army; so, as soon as Glinda had started and her soldiers had marched away to the inspiring strains of music played by the royal band, our friends climbed into the sofas and followed. The Gump flew along slowly at a point directly over the palanquin in which rode the Sorceress.

FUDGE

"Be careful," said the Tin Woodman to the Scarecrow, who was leaning far over the side to look at the army below. "You might fall."

"It wouldn't matter," remarked the educated Woggle-Bug. "he can't get broke so long as he is stuffed with money."

"Didn't I ask you" began Tip, in a reproachful voice.

"You did!" said the Woggle-Bug, promptly. "And I beg your pardon. I will really try to restrain myself."

"You'd better," declared the boy. "That is, if you wish to travel in our company."

"Ah! I couldn't bear to part with you now," murmured the Insect, feelingly; so Tip let the subject drop.

The army moved steadily on, but night had fallen before they came to the walls of the Emerald City. By the dim light of the new moon, however, Glinda's forces silently surrounded the city and pitched their tents of scarlet silk upon the greensward. The tent of the Sorceress was larger than the others, and was composed of pure white silk, with scarlet banners flying above it. A tent was also pitched for the Scarecrow's party; and when these preparations had been made, with military precision and quickness, the army retired to rest.

Great was the amazement of Queen Jinjur next morning when her soldiers came running to inform her of the vast army surrounding them. She at once climbed to a high tower of the royal palace and saw banners waving in every direction and the great white tent of Glinda standing directly before the gates.

"We are surely lost!" cried Jinjur, in despair; "for how can our knitting-needles avail against the long spears and terrible swords of our foes?"

"The best thing we can do," said one of the girls, "is to surrender as quickly as possible, before we get hurt."

"Not so," returned Jinjur, more bravely. "The enemy is still outside the walls, so we must try to gain time by engaging them in parley. Go you with a flag of truce to Glinda and ask her why she has dared to invade my dominions, and what are her demands."

So the girl passed through the gates, bearing a white flag to show she was on a mission of peace, and came to Glinda's tent. "Tell your Queen," said the Sorceress to the girl, "that she must deliver up to me old Mombi, to be my prisoner. If this is done I will not molest her farther."

Now when this message was delivered to the Queen it filled her with dismay, for Mombi was her chief counsellor, and Jinjur was terribly afraid of the old hag. But she sent for Mombi, and told her what Glinda had said.

"I see trouble ahead for all of us," muttered the old witch, after glancing into a magic mirror she carried in her pocket. "But we may even yet escape by deceiving this sorceress, clever as she thinks herself."

"Don't you think it will be safer for me to deliver you into her hands?" asked Jinjur, nervously.

"If you do, it will cost you the throne of the Emerald City!" answered the witch, positively. "But if you will let me have my own way, I can save us both very easily."

“Then do as you please,” replied Jinjur, “for it is so aristocratic to be a Queen that I do not wish to be obliged to return home again, to make beds and wash dishes for my mother.”

So Mombi called Jellia Jamb to her, and performed a certain magical rite with which she was familiar. As a result of the enchantment Jellia took on the form and features of Mombi, while the old witch grew to resemble the girl so closely that it seemed impossible anyone could guess the deception.

“Now,” said old Mombi to the Queen, “let your soldiers deliver up this girl to Glinda. She will think she has the real Mombi in her power, and so will return immediately to her own country in the South.”

Therefore Jellia, hobbling along like an aged woman, was led from the city gates and taken before Glinda.

“Here is the person you demanded,” said one of the guards, “and our Queen now begs you will go away, as you promised, and leave us in peace.”

“That I will surely do,” replied Glinda, much pleased; “if this is really the person she seems to be.”

“It is certainly old Mombi,” said the guard, who believed she was speaking the truth; and then Jinjur’s soldiers returned within the city’s gates.

The Sorceress quickly summoned the Scarecrow and his friends to her tent, and began to question the supposed Mombi about the lost girl Ozma. But Jellia knew nothing at all of this affair, and presently she grew so nervous under the questioning that she gave way and began to weep, to Glinda’s great astonishment.

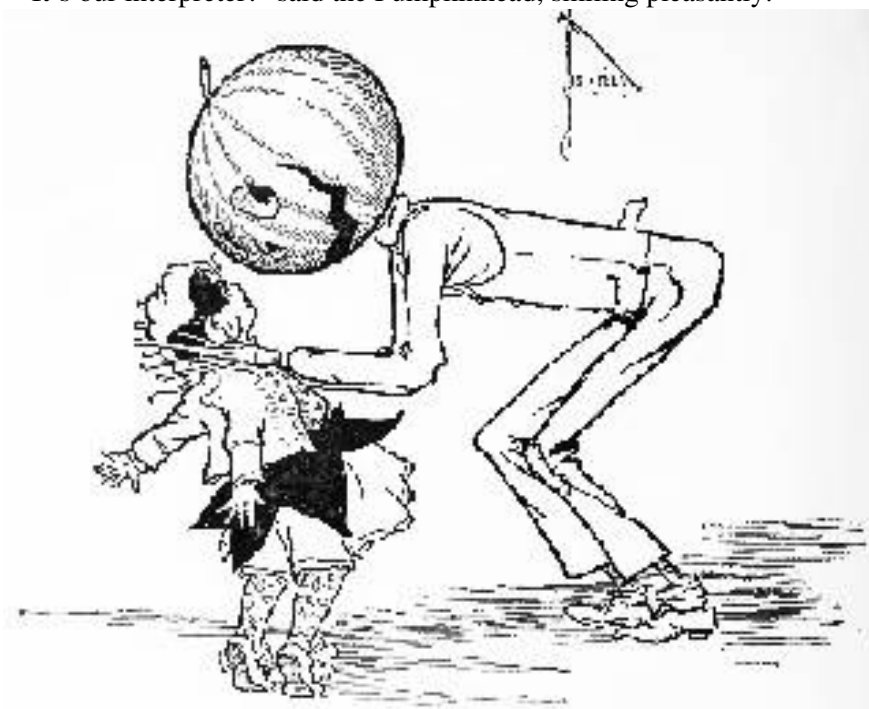
“Here is some foolish trickery!” said the Sorceress, her eyes flashing with anger. “This is not Mombi at all, but some other person who has been made to resemble her! Tell me,” she demanded, turning to the trembling girl, “what is your name?”

This Jellia dared not tell, having been threatened with death by the witch

if she confessed the fraud. But Glinda, sweet and fair though she was, understood magic better than any other person in the Land of Oz. So, by uttering a few potent words and making a peculiar gesture, she quickly transformed the girl into her proper shape, while at the same time old Mombi, far away in Jinjur's palace, suddenly resumed her own crooked form and evil features.

"Why, it's Jellia Jamb!" cried the Scarecrow, recognizing in the girl one of his old friends.

"It's our interpreter!" said the Pumpkinhead, smiling pleasantly.



Then Jellia was forced to tell of the trick Mombi had played and she also begged Glinda's protection, which the Sorceress readily granted. But Glinda was now really angry, and sent word to Jinjur that the fraud was discovered and she must deliver up the real Mombi or suffer terrible consequences. Jinjur was prepared for this message, for the witch well understood, when her natural form was thrust upon her, that Glinda had discovered her trickery. But the wicked old creature had already thought up a new deception, and had made Jinjur promise to carry it out. So the Queen said to Glinda's messenger:

"Tell your mistress that I cannot find Mombi anywhere, but that Glinda is welcome to enter the city and search herself for the old woman. She may also bring her friends with her, if she likes; but if she does not find Mombi by

sundown, the Sorceress must promise to go away peaceably and bother us no more."

TIP, THE TIN WOODMAN PLACES THE ROSE

Glinda agreed to these terms, well knowing that Mombi was somewhere within the city walls. So Jinjur caused the gates to be thrown open, and Glinda marched in at the head of a company of soldiers, followed by the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, while Jack Pumpkinhead rode astride the Saw-Horse, and the Educated, Highly Magnified Woggle-Bug sauntered behind in a dignified manner. Tip walked by the side of the Sorceress, for Glinda had conceived a great liking for the boy.

Of course old Mombi had no intention of being found by Glinda; so, while her enemies were marching up the street, the witch transformed herself

into a red rose growing upon a bush in the garden of the palace. It was a clever idea, and a trick Glinda did not suspect; so several precious hours were spent in a vain search for Mombi.

As sundown approached the Sorceress realized she had been defeated by the superior cunning of the aged witch; so she gave the command to her people to march out of the city and back to their tents.

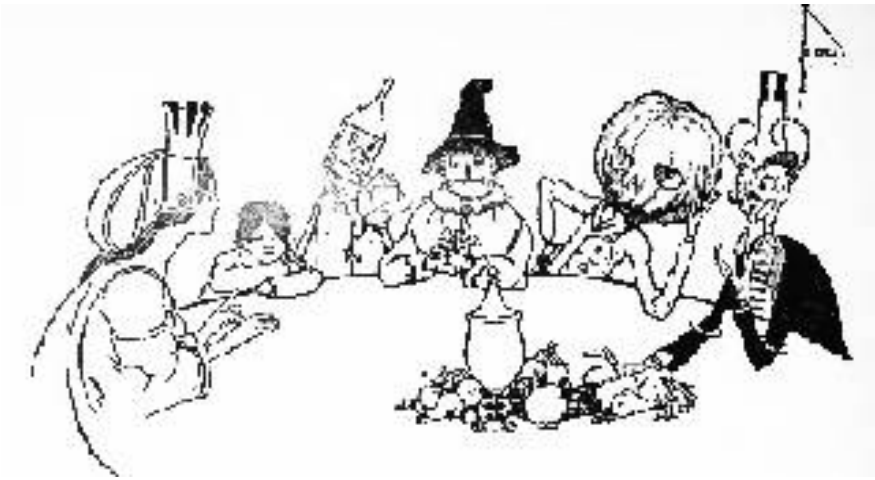
The Scarecrow and his comrades happened to be searching in the garden of the palace just then, and they turned with disappointment to obey Glinda's command. But before they left the garden the Tin Woodman, who was fond of flowers, chanced to espy a big red rose growing upon a bush; so he plucked the flower and fastened it securely in the tin buttonhole of his tin bosom.

As he did this he fancied he heard a low moan proceed from the rose; but he paid no attention to the sound, and Mombi was thus carried out of the city and into Glinda's camp without anyone having a suspicion that they had succeeded in their quest.

The Transformation of Old Mombi

The Witch was at first frightened at finding herself captured by the enemy; but soon she decided that she was exactly as safe in the Tin Woodman's button-hole as growing upon the bush. For no one knew the rose and Mombi to be one, and now that she was without the gates of the City her chances of escaping altogether from Glinda were much improved.

"But there is no hurry," thought Mombi. "I will wait awhile and enjoy the humiliation of this Sorceress when she finds I have outwitted her." So throughout the night the rose lay quietly on the Woodman's bosom, and in the morning, when Glinda summoned our friends to a consultation, Nick Chopper carried his pretty flower with him to the white silk tent.



"For some reason," said Glinda, "we have failed to find this cunning old Mombi; so I fear our expedition will prove a failure. And for that I am sorry, because without our assistance little Ozma will never be rescued and restored to her rightful position as Queen of the Emerald City"

"Do not let us give up so easily," said the Pumpkinhead. "Let us do something else."

"Something else must really be done," replied Glinda, with a smile. "yet I cannot understand how I have been defeated so easily by an old Witch who knows far less of magic than I do myself."

"While we are on the ground I believe it would be wise for us to conquer the Emerald City for Princess Ozma, and find the girl afterward," said the Scarecrow. "And while the girl remains hidden I will gladly rule in her place, for I understand the business of ruling much better than Jinjur does."

"But I have promised not to molest Jinjur," objected Glinda.

"Suppose you all return with me to my kingdom — or Empire, rather," said the Tin Woodman, politely including the entire party in a royal wave of his arm. "It will give me great pleasure to entertain you in my castle, where there is room enough and to spare. And if any of you wish to be nickel-plated, my valet will do it free of all expense."

While the Woodman was speaking Glinda's eyes had been noting the rose in his button-hole, and now she imagined she saw the big red leaves of the flower tremble slightly. This quickly aroused her suspicions, and in a moment more the Sorceress had decided that the seeming rose was nothing else than a transformation of old Mombi. At the same instant Mombi knew she was discovered and must quickly plan an escape, and as transformations were easy to her she immediately took the form of a Shadow and glided along the wall of the tent toward the entrance, thinking thus to disappear.

But Glinda had not only equal cunning, but far more experience than the Witch. So the Sorceress reached the opening of the tent before the Shadow, and with a wave of her hand closed the entrance so securely that Mombi could not find a crack big enough to creep through. The Scarecrow and his friends were greatly surprised at Glinda's actions; for none of them had noted the Shadow. But the Sorceress said to them:

"Remain perfectly quiet, all of you! For the old Witch is even now with us in this tent, and I hope to capture her."

These words so alarmed Mombi that she quickly transformed herself from a shadow to a Black Ant, in which shape she crawled along the ground, seeking a crack or crevice in which to hide her tiny body.

Fortunately, the ground where the tent had been pitched, being Just before the city gates, was hard and smooth; and while the Ant still crawled about, Glinda discovered it and ran quickly forward to effect its capture But, Just as her hand was descending, the Witch, now fairly frantic with fear, made her last transformation, and in the form of a huge Griffin sprang through the wall of the tent — tearing the silk asunder in her rush — and in a moment had darted away with the speed of a whirlwind.

THE GRIFFIN SPRANG THROUGH THE WALL OF THE TENT

Glinda did not hesitate to follow. She sprang upon the back of the Saw-Horse and cried:

"Now you shall prove that you have a right to be alive! Run — run — run!"

The Saw-Horse ran. Like a flash he followed the Griffin, his wooden legs moving so fast that they twinkled like the rays of a star. Before our friends could recover from their surprise both the Griffin and the Saw-Horse had dashed out of sight.

"Come! Let us follow!" cried the Scarecrow.

They ran to the place where the Gump was lying and quickly tumbled aboard.

“Fly!” commanded Tip, eagerly.

“Where to?” asked the Gump, in its calm voice.

“I don’t know,” returned Tip, who was very nervous at the delay; “but if you will mount into the air I think we can discover which way Glinda has gone.”

“Very well,” returned the Gump, quietly; and it spread its great wings and mounted high into the air.

Far away, across the meadows, they could now see two tiny specks, speeding one after the other; and they knew these specks must be the Griffin and the Saw-Horse. So Tip called the Gump’s attention to them and bade the creature try to overtake the Witch and the Sorceress. But, swift as was the Gump’s flight, the pursued and pursuer moved more swiftly yet, and within a few moments were blotted out against the dim horizon.

“Let us continue to follow them, nevertheless,” said the Scarecrow. “for the Land of Oz is of small extent, and sooner or later they must both come to a halt.”

Old Mombi had thought herself very wise to choose the form of a Griffin, for its legs were exceedingly fleet and its strength more enduring than that of other animals. But she had not reckoned on the untiring energy of the Saw-Horse, whose wooden limbs could run for days without slacking their speed. Therefore, after an hour’s hard running, the Griffin’s breath began to fail, and it panted and gasped painfully, and moved more slowly than before. Then it

reached the edge of the desert and began racing across the deep sands. But its tired feet sank far into the sand, and in a few minutes the Griffin fell forward, completely exhausted, and lay still upon the desert waste.

Glinda came up a moment later, riding the still vigorous Saw-Horse; and having unwound a slender golden thread from her girdle the Sorceress threw it over the head of the panting and helpless Griffin, and so destroyed the magical power of Mombi's transformation.

For the animal, with one fierce shudder, disappeared from view, while in its place was discovered the form of the old Witch, glaring savagely at the serene and beautiful face of the Sorceress.

"You are my prisoner, and it is useless for you to struggle any longer," said Glinda, in her soft, sweet voice. "Lie still a moment, and rest yourself, and then I will carry you back to my tent."

"Why do you seek me?" asked Mombi, still scarce able to speak plainly for lack of breath. "What have I done to you, to be so persecuted?"

"You have done nothing to me," answered the gentle Sorceress; "but I suspect you have been guilty of several wicked actions; and if I find it is true that you have so abused your knowledge of magic, I intend to punish you severely."

"I defy you!" croaked the old hag. "You dare not harm me!"

Just then the Gump flew up to them and alighted upon the desert sands beside Glinda. Our friends were delighted to find that Mombi had finally been captured, and after a hurried consultation it was decided they should all return to the camp in the Gump. So the Saw-Horse was tossed aboard, and then Glinda still holding an end of the golden thread that was around Mombi's neck, forced her prisoner to climb into the sofas. The others now followed, and Tip gave the word to the Gump to return.

The Journey was made in safety, Mombi sitting in her place with a grim and sullen air; for the old hag was absolutely helpless so long as the magical thread encircled her throat. The army hailed Glinda's return with loud cheers, and the party of friends soon gathered again in the royal tent, which had been neatly repaired during their absence.

"Now," said the Sorceress to Mombi, "I want you to tell us why the

Wonderful Wizard of Oz paid you three visits, and what became of the child, Ozma, which so curiously disappeared."

The Witch looked at Glinda defiantly, but said not a word.

"Answer me!" cried the Sorceress.

But still Mombi remained silent.

"Perhaps she doesn't know," remarked Jack.

"I beg you will keep quiet," said Tip. "You might spoil everything with your foolishness."

"Very well, dear father!" returned the Pumpkinhead, meekly.

"How glad I am to be a Woggle-Bug!" murmured the Highly Magnified Insect, softly. "No one can expect wisdom to flow from a pumpkin."

“Well,” said the Scarecrow, “what shall we do to make Mombi speak? Unless she tells us what we wish to know her capture will do us no good at all.”

“Suppose we try kindness,” suggested the Tin Woodman. “I’ve heard that anyone can be conquered with kindness, no matter how ugly they may be.”

At this the Witch turned to glare upon him so horribly that the Tin Woodman shrank back abashed.

Glinda had been carefully considering what to do, and now she turned to Mombi and said:

“You will gain nothing, I assure you, by thus defying us. For I am determined to learn the truth about the girl Ozma, and unless you tell me all that you know, I will certainly put you to death.”

“Oh, no! Don’t do that!” exclaimed the Tin Woodman. “It would be an awful thing to kill anyone — even old Mombi!”

“But it is merely a threat,” returned Glinda. “I shall not put Mombi to death, because she will prefer to tell me the truth.”

“Oh, I see!” said the tin man, much relieved.

“Suppose I tell you all that you wish to know,”. said Mombi, speaking so suddenly that she startled them all. “What will you do with me then?”

“In that case,” replied Glinda, “I shall merely ask you to drink a powerful draught which will cause you to forget all the magic you have ever learned.”

“Then I would become a helpless old woman!”

“But you would be alive,” suggested the Pumpkinhead, consolingly.

“Do try to keep silent!” said Tip, nervously.

“I’ll try,” responded Jack; “but you will admit that it’s a good thing to be alive.”

“Especially if one happens to be Thoroughly Educated,” added the Woggle-Bug, nodding approval.

“You may make your choice,” Glinda said to old Mombi, “between death if you remain silent, and the loss of your magical powers if you tell me the truth. But I think you will prefer to live.”

Mombi cast an uneasy glance at the Sorceress, and saw that she was in earnest, and not to be trifled with. So she replied, slowly:

“I will answer your questions.”

“That is what I expected,” said Glinda, pleasantly. “You have chosen wisely, I assure you.”

She then motioned to one of her Captains, who brought her a beautiful golden casket. From this the Sorceress drew an immense white pearl, attached to a slender chain which she placed around her neck in such a way that the pearl rested upon her bosom, directly over her heart.

“Now,” said she, “I will ask my first question: Why did the Wizard pay you three visits?”

“Because I would not come to him,” answered Mombi.

“That is no answer,” said Glinda, sternly. “Tell me the truth.”

“Well,” returned Mombi, with downcast eyes, “he visited me to learn the way I make tea-biscuits.”

“Look up!” commanded the Sorceress.

Mombi obeyed.

“What is the color of my pearl?” demanded Glinda.

“Why — it is black!” replied the old Witch, in a tone of wonder.

“Then you have told me a falsehood!” cried Glinda, angrily. “Only when the truth is spoken will my magic pearl remain a pure white in color.”

Mombi now saw how useless it was to try to deceive the Sorceress; so she said, meanwhile scowling at her defeat:

“The Wizard brought to me the girl Ozma, who was then no more than a baby, and begged me to conceal the child.”

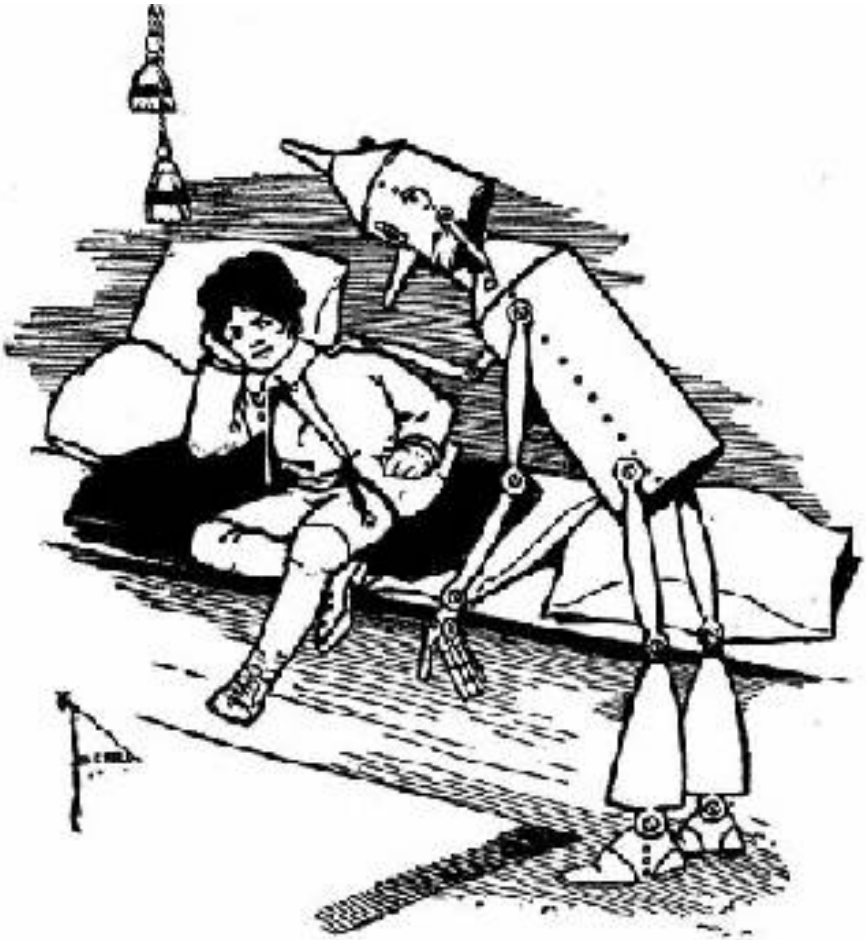
“That is what I thought,” declared Glinda, calmly. “What did he give you for thus serving him?”

“He taught me all the magical tricks he knew. Some were good tricks, and some were only frauds; but I have remained faithful to my promise.”

“What did you do with the girl?” asked Glinda; and at this question everyone bent forward and listened eagerly for the reply.

“I enchanted her,” answered Mombi.

“In what way?”



"I transformed her into — into — "

"Into what?" demanded Glinda, as the Witch hesitated.

"Into a boy!" said Mombi, in a low tone.

"A boy!" echoed every voice; and then, because they knew that this old woman had reared Tip from childhood, all eyes were turned to where the boy stood.

"Yes," said the old Witch, nodding her head; "that is the Princess Ozma — the child brought to me by the Wizard who stole her father's throne. That is the rightful ruler of the Emerald City!" and she pointed her long bony finger straight at the boy.

"I!" cried Tip, in amazement. "Why, I'm no Princess Ozma — I'm not a girl!"

Glinda smiled, and going to Tip she took his small brown hand within her

dainty white one.

“You are not a girl just now” said she, gently, “because Mombi transformed you into a boy. But you were born a girl, and also a Princess; so you must resume your proper form, that you may become Queen of the Emerald City.”

“Oh, let Jinjur be the Queen!” exclaimed Tip, ready to cry. “I want to stay a boy, and travel with the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, and the Woggle-Bug, and Jack — yes! and my friend the Saw-Horse — and the Gump! I don’t want to be a girl!”

“Never mind, old chap,” said the Tin Woodman, soothingly; “it don’t hurt to be a girl, I’m told; and we will all remain your faithful friends just the same. And, to be honest with you, I’ve always considered girls nicer than boys.”

“They’re just as nice, anyway,” added the Scarecrow, patting Tip affectionately upon the head.

“And they are equally good students,” proclaimed the Woggle-Bug. “I should like to become your tutor, when you are transformed into a girl again.”

“But — see here!” said Jack Pumpkinhead, with a gasp: “if you become a girl, you can’t be my dear father any more!”

“No,” answered Tip, laughing in spite of his anxiety. “and I shall not be sorry to escape the relationship.” Then he added, hesitatingly, as he turned to Glinda: “I might try it for awhile,-just to see how it seems, you know. But if I don’t like being a girl you must promise to change me into a boy again.”

“Really,” said the Sorceress, “that is beyond my magic. I never deal in transformations, for they are not honest, and no respectable sorceress likes to make things appear to be what they are not. Only unscrupulous witches use the art, and therefore I must ask Mombi to effect your release from her charm, and restore you to your proper form. It will be the last opportunity she will have to practice magic.”

Now that the truth about Princes Ozma had been discovered, Mombi did not care what became of Tip; but she feared Glinda’s anger, and the boy generously promised to provide for Mombi in her old age if he became the ruler of the Emerald City. So the Witch consented to effect the transformation, and preparations for the event were at once made.

Glinda ordered her own royal couch to be placed in the center of the tent. It was piled high with cushions covered with rose-colored silk, and from a golden railing above hung many folds of pink gossamer, completely concealing the interior of the couch.

The first act of the Witch was to make the boy drink a potion which quickly sent him into a deep and dreamless sleep. Then the Tin Woodman and the Woggle-Bug bore him gently to the couch, placed him upon the soft cushions, and drew the gossamer hangings to shut him from all earthly view.

The Witch squatted upon the ground and kindled a tiny fire of dried herbs, which she drew from her bosom. When the blaze shot up and burned clearly old Mombi scattered a handful of magical powder over the fire, which straightway gave off a rich violet vapor, filling all the tent with its fragrance and forcing the Saw-Horse to sneeze — although he had been warned to keep quiet.

Then, while the others watched her curiously, the hag chanted a rhythmical verse in words which no one understood, and bent her lean body seven times back and forth over the fire. And now the incantation seemed complete, for the Witch stood upright and cried the one word "Yeowa!" in a loud voice.

The vapor floated away; the atmosphere became, clear again; a whiff of fresh air filled the tent, and the pink curtains of the couch trembled slightly, as if stirred from within.

Glinda walked to the canopy and parted the silken hangings. Then she bent over the cushions, reached out her hand, and from the couch arose the form of a young girl, fresh and beautiful as a May morning. Her eyes sparkled as two diamonds, and her lips were tinted like a tourmaline. All

adown her back floated tresses of ruddy gold, with a slender jeweled circlet confining them at the brow. Her robes of silken gauze floated around her like a cloud, and dainty satin slippers shod her feet.

At this exquisite vision Tip's old comrades stared in wonder for the space of a full minute, and then every head bent low in honest admiration of the lovely Princess Ozma. The girl herself cast one look into Glinda's bright face, which glowed with pleasure and satisfaction, and then turned upon the others. Speaking the words with sweet diffidence, she said:

"I hope none of you will care less for me than you did before. I'm just the same Tip, you know; only — only — "

"Only you're different!" said the Pumpkinhead; and everyone thought it was the wisest speech he had ever made.

The Riches of Content

When the wonderful tidings reached the ears of Queen Jinjur — how Mombi the Witch had been captured; how she had confessed her crime to Glinda; and how the long-lost Princess Ozma had been discovered in no less a personage than the boy Tip — she wept real tears of grief and despair.

"To think," she moaned, "that after having ruled as Queen, and lived in a palace, I must go back to scrubbing floors and churning butter again! It is too horrible to think of! I will never consent!"

So when her soldiers, who spent most of their time making fudge in the palace kitchens, counseled Jinjur to resist, she listened to their foolish prattle and sent a sharp defiance to Glinda the Good and the Princess Ozma. The result was a declaration of war, and the very next day Glinda marched upon the Emerald City with pennants flying and bands playing, and a forest of shining spears, sparkling brightly beneath the sun's rays.

But when it came to the walls this brave assembly made a sudden halt; for Jinjur had closed and barred every gateway, and the walls of the Emerald City were builded high and thick with many blocks of green marble. Finding her advance thus baffled, Glinda bent her brows in deep thought, while the Woggle-Bug said, in his most positive tone:

"We must lay siege to the city, and starve it into submission. It is the only thing we can do."

"Not so," answered the Scarecrow. "We still have the Gump, and the Gump can still fly"

The Sorceress turned quickly at this speech, and her face now wore a bright smile.

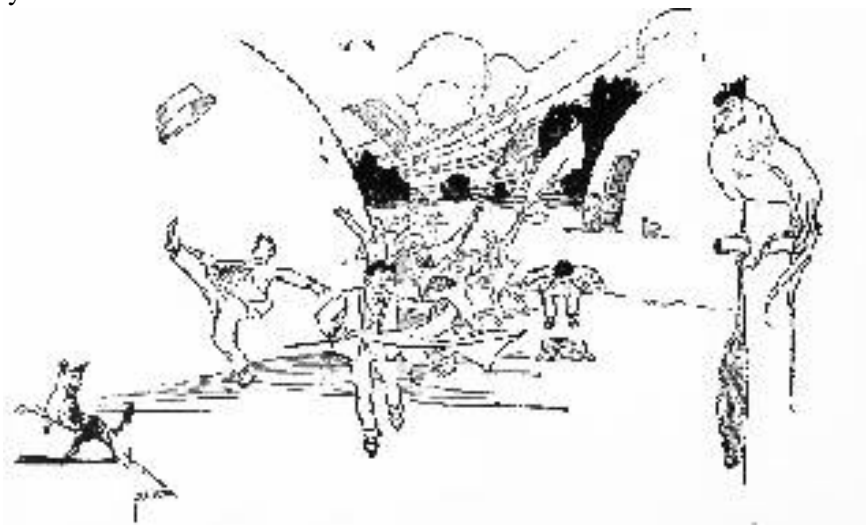
"You are right," she exclaimed, "and certainly have reason to be proud of your brains. Let us go to the Gump at once!"

So they passed through the ranks of the army until they came to the place, near the Scarecrow's tent, where the Gump lay. Glinda and Princess Ozma mounted first, and sat upon the sofas. Then the Scarecrow and his friends climbed aboard, and still there was room for a Captain and three soldiers, which Glinda considered sufficient for a guard.

Now, at a word from the Princess, the queer Thing they had called the Gump flopped its palm-leaf wings and rose into the air, carrying the party of adventurers high above the walls. They hovered over the palace, and soon perceived Jinjur reclining in a hammock in the courtyard, where she was comfortably reading a novel with a green cover and eating green chocolates, confident that the walls would protect her from her enemies. Obeying a quick command, the Gump alighted safely in this very courtyard, and before Jinjur had time to do more than scream, the Captain and three soldiers leaped out and made the former Queen a prisoner, locking strong chains upon both her wrists.

That act really ended the war; for the Army of Revolt submitted as soon

as they knew Jinjur to be a captive, and the Captain marched in safety through the streets and up to the gates of the city, which she threw wide open. Then the bands played their most stirring music while Glinda's army marched into the city, and heralds proclaimed the conquest of the audacious Jinjur and the accession of the beautiful Princess Ozma to the throne of her royal ancestors.



At once the men of the Emerald City cast off their aprons. And it is said that the women were so tired eating of their husbands' cooking that they all hailed the conquest of Jinjur with Joy. Certain it is that, rushing one and all to the kitchens of their houses, the good wives prepared so delicious a feast for the weary men that harmony was immediately restored in every family.

Ozma's first act was to oblige the Army of Revolt to return to her every emerald or other gem stolen from the public streets and buildings; and so great was the number of precious stones picked from their settings by these vain girls, that every one of the royal jewelers worked steadily for more than a month to replace them in their settings.

Meanwhile the Army of Revolt was disbanded and the girls sent home to their mothers. On promise of good behavior Jinjur was likewise released.

Ozma made the loveliest Queen the Emerald City had ever known; and, although she was so young and inexperienced, she ruled her people with wisdom and Justice. For Glinda gave her good advice on all occasions; and the Woggle-Bug, who was appointed to the important post of Public Educator, was quite helpful to Ozma when her royal duties grew perplexing.

The girl, in her gratitude to the Gump for its services, offered the creature any reward it might name.

“Then,” replied the Gump, “please take me to pieces. I did not wish to be brought to life, and I am greatly ashamed of my conglomerate personality. Once I was a monarch of the forest, as my antlers fully prove; but now, in my present upholstered condition of servitude, I am compelled to fly through the air — my legs being of no use to me whatever. Therefore I beg to be dispersed.”

So Ozma ordered the Gump taken apart. The antlered head was again hung over the mantle-piece in the hall, and the sofas were untied and placed in the reception parlors. The broom tail resumed its accustomed duties in the kitchen, and finally, the Scarecrow replaced all the clotheslines and ropes on the pegs from which he had taken them on the eventful day when the Thing was constructed.

You might think that was the end of the Gump; and so it was, as a flying-machine. But the head over the mantle-piece continued to talk whenever it took a notion to do so, and it frequently startled, with its abrupt questions, the people who waited in the hall for an audience with the Queen.

THE SCARECROW AS ROYAL TREASURER

The Saw-Horse, being Ozma's personal property, was tenderly cared for; and often she rode the queer creature along the streets of the Emerald City. She had its wooden legs shod with gold, to keep them from wearing out, and the tinkle of these golden shoes upon the pavement always filled the Queen's subjects with awe as they thought upon this evidence of her magical powers.

"The Wonderful Wizard was never so wonderful as Queen Ozma," the people said to one another, in whispers; "for he claimed to do many things he could not do; whereas our new Queen does many things no one would ever expect her to accomplish."

Jack Pumpkinhead remained with Ozma to the end of his days; and he did not spoil as soon as he had feared, although he always remained as stupid as

ever. The Woggle-Bug tried to teach him several arts and sciences; but Jack was so poor a student that any attempt to educate him was soon abandoned.

After Glinda's army had marched back home, and peace was restored to the Emerald City, the Tin Woodman announced his intention to return to his own Kingdom of the Winkies.

"It isn't a very big Kingdom," said he to Ozma, "but for that very reason it is easier to rule; and I have called myself an Emperor because I am an Absolute Monarch, and no one interferes in any way with my conduct of public or personal affairs. When I get home I shall have a new coat of nickel plate; for I have become somewhat marred and scratched lately; and then I shall be glad to have you pay me a visit."

"Thank you," replied Ozma. "Some day I may accept the invitation. But what is to become of the Scarecrow?"

"I shall return with my friend the Tin Woodman," said the stuffed one, seriously. "We have decided never to be parted in the future."

"And I have made the Scarecrow my Royal Treasurer," explained the Tin Woodman. "For it has occurred to me that it is a good thing to have a Royal Treasurer who is made of money. What do you think?"

"I think," said the little Queen, smiling, "that your friend must be the richest man in all the world."

"I am," returned the Scarecrow. "but not on account of my money. For I consider brains far superior to money, in every way. You may have noticed that if one has money without brains, he cannot use it to advantage; but if one has brains without money, they will enable him to live comfortably to the end of his days."

"At the same time," declared the Tin Woodman, "you must acknowledge that a good heart is a thing that brains can not create, and that money can not buy. Perhaps, after all, it is I who am the richest man in all the world."

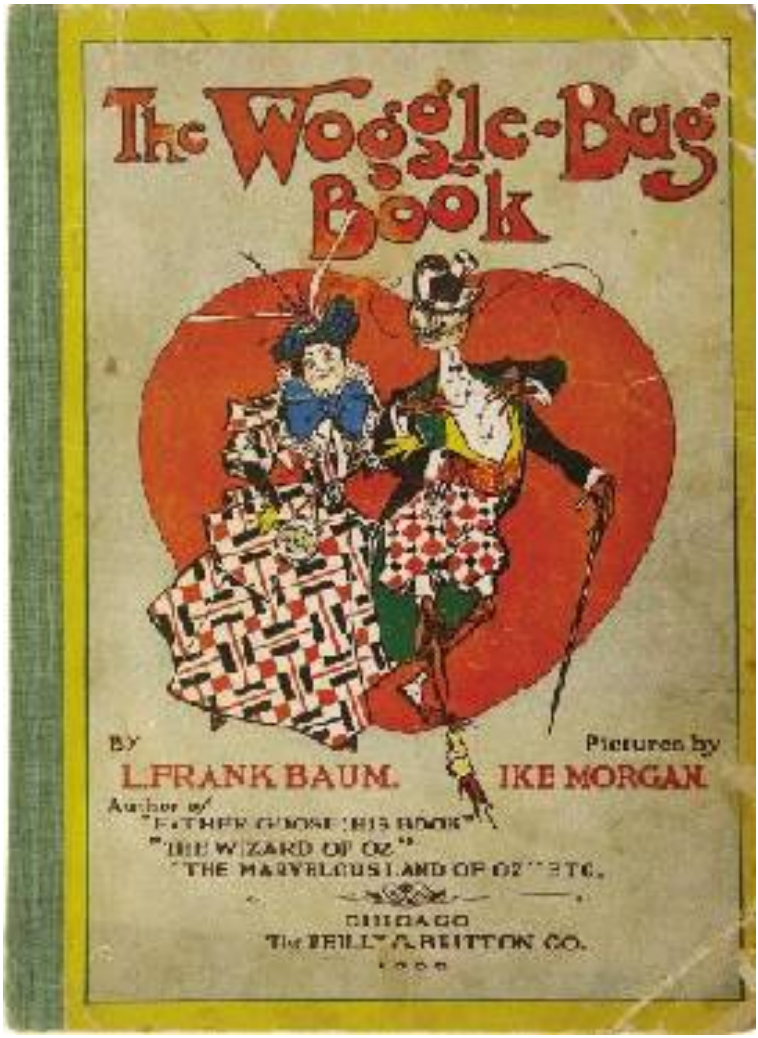
"You are both rich, my friends," said Ozma, gently; "and your riches are the only riches worth having — the riches of content!"

THE END

The End

THE WOGGLE-BUG BOOK

The Woggle-Bug Book is the rarest of Baum's Oz books, seldom reprinted and not considered part of the main canon of Oz books, but resulting from a popular comic strip Baum created, entitled *Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz*. Published as a picture book by Reilly & Britton in 1905, *The Woggle-Bug Book* featured illustrations by Ike Morgan. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T.E. was a beloved character from *The Marvelous Land of Oz*. In this story he travels to America where he falls in love with a plaid dress worn by a mannequin in a shop window. He works as a ditch digger in order to buy the dress, but is too late. He then follows the dress from owner to owner, finally accidentally flying by balloon to the jungles of Africa, before returning home.



A rare first edition copy of The Woggle-Bug Book

A Parker Brothers game created in 1905

The Woggle-Bug Book

By
L. FRANK BAUM.
Author of
"FATHER GOOSE: HIS BOOK"
"THE WIZARD OF OZ"
"THE MARVELOUS LAND OF OZ" ETC.

Pictures by
IKE MORGAN

CHICAGO
The REILLY & BRITTON CO.
1905

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ONE day Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E., becoming separated from his comrades who had accompanied him from the Land of Oz, and finding that time hung heavy on his hands (he had four of them), decided to walk down the Main street of the City and try to discover something or other of interest.

The initials "H. M." before his name meant "Highly Magnified," for this Woggle-Bug was several thousand times bigger than any other woggle-bug you ever saw. And the initials "T. E." after his named meant "Thoroughly Educated" — and so he was, in the Land of Oz. But his education, being applied to a woggle-bug intellect, was not at all remarkable in this country, where everything is quite different than Oz. Yet the Woggle-Bug did not suspect this, and being, like so many other thoroughly educated persons, proud of his mental attainments, he marched along the street with an air of importance that made one wonder what great thoughts were occupying his massive brain.

Being about as big, in his magnified state, as a man, the Woggle-Bug took care to clothe himself like a man; only, instead of choosing sober colors for his garments, he delighted in the most gorgeous reds and yellows and blues and greens; so that if you looked at him long the brilliance of his clothing was liable to dazzle your eyes.

I suppose the Waggle-Bug did not realize at all what a queer appearance he made. Being rather nervous, he seldom looked into a mirror; and as the people he met avoided telling him he was unusual, he had fallen into the

habit of considering himself merely an ordinary citizen of the big city wherein he resided.

So the Woggle-Bug strutted proudly along the street, swinging a cane in one hand, flourishing a pink handkerchief in the other, fumbling his watch-fob with another, and feeling his necktie was straight with another. Having four hands to use would prove rather puzzling to you or me, I imagine; but the Woggie-Bug was thoroughly accustomed to them.

Presently he came to a very fine store with big plate-glass windows, and standing in the center of the biggest window was a creature so beautiful and radiant and altogether charming that the first glance at her nearly took his breath away. Her complexion was lovely, for it was wax; but the thing which really caught the Woggle-Bug's fancy was the marvelous dress she wore. Indeed, it was the latest (last year's) Paris model, although the Woggle-Bug did not know that; and the designer must have had a real woggly love for bright colors, for the gown was made of red cloth covered with big checks which were so loud the fashion books called them "Wagnerian Plaids."

Never had our friend the Woggle-Bug seen such a beautiful gown before, and it afflicted him so strongly that he straightaway fell in love with the entire outfit — even to the wax-complexioned lady herself! Very politely he tipped his to her; but she stared coldly back without in any way acknowledging the courtesy.

"Never mind," he thought; "'faint heart never won fair lady.' And I'm determined to win this kaliedoscope of beauty or perish in the attempt!" You will notice that our insect had a way of using big words to express himself, which leads us to suspect that the school system in Oz is the same they employ in Boston.

As, with swelling heart, the Woggle-Bug feasted his eyes upon the

enchanting vision, a small green tag that was attached to a button of the waist suddenly attracted his attention. Upon the tag was marked: “Price $7.93 — GREATLY REDUCED.”

“Ah!” murmured the Woggle-Bug; “my darling is in greatly reduced circumstances, and $7.93 will make her mine! Where, oh where, shall I find the seven ninety-three wherewith to liberate this divinity and make her Mrs. Woggle-Bug?”

“Move on!” said a gruff policeman, who came along swinging his club. And the Woggle-Bug obediently moved on, his brain working fast and furious in the endeavor to think of a way to procure seven dollars and ninety-three cents.

You see, in the Land of Oz they use no money at all, so that when the Woggle-Bug arrived in America he did not possess a single penny. And no one had presented him with any money since.

“Yet there must be several ways to procure money in this country,” he reflected; “for otherwise everybody would be as penniless as I am. But how, I wonder, do they manage to get it?”

Just then he came along a side street where a number of men were at work digging a long and deep ditch in which to lay a new sewer.

"Now these men," thought the Woggle-Bug, "must get money for shoveling all that earth, else they wouldn't do it. Here is my chance to win the charming vision of beauty in the shop window!"

Seeking out the foreman, he asked for work, and the foreman agreed to hire him.

"How much do you pay these workmen?" asked the highly magnified one.

"Two dollars a day," answered the foreman.

"Then," said the Woggle-Bug, "you must pay me four dollars a day; for I have four arms to their two, and can do double their work."

"If that is so, I'll pay you four dollars," agreed the man.

The Woggle-Bug was delighted.

“In two days,” he told himself, as he threw off his brilliant coat and placed his hat upon it, and rolled up his sleeves; “in two days I can earn eight dollars — enough to purchase my greatly reduced darling and buy her seven cents worth of caramels besides.”

He seized two spades and began working so rapidly with his four arms that the foreman said: “You must have been forewarned.”

“Why?” asked the Insect.

“Because there’s a saying that to be forewarned is to be four-armed,” replied the other.

“That is nonsense,” said the Woggle-Bug, digging with all his might; “for they call you the foreman, and yet I only see one of you.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the man, and he was so proud of his new worker that he went into the corner saloon to tell his friend the barkeeper what a treasure he had found.

It was just after noon that the Woggle-Bug hired as a ditch-digger in order to win his heart’s desire; so at noon on the second day he quit work, and having received eight silver dollars he put on his coat and rushed away to the store that he might purchase his intended bride.

But, alas for the uncertainty of all our hopes! Just as the Woggle-Bug reached the door he saw a lady coming out of the store dressed in identical checks with which he had fallen in love!

At first he did not know what to do or say, for the young lady's complexion was not wax — far from it. But a glance into the window showed him the wax lady now dressed in a plain black tailor-made suit, and at once he knew the wearer of the Wagnerian plaids was his real love, and not the stiff creature behind the glass.

"Beg pardon!" he exclaimed, stopping the young lady; "but you're mine. Here's the seven ninety-three, and seven cents for candy."

But she glanced at him in a haughty manner, and walked away with her

nose slightly elevated.

He followed. He could not do otherwise with those delightful checks shining before him like beacon-lights to urge him on.

The young lady stepped into a car, which whirled away rapidly. For a moment he was nearly paralyzed at his loss; then he started after the car as fast as he could go, and this was very fast indeed — he being a woggle-bug.

Somebody cried: “Stop, thief!” and a policeman ran out to arrest him. But the Woggle-Bug used his four hands to push the officer aside, and the astonished man went rolling into the gutter so recklessly that his uniform bore marks of the encounter for many days.

Still keeping an eye on the car, the Woggle-Bug rushed on. He frightened two dogs, upset a fat gentleman who was crossing the street, leaped over an automobile that shot in front of him, and finally ran plump into the car, which had abruptly stopped to let off a passenger. Breathing hard from his exertions, he jumped upon the rear platform of the car, only to see his charmer step off at the front and walk mincingly up the steps of a house. Despite his fatigue, he flew after her at once, crying out:

"Stop, my variegated dear — stop! Don't you know you're mine?"

But she slammed the door in his face, and he sat down upon the steps and wiped his forehead with his pink handkerchief and fanned himself with his hat and tried to think what he should do next.

Presently a very angry man came out of the house. He had a revolver in one hand and a carving-knife in the other.

"What do you mean by insulting my wife?" he demanded.

"Was that your wife?" asked the Woggle-Bug, in meek astonishment.

"Of course it is my wife," answered the man.

"Oh, I didn't know," said the insect, rather humbled. "But I'll give you seven ninety-three for her. That's all she's worth, you know; for I saw it

marked on the tag."

The man gave a roar of rage and jumped into the air with the intention of falling on the Woggle-Bug and hurting him with the knife and pistol. But the Woggle-Bug was suddenly in a hurry, and didn't wait to be jumped on. Indeed, he ran so very fast that the man was content to let him go, especially as the pistol wasn't loaded and the carving-knife was as dull as such knives usually are.

But his wife had conceived a great dislike for the Wagnerian check costume that had won for her the Woggle-Bug's admiration. "I'll never wear it again!" she said to her husband, when he came in and told her that the Woggle-Bug was gone.

"Then," he replied, "you'd better give it to Bridget; for she's been bothering me about her wages lately, and the present will keep her quite for a month longer."

So she called Bridget and presented her with the dress, and the delighted servant decided to wear it that night to Mickey Schwartz's ball.

Now the poor Woggle-Bug, finding his affection scorned, was feeling very blue and unhappy that evening, When he walked out, dressed (among other things) in a purple-striped shirt, with a yellow necktie and pea-green gloves, he looked a great deal more cheerful than he really was. He had put on another hat, for the Woggle-Bug had a superstition that to change his hat was to change his luck, and luck seemed to have overlooked the fact that he was in existence.

The hat may really have altered his fortunes, as the Insect shortly met Ikey Swanson, who gave him a ticket to Mickey Schwartz's ball; for Ikey's clean dickey had not come home from the laundry, and so he could not go himself.

The Woggle-Bug, thinking to distract his mind from his dreams of love,

attended the hall, and the first thing he saw as he entered the room was Bridget clothed in that same gorgeous gown of Wagnerian plaid that had so fascinated his bugly heart.

The dear Bridget had added to her charms by putting seven full-blown imitation roses and three second-hand ostrich-plumes in her red hair; so that her entire person glowed like a sunset in June.

The Woggle-bug was enraptured; and, although the divine Bridget was waltzing with Fritzie Casey, the Insect rushed to her side and, seizing her with all his four arms at once, cried out in his truly educated Bostonian way:

"Oh, my superlative conglomeration of beauty! I have found you at last!"

Bridget uttered a shriek, and Fritzie Casey doubled two fists that looked like tombstones, and advanced upon the intruder.

Still embracing the plaid costume with two arms, the Woggle-Bug tipped Mr. Casey over with the other two. But Bridget made a bound and landed with her broad heel, which supported 180 pounds, firmly upon the Insect's toes. He gave a yelp of pain and promptly released the lady, and a moment later he found himself flat upon the floor with a dozen of the dancers piled upon him — all of whom were pummeling each other with much pleasure and a firm conviction that the diversion had been planned for their special amusement.

But the Woggle-Bug had the strength of many men, and when he flopped the big wings that were concealed by the tails of his coat, the gentlemen resting upon him were scattered like autumn leaves in a gust of wind.

The Insect stood up, rearranged his dress, and looked about him. Bridget

had run away and gone home, and the others were still fighting amongst themselves with exceeding cheerfulness. So the Woggle-Bug selected a hat which fit him (his own having been crushed out of shape) and walked sorrowfully back to his lodgings.

"Evidently that was not a lucky hat I wore to the ball," he reflected; "but perhaps this one I now have will bring about a change in my fortunes."

Bridget needed money; and as she had worn her brilliant costume once and allowed her friends to see how becoming it was, she carried it the next morning to a second-hand dealer and sold it for three dollars in cash.

Scarcely had she left the shop when a lady of Swedish extraction — a widow with four small children in her train — entered and asked to look at a gown. The dealer showed her the one he had just bought from Bridget, and its gay coloring so pleased the widow that she immediately purchased it for $3.65.

"Ay tank ets a good deal money, by sure," she said to herself; "but das leedle children mus' have new fadder to mak mind un tak care dere mudder like, by yimminy! An' Ay tank no man look may way in das ole dress I been wearing."

She took the gown and the four children to her home, where she lost no time in trying on the costume, which fitted her as perfectly as a flour-sack does a peck of potatoes.

"Das *beau* — tiful!" she exclaimed, in rapture, as she tried to see herself in a cracked mirror. "Ay go das very afternoon to valk in da park, for das man-folks go crazy-like ven he sees may fine frocks!"

Then she took her green parasol and a hand-bag stuffed with papers (to make it look prosperous and aristocratic) and sallied forth to the park, followed by all her interesting flock.

The men didn't fail to look at her, as you may guess; but none looked with yearning until the Woggle-Bug, sauntering gloomily along a path, happened

to raise his eyes and see before him his heart's delight the very identical Wagnerian plaids which had filled him with such unbounded affection.

"Aha, my excruciatingly lovely creation!" he cried, running up and kneeling before the widow; "I have found you once again. Do not, I beg of you, treat me with coldness!"

For he had learned from experience not to unduly startle his charmer at their first moment of meeting; so he made a firm attempt to control himself, that the wearer of the checked gown might not scorn him.

The widow had no great affection for bugs, having wrestled with the species for many years; but this one was such a big-bug and so handsomely dressed that she saw no harm in encouraging him — especially as the men she had sought to captivate were proving exceedingly shy.

"So you tank Ay I ban loavely?" she asked, with a coy glance at the Insect.

"I do! With all my heart I do!" protested the Woggle-Bug, placing all four hands, one after another, over that beating organ.

"Das mak plenty trouble by you. I don'd could be yours!" sighed the widow, indeed regretting her admirer was not an ordinary man.

"Why not?" asked the Woggle-Bug. "I have still the seven ninety-three; and as that was the original price, and you are now slightly worn and second-handed, I do not see why I need despair of calling you my own."

It is very queer, when we think of it, that the Woggle-Bug could not separate the wearer of his lovely gown from the gown itself. Indeed, he always made love directly to the costume that had so enchanted him, without any regard whatsoever to the person inside it; and the only way we can explain this remarkable fact is to recollect that the Woggle-Bug was only a woggle-bug, and nothing more could be expected of him. The widow did not, of course, understand his speech in the least; but she gathered the fact that the Woggle-Bug had id money, so she sighed and hinted that she was very

hungry, and that there was a good short-order restaurant just outside the park.

The Woggle-Bug became thoughtful at this. He hated to squander his money, which he had come to regard a sort of purchase price with which to secure his divinity. But neither could he allow those darling checks to go hungry; so he said:

"If you will come with me to the restaurant, I will gladly supply you with food."

The widow accepted the invitation at once, and the Woggle-Bug walked proudly beside her, leading all of the four children at once with his four hands.

Two such gay costumes as those worn by the widow and the Woggle-Bug are seldom found together, and the restaurant man was so impressed by the sight that he demanded his money in advance.

The four children, jabbering delightedly in their broken English, clambered upon four stools, and the widow sat upon another. And the Woggle-Bug, who was not hungry (being engaged in feasting his eyes upon the checks), laid down a silver dollar as a guarantee of good faith.

It was wonderful to see so much pie and cake and bread-and-butter and pickles and dough-nuts and sandwiches disappear into the mouths of the four innocents and their comparatively innocent mother. The Woggle-Bug had to add another quarter to the vanished dollar before the score was finally settled; and no sooner had the tribe trooped out of the restaurant than they turned into the open portals of an Ice-Cream Parlor, where they all attacked huge stacks of pale ice-cream and consumed several plates of lady-fingers and cream-puffs.

Again the Woggle-Bug reluctantly abandoned a dollar; but the end was not yet. The dear children wanted candy and nuts; and then they warned pink lemonade; and then pop-corn and chewing-gum; and always the Woggle-

Bug, after a glance at the entrancing costume, found himself unable to resist paying for the treat.

It was nearly evening when the widow pleaded fatigue and asked to be taken home. For none of them was able to eat another morsel, and the Woggle-Bug wearied her with his protestations of boundless admiration.

“Will you permit me to call upon you this evening?” asked the Insect, pleadingly, as he bade the wearer of the gown good-bye on her door-step.

“Sure like!” she replied, not caring to dismiss him harshly; and the happy Woggle-Bug went home with a light heart, murmuring to himself:

“At last the lovely plaids are to be my own! The new hat I found at the ball has certainly brought me luck.”

I am glad our friend the Woggle-Bug had those few happy moments, for he was destined to endure severe disappointments in the near future.

That evening he carefully brushed his coat, put on a green satin necktie and a purple embroidered waist-coat, and walked briskly towards the house of the widow. But, alas! as he drew near to the dwelling a most horrible stench greeted his nostrils, a sense of great depression came over him, and upon pausing before the house his body began to tremble and his eyes rolled wildly in their sockets.

For the wily widow, wishing to escape her admirer, had sprinkled the door-step and the front walk with insect Exterminator, and not even the Woggle-Bug's love for the enchanting checked gown could induce him to linger longer in that vicinity.

Sick and discouraged, he returned home, where his first act was to smash

the luckless hat and replace it with another. But it was some time before he recovered from the horrors of that near approach to extermination, and he passed a very wakeful and unhappy night, indeed.

Meantime the widow had traded with a friend of hers (who had once been a wash-lady for General Funston) the Wagnerian costume for a crazy quilt and a corset that was nearly as good as new and a pair of silk stockings that were not mates. It was a good bargain for both of them, and the wash-lady being colored — that is, she had a deep mahogany complexion — was delighted with her gorgeous gown and put it on the very next morning when she went to deliver the wash to the brick-layer's wife.

Surely it must have been Fate that directed the Woggle-Bug's steps; for, as he walked disconsolately along, an intuition caused him to raise his eyes, and he saw just ahead of him his affinity — carrying a large clothes-basket.

"Stop!" he called our, anxiously; "stop, my fair Grenadine, I implore you!"

The colored lady cast one glance behind her and imagined that Satan had at last arrived to claim her. For she had never before seen the Woggle-Bug, and was horrified by his sudden and unusual appearance.

"Go 'way, Mars' Debbil! Go 'way an' lemme 'lone!" she screeched, and the next minute she dropped her empty basket and sped up the street with a swiftness that only fear could have lent her flat-bottomed feet.

Nevertheless, the Woggle-Bug might have overtaken her had he not stepped into the clothes-basket and fallen headlong, becoming so tangled up in the thing that he rolled over and over several times before he could free himself. Then, when he had picked up his hat, which was utterly ruined, and found his cane, which had flown across the street, his mahogany charmer in the Wagnerian Plaids had disappeared from view.

With a sigh at his latest misfortune he returned home for another hat, and the agitated wash-lady, imagining that the devil had doubtless been lured by her beautiful gown, made haste to sell it to a Chinaman who lived next door.

Its bright colors pleased the Chink, who ripped it up and made it over into a Chinese robe, with flowing draperies falling to his heels. He dressed

himself in his new costume and, being proud of possessing such finery, sat down on a bench outside his door so that everyone passing by could see how magnificent he looked.

It was here the wandering Woggle-Bug espied him; and, recognizing at once the pattern and colors of his infatuating idol, he ran up and sat beside the Chinaman, saying in agitated but educated tones:

“Oh my prismatic personification of gigantic gorgeousness! — again I have found you!”

“Sure tling,” said the Chink with composure.

“Be mine! Only be mine!” continued the enraptured Woggle-Bug.

The Chinaman did not quite understand.

“Two dlolla a day,” he answered, cautiously.

“Oh, joy,” exclaimed the insect in delight; “I can then own you for a day and a half — for I have three dollars left. May I feel your exquisite texture, my dearest Fabric?”

"No flabic. No feelee. You too flesh. I *man* Chinaman!" returned the Oriental calmly.

"Never mind that! 'Tis your beautiful garment I love. Every check in that entrancing dress is a joy and a delight to my heart!"

While the Woggle-Bug thus raved, the Chinaman's wife (who was Mattie De Forest before she married him) heard the conversation, and decided this love affair had gone far enough. So she suddenly appeared with a broomstick, and with it began pounding the Woggle-Bug as fiercely as possible — and Mattie was no weakling, I assure you.

The first blow knocked the Insect's hat so far over his eyes that he was blinded; but, resolving not to be again cheated out of his darling, he grasped

firmly hold of the Wagnerian plaids with all four hands, and tore a goodly portion of it from the frightened Celestial's body.

Next moment he was dashing down the street, with the precious cloth tucked securely underneath an arm, and Mattie, being in slight dishabile, did not think best to follow him.

The triumphant joy of the Woggle-Bug can well be imagined. No more need he chase the fleeting vision of his love — no more submit to countless disappointments in his efforts to approach the object of his affection. The gorgeous plaids were now his own (or a large part of them, anyway), and upon reaching the quiet room wherein he lodged he gloated long and happily over its vivid coloring and violent contrasts of its glowing hues. To the eyes of the Woggle-Bug nothing could be more beautiful, and he positively regretted the necessity of ever turning his gaze from this bewitching treasure.

That he might never in the future be separated from the checks, he folded them, with many loving caresses, into compact form, and wrapped them in a sheet of stout paper tied with cotton cord that had a love-knot at the end. Wherever he went, thereafter, he carried the parcel underneath his left upper arm, pressed as closely to his heart as possible. And this sense of possession was so delightful that our Woggle-Bug was happy as the day is long.

In the evening his fortunes changed with cruel abruptness.

He walked out to take the air, and noticing a crowd people standing in an open space and surrounding a huge brown object, our Woggle-Bug stopped to learn what the excitement was about.

Pushing his way through the crowd, and hugging his precious parcel, he

soon reached the inner circle of spectators and found they had assembled to watch a balloon ascension. The Professor who was to go up with the balloon had not yet arrived; but the balloon itself was fully inflated and tugging hard at the rope that held it, as if anxious to escape the blended breaths of the people that crowded around. Just below the balloon was a small basket, attached to the netting of the gas-bag, and the Woggle-Bug was bending over the edge of this, to see what it contained, when a warning cry from the crowd caused him to pause and glance over his shoulder.

Great horrors and crumpled creeps! Springing toward him, with a scowl on his face and a long knife with a zig-zag blade in his uplifted hand, was that very Chinaman from whose body he had torn the Wagnerian plaids!

The plundered Celestial was evidently vindictive, and intended to push the wicked knife into the Woggle-Bug's body.

Our hero was a brave bug, as can easily be proved; but he did not wait for the knife to arrive at the broad of his back. Instead, he gave a yell (to show he was not afraid) and leaped nimbly into the basket of the balloon. The descending knife, missing its intended victim, fell upon the rope and severed it, and instantly the great balloon from the crowd and soared majestically toward the heavens.

The Woggle-Bug had escaped the Chinaman, but he didn't know whether to be glad or not.

For the balloon was earning him into the clouds, and he had no idea how to manage it, or to make it descend to earth again. When he peered over the edge of the basket he could hear the faint murmur of the crowd, and dimly see the enraged Professor (who had come too late) pounding the Chinaman, while the Chinaman tried to dissect the Professor with his knife.

Then all was blotted out; clouds rolled about him; night fell. The man in the moon laughed at him; the stars winked at each other as if delighted at the Woggle-Bug's plight, and a witch riding by on her broomstick yelled at him to keep on the right side of the road, and not run her down.

But the Woggle-Bug, squatted in the bottom of the basket and hugging his precious parcel to his bosom, paid no attention to anything but his own thoughts.

He had often ridden in the Gump; but never had he been so high as this, and the distance to the ground made him nervous.

When morning came he saw a strange country far beneath him, and longed to tread the earth again.

Now all woggle-bugs are born with wings, and our highly-magnified one had a beautiful, broad pair of floppers concealed beneath ample coat-tails. But long ago he had learned that his wings were not strong enough to lift his big body from the ground, so he had never tried to fly with them.

Here, however, was an occasion when he might put these wings to good use, for if he spread them in the air and then leaped over the side of the basket they would act in the same way a parachute does, and bear him gently to the ground.

No sooner did this thought occur to him than he put it into practice.

Disentangling his wings from his coat-tails, he spread them as wide as possible and then jumped from the car of the balloon.

Down, down the Woggle-Bug sank; but so slowly that there was no danger in the flight. He began to see the earth again, lying beneath him like a sun-kissed panorama of mud and frog-ponds and rocks and brushwood.

There were few trees, yet it was our insect's fate to drop directly above what trees there were, so that presently he came ker-plunk into a mass of tangled branches — and stuck there, with his legs dangling helplessly between two limbs and his wings caught in the foliage at either side.

Below was a group of Arab children, who at first started to run away. But,

seeing that the queer creature which had dropped from the skies was caught fast in the tree, they stopped and began to throw stones and clubs at it. One of the missiles struck the tree-limb at the right of the Woggle-Bug and jarred him loose. The next instant he fluttered to the ground, where his first act was to fold up his wings and tuck them underneath his coat-tails again, and his next action was to assure himself that the beloved plaids were still safe.

Then he looked for the Arab children; but they had scuttled away towards a group of tents, and now several men with dark skins and gay clothing came from the tents and ran towards the Woggle-Bug.

"Good morning," said our hero, removing his hat with a flourish and bowing politely.

"Meb-la-che-bah!" shouted the biggest Arab, and at once two others wound coils of rope around the Woggle-Bug and tied the ends in hard knots.

His hat was knocked off and trampled into the mud by the Shiek (who was the big Arab), and the precious parcel was seized and ruthlessly opened.

"Very good!" said the Shiek, eyeing the plaids with pleasure. "My slaves shall make me a new waistcoat of this cloth."

"No! oh, no!" cried the agonized Insect; "it is taken from a person who has had small-pox and yellow-fever and toothache and mumps — all at the same time. Do not, I bet you, risk your valuable life by wearing that cloth!"

"Bah!" said the Shiek, scornfully; "I have had all those diseases and many more. I am immune. But now," he continued, "allow me to bid you good-bye. I am sorry to be obliged to kill you, but such is our custom."

This was bad news for the Woggle-Bug; but he did not despair.

"Are you not afraid to kill me?" he asked, as if surprised.

"Why should I be afraid?" demanded the Shiek.

“Because it is well-known that to kill a woggle-bug brings bad luck to one.”

The Shiek hesitated, for he was very superstitious.

“Are you a woggle-bug?” he asked.

“I am,” replied the Insect, proudly. “And I may as well tell you that the last person who killed one of my race had three unlucky days. The first his suspenders broke (the Arab shuddered), the second day he smashed a looking-glass (the Arab moaned), and the third day he was chewed up by a crocodile.”

Now the greatest aversion Arabs have is to be chewed by a crocodile, because these people usually roam over the sands of the desert, where to meet an amphibian is simply horrible; so at the Woggle-Bug’s speech they set up a howl of fear, and the Shiek shouted:

“Unbind him! Let not a hair of his head be injured!”

At once the knots in the ropes were untied, and the Woggle-Bug was free. All the Arabs united to show him deference and every respectful attention, and since his own hat had been destroyed they wound about his head a picturesque turban of an exquisite soiled white color, having stripes of red and yellow in it.

Then the Woggle-Bug was escorted to the tents, where he suddenly remembered his precious plaids, and asked that the cloth he restored to him.

Thereupon the Shiek got up and made a long speech, in which he described his grief at being obliged to refuse the request.

At the end of that time one of the women came op to them with a lovely waistcoat which she had manufactured out of the Wagnerian plaids; and when the Shiek saw it he immediately ordered all the tom-toms and kettle-drums in the camp destroyed, as they were no longer necessary. Then he put on the gorgeous vestment, and turned a deaf ear to the Woggle-Bug's agonized wails.

But there were some scraps of cloth left, and to show that he was liberal

and good-natured, the Shiek ordered these manufactured into a handsome necktie, which he presented Woggle-Bug in another long speech.

Our hero, realizing a larger part of his darling was lost to him, decided to be content with the smaller share; so he put on the necktie, and felt really proud of its brilliance and aggressive elegance.

Then, bidding the Arabs farewell, he strode across the desert until he reached the borders of a more fertile and favored country.

Indeed, he found before him a cool and enticing jungle, which at first seemed deserted. But while he stared about him a sound fell upon his ear, and he saw approaching a young lady Chimpanzee. She was evidently a personage of some importance, for her hair was neatly banged just over her eyes, and she wore a clean white pinafore with bows of pink ribbon at the shoulders.

"Good morning, Mr. Beetle," said she, with merry laughter.

"Do not, I beg of you, call me a beetle," exclaimed our hero, rather peevishly; "for I am actually a Woggle-Bug, and Highly-Magnified at that!"

"What's in a name?" laughed the gay damsel. "Come, let me introduce you to our jungle, where strangers of good breeding are always welcome."

"As for breeding," said the Woggle-Bug, "my father, although of ordinary size, was a famous Bug-Wizard in his day, and claimed descent from the original protoplasm which constituted the nucleus of the present planetary satellite upon which we exist."

"That's all right," returned Miss Chim. "Tell that to our king, and he'll decorate you with the medal of the Omnipotent Order of Onerous

Orthographers, Are you ready to meander?”

The Woggle-Bug did not like the flippant tone in which maiden spoke; but he at once followed her.

Presently they came to a tall hedge surrounding the Inner Jungle, and without this hedge stood a patrol of brown bears who wore red soldier-caps and carried gold-plated muskets in their hands.

“We call this the bearier,” said Miss Chim, pointing to the soldiers, “because they oblige all strangers to paws.”

“I should think it was a bearicade,” remarked the Woggle-Bug.

But when they approached the gateway the officer in charge saluted respectfully to Miss Chim, and permitted her to escort the Woggle-Bug into the sacred precincts of the Inner Jungle.

Here his eyes were soon opened to their widest capacity in genuine astonishment.

The Jungle was as clean and as well-regulated as any city of men the Insect had ever visited. Just within the gate a sleek antelope was running a pop-corn stand, and a little further on a screech-owl stood upon a stump playing a violin, while across her breast was a sign reading: “I am blind — at present.”

As they walked up the street they came to a big grey monkey turning a hand-organ, and attached to a cord was a little nigger-boy whom the monkey sent into the crowd of animals, standing by to gather up the pennies, pulling him back every now and then by means of the cord.

“There’s a curious animal for you,” said Miss Chim, pointing to the boy. “Those horrid things they call men, whether black or white, seem to me the lowest of all created beasts.”

“I have seen them in a highly civilized state,” replied the Woggle-Bug, “and they’re really further advanced than you might suppose.”

But Miss Chim gave a scornful laugh, and pulled him away to where a hippopotamus sat under the shade of a big tree, mopping his brow with a red handkerchief — for the weather was somewhat sultry. Before the hip was a table covered with a blue cloth, and upon the cloth was embroidered the words: “Professor Hipmus, Fortune Teller.”

“Want your fortune told?” asked Miss Chim.

“I don’t mind,” replied the Woggle-Bug.

“I’ll read your hand,” said the Professor, with a yawn that startled the insect. “To my notion palmistry is the best means of finding out what nobody knows or cares to know.”

He took the upper-right hand of the Woggle-Bug, and after adjusting his spectacles bent over it with an air of great wisdom.

“You have been in love,” announced the Professor; “but you got it in the neck.”

“True!” murmured the astonished Insect, putting up his left lower hand to feel of the beloved necktie.

"It's not your hand," said the Professor.

"You think you have won," continued the Hip; "but there are others who have 1, 2. You have many heart throbs before you, during your future life. Afterward I see no heart throbs whatever. Forty cents, please."

"Isn't he just wonderful?" asked Miss Chim, with enthusiasm. "He's the greatest fortune teller in the jungle."

"On account of his size, I suppose," returned the Woggle-Bug, as they walked on.

Soon they came to the Royal Palace, which was a beautiful bower formed of vines upon which grew many brilliant-hued forest flowers. The entrance was guarded by a Zebra, who barred admission until Miss Chim whispered the password in his ear. Then he permitted them to enter, and the

Chimpanzee immediately ushered the Woggle-Bug into the presence of King Weasel.

This monarch lay coiled upon a purple silk cushion, half asleep and yet wakeful enough to be smoking a big cigar. Beside him crouched two prairie-dogs who were combing his hair very carefully, while a red squirrel perched near his head and fanned him with her bushy tail.

"Dear me, what have we here?" exclaimed the King of the Jungle, in a querulous tone, "Is it an over-grown pinch-bug, or is it a kissing-bug?"

"I have the honor to be a Woggle-Bug, your Majesty!" replied our hero, proudly.

"Sav, cut out that Majesty," snapped the King, with a scowl. "If you can find anything majestic about me, I'd like to know what it is."

"Don't treat him with any respect," whispered Miss Chim to the Insect, "or you'll get him riled. Sneer at him, and slap his face if you get a chance."

The Woggle-Bug took the hint.

"Really," he told the King. "I have never seen a more despicable creature than you. The admirable perspicacity inherent in your tribe seems to have deteriorated in you to a hyperbolated insousancy." Then he reached out his arms and slapped the king four times, twice on one side of his face and twice on the other.

"Thanks, my dear June-Bug," said the monarch; "I now recognize you to be a person of some importance."

"Sire, I am a Woggle-Bug, highly magnified and thoroughly educated. It is no exaggeration to say I am the greatest Woggle-Bug on earth."

"I fully believe it, so pray do not play any more foursomes on my jaw. I am sufficiently humiliated at this moment to recognize you as a

Sullivanthauros, should you claim to be a member of that extinct race."

Then two little weasels — a boy weasel and a girl weasel — came into the bower and threw their school-books at the squirrel so cleverly that one hit the King upon the nose and smashed his cigar and the other caught him fairly in the pit of his stomach.

At first the monarch howled a bit; then he wiped the tears from his face and said:

"Ah, what delightful children I have! What do you wish, my darlings?"

"I want a cent for chewing gum," said the Girl Weasel.

"Get it from the Guinea-Pig; you have my assent. And what does my dear boy want?"

"Pop," went the Weasel, "our billy-goat has swallowed the hare you gave me to play with."

"Dear me," sighed the King, "how often I find a hair in the butter! Whenever I reign people carry umbrellas; and my son, although quite polished, indulges only in monkey-shines! Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown! but if one is scalped, the loss of the crown renders the head still more uneasy."

"Couldn't they find a better king than you?" enquired the Woggle-Bug, curiously, as the children left the bower.

"Yes; but no worse," answered the Weasel; "and here in the jungle honors are conferred only upon the unworthy. For if a truly great animal is honored he gets a swelled head, and that renders him unbearable. They now regard the King of the Jungle with contempt, and that makes all my subjects self-respecting."

"There is wisdom in that," declared the Woggle-Bug, approvingly; "a single glance at you makes me content with being so excellent a bug."

"True," murmured the King, yawning. "But you tire me, good stranger. Miss Chim, will you kindly get the gasoline can? It's high time to eradicate this insect."

"With pleasure," said Miss Chim, moving away with a smile.

But the Woggle-Bug did not linger to be eradicated. With one wild bound he cleared the door of the palace and sprinted up the entrance of the Jungle. The bear soldiers saw him running away, and took careful aim and fired. But the gold-plated muskets would not shoot straight, and now the Woggle-Bug was far distant, and still running with all his might.

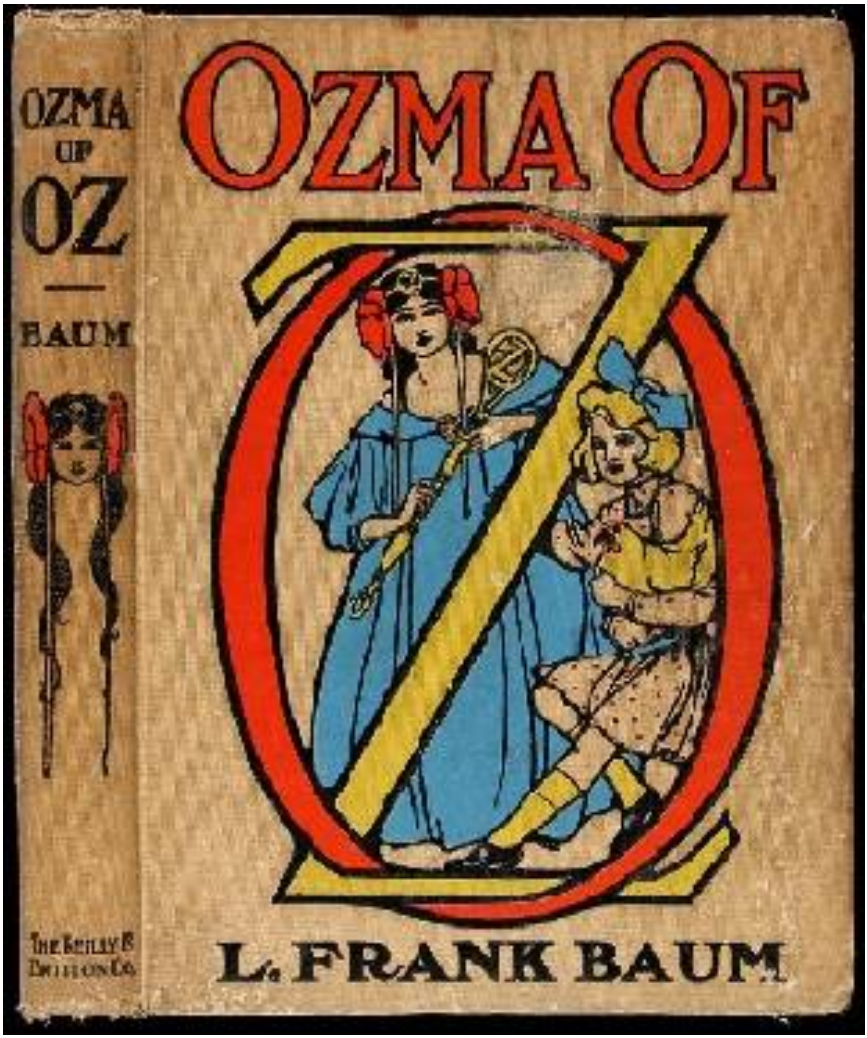
Nor did he pause until he had emerged from the forest and crossed the plains, and reached at last the city from whence he had escaped in the balloon. And, once again in his old lodgings, he looked at himself in the mirror and said:

"After all, this necktie is my love — and my love is now mine forevermore! Why should I not be happy and content?"

THE END

OZMA OF OZ

Ozma of Oz was Baum's third OZ book, published in 1907 by Reilly & Britton and illustrated by John R. Neill. Although most of the action takes place outside of Oz, it was with this book that Baum began to plan a series. The novel begins as vacationing Dorothy Gale and her Uncle Henry board a steamship bound for Australia. Dorothy falls overboard during a violent storm and, along with a yellow hen named Billina, drifts away in a large poultry crate. They arrive on the shore of a strange land and discover that Billina is able to talk. Lunch pails grow on trees and there are strange creatures known as Wheelers, with wheels instead of hands or feet. As they travel through the land of Ev, they meet Tik-Tok, a mechanical man, and are captured by the head-changing Princess Langwidere. Ozma of Oz comes to their rescue, along with old friends, the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion. In order to rescue the royal family of Ev, Dorothy and her friends must travel to the land of the Nome King. Readers also meet the Nome King, Roquat the Red, for the first time. After more adventures, Ozma officially names Dorothy a Princess of Oz.



A first edition copy of Ozma of Oz

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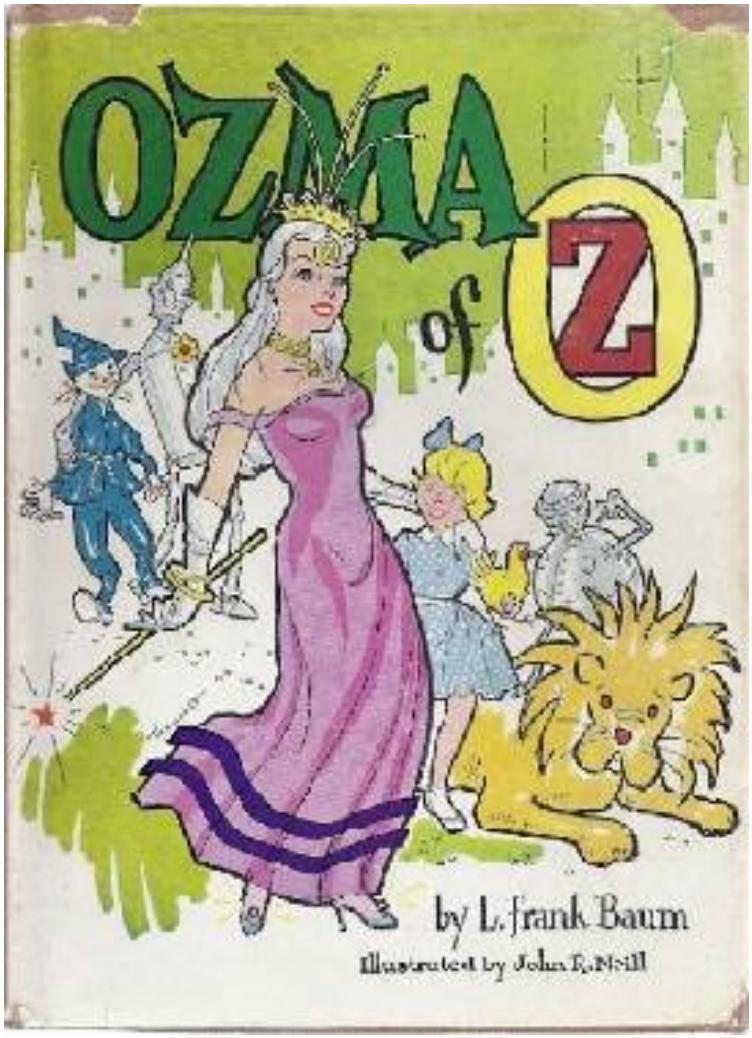

A copy of the 1959 edition

OZMA OF OZ

A Record of Her Adventures with Dorothy Gale of Kansas, the Yellow Hen, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, Tiktok, the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger; Besides Other Good People too Numerous to Mention Faithfully Recorded Herein

by

L. Frank Baum

Ozone

To all the boys and girls
who read my stories
and especially to
the Dorothys
this book is lovingly
dedicated

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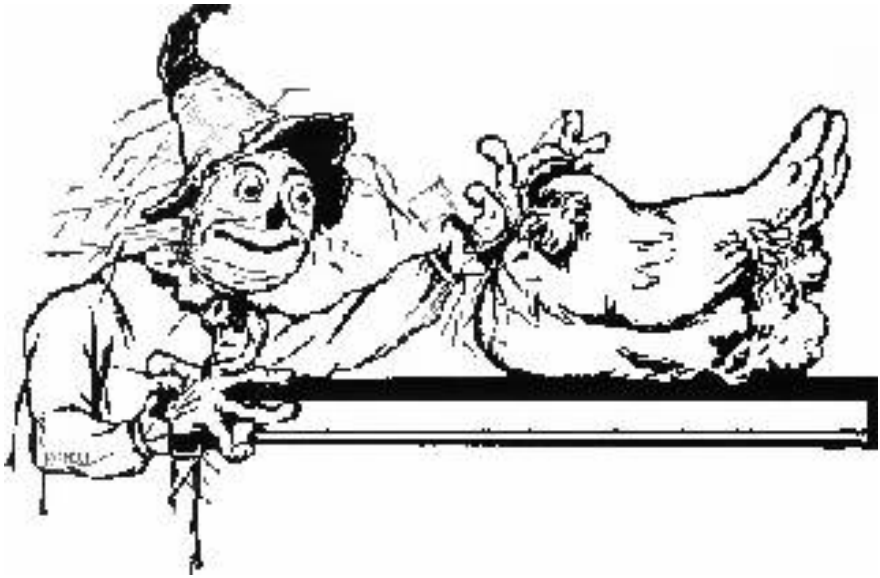

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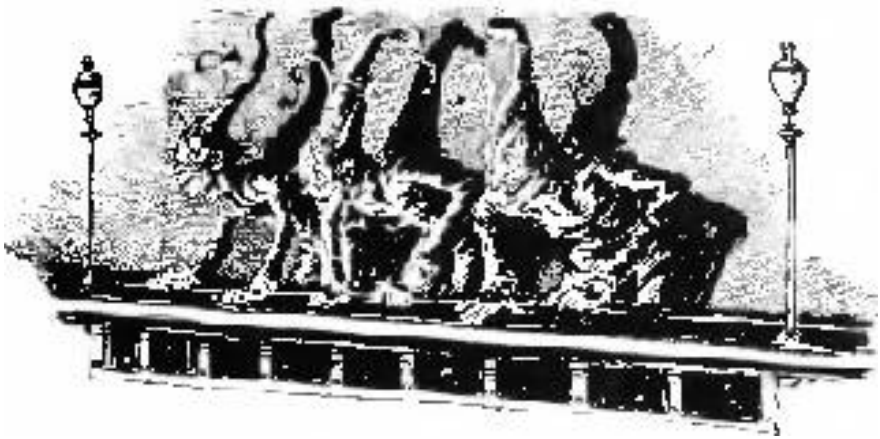


My friends the children are responsible for this new "Oz Book," as they were for the last one, which was called The Land of Oz. Their sweet little letters plead to know "more about Dorothy"; and they ask: "What became of the Cowardly Lion?" and "What did Ozma do afterward?"--meaning, of course, after she became the Ruler of Oz. And some of them suggest plots to me, saying: "Please have Dorothy go to the Land of Oz again"; or, "Why don't you make Ozma and Dorothy meet, and have a good time together?" Indeed, could I do all that my little friends ask, I would be obliged to write dozens of books to satisfy their demands. And I wish I could, for I enjoy writing these stories just as much as the children say they enjoy reading them.

Well, here is "more about Dorothy," and about our old friends the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, and about the Cowardly Lion, and Ozma, and all the rest of them; and here, likewise, is a good deal about some new folks that are queer and unusual. One little friend, who read this story before it was printed, said to me: "Billina is REAL OZZY, Mr. Baum, and so are Tiktok and the Hungry Tiger."

If this judgment is unbiased and correct, and the little folks find this new story "real Ozzy," I shall be very glad indeed that I wrote it. But perhaps I shall get some more of those very welcome letters from my readers, telling me just how they like "Ozma of Oz." I hope so, anyway.

L. FRANK BAUM.
MACATAWA, 1907.

1. The Girl in the Chicken Coop

The wind blew hard and joggled the water of the ocean, sending ripples across its surface. Then the wind pushed the edges of the ripples until they became waves, and shoved the waves around until they became billows. The billows rolled dreadfully high: higher even than the tops of houses. Some of them, indeed, rolled as high as the tops of tall trees, and seemed like mountains; and the gulfs between the great billows were like deep valleys.

All this mad dashing and splashing of the waters of the big ocean, which the mischievous wind caused without any good reason whatever, resulted in a terrible storm, and a storm on the ocean is liable to cut many queer pranks

and do a lot of damage.

At the time the wind began to blow, a ship was sailing far out upon the waters. When the waves began to tumble and toss and to grow bigger and bigger the ship rolled up and down, and tipped sidewise--first one way and then the other--and was jostled around so roughly that even the sailor-men had to hold fast to the ropes and railings to keep themselves from being swept away by the wind or pitched headlong into the sea.

And the clouds were so thick in the sky that the sunlight couldn't get through them; so that the day grew dark as night, which added to the terrors of the storm.

The Captain of the ship was not afraid, because he had seen storms before, and had sailed his ship through them in safety; but he knew that his passengers would be in danger if they tried to stay on deck, so he put them all into the cabin and told them to stay there until after the storm was over, and to keep brave hearts and not be scared, and all would be well with them.

Now, among these passengers was a little Kansas girl named Dorothy Gale, who was going with her Uncle Henry to Australia, to visit some relatives they had never before seen. Uncle Henry, you must know, was not very well, because he had been working so hard on his Kansas farm that his health had given way and left him weak and nervous. So he left Aunt Em at home to watch after the hired men and to take care of the farm, while he traveled far away to Australia to visit his cousins and have a good rest.

Dorothy was eager to go with him on this journey, and Uncle Henry thought she would be good company and help cheer him up; so he decided to take her along. The little girl was quite an experienced traveller, for she had once been carried by a cyclone as far away from home as the marvelous Land of Oz, and she had met with a good many adventures in that strange country before she managed to get back to Kansas again. So she wasn't easily frightened, whatever happened, and when the wind began to howl and whistle, and the waves began to tumble and toss, our little girl didn't mind the uproar the least bit.

"Of course we'll have to stay in the cabin," she said to Uncle Henry and the other passengers, "and keep as quiet as possible until the storm is over. For the Captain says if we go on deck we may be blown overboard."

No one wanted to risk such an accident as that, you may be sure; so all the passengers stayed huddled up in the dark cabin, listening to the shrieking of the storm and the creaking of the masts and rigging and trying to keep from bumping into one another when the ship tipped sidewise.

Dorothy had almost fallen asleep when she was aroused with a start to find that Uncle Henry was missing. She couldn't imagine where he had gone,

and as he was not very strong she began to worry about him, and to fear he might have been careless enough to go on deck. In that case he would be in great danger unless he instantly came down again.

The fact was that Uncle Henry had gone to lie down in his little sleeping-berth, but Dorothy did not know that. She only remembered that Aunt Em had cautioned her to take good care of her uncle, so at once she decided to go on deck and find him, in spite of the fact that the tempest was now worse than ever, and the ship was plunging in a really dreadful manner. Indeed, the little girl found it was as much as she could do to mount the stairs to the deck, and as soon as she got there the wind struck her so fiercely that it almost tore away the skirts of her dress. Yet Dorothy felt a sort of joyous excitement in defying the storm, and while she held fast to the railing she peered around through the gloom and thought she saw the dim form of a man clinging to a mast not far away from her. This might be her uncle, so she called as loudly as she could:

"Uncle Henry! Uncle Henry!"

But the wind screeched and howled so madly that she scarce heard her own voice, and the man certainly failed to hear her, for he did not move.

Dorothy decided she must go to him; so she made a dash forward, during a lull in the storm, to where a big square chicken-coop had been lashed to the deck with ropes. She reached this place in safety, but no sooner had she seized fast hold of the slats of the big box in which the chickens were kept than the wind, as if enraged because the little girl dared to resist its power, suddenly redoubled its fury. With a scream like that of an angry giant it tore away the ropes that held the coop and lifted it high into the air, with Dorothy still clinging to the slats. Around and over it whirled, this way and that, and a few moments later the chicken-coop dropped far away into the sea, where the

big waves caught it and slid it up-hill to a foaming crest and then down-hill into a deep valley, as if it were nothing more than a plaything to keep them amused.

Dorothy had a good ducking, you may be sure, but she didn't lose her presence of mind even for a second. She kept tight hold of the stout slats and as soon as she could get the water out of her eyes she saw that the wind had ripped the cover from the coop, and the poor chickens were fluttering away in every direction, being blown by the wind until they looked like feather dusters without handles. The bottom of the coop was made of thick boards, so Dorothy found she was clinging to a sort of raft, with sides of slats, which readily bore up her weight. After coughing the water out of her throat and getting her breath again, she managed to climb over the slats and stand upon the firm wooden bottom of the coop, which supported her easily enough.

"Why, I've got a ship of my own!" she thought, more amused than frightened at her sudden change of condition; and then, as the coop climbed up to the top of a big wave, she looked eagerly around for the ship from which she had been blown.

It was far, far away, by this time. Perhaps no one on board had yet missed her, or knew of her strange adventure. Down into a valley between the waves the coop swept her, and when she climbed another crest the ship looked like a toy boat, it was such a long way off. Soon it had entirely disappeared in the gloom, and then Dorothy gave a sigh of regret at parting with Uncle Henry and began to wonder what was going to happen to her next.

Just now she was tossing on the bosom of a big ocean, with nothing to keep her afloat but a miserable wooden hen-coop that had a plank bottom and slatted sides, through which the water constantly splashed and wetted her through to the skin! And there was nothing to eat when she became hungry--as she was sure to do before long--and no fresh water to drink and no dry clothes to put on.

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed, with a laugh. "You're in a pretty fix, Dorothy Gale, I can tell you! and I haven't the least idea how you're going to get out of it!"

As if to add to her troubles the night was now creeping on, and the gray clouds overhead changed to inky blackness. But the wind, as if satisfied at last with its mischievous pranks, stopped blowing this ocean and hurried away to another part of the world to blow something else; so that the waves, not being joggled any more, began to quiet down and behave themselves.

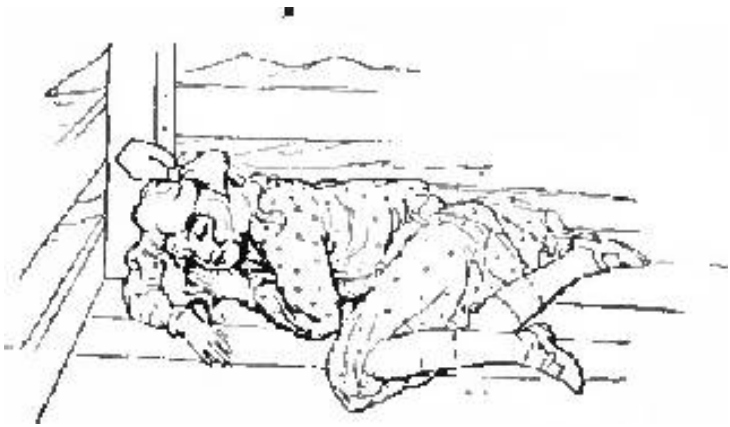
DOROTHY ALONE IN THE PENNOUS

It was lucky for Dorothy, I think, that the storm subsided; otherwise, brave though she was, I fear she might have perished. Many children, in her place, would have wept and given way to despair; but because Dorothy had encountered so many adventures and come safely through them it did not occur to her at this time to be especially afraid. She was wet and uncomfortable, it is true; but, after sighing that one sigh I told you of, she managed to recall some of her customary cheerfulness and decided to patiently await whatever her fate might be.

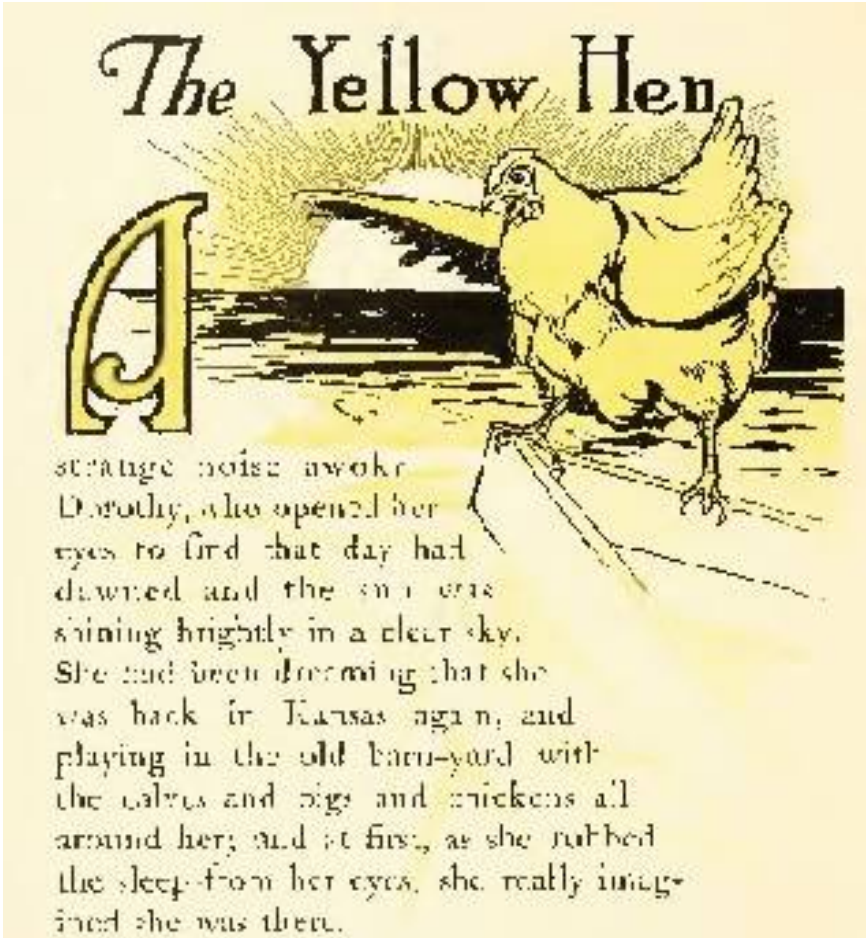
By and by the black clouds rolled away and showed a blue sky overhead, with a silver moon shining sweetly in the middle of it and little stars winking merrily at Dorothy when she looked their way. The coop did not toss around

any more, but rode the waves more gently--almost like a cradle rocking--so that the floor upon which Dorothy stood was no longer swept by water coming through the slats. Seeing this, and being quite exhausted by the excitement of the past few hours, the little girl decided that sleep would be the best thing to restore her strength and the easiest way in which she could pass the time. The floor was damp and she was herself wringing wet, but fortunately this was a warm climate and she did not feel at all cold.

So she sat down in a corner of the coop, leaned her back against the slats, nodded at the friendly stars before she closed her eyes, and was asleep in half a minute.



2. The Yellow Hen



A strange noise awoke Dorothy, who opened her eyes to find that day had dawned and the sun was shining brightly in a clear sky. She had been dreaming that she was back in Kansas again, and playing in the old barn-yard with the calves and pigs and chickens all around her; and at first, as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes, she really imagined she was there.

"Kut-kut-kut, ka-daw-kut! Kut-kut-kut, ka-daw-kut!"

Ah; here again was the strange noise that had awakened her. Surely it was a hen cackling! But her wide-open eyes first saw, through the slats of the coop, the blue waves of the ocean, now calm and placid, and her thoughts flew back to the past night, so full of danger and discomfort. Also she began to remember that she was a waif of the storm, adrift upon a treacherous and

unknown sea.

"Kut-kut-kut, ka-daw-w-w--kut!"

"What's that?" cried Dorothy, starting to her feet.

"Why, I've just laid an egg, that's all," replied a small, but sharp and distinct voice, and looking around her the little girl discovered a yellow hen squatting in the opposite corner of the coop.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, in surprise; "have YOU been here all night, too?"

"Of course," answered the hen, fluttering her wings and yawning. "When the coop blew away from the ship I clung fast to this corner, with claws and beak, for I knew if I fell into the water I'd surely be drowned. Indeed, I nearly drowned, as it was, with all that water washing over me. I never was so wet before in my life!"

"Yes," agreed Dorothy, "it was pretty wet, for a time, I know. But do you feel comfor'ble now?"

"Not very. The sun has helped to dry my feathers, as it has your dress, and I feel better since I laid my morning egg. But what's to become of us, I should like to know, afloat on this big pond?"

"I'd like to know that, too," said Dorothy. "But, tell me; how does it happen that you are able to talk? I thought hens could only cluck and cackle."

"Why, as for that," answered the yellow hen thoughtfully, "I've clucked and cackled all my life, and never spoken a word before this morning, that I can remember. But when you asked a question, a minute ago, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to answer you. So I spoke, and I seem to keep on speaking, just as you and other human beings do. Strange, isn't it?"

"Very," replied Dorothy. "If we were in the Land of Oz, I wouldn't think it so queer, because many of the animals can talk in that fairy country. But out here in the ocean must be a good long way from Oz."

"How is my grammar?" asked the yellow hen, anxiously. "Do I speak quite properly, in your judgment?"

"Yes," said Dorothy, "you do very well, for a beginner."

"I'm glad to know that," continued the yellow hen, in a confidential tone; "because, if one is going to talk, it's best to talk correctly. The red rooster has often said that my cluck and my cackle were quite perfect; and now it's a comfort to know I am talking properly."

"I'm beginning to get hungry," remarked Dorothy. "It's breakfast time; but there's no breakfast."

"You may have my egg," said the yellow hen. "I don't care for it, you know."

“Don’t you want to hatch it?” asked the little girl, in surprise.

“No, indeed; I never care to hatch eggs unless I’ve a nice snug nest, in some quiet place, with a baker’s dozen of eggs under me. That’s thirteen, you know, and it’s a lucky number for hens. So you may as well eat this egg.”

“Oh, I couldn’t POSS’BLY eat it, unless it was cooked,” exclaimed Dorothy. “But I’m much obliged for your kindness, just the same.”

“Don’t mention it, my dear,” answered the hen, calmly, and began preening her feathers.

For a moment Dorothy stood looking out over the wide sea. She was still thinking of the egg, though; so presently she asked:

“Why do you lay eggs, when you don’t expect to hatch them?”

“It’s a habit I have,” replied the yellow hen. “It has always been my pride to lay a fresh egg every morning, except when I’m moulting. I never feel like having my morning cackle till the egg is properly laid, and without the chance to cackle I would not be happy.”

“It’s strange,” said the girl, reflectively; “but as I’m not a hen I can’t be ‘spected to understand that.”

“Certainly not, my dear.”

Then Dorothy fell silent again. The yellow hen was some company, and a bit of comfort, too; but it was dreadfully lonely out on the big ocean, nevertheless.

After a time the hen flew up and perched upon the topmost slat of the coop, which was a little above Dorothy’s head when she was sitting upon the bottom, as she had been doing for some moments past.

“Why, we are not far from land!” exclaimed the hen.

“Where? Where is it?” cried Dorothy, jumping up in great excitement.

“Over there a little way,” answered the hen, nodding her head in a certain direction. “We seem to be drifting toward it, so that before noon we ought to find ourselves upon dry land again.”

“I shall like that!” said Dorothy, with a little sigh, for her feet and legs were still wetted now and then by the sea-water that came through the open slats.

THE YELLOW HEN

"So shall I," answered her companion. "There is nothing in the world so miserable as a wet hen."

The land, which they seemed to be rapidly approaching, since it grew more distinct every minute, was quite beautiful as viewed by the little girl in the floating hen-coop. Next to the water was a broad beach of white sand and gravel, and farther back were several rocky hills, while beyond these appeared a strip of green trees that marked the edge of a forest. But there were no houses to be seen, nor any sign of people who might inhabit this unknown land.

"I hope we shall find something to eat," said Dorothy, looking eagerly at the pretty beach toward which they drifted. "It's long past breakfast time,

now."

"I'm a trifle hungry, myself," declared the yellow hen.

"Why don't you eat the egg?" asked the child. "You don't need to have your food cooked, as I do."

"Do you take me for a cannibal?" cried the hen, indignantly. "I do not know what I have said or done that leads you to insult me!"

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure Mrs.--Mrs.--by the way, may I inquire your name, ma'am?" asked the little girl.

"My name is Bill," said the yellow hen, somewhat gruffly.

"Bill! Why, that's a boy's name."

"What difference does that make?"

"You're a lady hen, aren't you?"

"Of course. But when I was first hatched out no one could tell whether I was going to be a hen or a rooster; so the little boy at the farm where I was born called me Bill, and made a pet of me because I was the only yellow chicken in the whole brood. When I grew up, and he found that I didn't crow and fight, as all the roosters do, he did not think to change my name, and every creature in the barn-yard, as well as the people in the house, knew me as 'Bill.' So Bill I've always been called, and Bill is my name."

"But it's all wrong, you know," declared Dorothy, earnestly; "and, if you don't mind, I shall call you 'Billina.' Putting the 'eena' on the end makes it a girl's name, you see."

"Oh, I don't mind it in the least," returned the yellow hen. "It doesn't matter at all what you call me, so long as I know the name means ME."

"Very well, Billina. MY name is Dorothy Gale--just Dorothy to my friends and Miss Gale to strangers. You may call me Dorothy, if you like. We're getting very near the shore. Do you suppose it is too deep for me to wade the rest of the way?"

"Wait a few minutes longer. The sunshine is warm and pleasant, and we are in no hurry."

"But my feet are all wet and soggy," said the girl. "My dress is dry enough, but I won't feel real comfor'ble till I get my feet dried."

She waited, however, as the hen advised, and before long the big wooden coop grated gently on the sandy beach and the dangerous voyage was over.

It did not take the castaways long to reach the shore, you may be sure. The yellow hen flew to the sands at once, but Dorothy had to climb over the high slats. Still, for a country girl, that was not much of a feat, and as soon as she was safe ashore Dorothy drew off her wet shoes and stockings and spread them upon the sun-warmed beach to dry.

Then she sat down and watched Billina, who was pick-pecking away with

her sharp bill in the sand and gravel, which she scratched up and turned over with her strong claws.

“What are you doing?” asked Dorothy.

“Getting my breakfast, of course,” murmured the hen, busily pecking away.

“HOW DREADFUL!” EXCLAIMED DOROTHY

“What do you find?” inquired the girl, curiously.

“Oh, some fat red ants, and some sand-bugs, and once in a while a tiny crab. They are very sweet and nice, I assure you.”

“How dreadful!” exclaimed Dorothy, in a shocked voice.

“What is dreadful?” asked the hen, lifting her head to gaze with one bright eye at her companion.

“Why, eating live things, and horrid bugs, and crawly ants. You ought to be ‘SHAMED of yourself!”

“Goodness me!” returned the hen, in a puzzled tone; “how queer you are, Dorothy! Live things are much fresher and more wholesome than dead ones, and you humans eat all sorts of dead creatures.”

“We don’t!” said Dorothy.

“You do, indeed,” answered Billina. “You eat lambs and sheep and cows and pigs and even chickens.”

“But we cook ‘em,” said Dorothy, triumphantly.

“What difference does that make?”

“A good deal,” said the girl, in a graver tone. “I can’t just ‘splain the diff’rence, but it’s there. And, anyhow, we never eat such dreadful things as BUGS.”

“But you eat the chickens that eat the bugs,” retorted the yellow hen, with an odd cackle. “So you are just as bad as we chickens are.”

This made Dorothy thoughtful. What Billina said was true enough, and it almost took away her appetite for breakfast. As for the yellow hen, she continued to peck away at the sand busily, and seemed quite contented with her bill-of-fare.

Finally, down near the water’s edge, Billina stuck her bill deep into the sand, and then drew back and shivered.

“Ow!” she cried. “I struck metal, that time, and it nearly broke my beak.”

“It prob’bly was a rock,” said Dorothy, carelessly.

“Nonsense. I know a rock from metal, I guess,” said the hen. “There’s a different feel to it.”

“But there couldn’t be any metal on this wild, deserted seashore,” persisted the girl. “Where’s the place? I’ll dig it up, and prove to you I’m right.”

Billina showed her the place where she had “stubbed her bill,” as she expressed it, and Dorothy dug away the sand until she felt something hard. Then, thrusting in her hand, she pulled the thing out, and discovered it to be a large sized golden key--rather old, but still bright and of perfect shape.

“What did I tell you?” cried the hen, with a cackle of triumph. “Can I tell metal when I bump into it, or is the thing a rock?”

“It’s metal, sure enough,” answered the child, gazing thoughtfully at the curious thing she had found. “I think it is pure gold, and it must have lain hidden in the sand for a long time. How do you suppose it came there, Billina? And what do you suppose this mysterious key unlocks?”

“I can’t say,” replied the hen. “You ought to know more about locks and keys than I do.”

Dorothy glanced around. There was no sign of any house in that part of the country, and she reasoned that every key must fit a lock and every lock must have a purpose. Perhaps the key had been lost by somebody who lived far away, but had wandered on this very shore.

Musing on these things the girl put the key in the pocket of her dress and then slowly drew on her shoes and stockings, which the sun had fully dried.

"I b'lieve, Billina," she said, "I'll have a look 'round, and see if I can find some breakfast."

3. Letters in the Sand

Walking a little way back from the water's edge, toward the grove of trees, Dorothy came to a flat stretch of white sand that seemed to have queer signs marked upon its surface, just as one would write upon sand with a stick.

"What does it say?" she asked the yellow hen, who trotted along beside her in a rather dignified fashion.

"How should I know?" returned the hen. "I cannot read."

"Oh! Can't you?"

"Certainly not; I've never been to school, you know."

"Well, I have," admitted Dorothy; "but the letters are big and far apart,

and it's hard to spell out the words."

But she looked at each letter carefully, and finally discovered that these words were written in the sand:

"BEWARE THE WHEELERS!"

"That's rather strange," declared the hen, when Dorothy had read aloud the words. "What do you suppose the Wheelers are?"

"Folks that wheel, I guess. They must have wheelbarrows, or baby-cabs or hand-carts," said Dorothy.

"Perhaps they're automobiles," suggested the yellow hen. "There is no need to beware of baby-cabs and wheelbarrows; but automobiles are dangerous things. Several of my friends have been run over by them."

"It can't be auto'biles," replied the girl, "for this is a new, wild country, without even trolley-cars or tel'phones. The people here haven't been discovered yet, I'm sure; that is, if there ARE any people. So I don't b'lieve there CAN be any auto'biles, Billina."

"Perhaps not," admitted the yellow hen. "Where are you going now?"

"Over to those trees, to see if I can find some fruit or nuts," answered Dorothy.

She tramped across the sand, skirting the foot of one of the little rocky hills that stood near, and soon reached the edge of the forest.

At first she was greatly disappointed, because the nearer trees were all punita, or cotton-wood or eucalyptus, and bore no fruit or nuts at all. But, bye and bye, when she was almost in despair, the little girl came upon two trees that promised to furnish her with plenty of food.

One was quite full of square paper boxes, which grew in clusters on all the limbs, and upon the biggest and ripest boxes the word "Lunch" could be read, in neat raised letters. This tree seemed to bear all the year around, for there were lunch-box blossoms on some of the branches, and on others tiny little lunch-boxes that were as yet quite green, and evidently not fit to eat until they had grown bigger.

The leaves of this tree were all paper napkins, and it presented a very pleasing appearance to the hungry little girl.

But the tree next to the lunch-box tree was even more wonderful, for it bore quantities of tin dinner-pails, which were so full and heavy that the stout branches bent underneath their weight. Some were small and dark-brown in color; those larger were of a dull tin color; but the really ripe ones were pails of bright tin that shone and glistened beautifully in the rays of sunshine that touched them.

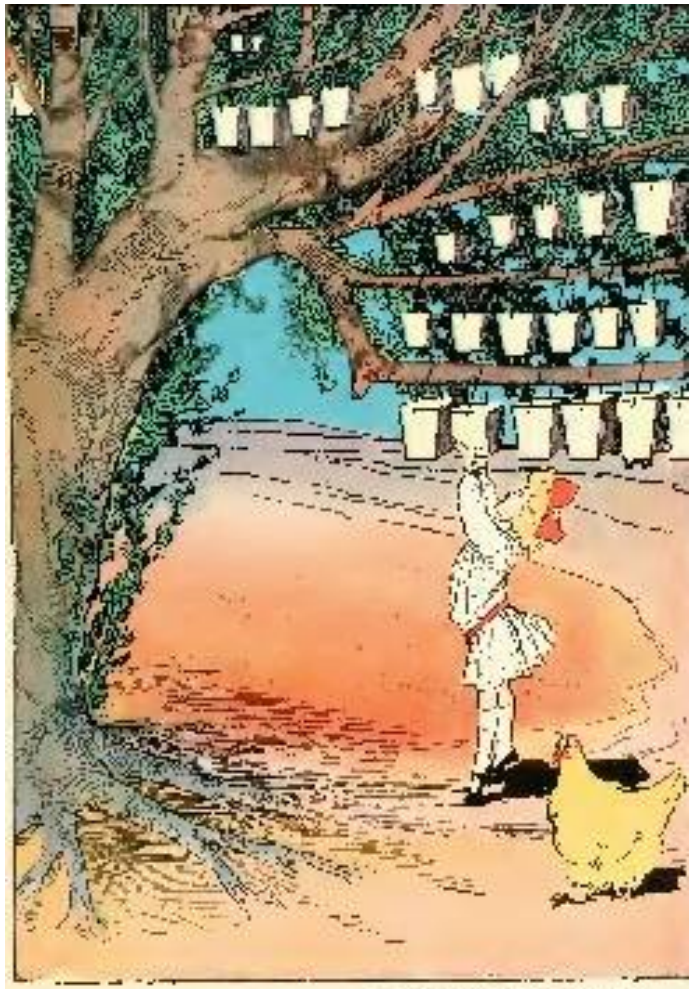
Dorothy was delighted, and even the yellow hen acknowledged that she

was surprised.

The little girl stood on tip-toe and picked one of the nicest and biggest lunch-boxes, and then she sat down upon the ground and eagerly opened it. Inside she found, nicely wrapped in white papers, a ham sandwich, a piece of sponge-cake, a pickle, a slice of new cheese and an apple. Each thing had a separate stem, and so had to be picked off the side of the box; but Dorothy found them all to be delicious, and she ate every bit of luncheon in the box before she had finished.

“A lunch isn’t zactly breakfast,” she said to Billina, who sat beside her curiously watching. “But when one is hungry one can eat even supper in the morning, and not complain.”

“I hope your lunch-box was perfectly ripe,” observed the yellow hen, in a anxious tone. “So much sickness is caused by eating green things.”



THE LITTLE GIRL PICKED ONE OF THE LUNCH-BOXES

"Oh, I'm sure it was ripe," declared Dorothy, "all, that is, 'cept the pickle, and a pickle just HAS to be green, Billina. But everything tasted perfectly splendid, and I'd rather have it than a church picnic. And now I think I'll pick a dinner-pail, to have when I get hungry again, and then we'll start out and 'splore the country, and see where we are."

"Haven't you any idea what country this is?" inquired Billina.

"None at all. But listen: I'm quite sure it's a fairy country, or such things as lunch-boxes and dinner-pails wouldn't be growing upon trees. Besides, Billina, being a hen, you wouldn't be able to talk in any civ'lized country, like Kansas, where no fairies live at all."

"Perhaps we're in the Land of Oz," said the hen, thoughtfully.

“No, that can’t be,” answered the little girl; “because I’ve been to the Land of Oz, and it’s all surrounded by a horrid desert that no one can cross.”

“Then how did you get away from there again?” asked Billina.

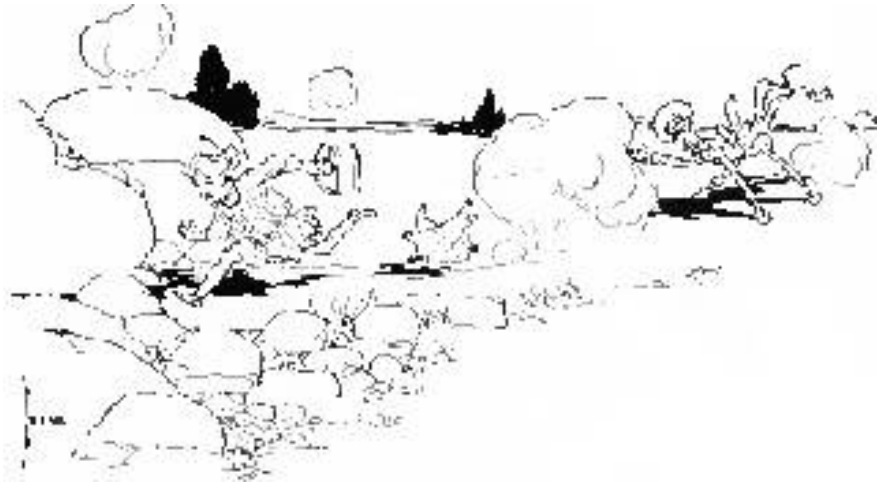
“I had a pair of silver shoes, that carried me through the air; but I lost them,” said Dorothy.

“Ah, indeed,” remarked the yellow hen, in a tone of unbelief.

“Anyhow,” resumed the girl, “there is no seashore near the Land of Oz, so this must surely be some other fairy country.”

While she was speaking she selected a bright and pretty dinner-pail that seemed to have a stout handle, and picked it from its branch. Then, accompanied by the yellow hen, she walked out of the shadow of the trees toward the sea-shore.

They were part way across the sands when Billina suddenly cried, in a voice of terror:



“What’s that?”

Dorothy turned quickly around, and saw coming out of a path that led from between the trees the most peculiar person her eyes had ever beheld.

It had the form of a man, except that it walked, or rather rolled, upon all fours, and its legs were the same length as its arms, giving them the appearance of the four legs of a beast. Yet it was no beast that Dorothy had discovered, for the person was clothed most gorgeously in embroidered garments of many colors, and wore a straw hat perched jauntily upon the side of its head. But it differed from human beings in this respect, that instead of hands and feet there grew at the end of its arms and legs round wheels, and by means of these wheels it rolled very swiftly over the level ground. Afterward Dorothy found that these odd wheels were of the same hard

substance that our finger-nails and toe-nails are composed of, and she also learned that creatures of this strange race were born in this queer fashion. But when our little girl first caught sight of the first individual of a race that was destined to cause her a lot of trouble, she had an idea that the brilliantly-clothed personage was on roller-skates, which were attached to his hands as well as to his feet.

"Run!" screamed the yellow hen, fluttering away in great fright. "It's a Wheeler!"

"IT'S A WHEELER!"

"A Wheeler?" exclaimed Dorothy. "What can that be?"

"Don't you remember the warning in the sand: 'Beware the Wheelers'? Run, I tell you--run!"

So Dorothy ran, and the Wheeler gave a sharp, wild cry and came after her in full chase.

Looking over her shoulder as she ran, the girl now saw a great procession of Wheelers emerging from the forest--dozens and dozens of them--all clad in splendid, tight-fitting garments and all rolling swiftly toward her and uttering their wild, strange cries.

“They’re sure to catch us!” panted the girl, who was still carrying the heavy dinner-pail she had picked. “I can’t run much farther, Billina.”

“Climb up this hill,--quick!” said the hen; and Dorothy found she was very near to the heap of loose and jagged rocks they had passed on their way to the forest. The yellow hen was even now fluttering among the rocks, and Dorothy followed as best she could, half climbing and half tumbling up the rough and rugged steep.

She was none too soon, for the foremost Wheeler reached the hill a moment after her; but while the girl scrambled up the rocks the creature stopped short with howls of rage and disappointment.

Dorothy now heard the yellow hen laughing, in her cackling, henny way.

“Don’t hurry, my dear,” cried Billina. “They can’t follow us among these rocks, so we’re safe enough now.”

Dorothy stopped at once and sat down upon a broad boulder, for she was all out of breath.

The rest of the Wheelers had now reached the foot of the hill, but it was evident that their wheels would not roll upon the rough and jagged rocks, and therefore they were helpless to follow Dorothy and the hen to where they had taken refuge. But they circled all around the little hill, so the child and Billina were fast prisoners and could not come down without being captured.

Then the creatures shook their front wheels at Dorothy in a threatening manner, and it seemed they were able to speak as well as to make their dreadful outcries, for several of them shouted:

“We’ll get you in time, never fear! And when we do get you, we’ll tear you into little bits!”

“Why are you so cruel to me?” asked Dorothy. “I’m a stranger in your country, and have done you no harm.”

“No harm!” cried one who seemed to be their leader. “Did you not pick our lunch-boxes and dinner-pails? Have you not a stolen dinner-pail still in your hand?”

“I only picked one of each,” she answered. “I was hungry, and I didn’t know the trees were yours.”

“That is no excuse,” retorted the leader, who was clothed in a most gorgeous suit. “It is the law here that whoever picks a dinner-pail without our

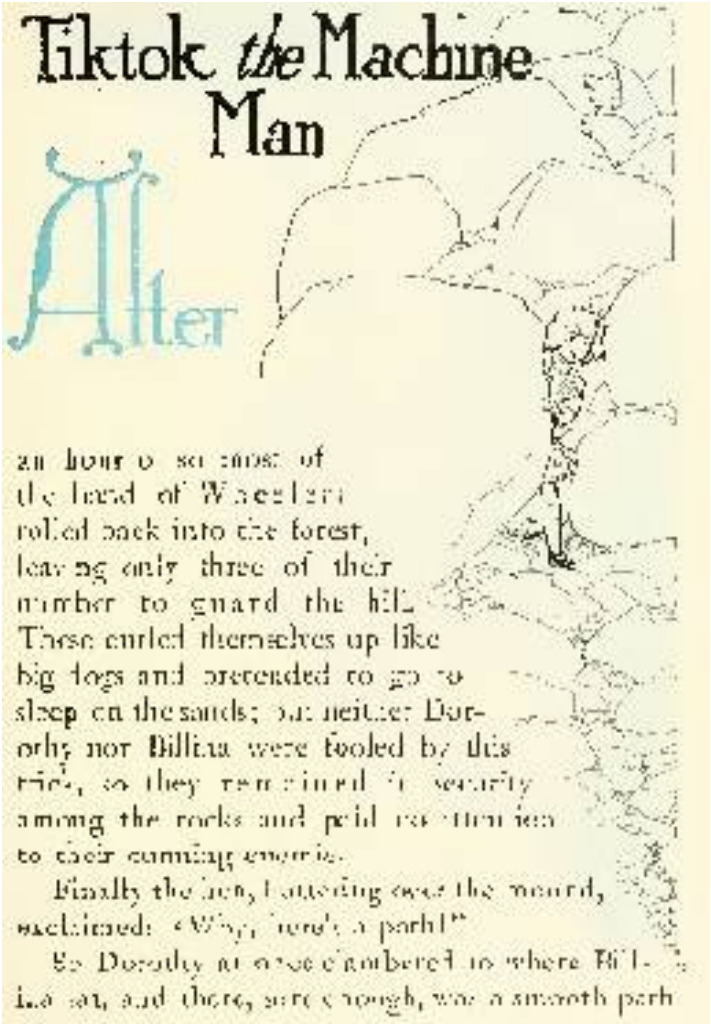
permission must die immediately."

"Don't you believe him," said Billina. "I'm sure the trees do not belong to these awful creatures. They are fit for any mischief, and it's my opinion they would try to kill us just the same if you hadn't picked a dinner-pail."

"I think so, too," agreed Dorothy. "But what shall we do now?"

"Stay where we are," advised the yellow hen. "We are safe from the Wheelers until we starve to death, anyhow; and before that time comes a good many things can happen."

4. Tiktok the Machine Man



After an hour or so most of the band of Wheelers rolled back into the forest, leaving only three of their number to guard the hill. These curled themselves up like big dogs and pretended to go to sleep on the sands; but neither Dorothy nor Billina were fooled by this trick, so they remained in security among the rocks and paid no attention to their cunning enemies.

Finally the hen, fluttering over the mound, exclaimed: “Why, here’s a path!”

So Dorothy at once clambered to where Billina sat, and there, sure enough, was a smooth path cut between the rocks. It seemed to wind around

the mound from top to bottom, like a cork-screw, twisting here and there between the rough boulders but always remaining level and easy to walk upon.

Indeed, Dorothy wondered at first why the Wheelers did not roll up this path; but when she followed it to the foot of the mound she found that several big pieces of rock had been placed directly across the end of the way, thus preventing any one outside from seeing it and also preventing the Wheelers from using it to climb up the mound.

Then Dorothy walked back up the path, and followed it until she came to the very top of the hill, where a solitary round rock stood that was bigger than any of the others surrounding it. The path came to an end just beside this great rock, and for a moment it puzzled the girl to know why the path had been made at all. But the hen, who had been gravely following her around and was now perched upon a point of rock behind Dorothy, suddenly remarked:

"It looks something like a door, doesn't it?"

"What looks like a door?" enquired the child.

"Why, that crack in the rock, just facing you," replied Billina, whose little round eyes were very sharp and seemed to see everything. "It runs up one side and down the other, and across the top and the bottom."

"What does?"

"Why, the crack. So I think it must be a door of rock, although I do not

see any hinges."

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy, now observing for the first time the crack in the rock. "And isn't this a key-hole, Billina?" pointing to a round, deep hole at one side of the door.

"Of course. If we only had the key, now, we could unlock it and see what is there," replied the yellow hen. "May be it's a treasure chamber full of diamonds and rubies, or heaps of shining gold, or--"

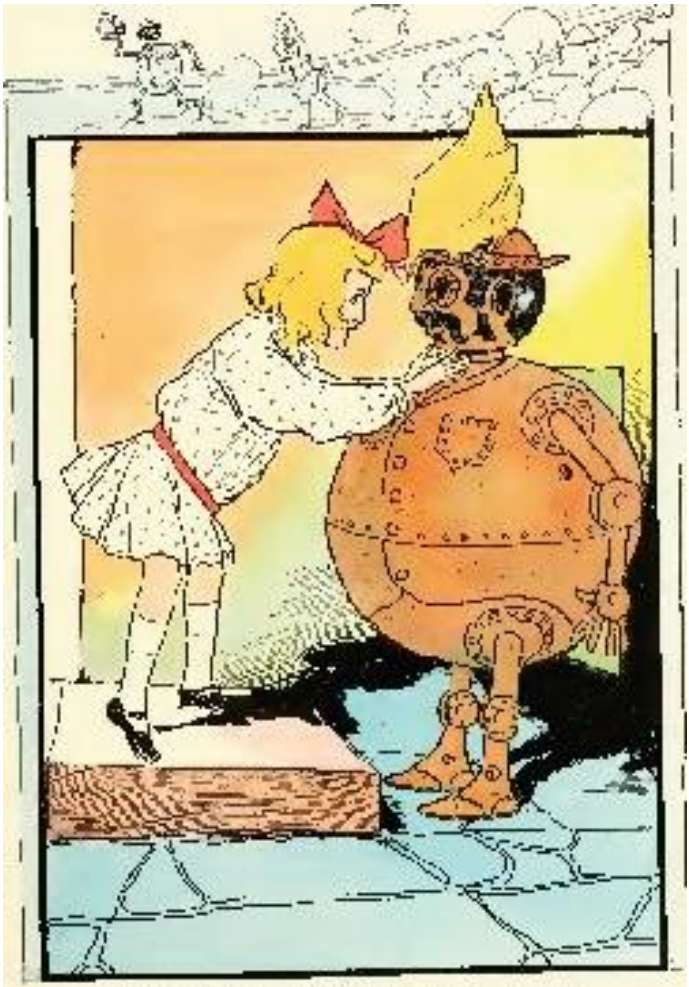
"That reminds me," said Dorothy, "of the golden key I picked up on the shore. Do you think that it would fit this key-hole, Billina?"

"Try it and see," suggested the hen.

So Dorothy searched in the pocket of her dress and found the golden key. And when she had put it into the hole of the rock, and turned it, a sudden sharp snap was heard; then, with a solemn creak that made the shivers run down the child's back, the face of the rock fell outward, like a door on hinges, and revealed a small dark chamber just inside.

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy, shrinking back as far as the narrow path would let her.

For, standing within the narrow chamber of rock, was the form of a man--or, at least, it seemed like a man, in the dim light. He was only about as tall as Dorothy herself, and his body was round as a ball and made out of burnished copper. Also his head and limbs were copper, and these were jointed or hinged to his body in a peculiar way, with metal caps over the joints, like the armor worn by knights in days of old. He stood perfectly still, and where the light struck upon his form it glittered as if made of pure gold.



"THE COPPER MAN IS NOT ALIVE AT ALL"

"Don't be frightened," called Billina, from her perch. "It isn't alive."

"I see it isn't," replied the girl, drawing a long breath.

"It is only made out of copper, like the old kettle in the barn-yard at home," continued the hen, turning her head first to one side and then to the other, so that both her little round eyes could examine the object.

"Once," said Dorothy, "I knew a man made out of tin, who was a woodman named Nick Chopper. But he was as alive as we are, 'cause he was born a real man, and got his tin body a little at a time--first a leg and then a finger and then an ear--for the reason that he had so many accidents with his axe, and cut himself up in a very careless manner."

"Oh," said the hen, with a sniff, as if she did not believe the story.

“But this copper man,” continued Dorothy, looking at it with big eyes, “is not alive at all, and I wonder what it was made for, and why it was locked up in this queer place.”

“That is a mystery,” remarked the hen, twisting her head to arrange her wing-feathers with her bill.

Dorothy stepped inside the little room to get a back view of the copper man, and in this way discovered a printed card that hung between his shoulders, it being suspended from a small copper peg at the back of his neck. She unfastened this card and returned to the path, where the light was better, and sat herself down upon a slab of rock to read the printing.

“What does it say?” asked the hen, curiously.

Dorothy read the card aloud, spelling out the big words with some difficulty; and this is what she read:

SMITH & TINKER'S

Patent Double-Action, Extra-Responsive,

Thought-Creating, Perfect-Talking

MECHANICAL MAN

Fitted with our Special Clock-Work Attachment

Thinks, Speaks, Acts, and Does Everything but Live.

Manufactured at the Works of Smith, Head of Ev.

All infringements will be promptly Prosecuted according to Law.

“How queer!” said the yellow hen. “Do you think that is all true, my dear?”

“I don’t know,” answered Dorothy, who had more to read. “Listen to this, Billina:”

DIRECTIONS FOR USING:

For THINKING:—Wind the Clock-work Man under his left arm, (marked No. 1.)

For SPEAKING:—Wind the Clock-work Man under his right arm, (marked No. 2.)

For WALKING and ACTION:—Wind Clock-work in the middle of his back, (marked No. 3.)

N. B.—The Works are guaranteed to work perfectly for a thousand years.

“Well, I declare!” gasped the yellow hen, in amazement; “if the copper man can do half of these things he is a very wonderful machine. But I suppose it is all humbug, like so many other patented articles.”

“We might wind him up,” suggested Dorothy, “and see what he’ll do.”

“Where is the key to the clock-work?” asked Billina.

“Hanging on the peg where I found the card.”

“Then,” said the hen, “let us try him, and find out if he will go. He is warranted for a thousand years, it seems; but we do not know how long he has been standing inside this rock.”

Dorothy had already taken the clock key from the peg.

“Which shall I wind up first?” she asked, looking again at the directions on the card.

DOROTHY WOUND UP NUMBER ONE.

“Number One, I should think,” returned Billina. “That makes him think, doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Dorothy, and wound up Number One, under the left arm.

“He doesn’t seem any different,” remarked the hen, critically.

“Why, of course not; he is only thinking, now,” said Dorothy.

“I wonder what he is thinking about.”

“I’ll wind up his talk, and then perhaps he can tell us,” said the girl.

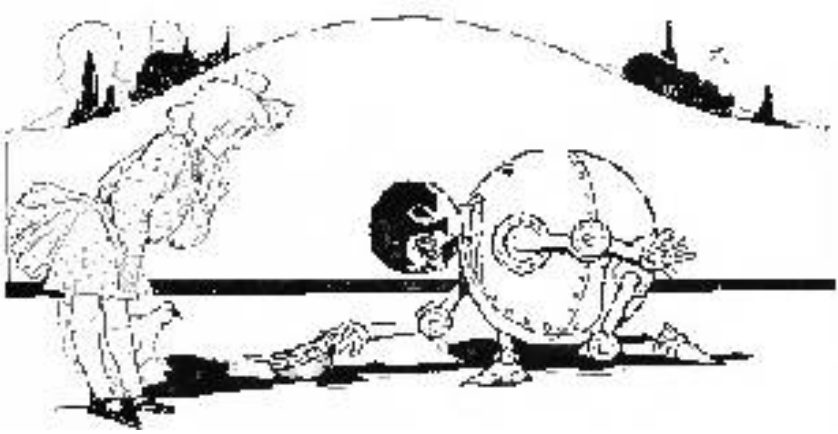
So she wound up Number Two, and immediately the clock-work man said, without moving any part of his body except his lips:

“Good morn-ing, lit-tle girl. Good morn-ing, Mrs. Hen.”

The words sounded a little hoarse and creaky, and they were uttered all in the same tone, without any change of expression whatever; but both Dorothy and Billina understood them perfectly.

“Good morning, sir,” they answered, politely.

“Thank you for res-cu-ing me,” continued the machine, in the same monotonous voice, which seemed to be worked by a bellows inside of him, like the little toy lambs and cats the children squeeze so that they will make a noise.



“Don’t mention it,” answered Dorothy. And then, being very curious, she asked: “How did you come to be locked up in this place?”

“It is a long sto-ry,” replied the copper man; “but I will tell it to you briefly. I was pur-chased from Smith & Tin-ker, my man-u-fac-tur-ers, by a cru-el King of Ev, named Ev-ol-do, who used to beat all his serv-ants un-til they died. How-ev-er, he was not a-ble to kill me, be-cause I was not a-live, and one must first live in or-der to die. So that all his beat-ing did me no harm, and mere-ly kept my cop-per bod-y well pol-ished.

“This cru-el king had a love-ly wife and ten beau-ti-ful chil-dren--five boys and five girls--but in a fit of an-ger he sold them all to the Nome King, who by means of his mag-ic arts changed them all in-to oth-er forms and put them in his un-der-ground pal-ace to or-na-ment the rooms.

“Af-ter-ward the King of Ev re-gret-ted his wick-ed ac-tion, and tried to get his wife and chil-dren a-way from the Nome King, but with-out a-vail. So, in de-spair, he locked me up in this rock, threw the key in-to the o-cean, and then jumped in af-ter it and was drowned.”

“How very dreadful!” exclaimed Dorothy.

“It is, in-deed,” said the machine. “When I found my-self im-pris-oned I shout-ed for help un-til my voice ran down; and then I walked back and forth in this lit-tle room un-til my ac-tion ran down; and then I stood still and thought un-til my thoughts ran down. Af-ter that I re-mem-ber noth-ing un-til you wound me up a-gain.”

“It’s a very wonderful story,” said Dorothy, “and proves that the Land of Ev is really a fairy land, as I thought it was.”

THE COPPER MAN WAS OUT OF THE ROCKY CAVERN

"Of course it is," answered the copper man. "I do not sup-pose such a per-fect ma-chine as I am could be made in an-y place but a fair-y land."

"I've never seen one in Kansas," said Dorothy.

"But where did you get the key to un-lock this door?" asked the clock-work voice.

"I found it on the shore, where it was prob'ly washed up by the waves," she answered. "And now, sir, if you don't mind, I'll wind up your action."

"That will please me ve-ry much," said the machine.

So she wound up Number Three, and at once the copper man in a somewhat stiff and jerky fashion walked out of the rocky cavern, took off his copper hat and bowed politely, and then kneeled before Dorothy. Said he:

“From this time forth I am your o-be-di-ent ser-vant. What-ev-er you com-mand, that I will do will-ing-ly--if you keep me wound up.”

“What is your name?” she asked.

“Tik-tok,” he replied. “My for-mer mas-ter gave me that name be-cause my clock-work al-ways ticks when it is wound up.”

“I can hear it now,” said the yellow hen.

“So can I,” said Dorothy. And then she added, with some anxiety: “You don’t strike, do you?”

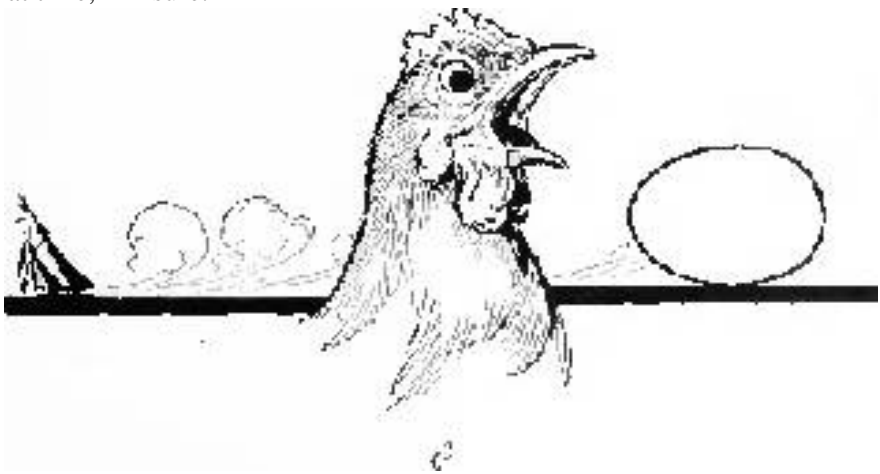
“No,” answered Tiktok; “and there is no a-larm con-nec-ted with my ma-chin-er-y. I can tell the time, though, by speak-ing, and as I nev-er sleep I can wak-en you at an-y hour you wish to get up in the morn-ing.”

“That’s nice,” said the little girl; “only I never wish to get up in the morning.”

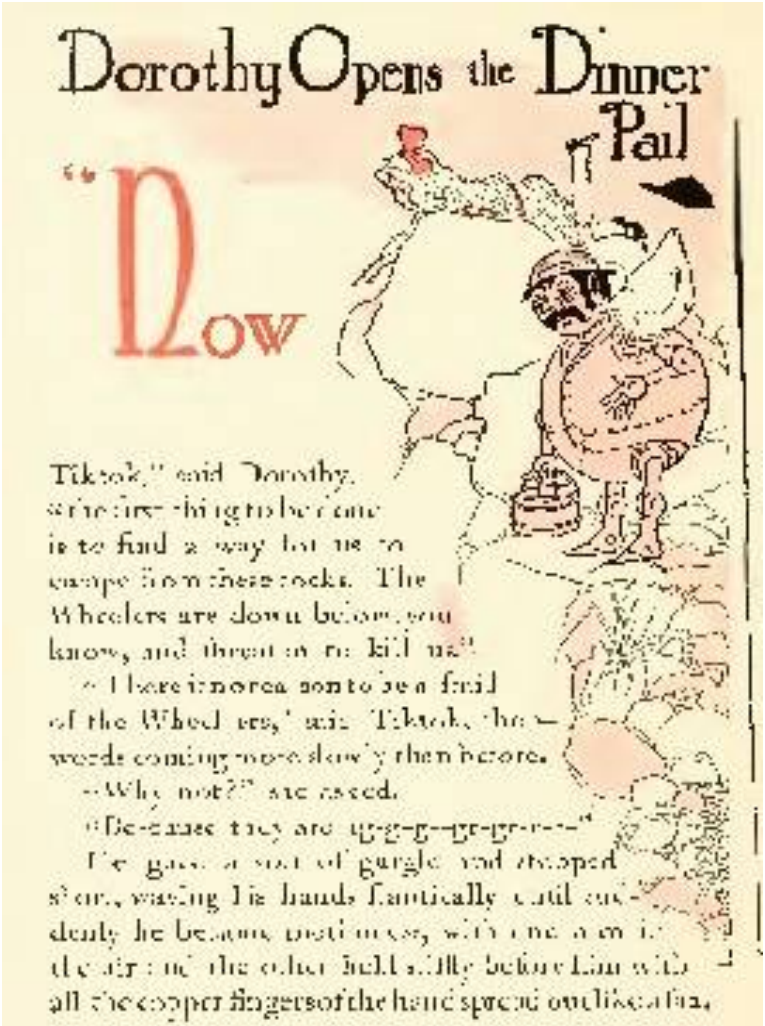
“You can sleep until I lay my egg,” said the yellow hen. “Then, when I cackle, Tiktok will know it is time to waken you.”

“Do you lay your egg very early?” asked Dorothy.

“About eight o’clock,” said Billina. “And everybody ought to be up by that time, I’m sure.”



5. Dorothy Opens the Dinner Pail



"Now Tiktok," said Dorothy, "the first thing to be done is to find a way for us to escape from these rocks. The Wheelers are down below, you know, and threaten to kill us."

"There is no rea-son to be a-fraid of the Wheel-ers," said Tiktok, the words coming more slowly than before.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Be-cause they are ag-g-g--gr-gr-r-r-"

He gave a sort of gurgle and stopped short, waving his hands frantically until suddenly he became motionless, with one arm in the air and the other

held stiffly before him with all the copper fingers of the hand spread out like a fan.

"Dear me!" said Dorothy, in a frightened tone. "What can the matter be?"

"He's run down, I suppose," said the hen, calmly. "You couldn't have wound him up very tight."

"I didn't know how much to wind him," replied the girl; "but I'll try to do better next time."

She ran around the copper man to take the key from the peg at the back of his neck, but it was not there.

"It's gone!" cried Dorothy, in dismay.

"What's gone?" asked Billina.

"The key."

"It probably fell off when he made that low bow to you," returned the hen. "Look around, and see if you cannot find it again."

Dorothy looked, and the hen helped her, and by and by the girl discovered the clock-key, which had fallen into a crack of the rock.

At once she wound up Tiktok's voice, taking care to give the key as many turns as it would go around. She found this quite a task, as you may imagine if you have ever tried to wind a clock, but the machine man's first words were to assure Dorothy that he would now run for at least twenty-four hours.

"You did not wind me much, at first," he calmly said, "and I told you that long sto-ry a-bout King Ev-ol-do; so it is no won-der that I ran down."

She next rewound the action clock-work, and then Billina advised her to carry the key to Tiktok in her pocket, so it would not get lost again.

"And now," said Dorothy, when all this was accomplished, "tell me what you were going to say about the Wheelers."

"Why, they are noth-ing to be fright-en'd at," said the machine. "They try to make folks be-lieve that they are ver-y ter-ri-ble, but as a mat-ter of fact the Wheel-ers are harm-less e-nough to an-y one that dares to fight them. They might try to hurt a lit-tle girl like you, per-haps, be-cause they are ver-y mis-chiev-ous. But if I had a club they would run a-way as soon as they saw me."

"Haven't you a club?" asked Dorothy.

"No," said Tiktok.

"And you won't find such a thing among these rocks, either," declared the yellow hen.

"Then what shall we do?" asked the girl.

"Wind up my think-works tight-ly, and I will try to think of some oth-er plan," said Tiktok.

So Dorothy rewound his thought machinery, and while he was thinking she decided to eat her dinner. Billina was already pecking away at the cracks in the rocks, to find something to eat, so Dorothy sat down and opened her tin dinner-pail.

In the cover she found a small tank that was full of very nice lemonade. It was covered by a cup, which might also, when removed, be used to drink the lemonade from. Within the pail were three slices of turkey, two slices of cold tongue, some lobster salad, four slices of bread and butter, a small custard pie, an orange and nine large strawberries, and some nuts and raisins. Singularly enough, the nuts in this dinner-pail grew already cracked, so that Dorothy had no trouble in picking out their meats to eat.

She spread the feast upon the rock beside her and began her dinner, first offering some of it to Tiktok, who declined because, as he said, he was merely a machine. Afterward she offered to share with Billina, but the hen murmured something about "dead things" and said she preferred her bugs and ants.

"Do the lunch-box trees and the dinner-pail trees belong to the Wheelers?" the child asked Tiktok, while engaged in eating her meal.

"Of course not," he answered. "They be-long to the roy-al fam-il-y of Ev, on-ly of course there is no roy-al fam-il-y just now be-cause King Ev-ol-do jumped in-to the sea and his wife and ten chil-dren have been trans-formed by the Nome King. So there is no one to rule the Land of Ev, that I can think of. Per-haps it is for this rea-son that the Wheel-ers claim the trees for their own, and pick the lunch-eons and din-ners to eat them-selves. But they be-long to the King, and you will find the roy-al "E" stamped up-on the bot-tom of ev-er-y din-ner pail."

Dorothy turned the pail over, and at once discovered the royal mark upon it, as Tiktok had said.

"Are the Wheelers the only folks living in the Land of Ev?" enquired the girl.

"No; they on-ly in-hab-it a small por-tion of it just back of the woods," replied the machine. "But they have al-ways been mis-chiev-ous and im-per-ti-nent, and my old mas-ter, King Ev-ol-do, used to car-ry a whip with him, when he walked out, to keep the crea-tures in or-der. When I was first made the Wheel-ers tried to run o-ver me, and butt me with their heads; but they soon found I was built of too sol-id a ma-ter-i-al for them to in-jure."

"You seem very durable," said Dorothy. "Who made you?"

"The firm of Smith & Tin-ker, in the town of Evna, where the roy-al pal-ace stands," answered Tiktok.

"Did they make many of you?" asked the child.

"No; I am the on-ly au-to-mat-ic me-chan-i-cal man they ev-er com-plet-

ed," he replied. "They were ver-y won-der-ful in-ven-tors, were my mak-ers, and quite ar-tis-tic in all they did."

"I am sure of that," said Dorothy. "Do they live in the town of Evna now?"

"They are both gone," replied the machine. "Mr. Smith was an art-ist, as well as an in-vent-or, and he paint-ed a pic-ture of a riv-er which was so nat-ur-al that, as he was reach-ing a-cross it to paint some flow-ers on the op-po-site bank, he fell in-to the wa-ter and was drowned."

"Oh, I'm sorry for that!" exclaimed the little girl.

"Mis-ter Tin-ker," continued Tiktok, "made a lad-der so tall that he could rest the end of it a-gainst the moon, while he stood on the high-est rung and picked the lit-tle stars to set in the points of the king's crown. But when he got to the moon Mis-ter Tin-ker found it such a love-ly place that he de-cid-ed to live there, so he pulled up the lad-der af-ter him and we have nev-er seen him since."

"He must have been a great loss to this country," said Dorothy, who was by this time eating her custard pie.

"He was," acknowledged Tiktok. "Also he is a great loss to me. For if I should get out of or-der I do not know of an-y one a-ble to re-pair me, be-cause I am so com-pli-cat-ed. You have no i-de-a how full of ma-chin-er-y I am."

"I can imagine it," said Dorothy, readily.

"And now," continued the machine, "I must stop talk-ing and be-gin think-ing a-gain of a way to es-cape from this rock." So he turned half way around, in order to think without being disturbed.

"The best thinker I ever knew," said Dorothy to the yellow hen, "was a scarecrow."

"Nonsense!" snapped Billina.

"It is true," declared Dorothy. "I met him in the Land of Oz, and he traveled with me to the city of the great Wizard of Oz, so as to get some brains, for his head was only stuffed with straw. But it seemed to me that he thought just as well before he got his brains as he did afterward."

"Do you expect me to believe all that rubbish about the Land of Oz?" enquired Billina, who seemed a little cross--perhaps because bugs were scarce.

"What rubbish?" asked the child, who was now finishing her nuts and raisins.

"Why, your impossible stories about animals that can talk, and a tin woodman who is alive, and a scarecrow who can think."

"They are all there," said Dorothy, "for I have seen them."

“I don’t believe it!” cried the hen, with a toss of her head.

“That’s ‘cause you’re so ign’rant,” replied the girl, who was a little offended at her friend Billina’s speech.

“In the Land of Oz,” remarked Tiktok, turning toward them, “an-y-thing is pos-si-ble. For it is a won-der-ful fair-y coun-try.”

“There, Billina! what did I say?” cried Dorothy. And then she turned to the machine and asked in an eager tone: “Do you know the Land of Oz, Tiktok?”

MISTER TINK-R VISITS THE MOON

“No; but I have heard a-bout it,” said the cop-per man. “For it is on-ly sep-a-ra-ted from this Land of Ev by a broad des-ert.”

Dorothy clapped her hands together delightedly.

“I’m glad of that!” she exclaimed. “It makes me quite happy to be so near my old friends. The scarecrow I told you of, Billina, is the King of the Land of Oz.”

“Par-don me. He is not the king now,” said Tiktok.

“He was when I left there,” declared Dorothy.

“I know,” said Tiktok, “but there was a rev-o-lu-tion in the Land of Oz, and the Scare-crow was de-posed by a sol-dier wo-man named Gen-er-al Jin-jur. And then Jin-jur was de-posed by a lit-tle girl named Oz-ma, who was the right-ful heir to the throne and now rules the land un-der the ti-tle of Oz-ma of Oz.”

“That is news to me,” said Dorothy, thoughtfully. “But I s’pose lots of things have happened since I left the Land of Oz. I wonder what has become of the Scarecrow, and of the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion. And I wonder who this girl Ozma is, for I never heard of her before.”

But Tiktok did not reply to this. He had turned around again to resume his thinking.

Dorothy packed the rest of the food back into the pail, so as not to be wasteful of good things, and the yellow hen forgot her dignity far enough to pick up all of the scattered crumbs, which she ate rather greedily, although she had so lately pretended to despise the things that Dorothy preferred as food.

By this time Tiktok approached them with his stiff bow.

“Be kind e-nough to fol-low me,” he said, “and I will lead you a-way from here to the town of Ev-na, where you will be more com-for-ta-ble, and al-so I will pro-tect you from the Wheel-ers.”

“All right,” answered Dorothy, promptly. “I’m ready!”

6. The Heads of Langwidere

They walked slowly down the path between the rocks, Tiktok going first, Dorothy following him, and the yellow hen trotting along last of all.

At the foot of the path the copper man leaned down and tossed aside with ease the rocks that encumbered the way. Then he turned to Dorothy and said:

"Let me car-ry your din-ner-pail."

She placed it in his right hand at once, and the copper fingers closed firmly over the stout handle.

Then the little procession marched out upon the level sands.

As soon as the three Wheelers who were guarding the mound saw them,

they began to shout their wild cries and rolled swiftly toward the little group, as if to capture them or bar their way. But when the foremost had approached near enough, Tiktok swung the tin dinner-pail and struck the Wheeler a sharp blow over its head with the queer weapon. Perhaps it did not hurt very much, but it made a great noise, and the Wheeler uttered a howl and tumbled over upon its side. The next minute it scrambled to its wheels and rolled away as fast as it could go, screeching with fear at the same time.

"I told you they were harm-less," began Tiktok; but before he could say more another Wheeler was upon them. Crack! went the dinner-pail against its head, knocking its straw hat a dozen feet away; and that was enough for this Wheeler, also. It rolled away after the first one, and the third did not wait to be pounded with the pail, but joined its fellows as quickly as its wheels would whirl.

The yellow hen gave a cackle of delight, and flying to a perch upon Tiktok's shoulder, she said:

"Bravely done, my copper friend! and wisely thought of, too. Now we are free from those ugly creatures."

But just then a large band of Wheelers rolled from the forest, and relying upon their numbers to conquer, they advanced fiercely upon Tiktok. Dorothy grabbed Billina in her arms and held her tight, and the machine embraced the form of the little girl with his left arm, the better to protect her. Then the Wheelers were upon them.

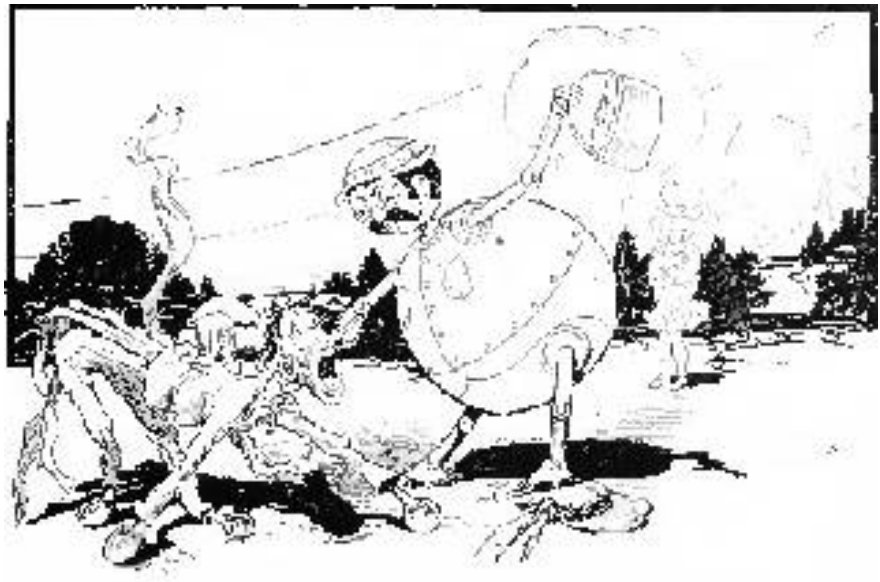
Rattlety, bang! bang! went the dinner-pail in every direction, and it made so much clatter bumping against the heads of the Wheelers that they were much more frightened than hurt and fled in a great panic. All, that is, except their leader. This Wheeler had stumbled against another and fallen flat upon his back, and before he could get his wheels under him to rise again, Tiktok had fastened his copper fingers into the neck of the gorgeous jacket of his foe and held him fast.

"Tell your peo-ple to go a-way," commanded the machine.

The leader of the Wheelers hesitated to give this order, so Tiktok shook him as a terrier dog does a rat, until the Wheeler's teeth rattled together with a noise like hailstones on a window pane. Then, as soon as the creature could get its breath, it shouted to the others to roll away, which they immediately did.

"Now," said Tiktok, "you shall come with us and tell me what I want to know."

"You'll be sorry for treating me in this way," whined the Wheeler. "I'm a terribly fierce person."



"As for that," answered Tiktok, "I am only a ma-chine, and can-not feel sor-row or joy, no mat-ter what hap-pens. But you are wrong to think your-self ter-ri-ble or fierce."

"Why so?" asked the Wheeler.

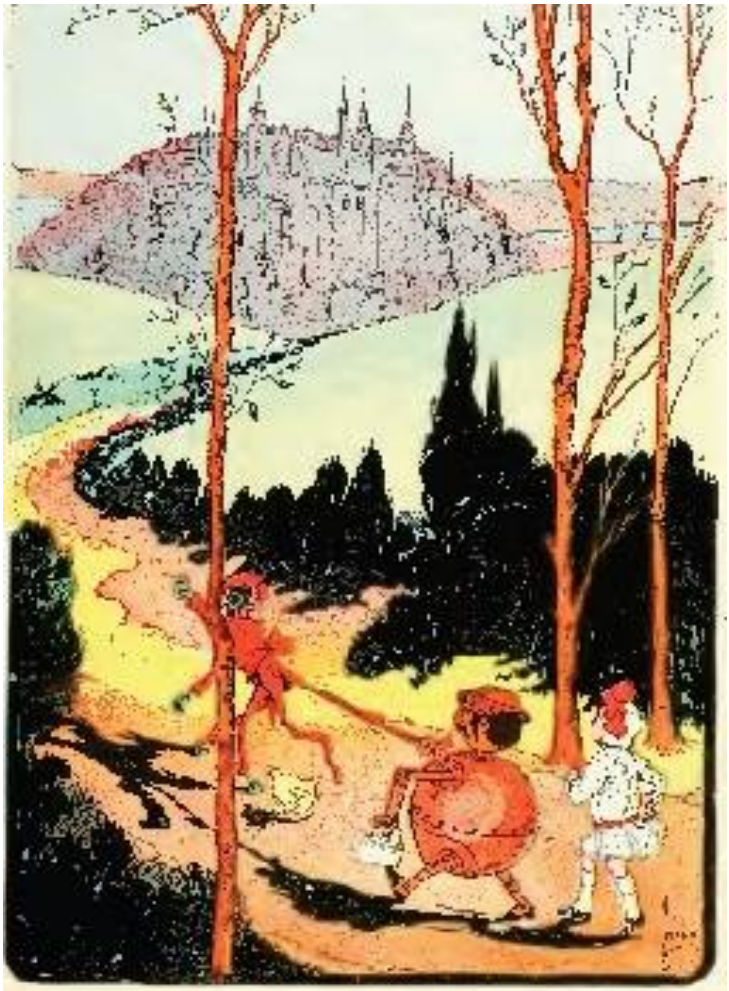
"Be-cause no one else thinks as you do. Your wheels make you help-less to in-jure an-y one. For you have no fists and can not scratch or e-ven pull hair. Nor have you an-y feet to kick with. All you can do is to yell and shout, and that does not hurt an-y one at all."

The Wheeler burst into a flood of tears, to Dorothy's great surprise.

"Now I and my people are ruined forever!" he sobbed; "for you have discovered our secret. Being so helpless, our only hope is to make people afraid of us, by pretending we are very fierce and terrible, and writing in the sand warnings to Beware the Wheelers. Until now we have frightened everyone, but since you have discovered our weakness our enemies will fall upon us and make us very miserable and unhappy."

"Oh, no," exclaimed Dorothy, who was sorry to see this beautifully dressed Wheeler so miserable; "Tiktok will keep your secret, and so will Billina and I. Only, you must promise not to try to frighten children any more, if they come near to you."

"I won't--indeed I won't!" promised the Wheeler, ceasing to cry and becoming more cheerful. "I'm not really bad, you know; but we have to pretend to be terrible in order to prevent others from attacking us."



ON THE WAY TO THE ROYAL PALACE OF OZ

"That is not ex-act-ly true," said Tiktok, starting to walk toward the path through the forest, and still holding fast to his prisoner, who rolled slowly along beside him. "You and your peo-ple are full of mis-chief, and like to both-er those who fear you. And you are of-ten im-pu-dent and dis-a-gree-a-ble, too. But if you will try to cure those faults I will not tell any-one how help-less you are."

"I'll try, of course," replied the Wheeler, eagerly. "And thank you, Mr. Tiktok, for your kindness."

"I am on-ly a ma-chine," said Tiktok. "I can not be kind an-y more than I can be sor-ry or glad. I can on-ly do what I am wound up to do."

"Are you wound up to keep my secret?" asked the Wheeler, anxiously.

“Yes; if you be-have your-self. But tell me: who rules the Land of Ev now?” asked the machine.

“There is no ruler,” was the answer, “because every member of the royal family is imprisoned by the Nome King. But the Princess Langwidere, who is a niece of our late King Evoldo, lives in a part of the royal palace and takes as much money out of the royal treasury as she can spend. The Princess Langwidere is not exactly a ruler, you see, because she doesn’t rule; but she is the nearest approach to a ruler we have at present.”

“I do not re-mem-ber her,” said Tiktok. “What does she look like?”

“That I cannot say,” replied the Wheeler, “although I have seen her twenty times. For the Princess Langwidere is a different person every time I see her, and the only way her subjects can recognize her at all is by means of a beautiful ruby key which she always wears on a chain attached to her left wrist. When we see the key we know we are beholding the Princess.”

“That is strange,” said Dorothy, in astonishment. “Do you mean to say that so many different princesses are one and the same person?”

“Not exactly,” answered the Wheeler. “There is, of course, but one princess; but she appears to us in many forms, which are all more or less beautiful.”

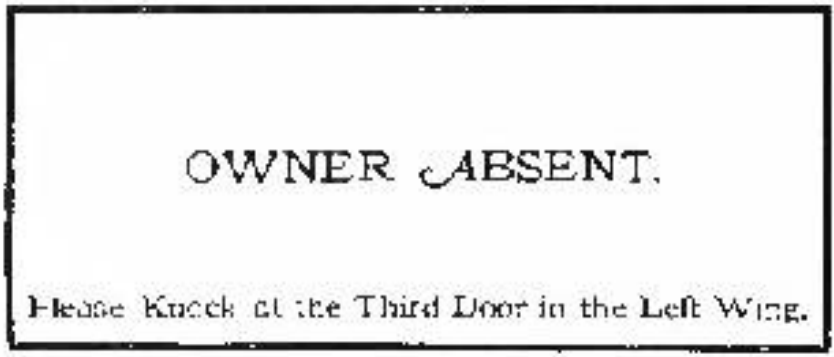
“She must be a witch,” exclaimed the girl.

“I do not think so,” declared the Wheeler. “But there is some mystery connected with her, nevertheless. She is a very vain creature, and lives mostly in a room surrounded by mirrors, so that she can admire herself whichever way she looks.”

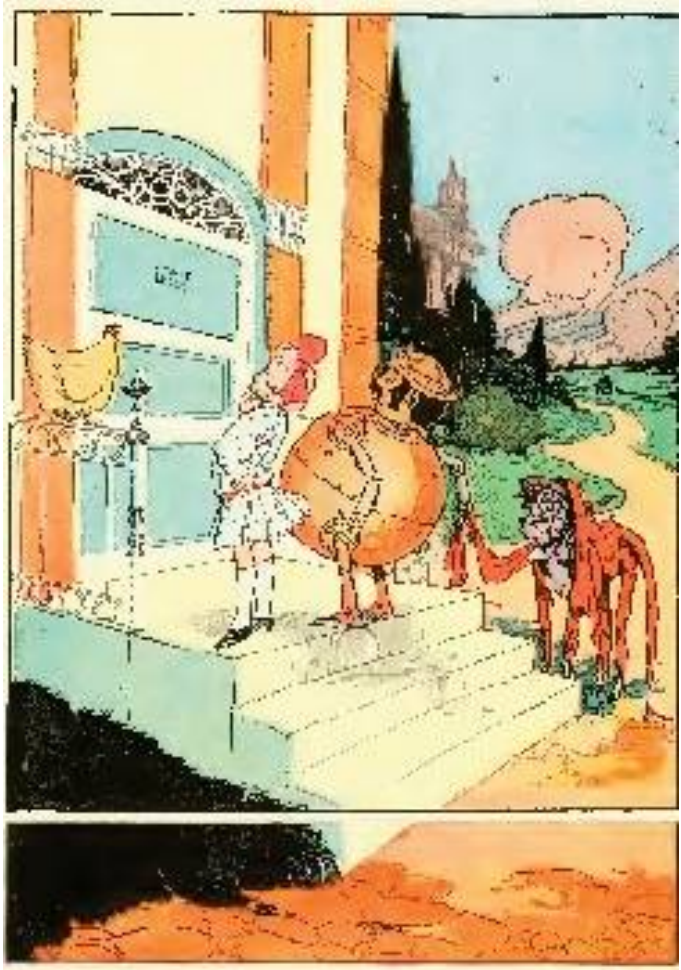
No one answered this speech, because they had just passed out of the forest and their attention was fixed upon the scene before them--a beautiful vale in which were many fruit trees and green fields, with pretty farm-houses scattered here and there and broad, smooth roads that led in every direction.

In the center of this lovely vale, about a mile from where our friends were standing, rose the tall spires of the royal palace, which glittered brightly against their background of blue sky. The palace was surrounded by charming grounds, full of flowers and shrubbery. Several tinkling fountains could be seen, and there were pleasant walks bordered by rows of white marble statuary.

All these details Dorothy was, of course, unable to notice or admire until they had advanced along the road to a position quite near to the palace, and she was still looking at the pretty sights when her little party entered the grounds and approached the big front door of the king’s own apartments. To their disappointment they found the door tightly closed. A sign was tacked to the panel which read as follows:



“Now,” said Tiktok to the captive Wheeler, “you must show us the way to the Left Wing.”



A SIGN WAS PAINTED ON THE PANEL

"Very well," agreed the prisoner, "it is around here at the right."

"How can the left wing be at the right?" demanded Dorothy, who feared the Wheeler was fooling them.

"Because there used to be three wings, and two were torn down, so the one on the right is the only one left. It is a trick of the Princess Langwidere to prevent visitors from annoying her."

Then the captive led them around to the wing, after which the machine man, having no further use for the Wheeler, permitted him to depart and rejoin his fellows. He immediately rolled away at a great pace and was soon lost to sight.

Tiktok now counted the doors in the wing and knocked loudly upon the

third one.

It was opened by a little maid in a cap trimmed with gay ribbons, who bowed respectfully and asked:

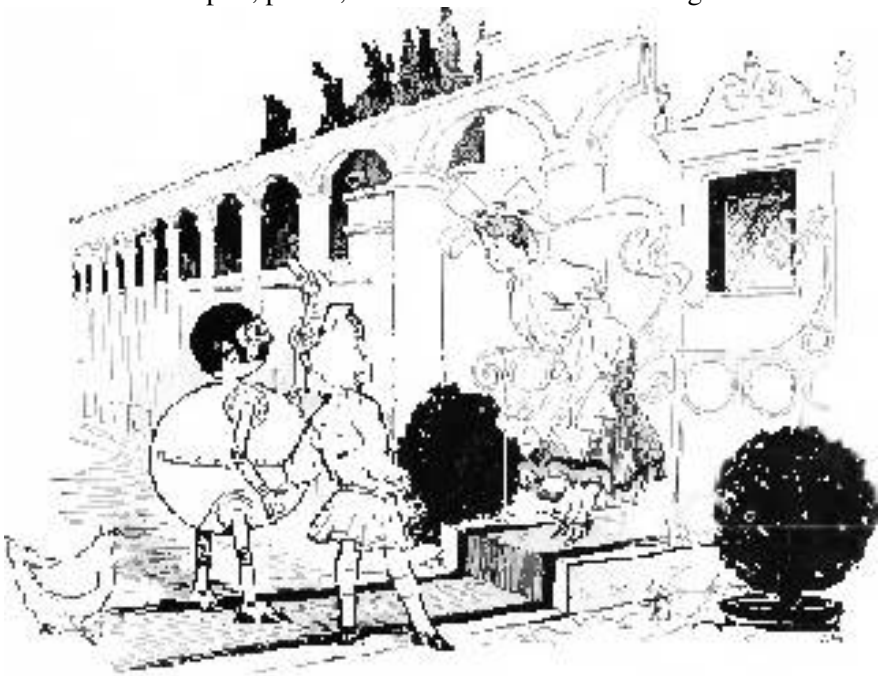
"What do you wish, good people?"

"Are you the Princess Langwidere?" asked Dorothy.

"No, miss; I am her servant," replied the maid.

"May I see the Princess, please?"

"I will tell her you are here, miss, and ask her to grant you an audience," said the maid. "Step in, please, and take a seat in the drawing-room."



So Dorothy walked in, followed closely by the machine. But as the yellow hen tried to enter after them, the little maid cried "Shoo!" and flapped her apron in Billina's face.

"Shoo, yourself!" retorted the hen, drawing back in anger and ruffling up her feathers. "Haven't you any better manners than that?"

"Oh, do you talk?" enquired the maid, evidently surprised.

"Can't you hear me?" snapped Billina. "Drop that apron, and get out of the doorway, so that I may enter with my friends!"

"The Princess won't like it," said the maid, hesitating.

"I don't care whether she likes it or not," replied Billina, and fluttering her wings with a loud noise she flew straight at the maid's face. The little servant at once ducked her head, and the hen reached Dorothy's side in safety.

“Very well,” sighed the maid; “if you are all ruined because of this obstinate hen, don’t blame me for it. It isn’t safe to annoy the Princess Langwidere.”

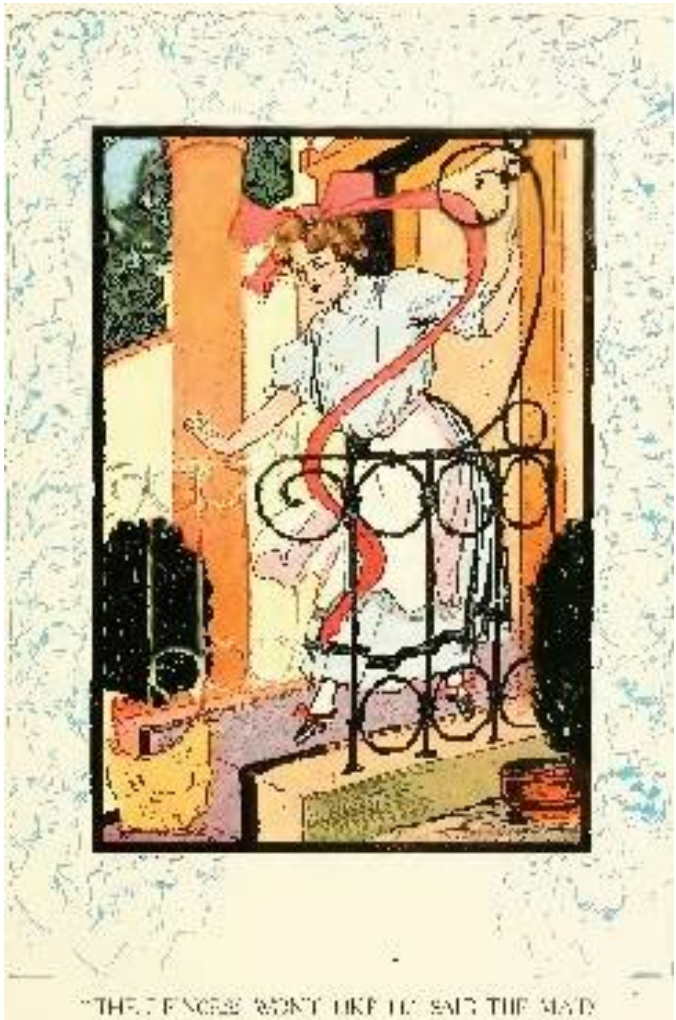
“Tell her we are waiting, if you please,” Dorothy requested, with dignity. “Billina is my friend, and must go wherever I go.”

Without more words the maid led them to a richly furnished drawing-room, lighted with subdued rainbow tints that came in through beautiful stained-glass windows.

“Remain here,” she said. “What names shall I give the Princess?”

“I am Dorothy Gale, of Kansas,” replied the child; “and this gentleman is a machine named Tiktok, and the yellow hen is my friend Billina.”

The little servant bowed and withdrew, going through several passages and mounting two marble stairways before she came to the apartments occupied by her mistress.



"THE PRINCESS WON'T LIKE IT," SAID THE MAID

Princess Langwidere's sitting-room was paneled with great mirrors, which reached from the ceiling to the floor; also the ceiling was composed of mirrors, and the floor was of polished silver that reflected every object upon it. So when Langwidere sat in her easy chair and played soft melodies upon her mandolin, her form was mirrored hundreds of times, in walls and ceiling and floor, and whichever way the lady turned her head she could see and admire her own features. This she loved to do, and just as the maid entered she was saying to herself:

"This head with the auburn hair and hazel eyes is quite attractive. I must wear it more often than I have done of late, although it may not be the best of my collection."

“You have company, Your Highness,” announced the maid, bowing low.

“Who is it?” asked Langwidere, yawning.

“Dorothy Gale of Kansas, Mr. Tiktok and Billina,” answered the maid.

“What a queer lot of names!” murmured the Princess, beginning to be a little interested. “What are they like? Is Dorothy Gale of Kansas pretty?”

“She might be called so,” the maid replied.

“And is Mr. Tiktok attractive?” continued the Princess.

“That I cannot say, Your Highness. But he seems very bright. Will Your Gracious Highness see them?”

“Oh, I may as well, Nanda. But I am tired admiring this head, and if my visitor has any claim to beauty I must take care that she does not surpass me. So I will go to my cabinet and change to No. 17, which I think is my best appearance. Don’t you?”

“Your No. 17 is exceedingly beautiful,” answered Nanda, with another bow.

Again the Princess yawned. Then she said:

“Help me to rise.”

So the maid assisted her to gain her feet, although Langwidere was the stronger of the two; and then the Princess slowly walked across the silver floor to her cabinet, leaning heavily at every step upon Nanda’s arm.

Now I must explain to you that the Princess Langwidere had thirty heads--as many as there are days in the month. But of course she could only wear one of them at a time, because she had but one neck. These heads were kept in what she called her “cabinet,” which was a beautiful dressing-room that lay just between Langwidere’s sleeping-chamber and the mirrored sitting-room. Each head was in a separate cupboard lined with velvet. The cupboards ran all around the sides of the dressing-room, and had elaborately carved doors with gold numbers on the outside and jeweled-framed mirrors on the inside of them.

When the Princess got out of her crystal bed in the morning she went to her cabinet, opened one of the velvet-lined cupboards, and took the head it contained from its golden shelf. Then, by the aid of the mirror inside the open door, she put on the head--as neat and straight as could be--and afterward called her maids to robe her for the day. She always wore a simple white costume, that suited all the heads. For, being able to change her face whenever she liked, the Princess had no interest in wearing a variety of gowns, as have other ladies who are compelled to wear the same face constantly.

Of course the thirty heads were in great variety, no two formed alike but all being of exceeding loveliness. There were heads with golden hair, brown hair, rich auburn hair and black hair; but none with gray hair. The heads had eyes of blue, of gray, of hazel, of brown and of black; but there were no red eyes among them, and all were bright and handsome. The noses were Grecian, Roman, retrousse and Oriental, representing all types of beauty; and the mouths were of assorted sizes and shapes, displaying pearly teeth when the heads smiled. As for dimples, they appeared in cheeks and chins, wherever they might be most charming, and one or two heads had freckles upon the faces to contrast the better with the brilliancy of their complexions.

One key unlocked all the velvet cupboards containing these treasures--a

curious key carved from a single blood-red ruby--and this was fastened to a strong but slender chain which the Princess wore around her left wrist.

When Nanda had supported Langwidere to a position in front of cupboard No. 17, the Princess unlocked the door with her ruby key and after handing head No. 9, which she had been wearing, to the maid, she took No. 17 from its shelf and fitted it to her neck. It had black hair and dark eyes and a lovely pearl-and-white complexion, and when Langwidere wore it she knew she was remarkably beautiful in appearance.

There was only one trouble with No. 17; the temper that went with it (and which was hidden somewhere under the glossy black hair) was fiery, harsh and haughty in the extreme, and it often led the Princess to do unpleasant things which she regretted when she came to wear her other heads.

But she did not remember this today, and went to meet her guests in the drawing-room with a feeling of certainty that she would surprise them with her beauty.

However, she was greatly disappointed to find that her visitors were merely a small girl in a gingham dress, a copper man that would only go when wound up, and a yellow hen that was sitting contentedly in Langwidere's best work-basket, where there was a china egg used for darning stockings. (It may surprise you to learn that a princess ever does such a common thing as darn stockings. But, if you will stop to think, you will realize that a princess is sure to wear holes in her stockings, the same as other people; only it isn't considered quite polite to mention the matter.)

"Oh!" said Langwidere, slightly lifting the nose of No. 17. "I thought some one of importance had called."

"Then you were right," declared Dorothy. "I'm a good deal of 'portance myself, and when Billina lays an egg she has the proudest cackle you ever heard. As for Tiktok, he's the--"

"Stop--Stop!" commanded the Princess, with an angry flash of her splendid eyes. "How dare you annoy me with your senseless chatter?"

"Why, you horrid thing!" said Dorothy, who was not accustomed to being treated so rudely.

The Princess looked at her more closely.

"Tell me," she resumed, "are you of royal blood?"

"Better than that, ma'am," said Dorothy. "I came from Kansas."

"Huh!" cried the Princess, scornfully. "You are a foolish child, and I cannot allow you to annoy me. Run away, you little goose, and bother some one else."

Dorothy was so indignant that for a moment she could find no words to reply. But she rose from her chair, and was about to leave the room when the

Princess, who had been scanning the girl's face, stopped her by saying, more gently:

"Come nearer to me."

Dorothy obeyed, without a thought of fear, and stood before the Princess while Langwidere examined her face with careful attention.

"You are rather attractive," said the lady, presently. "Not at all beautiful, you understand, but you have a certain style of prettiness that is different from that of any of my thirty heads. So I believe I'll take your head and give you No. 26 for it."

"Well, I b'lieve you won't!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"WELL, I B'LIEVE YOU WON'T!" EXCLAIMED DOROTHY

"It will do you no good to refuse," continued the Princess; "for I need

your head for my collection, and in the Land of Ev my will is law. I never have cared much for No. 26, and you will find that it is very little worn. Besides, it will do you just as well as the one you're wearing, for all practical purposes."

"I don't know anything about your No. 26, and I don't want to," said Dorothy, firmly. "I'm not used to taking cast-off things, so I'll just keep my own head."

"You refuse?" cried the Princess, with a frown.

"Of course I do," was the reply.

"Then," said Langwidere, "I shall lock you up in a tower until you decide to obey me. Nanda," turning to her maid, "call my army."

Nanda rang a silver bell, and at once a big fat colonel in a bright red uniform entered the room, followed by ten lean soldiers, who all looked sad and discouraged and saluted the princess in a very melancholy fashion.

"Carry that girl to the North Tower and lock her up!" cried the Princess, pointing to Dorothy.

"To hear is to obey," answered the big red colonel, and caught the child by her arm. But at that moment Tiktok raised his dinner-pail and pounded it so forcibly against the colonel's head that the big officer sat down upon the floor with a sudden bump, looking both dazed and very much astonished.

"Help!" he shouted, and the ten lean soldiers sprang to assist their leader.

There was great excitement for the next few moments, and Tiktok had knocked down seven of the army, who were sprawling in every direction upon the carpet, when suddenly the machine paused, with the dinner-pail raised for another blow, and remained perfectly motionless.

"My ac-tion has run down," he called to Dorothy. "Wind me up, quick."

She tried to obey, but the big colonel had by this time managed to get upon his feet again, so he grabbed fast hold of the girl and she was helpless to escape.

"This is too bad," said the machine. "I ought to have run six hours lon-ger, at least, but I sup-pose my long walk and my fight with the Wheel-ers made me run down fast-er than us-u-al."

"Well, it can't be helped," said Dorothy, with a sigh.

"Will you exchange heads with me?" demanded the Princess.

"No, indeed!" cried Dorothy.

"Then lock her up," said Langwidere to her soldiers, and they led Dorothy to a high tower at the north of the palace and locked her securely within.

The soldiers afterward tried to lift Tiktok, but they found the machine so solid and heavy that they could not stir it. So they left him standing in the center of the drawing-room.

“People will think I have a new statue,” said Langwidere, “so it won’t matter in the least, and Nanda can keep him well polished.”

“What shall we do with the hen?” asked the colonel, who had just discovered Billina in the work-basket.

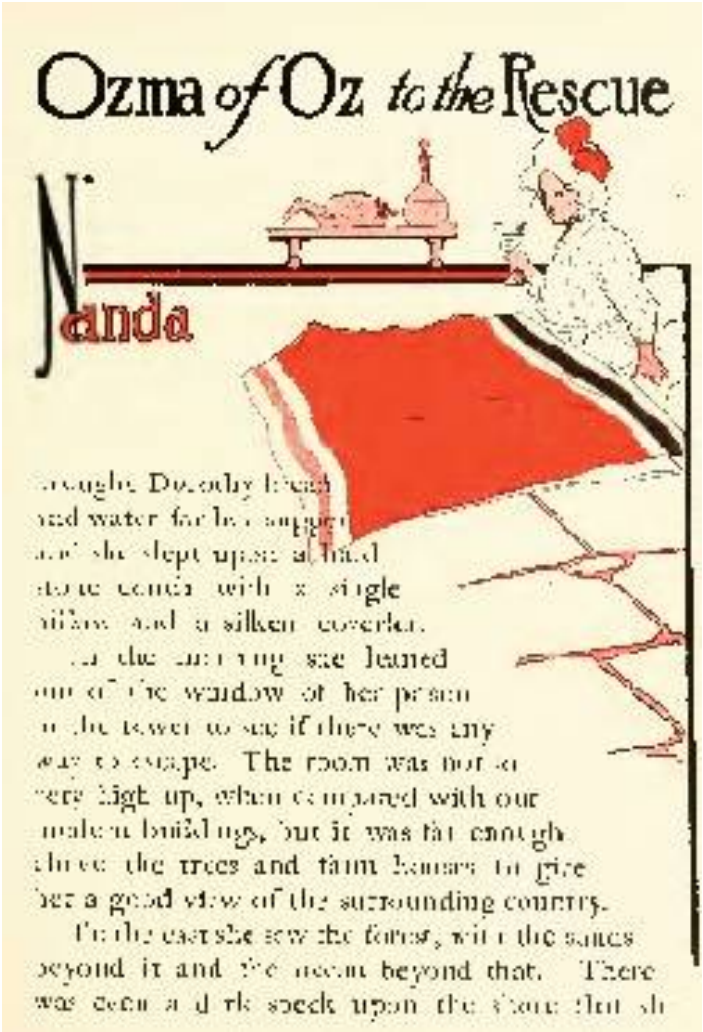
“Put her in the chicken-house,” answered the Princess. “Someday I’ll have her fried for breakfast.”

“She looks rather tough, Your Highness,” said Nanda, doubtfully.

“That is a base slander!” cried Billina, struggling frantically in the colonel’s arms. “But the breed of chickens I come from is said to be poison to all princesses.”

“Then,” remarked Langwidere, “I will not fry the hen, but keep her to lay eggs; and if she doesn’t do her duty I’ll have her drowned in the horse trough.”

7. Ozma of Oz to the Rescue



Nanda brought Dorothy bread and water for her supper, and she slept upon a hard stone couch with a single pillow and a silken coverlet.

In the morning she leaned out of the window of her prison in the tower to see if there was any way to escape. The room was not so very high up, when compared with our modern buildings, but it was far enough above the trees and farm houses to give her a good view of the surrounding country.

To the east she saw the forest, with the sands beyond it and the ocean beyond that. There was even a dark speck upon the shore that she thought might be the chicken-coop in which she had arrived at this singular country.

Then she looked to the north, and saw a deep but narrow valley lying between two rocky mountains, and a third mountain that shut off the valley at the further end.

Westward the fertile Land of Ev suddenly ended a little way from the palace, and the girl could see miles and miles of sandy desert that stretched further than her eyes could reach. It was this desert, she thought, with much interest, that alone separated her from the wonderful Land of Oz, and she remembered sorrowfully that she had been told no one had ever been able to cross this dangerous waste but herself. Once a cyclone had carried her across it, and a magical pair of silver shoes had carried her back again. But now she had neither a cyclone nor silver shoes to assist her, and her condition was sad indeed. For she had become the prisoner of a disagreeable princess who insisted that she must exchange her head for another one that she was not used to, and which might not fit her at all.

Really, there seemed no hope of help for her from her old friends in the Land of Oz. Thoughtfully she gazed from her narrow window. On all the desert not a living thing was stirring.

Wait, though! Something surely WAS stirring on the desert--something her eyes had not observed at first. Now it seemed like a cloud; now it seemed like a spot of silver; now it seemed to be a mass of rainbow colors that moved swiftly toward her.

What COULD it be, she wondered?

Then, gradually, but in a brief space of time nevertheless, the vision drew near enough to Dorothy to make out what it was.

A broad green carpet was unrolling itself upon the desert, while advancing across the carpet was a wonderful procession that made the girl open her eyes in amazement as she gazed.

First came a magnificent golden chariot, drawn by a great Lion and an immense Tiger, who stood shoulder to shoulder and trotted along as gracefully as a well-matched team of thoroughbred horses. And standing upright within the chariot was a beautiful girl clothed in flowing robes of silver gauze and wearing a jeweled diadem upon her dainty head. She held in one hand the satin ribbons that guided her astonishing team, and in the other an ivory wand that separated at the top into two prongs, the prongs being tipped by the letters “O” and “Z”, made of glistening diamonds set closely together.

The girl seemed neither older nor larger than Dorothy herself, and at once the prisoner in the tower guessed that the lovely driver of the chariot must be that Ozma of Oz of whom she had so lately heard from Tiktok.

Following close behind the chariot Dorothy saw her old friend the

Scarecrow, riding calmly astride a wooden Saw-Horse, which pranced and trotted as naturally as any meat horse could have done.

And then came Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman, with his funnel-shaped cap tipped carelessly over his left ear, his gleaming axe over his right shoulder, and his whole body sparkling as brightly as it had ever done in the old days when first she knew him.

The Tin Woodman was on foot, marching at the head of a company of twenty-seven soldiers, of whom some were lean and some fat, some short and some tall; but all the twenty-seven were dressed in handsome uniforms of various designs and colors, no two being alike in any respect.

Behind the soldiers the green carpet rolled itself up again, so that there was always just enough of it for the procession to walk upon, in order that their feet might not come in contact with the deadly, life-destroying sands of the desert.

Dorothy knew at once it was a magic carpet she beheld, and her heart beat high with hope and joy as she realized she was soon to be rescued and allowed to greet her dearly beloved friends of Oz--the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion.

THE MAGIC CARPET

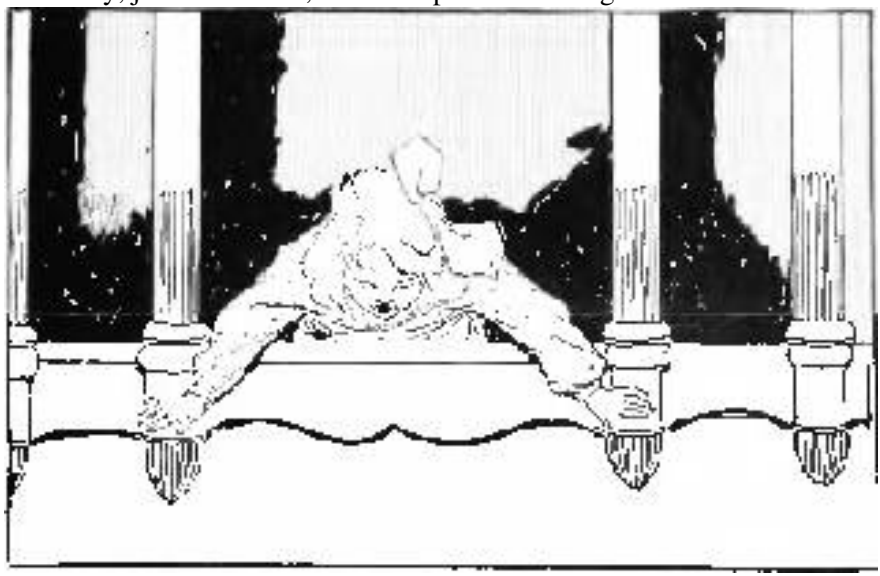
Indeed, the girl felt herself as good as rescued as soon as she recognized those in the procession, for she well knew the courage and loyalty of her old comrades, and also believed that any others who came from their marvelous country would prove to be pleasant and reliable acquaintances.

As soon as the last bit of desert was passed and all the procession, from the beautiful and dainty Ozma to the last soldier, had reached the grassy meadows of the Land of Ev, the magic carpet rolled itself together and entirely disappeared.

Then the chariot driver turned her Lion and Tiger into a broad roadway leading up to the palace, and the others followed, while Dorothy still gazed from her tower window in eager excitement.

They came quite close to the front door of the palace and then halted, the Scarecrow dismounting from his Saw-Horse to approach the sign fastened to the door, that he might read what it said.

Dorothy, just above him, could keep silent no longer.



"Here I am!" she shouted, as loudly as she could. "Here's Dorothy!"

"Dorothy who?" asked the Scarecrow, tipping his head to look upward until he nearly lost his balance and tumbled over backward.

"Dorothy Gale, of course. Your friend from Kansas," she answered.

"Why, hello, Dorothy!" said the Scarecrow. "What in the world are you doing up there?"

"Nothing," she called down, "because there's nothing to do. Save me, my friend--save me!"

"You seem to be quite safe now," replied the Scarecrow.

"But I'm a prisoner. I'm locked in, so that I can't get out," she pleaded.

"That's all right," said the Scarecrow. "You might be worse off, little Dorothy. Just consider the matter. You can't get drowned, or be run over by a Wheeler, or fall out of an apple-tree. Some folks would think they were lucky to be up there."

"Well, I don't," declared the girl, "and I want to get down immed'i'tly and see you and the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion."

"Very well," said the Scarecrow, nodding. "It shall be just as you say, little friend. Who locked you up?"

"The princess Langwidere, who is a horrid creature," she answered.

At this Ozma, who had been listening carefully to the conversation, called

to Dorothy from her chariot, asking:

"Why did the Princess lock you up, my dear?"

"Because," exclaimed Dorothy, "I wouldn't let her have my head for her collection, and take an old, cast-off head in exchange for it."

"SAVE ME, MY FRIEND, SAVE ME!"

"I do not blame you," exclaimed Ozma, promptly. "I will see the Princess at once, and oblige her to liberate you."

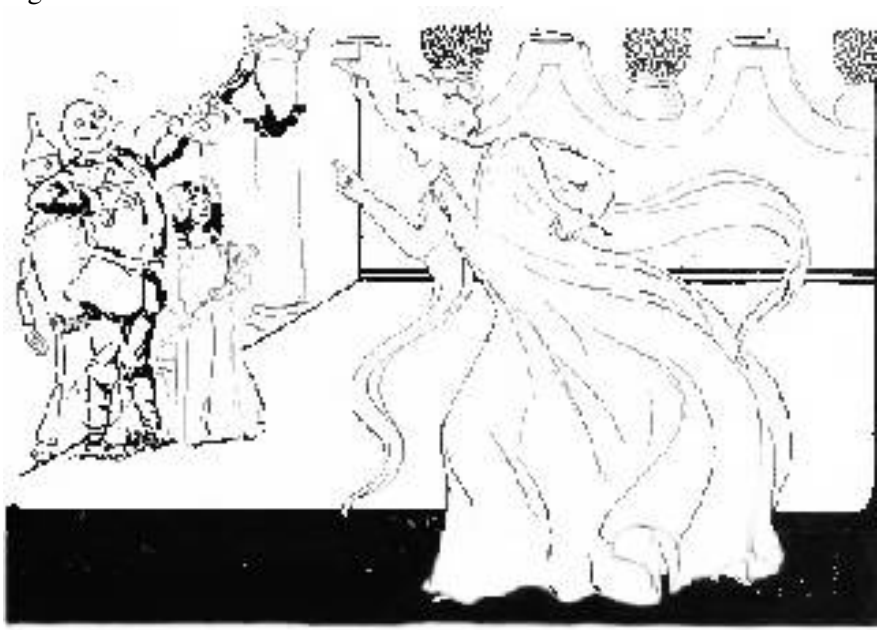
"Oh, thank you very, very much!" cried Dorothy, who as soon as she heard the sweet voice of the girlish Ruler of Oz knew that she would soon learn to love her dearly.

Ozma now drove her chariot around to the third door of the wing, upon which the Tin Woodman boldly proceeded to knock.

As soon as the maid opened the door Ozma, bearing in her hand her ivory wand, stepped into the hall and made her way at once to the drawing-room, followed by all her company, except the Lion and the Tiger. And the twenty-seven soldiers made such a noise and a clatter that the little maid Nanda ran away screaming to her mistress, whereupon the Princess Langwidere, roused to great anger by this rude invasion of her palace, came running into the drawing-room without any assistance whatever.

There she stood before the slight and delicate form of the little girl from Oz and cried out;--

"How dare you enter my palace unbidden? Leave this room at once, or I will bind you and all your people in chains, and throw you into my darkest dungeons!"



"What a dangerous lady!" murmured the Scarecrow, in a soft voice.

"She seems a little nervous," replied the Tin Woodman.

But Ozma only smiled at the angry Princess.

"Sit down, please," she said, quietly. "I have traveled a long way to see you, and you must listen to what I have to say."

"Must!" screamed the Princess, her black eyes flashing with fury--for she still wore her No. 17 head. "Must, to ME!"

"To be sure," said Ozma. "I am Ruler of the Land of Oz, and I am powerful enough to destroy all your kingdom, if I so wish. Yet I did not come here to do harm, but rather to free the royal family of Ev from the thrall

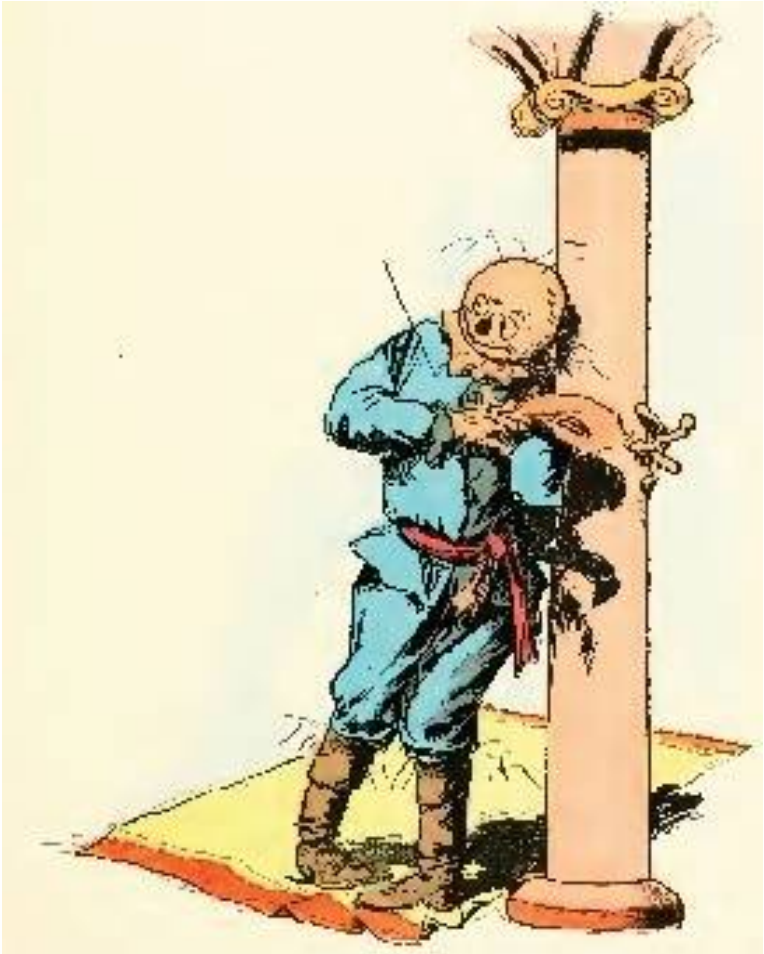
of the Nome King, the news having reached me that he is holding the Queen and her children prisoners."

Hearing these words, Langwidere suddenly became quiet.

"I wish you could, indeed, free my aunt and her ten royal children," said she, eagerly. "For if they were restored to their proper forms and station they could rule the Kingdom of Ev themselves, and that would save me a lot of worry and trouble. At present there are at least ten minutes every day that I must devote to affairs of state, and I would like to be able to spend my whole time in admiring my beautiful heads."

"Then we will presently discuss this matter," said Ozma, "and try to find a way to liberate your aunt and cousins. But first you must liberate another prisoner--the little girl you have locked up in your tower."

"Of course," said Langwidere, readily. "I had forgotten all about her. That was yesterday, you know, and a Princess cannot be expected to remember today what she did yesterday. Come with me, and I will release the prisoner at once."



"WHAT A DANGEROUS LADY!" MURMURED THE SCARECROW

So Ozma followed her, and they passed up the stairs that led to the room in the tower.

While they were gone Ozma's followers remained in the drawing-room, and the Scarecrow was leaning against a form that he had mistaken for a copper statue when a harsh, metallic voice said suddenly in his ear:

"Get off my foot, please. You are scratch-ing my pol-ish."

"Oh, excuse me!" he replied, hastily drawing back. "Are you alive?"

"No," said Tiktok, "I am on-ly a ma-chine. But I can think and speak and act, when I am pro-per-ly wound up. Just now my ac-tion is run down, and Dor-o-thy has the key to it."

"That's all right," replied the Scarecrow. "Dorothy will soon be free, and

then she'll attend to your works. But it must be a great misfortune not to be alive. I'm sorry for you."

"Why?" asked Tiktok.

"Because you have no brains, as I have," said the Scarecrow.

"Oh, yes, I have," returned Tiktok. "I am fit-ted with Smith & Tin-ker's Im-proved Com-bi-na-tion Steel Brains. They are what make me think. What sort of brains are you fit-ted with?"

"I don't know," admitted the Scarecrow. "They were given to me by the great Wizard of Oz, and I didn't get a chance to examine them before he put them in. But they work splendidly and my conscience is very active. Have you a conscience?"

"No," said Tiktok.

"And no heart, I suppose?" added the Tin Woodman, who had been listening with interest to this conversation.

"No," said Tiktok.

"Then," continued the Tin Woodman, "I regret to say that you are greatly inferior to my friend the Scarecrow, and to myself. For we are both alive, and he has brains which do not need to be wound up, while I have an excellent heart that is continually beating in my bosom."

"I con-grat-u-late you," replied Tiktok. "I can-not help be-ing your in-fer-i-or for I am a mere ma-chine. When I am wound up I do my du-ty by go-ing just as my ma-chin-er-y is made to go. You have no i-de-a how full of ma-chin-er-y I am."

"I can guess," said the Scarecrow, looking at the machine man curiously. "Some day I'd like to take you apart and see just how you are made."

"Do not do that, I beg of you," said Tiktok; "for you could not put me to-geth-er a-gain, and my use-ful-ness would be de-stroyed."

"Oh! are you useful?" asked the Scarecrow, surprised.

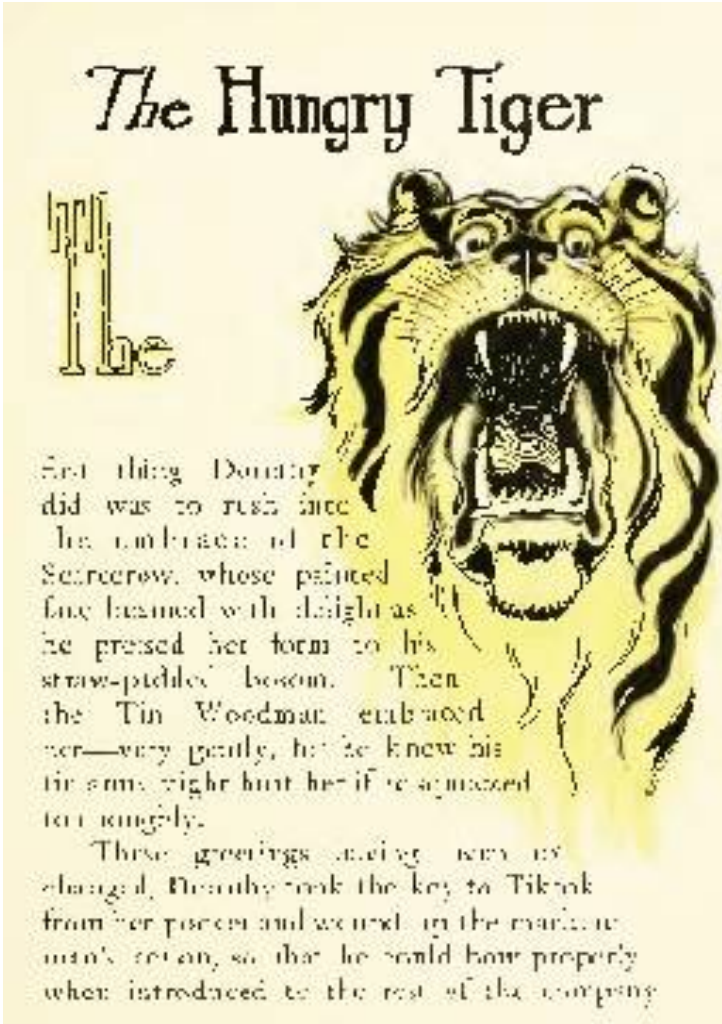
"Ve-ry," said Tiktok.

"In that case," the Scarecrow kindly promised, "I won't fool with your interior at all. For I am a poor mechanic, and might mix you up."

"Thank you," said Tiktok.

Just then Ozma re-entered the room, leading Dorothy by the hand and followed closely by the Princess Langwidere.

8. The Hungry Tiger



The first thing Dorothy did was to rush into the embrace of the Scarecrow, whose painted face beamed with delight as he pressed her form to his straw-padded bosom. Then the Tin Woodman embraced her--very gently, for he knew his tin arms might hurt her if he squeezed too roughly.

These greetings having been exchanged, Dorothy took the key to Tiktok from her pocket and wound up the machine man's action, so that he could bow properly when introduced to the rest of the company. While doing this she told them how useful Tiktok had been to her, and both the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman shook hands with the machine once more and thanked him

for protecting their friend.

Then Dorothy asked: “Where is Billina?”

“I don’t know,” said the Scarecrow. “Who is Billina?”

“She’s a yellow hen who is another friend of mine,” answered the girl, anxiously. “I wonder what has become of her?”

“She is in the chicken house, in the back yard,” said the Princess. “My drawing-room is no place for hens.”

Without waiting to hear more Dorothy ran to get Billina, and just outside the door she came upon the Cowardly Lion, still hitched to the chariot beside the great Tiger. The Cowardly Lion had a big bow of blue ribbon fastened to the long hair between his ears, and the Tiger wore a bow of red ribbon on his tail, just in front of the bushy end.

In an instant Dorothy was hugging the huge Lion joyfully.

“I’m *so* glad to see you again!” she cried.

“I am also glad to see you, Dorothy,” said the Lion. “We’ve had some fine adventures together, haven’t we?”

“Yes, indeed,” she replied. “How are you?”

“As cowardly as ever,” the beast answered in a meek voice. “Every little thing scares me and makes my heart beat fast. But let me introduce to you a new friend of mine, the Hungry Tiger.”

“Oh! Are you hungry?” she asked, turning to the other beast, who was just then yawning so widely that he displayed two rows of terrible teeth and a mouth big enough to startle anyone.

“Dreadfully hungry,” answered the Tiger, snapping his jaws together with a fierce click.

“Then why don’t you eat something?” she asked.

“It’s no use,” said the Tiger sadly. “I’ve tried that, but I always get hungry again.”

“Why, it is the same with me,” said Dorothy. “Yet I keep on eating.”

“But you eat harmless things, so it doesn’t matter,” replied the Tiger. “For my part, I’m a savage beast, and have an appetite for all sorts of poor little living creatures, from a chipmunk to fat babies.”

“How dreadful!” said Dorothy.

“Isn’t it, though?” returned the Hungry Tiger, licking his lips with his long red tongue. “Fat babies! Don’t they sound delicious? But I’ve never eaten any, because my conscience tells me it is wrong. If I had no conscience I would probably eat the babies and then get hungry again, which would mean that I had sacrificed the poor babies for nothing. No; hungry I was born, and hungry I shall die. But I’ll not have any cruel deeds on my conscience to be sorry for.”

“I think you are a very good tiger,” said Dorothy, patting the huge head of the beast.

“In that you are mistaken,” was the reply. “I am a good beast, perhaps, but a disgracefully bad tiger. For it is the nature of tigers to be cruel and ferocious, and in refusing to eat harmless living creatures I am acting as no good tiger has ever before acted. That is why I left the forest and joined my friend the Cowardly Lion.”

THE HUNGRY TIGER

"But the Lion is not really cowardly," said Dorothy. "I have seen him act as bravely as can be."

"All a mistake, my dear," protested the Lion gravely. "To others I may have seemed brave, at times, but I have never been in any danger that I was not afraid."

"Nor I," said Dorothy, truthfully. "But I must go and set free Billina, and then I will see you again."

She ran around to the back yard of the palace and soon found the chicken house, being guided to it by a loud cackling and crowing and a distracting hubbub of sounds such as chickens make when they are excited.

Something seemed to be wrong in the chicken house, and when Dorothy

looked through the slats in the door she saw a group of hens and roosters huddled in one corner and watching what appeared to be a whirling ball of feathers. It bounded here and there about the chicken house, and at first Dorothy could not tell what it was, while the screeching of the chickens nearly deafened her.

But suddenly the bunch of feathers stopped whirling, and then, to her amazement, the girl saw Billina crouching upon the prostrate form of a speckled rooster. For an instant they both remained motionless, and then the yellow hen shook her wings to settle the feathers and walked toward the door with a strut of proud defiance and a cluck of victory, while the speckled rooster limped away to the group of other chickens, trailing his crumpled plumage in the dust as he went.

"Why, Billina!" cried Dorothy, in a shocked voice; "have you been fighting?"

"I really think I have," retorted Billina. "Do you think I'd let that speckled villain of a rooster lord it over ME, and claim to run this chicken house, as long as I'm able to peck and scratch? Not if my name is Bill!"

"It isn't Bill, it's Billina; and you're talking slang, which is very undig'n'fied," said Dorothy, reprovingly. "Come here, Billina, and I'll let you out; for Ozma of Oz is here, and has set us free."

So the yellow hen came to the door, which Dorothy unlatched for her to pass through, and the other chickens silently watched them from their corner without offering to approach nearer.

The girl lifted her friend in her arms and exclaimed:

"Oh, Billina! how dreadful you look. You've lost a lot of feathers, and one of your eyes is nearly pecked out, and your comb is bleeding!"

"That's nothing," said Billina. "Just look at the speckled rooster! Didn't I do him up brown?"

Dorothy shook her head.

"I don't 'prove of this, at all," she said, carrying Billina away toward the palace. "It isn't a good thing for you to 'sociate with those common chickens. They would soon spoil your good manners, and you wouldn't be respec'able any more."

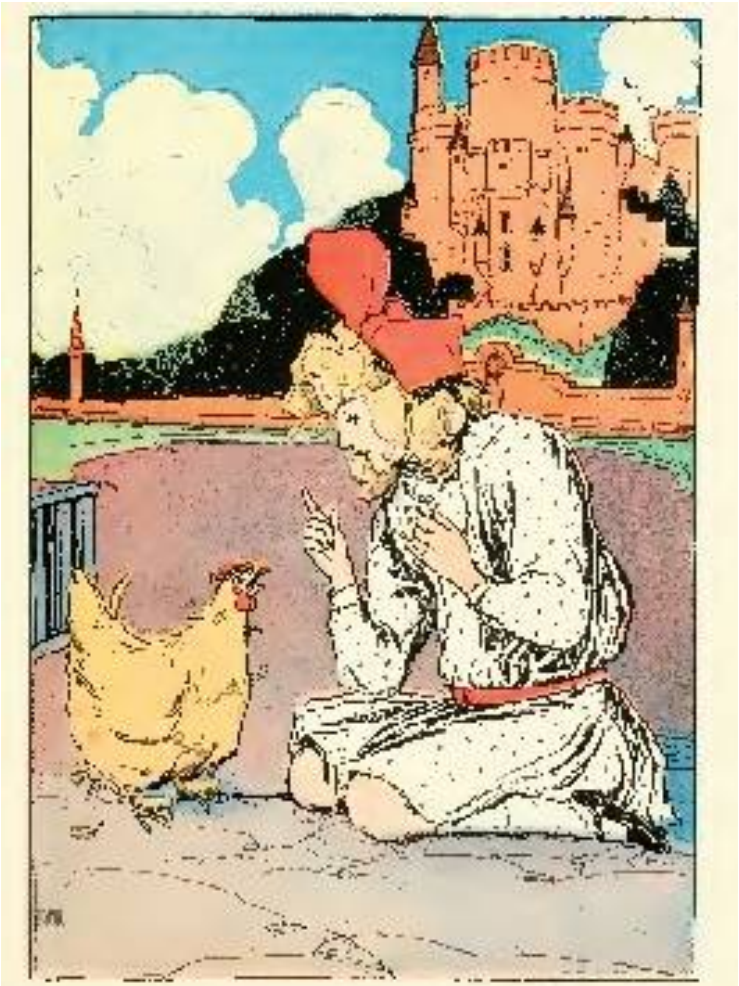
"I didn't ask to associate with them," replied Billina. "It is that cross old Princess who is to blame. But I was raised in the United States, and I won't allow any one-horse chicken of the Land of Ev to run over me and put on airs, as long as I can lift a claw in self-defense."

"Very well, Billina," said Dorothy. "We won't talk about it any more."

Soon they came to the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger to whom the girl introduced the Yellow Hen.

“Glad to meet any friend of Dorothy’s,” said the Lion, politely. “To judge by your present appearance, you are not a coward, as I am.”

“Your present appearance makes my mouth water,” said the Tiger, looking at Billina greedily. “My, my! how good you would taste if I could only crunch you between my jaws. But don’t worry. You would only appease my appetite for a moment; so it isn’t worth while to eat you.”



“WHY, BILLINA!” CRIED DOROTHY, “HAVE YOU BEEN FIGHTING?”

“Thank you,” said the hen, nestling closer in Dorothy’s arms.

“Besides, it wouldn’t be right,” continued the Tiger, looking steadily at Billina and clicking his jaws together.

“Of course not,” cried Dorothy, hastily. “Billina is my friend, and you mustn’t ever eat her under any circ’mstances.”

“I’ll try to remember that,” said the Tiger; “but I’m a little absent-minded, at times.”

Then Dorothy carried her pet into the drawing-room of the palace, where Tiktok, being invited to do so by Ozma, had seated himself between the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman. Opposite to them sat Ozma herself and the Princess Langwidere, and beside them there was a vacant chair for Dorothy.

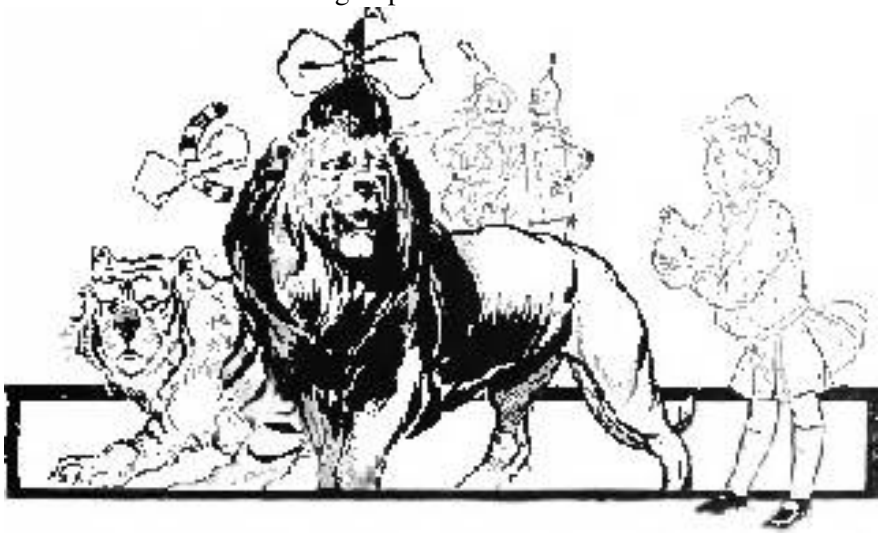
Around this important group was ranged the Army of Oz, and as Dorothy looked at the handsome uniforms of the Twenty-Seven she said:

“Why, they seem to be all officers.”

“They are, all except one,” answered the Tin Woodman. “I have in my Army eight Generals, six Colonels, seven Majors and five Captains, besides one private for them to command. I’d like to promote the private, for I believe no private should ever be in public life; and I’ve also noticed that officers usually fight better and are more reliable than common soldiers. Besides, the officers are more important looking, and lend dignity to our army.”

“No doubt you are right,” said Dorothy, seating herself beside Ozma.

“And now,” announced the girlish Ruler of Oz, “we will hold a solemn conference to decide the best manner of liberating the royal family of this fair Land of Ev from their long imprisonment.”



9. The Royal Family of Ev

The Tin Woodman was the first to address the meeting.

"To begin with," said he, "word came to our noble and illustrious Ruler, Ozma of Oz, that the wife and ten children--five boys and five girls--of the former King of Ev, by name Evoldo, have been enslaved by the Nome King and are held prisoners in his underground palace. Also that there was no one in Ev powerful enough to release them. Naturally our Ozma wished to undertake the adventure of liberating the poor prisoners; but for a long time she could find no way to cross the great desert between the two countries. Finally she went to a friendly sorceress of our land named Glinda the Good,

who heard the story and at once presented Ozma a magic carpet, which would continually unroll beneath our feet and so make a comfortable path for us to cross the desert. As soon as she had received the carpet our gracious Ruler ordered me to assemble our army, which I did. You behold in these bold warriors the pick of all the finest soldiers of Oz; and, if we are obliged to fight the Nome King, every officer as well as the private, will battle fiercely unto death."

Then Tiktok spoke.

"Why should you fight the Nome King?" he asked. "He has done no wrong."

"No wrong!" cried Dorothy. "Isn't it wrong to imprison a queen mother and her ten children?"

"They were sold to the Nome King by King Ev-ol-do," replied Tiktok. "It was the King of Ev who did wrong, and when he re-al-ized what he had done he jumped in-to the sea and drowned him-self."

"This is news to me," said Ozma, thoughtfully. "I had supposed the Nome King was all to blame in the matter. But, in any case, he must be made to liberate the prisoners."

"My uncle Evoldo was a very wicked man," declared the Princess Langwidere. "If he had drowned himself before he sold his family, no one would have cared. But he sold them to the powerful Nome King in exchange for a long life, and afterward destroyed the life by jumping into the sea."

"Then," said Ozma, "he did not get the long life, and the Nome King must give up the prisoners. Where are they confined?"

"No one knows, exactly," replied the Princess. "For the king, whose name is Roquat of the Rocks, owns a splendid palace underneath the great mountain which is at the north end of this kingdom, and he has transformed the queen and her children into ornaments and bric-a-brac with which to decorate his rooms."

"I'd like to know," said Dorothy, "who this Nome King is?"

"I will tell you," replied Ozma. "He is said to be the Ruler of the Underground World, and commands the rocks and all that the rocks contain. Under his rule are many thousands of the Nomes, who are queerly shaped but powerful sprites that labor at the furnaces and forges of their king, making gold and silver and other metals which they conceal in the crevices of the rocks, so that those living upon the earth's surface can only find them with great difficulty. Also they make diamonds and rubies and emeralds, which they hide in the ground; so that the kingdom of the Nomes is wonderfully rich, and all we have of precious stones and silver and gold is what we take from the earth and rocks where the Nome King has hidden them."

“I understand,” said Dorothy, nodding her little head wisely.

“For the reason that we often steal his treasures,” continued Ozma, “the Ruler of the Underground World is not fond of those who live upon the earth’s surface, and never appears among us. If we wish to see King Roquat of the Rocks, we must visit his own country, where he is all powerful, and therefore it will be a dangerous undertaking.”

“But, for the sake of the poor prisoners,” said Dorothy, “we ought to do it.”

“We shall do it,” replied the Scarecrow, “although it requires a lot of courage for me to go near to the furnaces of the Nome King. For I am only stuffed with straw, and a single spark of fire might destroy me entirely.”

“The furnaces may also melt my tin,” said the Tin Woodman; “but I am going.”

“I can’t bear heat,” remarked the Princess Langwidere, yawning lazily, “so I shall stay at home. But I wish you may have success in your undertaking, for I am heartily tired of ruling this stupid kingdom, and I need more leisure in which to admire my beautiful heads.”

“We do not need you,” said Ozma. “For, if with the aid of my brave followers I cannot accomplish my purpose, then it would be useless for you to undertake the journey.”

“Quite true,” sighed the Princess. “So, if you’ll excuse me, I will now retire to my cabinet. I’ve worn this head quite awhile, and I want to change it for another.”

When she had left them (and you may be sure no one was sorry to see her go) Ozma said to Tiktok:

“Will you join our party?”

“I am the slave of the girl Dor-oth-y, who rescued me from pris-on,” replied the machine. “Where she goes I will go.”

“Oh, I am going with my friends, of course,” said Dorothy, quickly. “I wouldn’t miss the fun for anything. Will you go, too, Billina?”

“To be sure,” said Billina in a careless tone. She was smoothing down the feathers of her back and not paying much attention.

"I CAN'T BEAT THAT," REMARKED LANGWIDERE

"Heat is just in her line," remarked the Scarecrow. "If she is nicely roasted, she will be better than ever."

"Then" said Ozma, "we will arrange to start for the Kingdom of the Nomes at daybreak tomorrow. And, in the meantime, we will rest and prepare ourselves for the journey."

Although Princess Langwidere did not again appear to her guests, the palace servants waited upon the strangers from Oz and did everything in their power to make the party comfortable. There were many vacant rooms at their disposal, and the brave Army of twenty-seven was easily provided for and liberally feasted.

The Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger were unharnessed from the

chariot and allowed to roam at will throughout the palace, where they nearly frightened the servants into fits, although they did no harm at all. At one time Dorothy found the little maid Nanda crouching in terror in a corner, with the Hungry Tiger standing before her.

"You certainly look delicious," the beast was saying. "Will you kindly give me permission to eat you?"

"No, no, no!" cried the maid in reply.

"Then," said the Tiger, yawning frightfully, "please to get me about thirty pounds of tenderloin steak, cooked rare, with a peck of boiled potatoes on the side, and five gallons of ice-cream for dessert."

"I--I'll do the best I can!" said Nanda, and she ran away as fast as she could go.

"Are you so very hungry?" asked Dorothy, in wonder.

"You can hardly imagine the size of my appetite," replied the Tiger, sadly. "It seems to fill my whole body, from the end of my throat to the tip of my tail. I am very sure the appetite doesn't fit me, and is too large for the size of my body. Some day, when I meet a dentist with a pair of forceps, I'm going to have it pulled."

"What, your tooth?" asked Dorothy.

"No, my appetite," said the Hungry Tiger.

The little girl spent most of the afternoon talking with the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, who related to her all that had taken place in the Land of Oz since Dorothy had left it. She was much interested in the story of Ozma, who had been, when a baby, stolen by a wicked old witch and transformed into a boy. She did not know that she had ever been a girl until she was restored to her natural form by a kind sorceress. Then it was found that she was the only child of the former Ruler of Oz, and was entitled to rule in his place. Ozma had many adventures, however, before she regained her father's throne, and in these she was accompanied by a pumpkin-headed man, a highly magnified and thoroughly educated Woggle-Bug, and a wonderful sawhorse that had been brought to life by means of a magic powder. The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman had also assisted her; but the Cowardly Lion, who ruled the great forest as the King of Beasts, knew nothing of Ozma until after she became the reigning princess of Oz. Then he journeyed to the Emerald City to see her, and on hearing she was about to visit the Land of Ev to set free the royal family of that country, the Cowardly Lion begged to go with her, and brought along his friend, the Hungry Tiger, as well.

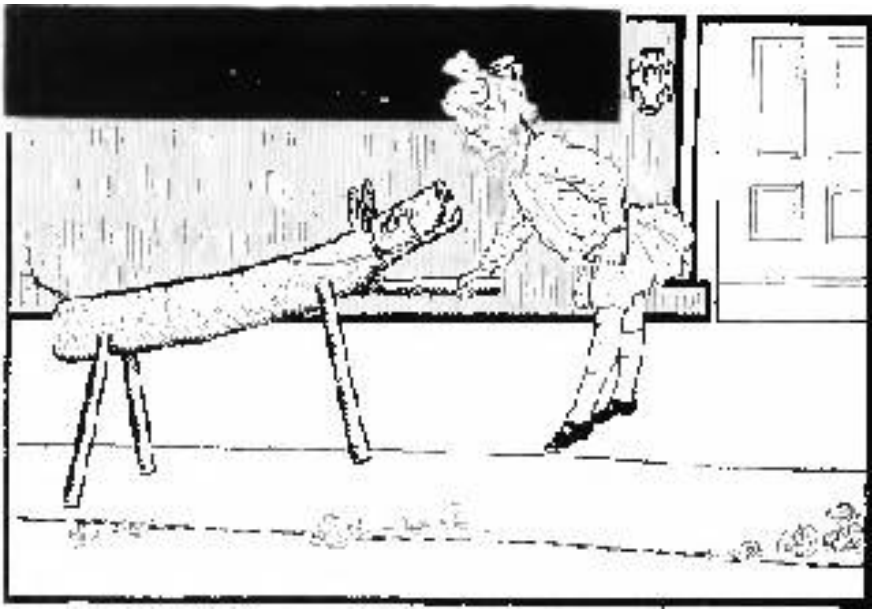
Having heard this story, Dorothy related to them her own adventures, and then went out with her friends to find the Sawhorse, which Ozma had caused to be shod with plates of gold, so that its legs would not wear out.

DOROTHY TOLD TO THEM HER OWN ADVENTURES

They came upon the Sawhorse standing motionless beside the garden gate, but when Dorothy was introduced to him he bowed politely and blinked his eyes, which were knots of wood, and wagged his tail, which was only the branch of a tree.

"What a remarkable thing, to be alive!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"I quite agree with you," replied the Sawhorse, in a rough but not unpleasant voice. "A creature like me has no business to live, as we all know. But it was the magic powder that did it, so I cannot justly be blamed."



"Of course not," said Dorothy. "And you seem to be of some use, 'cause I noticed the Scarecrow riding upon your back."

"Oh, yes; I'm of use," returned the Sawhorse; "and I never tire, never have to be fed, or cared for in any way."

"Are you intel'gent?" asked the girl.

"Not very," said the creature. "It would be foolish to waste intelligence on a common Sawhorse, when so many professors need it. But I know enough to obey my masters, and to gid-dup, or whoa, when I'm told to. So I'm pretty well satisfied."

That night Dorothy slept in a pleasant little bed-chamber next to that occupied by Ozma of Oz, and Billina perched upon the foot of the bed and tucked her head under her wing and slept as soundly in that position as did Dorothy upon her soft cushions.

But before daybreak every one was awake and stirring, and soon the adventurers were eating a hasty breakfast in the great dining-room of the palace. Ozma sat at the head of a long table, on a raised platform, with Dorothy on her right hand and the Scarecrow on her left. The Scarecrow did not eat, of course; but Ozma placed him near her so that she might ask his advice about the journey while she ate.

Lower down the table were the twenty-seven warriors of Oz, and at the end of the room the Lion and the Tiger were eating out of a kettle that had been placed upon the floor, while Billina fluttered around to pick up any scraps that might be scattered.

It did not take long to finish the meal, and then the Lion and the Tiger were harnessed to the chariot and the party was ready to start for the Nome King's Palace.

First rode Ozma, with Dorothy beside her in the golden chariot and holding Billina fast in her arms. Then came the Scarecrow on the Sawhorse, with the Tin Woodman and Tiktok marching side by side just behind him. After these tramped the Army, looking brave and handsome in their splendid uniforms. The generals commanded the colonels and the colonels commanded the majors and the majors commanded the captains and the captains commanded the private, who marched with an air of proud importance because it required so many officers to give him his orders.

And so the magnificent procession left the palace and started along the road just as day was breaking, and by the time the sun came out they had made good progress toward the valley that led to the Nome King's domain.

10. The Giant with the Hammer

The road led for a time through a pretty farm country, and then past a picnic grove that was very inviting. But the procession continued to steadily advance until Billina cried in an abrupt and commanding manner:

"Wait--wait!"

Ozma stopped her chariot so suddenly that the Scarecrow's Sawhorse nearly ran into it, and the ranks of the army tumbled over one another before they could come to a halt. Immediately the yellow hen struggled from Dorothy's arms and flew into a clump of bushes by the roadside.

"What's the matter?" called the Tin Woodman, anxiously.

“Why, Billina wants to lay her egg, that’s all,” said Dorothy.

“Lay her egg!” repeated the Tin Woodman, in astonishment.

“Yes; she lays one every morning, about this time; and it’s quite fresh,” said the girl.

“But does your foolish old hen suppose that this entire cavalcade, which is bound on an important adventure, is going to stand still while she lays her egg?” enquired the Tin Woodman, earnestly.

“What else can we do?” asked the girl. “It’s a habit of Billina’s and she can’t break herself of it.”

“Then she must hurry up,” said the Tin Woodman, impatiently.

“No, no!” exclaimed the Scarecrow. “If she hurries she may lay scrambled eggs.”

“That’s nonsense,” said Dorothy. “But Billina won’t be long, I’m sure.”

So they stood and waited, although all were restless and anxious to proceed. And by and by the yellow hen came from the bushes saying:

“Kut-kut, kut, ka-daw-kutt! Kut, kut, kut--ka-daw-kut!”

“What is she doing--singing her lay?” asked the Scarecrow.

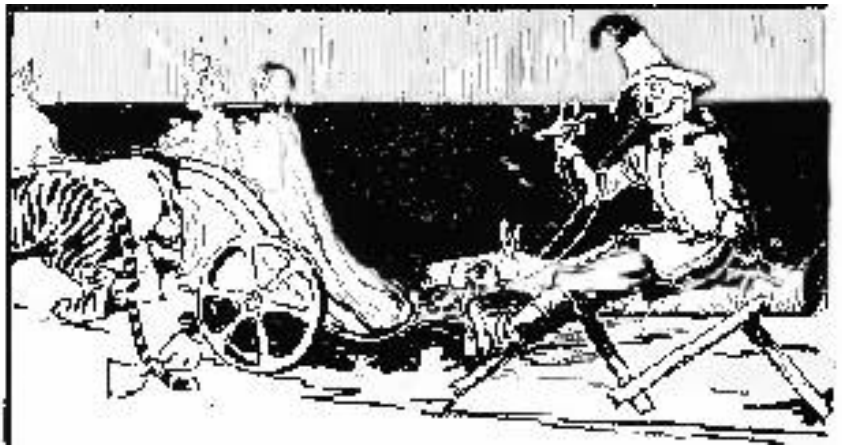
“For-ward--march!” shouted the Tin Woodman, waving his axe, and the procession started just as Dorothy had once more grabbed Billina in her arms.

“Isn’t anyone going to get my egg?” cried the hen, in great excitement.

“I’ll get it,” said the Scarecrow; and at his command the Sawhorse pranced into the bushes. The straw man soon found the egg, which he placed in his jacket pocket. The cavalcade, having moved rapidly on, was even then far in advance; but it did not take the Sawhorse long to catch up with it, and presently the Scarecrow was riding in his accustomed place behind Ozma’s chariot.

“What shall I do with the egg?” he asked Dorothy.

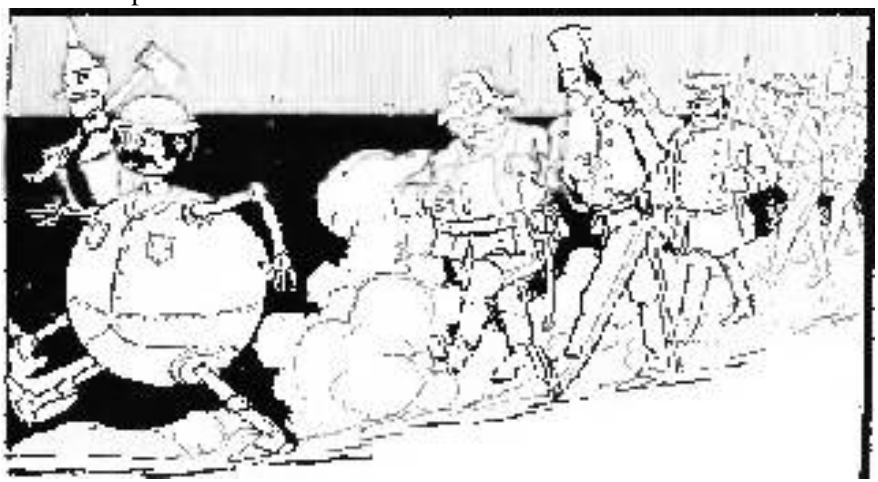
“I do not know,” the girl answered. “Perhaps the Hungry Tiger would like it.”



"It would not be enough to fill one of my back teeth," remarked the Tiger. "A bushel of them, hard boiled, might take a little of the edge off my appetite; but one egg isn't good for anything at all, that I know of."

"No; it wouldn't even make a sponge cake," said the Scarecrow, thoughtfully. "The Tin Woodman might carry it with his axe and hatch it; but after all I may as well keep it myself for a souvenir." So he left it in his pocket.

They had now reached that part of the valley that lay between the two high mountains which Dorothy had seen from her tower window. At the far end was the third great mountain, which blocked the valley and was the northern edge of the Land of Ev. It was underneath this mountain that the Nome King's palace was said to be; but it would be some time before they reached that place.



The path was becoming rocky and difficult for the wheels of the chariot to

pass over, and presently a deep gulf appeared at their feet which was too wide for them to leap. So Ozma took a small square of green cloth from her pocket and threw it upon the ground. At once it became the magic carpet, and unrolled itself far enough for all the cavalcade to walk upon. The chariot now advanced, and the green carpet unrolled before it, crossing the gulf on a level with its banks, so that all passed over in safety.

"That's easy enough," said the Scarecrow. "I wonder what will happen next."

He was not long in making the discovery, for the sides of the mountain came closer together until finally there was but a narrow path between them, along which Ozma and her party were forced to pass in single file.

They now heard a low and deep "thump!--thump!--thump!" which echoed throughout the valley and seemed to grow louder as they advanced. Then, turning a corner of rock, they saw before them a huge form, which towered above the path for more than a hundred feet. The form was that of a gigantic man built out of plates of cast iron, and it stood with one foot on either side of the narrow road and swung over its right shoulder an immense iron mallet, with which it constantly pounded the earth. These resounding blows explained the thumping sounds they had heard, for the mallet was much bigger than a barrel, and where it struck the path between the rocky sides of the mountain it filled all the space through which our travelers would be obliged to pass.

Of course they at once halted, a safe distance away from the terrible iron mallet. The magic carpet would do them no good in this case, for it was only meant to protect them from any dangers upon the ground beneath their feet, and not from dangers that appeared in the air above them.

"Wow!" said the Cowardly Lion, with a shudder. "It makes me dreadfully nervous to see that big hammer pounding so near my head. One blow would crush me into a door-mat."

"The ir-on gi-ant is a fine fel-low," said Tiktok, "and works as stead-i-ly as a clock. He was made for the Nome King by Smith & Tin-ker, who made me, and his du-ty is to keep folks from find-ing the un-der-ground pal-ace. Is he not a great work of art?"

"Can he think, and speak, as you do?" asked Ozma, regarding the giant with wondering eyes.

"No," replied the machine; "he is on-ly made to pound the road, and has no think-ing or speak-ing at-tach-ment. But he pounds ve-ry well, I think."

"Too well," observed the Scarecrow. "He is keeping us from going farther. Is there no way to stop his machinery?"

"On-ly the Nome King, who has the key, can do that," answered Tiktok.

“Then,” said Dorothy, anxiously, “what shall we do?”

“Excuse me for a few minutes,” said the Scarecrow, “and I will think it over.”

He retired, then, to a position in the rear, where he turned his painted face to the rocks and began to think.

Meantime the giant continued to raise his iron mallet high in the air and to strike the path terrific blows that echoed through the mountains like the roar of a cannon. Each time the mallet lifted, however, there was a moment when the path beneath the monster was free, and perhaps the Scarecrow had noticed this, for when he came back to the others he said:

“The matter is a very simple one, after all. We have but to run under the hammer, one at a time, when it is lifted, and pass to the other side before it falls again.”

THE TIGER WENT ALONG

"It will require quick work, if we escape the blow," said the Tin Woodman, with a shake of his head. "But it really seems the only thing to be done. Who will make the first attempt?"

They looked at one another hesitatingly for a moment. Then the Cowardly Lion, who was trembling like a leaf in the wind, said to them:

"I suppose the head of the procession must go first--and that's me. But I'm terribly afraid of the big hammer!"

"What will become of me?" asked Ozma. "You might rush under the hammer yourself, but the chariot would surely be crushed."

"We must leave the chariot," said the Scarecrow. "But you two girls can ride upon the backs of the Lion and the Tiger."

So this was decided upon, and Ozma, as soon as the Lion was unfastened from the chariot, at once mounted the beast's back and said she was ready.

"Cling fast to his mane," advised Dorothy. "I used to ride him myself, and that's the way I held on."

So Ozma clung fast to the mane, and the lion crouched in the path and eyed the swinging mallet carefully until he knew just the instant it would begin to rise in the air.

Then, before anyone thought he was ready, he made a sudden leap straight between the iron giant's legs, and before the mallet struck the ground again the Lion and Ozma were safe on the other side.

The Tiger went next. Dorothy sat upon his back and locked her arms around his striped neck, for he had no mane to cling to. He made the leap straight and true as an arrow from a bow, and ere Dorothy realized it she was out of danger and standing by Ozma's side.

Now came the Scarecrow on the Sawhorse, and while they made the dash in safety they were within a hair's breadth of being caught by the descending hammer.

Tiktok walked up to the very edge of the spot the hammer struck, and as it was raised for the next blow he calmly stepped forward and escaped its descent. That was an idea for the Tin Woodman to follow, and he also crossed in safety while the great hammer was in the air. But when it came to the twenty-six officers and the private, their knees were so weak that they could not walk a step.

"In battle we are wonderfully courageous," said one of the generals, "and our foes find us very terrible to face. But war is one thing and this is another. When it comes to being pounded upon the head by an iron hammer, and smashed into pancakes, we naturally object."

"Make a run for it," urged the Scarecrow.

"Our knees shake so that we cannot run," answered a captain. "If we should try it we would all certainly be pounded to a jelly."

"Well, well," sighed the Cowardly Lion, "I see, friend Tiger, that we must place ourselves in great danger to rescue this bold army. Come with me, and we will do the best we can."

So, Ozma and Dorothy having already dismounted from their backs, the Lion and the Tiger leaped back again under the awful hammer and returned with two generals clinging to their necks. They repeated this daring passage twelve times, when all the officers had been carried beneath the giant's legs and landed safely on the further side. By that time the beasts were very tired, and panted so hard that their tongues hung out of their great mouths.

"But what is to become of the private?" asked Ozma.

“Oh, leave him there to guard the chariot,” said the Lion. “I’m tired out, and won’t pass under that mallet again.”

The officers at once protested that they must have the private with them, else there would be no one for them to command. But neither the Lion or the Tiger would go after him, and so the Scarecrow sent the Sawhorse.

THE WOODEN HORSE WAS CARELESS

Either the wooden horse was careless, or it failed to properly time the descent of the hammer, for the mighty weapon caught it squarely upon its head, and thumped it against the ground so powerfully that the private flew off its back high into the air, and landed upon one of the giant’s cast-iron arms. Here he clung desperately while the arm rose and fell with each one of the rapid strokes.

The Scarecrow dashed in to rescue his Sawhorse, and had his left foot smashed by the hammer before he could pull the creature out of danger. They then found that the Sawhorse had been badly dazed by the blow; for while the hard wooden knot of which his head was formed could not be crushed by the hammer, both his ears were broken off and he would be unable to hear a sound until some new ones were made for him. Also his left knee was cracked, and had to be bound up with a string.

Billina having fluttered under the hammer, it now remained only to rescue the private who was riding upon the iron giant's arm, high in the air.

The Scarecrow lay flat upon the ground and called to the man to jump down upon his body, which was soft because it was stuffed with straw. This the private managed to do, waiting until a time when he was nearest the ground and then letting himself drop upon the Scarecrow. He accomplished the feat without breaking any bones, and the Scarecrow declared he was not injured in the least.

Therefore, the Tin Woodman having by this time fitted new ears to the Sawhorse, the entire party proceeded upon its way, leaving the giant to pound the path behind them.

11. The Nome King

By and by, when they drew near to the mountain that blocked their path and which was the furthermost edge of the Kingdom of Ev, the way grew dark and gloomy for the reason that the high peaks on either side shut out the sunshine. And it was very silent, too, as there were no birds to sing or squirrels to chatter, the trees being left far behind them and only the bare rocks remaining.

Ozma and Dorothy were a little awed by the silence, and all the others were quiet and grave except the Sawhorse, which, as it trotted along with the Scarecrow upon his back, hummed a queer song, of which this was the

chorus:

"Would a wooden horse in a woodland go?
Aye, aye! I sigh, he would, although
Had he not had a wooden head
He'd mount the mountain top instead."

But no one paid any attention to this because they were now close to the Nome King's dominions, and his splendid underground palace could not be very far away.

Suddenly they heard a shout of jeering laughter, and stopped short. They would have to stop in a minute, anyway, for the huge mountain barred their further progress and the path ran close up to a wall of rock and ended.

"Who was that laughing?" asked Ozma.

There was no reply, but in the gloom they could see strange forms flit across the face of the rock. Whatever the creations might be they seemed very like the rock itself, for they were the color of rocks and their shapes were as rough and rugged as if they had been broken away from the side of the mountain. They kept close to the steep cliff facing our friends, and glided up and down, and this way and that, with a lack of regularity that was quite confusing. And they seemed not to need places to rest their feet, but clung to the surface of the rock as a fly does to a window-pane, and were never still for a moment.

"Do not mind them," said Tiktok, as Dorothy shrank back. "They are only the Nomes."

"And what are Nomes?" asked the girl, half frightened.

"They are rock fair-ies, and serve the Nome King," replied the machine. "But they will do us no harm. You must call for the King, be-cause with-out him you can ne-ver find the en-trance to the pal-ace."

"YOU call," said Dorothy to Ozma.

Just then the Nomes laughed again, and the sound was so weird and disheartening that the twenty-six officers commanded the private to "right-about-face!" and they all started to run as fast as they could.

The Tin Woodman at once pursued his army and cried "halt!" and when they had stopped their flight he asked: "Where are you going?"

"I--I find I've forgotten the brush for my whiskers," said a general, trembling with fear. "S-s-so we are g-going back after it!"

"That is impossible," replied the Tin Woodman. "For the giant with the hammer would kill you all if you tried to pass him."

"Oh! I'd forgotten the giant," said the general, turning pale.

“You seem to forget a good many things,” remarked the Tin Woodman. “I hope you won’t forget that you are brave men.”

“Never!” cried the general, slapping his gold-embroidered chest.

“Never!” cried all the other officers, indignantly slapping their chests.

“For my part,” said the private, meekly, “I must obey my officers; so when I am told to run, I run; and when I am told to fight, I fight.”

“That is right,” agreed the Tin Woodman. “And now you must all come back to Ozma, and obey HER orders. And if you try to run away again I will have her reduce all the twenty-six officers to privates, and make the private your general.”

This terrible threat so frightened them that they at once returned to where Ozma was standing beside the Cowardly Lion.

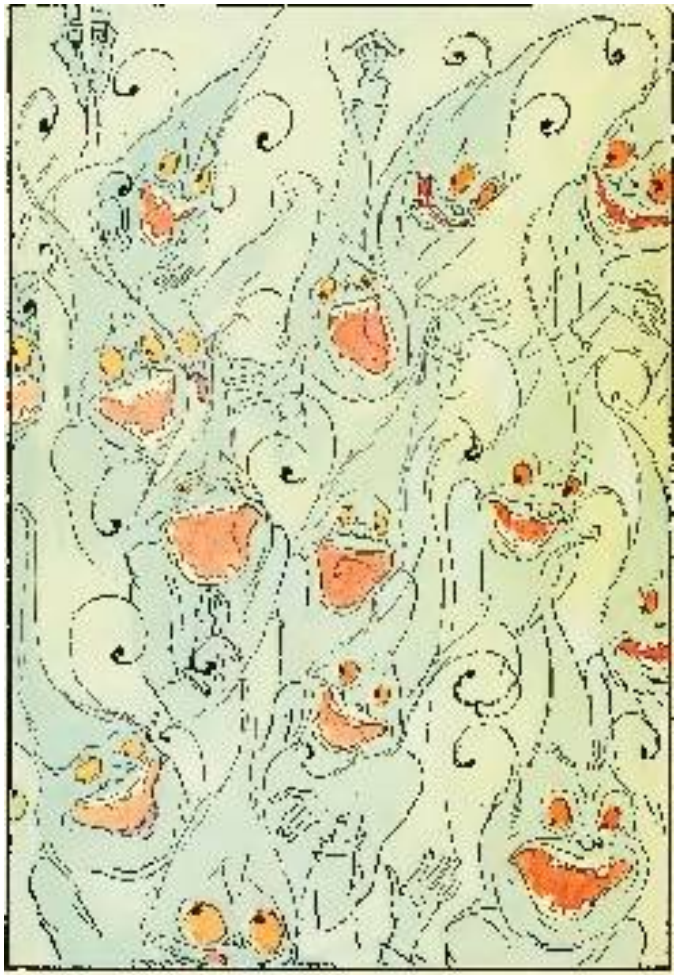
Then Ozma cried out in a loud voice:

“I demand that the Nome King appear to us!”

There was no reply, except that the shifting Nomes upon the mountain laughed in derision.

“You must not command the Nome King,” said Tiktok, “for you do not rule him, as you do your own peo-ple.”

So Ozma called again, saying:



ONLY THE MOCKING LAUGHTER REPLIED TO HER

"I request the Nome King to appear to us."

Only the mocking laughter replied to her, and the shadowy Nomes continued to flit here and there upon the rocky cliff.

"Try en-treat-y," said Tiktok to Ozma. "If he will not come at your re-quest, then the Nome King may list-en to your plead-ing."

Ozma looked around her proudly.

"Do you wish your ruler to plead with this wicked Nome King?" she asked. "Shall Ozma of Oz humble herself to a creature who lives in an underground kingdom?"

"No!" they all shouted, with big voices; and the Scarecrow added:

"If he will not come, we will dig him out of his hole, like a fox, and

conquer his stubbornness. But our sweet little ruler must always maintain her dignity, just as I maintain mine."

"I'm not afraid to plead with him," said Dorothy. "I'm only a little girl from Kansas, and we've got more dignity at home than we know what to do with. I'LL call the Nome King."

"Do," said the Hungry Tiger; "and if he makes hash of you I'll willingly eat you for breakfast tomorrow morning."

So Dorothy stepped forward and said:

"PLEASE Mr. Nome King, come here and see us."

The Nomes started to laugh again; but a low growl came from the mountain, and in a flash they had all vanished from sight and were silent.

Then a door in the rock opened, and a voice cried:

"Enter!"

"Isn't it a trick?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"Never mind," replied Ozma. "We came here to rescue the poor Queen of Ev and her ten children, and we must run some risks to do so."

"The Nome King is hon-est and good na-tured," said Tiktok. "You can trust him to do what is right."

So Ozma led the way, hand in hand with Dorothy, and they passed through the arched doorway of rock and entered a long passage which was lighted by jewels set in the walls and having lamps behind them. There was no one to escort them, or to show them the way, but all the party pressed through the passage until they came to a round, domed cavern that was

grandly furnished.

In the center of this room was a throne carved out of a solid boulder of rock, rude and rugged in shape but glittering with great rubies and diamonds and emeralds on every part of its surface. And upon the throne sat the Nome King.

This important monarch of the Underground World was a little fat man clothed in gray-brown garments that were the exact color of the rock throne in which he was seated. His bushy hair and flowing beard were also colored like the rocks, and so was his face. He wore no crown of any sort, and his only ornament was a broad, jewel-studded belt that encircled his fat little body. As for his features, they seemed kindly and good humored, and his eyes were turned merrily upon his visitors as Ozma and Dorothy stood before him with their followers ranged in close order behind them.

"Why, he looks just like Santa Claus--only he isn't the same color!" whispered Dorothy to her friend; but the Nome King heard the speech, and it made him laugh aloud.

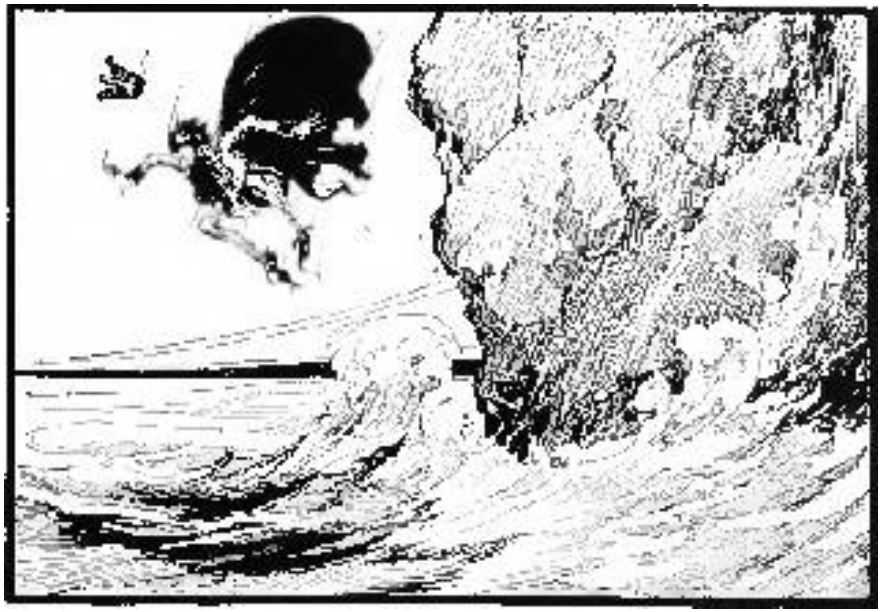
"'He had a red face and a round little belly
That shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly!'"

quoth the monarch, in a pleasant voice; and they could all see that he really did shake like jelly when he laughed.

Both Ozma and Dorothy were much relieved to find the Nome King so jolly, and a minute later he waved his right hand and the girls each found a cushioned stool at her side.

"Sit down, my dears," said the King, "and tell me why you have come all this way to see me, and what I can do to make you happy."

While they seated themselves the Nome King picked up a pipe, and taking a glowing red coal out of his pocket he placed it in the bowl of the pipe and began puffing out clouds of smoke that curled in rings above his head. Dorothy thought this made the little monarch look more like Santa Claus than ever; but Ozma now began speaking, and every one listened intently to her words.



"Your Majesty," said she, "I am the ruler of the Land of Oz, and I have come here to ask you to release the good Queen of Ev and her ten children, whom you have enchanted and hold as your prisoners."

"Oh, no; you are mistaken about that," replied the King. "They are not my prisoners, but my slaves, whom I purchased from the King of Ev."

"But that was wrong," said Ozma.

"According to the laws of Ev, the king can do no wrong," answered the monarch, eying a ring of smoke he had just blown from his mouth; "so that he had a perfect right to sell his family to me in exchange for a long life."

"You cheated him, though," declared Dorothy; "for the King of Ev did not have a long life. He jumped into the sea and was drowned."

"That was not my fault," said the Nome King, crossing his legs and smiling contentedly. "I gave him the long life, all right; but he destroyed it."

"Then how could it be a long life?" asked Dorothy.

"Easily enough," was the reply. "Now suppose, my dear, that I gave you a pretty doll in exchange for a lock of your hair, and that after you had received the doll you smashed it into pieces and destroyed it. Could you say that I had not given you a pretty doll?"

"No," answered Dorothy.

"And could you, in fairness, ask me to return to you the lock of hair, just because you had smashed the doll?"

"No," said Dorothy, again.

"Of course not," the Nome King returned. "Nor will I give up the Queen

and her children because the King of Ev destroyed his long life by jumping into the sea. They belong to me and I shall keep them."

"THEY BELONG TO ME AND I SHALL KEEP THEM"

"But you are treating them cruelly," said Ozma, who was much distressed by the King's refusal.

"In what way?" he asked.

"By making them your slaves," said she.

"Cruelty," remarked the monarch, puffing out wreathes of smoke and watching them float into the air, "is a thing I can't abide. So, as slaves must work hard, and the Queen of Ev and her children were delicate and tender, I transformed them all into articles of ornament and bric-a-brac and scattered them around the various rooms of my palace. Instead of being obliged to

labor, they merely decorate my apartments, and I really think I have treated them with great kindness."

"But what a dreadful fate is theirs!" exclaimed Ozma, earnestly. "And the Kingdom of Ev is in great need of its royal family to govern it. If you will liberate them, and restore them to their proper forms, I will give you ten ornaments to replace each one you lose."

The Nome King looked grave.

"Suppose I refuse?" he asked.

"Then," said Ozma, firmly, "I am here with my friends and my army to conquer your kingdom and oblige you to obey my wishes."

The Nome King laughed until he choked; and he choked until he coughed; and he coughed until his face turned from grayish-brown to bright red. And then he wiped his eyes with a rock-colored handkerchief and grew grave again.

"You are as brave as you are pretty, my dear," he said to Ozma. "But you have little idea of the extent of the task you have undertaken. Come with me for a moment."

He arose and took Ozma's hand, leading her to a little door at one side of the room. This he opened and they stepped out upon a balcony, from whence they obtained a wonderful view of the Underground World.

A vast cave extended for miles and miles under the mountain, and in every direction were furnaces and forges glowing brightly and Nomes hammering upon precious metals or polishing gleaming jewels. All around the walls of the cave were thousands of doors of silver and gold, built into the solid rock, and these extended in rows far away into the distance, as far as Ozma's eyes could follow them.

While the little maid from Oz gazed wonderingly upon this scene the Nome King uttered a shrill whistle, and at once all the silver and gold doors flew open and solid ranks of Nome soldiers marched out from every one. So great were their numbers that they quickly filled the immense underground cavern and forced the busy workmen to abandon their tasks.

Although this tremendous army consisted of rock-colored Nomes, all squat and fat, they were clothed in glittering armor of polished steel, inlaid with beautiful gems. Upon his brow each wore a brilliant electric light, and they bore sharp spears and swords and battle-axes of solid bronze. It was evident they were perfectly trained, for they stood in straight rows, rank after rank, with their weapons held erect and true, as if awaiting but the word of command to level them upon their foes.

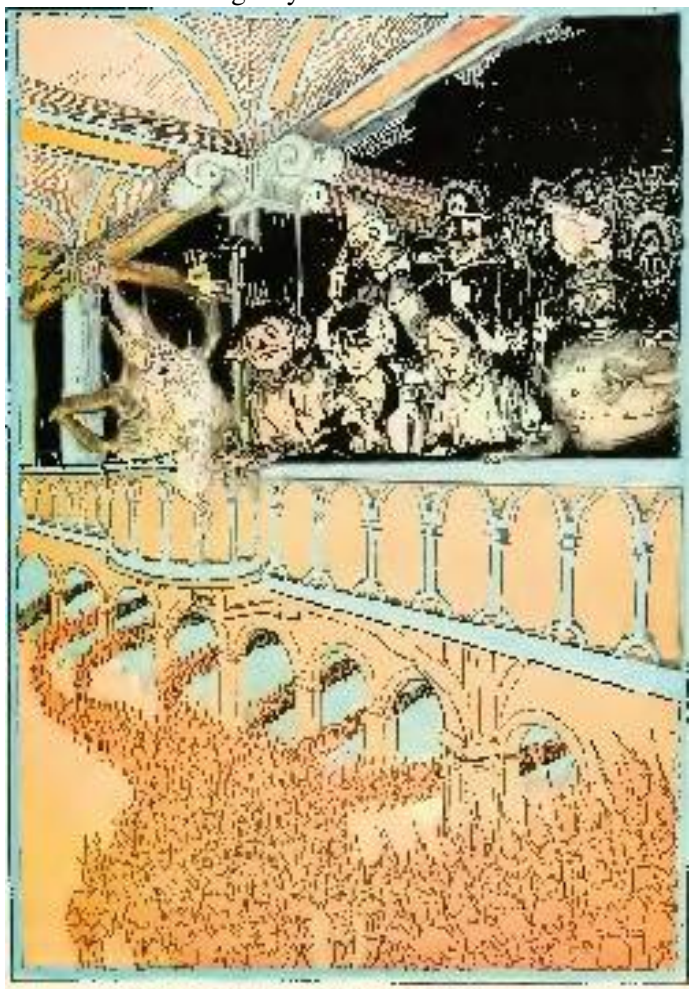
"This," said the Nome King, "is but a small part of my army. No ruler upon Earth has ever dared to fight me, and no ruler ever will, for I am too

powerful to oppose."

He whistled again, and at once the martial array filed through the silver and gold doorways and disappeared, after which the workmen again resumed their labors at the furnaces.

Then, sad and discouraged, Ozma of Oz turned to her friends, and the Nome King calmly reseated himself on his rock throne.

"It would be foolish for us to fight," the girl said to the Tin Woodman. "For our brave Twenty-Seven would be quickly destroyed. I'm sure I do not know how to act in this emergency."



THIS IS BUT A SMALL PART OF MY ARMY!

"Ask the King where his kitchen is," suggested the Tiger. "I'm hungry as a bear."

“I might pounce upon the King and tear him in pieces,” remarked the Cowardly Lion.

“Try it,” said the monarch, lighting his pipe with another hot coal which he took from his pocket.

The Lion crouched low and tried to spring upon the Nome King; but he hopped only a little way into the air and came down again in the same place, not being able to approach the throne by even an inch.

“It seems to me,” said the Scarecrow, thoughtfully, “that our best plan is to wheedle his Majesty into giving up his slaves, since he is too great a magician to oppose.”

“This is the most sensible thing any of you have suggested,” declared the Nome King. “It is folly to threaten me, but I’m so kind-hearted that I cannot stand coaxing or wheedling. If you really wish to accomplish anything by your journey, my dear Ozma, you must coax me.”

“Very well,” said Ozma, more cheerfully. “Let us be friends, and talk this over in a friendly manner.”

“To be sure,” agreed the King, his eyes twinkling merrily.

“I am very anxious,” she continued, “to liberate the Queen of Ev and her children who are now ornaments and bric-a-brac in your Majesty’s palace, and to restore them to their people. Tell me, sir, how this may be accomplished.”

The king remained thoughtful for a moment, after which he asked:

“Are you willing to take a few chances and risks yourself, in order to set free the people of Ev?”

“Yes, indeed!” answered Ozma, eagerly.

“Then,” said the Nome King, “I will make you this offer: You shall go alone and unattended into my palace and examine carefully all that the rooms contain. Then you shall have permission to touch eleven different objects, pronouncing at the time the word ‘Ev,’ and if any one of them, or more than one, proves to be the transformation of the Queen of Ev or any of her ten children, then they will instantly be restored to their true forms and may leave my palace and my kingdom in your company, without any objection whatever. It is possible for you, in this way, to free the entire eleven; but if you do not guess all the objects correctly, and some of the slaves remain transformed, then each one of your friends and followers may, in turn, enter the palace and have the same privileges I grant you.”

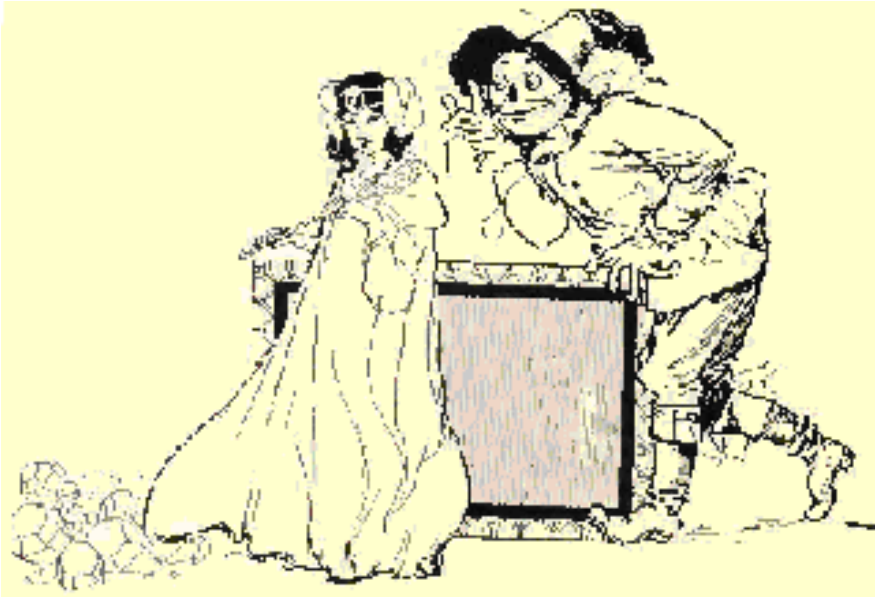
“Oh, thank you! thank you for this kind offer!” said Ozma, eagerly.

“I make but one condition,” added the Nome King, his eyes twinkling.

“What is it?” she enquired.

“If none of the eleven objects you touch proves to be the transformation of

any of the royal family of Ev, then, instead of freeing them, you will yourself become enchanted, and transformed into an article of bric-a-brac or an ornament. This is only fair and just, and is the risk you declared you were willing to take."



12. The Eleven Guesses

Hearing this condition imposed by the Nome King, Ozma became silent and thoughtful, and all her friends looked at her uneasily.

"Don't you do it!" exclaimed Dorothy. "If you guess wrong, you will be enslaved yourself."

"But I shall have eleven guesses," answered Ozma. "Surely I ought to guess one object in eleven correctly; and, if I do, I shall rescue one of the royal family and be safe myself. Then the rest of you may attempt it, and soon we shall free all those who are enslaved."

"What if we fail?" enquired the Scarecrow. "I'd look nice as a piece of

bric-a-brac, wouldn't I?"

"We must not fail!" cried Ozma, courageously. "Having come all this distance to free these poor people, it would be weak and cowardly in us to abandon the adventure. Therefore I will accept the Nome King's offer, and go at once into the royal palace."

"Come along, then, my dear," said the King, climbing down from his throne with some difficulty, because he was so fat; "I'll show you the way."

He approached a wall of the cave and waved his hand. Instantly an opening appeared, through which Ozma, after a smiling farewell to her friends, boldly passed.

She found herself in a splendid hall that was more beautiful and grand than anything she had ever beheld. The ceilings were composed of great arches that rose far above her head, and all the walls and floors were of polished marble exquisitely tinted in many colors. Thick velvet carpets were on the floor and heavy silken draperies covered the arches leading to the various rooms of the palace. The furniture was made of rare old woods richly carved and covered with delicate satins, and the entire palace was lighted by a mysterious rosy glow that seemed to come from no particular place but flooded each apartment with its soft and pleasing radiance.

Ozma passed from one room to another, greatly delighted by all she saw. The lovely palace had no other occupant, for the Nome King had left her at the entrance, which closed behind her, and in all the magnificent rooms there appeared to be no other person.

Upon the mantels, and on many shelves and brackets and tables, were clustered ornaments of every description, seemingly made out of all sorts of metals, glass, china, stones and marbles. There were vases, and figures of men and animals, and graven platters and bowls, and mosaics of precious gems, and many other things. Pictures, too, were on the walls, and the underground palace was quite a museum of rare and curious and costly objects.

After her first hasty examination of the rooms Ozma began to wonder which of all the numerous ornaments they contained were the transformations of the royal family of Ev. There was nothing to guide her, for everything seemed without a spark of life. So she must guess blindly; and for the first time the girl came to realize how dangerous was her task, and how likely she was to lose her own freedom in striving to free others from the bondage of the Nome King. No wonder the cunning monarch laughed good naturedly with his visitors, when he knew how easily they might be entrapped.

OZMA SHUT HER EYES TIGHTLY AND ADVANCED

But Ozma, having undertaken the venture, would not abandon it. She looked at a silver candelabra that had ten branches, and thought: “This may be the Queen of Ev and her ten children.” So she touched it and uttered aloud the word “Ev,” as the Nome King had instructed her to do when she guessed. But the candelabra remained as it was before.

Then she wandered into another room and touched a china lamb, thinking it might be one of the children she sought. But again she was unsuccessful. Three guesses; four guesses; five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten she made, and still not one of them was right!

The girl shivered a little and grew pale even under the rosy light; for now but one guess remained, and her own fate depended upon the result.

She resolved not to be hasty, and strolled through all the rooms once more, gazing earnestly upon the various ornaments and trying to decide which she would touch. Finally, in despair, she decided to leave it entirely to chance. She faced the doorway of a room, shut her eyes tightly, and then, thrusting aside the heavy draperies, she advanced blindly with her right arm outstretched before her.

Slowly, softly she crept forward until her hand came in contact with an object upon a small round table. She did not know what it was, but in a low voice she pronounced the word "Ev."

The rooms were quite empty of life after that. The Nome King had gained a new ornament. For upon the edge of the table rested a pretty grasshopper, that seemed to have been formed from a single emerald. It was all that remained of Ozma of Oz.

In the throne room just beyond the palace the Nome King suddenly looked up and smiled.

"Next!" he said, in his pleasant voice.

Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman, who had been sitting in anxious silence, each gave a start of dismay and stared into one another's eyes.

"Has she failed?" asked Tiktok.

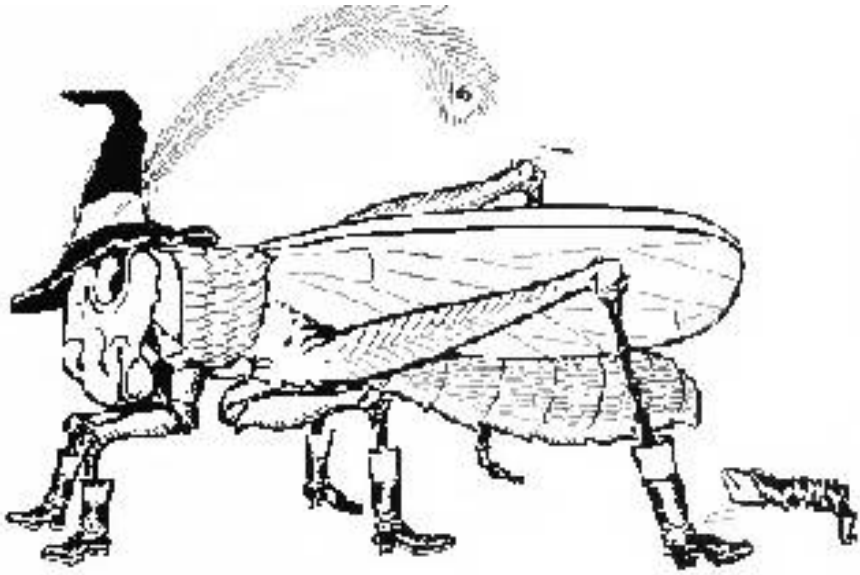
"So it seems," answered the little monarch, cheerfully. "But that is no reason one of you should not succeed. The next may have twelve guesses, instead of eleven, for there are now twelve persons transformed into ornaments. Well, well! Which of you goes next?"

"I'll go," said Dorothy.

"Not so," replied the Tin Woodman. "As commander of Ozma's army, it is my privilege to follow her and attempt her rescue."

"Away you go, then," said the Scarecrow. "But be careful, old friend."

"I will," promised the Tin Woodman; and then he followed the Nome King to the entrance to the palace and the rock closed behind him.



13. The Nome King Laughs

In a moment the King returned to his throne and relighted his pipe, and the rest of the little band of adventurers settled themselves for another long wait. They were greatly disheartened by the failure of their girl Ruler, and the knowledge that she was now an ornament in the Nome King's palace--a dreadful, creepy place in spite of all its magnificence. Without their little leader they did not know what to do next, and each one, down to the trembling private of the army, began to fear he would soon be more ornamental than useful.

Suddenly the Nome King began laughing.

“Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho!”

“What’s happened?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Why, your friend, the Tin Woodman, has become the funniest thing you can imagine,” replied the King, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes. “No one would ever believe he could make such an amusing ornament. Next!”

They gazed at each other with sinking hearts. One of the generals began to weep dolefully.

“What are you crying for?” asked the Scarecrow, indignant at such a display of weakness.

“He owed me six weeks back pay,” said the general, “and I hate to lose him.”

“Then you shall go and find him,” declared the Scarecrow.

“Me!” cried the general, greatly alarmed.

“Certainly. It is your duty to follow your commander. March!”

“I won’t,” said the general. “I’d like to, of course; but I just simply WON’T.”

The Scarecrow looked enquiringly at the Nome King.

“Never mind,” said the jolly monarch. “If he doesn’t care to enter the palace and make his guesses I’ll throw him into one of my fiery furnaces.”

“I’ll go!--of course I’m going,” yelled the general, as quick as scat. “Where is the entrance--where is it? Let me go at once!”

So the Nome King escorted him into the palace, and again returned to await the result. What the general did, no one can tell; but it was not long before the King called for the next victim, and a colonel was forced to try his fortune.

Thus, one after another, all of the twenty-six officers filed into the palace and made their guesses--and became ornaments.

Meantime the King ordered refreshments to be served to those waiting, and at his command a rudely shaped Nome entered, bearing a tray. This Nome was not unlike the others that Dorothy had seen, but he wore a heavy gold chain around his neck to show that he was the Chief Steward of the Nome King, and he assumed an air of much importance, and even told his majesty not to eat too much cake late at night, or he would be ill.

Dorothy, however, was hungry, and she was not afraid of being ill; so she ate several cakes and found them good, and also she drank a cup of excellent coffee made of a richly flavored clay, browned in the furnaces and then ground fine, and found it most refreshing and not at all muddy.

Of all the party which had started upon this adventure, the little Kansas girl was now left alone with the Scarecrow, Tiktok, and the private for

counsellors and companions. Of course the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger were still there, but they, having also eaten some of the cakes, had gone to sleep at one side of the cave, while upon the other side stood the Sawhorse, motionless and silent, as became a mere thing of wood. Billina had quietly walked around and picked up the crumbs of cake which had been scattered, and now, as it was long after bed-time, she tried to find some dark place in which to go to sleep.

Presently the hen espied a hollow underneath the King's rocky throne, and crept into it unnoticed. She could still hear the chattering of those around her, but it was almost dark underneath the throne, so that soon she had fallen fast asleep.

"Next!" called the King, and the private, whose turn it was to enter the fatal palace, shook hands with Dorothy and the Scarecrow and bade them a sorrowful good-bye, and passed through the rocky portal.

They waited a long time, for the private was in no hurry to become an ornament and made his guesses very slowly. The Nome King, who seemed to know, by some magical power, all that took place in his beautiful rooms of his palace, grew impatient finally and declared he would sit up no longer.

"I love ornaments," said he, "but I can wait until tomorrow to get more of them; so, as soon as that stupid private is transformed, we will all go to bed and leave the job to be finished in the morning."

"Is it so very late?" asked Dorothy.

"Why, it is after midnight," said the King, "and that strikes me as being late enough. There is neither night nor day in my kingdom, because it is under the earth's surface, where the sun does not shine. But we have to sleep, just the same as the up-stairs people do, and for my part I'm going to bed in a few minutes."

Indeed, it was not long after this that the private made his last guess. Of course he guessed wrongly, and of course he at once became an ornament. So the King was greatly pleased, and clapped his hands to summon his Chief Steward.

"Show these guests to some of the sleeping apartments," he commanded, "and be quick about it, too, for I'm dreadfully sleepy myself."

"You've no business to sit up so late," replied the Steward, gruffly. "You'll be as cross as a griffin tomorrow morning."

SOON SHE HAD FALLEN FAST ASLEEP

His Majesty made no answer to this remark, and the Chief Steward led Dorothy through another doorway into a long hall, from which several plain but comfortable sleeping rooms opened. The little girl was given the first room, and the Scarecrow and Tiktok the next--although they never slept--and the Lion and the Tiger the third. The Sawhorse hobbled after the Steward into a fourth room, to stand stiffly in the center of it until morning. Each night was rather a bore to the Scarecrow, Tiktok and the Sawhorse; but they had learned from experience to pass the time patiently and quietly, since all their friends who were made of flesh had to sleep and did not like to be disturbed.

When the Chief Steward had left them alone the Scarecrow remarked,

sadly:

“I am in great sorrow over the loss of my old comrade, the Tin Woodman. We have had many dangerous adventures together, and escaped them all, and now it grieves me to know he has become an ornament, and is lost to me forever.”

“He was al-ways an or-na-ment to so-ci-e-ty,” said Tiktok.

“True; but now the Nome King laughs at him, and calls him the funniest ornament in all the palace. It will hurt my poor friend’s pride to be laughed at,” continued the Scarecrow, sadly.

“We will make rath-er ab-surd or-na-ments, our-selves, to-mor-row,” observed the machine, in his monotonous voice.

Just then Dorothy ran into their room, in a state of great anxiety, crying:

“Where’s Billina? Have you seen Billina? Is she here?”

“No,” answered the Scarecrow.

“Then what has become of her?” asked the girl.

“Why, I thought she was with you,” said the Scarecrow. “Yet I do not remember seeing the yellow hen since she picked up the crumbs of cake.”

“We must have left her in the room where the King’s throne is,” decided Dorothy, and at once she turned and ran down the hall to the door through which they had entered. But it was fast closed and locked on the other side, and the heavy slab of rock proved to be so thick that no sound could pass through it. So Dorothy was forced to return to her chamber.

The Cowardly Lion stuck his head into her room to try to console the girl for the loss of her feathered friend.

“The yellow hen is well able to take care of herself,” said he; “so don’t worry about her, but try to get all the sleep you can. It has been a long and weary day, and you need rest.”

“I’ll prob’ly get lots of rest tomorrow, when I become an orn’ment,” said Dorothy, sleepily. But she lay down upon her couch, nevertheless, and in spite of all her worries was soon in the land of dreams.

14. Dorothy Tries to be Brave

Meantime the Chief Steward had returned to the throne room, where he said to the King:

"You are a fool to waste so much time upon these people."

"What!" cried his Majesty, in so enraged a voice that it awoke Billina, who was asleep under his throne. "How dare you call me a fool?"

"Because I like to speak the truth," said the Steward. "Why didn't you enchant them all at once, instead of allowing them to go one by one into the palace and guess which ornaments are the Queen of Ev and her children?"

"Why, you stupid rascal, it is more fun this way," returned the King, "and

it serves to keep me amused for a long time."

"But suppose some of them happen to guess aright," persisted the Steward; "then you would lose your old ornaments and these new ones, too."

"There is no chance of their guessing aright," replied the monarch, with a laugh. "How could they know that the Queen of Ev and her family are all ornaments of a royal purple color?"

"But there are no other purple ornaments in the palace," said the Steward.

"There are many other colors, however, and the purple ones are scattered throughout the rooms, and are of many different shapes and sizes. Take my word for it, Steward, they will never think of choosing the purple ornaments."

Billina, squatting under the throne, had listened carefully to all this talk, and now chuckled softly to herself as she heard the King disclose his secret.

"Still, you are acting foolishly by running the chance," continued the Steward, roughly; "and it is still more foolish of you to transform all those people from Oz into green ornaments."

"HOW DARE YOU CALL ME A FOOL?"

"I did that because they came from the Emerald City," replied the King; "and I had no green ornaments in my collection until now. I think they will look quite pretty, mixed with the others. Don't you?"

The Steward gave an angry grunt.

"Have your own way, since you are the King," he growled. "But if you come to grief through your carelessness, remember that I told you so. If I wore the magic belt which enables you to work all your transformations, and gives you so much other power, I am sure I would make a much wiser and better King than you are."

"Oh, cease your tiresome chatter!" commanded the King, getting angry again. "Because you are my Chief Steward you have an idea you can scold

me as much as you please. But the very next time you become impudent, I will send you to work in the furnaces, and get another Nome to fill your place. Now follow me to my chamber, for I am going to bed. And see that I am wakened early tomorrow morning. I want to enjoy the fun of transforming the rest of these people into ornaments."

"What color will you make the Kansas girl?" asked the Steward.

"Gray, I think," said his Majesty.

"And the Scarecrow and the machine man?"

"Oh, they shall be of solid gold, because they are so ugly in real life."

Then the voices died away, and Billina knew that the King and his Steward had left the room. She fixed up some of her tail feathers that were not straight, and then tucked her head under her wing again and went to sleep.

In the morning Dorothy and the Lion and Tiger were given their breakfast in their rooms, and afterward joined the King in his throne room. The Tiger complained bitterly that he was half starved, and begged to go into the palace and become an ornament, so that he would no longer suffer the pangs of hunger.

"Haven't you had your breakfast?" asked the Nome King.

"Oh, I had just a bite," replied the beast. "But what good is a bite, to a hungry tiger?"

"He ate seventeen bowls of porridge, a platter full of fried sausages, eleven loaves of bread and twenty-one mince pies," said the Steward.

"What more do you want?" demanded the King.

"A fat baby. I want a fat baby," said the Hungry Tiger. "A nice, plump, juicy, tender, fat baby. But, of course, if I had one, my conscience would not allow me to eat it. So I'll have to be an ornament and forget my hunger."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the King. "I'll have no clumsy beasts enter my palace, to overturn and break all my pretty nick-nacks. When the rest of your friends are transformed you can return to the upper world, and go about your business."

"As for that, we have no business, when our friends are gone," said the Lion. "So we do not care much what becomes of us."

Dorothy begged to be allowed to go first into the palace, but Tiktok firmly maintained that the slave should face danger before the mistress. The Scarecrow agreed with him in that, so the Nome King opened the door for the machine man, who tramped into the palace to meet his fate. Then his Majesty returned to his throne and puffed his pipe so contentedly that a small cloud of smoke formed above his head.

Bye and bye he said:

“I’m sorry there are so few of you left. Very soon, now, my fun will be over, and then for amusement I shall have nothing to do but admire my new ornaments.”

THE SOME KING PUFFED HIS PIPE.

“It seems to me,” said Dorothy, “that you are not so honest as you pretend to be.”

“How’s that?” asked the King.

“Why, you made us think it would be easy to guess what ornaments the people of Ev were changed into.”

“It IS easy,” declared the monarch, “if one is a good guesser. But it appears that the members of your party are all poor guessers.”

“What is Tiktok doing now?” asked the girl, uneasily.

“Nothing,” replied the King, with a frown. “He is standing perfectly still, in the middle of a room.”

“Oh, I expect he’s run down,” said Dorothy. “I forgot to wind him up this morning. How many guesses has he made?”

“All that he is allowed except one,” answered the King. “Suppose you go in and wind him up, and then you can stay there and make your own guesses.”

“All right,” said Dorothy.

“It is my turn next,” declared the Scarecrow.

“Why, you don’t want to go away and leave me all alone, do you?” asked the girl. “Besides, if I go now I can wind up Tiktok, so that he can make his last guess.”

“Very well, then,” said the Scarecrow, with a sigh. “Run along, little Dorothy, and may good luck go with you!”

So Dorothy, trying to be brave in spite of her fears, passed through the doorway into the gorgeous rooms of the palace. The stillness of the place awed her, at first, and the child drew short breaths, and pressed her hand to her heart, and looked all around with wondering eyes.

Yes, it was a beautiful place; but enchantments lurked in every nook and corner, and she had not yet grown accustomed to the wizardries of these fairy countries, so different from the quiet and sensible common-places of her own native land.

Slowly she passed through several rooms until she came upon Tiktok, standing motionless. It really seemed, then, that she had found a friend in this mysterious palace, so she hastened to wind up the machine man’s action and speech and thoughts.

“Thank you, Dor-oth-y,” were his first words. “I have now one more guess to make.”

“Oh, be very careful, Tiktok; won’t you?” cried the girl.

“Yes. But the Nome King has us in his power, and he has set a trap for us. I fear we are all lost.” he answered.

“I fear so, too,” said Dorothy, sadly.

“If Smith & Tin-ker had giv-en me a guess-ing clock-work at-tach-ment,” continued Tiktok, “I might have de-fied the Nome King. But my thoughts are plain and sim-ple, and are not of much use in this case.”

“Do the best you can,” said Dorothy, encouragingly, “and if you fail I will watch and see what shape you are changed into.”

So Tiktok touched a yellow glass vase that had daisies painted on one side, and he spoke at the same time the word “Ev.”

In a flash the machine man had disappeared, and although the girl looked

quickly in every direction, she could not tell which of the many ornaments the room contained had a moment before been her faithful friend and servant.

So all she could do was to accept the hopeless task set her, and make her guesses and abide by the result.

"It can't hurt very much," she thought, "for I haven't heard any of them scream or cry out--not even the poor officers. Dear me! I wonder if Uncle Henry or Aunt Em will ever know I have become an orn'ment in the Nome King's palace, and must stand forever and ever in one place and look pretty--'cept when I'm moved to be dusted. It isn't the way I thought I'd turn out, at all; but I s'pose it can't be helped."

She walked through all the rooms once more, and examined with care all the objects they contained; but there were so many, they bewildered her, and she decided, after all, as Ozma had done, that it could be only guess work at the best, and that the chances were much against her guessing aright.

Timidly she touched an alabaster bowl and said: "Ev."

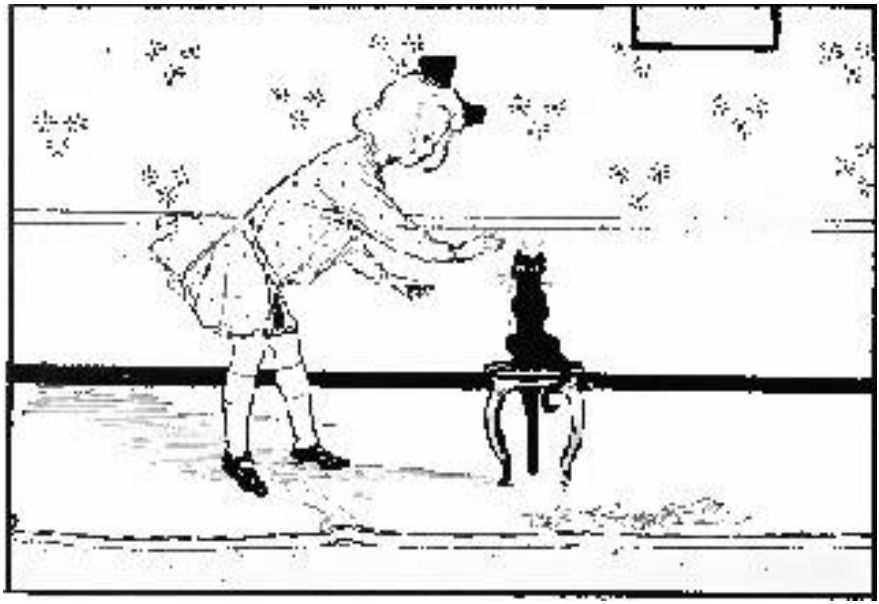
"That's one failure, anyhow," she thought. "But how am I to know which thing is enchanted, and which is not?"

Next she touched the image of a purple kitten that stood on the corner of a mantel, and as she pronounced the word "Ev" the kitten disappeared, and a pretty, fair-haired boy stood beside her. At the same time a bell rang somewhere in the distance, and as Dorothy started back, partly in surprise and partly in joy, the little one exclaimed:

"Where am I? And who are you? And what has happened to me?"

"Well, I declare!" said Dorothy. "I've really done it."

"Done what?" asked the boy.



"Saved myself from being an ornament," replied the girl, with a laugh, "and saved you from being forever a purple kitten."

"A purple kitten?" he repeated. "There IS no such thing."

"I know," she answered. "But there was, a minute ago. Don't you remember standing on a corner of the mantel?"

"Of course not. I am a Prince of Ev, and my name is Evring," the little one announced, proudly. "But my father, the King, sold my mother and all her children to the cruel ruler of the Nomes, and after that I remember nothing at all."

"A purple kitten can't be 'spected to remember, Evring," said Dorothy. "But now you are yourself again, and I'm going to try to save some of your brothers and sisters, and perhaps your mother, as well. So come with me."

She seized the child's hand and eagerly hurried here and there, trying to decide which object to choose next. The third guess was another failure, and so was the fourth and the fifth.

Little Evring could not imagine what she was doing, but he trotted along beside her very willingly, for he liked the new companion he had found.

Dorothy's further quest proved unsuccessful; but after her first disappointment was over, the little girl was filled with joy and thankfulness to think that after all she had been able to save one member of the royal family of Ev, and could restore the little Prince to his sorrowing country. Now she might return to the terrible Nome King in safety, carrying with her the prize she had won in the person of the fair-haired boy.

So she retraced her steps until she found the entrance to the palace, and as she approached, the massive doors of rock opened of their own accord, allowing both Dorothy and Evring to pass the portals and enter the throne room.

15. Billina Frightens the Nome King

Now when Dorothy had entered the palace to make her guesses and the Scarecrow was left with the Nome King, the two sat in moody silence for several minutes. Then the monarch exclaimed, in a tone of satisfaction:

"Very good!"

"Who is very good?" asked the Scarecrow.

"The machine man. He won't need to be wound up any more, for he has now become a very neat ornament. Very neat, indeed."

"How about Dorothy?" the Scarecrow enquired.

"Oh, she will begin to guess, pretty soon," said the King, cheerfully. "And then she will join my collection, and it will be your turn."

The good Scarecrow was much distressed by the thought that his little friend was about to suffer the fate of Ozma and the rest of their party; but

while he sat in gloomy reverie a shrill voice suddenly cried:

“Kut, kut, kut--ka-daw-kutt! Kut, kut, kut--ka-daw-kutt!”

The Nome King nearly jumped off his seat, he was so startled.

“Good gracious! What’s that?” he yelled.

“Why, it’s Billina,” said the Scarecrow.

“What do you mean by making a noise like that?” shouted the King, angrily, as the yellow hen came from under the throne and strutted proudly about the room.

“I’ve got a right to cackle, I guess,” replied Billina. “I’ve just laid my egg.”

“What! Laid an egg! In my throne room! How dare you do such a thing?” asked the King, in a voice of fury.

“I lay eggs wherever I happen to be,” said the hen, ruffling her feathers and then shaking them into place.

“But--thunder-ation! Don’t you know that eggs are poison?” roared the King, while his rock-colored eyes stuck out in great terror.

"DON'T YOU KNOW THAT EGGS ARE POISON?"

"Poison! well, I declare," said Billina, indignantly. "I'll have you know all my eggs are warranted strictly fresh and up to date. Poison, indeed!"

"You don't understand," retorted the little monarch, nervously. "Eggs belong only to the outside world--to the world on the earth's surface, where you came from. Here, in my underground kingdom, they are rank poison, as I said, and we Nomes can't bear them around."

"Well, you'll have to bear this one around," declared Billina; "for I've laid it."

"Where?" asked the King.

"Under your throne," said the hen.

The King jumped three feet into the air, so anxious was he to get away

from the throne.

"Take it away! Take it away at once!" he shouted.

"I can't," said Billina. "I haven't any hands."

"I'll take the egg," said the Scarecrow. "I'm making a collection of Billina's eggs. There's one in my pocket now, that she laid yesterday."

Hearing this, the monarch hastened to put a good distance between himself and the Scarecrow, who was about to reach under the throne for the egg when the hen suddenly cried:

"Stop!"

"What's wrong?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Don't take the egg unless the King will allow me to enter the palace and guess as the others have done," said Billina.

"Pshaw!" returned the King. "You're only a hen. How could you guess my enchantments?"

"I can try, I suppose," said Billina. "And, if I fail, you will have another ornament."

"A pretty ornament you'd make, wouldn't you?" growled the King. "But you shall have your way. It will properly punish you for daring to lay an egg in my presence. After the Scarecrow is enchanted you shall follow him into the palace. But how will you touch the objects?"

"With my claws," said the hen; "and I can speak the word 'Ev' as plainly as anyone. Also I must have the right to guess the enchantments of my

friends, and to release them if I succeed."

"Very well," said the King. "You have my promise."

"Then," said Billina to the Scarecrow, "you may get the egg."

He knelt down and reached underneath the throne and found the egg, which he placed in another pocket of his jacket, fearing that if both eggs were in one pocket they would knock together and get broken.

Just then a bell above the throne rang briskly, and the King gave another nervous jump.

"Well, well!" said he, with a rueful face; "the girl has actually done it."

"Done what?" asked the Scarecrow.

"She has made one guess that is right, and broken one of my neatest enchantments. By ricketty, it's too bad! I never thought she would do it."

"BY BUCKETTY, IT'S TOO BAD!"

"Do I understand that she will now return to us in safety?" enquired the Scarecrow, joyfully wrinkling his painted face into a broad smile.

"Of course," said the King, fretfully pacing up and down the room. "I always keep my promises, no matter how foolish they are. But I shall make an ornament of the yellow hen to replace the one I have just lost."

"Perhaps you will, and perhaps you won't," murmured Billina, calmly. "I may surprise you by guessing right."

"Guessing right?" snapped the King. "How could you guess right, where your betters have failed, you stupid fowl?"

Billina did not care to answer this question, and a moment later the doors flew open and Dorothy entered, leading the little Prince Evring by the hand.

The Scarecrow welcomed the girl with a close embrace, and he would have embraced Evring, too, in his delight. But the little Prince was shy, and shrank away from the painted Scarecrow because he did not yet know his many excellent qualities.

But there was little time for the friends to talk, because the Scarecrow must now enter the palace. Dorothy's success had greatly encouraged him, and they both hoped he would manage to make at least one correct guess.

However, he proved as unfortunate as the others except Dorothy, and although he took a good deal of time to select his objects, not one did the poor Scarecrow guess aright.

So he became a solid gold card-receiver, and the beautiful but terrible palace awaited its next visitor.

"It's all over," remarked the King, with a sigh of satisfaction; "and it has been a very amusing performance, except for the one good guess the Kansas girl made. I am richer by a great many pretty ornaments."

"It is my turn, now," said Billina, briskly.

"Oh, I'd forgotten you," said the King. "But you needn't go if you don't wish to. I will be generous, and let you off."

"No you won't," replied the hen. "I insist upon having my guesses, as you promised."

"Then go ahead, you absurd feathered fool!" grumbled the King, and he caused the opening that led to the palace to appear once more.

"Don't go, Billina," said Dorothy, earnestly. "It isn't easy to guess those orn'ments, and only luck saved me from being one myself. Stay with me and we'll go back to the Land of Ev together. I'm sure this little Prince will give us a home."

"Indeed I will," said Evring, with much dignity.

"Don't worry, my dear," cried Billina, with a cluck that was meant for a laugh. "I may not be human, but I'm no fool, if I AM a chicken."

"Oh, Billina!" said Dorothy, "you haven't been a chicken in a long time. Not since you--you've been--grown up."

"Perhaps that's true," answered Billina, thoughtfully. "But if a Kansas farmer sold me to some one, what would he call me?--a hen or a chicken!"

"You are not a Kansas farmer, Billina," replied the girl, "and you said--"

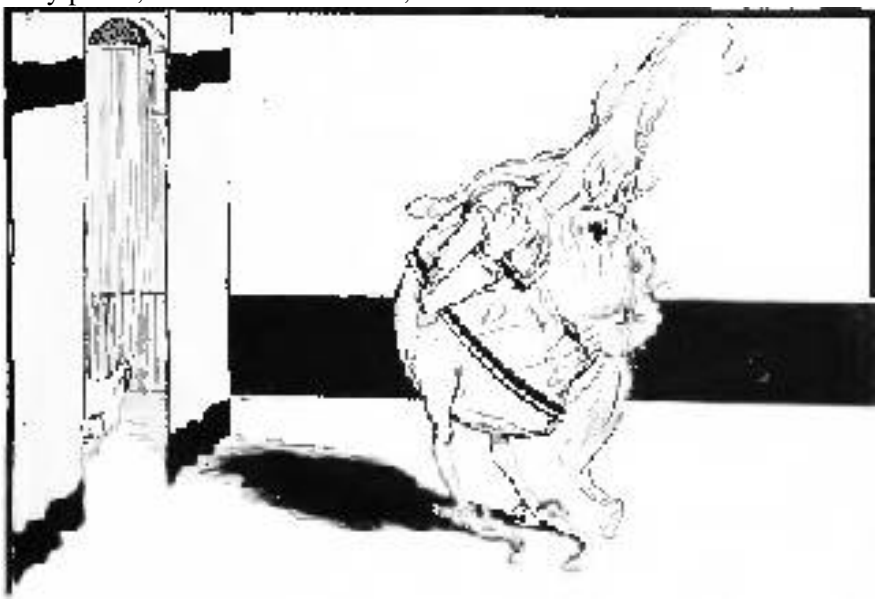
"Never mind that, Dorothy. I'm going. I won't say good-bye, because I'm coming back. Keep up your courage, for I'll see you a little later."

Then Billina gave several loud "cluck-clucks" that seemed to make the fat little King MORE nervous than ever, and marched through the entrance into the enchanted palace.

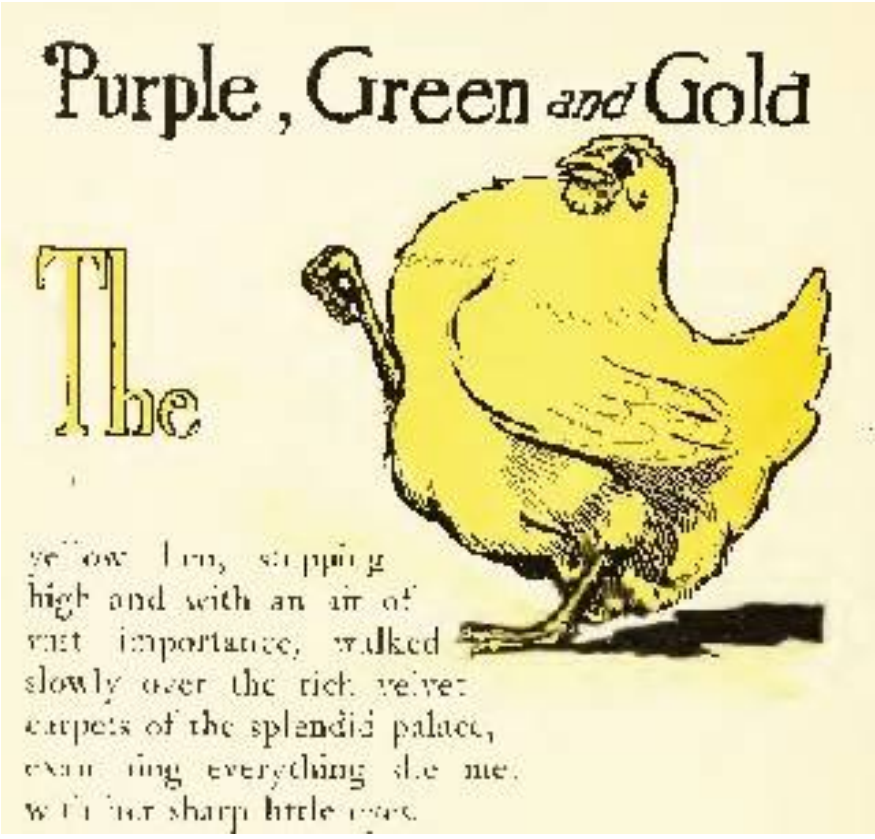
"I hope I've seen the last of THAT bird," declared the monarch, seating

himself again in his throne and mopping the perspiration from his forehead with his rock-colored handkerchief. “Hens are bothersome enough at their best, but when they can talk they’re simply dreadful.”

“Billina’s my friend,” said Dorothy quietly. “She may not always be ‘zactly polite; but she MEANS well, I’m sure.”



16. Purple, Green, and Gold



The yellow hen, stepping high and with an air of vast importance, walked slowly over the rich velvet carpets of the splendid palace, examining everything she met with her sharp little eyes.

Billina had a right to feel important; for she alone shared the Nome King's secret and knew how to tell the objects that were transformations from those that had never been alive. She was very sure that her guesses would be correct, but before she began to make them she was curious to behold all the magnificence of this underground palace, which was perhaps one of the most splendid and beautiful places in any fairyland.

As she went through the rooms she counted the purple ornaments; and although some were small and hidden in queer places, Billina spied them all, and found the entire ten scattered about the various rooms. The green ornaments she did not bother to count, for she thought she could find them all when the time came.

Finally, having made a survey of the entire palace and enjoyed its

splendor, the yellow hen returned to one of the rooms where she had noticed a large purple footstool. She placed a claw upon this and said “Ev,” and at once the footstool vanished and a lovely lady, tall and slender and most beautifully robed, stood before her.

The lady’s eyes were round with astonishment for a moment, for she could not remember her transformation, nor imagine what had restored her to life.

“Good morning, ma’am,” said Billina, in her sharp voice. “You’re looking quite well, considering your age.”

“Who speaks?” demanded the Queen of Ev, drawing herself up proudly.

“Why, my name’s Bill, by rights,” answered the hen, who was now perched upon the back of a chair; “although Dorothy has put scollops on it and made it Billina. But the name doesn’t matter. I’ve saved you from the Nome King, and you are a slave no longer.”

“Then I thank you for the gracious favor,” said the Queen, with a graceful courtesy. “But, my children--tell me, I beg of you--where are my children?” and she clasped her hands in anxious entreaty.

“Don’t worry,” advised Billina, pecking at a tiny bug that was crawling over the chair back. “Just at present they are out of mischief and perfectly safe, for they can’t even wiggle.”

“What mean you, O kindly stranger?” asked the Queen, striving to repress her anxiety.

“They’re enchanted,” said Billina, “just as you have been--all, that is, except the little fellow Dorothy picked out. And the chances are that they have been good boys and girls for some time, because they couldn’t help it.”

“Oh, my poor darlings!” cried the Queen, with a sob of anguish.

“Not at all,” returned the hen. “Don’t let their condition make you unhappy, ma’am, because I’ll soon have them crowding ‘round to bother and worry you as naturally as ever. Come with me, if you please, and I’ll show you how pretty they look.”

She flew down from her perch and walked into the next room, the Queen following. As she passed a low table a small green grasshopper caught her eye, and instantly Billina pounced upon it and snapped it up in her sharp bill. For grasshoppers are a favorite food with hens, and they usually must be caught quickly, before they can hop away. It might easily have been the end of Ozma of Oz, had she been a real grasshopper instead of an emerald one. But Billina found the grasshopper hard and lifeless, and suspecting it was not good to eat she quickly dropped it instead of letting it slide down her throat.

“I might have known better,” she muttered to herself, “for where there is no grass there can be no live grasshoppers. This is probably one of the

King's transformations."

A moment later she approached one of the purple ornaments, and while the Queen watched her curiously the hen broke the Nome King's enchantment and a sweet-faced girl, whose golden hair fell in a cloud over her shoulders, stood beside them.

"Evanna!" cried the Queen, "my own Evanna!" and she clasped the girl to her bosom and covered her face with kisses.

"That's all right," said Billina, contentedly. "Am I a good guesser, Mr. Nome King? Well, I guess!"

Then she disenchanted another girl, whom the Queen addressed as Evrose, and afterwards a boy named Evardo, who was older than his brother Evring. Indeed, the yellow hen kept the good Queen exclaiming and embracing for some time, until five Princesses and four Princes, all looking very much alike except for the difference in size, stood in a row beside their happy mother.

The Princesses were named, Evanna, Evrose, Evella, Evirene and Evedna, while the Princes were Evrob, Evington, Evardo and Evroland. Of these Evardo was the eldest and would inherit his father's throne and be crowned King of Ev when he returned to his own country. He was a grave and quiet youth, and would doubtless rule his people wisely and with justice.

Billina, having restored all of the royal family of Ev to their proper forms, now began to select the green ornaments which were the transformations of the people of Oz. She had little trouble in finding these, and before long all the twenty-six officers, as well as the private, were gathered around the yellow hen, joyfully congratulating her upon their release. The thirty-seven people who were now alive in the rooms of the palace knew very well that they owed their freedom to the cleverness of the yellow hen, and they were earnest in thanking her for saving them from the magic of the Nome King.

THE QUEEN OF EV THANKS BILLINA

"Now," said Billina, "I must find Ozma. She is sure to be here, somewhere, and of course she is green, being from Oz. So look around, you stupid soldiers, and help me in my search."

For a while, however, they could discover nothing more that was green. But the Queen, who had kissed all her nine children once more and could now find time to take an interest in what was going on, said to the hen:

"Mayhap, my gentle friend, it is the grasshopper whom you seek."

"Of course it's the grasshopper!" exclaimed Billina. "I declare, I'm nearly as stupid as these brave soldiers. Wait here for me, and I'll go back and get it."

So she went into the room where she had seen the grasshopper, and

presently Ozma of Oz, as lovely and dainty as ever, entered and approached the Queen of Ev, greeting her as one high born princess greets another.

"But where are my friends, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman?" asked the girl Ruler, when these courtesies had been exchanged.

"I'll hunt them up," replied Billina. "The Scarecrow is solid gold, and so is Tiktok; but I don't exactly know what the Tin Woodman is, because the Nome King said he had been transformed into something funny."

Ozma eagerly assisted the hen in her quest, and soon the Scarecrow and the machine man, being ornaments of shining gold, were discovered and restored to their accustomed forms. But, search as they might, in no place could they find a funny ornament that might be the transformation of the Tin Woodman.

"Only one thing can be done," said Ozma, at last, "and that is to return to the Nome King and oblige him to tell us what has become of our friend."

"Perhaps he won't," suggested Billina.

"He must," returned Ozma, firmly. "The King has not treated us honestly, for under the mask of fairness and good nature he entrapped us all, and we would have been forever enchanted had not our wise and clever friend, the yellow hen, found a way to save us."

"The King is a villain," declared the Scarecrow.

"His laugh is worse than another man's frown," said the private, with a shudder.

"I thought he was hon-est, but I was mis-tak-en," remarked Tiktok. "My thoughts are us-u-al-ly cor-rect, but it is Smith & Tin-ker's fault if they some-times go wrong or do not work prop-er-ly."

"Smith & Tinker made a very good job of you," said Ozma, kindly. "I do not think they should be blamed if you are not quite perfect."

"Thank you," replied Tiktok.

"Then," said Billina, in her brisk little voice, "let us all go back to the Nome King, and see what he has to say for himself."

So they started for the entrance, Ozma going first, with the Queen and her train of little Princes and Princesses following. Then came Tiktok, and the Scarecrow with Billina perched upon his straw-stuffed shoulder. The twenty-seven officers and the private brought up the rear.

As they reached the hall the doors flew open before them; but then they all stopped and stared into the domed cavern with faces of astonishment and dismay. For the room was filled with the mail-clad warriors of the Nome King, rank after rank standing in orderly array. The electric lights upon their brows gleamed brightly, their battle-axes were poised as if to strike down their foes; yet they remained motionless as statues, awaiting the word of

command.

And in the center of this terrible army sat the little King upon his throne of rock. But he neither smiled nor laughed. Instead, his face was distorted with rage, and most dreadful to behold.

17. The Scarecrow Wins the Fight

After Billina had entered the palace Dorothy and Evring sat down to await the success or failure of her mission, and the Nome King occupied his throne and smoked his long pipe for a while in a cheerful and contented mood.

Then the bell above the throne, which sounded whenever an enchantment was broken, began to ring, and the King gave a start of annoyance and exclaimed, “Rocketty-ricketts!”

When the bell rang a second time the King shouted angrily, “Smudge and blazes!” and at a third ring he screamed in a fury, “Hippikaloric!” which must be a dreadful word because we don’t know what it means.

After that the bell went on ringing time after time; but the King was now so violently enraged that he could not utter a word, but hopped out of his throne and all around the room in a mad frenzy, so that he reminded Dorothy of a jumping-jack.

The girl was, for her part, filled with joy at every peal of the bell, for it announced the fact that Billina had transformed one more ornament into a living person. Dorothy was also amazed at Billina's success, for she could not imagine how the yellow hen was able to guess correctly from all the bewildering number of articles clustered in the rooms of the palace. But after she had counted ten, and the bell continued to ring, she knew that not only the royal family of Ev, but Ozma and her followers also, were being restored to their natural forms, and she was so delighted that the antics of the angry King only made her laugh merrily.

Perhaps the little monarch could not be more furious than he was before, but the girl's laughter nearly drove him frantic, and he roared at her like a savage beast. Then, as he found that all his enchantments were likely to be dispelled and his victims every one set free, he suddenly ran to the little door that opened upon the balcony and gave the shrill whistle that summoned his warriors.

At once the army filed out of the gold and silver doors in great numbers, and marched up a winding stairs and into the throne room, led by a stern featured Nome who was their captain. When they had nearly filled the throne room they formed ranks in the big underground cavern below, and then stood still until they were told what to do next.

Dorothy had pressed back to one side of the cavern when the warriors entered, and now she stood holding little Prince Evring's hand while the great Lion crouched upon one side and the enormous Tiger crouched on the other side.

"Seize that girl!" shouted the King to his captain, and a group of warriors sprang forward to obey. But both the Lion and Tiger snarled so fiercely and bared their strong, sharp teeth so threateningly, that the men drew back in alarm.

"Don't mind them!" cried the Nome King; "they cannot leap beyond the places where they now stand."

"But they can bite those who attempt to touch the girl," said the captain.

"I'll fix that," answered the King. "I'll enchant them again, so that they can't open their jaws."

He stepped out of the throne to do this, but just then the Sawhorse ran up behind him and gave the fat monarch a powerful kick with both his wooden hind legs.

“Ow! Murder! Treason!” yelled the King, who had been hurled against several of his warriors and was considerably bruised. “Who did that?”

“I did,” growled the Sawhorse, viciously. “You let Dorothy alone, or I’ll kick you again.”

“We’ll see about that,” replied the King, and at once he waved his hand toward the Sawhorse and muttered a magical word. “Aha!” he continued; “NOW let us see you move, you wooden mule!”

But in spite of the magic the Sawhorse moved; and he moved so quickly toward the King, that the fat little man could not get out of his way. Thump--BANG! came the wooden heels, right against his round body, and the King flew into the air and fell upon the head of his captain, who let him drop flat upon the ground.

“Well, well!” said the King, sitting up and looking surprised. “Why didn’t my magic belt work, I wonder?”

“The creature is made of wood,” replied the captain. “Your magic will not work on wood, you know.”

“Ah, I’d forgotten that,” said the King, getting up and limping to his throne. “Very well, let the girl alone. She can’t escape us, anyway.”

The warriors, who had been rather confused by these incidents, now formed their ranks again, and the Sawhorse pranced across the room to Dorothy and took a position beside the Hungry Tiger.

At that moment the doors that led to the palace flew open and the people of Ev and the people of Oz were disclosed to view. They paused, astonished, at sight of the warriors and the angry Nome King, seated in their midst.

“Surrender!” cried the King, in a loud voice. “You are my prisoners.”

“Go ‘long!” answered Billina, from the Scarecrow’s shoulder. “You promised me that if I guessed correctly my friends and I might depart in safety. And you always keep your promises.”

“I said you might leave the palace in safety,” retorted the King; “and so you may, but you cannot leave my dominions. You are my prisoners, and I will hurl you all into my underground dungeons, where the volcanic fires glow and the molten lava flows in every direction, and the air is hotter than blue blazes.”

“That will be the end of me, all right,” said the Scarecrow, sorrowfully. “One small blaze, blue or green, is enough to reduce me to an ash-heap.”

“Do you surrender?” demanded the King.

Billina whispered something in the Scarecrow’s ear that made him smile and put his hands in his jacket pockets.

“No!” returned Ozma, boldly answering the King. Then she said to her army:

“Forward, my brave soldiers, and fight for your Ruler and yourselves, unto death!”

“Pardon me, Most Royal Ozma,” replied one of her generals; “but I find that I and my brother officers all suffer from heart disease, and the slightest excitement might kill us. If we fight we may get excited. Would it not be well for us to avoid this grave danger?”

“Soldiers should not have heart disease,” said Ozma.

“Private soldiers are not, I believe, afflicted that way,” declared another general, twirling his moustache thoughtfully. “If your Royal Highness desires, we will order our private to attack yonder warriors.”

“Do so,” replied Ozma.

“For-ward--march!” cried all the generals, with one voice. “For-ward--march!” yelled the colonels. “For-ward--march!” shouted the majors. “For-ward--march!” commanded the captains.

And at that the private leveled his spear and dashed furiously upon the foe.

The captain of the Nomes was so surprised by this sudden onslaught that he forgot to command his warriors to fight, so that the ten men in the first row, who stood in front of the private’s spear, fell over like so many toy soldiers. The spear could not go through their steel armor, however, so the warriors scrambled to their feet again, and by that time the private had knocked over another row of them.

Then the captain brought down his battle-axe with such a strong blow that the private’s spear was shattered and knocked from his grasp, and he was helpless to fight any longer.

The Nome King had left his throne and pressed through his warriors to the front ranks, so he could see what was going on; but as he faced Ozma and her friends the Scarecrow, as if aroused to action by the valor of the private, drew one of Billina’s eggs from his right jacket pocket and hurled it straight at the little monarch’s head.

It struck him squarely in his left eye, where the egg smashed and scattered, as eggs will, and covered his face and hair and beard with its sticky contents.

“Help, help!” screamed the King, clawing with his fingers at the egg, in a struggle to remove it.

"An egg! an egg! Run for your lives!" shouted the captain of the Nomes, in a voice of horror.

And how they DID run! The warriors fairly tumbled over one another in their efforts to escape the fatal poison of that awful egg, and those who could not rush down the winding stair fell off the balcony into the great cavern beneath, knocking over those who stood below them.

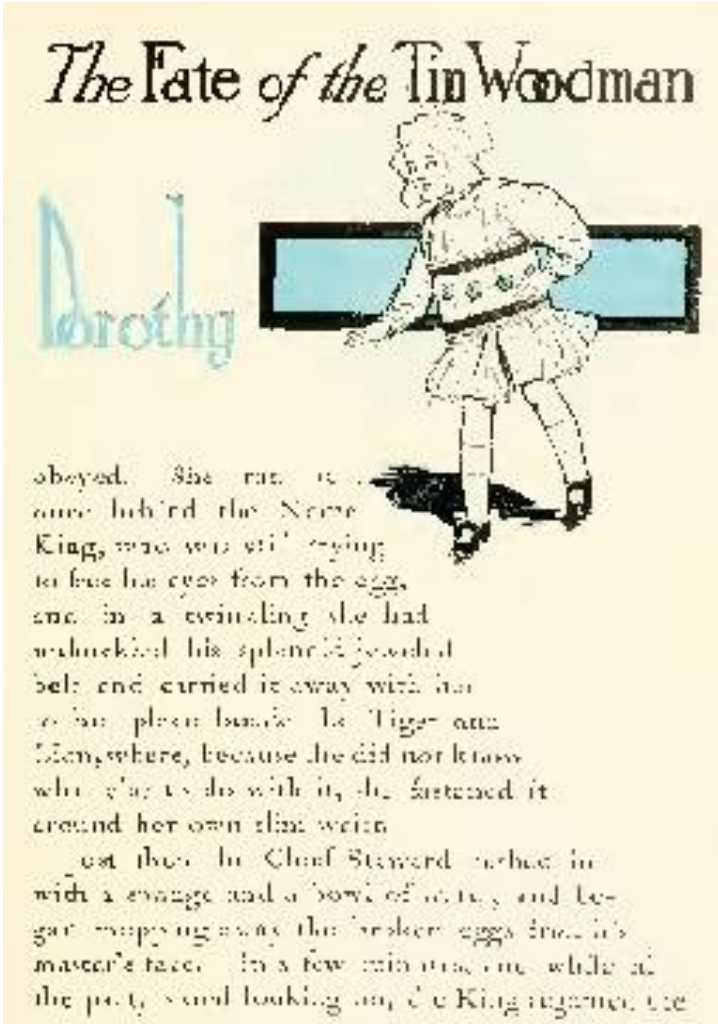
Even while the King was still yelling for help his throne room became emptied of every one of his warriors, and before the monarch had managed to clear the egg away from his left eye the Scarecrow threw the second egg against his right eye, where it smashed and blinded him entirely. The King was unable to flee because he could not see which way to run; so he stood

still and howled and shouted and screamed in abject fear.

While this was going on, Billina flew over to Dorothy, and perching herself upon the Lion's back the hen whispered eagerly to the girl:

"Get his belt! Get the Nome King's jeweled belt! It unbuckles in the back. Quick, Dorothy--quick!"

18. The Fate of the Tin Woodman



Dorothy obeyed. She ran at once behind the Nome King, who was still trying to free his eyes from the egg, and in a twinkling she had unbuckled his splendid jeweled belt and carried it away with her to her place beside the Tiger and Lion, where, because she did not know what else to do with it, she fastened it around her own slim waist.

Just then the Chief Steward rushed in with a sponge and a bowl of water, and began mopping away the broken eggs from his master's face. In a few minutes, and while all the party stood looking on, the King regained the use of his eyes, and the first thing he did was to glare wickedly upon the

Scarecrow and exclaim:

"I'll make you suffer for this, you hay-stuffed dummy! Don't you know eggs are poison to Nomes?"

"Really," said the Scarecrow, "they DON'T seem to agree with you, although I wonder why."

"They were strictly fresh and above suspicion," said Billina. "You ought to be glad to get them."

"I'll transform you all into scorpions!" cried the King, angrily, and began waving his arms and muttering magic words.

But none of the people became scorpions, so the King stopped and looked at them in surprise.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Why, you are not wearing your magic belt," replied the Chief Steward, after looking the King over carefully. "Where is it? What have you done with it?"

The Nome King clapped his hand to his waist, and his rock colored face turned white as chalk.

"It's gone," he cried, helplessly. "It's gone, and I am ruined!"

Dorothy now stepped forward and said:

"Royal Ozma, and you, Queen of Ev, I welcome you and your people back to the land of the living. Billina has saved you from your troubles, and now we will leave this drea'ful place, and return to Ev as soon as poss'ble."

While the child spoke they could all see that she wore the magic belt, and a great cheer went up from all her friends, which was led by the voices of the Scarecrow and the private. But the Nome King did not join them. He crept back onto his throne like a whipped dog, and lay there bitterly bemoaning his defeat.

"But we have not yet found my faithful follower, the Tin Woodman," said Ozma to Dorothy, "and without him I do not wish to go away."

"Nor I," replied Dorothy, quickly. "Wasn't he in the palace?"

"He must be there," said Billina; "but I had no clue to guide me in guessing the Tin Woodman, so I must have missed him."

"We will go back into the rooms," said Dorothy. "This magic belt, I am sure, will help us to find our dear old friend."

So she re-entered the palace, the doors of which still stood open, and everyone followed her except the Nome King, the Queen of Ev and Prince Evring. The mother had taken the little Prince in her lap and was fondling and kissing him lovingly, for he was her youngest born.

But the others went with Dorothy, and when she came to the middle of the first room the girl waved her hand, as she had seen the King do, and

commanded the Tin Woodman, whatever form he might then have, to resume his proper shape. No result followed this attempt, so Dorothy went into another room and repeated it, and so through all the rooms of the palace. Yet the Tin Woodman did not appear to them, nor could they imagine which among the thousands of ornaments was their transformed friend.

Sadly they returned to the throne room, where the King, seeing that they had met with failure, jeered at Dorothy, saying:

"You do not know how to use my belt, so it is of no use to you. Give it back to me and I will let you go free--you and all the people who came with you. As for the royal family of Ev, they are my slaves, and shall remain here."

"I shall keep the belt," said Dorothy.

"But how can you escape, without my consent?" asked the King.

"Easily enough," answered the girl. "All we need to do is to walk out the way that we came in."

DOROTHY AND ELLIMA ARGUE WITH THE KING

"Oh, that's all, is it?" sneered the King. "Well, where is the passage through which you entered this room?"

They all looked around, but could not discover the place, for it had long since been closed. Dorothy, however, would not be dismayed. She waved her hand toward the seemingly solid wall of the cavern and said:

"I command the passage to open!"

Instantly the order was obeyed; the opening appeared and the passage lay plainly before them.

The King was amazed, and all the others overjoyed.

"Why, then, if the belt obeys you, were we unable to discover the Tin Woodman?" asked Ozma.

“I can’t imagine,” said Dorothy.

“See here, girl,” proposed the King, eagerly; “give me the belt, and I will tell you what shape the Tin Woodman was changed into, and then you can easily find him.”

Dorothy hesitated, but Billina cried out:

“Don’t you do it! If the Nome King gets the belt again he will make every one of us prisoners, for we will be in his power. Only by keeping the belt, Dorothy, will you ever be able to leave this place in safety.”

“I think that is true,” said the Scarecrow. “But I have another idea, due to my excellent brains. Let Dorothy transform the King into a goose-egg unless he agrees to go into the palace and bring out to us the ornament which is our friend Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman.”

“A goose-egg!” echoed the horrified King. “How dreadful!”

“Well, a goose-egg you will be unless you go and fetch us the ornament we want,” declared Billina, with a joyful chuckle.

“You can see for yourself that Dorothy is able to use the magic belt all right,” added the Scarecrow.

The Nome King thought it over and finally consented, for he did not want to be a goose-egg. So he went into the palace to get the ornament which was the transformation of the Tin Woodman, and they all awaited his return with considerable impatience, for they were anxious to leave this underground cavern and see the sunshine once more. But when the Nome King came back he brought nothing with him except a puzzled and anxious expression upon

his face.

“He’s gone!” he said. “The Tin Woodman is nowhere in the palace.”

“Are you sure?” asked Ozma, sternly.

“I’m very sure,” answered the King, trembling, “for I know just what I transformed him into, and exactly where he stood. But he is not there, and please don’t change me into a goose-egg, because I’ve done the best I could.”

They were all silent for a time, and then Dorothy said:

“There is no use punishing the Nome King any more, and I’m ‘fraid we’ll have to go away without our friend.”

“If he is not here, we cannot rescue him,” agreed the Scarecrow, sadly. “Poor Nick! I wonder what has become of him.”

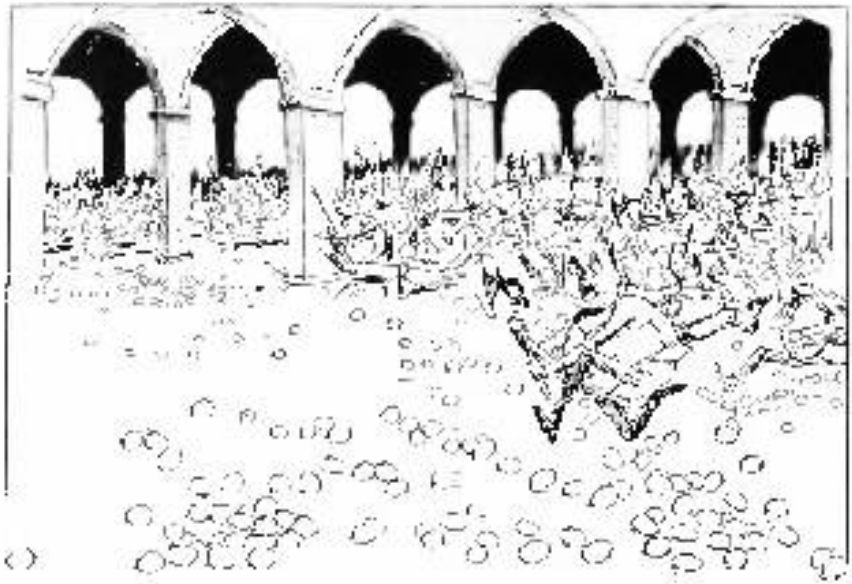
“And he owed me six weeks back pay!” said one of the generals, wiping the tears from his eyes with his gold-laced coat sleeve.

Very sorrowfully they determined to return to the upper world without their former companion, and so Ozma gave the order to begin the march through the passage.

The army went first, and then the royal family of Ev, and afterward came Dorothy, Ozma, Billina, the Scarecrow and Tiktok.

They left the Nome King scowling at them from his throne, and had no thought of danger until Ozma chanced to look back and saw a large number of the warriors following them in full chase, with their swords and spears and axes raised to strike down the fugitives as soon as they drew near enough.

Evidently the Nome King had made this last attempt to prevent their escaping him; but it did him no good, for when Dorothy saw the danger they were in she stopped and waved her hand and whispered a command to the magic belt.



Instantly the foremost warriors became eggs, which rolled upon the floor of the cavern in such numbers that those behind could not advance without stepping upon them. But, when they saw the eggs, all desire to advance departed from the warriors, and they turned and fled madly into the cavern, and refused to go back again.

Our friends had no further trouble in reaching the end of the passage, and soon were standing in the outer air upon the gloomy path between the two high mountains. But the way to Ev lay plainly before them, and they fervently hoped that they had seen the last of the Nome King and of his dreadful palace.

The cavalcade was led by Ozma, mounted on the Cowardly Lion, and the Queen of Ev, who rode upon the back of the Tiger. The children of the Queen walked behind her, hand in hand. Dorothy rode the Sawhorse, while the Scarecrow walked and commanded the army in the absence of the Tin Woodman.

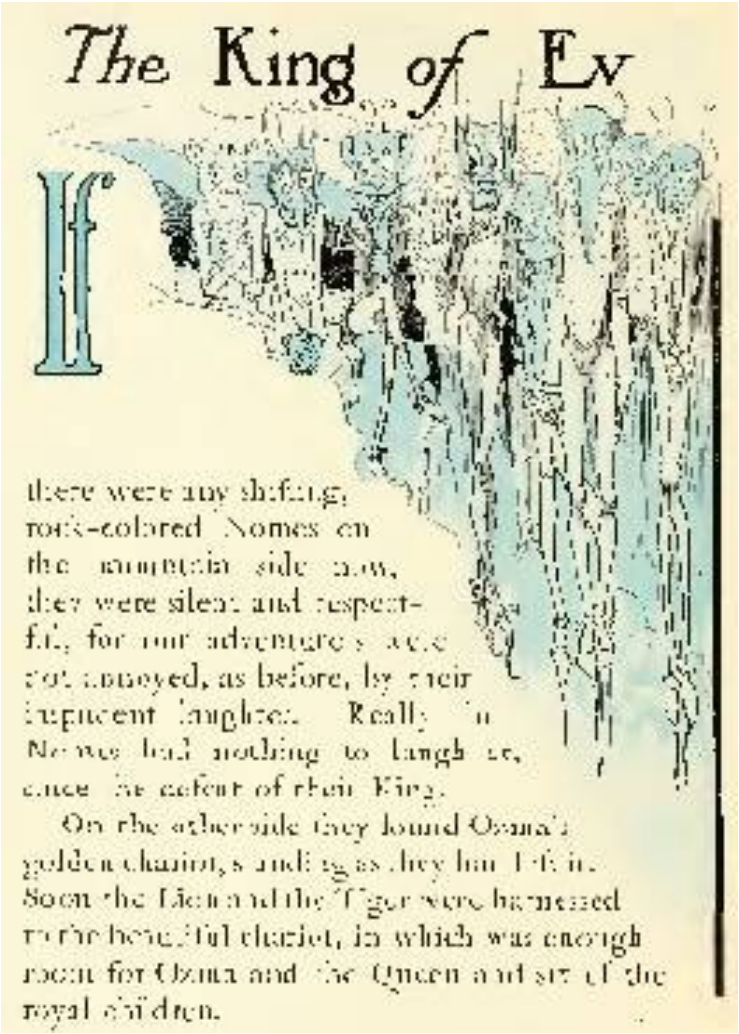
Presently the way began to lighten and more of the sunshine to come in between the two mountains. And before long they heard the "thump! thump! thump!" of the giant's hammer upon the road.

"How may we pass the monstrous man of iron?" asked the Queen, anxious for the safety of her children. But Dorothy solved the problem by a word to the magic belt.

The giant paused, with his hammer held motionless in the air, thus

allowing the entire party to pass between his cast-iron legs in safety.

19. The King of Ev



If there were any shifting, rock-colored Nomes on the mountain side now, they were silent and respectful, for our adventurers were not annoyed, as before, by their impudent laughter. Really the Nomes had nothing to laugh at, since the defeat of their King.

On the other side they found Ozma's golden chariot, standing as they had left it. Soon the Lion and the Tiger were harnessed to the beautiful chariot, in which was enough room for Ozma and the Queen and six of the royal children.

Little Evring preferred to ride with Dorothy upon the Sawhorse, which

had a long back. The Prince had recovered from his shyness and had become very fond of the girl who had rescued him, so they were fast friends and chatted pleasantly together as they rode along. Billina was also perched upon the head of the wooden steed, which seemed not to mind the added weight in the least, and the boy was full of wonder that a hen could talk, and say such sensible things.

When they came to the gulf, Ozma's magic carpet carried them all over in safety; and now they began to pass the trees, in which birds were singing; and the breeze that was wafted to them from the farms of Ev was spicy with flowers and new-mown hay; and the sunshine fell full upon them, to warm them and drive away from their bodies the chill and dampness of the underground kingdom of the Nomes.

"I would be quite content," said the Scarecrow to Tiktok, "were only the Tin Woodman with us. But it breaks my heart to leave him behind."

"He was a fine fel-low," replied Tiktok, "al-though his ma-ter-i-al was not ve-ry du-ra-ble."

"Oh, tin is an excellent material," the Scarecrow hastened to say; "and if anything ever happened to poor Nick Chopper he was always easily soldered. Besides, he did not have to be wound up, and was not liable to get out of order."

"I some-times wish," said Tiktok, "that I was stuffed with straw, as you are. It is hard to be made of cop-per."

"I have no reason to complain of my lot," replied the Scarecrow. "A little fresh straw, now and then, makes me as good as new. But I can never be the polished gentleman that my poor departed friend, the Tin Woodman, was."

You may be sure the royal children of Ev and their Queen mother were delighted at seeing again their beloved country; and when the towers of the palace of Ev came into view they could not forbear cheering at the sight. Little Evring, riding in front of Dorothy, was so overjoyed that he took a curious tin whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill blast that made the Sawhorse leap and prance in sudden alarm.

"What is that?" asked Billina, who had been obliged to flutter her wings in order to keep her seat upon the head of the frightened Sawhorse.

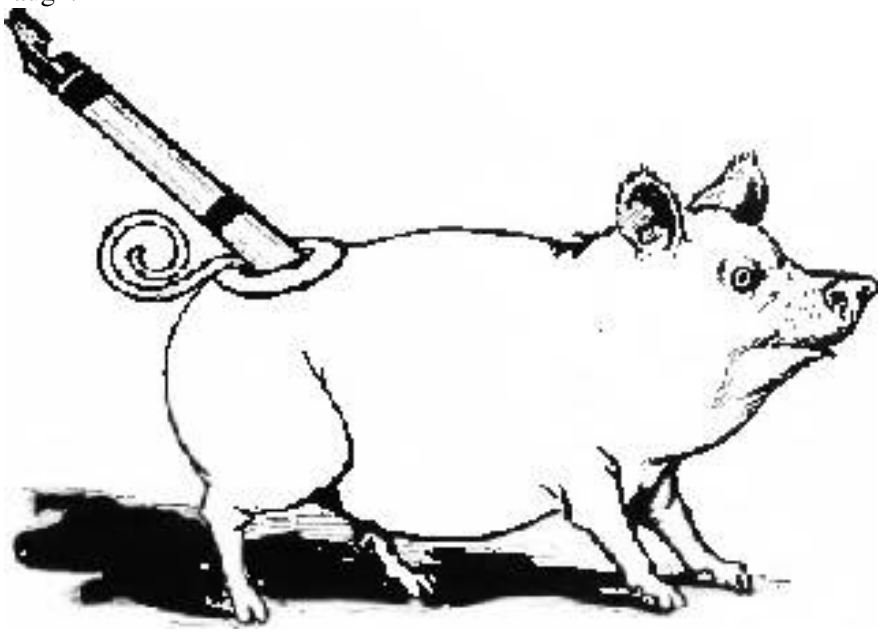
"That's my whistle," said Prince Evring, holding it out upon his hand.

It was in the shape of a little fat pig, made of tin and painted green. The whistle was in the tail of the pig.

"Where did you get it?" asked the yellow hen, closely examining the toy with her bright eyes.

"Why, I picked it up in the Nome King's palace, while Dorothy was making her guesses, and I put it in my pocket," answered the little Prince.

Billina laughed; or at least she made the peculiar cackle that served her for a laugh.



"No wonder I couldn't find the Tin Woodman," she said; "and no wonder the magic belt didn't make him appear, or the King couldn't find him, either!"

"What do you mean?" questioned Dorothy.

"Why, the Prince had him in his pocket," cried Billina, cackling again.

"I did not!" protested little Evring. "I only took the whistle."

"Well, then, watch me," returned the hen, and reaching out a claw she touched the whistle and said "Ev."

Swish!

"Good afternoon," said the Tin Woodman, taking off his funnel cap and bowing to Dorothy and the Prince. "I think I must have been asleep for the first time since I was made of tin, for I do not remember our leaving the Nome King."

"You have been enchanted," answered the girl, throwing an arm around her old friend and hugging him tight in her joy. "But it's all right, now."

"I want my whistle!" said the little Prince, beginning to cry.

"Hush!" cautioned Billina. "The whistle is lost, but you may have another when you get home."

The Scarecrow had fairly thrown himself upon the bosom of his old comrade, so surprised and delighted was he to see him again, and Tiktok

squeezed the Tin Woodman's hand so earnestly that he dented some of his fingers. Then they had to make way for Ozma to welcome the tin man, and the army caught sight of him and set up a cheer, and everybody was delighted and happy.

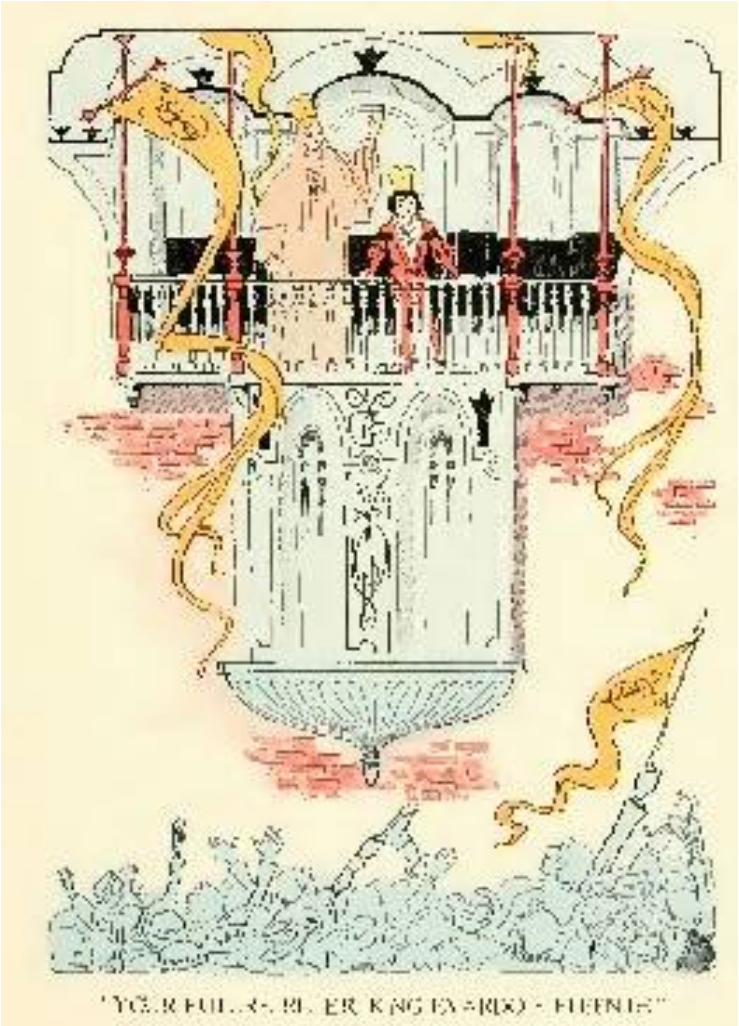
For the Tin Woodman was a great favorite with all who knew him, and his sudden recovery after they had thought he was lost to them forever was indeed a pleasant surprise.

Before long the cavalcade arrived at the royal palace, where a great crowd of people had gathered to welcome their Queen and her ten children. There was much shouting and cheering, and the people threw flowers in their path, and every face wore a happy smile.

They found the Princess Langwidere in her mirrored chamber, where she was admiring one of her handsomest heads--one with rich chestnut hair, dreamy walnut eyes and a shapely hickorynut nose. She was very glad to be relieved of her duties to the people of Ev, and the Queen graciously permitted her to retain her rooms and her cabinet of heads as long as she lived.

Then the Queen took her eldest son out upon a balcony that overlooked the crowd of subjects gathered below, and said to them:

"Here is your future ruler, King Evardo Fifteenth. He is fifteen years of age, has fifteen silver buckles on his jacket and is the fifteenth Evardo to rule the land of Ev."



"YOUR FUTURE MASTER KING EVARDO - FIFTEEN!"

The people shouted their approval fifteen times, and even the Wheelers, some of whom were present, loudly promised to obey the new King.

So the Queen placed a big crown of gold, set with rubies, upon Evardo's head, and threw an ermine robe over his shoulders, and proclaimed him King; and he bowed gratefully to all his subjects and then went away to see if he could find any cake in the royal pantry.

Ozma of Oz and her people, as well as Dorothy, Tiktok and Billina, were splendidly entertained by the Queen mother, who owed all her happiness to their kind offices; and that evening the yellow hen was publicly presented with a beautiful necklace of pearls and sapphires, as a token of esteem from the new King.

20. The Emerald City

Dorothy decided to accept Ozma's invitation to return with her to the Land of Oz. There was no greater chance of her getting home from Ev than from Oz, and the little girl was anxious to see once more the country where she had encountered such wonderful adventures. By this time Uncle Henry would have reached Australia in his ship, and had probably given her up for lost; so he couldn't worry any more than he did if she stayed away from him a while longer. So she would go to Oz.

They bade good-bye to the people of Ev, and the King promised Ozma that he would ever be grateful to her and render the Land of Oz any service

that might lie within his power.

And then they approached the edge of the dangerous desert, and Ozma threw down the magic carpet, which at once unrolled far enough for all of them to walk upon it without being crowded.

Tiktok, claiming to be Dorothy's faithful follower because he belonged to her, had been permitted to join the party, and before they started the girl wound up his machinery as far as possible, and the copper man stepped off as briskly as any one of them.

Ozma also invited Billina to visit the Land of Oz, and the yellow hen was glad enough to go where new sights and scenes awaited her.

They began the trip across the desert early in the morning, and as they stopped only long enough for Billina to lay her daily egg, before sunset they espied the green slopes and wooded hills of the beautiful Land of Oz. They entered it in the Munchkin territory, and the King of the Munchkins met them at the border and welcomed Ozma with great respect, being very pleased by her safe return. For Ozma of Oz ruled the King of the Munchkins, the King of the Winkies, the King of the Quadlings and the King of the Gillikins just as those kings ruled their own people; and this supreme ruler of the Land of Oz lived in a great town of her own, called the Emerald City, which was in the exact center of the four kingdoms of the Land of Oz.

The Munchkin king entertained them at his palace that night, and in the morning they set out for the Emerald City, travelling over a road of yellow brick that led straight to the jewel-studded gates. Everywhere the people turned out to greet their beloved Ozma, and to hail joyfully the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion, who were popular favorites. Dorothy, too, remembered some of the people, who had befriended her on the occasion of her first visit to Oz, and they were well pleased to see the little Kansas girl again, and showered her with compliments and good wishes.

At one place, where they stopped to refresh themselves, Ozma accepted a bowl of milk from the hands of a pretty dairy-maid. Then she looked at the girl more closely, and exclaimed:

"Why, it's Jinjur--isn't it!"

"Yes, your Highness," was the reply, as Jinjur dropped a low curtsy. And Dorothy looked wonderingly at this lively appearing person, who had once assembled an army of women and driven the Scarecrow from the throne of the Emerald City, and even fought a battle with the powerful army of Glinda the Sorceress.

"I've married a man who owns nine cows," said Jinjur to Ozma, "and now I am happy and contented and willing to lead a quiet life and mind my own

business."

"Where is your husband?" asked Ozma.

"He is in the house, nursing a black eye," replied Jinjur, calmly. "The foolish man would insist upon milking the red cow when I wanted him to milk the white one; but he will know better next time, I am sure."

Then the party moved on again, and after crossing a broad river on a ferry and passing many fine farm houses that were dome shaped and painted a pretty green color, they came in sight of a large building that was covered with flags and bunting.

"I don't remember that building," said Dorothy. "What is it?"

"That is the College of Art and Athletic Perfection," replied Ozma. "I had it built quite recently, and the Woggle-Bug is its president. It keeps him busy, and the young men who attend the college are no worse off than they were before. You see, in this country are a number of youths who do not like to work, and the college is an excellent place for them."

And now they came in sight of the Emerald City, and the people flocked out to greet their lovely ruler. There were several bands and many officers and officials of the realm, and a crowd of citizens in their holiday attire.

Thus the beautiful Ozma was escorted by a brilliant procession to her royal city, and so great was the cheering that she was obliged to constantly bow to the right and left to acknowledge the greetings of her subjects.

That evening there was a grand reception in the royal palace, attended by the most important persons of Oz, and Jack Pumpkinhead, who was a little

overripe but still active, read an address congratulating Ozma of Oz upon the success of her generous mission to rescue the royal family of a neighboring kingdom.

Then magnificent gold medals set with precious stones were presented to each of the twenty-six officers; and the Tin Woodman was given a new axe studded with diamonds; and the Scarecrow received a silver jar of complexion powder. Dorothy was presented with a pretty coronet and made a Princess of Oz, and Tiktok received two bracelets set with eight rows of very clear and sparkling emeralds.

Afterward they sat down to a splendid feast, and Ozma put Dorothy at her right and Billina at her left, where the hen sat upon a golden roost and ate from a jeweled platter. Then were placed the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and Tiktok, with baskets of lovely flowers before them, because they did not require food. The twenty-six officers were at the lower end of the table, and the Lion and the Tiger also had seats, and were served on golden platters, that held a half a bushel at one time.

The wealthiest and most important citizens of the Emerald City were proud to wait upon these famous adventurers, and they were assisted by a sprightly little maid named Jellia Jamb, whom the Scarecrow pinched upon her rosy cheeks and seemed to know very well.

During the feast Ozma grew thoughtful, and suddenly she asked:

"Where is the private?"

"Oh, he is sweeping out the barracks," replied one of the generals, who was busy eating a leg of a turkey. "But I have ordered him a dish of bread and molasses to eat when his work is done."

"Let him be sent for," said the girl ruler.

While they waited for this command to be obeyed, she enquired:

"Have we any other privates in the armies?"

"Oh, yes," replied the Tin Woodman, "I believe there are three, altogether."

The private now entered, saluting his officers and the royal Ozma very respectfully.

"What is your name, my man?" asked the girl.

"Omby Amby," answered the private.

"Then, Omby Amby," said she, "I promote you to be Captain General of all the armies of my kingdom, and especially to be Commander of my Body Guard at the royal palace."

"I PROMOTE YOU TO BE CAPTAIN-GENERAL"

"It is very expensive to hold so many offices," said the private, hesitating. "I have no money with which to buy uniforms."

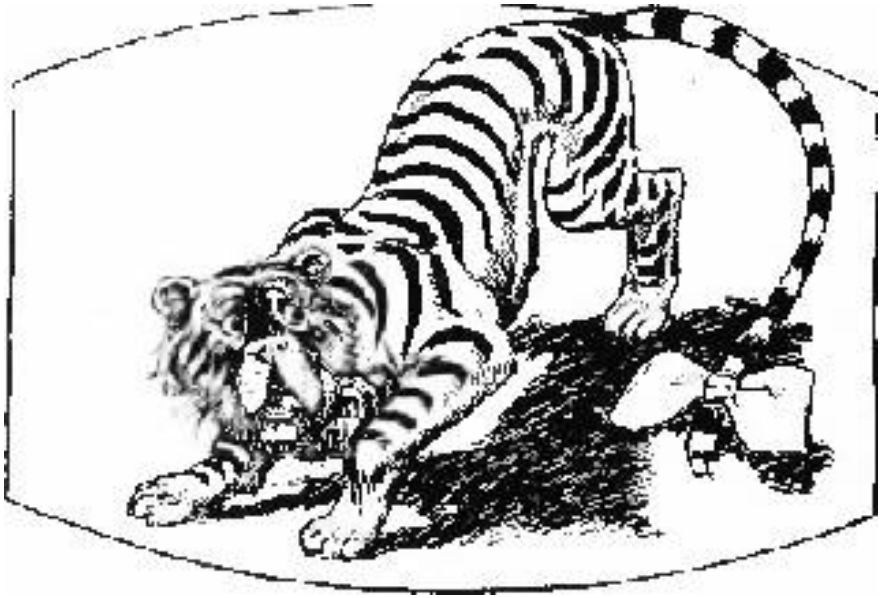
"You shall be supplied from the royal treasury," said Ozma.

Then the private was given a seat at the table, where the other officers welcomed him cordially, and the feasting and merriment were resumed.

Suddenly Jellia Jamb exclaimed:

"There is nothing more to eat! The Hungry Tiger has consumed everything!"

"But that is not the worst of it," declared the Tiger, mournfully. "Somewhere or somehow, I've actually lost my appetite!"



21. Dorothy's Magic Belt

Dorothy passed several very happy weeks in the Land of Oz as the guest of the royal Ozma, who delighted to please and interest the little Kansas girl. Many new acquaintances were formed and many old ones renewed, and wherever she went Dorothy found herself among friends.

One day, however, as she sat in Ozma's private room, she noticed hanging upon the wall a picture which constantly changed in appearance, at one time showing a meadow and at another time a forest, a lake or a village.

"How curious!" she exclaimed, after watching the shifting scenes for a few moments.

“Yes,” said Ozma, “that is really a wonderful invention in magic. If I wish to see any part of the world or any person living, I need only express the wish and it is shown in the picture.”

“May I use it?” asked Dorothy, eagerly.

“Of course, my dear.”

“Then I’d like to see the old Kansas farm, and Aunt Em,” said the girl.

Instantly the well remembered farmhouse appeared in the picture, and Aunt Em could be seen quite plainly. She was engaged in washing dishes by the kitchen window and seemed quite well and contented. The hired men and the teams were in the harvest fields behind the house, and the corn and wheat seemed to the child to be in prime condition. On the side porch Dorothy’s pet dog, Toto, was lying fast asleep in the sun, and to her surprise old Speckles was running around with a brood of twelve new chickens trailing after her.

“Everything seems all right at home,” said Dorothy, with a sigh of relief. “Now I wonder what Uncle Henry is doing.”

The scene in the picture at once shifted to Australia, where, in a pleasant room in Sydney, Uncle Henry was seated in an easy chair, solemnly smoking his briar pipe. He looked sad and lonely, and his hair was now quite white and his hands and face thin and wasted.

“Oh!” cried Dorothy, in an anxious voice, “I’m sure Uncle Henry isn’t getting any better, and it’s because he is worried about me. Ozma, dear, I must go to him at once!”

“How can you?” asked Ozma.

“I don’t know,” replied Dorothy; “but let us go to Glinda the Good. I’m sure she will help me, and advise me how to get to Uncle Henry.”

Ozma readily agreed to this plan and caused the Sawhorse to be harnessed to a pretty green and pink phaeton, and the two girls rode away to visit the famous sorceress.

Glinda received them graciously, and listened to Dorothy’s story with attention.

“I have the magic belt, you know,” said the little girl. “If I buckled it around my waist and commanded it to take me to Uncle Henry, wouldn’t it do it?”

“I think so,” replied Glinda, with a smile.

“And then,” continued Dorothy, “if I ever wanted to come back here again, the belt would bring me.”

“In that you are wrong,” said the sorceress. “The belt has magical powers only while it is in some fairy country, such as the Land of Oz, or the Land of Ev. Indeed, my little friend, were you to wear it and wish yourself in Australia, with your uncle, the wish would doubtless be fulfilled, because it

was made in fairyland. But you would not find the magic belt around you when you arrived at your destination."

"What would become of it?" asked the girl.

"It would be lost, as were your silver shoes when you visited Oz before, and no one would ever see it again. It seems too bad to destroy the use of the magic belt in that way, doesn't it?"

"Then," said Dorothy, after a moment's thought, "I will give the magic belt to Ozma, for she can use it in her own country. And she can wish me transported to Uncle Henry without losing the belt."

"That is a wise plan," replied Glinda.

"THAT IS A WISE PLAN," REPLIED GLINDA

So they rode back to the Emerald City, and on the way it was arranged that

every Saturday morning Ozma would look at Dorothy in her magic picture, wherever the little girl might chance to be. And, if she saw Dorothy make a certain signal, then Ozma would know that the little Kansas girl wanted to revisit the Land of Oz, and by means of the Nome King's magic belt would wish that she might instantly return.

This having been agreed upon, Dorothy bade good-bye to all her friends. Tiktok wanted to go to Australia; too, but Dorothy knew that the machine man would never do for a servant in a civilized country, and the chances were that his machinery wouldn't work at all. So she left him in Ozma's care.

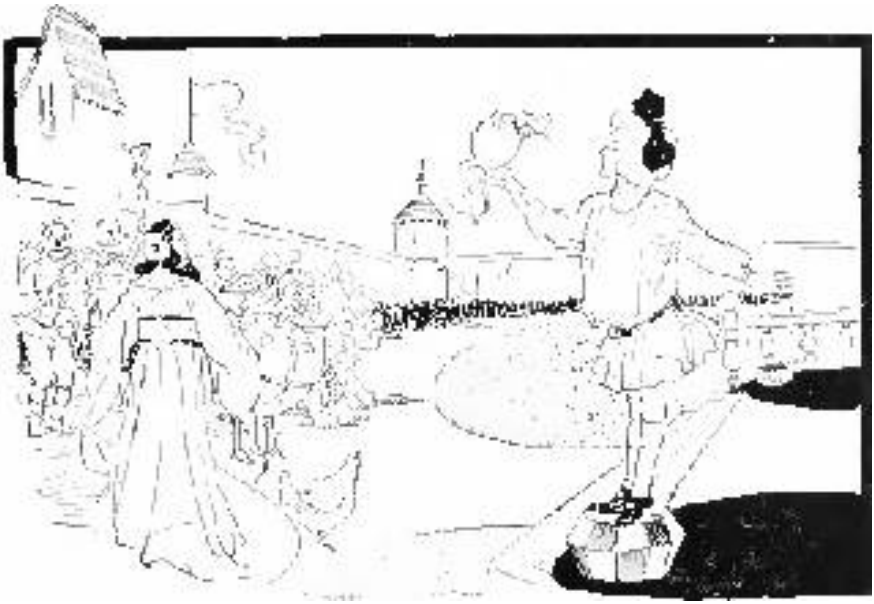
Billina, on the contrary, preferred the Land of Oz to any other country, and refused to accompany Dorothy.

"The bugs and ants that I find here are the finest flavored in the world," declared the yellow hen, "and there are plenty of them. So here I shall end my days; and I must say, Dorothy, my dear, that you are very foolish to go back into that stupid, humdrum world again."

"Uncle Henry needs me," said Dorothy, simply; and every one except Billina thought it was right that she should go.

All Dorothy's friends of the Land of Oz--both old and new--gathered in a group in front of the palace to bid her a sorrowful good-bye and to wish her long life and happiness. After much hand shaking, Dorothy kissed Ozma once more, and then handed her the Nome King's magic belt, saying:

"Now, dear Princess, when I wave my handkerchief, please wish me with Uncle Henry. I'm aw'fly sorry to leave you--and the Scarecrow--and the Tin Woodman--and the Cowardly Lion--and Tiktok--and--and everybody--but I do want my Uncle Henry! So good-bye, all of you."



Then the little girl stood on one of the big emeralds which decorated the courtyard, and after looking once again at each of her friends, waved her handkerchief.

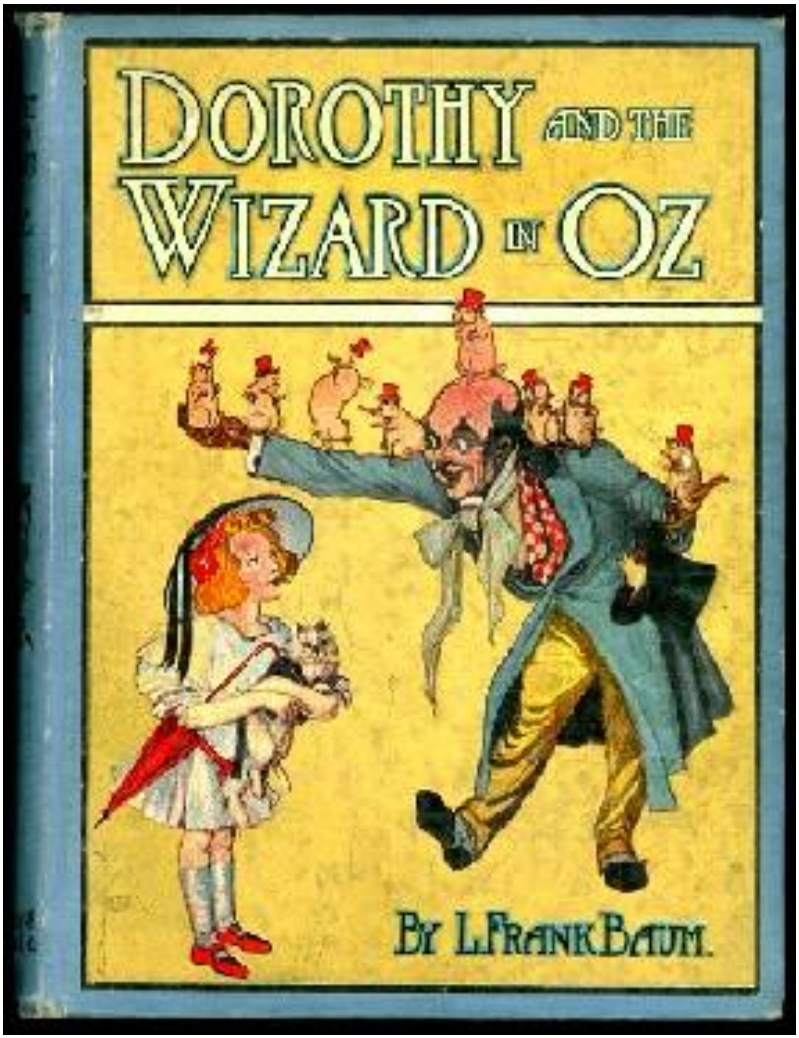
"No," said Dorothy, "I wasn't drowned at all. And I've come to nurse you and take care of you, Uncle Henry, and you must promise to get well as soon as poss'ble."

Uncle Henry smiled and cuddled his little niece close in his lap.

"I'm better already, my darling," said he.

DOROTHY AND THE WIZARD IN OZ

Published by Reilly & Britton in 1908 and illustrated by John R. Neill, *Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz* was Baum's fourth Oz book and one of his most exciting. In the narrative, Dorothy Gale is on her way to see Uncle Henry in California at Hugson's Ranch. She joins her cousin Zeb for a ride in a buggy drawn by a horse named Jim. An earthquake opens a crevice which they fall through, ending up in the land of the Mangaboos, strange vegetable people who blame Dorothy and Zeb for damaging their glass dwellings. Jim and Dorothy's cat, Eureka, are able to talk and so Dorothy knows that once again she is in a fairyland. While there, a balloon falls from the sky, and Dorothy meets her old friend the humbug Wizard of Oz. Escaping the Mangaboos, the companions travel through the beautiful Valley of Voe, which features invisible people and marauding bears, meet the "Braided Man" in Pyramid Mountain, and fight the hideous, winged, wooden Gargoyles. After a few further adventures, Dorothy uses the magic belt she'd captured from the Nome King, and they arrive at the Emerald City, where, among other happenings, Jim the cab-horse races the Sawhorse and Eureka the cat undergoes a trial for apparently eating one of the Wizard's nine tiny piglets.



A first edition copy of Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz

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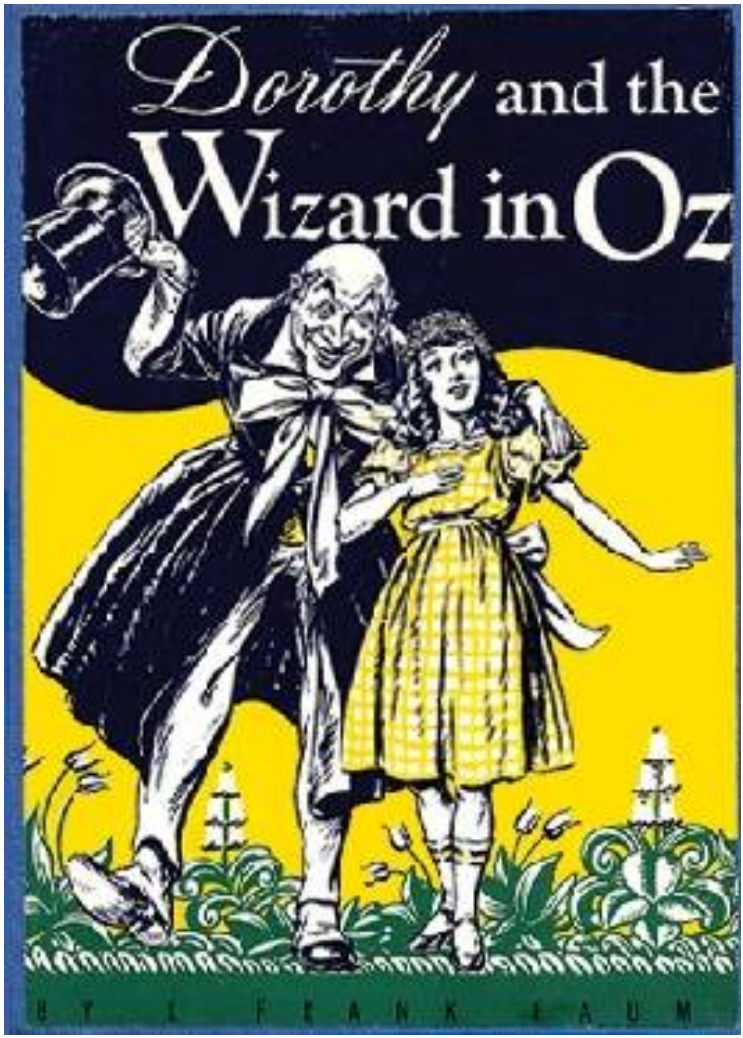

A copy of the 1947 edition

THIS BOOK BELONGS
TO

DOROTHY AND THE WIZARD

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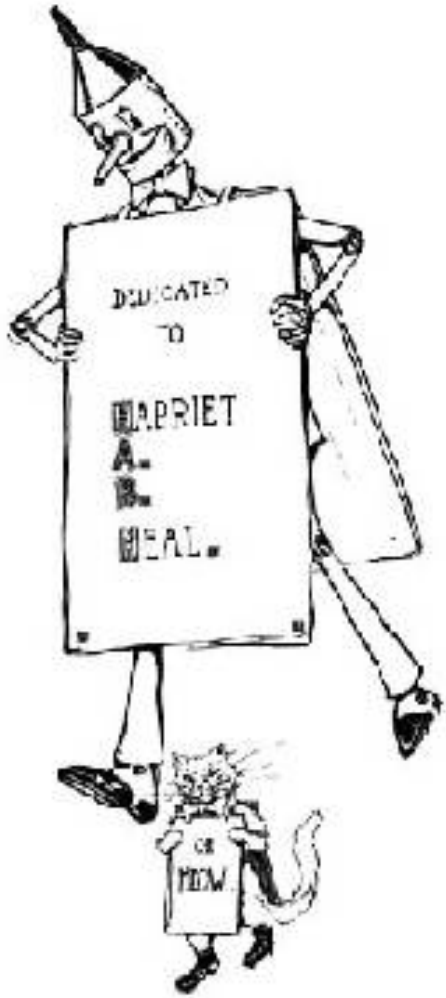

DEDICATED
TO
HARRIET
A.
B.
HEAL.
OR
MEW

DEDICATED TO HARRIET A. B. NEAL.

To My Readers

It's no use; no use at all. The children won't let me stop telling tales of the Land of Oz. I know lots of other stories, and I hope to tell them, some time or another; but just now my loving tyrants won't allow me. They cry: "Oz — Oz! more about Oz, Mr. Baum!" and what can I do but obey their commands?

This is Our Book — mine and the children's. For they have flooded me with thousands of suggestions in regard to it, and I have honestly tried to adopt as many of these suggestions as could be fitted into one story.

After the wonderful success of "Ozma of Oz" it is evident that Dorothy has become a firm fixture in these Oz stories. The little ones all love Dorothy, and as one of my small friends aptly states: "It isn't a real Oz story without her." So here she is again, as sweet and gentle and innocent as ever, I hope, and the heroine of another strange adventure.

There were many requests from my little correspondents for "more about the Wizard." It seems the jolly old fellow made hosts of friends in the first Oz book, in spite of the fact that he frankly acknowledged himself "a humbug." The children had heard how he mounted into the sky in a balloon and they were all waiting for him to come down again. So what could I do but tell "what happened to the Wizard afterward"? You will find him in these pages, just the same humbug Wizard as before.

There was one thing the children demanded which I found it impossible to do in this present book: they bade me introduce Toto, Dorothy's little black dog, who has many friends among my readers. But you will see, when you begin to read the story, that Toto was in Kansas while Dorothy was in California, and so she had to start on her adventure without him. In this book Dorothy had to take her kitten with her instead of her dog; but in the next Oz book, if I am permitted to write one, I intend to tell a good deal about Toto's further history.

Princess Ozma, whom I love as much as my readers do, is again introduced in this story, and so are several of our old friends of Oz. You will also become acquainted with Jim the Cab-Horse, the Nine Tiny Piglets, and Eureka, the Kitten. I am sorry the kitten was not as well behaved as she ought to have been; but perhaps she wasn't brought up properly. Dorothy found her, you see, and who her parents were nobody knows.

I believe, my dears, that I am the proudest story-teller that ever lived. Many a time tears of pride and joy have stood in my eyes while I read the tender, loving, appealing letters that come to me in almost every mail from

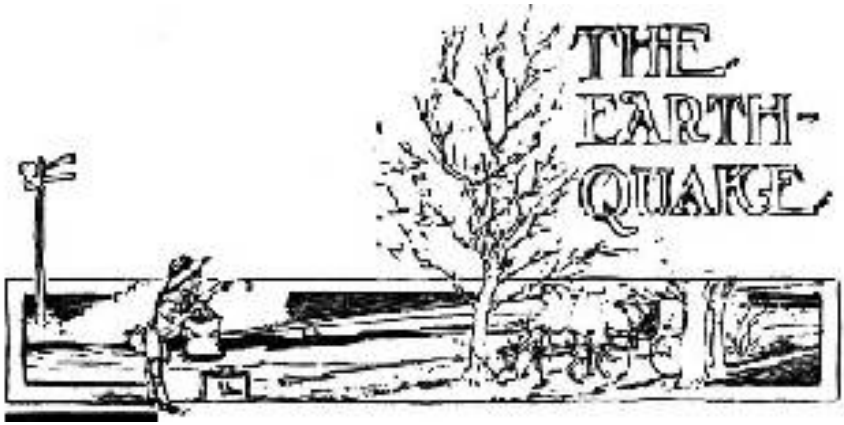
my little readers. To have pleased you, to have interested you, to have won your friendship, and perhaps your love, through my stories, is to my mind as great an achievement as to become President of the United States. Indeed, I would much rather be your story-teller, under these conditions, than to be the President. So you have helped me to fulfill my life's ambition, and I am more grateful to you, my dears, than I can express in words.

I try to answer every letter of my young correspondents; yet sometimes there are so many letters that a little time must pass before you get your answer. But be patient, friends, for the answer will surely come, and by writing to me you more than repay me for the pleasant task of preparing these books. Besides, I am proud to acknowledge that the books are partly yours, for your suggestions often guide me in telling the stories, and I am sure they would not be half so good without your clever and thoughtful assistance.

L. FRANK BAUM

Coronado, 1908.

CHAPTER 1.



THE EARTHQUAKE

THE train from 'Frisco was very late. It should have arrived at Hugson's siding at midnight, but it was already five o'clock and the gray dawn was breaking in the east when the little train slowly rumbled up to the open shed that served for the station-house. As it came to a stop the conductor called out in a loud voice:

"Hugson's Siding!"

At once a little girl rose from her seat and walked to the door of the car, carrying a wicker suit-case in one hand and a round bird-cage covered up with newspapers in the other, while a parasol was tucked under her arm. The conductor helped her off the car and then the engineer started his train again, so that it puffed and groaned and moved slowly away up the track. The reason he was so late was because all through the night there were times when the solid earth shook and trembled under him, and the engineer was afraid that at any moment the rails might spread apart and an accident happen to his passengers. So he moved the cars slowly and with caution.

The little girl stood still to watch until the train had disappeared around a curve; then she turned to see where she was.

The shed at Hugson's Siding was bare save for an old wooden bench, and did not look very inviting. As she peered through the soft gray light not a house of any sort was visible near the station, nor was any person in sight; but after a while the child discovered a horse and buggy standing near a group of trees a short distance away. She walked toward it and found the horse tied to a tree and standing motionless, with its head hanging down almost to the ground. It was a big horse, tall and bony, with long legs and large knees and feet. She could count his ribs easily where they showed

through the skin of his body, and his head was long and seemed altogether too big for him, as if it did not fit. His tail was short and scraggly, and his harness had been broken in many places and fastened together again with cords and bits of wire. The buggy seemed almost new, for it had a shiny top and side curtains. Getting around in front, so that she could look inside, the girl saw a boy curled up on the seat, fast asleep.

She set down the bird-cage and poked the boy with her parasol. Presently he woke up, rose to a sitting position and rubbed his eyes briskly.

"Hello!" he said, seeing her, "are you Dorothy Gale?"

"Yes," she answered, looking gravely at his tousled hair and blinking gray eyes. "Have you come to take me to Hugson's Ranch?"

"Of course," he answered. "Train in?"

"I couldn't be here if it wasn't," she said.

He laughed at that, and his laugh was merry and frank. Jumping out of the buggy he put Dorothy's suit-case under the seat and her bird-cage on the floor in front.

"Canary-birds?" he asked.

"Oh, no; it's just Eureka, my kitten. I thought that was the best way to carry her."

The boy nodded.

"Eureka's a funny name for a cat," he remarked.

"I named my kitten that because I found it," she explained. "Uncle Henry says 'Eureka' means 'I have found it.'"

"All right; hop in."

She climbed into the buggy and he followed her. Then the boy picked up the reins, shook them, and said "Gid-dap!"

The horse did not stir. Dorothy thought he just wiggled one of his drooping ears, but that was all.

"Gid-dap!" called the boy, again.

The horse stood still.

"Perhaps," said Dorothy, "if you untied him, he would go."

The boy laughed cheerfully and jumped out.

"Guess I'm half asleep yet," he said, untying the horse. "But Jim knows his business all right — don't you, Jim?" patting the long nose of the animal.

Then he got into the buggy again and took the reins, and the horse at once backed away from the tree, turned slowly around, and began to trot down the sandy road which was just visible in the dim light.

"Thought that train would never come," observed the boy. "I've waited at that station for five hours."

"We had a lot of earthquakes," said Dorothy. "Didn't you feel the ground

shake?”

“Yes; but we’re used to such things in California,” he replied. “They don’t scare us much.”

DOROTHY POKED THE BOY WITH HER PARASOL.

“The conductor said it was the worst quake he ever knew.”

“Did he? Then it must have happened while I was asleep,” he said, thoughtfully.

“How is Uncle Henry?” she enquired, after a pause during which the horse continued to trot with long, regular strides.

“He’s pretty well. He and Uncle Hugson have been having a fine visit.”

“Is Mr. Hugson your uncle?” she asked.

“Yes. Uncle Bill Hugson married your Uncle Henry’s wife’s sister; so we must be second cousins,” said the boy, in an amused tone. “I work for Uncle Bill on his ranch, and he pays me six dollars a month and my board.”

“Isn’t that a great deal?” she asked, doubtfully.

“Why, it’s a great deal for Uncle Hugson, but not for me. I’m a splendid worker. I work as well as I sleep,” he added, with a laugh.

“What is your name?” asked Dorothy, thinking she liked the boy’s manner and the cheery tone of his voice.

“Not a very pretty one,” he answered, as if a little ashamed. “My whole name is Zebediah; but folks just call me ‘Zeb.’ You’ve been to Australia, haven’t you?”

“Yes; with Uncle Henry,” she answered. “We got to San Francisco a week ago, and Uncle Henry went right on to Hugson’s Ranch for a visit while I stayed a few days in the city with some friends we had met.”

“How long will you be with us?” he asked.

“Only a day. Tomorrow Uncle Henry and I must start back for Kansas. We’ve been away for a long time, you know, and so we’re anxious to get home again.”

The boy flicked the big, boney horse with his whip and looked thoughtful. Then he started to say something to his little companion, but before he could speak the buggy began to sway dangerously from side to side and the earth seemed to rise up before them. Next minute there was a roar and a sharp crash, and at her side Dorothy saw the ground open in a wide crack and then come together again.

“Goodness!” she cried, grasping the iron rail of the seat. “What was that?”

“That was an awful big quake,” replied Zeb, with a white face. “It almost got us that time, Dorothy.”

The horse had stopped short, and stood firm as a rock. Zeb shook the reins and urged him to go, but Jim was stubborn. Then the boy cracked his whip and touched the animal’s flanks with it, and after a low moan of protest Jim stepped slowly along the road.

Neither the boy nor the girl spoke again for some minutes. There was a breath of danger in the very air, and every few moments the earth would shake violently. Jim’s ears were standing erect upon his head and every muscle of his big body was tense as he trotted toward home. He was not going very fast, but on his flanks specks of foam began to appear and at times he would tremble like a leaf.

The sky had grown darker again and the wind made queer sobbing sounds as it swept over the valley.

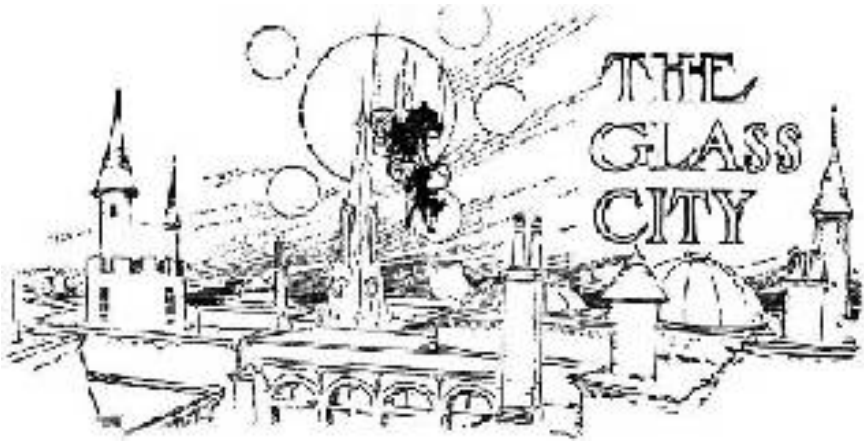
Suddenly there was a rending, tearing sound, and the earth split into another great crack just beneath the spot where the horse was standing. With a wild neigh of terror the animal fell bodily into the pit, drawing the buggy and its occupants after him.

Dorothy grabbed fast hold of the buggy top and the boy did the same. The sudden rush into space confused them so that they could not think.

Blackness engulfed them on every side, and in breathless silence they waited for the fall to end and crush them against jagged rocks or for the earth to close in on them again and bury them forever in its dreadful depths.

The horrible sensation of falling, the darkness and the terrifying noises, proved more than Dorothy could endure and for a few moments the little girl lost consciousness. Zeb, being a boy, did not faint, but he was badly frightened, and clung to the buggy seat with a tight grip, expecting every moment would be his last.

CHAPTER 2.



THE GLASS CITY

WHEN Dorothy recovered her senses they were still falling, but not so fast. The top of the buggy caught the air like a parachute or an umbrella filled with wind, and held them back so that they floated downward with a gentle motion that was not so very disagreeable to bear. The worst thing was their terror of reaching the bottom of this great crack in the earth, and the natural fear that sudden death was about to overtake them at any moment. Crash after crash echoed far above their heads, as the earth came together where it had split, and stones and chunks of clay rattled around them on every side. These they could not see, but they could feel them pelting the buggy top, and Jim screamed almost like a human being when a stone overtook him and struck his boney body. They did not really hurt the poor horse, because everything was falling together; only the stones and rubbish fell faster than the horse and buggy, which were held back by the pressure of the air, so that the terrified animal was actually more frightened than he was injured.

How long this state of things continued Dorothy could not even guess, she was so greatly bewildered. But bye and bye, as she stared ahead into the black chasm with a beating heart, she began to dimly see the form of the horse Jim — his head up in the air, his ears erect and his long legs sprawling in every direction as he tumbled through space. Also, turning her head, she found that she could see the boy beside her, who had until now remained as still and silent as she herself.

Dorothy sighed and commenced to breathe easier. She began to realize that death was not in store for her, after all, but that she had merely started upon another adventure, which promised to be just as queer and unusual as were those she had before encountered.

With this thought in mind the girl took heart and leaned her head over the side of the buggy to see where the strange light was coming from. Far below her she found six great glowing balls suspended in the air. The central and largest one was white, and reminded her of the sun. Around it were arranged, like the five points of a star, the other five brilliant balls; one being rose colored, one violet, one yellow, one blue and one orange. This splendid group of colored suns sent rays darting in every direction, and as the horse and buggy — with Dorothy and Zeb — sank steadily downward and came nearer to the lights, the rays began to take on all the delicate tintings of a rainbow, growing more and more distinct every moment until all the space was brilliantly illuminated.

Dorothy was too dazed to say much, but she watched one of Jim's big ears turn to violet and the other to rose, and wondered that his tail should be yellow and his body striped with blue and orange like the stripes of a zebra. Then she looked at Zeb, whose face was blue and whose hair was pink, and gave a little laugh that sounded a bit nervous.

"Isn't it funny?" she said.

The boy was startled and his eyes were big. Dorothy had a green streak through the center of her face where the blue and yellow lights came together, and her appearance seemed to add to his fright.

"I — I don't s-s-see any-thing funny — 'bout it!" he stammered.

HORSE, BUGGY AND ALL FELL SLOWLY.

Just then the buggy tipped slowly over upon its side, the body of the horse tipping also. But they continued to fall, all together, and the boy and girl had no difficulty in remaining upon the seat, just as they were before. Then they turned bottom side up, and continued to roll slowly over until they were right side up again. During this time Jim struggled frantically, all his legs kicking the air; but on finding himself in his former position the horse said, in a relieved tone of voice:

"Well, that's better!"

Dorothy and Zeb looked at one another in wonder.

"Can your horse talk?" she asked.

“Never knew him to, before,” replied the boy.

“Those were the first words I ever said,” called out the horse, who had overheard them, “and I can’t explain why I happened to speak then. This is a nice scrape you’ve got me into, isn’t it?”

“As for that, we are in the same scrape ourselves,” answered Dorothy, cheerfully. “But never mind; something will happen pretty soon.”

“Of course,” growled the horse; “and then we shall be sorry it happened.”

Zeb gave a shiver. All this was so terrible and unreal that he could not understand it at all, and so had good reason to be afraid.

Swiftly they drew near to the flaming colored suns, and passed close beside them. The light was then so bright that it dazzled their eyes, and they covered their faces with their hands to escape being blinded. There was no heat in the colored suns, however, and after they had passed below them the top of the buggy shut out many of the piercing rays so that the boy and girl could open their eyes again.

“We’ve got to come to the bottom some time,” remarked Zeb, with a deep sigh. “We can’t keep falling forever, you know.”

“Of course not,” said Dorothy. “We are somewhere in the middle of the earth, and the chances are we’ll reach the other side of it before long. But it’s a big hollow, isn’t it?”

“Awful big!” answered the boy.

“We’re coming to something now,” announced the horse.

At this they both put their heads over the side of the buggy and looked down. Yes; there was land below them; and not so very far away, either. But they were floating very, very slowly — so slowly that it could no longer be called a fall — and the children had ample time to take heart and look about them.

They saw a landscape with mountains and plains, lakes and rivers, very like those upon the earth’s surface; but all the scene was splendidly colored by the variegated lights from the six suns. Here and there were groups of houses that seemed made of clear glass, because they sparkled so brightly.

“I’m sure we are in no danger,” said Dorothy, in a sober voice. “We are falling so slowly that we can’t be dashed to pieces when we land, and this country that we are coming to seems quite pretty.”

“We’ll never get home again, though!” declared Zeb, with a groan.

“Oh, I’m not so sure of that,” replied the girl. “But don’t let us worry over such things, Zeb; we can’t help ourselves just now, you know, and I’ve always been told it’s foolish to borrow trouble.”

The boy became silent, having no reply to so sensible a speech, and soon both were fully occupied in staring at the strange scenes spread out below

them. They seemed to be falling right into the middle of a big city which had many tall buildings with glass domes and sharp-pointed spires. These spires were like great spear-points, and if they tumbled upon one of them they were likely to suffer serious injury.

Jim the horse had seen these spires, also, and his ears stood straight up with fear, while Dorothy and Zeb held their breaths in suspense. But no; they floated gently down upon a broad, flat roof, and came to a stop at last.

When Jim felt something firm under his feet the poor beast's legs trembled so much that he could hardly stand; but Zeb at once leaped out of the buggy to the roof, and he was so awkward and hasty that he kicked over Dorothy's birdcage, which rolled out upon the roof so that the bottom came off. At once a pink kitten crept out of the upset cage, sat down upon the glass roof, and yawned and blinked its round eyes.

"Oh," said Dorothy. "There's Eureka."

"First time I ever saw a pink cat," said Zeb.

"Eureka isn't pink; she's white. It's this queer light that gives her that color."

"Where's my milk?" asked the kitten, looking up into Dorothy's face. "I'm 'most starved to death."

"Oh, Eureka! Can you talk?"

"Talk! Am I talking? Good gracious, I believe I am. Isn't it funny?" asked the kitten.

"It's all wrong," said Zeb, gravely. "Animals ought not to talk. But even old Jim has been saying things since we had our accident."

"I can't see that it's wrong," remarked Jim, in his gruff tones. "At least, it isn't as wrong as some other things. What's going to become of us now?"

"I don't know," answered the boy, looking around him curiously.

The houses of the city were all made of glass, so clear and transparent that one could look through the walls as easily as though a window. Dorothy saw, underneath the roof on which she stood, several rooms used for rest chambers, and even thought she could make out a number of queer forms huddled into the corners of these rooms.

The roof beside them had a great hole smashed through it, and pieces of glass were lying scattered in every direction. A near by steeple had been broken off short and the fragments lay heaped beside it. Other buildings were cracked in places or had corners chipped off from them; but they must have been very beautiful before these accidents had happened to mar their perfection. The rainbow tints from the colored suns fell upon the glass city softly and gave to the buildings many delicate, shifting hues which were very pretty to see.

But not a sound had broken the stillness since the strangers had arrived, except that of their own voices. They began to wonder if there were no people to inhabit this magnificent city of the inner world.

Suddenly a man appeared through a hole in the roof next to the one they were on and stepped into plain view. He was not a very large man, but was well formed and had a beautiful face — calm and serene as the face of a fine portrait. His clothing fitted his form snugly and was gorgeously colored in brilliant shades of green, which varied as the sunbeams touched them but was not wholly influenced by the solar rays.

The man had taken a step or two across the glass roof before he noticed the presence of the strangers; but then he stopped abruptly. There was no expression of either fear or surprise upon his tranquil face, yet he must have been both astonished and afraid; for after his eyes had rested upon the ungainly form of the horse for a moment he walked rapidly to the furthest edge of the roof, his head turned back over his shoulder to gaze at the strange animal.

"Look out!" cried Dorothy, who noticed that the beautiful man did not look where he was going; "be careful, or you'll fall off!"

But he paid no attention to her warning. He reached the edge of the tall roof, stepped one foot out into the air, and walked into space as calmly as if he were on firm ground.

The girl, greatly astonished, ran to lean over the edge of the roof, and saw the man walking rapidly through the air toward the ground. Soon he reached the street and disappeared through a glass doorway into one of the glass buildings.

"How strange!" she exclaimed, drawing a long breath.

"Yes; but it's lots of fun, if it *is* strange," remarked the small voice of the kitten, and Dorothy turned to find her pet walking in the air a foot or so away from the edge of the roof.

"Come back, Eureka!" she called, in distress, "you'll certainly be killed."

"I have nine lives," said the kitten, purring softly as it walked around in a circle and then came back to the roof; "but I can't lose even one of them by falling in this country, because I really couldn't manage to fall if I wanted to."

"Does the air bear up your weight?" asked the girl.

"Of course; can't you see?" and again the kitten wandered into the air and back to the edge of the roof.

"It's wonderful!" said Dorothy.

"Suppose we let Eureka go down to the street and get some one to help us," suggested Zeb, who had been even more amazed than Dorothy at these

strange happenings.

“Perhaps we can walk on the air ourselves,” replied the girl.

Zeb drew back with a shiver.

“I wouldn’t dare try,” he said.

“May be Jim will go,” continued Dorothy, looking at the horse.

“And may be he won’t!” answered Jim. “I’ve tumbled through the air long enough to make me contented on this roof.”

“But we didn’t tumble to the roof,” said the girl; “by the time we reached here we were floating very slowly, and I’m almost sure we could float down to the street without getting hurt. Eureka walks on the air all right.”

“Eureka weighs only about half a pound,” replied the horse, in a scornful tone, “while I weigh about half a ton.”

“You don’t weigh as much as you ought to, Jim,” remarked the girl, shaking her head as she looked at the animal. “You’re dreadfully skinny.”

“Oh, well; I’m old,” said the horse, hanging his head despondently, “and I’ve had lots of trouble in my day, little one. For a good many years I drew a public cab in Chicago, and that’s enough to make anyone skinny.”

“He eats enough to get fat, I’m sure,” said the boy, gravely.

“Do I? Can you remember any breakfast that I’ve had today?” growled Jim, as if he resented Zeb’s speech.

“None of us has had breakfast,” said the boy; “and in a time of danger like this it’s foolish to talk about eating.”

“Nothing is more dangerous than being without food,” declared the horse, with a sniff at the rebuke of his young master; “and just at present no one can tell whether there are any oats in this queer country or not. If there are, they are liable to be glass oats!”

"COME ON, JIM! IT'S ALL RIGHT."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I can see plenty of nice gardens and fields down below us, at the edge of this city. But I wish we could find a way to get to the ground."

"Why don't you walk down?" asked Eureka. "I'm as hungry as the horse is, and I want my milk."

"Will you try it, Zeb" asked the girl, turning to her companion.

Zeb hesitated. He was still pale and frightened, for this dreadful adventure had upset him and made him nervous and worried. But he did not wish the little girl to think him a coward, so he advanced slowly to the edge of the roof.

Dorothy stretched out a hand to him and Zeb put one foot out and let it rest in the air a little over the edge of the roof. It seemed firm enough to walk upon, so he took courage and put out the other foot. Dorothy kept hold of his hand and followed him, and soon they were both walking through the air, with the kitten frisking beside them.

"Come on, Jim!" called the boy. "It's all right."

Jim had crept to the edge of the roof to look over, and being a sensible horse and quite experienced, he made up his mind that he could go where the others did. So, with a snort and a neigh and a whisk of his short tail he trotted off the roof into the air and at once began floating downward to the street. His great weight made him fall faster than the children walked, and he passed them on the way down; but when he came to the glass pavement he alighted upon it so softly that he was not even jarred.

"Well, well!" said Dorothy, drawing a long breath, "What a strange country this is."

People began to come out of the glass doors to look at the new arrivals, and pretty soon quite a crowd had assembled. There were men and women, but no children at all, and the folks were all beautifully formed and attractively dressed and had wonderfully handsome faces. There was not an ugly person in all the throng, yet Dorothy was not especially pleased by the appearance of these people because their features had no more expression than the faces of dolls. They did not smile nor did they frown, or show either fear or surprise or curiosity or friendliness. They simply stared at the strangers, paying most attention to Jim and Eureka, for they had never before seen either a horse or a cat and the children bore an outward resemblance to themselves.

Pretty soon a man joined the group who wore a glistening star in the dark hair just over his forehead. He seemed to be a person of authority, for the others pressed back to give him room. After turning his composed eyes first upon the animals and then upon the children he said to Zeb, who was a little taller than Dorothy:

"Tell me, intruder, was it you who caused the Rain of Stones?"

For a moment the boy did not know what he meant by this question. Then, remembering the stones that had fallen with them and passed them long before they had reached this place, he answered:

"No, sir; we didn't cause anything. It was the earthquake."

The man with the star stood for a time quietly thinking over this speech. Then he asked:

"What is an earthquake?"

"I don't know," said Zeb, who was still confused. But Dorothy, seeing his

perplexity, answered:

"It's a shaking of the earth. In this quake a big crack opened and we fell through — horse and buggy, and all — and the stones got loose and came down with us."

The man with the star regarded her with his calm, expressionless eyes.

"The Rain of Stones has done much damage to our city," he said; "and we shall hold you responsible for it unless you can prove your innocence."

"How can we do that?" asked the girl.

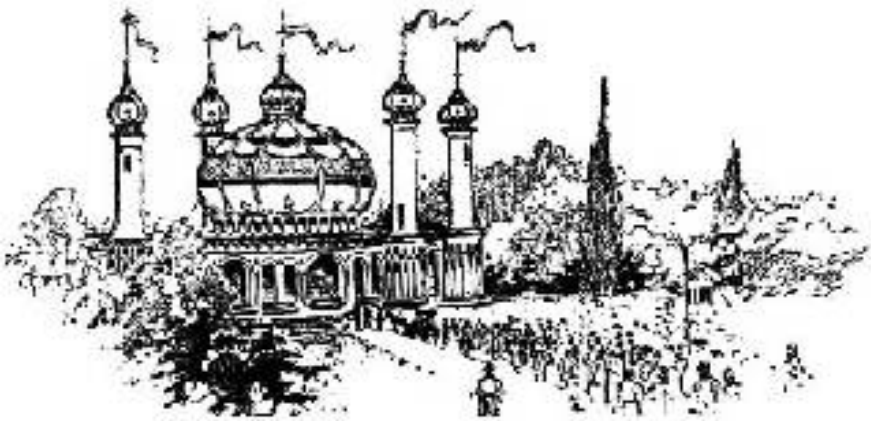
"That I am not prepared to say. It is your affair, not mine. You must go to the House of the Sorcerer, who will soon discover the truth."

"Where is the House of the Sorcerer?" the girl enquired.

"I will lead you to it. Come!"

He turned and walked down the street, and after a moment's hesitation Dorothy caught Eureka in her arms and climbed into the buggy. The boy took his seat beside her and said: "Gid-dap, Jim."

As the horse ambled along, drawing the buggy, the people of the glass city made way for them and formed a procession in their rear. Slowly they moved down one street and up another, turning first this way and then that, until they came to an open square in the center of which was a big glass palace having a central dome and four tall spires on each corner.



CHAPTER 3.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE WIZARD

THE doorway of the glass palace was quite big enough for the horse and buggy to enter, so Zeb drove straight through it and the children found themselves in a lofty hall that was very beautiful. The people at once followed and formed a circle around the sides of the spacious room, leaving the horse and buggy and the man with the star to occupy the center of the hall.

"Come to us, oh, Gwig!" called the man, in a loud voice.

Instantly a cloud of smoke appeared and rolled over the floor; then it slowly spread and ascended into the dome, disclosing a strange personage seated upon a glass throne just before Jim's nose. He was formed just as were the other inhabitants of this land and his clothing only differed from theirs in being bright yellow. But he had no hair at all, and all over his bald head and face and upon the backs of his hands grew sharp thorns like those found on the branches of rose-bushes. There was even a thorn upon the tip of his nose and he looked so funny that Dorothy laughed when she saw him.

The Sorcerer, hearing the laugh, looked toward the little girl with cold, cruel eyes, and his glance made her grow sober in an instant.

"Why have you dared to intrude your unwelcome persons into the secluded Land of the Mangaboos?" he asked, sternly.

"'Cause we couldn't help it," said Dorothy.

"Why did you wickedly and viciously send the Rain of Stones to crack and break our houses?" he continued.

"We didn't," declared the girl.

"Prove it!" cried the Sorcerer.

"We don't have to prove it," answered Dorothy, indignantly. "If you had any sense at all you'd known it was the earthquake."

“We only know that yesterday came a Rain of Stones upon us, which did much damage and injured some of our people. Today came another Rain of Stones, and soon after it you appeared among us.”

“By the way,” said the man with the star, looking steadily at the Sorcerer, “you told us yesterday that there would not be a second Rain of Stones. Yet one has just occurred that was even worse than the first. What is your sorcery good for if it cannot tell us the truth?”

“My sorcery does tell the truth!” declared the thorn-covered man. “I said there would be but one Rain of Stones. This second one was a Rain of People-and-Horse-and-Buggy. And some stones came with them.”

“Will there be any more Rains?” asked the man with the star.

“No, my Prince.”

“Neither stones nor people?”

“No, my Prince.”

“Are you sure?”

“Quite sure, my Prince. My sorcery tells me so.”

Just then a man came running into the hall and addressed the Prince after making a low bow.

“More wonders in the air, my Lord,” said he.

Immediately the Prince and all of his people flocked out of the hall into the street, that they might see what was about to happen. Dorothy and Zeb jumped out of the buggy and ran after them, but the Sorcerer remained calmly in his throne.

Far up in the air was an object that looked like a balloon. It was not so high as the glowing star of the six colored suns, but was descending slowly through the air — so slowly that at first it scarcely seemed to move.

The throng stood still and waited. It was all they could do, for to go away and leave that strange sight was impossible; nor could they hurry its fall in any way. The earth children were not noticed, being so near the average size of the Mangaboos, and the horse had remained in the House of the Sorcerer, with Eureka curled up asleep on the seat of the buggy.

Gradually the balloon grew bigger, which was proof that it was settling down upon the Land of the Mangaboos. Dorothy was surprised to find how patient the people were, for her own little heart was beating rapidly with excitement. A balloon meant to her some other arrival from the surface of the earth, and she hoped it would be some one able to assist her and Zeb out of their difficulties.

In an hour the balloon had come near enough for her to see a basket suspended below it; in two hours she could see a head looking over the side of the basket; in three hours the big balloon settled slowly into the great

square in which they stood and came to rest on the glass pavement.

Then a little man jumped out of the basket, took off his tall hat, and bowed very gracefully to the crowd of Mangaboos around him. He was quite an old little man, and his head was long and entirely bald.

"Why," cried Dorothy, in amazement, "it's Oz!"

The little man looked toward her and seemed as much surprised as she was. But he smiled and bowed as he answered:

"Yes, my dear; I am Oz, the Great and Terrible. Eh? And you are little Dorothy, from Kansas. I remember you very well."

"Who did you say it was?" whispered Zeb to the girl.

"It's the wonderful Wizard of Oz. Haven't you heard of him?"

Just then the man with the star came and stood before the Wizard.

"Sir," said he, "why are you here, in the Land of the Mangaboos?"

"Didn't know what land it was, my son," returned the other, with a pleasant smile; "and, to be honest, I didn't mean to visit you when I started out. I live on top of the earth, your honor, which is far better than living inside it; but yesterday I went up in a balloon, and when I came down I fell into a big crack in the earth, caused by an earthquake. I had let so much gas out of my balloon that I could not rise again, and in a few minutes the earth closed over my head. So I continued to descend until I reached this place, and if you will show me a way to get out of it, I'll go with pleasure. Sorry to have troubled you; but it couldn't be helped."

The Prince had listened with attention. Said he:

"This child, who is from the crust of the earth, like yourself, called you a Wizard. Is not a Wizard something like a Sorcerer?"

"It's better," replied Oz, promptly. "One Wizard is worth three Sorcerers."

"Ah, you shall prove that," said the Prince. "We Mangaboos have, at the present time, one of the most wonderful Sorcerers that ever was picked from a bush; but he sometimes makes mistakes. Do you ever make mistakes?"

"Never!" declared the Wizard, boldly.

"Oh, Oz!" said Dorothy; "you made a lot of mistakes when you were in the marvelous Land of Oz."

"Nonsense!" said the little man, turning red — although just then a ray of violet sunlight was on his round face.

"Come with me," said the Prince to him. "I wish you to meet our Sorcerer."

The Wizard did not like this invitation, but he could not refuse to accept it. So he followed the Prince into the great domed hall, and Dorothy and Zeb came after them, while the throng of people trooped in also.

There sat the thorny Sorcerer in his chair of state, and when the Wizard saw him he began to laugh, uttering comical little chuckles.

"What an absurd creature!" he exclaimed.

"He may look absurd," said the Prince, in his quiet voice; "but he is an excellent Sorcerer. The only fault I find with him is that he is so often wrong."

"I am never wrong," answered the Sorcerer.

"Only a short time ago you told me there would be no more Rain of Stones or of People," said the Prince.

"Well, what then?"

"Here is another person descended from the air to prove you were wrong."

"One person cannot be called 'people,'" said the Sorcerer. "If two should come out of the sky you might with justice say I was wrong; but unless more than this one appears I will hold that I was right."

"Very clever," said the Wizard, nodding his head as if pleased. "I am delighted to find humbugs inside the earth, just the same as on top of it. Were you ever with a circus, brother?"

"No," said the Sorcerer.

"You ought to join one," declared the little man seriously. "I belong to Bailum & Barney's Great Consolidated Shows — three rings in one tent and a menagerie on the side. It's a fine aggregation, I assure you."

"What do you do?" asked the Sorcerer.

"I go up in a balloon, usually, to draw the crowds to the circus. But I've just had the bad luck to come out of the sky, skip the solid earth, and land lower down than I intended. But never mind. It isn't everybody who gets a chance to see your Land of the Gabazoos."

"Mangaboos," said the Sorcerer, correcting him. "If you are a Wizard you ought to be able to call people by their right names."

"Oh, I'm a Wizard; you may be sure of that. Just as good a Wizard as you are a Sorcerer."

"That remains to be seen," said the other.

"If you are able to prove that you are better," said the Prince to the little man, "I will make you the Chief Wizard of this domain. Otherwise — "

"What will happen otherwise?" asked the Wizard.

"I will stop you from living, and forbid you to be planted," returned the Prince.

"That does not sound especially pleasant," said the little man, looking at the one with the star uneasily. "But never mind. I'll beat Old Prickly, all right."

"My name is Gwig," said the Sorcerer, turning his heartless, cruel eyes

upon his rival. “Let me see you equal the sorcery I am about to perform.”

He waved a thorny hand and at once the tinkling of bells was heard, playing sweet music. Yet, look where she would, Dorothy could discover no bells at all in the great glass hall.

The Mangaboo people listened, but showed no great interest. It was one of the things Gwig usually did to prove he was a sorcerer.

Now was the Wizard’s turn, so he smiled upon the assemblage and asked:

“Will somebody kindly loan me a hat?”

No one did, because the Mangaboos did not wear hats, and Zeb had lost his, somehow, in his flight through the air.

“Ahem!” said the Wizard, “will somebody please loan me a handkerchief?”

But they had no handkerchiefs, either.

“Very good,” remarked the Wizard. “I’ll use my own hat, if you please. Now, good people, observe me carefully. You see, there is nothing up my sleeve and nothing concealed about my person. Also, my hat is quite empty.” He took off his hat and held it upside down, shaking it briskly.

“Let me see it,” said the Sorcerer.

He took the hat and examined it carefully, returning it afterward to the Wizard.

“Now,” said the little man, “I will create something out of nothing.”

He placed the hat upon the glass floor, made a pass with his hand, and then removed the hat, displaying a little white piglet no bigger than a mouse, which began to run around here and there and to grunt and squeal in a tiny, shrill voice.

The people watched it intently, for they had never seen a pig before, big or little. The Wizard reached out, caught the wee creature in his hand, and holding its head between one thumb and finger and its tail between the other thumb and finger he pulled it apart, each of the two parts becoming a whole and separate piglet in an instant.

He placed one upon the floor, so that it could run around, and pulled apart the other, making three piglets in all; and then one of these was pulled apart, making four piglets. The Wizard continued this surprising performance until nine tiny piglets were running about at his feet, all squealing and grunting in a very comical way.

“Now,” said the Wizard of Oz, “having created something from nothing, I will make something nothing again.”

With this he caught up two of the piglets and pushed them together, so that the two were one. Then he caught up another piglet and pushed it into the first, where it disappeared. And so, one by one, the nine tiny piglets were

pushed together until but a single one of the creatures remained. This the Wizard placed underneath his hat and made a mystic sign above it. When he removed his hat the last piglet had disappeared entirely.

The little man gave a bow to the silent throng that had watched him, and then the Prince said, in his cold, calm voice:

"You are indeed a wonderful Wizard, and your powers are greater than those of my Sorcerer."

"He will not be a wonderful Wizard long," remarked Gwig.

"Why not?" enquired the Wizard.

"Because I am going to stop your breath," was the reply. "I perceive that you are curiously constructed, and that if you cannot breathe you cannot keep alive."

The little man looked troubled.

"How long will it take you to stop my breath?" he asked.

"About five minutes. I'm going to begin now. Watch me carefully."

He began making queer signs and passes toward the Wizard; but the little man did not watch him long. Instead, he drew a leathern case from his pocket and took from it several sharp knives, which he joined together, one after another, until they made a long sword. By the time he had attached a handle to this sword he was having much trouble to breathe, as the charm of the Sorcerer was beginning to take effect.

So the Wizard lost no more time, but leaping forward he raised the sharp sword, whirled it once or twice around his head, and then gave a mighty stroke that cut the body of the Sorcerer exactly in two.

Dorothy screamed and expected to see a terrible sight; but as the two halves of the Sorcerer fell apart on the floor she saw that he had no bones or blood inside of him at all, and that the place where he was cut looked much like a sliced turnip or potato.

"Why, he's vegetable!" cried the Wizard, astonished.

"Of course," said the Prince. "We are all vegetable, in this country. Are you not vegetable, also?"

"No," answered the Wizard. "People on top of the earth are all meat. Will your Sorcerer die?"

"Certainly, sir. He is really dead now, and will wither very quickly. So we must plant him at once, that other Sorcerers may grow upon his bush," continued the Prince.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the little Wizard, greatly puzzled.

"If you will accompany me to our public gardens," replied the Prince, "I will explain to you much better than I can here the mysteries of our Vegetable Kingdom."

THE WIZARD CUT THE SORCERER EXACTLY IN TWO.

CHAPTER 4.

THE VEGETABLE KINGDOM

AFTER the Wizard had wiped the dampness from his sword and taken it apart and put the pieces into their leathern case again, the man with the star ordered some of his people to carry the two halves of the Sorcerer to the public gardens.

Jim pricked up his ears when he heard they were going to the gardens, and wanted to join the party, thinking he might find something proper to eat; so Zeb put down the top of the buggy and invited the Wizard to ride with them. The seat was amply wide enough for the little man and the two children, and when Jim started to leave the hall the kitten jumped upon his back and sat there quite contentedly.

So the procession moved through the streets, the bearers of the Sorcerer first, the Prince next, then Jim drawing the buggy with the strangers inside of it, and last the crowd of vegetable people who had no hearts and could neither smile nor frown.

The glass city had several fine streets, for a good many people lived there; but when the procession had passed through these it came upon a broad plain covered with gardens and watered by many pretty brooks that flowed through it. There were paths through these gardens, and over some of the brooks were ornamental glass bridges.

Dorothy and Zeb now got out of the buggy and walked beside the Prince, so that they might see and examine the flowers and plants better.

“Who built these lovely bridges?” asked the little girl.

“No one built them,” answered the man with the star. “They grow.”

“That’s queer,” said she. “Did the glass houses in your city grow, too?”

“Of course,” he replied. “But it took a good many years for them to grow

as large and fine as they are now. That is why we are so angry when a Rain of Stones comes to break our towers and crack our roofs."

"Can't you mend them?" she enquired.

"No; but they will grow together again, in time, and we must wait until they do."

They first passed through many beautiful gardens of flowers, which grew nearest the city; but Dorothy could hardly tell what kind of flowers they were, because the colors were constantly changing under the shifting lights of the six suns. A flower would be pink one second, white the next, then blue or yellow; and it was the same way when they came to the plants, which had broad leaves and grew close to the ground.

When they passed over a field of grass Jim immediately stretched down his head and began to nibble.

"A nice country this is," he grumbled, "where a respectable horse has to eat pink grass!"

"It's violet," said the Wizard, who was in the buggy.

"Now it's blue," complained the horse. "As a matter of fact, I'm eating rainbow grass."

"How does it taste?" asked the Wizard.

"Not bad at all," said Jim. "If they give me plenty of it I'll not complain about its color."

By this time the party had reached a freshly plowed field, and the Prince said to Dorothy:

"This is our planting-ground."

Several Mangaboos came forward with glass spades and dug a hole in the ground. Then they put the two halves of the Sorcerer into it and covered him up. After that other people brought water from a brook and sprinkled the earth.

"He will sprout very soon," said the Prince, "and grow into a large bush, from which we shall in time be able to pick several very good sorcerers."

"Do all your people grow on bushes?" asked the boy.

"Certainly," was the reply. "Do not all people grow upon bushes where you came from, on the outside of the earth."

"Not that I ever heard of."

"How strange! But if you will come with me to one of our folk gardens I will show you the way we grow in the Land of the Mangaboos."

It appeared that these odd people, while they were able to walk through the air with ease, usually moved upon the ground in the ordinary way. There were no stairs in their houses, because they did not need them, but on a level surface they generally walked just as we do.

The little party of strangers now followed the Prince across a few more of the glass bridges and along several paths until they came to a garden enclosed by a high hedge. Jim had refused to leave the field of grass, where he was engaged in busily eating; so the Wizard got out of the buggy and joined Zeb and Dorothy, and the kitten followed demurely at their heels.

Inside the hedge they came upon row after row of large and handsome plants with broad leaves gracefully curving until their points nearly reached the ground. In the center of each plant grew a daintily dressed Mangaboo, for the clothing of all these creatures grew upon them and was attached to their bodies.

The growing Mangaboos were of all sizes, from the blossom that had just turned into a wee baby to the full-grown and almost ripe man or woman. On some of the bushes might be seen a bud, a blossom, a baby, a half-grown person and a ripe one; but even those ready to pluck were motionless and silent, as if devoid of life. This sight explained to Dorothy why she had seen no children among the Mangaboos, a thing she had until now been unable to account for.

"Our people do not acquire their real life until they leave their bushes," said the Prince. "You will notice they are all attached to the plants by the soles of their feet, and when they are quite ripe they are easily separated from the stems and at once attain the powers of motion and speech. So while they grow they cannot be said to really live, and they must be picked before they can become good citizens."

"How long do you live, after you are picked?" asked Dorothy.

"That depends upon the care we take of ourselves," he replied. "If we keep cool and moist, and meet with no accidents, we often live for five years. I've been picked over six years, but our family is known to be especially long lived."

"Do you eat?" asked the boy.

"Eat! No, indeed. We are quite solid inside our bodies, and have no need to eat, any more than does a potato."

"But the potatoes sometimes sprout," said Zeb.

"And sometimes we do," answered the Prince; "but that is considered a great misfortune, for then we must be planted at once."

"Where did you grow?" asked the Wizard.

"I will show you," was the reply. "Step this way, please."

He led them within another but smaller circle of hedge, where grew one large and beautiful bush.

"This," said he, "is the Royal Bush of the Mangaboos. All of our Princes and Rulers have grown upon this one bush from time immemorial."

They stood before it in silent admiration. On the central stalk stood poised the figure of a girl so exquisitely formed and colored and so lovely in the expression of her delicate features that Dorothy thought she had never seen so sweet and adorable a creature in all her life. The maiden's gown was soft as satin and fell about her in ample folds, while dainty lace-like traceries trimmed the bodice and sleeves. Her flesh was fine and smooth as polished ivory, and her poise expressed both dignity and grace.

"Who is this?" asked the Wizard, curiously.

The Prince had been staring hard at the girl on the bush. Now he answered, with a touch of uneasiness in his cold tones:

"She is the Ruler destined to be my successor, for she is a Royal Princess. When she becomes fully ripe I must abandon the sovereignty of the Mangaboos to her."

"Isn't she ripe now?" asked Dorothy.

He hesitated.

"Not quite," said he, finally. "It will be several days before she needs to be picked, or at least that is my judgment. I am in no hurry to resign my office and be planted, you may be sure."

"Probably not," declared the Wizard, nodding.

"This is one of the most unpleasant things about our vegetable lives," continued the Prince, with a sigh, "that while we are in our full prime we must give way to another, and be covered up in the ground to sprout and grow and give birth to other people."

"I'm sure the Princess is ready to be picked," asserted Dorothy, gazing hard at the beautiful girl on the bush. "She's as perfect as she can be."

"Never mind," answered the Prince, hastily, "she will be all right for a few days longer, and it is best for me to rule until I can dispose of you strangers, who have come to our land uninvited and must be attended to at once."

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Zeb.

"That is a matter I have not quite decided upon," was the reply. "I think I shall keep this Wizard until a new Sorcerer is ready to pick, for he seems quite skillful and may be of use to us. But the rest of you must be destroyed in some way, and you cannot be planted, because I do not wish horses and cats and meat people growing all over our country."

"You needn't worry," said Dorothy. "We wouldn't grow under ground, I'm sure."

"But why destroy my friends?" asked the little Wizard. "Why not let them live?"

"They do not belong here," returned the Prince. "They have no right to be

inside the earth at all."

"We didn't ask to come down here; we fell," said Dorothy.

"That is no excuse," declared the Prince, coldly.

The children looked at each other in perplexity, and the Wizard sighed. Eureka rubbed her paw on her face and said in her soft, purring voice:

"He won't need to destroy *me*, for if I don't get something to eat pretty soon I shall starve to death, and so save him the trouble."

"If he planted you, he might grow some cat-tails," suggested the Wizard.

"Oh, Eureka! perhaps we can find you some milk-weeds to eat," said the boy.

"Phoo!" snarled the kitten; "I wouldn't touch the nasty things!"

"You don't need milk, Eureka," remarked Dorothy; "you are big enough now to eat any kind of food."

"If I can get it," added Eureka.

"I'm hungry myself," said Zeb. "But I noticed some strawberries growing in one of the gardens, and some melons in another place. These people don't eat such things, so perhaps on our way back they will let us get them."

"Never mind your hunger," interrupted the Prince. "I shall order you destroyed in a few minutes, so you will have no need to ruin our pretty melon vines and berry bushes. Follow me, please, to meet your doom."

CHAPTER 5.

DOROTHY PICKS THE PRINCESS

THE words of the cold and moist vegetable Prince were not very comforting, and as he spoke them he turned away and left the enclosure. The children, feeling sad and despondent, were about to follow him when the Wizard touched Dorothy softly on her shoulder.

"Wait!" he whispered.

"What for?" asked the girl.

"Suppose we pick the Royal Princess," said the Wizard. "I'm quite sure she's ripe, and as soon as she comes to life she will be the Ruler, and may treat us better than that heartless Prince intends to."

"All right!" exclaimed Dorothy, eagerly. "Let's pick her while we have the chance, before the man with the star comes back."

So together they leaned over the great bush and each of them seized one hand of the lovely Princess.

"Pull!" cried Dorothy, and as they did so the royal lady leaned toward them and the stems snapped and separated from her feet. She was not at all heavy, so the Wizard and Dorothy managed to lift her gently to the ground.

The beautiful creature passed her hands over her eyes an instant, tucked in a stray lock of hair that had become disarranged, and after a look around the garden made those present a gracious bow and said, in a sweet but even toned voice:

"I thank you very much."

"We salute your Royal Highness!" cried the Wizard, kneeling and kissing her hand.

Just then the voice of the Prince was heard calling upon them to hasten, and a moment later he returned to the enclosure, followed by a number of his people.

Instantly the Princess turned and faced him, and when he saw that she was picked the Prince stood still and began to tremble.

"Sir," said the Royal Lady, with much dignity, "you have wronged me greatly, and would have wronged me still more had not these strangers come to my rescue. I have been ready for picking all the past week, but because you were selfish and desired to continue your unlawful rule, you left me to stand silent upon my bush."

"I did not know that you were ripe," answered the Prince, in a low voice.

"Give me the Star of Royalty!" she commanded.

Slowly he took the shining star from his own brow and placed it upon that of the Princess. Then all the people bowed low to her, and the Prince turned and walked away alone. What became of him afterward our friends never knew.

The people of Mangaboo now formed themselves into a procession and marched toward the glass city to escort their new ruler to her palace and to perform those ceremonies proper to the occasion. But while the people in the procession walked upon the ground the Princess walked in the air just above their heads, to show that she was a superior being and more exalted than her subjects.

No one now seemed to pay any attention to the strangers, so Dorothy and Zeb and the Wizard let the train pass on and then wandered by themselves into the vegetable gardens. They did not bother to cross the bridges over the brooks, but when they came to a stream they stepped high and walked in the air to the other side. This was a very interesting experience to them, and Dorothy said:

"I wonder why it is that we can walk so easily in the air."

"Perhaps," answered the Wizard, "it is because we are close to the center of the earth, where the attraction of gravitation is very slight. But I've noticed that many queer things happen in fairy countries."

"Is this a fairy country?" asked the boy.

"Of course it is," returned Dorothy, promptly. "Only a fairy country could have veg'table people; and only in a fairy country could Eureka and Jim talk as we do."

"That's true," said Zeb, thoughtfully.

In the vegetable gardens they found the strawberries and melons, and several other unknown but delicious fruits, of which they ate heartily. But the kitten bothered them constantly by demanding milk or meat, and called the Wizard names because he could not bring her a dish of milk by means of his magical arts.

As they sat upon the grass watching Jim, who was still busily eating,

Eureka said:

"I don't believe you are a Wizard at all!"

"No," answered the little man, "you are quite right. In the strict sense of the word I am not a Wizard, but only a humbug."

"The Wizard of Oz has always been a humbug," agreed Dorothy. "I've known him for a long time."

"If that is so," said the boy, "how could he do that wonderful trick with the nine tiny piglets?"

"Don't know," said Dorothy, "but it must have been humbug."

"Very true," declared the Wizard, nodding at her. "It was necessary to deceive that ugly Sorcerer and the Prince, as well as their stupid people; but I don't mind telling you, who are my friends, that the thing was only a trick."

"But I saw the little pigs with my own eyes!" exclaimed Zeb.

"So did I," purred the kitten.

"To be sure," answered the Wizard. "You saw them because they were there. They are in my inside pocket now. But the pulling of them apart and pushing them together again was only a sleight-of-hand trick."

"Let's see the pigs," said Eureka, eagerly.

The little man felt carefully in his pocket and pulled out the tiny piglets, setting them upon the grass one by one, where they ran around and nibbled the tender blades.

"They're hungry, too," he said.

"Oh, what cunning things!" cried Dorothy, catching up one and petting it.

"Be careful!" said the piglet, with a squeal, "you're squeezing me!"

"Dear me!" murmured the Wizard, looking at his pets in astonishment. "They can actually talk!"

"May I eat one of them?" asked the kitten, in a pleading voice. "I'm awfully hungry."

"Why, Eureka," said Dorothy, reproachfully, "what a cruel question! It would be dreadful to eat these dear little things."

"I should say so!" grunted another of the piglets, looking uneasily at the kitten; "cats are cruel things."

"I'm not cruel," replied the kitten, yawning. "I'm just hungry."

"You cannot eat my piglets, even if you are starving," declared the little man, in a stern voice. "They are the only things I have to prove I'm a wizard."

"How did they happen to be so little?" asked Dorothy. "I never saw such small pigs before."

"They are from the Island of Teenty-Weent," said the Wizard, "where everything is small because it's a small island. A sailor brought them to Los

Angeles and I gave him nine tickets to the circus for them."

"But what am I going to eat?" wailed the kitten, sitting in front of Dorothy and looking pleadingly into her face. "There are no cows here to give milk; or any mice, or even grasshoppers. And if I can't eat the piglets you may as well plant me at once and raise catsup."

"I have an idea," said the Wizard, "that there are fishes in these brooks. Do you like fish?"

"Fish!" cried the kitten. "Do I like fish? Why, they're better than piglets — or even milk!"

"Then I'll try to catch you some," said he.

"But won't they be veg'table, like everything else here?" asked the kitten.

"I think not. Fishes are not animals, and they are as cold and moist as the vegetables themselves. There is no reason, that I can see, why they may not exist in the waters of this strange country."

Then the Wizard bent a pin for a hook and took a long piece of string from his pocket for a fish-line. The only bait he could find was a bright red blossom from a flower; but he knew fishes are easy to fool if anything bright attracts their attention, so he decided to try the blossom. Having thrown the end of his line in the water of a nearby brook he soon felt a sharp tug that told him a fish had bitten and was caught on the bent pin; so the little man drew in the string and, sure enough, the fish came with it and was landed safely on the shore, where it began to flop around in great excitement.

IN THE GARDEN OF THE MANGABOOS.

The fish was fat and round, and its scales glistened like beautifully cut jewels set close together; but there was no time to examine it closely, for Eureka made a jump and caught it between her claws, and in a few moments it had entirely disappeared.

"Oh, Eureka!" cried Dorothy, "did you eat the bones?"

"If it had any bones, I ate them," replied the kitten, composedly, as it washed its face after the meal. "But I don't think that fish had any bones, because I didn't feel them scratch my throat."

"You were very greedy," said the girl.

"I was very hungry," replied the kitten.

The little pigs had stood huddled in a group, watching this scene with frightened eyes.

"Cats are dreadful creatures!" said one of them.

"I'm glad we are not fishes!" said another.

"Don't worry," Dorothy murmured, soothingly, "I'll not let the kitten hurt you."

Then she happened to remember that in a corner of her suit-case were one or two crackers that were left over from her luncheon on the train, and she went to the buggy and brought them. Eureka stuck up her nose at such food, but the tiny piglets squealed delightedly at the sight of the crackers and ate them up in a jiffy.

"Now let us go back to the city," suggested the Wizard. "That is, if Jim has had enough of the pink grass."

The cab-horse, who was browsing near, lifted his head with a sigh.

"I've tried to eat a lot while I had the chance," said he, "for it's likely to be a long while between meals in this strange country. But I'm ready to go, now, at any time you wish."

So, after the Wizard had put the piglets back into his inside pocket, where they cuddled up and went to sleep, the three climbed into the buggy and Jim started back to the town.

"Where shall we stay?" asked the girl.

"I think I shall take possession of the House of the Sorcerer," replied the Wizard; "for the Prince said in the presence of his people that he would keep me until they picked another Sorcerer, and the new Princess won't know but that we belong there."

They agreed to this plan, and when they reached the great square Jim drew the buggy into the big door of the domed hall.

"It doesn't look very homelike," said Dorothy, gazing around at the bare room. "But it's a place to stay, anyhow."

"What are those holes up there?" enquired the boy, pointing to some openings that appeared near the top of the dome.

"They look like doorways," said Dorothy; "only there are no stairs to get to them."

"You forget that stairs are unnecessary," observed the Wizard. "Let us walk up, and see where the doors lead to."

With this he began walking in the air toward the high openings, and Dorothy and Zeb followed him. It was the same sort of climb one experiences when walking up a hill, and they were nearly out of breath when they came to the row of openings, which they perceived to be doorways leading into halls in the upper part of the house. Following these halls they

discovered many small rooms opening from them, and some were furnished with glass benches, tables and chairs. But there were no beds at all.

"I wonder if these people never sleep," said the girl.

"Why, there seems to be no night at all in this country," Zeb replied. "Those colored suns are exactly in the same place they were when we came, and if there is no sunset there can be no night."

"Very true," agreed the Wizard. "But it is a long time since I have had any sleep, and I'm tired. So I think I shall lie down upon one of these hard glass benches and take a nap."

"I will, too," said Dorothy, and chose a little room at the end of the hall.

Zeb walked down again to unharness Jim, who, when he found himself free, rolled over a few times and then settled down to sleep, with Eureka nestling comfortably beside his big, boney body. Then the boy returned to one of the upper rooms, and in spite of the hardness of the glass bench was soon deep in slumberland.

CHAPTER 6.

THE MANGABOOS PROVE DANGEROUS

WHEN the Wizard awoke the six colored suns were shining down upon the Land of the Mangaboos just as they had done ever since his arrival. The little man, having had a good sleep, felt rested and refreshed, and looking through the glass partition of the room he saw Zeb sitting up on his bench and yawning. So the Wizard went in to him.

"Zeb," said he, "my balloon is of no further use in this strange country, so I may as well leave it on the square where it fell. But in the basket-car are some things I would like to keep with me. I wish you would go and fetch my satchel, two lanterns, and a can of kerosene oil that is under the seat. There is nothing else that I care about."

So the boy went willingly upon the errand, and by the time he had returned Dorothy was awake. Then the three held a counsel to decide what they should do next, but could think of no way to better their condition.

"I don't like these veg'table people," said the little girl. "They're cold and flabby, like cabbages, in spite of their prettiness."

"I agree with you. It is because there is no warm blood in them," remarked the Wizard.

"And they have no hearts; so they can't love anyone — not even themselves," declared the boy.

"The Princess is lovely to look at," continued Dorothy, thoughtfully; "but I don't care much for her, after all. If there was any other place to go, I'd like to go there."

"But *is* there any other place?" asked the Wizard.

"I don't know," she answered.

Just then they heard the big voice of Jim the cab-horse calling to them,

and going to the doorway leading to the dome they found the Princess and a throng of her people had entered the House of the Sorcerer.

So they went down to greet the beautiful vegetable lady, who said to them:

"I have been talking with my advisors about you meat people, and we have decided that you do not belong in the Land of the Mangaboos and must not remain here."

"How can we go away?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, you cannot go away, of course; so you must be destroyed," was the answer.

"In what way?" enquired the Wizard.

"We shall throw you three people into the Garden of the Twining Vines," said the Princess, "and they will soon crush you and devour your bodies to make themselves grow bigger. The animals you have with you we will drive to the mountains and put into the Black Pit. Then our country will be rid of all its unwelcome visitors."

"But you are in need of a Sorcerer," said the Wizard, "and not one of those growing is yet ripe enough to pick. I am greater than any thorn-covered sorcerer that ever grew in your garden. Why destroy me?"

"It is true we need a Sorcerer," acknowledged the Princess, "but I am informed that one of our own will be ready to pick in a few days, to take the place of Gwig, whom you cut in two before it was time for him to be planted. Let us see your arts, and the sorceries you are able to perform. Then I will decide whether to destroy you with the others or not."

At this the Wizard made a bow to the people and repeated his trick of producing the nine tiny piglets and making them disappear again. He did it very cleverly, indeed, and the Princess looked at the strange piglets as if she were as truly astonished as any vegetable person could be. But afterward she said:

"I have heard of this wonderful magic. But it accomplishes nothing of value. What else can you do?"

The Wizard tried to think. Then he jointed together the blades of his sword and balanced it very skillfully upon the end of his nose. But even that did not satisfy the Princess.

Just then his eye fell upon the lanterns and the can of kerosene oil which Zeb had brought from the car of his balloon, and he got a clever idea from those commonplace things.

"Your Highness," said he, "I will now proceed to prove my magic by creating two suns that you have never seen before; also I will exhibit a Destroyer much more dreadful than your Clinging Vines."

So he placed Dorothy upon one side of him and the boy upon the other and set a lantern upon each of their heads.

"Don't laugh," he whispered to them, "or you will spoil the effect of my magic."

"NOW, PRINCESS," EXCLAIMED THE WIZARD.

Then, with much dignity and a look of vast importance upon his wrinkled face, the Wizard got out his match-box and lighted the two lanterns. The glare they made was very small when compared with the radiance of the six great colored suns; but still they gleamed steadily and clearly. The

Mangaboos were much impressed because they had never before seen any light that did not come directly from their suns.

Next the Wizard poured a pool of oil from the can upon the glass floor, where it covered quite a broad surface. When he lighted the oil a hundred tongues of flame shot up, and the effect was really imposing.

"Now, Princess," exclaimed the Wizard, "those of your advisors who wished to throw us into the Garden of Clinging Vines must step within this circle of light. If they advised you well, and were in the right, they will not be injured in any way. But if any advised you wrongly, the light will wither him."

The advisors of the Princess did not like this test; but she commanded them to step into the flame and one by one they did so, and were scorched so badly that the air was soon filled with an odor like that of baked potatoes. Some of the Mangaboos fell down and had to be dragged from the fire, and all were so withered that it would be necessary to plant them at once.

"Sir," said the Princess to the Wizard, "you are greater than any Sorcerer we have ever known. As it is evident that my people have advised me wrongly, I will not cast you three people into the dreadful Garden of the Clinging Vines; but your animals must be driven into the Black Pit in the mountain, for my subjects cannot bear to have them around."

The Wizard was so pleased to have saved the two children and himself that he said nothing against this decree; but when the Princess had gone both Jim and Eureka protested they did not want to go to the Black Pit, and Dorothy promised she would do all that she could to save them from such a fate.

For two or three days after this — if we call days the periods between sleep, there being no night to divide the hours into days — our friends were not disturbed in any way. They were even permitted to occupy the House of the Sorcerer in peace, as if it had been their own, and to wander in the gardens in search of food.

Once they came near to the enclosed Garden of the Clinging Vines, and walking high into the air looked down upon it with much interest. They saw a mass of tough green vines all matted together and writhing and twisting around like a nest of great snakes. Everything the vines touched they crushed, and our adventurers were indeed thankful to have escaped being cast among them.

Whenever the Wizard went to sleep he would take the nine tiny piglets from his pocket and let them run around on the floor of his room to amuse themselves and get some exercise; and one time they found his glass door ajar and wandered into the hall and then into the bottom part of the great

dome, walking through the air as easily as Eureka could. They knew the kitten, by this time, so they scampered over to where she lay beside Jim and commenced to frisk and play with her.

The cab-horse, who never slept long at a time, sat upon his haunches and watched the tiny piglets and the kitten with much approval.

"Don't be rough!" he would call out, if Eureka knocked over one of the round, fat piglets with her paw; but the pigs never minded, and enjoyed the sport very greatly.

Suddenly they looked up to find the room filled with the silent, solemn-eyed Mangaboos. Each of the vegetable folks bore a branch covered with sharp thorns, which was thrust defiantly toward the horse, the kitten and the piglets.

"Here — stop this foolishness!" Jim roared, angrily; but after being pricked once or twice he got upon his four legs and kept out of the way of the thorns.

The Mangaboos surrounded them in solid ranks, but left an opening to the doorway of the hall; so the animals slowly retreated until they were driven from the room and out upon the street. Here were more of the vegetable people with thorns, and silently they urged the now frightened creatures down the street. Jim had to be careful not to step upon the tiny piglets, who scampered under his feet grunting and squealing, while Eureka, snarling and biting at the thorns pushed toward her, also tried to protect the pretty little things from injury. Slowly but steadily the heartless Mangaboos drove them on, until they had passed through the city and the gardens and come to the broad plains leading to the mountain.

"What does all this mean, anyhow?" asked the horse, jumping to escape a thorn.

"Why, they are driving us toward the Black Pit, into which they threatened to cast us," replied the kitten. "If I were as big as you are, Jim, I'd fight these miserable turnip-roots!"

"What would you do?" enquired Jim.

"I'd kick out with those long legs and iron-shod hoofs."

"All right," said the horse; "I'll do it."

An instant later he suddenly backed toward the crowd of Mangaboos and kicked out his hind legs as hard as he could. A dozen of them smashed together and tumbled to the ground, and seeing his success Jim kicked again and again, charging into the vegetable crowd, knocking them in all directions and sending the others scattering to escape his iron heels. Eureka helped him by flying into the faces of the enemy and scratching and biting furiously, and the kitten ruined so many vegetable complexions that the Mangaboos feared

her as much as they did the horse.

But the foes were too many to be repulsed for long. They tired Jim and Eureka out, and although the field of battle was thickly covered with mashed and disabled Mangaboos, our animal friends had to give up at last and allow themselves to be driven to the mountain.

CHAPTER 7.

INTO THE BLACK PIT AND OUT AGAIN

WHEN they came to the mountain it proved to be a rugged, towering chunk of deep green glass, and looked dismal and forbidding in the extreme. Half way up the steep was a yawning cave, black as night beyond the point where the rainbow rays of the colored suns reached into it.

The Mangaboos drove the horse and the kitten and the piglets into this dark hole and then, having pushed the buggy in after them — for it seemed some of them had dragged it all the way from the domed hall — they began to pile big glass rocks within the entrance, so that the prisoners could not get out again.

“This is dreadful!” groaned Jim. “It will be about the end of our adventures, I guess.”

“If the Wizard was here,” said one of the piglets, sobbing bitterly, “he would not see us suffer so.”

“We ought to have called him and Dorothy when we were first attacked,” added Eureka. “But never mind; be brave, my friends, and I will go and tell our masters where you are, and get them to come to your rescue.”

The mouth of the hole was nearly filled up now, but the kitten gave a leap through the remaining opening and at once scampered up into the air. The Mangaboos saw her escape, and several of them caught up their thorns and gave chase, mounting through the air after her. Eureka, however, was lighter than the Mangaboos, and while they could mount only about a hundred feet above the earth the kitten found she could go nearly two hundred feet. So she ran along over their heads until she had left them far behind and below and had come to the city and the House of the Sorcerer. There she entered in at Dorothy’s window in the dome and aroused her from her sleep.

As soon as the little girl knew what had happened she awakened the Wizard and Zeb, and at once preparations were made to go to the rescue of Jim and the piglets. The Wizard carried his satchel, which was quite heavy, and Zeb carried the two lanterns and the oil can. Dorothy's wicker suit-case was still under the seat of the buggy, and by good fortune the boy had also placed the harness in the buggy when he had taken it off from Jim to let the horse lie down and rest. So there was nothing for the girl to carry but the kitten, which she held close to her bosom and tried to comfort, for its little heart was still beating rapidly.

Some of the Mangaboos discovered them as soon as they left the House of the Sorcerer; but when they started toward the mountain the vegetable people allowed them to proceed without interference, yet followed in a crowd behind them so that they could not go back again.

Before long they neared the Black Pit, where a busy swarm of Mangaboos, headed by their Princess, was engaged in piling up glass rocks before the entrance.

"Stop, I command you!" cried the Wizard, in an angry tone, and at once began pulling down the rocks to liberate Jim and the piglets. Instead of opposing him in this they stood back in silence until he had made a good-sized hole in the barrier, when by order of the Princess they all sprang forward and thrust out their sharp thorns.

THROUGH THE BLACK PIT.

Dorothy hopped inside the opening to escape being pricked, and Zeb and the Wizard, after enduring a few stabs from the thorns, were glad to follow her. At once the Mangaboos began piling up the rocks of glass again, and as the little man realized that they were all about to be entombed in the mountain he said to the children:

"My dears, what shall we do? Jump out and fight?"

"What's the use?" replied Dorothy. "I'd as soon die here as live much longer among those cruel and heartless people."

"That's the way I feel about it," remarked Zeb, rubbing his wounds. "I've had enough of the Mangaboos."

“All right,” said the Wizard; “I’m with you, whatever you decide. But we can’t live long in this cavern, that’s certain.”

Noticing that the light was growing dim he picked up his nine piglets, patted each one lovingly on its fat little head, and placed them carefully in his inside pocket.

Zeb struck a match and lighted one of the lanterns. The rays of the colored suns were now shut out from them forever, for the last chinks had been filled up in the wall that separated their prison from the Land of the Mangaboos.

“How big is this hole?” asked Dorothy.

“I’ll explore it and see,” replied the boy.

So he carried the lantern back for quite a distance, while Dorothy and the Wizard followed at his side. The cavern did not come to an end, as they had expected it would, but slanted upward through the great glass mountain, running in a direction that promised to lead them to the side opposite the Mangaboo country.

“It isn’t a bad road,” observed the Wizard, “and if we followed it it might lead us to some place that is more comfortable than this black pocket we are now in. I suppose the vegetable folk were always afraid to enter this cavern because it is dark; but we have our lanterns to light the way, so I propose that we start out and discover where this tunnel in the mountain leads to.”

The others agreed readily to this sensible suggestion, and at once the boy began to harness Jim to the buggy. When all was in readiness the three took their seats in the buggy and Jim started cautiously along the way, Zeb driving while the Wizard and Dorothy each held a lighted lantern so the horse could see where to go.

Sometimes the tunnel was so narrow that the wheels of the buggy grazed the sides; then it would broaden out as wide as a street; but the floor was usually smooth, and for a long time they travelled on without any accident. Jim stopped sometimes to rest, for the climb was rather steep and tiresome.

“We must be nearly as high as the six colored suns, by this time,” said Dorothy. “I didn’t know this mountain was so tall.”

“We are certainly a good distance away from the Land of the Mangaboos,” added Zeb; “for we have slanted away from it ever since we started.”

But they kept steadily moving, and just as Jim was about tired out with his long journey the way suddenly grew lighter, and Zeb put out the lanterns to save the oil.

To their joy they found it was a white light that now greeted them, for all were weary of the colored rainbow lights which, after a time, had made their eyes ache with their constantly shifting rays. The sides of the tunnel showed

before them like the inside of a long spy-glass, and the floor became more level. Jim hastened his lagging steps at this assurance of a quick relief from the dark passage, and in a few moments more they had emerged from the mountain and found themselves face to face with a new and charming country.

CHAPTER 8.

THE VALLEY OF VOICES

THE VALLEY OF VOICES

BY journeying through the glass mountain they had reached a delightful valley that was shaped like the hollow of a great cup, with another rugged mountain showing on the other side of it, and soft and pretty green hills at the ends. It was all laid out into lovely lawns and gardens, with pebble paths leading through them and groves of beautiful and stately trees dotting the landscape here and there. There were orchards, too, bearing luscious fruits that are all unknown in our world. Alluring brooks of crystal water flowed sparkling between their flower-strewn banks, while scattered over the valley were dozens of the quaintest and most picturesque cottages our travelers had ever beheld. None of them were in clusters, such as villages or towns, but each had ample grounds of its own, with orchards and gardens surrounding it.

As the new arrivals gazed upon this exquisite scene they were enraptured by its beauties and the fragrance that permeated the soft air, which they breathed so gratefully after the confined atmosphere of the tunnel. Several minutes were consumed in silent admiration before they noticed two very singular and unusual facts about this valley. One was that it was lighted from some unseen source; for no sun or moon was in the arched blue sky, although every object was flooded with a clear and perfect light. The second and even more singular fact was the absence of any inhabitant of this splendid place. From their elevated position they could overlook the entire valley, but not a single moving object could they see. All appeared mysteriously deserted.

The mountain on this side was not glass, but made of a stone similar to granite. With some difficulty and danger Jim drew the buggy over the loose rocks until he reached the green lawns below, where the paths and orchards and gardens began. The nearest cottage was still some distance away.

“Isn’t it fine?” cried Dorothy, in a joyous voice, as she sprang out of the buggy and let Eureka run frolicking over the velvety grass.

“Yes, indeed!” answered Zeb. “We were lucky to get away from those dreadful vegetable people.”

“It wouldn’t be so bad,” remarked the Wizard, gazing around him, “if we were obliged to live here always. We couldn’t find a prettier place, I’m sure.”

He took the piglets from his pocket and let them run on the grass, and Jim tasted a mouthful of the green blades and declared he was very contented in his new surroundings.

“We can’t walk in the air here, though,” called Eureka, who had tried it and failed; but the others were satisfied to walk on the ground, and the Wizard said they must be nearer the surface of the earth than they had been in the Mangaboo country, for everything was more homelike and natural.

“But where are the people?” asked Dorothy.

The little man shook his bald head.

“Can’t imagine, my dear,” he replied.

They heard the sudden twittering of a bird, but could not find the creature anywhere. Slowly they walked along the path toward the nearest cottage, the piglets racing and gambolling beside them and Jim pausing at every step for another mouthful of grass.

Presently they came to a low plant which had broad, spreading leaves, in the center of which grew a single fruit about as large as a peach. The fruit was so daintily colored and so fragrant, and looked so appetizing and delicious that Dorothy stopped and exclaimed:

“What is it, do you s’pose?”

The piglets had smelled the fruit quickly, and before the girl could reach out her hand to pluck it every one of the nine tiny ones had rushed in and commenced to devour it with great eagerness.

“It’s good, anyway,” said Zeb, “or those little rascals wouldn’t have gobbled it up so greedily.”

“Where are they?” asked Dorothy, in astonishment.

They all looked around, but the piglets had disappeared.

“Dear me!” cried the Wizard; “they must have run away. But I didn’t see them go; did you?”

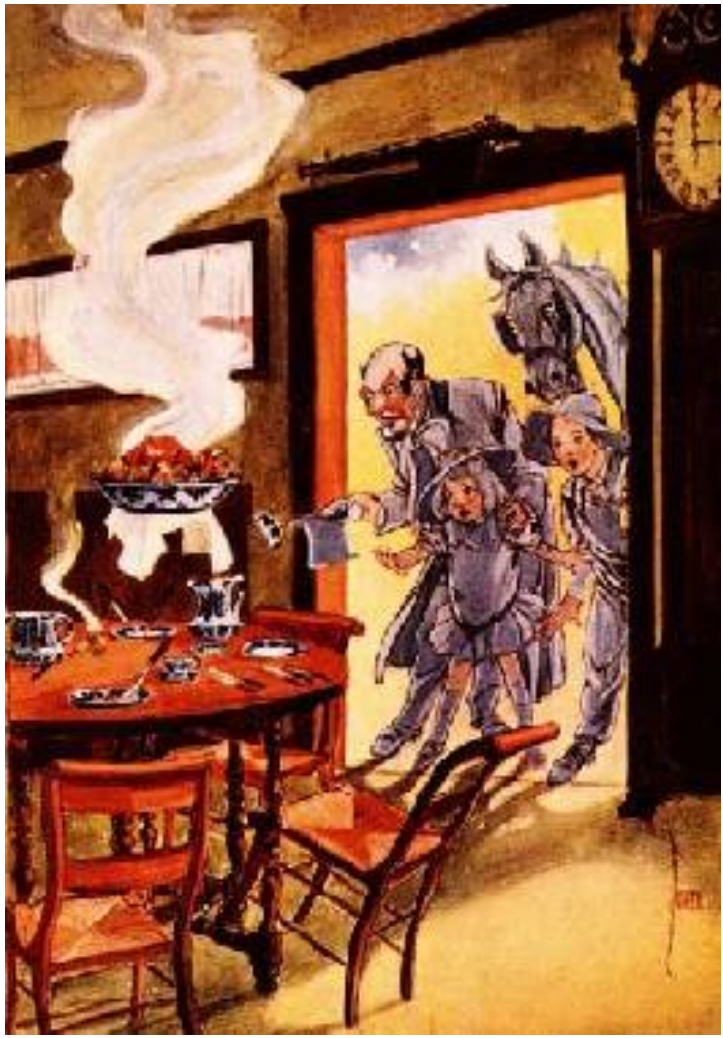
“No!” replied the boy and the girl, together.

“Here, — piggy, piggy, piggy!” called their master, anxiously.

Several squeals and grunts were instantly heard at his feet, but the Wizard could not discover a single piglet.

“Where are you?” he asked.

“Why, right beside you,” spoke a tiny voice. “Can’t you see us?”



"ARE THERE REALLY PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM?"

"No," answered the little man, in a puzzled tone.

"We can see you," said another of the piglets.

The Wizard stooped down and put out his hand, and at once felt the small fat body of one of his pets. He picked it up, but could not see what he held.

"It is very strange," said he, soberly. "The piglets have become invisible, in some curious way."

"I'll bet it's because they ate that peach!" cried the kitten.

"It wasn't a peach, Eureka," said Dorothy. "I only hope it wasn't poison."

"It was fine, Dorothy," called one of the piglets.

"We'll eat all we can find of them," said another.

“But *we* mus’n’t eat them,” the Wizard warned the children, “or we too may become invisible, and lose each other. If we come across another of the strange fruit we must avoid it.”

Calling the piglets to him he picked them all up, one by one, and put them away in his pocket; for although he could not see them he could feel them, and when he had buttoned his coat he knew they were safe for the present.

The travellers now resumed their walk toward the cottage, which they presently reached. It was a pretty place, with vines growing thickly over the broad front porch. The door stood open and a table was set in the front room, with four chairs drawn up to it. On the table were plates, knives and forks, and dishes of bread, meat and fruits. The meat was smoking hot and the knives and forks were performing strange antics and jumping here and there in quite a puzzling way. But not a single person appeared to be in the room.

“How funny!” exclaimed Dorothy, who with Zeb and the Wizard now stood in the doorway.

A peal of merry laughter answered her, and the knives and forks fell to the plates with a clatter. One of the chairs pushed back from the table, and this was so astonishing and mysterious that Dorothy was almost tempted to run away in fright.

“Here are strangers, mama!” cried the shrill and childish voice of some unseen person.

“So I see, my dear,” answered another voice, soft and womanly.

“What do you want?” demanded a third voice, in a stern, gruff accent.

“Well, well!” said the Wizard; “are there really people in this room?”

“Of course,” replied the man’s voice.

“And — pardon me for the foolish question — but, are you all invisible?”

“Surely,” the woman answered, repeating her low, rippling laughter. “Are you surprised that you are unable to see the people of Voe?”

“Why, yes,” stammered the Wizard. “All the people I have ever met before were very plain to see.”

“Where do you come from, then?” asked the woman, in a curious tone.

“We belong upon the face of the earth,” explained the Wizard, “but recently, during an earthquake, we fell down a crack and landed in the Country of the Mangaboos.”

“Dreadful creatures!” exclaimed the woman’s voice. “I’ve heard of them.”

“They walled us up in a mountain,” continued the Wizard; “but we found there was a tunnel through to this side, so we came here. It is a beautiful place. What do you call it?”

“It is the Valley of Voe.”

“Thank you. We have seen no people since we arrived, so we came to this

house to enquire our way."

"Are you hungry?" asked the woman's voice.

"I could eat something," said Dorothy.

"So could I," added Zeb.

"But we do not wish to intrude, I assure you," the Wizard hastened to say.

"That's all right," returned the man's voice, more pleasantly than before. "You are welcome to what we have."

As he spoke the voice came so near to Zeb that he jumped back in alarm. Two childish voices laughed merrily at this action, and Dorothy was sure they were in no danger among such light-hearted folks, even if those folks couldn't be seen.

"What curious animal is that which is eating the grass on my lawn?" enquired the man's voice.

"That's Jim," said the girl. "He's a horse."

"What is he good for?" was the next question.

"He draws the buggy you see fastened to him, and we ride in the buggy instead of walking," she explained.

"Can he fight?" asked the man's voice.

"No! he can kick pretty hard with his heels, and bite a little; but Jim can't 'zactly fight," she replied.

"Then the bears will get him," said one of the children's voices.

"Bears!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Are these bears here?"

"That is the one evil of our country," answered the invisible man. "Many large and fierce bears roam in the Valley of Voe, and when they can catch any of us they eat us up; but as they cannot see us, we seldom get caught."

"Are the bears invis'ble, too?" asked the girl.

"Yes; for they eat of the dama-fruit, as we all do, and that keeps them from being seen by any eye, whether human or animal."

"Does the dama-fruit grow on a low bush, and look something like a peach?" asked the Wizard.

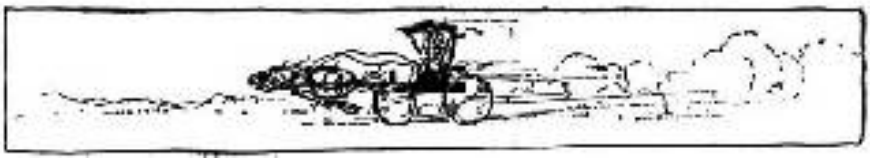
"Yes," was the reply.

"If it makes you invis'ble, why do you eat it?" Dorothy enquired.

"For two reasons, my dear," the woman's voice answered. "The dama-fruit is the most delicious thing that grows, and when it makes us invisible the bears cannot find us to eat us up. But now, good wanderers, your luncheon is on the table, so please sit down and eat as much as you like."

CHAPTER 9.

THEY FIGHT THE INVISIBLE BEARS



THEY FIGHT THE INVISIBLE BEARS

THE strangers took their seats at the table willingly enough, for they were all hungry and the platters were now heaped with good things to eat. In front of each place was a plate bearing one of the delicious dama-fruit, and the perfume that rose from these was so enticing and sweet that they were sorely tempted to eat of them and become invisible.

But Dorothy satisfied her hunger with other things, and her companions did likewise, resisting the temptation.

"Why do you not eat the damas?" asked the woman's voice.

"We don't want to get invis'ble," answered the girl.

"But if you remain visible the bears will see you and devour you," said a girlish young voice, that belonged to one of the children. "We who live here much prefer to be invisible; for we can still hug and kiss one another, and are quite safe from the bears."

"And we do not have to be so particular about our dress," remarked the man.

"And mama can't tell whether my face is dirty or not!" added the other childish voice, gleefully.

"But I make you wash it, every time I think of it," said the mother; "for it stands to reason your face is dirty, Ianu, whether I can see it or not."

Dorothy laughed and stretched out her hands.

"Come here, please — Ianu and your sister — and let me feel of you," she requested.

They came to her willingly, and Dorothy passed her hands over their faces and forms and decided one was a girl of about her own age and the other a boy somewhat smaller. The girl's hair was soft and fluffy and her skin as

smooth as satin. When Dorothy gently touched her nose and ears and lips they seemed to be well and delicately formed.

"If I could see you I am sure you would be beautiful," she declared.

The girl laughed, and her mother said:

"We are not vain in the Valley of Voe, because we can not display our beauty, and good actions and pleasant ways are what make us lovely to our companions. Yet we can see and appreciate the beauties of nature, the dainty flowers and trees, the green fields and the clear blue of the sky."

"How about the birds and beasts and fishes?" asked Zeb.

"The birds we cannot see, because they love to eat of the damas as much as we do; yet we hear their sweet songs and enjoy them. Neither can we see the cruel bears, for they also eat the fruit. But the fishes that swim in our brooks we can see, and often we catch them to eat."

"It occurs to me you have a great deal to make you happy, even while invisible," remarked the Wizard. "Nevertheless, we prefer to remain visible while we are in your valley."

Just then Eureka came in, for she had been until now wandering outside with Jim; and when the kitten saw the table set with food she cried out:

"Now you must feed me, Dorothy, for I'm half starved."

The children were inclined to be frightened by the sight of the small animal, which reminded them of the bears; but Dorothy reassured them by explaining that Eureka was a pet and could do no harm even if she wished to. Then, as the others had by this time moved away from the table, the kitten sprang upon the chair and put her paws upon the cloth to see what there was to eat. To her surprise an unseen hand clutched her and held her suspended in the air. Eureka was frantic with terror, and tried to scratch and bite, so the next moment she was dropped to the floor.

"Did you see that, Dorothy?" she gasped.

"Yes, dear," her mistress replied; "there are people living in this house, although we cannot see them. And you must have better manners, Eureka, or something worse will happen to you."

She placed a plate of food upon the floor and the kitten ate greedily.

"Give me that nice-smelling fruit I saw on the table," she begged, when she had cleaned the plate.

"Those are damas," said Dorothy, "and you must never even taste them, Eureka, or you'll get invis'ble, and then we can't see you at all."

The kitten gazed wistfully at the forbidden fruit.

"Does it hurt to be invis'ble?" she asked.

"I don't know," Dorothy answered; "but it would hurt me dre'fully to lose you."

“Very well, I won’t touch it,” decided the kitten; “but you must keep it away from me, for the smell is very tempting.”

“Can you tell us, sir or ma’am,” said the Wizard, addressing the air because he did not quite know where the unseen people stood, “if there is any way we can get out of your beautiful Valley, and on top of the Earth again.”

“Oh, one can leave the Valley easily enough,” answered the man’s voice; “but to do so you must enter a far less pleasant country. As for reaching the top of the earth, I have never heard that it is possible to do that, and if you succeeded in getting there you would probably fall off.”

“Oh, no,” said Dorothy, “we’ve been there, and we know.”

“The Valley of Voe is certainly a charming place,” resumed the Wizard; “but we cannot be contented in any other land than our own, for long. Even if we should come to unpleasant places on our way it is necessary, in order to reach the earth’s surface, to keep moving on toward it.”

“In that case,” said the man, “it will be best for you to cross our Valley and mount the spiral staircase inside the Pyramid Mountain. The top of that mountain is lost in the clouds, and when you reach it you will be in the awful Land of Naught, where the Gargoyles live.”

“What are Gargoyles?” asked Zeb.

“I do not know, young sir. Our greatest Champion, Overman-Anu, once climbed the spiral stairway and fought nine days with the Gargoyles before he could escape them and come back; but he could never be induced to describe the dreadful creatures, and soon afterward a bear caught him and ate him up.”

The wanderers were rather discouraged by this gloomy report, but Dorothy said with a sigh:

“If the only way to get home is to meet the Gurgles, then we’ve got to meet ‘em. They can’t be worse than the Wicked Witch or the Nome King.”

“But you must remember you had the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman to help you conquer those enemies,” suggested the Wizard. “Just now, my dear, there is not a single warrior in your company.”

“Oh, I guess Zeb could fight if he had to. Couldn’t you, Zeb?” asked the little girl.

“Perhaps; if I had to,” answered Zeb, doubtfully.

“And you have the jointed sword that you chopped the veg’table Sorcerer in two with,” the girl said to the little man.

“True,” he replied; “and in my satchel are other useful things to fight with.”

“What the Gargoyles most dread is a noise,” said the man’s voice. “Our

Champion told me that when he shouted his battle-cry the creatures shuddered and drew back, hesitating to continue the combat. But they were in great numbers, and the Champion could not shout much because he had to save his breath for fighting."

"Very good," said the Wizard; "we can all yell better than we can fight, so we ought to defeat the Gargoyles."

"But tell me," said Dorothy, "how did such a brave Champion happen to let the bears eat him? And if he was invis'ble, and the bears invis'ble, who knows that they really ate him up?"

"The Champion had killed eleven bears in his time," returned the unseen man; "and we know this is true because when any creature is dead the invisible charm of the dama-fruit ceases to be active, and the slain one can be plainly seen by all eyes. When the Champion killed a bear everyone could see it; and when the bears killed the Champion we all saw several pieces of him scattered about, which of course disappeared again when the bears devoured them."

They now bade farewell to the kind but unseen people of the cottage, and after the man had called their attention to a high, pyramid-shaped mountain on the opposite side of the Valley, and told them how to travel in order to reach it, they again started upon their journey.

They followed the course of a broad stream and passed several more pretty cottages; but of course they saw no one, nor did any one speak to them. Fruits and flowers grew plentifully all about, and there were many of the delicious damas that the people of Voe were so fond of.

About noon they stopped to allow Jim to rest in the shade of a pretty orchard, and while they plucked and ate some of the cherries and plums that grew there a soft voice suddenly said to them:

"There are bears near by. Be careful."

The Wizard got out his sword at once, and Zeb grabbed the horse-whip. Dorothy climbed into the buggy, although Jim had been unharnessed from it and was grazing some distance away.

The owner of the unseen voice laughed lightly and said:

"You cannot escape the bears that way."

"How *can* we 'scape?" asked Dorothy, nervously, for an unseen danger is always the hardest to face.

"You must take to the river," was the reply. "The bears will not venture upon the water."

"But we would be drowned!" exclaimed the girl.

"Oh, there is no need of that," said the voice, which from its gentle tones seemed to belong to a young girl. "You are strangers in the Valley of Voe,

and do not seem to know our ways; so I will try to save you."

The next moment a broad-leaved plant was jerked from the ground where it grew and held suspended in the air before the Wizard.

ESCAPING THE INVISIBLE BEARS.

"Sir," said the voice, "you must rub these leaves upon the soles of all your feet, and then you will be able to walk upon the water without sinking below the surface. It is a secret the bears do not know, and we people of Voe usually walk upon the water when we travel, and so escape our enemies."

"Thank you!" cried the Wizard, joyfully, and at once rubbed a leaf upon the soles of Dorothy's shoes and then upon his own. The girl took a leaf and rubbed it upon the kitten's paws, and the rest of the plant was handed to Zeb,

who, after applying it to his own feet, carefully rubbed it upon all four of Jim's hoofs and then upon the tires of the buggy-wheels. He had nearly finished this last task when a low growling was suddenly heard and the horse began to jump around and kick viciously with his heels.

"Quick! To the water, or you are lost!" cried their unseen friend, and without hesitation the Wizard drew the buggy down the bank and out upon the broad river, for Dorothy was still seated in it with Eureka in her arms. They did not sink at all, owing to the virtues of the strange plant they had used, and when the buggy was in the middle of the stream the Wizard returned to the bank to assist Zeb and Jim.

The horse was plunging madly about, and two or three deep gashes appeared upon its flanks, from which the blood flowed freely.

"Run for the river!" shouted the Wizard, and Jim quickly freed himself from his unseen tormenters by a few vicious kicks and then obeyed. As soon as he trotted out upon the surface of the river he found himself safe from pursuit, and Zeb was already running across the water toward Dorothy.

As the little Wizard turned to follow them he felt a hot breath against his cheek and heard a low, fierce growl. At once he began stabbing at the air with his sword, and he knew that he had struck some substance because when he drew back the blade it was dripping with blood. The third time that he thrust out the weapon there was a loud roar and a fall, and suddenly at his feet appeared the form of a great red bear, which was nearly as big as the horse and much stronger and fiercer. The beast was quite dead from the sword thrusts, and after a glance at its terrible claws and sharp teeth the little man turned in a panic and rushed out upon the water, for other menacing growls told him more bears were near.

On the river, however, the adventurers seemed to be perfectly safe. Dorothy and the buggy had floated slowly down stream with the current of the water, and the others made haste to join her. The Wizard opened his satchel and got out some sticking-plaster with which he mended the cuts Jim had received from the claws of the bears.

"I think we'd better stick to the river, after this," said Dorothy. "If our unknown friend hadn't warned us, and told us what to do, we would all be dead by this time."

"That is true," agreed the Wizard, "and as the river seems to be flowing in the direction of the Pyramid Mountain it will be the easiest way for us to travel."

Zeb hitched Jim to the buggy again, and the horse trotted along and drew them rapidly over the smooth water. The kitten was at first dreadfully afraid of getting wet, but Dorothy let her down and soon Eureka was frisking along

beside the buggy without being scared a bit. Once a little fish swam too near the surface, and the kitten grabbed it in her mouth and ate it up as quick as a wink; but Dorothy cautioned her to be careful what she ate in this valley of enchantments, and no more fishes were careless enough to swim within reach.

After a journey of several hours they came to a point where the river curved, and they found they must cross a mile or so of the Valley before they came to the Pyramid Mountain. There were few houses in this part, and few orchards or flowers; so our friends feared they might encounter more of the savage bears, which they had learned to dread with all their hearts.

"You'll have to make a dash, Jim," said the Wizard, "and run as fast as you can go."

"All right," answered the horse; "I'll do my best. But you must remember I'm old, and my dashing days are past and gone."

All three got into the buggy and Zeb picked up the reins, though Jim needed no guidance of any sort. The horse was still smarting from the sharp claws of the invisible bears, and as soon as he was on land and headed toward the mountain the thought that more of those fearsome creatures might be near acted as a spur and sent him galloping along in a way that made Dorothy catch her breath.

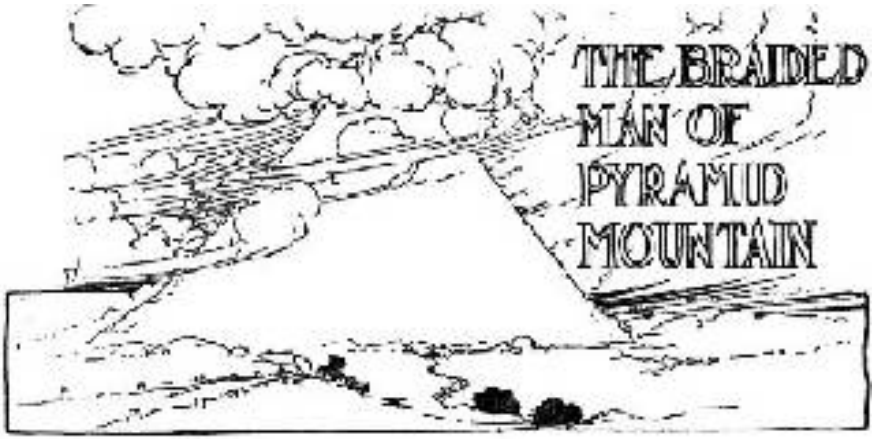
Then Zeb, in a spirit of mischief, uttered a growl like that of the bears, and Jim pricked up his ears and fairly flew. His boney legs moved so fast they could scarcely be seen, and the Wizard clung fast to the seat and yelled "Whoa!" at the top of his voice.

"I — I'm 'fraid he's — he's running away!" gasped Dorothy.

"I *know* he is," said Zeb; "but no bear can catch him if he keeps up that gait — and the harness or the buggy don't break."

Jim did not make a mile a minute; but almost before they were aware of it he drew up at the foot of the mountain, so suddenly that the Wizard and Zeb both sailed over the dashboard and landed in the soft grass — where they rolled over several times before they stopped. Dorothy nearly went with them, but she was holding fast to the iron rail of the seat, and that saved her. She squeezed the kitten, though, until it screeched; and then the old cab-horse made several curious sounds that led the little girl to suspect he was laughing at them all.

CHAPTER 10.



THE BRAIDED MAN OF PYRAMID MOUNTAIN

THE mountain before them was shaped like a cone and was so tall that its point was lost in the clouds. Directly facing the place where Jim had stopped was an arched opening leading to a broad stairway. The stairs were cut in the rock inside the mountain, and they were broad and not very steep, because they circled around like a cork-screw, and at the arched opening where the flight began the circle was quite big. At the foot of the stairs was a sign reading:

WARNING.

These steps lead to the
Land of the Gargoyles.

DANGER! KEEP OUT.

"I wonder how Jim is ever going to draw the buggy up so many stairs," said Dorothy, gravely.

"No trouble at all," declared the horse, with a contemptuous neigh. "Still, I don't care to drag any passengers. You'll all have to walk."

"Suppose the stairs get steeper?" suggested Zeb, doubtfully.

"Then you'll have to boost the buggy-wheels, that's all," answered Jim.

"We'll try it, anyway," said the Wizard. "It's the only way to get out of the Valley of Voe."

So they began to ascend the stairs, Dorothy and the Wizard first, Jim next, drawing the buggy, and then Zeb to watch that nothing happened to the harness.

The light was dim, and soon they mounted into total darkness, so that the

Wizard was obliged to get out his lanterns to light the way. But this enabled them to proceed steadily until they came to a landing where there was a rift in the side of the mountain that let in both light and air. Looking through this opening they could see the Valley of Voe lying far below them, the cottages seeming like toy houses from that distance.

After resting a few moments they resumed their climb, and still the stairs were broad and low enough for Jim to draw the buggy easily after him. The old horse panted a little, and had to stop often to get his breath. At such times they were all glad to wait for him, for continually climbing up stairs is sure to make one's legs ache.

They wound about, always going upward, for some time. The lights from the lanterns dimly showed the way, but it was a gloomy journey, and they were pleased when a broad streak of light ahead assured them they were coming to a second landing.

Here one side of the mountain had a great hole in it, like the mouth of a cavern, and the stairs stopped at the near edge of the floor and commenced ascending again at the opposite edge.

The opening in the mountain was on the side opposite to the Valley of Voe, and our travellers looked out upon a strange scene. Below them was a vast space, at the bottom of which was a black sea with rolling billows, through which little tongues of flame constantly shot up. Just above them, and almost on a level with their platform, were banks of rolling clouds which constantly shifted position and changed color. The blues and greys were very beautiful, and Dorothy noticed that on the cloud banks sat or reclined fleecy, shadowy forms of beautiful beings who must have been the Cloud Fairies. Mortals who stand upon the earth and look up at the sky cannot often distinguish these forms, but our friends were now so near to the clouds that they observed the dainty fairies very clearly.

"Are they real?" asked Zeb, in an awed voice.

"Of course," replied Dorothy, softly. "They are the Cloud Fairies."

"They seem like open-work," remarked the boy, gazing intently. "If I should squeeze one, there wouldn't be anything left of it."

In the open space between the clouds and the black, bubbling sea far beneath, could be seen an occasional strange bird winging its way swiftly through the air. These birds were of enormous size, and reminded Zeb of the rocs he had read about in the Arabian Nights. They had fierce eyes and sharp talons and beaks, and the children hoped none of them would venture into the cavern.

"Well, I declare!" suddenly exclaimed the little Wizard. "What in the world is this?"

They turned around and found a man standing on the floor in the center of the cave, who bowed very politely when he saw he had attracted their attention. He was a very old man, bent nearly double; but the queerest thing about him was his white hair and beard. These were so long that they reached to his feet, and both the hair and the beard were carefully plaited into many braids, and the end of each braid fastened with a bow of colored ribbon.

"Where did you come from?" asked Dorothy, wonderingly.

"No place at all," answered the man with the braids; "that is, not recently. Once I lived on top the earth, but for many years I have had my factory in this spot — half way up Pyramid Mountain."

"Are we only half way up?" enquired the boy, in a discouraged tone.

"I believe so, my lad," replied the braided man. "But as I have never been in either direction, down or up, since I arrived, I cannot be positive whether it is exactly half way or not."

"Have you a factory in this place?" asked the Wizard, who had been examining the strange personage carefully.

"To be sure," said the other. "I am a great inventor, you must know, and I manufacture my products in this lonely spot."

"What are your products?" enquired the Wizard.

"Well, I make Assorted Flutters for flags and bunting, and a superior grade of Rustles for ladies' silk gowns."

"I thought so," said the Wizard, with a sigh. "May we examine some of these articles?"

THE CLOUD FAIRIES.

THE BRAIDED MAN.

"Yes, indeed; come into my shop, please," and the braided man turned and led the way into a smaller cave, where he evidently lived. Here, on a broad shelf, were several card-board boxes of various sizes, each tied with cotton cord.

"This," said the man, taking up a box and handling it gently, "contains twelve dozen rustles — enough to last any lady a year. Will you buy it, my dear?" he asked, addressing Dorothy.

"My gown isn't silk," she said, smiling.

"Never mind. When you open the box the rustles will escape, whether you are wearing a silk dress or not," said the man, seriously. Then he picked up

another box. “In this,” he continued, “are many assorted flutters. They are invaluable to make flags flutter on a still day, when there is no wind. You, sir,” turning to the Wizard, “ought to have this assortment. Once you have tried my goods I am sure you will never be without them.”

“I have no money with me,” said the Wizard, evasively.

“I do not want money,” returned the braided man, “for I could not spend it in this deserted place if I had it. But I would like very much a blue hair-ribbon. You will notice my braids are tied with yellow, pink, brown, red, green, white and black; but I have no blue ribbons.”

“I’ll get you one!” cried Dorothy, who was sorry for the poor man; so she ran back to the buggy and took from her suit-case a pretty blue ribbon. It did her good to see how the braided man’s eyes sparkled when he received this treasure.

“You have made me very, very happy, my dear!” he exclaimed; and then he insisted on the Wizard taking the box of flutters and the little girl accepting the box of rustles.

“You may need them, some time,” he said, “and there is really no use in my manufacturing these things unless somebody uses them.”

“Why did you leave the surface of the earth?” enquired the Wizard.

“I could not help it. It is a sad story, but if you will try to restrain your tears I will tell you about it. On earth I was a manufacturer of Imported Holes for American Swiss Cheese, and I will acknowledge that I supplied a superior article, which was in great demand. Also I made pores for porous plasters and high-grade holes for doughnuts and buttons. Finally I invented a new Adjustable Post-hole, which I thought would make my fortune. I manufactured a large quantity of these post-holes, and having no room in which to store them I set them all end to end and put the top one in the ground. That made an extraordinary long hole, as you may imagine, and reached far down into the earth; and, as I leaned over it to try to see to the bottom, I lost my balance and tumbled in. Unfortunately, the hole led directly into the vast space you see outside this mountain; but I managed to catch a point of rock that projected from this cavern, and so saved myself from tumbling headlong into the black waves beneath, where the tongues of flame that dart out would certainly have consumed me. Here, then, I made my home; and although it is a lonely place I amuse myself making rustles and flutters, and so get along very nicely.”

When the braided man had completed this strange tale Dorothy nearly laughed, because it was all so absurd; but the Wizard tapped his forehead significantly, to indicate that he thought the poor man was crazy. So they politely bade him good day, and went back to the outer cavern to resume

their journey.

CHAPTER 11.

THEY MEET THE WOODEN GARGOYLES

ANOTHER breathless climb brought our adventurers to a third landing where there was a rift in the mountain. On peering out all they could see was rolling banks of clouds, so thick that they obscured all else.

But the travellers were obliged to rest, and while they were sitting on the rocky floor the Wizard felt in his pocket and brought out the nine tiny piglets. To his delight they were now plainly visible, which proved that they had passed beyond the influence of the magical Valley of Voe.

"Why, we can see each other again!" cried one, joyfully.

"Yes," sighed Eureka; "and I also can see you again, and the sight makes me dreadfully hungry. Please, Mr. Wizard, may I eat just one of the fat little piglets? You'd never miss *one* of them, I'm sure!"

"What a horrid, savage beast!" exclaimed a piglet; "and after we've been such good friends, too, and played with one another!"

"When I'm not hungry, I love to play with you all," said the kitten, demurely; "but when my stomach is empty it seems that nothing would fill it so nicely as a fat piglet."

"And we trusted you so!" said another of the nine, reproachfully.

"And thought you were respectable!" said another.

"It seems we were mistaken," declared a third, looking at the kitten timorously, "no one with such murderous desires should belong to our party, I'm sure."

"You see, Eureka," remarked Dorothy, reprovingly, "you are making yourself disliked. There are certain things proper for a kitten to eat; but I never heard of a kitten eating a pig, under *any* cir'stances."

"Did you ever see such little pigs before?" asked the kitten. "They are no

bigger than mice, and I'm sure mice are proper for me to eat."

"It isn't the bigness, dear; its the variety," replied the girl. "These are Mr. Wizard's pets, just as you are my pet, and it wouldn't be any more proper for you to eat them than it would be for Jim to eat you."

"And that's just what I shall do if you don't let those little balls of pork alone," said Jim, glaring at the kitten with his round, big eyes. "If you injure any one of them I'll chew you up instantly."

The kitten looked at the horse thoughtfully, as if trying to decide whether he meant it or not.

"In that case," she said, "I'll leave them alone. You haven't many teeth left, Jim, but the few you have are sharp enough to make me shudder. So the piglets will be perfectly safe, hereafter, as far as I am concerned."

"That is right, Eureka," remarked the Wizard, earnestly. "Let us all be a happy family and love one another."

Eureka yawned and stretched herself.

"I've always loved the piglets," she said; "but they don't love me."

"No one can love a person he's afraid of," asserted Dorothy. "If you behave, and don't scare the little pigs, I'm sure they'll grow very fond of you."

The Wizard now put the nine tiny ones back into his pocket and the journey was resumed.

"We must be pretty near the top, now," said the boy, as they climbed wearily up the dark, winding stairway.

"The Country of the Gurgles can't be far from the top of the earth," remarked Dorothy. "It isn't very nice down here. I'd like to get home again, I'm sure."

No one replied to this, because they found they needed all their breath for the climb. The stairs had become narrower and Zeb and the Wizard often had to help Jim pull the buggy from one step to another, or keep it from jamming against the rocky walls.

At last, however, a dim light appeared ahead of them, which grew clearer and stronger as they advanced.

"Thank goodness we're nearly there!" panted the little Wizard.

Jim, who was in advance, saw the last stair before him and stuck his head above the rocky sides of the stairway. Then he halted, ducked down and began to back up, so that he nearly fell with the buggy onto the others.

"Let's go down again!" he said, in his hoarse voice.

"Nonsense!" snapped the tired Wizard. "What's the matter with you, old man?"

"Everything," grumbled the horse. "I've taken a look at this place, and it's

no fit country for real creatures to go to. Everything's dead, up there — no flesh or blood or growing thing anywhere."

"Never mind; we can't turn back," said Dorothy; "and we don't intend to stay there, anyhow."

"It's dangerous," growled Jim, in a stubborn tone.

"See here, my good steed," broke in the Wizard, "little Dorothy and I have been in many queer countries in our travels, and always escaped without harm. We've even been to the marvelous Land of Oz — haven't we, Dorothy? — so we don't much care what the Country of the Gargoyles is like. Go ahead, Jim, and whatever happens we'll make the best of it."

"All right," answered the horse; "this is your excursion, and not mine; so if you get into trouble don't blame me."

With this speech he bent forward and dragged the buggy up the remaining steps. The others followed and soon they were all standing upon a broad platform and gazing at the most curious and startling sight their eyes had ever beheld.

"The Country of the Gargoyles is all wooden!" exclaimed Zeb; and so it was. The ground was sawdust and the pebbles scattered around were hard knots from trees, worn smooth in course of time. There were odd wooden houses, with carved wooden flowers in the front yards. The tree-trunks were of coarse wood, but the leaves of the trees were shavings. The patches of grass were splinters of wood, and where neither grass nor sawdust showed was a solid wooden flooring. Wooden birds fluttered among the trees and wooden cows were browsing upon the wooden grass; but the most amazing things of all were the wooden people — the creatures known as Gargoyles.

These were very numerous, for the palace was thickly inhabited, and a large group of the queer people clustered near, gazing sharply upon the strangers who had emerged from the long spiral stairway.

The Gargoyles were very small of stature, being less than three feet in height. Their bodies were round, their legs short and thick and their arms extraordinarily long and stout. Their heads were too big for their bodies and their faces were decidedly ugly to look upon. Some had long, curved noses and chins, small eyes and wide, grinning mouths. Others had flat noses, protruding eyes, and ears that were shaped like those of an elephant. There were many types, indeed, scarcely two being alike; but all were equally disagreeable in appearance. The tops of their heads had no hair, but were carved into a variety of fantastic shapes, some having a row of points or balls around the top, other designs resembling flowers or vegetables, and still others having squares that looked like waffles cut criss-cross on their heads. They all wore short wooden wings which were fastened to their wooden

bodies by means of wooden hinges with wooden screws, and with these wings they flew swiftly and noiselessly here and there, their legs being of little use to them.

This noiseless motion was one of the most peculiar things about the Gargoyles. They made no sounds at all, either in flying or trying to speak, and they conversed mainly by means of quick signals made with their wooden fingers or lips. Neither was there any sound to be heard anywhere throughout the wooden country. The birds did not sing, nor did the cows moo; yet there was more than ordinary activity everywhere.

The group of these queer creatures which was discovered clustered near the stairs at first remained staring and motionless, glaring with evil eyes at the intruders who had so suddenly appeared in their land. In turn the Wizard and the children, the horse and the kitten, examined the Gargoyles with the same silent attention.

"There's going to be trouble, I'm sure," remarked the horse. "Unhitch those tugs, Zeb, and set me free from the buggy, so I can fight comfortably."

"Jim's right," sighed the Wizard. "There's going to be trouble, and my sword isn't stout enough to cut up those wooden bodies — so I shall have to get out my revolvers."

He got his satchel from the buggy and, opening it, took out two deadly looking revolvers that made the children shrink back in alarm just to look at.

"What harm can the Gurgles do?" asked Dorothy. "They have no weapons to hurt us with."

"Each of their arms is a wooden club," answered the little man, "and I'm sure the creatures mean mischief, by the looks of their eyes. Even these revolvers can merely succeed in damaging a few of their wooden bodies, and after that we will be at their mercy."

"But why fight at all, in that case?" asked the girl.

"So I may die with a clear conscience," returned the Wizard, gravely. "It's every man's duty to do the best he knows how; and I'm going to do it."

"Wish I had an axe," said Zeb, who by now had unhitched the horse.

"If we had known we were coming we might have brought along several other useful things," responded the Wizard. "But we dropped into this adventure rather unexpectedly."

The Gargoyles had backed away a distance when they heard the sound of talking, for although our friends had spoken in low tones their words seemed loud in the silence surrounding them. But as soon as the conversation ceased the grinning, ugly creatures arose in a flock and flew swiftly toward the strangers, their long arms stretched out before them like the bowsprits of a fleet of sail-boats. The horse had especially attracted their notice, because it

was the biggest and strangest creature they had ever seen; so it became the center of their first attack.

But Jim was ready for them, and when he saw them coming he turned his heels toward them and began kicking out as hard as he could. Crack! crash! bang! went his iron-shod hoofs against the wooden bodies of the Gargoyles, and they were battered right and left with such force that they scattered like straws in the wind. But the noise and clatter seemed as dreadful to them as Jim's heels, for all who were able swiftly turned and flew away to a great distance. The others picked themselves up from the ground one by one and quickly rejoined their fellows, so for a moment the horse thought he had won the fight with ease.

But the Wizard was not so confident.

"Those wooden things are impossible to hurt," he said, "and all the damage Jim has done to them is to knock a few splinters from their noses and ears. That cannot make them look any uglier, I'm sure, and it is my opinion they will soon renew the attack."

"What made them fly away?" asked Dorothy.

"The noise, of course. Don't you remember how the Champion escaped them by shouting his battle-cry?"

"Suppose we escape down the stairs, too," suggested the boy. "We have time, just now, and I'd rather face the invis'ble bears than those wooden imps."

"No," returned Dorothy, stoutly, "it won't do to go back, for then we would never get home. Let's fight it out."

"That is what I advise," said the Wizard. "They haven't defeated us yet, and Jim is worth a whole army."

But the Gargoyles were clever enough not to attack the horse the next time. They advanced in a great swarm, having been joined by many more of their kind, and they flew straight over Jim's head to where the others were standing.

The Wizard raised one of his revolvers and fired into the throng of his enemies, and the shot resounded like a clap of thunder in that silent place.

Some of the wooden beings fell flat upon the ground, where they quivered and trembled in every limb; but most of them managed to wheel and escape again to a distance.

Zeb ran and picked up one of the Gargoyles that lay nearest to him. The top of its head was carved into a crown and the Wizard's bullet had struck it exactly in the left eye, which was a hard wooden knot. Half of the bullet stuck in the wood and half stuck out, so it had been the jar and the sudden noise that had knocked the creature down, more than the fact that it was

really hurt. Before this crowned Gargoyle had recovered himself Zeb had wound a strap several times around its body, confining its wings and arms so that it could not move. Then, having tied the wooden creature securely, the boy buckled the strap and tossed his prisoner into the buggy. By that time the others had all retired.

CHAPTER 12.

A WONDERFUL ESCAPE

FOR a while the enemy hesitated to renew the attack. Then a few of them advanced until another shot from the Wizard's revolver made them retreat.

"That's fine," said Zeb. "We've got 'em on the run now, sure enough."

"But only for a time," replied the Wizard, shaking his head gloomily. "These revolvers are good for six shots each, but when those are gone we shall be helpless."

The Gargoyles seemed to realize this, for they sent a few of their band time after time to attack the strangers and draw the fire from the little man's revolvers. In this way none of them was shocked by the dreadful report more than once, for the main band kept far away and each time a new company was sent into the battle. When the Wizard had fired all of his twelve bullets he had caused no damage to the enemy except to stun a few by the noise, and so he was no nearer to victory than in the beginning of the fray.

"What shall we do now?" asked Dorothy, anxiously.

"Let's yell — all together," said Zeb.

THE WIZARD FIRED INTO THE THRONG.

"And fight at the same time," added the Wizard. "We will get near Jim, so that he can help us, and each one must take some weapon and do the best he can. I'll use my sword, although it isn't much account in this affair. Dorothy must take her parasol and open it suddenly when the wooden folks attack her. I haven't anything for you, Zeb."

"I'll use the king," said the boy, and pulled his prisoner out of the buggy. The bound Gargoyle's arms extended far out beyond its head, so by grasping its wrists Zeb found the king made a very good club. The boy was strong for one of his years, having always worked upon a farm; so he was likely to prove more dangerous to the enemy than the Wizard.

When the next company of Gargoyles advanced, our adventurers began yelling as if they had gone mad. Even the kitten gave a dreadfully shrill scream and at the same time Jim the cab-horse neighed loudly. This daunted the enemy for a time, but the defenders were soon out of breath. Perceiving this, as well as the fact that there were no more of the awful "bangs" to come from the revolvers, the Gargoyles advanced in a swarm as thick as bees, so that the air was filled with them.

Dorothy squatted upon the ground and put up her parasol, which nearly covered her and proved a great protection. The Wizard's sword-blade snapped into a dozen pieces at the first blow he struck against the wooden people. Zeb pounded away with the Gargoyle he was using as a club until he had knocked down dozens of foes; but at the last they clustered so thickly about him that he no longer had room in which to swing his arms. The horse performed some wonderful kicking and even Eureka assisted when she leaped bodily upon the Gargoyles and scratched and bit at them like a wild-cat.

But all this bravery amounted to nothing at all. The wooden things wound their long arms around Zeb and the Wizard and held them fast. Dorothy was captured in the same way, and numbers of the Gargoyles clung to Jim's legs, so weighting him down that the poor beast was helpless. Eureka made a desperate dash to escape and scampered along the ground like a streak; but a grinning Gargoyle flew after her and grabbed her before she had gone very far.

All of them expected nothing less than instant death; but to their surprise the wooden creatures flew into the air with them and bore them far away, over miles and miles of wooden country, until they came to a wooden city. The houses of this city had many corners, being square and six-sided and eight-sided. They were tower-like in shape and the best of them seemed old and weather-worn; yet all were strong and substantial.

To one of these houses which had neither doors nor windows, but only one broad opening far up underneath the roof, the prisoners were brought by their captors. The Gargoyles roughly pushed them into the opening, where there was a platform, and then flew away and left them. As they had no wings the strangers could not fly away, and if they jumped down from such a height they would surely be killed. The creatures had sense enough to reason that way, and the only mistake they made was in supposing the earth people were unable to overcome such ordinary difficulties.

Jim was brought with the others, although it took a good many Gargoyles to carry the big beast through the air and land him on the high platform, and the buggy was thrust in after him because it belonged to the party and the

wooden folks had no idea what it was used for or whether it was alive or not. When Eureka's captor had thrown the kitten after the others the last Gargoyle silently disappeared, leaving our friends to breathe freely once more.

"What an awful fight!" said Dorothy, catching her breath in little gasps.

"Oh, I don't know," purred Eureka, smoothing her ruffled fur with her paw; "we didn't manage to hurt anybody, and nobody managed to hurt us."

"Thank goodness we are together again, even if we are prisoners," sighed the little girl.

"I wonder why they didn't kill us on the spot," remarked Zeb, who had lost his king in the struggle.

"They are probably keeping us for some ceremony," the Wizard answered, reflectively; "but there is no doubt they intend to kill us as dead as possible in a short time."

"As dead as poss'ble would be pretty dead, wouldn't it?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, my dear. But we have no need to worry about that just now. Let us examine our prison and see what it is like."

The space underneath the roof, where they stood, permitted them to see on all sides of the tall building, and they looked with much curiosity at the city spread out beneath them. Everything visible was made of wood, and the scene seemed stiff and extremely unnatural.

From their platform a stair descended into the house, and the children and the Wizard explored it after lighting a lantern to show them the way. Several stories of empty rooms rewarded their search, but nothing more; so after a time they came back to the platform again. Had there been any doors or windows in the lower rooms, or had not the boards of the house been so thick and stout, escape would have been easy; but to remain down below was like being in a cellar or the hold of a ship, and they did not like the darkness or the damp smell.

In this country, as in all others they had visited underneath the earth's surface, there was no night, a constant and strong light coming from some unknown source. Looking out, they could see into some of the houses near them, where there were open windows in abundance, and were able to mark the forms of the wooden Gargoyles moving about in their dwellings.

"This seems to be their time of rest," observed the Wizard. "All people need rest, even if they are made of wood, and as there is no night here they select a certain time of the day in which to sleep or doze."

"I feel sleepy myself," remarked Zeb, yawning.

"Why, where's Eureka?" cried Dorothy, suddenly.

They all looked around, but the kitten was no place to be seen.

"She's gone out for a walk," said Jim, gruffly.

“Where? On the roof?” asked the girl.

“No; she just dug her claws into the wood and climbed down the sides of this house to the ground.”

“She couldn’t climb *down*, Jim,” said Dorothy. “To climb means to go up.”

“Who said so?” demanded the horse.

“My school-teacher said so; and she knows a lot, Jim.”

“To ‘climb down’ is sometimes used as a figure of speech,” remarked the Wizard.

“Well, this was a figure of a cat,” said Jim, “and she *went* down, anyhow, whether she climbed or crept.”

“Dear me! how careless Eureka is,” exclaimed the girl, much distressed. “The Gurgles will get her, sure!”

“Ha, ha!” chuckled the old cab-horse; “they’re not ‘Gurgles,’ little maid; they’re Gargoyles.”

“Never mind; they’ll get Eureka, whatever they’re called.”

“No they won’t,” said the voice of the kitten, and Eureka herself crawled over the edge of the platform and sat down quietly upon the floor.

“Wherever have you been, Eureka?” asked Dorothy, sternly.

“Watching the wooden folks. They’re too funny for anything, Dorothy. Just now they are all going to bed, and — what do you think? — they unhook the hinges of their wings and put them in a corner until they wake up again.”

“What, the hinges?”

“No; the wings.”

“That,” said Zeb, “explains why this house is used by them for a prison. If any of the Gargoyles act badly, and have to be put in jail, they are brought here and their wings unhooked and taken away from them until they promise to be good.”

The Wizard had listened intently to what Eureka had said.

“I wish we had some of those loose wings,” he said.

“Could we fly with them?” asked Dorothy.

“I think so. If the Gargoyles can unhook the wings then the power to fly lies in the wings themselves, and not in the wooden bodies of the people who wear them. So, if we had the wings, we could probably fly as well as they do — at least while we are in their country and under the spell of its magic.”

“But how would it help us to be able to fly?” questioned the girl.

“Come here,” said the little man, and took her to one of the corners of the building. “Do you see that big rock standing on the hillside yonder?” he continued, pointing with his finger.

“Yes; it’s a good way off, but I can see it,” she replied.

“Well, inside that rock, which reaches up into the clouds, is an archway very much like the one we entered when we climbed the spiral stairway from the Valley of Voe. I’ll get my spy-glass, and then you can see it more plainly.”

He fetched a small but powerful telescope, which had been in his satchel, and by its aid the little girl clearly saw the opening.

“Where does it lead to?” she asked.

“That I cannot tell,” said the Wizard; “but we cannot now be far below the earth’s surface, and that entrance may lead to another stairway that will bring us on top of our world again, where we belong. So, if we had the wings, and could escape the Gargoyles, we might fly to that rock and be saved.”

“I’ll get you the wings,” said Zeb, who had thoughtfully listened to all this. “That is, if the kitten will show me where they are.”

“But how can you get down?” enquired the girl, wonderingly.

For answer Zeb began to unfasten Jim’s harness, strap by strap, and to buckle one piece to another until he had made a long leather strip that would reach to the ground.

THE FIGHT WITH THE GARGOYLES.

"I can climb down that, all right," he said.

"No you can't," remarked Jim, with a twinkle in his round eyes. "You may *go* down, but you can only *climb* up."

"Well, I'll climb up when I get back, then," said the boy, with a laugh. "Now, Eureka, you'll have to show me the way to those wings."

"You must be very quiet," warned the kitten; "for if you make the least noise the Gargoyles will wake up. They can hear a pin drop."

"I'm not going to drop a pin," said Zeb.

He had fastened one end of the strap to a wheel of the buggy, and now he let the line dangle over the side of the house.

“Be careful,” cautioned Dorothy, earnestly.

“I will,” said the boy, and let himself slide over the edge.

The girl and the Wizard leaned over and watched Zeb work his way carefully downward, hand over hand, until he stood upon the ground below. Eureka clung with her claws to the wooden side of the house and let herself down easily. Then together they crept away to enter the low doorway of a neighboring dwelling.

The watchers waited in breathless suspense until the boy again appeared, his arms now full of the wooden wings.

When he came to where the strap was hanging he tied the wings all in a bunch to the end of the line, and the Wizard drew them up. Then the line was let down again for Zeb to climb up by. Eureka quickly followed him, and soon they were all standing together upon the platform, with eight of the much prized wooden wings beside them.

The boy was no longer sleepy, but full of energy and excitement. He put the harness together again and hitched Jim to the buggy. Then, with the Wizard’s help, he tried to fasten some of the wings to the old cab-horse.

This was no easy task, because half of each one of the hinges of the wings was missing, it being still fastened to the body of the Gargoyle who had used it. However, the Wizard went once more to his satchel — which seemed to contain a surprising variety of odds and ends — and brought out a spool of strong wire, by means of which they managed to fasten four of the wings to Jim’s harness, two near his head and two near his tail. They were a bit wiggley, but secure enough if only the harness held together.

The other four wings were then fastened to the buggy, two on each side, for the buggy must bear the weight of the children and the Wizard as it flew through the air.

JIM FLUTTERED AND FLOUNDERED THROUGH THE AIR.

These preparations had not consumed a great deal of time, but the sleeping Gargoyles were beginning to wake up and move around, and soon some of them would be hunting for their missing wings. So the prisoners resolved to leave their prison at once.

They mounted into the buggy, Dorothy holding Eureka safe in her lap. The girl sat in the middle of the seat, with Zeb and the Wizard on each side of her. When all was ready the boy shook the reins and said:

"Fly away, Jim!"

"Which wings must I flop first?" asked the cab-horse, undecidedly.

"Flop them all together," suggested the Wizard.

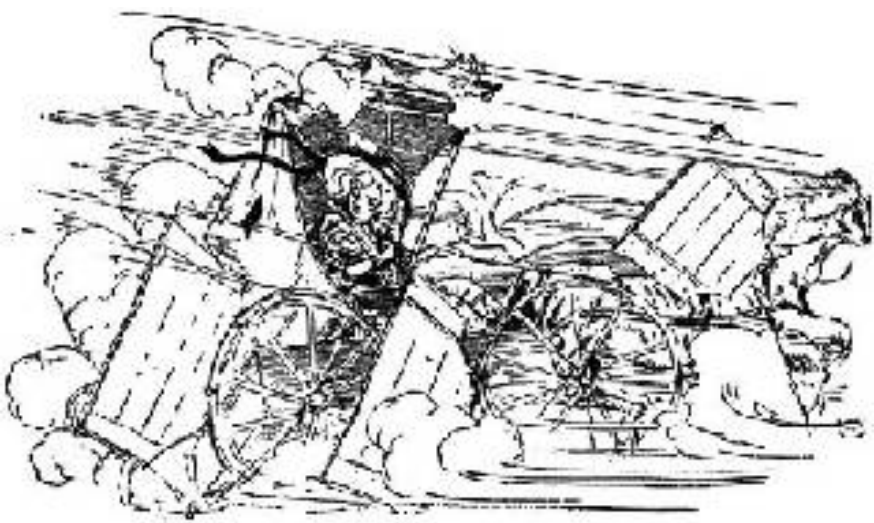
“Some of them are crooked,” objected the horse.

“Never mind; we will steer with the wings on the buggy,” said Zeb. “Just you light out and make for that rock, Jim; and don’t waste any time about it, either.”

So the horse gave a groan, flopped its four wings all together, and flew away from the platform. Dorothy was a little anxious about the success of their trip, for the way Jim arched his long neck and spread out his bony legs as he fluttered and floundered through the air was enough to make anybody nervous. He groaned, too, as if frightened, and the wings creaked dreadfully because the Wizard had forgotten to oil them; but they kept fairly good time with the wings of the buggy, so that they made excellent progress from the start. The only thing that anyone could complain of with justice was the fact that they wobbled first up and then down, as if the road were rocky instead of being as smooth as the air could make it.

The main point, however, was that they flew, and flew swiftly, if a bit unevenly, toward the rock for which they had headed.

Some of the Gargoyles saw them, presently, and lost no time in collecting a band to pursue the escaping prisoners; so that when Dorothy happened to look back she saw them coming in a great cloud that almost darkened the sky.



CHAPTER 13.

THE DEN OF THE DRAGONETTES

OUR friends had a good start and were able to maintain it, for with their eight wings they could go just as fast as could the Gargoyles. All the way to the great rock the wooden people followed them, and when Jim finally alighted at the mouth of the cavern the pursuers were still some distance away.

"But, I'm afraid they'll catch us yet," said Dorothy, greatly excited.

"No; we must stop them," declared the Wizard. "Quick Zeb, help me pull off these wooden wings!"

They tore off the wings, for which they had no further use, and the Wizard piled them in a heap just outside the entrance to the cavern. Then he poured over them all the kerosene oil that was left in his oil-can, and lighting a match set fire to the pile.

The flames leaped up at once and the bonfire began to smoke and roar and crackle just as the great army of wooden Gargoyles arrived. The creatures drew back at once, being filled with fear and horror; for such a dreadful thing as a fire they had never before known in all the history of their wooden land.

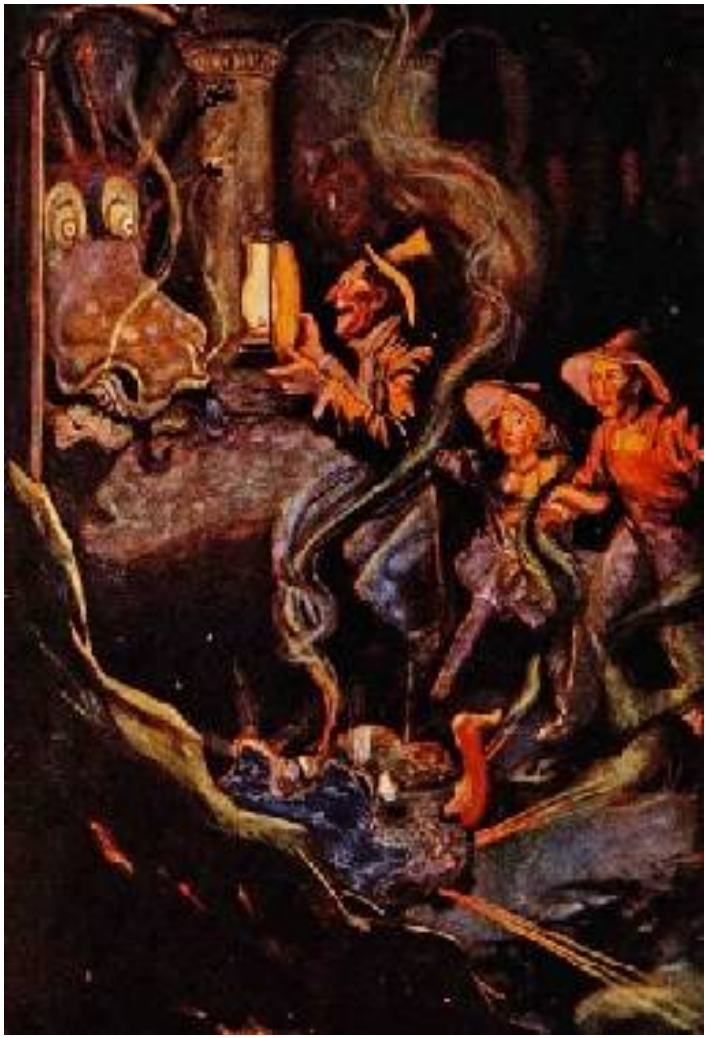
Inside the archway were several doors, leading to different rooms built into the mountain, and Zeb and the Wizard lifted these wooden doors from their hinges and tossed them all on the flames.

"That will prove a barrier for some time to come," said the little man, smiling pleasantly all over his wrinkled face at the success of their stratagem. "Perhaps the flames will set fire to all that miserable wooden country, and if it does the loss will be very small and the Gargoyles never will be missed. But come, my children; let us explore the mountain and discover which way we must go in order to escape from this cavern, which is getting to be almost

as hot as a bake-oven."

To their disappointment there was within this mountain no regular flight of steps by means of which they could mount to the earth's surface. A sort of inclined tunnel led upward for a way, and they found the floor of it both rough and steep. Then a sudden turn brought them to a narrow gallery where the buggy could not pass. This delayed and bothered them for a while, because they did not wish to leave the buggy behind them. It carried their baggage and was useful to ride in wherever there were good roads, and since it had accompanied them so far in their travels they felt it their duty to preserve it. So Zeb and the Wizard set to work and took off the wheels and the top, and then they put the buggy edgewise, so it would take up the smallest space. In this position they managed, with the aid of the patient cab-horse, to drag the vehicle through the narrow part of the passage. It was not a great distance, fortunately, and when the path grew broader they put the buggy together again and proceeded more comfortably. But the road was nothing more than a series of rifts or cracks in the mountain, and it went zig-zag in every direction, slanting first up and then down until they were puzzled as to whether they were any nearer to the top of the earth than when they had started, hours before.

"Anyhow," said Dorothy, "we've 'scaped those awful Gurgles, and that's *one* comfort!"



"WHY IT'S A DRAGON!"

"Probably the Gargoyles are still busy trying to put out the fire," returned the Wizard. "But even if they succeeded in doing that it would be very difficult for them to fly amongst these rocks; so I am sure we need fear them no longer."

Once in a while they would come to a deep crack in the floor, which made the way quite dangerous; but there was still enough oil in the lanterns to give them light, and the cracks were not so wide but that they were able to jump over them. Sometimes they had to climb over heaps of loose rock, where Jim could scarcely drag the buggy. At such times Dorothy, Zeb and the Wizard all pushed behind, and lifted the wheels over the roughest places; so they

managed, by dint of hard work, to keep going. But the little party was both weary and discouraged when at last, on turning a sharp corner, the wanderers found themselves in a vast cave arching high over their heads and having a smooth, level floor.

The cave was circular in shape, and all around its edge, near to the ground, appeared groups of dull yellow lights, two of them being always side by side. These were motionless at first, but soon began to flicker more brightly and to sway slowly from side to side and then up and down.

"What sort of a place is this?" asked the boy, trying to see more clearly through the gloom.

"I cannot imagine, I'm sure," answered the Wizard, also peering about.

"Woogh!" snarled Eureka, arching her back until her hair stood straight on end; "it's a den of alligators, or crocodiles, or some other dreadful creatures! Don't you see their terrible eyes?"

"Eureka sees better in the dark than we can," whispered Dorothy. "Tell us, dear, what do the creatures look like?" she asked, addressing her pet.

"I simply can't describe 'em," answered the kitten, shuddering. "Their eyes are like pie-plates and their mouths like coal-scuttles. But their bodies don't seem very big."

"Where are they?" enquired the girl.

"They are in little pockets all around the edge of this cavern. Oh, Dorothy — you can't imagine what horrid things they are! They're uglier than the Gargoyles."

"Tut-tut! be careful how you criticise your neighbors," spoke a rasping voice near by. "As a matter of fact you are rather ugly-looking creatures yourselves, and I'm sure mother has often told us we were the loveliest and prettiest things in all the world."

Hearing these words our friends turned in the direction of the sound, and the Wizard held his lanterns so that their light would flood one of the little pockets in the rock.

"Why, it's a dragon!" he exclaimed.

"No," answered the owner of the big yellow eyes which were blinking at them so steadily; "you are wrong about that. We hope to grow to be dragons some day, but just now we're only dragonettes."

"What's that?" asked Dorothy, gazing fearfully at the great scaley head, the yawning mouth and the big eyes.

"Young dragons, of course; but we are not allowed to call ourselves real dragons until we get our full growth," was the reply. "The big dragons are very proud, and don't think children amount to much; but mother says that some day we will all be very powerful and important."

“Where is your mother?” asked the Wizard, anxiously looking around.

“She has gone up to the top of the earth to hunt for our dinner. If she has good luck she will bring us an elephant, or a brace of rhinoceri, or perhaps a few dozen people to stay our hunger.”

“Oh; are you hungry?” enquired Dorothy, drawing back.

“Very,” said the dragonette, snapping its jaws.

“And — and — do you eat people?”

“To be sure, when we can get them. But they’ve been very scarce for a few years and we usually have to be content with elephants or buffaloes,” answered the creature, in a regretful tone.

“How old are you?” enquired Zeb, who stared at the yellow eyes as if fascinated.

“Quite young, I grieve to say; and all of my brothers and sisters that you see here are practically my own age. If I remember rightly, we were sixty-six years old the day before yesterday.”

“But that isn’t young!” cried Dorothy, in amazement.

“No?” drawled the dragonette; “it seems to me very babyish.”

“How old is your mother?” asked the girl.

“Mother’s about two thousand years old; but she carelessly lost track of her age a few centuries ago and skipped several hundreds. She’s a little fussy, you know, and afraid of growing old, being a widow and still in her prime.”

“I should think she would be,” agreed Dorothy. Then, after a moment’s thought, she asked: “Are we friends or enemies? I mean, will you be good to us, or do you intend to eat us?”

“As for that, we dragonettes would love to eat you, my child; but unfortunately mother has tied all our tails around the rocks at the back of our individual caves, so that we can not crawl out to get you. If you choose to come nearer we will make a mouthful of you in a wink; but unless you do you will remain quite safe.”

There was a regretful accent in the creature’s voice, and at the words all the other dragonettes sighed dismally.

Dorothy felt relieved. Presently she asked:

“Why did your mother tie your tails?”

“Oh, she is sometimes gone for several weeks on her hunting trips, and if we were not tied we would crawl all over the mountain and fight with each other and get into a lot of mischief. Mother usually knows what she is about, but she made a mistake this time; for you are sure to escape us unless you come too near, and you probably won’t do that.”

“No, indeed!” said the little girl. “We don’t wish to be eaten by such

awful beasts."

"Permit me to say," returned the dragonette, "that you are rather impolite to call us names, knowing that we cannot resent your insults. We consider ourselves very beautiful in appearance, for mother has told us so, and she knows. And we are of an excellent family and have a pedigree that I challenge any humans to equal, as it extends back about twenty thousand years, to the time of the famous Green Dragon of Atlantis, who lived in a time when humans had not yet been created. Can you match that pedigree, little girl?"

"Well," said Dorothy, "I was born on a farm in Kansas, and I guess that's being just as 'spectable and haughty as living in a cave with your tail tied to a rock. If it isn't I'll have to stand it, that's all."

"Tastes differ," murmured the dragonette, slowly drooping its scaley eyelids over its yellow eyes, until they looked like half-moons.

Being reassured by the fact that the creatures could not crawl out of their rock-pockets, the children and the Wizard now took time to examine them more closely. The heads of the dragonettes were as big as barrels and covered with hard, greenish scales that glittered brightly under the light of the lanterns. Their front legs, which grew just back of their heads, were also strong and big; but their bodies were smaller around than their heads, and dwindled away in a long line until their tails were slim as a shoe-string. Dorothy thought, if it had taken them sixty-six years to grow to this size, that it would be fully a hundred years more before they could hope to call themselves dragons, and that seemed like a good while to wait to grow up.

"It occurs to me," said the Wizard, "that we ought to get out of this place before the mother dragon comes back."

"Don't hurry," called one of the dragonettes; "mother will be glad to meet you, I'm sure."

"You may be right," replied the Wizard, "but we're a little particular about associating with strangers. Will you kindly tell us which way your mother went to get on top the earth?"

"That is not a fair question to ask us," declared another dragonette. "For, if we told you truly, you might escape us altogether; and if we told you an untruth we would be naughty and deserve to be punished."

"Then," decided Dorothy, "we must find our way out the best we can."

They circled all around the cavern, keeping a good distance away from the blinking yellow eyes of the dragonettes, and presently discovered that there were two paths leading from the wall opposite to the place where they had entered. They selected one of these at a venture and hurried along it as fast as they could go, for they had no idea when the mother dragon would be back

and were very anxious not to make her acquaintance.

CHAPTER 14.

OZMA USES THE MAGIC BELT

OZMA USES THE MAGIC BELT

FOR a considerable distance the way led straight upward in a gentle incline, and the wanderers made such good progress that they grew hopeful and eager, thinking they might see sunshine at any minute. But at length they came unexpectedly upon a huge rock that shut off the passage and blocked them from proceeding a single step farther.

This rock was separate from the rest of the mountain and was in motion, turning slowly around and around as if upon a pivot. When first they came to it there was a solid wall before them; but presently it revolved until there was exposed a wide, smooth path across it to the other side. This appeared so unexpectedly that they were unprepared to take advantage of it at first, and allowed the rocky wall to swing around again before they had decided to pass over. But they knew now that there was a means of escape and so waited patiently until the path appeared for the second time.

The children and the Wizard rushed across the moving rock and sprang into the passage beyond, landing safely though a little out of breath. Jim the cab-horse came last, and the rocky wall almost caught him; for just as he leaped to the floor of the further passage the wall swung across it and a loose stone that the buggy wheels knocked against fell into the narrow crack where the rock turned, and became wedged there.

They heard a crunching, grinding sound, a loud snap, and the turn-table came to a stop with its broadest surface shutting off the path from which they had come.

“Never mind,” said Zeb, “we don’t want to get back, anyhow.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” returned Dorothy. “The mother dragon may come down and catch us here.”

“It is possible,” agreed the Wizard, “if this proves to be the path she usually takes. But I have been examining this tunnel, and I do not see any signs of so large a beast having passed through it.”

“Then we’re all right,” said the girl, “for if the dragon went the other way she can’t poss’bly get to us now.”

“Of course not, my dear. But there is another thing to consider. The mother dragon probably knows the road to the earth’s surface, and if she went the other way then we have come the wrong way,” said the Wizard, thoughtfully.

“Dear me!” cried Dorothy. “That would be unlucky, wouldn’t it?”

“Very. Unless this passage also leads to the top of the earth,” said Zeb. “For my part, if we manage to get out of here I’ll be glad it isn’t the way the dragon goes.”

“So will I,” returned Dorothy. “It’s enough to have your pedigree flung in your face by those saucy dragonettes. No one knows what the mother might do.”

They now moved on again, creeping slowly up another steep incline. The lanterns were beginning to grow dim, and the Wizard poured the remaining oil from one into the other, so that the one light would last longer. But their journey was almost over, for in a short time they reached a small cave from which there was no further outlet.

They did not realize their ill fortune at first, for their hearts were gladdened by the sight of a ray of sunshine coming through a small crack in the roof of the cave, far overhead. That meant that their world — the real world — was not very far away, and that the succession of perilous adventures they had encountered had at last brought them near the earth’s surface, which meant home to them. But when the adventurers looked more carefully around them they discovered that they were in a strong prison from which there was no hope of escape.

“But we’re *almost* on earth again,” cried Dorothy, “for there is the sun — the most *beau’ful* sun that shines!” and she pointed eagerly at the crack in the distant roof.

“Almost on earth isn’t being there,” said the kitten, in a discontented tone. “It wouldn’t be possible for even me to get up to that crack — or through it if I got there.”

“It appears that the path ends here,” announced the Wizard, gloomily.

“And there is no way to go back,” added Zeb, with a low whistle of perplexity.

“I was sure it would come to this, in the end,” remarked the old cab-horse. “Folks don’t fall into the middle of the earth and then get back again to tell of

their adventures — not in real life. And the whole thing has been unnatural because that cat and I are both able to talk your language, and to understand the words you say."

"And so can the nine tiny piglets," added Eureka. "Don't forget them, for I may have to eat them, after all."

"I've heard animals talk before," said Dorothy, "and no harm came of it."

"Were you ever before shut up in a cave, far under the earth, with no way of getting out?" enquired the horse, seriously.

"No," answered Dorothy. "But don't you lose heart, Jim, for I'm sure this isn't the end of our story, by any means."

The reference to the piglets reminded the Wizard that his pets had not enjoyed much exercise lately, and must be tired of their prison in his pocket. So he sat down upon the floor of the cave, brought the piglets out one by one, and allowed them to run around as much as they pleased.

"My dears," he said to them, "I'm afraid I've got you into a lot of trouble, and that you will never again be able to leave this gloomy cave."

"What's wrong?" asked a piglet. "We've been in the dark quite a while, and you may as well explain what has happened."

The Wizard told them of the misfortune that had overtaken the wanderers.

"Well," said another piglet, "you are a wizard, are you not?"

"I am," replied the little man.

"Then you can do a few wizzes and get us out of this hole," declared the tiny one, with much confidence.

"I could if I happened to be a real wizard," returned the master sadly. "But I'm not, my piggy-wees; I'm a humbug wizard."

"Nonsense!" cried several of the piglets, together.

"You can ask Dorothy," said the little man, in an injured tone.

"It's true enough," returned the girl, earnestly. "Our friend Oz is merely a humbug wizard, for he once proved it to me. He can do several very wonderful things — if he knows how. But he can't wiz a single thing if he hasn't the tools and machinery to work with."

"Thank you, my dear, for doing me justice," responded the Wizard, gratefully. "To be accused of being a real wizard, when I'm not, is a slander I will not tamely submit to. But I am one of the greatest humbug wizards that ever lived, and you will realize this when we have all starved together and our bones are scattered over the floor of this lonely cave."

"I don't believe we'll realize anything, when it comes to that," remarked Dorothy, who had been deep in thought. "But I'm not going to scatter my bones just yet, because I need them, and you prob'ly need yours, too."

"We are helpless to escape," sighed the Wizard.

“*We* may be helpless,” answered Dorothy, smiling at him, “but there are others who can do more than we can. Cheer up, friends. I’m sure Ozma will help us.”

“Ozma!” exclaimed the Wizard. “Who is Ozma?”

“The girl that rules the marvelous Land of Oz,” was the reply. “She’s a friend of mine, for I met her in the Land of Ev, not long ago, and went to Oz with her.”

“For the second time?” asked the Wizard, with great interest.

“Yes. The first time I went to Oz I found you there, ruling the Emerald City. After you went up in a balloon, and escaped us, I got back to Kansas by means of a pair of magical silver shoes.”

“I remember those shoes,” said the little man, nodding. “They once belonged to the Wicked Witch. Have you them here with you?”

“No; I lost them somewhere in the air,” explained the child. “But the second time I went to the Land of Oz I owned the Nome King’s Magic Belt, which is much more powerful than were the Silver Shoes.”

“Where is that Magic Belt?” enquired the Wizard, who had listened with great interest.

“Ozma has it; for its powers won’t work in a common, ordinary country like the United States. Anyone in a fairy country like the Land of Oz can do anything with it; so I left it with my friend the Princess Ozma, who used it to wish me in Australia with Uncle Henry.”

“And were you?” asked Zeb, astonished at what he heard.

“Of course; in just a jiffy. And Ozma has an enchanted picture hanging in her room that shows her the exact scene where any of her friends may be, at any time she chooses. All she has to do is to say: ‘I wonder what So-and-so is doing,’ and at once the picture shows where her friend is and what the friend is doing. That’s *real* magic, Mr. Wizard; isn’t it? Well, every day at four o’clock Ozma has promised to look at me in that picture, and if I am in need of help I am to make her a certain sign and she will put on the Nome King’s Magic Belt and wish me to be with her in Oz.”

“Do you mean that Princess Ozma will see this cave in her enchanted picture, and see all of us here, and what we are doing?” demanded Zeb.

“Of course; when it is four o’clock,” she replied, with a laugh at his startled expression.

“And when you make a sign she will bring you to her in the Land of Oz?” continued the boy.

“That’s it, exactly; by means of the Magic Belt.”

“Then,” said the Wizard, “you will be saved, little Dorothy; and I am very glad of it. The rest of us will die much more cheerfully when we know you

have escaped our sad fate."

"*I* won't die cheerfully!" protested the kitten. "There's nothing cheerful about dying that I could ever see, although they say a cat has nine lives, and so must die nine times."

"Have you ever died yet?" enquired the boy.

"No, and I'm not anxious to begin," said Eureka.

"Don't worry, dear," Dorothy exclaimed, "I'll hold you in my arms, and take you with me."

"Take us, too!" cried the nine tiny piglets, all in one breath.

"Perhaps I can," answered Dorothy. "I'll try."

"Couldn't you manage to hold me in your arms?" asked the cab-horse.

Dorothy laughed.

"I'll do better than that," she promised, "for I can easily save you all, once I am myself in the Land of Oz."

"How?" they asked.

"By using the Magic Belt. All I need do is to wish you with me, and there you'll be — safe in the royal palace!"

"Good!" cried Zeb.

"I built that palace, and the Emerald City, too," remarked the Wizard, in a thoughtful tone, "and I'd like to see them again, for I was very happy among the Munchkins and Winkies and Quadlings and Gillikins."

"Who are they?" asked the boy.

"The four nations that inhabit the Land of Oz," was the reply. "I wonder if they would treat me nicely if I went there again."

"Of course they would!" declared Dorothy. "They are still proud of their former Wizard, and often speak of you kindly."

"Do you happen to know whatever became of the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow?" he enquired.

"They live in Oz yet," said the girl, "and are very important people."

"And the Cowardly Lion?"

"Oh, he lives there too, with his friend the Hungry Tiger; and Billina is there, because she liked the place better than Kansas, and wouldn't go with me to Australia."

"I'm afraid I don't know the Hungry Tiger and Billina," said the Wizard, shaking his head. "Is Billina a girl?"

"No; she's a yellow hen, and a great friend of mine. You're sure to like Billina, when you know her," asserted Dorothy.

"Your friends sound like a menagerie," remarked Zeb, uneasily. "Couldn't you wish me in some safer place than Oz."

"Don't worry," replied the girl. "You'll just love the folks in Oz, when

you get acquainted. What time is it, Mr. Wizard?”

The little man looked at his watch — a big silver one that he carried in his vest pocket.

“Half-past three,” he said.

“Then we must wait for half an hour,” she continued; “but it won’t take long, after that, to carry us all to the Emerald City.”

They sat silently thinking for a time. Then Jim suddenly asked:

“Are there any horses in Oz?”

“Only one,” replied Dorothy, “and he’s a sawhorse.”

“A what?”

“A sawhorse. Princess Ozma once brought him to life with a witch-powder, when she was a boy.”

“Was Ozma once a boy?” asked Zeb, wonderingly.

“Yes; a wicked witch enchanted her, so she could not rule her kingdom. But she’s a girl now, and the sweetest, loveliest girl in all the world.”

“A sawhorse is a thing they saw boards on,” remarked Jim, with a sniff.

“It is when it’s not alive,” acknowledged the girl. “But this sawhorse can trot as fast as you can, Jim; and he’s very wise, too.”

“Pah! I’ll race the miserable wooden donkey any day in the week!” cried the cab-horse.

Dorothy did not reply to that. She felt that Jim would know more about the Saw-Horse later on.

The time dragged wearily enough to the eager watchers, but finally the Wizard announced that four o’clock had arrived, and Dorothy caught up the kitten and began to make the signal that had been agreed upon to the far-away, invisible Ozma.

“Nothing seems to happen,” said Zeb, doubtfully.

“Oh, we must give Ozma time to put on the Magic Belt,” replied the girl.

She had scarcely spoken the words when she suddenly disappeared from the cave, and with her went the kitten. There had been no sound of any kind and no warning. One moment Dorothy sat beside them with the kitten in her lap, and a moment later the horse, the piglets, the Wizard and the boy were all that remained in the underground prison.

DOROTHY MADE THE SIGNAL.

"I believe we will soon follow her," announced the Wizard, in a tone of great relief; "for I know something about the magic of the fairyland that is called the Land of Oz. Let us be ready, for we may be sent for any minute."

He put the piglets safely away in his pocket again and then he and Zeb got into the buggy and sat expectantly upon the seat.

"Will it hurt?" asked the boy, in a voice that trembled a little.

"Not at all," replied the Wizard. "It will all happen as quick as a wink."

And that was the way it did happen.

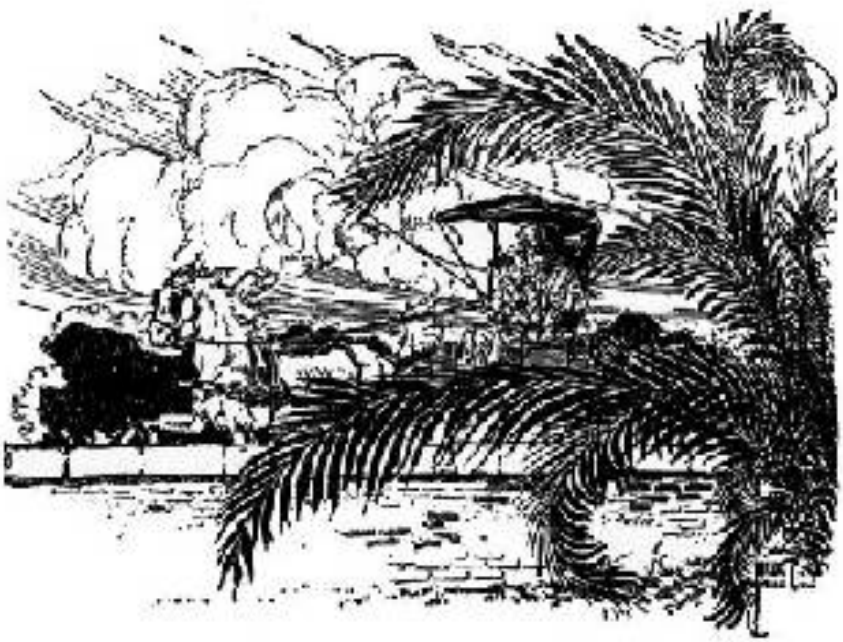
The cab-horse gave a nervous start and Zeb began to rub his eyes to make sure he was not asleep. For they were in the streets of a beautiful emerald-

green city, bathed in a grateful green light that was especially pleasing to their eyes, and surrounded by merry faced people in gorgeous green-and-gold costumes of many extraordinary designs.

Before them were the jewel-studded gates of a magnificent palace, and now the gates opened slowly as if inviting them to enter the courtyard, where splendid flowers were blooming and pretty fountains shot their silvery sprays into the air.

Zeb shook the reins to rouse the cab-horse from his stupor of amazement, for the people were beginning to gather around and stare at the strangers.

"Gid-dap!" cried the boy, and at the word Jim slowly trotted into the courtyard and drew the buggy along the jewelled driveway to the great entrance of the royal palace.



CHAPTER 15.

OLD FRIENDS ARE REUNITED

MANY servants dressed in handsome uniforms stood ready to welcome the new arrivals, and when the Wizard got out of the buggy a pretty girl in a green gown cried out in surprise:

"Why, it's Oz, the Wonderful Wizard, come back again!"

The little man looked at her closely and then took both the maiden's hands in his and shook them cordially.

"On my word," he exclaimed, "it's little Jellia Jamb — as pert and pretty as ever!"

"Why not, Mr. Wizard?" asked Jellia, bowing low. "But I'm afraid you cannot rule the Emerald City, as you used to, because we now have a beautiful Princess whom everyone loves dearly."

"And the people will not willingly part with her," added a tall soldier in a Captain-General's uniform.

The Wizard turned to look at him.

"Did you not wear green whiskers at one time?" he asked.

"Yes," said the soldier; "but I shaved them off long ago, and since then I have risen from a private to be the Chief General of the Royal Armies."

"That's nice," said the little man. "But I assure you, my good people, that I do not wish to rule the Emerald City," he added, earnestly.

"In that case you are very welcome!" cried all the servants, and it pleased the Wizard to note the respect with which the royal retainers bowed before him. His fame had not been forgotten in the Land of Oz, by any means.

"Where is Dorothy?" enquired Zeb, anxiously, as he left the buggy and stood beside his friend the little Wizard.

“She is with the Princess Ozma, in the private rooms of the palace,” replied Jellia Jamb. “But she has ordered me to make you welcome and to show you to your apartments.”

The boy looked around him with wondering eyes. Such magnificence and wealth as was displayed in this palace was more than he had ever dreamed of, and he could scarcely believe that all the gorgeous glitter was real and not tinsel.

“What’s to become of me?” asked the horse, uneasily. He had seen considerable of life in the cities in his younger days, and knew that this regal palace was no place for him.

It perplexed even Jellia Jamb, for a time, to know what to do with the animal. The green maiden was much astonished at the sight of so unusual a creature, for horses were unknown in this Land; but those who lived in the Emerald City were apt to be astonished by queer sights, so after inspecting the cab-horse and noting the mild look in his big eyes the girl decided not to be afraid of him.

“There are no stables here,” said the Wizard, “unless some have been built since I went away.”

“We have never needed them before,” answered Jellia; “for the Sawhorse lives in a room of the palace, being much smaller and more natural in appearance than this great beast you have brought with you.”

“Do you mean that I’m a freak?” asked Jim, angrily.

“Oh, no,” she hastened to say, “there may be many more like you in the place you came from, but in Oz any horse but a Sawhorse is unusual.”

This mollified Jim a little, and after some thought the green maiden decided to give the cab-horse a room in the palace, such a big building having many rooms that were seldom in use.

So Zeb unharnessed Jim, and several of the servants then led the horse around to the rear, where they selected a nice large apartment that he could have all to himself.

Then Jellia said to the Wizard:

“Your own room — which was back of the great Throne Room — has been vacant ever since you left us. Would you like it again?”

“Yes, indeed!” returned the little man. “It will seem like being at home again, for I lived in that room for many, many years.”

He knew the way to it, and a servant followed him, carrying his satchel. Zeb was also escorted to a room — so grand and beautiful that he almost feared to sit in the chairs or lie upon the bed, lest he might dim their splendor. In the closets he discovered many fancy costumes of rich velvets and brocades, and one of the attendants told him to dress himself in any of

the clothes that pleased him and to be prepared to dine with the Princess and Dorothy in an hour's time.

Opening from the chamber was a fine bath-room having a marble tub with perfumed water; so the boy, still dazed by the novelty of his surroundings, indulged in a good bath and then selected a maroon velvet costume with silver buttons to replace his own soiled and much worn clothing. There were silk stockings and soft leather slippers with diamond buckles to accompany his new costume, and when he was fully dressed Zeb looked much more dignified and imposing than ever before in his life.

He was all ready when an attendant came to escort him to the presence of the Princess; he followed bashfully and was ushered into a room more dainty and attractive than it was splendid. Here he found Dorothy seated beside a young girl so marvelously beautiful that the boy stopped suddenly with a gasp of admiration.

But Dorothy sprang up and ran to seize her friend's hand, drawing him impulsively toward the lovely Princess, who smiled most graciously upon her guest. Then the Wizard entered, and his presence relieved the boy's embarrassment. The little man was clothed in black velvet, with many sparkling emerald ornaments decorating his breast; but his bald head and wrinkled features made him appear more amusing than impressive.

Ozma had been quite curious to meet the famous man who had built the Emerald City and united the Munchkins, Gillikins, Quadlings and Winkies into one people; so when they were all four seated at the dinner table the Princess said:

"Please tell me, Mr. Wizard, whether you called yourself Oz after this great country, or whether you believe my country is called Oz after you. It is a matter that I have long wished to enquire about, because you are of a strange race and my own name is Ozma. No one, I am sure, is better able to explain this mystery than you."

"That is true," answered the little Wizard; "therefore it will give me pleasure to explain my connection with your country. In the first place, I must tell you that I was born in Omaha, and my father, who was a politician, named me Oscar Zoroaster Phadrig Isaac Norman Henkle Emmannuel Ambroise Diggs, Diggs being the last name because he could think of no more to go before it. Taken altogether, it was a dreadfully long name to weigh down a poor innocent child, and one of the hardest lessons I ever learned was to remember my own name. When I grew up I just called myself O. Z., because the other initials were P-I-N-H-E-A-D; and that spelled 'pinhead,' which was a reflection on my intelligence."

"Surely no one could blame you for cutting your name short," said Ozma,

sympathetically. “But didn’t you cut it almost too short?”

“Perhaps so,” replied the Wizard. “When a young man I ran away from home and joined a circus. I used to call myself a Wizard, and do tricks of ventriloquism.”

“What does that mean?” asked the Princess.

“Throwing my voice into any object I pleased, to make it appear that the object was speaking instead of me. Also I began to make balloon ascensions. On my balloon and on all the other articles I used in the circus I painted the two initials: ‘O. Z.’, to show that those things belonged to me.

“One day my balloon ran away with me and brought me across the deserts to this beautiful country. When the people saw me come from the sky they naturally thought me some superior creature, and bowed down before me. I told them I was a Wizard, and showed them some easy tricks that amazed them; and when they saw the initials painted on the balloon they called me Oz.”

“Now I begin to understand,” said the Princess, smiling.

“At that time,” continued the Wizard, busily eating his soup while talking, “there were four separate countries in this Land, each one of the four being ruled by a Witch. But the people thought my power was greater than that of the Witches; and perhaps the Witches thought so too, for they never dared oppose me. I ordered the Emerald City to be built just where the four countries cornered together, and when it was completed I announced myself the Ruler of the Land of Oz, which included all the four countries of the Munchkins, the Gillikins, the Winkies and the Quadlings. Over this Land I ruled in peace for many years, until I grew old and longed to see my native city once again. So when Dorothy was first blown to this place by a cyclone I arranged to go away with her in a balloon; but the balloon escaped too soon and carried me back alone. After many adventures I reached Omaha, only to find that all my old friends were dead or had moved away. So, having nothing else to do, I joined a circus again, and made my balloon ascensions until the earthquake caught me.”

“That is quite a history,” said Ozma; “but there is a little more history about the Land of Oz that you do not seem to understand — perhaps for the reason that no one ever told it you. Many years before you came here this Land was united under one Ruler, as it is now, and the Ruler’s name was always ‘Oz’, which means in our language ‘Great and Good’; or, if the Ruler happened to be a woman, her name was always ‘Ozma.’ But once upon a time four Witches leagued together to depose the king and rule the four parts of the kingdom themselves; so when the Ruler, my grandfather, was hunting one day, one Wicked Witch named Mombi stole him and carried him away,

keeping him a close prisoner. Then the Witches divided up the kingdom, and ruled the four parts of it until you came here. That was why the people were so glad to see you, and why they thought from your initials that you were their rightful ruler."

"But, at that time," said the Wizard, thoughtfully, "there were two Good Witches and two Wicked Witches ruling in the land."

"Yes," replied Ozma, "because a good Witch had conquered Mombi in the North and Glinda the Good had conquered the evil Witch in the South. But Mombi was still my grandfather's jailor, and afterward my father's jailor. When I was born she transformed me into a boy, hoping that no one would ever recognize me and know that I was the rightful Princess of the Land of Oz. But I escaped from her and am now the Ruler of my people."

"I am very glad of that," said the Wizard, "and hope you will consider me one of your most faithful and devoted subjects."

"We owe a great deal to the Wonderful Wizard," continued the Princess, "for it was you who built this splendid Emerald City."

"Your people built it," he answered. "I only bossed the job, as we say in Omaha."

"But you ruled it wisely and well for many years," said she, "and made the people proud of your magical art. So, as you are now too old to wander abroad and work in a circus, I offer you a home here as long as you live. You shall be the Official Wizard of my kingdom, and be treated with every respect and consideration."

"I accept your kind offer with gratitude, gracious Princess," the little man said, in a soft voice, and they could all see that tear-drops were standing in his keen old eyes. It meant a good deal to him to secure a home like this.

"He's only a humbug Wizard, though," said Dorothy, smiling at him.

"And that is the safest kind of a Wizard to have," replied Ozma, promptly.

"Oz can do some good tricks, humbug or no humbug," announced Zeb, who was now feeling more at ease.

"He shall amuse us with his tricks tomorrow," said the Princess. "I have sent messengers to summon all of Dorothy's old friends to meet her and give her welcome, and they ought to arrive very soon, now."

Indeed, the dinner was no sooner finished than in rushed the Scarecrow, to hug Dorothy in his padded arms and tell her how glad he was to see her again. The Wizard was also most heartily welcomed by the straw man, who was an important personage in the Land of Oz.

"How are your brains?" enquired the little humbug, as he grasped the soft, stuffed hands of his old friend.

"Working finely," answered the Scarecrow. "I'm very certain, Oz, that

you gave me the best brains in the world, for I can think with them day and night, when all other brains are fast asleep."

DOROTHY AND OZMA.

"How long did you rule the Emerald City, after I left here?" was the next question.

"Quite awhile, until I was conquered by a girl named General Jinjur. But Ozma soon conquered her, with the help of Glinda the Good, and after that I went to live with Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman."

Just then a loud cackling was heard outside; and, when a servant threw open the door with a low bow, a yellow hen strutted in. Dorothy sprang forward and caught the fluffy fowl in her arms, uttering at the same time a

glad cry.

"Oh, Billina!" she said; "how fat and sleek you've grown."

"Why shouldn't I?" asked the hen, in a sharp, clear voice. "I live on the fat of the land — don't I, Ozma?"

"You have everything you wish for," said the Princess.

Around Billina's neck was a string of beautiful pearls, and on her legs were bracelets of emeralds. She nestled herself comfortably in Dorothy's lap until the kitten gave a snarl of jealous anger and leaped up with a sharp claw fiercely bared to strike Billina a blow. But the little girl gave the angry kitten such a severe cuff that it jumped down again without daring to scratch.

"How horrid of you, Eureka!" cried Dorothy. "Is that the way to treat my friends?"

"You have queer friends, seems to me," replied the kitten, in a surly tone.

"Seems to me the same way," said Billina, scornfully, "if that beastly cat is one of them."

"Look here!" said Dorothy, sternly. "I won't have any quarrelling in the Land of Oz, I can tell you! Everybody lives in peace here, and loves everybody else; and unless you two, Billina and Eureka, make up and be friends, I'll take my Magic Belt and wish you both home again, *immejitly*. So, there!"

They were both much frightened at the threat, and promised meekly to be good. But it was never noticed that they became very warm friends, for all of that.

And now the Tin Woodman arrived, his body most beautifully nickle-plated, so that it shone splendidly in the brilliant light of the room. The Tin Woodman loved Dorothy most tenderly, and welcomed with joy the return of the little old Wizard.

"Sir," said he to the latter, "I never can thank you enough for the excellent heart you once gave me. It has made me many friends, I assure you, and it beats as kindly and lovingly today as it ever did."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the Wizard. "I was afraid it would get moldy in that tin body of yours."

"Not at all," returned Nick Chopper. "It keeps finely, being preserved in my air-tight chest."

Zeb was a little shy when first introduced to these queer people; but they were so friendly and sincere that he soon grew to admire them very much, even finding some good qualities in the yellow hen. But he became nervous again when the next visitor was announced.

"This," said Princess Ozma, "is my friend Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E., who assisted me one time when I was in great distress, and is now the Dean

of the Royal College of Athletic Science."

"Ah," said the Wizard; "I'm pleased to meet so distinguished a personage."

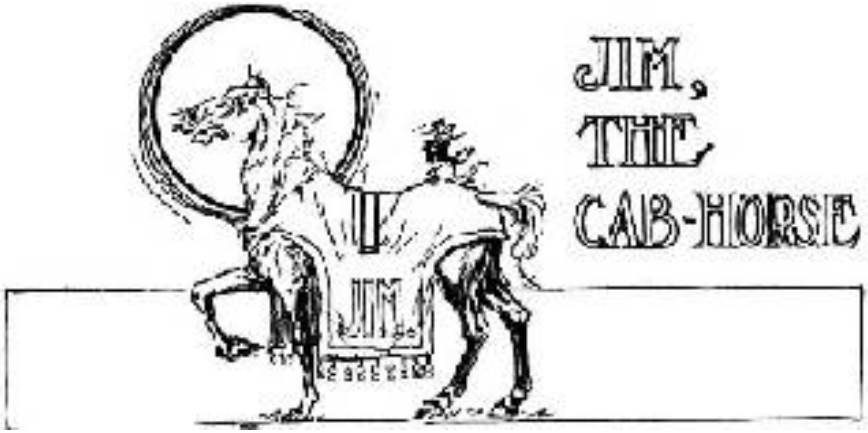
"H. M.," said the Woggle-Bug, pompously, "means Highly Magnified; and T. E. means Thoroughly Educated. I am, in reality, a very big bug, and doubtless the most intelligent being in all this broad domain."

"How well you disguise it," said the Wizard. "But I don't doubt your word in the least."

"Nobody doubts it, sir," replied the Woggle-Bug, and drawing a book from its pocket the strange insect turned its back on the company and sat down in a corner to read.

Nobody minded this rudeness, which might have seemed more impolite in one less thoroughly educated; so they straightway forgot him and joined in a merry conversation that kept them well amused until bed-time arrived.

CHAPTER 16.



JIM, THE CAB-HORSE

JIM the Cab-horse found himself in possession of a large room with a green marble floor and carved marble wainscoting, which was so stately in its appearance that it would have awed anyone else. Jim accepted it as a mere detail, and at his command the attendants gave his coat a good rubbing, combed his mane and tail, and washed his hoofs and fetlocks. Then they told him dinner would be served directly and he replied that they could not serve it too quickly to suit his convenience. First they brought him a steaming bowl of soup, which the horse eyed in dismay.

"Take that stuff away!" he commanded. "Do you take me for a salamander?"

They obeyed at once, and next served a fine large turbot on a silver platter, with drawn gravey poured over it.

"Fish!" cried Jim, with a sniff. "Do you take me for a tom-cat? Away with it!"

The servants were a little discouraged, but soon they brought in a great tray containing two dozen nicely roasted quail on toast.

"Well, well!" said the horse, now thoroughly provoked. "Do you take me for a weasel? How stupid and ignorant you are, in the Land of Oz, and what dreadful things you feed upon! Is there nothing that is decent to eat in this palace?"

The trembling servants sent for the Royal Steward, who came in haste and said:

"What would your Highness like for dinner?"

"Highness!" repeated Jim, who was unused to such titles.

"You are at least six feet high, and that is higher than any other animal in

this country," said the Steward.

"Well, my Highness would like some oats," declared the horse.

"Oats? We have no whole oats," the Steward replied, with much defference. "But there is any quantity of oatmeal, which we often cook for breakfast. Oatmeal is a breakfast dish," added the Steward, humbly.

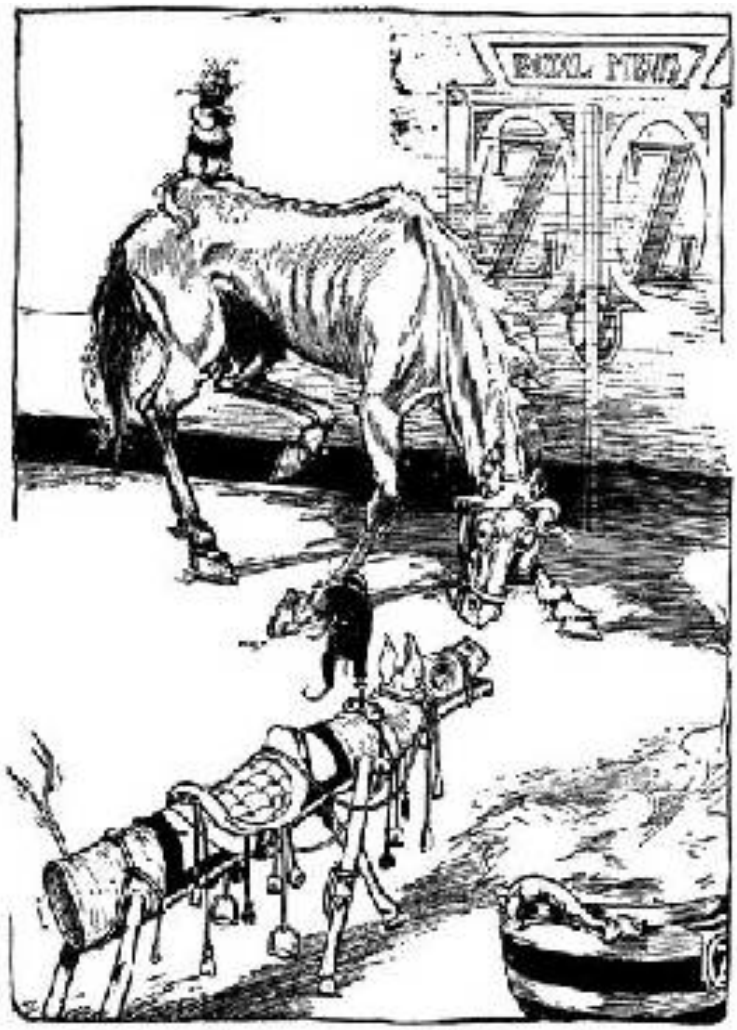
"I'll make it a dinner dish," said Jim. "Fetch it on, but don't cook it, as you value your life."

You see, the respect shown the worn-out old cab-horse made him a little arrogant, and he forgot he was a guest, never having been treated otherwise than as a servant since the day he was born, until his arrival in the Land of Oz. But the royal attendants did not heed the animal's ill temper. They soon mixed a tub of oatmeal with a little water, and Jim ate it with much relish.

Then the servants heaped a lot of rugs upon the floor and the old horse slept on the softest bed he had ever known in his life.

In the morning, as soon as it was daylight, he resolved to take a walk and try to find some grass for breakfast; so he ambled calmly through the handsome arch of the doorway, turned the corner of the palace, wherein all seemed asleep, and came face to face with the Sawhorse.

Jim stopped abruptly, being startled and amazed. The Sawhorse stopped at the same time and stared at the other with its queer protruding eyes, which were mere knots in the log that formed its body. The legs of the Sawhorse were four sticks driven into holes bored in the log; its tail was a small branch that had been left by accident and its mouth a place chopped in one end of the body which projected a little and served as a head. The ends of the wooden legs were shod with plates of solid gold, and the saddle of the Princess Ozma, which was of red leather set with sparkling diamonds, was strapped to the clumsy body.



"FOR GOODNESS SAKE, WHAT SORT OF A BEING ARE YOU?"

Jim's eyes stuck out as much as those of the Sawhorse, and he stared at the creature with his ears erect and his long head drawn back until it rested against his arched neck.

In this comical position the two horses circled slowly around each other for a while, each being unable to realize what the singular thing might be which it now beheld for the first time. Then Jim exclaimed:

"For goodness sake, what sort of a being are you?"

"I'm a Sawhorse," replied the other.

"Oh; I believe I've heard of you," said the cab-horse; "but you are unlike anything that I expected to see."

“I do not doubt it,” the Sawhorse observed, with a tone of pride. “I am considered quite unusual.”

“You are, indeed. But a rickety wooden thing like you has no right to be alive.”

“I couldn’t help it,” returned the other, rather crestfallen. “Ozma sprinkled me with a magic powder, and I just had to live. I know I’m not much account; but I’m the only horse in all the Land of Oz, so they treat me with great respect.”

“You, a horse!”

“Oh, not a real one, of course. There are no real horses here at all. But I’m a splendid imitation of one.”

Jim gave an indignant neigh.

“Look at me!” he cried. “Behold a real horse!”

The wooden animal gave a start, and then examined the other intently.

“Is it possible that you are a Real Horse?” he murmured.

“Not only possible, but true,” replied Jim, who was gratified by the impression he had created. “It is proved by my fine points. For example, look at the long hairs on my tail, with which I can whisk away the flies.”

“The flies never trouble me,” said the Saw-Horse.

“And notice my great strong teeth, with which I nibble the grass.”

“It is not necessary for me to eat,” observed the Saw-horse.

“Also examine my broad chest, which enables me to draw deep, full breaths,” said Jim, proudly.

“I have no need to breathe,” returned the other.

“No; you miss many pleasures,” remarked the cab-horse, pityingly. “You do not know the relief of brushing away a fly that has bitten you, nor the delight of eating delicious food, nor the satisfaction of drawing a long breath of fresh, pure air. You may be an imitation of a horse, but you’re a mighty poor one.”

“Oh, I cannot hope ever to be like you,” sighed the Sawhorse. “But I am glad to meet at last a Real Horse. You are certainly the most beautiful creature I ever beheld.”

This praise won Jim completely. To be called beautiful was a novelty in his experience. Said he:

“Your chief fault, my friend, is in being made of wood, and that I suppose you cannot help. Real horses, like myself, are made of flesh and blood and bones.”

“I can see the bones all right,” replied the Sawhorse, “and they are admirable and distinct. Also I can see the flesh. But the blood, I suppose, is tucked away inside.”

“Exactly,” said Jim.

“What good is it?” asked the Sawhorse.

Jim did not know, but he would not tell the Sawhorse that.

“If anything cuts me,” he replied, “the blood runs out to show where I am cut. You, poor thing! cannot even bleed when you are hurt.”

“But I am never hurt,” said the Sawhorse. “Once in a while I get broken up some, but I am easily repaired and put in good order again. And I never feel a break or a splinter in the least.”

Jim was almost tempted to envy the wooden horse for being unable to feel pain; but the creature was so absurdly unnatural that he decided he would not change places with it under any circumstances.

“How did you happen to be shod with gold?” he asked.

“Princess Ozma did that,” was the reply; “and it saves my legs from wearing out. We’ve had a good many adventures together, Ozma and I, and she likes me.”

The cab-horse was about to reply when suddenly he gave a start and a neigh of terror and stood trembling like a leaf. For around the corner had come two enormous savage beasts, treading so lightly that they were upon him before he was aware of their presence. Jim was in the act of plunging down the path to escape when the Sawhorse cried out:

“Stop, my brother! Stop, Real Horse! These are friends, and will do you no harm.”

Jim hesitated, eyeing the beasts fearfully. One was an enormous Lion with clear, intelligent eyes, a tawney mane bushy and well kept, and a body like yellow plush. The other was a great Tiger with purple stripes around his lithe body, powerful limbs, and eyes that showed through the half closed lids like coals of fire. The huge forms of these monarchs of the forest and jungle were enough to strike terror to the stoutest heart, and it is no wonder Jim was afraid to face them.

But the Sawhorse introduced the stranger in a calm tone, saying,

“This, noble Horse, is my friend the Cowardly Lion, who is the valiant King of the Forest, but at the same time a faithful vassal of Princess Ozma. And this is the Hungry Tiger, the terror of the jungle, who longs to devour fat babies but is prevented by his conscience from doing so. These royal beasts are both warm friends of little Dorothy and have come to the Emerald City this morning to welcome her to our fairyland.”

Hearing these words Jim resolved to conquer his alarm. He bowed his head with as much dignity as he could muster toward the savage looking beasts, who in return nodded in a friendly way.

“Is not the Real Horse a beautiful animal?” asked the Sawhorse

admiringly.

"That is doubtless a matter of taste," returned the Lion. "In the forest he would be thought ungainly, because his face is stretched out and his neck is uselessly long. His joints, I notice, are swollen and overgrown, and he lacks flesh and is old in years."

"And dreadfully tough," added the Hungry Tiger, in a sad voice. "My conscience would never permit me to eat so tough a morsel as the Real Horse."

"I'm glad of that," said Jim; "for I, also, have a conscience, and it tells me not to crush in your skull with a blow of my powerful hoof."

If he thought to frighten the striped beast by such language he was mistaken. The Tiger seemed to smile, and winked one eye slowly.

"You have a good conscience, friend Horse," it said, "and if you attend to its teachings it will do much to protect you from harm. Some day I will let you try to crush in my skull, and afterward you will know more about tigers than you do now."

"Any friend of Dorothy," remarked the Cowardly Lion, "must be our friend, as well. So let us cease this talk of skull crushing and converse upon more pleasant subjects. Have you breakfasted, Sir Horse?"

"Not yet," replied Jim. "But here is plenty of excellent clover, so if you will excuse me I will eat now."

"He's a vegetarian," remarked the Tiger, as the horse began to munch the clover. "If I could eat grass I would not need a conscience, for nothing could then tempt me to devour babies and lambs."

Just then Dorothy, who had risen early and heard the voices of the animals, ran out to greet her old friends. She hugged both the Lion and the Tiger with eager delight, but seemed to love the King of Beasts a little better than she did his hungry friend, having known him longer.

By the time they had indulged in a good talk and Dorothy had told them all about the awful earthquake and her recent adventures, the breakfast bell rang from the palace and the little girl went inside to join her human comrades. As she entered the great hall a voice called out, in a rather harsh tone:

"What! are *you* here again?"

"Yes, I am," she answered, looking all around to see where the voice came from.

"What brought you back?" was the next question, and Dorothy's eye rested on an antlered head hanging on the wall just over the fireplace, and caught its lips in the act of moving.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "I thought you were stuffed."

“So I am,” replied the head. “But once on a time I was part of the Gump, which Ozma sprinkled with the Powder of Life. I was then for a time the Head of the finest Flying Machine that was ever known to exist, and we did many wonderful things. Afterward the Gump was taken apart and I was put back on this wall; but I can still talk when I feel in the mood, which is not often.”

“It’s very strange,” said the girl. “What were you when you were first alive?”

“That I have forgotten,” replied the Gump’s Head, “and I do not think it is of much importance. But here comes Ozma; so I’d better hush up, for the Princess doesn’t like me to chatter since she changed her name from Tip to Ozma.”

Just then the girlish Ruler of Oz opened the door and greeted Dorothy with a good-morning kiss. The little Princess seemed fresh and rosy and in good spirits.

“Breakfast is served, dear,” she said, “and I am hungry. So don’t let us keep it waiting a single minute.”

JIM STOOD TREMBLING LIKE A LEAF.

CHAPTER 17.

THE NINE TINY PIGLETS

THE NINE TINY PIGLETS

AFTER breakfast Ozma announced that she had ordered a holiday to be observed throughout the Emerald City, in honor of her visitors. The people had learned that their old Wizard had returned to them and all were anxious to see him again, for he had always been a rare favorite. So first there was to be a grand procession through the streets, after which the little old man was requested to perform some of his wizardries in the great Throne Room of the palace. In the afternoon there were to be games and races.

The procession was very imposing. First came the Imperial Cornet Band of Oz, dressed in emerald velvet uniforms with slashes of pea-green satin and buttons of immense cut emeralds. They played the National air called "The Oz Spangled Banner," and behind them were the standard bearers with the Royal flag. This flag was divided into four quarters, one being colored sky-blue, another pink, a third lavender and a fourth white. In the center was a large emerald-green star, and all over the four quarters were sewn spangles that glittered beautifully in the sunshine. The colors represented the four countries of Oz, and the green star the Emerald City.

Just behind the royal standard-bearers came the Princess Ozma in her royal chariot, which was of gold encrusted with emeralds and diamonds set in exquisite designs. The chariot was drawn on this occasion by the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, who were decorated with immense pink and blue bows. In the chariot rode Ozma and Dorothy, the former in splendid raiment and wearing her royal coronet, while the little Kansas girl wore around her waist the Magic Belt she had once captured from the Nome King.

Following the chariot came the Scarecrow mounted on the Sawhorse, and the people cheered him almost as loudly as they did their lovely Ruler.

Behind him stalked with regular, jerky steps, the famous machine-man called Tik-tok, who had been wound up by Dorothy for the occasion. Tik-tok moved by clockwork, and was made all of burnished copper. He really belonged to the Kansas girl, who had much respect for his thoughts after they had been properly wound and set going; but as the copper man would be useless in any place but a fairy country Dorothy had left him in charge of Ozma, who saw that he was suitably cared for.

There followed another band after this, which was called the Royal Court Band, because the members all lived in the palace. They wore white uniforms with real diamond buttons and played "What is Oz without Ozma" very sweetly.

Then came Professor Woggle-Bug, with a group of students from the Royal College of Scientific Athletics. The boys wore long hair and striped sweaters and yelled their college yell every other step they took, to the great satisfaction of the populace, which was glad to have this evidence that their lungs were in good condition.

The brilliantly polished Tin Woodman marched next, at the head of the Royal Army of Oz which consisted of twenty-eight officers, from Generals down to Captains. There were no privates in the army because all were so courageous and skillful that they had been promoted one by one until there were no privates left. Jim and the buggy followed, the old cab-horse being driven by Zeb while the Wizard stood up on the seat and bowed his bald head right and left in answer to the cheers of the people, who crowded thick about him.

Taken altogether the procession was a grand success, and when it had returned to the palace the citizens crowded into the great Throne Room to see the Wizard perform his tricks.

The first thing the little humbug did was to produce a tiny white piglet from underneath his hat and pretend to pull it apart, making two. This act he repeated until all of the nine tiny piglets were visible, and they were so glad to get out of his pocket that they ran around in a very lively manner. The pretty little creatures would have been a novelty anywhere, so the people were as amazed and delighted at their appearance as even the Wizard could have desired. When he had made them all disappear again Ozma declared she was sorry they were gone, for she wanted one of them to pet and play with. So the Wizard pretended to take one of the piglets out of the hair of the Princess (while really he slyly took it from his inside pocket) and Ozma smiled joyously as the creature nestled in her arms, and she promised to have an emerald collar made for its fat neck and to keep the little squealer always at hand to amuse her.

Afterward it was noticed that the Wizard always performed his famous trick with eight piglets, but it seemed to please the people just as well as if there had been nine of them.

In his little room back of the Throne Room the Wizard had found a lot of things he had left behind him when he went away in the balloon, for no one had occupied the apartment in his absence. There was enough material there to enable him to prepare several new tricks which he had learned from some of the jugglers in the circus, and he had passed part of the night in getting them ready. So he followed the trick of the nine tiny piglets with several other wonderful feats that greatly delighted his audience and the people did not seem to care a bit whether the little man was a humbug Wizard or not, so long as he succeeded in amusing them. They applauded all his tricks and at the end of the performance begged him earnestly not to go away again and leave them.

"In that case," said the little man, gravely, "I will cancel all of my engagements before the crowned heads of Europe and America and devote myself to the people of Oz, for I love you all so well that I can deny you nothing."

After the people had been dismissed with this promise our friends joined Princess Ozma at an elaborate luncheon in the palace, where even the Tiger and the Lion were sumptuously fed and Jim the Cab-horse ate his oatmeal out of a golden bowl with seven rows of rubies, sapphires and diamonds set around the rim of it.

In the afternoon they all went to a great field outside the city gates where the games were to be held. There was a beautiful canopy for Ozma and her guests to sit under and watch the people run races and jump and wrestle. You may be sure the folks of Oz did their best with such a distinguished company watching them, and finally Zeb offered to wrestle with a little Munchkin who seemed to be the champion. In appearance he was twice as old as Zeb, for he had long pointed whiskers and wore a peaked hat with little bells all around the brim of it, which tinkled gaily as he moved. But although the Munchkin was hardly tall enough to come to Zeb's shoulder he was so strong and clever that he laid the boy three times on his back with apparent ease.

Zeb was greatly astonished at his defeat, and when the pretty Princess joined her people in laughing at him he proposed a boxing-match with the Munchkin, to which the little Ozite readily agreed. But the first time that Zeb managed to give him a sharp box on the ears the Munchkin sat down upon the ground and cried until the tears ran down his whiskers, because he had been hurt. This made Zeb laugh, in turn, and the boy felt comforted to find that Ozma laughed as merrily at her weeping subject as she had at him.

Just then the Scarecrow proposed a race between the Sawhorse and the Cab-horse; and although all the others were delighted at the suggestion the Sawhorse drew back, saying:

“Such a race would not be fair.”

“Of course not,” added Jim, with a touch of scorn; “those little wooden legs of yours are not half as long as my own.”

“It isn’t that,” said the Sawhorse, modestly; “but I never tire, and you do.”

“Bah!” cried Jim, looking with great disdain at the other; “do you imagine for an instant that such a shabby imitation of a horse as you are can run as fast as I?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” replied the Sawhorse.

“That is what we are trying to find out,” remarked the Scarecrow. “The object of a race is to see who can win it — or at least that is what my excellent brains think.”

“Once, when I was young,” said Jim, “I was a race horse, and defeated all who dared run against me. I was born in Kentucky, you know, where all the best and most aristocratic horses come from.”

“But you’re old, now, Jim,” suggested Zeb.

“Old! Why, I feel like a colt today,” replied Jim. “I only wish there was a real horse here for me to race with. I’d show the people a fine sight, I can tell you.”

“Then why not race with the Sawhorse?” enquired the Scarecrow.

“He’s afraid,” said Jim.

“Oh, no,” answered the Sawhorse. “I merely said it wasn’t fair. But if my friend the Real Horse is willing to undertake the race I am quite ready.”

So they unharnessed Jim and took the saddle off the Sawhorse, and the two queerly matched animals were stood side by side for the start.

“When I say ‘Go!’“ Zeb called to them, “you must dig out and race until you reach those three trees you see over yonder. Then circle ‘round them and come back again. The first one that passes the place where the Princess sits shall be named the winner. Are you ready?”

“I suppose I ought to give the wooden dummy a good start of me,” growled Jim.

“Never mind that,” said the Sawhorse. “I’ll do the best I can.”

“Go!” cried Zeb; and at the word the two horses leaped forward and the race was begun.

THE WIZARD TOOK A PIGLET FROM OZMA'S HAIR.

Jim's big hoofs pounded away at a great rate, and although he did not look very graceful he ran in a way to do credit to his Kentucky breeding. But the Sawhorse was swifter than the wind. Its wooden legs moved so fast that their twinkling could scarcely be seen, and although so much smaller than the cab-horse it covered the ground much faster. Before they had reached the trees the Sawhorse was far ahead, and the wooden animal returned to the starting place and was being lustily cheered by the Ozites before Jim came panting up to the canopy where the Princess and her friends were seated.

THE HUNGRY TIGER TEACHES JIM A LESSON.

I am sorry to record the fact that Jim was not only ashamed of his defeat but for a moment lost control of his temper. As he looked at the comical face of the Sawhorse he imagined that the creature was laughing at him; so in a fit of unreasonable anger he turned around and made a vicious kick that sent his rival tumbling head over heels upon the ground, and broke off one of its legs and its left ear.

An instant later the Tiger crouched and launched its huge body through the air swift and resistless as a ball from a cannon. The beast struck Jim full on his shoulder and sent the astonished cab-horse rolling over and over, amid shouts of delight from the spectators, who had been horrified by the

ungracious act he had been guilty of.

When Jim came to himself and sat upon his haunches he found the Cowardly Lion crouched on one side of him and the Hungry Tiger on the other, and their eyes were glowing like balls of fire.

“I beg your pardon, I’m sure,” said Jim, meekly. “I was wrong to kick the Sawhorse, and I am sorry I became angry at him. He has won the race, and won it fairly; but what can a horse of flesh do against a tireless beast of wood?”

Hearing this apology the Tiger and the Lion stopped lashing their tails and retreated with dignified steps to the side of the Princess.

“No one must injure one of our friends in our presence,” growled the Lion; and Zeb ran to Jim and whispered that unless he controlled his temper in the future he would probably be torn to pieces.

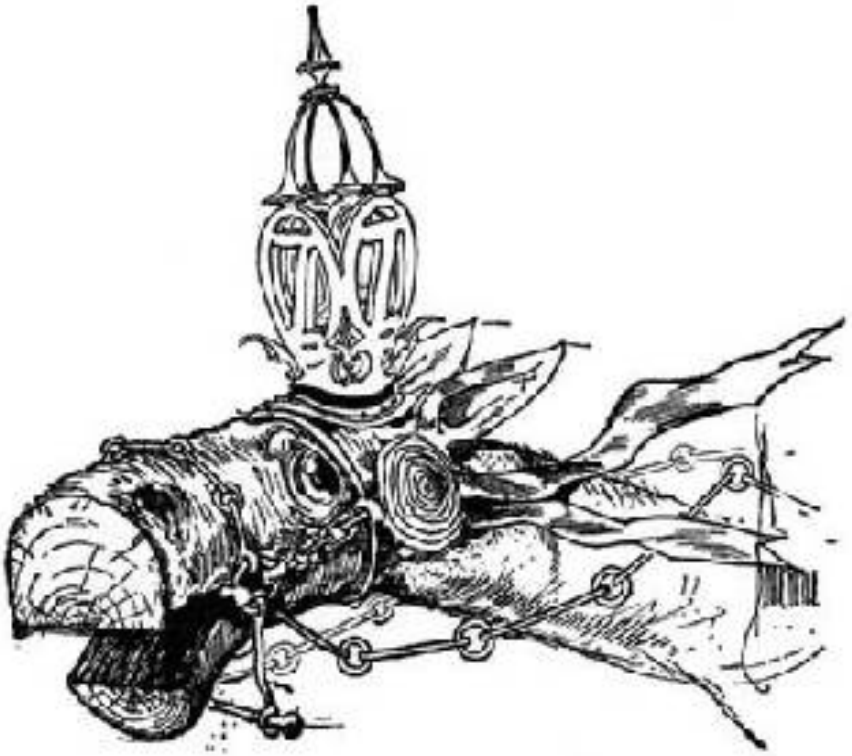
Then the Tin Woodman cut a straight and strong limb from a tree with his gleaming axe and made a new leg and a new ear for the Sawhorse; and when they had been securely fastened in place Princess Ozma took the coronet from her own head and placed it upon that of the winner of the race. Said she:

“My friend, I reward you for your swiftness by proclaiming you Prince of Horses, whether of wood or of flesh; and hereafter all other horses — in the Land of Oz, at least — must be considered imitations, and you the real Champion of your race.”

There was more applause at this, and then Ozma had the jewelled saddle replaced upon the Sawhorse and herself rode the victor back to the city at the head of the grand procession.

“I ought to be a fairy,” grumbled Jim, as he slowly drew the buggy home; “for to be just an ordinary horse in a fairy country is to be of no account whatever. It’s no place for us, Zeb.”

“It’s lucky we got here, though,” said the boy; and Jim thought of the dark cave, and agreed with him.



THE TRIAL OF EUREKA THE KITTEN

CHAPTER 18.

THE TRIAL OF EUREKA THE KITTEN

SEVERAL days of festivity and merry-making followed, for such old friends did not often meet and there was much to be told and talked over between them, and many amusements to be enjoyed in this delightful country.

Ozma was happy to have Dorothy beside her, for girls of her own age with whom it was proper for the Princess to associate were very few, and often the youthful Ruler of Oz was lonely for lack of companionship.

It was the third morning after Dorothy's arrival, and she was sitting with Ozma and their friends in a reception room, talking over old times, when the Princess said to her maid:

"Please go to my boudoir, Jellia, and get the white piglet I left on the dressing-table. I want to play with it."

Jellia at once departed on the errand, and she was gone so long that they had almost forgotten her mission when the green robed maiden returned with a troubled face.

"The piglet is not there, your Highness," said she.

"Not there!" exclaimed Ozma. "Are you sure?"

"I have hunted in every part of the room," the maid replied.

"Was not the door closed?" asked the Princess.

"Yes, your Highness; I am sure it was; for when I opened it Dorothy's white kitten crept out and ran up the stairs."

Hearing this, Dorothy and the Wizard exchanged startled glances, for they remembered how often Eureka had longed to eat a piglet. The little girl jumped up at once.

"Come, Ozma," she said, anxiously; "let us go ourselves to search for the piglet."

So the two went to the dressing-room of the Princess and searched carefully in every corner and among the vases and baskets and ornaments that stood about the pretty boudoir. But not a trace could they find of the tiny creature they sought.

Dorothy was nearly weeping, by this time, while Ozma was angry and indignant. When they returned to the others the Princess said:

"There is little doubt that my pretty piglet has been eaten by that horrid kitten, and if that is true the offender must be punished."

"I don't b'lieve Eureka would do such a dreadful thing!" cried Dorothy, much distressed. "Go and get my kitten, please, Jellia, and we'll hear what she has to say about it."

The green maiden hastened away, but presently returned and said:

“The kitten will not come. She threatened to scratch my eyes out if I touched her.”

“Where is she?” asked Dorothy.

“Under the bed in your own room,” was the reply.

So Dorothy ran to her room and found the kitten under the bed.

“Come here, Eureka!” she said.

“I won’t,” answered the kitten, in a surly voice.

“Oh, Eureka! Why are you so bad?”

The kitten did not reply.

“If you don’t come to me, right away,” continued Dorothy, getting provoked, “I’ll take my Magic Belt and wish you in the Country of the Gurgles.”

“Why do you want me?” asked Eureka, disturbed by this threat.

“You must go to Princess Ozma. She wants to talk to you.”

“All right,” returned the kitten, creeping out. “I’m not afraid of Ozma — or anyone else.”

Dorothy carried her in her arms back to where the others sat in grieved and thoughtful silence.

“Tell me, Eureka,” said the Princess, gently: “did you eat my pretty piglet?”

“I won’t answer such a foolish question,” asserted Eureka, with a snarl.

“Oh, yes you will, dear,” Dorothy declared. “The piglet is gone, and you ran out of the room when Jellia opened the door. So, if you are innocent, Eureka, you must tell the Princess how you came to be in her room, and what has become of the piglet.”

“Who accuses me?” asked the kitten, defiantly.

“No one,” answered Ozma. “Your actions alone accuse you. The fact is that I left my little pet in my dressing-room lying asleep upon the table; and you must hove stolen in without my knowing it. When next the door was opened you ran out and hid yourself — and the piglet was gone.”

“That’s none of my business,” growled the kitten.

“Don’t be impudent, Eureka,” admonished Dorothy.

“It is you who are impudent,” said Eureka, “for accusing me of such a crime when you can’t prove it except by guessing.”

Ozma was now greatly incensed by the kitten’s conduct. She summoned her Captain-General, and when the long, lean officer appeared she said:

“Carry this cat away to prison, and keep her in safe confinement until she is tried by law for the crime of murder.”

So the Captain-General took Eureka from the arms of the now weeping Dorothy and in spite of the kitten’s snarls and scratches carried it away to

prison.

“What shall we do now?” asked the Scarecrow, with a sigh, for such a crime had cast a gloom over all the company.

“I will summon the Court to meet in the Throne Room at three o’clock,” replied Ozma. “I myself will be the judge, and the kitten shall have a fair trial.”

“What will happen if she is guilty?” asked Dorothy.

“She must die,” answered the Princess.

“Nine times?” enquired the Scarecrow.

“As many times as is necessary,” was the reply. “I will ask the Tin Woodman to defend the prisoner, because he has such a kind heart I am sure he will do his best to save her. And the Woggle-Bug shall be the Public Accuser, because he is so learned that no one can deceive him.”

“Who will be the jury?” asked the Tin Woodman.

PORTRAIT OF THE WIZARD OF OZ.

"There ought to be several animals on the jury," said Ozma, "because animals understand each other better than we people understand them. So the jury shall consist of the Cowardly Lion, the Hungry Tiger, Jim the Cab-horse, the Yellow Hen, the Scarecrow, the Wizard, Tik-tok the Machine Man, the Sawhorse and Zeb of Hugson's Ranch. That makes the nine which the law requires, and all my people shall be admitted to hear the testimony."

They now separated to prepare for the sad ceremony; for whenever an appeal is made to law sorrow is almost certain to follow — even in a fairyland like Oz. But it must be stated that the people of that Land were generally so well-behaved that there was not a single lawyer amongst them,

and it had been years since any Ruler had sat in judgment upon an offender of the law. The crime of murder being the most dreadful crime of all, tremendous excitement prevailed in the Emerald City when the news of Eureka's arrest and trial became known.

The Wizard, when he returned to his own room, was exceedingly thoughtful. He had no doubt Eureka had eaten his piglet, but he realized that a kitten cannot be depended upon at all times to act properly, since its nature is to destroy small animals and even birds for food, and the tame cat that we keep in our houses today is descended from the wild cat of the jungle — a very ferocious creature, indeed. The Wizard knew that if Dorothy's pet was found guilty and condemned to death the little girl would be made very unhappy; so, although he grieved over the piglet's sad fate as much as any of them, he resolved to save Eureka's life.

Sending for the Tin Woodman the Wizard took him into a corner and whispered:

"My friend, it is your duty to defend the white kitten and try to save her, but I fear you will fail because Eureka has long wished to eat a piglet, to my certain knowledge, and my opinion is that she has been unable to resist the temptation. Yet her disgrace and death would not bring back the piglet, but only serve to make Dorothy unhappy. So I intend to prove the kitten's innocence by a trick."

He drew from his inside pocket one of the eight tiny piglets that were remaining and continued:

"This creature you must hide in some safe place, and if the jury decides that Eureka is guilty you may then produce this piglet and claim it is the one that was lost. All the piglets are exactly alike, so no one can dispute your word. This deception will save Eureka's life, and then we may all be happy again."

"I do not like to deceive my friends," replied the Tin Woodman; "still, my kind heart urges me to save Eureka's life, and I can usually trust my heart to do the right thing. So I will do as you say, friend Wizard."

After some thought he placed the little pig inside his funnel-shaped hat, and then put the hat upon his head and went back to his room to think over his speech to the jury.

CHAPTER 19.

THE WIZARD PERFORMS ANOTHER TRICK

AT three o'clock the Throne Room was crowded with citizens, men, women and children being eager to witness the great trial.

Princess Ozma, dressed in her most splendid robes of state, sat in the magnificent emerald throne, with her jewelled sceptre in her hand and her sparkling coronet upon her fair brow. Behind her throne stood the twenty-eight officers of her army and many officials of the royal household. At her right sat the queerly assorted Jury — animals, animated dummies and people — all gravely prepared to listen to what was said. The kitten had been placed in a large cage just before the throne, where she sat upon her haunches and gazed through the bars at the crowds around her, with seeming unconcern.

And now, at a signal from Ozma, the Woggle-Bug arose and addressed the jury. His tone was pompous and he strutted up and down in an absurd attempt to appear dignified.

"Your Royal Highness and Fellow Citizens," he began; "the small cat you see a prisoner before you is accused of the crime of first murdering and then eating our esteemed Ruler's fat piglet — or else first eating and then murdering it. In either case a grave crime has been committed which deserves a grave punishment."

"Do you mean my kitten must be put in a grave?" asked Dorothy.

"Don't interrupt, little girl," said the Woggle-Bug. "When I get my thoughts arranged in good order I do not like to have anything upset them or throw them into confusion."

"If your thoughts were any good they wouldn't become confused,"

remarked the Scarecrow, earnestly. “My thoughts are always — — ”

“Is this a trial of thoughts, or of kittens?” demanded the Woggle-Bug.

“It’s a trial of one kitten,” replied the Scarecrow; “but your manner is a trial to us all.”

“Let the Public Accuser continue,” called Ozma from her throne, “and I pray you do not interrupt him.”

“The criminal who now sits before the court licking her paws,” resumed the Woggle-Bug, “has long desired to unlawfully eat the fat piglet, which was no bigger than a mouse. And finally she made a wicked plan to satisfy her depraved appetite for pork. I can see her, in my mind’s eye — — ”

“What’s that?” asked the Scarecrow.

“I say I can see her in my mind’s eye — — ”

“The mind has no eye,” declared the Scarecrow. “It’s blind.”

“Your Highness,” cried the Woggle-Bug, appealing to Ozma, “have I a mind’s eye, or haven’t I?”

“If you have, it is invisible,” said the Princess.

“Very true,” returned the Woggle-Bug, bowing. “I say I see the criminal, in my mind’s eye, creeping stealthily into the room of our Ozma and secreting herself, when no one was looking, until the Princess had gone away and the door was closed. Then the murderer was alone with her helpless victim, the fat piglet, and I see her pounce upon the innocent creature and eat it up — — ”

“Are you still seeing with your mind’s eye?” enquired the Scarecrow.

“Of course; how else could I see it? And we know the thing is true, because since the time of that interview there is no piglet to be found anywhere.”

EUREKA IN COURT.

"I suppose, if the cat had been gone, instead of the piglet, your mind's eye would see the piglet eating the cat," suggested the Scarecrow.

"Very likely," acknowledged the Woggle-Bug. "And now, Fellow Citizens and Creatures of the Jury, I assert that so awful a crime deserves death, and in the case of the ferocious criminal before you — who is now washing her face — the death penalty should be inflicted nine times."

There was great applause when the speaker sat down. Then the Princess spoke in a stern voice:

"Prisoner, what have you to say for yourself? Are you guilty, or not guilty?"

“Why, that’s for you to find out,” replied Eureka. “If you can prove I’m guilty, I’ll be willing to die nine times, but a mind’s eye is no proof, because the Woggle-Bug has no mind to see with.”

“Never mind, dear,” said Dorothy.

Then the Tin Woodman arose and said:

“Respected Jury and dearly beloved Ozma, I pray you not to judge this feline prisoner unfeelingly. I do not think the innocent kitten can be guilty, and surely it is unkind to accuse a luncheon of being a murder. Eureka is the sweet pet of a lovely little girl whom we all admire, and gentleness and innocence are her chief virtues. Look at the kitten’s intelligent eyes;” (here Eureka closed her eyes sleepily) “gaze at her smiling countenance!” (here Eureka snarled and showed her teeth) “mark the tender pose of her soft, padded little hands!” (Here Eureka bared her sharp claws and scratched at the bars of the cage.) “Would such a gentle animal be guilty of eating a fellow creature? No; a thousand times, no!”

“Oh, cut it short,” said Eureka; “you’ve talked long enough.”

“I’m trying to defend you,” remonstrated the Tin Woodman.

“Then say something sensible,” retorted the kitten. “Tell them it would be foolish for me to eat the piglet, because I had sense enough to know it would raise a row if I did. But don’t try to make out I’m too innocent to eat a fat piglet if I could do it and not be found out. I imagine it would taste mighty good.”

“Perhaps it would, to those who eat,” remarked the Tin Woodman. “I myself, not being built to eat, have no personal experience in such matters. But I remember that our great poet once said:

“‘To eat is sweet
When hunger’s seat
Demands a treat
Of savory meat.’

“Take this into consideration, friends of the Jury, and you will readily decide that the kitten is wrongfully accused and should be set at liberty.”

When the Tin Woodman sat down no one applauded him, for his arguments had not been very convincing and few believed that he had proved Eureka’s innocence. As for the Jury, the members whispered to each other for a few minutes and then they appointed the Hungry Tiger their spokesman. The huge beast slowly arose and said:

“Kittens have no consciences, so they eat whatever pleases them. The jury believes the white kitten known as Eureka is guilty of having eaten the piglet owned by Princess Ozma, and recommends that she be put to death in

punishment of the crime."

The judgment of the jury was received with great applause, although Dorothy was sobbing miserably at the fate of her pet. The Princess was just about to order Eureka's head chopped off with the Tin Woodman's axe when that brilliant personage once more arose and addressed her.

"Your Highness," said he, "see how easy it is for a jury to be mistaken. The kitten could not have eaten your piglet — for here it is!"

He took off his funnel hat and from beneath it produced a tiny white piglet, which he held aloft that all might see it clearly.

Ozma was delighted and exclaimed, eagerly:

"Give me my pet, Nick Chopper!"

And all the people cheered and clapped their hands, rejoicing that the prisoner had escaped death and been proved to be innocent.

As the Princess held the white piglet in her arms and stroked its soft hair she said: "Let Eureka out of the cage, for she is no longer a prisoner, but our good friend. Where did you find my missing pet, Nick Chopper?"

"In a room of the palace," he answered.

"Justice," remarked the Scarecrow, with a sigh, "is a dangerous thing to meddle with. If you hadn't happened to find the piglet, Eureka would surely have been executed."

"But justice prevailed at the last," said Ozma, "for here is my pet, and Eureka is once more free."

"I refuse to be free," cried the kitten, in a sharp voice, "unless the Wizard can do his trick with eight piglets. If he can produce but seven, then this it not the piglet that was lost, but another one."

"Hush, Eureka!" warned the Wizard.

"Don't be foolish," advised the Tin Woodman, "or you may be sorry for it."

"The piglet that belonged to the Princess wore an emerald collar," said Eureka, loudly enough for all to hear.

"So it did!" exclaimed Ozma. "This cannot be the one the Wizard gave me."

"Of course not; he had nine of them, altogether," declared Eureka; "and I must say it was very stingy of him not to let me eat just a few. But now that this foolish trial is ended, I will tell you what really became of your pet piglet."

At this everyone in the Throne Room suddenly became quiet, and the kitten continued, in a calm, mocking tone of voice:

"I will confess that I intended to eat the little pig for my breakfast; so I crept into the room where it was kept while the Princess was dressing and hid

myself under a chair. When Ozma went away she closed the door and left her pet on the table. At once I jumped up and told the piglet not to make a fuss, for he would be inside of me in half a second; but no one can teach one of these creatures to be reasonable. Instead of keeping still, so I could eat him comfortably, he trembled so with fear that he fell off the table into a big vase that was standing on the floor. The vase had a very small neck, and spread out at the top like a bowl. At first the piglet stuck in the neck of the vase and I thought I should get him, after all, but he wriggled himself through and fell down into the deep bottom part — and I suppose he's there yet."

All were astonished at this confession, and Ozma at once sent an officer to her room to fetch the vase. When he returned the Princess looked down the narrow neck of the big ornament and discovered her lost piglet, just as Eureka had said she would.

There was no way to get the creature out without breaking the vase, so the Tin Woodman smashed it with his axe and set the little prisoner free.

Then the crowd cheered lustily and Dorothy hugged the kitten in her arms and told her how delighted she was to know that she was innocent.

"But why didn't you tell us at first?" she asked.

"It would have spoiled the fun," replied the kitten, yawning.

Ozma gave the Wizard back the piglet he had so kindly allowed Nick Chopper to substitute for the lost one, and then she carried her own into the apartments of the palace where she lived. And now, the trial being over, the good citizens of the Emerald City scattered to their homes, well content with the day's amusement.

CHAPTER 20.

ZEB RETURNS TO THE RANCH

EUREKA was much surprised to find herself in disgrace; but she was, in spite of the fact that she had not eaten the piglet. For the folks of Oz knew the kitten had tried to commit the crime, and that only an accident had prevented her from doing so; therefore even the Hungry Tiger preferred not to associate with her. Eureka was forbidden to wander around the palace and was made to stay in confinement in Dorothy's room; so she began to beg her mistress to send her to some other place where she could enjoy herself better.

Dorothy was herself anxious to get home, so she promised Eureka they would not stay in the Land of Oz much longer.

The next evening after the trial the little girl begged Ozma to allow her to look in the enchanted picture, and the Princess readily consented. She took the child to her room and said: "Make your wish, dear, and the picture will show the scene you desire to behold."

Then Dorothy found, with the aid of the enchanted picture, that Uncle Henry had returned to the farm in Kansas, and she also saw that both he and Aunt Em were dressed in mourning, because they thought their little niece had been killed by the earthquake.

"Really," said the girl, anxiously, "I must get back as soon as poss'ble to my own folks."

Zeb also wanted to see his home, and although he did not find anyone mourning for him, the sight of Hugson's Ranch in the picture made him long to get back there.

"This is a fine country, and I like all the people that live in it," he told Dorothy. "But the fact is, Jim and I don't seem to fit into a fairyland, and the old horse has been begging me to go home again ever since he lost the race.

So, if you can find a way to fix it, we'll be much obliged to you."

"Ozma can do it, easily," replied Dorothy. "Tomorrow morning I'll go to Kansas and you can go to Californy."

"I'M MUCH OBLIGED FOR ALL YOUR KINDNESS."

That last evening was so delightful that the boy will never forget it as long as he lives. They were all together (except Eureka) in the pretty rooms of the Princess, and the Wizard did some new tricks, and the Scarecrow told stories, and the Tin Woodman sang a love song in a sonorous, metallic voice, and everybody laughed and had a good time. Then Dorothy wound up Tik-tok and he danced a jig to amuse the company, after which the Yellow Hen

related some of her adventures with the Nome King in the Land of Ev.

The Princess served delicious refreshments to those who were in the habit of eating, and when Dorothy's bed time arrived the company separated after exchanging many friendly sentiments.

Next morning they all assembled for the final parting, and many of the officials and courtiers came to look upon the impressive ceremonies.

Dorothy held Eureka in her arms and bade her friends a fond good-bye.

"You must come again, some time," said the little Wizard; and she promised she would if she found it possible to do so.

"But Uncle Henry and Aunt Em need me to help them," she added, "so I can't ever be very long away from the farm in Kansas."

Ozma wore the Magic Belt; and, when she had kissed Dorothy farewell and had made her wish, the little girl and her kitten disappeared in a twinkling.

"Where is she?" asked Zeb, rather bewildered by the suddenness of it.

"Greeting her uncle and aunt in Kansas, by this time," returned Ozma, with a smile.

Then Zeb brought out Jim, all harnessed to the buggy, and took his seat.

"I'm much obliged for all your kindness," said the boy, "and very grateful to you for saving my life and sending me home again after all the good times I've had. I think this is the loveliest country in the world; but not being fairies Jim and I feel we ought to be where we belong — and that's at the ranch. Good-bye, everybody!"

He gave a start and rubbed his eyes. Jim was trotting along the well-known road, shaking his ears and whisking his tail with a contented motion. Just ahead of them were the gates of Hugson's Ranch, and Uncle Hugson now came out and stood with uplifted arms and wide open mouth, staring in amazement.

"Goodness gracious! It's Zeb — and Jim, too!" he exclaimed. "Where in the world have you been, my lad?"

"Why, in the world, Uncle," answered Zeb, with a laugh.

The End

THE ROAD TO OZ

The Road to Oz was Baum's fifth Oz book, published in 1909 by Reilly & Britton and illustrated by John R. Neill. Baum dedicated the book to his first grandson, Joslyn Stanton Baum. While taking a walk with her dog Toto, Dorothy Gale meets a wandering hobo known as the Shaggy Man, who carries the Love Magnet. As they walk together, the road split into seven paths and they decide to take the seventh. In short order, they meet a lost little boy named Button Bright and Polychrome, daughter of the Rainbow, who danced off the edge of the rainbow as it disappeared. The four companions proceed to a variety of adventures, including visits to Foxville and Dunkiton, where intelligent foxes and donkeys live, respectively. A couple of the friends undergo transformations. Eventually they must travel across the Deadly Desert in order to reach Oz in time for Ozma's birthday party on the 21st of August. The party includes a great number of guests, including many from Baum's other fantasies, such as Queen Zixi of Ix, John Dough, Chick the Cherub, and Santa Claus. Baum later featured Button Bright and Polychrome in his 1912 novel, *Sky Island*.

Front and back covers of the first edition of The Road to Oz

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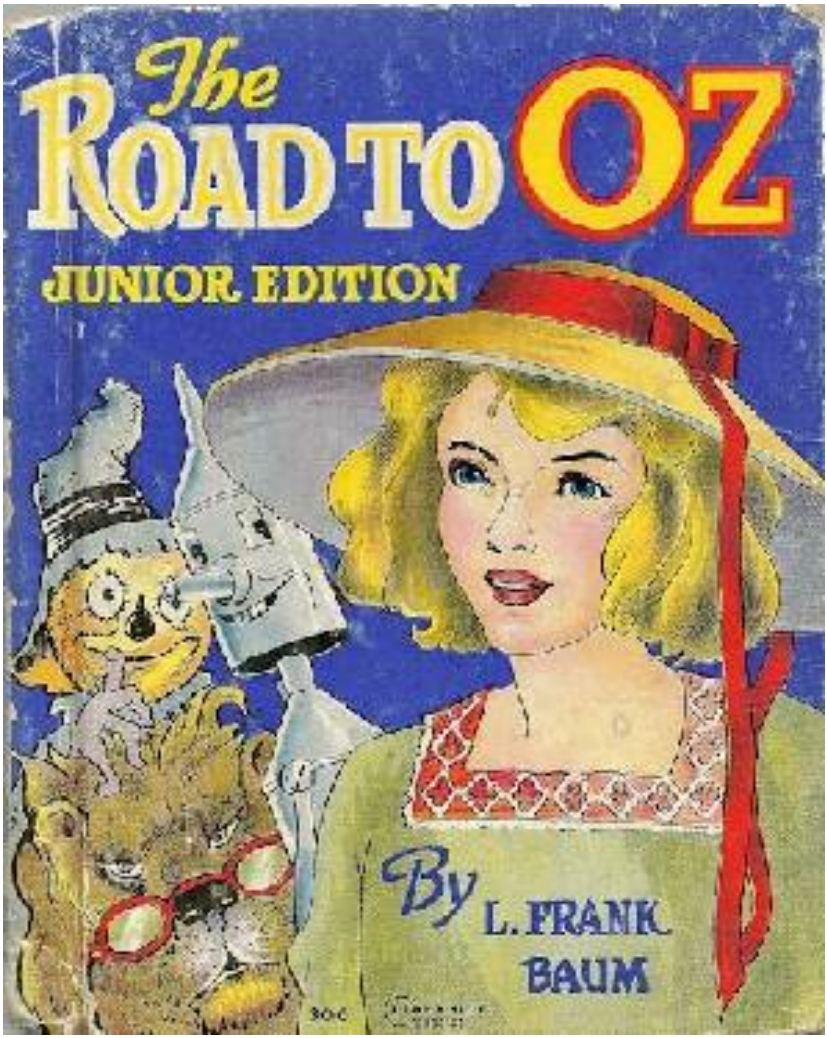

A copy of the abridged Junior Edition of The Road to Oz from 1939

THE ROAD
TO
Z

THE ROAD TO OZ

CALLING ON JACK PUMPKINHEAD (Chapter 16)

Copyright
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To my readers: Well, my dears, here is what you have asked for: another “Oz Book” about Dorothy’s strange adventures. Toto is in this story, because you wanted him to be there, and many other characters which you will recognize are in the story, too. Indeed, the wishes of my little correspondents have been

considered as carefully as possible, and if the story is not exactly as you would have written it yourselves, you must remember that a story has to be a story before it can be written down, and the writer cannot change it much without spoiling it.

In the preface to "Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz" I said I would like to write some stories that were not "Oz" stories, because I thought I had written about Oz long enough; but since that volume was published I have been fairly deluged with letters from children imploring me to "write more about Dorothy," and "more about Oz," and since I write only to please the children I shall try to respect their wishes.

There are some new characters in this book that ought to win your love. I'm very fond of the shaggy man myself, and I think you will like him, too. As for Polychrome — the Rainbow's Daughter — and stupid little Button-Bright, they seem to have brought a new element of fun into these Oz stories, and I am glad I discovered them. Yet I am anxious to have you write and tell me how you like them.

Since this book was written I have received some very remarkable news from The Land of Oz, which has greatly astonished me. I believe it will astonish you, too, my dears, when you hear it. But it is such a long and exciting story that it must be saved for another book — and perhaps that book will be the last story that will ever be told about the Land of Oz.

L Frank Baum.

Coronado, 1909.

1. The Way to Butterfield

"PLEASE, miss," said the shaggy man, "can you tell me the road to Butterfield?"

Dorothy looked him over. Yes, he was shaggy, all right; but there was a twinkle in his eye that seemed pleasant.

"Oh, yes," she replied; "I can tell you. But it isn't this road at all."

"No?"

"You cross the ten-acre lot, follow the lane to the highway, go north to the five branches, and take — let me see — "

"To be sure, miss; see as far as Butterfield, if you like," said the shaggy man.

"You take the branch next the willow stump, I b'lieve; or else the branch by the gopher holes; or else — — "

"Won't any of 'em do, miss?"

"'Course not, Shaggy Man. You must take the right road to get to Butterfield."

"And is that the one by the gopher stump, or — — "

"Dear me!" cried Dorothy; "I shall have to show you the way; you're so stupid. Wait a minute till I run in the house and get my sunbonnet."

The shaggy man waited. He had an oat-straw in his mouth, which he

chewed slowly as if it tasted good; but it didn't. There was an apple-tree beside the house, and some apples had fallen to the ground. The shaggy man thought they would taste better than the oat-straw, so he walked over to get some. A little black dog with bright brown eyes dashed out of the farm-house and ran madly toward the shaggy man, who had already picked up three apples and put them in one of the big wide pockets of his shaggy coat. The little dog barked, and made a dive for the shaggy man's leg; but he grabbed the dog by the neck and put it in his big pocket along with the apples. He took more apples, afterward, for many were on the ground; and each one that he tossed into his pocket hit the little dog somewhere upon the head or back, and made him growl. The little dog's name was Toto, and he was sorry he had been put in the shaggy man's pocket.

Pretty soon Dorothy came out of the house with her sunbonnet, and she called out:

"Come on, Shaggy Man, if you want me to show you the road to Butterfield." She climbed the fence into the ten-acre lot and he followed her, walking slowly and stumbling over the little hillocks in the pasture as if he was thinking of something else and did not notice them.

"My, but you're clumsy!" said the little girl. "Are your feet tired?"

"No, miss; it's my whiskers; they tire very easily this warm weather," said he. "I wish it would snow; don't you?"

"'Course not, Shaggy Man," replied Dorothy, giving him a severe look. "If it snowed in August it would spoil the corn and the oats and the wheat; and then Uncle Henry wouldn't have any crops; and that would make him poor; and — — "

“Never mind,” said the shaggy man. “It won’t snow, I guess. Is this the lane?”

“Yes,” replied Dorothy, climbing another fence; “I’ll go as far as the highway with you.”

“Thankee, miss; you’re very kind for your size, I’m sure,” said he gratefully.

“It isn’t everyone who knows the road to Butterfield,” Dorothy remarked as she tripped along the lane; “but I’ve driven there many a time with Uncle Henry, and so I b’lieve I could find it blindfolded.”

“Don’t do that, miss,” said the shaggy man, earnestly; “you might make a mistake.”

“I won’t,” she answered, laughing. “Here’s the highway. Now, it’s the second — no, the third turn to the left — or else it’s the fourth. Let’s see. The first one is by the elm tree; and the second is by the gopher holes; and then — — ”

“Then what?” he inquired, putting his hands in his coat pockets. Toto grabbed a finger and bit it; the shaggy man took his hand out of that pocket quickly, and said “Oh!”

Dorothy did not notice. She was shading her eyes from the sun with her arm, looking anxiously down the road.

“Come on,” she commanded. “It’s only a little way farther, so I may as well show you.”

After a while they came to the place where five roads branched in different directions; Dorothy pointed to one, and said:

“That’s it, Shaggy Man.”

“I’m much obliged, miss,” he said, and started along another road.

“Not that one!” she cried; “you’re going wrong.”

He stopped.

“I thought you said that other was the road to Butterfield,” said he, running his fingers through his shaggy whiskers in a puzzled way.

“So it is.”

“But I don’t want to go to Butterfield, miss.”

“You don’t?”

“Of course not. I wanted you to show me the road, so I shouldn’t go there by mistake.”

“Oh! Where *do* you want to go to, then?”

“I’m not particular, miss.”

This answer astonished the little girl; and it made her provoked, too, to think she had taken all this trouble for nothing.

“There are a good many roads here,” observed the shaggy man, turning

slowly around, like a human windmill.

"Seems to me a person could go 'most anywhere, from this place."

Dorothy turned around too, and gazed in surprise. There *were* a good many roads; more than she had ever seen before. She tried to count them, knowing there ought to be five; but when she had counted seventeen she grew bewildered and stopped, for the roads were as many as the spokes of a wheel and ran in every direction from the place where they stood; so if she kept on counting she was likely to count some of the roads twice.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "There used to be only five roads, highway and all. And now — why, where's the highway, Shaggy Man?"

"Can't say, miss," he responded, sitting down upon the ground as if tired with standing. "Wasn't it here a minute ago?"

"I thought so," she answered, greatly perplexed. "And I saw the gopher holes, too, and the dead stump; but they're not here now. These roads are all strange — and what a lot of them there are! Where do you suppose they all go to?"

"Roads," observed the shaggy man, "don't go anywhere. They stay in one place, so folks can walk on them."

He put his hand in his side-pocket and drew out an apple — quick, before Toto could bite him again. The little dog got his head out this time and said "Bow-wow!" so loudly that it made Dorothy jump.

"O Toto!" she cried; "where did you come from?"

"I brought him along," said the shaggy man.

"What for?" she asked.

"To guard these apples in my pocket, miss, so no one would steal them."

With one hand the shaggy man held the apple, which he began eating, while with the other hand he pulled Toto out of his pocket and dropped him to the ground. Of course Toto made for Dorothy at once, barking joyfully at his release from the dark pocket. When the child had patted his head lovingly, he sat down before her, his red tongue hanging out one side of his mouth, and looked up into her face with his bright brown eyes, as if asking her what they should do next.

Dorothy didn't know. She looked around her anxiously for some familiar landmark; but everything was strange. Between the branches of the many roads were green meadows and a few shrubs and trees, but she couldn't see anywhere the farm-house from which she had just come, or anything she had ever seen before — except the shaggy man and Toto.

Besides this, she had turned around and around so many times, trying to find out where she was, that now she couldn't even tell which direction the farm-house ought to be in; and this began to worry her and make her feel

anxious.

"I'm 'fraid, Shaggy Man," she said, with a sigh, "that we're lost!"

"That's nothing to be afraid of," he replied, throwing away the core of his apple and beginning to eat another one. "Each of these roads must lead somewhere, or it wouldn't be here. So what does it matter?"

"I want to go home again," she said.

"Well, why don't you?" said he.

"I don't know which road to take."

"That is too bad," he said, shaking his shaggy head gravely. "I wish I could help you; but I can't. I'm a stranger in these parts."

"Seems as if I were, too," she said, sitting down beside him. "It's funny. A few minutes ago I was home, and I just came to show you the way to Butterfield — — "

"So I shouldn't make a mistake and go there — — "

"And now I'm lost myself and don't now how to get home!"

"Have an apple," suggested the shaggy man, handing her one with pretty red cheeks.

"I'm not hungry," said Dorothy, pushing it away.

"But you may be, to-morrow; then you'll be sorry you didn't eat the apple," said he.

"If I am, I'll eat the apple then," promised Dorothy.

"Perhaps there won't be any apple then," he returned, beginning to eat the red-cheeked one himself. "Dogs sometimes can find their way home better than people," he went on; "perhaps your dog can lead you back to the farm."

"Will you, Toto?" asked Dorothy.

Toto wagged his tail vigorously.

"All right," said the girl; "let's go home."

Toto looked around a minute, and dashed up one of the roads.

"Good-bye, Shaggy Man," called Dorothy, and ran after Toto. The little dog pranced briskly along for some distance; when he turned around and looked at his mistress questioningly.

"Oh, don't 'spect *me* to tell you anything; I don't know the way," she said. "You'll have to find it yourself."

But Toto couldn't. He wagged his tail, and sneezed, and shook his ears, and trotted back where they had left the shaggy man. From here he started along another road; then came back and tried another; but each time he found the way strange and decided it would not take them to the farm house. Finally, when Dorothy had begun to tire with chasing after him, Toto sat down panting beside the shaggy man and gave up.

Dorothy sat down, too, very thoughtful. The little girl had encountered

some queer adventures since she came to live at the farm; but this was the queerest of them all. To get lost in fifteen minutes, so near to her home and in the unromantic State of Kansas, was an experience that fairly bewildered her.

"Will your folks worry?" asked the shaggy man, his eyes twinkling in a pleasant way.

"I s'pose so," answered Dorothy, with a sigh. "Uncle Henry says there's *always* something happening to me; but I've always come home safe at the last. So perhaps he'll take comfort and think I'll come home safe this time."

"I'm sure you will," said the shaggy man, smilingly nodding at her. "Good little girls never come to any harm, you know. For my part, I'm good, too; so nothing ever hurts me."

Dorothy looked at him curiously. His clothes were shaggy, his boots were shaggy and full of holes, and his hair and whiskers were shaggy. But his smile was sweet and his eyes were kind.

"Why didn't you want to go to Butterfield?" she asked.

"Because a man lives there who owes me fifteen cents, and if I went to Butterfield and he saw me he'd want to pay me the money. I don't want money, my dear."

"Why not?" she inquired.

"Money," declared the shaggy man, "makes people proud and haughty; I don't want to be proud and haughty. All I want is to have people love me; and as long as I own the Love Magnet everyone I meet is sure to love me dearly."

"THIS, MY DEAR, IS THE WONDERFUL LOVE MAGNET."

"The Love Magnet! Why, what's that?"

"I'll show you, if you won't tell anyone," he answered, in a low, mysterious voice.

"There isn't any one to tell, 'cept Toto," said the girl.

The shaggy man searched in one pocket, carefully; and in another pocket; and in a third. At last he drew out a small parcel wrapped in crumpled paper and tied with a cotton string. He unwound the string, opened the parcel, and took out a bit of metal shaped like a horseshoe. It was dull and brown, and not very pretty.

"This, my dear," said he, impressively, "is the wonderful Love Magnet. It

was given me by an Eskimo in the Sandwich Islands — where there are no sandwiches at all — and as long as I carry it every living thing I meet will love me dearly."

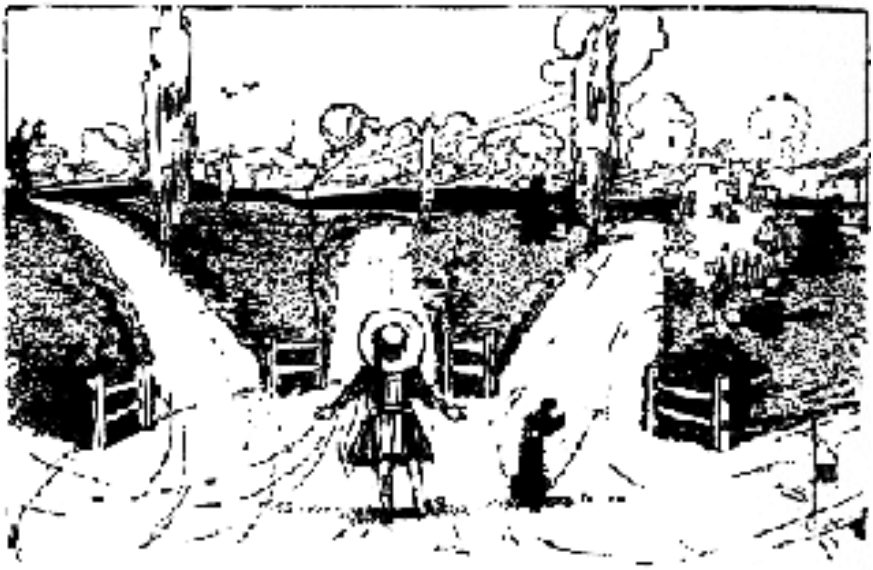
"Why didn't the Eskimo keep it?" she asked, looking at the Magnet with interest.

"He got tired being loved and longed for some one to hate him. So he gave me the Magnet and the very next day a grizzly bear ate him."

"Wasn't he sorry then?" she inquired.

"He didn't say," replied the shaggy man, wrapping and tying the Love Magnet with great care and putting it away in another pocket. "But the bear didn't seem sorry a bit," he added.

"Did you know the bear?" asked Dorothy.



"Yes; we used to play ball together in the Caviar Islands. The bear loved me because I had the Love Magnet. I couldn't blame him for eating the Eskimo, because it was his nature to do so."

"Once," said Dorothy, "I knew a Hungry Tiger who longed to eat fat babies, because it was his nature to; but he never ate any because he had a Conscience."

"This bear," replied the shaggy man, with a sigh, "had no Conscience, you see."

The shaggy man sat silent for several minutes, apparently considering the cases of the bear and the tiger, while Toto watched him with an air of great interest. The little dog was doubtless thinking of his ride in the shaggy man's pocket and planning to keep out of reach in the future.

At last the shaggy man turned and inquired, “What’s your name, little girl?”

“My name’s Dorothy,” said she, jumping up again, “but what are we going to do? We can’t stay here forever, you know.”

“Let’s take the seventh road,” he suggested. “Seven is a lucky number for little girls named Dorothy.”

“The seventh from where?”

“From where you begin to count.”

So she counted seven roads, and the seventh looked just like all the others; but the shaggy man got up from the ground where he had been sitting and started down this road as if sure it was the best way to go; and Dorothy and Toto followed him.

2. Dorothy Meets Button-bright

THE seventh road was a good road, and curved this way and that — winding through green meadows and fields covered with daisies and buttercups and past groups of shady trees. There were no houses of any sort to be seen, and for some distance they met with no living creature at all.

Dorothy began to fear they were getting a good way from the *farm-house*, since here everything was strange to her; but it would do no good at all to go back where the other roads all met, because the next one they chose might lead her just as far from home.

She kept on beside the shaggy man, who whistled cheerful tunes to beguile the journey, until by-and-by they followed a turn in the road and saw before them a big chestnut tree making a shady spot over the highway. In the shade sat a little boy dressed in sailor clothes, who was digging a hole in the earth with a bit of wood. He must have been digging some time, because the hole was already big enough to drop a foot-ball into.

Dorothy and Toto and the shaggy man came to a halt before the little boy, who kept on digging in a sober and persistent fashion.

“Who are you?” asked the girl.

He looked up at her calmly. His face was round and chubby and his eyes were big, blue, and earnest.

“I’m Button-Bright,” said he.

“But what’s you real name?” she inquired.

“Button-Bright.”

“That isn’t a really-truly name!” she exclaimed.

“Isn’t it?” he asked, still digging.

“‘Course not. It’s just a — a thing to call you by. You must have a name.”

“Must I?”

“To be sure. What does your mamma call you?”

He paused in his digging and tried to think.

“Papa always said I was bright as a button; so mamma always called me Button-Bright,” he said.

“What is your papa’s name?”

“Just Papa.”

“What else?”

“Don’t know.”

“Never mind,” said the shaggy man, smiling. “We’ll call the boy Button-Bright, as his mamma does. That name is as good as any, and better than some.”

Dorothy watched the boy dig.

“Where do you live?” she asked.

“Don’t know,” was the reply.

“How did you come here?”

“Don’t know,” he said again.

“Don’t you know where you came from?”

“No,” said he.

“Why, he must be lost,” she said to the shaggy man. She turned to the boy once more.

“What are you going to do?” she inquired.

“Dig,” said he.

“But you can’t dig forever; and what are you going to do then?” she persisted.

“Don’t know,” said the boy.

“But you *must* know *something*,” declared Dorothy, getting provoked.

“Must I?” he asked, looking up in surprise.

“Of course you must.”

“What must I know?”

“What’s going to become of you, for one thing,” she answered.

“Do *you* know what’s going to become of me?” he asked.

“Not — not ‘zactly,” she admitted.

“Do you know what’s going to become of *you*?” he continued, earnestly.

"I can't say I do," replied Dorothy, remembering her present difficulties.

The shaggy man laughed.

"No one knows everything, Dorothy," he said.

"But Button-Bright doesn't seem to know *anything*," she declared. "Do you, Button-Bright?"

He shook his head, which had pretty curls all over it, and replied with perfect calmness:

"Don't know."

Never before had Dorothy met with any one who could give her so little information. The boy was evidently lost, and his people would be sure to worry about him. He seemed two or three years younger than Dorothy, and was prettily dressed, as if some one loved him dearly and took much pains to make him look well. How, then, did he come to be in this lonely road? she wondered.

Near Button-Bright, on the ground, lay a sailor hat with a gilt anchor on the band. His sailor trousers were long and wide at the bottom, and the broad collar of his blouse had gold anchors sewed on its corners. The boy was still digging at his hole.

"Have you ever been to sea?" asked Dorothy.

"To see what?" answered Button-Bright.

"I mean have you ever been where there's water?"

"Yes," said Button-Bright; "there's a well in our back yard."

"You don't understand," cried Dorothy. "I mean, have you ever been on a big ship floating on a big ocean?"

“Don’t know,” said he.

“Then why do you wear sailor clothes?”

“Don’t know,” he answered, again.

Dorothy was in despair.

“You’re just *awful* stupid, Button-Bright,” she said.

“Am I?” he asked.

“Yes, you are.”

“Why?” looking up at her with big eyes.

She was going to say: “Don’t know,” but stopped herself in time.

“That’s for you to answer,” she replied.

“It’s no use asking Button-Bright questions,” said the shaggy man, who had been eating another apple; “but some one ought to take care of the poor little chap, don’t you think? So he’d better come along with us.”

Toto had been looking with great curiosity into the hole which the boy was digging, and growing more and more excited every minute, perhaps thinking that Button-Bright was after some wild animal. The little dog began barking loudly and jumped into the hole himself, where he began to dig with his tiny paws, making the earth fly in all directions. It spattered over the boy. Dorothy seized him and raised him to his feet, brushing his clothes with her hand.

“Stop that, Toto!” she called. “There aren’t any mice or woodchucks in that hole, so don’t be foolish.”

Toto stopped, sniffed at the hole suspiciously, and jumped out of it, wagging his tail as if he had done something important.

“Well,” said the shaggy man, “let’s start on, or we won’t get anywhere before night comes.”

“Where do you expect to get to?” asked Dorothy.

“I’m like Button-Bright; I don’t know,” answered the shaggy man, with a laugh. “But I’ve learned from long experience that every road leads somewhere, or there wouldn’t be any road; so it’s likely that if we travel long enough, my dear, we will come to some place or another in the end. What place it will be we can’t even guess at this moment, but we’re sure to find out when we get there.”

“Why, yes,” said Dorothy; “that seems reas’n’ble, Shaggy Man.”

3. A Queer Village

BUTTON-BRIGHT took the shaggy man's hand willingly; for the shaggy man had the Love Magnet, you know, which was the reason Button-Bright had loved him at once. They started on, with Dorothy on one side, and Toto on the other, the little party trudging along more cheerfully than you might have supposed. The girl was getting used to queer adventures, which interested her very much. Wherever Dorothy went Toto was sure to go, like Mary's little lamb. Button-Bright didn't seem a bit afraid or worried because he was lost, and the shaggy man had no home, perhaps, and was as happy in one place as in another.

Before long they saw ahead of them a fine big arch spanning the road, and when they came nearer they found that the arch was beautifully carved and decorated with rich colors. A row of peacocks with spread tails ran along the top of it, and all the feathers were gorgeously painted. In the center was a large fox's head, and the fox wore a shrewd and knowing expression and had large spectacles over its eyes and a small golden crown with shiny points on top of its head.

While the travellers were looking with curiosity at this beautiful arch there suddenly marched out of it a company of soldiers — only the soldiers were

all foxes dressed in uniforms. They wore green jackets and yellow pantaloons, and their little round caps and their high boots were a bright red color. Also there was a big red bow tied about the middle of each long, bushy tail. Each soldier was armed with a wooden sword having an edge of sharp teeth set in a row, and the sight of these teeth at first caused Dorothy to shudder.

A captain marched in front of the company of fox-soldiers, his uniform embroidered with gold braid to make it handsomer than the others.

Almost before our friends realized it the soldiers had surrounded them on all sides, and the captain was calling out in a harsh voice:

"Surrender! You are our prisoners."

"What's a pris'ner?" asked Button-Bright.

"A prisoner is a captive," replied the fox-captain, strutting up and down with much dignity.

"What's a captive?" asked Button-Bright.

"You're one," said the captain.

That made the shaggy man laugh.

"Good afternoon, captain," he said, bowing politely to all the foxes and very low to their commander. "I trust you are in good health, and that your families are all well?"

The fox-captain looked at the shaggy man, and his sharp features grew pleasant and smiling.

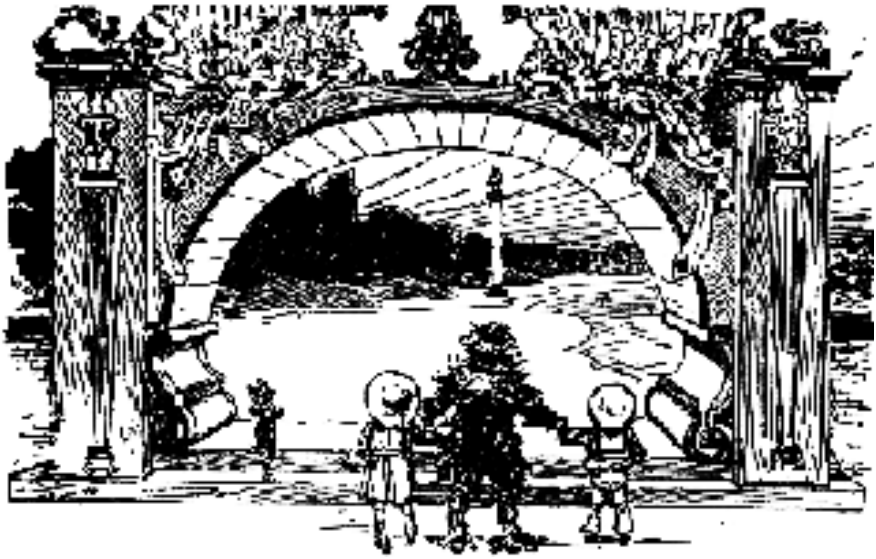
"We're pretty well, thank you, Shaggy Man," said he; and Dorothy knew that the Love Magnet was working and that all the foxes now loved the shaggy man because of it. But Toto didn't know this, for he began barking angrily and tried to bite the captain's hairy leg where it showed between his red boots and his yellow pantaloons.

"Stop, Toto!" cried the little girl, seizing the dog in her arms. "These are our friends."

"Why, so we are!" remarked the captain in tones of astonishment. "I thought at first we were enemies, but it seems you are friends, instead. You must come with me to see King Dox."

"Who's he?" asked Button-Bright, with earnest eyes.

"King Dox of Foxville; the great and wise sovereign who rules over our community."



"What's sov'rin, and what's c'u'nity?" inquired Button-Bright.

"Don't ask so many questions, little boy."

"Why?"

"Ah, why, indeed?" exclaimed the captain, looking at Button-Bright admiringly. "If you don't ask questions you will learn nothing. True enough. I was wrong. You're a very clever little boy, come to think of it — very clever indeed. But now, friends, please come with me, for it is my duty to escort you at once to the royal palace."

The soldiers marched back through the arch again, and with them marched the shaggy man, Dorothy, Toto, and Button-Bright. Once through the opening they found a fine, big city spread out before them, all the houses of carved marble in beautiful colors. The decorations were mostly birds and other fowl, such as peacocks, pheasants, turkeys, prairie-chickens, ducks, and geese. Over each doorway was carved a head representing the fox who lived in that house, this effect being quite pretty and unusual.

As our friends marched along, some of the foxes came out on the porches and balconies to get a view of the strangers. These foxes were all handsomely dressed, the girl-foxes and women-foxes wearing gowns of feathers woven together effectively and colored in bright hues which Dorothy thought were quite artistic and decidedly attractive.

Button-Bright stared until his eyes were big and round, and he would have stumbled and fallen more than once had not the shaggy man grasped his hand tightly. They were all interested, and Toto was so excited he wanted to bark every minute and to chase and fight every fox he caught sight of; but Dorothy

held his little wiggling body fast in her arms and commanded him to be good and behave himself. So he finally quieted down, like a wise doggy, deciding there were too many foxes in Foxville to fight at one time.

By-and-bye they came to a big square, and in the center of the square stood the royal palace. Dorothy knew it at once because it had over its great door the carved head of a fox just like the one she had seen on the arch, and this fox was the only one who wore a golden crown.

There were many fox-soldiers guarding the door, but they bowed to the captain and admitted him without question. The captain led them through many rooms, where richly dressed foxes were sitting on beautiful chairs or sipping tea, which was being passed around by fox-servants in white aprons. They came to a big doorway covered with heavy curtains of cloth of gold.

Beside this doorway stood a huge drum. The fox-captain went to this drum and knocked his knees against it — first one knee and then the other — so that the drum said; "Boom-boom."

"You must all do exactly what I do," ordered the captain; so the shaggy man pounded the drum with his knees, and so did Dorothy and so did Button-Bright. The boy wanted to keep on pounding it with his little fat knees, because he liked the sound of it; but the captain stopped him. Toto couldn't pound the drum with his knees and he didn't know enough to wag his tail against it, so Dorothy pounded the drum for him and that made him bark, and when the little dog barked the fox-captain scowled.

The golden curtains drew back far enough to make an opening, through which marched the captain with the others.

The broad, long room they entered was decorated in gold with stained-glass windows of splendid colors. In the center of the room, upon a richly carved golden throne, sat the fox-king, surrounded by a group of other foxes, all of whom wore great spectacles over their eyes, making them look solemn and important.

Dorothy knew the King at once, because she had seen his head carved on the arch and over the doorway of the palace. Having met with several other kings in her travels she knew what to do, and at once made a low bow before the throne. The shaggy man bowed, too, and Button-Bright bobbed his head and said "Hello."

"Most wise and noble Potentate of Foxville," said the captain, addressing the King in a pompous voice, "I humbly beg to report that I found these strangers on the road leading to your Foxy Majesty's dominions, and have therefore brought them before you, as is my duty."

"So — so," said the King, looking at them keenly. "What brought you here, strangers?"

"Our legs, may it please your Royal Hairiness," replied the shaggy man.

"What is your business here?" was the next question.

"To get away as soon as possible," said the shaggy man.

The King didn't know about the Magnet, of course; but it made him love the shaggy man at once.

"Do just as you please about going away," he said; "but I'd like to *show you* the sights of my city and to entertain your party while you are here. We feel highly honored to have little Dorothy with us, I assure you, and we appreciate her kindness in making us a visit. For whatever country Dorothy visits is sure to become famous."

This speech greatly surprised the little girl, who asked:

"How did your Majesty know my name?"

"Why, everybody knows you, my dear," said the Fox-King. "Don't you

realize that? You are quite an important personage since Princess Ozma of Oz made you her friend."

"Do you know Ozma?" she asked, wondering.

"I regret to say that I do not," he answered, sadly; "but I hope to meet her soon. You know the Princess Ozma is to celebrate her birthday on the twenty-first of this month."

"Is she?" said Dorothy. "I didn't know that."

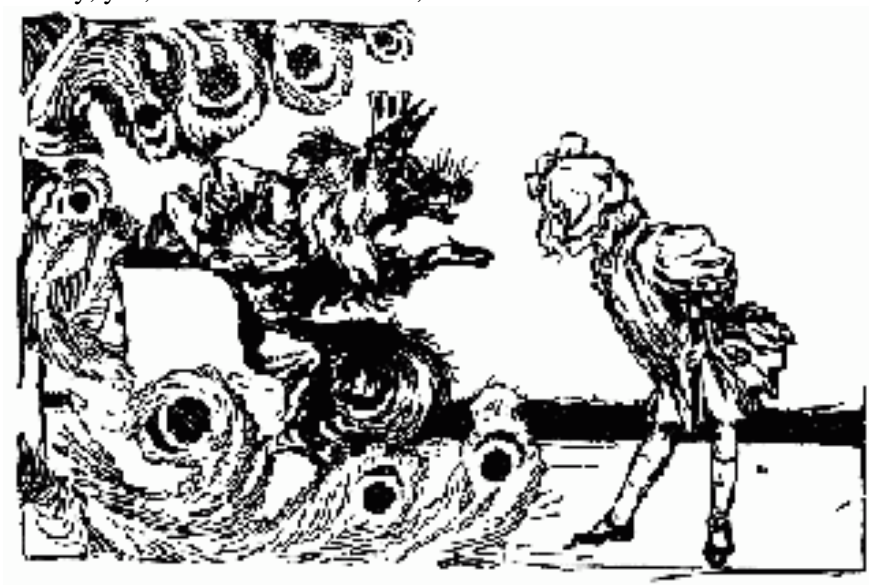
"Yes; it is to be the most brilliant royal ceremony ever held in any city in Fairyland, and I hope you will try to get me an invitation."

Dorothy thought a moment.

"I'm sure Ozma would invite you if I asked her," she said; "but how could you get to the Land of Oz and the Emerald City? It's a good way from Kansas."

"Kansas!" he exclaimed, surprised.

"Why, yes; we are in Kansas now, aren't we?" she returned.



"What a queer notion!" cried the Fox-King, beginning to laugh. "Whatever made you think this is Kansas?"

"I left Uncle Henry's farm only about two hours ago; that's the reason," she said, rather perplexed.

"But, tell me, my dear, did you ever see so wonderful a city as Foxville in Kansas?" he questioned.

"No, your Majesty."

"And haven't you traveled from Oz to Kansas in less than half a jiffy, by

means of the Silver Shoes and the Magic Belt?"

"Yes, your Majesty," she acknowledged.

"Then why do you wonder that an hour or two could bring you to Foxville, which is nearer to Oz than it is to Kansas?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dorothy; "is this another fairy adventure?"

"It seems to be," said the Fox-King, smiling.

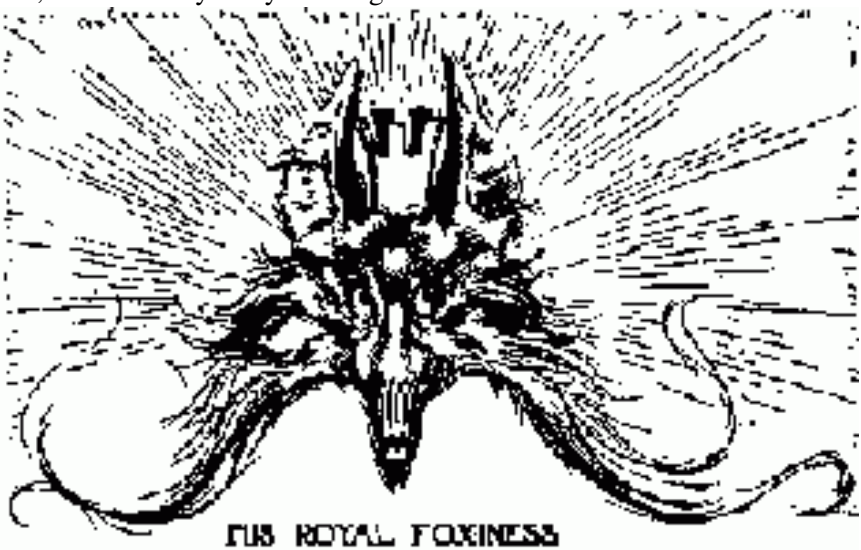
Dorothy turned to the shaggy man, and her face was grave and reproachful.

"Are you a magician? or a fairy in disguise?" she asked. "Did you enchant me when you asked the way to Butterfield?"

The shaggy man shook his head.

"Who ever heard of a shaggy fairy?" he replied. "No, Dorothy, my dear; I'm not to blame for this journey in any way, I assure you. There's been something strange about me ever since I owned the Love Magnet; but I don't know what it is any more than you do. I didn't try to get you away from home, at all. If you want to find your way back to the farm I'll go with you willingly, and do my best to help you."

"Never mind," said the little girl, thoughtfully. "There isn't so much to see in Kansas as there is here, and I guess Aunt Em won't be *very* much worried; that is, if I don't stay away too long."



"That's right," declared the Fox-King, nodding approval. "Be contented with your lot, whatever it happens to be, if you are wise. Which reminds me that you have a new companion on this adventure — he looks very clever and bright."

“He is,” said Dorothy; and the shaggy man added:
“That’s his name, your Royal Foxiness — Button Bright.”

4. King Dox

IT was amusing to note the expression on the face of King Dox as he looked the boy over, from his sailor hat to his stubby shoes; and it was equally diverting to watch Button-Bright stare at the King in return. No fox ever beheld a fresher, fairer child's face, and no child had ever before heard a fox talk, or met with one who dressed so handsomely and ruled so big a city. I am sorry to say that no one had ever told the little boy much about fairies of any kind; this being the case, it is easy to understand how much this strange experience startled and astonished him.

"How do you like us?" asked the King.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"Of course you don't. It's too short an acquaintance," returned his Majesty. "What do you suppose my name is?"

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"How should you? Well, I'll tell you. My private name is Dox, but a King can't be called by his private name; he has to take one that is official. Therefore my official name is King Renard the Fourth. Ren-ard with the accent on the 'Ren'."

"What's 'ren'?" asked Button-Bright.

“How clever!” exclaimed the King, turning a pleased face toward his counselors. “This boy is indeed remarkably bright. ‘What’s ‘ren’’? he asks; and of course ‘ren’ is nothing at all, all by itself. Yes; he’s very bright indeed.”

“That question is what your Majesty might call foxy,” said one of the counselors, an old grey fox.

“So it is,” declared the King. Turning again to Button-Bright, he asked:

“Having told you my name, what would you call me?”

“King Dox,” said the boy.

“Why?”

“‘Cause ‘ren’’s nothing at all,” was the reply.

“Good! Very good indeed! You certainly have a brilliant mind. Do you know why two and two make four?”

“No,” said Button-Bright.

“Clever! clever indeed. Of course you don’t know. Nobody knows why; we only know it’s so, and can’t tell why it’s so. Button-Bright, those curls and blue eyes do not go well with so much wisdom. They make you look too youthful, and hide your real cleverness. Therefore, I will do you a great favor. I will confer upon you the head of a fox, so that you may hereafter look as bright as you really are.”

As he spoke the King waved his paw toward the boy, and at once the pretty curls and fresh round face and big blue eyes were gone, while in their place a fox’s head appeared upon Button-Bright’s shoulders — a hairy head with a sharp nose, pointed ears, and keen little eyes.

“Oh, don’t do that!” cried Dorothy, shrinking back from her transformed

companion with a shocked and dismayed face.

"Too late, my dear; it's done. But you also shall have a fox's head if you can prove you're as clever as Button-Bright."

"I don't want it; it's dreadful!" she exclaimed; and, hearing this verdict, Button-Bright began to boo-hoo just as if he were still a little boy.

"How can you call that lovely head dreadful?" asked the King. "It's a much prettier face than he had before, to my notion, and my wife says I'm a good judge of beauty. Don't cry, little fox-boy. Laugh and be proud, because you are so highly favored. How do you like the new head, Button-Bright?"

"D-d-don't n-n-n-know!" sobbed the child.

"Please, *please* change him back again, your Majesty!" begged Dorothy.

King Renard IV shook his head.

"I can't do that," he said; "I haven't the power, even if I wanted to. No, Button-Bright must wear his fox head, and he'll be sure to love it dearly as soon as he gets used to it."

Both the shaggy man and Dorothy looked grave and anxious, for they were sorrowful that such a misfortune had overtaken their little companion. Toto barked at the fox-boy once or twice, not realizing it was his former friend who now wore the animal head; but Dorothy cuffed the dog and made him stop. As for the foxes, they all seemed to think Button-Bright's new head very becoming and that their King had conferred a great honor on this little stranger.

It was funny to see the boy reach up to feel of his sharp nose and wide mouth, and wail afresh with grief. He wagged his ears in a comical manner and tears were in his little black eyes. But Dorothy couldn't laugh at her friend just yet, because she felt so sorry.

Just then three little fox-princesses, daughters of the King, entered the room, and when they saw Button-Bright one exclaimed: "How lovely he is!" and the next one cried in delight: "How sweet he is!" and the third princess clapped her hands with pleasure and said, "How beautiful he is!"

Button-Bright stopped crying and asked timidly:

"Am I?"

"In all the world there is not another face so pretty," declared the biggest fox-princess.

"You must live with us always, and be our brother," said the next.

"We shall all love you dearly," the third said.

This praise did much to comfort the boy, and he looked around and tried to smile. It was a pitiful attempt, because the fox face was new and stiff, and Dorothy thought his expression more stupid than before the transformation.

"I think we ought to be going now," said the shaggy man, uneasily, for he

didn't know what the King might take into his head to do next.

"Don't leave us yet, I beg of you," pleaded King Renard. "I intend to have several days of feasting and merrymaking, in honor of your visit."

"Have it after we're gone, for we can't wait," said Dorothy, decidedly. But seeing this displeased the King, she added: "If I'm going to get Ozma to invite you to her party I'll have to find her as soon as poss'ble, you know."

In spite of all the beauty of Foxville and the gorgeous dresses of its inhabitants, both the girl and the shaggy man felt they were not quite safe there, and would be glad to see the last of it.

"But it is now evening," the King reminded them, "and you must stay with us until morning, anyhow. Therefore I invite you to be my guests at dinner, and to attend the theater afterward and sit in the royal box. Tomorrow morning, if you really insist upon it, you may resume your journey."

They consented to this, and some of the fox-servants led them to a suite of lovely rooms in the big palace.

Button-Bright was afraid to be left alone, so Dorothy took him into her own room. While a maid-fox dressed the little girl's hair — which was a bit tangled — and put some bright, fresh ribbons in it, another maid-fox combed the hair on poor Button-Bright's face and head and brushed it carefully, tying a pink bow to each of his pointed ears. The maids wanted to dress the children in fine costumes of woven feathers, such as all the foxes wore; but neither of them consented to that.

"A sailor suit and a fox head do not go well together," said one of the maids; "for no fox was ever a sailor that I can remember."

“I’m not a fox!” cried Button-Bright.

“Alas, no,” agreed the maid. “But you’ve got a lovely fox head on your skinny shoulders, and that’s *almost* as good as being a fox.”

The boy, reminded of his misfortune, began to cry again. Dorothy petted and comforted him and promised to find some way to restore him his own head.

“If we can manage to get to Ozma,” she said, “the Princess will change you back to yourself in half a second; so you just wear that fox head as comf’t’bly as you can, dear, and don’t worry about it at all. It isn’t nearly as pretty as your own head, no matter what the foxes say; but you can get along with it for a little while longer, can’t you?”

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright, doubtfully; but he didn’t cry any more after that.

Dorothy let the maids pin ribbons to her shoulders, after which they were ready for the King’s dinner. When they met the shaggy man in the splendid drawing-room of the palace they found him just the same as before. He had refused to give up his shaggy clothes for new ones, because if he did that he would no longer be the shaggy man, he said, and he might have to get acquainted with himself all over again.

He told Dorothy he had brushed his shaggy hair and whiskers; but she thought he must have brushed them the wrong way, for they were quite as shaggy as before.

As for the company of foxes assembled to dine with the strangers, they were most beautifully costumed, and their rich dresses made Dorothy’s simple gown and Button-Bright’s sailor suit and the shaggy man’s shaggy clothes look commonplace. But they treated their guests with great respect and the King’s dinner was a very good dinner indeed.

Foxes, as you know, are fond of chicken and other fowl; so they served chicken soup and roasted turkey and stewed duck and fried grouse and broiled quail and goose pie, and as the cooking was excellent the King’s guests enjoyed the meal and ate heartily of the various dishes.

The party went to the theater, where they saw a play acted by foxes dressed in costumes of brilliantly colored feathers. The play was about a fox-girl who was stolen by some wicked wolves and carried to their cave; and just as they were about to kill her and eat her a company of fox-soldiers marched up, saved the girl, and put all the wicked wolves to death.

“How do you like it?” the King asked Dorothy.

“Pretty well,” she answered. “It reminds me of one of Mr. Aesop’s fables.”

“Don’t mention Aesop to me, I beg of you!” exclaimed King Dox. “I hate

that man's name. He wrote a good deal about foxes, but always made them out cruel and wicked, whereas we are gentle and kind, as you may see."

"But his fables showed you to be wise and clever, and more shrewd than other animals," said the shaggy man, thoughtfully.

"So we are. There is no question about our knowing more than men do," replied the King, proudly. "But we employ our wisdom to do good, instead of harm; so that horrid Aesop did not know what he was talking about."

They did not like to contradict him, because they felt he ought to know the nature of foxes better than men did; so they sat still and watched the play, and Button-Bright became so interested that for the time he forgot he wore a fox head.

Afterward they went back to the palace and slept in soft beds stuffed with feathers; for the foxes raised many fowl for food, and used their feathers for clothing and to sleep upon.

Dorothy wondered why the animals living in Foxville did not wear just their own hairy skins, as wild foxes do; when she mentioned it to King Dox he said they clothed themselves because they were civilized.

"But you were born without clothes," she observed, "and you don't seem to me to need them."

"So were human beings born without clothes," he replied; "and until they became civilized they wore only their natural skins. But to become civilized means to dress as elaborately and prettily as possible, and to make a show of your clothes so your neighbors will envy you, and for that reason both civilized foxes and civilized humans spend most of their time dressing themselves."

“I don’t,” declared the shaggy man.

“That is true,” said the King, looking at him carefully: “but perhaps you are not civilized.”

After a sound sleep and a good night’s rest they had their breakfast with the King and then bade his Majesty good-bye.

“You’ve been kind to us — ’cept poor Button-Bright,” said Dorothy, “and we’ve had a nice time in Foxville.”

“Then,” said King Dox, “perhaps you’ll be good enough to get me an invitation to Princess Ozma’s birthday celebration.”

“I’ll try,” she promised; “if I see her in time.”

“It’s on the twenty-first, remember,” he continued; “and if you’ll just see that I’m invited I’ll find a way to cross the Dreadful Desert into the marvelous Land of Oz. I’ve always wanted to visit the Emerald City, so I’m sure it was fortunate you arrived here just when you did, you being Princess Ozma’s friend and able to assist me in getting the invitation.”

“If I see Ozma I’ll ask her to invite you,” she replied.

The Fox-King had a delightful luncheon put up for them, which the shaggy man shoved in his pocket, and the fox-captain escorted them to an arch at the side of the village opposite the one by which they had entered. Here they found more soldiers guarding the road.

“Are you afraid of enemies?” asked Dorothy.

“No; because we are watchful and able to protect ourselves,” answered the captain. “But this road leads to another village peopled by big, stupid beasts who might cause us trouble if they thought we were afraid of them.”

“What beasts are they?” asked the shaggy man.

The captain hesitated to answer. Finally he said:

“You will learn all about them when you arrive at their city. But do not be afraid of them. Button-Bright is so wonderfully clever and has now such an intelligent face that I’m sure he will manage to find a way to protect you.”

This made Dorothy and the shaggy man rather uneasy, for they had not so much confidence in the fox-boy’s wisdom as the captain seemed to have. But as their escort would say no more about the beasts, they bade him good-bye and proceeded on their journey.

5. The Rainbow's Daughter

TOTO, now allowed to run about as he pleased, was glad to be free again and able to bark at the birds and chase the butterflies. The country around them was charming, yet in the pretty fields of wild-flowers and groves of leafy trees were no houses whatever, or sign of any inhabitants. Birds flew through the air and cunning white rabbits darted amongst the tall grasses and green bushes; Dorothy noticed even the ants toiling busily along the roadway, bearing gigantic loads of clover seed; but of people there were none at all.

They walked briskly on for an hour or two, for even little Button-Bright was a good walker and did not tire easily. At length as they turned a curve in the road they beheld just before them a curious sight.

A little girl, radiant and beautiful, shapely as a fairy and exquisitely dressed, was dancing gracefully in the middle of the lonely road, whirling slowly this way and that, her dainty feet twinkling in sprightly fashion. She was clad in flowing, fluffy robes of soft material that reminded Dorothy of woven cobwebs, only it was colored in soft tintings of violet, rose, topaz, olive, azure, and white, mingled together most harmoniously in stripes which melted one into the other with soft blendings. Her hair was like spun gold

and floated around her in a cloud, no strand being fastened or confined by either pin or ornament or ribbon.

Filled with wonder and admiration our friends approached and stood watching this fascinating dance. The girl was no taller than Dorothy, although more slender; nor did she seem any older than our little heroine.

Suddenly she paused and abandoned the dance, as if for the first time observing the presence of strangers. As she faced them, shy as a frightened fawn, poised upon one foot as if to fly the next instant, Dorothy was astonished to see tears flowing from her violet eyes and trickling down her lovely rose-hued cheeks. That the dainty maiden should dance and weep at the same time was indeed surprising; so Dorothy asked in a soft, sympathetic voice:

POLYCHROME — THE RAINBOW'S DAUGHTER

"Are you unhappy, little girl?"

"Very!" was the reply; "I am lost."

"Why, so are we," said Dorothy, smiling; "but we don't cry about it."

"Don't you? Why not?"

"'Cause I've been lost before, and always got found again," answered Dorothy, simply.

"But I've never been lost before," murmured the dainty maiden, "and I'm worried and afraid."

"You were dancing," remarked Dorothy, in a puzzled tone of voice.

"Oh, that was just to keep warm," explained the maiden, quickly. "It was

not because I felt happy or gay, I assure you."

Dorothy looked at her closely. Her gauzy flowing robes might not be very warm, yet the weather wasn't at all chilly, but rather mild and balmy, like a spring day.

"Who are you, dear?" she asked, gently.

"I'm Polychrome," was the reply.

"Polly whom?"

"Polychrome. I'm the Daughter of the Rainbow."

"Oh!" said Dorothy, with a gasp; "I didn't know the Rainbow had children. But I *might* have known it, before you spoke. You couldn't really be anything else."

"Why not?" inquired Polychrome, as if surprised.

"Because you're so lovely and sweet."

The little maiden smiled through her tears, came up to Dorothy, and placed her slender fingers in the Kansas girl's chubby hand.

"You'll be my friend — won't you?" she said, pleadingly.

"Of course."

"And what is your name?"

"I'm Dorothy; and this is my friend Shaggy Man, who owns the Love Magnet; and this is Button-Bright — only you don't see him as he really is because the Fox-King carelessly changed his head into a fox head. But the real Button-Bright is good to look at, and I hope to get him changed back to himself, some time."

The Rainbow's Daughter nodded cheerfully, no longer afraid of her new

companions.

“But who is this?” she asked, pointing to Toto, who was sitting before her wagging his tail in the most friendly manner and admiring the pretty maid with his bright eyes. “Is this, also, some enchanted person?”

“Oh no, Polly — I may call you Polly, mayn’t I? Your whole name’s awful hard to say.”

“Call me Polly if you wish, Dorothy.”

“Well, Polly, Toto’s just a dog; but he has more sense than Button-Bright, to tell the truth; and I’m very fond of him.”

“So am I,” said Polychrome, bending gracefully to pat Toto’s head.

“But how did the Rainbow’s Daughter ever get on this lonely road, and become lost?” asked the shaggy man, who had listened wonderingly to all this.

“Why, my father stretched his rainbow over here this morning, so that one end of it touched this road,” was the reply; “and I was dancing upon the pretty rays, as I love to do, and never noticed I was getting too far over the bend in the circle. Suddenly I began to slide, and I went faster and faster until at last I bumped on the ground, at the very end. Just then father lifted the rainbow again, without noticing me at all, and though I tried to seize the end of it and hold fast, it melted away entirely and I was left alone and helpless on the cold, hard earth!”

“It doesn’t seem cold to me, Polly,” said Dorothy; “but perhaps you’re not warmly dressed.”

“I’m so used to living nearer the sun,” replied the Rainbow’s Daughter, “that at first I feared I would freeze down here. But my dance has warmed me some, and now I wonder how I am ever to get home again.”

“Won’t your father miss you, and look for you, and let down another rainbow for you?”

"Perhaps so; but he's busy just now because it rains in so many parts of the world at this season, and he has to set his rainbow in a lot of different places. What would you advise me to do, Dorothy?"

"Come with us," was the answer. "I'm going to try to find my way to the Emerald City, which is in the fairy Land of Oz. The Emerald City is ruled by a friend of mine, the Princess Ozma, and if we can manage to get there I'm sure she will know a way to send you home to your father again."

"Do you really think so?" asked Polychrome, anxiously.

"I'm pretty sure."

"Then I'll go with you," said the little maid; "for travel will help keep me warm, and father can find me in one part of the world as well as another — if he gets time to look for me."

"Come along, then," said the shaggy man, cheerfully; and they started on once more. Polly walked beside Dorothy a while, holding her new friend's hand as if she feared to let it go; but her nature seemed as light and buoyant as her fleecy robes, for suddenly she darted ahead and whirled round in a giddy dance. Then she tripped back to them with sparkling eyes and smiling cheeks, having regained her usual happy mood and forgotten all her worry about being lost.

They found her a charming companion, and her dancing and laughter — for she laughed at times like the tinkling of a silver bell — did much to enliven their journey and keep them contented.

6. The City of Beasts

WHEN noon came they opened the Fox-King's basket of luncheon, and found a nice roasted turkey with cranberry sauce and some slices of bread and butter. As they sat on the grass by the roadside the shaggy man cut up the turkey with his pocket-knife and passed slices of it around.

"Haven't you any dewdrops, or mist-cakes, or cloud-buns?" asked Polychrome, longingly.

"'Course not," replied Dorothy. "We eat solid things, down here on the earth. But there's a bottle of cold tea. Try some, won't you?"

The Rainbow's Daughter watched Button-Bright devour one leg of the turkey.

"Is it good?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Do you think I could eat it?"

"Not this," said Button-Bright.

"But I mean another piece?"

"Don't know," he replied.

"Well, I'm going to try, for I'm very hungry," she decided, and took a thin slice of the white breast of turkey which the shaggy man cut for her, as well as a bit of bread and butter. When she tasted it Polychrome thought the

turkey was good — better even than mist-cakes; but a little satisfied her hunger and she finished with a tiny sip of cold tea.

"That's about as much as a fly would eat," said Dorothy, who was making a good meal herself. "But I know some people in Oz who eat nothing at all."

"Who are they?" inquired the shaggy man.

"One is a scarecrow who's stuffed with straw, and the other a woodman made out of tin. They haven't any appetites inside of 'em, you see; so they never eat anything at all."

"Are they alive?" asked Button-Bright.

"Oh yes," replied Dorothy; "and they're very clever and very nice, too. If we get to Oz I'll introduce them to you."

"Do you really expect to get to Oz?" inquired the shaggy man, taking a drink of cold tea.

POLLY SIPPED A LITTLE COLD TEA

"I don't know just what to 'spect," answered the child, seriously; "but I've noticed if I happen to get lost I'm almost sure to come to the Land of Oz in the end, somehow 'r other; so I may get there this time. But I can't promise, you know; all I can do is wait and see."

"Will the Scarecrow scare me?" asked Button-Bright.

"No; 'cause you're not a crow," she returned. "He has the loveliest smile you ever saw — only it's painted on and he can't help it."

Luncheon being over they started again upon their journey, the shaggy man, Dorothy and Button-Bright walking soberly along, side by side, and the Rainbow's Daughter dancing merrily before them.

Sometimes she darted along the road so swiftly that she was nearly out of sight, then she came tripping back to greet them with her silvery laughter. But once she came back more sedately, to say:

"There's a city a little way off."

"I 'spected that," returned Dorothy; "for the fox-people warned us there was one on this road. It's filled with stupid beasts of some sort, but we mustn't be afraid of 'em 'cause they won't hurt us."

"All right," said Button-Bright; but Polychrome didn't know whether it was all right or not.

"It's a big city," she said, "and the road runs straight through it."

"Never mind," said the shaggy man; "as long as I carry the Love Magnet every living thing will love me, and you may be sure I shan't allow any of my friends to be harmed in any way."

This comforted them somewhat, and they moved on again. Pretty soon they came to a sign-post that read:

"HAF A MYLE TO DUNKITON."

"Oh," said the shaggy man, "if they're donkeys we've nothing to fear at all."

"They may kick," said Dorothy, doubtfully.

"Then we will cut some switches, and make them behave," he replied. At the first tree he cut himself a long, slender switch from one of the branches, and shorter switches for the others.

"Don't be afraid to order the beasts around," he said; "they're used to it."

Before long the road brought them to the gates of the city. There was a high wall all around, which had been whitewashed, and the gate just before our travelers was a mere opening in the wall, with no bars across it. No towers or steeples or domes showed above the enclosure, nor was any living thing to be seen as our friends drew near.

Suddenly, as they were about to boldly enter through the opening, there arose a harsh clamor of sound that swelled and echoed on every side, until they were nearly deafened by the racket and had to put their fingers to their ears to keep the noise out.

It was like the firing of many cannon, only there were no cannon-balls or other missiles to be seen; it was like the rolling of mighty thunder, only not a cloud was in the sky; it was like the roar of countless breakers on a rugged seashore, only there was no sea or other water anywhere about.

They hesitated to advance; but, as the noise did no harm, they entered through the whitewashed wall and quickly discovered the cause of the turmoil. Inside were suspended many sheets of tin or thin iron, and against these metal sheets a row of donkeys were pounding their heels with vicious

kicks.

The shaggy man ran up to the nearest donkey and gave the beast a sharp blow with his switch.

“Stop that noise!” he shouted; and the donkey stopped kicking the metal sheet and turned its head to look with surprise at the shaggy man. He switched the next donkey, and made him stop, and then the next, so that gradually the rattling of heels ceased and the awful noise subsided. The donkeys stood in a group and eyed the strangers with fear and trembling.

“What do you mean by making such a racket?” asked the shaggy man, sternly.

“We were scaring away the foxes,” said one of the donkeys, meekly. “Usually they run fast enough when they hear the noise, which makes them afraid.”

“There are no foxes here,” said the shaggy man.

“I beg to differ with you. There’s one, anyhow,” replied the donkey, sitting upright on its haunches and waving a hoof toward Button-Bright. “We saw him coming and thought the whole army of foxes was marching to attack us.”

“Button-Bright isn’t a fox,” explained the shaggy man. “He’s only wearing a fox head for a time, until he can get his own head back.”

“Oh, I see,” remarked the donkey, waving its left ear reflectively. “I’m sorry we made such a mistake, and had all our work and worry for nothing.”

The other donkeys by this time were sitting up and examining the strangers with big, glassy eyes. They made a queer picture, indeed; for they

wore wide, white collars around their necks and the collars had many scallops and points. The gentlemen-donkeys wore high pointed caps set between their great ears, and the lady-donkeys wore sunbonnets with holes cut in the top for the ears to stick through. But they had no other clothing except their hairy skins, although many wore gold and silver bangles on their front wrists and bands of different metals on their rear ankles. When they were kicking they had braced themselves with their front legs, but now they all stood or sat upright on their hind legs and used their front ones as arms. Having no fingers or hands the beasts were rather clumsy, as you may guess; but Dorothy was surprised to observe how many things they could do with their stiff, heavy hoofs.

Some of the donkeys were white, some were brown, or gray, or black, or spotted; but their hair was sleek and smooth and their broad collars and caps gave them a neat, if whimsical, appearance.

"This is a nice way to welcome visitors, I must say!" remarked the shaggy man, in a reproachful tone.

"Oh, we did not mean to be impolite," replied a grey donkey which had not spoken before. "But you were not expected, nor did you send in your visiting cards, as it is proper to do."

"There is some truth in that," admitted the shaggy man; "but, now you are informed that we are important and distinguished travelers, I trust you will accord us proper consideration."

These big words delighted the donkeys, and made them bow to the shaggy man with great respect. Said the grey one:

"You shall be taken before his great and glorious Majesty King Kik-a-bray, who will greet you as becomes your exalted stations."

"That's right," answered Dorothy. "Take us to some one who knows something."

"Oh, we all know something, my child, or we shouldn't be donkeys," asserted the grey one, with dignity. "The word 'donkey' means 'clever,' you know."

"I didn't know it," she replied. "I thought it meant 'stupid'."

"Not at all, my child. If you will look in the Encyclopedia Donkaniara you will find I'm correct. But come; I will myself lead you before our splendid, exalted, and most intellectual ruler."

All donkeys love big words, so it is no wonder the grey one used so many of them.

7. The Shaggy Man's Transformation

THEY found the houses of the town all low and square and built of bricks, neatly whitewashed inside and out. The houses were not set in rows, forming regular streets, but placed here and there in a haphazard manner which made it puzzling for a stranger to find his way.

"Stupid people must have streets and numbered houses in their cities, to guide them where to go," observed the grey donkey, as he walked before the visitors on his hind legs, in an awkward but comical manner; "but clever donkeys know their way about without such absurd marks. Moreover, a mixed city is much prettier than one with straight streets."

Dorothy did not agree with this, but she said nothing to contradict it. Presently she saw a sign on a house that read: "Madam de Fayke, Hoofist," and she asked their conductor:

"What's a 'hoofist,' please?"

"One who reads your fortune in your hoofs," replied the grey donkey.

"Oh, I see," said the little girl. "You are quite civilized here."

"Dunkiton," he replied, "is the center of the world's highest civilization."

They came to a house where two youthful donkeys were whitewashing the wall, and Dorothy stopped a moment to watch them. They dipped the ends of

their tails, which were much like paint-brushes, into a pail of whitewash, backed up against the house, and wagged their tails right and left until the whitewash was rubbed on the wall, after which they dipped these funny brushes in the pail again and repeated the performance.

"That must be fun," said Button-Bright.

"No; it's work," replied the old donkey; "but we make our youngsters do all the whitewashing, to keep them out of mischief."

"Don't they go to school?" asked Dorothy.

"All donkeys are born wise," was the reply, "so the only school we need is the school of experience. Books are only fit for those who know nothing, and so are obliged to learn things from other people."

"In other words, the more stupid one is the more he thinks he knows," observed the shaggy man. The grey donkey paid no attention to this speech because he had just stopped before a house which had painted over the doorway a pair of hoofs, with a donkey tail between them and a rude crown and sceptre above.

"I'll see if his magnificent Majesty King Kik-a-bray is at home," said he. He lifted his head and called "Whee-haw! whee-haw! whee-haw!" three times, in a shocking voice, turning about and kicking with his heels against the panel of the door. For a time there was no reply; then the door opened far enough to permit a donkey's head to stick out and look at them.

It was a white head, with big, awful ears and round, solemn eyes.

"Have the foxes gone?" it asked, in a trembling voice.

"They haven't been here, most stupendous Majesty," replied the grey one.

“The new arrivals prove to be travelers of distinction.”

“Oh,” said the King, in a relieved tone of voice. “Let them come in.”

He opened the door wide, and the party marched into a big room, which, Dorothy thought, looked quite unlike a king’s palace. There were mats of woven grasses on the floor and the place was clean and neat; but his Majesty had no other furniture at all — perhaps because he didn’t need it. He squatted down in the center of the room and a little brown donkey ran and brought a big gold crown which it placed on the monarch’s head, and a golden staff with a jeweled ball at the end of it, which the King held between his front hoofs as he sat upright.

“Now, then,” said his Majesty, waving his long ears gently to and fro, “tell me why you are here, and what you expect me to do for you.” He eyed Button-Bright rather sharply, as if afraid of the little boy’s queer head, though it was the shaggy man who undertook to reply.

“Most noble and supreme ruler of Dunkiton,” he said, trying not to laugh in the solemn King’s face, “we are strangers traveling through your dominions, and have entered your magnificent city because the road led through it, and there was no way to go around. All we desire is to pay our respects to your Majesty — the cleverest king in all the world, I’m sure — and then to continue on our way.”

This polite speech pleased the King very much; indeed, it pleased him so much that it proved an unlucky speech for the shaggy man. Perhaps the Love Magnet helped to win his Majesty’s affection as well as the flattery, but however this may be the white donkey looked kindly upon the speaker and

said:

“Only a donkey should be able to use such fine, big words, and you are too wise and admirable in all ways to be a mere man. Also I feel that I love you as well as I do my own favored people, so I will bestow upon you the greatest gift within my power — a donkey’s head.”

As he spoke he waved his jeweled staff. Although the shaggy man cried out and tried to leap backward and escape, it proved of no use. Suddenly his own head was gone and a donkey head appeared in its place — a brown, shaggy head so absurd and droll that Dorothy and Polly both broke into merry laughter, and even Button-Bright’s fox face wore a smile.

“Dear me! dear me!” cried the shaggy man, feeling of his shaggy new head and his long ears. “What a misfortune — what a great misfortune! Give me back my own head, you stupid king — if you love me at all!”

“Don’t you like it?” asked the King, surprised.

“Hee-haw! I hate it! Take it away — quick!” said the shaggy man.

KING KICK-A-BRAY WORKS MAGIC ON THE SHAGGY MAN

"But I can't do that," was the reply. '"My magic works only one way. I can *do* things, but I can't *un* do them. You'll have to find the Truth Pond, and bathe in its water, in order to get back your own head. But I advise you not to do that. This head is much more beautiful than the old one."

"That's a matter of taste," said Dorothy.

"Where is the Truth Pond?" asked the shaggy man, earnestly.

"Somewhere in the Land of Oz; but just the exact location of it I can not tell," was the answer.

"Don't worry, Shaggy Man," said Dorothy, smiling because her friend wagged his new ears so comically. "If the Truth Pond is in Oz we'll be sure

to find it when we get there."

"Oh! Are you going to the Land of Oz?" asked King Kik-a-bray.

"I don't know," she replied; "but we've been told we are nearer the Land of Oz than to Kansas, and if that's so the quickest way for me to get home is to find Ozma."

"Haw-haw! Do you know the mighty Princess Ozma?" asked the King, his tone both surprised and eager.

"'Course I do; she's my friend," said Dorothy.

"Then perhaps you'll do me a favor," continued the white donkey, much excited.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Perhaps you can get me an invitation to Princess Ozma's birthday celebration, which will be the grandest royal function ever held in Fairyland. I'd love to go."

"Hee-haw! You deserve punishment, rather than reward, for giving me this dreadful head," said the shaggy man, sorrowfully.

"I wish you wouldn't say 'hee-haw' so much," Polychrome begged him; "it makes cold chills run down my back."

"But I can't help it, my dear; my donkey head wants to bray continually," he replied. "Doesn't your fox head want to yelp every minute?" he asked Button-Bright.

"Don't know," said the boy, still staring at the shaggy man's ears. These seemed to interest him greatly, and the sight also made him forget his own fox head, which was a comfort.

"What do you think, Polly? shall I promise the donkey king an invitation to Ozma's party?" asked Dorothy of the Rainbow's Daughter, who was flitting about the room like a sunbeam because she could never keep still.

"Do as you please, dear," answered Polychrome. "He might help to amuse the guests of the Princess."

"Then, if you will give us some supper and a place to sleep to-night, and let us get started on our journey early tomorrow morning," said Dorothy to the King, "I'll ask Ozma to invite you — if I happen to get to Oz."

"Good! Hee-haw! Excellent!" cried Kik-a-bray, much pleased. "You shall all have fine suppers and good beds. What food would you prefer, a bran mash or ripe oats in the shell?"

"Neither one," replied Dorothy, promptly.

"Perhaps plain hay, or some sweet juicy grass would suit you better," suggested Kik-a-bray, musingly.

"Is that all you have to eat?" asked the girl.

"What more do you desire?"

"Well, you see we're not donkeys," she explained, "and so we're used to other food. The foxes gave us a nice supper in Foxville."

"We'd like some dewdrops and mist-cakes," said Polychrome.

"I'd prefer apples and a ham sandwich," declared the shaggy man; "for although I've a donkey head I still have my own particular stomach."

"I want pie," said Button-Bright.

"I think some beefsteak and chocolate layer-cake would taste best," said Dorothy.

"Hee-haw! I declare!" exclaimed the King. "It seems each one of you wants a different food. How queer all living creatures are, except donkeys!"

"And donkeys like you are queerest of all," laughed Polychrome.

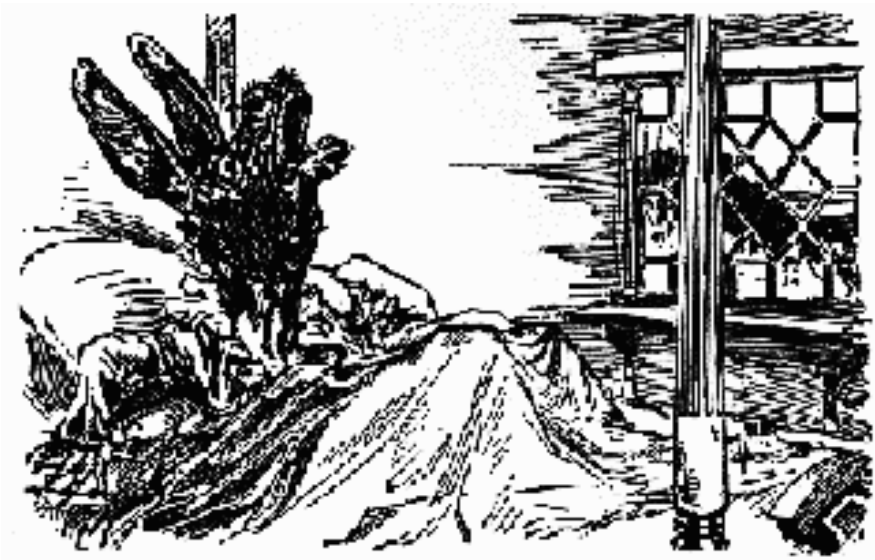
"Well," decided the King, "I suppose my Magic Staff will produce the things you crave; if you are lacking in good taste it is not my fault."

With this he waved his staff with the jeweled ball, and before them instantly appeared a tea-table, set with linen and pretty dishes, and on the table were the very things each had wished for. Dorothy's beefsteak was smoking hot, and the shaggy man's apples were plump and rosy-cheeked. The King had not thought to provide chairs, so they all stood in their places around the table and ate with good appetite, being hungry. The Rainbow's

Daughter found three tiny dewdrops on a crystal plate, and Button-Bright had a big slice of apple-pie, which he devoured eagerly.

Afterward the King called the brown donkey, which was his favorite servant, and bade it lead his guests to the vacant house where they were to pass the night. It had only one room and no furniture except beds of clean straw and a few mats of woven grasses; but our travelers were contented with these simple things because they realized it was the best the Donkey-King had to offer them. As soon as it was dark they lay down on the mats and slept comfortably until morning.

At daybreak there was a dreadful noise throughout the city. Every donkey in the place brayed. When he heard this the shaggy man woke up and called out "Hee-haw!" as loud as he could.



"Stop that!" said Button-Bright, in a cross voice. Both Dorothy and Polly looked at the shaggy man reproachfully.

"I couldn't help it, my dears," he said, as if ashamed of his bray; "but I'll try not to do it again."

Of course they forgave him, for as he still had the Love Magnet in his pocket they were all obliged to love him as much as ever.

They did not see the King again, but Kik-a-bray remembered them; for a table appeared again in their room with the same food upon it as on the night before.

"Don't want pie for breakfus'," said Button-Bright.

"I'll give you some of my beefsteak," proposed Dorothy; "there's plenty for us all."

That suited the boy better, but the shaggy man said he was content with his apples and sandwiches, although he ended the meal by eating Button-Bright's pie. Polly liked her dewdrops and mist-cakes better than any other food, so they all enjoyed an excellent breakfast. Toto had the scraps left from the beefsteak, and he stood up nicely on his hind legs while Dorothy fed them to him.

Breakfast ended, they passed through the village to the side opposite that by which they had entered, the brown servant-donkey guiding them through the maze of scattered houses. There was the road again, leading far away into the unknown country beyond.

"King Kik-a-bray says you must not forget his invitation," said the brown donkey, as they passed through the opening in the wall.

"I shan't," promised Dorothy.

Perhaps no one ever beheld a more strangely assorted group than the one which now walked along the road, through pretty green fields and past groves of feathery pepper-trees and fragrant mimosa. Polychrome, her beautiful gauzy robes floating around her like a rainbow cloud, went first, dancing back and forth and darting now here to pluck a wild-flower or there to watch a beetle crawl across the path. Toto ran after her at times, barking joyously the while, only to become sober again and trot along at Dorothy's heels. The little Kansas girl walked holding Button-Bright's hand clasped in her own, and the wee boy with his fox head covered by the sailor hat presented an odd appearance. Strangest of all, perhaps, was the shaggy man, with his shaggy donkey head, who shuffled along in the rear with his hands thrust deep in his big pockets.

None of the party was really unhappy. All were straying in an unknown land and had suffered more or less annoyance and discomfort; but they realized they were having a fairy adventure in a fairy country, and were

much interested in finding out what would happen next.

8. The Musicker

ABOUT the middle of the forenoon they began to go up a long hill. By-and-by this hill suddenly dropped down into a pretty valley, where the travelers saw to their surprise, a small house standing by the roadside.

It was the first house they had seen, and they hastened into the valley to discover who lived there. No one was in sight as they approached, but when they began to get nearer the house they heard queer sounds coming from it. They could not make these out at first, but as they became louder our friends thought they heard a sort of music like that made by a wheezy hand-organ; the music fell upon their ears in this way:

Tiddle-widdle-iddle, oom pom-pom!
Oom, pom-pom! oom, pom-pom!
Tiddle-tiddle-tiddle, oom pom-pom!
Oom, pom-pom — pah!

"What is it, a band or a mouth-organ?" asked Dorothy.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"Sounds to me like a played-out phonograph," said the shaggy man, lifting his enormous ears to listen.

"Oh, there just *couldn't* be a funnygraf in Fairyland!" cried Dorothy.

"It's rather pretty, isn't it?" asked Polychrome, trying to dance to the strains.

Tiddle-widdle-iddle, oom pom-pom,
Oom pom-pom; oom pom-pom!

came the music to their ears, more distinctly as they drew nearer the house. Presently they saw a little fat man sitting on a bench before the door. He wore a red, braided jacket that reached to his waist, a blue waistcoat, and white trousers with gold stripes down the sides. On his bald head was perched a little, round, red cap held in place by a rubber elastic underneath his chin. His face was round, his eyes a faded blue, and he wore white cotton gloves. The man leaned on a stout gold-headed cane, bending forward on his seat to watch his visitors approach.

Singularly enough, the musical sounds they had heard seemed to come from the inside of the fat man himself; for he was playing no instrument nor was any to be seen near him.

They came up and stood in a row, staring at him, and he stared back while the queer sounds came from him as before:

Tiddle-iddle-iddle, oom pom-pom,
Oom, pom-pom; oom pom-pom!
Tiddle-widdle-iddle, oom pom-pom,
Oom, pom-pom — pah!

"Why, he's a reg'lar musicker!" said Button-Bright.

"What's a musicker?" asked Dorothy.

"Him!" said the boy.

Hearing this the fat man sat up a little stiffer than before, as if he had received a compliment, and still came the sounds:

Tiddle-widdle-iddle, oom pom-pom,
Oom pom-pom, oom — —

"Stop it!" cried the shaggy man, earnestly. "Stop that dreadful noise!"

The fat man looked at him sadly and began his reply. When he spoke the music changed and the words seemed to accompany the notes. He said — or rather sang:

It isn't a noise that you hear,
But Music, harmonic and clear.
My breath makes me play
Like an organ, all day —
That bass note is in my left ear.

"How funny!" exclaimed Dorothy; "he says his breath makes the music."

"That's all nonsense," declared the shaggy man; but now the music began again, and they all listened carefully.

My lungs are full of reeds like those
In organs, therefore I suppose,
If I breathe in or out my nose,
The reeds are bound to play.

So, as I breathe to live, you know,
I squeeze out music as I go;
I'm very sorry this is so — —
Forgive my piping, pray!

“Poor man,” said Polychrome; “he can’t help it. What a great misfortune it is!”

“Yes,” replied the shaggy man; “we are only obliged to hear this music a short time, until we leave him and go away; but the poor fellow must listen to himself as long as he lives, and that is enough to drive him crazy. Don’t you think so?”

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright. Toto said “Bow-wow!” and the others laughed.

“Perhaps that’s why he lives all alone,” suggested Dorothy.

“Yes; if he had neighbors they might do him an injury,” responded the shaggy man.

All this while the little fat musicker was breathing the notes:

Tiddle-tiddle-iddle, oom, pom-pom,

and they had to speak loud in order to hear themselves. The shaggy man said:

“Who are you, sir?”

The reply came in the shape of this sing-song:

I’m Allegro da Capo, a very famous man;
Just find another, high or low, to match me if you can.
Some people try, but can’t, to play
And have to practice every day;
But I’ve been musical alway, since first my life began.

“Why, I b’lieve he’s proud of it,” exclaimed Dorothy, “and seems to me I’ve heard worse music than he makes.”

“Where?” asked Button-Bright.

“I’ve forgotten, just now. But Mr. Da Capo is certainly a strange person — isn’t he? — and p’r’aps he’s the only one of his kind in all the world.”

This praise seemed to please the little fat musicker, for he swelled out his chest, looked important and sang as follows:

I wear no band around me,
And yet I am a band!
I do not strain to make my strains
But, on the other hand,
My toot is always destitute
Of flats or other errors;
To see sharp and be natural are
For me but minor terrors.

“I don’t quite understand that,” said Polychrome, with a puzzled look; “but perhaps it’s because I’m accustomed only to the music of the spheres.”

“What’s that?” asked Button-Bright.

“Oh, Polly means the atmosphere and hemisphere, I s’pose,” explained Dorothy.

“Oh,” said Button-Bright.

“Bow-wow!” said Toto.

But the musicker was still breathing his constant

Oom, pom-pom; oom, pom-pom — —

and it seemed to jar on the shaggy man’s nerves.

“Stop it, can’t you?” he cried, angrily; “or breathe in a whisper; or put a clothes-pin on your nose. Do something, anyhow!”

But the fat one, with a sad look, sang this answer:

“*Music hath charms, and it may*
Soothe even the savage, they say;
So if savage you feel
Just list to my reel,
For sooth to say that’s the real way.”

The shaggy man had to laugh at this, and when he laughed he stretched his donkey mouth wide open. Said Dorothy:

“I don’t know how good his poetry is, but it seems to fit the notes, so that’s all that can be ‘xpected.”

“I like it,” said Button-Bright, who was staring hard at the musicker, his little legs spread wide apart. To the surprise of his companions, the boy asked this long question:

“If I swallowed a mouth-organ, what would I be?”

“An organette,” said the shaggy man. “But come, my dears; I think the

best thing we can do is to continue on our journey before Button-Bright swallows anything. We must try to find that Land of Oz, you know."

Hearing this speech the musicker sang, quickly:

If you go to the hand of Oz
Please take me along, because
On Ozma's birthday
I'm anxious to play
The loveliest song ever was.

"No, thank you," said Dorothy; "we prefer to travel alone. But if I see Ozma I'll tell her you want to come to her birthday party."

"Let's be going," urged the shaggy man, anxiously.

Polly was already dancing along the road, far in advance, and the others turned to follow her. Toto did not like the fat musicker and made a grab for his chubby leg. Dorothy quickly caught up the growling little dog and hurried after her companions, who were walking faster than usual in order to get out of hearing. They had to climb a hill, and until they got to the top they could not escape the musicker's monotonous piping:

"Oom, pom-pom; oom, pom-pom;
Tiddle-iddle-widdle, oom, pom-pom;
Oom, pom-pom — pah!"

As they passed the brow of the hill, however, and descended on the other side, the sounds gradually died away, whereat they all felt much relieved.

"I'm glad I don't have to live with the organ-man; aren't you, Polly?" said Dorothy.

“Yes, indeed,” answered the Rainbow’s Daughter.

“He’s nice,” declared Button-Bright, soberly.

“I hope your Princess Ozma won’t invite him to her birthday celebration,” remarked the shaggy man; “for the fellow’s music would drive her guests all crazy. You’ve given me an idea, Button-Bright; I believe the musicker must have swallowed an accordeon in his youth.”

“What’s ‘cordeon?” asked the boy.

“It’s a kind of pleating,” explained Dorothy, putting down the dog.

“Bow-wow!” said Toto, and ran away at a mad gallop to chase a bumble-bee.

9. Facing the Scoodlers

THE country wasn't so pretty now. Before the travelers appeared a rocky plain covered with hills on which grew nothing green. They were nearing some low mountains, too, and the road, which before had been smooth and pleasant to walk upon, grew rough and uneven.

Button-Bright's little feet stumbled more than once, and Polychrome ceased her dancing because the walking was now so difficult that she had no trouble to keep warm.

It had become afternoon, yet there wasn't a thing for their luncheon except two apples which the shaggy man had taken from the breakfast table. He divided these into four pieces and gave a portion to each of his companions. Dorothy and Button-Bright were glad to get theirs; but Polly was satisfied with a small bite, and Toto did not like apples.

"Do you know," asked the Rainbow's Daughter, "if this is the right road to the Emerald City?"

"No, I don't," replied Dorothy; "but it's the only road in this part of the country, so we may as well go to the end of it."

"It looks now as if it might end pretty soon," remarked the shaggy man; "and what shall we do if it does?"

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright.

“If I had my Magic Belt,” replied Dorothy, thoughtfully, “it could do us a lot of good just now.”

“What is your Magic Belt?” asked Polychrome.

“It’s a thing I captured from the Nome King one day, and it can do ‘most any wonderful thing. But I left it with Ozma, you know; ‘cause magic won’t work in Kansas, but only in fairy countries.”

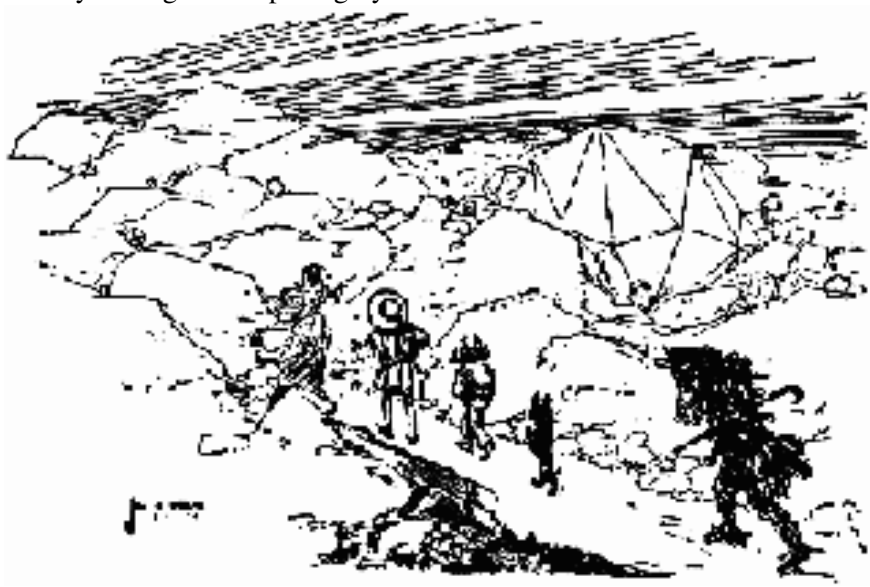
“Is this a fairy country?” asked Button-Bright.

“I should think you’d know,” said the little girl, gravely. “If it wasn’t a fairy country you couldn’t have a fox head and the shaggy man couldn’t have a donkey head, and the Rainbow’s Daughter would be invis’ble.”

“What’s that?” asked the boy.

“You don’t seem to know anything, Button-Bright. Invis’ble is a thing you can’t see.”

“Then Toto’s invisible,” declared the boy, and Dorothy found he was right. Toto had disappeared from view, but they could hear him barking furiously among the heaps of grey rock ahead of them.



They moved forward a little faster to see what the dog was barking at, and found perched upon a point of rock by the roadside a curious creature. It had the form of a man, middle-sized and rather slender and graceful; but as it sat silent and motionless upon the peak they could see that its face was black as ink, and it wore a black cloth costume made like a union suit and fitting tight to its skin. Its hands were black, too, and its toes curled down, like a bird’s.

The creature was black all over except its hair, which was fine, and yellow, banged in front across the black forehead and cut close at the sides. The eyes, which were fixed steadily upon the barking dog, were small and sparkling and looked like the eyes of a weasel.

"What in the world do you s'pose that is?" asked Dorothy in a hushed voice, as the little group of travelers stood watching the strange creature.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

The thing gave a jump and turned half around, sitting in the same place but with the other side of its body facing them. Instead of being black, it was now pure white, with a face like that of a clown in a circus and hair of a brilliant purple. The creature could bend either way, and its white toes now curled the same way the black ones on the other side had done.

"It has a face both front and back," whispered Dorothy, wonderingly; "only there's no back at all, but two fronts."

Having made the turn, the being sat motionless as before, while Toto barked louder at the white man than he had done at the black one.

"Once," said the shaggy man, "I had a jumping-jack like that, with two faces."

"Was it alive?" asked Button-Bright.

"No," replied the shaggy man; "it worked on strings, and was made of wood."

"Wonder if this works with strings," said Dorothy; but Polychrome cried "Look!" for another creature just like the first had suddenly appeared sitting on another rock, its black side toward them. The two twisted their heads around and showed a black face on the white side of one and a white face on the black side of the other.

"How curious," said Polychrome; "and how loose their heads seem to be! Are they friendly to us, do you think?"

"Can't tell, Polly," replied Dorothy. "Let's ask 'em."

The creatures flopped first one way and then the other, showing black or white by turns; and now another joined them, appearing on another rock. Our friends had come to a little hollow in the hills, and the place where they now stood was surrounded by jagged peaks of rock, except where the road ran through.

"Now there are four of them," said the shaggy man.

"Five," declared Polychrome.

"Six," said Dorothy.

"Lots of 'em!" cried Button-Bright; and so there were — quite a row of the two-sided black and white creatures sitting on the rocks all around.

Toto stopped barking and ran between Dorothy's feet, where he crouched down as if afraid. The creatures did not look pleasant or friendly, to be sure, and the shaggy man's donkey face became solemn, indeed.

"Ask 'em who they are, and what they want," whispered Dorothy; so the shaggy man called out in a loud voice:

"Who are you?"

"Scoodlers!" they yelled in chorus, their voices sharp and shrill.

"What do you want?" called the shaggy man.

"You!" they yelled, pointing their thin fingers at the group; and they all flopped around, so they were white, and then all flopped back again, so they were black.

“But what do you want us for?” asked the shaggy man, uneasily.

“Soup!” they all shouted, as if with one voice.

“YOU!” THEY YELLED

“Goodness me!” said Dorothy, trembling a little; “the Scoodlers must be reg’lar cannibals.”

“Don’t want to be soup,” protested Button-Bright, beginning to cry.

“Hush, dear,” said the little girl, trying to comfort him; “we don’t any of us want to be soup. But don’t worry; the shaggy man will take care of us.”

“Will he?” asked Polychrome, who did not like the Scoodlers at all, and kept close to Dorothy.

“I’ll try,” promised the shaggy man; but he looked worried.

Happening just then to feel the Love Magnet in his pocket, he said to the creatures, with more confidence:

"Don't you love me?"

"Yes!" they shouted, all together.

"Then you mustn't harm me, or my friends," said the shaggy man, firmly.

"We love you in soup!" they yelled, and in a flash turned their white sides to the front.

"How dreadful!" said Dorothy. "This is a time, Shaggy Man, when you get loved too much."

"Don't want to be soup!" wailed Button-Bright again; and Toto began to whine dismally, as if he didn't want to be soup, either.

"The only thing to do," said the shaggy man to his friends, in a low tone, "is to get out of this pocket in the rocks as soon as we can, and leave the Scoodlers behind us. Follow me, my dears, and don't pay any attention to what they do or say."

With this he began to march along the road to the opening in the rocks ahead, and the others kept close behind him. But the Scoodlers closed up in front, as if to bar their way, and so the shaggy man stooped down and picked up a loose stone, which he threw at the creatures to scare them from the path.

At this the Scoodlers raised a howl. Two of them picked their heads from their shoulders and hurled them at the shaggy man with such force that he fell over in a heap, greatly astonished. The two now ran forward with swift leaps, caught up their heads, and put them on again, after which they sprang back to their positions on the rocks.

10. Escaping the Soup-kettle

THE shaggy man got up and felt of himself to see if he was hurt; but he was not. One of the heads had struck his breast and the other his left shoulder; yet though they had knocked him down the heads were not hard enough to bruise him.

"Come on," he said, firmly; "we've got to get out of here some way," and forward he started again.

The Scoodlers began yelling and throwing their heads in great numbers at our frightened friends. The shaggy man was knocked over again, and so was Button-Bright, who kicked his heels against the ground and howled as loud as he could, although he was not hurt a bit. One head struck Toto, who first yelped and then grabbed the head by an ear and started running away with it.

The Scoodlers who had thrown their heads began to scramble down and run to pick them up, with wonderful quickness; but the one whose head Toto had stolen found it hard to get it back again. The head couldn't see the body with either pair of its eyes, because the dog was in the way, so the headless Scoodler stumbled around over the rocks and tripped on them more than once in its effort to regain its top. Toto was trying to get outside the rocks and roll the head down the hill; but some of the other Scoodlers came to the rescue of their unfortunate comrade and pelted the dog with their own heads

until he was obliged to drop his burden and hurry back to Dorothy.

The little girl and the Rainbow's Daughter had both escaped the shower of heads, but they saw now that it would be useless to try to run away from the dreadful Scoodlers.

"We may as well submit," declared the shaggy man, in a rueful voice, as he got upon his feet again. He turned toward their foes and asked:

"What do you want us to do?"

"Come!" they cried, in a triumphant chorus, and at once sprang from the rocks and surrounded their captives on all sides. One funny thing about the Scoodlers was they could walk in either direction, coming or going, without turning around; because they had two faces and, as Dorothy said, "two front sides," and their feet were shaped like the letter T upside down (⊥). They moved with great rapidity and there was something about their glittering eyes and contrasting colors and removable heads that inspired the poor prisoners with horror, and made them long to escape.

But the creatures led their captives away from the rocks and the road, down the hill by a side path until they came before a low mountain of rock that looked like a huge bowl turned upside down. At the edge of this mountain was a deep gulf — so deep that when you looked into it there was nothing but blackness below. Across the gulf was a narrow bridge of rock, and at the other end of the bridge was an arched opening that led into the mountain.

Over this bridge the Scoodlers led their prisoners, through the opening into the mountain, which they found to be an immense hollow dome lighted by several holes in the roof. All around the circular space were built rock

houses, set close together, each with a door in the front wall. None of these houses was more than six feet wide, but the Scoodlers were thin people sidewise and did not need much room. So vast was the dome that there was a large space in the middle of the cave, in front of all these houses, where the creatures might congregate as in a great hall.

It made Dorothy shudder to see a huge iron kettle suspended by a stout chain in the middle of the place, and underneath the kettle a great heap of kindling wood and shavings, ready to light.

"What's that?" asked the shaggy man, drawing back as they approached this place, so that they were forced to push him forward.

"The Soup Kettle!" yelled the Scoodlers; and then they shouted in the next breath:

"We're hungry!"

Button-Bright, holding Dorothy's hand in one chubby fist and Polly's hand in the other, was so affected by this shout that he began to cry again, repeating the protest:

"Don't want to be soup, I don't!"

"Never mind," said the shaggy man, consolingly; "I ought to make enough soup to feed them all, I'm so big; so I'll ask them to put me in the kettle first."

"All right," said Button-Bright, more cheerfully.

But the Scoodlers were not ready to make soup yet. They led the captives into a house at the farthest side of the cave — a house somewhat wider than the others.

"Who lives here?" asked the Rainbow's Daughter. The Scoodlers nearest her replied:

"The Queen."

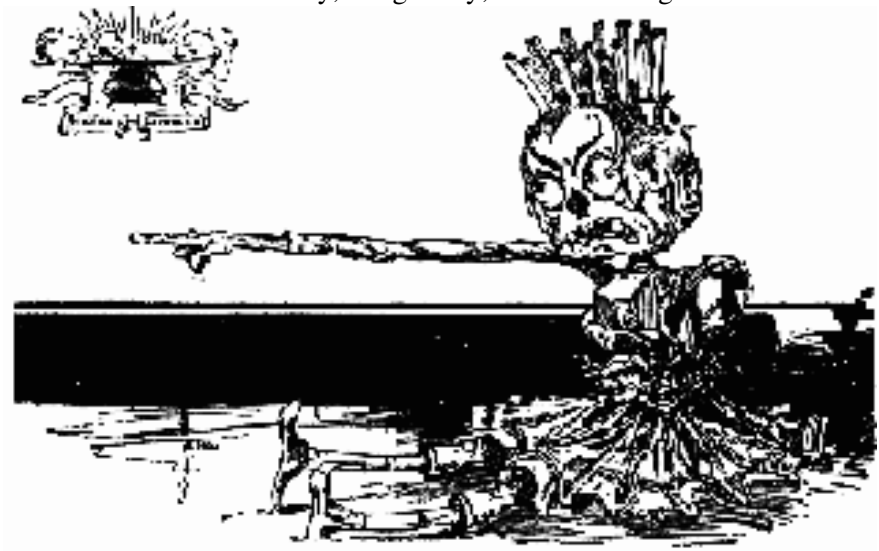
It made Dorothy hopeful to learn that a woman ruled over these fierce creatures, but a moment later they were ushered by two or three of the escort into a gloomy, bare room — and her hope died away.

For the Queen of the Scoodlers proved to be much more dreadful in appearance than any of her people. One side of her was fiery red, with jet-black hair and green eyes and the other side of her was bright yellow, with crimson hair and black eyes. She wore a short skirt of red and yellow and her hair, instead of being banged, was a tangle of short curls upon which rested a circular crown of silver — much dented and twisted because the Queen had thrown her head at so many things so many times. Her form was lean and bony and both her faces were deeply wrinkled.

"What have we here?" asked the Queen, sharply, as our friends were made to stand before her.

"Soup!" cried the guard of Scoodlers, speaking together.

"We're not!" said Dorothy, indignantly; "we're nothing of the sort."



"Ah, but you will be soon," retorted the Queen, a grim smile making her look more dreadful than before.

"Pardon me, most beautiful vision," said the shaggy man, bowing before the queen politely. "I must request your Serene Highness to let us go our way without being made into soup. For I own the Love Magnet, and whoever meets me must love me and all my friends."

"True," replied the Queen. "We love you very much; so much that we intend to eat your broth with real pleasure. But tell me, do you think I am so beautiful?"

"You won't be at all beautiful if you eat me," he said, shaking his head sadly. "Handsome is as handsome does, you know."

The Queen turned to Button-Bright.

"Do *you* think I'm beautiful?" she asked.

"No," said the boy; "you're ugly."

"*I* think you're a fright," said Dorothy.

"If you could see yourself you'd be terribly scared," added Polly.

The Queen scowled at them and flopped from her red side to her yellow side.

"Take them away," she commanded the guard, "and at six o'clock run them through the meat chopper and start the soup kettle boiling. And put plenty of salt in the broth this time, or I'll punish the cooks severely."

"Any onions, your Majesty?" asked one of the guard.

“Plenty of onions and garlic and a dash of red pepper. Now, go!”

The Scoodlers led the captives away and shut them up in one of the houses, leaving only a single Scoodler to keep guard.

The place was a sort of store-house; containing bags of potatoes and baskets of carrots, onions, and turnips.

“These,” said their guard, pointing to the vegetables, “we use to flavor our soups with.”

The prisoners were rather disheartened by this time, for they saw no way to escape and did not know how soon it would be six o’clock and time for the meat-chopper to begin work. But the shaggy man was brave and did not intend to submit to such a horrid fate without a struggle.

“I’m going to fight for our lives,” he whispered to the children, “for if I fail we will be no worse off than before, and to sit here quietly until we are made into soup would be foolish and cowardly.”

The Scoodler on guard stood near the doorway, turning first his white side toward them and then his black side, as if he wanted to show to all of his greedy four eyes the sight of so many fat prisoners. The captives sat in a sorrowful group at the other end of the room — except Polychrome, who danced back and forth in the little place to keep herself warm, for she felt the chill of the cave. Whenever she approached the shaggy man he would whisper something in her ear, and Polly would nod her pretty head as if she understood.

The shaggy man told Dorothy and Button-Bright to stand before him while he emptied the potatoes out of one of the sacks. When this had been

secretly done little Polychrome, dancing near to the guard, suddenly reached out her hand and slapped his face, the next instant whirling away from him quickly to rejoin her friends.

The angry Scoodler at once picked off his head and hurled it at the Rainbow's Daughter; but the shaggy man was expecting that, and caught the head very neatly, putting it in the sack, which he tied at the mouth. The body of the guard, not having the eyes of its head to guide it, ran here and there in an aimless manner, and the shaggy man easily dodged it and opened the door. Fortunately there was no one in the big cave at that moment, so he told Dorothy and Polly to run as fast as they could for the entrance, and out across the narrow bridge.

THE SHAGGY MAN CAUGHT THE HEADS AND TOSSED THEM INTO THE GULF BELOW

"I'll carry Button-Bright," he said, for he knew the little boy's legs were too short to run fast.

Dorothy picked up Toto, and then seized Polly's hand and ran swiftly toward the entrance to the cave. The shaggy man perched Button-Bright on his shoulders and ran after them. They moved so quickly and their escape was so wholly unexpected that they had almost reached the bridge when one of the Scoodlers looked out of his house and saw them.

The creature raised a shrill cry that brought all its fellows bounding out of the numerous doors, and at once they started in chase. Dorothy and Polly had reached the bridge and crossed it when the Scoodlers began throwing their heads. One of the queer missiles struck the shaggy man on his back and nearly knocked him over; but he was at the mouth of the cave now, so he set down Button-Bright and told the boy to run across the bridge to Dorothy.

Then the shaggy man turned around and faced his enemies, standing just outside the opening, and as fast as they threw their heads at him he caught them and tossed them into the black gulf below. The headless bodies of the foremost Scoodlers kept the others from running close up, but they also threw their heads in an effort to stop the escaping prisoners. The shaggy man caught them all and sent them whirling down into the black gulf. Among them he noticed the crimson and yellow head of the Queen, and this he tossed after the others with right good will.

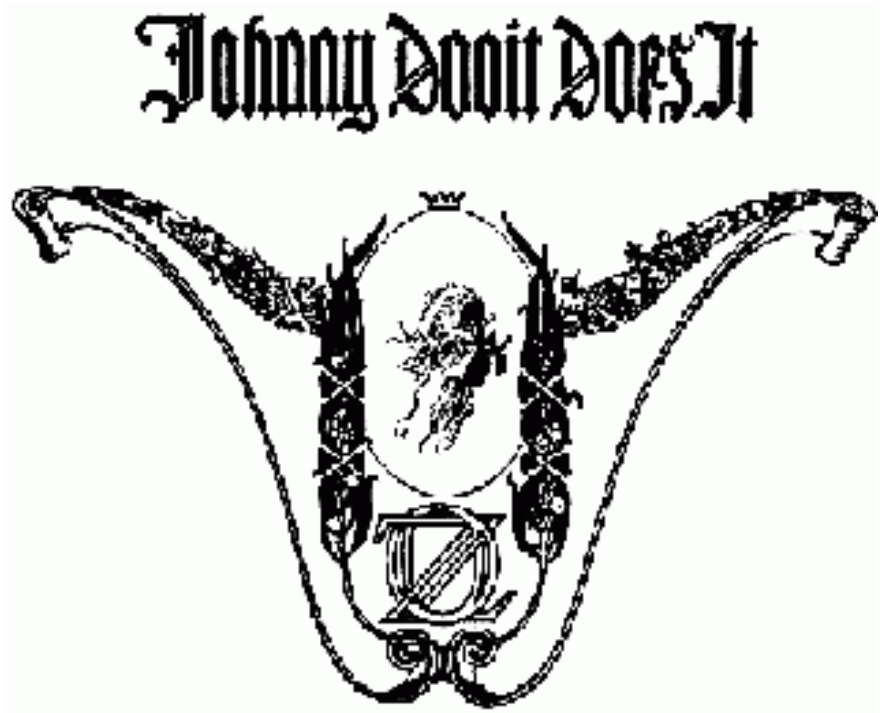
Presently every Scoodler of the lot had thrown its head, and every head was down in the deep gulf, and now the helpless bodies of the creatures were mixed together in the cave and wriggling around in a vain attempt to discover what had become of their heads. The shaggy man laughed and walked across the bridge to rejoin his companions.

"It's lucky I learned to play base-ball when I was young," he remarked, "for I caught all those heads easily, and never missed one. But come along, little ones; the Scoodlers will never bother us or anyone else any more."

Button-Bright was still frightened and kept insisting, "I don't want to be soup!" for the victory had been gained so suddenly that the boy could not realize they were free and safe. But the shaggy man assured him that all danger of their being made into soup was now past, as the Scoodlers would be unable to eat soup for some time to come.

So now, anxious to get away from the horrid gloomy cave as soon as possible, they hastened up the hillside and regained the road just beyond the place where they had first met the Scoodlers; and you may be sure they were glad to find their feet on the old familiar path again.

11. Johnny Dooit Does It



"IT'S getting awful rough walking," said Dorothy, as they trudged along. Button-Bright gave a deep sigh and said he was hungry. Indeed, all were hungry, and thirsty, too; for they had eaten nothing but the apples since breakfast; so their steps lagged and they grew silent and weary. At last they slowly passed over the crest of a barren hill and saw before them a line of green trees with a strip of grass at their feet. An agreeable fragrance was wafted toward them.

Our travelers, hot and tired, ran forward on beholding this refreshing sight and were not long in coming to the trees. Here they found a spring of pure bubbling water, around which the grass was full of wild strawberry plants, their pretty red berries ripe and ready to eat. Some of the trees bore yellow oranges and some russet pears, so the hungry adventurers suddenly found themselves provided with plenty to eat and to drink.

They lost no time in picking the biggest strawberries and ripest oranges and soon had feasted to their hearts' content. Walking beyond the line of trees they saw before them a fearful, dismal desert, everywhere grey sand. At the edge of this awful waste was a large white sign with black letters neatly painted upon it; and the letters made these words:

ALL PERSONS ARE WARNED NOT TO
VENTURE UPON THIS DESERT

For the Deadly Sands will Turn Any Living Flesh to Dust in an Instant.
Beyond This Barrier is the

LAND OF OZ

But no one can Reach that Beautiful Country because of these Destroying Sands

"Oh," said Dorothy, when the shaggy man had read this sign aloud; "I've seen this desert before, and it's true no one can live who tries to walk upon the sands."

"Then we mustn't try it," answered the shaggy man, thoughtfully. "But as we can't go ahead and there's no use going back, what shall we do next?"

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"I'm sure I don't know, either," added Dorothy, despondently.

"I wish father would come for me," sighed the pretty Rainbow's Daughter, "I would take you all to live upon the rainbow, where you could dance along its rays from morning till night, without a care or worry of any sort. But I suppose father's too busy just now to search the world for me."

"Don't want to dance," said Button-Bright, sitting down wearily upon the soft grass.

"It's very good of you, Polly," said Dorothy; "but there are other things that would suit me better than dancing on rainbows. I'm 'fraid they'd be kind of soft an' squnshy under foot, anyhow, although they're so pretty to look at."

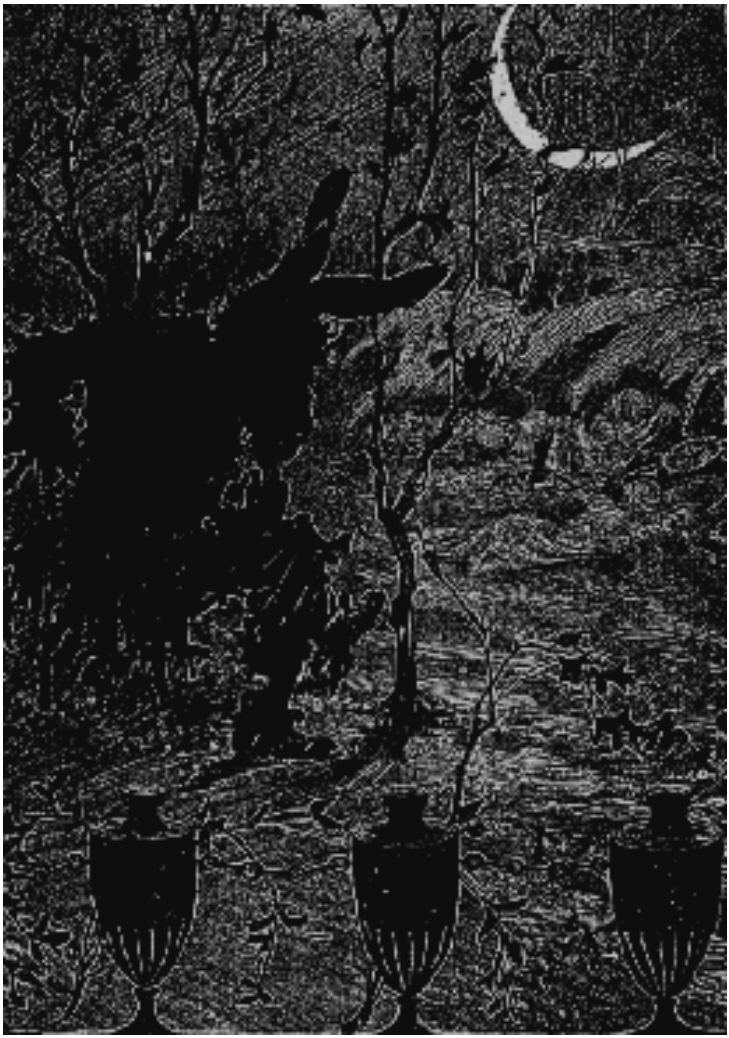
This didn't help to solve the problem, and they all fell silent and looked at one another questioningly.

"Really, I don't know what to do," muttered the shaggy man, gazing hard at Toto; and the little dog wagged his tail and said "Bow-wow!" just as if he could not tell, either, what to do. Button-Bright got a stick and began to dig in the earth, and the others watched him for a while in deep thought. Finally the shaggy man said:

"It's nearly evening, now; so we may well sleep in this pretty place and get rested; perhaps by morning we can decide what is best to be done."

There was little chance to make beds for the children, but the leaves of the trees grew thickly and would serve to keep off the night dews, so the shaggy man piled soft grasses in the thickest shade and when it was dark they lay down and slept peacefully until morning.

Long after the others were asleep, however, the shaggy man sat in the starlight by the spring, gazing thoughtfully into its bubbling waters. Suddenly he smiled and nodded to himself as if he had found a good thought, after which he, too, laid himself down under a tree and was soon lost in slumber.



In the bright morning sunshine, as they ate of the strawberries and sweet juicy pears, Dorothy said:

"Polly, can you do any magic?"

"No, dear," answered Polychrome, shaking her dainty head.

"You ought to know *some* magic, being the Rainbow's Daughter," continued Dorothy, earnestly.

"But we who live on the rainbow among the fleecy clouds have no use for magic," replied Polychrome.

"What I'd like," said Dorothy, "is to find some way to cross the desert to the Land of Oz and its Emerald City. I've crossed it already, you know, more than once. First a cyclone carried my house over, and some Silver Shoes

brought me back again — in half a second. Then Ozma took me over on her Magic Carpet, and the Nome King's Magic Belt took me home that time. You see it was magic that did it every time 'cept the first, and we can't 'spect a cyclone to happen along and take us to the Emerald City now."

"No, indeed," returned Polly, with a shudder; "I hate cyclones, anyway."

"That's why I wanted to find out if you could do any magic," said the little Kansas girl. "I'm sure I can't; and I'm sure Button-Bright can't; and the only magic the shaggy man has is the Love Magnet, which won't help us much."

"Don't be too sure of that, my dear," spoke the shaggy man, a smile on his donkey face. "I may not be able to do magic myself, but I can call to us a powerful friend who loves me because I own the Love Magnet, and this friend surely will be able to help us."

"Who is your friend?" asked Dorothy.

"Johnny Dooit."

"What can Johnny do?"

"Anything," answered the shaggy man, with confidence.

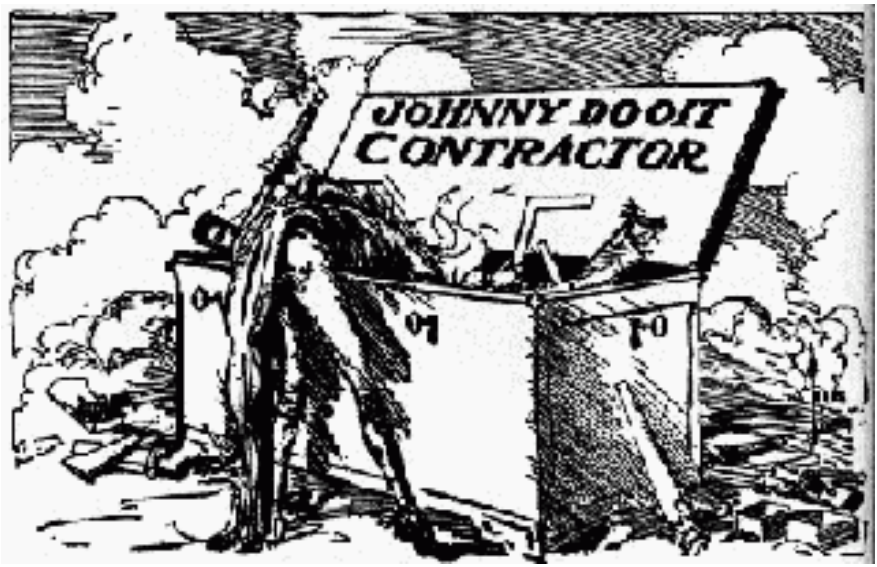
"Ask him to come," she exclaimed, eagerly.

The shaggy man took the Love Magnet from his pocket and unwrapped the paper that surrounded it. Holding the charm in the palm of his hand he looked at it steadily and said these words:

"Dear Johnny Dooit, come to me.
I need you bad as bad can be."

"Well, here I am," said a cheery little voice; "but you shouldn't say you need me bad, 'cause I'm always, *always* good."

At this they quickly whirled around to find a funny little man sitting on a big copper chest, puffing smoke from a long pipe. His hair was grey, his whiskers were grey; and these whiskers were so long that he had wound the ends of them around his waist and tied them in a hard knot underneath the leather apron that reached from his chin nearly to his feet, and which was soiled and scratched as if it had been used a long time. His nose was broad, and stuck up a little; but his eyes were twinkling and merry. The little man's hands and arms were as hard and tough as the leather in his apron, and Dorothy thought Johnny Dooit looked as if he had done a lot of hard work in his lifetime.



"Good morning, Johnny," said the shaggy man. "Thank you for coming to me so quickly."

"I never waste time," said the newcomer, promptly. "But what's happened to you? Where did you get that donkey head? Really, I wouldn't have known you at all, Shaggy Man, if I hadn't looked at your feet."

The shaggy man introduced Johnny Dooit to Dorothy and Toto and Button-Bright and the Rainbow's Daughter, and told him the story of their adventures, adding that they were anxious now to reach the Emerald City in the Land of Oz, where Dorothy had friends who would take care of them and send them safe home again.

"But," said he, "we find that we can't cross this desert, which turns all living flesh that touches it into dust; so I have asked you to come and help us."

Johnny Dooit puffed his pipe and looked carefully at the dreadful desert in front of them — stretching so far away they could not see its end.

"You must ride," he said, briskly.

"What in?" asked the shaggy man.

"In a sand-boat, which has runners like a sled and sails like a ship. The wind will blow you swiftly across the desert and the sand cannot touch your flesh to turn it into dust."

"Good!" cried Dorothy, clapping her hands delightedly. "That was the way the Magic Carpet took us across. We didn't have to touch the horrid sand at all."

"But where is the sand-boat?" asked the shaggy man, looking all around

him.

"I'll make you one," said Johnny Dooit.

As he spoke he knocked the ashes from his pipe and put it in his pocket. Then he unlocked the copper chest and lifted the lid, and Dorothy saw it was full of shining tools of all sorts and shapes.

Johnny Dooit moved quickly now — so quickly that they were astonished at the work he was able to accomplish. He had in his chest a tool for everything he wanted to do, and these must have been magic tools because they did their work so fast and so well.

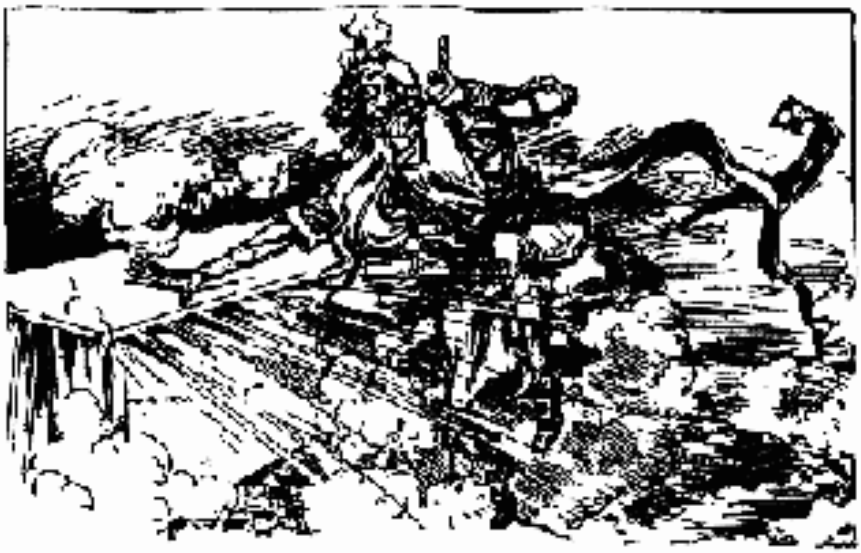
The man hummed a little song as he worked, and Dorothy tried to listen to it. She thought the words were something like these:

The only way to do a thing
Is do it when you can,
And do it cheerfully, and sing
And work and think and plan.
The only real unhappy one
Is he who dares to shirk;
The only really happy one
Is he who cares to work.

Whatever Johnny Dooit was singing he was certainly doing things, and they all stood by and watched him in amazement.

He seized an axe and in a couple of chops felled a tree. Next he took a saw and in a few minutes sawed the tree-trunk into broad long boards. He then nailed the boards together into the shape of a boat, about twelve feet long and four feet wide. He cut from another tree a long, slender pole which, when trimmed of its branches and fastened upright in the center of the boat, served as a mast. From the chest he drew a coil of rope and a big bundle of canvas, and with these — still humming his song — he rigged up a sail, arranging it so it could be raised or lowered upon the mast.

Dorothy fairly gasped with wonder to see the thing grow so speedily before her eyes, and both Button-Bright and Polly looked on with the same absorbed interest.



"It ought to be painted," said Johnny Dooit, tossing his tools back into the chest, "for that would make it look prettier. But 'though I can paint it for you in three seconds it would take an hour to dry, and that's a waste of time."

"We don't care how it looks," said the shaggy man, "if only it will take us across the desert."

"It will do that," declared Johnny Dooit. "All you need worry about is tipping over. Did you ever sail a ship?"

"I've seen one sailed," said the shaggy man.

"Good. Sail this boat the way you've seen a ship sailed, and you'll be across the sands before you know it."

With this he slammed down the lid of the chest, and the noise made them all wink. While they were winking the workman disappeared, tools and all.

12. The Deadly Desert Crossed

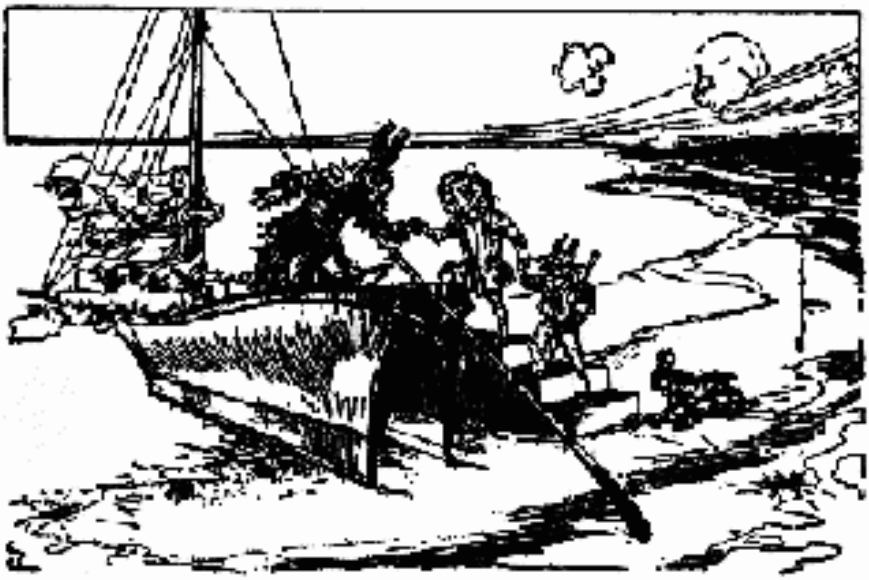
"OH, that's too bad!" cried Dorothy; "I wanted to thank Johnny Dooit for all his kindness to us."

"He hasn't time to listen to thanks," replied the shaggy man; "but I'm sure he knows we are grateful. I suppose he is already at work in some other part of the world."

They now looked more carefully at the sand-boat, and saw that the bottom was modelled with two sharp runners which would glide through the sand. The front of the sand-boat was pointed like the bow of a ship, and there was a rudder at the stern to steer by.

It had been built just at the edge of the desert, so that all its length lay upon the grey sand except the after part, which still rested on the strip of grass.

"Get in, my dears," said the shaggy man; "I'm sure I can manage this boat as well as any sailor. All you need do is sit still in your places."



Dorothy got in, Toto in her arms, and sat on the bottom of the boat just in front of the mast. Button-Bright sat in front of Dorothy, while Polly leaned over the bow. The shaggy man knelt behind the mast. When all were ready he raised the sail half way. The wind caught it. At once the sand-boat started forward — slowly at first, then with added speed. The shaggy man pulled the sail way up, and they flew so fast over the Deadly Desert that every one held fast to the sides of the boat and scarcely dared to breathe.

The sand lay in billows, and was in places very uneven, so that the boat rocked dangerously from side to side; but it never quite tipped over, and the speed was so great that the shaggy man himself became frightened and began to wonder how he could make the ship go slower.

"If we're spilled in this sand, in the middle of the desert," Dorothy thought to herself, "we'll be nothing but dust in a few minutes, and that will be the end of us."

But they were not spilled, and by-and-bye Polychrome, who was clinging to the bow and looking straight ahead, saw a dark line before them and wondered what it was. It grew plainer every second, until she discovered it to be a row of jagged rocks at the end of the desert, while high above these rocks she could see a tableland of green grass and beautiful trees.

"Look out!" she screamed to the shaggy man. "Go slowly, or we shall smash into the rocks."

He heard her, and tried to pull down the sail; but the wind would not let go of the broad canvas and the ropes had become tangled.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the great rocks, and the shaggy man was in despair because he could do nothing to stop the wild rush of the sand-boat.

"LOOK OUT!" SCREAMED POLYCHROME

They reached the edge of the desert and bumped squarely into the rocks. There was a crash as Dorothy, Button-Bright, Toto and Polly flew up in the air in a curve like a skyrocket's, one after another landing high upon the grass, where they rolled and tumbled for a time before they could stop themselves.

The shaggy man flew after them, head first, and lighted in a heap beside Toto, who, being much excited at the time, seized one of the donkey ears between his teeth and shook and worried it as hard as he could, growling

angrily. The shaggy man made the little dog let go, and sat up to look around him.

Dorothy was feeling one of her front teeth, which was loosened by knocking against her knee as she fell. Polly was looking sorrowfully at a rent in her pretty gauze gown, and Button-Bright's fox head had stuck fast in a gopher hole and he was wiggling his little fat legs frantically in an effort to get free.

Otherwise they were unhurt by the adventure; so the shaggy man stood up and pulled Button-Bright out of the hole and went to the edge of the desert to look at the sand-boat. It was a mere mass of splinters now, crushed out of shape against the rocks. The wind had torn away the sail and carried it to the top of a tall tree, where the fragments of it fluttered like a white flag.

"Well," he said, cheerfully, "we're here; but where the here is I don't know."

"It must be some part of the Land of Oz," observed Dorothy, coming to his side.

"Must it?"

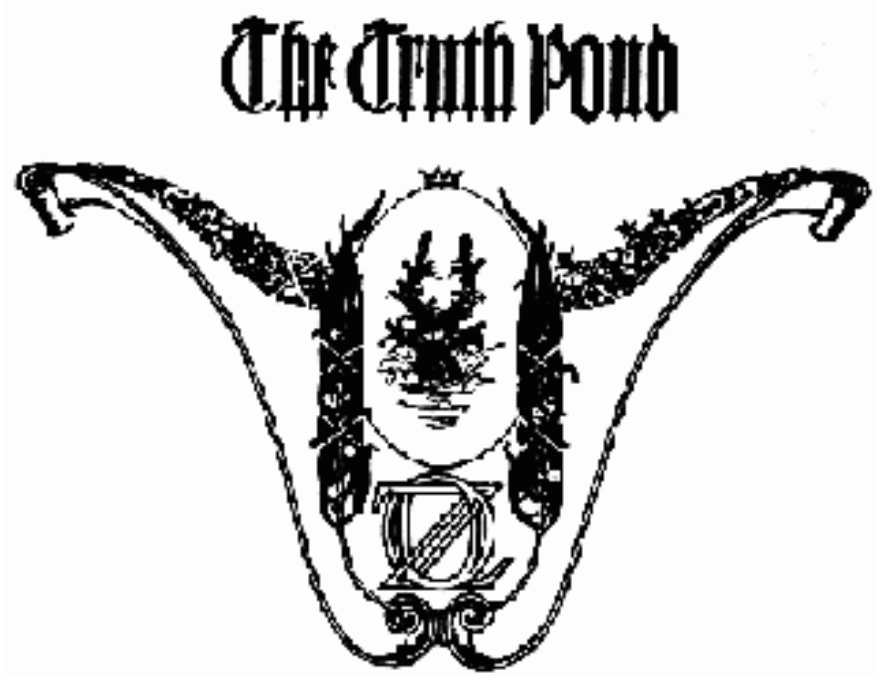
"'Course it must. We're across the desert, aren't we? And somewhere in the middle of Oz is the Emerald City."

"To be sure," said the shaggy man, nodding. "Let's go there."

"But I don't see any people about, to show us the way," she continued.

"Let's hunt for them," he suggested. "There must be people somewhere; but perhaps they did not expect us, and so are not at hand to give us a welcome."

13. The Truth Pond



THEY now made a more careful examination of the country around them. All was fresh and beautiful after the sultriness of the desert, and the sunshine and sweet, crisp air were delightful to the wanderers. Little mounds of yellowish green were away at the right, while on the left waved a group of tall leafy trees bearing yellow blossoms that looked like tassels and pompoms. Among the grasses carpeting the ground were pretty buttercups and cowslips and marigolds. After looking at these a moment Dorothy said reflectively:

"We must be in the Country of the Winkies, for the color of that country is yellow, and you will notice that 'most everything here is yellow that has any color at all."

"But I thought this was the Land of Oz," replied the shaggy man, as if greatly disappointed.

"So it is," she declared; "but there are four parts to the Land of Oz. The North Country is purple, and it's the Country of the Gillikins. The East country is blue, and that's the Country of the Munchkins. Down at the South is the red Country of the Quadlings, and here, in the West, the yellow Country of the Winkies. This is the part that is ruled by the Tin Woodman, you know."

“Who’s he?” asked Button-Bright.

“Why, he’s the tin man I told you about. His name is Nick Chopper, and he has a lovely heart given him by the wonderful Wizard.”

“Where does *he* live?” asked the boy.

“The Wizard? Oh, he lives in the Emerald City, which is just in the middle of Oz, where the corners of the four countries meet.”

“Oh,” said Button-Bright, puzzled by this explanation.

“We must be some distance from the Emerald City,” remarked the shaggy man.

“That’s true,” she replied; “so we’d better start on and see if we can find any of the Winkies. They’re nice people,” she continued, as the little party began walking toward the group of trees, “and I came here once with my friends the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion, to fight a wicked witch who had made all the Winkies her slaves.”

“Did you conquer her?” asked Polly.

“Why, I melted her with a bucket of water, and that was the end of her,” replied Dorothy. “After that the people were free, you know, and they made Nick Chopper — that’s the Tin Woodman — their Emp’ror.”

“What’s that?” asked Button-Bright.

“Emp’ror? Oh, it’s something like an alderman, I guess.”

“Oh,” said the boy.

“But I thought Princess Ozma ruled Oz,” said the shaggy man.

“So she does; she rules the Emerald City and all the four countries of Oz; but each country has another little ruler, not so big as Ozma. It’s like the

officers of an army, you see; the little rulers are all captains, and Ozma's the general."

By this time they had reached the trees, which stood in a perfect circle and just far enough apart so that their thick branches touched — or "shook hands," as Button-Bright remarked. Under the shade of the trees they found, in the center of the circle, a crystal pool, its water as still as glass. It must have been deep, too, for when Polychrome bent over it she gave a little sigh of pleasure.

"Why, it's a mirror!" she cried; for she could see all her pretty face and fluffy, rainbow-tinted gown reflected in the pool, as natural as life.

Dorothy bent over, too, and began to arrange her hair, blown by the desert wind into straggling tangles. Button-Bright leaned over the edge next, and then began to cry, for the sight of his fox head frightened the poor little fellow.

"I guess I won't look," remarked the shaggy man, sadly, for he didn't like his donkey head, either. While Polly and Dorothy tried to comfort Button-Bright, the shaggy man sat down near the edge of the pool, where his image could not be reflected, and stared at the water thoughtfully. As he did this he noticed a silver plate fastened to a rock just under the surface of the water, and on the silver plate was engraved these words:

THE TRUTH POND

"Ah!" cried the shaggy man, springing to his feet with eager joy; "we've found it at last."

"Found what?" asked Dorothy, running to him.

"The Truth Pond. Now, at last, I may get rid of this frightful head; for we were told, you remember, that only the Truth Pond could restore to me my proper face."

"Me, too!" shouted Button-Bright, trotting up to them.

"Of course," said Dorothy. "It will cure you both of your bad heads, I guess. Isn't it lucky we found it?"

"It is, indeed," replied the shaggy man. "I hated dreadfully to go to Princess Ozma looking like this; and she's to have a birthday celebration, too."

Just then a splash startled them, for Button-Bright, in his anxiety to see the pool that would "cure" him, had stepped too near the edge and tumbled heels over head into the water. Down he went, out of sight entirely, so that only his sailor hat floated on the top of the Truth Pond.

He soon bobbed up, and the shaggy man seized him by his sailor collar and dragged him to the shore, dripping and gasping for breath. They all looked upon the boy wonderingly, for the fox head with its sharp nose and pointed ears was gone, and in its place appeared the chubby round face and blue eyes and pretty curls that had belonged to Button-Bright before King Dox of Foxville transformed him.

"Oh, what a darling!" cried Polly, and would have hugged the little one had he not been so wet.

Their joyful exclamations made the child rub the water out of his eyes and look at his friends questioningly.

"You're all right now, dear," said Dorothy. "Come and look at yourself." She led him to the pool, and although there were still a few ripples on the surface of the water he could see his reflection plainly.

"It's me!" he said, in a pleased yet awed whisper.

THE SHAGGY MAN'S OWN HEAD RESTORED

"'Course it is," replied the girl; "and we're all as glad as you are, Button-Bright."

"Well," announced the shaggy man, "it's my turn next." He took off his shaggy coat and laid it on the grass and dived head first into the Truth Pond.

When he came up the donkey head had disappeared, and the shaggy man's own shaggy head was in its place, with the water dripping in little streams from his shaggy whiskers. He scrambled ashore and shook himself to get off some of the wet, and then leaned over the pool to look admiringly at his reflected face.

"I may not be strictly beautiful, even now," he said to his companions, who watched him with smiling faces; "but I'm so much handsomer than any donkey that I feel as proud as I can be."

"You're all right, Shaggy Man," declared Dorothy. "And Button-Bright is all right, too. So let's thank the Truth Pond for being so nice, and start on our journey to the Emerald City."

"I hate to leave it," murmured the shaggy man, with a sigh. "A truth pond wouldn't be a bad thing to carry around with us." But he put on his coat and started with the others in search of some one to direct them on their way.

14. Tik-Tok and Billina

THEY had not walked far across the flower-strewn meadows when they came upon a fine road leading toward the northwest and winding gracefully among the pretty yellow hills.

"That way," said Dorothy, "must be the direction of the Emerald City. We'd better follow the road until we meet some one or come to a house."

The sun soon dried Button-Bright's sailor suit and the shaggy man's shaggy clothes, and so pleased were they at regaining their own heads that they did not mind at all the brief discomfort of getting wet.

"It's good to be able to whistle again," remarked the shaggy man, "for those donkey lips were so thick I could not whistle a note with them." He warbled a tune as merrily as any bird.

"You'll look more natural at the birthday celebration, too," said Dorothy, happy in seeing her friends so happy.

Polychrome was dancing ahead in her usual sprightly manner, whirling gaily along the smooth, level road, until she passed from sight around the curve of one of the mounds. Suddenly they heard her exclaim "Oh!" and she appeared again, running toward them at full speed.

"What's the matter, Polly?" asked Dorothy, perplexed.

There was no need for the Rainbow's Daughter to answer, for turning the bend in the road there came advancing slowly toward them a funny round man made of burnished copper, gleaming brightly in the sun. Perched on the copper man's shoulder sat a yellow hen, with fluffy feathers and a pearl necklace around her throat.

"Oh, Tik-tok!" cried Dorothy, running forward. When she came to him the copper man lifted the little girl in his copper arms and kissed her cheek with his copper lips.

"Oh, Billina!" cried Dorothy, in a glad voice, and the yellow hen flew to her arms, to be hugged and petted by turns.

The others were curiously crowding around the group, and the girl said to them:

"It's Tik-tok and Billina; and oh! I'm so glad to see them again."

"Wel-come to Oz," said the copper man, in a monotonous voice.

Dorothy sat right down in the road, the yellow hen in her arms, and began to stroke Billina's back. Said the hen:

"Dorothy, dear, I've some wonderful news to tell you."

"Tell it quick, Billina!" said the girl.

Just then Toto, who had been growling to himself in a cross way gave a sharp bark and flew at the yellow hen, who ruffled her feathers and let out such an angry screech that Dorothy was startled.

"Stop, Toto! Stop that this minute!" she commanded. "Can't you see that Billina is my friend?" In spite of this warning had she not grabbed Toto quickly by the neck the little dog would have done the yellow hen a mischief, and even now he struggled madly to escape Dorothy's grasp. She slapped his

cars once or twice and told him to behave, and the yellow hen flew to Tik-tok's shoulder again, where she was safe.

"What a brute!" croaked Billina, glaring down at the little dog.

"Toto isn't a brute," replied Dorothy; "but at home Uncle Henry has to whip him sometimes for chasing the chickens. Now, look here, Toto," she added, holding up her finger and speaking sternly to him, "you've got to understand that Billina is one of my dearest friends, and mustn't be hurt — now or ever."

Toto wagged his tail as if he understood.

"The miserable thing can't talk," said Billina, with a sneer.

"Yes, he can," replied Dorothy; "he talks with his tail, and I know everything he says. If you could wag your tail, Billina, you wouldn't need words to talk with."

"Nonsense!" said Billina.

"It isn't nonsense at all. Just now Toto says he's sorry, and that he'll try to love you for my sake. Don't you, Toto?"

"Bow-wow!" said Toto, wagging his tail again.

"But I've such wonderful news for you; Dorothy," cried the yellow hen; "I've — — "

"Wait a minute, dear," interrupted the little girl; "I've got to introduce you all, first. That's manners, Billina. This," turning to her traveling companions, "is Mr. Tik-tok, who works by machinery, 'cause his thoughts wind up, and his talk winds up, and his action winds up — like a clock."

"Do they all wind up together?" asked the shaggy man.

"No; each one separate. But he works just lovely, and Tik-tok was a good friend to me once, and saved my life — and Billina's life, too."

"Is he alive?" asked Button-Bright, looking hard at the copper man.

"Oh, no, but his machinery makes him just as good as alive." She turned to the copper man and said politely: "Mr. Tik-tok, these are my new friends: the shaggy man, and Polly the Rainbow's Daughter, and Button-Bright, and Toto. Only Toto isn't a new friend, 'cause he's been to Oz before."

The copper man bowed low, removing his copper hat as he did so.

"I'm ve-ry pleased to meet Dor-o-thy's fr-r-r-r-r — — "

Here he stopped short.

"Oh, I guess his speech needs winding!" said the little girl, running behind the copper man to get the key off a hook at his back. She wound him up at a place under his right arm and he went on to say:

"Par-don me for run-ning down. I was a-bout to say I am pleased to meet Dor-o-thy's friends, who must be my friends." The words were somewhat jerky, but plain to understand.

“And this is Billina,” continued Dorothy, introducing the yellow hen, and they all bowed to her in turn.

“I’ve such wonderful news,” said the hen, turning her head so that one bright eye looked full at Dorothy.

“What is it, dear?” asked the girl.

“I’ve hatched out ten of the loveliest chicks you ever saw.”

“Oh, how nice! And where are they, Billina?”

“I left them at home. But they’re beauties, I assure you, and all wonderfully clever. I’ve named them Dorothy.”

“Which one?” asked the girl.

“All of them,” replied Billina.

“That’s funny. Why did you name them all with the same name?”

“It was so hard to tell them apart,” explained the hen. “Now, when I call ‘Dorothy,’ they all come running to me in a bunch; it’s much easier, after all, than having a separate name for each.”

“I’m just dying to see ‘em, Billina,” said Dorothy, eagerly. “But tell me, my friends, how did you happen to be here, in the Country of the Winkies, the first of all to meet us?”

“I’ll tell you,” answered Tik-tok, in his monotonous voice, all the sounds of his words being on one level — ”Prin-cess Oz-ma saw you in her mag-ic pic-ture, and knew you were com-ing here; so she sent Bil-lin-a and me to wel-come you, as she could not come her-self; so that — fiz-i-dig-le cum-so-lut-ing hy-ber-gobble in-tu-zib-ick — — ”

“Good gracious! Whatever’s the matter now?” cried Dorothy, as the copper man continued to babble these unmeaning words, which no one could understand at all because they had no sense.

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright, who was half scared. Polly whirled away to a distance and turned to look at the copper man in a fright.

"His thoughts have run down, this time," remarked Billina composedly, as she sat on Tik-tok's shoulder and pruned her sleek feathers. "When he can't think he can't talk properly, any more than you can. You'll have to wind up his thoughts, Dorothy, or else I'll have to finish his story myself."

Dorothy ran around and got the key again and wound up Tik-tok under his left arm, after which he could speak plainly again.

"Par-don me," he said, "but when my thoughts run down my speech has no mean-ing, for words are formed on-ly by thought. I was a-bout to say that Oz-ma sent us to wel-come you and in-vite you to come straight to the Em-er-ald Ci-ty. She was too bus-y to come her-self, for she is pre-par-ing for her birth-day cel-e-bra-tion, which is to be a grand af-fair."

"I've heard of it," said Dorothy, "and I'm glad we've come in time to attend. Is it far from here to the Emerald City?"

"Not ve-ry far," answered Tik-tok, "and we have plen-ty of time. To-night we will stop at the pal-ace of the Tin Wood-man, and to-mor-row night we will ar-rive at the Em-er-ald Ci-ty."

"Goody!" cried Dorothy. "I'd like to see dear Nick Chopper again. How's his heart?"

"It's fine," said Billina; "the Tin Woodman says it gets softer and kindlier every day. He's waiting at his castle to welcome you, Dorothy; but he couldn't come with us because he 'is getting polished as bright as possible for Ozma's party."

"Well, then," said Dorothy, "let's start on, and we can talk more as we go."

They proceeded on their journey in a friendly group, for Polychrome had

discovered that the copper man was harmless and was no longer afraid of him. Button-Bright was also reassured, and took quite a fancy to Tik-tok. He wanted the clockwork man to open himself, so that he might see the wheels go round; but that was a thing Tik-tok could not do. Button-Bright then wanted to wind up the copper man, and Dorothy promised he should do so as soon as any part of the machinery ran down. This pleased Button-Bright, who held fast to one of Tik-tok's copper hands as he trudged along the road, while Dorothy walked on the other side of her old friend and Billina perched by turns upon his shoulder or his copper hat. Polly once more joyously danced ahead and Toto ran after her, barking with glee. The shaggy man was left to walk behind; but he didn't seem to mind that a bit, and whistled merrily or looked curiously upon the pretty scenes they passed.

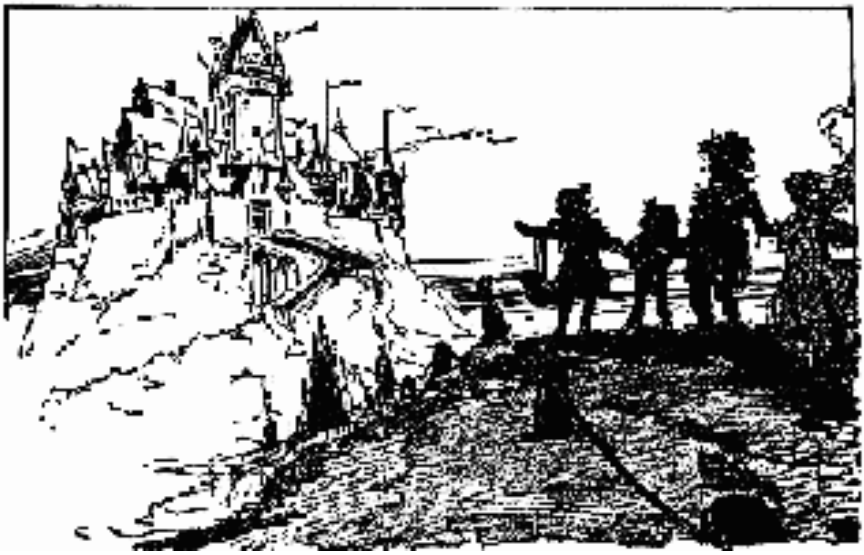
At last they came to a hilltop from which the tin castle of Nick Chopper could plainly be seen, its towers glistening magnificently under the rays of the declining sun.

"How pretty!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I've never seen the Emp'ror's new house before."

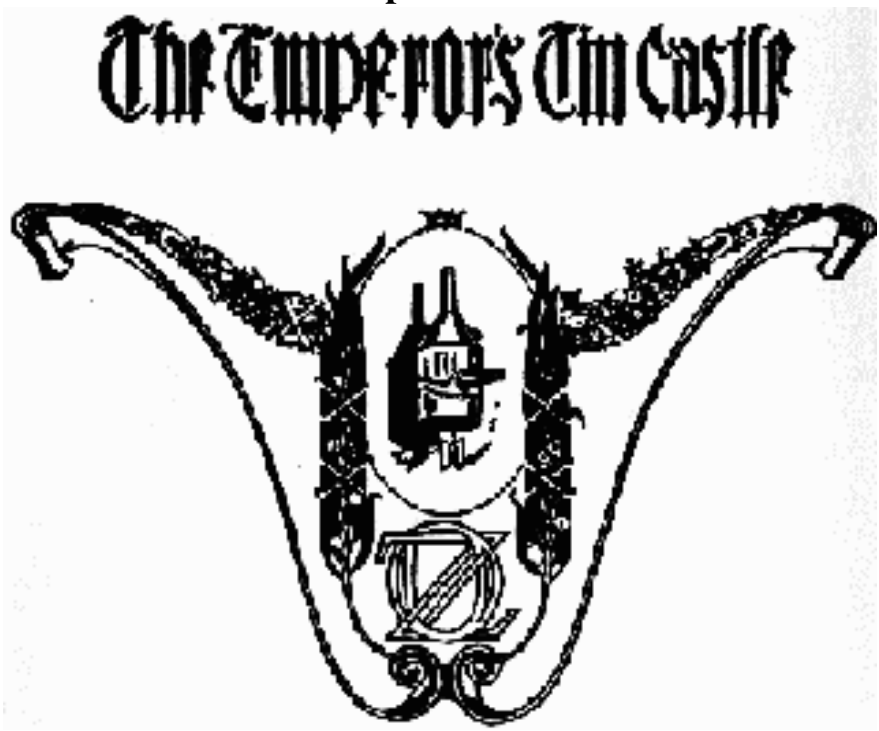
"He built it because the old castle was damp, and likely to rust his tin body," said Billina. "All those towers and steeples and domes and gables took a lot of tin, as you can see."

"Is it a toy?" asked Button-Bright, softly.

"No, dear," answered Dorothy; "it's better than that. It's the fairy dwelling of a fairy prince."



15. The Emperor's Tin Castle



THE grounds around Nick Chopper's new house were laid out in pretty flower-beds, with fountains of crystal water and statues of tin representing the Emperor's personal friends. Dorothy was astonished and delighted to find a tin statue of herself standing on a tin pedestal at a bend in the avenue leading up to the entrance. It was life-size and showed her in her sunbonnet with her basket on her arm, just as she had first appeared in the Land of Oz.

"Oh, Toto — you're there too!" she exclaimed; and sure enough there was the tin figure of Toto lying at the tin Dorothy's feet.

Also Dorothy saw figures of the Scarecrow, and the Wizard, and Ozma, and of many others, including Tik-tok. They reached the grand tin entrance to the tin castle, and the Tin Woodman himself came running out of the door to embrace little Dorothy and give her a glad welcome. He welcomed her friends as well, and the Rainbow's Daughter he declared to be the loveliest vision his tin eyes had ever beheld. He patted Button-Bright's curly head tenderly, for he was fond of children, and turned to the shaggy man and shook both his hands at the same time.

Nick Chopper, the Emperor of the Winkies, who was also known throughout the Land of Oz as the Tin Woodman, was certainly a remarkable person. He was neatly made, all of tin, nicely soldered at the joints, and his various limbs were cleverly hinged to his body so that he could use them nearly as well as if they had been common flesh. Once, he told the shaggy man, he had been made all of flesh and bones, as others people are, and then he chopped wood in the forests to earn his living. But the axe slipped so often and cut off parts of him — which he had replaced with tin — that finally there was no flesh left, nothing but tin; so he became a real tin woodman. The wonderful Wizard of Oz had given him an excellent heart to replace his old one, and he didn't at all mind being tin. Every one loved him, he loved every one; and he was therefore as happy as the day was long.

The Emperor was proud of his new tin castle, and showed his visitors through all the rooms. Every bit of the furniture was made of brightly polished tin — the tables, chairs, beds, and all — even the floors and walls were of tin.

"I suppose," said he, "that there are no cleverer tinsmiths in all the world than the Winkies. It would be hard to match this castle in Kansas; wouldn't it, little Dorothy?"

"Very hard," replied the child, gravely.

"It must have cost a lot of money," remarked the shaggy man.

"Money! Money in Oz!" cried the Tin Woodman. "What a queer idea! Did you suppose we are so vulgar as to use money here?"

"Why not?" asked the shaggy man.

“If we used money to buy things with, instead of love and kindness and the desire to please one another, then we should be no better than the rest of the world,” declared the Tin Woodman. “Fortunately money is not known in the Land of Oz at all. We have no rich, and no poor; for what one wishes the others all try to give him, in order to make him happy, and no one in all Oz cares to have more than he can use.”

“Good!” cried the shaggy man, greatly pleased to hear this. “I also despise money — a man in Butterfield owes me fifteen cents, and I will not take it from him. The Land of Oz is surely the most favored land in all the world, and its people the happiest. I should like to live here always.”

The Tin Woodman listened with respectful attention. Already he loved the shaggy man, although he did not yet know of the Love Magnet. So he said:

“If you can prove to the Princess Ozma that you are honest and true and worthy of our friendship, you may indeed live here all your days, and be as happy as we are.”

“I’ll try to prove that,” said the shaggy man, earnestly.

“And now,” continued the Emperor, “you must all go to your rooms and prepare for dinner, which will presently be served in the grand tin dining-hall. I am sorry, Shaggy Man, that I can not offer you a change of clothing; but I dress only in tin, myself, and I suppose that would not suit you.”

“I care little about dress,” said the shaggy man, indifferently.

“So I should imagine,” replied the Emperor, with true politeness.

They were shown to their rooms and permitted to make such toilets as they could, and soon they assembled again in the grand tin dining-hall, even Toto being present. For the Emperor was fond of Dorothy’s little dog, and the girl explained to her friends that in Oz all animals were treated with as much consideration as the people — ”if they behave themselves,” she added.

Toto behaved himself, and sat in a tin high-chair beside Dorothy and ate his dinner from a tin platter.

Indeed, they all ate from tin dishes, but these were of pretty shapes and brightly polished; Dorothy thought they were just as good as silver.

Button-Bright looked curiously at the man who had “no appetite inside him,” for the Tin Woodman, although he had prepared so fine a feast for his guests, ate not a mouthful himself, sitting patiently in his place to see that all built so they could eat were well and plentifully served.

POLYCHROME DANCED GRACEFULLY TO THE MUSIC

What pleased Button-Bright most about the dinner was the tin orchestra that played sweet music while the company ate. The players were not tin, being just ordinary Winkies; but the instruments they played upon were all tin — tin trumpets, tin fiddles, tin drums and cymbals and flutes and horns and all. They played so nicely the "Shining Emperor Waltz," composed expressly in honor of the Tin Woodman by Mr. H. M. Wogglebug, T. E., that Polly could not resist dancing to it. After she had tasted a few dewdrops, freshly gathered for her, she danced gracefully to the music while the others finished their repast; and when she whirled until her fleecy draperies of rainbow hues enveloped her like a cloud, the Tin Woodman was so delighted that he

clapped his tin hands until the noise of them drowned the sound of the cymbals.

Altogether it was a merry meal, although Polychrome ate little and the host nothing at all.

“I’m sorry the Rainbow’s Daughter missed her mist-cakes,” said the Tin Woodman to Dorothy; “but by a mistake Miss Polly’s mist-cakes were mislaid and not missed until now. I’ll try to have some for her breakfast.”

They spent the evening telling stories, and the next morning left the splendid tin castle and set out upon the road to the Emerald City. The Tin Woodman went with them, of course, having by this time been so brightly polished that he sparkled like silver. His axe, which he always carried with him, had a steel blade that was tin plated and a handle covered with tin plate beautifully engraved and set with diamonds.

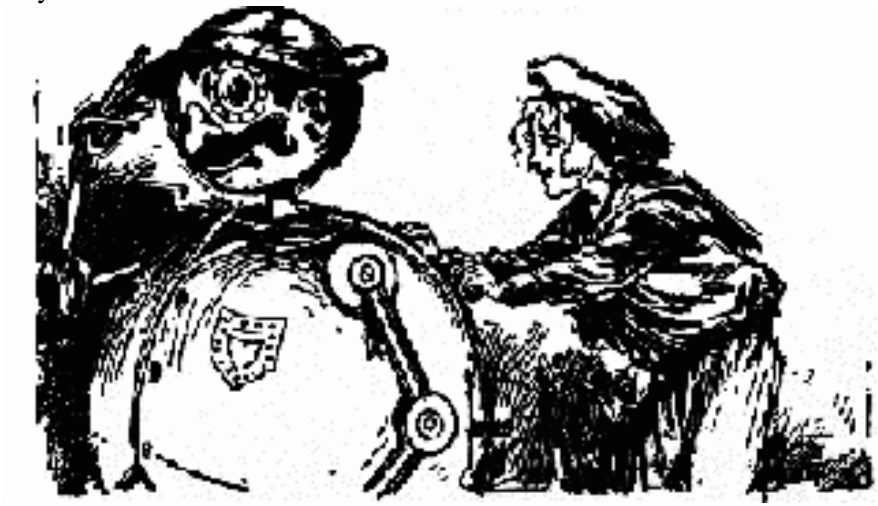
The Winkies assembled before the castle gates and cheered their Emperor as he marched away, and it was easy to see that they all loved him dearly.

16. Visiting the Pumpkin-Field

Dorothy let Button-Bright wind up the clock-work in the copper man this morning — his thinking machine first, then his speech, and finally his action; so he would doubtless run perfectly until they had reached the Emerald City. The copper man and the tin man were good friends, and not so much alike as you might think. For one was alive and the other moved by means of machinery; one was tall and angular and the other short and round. You could love the Tin Woodman because he had a fine nature, kindly and simple; but the machine man you could only admire without loving, since to love such a thing as he was as impossible as to love a sewing-machine or an automobile. Yet Tik-tok was popular with the people of Oz because he was so trustworthy, reliable and true; he was sure to do exactly what he was wound up to do, at all times and in all circumstances. Perhaps it is better to be a machine that does its duty than a flesh-and-blood person who will not, for a dead truth is better than a live falsehood.

About noon the travelers reached a large field of pumpkins — a vegetable quite appropriate to the yellow country of the Winkies — and some of the pumpkins which grew there were of remarkable size. Just before they entered upon this field they saw three little mounds that looked like graves, with a

pretty headstone to each one of them.



"What is this?" asked Dorothy, in wonder.

"It's Jack Pumpkinhead's private graveyard," replied the Tin Woodman.

"But I thought nobody ever died in Oz," she said.

"Nor do they; although if one is bad, he may be condemned and killed by the good citizens," he answered.

Dorothy ran over to the little graves and read the words engraved upon the tombstones. The first one said:

Here Lies the Mortal Part of
JACK PUMPKINHEAD
Which Spoiled April 9th.

She then went to the next stone, which read:

Here Lies the Mortal Part of
JACK PUMPKINHEAD
Which Spoiled October 2nd.

On the third stone were carved these words:

Here Lies the Mortal Part of
JACK PUMPKINHEAD
Which Spoiled January 24th.

"Poor Jack!" sighed Dorothy. "I'm sorry he had to die in three parts, for I hoped to see him again."

"So you shall," declared the Tin Woodman, "since he is still alive. Come with me to his house, for Jack is now a farmer and lives in this very pumpkin field."

They walked over to a monstrous big, hollow pumpkin which had a door and windows cut through the rind. There was a stovepipe running through

the stem, and six steps had been built leading up to the front door.

They walked up to this door and looked in. Seated on a bench was a man clothed in a spotted shirt, a red vest, and faded blue trousers, whose body was merely sticks of wood, jointed clumsily together. On his neck was set a round, yellow pumpkin, with a face carved on it such as a boy often carves on a jack-lantern.

This queer man was engaged in snapping slippery pumpkin-seeds with his wooden fingers, trying to hit a target on the other side of the room with them. He did not know he had visitors until Dorothy exclaimed:

"Why, it's Jack Pumpkinhead himself!"

He turned and saw them, and at once came forward to greet the little Kansas girl and Nick Chopper, and to be introduced to their new friends.

Button-Bright was at first rather shy with the quaint Pumpkinhead, but Jack's face was so jolly and smiling — being carved that way — that the boy soon grew to like him.

"I thought, a while ago, that you were buried in three parts," said Dorothy; "but now I see you're just the same as ever."

"Not quite the same, my dear, for my mouth is a little more one-sided than it used to be; but pretty nearly the same. I've a new head, and this is the fourth one I've owned since Ozma first made me and brought me to life by sprinkling me with the Magic Powder."

"What became of the other heads, Jack?"

"They spoiled and I buried them, for they were not even fit for pies. Each time Ozma has carved me a new head just like the old one, and as my body is by far the largest part of me I am still Jack Pumpkinhead, no matter how often I change my upper end. Once we had a dreadful time to find another pumpkin, as they were out of season, and so I was obliged to wear my old head a little longer than was strictly healthy. But after this sad experience I resolved to raise pumpkins myself, so as never to be caught again without one handy; and now I have this fine field that you see before you. Some grow pretty big — too big to be used for heads — so I dug out this one and use it for a house."

"Isn't it damp?" asked Dorothy.

"Not very. There isn't much left but the shell, you see, and it will last a long time yet."

"I think you are brighter than you used to be, Jack," said the Tin Woodman. "Your last head was a stupid one."

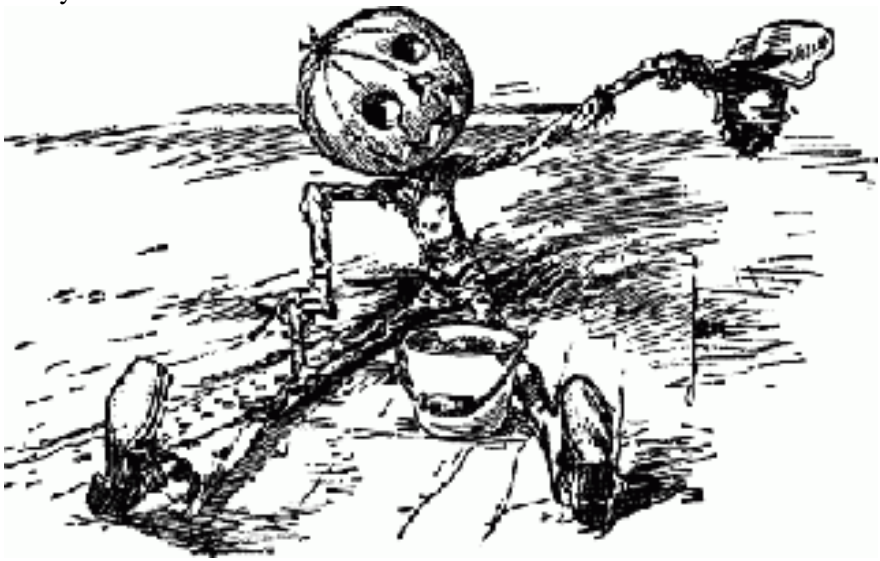
"The seeds in this one are better," was the reply.

"Are you going to Ozma's party?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," said he; "I wouldn't miss it for anything. Ozma's my parent, you

know, because she built my body and carved my pumpkin head. I'll follow you to the Emerald City to-morrow, where we shall meet again. I can't go to-day, because I have to plant fresh pumpkin-seeds and water the young vines. But give my love to Ozma, and tell her I'll be there in time for the jubilation."

"We will," she promised; and then they all left him and resumed their journey.



17. The Royal Chariot Arrives

THE neat yellow houses of the Winkies were now to be seen standing here and there along the roadway, giving the country a more cheerful and civilized look. They were farm-houses, though, and set far apart; for in the Land of Oz there were no towns or villages except the magnificent Emerald City in its center.

Hedges of evergreen or of yellow roses bordered the broad highway and the farms showed the care of their industrious inhabitants. The nearer the travelers came to the great city the more prosperous the country became, and they crossed many bridges over the sparkling streams and rivulets that watered the lands.

As they walked leisurely along the shaggy man said to the Tin Woodman:

"What sort of a Magic Powder was it, that made your friend the Pumpkinhead live?"

"It was called the Powder of Life," was the answer; "and it was invented by a crooked Sorcerer who lived in the mountains of the North Country. A Witch named Mombi got some of this powder from the crooked Sorcerer and took it home with her. Ozma lived with the Witch then, for it was before she became our Princess, while Mombi had transformed her into the shape of a

boy. Well, while Mombi was gone to the crooked Sorcerer's, the boy made this pumpkin-headed man to amuse himself, and also with the hope of frightening the Witch with it when she returned. But Mombi was not scared, and she sprinkled the Pumpkinhead with her Magic Powder of Life, to see if the Powder would work. Ozma was watching, and saw the Pumpkinhead come to life; so that night she took the pepper-box containing the Powder and ran away with it and with Jack, in search of adventures."

"Next day they found a wooden Saw-Horse standing by the roadside, and sprinkled it with the Powder. It came to life at once, and Jack Pumpkinhead rode the Saw-Horse to the Emerald City."

"What became of the Saw-Horse, afterward?" asked the shaggy man, much interested in this story.

"Oh, it's alive yet, and you will probably meet it presently in the Emerald City. Afterward Ozma used the last of the Powder to bring the Flying Gump to life; but as soon as it had carried her away from her enemies the Gump was taken apart, so it doesn't exist any more."

"It's too bad the Powder of Life was all used up," remarked the shaggy man; "it would be a handy thing to have around."

"I am not so sure of that, sir," answered the Tin Woodman. "A while ago the crooked Sorcerer who invented the magic Powder fell down a precipice and was killed. All his possessions went to a relative — an old woman named Dyna, who lives in the Emerald City. She went to the mountains where the Sorcerer had lived and brought away everything she thought of value. Among them was a small bottle of the Powder of Life; but of course

Dyna didn't know it was a magic Powder, at all. It happened she had once had a big blue bear for a pet; but the bear choked to death on a fishbone one day, and she loved it so dearly that Dyna made a rug of its skin, leaving the head and four paws on the hide. She kept the rug on the floor of her front parlor."

"I've seen rugs like that," said the shaggy man, nodding, "but never one made from a blue bear."

"Well," continued the Tin Woodman, "the old woman had an idea that the Powder in the bottle must be moth-powder, because it smelled something like moth-powder; so one day she sprinkled it on her bear rug to keep the moths out of it. She said, looking lovingly at the skin: 'I wish my dear bear were alive again!' To her horror the bear rug at once came to life, having been sprinkled with the Magic Powder; and now this live bear rug is a great trial to her, and makes her a lot of trouble."

"Why?" asked the shaggy man.

"Well, it stands up on its four feet and walks all around, and gets in the way; and that spoils it for a rug. It can't speak, although it is alive; for, while its head might say words, it has no breath in a solid body to push the words out of its mouth. It's a very slimpsy affair altogether, that bear rug, and the old woman is sorry it came to life. Every day she has to scold it, and make it lie down flat on the parlor floor to be walked upon; but sometimes when she goes to market the rug will hump up its back skin, and stand on its four feet, and trot along after her."

“I should think Dyna would like that,” said Dorothy.

“Well, she doesn’t; because every one knows it isn’t a real bear, but just a hollow skin, and so of no actual use in the world except for a rug,” answered the Tin Woodman. “Therefore I believe it is a good thing that all the magic Powder of Life is now used up, as it cannot cause any more trouble.”

“Perhaps you’re right,” said the shaggy man, thoughtfully.

At noon they stopped at a farm-house, where it delighted the farmer and his wife to be able to give them a good luncheon. The farm people knew Dorothy, having seen her when she was in the country before, and they treated the little girl with as much respect as they did the Emperor, because she was a friend of the powerful Princess Ozma.

They had not proceeded far after leaving this farm-house before coming to a high bridge over a broad river. This river, the Tin Woodman informed them, was the boundary between the Country of the Winkies and the territory of the Emerald City. The city itself was still a long way off, but all around it was a green meadow, as pretty as a well-kept lawn, and in this were neither houses nor farms to spoil the beauty of the scene.

From the top of the high bridge they could see far away the magnificent spires and splendid domes of the superb city, sparkling like brilliant jewels as they towered above the emerald walls. The shaggy man drew a deep breath of awe and amazement, for never had he dreamed that such a grand and beautiful place could exist — even in the fairyland of Oz.

Polly was so pleased that her violet eyes sparkled like amethysts, and she danced away from her companions across the bridge and into a group of feathery trees lining both the roadsides. These trees she stopped to look at with pleasure and surprise, for their leaves were shaped like ostrich plumes, their feather edges beautifully curled; and all the plumes were tinted in the same dainty rainbow hues that appeared in Polychrome’s own pretty gauze gown.

“Father ought to see these trees,” she murmured; “they are almost as lovely as his own rainbows.”

Then she gave a start of terror, for beneath the trees came stalking two great beasts, either one big enough to crush the little Daughter of the Rainbow with one blow of his paws, or to eat her up with one snap of his enormous jaws. One was a tawny lion, as tall as a horse, nearly; the other a striped tiger almost the same size.

Polly was too frightened to scream or to stir; she stood still with a wildly beating heart until Dorothy rushed past her and with a glad cry threw her arms around the huge lion’s neck, hugging and kissing the beast with evident joy.

“Oh, I’m *so* glad to see you again!” cried the little Kansas girl. “And the Hungry Tiger, too! How fine you’re both looking. Are you well and happy?”

DOROTHY THREW HER ARMS AROUND THE LION’S NECK

“We certainly are, Dorothy,” answered the Lion, in a deep voice that sounded pleasant and kind; “and we are greatly pleased that you have come to Ozma’s party. It’s going to be a grand affair, I promise you.”

“There will be lots of fat babies at the celebration, I hear,” remarked the Hungry Tiger, yawning so that his mouth opened dreadfully wide and showed all his big, sharp teeth; “but of course I can’t eat any of ‘em.”

“Is your Conscience still in good order?” asked Dorothy, anxiously.

“Yes; it rules me like a tyrant,” answered the Tiger, sorrowfully. “I can

imagine nothing more unpleasant than to own a Conscience," and he winked slyly at his friend the Lion.

"You're fooling me!" said Dorothy, with a laugh. "I don't b'lieve you'd eat a baby if you lost your Conscience. Come here, Polly," she called, "and be introduced to my friends."

Polly advanced rather shyly.

"You have some queer friends, Dorothy," she said.

"The queerness doesn't matter, so long as they're friends," was the answer. "This is the Cowardly Lion, who isn't a coward at all, but just thinks he is. The Wizard gave him some courage once, and he has part of it left."

The Lion bowed with great dignity to Polly.

"You are very lovely, my dear," said he. "I hope we shall be friends when we are better acquainted."

"And this is the Hungry Tiger," continued Dorothy. "He says he longs to eat fat babies; but the truth is he is never hungry at all, 'cause he gets plenty to eat; and I don't s'pose he'd hurt anybody even if he was hungry."

"Hush, Dorothy," whispered the Tiger; "you'll ruin my reputation if you are not more discreet. It isn't what we are, but what folks think we are, that counts in this world. And come to think of it Miss Polly would make a fine variegated breakfast, I'm sure."

18. The Emerald City

THE others now came up, and the Tin Woodman greeted the Lion and the Tiger cordially. Button-Bright yelled with fear when Dorothy first took his hand and led him toward the great beasts; but the girl insisted they were kind and good, and so the boy mustered up courage enough to pat their heads; after they had spoken to him gently and he had looked into their intelligent eyes his fear vanished entirely and he was so delighted with the animals that he wanted to keep close to them and stroke their soft fur every minute.

As for the shaggy man, he might have been afraid if he had met the beasts alone, or in any other country; but so many were the marvels in the Land of Oz that he was no longer easily surprised, and Dorothy's friendship for the Lion and Tiger was enough to assure him they were safe companions. Toto barked at the Cowardly Lion in joyous greeting, for he knew the beast of old and loved him, and it was funny to see how gently the Lion raised his huge paw to pat Toto's head. The little dog smelled of the Tiger's nose and the Tiger politely shook paws with him; so they were quite likely to become firm friends.

Tik-tok and Billina knew the beasts well, so merely bade them good day and asked after their healths and inquired about the Princess Ozma.

Now it was seen that the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger were

drawing behind them a splendid golden chariot, to which they were harnessed by golden cords. The body of the chariot was decorated on the outside with designs in clusters of sparkling emeralds, while inside it was lined with a green and gold satin, and the cushions of the seats were of green plush embroidered in gold with a crown, underneath which was a monogram.

"Why, it's Ozma's own royal chariot!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Yes," said the Cowardly Lion; "Ozma sent us to meet you here, for she feared you would be weary with your long walk and she wished you to enter the City in a style becoming your exalted rank."

"What!" cried Polly, looking at Dorothy curiously. "Do you belong to the nobility?"

"Just in Oz I do," said the child, "'cause Ozma made me a Princess, you know. But when I'm home in Kansas I'm only a country girl, and have to help with the churning and wipe the dishes while Aunt Em washes 'em. Do you have to help wash dishes on the rainbow, Polly?"

"No, dear," answered Polychrome, smiling.

"Well, I don't have to work any in Oz, either," said Dorothy. "It's kind of fun to be a Princess once in a while; don't you think so?"

"Dorothy and Polychrome and Button-Bright are all to ride in the chariot," said the Lion. "So get in, my dears, and be careful not to mar the gold or put your dusty feet on the embroidery."

Button-Bright was delighted to ride behind such a superb team, and he told Dorothy it made him feel like an actor in a circus. As the strides of the animals brought them nearer to the Emerald City every one bowed

respectfully to the children, as well as to the Tin Woodman, Tik-tok, and the shaggy man, who were following behind.

The Yellow Hen had perched upon the back of the chariot, where she could tell Dorothy more about her wonderful chickens as they rode. And so the grand chariot came finally to the high wall surrounding the City, and paused before the magnificent jewel-studded gates.

These were opened by a cheerful looking little man who wore green spectacles over his eyes. Dorothy introduced him to her friends as the Guardian of the Gates, and they noticed a big bunch of keys suspended on the golden chain that hung around his neck. The chariot passed through the outer gates into a fine arched chamber built in the thick wall, and through the inner gates into the streets of the Emerald City.

Polychrome exclaimed in rapture at the wondrous beauty that met her eyes on every side as they rode through this stately and imposing City, the equal of which has never been discovered, even in Fairyland. Button-Bright could only say "My!" so amazing was the sight; but his eyes were wide open and he tried to look in every direction at the same time, so as not to miss anything.

The shaggy man was fairly astounded at what he saw, for the graceful and handsome buildings were covered with plates of gold and set with emeralds so splendid and valuable that in any other part of the world any one of them would have been worth a fortune to its owner. The sidewalks were superb marble slabs polished as smooth as glass, and the curbs that separated the walks from the broad street were also set thick with clustered emeralds.

There were many people on these walks — men, women, and children — all dressed in handsome garments of silk or satin or velvet, with beautiful jewels. Better even than this: all seemed happy and contented, for their faces were smiling and free from care, and music and laughter might be heard on every side.

"Don't they work, at all?" asked the shaggy man.

"To be sure they work," replied the Tin Woodman; "this fair city could not be built or cared for without labor, nor could the fruit and vegetables and other food be provided for the inhabitants to eat. But no one works more than half his time, and the people of Oz enjoy their labors as much as they do their play."

"It's wonderful!" declared the shaggy man. "I do hope Ozma will let me live here."

The chariot, winding through many charming streets, paused before a building so vast and noble and elegant that even Button-Bright guessed at once that it was the Royal Palace. Its gardens and ample grounds were surrounded by a separate wall, not so high or thick as the wall around the City, but more daintily designed and built all of green marble. The gates flew open as the chariot appeared before them, and the Cowardly Lion and Hungry Tiger trotted up a jeweled driveway to the front door of the palace and stopped short.

"Here we are!" said Dorothy, gaily, and helped Button-Bright from the chariot. Polychrome leaped out lightly after them, and they were greeted by a crowd of gorgeously dressed servants who bowed low as the visitors mounted the marble steps. At their head was a pretty little maid with dark hair and eyes, dressed all in green embroidered with silver. Dorothy ran up to her with evident pleasure, and exclaimed:

"O Jellia Jamb! I'm so glad to see you again. Where's Ozma?"

"In her room, your Highness," replied the little maid demurely, for this was Ozma's favorite attendant. "She wishes you to come to her as soon as you have rested and changed your dress, Princess Dorothy. And you and your friends are to dine with her this evening."

"When is her birthday, Jellia?" asked the girl.

"Day after to-morrow, your Highness."

"And where's the Scarecrow?"

"He's gone into the Munchkin country to get some fresh straw to stuff himself with, in honor of Ozma's celebration," replied the maid. "He returns to the Emerald City to-morrow, he said."

By this time Tik-tok, the Tin Woodman, and the shaggy man had arrived and the chariot had gone around to the back of the palace, Billina going with

the Lion and Tiger to see her chickens after her absence from them. But Toto stayed close beside Dorothy.

"O, JELLIA JAMB! I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU"

"Come in, please," said Jellia Jamb; "it shall be our pleasant duty to escort all of you to the rooms prepared for your use."

The shaggy man hesitated. Dorothy had never known him to be ashamed of his shaggy looks before, but now that he was surrounded by so much magnificence and splendor the shaggy man felt sadly out of place.

Dorothy assured him that all her friends were welcome at Ozma's palace, so he carefully dusted his shaggy shoes with his shaggy handkerchief and entered the grand hall after the others.

Tik-tok lived at the Royal Palace and the Tin Woodman always had the same room whenever he visited Ozma, so these two went at once to remove the dust of the journey from their shining bodies. Dorothy also had a pretty suite of rooms which she always occupied when in the Emerald City; but several servants walked ahead politely to show the way, although she was quite sure she could find the rooms herself. She took Button-Bright with her, because he seemed too small to be left alone in such a big palace; but Jellia Jamb herself ushered the beautiful Daughter of the Rainbow to her apartments, because it was easy to see that Polychrome was used to splendid palaces and was therefore entitled to especial attention.

19. The Shaggy Man's Welcome

THE shaggy man stood in the great hall, his shaggy hat in his hands, wondering what would become of him. He had never been a guest in a fine palace before; perhaps he had never been a guest anywhere. In the big, cold, outside world people did not invite shaggy men to their homes, and this shaggy man of ours had slept more in hay-lofts and stables than in comfortable rooms. When the others left the great hall he eyed the splendidly dressed servants of the Princess Ozma as if he expected to be ordered out; but one of them bowed before him as respectfully as if he had been a prince, and said:

"Permit me, sir, to conduct you to your apartments."

The shaggy man drew a long breath and took courage.

"Very well," he answered; "I'm ready."

Through the big hall they went, up the grand staircase carpeted thick with velvet, and so along a wide corridor to a carved doorway. Here the servant paused, and opening the door said with polite deference:

"Be good enough to enter, sir, and make yourself at home in the rooms our Royal Ozma has ordered prepared for you. Whatever you see is for you to use and enjoy, as if your own. The Princess dines at seven, and I shall be here in time to lead you to the drawing-room, where you will be privileged to meet the lovely Ruler of Oz. Is there any command, in the meantime, with which you desire to honor me?"

"No," said the shaggy man; "but I'm much obliged."

He entered the room and shut the door, and for a time stood in bewilderment, admiring the grandeur before him.

He had been given one of the handsomest apartments in the most magnificent palace in the world, and you can not wonder that his good fortune astonished and awed him until he grew used to his surroundings.

The furniture was upholstered in cloth of gold, with the royal crown embroidered upon it in scarlet. The rug upon the marble floor was so thick and soft that he could not hear the sound of his own footsteps, and upon the walls were splendid tapestries woven with scenes from the Land of Oz. Books and ornaments were scattered about in profusion, and the shaggy man thought he had never seen so many pretty things in one place before. In one corner played a tinkling fountain of perfumed water, and in another was a table bearing a golden tray loaded with freshly gathered fruit, including several of the red-cheeked apples that the shaggy man loved.

At the farther end of this charming room was an open doorway, and he

crossed over to find himself in a bedroom containing more comforts than the shaggy man had ever before imagined. The bedstead was of gold and set with many brilliant diamonds, and the coverlet had designs of pearls and rubies sewed upon it. At one side of the bedroom was a dainty dressing-room, with closets containing a large assortment of fresh clothing; and beyond this was the bath — a large room having a marble pool big enough to swim in, with white marble steps leading down to the water. Around the edge of the pool were set rows of fine emeralds as large as door-knobs, while the water of the bath was clear as crystal.

THE SHAGGY MAN ADMIRES HIS NEW CLOTHES

For a time the shaggy man gazed upon all this luxury with silent amazement.

Then he decided, being wise in his way, to take advantage of his good fortune. He removed his shaggy boots and his shaggy clothing, and bathed in the pool with rare enjoyment. After he had dried himself with the soft towels he went into the dressing-room and took fresh linen from the drawers and put it on, finding that everything fitted him exactly. He examined the contents of the closets and selected an elegant suit of clothing. Strangely enough, everything about it was shaggy, although so new and beautiful, and he sighed with contentment to realize that he could now be finely dressed and still be the Shaggy Man. His coat was of rose-colored velvet, trimmed with shags and bobtails, with buttons of blood-red rubies and golden shags around the edges. His vest was a shaggy satin of a delicate cream color, and his knee-breeches of rose velvet trimmed like the coat. Shaggy creamy stockings of silk, and shaggy slippers of rose leather with ruby buckles, completed his costume, and when he was thus attired the shaggy man looked at himself in a long mirror with great admiration. On a table he found a mother-of-pearl chest decorated with delicate silver vines and flowers of clustered rubies, and on the cover was a silver plate engraved with these words:

THE SHAGGY MAN:
HIS BOX OF ORNAMENTS

The chest was not locked, so he opened it and was almost dazzled by the brilliance of the rich jewels it contained. After admiring the pretty things, he took out a fine golden watch with a big chain, several handsome finger-rings, and an ornament of rubies to pin upon the breast of his shaggy shirt-bosom. Having carefully brushed his hair and whiskers all the wrong way, to make them look as shaggy as possible, the shaggy man breathed a deep sigh of joy and decided he was ready to meet the Royal Princess as soon as she sent for him. While he waited he returned to the beautiful sitting room and ate several of the red-cheeked apples to pass away the time.

Meanwhile Dorothy had dressed herself in a pretty gown of soft grey embroidered with silver, and put a blue-and-gold suit of satin upon little Button-Bright, who looked as sweet as a cherub in it. Followed by the boy and Toto — the dog with a new green ribbon around his neck — she hastened down to the splendid drawing-room of the palace, where, seated upon an exquisite throne of carved malachite and nestled amongst its green satin cushions was the lovely Princess Ozma, waiting eagerly to welcome her friend.

20. Princess Ozma of Oz

THE royal historians of Oz, who are fine writers and know any number of big words, have often tried to describe the rare beauty of Ozma and failed because the words were not good enough. So of course I can not hope to tell you how great was the charm of this little Princess, or how her loveliness put to shame all the sparkling jewels and magnificent luxury that surrounded her in this her royal palace. Whatever else was beautiful or dainty or delightful of itself faded to dullness when contrasted with Ozma's bewitching face, and it has often been said by those who know that no other ruler in all the world can ever hope to equal the gracious charm of her manner.

Everything about Ozma attracted one, and she inspired love and the sweetest affection rather than awe or ordinary admiration. Dorothy threw her arms around her little friend and hugged and kissed her rapturously, and Toto barked joyfully and Button-Bright smiled a happy smile and consented to sit on the soft cushions close beside the Princess.

"Why didn't you send me word you were going to have a birthday party?" asked the little Kansas girl, when the first greetings were over.

"Didn't I?" asked Ozma, her pretty eyes dancing with merriment.

"Did you?" replied Dorothy, trying to think.

“Who do you imagine, dear, mixed up those roads, so as to start you wandering in the direction of Oz?” inquired the Princess.

“Oh! I never ‘spected *you* of that,” cried Dorothy.

“I’ve watched you in my Magic Picture all the way here,” declared Ozma, “and twice I thought I should have to use the Magic Belt to save you and transport you to the Emerald City. Once was when the Scoodlers caught you, and again when you reached the Deadly Desert. But the shaggy man was able to help you out both times, so I did not interfere.”

“Do you know who Button-Bright is?” asked Dorothy.

“No; I never saw him until you found him in the road, and then only in my Magic Picture.”

“And did you send Polly to us?”

“No, dear; the Rainbow’s Daughter slid from her father’s pretty arch just in time to meet you.”

“Well,” said Dorothy, “I’ve promised King Dox of Foxville and King Kik-a-bray of Dunkiton that I’d ask you to invite them to your party.”

“I have already done that,” returned Ozma, “because I thought it would please you to favor them.”

“Did you ‘vite the Musicker?” asked Button-Bright.

“No; because he would be too noisy, and might interfere with the comfort of others. When music is not very good, and is indulged in all the time, it is better that the performer should be alone,” said the Princess.

“I like the Musicker’s music,” declared the boy, gravely.

“But I don’t,” said Dorothy.

“Well, there will be plenty of music at my celebration,” promised Ozma; “so I’ve an idea Button-Bright won’t miss the Musicker at all.”

Just then Polychrome danced in, and Ozma rose to greet the Rainbow’s Daughter in her sweetest and most cordial manner.

Dorothy thought she had never seen two prettier creatures together than these lovely maidens; but Polly knew at once her own dainty beauty could not match that of Ozma, yet was not a bit jealous because this was so.

The Wizard of Oz was announced, and a dried-up, little, old man, clothed all in black, entered the drawing-room. His face was cheery and his eyes twinkling with humor, so Polly and Button-Bright were not at all afraid of the wonderful personage whose fame as a humbug magician had spread throughout the world. After greeting Dorothy with much affection, he stood modestly behind Ozma’s throne and listened to the lively prattle of the young people.

Now the shaggy man appeared, and so startling was his appearance, all clad in shaggy new raiment, that Dorothy cried “Oh!” and clasped her hands impulsively as she examined her friend with pleased eyes.

“He’s still shaggy, all right,” remarked Button-Bright; and Ozma nodded brightly because she had meant the shaggy man to remain shaggy when she provided his new clothes for him.

Dorothy led him toward the throne, as he was shy in such fine company, and presented him gracefully to the Princess, saying:

“This, your Highness, is my friend, the shaggy man, who owns the Love Magnet.”

“You are welcome to Oz,” said the girl Ruler, in gracious accents. “But tell me, sir, where did you get the Love Magnet which you say you own?”

The shaggy man grew red and looked downcast, as he answered in a low voice:

“I stole it, your Majesty.”

“Oh, Shaggy Man!” cried Dorothy. “How dreadful! And you told me the Eskimo gave you the Love Magnet.”

He shuffled first on one foot and then on the other, much embarrassed.

“I told you a falsehood, Dorothy,” he said; “but now, having bathed in the Truth Pond, I must tell nothing but the truth.”

“Why did you steal it?” asked Ozma, gently.

“Because no one loved me, or cared for me,” said the shaggy man, “and I wanted to be loved a great deal. It was owned by a girl in Butterfield who was loved too much, so that the young men quarreled over her, which made her unhappy. After I had stolen the Magnet from her, only one young man continued to love the girl, and she married him and regained her happiness.”

“Are you sorry you stole it?” asked the Princess.

“No, your Highness; I’m glad,” he answered; “for it has pleased me to be loved, and if Dorothy had not cared for me I could not have accompanied her to this beautiful Land of Oz, or met its kind-hearted Ruler. Now that I’m here, I hope to remain, and to become one of your Majesty’s most faithful subjects.”

IN THE ROYAL PALACE OF OZ

"But in Oz we are loved for ourselves alone, and for our kindness to one another, and for our good deeds," she said.

"I'll give up the Love Magnet," said the shaggy man, eagerly; "Dorothy shall have it."

"But every one loves Dorothy already," declared the Wizard.

"Then Button-Bright shall have it."

"Don't want it," said the boy, promptly.

"Then I'll give it to the Wizard, for I'm sure the lovely Princess Ozma does not need it."

"All my people love the Wizard, too," announced the Princess, laughing;

“so we will hang the Love Magnet over the gates of the Emerald City, that whoever shall enter or leave the gates may be loved and loving.”

“That is a good idea,” said the shaggy man; “I agree to it most willingly.”

Those assembled now went in to dinner, which you may imagine was a grand affair; and afterward Ozma asked the Wizard to give them an exhibition of his magic.

The Wizard took eight tiny white piglets from an inside pocket and set them on the table. One was dressed like a clown, and performed funny antics, and the others leaped over the spoons and dishes and ran around the table like racehorses, and turned hand-springs and were so sprightly and amusing that they kept the company in one roar of merry laughter. The Wizard had trained these pets to do many curious things, and they were so little and so cunning and soft that Polychrome loved to pick them up as they passed near her place and fondle them as if they were kittens.

It was late when the entertainment ended, and they separated to go to their rooms.

“To-morrow,” said Ozma, “my invited guests will arrive, and you will find among them some interesting and curious people, I promise you. The next day will be my birthday, and the festivities will be held on the broad green just outside the gates of the City, where all my people can assemble without being crowded.”

“I hope the Scarecrow won’t be late,” said Dorothy, anxiously.

“Oh, he is sure to return to-morrow,” answered Ozma. “He wanted new straw to stuff himself with, so he went to the Munchkin Country, where straw

is plentiful.”

With this the Princess bade her guests good night and went to her own room.

21. Dorothy Receives the Guests

NEXT morning Dorothy's breakfast was served in her own pretty sitting room, and she sent to invite Polly and the shaggy man to join her and Button-Bright at the meal. They came gladly, and Toto also had breakfast with them, so that the little party that had traveled together to Oz was once more reunited.

No sooner had they finished eating than they heard the distant blast of many trumpets, and the sound of a brass band playing martial music; so they all went out upon the balcony. This was at the front of the palace and overlooked the streets of the City, being higher than the wall that shut in the palace grounds. They saw approaching down the street a band of musicians, playing as hard and loud as they could, while the people of the Emerald City crowded the sidewalks and cheered so lustily that they almost drowned the noise of the drums and horns.

Dorothy looked to see what they were cheering at, and discovered that behind the band was the famous Scarecrow, riding proudly upon the back of a wooden Saw-Horse which pranced along the street almost as gracefully as if it had been made of flesh. Its hoofs, or rather the ends of its wooden legs, were shod with plates of solid gold, and the saddle strapped to the wooden body was richly embroidered and glittered with jewels.

As he reached the palace the Scarecrow looked up and saw Dorothy, and at once waved his peaked hat at her in greeting. He rode up to the front door and dismounted, and the band stopped playing and went away and the crowds of people returned to their dwellings.

By the time Dorothy and her friends had re-entered her room the Scarecrow was there, and he gave the girl a hearty embrace and shook the hands of the others with his own squashy hands, which were white gloves filled with straw.

The shaggy man, Button-Bright, and Polychrome stared hard at this celebrated person, who was acknowledged to be the most popular and most beloved man in all the Land of Oz.

"Why, your face has been newly painted!" exclaimed Dorothy, when the first greetings were over.

"I had it touched up a bit by the Munchkin farmer who first made me," answered the Scarecrow, pleasantly. "My complexion had become a bit grey and faded, you know, and the paint had peeled off one end of my mouth, so I couldn't talk quite straight. Now I feel like myself again, and I may say without immodesty that my body is stuffed with the loveliest oat-straw in all

Oz.” He pushed against his chest. “Hear me crunkle?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Dorothy; “you sound fine.”

Button-Bright was wonderfully attracted by the straw man, and so was Polly. The shaggy man treated him with great respect, because he was so queerly made.

Jellia Jamb now came to say that Ozma wanted Princess Dorothy to receive the invited guests in the Throne-Room, as they arrived. The Ruler was herself busy ordering the preparations for the morrow’s festivities, so she wished her friend to act in her place.

Dorothy willingly agreed, being the only other Princess in the Emerald City; so she went to the great Throne-Room and sat in Ozma’s seat, placing Polly on one side of her and Button-Bright on the other. The Scarecrow stood at the left of the throne and the Tin Woodman at the right, while the Wonderful Wizard and the shaggy man stood behind.

The Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger came in, with bright new bows of ribbon on their collars and tails. After greeting Dorothy affectionately the huge beasts lay down at the foot of the throne.

While they waited, the Scarecrow, who was near the little boy, asked:

“Why are you called Button-Bright?”

“Don’t know,” was the answer.

“Oh yes, you do, dear,” said Dorothy. “Tell the Scarecrow how you got your name.”

“Papa always said I was bright as a button, so mamma always called me Button-Bright,” announced the boy.

“Where is your mamma?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright.

“Where is your home?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright.

“Don’t you want to find your mamma again?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright, calmly.

The Scarecrow looked thoughtful.

“Your papa may have been right,” he observed; “but there are many kinds of buttons, you see. There are silver and gold buttons, which are highly polished and glitter brightly. There are pearl and rubber buttons, and other kinds, with surfaces more or less bright. But there is still another sort of button which is covered with dull cloth, and that must be the sort your papa meant when he said you were bright as a button. Don’t you think so?”

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright.

Jack Pumpkinhead arrived, wearing a pair of new white kid gloves; and he brought a birthday present for Ozma consisting of a necklace of pumpkin-

seeds. In each seed was set a sparkling carolite, which is considered the rarest and most beautiful gem that exists. The necklace was in a plush case and Jellia Jamb put it on a table with the Princess Ozma's other presents.

Next came a tall, beautiful woman clothed in a splendid trailing gown, trimmed with exquisite lace as fine as cobweb. This was the important Sorceress known as Glinda the Good, who had been of great assistance to both Ozma and Dorothy. There was no humbug about her magic, you may be sure, and Glinda was as kind as she was powerful. She greeted Dorothy most lovingly, and kissed Button-Bright and Polly, and smiled upon the shaggy man, after which Jellia Jamb led the Sorceress to one of the most magnificent rooms of the royal palace and appointed fifty servants to wait upon her.

The next arrival was Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E.; the "H. M." meaning Highly Magnified and the "T. E." meaning Thoroughly Educated. The Woggle-Bug was head professor at the Royal College of Oz, and he had composed a fine Ode in honor of Ozma's birthday. This he wanted to read to them; but the Scarecrow wouldn't let him.

Soon they heard a clucking sound and a chorus of "cheep! cheep!" and a servant threw open the door to allow Billina and her ten fluffy chicks to enter the Throne-Room. As the Yellow Hen marched proudly at the head of her family, Dorothy cried, "Oh, you lovely things!" and ran down from her seat to pet the little yellow downy balls. Billina wore a pearl necklace, and around the neck of each chicken was a tiny gold chain holding a locket with the letter "D" engraved upon the outside.

"Open the lockets, Dorothy," said Billina. The girl obeyed and found a

picture of herself in each locket. “They were named after you, my dear,” continued the Yellow Hen, “so I wanted all my chickens to wear your picture. Cluck — cluck! come here, Dorothy — this minute!” she cried, for the chickens were scattered and wandering all around the big room.

They obeyed the call at once, and came running as fast as they could, fluttering their fluffy wings in a laughable way.

It was lucky that Billina gathered the little ones under her soft breast just then, for Tik-tok came in and tramped up to the throne on his flat copper feet.

“I am all wound up and work-ing fine-ly,” said the clockwork man to Dorothy.

“I can hear him tick,” declared Button-Bright.

“You are quite the polished gentleman,” said the Tin Woodman. “Stand up here beside the shaggy man, Tik-tok, and help receive the company.”

Dorothy placed soft cushions in a corner for Billina and her chicks, and had just returned to the Throne and seated herself when the playing of the royal band outside the palace announced the approach of distinguished guests.

And my, how they did stare when the High Chamberlain threw open the doors and the visitors entered the Throne-Room!

First walked a gingerbread man, neatly formed and baked to a lovely brown tint. He wore a silk hat and carried a candy cane prettily striped with red and yellow. His shirt-front and cuffs were white frosting, and the buttons on his coat were licorice drops.

Behind the gingerbread man came a child with flaxen hair and merry blue eyes, dressed in white pajamas, with sandals on the soles of its pretty bare feet. The child looked around smiling and thrust its hands into the pockets of the pajamas. Close after it came a big rubber bear, walking erect on its hind feet. The bear had twinkling black eyes and its body looked as if it had been pumped full of air.

Following these curious visitors were two tall, thin men and two short, fat men, all four dressed in gorgeous uniforms.

KING DOUGH, THE HEAD BOOLEYWAG, AND PARA BRUIN

Ozma's High Chamberlain now hurried forward to announce the names of the new arrivals, calling out in a loud voice:

"His Gracious and Most Edible Majesty, King Dough the First, Ruler of the Two Kingdoms of Hiland and Loland. Also the Head Booleywag of his Majesty, known as Chick the Cherub, and their faithful friend Para Bruin, the rubber bear."

These great personages bowed low as their names were called, and Dorothy hastened to introduce them to the assembled company. They were the first foreign arrivals, and the friends of Princess Ozma were polite to them and tried to make them feel that they were welcome.

Chick the Cherub shook hands with every one, including Billina, and was so joyous and frank and full of good spirits that John Dough's Head Booleywag at once became a prime favorite.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" whispered Dorothy.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"Goodness me! what a queer lot of people you are," exclaimed the rubber bear, looking at the assembled company.

"So're you," said Button-Bright, gravely. "Is King Dough good to eat?"

"He's too good to eat," laughed Chick the Cherub.

"I hope none of you are fond of gingerbread," said the King, rather anxiously.

"We should never think of eating our visitors, if we were," declared the Scarecrow; "so please do not worry, for you will be perfectly safe while you remain in Oz."

"Why do they call you Chick?" the Yellow Hen asked the child.

"Because I'm an Incubator Baby, and never had any parents," replied the Head Booleywag.

"My chicks have a parent, and I'm it," said Billina.

"I'm glad of that," answered the Cherub, "because they'll have more fun worrying you than if they were brought up in an Incubator. The Incubator never worries, you know."

King John Dough had brought for Ozma's birthday present a lovely gingerbread crown, with rows of small pearls around it and a fine big pearl in each of its five points. After this had been received by Dorothy with proper

thanks and placed on the table with the other presents, the visitors from Hiland and Loland were escorted to their rooms by the High Chamberlain.

They had no sooner departed than the band before the palace began to play again, announcing more arrivals, and as these were doubtless from foreign parts the High Chamberlain hurried back to receive them in his most official manner.

22. Important Arrivals

FIRST entered a band of Ryls from the Happy Valley, all merry little sprites like fairy elves. A dozen crooked Knooks followed from the great Forest of Burzee. They had long whiskers and pointed caps and curling toes, yet were no taller than Button-Bright's shoulder. With this group came a man so easy to recognize and so important and dearly beloved throughout the known world, that all present rose to their feet and bowed their heads in respectful homage, even before the High Chamberlain knelt to announce his name.

"The most Mighty and Loyal Friend of Children, His Supreme Highness — Santa Claus!" said the Chamberlain, in an awed voice.

"Well, well, well! Glad to see you — glad to meet you all!" cried Santa Claus, briskly, as he trotted up the long room.

He was round as an apple, with a fresh rosy face, laughing eyes, and a bushy beard as white as snow. A red cloak trimmed with beautiful ermine hung from his shoulders and upon his back was a basket filled with pretty presents for the Princess Ozma.

"Hello, Dorothy; still having adventures?" he asked in his jolly way, as he took the girl's hand in both his own.

"How did you know my name, Santa?" she replied, feeling more shy in the presence of this immortal saint than she ever had before in her young life.

“Why, don’t I see you every Christmas Eve, when you’re asleep?” he rejoined, pinching her blushing cheek.

“Oh; do you?”

“And here’s Button-Bright, I declare!” cried Santa Claus, holding up the boy to kiss him. “What a long way from home you are; dear me!”

“Do you know Button-Bright, too?” questioned Dorothy, eagerly.

“Indeed I do. I’ve visited his home several Christmas Eves.”

“And do you know his father?” asked the girl.

MERRY RYLS AND CROOKED KNOOKS

“Certainly, my dear. Who else do you suppose brings him his Christmas neckties and stockings?” with a sly wink at the Wizard.

“Then where does he live? We’re just crazy to know, ‘cause Button-Bright’s lost,” she said.

Santa laughed and laid his finger aside of his nose as if thinking what to reply. He leaned over and whispered something in the Wizard’s ear, at which the Wizard smiled and nodded as if he understood.

Now Santa Claus spied Polychrome, and trotted over to where she stood.

“Seems to me the Rainbow’s Daughter is farther from home than any of you,” he observed, looking at the pretty maiden admiringly. “I’ll have to tell your father where you are, Polly, and send him to get you.”

“Please do, dear Santa Claus,” implored the little maid, beseechingly.

“But just now we must all have a jolly good time at Ozma’s party,” said the old gentlemen, turning to put his presents on the table with the others already there. “It isn’t often I find time to leave my castle, as you know; but Ozma invited me and I just couldn’t help coming to celebrate the happy occasion.”

“I’m so glad!” exclaimed Dorothy.

“These are my Ryls,” pointing to the little sprites squatting around him. “Their business is to paint the colors of the flowers when they bud and bloom; but I brought the merry fellows along to see Oz, and they’ve left their paint-pots behind them. Also I brought these crooked Knooks, whom I love. My dears, the Knooks are much nicer than they look, for their duty is to water and care for the young trees of the forest, and they do their work faithfully and well. It’s hard work, though, and it makes my Knooks crooked and gnarled, like the trees themselves; but their hearts are big and kind, as are the hearts of all who do good in our beautiful world.”

“I’ve read of the Ryls and Knooks,” said Dorothy, looking upon these little workers with interest.

Santa Claus turned to talk with the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, and he also said a kind word to the shaggy man, and afterward went away to ride the Saw-horse around the Emerald City. “For,” said he, “I must see all the grand sights while I am here and have the chance, and Ozma has promised to let me ride the Saw-Horse because I’m getting fat and short of breath.”

“Where are your reindeer?” asked Polychrome.

“I left them at home, for it is too warm for them in this sunny country,” he answered. “They’re used to winter weather when they travel.”

In a flash he was gone, and the Ryls and Knooks with him; but they could all hear the golden hoofs of the Saw-Horse ringing on the marble pavement outside, as he pranced away with his noble rider.

Presently the band played again, and the High Chamberlain announced:

"Her Gracious Majesty, the Queen of Merryland."

They looked earnestly to discover whom this queen might be, and saw advancing up the room an exquisite wax doll, dressed in dainty fluffs and ruffles and spangled gown. She was almost as big as Button-Bright, and her cheeks and mouth and eyebrow were prettily painted in delicate colors. Her blue eyes stared a bit, being of glass, yet the expression upon her Majesty's face was quite pleasant and decidedly winning. With the Queen of Merryland were four wooden soldiers, two stalking ahead of her with much dignity and two following behind, like a royal bodyguard. The soldiers were painted in bright colors and carried wooden guns, and after them came a fat little man who attracted attention at once, although he seemed modest and retiring. For he was made of candy, and carried a tin sugar-sifter filled with powdered sugar, with which he dusted himself frequently so that he wouldn't stick to things if he touched them. The High Chamberlain had called him "The Candy Man of Merryland," and Dorothy saw that one of his thumbs looked as if it had been bitten off by some who was fond of candy and couldn't resist the temptation.

The wax doll Queen spoke prettily to Dorothy and the others, and sent her loving greetings to Ozma before she retired to the rooms prepared for her. She had brought a birthday present wrapped in tissue paper and tied with pink and blue ribbons, and one of the wooden soldiers placed it on the table with the other gifts. But the Candy Man did not go to his room, because he said he preferred to stay and talk with the Scarecrow and Tik-tok and the Wizard and Tin Woodman, whom he declared the queerest people he had

ever met. Button-Bright was glad the Candy Man stayed in the Throne-room, because the boy thought this guest smelled deliciously of wintergreen and maple sugar.

The Braided Man now entered the room, having been fortunate enough to receive an invitation to the Princess Ozma's party. He was from a cave halfway between the Invisible Valley and the Country of the Gargoyles, and his hair and whiskers were so long that he was obliged to plait them into many braids that hung to his feet, and every braid was tied with a bow of colored ribbon.

"I've brought Princess Ozma a box of flutters for her birthday," said the Braided Man, earnestly; "and I hope she will like them, for they are the finest quality I have ever made."

"I'm sure she will be greatly pleased," said Dorothy, who remembered the Braided Man well; and the Wizard introduced the guest to the rest of the company and made him sit down in a chair and keep quiet, for, if allowed, he would talk continually about his flutters.

The band then played a welcome to another set of guests, and into the Throne-Room swept the handsome and stately Queen of Ev. Beside her was young King Evardo, and following them came the entire royal family of five Princesses and four Princes of Ev. The Kingdom of Ev lay just across the Deadly Desert to the North of Oz, and once Ozma and her people had rescued the Queen of Ev and her ten children from the Nome King, who had enslaved them. Dorothy had been present on this adventure, so she greeted the royal family cordially; and all the visitors were delighted to meet the little

Kansas girl again. They knew Tik-tok and Billina, too, and the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, as well as the Lion and Tiger; so there was a joyful reunion, as you may imagine, and it was fully an hour before the Queen and her train retired to their rooms. Perhaps they would not have gone then had not the band begun to play to announce new arrivals; but before they left the great Throne-Room King Evardo added to Ozma's birthday presents a diadem of diamonds set in radium.

The next comer proved to be King Renard of Foxville; or King Dox, as he preferred to be called. He was magnificently dressed in a new feather costume and wore white kid mittens over his paws and a flower in his buttonhole and had his hair parted in the middle.

King Dox thanked Dorothy fervently for getting him the invitation to come to Oz, which he had all his life longed to visit. He strutted around rather absurdly as he was introduced to all the famous people assembled in the Throne-Room, and when he learned that Dorothy was a Princess of Oz the Fox King insisted on kneeling at her feet and afterward retired backward — a dangerous thing to do, as he might have stubbed his paw and tumbled over.

No sooner was he gone than the blasts of bugles and clatter of drums and cymbals announced important visitors, and the High Chamberlain assumed his most dignified tone as he threw open the door and said proudly:

"Her Sublime and Resplendent Majesty, Queen Zixi of Ix! His Serene and Tremendous Majesty, King Bud of Noland. Her Royal Highness, the Princess Fluff."

HER MAJESTY, QUEEN ZIXI OF IX

That three such high and mighty royal personages should arrive at once was enough to make Dorothy and her companions grow solemn and assume their best company manners; but when the exquisite beauty of Queen Zixi met their eyes they thought they had never beheld anything so charming. Dorothy decided that Zixi must be about sixteen years old, but the Wizard whispered to her that this wonderful queen had lived thousands of years, but knew the secret of remaining always fresh and beautiful.

King Bud of Noland and his dainty fair-haired sister, the Princess Fluff, were friends of Zixi, as their kingdoms were adjoining, so they had traveled together from their far-off domains to do honor to Ozma of Oz on the

occasion of her birthday. They brought many splendid gifts; so the table was now fairly loaded down with presents.

Dorothy and Polly loved the Princess Fluff the moment they saw her, and little King Bud was so frank and boyish that Button-Bright accepted him as a chum at once and did not want him to go away. But it was after noon now, and the royal guests must prepare their toilets for the grand banquet at which they were to assemble that evening to meet the reigning Princess of this Fairyland; so Queen Zixi was shown to her room by a troop of maidens led by Jellia Jamb, and Bud and Fluff presently withdrew to their own apartments.

"My! what a big party Ozma is going to have," exclaimed Dorothy. "I guess the palace will be chock full, Button-Bright; don't you think so?"

"Don't know," said the boy.

"But we must go to our rooms, pretty soon, to dress for the banquet," continued the girl.

"I don't have to dress," said the Candy Man from Merryland. "All I need do is to dust myself with fresh sugar."

"Tik-tok and I always wear the same suits of clothes," said the Tin Woodman; "and so does our friend the Scarecrow."

"My feathers are good enough for any occasion," cried Billina, from her corner.

"Then I shall leave you four to welcome any new guests that come," said Dorothy; "for Button-Bright and I must look our very best at Ozma's banquet."

“Who is still to come?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Well, there’s King Kika-bray of Dunkiton, and Johnny Dooit, and the Good Witch of the North. But Johnny Dooit may not get here until late, he’s so very busy.”

“We will receive them and give them a proper welcome,” promised the Scarecrow. “So run along, little Dorothy, and get yourself dressed.”

23. The Grand Banquet

I WISH I could tell you how fine the company was that assembled that evening at Ozma's royal banquet. A long table was spread in the center of the great dining-hall of the palace and the splendor of the decorations and the blaze of lights and jewels was acknowledged to be the most magnificent sight that any of the guests had ever seen.

The jolliest person present, as well as the most important, was of course, old Santa Claus; so he was given the seat of honor at one end of the table while at the other end sat Princess Ozma, the hostess.

John Dough, Queen Zixi, King Bud, the Queen of Ev and her son Evardo, and the Queen of Merryland had golden thrones to sit in, while the others were supplied with beautiful chairs.

At the upper end of the banquet room was a separate table provided for the animals. Toto sat at one end of this table, with a bib tied around his neck and a silver platter to eat from. At the other end was placed a small stand, with a low rail around the edge of it, for Billina and her chicks. The rail kept the ten little Dorothys from falling off the stand, while the Yellow Hen could easily reach over and take her food from her tray upon the table. At other places sat the Hungry Tiger, the Cowardly Lion, the Saw-Horse, the Rubber Bear, the Fox King and the Donkey King; they made quite a company of animals.

At the lower end of the great room was another table, at which sat the Ryls and Knooks who had come with Santa Claus, the wooden soldiers who had come with the Queen of Merryland, and the Hilanders and Lolanders who had come with John Dough. Here were also seated the officers of the royal palace and of Ozma's army.

The splendid costumes of those at the three tables made a gorgeous and glittering display that no one present was ever likely to forget; perhaps there has never been in any part of the world at any time another assemblage of such wonderful people as that which gathered this evening to honor the birthday of the Ruler of Oz.

When all the members of the company were in their places an orchestra of five hundred pieces, in a balcony overlooking the banquet room, began to play sweet and delightful music. Then a door draped with royal green opened, and in came the fair and girlish Princess Ozma, who now greeted her guests in person for the first time.

As she stood by her throne at the head of the banquet table every eye was turned eagerly upon the lovely Princess, who was as dignified as she was bewitching, and who smiled upon all her old and new friends in a way that touched their hearts and brought an answering smile to every face.

Each guest had been served with a crystal goblet filled with lacasa, which is a sort of nectar famous in Oz and nicer to drink than soda-water or lemonade. Santa now made a pretty speech in verse, congratulating Ozma on having a birthday, and asking every one present to drink to the health and happiness of their dearly beloved hostess. This was done with great enthusiasm by those who were made so they could drink at all, and those who could not drink politely touched the rims of their goblets to their lips. All seated themselves at the tables and the servants of the Princess began serving the feast.

I am quite sure that only in Fairyland could such a delicious repast be prepared. The dishes were of precious metals set with brilliant jewels and the good things to eat which were placed upon them were countless in number and of exquisite flavor. Several present, such as the Candy Man, the Rubber Bear, Tik-tok, and the Scarecrow, were not made so they could eat, and the Queen of Merryland contented herself with a small dish of sawdust; but these enjoyed the pomp and glitter of the gorgeous scene as much as did those who feasted.

DRINKING THE HEALTH OF PRINCESS OZMA OF OZ

The Woggle-Bug read his "Ode to Ozma," which was written in very good rhythm and was well received by the company. The Wizard added to the entertainment by making a big pie appear before Dorothy, and when the little girl cut the pie the nine tiny piglets leaped out of it and danced around the table, while the orchestra played a merry tune. This amused the company very much, but they were even more pleased when Polychrome, whose hunger had been easily satisfied, rose from the table and performed her graceful and bewildering Rainbow Dance for them. When it was ended the people clapped their hands and the animals clapped their paws, while Billina cackled and the Donkey King brayed approval.

Johnny Dooit was present, and of course he proved he could do wonders in the way of eating, as well as in everything else that he undertook to do; the Tin Woodman sang a love song, every one joining in the chorus; and the wooden soldiers from Merryland gave an exhibition of a lightning drill with their wooden muskets; the Ryls and Knooks danced the Fairy Circle; and the Rubber Bear bounced himself all around the room. There was laughter and merriment on every side, and everybody was having a royal good time. Button-Bright was so excited and interested that he paid little attention to his fine dinner and a great deal of attention to his queer companions; and perhaps he was wise to do this, because he could eat at any other time.

The feasting and merrymaking continued until late in the evening, when they separated to meet again the next morning and take part in the birthday celebration, to which this royal banquet was merely the introduction.

24. The Birthday Celebration

A CLEAR, perfect day, with a gentle breeze and a sunny sky, greeted Princess Ozma as she wakened next morning, the anniversary of her birth. While it was yet early all the city was astir and crowds of people came from all parts of the Land of Oz to witness the festivities in honor of their girl Ruler's birthday.

The noted visitors from foreign countries, who had all been transported to the Emerald City by means of the Magic Belt, were as much a show to the Ozites as were their own familiar celebrities, and the streets leading from the royal palace to the jeweled gates were thronged with men, women, and children to see the procession as it passed out to the green fields where the ceremonies were to take place.

And what a great procession it was!

First came a thousand young girls — the prettiest in the land — dressed in white muslin, with green sashes and hair ribbons, bearing great baskets of red roses. As they walked they scattered these flowers upon the marble pavements, so that the way was carpeted thick with roses for the procession to walk upon.

Then came the Rulers of the four Kingdoms of Oz; the Emperor of the Winkies, the Monarch of the Munchkins, the King of the Quadlings and the

Sovereign of the Gillikins, each wearing a long chain of emeralds around his neck to show that he was a vassal of the Ruler of the Emerald City.

Next marched the Emerald City Cornet Band, clothed in green-and-gold uniforms and playing the "Ozma Two-Step." The Royal Army of Oz followed, consisting of twenty-seven officers, from the Captain-General down to the Lieutenants. There were no privates in Ozma's Army because soldiers were not needed to fight battles, but only to look important, and an officer always looks more imposing than a private.

While the people cheered and waved their hats and handkerchiefs, there came walking the Royal Princess Ozma, looking so pretty and sweet that it is no wonder her people love her so dearly. She had decided she would not ride in her chariot that day, as she preferred to walk in the procession with her favored subjects and her guests. Just in front of her trotted the living Blue Bear Rug owned by old Dyna, which wobbled clumsily on its four feet because there was nothing but the skin to support them, with a stuffed head at one end and a stubby tail at the other. But whenever Ozma paused in her walk the Bear Rug would flop down flat upon the ground for the princess to stand upon until she resumed her progress.

Following the Princess stalked her two enormous beasts, the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, and even if the Army had not been there these two would have been powerful enough to guard their mistress from any harm.

Next marched the invited guests, who were loudly cheered by the people of Oz along the road, and were therefore obliged to bow to right and left almost every step of the way. First was Santa Claus, who, because he was fat and not used to walking, rode the wonderful Saw-Horse. The merry old gentleman had a basket of small toys with him, and he tossed the toys one by one to the children as he passed by. His Ryls and Knooks marched close behind him.

Queen Zixi of Ix came after; then John Dough and the Cherub, with the rubber bear named Para Bruin strutting between them on its hind legs; then the Queen of Merryland, escorted by her wooden soldiers; then King Bud of Noland and his sister, the Princess Fluff; then the Queen of Ev and her ten royal children; then the Braided Man and the Candy Man, side by side; then King Dox of Foxville and King Kik-a-bray of Dunkiton, who by this time had become good friends; and finally Johnny Dooit, in his leather apron, smoking his long pipe.

These wonderful personages were not more heartily cheered by the people than were those who followed after them in the procession. Dorothy was a general favorite, and she walked arm in arm with the Scarecrow, who was beloved by all. Then came Polychrome and Button-Bright, and the people loved the Rainbow's pretty Daughter and the beautiful blue-eyed boy as soon as they saw them. The shaggy man in his shaggy new suit attracted much attention because he was such a novelty. With regular steps tramped the machine-man Tik-tok, and there was more cheering when the Wizard of Oz followed in the procession. The Woggle-Bug and Jack Pumpkinhead were next, and behind them Glinda the Sorceress and the Good Witch of the North. Finally came Billina, with her brood of chickens to whom she clucked anxiously to keep them together and to hasten them along so they would not delay the procession.

Another band followed, this time the Tin Band of the Emperor of the Winkies, playing a beautiful march called, "There's No Plate like Tin." Then came the servants of the Royal Palace, in a long line, and behind them all the people joined the procession and marched away through the emerald gates and out upon the broad green.

Here had been erected a splendid pavilion, with a grandstand big enough to seat all the royal party and those who had taken part in the procession. Over the pavilion, which was of green silk and cloth of gold, countless banners waved in the breeze. Just in front of this, and connected with it by a runway, had been built a broad platform, so that all the spectators could see plainly the entertainment provided for them.

The Wizard now became Master of Ceremonies, as Ozma had placed the conduct of the performance in his hands. After the people had all congregated about the platform and the royal party and the visitors were seated in the grandstand, the Wizard skillfully performed some feats of juggling glass balls and lighted candles. He tossed a dozen or so of them high in the air and caught them one by one as they came down, without missing any.

Then he introduced the Scarecrow, who did a sword-swallowing act that aroused much interest. After this the Tin Woodman gave an exhibition of Swinging the Axe, which he made to whirl around him so rapidly that the eye could scarcely follow the motion of the gleaming blade. Glinda the Sorceress then stepped upon the platform, and by her magic made a big tree grow in the middle of the space, made blossoms appear upon the tree, and made the blossoms become delicious fruit called tamornas; and so great was the quantity of fruit thus produced that when the servants climbed the tree and tossed it down to the crowd, there was enough to satisfy every person present.

Para Bruin, the rubber bear, climbed to a limb of the big tree, rolled himself into a ball, and dropped to the platform, whence he bounded up again to the limb. He repeated this bouncing act several times, to the great delight of all the children present. After he had finished, and bowed, and returned to his seat, Glinda waved her wand and the tree disappeared; but its fruit still remained to be eaten.

The Good Witch of the North amused the people by transforming ten stones into ten birds, the ten birds into ten lambs, and the ten lambs into ten little girls, who gave a pretty dance and were then transformed into ten stones again, just as they were in the beginning.

Johnny Dooit next came on the platform with his tool-chest, and in a few minutes built a great flying machine; then put his chest in the machine and the whole thing flew away together — Johnny and all — after he had bid good-bye to those present and thanked the Princess for her hospitality.

The Wizard then announced the last act of all, which was considered really wonderful. He had invented a machine to blow huge soap-bubbles, as big as balloons, and this machine was hidden under the platform so that only the rim of the big clay pipe to produce the bubbles showed above the flooring. The tank of soap-suds, and the air-pumps to inflate the bubbles, were out of sight beneath, so that when the bubbles began to grow upon the floor of the platform it really seemed like magic to the people of Oz, who knew nothing about even the common soap-bubbles that our children blow with a penny clay pipe and a basin of soap-and-water.

The Wizard had invented another thing. Usually soap-bubbles are frail and burst easily, lasting only a few moments as they float in the air; but the Wizard added a sort of glue to his soapsuds, which made his bubbles tough; and, as the glue dried rapidly when exposed to the air, the Wizard's bubbles were strong enough to float for hours without breaking.

He began by blowing — by means of his machinery and air-pumps — several large bubbles which he allowed to float upward into the sky, where the sunshine fell upon them and gave them iridescent hues that were most beautiful. This aroused much wonder and delight, because it was a new amusement to every one present — except perhaps Dorothy and Button-Bright, and even they had never seen such big, strong bubbles before.

THE WIZARD BLEW A BUBBLE AROUND SANTA CLAUS

The Wizard then blew a bunch of small bubbles and afterward blew a big bubble around them so they were left in the center of it; then he allowed the whole mass of pretty globes to float into the air and disappear in the far distant sky.

"That is really fine!" declared Santa Claus, who loved toys and pretty things. "I think, Mr. Wizard, I shall have you blow a bubble around me; then I can float away home and see the country spread out beneath me as I travel. There isn't a spot on earth that I haven't visited, but I usually go in the night-time, riding behind my swift reindeer. Here is a good chance to observe the country by daylight, while I am riding slowly and at my ease."

“Do you think you will be able to guide the bubble?” asked the Wizard.

“Oh yes; I know enough magic to do that,” replied Santa Claus. “You blow the bubble, with me inside of it, and I’ll be sure to get home in safety.”

“Please send me home in a bubble, too!” begged the Queen of Merryland.

“Very well, madam; you shall try the journey first,” politely answered old Santa.

The pretty wax doll bade good-bye to the Princess Ozma and the others, and stood on the platform while the Wizard blew a big soap-bubble around her. When completed he allowed the bubble to float slowly upward, and there could be seen the little Queen of Merryland standing in the middle of it and blowing kisses from her fingers to those below. The bubble took a southerly direction, quickly floating out of sight.

“That’s a very nice way to travel,” said Princess Fluff. “I’d like to go home in a bubble, too.”

So the Wizard blew a big bubble around Princess Fluff, and another around King Bud, her brother, and a third one around Queen Zixi; and soon these three bubbles had mounted into the sky and were floating off in a group in the direction of the kingdom of Noland.

The success of these ventures induced the other guests from foreign lands to undertake bubble journeys, also; so the Wizard put them one by one inside his bubbles, and Santa Claus directed the way they should go, because he knew exactly where everybody lived.

Finally Button-Bright said:

“I want to go home, too.”

“Why, so you shall!” cried Santa; “for I’m sure your father and mother will be glad to see you again. Mr. Wizard, please blow a big, fine bubble for Button-Bright to ride in, and I’ll agree to send him home to his family as safe as safe can be.”

“I’m sorry,” said Dorothy with a sigh, for she was fond of her little comrade; “but p’raps it’s best for Button-Bright to get home; ‘cause his folks must be worrying just dreadful.”

She kissed the boy, and Ozma kissed him, too, and all the others waved their hands and said good-bye and wished him a pleasant journey.

“Are you glad to leave us, dear?” asked Dorothy, a little wistfully.

“Don’t know,” said Button-Bright.

He sat down cross-legged on the platform, with his sailor hat tipped back on his head, and the Wizard blew a beautiful bubble all around him.

A minute later it had mounted into the sky, sailing toward the west, and the last they saw of Button-Bright he was still sitting in the middle of the shining globe and waving his sailor-hat at those below.

“Will you ride in a bubble, or shall I send you and Toto home by means of the Magic Belt?” the Princess asked Dorothy.

“Guess I’ll use the Belt,” replied the little girl. “I’m sort of ‘fraid of those bubbles.”

“Bow-wow!” said Toto, approvingly. He loved to bark at the bubbles as they sailed away, but he didn’t care to ride in one.

Santa Claus decided to go next. He thanked Ozma for her hospitality and wished her many happy returns of the day. Then the Wizard blew a bubble around his chubby little body and smaller bubbles around each of his Ryls and Knooks.

As the kind and generous friend of children mounted into the air the people all cheered at the top of their voices, for they loved Santa Claus dearly; and the little man heard them through the walls of the bubble and waved his hands in return as he smiled down upon them. The band played bravely while every one watched the bubble until it was completely out of sight.

“How ‘bout you, Polly?” Dorothy asked her friend. “Are you ‘fraid of bubbles, too?”

“No,” answered Polychrome, smiling; “but Santa Claus promised to speak to my father as he passed through the sky. So perhaps I shall get home an easier way.”

Indeed, the little maid had scarcely made this speech when a sudden radiance filled the air, and while the people looked on in wonder the end of a gorgeous rainbow slowly settled down upon the platform.

With a glad cry the Rainbow’s Daughter sprang from her seat and danced along the curve of the bow, mounting gradually upward, while the folds of her gauzy gown whirled and floated around her like a cloud and blended with the colors of the rainbow itself.

"GOOD-BYE, OZMA! GOOD-BYE, DOROTHY!"

"Good-bye, Ozma! Good-bye, Dorothy!" cried a voice they knew belonged to Polychrome; but now the little maiden's form had melted wholly into the rainbow, and their eyes could no longer see her.

Suddenly the end of the rainbow lifted and its colors slowly faded like mist before a breeze. Dorothy sighed deeply and turned to Ozma.

"I'm sorry to lose Polly," she said; "but I guess she's better off with her father; 'cause even the Land of Oz couldn't be like home to a cloud fairy."

"No, indeed," replied the Princess; "but it has been delightful for us to know Polychrome for a little while, and — who knows? — perhaps we may meet the Rainbow's daughter again, some day."

The entertainment being now ended, all left the pavilion and formed their gay procession back to the Emerald City again. Of Dorothy's recent traveling companions only Toto and the shaggy man remained, and Ozma had decided to allow the latter to live in Oz for a time, at least. If he proved honest and true she promised to let him live there always, and the shaggy man was anxious to earn this reward.

They had a nice quiet dinner together and passed a pleasant evening with the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, Tik-tok, and the Yellow Hen for company.

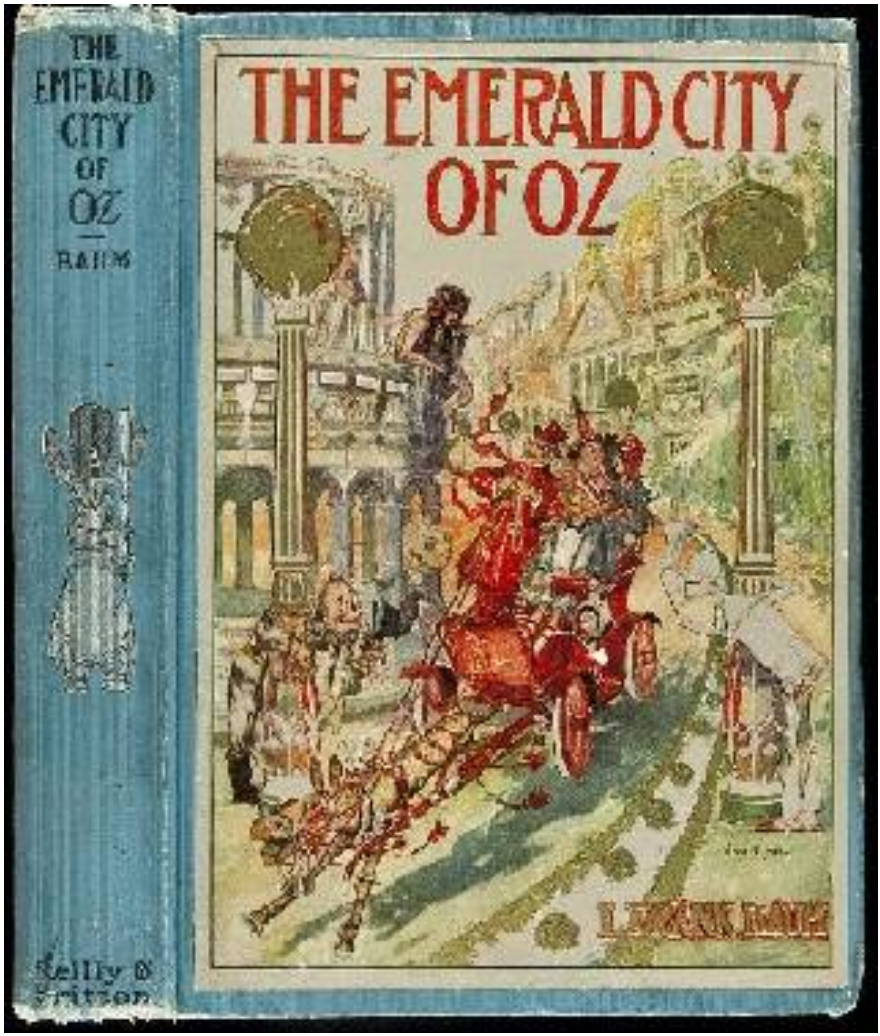
When Dorothy bade them good-night she kissed them all good-bye at the same time. For Ozma had agreed that while Dorothy slept she and Toto should be transported by means of the Magic Belt to her own little bed in the Kansas farmhouse and the little girl laughed as she thought how astonished Uncle Henry and Aunt Em would be when she came down to breakfast with them next morning.

Quite content to have had so pleasant an adventure, and a little tired by all the day's busy scenes, Dorothy clasped Toto in her arms and lay down upon the pretty white bed in her room in Ozma's royal palace.

Presently she was sound asleep.

THE EMERALD CITY OF OZ

In *The Emerald City of Oz*, published in 1910 by Reilly & Britton, Dorothy Gale and her Uncle Henry and Aunt Em move to Oz permanently. John R. Neill provided the illustrations for the sixth Oz book, which Baum intended to be his last. The book begins with Uncle Henry deep in debt. Both uncle and aunt doubt Dorothy's tales of her adventures, but Dorothy enlightens them by asking Ozma to transport them to the Emerald City using the magic belt she had captured from the Nome King. For the first time, Baum employs double plots. While Dorothy and her aunt and uncle tour the Quadling Country, the Nome King, Roquat, readies a massive army along with allied forces for invading the Land of Oz. Dorothy and her companions meet a variety of fascinating creatures, including living cutout paper dolls, talkative Rigmaroles, living kitchen utensils in Utensia, civilized rabbits of Bunnybury and more. Meanwhile, the Nome King plots revenge with his allies, the horrifying Whimsies and Growleywogs and the notoriously evil, Phanfasms.



A copy of the first edition of The Emerald City of Oz

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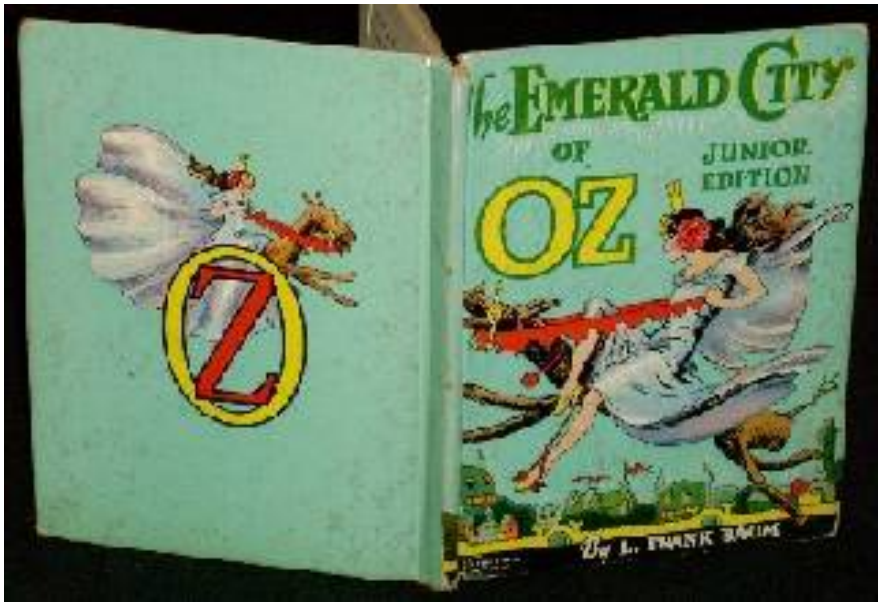

Front and back covers of the 1939 abridged Junior Edition of The Emerald City of Oz

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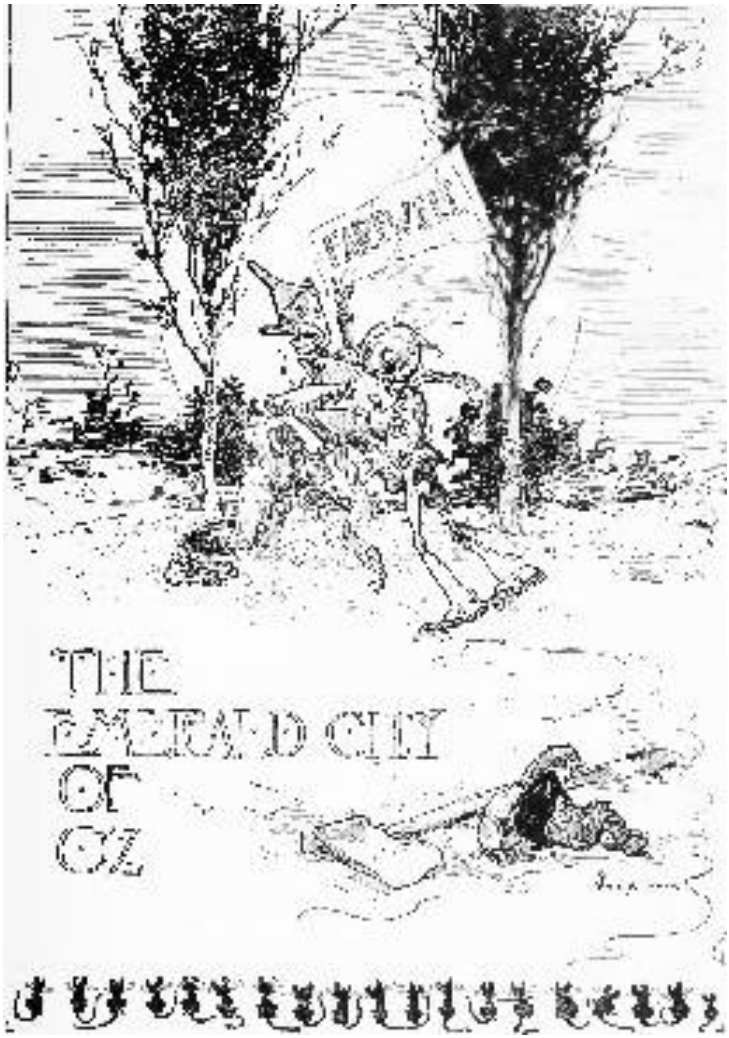
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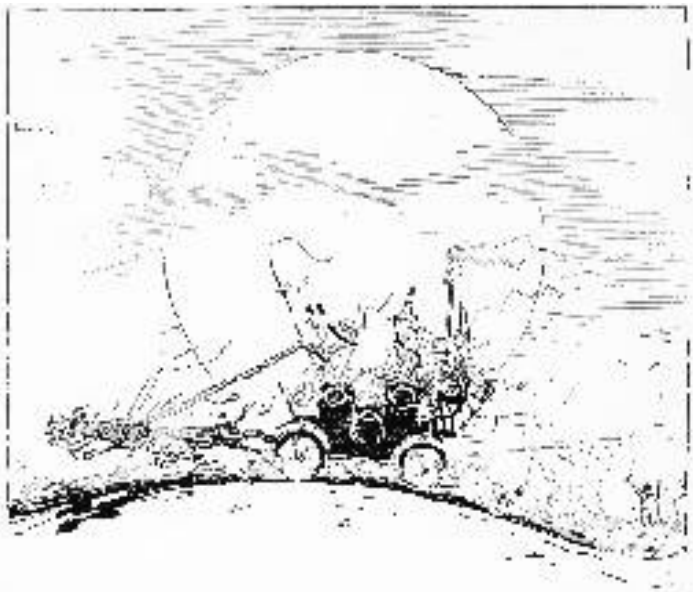

TO
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Author's Note

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These ideas are often clever. They are also logical and interesting. So I have used them whenever I could find an opportunity, and it is but just that I acknowledge my indebtedness to my little friends.

My, what imaginations these children have developed! Sometimes I am fairly astounded by their daring and genius. There will be no lack of fairy-tale authors in the future, I am sure. My readers have told me what to do with Dorothy, and Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, and I have obeyed their mandates. They have also given me a variety of subjects to write about in the future: enough, in fact, to keep me busy for some time. I am very proud of this alliance. Children love these stories because children have helped to create them. My readers know what they want and realize that I try to please them. The result is very satisfactory to the publishers, to me, and (I am quite sure) to the children.

I hope, my dears, it will be a long time before we are obliged to dissolve partnership.

L. FRANK BAUM.
Coronado, 1910

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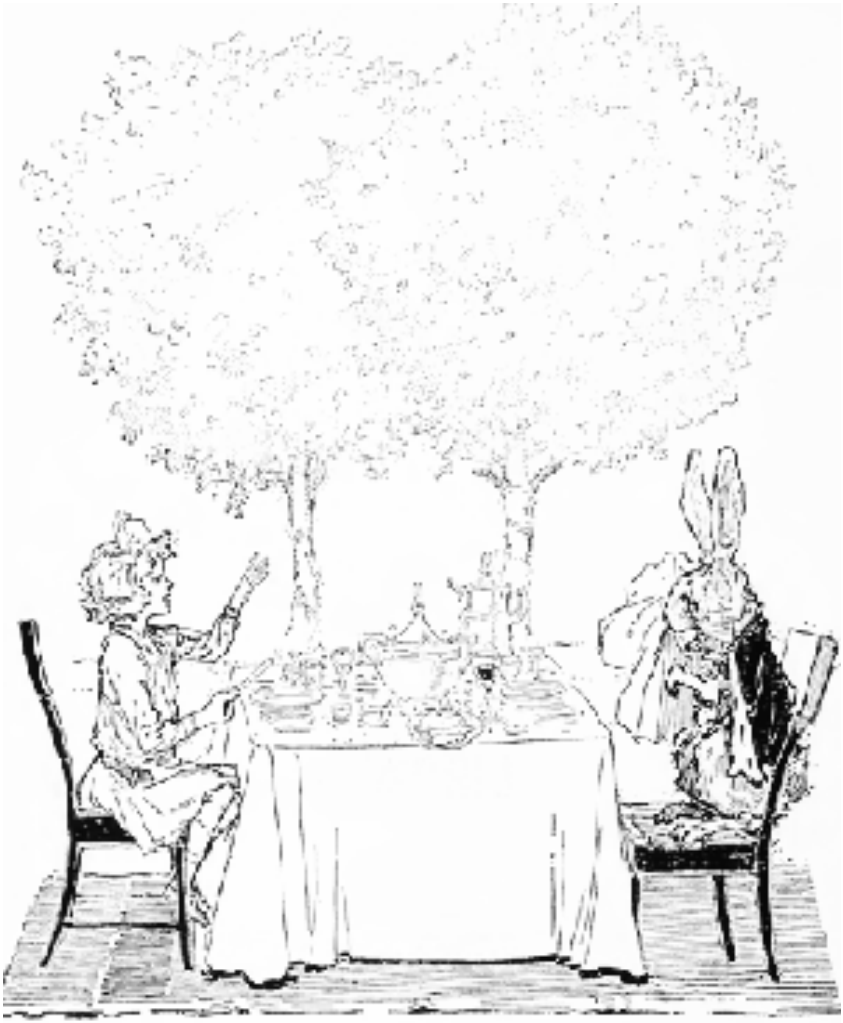
I hope, my dears, it will be a long time before we are obliged to dissolve partnership.

Coronado, 1910. L. FRANK BAUM.



Telegram
My Carry

1. How the Nome King Became Angry

The Nome King was in an angry mood, and at such times he was very disagreeable. Every one kept away from him, even his Chief Steward Kaliko.

Therefore the King stormed and raved all by himself, walking up and down in his jewel-studded cavern and getting angrier all the time. Then he remembered that it was no fun being angry unless he had some one to frighten and make miserable, and he rushed to his big gong and made it clatter as loud as he could.

In came the Chief Steward, trying not to show the Nome King how frightened he was.

"Send the Chief Counselor here!" shouted the angry monarch.

Kaliko ran out as fast as his spindle legs could carry his fat, round body, and soon the Chief Counselor entered the cavern. The King scowled and said to him:

"I'm in great trouble over the loss of my Magic Belt. Every little while I want to do something magical, and find I can't because the Belt is gone. That makes me angry, and when I'm angry I can't have a good time. Now, what do you advise?"

"Some people," said the Chief Counselor, "enjoy getting angry."

"But not all the time," declared the King. "To be angry once in a while is really good fun, because it makes others so miserable. But to be angry morning, noon and night, as I am, grows monotonous and prevents my gaining any other pleasure in life. Now what do you advise?"

"Why, if you are angry because you want to do magical things and can't,

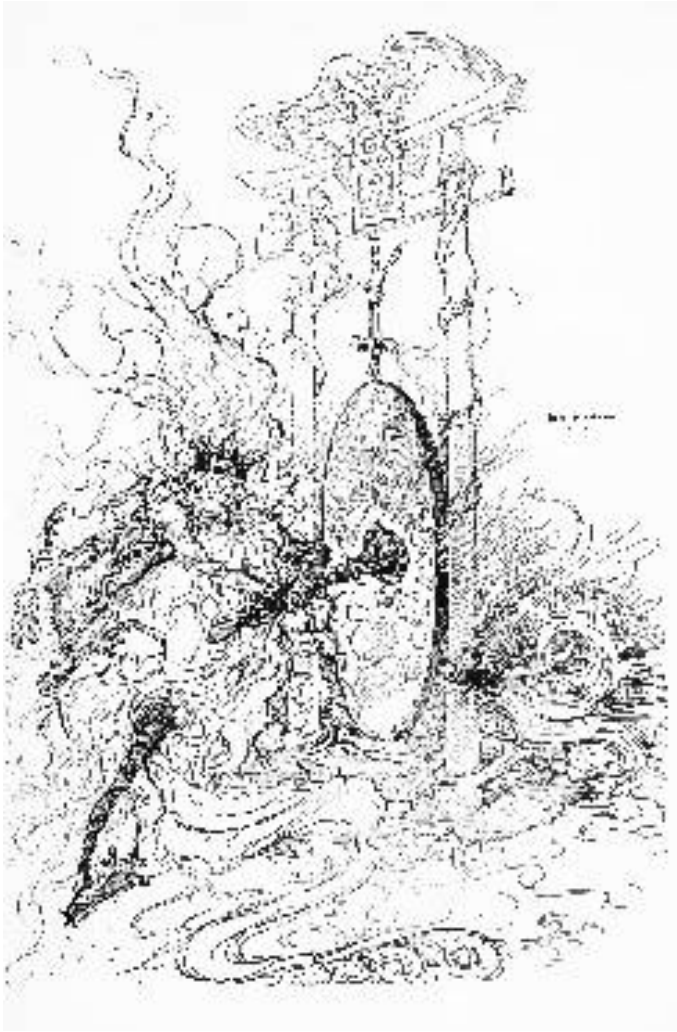
and if you don't want to get angry at all, my advice is not to want to do magical things."

Hearing this, the King glared at his Counselor with a furious expression and tugged at his own long white whiskers until he pulled them so hard that he yelled with pain.

"You are a fool!" he exclaimed.

"I share that honor with your Majesty," said the Chief Counselor.

The King roared with rage and stamped his foot.



"Ho, there, my guards!" he cried. "Ho" is a royal way of saying, "Come here." So, when the guards had hoed, the King said to them:

"Take this Chief Counselor and throw him away."

Then the guards took the Chief Counselor, and bound him with chains to prevent his struggling, and threw him away. And the King paced up and down his cavern more angry than before.

Finally he rushed to his big gong and made it clatter like a fire alarm. Kaliko appeared again, trembling and white with fear.

"Fetch my pipe!" yelled the King.

"Your pipe is already here, your Majesty," replied Kaliko.

"Then get my tobacco!" roared the King.

"The tobacco is in your pipe, your Majesty," returned the Steward.

"Then bring a live coal from the furnace!" commanded the King.

"The tobacco is lighted, and your Majesty is already smoking your pipe," answered the Steward.

"Why, so I am!" said the King, who had forgotten this fact; "but you are very rude to remind me of it."

"I am a lowborn, miserable villain," declared the Chief Steward, humbly.

The Nome King could think of nothing to say next, so he puffed away at his pipe and paced up and down the room. Finally, he remembered how angry he was, and cried out:

"What do you mean, Kaliko, by being so contented when your monarch is unhappy?"

"What makes you unhappy?" asked the Steward.

"I've lost my Magic Belt. A little girl named Dorothy, who was here with Ozma of Oz, stole my Belt and carried it away with her," said the King, grinding his teeth with rage.

"She captured it in a fair fight," Kaliko ventured to say.

"But I want it! I must have it! Half my power is gone with that Belt!" roared the King.

"You will have to go to the Land of Oz to recover it, and your Majesty can't get to the Land of Oz in any possible way," said the Steward, yawning because he had been on duty ninety-six hours, and was sleepy.

"Why not?" asked the King.

"Because there is a deadly desert all around that fairy country, which no one is able to cross. You know that fact as well as I do, your Majesty. Never mind the lost Belt. You have plenty of power left, for you rule this underground kingdom like a tyrant, and thousands of Nomes obey your commands. I advise you to drink a glass of melted silver, to quiet your nerves, and then go to bed."

The King grabbed a big ruby and threw it at Kaliko's head. The Steward ducked to escape the heavy jewel, which crashed against the door just over his left ear.

“Get out of my sight! Vanish! Go away--and send General Blug here,” screamed the Nome King.

Kaliko hastily withdrew, and the Nome King stamped up and down until the General of his armies appeared.

This Nome was known far and wide as a terrible fighter and a cruel, desperate commander. He had fifty thousand Nome soldiers, all well drilled, who feared nothing but their stern master. Yet General Blug was a trifle uneasy when he arrived and saw how angry the Nome King was.

“Ha! So you’re here!” cried the King.

“So I am,” said the General.

“March your army at once to the Land of Oz, capture and destroy the Emerald City, and bring back to me my Magic Belt!” roared the King.

“You’re crazy,” calmly remarked the General.

“What’s that? What’s that? What’s that?” And the Nome King danced around on his pointed toes, he was so enraged.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about,” continued the General, seating himself upon a large cut diamond. “I advise you to stand in a corner and count sixty before you speak again. By that time you may be more sensible.”

The King looked around for something to throw at General Blug, but as nothing was handy he began to consider that perhaps the man was right and he had been talking foolishly. So he merely threw himself into his glittering throne and tipped his crown over his ear and curled his feet up under him and glared wickedly at Blug.

“In the first place,” said the General, “we cannot march across the deadly desert to the Land of Oz. And if we could, the Ruler of that country, Princess Ozma, has certain fairy powers that would render my army helpless. Had you not lost your Magic Belt we might have some chance of defeating Ozma; but the Belt is gone.”

“I want it!” screamed the King. “I must have it.”

“Well, then, let us try in a sensible way to get it,” replied the General. “The Belt was captured by a little girl named Dorothy, who lives in Kansas, in the United States of America.”

“But she left it in the Emerald City, with Ozma,” declared the King.

“How do you know that?” asked the General.

“One of my spies, who is a Blackbird, flew over the desert to the Land of Oz, and saw the Magic Belt in Ozma’s palace,” replied the King with a groan.

“Now that gives me an idea,” said General Blug, thoughtfully. “There are two ways to get to the Land of Oz without traveling across the sandy desert.”

“What are they?” demanded the King, eagerly.

“One way is OVER the desert, through the air; and the other way is UNDER the desert, through the earth.”

Hearing this the Nome King uttered a yell of joy and leaped from his throne, to resume his wild walk up and down the cavern.

“That’s it, Blug!” he shouted. “That’s the idea, General! I’m King of the Under World, and my subjects are all miners. I’ll make a secret tunnel under the desert to the Land of Oz--yes! right up to the Emerald City--and you will march your armies there and capture the whole country!”

“Softly, softly, your Majesty. Don’t go too fast,” warned the General. “My Nomes are good fighters, but they are not strong enough to conquer the Emerald City.”

“Are you sure?” asked the King.

“Absolutely certain, your Majesty.”

“Then what am I to do?”

“Give up the idea and mind your own business,” advised the General. “You have plenty to do trying to rule your underground kingdom.”

“But I want the Magic Belt--and I’m going to have it!” roared the Nome King.

“I’d like to see you get it,” replied the General, laughing maliciously.

The King was by this time so exasperated that he picked up his scepter, which had a heavy ball, made from a sapphire, at the end of it, and threw it with all his force at General Blug. The sapphire hit the General upon his forehead and knocked him flat upon the ground, where he lay motionless.

Then the King rang his gong and told his guards to drag out the General and throw him away; which they did.

This Nome King was named Roquat the Red, and no one loved him. He was a bad man and a powerful monarch, and he had resolved to destroy the Land of Oz and its magnificent Emerald City, to enslave Princess Ozma and little Dorothy and all the Oz people, and recover his Magic Belt. This same Belt had once enabled Roquat the Red to carry out many wicked plans; but that was before Ozma and her people marched to the underground cavern and captured it. The Nome King could not forgive Dorothy or Princess Ozma, and he had determined to be revenged upon them.

But they, for their part, did not know they had so dangerous an enemy. Indeed, Ozma and Dorothy had both almost forgotten that such a person as the Nome King yet lived under the mountains of the Land of Ev--which lay just across the deadly desert to the south of the Land of Oz.

An unsuspected enemy is doubly dangerous.

2. How Uncle Henry Got Into Trouble

Dorothy Gale lived on a farm in Kansas, with her Aunt Em and her Uncle Henry. It was not a big farm, nor a very good one, because sometimes the rain did not come when the crops needed it, and then everything withered and dried up. Once a cyclone had carried away Uncle Henry's house, so that he was obliged to build another; and as he was a poor man he had to mortgage his farm to get the money to pay for the new house. Then his health became bad and he was too feeble to work. The doctor ordered him to take a sea voyage and he went to Australia and took Dorothy with him. That cost a lot of money, too.

Uncle Henry grew poorer every year, and the crops raised on the farm only bought food for the family. Therefore the mortgage could not be paid. At last the banker who had loaned him the money said that if he did not pay on a certain day, his farm would be taken away from him.

This worried Uncle Henry a good deal, for without the farm he would have no way to earn a living. He was a good man, and worked in the field as hard as he could; and Aunt Em did all the housework, with Dorothy's help. Yet they did not seem to get along.

This little girl, Dorothy, was like dozens of little girls you know. She was loving and usually sweet-tempered, and had a round rosy face and earnest eyes. Life was a serious thing to Dorothy, and a wonderful thing, too, for she had encountered more strange adventures in her short life than many other girls of her age.

Aunt Em once said she thought the fairies must have marked Dorothy at her birth, because she had wandered into strange places and had always been protected by some unseen power. As for Uncle Henry, he thought his little niece merely a dreamer, as her dead mother had been, for he could not quite believe all the curious stories Dorothy told them of the Land of Oz, which she had several times visited. He did not think that she tried to deceive her uncle and aunt, but he imagined that she had dreamed all of those astonishing adventures, and that the dreams had been so real to her that she had come to believe them true.

Whatever the explanation might be, it was certain that Dorothy had been absent from her Kansas home for several long periods, always disappearing unexpectedly, yet always coming back safe and sound, with amazing tales of where she had been and the unusual people she had met. Her uncle and aunt listened to her stories eagerly and in spite of their doubts began to feel that the little girl had gained a lot of experience and wisdom that were unaccountable in this age, when fairies are supposed no longer to exist.

Most of Dorothy's stories were about the Land of Oz, with its beautiful Emerald City and a lovely girl Ruler named Ozma, who was the most faithful friend of the little Kansas girl. When Dorothy told about the riches of this fairy country Uncle Henry would sigh, for he knew that a single one of the great emeralds that were so common there would pay all his debts and leave his farm free. But Dorothy never brought any jewels home with her, so their poverty became greater every year.

When the banker told Uncle Henry that he must pay the money in thirty days or leave the farm, the poor man was in despair, as he knew he could not possibly get the money. So he told his wife, Aunt Em, of his trouble, and she first cried a little and then said that they must be brave and do the best they could, and go away somewhere and try to earn an honest living. But they were getting old and feeble and she feared that they could not take care of Dorothy as well as they had formerly done. Probably the little girl would also be obliged to go to work.

They did not tell their niece the sad news for several days, not wishing to make her unhappy; but one morning the little girl found Aunt Em softly crying while Uncle Henry tried to comfort her. Then Dorothy asked them to tell her what was the matter.

"We must give up the farm, my dear," replied her uncle sadly, "and wander away into the world to work for our living."

The girl listened quite seriously, for she had not known before how desperately poor they were.

"We don't mind for ourselves," said her aunt, stroking the little girl's head

tenderly; “but we love you as if you were our own child, and we are heart-broken to think that you must also endure poverty, and work for a living before you have grown big and strong.”

“What could I do to earn money?” asked Dorothy.

“You might do housework for some one, dear, you are so handy; or perhaps you could be a nurse-maid to little children. I’m sure I don’t know exactly what you CAN do to earn money, but if your uncle and I are able to support you we will do it willingly, and send you to school. We fear, though, that we shall have much trouble in earning a living for ourselves. No one wants to employ old people who are broken down in health, as we are.”

Dorothy smiled.

“Wouldn’t it be funny,” she said, “for me to do housework in Kansas, when I’m a Princess in the Land of Oz?”

“A Princess!” they both exclaimed, astonished.

“Yes; Ozma made me a Princess some time ago, and she has often begged me to come and live always in the Emerald City,” said the child.

Her uncle and aunt looked at her in amazement. Then the man said:

“Do you suppose you could manage to return to your fairyland, my dear?”

“Oh yes,” replied Dorothy; “I could do that easily.”

“How?” asked Aunt Em.

“Ozma sees me every day at four o’clock, in her Magic Picture. She can see me wherever I am, no matter what I am doing. And at that time, if I make a certain secret sign, she will send for me by means of the Magic Belt, which I once captured from the Nome King. Then, in the wink of an eye, I shall be with Ozma in her palace.”

The elder people remained silent for some time after Dorothy had spoken. Finally, Aunt Em said, with another sigh of regret:

“If that is the case, Dorothy, perhaps you’d better go and live in the Emerald City. It will break our hearts to lose you from our lives, but you will be so much better off with your fairy friends that it seems wisest and best for you to go.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” remarked Uncle Henry, shaking his gray head doubtfully. “These things all seem real to Dorothy, I know; but I’m afraid our little girl won’t find her fairyland just what she had dreamed it to be. It would make me very unhappy to think that she was wandering among strangers who might be unkind to her.”

Dorothy laughed merrily at this speech, and then she became very sober again, for she could see how all this trouble was worrying her aunt and uncle, and knew that unless she found a way to help them their future lives would be quite miserable and unhappy. She knew that she COULD help them. She had thought of a way already. Yet she did not tell them at once what it was, because she must ask Ozma’s consent before she would be able to carry out her plans.

So she only said:

“If you will promise not to worry a bit about me, I’ll go to the Land of Oz this very afternoon. And I’ll make a promise, too; that you shall both see me again before the day comes when you must leave this farm.”

“The day isn’t far away, now,” her uncle sadly replied. “I did not tell you of our trouble until I was obliged to, dear Dorothy, so the evil time is near at hand. But if you are quite sure your fairy friends will give you a home, it will be best for you to go to them, as your aunt says.”

That was why Dorothy went to her little room in the attic that afternoon, taking with her a small dog named Toto. The dog had curly black hair and big brown eyes and loved Dorothy very dearly.

The child had kissed her uncle and aunt affectionately before she went upstairs, and now she looked around her little room rather wistfully, gazing at the simple trinkets and worn calico and gingham dresses, as if they were old friends. She was tempted at first to make a bundle of them, yet she knew very well that they would be of no use to her in her future life.

She sat down upon a broken-backed chair--the only one the room contained--and holding Toto in her arms waited patiently until the clock struck four.

Then she made the secret signal that had been agreed upon between her and Ozma.

Uncle Henry and Aunt Em waited downstairs. They were uneasy and a good deal excited, for this is a practical humdrum world, and it seemed to them quite impossible that their little niece could vanish from her home and travel instantly to fairyland.

So they watched the stairs, which seemed to be the only way that Dorothy could get out of the farmhouse, and they watched them a long time. They heard the clock strike four but there was no sound from above.

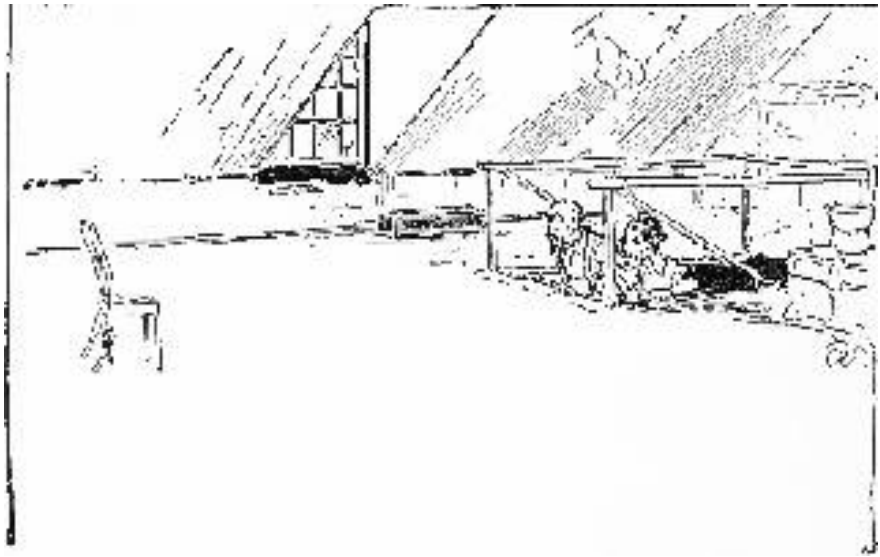
Half-past four came, and now they were too impatient to wait any longer. Softly, they crept up the stairs to the door of the little girl's room.

"Dorothy! Dorothy!" they called.

There was no answer.

They opened the door and looked in.

The room was empty.



3. How Ozma Granted Dorothy's Request

I suppose you have read so much about the magnificent Emerald City that there is little need for me to describe it here. It is the Capital City of the Land of Oz, which is justly considered the most attractive and delightful fairyland in all the world.

The Emerald City is built all of beautiful marbles in which are set a profusion of emeralds, every one exquisitely cut and of very great size. There are other jewels used in the decorations inside the houses and palaces, such as rubies, diamonds, sapphires, amethysts and turquoises. But in the streets and upon the outside of the buildings only emeralds appear, from which circumstance the place is named the Emerald City of Oz. It has nine thousand, six hundred and fifty-four buildings, in which lived fifty-seven thousand three hundred and eighteen people, up to the time my story opens.

All the surrounding country, extending to the borders of the desert which enclosed it upon every side, was full of pretty and comfortable farmhouses, in which resided those inhabitants of Oz who preferred country to city life.

Altogether there were more than half a million people in the Land of Oz--although some of them, as you will soon learn, were not made of flesh and blood as we are--and every inhabitant of that favored country was happy and prosperous.

No disease of any sort was ever known among the Ozites, and so no one ever died unless he met with an accident that prevented him from living. This happened very seldom, indeed. There were no poor people in the Land of Oz, because there was no such thing as money, and all property of every sort

belonged to the Ruler. The people were her children, and she cared for them. Each person was given freely by his neighbors whatever he required for his use, which is as much as any one may reasonably desire. Some tilled the lands and raised great crops of grain, which was divided equally among the entire population, so that all had enough. There were many tailors and dressmakers and shoemakers and the like, who made things that any who desired them might wear. Likewise there were jewelers who made ornaments for the person, which pleased and beautified the people, and these ornaments also were free to those who asked for them. Each man and woman, no matter what he or she produced for the good of the community, was supplied by the neighbors with food and clothing and a house and furniture and ornaments and games. If by chance the supply ever ran short, more was taken from the great storehouses of the Ruler, which were afterward filled up again when there was more of any article than the people needed.

Every one worked half the time and played half the time, and the people enjoyed the work as much as they did the play, because it is good to be occupied and to have something to do. There were no cruel overseers set to watch them, and no one to rebuke them or to find fault with them. So each one was proud to do all he could for his friends and neighbors, and was glad when they would accept the things he produced.

You will know by what I have here told you, that the Land of Oz was a remarkable country. I do not suppose such an arrangement would be practical with us, but Dorothy assures me that it works finely with the Oz people.

Oz being a fairy country, the people were, of course, fairy people; but that does not mean that all of them were very unlike the people of our own world. There were all sorts of queer characters among them, but not a single one who was evil, or who possessed a selfish or violent nature. They were peaceful, kind hearted, loving and merry, and every inhabitant adored the beautiful girl who ruled them and delighted to obey her every command.

In spite of all I have said in a general way, there were some parts of the Land of Oz not quite so pleasant as the farming country and the Emerald City which was its center. Far away in the South Country there lived in the mountains a band of strange people called Hammer-Heads, because they had no arms and used their flat heads to pound any one who came near them. Their necks were like rubber, so that they could shoot out their heads to quite a distance, and afterward draw them back again to their shoulders. The Hammer-Heads were called the “Wild People,” but never harmed any but those who disturbed them in the mountains where they lived.

In some of the dense forests there lived great beasts of every sort; yet these were for the most part harmless and even sociable, and conversed

agreeably with those who visited their haunts. The Kalidahs--beasts with bodies like bears and heads like tigers--had once been fierce and bloodthirsty, but even they were now nearly all tamed, although at times one or another of them would get cross and disagreeable.

Not so tame were the Fighting Trees, which had a forest of their own. If any one approached them these curious trees would bend down their branches, twine them around the intruders, and hurl them away.

But these unpleasant things existed only in a few remote parts of the Land of Oz. I suppose every country has some drawbacks, so even this almost perfect fairyland could not be quite perfect. Once there had been wicked witches in the land, too; but now these had all been destroyed; so, as I said, only peace and happiness reigned in Oz.

For some time Ozma had ruled over this fair country, and never was Ruler more popular or beloved. She is said to be the most beautiful girl the world has ever known, and her heart and mind are as lovely as her person.

Dorothy Gale had several times visited the Emerald City and experienced adventures in the Land of Oz, so that she and Ozma had now become firm friends. The girl Ruler had even made Dorothy a Princess of Oz, and had often implored her to come to Ozma's stately palace and live there always; but Dorothy had been loyal to her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, who had cared for her since she was a baby, and she had refused to leave them because she knew they would be lonely without her.

However, Dorothy now realized that things were going to be different with her uncle and aunt from this time forth, so after giving the matter deep thought she decided to ask Ozma to grant her a very great favor.

A few seconds after she had made the secret signal in her little bedchamber, the Kansas girl was seated in a lovely room in Ozma's palace in the Emerald City of Oz. When the first loving kisses and embraces had been exchanged, the fair Ruler inquired:

"What is the matter, dear? I know something unpleasant has happened to you, for your face was very sober when I saw it in my Magic Picture. And whenever you signal me to transport you to this safe place, where you are always welcome, I know you are in danger or in trouble."

Dorothy sighed.

"This time, Ozma, it isn't I," she replied. "But it's worse, I guess, for Uncle Henry and Aunt Em are in a heap of trouble, and there seems no way for them to get out of it--anyhow, not while they live in Kansas."

"Tell me about it, Dorothy," said Ozma, with ready sympathy.

"Why, you see Uncle Henry is poor; for the farm in Kansas doesn't 'mount to much, as farms go. So one day Uncle Henry borrowed some

money, and wrote a letter saying that if he didn't pay the money back they could take his farm for pay. Course he 'spected to pay by making money from the farm; but he just couldn't. An' so they're going to take the farm, and Uncle Henry and Aunt Em won't have any place to live. They're pretty old to do much hard work, Ozma; so I'll have to work for them, unless--"

Ozma had been thoughtful during the story, but now she smiled and pressed her little friend's hand.

"Unless what, dear?" she asked.

Dorothy hesitated, because her request meant so much to them all.

"Well," said she, "I'd like to live here in the Land of Oz, where you've often 'vited me to live. But I can't, you know, unless Uncle Henry and Aunt Em could live here too."

"Of course not," exclaimed the Ruler of Oz, laughing gaily. "So, in order to get you, little friend, we must invite your Uncle and Aunt to live in Oz, also."

"Oh, will you, Ozma?" cried Dorothy, clasping her chubby little hands eagerly. "Will you bring them here with the Magic Belt, and give them a nice little farm in the Munchkin Country, or the Winkie Country--or some other place?"

"To be sure," answered Ozma, full of joy at the chance to please her little friend. "I have long been thinking of this very thing, Dorothy dear, and often I have had it in my mind to propose it to you. I am sure your uncle and aunt must be good and worthy people, or you would not love them so much; and for YOUR friends, Princess, there is always room in the Land of Oz."

Dorothy was delighted, yet not altogether surprised, for she had clung to the hope that Ozma would be kind enough to grant her request. When, indeed, had her powerful and faithful friend refused her anything?

"But you must not call me 'Princess'," she said; "for after this I shall live on the little farm with Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, and princesses ought not to live on farms."

"Princess Dorothy will not," replied Ozma with her sweet smile. "You are going to live in your own rooms in this palace, and be my constant companion."

"But Uncle Henry--" began Dorothy.

"Oh, he is old, and has worked enough in his lifetime," interrupted the girl Ruler; "so we must find a place for your uncle and aunt where they will be comfortable and happy and need not work more than they care to. When shall we transport them here, Dorothy?"

"I promised to go and see them again before they were turned out of the farmhouse," answered Dorothy; "so--perhaps next Saturday--"

"But why wait so long?" asked Ozma. "And why make the journey back to Kansas again? Let us surprise them, and bring them here without any warning."

"I'm not sure that they believe in the Land of Oz," said Dorothy, "though I've told 'em 'bout it lots of times."

"They'll believe when they see it," declared Ozma; "and if they are told they are to make a magical journey to our fairyland, it may make them nervous. I think the best way will be to use the Magic Belt without warning them, and when they have arrived you can explain to them whatever they do not understand."

"Perhaps that's best," decided Dorothy. "There isn't much use in their staying at the farm until they are put out, 'cause it's much nicer here."

"Then to-morrow morning they shall come here," said Princess Ozma. "I will order Jellia Jamb, who is the palace housekeeper, to have rooms all prepared for them, and after breakfast we will get the Magic Belt and by its aid transport your uncle and aunt to the Emerald City."

"Thank you, Ozma!" cried Dorothy, kissing her friend gratefully.

"And now," Ozma proposed, "let us take a walk in the gardens before we dress for dinner. Come, Dorothy dear!"

4. How The Nome King Planned Revenge

The reason most people are bad is because they do not try to be good. Now, the Nome King had never tried to be good, so he was very bad indeed. Having decided to conquer the Land of Oz and to destroy the Emerald City and enslave all its people, King Roquat the Red kept planning ways to do this dreadful thing, and the more he planned the more he believed he would be able to accomplish it.

About the time Dorothy went to Ozma the Nome King called his Chief Steward to him and said:

"Kaliko, I think I shall make you the General of my armies."

"I think you won't," replied Kaliko, positively.

"Why not?" inquired the King, reaching for his scepter with the big sapphire.

"Because I'm your Chief Steward and know nothing of warfare," said Kaliko, preparing to dodge if anything were thrown at him. "I manage all the affairs of your kingdom better than you could yourself, and you'll never find another Steward as good as I am. But there are a hundred Nomes better fitted to command your army, and your Generals get thrown away so often that I have no desire to be one of them."

"Ah, there is some truth in your remarks, Kaliko," remarked the King, deciding not to throw the scepter. "Summon my army to assemble in the Great Cavern."

Kaliko bowed and retired, and in a few minutes returned to say that the army was assembled. So the King went out upon a balcony that overlooked

the Great Cavern, where fifty thousand Nomes, all armed with swords and pikes, stood marshaled in military array.

When they were not required as soldiers all these Nomes were metal workers and miners, and they had hammered so much at the forges and dug so hard with pick and shovel that they had acquired great muscular strength. They were strangely formed creatures, rather round and not very tall. Their toes were curly and their ears broad and flat.

In time of war every Nome left his forge or mine and became part of the great army of King Roquat. The soldiers wore rock-colored uniforms and were excellently drilled.

The King looked upon this tremendous army, which stood silently arrayed before him, and a cruel smile curled the corners of his mouth, for he saw that his legions were very powerful. Then he addressed them from the balcony, saying:

"I have thrown away General Blug, because he did not please me. So I want another General to command this army. Who is next in command?"

"I am," replied Colonel Crinkle, a dapper-looking Nome, as he stepped forward to salute his monarch.

The King looked at him carefully and said:

"I want you to march this army through an underground tunnel, which I am going to bore, to the Emerald City of Oz. When you get there I want you to conquer the Oz people, destroy them and their city, and bring all their gold and silver and precious stones back to my cavern. Also you are to recapture my Magic Belt and return it to me. Will you do this, General Crinkle?"

"No, your Majesty," replied the Nome; "for it can't be done."

"Oh indeed!" exclaimed the King. Then he turned to his servants and said: "Please take General Crinkle to the torture chamber. There you will kindly slice him into thin slices. Afterward you may feed him to the seven-headed dogs."

"Anything to oblige your Majesty," replied the servants, politely, and led the condemned man away.

When they had gone, the King addressed the army again.

"Listen!" said he. "The General who is to command my armies must promise to carry out my orders. If he fails he will share the fate of poor Crinkle. Now, then, who will volunteer to lead my hosts to the Emerald City?"

For a time no one moved and all were silent. Then an old Nome with white whiskers so long that they were tied around his waist to prevent their tripping him up, stepped out of the ranks and saluted the King.

"I'd like to ask a few questions, your Majesty," he said.

“Go ahead,” replied the King.

“These Oz people are quite good, are they not?”

“As good as apple pie,” said the King.

“And they are happy, I suppose?” continued the old Nome.

“Happy as the day is long,” said the King.

“And contented and prosperous?” inquired the Nome.

“Very much so,” said the King.

“Well, your Majesty,” remarked he of the white whiskers, “I think I should like to undertake the job, so I’ll be your General. I hate good people; I detest happy people; I’m opposed to any one who is contented and prosperous. That is why I am so fond of your Majesty. Make me your General and I’ll promise to conquer and destroy the Oz people. If I fail I’m ready to be sliced thin and fed to the seven-headed dogs.”

“Very good! Very good, indeed! That’s the way to talk!” cried Roquat the Red, who was greatly pleased. “What is your name, General?”

“I’m called Guph, your Majesty.”

“Well, Guph, come with me to my private cave, and we’ll talk it over.” Then he turned to the army. “Nomes and soldiers,” said he, “you are to obey the commands of General Guph until he becomes dog-feed. Any man who fails to obey his new General will be promptly thrown away. You are now dismissed.”

Guph went to the King’s private cave and sat down upon an amethyst chair and put his feet on the arm of the King’s ruby throne. Then he lighted his pipe and threw the live coal he had taken from his pocket upon the King’s

left foot and puffed the smoke into the King's eyes and made himself comfortable. For he was a wise old Nome, and he knew that the best way to get along with Roquat the Red was to show that he was not afraid of him.

"I'm ready for the talk, your Majesty," he said.

The King coughed and looked at his new General fiercely.

"Do you not tremble to take such liberties with your monarch?" he asked.

"Oh no," replied Guph, calmly, and he blew a wreath of smoke that curled around the King's nose and made him sneeze. "You want to conquer the Emerald City, and I'm the only Nome in all your dominions who can conquer it. So you will be very careful not to hurt me until I have carried out your wishes. After that--"

"Well, what then?" inquired the King.

"Then you will be so grateful to me that you won't care to hurt me," replied the General.

"That is a very good argument," said Roquat. "But suppose you fail?"

"Then it's the slicing machine. I agree to that," announced Guph. "But if you do as I tell you there will be no failure. The trouble with you, Roquat, is that you don't think carefully enough. I do. You would go ahead and march through your tunnel into Oz, and get defeated and driven back. I won't. And the reason I won't is because when I march I'll have all my plans made, and a host of allies to assist my Nomes."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the King.

"I'll explain, King Roquat. You're going to attack a fairy country, and a mighty fairy country, too. They haven't much of an army in Oz, but the Princess who ruled them has a fairy wand; and the little girl Dorothy has your Magic Belt; and at the North of the Emerald City lives a clever sorceress called Glinda the Good, who commands the spirits of the air. Also I have heard that there is a wonderful Wizard in Ozma's palace, who is so skillful that people used to pay him money in America to see him perform. So you see it will be no easy thing to overcome all this magic."

"We have fifty thousand soldiers!" cried the King proudly.

"Yes; but they are Nomes," remarked Guph, taking a silk handkerchief from the King's pocket and wiping his own pointed shoes with it. "Nomes are immortals, but they are not strong on magic. When you lost your famous Belt the greater part of your own power was gone from you. Against Ozma you and your Nomes would have no show at all."

Roquat's eyes flashed angrily.

"Then away you go to the slicing machine!" he cried.

"Not yet," said the General, filling his pipe from the King's private tobacco pouch.

"What do you propose to do?" asked the monarch.

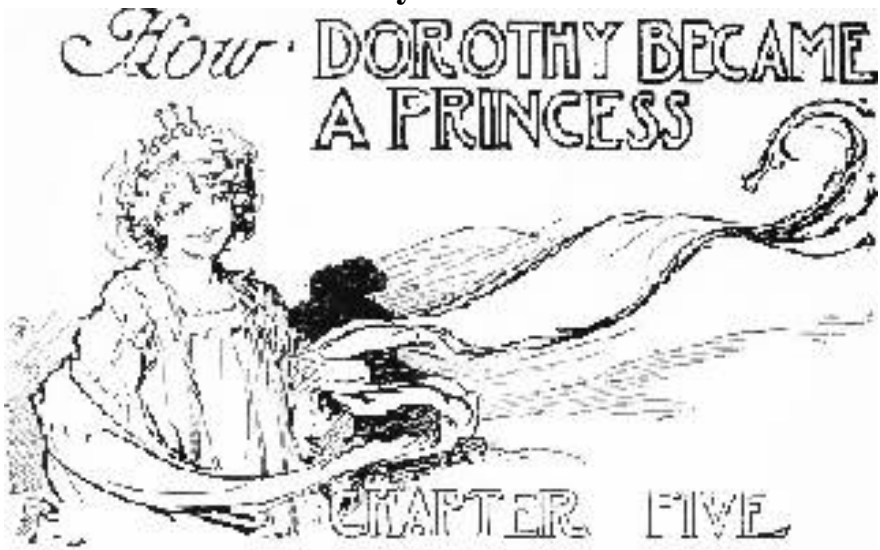
"I propose to obtain the power we need," answered Guph. "There are a good many evil creatures who have magic powers sufficient to destroy and conquer the Land of Oz. We will get them on our side, band them all together, and then take Ozma and her people by surprise. It's all very simple and easy when you know how. Alone, we should be helpless to injure the Ruler of Oz, but with the aid of the evil powers we can summon we shall easily succeed."

King Roquat was delighted with this idea, for he realized how clever it was.

"Surely, Guph, you are the greatest General I have ever had!" he exclaimed, his eyes sparkling with joy. "You must go at once and make arrangements with the evil powers to assist us, and meantime I'll begin to dig the tunnel."

“I thought you’d agree with me, Roquat,” replied the new General. “I’ll start this very afternoon to visit the Chief of the Whimsies.”

5. How Dorothy Became a Princess



When the people of the Emerald City heard that Dorothy had returned to them every one was eager to see her, for the little girl was a general favorite in the Land of Oz. From time to time some of the folk from the great outside world had found their way into this fairyland, but all except one had been companions of Dorothy and had turned out to be very agreeable people. The exception I speak of was the wonderful Wizard of Oz, a sleight-of-hand performer from Omaha who went up in a balloon and was carried by a current of air to the Emerald City. His queer and puzzling tricks made the people of Oz believe him a great wizard for a time, and he ruled over them until Dorothy arrived on her first visit and showed the Wizard to be a mere humbug. He was a gentle, kind-hearted little man, and Dorothy grew to like him afterward. When, after an absence, the Wizard returned to the Land of Oz, Ozma received him graciously and gave him a home in a part of the palace.

In addition to the Wizard two other personages from the outside world had been allowed to make their home in the Emerald City. The first was a quaint Shaggy Man, whom Ozma had made the Governor of the Royal Storehouses, and the second a Yellow Hen named Billina, who had a fine house in the gardens back of the palace, where she looked after a large family. Both these had been old comrades of Dorothy, so you see the little girl was quite an important personage in Oz, and the people thought she had brought them good luck, and loved her next best to Ozma. During her several

visits this little girl had been the means of destroying two wicked witches who oppressed the people, and she had discovered a live scarecrow who was now one of the most popular personages in all the fairy country. With the Scarecrow's help she had rescued Nick Chopper, a Tin Woodman, who had rusted in a lonely forest, and the tin man was now the Emperor of the Country of the Winkies and much beloved because of his kind heart. No wonder the people thought Dorothy had brought them good luck! Yet, strange as it may seem, she had accomplished all these wonders not because she was a fairy or had any magical powers whatever, but because she was a simple, sweet and true little girl who was honest to herself and to all whom she met. In this world in which we live simplicity and kindness are the only magic wands that work wonders, and in the Land of Oz Dorothy found these same qualities had won for her the love and admiration of the people. Indeed, the little girl had made many warm friends in the fairy country, and the only real grief the Ozites had ever experienced was when Dorothy left them and returned to her Kansas home.

Now she received a joyful welcome, although no one except Ozma knew at first that she had finally come to stay for good and all.

That evening Dorothy had many callers, and among them were such important people as Tiktok, a machine man who thought and spoke and moved by clockwork; her old companion the genial Shaggy Man; Jack Pumpkinhead, whose body was brush-wood and whose head was a ripe pumpkin with a face carved upon it; the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, two great beasts from the forest, who served Princess Ozma, and Professor H. M. Wogglebug, T.E. This wogglebug was a remarkable creature. He had once been a tiny little bug, crawling around in a schoolroom, but he was discovered and highly magnified so that he could be seen more plainly, and while in this magnified condition he had escaped. He had always remained big, and he dressed like a dandy and was so full of knowledge and information (which are distinct acquirements) that he had been made a Professor and the head of the Royal College.

Dorothy had a nice visit with these old friends, and also talked a long time with the Wizard, who was little and old and withered and dried up, but as merry and active as a child. Afterward, she went to see Billina's fast-growing family of chicks.

Toto, Dorothy's little black dog, also met with a cordial reception. Toto was an especial friend of the Shaggy Man, and he knew every one else. Being the only dog in the Land of Oz, he was highly respected by the people, who believed animals entitled to every consideration if they behaved themselves properly.

Dorothy had four lovely rooms in the palace, which were always reserved for her use and were called "Dorothy's rooms." These consisted of a beautiful sitting room, a dressing room, a dainty bedchamber and a big marble bathroom. And in these rooms were everything that heart could desire, placed there with loving thoughtfulness by Ozma for her little friend's use. The royal dressmakers had the little girl's measure, so they kept the closets in her dressing room filled with lovely dresses of every description and suitable for every occasion. No wonder Dorothy had refrained from bringing with her her old calico and gingham dresses! Here everything that was dear to a little girl's heart was supplied in profusion, and nothing so rich and beautiful could ever have been found in the biggest department stores in America. Of course Dorothy enjoyed all these luxuries, and the only reason she had heretofore preferred to live in Kansas was because her uncle and aunt loved her and needed her with them.

Now, however, all was to be changed, and Dorothy was really more delighted to know that her dear relatives were to share in her good fortune and enjoy the delights of the Land of Oz, than she was to possess such luxury for herself.

Next morning, at Ozma's request, Dorothy dressed herself in a pretty sky-blue gown of rich silk, trimmed with real pearls. The buckles of her shoes were set with pearls, too, and more of these priceless gems were on a lovely coronet which she wore upon her forehead. "For," said her friend Ozma, "from this time forth, my dear, you must assume your rightful rank as a Princess of Oz, and being my chosen companion you must dress in a way befitting the dignity of your position."

Dorothy agreed to this, although she knew that neither gowns nor jewels could make her anything else than the simple, unaffected little girl she had always been.

As soon as they had breakfasted--the girls eating together in Ozma's pretty boudoir--the Ruler of Oz said:

"Now, dear friend, we will use the Magic Belt to transport your uncle and aunt from Kansas to the Emerald City. But I think it would be fitting, in receiving such distinguished guests, for us to sit in my Throne Room."

"Oh, they're not very 'stinguished, Ozma," said Dorothy. "They're just plain people, like me."

"Being your friends and relatives, Princess Dorothy, they are certainly distinguished," replied the Ruler, with a smile.

"They--they won't hardly know what to make of all your splendid furniture and things," protested Dorothy, gravely. "It may scare 'em to see your grand Throne Room, an' p'raps we'd better go into the back yard,

Ozma, where the cabbages grow an' the chickens are playing. Then it would seem more natural to Uncle Henry and Aunt Em."

"No; they shall first see me in my Throne Room," replied Ozma, decidedly; and when she spoke in that tone Dorothy knew it was not wise to oppose her, for Ozma was accustomed to having her own way.

So together they went to the Throne Room, an immense domed chamber in the center of the palace. Here stood the royal throne, made of solid gold and encrusted with enough precious stones to stock a dozen jewelry stores in our country.

Ozma, who was wearing the Magic Belt, seated herself in the throne, and Dorothy sat at her feet. In the room were assembled many ladies and gentlemen of the court, clothed in rich apparel and wearing fine jewelry. Two immense animals squatted, one on each side of the throne--the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger. In a balcony high up in the dome an orchestra played sweet music, and beneath the dome two electric fountains sent sprays of colored perfumed water shooting up nearly as high as the arched ceiling.

"Are you ready, Dorothy?" asked the Ruler.

"I am," replied Dorothy; "but I don't know whether Aunt Em and Uncle Henry are ready."

"That won't matter," declared Ozma. "The old life can have very little to interest them, and the sooner they begin the new life here the happier they will be. Here they come, my dear!"

As she spoke, there before the throne appeared Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, who for a moment stood motionless, glaring with white and startled faces at the scene that confronted them. If the ladies and gentlemen present had not been so polite I am sure they would have laughed at the two strangers.

Aunt Em had her calico dress skirt "tucked up," and she wore a faded, blue-checked apron. Her hair was rather straggly and she had on a pair of Uncle Henry's old slippers. In one hand she held a dish-towel and in the other a cracked earthenware plate, which she had been engaged in wiping when so suddenly transported to the Land of Oz.

Uncle Henry, when the summons came, had been out in the barn “doin’ chores.” He wore a ragged and much soiled straw hat, a checked shirt without any collar and blue overalls tucked into the tops of his old cowhide boots.

“By gum!” gasped Uncle Henry, looking around as if bewildered.

“Well, I swan!” gurgled Aunt Em in a hoarse, frightened voice. Then her eyes fell upon Dorothy, and she said: “D-d-d-don’t that look like our little girl--our Dorothy, Henry?”

“Hi, there--look out, Em!” exclaimed the old man, as Aunt Em advanced a step; “take care o’ the wild beastses, or you’re a goner!”

But now Dorothy sprang forward and embraced and kissed her aunt and

uncle affectionately, afterward taking their hands in her own.

"Don't be afraid," she said to them. "You are now in the Land of Oz, where you are to live always, and be comfer'ble an' happy. You'll never have to worry over anything again, 'cause there won't be anything to worry about. And you owe it all to the kindness of my friend Princess Ozma."

Here she led them before the throne and continued:

"Your Highness, this is Uncle Henry. And this is Aunt Em. They want to thank you for bringing them here from Kansas."

Aunt Em tried to "slick" her hair, and she hid the dish-towel and dish under her apron while she bowed to the lovely Ozma. Uncle Henry took off his straw hat and held it awkwardly in his hands.

But the Ruler of Oz rose and came from her throne to greet her newly arrived guests, and she smiled as sweetly upon them as if they had been a king and queen.

"You are very welcome here, where I have brought you for Princess Dorothy's sake," she said, graciously, "and I hope you will be quite happy in your new home." Then she turned to her courtiers, who were silently and gravely regarding the scene, and added: "I present to my people our Princess Dorothy's beloved Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, who will hereafter be subjects of our kingdom. It will please me to have you show them every kindness and honor in your power, and to join me in making them happy and contented."

Hearing this, all those assembled bowed low and respectfully to the old farmer and his wife, who bobbed their own heads in return.

"And now," said Ozma to them, "Dorothy will show you the rooms prepared for you. I hope you will like them, and shall expect you to join me at luncheon."

So Dorothy led her relatives away, and as soon as they were out of the Throne Room and alone in the corridor, Aunt Em squeezed Dorothy's hand and said:

"Child, child! How in the world did we ever get here so quick? And is it all real? And are we to stay here, as she says? And what does it all mean, anyhow?"

Dorothy laughed.

"Why didn't you tell us what you were goin' to do?" inquired Uncle Henry, reproachfully. "If I'd known about it, I'd 'a put on my Sunday clothes."

"I'll 'splain ever'thing as soon as we get to your rooms," promised Dorothy. "You're in great luck, Uncle Henry and Aunt Em; an' so am I! And oh! I'm so happy to have got you here, at last!"

As he walked by the little girl's side, Uncle Henry stroked his whiskers thoughtfully. "'Pears to me, Dorothy, we won't make bang-up fairies," he remarked.

"An' my back hair looks like a fright!" wailed Aunt Em.

"Never mind," returned the little girl, reassuringly. "You won't have anything to do now but to look pretty, Aunt Em; an' Uncle Henry won't have to work till his back aches, that's certain."

"Sure?" they asked, wonderingly, and in the same breath.

"Course I'm sure," said Dorothy. "You're in the Fairyland of Oz, now; an' what's more, you belong to it!"

6. How Guph Visited the Whimsies

The new General of the Nome King's army knew perfectly well that to fail in his plans meant death for him. Yet he was not at all anxious or worried. He hated every one who was good and longed to make all who were happy unhappy. Therefore he had accepted this dangerous position as General quite willingly, feeling sure in his evil mind that he would be able to do a lot of mischief and finally conquer the Land of Oz.

Yet Guph determined to be careful, and to lay his plans well, so as not to fail. He argued that only careless people fail in what they attempt to do.

The mountains underneath which the Nome King's extensive caverns were located lay grouped just north of the Land of Ev, which lay directly across the deadly desert to the east of the Land of Oz. As the mountains were also on the edge of the desert the Nome King found that he had only to tunnel underneath the desert to reach Ozma's dominions. He did not wish his armies to appear above ground in the Country of the Winkies, which was the part of the Land of Oz nearest to King Roquat's own country, as then the people would give the alarm and enable Ozma to fortify the Emerald City and assemble an army. He wanted to take all the Oz people by surprise; so he decided to run the tunnel clear through to the Emerald City, where he and his hosts could break through the ground without warning and conquer the people before they had time to defend themselves.

Roquat the Red began work at once upon his tunnel, setting a thousand

miners at the task and building it high and broad enough for his armies to march through it with ease. The Nomes were used to making tunnels, as all the kingdom in which they lived was under ground; so they made rapid progress.

While this work was going on General Guph started out alone to visit the Chief of the Whimsies.

These Whimsies were curious people who lived in a retired country of their own. They had large, strong bodies, but heads so small that they were no bigger than door-knobs. Of course, such tiny heads could not contain any great amount of brains, and the Whimsies were so ashamed of their personal appearance and lack of commonsense that they wore big heads made of pasteboard, which they fastened over their own little heads. On these pasteboard heads they sewed sheep's wool for hair, and the wool was colored many tints--pink, green and lavender being the favorite colors. The faces of these false heads were painted in many ridiculous ways, according to the whims of the owners, and these big, burly creatures looked so whimsical and absurd in their queer masks that they were called "Whimsies." They foolishly imagined that no one would suspect the little heads that were inside the imitation ones, not knowing that it is folly to try to appear otherwise than as nature has made us.

The Chief of the Whimsies had as little wisdom as the others, and had been chosen chief merely because none among them was any wiser or more capable of ruling. The Whimsies were evil spirits and could not be killed. They were hated and feared by every one and were known as terrible fighters because they were so strong and muscular and had not sense enough to know when they were defeated.

General Guph thought the Whimsies would be a great help to the Nomes in the conquest of Oz, for under his leadership they could be induced to fight as long so they could stand up. So he traveled to their country and asked to see the Chief, who lived in a house that had a picture of his grotesque false head painted over the doorway.

The Chief's false head had blue hair, a turned-up nose, and a mouth that stretched half across the face. Big green eyes had been painted upon it, but in the center of the chin were two small holes made in the pasteboard, so that the Chief could see through them with his own tiny eyes; for when the big head was fastened upon his shoulders the eyes in his own natural head were on a level with the false chin.

Said General Guph to the Chief of the Whimsies:

"We Nomes are going to conquer the Land of Oz and capture our King's Magic Belt, which the Oz people stole from him. Then we are going to

plunder and destroy the whole country. And we want the Whimsies to help us."

"Will there be any fighting?" asked the Chief.

"Plenty," replied Guph.

That must have pleased the Chief, for he got up and danced around the room three times. Then he seated himself again, adjusted his false head, and said:

"We have no quarrel with Ozma of Oz."

"But you Whimsies love to fight, and here is a splendid chance to do so," urged Guph.

"Wait till I sing a song," said the Chief. Then he lay back in his chair and sang a foolish song that did not seem to the General to mean anything, although he listened carefully. When he had finished, the Chief Whimsie looked at him through the holes in his chin and asked:

"What reward will you give us if we help you?"

The General was prepared for this question, for he had been thinking the matter over on his journey. People often do a good deed without hope of reward, but for an evil deed they always demand payment.

"When we get our Magic Belt," he made reply, "our King, Roquat the Red, will use its power to give every Whimsie a natural head as big and fine as the false head he now wears. Then you will no longer be ashamed because your big strong bodies have such teenty-weenty heads."

"Oh! Will you do that?" asked the Chief, eagerly.

"We surely will," promised the General.

"I'll talk to my people," said the Chief.

So he called a meeting of all the Whimsies and told them of the offer made by the Nomes. The creatures were delighted with the bargain, and at once agreed to fight for the Nome King and help him to conquer Oz.

One Whimsie alone seemed to have a glimmer of sense, for he asked:

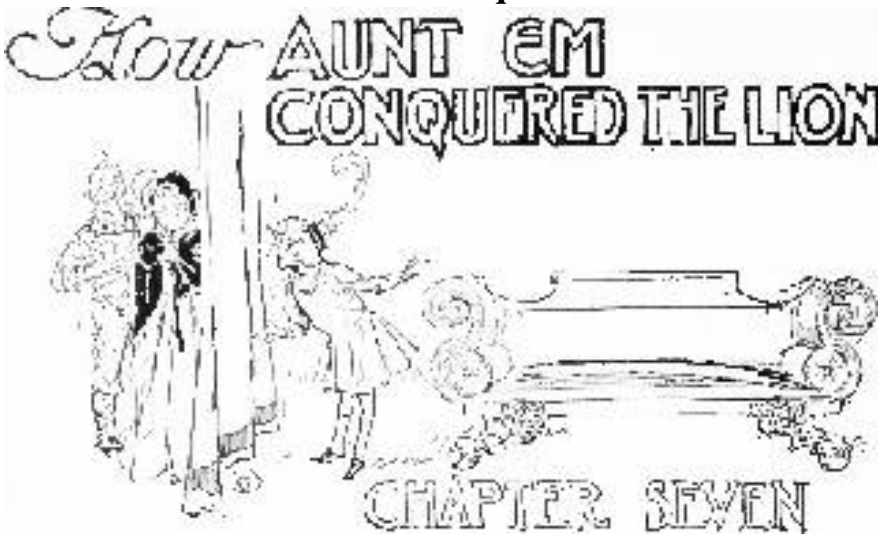
"Suppose we fail to capture the Magic Belt? What will happen then, and what good will all our fighting do?"

But they threw him into the river for asking foolish questions, and laughed when the water ruined his pasteboard head before he could swim out again.

So the compact was made and General Guph was delighted with his success in gaining such powerful allies.

But there were other people, too, just as important as the Whimsies, whom the clever old Nome had determined to win to his side.

7. How Aunt Em Conquered the Lion



"These are your rooms," said Dorothy, opening a door.

Aunt Em drew back at the sight of the splendid furniture and draperies.

"Ain't there any place to wipe my feet?" she asked.

"You will soon change your slippers for new shoes," replied Dorothy. "Don't be afraid, Aunt Em. Here is where you are to live, so walk right in and make yourself at home."

Aunt Em advanced hesitatingly.

"It beats the Topeka Hotel!" she cried admiringly. "But this place is too grand for us, child. Can't we have some back room in the attic, that's more in our class?"

"No," said Dorothy. "You've got to live here, 'cause Ozma says so. And all the rooms in this palace are just as fine as these, and some are better. It won't do any good to fuss, Aunt Em. You've got to be swell and high-toned in the Land of Oz, whether you want to or not; so you may as well make up your mind to it."

"It's hard luck," replied her aunt, looking around with an awed expression; "but folks can get used to anything, if they try. Eh, Henry?"

"Why, as to that," said Uncle Henry, slowly, "I b'lieve in takin' what's pervided us, an' askin' no questions. I've traveled some, Em, in my time, and you hain't; an' that makes a difference atween us."

Then Dorothy showed them through the rooms. The first was a handsome sitting-room, with windows opening upon the rose gardens. Then came separate bedrooms for Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, with a fine bathroom

between them. Aunt Em had a pretty dressing room, besides, and Dorothy opened the closets and showed several exquisite costumes that had been provided for her aunt by the royal dressmakers, who had worked all night to get them ready. Everything that Aunt Em could possibly need was in the drawers and closets, and her dressing-table was covered with engraved gold toilet articles.

Uncle Henry had nine suits of clothes, cut in the popular Munchkin fashion, with knee-breeches, silk stockings, and low shoes with jeweled buckles. The hats to match these costumes had pointed tops and wide brims with small gold bells around the edges. His shirts were of fine linen with frilled bosoms, and his vests were richly embroidered with colored silks.

Uncle Henry decided that he would first take a bath and then dress himself in a blue satin suit that had caught his fancy. He accepted his good fortune with calm composure and refused to have a servant to assist him. But Aunt Em was "all of a flutter," as she said, and it took Dorothy and Jellia Jamb, the housekeeper, and two maids a long time to dress her and do up her hair and get her "rigged like a popinjay," as she quaintly expressed it. She wanted to stop and admire everything that caught her eye, and she sighed continually and declared that such finery was too good for an old country woman, and that she never thought she would have to "put on airs" at her time of life.

Finally she was dressed, and when she went into the sitting-room there was Uncle Henry in his blue satin, walking gravely up and down the room. He had trimmed his beard and mustache and looked very dignified and respectable.

"Tell me, Dorothy," he said; "do all the men here wear duds like these?"

"Yes," she replied; "all 'cept the Scarecrow and the Shaggy Man--and of course the Tin Woodman and Tiktok, who are made of metal. You'll find all the men at Ozma's court dressed just as you are--only perhaps a little finer."

"Henry, you look like a play-actor," announced Aunt Em, looking at her husband critically.

"An' you, Em, look more highfalutin' than a peacock," he replied.

"I guess you're right," she said regretfully; "but we're helpless victims of high-toned royalty."

Dorothy was much amused.

"Come with me," she said, "and I'll show you 'round the palace."

She took them through the beautiful rooms and introduced them to all the people they chanced to meet. Also she showed them her own pretty rooms, which were not far from their own.

"So it's all true," said Aunt Em, wide-eyed with amazement, "and what Dorothy told us of this fairy country was plain facts instead of dreams! But where are all the strange creatures you used to know here?"

"Yes, where's the Scarecrow?" inquired Uncle Henry.

"Why, he's just now away on a visit to the Tin Woodman, who is Emp'ror of the Winkie Country," answered the little girl. "You'll see him when he comes back, and you're sure to like him."

"And where's the Wonderful Wizard?" asked Aunt Em.

"You'll see him at Ozma's luncheon, for he lives here in this palace," was the reply.

"And Jack Pumpkinhead?"

"Oh, he lives a little way out of town, in his own pumpkin field. We'll go there some time and see him, and we'll call on Professor Wogglebug, too. The Shaggy Man will be at the luncheon, I guess, and Tiktok. And now I'll take you out to see Billina, who has a house of her own."

So they went into the back yard, and after walking along winding paths some distance through the beautiful gardens they came to an attractive little house where the Yellow Hen sat on the front porch sunning herself.

"Good morning, my dear Mistress," called Billina, fluttering down to meet them. "I was expecting you to call, for I heard you had come back and

brought your uncle and aunt with you."

"We're here for good and all, this time, Billina," cried Dorothy, joyfully. "Uncle Henry and Aunt Em belong to Oz now as much as I do!"

"Then they are very lucky people," declared Billina; "for there couldn't be a nicer place to live. But come, my dear; I must show you all my Dorothys. Nine are living and have grown up to be very respectable hens; but one took cold at Ozma's birthday party and died of the pip, and the other two turned out to be horrid roosters, so I had to change their names from Dorothy to Daniel. They all had the letter 'D' engraved upon their gold lockets, you remember, with your picture inside, and 'D' stands for Daniel as well as for Dorothy."

"Did you call both the roosters Daniel?" asked Uncle Henry.

"Yes, indeed. I've nine Dorothys and two Daniels; and the nine Dorothys have eighty-six sons and daughters and over three hundred grandchildren," said Billina, proudly.

"What names do you give 'em all, dear?" inquired the little girl.

"Oh, they are all Dorothys and Daniels, some being Juniors and some Double-Juniors. Dorothy and Daniel are two good names, and I see no object in hunting for others," declared the Yellow Hen. "But just think, Dorothy, what a big chicken family we've grown to be, and our numbers increase nearly every day! Ozma doesn't know what to do with all the eggs we lay, and we are never eaten or harmed in any way, as chickens are in your country. They give us everything to make us contented and happy, and I, my dear, am the acknowledged Queen and Governor of every chicken in Oz, because I'm the eldest and started the whole colony."

"You ought to be very proud, ma'am," said Uncle Henry, who was astonished to hear a hen talk so sensibly.

"Oh, I am," she replied. "I've the loveliest pearl necklace you ever saw. Come in the house and I'll show it to you. And I've nine leg bracelets and a diamond pin for each wing. But I only wear them on state occasions."

They followed the Yellow Hen into the house, which Aunt Em declared was neat as a pin. They could not sit down, because all Billina's chairs were roosting-poles made of silver; so they had to stand while the hen fussily showed them her treasures.

Then they had to go into the back rooms occupied by Billina's nine Dorothys and two Daniels, who were all plump yellow chickens and greeted the visitors very politely. It was easy to see that they were well bred and that Billina had looked after their education.

In the yards were all the children and grandchildren of these eleven elders and they were of all sizes, from well-grown hens to tiny chickens just out of

the shell. About fifty fluffy yellow youngsters were at school, being taught good manners and good grammar by a young hen who wore spectacles. They sang in chorus a patriotic song of the Land of Oz, in honor of their visitors, and Aunt Em was much impressed by these talking chickens.

Dorothy wanted to stay and play with the young chickens for awhile, but Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had not seen the palace grounds and gardens yet and were eager to get better acquainted with the marvelous and delightful land in which they were to live.

"I'll stay here, and you can go for a walk," said Dorothy. "You'll be perfec'ly safe anywhere, and may do whatever you want to. When you get tired, go back to the palace and find your rooms, and I'll come to you before luncheon is ready."

So Uncle Henry and Aunt Em started out alone to explore the grounds, and Dorothy knew that they couldn't get lost, because all the palace grounds were enclosed by a high wall of green marble set with emeralds.

It was a rare treat to these simple folk, who had lived in the country all their lives and known little enjoyment of any sort, to wear beautiful clothes and live in a palace and be treated with respect and consideration by all around them. They were very happy indeed as they strolled up the shady walks and looked upon the gorgeous flowers and shrubs, feeling that their new home was more beautiful than any tongue could describe.

Suddenly, as they turned a corner and walked through a gap in a high hedge, they came face to face with an enormous Lion, which crouched upon the green lawn and seemed surprised by their appearance.

They stopped short, Uncle Henry trembling with horror and Aunt Em too terrified to scream. Next moment the poor woman clasped her husband around the neck and cried:

"Save me, Henry, save me!"

"Can't even save myself, Em," he returned, in a husky voice, "for the animile looks as if it could eat both of us an' lick its chops for more! If I only had a gun--"

"Haven't you, Henry? Haven't you?" she asked anxiously.

"Nary gun, Em. So let's die as brave an' graceful as we can. I knew our luck couldn't last!"

"I won't die. I won't be eaten by a lion!" wailed Aunt Em, glaring upon the huge beast. Then a thought struck her, and she whispered, "Henry, I've heard as savage beastses can be conquered by the human eye. I'll eye that lion out o' countenance an' save our lives."

“Try it, Em,” he returned, also in a whisper. “Look at him as you do at me when I’m late to dinner.”

Aunt Em turned upon the Lion a determined countenance and a wild dilated eye. She glared at the immense beast steadily, and the Lion, who had been quietly blinking at them, began to appear uneasy and disturbed.

“Is anything the matter, ma’am?” he asked, in a mild voice.

At this speech from the terrible beast Aunt Em and Uncle Henry both were startled, and then Uncle Henry remembered that this must be the Lion they had seen in Ozma’s Throne Room.

“Hold on, Em!” he exclaimed. “Quit the eagle eye conquest an’ take courage. I guess this is the same Cowardly Lion Dorothy has told us about.”

“Oh, is it?” she cried, much relieved.

“When he spoke, I got the idea; and when he looked so ‘shamed like, I was sure of it,” Uncle Henry continued.

Aunt Em regarded the animal with new interest.

“Are you the Cowardly Lion?” she inquired. “Are you Dorothy’s friend?”

“Yes’m,” answered the Lion, meekly. “Dorothy and I are old chums and are very fond of each other. I’m the King of Beasts, you know, and the Hungry Tiger and I serve Princess Ozma as her body guards.”

“To be sure,” said Aunt Em, nodding. “But the King of Beasts shouldn’t be cowardly.”

“I’ve heard that said before,” remarked the Lion, yawning till he showed two great rows of sharp white teeth; “but that does not keep me from being frightened whenever I go into battle.”

“What do you do, run?” asked Uncle Henry.

“No; that would be foolish, for the enemy would run after me,” declared the Lion. “So I tremble with fear and pitch in as hard as I can; and so far I have always won my fight.”

“Ah, I begin to understand,” said Uncle Henry.

“Were you scared when I looked at you just now?” inquired Aunt Em.

“Terribly scared, madam,” answered the Lion, “for at first I thought you were going to have a fit. Then I noticed you were trying to overcome me by the power of your eye, and your glance was so fierce and penetrating that I shook with fear.”

This greatly pleased the lady, and she said quite cheerfully:

“Well, I won’t hurt you, so don’t be scared any more. I just wanted to see what the human eye was good for.”

“The human eye is a fearful weapon,” remarked the Lion, scratching his nose softly with his paw to hide a smile. “Had I not known you were Dorothy’s friends I might have torn you both into shreds in order to escape your terrible gaze.”

Aunt Em shuddered at hearing this, and Uncle Henry said hastily:

“I’m glad you knew us. Good morning, Mr. Lion; we’ll hope to see you again--by and by--some time in the future.”

“Good morning,” replied the Lion, squatting down upon the lawn again. “You are likely to see a good deal of me, if you live in the Land of Oz.”

8. How the Grand Gallipoot Joined The Nomes

After leaving the Whimsies, Guph continued on his journey and penetrated far into the Northwest. He wanted to get to the Country of the Growleywogs, and in order to do that he must cross the Ripple Land, which was a hard thing to do. For the Ripple Land was a succession of hills and valleys, all very steep and rocky, and they changed places constantly by rippling. While Guph was climbing a hill it sank down under him and became a valley, and while he was descending into a valley it rose up and carried him to the top of a hill. This was very perplexing to the traveler, and a stranger might have thought he could never cross the Ripple Land at all. But Guph knew that if he kept steadily on he would get to the end at last; so he paid no attention to the changing hills and valleys and plodded along as calmly as if walking upon the level ground.

The result of this wise persistence was that the General finally reached firmer soil and, after penetrating a dense forest, came to the Dominion of the Growleywogs.

No sooner had he crossed the border of this domain when two guards seized him and carried him before the Grand Gallipoot of the Growleywogs, who scowled upon him ferociously and asked him why he dared intrude upon his territory.

“I’m the Lord High General of the Invincible Army of the Nomes, and my name is Guph,” was the reply. “All the world trembles when that name is mentioned.”

The Growleywogs gave a shout of jeering laughter at this, and one of them caught the Nome in his strong arms and tossed him high into the air. Guph was considerably shaken when he fell upon the hard ground, but he appeared to take no notice of the impertinence and composed himself to speak again to the Grand Gallipoot.

"My master, King Roquat the Red, has sent me here to confer with you. He wishes your assistance to conquer the Land of Oz."

Here the General paused, and the Grand Gallipoot scowled upon him more terribly than ever and said:

"Go on!"

The voice of the Grand Gallipoot was partly a roar and partly a growl. He mumbled his words badly and Guph had to listen carefully in order to understand him.

These Growleywogs were certainly remarkable creatures. They were of gigantic size, yet were all bone and skin and muscle, there being no meat or fat upon their bodies at all. Their powerful muscles lay just underneath their skins, like bunches of tough rope, and the weakest Growleywog was so strong that he could pick up an elephant and toss it seven miles away.

It seems unfortunate that strong people are usually so disagreeable and overbearing that no one cares for them. In fact, to be different from your fellow creatures is always a misfortune. The Growleywogs knew that they were disliked and avoided by every one, so they had become surly and unsociable even among themselves. Guph knew that they hated all people, including the Nomes; but he hoped to win them over, nevertheless, and knew that if he succeeded they would afford him very powerful assistance.

"The Land of Oz is ruled by a namby-pamby girl who is disgustingly kind and good," he continued. "Her people are all happy and contented and have no care or worries whatever."

"Go on!" growled the Grand Gallipoot.

"Once the Nome King enslaved the Royal Family of Ev--another goody-goody lot that we detest," said the General. "But Ozma interfered, although it was none of her business, and marched her army against us. With her was a Kansas girl named Dorothy, and a Yellow Hen, and they marched directly into the Nome King's cavern. There they liberated our slaves from Ev and stole King Roquat's Magic Belt, which they carried away with them. So now our King is making a tunnel under the deadly desert, so we can march through it to the Emerald City. When we get there we mean to conquer and destroy all the land and recapture the Magic Belt."

Again he paused, and again the Grand Gallipoot growled:

"Go on!"

Guph tried to think what to say next, and a happy thought soon occurred to him.

"We want you to help us in this conquest," he announced, "for we need the mighty aid of the Growleywogs in order to make sure that we shall not be defeated. You are the strongest people in all the world, and you hate good and happy creatures as much as we Nomes do. I am sure it will be a real pleasure to you to tear down the beautiful Emerald City, and in return for your valuable assistance we will allow you to bring back to your country ten thousand people of Oz, to be your slaves."

"Twenty thousand!" growled the Grand Gallipoot.

"All right, we promise you twenty thousand," agreed the General.

The Gallipoot made a signal and at once his attendants picked up General Guph and carried him away to a prison, where the jailer amused himself by sticking pins in the round fat body of the old Nome, to see him jump and hear him yell.

But while this was going on the Grand Gallipoot was talking with his counselors, who were the most important officials of the Growleywogs. When he had stated to them the proposition of the Nome King, he said:

"My advice is to offer to help them. Then, when we have conquered the Land of Oz, we will take not only our twenty thousand prisoners but all the gold and jewels we want."

"Let us take the Magic Belt, too," suggested one counselor.

"And rob the Nome King and make him our slave," said another.

"That is a good idea," declared the Grand Gallipoot. "I'd like King Roquat for my own slave. He could black my boots and bring me my porridge every morning while I am in bed."

"There is a famous Scarecrow in Oz. I'll take him for my slave," said a counselor.

"I'll take Tiktok, the machine man," said another.

"Give me the Tin Woodman," said a third.

They went on for some time, dividing up the people and the treasure of Oz in advance of the conquest. For they had no doubt at all that they would be able to destroy Ozma's domain. Were they not the strongest people in all the world?

"The deadly desert has kept us out of Oz before," remarked the Grand Gallipoot, "but now that the Nome King is building a tunnel we shall get into the Emerald City very easily. So let us send the little fat General back to his King with our promise to assist him. We will not say that we intend to conquer the Nomes after we have conquered Oz, but we will do so, just the same."

This plan being agreed upon, they all went home to dinner, leaving General Guph still in prison. The Nome had no idea that he had succeeded in his mission, for finding himself in prison he feared the Growleywogs intended to put him to death.

By this time the jailer had tired of sticking pins in the General, and was amusing himself by carefully pulling the Nome's whiskers out by the roots, one at a time. This enjoyment was interrupted by the Grand Gallipoot sending for the prisoner.

"Wait a few hours," begged the jailer. "I haven't pulled out a quarter of his whiskers yet."

"If you keep the Grand Gallipoot waiting, he'll break your back," declared the messenger.

"Perhaps you're right," sighed the jailer. "Take the prisoner away, if you will, but I advise you to kick him at every step he takes. It will be good fun, for he is as soft as a ripe peach."

So Guph was led away to the royal castle, where the Grand Gallipoot told him that the Growleywogs had decided to assist the Nomes in conquering the Land of Oz.

"Whenever you are ready," he added, "send me word and I will march with eighteen thousand of my most powerful warriors to your aid."

Guph was so delighted that he forgot all the smarting caused by the pins and the pulling of whiskers. He did not even complain of the treatment he had received, but thanked the Grand Gallipoot and hurried away upon his journey.

He had now secured the assistance of the Whimsies and the Growleywogs; but his success made him long for still more allies. His own

life depended upon his conquering Oz, and he said to himself:

"I'll take no chances. I'll be certain of success. Then, when Oz is destroyed, perhaps I shall be a greater man than old Roquat, and I can throw him away and be King of the Nomes myself. Why not? The Whimsies are stronger than the Nomes, and they also are my friends. There are some people still stronger than the Growleywogs, and if I can but induce them to aid me I shall have nothing more to fear."

9. How the Wogglebug Taught Athletics

It did not take Dorothy long to establish herself in her new home, for she knew the people and the manners and customs of the Emerald City just as well as she knew the old Kansas farm.

But Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had some trouble in getting used to the finery and pomp and ceremony of Ozma's palace, and felt uneasy because they were obliged to be "dressed up" all the time. Yet every one was very courteous and kind to them and endeavored to make them happy. Ozma, especially, made much of Dorothy's relatives, for her little friend's sake, and she well knew that the awkwardness and strangeness of their new mode of life would all wear off in time.

The old people were chiefly troubled by the fact that there was no work for them to do.

"Ev'ry day is like Sunday, now," declared Aunt Em, solemnly, "and I can't say I like it. If they'd only let me do up the dishes after meals, or even sweep an' dust my own rooms, I'd be a deal happier. Henry don't know what to do with himself either, and once when he stole out an' fed the chickens Billina scolded him for letting 'em eat between meals. I never knew before what a hardship it is to be rich and have everything you want."

These complaints began to worry Dorothy; so she had a long talk with Ozma upon the subject.

"I see I must find them something to do," said the girlish Ruler of Oz, seriously. "I have been watching your uncle and aunt, and I believe they will

be more contented if occupied with some light tasks. While I am considering this matter, Dorothy, you might make a trip with them through the Land of Oz, visiting some of the odd corners and introducing your relatives to some of our curious people."

"Oh, that would be fine!" exclaimed Dorothy, eagerly.

"I will give you an escort befitting your rank as a Princess," continued Ozma; "and you may go to some of the places you have not yet visited yourself, as well as some others that you know. I will mark out a plan of the trip for you and have everything in readiness for you to start to-morrow morning. Take your time, dear, and be gone as long as you wish. By the time you return I shall have found some occupation for Uncle Henry and Aunt Em that will keep them from being restless and dissatisfied."

Dorothy thanked her good friend and kissed the lovely Ruler gratefully. Then she ran to tell the joyful news to her uncle and aunt.

Next morning, after breakfast, everything was found ready for their departure.

The escort included Omby Amby, the Captain General of Ozma's army, which consisted merely of twenty-seven officers besides the Captain General. Once Omby Amby had been a private soldier--the only private in the army--but as there was never any fighting to do Ozma saw no need of a private, so she made Omby Amby the highest officer of them all. He was very tall and slim and wore a gay uniform and a fierce mustache. Yet the mustache was the only fierce thing about Omby Amby, whose nature was as gentle as that of a child.

The wonderful Wizard had asked to join the party, and with him came his friend the Shaggy Man, who was shaggy but not ragged, being dressed in fine silks with satin shags and bobtails. The Shaggy Man had shaggy whiskers and hair, but a sweet disposition and a soft, pleasant voice.

There was an open wagon, with three seats for the passengers, and the wagon was drawn by the famous wooden Sawhorse which had once been brought to life by Ozma by means of a magic powder. The Sawhorse wore wooden shoes to keep his wooden legs from wearing away, and he was strong and swift. As this curious creature was Ozma's own favorite steed, and very popular with all the people of the Emerald City, Dorothy knew that she had been highly favored by being permitted to use the Sawhorse on her journey.

In the front seat of the wagon sat Dorothy and the Wizard. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em sat in the next seat and the Shaggy Man and Omby Amby in the third seat. Of course Toto was with the party, curled up at Dorothy's feet, and just as they were about to start, Billina came fluttering along the path and

begged to be taken with them. Dorothy readily agreed, so the Yellow Hen flew up and perched herself upon the dashboard. She wore her pearl necklace and three bracelets upon each leg, in honor of the occasion.

Dorothy kissed Ozma good-bye, and all the people standing around waved their handkerchiefs, and the band in an upper balcony struck up a military march. Then the Wizard clucked to the Sawhorse and said: "Gid-dap!" and the wooden animal pranced away and drew behind him the big red wagon and all the passengers, without any effort at all. A servant threw open a gate of the palace enclosure, that they might pass out; and so, with music and shouts following them, the journey was begun.

"It's almost like a circus," said Aunt Em, proudly. "I can't help feelin' high an' mighty in this kind of a turn-out."

Indeed, as they passed down the street, all the people cheered them lustily, and the Shaggy Man and the Wizard and the Captain General all took off their hats and bowed politely in acknowledgment.

When they came to the great wall of the Emerald City, the gates were opened by the Guardian who always tended them. Over the gateway hung a dull-colored metal magnet shaped like a horse-shoe, placed against a shield of polished gold.

"That," said the Shaggy Man, impressively, "is the wonderful Love Magnet. I brought it to the Emerald City myself, and all who pass beneath this gateway are both loving and beloved."

"It's a fine thing," declared Aunt Em, admiringly. "If we'd had it in Kansas I guess the man who held a mortgage on the farm wouldn't have turned us out."

"Then I'm glad we didn't have it," returned Uncle Henry. "I like Oz better than Kansas, even; an' this little wood Sawhorse beats all the critters I ever saw. He don't have to be curried, or fed, or watered, an' he's strong as an ox. Can he talk, Dorothy?"

"Yes, Uncle," replied the child. "But the Sawhorse never says much. He told me once that he can't talk and think at the same time, so he prefers to think."

"Which is very sensible," declared the Wizard, nodding approvingly. "Which way do we go, Dorothy?"

"Straight ahead into the Quadling Country," she answered. "I've got a letter of interduction to Miss Cuttenclip."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Wizard, much interested. "Are we going there? Then I'm glad I came, for I've always wanted to meet the Cuttenclips."

"Who are they?" inquired Aunt Em.

"Wait till we get there," replied Dorothy, with a laugh; "then you'll see

for yourself. I've never seen the Cuttenclips, you know, so I can't 'zactly 'splain 'em to you."

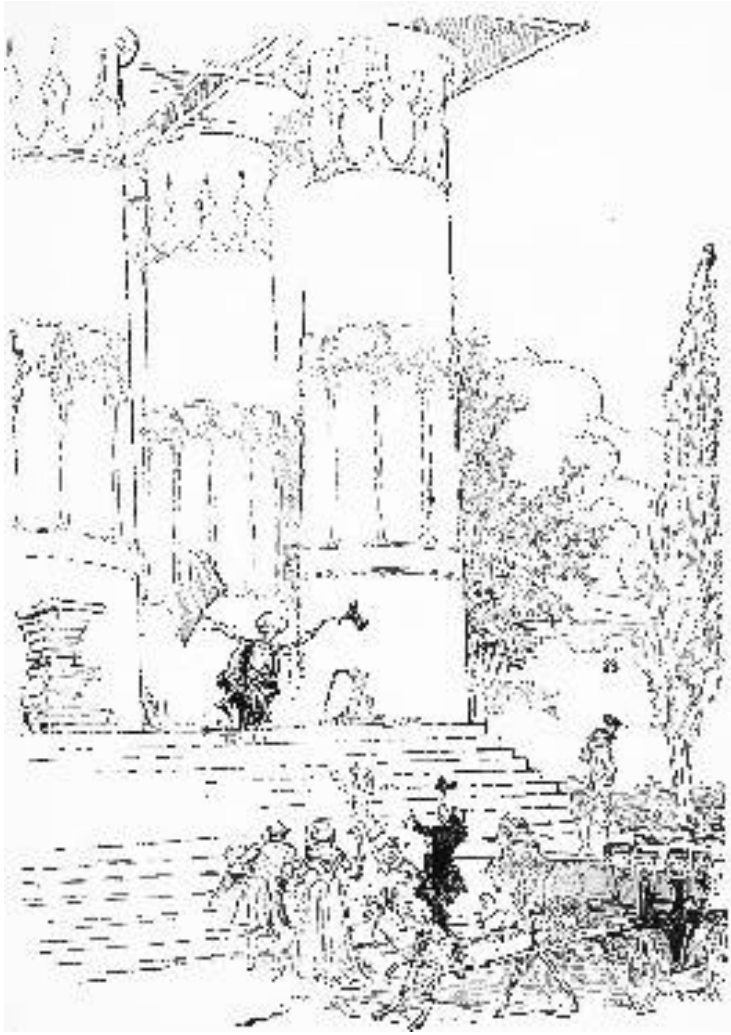
Once free of the Emerald City the Sawhorse dashed away at tremendous speed. Indeed, he went so fast that Aunt Em had hard work to catch her breath, and Uncle Henry held fast to the seat of the red wagon.

"Gently--gently, my boy!" called the Wizard, and at this the Sawhorse slackened his speed.

"What's wrong?" asked the animal, slightly turning his wooden head to look at the party with one eye, which was a knot of wood.

"Why, we wish to admire the scenery, that's all," answered the Wizard.

"Some of your passengers," added the Shaggy Man, "have never been out of the Emerald City before, and the country is all new to them."



“If you go too fast you’ll spoil all the fun,” said Dorothy. “There’s no hurry.”

“Very well; it is all the same to me,” observed the Sawhorse; and after that he went at a more moderate pace.

Uncle Henry was astonished.

“How can a wooden thing be so intelligent?” he asked.

“Why, I gave him some sawdust brains the last time I fitted his head with new ears,” explained the Wizard. “The sawdust was made from hard knots, and now the Sawhorse is able to think out any knotty problem he meets with.”

“I see,” said Uncle Henry.

“I don’t,” remarked Aunt Em; but no one paid any attention to this statement.

Before long they came to a stately building that stood upon a green plain with handsome shade trees grouped here and there.

“What is that?” asked Uncle Henry.

“That,” replied the Wizard, “is the Royal Athletic College of Oz, which is directed by Professor H. M. Wogglebug, T.E.”

“Let’s stop and make a call,” suggested Dorothy.

So the Sawhorse drew up in front of the great building and they were met at the door by the learned Wogglebug himself. He seemed fully as tall as the Wizard, and was dressed in a red and white checked vest and a blue swallow-tailed coat, and had yellow knee breeches and purple silk stockings upon his slender legs. A tall hat was jauntily set upon his head and he wore spectacles over his big bright eyes.

“Welcome, Dorothy,” said the Wogglebug; “and welcome to all your friends. We are indeed pleased to receive you at this great Temple of Learning.”

“I thought it was an Athletic College,” said the Shaggy Man.

“It is, my dear sir,” answered the Wogglebug, proudly. “Here it is that we teach the youth of our great land scientific College Athletics--in all their purity.”

“Don’t you teach them anything else?” asked Dorothy. “Don’t they get any reading, writing and ‘rithmetic?”

“Oh, yes; of course. They get all those, and more,” returned the Professor. “But such things occupy little of their time. Please follow me and I will show you how my scholars are usually occupied. This is a class hour and they are all busy.”

They followed him to a big field back of the college building, where several hundred young Ozites were at their classes. In one place they played football, in another baseball. Some played tennis, some golf; some were swimming in a big pool. Upon a river which wound through the grounds several crews in racing boats were rowing with great enthusiasm. Other groups of students played basketball and cricket, while in one place a ring was roped in to permit boxing and wrestling by the energetic youths. All the collegians seemed busy and there was much laughter and shouting.

“This college,” said Professor Wogglebug, complacently, “is a great success. Its educational value is undisputed, and we are turning out many great and valuable citizens every year.”

“But when do they study?” asked Dorothy.

“Study?” said the Wogglebug, looking perplexed at the question.

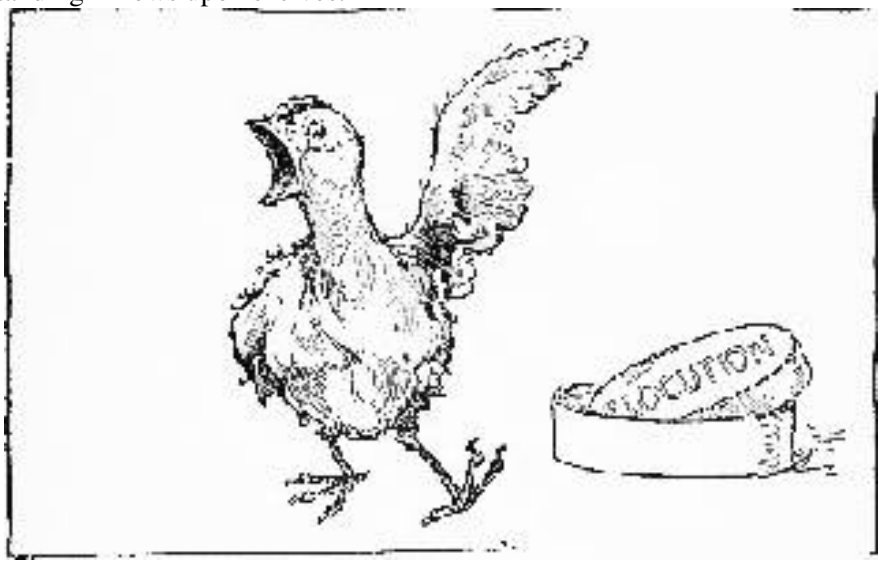
“Yes; when do they get their ‘rithmetic, and jogerfy, and such things?”

“Oh, they take doses of those every night and morning,” was the reply.

“What do you mean by doses?” Dorothy inquired, wonderingly.

“Why, we use the newly invented School Pills, made by your friend the Wizard. These pills we have found to be very effective, and they save a lot of time. Please step this way and I will show you our Laboratory of Learning.”

He led them to a room in the building where many large bottles were standing in rows upon shelves.



“These are the Algebra Pills,” said the Professor, taking down one of the bottles. “One at night, on retiring, is equal to four hours of study. Here are the Geography Pills--one at night and one in the morning. In this next bottle are the Latin Pills--one three times a day. Then we have the Grammar Pills--one before each meal--and the Spelling Pills, which are taken whenever needed.”

“Your scholars must have to take a lot of pills,” remarked Dorothy, thoughtfully. “How do they take ‘em, in applesauce?”

“No, my dear. They are sugar-coated and are quickly and easily swallowed. I believe the students would rather take the pills than study, and certainly the pills are a more effective method. You see, until these School Pills were invented we wasted a lot of time in study that may now be better employed in practicing athletics.”

“Seems to me the pills are a good thing,” said Omby Amby, who remembered how it used to make his head ache as a boy to study arithmetic.

“They are, sir,” declared the Wogglebug, earnestly. “They give us an

advantage over all other colleges, because at no loss of time our boys become thoroughly conversant with Greek and Latin, Mathematics and Geography, Grammar and Literature. You see they are never obliged to interrupt their games to acquire the lesser branches of learning."

"It's a great invention, I'm sure," said Dorothy, looking admiringly at the Wizard, who blushed modestly at this praise.

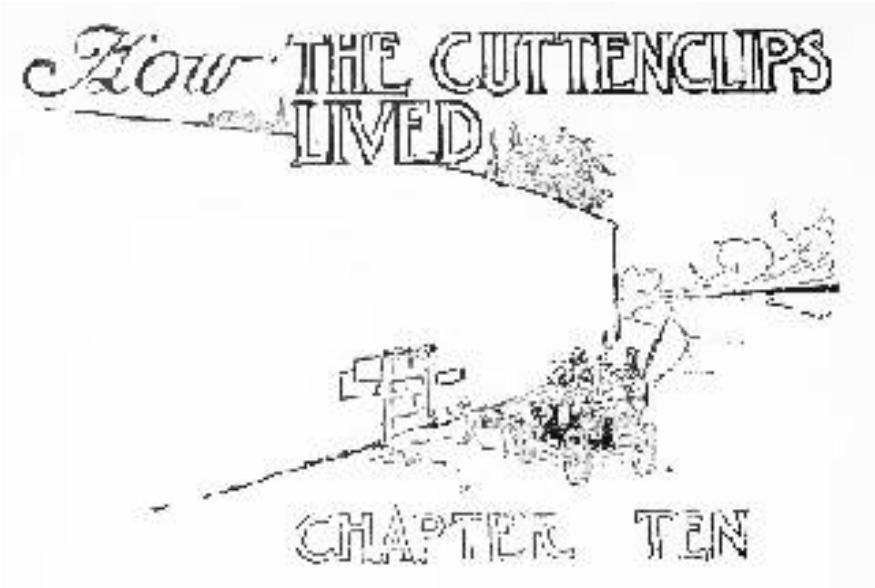
"We live in an age of progress," announced Professor Wogglebug, pompously. "It is easier to swallow knowledge than to acquire it laboriously from books. Is it not so, my friends?"

"Some folks can swallow anything," said Aunt Em, "but to me this seems too much like taking medicine."

"Young men in college always have to take their medicine, one way or another," observed the Wizard, with a smile; "and, as our Professor says, these School Pills have proved to be a great success. One day while I was making them I happened to drop one of them, and one of Billina's chickens gobbled it up. A few minutes afterward this chick got upon a roost and recited 'The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck' without making a single mistake. Then it recited 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and afterwards 'Excelsior.' You see, the chicken had eaten an Elocution Pill."

They now bade good-bye to the Professor, and thanking him for his kind reception mounted again into the red wagon and continued their journey.

10. How the Cuttenclips Lived



The travelers had taken no provisions with them because they knew that they would be welcomed wherever they might go in the Land of Oz, and that the people would feed and lodge them with genuine hospitality. So about noon they stopped at a farm-house and were given a delicious luncheon of bread and milk, fruits and wheat cakes with maple syrup. After resting a while and strolling through the orchards with their host--a round, jolly farmer--they got into the wagon and again started the Sawhorse along the pretty, winding road.

There were signposts at all the corners, and finally they came to one which read:

TAKE THIS ROAD TO THE CUTTENCLIPS

There was also a hand pointing in the right direction, so they turned the Sawhorse that way and found it a very good road, but seemingly little traveled.

"I've never seen the Cuttenclips before," remarked Dorothy.

"Nor I," said the Captain General.

"Nor I," said the Wizard.

"Nor I," said Billina.

"I've hardly been out of the Emerald City since I arrived in this country,"

added the Shaggy Man.

"Why, none of us has been there, then," exclaimed the little girl. "I wonder what the Cuttenclips are like."

"We shall soon find out," said the Wizard, with a sly laugh. "I've heard they are rather flimsy things."

The farm-houses became fewer as they proceeded, and the path was at times so faint that the Sawhorse had hard work to keep in the road. The wagon began to jounce, too; so they were obliged to go slowly.

After a somewhat wearisome journey they came in sight of a high wall, painted blue with pink ornaments. This wall was circular, and seemed to enclose a large space. It was so high that only the tops of the trees could be seen above it.

The path led up to a small door in the wall, which was closed and latched. Upon the door was a sign in gold letters reading as follows:

VISITORS are requested to MOVE SLOWLY and CAREFULLY, and to avoid COUGHING or making any BREEZE or DRAUGHT.

"That's strange," said the Shaggy Man, reading the sign aloud. "Who ARE the Cuttenclips, anyhow?"

"Why, they're paper dolls," answered Dorothy. "Didn't you know that?"

"Paper dolls! Then let's go somewhere else," said Uncle Henry. "We're all too old to play with dolls, Dorothy."

"But these are different," declared the girl. "They're alive."

"Alive!" gasped Aunt Em, in amazement.

"Yes. Let's go in," said Dorothy.

So they all got out of the wagon, since the door in the wall was not big enough for them to drive the Sawhorse and wagon through it.

"You stay here, Toto!" commanded Dorothy, shaking her finger at the little dog. "You're so careless that you might make a breeze if I let you inside."

Toto wagged his tail as if disappointed at being left behind; but he made no effort to follow them. The Wizard unlatched the door, which opened outward, and they all looked eagerly inside.

Just before the entrance was drawn up a line of tiny soldiers, with uniforms brightly painted and paper guns upon their shoulders. They were exactly alike, from one end of the line to the other, and all were cut out of paper and joined together in the centers of their bodies.

As the visitors entered the enclosure the Wizard let the door swing back into place, and at once the line of soldiers tumbled over, fell flat upon their

backs, and lay fluttering upon the ground.

"Hi there!" called one of them; "what do you mean by slamming the door and blowing us over?"

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," said the Wizard, regretfully. "I didn't know you were so delicate."

"We're not delicate!" retorted another soldier, raising his head from the ground. "We are strong and healthy; but we can't stand draughts."

"May I help you up?" asked Dorothy.

"If you please," replied the end soldier. "But do it gently, little girl."

Dorothy carefully stood up the line of soldiers, who first dusted their painted clothes and then saluted the visitors with their paper muskets. From the end it was easy to see that the entire line had been cut out of paper, although from the front the soldiers looked rather solid and imposing.

"I've a letter of introduction from Princess Ozma to Miss Cuttenclip," announced Dorothy.

"Very well," said the end soldier, and blew upon a paper whistle that hung around his neck. At once a paper soldier in a Captain's uniform came out of a paper house near by and approached the group at the entrance. He was not very big, and he walked rather stiffly and uncertainly on his paper legs; but he had a pleasant face, with very red cheeks and very blue eyes, and he bowed so low to the strangers that Dorothy laughed, and the breeze from her mouth nearly blew the Captain over. He wavered and struggled and finally managed to remain upon his feet.

"Take care, Miss!" he said, warningly. "You're breaking the rules, you know, by laughing."

"Oh, I didn't know that," she replied.

"To laugh in this place is nearly as dangerous as to cough," said the Captain. "You'll have to breathe very quietly, I assure you."

"We'll try to," promised the girl. "May we see Miss Cuttenclip, please?"

"You may," promptly returned the Captain. "This is one of her reception days. Be good enough to follow me."

He turned and led the way up a path, and as they followed slowly, because the paper Captain did not move very swiftly, they took the opportunity to gaze around them at this strange paper country.

Beside the path were paper trees, all cut out very neatly and painted a brilliant green color. And back of the trees were rows of cardboard houses, painted in various colors but most of them having green blinds. Some were large and some small, and in the front yards were beds of paper flowers quite natural in appearance. Over some of the porches paper vines were twined, giving them a cozy and shady look.

As the visitors passed along the street a good many paper dolls came to the doors and windows of their houses to look at them curiously. These dolls were nearly all the same height, but were cut into various shapes, some being fat and some lean. The girl dolls wore many beautiful costumes of tissue paper, making them quite fluffy; but their heads and hands were no thicker than the paper of which they were made.

Some of the paper people were on the street, walking along or congregated in groups and talking together; but as soon as they saw the strangers they all fluttered into the houses as fast as they could go, so as to be out of danger.

"Excuse me if I go edgewise," remarked the Captain as they came to a slight hill. "I can get along faster that way and not flutter so much."

"That's all right," said Dorothy. "We don't mind how you go, I'm sure."

At one side of the street was a paper pump, and a paper boy was pumping paper water into a paper pail. The Yellow Hen happened to brush against this boy with her wing, and he flew into the air and fell into a paper tree, where he stuck until the Wizard gently pulled him out. At the same time, the pail went into the air, spilling the paper water, while the paper pump bent nearly double.

"Goodness me!" said the Hen. "If I should flop my wings I believe I'd knock over the whole village!"

"Then don't flop them--please don't!" entreated the Captain. "Miss Cuttenclip would be very much distressed if her village was spoiled."

"Oh, I'll be careful," promised Billina.

"Are not all these paper girls and women named Miss Cuttenclips?" inquired Omby Amby.

"No indeed," answered the Captain, who was walking better since he began to move edgewise. "There is but one Miss Cuttenclip, who is our Queen, because she made us all. These girls are Cuttenclips, to be sure, but their names are Emily and Polly and Sue and Betty and such things. Only the Queen is called Miss Cuttenclip."

"I must say that this place beats anything I ever heard of," observed Aunt Em. "I used to play with paper dolls myself, an' cut 'em out; but I never thought I'd ever see such things alive."

"I don't see as it's any more curious than hearing hens talk," returned Uncle Henry.

"You're likely to see many queer things in the Land of Oz, sir," said the Wizard. "But a fairy country is extremely interesting when you get used to being surprised."

"Here we are!" called the Captain, stopping before a cottage.

This house was made of wood, and was remarkably pretty in design. In the Emerald City it would have been considered a tiny dwelling, indeed; but in the midst of this paper village it seemed immense. Real flowers were in the garden and real trees grew beside it. Upon the front door was a sign reading:

MISS CUTTENCLIP.

Just as they reached the porch the front door opened and a little girl stood before them. She appeared to be about the same age as Dorothy, and smiling upon her visitors she said, sweetly:

"You are welcome."

All the party seemed relieved to find that here was a real girl, of flesh and blood. She was very dainty and pretty as she stood there welcoming them. Her hair was a golden blonde and her eyes turquoise blue. She had rosy cheeks and lovely white teeth. Over her simple white lawn dress she wore an apron with pink and white checks, and in one hand she held a pair of scissors.

"May we see Miss Cuttenclip, please?" asked Dorothy.

"I am Miss Cuttenclip," was the reply. "Won't you come in?"

She held the door open while they all entered a pretty sitting-room that was littered with all sorts of paper--some stiff, some thin, and some tissue. The sheets and scraps were of all colors. Upon a table were paints and brushes, while several pair of scissors, of different sizes, were lying about.

"Sit down, please," said Miss Cuttenclip, clearing the paper scraps off some of the chairs. "It is so long since I have had any visitors that I am not properly prepared to receive them. But I'm sure you will pardon my untidy room, for this is my workshop."

"Do you make all the paper dolls?" inquired Dorothy.

"Yes; I cut them out with my scissors, and paint the faces and some of the costumes. It is very pleasant work, and I am happy making my paper village grow."

"But how do the paper dolls happen to be alive?" asked Aunt Em.

"The first dolls I made were not alive," said Miss Cuttenclip. "I used to live near the castle of a great Sorceress named Glinda the Good, and she saw my dolls and said they were very pretty. I told her I thought I would like them better if they were alive, and the next day the Sorceress brought me a lot of magic paper. 'This is live paper,' she said, 'and all the dolls you cut out of it will be alive, and able to think and to talk. When you have used it all up, come to me and I will give you more.'

"Of course I was delighted with this present," continued Miss Cuttenclip, "and at once set to work and made several paper dolls, which, as soon as they were cut out, began to walk around and talk to me. But they were so thin that I found that any breeze would blow them over and scatter them dreadfully;

so Glinda found this lonely place for me, where few people ever come. She built the wall to keep any wind from blowing away my people, and told me I could build a paper village here and be its Queen. That is why I came here and settled down to work and started the village you now see. It was many years ago that I built the first houses, and I've kept pretty busy and made my village grow finely; and I need not tell you that I am very happy in my work."

"Many years ago!" exclaimed Aunt Em. "Why, how old are you, child?"

"I never keep track of the years," said Miss Cuttenclip, laughing. "You see, I don't grow up at all, but stay just the same as I was when first I came here. Perhaps I'm older even than you are, madam; but I couldn't say for sure."

They looked at the lovely little girl wonderingly, and the Wizard asked:

"What happens to your paper village when it rains?"

"It does not rain here," replied Miss Cuttenclip. "Glinda keeps all the rain storms away; so I never worry about my dolls getting wet. But now, if you will come with me, it will give me pleasure to show you over my paper kingdom. Of course you must go slowly and carefully, and avoid making any breeze."

They left the cottage and followed their guide through the various streets of the village. It was indeed an amazing place, when one considered that it was all made with scissors, and the visitors were not only greatly interested but full of admiration for the skill of little Miss Cuttenclip.

In one place a large group of especially nice paper dolls assembled to greet their Queen, whom it was easy to see they loved early. These dolls marched and danced before the visitors, and then they all waved their paper handkerchiefs and sang in a sweet chorus a song called "The Flag of Our Native Land."

At the conclusion of the song they ran up a handsome paper flag on a tall flagpole, and all of the people of the village gathered around to cheer as loudly as they could--although, of course, their voices were not especially strong.

Miss Cuttenclip was about to make her subjects a speech in reply to this patriotic song, when the Shaggy Man happened to sneeze.

He was a very loud and powerful sneezer at any time, and he had tried so hard to hold in this sneeze that when it suddenly exploded the result was terrible.

The paper dolls were mowed down by dozens, and flew and fluttered in wild confusion in every direction, tumbling this way and that and getting more or less wrinkled and bent.

A wail of terror and grief came from the scattered throng, and Miss Cuttenclip exclaimed:

"Dear me! dear me!" and hurried at once to the rescue of her overturned people.

"Oh, Shaggy Man! How could you?" asked Dorothy, reproachfully.

"I couldn't help it--really I couldn't," protested the Shaggy Man, looking quite ashamed. "And I had no idea it took so little to upset these paper dolls."

"So little!" said Dorothy. "Why, it was 'most as bad as a Kansas cyclone." And then she helped Miss Cuttenclip rescue the paper folk and stand them on their feet again. Two of the cardboard houses had also tumbled over, and the little Queen said she would have to repair them and paste them together before they could be lived in again.

And now, fearing they might do more damage to the flimsy paper people, they decided to go away. But first they thanked Miss Cuttenclip very warmly for her courtesy and kindness to them.

"Any friend of Princess Ozma is always welcome here--unless he sneezes," said the Queen with a rather severe look at the Shaggy Man, who hung his head. "I like to have visitors admire my wonderful village, and I

hope you will call again.”

Miss Cuttenclip herself led them to the door in the wall, and as they passed along the street the paper dolls peeped at them half fearfully from the doors and windows. Perhaps they will never forget the Shaggy Man’s awful sneeze, and I am sure they were all glad to see the meat people go away.

11. How the General Met the First and Foremost

On leaving the Growleywogs General Guph had to recross the Ripple Lands, and he did not find it a pleasant thing to do. Perhaps having his whiskers pulled out one by one and being used as a pin-cushion for the innocent amusement of a good natured jailer had not improved the quality of Guph's temper, for the old Nome raved and raged at the recollection of the wrongs he had suffered, and vowed to take vengeance upon the Growleywogs after he had used them for his purposes and Oz had been conquered. He went on in this furious way until he was half across the Ripple Land. Then he became seasick, and the rest of the way this naughty Nome was almost as miserable as he deserved to be.

But when he reached the plains again and the ground was firm under his feet he began to feel better, and instead of going back home he turned directly west. A squirrel, perched in a tree, saw him take this road and called to him warningly: "Look out!" But he paid no attention. An eagle paused in its flight through the air to look at him wonderingly and say: "Look out!" But on he went.

No one can say that Guph was not brave, for he had determined to visit those dangerous creatures the Phanfasms, who resided upon the very top of the dread Mountain of Phantastico. The Phanfasms were Erbs, and so dreaded by mortals and immortals alike that no one had been near their mountain home for several thousand years. Yet General Guph hoped to induce them to join in his proposed warfare against the good and happy Oz people.

Guph knew very well that the Phanfasms would be almost as dangerous to the Nomes as they would to the Ozites, but he thought himself so clever that he believed he could manage these strange creatures and make them obey him. And there was no doubt at all that if he could enlist the services of the Phanfasms, their tremendous power, united to the strength of the Growleywogs and the cunning of the Whimsies would doom the Land of Oz to absolute destruction.

So the old Nome climbed the foothills and trudged along the wild mountain paths until he came to a big gully that encircled the Mountain of Phantastico and marked the boundary line of the dominion of the Phanfasms. This gully was about a third of the way up the mountain, and it was filled to the brim with red-hot molten lava in which swam fire-serpents and poisonous salamanders. The heat from this mass and its poisonous smell were both so unbearable that even birds hesitated to fly over the gully, but circled around it. All living things kept away from the mountain.

Now Guph had heard, during his long lifetime, many tales of these dreaded Phanfasms; so he had heard of this barrier of melted lava, and also he had been told that there was a narrow bridge that spanned it in one place. So he walked along the edge until he found the bridge. It was a single arch of gray stone, and lying flat upon the bridge was a scarlet alligator, seemingly fast asleep.

When Guph stumbled over the rocks in approaching the bridge the creature opened its eyes, from which tiny flames shot in all directions, and after looking at the intruder very wickedly the scarlet alligator closed its eyelids again and lay still.

Guph saw there was no room for him to pass the alligator on the narrow bridge, so he called out to it:

“Good morning, friend. I don’t wish to hurry you, but please tell me if you are coming down, or going up?”

“Neither,” snapped the alligator, clicking its cruel jaws together.

The General hesitated.

"Are you likely to stay there long?" he asked.

"A few hundred years or so," said the alligator.

Guph softly rubbed the end of his nose and tried to think what to do.

"Do you know whether the First and Foremost Phanfasm of Phantastico is at home or not?" he presently inquired.

"I expect he is, seeing he is always at home," replied the alligator.

"Ah; who is that coming down the mountain?" asked the Nome, gazing upward.

The alligator turned to look over its shoulder, and at once Guph ran to the bridge and leaped over the sentinel's back before it could turn back again. The scarlet monster made a snap at the Nome's left foot, but missed it by

fully an inch.

“Ah ha!” laughed the General, who was now on the mountain path. “I fooled you that time.”

“So you did; and perhaps you fooled yourself,” retorted the alligator. “Go up the mountain, if you dare, and find out what the First and Foremost will do to you!”

“I will,” declared Guph, boldly; and on he went up the path.

At first the scene was wild enough, but gradually it grew more and more awful in appearance. All the rocks had the shapes of frightful beings and even the tree trunks were gnarled and twisted like serpents.

Suddenly there appeared before the Nome a man with the head of an owl. His body was hairy like that of an ape, and his only clothing was a scarlet scarf twisted around his waist. He bore a huge club in his hand and his round owl eyes blinked fiercely upon the intruder.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded, threatening Guph with his club.

“I’ve come to see the First and Foremost Phanfasm of Phantastico,” replied the General, who did not like the way this creature looked at him, but still was not afraid.

“Ah; you shall see him!” the man said, with a sneering laugh. “The First and Foremost shall decide upon the best way to punish you.”

“He will not punish me,” returned Guph, calmly, “for I have come here to do him and his people a rare favor. Lead on, fellow, and take me directly to your master.”

The owl-man raised his club with a threatening gesture.

“If you try to escape,” he said, “beware--”

But here the General interrupted him.

“Spare your threats,” said he, “and do not be impertinent, or I will have you severely punished. Lead on, and keep silent!”

This Guph was really a clever rascal, and it seems a pity he was so bad, for in a good cause he might have accomplished much. He realized that he had put himself into a dangerous position by coming to this dreadful mountain, but he also knew that if he showed fear he was lost. So he adopted a bold manner as his best defense. The wisdom of this plan was soon evident, for the Phanfasm with the owl’s head turned and led the way up the mountain.

At the very top was a level plain upon which were heaps of rock that at first glance seemed solid. But on looking closer Guph discovered that these rock heaps were dwellings, for each had an opening.

Not a person was to be seen outside the rock huts. All was silent.

The owl-man led the way among the groups of dwellings to one standing in the center. It seemed no better and no worse than any of the others. Outside the entrance to this rock heap the guide gave a low wail that sounded like “Lee-ow-ah!”

Suddenly there bounded from the opening another hairy man. This one wore the head of a bear. In his hand he bore a brass hoop. He glared at the stranger in evident surprise.

“Why have you captured this foolish wanderer and brought him here?” he demanded, addressing the owl-man.

“I did not capture him,” was the answer. “He passed the scarlet alligator and came here of his own free will and accord.”

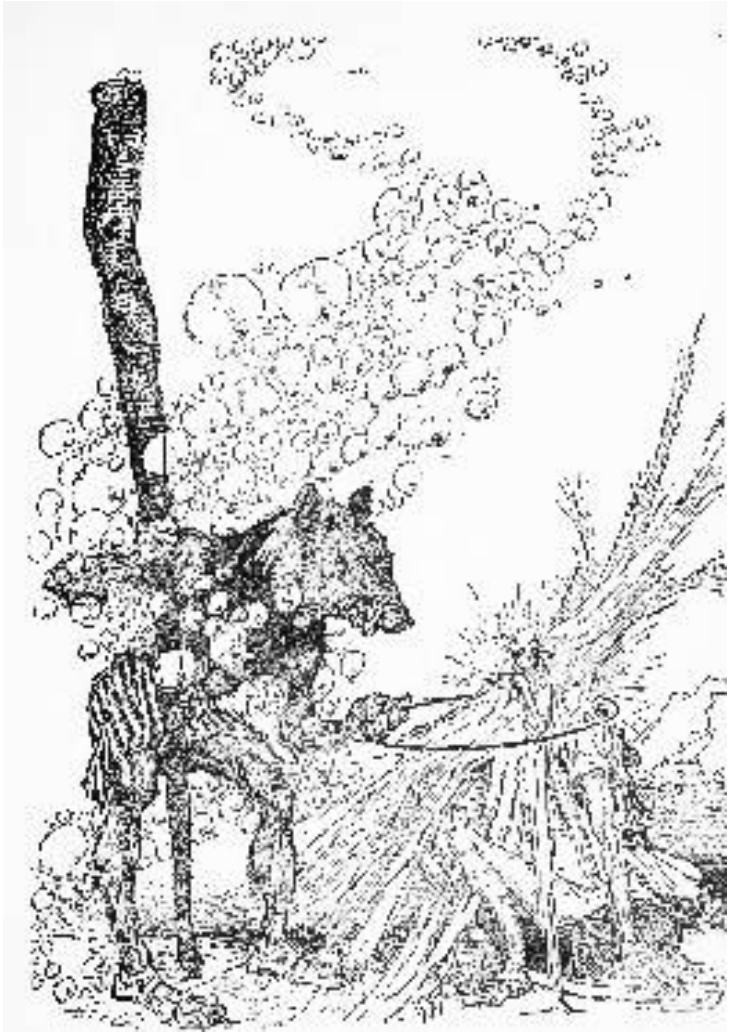
The First and Foremost looked at the General.

“Have you tired of life, then?” he asked.

“No indeed,” answered Guph. “I am a Nome, and the Chief General of King Roquat the Red’s great army of Nomes. I come of a long-lived race, and I may say that I expect to live a long time yet. Sit down, you Phanfasms--if you can find a seat in this wild haunt--and listen to what I have to say.”

With all his knowledge and bravery General Guph did not know that the steady glare from the bear eyes was reading his inmost thoughts as surely as if they had been put into words. He did not know that these despised rock heaps of the Phanfasms were merely deceptions to his own eyes, nor could he guess that he was standing in the midst of one of the most splendid and luxurious cities ever built by magic power. All that he saw was a barren waste of rock heaps, a hairy man with an owl’s head and another with a bear’s head. The sorcery of the Phanfasms permitted him to see no more.

Suddenly the First and Foremost swung his brass hoop and caught Guph around the neck with it. The next instant, before the General could think what had happened to him, he was dragged inside the rock hut. Here, his eyes still blinded to realities, he perceived only a dim light, by which the hut seemed as rough and rude inside as it was outside. Yet he had a strange feeling that many bright eyes were fastened upon him and that he stood in a vast and extensive hall.



The First and Foremost now laughed grimly and released his prisoner.

"If you have anything to say that is interesting," he remarked, "speak out, before I strangle you."

So Guph spoke out. He tried not to pay any attention to a strange rustling sound that he heard, as of an unseen multitude drawing near to listen to his words. His eyes could see only the fierce bear-man, and to him he addressed his speech. First he told of his plan to conquer the Land of Oz and plunder the country of its riches and enslave its people, who, being fairies, could not be killed. After relating all this, and telling of the tunnel the Nome King was building, he said he had come to ask the First and Foremost to join the Nomes, with his band of terrible warriors, and help them to defeat the Oz

people.

The General spoke very earnestly and impressively, but when he had finished the bear-man began to laugh as if much amused, and his laughter seemed to be echoed by a chorus of merriment from an unseen multitude. Then, for the first time, Guph began to feel a trifle worried.

"Who else has promised to help you?" finally asked the First and Foremost.

"The Whimsies," replied the General.

Again the bear-headed Phanfasm laughed.

"Any others?" he inquired.

"Only the Growleywogs," said Guph.

This answer set the First and Foremost laughing anew.

"What share of the spoils am I to have?" was the next question.

"Anything you like, except King Roquat's Magic Belt," replied Guph.

At this the Phanfasm set up a roar of laughter, which had its echo in the unseen chorus, and the bear-man seemed so amused that he actually rolled upon the ground and shouted with merriment.

"Oh, these blind and foolish Nomes!" he said. "How big they seem to themselves and how small they really are!"

Suddenly he arose and seized Guph's neck with one hairy paw, dragging him out of the hut into the open.

Here he gave a curious wailing cry, and, as if in answer, from all the rocky huts on the mountain-top came flocking a horde of Phanfasms, all with hairy bodies, but wearing heads of various animals, birds and reptiles. All were ferocious and repulsive-looking to the deceived eyes of the Nome, and Guph could not repress a shudder of disgust as he looked upon them.

The First and Foremost slowly raised his arms, and in a twinkling his hairy skin fell from him and he appeared before the astonished Nome as a beautiful woman, clothed in a flowing gown of pink gauze. In her dark hair flowers were entwined, and her face was noble and calm.

At the same instant the entire band of Phanfasms was transformed into a pack of howling wolves, running here and there as they snarled and showed their ugly yellow fangs.

The woman now raised her arms, even as the man-bear had done, and in a twinkling the wolves became crawling lizards, while she herself changed into a huge butterfly.

Guph had only time to cry out in fear and take a step backward to avoid the lizards when another transformation occurred, and all returned instantly to the forms they had originally worn.

Then the First and Foremost, who had resumed his hairy body and bear

head, turned to the Nome and asked:

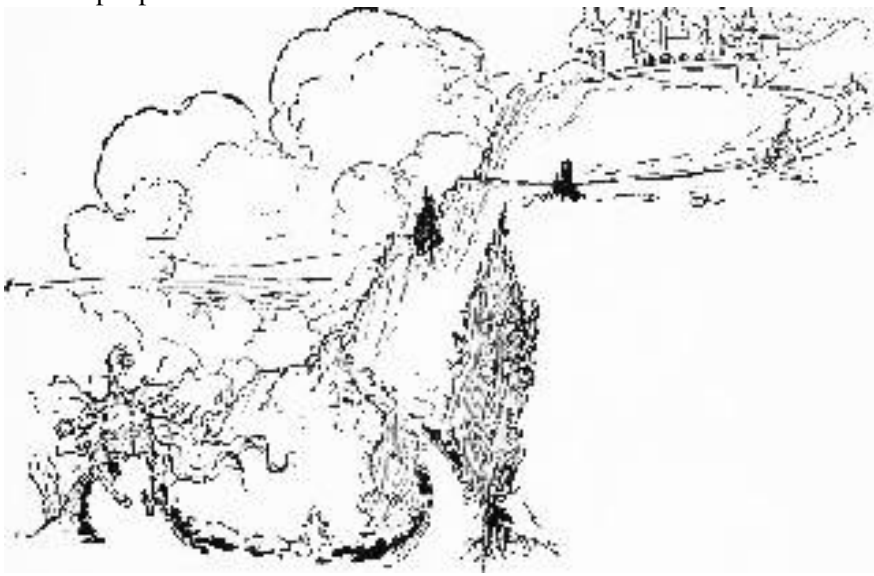
"Do you still demand our assistance?"

"More than ever," answered the General, firmly.

"Then tell me: what can you offer the Phanfasms that they have not already?" inquired the First and Foremost.

Guph hesitated. He really did not know what to say. The Nome King's vaunted Magic Belt seemed a poor thing compared to the astonishing magical powers of these people. Gold, jewels and slaves they might secure in any quantity without especial effort. He felt that he was dealing with powers greatly beyond him. There was but one argument that might influence the Phanfasms, who were creatures of evil.

"Permit me to call your attention to the exquisite joy of making the happy unhappy," said he at last. "Consider the pleasure of destroying innocent and harmless people."



"Ah! you have answered me," cried the First and Foremost. "For that reason alone we will aid you. Go home, and tell your bandy-legged king that as soon as his tunnel is finished the Phanfasms will be with him and lead his legions to the conquest of Oz. The deadly desert alone has kept us from destroying Oz long ago, and your underground tunnel is a clever thought. Go home, and prepare for our coming!"

Guph was very glad to be permitted to go with this promise. The owl-man led him back down the mountain path and ordered the scarlet alligator to crawl away and allow the Nome to cross the bridge in safety.

After the visitor had gone a brilliant and gorgeous city appeared upon the

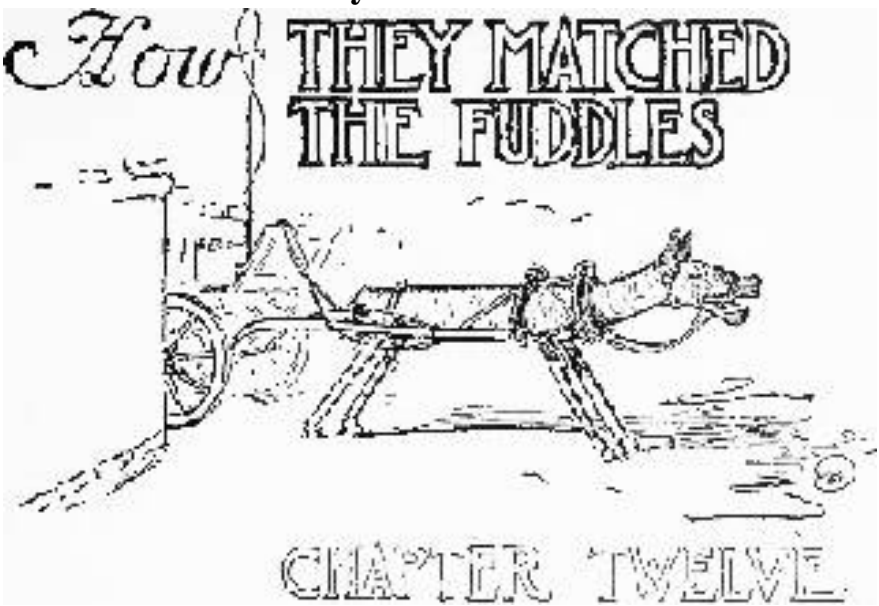
mountain top, clearly visible to the eyes of the gaily dressed multitude of Phanfasms that lived there. And the First and Foremost, beautifully arrayed, addressed the others in these words:

"It is time we went into the world and brought sorrow and dismay to its people. Too long have we remained for ourselves upon this mountain top, for while we are thus secluded many nations have grown happy and prosperous, and the chief joy of the race of Phanfasms is to destroy happiness. So I think it is lucky that this messenger from the Nomes arrived among us just now, to remind us that the opportunity has come for us to make trouble. We will use King Roquat's tunnel to conquer the Land of Oz. Then we will destroy the Whimsies, the Growleywogs and the Nomes, and afterward go out to ravage and annoy and grieve the whole world."

The multitude of evil Phanfasms eagerly applauded this plan, which they fully approved.

I am told that the Erbs are the most powerful and merciless of all the evil spirits, and the Phanfasms of Phantastico belong to the race of Erbs.

12. How they Matched the Fuddles



Dorothy and her fellow travelers rode away from the Cuttenclip village and followed the indistinct path as far as the sign-post. Here they took the main road again and proceeded pleasantly through the pretty farming country. When evening came they stopped at a dwelling and were joyfully welcomed and given plenty to eat and good beds for the night.

Early next morning, however, they were up and eager to start, and after a good breakfast they bade their host good-bye and climbed into the red wagon, to which the Sawhorse had been hitched all night. Being made of wood, this horse never got tired nor cared to lie down. Dorothy was not quite sure whether he ever slept or not, but it was certain that he never did when anybody was around.

The weather is always beautiful in Oz, and this morning the air was cool and refreshing and the sunshine brilliant and delightful.

In about an hour they came to a place where another road branched off. There was a sign-post here which read:

THIS WAY TO FUDDLECUMJIG

"Oh, here is where we turn," said Dorothy, observing the sign.

"What! Are we going to Fuddlecumjig?" asked the Captain General.

"Yes; Ozma thought we might enjoy the Fuddles. They are said to be very

interesting," she replied.

"No one would suspect it from their name," said Aunt Em. "Who are they, anyhow? More paper things?"

"I think not," answered Dorothy, laughing; "but I can't say 'zactly, Aunt Em, what they are. We'll find out when we get there."

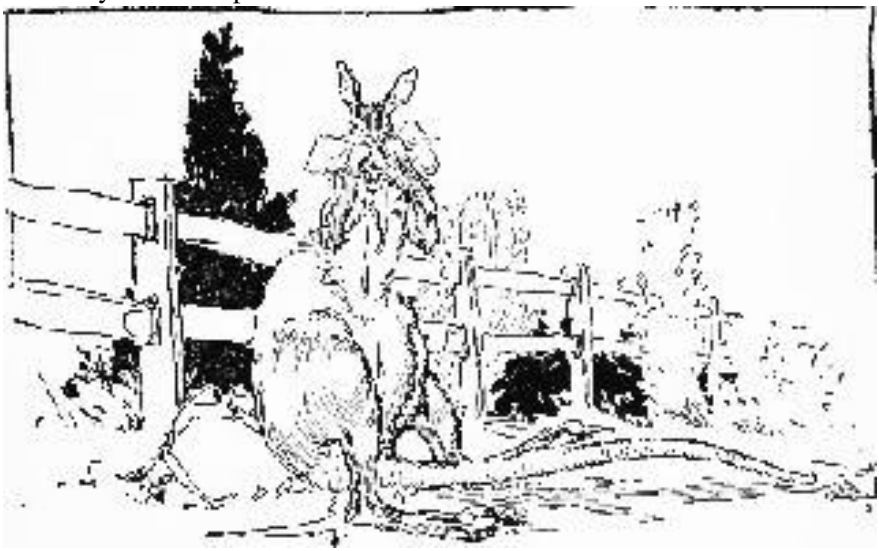
"Perhaps the Wizard knows," suggested Uncle Henry.

"No; I've never been there before," said the Wizard. "But I've often heard of Fuddlecumjig and the Fuddles, who are said to be the most peculiar people in all the Land of Oz."

"In what way?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the Wizard.

Just then, as they rode along the pretty green lane toward Fuddlecumjig, they espied a kangaroo sitting by the roadside. The poor animal had its face covered with both its front paws and was crying so bitterly that the tears coursed down its cheeks in two tiny streams and trickled across the road, where they formed a pool in a small hollow.



The Sawhorse stopped short at this pitiful sight, and Dorothy cried out, with ready sympathy:

"What's the matter, Kangaroo?"

"Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!" wailed the Kangaroo; "I've lost my mi--mi--mi--Oh, boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!"--

"Poor thing," said the Wizard, "she's lost her mister. It's probably her husband, and he's dead."

"No, no, no!" sobbed the kangaroo. "It--it isn't that. I've lost my mi--mi--Oh, boo, boo-hoo!"

“I know,” said the Shaggy Man; “she’s lost her mirror.”

“No; it’s my mi--mi--mi--Boo-hoo! My mi--Oh, Boo-hoo!” and the kangaroo cried harder than ever.

“It must be her mince-pie,” suggested Aunt Em.

“Or her milk-toast,” proposed Uncle Henry.

“I’ve lost my mi--mi--mittens!” said the kangaroo, getting it out at last.

“Oh!” cried the Yellow Hen, with a cackle of relief. “Why didn’t you say so before?”

“Boo-hoo! I--I--couldn’t,” answered the kangaroo.

“But, see here,” said Dorothy, “you don’t need mittens in this warm weather.”

“Yes, indeed I do,” replied the animal, stopping her sobs and removing her paws from her face to look at the little girl reproachfully. “My hands will get all sunburned and tanned without my mittens, and I’ve worn them so long that I’ll probably catch cold without them.”

“Nonsense!” said Dorothy. “I never heard of any kangaroo wearing mittens.”

“Didn’t you?” asked the animal, as if surprised.

“Never!” repeated the girl. “And you’ll probably make yourself sick if you don’t stop crying. Where do you live?”

“About two miles beyond Fuddlecumjig,” was the answer. “Grandmother Gnit made me the mittens, and she’s one of the Fuddles.”

“Well, you’d better go home now, and perhaps the old lady will make you another pair,” suggested Dorothy. “We’re on our way to Fuddlecumjig, and you may hop along beside us.”

So they rode on, and the kangaroo hopped beside the red wagon and seemed quickly to have forgotten her loss. By and by the Wizard said to the animal:

“Are the Fuddles nice people?”

“Oh, very nice,” answered the kangaroo; “that is, when they’re properly put together. But they get dreadfully scattered and mixed up, at times, and then you can’t do anything with them.”

“What do you mean by their getting scattered?” inquired Dorothy.

“Why, they’re made in a good many small pieces,” explained the kangaroo; “and whenever any stranger comes near them they have a habit of falling apart and scattering themselves around. That’s when they get so dreadfully mixed, and it’s a hard puzzle to put them together again.”

“Who usually puts them together?” asked Omby Amby.

“Any one who is able to match the pieces. I sometimes put Grandmother Gnit together myself, because I know her so well I can tell every piece that

belongs to her. Then, when she's all matched, she knits for me, and that's how she made my mittens. But it took a good many days hard knitting, and I had to put Grandmother together a good many times, because every time I came near, she'd scatter herself."

"I should think she would get used to your coming, and not be afraid," said Dorothy.

"It isn't that," replied the kangaroo. "They're not a bit afraid, when they're put together, and usually they're very jolly and pleasant. It's just a habit they have, to scatter themselves, and if they didn't do it they wouldn't be Fuddles."

The travelers thought upon this quite seriously for a time, while the Sawhorse continued to carry them rapidly forward. Then Aunt Em remarked:

"I don't see much use our visitin' these Fuddles. If we find them scattered, all we can do is to sweep 'em up, and then go about our business."

"Oh, I b'lieve we'd better go on," replied Dorothy. "I'm getting hungry, and we must try to get some luncheon at Fuddlecumjig. Perhaps the food won't be scattered as badly as the people."

"You'll find plenty to eat there," declared the kangaroo, hopping along in big bounds because the Sawhorse was going so fast; "and they have a fine cook, too, if you can manage to put him together. There's the town now--just ahead of us!"

They looked ahead and saw a group of very pretty houses standing in a green field a little apart from the main road.

"Some Munchkins came here a few days ago and matched a lot of people together," said the kangaroo. "I think they are together yet, and if you go softly, without making any noise, perhaps they won't scatter."

"Let's try it," suggested the Wizard.

So they stopped the Sawhorse and got out of the wagon, and, after bidding good bye to the kangaroo, who hopped away home, they entered the field and very cautiously approached the group of houses.

So silently did they move that soon they saw through the windows of the houses, people moving around, while others were passing to and fro in the yards between the buildings. They seemed much like other people from a distance, and apparently they did not notice the little party so quietly approaching.

They had almost reached the nearest house when Toto saw a large beetle crossing the path and barked loudly at it. Instantly a wild clatter was heard from the houses and yards. Dorothy thought it sounded like a sudden hailstorm, and the visitors, knowing that caution was no longer necessary, hurried forward to see what had happened.

After the clatter an intense stillness reigned in the town. The strangers entered the first house they came to, which was also the largest, and found the floor strewn with pieces of the people who lived there. They looked much like fragments of wood neatly painted, and were of all sorts of curious and fantastic shapes, no two pieces being in any way alike.

They picked up some of these pieces and looked at them carefully. On one which Dorothy held was an eye, which looked at her pleasantly but with an interested expression, as if it wondered what she was going to do with it. Quite near by she discovered and picked up a nose, and by matching the two pieces together found that they were part of a face.

"If I could find the mouth," she said, "this Fuddle might be able to talk, and tell us what to do next."

"Then let us find it," replied the Wizard, and so all got down on their hands and knees and began examining the scattered pieces.

"I've found it!" cried the Shaggy Man, and ran to Dorothy with a queer-shaped piece that had a mouth on it. But when they tried to fit it to the eye and nose they found the parts wouldn't match together.

"That mouth belongs to some other person," said Dorothy. "You see we need a curve here and a point there, to make it fit the face."

"Well, it must be here some place," declared the Wizard; "so if we search long enough we shall find it."

Dorothy fitted an ear on next, and the ear had a little patch of red hair above it. So while the others were searching for the mouth she hunted for pieces with red hair, and found several of them which, when matched to the other pieces, formed the top of a man's head. She had also found the other eye and the ear by the time Omby Amby in a far corner discovered the mouth. When the face was thus completed, all the parts joined together with a nicety that was astonishing.

"Why, it's like a picture puzzle!" exclaimed the little girl. "Let's find the rest of him, and get him all together."

"What's the rest of him like?" asked the Wizard. "Here are some pieces of blue legs and green arms, but I don't know whether they are his or not."

"Look for a white shirt and a white apron," said the head which had been put together, speaking in a rather faint voice. "I'm the cook."

"Oh, thank you," said Dorothy. "It's lucky we started you first, for I'm hungry, and you can be cooking something for us to eat while we match the other folks together."

It was not so very difficult, now that they had a hint as to how the man was dressed, to find the other pieces belonging to him, and as all of them now worked on the cook, trying piece after piece to see if it would fit, they finally had the cook set up complete.

When he was finished he made them a low bow and said:

"I will go at once to the kitchen to prepare your dinner. You will find it something of a job to get all the Fuddles together, so I advise you to begin on the Lord High Chigglewitz, whose first name is Larry. He's a bald-headed fat

man and is dressed in a blue coat with brass buttons, a pink vest and drab breeches. A piece of his left knee is missing, having been lost years ago when he scattered himself too carelessly. That makes him limp a little, but he gets along very well with half a knee. As he is the chief personage in this town of Fuddlecumjig, he will be able to welcome you and assist you with the others. So it will be best to work on him while I'm getting your dinner."

"We will," said the Wizard; "and thank you very much, Cook, for the suggestion."

Aunt Em was the first to discover a piece of the Lord High Chigglewitz.

"It seems to me like a fool business, this matching folks together," she remarked; "but as we haven't anything to do till dinner's ready, we may as well get rid of some of this rubbish. Here, Henry, get busy and look for Larry's bald head. I've got his pink vest, all right."

They worked with eager interest, and Billina proved a great help to them. The Yellow Hen had sharp eyes and could put her head close to the various pieces that lay scattered around. She would examine the Lord High Chigglewitz and see which piece of him was next needed, and then hunt around until she found it. So before an hour had passed old Larry was standing complete before them.

"I congratulate you, my friends," he said, speaking in a cheerful voice. "You are certainly the cleverest people who ever visited us. I was never matched together so quickly in my life. I'm considered a great puzzle, usually."

"Well," said Dorothy, "there used to be a picture puzzle craze in Kansas, and so I've had some 'sperience matching puzzles. But the pictures were flat, while you are round, and that makes you harder to figure out."

"Thank you, my dear," replied old Larry, greatly pleased. "I feel highly complimented. Were I not a really good puzzle, there would be no object in my scattering myself."

"Why do you do it?" asked Aunt Em, severely. "Why don't you behave yourself, and stay put together?"

The Lord High Chigglewitz seemed annoyed by this speech; but he replied, politely:

"Madam, you have perhaps noticed that every person has some peculiarity. Mine is to scatter myself. What your own peculiarity is I will not venture to say; but I shall never find fault with you, whatever you do."

"Now you've got your diploma, Em," said Uncle Henry, with a laugh, "and I'm glad of it. This is a queer country, and we may as well take people as we find them."

"If we did, we'd leave these folks scattered," she returned, and this retort

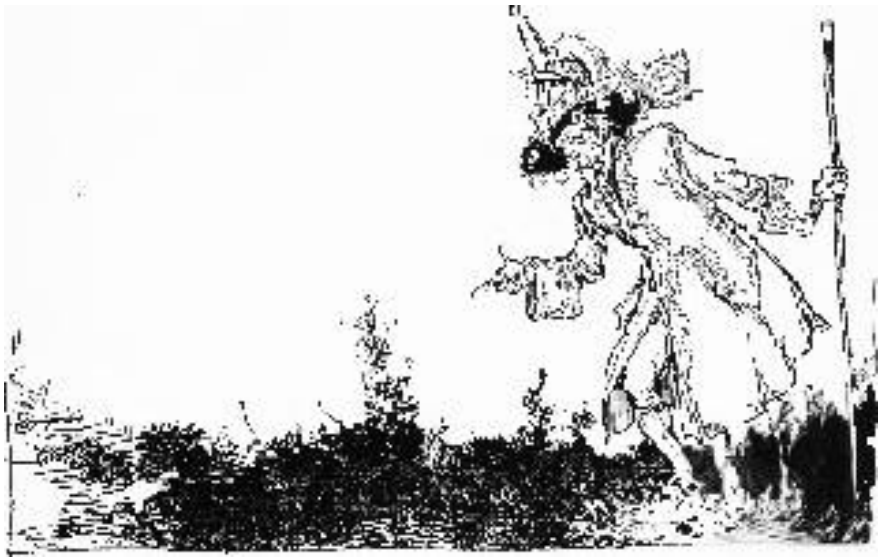
made everybody laugh good-naturedly.

Just then Omby Amby found a hand with a knitting needle in it, and they decided to put Grandmother Gnit together. She proved an easier puzzle than old Larry, and when she was completed they found her a pleasant old lady who welcomed them cordially. Dorothy told her how the kangaroo had lost her mittens, and Grandmother Gnit promised to set to work at once and make the poor animal another pair.

Then the cook came to call them to dinner, and they found an inviting meal prepared for them. The Lord High Chigglewitz sat at the head of the table and Grandmother Gnit at the foot, and the guests had a merry time and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

After dinner they went out into the yard and matched several other people together, and this work was so interesting that they might have spent the entire day at Fuddlecumjig had not the Wizard suggested that they resume their journey.

"But I don't like to leave all these poor people scattered," said Dorothy, undecided what to do.



"Oh, don't mind us, my dear," returned old Larry. "Every day or so some of the Gillikins, or Munchkins, or Winkies come here to amuse themselves by matching us together, so there will be no harm in leaving these pieces where they are for a time. But I hope you will visit us again, and if you do you will always be welcome, I assure you."

"Don't you ever match each other?" she inquired.

"Never; for we are no puzzles to ourselves, and so there wouldn't be any

fun in it.”

They now said goodbye to the queer Fuddles and got into their wagon to continue their journey.

“Those are certainly strange people,” remarked Aunt Em, thoughtfully, as they drove away from Fuddlecumjig, “but I really can’t see what use they are, at all.”

“Why, they amused us all for several hours,” replied the Wizard. “That is being of use to us, I’m sure.”

“I think they’re more fun than playing solitaire or mumbletypeg,” declared Uncle Henry, soberly. “For my part, I’m glad we visited the Fuddles.”

13. How the General Talked to the King

When General Guph returned to the cavern of the Nome King his Majesty asked:

"Well, what luck? Will the Whimsies join us?"

"They will," answered the General. "They will fight for us with all their strength and cunning."

"Good!" exclaimed the King. "What reward did you promise them?"

"Your Majesty is to use the Magic Belt to give each Whimsie a large, fine head, in place of the small one he is now obliged to wear."

"I agree to that," said the King. "This is good news, Guph, and it makes me feel more certain of the conquest of Oz."

"But I have other news for you," announced the General.

"Good or bad?"

"Good, your Majesty."

"Then I will hear it," said the King, with interest.

"The Growleywogs will join us."

"No!" cried the astonished King.

"Yes, indeed," said the General. "I have their promise."

"But what reward do they demand?" inquired the King, suspiciously, for he knew how greedy the Growleywogs were.

"They are to take a few of the Oz people for their slaves," replied Guph. He did not think it necessary to tell Roquat that the Growleywogs demanded twenty thousand slaves. It would be time enough for that when Oz was conquered.

“A very reasonable request, I’m sure,” remarked the King. “I must congratulate you, Guph, upon the wonderful success of your journey.”

“But that is not all,” said the General, proudly.

The King seemed astonished. “Speak out, sir!” he commanded.

“I have seen the First and Foremost Phanfasm of the Mountain of Phantastico, and he will bring his people to assist us.”

“What!” cried the King. “The Phanfasms! You don’t mean it, Guph!”

“It is true,” declared the General, proudly.

The King became thoughtful, and his brows wrinkled.

“I’m afraid, Guph,” he said rather anxiously, “that the First and Foremost may prove as dangerous to us as to the Oz people. If he and his terrible band come down from the mountain they may take the notion to conquer the Nomes!”

“Pah! That is a foolish idea,” retorted Guph, irritably, but he knew in his heart that the King was right. “The First and Foremost is a particular friend of mine, and will do us no harm. Why, when I was there, he even invited me into his house.”

The General neglected to tell the King how he had been jerked into the hut of the First and Foremost by means of the brass hoop. So Roquat the Red looked at his General admiringly and said:

“You are a wonderful Nome, Guph. I’m sorry I did not make you my General before. But what reward did the First and Foremost demand?”

“Nothing at all,” answered Guph. “Even the Magic Belt itself could not add to his powers of sorcery. All the Phanfasms wish is to destroy the Oz people, who are good and happy. This pleasure will amply repay them for assisting us.”

“When will they come?” asked Roquat, half fearfully.

“When the tunnel is completed,” said the General.

“We are nearly halfway under the desert now,” announced the King; “and that is fast work, because the tunnel has to be drilled through solid rock. But after we have passed the desert it will not take us long to extend the tunnel to the walls of the Emerald City.”

“Well, whenever you are ready, we shall be joined by the Whimsies, the Growleywogs and the Phanfasms,” said Guph; “so the conquest of Oz is assured without a doubt.”

Again, the King seemed thoughtful.

“I’m almost sorry we did not undertake the conquest alone,” said he. “All of these allies are dangerous people, and they may demand more than you have promised them. It might have been better to have conquered Oz without any outside assistance.”

“We could not do it,” said the General, positively.

“Why not, Guph?”

“You know very well. You have had one experience with the Oz people, and they defeated you.”

“That was because they rolled eggs at us,” replied the King, with a shudder. “My Nomes cannot stand eggs, any more than I can myself. They are poison to all who live underground.”

“That is true enough,” agreed Guph.

“But we might have taken the Oz people by surprise, and conquered them before they had a chance to get any eggs. Our former defeat was due to the fact that the girl Dorothy had a Yellow Hen with her. I do not know what ever became of that hen, but I believe there are no hens at all in the Land of Oz, and so there could be no eggs there.”

“On the contrary,” said Guph, “there are now hundreds of chickens in Oz, and they lay heaps of those dangerous eggs. I met a goshawk on my way home, and the bird informed me that he had lately been to Oz to capture and devour some of the young chickens. But they are protected by magic, so the hawk did not get a single one of them.”

“That is a very bad report,” said the King, nervously. “Very bad, indeed. My Nomes are willing to fight, but they simply can’t face hen’s eggs--and I don’t blame them.”

“They won’t need to face them,” replied Guph. “I’m afraid of eggs myself, and don’t propose to take any chances of being poisoned by them. My plan is to send the Whimsies through the tunnel first, and then the Growleywogs and the Phanfasms. By the time we Nomes get there the eggs

will all be used up, and we may then pursue and capture the inhabitants at our leisure."

"Perhaps you are right," returned the King, with a dismal sigh. "But I want it distinctly understood that I claim Ozma and Dorothy as my own prisoners. They are rather nice girls, and I do not intend to let any of those dreadful creatures hurt them, or make them their slaves. When I have captured them I will bring them here and transform them into china ornaments to stand on my mantle. They will look very pretty--Dorothy on one end of the mantle and Ozma on the other--and I shall take great care to see they are not broken when the maids dust them."

"Very well, your Majesty. Do what you will with the girls for all I care. Now that our plans are arranged, and we have the three most powerful bands of evil spirits in the world to assist us, let us make haste to get the tunnel finished as soon as possible."

"It will be ready in three days," promised the King, and hurried away to inspect the work and see that the Nomes kept busy.

14. How the Wizard Practiced Sorcery

"Where next?" asked the Wizard when they had left the town of Fuddlecumjig and the Sawhorse had started back along the road.

"Why, Ozma laid out this trip," replied Dorothy, "and she 'vised us to see the Rigmaroles next, and then visit the Tin Woodman."

"That sounds good," said the Wizard. "But what road do we take to get to the Rigmaroles?"

"I don't know, 'zactly," returned the little girl; "but it must be somewhere just southwest from here."

"Then why need we go way back to the crossroads?" asked the Shaggy Man. "We might save a lot of time by branching off here."

"There isn't any path," asserted Uncle Henry.

"Then we'd better go back to the signposts, and make sure of our way," decided Dorothy.

But after they had gone a short distance farther the Sawhorse, who had overheard their conversation, stopped and said:

"Here is a path."

Sure enough, a dim path seemed to branch off from the road they were on, and it led across pretty green meadows and past leafy groves, straight toward the southwest.

"That looks like a good path," said Omby Amby. "Why not try it?"

"All right," answered Dorothy. "I'm anxious to see what the Rigmaroles are like, and this path ought to take us there the quickest way."

No one made any objection to this plan, so the Sawhorse turned into the

path, which proved to be nearly as good as the one they had taken to get to the Fuddles. As first they passed a few retired farm houses, but soon these scattered dwellings were left behind and only the meadows and the trees were before them. But they rode along in cheerful contentment, and Aunt Em got into an argument with Billina about the proper way to raise chickens.

"I do not care to contradict you," said the Yellow Hen, with dignity, "but I have an idea I know more about chickens than human beings do."

"Pshaw!" replied Aunt Em. "I've raised chickens for nearly forty years, Billina, and I know you've got to starve 'em to make 'em lay lots of eggs, and stuff 'em if you want good broilers."

"Broilers!" exclaimed Billina, in horror. "Broil my chickens!"

"Why, that's what they're for, ain't it?" asked Aunt Em, astonished.

"No, Aunt, not in Oz," said Dorothy. "People do not eat chickens here. You see, Billina was the first hen that was ever seen in this country, and I brought her here myself. Everybody liked her an' respected her, so the Oz people wouldn't any more eat her chickens than they would eat Billina."

"Well, I declare," gasped Aunt Em. "How about the eggs?"

"Oh, if we have more eggs than we want to hatch, we allow people to eat them," said Billina. "Indeed, I am very glad the Oz folks like our eggs, for otherwise they would spoil."

"This certainly is a queer country," sighed Aunt Em.

"Excuse me," called the Sawhorse, "the path has ended and I'd like to know which way to go."

They looked around and sure enough there was no path to be seen.

"Well," said Dorothy, "we're going southwest, and it seems just as easy to follow that direction without a path as with one."

"Certainly," answered the Sawhorse. "It is not hard to draw the wagon over the meadow. I only want to know where to go."

"There's a forest over there across the prairie," said the Wizard, "and it lies in the direction we are going. Make straight for the forest, Sawhorse, and you're bound to go right."

So the wooden animal trotted on again and the meadow grass was so soft under the wheels that it made easy riding. But Dorothy was a little uneasy at losing the path, because now there was nothing to guide them.

No houses were to be seen at all, so they could not ask their way of any farmer; and although the Land of Oz was always beautiful, wherever one might go, this part of the country was strange to all the party.

"Perhaps we're lost," suggested Aunt Em, after they had proceeded quite a way in silence.

"Never mind," said the Shaggy Man; "I've been lost many a time--and so

has Dorothy--and we've always been found again."

"But we may get hungry," remarked Omby Amby. "That is the worst of getting lost in a place where there are no houses near."

"We had a good dinner at the Fuddle town," said Uncle Henry, "and that will keep us from starving to death for a long time."

"No one ever starved to death in Oz," declared Dorothy, positively; "but people may get pretty hungry sometimes."

The Wizard said nothing, and he did not seem especially anxious. The Sawhorse was trotting along briskly, yet the forest seemed farther away than they had thought when they first saw it. So it was nearly sundown when they finally came to the trees; but now they found themselves in a most beautiful spot, the wide-spreading trees being covered with flowering vines and having soft mosses underneath them. "This will be a good place to camp," said the Wizard, as the Sawhorse stopped for further instructions.

"Camp!" they all echoed.

"Certainly," asserted the Wizard. "It will be dark before very long and we cannot travel through this forest at night. So let us make a camp here, and have some supper, and sleep until daylight comes again."

They all looked at the little man in astonishment, and Aunt Em said, with a sniff:

"A pretty camp we'll have, I must say! I suppose you intend us to sleep under the wagon."

"And chew grass for our supper," added the Shaggy Man, laughing.

But Dorothy seemed to have no doubts and was quite cheerful

"It's lucky we have the wonderful Wizard with us," she said; "because he can do 'most anything he wants to."

"Oh, yes; I forgot we had a Wizard," said Uncle Henry, looking at the little man curiously.

"I didn't," chirped Billina, contentedly.

The Wizard smiled and climbed out of the wagon, and all the others followed him.

"In order to camp," said he, "the first thing we need is tents. Will some one please lend me a handkerchief?"

The Shaggy Man offered him one, and Aunt Em another. He took them both and laid them carefully upon the grass near to the edge of the forest. Then he laid his own handkerchief down, too, and standing a little back from them he waved his left hand toward the handkerchiefs and said:

"Tents of canvas, white as snow,
Let me see how fast you grow!"

Then, lo and behold! the handkerchiefs became tiny tents, and as the travelers looked at them the tents grew bigger and bigger until in a few minutes each one was large enough to contain the entire party.

"This," said the Wizard, pointing to the first tent, "is for the accommodation of the ladies. Dorothy, you and your Aunt may step inside and take off your things."

Every one ran to look inside the tent, and they saw two pretty white beds, all ready for Dorothy and Aunt Em, and a silver roost for Billina. Rugs were spread upon the grassy floor and some camp chairs and a table completed the furniture.

"Well, well, well! This beats anything I ever saw or heard of!" exclaimed Aunt Em, and she glanced at the Wizard almost fearfully, as if he might be dangerous because of his great powers.

"Oh, Mr. Wizard! How did you manage to do it?" asked Dorothy.

"It's a trick Glinda the Sorceress taught me, and it is much better magic than I used to practice in Omaha, or when I first came to Oz," he answered. "When the good Glinda found I was to live in the Emerald City always, she promised to help me, because she said the Wizard of Oz ought really to be a clever Wizard, and not a humbug. So we have been much together and I am learning so fast that I expect to be able to accomplish some really wonderful things in time."

"You've done it now!" declared Dorothy. "These tents are just wonderful!"

"But come and see the men's tent," said the Wizard. So they went to the second tent, which had shaggy edges because it has been made from the Shaggy Man's handkerchief, and found that completely furnished also. It contained four neat beds for Uncle Henry, Omby Amby, the Shaggy Man and the Wizard. Also there was a soft rug for Toto to lie upon.

"The third tent," explained the Wizard, "is our dining room and kitchen."

They visited that next, and found a table and dishes in the dining tent, with plenty of those things necessary to use in cooking. The Wizard carried out a big kettle and set it swinging on a crossbar before the tent. While he was doing this Omby Amby and the Shaggy Man brought a supply of twigs from the forest and then they built a fire underneath the kettle.

"Now, Dorothy," said the Wizard, smiling, "I expect you to cook our supper."

"But there is nothing in the kettle," she cried.

"Are you sure?" inquired the Wizard.

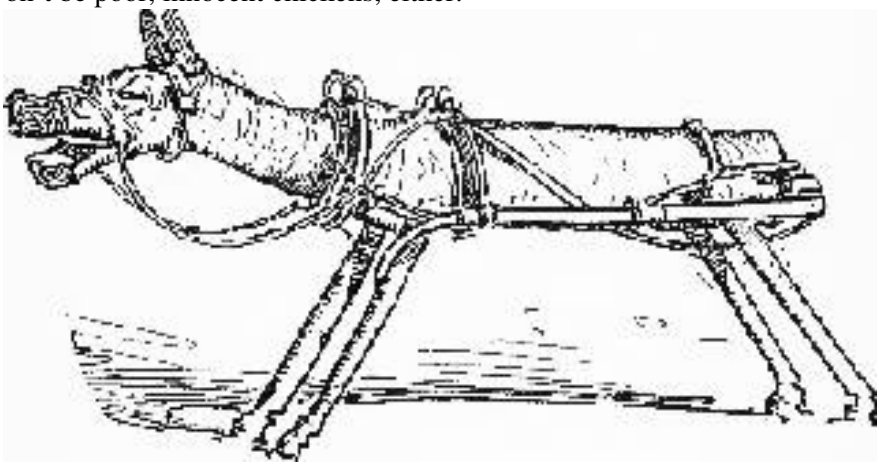
"I didn't see anything put in, and I'm almost sure it was empty when you brought it out," she replied.

“Nevertheless,” said the little man, winking slyly at Uncle Henry, “you will do well to watch our supper, my dear, and see that it doesn’t boil over.”

Then the men took some pails and went into the forest to search for a spring of water, and while they were gone Aunt Em said to Dorothy:

“I believe the Wizard is fooling us. I saw the kettle myself, and when he hung it over the fire there wasn’t a thing in it but air.”

“Don’t worry,” remarked Billina, confidently, as she nestled in the grass before the fire. “You’ll find something in the kettle when it’s taken off--and it won’t be poor, innocent chickens, either.”



“Your hen has very bad manners, Dorothy,” said Aunt Em, looking somewhat disdainfully at Billina. “It seems too bad she ever learned how to talk.”

There might have been another unpleasant quarrel between Aunt Em and Billina had not the men returned just then with their pails filled with clear, sparkling water. The Wizard told Dorothy that she was a good cook and he believed their supper was ready.

So Uncle Henry lifted the kettle from the fire and poured its contents into a big platter which the Wizard held for him. The platter was fairly heaped with a fine stew, smoking hot, with many kinds of vegetables and dumplings and a rich, delicious gravy.

The Wizard triumphantly placed the platter upon the table in the dining tent and then they all sat down in camp chairs to the feast.

There were several other dishes on the table, all carefully covered, and when the time came to remove these covers they found bread and butter, cakes, cheese, pickles and fruits--including some of the luscious strawberries of Oz.

No one ventured to ask a question as to how these things came there. They

contented themselves by eating heartily the good things provided, and Toto and Billina had their full share, you may be sure. After the meal was over, Aunt Em whispered to Dorothy:

"That may have been magic food, my dear, and for that reason perhaps it won't be very nourishing; but I'm willing to say it tasted as good as anything I ever et." Then she added, in a louder voice: "Who's going to do the dishes?"

"No one, madam," answered the Wizard. "The dishes have 'done' themselves."

"La sakes!" ejaculated the good lady, holding up her hands in amazement. For, sure enough, when she looked at the dishes they had a moment before left upon the table, she found them all washed and dried and piled up into neat stacks.

15. How Dorothy Happened to Get Lost

It was a beautiful evening, so they drew their camp chairs in a circle before one of the tents and began to tell stories to amuse themselves and pass away the time before they went to bed.

Pretty soon a zebra was seen coming out of the forest, and he trotted straight up to them and said politely:

"Good evening, people."

The zebra was a sleek little animal and had a slender head, a stubby mane and a paint-brush tail--very like a donkey's. His neatly shaped white body was covered with regular bars of dark brown, and his hoofs were delicate as those of a deer.

"Good evening, friend Zebra," said Omby Amby, in reply to the creature's greeting. "Can we do anything for you?"

"Yes," answered the zebra. "I should like you to settle a dispute that has long been a bother to me, as to whether there is more water or land in the world."

"Who are you disputing with?" asked the Wizard.

"With a soft-shell crab," said the zebra. "He lives in a pool where I go to drink every day, and he is a very impertinent crab, I assure you. I have told him many times that the land is much greater in extent than the water, but he will not be convinced. Even this very evening, when I told him he was an

insignificant creature who lived in a small pool, he asserted that the water was greater and more important than the land. So, seeing your camp, I decided to ask you to settle the dispute for once and all, that I may not be further annoyed by this ignorant crab."

When they had listened to this explanation Dorothy inquired:

"Where is the soft-shell crab?"

"Not far away," replied the zebra. "If you will agree to judge between us I will run and get him."

"Run along, then," said the little girl.

So the animal pranced into the forest and soon came trotting back to them. When he drew near they found a soft-shell crab clinging fast to the stiff hair of the zebra's head, where it held on by one claw.

"Now then, Mr. Crab," said the zebra, "here are the people I told you about; and they know more than you do, who lives in a pool, and more than I do, who lives in a forest. For they have been travelers all over the world, and know every part of it."

"There is more of the world than Oz," declared the crab, in a stubborn voice.

"That is true," said Dorothy; "but I used to live in Kansas, in the United States, and I've been to California and to Australia and so has Uncle Henry."

"For my part," added the Shaggy Man, "I've been to Mexico and Boston and many other foreign countries."

"And I," said the Wizard, "have been to Europe and Ireland."

"So you see," continued the zebra, addressing the crab, "here are people of real consequence, who know what they are talking about."

"Then they know there's more water in the world than there is land," asserted the crab, in a shrill, petulant voice.

"They know you are wrong to make such an absurd statement, and they will probably think you are a lobster instead of a crab," retorted the animal.

At this taunt the crab reached out its other claw and seized the zebra's ear, and the creature gave a cry of pain and began prancing up and down, trying to shake off the crab, which clung fast.

"Stop pinching!" cried the zebra. "You promised not to pinch if I would carry you here!"

"And you promised to treat me respectfully," said the crab, letting go the ear.

"Well, haven't I?" demanded the zebra.

"No; you called me a lobster," said the crab.

"Ladies and gentlemen," continued the zebra, "please pardon my poor friend, because he is ignorant and stupid, and does not understand. Also the

pinch of his claw is very annoying. So pray tell him that the world contains more land than water, and when he has heard your judgment I will carry him back and dump him into his pool, where I hope he will be more modest in the future."

"But we cannot tell him that," said Dorothy, gravely, "because it would not be true."

"What!" exclaimed the zebra, in astonishment; "do I hear you aright?"

"The soft-shell crab is correct," declared the Wizard. "There is considerably more water than there is land in the world."

"Impossible!" protested the zebra. "Why, I can run for days upon the land, and find but little water."

"Did you ever see an ocean?" asked Dorothy.

"Never," admitted the zebra. "There is no such thing as an ocean in the Land of Oz."

"Well, there are several oceans in the world," said Dorothy, "and people sail in ships upon these oceans for weeks and weeks, and never see a bit of land at all. And the joggerfys will tell you that all the oceans put together are bigger than all the land put together."

At this the crab began laughing in queer chuckles that reminded Dorothy of the way Billina sometimes cackled.

"NOW will you give up, Mr. Zebra?" it cried, jeeringly; "now will you give up?"

The zebra seemed much humbled.

"Of course I cannot read geographys," he said.

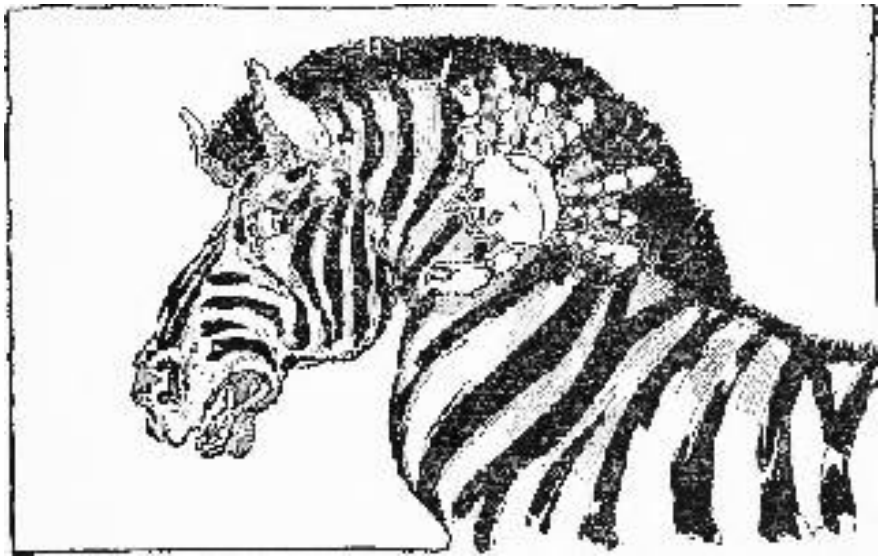
"You could take one of the Wizard's School Pills," suggested Billina, "and that would make you learned and wise without studying."

The crab began laughing again, which so provoked the zebra that he tried to shake the little creature off. This resulted in more ear-pinching, and finally Dorothy told them that if they could not behave they must go back to the forest.

"I'm sorry I asked you to decide this question," said the zebra, crossly. "So long as neither of us could prove we were right we quite enjoyed the dispute; but now I can never drink at that pool again without the soft-shell crab laughing at me. So I must find another drinking place."

"Do! Do, you ignoramus!" shouted the crab, as loudly as his little voice would carry. "Rile some other pool with your clumsy hoofs, and let your betters alone after this!"

Then the zebra trotted back to the forest, bearing the crab with him, and disappeared amid the gloom of the trees. And as it was now getting dark the travelers said good night to one another and went to bed.



Dorothy awoke just as the light was beginning to get strong next morning, and not caring to sleep any later she quietly got out of bed, dressed herself, and left the tent where Aunt Em was yet peacefully slumbering.

Outside she noticed Billina busily pecking around to secure bugs or other food for breakfast, but none of the men in the other tent seemed awake. So the little girl decided to take a walk in the woods and try to discover some path or road that they might follow when they again started upon their journey.

She had reached the edge of the forest when the Yellow Hen came fluttering along and asked where she was going.

"Just to take a walk, Billina; and maybe I'll find some path," said Dorothy.

"Then I'll go along," decided Billina, and scarcely had she spoken when Toto ran up and joined them.

Toto and the Yellow Hen had become quite friendly by this time, although at first they did not get along well together. Billina had been rather suspicious of dogs, and Toto had had an idea that it was every dog's duty to chase a hen on sight. But Dorothy had talked to them and scolded them for not being agreeable to one another until they grew better acquainted and became friends.

I won't say they loved each other dearly, but at least they had stopped quarreling and now managed to get on together very well.

The day was growing lighter every minute and driving the black shadows out of the forest; so Dorothy found it very pleasant walking under the trees.

She went some distance in one direction, but not finding a path, presently turned in a different direction. There was no path here, either, although she advanced quite a way into the forest, winding here and there among the trees and peering through the bushes in an endeavor to find some beaten track.

"I think we'd better go back," suggested the Yellow Hen, after a time. "The people will all be up by this time and breakfast will be ready."

"Very well," agreed Dorothy. "Let's see--the camp must be over this way."

She had probably made a mistake about that, for after they had gone far enough to have reached the camp they still found themselves in the thick of the woods. So the little girl stopped short and looked around her, and Toto glanced up into her face with his bright little eyes and wagged his tail as if he knew something was wrong. He couldn't tell much about direction himself, because he had spent his time prowling among the bushes and running here and there; nor had Billina paid much attention to where they were going, being interested in picking bugs from the moss as they passed along. The Yellow Hen now turned one eye up toward the little girl and asked:

"Have you forgotten where the camp is, Dorothy?"

"Yes," she admitted; "have you, Billina?"

"I didn't try to remember," returned Billina. "I'd no idea you would get lost, Dorothy."

"It's the thing we don't expect, Billina, that usually happens," observed the girl, thoughtfully. "But it's no use standing here. Let's go in that direction," pointing a finger at random. "It may be we'll get out of the forest over there."

So on they went again, but this way the trees were closer together, and the vines were so tangled that often they tripped Dorothy up.

Suddenly a voice cried sharply:

"Halt!"

At first, Dorothy could see nothing, although she looked around very carefully. But Billina exclaimed:

"Well, I declare!"

"What is it?" asked the little girl: for Toto began barking at something, and following his gaze she discovered what it was.

A row of spoons had surrounded the three, and these spoons stood straight up on their handles and carried swords and muskets. Their faces were outlined in the polished bowls and they looked very stern and severe.

Dorothy laughed at the queer things.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"We're the Spoon Brigade," said one.

“In the service of his Majesty King Kleaver,” said another.

“And you are our prisoners,” said a third.

Dorothy sat down on an old stump and looked at them, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

“What would happen,” she inquired, “if I should set my dog on your Brigade?”

“He would die,” replied one of the spoons, sharply. “One shot from our deadly muskets would kill him, big as he is.”

“Don’t risk it, Dorothy,” advised the Yellow Hen. “Remember this is a fairy country, yet none of us three happens to be a fairy.”

Dorothy grew sober at this.

“P’raps you’re right, Billina,” she answered. “But how funny it is, to be captured by a lot of spoons!”

“I do not see anything very funny about it,” declared a spoon. “We’re the regular military brigade of the kingdom.”

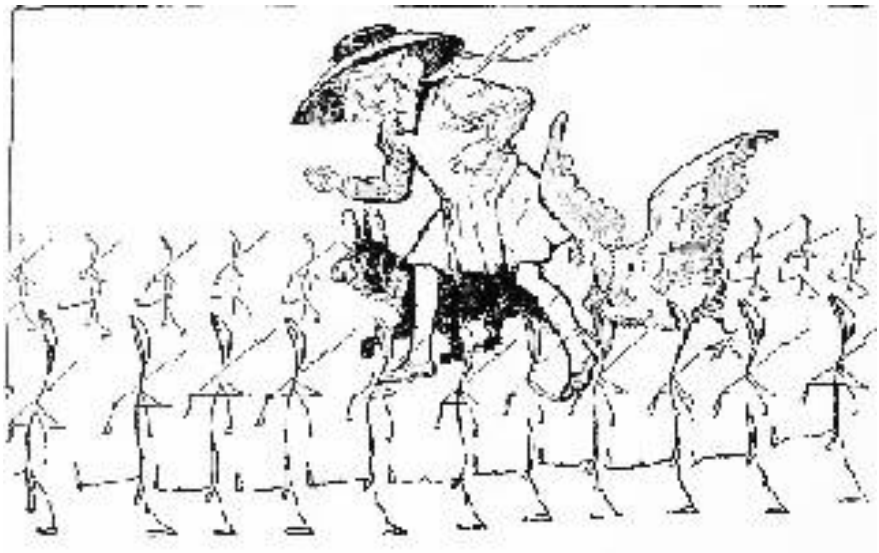
“What kingdom?” she asked.

“Utensia,” said he.

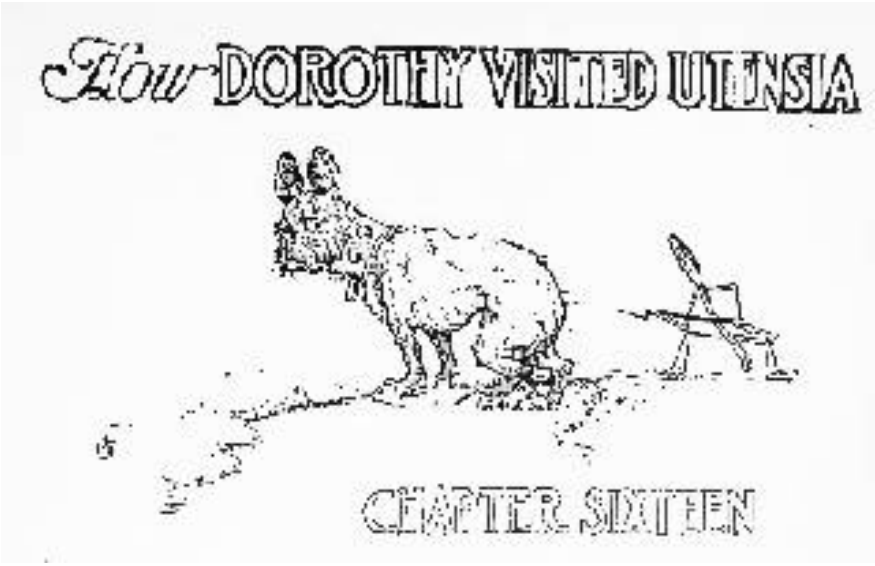
“I never heard of it before,” asserted Dorothy. Then she added thoughtfully, “I don’t believe Ozma ever heard of Utensia, either. Tell me, are you not subjects of Ozma of Oz?”

“We have never heard of her,” retorted a spoon. “We are subjects of King Kleaver, and obey only his orders, which are to bring all prisoners to him as soon as they are captured. So step lively, my girl, and march with us, or we may be tempted to cut off a few of your toes with our swords.”

This threat made Dorothy laugh again. She did not believe she was in any danger; but here was a new and interesting adventure, so she was willing to be taken to Utensia that she might see what King Kleaver’s kingdom was like.



16. How Dorothy Visited Utensia



There must have been from six to eight dozen spoons in the Brigade, and they marched away in the shape of a hollow square, with Dorothy, Billina and Toto in the center of the square. Before they had gone very far Toto knocked over one of the spoons by wagging his tail, and then the Captain of the Spoons told the little dog to be more careful, or he would be punished. So Toto was careful, and the Spoon Brigade moved along with astonishing swiftness, while Dorothy really had to walk fast to keep up with it.

By and by they left the woods and entered a big clearing, in which was the Kingdom of Utensia.

Standing all around the clearing were a good many cookstoves, ranges and grills, of all sizes and shapes, and besides these there were several kitchen cabinets and cupboards and a few kitchen tables. These things were crowded with utensils of all sorts: frying pans, sauce pans, kettles, forks, knives, basting and soup spoons, nutmeg graters, sifters, colanders, meat saws, flat irons, rolling pins and many other things of a like nature.

When the Spoon Brigade appeared with the prisoners a wild shout arose and many of the utensils hopped off their stoves or their benches and ran crowding around Dorothy and the hen and the dog.

“Stand back!” cried the Captain, sternly, and he led his captives through the curious throng until they came before a big range that stood in the center of the clearing. Beside this range was a butcher block upon which lay a great cleaver with a keen edge. It rested upon the flat of its back, its legs were

crossed and it was smoking a long pipe.

"Wake up, your Majesty," said the Captain. "Here are prisoners."

Hearing this, King Kleaver sat up and looked at Dorothy sharply.

"Gristle and fat!" he cried. "Where did this girl come from?"

"I found her in the forest and brought her here a prisoner," replied the Captain.

"Why did you do that?" inquired the King, puffing his pipe lazily.

"To create some excitement," the Captain answered. "It is so quiet here that we are all getting rusty for want of amusement. For my part, I prefer to see stirring times."

"Naturally," returned the cleaver, with a nod. "I have always said,

Captain, without a bit of irony, that you are a sterling officer and a solid citizen, bowled and polished to a degree. But what do you expect me to do with these prisoners?"

"That is for you to decide," declared the Captain. "You are the King."

"To be sure; to be sure," muttered the cleaver, musingly. "As you say, we have had dull times since the steel and grindstone eloped and left us. Command my Counselors and the Royal Courtiers to attend me, as well as the High Priest and the Judge. We'll then decide what can be done."

The Captain saluted and retired and Dorothy sat down on an overturned kettle and asked:

"Have you anything to eat in your kingdom?"

"Here! Get up! Get off from me!" cried a faint voice, at which his Majesty the cleaver said:

"Excuse me, but you're sitting on my friend the Ten-quart Kettle."

Dorothy at once arose, and the kettle turned right side up and looked at her reproachfully.

"I'm a friend of the King, so no one dares sit on me," said he.

"I'd prefer a chair, anyway," she replied.

"Sit on that hearth," commanded the King.

So Dorothy sat on the hearth-shelf of the big range, and the subjects of Utensia began to gather around in a large and inquisitive throng. Toto lay at Dorothy's feet and Billina flew upon the range, which had no fire in it, and perched there as comfortably as she could.

When all the Counselors and Courtiers had assembled--and these seemed to include most of the inhabitants of the kingdom--the King rapped on the block for order and said:

"Friends and Fellow Utensils! Our worthy Commander of the Spoon Brigade, Captain Dipp, has captured the three prisoners you see before you and brought them here for--for--I don't know what for. So I ask your advice how to act in this matter, and what fate I should mete out to these captives. Judge Sifter, stand on my right. It is your business to sift this affair to the bottom. High Priest Colender, stand on my left and see that no one testifies falsely in this matter."

As these two officials took their places, Dorothy asked:

"Why is the colander the High Priest?"

"He's the holiest thing we have in the kingdom," replied King Kleaver.

"Except me," said a sieve. "I'm the whole thing when it comes to holes."

"What we need," remarked the King, rebukingly, "is a wireless sieve. I must speak to Marconi about it. These old-fashioned sieves talk too much. Now, it is the duty of the King's Counselors to counsel the King at all times

of emergency, so I beg you to speak out and advise me what to do with these prisoners."

"I demand that they be killed several times, until they are dead!" shouted a pepperbox, hopping around very excitedly.

"Compose yourself, Mr. Paprica," advised the King. "Your remarks are piquant and highly-seasoned, but you need a scattering of commonsense. It is only necessary to kill a person once to make him dead; but I do not see that it is necessary to kill this little girl at all."

"I don't, either," said Dorothy.

"Pardon me, but you are not expected to advise me in this matter," replied King Kleaver.

"Why not?" asked Dorothy.

"You might be prejudiced in your own favor, and so mislead us," he said. "Now then, good subjects, who speaks next?"

"I'd like to smooth this thing over, in some way," said a flatiron, earnestly. "We are supposed to be useful to mankind, you know."

"But the girl isn't mankind! She's womankind!" yelled a corkscrew.

"What do you know about it?" inquired the King.

"I'm a lawyer," said the corkscrew, proudly. "I am accustomed to appear at the bar."

"But you're crooked," retorted the King, "and that debars you. You may be a corking good lawyer, Mr. Popp, but I must ask you to withdraw your remarks."

"Very well," said the corkscrew, sadly; "I see I haven't any pull at this court."

"Permit me," continued the flatiron, "to press my suit, your Majesty. I do not wish to gloss over any fault the prisoner may have committed, if such a fault exists; but we owe her some consideration, and that's flat!"

"I'd like to hear from Prince Karver," said the King.

At this a stately carvingknife stepped forward and bowed.

"The Captain was wrong to bring this girl here, and she was wrong to come," he said. "But now that the foolish deed is done let us all prove our mettle and have a slashing good time."

"That's it! that's it!" screamed a fat choppingknife. "We'll make mincemeat of the girl and hash of the chicken and sausage of the dog!"

There was a shout of approval at this and the King had to rap again for order.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" he said, "your remarks are somewhat cutting and rather disjointed, as might be expected from such acute intellects. But you give me no reasons for your demands."

“See here, Kleaver; you make me tired,” said a saucepan, strutting before the King very impudently. “You’re about the worst King that ever reigned in Utensia, and that’s saying a good deal. Why don’t you run things yourself, instead of asking everybody’s advice, like the big, clumsy idiot you are?”

The King sighed.

“I wish there wasn’t a saucepan in my kingdom,” he said. “You fellows are always stewing, over something, and every once in a while you slop over and make a mess of it. Go hang yourself, sir--by the handle--and don’t let me hear from you again.”

Dorothy was much shocked by the dreadful language the utensils employed, and she thought that they must have had very little proper training. So she said, addressing the King, who seemed very unfit to rule his turbulent subjects:

“I wish you’d decide my fate right away. I can’t stay here all day, trying to find out what you’re going to do with me.”

“This thing is becoming a regular broil, and it’s time I took part in it,” observed a big gridiron, coming forward.

“What I’d like to know,” said a can-opener, in a shrill voice, “is why the little girl came to our forest anyhow and why she intruded upon Captain Dipp--who ought to be called Dippy--and who she is, and where she came from, and where she is going, and why and wherefore and therefore and when.”

“I’m sorry to see, Sir Jabber,” remarked the King to the can-opener, “that you have such a prying disposition. As a matter of fact, all the things you mention are none of our business.”

Having said this the King relighted his pipe, which had gone out.

“Tell me, please, what IS our business?” inquired a potato-masher, winking at Dorothy somewhat impertinently. “I’m fond of little girls, myself, and it seems to me she has as much right to wander in the forest as we have.”

“Who accuses the little girl, anyway?” inquired a rolling-pin. “What has she done?”

“I don’t know,” said the King. “What has she done, Captain Dipp?”

“That’s the trouble, your Majesty. She hasn’t done anything,” replied the Captain.

“What do you want me to do?” asked Dorothy.

This question seemed to puzzle them all. Finally, a chafingdish, exclaimed irritably:

“If no one can throw any light on this subject you must excuse me if I go out.”

At this, a big kitchen fork pricked up its ears and said in a tiny voice:

“Let’s hear from Judge Sifter.”

“That’s proper,” returned the King.

So Judge Sifter turned around slowly several times and then said:

“We have nothing against the girl except the stove-hearth upon which she sits. Therefore I order her instantly discharged.”

“Discharged!” cried Dorothy. “Why, I never was discharged in my life, and I don’t intend to be. If it’s all the same to you, I’ll resign.”

“It’s all the same,” declared the King. “You are free--you and your companions--and may go wherever you like.”

“Thank you,” said the little girl. “But haven’t you anything to eat in your kingdom? I’m hungry.”

“Go into the woods and pick blackberries,” advised the King, lying down upon his back again and preparing to go to sleep. “There isn’t a morsel to eat in all Utensia, that I know of.”

So Dorothy jumped up and said:

“Come on, Toto and Billina. If we can’t find the camp, we may find some blackberries.”

The utensils drew back and allowed them to pass without protest, although Captain Dipp marched the Spoon Brigade in close order after them until they had reached the edge of the clearing.

There the spoons halted; but Dorothy and her companions entered the forest again and began searching diligently for a way back to the camp, that they might rejoin their party.

17. How They Came to Bunbury

Wandering through the woods, without knowing where you are going or what adventure you are about to meet next, is not as pleasant as one might think. The woods are always beautiful and impressive, and if you are not worried or hungry you may enjoy them immensely; but Dorothy was worried and hungry that morning, so she paid little attention to the beauties of the forest, and hurried along as fast as she could go. She tried to keep in one direction and not circle around, but she was not at all sure that the direction she had chosen would lead her to the camp.

By and by, to her great joy, she came upon a path. It ran to the right and to the left, being lost in the trees in both directions, and just before her, upon a big oak, were fastened two signs, with arms pointing both ways. One sign read:

TAKE THE OTHER ROAD TO BUNBURY

and the second sign read:

TAKE THE OTHER ROAD TO BUNNYBURY

"Well!" exclaimed Billina, eyeing the signs, "this looks as if we were getting back to civilization again."

"I'm not sure about the civil'zation, dear," replied the little girl; "but it looks as if we might get SOMEWHERE, and that's a big relief, anyhow."

“Which path shall we take?” inquired the Yellow Hen.

Dorothy stared at the signs thoughtfully.

“Bunbury sounds like something to eat,” she said. “Let’s go there.”

“It’s all the same to me,” replied Billina. She had picked up enough bugs and insects from the moss as she went along to satisfy her own hunger, but the hen knew Dorothy could not eat bugs; nor could Toto.

The path to Bunbury seemed little traveled, but it was distinct enough and ran through the trees in a zigzag course until it finally led them to an open space filled with the queerest houses Dorothy had ever seen. They were all made of crackers laid out in tiny squares, and were of many pretty and ornamental shapes, having balconies and porches with posts of bread-sticks and roofs shingled with wafer-crackers.

There were walks of bread-crusts leading from house to house and forming streets, and the place seemed to have many inhabitants.

When Dorothy, followed by Billina and Toto, entered the place, they found people walking the streets or assembled in groups talking together, or sitting upon the porches and balconies.

And what funny people they were!

Men, women and children were all made of buns and bread. Some were thin and others fat; some were white, some light brown and some very dark of complexion. A few of the buns, which seemed to form the more important class of the people, were neatly frosted. Some had raisins for eyes and currant buttons on their clothes; others had eyes of cloves and legs of stick cinnamon, and many wore hats and bonnets frosted pink and green.

There was something of a commotion in Bunbury when the strangers suddenly appeared among them. Women caught up their children and hurried into their houses, shutting the cracker doors carefully behind them. Some men ran so hastily that they tumbled over one another, while others, more brave, assembled in a group and faced the intruders defiantly.

Dorothy at once realized that she must act with caution in order not to frighten these shy people, who were evidently unused to the presence of strangers. There was a delightful fragrant odor of fresh bread in the town, and this made the little girl more hungry than ever. She told Toto and Billina to stay back while she slowly advanced toward the group that stood silently awaiting her.

“You must ‘scuse me for coming unexpected,” she said, softly, “but I really didn’t know I was coming here until I arrived. I was lost in the woods, you know, and I’m as hungry as anything.”

“Hungry!” they murmured, in a horrified chorus.

“Yes; I haven’t had anything to eat since last night’s supper,” she

exclaimed. “Are there any eatables in Bunbury?”

They looked at one another undecidedly, and then one portly bun man, who seemed a person of consequence, stepped forward and said:

“Little girl, to be frank with you, we are all eatables. Everything in Bunbury is eatable to ravenous human creatures like you. But it is to escape being eaten and destroyed that we have secluded ourselves in this out-of-the-way place, and there is neither right nor justice in your coming here to feed upon us.”

Dorothy looked at him longingly.

“You’re bread, aren’t you?” she asked.

“Yes; bread and butter. The butter is inside me, so it won’t melt and run. I do the running myself.”

At this joke all the others burst into a chorus of laughter, and Dorothy thought they couldn’t be much afraid if they could laugh like that.

“Couldn’t I eat something besides people?” she asked. “Couldn’t I eat just one house, or a side-walk or something? I wouldn’t mind much what it was, you know.”

“This is not a public bakery, child,” replied the man, sternly. “It’s private property.”

“I know Mr.--Mr.--”

“My name is C. Bunn, Esquire,” said the man. “‘C’ stands for Cinnamon, and this place is called after my family, which is the most aristocratic in the town.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” objected another of the queer people. “The Grahams and the Browns and Whites are all excellent families, and there is none better of their kind. I’m a Boston Brown, myself.”

“I admit you are all desirable citizens,” said Mr. Bunn rather stiffly; “but the fact remains that our town is called Bunbury.”

“‘Scuse me,” interrupted Dorothy; “but I’m getting hungrier every minute. Now, if you’re polite and kind, as I’m sure you ought to be, you’ll let me eat SOMETHING. There’s so much to eat here that you will never miss it.”

Then a big, puffed-up man, of a delicate brown color, stepped forward and said:

“I think it would be a shame to send this child away hungry, especially as she agrees to eat whatever we can spare and not touch our people.”

“So do I, Pop,” replied a Roll who stood near.

“What, then, do you suggest, Mr. Over?” inquired Mr. Bunn.

“Why, I’ll let her eat my back fence, if she wants to. It’s made of waffles, and they’re very crisp and nice.”

“She may also eat my wheelbarrow,” added a pleasant looking Muffin.

“It’s made of nabiscos with a zuzu wheel.”

“Very good; very good,” remarked Mr. Bunn. “That is certainly very kind of you. Go with Pop Over and Mr. Muffin, little girl, and they will feed you.”

“Thank you very much,” said Dorothy, gratefully. “May I bring my dog Toto, and the Yellow Hen? They’re hungry, too.”

“Will you make them behave?” asked the Muffin.

“Of course,” promised Dorothy.

“Then come along,” said Pop Over.

So Dorothy and Billina and Toto walked up the street and the people seemed no longer to be at all afraid of them. Mr. Muffin’s house came first, and as his wheelbarrow stood in the front yard the little girl ate that first. It didn’t seem very fresh, but she was so hungry that she was not particular. Toto ate some, too, while Billina picked up the crumbs.

While the strangers were engaged in eating, many of the people came and stood in the street curiously watching them. Dorothy noticed six roguish looking brown children standing all in a row, and she asked:

“Who are you, little ones?”

“We’re the Graham Gems,” replied one; “and we’re all twins.”

“I wonder if your mother could spare one or two of you?” asked Billina, who decided that they were fresh baked; but at this dangerous question the six little gems ran away as fast as they could go.

“You musn’t say such things, Billina,” said Dorothy, reprovingly. “Now let’s go into Pop Over’s back yard and get the waffles.”

“I sort of hate to let that fence go,” remarked Mr. Over, nervously, as they walked toward his house. “The neighbors back of us are Soda Biscuits, and I don’t care to mix with them.”

“But I’m hungry yet,” declared the girl. “That wheelbarrow wasn’t very big.”

“I’ve got a shortcake piano, but none of my family can play on it,” he said, reflectively. “Suppose you eat that.”

“All right,” said Dorothy; “I don’t mind. Anything to be accommodating.”

So Mr. Over led her into the house, where she ate the piano, which was of an excellent flavor.

"Is there anything to drink here?" she asked.

"Yes; I've a milk pump and a water pump; which will you have?" he asked.

"I guess I'll try 'em both," said Dorothy.

So Mr. Over called to his wife, who brought into the yard a pail made of some kind of baked dough, and Dorothy pumped the pail full of cool, sweet milk and drank it eagerly.

The wife of Pop Over was several shades darker than her husband.

"Aren't you overdone?" the little girl asked her.

“No indeed,” answered the woman. “I’m neither overdone nor done over; I’m just Mrs. Over, and I’m the President of the Bunbury Breakfast Band.”

Dorothy thanked them for their hospitality and went away. At the gate Mr. Cinnamon Bunn met her and said he would show her around the town. “We have some very interesting inhabitants,” he remarked, walking stiffly beside her on his stick-cinnamon legs; “and all of us who are in good health are well bred. If you are no longer hungry we will call upon a few of the most important citizens.”

Toto and Billina followed behind them, behaving very well, and a little way down the street they came to a handsome residence where Aunt Sally Lunn lived. The old lady was glad to meet the little girl and gave her a slice of white bread and butter which had been used as a door-mat. It was almost fresh and tasted better than anything Dorothy had eaten in the town.

“Where do you get the butter?” she inquired.

“We dig it out of the ground, which, as you may have observed, is all flour and meal,” replied Mr. Bunn. “There is a butter mine just at the opposite side of the village. The trees which you see here are all doughleanders and doughderas, and in the season we get quite a crop of dough-nuts off them.”

“I should think the flour would blow around and get into your eyes,” said Dorothy.

“No,” said he; “we are bothered with cracker dust sometimes, but never with flour.”

Then he took her to see Johnny Cake, a cheerful old gentleman who lived near by.

“I suppose you’ve heard of me,” said old Johnny, with an air of pride. “I’m a great favorite all over the world.”

“Aren’t you rather yellow?” asked Dorothy, looking at him critically.

“Maybe, child. But don’t think I’m bilious, for I was never in better health in my life,” replied the old gentleman. “If anything ailed me, I’d willingly acknowledge the corn.”

“Johnny’s a trifle stale,” said Mr. Bunn, as they went away; “but he’s a good mixer and never gets cross-grained. I will now take you to call upon some of my own relatives.” They visited the Sugar Bunns, the Currant Bunns and the Spanish Bunns, the latter having a decidedly foreign appearance. Then they saw the French Rolls, who were very polite to them, and made a brief call upon the Parker H. Rolls, who seemed a bit proud and overbearing.

“But they’re not as stuck up as the Frosted Jumbles,” declared Mr. Bunn, “who are people I really can’t abide. I don’t like to be suspicious or talk scandal, but sometimes I think the Jumbles have too much baking powder in

them.”

Just then a dreadful scream was heard, and Dorothy turned hastily around to find a scene of great excitement a little way down the street. The people were crowding around Toto and throwing at him everything they could find at hand. They pelted the little dog with hard-tack, crackers, and even articles of furniture which were hard baked and heavy enough for missiles.

Toto howeled a little as the assortment of bake stuff struck him; but he stood still, with head bowed and tail between his legs, until Dorothy ran up and inquired what the matter was.

“Matter!” cried a rye loafer, indignantly, “why the horrid beast has eaten three of our dear Crumpets, and is now devouring a Salt-rising Biscuit!”

“Oh, Toto! How could you?” exclaimed Dorothy, much distressed.

Toto’s mouth was full of his salt-rising victim; so he only whined and wagged his tail. But Billina, who had flown to the top of a cracker house to be in a safe place, called out:

“Don’t blame him, Dorothy; the Crumpets dared him to do it.”

“Yes, and you pecked out the eyes of a Raisin Bunn--one of our best citizens!” shouted a bread pudding, shaking its fist at the Yellow Hen.

“What’s that! What’s that?” wailed Mr. Cinnamon Bunn, who had now joined them. “Oh, what a misfortune--what a terrible misfortune!”

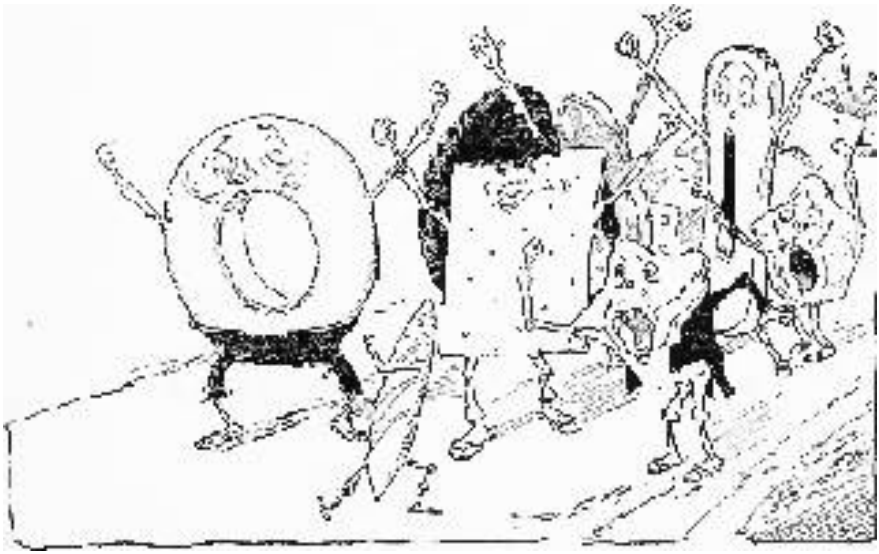
“See here,” said Dorothy, determined to defend her pets, “I think we’ve treated you all pretty well, seeing you’re eatables an’ reg’lar food for us. I’ve been kind to you and eaten your old wheelbarrows and pianos and rubbish, an’ not said a word. But Toto and Billina can’t be ‘spected to go hungry when the town’s full of good things they like to eat, ‘cause they can’t understand your stingy ways as I do.”

“You must leave here at once!” said Mr. Bunn, sternly.

“Suppose we won’t go?” said Dorothy, who was now much provoked.

“Then,” said he, “we will put you into the great ovens where we are made, and bake you.”

Dorothy gazed around and saw threatening looks upon the faces of all. She had not noticed any ovens in the town, but they might be there, nevertheless, for some of the inhabitants seemed very fresh. So she decided to go, and calling to Toto and Billina to follow her she marched up the street with as much dignity as possible, considering that she was followed by the hoots and cries of the buns and biscuits and other bake stuff.



18. How Ozma Looked into the Magic Picture

Princess Ozma was a very busy little ruler, for she looked carefully after the comfort and welfare of her people and tried to make them happy. If any quarrels arose she decided them justly; if any one needed counsel or advice she was ready and willing to listen to them.

For a day or two after Dorothy and her companions had started on their trip, Ozma was occupied with the affairs of her kingdom. Then she began to think of some manner of occupation for Uncle Henry and Aunt Em that would be light and easy and yet give the old people something to do.

She soon decided to make Uncle Henry the Keeper of the Jewels, for some one really was needed to count and look after the bins and barrels of emeralds, diamonds, rubies and other precious stones that were in the Royal Storehouses. That would keep Uncle Henry busy enough, but it was harder to find something for Aunt Em to do. The palace was full of servants, so there was no detail of housework that Aunt Em could look after.

While Ozma sat in her pretty room engaged in thought she happened to glance at her Magic Picture.

This was one of the most important treasures in all the Land of Oz. It was a large picture, set in a beautiful gold frame, and it hung in a prominent place upon a wall of Ozma's private room.

Usually this picture seemed merely a country scene, but whenever Ozma looked at it and wished to know what any of her friends or acquaintances were doing, the magic of this wonderful picture was straightway disclosed.

For the country scene would gradually fade away and in its place would appear the likeness of the person or persons Ozma might wish to see, surrounded by the actual scenes in which they were then placed. In this way the Princess could view any part of the world she wished, and watch the actions of any one in whom she was interested.

Ozma had often seen Dorothy in her Kansas home by this means, and now, having a little leisure, she expressed a desire to see her little friend again. It was while the travelers were at Fuddlecumjig, and Ozma laughed merrily as she watched in the picture her friends trying to match the pieces of Grandmother Gnit.

"They seem happy and are doubtless having a good time," the girl Ruler said to herself; and then she began to think of the many adventures she herself had encountered with Dorothy.

The image of her friends now faded from the Magic Picture and the old landscape slowly reappeared.

Ozma was thinking of the time when with Dorothy and her army she marched to the Nome King's underground cavern, beyond the Land of Ev, and forced the old monarch to liberate his captives, who belonged to the Royal Family of Ev. That was the time when the Scarecrow nearly frightened the Nome King into fits by throwing one of Billina's eggs at him, and Dorothy had captured King Roquat's Magic Belt and brought it away with her to the Land of Oz.

The pretty Princess smiled at the recollection of this adventure, and then she wondered what had become of the Nome King since then. Merely because she was curious and had nothing better to do, Ozma glanced at the Magic Picture and wished to see in it the King of the Nomes.

Roquat the Red went every day into his tunnel to see how the work was getting along and to hurry his workmen as much as possible. He was there now, and Ozma saw him plainly in the Magic Picture.

She saw the underground tunnel, reaching far underneath the Deadly Desert which separated the Land of Oz from the mountains beneath which the Nome King had his extensive caverns. She saw that the tunnel was being made in the direction of the Emerald City, and knew at once it was being dug so that the army of Nomes could march through it and attack her own beautiful and peaceful country.

"I suppose King Roquat is planning revenge against us," she said, musingly, "and thinks he can surprise us and make us his captives and slaves. How sad it is that any one can have such wicked thoughts! But I must not blame King Roquat too severely, for he is a Nome, and his nature is not so gentle as my own."

Then she dismissed from her mind further thought of the tunnel, for that time, and began to wonder if Aunt Em would not be happy as Royal Mender of the Stockings of the Ruler of Oz. Ozma wore few holes in her stockings; still, they sometimes needed mending. Aunt Em ought to be able to do that very nicely.

Next day, the Princess watched the tunnel again in her Magic Picture, and every day afterward she devoted a few minutes to inspecting the work. It was not especially interesting, but she felt that it was her duty.

Slowly but surely the big, arched hole crept through the rocks underneath the deadly desert, and day by day it drew nearer and nearer to the Emerald City.

19. How Bunnybury Welcomed the Strangers

Dorothy left Bunbury the same way she had entered it and when they were in the forest again she said to Billina:

"I never thought that things good to eat could be so dis'gree'ble."

"Often I've eaten things that tasted good but were disagreeable afterward," returned the Yellow Hen. "I think, Dorothy, if eatables are going to act badly, it's better before than after you eat them."

"P'raps you're right," said the little girl, with a sigh. "But what shall we do now?"

"Let us follow the path back to the signpost," suggested Billina. "That will be better than getting lost again."

"Why, we're lost anyhow," declared Dorothy; "but I guess you're right about going back to that signpost, Billina."

They returned along the path to the place where they had first found it, and at once took "the other road" to Bunnybury. This road was a mere narrow strip, worn hard and smooth but not wide enough for Dorothy's feet to tread. Still, it was a guide, and the walking through the forest was not at all difficult.

Before long they reached a high wall of solid white marble, and the path came to an end at this wall.

At first Dorothy thought there was no opening at all in the marble, but on looking closely she discovered a small square door about on a level with her head, and underneath this closed door was a bell-push. Near the bell-push a sign was painted in neat letters upon the marble, and the sign read:

NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT ON BUSINESS

This did not discourage Dorothy, however, and she rang the bell.

Pretty soon a bolt was cautiously withdrawn and the marble door swung slowly open. Then she saw it was not really a door, but a window, for several brass bars were placed across it, being set fast in the marble and so close together that the little girl's fingers might barely go between them. Back of the bars appeared the face of a white rabbit--a very sober and sedate face--with an eye-glass held in his left eye and attached to a cord in his buttonhole.

"Well! what is it?" asked the rabbit, sharply.

"I'm Dorothy," said the girl, "and I'm lost, and--"

"State your business, please," interrupted the rabbit.

"My business," she replied, "is to find out where I am, and to--"

"No one is allowed in Bunnybury without an order or a letter of introduction from either Ozma of Oz or Glinda the Good," announced the rabbit; "so that settles the matter," and he started to close the window.

"Wait a minute!" cried Dorothy. "I've got a letter from Ozma."

"From the Ruler of Oz?" asked the rabbit, doubtingly.

"Of course. Ozma's my best friend, you know; and I'm a Princess myself," she announced, earnestly.

"Hum--ha! Let me see your letter," returned the rabbit, as if he still doubted her.

So she hunted in her pocket and found the letter Ozma had given her. Then she handed it through the bars to the rabbit, who took it in his paws and opened it. He read it aloud in a pompous voice, as if to let Dorothy and Billina see that he was educated and could read writing. The letter was as follows:

"It will please me to have my subjects greet Princess Dorothy, the bearer of this royal missive, with the same courtesy and consideration they would extend to me."

"Ha--hum! It is signed 'Ozma of Oz,'" continued the rabbit, "and is sealed with the Great Seal of the Emerald City. Well, well, well! How strange! How remarkable!"

"What are you going to do about it?" inquired Dorothy, impatiently.

"We must obey the royal mandate," replied the rabbit. "We are subjects of

Ozma of Oz, and we live in her country. Also we are under the protection of the great Sorceress Glinda the Good, who made us promise to respect Ozma's commands."

"Then may I come in?" she asked.

"I'll open the door," said the rabbit. He shut the window and disappeared, but a moment afterward a big door in the wall opened and admitted Dorothy to a small room, which seemed to be a part of the wall and built into it.

Here stood the rabbit she had been talking with, and now that she could see all of him, she gazed at the creature in surprise. He was a good sized white rabbit with pink eyes, much like all other white rabbits. But the astonishing thing about him was the manner in which he was dressed. He wore a white satin jacket embroidered with gold, and having diamond buttons. His vest was rose-colored satin, with tourmaline buttons. His trousers were white, to correspond with the jacket, and they were baggy at the knees--like those of a zouave--being tied with knots of rose ribbons. His shoes were of white plush with diamond buckles, and his stockings were rose silk.

The richness and even magnificence of the rabbit's clothing made Dorothy stare at the little creature wonderingly. Toto and Billina had followed her into the room and when he saw them the rabbit ran to a table and sprang upon it nimbly. Then he looked at the three through his monocle and said:

"These companions, Princess, cannot enter Bunnybury with you."

"Why not?" asked Dorothy.

"In the first place they would frighten our people, who dislike dogs above all things on earth; and, secondly, the letter of the Royal Ozma does not mention them."

"But they're my friends," persisted Dorothy, "and go wherever I go."

"Not this time," said the rabbit, decidedly. "You, yourself, Princess, are a welcome visitor, since you come so highly recommended; but unless you consent to leave the dog and the hen in this room I cannot permit you to enter the town."

"Never mind us, Dorothy," said Billina. "Go inside and see what the place is like. You can tell us about it afterward, and Toto and I will rest comfortably here until you return."

This seemed the best thing to do, for Dorothy was curious to see how the rabbit people lived and she was aware of the fact that her friends might frighten the timid little creatures. She had not forgotten how Toto and Billina had misbehaved in Bunbury, and perhaps the rabbit was wise to insist on their staying outside the town.

“Very well,” she said, “I’ll go in alone. I s’pose you’re the King of this town, aren’t you?”

“No,” answered the rabbit, “I’m merely the Keeper of the Wicket, and a person of little importance, although I try to do my duty. I must now inform you, Princess, that before you enter our town you must consent to reduce.”

“Reduce what?” asked Dorothy.

“Your size. You must become the size of the rabbits, although you may retain your own form.”

“Wouldn’t my clothes be too big for me?” she inquired.

“No; they will reduce when your body does.”

“Can YOU make me smaller?” asked the girl.

“Easily,” returned the rabbit.

“And will you make me big again, when I’m ready to go away?”

“I will,” said he.

“All right, then; I’m willing,” she announced.

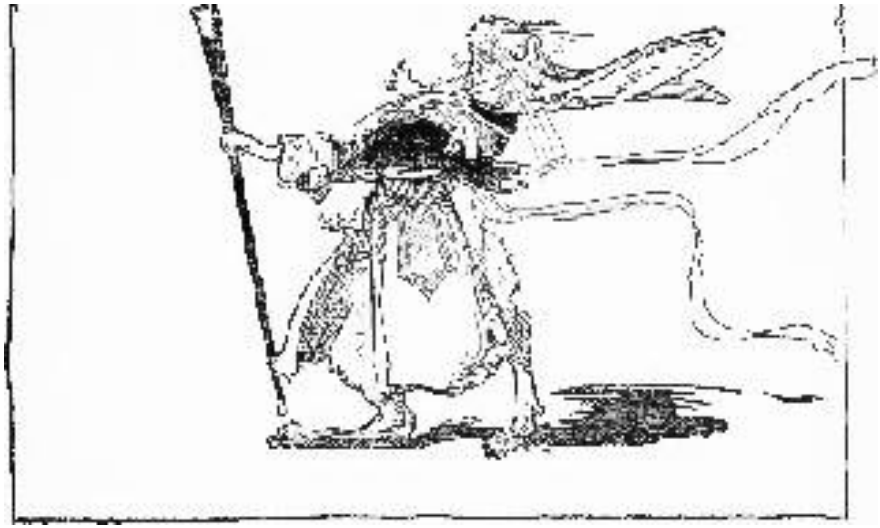
The rabbit jumped from the table and ran--or rather hopped--to the further wall, where he opened a door so tiny that even Toto could scarcely have crawled through it.

“Follow me,” he said.

Now, almost any other little girl would have declared that she could not get through so small a door; but Dorothy had already encountered so many fairy adventures that she believed nothing was impossible in the Land of Oz. So she quietly walked toward the door, and at every step she grew smaller and smaller until, by the time the opening was reached, she could pass through it with ease. Indeed, as she stood beside the rabbit, who sat upon his hind legs and used his paws as hands, her head was just about as high as his own.

Then the Keeper of the Wicket passed through and she followed, after which the door swung shut and locked itself with a sharp click.

Dorothy now found herself in a city so strange and beautiful that she gave a gasp of surprise. The high marble wall extended all around the place and shut out all the rest of the world. And here were marble houses of curious forms, most of them resembling overturned kettles but with delicate slender spires and minarets running far up into the sky. The streets were paved with white marble and in front of each house was a lawn of rich green clover. Everything was as neat as wax, the green and white contrasting prettily together.



But the rabbit people were, after all, the most amazing things Dorothy saw. The streets were full of them, and their costumes were so splendid that the rich dress of the Keeper of the Wicket was commonplace when compared with the others. Silks and satins of delicate hues seemed always used for material, and nearly every costume sparkled with exquisite gems.

But the lady rabbits outshone the gentlemen rabbits in splendor, and the cut of their gowns was really wonderful. They wore bonnets, too, with feathers and jewels in them, and some wheeled baby carriages in which the girl could see wee bunnies. Some were lying asleep while others lay sucking their paws and looking around them with big pink eyes.

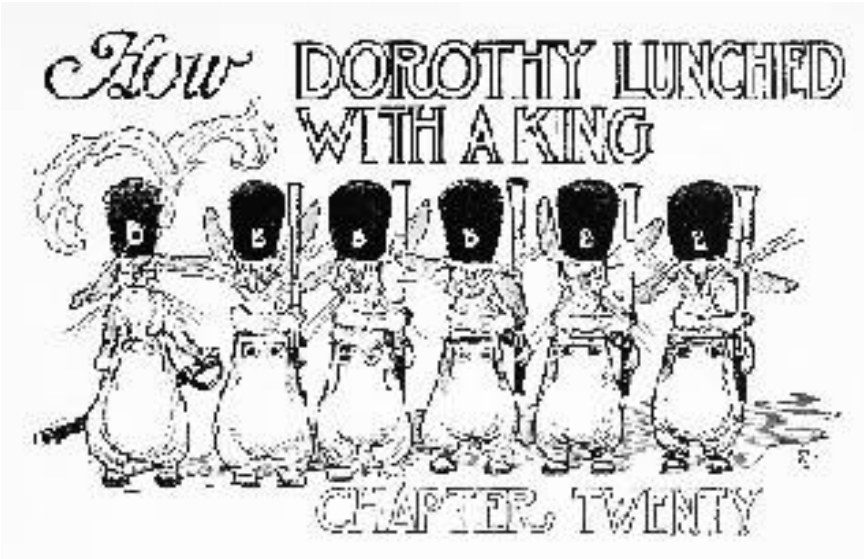
As Dorothy was no bigger in size than the grown-up rabbits she had a chance to observe them closely before they noticed her presence. Then they did not seem at all alarmed, although the little girl naturally became the center of attraction and regarded her with great curiosity.

“Make way!” cried the Keeper of the Wicket, in a pompous voice; “make way for Princess Dorothy, who comes from Ozma of Oz.”

Hearing this announcement, the throng of rabbits gave place to them on the walks, and as Dorothy passed along they all bowed their heads respectfully.

Walking thus through several handsome streets they came to a square in the center of the City. In this square were some pretty trees and a statue in bronze of Glinda the Good, while beyond it were the portals of the Royal Palace--an extensive and imposing building of white marble covered with a filigree of frosted gold.

20. How Dorothy Lunched With a King



A line of rabbit soldiers was drawn up before the palace entrance, and they wore green and gold uniforms with high shakos upon their heads and held tiny spears in their hands. The Captain had a sword and a white plume in his shako.

"Salute!" called the Keeper of the Wicket. "Salute Princess Dorothy, who comes from Ozma of Oz!"

"Salute!" yelled the Captain, and all the soldiers promptly saluted.

They now entered the great hall of the palace, where they met a gaily dressed attendant, from whom the Keeper of the Wicket inquired if the King were at leisure.

"I think so," was the reply. "I heard his Majesty blubbering and wailing as usual only a few minutes ago. If he doesn't stop acting like a cry-baby I'm going to resign my position here and go to work."

"What's the matter with your King?" asked Dorothy, surprised to hear the rabbit attendant speak so disrespectfully of his monarch.

"Oh, he doesn't want to be King, that's all; and he simply HAS to," was the reply.

"Come!" said the Keeper of the Wicket, sternly; "lead us to his Majesty; and do not air our troubles before strangers, I beg of you."

"Why, if this girl is going to see the King, he'll air his own troubles," returned the attendant.

"That is his royal privilege," declared the Keeper.

So the attendant led them into a room all draped with cloth-of-gold and furnished with satin-covered gold furniture. There was a throne in this room, set on a dais and having a big, cushioned seat, and on this seat reclined the Rabbit King. He was lying on his back, with his paws in the air, and whining very like a puppy-dog.

"Your Majesty! your Majesty! Get up. Here's a visitor," called out the attendant.

The King rolled over and looked at Dorothy with one watery pink eye. Then he sat up and wiped his eyes carefully with a silk handkerchief and put on his jeweled crown, which had fallen off.

"Excuse my grief, fair stranger," he said, in a sad voice. "You behold in me the most miserable monarch in all the world. What time is it, Blinkem?"

"One o'clock, your Majesty," replied the attendant to whom the question was addressed.

"Serve luncheon at once!" commanded the King. "Luncheon for two--that's for my visitor and me--and see that the human has some sort of food she's accustomed to."

"Yes, your Majesty," answered the attendant, and went away.

"Tie my shoe, Bristle," said the King to the Keeper of the Wicket. "Ah me! how unhappy I am!"

"What seems to be worrying your Majesty?" asked Dorothy.

"Why, it's this king business, of course," he returned, while the Keeper tied his shoe. "I didn't want to be King of Bunnybury at all, and the rabbits all knew it. So they elected me--to save themselves from such a dreadful fate, I suppose--and here I am, shut up in a palace, when I might be free and happy."

"Seems to me," said Dorothy, "it's a great thing to be a King."

"Were you ever a King?" inquired the monarch.

"No," she answered, laughing.

"Then you know nothing about it," he said. "I haven't inquired who you are, but it doesn't matter. While we're at luncheon, I'll tell you all my troubles. They're a great deal more interesting than anything you can say about yourself."

"Perhaps they are, to you," replied Dorothy.

"Luncheon is served!" cried Blinkem, throwing open the door, and in came a dozen rabbits in livery, all bearing trays which they placed upon the table, where they arranged the dishes in an orderly manner.

"Now clear out--all of you!" exclaimed the King. "Bristle, you may wait outside, in case I want you."

When they had gone and the King was alone with Dorothy he came down

from his throne, tossed his crown into a corner and kicked his ermine robe under the table.

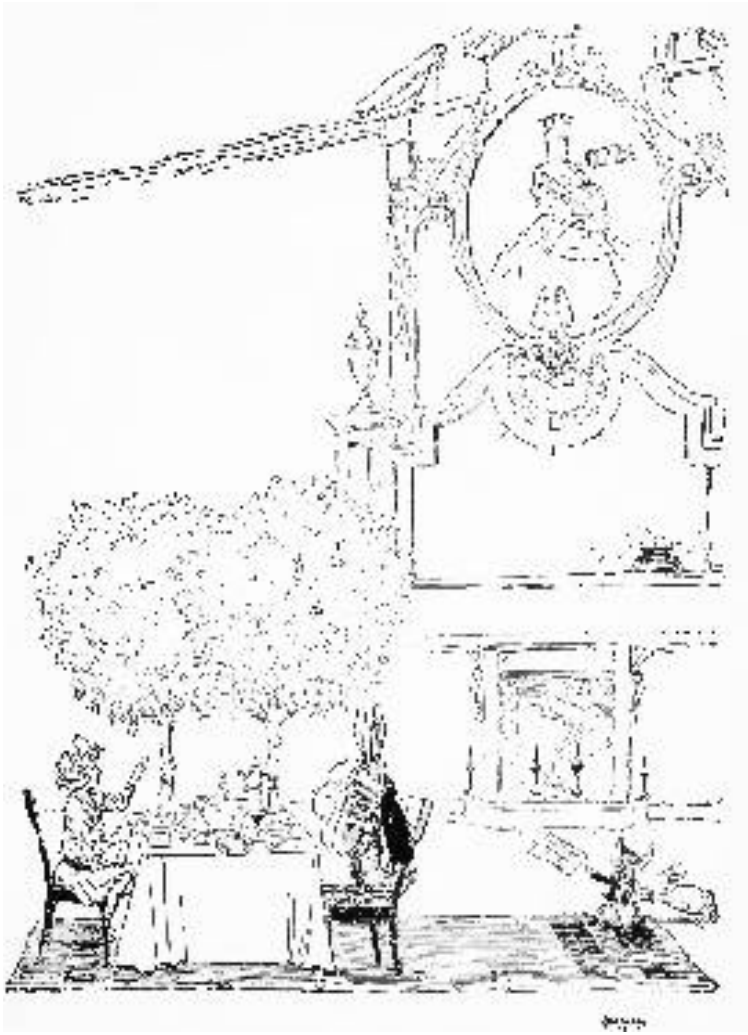
"Sit down," he said, "and try to be happy. It's useless for me to try, because I'm always wretched and miserable. But I'm hungry, and I hope you are."

"I am," said Dorothy. "I've only eaten a wheelbarrow and a piano to-day--oh, yes! and a slice of bread and butter that used to be a door-mat."

"That sounds like a square meal," remarked the King, seating himself opposite her; "but perhaps it wasn't a square piano. Eh?"

Dorothy laughed.

"You don't seem so very unhappy now," she said.



“But I am,” protested the King, fresh tears gathering in his eyes. “Even my jokes are miserable. I’m wretched, woeful, afflicted, distressed and dismal as an individual can be. Are you not sorry for me?”

“No,” answered Dorothy, honestly, “I can’t say I am. Seems to me that for a rabbit you’re right in clover. This is the prettiest little city I ever saw.”

“Oh, the city is good enough,” he admitted. “Glinda, the Good Sorceress, made it for us because she was fond of rabbits. I don’t mind the City so much, although I wouldn’t live here if I had my choice. It is being King that has absolutely ruined my happiness.”

“Why wouldn’t you live here by choice?” she asked.

“Because it is all unnatural, my dear. Rabbits are out of place in such luxury. When I was young I lived in a burrow in the forest. I was surrounded by enemies and often had to run for my life. It was hard getting enough to eat, at times, and when I found a bunch of clover I had to listen and look for danger while I ate it. Wolves prowled around the hole in which I lived and sometimes I didn’t dare stir out for days at a time. Oh, how happy and contented I was then! I was a real rabbit, as nature made me--wild and free!--and I even enjoyed listening to the startled throbbing of my own heart!”

“I’ve often thought,” said Dorothy, who was busily eating, “that it would be fun to be a rabbit.”

“It IS fun--when you’re the genuine article,” agreed his Majesty. “But look at me now! I live in a marble palace instead of a hole in the ground. I have all I want to eat, without the joy of hunting for it. Every day I must dress in fine clothes and wear that horrible crown till it makes my head ache. Rabbits come to me with all sorts of troubles, when my own troubles are the only ones I care about. When I walk out I can’t hop and run; I must strut on my rear legs and wear an ermine robe! And the soldiers salute me and the band plays and the other rabbits laugh and clap their paws and cry out: ‘Hail to the King!’ Now let me ask you, as a friend and a young lady of good judgment: isn’t all this pomp and foolishness enough to make a decent rabbit miserable?”

“Once,” said Dorothy, reflectively, “men were wild and unclothed and lived in caves and hunted for food as wild beasts do. But they got civ’lized, in time, and now they’d hate to go back to the old days.”

“That is an entirely different case,” replied the King. “None of you Humans were civilized in one lifetime. It came to you by degrees. But I have known the forest and the free life, and that is why I resent being civilized all at once, against my will, and being made a King with a crown and an ermine robe. Pah!”

“If you don’t like it, why don’t you resign?” she asked.

“Impossible!” wailed the Rabbit, wiping his eyes again with his handkerchief. “There’s a beastly law in this town that forbids it. When one is elected a King, there’s no getting out of it.”

“Who made the laws?” inquired Dorothy.

“The same Sorceress who made the town--Glinda the Good. She built the wall, and fixed up the City, and gave us several valuable enchantments, and made the laws. Then she invited all the pink-eyed white rabbits of the forest to come here, after which she left us to our fate.”

“What made you ‘cept the invitation, and come here?” asked the child.

“I didn’t know how dreadful city life was, and I’d no idea I would be elected King,” said he, sobbing bitterly. “And--and--now I’m It--with a capital I--and can’t escape!”

“I know Glinda,” remarked Dorothy, eating for dessert a dish of charlotte russe, “and when I see her again, I’ll ask her to put another King in your place.”

“Will you? Will you, indeed?” asked the King, joyfully.

“I will if you want me to,” she replied.

“Hurroo--huray!” shouted the King; and then he jumped up from the table and danced wildly about the room, waving his napkin like a flag and laughing with glee.

After a time he managed to control his delight and returned to the table.

“When are you likely to see Glinda?” he inquired.

“Oh, p’raps in a few days,” said Dorothy.

“And you won’t forget to ask her?”

“Of course not.”

“Princess,” said the Rabbit King, earnestly, “you have relieved me of a great unhappiness, and I am very grateful. Therefore I propose to entertain you, since you are my guest and I am the King, as a slight mark of my appreciation. Come with me to my reception hall.”

He then summoned Bristle and said to him: “Assemble all the nobility in the great reception hall, and also tell Blinkem that I want him immediately.”

The Keeper of the Wicket bowed and hurried away, and his Majesty turned to Dorothy and continued: “We’ll have time for a walk in the gardens before the people get here.”

The gardens were back of the palace and were filled with beautiful flowers and fragrant shrubs, with many shade and fruit trees and marble-paved walks running in every direction. As they entered this place Blinkem came running to the King, who gave him several orders in a low voice. Then his Majesty rejoined Dorothy and led her through the gardens, which she admired very much.

“What lovely clothes your Majesty wears!” she said, glancing at the rich blue satin costume, embroidered, with pearls in which the King was dressed.

“Yes,” he returned, with an air of pride, “this is one of my favorite suits; but I have a good many that are even more elaborate. We have excellent tailors in Bunnybury, and Glinda supplies all the material. By the way, you might ask the Sorceress, when you see her, to permit me to keep my wardrobe.”

“But if you go back to the forest you will not need clothes,” she said.

“N--o!” he faltered; “that may be so. But I’ve dressed up so long that I’m used to it, and I don’t imagine I’d care to run around naked again. So perhaps the Good Glinda will let me keep the costumes.”

“I’ll ask her,” agreed Dorothy.

Then they left the gardens and went into a fine, big reception hall, where rich rugs were spread upon the tiled floors and the furniture was exquisitely carved and studded with jewels. The King’s chair was an especially pretty piece of furniture, being in the shape of a silver lily with one leaf bent over to form the seat. The silver was everywhere thickly encrusted with diamonds and the seat was upholstered in white satin.

“Oh, what a splendid chair!” cried Dorothy, clasping her hands admiringly.

“Isn’t it?” answered the King, proudly. “It is my favorite seat, and I think it especially becoming to my complexion. While I think of it, I wish you’d ask Glinda to let me keep this lily chair when I go away.”

“It wouldn’t look very well in a hole in the ground, would it?” she suggested.

“Maybe not; but I’m used to sitting in it and I’d like to take it with me,” he answered. “But here come the ladies and gentlemen of the court; so please sit beside me and be presented.”

21. How the King Changed His Mind

Just then a rabbit band of nearly fifty pieces marched in, playing upon golden instruments and dressed in neat uniforms. Following the band came the nobility of Bunnybury, all richly dressed and hopping along on their rear legs. Both the ladies and the gentlemen wore white gloves upon their paws, with their rings on the outside of the gloves, as this seemed to be the fashion here. Some of the lady rabbits carried lorgnettes, while many of the gentlemen rabbits wore monocles in their left eyes.

The courtiers and their ladies paraded past the King, who introduced Princess Dorothy to each couple in a very graceful manner. Then the company seated themselves in chairs and on sofas and looked expectantly at their monarch.

"It is our royal duty, as well as our royal pleasure," he said, "to provide fitting entertainment for our distinguished guest. We will now present the Royal Band of Whiskered Friskers."

As he spoke the musicians, who had arranged themselves in a corner, struck up a dance melody while into the room pranced the Whiskered Friskers. They were eight pretty rabbits dressed only in gauzy purple skirts fastened around their waists with diamond bands. Their whiskers were colored a rich purple, but otherwise they were pure white.

After bowing before the King and Dorothy the Friskers began their pranks, and these were so comical that Dorothy laughed with real enjoyment. They not only danced together, whirling and gyrating around the room, but

they leaped over one another, stood upon their heads and hopped and skipped here and there so nimbly that it was hard work to keep track of them. Finally, they all made double somersaults and turned handsprings out of the room.

The nobility enthusiastically applauded, and Dorothy applauded with them.

"They're fine!" she said to the King.

"Yes, the Whiskered Friskers are really very clever," he replied. "I shall hate to part with them when I go away, for they have often amused me when I was very miserable. I wonder if you would ask Glinda--"

"No, it wouldn't do at all," declared Dorothy, positively. "There wouldn't be room in your hole in the ground for so many rabbits, 'spec'ly when you get the lily chair and your clothes there. Don't think of such a thing, your Majesty."

The King sighed. Then he stood up and announced to the company:

"We will now hold a military drill by my picked Bodyguard of Royal Pikemen."

Now the band played a march and a company of rabbit soldiers came in. They wore green and gold uniforms and marched very stiffly but in perfect time. Their spears, or pikes, had slender shafts of polished silver with golden heads, and during the drill they handled these weapons with wonderful dexterity.

"I should think you'd feel pretty safe with such a fine Bodyguard," remarked Dorothy.

"I do," said the King. "They protect me from every harm. I suppose Glinda wouldn't--"

"No," interrupted the girl; "I'm sure she wouldn't. It's the King's own Bodyguard, and when you are no longer King you can't have 'em."

The King did not reply, but he looked rather sorrowful for a time.

When the soldiers had marched out he said to the company:

"The Royal Jugglers will now appear."

Dorothy had seen many jugglers in her lifetime, but never any so interesting as these. There were six of them, dressed in black satin embroidered with queer symbols in silver--a costume which contrasted strongly with their snow-white fur.

First, they pushed in a big red ball and three of the rabbit jugglers stood upon its top and made it roll. Then two of them caught up a third and tossed him into the air, all vanishing, until only the two were left. Then one of these tossed the other upward and remained alone of all his fellows. This last juggler now touched the red ball, which fell apart, being hollow, and the five rabbits who had disappeared in the air scrambled out of the hollow ball.

Next they all clung together and rolled swiftly upon the floor. When they came to a stop only one fat rabbit juggler was seen, the others seeming to be inside him. This one leaped lightly into the air and when he came down he exploded and separated into the original six. Then four of them rolled themselves into round balls and the other two tossed them around and played ball with them.

These were but a few of the tricks the rabbit jugglers performed, and they were so skillful that all the nobility and even the King applauded as loudly as did Dorothy.

"I suppose there are no rabbit jugglers in all the world to compare with these," remarked the King. "And since I may not have the Whiskers Friskers or my Bodyguard, you might ask Glinda to let me take away just two or three of these jugglers. Will you?"

"I'll ask her," replied Dorothy, doubtfully.

"Thank you," said the King; "thank you very much. And now you shall listen to the Winsome Waggish Warblers, who have often cheered me in my moments of anguish."

The Winsome Waggish Warblers proved to be a quartette of rabbit singers, two gentlemen and two lady rabbits. The gentlemen Warblers wore full-dress swallow-tailed suits of white satin, with pearls for buttons, while the lady Warblers were gowned in white satin dresses with long trails.

The first song they sang began in this way:

"When a rabbit gets a habit
Of living in a city
And wearing clothes and furbelows
And jewels rare and pretty,
He scorns the Bun who has to run
And burrow in the ground
And pities those whose watchful foes
Are man and gun and hound."

Dorothy looked at the King when she heard this song and noticed that he seemed disturbed and ill at ease.

"I don't like that song," he said to the Warblers. "Give us something jolly and rollicking."

So they sang to a joyous, tinkling melody as follows:

"Bunnies gay
Delight to play

In their fairy town secure;
Ev'ry frisker
Flirts his whisker
At a pink-eyed girl demure.
Ev'ry maid
In silk arrayed
At her partner shyly glances,
Paws are grasped,
Waists are clasped
As they whirl in giddy dances.
Then together
Through the heather
'Neath the moonlight soft they stroll;
Each is very
Blithe and merry,
Gamboling with laughter droll.
Life is fun
To ev'ry one
Guarded by our magic charm
For to dangers
We are strangers,
Safe from any thought of harm."

"You see," said Dorothy to the King, when the song ended, "the rabbits all seem to like Bunnybury except you. And I guess you're the only one that ever has cried or was unhappy and wanted to get back to your muddy hole in the ground."

His Majesty seemed thoughtful, and while the servants passed around glasses of nectar and plates of frosted cakes their King was silent and a bit nervous.

When the refreshments had been enjoyed by all and the servants had retired Dorothy said:

"I must go now, for it's getting late and I'm lost. I've got to find the Wizard and Aunt Em and Uncle Henry and all the rest sometime before night comes, if I poss'bly can."

"Won't you stay with us?" asked the King. "You will be very welcome."

"No, thank you," she replied. "I must get back to my friends. And I want to see Glinda just as soon as I can, you know."

So the King dismissed his court and said he would himself walk with Dorothy to the gate. He did not weep nor groan any more, but his long face was quite solemn and his big ears hung dejectedly on each side of it. He still wore his crown and his ermine and walked with a handsome gold-headed cane.

When they arrived at the room in the wall the little girl found Toto and Billina waiting for her very patiently. They had been liberally fed by some of the attendants and were in no hurry to leave such comfortable quarters.

The Keeper of the Wicket was by this time back in his old place, but he kept a safe distance from Toto. Dorothy bade good bye to the King as they stood just inside the wall.

“You’ve been good to me,” she said, “and I thank you ever so much. As soon as poss’ble I’ll see Glinda and ask her to put another King in your place and send you back into the wild forest. And I’ll ask her to let you keep some of your clothes and the lily chair and one or two jugglers to amuse you. I’m sure she will do it, ‘cause she’s so kind she doesn’t like any one to be unhappy.”

“Ahem!” said the King, looking rather downcast. “I don’t like to trouble you with my misery; so you needn’t see Glinda.”

“Oh, yes I will,” she replied. “It won’t be any trouble at all.”

“But, my dear,” continued the King, in an embarrassed way, “I’ve been thinking the subject over carefully, and I find there are a lot of pleasant things here in Bunnybury that I would miss if I went away. So perhaps I’d better stay.”

Dorothy laughed. Then she looked grave.

“It won’t do for you to be a King and a cry-baby at the same time,” she said. “You’ve been making all the other rabbits unhappy and discontented with your howls about being so miserable. So I guess it’s better to have another King.”

“Oh, no indeed!” exclaimed the King, earnestly. “If you won’t say anything to Glinda I’ll promise to be merry and gay all the time, and never cry or wail again.”

“Honor bright?” she asked.

“On the royal word of a King I promise it!” he answered.

“All right,” said Dorothy. “You’d be a reg’lar lunatic to want to leave Bunnybury for a wild life in the forest, and I’m sure any rabbit outside the city would be glad to take your place.”

“Forget it, my dear; forget all my foolishness,” pleaded the King, earnestly. “Hereafter I’ll try to enjoy myself and do my duty by my subjects.”

So then she left him and entered through the little door into the room in the wall, where she grew gradually bigger and bigger until she had resumed her natural size.

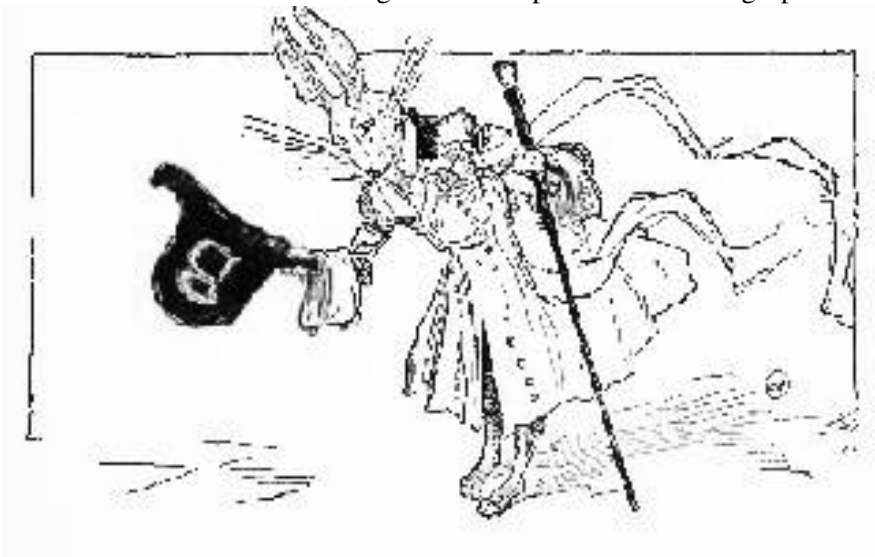
The Keeper of the Wicket let them out into the forest and told Dorothy that she had been of great service to Bunnybury because she had brought their dismal King to a realization of the pleasure of ruling so beautiful a city.

“I shall start a petition to have your statue erected beside Glinda’s in the public square,” said the Keeper. “I hope you will come again, some day, and see it.”

“Perhaps I shall,” she replied.

Then, followed by Toto and Billina, she walked away from the high

marble wall and started back along the narrow path toward the sign-post.



22. How the Wizard Found Dorothy

When they came to the signpost, there, to their joy, were the tents of the Wizard pitched beside the path and the kettle bubbling merrily over the fire. The Shaggy Man and Omby Amby were gathering firewood while Uncle Henry and Aunt Em sat in their camp chairs talking with the Wizard.

They all ran forward to greet Dorothy, as she approached, and Aunt Em exclaimed: “Goodness gracious, child! Where have you been?”

“You’ve played hookey the whole day,” added the Shaggy Man, reproachfully.

“Well, you see, I’ve been lost,” explained the little girl, “and I’ve tried awful hard to find the way back to you, but just couldn’t do it.”

“Did you wander in the forest all day?” asked Uncle Henry.

“You must be a’most starved!” said Aunt Em.

“No,” said Dorothy, “I’m not hungry. I had a wheelbarrow and a piano for breakfast, and lunched with a King.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the Wizard, nodding with a bright smile. “So you’ve been having adventures again.”

“She’s stark crazy!” cried Aunt Em. “Whoever heard of eating a wheelbarrow?”

“It wasn’t very big,” said Dorothy; “and it had a zuzu wheel.”

“And I ate the crumbs,” said Billina, soberly.

“Sit down and tell us about it,” begged the Wizard. “We’ve hunted for you all day, and at last I noticed your footsteps in this path--and the tracks of

Billina. We found the path by accident, and seeing it only led to two places I decided you were at either one or the other of those places. So we made camp and waited for you to return. And now, Dorothy, tell us where you have been--to Bunbury or to Bunnybury?"

"Why, I've been to both," she replied; "but first I went to Utensia, which isn't on any path at all."

She then sat down and related the day's adventures, and you may be sure Aunt Em and Uncle Henry were much astonished at the story.

"But after seeing the Cuttenclips and the Fuddles," remarked her uncle, "we ought not to wonder at anything in this strange country."

"Seems like the only common and ordinary folks here are ourselves," rejoined Aunt Em, diffidently.

"Now that we're together again, and one reunited party," observed the Shaggy Man, "what are we to do next?"

"Have some supper and a night's rest," answered the Wizard promptly, "and then proceed upon our journey."

"Where to?" asked the Captain General.

"We haven't visited the Rigmaroles or the Flutterbudgets yet," said Dorothy. "I'd like to see them--wouldn't you?"

"They don't sound very interesting," objected Aunt Em. "But perhaps they are."

"And then," continued the little Wizard, "we will call upon the Tin Woodman and Jack Pumpkinhead and our old friend the Scarecrow, on our way home."

"That will be nice!" cried Dorothy, eagerly.

"Can't say THEY sound very interesting, either," remarked Aunt Em.

"Why, they're the best friends I have!" asserted the little girl, "and you're sure to like them, Aunt Em, 'cause EVER'body likes them."

By this time twilight was approaching, so they ate the fine supper which the Wizard magically produced from the kettle and then went to bed in the cozy tents.

They were all up bright and early next morning, but Dorothy didn't venture to wander from the camp again for fear of more accidents.

"Do you know where there's a road?" she asked the little man.

"No, my dear," replied the Wizard; "but I'll find one."

After breakfast he waved his hand toward the tents and they became handkerchiefs again, which were at once returned to the pockets of their owners. Then they all climbed into the red wagon and the Sawhorse inquired:

"Which way?"

"Never mind which way," replied the Wizard. "Just go as you please and

you’re sure to be right. I’ve enchanted the wheels of the wagon, and they will roll in the right direction, never fear.”

As the Sawhorse started away through the trees Dorothy said:

“If we had one of those new-fashioned airships we could float away over the top of the forest, and look down and find just the places we want.”

“Airship? Pah!” retorted the little man, scornfully. “I hate those things, Dorothy, although they are nothing new to either you or me. I was a balloonist for many years, and once my balloon carried me to the Land of Oz, and once to the Vegetable Kingdom. And once Ozma had a Gump that flew all over this kingdom and had sense enough to go where it was told to--which airships won’t do. The house which the cyclone brought to Oz all the way from Kansas, with you and Toto in it--was a real airship at the time; so you see we’ve got plenty of experience flying with the birds.”

“Airships are not so bad, after all,” declared Dorothy. “Some day they’ll fly all over the world, and perhaps bring people even to the Land of Oz.”

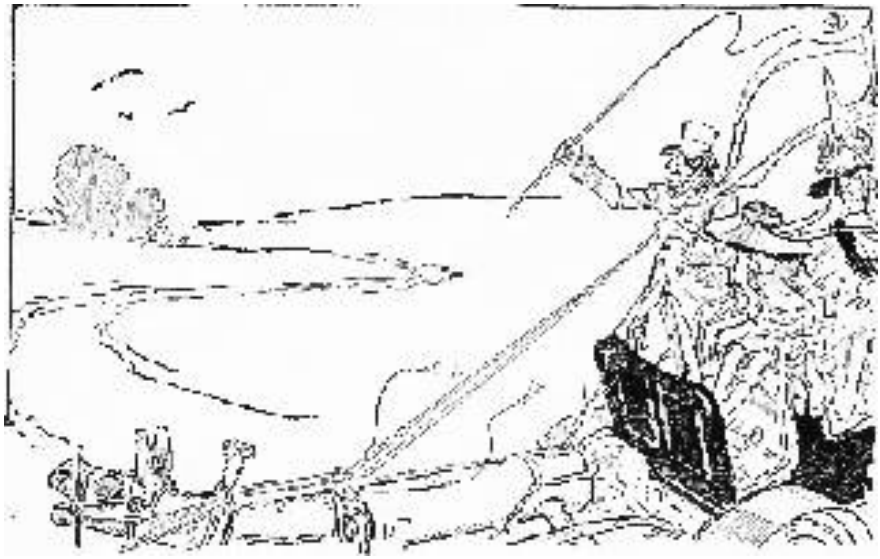
“I must speak to Ozma about that,” said the Wizard, with a slight frown. “It wouldn’t do at all, you know, for the Emerald City to become a way-station on an airship line.”

“No,” said Dorothy, “I don’t s’pose it would. But what can we do to prevent it?”

“I’m working out a magic recipe to fuddle men’s brains, so they’ll never make an airship that will go where they want it to go,” the Wizard confided to her. “That won’t keep the things from flying, now and then, but it’ll keep them from flying to the Land of Oz.”

Just then the Sawhorse drew the wagon out of the forest and a beautiful landscape lay spread before the travelers’ eyes. Moreover, right before them was a good road that wound away through the hills and valleys.

“Now,” said the Wizard, with evident delight, “we are on the right track again, and there is nothing more to worry about.”



"It's a foolish thing to take chances in a strange country," observed the Shaggy Man. "Had we kept to the roads we never would have been lost. Roads always lead to some place, else they wouldn't be roads."

"This road," added the Wizard, "leads to Rigmarole Town. I'm sure of that because I enchanted the wagon wheels."

Sure enough, after riding along the road for an hour or two they entered a pretty valley where a village was nestled among the hills. The houses were Munchkin shaped, for they were all domes, with windows wider than they were high, and pretty balconies over the front doors.

Aunt Em was greatly relieved to find this town "neither paper nor patchwork," and the only surprising thing about it was that it was so far distant from all other towns.

As the Sawhorse drew the wagon into the main street the travelers noticed that the place was filled with people, standing in groups and seeming to be engaged in earnest conversation. So occupied with themselves were the inhabitants that they scarcely noticed the strangers at all. So the Wizard stopped a boy and asked:

"Is this Rigmarole Town?"

"Sir," replied the boy, "if you have traveled very much you will have noticed that every town differs from every other town in one way or another and so by observing the methods of the people and the way they live as well as the style of their dwelling places it ought not to be a difficult thing to make up your mind without the trouble of asking questions whether the town bears the appearance of the one you intended to visit or whether perhaps having

taken a different road from the one you should have taken you have made an error in your way and arrived at some point where--”

“Land sakes!” cried Aunt Em, impatiently; “what’s all this rigmarole about?”

“That’s it!” said the Wizard, laughing merrily. “It’s a rigmarole because the boy is a Rigmarole and we’ve come to Rigmarole Town.”

“Do they all talk like that?” asked Dorothy, wonderingly.

“He might have said ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and settled the question,” observed Uncle Henry.

“Not here,” said Omby Amby. “I don’t believe the Rigmaroles know what ‘yes’ or ‘no’ means.”

While the boy had been talking several other people had approached the wagon and listened intently to his speech. Then they began talking to one another in long, deliberate speeches, where many words were used but little was said. But when the strangers criticized them so frankly one of the women, who had no one else to talk to, began an address to them, saying:

"It is the easiest thing in the world for a person to say 'yes' or 'no' when a question that is asked for the purpose of gaining information or satisfying the curiosity of the one who has given expression to the inquiry has attracted the attention of an individual who may be competent either from personal experience or the experience of others to answer it with more or less correctness or at least an attempt to satisfy the desire for information on the part of the one who has made the inquiry by--"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dorothy, interrupting the speech. "I've lost all track of what you are saying."

"Don't let her begin over again, for goodness sake!" cried Aunt Em.

But the woman did not begin again. She did not even stop talking, but went right on as she had begun, the words flowing from her mouth in a stream.

"I'm quite sure that if we waited long enough and listened carefully, some of these people might be able to tell us something, in time," said the Wizard.

"Let's don't wait," returned Dorothy. "I've heard of the Rigmaroles, and wondered what they were like; but now I know, and I'm ready to move on."

"So am I," declared Uncle Henry; "we're wasting time here."

"Why, we're all ready to go," said the Shaggy Man, putting his fingers to his ears to shut out the monotonous babble of those around the wagon.

So the Wizard spoke to the Sawhorse, who trotted nimbly through the village and soon gained the open country on the other side of it. Dorothy looked back, as they rode away, and noticed that the woman had not yet finished her speech but was talking as glibly as ever, although no one was near to hear her.

"If those people wrote books," Omby Amby remarked with a smile, "it would take a whole library to say the cow jumped over the moon."

"Perhaps some of 'em do write books," asserted the little Wizard. "I've read a few rigmaroles that might have come from this very town."

"Some of the college lecturers and ministers are certainly related to these people," observed the Shaggy Man; "and it seems to me the Land of Oz is a little ahead of the United States in some of its laws. For here, if one can't talk clearly, and straight to the point, they send him to Rigmarole Town; while Uncle Sam lets him roam around wild and free, to torture innocent people."

Dorothy was thoughtful. The Rigmaroles had made a strong impression upon her. She decided that whenever she spoke, after this, she would use only enough words to express what she wanted to say.

23. How They Encountered the Flutterbudgets

They were soon among the pretty hills and valleys again, and the Sawhorse sped up hill and down at a fast and easy pace, the roads being hard and smooth. Mile after mile was speedily covered, and before the ride had grown at all tiresome they sighted another village. The place seemed even larger than Rigmarole Town, but was not so attractive in appearance.

"This must be Flutterbudget Center," declared the Wizard. "You see, it's no trouble at all to find places if you keep to the right road."

"What are the Flutterbudgets like?" inquired Dorothy.

"I do not know, my dear. But Ozma has given them a town all their own, and I've heard that whenever one of the people becomes a Flutterbudget he is sent to this place to live."

"That is true," Omby Amby added; "Flutterbudget Center and Rigmarole Town are called 'the Defensive Settlements of Oz.'"

The village they now approached was not built in a valley, but on top of a hill, and the road they followed wound around the hill, like a corkscrew, ascending the hill easily until it came to the town.

"Look out!" screamed a voice. "Look out, or you'll run over my child!"

They gazed around and saw a woman standing upon the sidewalk nervously wringing her hands as she gazed at them appealingly.

"Where is your child?" asked the Sawhorse.

"In the house," said the woman, bursting into tears; "but if it should happen to be in the road, and you ran over it, those great wheels would crush

my darling to jelly. Oh dear! oh dear! Think of my darling child being crushed into jelly by those great wheels!"

"Gid-dap!" said the Wizard sharply, and the Sawhorse started on.

They had not gone far before a man ran out of a house shouting wildly, "Help! Help!"

The Sawhorse stopped short and the Wizard and Uncle Henry and the Shaggy Man and Omby Amby jumped out of the wagon and ran to the poor man's assistance. Dorothy followed them as quickly as she could.

"What's the matter?" asked the Wizard.

"Help! help!" screamed the man; "my wife has cut her finger off and she's bleeding to death!"

Then he turned and rushed back to the house, and all the party went with him. They found a woman in the front dooryard moaning and groaning as if in great pain.

"Be brave, madam!" said the Wizard, consolingly. "You won't die just because you have cut off a finger, you may be sure."

"But I haven't cut off a finger!" she sobbed.

"Then what HAS happened?" asked Dorothy.

"I--I pricked my finger with a needle while I was sewing, and--and the blood came!" she replied. "And now I'll have blood-poisoning, and the doctors will cut off my finger, and that will give me a fever and I shall die!"

"Pshaw!" said Dorothy; "I've pricked my finger many a time, and nothing happened."

"Really?" asked the woman, brightening and wiping her eyes upon her apron.

"Why, it's nothing at all," declared the girl. "You're more scared than hurt."

"Ah, that's because she's a Flutterbudget," said the Wizard, nodding wisely. "I think I know now what these people are like."

"So do I," announced Dorothy.

"Oh, boo-hoo-hoo!" sobbed the woman, giving way to a fresh burst of grief.

"What's wrong now?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Oh, suppose I had pricked my foot!" she wailed. "Then the doctors would have cut my foot off, and I'd be lamed for life!"

"Surely, ma'am," replied the Wizard, "and if you'd pricked your nose they might cut your head off. But you see you didn't."

"But I might have!" she exclaimed, and began to cry again. So they left her and drove away in their wagon. And her husband came out and began calling "Help!" as he had before; but no one seemed to pay any attention to

him.

As the travelers turned into another street they found a man walking excitedly up and down the pavement. He appeared to be in a very nervous condition and the Wizard stopped him to ask:

“Is anything wrong, sir?”

“Everything is wrong,” answered the man, dismally. “I can’t sleep.”

“Why not?” inquired Omby Amby.

“If I go to sleep I’ll have to shut my eyes,” he explained; “and if I shut my eyes they may grow together, and then I’d be blind for life!”

“Did you ever hear of any one’s eyes growing together?” asked Dorothy.

“No,” said the man, “I never did. But it would be a dreadful thing,

wouldn't it? And the thought of it makes me so nervous I'm afraid to go to sleep."

"There's no help for this case," declared the Wizard; and they went on.

At the next street corner a woman rushed up to them crying:

"Save my baby! Oh, good, kind people, save my baby!"

"Is it in danger?" asked Dorothy, noticing that the child was clasped in her arms and seemed sleeping peacefully.

"Yes, indeed," said the woman, nervously. "If I should go into the house and throw my child out of the window, it would roll way down to the bottom of the hill; and then if there were a lot of tigers and bears down there, they would tear my darling babe to pieces and eat it up!"

"Are there any tigers and bears in this neighborhood?" the Wizard asked.

"I've never heard of any," admitted the woman, "but if there were--"

"Have you any idea of throwing your baby out of the window?" questioned the little man.

"None at all," she said; "but if--"

"All your troubles are due to those 'ifs'," declared the Wizard. "If you were not a Flutterbudget you wouldn't worry."

"There's another 'if'," replied the woman. "Are you a Flutterbudget, too?"

"I will be, if I stay here long," exclaimed the Wizard, nervously.

"Another 'if'!" cried the woman.

But the Wizard did not stop to argue with her. He made the Sawhorse canter all the way down the hill, and only breathed easily when they were miles away from the village.

After they had ridden in silence for a while Dorothy turned to the little man and asked:

"Do 'ifs' really make Flutterbudgets?"

"I think the 'ifs' help," he answered seriously. "Foolish fears, and worries over nothing, with a mixture of nerves and ifs, will soon make a Flutterbudget of any one."

Then there was another long silence, for all the travelers were thinking over this statement, and nearly all decided it must be true.

The country they were now passing through was everywhere tinted purple, the prevailing color of the Gillikin Country; but as the Sawhorse ascended a hill they found that upon the other side everything was of a rich yellow hue.

"Aha!" cried the Captain General; "here is the Country of the Winkies. We are just crossing the boundary line."

"Then we may be able to lunch with the Tin Woodman," announced the Wizard, joyfully.

“Must we lunch on tin?” asked Aunt Em.

“Oh, no;” replied Dorothy. “Nick Chopper knows how to feed meat people, and he will give us plenty of good things to eat, never fear. I’ve been to his castle before.”

“Is Nick Chopper the Tin Woodman’s name?” asked Uncle Henry.

“Yes; that’s one of his names,” answered the little girl; “and another of his names is ‘Emp’ror of the Winkies.’ He’s the King of this country, you know, but Ozma rules over all the countries of Oz.”

“Does the Tin Woodman keep any Flutterbudgets or Rigmaroles at his castle?” inquired Aunt Em, uneasily.

“No indeed,” said Dorothy, positively. “He lives in a new tin castle, all full of lovely things.”

“I should think it would rust,” said Uncle Henry.

“He has thousands of Winkies to keep it polished for him,” explained the Wizard. “His people love to do anything in their power for their beloved Emperor, so there isn’t a particle of rust on all the big castle.”

“I suppose they polish their Emperor, too,” said Aunt Em.

“Why, some time ago he had himself nickel-plated,” the Wizard answered; “so he only needs rubbing up once in a while. He’s the brightest man in all the world, is dear Nick Chopper; and the kindest-hearted.”

“I helped find him,” said Dorothy, reflectively. “Once the Scarecrow and I found the Tin Woodman in the woods, and he was just rusted still, that time, an’ no mistake. But we oiled his joints an’ got ‘em good and slippery, and after that he went with us to visit the Wizard at the Em’rald City.”

“Was that the time the Wizard scared you?” asked Aunt Em.

“He didn’t treat us well, at first,” acknowledged Dorothy; “for he made us go away and destroy the Wicked Witch. But after we found out he was only a humbug wizard we were not afraid of him.”

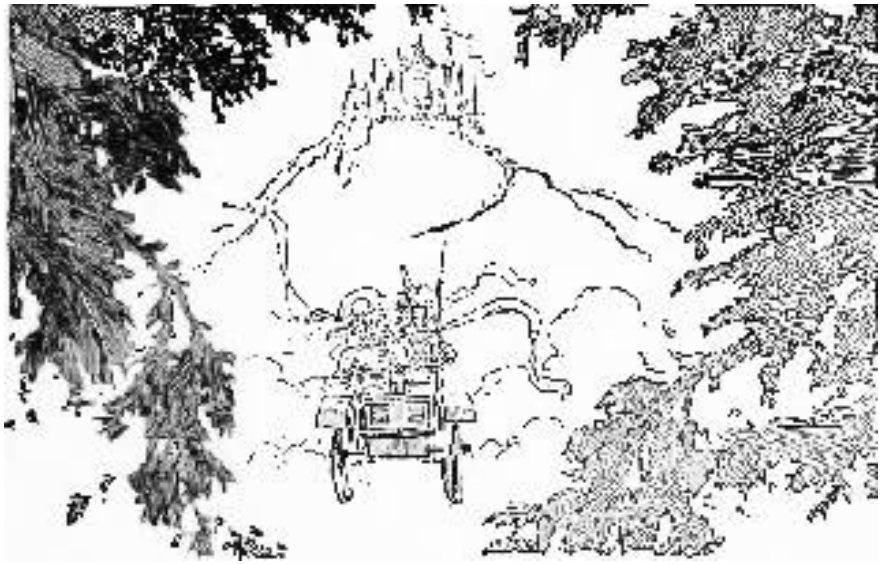
The Wizard sighed and looked a little ashamed.

“When we try to deceive people we always make mistakes,” he said. “But I’m getting to be a real wizard now, and Glinda the Good’s magic, that I am trying to practice, can never harm any one.”

“You were always a good man,” declared Dorothy, “even when you were a bad wizard.”

“He’s a good wizard now,” asserted Aunt Em, looking at the little man admiringly. “The way he made those tents grow out of handkerchiefs was just wonderful! And didn’t he enchant the wagon wheels so they’d find the road?”

“All the people of Oz,” said the Captain General, “are very proud of their Wizard. He once made some soap-bubbles that astonished the world.”



The Wizard blushed at this praise, yet it pleased him. He no longer looked sad, but seemed to have recovered his usual good humor.

The country through which they now rode was thickly dotted with farmhouses, and yellow grain waved in all the fields. Many of the Winkies could be seen working on their farms and the wild and unsettled parts of Oz were by this time left far behind.

These Winkies appeared to be happy, light-hearted folk, and all removed their caps and bowed low when the red wagon with its load of travelers passed by.

It was not long before they saw something glittering in the sunshine far ahead.

“See!” cried Dorothy; “that’s the Tin Castle, Aunt Em!”

And the Sawhorse, knowing his passengers were eager to arrive, broke into a swift trot that soon brought them to their destination.

24. How the Tin Woodman Told the Sad News

The Tin Woodman received Princess Dorothy's party with much grace and cordiality, yet the little girl decided that something must be worrying with her old friend, because he was not so merry as usual.

But at first she said nothing about this, for Uncle Henry and Aunt Em were fairly bubbling over with admiration for the beautiful tin castle and its polished tin owner. So her suspicion that something unpleasant had happened was for a time forgotten.

"Where is the Scarecrow?" she asked, when they had all been ushered into the big tin drawing-room of the castle, the Sawhorse being led around to the tin stable in the rear.

"Why, our old friend has just moved into his new mansion," explained the Tin Woodman. "It has been a long time in building, although my Winkies and many other people from all parts of the country have been busily working upon it. At last, however, it is completed, and the Scarecrow took possession of his new home just two days ago."

"I hadn't heard that he wanted a home of his own," said Dorothy. "Why doesn't he live with Ozma in the Emerald City? He used to, you know; and I thought he was happy there."

"It seems," said the Tin Woodman, "that our dear Scarecrow cannot be contented with city life, however beautiful his surroundings might be. Originally he was a farmer, for he passed his early life in a cornfield, where he was supposed to frighten away the crows."

"I know," said Dorothy, nodding. "I found him, and lifted him down from

his pole."

"So now, after a long residence in the Emerald City, his tastes have turned to farm life again," continued the Tin Man. "He feels that he cannot be happy without a farm of his own, so Ozma gave him some land and every one helped him build his mansion, and now he is settled there for good."

"Who designed his house?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"I believe it was Jack Pumpkinhead, who is also a farmer," was the reply.

They were now invited to enter the tin dining room, where luncheon was served.

Aunt Em found, to her satisfaction, that Dorothy's promise was more than fulfilled; for, although the Tin Woodman had no appetite of his own, he respected the appetites of his guests and saw that they were bountifully fed.

They passed the afternoon in wandering through the beautiful gardens and grounds of the palace. The walks were all paved with sheets of tin, brightly polished, and there were tin fountains and tin statues here and there among the trees. The flowers were mostly natural flowers and grew in the regular way; but their host showed them one flower bed which was his especial pride.

"You see, all common flowers fade and die in time," he explained, "and so there are seasons when the pretty blooms are scarce. Therefore I decided to make one tin flower bed all of tin flowers, and my workmen have created them with rare skill. Here you see tin camelias, tin marigolds, tin carnations, tin poppies and tin hollyhocks growing as naturally as if they were real."

Indeed, they were a pretty sight, and glistened under the sunlight like spun silver. "Isn't this tin hollyhock going to seed?" asked the Wizard, bending over the flowers.

"Why, I believe it is!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman, as if surprised. "I hadn't noticed that before. But I shall plant the tin seeds and raise another bed of tin hollyhocks."

In one corner of the gardens Nick Chopper had established a fish-pond in which they saw swimming and disporting themselves many pretty tin fishes.

"Would they bite on hooks?" asked Aunt Em, curiously.

The Tin Woodman seemed hurt at this question.

"Madam," said he, "do you suppose I would allow anyone to catch my beautiful fishes, even if they were foolish enough to bite on hooks? No, indeed! Every created thing is safe from harm in my domain, and I would as soon think of killing my little friend Dorothy as killing one of my tin fishes."

"The Emperor is very kind-hearted, ma'am," explained the Wizard. "If a fly happens to light upon his tin body he doesn't rudely brush it off, as some people might do; he asks it politely to find some other resting place."

“What does the fly do then?” enquired Aunt Em.

“Usually it begs his pardon and goes away,” said the Wizard, gravely. “Flies like to be treated politely as well as other creatures, and here in Oz they understand what we say to them, and behave very nicely.”

“Well,” said Aunt Em, “the flies in Kansas, where I came from, don’t understand anything but a swat. You have to smash ‘em to make ‘em behave; and it’s the same way with ‘skeeters. Do you have ‘skeeters in Oz?”

“We have some very large mosquitoes here, which sing as beautifully as song birds,” replied the Tin Woodman. “But they never bite or annoy our people, because they are well fed and taken care of. The reason they bite people in your country is because they are hungry--poor things!”

“Yes,” agreed Aunt Em; “they’re hungry, all right. An’ they ain’t very particular who they feed on. I’m glad you’ve got the ‘skeeters educated in Oz.”

That evening after dinner they were entertained by the Emperor’s Tin Cornet Band, which played for them several sweet melodies. Also the Wizard did a few sleight-of-hand tricks to amuse the company; after which they all retired to their cozy tin bedrooms and slept soundly until morning.

After breakfast Dorothy said to the Tin Woodman:

“If you’ll tell us which way to go we’ll visit the Scarecrow on our way home.”

“I will go with you, and show you the way,” replied the Emperor; “for I must journey to-day to the Emerald City.”

He looked so anxious, as he said this, that the little girl asked:

“There isn’t anything wrong with Ozma, is there?”

“Not yet,” said he; “but I’m afraid the time has come when I must tell you some very bad news, little friend.”

“Oh, what is it?” cried Dorothy.

“Do you remember the Nome King?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“I remember him very well,” she replied.

“The Nome King has not a kind heart,” said the Emperor, sadly, “and he has been harboring wicked thoughts of revenge, because we once defeated him and liberated his slaves and you took away his Magic Belt. So he has ordered his Nomes to dig a long tunnel underneath the deadly desert, so that he may march his hosts right into the Emerald City. When he gets there he intends to destroy our beautiful country.”

Dorothy was much surprised to hear this.

“How did Ozma find out about the tunnel?” she asked.

“She saw it in her Magic Picture.”

“Of course,” said Dorothy; “I might have known that. And what is she

going to do?”

“I cannot tell,” was the reply.

“Pooh!” cried the Yellow Hen. “We’re not afraid of the Nomes. If we roll a few of our eggs down the tunnel they’ll run away back home as fast as they can go.”

“Why, that’s true enough!” exclaimed Dorothy. “The Scarecrow once conquered all the Nome King’s army with some of Billina’s eggs.”

“But you do not understand all of the dreadful plot,” continued the Tin Woodman. “The Nome King is clever, and he knows his Nomes would run from eggs; so he has bargained with many terrible creatures to help him. These evil spirits are not afraid of eggs or anything else, and they are very powerful. So the Nome King will send them through the tunnel first, to conquer and destroy, and then the Nomes will follow after to get their share of the plunder and slaves.”

They were all startled to hear this, and every face wore a troubled look.

“Is the tunnel all ready?” asked Dorothy.

“Ozma sent me word yesterday that the tunnel was all completed except for a thin crust of earth at the end. When our enemies break through this crust, they will be in the gardens of the royal palace, in the heart of the Emerald City. I offered to arm all my Winkies and march to Ozma’s assistance; but she said no.”

“I wonder why?” asked Dorothy.

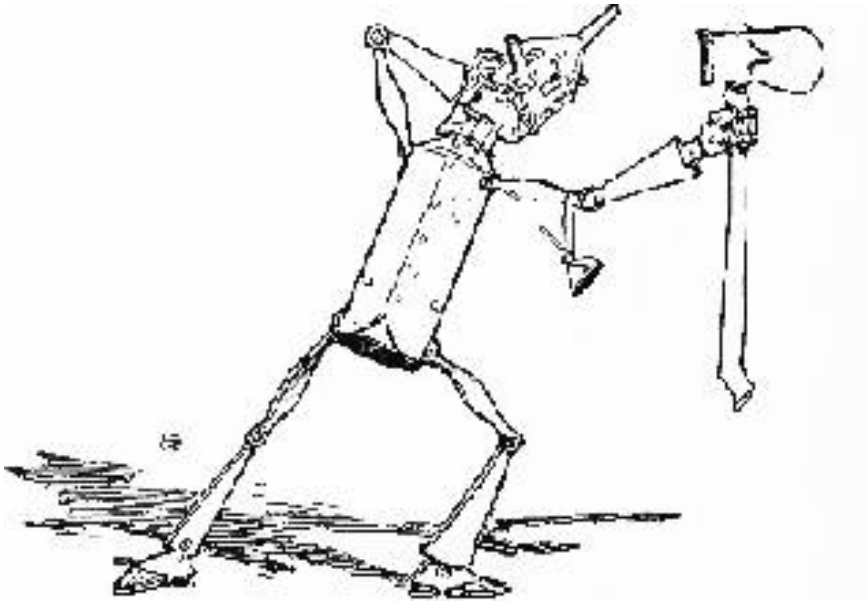
“She answered that all the inhabitants of Oz, gathered together, were not powerful enough to fight and overcome the evil forces of the Nome King. Therefore she refuses to fight at all.”

“But they will capture and enslave us, and plunder and ruin all our lovely land!” exclaimed the Wizard, greatly disturbed by this statement.

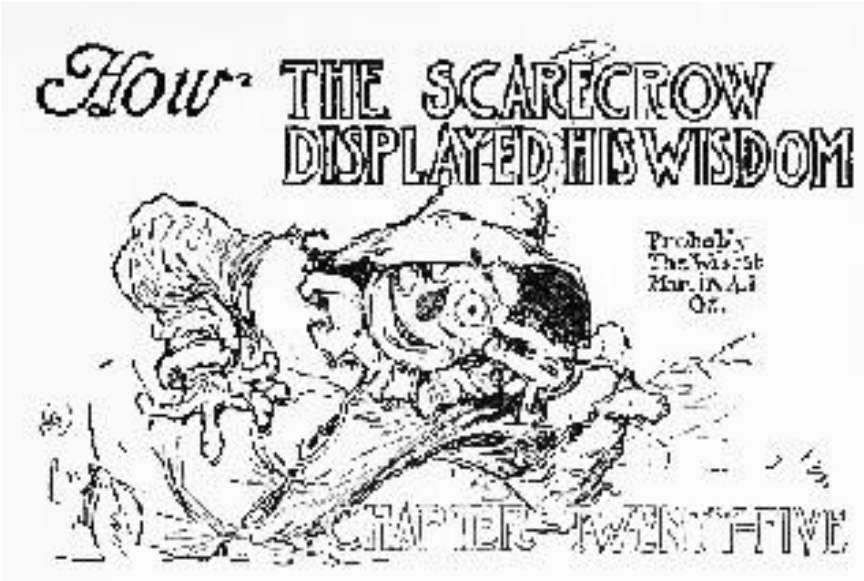
“I fear they will,” said the Tin Woodman, sorrowfully. “And I also fear that those who are not fairies, such as the Wizard, and Dorothy, and her uncle and aunt, as well as Toto and Billina, will be speedily put to death by the conquerors.”

“What can be done?” asked Dorothy, shuddering a little at the prospect of this awful fate.

“Nothing can be done!” gloomily replied the Emperor of the Winkies. “But since Ozma refuses my army I will go myself to the Emerald City. The least I may do is to perish beside my beloved Ruler.”



25. How the Scarecrow Displayed His Wisdom



This amazing news had saddened every heart and all were now anxious to return to the Emerald City and share Ozma's fate. So they started without loss of time, and as the road led past the Scarecrow's new mansion they determined to make a brief halt there and confer with him.

"The Scarecrow is probably the wisest man in all Oz," remarked the Tin Woodman, when they had started upon their journey. "His brains are plentiful and of excellent quality, and often he has told me things I might never have thought of myself. I must say I rely a great deal upon the Scarecrow's brains in this emergency."

The Tin Woodman rode on the front seat of the wagon, where Dorothy sat between him and the Wizard.

"Has the Scarecrow heard of Ozma's trouble?" asked the Captain General.

"I do not know, sir," was the reply.

"When I was a private," said Omby Amby, "I was an excellent army, as I fully proved in our war against the Nomes. But now there is not a single private left in our army, since Ozma made me the Captain General, so there is no one to fight and defend our lovely Ruler."

"True," said the Wizard. "The present army is composed only of officers, and the business of an officer is to order his men to fight. Since there are no men there can be no fighting."

"Poor Ozma!" whispered Dorothy, with tears in her sweet eyes. "It's

dreadful to think of all her lovely fairy country being destroyed. I wonder if we couldn't manage to escape and get back to Kansas by means of the Magic Belt? And we might take Ozma with us and all work hard to get money for her, so she wouldn't be so VERY lonely and unhappy about the loss of her fairyland."

"Do you think there would be any work for ME in Kansas?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"If you are hollow, they might use you in a canning factory," suggested Uncle Henry. "But I can't see the use of your working for a living. You never eat or sleep or need a new suit of clothes."

"I was not thinking of myself," replied the Emperor, with dignity. "I merely wondered if I could not help to support Dorothy and Ozma."

As they indulged in these sad plans for the future they journeyed in sight of the Scarecrow's new mansion, and even though filled with care and worry over the impending fate of Oz, Dorothy couldn't help a feeling of wonder at the sight she saw.

The Scarecrow's new house was shaped like an immense ear of corn. The rows of kernels were made of solid gold, and the green upon which the ear stood upright was a mass of sparkling emeralds. Upon the very top of the structure was perched a figure representing the Scarecrow himself, and upon his extended arms, as well as upon his head, were several crows carved out of ebony and having ruby eyes. You may imagine how big this ear of corn was when I tell you that a single gold kernel formed a window, swinging outward upon hinges, while a row of four kernels opened to make the front entrance. Inside there were five stories, each story being a single room.

The gardens around the mansion consisted of cornfields, and Dorothy acknowledged that the place was in all respects a very appropriate home for her good friend the Scarecrow.

"He would have been very happy here, I'm sure," she said, "if only the Nome King had left us alone. But if Oz is destroyed of course this place will be destroyed too."

"Yes," replied the Tin Woodman, "and also my beautiful tin castle, that has been my joy and pride."

"Jack Pumpkinhead's house will go too," remarked the Wizard, "as well as Professor Wogglebug's Athletic College, and Ozma's royal palace, and all our other handsome buildings."

"Yes, Oz will indeed become a desert when the Nome King gets through with it," sighed Omby Amby.

The Scarecrow came out to meet them and gave them all a hearty welcome.

“I hear you have decided always to live in the Land of Oz, after this,” he said to Dorothy; “and that will delight my heart, for I have greatly disliked our frequent partings. But why are you all so downcast?”

“Have you heard the news?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“No news to make me sad,” replied the Scarecrow.

Then Nick Chopper told his friend of the Nome King’s tunnel, and how the evil creatures of the North had allied themselves with the underground monarch for the purpose of conquering and destroying Oz. “Well,” said the Scarecrow, “it certainly looks bad for Ozma, and all of us. But I believe it is wrong to worry over anything before it happens. It is surely time enough to be sad when our country is despoiled and our people made slaves. So let us

not deprive ourselves of the few happy hours remaining to us."

"Ah! that is real wisdom," declared the Shaggy Man, approvingly. "After we become really unhappy we shall regret these few hours that are left to us, unless we enjoy them to the utmost."

"Nevertheless," said the Scarecrow, "I shall go with you to the Emerald City and offer Ozma my services."

"She says we can do nothing to oppose our enemies," announced the Tin Woodman.

"And doubtless she is right, sir," answered the Scarecrow. "Still, she will appreciate our sympathy, and it is the duty of Ozma's friends to stand by her side when the final disaster occurs."

He then led them into his queer mansion and showed them the beautiful rooms in all the five stories. The lower room was a grand reception hall, with a hand-organ in one corner. This instrument the Scarecrow, when alone, could turn to amuse himself, as he was very fond of music. The walls were hung with white silk, upon which flocks of black crows were embroidered in black diamonds. Some of the chairs were made in the shape of big crows and upholstered with cushions of corn-colored silk.

The second story contained a fine banquet room, where the Scarecrow might entertain his guests, and the three stories above that were bed-chambers exquisitely furnished and decorated.

"From these rooms," said the Scarecrow, proudly, "one may obtain fine views of the surrounding cornfields. The corn I grow is always husky, and I call the ears my regiments, because they have so many kernels. Of course I cannot ride my cobs, but I really don't care shucks about that. Taken altogether, my farm will stack up with any in the neighborhood."

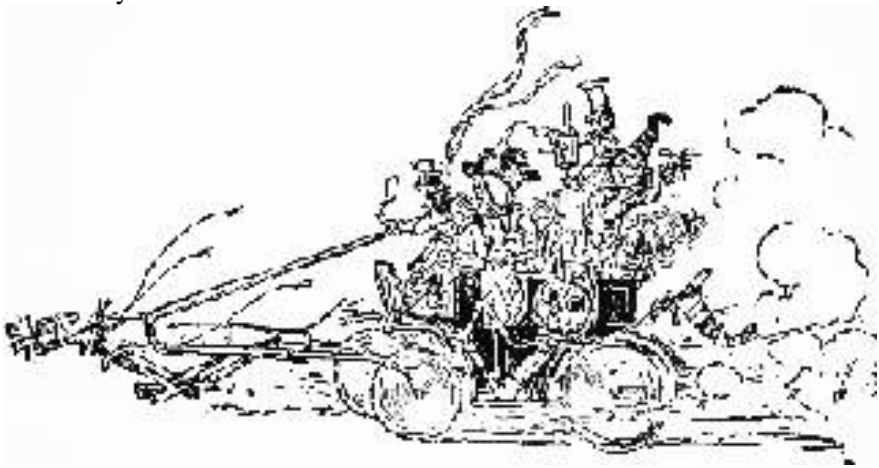
The visitors partook of some light refreshment and then hurried away to resume the road to the Emerald City. The Scarecrow found a seat in the wagon between Omby Amby and the Shaggy Man, and his weight did not add much to the load because he was stuffed with straw.

"You will notice I have one oat-field on my property," he remarked, as they drove away. "Oat-straw is, I have found, the best of all straws to re-stuff myself with when my interior gets musty or out of shape."

"Are you able to re-stuff yourself without help?" asked Aunt Em. "I should think that after the straw was taken out of you there wouldn't be anything left but your clothes."

"You are almost correct, madam," he answered. "My servants do the stuffing, under my direction. For my head, in which are my excellent brains, is a bag tied at the bottom. My face is neatly painted upon one side of the bag, as you may see. My head does not need re-stuffing, as my body does, for

all that it requires is to have the face touched up with fresh paint occasionally."



It was not far from the Scarecrow's mansion to the farm of Jack Pumpkinhead, and when they arrived there both Uncle Henry and Aunt Em were much impressed. The farm was one vast pumpkin field, and some of the pumpkins were of enormous size. In one of them, which had been neatly hollowed out, Jack himself lived, and he declared that it was a very comfortable residence. The reason he grew so many pumpkins was in order that he might change his head as often as it became wrinkled or threatened to spoil.

The pumpkin-headed man welcomed his visitors joyfully and offered them several delicious pumpkin pies to eat.

"I don't indulge in pumpkin pies myself, for two reasons," he said. "One reason is that were I to eat pumpkins I would become a cannibal, and the other reason is that I never eat, not being hollow inside."

"Very good reasons," agreed the Scarecrow.

They told Jack Pumpkinhead of the dreadful news about the Nome King, and he decided to go with them to the Emerald City and help comfort Ozma.

"I had expected to live here in ease and comfort for many centuries," said Jack, dolefully; "but of course if the Nome King destroys everything in Oz I shall be destroyed too. Really, it seems too bad, doesn't it?"

They were soon on their journey again, and so swiftly did the Sawhorse draw the wagon over the smooth roads that before twilight fell they had reached the royal palace in the Emerald City, and were at their journey's end.

26. How Ozma Refused to Fight for Her Kingdom

Ozma was in her rose garden picking a bouquet when the party arrived, and she greeted all her old and new friends as smilingly and sweetly as ever. Dorothy's eyes were full of tears as she kissed the lovely Ruler of Oz, and she whispered to her:

"Oh, Ozma, Ozma! I'm SO sorry!"

Ozma seemed surprised.

"Sorry for what, Dorothy?" she asked.

"For all your trouble about the Nome King," was the reply.

Ozma laughed with genuine amusement.

"Why, that has not troubled me a bit, dear Princess," she replied. Then, looking around at the sad faces of her friends, she added: "Have you all been worrying about this tunnel?"

"We have!" they exclaimed in a chorus.

"Well, perhaps it is more serious than I imagined," admitted the fair Ruler; "but I haven't given the matter much thought. After dinner we will all meet together and talk it over."

So they went to their rooms and prepared for dinner, and Dorothy dressed herself in her prettiest gown and put on her coronet, for she thought that this might be the last time she would ever appear as a Princess of Oz.

The Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and Jack Pumpkinhead all sat at the dinner table, although none of them was made so he could eat. Usually they served to enliven the meal with their merry talk, but to-night all seemed strangely silent and uneasy.

As soon as the dinner was finished Ozma led the company to her own private room in which hung the Magic Picture. When they had seated themselves the Scarecrow was the first to speak.

"Is the Nome King's tunnel finished, Ozma?" he asked.

"It was completed to-day," she replied. "They have built it right under my palace grounds, and it ends in front of the Forbidden Fountain. Nothing but a crust of earth remains to separate our enemies from us, and when they march here, they will easily break through this crust and rush upon us."

"Who will assist the Nome King?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"The Whimsies, the Growleywogs and the Phanfasms," she replied. "I watched to-day in my Magic Picture the messengers whom the Nome King

sent to all these people to summon them to assemble in his great caverns."

"Let us see what they are doing now," suggested the Tin Woodman.

So Ozma wished to see the Nome King's cavern, and at once the landscape faded from the Magic Picture and was replaced by the scene then being enacted in the jeweled cavern of King Roquat.

A wild and startling scene it was which the Oz people beheld.

Before the Nome King stood the Chief of the Whimsies and the Grand Gallipoot of the Growleywogs, surrounded by their most skillful generals. Very fierce and powerful they looked, so that even the Nome King and General Guph, who stood beside his master, seemed a bit fearful in the presence of their allies.

Now a still more formidable creature entered the cavern. It was the First and Foremost of the Phanfasms and he proudly sat down in King Roquat's own throne and demanded the right to lead his forces through the tunnel in advance of all the others. The First and Foremost now appeared to all eyes in his hairy skin and the bear's head. What his real form was even Roquat did not know.

Through the arches leading into the vast series of caverns that lay beyond the throne room of King Roquat could be seen ranks upon ranks of the invaders--thousands of Phanfasms, Growleywogs and Whimsies standing in serried lines, while behind them were massed the thousands upon thousands of General Guph's own army of Nomes.

"Listen!" whispered Ozma. "I think we can hear what they are saying."

So they kept still and listened.

"Is all ready?" demanded the First and Foremost, haughtily.

"The tunnel is finally completed," replied General Guph.

"How long will it take us to march to the Emerald City?" asked the Grand Gallipoot of the Growleywogs.

"If we start at midnight," replied the Nome King, "we shall arrive at the Emerald City by daybreak. Then, while all the Oz people are sleeping, we will capture them and make them our slaves. After that we will destroy the city itself and march through the Land of Oz, burning and devastating as we go."

"Good!" cried the First and Foremost. "When we get through with Oz it will be a desert wilderness. Ozma shall be my slave."

"She shall be MY slave!" shouted the Grand Gallipoot, angrily.

"We'll decide that by and by," said King Roquat hastily. "Don't let us quarrel now, friends. First let us conquer Oz, and then we will divide the spoils of war in a satisfactory manner."

The First and Foremost smiled wickedly; but he only said:

“I and my Phanfasms go first, for nothing on earth can oppose our power.”

They all agreed to that, knowing the Phanfasms to be the mightiest of the combined forces. King Roquat now invited them to attend a banquet he had prepared, where they might occupy themselves in eating and drinking until midnight arrived.

As they had now seen and heard all of the plot against them that they cared to, Ozma allowed her Magic Picture to fade away. Then she turned to her friends and said:

“Our enemies will be here sooner than I expected. What do you advise me to do?”

“It is now too late to assemble our people,” said the Tin Woodman, despondently. “If you had allowed me to arm and drill my Winkies, we might have put up a good fight and destroyed many of our enemies before we were conquered.”

“The Munchkins are good fighters, too,” said Omby Amby; “and so are the Gillikins.”

“But I do not wish to fight,” declared Ozma, firmly. “No one has the right to destroy any living creatures, however evil they may be, or to hurt them or make them unhappy. I will not fight, even to save my kingdom.”

“The Nome King is not so particular,” remarked the Scarecrow. “He intends to destroy us all and ruin our beautiful country.”

“Because the Nome King intends to do evil is no excuse for my doing the same,” replied Ozma.

“Self-preservation is the first law of nature,” quoted the Shaggy Man.

“True,” she said, readily. “I would like to discover a plan to save ourselves without fighting.”

That seemed a hopeless task to them, but realizing that Ozma was determined not to fight, they tried to think of some means that might promise escape.

“Couldn’t we bribe our enemies, by giving them a lot of emeralds and gold?” asked Jack Pumpkinhead.

“No, because they believe they are able to take everything we have,” replied the Ruler.

“I have thought of something,” said Dorothy.

“What is it, dear?” asked Ozma.

“Let us use the Magic Belt to wish all of us in Kansas. We will put some emeralds in our pockets, and can sell them in Topeka for enough to pay off the mortgage on Uncle Henry’s farm. Then we can all live together and be happy.”

“A clever idea!” exclaimed the Scarecrow.

“Kansas is a very good country. I’ve been there,” said the Shaggy Man.

“That seems to me an excellent plan,” approved the Tin Woodman.

“No!” said Ozma, decidedly. “Never will I desert my people and leave them to so cruel a fate. I will use the Magic Belt to send the rest of you to Kansas, if you wish, but if my beloved country must be destroyed and my people enslaved I will remain and share their fate.”

“Quite right,” asserted the Scarecrow, sighing. “I will remain with you.”

“And so will I,” declared the Tin Woodman and the Shaggy Man and Jack Pumpkinhead, in turn. Tiktok, the machine man, also said he intended to stand by Ozma. “For,” said he, “I should be of no use at all in Kan-sas.”

“For my part,” announced Dorothy, gravely, “if the Ruler of Oz must not desert her people, a Princess of Oz has no right to run away, either. I’m willing to become a slave with the rest of you; so all we can do with the Magic Belt is to use it to send Uncle Henry and Aunt Em back to Kansas.”

“I’ve been a slave all my life,” Aunt Em replied, with considerable cheerfulness, “and so has Henry. I guess we won’t go back to Kansas, anyway. I’d rather take my chances with the rest of you.”

Ozma smiled upon them all gratefully.

“There is no need to despair just yet,” she said. “I’ll get up early to-morrow morning and be at the Forbidden Fountain when the fierce warriors break through the crust of the earth. I will speak to them pleasantly and perhaps they won’t be so very bad, after all.”

“Why do they call it the Forbidden Fountain?” asked Dorothy, thoughtfully.

“Don’t you know, dear?” returned Ozma, surprised.

“No,” said Dorothy. “Of course I’ve seen the fountain in the palace grounds, ever since I first came to Oz; and I’ve read the sign which says: ‘All Persons are Forbidden to Drink at this Fountain.’ But I never knew WHY they were forbidden. The water seems clear and sparkling and it bubbles up in a golden basin all the time.”

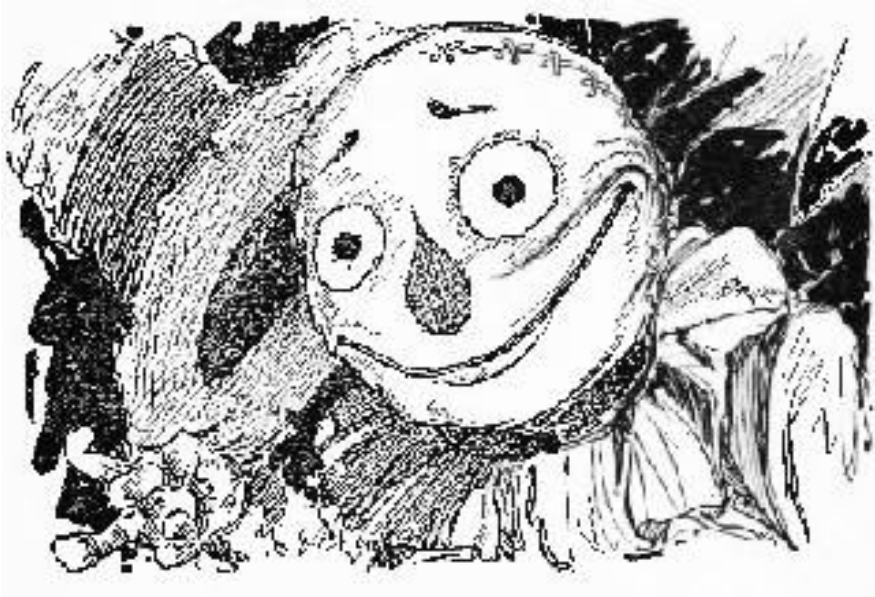
“That water,” declared Ozma, gravely, “is the most dangerous thing in all the Land of Oz. It is the Water of Oblivion.”

“What does that mean?” asked Dorothy.

“Whoever drinks at the Forbidden Fountain at once forgets everything he has ever known,” Ozma asserted.

“It wouldn’t be a bad way to forget our troubles,” suggested Uncle Henry.

“That is true; but you would forget everything else, and become as ignorant as a baby,” returned Ozma.



"Does it make one crazy?" asked Dorothy.

"No; it only makes one forget," replied the girl Ruler. "It is said that once--long, long ago--a wicked King ruled Oz, and made himself and all his people very miserable and unhappy. So Glinda, the Good Sorceress, placed this fountain here, and the King drank of its water and forgot all his wickedness. His mind became innocent and vacant, and when he learned the things of life again they were all good things. But the people remembered how wicked their King had been, and were still afraid of him. Therefore, he made them all drink of the Water of Oblivion and forget everything they had known, so that they became as simple and innocent as their King. After that, they all grew wise together, and their wisdom was good, so that peace and happiness reigned in the land. But for fear some one might drink of the water again, and in an instant forget all he had learned, the King put that sign upon the fountain, where it has remained for many centuries up to this very day."

They had all listened intently to Ozma's story, and when she finished speaking there was a long period of silence while all thought upon the curious magical power of the Water of Oblivion.

Finally the Scarecrow's painted face took on a broad smile that stretched the cloth as far as it would go.

"How thankful I am," he said, "that I have such an excellent assortment of brains!"

"I gave you the best brains I ever mixed," declared the Wizard, with an air of pride.

“You did, indeed!” agreed the Scarecrow, “and they work so splendidly that they have found a way to save Oz--to save us all!”

“I’m glad to hear that,” said the Wizard. “We never needed saving more than we do just now.”

“Do you mean to say you can save us from those awful Phanfasms, and Growleywogs and Whimsies?” asked Dorothy eagerly.

“I’m sure of it, my dear,” asserted the Scarecrow, still smiling genially.

“Tell us how!” cried the Tin Woodman.

“Not now,” said the Scarecrow. “You may all go to bed, and I advise you to forget your worries just as completely as if you had drunk of the Water of Oblivion in the Forbidden Fountain. I’m going to stay here and tell my plan to Ozma alone, but if you will all be at the Forbidden Fountain at daybreak, you’ll see how easily we will save the kingdom when our enemies break through the crust of earth and come from the tunnel.”

So they went away and let the Scarecrow and Ozma alone; but Dorothy could not sleep a wink all night.

“He is only a Scarecrow,” she said to herself, “and I’m not sure that his mixed brains are as clever as he thinks they are.”

But she knew that if the Scarecrow’s plan failed they were all lost; so she tried to have faith in him.

27. How the Fierce Warriors Invaded Oz

The Nome King and his terrible allies sat at the banquet table until midnight. There was much quarreling between the Growleywogs and Phanfasms, and one of the wee-headed Whimsies got angry at General Guph and choked him until he nearly stopped breathing. Yet no one was seriously hurt, and the Nome King felt much relieved when the clock struck twelve and they all sprang up and seized their weapons.

"Aha!" shouted the First and Foremost. "Now to conquer the Land of Oz!"

He marshaled his Phanfasms in battle array and at his word of command they marched into the tunnel and began the long journey through it to the Emerald City. The First and Foremost intended to take all the treasures of Oz for himself; to kill all who could be killed and enslave the rest; to destroy and lay waste the whole country, and afterward to conquer and enslave the Nomes, the Growleywogs and the Whimsies. And he knew his power was sufficient to enable him to do all these things easily.

Next marched into the tunnel the army of gigantic Growleywogs, with their Grand Gallipoot at their head. They were dreadful beings, indeed, and longed to get to Oz that they might begin to pilfer and destroy. The Grand Gallipoot was a little afraid of the First and Foremost, but had a cunning plan to murder or destroy that powerful being and secure the wealth of Oz for himself. Mighty little of the plunder would the Nome King get, thought the

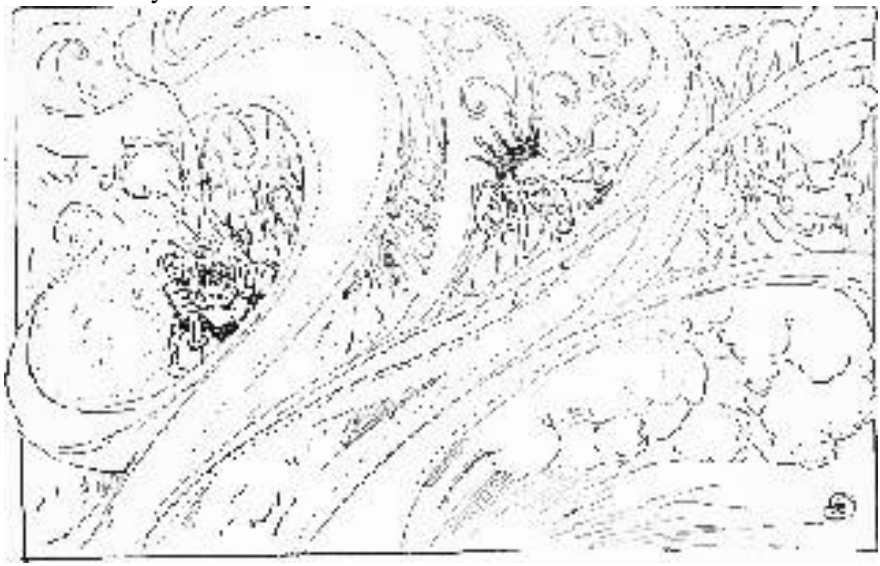
Grand Gallipoot.

The Chief of the Whimsies now marched his false-headed forces into the tunnel. In his wicked little head was a plot to destroy both the First and Foremost and the Grand Gallipoot. He intended to let them conquer Oz, since they insisted on going first; but he would afterward treacherously destroy them, as well as King Roquat, and keep all the slaves and treasure of Ozma's kingdom for himself.

After all his dangerous allies had marched into the tunnel the Nome King and General Guph started to follow them, at the head of fifty thousand Nomes, all fully armed.

"Guph," said the King, "those creatures ahead of us mean mischief. They intend to get everything for themselves and leave us nothing."

"I know," replied the General; "but they are not as clever as they think they are. When you get the Magic Belt you must at once wish the Whimsies and Growleywogs and Phanfasms all back into their own countries--and the Belt will surely take them there."



"Good!" cried the King. "An excellent plan, Guph. I'll do it. While they are conquering Oz I'll get the Magic Belt, and then only the Nomes will remain to ravage the country."

So you see there was only one thing that all were agreed upon--that Oz should be destroyed.

On, on, on the vast ranks of invaders marched, filling the tunnel from side to side. With a steady tramp, tramp, they advanced, every step taking them nearer to the beautiful Emerald City.

“Nothing can save the Land of Oz!” thought the First and Foremost, scowling until his bear face was as black as the tunnel.

“The Emerald City is as good as destroyed already!” muttered the Grand Gallipoot, shaking his war club fiercely.

“In a few hours Oz will be a desert!” said the Chief of the Whimsies, with an evil laugh.

“My dear Guph,” remarked the Nome King to his General, “at last my vengeance upon Ozma of Oz and her people is about to be accomplished.”

“You are right!” declared the General. “Ozma is surely lost.”

And now the First and Foremost, who was in advance and nearing the Emerald City, began to cough and to sneeze.

“This tunnel is terribly dusty,” he growled, angrily. “I’ll punish that Nome King for not having it swept clean. My throat and eyes are getting full of dust and I’m as thirsty as a fish!”

The Grand Gallipoot was coughing too, and his throat was parched and dry.

“What a dusty place!” he cried. “I’ll be glad when we reach Oz, where we can get a drink.”

“Who has any water?” asked the Whimsie Chief, gasping and choking. But none of his followers carried a drop of water, so he hastened on to get through the dusty tunnel to the Land of Oz.

“Where did all this dust come from?” demanded General Guph, trying hard to swallow but finding his throat so dry he couldn’t.

“I don’t know,” answered the Nome King. “I’ve been in the tunnel every day while it was being built, but I never noticed any dust before.”

“Let’s hurry!” cried the General. “I’d give half the gold in Oz for a drink of water.”

The dust grew thicker and thicker, and the throats and eyes and noses of the invaders were filled with it. But not one halted or turned back. They hurried forward more fierce and vengeful than ever.

28. How They Drank at the Forbidden Fountain

The Scarecrow had no need to sleep; neither had the Tin Woodman or Tiktok or Jack Pumpkinhead. So they all wandered out into the palace grounds and stood beside the sparkling water of the Forbidden Fountain until daybreak. During this time they indulged in occasional conversation.

"Nothing could make me forget what I know," remarked the Scarecrow, gazing into the fountain, "for I cannot drink the Water of Oblivion or water of any kind. And I am glad that this is so, for I consider my wisdom unexcelled."

"You are cer-tain-ly ve-ry wise," agreed Tiktok. "For my part, I can on-ly think by ma-chin-er-y, so I do not pre-tend to know as much as you do."

"My tin brains are very bright, but that is all I claim for them," said Nick Chopper, modestly. "Yet I do not aspire to being very wise, for I have noticed that the happiest people are those who do not let their brains oppress them."

"Mine never worry me," Jack Pumpkinhead acknowledged. "There are many seeds of thought in my head, but they do not sprout easily. I am glad that it is so, for if I occupied my days in thinking I should have no time for anything else."

In this cheery mood they passed the hours until the first golden streaks of dawn appeared in the sky. Then Ozma joined them, as fresh and lovely as ever and robed in one of her prettiest gowns.

"Our enemies have not yet arrived," said the Scarecrow, after greeting

affectionately the sweet and girlish Ruler.

“They will soon be here,” she said, “for I have just glanced at my Magic Picture, and have seen them coughing and choking with the dust in the tunnel.”

“Oh, is there dust in the tunnel?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“Yes; Ozma placed it there by means of the Magic Belt,” explained the Scarecrow, with one of his broad smiles.

Then Dorothy came to them, Uncle Henry and Aunt Em following close after her. The little girl’s eyes were heavy because she had had a sleepless and anxious night. Toto walked by her side, but the little dog’s spirits were very much subdued. Billina, who was always up by daybreak, was not long in joining the group by the fountain.

The Wizard and the Shaggy Man next arrived, and soon after appeared Omby Amby, dressed in his best uniform.

“There lies the tunnel,” said Ozma, pointing to a part of the ground just before the Forbidden Fountain, “and in a few moments the dreadful invaders will break through the earth and swarm over the land. Let us all stand on the other side of the Fountain and watch to see what happens.”

At once they followed her suggestion and moved around the fountain of the Water of Oblivion. There they stood silent and expectant until the earth beyond gave way with a sudden crash and up leaped the powerful form of the First and Foremost, followed by all his grim warriors.

As the leader sprang forward his gleaming eyes caught the play of the fountain and he rushed toward it and drank eagerly of the sparkling water. Many of the other Phanfasms drank, too, in order to clear their dry and dusty throats. Then they stood around and looked at one another with simple, wondering smiles.

The First and Foremost saw Ozma and her companions beyond the fountain, but instead of making an effort to capture her he merely stared at her in pleased admiration of her beauty--for he had forgotten where he was and why he had come there.

But now the Grand Gallipoot arrived, rushing from the tunnel with a hoarse cry of mingled rage and thirst. He too saw the fountain and hastened to drink of its forbidden waters. The other Growleywogs were not slow to follow suit, and even before they had finished drinking the Chief of the Whimsies and his people came to push them away, while they one and all cast off their false heads that they might slake their thirst at the fountain.

When the Nome King and General Guph arrived they both made a dash to drink, but the General was so mad with thirst that he knocked his King over, and while Roquat lay sprawling upon the ground the General drank heartily of the Water of Oblivion.

This rude act of his General made the Nome King so angry that for a

moment he forgot he was thirsty and rose to his feet to glare upon the group of terrible warriors he had brought here to assist him. He saw Ozma and her people, too, and yelled out:

"Why don't you capture them? Why don't you conquer Oz, you idiots? Why do you stand there like a lot of dummies?"

But the great warriors had become like little children. They had forgotten all their enmity against Ozma and against Oz. They had even forgotten who they themselves were, or why they were in this strange and beautiful country. As for the Nome King, they did not recognize him, and wondered who he was.

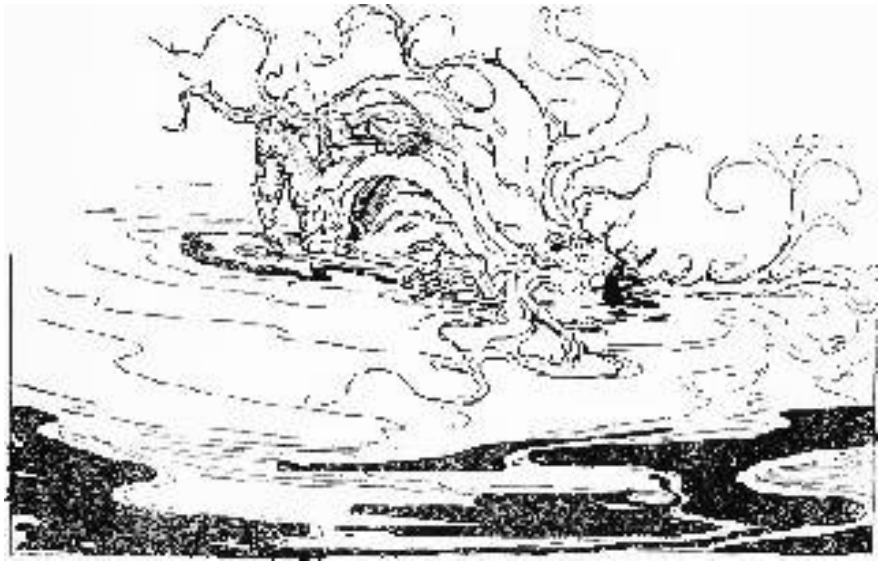
The sun came up and sent its flood of silver rays to light the faces of the invaders. The frowns and scowls and evil looks were all gone. Even the most monstrous of the creatures there assembled smiled innocently and seemed light-hearted and content merely to be alive.

Not so with Roquat, the Nome King. He had not drunk from the Forbidden Fountain and all his former rage against Ozma and Dorothy now inflamed him as fiercely as ever. The sight of General Guph babbling like a happy child and playing with his hands in the cool waters of the fountain astonished and maddened Red Roquat. Seeing that his terrible allies and his own General refused to act, the Nome King turned to order his great army of Nomes to advance from the tunnel and seize the helpless Oz people.

But the Scarecrow suspected what was in the King's mind and spoke a word to the Tin Woodman. Together they ran at Roquat and grabbing him up tossed him into the great basin of the fountain.

The Nome King's body was round as a ball, and it bobbed up and down in the Water of Oblivion while he spluttered and screamed with fear lest he should drown. And when he cried out, his mouth filled with water, which ran down his throat, so that straightway he forgot all he had formerly known just as completely as had all the other invaders.

Ozma and Dorothy could not refrain from laughing to see their dreaded enemies become as harmless as babies. There was no danger now that Oz would be destroyed. The only question remaining to solve was how to get rid of this horde of intruders.



The Shaggy Man kindly pulled the Nome King out of the fountain and set him upon his thin legs. Roquat was dripping wet, but he chattered and laughed and wanted to drink more of the water. No thought of injuring any person was now in his mind.

Before he left the tunnel he had commanded his fifty thousand Nomes to remain there until he ordered them to advance, as he wished to give his allies time to conquer Oz before he appeared with his own army. Ozma did not wish all these Nomes to overrun her land, so she advanced to King Roquat and taking his hand in her own said gently:

"Who are you? What is your name?"

"I don't know," he replied, smiling at her. "Who are you, my dear?"

"My name is Ozma," she said; "and your name is Roquat."

"Oh, is it?" he replied, seeming pleased.

"Yes; you are King of the Nomes," she said.

"Ah; I wonder what the Nomes are!" returned the King, as if puzzled.

"They are underground elves, and that tunnel over there is full of them," she answered. "You have a beautiful cavern at the other end of the tunnel, so you must go to your Nomes and say: 'March home!' Then follow after them and in time you will reach the pretty cavern where you live."

The Nome King was much pleased to learn this, for he had forgotten he had a cavern. So he went to the tunnel and said to his army: 'March home!' At once the Nomes turned and marched back through the tunnel, and the King followed after them, laughing with delight to find his orders so readily obeyed.

The Wizard went to General Guph, who was trying to count his fingers, and told him to follow the Nome King, who was his master. Guph meekly obeyed, and so all the Nomes quitted the Land of Oz forever.

But there were still the Phanfasms and Whimsies and Growleywogs standing around in groups, and they were so many that they filled the gardens and trampled upon the flowers and grass because they did not know that the tender plants would be injured by their clumsy feet. But in all other respects they were perfectly harmless and played together like children or gazed with pleasure upon the pretty sights of the royal gardens.

After counseling with the Scarecrow Ozma sent Omby Amby to the palace for the Magic Belt, and when the Captain General returned with it the Ruler of Oz at once clasped the precious Belt around her waist.

“I wish all these strange people--the Whimsies and the Growleywogs and the Phanfasms--safe back in their own homes!” she said.

It all happened in a twinkling, for of course the wish was no sooner spoken than it was granted.

All the hosts of the invaders were gone, and only the trampled grass showed that they had ever been in the Land of Oz.

29. How Glinda Worked a Magic Spell

"That was better than fighting," said Ozma, when all our friends were assembled in the palace after the exciting events of the morning; and each and every one agreed with her.

"No one was hurt," said the Wizard, delightedly.

"And no one hurt us," added Aunt Em.

"But, best of all," said Dorothy, "the wicked people have all forgotten their wickedness, and will not wish to hurt any one after this."

"True, Princess," declared the Shaggy Man. "It seems to me that to have reformed all those evil characters is more important than to have saved Oz."

"Nevertheless," remarked the Scarecrow, "I am glad Oz is saved. I can now go back to my new mansion and live happily."

"And I am glad and grateful that my pumpkin farm is saved," said Jack.

"For my part," added the Tin Woodman, "I cannot express my joy that my lovely tin castle is not to be demolished by wicked enemies."

"Still," said Tiktok, "o-ther en-e-mies may come to Oz some day."

"Why do you allow your clock-work brains to interrupt our joy?" asked Omby Amby, frowning at the machine man.

"I say what I am wound up to say," answered Tiktok.

"And you are right," declared Ozma. "I myself have been thinking of this very idea, and it seems to me there are entirely too many ways for people to get to the Land of Oz. We used to think the deadly desert that surrounds us was enough protection; but that is no longer the case. The Wizard and

Dorothy have both come here through the air, and I am told the earth people have invented airships that can fly anywhere they wish them to go."

"Why, sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't," asserted Dorothy.

"But in time the airships may cause us trouble," continued Ozma, "for if the earth folk learn how to manage them we would be overrun with visitors who would ruin our lovely, secluded fairyland."

"That is true enough," agreed the Wizard.

"Also the desert fails to protect us in other ways," Ozma went on, thoughtfully. "Johnny Dooit once made a sand-boat that sailed across it, and the Nome King made a tunnel under it. So I believe something ought to be done to cut us off from the rest of the world entirely, so that no one in the future will ever be able to intrude upon us."

"How will you do that?" asked the Scarecrow.

"I do not know; but in some way I am sure it can be accomplished. Tomorrow I will make a journey to the castle of Glinda the Good, and ask her advice."

"May I go with you?" asked Dorothy, eagerly.

"Of course, my dear Princess; and I also invite any of our friends here who would like to undertake the journey."

They all declared they wished to accompany their girl Ruler, for this was indeed an important mission, since the future of the Land of Oz to a great extent depended upon it. So Ozma gave orders to her servants to prepare for the journey on the morrow.

That day she watched her Magic Picture, and when it showed her that all the Nomes had returned through the tunnel to their underground caverns, Ozma used the Magic Belt to close up the tunnel, so that the earth underneath the desert sands became as solid as it was before the Nomes began to dig.

Early the following morning a gay cavalcade set out to visit the famous Sorceress, Glinda the Good. Ozma and Dorothy rode in a chariot drawn by the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, while the Sawhorse drew the red wagon in which rode the rest of the party.

With hearts light and free from care they traveled merrily along through the lovely and fascinating Land of Oz, and in good season reached the stately castle in which resided the Sorceress.

Glinda knew that they were coming.

"I have been reading about you in my Magic Book," she said, as she greeted them in her gracious way.

"What is your Magic Book like?" inquired Aunt Em, curiously.

"It is a record of everything that happens," replied the Sorceress. "As soon as an event takes place, anywhere in the world, it is immediately found

printed in my Magic Book. So when I read its pages I am well informed."

"Did it tell you how our enemies drank the Water of 'Blivion?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, my dear; it told all about it. And also it told me you were all coming to my castle, and why."

"Then," said Ozma, "I suppose you know what is in my mind, and that I am seeking a way to prevent any one in the future from discovering the Land of Oz."

"Yes; I know that. And while you were on your journey I have thought of a way to accomplish your desire. For it seems to me unwise to allow too many outside people to come here. Dorothy, with her uncle and aunt, has

now returned to Oz to live always, and there is no reason why we should leave any way open for others to travel uninvited to our fairyland. Let us make it impossible for any one ever to communicate with us in any way, after this. Then we may live peacefully and contentedly."

"Your advice is wise," returned Ozma. "I thank you, Glinda, for your promise to assist me."

"But how can you do it?" asked Dorothy. "How can you keep every one from ever finding Oz?"

"By making our country invisible to all eyes but our own," replied the Sorceress, smiling. "I have a magic charm powerful enough to accomplish that wonderful feat, and now that we have been warned of our danger by the Nome King's invasion, I believe we must not hesitate to separate ourselves forever from all the rest of the world."

"I agree with you," said the Ruler of Oz.

"Won't it make any difference to us?" asked Dorothy, doubtfully.

"No, my dear," Glinda answered, assuringly. "We shall still be able to see each other and everything in the Land of Oz. It won't affect us at all; but those who fly through the air over our country will look down and see nothing at all. Those who come to the edge of the desert, or try to cross it, will catch no glimpse of Oz, or know in what direction it lies. No one will try to tunnel to us again because we cannot be seen and therefore cannot be found. In other words, the Land of Oz will entirely disappear from the knowledge of the rest of the world."

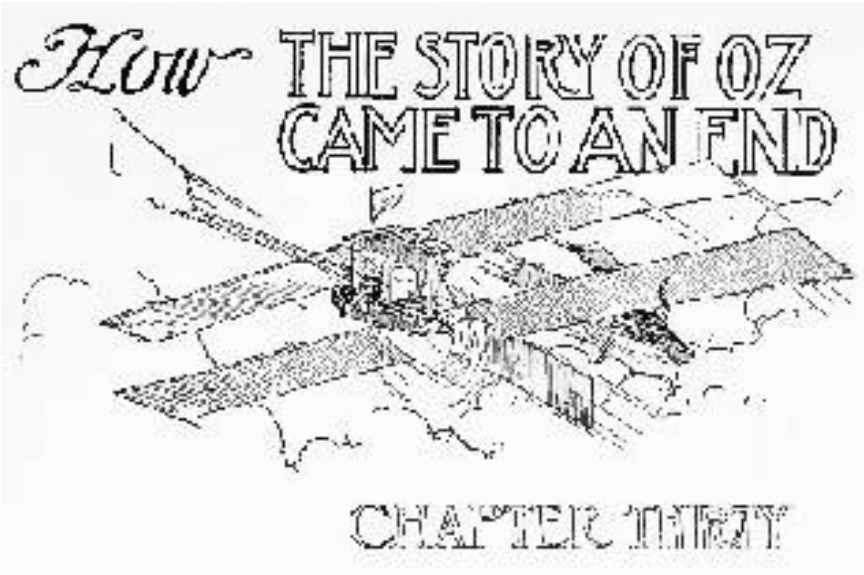
"That's all right," said Dorothy, cheerfully. "You may make Oz invis'ble as soon as you please, for all I care."

"It is already invisible," Glinda stated. "I knew Ozma's wishes, and performed the Magic Spell before you arrived."

Ozma seized the hand of the Sorceress and pressed it gratefully.

"Thank you!" she said.

30. How the Story of Oz Came to an End



The writer of these Oz stories has received a little note from Princess Dorothy of Oz which, for a time, has made him feel rather disconcerted. The note was written on a broad, white feather from a stork's wing, and it said:

"YOU WILL NEVER HEAR ANYTHING MORE ABOUT OZ, BECAUSE WE ARE NOW CUT OFF FOREVER FROM ALL THE REST OF THE WORLD. BUT TOTO AND I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU AND ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN WHO LOVE US.

"DOROTHY GALE."

This seemed to me too bad, at first, for Oz is a very interesting fairyland. Still, we have no right to feel grieved, for we have had enough of the history of the Land of Oz to fill six story books, and from its quaint people and their strange adventures we have been able to learn many useful and amusing things.

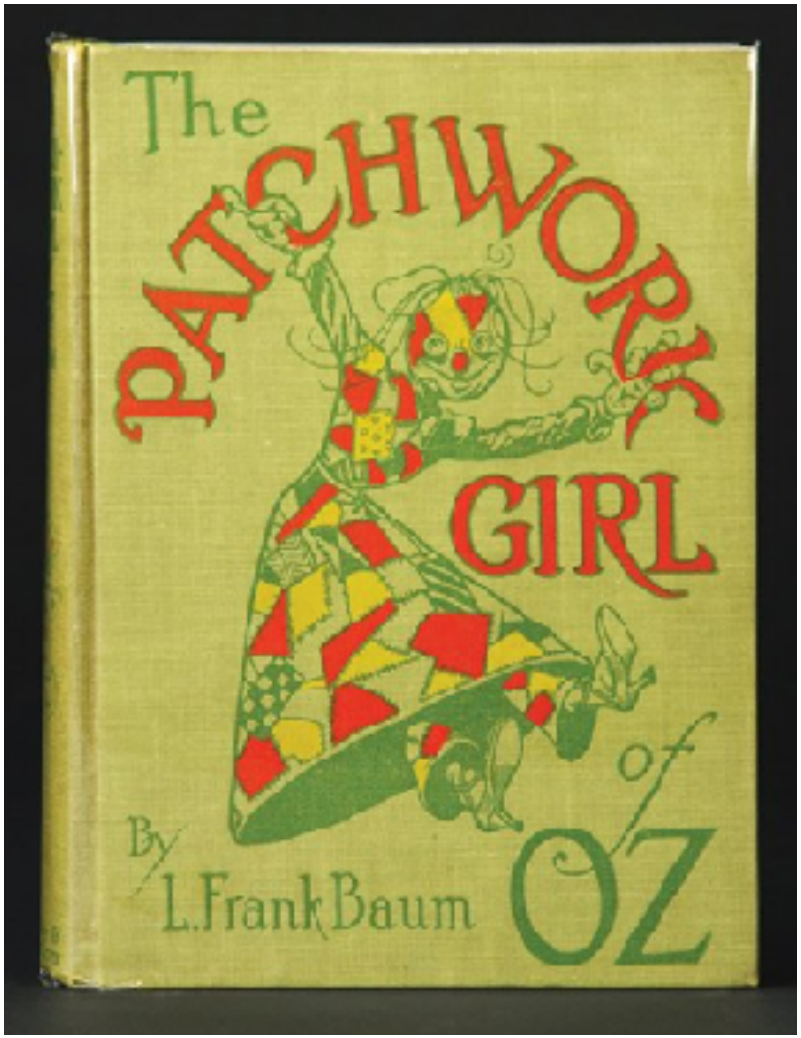
So good luck to little Dorothy and her companions. May they live long in their invisible country and be very happy!

THE END

THE END

THE PATCHWORK GIRL OF OZ

Although Baum had planned to end the Oz series with *The Emerald City of Oz*, between financial considerations and the popularity of the series, he decided to return to his enchanted land with a seventh book, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, published by Reilly & Britton in 1913, and once again illustrated by John R. Neill. For the first time since *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a quest leads Baum's characters on a journey throughout Oz, allowing the author to explore even more of its unusual features and creatures. A Munchkin boy named Ojo the Unlucky lives with his Uncle, "Unc Nunkie," a man so reticent that uttering two words is a long speech. They are starving and decide to visit an old friend of Unc's, Dr. Pipt, who demonstrates the "Powder of Life" and the "Liquid of Petrifaction," which unfortunately turns Unc Nunkie into a marble statue. In order to create the antidote, Ojo must travel throughout Oz in search of the rare ingredients. He travels with the Patchwork Girl named Scraps, animated via the "Powder of Life" and a variety of "Brain Furniture," and along the way he finds help from others, including Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Shaggy Man. Among other fascinating characters, readers also meet the Glass Cat, the Woozy, the Tottenhots, and the warring Hoppers and Horners. Baum considered *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* one of his finest fantasies.



A copy of the first edition of The Patchwork Girl of Oz

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Ozma of Oz as portrayed in the 1914 film, The Patchwork Girl of Oz

This book belongs to

PROLOGUE

THROUGH the kindness of Dorothy Gale of Kansas, afterward Princess Dorothy of Oz, an humble writer in the United States of America was once appointed Royal Historian of Oz, with the privilege of writing the chronicle of that wonderful fairyland. But after making six books about the adventures of those interesting but queer people who live in the Land of Oz, the Historian learned with sorrow that by an edict of the Supreme Ruler, Ozma of Oz, her country would thereafter be rendered invisible to all who lived outside its borders and that all communication with Oz would, in the future, be cut off.

The children who had learned to look for the books about Oz and who loved the stories about the gay and happy people inhabiting that favored country, were as sorry as their Historian that there would be no more books of Oz stories. They wrote many letters asking if the Historian did not know of some adventures to write about that had happened before the Land of Oz was shut out from all the rest of the world. But he did not know of any. Finally one of the children inquired why we couldn't hear from Princess Dorothy by wireless telegraph, which would enable her to communicate to the Historian whatever happened in the far-off Land of Oz without his seeing her, or even knowing just where Oz is.

That seemed a good idea; so the Historian rigged up a high tower in his back yard, and took lessons in wireless telegraphy until he understood it, and then began to call "Princess Dorothy of Oz" by sending messages into the air.

Now, it wasn't likely that Dorothy would be looking for wireless messages or would heed the call; but one thing the Historian was sure of, and that was that the powerful Sorceress, Glinda, would know what he was doing and that he desired to communicate with Dorothy. For Glinda has a big book in which is recorded every event that takes place anywhere in the world, just the moment that it happens, and so of course the book would tell her about the wireless message.

And that was the way Dorothy heard that the Historian wanted to speak

with her, and there was a Shaggy Man in the Land of Oz who knew how to telegraph a wireless reply. The result was that the Historian begged so hard to be told the latest news of Oz, so that he could write it down for the children to read, that Dorothy asked permission of Ozma and Ozma graciously consented.

That is why, after two long years of waiting, another Oz story is now presented to the children of America. This would not have been possible had not some clever man invented the "wireless" and an equally clever child suggested the idea of reaching the mysterious Land of Oz by its means.

L. Frank Baum.

"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA

1 Ojo and Unc Nunkie

"WHERE'S the butter, Unc Nunkie?" asked Ojo.

Unc looked out of the window and stroked his long beard. Then he turned to the Munchkin boy and shook his head.

“Isn’t,” said he.

“Isn’t any butter? That’s too bad, Unc. Where’s the jam then?” inquired Ojo, standing on a stool so he could look through all the shelves of the cupboard. But Unc Nunkie shook his head again.

“Gone,” he said.

“No jam, either? And no cake — no jelly — no apples — nothing but bread?”

“All,” said Unc, again stroking his beard as he gazed from the window.

The little boy brought the stool and sat beside his uncle, munching the dry bread slowly and seeming in deep thought.

“Nothing grows in our yard but the bread tree,” he mused, “and there are only two more loaves on that tree; and they’re not ripe yet. Tell me, Unc; why are we so poor?”

The old Munchkin turned and looked at Ojo. He had kindly eyes, but he hadn’t smiled or laughed in so long that the boy had forgotten that Unc Nunkie could look any other way than solemn. And Unc never spoke any more words than he was obliged to, so his little nephew, who lived alone with him, had learned to understand a great deal from one word.

“Why are we so poor, Unc?” repeated the boy.

“Not,” said the old Munchkin.

“I think we are,” declared Ojo. “What have we got?”

“House,” said Unc Nunkie.

“I know; but everyone in the Land of Oz has a place to live. What else, Unc?”

“Bread.”

“I’m eating the last loaf that’s ripe. There; I’ve put aside your share, Unc. It’s on the table, so you can eat it when you get hungry. But when that is gone, what shall we eat, Unc?”

The old man shifted in his chair but merely shook his head.

“Of course,” said Ojo, who was obliged to talk because his uncle would not, “no one starves in the Land of Oz, either. There is plenty for everyone, you know; only, if it isn’t just where you happen to be, you must go where it is.”

The aged Munchkin wriggled again and stared at his small nephew as if disturbed by his argument.

“By to-morrow morning,” the boy went on, “we must go where there is something to eat, or we shall grow very hungry and become very unhappy.”

“Where?” asked Unc.

“Where shall we go? I don’t know, I’m sure,” replied Ojo. “But *you* must know, Unc. You must have traveled, in your time, because you’re so old. I

don’t remember it, because ever since I could remember anything we’ve lived right here in this lonesome, round house, with a little garden back of it and the thick woods all around. All I’ve ever seen of the great Land of Oz, Unc dear, is the view of that mountain over at the south, where they say the Hammerheads live — who won’t let anybody go by them — and that mountain at the north, where they say nobody lives.”

“One,” declared Unc, correcting him.

“Oh, yes; one family lives there, I’ve heard. That’s the Crooked Magician, who is named Dr. Pipt, and his wife Margolotte. One year you told me about them; I think it took you a whole year, Unc, to say as much as I’ve just said about the Crooked Magician and his wife. They live high up on the mountain, and the good Munchkin Country, where the fruits and flowers grow, is just the other side. It’s funny you and I should live here all alone, in the middle of the forest, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Unc.

“Then let’s go away and visit the Munchkin Country and its jolly, good-natured people. I’d love to get a sight of something besides woods, Unc Nunkie.”

“Too little,” said Unc.

"Why, I'm not so little as I used to be," answered the boy earnestly. "I think I can walk as far and as fast through the woods as you can, Unc. And now that nothing grows in our back yard that is good to eat, we must go where there is food."

Unc Nunkie made no reply for a time. Then he shut down the window and turned his chair to face the room, for the sun was sinking behind the tree-tops and it was growing cool.

By and by Ojo lighted the fire and the logs blazed freely in the broad fireplace. The two sat in the firelight a long time — the old, white-bearded Munchkin and the little boy. Both were thinking. When it grew quite dark outside, Ojo said:

“Eat your bread, Unc, and then we will go to bed.”

But Unc Nunkie did not eat the bread; neither did he go directly to bed. Long after his little nephew was sound asleep in the corner of the room the old man sat by the fire, thinking.

2 The Crooked Magician

JUST at dawn next morning Unc Nunkie laid his hand tenderly on Ojo's head and awakened him.

"Come," he said.

Ojo dressed. He wore blue silk stockings, blue knee-pants with gold buckles, a blue ruffled waist and a jacket of bright blue braided with gold. His shoes were of blue leather and turned up at the toes, which were pointed. His hat had a peaked crown and a flat brim, and around the brim was a row of tiny golden bells that tinkled when he moved. This was the native costume of those who inhabited the Munchkin Country of the Land of Oz, so Unc Nunkie's dress was much like that of his nephew. Instead of shoes, the old man wore boots with turnover tops and his blue coat had wide cuffs of gold braid.

The boy noticed that his uncle had not eaten the bread, and supposed the old man had not been hungry. Ojo was hungry, though; so he divided the piece of bread upon the table and ate his half for breakfast, washing it down with fresh, cool water from the brook. Unc put the other piece of bread in his jacket pocket, after which he again said, as he walked out through the doorway: "Come."

Ojo was well pleased. He was dreadfully tired of living all alone in the woods and wanted to travel and see people. For a long time he had wished to explore the beautiful Land of Oz in which they lived. When they were outside, Unc simply latched the door and started up the path. No one would disturb their little house, even if anyone came so far into the thick forest while they were gone.

At the foot of the mountain that separated the Country of the Munchkins from the Country of the Gillikins, the path divided. One way led to the left and the other to the right — straight up the mountain. Unc Nunkie took this right-hand path and Ojo followed without asking why. He knew it would take them to the house of the Crooked Magician, whom he had never seen but who was their nearest neighbor.

All the morning they trudged up the mountain path and at noon Unc and Ojo sat on a fallen tree-trunk and ate the last of the bread which the old Munchkin had placed in his pocket. Then they started on again and two hours later came in sight of the house of Dr. Pipt.

It was a big house, round, as were all the Munchkin houses, and painted blue, which is the distinctive color of the Munchkin Country of Oz. There was a pretty garden around the house, where blue trees and blue flowers grew in abundance and in one place were beds of blue cabbages, blue carrots and blue lettuce, all of which were delicious to eat. In Dr. Pipt's garden grew bun-trees, cake-trees, cream-puff bushes, blue buttercups which yielded excellent blue butter and a row of chocolate-caramel plants. Paths of blue gravel divided the vegetable and flower beds and a wider path led up to the front door. The place was in a clearing on the mountain, but a little way off

was the grim forest, which completely surrounded it.

Unc knocked at the door of the house and a chubby, pleasant-faced woman, dressed all in blue, opened it and greeted the visitors with a smile.

"Ah," said Ojo; "you must be Dame Margolotte, the good wife of Dr. Pipt."

"I am, my dear, and all strangers are welcome to my home."

"May we see the famous Magician, Madam?"

"He is very busy just now," she said, shaking her head doubtfully. "But come in and let me give you something to eat, for you must have traveled far in order to get to our lonely place."

"We have," replied Ojo, as he and Unc entered the house. "We have come from a far lonelier place than this."

"A lonelier place! And in the Munchkin Country?" she exclaimed. "Then it must be somewhere in the Blue Forest."

"It is, good Dame Margolotte."

"Dear me!" she said, looking at the man, "you must be Unc Nunkie, known as the Silent One." Then she looked at the boy. "And you must be Ojo the Unlucky," she added.

"Yes," said Unc.

"I never knew I was called the Unlucky," said Ojo, soberly; "but it is really a good name for me."

"Well," remarked the woman, as she bustled around the room and set the table and brought food from the cupboard, "you were unlucky to live all alone in that dismal forest, which is much worse than the forest around here; but perhaps your luck will change, now you are away from it. If, during your travels, you can manage to lose that 'Un' at the beginning of your name 'Unlucky,' you will then become Ojo the Lucky, which will be a great improvement."

"How can I lose that 'Un,' Dame Margolotte?"

"I do not know how, but you must keep the matter in mind and perhaps the chance will come to you," she replied.

Ojo had never eaten such a fine meal in all his life. There was a savory stew, smoking hot, a dish of blue peas, a bowl of sweet milk of a delicate blue tint and a blue pudding with blue plums in it. When the visitors had eaten heartily of this fare the woman said to them:

"Do you wish to see Dr. Pipt on business or for pleasure?"

Unc shook his head.

"We are traveling," replied Ojo, "and we stopped at your house just to rest and refresh ourselves. I do not think Unc Nunkie cares very much to see the famous Crooked Magician; but for my part I am curious to look at such a

great man."

The woman seemed thoughtful.

"I remember that Unc Nunkie and my husband used to be friends, many years ago," she said, "so perhaps they will be glad to meet again. The Magician is very busy, as I said, but if you will promise not to disturb him you may come into his workshop and watch him prepare a wonderful charm."

"Thank you," replied the boy, much pleased. "I would like to do that."

She led the way to a great domed hall at the back of the house, which was the Magician's workshop. There was a row of windows extending nearly around the sides of the circular room, which rendered the place very light, and there was a back door in addition to the one leading to the front part of the house. Before the row of windows a broad seat was built and there were some chairs and benches in the room besides. At one end stood a great fireplace, in which a blue log was blazing with a blue flame, and over the fire hung four kettles in a row, all bubbling and steaming at a great rate. The Magician was stirring all four of these kettles at the same time, two with his hands and two with his feet, to the latter, wooden ladles being strapped, for this man was so very crooked that his legs were as handy as his arms.

Unc Nunkie came forward to greet his old friend, but not being able to shake either his hands or his feet, which were all occupied in stirring, he patted the Magician's bald head and asked: "What?"

"Ah, it's the Silent One," remarked Dr. Pipt, without looking up, "and he wants to know what I'm making. Well, when it is quite finished this compound will be the wonderful Powder of Life, which no one knows how to make but myself. Whenever it is sprinkled on anything, that thing will at once come to life, no matter what it is. It takes me several years to make this magic Powder, but at this moment I am pleased to say it is nearly done. You see, I am making it for my good wife Margolotte, who wants to use some of it for a purpose of her own. Sit down and make yourself comfortable, Unc Nunkie, and after I've finished my task I will talk to you."

"You must know," said Margolotte, when they were all seated together on the broad window-seat, "that my husband foolishly gave away all the Powder of Life he first made to old Mombi the Witch, who used to live in the Country of the Gillikins, to the north of here. Mombi gave to Dr. Pipt a Powder of Perpetual Youth in exchange for his Powder of Life, but she cheated him wickedly, for the Powder of Youth was no good and could work no magic at all."

"Perhaps the Powder of Life couldn't either," said Ojo.

"Yes; it is perfection," she declared. "The first lot we tested on our Glass Cat, which not only began to live but has lived ever since. She's somewhere around the house now."

"A Glass Cat!" exclaimed Ojo, astonished.

"Yes; she makes a very pleasant companion, but admires herself a little more than is considered modest, and she positively refuses to catch mice," explained Margolotte. "My husband made the cat some pink brains, but they proved to be too high-bred and particular for a cat, so she thinks it is undignified in her to catch mice. Also she has a pretty blood-red heart, but it is made of stone — a ruby, I think — and so is rather hard and unfeeling. I think the next Glass Cat the Magician makes will have neither brains nor

heart, for then it will not object to catching mice and may prove of some use to us."

"What did old Mombi the Witch do with the Powder of Life your husband gave her?" asked the boy.

"She brought Jack Pumpkinhead to life, for one thing," was the reply. "I suppose you've heard of Jack Pumpkinhead. He is now living near the Emerald City and is a great favorite with the Princess Ozma, who rules all the Land of Oz."

"No; I've never heard of him," remarked Ojo. "I'm afraid I don't know much about the Land of Oz. You see, I've lived all my life with Unc Nunkie, the Silent One, and there was no one to tell me anything."

"That is one reason you are Ojo the Unlucky," said the woman, in a sympathetic tone. "The more one knows, the luckier he is, for knowledge is the greatest gift in life."

"But tell me, please, what you intend to do with this new lot of the Powder of Life, which Dr. Pipt is making. He said his wife wanted it for some especial purpose."

"So I do," she answered. "I want it to bring my Patchwork Girl to life."

"Oh! A Patchwork Girl? What is that?" Ojo asked, for this seemed even more strange and unusual than a Glass Cat.

"I think I must show you my Patchwork Girl," said Margolotte, laughing at the boy's astonishment, "for she is rather difficult to explain. But first I will tell you that for many years I have longed for a servant to help me with the housework and to cook the meals and wash the dishes. No servant will come here because the place is so lonely and out-of-the-way, so my clever husband, the Crooked Magician, proposed that I make a girl out of some sort of material and he would make her live by sprinkling over her the Powder of Life. This seemed an excellent suggestion and at once Dr. Pipt set to work to make a new batch of his magic powder. He has been at it a long, long while, and so I have had plenty of time to make the girl. Yet that task was not so easy as you may suppose. At first I couldn't think what to make her of, but finally in searching through a chest I came across an old patchwork quilt, which my grandmother once made when she was young."

"What is a patchwork quilt?" asked Ojo.

"A bed-quilt made of patches of different kinds and colors of cloth, all neatly sewed together. The patches are of all shapes and sizes, so a patchwork quilt is a very pretty and gorgeous thing to look at. Sometimes it is called a 'crazy-quilt,' because the patches and colors are so mixed up. We never have used my grandmother's many-colored patchwork quilt, handsome as it is, for we Munchkins do not care for any color other than blue, so it has

been packed away in the chest for about a hundred years. When I found it, I said to myself that it would do nicely for my servant girl, for when she was brought to life she would not be proud nor haughty, as the Glass Cat is, for such a dreadful mixture of colors would discourage her from trying to be as dignified as the blue Munchkins are."

"Is blue the only respectable color, then?" inquired Ojo.

"Yes, for a Munchkin. All our country is blue, you know. But in other parts of Oz the people favor different colors. At the Emerald City, where our Princess Ozma lives, green is the popular color. But all Munchkins prefer blue to anything else and when my housework girl is brought to life she will find herself to be of so many unpopular colors that she'll never dare be rebellious or impudent, as servants are sometimes liable to be when they are made the same way their mistresses are."

Unc Nunkie nodded approval.

"Good i-dea," he said; and that was a long speech for Unc Nunkie because it was two words.

"So I cut up the quilt," continued Margolotte, "and made from it a very well-shaped girl, which I stuffed with cotton-wadding. I will show you what a good job I did," and she went to a tall cupboard and threw open the doors.

Then back she came, lugging in her arms the Patchwork Girl, which she set upon the bench and propped up so that the figure would not tumble over.

OJO

3 The Patchwork Girl

THE PATCHWORK GIRL

CHAP. THREE

OJO examined this curious contrivance with wonder. The Patchwork Girl was taller than he, when she stood upright, and her body was plump and rounded because it had been so neatly stuffed with cotton. Margolotte had first made the girl's form from the patchwork quilt and then she had dressed it with a patchwork skirt and an apron with pockets in it — using the same

gay material throughout. Upon the feet she had sewn a pair of red leather shoes with pointed toes. All the fingers and thumbs of the girl's hands had been carefully formed and stuffed and stitched at the edges, with gold plates at the ends to serve as finger-nails.

"She will have to work, when she comes to life," said Margolotte.

The head of the Patchwork Girl was the most curious part of her. While she waited for her husband to finish making his Powder of Life the woman had found ample time to complete the head as her fancy dictated, and she realized that a good servant's head must be properly constructed. The hair was of brown yarn and hung down on her neck in several neat braids. Her eyes were two silver suspender-buttons cut from a pair of the Magician's old trousers, and they were sewed on with black threads, which formed the pupils of the eyes. Margolotte had puzzled over the ears for some time, for these were important if the servant was to hear distinctly, but finally she had made them out of thin plates of gold and attached them in place by means of stitches through tiny holes bored in the metal. Gold is the most common metal in the Land of Oz and is used for many purposes because it is soft and pliable.

The woman had cut a slit for the Patchwork Girl's mouth and sewn two rows of white pearls in it for teeth, using a strip of scarlet plush for a tongue. This mouth Ojo considered very artistic and lifelike, and Margolotte was pleased when the boy praised it. There were almost too many patches on the face of the girl for her to be considered strictly beautiful, for one cheek was yellow and the other red, her chin blue, her forehead purple and the center, where her nose had been formed and padded, a bright yellow.

"You ought to have had her face all pink," suggested the boy.

"I suppose so; but I had no pink cloth," replied the woman. "Still, I cannot see as it matters much, for I wish my Patchwork Girl to be useful rather than ornamental. If I get tired looking at her patched face I can whitewash it."

"Has she any brains?" asked Ojo.

"No; I forgot all about the brains!" exclaimed the woman. "I am glad you reminded me of them, for it is not too late to supply them, by any means. Until she is brought to life I can do anything I please with this girl. But I must be careful not to give her too much brains, and those she has must be such as are fitted to the station she is to occupy in life. In other words, her brains mustn't be very good."

"Wrong," said Unc Nunkie.

"No; I am sure I am right about that," returned the woman.

"He means," explained Ojo, "that unless your servant has good brains she won't know how to obey you properly, nor do the things you ask her to do."

“Well, that maybe true,” agreed Margolotte; “but, on the contrary, a servant with too much brains is sure to become independent and high-and-mighty and feel above her work. This is a very delicate task, as I said, and I must take care to give the girl just the right quantity of the right sort of brains. I want her to know just enough, but not too much.”

With this she went to another cupboard which was filled with shelves. All the shelves were lined with blue glass bottles, neatly labeled by the Magician to show what they contained. One whole shelf was marked: “Brain Furniture,” and the bottles on this shelf were labeled as follows: “Obedience,” “Cleverness,” “Judgment,” “Courage,” “Ingenuity,” “Amiability,” “Learning,” “Truth,” “Poesy,” “Self Reliance.”

“Let me see,” said Margolotte; “of those qualities she must have ‘Obedience’ first of all,” and she took down the bottle bearing that label and poured from it upon a dish several grains of the contents. “‘Amiability’ is also good and ‘Truth.’“ She poured into the dish a quantity from each of these bottles. “I think that will do,” she continued, “for the other qualities are not needed in a servant.”

Unc Nunkie, who with Ojo stood beside her, touched the bottle marked “Cleverness.”

“Little,” said he.

“A little ‘Cleverness’? Well, perhaps you are right, sir,” said she, and was about to take down the bottle when the Crooked Magician suddenly called to her excitedly from the fireplace.

“Quick, Margolotte! Come and help me.”

She ran to her husband’s side at once and helped him lift the four kettles from the fire. Their contents had all boiled away, leaving in the bottom of each kettle a few grains of fine white powder. Very carefully the Magician removed this powder, placing it all together in a golden dish, where he mixed it with a golden spoon. When the mixture was complete there was scarcely a handful, all told.

"That," said Dr. Pipt, in a pleased and triumphant tone, "is the wonderful Powder of Life, which I alone in the world know how to make. It has taken me nearly six years to prepare these precious grains of dust, but the little heap on that dish is worth the price of a kingdom and many a king would give all he has to possess it. When it has become cooled I will place it in a small bottle; but meantime I must watch it carefully, lest a gust of wind blow it away or scatter it."

Unc Nunkie, Margolotte and the Magician all stood looking at the marvelous Powder, but Ojo was more interested just then in the Patchwork Girl's brains. Thinking it both unfair and unkind to deprive her of any good qualities that were handy, the boy took down every bottle on the shelf and

poured some of the contents in Margolotte's dish. No one saw him do this, for all were looking at the Powder of Life; but soon the woman remembered what she had been doing, and came back to the cupboard.

"Let's see," she remarked; "I was about to give my girl a little 'Cleverness,' which is the Doctor's substitute for 'Intelligence' — a quality he has not yet learned how to manufacture." Taking down the bottle of "Cleverness" she added some of the powder to the heap on the dish. Ojo became a bit uneasy at this, for he had already put quite a lot of the "Cleverness"41 powder in the dish; but he dared not interfere and so he comforted himself with the thought that one cannot have too much cleverness.

Margolotte now carried the dish of brains to the bench. Ripping the seam of the patch on the girl's forehead, she placed the powder within the head and then sewed up the seam as neatly and securely as before.

"My girl is all ready for your Powder of Life, my dear," she said to her husband. But the Magician replied:

"This powder must not be used before to-morrow morning; but I think it is now cool enough to be bottled."

He selected a small gold bottle with a pepper-box top, so that the powder might be sprinkled on any object through the small holes. Very carefully he placed the Powder of Life in the gold bottle and then locked it up in a drawer of his cabinet.

"At last," said he, rubbing his hands together gleefully, "I have ample leisure for a good talk with my old friend Unc Nunkie. So let us sit down cosily and enjoy ourselves. After stirring those four kettles for six years I am glad to have a little rest."

"You will have to do most of the talking," said Ojo, "for Unc is called the Silent One and uses few words."

"I know; but that renders your uncle a most agreeable companion and gossip," declared Dr. Pipt. "Most people talk too much, so it is a relief to find one who talks too little."

Ojo looked at the Magician with much awe and curiosity.

"Don't you find it very annoying to be so crooked?" he asked.

"No; I am quite proud of my person," was the reply. "I suppose I am the only Crooked Magician in all the world. Some others are accused of being crooked, but I am the only genuine."

He was really very crooked and Ojo wondered how he managed to do so many things with such a twisted body. When he sat down upon a crooked chair that had been made to fit him, one knee was under his chin and the other near the small of his back; but he was a cheerful man and his face bore

a pleasant and agreeable expression.

“I am not allowed to perform magic, except for my own amusement,” he told his visitors, as he lighted a pipe with a crooked stem and began to smoke. “Too many people were working magic in the Land of Oz, and so our lovely Princess Ozma put a stop to it. I think she was quite right. There were several wicked Witches who caused a lot of trouble; but now they are all out of business and only the great Sorceress, Glinda the Good, is permitted to practice her arts, which never harm anybody. The Wizard of Oz, who used to be a humbug and knew no magic at all, has been taking lessons of Glinda, and I’m told he is getting to be a pretty good Wizard; but he is merely the assistant of the great Sorceress. I’ve the right to make a servant girl for my wife, you know, or a Glass Cat to catch our mice — which she refuses to do — but I am forbidden to work magic for others, or to use it as a profession.”

“Magic must be a very interesting study,” said Ojo.

“It truly is,” asserted the Magician. “In my time I’ve performed some magical feats that were worthy the skill of Glinda the Good. For instance, there’s the Powder of Life, and my Liquid of Petrifaction, which is contained in that bottle on the shelf yonder — over the window.”

“What does the Liquid of Petrifaction do?” inquired the boy.

“Turns everything it touches to solid marble. It’s an invention of my own, and I find it very useful. Once two of those dreadful Kalidahs, with bodies like bears and heads like tigers, came here from the forest to attack us; but I sprinkled some of that Liquid on them and instantly they turned to marble. I now use them as ornamental statuary in my garden. This table looks to you like wood, and once it really was wood; but I sprinkled a few drops of the Liquid of Petrifaction on it and now it is marble. It will never break nor wear out.”

“Fine!” said Unc Nunkie, wagging his head and stroking his long gray beard.

“Dear me; what a chatterbox you’re getting to be, Unc,” remarked the Magician, who was pleased with the compliment. But just then there came a scratching at the back door and a shrill voice cried:

“Let me in! Hurry up, can’t you? Let me in!”

Margolotte got up and went to the door.

“Ask like a good cat, then,” she said.

"Mee-ee-ow-w-w! There; does that suit your royal highness?" asked the voice, in scornful accents.

"Yes; that's proper cat talk," declared the woman, and opened the door.

At once a cat entered, came to the center of the room and stopped short at the sight of strangers. Ojo and Unc Nunkie both stared at it with wide open eyes, for surely no such curious creature had ever existed before — even in the Land of Oz.

4 The Glass Cat

THE cat was made of glass, so clear and transparent that you could see through it as easily as through a window. In the top of its head, however, was a mass of delicate pink balls which looked like jewels, and it had a heart made of a blood-red ruby. The eyes were two large emeralds, but aside from these colors all the rest of the animal was clear glass, and it had a spun-glass

tail that was really beautiful.

"Well, Doc Pipt, do you mean to introduce us, or not?" demanded the cat, in a tone of annoyance. "Seems to me you are forgetting your manners."

"Excuse me," returned the Magician. "This is Unc Nunkie, the descendant of the former kings of the Munchkins, before this country became a part of the Land of Oz."

"He needs a hair-cut," observed the cat, washing its face.

"True," replied Unc, with a low chuckle of amusement.

"But he has lived alone in the heart of the forest for many years," the Magician explained; "and, although that is a barbarous country, there are no barbers there."

"Who is the dwarf?" asked the cat.

"That is not a dwarf, but a boy," answered the Magician. "You have never seen a boy before. He is now small because he is young. With more years he will grow big and become as tall as Unc Nunkie."

"Oh. Is that magic?" the glass animal inquired.

"Yes; but it is Nature's magic, which is more wonderful than any art known to man. For instance, my magic made you, and made you live; and it was a poor job because you are useless and a bother to me; but I can't make you grow. You will always be the same size — and the same saucy, inconsiderate Glass Cat, with pink brains and a hard ruby heart."

"No one can regret more than I the fact that you made me," asserted the cat, crouching upon the floor and slowly swaying its spun-glass tail from side to side. "Your world is a very uninteresting place. I've wandered through your gardens and in the forest until I'm tired of it all, and when I come into the house the conversation of your fat wife and of yourself bores me dreadfully."

"That is because I gave you different brains from those we ourselves possess — and much too good for a cat," returned Dr. Pipt.

"Can't you take 'em out, then, and replace 'em with pebbles, so that I won't feel above my station in life?" asked the cat, pleadingly.

"Perhaps so. I'll try it, after I've brought the Patchwork Girl to life," he said.

The cat walked up to the bench on which the Patchwork Girl reclined and looked at her attentively.

"Are you going to make that dreadful thing live?" she asked.

The Magician nodded.

"It is intended to be my wife's servant maid," he said. "When she is alive she will do all our work and mind the house. But you are not to order her around, Bungle, as you do us. You must treat the Patchwork Girl

respectfully."

"I won't. I couldn't respect such a bundle of scraps under any circumstances."

"If you don't, there will be more scraps than you will like," cried Margolotte, angrily.

"Why didn't you make her pretty to look at?" asked the cat. "You made me pretty — very pretty, indeed — and I love to watch my pink brains roll around when they're working, and to see my precious red heart beat." She went to a long mirror, as she said this, and stood before it, looking at herself with an air of much pride. "But that poor patched thing will hate herself, when she's once alive," continued the cat. "If I were you I'd use her for a mop, and make another servant that is prettier."

"You have a perverted taste," snapped Margolotte, much annoyed at this frank criticism. "I think the Patchwork Girl is beautiful, considering what she's made of. Even the rainbow hasn't as many colors, and you must admit that the rainbow is a pretty thing."

The Glass Cat yawned and stretched herself upon the floor.

"Have your own way," she said. "I'm sorry for the Patchwork Girl, that's all."

Ojo and Unc Nunkie slept that night in the Magician's house, and the boy was glad to stay because he was anxious to see the Patchwork Girl brought to life. The Glass Cat was also a wonderful creature to little Ojo, who had never seen or known anything of magic before, although he had lived in the Fairyland of Oz ever since he was born. Back there in the woods nothing unusual ever happened. Unc Nunkie, who might have been King of the Munchkins, had not his people united with all the other countries of Oz in acknowledging Ozma as their sole ruler, had retired into this forgotten forest nook with his baby nephew and they had lived all alone there. Only that the neglected garden had failed to grow food for them, they would always have lived in the solitary Blue Forest; but now they had started out to mingle with other people,51 and the first place they came to proved so interesting that Ojo could scarcely sleep a wink all night.

Margolotte was an excellent cook and gave them a fine breakfast. While they were all engaged in eating, the good woman said:

"This is the last meal I shall have to cook for some time, for right after breakfast Dr. Pipt has promised to bring my new servant to life. I shall let her wash the breakfast dishes and sweep and dust the house. What a relief it will be!"

"It will, indeed, relieve you of much drudgery," said the Magician. "By the way, Margolotte, I thought I saw you getting some brains from the

cupboard, while I was busy with my kettles. What qualities have you given your new servant?"

"Only those that an humble servant requires," she answered. "I do not wish her to feel above her station, as the Glass Cat does. That would make her discontented and unhappy, for of course she must always be a servant."

Ojo was somewhat disturbed as he listened to this, and the boy began to fear he had done wrong in adding all those different qualities of brains to the lot Margolotte had prepared for the servant. But it was too late now for regret, since all the brains were securely sewn up inside the Patchwork Girl's head. He might have confessed what he had done and thus allowed Margolotte and her husband to change the brains; but he was afraid of incurring their anger. He believed that Unc had seen him add to the brains, and Unc had not said a word against it; but then, Unc never did say anything unless it was absolutely necessary.

As soon as breakfast was over they all went into the Magician's big workshop, where the Glass Cat was lying before the mirror and the Patchwork Girl lay limp and lifeless upon the bench.

"Now, then," said Dr. Pipt, in a brisk tone, "we shall perform one of the greatest feats of magic possible to man, even in this marvelous Land of Oz. In no other country could it be done at all. I think we ought to have a little music while the Patchwork Girl comes to life. It is pleasant to reflect that the first sounds her golden ears will hear will be delicious music."

As he spoke he went to a phonograph, which was screwed fast to a small table, and wound up the spring of the instrument and adjusted the big gold horn.

"The music my servant will usually hear," remarked Margolotte, "will be my orders to do her work. But I see no harm in allowing her to listen to this unseen band while she wakens to her first realization of life. My orders will beat the band, afterward."

The phonograph was now playing a stirring march tune and the Magician unlocked his cabinet and took out the gold bottle containing the Powder of Life.

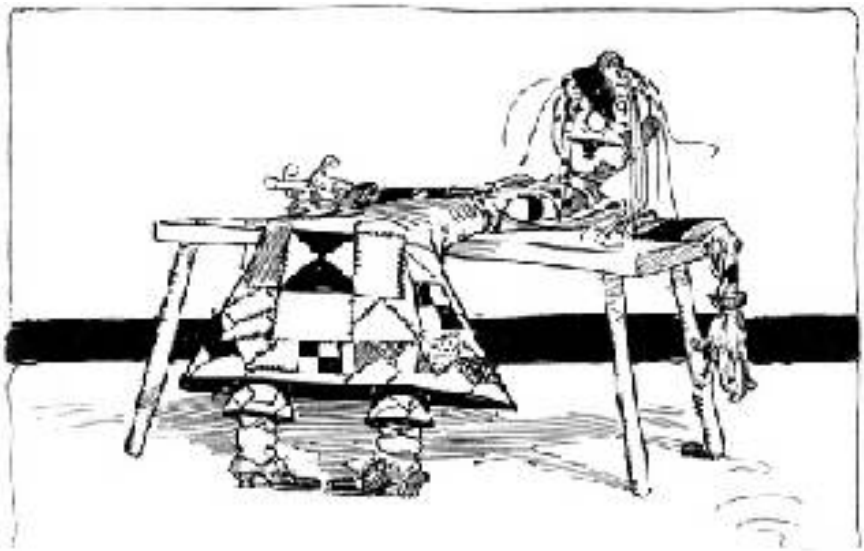
They all bent over the bench on which the Patchwork Girl reclined. Unc Nunkie and Margolotte stood behind, near the windows, Ojo at one side and the Magician in front, where he would have freedom to sprinkle the powder. The Glass Cat came near, too, curious to watch the important scene.

"All ready?" asked Dr. Pipt.

"All is ready," answered his wife.

So the Magician leaned over and shook from the bottle some grains of the wonderful Powder, and they fell directly on the Patchwork Girl's head and

arms.



5 A Terrible Accident

"IT will take a few minutes for this powder to do its work," remarked the Magician, sprinkling the body up and down with much care.

But suddenly the Patchwork Girl threw up one arm, which knocked the bottle of powder from the crooked man's hand and sent it flying across the room. Unc Nunkie and Margolotte were so startled that they both leaped backward

and bumped together, and Unc's head joggled the shelf above them and upset the bottle containing the Liquid of Petrifaction.

The Magician uttered such a wild cry that Ojo jumped away and the Patchwork Girl sprang after him and clasped her stuffed arms around him in terror. The Glass Cat snarled and hid under the table, and so it was that when the powerful Liquid of Petrifaction was spilled it fell only upon the wife of the Magician and the uncle of Ojo. With these two the charm worked promptly. They stood motionless and stiff as marble statues, in exactly the positions they were in when the Liquid struck them.

Ojo pushed the Patchwork Girl away and ran to Unc Nunkie, filled with a terrible fear for the only friend and protector he had ever known. When he grasped Unc's hand it was cold and hard. Even the long gray beard was solid marble. The Crooked Magician was dancing around the room in a frenzy of despair, calling upon his wife to forgive him, to speak to him, to come to life again!

The Patchwork Girl, quickly recovering from her fright, now came nearer and looked from one to another of the people with deep interest. Then she looked at herself and laughed. Noticing the mirror, she stood before it and examined her extraordinary features with amazement — her button eyes, pearl bead teeth and puffy nose. Then, addressing her reflection in the glass, she exclaimed:

"Whee, but there's a gaudy dame! Makes a paint-box blush with shame. Razzle-dazzle, fizzle-fazzle! Howdy-do, Miss What's-your-name?"

She bowed, and the reflection bowed. Then she laughed again, long and merrily, and the Glass Cat crept out from under the table and said:

"I don't blame you for laughing at yourself. Aren't you horrid?"

"Horrid?" she replied. "Why, I'm thoroughly delightful. I'm an Original, if you please, and therefore incomparable. Of all the comic, absurd, rare and amusing creatures the world contains, I must be the supreme freak. Who but poor Margolotte could have managed to invent such an unreasonable being as I? But I'm glad — I'm awfully glad! — that I'm just what I am, and nothing else."

"Be quiet, will you?" cried the frantic Magician; "be quiet and let me think! If I don't think I shall go mad."

"Think ahead," said the Patchwork Girl, seating herself in a chair. "Think all you want to. I don't mind."

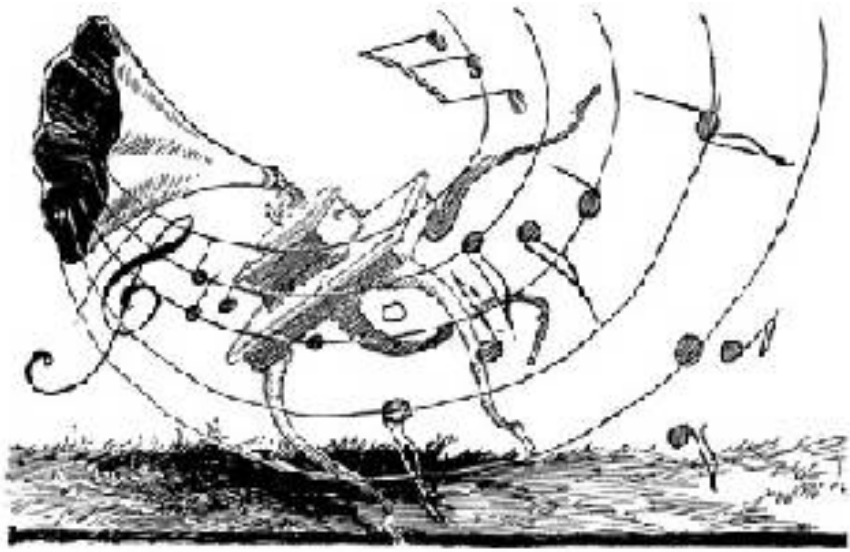
"Gee! but I'm tired playing that tune," called the phonograph, speaking through its horn in a brazen, scratchy voice. "If you don't mind, Pipt, old boy, I'll cut it out and take a rest."

The Magician looked gloomily at the music-machine.

“What dreadful luck!” he wailed, despondently. “The Powder of Life must have fallen on the phonograph.”

He went up to it and found that the gold bottle that contained the precious powder had dropped upon the stand and scattered its life-giving grains over the machine. The phonograph was very much alive, and began dancing a jig with the legs of the table to which it was attached, and this dance so annoyed Dr. Pipt that he kicked the thing into a corner and pushed a bench against it, to hold it quiet.

“You were bad enough before,” said the Magician, resentfully; “but a live phonograph is enough to drive every sane person in the Land of Oz stark crazy.”



“No insults, please,” answered the phonograph in a surly tone. “You did it, my boy; don’t blame me.”

“You’ve bungled everything, Dr. Pipt,” added the Glass Cat, contemptuously.

“Except me,” said the Patchwork Girl, jumping up to whirl merrily around the room.

“I think,” said Ojo, almost ready to cry through grief over Unc Nunkie’s sad fate, “it must all be my fault, in some way. I’m called Ojo the Unlucky, you know.”

“That’s nonsense, kiddie,” retorted the Patchwork Girl cheerfully. “No one can be unlucky who has the intelligence to direct his own actions. The unlucky ones are those who beg for a chance to think, like poor Dr. Pipt here. What’s the row about, anyway, Mr. Magic-maker?”

“The Liquid of Petrifaction has accidentally fallen upon my dear wife and Unc Nunkie and turned them into marble,” he sadly replied.

“Well, why don’t you sprinkle some of that powder on them and bring them to life again?” asked the Patchwork Girl.

The Magician gave a jump.

“Why, I hadn’t thought of that!” he joyfully cried, and grabbed up the golden bottle, with which he ran to Margolotte.

Said the Patchwork Girl:

“Higgledy, piggledy, dee — What fools magicians be! His head’s so thick He can’t think quick, So he takes advice from me.”

Standing upon the bench, for he was so crooked he could not reach the top of his wife’s head in any other way, Dr. Pipt began shaking the bottle. But not a grain of powder came out. He pulled off the cover, glanced within, and then threw the bottle from him with a wail of despair.

“Gone — gone! Every bit gone,” he cried. “Wasted on that miserable phonograph when it might have saved my dear wife!”

Then the Magician bowed his head on his crooked arms and began to cry.

Ojo was sorry for him. He went up to the sorrowful man and said softly:

“You can make more Powder of Life, Dr. Pipt.”

“Yes; but it will take me six years — six long, weary years of stirring four kettles with both feet and both hands,” was the agonized reply. “Six years! while poor Margolotte stands watching me as a marble image.”

“Can’t anything else be done?” asked the Patchwork Girl.

The Magician shook his head. Then he seemed to remember something and looked up.

“There is one other compound that would destroy the magic spell of the Liquid of Petrifaction and restore my wife and Unc Nunkie to life,” said he. “It may be hard to find the things I need to make this magic compound, but if they were found I could do in an instant what will otherwise take six long, weary years of stirring kettles with both hands and both feet.”

“All right; let’s find the things, then,” suggested the Patchwork Girl. “That seems a lot more sensible than those stirring times with the kettles.”

“That’s the idea, Scraps,” said the Glass Cat, approvingly. “I’m glad to find you have decent brains. Mine are exceptionally good. You can see ‘em work; they’re pink.”

“Scraps?” repeated the girl. “Did you call me ‘Scraps’? Is that my name?”

“I — I believe my poor wife had intended to name you ‘Angeline,’“ said the Magician.

“But I like ‘Scraps’ best,” she replied with a laugh. “It fits me better, for my patchwork is all scraps, and nothing else. Thank you for naming me,

Miss Cat. Have you any name of your own?"

"I have a foolish name that Margolotte once gave me, but which is quite undignified for one of my importance," answered the cat. "She called me 'Bungle.'"

"Yes," sighed the Magician; "you were a sad bungle, taken all in all. I was wrong to make you as I did, for a more useless, conceited and brittle thing never before existed."

"I'm not so brittle as you think," retorted the cat. "I've been alive a good many years, for Dr. Pipt experimented on me with the first magic Powder of Life he ever made, and so far I've never broken or cracked or chipped any part of me."

"You seem to have a chip on your shoulder," laughed the Patchwork Girl, and the cat went to the mirror to see.

"Tell me," pleaded Ojo, speaking to the Crooked Magician, "what must we find to make the compound that will save Unc Nunkie?"

"First," was the reply, "I must have a six-leaved clover. That can only be found in the green country around the Emerald City, and six-leaved clovers are very scarce, even there."

"I'll find it for you," promised Ojo.

"The next thing," continued the Magician, "is the left wing of a yellow butterfly. That color can only be found in the yellow country of the Winkies, West of the Emerald City."

"I'll find it," declared Ojo. "Is that all?"

"Oh, no; I'll get my Book of Recipes and see what comes next."

Saying this, the Magician unlocked a drawer of his cabinet and drew out a small book covered with blue leather. Looking through the pages he found the recipe he wanted and said: "I must have a gill of water from a dark well."

"What kind of a well is that, sir?" asked the boy.

"One where the light of day never penetrates. The water must be put in a gold bottle and brought to me without any light ever reaching it."

"I'll get the water from the dark well," said Ojo.

"Then I must have three hairs from the tip of a Woozy's tail, and a drop of oil from a live man's body."

Ojo looked grave at this.

"What is a Woozy, please?" he inquired.

"Some sort of an animal. I've never seen one, so I can't describe it," replied the Magician.

"If I can find a Woozy, I'll get the hairs from its tail," said Ojo. "But is there ever any oil in a man's body?"

The Magician looked in the book again, to make sure.

“That’s what the recipe calls for,” he replied, “and of course we must get everything that is called for, or the charm won’t work. The book doesn’t say ‘blood’; it says ‘oil,’ and there must be oil somewhere in a live man’s body or the book wouldn’t ask for it.”

“All right,” returned Ojo, trying not to feel discouraged; “I’ll try to find it.”

The Magician looked at the little Munchkin boy in a doubtful way and said:

“All this will mean a long journey for you; perhaps several long journeys; for you must search through several of the different countries of Oz in order to get the things I need.”

“I know it, sir; but I must do my best to save Unc Nunkie.”

“And also my poor wife Margolotte. If you save one you will save the other, for both stand there together and the same compound will restore them both to life. Do the best you can, Ojo, and while you are gone I shall begin the six years’ job of making a new batch of the Powder of Life. Then, if you should unluckily fail to secure any one of the things needed, I will have lost no time. But if you succeed you must return here as quickly as you can, and that will save me much tiresome stirring of four kettles with both feet and both hands.”

“I will start on my journey at once, sir,” said the boy.

“And I will go with you,” declared the Patchwork Girl.

“No, no!” exclaimed the Magician. “You have no right to leave this house. You are only a servant and have not been discharged.”

Scraps, who had been dancing up and down the room, stopped and looked at him.

“What is a servant?” she asked.

“One who serves. A — a sort of slave,” he explained.

“Very well,” said the Patchwork Girl, “I’m going to serve you and your wife by helping Ojo find the things you need. You need a lot, you know, such as are not easily found.”

“It is true,” sighed Dr. Pipt. “I am well aware that Ojo has undertaken a serious task.”

Scraps laughed, and resuming her dance she said:

“Here’s a job for a boy of brains: A drop of oil from a live man’s veins; A six-leaved clover; three nice hairs From a Woozy’s tail, the book declares Are needed for the magic spell, And water from a pitch-dark well. The yellow wing of a butterfly To find must Ojo also try, And if he gets them without harm, Doc Pipt will make the magic charm; But if he doesn’t get ‘em, Unc Will always stand a marble chunk.”

The Magician looked at her thoughtfully.

"Poor Margolotte must have given you some of the quality of poesy, by mistake," he said. "And, if that is true, I didn't make a very good article when I prepared it, or else you got an overdose or an underdose. However, I believe I shall let you go with Ojo, for my poor wife will not need your services until she is restored to life. Also I think you may be able to help the boy, for your head seems to contain some thoughts I did not expect to find in it. But be very careful of yourself, for you're a souvenir of my dear Margolotte. Try not to get ripped, or your stuffing may fall out. One of your eyes seems loose, and you may have to sew it on tighter. If you talk too much you'll wear out your scarlet plush tongue, which ought to have been hemmed on the edges. And remember you belong to me and must return here as soon as your mission is accomplished."

"I'm going with Scraps and Ojo," announced the Glass Cat.

"You can't," said the Magician.

"Why not?"

"You'd get broken in no time, and you couldn't be a bit of use to the boy and the Patchwork Girl."

"I beg to differ with you," returned the cat, in a haughty tone. "Three heads are better than two, and my pink brains are beautiful. You can see 'em work."

"Well, go along," said the Magician, irritably. "You're only an annoyance, anyhow, and I'm glad to get rid of you."

"Thank you for nothing, then," answered the cat, stiffly.

Dr. Pipt took a small basket from a cupboard and packed several things in it. Then he handed it to Ojo.

"Here is some food and a bundle of charms," he said. "It is all I can give you, but I am sure you will find friends on your journey who will assist you in your search. Take care of the Patchwork Girl and bring her safely back, for she ought to prove useful to my wife. As for the Glass Cat — properly named Bungle — if she bothers you I now give you my permission to break her in two, for she is not respectful and does not obey me. I made a mistake in giving her the pink brains, you see."

Then Ojo went to Unc Nunkie and kissed the old man's marble face very tenderly.

"I'm going to try to save you, Unc," he said, just as if the marble image could hear him; and then he shook the crooked hand of the Crooked Magician, who was already busy hanging the four kettles in the fireplace, and picking up his basket left the house.

The Patchwork Girl followed him, and after them came the Glass Cat.

6 The Journey

OJO had never traveled before and so he only knew that the path down the mountainside led into the open Munchkin Country, where large numbers of people dwelt. Scraps was quite new and not supposed to know anything of the Land of Oz, while the Glass Cat admitted she had never wandered very far away from the Magician's house. There was only one path before them, at the beginning, so they could not miss their way, and for a time they walked through the thick forest in silent thought, each one impressed with the importance of the adventure they had undertaken.

Suddenly the Patchwork Girl laughed. It was funny to see her laugh, because her cheeks wrinkled up, her nose tipped, her silver button eyes twinkled and her mouth curled at the corners in a comical way.

"Has something pleased you?" asked Ojo, who was feeling solemn and joyless through thinking upon his uncle's sad fate.

"Yes," she answered. "Your world pleases me, for it's a queer world, and life in it is queerer still. Here am I, made from an old bed-quilt and intended to be a slave to Margolotte, rendered free as air by an accident that none of you could foresee. I am enjoying life and seeing the world, while the woman who made me is standing helpless as a block of wood. If that isn't funny enough to laugh at, I don't know what is."

"You're not seeing much of the world yet, my poor, innocent Scraps," remarked the Cat. "The world doesn't consist wholly of the trees that are on all sides of us."

"But they're part of it; and aren't they pretty trees?" returned Scraps, bobbing her head until her brown yarn curls fluttered in the breeze. "Growing between them I can see lovely ferns and wild-flowers, and soft green mosses. If the rest of your world is half as beautiful I shall be glad I'm alive."

"I don't know what the rest of the world is like, I'm sure," said the cat; "but I mean to find out."

"I have never been out of the forest," Ojo added; "but to me the trees are gloomy and sad and the wild-flowers seem lonesome. It must be nicer where there are no trees and there is room for lots of people to live together."

"I wonder if any of the people we shall meet will be as splendid as I am," said the Patchwork Girl. "All I have seen, so far, have pale, colorless skins and clothes as blue as the country they live in, while I am of many gorgeous colors — face and body and clothes. That is why I am bright and contented, Ojo, while you are blue and sad."

"I think I made a mistake in giving you so many sorts of brains," observed the boy. "Perhaps, as the Magician said, you have an overdose, and they may not agree with you."

"What had you to do with my brains?" asked Scraps.

“A lot,” replied Ojo. “Old Margolotte meant to give you only a few — just enough to keep you going — but when she wasn’t looking I added a good many more, of the best kinds I could find in the Magician’s cupboard.”

“Thanks,” said the girl, dancing along the path ahead of Ojo and then dancing back to his side. “If a few brains are good, many brains must be better.”

“But they ought to be evenly balanced,” said the boy, “and I had no time to be careful. From the way you’re acting, I guess the dose was badly mixed.”

“Scraps hasn’t enough brains to hurt her, so don’t worry,” remarked the cat, which was trotting along in a very dainty and graceful manner. “The only brains worth considering are mine, which are pink. You can see ‘em work.”

After walking a long time they came to a little brook that trickled across the path, and here Ojo sat down to rest and eat something from his basket. He found that the Magician had given him part of a loaf of bread and a slice of cheese. He broke off some of the bread and was surprised to find the loaf just as large as it was before. It was the same way with the cheese: however much he broke off from the slice, it remained exactly the same size.

“Ah,” said he, nodding wisely; “that’s magic. Dr. Pipt has enchanted the bread and the cheese, so it will last me all through my journey, however much I eat.”

“Why do you put those things into your mouth?” asked Scraps, gazing at him in astonishment. “Do you need more stuffing? Then why don’t you use cotton, such as I am stuffed with?”

“I don’t need that kind,” said Ojo.

“But a mouth is to talk with, isn’t it?”

“It is also to eat with,” replied the boy. “If I didn’t put food into my mouth, and eat it, I would get hungry and starve.”

“Ah, I didn’t know that,” she said. “Give me some.”

Ojo handed her a bit of the bread and she put it in her mouth.

“What next?” she asked, scarcely able to speak.

“Chew it and swallow it,” said the boy.

Scraps tried that. Her pearl teeth were unable to chew the bread and beyond her mouth there was no opening. Being unable to swallow she threw away the bread and laughed.

“I must get hungry and starve, for I can’t eat,” she said.

"Neither can I," announced the cat; "but I'm not fool enough to try. Can't you understand that you and I are superior people and not made like these poor humans?"

"Why should I understand that, or anything else?" asked the girl. "Don't bother my head by asking conundrums, I beg of you. Just let me discover myself in my own way."

With this she began amusing herself by leaping across the brook and back again.

"Be careful, or you'll fall in the water," warned Ojo.

"Never mind."

"You'd better. If you get wet you'll be soggy and can't walk. Your colors

might run, too," he said.

"Don't my colors run whenever I run?" she asked.

"Not in the way I mean. If they get wet, the reds and greens and yellows and purples of your patches might run into each other and become just a blur — no color at all, you know."

"Then," said the Patchwork Girl, "I'll be careful, for if I spoiled my splendid colors I would cease to be beautiful."

"Pah!" sneered the Glass Cat, "such colors are not beautiful; they're ugly, and in bad taste. Please notice that my body has no color at all. I'm transparent, except for my exquisite red heart and my lovely pink brains — you can see 'em work."

"Shoo — shoo — shoo!" cried Scraps, dancing around and laughing. "And your horrid green eyes, Miss Bungle! You can't see your eyes, but we can, and I notice you're very proud of what little color you have. Shoo, Miss Bungle, shoo — shoo — shoo! If you were all colors and many colors, as I am, you'd be too stuck up for anything." She leaped over the cat and back again, and the startled Bungle crept close to a tree to escape her. This made Scraps laugh more heartily than ever, and she said:

"Whoop-te-doodle-doo! The cat has lost her shoe. Her tootsie's bare, but she don't care, So what's the odds to you?"

"Dear me, Ojo," said the cat; "don't you think the creature is a little bit crazy?"

"It may be," he answered, with a puzzled look.

"If she continues her insults I'll scratch off her suspender-button eyes," declared the cat.

"Don't quarrel, please," pleaded the boy, rising to resume the journey. "Let us be good comrades and as happy and cheerful as possible, for we are likely to meet with plenty of trouble on our way."

It was nearly sundown when they came to the edge of the forest and saw spread out before them a delightful landscape. There were broad blue fields stretching for miles over the valley, which was dotted everywhere with pretty, blue domed houses, none of which, however, was very near to the place where they stood. Just at the point where the path left the forest stood a tiny house covered with leaves from the trees, and before this stood a Munchkin man with an axe in his hand. He seemed very much surprised when Ojo and Scraps and the Glass Cat came out of the woods, but as the Patchwork Girl approached nearer he sat down upon a bench and laughed so hard that he could not speak for a long time.

This man was a woodchopper and lived all alone in the little house. He had bushy blue whiskers and merry blue eyes and his blue clothes were quite

old and worn.

"Mercy me!" exclaimed the woodchopper, when at last he could stop laughing. "Who would think such a funny harlequin lived in the Land of Oz? Where did you come from, Crazy-quilt?"

"Do you mean me?" asked the Patchwork Girl.

"Of course," he replied.

"You misjudge my ancestry. I'm not a crazy-quilt; I'm patchwork," she said.

"There's no difference," he replied, beginning to laugh again. "When my old grandmother sews such things together she calls it a crazy-quilt; but I never thought such a jumble could come to life."

"It was the Magic Powder that did it," explained Ojo.

"Oh, then you have come from the Crooked Magician on the mountain. I might have known it, for — Well, I declare! here's a glass cat. But the Magician will get in trouble for this; it's against the law for anyone to work magic except Glinda the Good and the royal Wizard of Oz. If you people — or things — or glass spectacles — or crazy-quilts — or whatever you are, go near the Emerald City, you'll be arrested."

"We're going there, anyhow," declared Scraps, sitting upon the bench and swinging her stuffed legs.

"If any of us takes a rest, We'll be arrested sure, And get no restitution 'Cause the rest we must endure."

"I see," said the woodchopper, nodding; "you're as crazy as the crazy-quilt you're made of."

"She really *is* crazy," remarked the Glass Cat. "But that isn't to be wondered at when you remember how many different things she's made of. For my part, I'm made of pure glass — except my jewel heart and my pretty pink brains. Did you notice my brains, stranger? You can see 'em work."

"So I can," replied the woodchopper; "but I can't see that they accomplish much. A glass cat is a useless sort of thing, but a Patchwork Girl is really useful. She makes me laugh, and laughter is the best thing in life. There was once a woodchopper, a friend of mine, who was made all of tin, and I used to laugh every time I saw him."

"A tin woodchopper?" said Ojo. "That is strange."

"My friend wasn't always tin," said the man, "but he was careless with his axe, and used to chop himself very badly. Whenever he lost an arm or a leg he had it replaced with tin; so after a while he was all tin."

"And could he chop wood then?" asked the boy.

"He could if he didn't rust his tin joints. But one day he met Dorothy in the forest and went with her to the Emerald City, where he made his fortune.

He is now one of the favorites of Princess Ozma, and she has made him the Emperor of the Winkies — the Country where all is yellow."

"Who is Dorothy?" inquired the Patchwork Girl.

"A little maid who used to live in Kansas, but is now a Princess of Oz. She's Ozma's best friend, they say, and lives with her in the royal palace."

"Is Dorothy made of tin?" inquired Ojo.

"Is she patchwork, like me?" inquired Scraps.

"No," said the man; "Dorothy is flesh, just as I am. I know of only one tin person, and that is Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman; and there will never be but one Patchwork Girl, for any magician that sees you will refuse to make another one like you."

"I suppose we shall see the Tin Woodman, for we are going to the Country of the Winkies," said the boy.

"What for?" asked the woodchopper.

"To get the left wing of a yellow butterfly."

"It is a long journey," declared the man, "and you will go through lonely parts of Oz and cross rivers and traverse dark forests before you get there."

"Suits me all right," said Scraps. "I'll get a chance to see the country."

"You're crazy, girl. Better crawl into a rag-bag and hide there; or give yourself to some little girl to play with. Those who travel are likely to meet trouble; that's why I stay at home."

The woodchopper then invited them all to stay the night at his little hut, but they were anxious to get on and so left him and continued along the path, which was broader, now, and more distinct.

They expected to reach some other house before it grew dark,78 but the twilight was brief and Ojo soon began to fear they had made a mistake in leaving the woodchopper.

“I can scarcely see the path,” he said at last. “Can you see it, Scraps?”

“No,” replied the Patchwork Girl, who was holding fast to the boy’s arm so he could guide her.

“I can see,” declared the Glass Cat. “My eyes are better than yours, and my pink brains — ”

“Never mind your pink brains, please,” said Ojo hastily; “just run ahead and show us the way. Wait a minute and I’ll tie a string to you; for then you can lead us.”

He got a string from his pocket and tied it around the cat’s neck, and after that the creature guided them along the path. They had proceeded in this way for about an hour when a twinkling blue light appeared ahead of them.

“Good! there’s a house at last,” cried Ojo. “When we reach it the good people will surely welcome us and give us a night’s lodging.” But however far they walked the light seemed to get no nearer, so by and by the cat stopped short, saying:

“I think the light is traveling, too, and we shall never be able to catch up with it. But here is a house by the roadside, so why go farther?”

“Where is the house, Bungle?”

“Just here beside us, Scraps.”

Ojo was now able to see a small house near the pathway. It was dark and silent, but the boy was tired and wanted to rest,79 so he went up to the door and knocked.

“Who is there?” cried a voice from within.

“I am Ojo the Unlucky, and with me are Miss Scraps Patchwork and the Glass Cat,” he replied.

“What do you want?” asked the Voice.

“A place to sleep,” said Ojo.

“Come in, then; but don’t make any noise, and you must go directly to bed,” returned the Voice.

Ojo unlatched the door and entered. It was very dark inside and he could see nothing at all. But the cat exclaimed: “Why, there’s no one here!”

“There must be,” said the boy. “Some one spoke to me.”

“I can see everything in the room,” replied the cat, “and no one is present but ourselves. But here are three beds, all made up, so we may as well go to sleep.”

“What is sleep?” inquired the Patchwork Girl.

“It’s what you do when you go to bed,” said Ojo.

“But why do you go to bed?” persisted the Patchwork Girl.

“Here, here! You are making altogether too much noise,” cried the Voice they had heard before. “Keep quiet, strangers, and go to bed.”

The cat, which could see in the dark, looked sharply around for the owner of the Voice, but could discover no one, although the Voice had seemed close beside them. She arched her back a little and seemed afraid. Then she whispered to Ojo: “Come!” and led him to a bed.

With his hands the boy felt of the bed and found it was big and soft, with feather pillows and plenty of blankets. So he took off his shoes and hat and crept into the bed. Then the cat led Scraps to another bed and the Patchwork Girl was puzzled to know what to do with it.

“Lie down and keep quiet,” whispered the cat, warningly.

“Can’t I sing?” asked Scraps.

“No.”

“Can’t I whistle?” asked Scraps.

“No.”

“Can’t I dance till morning, if I want to?” asked Scraps.

“You must keep quiet,” said the cat, in a soft voice.

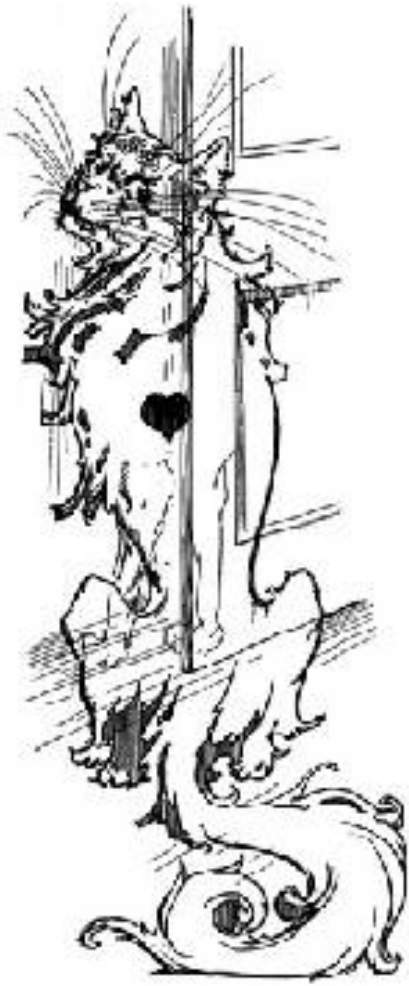
“I don’t want to,” replied the Patchwork Girl, speaking as loudly as usual. “What right have you to order me around? If I want to talk, or yell, or whistle __ ”

Before she could say anything more an unseen hand seized her firmly and threw her out of the door, which closed behind her with a sharp slam. She found herself bumping and rolling in the road and when she got up and tried to open the door of the house again she found it locked.

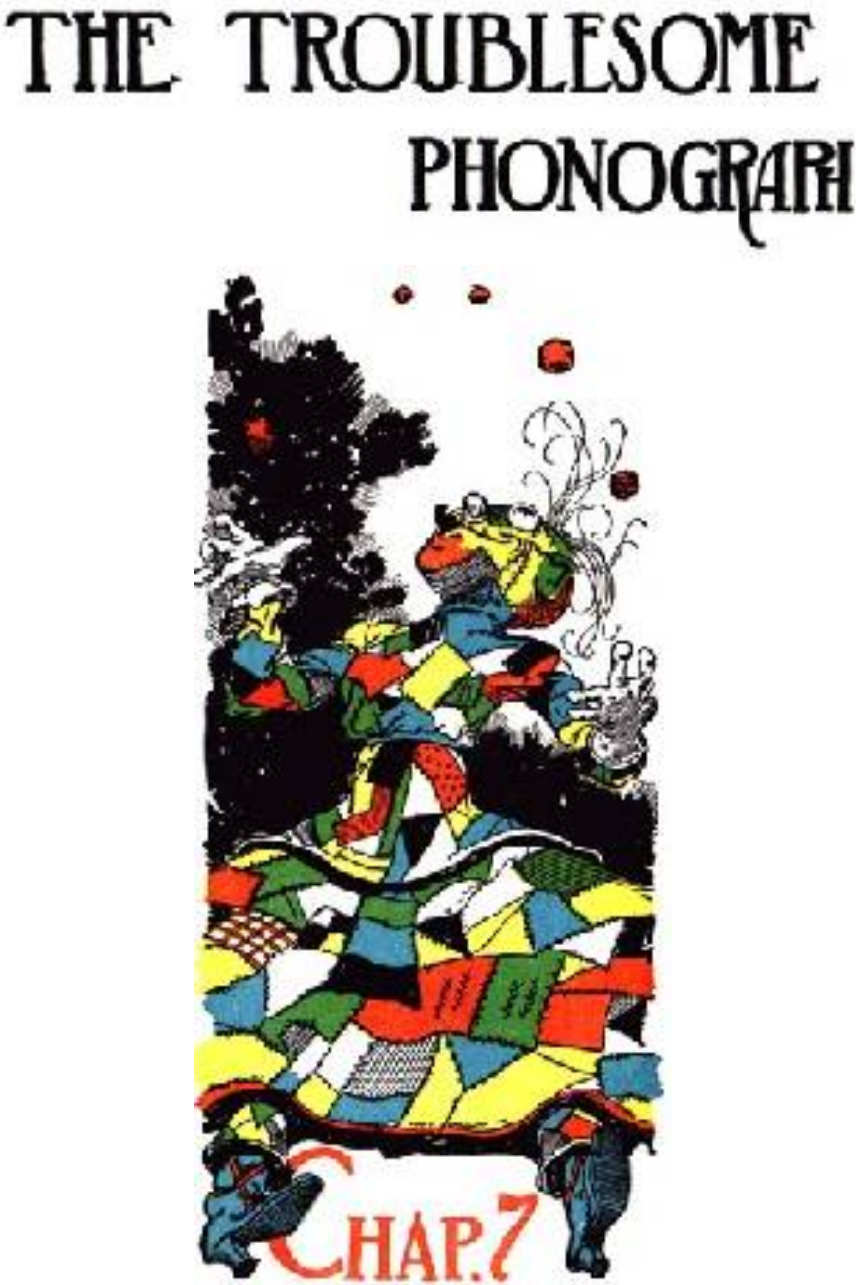
“What has happened to Scraps?” asked Ojo.

“Never mind. Let’s go to sleep, or something will happen to us,” answered the Glass Cat.

So Ojo snuggled down in his bed and fell asleep, and he was so tired that he never wakened until broad daylight.



7 The Troublesome Phonograph



WHEN the boy opened his eyes next morning he looked carefully around the

room. These small Munchkin houses seldom had more than one room in them. That in which Ojo now found himself had three beds, set all in a row on one side of it. The Glass Cat lay asleep on one bed, Ojo was in the second, and the third was neatly made up and smoothed for the day. On the other side of the room was a round table on which breakfast was already placed, smoking hot. Only one chair was drawn up to the table, where a place was set for one person. No one seemed to be in the room except the boy and Bungle.

Ojo got up and put on his shoes. Finding a toilet stand at the head of his bed he washed his face and hands and brushed his hair. Then he went to the table and said:

"I wonder if this is my breakfast?"

"Eat it!" commanded a Voice at his side, so near that Ojo jumped. But no person could he see.

He was hungry, and the breakfast looked good; so he sat down and ate all he wanted. Then, rising, he took his hat and wakened the Glass Cat.

"Come on, Bungle," said he; "we must go."

He cast another glance about the room and, speaking to the air, he said: "Whoever lives here has been kind to me, and I'm much obliged."

There was no answer, so he took his basket and went out the door, the cat following him. In the middle of the path sat the Patchwork Girl, playing with pebbles she had picked up.

"Oh, there you are!" she exclaimed cheerfully. "I thought you were never coming out. It has been daylight a long time."

"What did you do all night?" asked the boy.

"Sat here and watched the stars and the moon," she replied. "They're interesting. I never saw them before, you know."

"Of course not," said Ojo.

"You were crazy to act so badly and get thrown outdoors," remarked Bungle, as they renewed their journey.

"That's all right," said Scraps. "If I hadn't been thrown out I wouldn't have seen the stars, nor the big gray wolf."

"What wolf?" inquired Ojo.

"The one that came to the door of the house three times during the night."

"I don't see why that should be," said the boy, thoughtfully; "there was plenty to eat in that house, for I had a fine breakfast, and I slept in a nice bed."

"Don't you feel tired?" asked the Patchwork Girl, noticing that the boy yawned.

"Why, yes; I'm as tired as I was last night; and yet I slept very well."

“And aren’t you hungry?”

“It’s strange,” replied Ojo. “I had a good breakfast, and yet I think I’ll now eat some of my crackers and cheese.”

Scraps danced up and down the path. Then she sang:

“Kizzle-kazzle-kore; The wolf is at the door, There’s nothing to eat but a bone without meat, And a bill from the grocery store.”

“What does that mean?” asked Ojo.

“Don’t ask me,” replied Scraps. “I say what comes into my head, but of course I know nothing of a grocery store or bones without meat or — very much else.”

“No,” said the cat; “she’s stark, staring, raving crazy, and her brains can’t be pink, for they don’t work properly.”

“Bother the brains!” cried Scraps. “Who cares for ‘em,86 anyhow? Have you noticed how beautiful my patches are in this sunlight?”

Just then they heard a sound as of footsteps pattering along the path behind them and all three turned to see what was coming. To their astonishment they beheld a small round table running as fast as its four spindle legs could carry it, and to the top was screwed fast a phonograph with a big gold horn.

“Hold on!” shouted the phonograph. “Wait for me!”

“Goodness me; it’s that music thing which the Crooked Magician scattered the Powder of Life over,” said Ojo.

“So it is,” returned Bungle, in a grumpy tone of voice; and then, as the

phonograph overtook them, the Glass Cat added sternly: “What are you doing here, anyhow?”

“I’ve run away,” said the music thing. “After you left, old Dr. Pipt and I had a dreadful quarrel and he threatened to smash me to pieces if I didn’t keep quiet. Of course I wouldn’t do that, because a talking-machine is supposed to talk and make a noise — and sometimes music. So I slipped out of the house while the Magician was stirring his four kettles and I’ve been running after you all night. Now that I’ve found such pleasant company, I can talk and play tunes all I want to.”

Ojo was greatly annoyed by this unwelcome addition to their party. At first he did not know what to say to the newcomer, but a little thought decided him not to make friends.

“We are traveling on important business,” he declared, “and you’ll excuse me if I say we can’t be bothered.”

“How very impolite!” exclaimed the phonograph.

“I’m sorry; but it’s true,” said the boy. “You’ll have to go somewhere else.”

“This is very unkind treatment, I must say,” whined the phonograph, in an injured tone. “Everyone seems to hate me, and yet I was intended to amuse people.”

“It isn’t you we hate, especially,” observed the Glass Cat; “it’s your dreadful music. When I lived in the same room with you I was much annoyed by your squeaky horn. It growls and grumbles and clicks and scratches so it spoils the music, and your machinery rumbles so that the racket drowns every tune you attempt.”

“That isn’t my fault; it’s the fault of my records. I must admit that I haven’t a clear record,” answered the machine.

“Just the same, you’ll have to go away,” said Ojo.

“Wait a minute,” cried Scraps. “This music thing interests me. I remember to have heard music when I first came to life, and I would like to hear it again. What is your name, my poor abused phonograph?”

“Victor Columbia Edison,” it answered.

“Well, I shall call you ‘Vic’ for short,” said the Patchwork Girl. “Go ahead and play something.”

“It’ll drive you crazy,” warned the cat.

“I’m crazy now, according to your statement. Loosen up and reel out the music, Vic.”

“The only record I have with me,” explained the phonograph, “is one the Magician attached just before we had our quarrel. It’s a highly classical composition.”

“A what?” inquired Scraps.

“It is classical music, and is considered the best and most puzzling ever manufactured. You’re supposed to like it, whether you do or not, and if you don’t, the proper thing is to look as if you did. Understand?”

“Not in the least,” said Scraps.

“Then, listen!”

At once the machine began to play and in a few minutes Ojo put his hands to his ears to shut out the sounds and the cat snarled and Scraps began to laugh.

“Cut it out, Vic,” she said. “That’s enough.”

But the phonograph continued playing the dreary tune, so Ojo seized the crank, jerked it free and threw it into the road. However, the moment the crank struck the ground it bounded back to the machine again and began winding it up. And still the music played.

“Let’s run!” cried Scraps, and they all started and ran down the path as fast as they could go. But the phonograph was right behind them and could run and play at the same time. It called out, reproachfully:

“What’s the matter? Don’t you love classical music?”

“No, Vic,” said Scraps, halting. “We will passical the classical and preserve what joy we have left. I haven’t any nerves, thank goodness, but your music makes my cotton shrink.”

“Then turn over my record. There’s a rag-time tune on the other side,” said the machine.

“What’s rag-time?”

“The opposite of classical.”

“All right,” said Scraps, and turned over the record.

The phonograph now began to play a jerky jumble of sounds which proved so bewildering that after a moment Scraps stuffed her patchwork apron into the gold horn and cried: “Stop — stop! That’s the other extreme. It’s extremely bad!”

Muffled as it was, the phonograph played on.

“If you don’t shut off that music I’ll smash your record,” threatened Ojo.

The music stopped, at that, and the machine turned its horn from one to another and said with great indignation: “What’s the matter now? Is it possible you can’t appreciate rag-time?”

“Scraps ought to, being rags herself,” said the cat; “but I simply can’t stand it; it makes my whiskers curl.”

“It is, indeed, dreadful!” exclaimed Ojo, with a shudder.

“It’s enough to drive a crazy lady mad,” murmured the Patchwork Girl. “I’ll tell you what, Vic,” she added as she smoothed out her apron and put it

on again, “for some reason or other you’ve missed your guess. You’re not a concert; you’re a nuisance.”

“Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,” asserted the phonograph sadly.

“Then we’re not savages. I advise you to go home and beg the Magician’s pardon.”

“Never! He’d smash me.”

“That’s what we shall do, if you stay here,” Ojo declared.

“Run along, Vic, and bother some one else,” advised Scraps. “Find some one who is real wicked, and stay with him till he repents. In that way you can do some good in the world.”

The music thing turned silently away and trotted down a side path, toward a distant Munchkin village.

“Is that the way *we* go?” asked Bungle anxiously.

“No,” said Ojo; “I think we shall keep straight ahead, for this path is the widest and best. When we come to some house we will inquire the way to the Emerald City.”

8 The Foolish Owl and the Wise Donkey

ON they went, and half an hour's steady walking brought them to a house somewhat better than the two they had already passed. It stood close to the

roadside and over the door was a sign that read: “Miss Foolish Owl and Mr. Wise Donkey: Public Advisers.”

When Ojo read this sign aloud Scraps said laughingly: “Well, here is a place to get all the advice we want, maybe more than we need. Let’s go in.”

The boy knocked at the door.

“Come in!” called a deep bass voice.

So they opened the door and entered the house, where a little light-brown donkey, dressed in a blue apron and a blue cap, was engaged in dusting the furniture with a blue cloth. On a shelf over the window sat a great blue owl with a blue sunbonnet on her head, blinking her big round eyes at the visitors.

“Good morning,” said the donkey, in his deep voice, which seemed bigger than he was. “Did you come to us for advice?”

“Why, we came, anyhow,” replied Scraps, “and now we are here we may as well have some advice. It’s free, isn’t it?

“Certainly,” said the donkey. “Advice doesn’t cost anything — unless you follow it. Permit me to say, by the way, that you are the queerest lot of travelers that ever came to my shop. Judging you merely by appearances, I think you’d better talk to the Foolish Owl yonder.”

They turned to look at the bird, which fluttered its wings and stared back at them with its big eyes.

“Hoot-ti-toot-ti-toot!” cried the owl.

“Fiddle-cum-foo, Howdy — do? Riddle-cum, tiddle-cum, Too-ra-la-loo!”

“That beats your poetry, Scraps,” said Ojo.

“It’s just nonsense!” declared the Glass Cat.

“But it’s good advice for the foolish,” said the donkey, admiringly. “Listen to my partner, and you can’t go wrong.”

Said the owl in a grumbling voice:93

“Patchwork Girl has come to life; No one’s sweetheart, no one’s wife; Lacking sense and loving fun, She’ll be snubbed by everyone.”

“Quite a compliment! Quite a compliment, I declare,” exclaimed the donkey, turning to look at Scraps. “You are certainly a wonder, my dear, and I fancy you’d make a splendid pincushion. If you belonged to me, I’d wear smoked glasses when I looked at you.”

“Why?” asked the Patchwork Girl.

“Because you are so gay and gaudy.”

“It is my beauty that dazzles you,” she asserted. “You Munchkin people all strut around in your stupid blue color, while I — ”

“You are wrong in calling me a Munchkin,” interrupted the donkey, “for I was born in the Land of Mo and came to visit the Land of Oz on the day it

was shut off from all the rest of the world. So here I am obliged to stay, and I confess it is a very pleasant country to live in."

"Hoot-ti-toot!" cried the owl;

"Ojo's searching for a charm, 'Cause Unc Nunkie's come to harm. Charms are scarce; they're hard to get; Ojo's got a job, you bet!"

"Is the owl so very foolish?" asked the boy.

"Extremely so," replied the donkey. "Notice what vulgar expressions she uses. But I admire the owl for the reason that she *is* positively foolish. Owls are supposed to be so very wise, generally, that a foolish one is unusual, and you perhaps know that anything or anyone unusual is sure to be interesting to the wise."

The owl flapped its wings again, muttering these words:

"It's hard to be a glassy cat — No cat can be more hard than that; She's so transparent, every act Is clear to us, and that's a fact."

"Have you noticed my pink brains?" inquired Bungle, proudly. "You can see 'em work."

"Not in the daytime," said the donkey. "She can't see very well by day, poor thing. But her advice is excellent. I advise you all to follow it."

"The owl hasn't given us any advice, as yet," the boy declared.

"No? Then what do you call all those sweet poems?"

"Just foolishness," replied Ojo. "Scraps does the same thing."

"Foolishness! Of course! To be sure! The Foolish Owl must be foolish or she wouldn't be the Foolish Owl. You are very complimentary to my partner, indeed," asserted the donkey, rubbing his front hoofs together as if highly pleased.

"The sign says that *you* are wise," remarked Scraps to the donkey. "I wish you would prove it."

"With great pleasure," returned the beast. "Put me to the test, my dear Patches, and I'll prove my wisdom in the wink of an eye."

"What is the best way to get to the Emerald City?" asked Ojo.

"Walk," said the donkey.

"I know; but what road shall I take?" was the boy's next question.

"The road of yellow bricks, of course. It leads directly to the Emerald City."

"And how shall we find the road of yellow bricks?"

"By keeping along the path you have been following. You'll come to the

yellow bricks pretty soon, and you'll know them when you see them because they're the only yellow things in the blue country."

"Thank you," said the boy. "At last you have told me something."

"Is that the extent of your wisdom?" asked Scraps.

"No," replied the donkey; "I know many other things, but they wouldn't interest you. So I'll give you a last word of advice: move on, for the sooner you do that the sooner you'll get to the Emerald City of Oz."97

"Hoot-ti-toot-ti-toot-ti-too!" screeched the owl;

"Off you go! fast or slow, Where you're going you don't know. Patches, Bungle, Munchkin lad, Facing fortunes good and bad, Meeting dangers grave and sad, Sometimes worried, sometimes glad — Where you're going you

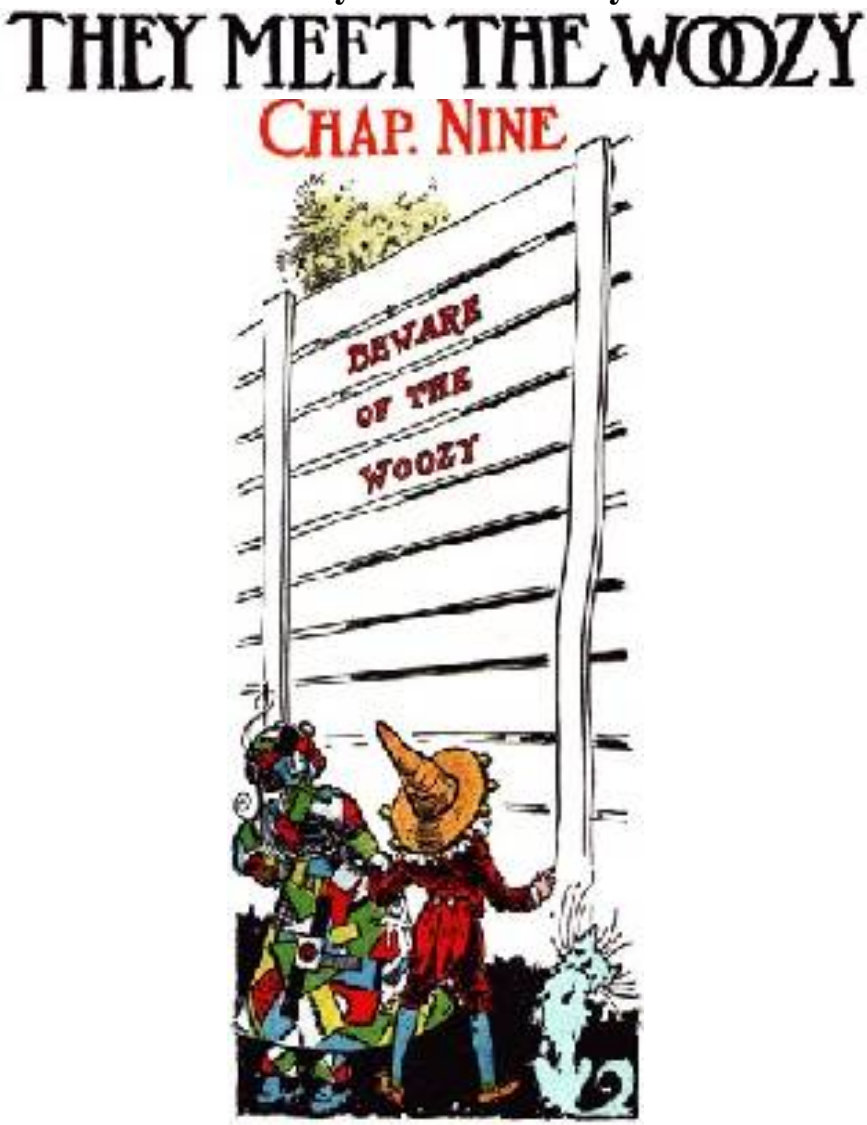
don’t know, Nor do I, but off you go!”

“Sounds like a hint, to me,” said the Patchwork Girl.

“Then let’s take it and go,” replied Ojo.

They said good-bye to the Wise Donkey and the Foolish Owl and at once resumed their journey.

9 They Meet the Woozy



"THERE seem to be very few houses around here, after all," remarked Ojo, after they had walked for a time in silence.

"Never mind," said Scraps; "we are not looking for houses, but rather the road of yellow bricks. Won't it be funny to run across something yellow in this dismal blue country?"

"There are worse colors than yellow in this country," asserted the Glass

Cat, in a spiteful tone.

"Oh; do you mean the pink pebbles you call your brains, and your red heart and green eyes?" asked the Patchwork Girl.

"No; I mean you, if you must know it," growled the cat.

"You're jealous!" laughed Scraps. "You'd give your whiskers for a lovely variegated complexion like mine."

"I wouldn't!" retorted the cat. "I've the clearest complexion in the world, and I don't employ a beauty-doctor, either."

"I see you don't," said Scraps.

"Please don't quarrel," begged Ojo. "This is an important journey, and quarreling makes me discouraged. To be brave, one must be cheerful, so I hope you will be as good-tempered as possible."

They had traveled some distance when suddenly they faced a high fence which barred any further progress straight ahead. It ran directly across the road and enclosed a small forest of tall trees, set close together. When the group of adventurers peered through the bars of the fence they thought this forest looked more gloomy and forbidding than any they had ever seen before.

They soon discovered that the path they had been following now made a bend and passed around the enclosure, but what made Ojo stop and look thoughtful was a sign painted on the fence which read:

"BEWARE OF THE WOOZY!"

"That means," he said, "that there's a Woozy inside that fence, and the Woozy must be a dangerous animal or they wouldn't tell people to beware of it."

"Let's keep out, then," replied Scraps. "That path is outside the fence, and Mr. Woozy may have all his little forest to himself, for all we care."

"But one of our errands is to find a Woozy," Ojo explained. "The Magician wants me to get three hairs from the end of a Woozy's tail."

"Let's go on and find some other Woozy," suggested the cat. "This one is ugly and dangerous, or they wouldn't cage him up. Maybe we shall find another that is tame and gentle."

"Perhaps there isn't any other, at all," answered Ojo. "The sign doesn't say: 'Beware *a* Woozy'; it says: 'Beware *the* Woozy,' which may mean there's only one in all the Land of Oz."

"Then," said Scraps, "suppose we go in and find him? Very likely if we ask him politely to let us pull three hairs out of the tip of his tail he won't hurt us."

"It would hurt *him*, I'm sure, and that would make him cross," said the cat.

“You needn’t worry, Bungle,” remarked the Patchwork Girl; “for if there is danger you can climb a tree. Ojo and I are not afraid; are we, Ojo?”

“I am, a little,” the boy admitted; “but this danger must be faced, if we intend to save poor Unc Nunkie. How shall we get over the fence?”

“Climb,” answered Scraps, and at once she began climbing up the rows of bars. Ojo followed and found it more easy than he had expected. When they got to the top of the fence they began to get down on the other side and soon were in the forest. The Glass Cat, being small, crept between the lower bars and joined them.

Here there was no path of any sort, so they entered the woods, the boy leading the way, and wandered through the trees until they were nearly in the center of the forest. They now came upon a clear space in which stood a rocky cave.

So far they had met no living creature, but when Ojo saw the cave he knew it must be the den of the Woozy.

It is hard to face any savage beast without a sinking of the heart, but still more terrifying is it to face an unknown beast, which you have never seen even a picture of. So there is little wonder that the pulses of the Munchkin boy beat fast as he and his companions stood facing the cave. The opening was perfectly square, and about big enough to admit a goat.

“I guess the Woozy is asleep,” said Scraps. “Shall I throw in a stone, to waken him?”

“No; please don’t,” answered Ojo, his voice trembling a little. “I’m in no hurry.”

But he had not long to wait, for the Woozy heard the sound of voices and came trotting out of his cave. As this is the only Woozy that has ever lived, either in the Land of Oz or out of it, I must describe it to you.

The creature was all squares and flat surfaces and edges. Its head was an exact square, like one of the building-blocks a child plays with; therefore it had no ears, but heard sounds through two openings in the upper corners. Its nose, being in the center of a square surface, was flat, while the mouth was formed by the opening of the lower edge of the block. The body of the Woozy was much larger than its head, but was likewise block-shaped — being twice as long as it was wide and high. The tail was square and stubby and perfectly straight, and the four legs were made in the same way, each being four-sided. The animal was covered with a thick, smooth skin and had no hair at all except at the extreme end of its tail, where there grew exactly three stiff, stubby hairs. The beast was dark blue in color and his face was not fierce nor ferocious in expression, but rather good-humored and droll.

Seeing the strangers, the Woozy folded his hind legs as if they had been

hinged and sat down to look his visitors over.

"Well, well," he exclaimed; "what a queer lot you are! At first I thought some of those miserable Munchkin farmers had come to annoy me, but I am relieved to find you in their stead. It is plain to me that you are a remarkable group — as remarkable in your way as I am in mine — and so you are welcome to my domain. Nice place, isn't it? But lonesome — dreadfully lonesome."

"Why did they shut you up here?" asked Scraps, who was regarding the queer, square creature with much curiosity.

"Because I eat up all the honey-bees which the Munchkin farmers who live around here keep to make them honey."

"Are you fond of eating honey-bees?" inquired the boy.

"Very. They are really delicious. But the farmers did not like to lose their bees and so they tried to destroy me. Of course they couldn't do that."

"Why not?"

"My skin is so thick and tough that nothing can get through it to hurt me. So, finding they could not destroy me, they drove me into this forest and built a fence around me. Unkind, wasn't it?"

"But what do you eat now?" asked Ojo.

"Nothing at all. I've tried the leaves from the trees and the mosses and creeping vines, but they don't seem to suit my taste. So, there being no honey-bees here, I've eaten nothing for years."

"You must be awfully hungry," said the boy. "I've got some bread and cheese in my basket. Would you like that kind of food?"

"Give me a nibble and I will try it; then I can tell you better whether it is grateful to my appetite," returned the Woozy.

So the boy opened his basket and broke a piece off the loaf of bread. He tossed it toward the Woozy, who cleverly caught it in his mouth and ate it in a twinkling.

"That's rather good," declared the animal. "Any more?"

"Try some cheese," said Ojo, and threw down a piece.

The Woozy ate that, too, and smacked its long, thin lips.

"That's mighty good!" it exclaimed. "Any more?"

"Plenty," replied Ojo. So he sat down on a stump and fed the Woozy bread and cheese for a long time; for, no matter how much the boy broke off, the loaf and the slice remained just as big.

"That'll do," said the Woozy, at last; "I'm quite full. I hope the strange food won't give me indigestion."

"I hope not," said Ojo. "It's what I eat."

"Well, I must say I'm much obliged, and I'm glad you came," announced

the beast. “Is there anything I can do in return for your kindness?”

“Yes,” said Ojo earnestly, “you have it in your power to do me a great favor, if you will.”

“What is it?” asked the Woozy. “Name the favor and I will grant it.”

“I — I want three hairs from the tip of your tail,” said Ojo, with some hesitation.

“Three hairs! Why, that’s all I have — on my tail or anywhere else,” exclaimed the beast.

“I know; but I want them very much.”

“They are my sole ornaments, my prettiest feature,” said the Woozy, uneasily. “If I give up those three hairs I — I’m just a blockhead.”

“Yet I must have them,” insisted the boy, firmly, and he then told the Woozy all about the accident to Unc Nunkie and Margolotte, and how the three hairs were to be a part of the magic charm that would restore them to life. The beast listened with attention and when Ojo had finished the recital it said, with a sigh:

“I always keep my word, for I pride myself on being square. So you may have the three hairs, and welcome. I think, under such circumstances, it would be selfish in me to refuse you.”

“Thank you! Thank you very much,” cried the boy, joyfully. “May I pull out the hairs now?”

“Any time you like,” answered the Woozy.

So Ojo went up to the queer creature and taking hold of one of the hairs began to pull. He pulled harder. He pulled with all his might; but the hair remained fast.

“What’s the trouble?” asked the Woozy, which Ojo had dragged here and there all around the clearing in his endeavor to pull out the hair.

“It won’t come,” said the boy, panting.

“I was afraid of that,” declared the beast. “You’ll have to pull harder.”

“I’ll help you,” exclaimed Scraps, coming to the boy’s side. “You pull the hair, and I’ll pull you, and together we ought to get it out easily.”

“Wait a jiffy,” called the Woozy, and then it went to a tree and hugged it with its front paws, so that its body couldn’t be dragged around by the pull. “All ready, now. Go ahead!”

Ojo grasped the hair with both hands and pulled with all his strength, while Scraps seized the boy around his waist and added her strength to his. But the hair wouldn’t budge. Instead, it slipped out of Ojo’s hands and he and Scraps both rolled upon the ground in a heap and never stopped until they bumped against the rocky cave.

"Give it up," advised the Glass Cat, as the boy arose and assisted the Patchwork Girl to her feet. "A dozen strong men couldn't pull out those hairs. I believe they're clinched on the under side of the Woozy's thick skin."

"Then what shall I do?" asked the boy, despairingly. "If on our return I fail to take these three hairs to the Crooked Magician, the other things I have come to seek will be of no use at all, and we cannot restore Unc Nunkie and Margolotte to life."

"They're goners, I guess," said the Patchwork Girl.

"Never mind," added the cat. "I can't see that old Unc and Margolotte are worth all this trouble, anyhow."

But Ojo did not feel that way. He was so disheartened that he sat down

upon a stump and began to cry.

The Woozy looked at the boy thoughtfully.

“Why don’t you take me with you?” asked the beast. “Then, when at last you get to the Magician’s house, he can surely find some way to pull out those three hairs.”

Ojo was overjoyed at this suggestion.

“That’s it!” he cried, wiping away the tears and springing to his feet with a smile. “If I take the three hairs to the Magician, it won’t matter if they are still in your body.”

“It can’t matter in the least,” agreed the Woozy.

“Come on, then,” said the boy, picking up his basket; “let us start at once. I have several other things to find, you know.”

But the Glass Cat gave a little laugh and inquired in her scornful way:

“How do you intend to get the beast out of this forest?”

That puzzled them all for a time.

“Let us go to the fence, and then we may find a way,” suggested Scraps. So they walked through the forest to the fence, reaching it at a point exactly opposite that where they had entered the enclosure.

“How did you get in?” asked the Woozy.

“We climbed over,” answered Ojo.

“I can’t do that,” said the beast. “I’m a very swift runner, for I can overtake a honey-bee as it flies; and I can jump very high, which is the reason they made such a tall fence to keep me in. But I can’t climb at all, and I’m too big to squeeze between the bars of the fence.”

Ojo tried to think what to do.

“Can you dig?” he asked.

“No,” answered the Woozy, “for I have no claws. My feet are quite flat on the bottom of them. Nor can I gnaw away the boards, as I have no teeth.”

“You’re not such a terrible creature, after all,” remarked Scraps.

“You haven’t heard me growl, or you wouldn’t say that,” declared the Woozy. “When I growl, the sound echoes like thunder all through the valleys and woodlands, and children tremble with fear, and women cover their heads with their aprons, and big men run and hide. I suppose there is nothing in the world so terrible to listen to as the growl of a Woozy.”

“Please don’t growl, then,” begged Ojo, earnestly.

“There is no danger of my growling, for I am not angry. Only when angry do I utter my fearful, ear-splitting, soul-shuddering growl. Also, when I am angry, my eyes flash fire, whether I growl or not.”

“Real fire?” asked Ojo.

“Of course, real fire. Do you suppose they’d flash imitation fire?” inquired

the Woozy, in an injured tone.

"In that case, I've solved the riddle," cried Scraps, dancing with glee. "Those fence-boards are made of wood, and if the Woozy stands close to the fence and lets his eyes flash fire, they might set fire to the fence and burn it up. Then he could walk away with us easily, being free."

"Ah, I have never thought of that plan, or I would have been free long ago," said the Woozy. "But I cannot flash fire from my eyes unless I am very angry."

"Can't you get angry 'bout something, please?" asked Ojo.

"I'll try. You just say 'Krizzle-Kroo' to me."

"Will that make you angry?" inquired the boy.

"Terribly angry."

"What does it mean?" asked Scraps.

"I don't know; that's what makes me so angry," replied the Woozy.

He then stood close to the fence, with his head near one of the boards, and Scraps called out "Krizzle-Kroo!" Then Ojo said "Krizzle-Kroo!" and the Glass Cat said "Krizzle-Kroo!" The Woozy began to tremble with anger and small sparks darted from his eyes. Seeing this, they all cried "Krizzle-Kroo!" together, and that made the beast's eyes flash fire so fiercely that the fence-board caught the sparks and began to smoke. Then it burst into flame, and the Woozy stepped back and said triumphantly:

"Aha! That did the business, all right. It was a happy thought for you to yell all together, for that made me as angry as I have ever been. Fine sparks, weren't they?"

"Reg'lar fireworks," replied Scraps, admiringly.

In a few moments the board had burned to a distance of several feet, leaving an opening big enough for them all to pass through. Ojo broke some branches from a tree and with them whipped the fire until it was extinguished.

"We don't want to burn the whole fence down," said he, "for the flames would attract the attention of the Munchkin farmers, who would then come and capture the Woozy again. I guess they'll be rather surprised when they find he's escaped."

"So they will," declared the Woozy, chuckling gleefully. "When they find I'm gone the farmers will be badly scared, for they'll expect me to eat up

their honey-bees, as I did before."

"That reminds me," said the boy, "that you must promise not to eat honey-bees while you are in our company."

"None at all?"

"Not a bee. You would get us all into trouble, and we can't afford to have any more trouble than is necessary. I'll feed you all the bread and cheese you want, and that must satisfy you."

"All right; I'll promise," said the Woozy, cheerfully. "And when I promise anything you can depend on it, 'cause I'm square."

"I don't see what difference that makes," observed the Patchwork Girl, as they found the path and continued their journey. "The shape doesn't make a thing honest, does it?"

"Of course it does," returned the Woozy, very decidedly. "No one could trust that Crooked Magician, for instance, just because he *is* crooked; but a square Woozy couldn't do anything crooked if he wanted to."

"I am neither square nor crooked," said Scraps, looking down at her plump body.

"No; you're round, so you're liable to do anything," asserted the Woozy. "Do not blame me, Miss Gorgeous, if I regard you with suspicion. Many a satin ribbon has a cotton back."

Scraps didn't understand this, but she had an uneasy misgiving that she had a cotton back herself. It would settle down, at times, and make her squat and dumpy, and then she had to roll herself in the road until her body stretched out again.

10 Shaggy Man to the Rescue

SHAGGY MAN TO THE RESCUE

CHAP. 10

THEY had not gone very far before Bungle, who had run on ahead, came bounding back to say that the road of yellow bricks was just before them. At once they hurried forward to see what this famous road looked like.

It was a broad road, but not straight, for it wandered over hill and dale and picked out the easiest places to go. All its length and breadth was paved with smooth bricks of a bright yellow color, so it was smooth and level except in a few places where the bricks had crumbled or been removed, leaving holes that might cause the unwary to stumble.

"I wonder," said Ojo, looking up and down the road, "which way to go."

"Where are you bound for?" asked the Woozy.

"The Emerald City," he replied.

"Then go west," said the Woozy. "I know this road pretty well, for I've chased many a honey-bee over it."

"Have you ever been to the Emerald City?" asked Scraps.

"No. I am very shy by nature, as you may have noticed, so I haven't mingled much in society."

"Are you afraid of men?" inquired the Patchwork Girl.

"Me? With my heart-rending growl — my horrible, shudderful growl? I should say not. I am not afraid of anything," declared the Woozy.

"I wish I could say the same," sighed Ojo. "I don't think we need be afraid when we get to the Emerald City, for Unc Nunkie has told me that Ozma, our girl Ruler, is very lovely and kind, and tries to help everyone who is in trouble. But they say there are many dangers lurking on the road to the great Fairy City, and so we must be very careful."

"I hope nothing will break me," said the Glass Cat, in a nervous voice. "I'm a little brittle, you know, and can't stand many hard knocks."

"If anything should fade the colors of my lovely patches it would break my heart," said the Patchwork Girl.

"I'm not sure you have a heart," Ojo reminded her.

"Then it would break my cotton," persisted Scraps. "Do you think they are all fast colors, Ojo?" she asked anxiously.

"They seem fast enough when you run," he replied; and then, looking ahead of them, he exclaimed: "Oh, what lovely trees!"

They were certainly pretty to look upon and the travelers hurried forward to observe them more closely.

"Why, they are not trees at all," said Scraps; "they are just monstrous plants."

That is what they really were: masses of great broad leaves which rose from the ground far into the air, until they towered twice as high as the top of the Patchwork Girl's head, who was a little taller than Ojo. The plants formed rows on both sides of the road and from each plant rose a dozen or more of the big broad leaves, which swayed continually from side to side, although no wind was blowing. But the most curious thing about the swaying

leaves was their color. They seemed to have a general groundwork of blue, but here and there other colors glinted at times through the blue — gorgeous yellows, turning to pink, purple, orange and scarlet, mingled with more sober browns and grays — each appearing as a blotch or stripe anywhere on a leaf and then disappearing, to be replaced by some other color of a different shape.

The changeful coloring of the great leaves was very beautiful, but it was bewildering, as well, and the novelty of the scene drew our travelers close to the line of plants, where they stood watching them with rapt interest.

Suddenly a leaf bent lower than usual and touched the Patchwork Girl. Swiftly it enveloped her in its embrace, covering her completely in its thick folds, and then it swayed back upon its stem.

"Why, she's gone!" gasped Ojo, in amazement, and listening carefully he thought he could hear the muffled screams of Scraps coming from the center of the folded leaf. But, before he could think what he ought to do to save her,

another leaf bent down and captured the Glass Cat, rolling around the little creature until she was completely hidden, and then straightening up again upon its stem.

"Look out," cried the Woozy. "Run! Run fast, or you are lost."

Ojo turned and saw the Woozy running swiftly up the road. But the last leaf of the row of plants seized the beast even as he ran and instantly he disappeared from sight.

The boy had no chance to escape. Half a dozen of the great leaves were bending toward him from different directions and as he stood hesitating one of them clutched him in its embrace. In a flash he was in the dark. Then he felt himself gently lifted until he was swaying in the air, with the folds of the leaf hugging him on all sides.

At first he struggled hard to escape, crying out in anger: "Let me go! Let me go!" But neither struggles nor protests had any effect whatever. The leaf held him firmly and he was a prisoner.

Then Ojo quieted himself and tried to think. Despair fell upon him when he remembered that all his little party had been captured, even as he was, and there was none to save them.

"I might have expected it," he sobbed, miserably. "I'm Ojo the Unlucky, and something dreadful was sure to happen to me."

He pushed against the leaf that held him and found it to be soft, but thick and firm. It was like a great bandage all around him and he found it difficult to move his body or limbs in order to change their position.

The minutes passed and became hours. Ojo wondered how long one could live in such a condition and if the leaf would gradually sap his strength and even his life, in order to feed itself. The little Munchkin boy had never heard of any person dying in the Land of Oz, but he knew one could suffer a great deal of pain. His greatest fear at this time was that he would always remain imprisoned in the beautiful leaf and never see the light of day again.

No sound came to him through the leaf; all around was intense silence. Ojo wondered if Scraps had stopped screaming, or if the folds of the leaf prevented his hearing her. By and by he thought he heard a whistle, as of some one whistling a tune. Yes; it really must be some one whistling, he decided, for he could follow the strains of a pretty Munchkin melody that Unc Nunkie used to sing to him. The sounds were low and sweet and, although they reached Ojo's ears very faintly, they were clear and harmonious.

Could the leaf whistle, Ojo wondered? Nearer and nearer came the sounds and then they seemed to be just the other side of the leaf that was hugging him.

Suddenly the whole leaf toppled and fell, carrying the boy with it, and while he sprawled at full length the folds slowly relaxed and set him free. He scrambled quickly to his feet and found that a strange man was standing before him — a man so curious in appearance that the boy stared with round eyes.

He was a big man, with shaggy whiskers, shaggy eyebrows, shaggy hair — but kindly blue eyes that were gentle as those of a cow. On his head was a green velvet hat with a jeweled band, which was all shaggy around the brim. Rich but shaggy laces were at his throat; a coat with shaggy edges was decorated with diamond buttons; the velvet breeches had jeweled buckles at the knees and shags all around the bottoms. On his breast hung a medallion bearing a picture of Princess Dorothy of Oz, and in his hand, as he stood looking at Ojo, was a sharp knife shaped like a dagger.

"Oh!" exclaimed Ojo, greatly astonished at the sight of this stranger; and then he added: "Who has saved me, sir?"

"Can't you see?" replied the other, with a smile; "I'm the Shaggy Man."

"Yes; I can see that," said the boy, nodding. "Was it you who rescued me from the leaf?"

"None other, you may be sure. But take care, or I shall have to rescue you again."

Ojo gave a jump, for he saw several broad leaves leaning toward him; but the Shaggy Man began to whistle again, and at the sound the leaves all straightened up on their stems and kept still.

The man now took Ojo's arm and led him up the road, past the last of the great plants, and not till he was safely beyond their reach did he cease his whistling.

"You see, the music charms 'em," said he. "Singing or whistling — it doesn't matter which — makes 'em behave, and nothing else will. I always whistle as I go by 'em and so they always let me alone. To-day as I went by, whistling, I saw a leaf curled and knew there must be something inside it. I cut down the leaf with my knife and — out you popped. Lucky I passed by, wasn't it?"

"You were very kind," said Ojo, "and I thank you. Will you please rescue my companions, also?"

"What companions?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"The leaves grabbed them all," said the boy. "There's a Patchwork Girl and — "

"A what?"

"A girl made of patchwork, you know. She's alive and her name is Scraps. And there's a Glass Cat — "

“Glass?” asked the Shaggy Man.

“All glass.”

“And alive?”

“Yes,” said Ojo; “she has pink brains. And there’s a Woozy — ”

“What’s a Woozy?” inquired the Shaggy Man.

“Why, I — I — can’t describe it,” answered the boy, greatly perplexed. “But it’s a queer animal with three hairs on the tip of its tail that won’t come out and — ”

“What won’t come out?” asked the Shaggy Man; “the tail?”

“The hairs won’t come out. But you’ll see the Woozy, if you’ll please rescue it, and then you’ll know just what it is.”

“Of course,” said the Shaggy Man, nodding his shaggy head. And then he walked back among the plants, still whistling, and found the three leaves which were curled around Ojo’s traveling companions. The first leaf he cut down released Scraps, and on seeing her the Shaggy Man threw back his shaggy head, opened wide his mouth and laughed so shaggily and yet so merrily, that Scraps liked him at once. Then he took off his hat and made her a low bow, saying:

“My dear, you’re a wonder. I must introduce you to my friend the Scarecrow.”

When he cut down the second leaf he rescued the Glass Cat, and Bungle was so frightened that she scampered away like a streak and soon had joined Ojo, when she sat beside him panting and trembling. The last plant of all the row had captured the Woozy, and a big bunch in the center of the curled leaf showed plainly where he was. With his sharp knife the Shaggy Man sliced off the stem of the leaf and as it fell and unfolded out trotted the Woozy and escaped beyond the reach of any more of the dangerous plants.

11 A Good Friend

A GOOD FRIEND

CHAP. 11.

SOON the entire party was gathered on the road of yellow bricks, quite beyond the reach of the beautiful but treacherous plants. The Shaggy Man, staring first at one and then at the other, seemed greatly pleased and interested.

"I've seen queer things since I came to the Land of Oz," said he, "but

never anything queerer than this band of adventurers. Let us sit down a while, and have a talk and get acquainted."

"Haven't you always lived in the Land of Oz?" asked the Munchkin boy.

"No; I used to live in the big, outside world. But I came here once with Dorothy, and Ozma let me stay."

"How do you like Oz?" asked Scraps. "Isn't the country and the climate grand?"

"It's the finest country in all the world, even if it is a fairyland, and I'm happy every minute I live in it," said the Shaggy Man. "But tell me something about yourselves."

So Ojo related the story of his visit to the house of the Crooked Magician, and how he met there the Glass Cat, and how the Patchwork Girl was brought to life and of the terrible accident to Unc Nunkie and Margolotte. Then he told how he had set out to find the five different things which the Magician needed to make a charm that would restore the marble figures to life, one requirement being three hairs from a Woozy's tail.

"We found the Woozy," explained the boy, "and he agreed to give us the three hairs; but we couldn't pull them out. So we had to bring the Woozy along with us."

"I see," returned the Shaggy Man, who had listened with interest to the story. "But perhaps I, who am big and strong, can pull those three hairs from the Woozy's tail."

"Try it, if you like," said the Woozy.

So the Shaggy Man tried it, but pull as hard as he could he failed to get the hairs out of the Woozy's tail. So he sat down again and wiped his shaggy face with a shaggy silk handkerchief and said:

"It doesn't matter. If you can keep the Woozy until you get the rest of the things you need, you can take the beast and his three hairs to the Crooked Magician and let him find a way to extract 'em. What are the other things you are to find?"

"One," said Ojo, "is a six-leaved clover."

"You ought to find that in the fields around the Emerald City," said the Shaggy Man. "There is a Law against picking six-leaved clovers, but I think I can get Ozma to let you have one."

"Thank you," replied Ojo. "The next thing is the left wing of a yellow butterfly."

"For that you must go to the Winkie Country," the Shaggy Man declared. "I've never noticed any butterflies there, but that is the yellow country of Oz and it's ruled by a good friend of mine, the Tin Woodman."

"Oh, I've heard of him!" exclaimed Ojo. "He must be a wonderful man."

“So he is, and his heart is wonderfully kind. I’m sure the Tin Woodman will do all in his power to help you to save your Unc Nunkie and poor Margolotte.”

“The next thing I must find,” said the Munchkin boy, “is a gill of water from a dark well.”

“Indeed! Well, that is more difficult,” said the Shaggy Man, scratching his left ear in a puzzled way. “I’ve never heard of a dark well; have you?”

“No,” said Ojo.

“Do you know where one may be found?” inquired the Shaggy Man.

“I can’t imagine,” said Ojo.

“Then we must ask the Scarecrow.”

“The Scarecrow! But surely, sir, a scarecrow can’t know anything.”

“Most scarecrows don’t, I admit,” answered the Shaggy Man. “But this Scarecrow of whom I speak is very intelligent. He claims to possess the best brains in all Oz.”

“Better than mine?” asked Scraps.

“Better than mine?” echoed the Glass Cat. “Mine are pink, and you can see ‘em work.”

“Well, you can’t see the Scarecrow’s brains work, but they do a lot of clever thinking,” asserted the Shaggy Man. “If anyone knows where a dark well is, it’s my friend the Scarecrow.”

“Where does he live?” inquired Ojo.

“He has a splendid castle in the Winkie Country, near to the palace of his friend the Tin Woodman, and he is often to be found in the Emerald City, where he visits Dorothy at the royal palace.”

“Then we will ask him about the dark well,” said Ojo.

“But what else does this Crooked Magician want?” asked the Shaggy Man.

“A drop of oil from a live man’s body.”

“Oh; but there isn’t such a thing.”

“That is what I thought,” replied Ojo; “but the Crooked Magician said it wouldn’t be called for by the recipe if it couldn’t be found, and therefore I must search until I find it.”

“I wish you good luck,” said the Shaggy Man, shaking his head doubtfully; “but I imagine you’ll have a hard job getting a drop of oil from a live man’s body. There’s blood in a body, but no oil.”

"There's cotton in mine," said Scraps, dancing a little jig.

"I don't doubt it," returned the Shaggy Man admiringly. "You're a regular comforter and as sweet as patchwork can be. All you lack is dignity."

"I hate dignity," cried Scraps, kicking a pebble high in the air and then trying to catch it as it fell. "Half the fools and all the wise folks are dignified, and I'm neither the one nor the other."

"She's just crazy," explained the Glass Cat.

The Shaggy Man laughed.

"She's delightful, in her way," he said. "I'm sure Dorothy will be pleased with her, and the Scarecrow will dote on her. Did you say you were traveling toward the Emerald City?"

“Yes,” replied Ojo. “I thought that the best place to go, at first, because the six-leaved clover may be found there.”

“I’ll go with you,” said the Shaggy Man, “and show you the way.”

“Thank you,” exclaimed Ojo. “I hope it won’t put you out any.”

“No,” said the other, “I wasn’t going anywhere in particular. I’ve been a rover all my life, and although Ozma has given me a suite of beautiful rooms in her palace I still get the wandering fever once in a while and start out to roam the country over. I’ve been away from the Emerald City several weeks, this time, and now that I’ve met you and your friends I’m sure it will interest me to accompany you to the great city of Oz and introduce you to my friends.”

“That will be very nice,” said the boy, gratefully.

“I hope your friends are not dignified,” observed Scraps.

“Some are, and some are not,” he answered; “but I never criticise my friends. If they are really true friends, they may be anything they like, for all of me.”

“There’s some sense in that,” said Scraps, nodding her queer head in approval. “Come on, and let’s get to the Emerald City as soon as possible.” With this she ran up the path, skipping and dancing, and then turned to await them.

“It is quite a distance from here to the Emerald City,” remarked the Shaggy Man, “so we shall not get there to-day, nor to-morrow. Therefore let us take the jaunt in an easy manner. I’m an old traveler and have found that I never gain anything by being in a hurry. ‘Take it easy’ is my motto. If you can’t take it easy, take it as easy as you can.”

After walking some distance over the road of yellow bricks Ojo said he was hungry and would stop to eat some bread and cheese. He offered a portion of the food to the Shaggy Man, who thanked him but refused it.

“When I start out on my travels,” said he, “I carry along enough square meals to last me several weeks. Think I’ll indulge in one now, as long as we’re stopping anyway.”

Saying this, he took a bottle from his pocket and shook from it a tablet about the size of one of Ojo’s finger-nails.

“That,” announced the Shaggy Man, “is a square meal, in condensed form. Invention of the great Professor Wogglebug, of the Royal College of Athletics. It contains soup, fish, roast meat, salad, apple-dumplings, ice cream and chocolate-drops, all boiled down to this small size, so it can be conveniently carried and swallowed when you are hungry and need a square meal.”

“I’m square,” said the Woozy. “Give me one, please.”

So the Shaggy Man gave the Woozy a tablet from his bottle and the beast ate it in a twinkling.

"You have now had a six course dinner," declared the Shaggy Man.

"Pshaw!" said the Woozy, ungratefully, "I want to taste something. There's no fun in that sort of eating."

"One should only eat to sustain life," replied the Shaggy Man, "and that tablet is equal to a peck of other food."

"I don't care for it. I want something I can chew and taste," grumbled the Woozy.

"You are quite wrong, my poor beast," said the Shaggy Man in a tone of pity. "Think how tired your jaws would get chewing a square meal like this, if it were not condensed to the size of a small tablet — which you can swallow in a jiffy."

"Chewing isn't tiresome; it's fun," maintained the Woozy. "I always chew the honey-bees when I catch them. Give me some bread and cheese, Ojo."

"No, no! You've already eaten a big dinner!" protested the Shaggy Man.

"May be," answered the Woozy; "but I guess I'll fool myself by munching some bread and cheese. I may not be hungry, having eaten all those things you gave me, but I consider this eating business a matter of taste, and I like to realize what's going into me."

Ojo gave the beast what he wanted, but the Shaggy Man shook his shaggy head reproachfully and said there was no animal so obstinate or hard to convince as a Woozy.

At this moment a patter of footsteps was heard, and looking up they saw the live phonograph standing before them. It seemed to have passed through many adventures since Ojo and his comrades last saw the machine, for the varnish of its wooden case was all marred and dented and scratched in a way that gave it an aged and disreputable appearance.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Ojo, staring hard. "What has happened to you?"

"Nothing much," replied the phonograph in a sad and depressed voice. "I've had enough things thrown at me, since I left you, to stock a department store and furnish half a dozen bargain-counters."

"Are you so broken up that you can't play?" asked Scraps.

"No; I still am able to grind out delicious music. Just now I've a record on tap that is really superb," said the phonograph, growing more cheerful.

"That is too bad," remarked Ojo. "We've no objection to you as a machine, you know; but as a music-maker we hate you."

"Then why was I ever invented?" demanded the machine, in a tone of indignant protest.

They looked at one another inquiringly, but no one could answer such a

puzzling question. Finally the Shaggy Man said:

"I'd like to hear the phonograph play."

Ojo sighed. "We've been very happy since we met you, sir," he said.

"I know. But a little misery, at times, makes one appreciate happiness more. Tell me, Phony, what is this record like, which you say you have on tap?"

"It's a popular song, sir. In all civilized lands the common people have gone wild over it."

"Makes civilized folks wild folks, eh? Then it's dangerous."

"Wild with joy, I mean," explained the phonograph. "Listen. This song will prove a rare treat to you, I know. It made the author rich — for an author. It is called 'My Lulu.'"

Then the phonograph began to play. A strain of odd, jerky sounds was followed by these words, sung by a man through his nose with great vigor of expression:

"Ah want mah Lulu, mah cross-eyed Lulu; Ah want mah loo-loo, loo-loo, loo-loo, Lu! Ah love mah Lulu, mah cross-eyed Lulu, There ain't nobody else loves loo-loo, Lu!"

"Here — shut that off!" cried the Shaggy Man, springing to his feet. "What do you mean by such impertinence?"

"It's the latest popular song," declared the phonograph, speaking in a sulky tone of voice.

"A popular song?"

"Yes. One that the feeble-minded can remember the words of and those ignorant of music can whistle or sing. That makes a popular song popular, and the time is coming when it will take the place of all other songs."

"That time won't come to us, just yet," said the Shaggy Man, sternly: "I'm something of a singer myself, and I don't intend to be throttled by any Lulus like your cross-eyed one. I shall take you all apart, Mr. Phony, and scatter your pieces far and wide over the country, as a matter of kindness to the people you might meet if allowed to run around loose. Having performed this painful duty I shall — "

But before he could say more the phonograph turned and dashed up the road as fast as its four table-legs could carry it, and soon it had entirely disappeared from their view.

The Shaggy Man sat down again and seemed well pleased. "Some one else will save me the trouble of scattering that phonograph," said he; "for it is not possible that such a music-maker can last long in the Land of Oz. When you are rested, friends, let us go on our way."

During the afternoon the travelers found themselves in a lonely and uninhabited part of the country. Even the fields were no longer cultivated and the country began to resemble a wilderness. The road of yellow bricks seemed to have been neglected and became uneven and more difficult to walk upon. Scrubby underbrush grew on either side of the way, while huge rocks were scattered around in abundance.

But this did not deter Ojo and his friends from trudging on, and they beguiled the journey with jokes and cheerful conversation. Toward evening they reached a crystal spring which gushed from a tall rock by the roadside and near this spring stood a deserted cabin. Said the Shaggy Man, halting here:

"We may as well pass the night here, where there is shelter for our heads and good water to drink. Road beyond here is pretty bad; worst we shall have to travel; so let's wait until morning before we tackle it."

They agreed to this and Ojo found some brushwood in the cabin and made a fire on the hearth. The fire delighted Scraps, who danced before it until Ojo warned her she might set fire to herself and burn up. After that the Patchwork Girl kept at a respectful distance from the darting flames, but the Woozy lay down before the fire like a big dog and seemed to enjoy its warmth.

For supper the Shaggy Man ate one of his tablets, but Ojo stuck to his bread and cheese as the most satisfying food. He also gave a portion to the Woozy.

When darkness came on and they sat in a circle on the cabin floor, facing the firelight — there being no furniture of any sort in the place — Ojo said to

the Shaggy Man:

"Won't you tell us a story?"

"I'm not good at stories," was the reply; "but I sing like a bird."

"Raven, or crow?" asked the Glass Cat.

"Like a song bird. I'll prove it. I'll sing a song I composed myself. Don't tell anyone I'm a poet; they might want me to write a book. Don't tell 'em I can sing, or they'd want me to make records for that awful phonograph. Haven't time to be a public benefactor, so I'll just sing you this little song for your own amusement."

They were glad enough to be entertained, and listened with interest while the Shaggy Man chanted the following verses to a tune that was not unpleasant:

"I'll sing a song of Ozland, where wondrous creatures dwell And fruits and flowers and shady bowers abound in every dell, Where magic is a science and where no one shows surprise If some amazing thing takes place before his very eyes.

Our Ruler's a bewitching girl whom fairies love to please; She's always kept her magic sceptre to enforce decrees To make her people happy, for her heart is kind and true And to aid the needy and distressed is what she longs to do.

And then there's Princess Dorothy, as sweet as any rose, A lass from Kansas, where they don't grow fairies, I suppose; And there's the brainy Scarecrow, with a body stuffed with straw,141 Who utters words of wisdom rare that fill us all with awe.

I'll not forget Nick Chopper, the Woodman made of Tin, Whose tender heart thinks killing time is quite a dreadful sin, Nor old Professor Wogglebug, who's highly magnified And looks so big to everyone that he is filled with pride.

Jack Pumpkinhead's a dear old chum who might be called a chump, But won renown by riding round upon a magic Gump; The Sawhorse is a splendid steed and though he's made of wood He does as many thrilling stunts as any meat horse could.

And now I'll introduce a beast that ev'ryone adores — The Cowardly Lion shakes with fear 'most ev'ry time he roars, And yet he does the bravest things that any lion might, Because he knows that cowardice is not considered right.

There's Tik-tok — he's a clockwork man and quite a funny sight — He talks and walks mechanically, when he's wound up tight; And we've a Hungry Tiger who would babies love to eat But never does because we feed him other kinds of meat.

It's hard to name all of the freaks this noble Land's acquired; 'Twould make my song so very long that you would soon be tired; But give attention while I mention one wise Yellow Hen And Nine fine Tiny Piglets living in a golden pen.

Just search the whole world over — sail the seas from coast to coast — No other nation in creation queerer folks can boast; And now our rare museum will include a Cat of Glass, A Woozy, and — last but not least — a crazy Patchwork Lass."

Ojo was so pleased with this song that he applauded the singer by clapping his hands, and Scraps followed suit by clapping her padded fingers together, although they made no noise. The cat pounded on the floor with her glass paws — gently, so as not to break them — and the Woozy, which had been asleep, woke up to ask what the row was about.

"I seldom sing in public, for fear they might want me to start an opera company," remarked the Shaggy Man, who was pleased to know his effort was appreciated. "Voice, just now, is a little out of training; rusty, perhaps."143

"Tell me," said the Patchwork Girl earnestly, "do all those queer people you mention really live in the Land of Oz?"

"Every one of 'em. I even forgot one thing: Dorothy's Pink Kitten."

"For goodness sake!" exclaimed Bungle, sitting up and looking interested. "A Pink Kitten? How absurd! Is it glass?"

"No; just ordinary kitten."

"Then it can't amount to much. I have pink brains, and you can see 'em work."

"Dorothy's kitten is all pink — brains and all — except blue eyes. Name's Eureka. Great favorite at the royal palace," said the Shaggy Man, yawning.

The Glass Cat seemed annoyed.

“Do you think a pink kitten — common meat — is as pretty as I am?” she asked.

“Can’t say. Tastes differ, you know,” replied the Shaggy Man, yawning again. “But here’s a pointer that may be of service to you: make friends with Eureka and you’ll be solid at the palace.”

“I’m solid now; solid glass.”

“You don’t understand,” rejoined the Shaggy Man, sleepily. “Anyhow, make friends with the Pink Kitten and you’ll be all right. If the Pink Kitten despises you, look out for breakers.”

“Would anyone at the royal palace break a Glass Cat?”

“Might. You never can tell. Advise you to purr soft and look humble — if you can. And now I’m going to bed.”

Bungle considered the Shaggy Man’s advice so carefully that her pink brains were busy long after the others of the party were fast asleep.

12 The Giant Porcupine

THE GIANT PORCUPINE

NEXT morning they started out bright and early to follow the road of yellow bricks toward the Emerald City. The little Munchkin boy was beginning to feel tired from the long walk, and he had a great many things to think of and consider besides the events of the journey. At the wonderful Emerald City, which he would presently reach, were so many strange and curious people that he was half afraid of meeting them and wondered if they would prove

friendly and kind. Above all else, he could not drive from his mind the important errand on which he had come, and he was determined to devote every energy to finding the things that were necessary to prepare the magic recipe. He believed that until dear Unc Nunkie was restored to life he could feel no joy in anything, and often he wished that Unc could be with him, to see all the astonishing things Ojo was seeing. But alas Unc Nunkie was now a marble statue in the house of the Crooked Magician and Ojo must not falter in his efforts to save him.

The country through which they were passing was still rocky and deserted, with here and there a bush or a tree to break the dreary landscape. Ojo noticed one tree, especially, because it had such long, silky leaves and was so beautiful in shape. As he approached it he studied the tree earnestly, wondering if any fruit grew on it or if it bore pretty flowers.

Suddenly he became aware that he had been looking at that tree a long time — at least for five minutes — and it had remained in the same position, although the boy had continued to walk steadily on. So he stopped short, and when he stopped, the tree and all the landscape, as well as his companions, moved on before him and left him far behind.

Ojo uttered such a cry of astonishment that it aroused the Shaggy Man, who also halted. The others then stopped, too, and walked back to the boy.

"What's wrong?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Why, we're not moving forward a bit, no matter how fast we walk," declared Ojo. "Now that we have stopped, we are moving backward! Can't you see? Just notice that rock."

Scraps looked down at her feet and said: "The yellow bricks are not moving."

"But the whole road is," answered Ojo.

"True; quite true," agreed the Shaggy Man. "I know all about the tricks of this road, but I have been thinking of something else and didn't realize where we were."

"It will carry us back to where we started from," predicted Ojo, beginning to be nervous.

"No," replied the Shaggy Man; "it won't do that, for I know a trick to beat this tricky road. I've traveled this way before, you know. Turn around, all of you, and walk backward."

"What good will that do?" asked the cat.

"You'll find out, if you obey me," said the Shaggy Man.

So they all turned their backs to the direction in which they wished to go and began walking backward. In an instant Ojo noticed they were gaining ground and as they proceeded in this curious way they soon passed the tree

which had first attracted his attention to their difficulty.

"How long must we keep this up, Shags?" asked Scraps, who was constantly tripping and tumbling down, only to get up again with a laugh at her mishap.

"Just a little way farther," replied the Shaggy Man.

A few minutes later he called to them to turn about quickly and step forward, and as they obeyed the order they found themselves treading solid ground.

"That task is well over," observed the Shaggy Man. "It's a little tiresome to walk backward, but that is the only way to pass this part of the road, which has a trick of sliding back and carrying with it anyone who is walking upon it."

With new courage and energy they now trudged forward and after a time came to a place where the road cut through a low hill, leaving high banks on either side of it. They were traveling along this cut, talking together, when the Shaggy Man seized Scraps with one arm and Ojo with another and shouted: "Stop!"

"What's wrong now?" asked the Patchwork Girl.

"See there!" answered the Shaggy Man, pointing with his finger.

Directly in the center of the road lay a motionless object that bristled all over with sharp quills, which resembled arrows. The body was as big as a ten-bushel-basket, but the projecting quills made it appear to be four times bigger.

“Well, what of it?” asked Scraps.

“That is Chiss, who causes a lot of trouble along this road,” was the reply.

“Chiss! What is Chiss?”

“I think it is merely an overgrown porcupine, but here in Oz they consider Chiss an evil spirit. He’s different from a reg’lar porcupine, because he can throw his quills in any direction, which an American porcupine cannot do. That’s what makes old Chiss so dangerous. If we get too near, he’ll fire those quills at us and hurt us badly.”

“Then we will be foolish to get too near,” said Scraps.

“I’m not afraid,” declared the Woozy. “The Chiss is cowardly, I’m sure, and if it ever heard my awful, terrible, frightful growl, it would be scared stiff.”

“Oh; can you growl?” asked the Shaggy Man.

“That is the only ferocious thing about me,” asserted the Woozy with evident pride. “My growl makes an earthquake blush and the thunder ashamed of itself. If I growled at that creature you call Chiss, it would immediately think the world had cracked in two and bumped against the sun and moon, and that would cause the monster to run as far and as fast as its legs could carry it.”

“In that case,” said the Shaggy Man, “you are now able to do us all a great favor. Please growl.”

“But you forget,” returned the Woozy; “my tremendous growl would also frighten you, and if you happen to have heart disease you might expire.”

“True; but we must take that risk,” decided the Shaggy Man, bravely. “Being warned of what is to occur we must try to bear the terrific noise of your growl; but Chiss won’t expect it, and it will scare him away.”

The Woozy hesitated.

“I’m fond of you all, and I hate to shock you,” it said.

“Never mind,” said Ojo.

“You may be made deaf.”

“If so, we will forgive you.”

“Very well, then,” said the Woozy in a determined voice, and advanced a few steps toward the giant porcupine. Pausing to look back, it asked: “All ready?”

“All ready!” they answered.

“Then cover up your ears and brace yourselves firmly. Now, then — look out!”

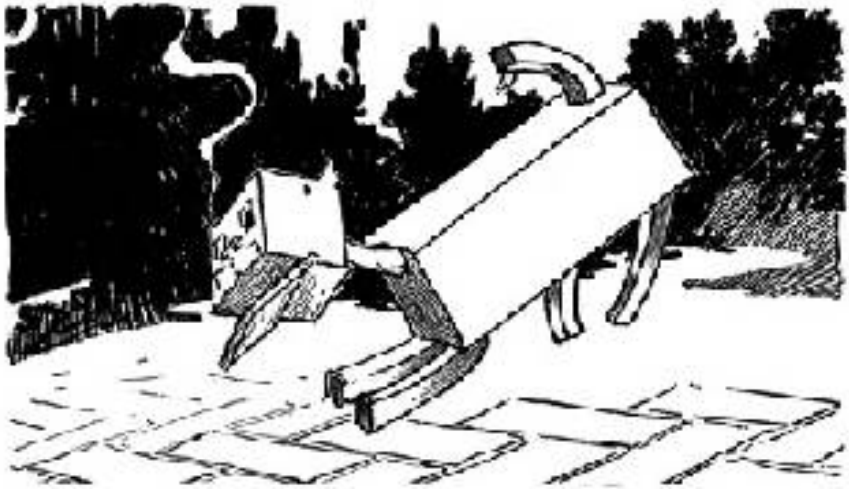
The Woozy turned toward Chiss, opened wide its mouth and said:

“Quee-ee-ee-eek.”

“Go ahead and growl,” said Scraps.

“Why, I — I *did* growl!” retorted the Woozy, who seemed much astonished.

“What, that little squeak?” she cried.



“It is the most awful growl that ever was heard, on land or sea, in caverns or in the sky,” protested the Woozy. “I wonder you stood the shock so well. Didn’t you feel the ground tremble? I suppose Chiss is now quite dead with fright.”

The Shaggy Man laughed merrily.

“Poor Wooz!” said he; “your growl wouldn’t scare a fly.”

The Woozy seemed to be humiliated and surprised. It hung its head a moment, as if in shame or sorrow, but then it said with renewed confidence: “Anyhow, my eyes can flash fire; and good fire, too; good enough to set fire to a fence!”

“That is true,” declared Scraps; “I saw it done myself. But your ferocious growl isn’t as loud as the tick of a beetle — or one of Ojo’s snores when he’s fast asleep.”

“Perhaps,” said the Woozy, humbly, “I have been mistaken about my growl. It has always sounded very fearful to me, but that may have been because it was so close to my ears.”

“Never mind,” Ojo said soothingly; “it is a great talent to be able to flash fire from your eyes. No one else can do that.”

As they stood hesitating what to do Chiss stirred and suddenly a shower of quills came flying toward them, almost filling the air, they were so many. Scraps realized in an instant that they had gone too near to Chiss for safety, so she sprang in front of Ojo and shielded him from the darts, which stuck their points into her own body until she resembled one of those targets they shoot arrows at in archery games. The Shaggy Man dropped flat on his face to avoid the shower, but one quill struck him in the leg and went far in. As for the Glass Cat, the quills rattled off her body without making even a scratch, and the skin of the Woozy was so thick and tough that he was not hurt at all.

When the attack was over they all ran to the Shaggy Man, who was moaning and groaning, and Scraps promptly pulled the quill out of his leg. Then up he jumped and ran over to Chiss, putting his foot on the monster's neck and holding it a prisoner. The body of the great porcupine was now as smooth as leather, except for the holes where the quills had been, for it had shot every single quill in that one wicked shower.

"Let me go!" it shouted angrily. "How dare you put your foot on Chiss?"

"I'm going to do worse than that, old boy," replied the Shaggy Man. "You have annoyed travelers on this road long enough, and now I shall put an end to you."

"You can't!" returned Chiss. "Nothing can kill me, as you know perfectly well."

"Perhaps that is true," said the Shaggy Man in a tone of disappointment. "Seems to me I've been told before that you can't be killed. But if I let you go, what will you do?"

"Pick up my quills again," said Chiss in a sulky voice.

"And then shoot them at more travelers? No; that won't do. You must promise me to stop throwing quills at people."

"I won't promise anything of the sort," declared Chiss.

"Why not?"

"Because it is my nature to throw quills, and every animal must do what Nature intends it to do. It isn't fair for you to blame me. If it were wrong for

me to throw quills, then I wouldn't be made with quills to throw. The proper thing for you to do is to keep out of my way."

"Why, there's some sense in that argument," admitted the Shaggy Man, thoughtfully; "but people who are strangers, and don't know you are here, won't be able to keep out of your way."

"Tell you what," said Scraps, who was trying to pull the quills out of her own body, "let's gather up all the quills and take them away with us; then old Chiss won't have any left to throw at people."

"Ah, that's a clever idea. You and Ojo must gather up the quills while I hold Chiss a prisoner; for, if I let him go, he will get some of his quills and be able to throw them again."

So Scraps and Ojo picked up all the quills and tied them in a bundle so they might easily be carried. After this the Shaggy Man released Chiss and let him go, knowing that he was harmless to injure anyone.

"It's the meanest trick I ever heard of," muttered the porcupine gloomily. "How would you like it, Shaggy Man, if I took all your shags away from you?"

"If I threw my shags and hurt people, you would be welcome to capture them," was the reply.

Then they walked on and left Chiss standing in the road sullen and disconsolate. The Shaggy Man limped as he walked, for his wound still hurt him, and Scraps was much annoyed because the quills had left a number of small holes in her patches.

When they came to a flat stone by the roadside the Shaggy Man sat down to rest, and then Ojo opened his basket and took out the bundle of charms the Crooked Magician had given him.

"I am Ojo the Unlucky," he said, "or we would never have met that dreadful porcupine. But I will see if I can find anything among these charms which will cure your leg."

Soon he discovered that one of the charms was labelled: "For flesh wounds," and this the boy separated from the others. It was only a bit of dried root, taken from some unknown shrub, but the boy rubbed it upon the wound made by the quill and in a few moments the place was healed entirely and the Shaggy Man's leg was as good as ever.

"Rub it on the holes in my patches," suggested Scraps, and Ojo tried it, but without any effect.

"The charm you need is a needle and thread," said the Shaggy Man. "But do not worry, my dear; those holes do not look badly, at all."

"They'll let in the air, and I don't want people to think I'm airy, or that I've been stuck up," said the Patchwork Girl.

“You were certainly stuck up until we pulled out those quills,” observed Ojo, with a laugh.

So now they went on again and coming presently to a pond of muddy water they tied a heavy stone to the bundle of quills and sunk it to the bottom of the pond, to avoid carrying it farther.

13 Scraps and the Scarecrow

FROM here on the country improved and the desert places began to give way to fertile spots; still no houses were yet to be seen near the road. There were some hills, with valleys between them, and on reaching the top of one of these hills the travelers found before them a high wall, running to the right and the left as far as their eyes could reach. Immediately in front of them, where the wall crossed the roadway, stood a gate having stout iron bars that

extended from top to bottom. They found, on coming nearer, that this gate was locked with a great padlock, rusty through lack of use.

"Well," said Scraps, "I guess we'll stop here."

"It's a good guess," replied Ojo. "Our way is barred by this great wall and gate. It looks as if no one had passed through in many years."

"Looks are deceiving," declared the Shaggy Man, laughing at their disappointed faces, "and this barrier is the most deceiving thing in all Oz."

"It prevents our going any farther, anyhow," said Scraps. "There is no one to mind the gate and let people through, and we've no key to the padlock."

"True," replied Ojo, going a little nearer to peep through the bars of the gate. "What shall we do, Shaggy Man? If we had wings we might fly over the wall, but we cannot climb it and unless we get to the Emerald City I won't be able to find the things to restore Unc Nunkie to life."

"All very true," answered the Shaggy Man, quietly; "but I know this gate, having passed through it many times."

"How?" they all eagerly inquired.

"I'll show you how," said he. He stood Ojo in the middle of the road and placed Scraps just behind him, with her padded hands on his shoulders. After the Patchwork Girl came the Woozy, who held a part of her skirt in his mouth. Then, last of all, was the Glass Cat, holding fast to the Woozy's tail with her glass jaws.

"Now," said the Shaggy Man, "you must all shut your eyes tight, and keep them shut until I tell you to open them."

"I can't," objected Scraps. "My eyes are buttons, and they won't shut."

So the Shaggy Man tied his red handkerchief over the Patchwork Girl's eyes and examined all the others to make sure they had their eyes fast shut and could see nothing.

"What's the game, anyhow — blind-man's-buff?" asked Scraps.

"Keep quiet!" commanded the Shaggy Man, sternly. "All ready? Then follow me."

He took Ojo's-hand and led him forward over the road of yellow bricks,

toward the gate. Holding fast to one another they all followed in a row, expecting every minute to bump against the iron bars. The Shaggy Man also had his eyes closed, but marched straight ahead, nevertheless, and after he had taken one hundred steps, by actual count, he stopped and said:

"Now you may open your eyes."

They did so, and to their astonishment found the wall and the gateway far behind them, while in front the former Blue Country of the Munchkins had given way to green fields, with pretty farm-houses scattered among them.

"That wall," explained the Shaggy Man, "is what is called an optical illusion. It is quite real while you have your eyes open, but if you are not looking at it the barrier doesn't exist at all. It's the same way with many other evils in life; they seem to exist, and yet it's all seeming and not true. You will notice that the wall — or what we thought was a wall — separates the Munchkin Country from the green country that surrounds the Emerald City, which lies exactly in the center of Oz. There are two roads of yellow bricks through the Munchkin Country, but the one we followed is the best of the two. Dorothy once traveled the other way, and met with more dangers than we did. But all our troubles are over for the present, as another day's journey will bring us to the great Emerald City."

They were delighted to know this, and proceeded with new courage. In a couple of hours they stopped at a farmhouse, where the people were very hospitable and invited them to dinner. The farm folk regarded Scraps with much curiosity but no great astonishment, for they were accustomed to seeing extraordinary people in the Land of Oz.

The woman of this house got her needle and thread and sewed up the holes made by the porcupine quills in the Patchwork Girl's body, after which Scraps was assured she looked as beautiful as ever.

"You ought to have a hat to wear," remarked the woman, "for that would keep the sun from fading the colors of your face. I have some patches and scraps put away, and if you will wait two or three days I'll make you a lovely hat that will match the rest of you."

"Never mind the hat," said Scraps, shaking her yarn braids; "it's a kind offer, but we can't stop. I can't see that my colors have faded a particle, as yet; can you?"

"Not much," replied the woman. "You are still very gorgeous,164 in spite of your long journey."

The children of the house wanted to keep the Glass Cat to play with, so Bungle was offered a good home if she would remain; but the cat was too much interested in Ojo's adventures and refused to stop.

"Children are rough playmates," she remarked to the Shaggy Man, "and

although this home is more pleasant than that of the Crooked Magician I fear I would soon be smashed to pieces by the boys and girls."

After they had rested themselves they renewed their journey, finding the road now smooth and pleasant to walk upon and the country growing more beautiful the nearer they drew to the Emerald City.

By and by Ojo began to walk on the green grass, looking carefully around him.

"What are you trying to find?" asked Scraps.

"A six-leaved clover," said he.

"Don't do that!" exclaimed the Shaggy Man, earnestly. "It's against the Law to pick a six-leaved clover. You must wait until you get Ozma's consent."

"She wouldn't know it," declared the boy.

"Ozma knows many things," said the Shaggy Man. "In her room is a Magic Picture that shows any scene in the Land of Oz where strangers or travelers happen to be. She may be watching the picture of us even now, and noticing everything that we do."

"Does she always watch the Magic Picture?" asked Ojo.

"Not always, for she has many other things to do; but, as I said, she may be watching us this very minute."

"I don't care," said Ojo, in an obstinate tone of voice; "Ozma's only a girl."

The Shaggy Man looked at him in surprise.

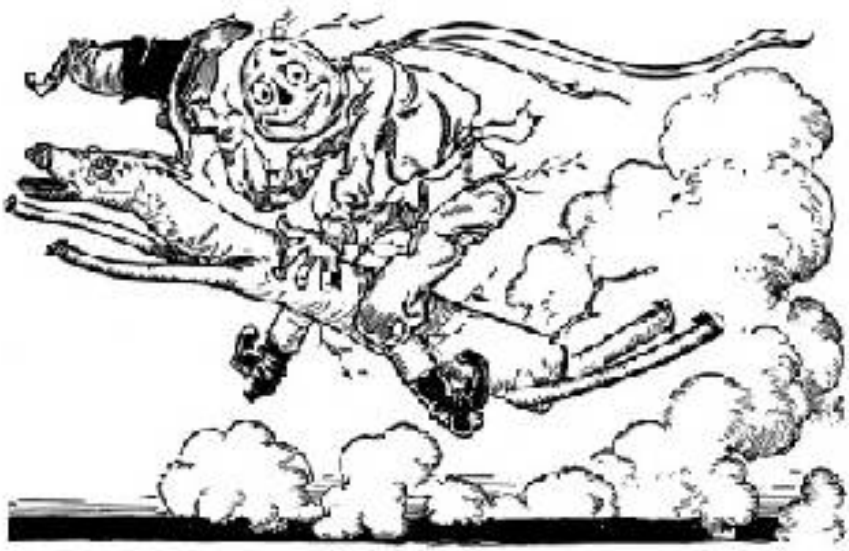
"You ought to care for Ozma," said he, "if you expect to save your uncle. For, if you displease our powerful Ruler, your journey will surely prove a failure; whereas, if you make a friend of Ozma, she will gladly assist you. As for her being a girl, that is another reason why you should obey her laws, if you are courteous and polite. Everyone in Oz loves Ozma and hates her enemies, for she is as just as she is powerful."

Ojo sulked a while, but finally returned to the road and kept away from the green clover. The boy was moody and bad tempered for an hour or two afterward, because he could really see no harm in picking a six-leaved clover, if he found one, and in spite of what the Shaggy Man had said he considered Ozma's law to be unjust.

They presently came to a beautiful grove of tall and stately trees, through which the road wound in sharp curves — first one way and then another. As they were walking through this grove they heard some one in the distance singing, and the sounds grew nearer and nearer until they could distinguish the words, although the bend in the road still hid the singer. The song was something like this:166

“Here’s to the hale old bale of straw That’s cut from the waving grain, The sweetest sight man ever saw In forest, dell or plain. It fills me with a crunkling joy A straw-stack to behold, For then I pad this lucky boy With strands of yellow gold.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the Shaggy Man; “here comes my friend the Scarecrow.”



“What, a live Scarecrow?” asked Ojo.

“Yes; the one I told you of. He’s a splendid fellow, and very intelligent. You’ll like him, I’m sure.”

Just then the famous Scarecrow of Oz came around the bend in the road, riding astride a wooden Sawhorse which was so small that its rider’s legs nearly touched the ground.

The Scarecrow wore the blue dress of the Munchkins, in which country he was made, and on his head was set a peaked hat with a flat brim trimmed with tinkling bells. A rope was tied around his waist to hold him in shape, for he was stuffed with straw in every part of him except the top of his head, where at one time the Wizard of Oz had placed sawdust, mixed with needles and pins, to sharpen his wits. The head itself was merely a bag of cloth, fastened to the body at the neck, and on the front of this bag was painted the face — ears, eyes, nose and mouth.

The Scarecrow’s face was very interesting, for it bore a comical and yet winning expression, although one eye was a bit larger than the other and the ears were not mates. The Munchkin farmer who had made the Scarecrow had neglected to sew him together with close stitches and therefore some of the

straw with which he was stuffed was inclined to stick out between the seams. His hands consisted of padded white gloves, with the fingers long and rather limp, and on his feet he wore Munchkin boots of blue leather with broad turns at the tops of them.

The Sawhorse was almost as curious as its rider. It had been rudely made, in the beginning, to saw logs upon, so that its body was a short length of a log, and its legs were stout branches fitted into four holes made in the body. The tail was formed by a small branch that had been left on the log, while the head was a gnarled bump on one end of the body. Two knots of wood formed the eyes, and the mouth was a gash chopped in the log. When the Sawhorse first came to life it had no ears at all, and so could not hear; but the boy who then owned him had whittled two ears out of bark and stuck them in the head, after which the Sawhorse heard very distinctly.

This queer wooden horse was a great favorite with Princess Ozma, who had caused the bottoms of its legs to be shod with plates of gold, so the wood would not wear away. Its saddle was made of cloth-of-gold richly encrusted with precious gems. It had never worn a bridle.

As the Scarecrow came in sight of the party of travelers, he reined in his wooden steed and dismounted, greeting the Shaggy Man with a smiling nod. Then he turned to stare at the Patchwork Girl in wonder, while she in turn stared at him.

"Shags," he whispered, drawing the Shaggy Man aside, "pat me into shape, there's a good fellow!"

While his friend punched and patted the Scarecrow's body, to smooth out the humps, Scraps turned to Ojo and whispered: "Roll me out, please; I've sagged down dreadfully from walking so much and men like to see a stately figure."

She then fell upon the ground and the boy rolled her back and forth like a rolling-pin, until the cotton had filled all the spaces in her patchwork covering and the body had lengthened to its fullest extent. Scraps and the Scarecrow both finished their hasty toilets at the same time, and again they faced each other.

"Allow me, Miss Patchwork," said the Shaggy Man, "to present my friend, the Right Royal Scarecrow of Oz. Scarecrow, this is Miss Scraps Patches; Scraps, this is the Scarecrow. Scarecrow — Scraps; Scraps — Scarecrow."

They both bowed with much dignity.

"Forgive me for staring so rudely," said the Scarecrow, "but you are the most beautiful sight my eyes have ever beheld."

"That is a high compliment from one who is himself so beautiful,"

murmured Scraps, casting down her suspender-button eyes by lowering her head. “But, tell me, good sir, are you not a trifle lumpy?”

“Yes, of course; that’s my straw, you know. It bunches up, sometimes, in spite of all my efforts to keep it even. Doesn’t your straw ever bunch?”

“Oh, I’m stuffed with cotton,” said Scraps. “It never bunches, but it’s inclined to pack down and make me sag.”

“But cotton is a high-grade stuffing. I may say it is even more stylish, not to say aristocratic, than straw,” said the Scarecrow politely. “Still, it is but proper that one so entrancingly lovely should have the best stuffing there is going. I — er — I’m *so* glad I’ve met you, Miss Scraps! Introduce us again, Shaggy.”170

“Once is enough,” replied the Shaggy Man, laughing at his friend’s enthusiasm.

“Then tell me where you found her, and — Dear me, what a queer cat! What are *you* made of — gelatine?”

“Pure glass,” answered the cat, proud to have attracted the Scarecrow’s attention. “I am much more beautiful than the Patchwork Girl. I’m transparent, and Scraps isn’t; I’ve pink brains — you can see ‘em work; and I’ve a ruby heart, finely polished, while Scraps hasn’t any heart at all.”

“No more have I,” said the Scarecrow, shaking hands with Scraps, as if to congratulate her on the fact. “I’ve a friend, the Tin Woodman, who has a heart, but I find I get along pretty well without one. And so — Well, well!

here's a little Munchkin boy, too. Shake hands, my little man. How are you?"

Ojo placed his hand in the flabby stuffed glove that served the Scarecrow for a hand, and the Scarecrow pressed it so cordially that the straw in his glove crackled.

Meantime, the Woozy had approached the Sawhorse and begun to sniff at it. The Sawhorse resented this familiarity and with a sudden kick pounded the Woozy squarely on its head with one gold-shod foot.

"Take that, you monster!" it cried angrily.

The Woozy never even winked.

"To be sure," he said; "I'll take anything I have to. But don't make me angry, you wooden beast, or my eyes will flash fire and burn you up."

The Sawhorse rolled its knot eyes wickedly and kicked again, but the Woozy trotted away and said to the Scarecrow:

"What a sweet disposition that creature has! I advise you to chop it up for kindling-wood and use me to ride upon. My back is flat and you can't fall off."

"I think the trouble is that you haven't been properly introduced," said the Scarecrow, regarding the Woozy with much wonder, for he had never seen such a queer animal before. "The Sawhorse is the favorite steed of Princess Ozma, the Ruler of the Land of Oz, and he lives in a stable decorated with pearls and emeralds, at the rear of the royal palace. He is swift as the wind, untiring, and is kind to his friends. All the people of Oz respect the Sawhorse highly, and when I visit Ozma she sometimes allows me to ride him — as I am doing to-day. Now you know what an important personage the Sawhorse is, and if some one — perhaps yourself — will tell me your name, your rank and station, and your history, it will give me pleasure to relate them to the Sawhorse. This will lead to mutual respect and friendship."

The Woozy was somewhat abashed by this speech and did not know how to reply. But Ojo said:

"This square beast is called the Woozy, and he isn't of much importance except that he has three hairs growing on the tip of his tail."

The Scarecrow looked and saw that this was true.

"But," said he, in a puzzled way, "what makes those three hairs important? The Shaggy Man has thousands of hairs, but no one has ever accused him of being important."

So Ojo related the sad story of Unc Nunkie's transformation into a marble statue, and told how he had set out to find the things the Crooked Magician wanted, in order to make a charm that would restore his uncle to life. One of the requirements was three hairs from a Woozy's tail, but not being able to pull out the hairs they had been obliged to take the Woozy with them.

The Scarecrow looked grave as he listened and he shook his head several times, as if in disapproval.

"We must see Ozma about this matter," he said. "That Crooked Magician is breaking the Law by practicing magic without a license, and I'm not sure Ozma will allow him to restore your uncle to life."

"Already I have warned the boy of that," declared the Shaggy Man.

At this Ojo began to cry. "I want my Unc Nunkie!" he exclaimed. "I know how he can be restored to life, and I'm going to do it — Ozma or no Ozma! What right has this girl Ruler to keep my Unc Nunkie a statue forever?"

"Don't worry about that just now," advised the Scarecrow. "Go on to the Emerald City, and when you reach it have the Shaggy Man take you to see Dorothy. Tell her your story and I'm sure she will help you. Dorothy is Ozma's best friend, and if you can win her to your side your uncle is pretty safe to live again." Then he turned to the Woozy and said: "I'm afraid you are not important enough to be introduced to the Sawhorse, after all."

"I'm a better beast than he is," retorted the Woozy, indignantly. "My eyes can flash fire, and his can't."

"Is this true?" inquired the Scarecrow, turning to the Munchkin boy.

"Yes," said Ojo, and told how the Woozy had set fire to the fence.

"Have you any other accomplishments?" asked the Scarecrow.

"I have a most terrible growl — that is, *sometimes*," said the Woozy, as Scraps laughed merrily and the Shaggy Man smiled. But the Patchwork Girl's laugh made the Scarecrow forget all about the Woozy. He said to her:

“What an admirable young lady you are, and what jolly good company! We must be better acquainted, for never before have I met a girl with such exquisite coloring or such natural, artless manners.”

“No wonder they call you the Wise Scarecrow,” replied Scraps.

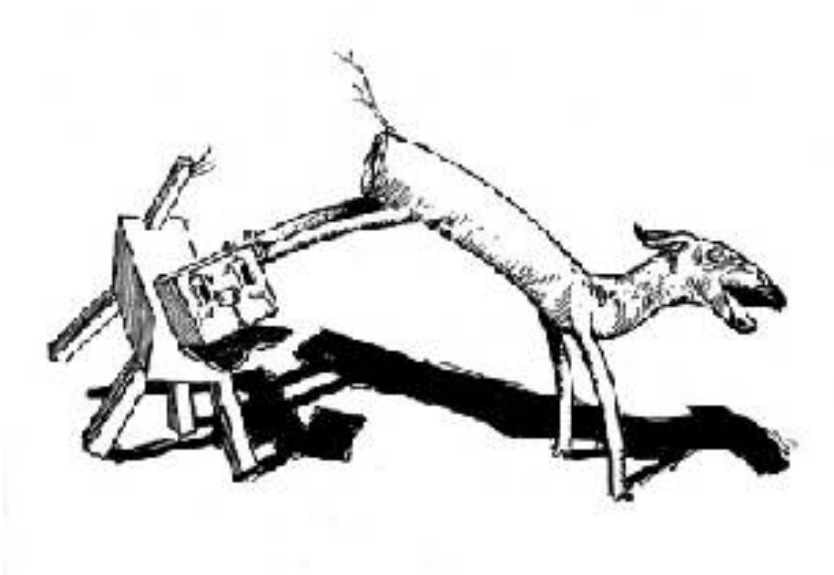
“When you arrive at the Emerald City I will see you again,” continued the Scarecrow. “Just now I am going to call upon an old friend — an ordinary young lady named Jinjur — who has promised to repaint my left ear for me. You may have noticed that the paint on my left ear has peeled off and faded, which affects my hearing on that side. Jinjur always fixes me up when I get weather-worn.”

“When do you expect to return to the Emerald City?” asked the Shaggy Man.

“I’ll be there this evening, for I’m anxious to have a long talk with Miss Scraps. How is it, Sawhorse; are you equal to a swift run?”

“Anything that suits you suits me,” returned the wooden horse.

So the Scarecrow mounted to the jeweled saddle and waved his hat, when the Sawhorse darted away so swiftly that they were out of sight in an instant.



14 Ojo Breaks the Law

OJO BREAKS THE LAW

"WHAT a queer man," remarked the Munchkin boy, when the party had resumed its journey.

"And so nice and polite," added Scraps, bobbing her head. "I think he is the handsomest man I've seen since I came to life."

"Handsome is as handsome does," quoted the Shaggy Man; "but we must

admit that no living scarecrow is handsomer. The chief merit of my friend is that he is a great thinker, and in Oz it is considered good policy to follow his advice."

"I didn't notice any brains in his head," observed the Glass Cat.

"You can't see 'em work, but they're there, all right," declared the Shaggy Man. "I hadn't much confidence in his brains myself, when first I came to Oz, for a humbug Wizard gave them to him; but I was soon convinced that the Scarecrow is really wise; and, unless his brains make him so, such wisdom is unaccountable."

"Is the Wizard of Oz a humbug?" asked Ojo.

"Not now. He was once, but he has reformed and now assists Glinda the Good, who is the Royal Sorceress of Oz and the only one licensed to practice magic or sorcery. Glinda has taught our old Wizard a good many clever things, so he is no longer a humbug."

They walked a little while in silence and then Ojo said:

"If Ozma forbids the Crooked Magician to restore Unc Nunkie to life, what shall I do?"

The Shaggy Man shook his head.

"In that case you can't do anything," he said. "But don't be discouraged yet. We will go to Princess Dorothy and tell her your troubles, and then we will let her talk to Ozma. Dorothy has the kindest little heart in the world, and she has been through so many troubles herself that she is sure to sympathize with you."

"Is Dorothy the little girl who came here from Kansas?" asked the boy.

"Yes. In Kansas she was Dorothy Gale. I used to know her there, and she brought me to the Land of Oz. But now Ozma has made her a Princess, and Dorothy's Aunt Em and Uncle Henry are here, too." Here the Shaggy Man uttered a long sigh, and then he continued: "It's a queer country, this Land of Oz; but I like it, nevertheless."

"What is queer about it?" asked Scraps.

"You, for instance," said he.

"Did you see no girls as beautiful as I am in your own country?" she inquired.

"None with the same gorgeous, variegated beauty," he confessed. "In America a girl stuffed with cotton wouldn't be alive, nor would anyone think of making a girl out of a patchwork quilt."

"What a queer country America must be!" she exclaimed in great surprise. "The Scarecrow, whom you say is wise, told me I am the most beautiful creature he has ever seen."

"I know; and perhaps you are — from a scarecrow point of view," replied

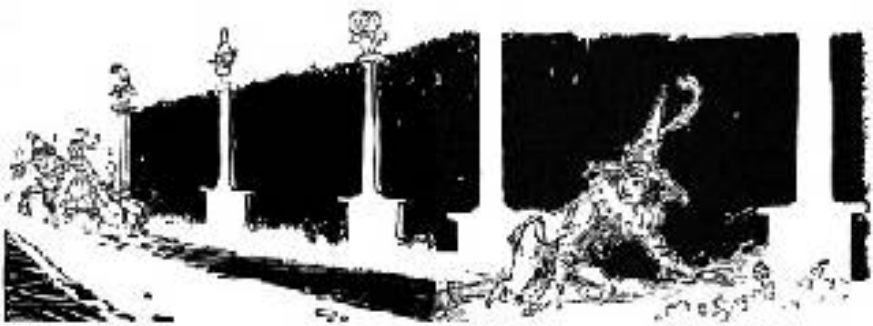
the Shaggy Man; but why he smiled as he said it Scraps could not imagine.

As they drew nearer to the Emerald City the travelers were filled with admiration for the splendid scenery they beheld. Handsome houses stood on both sides of the road and each had a green lawn before it as well as a pretty flower garden.

"In another hour," said the Shaggy Man, "we shall come in sight of the walls of the Royal City."

He was walking ahead, with Scraps, and behind them came the Woozy and the Glass Cat. Ojo had lagged behind, for in spite of the warnings he had received the boy's eyes were fastened on the clover that bordered the road of yellow bricks and he was eager to discover if such a thing as a six-leaved clover really existed.

Suddenly he stopped short and bent over to examine the ground more closely. Yes; here at last was a clover with six spreading leaves. He counted them carefully, to make sure. In an instant his heart leaped with joy, for this was one of the important things he had come for — one of the things that would restore dear Unc Nunkie to life.



He glanced ahead and saw that none of his companions was looking back. Neither were any other people about, for it was midway between two houses. The temptation was too strong to be resisted.

"I might search for weeks and weeks, and never find another six-leaved clover," he told himself, and quickly plucking the stem from the plant he placed the prized clover in his basket, covering it with the other things he carried there. Then, trying to look as if nothing had happened, he hurried forward and overtook his comrades.

The Emerald City, which is the most splendid as well as the most beautiful city in any fairyland, is surrounded by a high, thick wall of green marble, polished smooth and set with glistening emeralds. There are four gates, one facing the Munchkin Country, one facing the Country of the Winkies, one facing the Country of the Quadlings and one facing the Country of the Gillikins. The Emerald City lies directly in the center of these

four important countries of Oz. The gates had bars of pure gold, and on either side of each gateway were built high towers, from which floated gay banners. Other towers were set at distances along the walls, which were broad enough for four people to walk abreast upon.

This enclosure, all green and gold and glittering with precious gems, was indeed a wonderful sight to greet our travelers, who first observed it from the top of a little hill; but beyond the wall was the vast city it surrounded, and hundreds of jeweled spires, domes and minarets, flaunting flags and banners, reared their crests far above the towers of the gateways. In the center of the city our friends could see the tops of many magnificent trees, some nearly as tall as the spires of the buildings, and the Shaggy Man told them that these trees were in the royal gardens of Princess Ozma.

They stood a long time on the hilltop, feasting their eyes on the splendor of the Emerald City.

"Whee!" exclaimed Scraps, clasping her padded hands in ecstacy, "that'll do for me to live in, all right. No more of the Munchkin Country for these patches — and no more of the Crooked Magician!"

"Why, you belong to Dr. Pipt," replied Ojo, looking at her in amazement. "You were made for a servant, Scraps, so you are personal property and not your own mistress."

"Bother Dr. Pipt! If he wants me, let him come here and get me. I'll not go back to his den of my own accord; that's certain. Only one place in the Land of Oz is fit to live in, and that's the Emerald City. It's lovely! It's almost as beautiful as I am, Ojo."

"In this country," remarked the Shaggy Man, "people live wherever our Ruler tells them to. It wouldn't do to have everyone live in the Emerald City, you know, for some must plow the land and raise grains and fruits and vegetables, while others chop wood in the forests, or fish in the rivers, or herd the sheep and the cattle."

"Poor things!" said Scraps.

"I'm not sure they are not happier than the city people," replied the Shaggy Man. "There's a freedom and independence in country life that not even the Emerald City can give one. I know that lots of the city people would like to get back to the land. The Scarecrow lives in the country, and so do the Tin Woodman and Jack Pumpkinhead; yet all three would be welcome to live in Ozma's palace if they cared to. Too much splendor becomes tiresome, you know. But, if we're to reach the Emerald City before sundown, we must hurry, for it is yet a long way off."

The entrancing sight of the city had put new energy into them all and they hurried forward with lighter steps than before. There was much to interest

them along the roadway, for the houses were now set more closely together and they met a good many people who were coming or going from one place or another. All these seemed happy-faced, pleasant people, who nodded graciously to the strangers as they passed, and exchanged words of greeting.

At last they reached the great gateway, just as the sun was setting and adding its red glow to the glitter of the emeralds on the green walls and spires. Somewhere inside the city a band could be heard playing sweet music; a soft, subdued hum, as of many voices, reached their ears; from the neighboring yards came the low mooing of cows waiting to be milked.

They were almost at the gate when the golden bars slid back and a tall soldier stepped out and faced them. Ojo thought he had never seen so tall a man before. The soldier wore a handsome green and gold uniform, with a tall hat in which was a waving plume, and he had a belt thickly encrusted with jewels. But the most peculiar thing about him was his long green beard, which fell far below his waist and perhaps made him seem taller than he really was.

"Halt!" said the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, not in a stern voice but rather in a friendly tone.

They halted before he spoke and stood looking at him.

"Good evening, Colonel," said the Shaggy Man. "What's the news since I left? Anything important?"

"Billina has hatched out thirteen new chickens," replied the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, "and they're the cutest little fluffy yellow balls you ever saw. The Yellow Hen is mighty proud of those children, I can tell you."

"She has a right to be," agreed the Shaggy Man. "Let me see; that's about seven thousand chicks she has hatched out; isn't it, General?"

"That, at least," was the reply. "You will have to visit Billina and congratulate her."

"It will give me pleasure to do that," said the Shaggy Man. "But you will observe that I have brought some strangers home with me. I am going to take them to see Dorothy."

"One moment, please," said the soldier, barring their way as they started to enter the gate. "I am on duty, and I have orders to execute. Is anyone in your party named Ojo the Unlucky?"

"Why, that's me!" cried Ojo, astonished at hearing his name on the lips of a stranger.

The Soldier with the Green Whiskers nodded. “I thought so,” said he, “and I am sorry to announce that it is my painful duty to arrest you.”

“Arrest me!” exclaimed the boy. “What for?”

“I haven’t looked to see,” answered the soldier. Then he drew a paper from his breast pocket and glanced at it. “Oh, yes; you are to be arrested for wilfully breaking one of the Laws of Oz.”

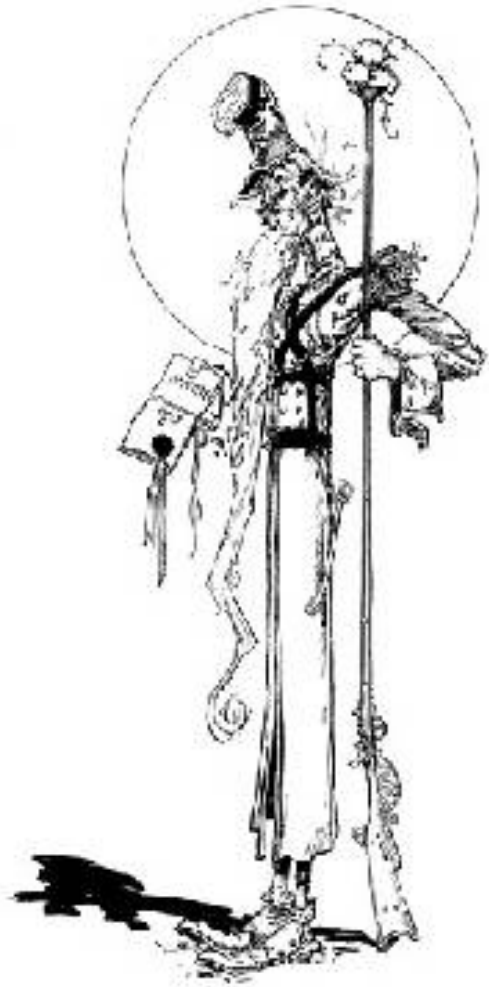
“Breaking a law!” said Scraps. “Nonsense, Soldier; you’re joking.”

“Not this time,” returned the soldier, with a sigh. “My dear child — what are you, a rummage sale or a guess-me-quick? — in me you behold the Body-Guard of our gracious Ruler, Princess Ozma, as well as the Royal Army of Oz and the Police Force of the Emerald City.”

“And only one man!” exclaimed the Patchwork Girl.

“Only one, and plenty enough. In my official positions I’ve had nothing to do for a good many years — so long that I began to fear I was absolutely useless — until to-day. An hour ago I was called to the presence of her Highness, Ozma of Oz, and told to arrest a boy named Ojo the Unlucky, who was journeying from the Munchkin Country to the Emerald City and would arrive in a short time. This command so astonished me that I nearly fainted, for it is the first time anyone has merited arrest since I can remember. You are rightly named Ojo the Unlucky, my poor boy, since you have broken a Law of Oz.”

“But you are wrong,” said Scraps. “Ozma is wrong — you are all wrong — for Ojo has broken no Law.”



"Then he will soon be free again," replied the Soldier with the Green Whiskers. "Anyone accused of crime is given a fair trial by our Ruler and has every chance to prove his innocence. But just now Ozma's orders must be obeyed."

With this he took from his pocket a pair of handcuffs made of gold and set with rubies and diamonds, and these he snapped over Ojo's wrists.

15 Ozma's Prisoner

OZMA'S PRISONER

THE boy was so bewildered by this calamity that he made no resistance at all. He knew very well he was guilty, but it surprised him that Ozma also knew it. He wondered how she had found out so soon that he had picked the six-leaved clover. He handed his basket to Scraps and said:

"Keep that, until I get out of prison. If I never get out, take it to the Crooked Magician, to whom it belongs."

The Shaggy Man had been gazing earnestly in the boy's face, uncertain whether to defend him or not; but something he read in Ojo's expression made him draw back and refuse to interfere to save him. The Shaggy Man was greatly surprised and grieved, but he knew that Ozma never made mistakes and so Ojo must really have broken the Law of Oz.

The Soldier with the Green Whiskers now led them all through the gate and into a little room built in the wall. Here sat a jolly little man, richly dressed in green and having around his neck a heavy gold chain to which a number of great golden keys were attached. This was the Guardian of the Gate and at the moment they entered his room he was playing a tune upon a mouth-organ.

"Listen!" he said, holding up his hand for silence. "I've just composed a tune called 'The Speckled Alligator.' It's in patch-time, which is much superior to rag-time, and I've composed it in honor of the Patchwork Girl, who has just arrived."

"How did you know I had arrived?" asked Scraps, much interested.

"It's my business to know who's coming, for I'm the Guardian of the Gate. Keep quiet while I play you 'The Speckled Alligator.'"

It wasn't a very bad tune, nor a very good one, but all listened respectfully while he shut his eyes and swayed his head from side to side and blew the notes from the little instrument. When it was all over the Soldier with the Green Whiskers said:

"Guardian, I have here a prisoner."

"Good gracious! A prisoner?" cried the little man, jumping up from his chair. "Which one? Not the Shaggy Man?"

"No; this boy."

"Ah; I hope his fault is as small as himself," said the Guardian of the Gate. "But what can he have done, and what made him do it?"

"Can't say," replied the soldier. "All I know is that he has broken the Law."

"But no one ever does that!"

"Then he must be innocent, and soon will be released. I hope you are right, Guardian. Just now I am ordered to take him to prison. Get me a prisoner's robe from your Official Wardrobe."

The Guardian unlocked a closet and took from it a white robe, which the soldier threw over Ojo. It covered him from head to foot, but had two holes just in front of his eyes, so he could see where to go. In this attire the boy presented a very quaint appearance.

As the Guardian unlocked a gate leading from his room into the streets of the Emerald City, the Shaggy Man said to Scraps:

"I think I shall take you directly to Dorothy, as the Scarecrow advised, and the Glass Cat and the Woozy may come with us. Ojo must go to prison with the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, but he will be well treated and you need not worry about him."

"What will they do with him?" asked Scraps.

"That I cannot tell. Since I came to the Land of Oz no one has ever been arrested or imprisoned — until Ojo broke the Law."

"Seems to me that girl Ruler of yours is making a big fuss over nothing," remarked Scraps, tossing her yarn hair out of her eyes with a jerk of her patched head. "I don't know what Ojo has done, but it couldn't be anything very bad, for you and I were with him all the time."

The Shaggy Man made no reply to this speech and presently the Patchwork Girl forgot all about Ojo in her admiration of the wonderful city she had entered.

They soon separated from the Munchkin boy, who was led by the Soldier with the Green Whiskers down a side street toward the prison. Ojo felt very miserable and greatly ashamed of himself, but he was beginning to grow

angry because he was treated in such a disgraceful manner. Instead of entering the splendid Emerald City as a respectable traveler who was entitled to a welcome and to hospitality, he was being brought in as a criminal, handcuffed and in a robe that told all he met of his deep disgrace.

Ojo was by nature gentle and affectionate and if he had disobeyed the Law of Oz it was to restore his dear Unc Nunkie to life. His fault was more thoughtless than wicked, but that did not alter the fact that he had committed a fault. At first he had felt sorrow and remorse, but the more he thought about the unjust treatment he had received — unjust merely because he considered it so — the more he resented his arrest, blaming Ozma for making foolish laws and then punishing folks who broke them. Only a six-leaved clover! A tiny green plant growing neglected and trampled under foot. What harm could there be in picking it? Ojo began to think Ozma must be a very bad and oppressive Ruler for such a lovely fairyland as Oz. The Shaggy Man said the people loved her; but how could they?

The little Munchkin boy was so busy thinking these things — which many guilty prisoners have thought before him — that he scarcely noticed all the splendor of the city streets through which they passed. Whenever they met any of the happy, smiling people, the boy turned his head away in shame, although none knew who was beneath the robe.

By and by they reached a house built just beside the great city wall, but in a quiet, retired place. It was a pretty house, neatly painted and with many windows. Before it was a garden filled with blooming flowers. The Soldier with the Green Whiskers led Ojo up the gravel path to the front door, on which he knocked.

A woman opened the door and, seeing Ojo in his white robe, exclaimed:

"Goodness me! A prisoner at last. But what a small one, Soldier."

"The size doesn't matter, Tollydiggle, my dear. The fact remains that he is a prisoner," said the soldier. "And, this being the prison, and you the jailer, it is my duty to place the prisoner in your charge."

"True. Come in, then, and I'll give you a receipt for him."

They entered the house and passed through a hall to a large circular room, where the woman pulled the robe off from Ojo and looked at him with kindly interest. The boy, on his part, was gazing around him in amazement, for never had he dreamed of such a magnificent apartment as this in which he stood. The roof of the dome was of colored glass, worked into beautiful designs. The walls were paneled with plates of gold decorated with gems of great size and many colors, and upon the tiled floor were soft rugs delightful to walk upon. The furniture was framed in gold and upholstered in satin brocade and it consisted of easy chairs, divans and stools in great variety.

Also there were several tables with mirror tops and cabinets filled with rare and curious things. In one place a case filled with books stood against the wall, and elsewhere Ojo saw a cupboard containing all sorts of games.

"May I stay here a little while before I go to prison?" asked the boy, pleadingly.

"Why, this is your prison," replied Tollydiggle, "and in me behold your jailor. Take off those handcuffs, Soldier, for it is impossible for anyone to escape from this house."

"I know that very well," replied the soldier and at once unlocked the handcuffs and released the prisoner.

The woman touched a button on the wall and lighted a big chandelier that hung suspended from the ceiling, for it was growing dark outside. Then she seated herself at a desk and asked:

"What name?"

"Ojo the Unlucky," answered the Soldier with the Green Whiskers.

"Unlucky? Ah, that accounts for it," said she. "What crime?"

"Breaking a Law of Oz."

"All right. There's your receipt, Soldier; and now I'm responsible for the prisoner. I'm glad of it, for this is the first time I've ever had anything to do, in my official capacity," remarked the jailer, in a pleased tone.

"It's the same with me, Tollydiggle," laughed the soldier. "But my task is finished and I must go and report to Ozma that I've done my duty like a faithful Police Force, a loyal Army and an honest Body-Guard — as I hope I am."

Saying this, he nodded farewell to Tollydiggle and Ojo and went away.

"Now, then," said the woman briskly, "I must get you some supper, for you are doubtless hungry. What would you prefer: planked whitefish, omelet with jelly or mutton-chops with gravy?"

Ojo thought about it. Then he said: "I'll take the chops, if you please."

"Very well; amuse yourself while I'm gone; I won't be long," and then she went out by a door and left the prisoner alone.

Ojo was much astonished, for not only was this unlike any prison he had ever heard of, but he was being treated more as a guest than a criminal. There were many windows and they had no locks. There were three doors to the room and none were bolted. He cautiously opened one of the doors and found it led into a hallway. But he had no intention of trying to escape. If his jailor was willing to trust him in this way he would not betray her trust, and moreover a hot supper was being prepared for him and his prison was very pleasant and comfortable. So he took a book from the case and sat down in a big chair to look at the pictures.

This amused him until the woman came in with a large tray and spread a cloth on one of the tables. Then she arranged his supper, which proved the most varied and delicious meal Ojo had ever eaten in his life.

Tollydiggle sat near him while he ate, sewing on some fancy work she held in her lap. When he had finished she cleared the table and then read to him a story from one of the books.

"Is this really a prison?" he asked, when she had finished reading.

"Indeed it is," she replied. "It is the only prison in the Land of Oz."

"And am I a prisoner?"

"Bless the child! Of course."

"Then why is the prison so fine, and why are you so kind to me?" he earnestly asked.

Tollydiggle seemed surprised by the question, but she presently answered:

"We consider a prisoner unfortunate. He is unfortunate in two ways — because he has done something wrong and because he is deprived of his liberty. Therefore we should treat him kindly, because of his misfortune, for otherwise he would become hard and bitter and would not be sorry he had done wrong. Ozma thinks that one who has committed a fault did so because he was not strong and brave; therefore she puts him in prison to make him strong and brave. When that is accomplished he is no longer a prisoner, but a good and loyal citizen and everyone is glad that he is now strong enough to resist doing wrong. You see, it is kindness that makes one strong and brave; and so we are kind to our prisoners."

Ojo thought this over very carefully. "I had an idea," said he, "that prisoners were always treated harshly, to punish them."

"That would be dreadful!" cried Tollydiggle. "Isn't one punished enough

in knowing he has done wrong? Don't you wish, Ojo, with all your heart, that you had not been disobedient and broken a Law of Oz?"

"I — I hate to be different from other people," he admitted.

"Yes; one likes to be respected as highly as his neighbors are," said the woman. "When you are tried and found guilty,201 you will be obliged to make amends, in some way. I don't know just what Ozma will do to you, because this is the first time one of us has broken a Law; but you may be sure she will be just and merciful. Here in the Emerald City people are too happy and contented ever to do wrong; but perhaps you came from some faraway corner of our land, and having no love for Ozma carelessly broke one of her Laws."

"Yes," said Ojo, "I've lived all my life in the heart of a lonely forest, where I saw no one but dear Unc Nunkie."

"I thought so," said Tollydiggle. "But now we have talked enough, so let us play a game until bedtime."

16 Princess Dorothy

PRINCESS DOROTHY

DOROTHY GALE was sitting in one of her rooms in the royal palace, while curled up at her feet was a little black dog with a shaggy coat and very bright eyes. She wore a plain white frock, without any jewels or other ornaments except an emerald-green hair-ribbon, for Dorothy was a simple little girl and

had not been in the least spoiled by the magnificence surrounding her. Once the child had lived on the Kansas prairies, but she seemed marked for adventure, for she had made several trips to the Land of Oz before she came to live there for good. Her very best friend was the beautiful Ozma of Oz, who loved Dorothy so well that she kept her in her own palace, so as to be near her. The girl's Uncle Henry and Aunt Em — the only relatives she had in the world — had also been brought here by Ozma and given a pleasant home. Dorothy knew almost everybody in Oz, and it was she who had discovered the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion, as well as Tik-tok the Clockwork Man. Her life was very pleasant now, and although she had been made a Princess of Oz by her friend Ozma she did not care much to be a Princess and remained as sweet as when she had been plain Dorothy Gale of Kansas.

Dorothy was reading in a book this evening when Jellia Jamb, the favorite servant-maid of the palace, came to say that the Shaggy Man wanted to see her.

"All right," said Dorothy; "tell him to come right up."

"But he has some queer creatures with him — some of the queerest I've ever laid eyes on," reported Jellia.

"Never mind; let 'em all come up," replied Dorothy.

But when the door opened to admit not only the Shaggy Man, but Scraps, the Woozy and the Glass Cat, Dorothy jumped up and looked at her strange visitors in amazement. The Patchwork Girl was the most curious of all and Dorothy was uncertain at first whether Scraps was really alive or only a dream or a nightmare. Toto, her dog, slowly uncurled himself and going to the Patchwork Girl sniffed at her inquiringly; but soon he lay down again, as if to say he had no interest in such an irregular creation.

"You're a new one to me," Dorothy said reflectively, addressing the Patchwork Girl. "I can't imagine where you've come from."

"Who, me?" asked Scraps, looking around the pretty room instead of at the girl. "Oh, I came from a bed-quilt, I guess. That's what they say, anyhow. Some call it a crazy-quilt and some a patchwork quilt. But my name is Scraps — and now you know all about me."

"Not quite all," returned Dorothy with a smile. "I wish you'd tell me how you came to be alive."

"That's an easy job," said Scraps, sitting upon a big upholstered chair and making the springs bounce her up and down. "Margolotte wanted a slave, so she made me out of an old bed-quilt she didn't use. Cotton stuffing, suspender-button eyes, red velvet tongue, pearl beads for teeth. The Crooked Magician made a Powder of Life, sprinkled me with it and — here I am. Perhaps you've noticed my different colors. A very refined and educated gentleman named the Scarecrow, whom I met, told me I am the most beautiful creature in all Oz, and I believe it."

"Oh! Have you met our Scarecrow, then?" asked Dorothy, a little puzzled to understand the brief history related.

"Yes; isn't he jolly?"

"The Scarecrow has many good qualities," replied Dorothy. "But I'm

sorry to hear all this ‘bout the Crooked Magician. Ozma’ll be mad as hops when she hears he’s been doing magic again. She told him not to.”

“He only practices magic for the benefit of his own family,” explained Bungle, who was keeping at a respectful distance from the little black dog.

“Dear me,” said Dorothy; “I hadn’t noticed you before. Are you glass, or what?”

“I’m glass, and transparent, too, which is more than can be said of some folks,” answered the cat. “Also I have some lovely pink brains; you can see ‘em work.”

“Oh; is that so? Come over here and let me see.”

The Glass Cat hesitated, eyeing the dog.

“Send that beast away and I will,” she said.

“Beast! Why, that’s my dog Toto, an’ he’s the kindest dog in all the world. Toto knows a good many things, too; ‘most as much as I do, I guess.”

“Why doesn’t he say anything?” asked Bungle.

“He can’t talk, not being a fairy dog,” explained Dorothy. “He’s just a common United States dog; but that’s a good deal; and I understand him, and he understands me, just as well as if he could talk.”

Toto, at this, got up and rubbed his head softly against Dorothy’s hand, which she held out to him, and he looked up into her face as if he had understood every word she had said.

“This cat, Toto,” she said to him, “is made of glass, so you mustn’t bother it, or chase it, any more than you do my Pink Kitten. It’s prob’ly brittle and might break if it bumped against anything.”

“Woof!” said Toto, and that meant he understood.

The Glass Cat was so proud of her pink brains that she ventured to come close to Dorothy, in order that the girl might “see ‘em work.” This was really interesting, but when Dorothy patted the cat she found the glass cold and hard and unresponsive, so she decided at once that Bungle would never do for a pet.

“What do you know about the Crooked Magician who lives on the mountain?” asked Dorothy.

“He made me,” replied the cat; “so I know all about him. The Patchwork Girl is new — three or four days old — but I’ve lived with Dr. Pipt for years; and, though I don’t much care for him, I will say that he has always refused to work magic for any of the people who come to his house. He thinks there’s no harm in doing magic things for his own family, and he made me out of glass because the meat cats drink too much milk. He also made Scraps come to life so she could do the housework for his wife Margolotte.”

“Then why did you both leave him?” asked Dorothy.

“I think you’d better let me explain that,” interrupted the Shaggy Man, and then he told Dorothy all of Ojo’s story, and how Unc Nunkie and Margolotte had accidentally been turned to marble by the Liquid of Petrifaction. Then he related how the boy had started out in search of the things needed to make the magic charm, which would restore the unfortunates to life, and how he had found the Woozy and taken him along because he could not pull the three hairs out of its tail. Dorothy listened to all this with much interest, and thought that so far Ojo had acted very well. But when the Shaggy Man told her of the Munchkin boy’s arrest by the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, because he was accused of wilfully breaking a Law of Oz, the little girl was greatly shocked.

“What do you s’pose he’s done?” she asked.

“I fear he has picked a six-leaved clover,” answered the Shaggy Man, sadly. “I did not see him do it, and I warned him that to do so was against the Law; but perhaps that is what he did, nevertheless.”

“I’m sorry ‘bout that,” said Dorothy gravely, “for now there will be no one to help his poor uncle and Margolotte — ’cept this Patchwork Girl, the Woozy and the Glass Cat.”

“Don’t mention it,” said Scraps. “That’s no affair of mine. Margolotte and Unc Nunkie are perfect strangers to me, for the moment I came to life they came to marble.”

“I see,” remarked Dorothy with a sigh of regret; “the woman forgot to give you a heart.”

“I’m glad she did,” retorted the Patchwork Girl. “A heart must be a great annoyance to one. It makes a person feel sad or sorry or devoted or sympathetic — all of which sensations interfere with one’s happiness.”

“I have a heart,” murmured the Glass Cat. “It’s made of a ruby; but I don’t imagine I shall let it bother me about helping Unc Nunkie and Margolotte.”

“That’s a pretty hard heart of yours,” said Dorothy. “And the Woozy, of course — ”

“Why, as for me,” observed the Woozy, who was reclining on the floor with his legs doubled under him, so that he looked much like a square box, “I have never seen those unfortunate people you are speaking of, and yet I am sorry for them, having at times been unfortunate myself. When I was shut up in that forest I longed for some one to help me, and by and by Ojo came and did help me. So I’m willing to help his uncle. I’m only a stupid beast, Dorothy, but I can’t help that, and if you’ll tell me what to do to help Ojo and his uncle, I’ll gladly do it.”

Dorothy walked over and patted the Woozy on his square head.

“You’re not pretty,” she said, “but I like you. What are you able to do;

anything ‘special?”

“I can make my eyes flash fire — real fire — when I’m angry. When anyone says: ‘Krizzle-Kroo’ to me I get angry, and then my eyes flash fire.”

“I don’t see as fireworks could help Ojo’s uncle,” remarked Dorothy. “Can you do anything else?”

“I — I thought I had a very terrifying growl,” said the Woozy, with hesitation; “but perhaps I was mistaken.”

“Yes,” said the Shaggy Man, “you were certainly wrong about that.” Then he turned to Dorothy and added: “What will become of the Munchkin boy?”

“I don’t know,” she said, shaking her head thoughtfully. “Ozma will see him ‘bout it, of course, and then she’ll punish him. But how, I don’t know, ‘cause no one ever has been punished in Oz since I knew anything about the place. Too bad, Shaggy Man, isn’t it?”

While they were talking Scraps had been roaming around the room and looking at all the pretty things it contained. She had carried Ojo’s basket in her hand, until now, when she decided to see what was inside it. She found the bread and cheese, which she had no use for, and the bundle of charms, which were curious but quite a mystery to her. Then, turning these over, she came upon the six-leaved clover which the boy had plucked.

Scraps was quick-witted, and although she had no heart she recognized the fact that Ojo was her first friend. She knew at once that because the boy had taken the clover he had been imprisoned, and she understood that Ojo had given her the basket so they would not find the clover in his possession and have proof of his crime. So, turning her head to see that no one noticed her, she took the clover from the basket and dropped it into a golden vase that stood on Dorothy's table. Then she came forward and said to Dorothy:

"I wouldn't care to help Ojo's uncle, but I will help Ojo. He did not break the Law — no one can prove he did — and that green-whiskered soldier had no right to arrest him."

"Ozma ordered the boy's arrest," said Dorothy, "and of course she knew

what she was doing. But if you can prove Ojo is innocent they will set him free at once."

"They'll have to prove him guilty, won't they?" asked Scraps.

"I s'pose so."

"Well, they can't do that," declared the Patchwork Girl.

As it was nearly time for Dorothy to dine with Ozma, which she did every evening, she rang for a servant and ordered the Woozy taken to a nice room and given plenty of such food as he liked best.

"That's honey-bees," said the Woozy.

"You can't eat honey-bees, but you'll be given something just as nice," Dorothy told him. Then she had the Glass Cat taken to another room for the night and the Patchwork Girl she kept in one of her own rooms, for she was much interested in the strange creature and wanted to talk with her again and try to understand her better.

17 Ozma and Her Friends

OZMA AND HER FRIENDS

CHAP. 17

THE Shaggy Man had a room of his own in the royal palace, so there he went to change his shaggy suit of clothes for another just as shaggy but not so dusty from travel. He selected a costume of pea-green and pink satin and velvet, with embroidered shags on all the edges and iridescent pearls for ornaments. Then he bathed in an alabaster pool and brushed his shaggy hair

and whiskers the wrong way to make them still more shaggy. This accomplished, and arrayed in his splendid shaggy garments, he went to Ozma's banquet hall and found the Scarecrow, the Wizard and Dorothy already assembled there. The Scarecrow had made a quick trip and returned to the Emerald City with his left ear freshly painted.

A moment later, while they all stood in waiting, a servant threw open a door, the orchestra struck up a tune and Ozma of Oz entered.

Much has been told and written concerning the beauty of person and character of this sweet girl Ruler of the Land of Oz — the richest, the happiest and most delightful fairyland of which we have any knowledge. Yet with all her queenly qualities Ozma was a real girl and enjoyed the things in life that other real girls enjoy. When she sat on her splendid emerald throne in the great Throne Room of her palace and made laws and settled disputes and tried to keep all her subjects happy and contented, she was as dignified and demure as any queen might be; but when she had thrown aside her jeweled robe of state and her sceptre, and had retired to her private apartments, the girl — joyous, light-hearted and free — replaced the sedate Ruler.

In the banquet hall to-night were gathered only old and trusted friends, so here Ozma was herself — a mere girl. She greeted Dorothy with a kiss, the Shaggy Man with a smile, the little old Wizard with a friendly handshake and then she pressed the Scarecrow's stuffed arm and cried merrily:

"What a lovely left ear! Why, it's a hundred times better than the old one."

"I'm glad you like it," replied the Scarecrow, well pleased. "Jinjur did a neat job, didn't she? And my hearing is now perfect. Isn't it wonderful what a little paint will do, if it's properly applied?"

"It really *is* wonderful," she agreed, as they all took their seats; "but the Sawhorse must have made his legs twinkle to have carried you so far in one day. I didn't expect you back before to-morrow, at the earliest."

"Well," said the Scarecrow, "I met a charming girl on the road and wanted to see more of her, so I hurried back."

Ozma laughed.

"I know," she returned; "it's the Patchwork Girl. She is certainly bewildering, if not strictly beautiful."

"Have you seen her, then?" the straw man eagerly asked.

"Only in my Magic Picture, which shows me all scenes of interest in the Land of Oz."

"I fear the picture didn't do her justice," said the Scarecrow.

"It seemed to me that nothing could be more gorgeous," declared Ozma.

“Whoever made that patchwork quilt, from which Scraps was formed, must have selected the gayest and brightest bits of cloth that ever were woven.”

“I am glad you like her,” said the Scarecrow in a satisfied tone. Although the straw man did not eat, not being made so he could, he often dined with Ozma and her companions, merely for the pleasure of talking with them. He sat at the table and had a napkin and plate, but the servants knew better than to offer him food. After a little while he asked: “Where is the Patchwork Girl now?”

“In my room,” replied Dorothy. “I’ve taken a fancy to her; she’s so queer and — and — uncommon.”

“She’s half crazy, I think,” added the Shaggy Man.

“But she is so beautiful!” exclaimed the Scarecrow, as if that fact disarmed all criticism. They all laughed at his enthusiasm, but the Scarecrow was quite serious. Seeing that he was interested in Scraps they forbore to say anything against her. The little band of friends Ozma had gathered around her was so quaintly assorted that much care must be exercised to avoid hurting their feelings or making any one of them unhappy. It was this considerate kindness that held them close friends and enabled them to enjoy one another’s society.

Another thing they avoided was conversing on unpleasant subjects, and for that reason Ojo and his troubles were not mentioned during the dinner. The Shaggy Man, however, related his adventures with the monstrous plants which had seized and enfolded the travelers, and told how he had robbed Chiss, the giant porcupine, of the quills which it was accustomed to throw at people. Both Dorothy and Ozma were pleased with this exploit and thought it served Chiss right.

Then they talked of the Woozy, which was the most remarkable animal any of them had ever before seen — except, perhaps, the live Sawhorse. Ozma had never known that her dominions contained such a thing as a Woozy, there being but one in existence and this being confined in his forest

for many years. Dorothy said she believed the Woozy was a good beast, honest and faithful; but she added that she did not care much for the Glass Cat.

"Still," said the Shaggy Man, "the Glass Cat is very pretty and if she were not so conceited over her pink brains no one would object to her as a companion."

The Wizard had been eating silently until now, when he looked up and remarked:

"That Powder of Life which is made by the Crooked Magician is really a wonderful thing. But Dr. Pipt does not know its true value and he uses it in the most foolish ways."

"I must see about that," said Ozma, gravely. Then she smiled again and continued in a lighter tone: "It was Dr. Pipt's famous Powder of Life that enabled me to become the Ruler of Oz."

"I've never heard that story," said the Shaggy Man, looking at Ozma questioningly.

"Well, when I was a baby girl I was stolen by an old Witch named Mombi and transformed into a boy," began the girl Ruler. "I did not know who I was and when I grew big enough to work, the Witch made me wait upon her and carry wood for the fire and hoe in the garden. One day she came back from a journey bringing some of the Powder of Life, which Dr. Pipt had given her. I had made a pumpkin-headed man and set it up in her path to frighten her, for I was fond of fun and hated the Witch. But she knew what the figure was and to test her Powder of Life she sprinkled some of it on the man I had made. It came to life and is now our dear friend Jack Pumpkinhead. That night I ran away with Jack to escape punishment, and I took old Mombi's Powder of Life with me. During our journey we came upon a wooden Sawhorse standing by the road and I used the magic powder to bring it to life. The Sawhorse has been with me ever since. When I got to the Emerald City the good Sorceress, Glinda, knew who I was and restored me to my proper person, when I became the rightful Ruler of this land. So you see had not old Mombi brought home the Powder of Life I might never have run away from her and become Ozma of Oz, nor would we have had Jack Pumpkinhead and the Sawhorse to comfort and amuse us."

That story interested the Shaggy Man very much, as well as the others, who had often heard it before. The dinner being now concluded, they all went to Ozma's drawing-room, where they passed a pleasant evening before it came time to retire.

GLINDA

18 Ojo is Forgiven

OJO IS FORGIVEN

CHAP. 18

THE next morning the Soldier with the Green Whiskers went to the prison and took Ojo away to the royal palace, where he was summoned to appear before the girl Ruler for judgment. Again the soldier put upon the boy the jeweled handcuffs and white prisoner's robe with the peaked top and holes for the eyes. Ojo was so ashamed, both of his disgrace and the fault he had

committed, that he was glad to be covered up in this way, so that people could not see him or know who he was. He followed the Soldier with the Green Whiskers very willingly, anxious that his fate might be decided as soon as possible.

The inhabitants of the Emerald City were polite people and never jeered at the unfortunate; but it was so long since they had seen a prisoner that they cast many curious looks toward the boy and many of them hurried away to the royal palace to be present during the trial.

When Ojo was escorted into the great Throne Room of the palace he found hundreds of people assembled there. In the magnificent emerald throne, which sparkled with countless jewels, sat Ozma of Oz in her Robe of State, which was embroidered with emeralds and pearls. On her right, but a little lower, was Dorothy, and on her left the Scarecrow. Still lower, but nearly in front of Ozma, sat the wonderful Wizard of Oz and on a small table beside him was the golden vase from Dorothy's room, into which Scraps had dropped the stolen clover.

At Ozma's feet crouched two enormous beasts, each the largest and most powerful of its kind. Although these beasts were quite free, no one present was alarmed by them; for the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger were well known and respected in the Emerald City and they always guarded the Ruler when she held high court in the Throne Room. There was still another beast present, but this one Dorothy held in her arms, for it was her constant companion, the little dog Toto. Toto knew the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger and often played and romped with them, for they were good friends.

Seated on ivory chairs before Ozma, with a clear space between them and the throne, were many of the nobility of the Emerald City, lords and ladies in beautiful costumes, and officials of the kingdom in the royal uniforms of Oz. Behind these courtiers were others of less importance, filling the great hall to the very doors.

At the same moment that the Soldier with the Green Whiskers arrived with Ojo, the Shaggy Man entered from a side door, escorting the Patchwork Girl, the Woozy and the Glass Cat. All these came to the vacant space before the throne and stood facing the Ruler.

"Hullo, Ojo," said Scraps; "how are you?"

"All right," he replied; but the scene awed the boy and his voice trembled a little with fear. Nothing could awe the Patchwork Girl, and although the Woozy was somewhat uneasy in these splendid surroundings the Glass Cat was delighted with the sumptuousness of the court and the impressiveness of the occasion — pretty big words but quite expressive.

At a sign from Ozma the soldier removed Ojo's white robe and the boy stood face to face with the girl who was to decide his punishment. He saw at a glance how lovely and sweet she was, and his heart gave a bound of joy, for he hoped she would be merciful.

Ozma sat looking at the prisoner a long time. Then she said gently:

"One of the Laws of Oz forbids anyone to pick a six-leaved clover. You are accused of having broken this Law, even after you had been warned not to do so."226

Ojo hung his head and while he hesitated how to reply the Patchwork Girl stepped forward and spoke for him.

"All this fuss is about nothing at all," she said, facing Ozma unabashed. "You can't prove he picked the six-leaved clover, so you've no right to accuse him of it. Search him, if you like, but you won't find the clover; look in his basket and you'll find it's not there. He hasn't got it, so I demand that you set this poor Munchkin boy free."

The people of Oz listened to this defiance in amazement and wondered at the queer Patchwork Girl who dared talk so boldly to their Ruler. But Ozma sat silent and motionless and it was the little Wizard who answered Scraps.

"So the clover hasn't been picked, eh?" he said. "I think it has. I think the boy hid it in his basket, and then gave the basket to you. I also think you dropped the clover into this vase, which stood in Princess Dorothy's room, hoping to get rid of it so it would not prove the boy guilty. You're a stranger

here, Miss Patches, and so you don't know that nothing can be hidden from our powerful Ruler's Magic Picture — nor from the watchful eyes of the humble Wizard of Oz. Look, all of you!" With these words he waved his hands toward the vase on the table, which Scraps now noticed for the first time.

From the mouth of the vase a plant sprouted, slowly growing before their eyes until it became a beautiful bush, and on the topmost branch appeared the six-leaved clover which Ojo had unfortunately picked.

The Patchwork Girl looked at the clover and said: "Oh, so you've found it. Very well; prove he picked it, if you can."

Ozma turned to Ojo.

"Did you pick the six-leaved clover?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "I knew it was against the Law, but I wanted to save Unc Nunkie and I was afraid if I asked your consent to pick it you would refuse me."

"What caused you to think that?" asked the Ruler.

"Why, it seemed to me a foolish law, unjust and unreasonable. Even now I can see no harm in picking a six-leaved clover. And I — I had not seen the Emerald City, then, nor you, and I thought a girl who would make such a silly Law would not be likely to help anyone in trouble."

Ozma regarded him musingly, her chin resting upon her hand; but she was not angry. On the contrary she smiled a little at her thoughts and then grew sober again.

"I suppose a good many laws seem foolish to those people who do not understand them," she said; "but no law is ever made without some purpose, and that purpose is usually to protect all the people and guard their welfare. As you are a stranger, I will explain this Law which to you seems so foolish. Years ago there were many Witches and Magicians in the Land of Oz, and one of the things they often used in making their magic charms and transformations was a six-leaved clover. These Witches and Magicians caused so much trouble among my people, often using their powers for evil rather than good,230 that I decided to forbid anyone to practice magic or sorcery except Glinda the Good and her assistant, the Wizard of Oz, both of whom I can trust to use their arts only to benefit my people and to make them happier. Since I issued that Law the Land of Oz has been far more peaceful and quiet; but I learned that some of the Witches and Magicians were still practicing magic on the sly and using the six-leaved clovers to make their potions and charms. Therefore I made another Law forbidding anyone from plucking a six-leaved clover or from gathering other plants and herbs which the Witches boil in their kettles to work magic with. That has almost put an

end to wicked sorcery in our land, so you see the Law was not a foolish one, but wise and just; and, in any event, it is wrong to disobey a Law."

Ojo knew she was right and felt greatly mortified to realize he had acted and spoken so ridiculously. But he raised his head and looked Ozma in the face, saying:

"I am sorry I have acted wrongly and broken your Law. I did it to save Unc Nunkie, and thought I would not be found out. But I am guilty of this act and whatever punishment you think I deserve I will suffer willingly."

Ozma smiled more brightly, then, and nodded graciously.

"You are forgiven," she said. "For, although you have committed a serious fault, you are now penitent and I think you have been punished enough. Soldier, release Ojo the Lucky and — "

"I beg your pardon; I'm Ojo the *Un*lucky," said the boy.

"At this moment you are lucky," said she. "Release him, Soldier, and let him go free."

The people were glad to hear Ozma's decree and murmured their approval. As the royal audience was now over, they began to leave the Throne Room and soon there were none remaining except Ojo and his friends and Ozma and her favorites.

The girl Ruler now asked Ojo to sit down and tell her all his story, which he did, beginning at the time he had left his home in the forest and ending with his arrival at the Emerald City and his arrest. Ozma listened attentively and was thoughtful for some moments after the boy had finished speaking. Then she said:

"The Crooked Magician was wrong to make the Glass Cat and the Patchwork Girl, for it was against the Law. And if he had not unlawfully kept the bottle of Liquid of Petrifaction standing on his shelf, the accident to his wife Margolotte and to Unc Nunkie could not have occurred. I can understand, however, that Ojo, who loves his uncle, will be unhappy unless he can save him. Also I feel it is wrong to leave those two victims standing as marble statues, when they ought to be alive. So I propose we allow Dr. Pipt to make the magic charm which will save them, and that we assist Ojo to find the things he is seeking. What do you think, Wizard?"

"That is perhaps the best thing to do," replied the Wizard. "But after the Crooked Magician has restored those poor people to life you must take away his magic powers."

"I will," promised Ozma.

"Now tell me, please, what magic things must you find?" continued the Wizard, addressing Ojo.

"The three hairs from the Woozy's tail I have," said the boy. "That is, I

have the Woozy, and the hairs are in his tail. The six-leaved clover I — I — ”

“You may take it and keep it,” said Ozma. “That will not be breaking the Law, for it is already picked, and the crime of picking it is forgiven.”

“Thank you!” cried Ojo gratefully. Then he continued: “The next thing I must find is a gill of water from a dark well.”

The Wizard shook his head. “That,” said he, “will be a hard task, but if you travel far enough you may discover it.”

“I am willing to travel for years, if it will save Unc Nunkie,” declared Ojo, earnestly.

“Then you’d better begin your journey at once,” advised the Wizard.

Dorothy had been listening with interest to this conversation. Now she turned to Ozma and asked: “May I go with Ojo, to help him?”

“Would you like to?” returned Ozma.

“Yes. I know Oz pretty well, but Ojo doesn’t know it at all. I’m sorry for his uncle and poor Margolotte and I’d like to help save them. May I go?”

“If you wish to,” replied Ozma.

“If Dorothy goes, then I must go to take care of her,” said the Scarecrow, decidedly. “A dark well can only be discovered in some out-of-the-way place, and there may be dangers there.”

“You have my permission to accompany Dorothy,” said Ozma. “And while you are gone I will take care of the Patchwork Girl.”

“I’ll take care of myself,” announced Scraps, “for I’m going with the Scarecrow and Dorothy. I promised Ojo to help him find the things he wants and I’ll stick to my promise.”

“Very well,” replied Ozma. “But I see no need for Ojo to take the Glass Cat and the Woozy.”

“I prefer to remain here,” said the cat. “I’ve nearly been nicked half a dozen times, already, and if they’re going into dangers it’s best for me to keep away from them.”

“Let Jellia Jamb keep her till Ojo returns,” suggested Dorothy. “We won’t need to take the Woozy, either, but he ought to be saved because of the three hairs in his tail.”

“Better take me along,” said the Woozy. “My eyes can flash fire, you know, and I can growl — a little.”

“I’m sure you’ll be safer here,” Ozma decided, and the Woozy made no further objection to the plan.

After consulting together they decided that Ojo and his party should leave the very next day to search for the gill of water from a dark well, so they now separated to make preparations for the journey.

Ozma gave the Munchkin boy a room in the palace for that night and the afternoon he passed with Dorothy — getting acquainted,234 as she said — and receiving advice from the Shaggy Man as to where they must go. The Shaggy Man had wandered in many parts of Oz, and so had Dorothy, for that matter, yet neither of them knew where a dark well was to be found.

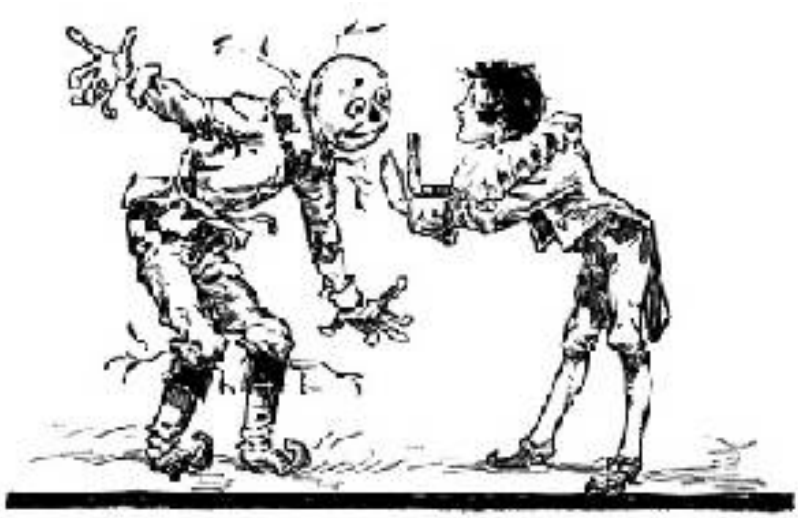
"If such a thing is anywhere in the settled parts of Oz," said Dorothy, "we'd prob'ly have heard of it long ago. If it's in the wild parts of the country, no one there would need a dark well. P'raps there isn't such a thing."

"Oh, there must be!" returned Ojo, positively; "or else the recipe of Dr. Pipt wouldn't call for it."

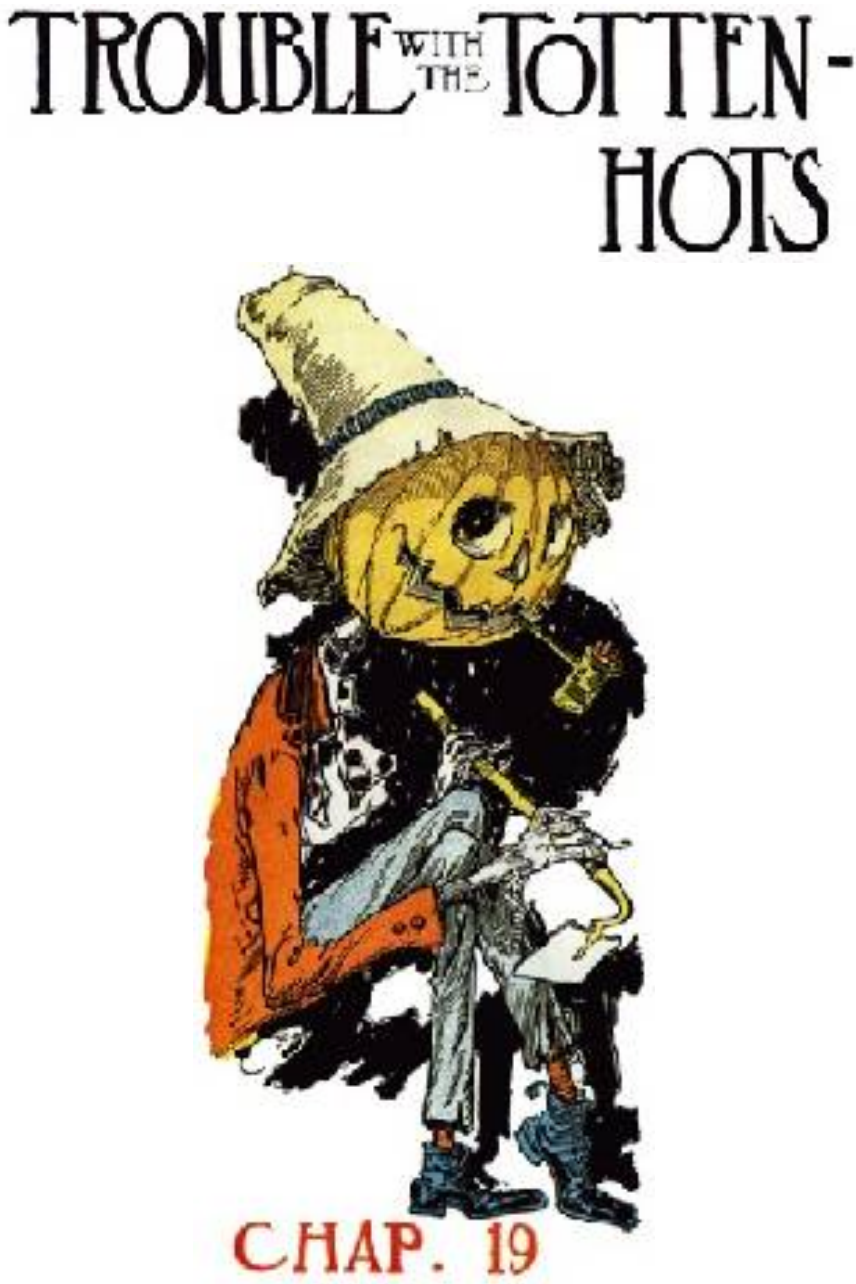
"That's true," agreed Dorothy; "and, if it's anywhere in the Land of Oz, we're bound to find it."

"Well, we're bound to *search* for it, anyhow," said the Scarecrow. "As for finding it, we must trust to luck."

"Don't do that," begged Ojo, earnestly. "I'm called Ojo the Unlucky, you know."



19 Trouble with the Tottenhots



A DAY'S journey from the Emerald City brought the little band of adventurers to the home of Jack Pumpkinhead, which was a house formed

from the shell of an immense pumpkin. Jack had made it himself and was very proud of it. There was a door, and several windows, and through the top was stuck a stovepipe that led from a small stove inside. The door was reached by a flight of three steps and there was a good floor on which was arranged some furniture that was quite comfortable.

It is certain that Jack Pumpkinhead might have had a much finer house to live in had he wanted it, for Ozma loved the stupid fellow, who had been her earliest companion; but Jack preferred his pumpkin house, as it matched himself very well, and in this he was not so stupid, after all.

The body of this remarkable person was made of wood, branches of trees of various sizes having been used for the purpose. This wooden framework was covered by a red shirt — with white spots in it — blue trousers, a yellow vest, a jacket of green-and-gold and stout leather shoes. The neck was a sharpened stick on which the pumpkin head was set, and the eyes, ears, nose and mouth were carved on the skin of the pumpkin, very like a child's jack-o'-lantern.

The house of this interesting creation stood in the center of a vast pumpkin-field, where the vines grew in profusion and bore pumpkins of extraordinary size as well as those which were smaller. Some of the pumpkins now ripening on the vines were almost as large as Jack's house, and he told Dorothy he intended to add another pumpkin to his mansion.

The travelers were cordially welcomed to this quaint domicile and invited to pass the night there, which they had planned to do. The Patchwork Girl was greatly interested in Jack and examined him admiringly.

"You are quite handsome," she said; "but not as really beautiful as the Scarecrow."

Jack turned, at this, to examine the Scarecrow critically, and his old friend slyly winked one painted eye at him.

"There is no accounting for tastes," remarked the Pumpkinhead, with a sigh. "An old crow once told me I was very fascinating, but of course the bird might have been mistaken. Yet I have noticed that the crows usually avoid the Scarecrow, who is a very honest fellow, in his way, but stuffed. I

am not stuffed, you will observe; my body is good solid hickory."

"I adore stuffing," said the Patchwork Girl.

"Well, as for that, my head is stuffed with pumpkin-seeds," declared Jack. "I use them for brains, and when they are fresh I am intellectual. Just now, I regret to say, my seeds are rattling a bit, so I must soon get another head."

"Oh; do you change your head?" asked Ojo.

"To be sure. Pumpkins are not permanent, more's the pity, and in time they spoil. That is why I grow such a great field of pumpkins — that I may select a new head whenever necessary."

"Who carves the faces on them?" inquired the boy.

"I do that myself. I lift off my old head, place it on a table before me, and use the face for a pattern to go by. Sometimes the faces I carve are better than others — more expressive and cheerful, you know — but I think they average very well."

Before she had started on the journey Dorothy had packed a knapsack with the things she might need, and this knapsack the Scarecrow carried strapped to his back. The little girl wore a plain gingham dress and a checked sunbonnet, as she knew they were best fitted for travel. Ojo also had brought along his basket, to which Ozma had added a bottle of "Square Meal Tablets" and some fruit. But Jack Pumpkinhead grew a lot of things in his garden besides pumpkins, so he cooked for them a fine vegetable soup and gave Dorothy, Ojo and Toto, the only ones who found it necessary to eat, a pumpkin pie and some green cheese. For beds they must use the sweet dried grasses which Jack had strewn along one side of the room, but that satisfied Dorothy and Ojo very well. Toto, of course, slept beside his little mistress.

The Scarecrow, Scraps and the Pumpkinhead were tireless and had no need to sleep, so they sat up and talked together all night; but they stayed outside the house, under the bright stars, and talked in low tones so as not to disturb the sleepers. During the conversation the Scarecrow explained their quest for a dark well, and asked Jack's advice where to find it.

The Pumpkinhead considered the matter gravely.

"That is going to be a difficult task," said he, "and if I were you I'd take any ordinary well and enclose it, so as to make it dark."

"I fear that wouldn't do," replied the Scarecrow. "The well must be naturally dark, and the water must never have seen the light of day, for otherwise the magic charm might not work at all."

"How much of the water do you need?" asked Jack.

"A gill."

"How much is a gill?"

"Why — a gill is a gill, of course," answered the Scarecrow, who did not

wish to display his ignorance.

"I know!" cried Scraps. "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch — "

"No, no; that's wrong," interrupted the Scarecrow. "There are two kinds of gills, I think; one is a girl, and the other is — "

"A gillyflower," said Jack.

"No; a measure."

"How big a measure?"

"Well, I'll ask Dorothy."

So next morning they asked Dorothy, and she said:

"I don't just know how much a gill is, but I've brought along a gold flask that holds a pint. That's more than a gill, I'm sure, and the Crooked Magician may measure it to suit himself. But the thing that's bothering us most, Jack, is to find the well."

Jack gazed around the landscape, for he was standing in the doorway of his house.

"This is a flat country, so you won't find any dark wells here," said he. "You must go into the mountains, where rocks and caverns are."

"And where is that?" asked Ojo.

"In the Quadling Country, which lies south of here," replied the Scarecrow. "I've known all along that we must go to the mountains."

"So have I," said Dorothy.

"But — goodness me! — the Quadling Country is full of dangers," declared Jack. "I've never been there myself, but — "

"I have," said the Scarecrow. "I've faced the dreadful Hammerheads, which have no arms and butt you like a goat; and I've faced the Fighting Trees, which bend down their branches to pound and whip you, and had many other adventures there."

"It's a wild country," remarked Dorothy, soberly, "and if we go there we're sure to have troubles of our own. But I guess we'll have to go, if we want that gill of water from the dark well."

So they said good-bye to the Pumpkinhead and resumed their travels, heading now directly toward the South Country, where mountains and rocks and caverns and forests of great trees abounded. This part of the Land of Oz, while it belonged to Ozma and owed her allegiance, was so wild and secluded that many queer peoples hid in its jungles and lived in their own way, without even a knowledge that they had a Ruler in the Emerald City. If they were left alone, these creatures never troubled the inhabitants of the rest of Oz, but those who invaded their domains encountered many dangers from them.

It was a two days' journey from Jack Pumpkinhead's house to the edge of

the Quadling Country, for neither Dorothy nor Ojo could walk very fast and they often stopped by the wayside to rest. The first night they slept on the broad fields,242 among the buttercups and daisies, and the Scarecrow covered the children with a gauze blanket taken from his knapsack, so they would not be chilled by the night air. Toward evening of the second day they reached a sandy plain where walking was difficult; but some distance before them they saw a group of palm trees, with many curious black dots under them; so they trudged bravely on to reach that place by dark and spend the night under the shelter of the trees.

The black dots grew larger as they advanced and although the light was dim Dorothy thought they looked like big kettles turned upside down. Just beyond this place a jumble of huge, jagged rocks lay scattered, rising to the mountains behind them.

Our travelers preferred to attempt to climb these rocks by daylight, and they realized that for a time this would be their last night on the plains.

Twilight had fallen by the time they came to the trees, beneath which were the black, circular objects they had marked from a distance. Dozens of them were scattered around and Dorothy bent near to one, which was about as tall as she was, to examine it more closely. As she did so the top flew open and out popped a small creature, rising its length into the air and then plumping down upon the ground just beside the little girl. Another and another popped out of the circular, pot-like dwelling, while from all the other black objects came popping more creatures — very like jumping-jacks when their boxes are unhooked — until fully a hundred stood gathered around our little group of travelers.

By this time Dorothy had discovered they were people, tiny and curiously formed, but still people. Their hair stood straight up, like wires, and was brilliant scarlet in color. Their bodies were bare except for skins fastened around their waists and they wore bracelets on their ankles and wrists, and necklaces, and great pendant earrings.

Toto crouched beside his mistress and wailed as if he did not like these strange creatures a bit. Scraps began to mutter something about "hoppity, poppity, jumpity, dump!" but no one paid any attention to her. Ojo kept close to the Scarecrow and the Scarecrow kept close to Dorothy; but the little girl turned to the queer creatures and asked:

"Who are you?"

They answered this question all together, in a sort of chanting chorus, the words being as follows:

“We’re the jolly Tottenhots; We do not like the day, But in the night ‘tis our delight To gambol, skip and play.

“We hate the sun and from it run, The moon is cool and clear,245 So on this spot each Tottenhot Waits for it to appear.

“We’re ev’ry one chock full of fun, And full of mischief, too; But if you’re gay and with us play We’ll do no harm to you.”

“Glad to meet you, Tottenhots,” said the Scarecrow solemnly. “But you mustn’t expect us to play with you all night, for we’ve traveled all day and some of us are tired.”

“And we never gamble,” added the Patchwork Girl. “It’s against the Law.”

These remarks were greeted with shouts of laughter by the impish creatures and one seized the Scarecrow’s arm and was astonished to find the straw man whirl around so easily. So the Tottenhot raised the Scarecrow high in the air and tossed him over the heads of the crowd. Some one caught him and tossed him back, and so with shouts of glee they continued throwing the Scarecrow here and there, as if he had been a basket-ball.

Presently another imp seized Scraps and began to throw her about, in the same way. They found her a little heavier than the Scarecrow but still light enough to be tossed like a sofa-cushion, and they were enjoying the sport immensely when Dorothy, angry and indignant at the treatment her friends were receiving, rushed among the Tottenhots and began slapping and pushing them, until she had rescued the Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl and held them close on either side of her. Perhaps she would not have accomplished this victory so easily had not Toto helped her, barking and snapping at the bare legs of the imps until they were glad to flee from his attack. As for Ojo, some of the creatures had attempted to toss him, also, but finding his body too heavy they threw him to the ground and a row of the imps sat on him and held him from assisting Dorothy in her battle.

The little folks were much surprised at being attacked by the girl and the dog, and one or two who had been slapped hardest began to cry. Then suddenly they gave a shout, all together, and disappeared in a flash into their various houses, the tops of which closed with a series of pops that sounded like a bunch of firecrackers being exploded.

The adventurers now found themselves alone, and Dorothy asked anxiously:

“Is anybody hurt?”

“Not me,” answered the Scarecrow. “They have given my straw a good shaking up and taken all the lumps out of it. I am now in splendid condition and am really obliged to the Tottenhots for their kind treatment.”

“I feel much the same way,” said Scraps. “My cotton stuffing had sagged a good deal with the day’s walking and they’ve loosened it up until I feel as plump as a sausage. But the play was a little rough and I’d had quite enough of it when you interfered.”247

“Six of them sat on me,” said Ojo, “but as they are so little they didn’t hurt me much.”

Just then the roof of the house in front of them opened and a Tottenhot stuck his head out, very cautiously, and looked at the strangers.

“Can’t you take a joke?” he asked, reproachfully; “haven’t you any fun in you at all?”

“If I had such a quality,” replied the Scarecrow, “your people would have

knocked it out of me. But I don't bear grudges. I forgive you."

"So do I," added Scraps. "That is, if you behave yourselves after this."

"It was just a little rough-house, that's all," said the Tottenhot. "But the question is not if *we* will behave, but if *you* will behave? We can't be shut up here all night, because this is our time to play; nor do we care to come out and be chewed up by a savage beast or slapped by an angry girl. That slapping hurts like sixty; some of my folks are crying about it. So here's the proposition: you let us alone and we'll let you alone."

"You began it," declared Dorothy.

"Well, you ended it, so we won't argue the matter. May we come out again? Or are you still cruel and slappy?"

"Tell you what we'll do," said Dorothy. "We're all tired and want to sleep until morning. If you'll let us get into your house, and stay there until daylight, you can play outside all you want to."

"That's a bargain!" cried the Tottenhot eagerly, and he gave a queer whistle that brought his people popping out of their houses on all sides. When the house before them was vacant, Dorothy and Ojo leaned over the hole and looked in, but could see nothing because it was so dark. But if the Tottenhots slept there all day the children thought they could sleep there at night, so Ojo lowered himself down and found it was not very deep.

"There's a soft cushion all over," said he. "Come on in."

Dorothy handed Toto to the boy and then climbed in herself. After her came Scraps and the Scarecrow, who did not wish to sleep but preferred to keep out of the way of the mischievous Tottenhots.

There seemed no furniture in the round den, but soft cushions were strewn about the floor and these they found made very comfortable beds. They did not close the hole in the roof but left it open to admit air. It also admitted the shouts and ceaseless laughter of the impish Tottenhots as they played outside, but Dorothy and Ojo, being weary from their journey, were soon fast asleep.

Toto kept an eye open, however, and uttered low, threatening growls whenever the racket made by the creatures outside became too boisterous; and the Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl sat leaning against the wall and talked in whispers all night long. No one disturbed the travelers until daylight, when in popped the Tottenhot who owned the place and invited them to vacate his premises.

LOOK
OUT
FOR
YOOP

20 The Captive Yoop

THE CAPTIVE YOOP

AS they were preparing to leave, Dorothy asked: “Can you tell us where there is a dark well?”

“Never heard of such a thing,” said the Tottenhot. “We live our lives in the dark, mostly, and sleep in the daytime; but we’ve never seen a dark well, or anything like one.”

“Does anyone live on those mountains beyond here?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Lots of people. But you’d better not visit them. We never go there.” was the reply.

“What are the people like?” Dorothy inquired.

“Can’t say. We’ve been told to keep away from the mountain paths, and so we obey. This sandy desert is good enough for us, and we’re not disturbed here,” declared the Tottenhot.

So they left the man snuggling down to sleep in his dusky dwelling, and went out into the sunshine, taking the path that led toward the rocky places. They soon found it hard climbing, for the rocks were uneven and full of sharp points and edges, and now there was no path at all. Clambering here and there among the boulders they kept steadily on, gradually rising higher and higher until finally they came to a great rift in a part of the mountain, where the rock seemed to have split in two and left high walls on either side.

“S’pose we go this way,” suggested Dorothy; “it’s much easier walking than to climb over the hills.”

“How about that sign?” asked Ojo.

“What sign?” she inquired.

The Munchkin boy pointed to some words painted on the wall of rock beside them, which Dorothy had not noticed. The words read:

“LOOK OUT FOR YOOP.”

The girl eyed this sign a moment and then turned to the Scarecrow, asking:

“Who is Yoop; or what is Yoop?”

The straw man shook his head. Then she looked at Toto and the dog said “Woof!”

“Only way to find out is to go on,” said Scraps.

This being quite true, they went on. As they proceeded, the walls of rock on either side grew higher and higher. Presently they came upon another sign which read:

“BEWARE THE CAPTIVE YOOP.”

“Why, as for that,” remarked Dorothy, “if Yoop is a captive there’s no need to beware of him. Whatever Yoop happens to be, I’d much rather have him a captive than running around loose.”

“So had I,” agreed the Scarecrow, with a nod of his painted head.

“Still,” said Scraps, reflectively:

“Yoop-te-hoop-te-loop-te-goop! Who put noodles in the soup? We may beware but we don’t care, And dare go where we scare the Yoop.”

“Dear me! Aren’t you feeling a little queer, just now?” Dorothy asked the

Patchwork Girl.

"Not queer, but crazy," said Ojo. "When she says those things I'm sure her brains get mixed somehow and work the wrong way."

"I don't see why we are told to beware the Yoop unless he is dangerous," observed the Scarecrow in a puzzled tone.

"Never mind; we'll find out all about him when we get to where he is," replied the little girl.

The narrow canyon turned and twisted this way and that, and the rift was so small that they were able to touch both walls at the same time by stretching out their arms. Toto had run on ahead, frisking playfully, when suddenly he uttered a sharp bark of fear and came running back to them with his tail between his legs, as dogs do when they are frightened.

"Ah," said the Scarecrow, who was leading the way, "we must be near Yoop."

Just then, as he rounded a sharp turn, the straw man stopped so suddenly that all the others bumped against him.

"What is it?" asked Dorothy, standing on tip-toes to look over his shoulder. But then she saw what it was and cried "Oh!" in a tone of astonishment.

In one of the rock walls — that at their left — was hollowed a great cavern, in front of which was a row of thick iron bars, the tops and bottoms being firmly fixed in the solid rock. Over this cavern was a big sign, which Dorothy read with much curiosity, speaking the words aloud that all might know what they said:

"MISTER YOOP — HIS CAVE

The Largest Untamed Giant in Captivity.

Height, 21 Feet. — (And yet he has but 2 feet.)

Weight, 1640 Pounds. — (But he waits all the time.)

Age, 400 Years 'and Up' (as they say in the Department Store advertisements.).

Temper, Fierce and Ferocious. — (Except when asleep.)

Appetite, Ravenous. — (Prefers Meat People and Orange Marmalade.)

Strangers Approaching this Cave do so at Their
Own Peril!

P. S. — Don't feed the Giant yourself."

"Very well," said Ojo, with a sigh; "let's go back."

"It's a long way back," declared Dorothy.

"So it is," remarked the Scarecrow, "and it means a tedious climb over those sharp rocks if we can't use this passage. I think it will be best to run by the Giant's cave as fast as we can go. Mister Yoop seems to be asleep just now."

But the Giant wasn't asleep. He suddenly appeared at the front of his cavern, seized the iron bars in his great hairy hands and shook them until they rattled in their sockets. Yoop was so tall that our friends had to tip their heads way back to look into his face, and they noticed he was dressed all in pink velvet, with silver buttons and braid. The Giant's boots were of pink

leather and had tassels on them and his hat was decorated with an enormous pink ostrich feather, carefully curled.

"Yo-ho!" he said in a deep bass voice; "I smell dinner."

"I think you are mistaken," replied the Scarecrow. "There is no orange marmalade around here."

"Ah, but I eat other things," asserted Mister Yoop. "That is, I eat them when I can get them. But this is a lonely place, and no good meat has passed by my cave for many years; so I'm hungry."

"Haven't you eaten anything in many years?" asked Dorothy.

"Nothing except six ants and a monkey. I thought the monkey would taste like meat people, but the flavor was different. I hope you will taste better, for you seem plump and tender."

"Oh, I'm not going to be eaten," said Dorothy.

"Why not?"

"I shall keep out of your way," she answered.

"How heartless!" wailed the Giant, shaking the bars again. "Consider how many years it is since I've eaten a single plump little girl! They tell me meat is going up, but if I can manage to catch you I'm sure it will soon be going down. And I'll catch you if I can."

With this the Giant pushed his big arms, which looked like tree-trunks (except that tree-trunks don't wear pink velvet) between the iron bars, and the arms were so long that they touched the opposite wall of the rock passage. Then he extended them as far as he could reach toward our travelers and found he could almost touch the Scarecrow — but not quite.

"Come a little nearer, please," begged the Giant.

"I'm a Scarecrow."

"A Scarecrow? Ugh! I don't care a straw for a scarecrow. Who is that bright-colored delicacy behind you?"

"Me?" asked Scraps. "I'm a Patchwork Girl, and I'm stuffed with cotton."

"Dear me," sighed the Giant in a disappointed tone; "that reduces my dinner from four to two — and the dog. I'll save the dog for dessert."

Toto growled, keeping a good distance away.

"Back up," said the Scarecrow to those behind him. "Let us go back a little way and talk this over."

So they turned and went around the bend in the passage, where they were out of sight of the cave and Mister Yoop could not hear them.

"My idea," began the Scarecrow, when they had halted, "is to make a dash past the cave, going on a run."

"He'd grab us," said Dorothy.

"Well, he can't grab but one at a time, and I'll go first. As soon as he

grabs me the rest of you can slip past him, out of his reach, and he will soon let me go because I am not fit to eat."

They decided to try this plan and Dorothy took Toto in her arms, so as to protect him. She followed just after the Scarecrow. Then came Ojo, with Scraps the last of the four. Their hearts beat a little faster than usual as they again approached the Giant's cave, this time moving swiftly forward.

It turned out about the way the Scarecrow had planned. Mister Yoop was quite astonished to see them come flying toward him, and thrusting his arms between the bars he seized the Scarecrow in a firm grip. In the next instant he realized, from the way the straw crunched between his fingers, that he had captured the non-eatable man, but during that instant of delay Dorothy and Ojo had slipped by the Giant and were out of reach. Uttering a howl of rage the monster threw the Scarecrow after them with one hand and grabbed Scraps with the other.

The poor Scarecrow went whirling through the air and so cleverly was he aimed that he struck Ojo's back and sent the boy tumbling head over heels, and he tripped Dorothy and sent her, also, sprawling upon the ground. Toto flew out of the little girl's arms and landed some distance ahead, and all were so dazed that it was a moment before they could scramble to their feet again. When they did so they turned to look toward the Giant's cave, and at that moment the ferocious Mister Yoop threw the Patchwork Girl at them.

Down went all three again, in a heap, with Scraps on top. The Giant roared so terribly that for a time they were afraid he had broken loose; but he hadn't. So they sat in the road and looked at one another in a rather bewildered way, and then began to feel glad.

"We did it!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, with satisfaction. "And now we are free to go on our way."

"Mister Yoop is very impolite," declared Scraps. "He jarred me terribly. It's lucky my stitches are so fine and strong, for otherwise such harsh treatment might rip me up the back."

"Allow me to apologize for the Giant," said the Scarecrow, raising the Patchwork Girl to her feet and dusting her skirt with his stuffed hands. "Mister Yoop is a perfect stranger to me, but I fear, from the rude manner in which he has acted, that he is no gentleman."

Dorothy and Ojo laughed at this statement and Toto barked as if he understood the joke, after which they all felt better and resumed the journey in high spirits.

"Of course," said the little girl, when they had walked a way along the passage, "it was lucky for us the Giant was caged; for, if he had happened to be loose, he — he — "

“Perhaps, in that case, he wouldn’t be hungry any more,” said Ojo gravely.

21 Hiphopper the Champion

HIP HOPPER THE CHAMPION

CHAP. 21

THEY must have had good courage to climb all those rocks, for after getting out of the canyon they encountered more rock hills to be surmounted. Toto could jump from one rock to another quite easily, but the others had to creep and climb with care, so that after a whole day of such work Dorothy and Ojo found themselves very tired.

As they gazed upward at the great mass of tumbled rocks that covered the steep incline, Dorothy gave a little groan and said:

"That's going to be a ter'ble hard climb, Scarecrow. I wish we could find the dark well without so much trouble."

"Suppose," said Ojo,268 "you wait here and let me do the climbing, for it's on my account we're searching for the dark well. Then, if I don't find anything, I'll come back and join you."

"No," replied the little girl, shaking her head positively, "we'll all go together, for that way we can help each other. If you went alone, something might happen to you, Ojo."

So they began the climb and found it indeed difficult, for a way. But presently, in creeping over the big crags, they found a path at their feet which wound in and out among the masses of rock and was quite smooth and easy to walk upon. As the path gradually ascended the mountain, although in a roundabout way, they decided to follow it.

"This must be the road to the Country of the Hoppers," said the Scarecrow.

"Who are the Hoppers?" asked Dorothy.

"Some people Jack Pumpkinhead told me about," he replied.

"I didn't hear him," replied the girl.

"No; you were asleep," explained the Scarecrow. "But he told Scraps and me that the Hoppers and the Horners live on this mountain."

"He said *in* the mountain," declared Scraps; "but of course he meant *on* it."

"Didn't he say what the Hoppers and Horners were like?" inquired Dorothy.

"No; he only said they were two separate nations, and that the Horners were the most important."

"Well, if we go to their country we'll find out all about 'em," said the girl. "But I've never heard Ozma mention those people, so they can't be *very* important."

"Is this mountain in the Land of Oz?" asked Scraps.

"Course it is," answered Dorothy. "It's in the South Country of the Quadlings. When one comes to the edge of Oz, in any direction, there is nothing more to be seen at all. Once you could see sandy desert all around Oz; but now it's diff'rent, and no other people can see us, any more than we can see them."

"If the mountain is under Ozma's rule, why doesn't she know about the Hoppers and the Horners?" Ojo asked.

"Why, it's a fairyland," explained Dorothy, "and lots of queer people live

in places so tucked away that those in the Emerald City never even hear of ‘em. In the middle of the country it’s diff’rent, but when you get around the edges you’re sure to run into strange little corners that surprise you. I know, for I’ve traveled in Oz a good deal, and so has the Scarecrow.”

“Yes,” admitted the straw man, “I’ve been considerable of a traveler, in my time, and I like to explore strange places. I find I learn much more by traveling than by staying at home.”

During this conversation they had been walking up the steep pathway and now found themselves well up on the mountain. They could see nothing around them, for the rocks beside their path were higher than their heads. Nor could they see far in front of them, because the path was so crooked. But suddenly they stopped, because the path ended and there was no place to go. Ahead was a big rock lying against the side of the mountain, and this blocked the way completely.

“There wouldn’t be a path, though, if it didn’t go somewhere,” said the Scarecrow, wrinkling his forehead in deep thought.

“This is somewhere, isn’t it?” asked the Patchwork Girl, laughing at the bewildered looks of the others.

“The path is locked, the way is blocked, Yet here we’ve innocently flocked; And now we’re here it’s rather queer There’s no front door that can be knocked.”

“Please don’t, Scraps,” said Ojo. “You make me nervous.”

“Well,” said Dorothy, “I’m glad of a little rest, for that’s a drea’ful steep path.”

As she spoke she leaned against the edge of the big rock that stood in their way. To her surprise it slowly swung backward and showed behind it a dark hole that looked like the mouth of a tunnel.

“Why, here’s where the path goes to!” she exclaimed.

“So it is,” answered the Scarecrow. “But the question is, do we want to go where the path does?”

“It’s underground; right inside the mountain,” said Ojo, peering into the dark hole. “Perhaps there’s a well there; and, if there is, it’s sure to be a dark one.”

“Why, that’s true enough!” cried Dorothy with eagerness. “Let’s go in, Scarecrow; ‘cause, if others have gone, we’re pretty safe to go, too.”

Toto looked in and barked, but he did not venture to enter until the Scarecrow had bravely gone first. Scraps followed closely after the straw man and then Ojo and Dorothy timidly stepped inside the tunnel. As soon as all of them had passed the big rock, it slowly turned and filled up the opening again; but now they were no longer in the dark, for a soft, rosy light enabled

them to see around them quite distinctly.

It was only a passage, wide enough for two of them to walk abreast — with Toto in between them — and it had a high, arched roof. They could not see where the light which flooded the place so pleasantly came from, for there were no lamps anywhere visible. The passage ran straight for a little way and then made a bend to the right and another sharp turn to the left, after which it went straight again. But there were no side passages, so they could not lose their way.

After proceeding some distance, Toto, who had gone on ahead, began to bark loudly. They ran around a bend to see what was the matter and found a man sitting on the floor of the passage and leaning his back against the wall. He had probably been asleep before Toto's barks aroused him, for he was now rubbing his eyes and staring at the little dog with all his might.

There was something about this man that Toto objected to, and when he slowly rose to his foot they saw what it was. He had but one leg, set just below the middle of his round, fat body; but it was a stout leg and had a broad, flat foot at the bottom of it, on which the man seemed to stand very well. He had never had but this one leg, which looked something like a pedestal, and when Toto ran up and made a grab at the man's ankle he hopped first one way and then another in a very active manner, looking so frightened that Scraps laughed aloud.

Toto was usually a well behaved dog, but this time he was angry and snapped at the man's leg again and again. This filled the poor fellow with fear, and in hopping out of Toto's reach he suddenly lost his balance and tumbled heel over head upon the floor. When he sat up he kicked Toto on the nose and made the dog howl angrily, but Dorothy now ran forward and caught Toto's collar, holding him back.

"Do you surrender?" she asked the man.

"Who? Me?" asked the Hopper.

"Yes; you," said the little girl.

"Am I captured?" he inquired.

"Of course. My dog has captured you," she said.

"Well," replied the man, "if I'm captured I must surrender, for it's the proper thing to do. I like to do everything proper, for it saves one a lot of trouble."

"It does, indeed," said Dorothy. "Please tell us who you are."

"I'm Hip Hopper — Hip Hopper, the Champion."

"Champion what?" she asked in surprise.

"Champion wrestler. I'm a very strong man, and that ferocious animal which you are so kindly holding is the first living thing that has ever

conquered me."

"And you are a Hopper?" she continued.

"Yes. My people live in a great city not far from here. Would you like to visit it?"

"I'm not sure," she said with hesitation. "Have you any dark wells in your city?"

"I think not. We have wells, you know, but they're all well lighted, and a well lighted well cannot well be a dark well. But there may be such a thing as a very dark well in the Horner Country, which is a black spot on the face of the earth."

"Where is the Horner Country?" Ojo inquired.

"The other side of the mountain. There's a fence between the Hopper Country and the Horner Country, and a gate in the fence; but you can't pass through just now, because we are at war with the Horners."

"That's too bad," said the Scarecrow. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"Why, one of them made a very insulting remark about my people. He said we were lacking in understanding, because we had only one leg to a person. I can't see that legs have anything to do with understanding things. The Horners each have two legs, just as you have. That's one leg too many, it seems to me."

"No," declared Dorothy, "it's just the right number."

"You don't need them," argued the Hopper, obstinately. "You've only one head, and one body, and one nose and mouth. Two legs are quite unnecessary, and they spoil one's shape."

"But how can you walk, with only one leg?" asked Ojo.

"Walk! Who wants to walk?" exclaimed the man. "Walking is a terribly awkward way to travel. I hop, and so do all my people. It's so much more graceful and agreeable than walking."

"I don't agree with you," said the Scarecrow. "But tell me, is there any way to get to the Horner Country without going through the city of the Hoppers?"

"Yes; there is another path from the rocky lowlands, outside the mountain, that leads straight to the entrance of the Horner Country. But it's a long way around, so you'd better come with me. Perhaps they will allow you to go through the gate; but we expect to conquer them this afternoon, if we get time, and then you may go and come as you please."

They thought it best to take the Hopper's advice, and asked him to lead the way. This he did in a series of hops, and he moved so swiftly in this strange manner that those with two legs had to run to keep up with him.

22 The Joking Horners

THE JOKING HORNERS

CHAP. 22

IT was not long before they left the passage and came to a great cave, so high that it must have reached nearly to the top of the mountain within which it lay. It was a magnificent cave, illumined by the soft, invisible light, so that everything in it could be plainly seen. The walls were of polished marble, white with veins of delicate colors running through it, and the roof was

arched and carved in designs both fantastic and beautiful.

Built beneath this vast dome was a pretty village — not very large, for there seemed not more than fifty houses altogether — and the dwellings were of marble and artistically designed. No grass nor flowers nor trees grew in this cave, so the yards surrounding the houses were smooth and bare and had low walls around them to mark their boundaries.

In the streets and the yards of the houses were many people, all having one leg growing below their bodies and all hopping here and there whenever they moved. Even the children stood firmly upon their single legs and never lost their balance.

"All hail, Champion!" cried a man in the first group of Hoppers they met; "whom have you captured?"

"No one," replied the Champion in a gloomy voice; "these strangers have captured me."

"Then," said another, "we will rescue you, and capture them, for we are greater in number."

"No," answered the Champion, "I can't allow it. I've surrendered, and it isn't polite to capture those you've surrendered to."

"Never mind that," said Dorothy. "We will give you your liberty and set you free."

"Really?" asked the Champion in joyous tones.

"Yes," said the little girl; "your people may need you to help conquer the Horners."

At this all the Hoppers looked downcast and sad. Several more had joined the group by this time and quite a crowd of curious men, women and children surrounded the strangers.

"This war with our neighbors is a terrible thing," remarked one of the women. "Some one is almost sure to get hurt."

"Why do you say that, madam?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"Because the horns of our enemies are sharp, and in battle they will try to stick those horns into our warriors," she replied.

"How many horns do the Horners have?" asked Dorothy.

"Each has one horn in the center of his forehead," was the answer.

"Oh, then they're unicorns," declared the Scarecrow.

"No; they're Horners. We never go to war with them if we can help it, on account of their dangerous horns; but this insult was so great and so unprovoked that our brave men decided to fight, in order to be revenged," said the woman.

"What weapons do you fight with?" the Scarecrow asked.

"We have no weapons," explained the Champion. "Whenever we fight the

Horners, our plan is to push them back, for our arms are longer than theirs."

"Then you are better armed," said Scraps.

"Yes; but they have those terrible horns, and unless we are careful they prick us with the points," returned the Champion with a shudder. "That makes a war with them dangerous, and a dangerous war cannot be a pleasant one."

"I see very clearly," remarked the Scarecrow, "that you are going to have trouble in conquering those Horners — unless we help you."

"Oh!" cried the Hoppers in a chorus; "can you help us? Please do! We will be greatly obliged! It would please us very much!" and by these exclamations the Scarecrow knew that his speech had met with favor.

"How far is it to the Horner Country?" he asked.

"Why, it's just the other side of the fence," they answered, and the Champion added:

"Come with me, please, and I'll show you the Horners."

So they followed the Champion and several others through the streets and just beyond the village came to a very high picket fence, built all of marble, which seemed to divide the great cave into two equal parts.

But the part inhabited by the Horners was in no way as grand in appearance as that of the Hoppers. Instead of being marble, the walls and roof were of dull gray rock and the square houses were plainly made of the same material. But in extent the city was much larger than that of the Hoppers and the streets were thronged with numerous people who busied themselves in various ways.

Looking through the open pickets of the fence our friends watched the Horners, who did not know they were being watched by strangers, and found them very unusual in appearance. They were little folks in size and had bodies round as balls and short legs and arms. Their heads were round, too, and they had long, pointed ears and a horn set in the center of the forehead. The horns did not seem very terrible, for they were not more than six inches long; but they were ivory white and sharp pointed, and no wonder the Hoppers feared them.

The skins of the Horners were light brown, but they wore snow-white robes and were bare-footed. Dorothy thought the most striking thing about them was their hair, which grew in three distinct colors on each and every head — red, yellow and green. The red was at the bottom and sometimes hung over their eyes; then came a broad circle of yellow and the green was at the top and formed a brush-shaped top-knot.

None of the Horners was yet aware of the presence of strangers, who watched the little brown people for a time and then went to the big gate in the

center of the dividing fence. It was locked on both sides and over the latch was a sign reading:

"WAR IS DECLARED"

"Can't we go through?" asked Dorothy.

"Not now," answered the Champion.

"I think," said the Scarecrow, "that if I could talk with those Horners they would apologize to you, and then there would be no need to fight."

"Can't you talk from this side," asked the Champion.

"Not so well," replied the Scarecrow. "Do you suppose you could throw me over that fence? It is high, but I am very light."

"We can try it," said the Hopper. "I am perhaps the strongest man in my country, so I'll undertake to do the throwing. But I won't promise you will land on your feet."

"No matter about that," returned the Scarecrow. "Just toss me over and I'll be satisfied."

So the Champion picked up the Scarecrow and balanced him a moment, to see how much he weighed, and then with all his strength tossed him high into the air.

Perhaps if the Scarecrow had been a trifle heavier he would have been easier to throw and would have gone a greater distance; but, as it was, instead of going over the fence he landed just on top of it, and one of the sharp pickets caught him in the middle of his back and held him fast prisoner. Had he been face downward the Scarecrow might have managed to free himself, but lying on his back on the picket his hands waved in the air of the Horner Country while his feet kicked the air of the Hopper Country; so there he was.

"Are you hurt?" called the Patchwork Girl anxiously.

"Course not," said Dorothy. "But if he wiggles that way he may tear his clothes. How can we get him down, Mr. Champion?"

The Champion shook his head.

"I don't know," he confessed. "If he could scare Horners as well as he does crows, it might be a good idea to leave him there."

"This is terrible," said Ojo, almost ready to cry. "I s'pose it's because I am Ojo the Unlucky that everyone who tries to help me gets into trouble."

"You are lucky to have anyone to help you," declared Dorothy. "But don't worry. We'll rescue the Scarecrow, somehow."

"I know how," announced Scraps. "Here, Mr. Champion; just throw me up to the Scarecrow. I'm nearly as light as he is, and when I'm on top the fence I'll pull our friend off the picket and toss him down to you."

"All right," said the Champion, and he picked up the Patchwork Girl and threw her in the same manner he had the Scarecrow. He must have used more strength this time, however, for Scraps sailed far over the top of the fence and, without being able to grab the Scarecrow at all, tumbled to the ground in the Horner Country, where her stuffed body knocked over two men and a woman and made a crowd that had collected there run like rabbits to get away from her.

Seeing the next moment that she was harmless, the people slowly returned and gathered around the Patchwork Girl, regarding her with astonishment. One of them wore a jeweled star in his hair, just above his horn, and this seemed a person of importance. He spoke for the rest of his people, who treated him with great respect.

"Who are you, Unknown Being?" he asked.

"Scraps," she said, rising to her feet and patting her cotton wadding smooth where it had bunched up.

"And where did you come from?" he continued.

"Over the fence. Don't be silly. There's no other place I *could* have come from," she replied.

He looked at her thoughtfully.

"You are not a Hopper," said he, "for you have two legs. They're not very well shaped, but they are two in number. And that strange creature on top the fence — why doesn't he stop kicking? — must be your brother, or father, or son, for he also has two legs."

"You must have been to visit the Wise Donkey," said Scraps, laughing so merrily that the crowd smiled with her, in sympathy. "But that reminds me, Captain — or King — "

"I am Chief of the Horners, and my name is Jak."

"Of course; Little Jack Horner; I might have known it. But the reason I volplaned over the fence was so I could have a talk with you about the

Hoppers."

"What about the Hoppers?" asked the Chief, frowning.

"You've insulted them, and you'd better beg their pardon," said Scraps. "If you don't, they'll probably hop over here and conquer you."

"We're not afraid — as long as the gate is locked," declared the Chief. "And we didn't insult them at all. One of us made a joke that the stupid Hoppers couldn't see."

The Chief smiled as he said this and the smile made his face look quite jolly.

"What was the joke?" asked Scraps.

"A Horner said they have less understanding than we, because they've only one leg. Ha, ha! You see the point, don't you? If you stand on your legs, and your legs are under you, then — ha, ha, ha! — then your legs are your under-standing. Hee, hee, hee! Ho, ho! My, but that's a fine joke. And the stupid Hoppers couldn't see it! They couldn't see that with only one leg they must have less under-standing than we who have two legs. Ha, ha, ha! Hee, hee! Ho, ho!" The Chief wiped the tears of laughter from his eyes with the bottom hem of his white robe, and all the other Horners wiped their eyes on their robes, for they had laughed just as heartily as their Chief at the absurd joke.

"Then," said Scraps, "their understanding of the understanding you meant led to the misunderstanding."

"Exactly; and so there's no need for us to apologize," returned the Chief.

"No need for an apology, perhaps, but much need for an explanation," said Scraps decidedly. "You don't want war, do you?"

"Not if we can help it," admitted Jak Horner. "The question is, who's going to explain the joke to the Horners? You know it spoils any joke to be obliged to explain it, and this is the best joke I ever heard."

"Who made the joke?" asked Scraps.

"Diksey Horner. He is working in the mines, just now, but he'll be home before long. Suppose we wait and talk with him about it? Maybe he'll be willing to explain his joke to the Hoppers."

"All right," said Scraps. "I'll wait, if Diksey isn't too long."

"No, he's short; he's shorter than I am. Ha, ha, ha! Say! that's a better joke than Diksey's. He won't be too long, because he's short. Hee, hee, ho!"

The other Horners who were standing by roared with laughter and seemed to like their Chief's joke as much as he did. Scraps thought it was odd that they could be so easily amused, but decided there could be little harm in people who laughed so merrily.

23 Peace is Declared

PEACE IS DECLARED

"COME with me to my dwelling and I'll introduce you to my daughters," said the Chief. "We're bringing them up according to a book of rules that was written by one of our leading old bachelors, and everyone says they're a remarkable lot of girls."

So Scraps accompanied him along the street to a house that seemed on the

outside exceptionally grimy and dingy. The streets of this city were not paved nor had any attempt been made to beautify the houses or their surroundings, and having noticed this condition Scraps was astonished when the Chief ushered her into his home.

Here was nothing grimy or faded, indeed. On the contrary, the room was of dazzling brilliance and beauty, for it was lined throughout with an exquisite metal that resembled translucent frosted silver. The surface of this metal was highly ornamented in raised designs representing men, animals, flowers and trees, and from the metal itself was radiated the soft light which flooded the room. All the furniture was made of the same glorious metal, and Scraps asked what it was.

"That's radium," answered the Chief. "We Horners spend all our time digging radium from the mines under this mountain, and we use it to decorate our homes and make them pretty and cosy. It is a medicine, too, and no one can ever be sick who lives near radium."

"Have you plenty of it?" asked the Patchwork Girl.

"More than we can use. All the houses in this city are decorated with it, just the same as mine is."

"Why don't you use it on your streets, then, and the outside of your houses, to make them as pretty as they are within?" she inquired.

"Outside? Who cares for the outside of anything?" asked the Chief. "We Horners don't live on the outside of our homes; we live inside. Many people are like those stupid Hoppers, who love to make an outside show. I suppose you strangers thought their city more beautiful than ours, because you judged from appearances and they have handsome marble houses and marble streets; but if you entered one of their stiff dwellings you would find it bare and uncomfortable, as all their show is on the outside. They have an idea that what is not seen by others is not important, but with us the rooms we live in are our chief delight and care, and we pay no attention to outside show."

"Seems to me," said Scraps, musingly, "it would be better to make it all pretty — inside and out."

"Seems? Why, you're all seams, my girl!" said the Chief; and then he laughed heartily at his latest joke and a chorus of small voices echoed the chorus with "tee-hee-hee! ha, ha!"

Scraps turned around and found a row of girls seated in radium chairs ranged along one wall of the room. There were nineteen of them, by actual count, and they were of all sizes from a tiny child to one almost a grown woman. All were neatly dressed in spotless white robes and had brown skins, horns on their foreheads and three-colored hair.

"These," said the Chief, "are my sweet daughters. My dears, I introduce to

you Miss Scraps Patchwork, a lady who is traveling in foreign parts to increase her store of wisdom."

The nineteen Horner girls all arose and made a polite courtesy, after which they resumed their seats and rearranged their robes properly.

"Why do they sit so still, and all in a row?" asked Scraps.

"Because it is ladylike and proper," replied the Chief.

"But some are just children, poor things! Don't they ever run around and play and laugh, and have a good time?"

"No, indeed," said the Chief. "That would be improper in young ladies, as well as in those who will sometime become young ladies. My daughters are being brought up according to the rules and regulations laid down by a leading bachelor who has given the subject much study and is himself a man of taste and culture. Politeness is his great hobby, and he claims that if a child is allowed to do an impolite thing one cannot expect the grown person to do anything better."

"Is it impolite to romp and shout and be jolly?" asked Scraps.

"Well, sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't," replied the Horner, after considering the question. "By curbing such inclinations in my daughters we keep on the safe side. Once in a while I make a good joke, as you have heard, and then I permit my daughters to laugh decorously; but they are never allowed to make a joke themselves."

"That old bachelor who made the rules ought to be skinned alive!" declared Scraps, and would have said more on the subject had not the door opened to admit a little Horner man whom the Chief introduced as Diksey.

"What's up, Chief?" asked Diksey, winking nineteen times at the nineteen girls, who demurely cast down their eyes because their father was looking.

The Chief told the man that his joke had not been understood by the dull Hoppers, who had become so angry that they had declared war. So the only way to avoid a terrible battle was to explain the joke so they could understand it.

"All right," replied Diksey, who seemed a good-natured man; "I'll go at once to the fence and explain. I don't want any war with the Hoppers, for wars between nations always cause hard feelings."

So the Chief and Diksey and Scraps left the house and went back to the marble picket fence. The Scarecrow was still stuck on the top of his picket but had now ceased to struggle. On the other side of the fence were Dorothy and Ojo, looking between the pickets; and there, also, were the Champion and many other Hoppers.

Diksey went close to the fence and said:

"My good Hoppers, I wish to explain that what I said about you was a

joke. You have but one leg each, and we have two legs each. Our legs are under us, whether one or two, and we stand on them. So, when I said you had less understanding than we, I did not mean that you had less understanding, you understand, but that you had less standundering, so to speak. Do you understand that?"

The Hoppers thought it over carefully. Then one said:

"That is clear enough; but where does the joke come in?"

Dorothy laughed, for she couldn't help it, although all the others were solemn enough.

"I'll tell you where the joke comes in," she said, and took the Hoppers away to a distance, where the Horners could not hear them. "You know," she then explained, "those neighbors of yours are not very bright, poor things, and what they think is a joke isn't a joke at all — it's true, don't you see?"

"True that we have less understanding?" asked the Champion.

"Yes; it's true because you don't understand such a poor joke; if you did, you'd be no wiser than they are."

"Ah, yes; of course," they answered, looking very wise.

"So I'll tell you what to do," continued Dorothy. "Laugh at their poor joke and tell 'em it's pretty good for a Horner. Then they won't dare say you have less understanding, because you understand as much as they do."

The Hoppers looked at one another questioningly and blinked their eyes and tried to think what it all meant; but they couldn't figure it out.

"What do you think, Champion?" asked one of them.

"I think it is dangerous to think of this thing any more than we can help," he replied. "Let us do as this girl says and laugh with the Horners, so as to make them believe we see the joke. Then there will be peace again and no need to fight."

They readily agreed to this and returned to the fence laughing as loud and as hard as they could, although they didn't feel like laughing a bit. The Horners were much surprised.

"That's a fine joke — for a Horner — and we are much pleased with it," said the Champion, speaking between the pickets. "But please don't do it again."

"I won't," promised Diksey. "If I think of another such joke I'll try to forget it."

"Good!" cried the Chief Horner. "The war is over and peace is declared."

There was much joyful shouting on both sides the fence and the gate was unlocked and thrown wide open, so that Scraps was able to rejoin her friends.

"What about the Scarecrow?" she asked Dorothy.

"We must get him down, somehow or other," was the reply.

“Perhaps the Horners can find a way,” suggested Ojo. So they all went through the gate and Dorothy asked the Chief Horner how they could get the Scarecrow off the fence. The Chief didn’t know how, but Diksey said:

“A ladder’s the thing.”

“Have you one?” asked Dorothy.

“To be sure. We use ladders in our mines,” said he. Then he ran away to get the ladder, and while he was gone the Horners gathered around and welcomed the strangers to their country, for through them a great war had been avoided.

In a little while Diksey came back with a tall ladder which he placed against the fence. Ojo at once climbed to the top of the ladder and Dorothy went about halfway up and Scraps stood at the foot of it. Toto ran around it and barked. Then Ojo pulled the Scarecrow away from the picket and passed him down to Dorothy, who in turn lowered him to the Patchwork Girl.

As soon as he was on his feet and standing on solid ground the Scarecrow said:

“Much obliged. I feel much better. I’m not stuck on that picket any more.”

The Horners began to laugh, thinking this was a joke, but the Scarecrow shook himself and patted his straw a little and said to Dorothy: “Is there much of a hole in my back?”

The little girl examined him carefully.

“There’s quite a hole,” she said. “But I’ve got a needle and thread in the knapsack and I’ll sew you up again.”

“Do so,” he begged earnestly, and again the Horners laughed, to the Scarecrow’s great annoyance.

While Dorothy was sewing up the hole in the straw man’s back Scraps examined the other parts of him.

“One of his legs is ripped, too!” she exclaimed.

“Oho!” cried little Diksey; “that’s bad. Give him the needle and thread and let him mend his ways.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed the Chief, and the other Horners at once roared with laughter.

“What’s funny?” inquired the Scarecrow sternly.

“Don’t you see?” asked Diksey, who had laughed even harder than the others. “That’s a joke. It’s by odds the best joke I ever made. You walk with your legs, and so that’s the way you walk, and your legs are the ways. See? So, when you mend your legs, you mend your ways. Ho, ho, ho! hee, hee! I’d no idea I could make such a fine joke!”

“Just wonderful!” echoed the Chief. “How do you manage to do it, Diksey?”295

"I don't know," said Diksey modestly. "Perhaps it's the radium, but I rather think it's my splendid intellect."

"If you don't quit it," the Scarecrow told him, "there'll be a worse war than the one you've escaped from."

Ojo had been deep in thought, and now he asked the Chief: "Is there a dark well in any part of your country?"

"A dark well? None that ever I heard of," was the answer.

"Oh, yes," said Diksey, who overheard the boy's question. "There's a very dark well down in my radium mine."

"Is there any water in it?" Ojo eagerly asked.

"Can't say; I've never looked to see. But we can find out."

So, as soon as the Scarecrow was mended, they decided to go with Diksey to the mine. When Dorothy had patted the straw man into shape again he declared he felt as good as new and equal to further adventures.

"Still," said he, "I prefer not to do picket duty again. High life doesn't seem to agree with my constitution." And then they hurried away to escape the laughter of the Horners, who thought this was another joke.

24 Ojo Finds the Dark Well

OJO FINDS THE DARK WELL

CHAP. 24

THEY now followed Diksey to the farther end of the great cave, beyond the Horner city, where there were several round, dark holes leading into the

ground in a slanting direction. Diksey went to one of these holes and said:

"Here is the mine in which lies the dark well you are seeking. Follow me and step carefully and I'll lead you to the place."

He went in first and after him came Ojo, and then Dorothy, with the Scarecrow behind her. The Patchwork Girl entered last of all, for Toto kept close beside his little mistress.

A few steps beyond the mouth of the opening it was pitch dark. "You won't lose your way,300 though," said the Horner, "for there's only one way to go. The mine's mine and I know every step of the way. How's that for a joke, eh? The mine's mine." Then he chuckled gleefully as they followed him silently down the steep slant. The hole was just big enough to permit them to walk upright, although the Scarecrow, being much the taller of the party, often had to bend his head to keep from hitting the top.

The floor of the tunnel was difficult to walk upon because it had been worn smooth as glass, and pretty soon Scraps, who was some distance behind the others, slipped and fell head foremost. At once she began to slide downward, so swiftly that when she came to the Scarecrow she knocked him off his feet and sent him tumbling against Dorothy, who tripped up Ojo. The boy fell against the Horner, so that all went tumbling down the slide in a regular mix-up, unable to see where they were going because of the darkness.

Fortunately, when they reached the bottom the Scarecrow and Scraps were in front, and the others bumped against them, so that no one was hurt. They found themselves in a vast cave which was dimly lighted by the tiny grains of radium that lay scattered among the loose rocks.

"Now," said Diksey, when they had all regained their feet, "I will show you where the dark well is. This is a big place, but if we hold fast to each other we won't get lost."

They took hold of hands and the Horner led them into a dark corner, where he halted.

"Be careful," said he warningly. "The well is at your feet."

"All right," replied Ojo, and kneeling down he felt in the well with his hand and found that it contained a quantity of water. "Where's the gold flask, Dorothy?" he asked, and the little girl handed him the flask, which she had brought with her.

Ojo knelt again and by feeling carefully in the dark managed to fill the flask with the unseen water that was in the well. Then he screwed the top of the flask firmly in place and put the precious water in his pocket.

"All right!" he said again, in a glad voice; "now we can go back."

They returned to the mouth of the tunnel and began to creep cautiously up the incline. This time they made Scraps stay behind, for fear she would slip

again; but they all managed to get up in safety and the Munchkin boy was very happy when he stood in the Horner city and realized that the water from the dark well, which he and his friends had traveled so far to secure, was safe in his jacket pocket.

25 They Bribe the Lazy Quadling

CHAP. 25

"NOW," said Dorothy, as they stood on the mountain path, having left

behind them the cave in which dwelt the Hoppers and the Horners, “I think we must find a road into the Country of the Winkies, for there is where Ojo wants to go next.”

“Is there such a road?” asked the Scarecrow.

“I don’t know,” she replied. “I s’pose we can go back the way we came, to Jack Pumpkinhead’s house, and then turn into the Winkie Country; but that seems like running ‘round a haystack, doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” said the Scarecrow. “What is the next thing Ojo must get?”

“A yellow butterfly,” answered the boy.

“That means the Winkie Country, all right, for it’s the yellow country of Oz,” remarked Dorothy. “I think, Scarecrow, we ought to take him to the Tin Woodman, for he’s the Emp’ror of the Winkies and will help us to find what Ojo wants.”

“Of course,” replied the Scarecrow, brightening at the suggestion. “The Tin Woodman will do anything we ask him, for he’s one of my dearest friends. I believe we can take a crosscut into his country and so get to his castle a day sooner than if we travel back the way we came.”

“I think so, too,” said the girl; “and that means we must keep to the left.”

They were obliged to go down the mountain before they found any path that led in the direction they wanted to go, but among the tumbled rocks at the foot of the mountain was a faint trail which they decided to follow. Two or three hours’ walk along this trail brought them to a clear, level country, where there were a few farms and some scattered houses. But they knew they were still in the Country of the Quadlings, because everything had a bright red color. Not that the trees and grasses were red, but the fences and houses were painted that color and all the wild-flowers that bloomed by the wayside had red blossoms. This part of the Quadling Country seemed peaceful and prosperous, if rather lonely, and the road was now more distinct and easier to follow.

But just as they were congratulating themselves upon the progress they had made they came upon a broad river which swept along between high banks, and here the road ended and there was no bridge of any sort to allow them to cross.

“This is queer,” mused Dorothy, looking at the water reflectively. “Why should there be any road, if the river stops everyone walking along it?”

“Wow!” said Toto, gazing earnestly into her face.

“That’s the best answer you’ll get,” declared the Scarecrow, with his comical smile, “for no one knows any more than Toto about this road.”

Said Scraps:

“Ev’ry time I see a river, I have chills that make me shiver, For I never

can forget All the water's very wet. If my patches get a soak It will be a sorry joke; So to swim I'll never try Till I find the water dry."

"Try to control yourself, Scraps," said Ojo; "you're getting crazy again. No one intends to swim that river."

"No," decided Dorothy, "we couldn't swim it if we tried. It's too big a river, and the water moves awful fast."

"There ought to be a ferryman with a boat," said the Scarecrow; "but I don't see any."

"Couldn't we make a raft?" suggested Ojo.

"There's nothing to make one of," answered Dorothy.

"Wow!" said Toto again, and Dorothy saw he was looking along the bank of the river.

"Why, he sees a house over there!" cried the little girl. "I wonder we didn't notice it ourselves. Let's go and ask the people how to get 'cross the river."

A quarter of a mile along the bank stood a small, round house, painted bright red, and as it was on their side of the river they hurried toward it. A chubby little man, dressed all in red, came out to greet them, and with him were two children, also in red costumes. The man's eyes were big and staring as he examined the Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl, and the children shyly hid behind him and peeked timidly at Toto.

"Do you live here, my good man?" asked the Scarecrow.

"I think I do, Most Mighty Magician," replied the Quadling, bowing low; "but whether I'm awake or dreaming I can't be positive, so I'm not sure where I live. If you'll kindly pinch me I'll find out all about it."

"You're awake," said Dorothy, "and this is no magician, but just the Scarecrow."

"But he's alive," protested the man, "and he oughtn't to be, you know. And that other dreadful person — the girl who is all patches — seems to be alive, too."

"Very much so," declared Scraps, making a face at him. "But that isn't your affair, you know."

"I've a right to be surprised, haven't I?" asked the man meekly.

"I'm not sure; but anyhow you've no right to say I'm dreadful. The Scarecrow, who is a gentleman of great wisdom, thinks I'm beautiful," retorted Scraps.

"Never mind all that," said Dorothy. "Tell us, good Quadling, how we can get across the river."

"I don't know," replied the Quadling.

"Don't you ever cross it?" asked the girl.

“Never.”

“Don’t travelers cross it?”

“Not to my knowledge,” said he.

They were much surprised to hear this, and the man added: “It’s a pretty big river, and the current is strong. I know a man who lives on the opposite bank, for I’ve seen him there a good many years; but we’ve never spoken because neither of us has ever crossed over.”

“That’s queer,” said the Scarecrow. “Don’t you own a boat?”

The man shook his head.

“Nor a raft?”

“No.”

“Where does this river go to?” asked Dorothy.

“That way,” answered the man, pointing with one hand, “it goes into the Country of the Winkies, which is ruled by the Tin Emperor, who must be a mighty magician because he’s all made of tin, and yet he’s alive. And that way,” pointing with the other hand, “the river runs between two mountains where dangerous people dwell.”

The Scarecrow looked at the water before them.

“The current flows toward the Winkie Country,” said he; “and so, if we had a boat, or a raft, the river would float us there more quickly and more easily than we could walk.”

“That is true,” agreed Dorothy; and then they all looked thoughtful and wondered what could be done.

“Why can’t the man make us a raft?” asked Ojo.

“Will you?” inquired Dorothy, turning to the Quadling.

The chubby man shook his head.

“I’m too lazy,” he said. “My wife says I’m the laziest man in all Oz, and she is a truthful woman. I hate work of any kind, and making a raft is hard work.”

“I’ll give you my em’rald ring,” promised the girl.

“No; I don’t care for emeralds. If it were a ruby, which is the color I like best, I might work a little while.”

“I’ve got some Square Meal Tablets,” said the Scarecrow. “Each one is the same as a dish of soup, a fried fish, a mutton pot-pie, lobster salad, charlotte russe and lemon jelly — all made into one little tablet that you can swallow without trouble.”

“Without trouble!” exclaimed the Quadling, much interested; “then those tablets would be fine for a lazy man. It’s such hard work to chew when you eat.”

“I’ll give you six of those tablets if you’ll help us make a raft,” promised

the Scarecrow. “They’re a combination of food which people who eat are very fond of. I never eat, you know, being straw; but some of my friends eat regularly. What do you say to my offer, Quadling?”

“I’ll do it,” decided the man. “I’ll help, and you can do most of the work. But my wife has gone fishing for red eels to-day, so some of you will have to mind the children.”

Scraps promised to do that, and the children were not so shy when the Patchwork Girl sat down to play with them. They grew to like Toto, too, and the little dog allowed them to pat him on his head, which gave the little ones much joy.

There were a number of fallen trees near the house and the Quadling got his axe and chopped them into logs of equal length. He took his wife’s clothesline to bind these logs together, so that they would form a raft, and Ojo found some strips of wood and nailed them along the tops of the logs, to render them more firm. The Scarecrow and Dorothy helped roll the logs together and carry the strips of wood, but it took so long to make the raft that evening came just as it was finished, and with evening the Quadling’s wife returned from her fishing.

The woman proved to be cross and bad-tempered, perhaps because she had only caught one red eel during all the day. When she found that her husband had used her clothesline, and the logs she had wanted for firewood, and the boards she had intended to mend the shed with, and a lot of gold nails, she became very angry. Scraps wanted to shake the woman, to make her behave, but Dorothy talked to her in a gentle tone and told the Quadling’s wife she was a Princess of Oz and a friend of Ozma and that when she got back to the Emerald City she would send them a lot of things to repay them for the raft, including a new clothesline. This promise pleased the woman and she soon became more pleasant, saying they could stay the night at her house and begin their voyage on the river next morning.

This they did, spending a pleasant evening with the Quadling family and being entertained with such hospitality as the poor people were able to offer them. The man groaned a good deal and said he had overworked himself by chopping the logs, but the Scarecrow gave him two more tablets than he had promised, which seemed to comfort the lazy fellow.

26 The Trick River

NEXT morning they pushed the raft into the water and all got aboard. The Quadling man had to hold the log craft fast while they took their places, and the flow of the river was so powerful that it nearly tore the raft from his hands. As soon as they were all seated upon the logs he let go and away it floated and the adventurers had begun their voyage toward the Winkie Country.

The little house of the Quadlings was out of sight almost before they had cried their good-byes, and the Scarecrow said in a pleased voice: “It won’t take us long to get to the Winkie Country, at this rate.”

They had floated several miles down the stream and were enjoying the ride when suddenly the raft slowed up, stopped short, and then began to float back the way it had come.

“Why, what’s wrong?” asked Dorothy, in astonishment; but they were all just as bewildered as she was and at first no one could answer the question. Soon, however, they realized the truth: that the current of the river had reversed and the water was now flowing in the opposite direction — toward the mountains.

They began to recognize the scenes they had passed, and by and by they came in sight of the little house of the Quadlings again. The man was standing on the river bank and he called to them:

“How do you do? Glad to see you again. I forgot to tell you that the river changes its direction every little while. Sometimes it flows one way, and sometimes the other.”

They had no time to answer him, for the raft was swept past the house and a long distance on the other side of it.

“We’re going just the way we don’t want to go,” said Dorothy, “and I guess the best thing we can do is to get to land before we’re carried any farther.”

But they could not get to land. They had no oars, nor even a pole to guide the raft with. The logs which bore them floated in the middle of the stream and were held fast in that position by the strong current.

So they sat still and waited and, even while they were wondering what could be done, the raft slowed down, stopped, and began drifting the other way — in the direction it had first followed. After a time they repassed the Quadling house and the man was still standing on the bank. He cried out to them:

“Good day! Glad to see you again. I expect I shall see you a good many times, as you go by, unless you happen to swim ashore.”

By that time they had left him behind and were headed once more straight toward the Winkie Country.

“This is pretty hard luck,” said Ojo in a discouraged voice. “The Trick River keeps changing, it seems, and here we must float back and forward forever, unless we manage in some way to get ashore.”

“Can you swim?” asked Dorothy.

“No; I’m Ojo the Unlucky.”

“Neither can I. Toto can swim a little, but that won’t help us to get to

shore."

"I don't know whether I could swim, or not," remarked Scraps; "but if I tried it I'd surely ruin my lovely patches."

"My straw would get soggy in the water and I would sink," said the Scarecrow.

So there seemed no way out of their dilemma and being helpless they simply sat still. Ojo, who was on the front of the raft, looked over into the water and thought he saw some large fishes swimming about. He found a loose end of the clothesline which fastened the logs together, and taking a gold nail from his pocket he bent it nearly double, to form a hook, and tied it to the end of the line. Having baited the hook with some bread which he broke from his loaf, he dropped the line into the water and almost instantly it was seized by a great fish.

They knew it was a great fish, because it pulled so hard on the line that it dragged the raft forward even faster than the current of the river had carried it. The fish was frightened, and it was a strong swimmer. As the other end of the clothesline was bound around the logs he could not get it away, and as he had greedily swallowed the gold hook at the first bite he could not get rid of that, either.

When they reached the place where the current had before changed, the fish was still swimming ahead in its wild attempt to escape. The raft slowed down, yet it did not stop, because the fish would not let it. It continued to move in the same direction it had been going. As the current reversed and rushed backward on its course it failed to drag the raft with it. Slowly, inch by inch, they floated on, and the fish tugged and tugged and kept them going.

"I hope he won't give up," said Ojo anxiously. "If the fish can hold out until the current changes again, we'll be all right."

The fish did not give up, but held the raft bravely on its course, till at last the water in the river shifted again and floated them the way they wanted to go. But now the captive fish found its strength failing. Seeking a refuge, it began to drag the raft toward the shore. As they did not wish to land in this place the boy cut the rope with his pocket-knife and set the fish free, just in time to prevent the raft from grounding.

The next time the river backed up the Scarecrow managed to seize the branch of a tree that overhung the water and they all assisted him to hold fast and prevent the raft from being carried backward. While they waited here, Ojo spied a long broken branch lying upon the bank, so he leaped ashore and got it. When he had stripped off the side shoots he believed he could use the branch as a pole, to guide the raft in case of emergency.

They clung to the tree until they found the water flowing the right way, when they let go and permitted the raft to resume its voyage. In spite of these pauses they were really making good progress toward the Winkie Country and having found a way to conquer the adverse current their spirits rose considerably. They could see little of the country through which they were

passing, because of the high banks, and they met with no boats or other craft upon the surface of the river.

Once more the trick river reversed its current, but this time the Scarecrow was on guard and used the pole to push the raft toward a big rock which lay in the water. He believed the rock would prevent their floating backward with the current, and so it did. They clung to this anchorage until the water resumed its proper direction, when they allowed the raft to drift on.

Floating around a bend they saw ahead a high bank of water, extending across the entire river, and toward this they were being irresistibly carried. There being no way to arrest the progress of the raft they clung fast to the logs and let the river sweep them on. Swiftly the raft climbed the bank of water and slid down on the other side, plunging its edge deep into the water and drenching them all with spray.

As again the raft righted and drifted on, Dorothy and Ojo laughed at the ducking they had received; but Scraps was much dismayed and the Scarecrow took out his handkerchief and wiped the water off the Patchwork Girl's patches as well as he was able to. The sun soon dried her and the colors of her patches proved good, for they did not run together nor did they fade.

After passing the wall of water the current did not change or flow backward any more but continued to sweep them steadily forward. The banks of the river grew lower, too, permitting them to see more of the country, and presently they discovered yellow buttercups and dandelions growing amongst the grass, from which evidence they knew they had reached the Winkie Country.

"Don't you think we ought to land?" Dorothy asked the Scarecrow.

"Pretty soon," he replied. "The Tin Woodman's castle is in the southern part of the Winkie Country, and so it can't be a great way from here."318

Fearing they might drift too far, Dorothy and Ojo now stood up and raised the Scarecrow in their arms, as high as they could, thus allowing him a good view of the country. For a time he saw nothing he recognized, but finally he cried:

"There it is! There it is!"

"What?" asked Dorothy.

"The Tin Woodman's tin castle. I can see its turrets glittering in the sun. It's quite a way off, but we'd better land as quickly as we can."

They let him down and began to urge the raft toward the shore by means of the pole. It obeyed very well, for the current was more sluggish now, and soon they had reached the bank and landed safely.

The Winkie Country was really beautiful, and across the fields they could see afar the silvery sheen of the tin castle. With light hearts they hurried toward it, being fully rested by their long ride on the river.

By and by they began to cross an immense field of splendid yellow lilies, the delicate fragrance of which was very delightful.

"How beautiful they are!" cried Dorothy, stopping to admire the perfection of these exquisite flowers.

"Yes," said the Scarecrow, reflectively, "but we must be careful not to crush or injure any of these lilies."

"Why not?" asked Ojo.

"The Tin Woodman is very kind-hearted," was the reply,321 "and he

hates to see any living thing hurt in any way."

"Are flowers alive?" asked Scraps.

"Yes, of course. And these flowers belong to the Tin Woodman. So, in order not to offend him, we must not tread on a single blossom."

"Once," said Dorothy, "the Tin Woodman stepped on a beetle and killed the little creature. That made him very unhappy and he cried until his tears rusted his joints, so he couldn't move 'em."

"What did he do then?" asked Ojo.

"Put oil on them, until the joints worked smooth again."

"Oh!" exclaimed the boy, as if a great discovery had flashed across his mind. But he did not tell anybody what the discovery was and kept the idea to himself.

It was a long walk, but a pleasant one, and they did not mind it a bit. Late in the afternoon they drew near to the wonderful tin castle of the Emperor of the Winkies, and Ojo and Scraps, who had never seen it before, were filled with amazement.

Tin abounded in the Winkie Country and the Winkies were said to be the most skillful tinsmiths in all the world. So the Tin Woodman had employed them in building his magnificent castle, which was all of tin, from the ground to the tallest turret, and so brightly polished that it glittered in the sun's rays more gorgeously than silver. Around the grounds of the castle ran a tin wall, with tin gates; but the gates stood wide open because the Emperor had no enemies to disturb him.

When they entered the spacious grounds our travelers found more to admire. Tin fountains sent sprays of clear water far into the air and there were many beds of tin flowers, all as perfectly formed as any natural flowers might be. There were tin trees, too, and here and there shady bowers of tin, with tin benches and chairs to sit upon. Also, on the sides of the pathway leading up to the front door of the castle, were rows of tin statuary, very cleverly executed. Among these Ojo recognized statues of Dorothy, Toto, the Scarecrow, the Wizard, the Shaggy Man, Jack Pumpkinhead and Ozma, all standing upon neat pedestals of tin.

Toto was well acquainted with the residence of the Tin Woodman and, being assured a joyful welcome, he ran ahead and barked so loudly at the front door that the Tin Woodman heard him and came out in person to see if it were really his old friend Toto. Next moment the tin man had clasped the Scarecrow in a warm embrace and then turned to hug Dorothy. But now his eye was arrested by the strange sight of the Patchwork Girl, and he gazed upon her in mingled wonder and admiration.

27 The Tin Woodman Objects

THE Tin Woodman was one of the most important personages in all Oz.

Though Emperor of the Winkies, he owed allegiance to Ozma, who ruled all the land, and the girl and the tin man were warm personal friends. He was something of a dandy and kept his tin body brilliantly polished and his tin joints well oiled. Also he was very courteous in manner and so kind and gentle that everyone loved him. The Emperor greeted Ojo and Scraps with cordial hospitality and ushered the entire party into his handsome tin parlor, where all the furniture and pictures were made of tin. The walls were paneled with tin and from the tin ceiling hung tin chandeliers.

The Tin Woodman wanted to know, first of all, where Dorothy had found the Patchwork Girl, so between them the visitors told the story of how Scraps was made, as well as the accident to Margolotte and Unc Nunkie and how Ojo had set out upon a journey to procure the things needed for the Crooked Magician's magic charm. Then Dorothy told of their adventures in the Quadling Country and how at last they succeeded in getting the water from a dark well.

While the little girl was relating these adventures the Tin Woodman sat in an easy chair listening with intense interest, while the others sat grouped around him. Ojo, however, had kept his eyes fixed upon the body of the tin Emperor, and now he noticed that under the joint of his left knee a tiny drop of oil was forming. He watched this drop of oil with a fast-beating heart, and feeling in his pocket brought out a tiny vial of crystal, which he held secreted in his hand.

Presently the Tin Woodman changed his position, and at once Ojo, to the astonishment of all, dropped to the floor and held his crystal vial under the Emperor's knee joint. Just then the drop of oil fell, and the boy caught it in his bottle and immediately corked it tight. Then, with a red face and embarrassed manner, he rose to confront the others.

"What in the world were you doing?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"I caught a drop of oil that fell from your knee-joint," confessed Ojo.

"A drop of oil!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman. "Dear me, how careless my valet must have been in oiling me this morning. I'm afraid I shall have to scold the fellow, for I can't be dropping oil wherever I go."

"Never mind," said Dorothy. "Ojo seems glad to have the oil, for some reason."

"Yes," declared the Munchkin boy, "I am glad. For one of the things the Crooked Magician sent me to get was a drop of oil from a live man's body. I had no idea, at first, that there was such a thing; but it's now safe in the little crystal vial."

"You are very welcome to it, indeed," said the Tin Woodman. "Have you now secured all the things you were in search of?"

"Not quite all," answered Ojo. "There were five things I had to get, and I have found four of them. I have the three hairs in the tip of a Woozy's tail, a six-leaved clover, a gill of water from a dark well and a drop of oil from a live man's body. The last thing is the easiest of all to get, and I'm sure that my dear Unc Nunkie — and good Margolotte, as well — will soon be restored to life."

The Munchkin boy said this with much pride and pleasure.

"Good!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman; "I congratulate you. But what is the fifth and last thing you need, in order to complete the magic charm?"

"The left wing of a yellow butterfly," said Ojo. "In this yellow country, and with your kind assistance, that ought to be very easy to find."

The Tin Woodman stared at him in amazement.

"Surely you are joking!" he said.

"No," replied Ojo, much surprised; "I am in earnest."

"But do you think for a moment that I would permit you, or anyone else, to pull the left wing from a yellow butterfly?" demanded the Tin Woodman sternly.

"Why not, sir?"

"Why not? You ask me why not? It would be cruel — one of the most cruel and heartless deeds I ever heard of," asserted the Tin Woodman. "The butterflies are among the prettiest of all created things, and they are very

sensitive to pain. To tear a wing from one would cause it exquisite torture and it would soon die in great agony. I would not permit such a wicked deed under any circumstances!"

Ojo was astounded at hearing this. Dorothy, too, looked grave and disconcerted, but she knew in her heart that the Tin Woodman was right. The Scarecrow nodded his head in approval of his friend's speech, so it was evident that he agreed with the Emperor's decision. Scraps looked from one to another in perplexity.

"Who cares for a butterfly?" she asked.

"Don't you?" inquired the Tin Woodman.

"Not the snap of a finger, for I have no heart," said the Patchwork Girl. "But I want to help Ojo, who is my friend, to rescue the uncle whom he loves, and I'd kill a dozen useless butterflies to enable him to do that."

The Tin Woodman sighed regretfully.

"You have kind instincts," he said, "and with a heart you would indeed be a fine creature. I cannot blame you for your heartless remark, as you cannot understand the feelings of those who possess hearts. I, for instance, have a very neat and responsive heart which the wonderful Wizard of Oz once gave me, and so I shall never — never — *never* permit a poor yellow butterfly to be tortured by anyone."

"The yellow country of the Winkies," said Ojo sadly, "is the only place in Oz where a yellow butterfly can be found."

"I'm glad of that," said the Tin Woodman. "As I rule the Winkie Country, I can protect my butterflies."

"Unless I get the wing — just one left wing — " said Ojo miserably, "I can't save Unc Nunkie."

"Then he must remain a marble statue forever," declared the Tin Emperor, firmly.

Ojo wiped his eyes, for he could not hold back the tears.

"I'll tell you what to do," said Scraps. "We'll take a whole yellow butterfly, alive and well, to the Crooked Magician, and let him pull the left wing off."

"No you won't," said the Tin Woodman. "You can't have one of my dear little butterflies to treat in that way."

"Then what in the world shall we do?" asked Dorothy.

They all became silent and thoughtful. No one spoke for a long time. Then the Tin Woodman suddenly roused himself and said:

"We must all go back to the Emerald City and ask Ozma's advice. She's a wise little girl, our Ruler, and she may find a way to help Ojo save his Unc Nunkie."

So the following morning the party started on the journey to the Emerald City, which they reached in due time without any important adventure. It was a sad journey for Ojo, for without the wing of the yellow butterfly he saw no way to save Unc Nunkie — unless he waited six years for the Crooked Magician to make a new lot of the Powder of Life. The boy was utterly discouraged, and as he walked along he groaned aloud.

"Is anything hurting you?" inquired the Tin Woodman in a kindly tone, for the Emperor was with the party.

"I'm Ojo the Unlucky," replied the boy. "I might have known I would fail in anything I tried to do."

"Why are you Ojo the Unlucky?" asked the tin man.

"Because I was born on a Friday."

"Friday is not unlucky," declared the Emperor. "It's just one of seven days. Do you suppose all the world becomes unlucky one-seventh of the time?"

"It was the thirteenth day of the month," said Ojo.

"Thirteen! Ah, that is indeed a lucky number," replied the Tin Woodman. "All my good luck seems to happen on the thirteenth. I suppose most people never notice the good luck that comes to them with the number 13, and yet if the least bit of bad luck falls on that day, they blame it to the number, and not to the proper cause."

"Thirteen's my lucky number, too," remarked the Scarecrow.

"And mine," said Scraps. "I've just thirteen patches on my head."

"But," continued Ojo, "I'm left-handed."

"Many of our greatest men are that way," asserted the Emperor. "To be left-handed is usually to be two-handed; the right-handed people are usually one-handed."

"And I've a wart under my right arm," said Ojo.

"How lucky!" cried the Tin Woodman. "If it were on the end of your nose it might be unlucky, but under your arm it is luckily out of the way."

"For all those reasons," said the Munchkin boy, "I have been called Ojo the Unlucky."

"Then we must turn over a new leaf and call you henceforth Ojo the Lucky," declared the tin man. "Every reason you have given is absurd. But I have noticed that those who continually dread ill luck and fear it will overtake them, have no time to take advantage of any good fortune that comes their way. Make up your mind to be Ojo the Lucky."

"How can I?" asked the boy, "when all my attempts to save my dear uncle have failed?"

"Never give up, Ojo," advised Dorothy. "No one ever knows what's going

to happen next."

Ojo did not reply, but he was so dejected that even their arrival at the Emerald City failed to interest him.

The people joyfully cheered the appearance of the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow and Dorothy, who were all three general favorites, and on entering the royal palace word came to them from Ozma that she would at once grant them an audience.

Dorothy told the girl Ruler how successful they had been in their quest until they came to the item of the yellow butterfly, which the Tin Woodman positively refused to sacrifice to the magic potion.

"He is quite right," said Ozma, who did not seem a bit surprised. "Had

Ojo told me that one of the things he sought was the wing of a yellow butterfly I would have informed him, before he started out, that he could never secure it. Then you would have been saved the troubles and annoyances of your long journey."

"I didn't mind the journey at all," said Dorothy; "it was fun."

"As it has turned out," remarked Ojo, "I can never get the things the Crooked Magician sent me for; and so, unless I wait the six years for him to make the Powder of Life, Unc Nunkie cannot be saved."

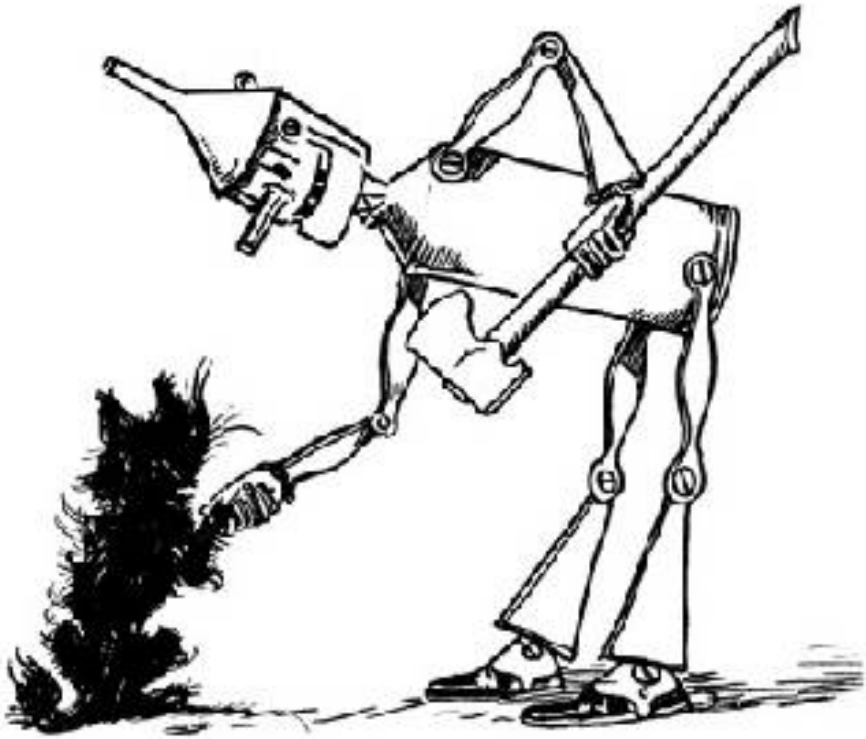
Ozma smiled.

"Dr. Pipt will make no more Powder of Life, I promise you," said she. "I have sent for him and had him brought to this palace, where he now is, and his four kettles have been destroyed and his book of recipes burned up. I have also had brought here the marble statues of your uncle and of Margolotte, which are standing in the next room."

They were all greatly astonished at this announcement.

"Oh, let me see Unc Nunkie! Let me see him at once, please!" cried Ojo eagerly.

"Wait a moment," replied Ozma, "for I have something more to say. Nothing that happens in the Land of Oz escapes the notice of our wise Sorceress, Glinda the Good. She knew all about the magic-making of Dr. Pipt, and how he had brought the Glass Cat and the Patchwork Girl to life, and the accident to Unc Nunkie and Margolotte, and of Ojo's quest and his journey with Dorothy. Glinda also knew that Ojo would fail to find all the things he sought, so she sent for our Wizard and instructed him what to do. Something is going to happen in this palace, presently, and that 'something' will, I am sure, please you all. And now," continued the girl Ruler, rising from her chair, "you may follow me into the next room."



28 The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

THE WONDERFUL WIZ-
ARD OF OZ

CHAP. 28

WHEN Ojo entered the room he ran quickly to the statue of Unc Nunkie and kissed the marble face affectionately.

"I did my best, Unc," he said, with a sob, "but it was no use!"

Then he drew back and looked around the room, and the sight of the assembled company quite amazed him.

Aside from the marble statues of Unc Nunkie and Margolotte, the Glass Cat was there, curled up on a rug; and the Woozy was there, sitting on its square hind legs and looking on the scene with solemn interest; and there was the Shaggy Man, in a suit of shaggy pea-green satin, and at a table sat the little Wizard, looking quite important and as if he knew much more than he cared to tell.

Last of all, Dr. Pipt was there, and the Crooked Magician sat humped up in a chair, seeming very dejected but keeping his eyes fixed on the lifeless form of his wife Margolotte, whom he fondly loved but whom he now feared was lost to him forever.

Ozma took a chair which Jellia Jamb wheeled forward for the Ruler, and back of her stood the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and Dorothy, as well as the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger. The Wizard now arose and made a low bow to Ozma and another less deferent bow to the assembled company.

"Ladies and gentlemen and beasts," he said, "I beg to announce that our Gracious Ruler has permitted me to obey the commands of the great Sorceress, Glinda the Good, whose humble Assistant I am proud to be. We have discovered that the Crooked Magician has been indulging in his magical arts contrary to Law, and therefore, by Royal Edict, I hereby deprive him of all power to work magic in the future. He is no longer a crooked magician, but a simple Munchkin; he is no longer even crooked, but a man like other men."

As he pronounced these words the Wizard waved his hand toward Dr. Pipt and instantly every crooked limb straightened out and became perfect. The former magician, with a cry of joy, sprang to his feet, looked at himself in wonder, and then fell back in his chair and watched the Wizard with fascinated interest.

"The Glass Cat, which Dr. Pipt lawlessly made," continued the Wizard, "is a pretty cat, but its pink brains made it so conceited that it was a disagreeable companion to everyone. So the other day I took away the pink brains and replaced them with transparent ones, and now the Glass Cat is so modest and well behaved that Ozma has decided to keep her in the palace as a pet."

"I thank you," said the cat, in a soft voice.

"The Woozy has proved himself a good Woozy and a faithful friend," the Wizard went on, "so we will send him to the Royal Menagerie, where he will have good care and plenty to eat all his life."

"Much obliged," said the Woozy. "That beats being fenced up in a lonely

forest and starved."

"As for the Patchwork Girl," resumed the Wizard, "she is so remarkable in appearance, and so clever and good tempered, that our Gracious Ruler intends to preserve her carefully, as one of the curiosities of the curious Land of Oz. Scraps may live in the palace, or wherever she pleases, and be nobody's servant but her own."

"That's all right," said Scraps.

"We have all been interested in Ojo," the little Wizard continued, "because his love for his unfortunate uncle has led him bravely to face all sorts of dangers, in order that he might rescue him. The Munchkin boy has a loyal and generous heart and has done his best to restore Unc Nunkie to life. He has failed, but there are others more powerful than the Crooked Magician, and there are more ways than Dr. Pipt knew of to destroy the charm of the Liquid of Petrifaction. Glinda the Good has told me of one way, and you shall now learn how great is the knowledge and power of our peerless Sorceress."339

As he said this the Wizard advanced to the statue of Margolotte and made a magic pass, at the same time muttering a magic word that none could hear distinctly. At once the woman moved, turned her head wonderingly this way and that, to note all who stood before her, and seeing Dr. Pipt, ran forward and threw herself into her husband's outstretched arms.

Then the Wizard made the magic pass and spoke the magic word before the statue of Unc Nunkie. The old Munchkin immediately came to life and with a low bow to the Wizard said: "Thanks."

But now Ojo rushed up and threw his arms joyfully about his uncle, and the old man hugged his little nephew tenderly and stroked his hair and wiped away the boy's tears with a handkerchief, for Ojo was crying from pure

happiness.

Ozma came forward to congratulate them.

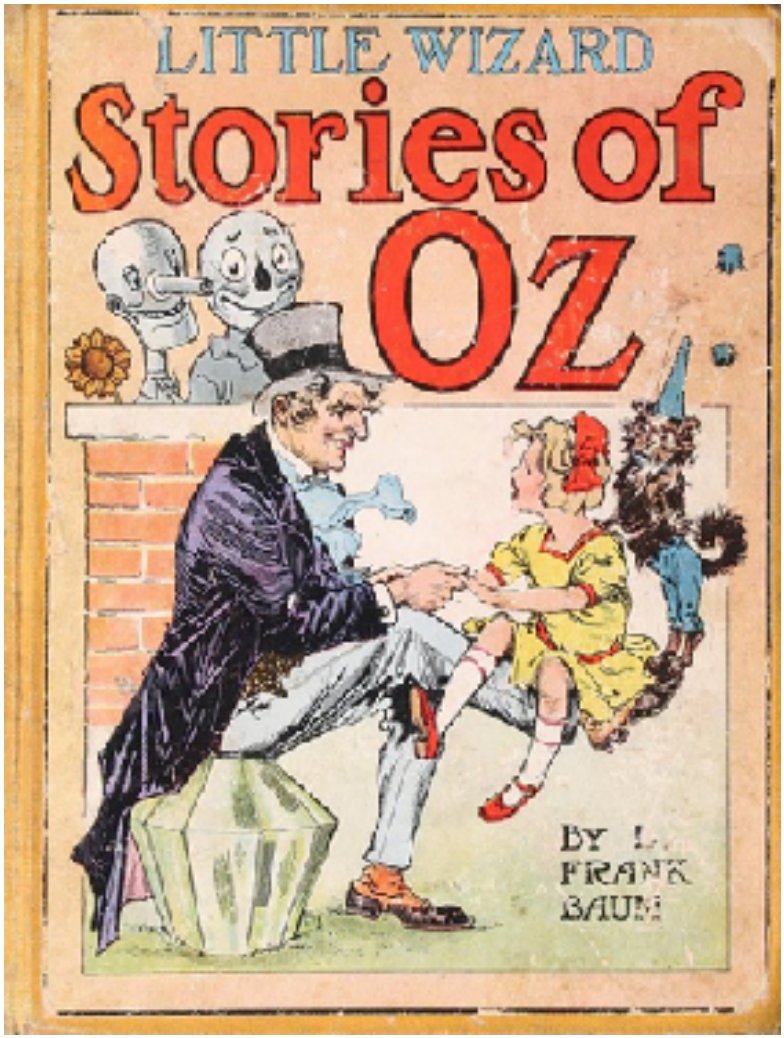
“I have given to you, my dear Ojo and Unc Nunkie, a nice house just outside the walls of the Emerald City,” she said, “and there you shall make your future home and be under my protection.”

“Didn’t I say you were Ojo the Lucky?” asked the Tin Woodman, as everyone crowded around to shake Ojo’s hand.

“Yes; and it is true!” replied Ojo, gratefully.

LITTLE WIZARD STORIES OF OZ

Little Wizard Stories of Oz first appeared as separate 29 page booklets in 1913, printed in blue ink. Reilly & Britton collected them into one volume, published in 1914 and illustrated by John R. Neill. Aimed at introducing the youngest readers to Oz, the simpler stories feature favorite characters familiar to fans of earlier books.



A first edition copy of 'Little Wizard Stories of Oz'

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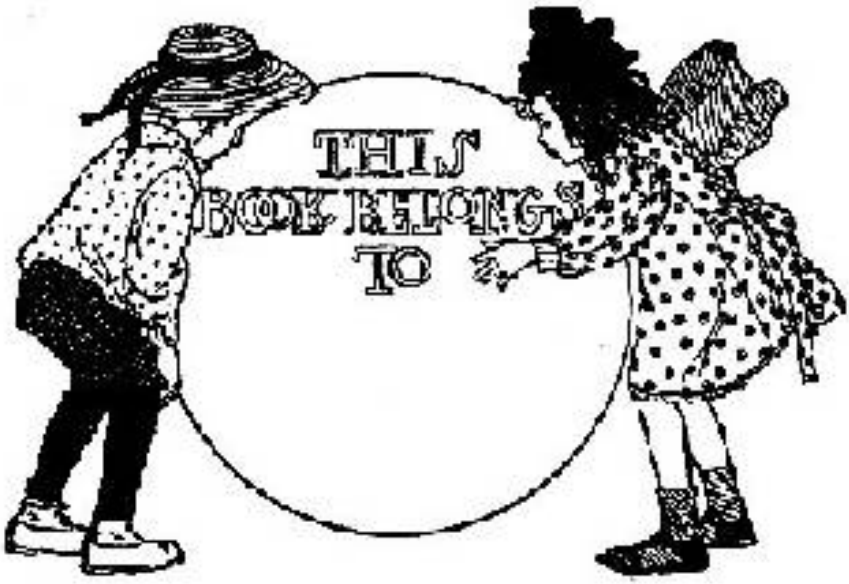
L. Frank Baum with some of his creations in 1908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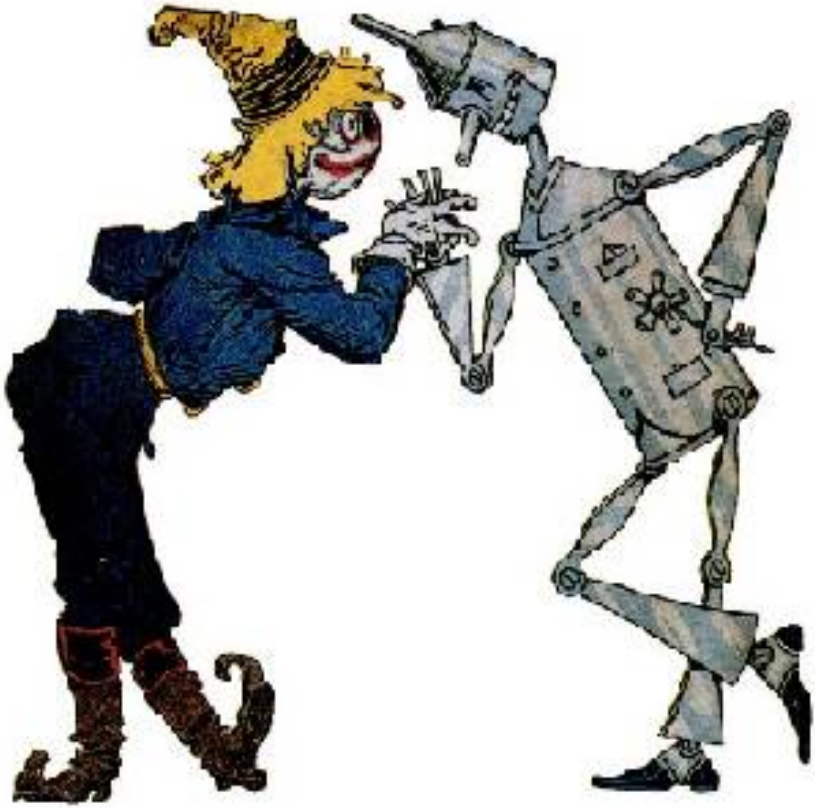


THE COWARDLY LION AND THE HUNGRY TIGER

In the splendid palace of the Emerald City, which is in the center of the fairy Land of Oz, is a great Throne Room, where Princess Ozma, the Ruler, for an hour each day sits in a throne of glistening emeralds and listens to all the troubles of her people, which they are sure to tell her about. Around Ozma's throne, on such occasions, are grouped all the important personages of Oz, such as the Scarecrow, Jack Pumpkinhead, Tiktok the Clockwork Man, the Tin Woodman, the Wizard of Oz, the Shaggy Man and other famous fairy people. Little Dorothy usually has a seat at Ozma's feet, and crouched on either side the throne are two enormous beasts known as the Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion.

These two beasts are Ozma's chief guardians, but as everyone loves the beautiful girl Princess there has never been any disturbance in the great Throne Room, or anything for the guardians to do but look fierce and solemn and keep quiet until the Royal Audience is over and the people go away to their homes.

Of course no one would dare be naughty while the huge Lion and Tiger crouched beside the throne; but the fact is, the people of Oz are very seldom naughty. So Ozma's big guards are more ornamental than useful, and no one realizes that better than the beasts themselves.

One day, after everybody had left the Throne Room except the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, the Lion yawned and said to his friend:

“I’m getting tired of this job. No one is afraid of us and no one pays any attention to us.”

“That is true,” replied the big Tiger, purring softly. “We might as well be in the thick jungles where we were born, as trying to protect Ozma when she needs no protection. And I’m dreadfully hungry all the time.”

“You have enough to eat, I’m sure,” said the Lion, swaying his tail slowly back and forth.

“Enough, perhaps; but not the kind of food I long for,” answered the Tiger. “What I’m hungry for is fat babies. I have a great desire to eat a few fat babies. Then, perhaps, the people of Oz would fear me and I’d become more important.”

“True,” agreed the Lion. “It would stir up quite a rumpus if you ate but *one* fat baby. As for myself; my claws are sharp as needles and strong as crowbars, while my teeth are powerful enough to tear a person to pieces in a few seconds. If I should spring upon a man and make chop suey of him, there would be wild excitement in the Emerald City and the people would fall upon their knees and beg me for mercy. That, in my opinion, would render me of considerable importance.”

“After you had torn the person to pieces, what would you do next?” asked the Tiger sleepily.

“Then I would roar so loudly it would shake the earth and stalk away to the jungle to hide myself, before anyone could attack me or kill me for what I had done.”

“I see,” nodded the Tiger. “You are really cowardly.”

“To be sure. That is why I am named the Cowardly Lion. That is why I have always been so tame and peaceable. But I’m awfully tired of being tame,” added the Lion, with a sigh, “and it would be fun to raise a row and show people what a terrible beast I really am.”

The Tiger remained silent for several minutes, thinking deeply as he slowly washed his face with his left paw. Then he said:

“I’m getting old, and it would please me to eat at least one fat baby before I die. Suppose we surprise these people of Oz and prove our power. What do you say? We will walk out of here just as usual and the first baby we meet I’ll eat in a jiffy, and the first man or woman you meet you will tear to pieces. Then we will both run out of the city gates and gallop across the country and hide in the jungle before anyone can stop us.”

“All right; I’m game,” said the Lion, yawning again so that he showed two rows of dreadfully sharp teeth.

The Tiger got up and stretched his great, sleek body.

“Come on,” he said. The Lion stood up and proved he was the larger of the two, for he was almost as big as a small horse.

Out of the palace they walked, and met no one. They passed through the beautiful grounds, past fountains and beds of lovely flowers, and met no one. Then they unlatched a gate and entered a street of the city, and met no one.

“I wonder how a fat baby will taste,” remarked the Tiger, as they stalked majestically along, side by side.

“I imagine it will taste like nutmegs,” said the Lion.

“No,” said the Tiger, “I’ve an idea it will taste like gumdrops.”

They turned a corner, but met no one, for the people of the Emerald City were accustomed to take their naps at this hour of the afternoon.

“I wonder how many pieces I ought to tear a person into,” said the Lion,

in a thoughtful voice.

"Sixty would be about right," suggested the Tiger.

"Would that hurt any more than to tear one into about a dozen pieces?" inquired the Lion, with a little shudder.

"Who cares whether it hurts or not?" growled the Tiger.

The Lion did not reply. They entered a side street, but met no one.

Suddenly they heard a child crying.

"Aha!" exclaimed the Tiger. "There is my meat."

He rushed around a corner, the Lion following, and came upon a nice fat baby sitting in the middle of the street and crying as if in great distress.

"What's the matter?" asked the Tiger, crouching before the baby.

“I — I — I-lost my m-m-mamma!” wailed the baby.

“Why, you poor little thing,” said the great beast, softly stroking the child’s head with its paw. “Don’t cry, my dear, for mamma can’t be far away and I’ll help you to find her.”

“Go on,” said the Lion, who stood by.

“Go on where?” asked the Tiger, looking up.

“Go on and eat your fat baby.”

“Why, you dreadful creature!” said the Tiger reproachfully; “would you want me to eat a poor little lost baby, that doesn’t know where its mother is?” And the beast gathered the little one into its strong, hairy arms and tried to comfort it by rocking it gently back and forth.

The Lion growled low in his throat and seemed very much disappointed; but at that moment a scream reached their ears and a woman came bounding out of a house and into the street. Seeing her baby in the embrace of the monster Tiger the woman screamed again and rushed forward to rescue it, but in her haste she caught her foot in her skirt and tumbled head over heels and heels over head, stopping with such a bump that she saw many stars in the heavens, although it was broad daylight. And there she lay, in a helpless manner, all tangled up and unable to stir.

With one bound and a roar like thunder the huge Lion was beside her. With his strong jaws he grasped her dress and raised her into an upright position.

"Poor thing! Are you hurt?" he gently asked.

Gasping for breath the woman struggled to free herself and tried to walk, but she limped badly and tumbled down again.

"My baby!" she said pleadingly.

"The baby is all right; don't worry," replied the Lion; and then he added: "Keep quiet, now, and I'll carry you back to your house, and the Hungry Tiger will carry your baby."

The Tiger, who had approached the place with the child in its arms, asked in astonishment:

"Aren't you going to tear her into sixty pieces?"

"No, nor into six pieces," answered the Lion indignantly. "I'm not such a brute as to destroy a poor woman who has hurt herself trying to save her lost baby. If you are so ferocious and cruel and bloodthirsty, you may leave me and go away, for I do not care to associate with you."

"That's all right," answered the Tiger. "I'm not cruel — not in the least — I'm only hungry. But I thought *you* were cruel."

"Thank heaven I'm respectable," said the Lion, with dignity. He then raised the woman and with much gentleness carried her into her house, where he laid her upon a sofa. The Tiger followed with the baby, which he safely deposited beside its mother. The little one liked the Hungry Tiger and grasping the enormous beast by both ears the baby kissed the beast's nose to

show he was grateful and happy.

"Thank you very much," said the woman. "I've often heard what good beasts you are, in spite of your power to do mischief to mankind, and now I know that the stories are true. I do not think either of you have ever had an evil thought."

The Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion hung their heads and did not look into each other's eyes, for both were shamed and humbled. They crept away and stalked back through the streets until they again entered the palace grounds, where they retreated to the pretty, comfortable rooms they occupied at the back of the palace. There they silently crouched in their usual corners to think over their adventure.

After a while the Tiger said sleepily:

"I don't believe fat babies taste like gumdrops. I'm quite sure they have the flavor of raspberry tarts. My, how hungry I am for fat babies!"

The Lion grunted disdainfully.

"You're a humbug," said he.

"Am I?" retorted the Tiger, with a sneer. "Tell me, then, into how many pieces you usually tear your victims, my bold Lion?"

The Lion impatiently thumped the floor with his tail.

"To tear anyone into pieces would soil my claws and blunt my teeth," he said. "I'm glad I didn't muss myself up this afternoon by hurting that poor mother."

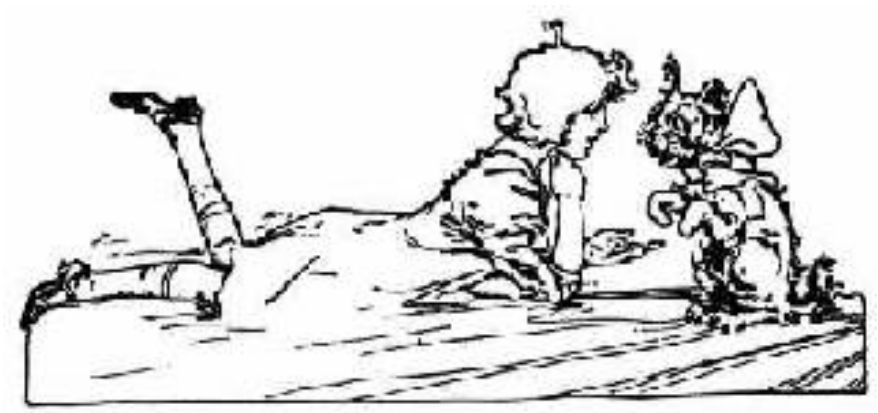
The Tiger looked at him steadily and then yawned a wide, wide yawn.

"You're a coward," he remarked.

"Well," said the Lion, "it's better to be a coward than to do wrong."

"To be sure," answered the other. "And that reminds me that I nearly lost my own reputation. For, had I eaten that fat baby I would not now be the Hungry Tiger. It's better to go hungry, seems to me, than to be cruel to a little child."

And then they dropped their heads on their paws and went to sleep.



LITTLE DOROTHY AND TOTO

orothy was a little Kansas girl who once accidentally found the beautiful Land of Oz and was invited to live there always. Toto was Dorothy's small black dog, with fuzzy, curly hair and bright black eyes. Together, when they tired of the grandeur of the Emerald City of Oz, they would wander out into the country and all through the land, peering into queer nooks and corners and having a good time in their own simple way. There was a little Wizard living in Oz who was a faithful friend of Dorothy and did not approve of her traveling alone in this way, but the girl always laughed at the little man's fears for her and said she was not afraid of anything that might happen.

One day while on such a journey, Dorothy and Toto found themselves among the wild wooded hills at the southeast of Oz — a place usually avoided by travelers because so many magical things abounded there. And, as they entered a forest path, the little girl noticed a sign tacked to a tree, which said: “Look out for Crinklink.”

Toto could not talk, as many of the animals of Oz can, for he was just a common Kansas dog; but he looked at the sign so seriously that Dorothy almost believed he could read it, and she knew quite well that Toto understood every word she said to him.

“Never mind Crinklink,” said she. “I don’t believe anything in Oz will try to hurt us, Toto, and if I get into trouble you must take care of me.”

“Bow-wow!” said Toto, and Dorothy knew that meant a promise.

The path was narrow and wound here and there between the trees, but they could not lose their way, because thick vines and creepers shut them in on both sides. They had walked a long time when, suddenly turning a curve of the pathway, they came upon a lake of black water, so big and so deep that they were forced to stop.

“Well, Toto,” said Dorothy, looking at the lake, “we must turn back, I guess, for there is neither a bridge nor a boat to take us across the black water.”

“Here’s the ferryman, though,” cried a tiny voice beside them, and the girl gave a start and looked down at her feet, where a man no taller than three

inches sat at the edge of the path with his legs dangling over the lake.

"Oh!" said Dorothy; "I didn't see you before."

Toto growled fiercely and made his ears stand up straight, but the little man did not seem in the least afraid of the dog. He merely repeated: "I'm the ferryman, and it's my business to carry people across the lake."

Dorothy couldn't help feeling surprised, for she could have picked the little man up with one hand, and the lake was big and broad. Looking at the ferryman more closely she saw that he had small eyes, a big nose, and a sharp chin. His hair was blue and his clothes scarlet, and Dorothy noticed that every button on his jacket was the head of some animal. The top button was a bear's head and the next button a wolf's head; the next was a cat's head and the next a weasel's head, while the last button of all was the head of a field-mouse. When Dorothy looked into the eyes of these animals' heads, they all nodded and said in a chorus: "Don't believe all you hear, little girl!"

"Silence!" said the small ferryman, slapping each button head in turn, but not hard enough to hurt them. Then he turned to Dorothy and asked: "Do you wish to cross over the lake?"

"Why, I'd like to," she answered, hesitating; "but I can't see how you will manage to carry us, without any boat."

"If you can't see, you mustn't see," he answered with a laugh. "All you need do is shut your eyes, say the word, and — over you go!"

Dorothy wanted to get across, in order that she might continue her journey.

"All right," she said, closing her eyes; "I'm ready."

Instantly she was seized in a pair of strong arms — arms so big and

powerful that she was startled and cried out in fear.

"Silence!" roared a great voice, and the girl opened her eyes to find that the tiny man had suddenly grown to a giant and was holding both her and Toto in a tight embrace while in one step he spanned the lake and reached the other shore.

Dorothy became frightened, then, especially as the giant did not stop but continued tramping in great steps over the wooded hills, crushing bushes and trees beneath his broad feet. She struggled in vain to free herself, while Toto whined and trembled beside her, for the little dog was frightened, too.

"Stop!" screamed the girl. "Let me down!" But the giant paid no attention. "Who are you, and where are you taking me?" she continued; but the giant said not a word. Close to Dorothy's ear, however, a voice answered her, saying: "This is the terrible Crinklink, and he has you in his power."

Dorothy managed to twist her head around and found it was the second button on the jacket — the wolf's head — which had spoken to her.

"What will Crinklink do with me?" she asked anxiously.

"No one knows. You must wait and see," replied the wolf.

"Some of his captives he whips," squeaked the weasel's head.

"Some he transforms into bugs and other things," growled the bear's head.

"Some he enchants, so that they become doorknobs," sighed the cat's head.

"Some he makes his slaves — even as we are — and that is the most dreadful fate of all," added the field-mouse. "As long as Crinklink exists we

shall remain buttons, but as there are no more buttonholes on his jacket he will probably make you a slave."

Dorothy began to wish she had not met Crinklink. Meantime, the giant took such big steps that he soon reached the heart of the hills, where, perched upon the highest peak, stood a log castle. Before this castle he paused to set down Dorothy and Toto, for Crinklink was at present far too large to enter his own doorway. So he made himself grow smaller, until he was about the size of an ordinary man. Then he said to Dorothy, in stern, commanding tones:

"Enter, girl!"

Dorothy obeyed and entered the castle, with Toto at her heels. She found

the place to be merely one big room. There was a table and chair of ordinary size near the center, and at one side a wee bed that seemed scarcely big enough for a doll. Everywhere else were dishes — dishes — dishes! They were all soiled, and were piled upon the floor, in all the corners and upon every shelf. Evidently Crinklink had not washed a dish for years, but had cast them aside as he used them.

Dorothy's captor sat down in the chair and frowned at her.

"You are young and strong, and will make a good dishwasher," said he.

"Do you mean me to wash all those dishes?" she asked, feeling both indignant and fearful, for such a task would take weeks to accomplish.

"That's just what I mean," he retorted. "I need clean dishes, for all I have are soiled, and you're going to make 'em clean or get trounced. So get to work and be careful not to break anything. If you smash a dish, the penalty is one lash from my dreadful cat-o'-nine-tails for every piece the dish breaks into," and here Crinklink displayed a terrible whip that made the little girl shudder.

Dorothy knew how to wash dishes, but she remembered that often she carelessly broke one. In this case, however, a good deal depended on being careful, so she handled the dishes very cautiously.

While she worked, Toto sat by the hearth and growled low at Crinklink, and Crinklink sat in his chair and growled at Dorothy because she moved so slowly. He expected her to break a dish any minute, but as the hours passed away and this did not happen Crinklink began to grow sleepy. It was tiresome watching the girl wash dishes and often he glanced longingly at the tiny bed. Now he began to yawn, and he yawned and yawned until finally he said:

"I'm going to take a nap. But the buttons on my jacket will be wide awake and whenever you break a dish the crash will waken me. As I'm rather sleepy I hope you won't interrupt my nap by breaking anything for a long time."

Then Crinklink made himself grow smaller and smaller until he was three inches high and of a size to fit the tiny bed. At once he lay down and fell fast asleep.

Dorothy came close to the buttons and whispered: "Would you really warn Crinklink if I tried to escape?"

"You can't escape," growled the bear. "Crinklink would become a giant, and soon overtake you."

“But you might kill him while he sleeps,” suggested the cat, in a soft voice.

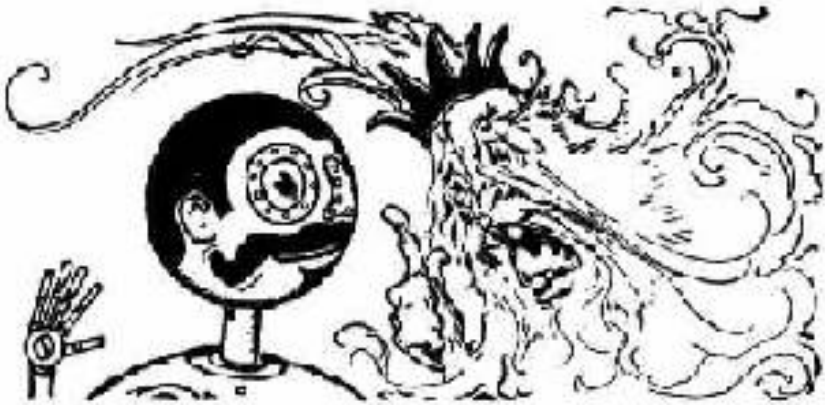
“Oh!” cried Dorothy, drawing back; “I couldn’t poss’bly *kill* anything — even to save my life.”

But Toto had heard this conversation and was not so particular about killing monsters. Also the little dog knew he must try to save his mistress. In an instant he sprang upon the wee bed and was about to seize the sleeping Crinklink in his jaws when Dorothy heard a loud crash and a heap of dishes fell from the table to the floor. Then the girl saw Toto and the little man rolling on the floor together, like a fuzzy ball, and when the ball stopped rolling, behold! there was Toto wagging his tail joyfully and there sat the little Wizard of Oz, laughing merrily at the expression of surprise on Dorothy’s face.

“Yes, my dear, it’s me,” said he, “and I’ve been playing tricks on you — for your own good. I wanted to prove to you that it is really dangerous for a little girl to wander alone in a fairy country; so I took the form of Crinklink to teach you a lesson. There isn’t any Crinklink, to be sure; but if there had been you’d be severely whipped for breaking all those dishes.”

The Wizard now rose, took off the coat with the button heads, and spread it on the floor, wrong side up. At once there crept from beneath it a bear, a wolf, a cat, a weasel, and a field-mouse, who all rushed from the room and escaped into the mountains.

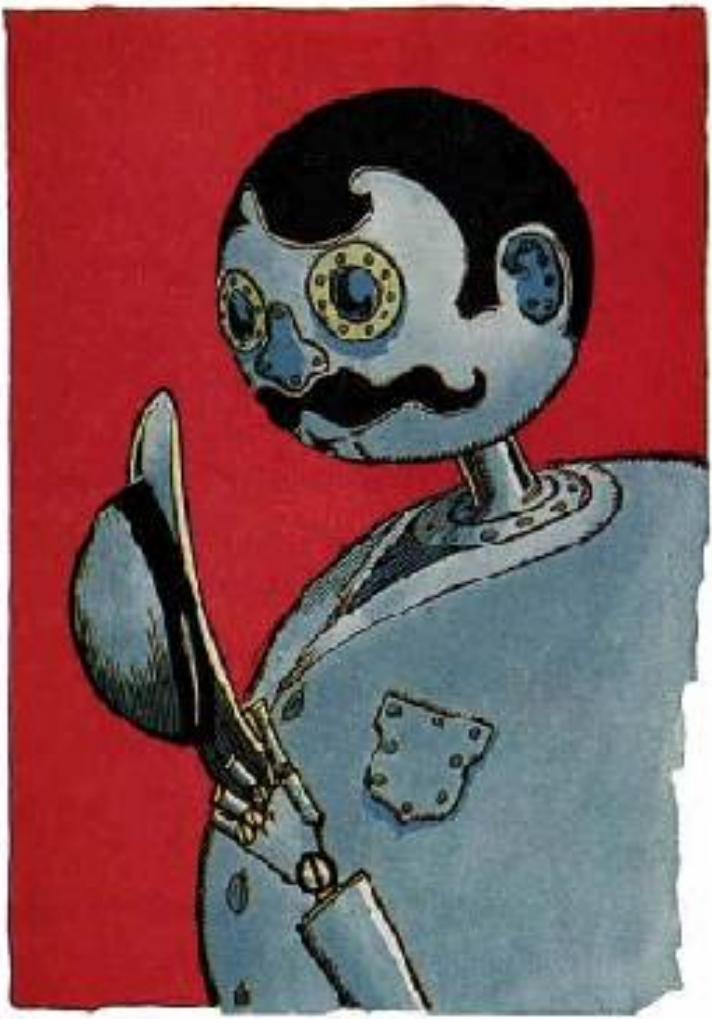
"Come on, Toto," said Dorothy; "let's go back to the Emerald City. You've given me a good scare, Wizard," she added, with dignity, "and p'raps I'll forgive you, by'n'by; but just now I'm mad to think how easily you fooled me."



TIKTOK AND THE NOME KING

he Nome King was unpleasantly angry. He had carelessly bitten his tongue at breakfast and it still hurt; so he roared and raved and stamped around in his underground palace in a way that rendered him very disagreeable.

It so happened that on this unfortunate day Tiktok, the Clockwork Man, visited the Nome King to ask a favor. Tiktok lived in the Land of Oz, and although he was an active and important person, he was made entirely of metal. Machinery within him, something like the works of a clock, made him move; other machinery made him talk; still other machinery made him think.



Although so cleverly constructed, the Clockwork Man was far from perfect. Three separate keys wound up his motion machinery, his speech works, and his thoughts. One or more of these contrivances was likely to run down at a critical moment, leaving poor Tiktok helpless. Also some of his parts were wearing out, through much use, and just now his thought machinery needed repair. The skillful little Wizard of Oz had tinkered with Tiktok's thoughts without being able to get them properly regulated, so he had advised the Clockwork Man to go to the Nome King and secure a new set of springs, which would render his thoughts more elastic and responsive.

"Be careful what you say to the Nome King," warned the Wizard. "He has a bad temper and the least little thing makes him angry."

Tiktok promised, and the Wizard wound his machinery and set him walking in the direction of the Nome King's dominions, just across the desert from the Land of Oz. He ran down just as he reached the entrance to the underground palace, and there Kaliko, the Nome King's Chief Steward, found him and wound him up again.

"I want to see the King," said Tiktok, in his jerky voice.

"Well," remarked Kaliko, "it may be safe for a cast-iron person like you to face his Majesty this morning; but you must announce yourself, for should I show my face inside the jewel-studded cavern where the King is now raving, I'd soon look like a dish of mashed potatoes, and be of no further use to anyone."

"I'm not a-fraid," said Tiktok.

"Then walk in and make yourself at home," answered Kaliko, and threw open the door of the King's cavern.

Tiktok promptly walked in and faced the astonished Nome King, to whom he said: “Good morn-ing. I want two new steel springs for my thought-works and a new cog-wheel for my speech-pro-du-cer. How a-bout it, your Maj-es-ty?”

The Nome King growled a menacing growl and his eyes were red with rage.

“How dare you enter my presence?” he shouted.

“I dare an-y-thing,” said Tiktok. “I’m not a-fraid of a fat Nome.”

This was true, yet an unwise speech. Had Tiktok's thoughts been in good working order he would have said something else. The angry Nome King quickly caught up his heavy mace and hurled it straight at Tiktok. When it struck the metal man's breast, the force of the blow burst the bolts which held the plates of his body together and they clattered to the floor in a score of pieces. Hundreds and hundreds of wheels, pins, cogs and springs filled the air like a cloud and then rattled like hail upon the floor.

Where Tiktok had stood was now only a scrap-heap and the Nome King was so amazed by the terrible effect of his blow that he stared in wonder.

His Majesty's anger quickly cooled. He remembered that the Clockwork Man was a favorite subject of the powerful Princess, Ozma of Oz, who

would be sure to resent Tiktok's ruin.

"Too bad! too bad!" he muttered, regretfully. "I'm really sorry I made junk of the fellow. I didn't know he'd break."

"You'd better be," remarked Kaliko, who now ventured to enter the room. "You'll have a war on your hands when Ozma hears of this, and the chances are you will lose your throne and your kingdom."

The Nome King turned pale, for he loved to rule the Nomes and did not know of any other way to earn a living in case Ozma fought and conquered him.

"Do — do you think Ozma will be angry?" he asked anxiously.

"I'm sure of it," said Kaliko. "And she has the right to be. You've made scrap-iron of her favorite."

The King groaned.

"Sweep him up and throw the rubbish into the black pit," he commanded; and then he shut himself up in his private den and for days would see no one, because he was so ashamed of his unreasoning anger and so feared the results of his rash act.

Kaliko swept up the pieces, but he did not throw them into the black pit. Being a clever and skillful mechanic he determined to fit the pieces together again.

No man ever faced a greater puzzle; but it was interesting work and Kaliko succeeded. When he found a spring or wheel worn or imperfect, he made a new one.

Within two weeks, by working steadily night and day, the Chief Steward completed his task and put the three sets of clockworks and the last rivet into Tiktok's body. He then wound up the motion machinery, and the Clockwork Man walked up and down the room as naturally as ever. Then Kaliko wound up the thought works and the speech regulator and said to Tiktok:

"How do you feel now?"

"Fine," said the Clockwork Man. "You have done a ve-ry good job, Kal-i-ko, and saved me from de-struc-tion. Much o-bliged."

"Don't mention it," replied the Chief Steward. "I quite enjoyed the work."

Just then the Nome King's gong sounded, and Kaliko rushed away through the jewel-studded cavern and into the den where the King had

hidden, leaving the doors ajar.

“Kaliko,” said the King, in a meek voice, “I’ve been shut up here long enough to repent bitterly the destruction of Tiktok. Of course Ozma will have revenge, and send an army to fight us, but we must take our medicine. One thing comforts me: Tiktok wasn’t really a live person; he was only a machine man, and so it wasn’t very wicked to stop his clockworks. I couldn’t sleep nights, at first, for worry; but there’s no more harm in smashing a machine man than in breaking a wax doll. Don’t you think so?”

“I am too humble to think in the presence of your Majesty,” said Kaliko.

“Then get me something to eat,” commanded the King, “for I’m nearly starved. Two roasted goats, a barrel of cakes and nine mince pies will do me until dinnertime.”

Kaliko bowed and hurried away to the royal kitchen, forgetting Tiktok, who was wandering around in the outer cavern. Suddenly the Nome King looked up and saw the Clockwork Man standing before him, and at the sight the monarch’s eyes grew big and round and he fell a-trembling in every limb.

“Away, grim Shadow!” he cried. “You’re not here, you know; you’re only a hash of cogwheels and springs, lying at the bottom of the black pit. Vanish, thou Vision of the demolished Tiktok, and leave me in peace — for I have bitterly repented!”

“Then beg my pardon,” said Tiktok in a gruff voice, for Kaliko had forgotten to oil the speech works.

But the sound of a voice coming from what he thought a mere vision was too much for the Nome King’s shaken nerves. He gave a yell of fear and rushed from the room. Tiktok followed, so the King bolted through the corridors on a swift run and bumped against Kaliko, who was returning with a tray of things to eat. The sound of the breaking dishes, as they struck the floor, added to the King’s terror and he yelled again and dashed into a great cavern where a thousand Nomes were at work hammering metal.

"Look out! Here comes a phantom clockwork man!" screamed the terrified monarch, and every Nome dropped his tools and made a rush from the cavern, knocking over their King in their mad flight and recklessly trampling upon his prostrate fat body. So, when Tiktok came into the cavern, there was only the Nome King left, and he was rolling upon the rocky floor and howling for mercy, with his eyes fast shut so that he could not see what he was sure was a dreadful phantom that was coming straight toward him.

"It oc-curs to me," said Tiktok calmly, "that your Maj-es-ty is act-ing like a ba-by I am not a phan-tom. A phan-tom is unreal, while I am the real thing."

The King rolled over, sat up and opened his eyes.

"Didn't I smash you to pieces?" he asked in trembling tones.

"Yes," said Tiktok.

"Then you are nothing but a junk-heap, and this form in which you now appear cannot be real."

"It is, though," declared Tiktok. "Kal-i-ko picked up my piec-es and put me to-geth-er a-gain. I'm as good as new, and perhaps bet-ter."

"That is true, your Majesty," added Kaliko, who now made his appearance, "and I hope you will forgive me for mending Tiktok. He was quite broken up, after you smashed him, and I found it almost as hard a job to match his pieces as to pick turnips from gooseberry bushes. But I did it," he added proudly.

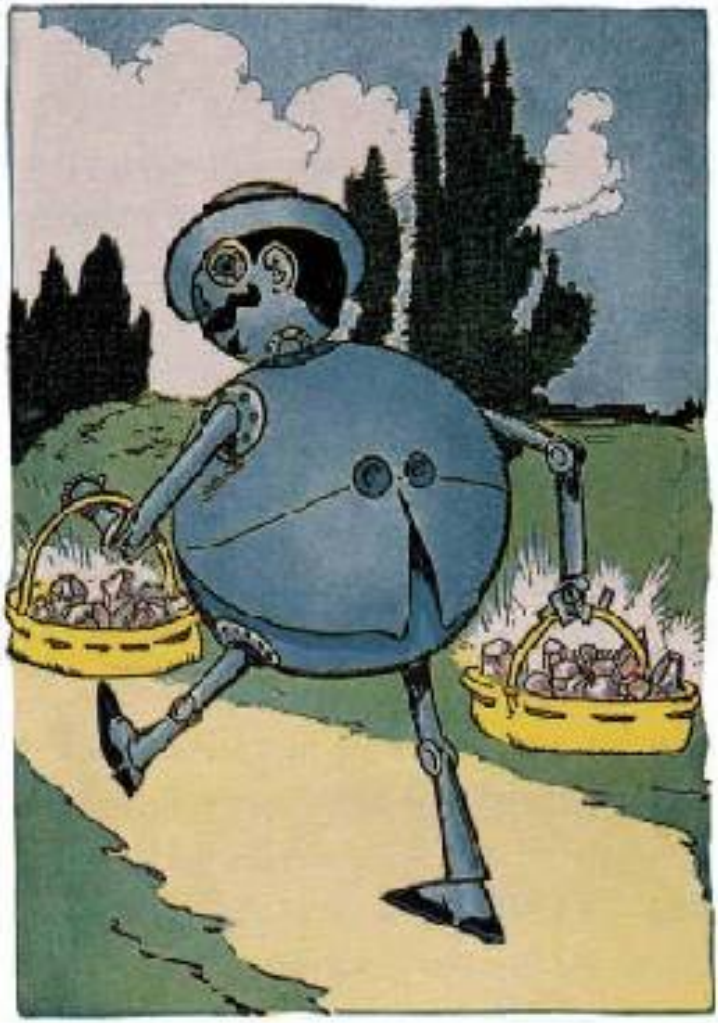
"You are forgiven," announced the Nome King, rising to his feet and

drawing a long breath. “I will raise your wages one specto a year, and Tiktok shall return to the Land of Oz loaded with jewels for the Princess Ozma.”

“That is all right,” said Tiktok. “But what I want to know is, why did you hit me with your mace?”

“Because I was angry,” admitted the King. “When I am angry I always do something that I am sorry for afterward. So I have firmly resolved never to get angry again; unless — unless — ”

“Unless what, your Majesty?” inquired Kaliko.



“Unless something annoys me,” said the Nome King. And then he went to his treasure-chamber to get the jewels for Princess Ozma of Oz.

OZMA AND THE LITTLE WIZARD

nce upon a time there lived in the beautiful Emerald City, which lies in the center of the fairy Land of Oz, a lovely girl called Princess Ozma, who was ruler of all that country. And among those who served this girlish Ruler and lived in a cozy suite of rooms in her splendid palace, was a little, withered old man known as the Wizard of Oz.

This little Wizard could do a good many queer things in magic; but he was a kind man, with merry, twinkling eyes and a sweet smile; so, instead of fearing him because of his magic, everybody loved him.

Now, Ozma was very anxious that all her people who inhabited the pleasant Land of Oz should be happy and contented, and therefore she decided one morning to make a journey to all parts of the country, that she might discover if anything was amiss, or anyone discontented, or if there was any wrong that ought to be righted. She asked the little Wizard to accompany her and he was glad to go.

"Shall I take my bag of magic tools with me?" he asked.

"Of course," said Ozma. "We may need a lot of magic before we return,

for we are going into strange corners of the land, where we may meet with unknown creatures and dangerous adventures."

So the Wizard took his bag of magic tools and the two left the Emerald City and wandered over the country for many days, at last reaching a place far up in the mountains which neither of them had ever visited before. Stopping one morning at a cottage, built beside the rocky path which led into a pretty valley beyond, Ozma asked a man:

"Are you happy? Have you any complaint to make of your lot?"

And the man replied:

"We are happy except for three mischievous Imps that live in yonder valley and often come here to annoy us. If your Highness would only drive away those Imps, I and my family would be very happy and very grateful to you."

"Who are these bad Imps?" inquired the girl Ruler.

"One is named Olite, and one Udent and one Ertinent, and they have no respect for anyone or anything. If strangers pass through the valley the Imps jeer at them and make horrid faces and call names, and often they push travelers out of the path or throw stones at them. Whenever Imp Olite or Imp Udent or Imp Ertinent comes here to bother us, I and my family run into the house and lock all the doors and windows, and we dare not venture out again until the Imps have gone away."

Princess Ozma was grieved to hear this report and the little Wizard shook his head gravely and said the naughty Imps deserved to be punished. They told the good man they would see what could be done to protect him and at once entered the valley to seek the dwelling place of the three mischievous creatures.

Before long they came upon three caves, hollowed from the rocks, and in front of each cave squatted a queer little dwarf. Ozma and the Wizard paused to examine them and found them well-shaped, strong and lively. They had big round ears, flat noses and wide grinning mouths, and their jet-black hair came to points on top of their heads, much resembling horns. Their clothing fitted snugly to their bodies and limbs and the Imps were so small in size that at first Ozma did not consider them at all dangerous. But one of them suddenly reached out a hand and caught the dress of the Princess, jerking it so sharply that she nearly fell down, and a moment later another Imp pushed the little Wizard so hard that he bumped against Ozma and both unexpectedly sat down upon the ground.

At this the Imps laughed boisterously and began running around in a circle and kicking dust upon the Royal Princess, who cried in a sharp voice: “Wizard, do your duty!”

The Wizard promptly obeyed. Without rising from the ground he opened his bag, got the tools he required and muttered a magic spell.

Instantly the three Imps became three bushes — of a thorny stubby kind — with their roots in the ground. As the bushes were at first motionless, perhaps through surprise at their sudden transformation, the Wizard and the Princess found time to rise from the ground and brush the dust off their pretty clothes. Then Ozma turned to the bushes and said:

“The unhappy lot you now endure, my poor Imps, is due entirely to your naughty actions. You can no longer annoy harmless travelers and you must remain ugly bushes, covered with sharp thorns, until you repent of your bad ways and promise to be good Imps.”

“They can’t help being good now, your Highness,” said the Wizard, who was much pleased with his work, “and the safest plan will be to allow them always to remain bushes.”

But something must have been wrong with the Wizard’s magic, or the creatures had magic of their own, for no sooner were the words spoken than the bushes began to move. At first they only waved their branches at the girl and little man, but pretty soon they began to slide over the ground, their roots dragging through the earth, and one pushed itself against the Wizard and pricked him so sharply with its thorns that he cried out: “Ouch!” and started to run away.

Ozma followed, for the other bushes were trying to stick their thorns into her legs and one actually got so near her that it tore a great rent in her beautiful dress. The girl Princess could run, however, and she followed the fleeing Wizard until he tumbled head first over a log and rolled upon the ground. Then she sprang behind a tree and shouted: "Quick! Transform them into something else."

The Wizard heard, but he was much confused by his fall. Grabbing from his bag the first magical tool he could find he transformed the bushes into three white pigs. That astonished the Imps. In the shape of pigs — fat, roly-poly and cute — they scampered off a little distance and sat down to think about their new condition.

Ozma drew a long breath and coming from behind the tree she said:

"That is much better, Wiz, for such pigs as these must be quite harmless. No one need now fear the mischievous Imps."

"I intended to transform them into mice," replied the Wizard, "but in my excitement I worked the wrong magic. However, unless the horrid creatures behave themselves hereafter, they are liable to be killed and eaten. They would make good chops, sausages or roasts."

But the Imps were now angry and had no intention of behaving. As Ozma and the little Wizard turned to resume their journey, the three pigs rushed forward, dashed between their legs, and tripped them up, so that both lost their balance and toppled over, clinging to one another. As the Wizard tried to get up he was tripped again and fell across the back of the third pig, which carried him on a run far down the valley until it dumped the little man in the river. Ozma had been sprawled upon the ground but found she was not hurt, so she picked herself up and ran to the assistance of the Wizard, reaching him just as he was crawling out of the river, gasping for breath and dripping with water. The girl could not help laughing at his woeful appearance. But he had no sooner wiped the wet from his eyes than one of the impish pigs tripped him again and sent him into the river for a second bath. The pigs tried to trip Ozma, too, but she ran around a stump and so managed to keep out of their way. So the Wizard scrambled out of the water again and picked up a sharp stick to defend himself. Then he mumbled a magic mutter which instantly dried his clothes, after which he hurried to assist Ozma. The pigs

were afraid of the sharp stick and kept away from it.

"This won't do," said the Princess. "We have accomplished nothing, for the pig Imps would annoy travelers as much as the real Imps. Transform them into something else, Wiz."

The Wizard took time to think. Then he transformed the white pigs into three blue doves.

"Doves," said he, "are the most harmless things in the world."

But scarcely had he spoken when the doves flew at them and tried to peck out their eyes. When they endeavored to shield their eyes with their hands, two of the doves bit the Wizard's fingers and another caught the pretty pink ear of the Princess in its bill and gave it such a cruel tweak that she cried out

in pain and threw her skirt over her head.

"These birds are worse than pigs, Wizard," she called to her companion. "Nothing is harmless that is animated by impudent anger or impertinent mischief. You must transform the Imps into something that is not alive."

The Wizard was pretty busy, just then, driving off the birds, but he managed to open his bag of magic and find a charm which instantly transformed the doves into three buttons. As they fell to the ground he picked them up and smiled with satisfaction. The tin button was Imp Olite, the brass button was Imp Udent and the lead button was Imp Ertinent. These buttons the Wizard placed in a little box which he put in his jacket pocket.

"Now," said he, "the Imps cannot annoy travelers, for we shall carry them

back with us to the Emerald City."

"But we dare not use the buttons," said Ozma, smiling *once more* now that the danger was over.

"Why not?" asked the Wizard. "I intend to sew them upon my coat and watch them carefully. The spirits of the Imps are still in the buttons, and after a time they will repent and be sorry for their naughtiness. Then they will decide to be very good in the future. When they feel that way, the tin button will turn to silver and the brass to gold, while the lead button will become aluminum. I shall then restore them to their proper forms, changing their names to pretty names instead of the ugly ones they used to bear. Thereafter the three Imps will become good citizens of the Land of Oz and I think you will find they will prove faithful subjects of our beloved Princess Ozma."

“Ah, that is magic well worthwhile,” exclaimed Ozma, well pleased. “There is no doubt, my friend, but that you are a very clever Wizard.”

JACK PUMPKINHEAD AND THE SAWHORSE

In a room of the Royal Palace of the Emerald City of Oz hangs a Magic Picture, in which are shown all the important scenes that transpire in those fairy dominions. The scenes shift constantly and by watching them, Ozma, the girl Ruler, is able to discover events taking place in any part of her kingdom.

One day she saw in her Magic Picture that a little girl and a little boy had wandered together into a great, gloomy forest at the far west of Oz and had become hopelessly lost. Their friends were seeking them in the wrong direction and unless Ozma came to their rescue the little ones would never be found in time to save them from starving.

So the Princess sent a message to Jack Pumpkinhead and asked him to come to the palace. This personage, one of the queerest of the queer inhabitants of Oz, was an old friend and companion of Ozma. His form was made of rough sticks fitted together and dressed in ordinary clothes. His head was a pumpkin with a face carved upon it, and was set on top a sharp stake which formed his neck.

Jack was active, good-natured and a general favorite; but his pumpkin head was likely to spoil with age, so in order to secure a good supply of heads he grew a big field of pumpkins and lived in the middle of it, his house being a huge pumpkin hollowed out. Whenever he needed a new head he picked a pumpkin, carved a face on it and stuck it upon the stake of his neck, throwing away the old head as of no further use.

The day Ozma sent for him Jack was in prime condition and was glad to be of service in rescuing the lost children. Ozma made him a map, showing just where the forest was and how to get to it and the paths he must take to reach the little ones. Then she said:

"You'd better ride the Sawhorse, for he is swift and intelligent and will help you accomplish your task."

"All right," answered Jack, and went to the royal stable to tell the Sawhorse to be ready for the trip.

This remarkable animal was not unlike Jack Pumpkinhead in form, although so different in shape. Its body was a log, with four sticks stuck into it for legs. A branch at one end of the log served as a tail, while in the other end was chopped a gash that formed a mouth. Above this were two small knots that did nicely for eyes. The Sawhorse was the favorite steed of Ozma and to prevent its wooden legs from wearing out she had them shod with plates of gold.

Jack said “Good morning” to the Sawhorse and placed upon the creature’s back a saddle of purple leather, studded with jewels.

“Where now?” asked the horse, blinking its knot eyes at Jack.

“We’re going to rescue two babes in the wood,” was the reply. Then he climbed into the saddle and the wooden animal pranced out of the stable, through the streets of the Emerald City and out upon the highway leading to the western forest where the children were lost.

Small though he was, the Sawhorse was swift and untiring. By nightfall they were in the far west and quite close to the forest they sought. They passed the night standing quietly by the roadside. They needed no food, for their wooden bodies never became hungry; nor did they sleep, because they never tired. At daybreak they continued their journey and soon reached the forest.

Jack now examined the map Ozma had given him and found the right path to take, which the Sawhorse obediently followed. Underneath the trees all was silent and gloomy and Jack beguiled the way by whistling gayly as the Sawhorse trotted along.

The paths branched so many times and in so many different ways that the Pumpkinhead was often obliged to consult Ozma's map, and finally the Sawhorse became suspicious.

"Are you sure you are right?" it asked.

"Of course," answered Jack. "Even a Pumpkinhead whose brains are seeds can follow so clear a map as this. Every path is plainly marked, and here is a cross where the children are."

Finally they reached a place, in the very heart of the forest, where they came upon the lost boy and girl. But they found the two children bound fast to the trunk of a big tree, at the foot of which they were sitting.

When the rescuers arrived, the little girl was sobbing bitterly and the boy

was trying to comfort her, though he was probably frightened as much as she.

"Cheer up, my dears," said Jack, getting out of the saddle. "I have come to take you back to your parents. But why are you bound to that tree?"

"Because," cried a small, sharp voice, "they are thieves and robbers. That's why!"

"Dear me!" said Jack, looking around to see who had spoken. The voice seemed to come from above.

A big grey squirrel was sitting upon a low branch of the tree. Upon the squirrel's head was a circle of gold, with a diamond set in the center of it. He was running up and down the limbs and chattering excitedly.

“These children,” continued the squirrel, angrily, “robbed our storehouse of all the nuts we had saved up for winter. Therefore, being King of all the Squirrels in this forest, I ordered them arrested and put in prison, as you now see them. They had no right to steal our provisions and we are going to punish them.”

“We were hungry,” said the boy, pleadingly, “and we found a hollow tree full of nuts, and ate them to keep alive. We didn’t want to starve when there was food right in front of us.”

“Quite right,” remarked Jack, nodding his pumpkin head. “I don’t blame you one bit, under the circumstances. Not a bit.”

Then he began to untie the ropes that bound the children to the tree.

“Stop that!” cried the King Squirrel, chattering and whisking about. “You mustn’t release our prisoners. You have no right to.”

But Jack paid no attention to the protest. His wooden fingers were awkward and it took him some time to untie the ropes. When at last he succeeded, the tree was full of squirrels, called together by their King, and they were furious at losing their prisoners. From the tree they began to hurl nuts at the Pumpkinhead, who laughed at them as he helped the two children to their feet.

Now, at the top of this tree was a big dead limb, and so many squirrels gathered upon it that suddenly it broke away and fell to the ground. Poor Jack was standing directly under it and when the limb struck him it smashed his pumpkin head into a pulpy mass and sent Jack's wooden form tumbling, to stop with a bump against a tree a dozen feet away.

He sat up, a moment afterward, but when he felt for his head it was gone. He could not see; neither could he speak. It was perhaps the greatest misfortune that could have happened to Jack Pumpkinhead, and the squirrels were delighted. They danced around in the tree in great glee as they saw Jack's plight.

The boy and girl were indeed free, but their protector was ruined. The Sawhorse was there, however, and in his way he was wise. He had seen the accident and knew that the smashed pumpkin would never again serve Jack as a head. So he said to the children, who were frightened at this accident to their new found friend:

"Pick up the Pumpkinhead's body and set it on my saddle. Then mount behind it and hold on. We must get out of this forest as soon as we can, or the squirrels may capture you again. I must guess at the right path, for Jack's map is no longer of any use to him since that limb destroyed his head."

The two children lifted Jack's body, which was not at all heavy, and placed it upon the saddle. Then they climbed up behind it and the Sawhorse immediately turned and trotted back along the path he had come, bearing all three with ease. However, when the path began to branch into many paths, all following different directions, the wooden animal became puzzled and soon was wandering aimlessly about, without any hope of finding the right way. Toward evening they came upon a fine fruit tree, which furnished the children a supper, and at night the little ones lay upon a bed of leaves while the Sawhorse stood watch, with the limp, headless form of poor Jack Pumpkinhead lying helpless across the saddle.

Now, Ozma had seen in her Magic Picture all that had happened in the forest, so she sent the little Wizard, mounted upon the Cowardly Lion, to save the unfortunates. The Lion knew the forest well and when he reached it he bounded straight through the tangled paths to where the Sawhorse was wandering, with Jack and the two children on his back.

The Wizard was grieved at the sight of the headless Jack, but believed he could save him. He first led the Sawhorse out of the forest and restored the boy and girl to the arms of their anxious friends, and then he sent the Lion back to Ozma to tell her what had happened.

The Wizard now mounted the Sawhorse and supported Jack's form on the long ride to the pumpkin field. When they arrived at Jack's house the Wizard selected a fine pumpkin — not too ripe — and very neatly carved a face on it. Then he stuck the pumpkin solidly on Jack's neck and asked him:

"Well, old friend, how do you feel?"

"Fine!" replied Jack, and shook the hand of the little Wizard gratefully. "You have really saved my life, for without your assistance I could not have found my way home to get a new head. But I'm all right, now, and I shall be very careful not to get this beautiful head smashed." And he shook the Wizard's hand again.

"Are the brains in the new head any better than the old ones?" inquired

the Sawhorse, who had watched Jack's restoration.

"Why, these seeds are quite tender," replied the Wizard, "so they will give our friend tender thoughts. But, to speak truly, my dear Sawhorse, Jack Pumpkinhead, with all his good qualities, will never be noted for his wisdom."

THE SCARECROW AND THE TIN WOODMAN

here lived in the Land of Oz two queerly made men who were the best of friends. They were so much happier when together that they were seldom apart; yet they liked to separate, once in a while, that they might enjoy the pleasure of meeting again.

One was a Scarecrow. That means he was a suit of blue Munchkin clothes, stuffed with straw, on top of which was fastened a round cloth head, filled with bran to hold it in shape. On the head were painted two eyes, two ears, a nose and a mouth. The Scarecrow had never been much of a success in scaring crows, but he prided himself on being a superior man, because he could feel no pain, was never tired and did not have to eat or drink. His brains were sharp, for the Wizard of Oz had put pins and needles in the Scarecrow's brains.

The other man was made all of tin, his arms and legs and head being cleverly jointed so that he could move them freely. He was known as the Tin Woodman, having at one time been a woodchopper, and everyone loved him because the Wizard had given him an excellent heart of red plush.

The Tin Woodman lived in a magnificent tin castle, built on his country estate in the Winkie Land, not far from the Emerald City of Oz. It had pretty tin furniture and was surrounded by lovely gardens in which were many tin trees and beds of tin flowers. The palace of the Scarecrow was not far distant, on the banks of a river, and this palace was in the shape of an immense ear of corn.

One morning the Tin Woodman went to visit his friend the Scarecrow, and as they had nothing better to do they decided to take a boat ride on the river. So they got into the Scarecrow's boat, which was formed from a big corncob, hollowed out and pointed at both ends and decorated around the edges with brilliant jewels. The sail was of purple silk and glittered gayly in

the sunshine.

There was a good breeze that day, so the boat glided swiftly over the water. By and by they came to a smaller river that flowed from out a deep forest, and the Tin Woodman proposed they sail up this stream, as it would be cool and shady beneath the trees of the forest. So the Scarecrow, who was steering, turned the boat up the stream and the friends continued talking together of old times and the wonderful adventures they had met with while traveling with Dorothy, the little Kansas girl. They became so much interested in this talk that they forgot to notice that the boat was now sailing through the forest, or that the stream was growing more narrow and crooked.

Suddenly the Scarecrow glanced up and saw a big rock just ahead of them.

“Look out!” he cried; but the warning came too late.

The Tin Woodman sprang to his feet just as the boat bumped into the rock, and the jar made him lose his balance. He toppled and fell overboard and being made of tin he sank to the bottom of the water in an instant and lay there at full length, face up.

Immediately the Scarecrow threw out the anchor, so as to hold the boat in that place, and then he leaned over the side and through the clear water looked at his friend sorrowfully.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed; "what a *misfortune*!"

"It is, indeed," replied the Tin Woodman, speaking in muffled tones because so much water covered him. "I cannot drown, of course, but I must lie here until you find a way to get me out. Meantime, the water is soaking into all my joints and I shall become badly rusted before I am rescued."

"Very true," agreed the Scarecrow; "but be patient, my friend, and I'll dive down and get you. My straw will not rust, and is easily replaced, if damaged, so I'm not afraid of the water."

The Scarecrow now took off his hat and made a dive from the boat into the water; but he was so light in weight that he barely dented the surface of the stream, nor could he reach the Tin Woodman with his outstretched straw

arms. So he floated to the boat and climbed into it, saying the while:

"Do not despair, my friend. We have an extra anchor aboard, and I will tie it around my waist, to make me sink, and dive again."

"Don't do that!" called the tin man. "That would anchor you also to the bottom, where I am, and we'd both be helpless."

"True enough," sighed the Scarecrow, wiping his wet face with a handkerchief; and then he gave a cry of astonishment, for he found he had wiped off one painted eye and now had but one eye to see with.

"How dreadful!" said the poor Scarecrow. "That eye must have been painted in water-color, instead of oil. I must be careful not to wipe off the other eye, for then I could not see to help you at all."

A shriek of elfish laughter greeted this speech and looking up the Scarecrow found the trees full of black crows, who seemed much amused by the straw man's one-eyed countenance. He knew the crows well, however, and they had usually been friendly to him because he had never deceived them into thinking he was a meat man — the sort of man they really feared.

"Don't laugh," said he; "you may lose an eye yourselves some day."

"We couldn't look as funny as you, if we did," replied one old crow, the king of them. "But what has gone wrong with you?"

"The Tin Woodman, my dear friend and companion, has fallen overboard and is now on the bottom of the river," said the Scarecrow. "I'm trying to get him out again, but I fear I shall not succeed."

“Why, it’s easy enough,” declared the old crow. “Tie a string to him and all of my crows will fly down, take hold of the string, and pull him up out of the water. There are hundreds of us here, so our united strength could lift much more than that.”

“But I can’t tie a string to him,” replied the Scarecrow. “My straw is so light that I am unable to dive through the water. I’ve tried it, and knocked one eye out.”

“Can’t you fish for him?”

“Ah, that is a good idea,” said the Scarecrow. “I’ll make the attempt.”

He found a fishline in the boat, with a stout hook at the end of it. No bait was needed, so the Scarecrow dropped the hook into the water till it touched the Woodman.

“Hook it into a joint,” advised the crow, who was now perched upon a branch that stuck far out and bent down over the water.

The Scarecrow tried to do this, but having only one eye he could not see the joints very clearly.

“Hurry up, please,” begged the Tin Woodman; “you’ve no idea how damp it is down here.”

“Can’t you help?” asked the crow.

“How?” inquired the tin man.

“Catch the line and hook it around your neck.”

The Tin Woodman made the attempt and after several trials wound the line around his neck and hooked it securely.

“Good!” cried the King Crow, a mischievous old fellow. “Now, then,

we'll all grab the line and pull you out."

At once the air was filled with black crows, each of whom seized the cord with beak or talons. The Scarecrow watched them with much interest and forgot that he had tied the other end of the line around his own waist, so he would not lose it while fishing for his friend.

"All together for the good caws!" shrieked the King Crow, and with a great flapping of wings the birds rose into the air.

The Scarecrow clapped his stuffed hands in glee as he saw his friend drawn from the water into the air; but the next moment the straw man was himself in the air, his stuffed legs kicking wildly; for the crows had flown straight up through the trees. On one end of the line dangled the Tin Woodman, hung by the neck, and on the other dangled the Scarecrow, hung by the waist and clinging fast to the spare anchor of the boat, which he had seized hoping to save himself.

"Hi, there — be careful!" shouted the Scarecrow to the crows. "Don't take us so high. Land us on the river bank."

But the crows were bent on mischief. They thought it a good joke to bother the two, now that they held them captive.

"Here's where the crows scare the Scarecrow!" chuckled the naughty King Crow, and at his command the birds flew over the forest to where a tall dead tree stood higher than all the other trees. At the very top was a crotch, formed by two dead limbs, and into the crotch the crows dropped the center of the line. Then, letting go their hold, they flew away, chattering with laughter, and left the two friends suspended high in the air — one on each side of the tree.

Now the Tin Woodman was much heavier than the Scarecrow, but the reason they balanced so nicely was because the straw man still clung fast to

the iron anchor. There they hung, not ten feet apart, yet unable to reach the bare tree-trunk.

"For goodness sake don't drop that anchor," said the Tin Woodman anxiously.

"Why not?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"If you did I'd tumble to the ground, where my tin would be badly dented by the fall. Also you would shoot into the air and alight somewhere among the tree-tops."

"Then," said the Scarecrow, earnestly, "I shall hold fast to the anchor."

For a time they both dangled in silence, the breeze swaying them gently to and fro. Finally the tin man said: "Here is an emergency, friend, where only brains can help us. We must think of some way to escape."

"I'll do the thinking," replied the Scarecrow. "My brains are the sharpest."

He thought so long that the tin man grew tired and tried to change his position, but found his joints had already rusted so badly that he could not move them. And his oil-can was back in the boat.

"Do you suppose your brains are rusted, friend Scarecrow?" he asked in a weak voice, for his jaws would scarcely move.

"No, indeed. Ah, here's an idea at last!"

And with this the Scarecrow clapped his hands to his head, forgetting the anchor, which tumbled to the ground. The result was astonishing; for, just as the tin man had said, the light Scarecrow flew into the air, sailed over the top of the tree and landed in a bramble-bush, while the tin man fell plump to the ground, and landing on a bed of dry leaves was not dented at all. The Tin Woodman's joints were so rusted, however, that he was unable to move, while the thorns held the Scarecrow a fast prisoner.

While they were in this sad plight the sound of hoofs was heard and along the forest path rode the little Wizard of Oz, seated on a wooden Sawhorse. He smiled when he saw the one-eyed head of the Scarecrow sticking out of the bramble-bush, but he helped the poor straw man out of his prison.

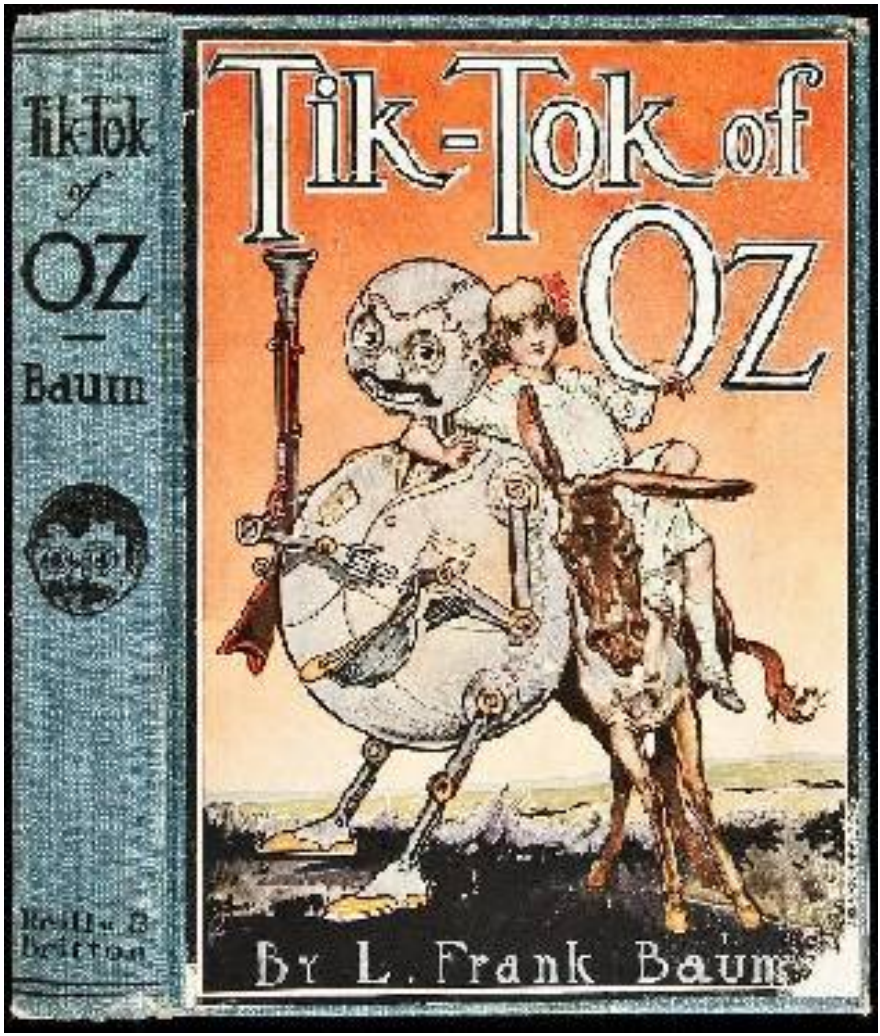
"Thank you, dear Wiz," said the grateful Scarecrow. "Now we must get the oil-can and rescue the Tin Woodman."

Together they ran to the river bank, but the boat was floating in midstream and the Wizard was obliged to mumble some magic words to draw it to the bank, so the Scarecrow could get the oil-can. Then back they flew to the tin man, and while the Scarecrow carefully oiled each joint the little Wizard moved the joints gently back and forth until they worked freely. After an hour of this labor the Tin Woodman was again on his feet, and although still a little stiff he managed to walk to the boat.

The Wizard and the Sawhorse also got aboard the corncob craft and together they returned to the Scarecrow's palace. But the Tin Woodman was very careful not to stand up in the boat again.

TIK-TOK OF OZ

L. Frank Baum entitled *Tik-Tok of Oz*, published by Reilly & Britton in 1914, after the beloved character from *Ozma of Oz*, Tik-Tok, a mechanical man made from copper. John R. Neill illustrated Baum's eighth Oz book. Despite its title, however, the novel has little to do with Tik-Tok and much to do with the Shaggy Man, first seen in *The Road to Oz*. In searching for his lost brother, the Shaggy Man meets Betsy Bobbin and her mule Hank, washed ashore in a storm much as Dorothy and Billina the hen did in *Ozma of Oz*. Exciting adventures ensue in the Rose Kingdom and the Nome Kingdom. The Shaggy Man and Betsy meet Polychrome, the Rainbow's daughter, discover Tik-Tok thrown down a well, do battle with the Nome King, and encounter Queen Anne Soforth of Oogaboo, who intends to conquer Oz with her tiny army. By the end of the book, Betsy, Dorothy, and Ozma are fast friends. Baum adapted parts of *Tik-Tok of Oz* from a stage version of *Ozma of Oz*. The book included the first map of Oz and surrounding lands.



A first edition copy of Tik-Tok in Oz

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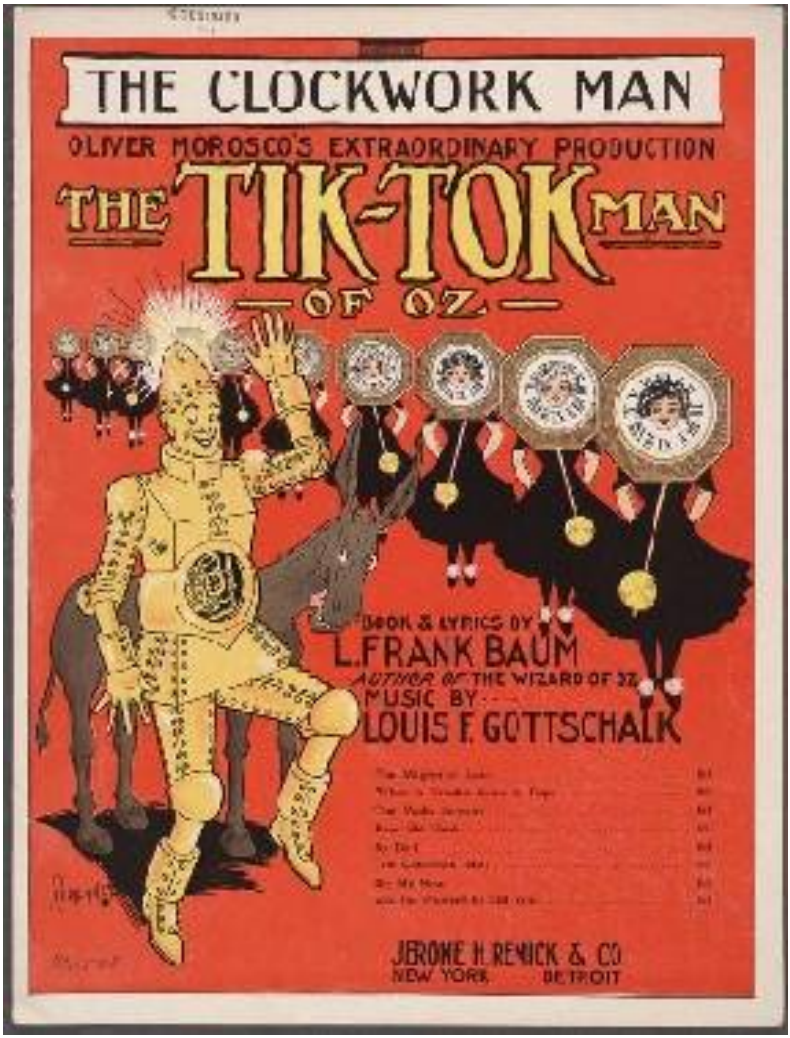
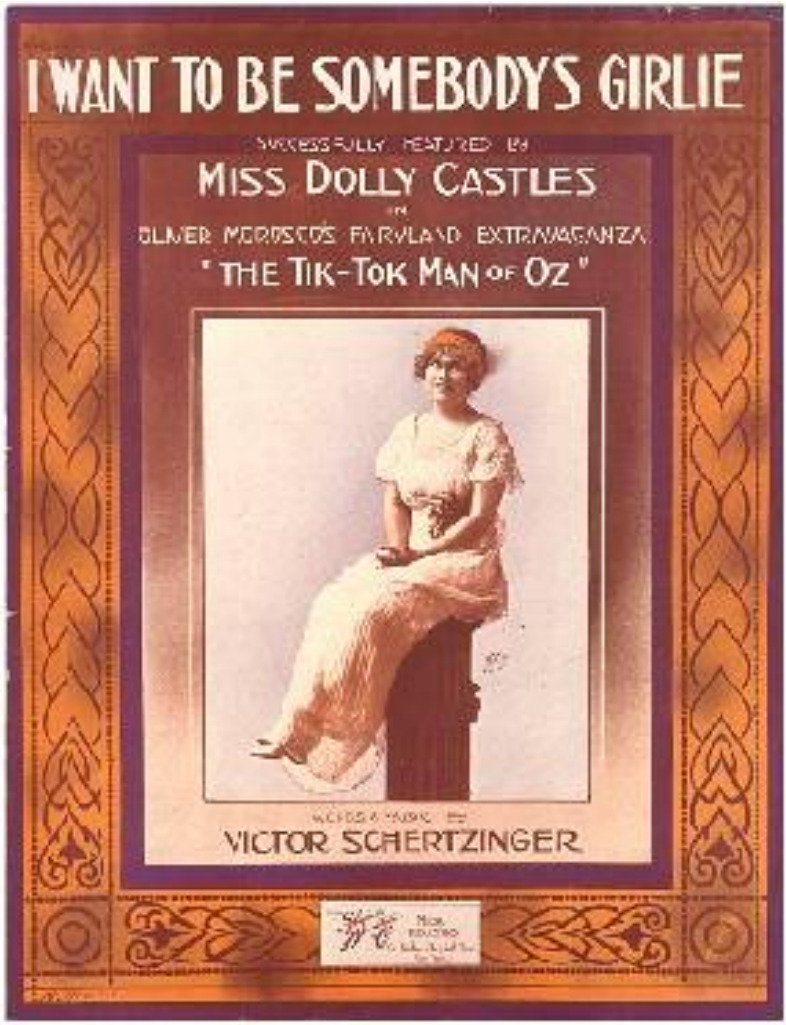


Sheet music for Baum's1913 theatrical production of The Tik-Tok Man of Oz



Sheet music from 1913

Sheet music from 1913

To Louis F. Gottschalk,

whose sweet and dainty melodies
breathe the true spirit of fairyland,
this book is affectionately dedicated

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To
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To My Readers

The very marked success of my last year's fairy book, "The Patchwork Girl of Oz," convinces me that my readers like the Oz stories "best of all," as one little girl wrote me. So here, my dears, is a new Oz story in which is introduced Ann Soforth, the Queen of Oogaboo, whom Tik-Tok assisted in conquering our old acquaintance, the Nome King. It also tells of Betsy Bobbin and how, after many adventures, she finally reached the marvelous Land of Oz.

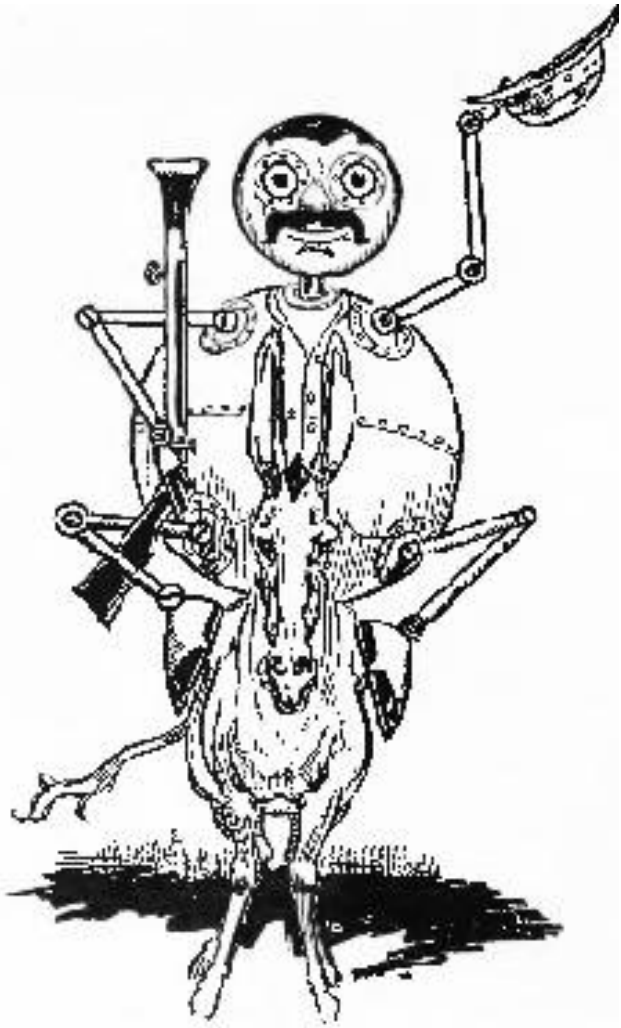
There is a play called "The Tik-Tok Man of Oz," but it is not like this story of "Tik-Tok of Oz," although some of the adventures recorded in this book, as well as those in several other Oz books, are included in the play.

Those who have seen the play and those who have read the other Oz books will find in this story a lot of strange characters and adventures that they have never heard of before.

In the letters I receive from children there has been an urgent appeal for me to write a story that will take Trot and Cap'n Bill to the Land of Oz, where they will meet Dorothy and Ozma. Also they think Button-Bright ought to get acquainted with Ojo the Lucky. As you know, I am obliged to talk these matters over with Dorothy by means of the "wireless," for that is the only way I can communicate with the Land of Oz. When I asked her about this idea, she replied: "Why, haven't you heard?" I said "No." "Well," came the message over the wireless, "I'll tell you all about it, by and by, and then you can make a book of that story for the children to read."

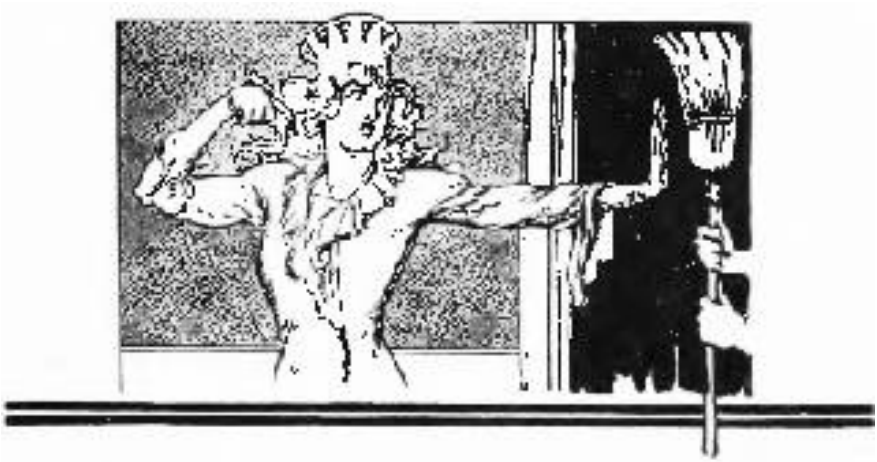
So, if Dorothy keeps her word and I am permitted to write another Oz book, you will probably discover how all these characters came together in the famous Emerald City. Meantime, I want to tell all my little friends — whose numbers are increasing by many thousands every year — that I am very grateful for the favor they have shown my books and for the delightful little letters I am constantly receiving. I am almost sure that I have as many friends among the children of America as any story writer alive; and this, of course, makes me very proud and happy.

L. Frank Baum.
"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA,
1914.



Chapter One

Ann's Army



"I won't!" cried Ann; "I won't sweep the floor. It is beneath my dignity."

"Some one must sweep it," replied Ann's younger sister, Salye; "else we shall soon be wading in dust. And you are the eldest, and the head of the family."

"I'm Queen of Oogaboo," said Ann, proudly. "But," she added with a sigh, "my kingdom is the smallest and the poorest in all the Land of Oz."

This was quite true. Away up in the mountains, in a far corner of the beautiful fairyland of Oz, lies a small valley which is named Oogaboo, and in this valley lived a few people who were usually happy and contented and never cared to wander over the mountain pass into the more settled parts of the land. They knew that all of Oz, including their own territory, was ruled by a beautiful Princess named Ozma, who lived in the splendid Emerald City; yet the simple folk of Oogaboo never visited Ozma. They had a royal family of their own — not especially to rule over them, but just as a matter of pride. Ozma permitted the various parts of her country to have their Kings and Queens and Emperors and the like, but all were ruled over by the lovely girl Queen of the Emerald City.

The King of Oogaboo used to be a man named Jol Jemkiph Soforth, who for many years did all the drudgery of deciding disputes and telling his people when to plant cabbages and pickle onions. But the King's wife had a sharp tongue and small respect for the King, her husband; therefore one night King Jol crept over the pass into the Land of Oz and disappeared from Oogaboo for good and all. The Queen waited a few years for him to return and then started in search of him, leaving her eldest daughter, Ann Soforth,

to act as Queen.

Now, Ann had not forgotten when her birthday came, for that meant a party and feasting and dancing, but she had quite forgotten how many years the birthdays marked. In a land where people live always, this is not considered a cause for regret, so we may justly say that Queen Ann of Oogaboo was old enough to make jelly — and let it go at that.

But she didn't make jelly, or do any more of the housework than she could help. She was an ambitious woman and constantly resented the fact that her kingdom was so tiny and her people so stupid and unenterprising. Often she wondered what had become of her father and mother, out beyond the pass, in the wonderful Land of Oz, and the fact that they did not return to Oogaboo led Ann to suspect that they had found a better place to live. So, when Salye refused to sweep the floor of the living room in the palace, and Ann would not sweep it, either, she said to her sister:

"I'm going away. This absurd Kingdom of Oogaboo tires me."

"Go, if you want to," answered Salye; "but you are very foolish to leave this place."

"Why?" asked Ann.

"Because in the Land of Oz, which is Ozma's country, you will be a nobody, while here you are a Queen."

"Oh, yes! Queen over eighteen men, twenty-seven women and forty-four children!" returned Ann bitterly.

"Well, there are certainly more people than that in the great Land of Oz," laughed Salye. "Why don't you raise an army and conquer them, and be Queen of all Oz?" she asked, trying to taunt Ann and so to anger her. Then she made a face at her sister and went into the back yard to swing in the hammock.

Her jeering words, however, had given Queen Ann an idea. She reflected that Oz was reported to be a peaceful country and Ozma a mere girl who ruled with gentleness to all and was obeyed because her people loved her. Even in Oogaboo the story was told that Ozma's sole army consisted of twenty-seven fine officers, who wore beautiful uniforms but carried no weapons, because there was no one to fight. Once there had been a private soldier, besides the officers, but Ozma had made him a Captain-General and taken away his gun for fear it might accidentally hurt some one.

The more Ann thought about the matter the more she was convinced it would be easy to conquer the Land of Oz and set herself up as Ruler in Ozma's place, if she but had an Army to do it with. Afterward she could go out into the world and conquer other lands, and then perhaps she could find a way to the moon, and conquer that. She had a warlike spirit that preferred

trouble to idleness.

It all depended on an Army, Ann decided. She carefully counted in her mind all the men of her kingdom. Yes; there were exactly eighteen of them, all told. That would not make a very big Army, but by surprising Ozma's unarmed officers her men might easily subdue them. "Gentle people are always afraid of those that bluster," Ann told herself. "I don't wish to shed any blood, for that would shock my nerves and I might faint; but if we threaten and flash our weapons I am sure the people of Oz will fall upon their knees before me and surrender."

This argument, which she repeated to herself more than once, finally determined the Queen of Oogaboo to undertake the audacious venture.

"Whatever happens," she reflected, "can make me no more unhappy than my staying shut up in this miserable valley and sweeping floors and quarreling with Sister Salye; so I will venture all, and win what I may."

That very day she started out to organize her Army.

The first man she came to was Jo Apple, so called because he had an apple orchard.

"Jo," said Ann, "I am going to conquer the world, and I want you to join my Army."

"Don't ask me to do such a fool thing, for I must politely refuse Your Majesty," said Jo Apple.

"I have no intention of asking you. I shall command you, as Queen of Oogaboo, to join," said Ann.

"In that case, I suppose I must obey," the man remarked, in a sad voice. "But I pray you to consider that I am a very important citizen, and for that reason am entitled to an office of high rank."

"You shall be a General," promised Ann.

"With gold epaulets and a sword?" he asked.

"Of course," said the Queen.

Then she went to the next man, whose name was Jo Bunn, as he owned an orchard where graham-buns and wheat-buns, in great variety, both hot and cold, grew on the trees.

"Jo," said Ann, "I am going to conquer the world, and I command you to join my Army."

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "The bun crop has to be picked."

"Let your wife and children do the picking," said Ann.

"But I'm a man of great importance, Your Majesty," he protested.

"For that reason you shall be one of my Generals, and wear a cocked hat with gold braid, and curl your mustaches and clank a long sword," she promised.

So he consented, although sorely against his will, and the Queen walked on to the next cottage. Here lived Jo Cone, so called because the trees in his orchard bore crops of excellent ice-cream cones.

"Jo," said Ann, "I am going to conquer the world, and you must join my Army."

"Excuse me, please," said Jo Cone. "I am a bad fighter. My good wife conquered me years ago, for she can fight better than I. Take her, Your Majesty, instead of me, and I'll bless you for the favor."

"This must be an army of men — fierce, ferocious warriors," declared Ann, looking sternly upon the mild little man.

"And you will leave my wife here in Oogaboo?" he asked.

"Yes; and make you a General."

"I'll go," said Jo Cone, and Ann went on to the cottage of Jo Clock, who had an orchard of clock-trees. This man at first insisted that he would not join the army, but Queen Ann's promise to make him a General finally won his consent.

"How many Generals are there in your army?" he asked.

"Four, so far," replied Ann.

"And how big will the army be?" was his next question.

"I intend to make every one of the eighteen men in Oogaboo join it," she said.

"Then four Generals are enough," announced Jo Clock. "I advise you to make the rest of them Colonels."

Ann tried to follow his advice. The next four men she visited — who were Jo Plum, Jo Egg, Jo Banjo and Jo Cheese, named after the trees in their orchards — she made Colonels of her Army; but the fifth one, Jo Nails, said Colonels and Generals were getting to be altogether too common in the Army of Oogaboo and he preferred to be a Major. So Jo Nails, Jo Cake, Jo Ham and Jo Stockings were all four made Majors, while the next four — Jo Sandwich, Jo Padlocks, Jo Sundae and Jo Buttons — were appointed Captains of the Army.

But now Queen Ann was in a quandary. There remained but two other men in all Oogaboo, and if she made these two Lieutenants, while there were four Captains, four Majors, four Colonels and four Generals, there was likely to be jealousy in her army, and perhaps mutiny and desertions.

One of these men, however, was Jo Candy, and he would not go at all. No promises could tempt him, nor could threats move him. He said he must remain at home to harvest his crop of jackson-balls, lemon-drops, bonbons and chocolate-creams. Also he had large fields of crackerjack and buttered pop corn to be mowed and threshed, and he was determined not to disappoint

the children of Oogaboo by going away to conquer the world and so let the candy crop spoil.

Finding Jo Candy so obstinate, Queen Ann let him have his own way and continued her journey to the house of the eighteenth and last man in Oogaboo, who was a young fellow named Jo Files. This Files had twelve trees which bore steel files of various sorts; but also he had nine book-trees, on which grew a choice selection of story-books. In case you have never seen books growing upon trees, I will explain that those in Jo Files' orchard were enclosed in broad green husks which, when fully ripe, turned to a deep red color. Then the books were picked and husked and were ready to read. If they were picked too soon, the stories were found to be confused and uninteresting and the spelling bad. However, if allowed to ripen perfectly, the stories were fine reading and the spelling and grammar excellent.

Files freely gave his books to all who wanted them, but the people of Oogaboo cared little for books and so he had to read most of them himself, before they spoiled. For, as you probably know, as soon as the books were read the words disappeared and the leaves withered and faded — which is the worst fault of all books which grow upon trees.

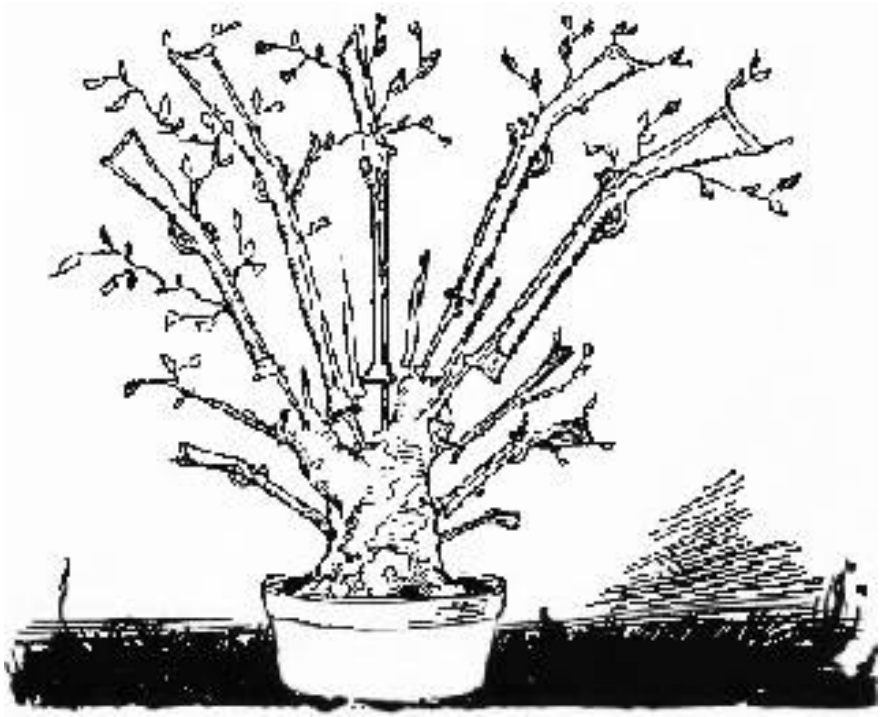
When Queen Ann spoke to this young man Files, who was both intelligent and ambitious, he said he thought it would be great fun to conquer the world. But he called her attention to the fact that he was far superior to the other men of her army. Therefore, he would not be one of her Generals or Colonels or Majors or Captains, but claimed the honor of being sole Private.

Ann did not like this idea at all.

“I hate to have a Private Soldier in my army,” she said; “they’re so common. I am told that Princess Ozma once had a private soldier, but she made him her Captain-General, which is good evidence that the private was unnecessary.”

“Ozma’s army doesn’t fight,” returned Files; “but your army must fight like fury in order to conquer the world. I have read in my books that it is always the private soldiers who do the fighting, for no officer is ever brave enough to face the foe. Also, it stands to reason that your officers must have some one to command and to issue their orders to; therefore I’ll be the one. I long to slash and slay the enemy and become a hero. Then, when we return to Oogaboo, I’ll take all the marbles away from the children and melt them up and make a marble statue of myself for all to look upon and admire.”

Ann was much pleased with Private Files. He seemed indeed to be such a warrior as she needed in her enterprise, and her hopes of success took a sudden bound when Files told her he knew where a gun-tree grew and would go there at once and pick the ripest and biggest musket the tree bore.



Chapter Two
Out of Oogaboo

Three days later the Grand Army of Oogaboo assembled in the square in front of the royal palace. The sixteen officers were attired in gorgeous uniforms and carried sharp, glittering swords. The Private had picked his gun and, although it was not a very big weapon, Files tried to look fierce and succeeded so well that all his commanding officers were secretly afraid of him.

The women were there, protesting that Queen Ann Soforth had no right to take their husbands and fathers from them; but Ann commanded them to keep silent, and that was the hardest order to obey they had ever received.

The Queen appeared before her Army dressed in an imposing uniform of green, covered with gold braid. She wore a green soldier-cap with a purple plume in it and looked so royal and dignified that everyone in Oogaboo except the Army was glad she was going. The Army was sorry she was not going alone.

"Form ranks!" she cried in her shrill voice.

Salye leaned out of the palace window and laughed.

"I believe your Army can run better than it can fight," she observed.

"Of course," replied General Bunn, proudly. "We're not looking for trouble, you know, but for plunder. The more plunder and the less fighting we get, the better we shall like our work."

"For my part," said Files, "I prefer war and carnage to anything. The only way to become a hero is to conquer, and the story-books all say that the easiest way to conquer is to fight."

"That's the idea, my brave man!" agreed Ann. "To fight is to conquer and to conquer is to secure plunder and to secure plunder is to become a hero. With such noble determination to back me, the world is mine! Good-bye, Salye. When we return we shall be rich and famous. Come, Generals; let us march."

At this the Generals straightened up and threw out their chests. Then they swung their glittering swords in rapid circles and cried to the Colonels:

"For-ward March!"

Then the Colonels shouted to the Majors: "For-ward March!" and the Majors yelled to the Captains: "For-ward March!" and the Captains screamed to the Private:

"For-ward March!"

So Files shouldered his gun and began to march, and all the officers followed after him. Queen Ann came last of all, rejoicing in her noble army and wondering why she had not decided long ago to conquer the world.

In this order the procession marched out of Oogaboo and took the narrow mountain pass which led into the lovely Fairyland of Oz.

Chapter Three

Magic Mystifies the Marchers

Princess Ozma was all unaware that the Army of Oogaboo, led by their ambitious Queen, was determined to conquer her Kingdom. The beautiful girl Ruler of Oz was busy with the welfare of her subjects and had no time to think of Ann Soforth and her disloyal plans. But there was one who constantly guarded the peace and happiness of the Land of Oz and this was the Official Sorceress of the Kingdom, Glinda the Good.

In her magnificent castle, which stands far north of the Emerald City where Ozma holds her court, Glinda owns a wonderful magic Record Book, in which is printed every event that takes place anywhere, just as soon as it happens.

The smallest things and the biggest things are all recorded in this book. If a child stamps its foot in anger, Glinda reads about it; if a city burns down, Glinda finds the fact noted in her book.

The Sorceress always reads her Record Book every day, and so it was she knew that Ann Soforth, Queen of Oogaboo, had foolishly assembled an army of sixteen officers and one private soldier, with which she intended to invade and conquer the Land of Oz.

There was no danger but that Ozma, supported by the magic arts of Glinda the Good and the powerful Wizard of Oz — both her firm friends — could easily defeat a far more imposing army than Ann's; but it would be a shame to have the peace of Oz interrupted by any sort of quarreling or fighting. So Glinda did not even mention the matter to Ozma, or to anyone else. She merely went into a great chamber of her castle, known as the Magic Room, where she performed a magical ceremony which caused the mountain pass that led from Oogaboo to make several turns and twists. The result was

that when Ann and her army came to the end of the pass they were not in the Land of Oz at all, but in an adjoining territory that was quite distinct from Ozma's domain and separated from Oz by an invisible barrier.

As the Oogaboo people emerged into this country, the pass they had traversed disappeared behind them and it was not likely they would ever find their way back into the valley of Oogaboo. They were greatly puzzled, indeed, by their surroundings and did not know which way to go. None of them had ever visited Oz, so it took them some time to discover they were not in Oz at all, but in an unknown country.

"Never mind," said Ann, trying to conceal her disappointment; "we have started out to conquer the world, and here is part of it. In time, as we pursue our victorious journey, we will doubtless come to Oz; but, until we get there, we may as well conquer whatever land we find ourselves in."

"Have we conquered this place, Your Majesty?" anxiously inquired Major Cake.

"Most certainly," said Ann. "We have met no people, as yet, but when we do, we will inform them that they are our slaves."

"And afterward we will plunder them of all their possessions," added General Apple.

"They may not possess anything," objected Private Files; "but I hope they will fight us, just the same. A peaceful conquest wouldn't be any fun at all."

"Don't worry," said the Queen. "We can fight, whether our foes do or not; and perhaps we would find it more comfortable to have the enemy surrender promptly."

It was a barren country and not very pleasant to travel in. Moreover, there was little for them to eat, and as the officers became hungry they became fretful. Many would have deserted had they been able to find their way home, but as the Oogaboo people were now hopelessly lost in a strange country they considered it more safe to keep together than to separate.

Queen Ann's temper, never very agreeable, became sharp and irritable as she and her army tramped over the rocky roads without encountering either people or plunder. She scolded her officers until they became surly, and a few of them were disloyal enough to ask her to hold her tongue. Others began to reproach her for leading them into difficulties and in the space of three unhappy days every man was mourning for his orchard in the pretty valley of Oogaboo.

Files, however, proved a different sort. The more difficulties he encountered the more cheerful he became, and the sighs of the officers were answered by the merry whistle of the Private. His pleasant disposition did much to encourage Queen Ann and before long she consulted the Private

Soldier more often than she did his superiors.

It was on the third day of their pilgrimage that they encountered their first adventure. Toward evening the sky was suddenly darkened and Major Nails exclaimed:

"A fog is coming toward us."

"I do not think it is a fog," replied Files, looking with interest at the approaching cloud. "It seems to me more like the breath of a Rak."

"What is a Rak?" asked Ann, looking about fearfully.

"A terrible beast with a horrible appetite," answered the soldier, growing a little paler than usual. "I have never seen a Rak, to be sure, but I have read of them in the story-books that grew in my orchard, and if this is indeed one of those fearful monsters, we are not likely to conquer the world."

Hearing this, the officers became quite worried and gathered closer about their soldier.

"What is the thing like?" asked one.

"The only picture of a Rak that I ever saw in a book was rather blurred," said Files, "because the book was not quite ripe when it was picked. But the creature can fly in the air and run like a deer and swim like a fish. Inside its body is a glowing furnace of fire, and the Rak breathes in air and breathes out smoke, which darkens the sky for miles around, wherever it goes. It is bigger than a hundred men and feeds on any living thing."

The officers now began to groan and to tremble, but Files tried to cheer them, saying:

"It may not be a Rak, after all, that we see approaching us, and you must not forget that we people of Oogaboo, which is part of the fairyland of Oz, cannot be killed."

"Nevertheless," said Captain Buttons, "if the Rak catches us, and chews us up into small pieces, and swallows us — what will happen then?"

"Then each small piece will still be alive," declared Files.

"I cannot see how that would help us," wailed Colonel Banjo. "A hamburger steak is a hamburger steak, whether it is alive or not!"

"I tell you, this may not be a Rak," persisted Files. "We will know, when the cloud gets nearer, whether it is the breath of a Rak or not. If it has no smell at all, it is probably a fog; but if it has an odor of salt and pepper, it is a Rak and we must prepare for a desperate fight."

They all eyed the dark cloud fearfully. Before long it reached the frightened group and began to envelop them. Every nose sniffed the cloud — and every one detected in it the odor of salt and pepper.

"The Rak!" shouted Private Files, and with a howl of despair the sixteen officers fell to the ground, writhing and moaning in anguish. Queen Ann sat

down upon a rock and faced the cloud more bravely, although her heart was beating fast. As for Files, he calmly loaded his gun and stood ready to fight the foe, as a soldier should.

They were now in absolute darkness, for the cloud which covered the sky and the setting sun was black as ink. Then through the gloom appeared two round, glowing balls of red, and Files at once decided these must be the monster's eyes.

He raised his gun, took aim and fired.

There were several bullets in the gun, all gathered from an excellent bullet-tree in Oogaboo, and they were big and hard. They flew toward the monster and struck it, and with a wild, weird cry the Rak came fluttering down and its huge body fell plump upon the forms of the sixteen officers, who thereupon screamed louder than before.

"Badness me!" moaned the Rak. "See what you've done with that dangerous gun of yours!"

"I can't see," replied Files, "for the cloud formed by your breath darkens my sight!"

"Don't tell me it was an accident," continued the Rak, reproachfully, as it still flapped its wings in a helpless manner. "Don't claim you didn't know the gun was loaded, I beg of you!"

"I don't intend to," replied Files. "Did the bullets hurt you very badly?"

"One has broken my jaw, so that I can't open my mouth. You will notice that my voice sounds rather harsh and husky, because I have to talk with my teeth set close together. Another bullet broke my left wing, so that I can't fly; and still another broke my right leg, so that I can't walk. It was the most careless shot I ever heard of!"

"Can't you manage to lift your body off from my commanding officers?" inquired Files. "From their cries I'm afraid your great weight is crushing them."

"I hope it is," growled the Rak. "I want to crush them, if possible, for I have a bad disposition. If only I could open my mouth, I'd eat all of you, although my appetite is poorly this warm weather."

With this the Rak began to roll its immense body sidewise, so as to crush the officers more easily; but in doing this it rolled completely off from them and the entire sixteen scrambled to their feet and made off as fast as they could run.

Private Files could not see them go but he knew from the sound of their voices that they had escaped, so he ceased to worry about them.

"Pardon me if I now bid you good-bye," he said to the Rak. "The parting is caused by our desire to continue our journey. If you die, do not blame me,

for I was obliged to shoot you as a matter of self-protection."

"I shall not die," answered the monster, "for I bear a charmed life. But I beg you not to leave me!"

"Why not?" asked Files.

"Because my broken jaw will heal in about an hour, and then I shall be able to eat you. My wing will heal in a day and my leg will heal in a week, when I shall be as well as ever. Having shot me, and so caused me all this annoyance, it is only fair and just that you remain here and allow me to eat you as soon as I can open my jaws."

"I beg to differ with you," returned the soldier firmly. "I have made an engagement with Queen Ann of Oogaboo to help her conquer the world, and I cannot break my word for the sake of being eaten by a Rak."

"Oh; that's different," said the monster. "If you've an engagement, don't let me detain you."

So Files felt around in the dark and grasped the hand of the trembling Queen, whom he led away from the flapping, sighing Rak. They stumbled over the stones for a way but presently began to see dimly the path ahead of them, as they got farther and farther away from the dreadful spot where the wounded monster lay. By and by they reached a little hill and could see the last rays of the sun flooding a pretty valley beyond, for now they had passed beyond the cloudy breath of the Rak. Here were huddled the sixteen officers, still frightened and panting from their run. They had halted only because it was impossible for them to run any farther.

Queen Ann gave them a severe scolding for their cowardice, at the same time praising Files for his courage.

"We are wiser than he, however," muttered General Clock, "for by running away we are now able to assist Your Majesty in conquering the world; whereas, had Files been eaten by the Rak, he would have deserted your Army."

After a brief rest they descended into the valley, and as soon as they were out of sight of the Rak the spirits of the entire party rose quickly. Just at dusk they came to a brook, on the banks of which Queen Ann commanded them to make camp for the night.

Each officer carried in his pocket a tiny white tent. This, when placed upon the ground, quickly grew in size until it was large enough to permit the owner to enter it and sleep within its canvas walls. Files was obliged to carry a knapsack, in which was not only his own tent but an elaborate pavilion for Queen Ann, besides a bed and chair and a magic table. This table, when set upon the ground in Ann's pavilion, became of large size, and in a drawer of the table was contained the Queen's supply of extra clothing, her manicure

and toilet articles and other necessary things. The royal bed was the only one in the camp, the officers and private sleeping in hammocks attached to their tent poles.

There was also in the knapsack a flag bearing the royal emblem of Oogaboo, and this flag Files flew upon its staff every night, to show that the country they were in had been conquered by the Queen of Oogaboo. So far, no one but themselves had seen the flag, but Ann was pleased to see it flutter in the breeze and considered herself already a famous conqueror.

Chapter Four

Betsy Braves the Billows

The waves dashed and the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled and the ship struck a rock. Betsy Bobbin was running across the deck and the shock sent her flying through the air until she fell with a splash into the dark blue water. The same shock caught Hank, a thin little, sad-faced mule, and tumbled him also into the sea, far from the ship's side.

When Betsy came up, gasping for breath because the wet plunge had surprised her, she reached out in the dark and grabbed a bunch of hair. At first she thought it was the end of a rope, but presently she heard a dismal "Hee-haw!" and knew she was holding fast to the end of Hank's tail.

Suddenly the sea was lighted up by a vivid glare. The ship, now in the far distance, caught fire, blew up and sank beneath the waves.

Betsy shuddered at the sight, but just then her eye caught a mass of wreckage floating near her and she let go the mule's tail and seized the rude raft, pulling herself up so that she rode upon it in safety. Hank also saw the raft and swam to it, but he was so clumsy he never would have been able to climb upon it had not Betsy helped him to get aboard.

They had to crowd close together, for their support was only a hatch-cover torn from the ship's deck; but it floated them fairly well and both the girl and the mule knew it would keep them from drowning.

The storm was not over, by any means, when the ship went down. Blinding bolts of lightning shot from cloud to cloud and the clamor of deep thunderclaps echoed far over the sea. The waves tossed the little raft here and there as a child tosses a rubber ball and Betsy had a solemn feeling that for hundreds of watery miles in every direction there was no living thing besides herself and the small donkey.

Perhaps Hank had the same thought, for he gently rubbed his nose against the frightened girl and said “Hee-haw!” in his softest voice, as if to comfort her.

“You’ll protect me, Hank dear, won’t you?” she cried helplessly, and the mule said “Hee-haw!” again, in tones that meant a promise.

On board the ship, during the days that preceded the wreck, when the sea was calm, Betsy and Hank had become good friends; so, while the girl might have preferred a more powerful protector in this dreadful emergency, she felt that the mule would do all in a mule’s power to guard her safety.

All night they floated, and when the storm had worn itself out and passed away with a few distant growls, and the waves had grown smaller and easier to ride, Betsy stretched herself out on the wet raft and fell asleep.

Hank did not sleep a wink. Perhaps he felt it his duty to guard Betsy. Anyhow, he crouched on the raft beside the tired sleeping girl and watched patiently until the first light of dawn swept over the sea.

The light wakened Betsy Bobbin. She sat up, rubbed her eyes and stared across the water.

“Oh, Hank; there’s land ahead!” she exclaimed.

“Hee-haw!” answered Hank in his plaintive voice.

The raft was floating swiftly toward a very beautiful country and as they drew near Betsy could see banks of lovely flowers showing brightly between leafy trees. But no people were to be seen at all.

Chapter Five

The Roses Repulse the Refugees

Gently the raft grated on the sandy beach. Then Betsy easily waded ashore, the mule following closely behind her. The sun was now shining and the air was warm and laden with the fragrance of roses.

"I'd like some breakfast, Hank," remarked the girl, feeling more cheerful now that she was on dry land; "but we can't eat the flowers, although they do smell mighty good."

"Hee-haw!" replied Hank and trotted up a little pathway to the top of the bank.

Betsy followed and from the eminence looked around her. A little way off stood a splendid big greenhouse, its thousands of crystal panes glittering in the sunlight.

"There ought to be people somewhere 'round," observed Betsy thoughtfully; "gardeners, or somebody. Let's go and see, Hank. I'm getting hungrier ev'ry minute."

So they walked toward the great greenhouse and came to its entrance without meeting with anyone at all. A door stood ajar, so Hank went in first, thinking if there was any danger he could back out and warn his companion. But Betsy was close at his heels and the moment she entered was lost in amazement at the wonderful sight she saw.

The greenhouse was filled with magnificent rosebushes, all growing in big pots. On the central stem of each bush bloomed a splendid Rose, gorgeously colored and deliciously fragrant, and in the center of each Rose was the face of a lovely girl.

As Betsy and Hank entered, the heads of the Roses were drooping and

their eyelids were closed in slumber; but the mule was so amazed that he uttered a loud “Hee-haw!” and at the sound of his harsh voice the rose leaves fluttered, the Roses raised their heads and a hundred startled eyes were instantly fixed upon the intruders.

“I — I beg your pardon!” stammered Betsy, blushing and confused.

“O-o-o-h!” cried the Roses, in a sort of sighing chorus; and one of them added: “What a horrid noise!”

“Why, that was only Hank,” said Betsy, and as if to prove the truth of her words the mule uttered another loud “Hee-haw!”

At this all the Roses turned on their stems as far as they were able and trembled as if some one were shaking their bushes. A dainty Moss Rose gasped: “Dear me! How dreadfully dreadful!”

“It isn’t dreadful at all,” said Betsy, somewhat indignant. “When you get used to Hank’s voice it will put you to sleep.”

The Roses now looked at the mule less fearfully and one of them asked:

“Is that savage beast named Hank?”

“Yes; Hank’s my comrade, faithful and true,” answered the girl, twining her arms around the little mule’s neck and hugging him tight. “Aren’t you, Hank?”

Hank could only say in reply: “Hee-haw!” and at his bray the Roses shivered again.

“Please go away!” begged one. “Can’t you see you’re frightening us out of a week’s growth?”

“Go away!” echoed Betsy. “Why, we’ve no place to go. We’ve just been wrecked.”

“Wrecked?” asked the Roses in a surprised chorus.

“Yes; we were on a big ship and the storm came and wrecked it,” explained the girl. “But Hank and I caught hold of a raft and floated ashore to this place, and — we’re tired and hungry. What country is this, please?”

“This is the Rose Kingdom,” replied the Moss Rose, haughtily, “and it is devoted to the culture of the rarest and fairest Roses grown.”

“I believe it,” said Betsy, admiring the pretty blossoms.

“But only Roses are allowed here,” continued a delicate Tea Rose, bending her brows in a frown; “therefore you must go away before the Royal Gardener finds you and casts you back into the sea.”

“Oh! Is there a Royal Gardener, then?” inquired Betsy.

“To be sure.”

“And is he a Rose, also?”

“Of course not; he’s a man — a wonderful man,” was the reply.

“Well, I’m not afraid of a man,” declared the girl, much relieved, and

even as she spoke the Royal Gardener popped into the greenhouse — a spading fork in one hand and a watering pot in the other.

He was a funny little man, dressed in a rose-colored costume, with ribbons at his knees and elbows, and a bunch of ribbons in his hair. His eyes were small and twinkling, his nose sharp and his face puckered and deeply lined.

“O-ho!” he exclaimed, astonished to find strangers in his greenhouse, and when Hank gave a loud bray the Gardener threw the watering pot over the mule’s head and danced around with his fork, in such agitation that presently he fell over the handle of the implement and sprawled at full length upon the ground.

Betsy laughed and pulled the watering pot off from Hank’s head. The little mule was angry at the treatment he had received and backed toward the Gardener threateningly.

“Look out for his heels!” called Betsy warningly and the Gardener scrambled to his feet and hastily hid behind the Roses.

“You are breaking the Law!” he shouted, sticking out his head to glare at the girl and the mule.

“What Law?” asked Betsy.

“The Law of the Rose Kingdom. No strangers are allowed in these domains.”

“Not when they’re shipwrecked?” she inquired.

“The Law doesn’t except shipwrecks,” replied the Royal Gardener, and he was about to say more when suddenly there was a crash of glass and a man came tumbling through the roof of the greenhouse and fell plump to the ground.

Chapter Six

Shaggy Seeks his Stray Brother

This sudden arrival was a queer looking man, dressed all in garments so shaggy that Betsy at first thought he must be some animal. But the stranger ended his fall in a sitting position and then the girl saw it was really a man. He held an apple in his hand, which he had evidently been eating when he fell, and so little was he jarred or flustered by the accident that he continued to munch this apple as he calmly looked around him.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Betsy, approaching him. "Who are you, and where did you come from?"

"Me? Oh, I'm Shaggy Man," said he, taking another bite of the apple. "Just dropped in for a short call. Excuse my seeming haste."

"Why, I s'pose you couldn't help the haste," said Betsy.

"No. I climbed an apple tree, outside; branch gave way and — here I am."

As he spoke the Shaggy Man finished his apple, gave the core to Hank — who ate it greedily — and then stood up to bow politely to Betsy and the Roses.

The Royal Gardener had been frightened nearly into fits by the crash of glass and the fall of the shaggy stranger into the bower of Roses, but now he peeped out from behind a bush and cried in his squeaky voice:

"You're breaking the Law! You're breaking the Law!"

Shaggy stared at him solemnly.

"Is the glass the Law in this country?" he asked.

"Breaking the glass is breaking the Law," squeaked the Gardener, angrily. "Also, to intrude in any part of the Rose Kingdom is breaking the Law."

"How do you know?" asked Shaggy.

"Why, it's printed in a book," said the Gardener, coming forward and

taking a small book from his pocket. “Page thirteen. Here it is: ‘If any stranger enters the Rose Kingdom he shall at once be condemned by the Ruler and put to death.’ So you see, strangers,” he continued triumphantly, “it’s death for you all and your time has come!”

But just here Hank interposed. He had been stealthily backing toward the Royal Gardener, whom he disliked, and now the mule’s heels shot out and struck the little man in the middle. He doubled up like the letter “U” and flew out of the door so swiftly — never touching the ground — that he was gone before Betsy had time to wink.

But the mule’s attack frightened the girl.

“Come,” she whispered, approaching the Shaggy Man and taking his hand; “let’s go somewhere else. They’ll surely kill us if we stay here!”

“Don’t worry, my dear,” replied Shaggy, patting the child’s head. “I’m not afraid of anything, so long as I have the Love Magnet.”

“The Love Magnet! Why, what is that?” asked Betsy.

“It’s a charming little enchantment that wins the heart of everyone who looks upon it,” was the reply. “The Love Magnet used to hang over the gateway to the Emerald City, in the Land of Oz; but when I started on this journey our beloved Ruler, Ozma of Oz, allowed me to take it with me.”

“Oh!” cried Betsy, staring hard at him; “are you really from the wonderful Land of Oz?”

“Yes. Ever been there, my dear?”

“No; but I’ve heard about it. And do you know Princess Ozma?”

“Very well indeed.”

“And — and Princess Dorothy?”

“Dorothy’s an old chum of mine,” declared Shaggy.

“Dear me!” exclaimed Betsy. “And why did you ever leave such a beautiful land as Oz?”

“On an errand,” said Shaggy, looking sad and solemn. “I’m trying to find my dear little brother.”

“Oh! Is he lost?” questioned Betsy, feeling very sorry for the poor man.

“Been lost these ten years,” replied Shaggy, taking out a handkerchief and wiping a tear from his eye. “I didn’t know it until lately, when I saw it recorded in the magic Record Book of the Sorceress Glinda, in the Land of Oz. So now I’m trying to find him.”

“Where was he lost?” asked the girl sympathetically.

“Back in Colorado, where I used to live before I went to Oz. Brother was a miner, and dug gold out of a mine. One day he went into his mine and never came out. They searched for him, but he was not there. Disappeared entirely,” Shaggy ended miserably.

“For goodness sake! What do you s’pose became of him?” she asked.

“There is only one explanation,” replied Shaggy, taking another apple from his pocket and eating it to relieve his misery. “The Nome King probably got him.”

“The Nome King! Who is he?”

“Why, he’s sometimes called the Metal Monarch, and his name is Ruggedo. Lives in some underground cavern. Claims to own all the metals hidden in the earth. Don’t ask me why.”

“Why?”

“Cause I don’t know. But this Ruggedo gets wild with anger if anyone digs gold out of the earth, and my private opinion is that he captured brother and carried him off to his underground kingdom. No — don’t ask me why. I see you’re dying to ask me why. But I don’t know.”

“But — dear me! — in that case you will never find your lost brother!” exclaimed the girl.

“Maybe not; but it’s my duty to try,” answered Shaggy. “I’ve wandered so far without finding him, but that only proves he is not where I’ve been looking. What I seek now is the hidden passage to the underground cavern of the terrible Metal Monarch.”

“Well,” said Betsy doubtfully, “it strikes me that if you ever manage to get there the Metal Monarch will make you, too, his prisoner.”

“Nonsense!” answered Shaggy, carelessly. “You mustn’t forget the Love Magnet.”

“What about it?” she asked.

“When the fierce Metal Monarch sees the Love Magnet, he will love me dearly and do anything I ask.”

“It must be wonderful,” said Betsy, with awe.

“It is,” the man assured her. “Shall I show it to you?”

“Oh, do!” she cried; so Shaggy searched in his shaggy pocket and drew out a small silver magnet, shaped like a horseshoe.

The moment Betsy saw it she began to like the Shaggy Man better than before. Hank also saw the Magnet and crept up to Shaggy to rub his head lovingly against the man’s knee.

But they were interrupted by the Royal Gardener, who stuck his head into the greenhouse and shouted angrily:

“You are all condemned to death! Your only chance to escape is to leave here instantly.”

This startled little Betsy, but the Shaggy Man merely waved the Magnet toward the Gardener, who, seeing it, rushed forward and threw himself at Shaggy’s feet, murmuring in honeyed words:

“Oh, you lovely, lovely man! How fond I am of you! Every shag and bobtail that decorates you is dear to me — all I have is yours! But for goodness’ sake get out of here before you die the death.”

“I’m not going to die,” declared Shaggy Man.

“You must. It’s the Law,” exclaimed the Gardener, beginning to weep real tears. “It breaks my heart to tell you this bad news, but the Law says that all strangers must be condemned by the Ruler to die the death.”

“No Ruler has condemned us yet,” said Betsy.

“Of course not,” added Shaggy. “We haven’t even seen the Ruler of the Rose Kingdom.”

“Well, to tell the truth,” said the Gardener, in a perplexed tone of voice, “we haven’t any real Ruler, just now. You see, all our Rulers grow on bushes in the Royal Gardens, and the last one we had got mildewed and withered before his time. So we had to plant him, and at this time there is no one growing on the Royal Bushes who is ripe enough to pick.”

“How do you know?” asked Betsy.

“Why, I’m the Royal Gardener. Plenty of royalties are growing, I admit; but just now they are all green. Until one ripens, I am supposed to rule the Rose Kingdom myself, and see that its Laws are obeyed. Therefore, much as I love you, Shaggy, I must put you to death.”

“Wait a minute,” pleaded Betsy. “I’d like to see those Royal Gardens before I die.”

“So would I,” added Shaggy Man. “Take us there, Gardener.”

“Oh, I can’t do that,” objected the Gardener. But Shaggy again showed him the Love Magnet and after one glance at it the Gardener could no longer resist.

He led Shaggy, Betsy and Hank to the end of the great greenhouse and carefully unlocked a small door. Passing through this they came into the splendid Royal Garden of the Rose Kingdom.

It was all surrounded by a tall hedge and within the enclosure grew several enormous rosebushes having thick green leaves of the texture of velvet. Upon these bushes grew the members of the Royal Family of the Rose Kingdom — men, women and children in all stages of maturity. They all seemed to have a light green hue, as if unripe or not fully developed, their flesh and clothing being alike green. They stood perfectly lifeless upon their branches, which swayed softly in the breeze, and their wide open eyes stared straight ahead, unseeing and unintelligent.

While examining these curious growing people, Betsy passed behind a big central bush and at once uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure. For there, blooming in perfect color and shape, stood a Royal Princess, whose

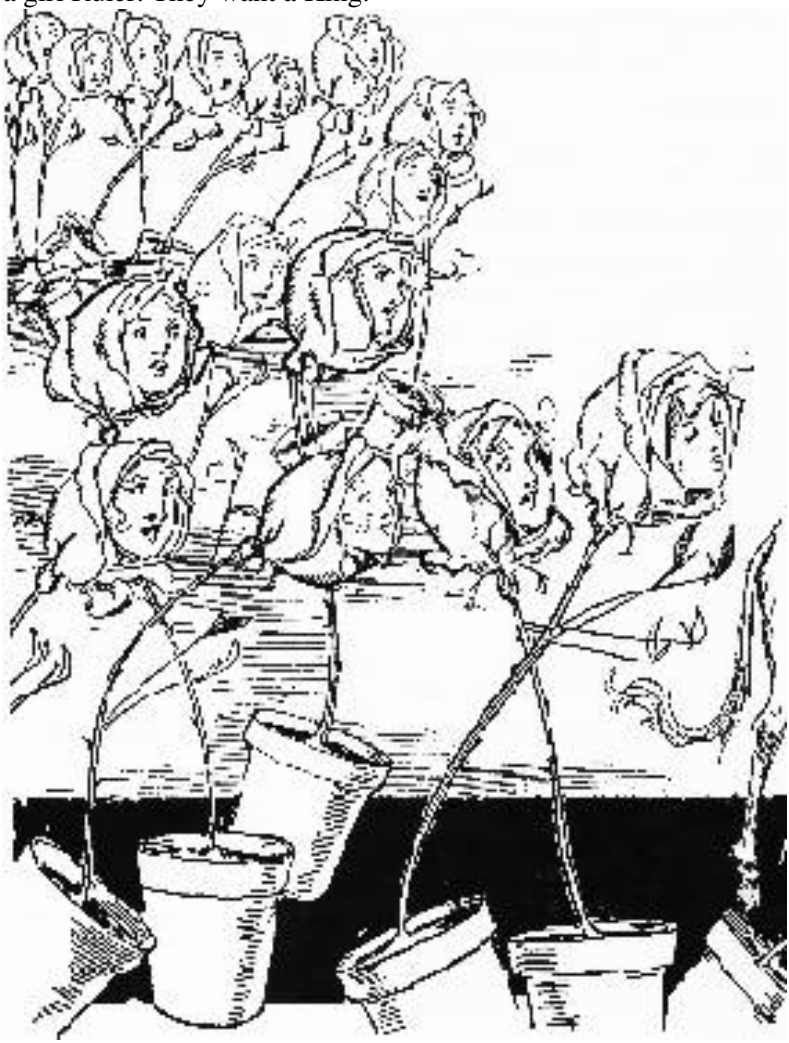
beauty was amazing.

"Why, she's ripe!" cried Betsy, pushing aside some of the broad leaves to observe her more clearly.

"Well, perhaps so," admitted the Gardener, who had come to the girl's side; "but she's a girl, and so we can't use her for a Ruler."

"No, indeed!" came a chorus of soft voices, and looking around Betsy discovered that all the Roses had followed them from the greenhouse and were now grouped before the entrance.

"You see," explained the Gardener, "the subjects of Rose Kingdom don't want a girl Ruler. They want a King."



"A King! We want a King!" repeated the chorus of Roses.

"Isn't she Royal?" inquired Shaggy, admiring the lovely Princess.

"Of course, for she grows on a Royal Bush. This Princess is named Ozga, as she is a distant cousin of Ozma of Oz; and, were she but a man, we would joyfully hail her as our Ruler."

The Gardener then turned away to talk with his Roses and Betsy whispered to her companion: "Let's pick her, Shaggy."

"All right," said he. "If she's royal, she has the right to rule this Kingdom, and if we pick her she will surely protect us and prevent our being hurt, or driven away."

So Betsy and Shaggy each took an arm of the beautiful Rose Princess and

a little twist of her feet set her free of the branch upon which she grew. Very gracefully she stepped down from the bush to the ground, where she bowed low to Betsy and Shaggy and said in a delightfully sweet voice: “I thank you.”

But at the sound of these words the Gardener and the Roses turned and discovered that the Princess had been picked, and was now alive. Over every face flashed an expression of resentment and anger, and one of the Roses cried aloud.

“Audacious mortals! What have you done?”

“Picked a Princess for you, that’s all,” replied Betsy, cheerfully.

“But we won’t have her! We want a King!” exclaimed a Jacque Rose, and

another added with a voice of scorn: “No girl shall rule over us!”

The newly-picked Princess looked from one to another of her rebellious subjects in astonishment. A grieved look came over her exquisite features.

“Have I no welcome here, pretty subjects?” she asked gently. “Have I not come from my Royal Bush to be your Ruler?”

“You were picked by mortals, without our consent,” replied the Moss Rose, coldly; “so we refuse to allow you to rule us.”

“Turn her out, Gardener, with the others!” cried the Tea Rose.

“Just a second, please!” called Shaggy, taking the Love Magnet from his pocket. “I guess this will win their love, Princess. Here — take it in your hand and let the roses see it.”

Princess Ozga took the Magnet and held it poised before the eyes of her subjects; but the Roses regarded it with calm disdain.

“Why, what’s the matter?” demanded Shaggy in surprise. “The Magnet never failed to work before!”

“I know,” said Betsy, nodding her head wisely. “These Roses have no hearts.”

“That’s it,” agreed the Gardener. “They’re pretty, and sweet, and alive; but still they are Roses. Their stems have thorns, but no hearts.”

The Princess sighed and handed the Magnet to the Shaggy Man.

“What shall I do?” she asked sorrowfully.

“Turn her out, Gardener, with the others!” commanded the Roses. “We will have no Ruler until a man-rose — a King — is ripe enough to pick.”

“Very well,” said the Gardener meekly. “You must excuse me, my dear Shaggy, for opposing your wishes, but you and the others, including Ozga, must get out of Rose Kingdom immediately, if not before.”

“Don’t you love me, Gardy?” asked Shaggy, carelessly displaying the Magnet.

“I do. I dote on thee!” answered the Gardener earnestly; “but no true man will neglect his duty for the sake of love. My duty is to drive you out, so — out you go!”

With this he seized a garden fork and began jabbing it at the strangers, in order to force them to leave. Hank the mule was not afraid of the fork and when he got his heels near to the Gardener the man fell back to avoid a kick.

But now the Roses crowded around the outcasts and it was soon discovered that beneath their draperies of green leaves were many sharp thorns which were more dangerous than Hank’s heels. Neither Betsy nor Ozga nor Shaggy nor the mule cared to brave those thorns and when they pressed away from them they found themselves slowly driven through the garden door into the greenhouse. From there they were forced out at the

entrance and so through the territory of the flower-strewn Rose Kingdom, which was not of very great extent.

The Rose Princess was sobbing bitterly; Betsy was indignant and angry; Hank uttered defiant “Hee-haws” and the Shaggy Man whistled softly to himself.

The boundary of the Rose Kingdom was a deep gulf, but there was a drawbridge in one place and this the Royal Gardener let down until the outcasts had passed over it. Then he drew it up again and returned with his Roses to the greenhouse, leaving the four queerly assorted comrades to wander into the bleak and unknown country that lay beyond.

“I don’t mind, much,” remarked Shaggy, as he led the way over the stony, barren ground. “I’ve got to search for my long-lost little brother, anyhow, so it won’t matter where I go.”

“Hank and I will help you find your brother,” said Betsy in her most cheerful voice. “I’m so far away from home now that I don’t s’pose I’ll ever find my way back; and, to tell the truth, it’s more fun traveling around and having adventures than sticking at home. Don’t you think so, Hank?”

"Hee-haw!" said Hank, and the Shaggy Man thanked them both.

"For my part," said Princess Ozga of Roseland, with a gentle sigh, "I must remain forever exiled from my Kingdom. So I, too, will be glad to help the Shaggy Man find his lost brother."

"That's very kind of you, ma'am," said Shaggy. "But unless I can find the underground cavern of Ruggedo, the Metal Monarch, I shall never find poor brother."

(This King was formerly named "Roquat," but after he drank of the "Waters of Oblivion" he forgot his own name and had to take another.)

“Doesn’t anyone know where it is?” inquired Betsy.

“Some one must know, of course,” was Shaggy’s reply. “But we are not the ones. The only way to succeed is for us to keep going until we find a person who can direct us to Ruggedo’s cavern.”

“We may find it ourselves, without any help,” suggested Betsy. “Who knows?”

“No one knows that, except the person who’s writing this story,” said Shaggy. “But we won’t find anything — not even supper — unless we travel on. Here’s a path. Let’s take it and see where it leads to.”

Chapter Seven

Polychrome's Pitiful Plight

The Rain King got too much water in his basin and spilled some over the brim. That made it rain in a certain part of the country — a real hard shower, for a time — and sent the Rainbow scampering to the place to show the gorgeous colors of his glorious bow as soon as the mist of rain had passed and the sky was clear.

The coming of the Rainbow is always a joyous event to earth folk, yet few have ever seen it close by. Usually the Rainbow is so far distant that you can observe its splendid hues but dimly, and that is why we seldom catch sight of the dancing Daughters of the Rainbow.

In the barren country where the rain had just fallen there appeared to be no human beings at all; but the Rainbow appeared, just the same, and dancing gayly upon its arch were the Rainbow's Daughters, led by the fairylike Polychrome, who is so dainty and beautiful that no girl has ever quite equalled her in loveliness.

Polychrome was in a merry mood and danced down the arch of the bow to the ground, daring her sisters to follow her. Laughing and gleeful, they also touched the ground with their twinkling feet; but all the Daughters of the Rainbow knew that this was a dangerous pastime, so they quickly climbed upon their bow again.

All but Polychrome. Though the sweetest and merriest of them all, she was likewise the most reckless. Moreover, it was an unusual sensation to pat the cold, damp earth with her rosy toes. Before she realized it the bow had lifted and disappeared in the billowy blue sky, and here was Polychrome standing helpless upon a rock, her gauzy draperies floating about her like brilliant cobwebs and not a soul — fairy or mortal — to help her regain her

lost bow!

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, a frown passing across her pretty face, "I'm caught again. This is the second time my carelessness has left me on earth while my sisters returned to our Sky Palaces. The first time I enjoyed some pleasant adventures, but this is a lonely, forsaken country and I shall be very unhappy until my Rainbow comes again and I can climb aboard. Let me think what is best to be done."

She crouched low upon the flat rock, drew her draperies about her and bowed her head.

It was in this position that Betsy Bobbin spied Polychrome as she came along the stony path, followed by Hank, the Princess and Shaggy. At once the girl ran up to the radiant Daughter of the Rainbow and exclaimed:

"Oh, what a lovely, lovely creature!"

Polychrome raised her golden head. There were tears in her blue eyes.

"I'm the most miserable girl in the whole world!" she sobbed.

The others gathered around her.

"Tell us your troubles, pretty one," urged the Princess.

"I — I've lost my bow!" wailed Polychrome.

"Take me, my dear," said Shaggy Man in a sympathetic tone, thinking she meant "beau" instead of "bow."

"I don't want you!" cried Polychrome, stamping her foot imperiously; "I want my Rainbow."

"Oh; that's different," said Shaggy. "But try to forget it. When I was young I used to cry for the Rainbow myself, but I couldn't have it. Looks as if you couldn't have it, either; so please don't cry."

Polychrome looked at him reproachfully.

"I don't like you," she said.

"No?" replied Shaggy, drawing the Love Magnet from his pocket; "not a little bit? — just a wee speck of a like?"

"Yes, yes!" said Polychrome, clasping her hands in ecstasy as she gazed at the enchanted talisman; "I love you, Shaggy Man!"

"Of course you do," said he calmly; "but I don't take any credit for it. It's the Love Magnet's powerful charm. But you seem quite alone and friendless, little Rainbow. Don't you want to join our party until you find your father and sisters again?"

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"We don't just know that," said Betsy, taking her hand; "but we're trying to find Shaggy's long-lost brother, who has been captured by the terrible Metal Monarch. Won't you come with us, and help us?"

Polychrome looked from one to another of the queer party of travelers and

a bewitching smile suddenly lighted her face.

“A donkey, a mortal maid, a Rose Princess and a Shaggy Man!” she exclaimed. “Surely you need help, if you intend to face Ruggedo.”

“Do you know him, then?” inquired Betsy.

“No, indeed. Ruggedo’s caverns are beneath the earth’s surface, where no Rainbow can ever penetrate. But I’ve heard of the Metal Monarch. He is also called the Nome King, you know, and he has made trouble for a good many people — mortals and fairies — in his time,” said Polychrome.

“Do you fear him, then?” asked the Princess, anxiously.

“No one can harm a Daughter of the Rainbow,” said Polychrome proudly. “I’m a sky fairy.”

“Then,” said Betsy, quickly, “you will be able to tell us the way to Ruggedo’s cavern.”

“No,” returned Polychrome, shaking her head, “that is one thing I cannot do. But I will gladly go with you and help you search for the place.”

This promise delighted all the wanderers and after the Shaggy Man had found the path again they began moving along it in a more happy mood. The Rainbow’s Daughter danced lightly over the rocky trail, no longer sad, but with her beautiful features wreathed in smiles. Shaggy came next, walking steadily and now and then supporting the Rose Princess, who followed him. Betsy and Hank brought up the rear, and if she tired with walking the girl got upon Hank’s back and let the stout little donkey carry her for a while.

At nightfall they came to some trees that grew beside a tiny brook and here they made camp and rested until morning. Then away they tramped, finding berries and fruits here and there which satisfied the hunger of Betsy, Shaggy and Hank, so that they were well content with their lot.

It surprised Betsy to see the Rose Princess partake of their food, for she considered her a fairy; but when she mentioned this to Polychrome, the Rainbow’s Daughter explained that when Ozga was driven out of her Rose Kingdom she ceased to be a fairy and would never again be more than a mere mortal. Polychrome, however, was a fairy wherever she happened to be, and if she sipped a few dewdrops by moonlight for refreshment no one ever saw her do it.

As they continued their wandering journey, direction meant very little to them, for they were hopelessly lost in this strange country. Shaggy said it would be best to go toward the mountains, as the natural entrance to Ruggedo’s underground cavern was likely to be hidden in some rocky, deserted place; but mountains seemed all around them except in the one direction that they had come from, which led to the Rose Kingdom and the sea. Therefore it mattered little which way they traveled.

By and by they espied a faint trail that looked like a path and after following this for some time they reached a crossroads. Here were many paths, leading in various directions, and there was a signpost so old that there were now no words upon the sign. At one side was an old well, with a chain windlass for drawing water, yet there was no house or other building anywhere in sight.

While the party halted, puzzled which way to proceed, the mule approached the well and tried to look into it.

"He's thirsty," said Betsy.

"It's a dry well," remarked Shaggy. "Probably there has been no water in it for many years. But, come; let us decide which way to travel."

No one seemed able to decide that. They sat down in a group and tried to consider which road might be the best to take. Hank, however, could not keep away from the well and finally he reared up on his hind legs, got his head over the edge and uttered a loud "Hee-haw!" Betsy watched her animal friend curiously.

"I wonder if he sees anything down there?" she said.

At this, Shaggy rose and went over to the well to investigate, and Betsy went with him. The Princess and Polychrome, who had become fast friends, linked arms and sauntered down one of the roads, to find an easy path.

"Really," said Shaggy, "there does seem to be something at the bottom of this old well."

"Can't we pull it up, and see what it is?" asked the girl.

There was no bucket at the end of the windlass chain, but there was a big hook that at one time was used to hold a bucket. Shaggy let down this hook, dragged it around on the bottom and then pulled it up. An old hoopskirt came with it, and Betsy laughed and threw it away. The thing frightened Hank, who had never seen a hoopskirt before, and he kept a good distance away from it.

Several other objects the Shaggy Man captured with the hook and drew up, but none of these was important.

"This well seems to have been the dump for all the old rubbish in the country," he said, letting down the hook once more. "I guess I've captured everything now. No — the hook has caught again. Help me, Betsy! Whatever this thing is, it's heavy."

She ran up and helped him turn the windlass and after much effort a confused mass of copper came in sight.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Shaggy. "Here is a surprise, indeed!"

"What is it?" inquired Betsy, clinging to the windlass and panting for breath.

For answer the Shaggy Man grasped the bundle of copper and dumped it upon the ground, free of the well. Then he turned it over with his foot, spread it out, and to Betsy's astonishment the thing proved to be a copper man.

"Just as I thought," said Shaggy, looking hard at the object. "But unless there are two copper men in the world this is the most astonishing thing I ever came across."

At this moment the Rainbow's Daughter and the Rose Princess approached them, and Polychrome said:

"What have you found, Shaggy One?"

"Either an old friend, or a stranger," he replied.

"Oh, here's a sign on his back!" cried Betsy, who had knelt down to examine the man. "Dear me; how funny! Listen to this."

Then she read the following words, engraved upon the copper plates of the man's body:

SMITH & TINKER'S

Patent Double-Action, Extra-Responsive,
Thought-Creating, Perfect-Talking
MECHANICAL MAN
Fitted with our Special Clockwork Attachment.
Thinks, Speaks, Acts, and Does Everything but Live.

"Isn't he wonderful!" exclaimed the Princess.

"Yes; but here's more," said Betsy, reading from another engraved plate:

DIRECTIONS FOR USING:

For THINKING:—Wind the Clockwork Man under his left arm, (marked No. 1).

For SPEAKING:—Wind the Clockwork Man under his right arm, (marked No. 2).

For WALKING and ACTION:—Wind Clockwork Man in the middle of his back, (marked No. 3).

N. B.—This Mechanism is guaranteed to work perfectly for a thousand years.

"If he's guaranteed for a thousand years," said Polychrome, "he ought to work yet."

“Of course,” replied Shaggy. “Let’s wind him up.”

In order to do this they were obliged to set the copper man upon his feet, in an upright position, and this was no easy task. He was inclined to topple over, and had to be propped again and again. The girls assisted Shaggy, and at last Tik-Tok seemed to be balanced and stood alone upon his broad feet.

“Yes,” said Shaggy, looking at the copper man carefully, “this must be, indeed, my old friend Tik-Tok, whom I left ticking merrily in the Land of Oz. But how he came to this lonely place, and got into that old well, is surely a mystery.”

“If we wind him, perhaps he will tell us,” suggested Betsy. “Here’s the key, hanging to a hook on his back. What part of him shall I wind up first?”

“His thoughts, of course,” said Polychrome, “for it requires thought to speak or move intelligently.”

So Betsy wound him under his left arm, and at once little flashes of light began to show in the top of his head, which was proof that he had begun to think.

“Now, then,” said Shaggy, “wind up his phonograph.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“Why, his talking-machine. His thoughts may be interesting, but they don’t tell us anything.”

So Betsy wound the copper man under his right arm, and then from the interior of his copper body came in jerky tones the words: “Ma-ny thanks!”

“Hurrah!” cried Shaggy, joyfully, and he slapped Tik-Tok upon the back in such a hearty manner that the copper man lost his balance and tumbled to the ground in a heap. But the clockwork that enabled him to speak had been wound up and he kept saying: “Pick-me-up! Pick-me-up! Pick-me-up!” until they had again raised him and balanced him upon his feet, when he added politely: “Ma-ny thanks!”

“He won’t be self-supporting until we wind up his action,” remarked Shaggy; so Betsy wound it, as tight as she could — for the key turned rather hard — and then Tik-Tok lifted his feet, marched around in a circle and ended by stopping before the group and making them all a low bow.

“How in the world did you happen to be in that well, when I left you safe in Oz?” inquired Shaggy.

“It is a long sto-ry,” replied Tik-Tok, “but I’ll tell it in a few words. Af-ter you had gone in search of your broth-er, Oz-ma saw you wan-der-ing in strange lands when-ev-er she looked in her mag-ic pic-ture, and she also saw your broth-er in the Nome King’s cavern; so she sent me to tell you where to find your broth-er and told me to help you if I could. The Sor-cer-ess, Glin-da the Good, trans-port-ed me to this place in the wink of an eye; but here I

met the Nome King him-self — old Rug-ge-do, who is called in these parts the Met-al Mon-arch. Rug-ge-do knew what I had come for, and he was so an-gry that he threw me down the well. Af-ter my works ran down I was help-less un-til you came a-long and pulled me out a-gain. Ma-ny thanks."

"This is, indeed, good news," said Shaggy. "I suspected that my brother was the prisoner of Ruggedo; but now I know it. Tell us, Tik-Tok, how shall we get to the Nome King's underground cavern?"

"The best way is to walk," said Tik-Tok. "We might crawl, or jump, or roll o-ver and o-ver until we get there; but the best way is to walk."

"I know; but which road shall we take?"

"My ma-chin-er-y is-n't made to tell that," replied Tik-Tok.

"There is more than one entrance to the underground cavern," said Polychrome; "but old Ruggedo has cleverly concealed every opening, so that earth dwellers can not intrude in his domain. If we find our way underground at all, it will be by chance."

"Then," said Betsy, "let us select any road, haphazard, and see where it leads us."

"That seems sensible," declared the Princess. "It may require a lot of time for us to find Ruggedo, but we have more time than anything else."

"If you keep me wound up," said Tik-Tok, "I will last a thou-sand years."

"Then the only question to decide is which way to go," added Shaggy, looking first at one road and then at another.

But while they stood hesitating, a peculiar sound reached their ears — a sound like the tramping of many feet.

"What's coming?" cried Betsy; and then she ran to the left-hand road and glanced along the path. "Why, it's an army!" she exclaimed. "What shall we do, hide or run?"

"Stand still," commanded Shaggy. "I'm not afraid of an army. If they prove to be friendly, they can help us; if they are enemies, I'll show them the Love Magnet."

Chapter Eight

Tik-Tok Tackles a Tough Task

While Shaggy and his companions stood huddled in a group at one side, the Army of Oogaboo was approaching along the pathway, the tramp of their feet being now and then accompanied by a dismal groan as one of the officers stepped on a sharp stone or knocked his funnybone against his neighbor's sword-handle.

Then out from among the trees marched Private Files, bearing the banner of Oogaboo, which fluttered from a long pole. This pole he stuck in the ground just in front of the well and then he cried in a loud voice:

"I hereby conquer this territory in the name of Queen Ann Soforth of Oogaboo, and all the inhabitants of the land I proclaim her slaves!"

Some of the officers now stuck their heads out of the bushes and asked:

"Is the coast clear, Private Files?"

"There is no coast here," was the reply, "but all's well."

"I hope there's water in it," said General Cone, mustering courage to advance to the well; but just then he caught a glimpse of Tik-Tok and Shaggy and at once fell upon his knees, trembling and frightened and cried out:

"Mercy, kind enemies! Mercy! Spare us, and we will be your slaves forever!"

The other officers, who had now advanced into the clearing, likewise fell upon their knees and begged for mercy.

Files turned around and, seeing the strangers for the first time, examined them with much curiosity. Then, discovering that three of the party were girls, he lifted his cap and made a polite bow.

"What's all this?" demanded a harsh voice, as Queen Ann reached the place and beheld her kneeling army.

“Permit us to introduce ourselves,” replied Shaggy, stepping forward. “This is Tik-Tok, the Clockwork Man — who works better than some meat people. And here is Princess Ozga of Roseland, just now unfortunately exiled from her Kingdom of Roses. I next present Polychrome, a sky fairy, who lost her Bow by an accident and can’t find her way home. The small girl here is Betsy Bobbin, from some unknown earthly paradise called Oklahoma, and with her you see Mr. Hank, a mule with a long tail and a short temper.”

“Puh!” said Ann, scornfully; “a pretty lot of vagabonds you are, indeed; all lost or strayed, I suppose, and not worth a Queen’s plundering. I’m sorry I’ve conquered you.”

“But you haven’t conquered us yet,” called Betsy indignantly.

“No,” agreed Files, “that is a fact. But if my officers will kindly command me to conquer you, I will do so at once, after which we can stop arguing and converse more at our ease.”

The officers had by this time risen from their knees and brushed the dust from their trousers. To them the enemy did not look very fierce, so the Generals and Colonels and Majors and Captains gained courage to face them and began strutting in their most haughty manner.

“You must understand,” said Ann, “that I am the Queen of Oogaboo, and this is my invincible Army. We are busy conquering the world, and since you seem to be a part of the world, and are obstructing our journey, it is necessary for us to conquer you — unworthy though you may be of such high honor.”

“That’s all right,” replied Shaggy. “Conquer us as often as you like. We don’t mind.”

“But we won’t be anybody’s slaves,” added Betsy, positively.

"We'll see about that," retorted the Queen, angrily. "Advance, Private Files, and bind the enemy hand and foot!"

But Private Files looked at pretty Betsy and fascinating Polychrome and the beautiful Rose Princess and shook his head.

"It would be impolite, and I won't do it," he asserted.

"You must!" cried Ann. "It is your duty to obey orders."

"I haven't received any orders from my officers," objected the Private.

But the Generals now shouted: "Forward, and bind the prisoners!" and the Colonels and Majors and Captains repeated the command, yelling it as loud as they could.

All this noise annoyed Hank, who had been eyeing the Army of Oogaboo

with strong disfavor. The mule now dashed forward and began backing upon the officers and kicking fierce and dangerous heels at them. The attack was so sudden that the officers scattered like dust in a whirlwind, dropping their swords as they ran and trying to seek refuge behind the trees and bushes.

Betsy laughed joyously at the comical rout of the "noble army," and Polychrome danced with glee. But Ann was furious at this ignoble defeat of her gallant forces by one small mule.

"Private Files, I command you to do your duty!" she cried again, and then she herself ducked to escape the mule's heels — for Hank made no distinction in favor of a lady who was an open enemy. Betsy grabbed her champion by the forelock, however, and so held him fast, and when the officers saw that the mule was restrained from further attacks they crept fearfully back and picked up their discarded swords.

"Private Files, seize and bind these prisoners!" screamed the Queen.

"No," said Files, throwing down his gun and removing the knapsack which was strapped to his back, "I resign my position as the Army of Oogaboo. I enlisted to fight the enemy and become a hero, but if you want some one to bind harmless girls you will have to hire another Private."

Then he walked over to the others and shook hands with Shaggy and Tik-Tok.

"Treason!" shrieked Ann, and all the officers echoed her cry.

"Nonsense," said Files. "I've the right to resign if I want to."

"Indeed you haven't!" retorted the Queen. "If you resign it will break up my Army, and then I cannot conquer the world." She now turned to the officers and said: "I must ask you to do me a favor. I know it is undignified in officers to fight, but unless you immediately capture Private Files and force him to obey my orders there will be no plunder for any of us. Also it is likely you will all suffer the pangs of hunger, and when we meet a powerful foe you are liable to be captured and made slaves."

The prospect of this awful fate so frightened the officers that they drew their swords and rushed upon Files, who stood beside Shaggy, in a truly ferocious manner. The next instant, however, they halted and again fell upon their knees; for there, before them, was the glistening Love Magnet, held in the hand of the smiling Shaggy Man, and the sight of this magic talisman at once won the heart of every Oogabooite. Even Ann saw the Love Magnet, and forgetting all enmity and anger threw herself upon Shaggy and embraced him lovingly.

Quite disconcerted by this unexpected effect of the Magnet, Shaggy disengaged himself from the Queen's encircling arms and quickly hid the talisman in his pocket. The adventurers from Oogaboo were now his firm

friends, and there was no more talk about conquering and binding any of his party.

"If you insist on conquering anyone," said Shaggy, "you may march with me to the underground Kingdom of Ruggedo. To conquer the world, as you have set out to do, you must conquer everyone under its surface as well as those upon its surface, and no one in all the world needs conquering so much as Ruggedo."

"Who is he?" asked Ann.

"The Metal Monarch, King of the Nomes."

"Is he rich?" inquired Major Stockings in an anxious voice.

"Of course," answered Shaggy. "He owns all the metal that lies

underground — gold, silver, copper, brass and tin. He has an idea he also owns all the metals above ground, for he says all metal was once a part of his kingdom. So, by conquering the Metal Monarch, you will win all the riches in the world."

"Ah!" exclaimed General Apple, heaving a deep sigh, "that would be plunder worth our while. Let's conquer him, Your Majesty."

The Queen looked reproachfully at Files, who was sitting next to the lovely Princess and whispering in her ear.

"Alas," said Ann, "I have no longer an Army. I have plenty of brave officers, indeed, but no private soldier for them to command. Therefore I cannot conquer Ruggedo and win all his wealth."

"Why don't you make one of your officers the Private?" asked Shaggy; but at once every officer began to protest and the Queen of Oogaboo shook her head as she replied:

"That is impossible. A private soldier must be a terrible fighter, and my officers are unable to fight. They are exceptionally brave in commanding others to fight, but could not themselves meet the enemy and conquer."

"Very true, Your Majesty," said Colonel Plum, eagerly. "There are many kinds of bravery and one cannot be expected to possess them all. I myself am brave as a lion in all ways until it comes to fighting, but then my nature revolts. Fighting is unkind and liable to be injurious to others; so, being a gentleman, I never fight."

"Nor I!" shouted each of the other officers.

"You see," said Ann, "how helpless I am. Had not Private Files proved himself a traitor and a deserter, I would gladly have conquered this Ruggedo; but an Army without a private soldier is like a bee without a stinger."

"I am not a traitor, Your Majesty," protested Files. "I resigned in a proper manner, not liking the job. But there are plenty of people to take my place. Why not make Shaggy Man the private soldier?"

"He might be killed," said Ann, looking tenderly at Shaggy, "for he is mortal, and able to die. If anything happened to him, it would break my heart."

"It would hurt me worse than that," declared Shaggy. "You must admit, Your Majesty, that I am commander of this expedition, for it is my brother we are seeking, rather than plunder. But I and my companions would like the assistance of your Army, and if you help us to conquer Ruggedo and to rescue my brother from captivity we will allow you to keep all the gold and jewels and other plunder you may find."

This prospect was so tempting that the officers began whispering together and presently Colonel Cheese said: "Your Majesty, by combining our brains

we have just evolved a most brilliant idea. We will make the Clockwork Man the private soldier!"

"Who? Me?" asked Tik-Tok. "Not for a sin-gle sec-ond! I can-not fight, and you must not for-get that it was Rug-ge-do who threw me in the well."

"At that time you had no gun," said Polychrome. "But if you join the Army of Oogaboo you will carry the gun that Mr. Files used."

"A sol-dier must be a-ble to run as well as to fight," protested Tik-Tok, "and if my works run down, as they of-ten do, I could nei-ther run nor fight."

"I'll keep you wound up, Tik-Tok," promised Betsy.

"Why, it isn't a bad idea," said Shaggy. "Tik-Tok will make an ideal soldier, for nothing can injure him except a sledge hammer. And, since a private soldier seems to be necessary to this Army, Tik-Tok is the only one of our party fitted to undertake the job."

"What must I do?" asked Tik-Tok.

"Obey orders," replied Ann. "When the officers command you to do anything, you must do it; that is all."

"And that's enough, too," said Files.

"Do I get a salary?" inquired Tik-Tok.

"You get your share of the plunder," answered the Queen.

"Yes," remarked Files, "one-half of the plunder goes to Queen Ann, the other half is divided among the officers, and the Private gets the rest."

"That will be sat-is-fac-tor-y," said Tik-Tok, picking up the gun and examining it wonderingly, for he had never before seen such a weapon.

Then Ann strapped the knapsack to Tik-Tok's copper back and said: "Now we are ready to march to Ruggedo's Kingdom and conquer it. Officers, give the command to march."

"Fall — in!" yelled the Generals, drawing their swords.

"Fall — in!" cried the Colonels, drawing their swords.

"Fall — in!" shouted the Majors, drawing their swords.

"Fall — in!" bawled the Captains, drawing their swords.

Tik-Tok looked at them and then around him in surprise.

"Fall in what? The well?" he asked.

"No," said Queen Ann, "you must fall in marching order."

"Can-not I march without fall-ing in-to it?" asked the Clockwork Man.

"Shoulder your gun and stand ready to march," advised Files; so Tik-Tok held the gun straight and stood still.

"What next?" he asked.

The Queen turned to Shaggy.

"Which road leads to the Metal Monarch's cavern?"

"We don't know, Your Majesty," was the reply.

“But this is absurd!” said Ann with a frown. “If we can’t get to Ruggedo, it is certain that we can’t conquer him.”

“You are right,” admitted Shaggy; “but I did not say we could not get to him. We have only to discover the way, and that was the matter we were considering when you and your magnificent Army arrived here.”

“Well, then, get busy and discover it,” snapped the Queen.

That was no easy task. They all stood looking from one road to another in perplexity. The paths radiated from the little clearing like the rays of the midday sun, and each path seemed like all the others.

Files and the Rose Princess, who had by this time become good friends, advanced a little way along one of the roads and found that it was bordered by pretty wild flowers.

“Why don’t you ask the flowers to tell you the way?” he said to his companion.

“The flowers?” returned the Princess, surprised at the question.

“Of course,” said Files. “The field-flowers must be second-cousins to a Rose Princess, and I believe if you ask them they will tell you.”

She looked more closely at the flowers. There were hundreds of white daisies, golden buttercups, bluebells and daffodils growing by the roadside, and each flower-head was firmly set upon its slender but stout stem. There were even a few wild roses scattered here and there and perhaps it was the sight of these that gave the Princess courage to ask the important question.

She dropped to her knees, facing the flowers, and extended both her arms pleadingly toward them.

“Tell me, pretty cousins,” she said in her sweet, gentle voice, “which way will lead us to the Kingdom of Ruggedo, the Nome King?”

At once all the stems bent gracefully to the right and the flower heads nodded once — twice — thrice in that direction.

“That’s it!” cried Files joyfully. “Now we know the way.”

Ozga rose to her feet and looked wonderingly at the field-flowers, which had now resumed their upright position.

“Was it the wind, do you think?” she asked in a low whisper.

“No, indeed,” replied Files. “There is not a breath of wind stirring. But these lovely blossoms are indeed your cousins and answered your question at once, as I knew they would.”

Chapter Nine

Ruggedo's Rage is Rash and Reckless

The way taken by the adventurers led up hill and down dale and wound here and there in a fashion that seemed aimless. But always it drew nearer to a range of low mountains and Files said more than once that he was certain the entrance to Ruggedo's cavern would be found among these rugged hills.

In this he was quite correct. Far underneath the nearest mountain was a gorgeous chamber hollowed from the solid rock, the walls and roof of which glittered with thousands of magnificent jewels. Here, on a throne of virgin gold, sat the famous Nome King, dressed in splendid robes and wearing a superb crown cut from a single blood-red ruby.

Ruggedo, the Monarch of all the Metals and Precious Stones of the Underground World, was a round little man with a flowing white beard, a red face, bright eyes and a scowl that covered all his forehead. One would think, to look at him, that he ought to be jolly; one might think, considering his enormous wealth, that he ought to be happy; but this was not the case. The Metal Monarch was surly and cross because mortals had dug so much treasure out of the earth and kept it above ground, where all the power of Ruggedo and his nomes was unable to recover it. He hated not only the mortals but also the fairies who live upon the earth or above it, and instead of being content with the riches he still possessed he was unhappy because he did not own all the gold and jewels in the world.

Ruggedo had been nodding, half asleep, in his chair when suddenly he sat upright, uttered a roar of rage and began pounding upon a huge gong that stood beside him.

The sound filled the vast cavern and penetrated to many caverns beyond,

where countless thousands of nomes were working at their unending tasks, hammering out gold and silver and other metals, or melting ores in great furnaces, or polishing glittering gems. The nomes trembled at the sound of the King's gong and whispered fearfully to one another that something unpleasant was sure to happen; but none dared pause in his task.

The heavy curtains of cloth-of-gold were pushed aside and Kaliko, the King's High Chamberlain, entered the royal presence.

"What's up, Your Majesty?" he asked, with a wide yawn, for he had just wakened.

"Up?" roared Ruggedo, stamping his foot viciously. "Those foolish mortals are up, that's what! And they want to come down."

"Down here?" inquired Kaliko.

"Yes!"

"How do you know?" continued the Chamberlain, yawning again.

"I feel it in my bones," said Ruggedo. "I can always feel it when those hateful earth-crawlers draw near to my Kingdom. I am positive, Kaliko, that mortals are this very minute on their way here to annoy me — and I hate mortals more than I do catnip tea!"

"Well, what's to be done?" demanded the nome.

"Look through your spyglass, and see where the invaders are," commanded the King.

So Kaliko went to a tube in the wall of rock and put his eye to it. The tube ran from the cavern up to the side of the mountain and turned several curves and corners, but as it was a magic spyglass Kaliko was able to see through it just as easily as if it had been straight.

"Ho — hum," said he. "I see 'em, Your Majesty."

"What do they look like?" inquired the Monarch.

"That's a hard question to answer, for a queerer assortment of creatures I never yet beheld," replied the nome. "However, such a collection of curiosities may prove dangerous. There's a copper man, worked by machinery — "

"Bah! that's only Tik-Tok," said Ruggedo. "I'm not afraid of him. Why, only the other day I met the fellow and threw him down a well."

"Then some one must have pulled him out again," said Kaliko. "And there's a little girl — "

"Dorothy?" asked Ruggedo, jumping up in fear.

"No; some other girl. In fact, there are several girls, of various sizes; but Dorothy is not with them, nor is Ozma."

"That's good!" exclaimed the King, sighing in relief.

Kaliko still had his eye to the spyglass.

“I see,” said he, “an army of men from Oogaboo. They are all officers and carry swords. And there is a Shaggy Man — who seems very harmless — and a little donkey with big ears.”

“Pooh!” cried Ruggedo, snapping his fingers in scorn. “I’ve no fear of such a mob as that. A dozen of my nomes can destroy them all in a jiffy.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said Kaliko. “The people of Oogaboo are hard to destroy, and I believe the Rose Princess is a fairy. As for Polychrome, you know very well that the Rainbow’s Daughter cannot be injured by a nome.”

“Polychrome! Is she among them?” asked the King.

“Yes; I have just recognized her.”

“Then these people are coming here on no peaceful errand,” declared Ruggedo, scowling fiercely. “In fact, no one ever comes here on a peaceful errand. I hate everybody, and everybody hates me!”

“Very true,” said Kaliko.

“I must in some way prevent these people from reaching my dominions. Where are they now?”

“Just now they are crossing the Rubber Country, Your Majesty.”

“Good! Are your magnetic rubber wires in working order?”

“I think so,” replied Kaliko. “Is it your Royal Will that we have some fun with these invaders?”

“It is,” answered Ruggedo. “I want to teach them a lesson they will never forget.”

Now, Shaggy had no idea that he was in a Rubber Country, nor had any of his companions. They noticed that everything around them was of a dull gray color and that the path upon which they walked was soft and springy, yet they had no suspicion that the rocks and trees were rubber and even the path they trod was made of rubber.

Presently they came to a brook where sparkling water dashed through a deep channel and rushed away between high rocks far down the mountain-side. Across the brook were stepping-stones, so placed that travelers might easily leap from one to another and in that manner cross the water to the farther bank.

Tik-Tok was marching ahead, followed by his officers and Queen Ann. After them came Betsy Bobbin and Hank, Polychrome and Shaggy, and last of all the Rose Princess with Files. The Clockwork Man saw the stream and the stepping stones and, without making a pause, placed his foot upon the first stone.

The result was astonishing. First he sank down in the soft rubber, which then rebounded and sent Tik-Tok soaring high in the air, where he turned a succession of flip-flops and alighted upon a rubber rock far in the rear of the

party.

General Apple did not see Tik-Tok bound, so quickly had he disappeared; therefore he also stepped upon the stone (which you will guess was connected with Kaliko's magnetic rubber wire) and instantly shot upward like an arrow. General Cone came next and met with a like fate, but the others now noticed that something was wrong and with one accord they halted the column and looked back along the path.

There was Tik-Tok, still bounding from one rubber rock to another, each time rising a less distance from the ground. And there was General Apple, bounding away in another direction, his three-cornered hat jammed over his eyes and his long sword thumping him upon the arms and head as it swung this way and that. And there, also, appeared General Cone, who had struck a rubber rock headforemost and was so crumpled up that his round body looked more like a bouncing-ball than the form of a man.

Betsy laughed merrily at the strange sight and Polychrome echoed her laughter. But Ozga was grave and wondering, while Queen Ann became angry at seeing the chief officers of the Army of Oogaboo bounding around in so undignified a manner. She shouted to them to stop, but they were unable to obey, even though they would have been glad to do so. Finally, however, they all ceased bounding and managed to get upon their feet and rejoin the Army.

"Why did you do that?" demanded Ann, who seemed greatly provoked.

"Don't ask them why," said Shaggy earnestly. "I knew you would ask them why, but you ought not to do it. The reason is plain. Those stones are rubber; therefore they are not stones. Those rocks around us are rubber, and therefore they are not rocks. Even this path is not a path; it's rubber. Unless we are very careful, your Majesty, we are all likely to get the bounce, just as your poor officers and Tik-Tok did."

"Then let's be careful," remarked Files, who was full of wisdom; but Polychrome wanted to test the quality of the rubber, so she began dancing. Every step sent her higher and higher into the air, so that she resembled a big butterfly fluttering lightly. Presently she made a great bound and bounded way across the stream, landing lightly and steadily on the other side.

"There is no rubber over here," she called to them. "Suppose you all try to bound over the stream, without touching the stepping-stones."

Ann and her officers were reluctant to undertake such a risky adventure, but Betsy at once grasped the value of the suggestion and began jumping up and down until she found herself bounding almost as high as Polychrome had done. Then she suddenly leaned forward and the next bound took her easily

across the brook, where she alighted by the side of the Rainbow's Daughter.

"Come on, Hank!" called the girl, and the donkey tried to obey. He managed to bound pretty high but when he tried to bound across the stream he misjudged the distance and fell with a splash into the middle of the water.

"Hee-haw!" he wailed, struggling toward the far bank. Betsy rushed forward to help him out, but when the mule stood safely beside her she was amazed to find he was not wet at all.

"It's dry water," said Polychrome, dipping her hand into the stream and showing how the water fell from it and left it perfectly dry.

"In that case," returned Betsy, "they can all walk through the water."

She called to Ozga and Shaggy to wade across, assuring them the water was shallow and would not wet them. At once they followed her advice, avoiding the rubber stepping stones, and made the crossing with ease. This encouraged the entire party to wade through the dry water, and in a few minutes all had assembled on the bank and renewed their journey along the path that led to the Nome King's dominions.

When Kaliko again looked through his magic spyglass he exclaimed:

"Bad luck, Your Majesty! All the invaders have passed the Rubber Country and now are fast approaching the entrance to your caverns."

Ruggedo raved and stormed at the news and his anger was so great that several times, as he strode up and down his jeweled cavern, he paused to kick Kaliko upon his shins, which were so sensitive that the poor nome howled with pain. Finally the King said:

"There's no help for it; we must drop these audacious invaders down the Hollow Tube."

Kaliko gave a jump, at this, and looked at his master wonderingly.

"If you do that, Your Majesty," he said, "you will make Tititi-Hoochoo very angry."

"Never mind that," retorted Ruggedo. "Tititi-Hoochoo lives on the other side of the world, so what do I care for his anger?"

Kaliko shuddered and uttered a little groan.

"Remember his terrible powers," he pleaded, "and remember that he warned you, the last time you slid people through the Hollow Tube, that if you did it again he would take vengeance upon you."

The Metal Monarch walked up and down in silence, thinking deeply.

"Of two dangers," said he, "it is wise to choose the least. What do you suppose these invaders want?"

"Let the Long-Eared Hearer listen to them," suggested Kaliko.

"Call him here at once!" commanded Ruggedo eagerly.

So in a few minutes there entered the cavern a nome with enormous ears,

who bowed low before the King.

"Strangers are approaching," said Ruggedo, "and I wish to know their errand. Listen carefully to their talk and tell me why they are coming here, and what for."

The nome bowed again and spread out his great ears, swaying them gently up and down and back and forth. For half an hour he stood silent, in an attitude of listening, while both the King and Kaliko grew impatient at the delay. At last the Long-Eared Hearer spoke:

"Shaggy Man is coming here to rescue his brother from captivity," said he.

"Ha, the Ugly One!" exclaimed Ruggedo. "Well, Shaggy Man may have

his ugly brother, for all I care. He's too lazy to work and is always getting in my way. Where is the Ugly One now, Kaliko?"

"The last time Your Majesty stumbled over the prisoner you commanded me to send him to the Metal Forest, which I did. I suppose he is still there."

"Very good. The invaders will have a hard time finding the Metal Forest," said the King, with a grin of malicious delight, "for half the time I can't find it myself. Yet I created the forest and made every tree, out of gold and silver, so as to keep the precious metals in a safe place and out of the reach of mortals. But tell me, Hearer, do the strangers want anything else?"

"Yes, indeed they do!" returned the nome. "The Army of Oogaboo is determined to capture all the rich metals and rare jewels in your kingdom, and the officers and their Queen have arranged to divide the spoils and carry them away."

When he heard this Ruggedo uttered a bellow of rage and began dancing up and down, rolling his eyes, clicking his teeth together and swinging his arms furiously. Then, in an ecstasy of anger he seized the long ears of the Hearer and pulled and twisted them cruelly; but Kaliko grabbed up the King's sceptre and rapped him over the knuckles with it, so that Ruggedo let go the ears and began to chase his Royal Chamberlain around the throne.

The Hearer took advantage of this opportunity to slip away from the cavern and escape, and after the King had tired himself out chasing Kaliko he threw himself into his throne and panted for breath, while he glared wickedly at his defiant subject.

"You'd better save your strength to fight the enemy," suggested Kaliko. "There will be a terrible battle when the Army of Oogaboo gets here."

"The Army won't get here," said the King, still coughing and panting. "I'll drop 'em down the Hollow Tube — every man Jack and every girl Jill of 'em!"

"And defy Tititi-Hoochoo?" asked Kaliko.

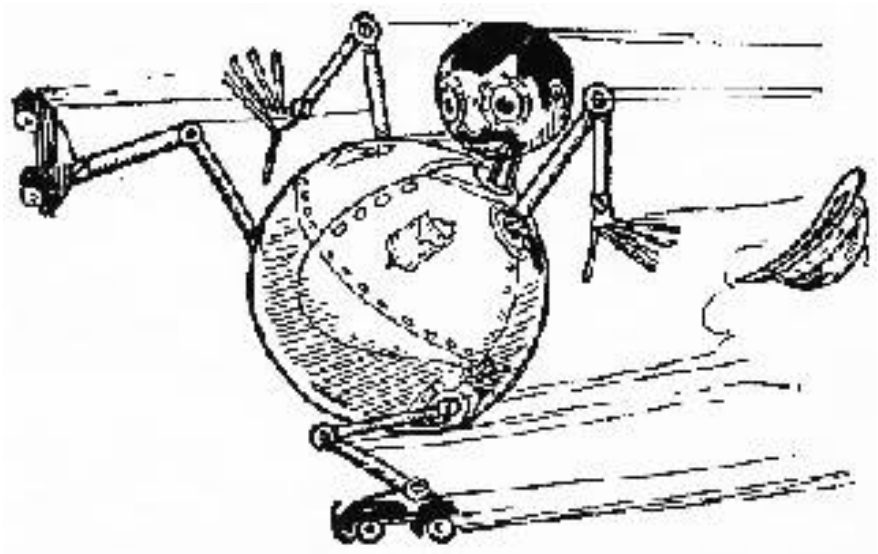
"Yes. Go at once to my Chief Magician and order him to turn the path toward the Hollow Tube, and to make the tip of the Tube invisible, so they'll all fall into it."

Kaliko went away shaking his head, for he thought Ruggedo was making a great mistake. He found the Magician and had the path twisted so that it led directly to the opening of the Hollow Tube, and this opening he made invisible.

Having obeyed the orders of his master, the Royal Chamberlain went to his private room and began to write letters of recommendation of himself, stating that he was an honest man, a good servant and a small eater.

"Pretty soon," he said to himself, "I shall have to look for another job, for

it is certain that Ruggedo has ruined himself by this reckless defiance of the mighty Tititi-Hoochoo. And in seeking a job nothing is so effective as a letter of recommendation."



Chapter Ten
A Terrible Tumble Through a Tube

I suppose that Polychrome, and perhaps Queen Ann and her Army, might have been able to dispel the enchantment of Ruggedo's Chief Magician had they known that danger lay in their pathway; for the Rainbow's Daughter was a fairy and as Oogaboo is a part of the Land of Oz its inhabitants cannot easily be deceived by such common magic as the Nome King could command. But no one suspected any especial danger until after they had entered Ruggedo's cavern, and so they were journeying along in quite a contented manner when Tik-Tok, who marched ahead, suddenly disappeared.

The officers thought he must have turned a corner, so they kept on their way and all of them likewise disappeared — one after another. Queen Ann was rather surprised at this, and in hastening forward to learn the reason she also vanished from sight.

Betsy Bobbin had tired her feet by walking, so she was now riding upon the back of the stout little mule, facing backward and talking to Shaggy and Polychrome, who were just behind. Suddenly Hank pitched forward and began falling and Betsy would have tumbled over his head had she not grabbed the mule's shaggy neck with both arms and held on for dear life.

All around was darkness, and they were not falling directly downward but seemed to be sliding along a steep incline. Hank's hoofs were resting upon some smooth substance over which he slid with the swiftness of the wind. Once Betsy's heels flew up and struck a similar substance overhead. They were, indeed, descending the "Hollow Tube" that led to the other side of the world.

“Stop, Hank — stop!” cried the girl; but Hank only uttered a plaintive “Hee-haw!” for it was impossible for him to obey.

After several minutes had passed and no harm had befallen them, Betsy gained courage. She could see nothing at all, nor could she hear anything except the rush of air past her ears as they plunged downward along the Tube. Whether she and Hank were alone, or the others were with them, she could not tell. But had some one been able to take a flash-light photograph of the Tube at that time a most curious picture would have resulted. There was Tik-Tok, flat upon his back and sliding headforemost down the incline. And there were the Officers of the Army of Oogaboo, all tangled up in a confused crowd, flapping their arms and trying to shield their faces from the clanking swords, which swung back and forth during the swift journey and pommeled everyone within their reach. Now followed Queen Ann, who had struck the Tube in a sitting position and went flying along with a dash and abandon that thoroughly bewildered the poor lady, who had no idea what had happened to her. Then, a little distance away, but unseen by the others in the inky darkness, slid Betsy and Hank, while behind them were Shaggy and Polychrome and finally Files and the Princess.

When first they tumbled into the Tube all were too dazed to think clearly, but the trip was a long one, because the cavity led straight through the earth to a place just opposite the Nome King’s dominions, and long before the adventurers got to the end they had begun to recover their wits.

“This is awful, Hank!” cried Betsy in a loud voice, and Queen Ann heard her and called out: “Are you safe, Betsy?”

“Mercy, no!” answered the little girl. “How could anyone be safe when she’s going about sixty miles a minute?” Then, after a pause, she added: “But where do you s’pose we’re going to, Your Maj’sty?”

“Don’t ask her that, please don’t!” said Shaggy, who was not too far away to overhear them. “And please don’t ask me why, either.”

“Why?” said Betsy.

“No one can tell where we are going until we get there,” replied Shaggy, and then he yelled “Ouch!” for Polychrome had overtaken him and was now sitting on his head.

The Rainbow’s Daughter laughed merrily, and so infectious was this joyous laugh that Betsy echoed it and Hank said “Hee haw!” in a mild and sympathetic tone of voice.

“I’d like to know where and when we’ll arrive, just the same,” exclaimed the little girl.

“Be patient and you’ll find out, my dear,” said Polychrome. “But isn’t this an odd experience? Here am I, whose home is in the skies, making a journey

through the center of the earth — where I never expected to be!”

“How do you know we’re in the center of the earth?” asked Betsy, her voice trembling a little through nervousness.

“Why, we can t be anywhere else,” replied Polychrome. “I have often heard of this passage, which was once built by a Magician who was a great traveler. He thought it would save him the bother of going around the earth’s surface, but he tumbled through the Tube so fast that he shot out at the other end and hit a star in the sky, which at once exploded.”

“The star exploded?” asked Betsy wonderingly.

“Yes; the Magician hit it so hard.”

“And what became of the Magician?” inquired the girl.

“No one knows that,” answered Polychrome. “But I don’t think it matters much.”

“It matters a good deal, if we also hit the stars when we come out,” said Queen Ann, with a moan.

“Don’t worry,” advised Polychrome. “I believe the Magician was going the other way, and probably he went much faster than we are going.”

“It’s fast enough to suit me,” remarked Shaggy, gently removing Polychrome’s heel from his left eye. “Couldn’t you manage to fall all by yourself, my dear?”

“I’ll try,” laughed the Rainbow’s Daughter.

All this time they were swiftly falling through the Tube, and it was not so easy for them to talk as you may imagine when you read their words. But although they were so helpless and altogether in the dark as to their fate, the fact that they were able to converse at all cheered them, considerably.

Files and Ozga were also conversing as they clung tightly to one another, and the young fellow bravely strove to reassure the Princess, although he was terribly frightened, both on her account and on his own.

An hour, under such trying circumstances, is a very long time, and for more than an hour they continued their fearful journey. Then, just as they began to fear the Tube would never end, Tik-Tok popped out into broad daylight and, after making a graceful circle in the air, fell with a splash into a great marble fountain.

Out came the officers, in quick succession, tumbling heels over head and striking the ground in many undignified attitudes.

“For the love of sassafras!” exclaimed a Peculiar Person who was hoeing pink violets in a garden. “What can all this mean?”

For answer, Queen Ann sailed up from the Tube, took a ride through the air as high as the treetops, and alighted squarely on top of the Peculiar Person’s head, smashing a jeweled crown over his eyes and tumbling him to

the ground.

The mule was heavier and had Betsy clinging to his back, so he did not go so high up. Fortunately for his little rider he struck the ground upon his four feet. Betsy was jarred a trifle but not hurt and when she looked around her she saw the Queen and the Peculiar Person struggling together upon the ground, where the man was trying to choke Ann and she had both hands in his bushy hair and was pulling with all her might. Some of the officers, when they got upon their feet, hastened to separate the combatants and sought to restrain the Peculiar Person so that he could not attack their Queen again.

By this time, Shaggy, Polychrome, Ozga and Files had all arrived and were curiously examining the strange country in which they found themselves and

which they knew to be exactly on the opposite side of the world from the place where they had fallen into the Tube. It was a lovely place, indeed, and seemed to be the garden of some great Prince, for through the vistas of trees and shrubbery could be seen the towers of an immense castle. But as yet the only inhabitant to greet them was the Peculiar Person just mentioned, who had shaken off the grasp of the officers without effort and was now trying to pull the battered crown from off his eyes.

Shaggy, who was always polite, helped him to do this and when the man was free and could see again he looked at his visitors with evident amazement.

"Well, well, well!" he exclaimed. "Where did you come from and how did you get here?"

Betsy tried to answer him, for Queen Ann was surly and silent.

"I can't say, exac'ly where we came from, cause I don't know the name of the place," said the girl, "but the way we got here was through the Hollow Tube."

"Don't call it a 'hollow' Tube, please," exclaimed the Peculiar Person in an irritated tone of voice. "If it's a tube, it's sure to be hollow."

"Why?" asked Betsy.

"Because all tubes are made that way. But this Tube is private property and everyone is forbidden to fall into it."

"We didn't do it on purpose," explained Betsy, and Polychrome added: "I am quite sure that Ruggedo, the Nome King, pushed us down that Tube."

"Ha! Ruggedo! Did you say Ruggedo?" cried the man, becoming much excited.

"That is what she said," replied Shaggy, "and I believe she is right. We were on our way to conquer the Nome King when suddenly we fell into the Tube."

"Then you are enemies of Ruggedo?" inquired the peculiar Person.

"Not exac'ly enemies," said Betsy, a little puzzled by the question, "'cause we don't know him at all; but we started out to conquer him, which isn't as friendly as it might be."

"True," agreed the man. He looked thoughtfully from one to another of them for a while and then he turned his head over his shoulder and said: "Never mind the fire and pincers, my good brothers. It will be best to take these strangers to the Private Citizen."

"Very well, Tubekins," responded a Voice, deep and powerful, that seemed to come out of the air, for the speaker was invisible.

All our friends gave a jump, at this. Even Polychrome was so startled that her gauze draperies fluttered like a banner in a breeze. Shaggy shook his head

and sighed; Queen Ann looked very unhappy; the officers clung to each other, trembling violently.

But soon they gained courage to look more closely at the Peculiar Person. As he was a type of all the inhabitants of this extraordinary land whom they afterward met, I will try to tell you what he looked like.

His face was beautiful, but lacked expression. His eyes were large and blue in color and his teeth finely formed and white as snow. His hair was black and bushy and seemed inclined to curl at the ends. So far no one could find any fault with his appearance. He wore a robe of scarlet, which did not cover his arms and extended no lower than his bare knees. On the bosom of the robe was embroidered a terrible dragon's head, as horrible to look at as the man was beautiful. His arms and legs were left bare and the skin of one arm was bright yellow and the skin of the other arm a vivid green. He had one blue leg and one pink one, while both his feet — which showed through the open sandals he wore — were jet black.

Betsy could not decide whether these gorgeous colors were dyes or the natural tints of the skin, but while she was thinking it over the man who had been called "Tubekins" said:

"Follow me to the Residence — all of you!"

But just then a Voice exclaimed: “Here’s another of them, Tubekins, lying in the water of the fountain.”

“Gracious!” cried Betsy; “it must be Tik-Tok, and he’ll drown.”

“Water is a bad thing for his clockworks, anyway,” agreed Shaggy, as with one accord they all started for the fountain. But before they could reach it, invisible hands raised Tik-Tok from the marble basin and set him upon his feet beside it, water dripping from every joint of his copper body.

“Ma — ny tha — tha — tha — thanks!” he said; and then his copper jaws clicked together and he could say no more. He next made an attempt to walk but after several awkward trials found he could not move his joints.

Peals of jeering laughter from persons unseen greeted Tik-Tok’s failure,

and the new arrivals in this strange land found it very uncomfortable to realize that there were many creatures around them who were invisible, yet could be heard plainly.

"Shall I wind him up?" asked Betsy, feeling very sorry for Tik-Tok.

"I think his machinery is wound; but he needs oiling," replied Shaggy.

At once an oil-can appeared before him, held on a level with his eyes by some unseen hand. Shaggy took the can and tried to oil Tik-Tok's joints. As if to assist him, a strong current of warm air was directed against the copper man which quickly dried him. Soon he was able to say "Ma-ny thanks!" quite smoothly and his joints worked fairly well.

"Come!" commanded Tubekins, and turning his back upon them he walked up the path toward the castle.

"Shall we go?" asked Queen Ann, uncertainly; but just then she received a shove that almost pitched her forward on her head; so she decided to go. The officers who hesitated received several energetic kicks, but could not see who delivered them; therefore they also decided — very wisely — to go. The others followed willingly enough, for unless they ventured upon another terrible journey through the Tube they must make the best of the unknown country they were in, and the best seemed to be to obey orders.

Chapter Eleven

The Famous Fellowship of Fairies

After a short walk through very beautiful gardens they came to the castle and followed Tubekins through the entrance and into a great domed chamber, where he commanded them to be seated.

From the crown which he wore, Betsy had thought this man must be the King of the country they were in, yet after he had seated all the strangers upon benches that were ranged in a semicircle before a high throne, Tubekins bowed humbly before the vacant throne and in a flash became invisible and disappeared.

The hall was an immense place, but there seemed to be no one in it beside themselves. Presently, however, they heard a low cough near them, and here and there was the faint rustling of a robe and a slight patter as of footsteps. Then suddenly there rang out the clear tone of a bell and at the sound all was changed.

Gazing around the hall in bewilderment they saw that it was filled with hundreds of men and women, all with beautiful faces and staring blue eyes and all wearing scarlet robes and jeweled crowns upon their heads. In fact, these people seemed exact duplicates of Tubekins and it was difficult to find any mark by which to tell them apart.

"My! what a lot of Kings and Queens!" whispered Betsy to Polychrome, who sat beside her and appeared much interested in the scene but not a bit worried.

"It is certainly a strange sight," was Polychrome's reply; "but I cannot see how there can be more than one King, or Queen, in any one country, for were

these all rulers, no one could tell who was Master."

One of the Kings who stood near and overheard this remark turned to her and said: "One who is Master of himself is always a King, if only to himself. In this favored land all Kings and Queens are equal, and it is our privilege to bow before one supreme Ruler — the Private Citizen."

"Who's he?" inquired Betsy.

As if to answer her, the clear tones of the bell again rang out and instantly there appeared seated in the throne the man who was lord and master of all these royal ones. This fact was evident when with one accord they fell upon their knees and touched their foreheads to the floor.

The Private Citizen was not unlike the others, except that his eyes were black instead of blue and in the centers of the black irises glowed red sparks that seemed like coals of fire. But his features were very beautiful and dignified and his manner composed and stately. Instead of the prevalent scarlet robe, he wore one of white, and the same dragon's head that decorated the others was embroidered upon its bosom.

"What charge lies against these people, Tubekins?" he asked in quiet, even tones.

"They came through the forbidden Tube, O Mighty Citizen," was the reply.

"You see, it was this way," said Betsy. "We were marching to the Nome King, to conquer him and set Shaggy's brother free, when on a sudden — "

"Who are you?" demanded the Private Citizen sternly.

"Me? Oh, I'm Betsy Bobbin, and — "

"Who is the leader of this party?" asked the Citizen.

"Sir, I am Queen Ann of Oogaboo, and — "

"Then keep quiet," said the Citizen. "Who is the leader?"

No one answered for a moment. Then General Bunn stood up.

"Sit down!" commanded the Citizen. "I can see that sixteen of you are merely officers, and of no account."

"But we have an Army," said General Clock, blusteringly, for he didn't like to be told he was of no account.

"Where is your Army?" asked the Citizen.

"It's me," said Tik-Tok, his voice sounding a little rusty. "I'm the on-ly Pri-vate Sol-dier in the par-ty."

Hearing this, the Citizen rose and bowed respectfully to the Clockwork Man.

"Pardon me for not realizing your importance before," said he. "Will you oblige me by taking a seat beside me on my throne?"

Tik-Tok rose and walked over to the throne, all the Kings and Queens

making way for him. Then with clanking steps he mounted the platform and sat on the broad seat beside the Citizen.

Ann was greatly provoked at this mark of favor shown to the humble Clockwork Man, but Shaggy seemed much pleased that his old friend's importance had been recognized by the ruler of this remarkable country. The Citizen now began to question Tik-Tok, who told in his mechanical voice about Shaggy's quest of his lost brother, and how Ozma of Oz had sent the Clockwork Man to assist him, and how they had fallen in with Queen Ann and her people from Oogaboo. Also he told how Betsy and Hank and Polychrome and the Rose Princess had happened to join their party.

"And you intended to conquer Ruggedo, the Metal Monarch and King of the Nomes?" asked the Citizen.

"Yes. That seemed the on-ly thing for us to do," was Tik-Tok's reply. "But he was too cle-ver for us. When we got close to his cav-ern he made our path lead to the Tube, and made the op-en-ing in-vis-i-ble, so that we all fell in-to it be-fore we knew it was there. It was an eas-y way to get rid of us and now Rug-gedo is safe and we are far a-way in a strange land."

The Citizen was silent a moment and seemed to be thinking. Then he said:

"Most noble Private Soldier, I must inform you that by the laws of our country anyone who comes through the Forbidden Tube must be tortured for nine days and ten nights and then thrown back into the Tube. But it is wise to disregard laws when they conflict with justice, and it seems that you and your followers did not disobey our laws willingly, being forced into the Tube by Ruggedo. Therefore the Nome King is alone to blame, and he alone must be punished."

"That suits me," said Tik-Tok. "But Rug-ge-do is on the o-ther side of the world where he is a-way out of your reach."

The Citizen drew himself up proudly.

"Do you imagine anything in the world or upon it can be out of the reach of the Great Jinjin?" he asked.

"Oh! Are you, then, the Great Jinjin?" inquired Tik-Tok.

"I am."

"Then your name is Ti-ti-ti-Hoo-choo?"

"It is."

Queen Ann gave a scream and began to tremble. Shaggy was so disturbed that he took out a handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Polychrome looked sober and uneasy for the first time, while Files put his arms around the Rose Princess as if to protect her. As for the officers, the name of the great Jinjin set them moaning and weeping at a great rate and every one fell upon his knees before the throne, begging for mercy. Betsy

was worried at seeing her companions so disturbed, but did not know what it was all about. Only Tik-Tok was unmoved at the discovery.

"Then," said he, "if you are Ti-ti-ti-Hoo-choo, and think Rug-ge-do is to blame, I am sure that some-thing queer will hap-pen to the King of the Nomes."

"I wonder what 'twill be," said Betsy.

The Private Citizen — otherwise known as Tititi-Hoochoo, the Great Jinjin — looked at the little girl steadily.

"I will presently decide what is to happen to Ruggedo," said he in a hard, stern voice. Then, turning to the throng of Kings and Queens, he continued: "Tik-Tok has spoken truly, for his machinery will not allow him to lie, nor will it allow his thoughts to think falsely. Therefore these people are not our enemies and must be treated with consideration and justice. Take them to your palaces and entertain them as guests until to-morrow, when I command that they be brought again to my Residence. By then I shall have formed my plans."

No sooner had Tititi-Hoochoo spoken than he disappeared from sight. Immediately after, most of the Kings and Queens likewise disappeared. But several of them remained visible and approached the strangers with great respect. One of the lovely Queens said to Betsy:

"I trust you will honor me by being my guest. I am Erma, Queen of Light."

"May Hank come with me?" asked the girl.

"The King of Animals will care for your mule," was the reply. "But do not fear for him, for he will be treated royally. All of your party will be reunited on the morrow."

"I — I'd like to have some one with me," said Betsy, pleadingly.

Queen Erma looked around and smiled upon Polychrome.

"Will the Rainbow's Daughter be an agreeable companion?" she asked.

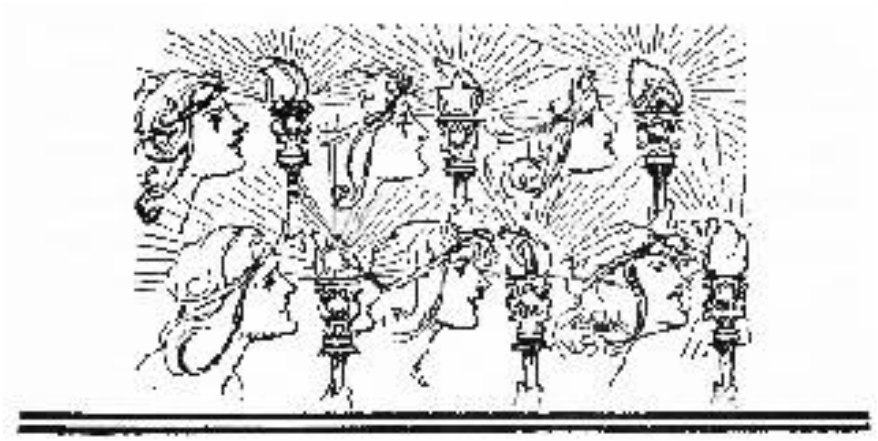
"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the girl.

So Polychrome and Betsy became guests of the Queen of Light, while other beautiful Kings and Queens took charge of the others of the party.

The two girls followed Erma out of the hall and through the gardens of the Residence to a village of pretty dwellings. None of these was so large or imposing as the castle of the Private Citizen, but all were handsome enough to be called palaces — as, in fact, they really were.

Betsy

Chapter Twelve
The Lovely Lady of Light



The palace of the Queen of Light stood on a little eminence and was a mass of crystal windows, surmounted by a vast crystal dome. When they entered the portals Erma was greeted by six lovely maidens, evidently of high degree, who at once aroused Betsy's admiration. Each bore a wand in her hand, tipped with an emblem of light, and their costumes were also emblematic of the lights they represented. Erma introduced them to her guests and each made a graceful and courteous acknowledgment.

First was Sunlight, radiantly beautiful and very fair; the second was Moonlight, a soft, dreamy damsel with nut-brown hair; next came Starlight, equally lovely but inclined to be retiring and shy. These three were dressed in shimmering robes of silvery white. The fourth was Daylight, a brilliant damsel with laughing eyes and frank manners, who wore a variety of colors. Then came Firelight, clothed in a fleecy flame-colored robe that wavered around her shapely form in a very attractive manner. The sixth maiden, Electra, was the most beautiful of all, and Betsy thought from the first that both Sunlight and Daylight regarded Electra with envy and were a little jealous of her.

But all were cordial in their greetings to the strangers and seemed to regard the Queen of Light with much affection, for they fluttered around her in a flashing, radiant group as she led the way to her regal drawing-room.

This apartment was richly and cosily furnished, the upholstery being of many tints, and both Betsy and Polychrome enjoyed resting themselves upon the downy divans after their strenuous adventures of the day.

The Queen sat down to chat with her guests, who noticed that Daylight

was the only maiden now seated beside Erma. The others had retired to another part of the room, where they sat modestly with entwined arms and did not intrude themselves at all.

The Queen told the strangers all about this beautiful land, which is one of the chief residences of fairies who minister to the needs of mankind. So many important fairies lived there that, to avoid rivalry, they had elected as their Ruler the only important personage in the country who had no duties to mankind to perform and was, in effect, a Private Citizen. This Ruler, or Jinjin, as was his title, bore the name of Tititi-Hoochoo, and the most singular thing about him was that he had no heart. But instead of this he possessed a high degree of Reason and Justice and while he showed no mercy in his judgments he never punished unjustly or without reason. To wrong-doers Tititi-Hoochoo was as terrible as he was heartless, but those who were innocent of evil had nothing to fear from him.

All the Kings and Queens of this fairyland paid reverence to Jinjin, for as they expected to be obeyed by others they were willing to obey the one in authority over them.

The inhabitants of the Land of Oz had heard many tales of this fearfully just Jinjin, whose punishments were always equal to the faults committed. Polychrome also knew of him, although this was the first time she had ever seen him face to face. But to Betsy the story was all new, and she was greatly interested in Tititi-Hoochoo, whom she no longer feared.

Time sped swiftly during their talk and suddenly Betsy noticed that Moonlight was sitting beside the Queen of Light, instead of Daylight.

"But tell me, please," she pleaded, "why do you all wear a dragon's head embroidered on your gowns?"

Erma's pleasant face became grave as she answered:

"The Dragon, as you must know, was the first living creature ever made; therefore the Dragon is the oldest and wisest of living things. By good fortune the Original Dragon, who still lives, is a resident of this land and supplies us with wisdom whenever we are in need of it. He is old as the world and remembers everything that has happened since the world was created."

"Did he ever have any children?" inquired the girl.

"Yes, many of them. Some wandered into other lands, where men, not understanding them, made war upon them; but many still reside in this country. None, however, is as wise as the Original Dragon, for whom we have great respect. As he was the first resident here, we wear the emblem of the dragon's head to show that we are the favored people who alone have the right to inhabit this fairyland, which in beauty almost equals the Fairyland of

Oz, and in power quite surpasses it."

"I understand about the dragon, now," said Polychrome, nodding her lovely head. Betsy did not quite understand, but she was at present interested in observing the changing lights. As Daylight had given way to Moonlight, so now Starlight sat at the right hand of Erma the Queen, and with her coming a spirit of peace and content seemed to fill the room. Polychrome, being herself a fairy, had many questions to ask about the various Kings and Queens who lived in this far-away, secluded place, and before Erma had finished answering them a rosy glow filled the room and Firelight took her place beside the Queen.

Betsy liked Firelight, but to gaze upon her warm and glowing features made the little girl sleepy, and presently she began to nod. Thereupon Erma rose and took Betsy's hand gently in her own.

"Come," said she; "the feast time has arrived and the feast is spread."

"That's nice," exclaimed the small mortal. "Now that I think of it, I'm awful hungry. But p'raps I can't eat your fairy food."

The Queen smiled and led her to a doorway. As she pushed aside a heavy drapery a flood of silvery light greeted them, and Betsy saw before her a splendid banquet hall, with a table spread with snowy linen and crystal and silver. At one side was a broad, throne-like seat for Erma and beside her now sat the brilliant maid Electra. Polychrome was placed on the Queen's right hand and Betsy upon her left. The other five messengers of light now waited upon them, and each person was supplied with just the food she liked best. Polychrome found her dish of dewdrops, all fresh and sparkling, while Betsy was so lavishly served that she decided she had never in her life eaten a dinner half so good.

"I s'pose," she said to the Queen, "that Miss Electra is the youngest of all these girls."

"Why do you suppose that?" inquired Erma, with a smile.

"'Cause electric'ty is the newest light we know of. Didn't Mr. Edison discover it?"

"Perhaps he was the first mortal to discover it," replied the Queen. "But electricity was a part of the world from its creation, and therefore my Electra is as old as Daylight or Moonlight, and equally beneficent to mortals and fairies alike."

Betsy was thoughtful for a time. Then she remarked, as she looked at the six messengers of light:

"We couldn't very well do without any of 'em; could we?"

Erma laughed softly. "I couldn't, I'm sure," she replied, "and I think mortals would miss any one of my maidens, as well. Daylight cannot take the

place of Sunlight, which gives us strength and energy. Moonlight is of value when Daylight, worn out with her long watch, retires to rest. If the moon in its course is hidden behind the earth's rim, and my sweet Moonlight cannot cheer us, Starlight takes her place, for the skies always lend her power. Without Firelight we should miss much of our warmth and comfort, as well as much cheer when the walls of houses encompass us. But always, when other lights forsake us, our glorious Electra is ready to flood us with bright rays. As Queen of Light, I love all my maidens, for I know them to be faithful and true."

"I love 'em too!" declared Betsy. "But sometimes, when I'm real sleepy, I can get along without any light at all."

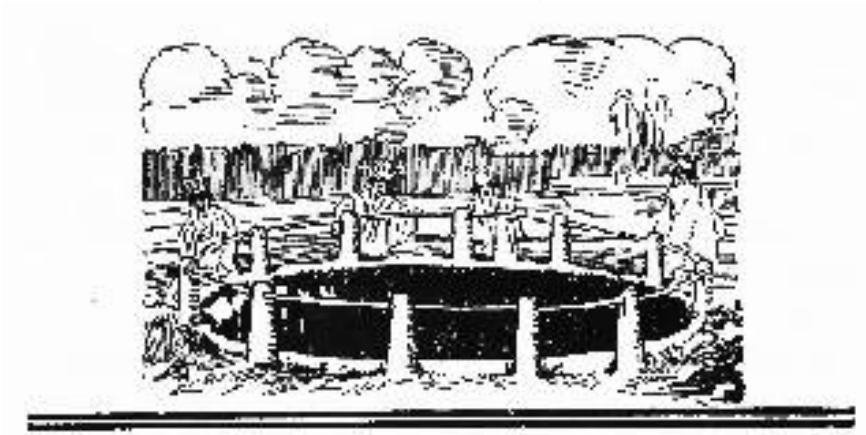
"Are you sleepy now?" inquired Erma, for the feast had ended.

"A little," admitted the girl.

So Electra showed her to a pretty chamber where there was a soft, white bed, and waited patiently until Betsy had undressed and put on a shimmery silken nightrobe that lay beside her pillow. Then the light-maid bade her good night and opened the door.

When she closed it after her Betsy was in darkness. In six winks the little girl was fast asleep.

Chapter Thirteen
The Jinjin's Just Judgment



All the adventurers were reunited next morning when they were brought from various palaces to the Residence of Tititi-Hoochoo and ushered into the great Hall of State.

As before, no one was visible except our friends and their escorts until the first bell sounded. Then in a flash the room was seen to be filled with the beautiful Kings and Queens of the land. The second bell marked the appearance in the throne of the mighty Jinjin, whose handsome countenance was as composed and expressionless as ever.

All bowed low to the Ruler. Their voices softly murmured: "We greet the Private Citizen, mightiest of Rulers, whose word is Law and whose Law is just."

Tititi-Hoochoo bowed in acknowledgment. Then, looking around the brilliant assemblage, and at the little group of adventurers before him, he said:

"An unusual thing has happened. Inhabitants of other lands than ours, who are different from ourselves in many ways, have been thrust upon us through the Forbidden Tube, which one of our people foolishly made years ago and was properly punished for his folly. But these strangers had no desire to come here and were wickedly thrust into the Tube by a cruel King on the other side of the world, named Ruggedo. This King is an immortal, but he is not good. His magic powers hurt mankind more than they benefit them. Because he had unjustly kept the Shaggy Man's brother a prisoner, this little band of honest people, consisting of both mortals and immortals, determined to conquer Ruggedo and to punish him. Fearing they might succeed in this,

the Nome King misled them so that they fell into the Tube.

"Now, this same Ruggedo has been warned by me, many times, that if ever he used this Forbidden Tube in any way he would be severely punished. I find, by referring to the Fairy Records, that this King's servant, a nome named Kaliko, begged his master not to do such a wrong act as to drop these people into the Tube and send them tumbling into our country. But Ruggedo defied me and my orders.

"Therefore these strangers are innocent of any wrong. It is only Ruggedo who deserves punishment, and I will punish him." He paused a moment and then continued in the same cold, merciless voice:

"These strangers must return through the Tube to their own side of the world; but I will make their fall more easy and pleasant than it was before. Also I shall send with them an Instrument of Vengeance, who in my name will drive Ruggedo from his underground caverns, take away his magic powers and make him a homeless wanderer on the face of the earth — a place he detests."

There was a little murmur of horror from the Kings and Queens at the severity of this punishment, but no one uttered a protest, for all realized that the sentence was just.

"In selecting my Instrument of Vengeance," went on Tititi-Hoochoo, "I have realized that this will be an unpleasant mission. Therefore no one of us who is blameless should be forced to undertake it. In this wonderful land it is seldom one is guilty of wrong, even in the slightest degree, and on examining the Records I found no King or Queen had erred. Nor had any among their followers or servants done any wrong. But finally I came to the Dragon Family, which we highly respect, and then it was that I discovered the error of Quox.

"Quox, as you well know, is a young dragon who has not yet acquired the wisdom of his race. Because of this lack, he has been disrespectful toward his most ancient ancestor, the Original Dragon, telling him once to mind his own business and again saying that the Ancient One had grown foolish with age. We are aware that dragons are not the same as fairies and cannot be altogether guided by our laws, yet such disrespect as Quox has shown should not be unnoticed by us. Therefore I have selected Quox as my royal Instrument of Vengeance and he shall go through the Tube with these people and inflict upon Ruggedo the punishment I have decreed."

All had listened quietly to this speech and now the Kings and Queens bowed gravely to signify their approval of the Jinjin's judgment.

Tititi-Hoochoo turned to Tubekins.

"I command you," said he, "to escort these strangers to the Tube and see

that they all enter it."

The King of the Tube, who had first discovered our friends and brought them to the Private Citizen, stepped forward and bowed. As he did so, the Jinjin and all the Kings and Queens suddenly disappeared and only Tubekins remained visible.

"All right," said Betsy, with a sigh; "I don't mind going back so very much, 'cause the Jinjin promised to make it easy for us."

Indeed, Queen Ann and her officers were the only ones who looked solemn and seemed to fear the return journey. One thing that bothered Ann was her failure to conquer this land of Tititi-Hoochoo. As they followed their guide through the gardens to the mouth of the Tube she said to Shaggy:

"How can I conquer the world, if I go away and leave this rich country unconquered?"

"You can't," he replied. "Don't ask me why, please, for if you don't know I can't inform you."

"Why not?" said Ann; but Shaggy paid no attention to the question.

This end of the Tube had a silver rim and around it was a gold railing to which was attached a sign that read.

"IF YOU ARE OUT, STAY THERE.
IF YOU ARE IN, DON'T COME OUT."

On a little silver plate just inside the Tube was engraved the words:

"*Burrowed and built by*
Hiergargo the Magician,
In the Year of the World
1962 5478
For his own exclusive uses."

"He was some builder, I must say," remarked Betsy, when she had read the inscription; "but if he had known about that star I guess he'd have spent

his time playing solitaire."

"Well, what are we waiting for?" inquired Shaggy, who was impatient to start.

"Quox," replied Tubekins. "But I think I hear him coming."

"Is the young dragon invisible?" asked Ann, who had never seen a live dragon and was a little fearful of meeting one.

"No, indeed," replied the King of the Tube. "You'll see him in a minute; but before you part company I'm sure you'll wish he was invisible."

"Is he dangerous, then?" questioned Files.

"Not at all. But Quox tires me dreadfully," said Tubekins, "and I prefer his room to his company."

At that instant a scraping sound was heard, drawing nearer and nearer until from between two big bushes appeared a huge dragon, who approached the party, nodded his head and said: "Good morning."

Had Quox been at all bashful I am sure he would have felt uncomfortable at the astonished stare of every eye in the group — except Tubekins, of course, who was not astonished because he had seen Quox so often.

Betsy had thought a "young" dragon must be a small dragon, yet here was one so enormous that the girl decided he must be full grown, if not overgrown. His body was a lovely sky-blue in color and it was thickly set with glittering silver scales, each one as big as a serving-tray. Around his neck was a pink ribbon with a bow just under his left ear, and below the ribbon appeared a chain of pearls to which was attached a golden locket about as large around as the end of a bass drum. This locket was set with many large and beautiful jewels.

The head and face of Quox were not especially ugly, when you consider that he was a dragon; but his eyes were so large that it took him a long time to wink and his teeth seemed very sharp and terrible when they showed, which they did whenever the beast smiled. Also his nostrils were quite large and wide, and those who stood near him were liable to smell brimstone — especially when he breathed out fire, as it is the nature of dragons to do. To the end of his long tail was attached a big electric light.

Perhaps the most singular thing about the dragon's appearance at this time was the fact that he had a row of seats attached to his back, one seat for each member of the party. These seats were double, with curved backs, so that two could sit in them, and there were twelve of these double seats, all strapped firmly around the dragon's thick body and placed one behind the other, in a row that extended from his shoulders nearly to his tail.

"Aha!" exclaimed Tubekins; "I see that Tititi-Hoochoo has transformed Quox into a carryall."

“I’m glad of that,” said Betsy. “I hope, Mr. Dragon, you won’t mind our riding on your back.”

“Not a bit,” replied Quox. “I’m in disgrace just now, you know, and the only way to redeem my good name is to obey the orders of the Jinjin. If he makes me a beast of burden, it is only a part of my punishment, and I must bear it like a dragon. I don’t blame you people at all, and I hope you’ll enjoy the ride. Hop on, please. All aboard for the other side of the world!”

Silently they took their places. Hank sat in the front seat with Betsy, so that he could rest his front hoofs upon the dragon’s head. Behind them were Shaggy and Polychrome, then Files and the Princess, and Queen Ann and Tik-Tok. The officers rode in the rear seats. When all had mounted to their places the dragon looked very like one of those sightseeing wagons so common in big cities — only he had legs instead of wheels.

“All ready?” asked Quox, and when they said they were he crawled to the mouth of the Tube and put his head in.

“Good-bye, and good luck to you!” called Tubekins; but no one thought to reply, because just then the dragon slid his great body into the Tube and the journey to the other side of the world had begun.

At first they went so fast that they could scarcely catch their breaths, but presently Quox slowed up and said with a sort of cackling laugh:

“My scales! but that is some tumble. I think I shall take it easy and fall slower, or I’m likely to get dizzy. Is it very far to the other side of the world?”

“Haven’t you ever been through this Tube before?” inquired Shaggy.

“Never. Nor has anyone else in our country; at least, not since I was born.”

“How long ago was that?” asked Betsy.

“That I was born? Oh, not very long ago. I’m only a mere child. If I had not been sent on this journey, I would have celebrated my three thousand and fifty-sixth birthday next Thursday. Mother was going to make me a birthday cake with three thousand and fifty-six candles on it; but now, of course, there will be no celebration, for I fear I shall not get home in time for it.”

“Three thousand and fifty-six years!” cried Betsy. “Why, I had no idea anything could live that long!”

“My respected Ancestor, whom I would call a stupid old humbug if I had not reformed, is so old that I am a mere baby compared with him,” said Quox. “He dates from the beginning of the world, and insists on telling us stories of things that happened fifty thousand years ago, which are of no interest at all to youngsters like me. In fact, Grandpa isn’t up to date. He lives altogether in the past, so I can’t see any good reason for his being alive to-

day.... Are you people able to see your way, or shall I turn on more light?"

"Oh, we can see very nicely, thank you; only there's nothing to see but ourselves," answered Betsy.

This was true. The dragon's big eyes were like headlights on an automobile and illuminated the Tube far ahead of them. Also he curled his tail upward so that the electric light on the end of it enabled them to see one another quite clearly. But the Tube itself was only dark metal, smooth as glass but exactly the same from one of its ends to the other. Therefore there was no scenery of interest to beguile the journey.

They were now falling so gently that the trip was proving entirely comfortable, as the Jinjin had promised it would be; but this meant a longer journey and the only way they could make time pass was to engage in conversation. The dragon seemed a willing and persistent talker and he was of so much interest to them that they encouraged him to chatter. His voice was a little gruff but not unpleasant when one became used to it.

"My only fear," said he presently, "is that this constant sliding over the surface of the Tube will dull my claws. You see, this hole isn't straight down, but on a steep slant, and so instead of tumbling freely through the air I must skate along the Tube. Fortunately, there is a file in my tool-kit, and if my claws get dull they can be sharpened again."

"Why do you want sharp claws?" asked Betsy.

"They are my natural weapons, and you must not forget that I have been sent to conquer Ruggedo."

"Oh, you needn't mind about that," remarked Queen Ann, in her most haughty manner; "for when we get to Ruggedo I and my invincible Army can conquer him without your assistance."

"Very good," returned the dragon, cheerfully. "That will save me a lot of bother — if you succeed. But I think I shall file my claws, just the same."

He gave a long sigh, as he said this, and a sheet of flame, several feet in length, shot from his mouth. Betsy shuddered and Hank said "Hee-haw!" while some of the officers screamed in terror. But the dragon did not notice that he had done anything unusual.

"Is there fire inside of you?" asked Shaggy.

"Of course," answered Quox. "What sort of a dragon would I be if my fire went out?"

"What keeps it going?" Betsy inquired.

"I've no idea. I only know it's there," said Quox. "The fire keeps me alive and enables me to move; also to think and speak."

"Ah! You are ver-y much like my-self," said Tik-Tok. "The on-ly dif-fer-ence is that I move by clock-work, while you move by fire."

“I don’t see a particle of likeness between us, I must confess,” retorted Quox, gruffly. “You are not a live thing; you’re a dummy.”

“But I can do things, you must ad-mit,” said Tik-Tok.

“Yes, when you are wound up,” sneered the dragon. “But if you run down, you are helpless.”

“What would happen to you, Quox, if you ran out of gasoline?” inquired Shaggy, who did not like this attack upon his friend.

“I don’t use gasoline.”

“Well, suppose you ran out of fire.”

“What’s the use of supposing that?” asked Quox. “My great-great-great-grandfather has lived since the world began, and he has never once run out of fire to keep him going. But I will confide to you that as he gets older he shows more smoke and less fire. As for Tik-Tok, he’s well enough in his way, but he’s merely copper. And the Metal Monarch knows copper through and through. I wouldn’t be surprised if Ruggedo melted Tik-Tok in one of his furnaces and made copper pennies of him.”

“In that case, I would still keep going,” remarked Tik-Tok, calmly.

“Pennies do,” said Betsy regretfully.

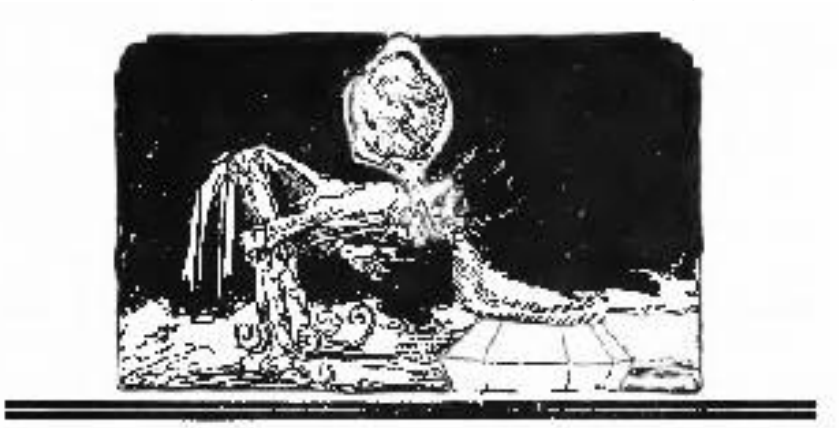
“This is all nonsense,” said the Queen, with irritation. “Tik-Tok is my great Army — all but the officers — and I believe he will be able to conquer Ruggedo with ease. What do you think, Polychrome?”

“You might let him try,” answered the Rainbow’s Daughter, with her sweet ringing laugh, that sounded like the tinkling of tiny bells. “And if Tik-Tok fails, you have still the big fire-breathing dragon to fall back on.”

“Ah!” said the dragon, another sheet of flame gushing from his mouth and nostrils; “it’s a wise little girl, this Polychrome. Anyone would know she is a fairy.”

Chapter Fourteen

The Long-Eared Hearer Learns by Listening



During this time Ruggedo, the Metal Monarch and King of the Nomes, was trying to amuse himself in his splendid jeweled cavern. It was hard work for Ruggedo to find amusement to-day, for all the nomes were behaving well and there was no one to scold or to punish. The King had thrown his sceptre at Kaliko six times, without hitting him once. Not that Kaliko had done anything wrong. On the contrary, he had obeyed the King in every way but one: he would not stand still, when commanded to do so, and let the heavy sceptre strike him.

We can hardly blame Kaliko for this, and even the cruel Ruggedo forgave him; for he knew very well that if he mashed his Royal Chamberlain he could never find another so intelligent and obedient. Kaliko could make the nomes work when their King could not, for the nomes hated Ruggedo and there were so many thousands of the quaint little underground people that they could easily have rebelled and defied the King had they dared to do so. Sometimes, when Ruggedo abused them worse than usual, they grew sullen and threw down their hammers and picks. Then, however hard the King scolded or whipped them, they would not work until Kaliko came and begged them to. For Kaliko was one of themselves and was as much abused by the King as any nome in the vast series of caverns.

But to-day all the little people were working industriously at their tasks and Ruggedo, having nothing to do, was greatly bored. He sent for the Long-Eared Hearer and asked him to listen carefully and report what was going on in the big world.

"It seems," said the Hearer, after listening for awhile, "that the women in America have clubs."

“Are there spikes in them?” asked Ruggedo, yawning.

“I cannot hear any spikes, Your Majesty,” was the reply.

“Then their clubs are not as good as my sceptre. What else do you hear?’

“There’s a war.

“Bah! there’s always a war. What else?”

For a time the Hearer was silent, bending forward and spreading out his big ears to catch the slightest sound. Then suddenly he said:

“Here is an interesting thing, Your Majesty. These people are arguing as to who shall conquer the Metal Monarch, seize his treasure and drive him from his dominions.”

“What people?” demanded Ruggedo, sitting up straight in his throne.

“The ones you threw down the Hollow Tube.”

“Where are they now?”

“In the same Tube, and coming back this way,” said the Hearer.

Ruggedo got out of his throne and began to pace up and down the cavern.

“I wonder what can be done to stop them,” he mused.

“Well,” said the Hearer, “if you could turn the Tube upside down, they would be falling the other way, Your Majesty.”

Ruggedo glared at him wickedly, for it was impossible to turn the Tube upside down and he believed the Hearer was slyly poking fun at him. Presently he asked:

“How far away are those people now?”

“About nine thousand three hundred and six miles, seventeen furlongs, eight feet and four inches — as nearly as I can judge from the sound of their voices,” replied the Hearer.

“Aha! Then it will be some time before they arrive,” said Ruggedo, “and when they get here I shall be ready to receive them.”

He rushed to his gong and pounded upon it so fiercely that Kaliko came bounding into the cavern with one shoe off and one shoe on, for he was just dressing himself after a swim in the hot bubbling lake of the Underground Kingdom.

“Kaliko, those invaders whom we threw down the Tube are coming back again!” he exclaimed.

“I thought they would,” said the Royal Chamberlain, pulling on the other shoe. “Tititi-Hoochoo would not allow them to remain in his kingdom, of course, and so I’ve been expecting them back for some time. That was a very foolish action of yours, Rug.”

“What, to throw them down the Tube?”

“Yes. Tititi-Hoochoo has forbidden us to throw even rubbish into the Tube.”

“Pooh! what do I care for the Jinjin?” asked Ruggedo scornfully. “He never leaves his own kingdom, which is on the other side of the world.”

“True; but he might send some one through the Tube to punish you,” suggested Kaliko.

“I’d like to see him do it! Who could conquer my thousands of nomes?”

“Why, they’ve been conquered before, if I remember aright,” answered Kaliko with a grin. “Once I saw you running from a little girl named Dorothy, and her friends, as if you were really afraid.”

“Well, I was afraid, that time,” admitted the Nome King, with a deep sigh, “for Dorothy had a Yellow Hen that laid eggs!”

The King shuddered as he said “eggs,” and Kaliko also shuddered, and so

did the Long-Eared Hearer; for eggs are the only things that the nomes greatly dread. The reason for this is that eggs belong on the earth's surface, where birds and fowl of all sorts live, and there is something about a hen's egg, especially, that fills a nome with horror. If by chance the inside of an egg touches one of these underground people, he withers up and blows away and that is the end of him — unless he manages quickly to speak a magical word which only a few of the nomes know. Therefore Ruggedo and his followers had very good cause to shudder at the mere mention of eggs.

"But Dorothy," said the King, "is not with this band of invaders; nor is the Yellow Hen. As for Tititi-Hoochoo, he has no means of knowing that we are afraid of eggs."

"You mustn't be too sure of that," Kaliko warned him. "Tititi-Hoochoo knows a great many things, being a fairy, and his powers are far superior to any we can boast."

Ruggedo shrugged impatiently and turned to the Hearer.

"Listen," said he, "and tell me if you hear any eggs coming through the Tube."

The Long-Eared one listened and then shook his head. But Kaliko laughed at the King.

"No one can hear an egg, Your Majesty," said he. "The only way to discover the truth is to look through the Magic Spyglass."

"That's it!" cried the King. "Why didn't I think of it before? Look at once, Kaliko!"

So Kaliko went to the Spyglass and by uttering a mumbled charm he caused the other end of it to twist around, so that it pointed down the opening of the Tube. Then he put his eye to the glass and was able to gaze along all the turns and windings of the Magic Spyglass and then deep into the Tube, to where our friends were at that time falling.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Here comes a dragon."

"A big one?" asked Ruggedo.

"A monster. He has an electric light on the end of his tail, so I can see him very plainly. And the other people are all riding upon his back."

"How about the eggs?" inquired the King.

Kaliko looked again.

"I can see no eggs at all," said he; "but I imagine that the dragon is as dangerous as eggs. Probably Tititi-Hoochoo has sent him here to punish you for dropping those strangers into the Forbidden Tube. I warned you not to do it, Your Majesty."

This news made the Nome King anxious. For a few minutes he paced up and down, stroking his long beard and thinking with all his might. After this

he turned to Kaliko and said:

"All the harm a dragon can do is to scratch with his claws and bite with his teeth."

"That is not all, but it's quite enough," returned Kaliko earnestly. "On the other hand, no one can hurt a dragon, because he's the toughest creature alive. One flop of his huge tail could smash a hundred nomes to pancakes, and with teeth and claws he could tear even you or me into small bits, so that it would be almost impossible to put us together again. Once, a few hundred years ago, while wandering through some deserted caverns, I came upon a small piece of a nome lying on the rocky floor. I asked the piece of nome what had happened to it. Fortunately the mouth was a part of this piece — the mouth and the left eye — so it was able to tell me that a fierce dragon was the cause. It had attacked the poor nome and scattered him in every direction, and as there was no friend near to collect his pieces and put him together, they had been separated for a great many years. So you see, Your Majesty, it is not in good taste to sneer at a dragon."

The King had listened attentively to Kaliko. Said he:

"It will only be necessary to chain this dragon which Tititi-Hoochoo has sent here, in order to prevent his reaching us with his claws and teeth."

"He also breathes flames," Kaliko reminded him.

"My nomes are not afraid of fire, nor am I," said Ruggedo.

"Well, how about the Army of Oogaboo?"

"Sixteen cowardly officers and Tik-Tok! Why, I could defeat them single-handed; but I won't try to. I'll summon my army of nomes to drive the invaders out of my territory, and if we catch any of them I intend to stick needles into them until they hop with pain."

"I hope you won't hurt any of the girls," said Kaliko.

"I'll hurt 'em all!" roared the angry Metal Monarch. "And that braying Mule I'll make into hoof-soup, and feed it to my nomes, that it may add to their strength."

"Why not be good to the strangers and release your prisoner, the Shaggy Man's brother?" suggested Kaliko.

"Never!"

"It may save you a lot of annoyance. And you don't want the Ugly One."

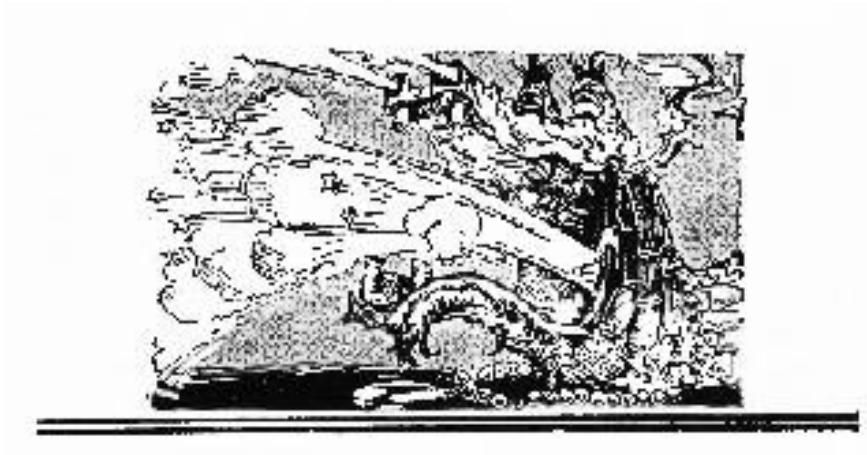
"I don't want him; that's true. But I won't allow anybody to order me around. I'm King of the Nomes and I'm the Metal Monarch, and I shall do as I please and what I please and when I please!"

With this speech Ruggedo threw his sceptre at Kaliko's head, aiming it so well that the Royal Chamberlain had to fall flat upon the floor in order to escape it. But the Hearer did not see the sceptre coming and it swept past his

head so closely that it broke off the tip of one of his long ears. He gave a dreadful yell that quite startled Ruggedo, and the King was sorry for the accident because those long ears of the Hearer were really valuable to him.

So the Nome King forgot to be angry with Kaliko and ordered his Chamberlain to summon General Guph and the army of nomes and have them properly armed. They were then to march to the mouth of the Tube, where they could seize the travelers as soon as they appeared.

Chapter Fifteen
The Dragon Defies Danger



Although the journey through the Tube was longer, this time, than before, it was so much more comfortable that none of our friends minded it at all. They talked together most of the time and as they found the dragon good-natured and fond of the sound of his own voice they soon became well acquainted with him and accepted him as a companion.

"You see," said Shaggy, in his frank way, "Quox is on our side, and therefore the dragon is a good fellow. If he happened to be an enemy, instead of a friend, I am sure I should dislike him very much, for his breath smells of brimstone, he is very conceited and he is so strong and fierce that he would prove a dangerous foe."

"Yes, indeed," returned Quox, who had listened to this speech with pleasure; "I suppose I am about as terrible as any living thing. I am glad you find me conceited, for that proves I know my good qualities. As for my breath smelling of brimstone, I really can't help it, and I once met a man whose breath smelled of onions, which I consider far worse."

"I don't," said Betsy; "I love onions.

"And I love brimstone," declared the dragon, "so don't let us quarrel over one another's peculiarities."

Saying this, he breathed a long breath and shot a flame fifty feet from his mouth. The brimstone made Betsy cough, but she remembered about the onions and said nothing.

They had no idea how far they had gone through the center of the earth, nor when to expect the trip to end. At one time the little girl remarked:

"I wonder when we'll reach the bottom of this hole. And isn't it funny,

Shaggy Man, that what is the bottom to us now, was the top when we fell the other way?"

"What puzzles me," said Files, "is that we are able to fall both ways."

"That," announced Tik-Tok, "is be-cause the world is round."

"Exactly," responded Shaggy. "The machinery in your head is in fine working order, Tik-Tok. You know, Betsy, that there is such a thing as the Attraction of Gravitation, which draws everything toward the center of the earth. That is why we fall out of bed, and why everything clings to the surface of the earth."

"Then why doesn't everyone go on down to the center of the earth?" inquired the little girl.

"I was afraid you were going to ask me that," replied Shaggy in a sad tone. "The reason, my dear, is that the earth is so solid that other solid things can't get through it. But when there's a hole, as there is in this case, we drop right down to the center of the world."

"Why don't we stop there?" asked Betsy.

"Because we go so fast that we acquire speed enough to carry us right up to the other end."

"I don't understand that, and it makes my head ache to try to figure it out," she said after some thought. "One thing draws us to the center and another thing pushes us away from it. But — "

"Don't ask me why, please," interrupted the Shaggy Man. "If you can't understand it, let it go at that."

"Do you understand it?" she inquired.

"All the magic isn't in fairyland," he said gravely. "There's lots of magic in all Nature, and you may see it as well in the United States, where you and I once lived, as you can here."

"I never did," she replied.

"Because you were so used to it all that you didn't realize it was magic. Is anything more wonderful than to see a flower grow and blossom, or to get light out of the electricity in the air? The cows that manufacture milk for us must have machinery fully as remarkable as that in Tik-Tok's copper body, and perhaps you've noticed that — "

And then, before Shaggy could finish his speech, the strong light of day suddenly broke upon them, grew brighter, and completely enveloped them. The dragon's claws no longer scraped against the metal Tube, for he shot into the open air a hundred feet or more and sailed so far away from the slanting hole that when he landed it was on the peak of a mountain and just over the entrance to the many underground caverns of the Nome King.

Some of the officers tumbled off their seats when Quox struck the ground,

but most of the dragon's passengers only felt a slight jar. All were glad to be on solid earth again and they at once dismounted and began to look about them. Queerly enough, as soon as they had left the dragon, the seats that were strapped to the monster's back disappeared, and this probably happened because there was no further use for them and because Quox looked far more dignified in just his silver scales. Of course he still wore the forty yards of ribbon around his neck, as well as the great locket, but these only made him look "dressed up," as Betsy remarked.

Now the army of nomes had gathered thickly around the mouth of the Tube, in order to be ready to capture the band of invaders as soon as they popped out. There were, indeed, hundreds of nomes assembled, and they were led by

Guph, their most famous General. But they did not expect the dragon to fly so high, and he shot out of the Tube so suddenly that it took them by surprise. When the nomes had rubbed the astonishment out of their eyes and regained their wits, they discovered the dragon quietly seated on the mountainside far above their heads, while the other strangers were standing in a group and calmly looking down upon them.

General Guph was very angry at the escape, which was no one's fault but his own.

"Come down here and be captured!" he shouted, waving his sword at them.

"Come up here and capture us — if you dare!" replied Queen Ann, who was winding up the clockwork of her Private Soldier, so he could fight more briskly.

Guph's first answer was a roar of rage at the defiance; then he turned and issued a command to his nomes. These were all armed with sharp spears and with one accord they raised these spears and threw them straight at their foes, so that they rushed through the air in a perfect cloud of flying weapons.

Some damage might have been done had not the dragon quickly crawled before the others, his body being so big that it shielded every one of them, including Hank. The spears rattled against the silver scales of Quox and then fell harmlessly to the ground. They were magic spears, of course, and all straightway bounded back into the hands of those who had thrown them, but even Guph could see that it was useless to repeat the attack.

It was now Queen Ann's turn to attack, so the Generals yelled "For — ward march!" and the Colonels and Majors and Captains repeated the command and the valiant Army of Oogaboo, which seemed to be composed mainly of Tik-Tok, marched forward in single column toward the nomes, while Betsy and Polychrome cheered and Hank gave a loud "Hee-haw!" and Shaggy shouted "Hooray!" and Queen Ann screamed: "At 'em, Tik-Tok — at 'em!"

The nomes did not await the Clockwork Man's attack but in a twinkling disappeared into the underground caverns. They made a great mistake in being so hasty, for Tik-Tok had not taken a dozen steps before he stubbed his copper toe on a rock and fell flat to the ground, where he cried: "Pick me up! Pick me up! Pick me up!" until Shaggy and Files ran forward and raised him to his feet again.

The dragon chuckled softly to himself as he scratched his left ear with his hind claw, but no one was paying much attention to Quox just then.

It was evident to Ann and her officers that there could be no fighting unless the enemy was present, and in order to find the enemy they must

boldly enter the underground Kingdom of the nomes. So bold a step demanded a council of war.

"Don't you think I'd better drop in on Ruggedo and obey the orders of the Jinjin?" asked Quox.

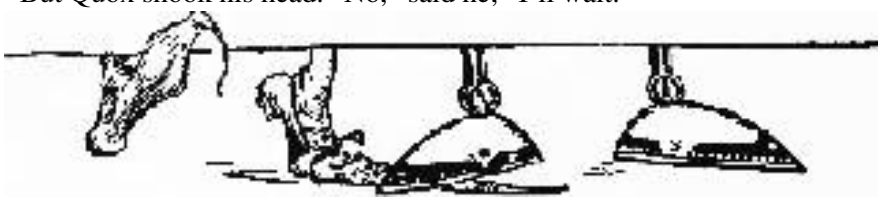
"By no means!" returned Queen Ann. "We have already put the army of nomes to flight and all that yet remains is to force our way into those caverns, and conquer the Nome King and all his people."

"That seems to me something of a job," said the dragon, closing his eyes sleepily. "But go ahead, if you like, and I'll wait here for you. Don't be in any hurry on my account. To one who lives thousands of years the delay of a few days means nothing at all, and I shall probably sleep until the time comes for me to act."

Ann was provoked at this speech.

"You may as well go back to Tititi-Hoochoo now," she said, "for the Nome King is as good as conquered already."

But Quox shook his head. "No," said he; "I'll wait."



Chapter Sixteen
The Naughty Nome

Shaggy Man had said nothing during the conversation between Queen Ann and Quox, for the simple reason that he did not consider the matter worth an argument. Safe within his pocket reposed the Love Magnet, which had never failed to win every heart. The nomes, he knew, were not like the heartless Roses and therefore could be won to his side as soon as he exhibited the magic talisman.

Shaggy's chief anxiety had been to reach Ruggedo's Kingdom and now that the entrance lay before him he was confident he would be able to rescue his lost brother. Let Ann and the dragon quarrel as to who should conquer the nomes, if they liked; Shaggy would let them try, and if they failed he had the means of conquest in his own pocket.

But Ann was positive she could not fail, for she thought her Army could do anything. So she called the officers together and told them how to act, and she also instructed Tik-Tok what to do and what to say.

"Please do not shoot your gun except as a last resort," she added, "for I do not wish to be cruel or to shed any blood — unless it is absolutely necessary."

"All right," replied Tik-Tok; "but I do not think Rug-ge-do would bleed if I filled him full of holes and put him in a ci-der press."

Then the officers fell in line, the four Generals abreast and then the four Colonels and the four Majors and the four Captains. They drew their glittering swords and commanded Tik-Tok to march, which he did. Twice he fell down, being tripped by the rough rocks, but when he struck the smooth path he got along better. Into the gloomy mouth of the cavern entrance he

stepped without hesitation, and after him proudly pranced the officers and Queen Ann. The others held back a little, waiting to see what would happen.

Of course the Nome King knew they were coming and was prepared to receive them. Just within the rocky passage that led to the jeweled throne-room was a deep pit, which was usually covered. Ruggedo had ordered the cover removed and it now stood open, scarcely visible in the gloom.

The pit was so large around that it nearly filled the passage and there was barely room for one to walk around it by pressing close to the rock walls. This Tik-Tok did, for his copper eyes saw the pit clearly and he avoided it; but the officers marched straight into the hole and tumbled in a heap on the bottom. An instant later Queen Ann also walked into the pit, for she had her chin in the air and was careless where she placed her feet. Then one of the nomes pulled a lever which replaced the cover on the pit and made the officers of Oogaboo and their Queen fast prisoners.

As for Tik-Tok, he kept straight on to the cavern where Ruggedo sat in his throne and there he faced the Nome King and said:

"I here-by con-quer you in the name of Queen Ann So-forth of Oo-ga-boo, whose Ar-my I am, and I de-clare that you are her pris-on-er!"

Ruggedo laughed at him.

"Where is this famous Queen?" he asked.

"She'll be here in a min-ute," said Tik-Tok. "Per-haps she stopped to tie her shoe-string."

"Now, see here, Tik-Tok," began the Nome King, in a stern voice, "I've had enough of this nonsense. Your Queen and her officers are all prisoners, having fallen into my power, so perhaps you'll tell me what you mean to do."

"My or-ders were to con-quer you," replied Tik-Tok, "and my ma-chin-er-y has done the best it knows how to car-ry out those or-ders."

Ruggedo pounded on his gong and Kaliko appeared, followed closely by General Guph.

"Take this copper man into the shops and set him to work hammering gold," commanded the King. "Being run by machinery he ought to be a steady worker. He ought never to have been made, but since he exists I shall hereafter put him to good use."

"If you try to cap-ture me," said Tik-Tok, "I shall fight."

"Don't do that!" exclaimed General Guph, earnestly, "for it will be useless to resist and you might hurt some one."

But Tik-Tok raised his gun and took aim and not knowing what damage the gun might do the nomes were afraid to face it.

While he was thus defying the Nome King and his high officials, Betsy Bobbin rode calmly into the royal cavern, seated upon the back of Hank the

mule. The little girl had grown tired of waiting for "something to happen" and so had come to see if Ruggedo had been conquered.

"Nails and nuggets!" roared the King; "how dare you bring that beast here and enter my presence unannounced?"

"There wasn't anybody to announce me," replied Betsy. "I guess your folks were all busy. Are you conquered yet?"

"No!" shouted the King, almost beside himself with rage.

"Then please give me something to eat, for I'm awful hungry," said the girl. "You see, this conquering business is a good deal like waiting for a circus parade; it takes a long time to get around and don't amount to much anyhow."

The nomes were so much astonished at this speech that for a time they could only glare at her silently, not finding words to reply. The King finally recovered the use of his tongue and said:

"Earth-crawler! this insolence to my majesty shall be your death-warrant. You are an ordinary mortal, and to stop a mortal from living is so easy a thing to do that I will not keep you waiting half so long as you did for my conquest."

"I'd rather you wouldn't stop me from living," remarked Betsy, getting off Hank's back and standing beside him. "And it would be a pretty cheap King who killed a visitor while she was hungry. If you'll give me something to eat, I'll talk this killing business over with you afterward; only, I warn you now that I don't approve of it, and never will."

Her coolness and lack of fear impressed the Nome King, although he bore an intense hatred toward all mortals.

"What do you wish to eat?" he asked gruffly.

"Oh, a ham-sandwich would do, or perhaps a couple of hard-boiled eggs — "

"Eggs!" shrieked the three nomes who were present, shuddering till their teeth chattered.

"What's the matter?" asked Betsy wonderingly. "Are eggs as high here as they are at home?"

"Guph," said the King in an agitated voice, turning to his General, "let us destroy this rash mortal at once! Seize her and take her to the Slimy Cave and lock her in."

Guph glanced at Tik-Tok, whose gun was still pointed, but just then Kaliko stole softly behind the copper man and kicked his knee-joints so that they suddenly bent forward and tumbled Tik-Tok to the floor, his gun falling from his grasp.

Then Guph, seeing Tik-Tok helpless, made a grab at Betsy. At the same

time Hank's heels shot out and caught the General just where his belt was buckled. He rose into the air swift as a cannon-ball, struck the Nome King fairly and flattened his Majesty against the wall of rock on the opposite side of the cavern. Together they fell to the floor in a dazed and crumpled condition, seeing which Kaliko whispered to Betsy:

"Come with me — quick! — and I will save you."

She looked into Kaliko's face inquiringly and thought he seemed honest and good-natured, so she decided to follow him. He led her and the mule through several passages and into a small cavern very nicely and comfortably furnished.

"This is my own room," said he, "but you are quite welcome to use it. Wait here a minute and I'll get you something to eat."

When Kaliko returned he brought a tray containing some broiled mushrooms, a loaf of mineral bread and some petroleum-butter. The butter Betsy could not eat, but the bread was good and the mushrooms delicious.

"Here's the door key," said Kaliko, "and you'd better lock yourself in."

"Won't you let Polychrome and the Rose Princess come here, too?" she asked.

"I'll see. Where are they?"

"I don't know. I left them outside," said Betsy.

"Well, if you hear three raps on the door, open it," said Kaliko; "but don't let anyone in unless they give the three raps."

"All right," promised Betsy, and when Kaliko left the cosy cavern she closed and locked the door.

In the meantime Ann and her officers, finding themselves prisoners in the pit, had shouted and screamed until they were tired out, but no one had come to their assistance. It was very dark and damp in the pit and they could not climb out because the walls were higher than their heads and the cover was on. The Queen was first angry and then annoyed and then discouraged; but the officers were only afraid. Every one of the poor fellows heartily wished he was back in Oogaboo caring for his orchard, and some were so unhappy that they began to reproach Ann for causing them all this trouble and danger.

Finally the Queen sat down on the bottom of the pit and leaned her back against the wall. By good luck her sharp elbow touched a secret spring in the wall and a big flat rock swung inward. Ann fell over backward, but the next instant she jumped up and cried to the others:

"A passage! A passage! Follow me, my brave men, and we may yet escape."

Then she began to crawl through the passage, which was as dark and dank as the pit, and the officers followed her in single file. They crawled, and they

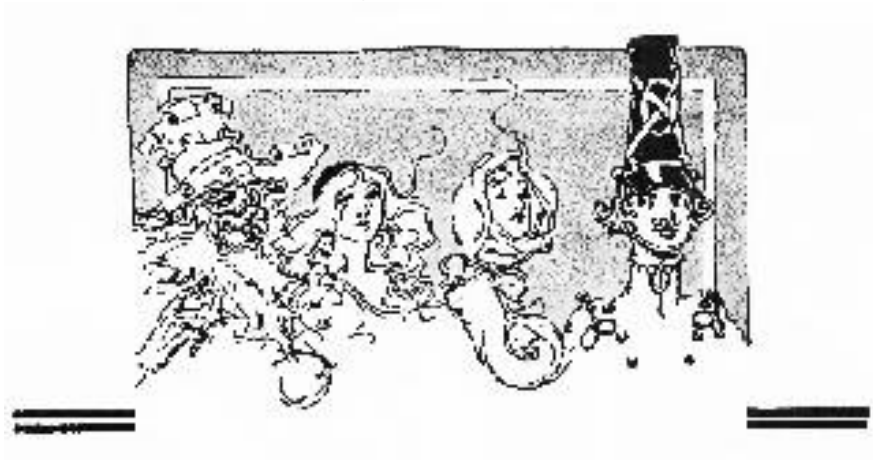
crawled, and they kept on crawling, for the passage was not big enough to allow them to stand upright. It turned this way and twisted that, sometimes like a corkscrew and sometimes zigzag, but seldom ran for long in a straight line.

"It will never end — never!" moaned the officers, who were rubbing all the skin off their knees on the rough rocks.

"It must end," retorted Ann courageously, "or it never would have been made. We don't know where it will lead us to, but any place is better than that loathsome pit."

So she crawled on, and the officers crawled on, and while they were crawling through this awful underground passage Polychrome and Shaggy and Files and the Rose Princess, who were standing outside the entrance to Ruggedo's domains, were wondering what had become of them.

Chapter Seventeen
A Tragic Transformation



"Don't let us worry," said Shaggy to his companions, "for it may take the Queen some time to conquer the Metal Monarch, as Tik-Tok has to do everything in his slow, mechanical way."

"Do you suppose they are likely to fail?" asked the Rose Princess.

"I do, indeed," replied Shaggy. "This Nome King is really a powerful fellow and has a legion of nomes to assist him, whereas our bold Queen commands a Clockwork Man and a band of faint-hearted officers."

"She ought to have let Quox do the conquering," said Polychrome, dancing lightly upon a point of rock and fluttering her beautiful draperies. "But perhaps the dragon was wise to let her go first, for when she fails to conquer Ruggedo she may become more modest in her ambitions."

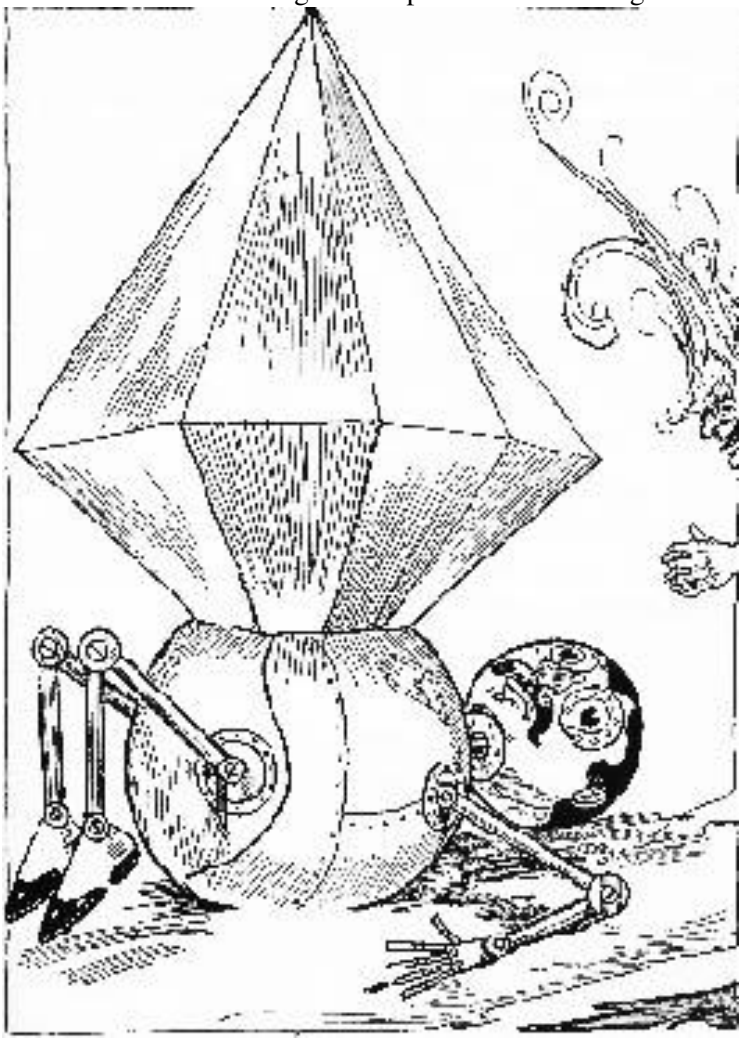
"Where is the dragon now?" inquired Ozga.

"Up there on the rocks," replied Files. "Look, my dear; you may see him from here. He said he would take a little nap while we were mixing up with Ruggedo, and he added that after we had gotten into trouble he would wake up and conquer the Nome King in a jiffy, as his master the Jinjin has ordered him to do."

"Quox means well," said Shaggy, "but I do not think we shall need his services; for just as soon as I am satisfied that Queen Ann and her army have failed to conquer Ruggedo, I shall enter the caverns and show the King my Love Magnet. That he cannot resist; therefore the conquest will be made with ease."

This speech of Shaggy Man's was overheard by the Long-Eared Hearer, who was at that moment standing by Ruggedo's side. For when the King and

Guph had recovered from Hank's kick and had picked themselves up, their first act was to turn Tik-Tok on his back and put a heavy diamond on top of him, so that he could not get up again. Then they carefully put his gun in a corner of the cavern and the King sent Guph to fetch the Long-Eared Hearer.



The Hearer was still angry at Ruggedo for breaking his ear, but he acknowledged the Nome King to be his master and was ready to obey his commands. Therefore he repeated Shaggy's speech to the King, who at once realized that his Kingdom was in grave danger. For Ruggedo knew of the Love Magnet and its powers and was horrified at the thought that Shaggy might show him the magic talisman and turn all the hatred in his heart into love. Ruggedo was proud of his hatred and abhorred love of any sort.

“Really,” said he, “I’d rather he conquered and lose my wealth and my Kingdom than gaze at that awful Love Magnet. What can I do to prevent the Shaggy Man from taking it out of his pocket?”

Kaliko returned to the cavern in time to overhear this question, and being a loyal nome and eager to serve his King, he answered by saying:

“If we can manage to bind the Shaggy Man’s arms, tight to his body, he could not get the Love Magnet out of his pocket.”

“True!” cried the King in delight at this easy solution of the problem. “Get at once a dozen nomes, with ropes, and place them in the passage where they can seize and bind Shaggy as soon as he enters.”

This Kaliko did, and meanwhile the watchers outside the entrance were growing more and more uneasy about their friends.

“I don’t worry so much about the Oogaboo people,” said Polychrome, who had grown sober with waiting, and perhaps a little nervous, “for they could not be killed, even though Ruggedo might cause them much suffering and perhaps destroy them utterly. But we should not have allowed Betsy and Hank to go alone into the caverns. The little girl is mortal and possesses no magic powers whatever, so if Ruggedo captures her she will be wholly at his mercy.”

“That is indeed true,” replied Shaggy. “I wouldn’t like to have anything happen to dear little Betsy, so I believe I’ll go in right away and put an end to all this worry.”

“We may as well go with you,” asserted Files, “for by means of the Love Magnet, you can soon bring the Nome King to reason.”

So it was decided to wait no longer. Shaggy walked through the entrance first, and after him came the others. They had no thought of danger to themselves, and Shaggy, who was going along with his hands thrust into his pockets, was much surprised when a rope shot out from the darkness and twined around his body, pinning down his arms so securely that he could not even withdraw his hands from the pockets. Then appeared several grinning nomes, who speedily tied knots in the ropes and then led the prisoner along the passage to the cavern. No attention was paid to the others, but Files and the Princess followed on after Shaggy, determined not to desert their friend and hoping that an opportunity might arise to rescue him.

As for Polychrome, as soon as she saw that trouble had overtaken Shaggy she turned and ran lightly back through the passage and out of the entrance. Then she easily leaped from rock to rock until she paused beside the great dragon, who lay fast asleep.

“Wake up, Quox!” she cried. “It is time for you to act.”

But Quox did not wake up. He lay as one in a trance, absolutely motionless, with his enormous eyes tight closed. The eyelids had big silver scales on them, like all the rest of his body.

Polychrome might have thought Quox was dead had she not known that dragons do not die easily or had she not observed his huge body swelling as he breathed. She picked up a piece of rock and pounded against his eyelids with it, saying:

"Wake up, Quox — wake up!" But he would not waken.

"Dear me, how unfortunate!" sighed the lovely Rainbow's Daughter. "I wonder what is the best and surest way to waken a dragon. All our friends may be captured and destroyed while this great beast lies asleep."

She walked around Quox two or three times, trying to discover some tender place on his body where a thump or a punch might be felt; but he lay extended along the rocks with his chin flat upon the ground and his legs drawn underneath his body, and all that one could see was his thick sky-blue skin — thicker than that of a rhinoceros — and his silver scales.

Then, despairing at last of wakening the beast, and worried over the fate of her friends, Polychrome again ran down to the entrance and hurried along the passage into the Nome King's cavern.

Here she found Ruggedo lolling in his throne and smoking a long pipe. Beside him stood General Guph and Kaliko, and ranged before the King were the Rose Princess, Files and the Shaggy Man. Tik-Tok still lay upon the floor, weighted down by the big diamond.

Ruggedo was now in a more contented frame of mind. One by one he had met the invaders and easily captured them. The dreaded Love Magnet was indeed in Shaggy's pocket, only a few feet away from the King, but Shaggy was powerless to show it and unless Ruggedo's eyes beheld the talisman it could not affect him. As for Betsy Bobbin and her mule, he believed Kaliko had placed them in the Slimy Cave, while Ann and her officers he thought safely imprisoned in the pit. Ruggedo had no fear of Files or Ozga, but to be on the safe side he had ordered golden handcuffs placed upon their wrists. These did not cause them any great annoyance but prevented them from making an attack, had they been inclined to do so.

The Nome King, thinking himself wholly master of the situation, was laughing and jeering at his prisoners when Polychrome, exquisitely beautiful and dancing like a ray of light, entered the cavern.

"Oho!" cried the King; "a Rainbow under ground, eh?" and then he stared hard at Polychrome, and still harder, and then he sat up and pulled the wrinkles out of his robe and arranged his whiskers. "On my word," said he, "you are a very captivating creature; moreover, I perceive you are a fairy."

"I am Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter," she said proudly.

"Well," replied Ruggedo, "I like you. The others I hate. I hate everybody — but you! Wouldn't you like to live always in this beautiful cavern, Polychrome? See! the jewels that stud the walls have every tint and color of your Rainbow — and they are not so elusive. I'll have fresh dewdrops gathered for your feasting every day and you shall be Queen of all my nomes and pull Kaliko's nose whenever you like."

"No, thank you," laughed Polychrome. "My home is in the sky, and I'm only on a visit to this solid, sordid earth. But tell me, Ruggedo, why my friends have been wound with cords and bound with chains?"

"They threatened me," answered Ruggedo. "The fools did not know how

powerful I am.”

“Then, since they are now helpless, why not release them and send them back to the earth’s surface?”

“Because I hate ‘em and mean to make ‘em suffer for their invasion. But I’ll make a bargain with you, sweet Polly. Remain here and live with me and I’ll set all these people free. You shall be my daughter or my wife or my aunt or grandmother — whichever you like — only stay here to brighten my gloomy kingdom and make me happy!”

Polychrome looked at him wonderingly. Then she turned to Shaggy and asked:

“Are you sure he hasn’t seen the Love Magnet?”

“I’m positive,” answered Shaggy. “But you seem to be something of a Love Magnet yourself, Polychrome.”

She laughed again and said to Ruggedo: “Not even to rescue my friends would I live in your kingdom. Nor could I endure for long the society of such a wicked monster as you.”

“You forget,” retorted the King, scowling darkly, “that you also are in my power.”

“Not so, Ruggedo. The Rainbow’s Daughter is beyond the reach of your spite or malice.”

“Seize her!” suddenly shouted the King, and General Guph sprang forward to obey. Polychrome stood quite still, yet when Guph attempted to clutch her his hands met in air, and now the Rainbow’s Daughter was in another part of the room, as smiling and composed as before.

Several times Guph endeavored to capture her and Ruggedo even came down from his throne to assist his General; but never could they lay hands upon the lovely sky fairy, who flitted here and there with the swiftness of light and constantly defied them with her merry laughter as she evaded their efforts.

So after a time they abandoned the chase and Ruggedo returned to his throne and wiped the perspiration from his face with a finely-woven handkerchief of cloth-of-gold.

"Well," said Polychrome, "what do you intend to do now?"

"I'm going to have some fun, to repay me for all my bother," replied the Nome King. Then he said to Kaliko: "Summon the executioners."

Kaliko at once withdrew and presently returned with a score of nomes, all

of whom were nearly as evil looking as their hated master. They bore great golden pincers, and prods of silver, and clamps and chains and various wicked-looking instruments, all made of precious metals and set with diamonds and rubies.

"Now, Pang," said Ruggedo, addressing the leader of the executioners, "fetch the Army of Oogaboo and their Queen from the pit and torture them here in my presence — as well as in the presence of their friends. It will be great sport."

"I hear Your Majesty, and I obey Your Majesty," answered Pang, and went with his nomes into the passage. In a few minutes he returned and bowed to Ruggedo.

"They're all gone," said he.

"Gone!" exclaimed the Nome King. "Gone where?"

"They left no address, Your Majesty; but they are not in the pit."

"Picks and puddles!" roared the King; "who took the cover off?"

"No one," said Pang. "The cover was there, but the prisoners were not under it."

"In that case," snarled the King, trying to control his disappointment, "go to the Slimy Cave and fetch hither the girl and the donkey. And while we are torturing them Kaliko must take a hundred nomes and search for the escaped prisoners — the Queen of Oogaboo and her officers. If he does not find them, I will torture Kaliko."

Kaliko went away looking sad and disturbed, for he knew the King was cruel and unjust enough to carry out this threat. Pang and the executioners also went away, in another direction, but when they came back Betsy Bobbin was not with them, nor was Hank.

"There is no one in the Slimy Cave, Your Majesty," reported Pang.

"Jumping jellycakes!" screamed the King. "Another escape? Are you sure you found the right cave?"

"There is but one Slimy Cave, and there is no one in it," returned Pang positively.

Ruggedo was beginning to be alarmed as well as angry. However, these disappointments but made him the more vindictive and he cast an evil look at the other prisoners and said:

"Never mind the girl and the donkey. Here are four, at least, who cannot escape my vengeance. Let me see; I believe I'll change my mind about Tik-Tok. Have the gold crucible heated to a white, seething heat, and then we'll dump the copper man into it and melt him up."

"But, Your Majesty," protested Kaliko, who had returned to the room after sending a hundred nomes to search for the Oogaboo people, "you must

remember that Tik-Tok is a very curious and interesting machine. It would be a shame to deprive the world of such a clever contrivance."

"Say another word, and you'll go into the furnace with him!" roared the King. "I'm getting tired of you, Kaliko, and the first thing you know I'll turn you into a potato and make Saratoga-chips of you! The next to consider," he added more mildly, "is the Shaggy Man. As he owns the Love Magnet, I think I'll transform him into a dove, and then we can practice shooting at him with Tik-Tok's gun. Now, this is a very interesting ceremony and I beg you all to watch me closely and see that I've nothing up my sleeve."

He came out of his throne to stand before the Shaggy Man, and then he waved his hands, palms downward, in seven semicircles over his victim's head, saying in a low but clear tone of voice the magic wugwa:

"Adi, edi, idi, odi, udi, oo-i-oo!
Idu, ido, idi, ide, ida, woo!"

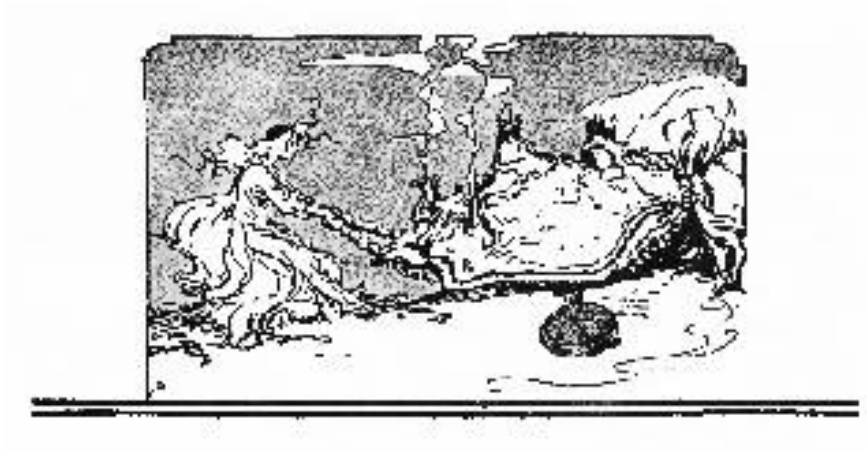
The effect of this well-known sorcery was instantaneous. Instead of the Shaggy Man, a pretty dove lay fluttering upon the floor, its wings confined by tiny cords wound around them. Ruggedo gave an order to Pang, who cut the cords with a pair of scissors. Being freed, the dove quickly flew upward and alighted on the shoulder of the Rose Princess, who stroked it tenderly.

"Very good! Very good!" cried Ruggedo, rubbing his hands gleefully together. "One enemy is out of my way, and now for the others."

(Perhaps my readers should be warned not to attempt the above transformation; for, although the exact magical formula has been described, it is unlawful in all civilized countries for anyone to transform a person into a dove by muttering the words Ruggedo used. There were no laws to prevent the Nome King from performing this transformation, but if it should be attempted in any other country, and the magic worked, the magician would be severely punished.)

When Polychrome saw Shaggy Man transformed into a dove and realized that Ruggedo was about do something as dreadful to the Princess and Files, and that Tik-Tok would soon be melted in a crucible, she turned and ran from the cavern, through the passage and back to the place where Quox lay asleep.

Chapter Eighteen
A Clever Conquest



The great dragon still had his eyes closed and was even snoring in a manner that resembled distant thunder; but Polychrome was now desperate, because any further delay meant the destruction of her friends. She seized the pearl necklace, to which was attached the great locket, and jerked it with all her strength.

The result was encouraging. Quox stopped snoring and his eyelids flickered. So Polychrome jerked again — and again — till slowly the great lids raised and the dragon looked at her steadily. Said he, in a sleepy tone:

"What's the matter, little Rainbow?"

"Come quick!" exclaimed Polychrome. "Ruggedo has captured all our friends and is about to destroy them."

"Well, well," said Quox, "I suspected that would happen. Step a little out of my path, my dear, and I'll make a rush for the Nome King's cavern."

She fell back a few steps and Quox raised himself on his stout legs, whisked his long tail and in an instant had slid down the rocks and made a dive through the entrance.

Along the passage he swept, nearly filling it with his immense body, and now he poked his head into the jeweled cavern of Ruggedo.

But the King had long since made arrangements to capture the dragon, whenever he might appear. No sooner did Quox stick his head into the room than a thick chain fell from above and encircled his neck. Then the ends of the chain were drawn tight — for in an adjoining cavern a thousand nomes were pulling on them — and so the dragon could advance no further toward the King. He could not use his teeth or his claws and as his body was still in

the passage he had not even room to strike his foes with his terrible tail.

Ruggedo was delighted with the success of his stratagem. He had just transformed the Rose Princess into a fiddle and was about to transform Files into a fiddle bow, when the dragon appeared to interrupt him. So he called out:

"Welcome, my dear Quox, to my royal entertainment. Since you are here, you shall witness some very neat magic, and after I have finished with Files and Tik-Tok I mean to transform you into a tiny lizard — one of the chameleon sort — and you shall live in my cavern and amuse me."

"Pardon me for contradicting Your Majesty," returned Quox in a quiet voice, "but I don't believe you'll perform any more magic."

"Eh? Why not?" asked the King in surprise.

"There's a reason," said Quox. "Do you see this ribbon around my neck?"

"Yes; and I'm astonished that a dignified dragon should wear such a silly thing."

"Do you see it plainly?" persisted the dragon, with a little chuckle of amusement.

"I do," declared Ruggedo.

"Then you no longer possess any magical powers, and are as helpless as a clam," asserted Quox. "My great master, Tititi-Hoochoo, the Jinjin, enchanted this ribbon in such a way that whenever Your Majesty looked upon it all knowledge of magic would desert you instantly, nor will any magical formula you can remember ever perform your bidding."

"Pooh! I don't believe a word of it!" cried Ruggedo, half frightened, nevertheless. Then he turned toward Files and tried to transform him into a fiddle bow. But he could not remember the right words or the right pass of the hands and after several trials he finally gave up the attempt.

By this time the Nome King was so alarmed that he was secretly shaking in his shoes.

"I told you not to anger Tititi-Hoochoo," grumbled Kaliko, "and now you see the result of your disobedience."

Ruggedo promptly threw his sceptre at his Royal Chamberlain, who dodged it with his usual cleverness, and then he said with an attempt to swagger:

"Never mind; I don't need magic to enable me to destroy these invaders; fire and the sword will do the business and I am still King of the Nomes and lord and master of my Underground Kingdom!"

"Again I beg to differ with Your Majesty," said Quox. "The Great Jinjin commands you to depart instantly from this Kingdom and seek the earth's surface, where you will wander for all time to come, without a home or

country, without a friend or follower, and without any more riches than you can carry with you in your pockets. The Great Jinjin is so generous that he will allow you to fill your pockets with jewels or gold, but you must take nothing more."

Ruggedo now stared at the dragon in amazement.

"Does Tititi-Hoochoo condemn me to such a fate?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"He does," said Quox.

"And just for throwing a few strangers down the Forbidden Tube?"

"Just for that," repeated Quox in a stern, gruff voice.

"Well, I won't do it. And your crazy old Jinjin can't make me do it, either!" declared Ruggedo. "I intend to remain here, King of the Nomes, until the end of the world, and I defy your Tititi-Hoochoo and all his fairies — as well as his clumsy messenger, whom I have been obliged to chain up!"

The dragon smiled again, but it was not the sort of smile that made Ruggedo feel very happy. Instead, there was something so cold and merciless in the dragon's expression that the condemned Nome King trembled and was sick at heart.

There was little comfort for Ruggedo in the fact that the dragon was now chained, although he had boasted of it. He glared at the immense head of Quox as if fascinated and there was fear in the old King's eyes as he watched his enemy's movements.

For the dragon was now moving; not abruptly, but as if he had something to do and was about to do it. Very deliberately he raised one claw, touched the catch of the great jeweled locket that was suspended around his neck, and at once it opened wide.

Nothing much happened at first; half a dozen hen's eggs rolled out upon the floor and then the locket closed with a sharp click. But the effect upon the nomes of this simple thing was astounding. General Guph, Kaliko, Pang and his band of executioners were all standing close to the door that led to the vast series of underground caverns which constituted the dominions of the nomes, and as soon as they saw the eggs they raised a chorus of frantic screams and rushed through the door, slamming it in Ruggedo's face and placing a heavy bronze bar across it.

Ruggedo, dancing with terror and uttering loud cries, now leaped upon the seat of his throne to escape the eggs, which had rolled steadily toward him. Perhaps these eggs, sent by the wise and crafty Tititi-Hoochoo, were in some way enchanted, for they all rolled directly after Ruggedo and when they reached the throne where he had taken refuge they began rolling up the legs to the seat.

This was too much for the King to bear. His horror of eggs was real and absolute and he made a leap from the throne to the center of the room and then ran to a far corner.

The eggs followed, rolling slowly but steadily in his direction. Ruggedo threw his sceptre at them, and then his ruby crown, and then he drew off his heavy golden sandals and hurled these at the advancing eggs. But the eggs dodged every missile and continued to draw nearer. The King stood trembling, his eyes staring in terror, until they were but half a yard distant; then with an agile leap he jumped clear over them and made a rush for the passage that led to the outer entrance.

Of course the dragon was in his way, being chained in the passage with his head in the cavern, but when he saw the King making toward him he crouched as low as he could and dropped his chin to the floor, leaving a small space between his body and the roof of the passage.

Ruggedo did not hesitate an instant. Impelled by fear, he leaped to the dragon's nose and then scrambled to his back, where he succeeded in squeezing himself through the opening. After the head was passed there was more room and he slid along the dragon's scales to his tail and then ran as fast as his legs would carry him to the entrance. Not pausing here, so great was his fright, the King dashed on down the mountain path, but before he had gone very far he stumbled and fell.

When he picked himself up he observed that no one was following him, and while he recovered his breath he happened to think of the decree of the Jinjin — that he should be driven from his Kingdom and made a wanderer on the face of the earth. Well, here he was, driven from his cavern in truth; driven by those dreadful eggs; but he would go back and defy them; he would not submit to losing his precious Kingdom and his tyrannical powers, all because Tititi-Hoochoo had said he must.

So, although still afraid, Ruggedo nerved himself to creep back along the path to the entrance, and when he arrived there he saw the six eggs lying in a row just before the arched opening.

At first he paused a safe distance away to consider the case, for the eggs were now motionless. While he was wondering what could be done, he remembered there was a magical charm which would destroy eggs and render them harmless to nomes. There were nine passes to be made and six verses of incantation to be recited; but Ruggedo knew them all. Now that he had ample time to be exact, he carefully went through the entire ceremony.

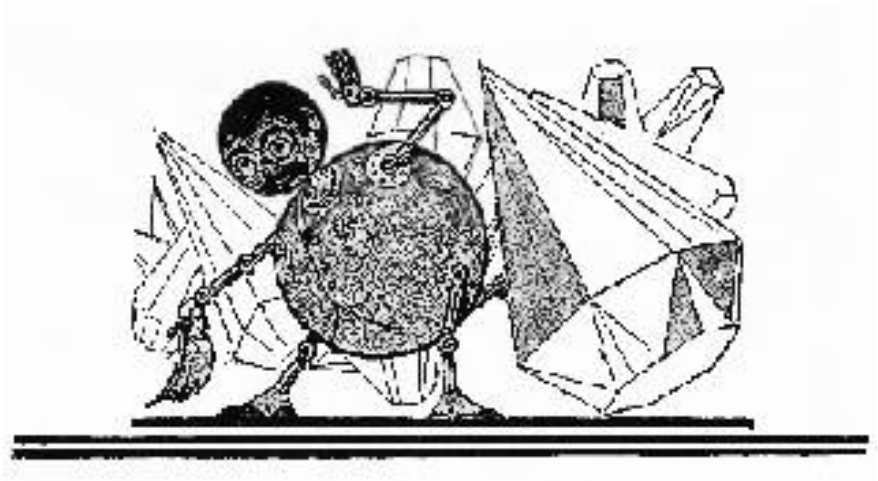
But nothing happened. The eggs did not disappear, as he had expected; so he repeated the charm a second time. When that also failed, he remembered, with a moan of despair, that his magic power had been taken away from him

and in the future he could do no more than any common mortal.

And there were the eggs, forever barring him from the Kingdom which he had ruled so long with absolute sway! He threw rocks at them, but could not hit a single egg. He raved and scolded and tore his hair and beard, and danced in helpless passion, but that did nothing to avert the just judgment of the Jinjin, which Ruggedo's own evil deeds had brought upon him.

From this time on he was an outcast — a wanderer upon the face of the earth — and he had even forgotten to fill his pockets with gold and jewels before he fled from his former Kingdom!

Chapter Nineteen
King Kaliko



After the King had made good his escape Files said to the dragon, in a sad voice:

"Alas! why did you not come before? Because you were sleeping instead of conquering, the lovely Rose Princess has become a fiddle without a bow, while poor Shaggy sits there a cooing dove!"

"Don't worry," replied Quox. "Tititi-Hoochoo knows his business, and I have my orders from the Great Jinjin himself. Bring the fiddle here and touch it lightly to my pink ribbon."

Files obeyed and at the moment of contact with the ribbon the Nome King's charm was broken and the Rose Princess herself stood before them as sweet and smiling as ever.

The dove, perched on the back of the throne, had seen and heard all this, so without being told what to do it flew straight to the dragon and alighted on the ribbon. Next instant Shaggy was himself again and Quox said to him grumblingly:

"Please get off my left toe, Shaggy Man, and be more particular where you step."

"I beg your pardon!" replied Shaggy, very glad to resume his natural form. Then he ran to lift the heavy diamond off Tik-Tok's chest and to assist the Clockwork Man to his feet.

"Ma-ny thanks!" said Tik-Tok. "Where is the wicked King who want-ed to melt me in a cru-ci-ble?"

"He has gone, and gone for good," answered Polychrome, who had

managed to squeeze into the room beside the dragon and had witnessed the occurrences with much interest. “But I wonder where Betsy Bobbin and Hank can be, and if any harm has befallen them.”

“We must search the cavern until we find them,” declared Shaggy; but when he went to the door leading to the other caverns he found it shut and barred.

“I’ve a pretty strong push in my forehead,” said Quox, “and I believe I can break down that door, even though it’s made of solid gold.”

“But you are a prisoner, and the chains that hold you are fastened in some other room, so that we cannot release you,” Files said anxiously.

“Oh, never mind that,” returned the dragon. “I have remained a prisoner only because I wished to be one,” and with this he stepped forward and burst the stout chains as easily as if they had been threads.

But when he tried to push in the heavy metal door, even his mighty strength failed, and after several attempts he gave it up and squatted himself in a corner to think of a better way.

“I’ll o-pen the door,” asserted Tik-Tok, and going to the King’s big gong he pounded upon it until the noise was almost deafening.

Kaliko, in the next cavern, was wondering what had happened to Ruggedo and if he had escaped the eggs and outwitted the dragon. But when he heard the sound of the gong, which had so often called him into the King’s presence, he decided that Ruggedo had been victorious; so he took away the bar, threw open the door and entered the royal cavern.

Great was his astonishment to find the King gone and the enchantments removed from the Princess and Shaggy. But the eggs were also gone and so Kaliko advanced to the dragon, whom he knew to be Tititi-Hoochoo’s messenger, and bowed humbly before the beast.

"What is your will?" he inquired.

"Where is Betsy?" demanded the dragon.

"Safe in my own private room," said Kaliko.

"Go and get her!" commanded Quox.

So Kaliko went to Betsy's room and gave three raps upon the door. The little girl had been asleep, but she heard the raps and opened the door.

"You may come out now," said Kaliko. "The King has fled in disgrace and your friends are asking for you."

So Betsy and Hank returned with the Royal Chamberlain to the throne cavern, where she was received with great joy by her friends. They told her what had happened to Ruggedo and she told them how kind Kaliko had been

to her. Quox did not have much to say until the conversation was ended, but then he turned to Kaliko and asked:

"Do you suppose you could rule your nomes better than Ruggedo has done?"

"Me?" stammered the Chamberlain, greatly surprised by the question. "Well, I couldn't be a worse King, I'm sure."

"Would the nomes obey you?" inquired the dragon.

"Of course," said Kaliko. "They like me better than ever they did Ruggedo."

"Then hereafter you shall be the Metal Monarch, King of the Nomes, and Tititi-Hoochoo expects you to rule your Kingdom wisely and well," said Quox.

"Hooray!" cried Betsy; "I'm glad of that. King Kaliko, I salute Your Majesty and wish you joy in your gloomy old Kingdom!"

"We all wish him joy," said Polychrome; and then the others made haste to congratulate the new King.

"Will you release my dear brother?" asked Shaggy.

"The Ugly One? Very willingly," replied Kaliko. "I begged Ruggedo long ago to send him away, but he would not do so. I also offered to help your brother to escape, but he would not go."

"He's so conscientious!" said Shaggy, highly pleased. "All of our family have noble natures. But is my dear brother well?" he added anxiously.

"He eats and sleeps very steadily," replied the new King.

"I hope he doesn't work too hard," said Shaggy.

"He doesn't work at all. In fact, there is nothing he can do in these dominions as well as our nomes, whose numbers are so great that it worries us to keep them all busy. So your brother has only to amuse himself."

"Why, it's more like visiting, than being a prisoner," asserted Betsy.

"Not exactly," returned Kaliko. "A prisoner cannot go where or when he pleases, and is not his own master."

"Where is my brother now?" inquired Shaggy.

"In the Metal Forest."

"Where is that?"

"The Metal Forest is in the Great Domed Cavern, the largest in all our dominions," replied Kaliko. "It is almost like being out of doors, it is so big, and Ruggedo made the wonderful forest to amuse himself, as well as to tire out his hard-working nomes. All the trees are gold and silver and the ground is strewn with precious stones, so it is a sort of treasury."

"Let us go there at once and rescue my dear brother," pleaded Shaggy earnestly.

Kaliko hesitated.

“I don’t believe I can find the way,” said he. “Ruggedo made three secret passages to the Metal Forest, but he changes the location of these passages every week, so that no one can get to the Metal Forest without his permission. However, if we look sharp, we may be able to discover one of these secret ways.”

“That reminds me to ask what has become of Queen Ann and the Officers of Oogaboo,” said Files.

“I’m sure I can’t say,” replied Kaliko.

“Do you suppose Ruggedo destroyed them?”

“Oh, no; I’m quite sure he didn’t. They fell into the big pit in the passage, and we put the cover on to keep them there; but when the executioners went to look for them they had all disappeared from the pit and we could find no trace of them.”

“That’s funny,” remarked Betsy thoughtfully. “I don’t believe Ann knew any magic, or she’d have worked it before. But to disappear like that seems like magic; now, doesn’t it?”

They agreed that it did, but no one could explain the mystery.

“However,” said Shaggy, “they are gone, that is certain, so we cannot help them or be helped by them. And the important thing just now is to rescue my dear brother from captivity.”

“Why do they call him the Ugly One?” asked Betsy.

“I do not know,” confessed Shaggy. “I can not remember his looks very well, it is so long since I have seen him; but all of our family are noted for their handsome faces.”

Betsy laughed and Shaggy seemed rather hurt; but Polychrome relieved his embarrassment by saying softly: “One can be ugly in looks, but lovely in disposition.”

“Our first task,” said Shaggy, a little comforted by this remark, “is to find one of those secret passages to the Metal Forest.”

“True,” agreed Kaliko. “So I think I will assemble the chief nomes of my kingdom in this throne room and tell them that I am their new King. Then I can ask them to assist us in searching for the secret passages.

“That’s a good idea,” said the dragon, who seemed to be getting sleepy again.

Kaliko went to the big gong and pounded on it just as Ruggedo used to do; but no one answered the summons.

“Of course not,” said he, jumping up from the throne, where he had seated himself. “That is my call, and I am still the Royal Chamberlain, and will be until I appoint another in my place.”

So he ran out of the room and found Guph and told him to answer the summons of the King's gong. Having returned to the royal cavern, Kaliko first pounded the gong and then sat in the throne, wearing Ruggedo's discarded ruby crown and holding in his hand the sceptre which Ruggedo had so often thrown at his head.

When Guph entered he was amazed.

"Better get out of that throne before old Ruggedo comes back," he said warningly.

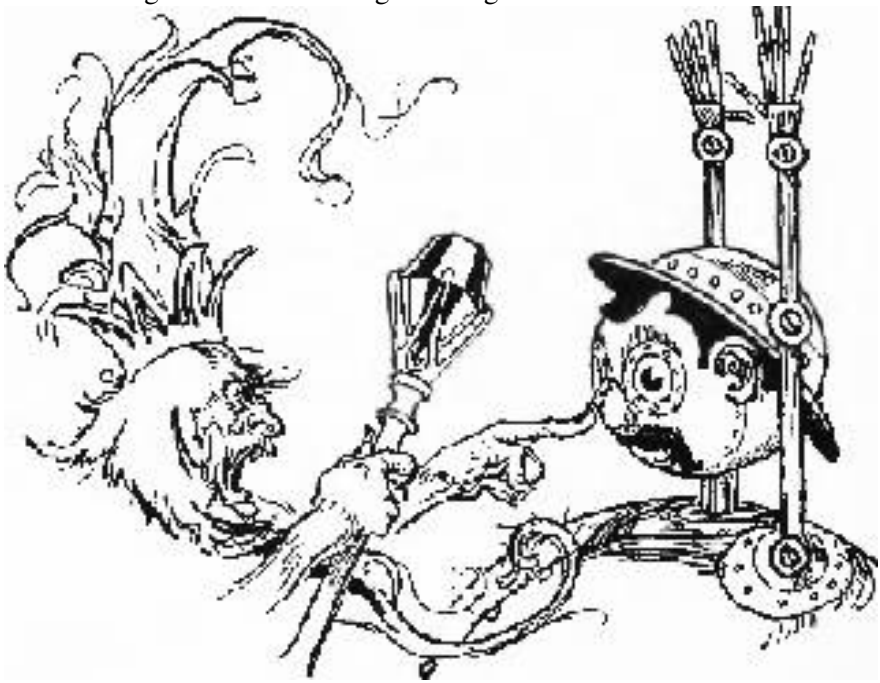
"He isn't coming back, and I am now the King of the Nomes, in his stead," announced Kaliko.

"All of which is quite true," asserted the dragon, and all of those who

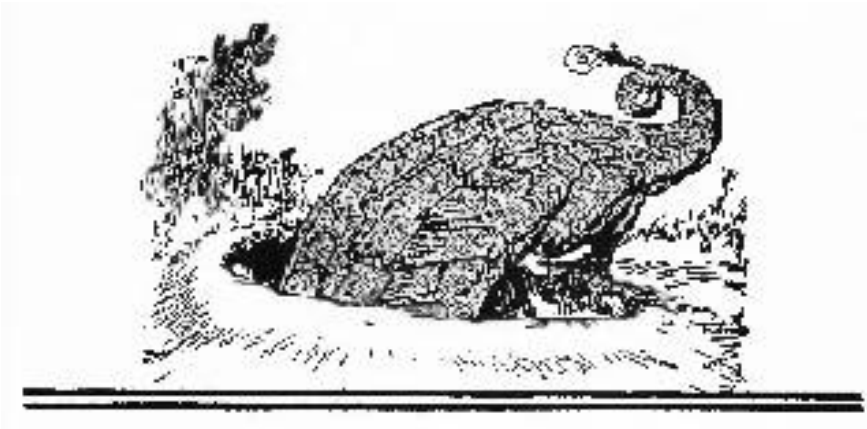
stood around the throne bowed respectfully to the new King.

Seeing this, Guph also bowed, for he was glad to be rid of such a hard master as Ruggedo. Then Kaliko, in quite a kingly way, informed Guph that he was appointed the Royal Chamberlain, and promised not to throw the sceptre at his head unless he deserved it.

All this being pleasantly arranged, the new Chamberlain went away to tell the news to all the nomes of the underground Kingdom, every one of whom would be delighted with the change in Kings.



Chapter Twenty
Quox Quietly Quits



When the chief nomes assembled before their new King they joyfully saluted him and promised to obey his commands. But, when Kaliko questioned them, none knew the way to the Metal Forest, although all had assisted in its making. So the King instructed them to search carefully for one of the passages and to bring him the news as soon as they had found it.

Meantime Quox had managed to back out of the rocky corridor and so regain the open air and his old station on the mountain-side, and there he lay upon the rocks, sound asleep, until the next day. The others of the party were all given as good rooms as the caverns of the nomes afforded, for King Kaliko felt that he was indebted to them for his promotion and was anxious to be as hospitable as he could.

Much wonderment had been caused by the absolute disappearance of the sixteen officers of Oogaboo and their Queen. Not a nome had seen them, nor were they discovered during the search for the passages leading to the Metal Forest. Perhaps no one was unhappy over their loss, but all were curious to know what had become of them.

On the next day, when our friends went to visit the dragon, Quox said to them: "I must now bid you good-bye, for my mission here is finished and I must depart for the other side of the world, where I belong."

"Will you go through the Tube again?" asked Betsy.

"To be sure. But it will be a lonely trip this time, with no one to talk to, and I cannot invite any of you to go with me. Therefore, as soon as I slide into the hole I shall go to sleep, and when I pop out at the other end I will wake up at home."

They thanked the dragon for befriending them and wished him a pleasant

journey. Also they sent their thanks to the great Jinjin, whose just condemnation of Ruggedo had served their interests so well. Then Quox yawned and stretched himself and ambled over to the Tube, into which he slid headforemost and disappeared.

They really felt as if they had lost a friend, for the dragon had been both kind and sociable during their brief acquaintance with him; but they knew it was his duty to return to his own country. So they went back to the caverns to renew the search for the hidden passages that led to the forest, but for three days all efforts to find them proved in vain.

It was Polychrome's custom to go every day to the mountain and watch for her father, the Rainbow, for she was growing tired with wandering upon the earth and longed to rejoin her sisters in their sky palaces. And on the third day, while she sat motionless upon a point of rock, whom should she see slyly creeping up the mountain but Ruggedo!

The former King looked very forlorn. His clothes were soiled and torn and he had no sandals upon his feet or hat upon his head. Having left his crown and sceptre behind when he fled, the old nome no longer seemed kingly, but more like a beggerman.

Several times had Ruggedo crept up to the mouth of the caverns, only to find the six eggs still on guard. He knew quite well that he must accept his fate and become a homeless wanderer, but his chief regret now was that he had neglected to fill his pockets with gold and jewels. He was aware that a wanderer with wealth at his command would fare much better than one who was a pauper, so he still loitered around the caverns wherein he knew so much treasure was stored, hoping for a chance to fill his pockets.

That was how he came to recollect the Metal Forest.

"Aha!" said he to himself, "I alone know the way to that Forest, and once there I can fill my pockets with the finest jewels in all the world."

He glanced at his pockets and was grieved to find them so small. Perhaps they might be enlarged, so that they would hold more. He knew of a poor woman who lived in a cottage at the foot of the mountain, so he went to her and begged her to sew pockets all over his robe, paying her with the gift of a diamond ring which he had worn upon his finger. The woman was delighted to possess so valuable a ring and she sewed as many pockets on Ruggedo's robe as she possibly could.

Then he returned up the mountain and, after gazing cautiously around to make sure he was not observed, he touched a spring in a rock and it swung slowly backward, disclosing a broad passageway. This he entered, swinging the rock in place behind him.

However, Ruggedo had failed to look as carefully as he might have done,

for Polychrome was seated only a little distance off and her clear eyes marked exactly the manner in which Ruggedo had released the hidden spring. So she rose and hurried into the cavern, where she told Kaliko and her friends of her discovery.

"I've no doubt that that is a way to the Metal Forest," exclaimed Shaggy. "Come, let us follow Ruggedo at once and rescue my poor brother!"

They agreed to this and King Kaliko called together a band of nomes to assist them by carrying torches to light their way.

"The Metal Forest has a brilliant light of its own," said he, "but the passage across the valley is likely to be dark."

Polychrome easily found the rock and touched the spring, so in less than an hour after Ruggedo had entered they were all in the passage and following swiftly after the former King.

"He means to rob the Forest, I'm sure," said Kaliko; "but he will find he is no longer of any account in this Kingdom and I will have my nomes throw him out."

"Then please throw him as hard as you can," said Betsy, "for he deserves it. I don't mind an honest, out-an'-out enemy, who fights square; but changing girls into fiddles and ordering 'em put into Slimy Caves is mean and tricky, and Ruggedo doesn't deserve any sympathy. But you'll have to let him take as much treasure as he can get in his pockets, Kaliko."

"Yes, the Jinjin said so; but we won't miss it much. There is more treasure in the Metal Forest than a million nomes could carry in their pockets."

It was not difficult to walk through this passage, especially when the torches lighted the way, so they made good progress. But it proved to be a long distance and Betsy had tired herself with walking and was seated upon the back of the mule when the passage made a sharp turn and a wonderful and glorious light burst upon them. The next moment they were all standing upon the edge of the marvelous Metal Forest.

It lay under another mountain and occupied a great domed cavern, the roof of which was higher than a church steeple. In this space the industrious nomes had built, during many years of labor, the most beautiful forest in the world. The trees — trunks, branches and leaves — were all of solid gold, while the bushes and underbrush were formed of filigree silver, virgin pure. The trees towered as high as natural live oaks do and were of exquisite workmanship.

On the ground were thickly strewn precious gems of every hue and size, while here and there among the trees were paths pebbled with cut diamonds of the clearest water. Taken all together, more treasure was gathered in this Metal Forest than is contained in all the rest of the world — if we except the

land of Oz, where perhaps its value is equalled in the famous Emerald City.

Our friends were so amazed at the sight that for a while they stood gazing in silent wonder. Then Shaggy exclaimed.

"My brother! My dear lost brother! Is he indeed a prisoner in this place?"

"Yes," replied Kaliko. "The Ugly One has been here for two or three years, to my positive knowledge."

"But what could he find to eat?" inquired Betsy. "It's an awfully swell place to live in, but one can't breakfast on rubies and di'monds, or even gold."

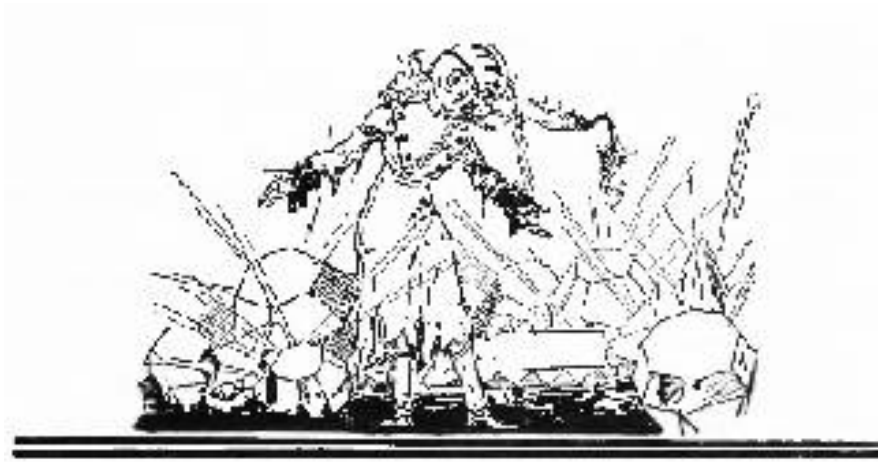
"One doesn't need to, my dear," Kaliko assured her. "The Metal Forest does not fill all of this great cavern, by any means. Beyond these gold and

silver trees are other trees of the real sort, which bear foods very nice to eat. Let us walk in that direction, for I am quite sure we will find Shaggy's brother in that part of the cavern, rather than in this."

So they began to tramp over the diamond-pebbled paths, and at every step they were more and more bewildered by the wondrous beauty of the golden trees with their glittering foliage.

Suddenly they heard a scream. Jewels scattered in every direction as some one hidden among the bushes scampered away before them. Then a loud voice cried: "Halt!" and there was the sound of a struggle.

Chapter Twenty-One
A Bashful Brother



With fast beating hearts they all rushed forward and, beyond a group of stately metal trees, came full upon a most astonishing scene.

There was Ruggedo in the hands of the officers of Oogaboo, a dozen of whom were clinging to the old nome and holding him fast in spite of his efforts to escape. There also was Queen Ann, looking grimly upon the scene of strife; but when she observed her former companions approaching she turned away in a shamefaced manner.

For Ann and her officers were indeed a sight to behold. Her Majesty's clothing, once so rich and gorgeous, was now worn and torn into shreds by her long crawl through the tunnel, which, by the way, had led her directly into the Metal Forest. It was, indeed, one of the three secret passages, and by far the most difficult of the three. Ann had not only torn her pretty skirt and jacket, but her crown had become bent and battered and even her shoes were so cut and slashed that they were ready to fall from her feet.

The officers had fared somewhat worse than their leader, for holes were worn in the knees of their trousers, while sharp points of rock in the roof and sides of the tunnel had made rags of every inch of their once brilliant uniforms. A more tattered and woeful army never came out of a battle, than these harmless victims of the rocky passage. But it had seemed their only means of escape from the cruel Nome King; so they had crawled on, regardless of their sufferings.

When they reached the Metal Forest their eyes beheld more plunder than they had ever dreamed of; yet they were prisoners in this huge dome and could not escape with the riches heaped about them. Perhaps a more unhappy

and homesick lot of “conquerors” never existed than this band from Oogaboo.

After several days of wandering in their marvelous prison they were frightened by the discovery that Ruggedo had come among them. Rendered desperate by their sad condition, the officers exhibited courage for the first time since they left home and, ignorant of the fact that Ruggedo was no longer King of the nomes, they threw themselves upon him and had just succeeded in capturing him when their fellow adventurers reached the spot.

“Goodness gracious!” cried Betsy. “What has happened to you all?”

Ann came forward to greet them, sorrowful and indignant.

“We were obliged to escape from the pit through a small tunnel, which was lined with sharp and jagged rocks,” said she, “and not only was our clothing torn to rags but our flesh is so bruised and sore that we are stiff and lame in every joint. To add to our troubles we find we are still prisoners; but now that we have succeeded in capturing the wicked Metal Monarch we shall force him to grant us our liberty.”

“Ruggedo is no longer Metal Monarch, or King of the nomes,” Files informed her. “He has been deposed and cast out of his kingdom by Quox; but here is the new King, whose name is Kaliko, and I am pleased to assure Your Majesty that he is our friend.”

“Glad to meet Your Majesty, I’m sure,” said Kaliko, bowing as courteously as if the Queen still wore splendid raiment.

The officers, having heard this explanation, now set Ruggedo free; but, as he had no place to go, he stood by and faced his former servant, who was now King in his place, in a humble and pleading manner.

“What are you doing here?” asked Kaliko sternly.

“Why, I was promised as much treasure as I could carry in my pockets,” replied Ruggedo; “so I came here to get it, not wishing to disturb Your Majesty.”

“You were commanded to leave the country of the nomes forever!” declared Kaliko.

“I know; and I’ll go as soon as I have filled my pockets,” said Ruggedo, meekly.

“Then fill them, and be gone,” returned the new King.

Ruggedo obeyed. Stooping down, he began gathering up jewels by the handful and stuffing them into his many pockets. They were heavy things, these diamonds and rubies and emeralds and amethysts and the like, so before long Ruggedo was staggering with the weight he bore, while the pockets were not yet filled. When he could no longer stoop over without falling, Betsy and Polychrome and the Rose Princess came to his assistance,

picking up the finest gems and tucking them into his pockets.

At last these were all filled and Ruggedo presented a comical sight, for surely no man ever before had so many pockets, or any at all filled with such a choice collection of precious stones. He neglected to thank the young ladies for their kindness, but gave them a surly nod of farewell and staggered down the path by the way he had come. They let him depart in silence, for with all he had taken, the masses of jewels upon the ground seemed scarcely to have been disturbed, so numerous were they. Also they hoped they had seen the last of the degraded King.

"I'm awful glad he's gone," said Betsy, sighing deeply. "If he doesn't get reckless and spend his wealth foolishly, he's got enough to start a bank when

he gets to Oklahoma."

"But my brother — my dear brother! Where is he?" inquired Shaggy anxiously. "Have you seen him, Queen Ann?"

"What does your brother look like?" asked the Queen.

Shaggy hesitated to reply, but Betsy said: "He's called the Ugly One. Perhaps you'll know him by that."

"The only person we have seen in this cavern," said Ann, "has run away from us whenever we approached him. He hides over yonder, among the trees that are not gold, and we have never been able to catch sight of his face. So I can not tell whether he is ugly or not."

"That must be my dear brother!" exclaimed Shaggy.

"Yes, it must be," assented Kaliko. "No one else inhabits this splendid dome, so there can be no mistake."

"But why does he hide among those green trees, instead of enjoying all these glittery golden ones?" asked Betsy.

"Because he finds food among the natural trees," replied Kaliko, "and I remember that he has built a little house there, to sleep in. As for these glittery golden trees, I will admit they are very pretty at first sight. One cannot fail to admire them, as well as the rich jewels scattered beneath them; but if one has to look at them always, they become pretty tame."

"I believe that is true," declared Shaggy. "My dear brother is very wise to prefer real trees to the imitation ones. But come; let us go there and find him."

Shaggy started for the green grove at once, and the others followed him, being curious to witness the final rescue of his long-sought, long-lost brother.

Not far from the edge of the grove they came upon a small hut, cleverly made of twigs and golden branches woven together. As they approached the place they caught a glimpse of a form that darted into the hut and slammed the door tight shut after him.

Shaggy Man ran to the door and cried aloud:

"Brother! Brother!"

"Who calls," demanded a sad, hollow voice from within.

"It is Shaggy — your own loving brother — who has been searching for you a long time and has now come to rescue you."

"Too late!" replied the gloomy voice. "No one can rescue me now."

"Oh, but you are mistaken about that," said Shaggy. "There is a new King of the nomes, named Kaliko, in Ruggedo's place, and he has promised you shall go free."

"Free! I dare not go free!" said the Ugly One, in a voice of despair.

"Why not, Brother?" asked Shaggy, anxiously.

“Do you know what they have done to me?” came the answer through the closed door.

“No. Tell me, Brother, what have they done?”

“When Ruggedo first captured me I was very handsome. Don’t you remember, Shaggy?”

“Not very well, Brother; you were so young when I left home. But I remember that mother thought you were beautiful.”

“She was right! I am sure she was right,” wailed the prisoner. “But Ruggedo wanted to injure me — to make me ugly in the eyes of all the world — so he performed a wicked enchantment. I went to bed beautiful — or you might say handsome — to be very modest I will merely claim that I was good-looking — and I wakened the next morning the homeliest man in all the world! I am so repulsive that when I look in a mirror I frighten myself.”

“Poor Brother!” said Shaggy softly, and all the others were silent from sympathy.

“I was so ashamed of my looks,” continued the voice of Shaggy’s brother, “that I tried to hide; but the cruel King Ruggedo forced me to appear before all the legion of nomes, to whom he said: ‘Behold the Ugly One!’ But when the nomes saw my face they all fell to laughing and jeering, which prevented them from working at their tasks. Seeing this, Ruggedo became angry and pushed me into a tunnel, closing the rock entrance so that I could not get out. I followed the length of the tunnel until I reached this huge dome, where the marvelous Metal Forest stands, and here I have remained ever since.”

“Poor Brother!” repeated Shaggy. “But I beg you now to come forth and face us, who are your friends. None here will laugh or jeer, however unhandsome you may be.”

“No, indeed,” they all added pleadingly.

But the Ugly One refused the invitation.

“I cannot,” said he; “indeed, I cannot face strangers, ugly as I am.”

Shaggy Man turned to the group surrounding him.

“What shall I do?” he asked in sorrowful tones. “I cannot leave my dear brother here, and he refuses to come out of that house and face us.”

“I’ll tell you,” replied Betsy. “Let him put on a mask.”

“The very idea I was seeking!” exclaimed Shaggy joyfully; and then he called out: “Brother, put a mask over your face, and then none of us can see what your features are like.”

“I have no mask,” answered the Ugly One.

“Look here,” said Betsy; “he can use my handkerchief.”

Shaggy looked at the little square of cloth and shook his head.

“It isn’t big enough,” he objected; “I’m sure it isn’t big enough to hide a

man's face. But he can use mine."

Saying this he took from his pocket his own handkerchief and went to the door of the hut.

"Here, my Brother," he called, "take this handkerchief and make a mask of it. I will also pass you my knife, so that you may cut holes for the eyes, and then you must tie it over your face."

The door slowly opened, just far enough for the Ugly One to thrust out his hand and take the handkerchief and the knife. Then it closed again.

"Don't forget a hole for your nose," cried Betsy. "You must breathe, you know."

For a time there was silence. Queen Ann and her army sat down upon the ground to rest. Betsy sat on Hank's back. Polychrome danced lightly up and down the jeweled paths while Files and the Princess wandered through the groves arm in arm. Tik-Tok, who never tired, stood motionless.

By and by a noise sounded from within the hut.

"Are you ready?" asked Shaggy.

"Yes, Brother," came the reply and the door was thrown open to allow the Ugly One to step forth.

Betsy might have laughed aloud had she not remembered how sensitive to ridicule Shaggy's brother was, for the handkerchief with which he had masked his features was a red one covered with big white polka dots. In this two holes had been cut — in front of the eyes — while two smaller ones before the nostrils allowed the man to breathe freely. The cloth was then tightly drawn over the Ugly One's face and knotted at the back of his neck.

He was dressed in clothes that had once been good, but now were sadly worn and frayed. His silk stockings had holes in them, and his shoes were stub-toed and needed blackening. "But what can you expect," whispered Betsy, "when the poor man has been a prisoner for so many years?"

Shaggy had darted forward, and embraced his newly found brother with both his arms. The brother also embraced Shaggy, who then led him forward and introduced him to all the assembled company.

"This is the new Nome King," he said when he came to Kaliko. "He is our friend, and has granted you your freedom."

"That is a kindly deed," replied Ugly in a sad voice, "but I dread to go back to the world in this direful condition. Unless I remain forever masked, my dreadful face would curdle all the milk and stop all the clocks."

"Can't the enchantment be broken in some way?" inquired Betsy.

Shaggy looked anxiously at Kaliko, who shook his head.

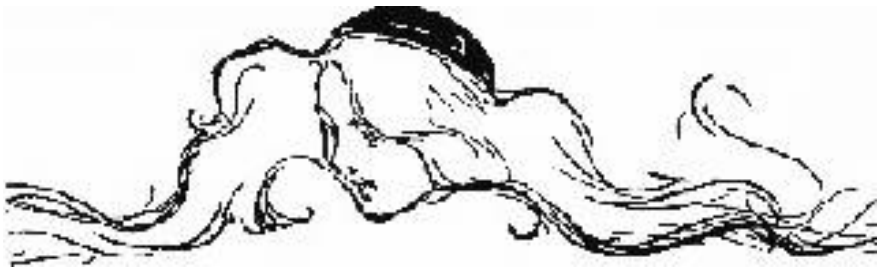
"I am sure I can't break the enchantment," he said. "Ruggedo was fond of magic, and learned a good many enchantments that we nomes know nothing

of.”

“Perhaps Ruggedo himself might break his own enchantment,” suggested Ann; “but unfortunately we have allowed the old King to escape.”

“Never mind, my dear Brother,” said Shaggy consolingly; “I am very happy to have found you again, although I may never see your face. So let us make the most of this joyful reunion.”

The Ugly One was affected to tears by this tender speech, and the tears began to wet the red handkerchief; so Shaggy gently wiped them away with his coat sleeve.



Chapter Twenty-Two
Kindly Kisses

"Won't you be dreadful sorry to leave this lovely place?" Betsy asked the Ugly One.

"No, indeed," said he. "Jewels and gold are cold and heartless things, and I am sure I would presently have died of loneliness had I not found the natural forest at the edge of the artificial one. Anyhow, without these real trees I should soon have starved to death."

Betsy looked around at the quaint trees.

"I don't just understand that," she admitted. "What could you find to eat here."

"The best food in the world," Ugly answered. "Do you see that grove at your left?" he added, pointing it out; "well, such trees as those do not grow in your country, or in any other place but this cavern. I have named them 'Hotel Trees,' because they bear a certain kind of table d'hote fruit called 'Three-Course Nuts.'"

"That's funny!" said Betsy. "What are the 'Three-Course Nuts' like?"

"Something like cocoanuts, to look at," explained the Ugly One. "All you have to do is to pick one of them and then sit down and eat your dinner. You first unscrew the top part and find a cupfull of good soup. After you've eaten that, you unscrew the middle part and find a hollow filled with meat and potatoes, vegetables and a fine salad. Eat that, and unscrew the next section, and you come to the dessert in the bottom of the nut. That is, pie and cake, cheese and crackers, and nuts and raisins. The Three-Course Nuts are not all exactly alike in flavor or in contents, but they are all good and in each one may be found a complete three-course dinner."

“But how about breakfasts?” inquired Betsy.

“Why, there are Breakfast Trees for that, which grow over there at the right. They bear nuts, like the others, only the nuts contain coffee or chocolate, instead of soup; oatmeal instead of meat-and-potatoes, and fruits instead of dessert. Sad as has been my life in this wonderful prison, I must admit that no one could live more luxuriously in the best hotel in the world than I have lived here; but I will be glad to get into the open air again and see the good old sun and the silvery moon and the soft green grass and the flowers that are kissed by the morning dew. Ah, how much more lovely are those blessed things than the glitter of gems or the cold gleam of gold!”

“Of course,” said Betsy. “I once knew a little boy who wanted to catch the measles, because all the little boys in his neighborhood but him had ‘em, and he was really unhappy ‘cause he couldn’t catch ‘em, try as he would. So I’m pretty certain that the things we want, and can’t have, are not good for us. Isn’t that true, Shaggy?”

“Not always, my dear,” he gravely replied. “If we didn’t want anything, we would never get anything, good or bad. I think our longings are natural, and if we act as nature prompts us we can’t go far wrong.”

“For my part,” said Queen Ann, “I think the world would be a dreary place without the gold and jewels.”

“All things are good in their way,” said Shaggy; “but we may have too much of any good thing. And I have noticed that the value of anything depends upon how scarce it is, and how difficult it is to obtain.”

“Pardon me for interrupting you,” said King Kaliko, coming to their side, “but now that we have rescued Shaggy’s brother I would like to return to my royal cavern. Being the King of the Nomes, it is my duty to look after my restless subjects and see that they behave themselves.”

So they all turned and began walking through the Metal Forest to the other side of the great domed cave, where they had first entered it. Shaggy and his brother walked side by side and both seemed rejoiced that they were together after their long separation. Betsy didn’t dare look at the polka dot handkerchief, for fear she would laugh aloud; so she walked behind the two brothers and led Hank by holding fast to his left ear.

When at last they reached the place where the passage led to the outer world, Queen Ann said, in a hesitating way that was unusual with her:

“I have not conquered this Nome Country, nor do I expect to do so; but I would like to gather a few of these pretty jewels before I leave this place.”

“Help yourself, ma’am,” said King Kaliko, and at once the officers of the Army took advantage of his royal permission and began filling their pockets, while Ann tied a lot of diamonds in a big handkerchief.

This accomplished, they all entered the passage, the nomes going first to light the way with their torches. They had not proceeded far when Betsy exclaimed:

"Why, there are jewels here, too!"

All eyes were turned upon the ground and they found a regular trail of jewels strewn along the rock floor.

"This is queer!" said Kaliko, much surprised. "I must send some of my nomes to gather up these gems and replace them in the Metal Forest, where they belong. I wonder how they came to be here?"

All the way along the passage they found this trail of jewels, but when they neared the end the mystery was explained. For there, squatted upon the floor with his back to the rock wall, sat old Ruggedo, puffing and blowing as if he was all tired out. Then they realized it was he who had scattered the jewels, from his many pockets, which one by one had burst with the weight of their contents as he had stumbled along the passage.

"But I don't mind," said Ruggedo, with a deep sigh. "I now realize that I could not have carried such a weighty load very far, even had I managed to escape from this passage with it. The woman who sewed the pockets on my robe used poor thread, for which I shall thank her."

"Have you any jewels left?" inquired Betsy.

He glanced into some of the remaining pockets.

"A few," said he, "but they will be sufficient to supply my wants, and I no longer have any desire to be rich. If some of you will kindly help me to rise, I'll get out of here and leave you, for I know you all despise me and prefer my room to my company."

Shaggy and Kaliko raised the old King to his feet, when he was confronted by Shaggy's brother, whom he now noticed for the first time. The queer and unexpected appearance of the Ugly One so startled Ruggedo that he gave a wild cry and began to tremble, as if he had seen a ghost.

"Wh — wh — who is this?" he faltered.

"I am that helpless prisoner whom your cruel magic transformed from a handsome man into an ugly one!" answered Shaggy's brother, in a voice of stern reproach.

"Really, Ruggedo," said Betsy, "you ought to be ashamed of that mean trick."

"I am, my dear," admitted Ruggedo, who was now as meek and humble as formerly he had been cruel and vindictive.

"Then," returned the girl, "you'd better do some more magic and give the poor man his own face again."

"I wish I could," answered the old King; "but you must remember that

Tititi-Hoochoo has deprived me of all my magic powers. However, I never took the trouble to learn just how to break the charm I cast over Shaggy's brother, for I intended he should always remain ugly."

"Every charm," remarked pretty Polychrome, "has its antidote; and, if you knew this charm of ugliness, Ruggedo, you must have known how to dispel it."

He shook his head.

"If I did, I — I've forgotten," he stammered regretfully.

"Try to think!" pleaded Shaggy, anxiously. "Please try to think!"

Ruggedo ruffled his hair with both hands, sighed, slapped his chest, rubbed his ear, and stared stupidly around the group.

“I’ve a faint recollection that there was one thing that would break the charm,” said he; “but misfortune has so addled my brain that I can’t remember what it was.”

“See here, Ruggedo,” said Betsy, sharply, “we’ve treated you pretty well, so far, but we won’t stand for any nonsense, and if you know what’s good for yourself you’ll think of that charm!”

“Why?” he demanded, turning to look wonderingly at the little girl.

“Because it means so much to Shaggy’s brother. He’s dreadfully ashamed of himself, the way he is now, and you’re to blame for it. Fact is, Ruggedo, you’ve done so much wickedness in your life that it won’t hurt you to do a kind act now.”

Ruggedo blinked at her, and sighed again, and then tried very hard to think.

“I seem to remember, dimly,” said he, “that a certain kind of a kiss will break the charm of ugliness.”

“What kind of a kiss?”

“What kind? Why, it was — it was — it was either the kiss of a Mortal Maid; or — or — the kiss of a Mortal Maid who had once been a Fairy; or — or the kiss of one who is still a Fairy. I can’t remember which. But of course no maid, mortal or fairy, would ever consent to kiss a person so ugly — so dreadfully, fearfully, terribly ugly — as Shaggy’s brother.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said Betsy, with admirable courage; “I’m a Mortal Maid, and if it is my kiss that will break this awful charm, I — I’ll do it!”

“Oh, you really couldn’t,” protested Ugly. “I would be obliged to remove my mask, and when you saw my face, nothing could induce you to kiss me, generous as you are.”

“Well, as for that,” said the little girl, “I needn’t see your face at all. Here’s my plan: You stay in this dark passage, and we’ll send away the nomes with their torches. Then you’ll take off the handkerchief, and I — I’ll kiss you.”

“This is awfully kind of you, Betsy!” said Shaggy, gratefully.

“Well, it surely won’t kill me,” she replied; “and, if it makes you and your brother happy, I’m willing to take some chances.”

So Kaliko ordered the torch-bearers to leave the passage, which they did by going through the rock opening. Queen Ann and her army also went out; but the others were so interested in Betsy’s experiment that they remained grouped at the mouth of the passageway. When the big rock swung into place, closing tight the opening, they were left in total darkness.

“Now, then,” called Betsy in a cheerful voice, “have you got that

handkerchief off your face, Ugly?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Well, where are you, then?" she asked, reaching out her arms.

"Here," said he.

"You'll have to stoop down, you know."

He found her hands and clasping them in his own stooped until his face was near to that of the little girl. The others heard a clear, smacking kiss, and then Betsy exclaimed:

"There! I've done it, and it didn't hurt a bit!"

"Tell me, dear brother; is the charm broken?" asked Shaggy.

"I do not know," was the reply. "It may be, or it may not be. I cannot tell."

"Has anyone a match?" inquired Betsy.

"I have several," said Shaggy.

"Then let Ruggedo strike one of them and look at your brother's face, while we all turn our backs. Ruggedo made your brother ugly, so I guess he can stand the horror of looking at him, if the charm isn't broken."

Agreeing to this, Ruggedo took the match and lighted it. He gave one look and then blew out the match.

"Ugly as ever!" he said with a shudder. "So it wasn't the kiss of a Mortal Maid, after all."

"Let me try," proposed the Rose Princess, in her sweet voice. "I am a Mortal Maid who was once a Fairy. Perhaps my kiss will break the charm."

Files did not wholly approve of this, but he was too generous to interfere. So the Rose Princess felt her way through the darkness to Shaggy's brother and kissed him.

Ruggedo struck another match, while they all turned away.

"No," announced the former King; "that didn't break the charm, either. It must be the kiss of a Fairy that is required — or else my memory has failed me altogether."

"Polly," said Betsy, pleadingly, "won't you try?"

"Of course I will!" answered Polychrome, with a merry laugh. "I've never kissed a mortal man in all the thousands of years I have existed, but I'll do it to please our faithful Shaggy Man, whose unselfish affection for his ugly brother deserves to be rewarded."

Even as Polychrome was speaking she tripped lightly to the side of the Ugly One and quickly touched his cheek with her lips.

"Oh, thank you — thank you!" he fervently cried. "I've changed, this time, I know. I can feel it! I'm different. Shaggy — dear Shaggy — I am myself again!"

Files, who was near the opening, touched the spring that released the big

rock and it suddenly swung backward and let in a flood of daylight.

Everyone stood motionless, staring hard at Shaggy's brother, who, no longer masked by the polka-dot handkerchief, met their gaze with a glad smile.

"Well," said Shaggy Man, breaking the silence at last and drawing a long, deep breath of satisfaction, "you are no longer the Ugly One, my dear brother; but, to be entirely frank with you, the face that belongs to you is no more handsome than it ought to be."

"I think he's rather good looking," remarked Betsy, gazing at the man critically.

"In comparison with what he was," said King Kaliko, "he is really beautiful. You, who never beheld his ugliness, may not understand that; but it was my misfortune to look at the Ugly One many times, and I say again that, in comparison with what he was, the man is now beautiful."

"All right," returned Betsy, briskly, "we'll take your word for it, Kaliko. And now let us get out of this tunnel and into the world again."

Chapter Twenty-Three
Ruggedo Reforms

It did not take them long to regain the royal cavern of the Nome King, where Kaliko ordered served to them the nicest refreshments the place afforded. Ruggedo had come trailing along after the rest of the party and while no one paid any attention to the old King they did not offer any objection to his presence or command him to leave them. He looked fearfully to see if the eggs were still guarding the entrance, but they had now disappeared; so he crept into the cavern after the others and humbly squatted down in a corner of the room.

There Betsy discovered him. All of the little girl's companions were now so happy at the success of Shaggy's quest for his brother, and the laughter and merriment seemed so general, that Betsy's heart softened toward the friendless old man who had once been their bitter enemy, and she carried to him some of the food and drink. Ruggedo's eyes filled with tears at this unexpected kindness. He took the child's hand in his own and pressed it gratefully.

"Look here, Kaliko," said Betsy, addressing the new King, "what's the use of being hard on Ruggedo? All his magic power is gone, so he can't do any more harm, and I'm sure he's sorry he acted so badly to everybody."

"Are you?" asked Kaliko, looking down at his former master.

"I am," said Ruggedo. "The girl speaks truly. I'm sorry and I'm harmless. I don't want to wander through the wide world, on top of the ground, for I'm a nome. No nome can ever be happy any place but underground."

"That being the case," said Kaliko, "I will let you stay here as long as you behave yourself; but, if you try to act badly again, I shall drive you out, as

Tititi-Hoochoo has commanded, and you'll have to wander."

"Never fear. I'll behave," promised Ruggedo. "It is hard work being a King, and harder still to be a good King. But now that I am a common nome I am sure I can lead a blameless life."

They were all pleased to hear this and to know that Ruggedo had really reformed.

"I hope he'll keep his word," whispered Betsy to Shaggy; "but if he gets bad again we will be far away from the Nome Kingdom and Kaliko will have to 'tend to the old nome himself."

Polychrome had been a little restless during the last hour or two. The lovely Daughter of the Rainbow knew that she had now done all in her power to assist her earth friends, and so she began to long for her sky home.

"I think," she said, after listening intently, "that it is beginning to rain. The Rain King is my uncle, you know, and perhaps he has read my thoughts and is going to help me. Anyway I must take a look at the sky and make sure."

So she jumped up and ran through the passage to the outer entrance, and they all followed after her and grouped themselves on a ledge of the mountain-side. Sure enough, dark clouds had filled the sky and a slow, drizzling rain had set in.

"It can't last for long," said Shaggy, looking upward, "and when it stops we shall lose the sweet little fairy we have learned to love. Alas," he continued, after a moment, "the clouds are already breaking in the west, and — see! — isn't that the Rainbow coming?"

Betsy didn't look at the sky; she looked at Polychrome, whose happy, smiling face surely foretold the coming of her father to take her to the Cloud Palaces. A moment later a gleam of sunshine flooded the mountain and a gorgeous Rainbow appeared.

With a cry of gladness Polychrome sprang upon a point of rock and held out her arms. Straightway the Rainbow descended until its end was at her very feet, when with a graceful leap she sprang upon it and was at once clasped in the arms of her radiant sisters, the Daughters of the Rainbow. But Polychrome released herself to lean over the edge of the glowing arch and nod, and smile and throw a dozen kisses to her late comrades.

"Good-bye!" she called, and they all shouted "Good-bye!" in return and waved their hands to their pretty friend.

Slowly the magnificent bow lifted and melted into the sky, until the eyes of the earnest watchers saw only fleecy clouds flitting across the blue.

"I'm dreadful sorry to see Polychrome go," said Betsy, who felt like crying; "but I s'pose she'll be a good deal happier with her sisters in the sky palaces."

“To be sure,” returned Shaggy, nodding gravely. “It’s her home, you know, and those poor wanderers who, like ourselves, have no home, can realize what that means to her.”

“Once,” said Betsy, “I, too, had a home. Now, I’ve only — only — dear old Hank!”

She twined her arms around her shaggy friend who was not human, and he said: “Hee-haw!” in a tone that showed he understood her mood. And the shaggy friend who was human stroked the child’s head tenderly and said: “You’re wrong about that, Betsy, dear. I will never desert you.”

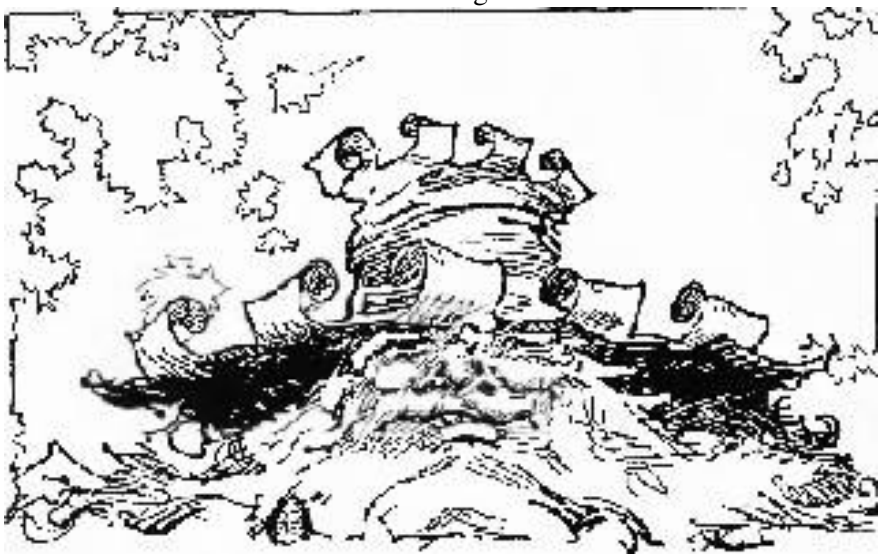
“Nor I!” exclaimed Shaggy’s brother, in earnest tones.

The little girl looked up at them gratefully, and her eyes smiled through

their tears.

"All right," she said. "It's raining again, so let's go back into the cavern."

Rather soberly, for all loved Polychrome and would miss her, they reentered the dominions of the Nome King.



Chapter Twenty-Four
Dorothy is Delighted

"Well," said Queen Ann, when all were again seated in Kaliko's royal cavern, "I wonder what we shall do next. If I could find my way back to Oogaboo I'd take my army home at once, for I'm sick and tired of these dreadful hardships."

"Don't you want to conquer the world?" asked Betsy.

"No; I've changed my mind about that," admitted the Queen. "The world is too big for one person to conquer and I was happier with my own people in Oogaboo. I wish — Oh, how earnestly I wish — that I was back there this minute!"

"So do I!" yelled every officer in a fervent tone.

Now, it is time for the reader to know that in the far-away Land of Oz the lovely Ruler, Ozma, had been following the adventures of her Shaggy Man, and Tik-Tok, and all the others they had met. Day by day Ozma, with the wonderful Wizard of Oz seated beside her, had gazed upon a Magic Picture in a radium frame, which occupied one side of the Ruler's cosy boudoir in the palace of the Emerald City. The singular thing about this Magic Picture was that it showed whatever scene Ozma wished to see, with the figures all in motion, just as it was taking place. So Ozma and the Wizard had watched every action of the adventurers from the time Shaggy had met shipwrecked Betsy and Hank in the Rose Kingdom, at which time the Rose Princess, a distant cousin of Ozma, had been exiled by her heartless subjects.

When Ann and her people so earnestly wished to return to Oogaboo, Ozma was sorry for them and remembered that Oogaboo was a corner of the

Land of Oz. She turned to her attendant and asked:

"Can not your magic take these unhappy people to their old home, Wizard?"

"It can, Your Highness," replied the little Wizard.

"I think the poor Queen has suffered enough in her misguided effort to conquer the world," said Ozma, smiling at the absurdity of the undertaking, "so no doubt she will hereafter be contented in her own little Kingdom. Please send her there, Wizard, and with her the officers and Files."

"How about the Rose Princess?" asked the Wizard.

"Send her to Oogaboo with Files," answered Ozma. "They have become such good friends that I am sure it would make them unhappy to separate them."

"Very well," said the Wizard, and without any fuss or mystery whatever he performed a magical rite that was simple and effective. Therefore those seated in the Nome King's cavern were both startled and amazed when all the people of Oogaboo suddenly disappeared from the room, and with them the Rose Princess. At first they could not understand it at all; but presently Shaggy suspected the truth, and believing that Ozma was now taking an interest in the party he drew from his pocket a tiny instrument which he placed against his ear.

Ozma, observing this action in her Magic Picture, at once caught up a similar instrument from a table beside her and held it to her own ear. The two instruments recorded the same delicate vibrations of sound and formed a wireless telephone, an invention of the Wizard. Those separated by any distance were thus enabled to converse together with perfect ease and without any wire connection.

"Do you hear me, Shaggy Man?" asked Ozma.

"Yes, Your Highness," he replied.

"I have sent the people of Oogaboo back to their own little valley," announced the Ruler of Oz; "so do not worry over their disappearance."

"That was very kind of you," said Shaggy. "But Your Highness must permit me to report that my own mission here is now ended. I have found my lost brother, and he is now beside me, freed from the enchantment of ugliness which Ruggedo cast upon him. Tik-Tok has served me and my comrades faithfully, as you requested him to do, and I hope you will now transport the Clockwork Man back to your fairyland of Oz."

"I will do that," replied Ozma. "But how about yourself, Shaggy?"

"I have been very happy in Oz," he said, "but my duty to others forces me to exile myself from that delightful land. I must take care of my new-found brother, for one thing, and I have a new comrade in a dear little girl named

Betsy Bobbin, who has no home to go to, and no other friends but me and a small donkey named Hank. I have promised Betsy never to desert her as long as she needs a friend, and so I must give up the delights of the Land of Oz forever."

He said this with a sigh of regret, and Ozma made no reply but laid the tiny instrument on her table, thus cutting off all further communication with the Shaggy Man. But the lovely Ruler of Oz still watched her magic picture, with a thoughtful expression upon her face, and the little Wizard of Oz watched Ozma and smiled softly to himself.

In the cavern of the Nome King Shaggy replaced the wireless telephone in his pocket and turning to Betsy said in as cheerful a voice as he could muster:

"Well, little comrade, what shall we do next?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she answered with a puzzled face. "I'm kind of sorry our adventures are over, for I enjoyed them, and now that Queen Ann and her people are gone, and Polychrome is gone, and — dear me! — where's Tik-Tok, Shaggy?"

"He also has disappeared," said Shaggy, looking around the cavern and nodding wisely. "By this time he is in Ozma's palace in the Land of Oz, which is his home."

"Isn't it your home, too?" asked Betsy.

"It used to be, my dear; but now my home is wherever you and my brother are. We are wanderers, you know, but if we stick together I am sure we shall have a good time."

"Then," said the girl, "let us get out of this stuffy, underground cavern and go in search of new adventures. I'm sure it has stopped raining."

"I'm ready," said Shaggy, and then they bade good-bye to King Kaliko, and thanked him for his assistance, and went out to the mouth of the passage.

The sky was now clear and a brilliant blue in color; the sun shone brightly and even this rugged, rocky country seemed delightful after their confinement underground. There were but four of them now — Betsy and Hank, and Shaggy and his brother — and the little party made their way down the mountain and followed a faint path that led toward the southwest.

During this time Ozma had been holding a conference with the Wizard, and later with Tik-Tok, whom the magic of the Wizard had quickly transported to Ozma's palace. Tik-Tok had only words of praise for Betsy Bobbin, "who," he said, "is al-most as nice as Dor-o-thy her-self."

"Let us send for Dorothy," said Ozma, and summoning her favorite maid, who was named Jellia Jamb, she asked her to request Princess Dorothy to attend her at once. So a few moments later Dorothy entered Ozma's room

and greeted her and the Wizard and Tik-Tok with the same gentle smile and simple manner that had won for the little girl the love of everyone she met.

"Did you want to see me, Ozma?" she asked.

"Yes, dear. I am puzzled how to act, and I want your advice."

"I don't b'lieve it's worth much," replied Dorothy, "but I'll do the best I can. What is it all about, Ozma?"

"You all know," said the girl Ruler, addressing her three friends, "what a serious thing it is to admit any mortals into this fairyland of Oz. It is true I have invited several mortals to make their home here, and all of them have proved true and loyal subjects. Indeed, no one of you three was a native of Oz. Dorothy and the Wizard came here from the United States, and Tik-Tok came from the Land of Ev. But of course he is not a mortal. Shaggy is another American, and he is the cause of all my worry, for our dear Shaggy will not return here and desert the new friends he has found in his recent adventures, because he believes they need his services."

"Shaggy Man was always kind-hearted," remarked Dorothy. "But who are these new friends he has found?"

"One is his brother, who for many years has been a prisoner of the Nome King, our old enemy Ruggedo. This brother seems a kindly, honest fellow, but he has done nothing to entitle him to a home in the Land of Oz."

"Who else?" asked Dorothy.

"I have told you about Betsy Bobbin, the little girl who was shipwrecked — in much the same way you once were — and has since been following the Shaggy Man in his search for his lost brother. You remember her, do you not?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I've often watched her and Hank in the Magic Picture, you know. She's a dear little girl, and old Hank is a darling! Where are they now?"

"Look and see," replied Ozma with a smile at her friend's enthusiasm.

Dorothy turned to the Picture, which showed Betsy and Hank, with Shaggy and his brother, trudging along the rocky paths of a barren country.

"Seems to me," she said, musingly, "that they're a good way from any place to sleep, or any nice things to eat."

"You are right," said Tik-Tok. "I have been in that coun-try, and it is a wil-der-ness."

"It is the country of the nomes," explained the Wizard, "who are so mischievous that no one cares to live near them. I'm afraid Shaggy and his friends will endure many hardships before they get out of that rocky place, unless — "

He turned to Ozma and smiled.

“Unless I ask you to transport them all here?” she asked.

“Yes, your Highness.”

“Could your magic do that?” inquired Dorothy.

“I think so,” said the Wizard.

“Well,” said Dorothy, “as far as Betsy and Hank are concerned, I’d like to have them here in Oz. It would be such fun to have a girl playmate of my own age, you see. And Hank is such a dear little mule!”

Ozma laughed at the wistful expression in the girl’s eyes, and then she drew Dorothy to her and kissed her.

“Am I not your friend and playmate?” she asked.

Dorothy flushed.

“You know how dearly I love you, Ozma!” she cried. “But you’re so busy ruling all this Land of Oz that we can’t always be together.”

“I know, dear. My first duty is to my subjects, and I think it would be a delight to us all to have Betsy with us. There’s a pretty suite of rooms just opposite your own where she can live, and I’ll build a golden stall for Hank in the stable where the Sawhorse lives. Then we’ll introduce the mule to the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, and I’m sure they will soon become firm friends. But I cannot very well admit Betsy and Hank into Oz unless I also admit Shaggy’s brother.”

“And, unless you admit Shaggy’s brother, you will keep out poor Shaggy, whom we are all very fond of,” said the Wizard.

“Well, why not ad-mit him?” demanded Tik-Tok.

“The Land of Oz is not a refuge for all mortals in distress,” explained Ozma. “I do not wish to be unkind to Shaggy Man, but his brother has no claim on me.”

“The Land of Oz isn’t crowded,” suggested Dorothy.

“Then you advise me to admit Shaggy’s brother?” inquired Ozma.

“Well, we can’t afford to lose our Shaggy Man, can we?”

“No, indeed!” returned Ozma. “What do you say, Wizard?”

“I’m getting my magic ready to transport them all.”

“And you, Tik-Tok?”

“Shag-gy’s broth-er is a good fel-low, and we can’t spare Shag-gy.”

“So, then; the question is settled,” decided Ozma. “Perform your magic, Wizard!”

He did so, placing a silver plate upon a small standard and pouring upon the plate a small quantity of pink powder which was contained in a crystal vial. Then he muttered a rather difficult incantation which the sorceress Glinda the Good had taught him, and it all ended in a puff of perfumed smoke from the silver plate. This smoke was so pungent that it made both

Ozma and Dorothy rub their eyes for a moment.

"You must pardon these disagreeable fumes," said the Wizard. "I assure you the smoke is a very necessary part of my wizardry."

"Look!" cried Dorothy, pointing to the Magic Picture; "they're gone! All of them are gone."

Indeed, the picture now showed the same rocky landscape as before, but the three people and the mule had disappeared from it.

"They are gone," said the Wizard, polishing the silver plate and wrapping it in a fine cloth, "because they are here."

At that moment Jellia Jamb entered the room.

"Your Highness," she said to Ozma, "the Shaggy Man and another man

are in the waiting room and ask to pay their respects to you. Shaggy is crying like a baby, but he says they are tears of joy."

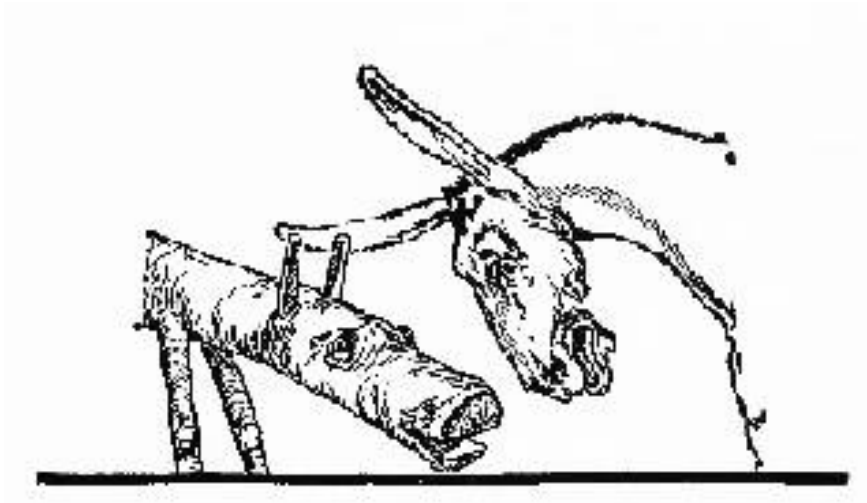
"Send them here at once, Jellia!" commanded Ozma.

"Also," continued the maid, "a girl and a small-sized mule have mysteriously arrived, but they don't seem to know where they are or how they came here. Shall I send them here, too?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Dorothy, eagerly jumping up from her chair; "I'll go to meet Betsy myself, for she'll feel awful strange in this big palace."

And she ran down the stairs two at a time to greet her new friend, Betsy Bobbin.

Chapter Twenty-Five
The Land of Love



"Well, is 'hee-haw' all you are able to say?" inquired the Sawhorse, as he examined Hank with his knot eyes and slowly wagged the branch that served him for a tail.

They were in a beautiful stable in the rear of Ozma's palace, where the wooden Sawhorse — very much alive — lived in a gold-paneled stall, and where there were rooms for the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, which were filled with soft cushions for them to lie upon and golden troughs for them to eat from.

Beside the stall of the Sawhorse had been placed another for Hank, the mule. This was not quite so beautiful as the other, for the Sawhorse was Ozma's favorite steed; but Hank had a supply of cushions for a bed (which the Sawhorse did not need because he never slept) and all this luxury was so strange to the little mule that he could only stand still and regard his surroundings and his queer companions with wonder and amazement.

The Cowardly Lion, looking very dignified, was stretched out upon the marble floor of the stable, eyeing Hank with a calm and critical gaze, while near by crouched the huge Hungry Tiger, who seemed equally interested in the new animal that had just arrived. The Sawhorse, standing stiffly before Hank, repeated his question:

"Is 'hee-haw' all you are able to say?"

Hank moved his ears in an embarrassed manner.

"I have never said anything else, until now," he replied; and then he began

to tremble with fright to hear himself talk.

"I can well understand that," remarked the Lion, wagging his great head with a swaying motion. "Strange things happen in this Land of Oz, as they do everywhere else. I believe you came here from the cold, civilized, outside world, did you not?"

"I did," replied Hank. "One minute I was outside of Oz — and the next minute I was inside! That was enough to give me a nervous shock, as you may guess; but to find myself able to talk, as Betsy does, is a marvel that staggers me."

"That is because you are in the Land of Oz," said the Sawhorse. "All animals talk, in this favored country, and you must admit it is more sociable than to bray your dreadful 'hee-haw,' which nobody can understand."

"Mules understand it very well," declared Hank.

"Oh, indeed! Then there must be other mules in your outside world," said the Tiger, yawning sleepily.

"There are a great many in America," said Hank. "Are you the only Tiger in Oz?"

"No," acknowledged the Tiger, "I have many relatives living in the Jungle Country; but I am the only Tiger living in the Emerald City."

"There are other Lions, too," said the Sawhorse; "but I am the only horse, of any description, in this favored Land."

"That is why this Land is favored," said the Tiger. "You must understand, friend Hank, that the Sawhorse puts on airs because he is shod with plates of gold, and because our beloved Ruler, Ozma of Oz, likes to ride upon his back."

"Betsy rides upon my back," declared Hank proudly.

"Who is Betsy?"

"The dearest, sweetest girl in all the world!"

The Sawhorse gave an angry snort and stamped his golden feet. The Tiger crouched and growled. Slowly the great Lion rose to his feet, his mane bristling.

"Friend Hank," said he, "either you are mistaken in judgment or you are willfully trying to deceive us. The dearest, sweetest girl in the world is our Dorothy, and I will fight anyone — animal or human — who dares to deny it!"

"So will I!" snarled the Tiger, showing two rows of enormous white teeth.

"You are all wrong!" asserted the Sawhorse in a voice of scorn. "No girl living can compare with my mistress, Ozma of Oz!"

Hank slowly turned around until his heels were toward the others. Then he said stubbornly:

“I am not mistaken in my statement, nor will I admit there can be a sweeter girl alive than Betsy Bobbin. If you want to fight, come on — I’m ready for you!”

While they hesitated, eyeing Hank’s heels doubtfully, a merry peal of laughter startled the animals and turning their heads they beheld three lovely girls standing just within the richly carved entrance to the stable. In the center was Ozma, her arms encircling the waists of Dorothy and Betsy, who stood on either side of her. Ozma was nearly half a head taller than the two other girls, who were almost of one size. Unobserved, they had listened to the talk of the animals, which was a very strange experience indeed to little Betsy Bobbin.

“You foolish beasts!” exclaimed the Ruler of Oz, in a gentle but chiding voice. “Why should you fight to defend us, who are all three loving friends and in no sense rivals? Answer me!” she continued, as they bowed their heads sheepishly.

“I have the right to express my opinion, your Highness,” pleaded the Lion.

“And so have the others,” replied Ozma. “I am glad you and the Hungry Tiger love Dorothy best, for she was your first friend and companion. Also I am pleased that my Sawhorse loves me best, for together we have endured both joy and sorrow. Hank has proved his faith and loyalty by defending his own little mistress; and so you are all right in one way, but wrong in another. Our Land of Oz is a Land of Love, and here friendship outranks every other quality. Unless you can all be friends, you cannot retain our love.”

They accepted this rebuke very meekly.

“All right,” said the Sawhorse, quite cheerfully; “shake hoofs, friend Mule.”

Hank touched his hoof to that of the wooden horse.

“Let us be friends and rub noses,” said the Tiger. So Hank modestly rubbed noses with the big beast.

The Lion merely nodded and said, as he crouched before the mule:

“Any friend of a friend of our beloved Ruler is a friend of the Cowardly Lion. That seems to cover your case. If ever you need help or advice, friend Hank, call on me.”

“Why, this is as it should be,” said Ozma, highly pleased to see them so fully reconciled. Then she turned to her companions: “Come, my dears, let us resume our walk.”

As they turned away Betsy said wonderingly:

“Do all the animals in Oz talk as we do?”

“Almost all,” answered Dorothy. “There’s a Yellow Hen here, and she can talk, and so can her chickens; and there’s a Pink Kitten upstairs in my

room who talks very nicely; but I've a little fuzzy black dog, named Toto, who has been with me in Oz a long time, and he's never said a single word but 'Bow-wow!'"

"Do you know why?" asked Ozma.

"Why, he's a Kansas dog; so I s'pose he's different from these fairy animals," replied Dorothy.

"Hank isn't a fairy animal, any more than Toto," said Ozma, "yet as soon as he came under the spell of our fairyland he found he could talk. It was the same way with Billina, the Yellow Hen whom you brought here at one time. The same spell has affected Toto, I assure you; but he's a wise little dog and while he knows everything that is said to him he prefers not to talk."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I never s'pected Toto was fooling me all this time." Then she drew a small silver whistle from her pocket and blew a shrill note upon it. A moment later there was a sound of scurrying footsteps, and a shaggy black dog came running up the path.

Dorothy knelt down before him and shaking her finger just above his nose she said:

"Toto, haven't I always been good to you?"

Toto looked up at her with his bright black eyes and wagged his tail.

"Bow-wow!" he said, and Betsy knew at once that meant yes, as well as Dorothy and Ozma knew it, for there was no mistaking the tone of Toto's voice.

"That's a dog answer," said Dorothy. "How would you like it, Toto, if I said nothing to you but 'bow-wow'?"

Toto's tail was wagging furiously now, but otherwise he was silent.

"Really, Dorothy," said Betsy, "he can talk with his bark and his tail just

as well as we can. Don't you understand such dog language?"

"Of course I do," replied Dorothy. "But Toto's got to be more sociable. See here, sir!" she continued, addressing the dog, "I've just learned, for the first time, that you can say words — if you want to. Don't you want to, Toto?"

"Woof!" said Toto, and that meant "no."

"Not just one word, Toto, to prove you're as any other animal in Oz?"

"Woof!"

"Just one word, Toto — and then you may run away."

He looked at her steadily a moment.

"All right. Here I go!" he said, and darted away as swift as an arrow.

Dorothy clapped her hands in delight, while Betsy and Ozma both laughed heartily at her pleasure and the success of her experiment. Arm in arm they sauntered away through the beautiful gardens of the palace, where magnificent flowers bloomed in abundance and fountains shot their silvery sprays far into the air. And by and by, as they turned a corner, they came upon Shaggy Man and his brother, who were seated together upon a golden bench.

The two arose to bow respectfully as the Ruler of Oz approached them.

"How are you enjoying our Land of Oz?" Ozma asked the stranger.

"I am very happy here, Your Highness," replied Shaggy's brother. "Also I am very grateful to you for permitting me to live in this delightful place."

"You must thank Shaggy for that," said Ozma. "Being his brother, I have made you welcome here."

"When you know Brother better," said Shaggy earnestly, "you will be glad he has become one of your loyal subjects. I am just getting acquainted with him myself and I find much in his character to admire."

Leaving the brothers, Ozma and the girls continued their walk. Presently Betsy exclaimed:

"Shaggy's brother can't ever be as happy in Oz as I am. Do you know, Dorothy, I didn't believe any girl could ever have such a good time — anywhere — as I'm having now?"

"I know," answered Dorothy. "I've felt that way myself, lots of times."

"I wish," continued Betsy, dreamily, "that every little girl in the world could live in the Land of Oz; and every little boy, too!"

Ozma laughed at this.

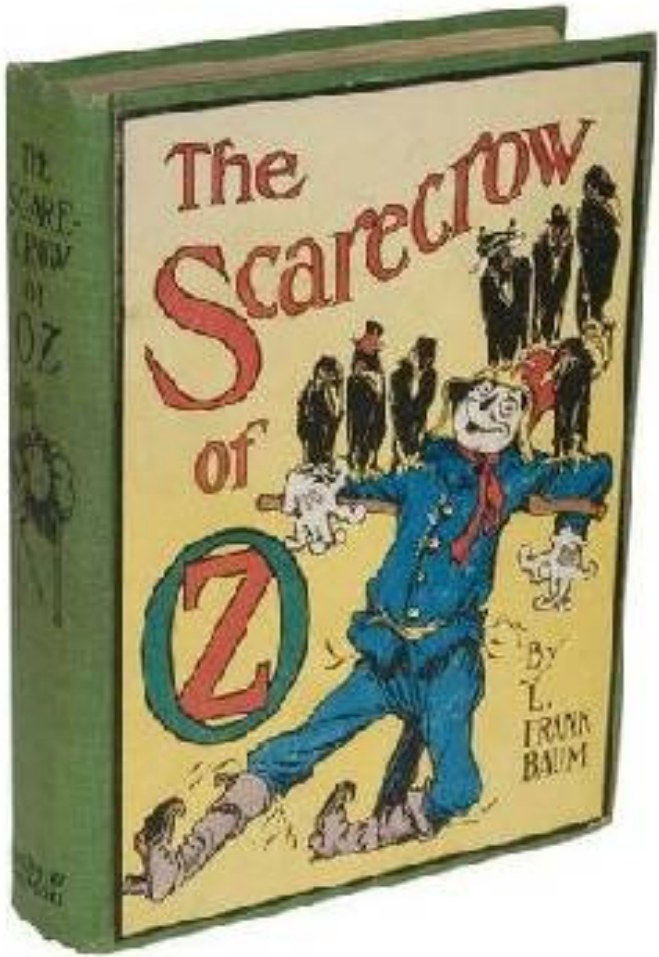
"It is quite fortunate for us, Betsy, that your wish cannot be granted," said she, "for all that army of girls and boys would crowd us so that we would have to move away."

"Yes," agreed Betsy, after a little thought, "I guess that's true."

THE END

THE SCARECROW OF OZ

Baum's ninth Oz book, *The Scarecrow of Oz*, was apparently a personal favorite of the author. Reilly & Britton published the novel in 1915, illustrated by John R. Neill. A few years earlier, Baum had begun a new series featuring an old sea salt, Cap'n Bill and his friend, a little girl named Trot. Although well done, *The Sea Fairies* and *Sky Island* did not prove as popular as the Oz books and so, Baum decided to bring the characters to Oz. A storm breaks up their quiet boat ride and Cap'n Bill and Trot are thrown overboard, winding up in an underwater cave, where they meet an Ork, an ostrich-sized bird with a propeller tail, who flies them out of the cave and into a series of adventures, encountering magic berries and traveling from the Land of Mo via crossing the Deadly Dessert to a remote corner of Oz, known as Jinxland, where they find danger in the form of King Krewl and a witch named Blinkie. The Scarecrow of Oz comes to the rescue. Trot was the last American girl that Baum introduced to the Land of Oz.



A copy of the first edition of The Scarecrow of Oz

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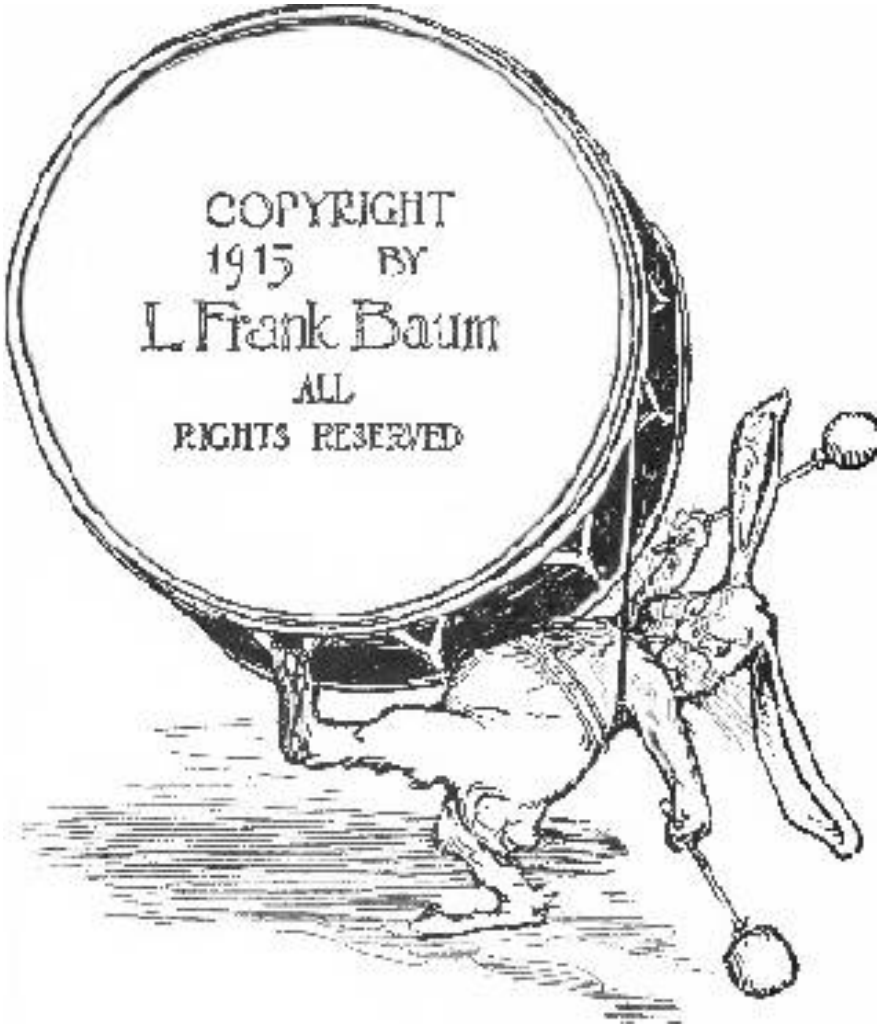
A poster from the 1902-03 musical

Fred Stone in the musical adaptation of 'The Wizard of Oz', 1902-03

Fred Stone in the musical adaptation of 'The Wizard of Oz', 1902-03

Sheet music from the 1902-03 musical

THE
SCARECROW OF OZ
Dedicated to



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Dedicated to

"The uplifters" of Los Angeles, California, in grateful appreciation of the pleasure I have derived from association with them, and in recognition of their sincere endeavor to uplift humanity through kindness, consideration and good-fellowship. They are big men — all of them — and all with the generous hearts of little children.

L. Frank Baum

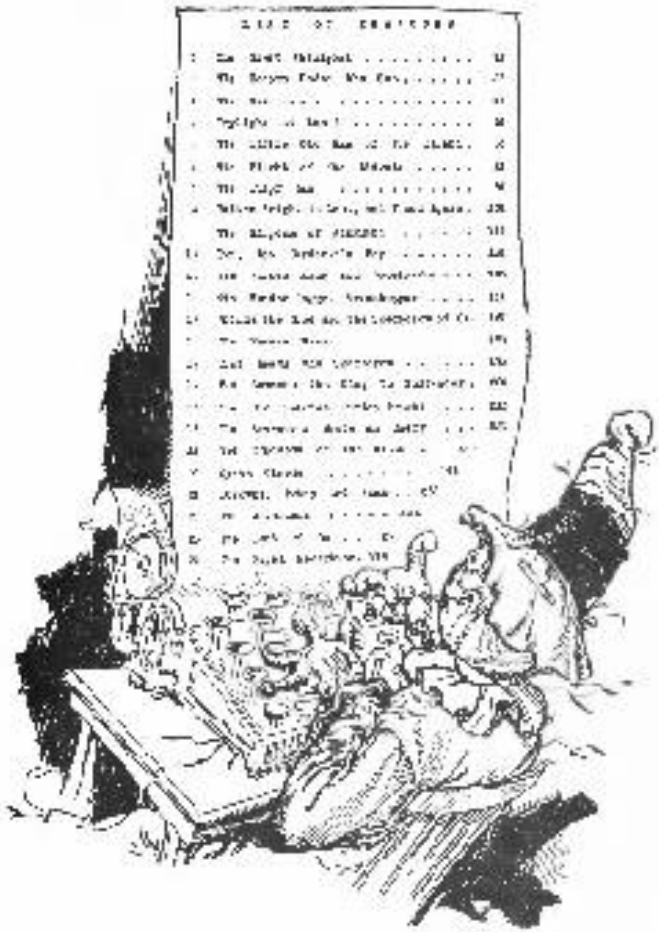
‘TWIXT YOU AND ME

The Army of Children which besieged the Postoffice, conquered the Postmen and delivered to me its imperious Commands, insisted that Trot and Cap’n Bill be admitted to the Land of Oz, where Trot could enjoy the society of Dorothy, Betsy Bobbin and Ozma, while the one-legged sailor-man might become a comrade of the Tin Woodman, the Shaggy Man, Tik-Tok and all the other quaint people who inhabit this wonderful fairyland.

It was no easy task to obey this order and land Trot and Cap’n Bill safely in Oz, as you will discover by reading this book. Indeed, it required the best efforts of our dear old friend, the Scarecrow, to save them from a dreadful fate on the journey; but the story leaves them happily located in Ozma’s splendid palace and Dorothy has promised me that Button-Bright and the three girls are sure to encounter, in the near future, some marvelous adventures in the Land of Oz, which I hope to be permitted to relate to you in the next Oz Book.

Meantime, I am deeply grateful to my little readers for their continued enthusiasm over the Oz stories, as evinced in the many letters they send me, all of which are lovingly cherished. It takes more and more Oz Books every year to satisfy the demands of old and new readers, and there have been formed many “Oz Reading Societies,” where the Oz Books owned by different members are read aloud. All this is very gratifying to me and encourages me to write more stories. When the children have had enough of them, I hope they will let me know, and then I’ll try to write something different.

L. Frank Baum
“Royal Historian of Oz.”
“OZCOT”
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA, 1915.



Chapter One
The Great Whirlpool

"Seems to me," said Cap'n Bill, as he sat beside Trot under the big acacia tree, looking out over the blue ocean, "seems to me, Trot, as how the more we know, the more we find we don't know."

"I can't quite make that out, Cap'n Bill," answered the little girl in a serious voice, after a moment's thought, during which her eyes followed those of the old sailor-man across the glassy surface of the sea. "Seems to me that all we learn is jus' so much gained."

"I know; it looks that way at first sight," said the sailor, nodding his head; "but those as knows the least have a habit of thinkin' they know all there is to know, while them as knows the most admits what a turr'ble big world this is. It's the knowing ones that realize one lifetime ain't long enough to git more'n a few dips o' the oars of knowledge."

Trot didn't answer. She was a very little girl, with big, solemn eyes and an earnest, simple manner. Cap'n Bill had been her faithful companion for years and had taught her almost everything she knew.

He was a wonderful man, this Cap'n Bill. Not so very old, although his hair was grizzled — what there was of it. Most of his head was bald as an egg and as shiny as oilcloth, and this made his big ears stick out in a funny way. His eyes had a gentle look and were pale blue in color, and his round face was rugged and bronzed. Cap'n Bill's left leg was missing, from the knee down, and that was why the sailor no longer sailed the seas. The wooden leg he wore was good enough to stump around with on land, or even to take Trot out for a row or a sail on the ocean, but when it came to "runnin' up aloft" or performing active duties on shipboard, the old sailor was not equal to the task. The loss of his leg had ruined his career and the old sailor found comfort in devoting himself to the education and companionship of the little girl.

The accident to Cap'n Bill's leg bad happened at about the time Trot was born, and ever since that he had lived with Trot's mother as "a star boarder," having enough money saved up to pay for his weekly "keep." He loved the baby and often held her on his lap; her first ride was on Cap'n Bill's shoulders, for she had no baby-carriage; and when she began to toddle around, the child and the sailor became close comrades and enjoyed many strange adventures together. It is said the fairies had been present at Trot's birth and had marked her forehead with their invisible mystic signs, so that she was able to see and do many wonderful things.

The acacia tree was on top of a high bluff, but a path ran down the bank in a zigzag way to the water's edge, where Cap'n Bill's boat was moored to a rock by means of a stout cable. It had been a hot, sultry afternoon, with scarcely a breath of air stirring, so Cap'n Bill and Trot had been quietly sitting beneath the shade of the tree, waiting for the sun to get low enough for them to take a row.

They had decided to visit one of the great caves which the waves had washed out of the rocky coast during many years of steady effort. The caves were a source of continual delight to both the girl and the sailor, who loved to explore their awesome depths.

"I b'lieve, Cap'n," remarked Trot, at last, "that it's time for us to start."

The old man cast a shrewd glance at the sky, the sea and the motionless boat. Then he shook his head.

"Mebbe it's time, Trot," he answered, "but I don't jes' like the looks o' things this afternoon."

"What's wrong?" she asked wonderingly.

“Can’t say as to that. Things is too quiet to suit me, that’s all. No breeze, not a ripple a-top the water, nary a gull a-flyin’ anywhere, an’ the end o’ the hottest day o’ the year. I ain’t no weather-prophet, Trot, but any sailor would know the signs is ominous.”

“There’s nothing wrong that I can see,” said Trot.

“If there was a cloud in the sky even as big as my thumb, we might worry about it; but — look, Cap’n! — the sky is as clear as can be.”

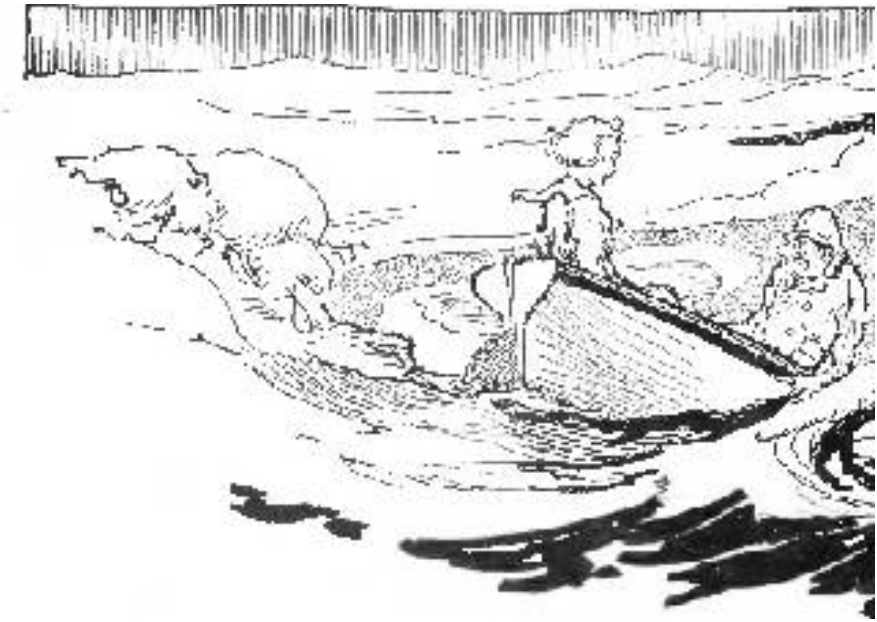
He looked again and nodded.

“P’r’aps we can make the cave, all right,” he agreed, not wishing to disappoint her. “It’s only a little way out, an’ we’ll be on the watch; so come along, Trot.”

Together they descended the winding path to the beach. It was no trouble for the girl to keep her footing on the steep way, but Cap’n Bill, because of his wooden leg, had to hold on to rocks and roots now and then to save himself from tumbling. On a level path he was as spry as anyone, but to climb up hill or down required some care.

They reached the boat safely and while Trot was untying the rope Cap’n Bill reached into a crevice of the rock and drew out several tallow candles and a box of wax matches, which he thrust into the capacious pockets of his “sou’wester.” This sou’wester was a short coat of oilskin which the old sailor wore on all occasions — when he wore a coat at all — and the pockets always contained a variety of objects, useful and ornamental, which made even Trot wonder where they all came from and why Cap’n Bill should treasure them. The jackknives — a big one and a little one — the bits of cord, the fishhooks, the nails: these were handy to have on certain occasions. But bits of shell, and tin boxes with unknown contents, buttons, pincers, bottles of curious stones and the like, seemed quite unnecessary to carry around. That was Cap’n Bill’s business, however, and now that he added the candles and the matches to his collection Trot made no comment, for she knew these last were to light their way through the caves. The sailor always rowed the boat, for he handled the oars with strength and skill. Trot sat in the stern and steered. The place where they embarked was a little bight or circular bay, and the boat cut across a much larger bay toward a distant headland where the caves were located, right at the water’s edge. They were nearly a mile from shore and about halfway across the bay when Trot suddenly sat up straight and exclaimed: “What’s that, Cap’n?”

He stopped rowing and turned half around to look.



"That, Trot," he slowly replied, "looks to me mighty like a whirlpool."

"What makes it, Cap'n?"

"A whirl in the air makes the whirl in the water. I was afraid as we'd meet with trouble, Trot. Things didn't look right. The air was too still."

"It's coming closer," said the girl.

The old man grabbed the oars and began rowing with all his strength.

"'Tain't comin' closer to us, Trot," he gasped; "it's we that are comin' closer to the whirlpool. The thing is drawin' us to it like a magnet!"

Trot's sun-bronzed face was a little paler as she grasped the tiller firmly and tried to steer the boat away; but she said not a word to indicate fear.

The swirl of the water as they came nearer made a roaring sound that was fearful to listen to. So fierce and powerful was the whirlpool that it drew the surface of the sea into the form of a great basin, slanting downward toward the center, where a big hole had been made in the ocean — a hole with walls of water that were kept in place by the rapid whirling of the air.

The boat in which Trot and Cap'n Bill were riding was just on the outer edge of this saucer-like slant, and the old sailor knew very well that unless he could quickly force the little craft away from the rushing current they would soon be drawn into the great black hole that yawned in the middle. So he exerted all his might and pulled as he had never pulled before. He pulled so hard that the left oar snapped in two and sent Cap'n Bill sprawling upon the bottom of the boat.

He scrambled up quickly enough and glanced over the side. Then he looked at Trot, who sat quite still, with a serious, far-away look in her sweet eyes. The boat was now speeding swiftly of its own accord, following the line of the circular basin round and round and gradually drawing nearer to the great hole in the center. Any further effort to escape the whirlpool was useless, and realizing this fact Cap'n Bill turned toward Trot and put an arm

around her, as if to shield her from the awful fate before them. He did not try to speak, because the roar of the waters would have drowned the sound of his voice.

These two faithful comrades had faced dangers before, but nothing to equal that which now faced them. Yet Cap'n Bill, noting the look in Trot's eyes and remembering how often she had been protected by unseen powers, did not quite give way to despair.

The great hole in the dark water — now growing nearer and nearer — looked very terrifying; but they were both brave enough to face it and await the result of the adventure.

Chapter Two

The Cavern Under the Sea

The circles were so much smaller at the bottom of the basin, and the boat moved so much more swiftly, that Trot was beginning to get dizzy with the motion, when suddenly the boat made a leap and dived headlong into the murky depths of the hole. Whirling like tops, but still clinging together, the sailor and the girl were separated from their boat and plunged down — down — down — into the farthermost recesses of the great ocean.

At first their fall was swift as an arrow, but presently they seemed to be going more moderately and Trot was almost sure that unseen arms were about her, supporting her and protecting her. She could see nothing, because the water filled her eyes and blurred her vision, but she clung fast to Cap'n Bill's sou'wester, while other arms clung fast to her, and so they gradually sank down and down until a full stop was made, when they began to ascend

again.

But it seemed to Trot that they were not rising straight to the surface from where they had come. The water was no longer whirling them and they seemed to be drawn in a slanting direction through still, cool ocean depths. And then — in much quicker time than I have told it — up they popped to the surface and were cast at full length upon a sandy beach, where they lay choking and gasping for breath and wondering what had happened to them.

Trot was the first to recover. Disengaging herself from Cap'n Bill's wet embrace and sitting up, she rubbed the water from her eyes and then looked around her. A soft, bluish-green glow lighted the place, which seemed to be a sort of cavern, for above and on either side of her were rugged rocks. They had been cast upon a beach of clear sand, which slanted upward from the pool of water at their feet — a pool which doubtless led into the big ocean that fed it. Above the reach of the waves of the pool were more rocks, and still more and more, into the dim windings and recesses of which the glowing light from the water did not penetrate.

The place looked grim and lonely, but Trot was thankful that she was still alive and had suffered no severe injury during her trying adventure under water. At her side Cap'n Bill was sputtering and coughing, trying to get rid of the water he had swallowed. Both of them were soaked through, yet the cavern was warm and comfortable and a wetting did not dismay the little girl in the least.

She crawled up the slant of sand and gathered in her hand a bunch of dried seaweed, with which she mopped the face of Cap'n Bill and cleared the water from his eyes and ears. Presently the old man sat up and stared at her intently. Then he nodded his bald head three times and said in a gurgling voice:

"Mighty good, Trot; mighty good! We didn't reach Davy Jones's locker that time, did we? Though why we didn't, an' why we're here, is more'n I kin make out."

"Take it easy, Cap'n," she replied. "We're safe enough, I guess, at least for the time being."

He squeezed the water out of the bottoms of his loose trousers and felt of his wooden leg and arms and head, and finding he had brought all of his person with him he gathered courage to examine closely their surroundings.

"Where d'ye think we are, Trot?" he presently asked.

"Can't say, Cap'n. P'r'aps in one of our caves."

He shook his head. "No," said he, "I don't think that, at all. The distance we came up didn't seem half as far as the distance we went down; an' you'll notice there ain't any outside entrance to this cavern whatever. It's a reg'lar

dome over this pool o' water, and unless there's some passage at the back, up yonder, we're fast pris'ners."

Trot looked thoughtfully over her shoulder.

"When we're rested," she said, "we will crawl up there and see if there's a way to get out."

Cap'n Bill reached in the pocket of his oilskin coat and took out his pipe. It was still dry, for he kept it in an oilskin pouch with his tobacco. His matches were in a tight tin box, so in a few moments the old sailor was smoking contentedly. Trot knew it helped him to think when he was in any difficulty. Also, the pipe did much to restore the old sailor's composure, after his long ducking and his terrible fright — a fright that was more on Trot's account than his own.

The sand was dry where they sat, and soaked up the water that dripped from their clothing. When Trot had squeezed the wet out of her hair she began to feel much like her old self again. By and by they got upon their feet and crept up the incline to the scattered boulders above. Some of these were of huge size, but by passing between some and around others, they were able to reach the extreme rear of the cavern.

"Yes," said Trot, with interest, "here's a round hole."

"And it's black as night inside it," remarked Cap'n Bill.

"Just the same," answered the girl, "we ought to explore it, and see where it goes, 'cause it's the only poss'ble way we can get out of this place."

Cap'n Bill eyed the hole doubtfully

"It may be a way out o' here, Trot," he said, "but it may be a way into a far worse place than this. I'm not sure but our best plan is to stay right here."

Trot wasn't sure, either, when she thought of it in that light. After awhile she made her way back to the sands again, and Cap'n Bill followed her. As they sat down, the child looked thoughtfully at the sailor's bulging pockets.

"How much food have we got, Cap'n?" she asked.

“Half a dozen ship’s biscuits an’ a hunk o’ cheese,” he replied. “Want some now, Trot?”

She shook her head, saying:

“That ought to keep us alive ‘bout three days if we’re careful of it.”

“Longer’n that, Trot,” said Cap’n Bill, but his voice was a little troubled and unsteady.

“But if we stay here we’re bound to starve in time,” continued the girl, “while if we go into the dark hole — ”

“Some things are more hard to face than starvation,” said the sailor-man, gravely. “We don’t know what’s inside that dark hole: Trot, nor where it might lead us to.”

“There’s a way to find that out,” she persisted.

Instead of replying, Cap’n Bill began searching in his pockets. He soon drew out a little package of fish-hooks and a long line. Trot watched him join them together. Then he crept a little way up the slope and turned over a big rock. Two or three small crabs began scurrying away over the sands and the old sailor caught them and put one on his hook and the others in his pocket. Coming back to the pool he swung the hook over his shoulder and circled it around his head and cast it nearly into the center of the water, where he allowed it to sink gradually, paying out the line as far as it would go. When the end was reached, he began drawing it in again, until the crab bait was floating on the surface.

Trot watched him cast the line a second time, and a third. She decided that either there were no fishes in the pool or they would not bite the crab bait. But Cap’n Bill was an old fisherman and not easily discouraged. When the crab got away he put another on the hook. When the crabs were all gone he climbed up the rocks and found some more.

Meantime Trot tired of watching him and lay down upon the sands, where she fell fast asleep. During the next two hours her clothing dried completely, as did that of the old sailor. They were both so used to salt water that there was no danger of taking cold.

Finally the little girl was wakened by a splash beside her and a grunt of satisfaction from Cap’n Bill. She opened her eyes to find that the Cap’n had landed a silver-scaled fish weighing about two pounds. This cheered her considerably and she hurried to scrape together a heap of seaweed, while Cap’n Bill cut up the fish with his jackknife and got it ready for cooking.

They had cooked fish with seaweed before. Cap’n Bill wrapped his fish in some of the weed and dipped it in the water to dampen it. Then he lighted a match and set fire to Trot’s heap, which speedily burned down to a glowing bed of ashes. Then they laid the wrapped fish on the ashes, covered it with more seaweed, and allowed this to catch fire and burn to embers. After feeding the fire with seaweed for some time, the sailor finally decided that their supper was ready, so he scattered the ashes and drew out the bits of fish, still encased in their smoking wrappings.

When these wrappings were removed, the fish was found thoroughly cooked and both Trot and Cap’n Bill ate of it freely. It had a slight flavor of seaweed and would have been better with a sprinkling of salt.

The soft glow which until now had lighted the cavern, began to grow dim, but there was a great quantity of seaweed in the place, so after they had eaten their fish they kept the fire alive for a time by giving it a handful of fuel now and then.

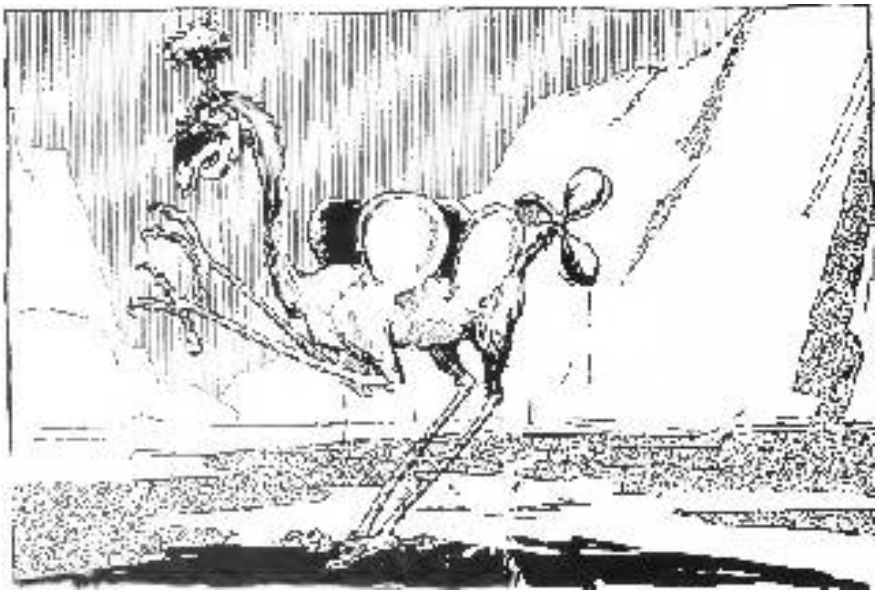
From an inner pocket the sailor drew a small flask of battered metal and unscrewing the cap handed it to Trot. She took but one swallow of the water although she wanted more, and she noticed that Cap'n Bill merely wet his lips with it.

"S'pose," said she, staring at the glowing seaweed fire and speaking slowly, "that we can catch all the fish we need; how 'bout the drinking-water, Cap'n?"

He moved uneasily but did not reply. Both of them were thinking about the dark hole, but while Trot had little fear of it the old man could not overcome his dislike to enter the place. He knew that Trot was right, though. To remain in the cavern, where they now were, could only result in slow but sure death.

It was nighttime up on the earth's surface, so the little girl became drowsy and soon fell asleep. After a time the old sailor slumbered on the sands beside her. It was very still and nothing disturbed them for hours. When at last they awoke the cavern was light again.

They had divided one of the biscuits and were munching it for breakfast when they were startled by a sudden splash in the pool. Looking toward it they saw emerging from the water the most curious creature either of them had ever beheld. It wasn't a fish, Trot decided, nor was it a beast. It had wings, though, and queer wings they were: shaped like an inverted chopping-bowl and covered with tough skin instead of feathers. It had four legs — much like the legs of a stork, only double the number — and its head was shaped a good deal like that of a poll parrot, with a beak that curved downward in front and upward at the edges, and was half bill and half mouth. But to call it a bird was out of the question, because it had no feathers whatever except a crest of wavy plumes of a scarlet color on the very top of its head. The strange creature must have weighed as much as Cap'n Bill, and as it floundered and struggled to get out of the water to the sandy beach it was so big and unusual that both Trot and her companion stared at it in wonder — in wonder that was not unmixed with fear.



Chapter Three
The Ork

The eyes that regarded them, as the creature stood dripping before them, were bright and mild in expression, and the queer addition to their party made no attempt to attack them and seemed quite as surprised by the meeting as they were.

"I wonder," whispered Trot, "what it is."

"Who, me?" exclaimed the creature in a shrill, high-pitched voice. "Why, I'm an Ork."

"Oh!" said the girl. "But what is an Ork?"

"I am," he repeated, a little proudly, as he shook the water from his funny wings; "and if ever an Ork was glad to be out of the water and on dry land again, you can be mighty sure that I'm that especial, individual Ork!"

“Have you been in the water long?” inquired Cap’n Bill, thinking it only polite to show an interest in the strange creature.

“Why, this last ducking was about ten minutes, I believe, and that’s about nine minutes and sixty seconds too long for comfort,” was the reply. “But last night I was in an awful pickle, I assure you. The whirlpool caught me, and — ”

“Oh, were you in the whirlpool, too?” asked Trot eagerly.

He gave her a glance that was somewhat reproachful.

“I believe I was mentioning the fact, young lady, when your desire to talk interrupted me,” said the Ork. “I am not usually careless in my actions, but that whirlpool was so busy yesterday that I thought I’d see what mischief it was up to. So I flew a little too near it and the suction of the air drew me down into the depths of the ocean. Water and I are natural enemies, and it would have conquered me this time had not a bevy of pretty mermaids come to my assistance and dragged me away from the whirling water and far up into a cavern, where they deserted me.”

“Why, that’s about the same thing that happened to us,” cried Trot. “Was your cavern like this one?”

“I haven’t examined this one yet,” answered the Ork; “but if they happen to be alike I shudder at our fate, for the other one was a prison, with no outlet except by means of the water. I stayed there all night, however, and this morning I plunged into the pool, as far down as I could go, and then swam as hard and as far as I could. The rocks scraped my back, now and then, and I barely escaped the clutches of an ugly sea-monster; but by and by I came to the surface to catch my breath, and found myself here. That’s the whole story, and as I see you have something to eat I entreat you to give me a share of it. The truth is, I’m half starved.”

With these words the Ork squatted down beside them. Very reluctantly Cap’n Bill drew another biscuit from his pocket and held it out. The Ork promptly seized it in one of its front claws and began to nibble the biscuit in much the same manner a parrot might have done.

“We haven’t much grub,” said the sailor-man, “but we’re willin’ to share it with a comrade in distress.”

“That’s right,” returned the Ork, cocking its head sidewise in a cheerful manner, and then for a few minutes there was silence while they all ate of the biscuits. After a while Trot said:

“I’ve never seen or heard of an Ork before. Are there many of you?”

“We are rather few and exclusive, I believe,” was the reply. “In the country where I was born we are the absolute rulers of all living things, from ants to elephants.”

“What country is that?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“Orkland.”

“Where does it lie?”

“I don’t know, exactly. You see, I have a restless nature, for some reason, while all the rest of my race are quiet and contented Orks and seldom stray far from home. From childhood days I loved to fly long distances away, although father often warned me that I would get into trouble by so doing.

“‘It’s a big world, Flipper, my son,’ he would say, ‘and I’ve heard that in parts of it live queer two-legged creatures called Men, who war upon all other living things and would have little respect for even an Ork.’

“This naturally aroused my curiosity and after I had completed my education and left school I decided to fly out into the world and try to get a glimpse of the creatures called Men. So I left home without saying good-bye, an act I shall always regret. Adventures were many, I found. I sighted men several times, but have never before been so close to them as now. Also I had to fight my way through the air, for I met gigantic birds, with fluffy feathers all over them, which attacked me fiercely. Besides, it kept me busy escaping from floating airships. In my rambling I had lost all track of distance or direction, so that when I wanted to go home I had no idea where my country was located. I’ve now been trying to find it for several months and it was during one of my flights over the ocean that I met the whirlpool and became its victim.”

Trot and Cap’n Bill listened to this recital with much interest, and from the friendly tone and harmless appearance of the Ork they judged he was not likely to prove so disagreeable a companion as at first they had feared he might be.

The Ork sat upon its haunches much as a cat does, but used the finger-like claws of its front legs almost as cleverly as if they were hands. Perhaps the most curious thing about the creature was its tail, or what ought to have been its tail. This queer arrangement of skin, bones and muscle was shaped like the propellers used on boats and airships, having fan-like surfaces and being pivoted to its body. Cap’n Bill knew something of mechanics, and observing the propeller-like tail of the Ork he said:

“I s’pose you’re a pretty swift flyer?”

“Yes, indeed; the Orks are admitted to be Kings of the Air.”

“Your wings don’t seem to amount to much,” remarked Trot.

“Well, they are not very big,” admitted the Ork, waving the four hollow skins gently to and fro, “but they serve to support my body in the air while I speed along by means of my tail. Still, taken altogether, I’m very handsomely formed, don’t you think?”

Trot did not like to reply, but Cap'n Bill nodded gravely. "For an Ork," said he, "you're a wonder. I've never seen one afore, but I can imagine you're as good as any."

That seemed to please the creature and it began walking around the cavern, making its way easily up the slope. While it was gone, Trot and Cap'n Bill each took another sip from the water-flask, to wash down their breakfast.

"Why, here's a hole — an exit — an outlet!" exclaimed the Ork from above.

"We know," said Trot. "We found it last night."

"Well, then, let's be off," continued the Ork, after sticking its head into the black hole and sniffing once or twice. "The air seems fresh and sweet, and it can't lead us to any worse place than this."

The girl and the sailor-man got up and climbed to the side of the Ork.

"We'd about decided to explore this hole before you came," explained Cap'n Bill; "but it's a dangerous place to navigate in the dark, so wait till I light a candle."

"What is a candle?" inquired the Ork.

"You'll see in a minute," said Trot.

The old sailor drew one of the candles from his right-side pocket and the tin matchbox from his left-side pocket. When he lighted the match the Ork gave a startled jump and eyed the flame suspiciously; but Cap'n Bill proceeded to light the candle and the action interested the Ork very much.

“Light,” it said, somewhat nervously, “is valuable in a hole of this sort. The candle is not dangerous, I hope?”

“Sometimes it burns your fingers,” answered Trot, “but that’s about the worst it can do — ’cept to blow out when you don’t want it to.”

Cap’n Bill shielded the flame with his hand and crept into the hole. It wasn’t any too big for a grown man, but after he had crawled a few feet it grew larger. Trot came close behind him and then the Ork followed.

“Seems like a reg’lar tunnel,” muttered the sailor-man, who was creeping along awkwardly because of his wooden leg. The rocks, too, hurt his knees.

For nearly half an hour the three moved slowly along the tunnel, which made many twists and turns and sometimes slanted downward and sometimes upward. Finally Cap’n Bill stopped short, with an exclamation of disappointment, and held the flickering candle far ahead to light the scene.

“What’s wrong?” demanded Trot, who could see nothing because the sailor’s form completely filled the hole.

“Why, we’ve come to the end of our travels, I guess,” he replied.

“Is the hole blocked?” inquired the Ork.

“No; it’s wuss nor that,” replied Cap’n Bill sadly. “I’m on the edge of a precipice. Wait a minute an’ I’ll move along and let you see for yourselves. Be careful, Trot, not to fall.”

Then he crept forward a little and moved to one side, holding the candle so that the girl could see to follow him. The Ork came next and now all three knelt on a narrow ledge of rock which dropped straight away and left a huge black space which the tiny flame of the candle could not illuminate.

“H-m!” said the Ork, peering over the edge; “this doesn’t look very promising, I’ll admit. But let me take your candle, and I’ll fly down and see what’s below us.”

“Aren’t you afraid?” asked Trot.

“Certainly I’m afraid,” responded the Ork. “But if we intend to escape we can’t stay on this shelf forever. So, as I notice you poor creatures cannot fly, it is my duty to explore the place for you.”

Cap’n Bill handed the Ork the candle, which had now burned to about half its length. The Ork took it in one claw rather cautiously and then tipped its body forward and slipped over the edge. They heard a queer buzzing sound, as the tail revolved, and a brisk flapping of the peculiar wings, but they were more interested just then in following with their eyes the tiny speck of light which marked the location of the candle. This light first made a great circle, then dropped slowly downward and suddenly was extinguished, leaving everything before them black as ink.

“Hi, there! How did that happen?” cried the Ork.

“It blew out, I guess,” shouted Cap’n Bill. “Fetch it here.”

“I can’t see where you are,” said the Ork.

So Cap’n Bill got out another candle and lighted it, and its flame enabled the Ork to fly back to them. It alighted on the edge and held out the bit of candle.

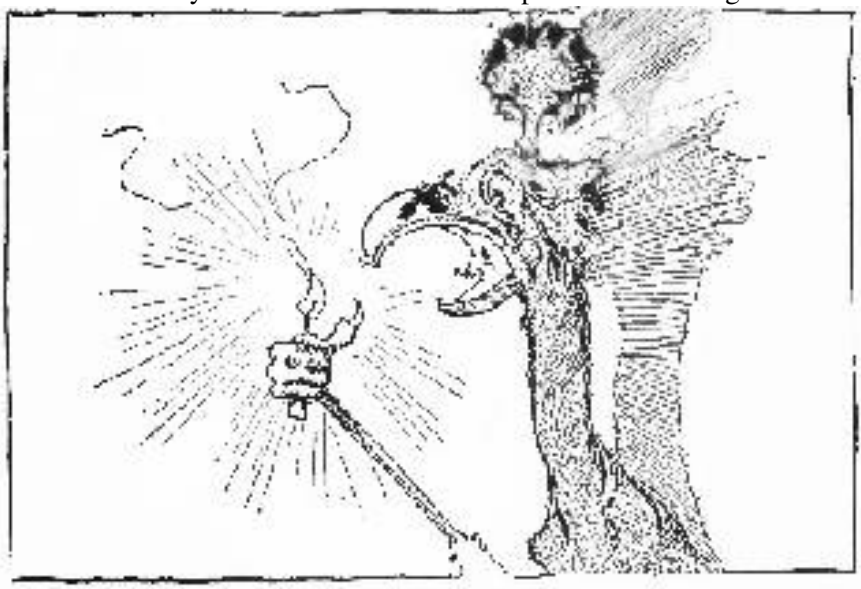
“What made it stop burning?” asked the creature.

“The wind,” said Trot. “You must be more careful, this time.”

“What’s the place like?” inquired Cap’n Bill.

“I don’t know, yet; but there must be a bottom to it, so I’ll try to find it.”

With this the Ork started out again and this time sank downward more slowly. Down, down, down it went, till the candle was a mere spark, and then it headed away to the left and Trot and Cap’n Bill lost all sight of it.



In a few minutes, however, they saw the spark of light again, and as the sailor still held the second lighted candle the Ork made straight toward them. It was only a few yards distant when suddenly it dropped the candle with a cry of pain and next moment alighted, fluttering wildly, upon the rocky ledge.

“What’s the matter?” asked Trot.

“It bit me!” wailed the Ork. “I don’t like your candles. The thing began to disappear slowly as soon as I took it in my claw, and it grew smaller and smaller until just now it turned and bit me — a most unfriendly thing to do. Oh — oh! Ouch, what a bite!”

“That’s the nature of candles, I’m sorry to say,” explained Cap’n Bill,

with a grin. “You have to handle ‘em mighty keerful. But tell us, what did you find down there?”

“I found a way to continue our journey,” said the Ork, nursing tenderly the claw which had been burned. “Just below us is a great lake of black water, which looked so cold and wicked that it made me shudder; but away at the left there’s a big tunnel, which we can easily walk through. I don’t know where it leads to, of course, but we must follow it and find out.” “why, we can’t get to it,” protested the little girl. “We can’t fly, as you do, you must remember.”

“No, that’s true,” replied the Ork musingly. “Your bodies are built very poorly, it seems to me, since all you can do is crawl upon the earth’s surface. But you may ride upon my back, and in that way I can promise you a safe journey to the tunnel.”

“Are you strong enough to carry us?” asked Cap’n Bill, doubtfully.

“Yes, indeed; I’m strong enough to carry a dozen of you, if you could find a place to sit,” was the reply; “but there’s only room between my wings for one at a time, so I’ll have to make two trips.”

“All right; I’ll go first,” decided Cap’n Bill.

He lit another candle for Trot to hold while they were gone and to light the Ork on his return to her, and then the old sailor got upon the Ork’s back, where he sat with his wooden leg sticking straight out sidewise.

“If you start to fall, clasp your arms around my neck,” advised the creature.

“If I start to fall, it’s good night an’ pleasant dreams,” said Cap’n Bill.

“All ready?” asked the Ork.

“Start the buzz-tail,” said Cap’n Bill, with a tremble in his voice. But the Ork flew away so gently that the old man never even tottered in his seat. Trot watched the light of Cap’n Bill’s candle till it disappeared in the far distance. She didn’t like to be left alone on this dangerous ledge, with a lake of black water hundreds of feet below her; but she was a brave little girl and waited patiently for the return of the Ork. It came even sooner than she had expected and the creature said to her:

“Your friend is safe in the tunnel. Now, then, get aboard and I’ll carry you to him in a jiffy.”

I’m sure not many little girls would have cared to take that awful ride through the huge black cavern on the back of a skinny Ork. Trot didn’t care for it, herself, but it just had to be done and so she did it as courageously as possible. Her heart beat fast and she was so nervous she could scarcely hold the candle in her fingers as the Ork sped swiftly through the darkness.

It seemed like a long ride to her, yet in reality the Ork covered the

distance in a wonderfully brief period of time and soon Trot stood safely beside Cap'n Bill on the level floor of a big arched tunnel. The sailor-man was very glad to greet his little comrade again and both were grateful to the Ork for his assistance.

"I dunno where this tunnel leads to," remarked Cap'n Bill, "but it surely looks more promisin' than that other hole we crept through."

"When the Ork is rested," said Trot, "we'll travel on and see what happens."

"Rested!" cried the Ork, as scornfully as his shrill voice would allow. "That bit of flying didn't tire me at all. I'm used to flying days at a time, without ever once stopping."

"Then let's move on," proposed Cap'n Bill. He still held in his hand one lighted candle, so Trot blew out the other flame and placed her candle in the sailor's big pocket. She knew it was not wise to burn two candles at once.

The tunnel was straight and smooth and very easy to walk through, so they made good progress. Trot thought that the tunnel began about two miles from the cavern where they had been cast by the whirlpool, but now it was impossible to guess the miles traveled, for they walked steadily for hours and hours without any change in their surroundings.

Finally Cap'n Bill stopped to rest.

"There's somethin' queer about this 'ere tunnel, I'm certain," he declared, wagging his head dolefully. "Here's three candles gone a'ready, an' only three more left us, yet the tunnel's the same as it was when we started. An' how long it's goin' to keep up, no one knows."

"Couldn't we walk without a light?" asked Trot. "The way seems safe enough."

"It does right now," was the reply, "but we can't tell when we are likely to come to another gulf, or somethin' jes' as dangerous. In that case we'd be killed afore we knew it."

"Suppose I go ahead?" suggested the Ork. "I don't fear a fall, you know, and if anything happens I'll call out and warn you."

"That's a good idea," declared Trot, and Cap'n Bill thought so, too. So the Ork started off ahead, quite in the dark, and hand in band the two followed him.

When they had walked in this way for a good long time the Ork halted and demanded food. Cap'n Bill had not mentioned food because there was so little left — only three biscuits and a lump of cheese about as big as his two fingers — but he gave the Ork half of a biscuit, sighing as he did so. The creature didn't care for the cheese, so the sailor divided it between himself and Trot. They lighted a candle and sat down in the tunnel while they ate.

“My feet hurt me,” grumbled the Ork. “I’m not used to walking and this rocky passage is so uneven and lumpy that it hurts me to walk upon it.”

“Can’t you fly along?” asked Trot.

“No; the roof is too low,” said the Ork.

After the meal they resumed their journey, which Trot began to fear would never end. When Cap’n Bill noticed how tired the little girl was, he paused and lighted a match and looked at his big silver watch.

“Why, it’s night!” he exclaimed. “We’ve tramped all day, an’ still we’re in this awful passage, which mebbe goes straight through the middle of the world, an’ mebbe is a circle — in which case we can keep walkin’ till doomsday. Not knowin’ what’s before us so well as we know what’s behind us, I propose we make a stop, now, an’ try to sleep till mornin’.”

“That will suit me,” asserted the Ork, with a groan. “My feet are hurting me dreadfully and for the last few miles I’ve been limping with pain.”

“My foot hurts, too,” said the sailor, looking for a smooth place on the rocky floor to sit down.

“Your foot!” cried the Ork. “why, you’ve only one to hurt you, while I have four. So I suffer four times as much as you possibly can. Here; hold the candle while I look at the bottoms of my claws. I declare,” he said, examining them by the flickering light, “there are bunches of pain all over them!”

“P’r’aps,” said Trot, who was very glad to sit down beside her companions, “you’ve got corns.”

“Corns? Nonsense! Orks never have corns,” protested the creature, rubbing its sore feet tenderly.

“Then mebbe they’re — they’re — What do you call ‘em, Cap’n Bill? Something ‘bout the Pilgrim’s Progress, you know.”

“Bunions,” said Cap’n Bill.

“Oh, yes; mebbe you’ve got bunions.”

“It is possible,” moaned the Ork. “But whatever they are, another day of such walking on them would drive me crazy.”

“I’m sure they’ll feel better by mornin’,” said Cap’n Bill, encouragingly. “Go to sleep an’ try to forget your sore feet.”

The Ork cast a reproachful look at the sailor-man, who didn’t see it. Then the creature asked plaintively: “Do we eat now, or do we starve?”

“There’s only half a biscuit left for you,” answered Cap’n Bill. “No one knows how long we’ll have to stay in this dark tunnel, where there’s nothing whatever to eat; so I advise you to save that morsel o’ food till later.”

“Give it me now!” demanded the Ork. “If I’m going to starve, I’ll do it all at once — not by degrees.”

Cap'n Bill produced the biscuit and the creature ate it in a trice. Trot was rather hungry and whispered to Cap'n Bill that she'd take part of her share; but the old man secretly broke his own half-biscuit in two, saving Trot's share for a time of greater need.

He was beginning to be worried over the little girl's plight and long after she was asleep and the Ork was snoring in a rather disagreeable manner, Cap'n Bill sat with his back to a rock and smoked his pipe and tried to think of some way to escape from this seemingly endless tunnel. But after a time he also slept, for hobbling on a wooden leg all day was tiresome, and there in the dark slumbered the three adventurers for many hours, until the Ork roused itself and kicked the old sailor with one foot.

"It must be another day," said he.

Chapter Four
Daylight at Last

Cap'n Bill rubbed his eyes, lit a match and consulted his watch.
"Nine o'clock. Yes, I guess it's another day, sure enough. Shall we go on?" he asked.

"Of course," replied the Ork. "Unless this tunnel is different from everything else in the world, and has no end, we'll find a way out of it sooner or later."

The sailor gently wakened Trot. She felt much rested by her long sleep and sprang to her feet eagerly.

"Let's start, Cap'n," was all she said.

They resumed the journey and had only taken a few steps when the Ork cried "Wow!" and made a great fluttering of its wings and whirling of its tail. The others, who were following a short distance behind, stopped abruptly.

"What's the matter?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"Give us a light," was the reply. "I think we've come to the end of the

tunnel." Then, while Cap'n Bill lighted a candle, the creature added: "If that is true, we needn't have wakened so soon, for we were almost at the end of this place when we went to sleep."

The sailor-man and Trot came forward with a light. A wall of rock really faced the tunnel, but now they saw that the opening made a sharp turn to the left. So they followed on, by a narrower passage, and then made another sharp turn this time to the right.

"Blow out the light, Cap'n," said the Ork, in a pleased voice. "We've struck daylight."

Daylight at last! A shaft of mellow light fell almost at their feet as Trot and the sailor turned the corner of the passage, but it came from above, and raising their eyes they found they were at the bottom of a deep, rocky well, with the top far, far above their heads. And here the passage ended.

For a while they gazed in silence, at least two of them being filled with dismay at the sight. But the Ork merely whistled softly and said cheerfully:

"That was the toughest journey I ever had the misfortune to undertake, and I'm glad it's over. Yet, unless I can manage to fly to the top of this pit, we are entombed here forever."

"Do you think there is room enough for you to fly in?" asked the little girl anxiously; and Cap'n Bill added:

"It's a straight-up shaft, so I don't see how you'll ever manage it."

"Were I an ordinary bird — one of those horrid feathered things — I wouldn't even make the attempt to fly out," said the Ork. "But my mechanical propeller tail can accomplish wonders, and whenever you're ready I'll show you a trick that is worth while."

"Oh!" exclaimed Trot; "do you intend to take us up, too?"

"Why not?"

"I thought," said Cap'n Bill, "as you'd go first, an' then send somebody to help us by lettin' down a rope."

"Ropes are dangerous," replied the Ork, "and I might not be able to find one to reach all this distance. Besides, it stands to reason that if I can get out myself I can also carry you two with me."

"Well, I'm not afraid," said Trot, who longed to be on the earth's surface again.

"S'pose we fall?" suggested Cap'n Bill, doubtfully.

"Why, in that case we would all fall together," returned the Ork. "Get aboard, little girl; sit across my shoulders and put both your arms around my neck."

Trot obeyed and when she was seated on the Ork, Cap'n Bill inquired:

"How 'bout me, Mr. Ork?"

“Why, I think you’d best grab hold of my rear legs and let me carry you up in that manner,” was the reply.

Cap’n Bill looked way up at the top of the well, and then he looked at the Ork’s slender, skinny legs and heaved a deep sigh.

“It’s goin’ to be some dangle, I guess; but if you don’t waste too much time on the way up, I may be able to hang on,” said he.

“All ready, then!” cried the Ork, and at once his whirling tail began to revolve. Trot felt herself rising into the air; when the creature’s legs left the ground Cap’n Bill grasped two of them firmly and held on for dear life. The Ork’s body was tipped straight upward, and Trot had to embrace the neck very tightly to keep from sliding off. Even in this position the Ork had trouble in escaping the rough sides of the well. Several times it exclaimed “Wow!” as it bumped its back, or a wing hit against some jagged projection; but the tail kept whirling with remarkable swiftness and the daylight grew brighter and brighter. It was, indeed, a long journey from the bottom to the top, yet almost before Trot realized they had come so far, they popped out of the hole into the clear air and sunshine and a moment later the Ork alighted gently upon the ground.

The release was so sudden that even with the creature’s care for its passengers Cap’n Bill struck the earth with a shock that sent him rolling heel over head; but by the time Trot had slid down from her seat the old sailor-man was sitting up and looking around him with much satisfaction.

“It’s sort o’ pretty here,” said he.

“Earth is a beautiful place!” cried Trot.

“I wonder where on earth we are?” pondered the Ork, turning first one bright eye and then the other to this side and that. Trees there were, in plenty, and shrubs and flowers and green turf. But there were no houses; there were no paths; there was no sign of civilization whatever.

“Just before I settled down on the ground I thought I caught a view of the ocean,” said the Ork. “Let’s see if I was right.” Then he flew to a little hill, near by, and Trot and Cap’n Bill followed him more slowly. When they stood on the top of the hill they could see the blue waves of the ocean in front of them, to the right of them, and at the left of them. Behind the hill was a forest that shut out the view.

“I hope it ain’t an island, Trot,” said Cap’n Bill gravely.

“If it is, I s’pose we’re prisoners,” she replied.

“Ezzackly so, Trot.”

“But, ‘even so, it’s better than those terr’ble underground tunnels and caverns,” declared the girl.

“You are right, little one,” agreed the Ork. “Anything above ground is better than the best that lies under ground. So let’s not quarrel with our fate but be thankful we’ve escaped.”

“We are, indeed!” she replied. “But I wonder if we can find something to eat in this place?”

“Let’s explore an’ find out,” proposed Cap’n Bill. “Those trees over at the left look like cherry-trees.”

On the way to them the explorers had to walk through a tangle of vines and Cap'n Bill, who went first, stumbled and pitched forward on his face.

"Why, it's a melon!" cried Trot delightedly, as she saw what had caused the sailor to fall.

Cap'n Bill rose to his foot, for he was not at all hurt, and examined the melon. Then he took his big jackknife from his pocket and cut the melon open. It was quite ripe and looked delicious; but the old man tasted it before he permitted Trot to eat any. Deciding it was good he gave her a big slice and then offered the Ork some. The creature looked at the fruit somewhat disdainfully, at first, but once he had tasted its flavor he ate of it as heartily as did the others. Among the vines they discovered many other melons, and Trot said gratefully: "Well, there's no danger of our starving, even if this is an island."

"Melons," remarked Cap'n Bill, "are both food an' water. We couldn't have struck anything better."

Farther on they came to the cherry trees, where they obtained some of the fruit, and at the edge of the little forest were wild plums. The forest itself consisted entirely of nut trees — walnuts, filberts, almonds and chestnuts — so there would be plenty of wholesome food for them while they remained there.

Cap'n Bill and Trot decided to walk through the forest, to discover what was on the other side of it, but the Ork's feet were still so sore and "lumpy" from walking on the rocks that the creature said he preferred to fly over the tree-tops and meet them on the other side. The forest was not large, so by

walking briskly for fifteen minutes they reached its farthest edge and saw before them the shore of the ocean.

"It's an island, all right," said Trot, with a sigh.

"Yes, and a pretty island, too," said Cap'n Bill, trying to conceal his disappointment on Trot's account. "I guess, partner, if the wuss comes to the wuss, I could build a raft — or even a boat — from those trees, so's we could sail away in it."

The little girl brightened at this suggestion. "I don't see the Ork anywhere," she remarked, looking around. Then her eyes lighted upon something and she exclaimed: "Oh, Cap'n Bill! Isn't that a house, over there to the left?"

Cap'n Bill, looking closely, saw a shed-like structure built at one edge of the forest.

"Seems like it, Trot. Not that I'd call it much of a house, but it's a buildin', all right. Let's go over an' see if it's occypied."

Chapter Five
The Little Old Man of the Island

A few steps brought them to the shed, which was merely a roof of boughs built over a square space, with some branches of trees fastened to the sides to keep off the wind. The front was quite open and faced the sea, and as our friends came nearer they observed a little man, with a long pointed beard, sitting motionless on a stool and staring thoughtfully out over the water.

"Get out of the way, please," he called in a fretful voice. "Can't you see you are obstructing my view?"

"Good morning," said Cap'n Bill, politely.

"It isn't a good morning!" snapped the little man. "I've seen plenty of mornings better than this. Do you call it a good morning when I'm pestered with such a crowd as you?"

Trot was astonished to hear such words from a stranger whom they had greeted quite properly, and Cap'n Bill grew red at the little man's rudeness.

But the sailor said, in a quiet tone of voice:

"Are you the only one as lives on this 'ere island?"

"Your grammar's bad," was the reply. "But this is my own exclusive island, and I'll thank you to get off it as soon as possible."

"We'd like to do that," said Trot, and then she and Cap'n Bill turned away and walked down to the shore, to see if any other land was in sight.

The little man rose and followed them, although both were now too provoked to pay any attention to him.

"Nothin' in sight, partner," reported Cap'n Bill, shading his eyes with his hand; "so we'll have to stay here for a time, anyhow. It isn't a bad place, Trot, by any means."

"That's all you know about it!" broke in the little man. "The trees are altogether too green and the rocks are harder than they ought to be. I find the sand very grainy and the water dreadfully wet. Every breeze makes a draught and the sun shines in the daytime, when there's no need of it, and disappears just as soon as it begins to get dark. If you remain here you'll find the island very unsatisfactory."

Trot turned to look at him, and her sweet face was grave and curious.

"I wonder who you are," she said.

"My name is Pessim," said he, with an air of pride. "I'm called the Observer."

"Oh. What do you observe?" asked the little girl.

"Everything I see," was the reply, in a more surly tone. Then Pessim drew back with a startled exclamation and looked at some footprints in the sand. "Why, good gracious me!" he cried in distress.

"What's the matter now?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"Someone has pushed the earth in! Don't you see it?

"It isn't pushed in far enough to hurt anything," said Trot, examining the footprints.

"Everything hurts that isn't right," insisted the man. "If the earth were pushed in a mile, it would be a great calamity, wouldn't it?"

"I s'pose so," admitted the little girl.

"Well, here it is pushed in a full inch! That's a twelfth of a foot, or a little more than a millionth part of a mile. Therefore it is one-millionth part of a calamity — Oh, dear! How dreadful!" said Pessim in a wailing voice.

"Try to forget it, sir," advised Cap'n Bill, soothingly. "It's beginning to rain. Let's get under your shed and keep dry."

"Raining! Is it really raining?" asked Pessim, beginning to weep.

"It is," answered Cap'n Bill, as the drops began to descend, "and I don't see any way to stop it — although I'm some observer myself."

“No; we can’t stop it, I fear,” said the man. “Are you very busy just now?”

“I won’t be after I get to the shed,” replied the sailor-man.

“Then do me a favor, please,” begged Pessim, walking briskly along behind them, for they were hastening to the shed.

“Depends on what it is,” said Cap’n Bill.

“I wish you would take my umbrella down to the shore and hold it over the poor fishes till it stops raining. I’m afraid they’ll get wet,” said Pessim.

Trot laughed, but Cap’n Bill thought the little man was poking fun at him and so he scowled upon Pessim in a way that showed he was angry.

They reached the shed before getting very wet, although the rain was now coming down in big drops. The roof of the shed protected them and while they stood watching the rainstorm something buzzed in and circled around Pessim’s head. At once the Observer began beating it away with his hands, crying out:

“A bumblebee! A bumblebee! The queerest bumblebee I ever saw!”

Cap’n Bill and Trot both looked at it and the little girl said in surprise:

“Dear me! It’s a wee little Ork!”

“That’s what it is, sure enough,” exclaimed Cap’n Bill.

Really, it wasn’t much bigger than a big bumblebee, and when it came toward Trot she allowed it to alight on her shoulder.

“It’s me, all right,” said a very small voice in her ear; “but I’m in an awful pickle, just the same!”

“What, are you our Ork, then?” demanded the girl, much amazed.

“No, I’m my own Ork. But I’m the only Ork you know,” replied the tiny creature.

“What’s happened to you?” asked the sailor, putting his head close to Trot’s shoulder in order to hear the reply better. Pessim also put his head close, and the Ork said:

"You will remember that when I left you I started to fly over the trees, and just as I got to this side of the forest I saw a bush that was loaded down with the most luscious fruit you can imagine. The fruit was about the size of a gooseberry and of a lovely lavender color. So I swooped down and picked off one in my bill and ate it. At once I began to grow small. I could feel myself shrinking, shrinking away, and it frightened me terribly, so that I lighted on the ground to think over what was happening. In a few seconds I had shrunk to the size you now see me; but there I remained, getting no smaller, indeed, but no larger. It is certainly a dreadful affliction! After I had recovered somewhat from the shock I began to search for you. It is not so easy to find one's way when a creature is so small, but fortunately I spied you here in this shed and came to you at once."

Cap'n Bill and Trot were much astonished at this story and felt grieved for the poor Ork, but the little man Pessim seemed to think it a good joke. He began laughing when he heard the story and laughed until he choked, after which he lay down on the ground and rolled and laughed again, while the tears of merriment coursed down his wrinkled cheeks.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" he finally gasped, sitting up and wiping his eyes. "This is too rich! It's almost too joyful to be true."

"I don't see anything funny about it," remarked Trot indignantly.

"You would if you'd had my experience," said Pessim, getting upon his feet and gradually resuming his solemn and dissatisfied expression of countenance. "The same thing happened to me."

“Oh, did it? And how did you happen to come to this island?” asked the girl.

“I didn’t come; the neighbors brought me,” replied the little man, with a frown at the recollection. “They said I was quarrelsome and fault-finding and blamed me because I told them all the things that went wrong, or never were right, and because I told them how things ought to be. So they brought me here and left me all alone, saying that if I quarreled with myself, no one else would be made unhappy. Absurd, wasn’t it?”

“Seems to me,” said Cap’n Bill, “those neighbors did the proper thing.”

“Well,” resumed Pessim, “when I found myself King of this island I was obliged to live upon fruits, and I found many fruits growing here that I had never seen before. I tasted several and found them good and wholesome. But one day I ate a lavender berry — as the Ork did — and immediately I grew so small that I was scarcely two inches high. It was a very unpleasant condition and like the Ork I became frightened. I could not walk very well nor very far, for every lump of earth in my way seemed a mountain, every blade of grass a tree and every grain of sand a rocky boulder. For several days I stumbled around in an agony of fear. Once a tree toad nearly gobbled me up, and if I ran out from the shelter of the bushes the gulls and cormorants swooped down upon me. Finally I decided to eat another berry and become nothing at all, since life, to one as small as I was, had become a dreary nightmare.

“At last I found a small tree that I thought bore the same fruit as that I had eaten. The berry was dark purple instead of light lavender, but otherwise it was quite similar. Being unable to climb the tree, I was obliged to wait underneath it until a sharp breeze arose and shook the limbs so that a berry fell. Instantly I seized it and taking a last view of the world — as I then thought — I ate the berry in a twinkling. Then, to my surprise, I began to grow big again, until I became of my former stature, and so I have since remained. Needless to say, I have never eaten again of the lavender fruit, nor do any of the beasts or birds that live upon this island eat it.”

They had all three listened eagerly to this amazing tale, and when it was finished the Ork exclaimed:

“Do you think, then, that the deep purple berry is the antidote for the lavender one?”

"I'm sure of it," answered Pessim.

"Then lead me to the tree at once!" begged the Ork, "for this tiny form I now have terrifies me greatly."

Pessim examined the Ork closely

"You are ugly enough as you are," said he. "Were you any larger you might be dangerous."

"Oh, no," Trot assured him; "the Ork has been our good friend. Please take us to the tree."

Then Pessim consented, although rather reluctantly. He led them to the right, which was the east side of the island, and in a few minutes brought them near to the edge of the grove which faced the shore of the ocean. Here stood a small tree bearing berries of a deep purple color. The fruit looked very enticing and Cap'n Bill reached up and selected one that seemed especially plump and ripe.

The Ork had remained perched upon Trot's shoulder but now it flew down to the ground. It was so difficult for Cap'n Bill to kneel down, with his wooden leg, that the little girl took the berry from him and held it close to the Ork's head.

"It's too big to go into my mouth," said the little creature, looking at the fruit sidewise.

"You'll have to make sev'ral mouthfuls of it, I guess," said Trot; and that is what the Ork did. He pecked at the soft, ripe fruit with his bill and ate it up very quickly, because it was good.

Even before he had finished the berry they could see the Ork begin to grow. In a few minutes he had regained his natural size and was strutting before them, quite delighted with his transformation.

“Well, well! What do you think of me now?” he asked proudly.

“You are very skinny and remarkably ugly,” declared Pessim.

“You are a poor judge of Orks,” was the reply. “Anyone can see that I’m much handsomer than those dreadful things called birds, which are all fluff and feathers.”

“Their feathers make soft beds,” asserted Pessim. “And my skin would make excellent drumheads,” retorted the Ork. “Nevertheless, a plucked bird or a skinned Ork would be of no value to himself, so we needn’t brag of our usefulness after we are dead. But for the sake of argument, friend Pessim, I’d like to know what good you would be, were you not alive?”

“Never mind that,” said Cap’n Bill. “He isn’t much good as he is.”

“I am King of this Island, allow me to say, and you’re intruding on my property,” declared the little man, scowling upon them. “If you don’t like me — and I’m sure you don’t, for no one else does — why don’t you go away and leave me to myself?”

“Well, the Ork can fly, but we can’t,” explained Trot, in answer. “We don’t want to stay here a bit, but I don’t see how we can get away.”

“You can go back into the hole you came from.”

Cap’n Bill shook his head; Trot shuddered at the thought; the Ork laughed aloud.

“You may be King here,” the creature said to Pessim, “but we intend to run this island to suit ourselves, for we are three and you are one, and the balance of power lies with us.”

The little man made no reply to this, although as they walked back to the shed his face wore its fiercest scowl. Cap’n Bill gathered a lot of leaves and, assisted by Trot, prepared two nice beds in opposite corners of the shed. Pessim slept in a hammock which he swung between two trees.

They required no dishes, as all their food consisted of fruits and nuts picked from the trees; they made no fire, for the weather was warm and there was nothing to cook; the shed had no furniture other than the rude stool which the little man was accustomed to sit upon. He called it his “throne” and they let him keep it.

So they lived upon the island for three days, and rested and ate to their hearts’ content. Still, they were not at all happy in this life because of Pessim. He continually found fault with them, and all that they did, and all their surroundings. He could see nothing good or admirable in all the world and Trot soon came to understand why the little man’s former neighbors had brought him to this island and left him there, all alone, so he could not annoy anyone. It was their misfortune that they had been led to this place by their adventures, for often they would have preferred the company of a wild beast

to that of Pessim.

On the fourth day a happy thought came to the Ork. They had all been racking their brains for a possible way to leave the island, and discussing this or that method, without finding a plan that was practical. Cap'n Bill had said he could make a raft of the trees, big enough to float them all, but he had no tools except those two pocketknives and it was not possible to chop down tree with such small blades.

"And s'pose we got afloat on the ocean," said Trot, "where would we drift to, and how long would it take us to get there?"

Cap'n Bill was forced to admit he didn't know. The Ork could fly away from the island any time it wished to, but the queer creature was loyal to his new friends and refused to leave them in such a lonely, forsaken place.

It was when Trot urged him to go, on this fourth morning, that the Ork had his happy thought.

"I will go," said he, "if you two will agree to ride upon my back."

"We are too heavy; you might drop us," objected Cap'n Bill.

"Yes, you are rather heavy for a long journey," acknowledged the Ork, "but you might eat of those lavender berries and become so small that I could carry you with ease."

This quaint suggestion startled Trot and she looked gravely at the speaker while she considered it, but Cap'n Bill gave a scornful snort and asked:

"What would become of us afterward? We wouldn't be much good if we were some two or three inches high. No, Mr. Ork, I'd rather stay here, as I am, than be a hop-o'-my-thumb somewhere else."

"Why couldn't you take some of the dark purple berries along with you, to eat after we had reached our destination?" inquired the Ork. "Then you could grow big again whenever you pleased."

Trot clapped her hands with delight.

"That's it!" she exclaimed. "Let's do it, Cap'n Bill."

The old sailor did not like the idea at first, but he thought it over carefully and the more he thought the better it seemed.

"How could you manage to carry us, if we were so small?" he asked.

"I could put you in a paper bag, and tie the bag around my neck."

"But we haven't a paper bag," objected Trot.

The Ork looked at her.

"There's your sunbonnet," it said presently, "which is hollow in the middle and has two strings that you could tie around my neck."

Trot took off her sunbonnet and regarded it critically. Yes, it might easily hold both her and Cap'n Bill, after they had eaten the lavender berries and been reduced in size. She tied the strings around the Ork's neck and the sunbonnet made a bag in which two tiny people might ride without danger of falling out. So she said:

"I b'lieve we'll do it that way, Cap'n."

Cap'n Bill groaned but could make no logical objection except that the plan seemed to him quite dangerous — and dangerous in more ways than one.

"I think so, myself," said Trot soberly. "But nobody can stay alive without getting into danger sometimes, and danger doesn't mean getting hurt, Cap'n; it only means we might get hurt. So I guess we'll have to take the risk."

"Let's go and find the berries," said the Ork.

They said nothing to Pessim, who was sitting on his stool and scowling dismally as he stared at the ocean, but started at once to seek the trees that bore the magic fruits. The Ork remembered very well where the lavender berries grew and led his companions quickly to the spot.

Cap'n Bill gathered two berries and placed them carefully in his pocket.

Then they went around to the east side of the island and found the tree that bore the dark purple berries.

"I guess I'll take four of these," said the sailor-man, "so in case one doesn't make us grow big we can eat another."

"Better take six," advised the Ork. "It's well to be on the safe side, and I'm sure these trees grow nowhere else in all the world."

So Cap'n Bill gathered six of the purple berries and with their precious fruit they returned to the shed to big good-bye to Pessim. Perhaps they would not have granted the surly little man this courtesy had they not wished to use him to tie the sunbonnet around the Ork's neck.

When Pessim learned they were about to leave him he at first looked greatly pleased, but he suddenly recollected that nothing ought to please him and so began to grumble about being left alone.

"We knew it wouldn't suit you," remarked Cap'n Bill. "It didn't suit you to have us here, and it won't suit you to have us go away."

"That is quite true," admitted Pessim. "I haven't been suited since I can remember; so it doesn't matter to me in the least whether you go or stay."

He was interested in their experiment, however, and willingly agreed to assist, although he prophesied they would fall out of the sunbonnet on their way and be either drowned in the ocean or crushed upon some rocky shore. This uncheerful prospect did not daunt Trot, but it made Cap'n Bill quite nervous.

"I will eat my berry first," said Trot, as she placed her sunbonnet on the ground, in such manner that they could get into it.

Then she ate the lavender berry and in a few seconds became so small that Cap'n Bill picked her up gently with his thumb and one finger and placed her in the middle of the sunbonnet. Then he placed beside her the six purple berries — each one being about as big as the tiny Trot's head — and all preparations being now made the old sailor ate his lavender berry and became very small — wooden leg and all!

Cap'n Bill stumbled sadly in trying to climb over the edge of the sunbonnet and pitched in beside Trot headfirst, which caused the unhappy Pessim to laugh with glee. Then the King of the Island picked up the sunbonnet — so rudely that he shook its occupants like peas in a pod — and tied it, by means of its strings, securely around the Ork's neck.

"I hope, Trot, you sewed those strings on tight," said Cap'n Bill anxiously.

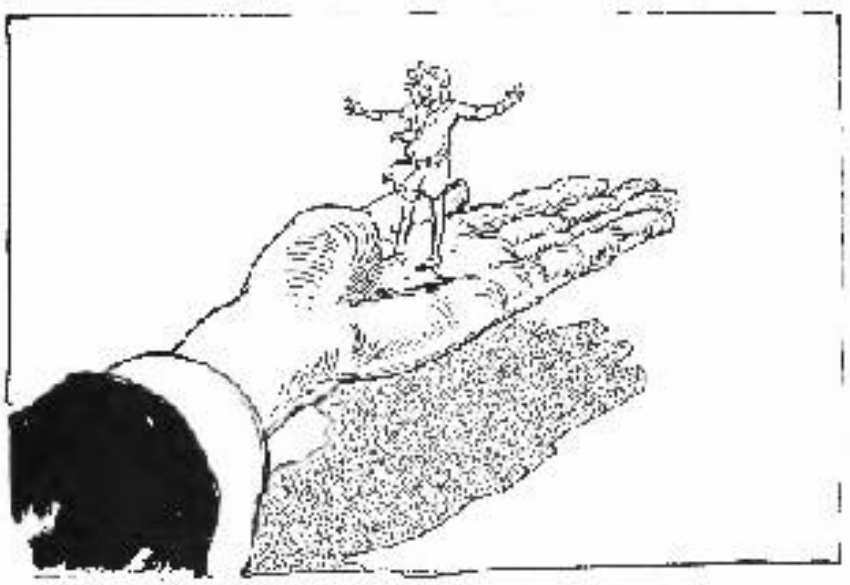
"Why, we are not very heavy, you know," she replied, "so I think the stitches will hold. But be careful and not crush the berries, Cap'n."

"One is jammed already," he said, looking at them.

“All ready?” asked the Ork.

“Yes!” they cried together, and Pessim came close to the sunbonnet and called out to them: “You’ll be smashed or drowned, I’m sure you will! But farewell, and good riddance to you.”

The Ork was provoked by this unkind speech, so he turned his tail toward the little man and made it revolve so fast that the rush of air tumbled Pessim over backward and he rolled several times upon the ground before he could stop himself and sit up. By that time the Ork was high in the air and speeding swiftly over the ocean.



Chapter Six

The Flight of the Midgets

Cap'n Bill and Trot rode very comfortably in the sunbonnet. The motion was quite steady, for they weighed so little that the Ork flew without effort. Yet they were both somewhat nervous about their future fate and could not help wishing they were safe on land and their natural size again.

"You're terr'ble small, Trot," remarked Cap'n Bill, looking at his companion.

"Same to you, Cap'n," she said with a laugh; "but as long as we have the purple berries we needn't worry about our size."

"In a circus," mused the old man, "we'd be curiosities. But in a sunbonnet — high up in the air — sailin' over a big, unknown ocean — they ain't no word in any booktionary to describe us."

"Why, we're midgets, that's all," said the little girl. The Ork flew silently

for a long time. The slight swaying of the sunbonnet made Cap'n Bill drowsy, and he began to doze. Trot, however, was wide awake, and after enduring the monotonous journey as long as she was able she called out:

"Don't you see land anywhere, Mr. Ork?"

"Not yet," he answered. "This is a big ocean and I've no idea in which direction the nearest land to that island lies; but if I keep flying in a straight line I'm sure to reach some place some time."

That seemed reasonable, so the little people in the sunbonnet remained as patient as possible; that is, Cap'n Bill dozed and Trot tried to remember her geography lessons so she could figure out what land they were likely to arrive at.

For hours and hours the Ork flew steadily, keeping to the straight line and searching with his eyes the horizon of the ocean for land. Cap'n Bill was fast asleep and snoring and Trot had laid her head on his shoulder to rest it when suddenly the Ork exclaimed:

"There! I've caught a glimpse of land, at last."

At this announcement they roused themselves. Cap'n Bill stood up and tried to peek over the edge of the sunbonnet.

"What does it look like?" he inquired.

"Looks like another island," said the Ork; "but I can judge it better in a minute or two."

"I don't care much for islands, since we visited that other one," declared Trot.

Soon the Ork made another announcement.

"It is surely an island, and a little one, too," said he. "But I won't stop, because I see a much bigger land straight ahead of it."

"That's right," approved Cap'n Bill. "The bigger the land, the better it will suit us."

"It's almost a continent," continued the Ork after a brief silence, during which he did not decrease the speed of his flight. "I wonder if it can be Orkland, the place I have been seeking so long?"

"I hope not," whispered Trot to Cap'n Bill — so softly that the Ork could not hear her — "for I shouldn't like to be in a country where only Orks live. This one Ork isn't a bad companion, but a lot of him wouldn't be much fun."

After a few more minutes of flying the Ork called out in a sad voice:

"No! this is not my country. It's a place I have never seen before, although I have wandered far and wide. It seems to be all mountains and deserts and green valleys and queer cities and lakes and rivers — mixed up in a very puzzling way."

"Most countries are like that," commented Cap'n Bill. "Are you going to

land?”

“Pretty soon,” was the reply. “There is a mountain peak just ahead of me. What do you say to our landing on that?”

“All right,” agreed the sailor-man, for both he and Trot were getting tired of riding in the sunbonnet and longed to set foot on solid ground again.

So in a few minutes the Ork slowed down his speed and then came to a stop so easily that they were scarcely jarred at all. Then the creature squatted down until the sunbonnet rested on the ground, and began trying to unfasten with its claws the knotted strings.

This proved a very clumsy task, because the strings were tied at the back of the Ork’s neck, just where his claws would not easily reach. After much fumbling he said:

“I’m afraid I can’t let you out, and there is no one near to help me.”

This was at first discouraging, but after a little thought Cap’n Bill said:

“If you don’t mind, Trot, I can cut a slit in your sunbonnet with my knife.”

“Do,” she replied. “The slit won’t matter, ‘cause I can sew it up again afterward, when I am big.”

So Cap’n Bill got out his knife, which was just as small, in proportion, as he was, and after considerable trouble managed to cut a long slit in the sunbonnet. First he squeezed through the opening himself and then helped Trot to get out.

When they stood on firm ground again their first act was to begin eating the dark purple berries which they had brought with them. Two of these Trot had guarded carefully during the long journey, by holding them in her lap, for their safety meant much to the tiny people.

“I’m not very hungry,” said the little girl as she handed a berry to Cap’n Bill, “but hunger doesn’t count, in this case. It’s like taking medicine to make you well, so we must manage to eat ‘em, somehow or other.”

But the berries proved quite pleasant to taste and as Cap’n Bill and Trot nibbled at their edges their forms began to grow in size — slowly but steadily. The bigger they grew the easier it was for them to eat the berries, which of course became smaller to them, and by the time the fruit was eaten our friends had regained their natural size.

The little girl was greatly relieved when she found herself as large as she had ever been, and Cap’n Bill shared her satisfaction; for, although they had seen the effect of the berries on the Ork, they had not been sure the magic fruit would have the same effect on human beings, or that the magic would work in any other country than that in which the berries grew.

“What shall we do with the other four berries?” asked Trot, as she picked

up her sunbonnet, marveling that she had ever been small enough to ride in it. “They’re no good to us now, are they, Cap’n?”

“I’m not sure as to that,” he replied. “If they were eaten by one who had never eaten the lavender berries, they might have no effect at all; but then, contrarywise, they might. One of ‘em has got badly jammed, so I’ll throw it away, but the other three I b’lieve I’ll carry with me. They’re magic things, you know, and may come handy to us some time.”

He now searched in his big pockets and drew out a small wooden box with a sliding cover. The sailor had kept an assortment of nails, of various sizes, in this box, but those he now dumped loosely into his pocket and in the box placed the three sound purple berries.

When this important matter was attended to they found time to look about them and see what sort of place the Ork had landed them in.

Chapter Seven
The Bumpy Man

The mountain on which they had alighted was not a barren waste, but had on its sides patches of green grass, some bushes, a few slender trees and here and there masses of tumbled rocks. The sides of the slope seemed rather steep, but with care one could climb up or down them with ease and safety. The view from where they now stood showed pleasant valleys and fertile hills lying below the heights. Trot thought she saw some houses of queer shapes scattered about the lower landscape, and there were moving dots that might be people or animals, yet were too far away for her to see them clearly.

Not far from the place where they stood was the top of the mountain, which seemed to be flat, so the Ork proposed to his companions that he would fly up and see what was there.

“That’s a good idea,” said Trot, “‘cause it’s getting toward evening and we’ll have to find a place to sleep.”

The Ork had not been gone more than a few minutes when they saw him appear on the edge of the top which was nearest them.

“Come on up!” he called.

So Trot and Cap’n Bill began to ascend the steep slope and it did not take them long to reach the place where the Ork awaited them.

Their first view of the mountain top pleased them very much. It was a level space of wider extent than they had guessed and upon it grew grass of a brilliant green color. In the very center stood a house built of stone and very neatly constructed. No one was in sight, but smoke was coming from the chimney, so with one accord all three began walking toward the house.

“I wonder,” said Trot, “in what country we are, and if it’s very far from my home in California.”

“Can’t say as to that, partner,” answered Cap’n Bill, “but I’m mighty certain we’ve come a long way since we struck that whirlpool.”

“Yes,” she agreed, with a sigh, “it must be miles and miles!”

“Distance means nothing,” said the Ork. “I have flown pretty much all over the world, trying to find my home, and it is astonishing how many little countries there are, hidden away in the cracks and corners of this big globe of Earth. If one travels, he may find some new country at every turn, and a good many of them have never yet been put upon the maps.”

“P’raps this is one of them,” suggested Trot.

They reached the house after a brisk walk and Cap’n Bill knocked upon the door. It was at once opened by a rugged looking man who had “bumps all over him,” as Trot afterward declared. There were bumps on his head, bumps on his body and bumps on his arms and legs and hands. Even his fingers had bumps on the ends of them. For dress he wore an old gray suit of fantastic design, which fitted him very badly because of the bumps it covered but could not conceal.

But the Bumpy Man’s eyes were kind and twinkling in expression and as soon as he saw his visitors he bowed low and said in a rather bumpy voice:

“Happy day! Come in and shut the door, for it grows cool when the sun goes down. Winter is now upon us.”

“Why, it isn’t cold a bit, outside,” said Trot, “so it can’t be winter yet.”

“You will change your mind about that in a little while,” declared the Bumpy Man. “My bumps always tell me the state of the weather, and they feel just now as if a snowstorm was coming this way. But make yourselves at home, strangers. Supper is nearly ready and there is food enough for all.”

Inside the house there was but one large room, simply but comfortably

furnished. It had benches, a table and a fireplace, all made of stone. On the hearth a pot was bubbling and steaming, and Trot thought it had a rather nice smell. The visitors seated themselves upon the benches — except the Ork. which squatted by the fireplace — and the Bumpy Man began stirring the kettle briskly.

"May I ask what country this is, sir?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

"Goodness me — fruit-cake and apple-sauce! — don't you know where you are?" asked the Bumpy Man, as he stopped stirring and looked at the speaker in surprise.

"No," admitted Cap'n Bill. "We've just arrived."

"Lost your way?" questioned the Bumpy Man.

"Not exactly," said Cap'n Bill. "We didn't have any way to lose."

"Ah!" said the Bumpy Man, nodding his bumpy head. "This," he announced, in a solemn, impressive voice, "is the famous Land of Mo."

"Oh!" exclaimed the sailor and the girl, both in one breath. But, never having heard of the Land of Mo, they were no wiser than before.

"I thought that would startle you," remarked the Bumpy Man, well pleased, as he resumed his stirring. The Ork watched him a while in silence and then asked:

"Who may you be?"

"Me?" answered the Bumpy Man. "Haven't you heard of me? Gingerbread and lemon-juice! I'm known, far and wide, as the Mountain Ear."

They all received this information in silence at first, for they were trying to think what he could mean. Finally Trot mustered up courage to ask:

"What is a Mountain Ear, please?"

For answer the man turned around and faced them, waving the spoon with which he had been stirring the kettle, as he recited the following verses in a singsong tone of voice:

"Here's a mountain, hard of hearing,
That's sad-hearted and needs cheering,
So my duty is to listen to all sounds that Nature makes,
So the hill won't get uneasy —
Get to coughing, or get sneezy —
For this monster bump, when frightened, is quite liable to quakes.

"You can hear a bell that's ringing;
I can feel some people's singing;
But a mountain isn't sensible of what goes on, and so
When I hear a blizzard blowing
Or it's raining hard, or snowing,

I tell it to the mountain and the mountain seems to know.

"Thus I benefit all people
While I'm living on this steeple,
For I keep the mountain steady so my neighbors all may thrive.
With my list'ning and my shouting
I prevent this mount from spouting,
And that makes me so important that I'm glad that I'm alive."

When he had finished these lines of verse the Bumpy Man turned again to resume his stirring. The Ork laughed softly and Cap'n Bill whistled to himself and Trot made up her mind that the Mountain Ear must be a little crazy. But the Bumpy Man seemed satisfied that he had explained his position fully and presently he placed four stone plates upon the table and then lifted the kettle from the fire and poured some of its contents on each of the plates. Cap'n Bill and Trot at once approached the table, for they were hungry, but when she examined her plate the little girl exclaimed:

"Why, it's molasses candy!"

"To be sure," returned the Bumpy Man, with a pleasant smile. "Eat it quick, while it's hot, for it cools very quickly this winter weather."

With this he seized a stone spoon and began putting the hot molasses candy into his mouth, while the others watched him in astonishment.

"Doesn't it burn you?" asked the girl.

"No indeed," said he. "Why don't you eat? Aren't you hungry?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am hungry. But we usually eat our candy when it is cold and hard. We always pull molasses candy before we eat it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Mountain Ear. "What a funny idea! Where in the world did you come from?"

"California," she said.

"California! Pooh! there isn't any such place. I've heard of every place in the Land of Mo, but I never before heard of California."

"It isn't in the Land of Mo," she explained.

"Then it isn't worth talking about," declared the Bumpy Man, helping himself again from the steaming kettle, for he had been eating all the time he talked.

"For my part," sighed Cap'n Bill, "I'd like a decent square meal, once more, just by way of variety. In the last place there was nothing but fruit to eat, and here it's worse, for there's nothing but candy."

"Molasses candy isn't so bad," said Trot. "Mine's nearly cool enough to pull, already. Wait a bit, Cap'n, and you can eat it."

A little later she was able to gather the candy from the stone plate and begin to work it back and forth with her hands. The Mountain Ear was greatly amazed at this and watched her closely. It was really good candy and pulled beautifully, so that Trot was soon ready to cut it into chunks for eating.

Cap'n Bill condescended to eat one or two pieces and the Ork ate several, but the Bumpy Man refused to try it. Trot finished the plate of candy herself and then asked for a drink of water.

"Water?" said the Mountain Ear wonderingly. "What is that?"

"Something to drink. Don't you have water in Mo?"

"None that ever I heard of," said he. "But I can give you some fresh lemonade. I caught it in a jar the last time it rained, which was only day before yesterday."

"Oh, does it rain lemonade here?" she inquired.

"Always; and it is very refreshing and healthful."

With this he brought from a cupboard a stone jar and a dipper, and the girl found it very nice lemonade, indeed. Cap'n Bill liked it, too; but the Ork would not touch it.

"If there is no water in this country, I cannot stay here for long," the creature declared. "Water means life to man and beast and bird."

"There must be water in lemonade," said Trot.

"Yes," answered the Ork, "I suppose so; but there are other things in it, too, and they spoil the good water."

The day's adventures had made our wanderers tired, so the Bumpy Man brought them some blankets in which they rolled themselves and then lay

down before the fire, which their host kept alive with fuel all through the night. Trot wakened several times and found the Mountain Ear always alert and listening intently for the slightest sound. But the little girl could hear no sound at all except the snores of Cap'n Bill.

Chapter Eight
Button-Bright is Lost and Found Again

"Wake up — wake up!" called the voice of the Bumpy Man. "Didn't I tell you winter was coming? I could hear it coming with my left ear, and the proof is that it is now snowing hard outside."

"Is it?" said Trot, rubbing her eyes and creeping out of her blanket. "Where I live, in California, I have never seen snow, except far away on the tops of high mountains."

"Well, this is the top of a high mountain," returned the bumpy one, "and for that reason we get our heaviest snowfalls right here."

The little girl went to the window and looked out. The air was filled with falling white flakes, so large in size and so queer in form that she was puzzled.

"Are you certain this is snow?" she asked.

"To be sure. I must get my snow-shovel and turn out to shovel a path.

Would you like to come with me?”

“Yes,” she said, and followed the Bumpy Man out when he opened the door. Then she exclaimed: “Why, it isn’t cold a bit!”

“Of course not,” replied the man. “It was cold last night, before the snowstorm; but snow, when it falls, is always crisp and warm.”

Trot gathered a handful of it.

“Why, it’s popcorn?” she cried.

“Certainly; all snow is popcorn. What did you expect it to be?”

“Popcorn is not snow in my country.”

“Well, it is the only snow we have in the Land of Mo, so you may as well make the best of it,” said he, a little impatiently. “I’m not responsible for the absurd things that happen in your country, and when you’re in Mo you must do as the Momen do. Eat some of our snow, and you will find it is good. The only fault I find with our snow is that we get too much of it at times.”

With this the Bumpy Man set to work shoveling a path and he was so quick and industrious that he piled up the popcorn in great banks on either side of the trail that led to the mountain-top from the plains below. While he worked, Trot ate popcorn and found it crisp and slightly warm, as well as nicely salted and buttered. Presently Cap’n Bill came out of the house and joined her.

“What’s this?” he asked.

“Mo snow,” said she. “But it isn’t real snow, although it falls from the sky. It’s popcorn.”

Cap’n Bill tasted it; then he sat down in the path and began to eat. The Ork came out and pecked away with its bill as fast as it could. They all liked popcorn and they all were hungry this morning.

Meantime the flakes of “Mo snow” came down so fast that the number of them almost darkened the air. The Bumpy Man was now shoveling quite a distance down the mountain-side, while the path behind him rapidly filled up with fresh-fallen popcorn. Suddenly Trot heard him call out:

“Goodness gracious — mince pie and pancakes! — here is some one buried in the snow.”

She ran toward him at once and the others followed, wading through the corn and crunching it underneath their feet. The Mo snow was pretty deep where the Bumpy Man was shoveling and from beneath a great bank of it he had uncovered a pair of feet.

“Dear me! Someone has been lost in the storm,” said Cap’n Bill. “I hope he is still alive. Let’s pull him out and see.”

He took hold of one foot and the Bumpy Man took hold of the other. Then they both pulled and out from the heap of popcorn came a little boy. He was

dressed in a brown velvet jacket and knickerbockers, with brown stockings, buckled shoes and a blue shirt-waist that had frills down its front. When drawn from the heap the boy was chewing a mouthful of popcorn and both his hands were full of it. So at first he couldn't speak to his rescuers but lay quite still and eyed them calmly until he had swallowed his mouthful. Then he said:

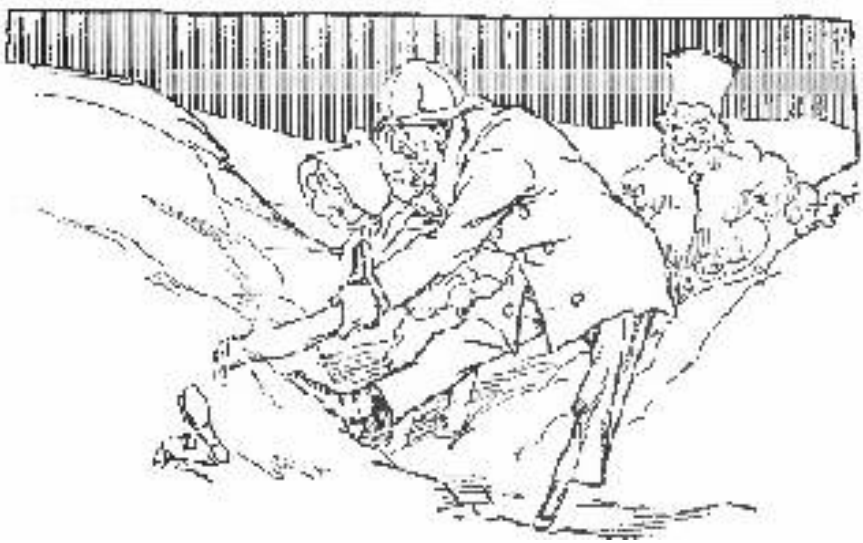
"Get my cap," and stuffed more popcorn into his mouth.

While the Bumpy Man began shoveling into the corn-bank to find the boy's cap, Trot was laughing joyfully and Cap'n Bill had a broad grin on his face. The Ork looked from one to another and asked:

"Who is this stranger?"

"Why, it's Button-Bright, of course," answered Trot. "If anyone ever finds a lost boy, he can make up his mind it's Button-Bright. But how he ever came to be lost in this far-away country is more'n I can make out."

"Where does he belong?" inquired the Ork.



"His home used to be in Philadelphia, I think; but I'm quite sure Button-Bright doesn't belong anywhere."

"That's right," said the boy, nodding his head as he swallowed the second mouthful.

"Everyone belongs somewhere," remarked the Ork.

"Not me," insisted Button-Bright. "I'm half way round the world from Philadelphia, and I've lost my Magic Umbrella, that used to carry me anywhere. Stands to reason that if I can't get back I haven't any home. But I don't care much. This is a pretty good country, Trot. I've had lots of fun here."

By this time the Mountain Ear had secured the boy's cap and was listening to the conversation with much interest.

"It seems you know this poor, snow-covered cast-away," he said.

"Yes, indeed," answered Trot. "We made a journey together to Sky Island, once, and were good friends."

"Well, then I'm glad I saved his life," said the Bumpy Man.

"Much obliged, Mr. Knobs," said Button-Bright, sitting up and staring at him, "but I don't believe you've saved anything except some popcorn that I might have eaten had you not disturbed me. It was nice and warm in that bank of popcorn, and there was plenty to eat. What made you dig me out? And what makes you so bumpy everywhere?"

"As for the bumps," replied the man, looking at himself with much pride, "I was born with them and I suspect they were a gift from the fairies. They make me look rugged and big, like the mountain I serve."

"All right," said Button-Bright and began eating popcorn again.

It had stopped snowing, now, and great flocks of birds were gathering around the mountain-side, eating the popcorn with much eagerness and scarcely noticing the people at all. There were birds of every size and color, most of them having gorgeous feathers and plumes.

"Just look at them!" exclaimed the Ork scornfully. "Aren't they dreadful creatures, all covered with feathers?"

"I think they're beautiful," said Trot, and this made the Ork so indignant that he went back into the house and sulked.

Button-Bright reached out his hand and caught a big bird by the leg. At once it rose into the air and it was so strong that it nearly carried the little boy with it. He let go the leg in a hurry and the bird flew down again and began to eat of the popcorn, not being frightened in the least.

This gave Cap'n Bill an idea. He felt in his pocket and drew out several pieces of stout string. Moving very quietly, so as to not alarm the birds, he crept up to several of the biggest ones and tied cords around their legs, thus making them prisoners. The birds were so intent on their eating that they did not notice what had happened to them, and when about twenty had been captured in this manner Cap'n Bill tied the ends of all the strings together and fastened them to a huge stone, so they could not escape.

The Bumpy Man watched the old sailor's actions with much curiosity.

"The birds will be quiet until they've eaten up all the snow," he said, "but then they will want to fly away to their homes. Tell me, sir, what will the poor things do when they find they can't fly?"

"It may worry 'em a little," replied Cap'n Bill, "but they're not going to be hurt if they take it easy and behave themselves."

Our friends had all made a good breakfast of the delicious popcorn and now they walked toward the house again. Button-Bright walked beside Trot and held her hand in his, because they were old friends and he liked the little girl very much. The boy was not so old as Trot, and small as she was he was half a head shorter in height. The most remarkable thing about Button-Bright was that he was always quiet and composed, whatever happened, and nothing was ever able to astonish him. Trot liked him because he was not rude and never tried to plague her. Cap'n Bill liked him because he had found the boy cheerful and brave at all times, and willing to do anything he was asked to do.

When they came to the house Trot sniffed the air and asked "Don't I smell perfume?"

"I think you do," said the Bumpy Man. "You smell violets, and that proves there is a breeze springing up from the south. All our winds and breezes are perfumed and for that reason we are glad to have them blow in our direction. The south breeze always has a violet odor; the north breeze has the fragrance of wild roses; the east breeze is perfumed with lilies-of-the-valley and the west wind with lilac blossoms. So we need no weathervane to tell us which way the wind is blowing. We have only to smell the perfume and it informs us at once."

Inside the house they found the Ork, and Button-Bright regarded the strange, birdlike creature with curious interest. After examining it closely for a time he asked:

“Which way does your tail whirl?”

“Either way,” said the Ork.

Button-Bright put out his hand and tried to spin it.

“Don’t do that!” exclaimed the Ork.

“Why not?” inquired the boy.

“Because it happens to be my tail, and I reserve the right to whirl it myself,” explained the Ork.

“Let’s go out and fly somewhere,” proposed Button-Bright. “I want to see how the tail works.”

“Not now,” said the Ork. “I appreciate your interest in me, which I fully deserve; but I only fly when I am going somewhere, and if I got started I might not stop.”

“That reminds me,” remarked Cap’n Bill, “to ask you, friend Ork, how we are going to get away from here?”

“Get away!” exclaimed the Bumpy Man. “Why don’t you stay here? You won’t find any nicer place than Mo.”

“Have you been anywhere else, sir?”

“No; I can’t say that I have,” admitted the Mountain Ear.

“Then permit me to say you’re no judge,” declared Cap’n Bill. “But you haven’t answered my question, friend Ork. How are we to get away from this mountain?”

The Ork reflected a while before he answered.

“I might carry one of you — the boy or the girl — upon my back,” said he, “but three big people are more than I can manage, although I have carried two of you for a short distance. You ought not to have eaten those purple berries so soon.”

“P’r’aps we did make a mistake,” Cap’n Bill acknowledged.

“Or we might have brought some of those lavender berries with us, instead of so many purple ones,” suggested Trot regretfully.

Cap’n Bill made no reply to this statement, which showed he did not fully agree with the little girl; but he fell into deep thought, with wrinkled brows, and finally he said:

“If those purple berries would make anything grow bigger, whether it’d eaten the lavender ones or not, I could find a way out of our troubles.”

They did not understand this speech and looked at the old sailor as if expecting him to explain what he meant. But just then a chorus of shrill cries rose from outside.

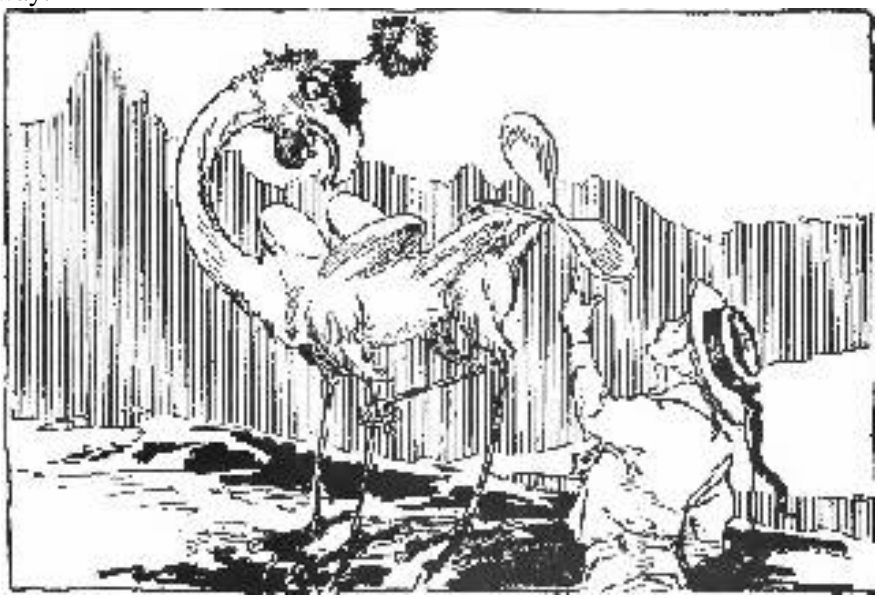
“Here! Let me go — let me go!” the voices seemed to say. “Why are we insulted in this way? Mountain Ear, come and help us!”

Trot ran to the window and looked out.

“It’s the birds you caught, Cap’n,” she said. “I didn’t know they could talk.”

“Oh, yes; all the birds in Mo are educated to talk,” said the Bumpy Man. Then he looked at Cap’n Bill uneasily and added: “Won’t you let the poor things go?”

“I’ll see,” replied the sailor, and walked out to where the birds were fluttering and complaining because the strings would not allow them to fly away.



“Listen to me!” he cried, and at once they became still. “We three people who are strangers in your land want to go to some other country, and we want three of you birds to carry us there. We know we are asking a great favor, but it’s the only way we can think of — excep’ walkin’, an’ I’m not much good at that because I’ve a wooden leg. Besides, Trot an’ Button-Bright are too small to undertake a long and tiresome journey. Now, tell me: Which three of you birds will consent to carry us?”

The birds looked at one another as if greatly astonished. Then one of them replied: “You must be crazy, old man. Not one of us is big enough to fly with even the smallest of your party.”

“I’ll fix the matter of size,” promised Cap’n Bill. “If three of you will agree to carry us, I’ll make you big an’ strong enough to do it, so it won’t worry you a bit.”

The birds considered this gravely. Living in a magic country, they had no doubt but that the strange one-legged man could do what he said. After a

little, one of them asked:

"If you make us big, would we stay big always?"

"I think so," replied Cap'n Bill.

They chattered a while among themselves and then the bird that had first spoken said: "I'll go, for one."

"So will I," said another; and after a pause a third said: "I'll go, too."

Perhaps more would have volunteered, for it seemed that for some reason they all longed to be bigger than they were; but three were enough for Cap'n Bill's purpose and so he promptly released all the others, who immediately flew away.

The three that remained were cousins, and all were of the same brilliant plumage and in size about as large as eagles. When Trot questioned them she found they were quite young, having only abandoned their nests a few weeks before. They were strong young birds, with clear, brave eyes, and the little girl decided they were the most beautiful of all the feathered creatures she had ever seen.

Cap'n Bill now took from his pocket the wooden box with the sliding cover and removed the three purple berries, which were still in good condition.

"Eat these," he said, and gave one to each of the birds. They obeyed, finding the fruit very pleasant to taste. In a few seconds they began to grow in size and grew so fast that Trot feared they would never stop. But they finally did stop growing, and then they were much larger than the Ork, and nearly the size of full-grown ostriches.

Cap'n Bill was much pleased by this result.

"You can carry us now, all right," said he.

The birds strutted around with pride, highly pleased with their immense size.

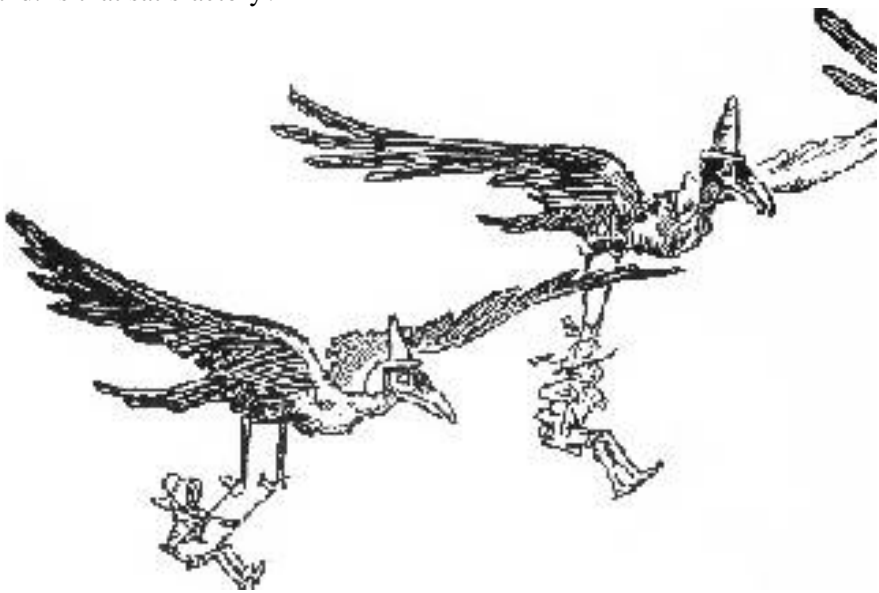
"I don't see, though," said Trot doubtfully, "how we're going to ride on their backs without falling off."

"We're not going to ride on their backs," answered Cap'n Bill. "I'm going to make swings for us to ride in."

He then asked the Bumpy Man for some rope, but the man had no rope. He had, however, an old suit of gray clothes which he gladly presented to Cap'n Bill, who cut the cloth into strips and twisted it so that it was almost as strong as rope. With this material he attached to each bird a swing that dangled below its feet, and Button-Bright made a trial flight in one of them to prove that it was safe and comfortable. When all this had been arranged one of the birds asked:

"Where do you wish us to take you?"

“Why, just follow the Ork,” said Cap’n Bill. “He will be our leader, and wherever the Ork flies you are to fly, and wherever the Ork lands you are to land. Is that satisfactory?”



The birds declared it was quite satisfactory, so Cap’n Bill took counsel with the Ork.

“On our way here,” said that peculiar creature, “I noticed a broad, sandy desert at the left of me, on which was no living thing.”

“Then we’d better keep away from it,” replied the sailor.

“Not so,” insisted the Ork. “I have found, on my travels, that the most pleasant countries often lie in the midst of deserts; so I think it would be wise for us to fly over this desert and discover what lies beyond it. For in the direction we came from lies the ocean, as we well know, and beyond here is this strange Land of Mo, which we do not care to explore. On one side, as we can see from this mountain, is a broad expanse of plain, and on the other the desert. For my part, I vote for the desert.”

"What do you say, Trot?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

"It's all the same to me," she replied.

No one thought of asking Button-Bright's opinion, so it was decided to fly over the desert. They bade good-bye to the Bumpy Man and thanked him for his kindness and hospitality. Then they seated themselves in the swings — one for each bird — and told the Ork to start away and they would follow.

The whirl of the Ork's tail astonished the birds at first, but after he had gone a short distance they rose in the air, carrying their passengers easily, and flew with strong, regular strokes of their great wings in the wake of their leader.

Chapter Nine
The Kingdom of Jinxland

Trot rode with more comfort than she had expected, although the swing swayed so much that she had to hold on tight with both hands. Cap'n Bill's bird followed the Ork, and Trot came next, with Button-Bright trailing behind her. It was quite an imposing procession, but unfortunately there was no one to see it, for the Ork had headed straight for the great sandy desert and in a few minutes after starting they were flying high over the broad waste, where no living thing could exist.

The little girl thought this would be a bad place for the birds to lose strength, or for the cloth ropes to give way; but although she could not help feeling a trifle nervous and fidgety she had confidence in the huge and brilliantly plumaged bird that bore her, as well as in Cap'n Bill's knowledge of how to twist and fasten a rope so it would hold.

That was a remarkably big desert. There was nothing to relieve the

monotony of view and every minute seemed an hour and every hour a day. Disagreeable fumes and gases rose from the sands, which would have been deadly to the travelers had they not been so high in the air. As it was, Trot was beginning to feel sick, when a breath of fresher air filled her nostrils and on looking ahead she saw a great cloud of pink-tinted mist. Even while she wondered what it could be, the Ork plunged boldly into the mist and the other birds followed. She could see nothing for a time, nor could the bird which carried her see where the Ork had gone, but it kept flying as sturdily as ever and in a few moments the mist was passed and the girl saw a most beautiful landscape spread out below her, extending as far as her eye could reach.

She saw bits of forest, verdure clothed hills, fields of waving grain, fountains, rivers and lakes; and throughout the scene were scattered groups of pretty houses and a few grand castles and palaces.

Over all this delightful landscape — which from Trot's high perch seemed like a magnificent painted picture — was a rosy glow such as we sometimes see in the west at sunset. In this case, however, it was not in the west only, but everywhere.

No wonder the Ork paused to circle slowly over this lovely country. The other birds followed his action, all eyeing the place with equal delight. Then, as with one accord, the four formed a group and slowly sailed downward. This brought them to that part of the newly-discovered land which bordered on the desert's edge; but it was just as pretty here as anywhere, so the Ork and the birds alighted and the three passengers at once got out of their swings.

"Oh, Cap'n Bill, isn't this fine an' dandy?" exclaimed Trot rapturously. "How lucky we were to discover this beautiful country!"

"The country seems rather high class, I'll admit, Trot," replied the old sailor-man, looking around him, "but we don't know, as yet, what its people are like."

"No one could live in such a country without being happy and good — I'm sure of that," she said earnestly. "Don't you think so, Button-Bright?"

"I'm not thinking, just now," answered the little boy. "It tires me to think, and I never seem to gain anything by it. When we see the people who live here we will know what they are like, and no 'mount of thinking will make them any different."

"That's true enough," said the Ork. "But now I want to make a proposal. While you are getting acquainted with this new country, which looks as if it contains everything to make one happy, I would like to fly along — all by myself — and see if I can find my home on the other side of the great desert.

If I do, I will stay there, of course. But if I fail to find Orkland I will return to you in a week, to see if I can do anything more to assist you."

They were sorry to lose their queer companion, but could offer no objection to the plan; so the Ork bade them good-bye and rising swiftly in the air, he flew over the country and was soon lost to view in the distance.

The three birds which had carried our friends now begged permission to return by the way they had come, to their own homes, saying they were anxious to show their families how big they had become. So Cap'n Bill and Trot and Button-Bright all thanked them gratefully for their assistance and soon the birds began their long flight toward the Land of Mo. Being now left to themselves in this strange land, the three comrades selected a pretty pathway and began walking along it. They believed this path would lead them to a splendid castle which they espied in the distance, the turrets of which towered far above the tops of the trees which surrounded it. It did not seem very far away, so they sauntered on slowly, admiring the beautiful ferns and flowers that lined the pathway and listening to the singing of the birds and the soft chirping of the grasshoppers.

Presently the path wound over a little hill. In a valley that lay beyond the hill was a tiny cottage surrounded by flower beds and fruit trees. On the shady porch of the cottage they saw, as they approached, a pleasant faced woman

sitting amidst a group of children, to whom she was telling stories. The children quickly discovered the strangers and ran toward them with exclamations of astonishment, so that Trot and her friends became the center of a curious group, all chattering excitedly. Cap'n Bill's wooden leg seemed to arouse the wonder of the children, as they could not understand why he had not two meat legs. This attention seemed to please the old sailor, who patted the heads of the children kindly and then, raising his hat to the woman, he inquired:

"Can you tell us, madam, just what country this is?"

She stared hard at all three of the strangers as she replied briefly: "Jinxland."

"Oh!" exclaimed Cap'n Bill, with a puzzled look. "And where is Jinxland, please?"

"In the Quadling Country," said she.

"What!" cried Trot, in sudden excitement. "Do you mean to say this is the Quadling Country of the Land of Oz?"

"To be sure I do," the woman answered. "Every bit of land that is surrounded by the great desert is the Land of Oz, as you ought to know as well as I do; but I'm sorry to say that Jinxland is separated from the rest of the Quadling Country by that row of high mountains you see yonder, which have such steep sides that no one can cross them. So we live here all by ourselves, and are ruled by our own King, instead of by Ozma of Oz."

"I've been to the Land of Oz before," said Button-Bright, "but I've never been here."

"Did you ever hear of Jinxland before?" asked Trot.

"No," said Button-Bright.

"It is on the Map of Oz, though," asserted the woman, "and it's a fine country, I assure you. If only," she added, and then paused to look around her with a frightened expression. "If only — " here she stopped again, as if not daring to go on with her speech.

"If only what, ma'am?" asked Cap'n Bill.

The woman sent the children into the house. Then she came closer to the strangers and whispered: "If only we had a different King, we would be very happy and contented."

"What's the matter with your King?" asked Trot, curiously. But the woman seemed frightened to have said so much. She retreated to her porch, merely saying:

"The King punishes severely any treason on the part of his subjects."

"What's treason?" asked Button-Bright.

"In this case," replied Cap'n Bill, "treason seems to consist of knockin'

the King; but I guess we know his disposition now as well as if the lady had said more."

"I wonder," said Trot, going up to the woman, "if you could spare us something to eat. We haven't had anything but popcorn and lemonade for a long time."

"Bless your heart! Of course I can spare you some food," the woman answered, and entering her cottage she soon returned with a tray loaded with sandwiches, cakes and cheese. One of the children drew a bucket of clear, cold water from a spring and the three wanderers ate heartily and enjoyed the good things immensely.

When Button-Bright could eat no more he filled the pockets of his jacket with cakes and cheese, and not even the children objected to this. Indeed they all seemed pleased to see the strangers eat, so Cap'n Bill decided that no matter what the King of Jinxland was like, the people would prove friendly and hospitable.

"Whose castle is that, yonder, ma'am?" he asked, waving his hand toward the towers that rose above the trees.

"It belongs to his Majesty, King Krewl." she said.

"Oh, indeed; and does he live there?"

"When he is not out hunting with his fierce courtiers and war captains," she replied.

"Is he hunting now?" Trot inquired.

“I do not know, my dear. The less we know about the King’s actions the safer we are.”

It was evident the woman did not like to talk about King Krewl and so, having finished their meal, they said good-bye and continued along the pathway.

“Don’t you think we’d better keep away from that King’s castle, Cap’n?” asked Trot.

“Well,” said he, “King Krewl would find out, sooner or later, that we are in his country, so we may as well face the music now. Perhaps he isn’t quite so bad as that woman thinks he is. Kings aren’t always popular with their people, you know, even if they do the best they know how.”

“Ozma is pop’lar,” said Button-Bright.

“Ozma is diff’rent from any other Ruler, from all I’ve heard,” remarked Trot musingly, as she walked beside the boy. “And, after all, we are really in the Land of Oz, where Ozma rules ev’ry King and ev’rybody else. I never heard of anybody getting hurt in her dominions, did you, Button-Bright?”

“Not when she knows about it,” he replied. “But those birds landed us in just the wrong place, seems to me. They might have carried us right on, over that row of mountains, to the Em’rald City.”

“True enough,” said Cap’n Bill; “but they didn’t, an’ so we must make the best of Jinxland. Let’s try not to be afraid.”

“Oh, I’m not very scared,” said Button-Bright, pausing to look at a pink rabbit that popped its head out of a hole in the field near by.

“Nor am I,” added Trot. “Really, Cap’n, I’m so glad to be anywhere at all in the wonderful fairyland of Oz that I think I’m the luckiest girl in all the world. Dorothy lives in the Em’rald City, you know, and so does the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and Tik-Tok and the Shaggy Man — and all the rest of ‘em that we’ve heard so much about — not to mention Ozma, who must be the sweetest and loveliest girl in all the world!”

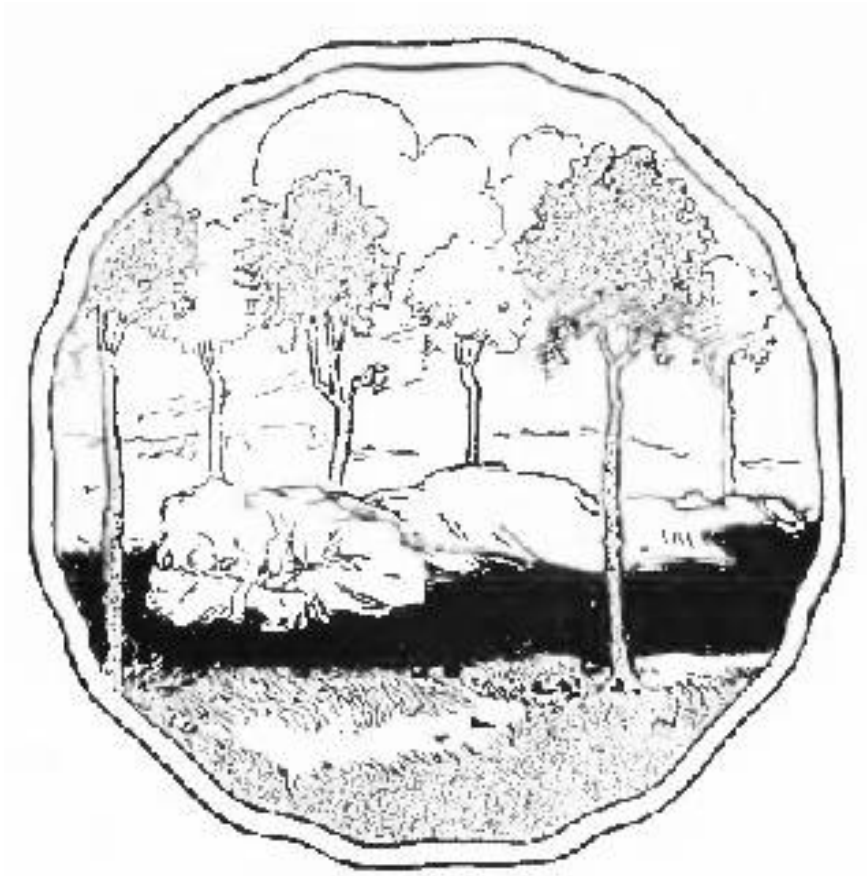
“Take your time, Trot,” advised Button-Bright. “You don’t have to say it all in one breath, you know. And you haven’t mentioned half of the curious people in the Em’rald City.”

“That ‘ere Em’rald City,” said Cap’n Bill impressively, “happens to be on the other side o’ those mountains, that we’re told no one is able to cross. I don’t want to discourage of you, Trot, but we’re a’most as much separated from your Ozma an’ Dorothy as we were when we lived in Californy.”

There was so much truth in this statement that they all walked on in silence for some time. Finally they reached the grove of stately trees that bordered the grounds of the King’s castle. They had gone halfway through it when the sound of sobbing, as of someone in bitter distress, reached their

ears and caused them to halt abruptly.

Chapter Ten
Pon, the Gardener's Boy



It was Button-Bright who first discovered, lying on his face beneath a broad spreading tree near the pathway, a young man whose body shook with the force of his sobs. He was dressed in a long brown smock and had sandals on his feet, betokening one in humble life. His head was bare and showed a shock of brown, curly hair. Button-Bright looked down on the young man and said:

"Who cares, anyhow?"

"I do!" cried the young man, interrupting his sobs to roll over, face upward, that he might see who had spoken. "I care, for my heart is broken!"

"Can't you get another one?" asked the little boy.

"I don't want another!" wailed the young man.

By this time Trot and Cap'n Bill arrived at the spot and the girl leaned

over and said in a sympathetic voice:

"Tell us your troubles and perhaps we may help you."

The youth sat up, then, and bowed politely. Afterward he got upon his feet, but still kept wringing his hands as he tried to choke down his sobs. Trot thought he was very brave to control such awful agony so well.

"My name is Pon," he began. "I'm the gardener's boy."

"Then the gardener of the King is your father, I suppose," said Trot.

"Not my father, but my master," was the reply

"I do the work and the gardener gives the orders. And it was not my fault, in the least, that the Princess Gloria fell in love with me."

"Did she, really?" asked the little girl.

"I don't see why," remarked Button-Bright, staring at the youth.

"And who may the Princess Gloria be?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

"She is the niece of King Krewl, who is her guardian. The Princess lives in the castle and is the loveliest and sweetest maiden in all Jinxland. She is fond of flowers and used to walk in the gardens with her attendants. At such times, if I was working at my tasks, I used to cast down my eyes as Gloria passed me; but one day I glanced up and found her gazing at me with a very tender look in her eyes. The next day she dismissed her attendants and, coming to my side, began to talk with me. She said I had touched her heart as no other young man had ever done. I kissed her hand. Just then the King came around a bend in the walk. He struck me with his fist and kicked me with his foot. Then he seized the arm of the Princess and rudely dragged her into the castle."

"Wasn't he awful!" gasped Trot indignantly.

"He is a very abrupt King," said Pon, "so it was the least I could expect. Up to that time I had not thought of loving Princess Gloria, but realizing it would be impolite not to return her love, I did so. We met at evening, now and then, and she told me the King wanted her to marry a rich courtier named Googly-Goo, who is old enough to be Gloria's father. She has refused Googly-Goo thirty-nine times, but he still persists and has brought many rich presents to bribe the King. On that account King Krewl has commanded his niece to marry the old man, but the Princess has assured me, time and again, that she will wed only me. This morning we happened to meet in the grape arbor and as I was respectfully saluting the cheek of the Princess, two of the King's guards seized me and beat me terribly before the very eyes of Gloria, whom the King himself held back so she could not interfere."

"Why, this King must be a monster!" cried Trot.

"He is far worse than that," said Pon, mournfully.

"But, see here," interrupted Cap'n Bill, who had listened carefully to Pon.

“This King may not be so much to blame, after all. Kings are proud folks, because they’re so high an’ mighty, an’ it isn’t reasonable for a royal Princess to marry a common gardener’s boy.”

“It isn’t right,” declared Button-Bright. “A Princess should marry a Prince.”

“I’m not a common gardener’s boy,” protested Pon. “If I had my rights I would be the King instead of Krewl. As it is, I’m a Prince, and as royal as any man in Jinxland.”

“How does that come?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“My father used to be the King and Krewl was his Prime Minister. But one day while out hunting, King Phearse — that was my father’s name — had a quarrel with Krewl and tapped him gently on the nose with the knuckles of his closed hand. This so provoked the wicked Krewl that he tripped my father backward, so that he fell into a deep pond. At once Krewl threw in a mass of heavy stones, which so weighted down my poor father that his body could not rise again to the surface. It is impossible to kill anyone in this land, as perhaps you know, but when my father was pressed down into the mud at the bottom of the deep pool and the stones held him so he could never escape, he was of no more use to himself or the world than if he had died. Knowing this, Krewl proclaimed himself King, taking possession of the royal castle and driving all my father’s people out. I was a small boy, then, but when I grew up I became a gardener. I have served King Krewl without his knowing that I am the son of the same King Phearse whom he so cruelly made away with.”

“My, but that’s a terr’bly exciting story!” said Trot, drawing a long breath. “But tell us, Pon, who was Gloria’s father?”

“Oh, he was the King before my father,” replied Pon. “Father was Prime Minister for King Kynd, who was Gloria’s father. She was only a baby when King Kynd fell into the Great Gulf that lies just this side of the mountains — the same mountains that separate Jinxland from the rest of the Land of Oz. It is said the Great Gulf has no bottom; but, however that may be, King Kynd has never been seen again and my father became King in his place.”

“Seems to me,” said Trot, “that if Gloria had her rights she would be Queen of Jinxland.”

“Well, her father was a King,” admitted Pon, “and so was my father; so we are of equal rank, although she’s a great lady and I’m a humble gardener’s boy. I can’t see why we should not marry if we want to except that King Krewl won’t let us.”

“It’s a sort of mixed-up mess, taken altogether,” remarked Cap’n Bill. “But we are on our way to visit King Krewl, and if we get a chance, young

man, we'll put in a good word for you."

"Do, please!" begged Pon.

"Was it the flogging you got that broke your heart?" inquired Button-Bright.

"Why, it helped to break it, of course," said Pon.

"I'd get it fixed up, if I were you," advised the boy, tossing a pebble at a chipmunk in a tree. "You ought to give Gloria just as good a heart as she gives you."

"That's common sense," agreed Cap'n Bill. So they left the gardener's boy standing beside the path, and resumed their journey toward the castle.

Chapter Eleven

The Wicked King and Googly-Goo

When our friends approached the great doorway of the castle they found it guarded by several soldiers dressed in splendid uniforms. They were armed with swords and lances. Cap'n Bill walked straight up to them and asked:

"Does the King happen to be at home?"

"His Magnificent and Glorious Majesty, King Krewl, is at present inhabiting his Royal Castle," was the stiff reply.

"Then I guess we'll go in an' say how-d'ye-do," continued Cap'n Bill, attempting to enter the doorway. But a soldier barred his way with a lance.

"Who are you, what are your names, and where do you come from?" demanded the soldier.

"You wouldn't know if we told you," returned the sailor, "seein' as we're strangers in a strange land."

"Oh, if you are strangers you will be permitted to enter," said the soldier,

lowering his lance. “His Majesty is very fond of strangers.”

“Do many strangers come here?” asked Trot.

“You are the first that ever came to our country,” said the man. “But his Majesty has often said that if strangers ever arrived in Jinxland he would see that they had a very exciting time.”

Cap’n Bill scratched his chin thoughtfully. He wasn’t very favorably impressed by this last remark. But he decided that as there was no way of escape from Jinxland it would be wise to confront the King boldly and try to win his favor. So they entered the castle, escorted by one of the soldiers.

It was certainly a fine castle, with many large rooms, all beautifully furnished. The passages were winding and handsomely decorated, and after following several of these the soldier led them into an open court that occupied the very center of the huge building. It was surrounded on every side by high turreted walls, and contained beds of flowers, fountains and walks of many colored marbles which were matched together in quaint designs. In an open space near the middle of the court they saw a group of courtiers and their ladies, who surrounded a lean man who wore upon his head a jeweled crown. His face was hard and sullen and through the slits of his half-closed eyelids the eyes glowed like coals of fire. He was dressed in brilliant satins and velvets and was seated in a golden throne-chair.

This personage was King Krewl, and as soon as Cap’n Bill saw him the old sailor knew at once that he was not going to like the King of Jinxland.

“Hello! who’s here?” said his Majesty, with a deep scowl.

“Strangers, Sire,” answered the soldier, bowing so low that his forehead touched the marble tiles.

“Strangers, eh? Well, well; what an unexpected visit! Advance, strangers, and give an account of yourselves.”

The King’s voice was as harsh as his features. Trot shuddered a little but Cap’n Bill calmly replied:

“There ain’t much for us to say, ‘cept as we’ve arrived to look over your country an’ see how we like it. Judgin’ from the way you speak, you don’t know who we are, or you’d be jumpin’ up to shake hands an’ offer us seats. Kings usually treat us pretty well, in the great big Outside World where we come from, but in this little kingdom — which don’t amount to much, anyhow — folks don’t seem to ‘a’ got much culchure.”

The King listened with amazement to this bold speech, first with a frown and then gazing at the two children and the old sailor with evident curiosity. The courtiers were dumb with fear, for no one had ever dared speak in such a manner to their self-willed, cruel King before. His Majesty, however, was somewhat frightened, for cruel people are always cowards, and he feared

these mysterious strangers might possess magic powers that would destroy him unless he treated them well. So he commanded his people to give the new arrivals seats, and they obeyed with trembling haste.

After being seated, Cap'n Bill lighted his pipe and began puffing smoke from it, a sight so strange to them that it filled them all with wonder. Presently the King asked:

"How did you penetrate to this hidden country? Did you cross the desert or the mountains?"

"Desert," answered Cap'n Bill, as if the task were too easy to be worth talking about.

"Indeed! No one has ever been able to do that before," said the King.

"Well, it's easy enough, if you know how," asserted Cap'n Bill, so carelessly that it greatly impressed his hearers. The King shifted in his throne uneasily. He was more afraid of these strangers than before.

"Do you intend to stay long in Jinxland?" was his next anxious question.

"Depends on how we like it," said Cap'n Bill. "Just now I might suggest to your Majesty to order some rooms got ready for us in your dinky little castle here. And a royal banquet, with some fried onions an' pickled tripe, would set easy on our stomicks an' make us a bit happier than we are now."

"Your wishes shall be attended to," said King Krewl, but his eyes flashed from between their slits in a wicked way that made Trot hope the food wouldn't be poisoned. At the King's command several of his attendants hastened away to give the proper orders to the castle servants and no sooner were they gone than a skinny old man entered the courtyard and bowed before the King.

This disagreeable person was dressed in rich velvets, with many furbelows and laces. He was covered with golden chains, finely wrought rings and jeweled ornaments. He walked with mincing steps and glared at all the courtiers as if he considered himself far superior to any or all of them.

“Well, well, your Majesty; what news — what news?” he demanded, in a shrill, cracked voice.

The King gave him a surly look.

“No news, Lord Googly-Goo, except that strangers have arrived,” he said.

Googly-Goo cast a contemptuous glance at Cap’n Bill and a disdainful one at Trot and Button-Bright. Then he said:

“Strangers do not interest me, your Majesty. But the Princess Gloria is very interesting — very interesting, indeed! What does she say, Sire? Will she marry me?”

“Ask her,” retorted the King.

“I have, many times; and every time she has refused.”

“Well?” said the King harshly.

“Well,” said Googly-Goo in a jaunty tone, “a bird that can sing, and won’t sing, must be made to sing.”

“Huh!” sneered the King. “That’s easy, with a bird; but a girl is harder to manage.”

“Still,” persisted Googly-Goo, “we must overcome difficulties. The chief trouble is that Gloria fancies she loves that miserable gardener’s boy, Pon. Suppose we throw Pon into the Great Gulf, your Majesty?”

“It would do you no good,” returned the King. “She would still love him.”

“Too bad, too bad!” sighed Googly-Goo. “I have laid aside more than a bushel of precious gems — each worth a king’s ransom — to present to your Majesty on the day I wed Gloria.”

The King’s eyes sparkled, for he loved wealth above everything; but the next moment he frowned deeply again.

“It won’t help us to kill Pon,” he muttered. “What we must do is kill Gloria’s love for Pon.”

“That is better, if you can find a way to do it,” agreed Googly-Goo. “Everything would come right if you could kill Gloria’s love for that gardener’s boy. Really, Sire, now that I come to think of it, there must be fully a bushel and a half of those jewels!”

Just then a messenger entered the court to say that the banquet was prepared for the strangers. So Cap’n Bill, Trot and Button-Bright entered the castle and were taken to a room where a fine feast was spread upon the table.

“I don’t like that Lord Googly-Goo,” remarked Trot as she was busily eating.

“Nor I,” said Cap’n Bill. “But from the talk we heard I guess the gardener’s boy won’t get the Princess.”

“Perhaps not,” returned the girl; “but I hope old Googly doesn’t get her, either.”

“The King means to sell her for all those jewels,” observed Button-Bright, his mouth half full of cake and jam.

“Poor Princess!” sighed Trot. “I’m sorry for her, although I’ve never seen her. But if she says no to Googly-Goo, and means it, what can they do?”

“Don’t let us worry about a strange Princess,” advised Cap’n Bill. “I’ve a notion we’re not too safe, ourselves, with this cruel King.”

The two children felt the same way and all three were rather solemn during the remainder of the meal.

When they had eaten, the servants escorted them to their rooms. Cap’n Bill’s room was way to one end of the castle, very high up, and Trot’s room was at the opposite end, rather low down. As for Button-Bright, they placed

him in the middle, so that all were as far apart as they could possibly be. They didn't like this arrangement very well, but all the rooms were handsomely furnished and being guests of the King they dared not complain.

After the strangers had left the courtyard the King and Googly-Goo had a long talk together, and the King said:

"I cannot force Gloria to marry you just now, because those strangers may interfere. I suspect that the wooden-legged man possesses great magical powers, or he would never have been able to carry himself and those children across the deadly desert."

"I don't like him; he looks dangerous," answered Googly-Goo. "But perhaps you are mistaken about his being a wizard. Why don't you test his powers?"

"How?" asked the King.

"Send for the Wicked Witch. She will tell you in a moment whether that wooden-legged person is a common man or a magician."

"Ha! that's a good idea," cried the King. "Why didn't I think of the Wicked Witch before? But the woman demands rich rewards for her services."

"Never mind; I will pay her," promised the wealthy Googly-Goo.

So a servant was dispatched to summon the Wicked Witch, who lived but a few leagues from King Krewl's castle. While they awaited her, the withered old courtier proposed that they pay a visit to Princess Gloria and see if she was not now in a more complaisant mood. So the two started away

together and searched the castle over without finding Gloria.

At last Googly-Goo suggested she might be in the rear garden, which was a large park filled with bushes and trees and surrounded by a high wall. And what was their anger, when they turned a corner of the path, to find in a quiet nook the beautiful Princess, and kneeling before her, Pon, the gardener's boy! With a roar of rage the King dashed forward; but Pon had scaled the wall by means of a ladder, which still stood in its place, and when he saw the King coming he ran up the ladder and made good his escape. But this left Gloria confronted by her angry guardian, the King, and by old Googly-Goo, who was trembling with a fury he could not express in words.

Seizing the Princess by her arm the King dragged her back to the castle. Pushing her into a room on the lower floor he locked the door upon the unhappy girl. And at that moment the arrival of the Wicked Witch was announced.

Hearing this, the King smiled, as a tiger smiles, showing his teeth. And Googly-Goo smiled, as a serpent smiles, for he had no teeth except a couple of fangs. And having frightened each other with these smiles the two dreadful men went away to the Royal Council Chamber to meet the Wicked Witch.

Queen Gloria

Chapter Twelve

The Wooden-Legged Grass-Hopper

Now it so happened that Trot, from the window of her room, had witnessed the meeting of the lovers in the garden and had seen the King come and drag Gloria away. The little girl's heart went out in sympathy for the poor Princess, who seemed to her to be one of the sweetest and loveliest young ladies she had ever seen, so she crept along the passages and from a hidden niche saw Gloria locked in her room.

The key was still in the lock, so when the King had gone away, followed by Googly-Goo, Trot stole up to the door, turned the key and entered. The Princess lay prone upon a couch, sobbing bitterly. Trot went up to her and smoothed her hair and tried to comfort her.

"Don't cry," she said. "I've unlocked the door, so you can go away any time you want to."

“It isn’t that,” sobbed the Princess. “I am unhappy because they will not let me love Pon, the gardener’s boy!”

“Well, never mind; Pon isn’t any great shakes, anyhow, seems to me,” said Trot soothingly. “There are lots of other people you can love.”

Gloria rolled over on the couch and looked at the little girl reproachfully.

“Pon has won my heart, and I can’t help loving him,” she explained. Then with sudden indignation she added: “But I’ll never love Googly-Goo — never, as long as I live!”

“I should say not!” replied Trot. “Pon may not be much good, but old Googly is very, very bad. Hunt around, and I’m sure you’ll find someone worth your love. You’re very pretty, you know, and almost anyone ought to love you.”

“You don’t understand, my dear,” said Gloria, as she wiped the tears from her eyes with a dainty lace handkerchief bordered with pearls. “When you are older you will realize that a young lady cannot decide whom she will love, or choose the most worthy. Her heart alone decides for her, and whomsoever her heart selects, she must love, whether he amounts to much or not.”

Trot was a little puzzled by this speech, which seemed to her unreasonable; but she made no reply and presently Gloria’s grief softened and she began to question the little girl about herself and her adventures. Trot told her how they had happened to come to Jinxland, and all about Cap’n Bill and the Ork and Pessim and the Bumpy Man.

While they were thus conversing together, getting more and more friendly as they became better acquainted, in the Council Chamber the King and Googly-Goo were talking with the Wicked Witch.

This evil creature was old and ugly. She had lost one eye and wore a black patch over it, so the people of Jinxland had named her “Blinkie.” Of course witches are forbidden to exist in the Land of Oz, but Jinxland was so far removed from the center of Ozma’s dominions, and so absolutely cut off from it by the steep mountains and the bottomless gulf, that the laws of Oz were not obeyed very well in that country. So there were several witches in Jinxland who were the terror of the people, but King Krewl favored them and permitted them to exercise their evil sorcery.

Blinkie was the leader of all the other witches and therefore the most hated and feared. The King used her witchcraft at times to assist him in carrying out his cruelties and revenge, but he was always obliged to pay Blinkie large sums of money or heaps of precious jewels before she would undertake an enchantment. This made him hate the old woman almost as much as his subjects did, but to-day Lord Googly-Goo had agreed to pay the

witch's price, so the King greeted her with gracious favor.

"Can you destroy the love of Princess Gloria for the gardener's boy?" inquired his Majesty.

The Wicked Witch thought about it before she replied:

"That's a hard question to answer. I can do lots of clever magic, but love is a stubborn thing to conquer. When you think you've killed it, it's liable to bob up again as strong as ever. I believe love and cats have nine lives. In other words, killing love is a hard job, even for a skillful witch, but I believe I can do something that will answer your purpose just as well."

"What is that?" asked the King.

"I can freeze the girl's heart. I've got a special incantation for that, and

when Gloria's heart is thoroughly frozen she can no longer love Pon."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Googly-Goo, and the King was likewise much pleased.

They bargained a long time as to the price, but finally the old courtier agreed to pay the Wicked Witch's demands. It was arranged that they should take Gloria to Blinkie's house the next day, to have her heart frozen.

Then King Krewl mentioned to the old hag the strangers who had that day arrived in Jinxland, and said to her:

"I think the two children — the boy and the girl — are unable to harm me, but I have a suspicion that the wooden-legged man is a powerful wizard."

The witch's face wore a troubled look when she heard this.

"If you are right," she said, "this wizard might spoil my incantation and interfere with me in other ways. So it will be best for me to meet this stranger at once and match my magic against his, to decide which is the stronger."

"All right," said the King. "Come with me and I will lead you to the man's room."

Googly-Goo did not accompany them, as he was obliged to go home to get the money and jewels he had promised to pay old Blinkie, so the other two climbed several flights of stairs and went through many passages until they came to the room occupied by Cap'n Bill.

The sailor-man, finding his bed soft and inviting, and being tired with the adventures he had experienced, had decided to take a nap. When the Wicked Witch and the King softly opened his door and entered, Cap'n Bill was snoring with such vigor that he did not hear them at all.

Blinkie approached the bed and with her one eye anxiously stared at the sleeping stranger.

"Ah," she said in a soft whisper, "I believe you are right, King Krewl. The man looks to me like a very powerful wizard. But by good luck I have caught him asleep, so I shall transform him before he wakes up, giving him such a form that he will be unable to oppose me."

"Careful!" cautioned the King, also speaking low. "If he discovers what you are doing he may destroy you, and that would annoy me because I need you to attend to Gloria."

But the Wicked Witch realized as well as he did that she must be careful. She carried over her arm a black bag, from which she now drew several packets carefully wrapped in paper. Three of these she selected, replacing the others in the bag. Two of the packets she mixed together, and then she cautiously opened the third.

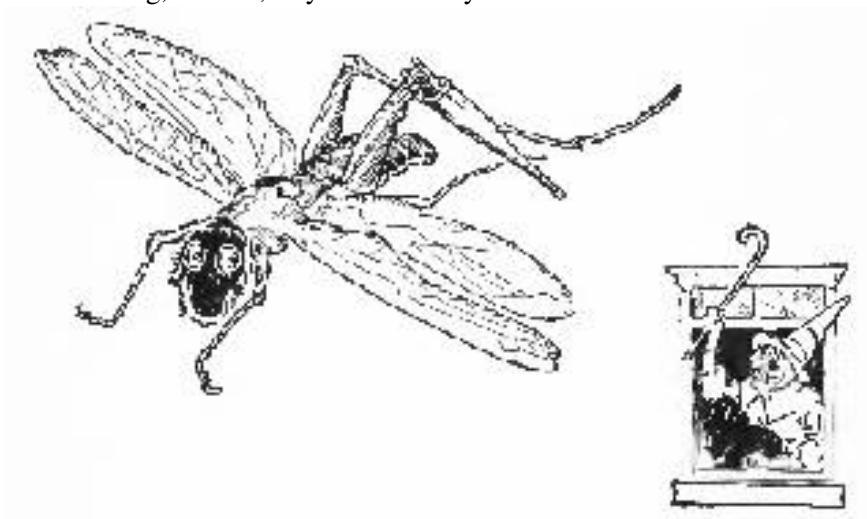
"Better stand back, your Majesty," she advised, "for if this powder falls on you you might be transformed yourself."

The King hastily retreated to the end of the room. As Blinkie mixed the third powder with the others she waved her hands over it, mumbled a few words, and then backed away as quickly as she could.

Cap'n Bill was slumbering peacefully, all unconscious of what was going on. Puff! A great cloud of smoke rolled over the bed and completely hid him from view. When the smoke rolled away, both Blinkie and the King saw that the body of the stranger had quite disappeared, while in his place, crouching in the middle of the bed, was a little gray grasshopper.

One curious thing about this grasshopper was that the last joint of its left leg was made of wood. Another curious thing — considering it was a grasshopper — was that it began talking, crying out in a tiny but sharp voice:

"Here — you people! What do you mean by treating me so? Put me back where I belong, at once, or you'll be sorry!"



The cruel King turned pale at hearing the grasshopper's threats, but the Wicked Witch merely laughed in derision. Then she raised her stick and aimed a vicious blow at the grasshopper, but before the stick struck the bed the tiny hopper made a marvelous jump — marvelous, indeed, when we consider that it had a wooden leg. It rose in the air and sailed across the room and passed right through the open window, where it disappeared from their view.

"Good!" shouted the King. "We are well rid of this desperate wizard." And then they both laughed heartily at the success of the incantation, and went away to complete their horrid plans.

After Trot had visited a time with Princess Gloria, the little girl went to Button-Bright's room but did not find him there. Then she went to Cap'n

Bill's room, but he was not there because the witch and the King had been there before her. So she made her way downstairs and questioned the servants. They said they had seen the little boy go out into the garden, some time ago, but the old man with the wooden leg they had not seen at all.

Therefore Trot, not knowing what else to do, rambled through the great gardens, seeking for Button-Bright or Cap'n Bill and not finding either of them. This part of the garden, which lay before the castle, was not walled in, but extended to the roadway, and the paths were open to the edge of the forest; so, after two hours of vain search for her friends, the little girl returned to the castle.

But at the doorway a soldier stopped her.

"I live here," said Trot, "so it's all right to let me in. The King has given me a room."

"Well, he has taken it back again," was the soldier's reply. "His Majesty's orders are to turn you away if you attempt to enter. I am also ordered to forbid the boy, your companion, to again enter the King's castle."

"How 'bout Cap'n Bill?" she inquired.

"Why, it seems he has mysteriously disappeared," replied the soldier, shaking his head ominously. "Where he has gone to, I can't make out, but I can assure you he is no longer in this castle. I'm sorry, little girl, to disappoint you. Don't blame me; I must obey my master's orders."

Now, all her life Trot had been accustomed to depend on Cap'n Bill, so when this good friend was suddenly taken from her she felt very miserable and forlorn indeed. She was brave enough not to cry before the soldier, or even to let him see her grief and anxiety, but after she was turned away from the castle she sought a quiet bench in the garden and for a time sobbed as if her heart would break.

It was Button-Bright who found her, at last, just as the sun had set and the shades of evening were falling. He also had been turned away from the King's castle, when he tried to enter it, and in the park he came across Trot.

"Never mind," said the boy. "We can find a place to sleep."

"I want Cap'n Bill," wailed the girl.

"Well, so do I," was the reply. "But we haven't got him. Where do you s'pose he is, Trot?

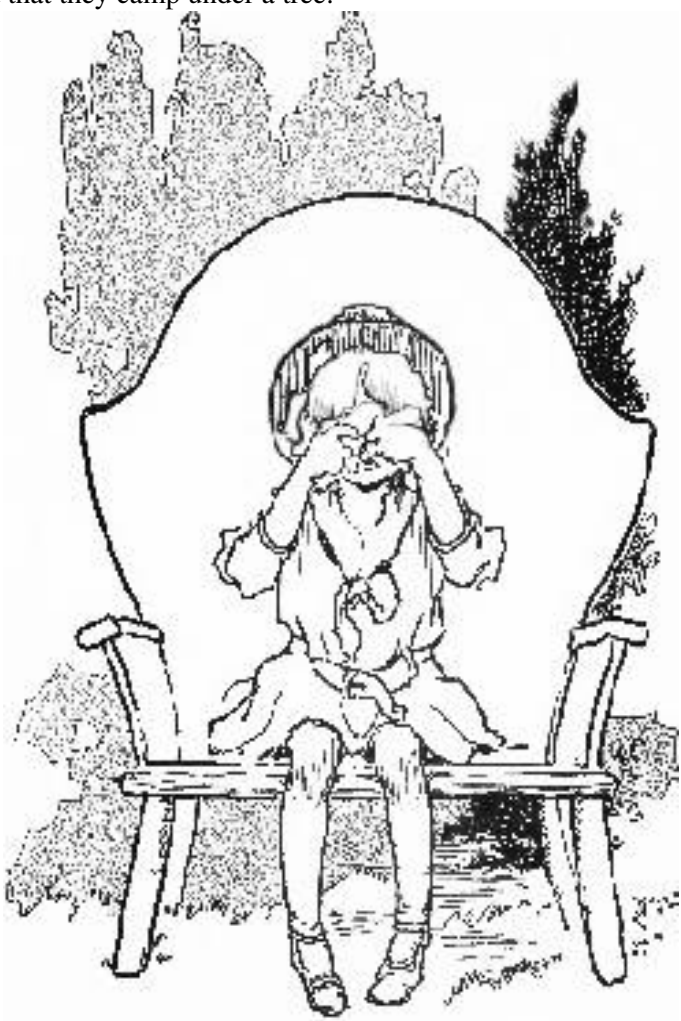
"I don't s'pose anything. He's gone, an' that's all I know 'bout it."

Button-Bright sat on the bench beside her and thrust his hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers. Then he reflected somewhat gravely for him.

"Cap'n Bill isn't around here," he said, letting his eyes wander over the dim garden, "so we must go somewhere else if we want to find him. Besides, it's fast getting dark, and if we want to find a place to sleep we must get busy

while we can see where to go.”

He rose from the bench as he said this and Trot also jumped up, drying her eyes on her apron. Then she walked beside him out of the grounds of the King’s castle. They did not go by the main path, but passed through an opening in a hedge and found themselves in a small but well-worn roadway. Following this for some distance, along a winding way, they came upon no house or building that would afford them refuge for the night. It became so dark that they could scarcely see their way, and finally Trot stopped and suggested that they camp under a tree.



“All right,” said Button-Bright, “I’ve often found that leaves make a good warm blanket. But — look there, Trot! — isn’t that a light flashing over

yonder?"

"It certainly is, Button-Bright. Let's go over and see if it's a house. Whoever lives there couldn't treat us worse than the King did."

To reach the light they had to leave the road, so they stumbled over hillocks and brushwood, hand in hand, keeping the tiny speck of light always in sight.

They were rather forlorn little waifs, outcasts in a strange country and forsaken by their only friend and guardian, Cap'n Bill. So they were very glad when finally they reached a small cottage and, looking in through its one window, saw Pon, the gardener's boy, sitting by a fire of twigs.

As Trot opened the door and walked boldly in, Pon sprang up to greet them. They told him of Cap'n Bill's disappearance and how they had been turned out of the King's castle. As they finished the story Pon shook his head sadly.

"King Krewl is plotting mischief, I fear," said he, "for to-day he sent for old Blinkie, the Wicked Witch, and with my own eyes I saw her come from the castle and hobble away toward her hut. She had been with the King and Googly-Goo, and I was afraid they were going to work some enchantment on Gloria so she would no longer love me. But perhaps the witch was only called to the castle to enchant your friend, Cap'n Bill."

"Could she do that?" asked Trot, horrified by the suggestion.

"I suppose so, for old Blinkie can do a lot of wicked magical things."

"What sort of an enchantment could she put on Cap'n Bill?"

"I don't know. But he has disappeared, so I'm pretty certain she has done something dreadful to him. But don't worry. If it has happened, it can't be helped, and if it hasn't happened we may be able to find him in the morning."

With this Pon went to the cupboard and brought food for them. Trot was far too worried to eat, but Button-Bright made a good supper from the simple food and then lay down before the fire and went to sleep. The little girl and the gardener's boy, however, sat for a long time staring into the fire, busy with their thoughts. But at last Trot, too, became sleepy and Pon gently covered her with the one blanket he possessed. Then he threw more wood on the fire and laid himself down before it, next to Button-Bright. Soon all three were fast asleep. They were in a good deal of trouble; but they were young, and sleep was good to them because for a time it made them forget.

Chapter Thirteen

Glinda the Good and the Scarecrow of Oz

That country south of the Emerald City, in the Land of Oz, is known as the Quadling Country, and in the very southernmost part of it stands a splendid palace in which lives Glinda the Good.

Glinda is the Royal Sorceress of Oz. She has wonderful magical powers and uses them only to benefit the subjects of Ozma's kingdom. Even the famous Wizard of Oz pays tribute to her, for Glinda taught him all the real magic he knows, and she is his superior in all sorts of sorcery Everyone loves Glinda, from the dainty and exquisite Ruler, Ozma, down to the humblest inhabitant of Oz, for she is always kindly and helpful and willing to listen to their troubles, however busy she may be. No one knows her age, but all can see how beautiful and stately she is. Her hair is like red gold and finer than the finest silken strands. Her eyes are blue as the sky and always frank and smiling. Her cheeks are the envy of peach-blows and her mouth is enticing as

a rosebud. Glinda is tall and wears splendid gowns that trail behind her as she walks. She wears no jewels, for her beauty would shame them.

For attendants Glinda has half a hundred of the loveliest girls in Oz. They are gathered from all over Oz, from among the Winkies, the Munchkins, the Gillikins and the Quadlings, as well as from Ozma's magnificent Emerald City, and it is considered a great favor to be allowed to serve the Royal Sorceress.

Among the many wonderful things in Glinda's palace is the Great Book of Records. In this book is inscribed everything that takes place in all the world, just the instant it happens; so that by referring to its pages Glinda knows what is taking place far and near, in every country that exists. In this way she learns when and where she can help any in distress or danger, and although her duties are confined to assisting those who inhabit the Land of Oz, she is always interested in what takes place in the unprotected outside world.

So it was that on a certain evening Glinda sat in her library, surrounded by a bevy of her maids, who were engaged in spinning, weaving and embroidery, when an attendant announced the arrival at the palace of the Scarecrow.

This personage was one of the most famous and popular in all the Land of Oz. His body was merely a suit of Munchkin clothes stuffed with straw, but his head was a round sack filled with bran, with which the Wizard of Oz had mixed some magic brains of a very superior sort. The eyes, nose and mouth of the Scarecrow were painted upon the front of the sack, as were his ears, and since this quaint being had been endowed with life, the expression of his face was very interesting, if somewhat comical.

The Scarecrow was good all through, even to his brains, and while he was

naturally awkward in his movements and lacked the neat symmetry of other people, his disposition was so kind and considerate and he was so obliging and honest, that all who knew him loved him, and there were few people in Oz who had not met our Scarecrow and made his acquaintance. He lived part of the time in Ozma's palace at the Emerald City, part of the time in his own corncob castle in the Winkie Country, and part of the time he traveled over all Oz, visiting with the people and playing with the children, whom he dearly loved.

It was on one of his wandering journeys that the Scarecrow had arrived at Glinda's palace, and the Sorceress at once made him welcome. As he sat beside her, talking of his adventures, he asked:

"What's new in the way of news?"

Glinda opened her Great Book of Records and read some of the last pages.

"Here is an item quite curious and interesting," she announced, an accent of surprise in her voice. "Three people from the big Outside World have arrived in Jinxland."

"Where is Jinxland?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"Very near here, a little to the east of us," she said. "In fact, Jinxland is a little slice taken off the Quadling Country, but separated from it by a range of high mountains, at the foot of which lies a wide, deep gulf that is supposed to be impassable."

"Then Jinxland is really a part of the Land of Oz," said he.

"Yes," returned Glinda, "but Oz people know nothing of it, except what is recorded here in my book."

"What does the Book say about it?" asked the Scarecrow.

"It is ruled by a wicked man called King Krewl, although he has no right to the title. Most of the people are good, but they are very timid and live in constant fear of their fierce ruler. There are also several Wicked Witches who keep the inhabitants of Jinxland in a state of terror."

"Do those witches have any magical powers?" inquired the Scarecrow.

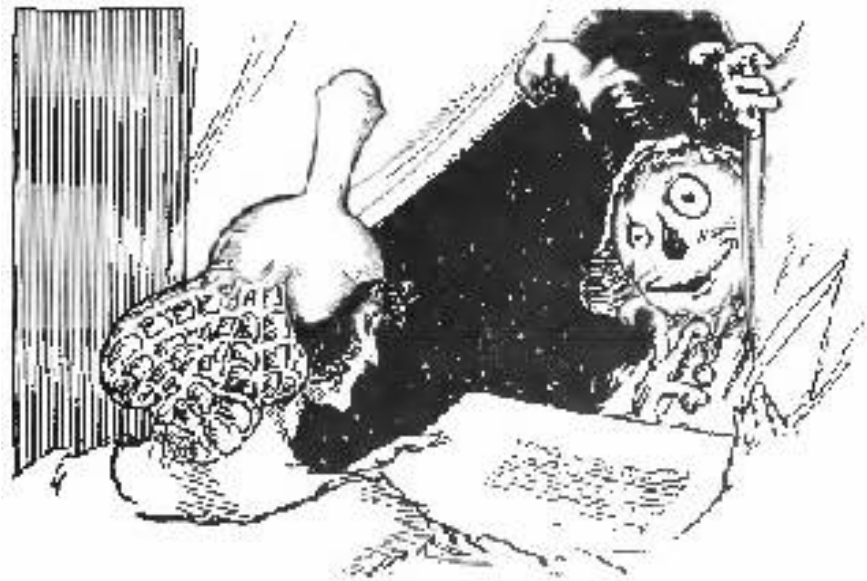
"Yes, they seem to understand witchcraft in its most evil form, for one of them has just transformed a respectable and honest old sailor — one of the strangers who arrived there — into a grasshopper. This same witch, Blinkie by name, is also planning to freeze the heart of a beautiful Jinxland girl named Princess Gloria."

"Why, that's a dreadful thing to do!" exclaimed the Scarecrow.

Glinda's face was very grave. She read in her book how Trot and Button-Bright were turned out of the King's castle, and how they found refuge in the hut of Pon, the gardener's boy.

"I'm afraid those helpless earth people will endure much suffering in Jinxland, even if the wicked King and the witches permit them to live," said the good Sorceress, thoughtfully. "I wish I might help them."

"Can I do anything?" asked the Scarecrow, anxiously. "If so, tell me what to do, and I'll do it."



For a few moments Glinda did not reply, but sat musing over the records. Then she said: "I am going to send you to Jinxland, to protect Trot and Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill."

"All right," answered the Scarecrow in a cheerful voice. "I know Button-Bright already, for he has been in the Land of Oz before. You remember he went away from the Land of Oz in one of our Wizard's big bubbles."

"Yes," said Glinda, "I remember that." Then she carefully instructed the Scarecrow what to do and gave him certain magical things which he placed in the pockets of his ragged Munchkin coat.

"As you have no need to sleep," said she, "you may as well start at once."

"The night is the same as day to me," he replied, "except that I cannot see my way so well in the dark."

"I will furnish a light to guide you," promised the Sorceress.

So the Scarecrow bade her good-bye and at once started on his journey. By morning he had reached the mountains that separated the Quadling Country from Jinxland. The sides of these mountains were too steep to climb, but the Scarecrow took a small rope from his pocket and tossed one end upward, into the air. The rope unwound itself for hundreds of feet, until it

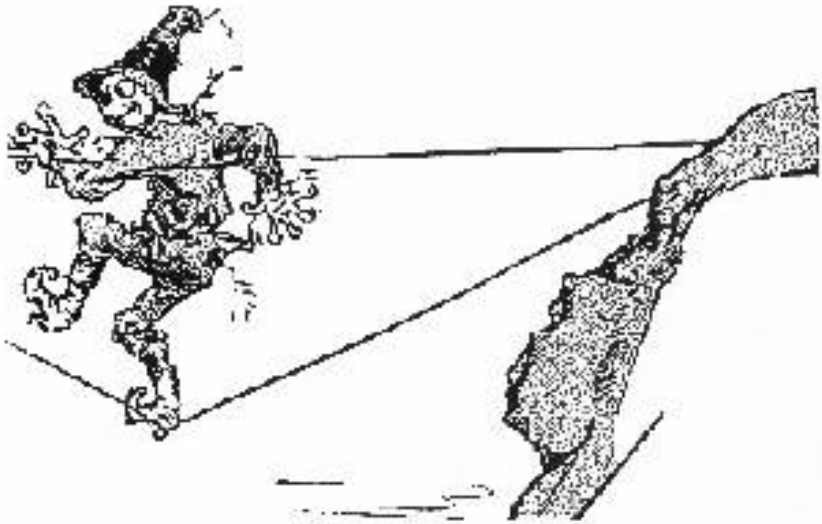
caught upon a peak of rock at the very top of a mountain, for it was a magic rope furnished him by Glinda. The Scarecrow climbed the rope and, after pulling it up, let it down on the other side of the mountain range. When he descended the rope on this side he found himself in Jinxland, but at his feet yawned the Great Gulf, which must be crossed before he could proceed any farther.

The Scarecrow knelt down and examined the ground carefully, and in a moment he discovered a fuzzy brown spider that had rolled itself into a ball. So he took two tiny pills from his pocket and laid them beside the spider, which unrolled itself and quickly ate up the pills. Then the Scarecrow said in a voice of command:

“Spin!” and the spider obeyed instantly.

In a few moments the little creature had spun two slender but strong strands that reached way across the gulf, one being five or six feet above the other. When these were completed the Scarecrow started across the tiny bridge, walking upon one strand as a person walks upon a rope, and holding to the upper strand with his hands to prevent him from losing his balance and toppling over into the gulf. The tiny threads held him safely, thanks to the strength given them by the magic pills.

Presently he was safe across and standing on the plains of Jinxland. Far away he could see the towers of the King’s castle and toward this he at once began to walk.



Chapter Fourteen
The Frozen Heart

In the hut of Pon, the gardener's boy, Button-Bright was the first to waken in the morning. Leaving his companions still asleep, he went out into the fresh morning air and saw some blackberries growing on bushes in a field not far away. Going to the bushes he found the berries ripe and sweet, so he began eating them. More bushes were scattered over the fields, so the boy wandered on, from bush to bush, without paying any heed to where he was wandering. Then a butterfly fluttered by. He gave chase to it and followed it a long way. When finally he paused to look around him, Button-Bright could see no sign of Pon's house, nor had he the slightest idea in which direction it lay.

"Well, I'm lost again," he remarked to himself. "But never mind; I've been lost lots of times. Someone is sure to find me."

Trot was a little worried about Button-Bright when she awoke and found him gone. Knowing how careless he was, she believed that he had strayed

away, but felt that he would come back in time, because he had a habit of not staying lost. Pon got the little girl some food for her breakfast and then together they went out of the hut and stood in the sunshine.

Pon's house was some distance off the road, but they could see it from where they stood and both gave a start of surprise when they discovered two soldiers walking along the roadway and escorting Princess Gloria between them. The poor girl had her hands bound together, to prevent her from struggling, and the soldiers rudely dragged her forward when her steps seemed to lag.

Behind this group came King Krewl, wearing his jeweled crown and swinging in his hand a slender golden staff with a ball of clustered gems at one end.

"Where are they going?" asked Trot. "To the house of the Wicked Witch, I fear," Pon replied. "Come, let us follow them, for I am sure they intend to harm my dear Gloria."

"Won't they see us?" she asked timidly.

"We won't let them. I know a short cut through the trees to Blinkie's house," said he.

So they hurried away through the trees and reached the house of the witch ahead of the King and his soldiers. Hiding themselves in the shrubbery, they watched the approach of poor Gloria and her escort, all of whom passed so near to them that Pon could have put out a hand and touched his sweetheart, had he dared to.

Blinkie's house had eight sides, with a door and a window in each side. Smoke was coming out of the chimney and as the guards brought Gloria to one of the doors it was opened by the old witch in person. She chuckled with evil glee and rubbed her skinny hands together to show the delight with which she greeted her victim, for Blinkie was pleased to be able to perform her wicked rites on one so fair and sweet as the Princess.

Gloria struggled to resist when they bade her enter the house, so the soldiers forced her through the doorway and even the King gave her a shove as he followed close behind. Pon was so incensed at the cruelty shown Gloria that he forgot all caution and rushed forward to enter the house also; but one of the soldiers prevented him, pushing the gardener's boy away with violence and slamming the door in his face.

"Never mind," said Trot soothingly, as Pon rose from where he had fallen. "You couldn't do much to help the poor Princess if you were inside. How unfortunate it is that you are in love with her!"

"True," he answered sadly, "it is indeed my misfortune. If I did not love her, it would be none of my business what the King did to his niece Gloria;

but the unlucky circumstance of my loving her makes it my duty to defend her."

"I don't see how you can, duty or no duty," observed Trot.

"No; I am powerless, for they are stronger than I. But we might peek in through the window and see what they are doing."

Trot was somewhat curious, too, so they crept up to one of the windows and looked in, and it so happened that those inside the witch's house were so busy they did not notice that Pon and Trot were watching them.

Gloria had been tied to a stout post in the center of the room and the King was giving the Wicked Witch a quantity of money and jewels, which Googly-Goo had provided in payment. When this had been done the King said to her:

"Are you perfectly sure you can freeze this maiden's heart, so that she will no longer love that low gardener's boy?"

"Sure as witchcraft, your Majesty," the creature replied.

"Then get to work," said the King. "There may be some unpleasant features about the ceremony that would annoy me, so I'll bid you good day and leave you to carry out your contract. One word, however: If you fail, I shall burn you at the stake!" Then he beckoned to his soldiers to follow him, and throwing wide the door of the house walked out.

This action was so sudden that King Krewl almost caught Trot and Pon eavesdropping, but they managed to run around the house before he saw them. Away he marched, up the road, followed by his men, heartlessly leaving Gloria to the mercies of old Blinkie.

When they again crept up to the window, Trot and Pon saw Blinkie gloating over her victim. Although nearly fainting from fear, the proud Princess gazed with haughty defiance into the face of the wicked creature; but she was bound so tightly to the post that she could do no more to express her loathing.

Pretty soon Blinkie went to a kettle that was swinging by a chain over the fire and tossed into it several magical compounds. The kettle gave three flashes, and at every flash another witch appeared in the room.

These hags were very ugly but when one-eyed Blinkie whispered her orders to them they grinned with joy as they began dancing around Gloria. First one and then another cast something into the kettle, when to the

astonishment of the watchers at the window all three of the old women were instantly transformed into maidens of exquisite beauty, dressed in the daintiest costumes imaginable. Only their eyes could not be disguised, and an evil glare still shone in their depths. But if the eyes were cast down or hidden, one could not help but admire these beautiful creatures, even with the knowledge that they were mere illusions of witchcraft.

Trot certainly admired them, for she had never seen anything so dainty and bewitching, but her attention was quickly drawn to their deeds instead of their persons, and then horror replaced admiration. Into the kettle old Blinkie poured another mess from a big brass bottle she took from a chest, and this made the kettle begin to bubble and smoke violently. One by one the beautiful witches approached to stir the contents of the kettle and to mutter a magic charm. Their movements were graceful and rhythmic and the Wicked Witch who had called them to her aid watched them with an evil grin upon her wrinkled face.

Finally the incantation was complete. The kettle ceased bubbling and together the witches lifted it from the fire. Then Blinkie brought a wooden ladle and filled it from the contents of the kettle. Going with the spoon to Princess Gloria she cried:

"Love no more! Magic art Now will freeze your mortal heart!"

With this she dashed the contents of the ladle full upon Gloria's breast.

Trot saw the body of the Princess become transparent, so that her beating heart showed plainly. But now the heart turned from a vivid red to gray, and then to white. A layer of frost formed about it and tiny icicles clung to its surface. Then slowly the body of the girl became visible again and the heart was hidden from view. Gloria seemed to have fainted, but now she recovered and, opening her beautiful eyes, stared coldly and without emotion at the group of witches confronting her.

Blinkie and the others knew by that one cold look that their charm had been successful. They burst into a chorus of wild laughter and the three beautiful ones began dancing again, while Blinkie unbound the Princess and set her free.

Trot rubbed her eyes to prove that she was wide awake and seeing clearly, for her astonishment was great when the three lovely maidens turned into ugly, crooked hags again, leaning on broomsticks and canes. They jeered at Gloria, but the Princess regarded them with cold disdain. Being now free, she walked to a door, opened it and passed out. And the witches let her go.

Trot and Pon had been so intent upon this scene that in their eagerness they had pressed quite hard against the window. Just as Gloria went out of the house the window-sash broke loose from its fastenings and fell with a crash into the room. The witches uttered a chorus of screams and then, seeing that their magical incantation had been observed, they rushed for the open window with uplifted broomsticks and canes. But Pon was off like the wind, and Trot followed at his heels. Fear lent them strength to run, to leap across ditches, to speed up the hills and to vault the low fences as a deer would.

The band of witches had dashed through the window in pursuit; but Blinkie was so old, and the others so crooked and awkward, that they soon realized they would be unable to overtake the fugitives. So the three who had

been summoned by the Wicked Witch put their canes or broomsticks between their legs and flew away through the air, quickly disappearing against the blue sky. Blinkie, however, was so enraged at Pon and Trot that she hobbled on in the direction they had taken, fully determined to catch them, in time, and to punish them terribly for spying upon her witchcraft.

When Pon and Trot had run so far that they were confident they had made good their escape, they sat down near the edge of a forest to get their breath again, for both were panting hard from their exertions. Trot was the first to recover speech, and she said to her companion:

"My! wasn't it terr'ble?"

"The most terrible thing I ever saw," Pon agreed.

"And they froze Gloria's heart; so now she can't love you any more."

"Well, they froze her heart, to be sure," admitted Pon, "but I'm in hopes I can melt it with my love."

"Where do you s'pose Gloria is?" asked the girl, after a pause.

"She left the witch's house just before we did. Perhaps she has gone back to the King's castle," he said.

"I'm pretty sure she started off in a diff'rent direction," declared Trot. "I looked over my shoulder, as I ran, to see how close the witches were, and I'm sure I saw Gloria walking slowly away toward the north."

"Then let us circle around that way," proposed Pon, "and perhaps we shall meet her."

Trot agreed to this and they left the grove and began to circle around toward the north, thus drawing nearer and nearer to old Blinkie's house again. The Wicked Witch did not suspect this change of direction, so when she came to the grove she passed through it and continued on.

Pon and Trot had reached a place less than half a mile from the witch's house when they saw Gloria walking toward them. The Princess moved with great dignity and with no show of haste whatever, holding her head high and looking neither to right nor left.

Pon rushed forward, holding out his arms as if to embrace her and calling her sweet names. But Gloria gazed upon him coldly and repelled him with a haughty gesture. At this the poor gardener's boy sank upon his knees and hid his face in his arms, weeping bitter tears; but the Princess was not at all moved by his distress. Passing him by, she drew her skirts aside, as if unwilling they should touch him, and then she walked up the path a way and hesitated, as if uncertain where to go next.

Trot was grieved by Pon's sobs and indignant because Gloria treated him so badly. But she remembered why.

"I guess your heart is frozen, all right," she said to the Princess. Gloria

nodded gravely, in reply, and then turned her back upon the little girl. “Can’t you like even me?” asked Trot, half pleadingly.

“No,” said Gloria.

“Your voice sounds like a refrig’rator,” sighed the little girl. “I’m awful sorry for you, ‘cause you were sweet an’ nice to me before this happened. You can’t help it, of course; but it’s a dreadful thing, jus’ the same.”

“My heart is frozen to all mortal loves,” announced Gloria, calmly. “I do not love even myself.”

“That’s too bad,” said Trot, “for, if you can’t love anybody, you can’t expect anybody to love you.”

“I do!” cried Pon. “I shall always love her.”

“Well, you’re just a gardener’s boy,” replied Trot, “and I didn’t think you ‘mounted to much, from the first. I can love the old Princess Gloria, with a warm heart an’ nice manners, but this one gives me the shivers.”

“It’s her icy heart, that’s all,” said Pon.

“That’s enough,” insisted Trot. “Seeing her heart isn’t big enough to skate on, I can’t see that she’s of any use to anyone. For my part, I’m goin’ to try to find Button-Bright an’ Cap’n Bill.”

“I will go with you,” decided Pon. “It is evident that Gloria no longer loves me and that her heart is frozen too stiff for me to melt it with my own love; therefore I may as well help you to find your friends.”

As Trot started off, Pon cast one more imploring look at the Princess, who returned it with a chilly stare. So he followed after the little girl.

As for the Princess, she hesitated a moment and then turned in the same direction the others had taken, but going far more slowly. Soon she heard footsteps pattering behind her, and up came Googly-Goo, a little out of breath with running.

“Stop, Gloria!” he cried. “I have come to take you back to my mansion, where we are to be married.”

She looked at him wonderingly a moment, then tossed her head disdainfully and walked on. But Googly-Goo kept beside her.

“What does this mean?” he demanded. “Haven’t you discovered that you no longer love that gardener’s boy, who stood in my way?”

“Yes; I have discovered it,” she replied. “My heart is frozen to all mortal loves. I cannot love you, or Pon, or the cruel King my uncle, or even myself. Go your way, Googly-Goo, for I will wed no one at all.”

He stopped in dismay when he heard this, but in another minute he exclaimed angrily:

“You must wed me, Princess Gloria, whether you want to or not! I paid to have your heart frozen; I also paid the King to permit our marriage. If you now refuse me it will mean that I have been robbed — robbed — robbed of my precious money and jewels!”

He almost wept with despair, but she laughed a cold, bitter laugh and passed on. Googly-Goo caught at her arm, as if to restrain her, but she whirled and dealt him a blow that sent him reeling into a ditch beside the path. Here he lay for a long time, half covered by muddy water, dazed with surprise.

Finally the old courtier arose, dripping, and climbed from the ditch. The Princess had gone; so, muttering threats of vengeance upon her, upon the King and upon Blinkie, old Googly-Goo hobbled back to his mansion to have the mud removed from his costly velvet clothes.

Chapter Fifteen
Trot Meets the Scarecrow

Trot and Pon covered many leagues of ground, searching through forests, in fields and in many of the little villages of Jinxland, but could find no trace of either Cap'n Bill or Button-Bright. Finally they paused beside a cornfield and sat upon a stile to rest. Pon took some apples from his pocket and gave one to Trot. Then he began eating another himself, for this was their time for luncheon. When his apple was finished Pon tossed the core into the field.

"Tchuk-tchuk!" said a strange voice. "What do you mean by hitting me in the eye with an apple-core?"

Then rose up the form of the Scarecrow, who had hidden himself in the cornfield while he examined Pon and Trot and decided whether they were worthy to be helped.

"Excuse me," said Pon. "I didn't know you were there."

"How did you happen to be there, anyhow?" asked Trot.

The Scarecrow came forward with awkward steps and stood beside them.

"Ah, you are the gardener's boy," he said to Pon. Then he turned to Trot. "And you are the little girl who came to Jinxland riding on a big bird, and who has had the misfortune to lose her friend, Cap'n Bill, and her chum, Button-Bright."

"Why, how did you know all that?" she inquired.

"I know a lot of things," replied the Scarecrow, winking at her comically. "My brains are the Carefully-Assorted, Double-Distilled, High-Efficiency sort that the Wizard of Oz makes. He admits, himself, that my brains are the best he ever manufactured."

"I think I've heard of you," said Trot slowly, as she looked the Scarecrow over with much interest; "but you used to live in the Land of Oz."

"Oh, I do now," he replied cheerfully. "I've just come over the mountains from the Quadling Country to see if I can be of any help to you."

"Who, me?" asked Pon.

"No, the strangers from the big world. It seems they need looking after."

"I'm doing that myself," said Pon, a little ungraciously. "If you will pardon me for saying so, I don't see how a Scarecrow with painted eyes can look after anyone."

"If you don't see that, you are more blind than the Scarecrow," asserted Trot. "He's a fairy man, Pon, and comes from the fairyland of Oz, so he can do 'most anything. I hope," she added, turning to the Scarecrow, "you can find Cap'n Bill for me."

"I will try, anyhow," he promised. "But who is that old woman who is running toward us and shaking her stick at us?"

Trot and Pon turned around and both uttered an exclamation of fear. The next instant they took to their heels and ran fast up the path. For it was old Blinkie, the Wicked Witch, who had at last traced them to this place. Her anger was so great that she was determined not to abandon the chase of Pon and Trot until she had caught and punished them. The Scarecrow understood at once that the old woman meant harm to his new friends, so as she drew near he stepped before her. His appearance was so sudden and unexpected that Blinkie ran into him and toppled him over, but she tripped on his straw body and went rolling in the path beside him.

The Scarecrow sat up and said: “I beg your pardon!” but she whacked him with her stick and knocked him flat again. Then, furious with rage, the old witch sprang upon her victim and began pulling the straw out of his body. The poor Scarecrow was helpless to resist and in a few moments all that was left of him was an empty suit of clothes and a heap of straw beside it. Fortunately, Blinkie did not harm his head, for it rolled into a little hollow and escaped her notice. Fearing that Pon and Trot would escape her, she quickly resumed the chase and disappeared over the brow of a hill, following the direction in which she had seen them go.

Only a short time elapsed before a gray grasshopper with a wooden leg came hopping along and lit directly on the upturned face of the Scarecrow’s head.

“Pardon me, but you are resting yourself upon my nose,” remarked the Scarecrow.

“Oh! are you alive?” asked the grasshopper.

“That is a question I have never been able to decide,” said the Scarecrow’s head. “When my body is properly stuffed I have animation and can move around as well as any live person. The brains in the head you are now occupying as a throne, are of very superior quality and do a lot of very clever thinking. But whether that is being alive, or not, I cannot prove to you; for one who lives is liable to death, while I am only liable to destruction.”

“Seems to me,” said the grasshopper, rubbing his nose with his front legs, “that in your case it doesn’t matter — unless you’re destroyed already.”

“I am not; all I need is re-stuffing,” declared the Scarecrow; “and if Pon

and Trot escape the witch, and come back here, I am sure they will do me that favor."

"Tell me! Are Trot and Pon around here?" inquired the grasshopper, its small voice trembling with excitement.

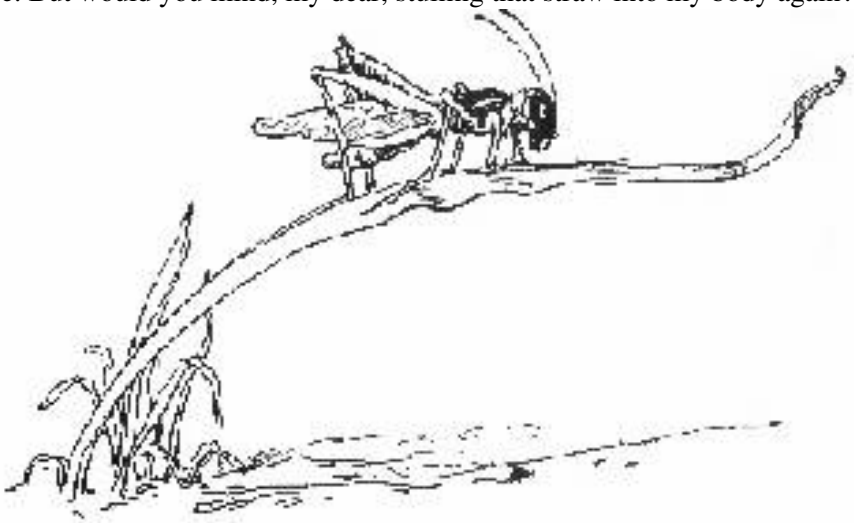
The Scarecrow did not answer at once, for both his eyes were staring straight upward at a beautiful face that was slightly bent over his head. It was, indeed, Princess Gloria, who had wandered to this spot, very much surprised when she heard the Scarecrow's head talk and the tiny gray grasshopper answer it.

"This," said the Scarecrow, still staring at her, "must be the Princess who loves Pon, the gardener's boy."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed the grasshopper — who of course was Cap'n Bill — as he examined the young lady curiously.

"No," said Gloria frigidly, "I do not love Pon, or anyone else, for the Wicked Witch has frozen my heart."

"What a shame!" cried the Scarecrow. "One so lovely should be able to love. But would you mind, my dear, stuffing that straw into my body again?"



The dainty Princess glanced at the straw and at the well-worn blue Munchkin clothes and shrank back in disdain. But she was spared from refusing the Scarecrow's request by the appearance of Trot and Pon, who had hidden in some bushes just over the brow of the hill and waited until old Blinkie had passed them by. Their hiding place was on the same side as the witch's blind eye, and she rushed on in the chase of the girl and the youth without being aware that they had tricked her.

Trot was shocked at the Scarecrow's sad condition and at once began

putting the straw back into his body. Pon, at sight of Gloria, again appealed to her to take pity on him, but the frozen-hearted Princess turned coldly away and with a sigh the gardener's boy began to assist Trot.

Neither of them at first noticed the small grasshopper, which at their appearance had skipped off the Scarecrow's nose and was now clinging to a wisp of grass beside the path, where he was not likely to be stepped upon. Not until the Scarecrow had been neatly restuffed and set upon his feet again — when he bowed to his restorers and expressed his thanks — did the grasshopper move from his perch. Then he leaped lightly into the path and called out:

"Trot — Trot! Look at me. I'm Cap'n Bill! See what the Wicked Witch has done to me."

The voice was small, to be sure, but it reached Trot's ears and startled her greatly. She looked intently at the grasshopper, her eyes wide with fear at first; then she knelt down and, noticing the wooden leg, she began to weep sorrowfully.

"Oh, Cap'n Bill — dear Cap'n Bill! What a cruel thing to do!" she sobbed.

"Don't cry, Trot," begged the grasshopper. "It didn't hurt any, and it doesn't hurt now. But it's mighty inconvenient an' humiliatin', to say the least."

"I wish," said the girl indignantly, while trying hard to restrain her tears, "that I was big 'nough an' strong 'nough to give that horrid witch a good beating. She ought to be turned into a toad for doing this to you, Cap'n Bill!"

"Never mind," urged the Scarecrow, in a comforting voice, "such a transformation doesn't last always, and as a general thing there's some way to break the enchantment. I'm sure Glinda could do it, in a jiffy."

"Who is Glinda?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

Then the Scarecrow told them all about Glinda, not forgetting to mention her beauty and goodness and her wonderful powers of magic. He also explained how the Royal Sorceress had sent him to Jinxland especially to help the strangers, whom she knew to be in danger because of the wiles of the cruel King and the Wicked Witch.

Chapter Sixteen

Pon Summons the King to Surrender

Gloria had drawn near to the group to listen to their talk, and it seemed to interest her in spite of her frigid manner. They knew, of course, that the poor Princess could not help being cold and reserved, so they tried not to blame her.

"I ought to have come here a little sooner," said the Scarecrow, regretfully; "but Glinda sent me as soon as she discovered you were here and were likely to get into trouble. And now that we are all together — except Button-Bright, over whom it is useless to worry — I propose we hold a council of war, to decide what is best to be done."

That seemed a wise thing to do, so they all sat down upon the grass, including Gloria, and the grasshopper perched upon Trot's shoulder and allowed her to stroke him gently with her hand.

"In the first place," began the Scarecrow, "this King Krewl is a usurper

and has no right to rule this Kingdom of Jinxland."

"That is true," said Pon, eagerly. "My father was King before him, and I — "

"You are a gardener's boy," interrupted the Scarecrow. "Your father had no right to rule, either, for the rightful King of this land was the father of Princess Gloria, and only she is entitled to sit upon the throne of Jinxland."

"Good!" exclaimed Trot. "But what'll we do with King Krewl? I s'pose he won't give up the throne unless he has to."

"No, of course not," said the Scarecrow. "Therefore it will be our duty to make him give up the throne."

"How?" asked Trot.

"Give me time to think," was the reply. "That's what my brains are for. I don't know whether you people ever think, or not, but my brains are the best that the Wizard of Oz ever turned out, and if I give them plenty of time to work, the result usually surprises me."

"Take your time, then," suggested Trot. "There's no hurry."

"Thank you," said the straw man, and sat perfectly still for half an hour. During this interval the grasshopper whispered in Trot's ear, to which he was very close, and Trot whispered back to the grasshopper sitting upon her shoulder. Pon cast loving glances at Gloria, who paid not the slightest heed to them.

Finally the Scarecrow laughed aloud.

"Brains working?" inquired Trot.

"Yes. They seem in fine order to-day. We will conquer King Krewl and put Gloria upon his throne as Queen of Jinxland."

"Fine!" cried the little girl, clapping her hands together gleefully. "But how?"

"Leave the how to me," said the Scarecrow proudly. "As a conqueror I'm a wonder. We will, first of all, write a message to send to King Krewl, asking him to surrender. If he refuses, then we will make him surrender."

"Why ask him, when we know he'll refuse?" inquired Pon.

"Why, we must be polite, whatever we do," explained the Scarecrow. "It would be very rude to conquer a King without proper notice."

They found it difficult to write a message without paper, pen and ink, none of which was at hand; so it was decided to send Pon as a messenger, with instructions to ask the King, politely but firmly, to surrender.

Pon was not anxious to be the messenger. Indeed, he hinted that it might prove a dangerous mission. But the Scarecrow was now the acknowledged head of the Army of Conquest, and he would listen to no refusal. So off Pon started for the King's castle, and the others accompanied him as far as his hut, where they had decided to await the gardener's boy's return.

I think it was because Pon had known the Scarecrow such a short time that he lacked confidence in the straw man's wisdom. It was easy to say: "We will conquer King Krewl," but when Pon drew near to the great castle he began to doubt the ability of a straw-stuffed man, a girl, a grasshopper and a frozen-hearted Princess to do it. As for himself, he had never thought of defying the King before.

That was why the gardener's boy was not very bold when he entered the castle and passed through to the enclosed court where the King was just then seated, with his favorite courtiers around him. None prevented Pon's entrance, because he was known to be the gardener's boy, but when the King saw him he began to frown fiercely. He considered Pon to be to blame for all his trouble with Princess Gloria, who since her heart had been frozen had escaped to some unknown place, instead of returning to the castle to wed

Googly-Goo, as she had been expected to do. So the King bared his teeth angrily as he demanded:

"What have you done with Princess Gloria?"

"Nothing, your Majesty! I have done nothing at all," answered Pon in a faltering voice. "She does not love me any more and even refuses to speak to me."

"Then why are you here, you rascal?" roared the King.

Pon looked first one way and then another, but saw no means of escape; so he plucked up courage.

"I am here to summon your Majesty to surrender."

"What!" shouted the King. "Surrender? Surrender to whom?"

Pon's heart sank to his boots.

"To the Scarecrow," he replied.

Some of the courtiers began to titter, but King Krewl was greatly annoyed. He sprang up and began to beat poor Pon with the golden staff he carried. Pon howled lustily and would have run away had not two of the soldiers held him until his Majesty was exhausted with punishing the boy. Then they let him go and he left the castle and returned along the road, sobbing at every step because his body was so sore and aching.

"Well," said the Scarecrow, "did the King surrender?"

"No; but he gave me a good drubbing!" sobbed poor Pon.

Trot was very sorry for Pon, but Gloria did not seem affected in any way by her lover's anguish. The grasshopper leaped to the Scarecrow's shoulder and asked him what he was going to do next.

"Conquer," was the reply. "But I will go alone, this time, for beatings cannot hurt me at all; nor can lance thrusts — or sword cuts — or arrow pricks."

"Why is that?" inquired Trot.

"Because I have no nerves, such as you meat people possess. Even grasshoppers have nerves, but straw doesn't; so whatever they do — except just one thing — they cannot injure me. Therefore I expect to conquer King Krewl with ease."

"What is that one thing you excepted?" asked Trot.

"They will never think of it, so never mind. And now, if you will kindly excuse me for a time, I'll go over to the castle and do my conquering."

"You have no weapons," Pon reminded him.

"True," said the Scarecrow. "But if I carried weapons I might injure someone — perhaps seriously — and that would make me unhappy. I will just borrow that riding-whip, which I see in the corner of your hut, if you don't mind. It isn't exactly proper to walk with a riding-whip, but I trust you will excuse the inconsistency."

Pon handed him the whip and the Scarecrow bowed to all the party and left the hut, proceeding leisurely along the way to the King's castle.

Chapter Seventeen

The Ork Rescues Button-Bright

I must now tell you what had become of Button-Bright since he wandered away in the morning and got lost. This small boy, as perhaps you have discovered, was almost as destitute of nerves as the Scarecrow. Nothing ever astonished him much; nothing ever worried him or made him unhappy. Good fortune or bad fortune he accepted with a quiet smile, never complaining, whatever happened. This was one reason why Button-Bright was a favorite with all who knew him — and perhaps it was the reason why he so often got into difficulties, or found himself lost.

To-day, as he wandered here and there, over hill and down dale, he missed Trot and Cap'n Bill, of whom he was fond, but nevertheless he was not unhappy. The birds sang merrily and the wildflowers were beautiful and the breeze had a fragrance of new-mown hay.

"The only bad thing about this country is its King," he reflected; "but the

country isn't to blame for that."

A prairie-dog stuck its round head out of a mound of earth and looked at the boy with bright eyes.

"Walk around my house, please," it said, "and then you won't harm it or disturb the babies."

"All right," answered Button-Bright, and took care not to step on the mound. He went on, whistling merrily, until a petulant voice cried:

"Oh, stop it! Please stop that noise. It gets on my nerves."

Button-Bright saw an old gray owl sitting in the crotch of a tree, and he replied with a laugh: "All right, old Fussy," and stopped whistling until he had passed out of the owl's hearing. At noon he came to a farmhouse where an aged couple lived. They gave him a good dinner and treated him kindly, but the man was deaf and the woman was dumb, so they could answer no questions to guide him on the way to Pon's house. When he left them he was just as much lost as he had been before.

Every grove of trees he saw from a distance he visited, for he remembered that the King's castle was near a grove of trees and Pon's hut was near the King's castle; but always he met with disappointment. Finally, passing through one of these groves, he came out into the open and found himself face to face with the Ork.

"Hello!" said Button-Bright. "Where did you come from?"

"From Orkland," was the reply. "I've found my own country, at last, and it is not far from here, either. I would have come back to you sooner, to see

how you are getting along, had not my family and friends welcomed my return so royally that a great celebration was held in my honor. So I couldn't very well leave Orkland again until the excitement was over."

"Can you find your way back home again?" asked the boy.

"Yes, easily; for now I know exactly where it is. But where are Trot and Cap'n Bill?"

Button-Bright related to the Ork their adventures since it had left them in Jinxland, telling of Trot's fear that the King had done something wicked to Cap'n Bill, and of Pon's love for Gloria, and how Trot and Button-Bright had been turned out of the King's castle. That was all the news that the boy had, but it made the Ork anxious for the safety of his friends.

"We must go to them at once, for they may need us," he said.

"I don't know where to go," confessed Button-Bright. "I'm lost."

"Well, I can take you back to the hut of the gardener's boy," promised the Ork, "for when I fly high in the air I can look down and easily spy the King's castle. That was how I happened to spy you, just entering the grove; so I flew down and waited until you came out."

"How can you carry me?" asked the boy.

"You'll have to sit straddle my shoulders and put your arms around my neck. Do you think you can keep from falling off?"

"I'll try," said Button-Bright. So the Ork squatted down and the boy took his seat and held on tight. Then the skinny creature's tail began whirling and up they went, far above all the tree-tops.

After the Ork had circled around once or twice, its sharp eyes located the towers of the castle and away it flew, straight toward the place. As it hovered in the air, near by the castle, Button-Bright pointed out Pon's hut, so they landed just before it and Trot came running out to greet them.

Gloria was introduced to the Ork, who was surprised to find Cap'n Bill transformed into a grasshopper.

"How do you like it?" asked the creature.

"Why, it worries me good deal," answered Cap'n Bill, perched upon Trot's shoulder. "I'm always afraid o' bein' stepped on, and I don't like the flavor of grass an' can't seem to get used to it. It's my nature to eat grass, you know, but I begin to suspect it's an acquired taste."

"Can you give molasses?" asked the Ork.

"I guess I'm not that kind of a grasshopper," replied Cap'n Bill. "But I can't say what I might do if I was squeezed — which I hope I won't be."

"Well," said the Ork, "it's a great pity, and I'd like to meet that cruel King and his Wicked Witch and punish them both severely. You're awfully small, Cap'n Bill, but I think I would recognize you anywhere by your wooden

leg."

Then the Ork and Button-Bright were told all about Gloria's frozen heart and how the Scarecrow had come from the Land of Oz to help them. The Ork seemed rather disturbed when it learned that the Scarecrow had gone alone to conquer King Krewl.

"I'm afraid he'll make a fizzle of it," said the skinny creature, "and there's no telling what that terrible King might do to the poor Scarecrow, who seems like a very interesting person. So I believe I'll take a hand in this conquest myself."

"How?" asked Trot.

"Wait and see," was the reply. "But, first of all, I must fly home again — back to my own country — so if you'll forgive my leaving you so soon, I'll be off at once. Stand away from my tail, please, so that the wind from it, when it revolves, won't knock you over."

They gave the creature plenty of room and away it went like a flash and soon disappeared in the sky.

"I wonder," said Button-Bright, looking solemnly after the Ork, "whether he'll ever come back again."

"Of course he will!" returned Trot. "The Ork's a pretty good fellow, and we can depend on him. An' mark my words, Button-Bright, whenever our Ork does come back, there's one cruel King in Jinxland that'll wish he hadn't."

Chapter Eighteen

The Scarecrow Meets an Enemy

The Scarecrow was not a bit afraid of King Krewl. Indeed, he rather enjoyed the prospect of conquering the evil King and putting Gloria on the throne of Jinxland in his place. So he advanced boldly to the royal castle and demanded admittance.

Seeing that he was a stranger, the soldiers allowed him to enter. He made his way straight to the throne room, where at that time his Majesty was settling the disputes among his subjects.

"Who are you?" demanded the King.

"I'm the Scarecrow of Oz, and I command you to surrender yourself my prisoner."

"Why should I do that?" inquired the King, much astonished at the straw man's audacity.

"Because I've decided you are too cruel a King to rule so beautiful a

country. You must remember that Jinxland is a part of Oz, and therefore you owe allegiance to Ozma of Oz, whose friend and servant I am."

Now, when he heard this, King Krewl was much disturbed in mind, for he knew the Scarecrow spoke the truth. But no one had ever before come to Jinxland from the Land of Oz and the King did not intend to be put out of his throne if he could help it. Therefore he gave a harsh, wicked laugh of derision and said:

"I'm busy, now. Stand out of my way, Scarecrow, and I'll talk with you by and by."

But the Scarecrow turned to the assembled courtiers and people and called in a loud voice:

“I hereby declare, in the name of Ozma of Oz, that this man is no longer ruler of Jinxland. From this moment Princess Gloria is your rightful Queen, and I ask all of you to be loyal to her and to obey her commands.”

The people looked fearfully at the King, whom they all hated in their hearts, but likewise feared. Krewl was now in a terrible rage and he raised his golden sceptre and struck the Scarecrow so heavy a blow that he fell to the floor.

But he was up again, in an instant, and with Pon’s riding-whip he switched the King so hard that the wicked monarch roared with pain as much as with rage, calling on his soldiers to capture the Scarecrow.

They tried to do that, and thrust their lances and swords into the straw body, but without doing any damage except to make holes in the Scarecrow’s clothes. However, they were many against one and finally old Googly-Goo brought a rope which he wound around the Scarecrow, binding his legs together and his arms to his sides, and after that the fight was over.

The King stormed and danced around in a dreadful fury, for he had never been so switched since he was a boy — and perhaps not then. He ordered the Scarecrow thrust into the castle prison, which was no task at all because one man could carry him easily, bound as he was.

Even after the prisoner was removed the King could not control his anger. He tried to figure out some way to be revenged upon the straw man, but could think of nothing that could hurt him. At last, when the terrified people and the frightened courtiers had all slunk away, old Googly-Goo approached the king with a malicious grin upon his face.

“I’ll tell you what to do,” said he. “Build a big bonfire and burn the Scarecrow up, and that will be the end of him.”

The King was so delighted with this suggestion that he hugged old Googly-Goo in his joy.

“Of course!” he cried. “The very thing. Why did I not think of it myself?”

So he summoned his soldiers and retainers and bade them prepare a great bonfire in an open space in the castle park. Also he sent word to all his people to assemble and witness the destruction of the Scarecrow who had dared to defy his power. Before long a vast throng gathered in the park and the servants had heaped up enough fuel to make a fire that might be seen for miles away — even in the daytime.

When all was prepared, the King had his throne brought out for him to sit upon and enjoy the spectacle, and then he sent his soldiers to fetch the Scarecrow.

Now the one thing in all the world that the straw man really feared was fire. He knew he would burn very easily and that his ashes wouldn't amount to much afterward. It wouldn't hurt him to be destroyed in such a manner, but he realized that many people in the Land of Oz, and especially Dorothy and the Royal Ozma, would feel sad if they learned that their old friend the Scarecrow was no longer in existence.

In spite of this, the straw man was brave and faced his fiery fate like a hero. When they marched him out before the concourse of people he turned to the King with great calmness and said:

"This wicked deed will cost you your throne, as well as much suffering, for my friends will avenge my destruction."

“Your friends are not here, nor will they know what I have done to you, when you are gone and can-not tell them,” answered the King in a scornful voice.

Then he ordered the Scarecrow bound to a stout stake that he had had driven into the ground, and the materials for the fire were heaped all around him. When this had been done, the King’s brass band struck up a lively tune and old Googly-Goo came forward with a lighted match and set fire to the pile.

At once the flames shot up and crept closer and closer toward the Scarecrow. The King and all his people were so intent upon this terrible spectacle that none of them noticed how the sky grew suddenly dark. Perhaps they thought that the loud buzzing sound — like the noise of a dozen moving railway trains — came from the blazing fagots; that the rush of wind was merely a breeze. But suddenly down swept a flock of Orks, half a hundred of them at the least, and the powerful currents of air caused by their revolving tails sent the bonfire scattering in every direction, so that not one burning brand ever touched the Scarecrow.

But that was not the only effect of this sudden tornado. King Krewl was blown out of his throne and went tumbling heels over head until he landed with a bump against the stone wall of his own castle, and before he could rise a big Ork sat upon him and held him pressed flat to the ground. Old Googly-Goo shot up into the air like a rocket and landed on a tree, where he hung by the middle on a high limb, kicking the air with his feet and clawing the air with his hands, and howling for mercy like the coward he was.

The people pressed back until they were jammed close together, while all the soldiers were knocked over and sent sprawling to the earth. The excitement was great for a few minutes, and every frightened inhabitant of Jinxland looked with awe and amazement at the great Orks whose descent had served to rescue the Scarecrow and conquer King Krewl at one and the same time.

The Ork, who was the leader of the band, soon had the Scarecrow free of his bonds. Then he said: “Well, we were just in time to save you, which is better than being a minute too late. You are now the master here, and we are determined to see your orders obeyed.”

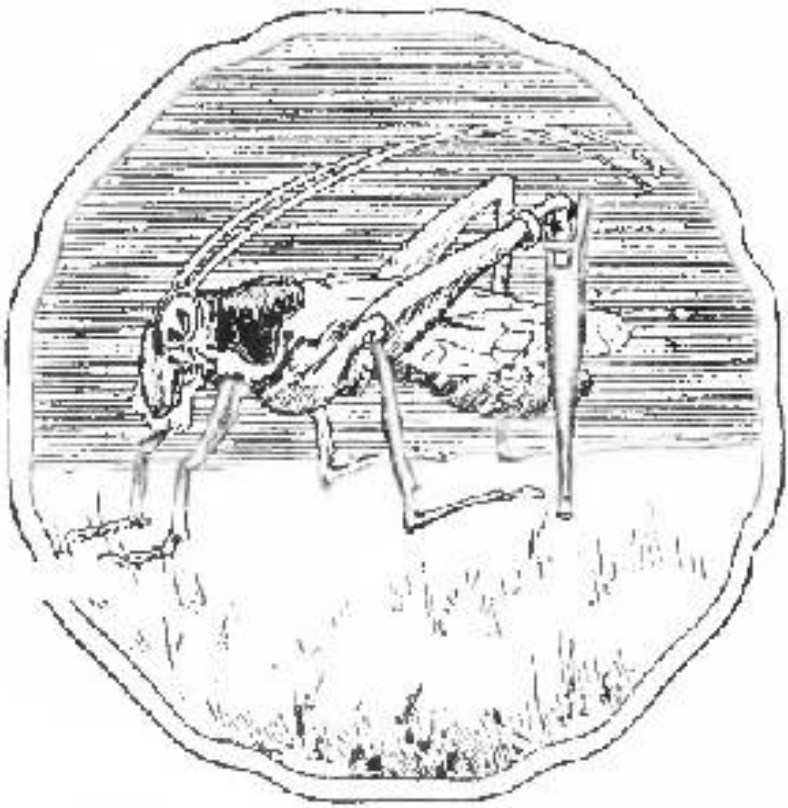
With this the Ork picked up Krewl’s golden crown, which had fallen off his head, and placed it upon the head of the Scarecrow, who in his awkward way then shuffled over to the throne and sat down in it.

Seeing this, a rousing cheer broke from the crowd of people, who tossed their hats and waved their handkerchiefs and hailed the Scarecrow as their King. The soldiers joined the people in the cheering, for now they fully

realized that their hated master was conquered and it would be wise to show their good will to the conqueror. Some of them bound Krewl with ropes and dragged him forward, dumping his body on the ground before the Scarecrow's throne. Googly-Goo struggled until he finally slid off the limb of the tree and came tumbling to the ground. He then tried to sneak away and escape, but the soldiers seized and bound him beside Krewl.

"The tables are turned," said the Scarecrow, swelling out his chest until the straw within it crackled pleasantly, for he was highly pleased; "but it was you and your people who did it, friend Ork, and from this time you may count me your humble servant."

Chapter Nineteen
The Conquest of the Witch



Now as soon as the conquest of King Krewl had taken place, one of the Orks had been dispatched to Pon's house with the joyful news. At once Gloria and Pon and Trot and Button-Bright hastened toward the castle. They were somewhat surprised by the sight that met their eyes, for there was the Scarecrow, crowned King, and all the people kneeling humbly before him. So they likewise bowed low to the new ruler and then stood beside the throne. Cap'n Bill, as the gray grasshopper, was still perched upon Trot's shoulder, but now he hopped to the shoulder of the Scarecrow and whispered into the painted ear:

"I thought Gloria was to be Queen of Jinxland."

The Scarecrow shook his head.

"Not yet," he answered. "No Queen with a frozen heart is fit to rule any country." Then he turned to his new friend, the Ork, who was strutting about,

very proud of what he had done, and said: “Do you suppose you, or your followers, could find old Blinkie the Witch?”

“Where is she?” asked the Ork.

“Somewhere in Jinxland, I’m sure.”

“Then,” said the Ork, “we shall certainly be able to find her.”

“It will give me great pleasure,” declared the Scarecrow. “When you have found her, bring her here to me, and I will then decide what to do with her.”

The Ork called his followers together and spoke a few words to them in a low tone. A moment after they rose into the air — so suddenly that the Scarecrow, who was very light in weight, was blown quite out of his throne and into the arms of Pon, who replaced him carefully upon his seat. There was an eddy of dust and ashes, too, and the grasshopper only saved himself from being whirled into the crowd of people by jumping into a tree, from where a series of hops soon brought him back to Trot’s shoulder again. The Orks were quite out of sight by this time, so the Scarecrow made a speech to the people and presented Gloria to them, whom they knew well already and were fond of. But not all of them knew of her frozen heart, and when the Scarecrow related the story of the Wicked Witch’s misdeeds, which had been encouraged and paid for by Krewl and Googly-Goo, the people were very indignant.

Meantime the fifty Orks had scattered all over Jinx land, which is not a very big country, and their sharp eyes were peering into every valley and grove and gully. Finally one of them spied a pair of heels sticking out from underneath some bushes, and with a shrill whistle to warn his comrades that the witch was found the Ork flew down and dragged old Blinkie from her hiding-place. Then two or three of the Orks seized the clothing of the wicked woman in their strong claws and, lifting her high in the air, where she struggled and screamed to no avail, they flew with her straight to the royal castle and set her down before the throne of the Scarecrow.

"Good!" exclaimed the straw man, nodding his stuffed head with satisfaction. "Now we can proceed to business. Mistress Witch, I am obliged to request, gently but firmly, that you undo all the wrongs you have done by means of your witchcraft."

"Pah!" cried old Blinkie in a scornful voice. "I defy you all! By my magic powers I can turn you all into pigs, rooting in the mud, and I'll do it if you are not careful."

"I think you are mistaken about that," said the Scarecrow, and rising from his throne he walked with wobbling steps to the side of the Wicked Witch. "Before I left the Land of Oz, Glinda the Royal Sorceress gave me a box, which I was not to open except in an emergency. But I feel pretty sure that

this occasion is an emergency; don't you, Trot?" he asked, turning toward the little girl.

"Why, we've got to do something," replied Trot seriously. "Things seem in an awful muddle here, jus' now, and they'll be worse if we don't stop this witch from doing more harm to people."

"That is my idea, exactly," said the Scarecrow, and taking a small box from his pocket he opened the cover and tossed the contents toward Blinkie.

The old woman shrank back, pale and trembling, as a fine white dust settled all about her. Under its influence she seemed to the eyes of all observers to shrivel and grow smaller.

"Oh, dear — oh, dear!" she wailed, wringing her hands in fear. "Haven't you the antidote, Scarecrow? Didn't the great Sorceress give you another box?"

"She did," answered the Scarecrow.

"Then give it me — quick!" pleaded the witch. "Give it me — and I'll do anything you ask me to!"

"You will do what I ask first," declared the Scarecrow, firmly.

The witch was shriveling and growing smaller every moment.

"Be quick, then!" she cried. "Tell me what I must do and let me do it, or it will be too late."

"You made Trot's friend, Cap'n Bill, a grasshopper. I command you to give him back his proper form again," said the Scarecrow.

"Where is he? Where's the grasshopper? Quick — quick!" she screamed.

Cap'n Bill, who had been deeply interested in this conversation, gave a great leap from Trot's shoulder and landed on that of the Scarecrow. Blinkie saw him alight and at once began to make magic passes and to mumble magic incantations. She was in a desperate hurry, knowing that she had no time to waste, and the grasshopper was so suddenly transformed into the old sailor-man, Cap'n Bill, that he had no opportunity to jump off the Scarecrow's shoulder; so his great weight bore the stuffed Scarecrow to the ground. No harm was done, however, and the straw man got up and brushed the dust from his clothes while Trot delightedly embraced Cap'n Bill.

"The other box! Quick! Give me the other box," begged Blinkie, who had now shrunk to half her former size.

"Not yet," said the Scarecrow. "You must first melt Princess Gloria's frozen heart."

"I can't; it's an awful job to do that! I can't," asserted the witch, in an agony of fear — for still she was growing smaller.

"You must!" declared the Scarecrow, firmly.

The witch cast a shrewd look at him and saw that he meant it; so she

began dancing around Gloria in a frantic manner. The Princess looked coldly on, as if not at all interested in the proceedings, while Blinkie tore a handful of hair from her own head and ripped a strip of cloth from the bottom of her gown. Then the witch sank upon her knees, took a purple powder from her black bag and sprinkled it over the hair and cloth.

"I hate to do it — I hate to do it!" she wailed, "for there is no more of this magic compound in all the world. But I must sacrifice it to save my own life. A match! Give me a match, quick!" and panting from lack of breath she gazed imploringly from one to another.

Cap'n Bill was the only one who had a match, but he lost no time in handing it to Blinkie, who quickly set fire to the hair and the cloth and the purple powder. At once a purple cloud enveloped Gloria, and this gradually turned to a rosy pink color — brilliant and quite transparent. Through the rosy cloud they could all see the beautiful Princess, standing proud and erect. Then her heart became visible, at first frosted with ice but slowly growing brighter and warmer until all the frost had disappeared and it was beating as softly and regularly as any other heart. And now the cloud dispersed and disclosed Gloria, her face suffused with joy, smiling tenderly upon the friends who were grouped about her.

Poor Pon stepped forward — timidly, fearing a repulse, but with pleading eyes and arms fondly outstretched toward his former sweetheart — and the Princess saw him and her sweet face lighted with a radiant smile. Without an instant's hesitation she threw herself into Pon's arms and this reunion of two loving hearts was so affecting that the people turned away and lowered their eyes so as not to mar the sacred joy of the faithful lovers.

But Blinkie's small voice was shouting to the Scarecrow for help.

"The antidote!" she screamed. "Give me the other box — quick!"

The Scarecrow looked at the witch with his quaint, painted eyes and saw that she was now no taller than his knee. So he took from his pocket the second box and scattered its contents on Blinkie. She ceased to grow any smaller, but she could never regain her former size, and this the wicked old

woman well knew.

She did not know, however, that the second powder had destroyed all her power to work magic, and seeking to be revenged upon the Scarecrow and his friends she at once began to mumble a charm so terrible in its effect that it would have destroyed half the population of Jinxland — had it worked. But it did not work at all, to the amazement of old Blinkie. And by this time the Scarecrow noticed what the little witch was trying to do, and said to her:

"Go home, Blinkie, and behave yourself. You are no longer a witch, but an ordinary old woman, and since you are powerless to do more evil I advise you to try to do some good in the world. Believe me, it is more fun to accomplish a good act than an evil one, as you will discover when once you have tried it."

But Blinkie was at that moment filled with grief and chagrin at losing her magic powers. She started away toward her home, sobbing and bewailing her fate, and not one who saw her go was at all sorry for her.

Chapter Twenty
Queen Gloria

Next morning the Scarecrow called upon all the courtiers and the people to assemble in the throne room of the castle, where there was room enough for all that were able to attend. They found the straw man seated upon the velvet cushions of the throne, with the King's glittering crown still upon his stuffed head. On one side of the throne, in a lower chair, sat Gloria, looking radiantly beautiful and fresh as a new-blown rose. On the other side sat Pon, the gardener's boy, still dressed in his old smock frock and looking sad and solemn; for Pon could not make himself believe that so splendid a Princess would condescend to love him when she had come to her own and was seated upon a throne. Trot and Cap'n Bill sat at the feet of the Scarecrow and were much interested in the proceedings. Button-Bright had lost himself before breakfast, but came into the throne room before the ceremonies were

over. Back of the throne stood a row of the great Orks, with their leader in the center, and the entrance to the palace was guarded by more Orks, who were regarded with wonder and awe.

When all were assembled, the Scarecrow stood up and made a speech. He told how Gloria's father, the good King Kynd, who had once ruled them and been loved by everyone, had been destroyed by King Phearce, the father of Pon, and how King Phearce had been destroyed by King Krewl. This last King had been a bad ruler, as they knew very well, and the Scarecrow declared that the only one in all Jinxland who had the right to sit upon the throne was Princess Gloria, the daughter of King Kynd.

"But," he added, "it is not for me, a stranger, to say who shall rule you. You must decide for yourselves, or you will not be content. So choose now who shall be your future ruler."

And they all shouted: "The Scarecrow! The Scarecrow shall rule us!"

Which proved that the stuffed man had made himself very popular by his conquest of King Krewl, and the people thought they would like him for their King. But the Scarecrow shook his head so vigorously that it became loose, and Trot had to pin it firmly to his body again.

"No," said he, "I belong in the Land of Oz, where I am the humble servant of the lovely girl who rules us all — the royal Ozma. You must choose one of your own inhabitants to rule over Jinxland. Who shall it be?"

They hesitated for a moment, and some few cried: "Pon!" but many more shouted: "Gloria!"

So the Scarecrow took Gloria's hand and led her to the throne, where he first seated her and then took the glittering crown off his own head and placed it upon that of the young lady, where it nestled prettily amongst her soft curls. The people cheered and shouted then, kneeling before their new Queen; but Gloria leaned down and took Pon's hand in both her own and raised him to the seat beside her.

"You shall have both a King and a Queen to care for you and to protect you, my dear subjects," she said in a sweet voice, while her face glowed with happiness; "for Pon was a King's son before he became a gardener's boy, and because I love him he is to be my Royal Consort."

That pleased them all, especially Pon, who realized that this was the most important moment of his life. Trot and Button-Bright and Cap'n Will all congratulated him on winning the beautiful Gloria; but the Ork sneezed twice and said that in his opinion the young lady might have done better.

Then the Scarecrow ordered the guards to bring in the wicked Krewl, King no longer, and when he appeared, loaded with chains and dressed in fustian, the people hissed him and drew back as he passed so their garments

would not touch him.

Krewl was not haughty or overbearing any more; on the contrary he seemed very meek and in great fear of the fate his conquerors had in store for him. But Gloria and Pon were too happy to be revengeful and so they offered to appoint Krewl to the position of gardener's boy at the castle, Pon having resigned to become King. But they said he must promise to reform his wicked ways and to do his duty faithfully, and he must change his name from Krewl to Grewl. All this the man eagerly promised to do, and so when Pon retired to a room in the castle to put on princely raiment, the old brown smock he had formerly worn was given to Grewl, who then went out into the garden to water the roses.

The remainder of that famous day, which was long remembered in Jinxland, was given over to feasting and merrymaking. In the evening there was a grand dance in the courtyard, where the brass band played a new piece of music called the "Ork Trot" which was dedicated to "Our Glorious Gloria, the Queen."

While the Queen and Pon were leading this dance, and all the Jinxland people were having a good time, the strangers were gathered in a group in the park outside the castle. Cap'n Bill, Trot, Button-Bright and the Scarecrow were there, and so was their old friend the Ork; but of all the great flock of Orks which had assisted in the conquest but three remained in Jinxland, besides their leader, the others having returned to their own country as soon

as Gloria was crowned Queen. To the young Ork who had accompanied them in their adventures Cap'n Bill said:

"You've surely been a friend in need, and we're mighty grateful to you for helping us. I might have been a grasshopper yet if it hadn't been for you, an' I might remark that bein' a grasshopper isn't much fun."

"If it hadn't been for you, friend Ork," said the Scarecrow, "I fear I could not have conquered King Krewl."

"No," agreed Trot, "you'd have been just a heap of ashes by this time."

"And I might have been lost yet," added Button-Bright. "Much obliged, Mr. Ork."

"Oh, that's all right," replied the Ork. "Friends must stand together, you know, or they wouldn't be friends. But now I must leave you and be off to my own country, where there's going to be a surprise party on my uncle, and I've promised to attend it."

"Dear me," said the Scarecrow, regretfully. "That is very unfortunate."

"Why so?" asked the Ork.

"I hoped you would consent to carry us over those mountains, into the Land of Oz. My mission here is now finished and I want to get back to the Emerald City."

"How did you cross the mountains before?" inquired the Ork.

"I scaled the cliffs by means of a rope, and crossed the Great Gulf on a strand of spider web. Of course I can return in the same manner, but it would be a hard journey — and perhaps an impossible one — for Trot and Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill. So I thought that if you had the time you and your people would carry us over the mountains and land us all safely on the other side, in the Land of Oz."

The Ork thoughtfully considered the matter for a while. Then he said:

"I mustn't break my promise to be present at the surprise party; but, tell me, could you go to Oz to-night?"

"What, now?" exclaimed Trot.

"It is a fine moonlight night," said the Ork, "and I've found in my experience that there's no time so good as right away. The fact is," he explained, "it's a long journey to Orkland and I and my cousins here are all rather tired by our day's work. But if you will start now, and be content to allow us to carry you over the mountains and dump you on the other side, just say the word and — off we go!"

Cap'n Bill and Trot looked at one another questioningly. The little girl was eager to visit the famous fairyland of Oz and the old sailor had endured such hardships in Jinxland that he would be glad to be out of it.

"It's rather impolite of us not to say good-bye to the new King and

Queen," remarked the Scarecrow, "but I'm sure they're too happy to miss us, and I assure you it will be much easier to fly on the backs of the Orks over those steep mountains than to climb them as I did."

"All right; let's go!" Trot decided. "But where's Button-Bright?"

Just at this important moment Button-Bright was lost again, and they all scattered in search of him. He had been standing beside them just a few minutes before, but his friends had an exciting hunt for him before they finally discovered the boy seated among the members of the band, beating the end of the bass drum with the bone of a turkey-leg that he had taken from the table in the banquet room.

"Hello, Trot," he said, looking up at the little girl when she found him. "This is the first chance I ever had to pound a drum with a reg'lar drum stick. And I ate all the meat off the bone myself."

"Come quick. We're going to the Land of Oz."

"Oh, what's the hurry?" said Button-Bright; but she seized his arm and dragged him away to the park, where the others were waiting.

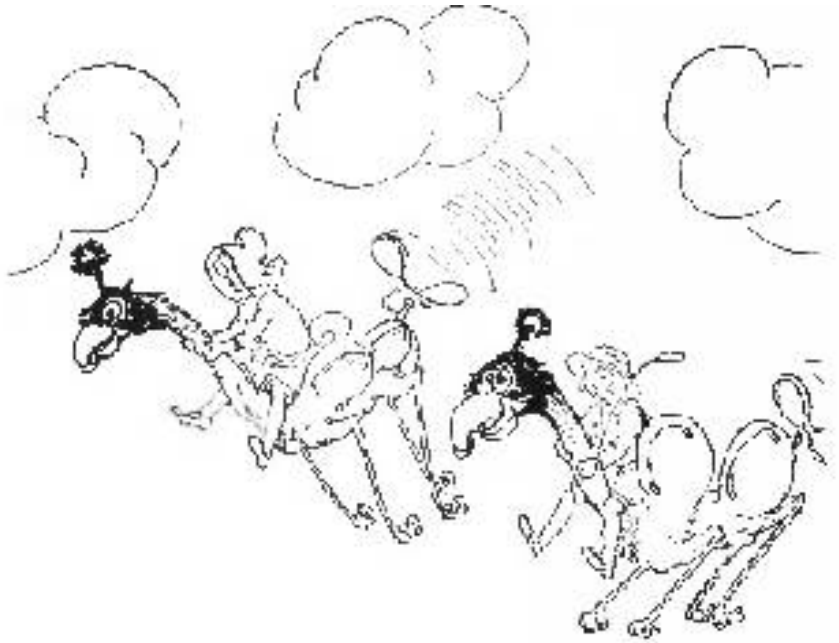
Trot climbed upon the back of her old friend, the Ork leader, and the others took their seats on the backs of his three cousins. As soon as all were placed and clinging to the skinny necks of the creatures, the revolving tails began to whirl and up rose the four monster Orks and sailed away toward the mountains. They were so high in the air that when they passed the crest of the highest peak it seemed far below them. No sooner were they well across the barrier than the Orks swooped downward and landed their passengers upon the ground.

"Here we are, safe in the Land of Oz!" cried the Scarecrow joyfully.

"Oh, are we?" asked Trot, looking around her curiously.

She could see the shadows of stately trees and the outlines of rolling hills; beneath her feet was soft turf, but otherwise the subdued light of the moon disclosed nothing clearly.

"Seems jus' like any other country," was Cap'n Bill's comment.



“But it isn’t,” the Scarecrow assured him. “You are now within the borders of the most glorious fairyland in all the world. This part of it is just a corner of the Quadling Country, and the least interesting portion of it. It’s not very thickly settled, around here, I’ll admit, but — ”

He was interrupted by a sudden whir and a rush of air as the four Orks mounted into the sky.

"Good night!" called the shrill voices of the strange creatures, and although Trot shouted "Good night!" as loudly as she could, the little girl was almost ready to cry because the Orks had not waited to be properly thanked for all their kindness to her and to Cap'n Bill.

But the Orks were gone, and thanks for good deeds do not amount to much except to prove one's politeness.

"Well, friends," said the Scarecrow, "we mustn't stay here in the meadows all night, so let us find a pleasant place to sleep. Not that it matters to me, in the least, for I never sleep; but I know that meat people like to shut their eyes and lie still during the dark hours."

"I'm pretty tired," admitted Trot, yawning as she followed the straw man along a tiny path, "so, if you don't find a house handy, Cap'n Bill and I will sleep under the trees, or even on this soft grass."

But a house was not very far off, although when the Scarecrow stumbled upon it there was no light in it whatever. Cap'n Bill knocked on the door several times, and there being no response the Scarecrow boldly lifted the latch and walked in, followed by the others. And no sooner had they entered than a soft light filled the room. Trot couldn't tell where it came from, for no lamp of any sort was visible, but she did not waste much time on this problem, because directly in the center of the room stood a table set for three,

with lots of good food on it and several of the dishes smoking hot.

The little girl and Button-Bright both uttered exclamations of pleasure, but they looked in vain for any cook stove or fireplace, or for any person who might have prepared for them this delicious feast.

"It's fairyland," muttered the boy, tossing his cap in a corner and seating himself at the table. "This supper smells 'most as good as that turkey-leg I had in Jinxland. Please pass the muffins, Cap'n Bill."

Trot thought it was strange that no people but themselves were in the house, but on the wall opposite the door was a gold frame bearing in big letters the word:

"WELCOME."

So she had no further hesitation in eating of the food so mysteriously prepared for them.

"But there are only places for three!" she exclaimed.

"Three are quite enough," said the Scarecrow. "I never eat, because I am stuffed full already, and I like my nice clean straw better than I do food."

Trot and the sailor-man were hungry and made a hearty meal, for not since they had left home had they tasted such good food. It was surprising that Button-Bright could eat so soon after his feast in Jinxland, but the boy always ate whenever there was an opportunity. "If I don't eat now," he said, "the next time I'm hungry I'll wish I had."

"Really, Cap'n," remarked Trot, when she found a dish of ice-cream appear beside her plate, "I b'lieve this is fairyland, sure enough."

"There's no doubt of it, Trot," he answered gravely

"I've been here before," said Button-Bright, "so I know."

After supper they discovered three tiny bedrooms adjoining the big living room of the house, and in each room was a comfortable white bed with downy pillows. You may be sure that the tired mortals were not long in bidding the Scarecrow good night and creeping into their beds, where they slept soundly until morning.

For the first time since they set eyes on the terrible whirlpool, Trot and Cap'n Bill were free from anxiety and care. Button-Bright never worried about anything. The Scarecrow, not being able to sleep, looked out of the window and tried to count the stars.

Chapter Twenty-One

Dorothy, Betsy and Ozma

I suppose many of my readers have read descriptions of the beautiful and magnificent Emerald City of Oz, so I need not describe it here, except to state that never has any city in any fairyland ever equalled this one in stately splendor. It lies almost exactly in the center of the Land of Oz, and in the center of the Emerald City rises the wall of glistening emeralds that surrounds the palace of Ozma. The palace is almost a city in itself and is inhabited by many of the Ruler's especial friends and those who have won her confidence and favor. As for Ozma herself, there are no words in any dictionary I can find that are fitted to describe this young girl's beauty of mind and person. Merely to see her is to love her for her charming face and manners; to know her is to love her for her tender sympathy, her generous nature, her truth and honor. Born of a long line of Fairy Queens, Ozma is as nearly perfect as any fairy may be, and she is noted for her wisdom as well as

for her other qualities. Her happy subjects adore their girl Ruler and each one considers her a comrade and protector.

At the time of which I write, Ozma's best friend and most constant companion was a little Kansas girl named Dorothy, a mortal who had come to the Land of Oz in a very curious manner and had been offered a home in Ozma's palace. Furthermore, Dorothy had been made a Princess of Oz, and was as much at home in the royal palace as was the gentle Ruler. She knew almost every part of the great country and almost all of its numerous inhabitants. Next to Ozma she was loved better than anyone in all Oz, for Dorothy was simple and sweet, seldom became angry and had such a friendly, chummy way that she made friends where-ever she wandered. It was she who first brought the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion to the Emerald City. Dorothy had also introduced to Ozma the Shaggy Man and the Hungry Tiger, as well as Billina the Yellow Hen, Eureka the Pink Kitten, and many other delightful characters and creatures. Coming as she did from our world, Dorothy was much like many other girls we know; so there were times when she was not so wise as she might have been, and other times when she was obstinate and got herself into trouble. But life in a fairy-land had taught the little girl to accept all sorts of surprising things as matters-of-course, for while Dorothy was no fairy — but just as mortal as we are — she had seen more wonders than most mortals ever do.

Another little girl from our outside world also lived in Ozma's palace. This was Betsy Bobbin, whose strange adventures had brought her to the Emerald City, where Ozma had cordially welcomed her. Betsy was a shy little thing and could never get used to the marvels that surrounded her, but she and Dorothy were firm friends and thought themselves very fortunate in being together in this delightful country.

One day Dorothy and Betsy were visiting Ozma in the girl Ruler's private apartment, and among the things that especially interested them was Ozma's Magic Picture, set in a handsome frame and hung upon the wall of the room. This picture was a magic one because it constantly changed its scenes and showed events and adventures happening in all parts of the world. Thus it was really a "moving picture" of life, and if the one who stood before it wished to know what any absent person was doing, the picture instantly showed that person, with his or her surroundings.

The two girls were not wishing to see anyone in particular, on this occasion, but merely enjoyed watching the shifting scenes, some of which were exceedingly curious and remarkable. Suddenly Dorothy exclaimed: "Why, there's Button-Bright!" and this drew Ozma also to look at the

picture, for she and Dorothy knew the boy well.

"Who is Button-Bright?" asked Betsy, who had never met him.

"Why, he's the little boy who is just getting off the back of that strange flying creature," exclaimed Dorothy. Then she turned to Ozma and asked: "What is that thing, Ozma? A bird? I've never seen anything like it before."

"It is an Ork," answered Ozma, for they were watching the scene where the Ork and the three big birds were first landing their passengers in Jinxland after the long flight across the desert. "I wonder," added the girl Ruler, musingly, "why those strangers dare venture into that unfortunate country, which is ruled by a wicked King."

"That girl, and the one-legged man, seem to be mortals from the outside

world," said Dorothy.

"The man isn't one-legged," corrected Betsy; "he has one wooden leg."

"It's almost as bad," declared Dorothy, watching Cap'n Bill stump around.

"They are three mortal adventurers," said Ozma, "and they seem worthy and honest. But I fear they will be treated badly in Jinxland, and if they meet with any misfortune there it will reflect upon me, for Jinxland is a part of my dominions."

"Can't we help them in any way?" inquired Dorothy. "That seems like a nice little girl. I'd be sorry if anything happened to her."

"Let us watch the picture for awhile," suggested Ozma, and so they all drew chairs before the Magic Picture and followed the adventures of Trot and Cap'n Bill and Button-Bright. Presently the scene shifted and showed their friend the Scarecrow crossing the mountains into Jinxland, and that somewhat relieved Ozma's anxiety, for she knew at once that Glinda the Good had sent the Scarecrow to protect the strangers.

The adventures in Jinxland proved very interesting to the three girls in Ozma's palace, who during the succeeding days spent much of their time in watching the picture. It was like a story to them.

"That girl's a reg'lar trump!" exclaimed Dorothy, referring to Trot, and Ozma answered:

"She's a dear little thing, and I'm sure nothing very bad will happen to her. The old sailor is a fine character, too, for he has never once grumbled over being a grasshopper, as so many would have done."

When the Scarecrow was so nearly burned up the girls all shivered a little, and they clapped their hands in joy when the flock of Orks came and saved him.

So it was that when all the exciting adventures in Jinxland were over and the four Orks had begun their flight across the mountains to carry the mortals into the Land of Oz, Ozma called the Wizard to her and asked him to prepare a place for the strangers to sleep.

The famous Wizard of Oz was a quaint little man who inhabited the royal palace and attended to all the magical things that Ozma wanted done. He was

not as powerful as Glinda, to be sure, but he could do a great many wonderful things. He proved this by placing a house in the uninhabited part of the Quadling Country where the Orks landed Cap'n Bill and Trot and Button-Bright, and fitting it with all the comforts I have described in the last chapter.

Next morning Dorothy said to Ozma:

"Oughtn't we to go meet the strangers, so we can show them the way to the Emerald City? I'm sure that little girl will feel shy in this beautiful land, and I know if 'twas me I'd like somebody to give me a welcome."

Ozma smiled at her little friend and answered:

"You and Betsy may go to meet them, if you wish, but I can not leave my palace just now, as I am to have a conference with Jack Pumpkinhead and Professor Wogglebug on important matters. You may take the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon, and if you start soon you will be able to meet the Scarecrow and the strangers at Glinda's palace."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Dorothy, and went away to tell Betsy and to make preparations for the journey.

Chapter Twenty-Two
The Waterfall

Glinda's castle was a long way from the mountains, but the Scarecrow began the journey cheerfully, since time was of no great importance in the Land of Oz and he had recently made the trip and knew the way. It never mattered much to Button-Bright where he was or what he was doing; the boy was content in being alive and having good companions to share his wanderings. As for Trot and Cap'n Bill, they now found themselves so comfortable and free from danger, in this fine fairyland, and they were so awed and amazed by the adventures they were encountering, that the journey to Glinda's castle was more like a pleasure trip than a hardship, so many wonderful things were there to see.

Button-Bright had been in Oz before, but never in this part of it, so the Scarecrow was the only one who knew the paths and could lead them. They had eaten a hearty breakfast, which they found already prepared for them and

awaiting them on the table when they arose from their refreshing sleep, so they left the magic house in a contented mood and with hearts lighter and more happy than they had known for many a day. As they marched along through the fields, the sun shone brightly and the breeze was laden with delicious fragrance, for it carried with it the breath of millions of wildflowers.

At noon, when they stopped to rest by the bank of a pretty river, Trot said with a long-drawn breath that was much like a sigh:

"I wish we'd brought with us some of the food that was left from our breakfast, for I'm getting hungry again."

Scarcely had she spoken when a table rose up before them, as if from the ground itself, and it was loaded with fruits and nuts and cakes and many other good things to eat. The little girl's eyes opened wide at this display of magic, and Cap'n Bill was not sure that the things were actually there and fit to eat until he had taken them in his hand and tasted them. But the Scarecrow said with a laugh:

"Someone is looking after your welfare, that is certain, and from the looks of this table I suspect my friend the Wizard has taken us in his charge. I've known him to do things like this before, and if we are in the Wizard's care you need not worry about your future."

"Who's worrying?" inquired Button-Bright, already at the table and busily eating.

The Scarecrow looked around the place while the others were feasting, and finding many things unfamiliar to him he shook his head and remarked:

"I must have taken the wrong path, back in that last valley, for on my way to Jinxland I remember that I passed around the foot of this river, where there was a great waterfall."

"Did the river make a bend, after the waterfall?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"No, the river disappeared. Only a pool of whirling water showed what had become of the river; but I suppose it is under ground, somewhere, and will come to the surface again in another part of the country."

"Well," suggested Trot, as she finished her luncheon, "as there is no way to cross this river, I s'pose we'll have to find that waterfall, and go around it."

"Exactly," replied the Scarecrow; so they soon renewed their journey, following the river for a long time until the roar of the waterfall sounded in their ears. By and by they came to the waterfall itself, a sheet of silver dropping far, far down into a tiny lake which seemed to have no outlet. From the top of the fall, where they stood, the banks gradually sloped away, so that the descent by land was quite easy, while the river could do nothing but glide

over an edge of rock and tumble straight down to the depths below.

"You see," said the Scarecrow, leaning over the brink, "this is called by our Oz people the Great Waterfall, because it is certainly the highest one in all the land; but I think — Help!"

He had lost his balance and pitched headforemost into the river. They saw a flash of straw and blue clothes, and the painted face looking upward in surprise. The next moment the Scarecrow was swept over the waterfall and plunged into the basin below.

The accident had happened so suddenly that for a moment they were all too horrified to speak or move.

"Quick! We must go to help him or he will be drowned," Trot exclaimed.

Even while speaking she began to descend the bank to the pool below, and Cap'n Bill followed as swiftly as his wooden leg would let him. Button-Bright came more slowly, calling to the girl:

"He can't drown, Trot; he's a Scarecrow."

But she wasn't sure a Scarecrow couldn't drown and never relaxed her speed until she stood on the edge of the pool, with the spray dashing in her face. Cap'n Bill, puffing and panting, had just voice enough to ask, as he reached her side:

"See him, Trot?"

"Not a speck of him. Oh, Cap'n, what do you s'pose has become of him?"

"I s'pose," replied the sailor, "that he's in that water, more or less far down, and I'm 'fraid it'll make his straw pretty soggy. But as fer his bein' drowned, I agree with Button-Bright that it can't be done."

There was small comfort in this assurance and Trot stood for some time searching with her eyes the bubbling water, in the hope that the Scarecrow would finally come to the surface. Presently she heard Button-Bright calling: "Come here, Trot!" and looking around she saw that the boy had crept over the wet rocks to the edge of the waterfall and seemed to be peering behind it. Making her way toward him, she asked:

"What do you see?"

"A cave," he answered. "Let's go in. P'r'aps we'll find the Scarecrow there."

She was a little doubtful of that, but the cave interested her, and so did it Cap'n Bill. There was just space enough at the edge of the sheet of water for them to crowd in behind it, but after that dangerous entrance they found room enough to walk upright and after a time they came to an opening in the wall of rock. Approaching this opening, they gazed within it and found a series of steps, cut so that they might easily descend into the cavern.

Trot turned to look inquiringly at her companions. The falling water made such din and roaring that her voice could not be heard. Cap'n Bill nodded his head, but before he could enter the cave, Button-Bright was before him, clambering down the steps without a particle of fear. So the others followed the boy.

The first steps were wet with spray, and slippery, but the remainder were quite dry. A rosy light seemed to come from the interior of the cave, and this

lighted their way. After the steps there was a short tunnel, high enough for them to walk erect in, and then they reached the cave itself and paused in wonder and admiration.

They stood on the edge of a vast cavern, the walls and domed roof of which were lined with countless rubies, exquisitely cut and flashing sparkling rays from one to another. This caused a radiant light that permitted the entire cavern to be distinctly seen, and the effect was so marvelous that Trot drew in her breath with a sort of a gasp, and stood quite still in wonder.

But the walls and roof of the cavern were merely a setting for a more wonderful scene. In the center was a bubbling caldron of water, for here the river rose again, splashing and dashing till its spray rose high in the air, where it took the ruby color of the jewels and seemed like a seething mass of flame. And while they gazed into the tumbling, tossing water, the body of the Scarecrow suddenly rose in the center, struggling and kicking, and the next instant wholly disappeared from view.

"My, but he's wet!" exclaimed Button-Bright; but none of the others heard him.

Trot and Cap'n Bill discovered that a broad ledge — covered, like the walls, with glittering rubies — ran all around the cavern; so they followed this gorgeous path to the rear and found where the water made its final dive underground, before it disappeared entirely. Where it plunged into this dim abyss the river was black and dreary looking, and they stood gazing in awe until just beside them the body of the Scarecrow again popped up from the water.

Chapter Twenty Three
The Land of Oz

The straw man's appearance on the water was so sudden that it startled Trot, but Cap'n Bill had the presence of mind to stick his wooden leg out over the water and the Scarecrow made a desperate clutch and grabbed the leg with both hands. He managed to hold on until Trot and Button-Bright knelt down and seized his clothing, but the children would have been powerless to drag the soaked Scarecrow ashore had not Cap'n Bill now assisted them. When they laid him on the ledge of rubies he was the most useless looking Scarecrow you can imagine — his straw sodden and dripping with water, his clothing wet and crumpled, while even the sack upon which his face was painted had become so wrinkled that the old jolly expression of their stuffed friend's features was entirely gone. But he could still speak, and when Trot bent down her ear she heard him say:

"Get me out of here as soon as you can."

That seemed a wise thing to do, so Cap'n Bill lifted his head and

shoulders, and Trot and Button-Bright each took a leg; among them they partly carried and partly dragged the damp Scarecrow out of the Ruby Cavern, along the tunnel, and up the flight of rock steps. It was somewhat difficult to get him past the edge of the waterfall, but they succeeded, after much effort, and a few minutes later laid their poor comrade on a grassy bank where the sun shone upon him freely and he was beyond the reach of the spray.

Cap'n Bill now knelt down and examined the straw that the Scarecrow was stuffed with.

"I don't believe it'll be of much use to him, any more," said he, "for it's full of polliwogs an' fish eggs, an' the water has took all the crinkle out o' the straw an ruined it. I guess, Trot, that the best thing for us to do is to empty out all his body an' carry his head an' clothes along the road till we come to a field or a house where we can get some fresh straw."

"Yes, Cap'n," she agreed, "there's nothing else to be done. But how shall we ever find the road to Glinda's palace, without the Scarecrow to guide us?"

"That's easy," said the Scarecrow, speaking in a rather feeble but distinct voice. "If Cap'n Bill will carry my head on his shoulders, eyes front, I can tell him which way to go."

So they followed that plan and emptied all the old, wet straw out of the Scarecrow's body. Then the sailor-man wrung out the clothes and laid them in the sun till they were quite dry. Trot took charge of the head and pressed the wrinkles out of the face as it dried, so that after a while the Scarecrow's expression became natural again, and as jolly as before.

This work consumed some time, but when it was completed they again started upon their journey, Button-Bright carrying the boots and hat, Trot the bundle of clothes, and Cap'n Bill the head. The Scarecrow, having regained his composure and being now in a good humor, despite his recent mishaps, beguiled their way with stories of the Land of Oz.

It was not until the next morning, however, that they found straw with which to restuff the Scarecrow. That evening they came to the same little house they had slept in before, only now it was magically transferred to a new place. The same bountiful supper as before was found smoking hot upon the table and the same cosy beds were ready for them to sleep in.

They rose early and after breakfast went out of doors, and there, lying just beside the house, was a heap of clean, crisp straw. Ozma had noticed the Scarecrow's accident in her Magic Picture and had notified the Wizard to provide the straw, for she knew the adventurers were not likely to find straw in the country through which they were now traveling.

They lost no time in stuffing the Scarecrow anew, and he was greatly

delighted at being able to walk around again and to assume the leadership of the little party.

"Really," said Trot, "I think you're better than you were before, for you are fresh and sweet all through and rustle beautifully when you move."

"Thank you, my dear," he replied gratefully. "I always feel like a new man when I'm freshly stuffed. No one likes to get musty, you know, and even good straw may be spoiled by age."

"It was water that spoiled you, the last time," remarked Button-Bright, "which proves that too much bathing is as bad as too little. But, after all, Scarecrow, water is not as dangerous for you as fire."

"All things are good in moderation," declared the Scarecrow. "But now, let us hurry on, or we shall not reach Glinda's palace by nightfall."

Chapter Twenty-Four
The Royal Reception

At about four o'clock of that same day the Red Wagon drew up at the entrance to Glinda's palace and Dorothy and Betsy jumped out. Ozma's Red Wagon was almost a chariot, being inlaid with rubies and pearls, and it was drawn by Ozma's favorite steed, the wooden Sawhorse.

"Shall I unharness you," asked Dorothy, "so you can come in and visit?"

"No," replied the Sawhorse. "I'll just stand here and think. Take your time. Thinking doesn't seem to bore me at all."

"What will you think of?" inquired Betsy.

"Of the acorn that grew the tree from which I was made."

So they left the wooden animal and went in to see Glinda, who welcomed the little girls in her most cordial manner.

"I knew you were on your way," said the good Sorceress when they were seated in her library, "for I learned from my Record Book that you intended

to meet Trot and Button-Bright on their arrival here."

"Is the strange little girl named Trot?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes; and her companion, the old sailor, is named Cap'n Bill. I think we shall like them very much, for they are just the kind of people to enjoy and appreciate our fairyland and I do not see any way, at present, for them to return again to the outside world."

"Well, there's room enough here for them, I'm sure," said Dorothy. "Betsy and I are already eager to welcome Trot. It will keep us busy for a year, at least, showing her all the wonderful things in Oz."

Glinda smiled.

"I have lived here many years," said she, "and I have not seen all the wonders of Oz yet."

Meantime the travelers were drawing near to the palace, and when they first caught sight of its towers Trot realized that it was far more grand and imposing than was the King's castle in Jinxland. The nearer they came, the more beautiful the palace appeared, and when finally the Scarecrow led them up the great marble steps, even Button-Bright was filled with awe.

"I don't see any soldiers to guard the place," said the little girl.

"There is no need to guard Glinda's palace," replied the Scarecrow. "We have no wicked people in Oz, that we know of, and even if there were any, Glinda's magic would be powerful enough to protect her."

Button-Bright was now standing on the top steps of the entrance, and he suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, there's the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon! Hip, hooray!" and next moment he was rushing down to throw his arms around the neck of the wooden horse, which good-naturedly permitted this familiarity when it recognized in the boy an old friend.

Button-Bright's shout had been heard inside the palace, so now Dorothy and Betsy came running out to embrace their beloved friend, the Scarecrow, and to welcome Trot and Cap'n Bill to the Land of Oz.

"We've been watching you for a long time, in Ozma's Magic Picture," said Dorothy, "and Ozma has sent us to invite you to her own palace in the Em'rald City. I don't know if you realize how lucky you are to get that invitation, but you'll understand it better after you've seen the royal palace and the Em'rald City."

Glinda now appeared in person to lead all the party into her Azure Reception Room. Trot was a little afraid of the stately Sorceress, but gained courage by holding fast to the hands of Betsy and Dorothy. Cap'n Bill had no one to help him feel at ease, so the old sailor sat stiffly on the edge of his chair and said:

“Yes, ma’am,” or “No, ma’am,” when he was spoken to, and was greatly embarrassed by so much splendor.

The Scarecrow had lived so much in palaces that he felt quite at home, and he chatted to Glinda and the Oz girls in a merry, light-hearted way. He told all about his adventures in Jinxland, and at the Great Waterfall, and on the journey hither — most of which his hearers knew already — and then he asked Dorothy and Betsy what had happened in the Emerald City since he had left there.

They all passed the evening and the night at Glinda’s palace, and the Sorceress was so gracious to Cap’n Bill that the old man by degrees regained his self-possession and began to enjoy himself. Trot had already come to the conclusion that in Dorothy and Betsy she had found two delightful comrades, and Button-Bright was just as much at home here as he had been in the fields of Jinxland or when he was buried in the popcorn snow of the Land of Mo.

The next morning they arose bright and early and after breakfast bade good-bye to the kind Sorceress, whom Trot and Cap’n Bill thanked earnestly for sending the Scarecrow to Jinxland to rescue them. Then they all climbed into the Red Wagon.

There was room for all on the broad seats, and when all had taken their places — Dorothy, Trot and Betsy on the rear seat and Cap’n Bill, Button-Bright and the Scarecrow in front — they called “Gid-dap!” to the Sawhorse and the wooden steed moved briskly away, pulling the Red Wagon with ease.

It was now that the strangers began to perceive the real beauties of the Land of Oz, for they were passing through a more thickly settled part of the country and the population grew more dense as they drew nearer to the Emerald City. Everyone they met had a cheery word or a smile for the Scarecrow, Dorothy and Betsy Bobbin, and some of them remembered Button-Bright and welcomed him back to their country.

It was a happy party, indeed, that journeyed in the Red Wagon to the Emerald City, and Trot already began to hope that Ozma would permit her and Cap’n Bill to live always in the Land of Oz.

When they reached the great city they were more amazed than ever, both by the concourse of people in their quaint and picturesque costumes, and by the splendor of the city itself. But the magnificence of the Royal Palace quite took their breath away, until Ozma received them in her own pretty apartment and by her charming manners and assuring smiles made them feel they were no longer strangers.

Trot was given a lovely little room next to that of Dorothy, while Cap’n Bill had the cosiest sort of a room next to Trot’s and overlooking the gardens. And that evening Ozma gave a grand banquet and reception in

honor of the new arrivals. While Trot had read of many of the people she then met, Cap'n Bill was less familiar with them and many of the unusual characters introduced to him that evening caused the old sailor to open his eyes wide in astonishment.

He had thought the live Scarecrow about as curious as anyone could be, but now he met the Tin Woodman, who was all made of tin, even to his heart, and carried a gleaming axe over his shoulder wherever he went. Then there was Jack Pumpkinhead, whose head was a real pumpkin with the face carved upon it; and Professor Wogglebug, who had the shape of an enormous bug but was dressed in neat fitting garments. The Professor was an interesting talker and had very polite manners, but his face was so comical that it made Cap'n Bill smile to look at it. A great friend of Dorothy and Ozma seemed to be a machine man called Tik-Tok, who ran down several times during the

evening and had to be wound up again by someone before he could move or speak.

At the reception appeared the Shaggy Man and his brother, both very popular in Oz, as well as Dorothy's Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, two happy old people who lived in a pretty cottage near the palace.

But what perhaps seemed most surprising to both Trot and Cap'n Bill was the number of peculiar animals admitted into Ozma's parlors, where they not only conducted themselves quite properly but were able to talk as well as anyone.

There was the Cowardly Lion, an immense beast with a beautiful mane; and the Hungry Tiger, who smiled continually; and Eureka the Pink Kitten, who lay curled upon a cushion and had rather supercilious manners; and the wooden Sawhorse; and nine tiny piglets that belonged to the Wizard; and a mule named Hank, who belonged to Betsy Bobbin. A fuzzy little terrier dog, named Toto, lay at Dorothy's feet but seldom took part in the conversation, although he listened to every word that was said. But the most wonderful of all to Trot was a square beast with a winning smile, that squatted in a corner of the room and wagged his square head at everyone in quite a jolly way. Betsy told Trot that this unique beast was called the Woozy, and there was no other like him in all the world.

Cap'n Bill and Trot had both looked around expectantly for the Wizard of Oz, but the evening was far advanced before the famous little man entered the room. But he went up to the strangers at once and said:

"I know you, but you don't know me; so let's get acquainted."

And they did get acquainted, in a very short time, and before the evening was over Trot felt that she knew every person and animal present at the reception, and that they were all her good friends.

Suddenly they looked around for Button-Bright, but he was nowhere to be found.

"Dear me!" cried Trot. "He's lost again."

"Never mind, my dear," said Ozma, with her charming smile, "no one can go far astray in the Land of Oz, and if Button-Bright isn't lost occasionally, he isn't happy."

RINKITINK IN OZ

Rinkitink in Oz was Baum's tenth Oz book, published in 1916 by Reilly & Britton with artwork by John R. Neill. Baum originally intended it as a non-Oz book, having composed most of it eleven years earlier. In its revised form, Oz characters appear toward the end of the novel. The bulk of *Rinkitink in Oz* takes place on three islands, Pingaree, Regos, and Coregos, as well as the Nome King's caverns. The plot deals with the invasion of Pingaree and the subsequent attempts of Prince Inga to save his people from slavery. With inherited and powerful magical colored pearls in hand, Inga sets out on dangerous adventures that eventually lead him to Oz, joined by jolly King Rinkitink of Gilgad, and his surly companion, an enchanted goat named Bilbil. Along the way they meet Dorothy Gale, who helps them negotiate with the craftiest Nome King yet, King Kaliko.

A first edition copy of Rinkitink in Oz

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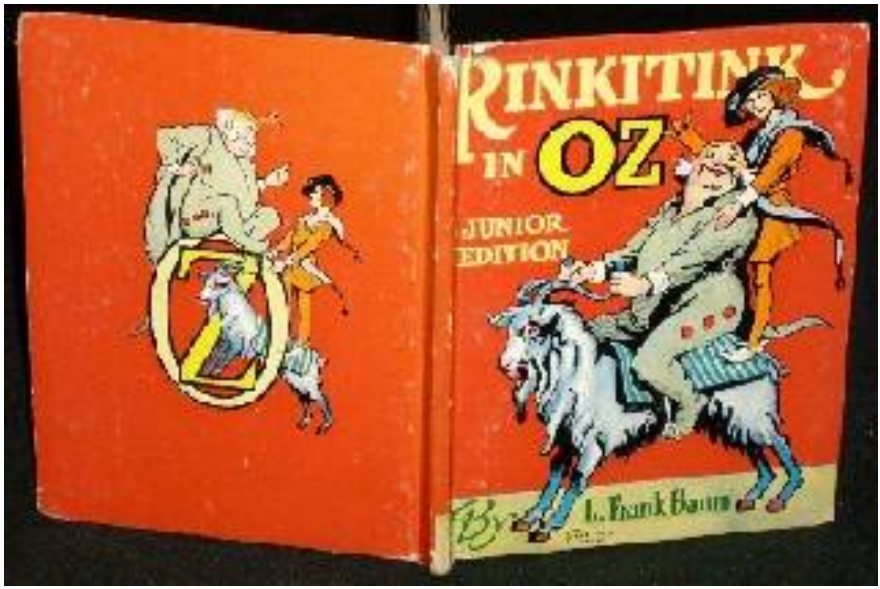

Front and back covers of the 1939 abridged Junior Edition of 'Rinkitink in Oz'

THIS BOOK BELONGS
TO

RINKITINK
IN
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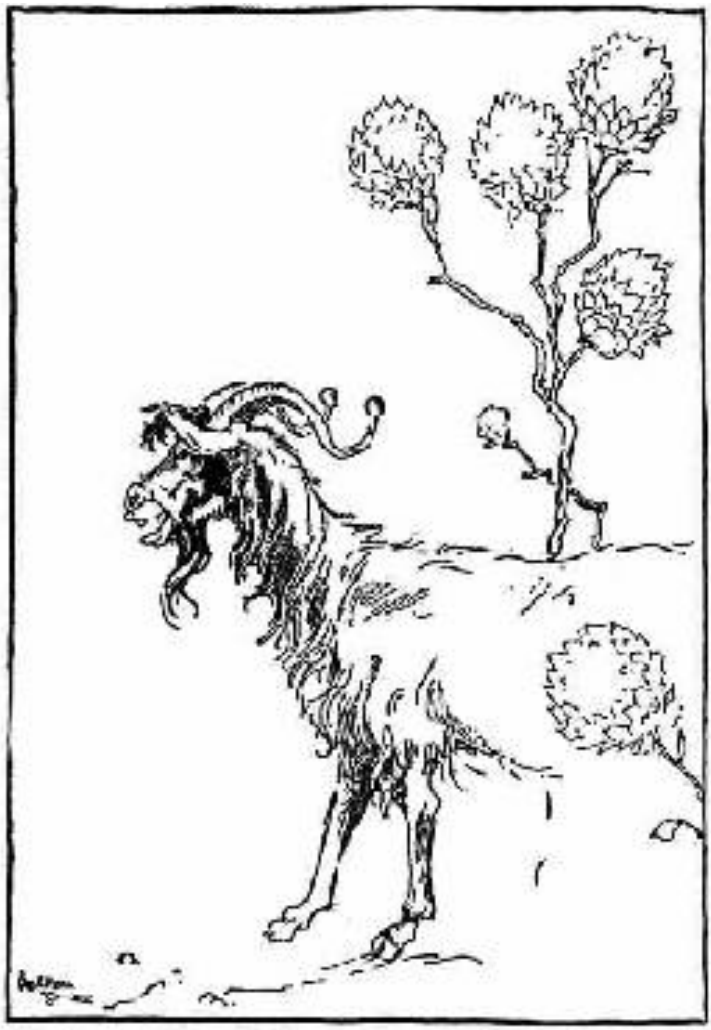

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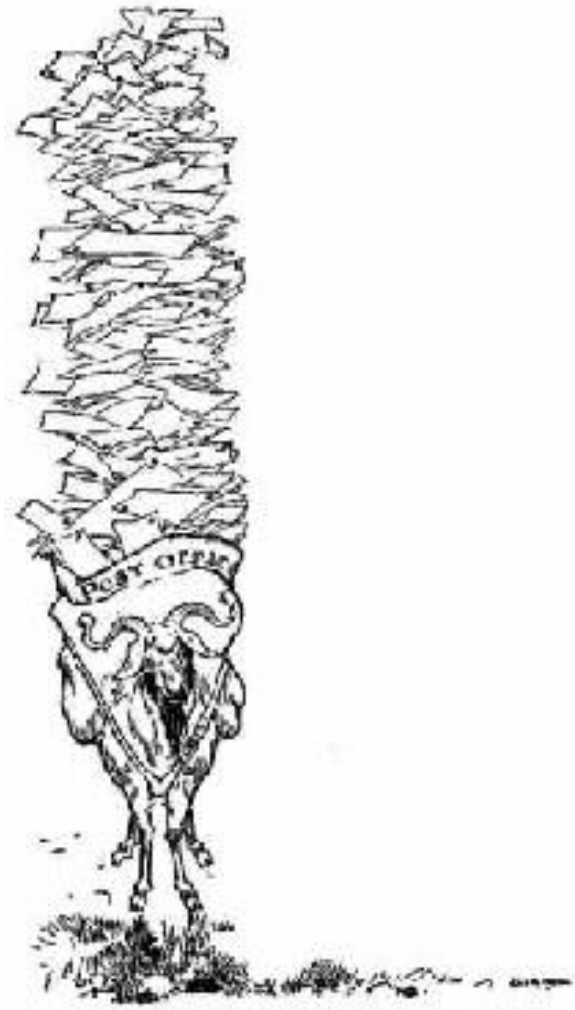
To

My New Grandson ~

Robert Allison Baum

INTRODUCING THIS STORY



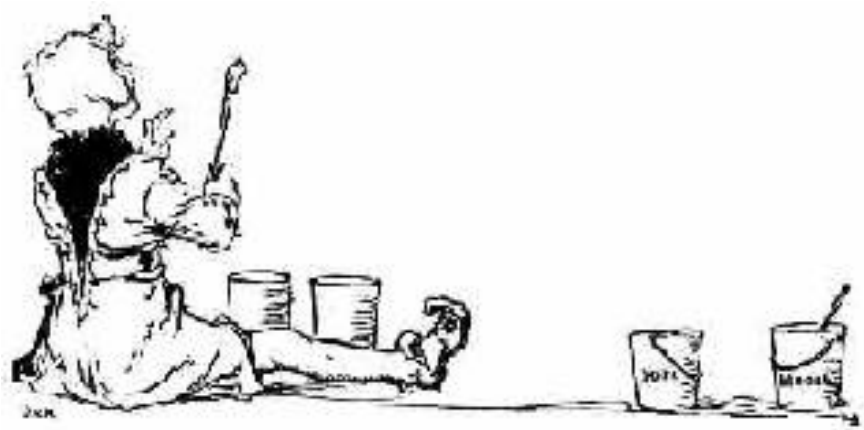
Here is a story with a boy hero, and a boy of whom you have never before heard. There are girls in the story, too, including our old friend Dorothy, and some of the characters wander a good way from the Land of Oz before they all assemble in the Emerald City to take part in Ozma's banquet. Indeed, I think you will find this story quite different from the other histories of Oz, but I hope you will not like it the less on that account.

If I am permitted to write another Oz book it will tell of some thrilling adventures encountered by Dorothy, Betsy Bobbin, Trot and the Patchwork Girl right in the Land of Oz, and how they discovered some amazing

creatures that never could have existed outside a fairyland. I have an idea that about the time you are reading this story of Rinkitink I shall be writing that story of Adventures in Oz.

Don't fail to write me often and give me your advice and suggestions, which I always appreciate. I get a good many letters from my readers, but every one is a joy to me and I answer them as soon as I can find time to do so.

L. Frank Baum
Royal Historian of Oz
"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA
1916.



The Prince of Pingaree

CHAPTER 1

If you have a map of the Land of Oz handy, you will find that the great Nonestic Ocean washes the shores of the Kingdom of Rinkitink, between which and the Land of Oz lies a strip of the country of the Nome King and a Sandy Desert. The Kingdom of Rinkitink isn't very big and lies close to the ocean, all the houses and the King's palace being built near the shore. The people live much upon the water, boating and fishing, and the wealth of Rinkitink is gained from trading along the coast and with the islands nearest it.

Four days' journey by boat to the north of Rinkitink is the Island of Pingaree, and as our story begins here I must tell you something about this island. At the north end of Pingaree, where it is widest, the land is a mile from shore to shore, but at the south end it is scarcely half a mile broad; thus, although Pingaree is four miles long, from north to south, it cannot be called a very big island. It is exceedingly pretty, however, and to the gulls who approach it from the sea it must resemble a huge green wedge lying upon the waters, for its grass and trees give it the color of an emerald.

The grass came to the edge of the sloping shores; the beautiful trees occupied all the central portion of Pingaree, forming a continuous grove where the branches met high overhead and there was just space beneath them for the cosy houses of the inhabitants. These houses were scattered everywhere throughout the island, so that there was no town or city, unless the whole island might be called a city. The canopy of leaves, high overhead, formed a shelter from sun and rain, and the dwellers in the grove could all look past the straight tree-trunks and across the grassy slopes to the purple waters of the Nonestic Ocean.

At the big end of the island, at the north, stood the royal palace of King Kitticut, the lord and ruler of Pingaree. It was a beautiful palace, built entirely of snow-white marble and capped by domes of burnished gold, for the King was exceedingly wealthy. All along the coast of Pingaree were found the largest and finest pearls in the whole world.

These pearls grew within the shells of big oysters, and the people raked the oysters from their watery beds, sought out the milky pearls and carried them dutifully to their King. Therefore, once every year His Majesty was able to send six of his boats, with sixty rowers and many sacks of the valuable pearls, to the Kingdom of Rinkitink, where there was a city called Gilgad, in which King Rinkitink's palace stood on a rocky headland and served, with its high towers, as a lighthouse to guide sailors to the harbor. In Gilgad the pearls from Pingaree were purchased by the King's treasurer, and

the boats went back to the island laden with stores of rich merchandise and such supplies of food as the people and the royal family of Pingaree needed.

The Pingaree people never visited any other land but that of Rinkitink, and so there were few other lands that knew there was such an island. To the southwest was an island called the Isle of Phreex, where the inhabitants had no use for pearls. And far north of Pingaree — six days' journey by boat, it was said — were twin islands named Regos and Coregos, inhabited by a fierce and warlike people.

Many years before this story really begins, ten big boatloads of those fierce warriors of Regos and Coregos visited Pingaree, landing suddenly upon the north end of the island. There they began to plunder and conquer, as was their custom, but the people of Pingaree, although neither so big nor so strong as their foes, were able to defeat them and drive them all back to the sea, where a great storm overtook the raiders from Regos and Coregos and destroyed them and their boats, not a single warrior returning to his own country.

This defeat of the enemy seemed the more wonderful because the pearl-fishers of Pingaree were mild and peaceful in disposition and seldom quarreled even among themselves. Their only weapons were their oyster rakes; yet the fact remains that they drove their fierce enemies from Regos and Coregos from their shores.

King Kitticut was only a boy when this remarkable battle was fought, and now his hair was gray; but he remembered the day well and, during the years that followed, his one constant fear was of another invasion of his enemies. He feared they might send a more numerous army to his island, both for conquest and revenge, in which case there could be little hope of successfully opposing them.

This anxiety on the part of King Kitticut led him to keep a sharp lookout for strange boats, one of his men patrolling the beach constantly, but he was too wise to allow any fear to make him or his subjects unhappy. He was a good King and lived very contentedly in his fine palace, with his fair Queen Garee and their one child, Prince Inga.

The wealth of Pingaree increased year by year; and the happiness of the people increased, too. Perhaps there was no place, outside the Land of Oz, where contentment and peace were more manifest than on this pretty island, hidden in the bosom of the Nonestic Ocean. Had these conditions remained undisturbed, there would have been no need to speak of Pingaree in this story.

Prince Inga, the heir to all the riches and the kingship of Pingaree, grew up surrounded by every luxury; but he was a manly little fellow, although

somewhat too grave and thoughtful, and he could never bear to be idle a single minute. He knew where the finest oysters lay hidden along the coast and was as successful in finding pearls as any of the men of the island, although he was so slight and small. He had a little boat of his own and a rake for dragging up the oysters and he was very proud indeed when he could carry a big white pearl to his father.

There was no school upon the island, as the people of Pingaree were far removed from the state of civilization that gives our modern children such advantages as schools and learned professors, but the King owned several manuscript books, the pages being made of sheepskin. Being a man of intelligence, he was able to teach his son something of reading, writing and arithmetic.

When studying his lessons Prince Inga used to go into the grove near his father's palace and climb into the branches of a tall tree, where he had built a platform with a comfortable seat to rest upon, all hidden by the canopy of leaves. There, with no one to disturb him, he would pore over the sheepskin on which were written the queer characters of the Pingarese language.

King Kitticut was very proud of his little son, as well he might be, and he soon felt a high respect for Inga's judgment and thought that he was worthy to be taken into the confidence of his father in many matters of state. He taught the boy the needs of the people and how to rule them justly, for some day he knew that Inga would be King in his place. One day he called his son to his side and said to him:

"Our island now seems peaceful enough, Inga, and we are happy and prosperous, but I cannot forget those terrible people of Regos and Coregos. My constant fear is that they will send a fleet of boats to search for those of their race whom we defeated many years ago, and whom the sea afterwards destroyed. If the warriors come in great numbers we may be unable to oppose them, for my people are little trained to fighting at best; they surely would cause us much injury and suffering."

"Are we, then, less powerful than in my grandfather's day?" asked Prince Inga.

The King shook his head thoughtfully.

"It is not that," said he. "That you may fully understand that marvelous battle, I must confide to you a great secret. I have in my possession three Magic Talismans, which I have ever guarded with utmost care, keeping the knowledge of their existence from anyone else. But, lest I should die and the secret be lost, I have decided to tell you what these talismans are and where they are hidden. Come with me, my son."

He led the way through the rooms of the palace until they came to the

great banquet hall. There, stopping in the center of the room, he stooped down and touched a hidden spring in the tiled floor. At once one of the tiles sank downward and the King reached within the cavity and drew out a silken bag.

This bag he proceeded to open, showing Inga that it contained three great pearls, each one as big around as a marble. One had a blue tint and one was of a delicate rose color, but the third was pure white.

"These three pearls," said the King, speaking in a solemn, impressive voice, "are the most wonderful the world has ever known. They were gifts to one of my ancestors from the Mermaid Queen, a powerful fairy whom he once had the good fortune to rescue from her enemies. In gratitude for this

favor she presented him with these pearls. Each of the three possesses an astonishing power, and whoever is their owner may count himself a fortunate man. This one having the blue tint will give to the person who carries it a strength so great that no power can resist him. The one with the pink glow will protect its owner from all dangers that may threaten him, no matter from what source they may come. The third pearl — this one of pure white — can speak, and its words are always wise and helpful."

"What is this, my father!" exclaimed the Prince, amazed; "do you tell me that a pearl can speak? It sounds impossible."

"Your doubt is due to your ignorance of fairy powers," returned the King, gravely. "Listen, my son, and you will know that I speak the truth."

He held the white pearl to Inga's ear and the Prince heard a small voice say distinctly: "Your father is right. Never question the truth of what you fail to understand, for the world is filled with wonders."

"I crave your pardon, dear father," said the Prince, "for clearly I heard the pearl speak, and its words were full of wisdom."

"The powers of the other pearls are even greater," resumed the King. "Were I poor in all else, these gems would make me richer than any other monarch the world holds."

"I believe that," replied Inga, looking at the beautiful pearls with much awe. "But tell me, my father, why do you fear the warriors of Regos and Coregos when these marvelous powers are yours?"

"The powers are mine only while I have the pearls upon my person," answered King Kitticut, "and I dare not carry them constantly for fear they might be lost. Therefore, I keep them safely hidden in this recess. My only danger lies in the chance that my watchmen might fail to discover the approach of our enemies and allow the warrior invaders to seize me before I could secure the pearls. I should, in that case, be quite powerless to resist. My father owned the magic pearls at the time of the Great Fight, of which you have so often heard, and the pink pearl protected him from harm, while the blue pearl enabled him and his people to drive away the enemy. Often have I suspected that the destroying storm was caused by the fairy mermaids, but that is a matter of which I have no proof."

"I have often wondered how we managed to win that battle," remarked Inga thoughtfully. "But the pearls will assist us in case the warriors come again, will they not?"

"They are as powerful as ever," declared the King. "Really, my son, I have little to fear from any foe. But lest I die and the secret be lost to the next King, I have now given it into your keeping. Remember that these pearls are the rightful heritage of all Kings of Pingaree. If at any time I should be taken

from you, Inga, guard this treasure well and do not forget where it is hidden."

"I shall not forget," said Inga.

Then the King returned the pearls to their hiding place and the boy went to his own room to ponder upon the wonderful secret his father had that day confided to his care.

The Coming of King Rinkitink

CHAPTER 2

A few days after this, on a bright and sunny morning when the breeze blew soft and sweet from the ocean and the trees waved their leaf-laden branches, the Royal Watchman, whose duty it was to patrol the shore, came running to the King with news that a strange boat was approaching the island.

At first the King was sore afraid and made a step toward the hidden pearls, but the next moment he reflected that one boat, even if filled with enemies, would be powerless to injure him, so he curbed his fear and went down to the beach to discover who the strangers might be. Many of the men of Pingaree assembled there also, and Prince Inga followed his father. Arriving at the water's edge, they all stood gazing eagerly at the oncoming boat.

It was quite a big boat, they observed, and covered with a canopy of purple silk, embroidered with gold. It was rowed by twenty men, ten on each side. As it came nearer, Inga could see that in the stern, seated upon a high, cushioned chair of state, was a little man who was so very fat that he was nearly as broad as he was high. This man was dressed in a loose silken robe of purple that fell in folds to his feet, while upon his head was a cap of white velvet curiously worked with golden threads and having a circle of diamonds sewn around the band. At the opposite end of the boat stood an oddly shaped cage, and several large boxes of sandalwood were piled near the center of the craft.

As the boat approached the shore the fat little man got upon his feet and bowed several times in the direction of those who had assembled to greet him, and as he bowed he flourished his white cap in an energetic manner. His face was round as an apple and nearly as rosy. When he stopped bowing he smiled in such a sweet and happy way that Inga thought he must be a very jolly fellow.

The prow of the boat grounded on the beach, stopping its speed so suddenly that the little man was caught unawares and nearly toppled headlong into the sea. But he managed to catch hold of the chair with one hand and the hair of one of his rowers with the other, and so steadied himself. Then, again waving his jeweled cap around his head, he cried in a merry voice:

"Well, here I am at last!"

"So I perceive," responded King Kitticut, bowing with much dignity.

The fat man glanced at all the sober faces before him and burst into a rollicking laugh. Perhaps I should say it was half laughter and half a chuckle of merriment, for the sounds he emitted were quaint and droll and tempted every hearer to laugh with him.

“Heh, heh — ho, ho, ho!” he roared. “Didn’t expect me, I see. Keek-eek-eek-eek! This is funny — it’s really funny. Didn’t know I was coming, did you? Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo! This is certainly amusing. But I’m here, just the same.”

“Hush up!” said a deep, growling voice. “You’re making yourself ridiculous.”

Everyone looked to see where this voice came from; but none could guess who had uttered the words of rebuke. The rowers of the boat were all solemn and silent and certainly no one on the shore had spoken. But the little man did not seem astonished in the least, or even annoyed.

King Kitticut now addressed the stranger, saying courteously:

“You are welcome to the Kingdom of Pingaree. Perhaps you will deign to come ashore and at your convenience inform us whom we have the honor of receiving as a guest.”

“Thanks; I will,” returned the little fat man, waddling from his place in the boat and stepping, with some difficulty, upon the sandy beach. “I am King Rinkitink, of the City of Gilgad in the Kingdom of Rinkitink, and I have come to Pingaree to see for myself the monarch who sends to my city so many beautiful pearls. I have long wished to visit this island; and so, as I said before, here I am!”

“I am pleased to welcome you,” said King Kitticut. “But why has Your Majesty so few attendants? Is it not dangerous for the King of a great country to make distant journeys in one frail boat, and with but twenty men?”

"Oh, I suppose so," answered King Rinkitink, with a laugh. "But what else could I do? My subjects would not allow me to go anywhere at all, if they knew it. So I just ran away."

"Ran away!" exclaimed King Kitticut in surprise.

"Funny, isn't it? Heh, heh, heh — woo, hoo!" laughed Rinkitink, and this is as near as I can spell with letters the jolly sounds of his laughter. "Fancy a King running away from his own people — hoo, hoo — keek, eek, eek, eek! But I had to, don't you see!"

"Why?" asked the other King.

"They're afraid I'll get into mischief. They don't trust me. Keek-eek-eek — Oh, dear me! Don't trust their own King. Funny, isn't it?"

“No harm can come to you on this island,” said Kitticut, pretending not to notice the odd ways of his guest. “And, whenever it pleases you to return to your own country, I will send with you a fitting escort of my own people. In the meantime, pray accompany me to my palace, where everything shall be done to make you comfortable and happy.”

“Much obliged,” answered Rinkitink, tipping his white cap over his left ear and heartily shaking the hand of his brother monarch. “I’m sure you can make me comfortable if you’ve plenty to eat. And as for being happy — ha, ha, ha, ha! — why, that’s my trouble. I’m *too* happy. But stop! I’ve brought you some presents in those boxes. Please order your men to carry them up to the palace.”

“Certainly,” answered King Kitticut, well pleased, and at once he gave his men the proper orders.

“And, by the way,” continued the fat little King, “let them also take my goat from his cage.”

“A goat!” exclaimed the King of Pingaree.

“Exactly; my goat Bilbil. I always ride him wherever I go, for I’m not at all fond of walking, being a trifle stout — eh, Kitticut? — a trifle stout! Hoo, hoo, hoo — keek, eek!”

The Pingaree people started to lift the big cage out of the boat, but just then a gruff voice cried: “Be careful, you villains!” and as the words seemed to come from the goat’s mouth the men were so astonished that they dropped the cage upon the sand with a sudden jar.

“There! I told you so!” cried the voice angrily. “You’ve rubbed the skin off my left knee. Why on earth didn’t you handle me gently?”

“There, there, Bilbil,” said King Rinkitink soothingly; “don’t scold, my boy. Remember that these are strangers, and we their guests.” Then he turned to Kitticut and remarked: “You have no talking goats on your island, I suppose.”

“We have no goats at all,” replied the King; “nor have we any animals, of any sort, who are able to talk.”

“I wish my animal couldn’t talk, either,” said Rinkitink, winking comically at Inga and then looking toward the cage. “He is very cross at times, and indulges in language that is not respectful. I thought, at first, it would be fine to have a talking goat, with whom I could converse as I rode about my city on his back; but — keek-eek-eek-eek! — the rascal treats me as if I were a chimney sweep instead of a King. Heh, heh, heh, keek, eek! A chimney sweep — hoo, hoo, hoo! — and me a King! Funny, isn’t it?” This last was addressed to Prince Inga, whom he chucked familiarly under the chin, to the boy’s great embarrassment.

“Why do you not ride a horse?” asked King Kitticut.

“I can’t climb upon his back, being rather stout; that’s why. Kee, kee, keek, eek! — rather stout — hoo, hoo, hoo!” He paused to wipe the tears of merriment from his eyes and then added: “But I can get on and off Bilbil’s back with ease.”

He now opened the cage and the goat deliberately walked out and looked about him in a sulky manner. One of the rowers brought from the boat a saddle made of red velvet and beautifully embroidered with silver thistles, which he fastened upon the goat’s back. The fat King put his leg over the saddle and seated himself comfortably, saying:

“Lead on, my noble host, and we will follow.”

“What! Up that steep hill?” cried the goat. “Get off my back at once, Rinkitink, or I won’t budge a step.”

“But — consider, Bilbil,” remonstrated the King. “How am I to get up that hill unless I ride?”

“Walk!” growled Bilbil.

“But I’m too fat. Really, Bilbil, I’m surprised at you. Haven’t I brought you all this distance so you may see something of the world and enjoy life? And now you are so ungrateful as to refuse to carry me! Turn about is fair play, my boy. The boat carried you to this shore, because you can’t swim, and now you must carry me up the hill, because I can’t climb. Eh, Bilbil, isn’t that reasonable?”

“Well, well, well,” said the goat, surlily, “keep quiet and I’ll carry you. But you make me very tired, Rinkitink, with your ceaseless chatter.”

After making this protest Bilbil began walking up the hill, carrying the fat King upon his back with no difficulty whatever.

Prince Inga and his father and all the men of Pingaree were much astonished to overhear this dispute between King Rinkitink and his goat; but they were too polite to make critical remarks in the presence of their guests. King Kitticut walked beside the goat and the Prince followed after, the men coming last with the boxes of sandalwood.

When they neared the palace, the Queen and her maidens came out to meet them and the royal guest was escorted in state to the splendid throne room of the palace. Here the boxes were opened and King Rinkitink displayed all the beautiful silks and laces and jewelry with which they were filled. Every one of the courtiers and ladies received a handsome present, and the King and Queen had many rich gifts and Inga not a few. Thus the time passed pleasantly until the Chamberlain announced that dinner was served.

Bilbil the goat declared that he preferred eating of the sweet, rich grass that grew abundantly in the palace grounds, and Rinkitink said that the beast could never bear being shut up in a stable; so they removed the saddle from his back and allowed him to wander wherever he pleased.

During the dinner Inga divided his attention between admiring the pretty gifts he had received and listening to the jolly sayings of the fat King, who laughed when he was not eating and ate when he was not laughing and seemed to enjoy himself immensely.

"For four days I have lived in that narrow boat," said he, "with no other amusement than to watch the rowers and quarrel with Bilbil; so I am very glad to be on land again with such friendly and agreeable people."

“You do us great honor,” said King Kitticut, with a polite bow.

“Not at all — not at all, my brother. This Pingaree must be a wonderful island, for its pearls are the admiration of all the world; nor will I deny the fact that my kingdom would be a poor one without the riches and glory it derives from the trade in your pearls. So I have wished for many years to come here to see you, but my people said: No! Stay at home and behave yourself, or we’ll know the reason why.’“

“Will they not miss Your Majesty from your palace at Gilgad?” inquired Kitticut.

“I think not,” answered Rinkitink. “You see, one of my clever subjects has written a parchment entitled ‘How to be Good,’ and I believed it would benefit me to study it, as I consider the accomplishment of being good one of the fine arts. I had just scolded severely my Lord High Chancellor for coming to breakfast without combing his eyebrows, and was so sad and regretful at having hurt the poor man’s feelings that I decided to shut myself up in my own room and study the scroll until I knew how to be good — hee, heek, keek, eek, eek! — to be good! Clever idea, that, wasn’t it? Mighty clever! And I issued a decree that no one should enter my room, under pain of my royal displeasure, until I was ready to come out. They’re awfully afraid of my royal displeasure, although not a bit afraid of me. Then I put the parchment in my pocket and escaped through the back door to my boat — and here I am. Oo, hoo-hoo, keek-eek! Imagine the fuss there would be in Gilgad if my subjects knew where I am this very minute!”

“I would like to see that parchment,” said the solemn-eyed Prince Inga, “for if it indeed teaches one to be good it must be worth its weight in pearls.”

“Oh, it’s a fine essay,” said Rinkitink, “and beautifully written with a goosequill. Listen to this: You’ll enjoy it — tee, hee, hee! — enjoy it.”

He took from his pocket a scroll of parchment tied with a black ribbon, and having carefully unrolled it, he proceeded to read as follows:

“‘A Good Man is One who is Never Bad.’ How’s that, eh? Fine thought, what? ‘Therefore, in order to be Good, you must avoid those Things which are Evil.’ Oh, hoo-hoo-hoo! — how clever! When I get back I shall make the man who wrote that a royal hippolorum, for, beyond question, he is the wisest man in my kingdom — as he has often told me himself.” With this, Rinkitink lay back in his chair and chuckled his queer chuckle until he coughed, and coughed until he choked and choked until he sneezed. And he wrinkled his face in such a jolly, droll way that few could keep from laughing with him, and even the good Queen was forced to titter behind her fan.

When Rinkitink had recovered from his fit of laughter and had wiped his

eyes upon a fine lace handkerchief, Prince Inga said to him:

"The parchment speaks truly."

"Yes, it is true beyond doubt," answered Rinkitink, "and if I could persuade Bilbil to read it he would be a much better goat than he is now. Here is another selection: 'To avoid saying Unpleasant Things, always Speak Agreeably.' That would hit Bilbil, to a dot. And here is one that applies to you, my Prince: 'Good Children are seldom punished, for the reason that they deserve no punishment.' Now, I think that is neatly put, and shows the author to be a deep thinker. But the advice that has impressed me the most is in the following paragraph: 'You may not find it as Pleasant to be Good as it is to be Bad, but Other People will find it more Pleasant.' Haw-hoo-ho! keek-eek! 'Other people will find it more pleasant!' — hee, hee, heek, keek! — 'more pleasant.' Dear me — dear me! Therein lies a noble incentive to be good, and whenever I get time I'm surely going to try it."

Then he wiped his eyes again with the lace handkerchief and, suddenly remembering his dinner, seized his knife and fork and began eating.

The Warriors from the North

CHAPTER 3

King Rinkitink was so much pleased with the Island of Pingaree that he continued his stay day after day and week after week, eating good dinners, talking with King Kitticut and sleeping. Once in a while he would read from his scroll. "For," said he, "whenever I return home, my subjects will be anxious to know if I have learned 'How to be Good,' and I must not disappoint them."

The twenty rowers lived on the small end of the island, with the pearl fishers, and seemed not to care whether they ever returned to the Kingdom of Rinkitink or not. Bilbil the goat wandered over the grassy slopes, or among the trees, and passed his days exactly as he pleased. His master seldom cared to ride him. Bilbil was a rare curiosity to the islanders, but since there was little pleasure in talking with the goat they kept away from him. This pleased the creature, who seemed well satisfied to be left to his own devices.

Once Prince Inga, wishing to be courteous, walked up to the goat and said: "Good morning, Bilbil."

"It isn't a good morning," answered Bilbil grumpily. "It is cloudy and damp, and looks like rain."

"I hope you are contented in our kingdom," continued the boy, politely ignoring the other's harsh words.

"I'm not," said Bilbil. "I'm never contented; so it doesn't matter to me whether I'm in your kingdom or in some other kingdom. Go away — will you?"

"Certainly," answered the Prince, and after this rebuff he did not again try to make friends with Bilbil.

Now that the King, his father, was so much occupied with his royal guest, Inga was often left to amuse himself, for a boy could not be allowed to take part in the conversation of two great monarchs. He devoted himself to his studies, therefore, and day after day he climbed into the branches of his favorite tree and sat for hours in his "tree-top rest," reading his father's precious manuscripts and thinking upon what he read.

You must not think that Inga was a mollycoddle or a prig, because he was so solemn and studious. Being a King's son and heir to a throne, he could not play with the other boys of Pingaree, and he lived so much in the society of the King and Queen, and was so surrounded by the pomp and dignity of a court, that he missed all the jolly times that boys usually have. I have no doubt that had he been able to live as other boys do, he would have been much like other boys; as it was, he was subdued by his surroundings, and more grave and thoughtful than one of his years should be.

Inga was in his tree one morning when, without warning, a great fog enveloped the Island of Pingaree. The boy could scarcely see the tree next to that in which he sat, but the leaves above him prevented the dampness from wetting him, so he curled himself up in his seat and fell fast asleep.

All that forenoon the fog continued. King Kitticut, who sat in his palace talking with his merry visitor, ordered the candles lighted, that they might be able to see one another. The good Queen, Inga's mother, found it was too dark to work at her embroidery, so she called her maidens together and told them wonderful stories of bygone days, in order to pass away the dreary hours.

But soon after noon the weather changed. The dense fog rolled away like

a heavy cloud and suddenly the sun shot his bright rays over the island.

"Very good!" exclaimed King Kitticut. "We shall have a pleasant afternoon, I am sure," and he blew out the candles.

Then he stood a moment motionless, as if turned to stone, for a terrible cry from without the palace reached his ears — a cry so full of fear and horror that the King's heart almost stopped beating. Immediately there was a scurrying of feet as every one in the palace, filled with dismay, rushed outside to see what had happened. Even fat little Rinkitink sprang from his chair and followed his host and the others through the arched vestibule.

After many years the worst fears of King Kitticut were realized.

Landing upon the beach, which was but a few steps from the palace itself,

were hundreds of boats, every one filled with a throng of fierce warriors. They sprang upon the land with wild shouts of defiance and rushed to the King's palace, waving aloft their swords and spears and battle-axes.

King Kitticut, so completely surprised that he was bewildered, gazed at the approaching host with terror and grief.

"They are the men of Regos and Coregos!" he groaned. "We are, indeed, lost!"

Then he bethought himself, for the first time, of his wonderful pearls. Turning quickly, he ran back into the palace and hastened to the hall where the treasures were hidden. But the leader of the warriors had seen the King enter the palace and bounded after him, thinking he meant to escape. Just as the King had stooped to press the secret spring in the tiles, the warrior seized him from the rear and threw him backward upon the floor, at the same time shouting to his men to fetch ropes and bind the prisoner. This they did very quickly and King Kitticut soon found himself helplessly bound and in the power of his enemies. In this sad condition he was lifted by the warriors and carried outside, when the good King looked upon a sorry sight.

The Queen and her maidens, the officers and servants of the royal household and all who had inhabited this end of the Island of Pingaree had been seized by the invaders and bound with ropes. At once they began carrying their victims to the boats, tossing them in as unceremoniously as if they had been bales of merchandise.

The King looked around for his son Inga, but failed to find the boy among the prisoners. Nor was the fat King, Rinkitink, to be seen anywhere about.

The warriors were swarming over the palace like bees in a hive, seeking anyone who might be in hiding, and after the search had been prolonged for some time the leader asked impatiently: "Do you find anyone else?"

"No," his men told him. "We have captured them all."

"Then," commanded the leader, "remove everything of value from the palace and tear down its walls and towers, so that not one stone remains upon another!"

While the warriors were busy with this task we will return to the boy Prince, who, when the fog lifted and the sun came out, wakened from his sleep and began to climb down from his perch in the tree. But the terrifying cries of the people, mingled with the shouts of the rude warriors, caused him to pause and listen eagerly.

Then he climbed rapidly up the tree, far above his platform, to the topmost swaying branches. This tree, which Inga called his own, was somewhat taller than the other trees that surrounded it, and when he had reached the top he pressed aside the leaves and saw a great fleet of boats upon the shore — strange boats, with banners that he had never seen before. Turning to look upon his father's palace, he found it surrounded by a horde of enemies. Then Inga knew the truth: that the island had been invaded by the barbaric warriors from the north. He grew so faint from the terror of it all that he might have fallen had he not wound his arms around a limb and clung fast until the dizzy feeling passed away. Then with his sash he bound himself to the limb and again ventured to look out through the leaves.

The warriors were now engaged in carrying King Kitticut and Queen Garee and all their other captives down to the boats, where they were thrown in and chained one to another. It was a dreadful sight for the Prince to witness, but he sat very still, concealed from the sight of anyone below by the bower of leafy branches around him. Inga knew very well that he could do nothing to help his beloved parents, and that if he came down he would only be forced to share their cruel fate.

Now a procession of the Northmen passed between the boats and the palace, bearing the rich furniture, splendid draperies and rare ornaments of which the royal palace had been robbed, together with such food and other plunder as they could lay their hands upon. After this, the men of Regos and Coregos threw ropes around the marble domes and towers and hundreds of warriors tugged at these ropes until the domes and towers toppled and fell in ruins upon the ground. Then the walls themselves were torn down, till little remained of the beautiful palace but a vast heap of white marble blocks tumbled and scattered upon the ground.

Prince Inga wept bitter tears of grief as he watched the ruin of his home; yet he was powerless to avert the destruction. When the palace had been demolished, some of the warriors entered their boats and rowed along the coast of the island, while the others marched in a great body down the length of the island itself. They were so numerous that they formed a line stretching from shore to shore and they destroyed every house they came to and took every inhabitant prisoner.

The pearl fishers who lived at the lower end of the island tried to escape in their boats, but they were soon overtaken and made prisoners, like the others. Nor was there any attempt to resist the foe, for the sharp spears and pikes and swords of the invaders terrified the hearts of the defenseless people of Pingaree, whose sole weapons were their oyster rakes.

When night fell the whole of the Island of Pingaree had been conquered by the men of the North, and all its people were slaves of the conquerors. Next morning the men of Regos and Coregos, being capable of no further mischief, departed from the scene of their triumph, carrying their prisoners with them and taking also every boat to be found upon the island. Many of the boats they had filled with rich plunder, with pearls and silks and velvets, with silver and gold ornaments and all the treasure that had made Pingaree famed as one of the richest kingdoms in the world. And the hundreds of slaves they had captured would be set to work in the mines of Regos and the grain fields of Coregos.

So complete was the victory of the Northmen that it is no wonder the warriors sang songs of triumph as they hastened back to their homes. Great

rewards were awaiting them when they showed the haughty King of Regos and the terrible Queen of Coregos the results of their ocean raid and conquest.

The Deserted Island

CHAPTER 4

All through that terrible night Prince Inga remained hidden in his tree. In the morning he watched the great fleet of boats depart for their own country, carrying his parents and his countrymen with them, as well as everything of value the Island of Pingaree had contained.

Sad, indeed, were the boy's thoughts when the last of the boats had become a mere speck in the distance, but Inga did not dare leave his perch of safety until all of the craft of the invaders had disappeared beyond the horizon. Then he came down, very slowly and carefully, for he was weak from hunger and the long and weary watch, as he had been in the tree for twenty-four hours without food.

The sun shone upon the beautiful green isle as brilliantly as if no ruthless invader had passed and laid it in ruins. The birds still chirped among the trees and the butterflies darted from flower to flower as happily as when the land was filled with a prosperous and contented people.

Inga feared that only he was left of all his nation. Perhaps he might be obliged to pass his life there alone. He would not starve, for the sea would give him oysters and fish, and the trees fruit; yet the life that confronted him was far from enticing.

The boy's first act was to walk over to where the palace had stood and search the ruins until he found some scraps of food that had been overlooked by the enemy. He sat upon a block of marble and ate of this, and tears filled his eyes as he gazed upon the desolation around him. But Inga tried to bear up bravely, and having satisfied his hunger he walked over to the well, intending to draw a bucket of drinking water.

Fortunately, this well had been overlooked by the invaders and the bucket was still fastened to the chain that wound around a stout wooden windlass. Inga took hold of the crank and began letting the bucket down into the well, when suddenly he was startled by a muffled voice crying out:

"Be careful, up there!"

The sound and the words seemed to indicate that the voice came from the bottom of the well, so Inga looked down. Nothing could be seen, on account of the darkness.

"Who are you?" he shouted.

"It's I — Rinkitink," came the answer, and the depths of the well echoed: "Tink-i-tink-i-tink!" in a ghostly manner.

"Are you in the well?" asked the boy, greatly surprised.

"Yes, and nearly drowned. I fell in while running from those terrible warriors, and I've been standing in this damp hole ever since, with my head

just above the water. It's lucky the well was no deeper, for had my head been under water, instead of above it — hoo, hoo, hoo, keek, eek! — under instead of over, you know — why, then I wouldn't be talking to you now! Ha, hoo, hee!" And the well dismally echoed: "Ha, hoo, hee!" which you must imagine was a laugh half merry and half sad.

"I'm awfully sorry," cried the boy, in answer. "I wonder you have the heart to laugh at all. But how am I to get you out?"

"I've been considering that all night," said Rinkitink, "and I believe the best plan will be for you to let down the bucket to me, and I'll hold fast to it while you wind up the chain and so draw me to the top."

"I will try to do that," replied Inga, and he let the bucket down very carefully until he heard the King call out:

"I've got it! Now pull me up — slowly, my boy, slowly — so I won't rub against the rough sides."

Inga began winding up the chain, but King Rinkitink was so fat that he was very heavy and by the time the boy had managed to pull him halfway up the well his strength was gone. He clung to the crank as long as possible, but suddenly it slipped from his grasp and the next minute he heard Rinkitink fall "plump!" into the water again.

"That's too bad!" called Inga, in real distress; "but you were so heavy I couldn't help it."

"Dear me!" gasped the King, from the darkness below, as he spluttered and coughed to get the water out of his mouth. "Why didn't you tell me you were going to let go?"

"I hadn't time," said Inga, sorrowfully.

"Well, I'm not suffering from thirst," declared the King, "for there's enough water inside me to float all the boats of Regos and Coregos — or at least it feels that way. But never mind! So long as I'm not actually drowned, what does it matter?"

"What shall we do next?" asked the boy anxiously.

"Call someone to help you," was the reply.

"There is no one on the island but myself," said the boy; " — excepting you," he added, as an afterthought.

"I'm not on it — more's the pity! — but *in* it," responded Rinkitink. "Are the warriors all gone?"

"Yes," said Inga, "and they have taken my father and mother, and all our people, to be their slaves," he added, trying in vain to repress a sob.

"So — so!" said Rinkitink softly; and then he paused a moment, as if in thought. Finally he said: "There are worse things than slavery, but I never imagined a well could be one of them. Tell me, Inga, could you let down

some food to me? I'm nearly starved, and if you could manage to send me down some food I'd be *well* fed — hoo, hoo, heek, keek, eek! — well fed. Do you see the joke, Inga?"

"Do not ask me to enjoy a joke just now, Your Majesty," begged Inga in a sad voice; "but if you will be patient I will try to find something for you to eat."

He ran back to the ruins of the palace and began searching for bits of food with which to satisfy the hunger of the King, when to his surprise he observed the goat, Bilbil, wandering among the marble blocks.

"What!" cried Inga. "Didn't the warriors get you, either?"

"If they had," calmly replied Bilbil, "I shouldn't be here."

"But how did you escape?" asked the boy.

"Easily enough. I kept my mouth shut and stayed away from the rascals," said the goat. "I knew that the soldiers would not care for a skinny old beast like me, for to the eye of a stranger I seem good for nothing. Had they known I could talk, and that my head contained more wisdom than a hundred of their own noddles, I might not have escaped so easily."

"Perhaps you are right," said the boy.

"I suppose they got the old man?" carelessly remarked Bilbil.

"What old man?"

"Rinkitink."

"Oh, no! His Majesty is at the bottom of the well," said Inga, "and I don't know how to get him out again."

"Then let him stay there," suggested the goat.

"That would be cruel. I am sure, Bilbil, that you are fond of the good King, your master, and do not mean what you say. Together, let us find some way to save poor King Rinkitink. He is a very jolly companion, and has a heart exceedingly kind and gentle."

"Oh, well; the old boy isn't so bad, taken altogether," admitted Bilbil, speaking in a more friendly tone. "But his bad jokes and fat laughter tire me dreadfully, at times."

Prince Inga now ran back to the well, the goat following more leisurely.

"Here's Bilbil!" shouted the boy to the King. "The enemy didn't get him, it seems."

"That's lucky for the enemy," said Rinkitink. "But it's lucky for me, too, for perhaps the beast can assist me out of this hole. If you can let a rope down the well, I am sure that you and Bilbil, pulling together, will be able to drag me to the earth's surface."

"Be patient and we will make the attempt," replied Inga encouragingly, and he ran to search the ruins for a rope. Presently he found one that had been used by the warriors in toppling over the towers, which in their haste they had neglected to remove, and with some difficulty he untied the knots and carried the rope to the mouth of the well.

Bilbil had lain down to sleep and the refrain of a merry song came in muffled tones from the well, proving that Rinkitink was making a patient endeavor to amuse himself.

"I've found a rope!" Inga called down to him; and then the boy proceeded to make a loop in one end of the rope, for the King to put his arms through, and the other end he placed over the drum of the windlass. He now aroused

Bilbil and fastened the rope firmly around the goat's shoulders.

"Are you ready?" asked the boy, leaning over the well.

"I am," replied the King.

"And I am not," growled the goat, "for I have not yet had my nap out. Old Rinki will be safe enough in the well until I've slept an hour or two longer."

"But it is damp in the well," protested the boy, "and King Rinkitink may catch the rheumatism, so that he will have to ride upon your back wherever he goes."

Hearing this, Bilbil jumped up at once.

"Let's get him out," he said earnestly.

"Hold fast!" shouted Inga to the King. Then he seized the rope and helped Bilbil to pull. They soon found the task more difficult than they had supposed. Once or twice the King's weight threatened to drag both the boy and the goat into the well, to keep Rinkitink company. But they pulled sturdily, being aware of this danger, and at last the King popped out of the hole and fell sprawling full length upon the ground.

For a time he lay panting and breathing hard to get his breath back, while Inga and Bilbil were likewise worn out from their long strain at the rope; so the three rested quietly upon the grass and looked at one another in silence.

Finally Bilbil said to the King:

"I'm surprised at you. Why were you so foolish as to fall down that well? Don't you know it's a dangerous thing to do? You might have broken your neck in the fall, or been drowned in the water."

"Bilbil," replied the King solemnly, "you're a goat. Do you imagine I fell down the well on purpose?"

"I imagine nothing," retorted Bilbil. "I only know you were there."

"There? Heh-heh-heek-keek-eek! To be sure I was there," laughed Rinkitink. "There in a dark hole, where there was no light; there in a watery well, where the wetness soaked me through and through — keek-eek-eek-eek! — through and through!"

"How did it happen?" inquired Inga.

"I was running away from the enemy," explained the King, "and I was carelessly looking over my shoulder at the same time, to see if they were chasing me. So I did not see the well, but stepped into it and found myself tumbling down to the bottom. I struck the water very neatly and began struggling to keep myself from drowning, but presently I found that when I stood upon my feet on the bottom of the well, that my chin was just above the water. So I stood still and yelled for help; but no one heard me."

"If the warriors had heard you," said Bilbil, "they would have pulled you out and carried you away to be a slave. Then you would have been obliged to

work for a living, and that would be a new experience."

"Work!" exclaimed Rinkitink. "Me work? Hoo, hoo, heek-keek-eek! How absurd! I'm so stout — not to say chubby — not to say fat — that I can hardly walk, and I couldn't earn my salt at hard work. So I'm glad the enemy did not find me, Bilbil. How many others escaped?"

"That I do not know," replied the boy, "for I have not yet had time to visit the other parts of the island. When you have rested and satisfied your royal hunger, it might be well for us to look around and see what the thieving warriors of Regos and Coregos have left us."

"An excellent idea," declared Rinkitink. "I am somewhat feeble from my long confinement in the well, but I can ride upon Bilbil's back and we may as well start at once."

Hearing this, Bilbil cast a surly glance at his master but said nothing, since it was really the goat's business to carry King Rinkitink wherever he desired to go.

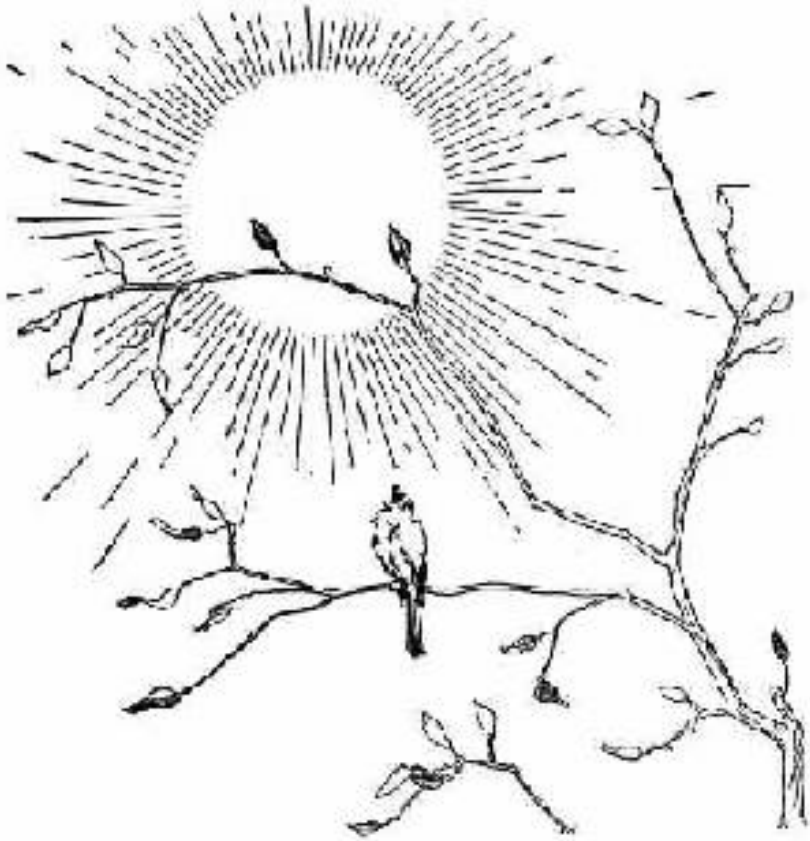
They first searched the ruins of the palace, and where the kitchen had once been they found a small quantity of food that had been half hidden by a block of marble. This they carefully placed in a sack to preserve it for future use, the little fat King having first eaten as much as he cared for. This consumed some time, for Rinkitink had been exceedingly hungry and liked to eat in a leisurely manner. When he had finished the meal he straddled Bilbil's back and set out to explore the island, Prince Inga walking by his side.

They found on every hand ruin and desolation. The houses of the people had been pilfered of all valuables and then torn down or burned. Not a boat had been left upon the shore, nor was there a single person, man or woman or child, remaining upon the island, save themselves. The only inhabitants of Pingaree now consisted of a fat little King, a boy and a goat.

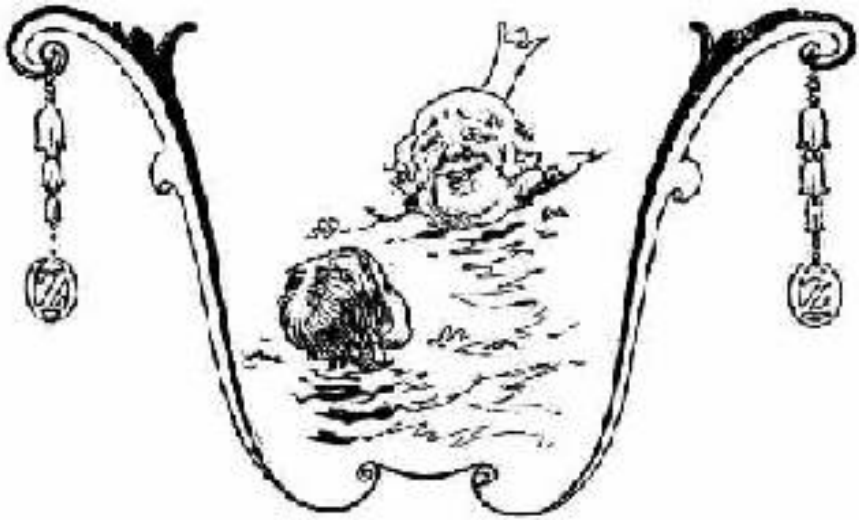
Even Rinkitink, merry hearted as he was, found it hard to laugh in the face of this mighty disaster. Even the goat, contrary to its usual habit, refrained from saying anything disagreeable. As for the poor boy whose home was now a wilderness, the tears came often to his eyes as he marked the ruin of his dearly loved island.

When, at nightfall, they reached the lower end of Pingaree and found it swept as bare as the rest, Inga's grief was almost more than he could bear. Everything had been swept from him — parents, home and country — in so brief a time that his bewilderment was equal to his sorrow.

Since no house remained standing, in which they might sleep, the three wanderers crept beneath the overhanging branches of a cassa tree and curled themselves up as comfortably as possible. So tired and exhausted were they by the day's anxieties and griefs that their troubles soon faded into the mists of dreamland. Beast and King and boy slumbered peacefully together until wakened by the singing of the birds which greeted the dawn of a new day.



The Three Pearls



CHAPTER 5

When King Rinkitink and Prince Inga had bathed themselves in the sea and eaten a simple breakfast, they began wondering what they could do to improve their condition.

"The poor people of Gilgad," said Rinkitink cheerfully, "are little likely ever again to behold their King in the flesh, for my boat and my rowers are gone with everything else. Let us face the fact that we are imprisoned for life upon this island, and that our lives will be short unless we can secure more to eat than is in this small sack."

"I'll not starve, for I can eat grass," remarked the goat in a pleasant tone — or a tone as pleasant as Bilbil could assume.

"True, quite true," said the King. Then he seemed thoughtful for a moment and turning to Inga he asked: "Do you think, Prince, that if the worst comes, we could eat Bilbil?"

The goat gave a groan and cast a reproachful look at his master as he said:

"Monster! Would you, indeed, eat your old friend and servant?"

"Not if I can help it, Bilbil," answered the King pleasantly. "You would make a remarkably tough morsel, and my teeth are not as good as they once were."

While this talk was in progress Inga suddenly remembered the three pearls which his father had hidden under the tiled floor of the banquet hall. Without doubt King Kitticut had been so suddenly surprised by the invaders that he had found no opportunity to get the pearls, for otherwise the fierce warriors would have been defeated and driven out of Pingaree. So they must still be in their hiding place, and Inga believed they would prove of great assistance to him and his comrades in this hour of need. But the palace was a mass of ruins; perhaps he would be unable now to find the place where the pearls were hidden.

He said nothing of this to Rinkitink, remembering that his father had charged him to preserve the secret of the pearls and of their magic powers. Nevertheless, the thought of securing the wonderful treasures of his ancestors gave the boy new hope.

He stood up and said to the King:

"Let us return to the other end of Pingaree. It is more pleasant than here in spite of the desolation of my father's palace. And there, if anywhere, we shall discover a way out of our difficulties."

This suggestion met with Rinkitink's approval and the little party at once started upon the return journey. As there was no occasion to delay upon the way, they reached the big end of the island about the middle of the day and at

once began searching the ruins of the palace.

They found, to their satisfaction, that one room at the bottom of a tower was still habitable, although the roof was broken in and the place was somewhat littered with stones. The King was, as he said, too fat to do any hard work, so he sat down on a block of marble and watched Inga clear the room of its rubbish. This done, the boy hunted through the ruins until he discovered a stool and an armchair that had not been broken beyond use. Some bedding and a mattress were also found, so that by nightfall the little room had been made quite comfortable.

The following morning, while Rinkitink was still sound asleep and Bilbil was busily cropping the dewy grass that edged the shore, Prince Inga began to search the tumbled heaps of marble for the place where the royal banquet hall had been. After climbing over the ruins for a time he reached a flat place which he recognized, by means of the tiled flooring and the broken furniture scattered about, to be the great hall he was seeking. But in the center of the floor, directly over the spot where the pearls were hidden, lay several large and heavy blocks of marble, which had been torn from the dismantled walls.

This unfortunate discovery for a time discouraged the boy, who realized how helpless he was to remove such vast obstacles; but it was so important to secure the pearls that he dared not give way to despair until every human effort had been made, so he sat him down to think over the matter with great care.

Meantime Rinkitink had risen from his bed and walked out upon the lawn, where he found Bilbil reclining at ease upon the greensward.

“Where is Inga?” asked Rinkitink, rubbing his eyes with his knuckles because their vision was blurred with too much sleep.

“Don’t, ask me,” said the goat, chewing with much satisfaction a cud of sweet grasses.

“Bilbil,” said the King, squatting down beside the goat and resting his fat chin upon his hands and his elbows on his knees, “allow me to confide to you the fact that I am bored, and need amusement. My good friend Kitticut has been kidnapped by the barbarians and taken from me, so there is no one to converse with me intelligently. I am the King and you are the goat. Suppose you tell me a story.”

“Suppose I don’t,” said Bilbil, with a scowl, for a goat’s face is very expressive.

“If you refuse, I shall be more unhappy than ever, and I know your disposition is too sweet to permit that. Tell me a story, Bilbil.”

The boat looked at him with an expression of scorn. Said he:

“One would think you are but four years old, Rinkitink! But there — I

will do as you command. Listen carefully, and the story may do you some good — although I doubt if you understand the moral."

"I am sure the story will do me good," declared the King, whose eyes were twinkling.

"Once on a time," began the goat.

"When was that, Bilbil?" asked the King gently.

"Don't interrupt; it is impolite. Once on a time there was a King with a hollow inside his head, where most people have their brains, and — "

"Is this a true story, Bilbil?"

"And the King with a hollow head could chatter words, which had no sense, and laugh in a brainless manner at senseless things. That part of the story is true enough, Rinkitink."

"Then proceed with the tale, sweet Bilbil. Yet it is hard to believe that any King could be brainless — unless, indeed, he proved it by owning a talking goat."

Bilbil glared at him a full minute in silence. Then he resumed his story:

"This empty-headed man was a King by accident, having been born to that high station. Also the King was empty-headed by the same chance, being born without brains."

"Poor fellow!" quoth the King. "Did he own a talking goat?"

"He did," answered Bilbil.

"Then he was wrong to have been born at all. Cheek-eek-eek-eek, oo, hoo!" chuckled Rinkitink, his fat body shaking with merriment. "But it's hard to prevent oneself from being born; there's no chance for protest, eh, Bilbil?"

"Who is telling this story, I'd like to know," demanded the goat, with anger.

"Ask someone with brains, my boy; I'm sure I can't tell," replied the King, bursting into one of his merry fits of laughter.

Bilbil rose to his hoofs and walked away in a dignified manner, leaving Rinkitink chuckling anew at the sour expression of the animal's face.

"Oh, Bilbil, you'll be the death of me, some day — I'm sure you will!" gasped the King, taking out his lace handkerchief to wipe his eyes; for, as he often did, he had laughed till the tears came.

Bilbil was deeply vexed and would not even turn his head to look at his master. To escape from Rinkitink he wandered among the ruins of the palace, where he came upon Prince Inga.

"Good morning, Bilbil," said the boy. "I was just going to find you, that I might consult you upon an important matter. If you will kindly turn back with me I am sure your good judgment will be of great assistance."

The angry goat was quite mollified by the respectful tone in which he was addressed, but he immediately asked:

“Are you also going to consult that empty-headed King over yonder?”

“I am sorry to hear you speak of your kind master in such a way,” said the boy gravely. “All men are deserving of respect, being the highest of living creatures, and Kings deserve respect more than others, for they are set to rule over many people.”

“Nevertheless,” said Bilbil with conviction, “Rinkitink’s head is certainly empty of brains.”

“That I am unwilling to believe,” insisted Inga. “But anyway his heart is kind and gentle and that is better than being wise. He is merry in spite of misfortunes that would cause others to weep and he never speaks harsh words that wound the feelings of his friends.”

“Still,” growled Bilbil, “he is — ”

“Let us forget everything but his good nature, which puts new heart into us when we are sad,” advised the boy.

“But he is — ”

“Come with, me, please,” interrupted Inga, “for the matter of which I wish to speak is very important.”

Bilbil followed him, although the boy still heard the goat muttering that the King had no brains. Rinkitink, seeing them turn into the ruins, also followed, and upon joining them asked for his breakfast.

Inga opened the sack of food and while he and the King ate of it the boy said:

“If I could find a way to remove some of the blocks of marble which have fallen in the banquet hall, I think I could find means for us to escape from this barren island.”

“Then,” mumbled Rinkitink, with his mouth full, “let us move the blocks of marble.”

“But how?” inquired Prince Inga. “They are very heavy.”

“Ah, how, indeed?” returned the King, smacking his lips contentedly. “That is a serious question. But — I have it! Let us see what my famous parchment says about it.” He wiped his fingers upon a napkin and then, taking the scroll from a pocket inside his embroidered blouse, he unrolled it and read the following words: “‘Never step on another man’s toes.’“

The goat gave a snort of contempt; Inga was silent; the King looked from one to the other inquiringly.

“That’s the idea, exactly!” declared Rinkitink.

“To be sure,” said Bilbil scornfully, “it tells us exactly how to move the blocks of marble.”

“Oh, does it?” responded the King, and then for a moment he rubbed the top of his bald head in a perplexed manner. The next moment he burst into a peal of joyous laughter. The goat looked at Inga and sighed.

“What did I tell you?” asked the creature. “Was I right, or was I wrong?”

“This scroll,” said Rinkitink, “is indeed a masterpiece. Its advice is of tremendous value. ‘Never step on another man’s toes.’ Let us think this over. The inference is that we should step upon our own toes, which were given us for that purpose. Therefore, if I stepped upon another man’s toes, I would be the other man. Hoo, hoo, hoo! — the other man — hee, hee, heek-keek-eek! Funny, isn’t it?”

“Didn’t I say — ” began Bilbil.

“No matter what you said, my boy,” roared the King. “No fool could have figured that out as nicely as I did.”

“We have still to decide how to remove the blocks of marble,” suggested Inga anxiously.

“Fasten a rope to them, and pull,” said Bilbil.

“Don’t pay any more attention to Rinkitink, for he is no wiser than the man who wrote that brainless scroll. Just get the rope, and we’ll fasten Rinkitink to one end of it for a weight and I’ll help you pull.”

“Thank you, Bilbil,” replied the boy. “I’ll get the rope at once.”

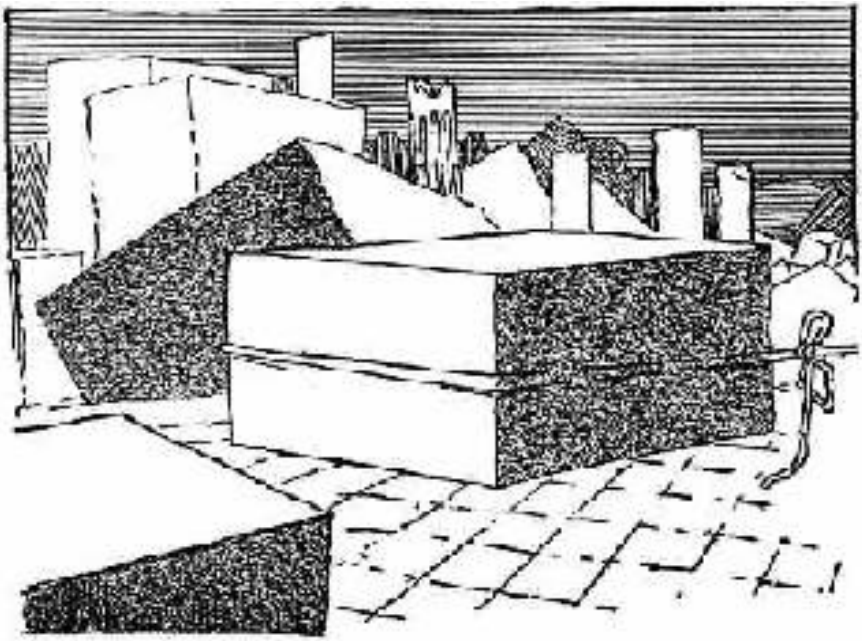
Bilbil found it difficult to climb over the ruins to the floor of the banquet hall, but there are few places a goat cannot get to when it makes the attempt, so Bilbil succeeded at last, and even fat little Rinkitink finally joined them, though much out of breath.

Inga fastened one end of the rope around a block of marble and then made a loop at the other end to go over Bilbil’s head. When all was ready the boy seized the rope and helped the goat to pull; yet, strain as they might, the huge block would not stir from its place. Seeing this, King Rinkitink came forward and lent his assistance, the weight of his body forcing the heavy marble to slide several feet from where it had lain.

But it was hard work and all were obliged to take a long rest before undertaking the removal of the next block.

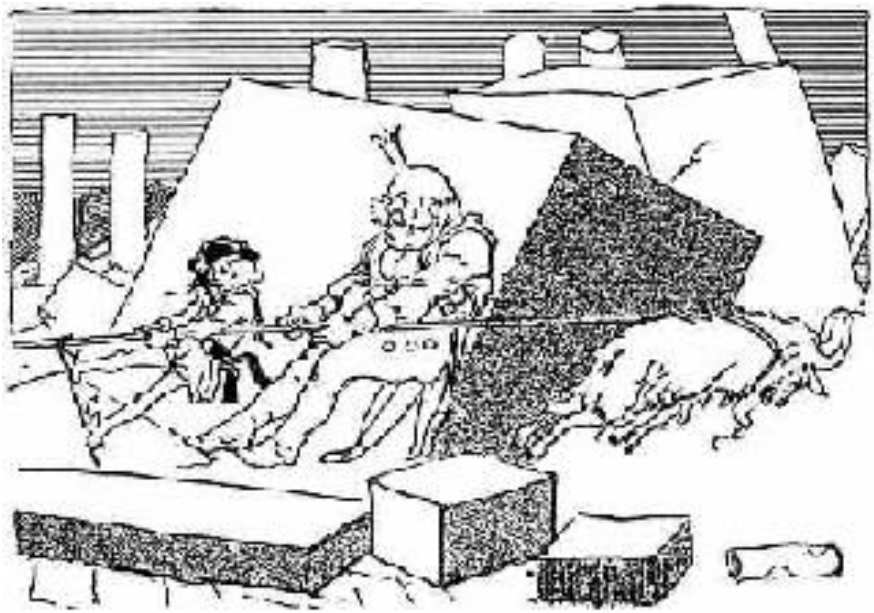
“Admit, Bilbil,” said the King, “that I am of some use in the world.”

“Your weight was of considerable help,” acknowledged the goat, “but if your head were as well filled as your stomach the task would be still easier.”



When Inga went to fasten the rope a second time he was rejoiced to discover that by moving one more block of marble he could uncover the tile with the secret spring. So the three pulled with renewed energy and to their joy the block moved and rolled upon its side, leaving Inga free to remove the treasure when he pleased.

But the boy had no intention of allowing Bilbil and the King to share the secret of the royal treasures of Pingaree; so, although both the goat and its master demanded to know why the marble blocks had been moved, and how it would benefit them, Inga begged them to wait until the next morning, when he hoped to be able to satisfy them that their hard work had not been in vain.



Having little confidence in this promise of a mere boy, the goat grumbled and the King laughed; but Inga paid no heed to their ridicule and set himself to work rigging up a fishing rod, with line and hook. During the afternoon he waded out to some rocks near the shore and fished patiently until he had captured enough yellow perch for their supper and breakfast.

"Ah," said Rinkitink, looking at the fine catch when Inga returned to the shore; "these will taste delicious when they are cooked; but do you know how to cook them?"

"No," was the reply. "I have often caught fish, but never cooked them. Perhaps Your Majesty understands cooking."

"Cooking and majesty are two different things," laughed the little King. "I could not cook a fish to save me from starvation."

"For my part," said Bilbil, "I never eat fish, but I can tell you how to cook them, for I have often watched the palace cooks at their work." And so, with the goat's assistance, the boy and the King managed to prepare the fish and cook them, after which they were eaten with good appetite.

That night, after Rinkitink and Bilbil were both fast asleep, Inga stole quietly through the moonlight to the desolate banquet hall. There, kneeling down, he touched the secret spring as his father had instructed him to do and to his joy the tile sank downward and disclosed the opening. You may imagine how the boy's heart throbbed with excitement as he slowly thrust his hand into the cavity and felt around to see if the precious pearls were still

there. In a moment his fingers touched the silken bag and, without pausing to close the recess, he pressed the treasure against his breast and ran out into the moonlight to examine it. When he reached a bright place he started to open the bag, but he observed Bilbil lying asleep upon the grass near by. So, trembling with the fear of discovery, he ran to another place, and when he paused he heard Rinkitink snoring lustily. Again he fled and made his way to the seashore, where he squatted under a bank and began to untie the cords that fastened the mouth of the bag. But now another fear assailed him.

"If the pearls should slip from my hand," he thought, "and roll into the water, they might be lost to me forever. I must find some safer place."

Here and there he wandered, still clasping the silken bag in both hands, and finally he went to the grove and climbed into the tall tree where he had made his platform and seat. But here it was pitch dark, so he found he must wait patiently until morning before he dared touch the pearls. During those hours of waiting he had time for reflection and reproached himself for being so frightened by the possession of his father's treasures.

"These pearls have belonged to our family for generations," he mused, "yet no one has ever lost them. If I use ordinary care I am sure I need have no fears for their safety."

When the dawn came and he could see plainly, Inga opened the bag and took out the Blue Pearl. There was no possibility of his being observed by others, so he took time to examine it wonderingly, saying to himself: "This will give me strength."

Taking off his right shoe he placed the Blue Pearl within it, far up in the pointed toe. Then he tore a piece from his handkerchief and stuffed it into the shoe to hold the pearl in place. Inga's shoes were long and pointed, as were all the shoes worn in Pingaree, and the points curled upward, so that there was quite a vacant space beyond the place where the boy's toes reached when the shoe was upon his foot.

After he had put on the shoe and laced it up he opened the bag and took out the Pink Pearl. "This will protect me from danger," said Inga, and removing the shoe from his left foot he carefully placed the pearl in the hollow toe. This, also, he secured in place by means of a strip torn from his handkerchief.

Having put on the second shoe and laced it up, the boy drew from the silken bag the third pearl — that which was pure white — and holding it to his ear he asked:

"Will you advise me what to do, in this my hour of misfortune?"

Clearly the small voice of the pearl made answer:

"I advise you to go to the Islands of Regos and Coregos, where you may liberate your parents from slavery."

"How could I do that?" exclaimed Prince Inga, amazed at receiving such advice.

"To-night," spoke the voice of the pearl, "there will be a storm, and in the morning a boat will strand upon the shore. Take this boat and row to Regos

and Coregos."

"How can I, a weak boy, pull the boat so far?" he inquired, doubting the possibility.

"The Blue Pearl will give you strength," was the reply.

"But I may be shipwrecked and drowned, before ever I reach Regos and Coregos," protested the boy.

"The Pink Pearl will protect you from harm," murmured the voice, soft and low but very distinct.

"Then I shall act as you advise me," declared Inga, speaking firmly because this promise gave him courage, and as he removed the pearl from his ear it whispered:

"The wise and fearless are sure to win success."

Restoring the White Pearl to the depths of the silken bag, Inga fastened it securely around his neck and buttoned his waist above it to hide the treasure from all prying eyes. Then he slowly climbed down from the tree and returned to the room where King Rinkitink still slept.

The goat was browsing upon the grass but looked cross and surly. When the boy said good morning as he passed, Bilbil made no response whatever. As Inga entered the room the King awoke and asked:

"What is that mysterious secret of yours? I've been dreaming about it, and I haven't got my breath yet from tugging at those heavy blocks. Tell me the secret."

"A secret told is no longer a secret," replied Inga, with a laugh. "Besides, this is a family secret, which it is proper I should keep to myself. But I may tell you one thing, at least: We are going to leave this island to-morrow morning."

The King seemed puzzled by this statement.

"I'm not much of a swimmer," said he, "and, though I'm fat enough to float upon the surface of the water, I'd only bob around and get nowhere at all."

"We shall not swim, but ride comfortably in a boat," promised Inga.

"There isn't a boat on this island!" declared Rinkitink, looking upon the boy with wonder.

"True," said Inga. "But one will come to us in the morning." He spoke positively, for he had perfect faith in the promise of the White Pearl; but Rinkitink, knowing nothing of the three marvelous jewels, began to fear that the little Prince had lost his mind through grief and misfortune.

For this reason the King did not question the boy further but tried to cheer him by telling him witty stories. He laughed at all the stories himself, in his merry, rollicking way, and Inga joined freely in the laughter because his

heart had been lightened by the prospect of rescuing his dear parents. Not since the fierce warriors had descended upon Pingaree had the boy been so hopeful and happy.

With Rinkitink riding upon Bilbil's back, the three made a tour of the island and found in the central part some bushes and trees bearing ripe fruit. They gathered this freely, for — aside from the fish which Inga caught — it was the only food they now had, and the less they had, the bigger Rinkitink's appetite seemed to grow.

"I am never more happy," said he with a sigh, "than when I am eating."

Toward evening the sky became overcast and soon a great storm began to rage. Prince Inga and King Rinkitink took refuge within the shelter of the room they had fitted up and there Bilbil joined them. The goat and the King were somewhat disturbed by the violence of the storm, but Inga did not mind it, being pleased at this evidence that the White Pearl might be relied upon.

All night the wind shrieked around the island; thunder rolled, lightning flashed and rain came down in torrents. But with morning the storm abated and when the sun arose no sign of the tempest remained save a few fallen trees.

The Magic Boat

CHAPTER 6

Prince Inga was up with the sun and, accompanied by Bilbil, began walking along the shore in search of the boat which the White Pearl had promised him. Never for an instant did he doubt that he would find it and before he had walked any great distance a dark object at the water's edge caught his eye.

"It is the boat, Bilbil!" he cried joyfully, and running down to it he found it was, indeed, a large and roomy boat. Although stranded upon the beach, it was in perfect order and had suffered in no way from the storm.

Inga stood for some moments gazing upon the handsome craft and wondering where it could have come from. Certainly it was unlike any boat he had ever seen. On the outside it was painted a lustrous black, without any other color to relieve it; but all the inside of the boat was lined with pure silver, polished so highly that the surface resembled a mirror and glinted brilliantly in the rays of the sun. The seats had white velvet cushions upon them and the cushions were splendidly embroidered with threads of gold. At one end, beneath the broad seat, was a small barrel with silver hoops, which the boy found was filled with fresh, sweet water. A great chest of sandalwood, bound and ornamented with silver, stood in the other end of the boat. Inga raised the lid and discovered the chest filled with sea-biscuits, cakes, tinned meats and ripe, juicy melons; enough good and wholesome food to last the party a long time.

Lying upon the bottom of the boat were two shining oars, and overhead, but rolled back now, was a canopy of silver cloth to ward off the heat of the sun.

It is no wonder the boy was delighted with the appearance of this beautiful boat; but on reflection he feared it was too large for him to row any great distance. Unless, indeed, the Blue Pearl gave him unusual strength.

While he was considering this matter, King Rinkitink came waddling up to him and said:

"Well, well, well, my Prince, your words have come true! Here is the boat, for a certainty, yet how it came here — and how you knew it would come to us — are puzzles that mystify me. I do not question our good fortune, however, and my heart is bubbling with joy, for in this boat I will return at once to my City of Gilgad, from which I have remained absent altogether too long a time."

"I do not wish to go to Gilgad," said Inga.

"That is too bad, my friend, for you would be very welcome. But you may remain upon this island, if you wish," continued Rinkitink, "and when I get home I will send some of my people to rescue you."

“It is my boat, Your Majesty,” said Inga quietly.

“May be, may be,” was the careless answer, “but I am King of a great country, while you are a boy Prince without any kingdom to speak of. Therefore, being of greater importance than you, it is just and right that I take your boat and return to my own country in it.”

“I am sorry to differ from Your Majesty’s views,” said Inga, “but instead of going to Gilgad I consider it of greater importance that we go to the islands of Regos and Coregos.”

“Hey? What!” cried the astounded King. “To Regos and Coregos! To become slaves of the barbarians, like the King, your father? No, no, my boy! Your Uncle Rinki may have an empty noddle, as Bilbil claims, but he is far too wise to put his head in the lion’s mouth. It’s no fun to be a slave.”

“The people of Regos and Coregos will not enslave us,” declared Inga. “On the contrary, it is my intention to set free my dear parents, as well as all my people, and to bring them back again to Pingaree.”

“Cheek-eek-eek-eek-eek! How funny!” chuckled Rinkitink, winking at the goat, which scowled in return. “Your audacity takes my breath away, Inga, but the adventure has its charm, I must confess. Were I not so fat, I’d agree to your plan at once, and could probably conquer that horde of fierce warriors without any assistance at all — any at all — eh, Bilbil? But I grieve to say that I am fat, and not in good fighting trim. As for your determination to do what I admit I can’t do, Inga, I fear you forget that you are only a boy, and rather small at that.”

“No, I do not forget that,” was Inga’s reply.

“Then please consider that you and I and Bilbil are not strong enough, as an army, to conquer a powerful nation of skilled warriors. We could attempt it, of course, but you are too young to die, while I am too old. Come with me to my City of Gilgad, where you will be greatly honored. I’ll have my professors teach you how to be good. Eh? What do you say?”

Inga was a little embarrassed how to reply to these arguments, which he knew King Rinkitink considered were wise; so, after a period of thought, he said:

“I will make a bargain with Your Majesty, for I do not wish to fail in respect to so worthy a man and so great a King as yourself. This boat is mine, as I have said, and in my father’s absence you have become my guest; therefore I claim that I am entitled to some consideration, as well as you.”

“No doubt of it,” agreed Rinkitink. “What is the bargain you propose, Inga?”

“Let us both get into the boat, and you shall first try to row us to Gilgad. If you succeed, I will accompany you right willingly; but should you fail, I will

then row the boat to Regos, and you must come with me without further protest."

"A fair and just bargain!" cried the King, highly pleased. "Yet, although I am a man of mighty deeds, I do not relish the prospect of rowing so big a boat all the way to Gilgad. But I will do my best and abide by the result."

The matter being thus peaceably settled, they prepared to embark. A further supply of fruits was placed in the boat and Inga also raked up a quantity of the delicious oysters that abounded on the coast of Pingaree but which he had before been unable to reach for lack of a boat. This was done at the suggestion of the ever-hungry Rinkitink, and when the oysters had been stowed in their shells behind the water barrel and a plentiful supply of grass brought aboard for Bilbil, they decided they were ready to start on their voyage.

It proved no easy task to get Bilbil into the boat, for he was a remarkably clumsy goat and once, when Rinkitink gave him a push, he tumbled into the water and nearly drowned before they could get him out again. But there was no thought of leaving the quaint animal behind. His power of speech made him seem almost human in the eyes of the boy, and the fat King was so accustomed to his surly companion that nothing could have induced him to part with him. Finally Bilbil fell sprawling into the bottom of the boat, and Inga helped him to get to the front end, where there was enough space for him to lie down.

Rinkitink now took his seat in the silver-lined craft and the boy came last, pushing off the boat as he sprang aboard, so that it floated freely upon the water.

"Well, here we go for Gilgad!" exclaimed the King, picking up the oars and placing them in the row-locks. Then he began to row as hard as he could, singing at the same time an odd sort of a song that ran like this:

"The way to Gilgad isn't bad
For a stout old King and a brave young lad,
For a cross old goat with a dripping coat,
And a silver boat in which to float.
So our hearts are merry, light and glad
As we speed away to fair Gilgad!"

"Don't, Rinkitink; please don't! It makes me seasick," growled Bilbil.

Rinkitink stopped rowing, for by this time he was all out of breath and his round face was covered with big drops of perspiration. And when he looked over his shoulder he found to his dismay that the boat had scarcely moved a foot from its former position.

Inga said nothing and appeared not to notice the King's failure. So now

Rinkitink, with a serious look on his fat, red face, took off his purple robe and rolled up the sleeves of his tunic and tried again.

However, he succeeded no better than before and when he heard Bilbil give a gruff laugh and saw a smile upon the boy Prince's face, Rinkitink suddenly dropped the oars and began shouting with laughter at his own defeat. As he wiped his brow with a yellow silk handkerchief he sang in a merry voice:

"A sailor bold am I, I hold,
But boldness will not row a boat.
So I confess I'm in distress
And just as useless as the goat."

"Please leave me out of your verses," said Bilbil with a snort of anger.

"When I make a fool of myself, Bilbil, I'm a goat," replied Rinkitink.

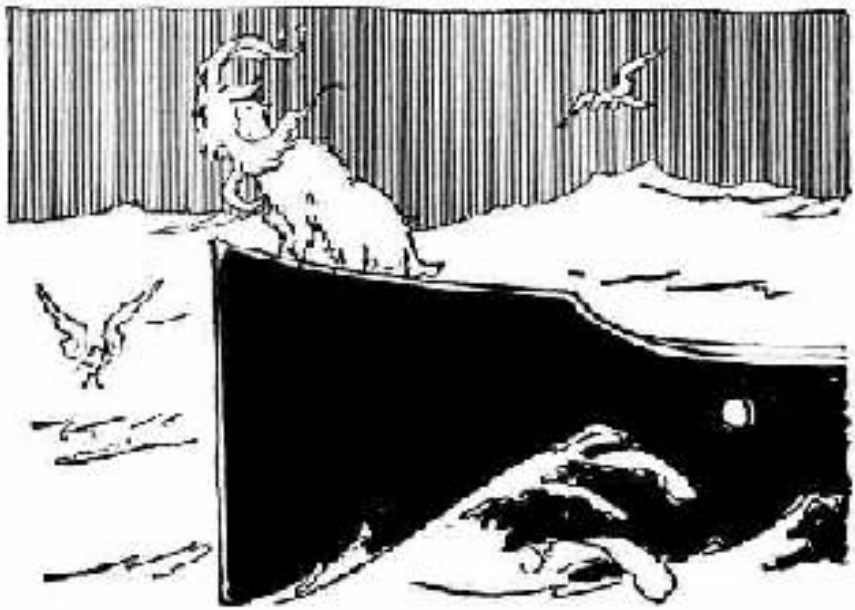
"Not so," insisted Bilbil. "Nothing could make you a member of my superior race."

"Superior? Why, Bilbil, a goat is but a beast, while I am a King!"

"I claim that superiority lies in intelligence," said the goat.

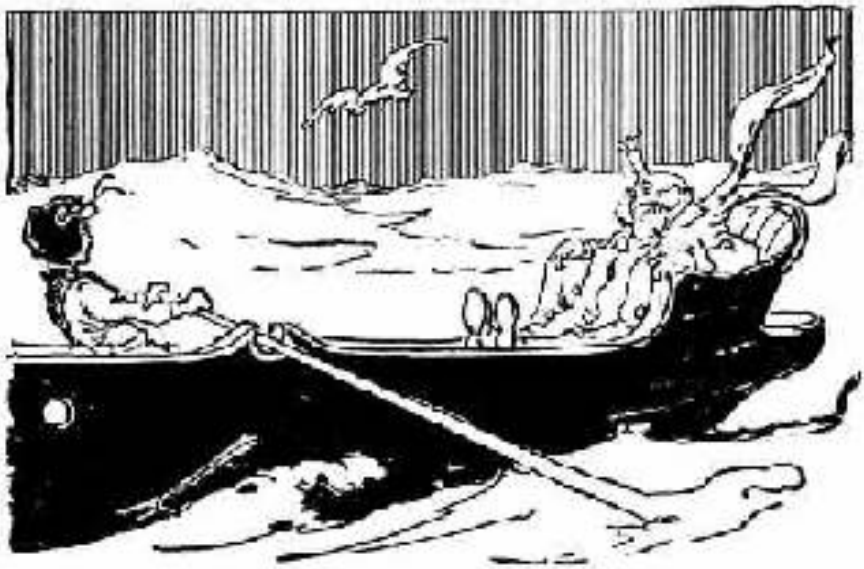
Rinkitink paid no attention to this remark, but turning to Inga he said:

"We may as well get back to the shore, for the boat is too heavy to row to Gilgad or anywhere else. Indeed, it will be hard for us to reach land again."



"Let me take the oars," suggested Inga. "You must not forget our bargain."

"No, indeed," answered Rinkitink. "If you can row us to Regos, or to any other place, I will go with you without protest."



So the King took Inga's place in the stern of the boat and the boy grasped the oars and commenced to row. And now, to the great wonder of Rinkitink — and even to Inga's surprise — the oars became light as feathers as soon as the Prince took hold of them. In an instant the boat began to glide rapidly through the water and, seeing this, the boy turned its prow toward the north. He did not know exactly where Regos and Coregos were located, but he did know that the islands lay to the north of Pingaree, so he decided to trust to luck and the guidance of the pearls to carry him to them.

Gradually the Island of Pingaree became smaller to their view as the boat sped onward, until at the end of an hour they had lost sight of it altogether and were wholly surrounded by the purple waters of the Nonestic Ocean.

Prince Inga did not tire from the labor of rowing; indeed, it seemed to him no labor at all. Once he stopped long enough to place the poles of the canopy in the holes that had been made for them, in the edges of the boat, and to spread the canopy of silver over the poles, for Rinkitink had complained of the sun's heat. But the canopy shut out the hot rays and rendered the interior of the boat cool and pleasant.

"This is a glorious ride!" cried Rinkitink, as he lay back in the shade. "I find it a decided relief to be away from that dismal island of Pingaree."

"It may be a relief for a short time," said Bilbil, "but you are going to the

land of your enemies, who will probably stick your fat body full of spears and arrows."

"Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed Inga, distressed at the thought.

"Never mind," said the King calmly, "a man can die but once, you know, and when the enemy kills me I shall beg him to kill Bilbil, also, that we may remain together in death as in life."

"They may be cannibals, in which case they will roast and eat us," suggested Bilbil, who wished to terrify his master.

"Who knows?" answered Rinkitink, with a shudder. "But cheer up, Bilbil; they may not kill us after all, or even capture us; so let us not borrow trouble. Do not look so cross, my sprightly quadruped, and I will sing to amuse you."

"Your song would make me more cross than ever," grumbled the goat.

"Quite impossible, dear Bilbil. You couldn't be more surly if you tried. So here is a famous song for you."

While the boy rowed steadily on and the boat rushed fast over the water, the jolly King, who never could be sad or serious for many minutes at a time, lay back on his embroidered cushions and sang as follows:

"A merry maiden went to sea —
Sing too-ral-oo-ral-i-do!
She sat upon the Captain's knee
And looked around the sea to see
What she could see, but she couldn't see me —
Sing too-ral-oo-ral-i-do!"

"How do you like that, Bilbil?"

"I don't like it," complained the goat. "It reminds me of the alligator that tried to whistle."

"Did he succeed, Bilbil?" asked the King.

"He whistled as well as you sing."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, heek, keek, eek!" chuckled the King. "He must have whistled most exquisitely, eh, my friend?"

"I am not your friend," returned the goat, wagging his ears in a surly manner.

"I am yours, however," was the King's cheery reply; "and to prove it I'll sing you another verse."

"Don't, I beg of you!"

But the King sang as follows:

"The wind blew off the maiden's shoe —
Sing too-ral-oo-ral-i-do!
And the shoe flew high to the sky so blue
And the maiden knew 'twas a new shoe, too;

But she couldn't pursue the shoe, 'tis true —
Sing too-ral-oo-ral-i-do!"

"Isn't that sweet, my pretty goat?"

"Sweet, do you ask?" retorted Bilbil. "I consider it as sweet as candy made from mustard and vinegar."

"But not as sweet as your disposition, I admit. Ah, Bilbil, your temper would put honey itself to shame."

"Do not quarrel, I beg of you," pleaded Inga. "Are we not sad enough already?"

"But this is a jolly quarrel," said the King, "and it is the way Bilbil and I often amuse ourselves. Listen, now, to the last verse of all:

The maid who shied her shoe now cried —
Sing too-ral-oo-ral-i-do!
Her tears were fried for the Captain's bride
Who ate with pride her sobs, beside,
And gently sighed 'I'm satisfied' —
Sing too-ral-oo-ral-i-do!"

"Worse and worse!" grumbled Bilbil, with much scorn. "I am glad that is the last verse, for another of the same kind might cause me to faint."

"I fear you have no ear for music," said the King.

"I have heard no music, as yet," declared the goat. "You must have a strong imagination, King Rinkitink, if you consider your songs music. Do you remember the story of the bear that hired out for a nursemaid?"

"I do not recall it just now," said Rinkitink, with a wink at Inga.

"Well, the bear tried to sing a lullaby to put the baby to sleep."

"And then?" said the King.

"The bear was highly pleased with its own voice, but the baby was nearly frightened to death."

"Heh, heh, heh, heh, whoo, hoo, hoo! You are a merry rogue, Bilbil," laughed the King; "a merry rogue in spite of your gloomy features. However, if I have not amused you, I have at least pleased myself, for I am exceedingly fond of a good song. So let us say no more about it."

All this time the boy Prince was rowing the boat. He was not in the least tired, for the oars he held seemed to move of their own accord. He paid little heed to the conversation of Rinkitink and the goat, but busied his thoughts with plans of what he should do when he reached the islands of Regos and Coregos and confronted his enemies. When the others finally became silent, Inga inquired:

"Can you fight, King Rinkitink?"

"I have never tried," was the answer. "In time of danger I have found it much easier to run away than to face the foe."

"But *could* you fight?" asked the boy.

"I might try, if there was no chance to escape by running. Have you a proper weapon for me to fight with?"

"I have no weapon at all," confessed Inga.

"Then let us use argument and persuasion instead of fighting. For instance, if we could persuade the warriors of Regos to lie down, and let me step on them, they would be crushed with ease."

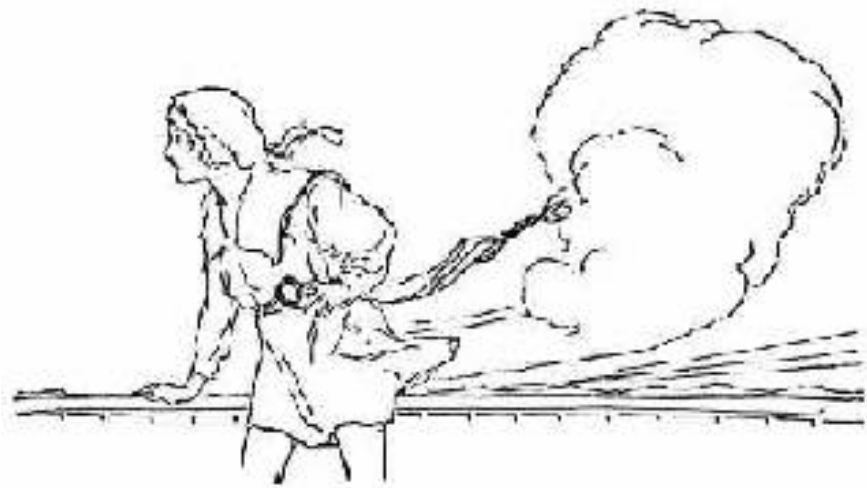
Prince Inga had expected little support from the King, so he was not discouraged by this answer. After all, he reflected, a conquest by battle

would be out of the question, yet the White Pearl would not have advised him to go to Regos and Coregos had the mission been a hopeless one. It seemed to him, on further reflection, that he must rely upon circumstances to determine his actions when he reached the islands of the barbarians.

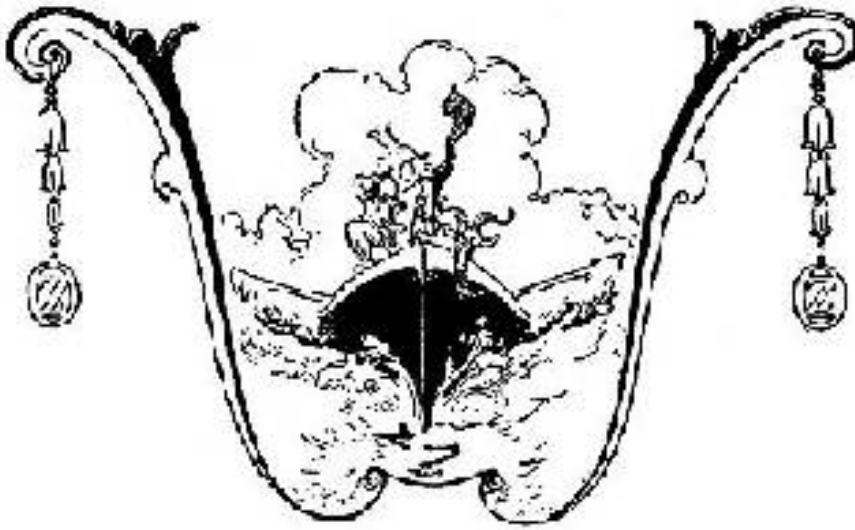
By this time Inga felt perfect confidence in the Magic Pearls. It was the White Pearl that had given him the boat, and the Blue Pearl that had given him strength to row it. He believed that the Pink Pearl would protect him from any danger that might arise; so his anxiety was not for himself, but for his companions. King Rinkitink and the goat had no magic to protect them, so Inga resolved to do all in his power to keep them from harm.

For three days and three nights the boat with the silver lining sped swiftly over the ocean. On the morning of the fourth day, so quickly had they traveled, Inga saw before him the shores of the two great islands of Regos and Coregos.

"The pearls have guided me aright!" he whispered to himself. "Now, if I am wise, and cautious, and brave, I believe I shall be able to rescue my father and mother and my people."



The Twin Islands



CHAPTER 7

The Island of Regos was ten miles wide and forty miles long and it was ruled by a big and powerful King named Gos. Near to the shores were green and fertile fields, but farther back from the sea were rugged hills and mountains, so rocky that nothing would grow there. But in these mountains were mines of gold and silver, which the slaves of the King were forced to work, being confined in dark underground passages for that purpose. In the course of time huge caverns had been hollowed out by the slaves, in which they lived and slept, never seeing the light of day. Cruel overseers with whips stood over these poor people, who had been captured in many countries by the raiding parties of King Gos, and the overseers were quite willing to lash the slaves with their whips if they faltered a moment in their work.

Between the green shores and the mountains were forests of thick, tangled trees, between which narrow paths had been cut to lead up to the caves of the mines. It was on the level green meadows, not far from the ocean, that the great City of Regos had been built, wherein was located the palace of the King. This city was inhabited by thousands of the fierce warriors of Gos, who frequently took to their boats and spread over the sea to the neighboring islands to conquer and pillage, as they had done at Pingaree. When they were not absent on one of these expeditions, the City of Regos swarmed with them and so became a dangerous place for any peaceful person to live in, for the warriors were as lawless as their King.

The Island of Coregos lay close beside the Island of Regos; so close, indeed, that one might have thrown a stone from one shore to another. But Coregos was only half the size of Regos and instead of being mountainous it was a rich and pleasant country, covered with fields of grain. The fields of Coregos furnished food for the warriors and citizens of both countries, while the mines of Regos made them all rich.

Coregos was ruled by Queen Cor, who was wedded to King Gos; but so stern and cruel was the nature of this Queen that the people could not decide which of their sovereigns they dreaded most.

Queen Cor lived in her own City of Coregos, which lay on that side of her island facing Regos, and her slaves, who were mostly women, were made to plow the land and to plant and harvest the grain.

From Regos to Coregos stretched a bridge of boats, set close together, with planks laid across their edges for people to walk upon. In this way it was easy to pass from one island to the other and in times of danger the bridge could be quickly removed.

The native inhabitants of Regos and Coregos consisted of the warriors,

who did nothing but fight and ravage, and the trembling servants who waited on them. King Gos and Queen Cor were at war with all the rest of the world. Other islanders hated and feared them, for their slaves were badly treated and absolutely no mercy was shown to the weak or ill.

When the boats that had gone to Pingaree returned loaded with rich plunder and a host of captives, there was much rejoicing in Regos and Coregos and the King and Queen gave a fine feast to the warriors who had accomplished so great a conquest. This feast was set for the warriors in the grounds of King Gos's palace, while with them in the great throne room all the captains and leaders of the fighting men were assembled with King Gos and Queen Cor, who had come from her island to attend the ceremony. Then all the goods that had been stolen from the King of Pingaree were divided according to rank, the King and Queen taking half, the captains a quarter, and the rest being divided amongst the warriors.

The day following the feast King Gos sent King Kitticut and all the men of Pingaree to work in his mines under the mountains, having first chained them together so they could not escape. The gentle Queen of Pingaree and all her women, together with the captured children, were given to Queen Cor, who set them to work in her grain fields.

Then the rulers and warriors of these dreadful islands thought they had done forever with Pingaree. Despoiled of all its wealth, its houses torn down, its boats captured and all its people enslaved, what likelihood was there that they might ever again hear of the desolated island? So the people of Regos and Coregos were surprised and puzzled when one morning they observed approaching their shores from the direction of the south a black boat containing a boy, a fat man and a goat. The warriors asked one another who these could be, and where they had come from? No one ever came to those islands of their own accord, that was certain.

Prince Inga guided his boat to the south end of the Island of Regos, which was the landing place nearest to the city, and when the warriors saw this

action they went down to the shore to meet him, being led by a big captain named Buzzub.

"Those people surely mean us no good," said Rinkitink uneasily to the boy. "Without doubt they intend to capture us and make us their slaves."

"Do not fear, sir," answered Inga, in a calm voice. "Stay quietly in the boat with Bilbil until I have spoken with these men."

He stopped the boat a dozen feet from the shore, and standing up in his place made a grave bow to the multitude confronting him. Said the big Captain Buzzub in a gruff voice:

"Well, little one, who may you be? And how dare you come, uninvited and all alone, to the Island of Regos?"

"I am Inga, Prince of Pingaree," returned the boy, "and I have come here to free my parents and my people, whom you have wrongfully enslaved."

When they heard this bold speech a mighty laugh arose from the band of warriors, and when it had subsided the captain said:

"You love to jest, my baby Prince, and the joke is fairly good. But why did you willingly thrust your head into the lion's mouth? When you were free, why did you not stay free? We did not know we had left a single person in Pingaree! But since you managed to escape us then, it is really kind of you to come here of your own free will, to be our slave. Who is the funny fat person with you?"

"It is His Majesty, King Rinkitink, of the great City of Gilgad. He has accompanied me to see that you render full restitution for all you have stolen from Pingaree."

"Better yet!" laughed Buzzub. "He will make a fine slave for Queen Cor, who loves to tickle fat men, and see them jump."

King Rinkitink was filled with horror when he heard this, but the Prince answered as boldly as before, saying:

"We are not to be frightened by bluster, believe me; nor are we so weak as you imagine. We have magic powers so great and terrible that no host of warriors can possibly withstand us, and therefore I call upon you to surrender your city and your island to us, before we crush you with our mighty powers."

The boy spoke very gravely and earnestly, but his words only aroused another shout of laughter. So while the men of Regos were laughing Inga drove the boat well up onto the sandy beach and leaped out. He also helped Rinkitink out, and when the goat had unaided sprung to the sands, the King got upon Bilbil's back, trembling a little internally, but striving to look as brave as possible.

There was a bunch of coarse hair between the goat's ears, and this Inga

clutched firmly in his left hand. The boy knew the Pink Pearl would protect not only himself, but all whom he touched, from any harm, and as Rinkitink was astride the goat and Inga had his hand upon the animal, the three could not be injured by anything the warriors could do. But Captain Buzzub did not know this, and the little group of three seemed so weak and ridiculous that he believed their capture would be easy. So he turned to his men and with a wave of his hand said:

"Seize the intruders!"

Instantly two or three of the warriors stepped forward to obey, but to their amazement they could not reach any of the three; their hands were arrested as if by an invisible wall of iron. Without paying any attention to these attempts at capture, Inga advanced slowly and the goat kept pace with him. And when Rinkitink saw that he was safe from harm he gave one of his big, merry laughs, and it startled the warriors and made them nervous. Captain Buzzub's eyes grew big with surprise as the three steadily advanced and forced his men backward; nor was he free from terror himself at the magic that protected these strange visitors. As for the warriors, they presently became terror-stricken and fled in a panic up the slope toward the city, and Buzzub was obliged to chase after them and shout threats of punishment before he could halt them and form them into a line of battle.

All the men of Regos bore spears and bows-and-arrows, and some of the officers had swords and battle-axes; so Buzzub ordered them to stand their ground and shoot and slay the strangers as they approached. This they tried to do. Inga being in advance, the warriors sent a flight of sharp arrows straight at the boy's breast, while others cast their long spears at him.

It seemed to Rinkitink that the little Prince must surely perish as he stood facing this hail of murderous missiles; but the power of the Pink Pearl did not desert him, and when the arrows and spears had reached to within an inch of his body they bounded back again and fell harmlessly at his feet. Nor were Rinkitink or Bilbil injured in the least, although they stood close beside Inga.

Buzzub stood for a moment looking upon the boy in silent wonder. Then, recovering himself, he shouted in a loud voice:

"Once again! All together, my men. No one shall ever defy our might and live!"

Again a flight of arrows and spears sped toward the the three, and since many more of the warriors of Regos had by this time joined their fellows, the air was for a moment darkened by the deadly shafts. But again all fell harmless before the power of the Pink Pearl, and Bilbil, who had been growing very angry at the attempts to injure him and his party, suddenly made a bolt forward, casting off Inga's hold, and butted into the line of

warriors, who were standing amazed at their failure to conquer.

Taken by surprise at the goat's attack, a dozen big warriors tumbled in a heap, yelling with fear, and their comrades, not knowing what had happened but imagining that their foes were attacking them, turned about and ran to the city as hard as they could go. Bilbil, still angry, had just time to catch the big captain as he turned to follow his men, and Buzzub first sprawled headlong upon the ground, then rolled over two or three times, and finally jumped up and ran yelling after his defeated warriors. This butting on the part of the goat was very hard upon King Rinkitink, who nearly fell off Bilbil's back at the shock of encounter; but the little fat King wound his arms around the goat's neck and shut his eyes and clung on with all his might. It was not until

he heard Inga say triumphantly, “We have won the fight without striking a blow!” that Rinkitink dared open his eyes again. Then he saw the warriors rushing into the City of Regos and barring the heavy gates, and he was very much relieved at the sight.

“Without striking a blow!” said Bilbil indignantly. “That is not quite true, Prince Inga. You did not fight, I admit, but I struck a couple of times to good purpose, and I claim to have conquered the cowardly warriors unaided.”

“You and I together, Bilbil,” said Rinkitink mildly. “But the next time you make a charge, please warn me in time, so that I may dismount and give you all the credit for the attack.”

There being no one now to oppose their advance, the three walked to the gates of the city, which had been closed against them. The gates were of iron and heavily barred, and upon the top of the high walls of the city a host of the warriors now appeared armed with arrows and spears and other weapons. For Buzzub had gone straight to the palace of King Gos and reported his defeat, relating the powerful magic of the boy, the fat King and the goat, and had asked what to do next.

The big captain still trembled with fear, but King Gos did not believe in magic, and called Buzzub a coward and a weakling. At once the King took command of his men personally, and he ordered the walls manned with warriors and instructed them to shoot to kill if any of the three strangers approached the gates.

Of course, neither Rinkitink nor Bilbil knew how they had been protected from harm and so at first they were inclined to resent the boy’s command that the three must always keep together and touch one another at all times. But when Inga explained that his magic would not otherwise save them from injury, they agreed to obey, for they had now seen enough to convince them that the Prince was really protected by some invisible power.

As they came before the gates another shower of arrows and spears descended upon them, and as before not a single missile touched their bodies. King Gos, who was upon the wall, was greatly amazed and somewhat worried, but he depended upon the strength of his gates and commanded his men to continue shooting until all their weapons were gone.

Inga let them shoot as much as they wished, while he stood before the great gates and examined them carefully.

“Perhaps Bilbil can batter down the gates,” suggested Rinkitink.

“No,” replied the goat; “my head is hard, but not harder than iron.”

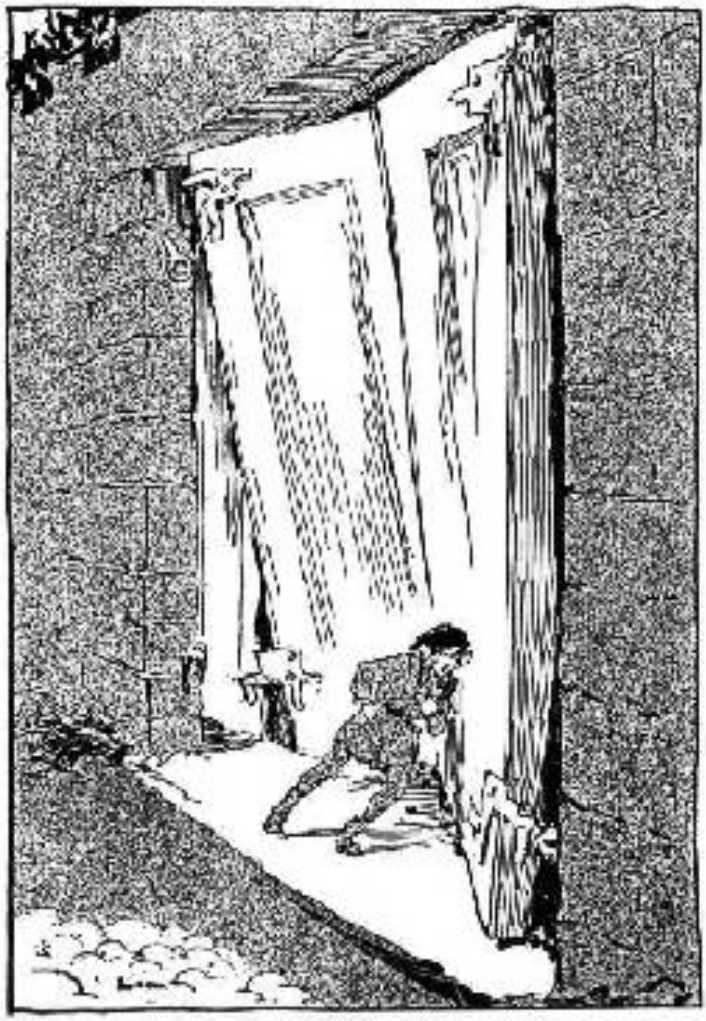
“Then,” returned the King, “let us stay outside; especially as we can’t get in.”

But Inga was not at all sure they could not get in. The gates opened

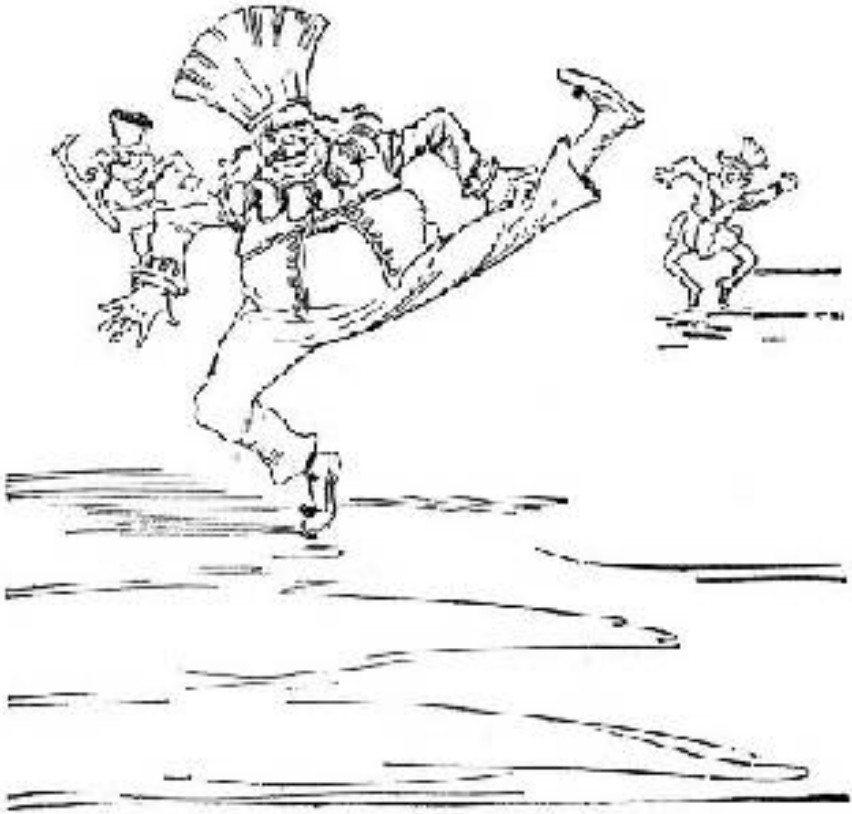
inward, and three heavy bars were held in place by means of stout staples riveted to the sheets of steel. The boy had been told that the power of the Blue Pearl would enable him to accomplish any feat of strength, and he believed that this was true.

The warriors, under the direction of King Gos, continued to hurl arrows and darts and spears and axes and huge stones upon the invaders, all without avail. The ground below was thickly covered with weapons, yet not one of the three before the gates had been injured in the slightest manner. When everything had been cast that was available and not a single weapon of any sort remained at hand, the amazed warriors saw the boy put his shoulder against the gates and burst asunder the huge staples that held the bars in place. A thousand of their men could not have accomplished this feat, yet the small, slight boy did it with seeming ease. The gates burst open, and Inga advanced into the city street and called upon King Gos to surrender.

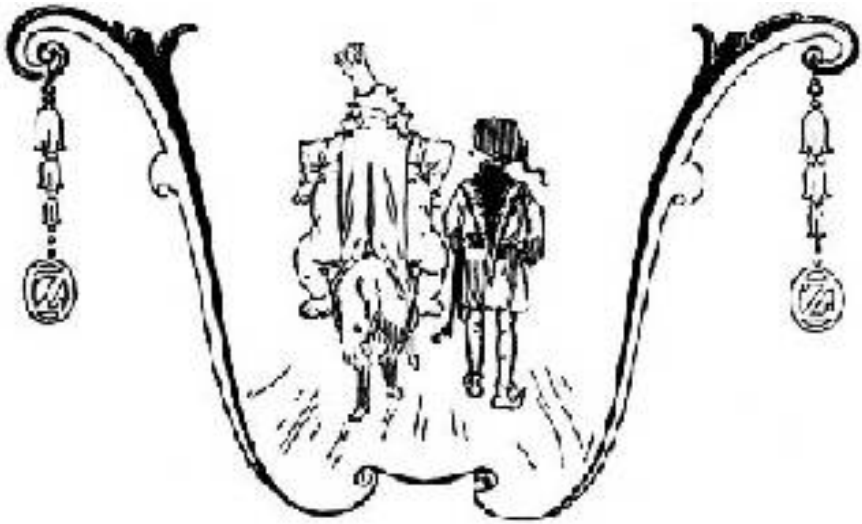
But Gos was now as badly frightened as were his warriors. He and his men were accustomed to war and pillage and they had carried terror into many countries, but here was a small boy, a fat man and a goat who could not be injured by all his skill in warfare, his numerous army and thousands of death-dealing weapons. Moreover, they not only defied King Gos's entire army but they had broken in the huge gates of the city — as easily as if they had been made of paper — and such an exhibition of enormous strength made the wicked King fear for his life. Like all bullies and marauders, Gos was a coward at heart, and now a panic seized him and he turned and fled before the calm advance of Prince Inga of Pingaree. The warriors were like their master, and having thrown all their weapons over the wall and being helpless to oppose the strangers, they all swarmed after Gos, who abandoned his city and crossed the bridge of boats to the Island of Coregos. There was a desperate struggle among these cowardly warriors to get over the bridge, and many were pushed into the water and obliged to swim; but finally every fighting man of Regos had gained the shore of Coregos and then they tore away the bridge of boats and drew them up on their own side, hoping the stretch of open water would prevent the magic invaders from following them.



The humble citizens and serving people of Regos, who had been terrified and abused by the rough warriors all their lives, were not only greatly astonished by this sudden conquest of their masters but greatly delighted. As the King and his army fled to Coregos, the people embraced one another and danced for very joy, and then they turned to see what the conquerors of Regos were like.



Rinkitink Makes a Great Mistake



CHAPTER 8

The fat King rode his goat through the streets of the conquered city and the boy Prince walked proudly beside him, while all the people bent their heads humbly to their new masters, whom they were prepared to serve in the same manner they had King Gos.

Not a warrior remained in all Regos to oppose the triumphant three; the bridge of boats had been destroyed; Inga and his companions were free from danger — for a time, at least.

The jolly little King appreciated this fact and rejoiced that he had escaped all injury during the battle. How it had all happened he could not tell, nor even guess, but he was content in being safe and free to take possession of the enemy's city. So, as they passed through the lines of respectful civilians on their way to the palace, the King tipped his crown back on his bald head and folded his arms and sang in his best voice the following lines:

"Oh, here comes the army of King Rinkitink!
It isn't a big one, perhaps you may think,
But it scattered the warriors quicker than wink —
Rink-i-tink, tink-i-tink, tink!
Our Bilbil's a hero and so is his King;
Our foemen have vanished like birds on the wing;
I guess that as fighters we're quite the real thing —
Rink-i-tink, tink-i-tink, tink!"

"Why don't you give a little credit to Inga?" inquired the goat. "If I remember aright, he did a little of the conquering himself."

"So he did," responded the King, "and that's the reason I'm sounding our own praise, Bilbil. Those who do the least, often shout the loudest and so get the most glory. Inga did so much that there is danger of his becoming more important than we are, and so we'd best say nothing about him."

When they reached the palace, which was an immense building, furnished throughout in regal splendor, Inga took formal possession and ordered the majordomo to show them the finest rooms the building contained. There were many pleasant apartments, but Rinkitink proposed to Inga that they share one of the largest bedrooms together.

"For," said he, "we are not sure that old Gos will not return and try to recapture his city, and you must remember that I have no magic to protect me. In any danger, were I alone, I might be easily killed or captured, while if you are by my side you can save me from injury."

The boy realized the wisdom of this plan, and selected a fine big bedroom on the second floor of the palace, in which he ordered two golden beds

placed and prepared for King Rinkitink and himself. Bilbil was given a suite of rooms on the other side of the palace, where servants brought the goat fresh-cut grass to eat and made him a soft bed to lie upon.

That evening the boy Prince and the fat King dined in great state in the lofty-domed dining-hall of the palace, where forty servants waited upon them. The royal chef, anxious to win the favor of the conquerors of Regos, prepared his finest and most savory dishes for them, which Rinkitink ate with much appetite and found so delicious that he ordered the royal chef brought into the banquet hall and presented him with a gilt button which the King cut from his own jacket.

"You are welcome to it," said he to the chef, "because I have eaten so much that I cannot use that lower button at all."

Rinkitink was mightily pleased to live in a comfortable palace again and to dine at a well-spread table. His joy grew every moment, so that he came in time to be as merry and cheery as before Pingaree was despoiled. And, although he had been much frightened during Inga's defiance of the army of King Gos, he now began to turn the matter into a joke.

"Why, my boy," said he, "you whipped the big black-bearded King exactly as if he were a schoolboy, even though you used no warlike weapon at all upon him. He was cowed through fear of your magic, and that reminds me to demand from you an explanation. How did you do it, Inga? And where did the wonderful magic come from?"

Perhaps it would have been wise for the Prince to have explained about the magic pearls, but at that moment he was not inclined to do so. Instead, he replied:

"Be patient, Your Majesty. The secret is not my own, so please do not ask me to divulge it. Is it not enough, for the present, that the magic saved you from death to-day?"

"Do not think me ungrateful," answered the King earnestly. "A million spears fell on me from the wall, and several stones as big as mountains, yet none of them hurt me!"

"The stones were not as big as mountains, sire," said the Prince with a smile. "They were, indeed, no larger than your head."

“Are you sure about that?” asked Rinkitink.

“Quite sure, Your Majesty.”

“How deceptive those things are!” sighed the King. “This argument reminds me of the story of Tom Tick, which my father used to tell.”

“I have never heard that story,” Inga answered.

“Well, as he told it, it ran like this:

“When Tom walked out, the sky to spy,
A naughty gnat flew in his eye;
But Tom knew not it was a gnat —
He thought, at first, it was a cat.

“And then, it felt so very big,
He thought it surely was a pig
Till, standing still to hear it grunt,
He cried: ‘Why, it’s an *elephunt*!’

“But — when the gnat flew out again
And Tom was free from all his pain,
He said: ‘There flew into my eye
A leetle, teenty-tiny fly.’“

“Indeed,” said Inga, laughing, “the gnat was much like your stones that seemed as big as mountains.”

After their dinner they inspected the palace, which was filled with valuable goods stolen by King Gos from many nations. But the day’s events had tired them and they retired early to their big sleeping apartment.

“In the morning,” said the boy to Rinkitink, as he was undressing for bed, “I shall begin the search for my father and mother and the people of Pingaree. And, when they are found and rescued, we will all go home again, and be as happy as we were before.”

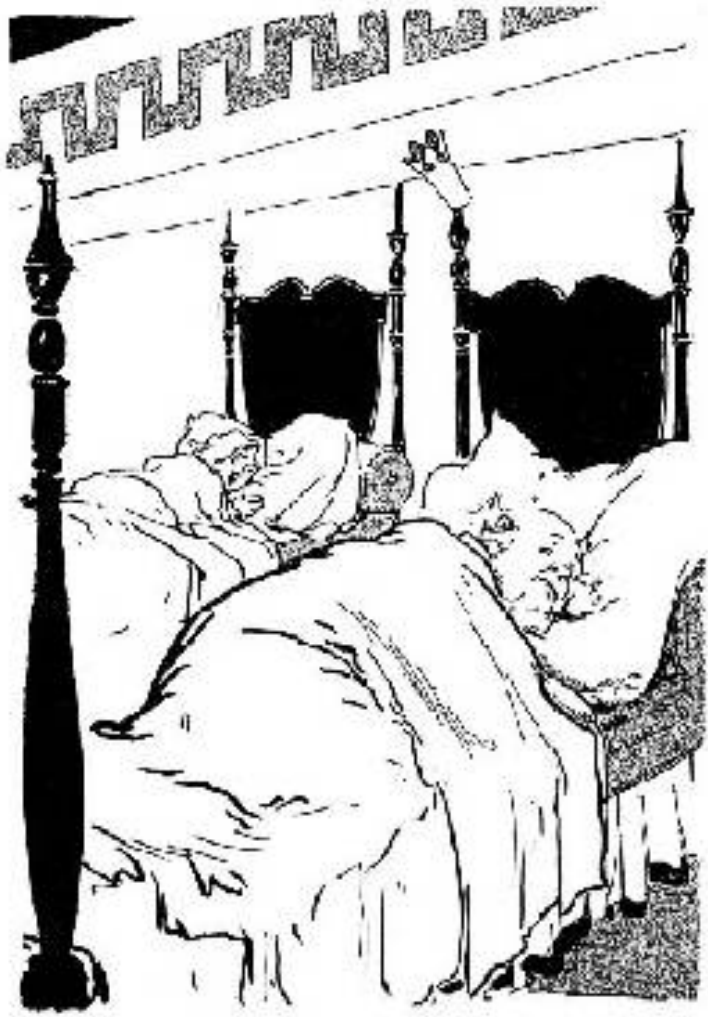
They carefully bolted the door of their room, that no one might enter, and then got into their beds, where Rinkitink fell asleep in an instant. The boy lay awake for a while thinking over the day’s adventures, but presently he fell sound asleep also, and so weary was he that nothing disturbed his slumber until he awakened next morning with a ray of sunshine in his eyes, which had crept into the room through the open window by King Rinkitink’s bed.

Resolving to begin the search for his parents without any unnecessary delay, Inga at once got out of bed and began to dress himself, while Rinkitink, in the other bed, was still sleeping peacefully. But when the boy had put on both his stockings and began looking for his shoes, he could find but one of them. The left shoe, that containing the Pink Pearl, was missing.

Filled with anxiety at this discovery, Inga searched through the entire room, looking underneath the beds and divans and chairs and behind the

draperies and in the corners and every other possible place a shoe might be. He tried the door, and found it still bolted; so, with growing uneasiness, the boy was forced to admit that the precious shoe was not in the room.

With a throbbing heart he aroused his companion.



"King Rinkitink," said he, "do you know what has become of my left shoe?"

"Your shoe!" exclaimed the King, giving a wide yawn and rubbing his eyes to get the sleep out of them. "Have you lost a shoe?"

"Yes," said Inga. "I have searched everywhere in the room, and cannot find it."

"But why bother me about such a small thing?" inquired Rinkitink. "A

shoe is only a shoe, and you can easily get another one. But, stay! Perhaps it was your shoe which I threw at the cat last night."

"The cat!" cried Inga. "What do you mean?"

"Why, in the night," explained Rinkitink, sitting up and beginning to dress himself, "I was wakened by the mewing of a cat that sat upon a wall of the palace, just outside my window. As the noise disturbed me, I reached out in the dark and caught up something and threw it at the cat, to frighten the creature away. I did not know what it was that I threw, and I was too sleepy to care; but probably it was your shoe, since it is now missing."

"Then," said the boy, in a despairing tone of voice, "your carelessness has ruined me, as well as yourself, King Rinkitink, for in that shoe was concealed the magic power which protected us from danger."

The King's face became very serious when he heard this and he uttered a low whistle of surprise and regret.

"Why on earth did you not warn me of this?" he demanded. "And why did you keep such a precious power in an old shoe? And why didn't you put the shoe under a pillow? You were very wrong, my lad, in not confiding to me, your faithful friend, the secret, for in that case the shoe would not now be lost."

To all this Inga had no answer. He sat on the side of his bed, with hanging head, utterly disconsolate, and seeing this, Rinkitink had pity for his sorrow.

"Come!" cried the King; "let us go out at once and look for the shoe which I threw at the cat. It must even now be lying in the yard of the palace."

This suggestion roused the boy to action. He at once threw open the door and in his stocking feet rushed down the staircase, closely followed by Rinkitink. But although they looked on both sides of the palace wall and in every possible crack and corner where a shoe might lodge, they failed to find it.

After a half hour's careful search the boy said sorrowfully:

"Someone must have passed by, as we slept, and taken the precious shoe, not knowing its value. To us, King Rinkitink, this will be a dreadful misfortune, for we are surrounded by dangers from which we have now no protection. Luckily I have the other shoe left, within which is the magic power that gives me strength; so all is not lost."

Then he told Rinkitink, in a few words, the secret of the wonderful pearls, and how he had recovered them from the ruins and hidden them in his shoes, and how they had enabled him to drive King Gos and his men from Regos and to capture the city. The King was much astonished, and when the story was concluded he said to Inga:

"What did you do with the other shoe?"

"Why, I left it in our bedroom," replied the boy.

"Then I advise you to get it at once," continued Rinkitink, "for we can ill afford to lose the second shoe, as well as the one I threw at the cat."

"You are right!" cried Inga, and they hastened back to their bedchamber.

On entering the room they found an old woman sweeping and raising a great deal of dust.

"Where is my shoe?" asked the Prince, anxiously.

The old woman stopped sweeping and looked at him in a stupid way, for she was not very intelligent.

"Do you mean the one odd shoe that was lying on the floor when I came in?" she finally asked.

"Yes — yes!" answered the boy. "Where is it? Tell me where it is!"

"Why, I threw it on the dust-heap, outside the back gate," said she, "for, it being but a single shoe, with no mate, it can be of no use to anyone."

"Show us the way to the dust-heap — at once!" commanded the boy, sternly, for he was greatly frightened by this new misfortune which threatened him.

The old woman hobbled away and they followed her, constantly urging her to hasten; but when they reached the dust-heap no shoe was to be seen.

"This is terrible!" wailed the young Prince, ready to weep at his loss. "We are now absolutely ruined, and at the mercy of our enemies. Nor shall I be able to liberate my dear father and mother."

"Well," replied Rinkitink, leaning against an old barrel and looking quite

solemn, “the thing is certainly unlucky, any way we look at it. I suppose someone has passed along here and, seeing the shoe upon the dust-heap, has carried it away. But no one could know the magic power the shoe contains and so will not use it against us. I believe, Inga, we must now depend upon our wits to get us out of the scrape we are in.”

With saddened hearts they returned to the palace, and entering a small room where no one could observe them or overhear them, the boy took the White Pearl from its silken bag and held it to his ear, asking:

“What shall I do now?”

“Tell no one of your loss,” answered the Voice of the Pearl. “If your enemies do not know that you are powerless, they will fear you as much as ever. Keep your secret, be patient, and fear not!”

Inga heeded this advice and also warned Rinkitink to say nothing to anyone of the loss of the shoes and the powers they contained. He sent for the shoemaker of King Gos, who soon brought him a new pair of red leather shoes that fitted him quite well. When these had been put upon his feet, the Prince, accompanied by the King, started to walk through the city.

Wherever they went the people bowed low to the conqueror, although a few, remembering Inga’s terrible strength, ran away in fear and trembling. They had been used to severe masters and did not yet know how they would be treated by King Gos’s successor. There being no occasion for the boy to exercise the powers he had displayed the previous day, his present helplessness was not suspected by any of the citizens of Regos, who still considered him a wonderful magician.

Inga did not dare to fight his way to the mines, at present, nor could he try to conquer the Island of Coregos, where his mother was enslaved; so he set about the regulation of the City of Regos, and having established himself with great state in the royal palace he began to govern the people by kindness, having consideration for the most humble.

The King of Regos and his followers sent spies across to the island they had abandoned in their flight, and these spies returned with the news that the terrible boy conqueror was still occupying the city. Therefore none of them ventured to go back to Regos but continued to live upon the neighboring island of Coregos, where they passed the days in fear and trembling and sought to plot and plan ways how they might overcome the Prince of Pingaree and the fat King of Gilgad.

A Present for Zella

CHAPTER 9

Now it so happened that on the morning of that same day when the Prince of Pingaree suffered the loss of his priceless shoes, there chanced to pass along the road that wound beside the royal palace a poor charcoal-burner named Nikobob, who was about to return to his home in the forest.

Nikobob carried an ax and a bundle of torches over his shoulder and he walked with his eyes to the ground, being deep in thought as to the strange manner in which the powerful King Gos and his city had been conquered by a boy Prince who had come from Pingaree.

Suddenly the charcoal-burner espied a shoe lying upon the ground, just beyond the high wall of the palace and directly in his path. He picked it up and, seeing it was a pretty shoe, although much too small for his own foot, he put it in his pocket.

Soon after, on turning a corner of the wall, Nikobob came to a dust-heap where, lying amidst a mass of rubbish, was another shoe — the mate to the one he had before found. This also he placed in his pocket, saying to himself:

"I have now a fine pair of shoes for my daughter Zella, who will be much pleased to find I have brought her a present from the city."

And while the charcoal-burner turned into the forest and trudged along the path toward his home, Inga and Rinkitink were still searching for the missing shoes. Of course, they could not know that Nikobob had found them, nor did the honest man think he had taken anything more than a pair of cast-off shoes which nobody wanted.

Nikobob had several miles to travel through the forest before he could reach the little log cabin where his wife, as well as his little daughter Zella, awaited his return, but he was used to long walks and tramped along the path whistling cheerfully to beguile the time.

Few people, as I said before, ever passed through the dark and tangled forests of Regos, except to go to the mines in the mountain beyond, for many dangerous creatures lurked in the wild jungles, and King Gos never knew, when he sent a messenger to the mines, whether he would reach there safely or not.

The charcoal-burner, however, knew the wild forest well, and especially this part of it lying between the city and his home. It was the favorite haunt of the ferocious beast Choggenmugger, dreaded by every dweller in the Island of Regos. Choggenmugger was so old that everyone thought it must have been there since the world was made, and each year of its life the huge scales that covered its body grew thicker and harder and its jaws grew wider and its teeth grew sharper and its appetite grew more keen than ever.

In former ages there had been many dragons in Regos, but Choggenmugger was so fond of dragons that he had eaten all of them long ago. There had also been great serpents and crocodiles in the forest marshes, but all had gone to feed the hunger of Choggenmugger. The people of Regos knew well there was no use opposing the Great Beast, so when one unfortunately met with it he gave himself up for lost.

All this Nikobob knew well, but fortune had always favored him in his journeys through the forest, and although he had at times met many savage beasts and fought them with his sharp ax, he had never to this day encountered the terrible Choggenmugger. Indeed, he was not thinking of the Great Beast at all as he walked along, but suddenly he heard a crashing of

broken trees and felt a trembling of the earth and saw the immense jaws of Choggenmugger opening before him. Then Nikobob gave himself up for lost and his heart almost ceased to beat.

He believed there was no way of escape. No one ever dared oppose Choggenmugger. But Nikobob hated to die without showing the monster, in some way, that he was eaten only under protest. So he raised his ax and brought it down upon the red, protruding tongue of the monster — and cut it clean off!

For a moment the charcoal-burner scarcely believed what his eyes saw, for he knew nothing of the pearls he carried in his pocket or the magic power they lent his arm. His success, however, encouraged him to strike again, and this time the huge scaly jaw of Choggenmugger was severed in twain and the beast howled in terrified rage.

Nikobob took off his coat, to give himself more freedom of action, and then he earnestly renewed the attack. But now the ax seemed blunted by the hard scales and made no impression upon them whatever. The creature advanced with glaring, wicked eyes, and Nikobob seized his coat under his arm and turned to flee.

That was foolish, for Choggenmugger could run like the wind. In a moment it overtook the charcoal-burner and snapped its four rows of sharp teeth together. But they did not touch Nikobob, because he still held the coat in his grasp, close to his body, and in the coat pocket were Inga's shoes, and in the points of the shoes were the magic pearls. Finding himself uninjured, Nikobob put on his coat, again seized his ax, and in a short time had chopped Choggenmugger into many small pieces — a task that proved not only easy but very agreeable.

"I must be the strongest man in all the world!" thought the charcoal-burner, as he proudly resumed his way, "for Choggenmugger has been the terror of Regos since the world began, and I alone have been able to destroy the beast. Yet it is singular that never before did I discover how powerful a man I am."

He met no further adventure and at midday reached a little clearing in the forest where stood his humble cabin.

"Great news! I have great news for you," he shouted, as his wife and little daughter came to greet him. "King Gos has been conquered by a boy Prince from the far island of Pingaree, and I have this day — unaided — destroyed Choggenmugger by the might of my strong arm."

This was, indeed, great news. They brought Nikobob into the house and set him in an easy chair and made him tell everything he knew about the Prince of Pingaree and the fat King of Gilgad, as well as the details of his

wonderful fight with mighty Choggenmugger.

"And now, my daughter," said the charcoal-burner, when all his news had been related for at least the third time, "here is a pretty present I have brought you from the city."

With this he drew the shoes from the pocket of his coat and handed them to Zella, who gave him a dozen kisses in payment and was much pleased with her gift. The little girl had never worn shoes before, for her parents were too poor to buy her such luxuries, so now the possession of these, which were not much worn, filled the child's heart with joy. She admired the red leather and the graceful curl of the pointed toes. When she tried them on her feet, they fitted as well as if made for her.

All the afternoon, as she helped her mother with the housework, Zella thought of her pretty shoes. They seemed more important to her than the coming to Regos of the conquering Prince of Pingaree, or even the death of Choggenmugger.

When Zella and her mother were not working in the cabin, cooking or sewing, they often searched the neighboring forest for honey which the wild bees cleverly hid in hollow trees. The day after Nikobob's return, as they were starting out after honey, Zella decided to put on her new shoes, as they would keep the twigs that covered the ground from hurting her feet. She was used to the twigs, of course, but what is the use of having nice, comfortable shoes, if you do not wear them?

So she danced along, very happily, followed by her mother, and presently they came to a tree in which was a deep hollow. Zella thrust her hand and arm into the space and found that the tree was full of honey, so she began to dig it out with a wooden paddle. Her mother, who held the pail, suddenly cried in warning:

"Look out, Zella; the bees are coming!" and then the good woman ran fast toward the house to escape.

Zella, however, had no more than time to turn her head when a thick swarm of bees surrounded her, angry because they had caught her stealing their honey and intent on stinging the girl as a punishment. She knew her danger and expected to be badly injured by the multitude of stinging bees, but to her surprise the little creatures were unable to fly close enough to her to stick their dart-like stingers into her flesh. They swarmed about her in a dark cloud, and their angry buzzing was terrible to hear, yet the little girl remained unharmed.

When she realized this, Zella was no longer afraid but continued to ladle out the honey until she had secured all that was in the tree. Then she returned to the cabin, where her mother was weeping and bemoaning the fate of her darling child, and the good woman was greatly astonished to find Zella had escaped injury.

Again they went to the woods to search for honey, and although the mother always ran away whenever the bees came near them, Zella paid no attention to the creatures but kept at her work, so that before supper time came the pails were again filled to overflowing with delicious honey.

"With such good fortune as we have had this day," said her mother, "we shall soon gather enough honey for you to carry to Queen Cor." For it seems the wicked Queen was very fond of honey and it had been Zella's custom to go, once every year, to the City of Coregos, to carry the Queen a supply of sweet honey for her table. Usually she had but one pail.

“But now,” said Zella, “I shall be able to carry two pailsful to the Queen, who will, I am sure, give me a good price for it.”

“True,” answered her mother, “and, as the boy Prince may take it into his head to conquer Coregos, as well as Regos, I think it best for you to start on your journey to Queen Cor to-morrow morning. Do you not agree with me, Nikobob?” she added, turning to her husband, the charcoal-burner, who was eating his supper.

“I agree with you,” he replied. “If Zella must go to the City of Coregos, she may as well start to-morrow morning.”

The Cunning of Queen Cor

CHAPTER 10

You may be sure the Queen of Coregos was not well pleased to have King Gos and all his warriors living in her city after they had fled from their own. They were savage natured and quarrelsome men at all times, and their tempers had not improved since their conquest by the Prince of Pingaree. Moreover, they were eating up Queen Cor's provisions and crowding the houses of her own people, who grumbled and complained until their Queen was heartily tired.

"Shame on you!" she said to her husband, King Gos, "to be driven out of your city by a boy, a roly-poly King and a billy goat! Why do you not go back and fight them?"

"No human can fight against the powers of magic," returned the King in a surly voice. "That boy is either a fairy or under the protection of fairies. We escaped with our lives only because we were quick to run away; but, should we return to Regos, the same terrible power that burst open the city gates would crush us all to atoms."

"Bah! you are a coward," cried the Queen, tauntingly.

"I am not a coward," said the big King. "I have killed in battle scores of my enemies; by the might of my sword and my good right arm I have conquered many nations; all my life people have feared me. But no one would dare face the tremendous power of the Prince of Pingaree, boy though he is. It would not be courage, it would be folly, to attempt it."

"Then meet his power with cunning," suggested the Queen. "Take my advice, and steal over to Regos at night, when it is dark, and capture or destroy the boy while he sleeps."

"No weapon can touch his body," was the answer. "He bears a charmed life and cannot be injured."

"Does the fat King possess magic powers, or the goat?" inquired Cor.

"I think not," said Gos. "We could not injure them, indeed, any more than we could the boy, but they did not seem to have any unusual strength, although the goat's head is harder than a battering-ram."

"Well," mused the Queen, "there is surely some way to conquer that slight boy. If you are afraid to undertake the job, I shall go myself. By some strategem I shall manage to make him my prisoner. He will not dare to defy a Queen and no magic can stand against a woman's cunning."

"Go ahead, if you like," replied the King, with an evil grin, "and if you are

hung up by the thumbs or cast into a dungeon, it will serve you right for thinking you can succeed where a skilled warrior dares not make the attempt."

"I'm not afraid," answered the Queen. "It is only soldiers and bullies who are cowards."

In spite of this assertion, Queen Cor was not so brave as she was cunning. For several days she thought over this plan and that, and tried to decide which was most likely to succeed. She had never seen the boy Prince but had heard so many tales of him from the defeated warriors, and especially from Captain Buzzub, that she had learned to respect his power.

Spurred on by the knowledge that she would never get rid of her unwelcome guests until Prince Inga was overcome and Regos regained for King Gos, the Queen of Coregos finally decided to trust to luck and her native wit to defeat a simple-minded boy, however powerful he might be. Inga could not suspect what she was going to do, because she did not know herself. She intended to act boldly and trust to chance to win.

It is evident that had the cunning Queen known that Inga had lost all his magic, she would not have devoted so much time to the simple matter of capturing him, but like all others she was impressed by the marvelous exhibition of power he had shown in capturing Regos, and had no reason to believe the boy was less powerful now.

One morning Queen Cor boldly entered a boat, and, taking four men with her as an escort and bodyguard, was rowed across the narrow channel to Regos. Prince Inga was sitting in the palace playing checkers with King Rinkitink when a servant came to him, saying that Queen Cor had arrived and desired an audience with him.

With many misgivings lest the wicked Queen discover that he had now lost his magic powers, the boy ordered her to be admitted, and she soon entered the room and bowed low before him, in mock respect.

Cor was a big woman, almost as tall as King Gos. She had flashing black eyes and the dark complexion you see on gypsies. Her temper, when irritated, was something dreadful, and her face wore an evil expression which she tried to cover by smiling sweetly — often when she meant the most mischief.

"I have come," said she in a low voice, "to render homage to the noble Prince of Pingaree. I am told that Your Highness is the strongest person in the world, and invincible in battle, and therefore I wish you to become my friend, rather than my enemy."

Now Inga did not know how to reply to this speech. He disliked the appearance of the woman and was afraid of her and he was unused to

deception and did not know how to mask his real feelings. So he took time to think over his answer, Which he finally made in these words:

"I have no quarrel with Your Majesty, and my only reason for coming here is to liberate my father and mother, and my people, whom you and your husband have made your slaves, and to recover the goods King Gos has plundered from the Island of Pingaree. This I hope soon to accomplish, and if you really wish to be my friend, you can assist me greatly."

While he was speaking Queen Cor had been studying the boy's face stealthily, from the corners of her eyes, and she said to herself: "He is so small and innocent that I believe I can capture him alone, and with ease. He does not seem very terrible and I suspect that King Gos and his warriors were frightened at nothing." Then, aloud, she said to Inga:

"I wish to invite you, mighty Prince, and your friend, the great King of Gilgad, to visit my poor palace at Coregos, where all my people shall do you honor. Will you come?"

"At present," replied Inga, uneasily, "I must refuse your kind invitation."

"There will be feasting, and dancing girls, and games and fireworks," said the Queen, speaking as if eager to entice him and at each word coming a step nearer to where he stood.

"I could not enjoy them while my poor parents are slaves," said the boy, sadly.

"Are you sure of that?" asked Queen Cor, and by that time she was close beside Inga. Suddenly she leaned forward and threw both of her long arms around Inga's body, holding him in a grasp that was like a vise.

Now Rinkitink sprang forward to rescue his friend, but Cor kicked out viciously with her foot and struck the King squarely on his stomach — a very tender place to be kicked, especially if one is fat. Then, still hugging Inga tightly, the Queen called aloud:

"I've got him! Bring in the ropes."

Instantly the four men she had brought with her sprang into the room and

bound the boy hand and foot. Next they seized Rinkitink, who was still rubbing his stomach, and bound him likewise.

With a laugh of wicked triumph, Queen Cor now led her captives down to the boat and returned with them to Coregos.

Great was the astonishment of King Gos and his warriors when they saw that the mighty Prince of Pingaree, who had put them all to flight, had been captured by a woman. Cowards as they were, they now crowded around the boy and jeered at him, and some of them would have struck him had not the Queen cried out:

"Hands off! He is my prisoner, remember — not yours."

"Well, Cor, what are you going to do with him?" inquired King Gos.

"I shall make him my slave, that he may amuse my idle hours. For he is a pretty boy, and gentle, although he did frighten all of you big warriors so terribly."

The King scowled at this speech, not liking to be ridiculed, but he said nothing more. He and his men returned that same day to Regos, after restoring the bridge of boats. And they held a wild carnival of rejoicing, both in the King's palace and in the city, although the poor people of Regos who were not warriors were all sorry that the kind young Prince had been captured by his enemies and could rule them no longer.

When her unwelcome guests had all gone back to Regos and the Queen was alone in her palace, she ordered Inga and Rinkitink brought before her and their bonds removed. They came sadly enough, knowing they were in serious straits and at the mercy of a cruel mistress. Inga had taken counsel of the White Pearl, which had advised him to bear up bravely under his misfortune, promising a change for the better very soon. With this promise to comfort him, Inga faced the Queen with a dignified bearing that indicated both pride and courage.

"Well, youngster," said she, in a cheerful tone because she was pleased with her success, "you played a clever trick on my poor husband and frightened him badly, but for that prank I am inclined to forgive you. Hereafter I intend you to be my page, which means that you must fetch and carry for me at my will. And let me advise you to obey my every whim without question or delay, for when I am angry I become ugly, and when I am ugly someone is sure to feel the lash. Do you understand me?"

Inga bowed, but made no answer. Then she turned to Rinkitink and said:

"As for you, I cannot decide how to make you useful to me, as you are altogether too fat and awkward to work in the fields. It may be, however, that I can use you as a pincushion."

"What!" cried Rinkitink in horror, "would you stick pins into the King of

Gilgad?”

“Why not?” returned Queen Cor. “You are as fat as a pincushion, as you must yourself admit, and whenever I needed a pin I could call you to me.” Then she laughed at his frightened look and asked: “By the way, are you ticklish?”

This was the question Rinkitink had been dreading. He gave a moan of despair and shook his head.

“I should love to tickle the bottom of your feet with a feather,” continued the cruel woman. “Please take off your shoes.”

“Oh, your Majesty!” pleaded poor Rinkitink, “I beg you to allow me to amuse you in some other way. I can dance, or I can sing you a song.”

“Well,” she answered, shaking with laughter, “you may sing a song — if it be a merry one. But you do not seem in a merry mood.”

“I *feel* merry — indeed, Your Majesty, I do!” protested Rinkitink, anxious to escape the tickling. But even as he professed to “feel merry” his round, red face wore an expression of horror and anxiety that was really comical.

“Sing, then!” commanded Queen Cor, who was greatly amused.

Rinkitink gave a sigh of relief and after clearing his throat and trying to repress his sobs he began to sing this song — gently, at first, but finally roaring it out at the top of his voice:

“Oh!
There was a Baby Tiger lived in a men-ag-er-ie —
Fizzy-fezzy-fuzzy — they wouldn’t set him free;
And ev’rybody thought that he was gentle as could be —
Fizzy-fezzy-fuzzy — Ba-by Ti-ger!

“Oh!
They patted him upon his head and shook him by the paw —
Fizzy-fezzy-fuzzy — he had a bone to gnaw;
But soon he grew the biggest Tiger that you ever saw —
Fizzy-fezzy-fuzzy — what a Ti-ger!

“Oh!
One day they came to pet the brute and he began to fight —
Fizzy-fezzy-fuzzy — how he did scratch and bite!
He broke the cage and in a rage he darted out of sight —
Fizzy-fezzy-fuzzy was a Ti-ger!”

“And is there a moral to the song?” asked Queen Cor, when King Rinkitink had finished his song with great spirit.

"If there is," replied Rinkitink, "it is a warning not to fool with tigers."

The little Prince could not help smiling at this shrewd answer, but Queen Cor frowned and gave the King a sharp look.

"Oh," said she; "I think I know the difference between a tiger and a lapdog. But I'll bear the warning in mind, just the same."

For, after all her success in capturing them, she was a little afraid of these people who had once displayed such extraordinary powers.

Zella Goes to Coregos

CHAPTER 11

The forest in which Nikobob lived with his wife and daughter stood between the mountains and the City of Regos, and a well-beaten path wound among the trees, leading from the city to the mines. This path was used by the King's messengers, and captured prisoners were also sent by this way from Regos to work in the underground caverns.

Nikobob had built his cabin more than a mile away from this path, that he might not be molested by the wild and lawless soldiers of King Gos, but the family of the charcoal-burner was surrounded by many creatures scarcely less dangerous to encounter, and often in the night they could hear savage animals growling and prowling about the cabin. Because Nikobob minded his own business and never hunted the wild creatures to injure them, the beasts had come to regard him as one of the natural dwellers in the forest and did not molest him or his family. Still, Zella and her mother seldom wandered far from home, except on such errands as carrying honey to Coregos, and at these times Nikobob cautioned them to be very careful.

So when Zella set out on her journey to Queen Cor, with the two pails of honey in her hands, she was undertaking a dangerous adventure and there was no certainty that she would return safely to her loving parents. But they were poor, and Queen Cor's money, which they expected to receive for the honey, would enable them to purchase many things that were needed; so it was deemed best that Zella should go. She was a brave little girl and poor people are often obliged to take chances that rich ones are spared.

A passing woodchopper had brought news to Nikobob's cabin that Queen Cor had made a prisoner of the conquering Prince of Pingaree and that Gos and his warriors were again back in their city of Regos; but these struggles and conquests were matters which, however interesting, did not concern the poor charcoal-burner or his family. They were more anxious over the report that the warriors had become more reckless than ever before, and delighted in annoying all the common people; so Zella was told to keep away from the beaten path as much as possible, that she might not encounter any of the King's soldiers.

"When it is necessary to choose between the warriors and the wild beasts," said Nikobob, "the beasts will be found the more merciful."

The little girl had put on her best attire for the journey and her mother threw a blue silk shawl over her head and shoulders. Upon her feet were the pretty red shoes her father had brought her from Regos. Thus prepared, she kissed her parents good-bye and started out with a light heart, carrying the pails of honey in either hand.

It was necessary for Zella to cross the path that led from the mines to the city, but once on the other side she was not likely to meet with anyone, for she had resolved to cut through the forest and so reach the bridge of boats without entering the City of Regos, where she might be interrupted. For an hour or two she found the walking easy enough, but then the forest, which in this part was unknown to her, became badly tangled. The trees were thicker and creeping vines intertwined between them. She had to turn this way and that to get through at all, and finally she came to a place where a network of vines and branches effectually barred her farther progress.

Zella was dismayed, at first, when she encountered this obstacle, but setting down her pails she made an endeavor to push the branches aside. At her touch they parted as if by magic, breaking asunder like dried twigs, and she found she could pass freely. At another place a great log had fallen across her way, but the little girl lifted it easily and cast it aside, although six ordinary men could scarcely have moved it.

The child was somewhat worried at this evidence of a strength she had heretofore been ignorant that she possessed. In order to satisfy herself that it was no delusion, she tested her new-found power in many ways, finding that nothing was too big nor too heavy for her to lift. And, naturally enough, the girl gained courage from these experiments and became confident that she could protect herself in any emergency. When, presently, a wild boar ran toward her, grunting horribly and threatening her with its great tusks, she did not climb a tree to escape, as she had always done before on meeting such creatures, but stood still and faced the boar. When it had come quite close and Zella saw that it could not injure her — a fact that astonished both the beast and the girl — she suddenly reached down and seizing it by one ear threw the great beast far off amongst the trees, where it fell headlong to the earth, grunting louder than ever with surprise and fear.

The girl laughed merrily at this incident and, picking up her pails, resumed her journey through the forest. It is not recorded whether the wild boar told his adventure to the other beasts or they had happened to witness his defeat, but certain it is that Zella was not again molested. A brown bear watched her pass without making any movement in her direction and a great puma — a beast much dreaded by all men — crept out of her path as she approached, and disappeared among the trees.

Thus everything favored the girl's journey and she made such good speed that by noon she emerged from the forest's edge and found she was quite near to the bridge of boats that led to Coregos. This she crossed safely and without meeting any of the rude warriors she so greatly feared, and five minutes later the daughter of the charcoal-burner was seeking admittance at the back door of Queen Cor's palace.

The Excitement of Bilbil the Goat

CHAPTER 12

Our story must now return to one of our characters whom we have been forced to neglect. The temper of Bilbil the goat was not sweet under any circumstances, and whenever he had a grievance he was inclined to be quite grumpy. So, when his master settled down in the palace of King Gos for a quiet life with the boy Prince, and passed his time in playing checkers and eating and otherwise enjoying himself, he had no use whatever for Bilbil, and shut the goat in an upstairs room to prevent his wandering through the city and quarreling with the citizens. But this Bilbil did not like at all. He became very cross and disagreeable at being left alone and he did not speak nicely to the servants who came to bring him food; therefore those people decided not to wait upon him any more, resenting his conversation and not liking to be scolded by a lean, scraggly goat, even though it belonged to a conqueror. The servants kept away from the room and Bilbil grew more hungry and more angry every hour. He tried to eat the rugs and ornaments, but found them not at all nourishing. There was no grass to be had unless he escaped from the palace.

When Queen Cor came to capture Inga and Rinkitink, both the prisoners were so filled with despair at their own misfortune that they gave no thought whatever to the goat, who was left in his room. Nor did Bilbil know anything of the changed fortunes of his comrades until he heard shouts and boisterous laughter in the courtyard below. Looking out of a window, with the intention of rebuking those who dared thus to disturb him, Bilbil saw the courtyard quite filled with warriors and knew from this that the palace had in some way again fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Now, although Bilbil was often exceedingly disagreeable to King Rinkitink, as well as to the Prince, and sometimes used harsh words in addressing them, he was intelligent enough to know them to be his friends, and to know that King Gos and his people were his foes. In sudden anger, provoked by the sight of the warriors and the knowledge that he was in the power of the dangerous men of Regos, Bilbil butted his head against the door of his room and burst it open. Then he ran to the head of the staircase and saw King Gos coming up the stairs followed by a long line of his chief captains and warriors.

The goat lowered his head, trembling with rage and excitement, and just as the King reached the top stair the animal dashed forward and butted His

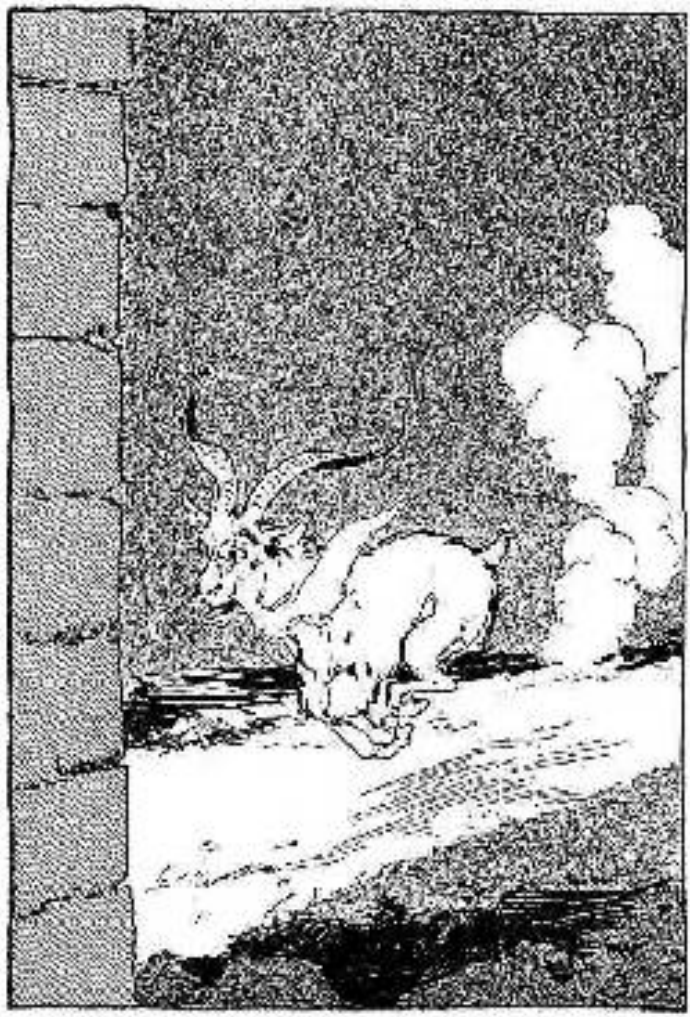
Majesty so fiercely that the big and powerful King, who did not expect an attack, doubled up and tumbled backward. His great weight knocked over the man just behind him and he in turn struck the next warrior and upset him, so that in an instant the whole line of Bilbil's foes was tumbling heels over head to the bottom of the stairs, where they piled up in a heap, struggling and shouting and in the mix-up hitting one another with their fists, until every man of them was bruised and sore.

Finally King Gos scrambled out of the heap and rushed up the stairs again, very angry indeed. Bilbil was ready for him and a second time butted the King down the stairs; but now the goat also lost his balance and followed the King, landing full upon the confused heap of soldiers. Then he kicked out so viciously with his heels that he soon freed himself and dashed out of the doorway of the palace.

"Stop him!" cried King Gos, running after.

But the goat was now so wild and excited that it was not safe for anyone to stand in his way. None of the men were armed and when one or two tried to head off the goat, Bilbil sent them sprawling upon the ground. Most of the warriors, however, were wise enough not to attempt to interfere with his flight.

Coursing down the street, Bilbil found himself approaching the bridge of boats and without pausing to think where it might lead him he crossed over and proceeded on his way. A few moments later a great stone building blocked his path. It was the palace of Queen Cor, and seeing the gates of the courtyard standing wide open, Bilbil rushed through them without slackening his speed.



Zella Saves the Prince

CHAPTER 13

The wicked Queen of Coregos was in a very bad humor this morning, for one of her slave drivers had come from the fields to say that a number of slaves had rebelled and would not work.

"Bring them here to me!" she cried savagely. "A good whipping may make them change their minds."

So the slave driver went to fetch the rebellious ones and Queen Cor sat down to eat her breakfast, an ugly look on her face.

Prince Inga had been ordered to stand behind his new mistress with a big fan of peacock's feathers, but he was so unused to such service that he awkwardly brushed her ear with the fan. At once she flew into a terrible rage and slapped the Prince twice with her hand — blows that tingled, too, for her hand was big and hard and she was not inclined to be gentle. Inga took the blows without shrinking or uttering a cry, although they stung his pride far more than his body. But King Rinkitink, who was acting as the queen's butler and had just brought in her coffee, was so startled at seeing the young Prince punished that he tipped over the urn and the hot coffee streamed across the lap of the Queen's best morning gown.

Cor sprang from her seat with a scream of anger and poor Rinkitink would doubtless have been given a terrible beating had not the slave driver returned at this moment and attracted the woman's attention. The overseer had brought with him all of the women slaves from Pingaree, who had been loaded down with chains and were so weak and ill they could scarcely walk, much less work in the fields.

Prince Inga's eyes were dimmed with sorrowful tears when he discovered how his poor people had been abused, but his own plight was so helpless that he was unable to aid them. Fortunately the boy's mother, Queen Garee, was not among these slaves, for Queen Cor had placed her in the royal dairy to make butter.

"Why do you refuse to work?" demanded Cor in a harsh voice, as the slaves from Pingaree stood before her, trembling and with downcast eyes.

"Because we lack strength to perform the tasks your overseers demand," answered one of the women.

"Then you shall be whipped until your strength returns!" exclaimed the Queen, and turning to Inga, she commanded: "Get me the whip with the seven lashes."

As the boy left the room, wondering how he might manage to save the unhappy women from their undeserved punishment, he met a girl entering by the back way, who asked:

“Can you tell me where to find Her Majesty, Queen Cor?”

“She is in the chamber with the red dome, where green dragons are painted upon the walls,” replied Inga; “but she is in an angry and ungracious mood to-day. Why do you wish to see her?”

“I have honey to sell,” answered the girl, who was Zella, just come from the forest. “The Queen is very fond of my honey.”

“You may go to her, if you so desire,” said the boy, “but take care not to anger the cruel Queen, or she may do you a mischief.”

“Why should she harm me, who brings her the honey she so dearly loves?” inquired the child innocently. “But I thank you for your warning; and I will try not to anger the Queen.”

As Zella started to go, Inga’s eyes suddenly fell upon her shoes and instantly he recognized them as his own. For only in Pingaree were shoes shaped in this manner: high at the heel and pointed at the toes.

“Stop!” he cried in an excited voice, and the girl obeyed, wonderingly. “Tell me,” he continued, more gently, “where did you get those shoes?”

“My father brought them to me from Regos,” she answered.

“From Regos!”

“Yes. Are they not pretty?” asked Zella, looking down at her feet to admire them. “One of them my father found by the palace wall, and the other on an ash-heap. So he brought them to me and they fit me perfectly.”

By this time Inga was trembling with eager joy, which of course the girl could not understand.

“What is your name, little maid?” he asked.

“I am called Zella, and my father is Nikobob, the charcoal-burner.”

“Zella is a pretty name. I am Inga, Prince of Pingaree,” said he, “and the shoes you are now wearing, Zella, belong to me. They were not cast away, as your father supposed, but were lost. Will you let me have them again?”

Zella’s eyes filled with tears.

“Must I give up my pretty shoes, then?” she asked. “They are the only ones I have ever owned.”

Inga was sorry for the poor child, but he knew how important it was that he regain possession of the Magic Pearls. So he said, pleadingly:

“Please let me have them, Zella. See! I will exchange for them the shoes I now have on, which are newer and prettier than the others.”

The girl hesitated. She wanted to please the boy Prince, yet she hated to exchange the shoes which her father had brought her as a present.

“If you will give me the shoes,” continued the boy, anxiously, “I will promise to make you and your father and mother rich and prosperous. Indeed, I will promise to grant any favors you may ask of me,” and he sat

down upon the floor and drew off the shoes he was wearing and held them toward the girl.

"I'll see if they will fit me," said Zella, taking off her left shoe — the one that contained the Pink Pearl — and beginning to put on one of Inga's.

Just then Queen Cor, angry at being made to wait for her whip with the seven lashes, rushed into the room to find Inga. Seeing the boy sitting upon the floor beside Zella, the woman sprang toward him to beat him with her clenched fists; but Inga had now slipped on the shoe and the Queen's blows could not reach his body.

Then Cor espied the whip lying beside Inga and snatching it up she tried to lash him with it — all to no avail.

While Zella sat horrified by this scene, the Prince, who realized he had no time to waste, reached out and pulled the right shoe from the girl's foot, quickly placing it upon his own. Then he stood up and, facing the furious but astonished Queen, said to her in a quiet voice:

"Madam, please give me that whip."

"I won't!" answered Cor. "I'm going to lash those Pingaree women with it."

The boy seized hold of the whip and with irresistible strength drew it from the Queen's hand. But she drew from her bosom a sharp dagger and with the swiftness of lightning aimed a blow at Inga's heart. He merely stood still and smiled, for the blade rebounded and fell clattering to the floor.

Then, at last, Queen Cor understood the magic power that had terrified her husband but which she had ridiculed in her ignorance, not believing in it. She did not know that Inga's power had been lost, and found again, but she realized the boy was no common foe and that unless she could still manage to outwit him her reign in the Island of Coregos was ended. To gain time, she went back to the red-domed chamber and seated herself in her throne, before which were grouped the weeping slaves from Pingaree.

Inga had taken Zella's hand and assisted her to put on the shoes he had given her in exchange for his own. She found them quite comfortable and did not know she had lost anything by the transfer.

"Come with me," then said the boy Prince, and led her into the presence of Queen Cor, who was giving Rinkitink a scolding. To the overseer Inga said:

"Give me the keys which unlock these chains, that I may set these poor women at liberty."

"Don't you do it!" screamed Queen Cor.

"If you interfere, madam," said the boy, "I will put you into a dungeon."

By this Rinkitink knew that Inga had recovered his Magic Pearls and the little fat King was so overjoyed that he danced and capered all around the room. But the Queen was alarmed at the threat and the slave driver, fearing the conqueror of Regos, tremblingly gave up the keys.

Inga quickly removed all the shackles from the women of his country and comforted them, telling them they should work no more but would soon be restored to their homes in Pingaree. Then he commanded the slave driver to go and get all the children who had been made slaves, and to bring them to their mothers. The man obeyed and left at once to perform his errand, while Queen Cor, growing more and more uneasy, suddenly sprang from her throne and before Inga could stop her had rushed through the room and out into the courtyard of the palace, meaning to make her escape. Rinkitink

followed her, running as fast as he could go.

It was at this moment that Bilbil, in his mad dash from Regos, turned in at the gates of the courtyard, and as he was coming one way and Queen Cor was going the other they bumped into each other with great force. The woman sailed through the air, over Bilbil's head, and landed on the ground outside the gates, where her crown rolled into a ditch and she picked herself up, half dazed, and continued her flight. Bilbil was also somewhat dazed by the unexpected encounter, but he continued his rush rather blindly and so struck poor Rinkitink, who was chasing after Queen Cor. They rolled over one another a few times and then Rinkitink sat up and Bilbil sat up and they looked at each other in amazement.

"Bilbil," said the King, "I'm astonished at you!"

"Your Majesty," said Bilbil, "I expected kinder treatment at your hands."

"You interrupted me," said Rinkitink.

"There was plenty of room without your taking my path," declared the goat.

And then Inga came running out and said: "Where is the Queen?"

"Gone," replied Rinkitink, "but she cannot go far, as this is an island. However, I have found Bilbil, and our party is again reunited. You have recovered your magic powers, and again we are masters of the situation. So let us be thankful."

Saying this, the good little King got upon his feet and limped back into the throne room to help comfort the women.

Presently the children of Pingaree, who had been gathered together by the overseer, were brought in and restored to their mothers, and there was great rejoicing among them, you may be sure.

"But where is Queen Garee, my dear mother?" questioned Inga; but the women did not know and it was some time before the overseer remembered that one of the slaves from Pingaree had been placed in the royal dairy. Perhaps this was the woman the boy was seeking.

Inga at once commanded him to lead the way to the butter house, but when they arrived there Queen Garee was nowhere in the place, although the boy found a silk scarf which he recognized as one that his mother used to wear. Then they began a search throughout the island of Coregos, but could not find Inga's mother anywhere.

When they returned to the palace of Queen Cor, Rinkitink discovered that the bridge of boats had again been removed, separating them from Regos, and from this they suspected that Queen Cor had fled to her husband's island and had taken Queen Garee with her. Inga was much perplexed what to do and returned with his friends to the palace to talk the matter over.

Zella was now crying because she had not sold her honey and was unable to return to her parents on the island of Regos, but the boy Prince comforted her and promised she should be protected until she could be restored to her home. Rinkitink found Queen Cor's purse, which she had had no time to take with her, and gave Zella several gold pieces for the honey. Then Inga ordered the palace servants to prepare a feast for all the women and children of Pingaree and to prepare for them beds in the great palace, which was large enough to accommodate them all.

Then the boy and the goat and Rinkitink and Zella went into a private room to consider what should be done next.

The Escape

CHAPTER 14

"Our fault," said Rinkitink, "is that we conquer only one of these twin islands at a time. When we conquered Regos, our foes all came to Coregos, and now that we have conquered Coregos, the Queen has fled to Regos. And each time they removed the bridge of boats, so that we could not follow them."

"What has become of our own boat, in which we came from Pingaree?" asked Bilbil.

"We left it on the shore of Regos," replied the Prince, "but I wonder if we could not get it again."

"Why don't you ask the White Pearl?" suggested Rinkitink.

"That is a good idea," returned the boy, and at once he drew the White Pearl from its silken bag and held it to his ear. Then he asked: "How may I regain our boat?"

The Voice of the Pearl replied: "Go to the south end of the Island of Coregos, and clap your hands three times and the boat will come to you."

"Very good!" cried Inga, and then he turned to his companions and said: "We shall be able to get our boat whenever we please; but what then shall we do?"

"Take me home in it!" pleaded Zella.

"Come with me to my City of Gilgad," said the King, "where you will be very welcome to remain forever."

"No," answered Inga, "I must rescue my father and mother, as well as my people. Already I have the women and children of Pingaree, but the men are with my father in the mines of Regos, and my dear mother has been taken away by Queen Cor. Not until all are rescued will I consent to leave these islands."

"Quite right!" exclaimed Bilbil.

"On second thought," said Rinkitink, "I agree with you. If you are careful to sleep in your shoes, and never take them off again, I believe you will be able to perform the task you have undertaken."

They counseled together for a long time as to their mode of action and it was finally considered best to make the attempt to liberate King Kitticut first of all, and with him the men from Pingaree. This would give them an army to assist them and afterward they could march to Regos and compel Queen Cor to give up the Queen of Pingaree. Zella told them that they could go in their boat along the shore of Regos to a point opposite the mines, thus avoiding any conflict with the warriors of King Gos.

This being considered the best course to pursue, they resolved to start on

the following morning, as night was even now approaching. The servants being all busy in caring for the women and children, Zella undertook to get a dinner for Inga and Rinkitink and herself and soon prepared a fine meal in the palace kitchen, for she was a good little cook and had often helped her mother. The dinner was served in a small room overlooking the gardens and Rinkitink thought the best part of it was the sweet honey, which he spread upon the biscuits that Zella had made. As for Bilbil, he wandered through the palace grounds and found some grass that made him a good dinner.

During the evening Inga talked with the women and cheered them, promising soon to reunite them with their husbands who were working in the mines and to send them back to their own island of Pingaree.

Next morning the boy rose bright and early and found that Zella had already prepared a nice breakfast. And after the meal they went to the most southern point of the island, which was not very far away, Rinkitink riding upon Bilbil's back and Inga and Zella following behind them, hand in hand.

When they reached the water's edge the boy advanced and clapped his hands together three times, as the White Pearl had told him to do. And in a few moments they saw in the distance the black boat with the silver lining, coming swiftly toward them from the sea. Presently it grounded on the beach and they all got into it.

Zella was delighted with the boat, which was the most beautiful she had ever seen, and the marvel of its coming to them through the water without anyone to row it, made her a little afraid of the fairy craft. But Inga picked up the oars and began to row and at once the boat shot swiftly in the direction of Regos. They rounded the point of that island where the city was built and noticed that the shore was lined with warriors who had discovered their boat but seemed undecided whether to pursue it or not. This was probably because they had received no commands what to do, or perhaps they had learned to fear the magic powers of these adventurers from Pingaree and were unwilling to attack them unless their King ordered them to.

The coast on the western side of the Island of Regos was very uneven and Zella, who knew fairly well the location of the mines from the inland forest path, was puzzled to decide which mountain they now viewed from the sea was the one where the entrance to the underground caverns was located. First she thought it was this peak, and then she guessed it was that; so considerable time was lost through her uncertainty.

They finally decided to land and explore the country, to see where they were, so Inga ran the boat into a little rocky cove where they all disembarked. For an hour they searched for the path without finding any trace of it and now Zella believed they had gone too far to the north and must return to another mountain that was nearer to the city.

Once again they entered the boat and followed the winding coast south until they thought they had reached the right place. By this time, however, it was growing dark, for the entire day had been spent in the search for the entrance to the mines, and Zella warned them that it would be safer to spend the night in the boat than on the land, where wild beasts were sure to disturb them. None of them realized at this time how fatal this day of search had been to their plans and perhaps if Inga had realized what was going on he would have landed and fought all the wild beasts in the forest rather than quietly remain in the boat until morning.

However, knowing nothing of the cunning plans of Queen Cor and King

Gos, they anchored their boat in a little bay and cheerfully ate their dinner, finding plenty of food and drink in the boat's lockers. In the evening the stars came out in the sky and tipped the waves around their boat with silver. All around them was delightfully still save for the occasional snarl of a beast on the neighboring shore.

They talked together quietly of their adventures and their future plans and Zella told them her simple history and how hard her poor father was obliged to work, burning charcoal to sell for enough money to support his wife and child. Nikobob might be the humblest man in all Regos, but Zella declared he was a good man, and honest, and it was not his fault that his country was ruled by so wicked a King.

Then Rinkitink, to amuse them, offered to sing a song, and although Bilbil protested in his gruff way, claiming that his master's voice was cracked and disagreeable, the little King was encouraged by the others to sing his song, which he did.

"A red-headed man named Ned was dead;
Sing fiddle-cum-faddle-cum-fi-do!
In battle he had lost his head;
Sing fiddle-cum-faddle-cum-fi-do!
'Alas, poor Ned,' to him I said,
'How did you lose your head so red?'
Sing fiddle-cum-faddle-cum-fi-do!

"Said Ned: 'I for my country bled,'
Sing fiddle-cum-faddle-cum-fi-do!
'Instead of dying safe in bed;'
Sing fiddle-cum-faddle-cum-fi-do!
'If I had only fled, instead,
I then had been a head ahead.'
Sing fiddle-cum-faddle-cum-fi-do!

"I said to Ned — — "

"Do stop, Your Majesty!" pleaded Bilbil. "You're making my head ache."

"But the song isn't finished," replied Rinkitink, "and as for your head aching, think of poor Ned, who hadn't any head at all!"

"I can think of nothing but your dismal singing," retorted Bilbil. "Why didn't you choose a cheerful subject, instead of telling how a man who was dead lost his red head? Really, Rinkitink, I'm surprised at you."

"I know a splendid song about a live man," said the King.

"Then don't sing it," begged Bilbil.

Zella was both astonished and grieved by the disrespectful words of the goat, for she had quite enjoyed Rinkitink's singing and had been taught a

proper respect for Kings and those high in authority. But as it was now getting late they decided to go to sleep, that they might rise early the following morning, so they all reclined upon the bottom of the big boat and covered themselves with blankets which they found stored underneath the seats for just such occasions. They were not long in falling asleep and did not waken until daybreak.

After a hurried breakfast, for Inga was eager to liberate his father, the boy rowed the boat ashore and they all landed and began searching for the path. Zella found it within the next half hour and declared they must be very close to the entrance to the mines; so they followed the path toward the north, Inga going first, and then Zella following him, while Rinkitink brought up the rear

riding upon Bilbil's back.

Before long they saw a great wall of rock towering before them, in which was a low arched entrance, and on either side of this entrance stood a guard, armed with a sword and a spear. The guards of the mines were not so fierce as the warriors of King Gos, their duty being to make the slaves work at their tasks and guard them from escaping; but they were as cruel as their cruel master wished them to be, and as cowardly as they were cruel.

Inga walked up to the two men at the entrance and said:

"Does this opening lead to the mines of King Gos?"

"It does," replied one of the guards, "but no one is allowed to pass out who once goes in."

"Nevertheless," said the boy, "we intend to go in and we shall come out whenever it pleases us to do so. I am the Prince of Pingaree, and I have come to liberate my people, whom King Gos has enslaved."

Now when the two guards heard this speech they looked at one another and laughed, and one of them said: "The King was right, for he said the boy was likely to come here and that he would try to set his people free. Also the King commanded that we must keep the little Prince in the mines, and set him to work, together with his companions."

"Then let us obey the King," replied the other man.

Inga was surprised at hearing this, and asked:

"When did King Gos give you this order?"

"His Majesty was here in person last night," replied the man, "and went away again but an hour ago. He suspected you were coming here and told us to capture you if we could."

This report made the boy very anxious, not for himself but for his father, for he feared the King was up to some mischief. So he hastened to enter the mines and the guards did nothing to oppose him or his companions, their orders being to allow him to go in but not to come out.

The little group of adventurers passed through a long rocky corridor and reached a low, wide cavern where they found a dozen guards and a hundred slaves, the latter being hard at work with picks and shovels digging for gold, while the guards stood over them with long whips.

Inga found many of the men from Pingaree among these slaves, but King Kitticut was not in this cavern; so they passed through it and entered another corridor that led to a second cavern. Here also hundreds of men were working, but the boy did not find his father amongst them, and so went on to a third cavern.

The corridors all slanted downward, so that the farther they went the lower into the earth they descended, and now they found the air hot and close

and difficult to breathe. Flaming torches were stuck into the walls to give light to the workers, and these added to the oppressive heat.

The third and lowest cavern was the last in the mines, and here were many scores of slaves and many guards to keep them at work. So far, none of the guards had paid any attention to Inga's party, but allowed them to proceed as they would, and while the slaves cast curious glances at the boy and girl and man and goat, they dared say nothing. But now the boy walked up to some of the men of Pingaree and asked news of his father, telling them not to fear the guards as he would protect them from the whips.

Then he learned that King Kitticut had indeed been working in this very cavern until the evening before, when King Gos had come and taken him

away — still loaded with chains.

“Seems to me,” said King Rinkitink, when he heard this report, “that Gos has carried your father away to Regos, to prevent us from rescuing him. He may hide poor Kitticut in a dungeon, where we cannot find him.”

“Perhaps you are right,” answered the boy, “but I am determined to find him, wherever he may be.”

Ingo spoke firmly and with courage, but he was greatly disappointed to find that King Gos had been before him at the mines and had taken his father away. However, he tried not to feel disheartened, believing he would succeed in the end, in spite of all opposition. Turning to the guards, he said:

“Remove the chains from these slaves and set them free.”

The guards laughed at this order, and one of them brought forward a handful of chains, saying: “His Majesty has commanded us to make you, also, a slave, for you are never to leave these caverns again.”

Then he attempted to place the chains on Inga, but the boy indignantly seized them and broke them apart as easily as if they had been cotton cords. When a dozen or more of the guards made a dash to capture him, the Prince swung the end of the chain like a whip and drove them into a corner, where they cowered and begged for mercy.

Stories of the marvelous strength of the boy Prince had already spread to the mines of Regos, and although King Gos had told them that Inga had been deprived of all his magic power, the guards now saw this was not true, so they deemed it wise not to attempt to oppose him.

The chains of the slaves had all been riveted fast to their ankles and wrists, but Inga broke the bonds of steel with his hands and set the poor men

free — not only those from Pingaree but all who had been captured in the many wars and raids of King Gos. They were very grateful, as you may suppose, and agreed to support Prince Inga in whatever action he commanded.

He led them to the middle cavern, where all the guards and overseers fled in terror at his approach, and soon he had broken apart the chains of the slaves who had been working in that part of the mines. Then they approached the first cavern and liberated all there.

The slaves had been treated so cruelly by the servants of King Gos that they were eager to pursue and slay them, in revenge; but Inga held them back and formed them into companies, each company having its own leader. Then he called the leaders together and instructed them to march in good order along the path to the City of Regos, where he would meet them and tell them what to do next.

They readily agreed to obey him, and, arming themselves with iron bars and pick-axes which they brought from the mines, the slaves began their march to the city.

Zella at first wished to be left behind, that she might make her way to her own home, but neither Rinkitink nor Inga thought it was safe for her to wander alone through the forest, so they induced her to return with them to the city.

The boy beached his boat this time at the same place as when he first landed at Regos, and while many of the warriors stood on the shore and before the walls of the city, not one of them attempted to interfere with the boy in any way. Indeed, they seemed uneasy and anxious, and when Inga met Captain Buzzub the boy asked if anything had happened in his absence.

“A great deal has happened,” replied Buzzub. “Our King and Queen have run away and left us, and we don’t know what to do.”

“Run away!” exclaimed Inga. “Where did they go to?”

“Who knows?” said the man, shaking his head despondently. “They departed together a few hours ago, in a boat with forty rowers, and they took with them the King and Queen of Pingaree!”

The Flight of the Rulers

CHAPTER 15

Now it seems that when Queen Cor fled from her island to Regos, she had wit enough, although greatly frightened, to make a stop at the royal dairy, which was near to the bridge, and to drag poor Queen Garee from the butter-house and across to Regos with her. The warriors of King Gos had never before seen the terrible Queen Cor frightened, and therefore when she came running across the bridge of boats, dragging the Queen of Pingaree after her by one arm, the woman's great fright had the effect of terrifying the waiting warriors.

"Quick!" cried Cor. "Destroy the bridge, or we are lost."

While the men were tearing away the bridge of boats the Queen ran up to the palace of Gos, where she met her husband.

"That boy is a wizard!" she gasped. "There is no standing against him."

"Oh, have you discovered his magic at last?" replied Gos, laughing in her face. "Who, now, is the coward?"

"Don't laugh!" cried Queen Cor. "It is no laughing matter. Both our islands are as good as conquered, this very minute. What shall we do, Gos?"

"Come in," he said, growing serious, "and let us talk it over."

So they went into a room of the palace and talked long and earnestly.

"The boy intends to liberate his father and mother, and all the people of Pingaree, and to take them back to their island," said Cor. "He may also destroy our palaces and make us his slaves. I can see but one way, Gos, to prevent him from doing all this, and whatever else he pleases to do."

"What way is that?" asked King Gos.

"We must take the boy's parents away from here as quickly as possible. I have with me the Queen of Pingaree, and you can run up to the mines and get the King. Then we will carry them away in a boat and hide them where the boy cannot find them, with all his magic. We will use the King and Queen of Pingaree as hostages, and send word to the boy wizard that if he does not go away from our islands and allow us to rule them undisturbed, in our own way, we will put his father and mother to death. Also we will say that as long as we are let alone his parents will be safe, although still safely hidden. I believe, Gos, that in this way we can compel Prince Inga to obey us, for he seems very fond of his parents."

"It isn't a bad idea," said Gos, reflectively; "but where can we hide the King and Queen, so that the boy cannot find them?"

"In the country of the Nome King, on the mainland away at the south," she replied. "The nomes are our friends, and they possess magic powers that will enable them to protect the prisoners from discovery. If we can manage to

get the King and Queen of Pingaree to the Nome Kingdom before the boy knows what we are doing, I am sure our plot will succeed."

Gos gave the plan considerable thought in the next five minutes, and the more he thought about it the more clever and reasonable it seemed. So he agreed to do as Queen Cor suggested and at once hurried away to the mines, where he arrived before Prince Inga did. The next morning he carried King Kitticut back to Regos.

While Gos was gone, Queen Cor busied herself in preparing a large and swift boat for the journey. She placed in it several bags of gold and jewels with which to bribe the nomes, and selected forty of the strongest oarsmen in Regos to row the boat. The instant King Gos returned with his royal prisoner

all was ready for departure. They quickly entered the boat with their two important captives and without a word of explanation to any of their people they commanded the oarsmen to start, and were soon out of sight upon the broad expanse of the Nonestic Ocean.

Inga arrived at the city some hours later and was much distressed when he learned that his father and mother had been spirited away from the islands.

"I shall follow them, of course," said the boy to Rinkitink, "and if I cannot overtake them on the ocean I will search the world over until I find them. But before I leave here I must arrange to send our people back to Pingaree."

Nikobob Refuses a Crown

CHAPTER 16

Almost the first persons that Zella saw when she landed from the silver-lined boat at Regos were her father and mother. Nikobob and his wife had been greatly worried when their little daughter failed to return from Coregos, so they had set out to discover what had become of her. When they reached the City of Regos, that very morning, they were astonished to hear news of all the strange events that had taken place; still, they found comfort when told that Zella had been seen in the boat of Prince Inga, which had gone to the north. Then, while they wondered what this could mean, the silver-lined boat appeared again, with their daughter in it, and they ran down to the shore to give her a welcome and many joyful kisses.

Inga invited the good people to the palace of King Gos, where he conferred with them, as well as with Rinkitink and Bilbil.

"Now that the King and Queen of Regos and Coregos have run away," he said, "there is no one to rule these islands. So it is my duty to appoint a new ruler, and as Nikobob, Zella's father, is an honest and worthy man, I shall make him the King of the Twin Islands."

"Me?" cried Nikobob, astounded by this speech. "I beg Your Highness, on my bended knees, not to do so cruel a thing as to make me King!"

"Why not?" inquired Rinkitink. "I'm a King, and I know how it feels. I assure you, good Nikobob, that I quite enjoy my high rank, although a jeweled crown is rather heavy to wear in hot weather."

"With you, noble sir, it is different," said Nikobob, "for you are far from your kingdom and its trials and worries and may do as you please. But to remain in Regos, as King over these fierce and unruly warriors, would be to live in constant anxiety and peril, and the chances are that they would murder me within a month. As I have done no harm to anyone and have tried to be a good and upright man, I do not think that I should be condemned to such a dreadful fate."

"Very well," replied Inga, "we will say no more about your being King. I merely wanted to make you rich and prosperous, as I had promised Zella."

"Please forget that promise," pleaded the charcoal-burner, earnestly; "I have been safe from molestation for many years, because I was poor and possessed nothing that anyone else could envy. But if you make me rich and prosperous I shall at once become the prey of thieves and marauders and probably will lose my life in the attempt to protect my fortune."

Inga looked at the man in surprise.

"What, then, can I do to please you?" he inquired.

"Nothing more than to allow me to go home to my poor cabin," said

Nikobob.

"Perhaps," remarked King Rinkitink, "the charcoal-burner has more wisdom concealed in that hard head of his than we gave him credit for. But let us use that wisdom, for the present, to counsel us what to do in this emergency."

"What you call my wisdom," said Nikobob, "is merely common sense. I have noticed that some men become rich, and are scorned by some and robbed by others. Other men become famous, and are mocked at and derided by their fellows. But the poor and humble man who lives unnoticed and unknown escapes all these troubles and is the only one who can appreciate the joy of living."

“If I had a hand, instead of a cloven hoof, I’d like to shake hands with you, Nikobob,” said Bilbil the goat. “But the poor man must not have a cruel master, or he is undone.”

During the council they found, indeed, that the advice of the charcoal-burner was both shrewd and sensible, and they profited much by his words.

Inga gave Captain Buzzub the command of the warriors and made him promise to keep his men quiet and orderly — if he could. Then the boy allowed all of King Gos’s former slaves, except those who came from Pingaree, to choose what boats they required and to stock them with provisions and row away to their own countries. When these had departed, with grateful thanks and many blessings showered upon the boy Prince who had set them free, Inga made preparations to send his own people home, where they were told to rebuild their houses and then erect a new royal palace. They were then to await patiently the coming of King Kitticut or Prince Inga.

“My greatest worry,” said the boy to his friends, “is to know whom to appoint to take charge of this work of restoring Pingaree to its former condition. My men are all pearl fishers, and although willing and honest, have no talent for directing others how to work.”

While the preparations for departure were being made, Nikobob offered to direct the men of Pingaree, and did so in a very capable manner. As the island had been despoiled of all its valuable furniture and draperies and rich cloths and paintings and statuary and the like, as well as gold and silver and ornaments, Inga thought it no more than just that they be replaced by the spoilers. So he directed his people to search through the storehouses of King Gos and to regain all their goods and chattels that could be found. Also he instructed them to take as much else as they required to make their new homes comfortable, so that many boats were loaded full of goods that would enable the people to restore Pingaree to its former state of comfort.

For his father’s new palace the boy plundered the palaces of both Queen Cor and King Gos, sending enough wares away with his people to make King Kitticut’s new residence as handsomely fitted and furnished as had been the one which the ruthless invaders from Regos had destroyed.

It was a great fleet of boats that set out one bright, sunny morning on the voyage to Pingaree, carrying all the men, women and children and all the goods for refitting their homes. As he saw the fleet depart, Prince Inga felt that he had already successfully accomplished a part of his mission, but he vowed he would never return to Pingaree in person until he could take his father and mother there with him; unless, indeed, King Gos wickedly destroyed his beloved parents, in which case Inga would become the King of

Pingaree and it would be his duty to go to his people and rule over them.

It was while the last of the boats were preparing to sail for Pingaree that Nikobob, who had been of great service in getting them ready, came to Inga in a thoughtful mood and said:

"Your Highness, my wife and my daughter Zella have been urging me to leave Regos and settle down in your island, in a new home. From what your people have told me, Pingaree is a better place to live than Regos, and there are no cruel warriors or savage beasts there to keep one in constant fear for the safety of those he loves. Therefore, I have come to ask to go with my family in one of the boats."

Inga was much pleased with this proposal and not only granted Nikobob

permission to go to Pingaree to live, but instructed him to take with him sufficient goods to furnish his new home in a comfortable manner. In addition to this, he appointed Nikobob general manager of the buildings and of the pearl fisheries, until his father or he himself arrived, and the people approved this order because they liked Nikobob and knew him to be just and honest.

As soon as the last boat of the great flotilla had disappeared from the view of those left at Regos, Inga and Rinkitink prepared to leave the island themselves. The boy was anxious to overtake the boat of King Gos, if possible, and Rinkitink had no desire to remain in Regos.

Buzzub and the warriors stood silently on the shore and watched the black boat with its silver lining depart, and I am sure they were as glad to be rid of their unwelcome visitors as Inga and Rinkitink and Bilbil were to leave.

The boy asked the White Pearl what direction the boat of King Gos had taken and then he followed after it, rowing hard and steadily for eight days without becoming at all weary. But, although the black boat moved very swiftly, it failed to overtake the barge which was rowed by Queen Cor's forty picked oarsmen.

The Nome King

CHAPTER 17

The Kingdom of the Nomes does not border on the Nonestic Ocean, from which it is separated by the Kingdom of Rinkitink and the Country of the Wheelers, which is a part of the Land of Ev. Rinkitink's country is separated from the country of the Nomes by a row of high and steep mountains, from which it extends to the sea. The Country of the Wheelers is a sandy waste that is open on one side to the Nonestic Ocean and on the other side has no barrier to separate it from the Nome Country, therefore it was on the coast of the Wheelers that King Gos landed — in a spot quite deserted by any of the curious inhabitants of that country.

The Nome Country is very large in extent, and is only separated from the Land of Oz, on its eastern borders, by a Deadly Desert that cannot be crossed by mortals, unless they are aided by the fairies or by magic.

The nomes are a numerous and mischievous people, living in underground caverns of wide extent, connected one with another by arches and passages. The word "nome" means "one who knows," and these people are so called because they know where all the gold and silver and precious stones are hidden in the earth — a knowledge that no other living creatures share with them. The nomes are busy people, constantly digging up gold in one place and taking it to another place, where they secretly bury it, and perhaps this is the reason they alone know where to find it. The nomes were ruled, at the time of which I write, by a King named Kaliko.

King Gos had expected to be pursued by Inga in his magic boat, so he made all the haste possible, urging his forty rowers to their best efforts night and day. To his joy he was not overtaken but landed on the sandy beach of the Wheelers on the morning of the eighth day.

The forty rowers were left with the boat, while Queen Cor and King Gos, with their royal prisoners, who were still chained, began the journey to the Nome King.

It was not long before they passed the sands and reached the rocky country belonging to the nomes, but they were still a long way from the entrance to the underground caverns in which lived the Nome King. There was a dim path, winding between stones and boulders, over which the walking was quite difficult, especially as the path led up hills that were small mountains, and then down steep and abrupt slopes where any misstep might mean a broken leg. Therefore it was the second day of their journey before they climbed halfway up a rugged mountain and found themselves at the entrance of the Nome King's caverns.

On their arrival, the entrance seemed free and unguarded, but Gos and Cor

had been there before, and they were too wise to attempt to enter without announcing themselves, for the passage to the caves was full of traps and pitfalls. So King Gos stood still and shouted, and in an instant they were surrounded by a group of crooked nomes, who seemed to have sprung from the ground.

One of these had very long ears and was called The Long-Eared Hearer. He said: “I heard you coming early this morning.”

Another had eyes that looked in different directions at the same time and were curiously bright and penetrating. He could look over a hill or around a corner and was called The Lookout. Said he: “I saw you coming yesterday.”

“Then,” said King Gos, “perhaps King Kaliko is expecting us.”

“It is true,” replied another nome, who wore a gold collar around his neck and carried a bunch of golden keys. “The mighty Nome King expects you, and bids you follow me to his presence.”

With this he led the way into the caverns and Gos and Cor followed, dragging their weary prisoners with them, for poor King Kitticut and his gentle Queen had been obliged to carry, all through the tedious journey, the bags of gold and jewels which were to bribe the Nome King to accept them as slaves.

Through several long passages the guide led them and at last they entered a small cavern which was beautifully decorated and set with rare jewels that flashed from every part of the wall, floor and ceiling. This was a waiting-room for visitors, and there their guide left them while he went to inform King Kaliko of their arrival.

Before long they were ushered into a great domed chamber, cut from the solid rock and so magnificent that all of them — the King and Queen of Pingaree and the King and Queen of Regos and Coregos — drew long breaths of astonishment and opened their eyes as wide as they could.

In an ivory throne sat a little round man who had a pointed beard and hair that rose to a tall curl on top of his head. He was dressed in silken robes, richly embroidered, which had large buttons of cut rubies. On his head was a diamond crown and in his hand he held a golden sceptre with a big jeweled ball at one end of it. This was Kaliko, the King and ruler of all the nomes. He nodded pleasantly enough to his visitors and said in a cheery voice:

“Well, Your Majesties, what can I do for you?”

“It is my desire,” answered King Gos, respectfully, “to place in your care two prisoners, whom you now see before you. They must be carefully guarded, to prevent them from escaping, for they have the cunning of foxes and are not to be trusted. In return for the favor I am asking you to grant, I have brought Your Majesty valuable presents of gold and precious gems.”

He then commanded Kitticut and Garee to lay before the Nome King the bags of gold and jewels, and they obeyed, being helpless.

“Very good,” said King Kaliko, nodding approval, for like all the nomes he loved treasures of gold and jewels. “But who are the prisoners you have brought here, and why do you place them in my charge instead of guarding them yourself? They seem gentle enough, I’m sure.”

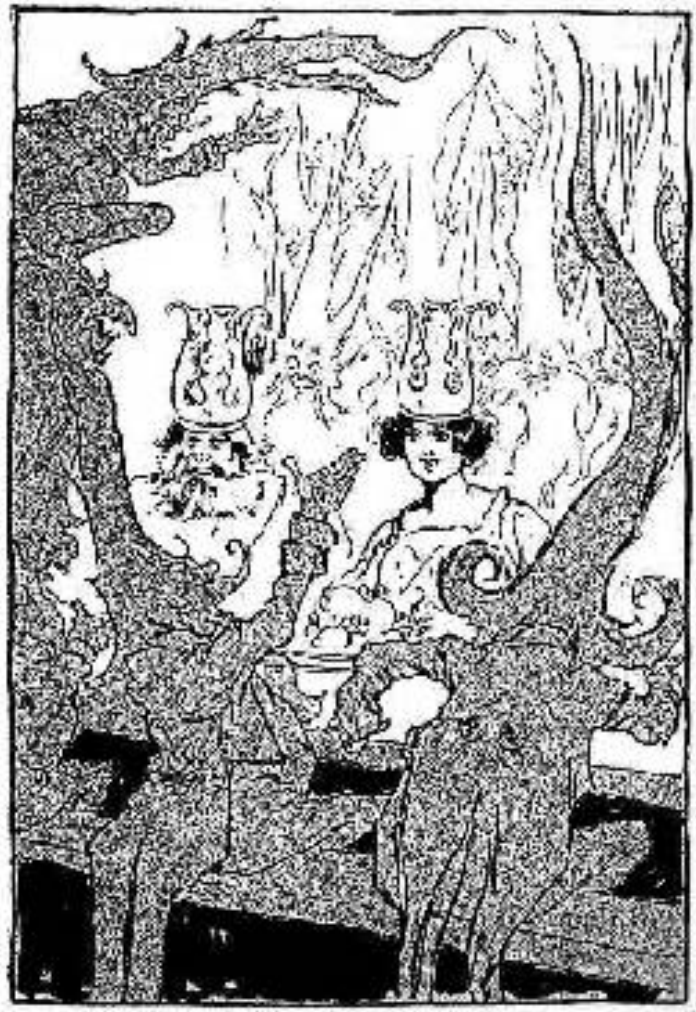
“The prisoners,” returned King Gos, “are the King and Queen of Pingaree, a small island north of here. They are very evil people and came to our islands of Regos and Coregos to conquer them and slay our poor people. Also they intended to plunder us of all our riches, but by good fortune we were able to defeat and capture them. However, they have a son who is a

terrible wizard and who by magic art is trying to find this awful King and Queen of Pingaree, and to set them free, that they may continue their wicked deeds. Therefore, as we have no magic to defend ourselves with, we have brought the prisoners to you for safe keeping."

"Your Majesty," spoke up King Kitticut, addressing the Nome King with great indignation, "do not believe this tale, I implore you. It is all a lie!"

"I know it," said Kaliko. "I consider it a clever lie, though, because it is woven without a thread of truth. However, that is none of my business. The fact remains that my good friend King Gos wishes to put you in my underground caverns, so that you will be unable to escape. And why should I not please him in this little matter? Gos is a mighty King and a great warrior, while your island of Pingaree is desolated and your people scattered. In my heart, King Kitticut, I sympathize with you, but as a matter of business policy we powerful Kings must stand together and trample the weaker ones under our feet."

King Kitticut was surprised to find the King of the nomes so candid and so well informed, and he tried to argue that he and his gentle wife did not deserve their cruel fate and that it would be wiser for Kaliko to side with them than with the evil King of Regos. But Kaliko only shook his head and smiled, saying:



"The fact that you are a prisoner, my poor Kitticut, is evidence that you are weaker than King Gos, and I prefer to deal with the strong. By the way," he added, turning to the King of Regos, "have these prisoners any connection with the Land of Oz?"

"Why do you ask?" said Gos.

"Because I dare not offend the Oz people," was the reply. "I am very powerful, as you know, but Ozma of Oz is far more powerful than I; therefore, if this King and Queen of Pingaree happened to be under Ozma's protection, I would have nothing to do with them."

"I assure Your Majesty that the prisoners have nothing to do with the Oz people," Gos hastened to say. And Kitticut, being questioned, admitted that

this was true.

"But how about that wizard you mentioned?" asked the Nome King.

"Oh, he is merely a boy; but he is very ferocious and obstinate and he is assisted by a little fat sorcerer called Rinkitink and a talking goat."

"Oho! A talking goat, do you say? That certainly sounds like magic; and it also sounds like the Land of Oz, where all the animals talk," said Kaliko, with a doubtful expression.

But King Gos assured him the talking goat had never been to Oz.

"As for Rinkitink, whom you call a sorcerer," continued the Nome King, "he is a neighbor of mine, you must know, but as we are cut off from each other by high mountains beneath which a powerful river runs, I have never yet met King Rinkitink. But I have heard of him, and from all reports he is a jolly rogue, and perfectly harmless. However, in spite of your false statements and misrepresentations, I will earn the treasure you have brought me, by keeping your prisoners safe in my caverns."

"Make them work," advised Queen Cor. "They are rather delicate, and to make them work will make them suffer delightfully."

"I'll do as I please about that," said the Nome King sternly. "Be content that I agree to keep them safe."

The bargain being thus made and concluded, Kaliko first examined the gold and jewels and then sent it away to his royal storehouse, which was well filled with like treasure. Next the captives were sent away in charge of the nome with the golden collar and keys, whose name was Klik, and he escorted them to a small cavern and gave them a good supper.

"I shall lock your door," said Klik, "so there is no need of your wearing those heavy chains any longer." He therefore removed the chains and left King Kitticut and his Queen alone. This was the first time since the Northmen had carried them away from Pingaree that the good King and Queen had been alone together and free of all bonds, and as they embraced lovingly and mingled their tears over their sad fate they were also grateful that they had passed from the control of the heartless King Gos into the more considerate care of King Kaliko. They were still captives but they believed they would be happier in the underground caverns of the nomes than in Regos and Coregos.

Meantime, in the King's royal cavern a great feast had been spread. King Gos and Queen Cor, having triumphed in their plot, were so well pleased that they held high revelry with the jolly Nome King until a late hour that night. And the next morning, having cautioned Kaliko not to release the prisoners under any consideration without their orders, the King and Queen of Regos and Coregos left the caverns of the nomes to return to the shore of the ocean

where they had left their boat.

Inga Parts With His Pink Pearl

CHAPTER 18

The White Pearl guided Inga truly in his pursuit of the boat of King Gos, but the boy had been so delayed in sending his people home to Pingaree that it was a full day after Gos and Cor landed on the shore of the Wheeler Country that Inga's boat arrived at the same place.

There he found the forty rowers guarding the barge of Queen Cor, and although they would not or could not tell the boy where the King and Queen had taken his father and mother, the White Pearl advised him to follow the path to the country and the caverns of the nomes.

Rinkitink didn't like to undertake the rocky and mountainous journey, even with Bilbil to carry him, but he would not desert Inga, even though his own kingdom lay just beyond a range of mountains which could be seen towering southwest of them. So the King bravely mounted the goat, who always grumbled but always obeyed his master, and the three set off at once for the caverns of the nomes.

They traveled just as slowly as Queen Cor and King Gos had done, so when they were about halfway they discovered the King and Queen coming back to their boat. The fact that Gos and Cor were now alone proved that they had left Inga's father and mother behind them; so, at the suggestion of Rinkitink, the three hid behind a high rock until the King of Regos and the Queen of Coregos, who had not observed them, had passed them by. Then they continued their journey, glad that they had not again been forced to fight or quarrel with their wicked enemies.

"We might have asked them, however, what they had done with your poor parents," said Rinkitink.

"Never mind," answered Inga. "I am sure the White Pearl will guide us aright."

For a time they proceeded in silence and then Rinkitink began to chuckle with laughter in the pleasant way he was wont to do before his misfortunes came upon him.

"What amuses Your Majesty?" inquired the boy.

"The thought of how surprised my dear subjects would be if they realized how near to them I am, and yet how far away. I have always wanted to visit the Nome Country, which is full of mystery and magic and all sorts of adventures, but my devoted subjects forbade me to think of such a thing, fearing I would get hurt or enchanted."

"Are you afraid, now that you are here?" asked Inga.

"A little, but not much, for they say the new Nome King is not as wicked as the old King used to be. Still, we are undertaking a dangerous journey and

I think you ought to protect me by lending me one of your pearls."

Inga thought this over and it seemed a reasonable request.

"Which pearl would you like to have?" asked the boy.

"Well, let us see," returned Rinkitink; "you may need strength to liberate your captive parents, so you must keep the Blue Pearl. And you will need the advice of the White Pearl, so you had best keep that also. But in case we should be separated I would have nothing to protect me from harm, so you ought to lend me the Pink Pearl."

"Very well," agreed Inga, and sitting down upon a rock he removed his right shoe and after withdrawing the cloth from the pointed toe took out the Pink Pearl — the one which protected from any harm the person who carried it.

"Where can you put it, to keep it safely?" he asked.

"In my vest pocket," replied the King. "The pocket has a flap to it and I can pin it down in such a way that the pearl cannot get out and become lost. As for robbery, no one with evil intent can touch my person while I have the pearl."

So Inga gave Rinkitink the Pink Pearl and the little King placed it in the pocket of his red-and-green brocaded velvet vest, pinning the flap of the pocket down tightly.

They now resumed their journey and finally reached the entrance to the Nome King's caverns. Placing the White Pearl to his ear, Inga asked: "What shall I do now?" and the Voice of the Pearl replied: "Clap your hands together four times and call aloud the word 'Klik.' Then allow yourselves to be conducted to the Nome King, who is now holding your father and mother captive."

Inga followed these instructions and when Klik appeared in answer to his summons the boy requested an audience of the Nome King. So Klik led them into the presence of King Kaliko, who was suffering from a severe headache, due to his revelry the night before, and therefore was unusually cross and grumpy.

“I know what you’ve come for,” said he, before Inga could speak. “You want to get the captives from Regos away from me; but you can’t do it, so you’d best go away again.”

“The captives are my father and mother, and I intend to liberate them,” said the boy firmly.

The King stared hard at Inga, wondering at his audacity. Then he turned to look at King Rinkitink and said:

“I suppose you are the King of Gilgad, which is in the Kingdom of Rinkitink.”

“You’ve guessed it the first time,” replied Rinkitink.

“How round and fat you are!” exclaimed Kaliko.

“I was just thinking how fat and round *you* are,” said Rinkitink. “Really, King Kaliko, we ought to be friends, we’re so much alike in everything but disposition and intelligence.”

Then he began to chuckle, while Kaliko stared hard at him, not knowing whether to accept his speech as a compliment or not. And now the nome’s eyes wandered to Bilbil, and he asked:

“Is that your talking goat?”

Bilbil met the Nome King’s glowering look with a gaze equally surly and defiant, while Rinkitink answered: “It is, Your Majesty.”

“Can he really talk?” asked Kaliko, curiously.

“He can. But the best thing he does is to scold. Talk to His Majesty, Bilbil.”

But Bilbil remained silent and would not speak.

“Do you always ride upon his back?” continued Kaliko, questioning Rinkitink.

“Yes,” was the answer, “because it is difficult for a fat man to walk far, as perhaps you know from experience.”

“That is true,” said Kaliko. “Get off the goat’s back and let me ride him a while, to see how I like it. Perhaps I’ll take him away from you, to ride through my caverns.”

Rinkitink chuckled softly as he heard this, but at once got off Bilbil’s back and let Kaliko get on. The Nome King was a little awkward, but when he was firmly astride the saddle he called in a loud voice: “Giddap!”

When Bilbil paid no attention to the command and refused to stir, Kaliko kicked his heels viciously against the goat’s body, and then Bilbil made a sudden start. He ran swiftly across the great cavern, until he had almost reached the opposite wall, when he stopped so abruptly that King Kaliko sailed over his head and bumped against the jeweled wall. He bumped so hard that the points of his crown were all mashed out of shape and his head

was driven far into the diamond-studded band of the crown, so that it covered one eye and a part of his nose. Perhaps this saved Kaliko's head from being cracked against the rock wall, but it was hard on the crown.

Bilbil was highly pleased at the success of his feat and Rinkitink laughed merrily at the Nome King's comical appearance; but Kaliko was muttering and growling as he picked himself up and struggled to pull the battered crown from his head, and it was evident that he was not in the least amused. Indeed, Inga could see that the King was very angry, and the boy knew that the incident was likely to turn Kaliko against the entire party.

The Nome King sent Klik for another crown and ordered his workmen to repair the one that was damaged. While he waited for the new crown he sat

regarding his visitors with a scowling face, and this made Inga more uneasy than ever. Finally, when the new crown was placed upon his head, King Kaliko said: “Follow me, strangers!” and led the way to a small door at one end of the cavern.

Inga and Rinkitink followed him through the doorway and found themselves standing on a balcony that overlooked an enormous domed cave — so extensive that it seemed miles to the other side of it. All around this circular cave, which was brilliantly lighted from an unknown source, were arches connected with other caverns.

Kaliko took a gold whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill note that echoed through every part of the cave. Instantly nomes began to pour in through the side arches in great numbers, until the immense space was packed with them as far as the eye could reach. All were armed with glittering weapons of polished silver and gold, and Inga was amazed that any King could command so great an army.

They began marching and countermarching in very orderly array until another blast of the gold whistle sent them scurrying away as quickly as they had appeared. And as soon as the great cave was again empty Kaliko returned with his visitors to his own royal chamber, where he once more seated himself upon his ivory throne.

“I have shown you,” said he to Inga, “a part of my bodyguard. The royal armies, of which this is only a part, are as numerous as the sands of the ocean, and live in many thousands of my underground caverns. You have come here thinking to force me to give up the captives of King Gos and Queen Cor, and I wanted to convince you that my power is too mighty for anyone to oppose. I am told that you are a wizard, and depend upon magic to aid you; but you must know that the nomes are not mortals, and understand magic pretty well themselves, so if we are obliged to fight magic with magic the chances are that we are a hundred times more powerful than you can be. Think this over carefully, my boy, and try to realize that you are in my power. I do not believe you can force me to liberate King Kitticut and Queen Garee, and I know that you cannot coax me to do so, for I have given my promise to King Gos. Therefore, as I do not wish to hurt you, I ask you to go away peaceably and let me alone.”

“Forgive me if I do not agree with you, King Kaliko,” answered the boy. “However difficult and dangerous my task may be, I cannot leave your dominions until every effort to release my parents has failed and left me completely discouraged.”

“Very well,” said the King, evidently displeased. “I have warned you, and now if evil overtakes you it is your own fault. I’ve a headache to-day, so I

cannot entertain you properly, according to your rank; but Klik will attend you to my guest chambers and to-morrow I will talk with you again."

This seemed a fair and courteous way to treat one's declared enemies, so they politely expressed the wish that Kaliko's headache would be better, and followed their guide, Klik, down a well-lighted passage and through several archways until they finally reached three nicely furnished bedchambers which were cut from solid gray rock and well lighted and aired by some mysterious method known to the nomes.

The first of these rooms was given King Rinkitink, the second was Inga's and the third was assigned to Bilbil the goat. There was a swinging rock door between the third and second rooms and another between the second and first, which also had a door that opened upon the passage. Rinkitink's room was the largest, so it was here that an excellent dinner was spread by some of the nome servants, who, in spite of their crooked shapes, proved to be well trained and competent.

"You are not prisoners, you know," said Klik; "neither are you welcome guests, having declared your purpose to oppose our mighty King and all his hosts. But we bear you no ill will, and you are to be well fed and cared for as long as you remain in our caverns. Eat hearty, sleep tight, and pleasant dreams to you."

Saying this, he left them alone and at once Rinkitink and Inga began to counsel together as to the best means to liberate King Kitticut and Queen Garee. The White Pearl's advice was rather unsatisfactory to the boy, just now, for all that the Voice said in answer to his questions was: "Be patient, brave and determined."

Rinkitink suggested that they try to discover in what part of the series of underground caverns Inga's parents had been confined, as that knowledge was necessary before they could take any action; so together they started out, leaving Bilbil asleep in his room, and made their way unopposed through many corridors and caverns.

In some places were great furnaces, where gold dust was being melted into bricks. In other rooms workmen were fashioning the gold into various articles and ornaments. In one cavern immense wheels revolved which polished precious gems, and they found many caverns used as storerooms, where treasure of every sort was piled high. Also they came to the barracks of the army and the great kitchens.

There were nomes everywhere — countless thousands of them — but none paid the slightest heed to the visitors from the earth's surface. Yet, although Inga and Rinkitink walked until they were weary, they were unable to locate the place where the boy's father and mother had been confined, and

when they tried to return to their own rooms they found that they had hopelessly lost themselves amid the labyrinth of passages. However, Klik presently came to them, laughing at their discomfiture, and led them back to their bedchambers.

Before they went to sleep they carefully barred the door from Rinkitink's room to the corridor, but the doors that connected the three rooms one with another were left wide open.

In the night Inga was awakened by a soft grating sound that filled him with anxiety because he could not account for it. It was dark in his room, the light having disappeared as soon as he got into bed, but he managed to feel his way to the door that led to Rinkitink's room and found it tightly closed and immovable. Then he made his way to the opposite door, leading to Bilbil's room, to discover that also had been closed and fastened.

The boy had a curious sensation that all of his room — the walls, floor and ceiling — was slowly whirling as if on a pivot, and it was such an uncomfortable feeling that he got into bed again, not knowing what else to do. And as the grating noise had ceased and the room now seemed stationary, he soon fell asleep again.

When the boy wakened, after many hours, he found the room again light. So he dressed himself and discovered that a small table, containing a breakfast that was smoking hot, had suddenly appeared in the center of his room. He tried the two doors, but finding that he could not open them he ate some breakfast, thoughtfully wondering who had locked him in and why he had been made a prisoner. Then he again went to the door which he thought led to Rinkitink's chamber and to his surprise the latch lifted easily and the door swung open.

Before him was a rude corridor hewn in the rock and dimly lighted. It did not look inviting, so Inga closed the door, puzzled to know what had become of Rinkitink's room and the King, and went to the opposite door. Opening this, he found a solid wall of rock confronting him, which effectually prevented his escape in that direction.

The boy now realized that King Kaliko had tricked him, and while professing to receive him as a guest had plotted to separate him from his comrades. One way had been left, however, by which he might escape and he decided to see where it led to.

So, going to the first door, he opened it and ventured slowly into the dimly lighted corridor. When he had advanced a few steps he heard the door of his room slam shut behind him. He ran back at once, but the door of rock fitted so closely into the wall that he found it impossible to open it again. That did not matter so much, however, for the room was a prison and the only way of

escape seemed ahead of him.

Along the corridor he crept until, turning a corner, he found himself in a large domed cavern that was empty and deserted. Here also was a dim light that permitted him to see another corridor at the opposite side; so he crossed the rocky floor of the cavern and entered a second corridor. This one twisted and turned in every direction but was not very long, so soon the boy reached a second cavern, not so large as the first. This he found vacant also, but it had another corridor leading out of it, so Inga entered that. It was straight and short and beyond was a third cavern, which differed little from the others except that it had a strong iron grating at one side of it.

All three of these caverns had been roughly hewn from the rock and it

seemed they had never been put to use, as had all the other caverns of the nomes he had visited. Standing in the third cavern, Inga saw what he thought was still another corridor at its farther side, so he walked toward it. This opening was dark, and that fact, and the solemn silence all around him, made him hesitate for a while to enter it. Upon reflection, however, he realized that unless he explored the place to the very end he could not hope to escape from it, so he boldly entered the dark corridor and felt his way cautiously as he moved forward.

Scarcely had he taken two paces when a crash resounded back of him and a heavy sheet of steel closed the opening into the cavern from which he had just come. He paused a moment, but it still seemed best to proceed, and as Inga advanced in the dark, holding his hands outstretched before him to feel his way, handcuffs fell upon his wrists and locked themselves with a sharp click, and an instant later he found he was chained to a stout iron post set firmly in the rock floor.

The chains were long enough to permit him to move a yard or so in any direction and by feeling the walls he found he was in a small circular room that had no outlet except the passage by which he had entered, and that was now closed by the door of steel. This was the end of the series of caverns and corridors.

It was now that the horror of his situation occurred to the boy with full force. But he resolved not to submit to his fate without a struggle, and realizing that he possessed the Blue Pearl, which gave him marvelous strength, he quickly broke the chains and set himself free of the handcuffs. Next he twisted the steel door from its hinges, and creeping along the short passage, found himself in the third cave.

But now the dim light, which had before guided him, had vanished; yet on peering into the gloom of the cave he saw what appeared to be two round disks of flame, which cast a subdued glow over the floor and walls. By this dull glow he made out the form of an enormous man, seated in the center of the cave, and he saw that the iron grating had been removed, permitting the man to enter.

The giant was unclothed and its limbs were thickly covered with coarse red hair. The round disks of flame were its two eyes and when it opened its mouth to yawn Inga saw that its jaws were wide enough to crush a dozen men between the great rows of teeth.

Presently the giant looked up and perceived the boy crouching at the other side of the cavern, so he called out in a hoarse, rude voice:

“Come hither, my pretty one. We will wrestle together, you and I, and if you succeed in throwing me I will let you pass through my cave.”

The boy made no reply to the challenge. He realized he was in dire peril and regretted that he had lent the Pink Pearl to King Rinkitink. But it was now too late for vain regrets, although he feared that even his great strength would avail him little against this hairy monster. For his arms were not long enough to span a fourth of the giant's huge body, while the monster's powerful limbs would be likely to crush out Inga's life before he could gain the mastery.

Therefore the Prince resolved to employ other means to combat this foe, who had doubtless been placed there to bar his return. Retreating through the passage he reached the room where he had been chained and wrenched the iron post from its socket. It was a foot thick and four feet long, and being of

solid iron was so heavy that three ordinary men would have found it hard to lift.

Returning to the cavern, the boy swung the great bar above his head and dashed it with mighty force full at the giant. The end of the bar struck the monster upon its forehead, and with a single groan it fell full length upon the floor and lay still.

When the giant fell, the glow from its eyes faded away, and all was dark. Cautiously, for Inga was not sure the giant was dead, the boy felt his way toward the opening that led to the middle cavern. The entrance was narrow and the darkness was intense, but, feeling braver now, the boy stepped boldly forward. Instantly the floor began to sink beneath him and in great alarm he turned and made a leap that enabled him to grasp the rocky sides of the wall and regain a footing in the passage through which he had just come.

Scarcely had he obtained this place of refuge when a mighty crash resounded throughout the cavern and the sound of a rushing torrent came from far below. Inga felt in his pocket and found several matches, one of which he lighted and held before him. While it flickered he saw that the entire floor of the cavern had fallen away, and knew that had he not instantly regained his footing in the passage he would have plunged into the abyss that lay beneath him.

By the light of another match he saw the opening at the other side of the cave and the thought came to him that possibly he might leap across the gulf. Of course, this could never be accomplished without the marvelous strength lent him by the Blue Pearl, but Inga had the feeling that one powerful spring might carry him over the chasm into safety. He could not stay where he was, that was certain, so he resolved to make the attempt.

He took a long run through the first cave and the short corridor; then, exerting all his strength, he launched himself over the black gulf of the second cave. Swiftly he flew and, although his heart stood still with fear, only a few seconds elapsed before his feet touched the ledge of the opposite passageway and he knew he had safely accomplished the wonderful feat.

Only pausing to draw one long breath of relief, Inga quickly traversed the crooked corridor that led to the last cavern of the three. But when he came in sight of it he paused abruptly, his eyes nearly blinded by a glare of strong light which burst upon them. Covering his face with his hands, Inga retreated behind a projecting corner of rock and by gradually getting his eyes used to the light he was finally able to gaze without blinking upon the strange glare that had so quickly changed the condition of the cavern. When he had passed through this vault it had been entirely empty. Now the flat floor of rock was covered everywhere with a bed of glowing coals, which shot up little tongues

of red and white flames. Indeed, the entire cave was one monster furnace and the heat that came from it was fearful.

Inga's heart sank within him as he realized the terrible obstacle placed by the cunning Nome King between him and the safety of the other caverns. There was no turning back, for it would be impossible for him again to leap over the gulf of the second cave, the corridor at this side being so crooked that he could get no run before he jumped. Neither could he leap over the glowing coals of the cavern that faced him, for it was much larger than the middle cavern. In this dilemma he feared his great strength would avail him nothing and he bitterly reproached himself for parting with the Pink Pearl, which would have preserved him from injury.

However, it was not in the nature of Prince Inga to despair for long, his past adventures having taught him confidence and courage, sharpened his wits and given him the genius of invention. He sat down and thought earnestly on the means of escape from his danger and at last a clever idea came to his mind. This is the way to get ideas: never to let adverse circumstances discourage you, but to believe there is a way out of every difficulty, which may be found by earnest thought.

There were many points and projections of rock in the walls of the crooked corridor in which Inga stood and some of these rocks had become cracked and loosened, although still clinging to their places. The boy picked out one large piece, and, exerting all his strength, tore it away from the wall. He then

carried it to the cavern and tossed it upon the burning coals, about ten feet away from the end of the passage. Then he returned for another fragment of rock, and wrenching it free from its place, he threw it ten feet beyond the first one, toward the opposite side of the cave. The boy continued this work until he had made a series of stepping-stones reaching straight across the cavern to the dark passageway beyond, which he hoped would lead him back to safety if not to liberty.

When his work had been completed, Inga did not long hesitate to take advantage of his stepping-stones, for he knew his best chance of escape lay in his crossing the bed of coals before the rocks became so heated that they would burn his feet. So he leaped to the first rock and from there began jumping from one to the other in quick succession. A withering wave of heat at once enveloped him, and for a time he feared he would suffocate before he could cross the cavern; but he held his breath, to keep the hot air from his lungs, and maintained his leaps with desperate resolve.

Then, before he realized it, his feet were pressing the cooler rocks of the passage beyond and he rolled helpless upon the floor, gasping for breath. His skin was so red that it resembled the shell of a boiled lobster, but his swift motion had prevented his being burned, and his shoes had thick soles, which saved his feet.

After resting a few minutes, the boy felt strong enough to go on. He went to the end of the passage and found that the rock door by which he had left his room was still closed, so he returned to about the middle of the corridor and was thinking what he should do next, when suddenly the solid rock before him began to move and an opening appeared through which shone a brilliant light. Shielding his eyes, which were somewhat dazzled, Inga sprang through the opening and found himself in one of the Nome King's inhabited caverns, where before him stood King Kaliko, with a broad grin upon his features, and Klik, the King's chamberlain, who looked surprised, and King Rinkitink seated astride Bilbil the goat, both of whom seemed pleased that Inga had rejoined them.

Rinkitink Chuckles

CHAPTER 19

We will now relate what happened to Rinkitink and Bilbil that morning, while Inga was undergoing his trying experiences in escaping the fearful dangers of the three caverns.

The King of Gilgad wakened to find the door of Inga's room fast shut and locked, but he had no trouble in opening his own door into the corridor, for it seems that the boy's room, which was the middle one, whirled around on a pivot, while the adjoining rooms occupied by Bilbil and Rinkitink remained stationary. The little King also found a breakfast magically served in his room, and while he was eating it, Klik came to him and stated that His Majesty, King Kaliko, desired his presence in the royal cavern.

So Rinkitink, having first made sure that the Pink Pearl was still in his vest pocket, willingly followed Klik, who ran on some distance ahead. But no sooner had Rinkitink set foot in the passage than a great rock, weighing at least a ton, became dislodged and dropped from the roof directly over his head. Of course, it could not harm him, protected as he was by the Pink Pearl, and it bounded aside and crashed upon the floor, where it was shattered by its own weight.

"How careless!" exclaimed the little King, and waddled after Klik, who seemed amazed at his escape.

Presently another rock above Rinkitink plunged downward, and then another, but none touched his body. Klik seemed much perplexed at these continued escapes and certainly Kaliko was surprised when Rinkitink, safe and sound, entered the royal cavern.

"Good morning," said the King of Gilgad. "Your rocks are getting loose, Kaliko, and you'd better have them glued in place before they hurt someone." Then he began to chuckle: "Hoo, hoo, hoo-hee, hee-heek, keek, eek!" and Kaliko sat and frowned because he realized that the little fat King was poking fun at him.

"I asked Your Majesty to come here," said the Nome King, "to show you a curious skein of golden thread which my workmen have made. If it pleases you, I will make you a present of it."

With this he held out a small skein of glittering gold twine, which was really pretty and curious. Rinkitink took it in his hand and at once the golden thread began to unwind — so swiftly that the eye could not follow its motion. And, as it unwound, it coiled itself around Rinkitink's body, at the same time weaving itself into a net, until it had enveloped the little King from head to foot and placed him in a prison of gold.

"Aha!" cried Kaliko; "*this* magic worked all right, it seems."

“Oh, did it?” replied Rinkitink, and stepping forward he walked right through the golden net, which fell to the floor in a tangled mass.

Kaliko rubbed his chin thoughtfully and stared hard at Rinkitink.

“I understand a good bit of magic,” said he, “but Your Majesty has a sort of magic that greatly puzzles me, because it is unlike anything of the sort that I ever met with before.”

“Now, see here, Kaliko,” said Rinkitink; “if you are trying to harm me or my companions, give it up, for you will never succeed. We’re harm-proof, so to speak, and you are merely wasting your time trying to injure us.”

“You may be right, and I hope I am not so impolite as to argue with a guest,” returned the Nome King. “But you will pardon me if I am not yet satisfied that you are stronger than my famous magic. However, I beg you to believe that I bear you no ill will, King Rinkitink; but it is my duty to destroy you, if possible, because you and that insignificant boy Prince have openly threatened to take away my captives and have positively refused to go back to the earth’s surface and let me alone. I’m very tender-hearted, as a matter of fact, and I like you immensely and would enjoy having you as a friend, but — ” Here he pressed a button on the arm of his throne chair and the section of the floor where Rinkitink stood suddenly opened and disclosed a black pit beneath, which was a part of the terrible Bottomless Gulf.

But Rinkitink did not fall into the pit; his body remained suspended in the air until he put out his foot and stepped to the solid floor, when the opening suddenly closed again.

"I appreciate Your Majesty's friendship," remarked Rinkitink, as calmly as if nothing had happened, "but I am getting tired with standing. Will you kindly send for my goat, Bilbil, that I may sit upon his back to rest?"

"Indeed I will!" promised Kaliko. "I have not yet completed my test of your magic, and as I owe that goat a slight grudge for bumping my head and smashing my second-best crown, I will be glad to discover if the beast can also escape my delightful little sorceries."

So Klik was sent to fetch Bilbil and presently returned with the goat,

which was very cross this morning because it had not slept well in the underground caverns.

Rinkitink lost no time in getting upon the red velvet saddle which the goat constantly wore, for he feared the Nome King would try to destroy Bilbil and knew that as long as his body touched that of the goat the Pink Pearl would protect them both; whereas, if Bilbil stood alone, there was no magic to save him.

Bilbil glared wickedly at King Kaliko, who moved uneasily in his ivory throne. Then the Nome King whispered a moment in the ear of Klik, who nodded and left the room.

"Please make yourselves at home here for a few minutes, while I attend to an errand," said the Nome King, getting up from the throne. "I shall return pretty soon, when I hope to find you pieceful — ha, ha, ha! — that's a joke you can't appreciate now but will later. Be pieceful — that's the idea. Ho, ho, ho! How funny." Then he waddled from the cavern, closing the door behind him.

"Well, why didn't you laugh when Kaliko laughed?" demanded the goat, when they were left alone in the cavern.

"Because he means mischief of some sort," replied Rinkitink, "and we'll laugh after the danger is over, Bilbil. There's an old adage that says: 'He laughs best who laughs last,' and the only way to laugh last is to give the other fellow a chance. Where did that knife come from, I wonder."

For a long, sharp knife suddenly appeared in the air near them, twisting and turning from side to side and darting here and there in a dangerous manner, without any support whatever. Then another knife became visible — and another and another — until all the space in the royal cavern seemed filled with them. Their sharp points and edges darted toward Rinkitink and Bilbil perpetually and nothing could have saved them from being cut to pieces except the protecting power of the Pink Pearl. As it was, not a knife touched them and even Bilbil gave a gruff laugh at the failure of Kaliko's clever magic.

The goat wandered here and there in the cavern, carrying Rinkitink upon his back, and neither of them paid the slightest heed to the whirring knives, although the glitter of the hundreds of polished blades was rather trying to their eyes. Perhaps for ten minutes the knives darted about them in bewildering fury; then they disappeared as suddenly as they had appeared.

Kaliko cautiously stuck his head through the doorway and found the goat chewing the embroidery of his royal cloak, which he had left lying over the throne, while Rinkitink was reading his manuscript on "How to be Good" and chuckling over its advice. The Nome King seemed greatly disappointed

as he came in and resumed his seat on the throne. Said Rinkitink with a chuckle:

"We've really had a peaceful time, Kaliko, although not the pieceful time you expected. Forgive me if I indulge in a laugh — hoo, hoo, hoo-hee, heek-keek-eek! And now, tell me; aren't you getting tired of trying to injure us?"

"Eh-heh," said the Nome King. "I see now that your magic can protect you from all my arts. But is the boy Inga as well protected as Your Majesty and the goat?"

"Why do you ask?" inquired Rinkitink, uneasy at the question because he remembered he had not seen the little Prince of Pingaree that morning.

"Because," said Kaliko, "the boy has been undergoing trials far greater and more dangerous than any you have encountered, and it has been hundreds of years since anyone has been able to escape alive from the perils of my Three Trick Caverns."

King Rinkitink was much alarmed at hearing this, for although he knew that Inga possessed the Blue Pearl, that would only give to him marvelous strength, and perhaps strength alone would not enable him to escape from danger. But he would not let Kaliko see the fear he felt for Inga's safety, so he said in a careless way:

"You're a mighty poor magician, Kaliko, and I'll give you my crown if Inga hasn't escaped any danger you have threatened him with."

"Your whole crown is not worth one of the valuable diamonds in my crown," answered the Nome King, "but I'll take it. Let us go at once, therefore, and see what has become of the boy Prince, for if he is not destroyed by this time I will admit he cannot be injured by any of the magic arts which I have at my command."

He left the room, accompanied by Klik, who had now rejoined his master, and by Rinkitink riding upon Bilbil. After traversing several of the huge caverns they entered one that was somewhat more bright and cheerful than the others, where the Nome King paused before a wall of rock. Then Klik pressed a secret spring and a section of the wall opened and disclosed the corridor where Prince Inga stood facing them.

"Tarts and tadpoles!" cried Kaliko in surprise. "The boy is still alive!"

Dorothy to the Rescue

CHAPTER 20

One day when Princess Dorothy of Oz was visiting Glinda the Good, who is Ozma's Royal Sorceress, she was looking through Glinda's Great Book of Records — wherein is inscribed all important events that happen in every part of the world — when she came upon the record of the destruction of Pingaree, the capture of King Kitticut and Queen Garee and all their people, and the curious escape of Inga, the boy Prince, and of King Rinkitink and the talking goat. Turning over some of the following pages, Dorothy read how Inga had found the Magic Pearls and was rowing the silver-lined boat to Regos to try to rescue his parents.

The little girl was much interested to know how well Inga succeeded, but she returned to the palace of Ozma at the Emerald City of Oz the next day and other events made her forget the boy Prince of Pingaree for a time. However, she was one day idly looking at Ozma's Magic Picture, which shows any scene you may wish to see, when the girl thought of Inga and commanded the Magic Picture to show what the boy was doing at that moment.

It was the time when Inga and Rinkitink had followed the King of Regos and Queen of Coregos to the Nome King's country and she saw them hiding behind the rock as Cor and Gos passed them by after having placed the King and Queen of Pingaree in the keeping of the Nome King. From that time Dorothy followed, by means of the Magic Picture, the adventures of Inga and his friends in the Nome King's caverns, and the danger and helplessness of the poor boy aroused the little girl's pity and indignation.

So she went to Ozma and told the lovely girl Ruler of Oz all about Inga and Rinkitink.

"I think Kaliko is treating them dreadfully mean," declared Dorothy, "and I wish you'd let me go to the Nome Country and help them out of their troubles."

"Go, my dear, if you wish to," replied Ozma, "but I think it would be best for you to take the Wizard with you."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of the nomes," said Dorothy, "but I'll be glad to take the Wizard, for company. And may we use your Magic Carpet, Ozma?"

"Of course. Put the Magic Carpet in the Red Wagon and have the Sawhorse take you and the Wizard to the edge of the desert. While you are gone, Dorothy, I'll watch you in the Magic Picture, and if any danger threatens you I'll see you are not harmed."

Dorothy thanked the Ruler of Oz and kissed her good-bye, for she was determined to start at once. She found the Wizard of Oz, who was planting

shoe-trees in the garden, and when she told him Inga's story he willingly agreed to accompany the little girl to the Nome King's caverns. They had both been there before and had conquered the nomes with ease, so they were not at all afraid.

The Wizard, who was a cheery little man with a bald head and a winning smile, harnessed the Wooden Sawhorse to the Red Wagon and loaded on Ozma's Magic Carpet. Then he and Dorothy climbed to the seat and the Sawhorse started off and carried them swiftly through the beautiful Land of Oz to the edge of the Deadly Desert that separated their fairyland from the Nome Country.

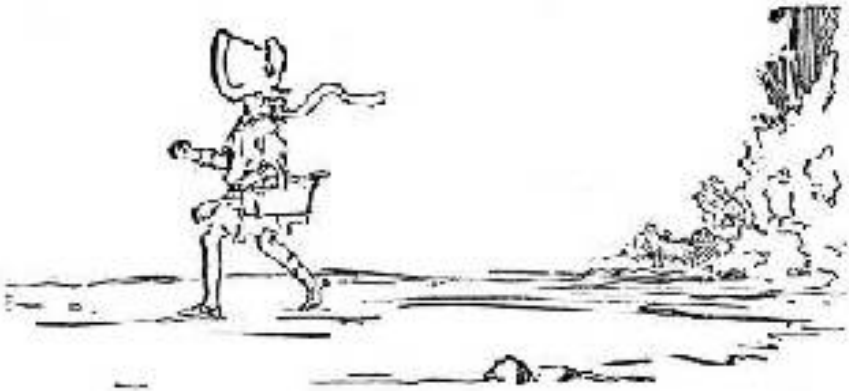
Even Dorothy and the clever Wizard would not have dared to cross this desert without the aid of the Magic Carpet, for it would have quickly destroyed them; but when the roll of carpet had been placed upon the edge of the sands, leaving just enough lying flat for them to stand upon, the carpet straightway began to unroll before them and as they walked on it continued to unroll, until they had safely passed over the stretch of Deadly Desert and were on the border of the Nome King's dominions.

This journey had been accomplished in a few minutes, although such a distance would have required several days' travel had they not been walking on the Magic Carpet. On arriving they at once walked toward the entrance to the caverns of the nomes.

The Wizard carried a little black bag containing his tools of wizardry, while Dorothy carried over her arm a covered basket in which she had placed a dozen eggs, with which to conquer the nomes if she had any trouble with them.

Eggs may seem to you to be a queer weapon with which to fight, but the little girl well knew their value. The nomes are immortal; that is, they do not perish, as mortals do, *unless they happen to come in contact with an egg*. If an egg touches them — either the outer shell or the inside of the egg — the nomes lose their charm of perpetual life and thereafter are liable to die through accident or old age, just as all humans are.

For this reason the sight of an egg fills a nome with terror and he will do anything to prevent an egg from touching him, even for an instant. So, when Dorothy took her basket of eggs with her, she knew that she was more powerfully armed than if she had a regiment of soldiers at her back.



The Wizard Finds an Enchantment

CHAPTER 21

After Kaliko had failed in his attempts to destroy his guests, as has been related, the Nome King did nothing more to injure them but treated them in a friendly manner. He refused, however, to permit Inga to see or to speak with his father and mother, or even to know in what part of the underground caverns they were confined.

"You are able to protect your lives and persons, I freely admit," said Kaliko; "but I firmly believe you have no power, either of magic or otherwise, to take from me the captives I have agreed to keep for King Gos."

Inga would not agree to this. He determined not to leave the caverns until he had liberated his father and mother, although he did not then know how that could be accomplished. As for Rinkitink, the jolly King was well fed and had a good bed to sleep upon, so he was not worrying about anything and seemed in no hurry to go away.

Kaliko and Rinkitink were engaged in pitching a game with solid gold quoits, on the floor of the royal chamber, and Inga and Bilbil were watching them, when Klik came running in, his hair standing on end with excitement, and cried out that the Wizard of Oz and Dorothy were approaching.

Kaliko turned pale on hearing this unwelcome news and, abandoning his game, went to sit in his ivory throne and try to think what had brought these fearful visitors to his domain.

"Who is Dorothy?" asked Inga.

"She is a little girl who once lived in Kansas," replied Klik, with a shudder, "but she now lives in Ozma's palace at the Emerald City and is a Princess of Oz — which means that she is a terrible foe to deal with."

"Doesn't she like the nomes?" inquired the boy.

"It isn't that," said King Kaliko, with a groan, "but she insists on the nomes being goody-goody, which is contrary to their natures. Dorothy gets angry if I do the least thing that is wicked, and tries to make me stop it, and that naturally makes me downhearted. I can't imagine why she has come here just now, for I've been behaving very well lately. As for that Wizard of Oz, he's chock-full of magic that I can't overcome, for he learned it from Glinda, who is the most powerful sorceress in the world. Woe is me! Why didn't Dorothy and the Wizard stay in Oz, where they belong?"

Inga and Rinkitink listened to this with much joy, for at once the idea came to them both to plead with Dorothy to help them. Even Bilbil pricked up his ears when he heard the Wizard of Oz mentioned, and the goat seemed much less surly, and more thoughtful than usual.

A few minutes later a nome came to say that Dorothy and the Wizard had

arrived and demanded admittance, so Klik was sent to usher them into the royal presence of the Nome King.

As soon as she came in the little girl ran up to the boy Prince and seized both his hands.

"Oh, Inga!" she exclaimed, "I'm so glad to find you alive and well."

Inga was astonished at so warm a greeting. Making a low bow he said:

"I don't think we have met before, Princess."

"No, indeed," replied Dorothy, "but I know all about you and I've come to help you and King Rinkitink out of your troubles." Then she turned to the Nome King and continued: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, King Kaliko, to treat an honest Prince and an honest King so badly."

"I haven't done anything to them," whined Kaliko, trembling as her eyes flashed upon him.

"No; but you tried to, an' that's just as bad, if not worse," said Dorothy, who was very indignant. "And now I want you to send for the King and Queen of Pingaree and have them brought here *immejitly*!"

"I won't," said Kaliko.

"Yes, you will!" cried Dorothy, stamping her foot at him. "I won't have those poor people made unhappy any longer, or separated from their little boy. Why, it's *dreadful*, Kaliko, an' I'm su'prised at you. You must be more wicked than I thought you were."

"I can't do it, Dorothy," said the Nome King, almost weeping with despair. "I promised King Gos I'd keep them captives. You wouldn't ask me to break my promise, would you?"

"King Gos was a robber and an outlaw," she said, "and p'r'aps you don't know that a storm at sea wrecked his boat, while he was going back to Regos, and that he and Queen Cor were both drowned."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Kaliko. "Is that so?"

"I saw it in Glinda's Record Book," said Dorothy. "So now you trot out the King and Queen of Pingaree as quick as you can."

"No," persisted the contrary Nome King, shaking his head, "I won't do it. Ask me anything else and I'll try to please you, but I can't allow these

friendly enemies to triumph over me."

"In that case," said Dorothy, beginning to remove the cover from her basket, "I'll show you some eggs."

"Eggs!" screamed the Nome King in horror. "Have you eggs in that basket?"

"A dozen of 'em," replied Dorothy.

"Then keep them there — I beg — I implore you! — and I'll do anything you say," pleaded Kaliko, his teeth chattering so that he could hardly speak.

"Send for the King and Queen of Pingaree," said Dorothy.

"Go, Klik," commanded the Nome King, and Klik ran away in great haste, for he was almost as much frightened as his master.

It was an affecting scene when the unfortunate King and Queen of Pingaree entered the chamber and with sobs and tears of joy embraced their brave and adventurous son. All the others stood silent until greetings and kisses had been exchanged and Inga had told his parents in a few words of his vain struggles to rescue them and how Princess Dorothy had finally come to his assistance.

Then King Kitticut shook the hands of his friend King Rinkitink and thanked him for so loyally supporting his son Inga, and Queen Garee kissed little Dorothy's forehead and blessed her for restoring her husband and herself to freedom.

The Wizard had been standing near Bilbil the goat and now he was surprised to hear the animal say:

"Joyful reunion, isn't it? But it makes me tired to see grown people cry like children."

"Oho!" exclaimed the Wizard. "How does it happen, Mr. Goat, that you, who have never been to the Land of Oz, are able to talk?"

"That's my business," returned Bilbil in a surly tone.

The Wizard stooped down and gazed fixedly into the animal's eyes. Then he said, with a pitying sigh: "I see; you are under an enchantment. Indeed, I believe you to be Prince Bobo of Boboland."

Bilbil made no reply but dropped his head as if ashamed.

"This is a great discovery," said the Wizard, addressing Dorothy and the others of the party. "A good many years ago a cruel magician transformed the gallant Prince of Boboland into a talking goat, and this goat, being ashamed of his condition, ran away and was never after seen in Boboland, which is a country far to the south of here but bordering on the Deadly Desert, opposite the Land of Oz. I heard of this story long ago and know that a diligent search has been made for the enchanted Prince, without result. But I am well assured that, in the animal you call Bilbil, I have discovered the

unhappy Prince of Boboland."

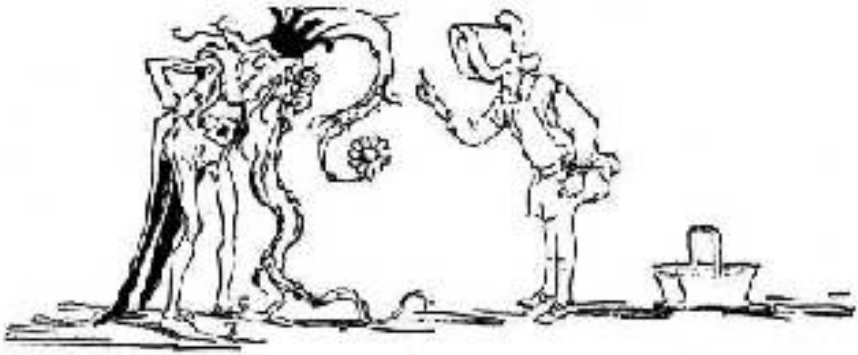
"Dear me, Bilbil," said Rinkitink, "why have you never told me this?"

"What would be the use?" asked Bilbil in a low voice and still refusing to look up.

"The use?" repeated Rinkitink, puzzled.

"Yes, that's the trouble," said the Wizard. "It is one of the most powerful enchantments ever accomplished, and the magician is now dead and the secret of the anti-charm lost. Even I, with all my skill, cannot restore Prince Bobo to his proper form. But I think Glinda might be able to do so and if you will all return with Dorothy and me to the Land of Oz, where Ozma will make you welcome, I will ask Glinda to try to break this enchantment."

This was willingly agreed to, for they all welcomed the chance to visit the famous Land of Oz. So they bade good-bye to King Kaliko, whom Dorothy warned not to be wicked any more if he could help it, and the entire party returned over the Magic Carpet to the Land of Oz. They filled the Red Wagon, which was still waiting for them, pretty full; but the Sawhorse didn't mind that and with wonderful speed carried them safely to the Emerald City.



Ozma's Banquet

CHAPTER 22

Ozma had seen in her Magic Picture the liberation of Inga's parents and the departure of the entire party for the Emerald City, so with her usual hospitality she ordered a splendid banquet prepared and invited all her quaint friends who were then in the Emerald City to be present that evening to meet the strangers who were to become her guests.

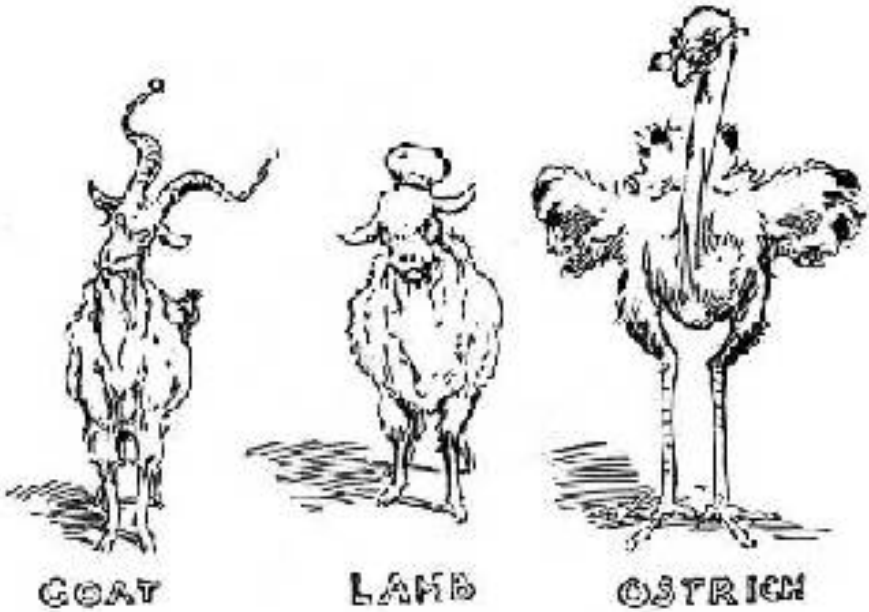
Glinda, also, in her wonderful Record Book had learned of the events that had taken place in the caverns of the Nome King and she became especially interested in the enchantment of the Prince of Boboland. So she hastily prepared several of her most powerful charms and then summoned her flock of sixteen white storks, which swiftly bore her to Ozma's palace. She arrived there before the Red Wagon did and was warmly greeted by the girl Ruler.

Realizing that the costume of Queen Garee of Pingaree must have become sadly worn and frayed, owing to her hardships and adventures, Ozma ordered a royal outfit prepared for the good Queen and had it laid in her chamber ready for her to put on as soon as she arrived, so she would not be shamed at the banquet. New costumes were also provided for King Kitticut and King Rinkitink and Prince Inga, all cut and made and embellished in the elaborate and becoming style then prevalent in the Land of Oz, and as soon as the party arrived at the palace Ozma's guests were escorted by her servants to their rooms, that they might bathe and dress themselves.

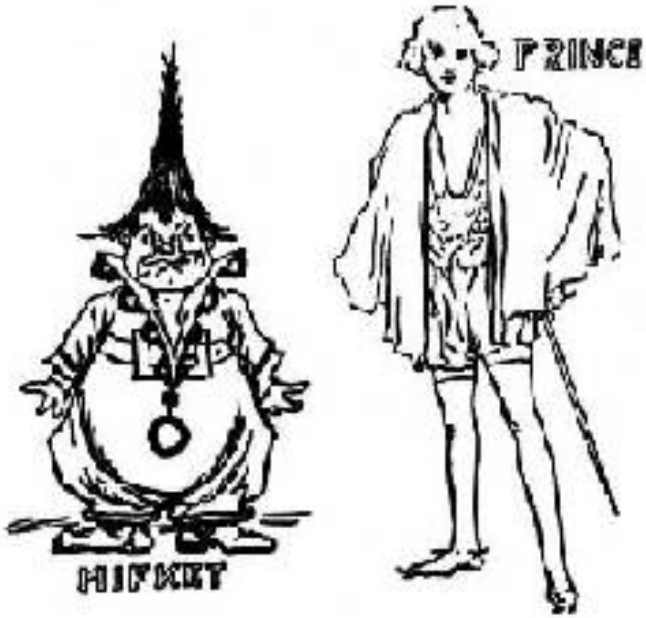
Glinda the Sorceress and the Wizard of Oz took charge of Bilbil the goat and went to a private room where they were not likely to be interrupted. Glinda first questioned Bilbil long and earnestly about the manner of his enchantment and the ceremony that had been used by the magician who enchanted him. At first Bilbil protested that he did not want to be restored to his natural shape, saying that he had been forever disgraced in the eyes of his people and of the entire world by being obliged to exist as a scrawny, scraggly goat. But Glinda pointed out that any person who incurred the enmity of a wicked magician was liable to suffer a similar fate, and assured him that his misfortune would make him better beloved by his subjects when he returned to them freed from his dire enchantment.

Bilbil was finally convinced of the truth of this assertion and agreed to submit to the experiments of Glinda and the Wizard, who knew they had a hard task before them and were not at all sure they could succeed. We know that Glinda is the most complete mistress of magic who has ever existed, and she was wise enough to guess that the clever but evil magician who had enchanted Prince Bobo had used a spell that would puzzle any ordinary wizard or sorcerer to break; therefore she had given the matter much shrewd

thought and hoped she had conceived a plan that would succeed. But because she was not positive of success she would have no one present at the incantation except her assistant, the Wizard of Oz.



First she transformed Bilbil the goat into a lamb, and this was done quite easily. Next she transformed the lamb into an ostrich, giving it two legs and feet instead of four. Then she tried to transform the ostrich into the original Prince Bobo, but this incantation was an utter failure. Glinda was not discouraged, however, but by a powerful spell transformed the ostrich into a tottenhot — which is a lower form of a man. Then the tottenhot was transformed into a mifket, which was a great step in advance and, finally, Glinda transformed the mifket into a handsome young man, tall and shapely, who fell on his knees before the great Sorceress and gratefully kissed her hand, admitting that he had now recovered his proper shape and was indeed Prince Bobo of Boboland.



This process of magic, successful though it was in the end, had required so much time that the banquet was now awaiting their presence. Bobo was already dressed in princely raiment and although he seemed very much humbled by his recent lowly condition, they finally persuaded him to join the festivities.

When Rinkitink saw that his goat had now become a Prince, he did not know whether to be sorry or glad, for he felt that he would miss the companionship of the quarrelsome animal he had so long been accustomed to ride upon, while at the same time he rejoiced that poor Bilbil had come to his own again.

Prince Bobo humbly begged Rinkitink's forgiveness for having been so disagreeable to him, at times, saying that the nature of a goat had influenced him and the surly disposition he had shown was a part of his enchantment. But the jolly King assured the Prince that he had really enjoyed Bilbil's grumpy speeches and forgave him readily. Indeed, they all discovered the young Prince Bobo to be an exceedingly courteous and pleasant person, although he was somewhat reserved and dignified.

Ah, but it was a great feast that Ozma served in her gorgeous banquet hall that night and everyone was as happy as could be. The Shaggy Man was there, and so was Jack Pumpkinhead and the Tin Woodman and Cap'n Bill. Beside Princess Dorothy sat Tiny Trot and Betsy Bobbin, and the three little girls were almost as sweet to look upon as was Ozma, who sat at the head of her table and outshone all her guests in loveliness.

King Rinkitink was delighted with the quaint people of Oz and laughed and joked with the tin man and the pumpkin-headed man and found Cap'n Bill a very agreeable companion. But what amused the jolly King most were the animal guests, which Ozma always invited to her banquets and seated at a table by themselves, where they talked and chatted together as people do but were served the sort of food their natures required. The Hungry Tiger and Cowardly Lion and the Glass Cat were much admired by Rinkitink, but when he met a mule named Hank, which Betsy Robbin had brought to Oz, the King found the creature so comical that he laughed and chuckled until his friends thought he would choke. Then while the banquet was still in progress, Rinkitink composed and sang a song to the mule and they all joined in the chorus, which was something like this:

"It's very queer how big an ear
Is worn by Mr. Donkey;
And yet I fear he could not hear
If it were on a monkey.

‘Tis thick and strong and broad and long
And also very hairy;
It’s quite becoming to our Hank
But might disgrace a fairy!”

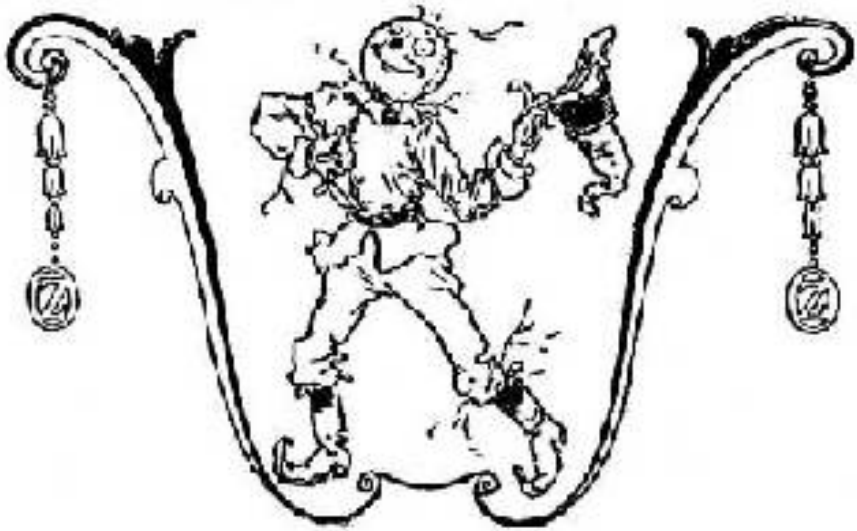
This song was received with so much enthusiasm that Rinkitink was prevailed upon to sing another. They gave him a little time to compose the rhyme, which he declared would be better if he could devote a month or two to its composition, but the sentiment he expressed was so admirable that no one criticized the song or the manner in which the jolly little King sang it.

Dorothy wrote down the words on a piece of paper, and here they are:

“We’re merry comrades all, to-night,

Because we've won a gallant fight
And conquered all our foes.
We're not afraid of anything,
So let us gayly laugh and sing
Until we seek repose.
"We've all our grateful hearts can wish;
King Gos has gone to feed the fish,
Queen Cor has gone, as well;
King Kitticut has found his own,
Prince Bobo soon will have a throne
Relieved of magic spell.
"So let's forget the horrid strife
That fell upon our peaceful life
And caused distress and pain;
For very soon across the sea
We'll all be sailing merrily
To Pingaree again."

The Pearl Kingdom



CHAPTER 23

It was unfortunate that the famous Scarecrow — the most popular person in all Oz, next to Ozma — was absent at the time of the banquet, for he happened just then to be making one of his trips through the country; but the Scarecrow had a chance later to meet Rinkitink and Inga and the King and Queen of Pingaree and Prince Bobo, for the party remained several weeks at the Emerald City, where they were royally entertained, and where both the gentle Queen Garee and the noble King Kitticut recovered much of their good spirits and composure and tried to forget their dreadful experiences.

At last, however, the King and Queen desired to return to their own Pingaree, as they longed to be with their people again and see how well they had rebuilt their homes. Inga also was anxious to return, although he had been very happy in Oz, and King Rinkitink, who was happy anywhere except at Gilgad, decided to go with his former friends to Pingaree. As for Prince Bobo, he had become so greatly attached to King Rinkitink that he was loth to leave him.

On a certain day they all bade good-bye to Ozma and Dorothy and Glinda and the Wizard and all their good friends in Oz, and were driven in the Red Wagon to the edge of the Deadly Desert, which they crossed safely on the Magic Carpet. They then made their way across the Nome Kingdom and the Wheeler Country, where no one molested them, to the shores of the Nonestic Ocean. There they found the boat with the silver lining still lying undisturbed on the beach.

There were no important adventures during the trip and on their arrival at the pearl kingdom they were amazed at the beautiful appearance of the island they had left in ruins. All the houses of the people had been rebuilt and were prettier than before, with green lawns before them and flower gardens in the back yards. The marble towers of King Kitticut's new palace were very striking and impressive, while the palace itself proved far more magnificent than it had been before the warriors from Regos destroyed it.

Nikobob had been very active and skillful in directing all this work, and he had also built a pretty cottage for himself, not far from the King's palace, and there Inga found Zella, who was living very happy and contented in her new home. Not only had Nikobob accomplished all this in a comparatively brief space of time, but he had started the pearl fisheries again and when King Kitticut returned to Pingaree he found a quantity of fine pearls already in the royal treasury.

So pleased was Kitticut with the good judgment, industry and honesty of the former charcoal-burner of Regos, that he made Nikobob his Lord High

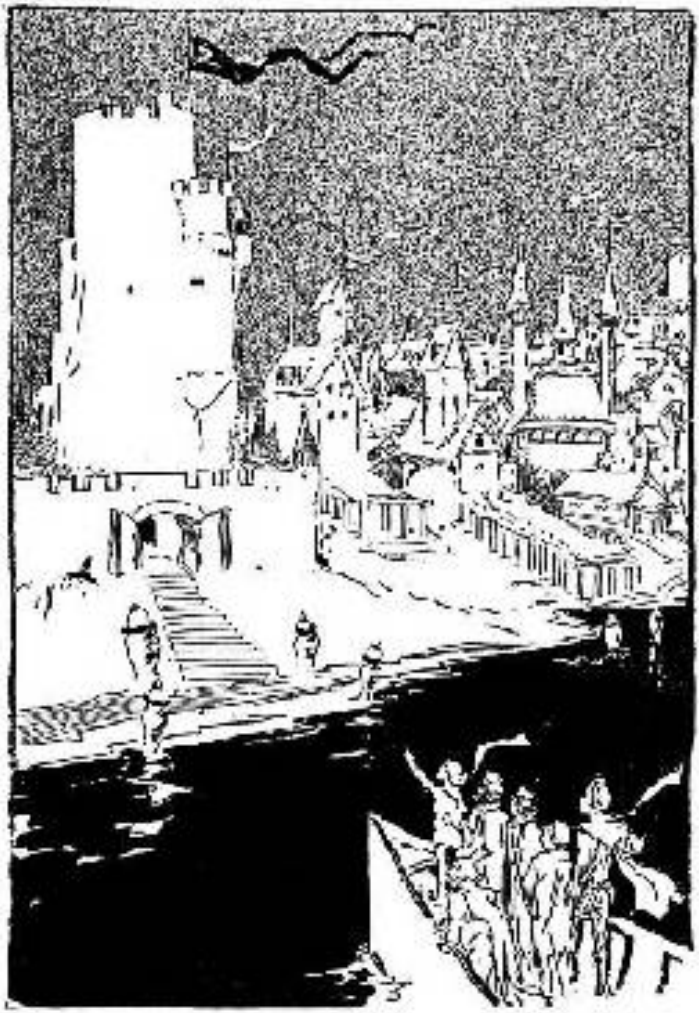
Chamberlain and put him in charge of the pearl fisheries and all the business matters of the island kingdom.

They all settled down very comfortably in the new palace and the Queen gathered her maids about her once more and set them to work embroidering new draperies for the royal throne. Inga placed the three Magic Pearls in their silken bag and again deposited them in the secret cavity under the tiled flooring of the banquet hall, where they could be quickly secured if danger ever threatened the now prosperous island.

King Rinkitink occupied a royal guest chamber built especially for his use and seemed in no hurry to leave his friends in Pingaree. The fat little King had to walk wherever he went and so missed Bilbil more and more; but he seldom walked far and he was so fond of Prince Bobo that he never regretted Bilbil's disenchantment.

Indeed, the jolly monarch was welcome to remain forever in Pingaree, if he wished to, for his merry disposition set smiles on the faces of all his friends and made everyone near him as jolly as he was himself. When King Kitticut was not too busy with affairs of state he loved to join his guest and listen to his brother monarch's songs and stories. For he found Rinkitink to be, with all his careless disposition, a shrewd philosopher, and in talking over their adventures one day the King of Gilgad said:

"The beauty of life is its sudden changes. No one knows what is going to happen next, and so we are constantly being surprised and entertained. The many ups and downs should not discourage us, for if we are down, we know that a change is coming and we will go up again; while those who are up are almost certain to go down. My grandfather had a song which well expresses this and if you will listen I will sing it."



"Of course I will listen to your song," returned Kitticut, "for it would be impolite not to."

So Rinkitink sang his grandfather's song:

"A mighty King once ruled the land —
But now he's baking pies.
A pauper, on the other hand,
Is ruling, strong and wise.

A tiger once in jungles raged —
But now he's in a zoo;
A lion, captive-born and caged,
Now roams the forest through

A man once slapped a poor boy's pate
And made him weep and wail.
The boy became a magistrate
And put the man in jail.
A sunny day succeeds the night;
It's summer — then it snows!
Right oft goes wrong and wrong comes right,
As ev'ry wise man knows."

The Captive King

CHAPTER 24

One morning, just as the royal party was finishing breakfast, a servant came running to say that a great fleet of boats was approaching the island from the south. King Kitticut sprang up at once, in great alarm, for he had much cause to fear strange boats. The others quickly followed him to the shore to see what invasion might be coming upon them.

Inga was there with the first, and Nikobob and Zella soon joined the watchers. And presently, while all were gazing eagerly at the approaching fleet, King Rinkitink suddenly cried out:

"Get your pearls, Prince Inga — get them quick!"

"Are these our enemies, then?" asked the boy, looking with surprise upon the fat little King, who had begun to tremble violently.

"They are my people of Gilgad!" answered Rinkitink, wiping a tear from his eye. "I recognize my royal standards flying from the boats. So, please, dear Inga, get out your pearls to protect me!"

"What can you fear at the hands of your own subjects?" asked Kitticut, astonished.

But before his frightened guest could answer the question Prince Bobo, who was standing beside his friend, gave an amused laugh and said:

"You are caught at last, dear Rinkitink. Your people will take you home again and oblige you to reign as King."

Rinkitink groaned aloud and clasped his hands together with a gesture of despair, an attitude so comical that the others could scarcely forbear laughing.

But now the boats were landing upon the beach. They were fifty in number, beautifully decorated and upholstered and rowed by men clad in the gay uniforms of the King of Gilgad. One splendid boat had a throne of gold in the center, over which was draped the King's royal robe of purple velvet, embroidered with gold buttercups.

Rinkitink shuddered when he saw this throne; but now a tall man, handsomely dressed, approached and knelt upon the grass before his King, while all the other occupants of the boats shouted joyfully and waved their plumed hats in the air.

"Thanks to our good fortune," said the man who kneeled, "we have found Your Majesty at last!"

"Pinkerbloo," answered Rinkitink sternly, "I must have you hanged, for thus finding me against my will."

"You think so now, Your Majesty, but you will never do it," returned Pinkerbloo, rising and kissing the King's hand.

“Why won’t I?” asked Rinkitink.

“Because you are much too tender-hearted, Your Majesty.”

“It may be — it may be,” agreed Rinkitink, sadly. “It is one of my greatest failings. But what chance brought you here, my Lord Pinkerbloo?”

“We have searched for you everywhere, sire, and all the people of Gilgad have been in despair since you so mysteriously disappeared. We could not appoint a new King, because we did not know but that you still lived; so we set out to find you, dead or alive. After visiting many islands of the Nonestic Ocean we at last thought of Pingaree, from where come the precious pearls; and now our faithful quest has been rewarded.”

“And what now?” asked Rinkitink.

“Now, Your Majesty, you must come home with us, like a good and dutiful King, and rule over your people,” declared the man in a firm voice.

“I will not.”

“But you must — begging Your Majesty’s pardon for the contradiction.”

“Kitticut,” cried poor Rinkitink, “you must save me from being captured by these, my subjects. What! must I return to Gilgad and be forced to reign in splendid state when I much prefer to eat and sleep and sing in my own quiet way? They will make me sit in a throne three hours a day and listen to dry and tedious affairs of state; and I must stand up for hours at the court receptions, till I get corns on my heels; and forever must I listen to tiresome speeches and endless petitions and complaints!”

“But someone must do this, Your Majesty,” said Pinkerbloo respectfully, “and since you were born to be our King you cannot escape your duty.”

"'Tis a horrid fate!" moaned Rinkitink. "I would die willingly, rather than be a King — if it did not hurt so terribly to die."

"You will find it much more comfortable to reign than to die, although I fully appreciate Your Majesty's difficult position and am truly sorry for you," said Pinkerbloo.

King Kitticut had listened to this conversation thoughtfully, so now he said to his friend:

"The man is right, dear Rinkitink. It is your duty to reign, since fate has made you a King, and I see no honorable escape for you. I shall grieve to lose your companionship, but I feel the separation cannot be avoided."

Rinkitink sighed.

“Then,” said he, turning to Lord Pinkerbloo, “in three days I will depart with you for Gilgad; but during those three days I propose to feast and make merry with my good friend King Kitticut.”

Then all the people of Gilgad shouted with delight and eagerly scrambled ashore to take their part in the festival.

Those three days were long remembered in Pingaree, for never — before nor since — has such feasting and jollity been known upon that island. Rinkitink made the most of his time and everyone laughed and sang with him by day and by night.

Then, at last, the hour of parting arrived and the King of Gilgad and Ruler of the Dominion of Rinkitink was escorted by a grand procession to his boat and seated upon his golden throne. The rowers of the fifty boats paused, with their glittering oars pointed into the air like gigantic uplifted sabres, while the people of Pingaree — men, women and children — stood upon the shore shouting a royal farewell to the jolly King.

Then came a sudden hush, while Rinkitink stood up and, with a bow to those assembled to witness his departure, sang the following song, which he had just composed for the occasion.

“Farewell, dear Isle of Pingaree —
The fairest land in all the sea!
No living mortals, kings or churls,
Would scorn to wear thy precious pearls.

“King Kitticut, ‘tis with regret
I’m forced to say farewell; and yet
Abroad no longer can I roam
When fifty boats would drag me home.

“Good-bye, my Prince of Pingaree;
A noble King some time you’ll be
And long and wisely may you reign
And never face a foe again!”

They cheered him from the shore; they cheered him from the boats; and then all the oars of the fifty boats swept downward with a single motion and dipped their blades into the purple-hued waters of the Nonestic Ocean.

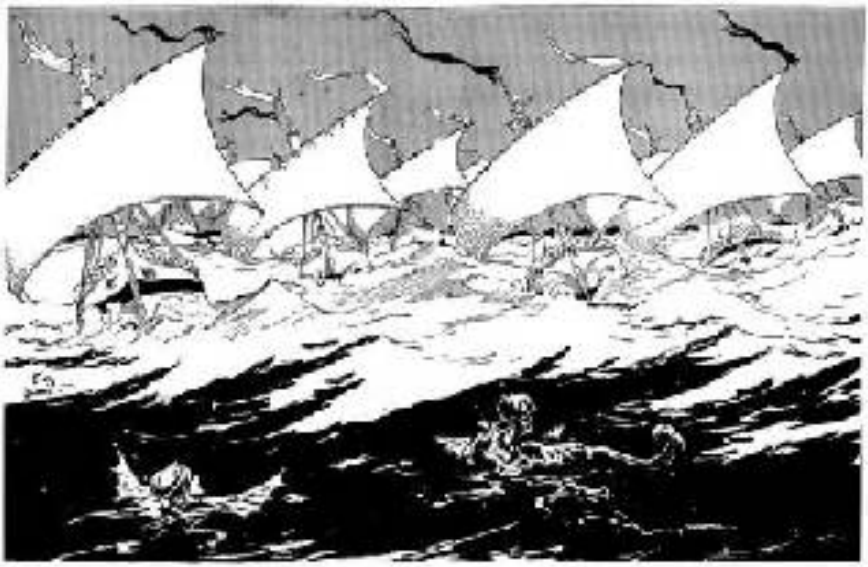
As the boats shot swiftly over the ripples of the sea Rinkitink turned to Prince Bobo, who had decided not to desert his former master and his present friend, and asked anxiously:

"How did you like that song, Bilbil — I mean Bobo? Is it a masterpiece, do you think?"

And Bobo replied with a smile:

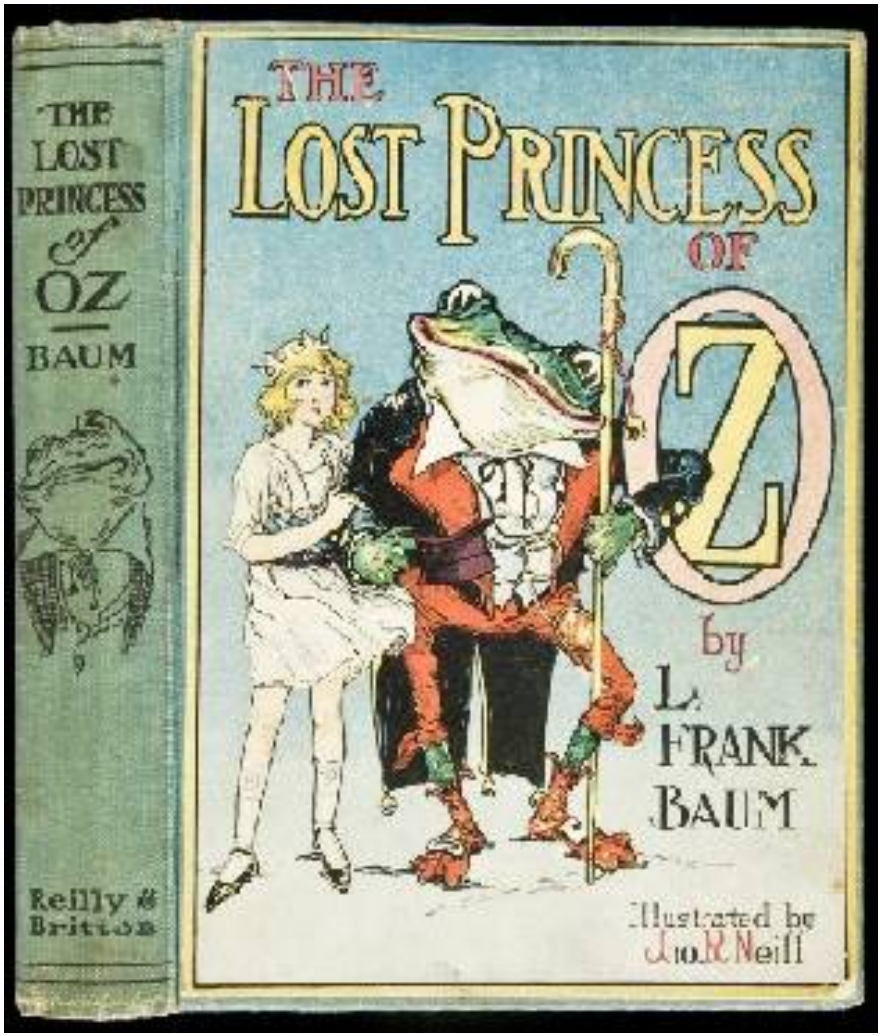
"Like all your songs, dear Rinkitink, the sentiment far excels the poetry."

WARNING



THE LOST PRINCESS OF OZ

Reilly & Britton published Baum's eleventh Oz book, *The Lost Princess of Oz*, in 1917, once again illustrated by John R. Neill. Baum dedicated the book to his newborn granddaughter, Ozma Baum. The novel begins with Dorothy missing Ozma, Glinda the Good missing her "Great Book of Records" and the Wizard missing his magic tools. Joined by their friends, Button Bright, Trot and Betsy Bobbin, Dorothy and the Wizard set out to find Ozma and the missing magical items. While traveling far and wide, they visit heretofore unknown communities in Oz, such as Thi and Herku, also meeting up with such memorable characters as the Lavender Bear, Cayke the Cookie Cook, and the Frogman. Secret enchantments, a pure energy compound dubbed "zosozo," and a dastardly villain known as Ugu the Shoemaker, provide plenty of excitement.



A copy of the first edition of 'The Lost Princess of Oz'

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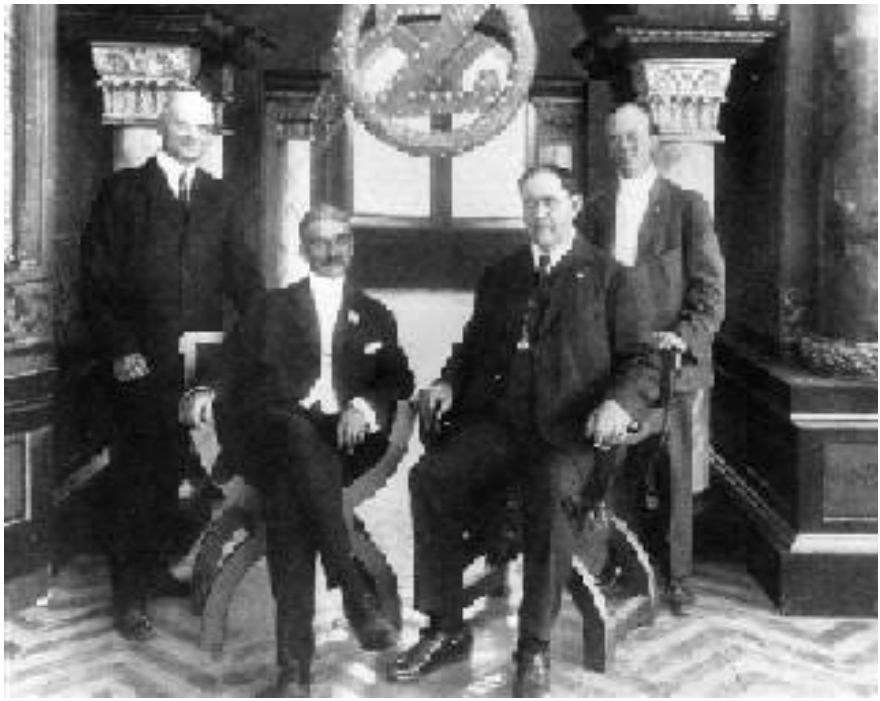

L. Frank Baum (second from left) with principals of the Oz Film Manufacturing Company

This book
belongs to

THE LOST PRINCESS OF OZ

There Stood Their Lovely Girl Ruler Ozma, of Oz —

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This Book is Dedicated
To My Granddaughter
OZMA BAUM

TO MY READERS

Some of my youthful readers are developing wonderful imaginations. This pleases me. Imagination has brought mankind through the Dark Ages to its present state of civilization. Imagination led Columbus to discover America. Imagination led Franklin to discover electricity. Imagination has given us the steam engine, the telephone, the talking-machine and the automobile, for these things had to be dreamed of before they became realities. So I believe that dreams — day dreams, you know, with your eyes wide open and your brain-machinery whizzing — are likely to lead to the betterment of the world. The imaginative child will become the imaginative man or woman most apt to create, to invent, and therefore to foster civilization. A prominent educator tells me that fairy tales are of untold value in developing imagination in the young. I believe it.

Among the letters I receive from children are many containing suggestions of "what to write about in the next Oz Book." Some of the ideas advanced are mighty interesting, while others are too extravagant to be seriously considered — even in a fairy tale. Yet I like them all, and I must admit that the main idea in "The Lost Princess of Oz" was suggested to me by a sweet little girl of eleven who called to see me and to talk about the Land of Oz. Said she: "I s'pose if Ozma ever got lost, or stolen, ev'rybody in Oz would be dreadful sorry."

That was all, but quite enough foundation to build this present story on. If you happen to like the story, give credit to my little friend's clever hint. And, by the way, don't hesitate to write me your own hints and suggestions, such as result from your own day dreams. They will be sure to interest me, even if I cannot use them in a story, and the very fact that you have dreamed at all will give me pleasure and do you good. For, after all, dear reader, these stories of Oz are just yours and mine, and we are partners. As long as you care to read them I shall try to write them, and I've an idea that the next one will relate some startling adventures of the "Tin Woodman of Oz" and his comrades.

L. Frank Baum,
Royal Historian of Oz.

"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA
1917.

List of Chapters

A Terrible Loss

CHAPTER 1

There could be no doubt of the fact: Princess Ozma, the lovely girl ruler of the Fairyland of Oz, was lost. She had completely disappeared. Not one of her subjects — not even her closest friends — knew what had become of her.

It was Dorothy who first discovered it. Dorothy was a little Kansas girl who had come to the Land of Oz to live and had been given a delightful suite of rooms in Ozma's royal palace, just because Ozma loved Dorothy and wanted her to live as near her as possible, so the two girls might be much together.

Dorothy was not the only girl from the outside world who had been welcomed to Oz and lived in the royal palace. There was another named Betsy Bobbin, whose adventures had led her to seek refuge with Ozma, and still another named Trot, who had been invited, together with her faithful companion, Cap'n Bill, to make her home in this wonderful fairyland. The three girls all had rooms in the palace and were great chums; but Dorothy was the dearest friend of their gracious Ruler and only she at any hour dared to seek Ozma in her royal apartments. For Dorothy had lived in Oz much longer than the other girls and had been made a Princess of the realm.

Betsy was a year older than Dorothy and Trot was a year younger, yet the three were near enough of an age to become great playmates and to have nice times together. It was while the three were talking together one morning in Dorothy's room that Betsy proposed they make a journey into the Munchkin Country, which was one of the four great countries of the Land of Oz ruled by Ozma.

"I've never been there yet," said Betsy Bobbin, "but the Scarecrow once told me it is the prettiest country in all Oz."

"I'd like to go, too," added Trot.

"All right," said Dorothy, "I'll go and ask Ozma. Perhaps she will let us take the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon, which would be much nicer for us than having to walk all the way. This Land of Oz is a pretty big place, when you get to all the edges of it."

So she jumped up and went along the halls of the splendid palace until she came to the royal suite, which filled all the front of the second floor. In a little waiting room sat Ozma's maid, Jellia Jamb, who was busily sewing.

"Is Ozma up yet?" inquired Dorothy.

“I don’t know, my dear,” replied Jellia. “I haven’t heard a word from her this morning. She hasn’t even called for her bath or her breakfast, and it is far past her usual time for them.”

“That’s strange!” exclaimed the little girl.

“Yes,” agreed the maid; “but of course no harm could have happened to her. No one can die or be killed in the Land of Oz and Ozma is herself a powerful fairy, and she has no enemies, so far as we know. Therefore I am not at all worried about her, though I must admit her silence is unusual.”

“Perhaps,” said Dorothy, thoughtfully, “she has overslept. Or she may be reading, or working out some new sort of magic to do good to her people.”

“Any of these things may be true,” replied Jellia Jamb, “so I haven’t dared disturb our royal mistress. You, however, are a privileged character, Princess, and I am sure that Ozma wouldn’t mind at all if you went in to see her.”

“Of course not,” said Dorothy, and opening the door of the outer chamber she went in. All was still here. She walked into another room, which was Ozma’s boudoir, and then, pushing back a heavy drapery richly broidered with threads of pure gold, the girl entered the sleeping-room of the fairy Ruler of Oz. The bed of ivory and gold was vacant; the room was vacant; not a trace of Ozma was to be found.

Very much surprised, yet still with no fear that anything had happened to her friend, Dorothy returned through the boudoir to the other rooms of the suite. She went into the music room, the library, the laboratory, the bath, the wardrobe and even into the great throne room, which adjoined the royal suite, but in none of these places could she find Ozma.

So she returned to the anteroom where she had left the maid, Jellia Jamb, and said:

“She isn’t in her rooms now, so she must have gone out.”

“I don’t understand how she could do that without my seeing her,” replied Jellia, “unless she made herself invisible.”

“She isn’t there, anyhow,” declared Dorothy.

“Then let us go find her,” suggested the maid, who appeared to be a little uneasy.

So they went into the corridors and there Dorothy almost stumbled over a queer girl who was dancing lightly along the passage.

“Stop a minute, Scraps!” she called. “Have you seen Ozma this morning?”

“Not I!” replied the queer girl, dancing nearer. “I lost both my eyes in a tussle with the Woozy, last night, for the creature scraped ‘em both off my face with his square paws. So I put the eyes in my pocket and this morning Button-Bright led me to Aunt Em, who sewed ‘em on again. So I’ve seen

nothing at all to-day, except during the last five minutes. So of course I haven't seen Ozma."

"Very well, Scraps," said Dorothy, looking curiously at the eyes, which were merely two round black buttons sewed upon the girl's face.

There were other things about Scraps that would have seemed curious to one seeing her for the first time. She was commonly called "The Patchwork Girl," because her body and limbs were made from a gay-colored patchwork quilt which had been cut into shape and stuffed with cotton. Her head was a round ball stuffed in the same manner and fastened to her shoulders. For hair she had a mass of brown yarn and to make a nose for her a part of the cloth had been pulled out into the shape of a knob and tied with a string to hold it

in place. Her mouth had been carefully made by cutting a slit in the proper place and lining it with red silk, adding two rows of pearls for teeth and a bit of red flannel for a tongue.

In spite of this queer make-up, the Patchwork Girl was magically alive and had proved herself not the least jolly and agreeable of the many quaint characters who inhabit the astonishing Fairyland of Oz. Indeed, Scraps was a general favorite, although she was rather flighty and erratic and did and said many things that surprised her friends. She was seldom still, but loved to dance, to turn handsprings and somersaults, to climb trees and to indulge in many other active sports.

"I'm going to search for Ozma," remarked Dorothy, "for she isn't in her

rooms and I want to ask her a question."

"I'll go with you," said Scraps, "for my eyes are brighter than yours and they can see farther."

"I'm not sure of that," returned Dorothy. "But come along, if you like."

Together they searched all through the great palace and even to the farthest limits of the palace grounds, which were quite extensive, but nowhere could they find a trace of Ozma. When Dorothy returned to where Betsy and Trot awaited her, the little girl's face was rather solemn and troubled, for never before had Ozma gone away without telling her friends where she was going, or without an escort that befitted her royal state.

She was gone, however, and none had seen her go. Dorothy had met and questioned the Scarecrow, Tik-Tok, the Shaggy Man, Button-Bright, Cap'n Bill, and even the wise and powerful Wizard of Oz, but not one of them had seen Ozma since she parted with her friends the evening before and had gone to her own rooms.

"She didn't say anything las' night about going anywhere," observed little Trot.

"No, and that's the strange part of it," replied Dorothy. "Usually Ozma lets us know of everything she does."

"Why not look in the Magic Picture?" suggested Betsy Bobbin. "That will tell us where she is, in just one second."

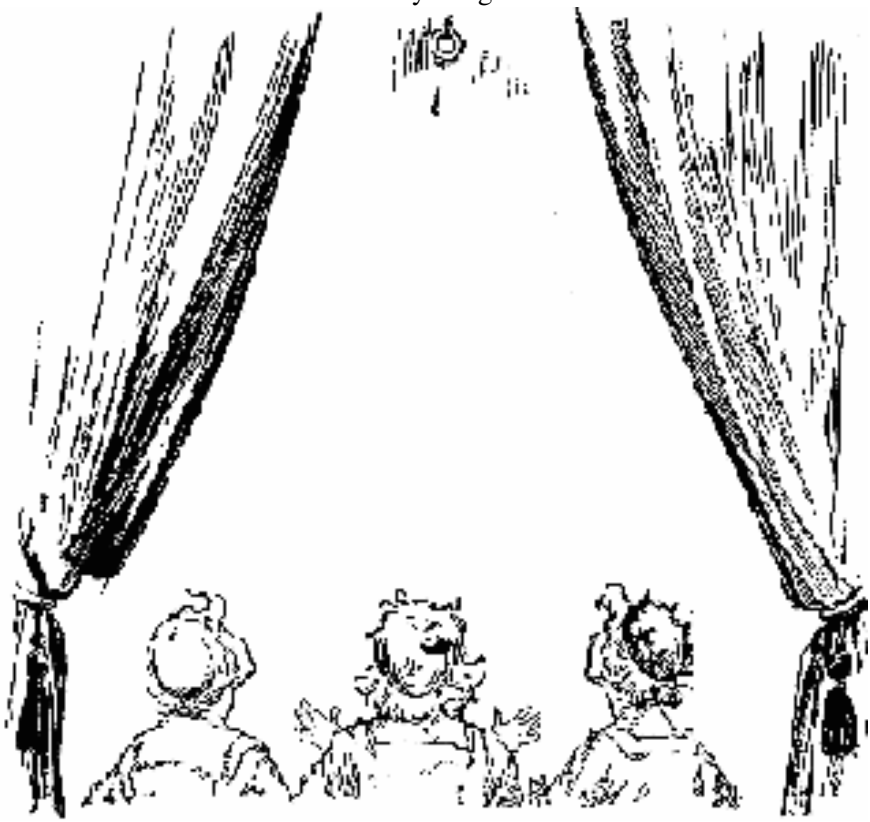
"Of course!" cried Dorothy. "Why didn't I think of that before?" and at once the three girls hurried away to Ozma's boudoir, where the Magic Picture always hung.

This wonderful Magic Picture was one of the royal Ozma's greatest treasures. There was a large gold frame, in the center of which was a bluish-gray canvas on which various scenes constantly appeared and disappeared. If one who stood before it wished to see what any person — anywhere in the

world — was doing, it was only necessary to make the wish and the scene in the Magic Picture would shift to the scene where that person was and show exactly what he or she was then engaged in doing. So the girls knew it would be easy for them to wish to see Ozma, and from the picture they could quickly learn where she was.

Dorothy advanced to the place where the picture was usually protected by thick satin curtains, and pulled the draperies aside. Then she stared in amazement, while her two friends uttered exclamations of disappointment.

The Magic Picture was gone. Only a blank space on the wall behind the curtains showed where it had formerly hung.



The Troubles of Glinda the Good

CHAPTER 2

That same morning there was great excitement in the castle of the powerful Sorceress of Oz, Glinda the Good. This castle, situated in the Quadling Country, far south of the Emerald City where Ozma ruled, was a splendid structure of exquisite marbles and silver grilles. Here the Sorceress lived, surrounded by a bevy of the most beautiful maidens of Oz, gathered from all the four countries of that fairyland as well as from the magnificent Emerald City itself, which stood in the place where the four countries cornered.

It was considered a great honor to be allowed to serve the good Sorceress, whose arts of magic were used only to benefit the Oz people. Glinda was Ozma's most valued servant, for her knowledge of sorcery was wonderful and she could accomplish almost anything that her mistress, the lovely girl Ruler of Oz, wished her to.

Of all the magical things which surrounded Glinda in her castle there was none more marvelous than her Great Book of Records. On the pages of this Record Book were constantly being inscribed — day by day and hour by hour — all the important events that happened anywhere in the known world, and they were inscribed in the book at exactly the moment the events happened. Every adventure in the Land of Oz and in the big outside world, and even in places that you and I have never heard of, were recorded accurately in the Great Book, which never made a mistake and stated only the exact truth. For that reason nothing could be concealed from Glinda the Good, who had only to look at the pages of the Great Book of Records to know everything that had taken place. That was one reason she was such a great Sorceress, for the records made her wiser than any other living person.

This wonderful book was placed upon a big gold table that stood in the middle of Glinda's drawing-room. The legs of the table, which were incrusted with precious gems, were firmly fastened to the tiled floor and the book itself was chained to the table and locked with six stout golden padlocks, the keys to which Glinda carried on a chain that was secured around her own neck.

The pages of the Great Book were larger in size than those of an American newspaper and although they were exceedingly thin there were so many of them that they made an enormous, bulky volume. With its gold cover and gold clasps the book was so heavy that three men could scarcely have lifted it. Yet this morning, when Glinda entered her drawing-room after

breakfast, with all her maidens trailing after her, the good Sorceress was amazed to discover that her Great Book of Records had mysteriously disappeared.

Advancing to the table, she found the chains had been cut with some sharp instrument, and this must have been done while all in the castle slept. Glinda was shocked and grieved. Who could have done this wicked, bold thing? And who could wish to deprive her of her Great Book of Records?

The Sorceress was thoughtful for a time, considering the consequences of her loss. Then she went to her Room of Magic to prepare a charm that would tell her who had stolen the Record Book. But, when she unlocked her cupboards and threw open the doors, all of her magical instruments and rare

chemical compounds had been removed from the shelves.

The Sorceress was now both angry and alarmed. She sat down in a chair and tried to think how this extraordinary robbery could have taken place. It was evident that the thief was some person of very great power, or the theft could never have been accomplished without her knowledge. But who, in all the Land of Oz, was powerful and skillful enough to do this awful thing? And who, having the power, could also have an object in defying the wisest and most talented Sorceress the world has ever known?

Glinda thought over the perplexing matter for a full hour, at the end of which time she was still puzzled how to explain it. But although her instruments and chemicals were gone her *knowledge* of magic had not been stolen, by

any means, since no thief, however skillful, can rob one of knowledge, and that is why knowledge is the best and safest treasure to acquire. Glinda believed that when she had time to gather more magical herbs and elixirs and to manufacture more magical instruments she would be able to discover who the robber was, and what had become of her precious Book of Records.

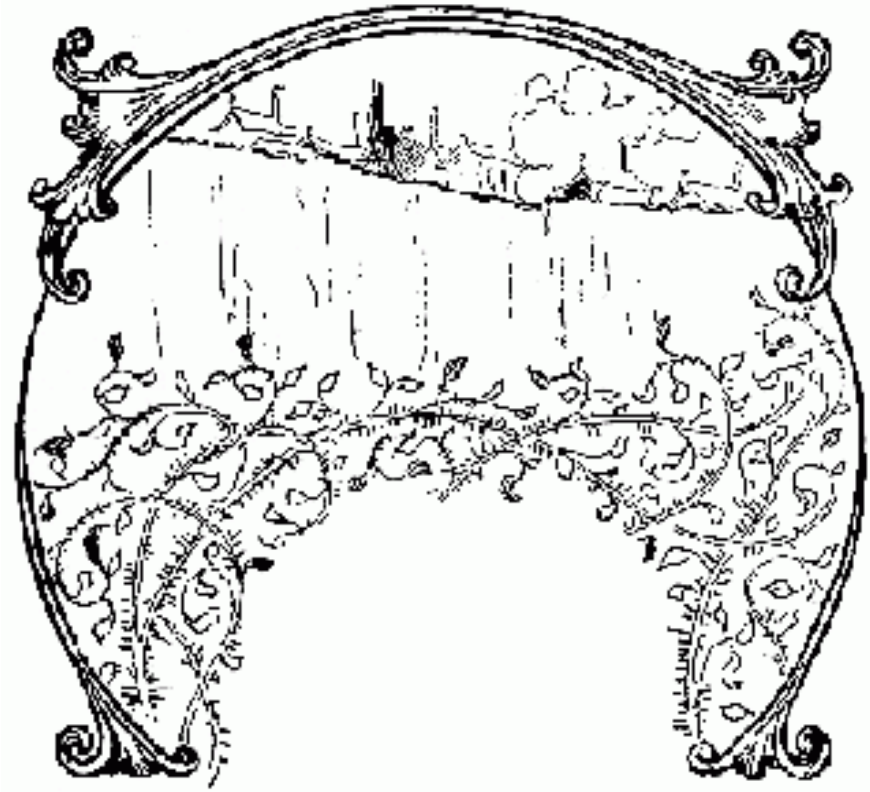
"Whoever has done this," she said to her maidens, "is a very foolish person, for in time he is sure to be found out and will then be severely punished."

She now made a list of the things she needed and dispatched messengers to every part of Oz with instructions to obtain them and bring them to her as soon as possible. And one of her messengers met the little Wizard of Oz, who was mounted on the back of the famous live Sawhorse and was clinging to its neck with both his arms; for the Sawhorse was speeding to Glinda's castle with the velocity of the wind, bearing the news that Royal Ozma, Ruler of all the great Land of Oz, had suddenly disappeared and no one in the Emerald City knew what had become of her.

"Also," said the Wizard, as he stood before the astonished Sorceress, "Ozma's Magic Picture is gone, so we cannot consult it to discover where she is. So I came to you for assistance as soon as we realized our loss. Let us look in the Great Book of Records."

"Alas," returned the Sorceress sorrowfully, "we cannot do that, for the Great Book of Records has also disappeared!"

Robbery of Cayke the Cookie Cook



CHAPTER 3

One more important
theft was reported
in the Land
of Oz that eventful
morning, but it took place so far from either the Emerald City or the castle of Glinda the Good that none of those persons we have mentioned learned of the robbery until long afterward.

In the far southwestern corner of the Winkie Country is a broad tableland that can be reached only by climbing a steep hill, whichever side one approaches it. On the hillside surrounding this tableland are no paths at all, but there are quantities of bramble-bushes with sharp prickers on them, which prevent any of the Oz people who live down below from climbing up to see what is on top. But on top live the Yips, and although the space they occupy is not great in extent the wee country is all their own. The Yips had never — up to the time this story begins — left their broad tableland to go down into the Land of Oz, nor had the Oz people ever climbed up to the country of the Yips.

Living all alone as they did, the Yips had queer ways and notions of their own and did not resemble any other people of the Land of Oz. Their houses were scattered all over the flat surface; not like a city, grouped together, but set wherever their owners' fancy dictated, with fields here, trees there, and odd little paths connecting the houses one with another.

It was here, on the morning when Ozma so strangely disappeared from the Emerald City, that Cayke the Cookie Cook discovered that her diamond-studded gold dishpan had been stolen, and she raised such a hue-and-cry over her loss and wailed and shrieked so loudly that many of the Yips gathered around her house to inquire what was the matter.

It was a serious thing, in any part of the Land of Oz, to accuse one of stealing, so when the Yips heard Cayke the Cookie Cook declare that her jeweled dishpan had been stolen they were both humiliated and disturbed and forced Cayke to go with them to the Frogman to see what could be done about it.

I do not suppose you have ever before heard of the Frogman, for like all other dwellers on that tableland he had never been away from it, nor had anyone come up there to see him. The Frogman was, in truth, descended from the common frogs of Oz, and when he was first born he lived in a pool in the Winkie Country and was much like any other frog. Being of an adventurous nature, however, he soon hopped out of his pool and began to

travel, when a big bird came along and seized him in its beak and started to fly away with him to its nest. When high in the air the frog wriggled so frantically that he got loose and fell down — down — down into a small hidden pool on the tableland of the Yips. Now this pool, it seems, was unknown to the Yips because it was surrounded by thick bushes and was not near to any dwelling, and it proved to be an enchanted pool, for the frog grew very fast and very big, feeding on the magic skosh which is found nowhere else on earth except in that one pool. And the skosh not only made the frog very big, so that when he stood on his hind legs he was tall as any Yip in the country, but it made him unusually intelligent, so that he soon knew more than the Yips did and was able to reason and to argue very well indeed.

No one could expect a frog with these talents to remain in a hidden pool, so he finally got out of it and mingled with the people of the tableland, who were amazed at his appearance and greatly impressed by his learning. They had never seen a frog before and the frog had never seen a Yip before, but as there were plenty of Yips and only one frog, the frog became the most important. He did not hop any more, but stood upright on his hind legs and dressed himself in fine clothes and sat in chairs and did all the things that people do; so he soon came to be called the Frogman, and that is the only name he has ever had.

After some years had passed the people came to regard the Frogman as their adviser in all matters that puzzled them. They brought all their difficulties to him and when he did not know anything he pretended to know it, which seemed to answer just as well. Indeed, the Yips thought the Frogman was much wiser than he really was, and he allowed them to think so, being very proud of his position of authority.

There was another pool on the tableland, which was not enchanted but contained good clear water and was located close to the dwellings. Here the people built the Frogman a house of his own, close to the edge of the pool, so that he could take a bath or a swim whenever he wished. He usually swam in the pool in the early morning, before anyone else was up, and during the day he dressed himself in his beautiful clothes and sat in his house and received the visits of all the Yips who came to him to ask his advice.

The Frogman's usual costume consisted of knee-breeches made of yellow satin plush, with trimmings of gold braid and jeweled knee-buckles; a white satin vest with silver buttons in which were set solitaire rubies; a swallow-tailed coat of bright yellow; green stockings and red leather shoes turned up at the toes and having diamond buckles. He wore, when he walked out, a purple silk hat and carried a gold-headed cane. Over his eyes he wore great spectacles with gold rims, not because his eyes were bad but because the spectacles made him look wise, and so distinguished and gorgeous was his appearance that all the Yips were very proud of him.

There was no King or Queen in the Yip Country, so the simple inhabitants naturally came to look upon the Frogman as their leader as well as their counselor in all times of emergency. In his heart the big frog knew he was no wiser than the Yips, but for a frog to know as much as a person was quite remarkable, and the Frogman was shrewd enough to make the people believe he was far more wise than he really was. They never suspected he was a humbug, but listened to his words with great respect and did just what he advised them to do.

Now, when Cayke the Cookie Cook raised such an outcry over the theft of

her diamond-studded dishpan, the first thought of the people was to take her to the Frogman and inform him of the loss, thinking that of course he could tell her where to find it.

He listened to the story with his big eyes wide open behind his spectacles, and said in his deep, croaking voice:

"If the dishpan is stolen, somebody must have taken it."

"But who?" asked Cayke, anxiously. "Who is the thief?"

"The one who took the dishpan, of course," replied the Frogman, and hearing this all the Yips nodded their heads gravely and said to one another:

"It is absolutely true!"

"But I want my dishpan!" cried Cayke.

“No one can blame you for that wish,” remarked the Frogman.

“Then tell me where I may find it,” she urged.

The look the Frogman gave her was a very wise look and he rose from his chair and strutted up and down the room with his hands under his coat-tails, in a very pompous and imposing manner. This was the first time so difficult a matter had been brought to him and he wanted time to think. It would never do to let them suspect his ignorance and so he thought very, very hard how best to answer the woman without betraying himself.

“I beg to inform you,” said he, “that nothing in the Yip Country has ever been stolen before.”

“We know that, already,” answered Cayke the Cookie Cook, impatiently.

“Therefore,” continued the Frogman, “this theft becomes a very important matter.”

“Well, where is my dishpan?” demanded the woman.

“It is lost; but it must be found. Unfortunately, we have no policemen or detectives to unravel the mystery, so we must employ other means to regain the lost article. Cayke must first write a Proclamation and tack it to the door of her house, and the Proclamation must read that whoever stole the jeweled dishpan must return it at once.”

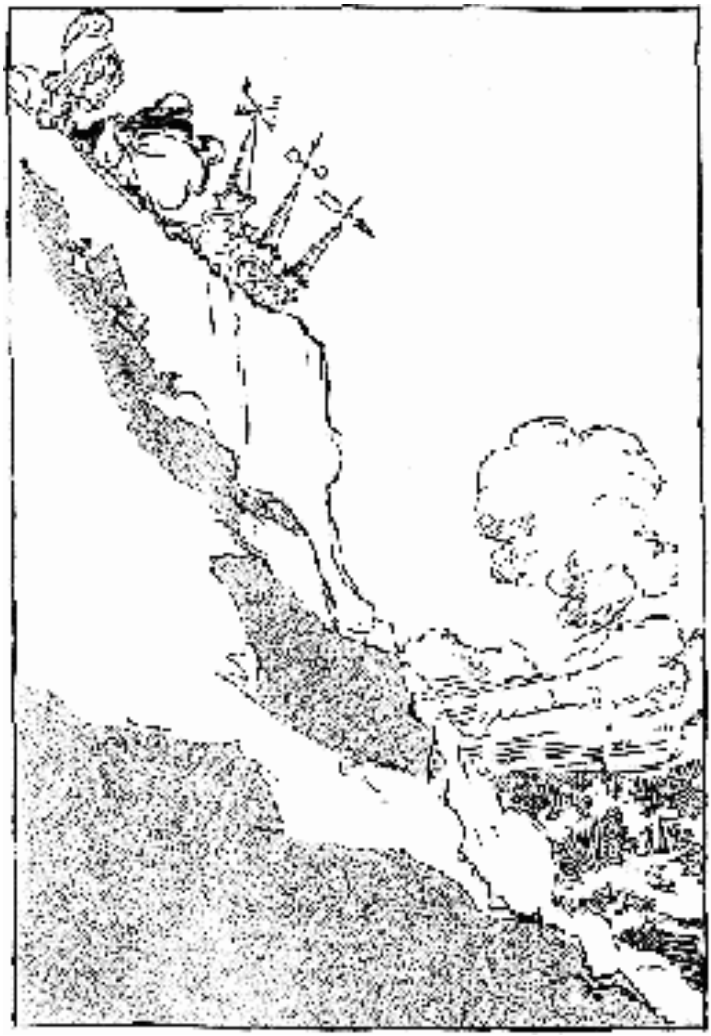
“But suppose no one returns it,” suggested Cayke.

“Then,” said the Frogman, “that very fact will be proof that no one has stolen it.”

Cayke was not satisfied, but the other Yips seemed to approve the plan highly. They all advised her to do as the Frogman had told her to, so she posted the sign on her door and waited patiently for someone to return the dishpan — which no one ever did.

Again she went, accompanied by a group of her neighbors, to the Frogman, who by this time had given the matter considerable thought. Said he to Cayke:

“I am now convinced that no Yip has taken your dishpan, and, since it is gone from the Yip Country, I suspect that some stranger came from the world down below us, in the darkness of night when all of us were asleep, and took away your treasure. There can be no other explanation of its disappearance. So, if you wish to recover that golden, diamond-studded dishpan, you must go into the lower world after it.”



This was indeed a startling proposition. Cayke and her friends went to the edge of the flat tableland and looked down the steep hillside to the plains below. It was so far to the bottom of the hill that nothing there could be seen very distinctly and it seemed to the Yips very venturesome, if not dangerous, to go so far from home into an unknown land.

However, Cayke wanted her dishpan very badly, so she turned to her friends and asked:

"Who will go with me?"

No one answered this question, but after a period of silence one of the Yips said:

"We know what is here, on the top of this flat hill, and it seems to us a

very pleasant place; but what is down below we do not know. The chances are it is not so pleasant, so we had best stay where we are."

"It may be a far better country than this is," suggested the Cookie Cook.

"Maybe, maybe," responded another Yip, "but why take chances? Contentment with one's lot is true wisdom. Perhaps, in some other country, there are better cookies than you cook; but as we have always eaten your cookies, and liked them — except when they are burned on the bottom — we do not long for any better ones."

Cayke might have agreed to this argument had she not been so anxious to find her precious dishpan, but now she exclaimed impatiently:

"You are cowards — all of you! If none of you are willing to explore with me the great world beyond this small hill, I will surely go alone."

"That is a wise resolve," declared the Yips, much relieved. "It is your dishpan that is lost, not ours; and, if you are willing to risk your life and liberty to regain it, no one can deny you the privilege."

While they were thus conversing the Frogman joined them and looked down at the plain with his big eyes and seemed unusually thoughtful. In fact, the Frogman was thinking that he'd like to see more of the world. Here in the Yip Country he had become the most important creature of them all and his importance was getting to be a little tame. It would be nice to have other people defer to him and ask his advice and there seemed no reason, so far as he could see, why his fame should not spread throughout all Oz.

He knew nothing of the rest of the world, but it was reasonable to believe that there were more people beyond the mountain where he now lived than there were Yips, and if he went among them he could surprise them with his display of wisdom and make them bow down to him as the Yips did. In other words, the Frogman was ambitious to become still greater than he was, which was impossible if he always remained upon this mountain. He wanted others to see his gorgeous clothes and listen to his solemn sayings, and here was an excuse for him to get away from the Yip Country. So he said to Cayke the Cookie Cook:

"*I* will go with you, my good woman," which greatly pleased Cayke because she felt the Frogman could be of much assistance to her in her search.

But now, since the mighty Frogman had decided to undertake the journey, several of the Yips who were young and daring at once made up their minds to go along; so the next morning after breakfast the Frogman and Cayke the Cookie Cook and nine of the Yips started to slide down the side of the mountain. The bramble-bushes and cactus plants were very prickly and uncomfortable to the touch, so the Frogman commanded the Yips to go first

and break a path, so that when he followed them he would not tear his splendid clothes. Cayke, too, was wearing her best dress, and was likewise afraid of the thorns and prickers, so she kept behind the Frogman.

They made rather slow progress and night overtook them before they were halfway down the mountain side, so they found a cave in which they sought shelter until morning. Cayke had brought along a basket full of her famous cookies, so they all had plenty to eat.

On the second day the Yips began to wish they had not embarked on this adventure. They grumbled a good deal at having to cut away the thorns to make the path for the Frogman and the Cookie Cook, for their own clothing suffered many tears, while Cayke and the Frogman traveled safely and in comfort.

"If it is true that anyone came to our country to steal your diamond dishpan," said one of the Yips to Cayke, "it must have been a bird, for no person in the form of a man, woman or child could have climbed through these bushes and back again."

"And, allowing he could have done so," said another Yip, "the diamond-studded gold dishpan would not have repaid him for his troubles and his tribulations."

"For my part," remarked a third Yip, "I would rather go back home and dig and polish some more diamonds, and mine some more gold, and make you another dishpan, than be scratched from head to heel by these dreadful bushes. Even now, if my mother saw me, she would not know I am her son."

Cayke paid no heed to these mutterings, nor did the Frogman. Although their journey was slow it was being made easy for them by the Yips, so they had nothing to complain of and no desire to turn back.

Quite near to the bottom of the great hill they came upon a deep gulf, the sides of which were as smooth as glass. The gulf extended a long distance — as far as they could see, in either direction — and although it was not very wide it was far too wide for the Yips to leap across it. And, should they fall into it, it was likely they might never get out again.

"Here our journey ends," said the Yips. "We must go back again."

Cayke the Cookie Cook began to weep.

"I shall never find my pretty dishpan again — and my heart will be broken!" she sobbed.

The Frogman went to the edge of the gulf and with his eye carefully measured the distance to the other side.

"Being a frog," said he, "I can leap, as all frogs do; and, being so big and strong, I am sure I can leap across this gulf with ease. But the rest of you, not being frogs, must return the way you came."

“We will do that with pleasure,” cried the Yips and at once they turned and began to climb up the steep mountain, feeling they had had quite enough of this unsatisfactory adventure. Cayke the Cookie Cook did not go with them, however. She sat on a rock and wept and wailed and was very miserable.

“Well,” said the Frogman to her, “I will now bid you good-bye. If I find your diamond decorated gold dishpan I will promise to see that it is safely returned to you.”

“But I prefer to find it myself!” she said. “See here, Frogman, why can’t you carry me across the gulf when you leap it? You are big and strong, while I am small and thin.”

The Frogman gravely thought over this suggestion. It was a fact that Cayke the Cookie Cook was not a heavy person. Perhaps he could leap the gulf with her on his back.

“If you are willing to risk a fall,” said he, “I will make the attempt.”

At once she sprang up and grabbed him around his neck with both her arms. That is, she grabbed him where his neck ought to be, for the Frogman had no neck at all. Then he squatted down, as frogs do when they leap, and with his powerful rear legs he made a tremendous jump.

Over the gulf he sailed, with the Cookie Cook on his back, and he had leaped so hard — to make sure of not falling in — that he sailed over a lot of bramble-bushes that grew on the other side and landed in a clear space which was so far beyond the gulf that when they looked back they could not see it at all.

Cayke now got off the Frogman’s back and he stood erect again and carefully brushed the dust from his velvet coat and rearranged his white satin necktie.

“I had no idea I could leap so far,” he said wonderingly. “Leaping is one more accomplishment I can now add to the long list of deeds I am able to perform.”

“You are certainly fine at leap-frog,” said the Cookie Cook, admiringly; “but, as you say, you are wonderful in many ways. If we meet with any people down here I am sure they will consider you the greatest and grandest of all living creatures.”

"Yes," he replied, "I shall probably astonish strangers, because they have never before had the pleasure of seeing me. Also they will marvel at my great learning. Every time I open my mouth, Cayke, I am liable to say something important."

"That is true," she agreed, "and it is fortunate your mouth is so very wide and opens so far, for otherwise all the wisdom might not be able to get out of it."

"Perhaps nature made it wide for that very reason," said the Frogman: "But come; let us now go on, for it is getting late and we must find some sort of shelter before night overtakes us."

Among the Winkies

CHAPTER 4

The settled parts of the Winkie Country are full of happy and contented people who are ruled by a tin Emperor named Nick Chopper, who in turn is a subject of the beautiful girl Ruler, Ozma of Oz. But not all of the Winkie Country is fully settled. At the east, which part lies nearest the Emerald City, there are beautiful farmhouses and roads, but as you travel west you first come to a branch of the Winkie River, beyond which there is a rough country where few people live, and some of these are quite unknown to the rest of the world. After passing through this rude section of territory, which no one ever visits, you would come to still another branch of the Winkie River, after crossing which you would find another well-settled part of the Winkie Country, extending westward quite to the Deadly Desert that surrounds all the Land of Oz and separates that favored fairyland from the more common outside world. The Winkies who live in this west section have many tin mines, from which metal they make a great deal of rich jewelry and other articles, all of which are highly esteemed in the Land of Oz because tin is so bright and pretty, and there is not so much of it as there is of gold and silver.

Not all the Winkies are miners, however, for some till the fields and grow grains for food, and it was at one of these far west Winkie farms that the Frogman and Cayke the Cookie Cook first arrived after they had descended from the mountain of the Yips.

"Goodness me!" cried Nellary, the Winkie wife, when she saw the strange couple approaching her house. "I have seen many queer creatures in the Land of Oz, but none more queer than this giant frog, who dresses like a man and walks on his hind legs. Come here, Wiljon," she called to her husband, who was eating his breakfast, "and take a look at this astonishing freak."

Wiljon the Winkie came to the door and looked out. He was still standing in the doorway when the Frogman approached and said with a haughty croak:

"Tell me, my good man, have you seen a diamond-studded gold dishpan?"

"No; nor have I seen a copper-plated lobster," replied Wiljon, in an equally haughty tone.

The Frogman stared at him and said:

"Do not be insolent, fellow!"

"No," added Cayke the Cookie Cook, hastily, "you must be very polite to

the great Frogman, for he is the wisest creature in all the world."

"Who says that?" inquired Wiljon.

"He says so himself," replied Cayke, and the Frogman nodded and strutted up and down, twirling his gold-headed cane very gracefully.

"Does the Scarecrow admit that this overgrown frog is the wisest creature in the world?" asked Wiljon.

"I do not know who the Scarecrow is," answered Cayke the Cookie Cook.

"Well, he lives at the Emerald City, and he is supposed to have the finest brains in all Oz. The Wizard gave them to him, you know."

"Mine grew in my head," said the Frogman pompously, "so I think they must be better than any wizard brains. I am so wise that sometimes my wisdom makes my head ache. I know so much that often I have to forget part of it, since no one creature, however great, is able to contain so much knowledge."

"It must be dreadful to be stuffed full of wisdom," remarked Wiljon reflectively, and eyeing the Frogman with a doubtful look. "It is my good fortune to know very little."

"I hope, however, you know where my jeweled dishpan is," said the Cookie Cook anxiously.

"I do not know even that," returned the Winkie. "We have trouble enough in keeping track of our own dishpans, without meddling with the dishpans of strangers."

Finding him so ignorant, the Frogman proposed that they walk on and seek Cayke's dishpan elsewhere. Wiljon the Winkie did not seem greatly impressed by the great Frogman, which seemed to that personage as strange as it was disappointing; but others in this unknown land might prove more respectful.

"I'd like to meet that Wizard of Oz," remarked Cayke, as they walked along a path. "If he could give a Scarecrow brains he might be able to find my dishpan."

"Poof!" grunted the Frogman scornfully; "I am greater than any wizard. Depend on *me*. If your dishpan is anywhere in the world I am sure to find it."

"If you do not, my heart will be broken," declared the Cookie Cook in a sorrowful voice.

For a while the Frogman walked on in silence. Then he asked:

"Why do you attach so much importance to a dishpan?"

"It is the greatest treasure I possess," replied the woman. "It belonged to my mother and to all my grandmothers, since the beginning of time. It is, I

believe, the very oldest thing in all the Yip Country — or was while it was there — and," she added, dropping her voice to an awed whisper, "it has magic powers!"

"In what way?" inquired the Frogman, seeming to be surprised at this statement.

"Whoever has owned that dishpan has been a good cook, for one thing. No one else is able to make such good cookies as I have cooked, as you and all the Yips know. Yet, the very morning after my dishpan was stolen, I tried to make a batch of cookies and they burned up in the oven! I made another batch that proved too tough to eat, and I was so ashamed of them that I buried them in the ground. Even the third batch of cookies, which I brought with me in my basket, were pretty poor stuff and no better than any woman could make who does not own my diamond-studded gold dishpan. In fact, my good Frogman, Cayke the Cookie Cook will never be able to cook good cookies again until her magic dishpan is restored to her."

"In that case," said the Frogman with a sigh, "I suppose we must manage to find it."

Ozma's Friends Are Perplexed

CHAPTER 5

"Really," said Dorothy, looking solemn, "this is very s'prising. We can't find even a shadow of Ozma anywhere in the Em'rald City; and, wherever she's gone, she's taken her Magic Picture with her."

She was standing in the courtyard of the palace with Betsy and Trot, while Scraps, the Patchwork Girl, danced around the group, her hair flying in the wind.

"P'raps," said Scraps, still dancing, "someone has stolen Ozma."

"Oh, they'd never dare do that!" exclaimed tiny Trot.

"And stolen the Magic Picture, too, so the thing can't tell where she is," added the Patchwork Girl.

"That's nonsense," said Dorothy. "Why, ev'ryone loves Ozma. There isn't a person in the Land of Oz who would steal a single thing she owns."

"Huh!" replied the Patchwork Girl. "You don't know ev'ry person in the Land of Oz."

"Why don't I?"

"It's a big country," said Scraps. "There are cracks and corners in it that even Ozma doesn't know of."

"The Patchwork Girl's just daffy," declared Betsy.

"No; she's right about that," replied Dorothy thoughtfully. "There are lots of queer people in this fairyland who never come near Ozma or the Em'rald City. I've seen some of 'em myself, girls; but I haven't seen all, of course, and there *might* be some wicked persons left in Oz, yet, though I think the wicked witches have all been destroyed."

Just then the Wooden Sawhorse dashed into the courtyard with the Wizard of Oz on his back.

"Have you found Ozma?" cried the Wizard when the Sawhorse stopped beside them.

"Not yet," said Dorothy. "Doesn't Glinda know where she is?"

"No. Glinda's Book of Records and all her magic instruments are gone. Someone must have stolen them."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Dorothy, in alarm. "This is the biggest steal I ever heard of. Who do you think did it, Wizard?"

"I've no idea," he answered. "But I have come to get my own bag of magic tools and carry them to Glinda. She is so much more powerful than I that she may be able to discover the truth by means of my magic, quicker and

better than I could myself."

"Hurry, then," said Dorothy, "for we're all getting terr'bly worried."

The Wizard rushed away to his rooms but presently came back with a long, sad face.

"It's gone!" he said.

"What's gone?" asked Scraps.

"My black bag of magic tools. Someone must have stolen it!"

They looked at one another in amazement.

"This thing is getting desperate," continued the Wizard. "All the magic that belongs to Ozma, or to Glinda, or to me, has been stolen."

"Do you suppose Ozma could have taken them, herself, for some

purpose?" asked Betsy.

"No, indeed," declared the Wizard. "I suspect some enemy has stolen Ozma and, for fear we would follow and recapture her, has taken all our magic away from us."

"How dreadful!" cried Dorothy. "The idea of anyone wanting to injure our dear Ozma! Can't we do *any*thing to find her, Wizard?"

"I'll ask Glinda. I must go straight back to her and tell her that my magic tools have also disappeared. The good Sorceress will be greatly shocked, I know."

With this he jumped upon the back of the Sawhorse again and the quaint steed, which never tired, dashed away at full speed.

The three girls were very much disturbed in mind. Even the Patchwork Girl was more quiet than usual and seemed to realize that a great calamity had overtaken them all. Ozma was a fairy of considerable power and all the creatures in Oz, as well as the three mortal girls from the outside world, looked upon her as their protector and friend. The idea of their beautiful girl Ruler's being overpowered by an enemy and dragged from her splendid palace a captive was too astonishing for them to comprehend, at first. Yet what other explanation of the mystery could there be?

"Ozma wouldn't go away willingly, without letting us know about it," asserted Dorothy; "and she wouldn't steal Glinda's Great Book of Records, or the Wizard's magic, 'cause she could get them any time, just by asking for 'em. I'm sure some wicked person has done all this."

"Someone in the Land of Oz?" asked Trot.

"Of course. No one could get across the Deadly Desert, you know, and no one but an Oz person could know about the Magic Picture and the Book of Records and the Wizard's magic, or where they were kept, and so be able to steal the whole outfit before we could stop 'em. It *must* be someone who lives in the Land of Oz."

"But who — who — who?" asked Scraps. "That's the question. Who?"

"If we knew," replied Dorothy, severely, "we wouldn't be standing here, doing nothing."

Just then two boys entered the courtyard and approached the group of girls. One boy was dressed in the fantastic Munchkin costume — a blue jacket and knickerbockers, blue leather shoes and a blue hat with a high peak and tiny silver bells dangling from its rim — and this was Ojo the Lucky, who had once come from the Munchkin Country of Oz and now lived in the Emerald City. The other boy was an American, from Philadelphia, and had lately found his way to Oz in the company of Trot and Cap'n Bill. His name was Button-Bright; that is, everyone called him by that name, and knew no

other.

Button-Bright was not quite as big as the Munchkin boy, but he wore the same kind of clothes, only they were of different colors. As the two came up to the girls, arm in arm, Button-Bright remarked:

“Hello, Dorothy. They say Ozma is lost.”

“*Who* says so?” she asked.

“Everybody’s talking about it, in the City,” he replied.

“I wonder how the people found it out?” Dorothy asked.

“I know,” said Ojo. “Jellia Jamb told them. She has been asking everywhere if anyone has seen Ozma.”

“That’s too bad,” observed Dorothy, frowning.

“Why?” asked Button-Bright.

“There wasn’t any use making all our people unhappy, till we were dead certain that Ozma can’t be found.”

"Pshaw," said Button-Bright, "It's nothing to get lost. I've been lost lots of times."

"That's true," admitted Trot, who knew that the boy had a habit of getting lost and then finding himself again; "but it's diff'rent with Ozma. She's the Ruler of all this big fairyland and we're 'fraid that the reason she's lost is because somebody has stolen her away."

"Only wicked people steal," said Ojo. "Do you know of any wicked people in Oz, Dorothy?"

"No," she replied.

"They're here, though," cried Scraps, dancing up to them and then circling around the group. "Ozma's stolen; someone in Oz stole her; only

wicked people steal; so someone in Oz is wicked!"

There was no denying the truth of this statement. The faces of all of them were now solemn and sorrowful.

"One thing is sure," said Button-Bright, after a time, "if Ozma has been stolen, someone ought to find her and punish the thief."

"There may be a lot of thieves," suggested Trot gravely, "and in this fairy country they don't seem to have any soldiers or policemen."

"There is one soldier," claimed Dorothy. "He has green whiskers and a gun and is a Major-General; but no one is afraid of either his gun or his whiskers, 'cause he's so tender-hearted that he wouldn't hurt a fly."

"Well, a soldier's a soldier," said Betsy, "and perhaps he'd hurt a wicked thief if he wouldn't hurt a fly. Where is he?"

"He went fishing about two months ago and hasn't come back yet," explained Button-Bright.

"Then I can't see that he will be of much use to us in this trouble," sighed little Trot. "But p'raps Ozma, who is a fairy, can get away from the thieves without any help from anybody."

"She *might* be able to," admitted Dorothy, reflectively, "but if she had the power to do that, it isn't likely she'd have let herself be stolen. So the thieves must have been even more powerful in magic than our Ozma."

There was no denying this argument and, although they talked the matter over all the rest of that day, they were unable to decide how Ozma had been stolen against her will or who had committed the dreadful deed.

Toward evening the Wizard came back, riding slowly upon the Sawhorse because he felt discouraged and perplexed. Glinda came, later, in her aerial chariot drawn by twenty milk-white swans, and she also seemed worried and unhappy. More of Ozma's friends joined them and that evening they all had a long talk together.

"I think," said Dorothy, "we ought to start out right away in search of our dear Ozma. It seems cruel for us to live comf'tably in her palace while she is a pris'ner in the power of some wicked enemy."

"Yes," agreed Glinda the Sorceress, "someone ought to search for her. I cannot go myself, because I must work hard in order to create some new instruments of sorcery by means of which I may rescue our fair Ruler. But if you can find her, in the meantime, and let me know who has stolen her, it will enable me to rescue her much more quickly."

"Then we'll start to-morrow morning," decided Dorothy. "Betsy and Trot and I won't waste another minute."

"I'm not sure you girls will make good detectives," remarked the Wizard; "but I'll go with you, to protect you from harm and to give you my advice.

All my wizardry, alas, is stolen, so I am now really no more a wizard than any of you; but I will try to protect you from any enemies you may meet."

"What harm could happen to us in Oz?" inquired Trot.

"What harm happened to Ozma?" returned the Wizard. "If there is an Evil Power abroad in our fairyland, which is able to steal not only Ozma and her Magic Picture, but Glinda's Book of Records and all her magic, and my black bag containing all my tricks of wizardry, then that Evil Power may yet cause us considerable injury. Ozma is a fairy, and so is Glinda, so no power can kill or destroy them; but you girls are all mortals, and so are Button-Bright and I, so we must watch out for ourselves."

"Nothing can kill me," said Ojo, the Munchkin boy.

"That is true," replied the Sorceress, "and I think it may be well to divide the searchers into several parties, that they may cover all the land of Oz more quickly. So I will send Ojo and Unc Nunkie and Dr. Pipt into the Munchkin Country, which they are well acquainted with; and I will send the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman into the Quadling Country, for they are fearless and brave and never tire; and to the Gillikin Country, where many dangers lurk, I will send the Shaggy Man and his brother, with Tik-Tok and Jack Pumpkinhead. Dorothy may make up her own party and travel into the Winkie Country. All of you must inquire everywhere for Ozma and try to discover where she is **hidden**."

They thought this a very wise plan and adopted it without question. In

Ozma's absence Glinda the Good was the most important person in Oz and all were glad to serve under her direction.

The Search Party

CHAPTER 6

Next morning,
as soon as the sun
was up, Glinda
flew back to her
castle, stopping on the way to instruct the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, who were at that time staying at the college of Professor H. M. Wogglebug, T. E., and taking a course of his Patent Educational Pills. On hearing of Ozma's loss they started at once for the Quadling Country to search for her.

As soon as Glinda had left the Emerald City, Tik-Tok and the Shaggy Man and Jack Pumpkinhead, who had been present at the conference, began their journey into the Gillikin Country, and an hour later Ojo and Unc Nunkie joined Dr. Pipt and together they traveled toward the Munchkin Country. When all these searchers were gone, Dorothy and the Wizard completed their own preparations.

The Wizard hitched the Sawhorse to the Red Wagon, which would seat four very comfortably. He wanted Dorothy, Betsy, Trot and the Patchwork Girl to ride in the wagon, but Scraps came up to them mounted upon the Woozy, and the Woozy said he would like to join the party. Now this Woozy was a most peculiar animal, having a square head, square body, square legs and square tail. His skin was very tough and hard, resembling leather, and while his movements were somewhat clumsy the beast could travel with remarkable swiftness. His square eyes were mild and gentle in expression and he was not especially foolish. The Woozy and the Patchwork Girl were great friends and so the Wizard agreed to let the Woozy go with them.

Another great beast now appeared and asked to go along. This was none other than the famous Cowardly Lion, one of the most interesting creatures in all Oz. No lion that roamed the jungles or plains could compare in size or intelligence with this Cowardly Lion, who — like all animals living in Oz — could talk, and who talked with more shrewdness and wisdom than many of the people did. He said he was cowardly because he always trembled when he faced danger, but he had faced danger many times and never refused to fight when it was necessary. This Lion was a great favorite with Ozma and always guarded her throne on state occasions. He was also an old companion and friend of the Princess Dorothy, so the girl was delighted to have him join the party.

“I’m so nervous over our dear Ozma,” said the Cowardly Lion in his deep, rumbling voice, “that it would make me unhappy to remain behind while you are trying to find her. But do not get into any danger, I beg of you, for danger frightens me terribly.”

“We’ll not get into danger if we can poss’bly help it,” promised Dorothy; “but we shall do anything to find Ozma, danger or no danger.”

The addition of the Woozy and the Cowardly Lion to the party gave Betsy Bobbin an idea and she ran to the marble stables at the rear of the palace and brought out her mule, Hank by name. Perhaps no mule you ever saw was so lean and bony and altogether plain looking as this Hank, but Betsy loved him dearly because he was faithful and steady and not nearly so stupid as most mules are considered to be. Betsy had a saddle for Hank and declared she would ride on his back, an arrangement approved by the Wizard because it left only four of the party to ride on the seats of the Red Wagon — Dorothy and Button-Bright and Trot and himself.

An old sailor-man, who had one wooden leg, came to see them off and suggested that they put a supply of food and blankets in the Red Wagon, inasmuch as they were uncertain how long they would be gone. This sailor-man was called Cap’n Bill. He was a former friend and comrade of Trot and had encountered many adventures in company with the little girl. I think he was sorry he could not go with her on this trip, but Glinda the Sorceress had asked Cap’n Bill to remain in the Emerald City and take charge of the royal palace while everyone else was away, and the one-legged sailor had agreed to do so.

They loaded the back end of the Red Wagon with everything they thought they might need, and then they formed a procession and marched from the palace through the Emerald City to the great gates of the wall that surrounded this beautiful capital of the Land of Oz. Crowds of citizens lined the streets to see them pass and to cheer them and wish them success, for all were grieved over Ozma’s loss and anxious that she be found again.

First came the Cowardly Lion; then the Patchwork Girl riding upon the Woozy; then Betsy Bobbin on her mule Hank; and finally the Sawhorse drawing the Red Wagon, in which were seated the Wizard and Dorothy and Button-Bright and Trot. No one was obliged to drive the Sawhorse, so there were no reins to his harness; one had only to tell him which way to go, fast or slow, and he understood perfectly.

It was about this time that a shaggy little black dog who had been lying asleep in Dorothy’s room in the palace woke up and discovered he was lonesome. Everything seemed very still throughout the great building and Toto — that was the little dog’s name — missed the customary chatter of the

three girls. He never paid much attention to what was going on around him and, although he could speak, he seldom said anything; so the little dog did not know about Ozma's loss or that everyone had gone in search of her. But he liked to be with people, and especially with his own mistress, Dorothy, and having yawned and stretched himself and found the door of the room ajar he trotted out into the corridor and went down the stately marble stairs to the hall of the palace, where he met Jellia Jamb.

"Where's Dorothy?" asked Toto.
"She's gone to the Winkie Country," answered the maid.
"When?"
"A little while ago," replied Jellia.

Toto turned and trotted out into the palace garden and down the long driveway until he came to the streets of the Emerald City. Here he paused to listen and, hearing sounds of cheering, he ran swiftly along until he came in sight of the Red Wagon and the Woozy and the Lion and the Mule and all the others. Being a wise little dog, he decided not to show himself to Dorothy just then, lest he be sent back home; but he never lost sight of the party of travelers, all of whom were so eager to get ahead that they never thought to look behind them.

When they came to the gates in the city wall the Guardian of the Gates came out to throw wide the golden portals and let them pass through.

"Did any strange person come in or out of the city on the night before last, when Ozma was stolen?" asked Dorothy.

"No, indeed, Princess," answered the Guardian of the Gates.

"Of course not," said the Wizard. "Anyone clever enough to steal all the things we have lost would not mind the barrier of a wall like this, in the least. I think the thief must have flown through the air, for otherwise he could not have stolen from Ozma's royal palace and Glinda's far-away castle in the same night. Moreover, as there are no airships in Oz and no way for airships from the outside world to get into this country, I believe the thief must have flown from place to place by means of magic arts which neither Glinda nor I understand."

On they went, and before the gates closed behind them Toto managed to dodge through them. The country surrounding the Emerald City was thickly settled and for a while our friends rode over nicely paved roads which wound through a fertile country dotted with beautiful houses, all built in the quaint Oz fashion. In the course of a few hours, however, they had left the tilled fields and entered the Country of the Winkies, which occupies a quarter of all the territory in the Land of Oz but is not so well known as many other parts of Ozma's fairyland. Long before night the travelers had crossed the Winkie River near to the Scarecrow's Tower (which was now vacant) and had entered the Rolling Prairie where few people live. They asked everyone they met for news of Ozma, but none in this district had seen her or even knew that she had been stolen. And by nightfall they had passed all the farmhouses and were obliged to stop and ask for shelter at the hut of a lonely shepherd. When they halted, Toto was not far behind. The little dog halted, too, and stealing softly around the party he hid himself behind the hut.

The shepherd was a kindly old man and treated the travelers with much courtesy. He slept out of doors, that night, giving up his hut to the three girls, who made their beds on the floor with the blankets they had brought in the Red Wagon. The Wizard and Button-Bright also slept out of doors, and so

did the Cowardly Lion and Hank the Mule. But Scraps and the Sawhorse did not sleep at all and the Woozy could stay awake for a month at a time, if he wished to, so these three sat in a little group by themselves and talked together all through the night.

In the darkness the Cowardly Lion felt a shaggy little form nestling beside his own, and he said sleepily:

"Where did you come from, Toto?"

"From home," said the dog. "If you roll over, roll the other way, so you won't smash me."

"Does Dorothy know you are here?" asked the Lion.

"I believe not," admitted Toto, and he added, a little anxiously: "Do you think, friend Lion, we are now far enough from the Emerald City for me to risk showing myself? Or will Dorothy send me back because I wasn't invited?"

"Only Dorothy can answer that question," said the Lion. "For my part, Toto, I consider this affair none of my business, so you must act as you think best."

Then the huge beast went to sleep again and Toto snuggled closer to his warm, hairy body and also slept. He was a wise little dog, in his way, and didn't intend to worry when there was something much better to do.

In the morning the Wizard built a fire, over which the girls cooked a very good breakfast.

Suddenly Dorothy discovered Toto sitting quietly before the fire and the little girl exclaimed:

"Goodness me, Toto! Where did *you* come from?"

"From the place you cruelly left me," replied the dog in a reproachful tone.

"I forgot all about you," admitted Dorothy, "and if I hadn't I'd prob'ly left you with Jellia Jamb, seeing this isn't a pleasure trip but stric'ly business. But, now that you're here, Toto, I s'pose you'll have to stay with us, unless you'd rather go back home again. We may get ourselves into trouble, before we're done, Toto."

"Never mind that," said Toto, wagging his tail. "I'm hungry, Dorothy."

"Breakfas'll soon be ready and then you shall have your share," promised his little mistress, who was really glad to have her dog with her. She and Toto had traveled together before, and she knew he was a good and faithful comrade.

When the food was cooked and served the girls invited the old shepherd to join them in their morning meal. He willingly consented and while they ate he said to them:

"You are now about to pass through a very dangerous country, unless you turn to the north or to the south to escape its perils."

"In that case," said the Cowardly Lion, "let us turn, by all means, for I dread to face dangers of any sort."

"What's the matter with the country ahead of us?" inquired Dorothy.

"Beyond this Rolling Prairie," explained the shepherd, "are the Merry-Go-Round Mountains, set close together and surrounded by deep gulfs, so that no one is able to get past them. Beyond the Merry-Go-Round Mountains it is said the Thistle-Eaters and the Herkus live."

"What are they like?" demanded Dorothy.

"No one knows, for no one has ever passed the Merry-Go-Round

Mountains," was the reply; "but it is said that the Thistle-Eaters hitch dragons to their chariots and that the Herkus are waited upon by giants whom they have conquered and made their slaves."

"Who says all that?" asked Betsy.

"It is common report," declared the shepherd. "Everyone believes it."

"I don't see how they know," remarked little Trot, "if no one has been there."

"Perhaps the birds who fly over that country brought the news," suggested Betsy.

"If you escaped those dangers," continued the shepherd, "you might encounter others, still more serious, before you came to the next branch of the Winkie River. It is true that beyond that river there lies a fine country, inhabited by good people, and if you reached there you would have no further trouble. It is between here and the west branch of the Winkie River that all dangers lie, for that is the unknown territory that is inhabited by terrible, lawless people."

"It may be, and it may not be," said the Wizard. "We shall know when we get there."

"Well," persisted the shepherd, "in a fairy country such as ours every undiscovered place is likely to harbor wicked creatures. If they were not wicked, they would discover themselves, and by coming among us submit to Ozma's rule and be good and considerate, as are all the Oz people whom we know."

"That argument," stated the little Wizard, "convinces me that it is our duty to go straight to those unknown places, however dangerous they may be; for it is surely some cruel and wicked person who has stolen our Ozma, and we know it would be folly to search among good people for the culprit. Ozma may not be hidden in the secret places of the Winkie Country, it is true, but it is our duty to travel to every spot, however dangerous, where our beloved Ruler is likely to be imprisoned."

"You're right about that," said Button-Bright approvingly. "Dangers don't hurt us; only things that happen ever hurt anyone, and a danger is a thing that might happen, and might not happen, and sometimes don't amount to shucks. I vote we go ahead and take our chances."

They were all of the same opinion, so they packed up and said good-bye to the friendly shepherd and proceeded on their way.

The Merry-Go-Round Mountains

CHAPTER 7

The Rolling Prairie was not difficult to travel over, although it was all up-hill and down-hill, so for a while they made good progress. Not even a shepherd was to be met with now and the farther they advanced the more dreary the landscape became. At noon they stopped for a "picnic luncheon," as Betsy called it, and then they again resumed their journey. All the animals were swift and tireless and even the Cowardly Lion and the Mule found they could keep up with the pace of the Woozy and the Sawhorse.

It was the middle of the afternoon when first they came in sight of a cluster of low mountains. These were cone-shaped, rising from broad bases to sharp peaks at the tops. From a distance the mountains appeared indistinct and seemed rather small — more like hills than mountains — but as the travelers drew nearer they noted a most unusual circumstance: the hills were all whirling around, some in one direction and some the opposite way.

"I guess those are the Merry-Go-Round Mountains, all right," said Dorothy.

"They must be," said the Wizard.

"They go 'round, sure enough," added Trot, "but they don't seem very merry."

There were several rows of these mountains, extending both to the right and to the left, for miles and miles. How many rows there might be, none could tell, but between the first row of peaks could be seen other peaks, all steadily whirling around one way or another. Continuing to ride nearer, our friends watched these hills attentively, until at last, coming close up, they discovered there was a deep but narrow gulf around the edge of each mountain, and that the mountains were set so close together that the outer gulf was continuous and barred farther advance.

At the edge of the gulf they all dismounted and peered over into its depths. There was no telling where the bottom was, if indeed there was any bottom at all. From where they stood it seemed as if the mountains had been set in one great hole in the ground, just close enough together so they would not touch, and that each mountain was supported by a rocky column beneath its base which extended far down into the black pit below. From the land side it seemed impossible to get across the gulf or, succeeding in that, to gain a foothold on any of the whirling mountains.

"This ditch is too wide to jump across," remarked Button-Bright.

“P’raps the Lion could do it,” suggested Dorothy.

“What, jump from here to that whirling hill?” cried the Lion indignantly. “I should say not! Even if I landed there, and could hold on, what good would it do? There’s another spinning mountain beyond it, and perhaps still another beyond that. I don’t believe any living creature could jump from one mountain to another, when both are whirling like tops and in different directions.”

“I propose we turn back,” said the Wooden Sawhorse, with a yawn of his chopped-out mouth, as he stared with his knot eyes at the Merry-Go-Round Mountains.

“I agree with you,” said the Woozy, wagging his square head.

“We should have taken the shepherd’s advice,” added Hank the Mule.

The others of the party, however they might be puzzled by the serious problem that confronted them, would not allow themselves to despair.

“If we once get over these mountains,” said Button-Bright, “we could probably get along all right.”

“True enough,” agreed Dorothy. “So we must find some way, of course, to get past these whirligig hills. But how?”

“I wish the Ork was with us,” sighed Trot.

“But the Ork isn’t here,” said the Wizard, “and we must depend upon ourselves to conquer this difficulty. Unfortunately, all my magic has been stolen; otherwise I am sure I could easily get over the mountains.”

“Unfortunately,” observed the Woozy, “none of us has wings. And we’re in a magic country without any magic.”

“What is that around your waist, Dorothy?” asked the Wizard.

“That? Oh, that’s just the Magic Belt I once captured from the Nome King,” she replied.

“A Magic Belt! Why, that’s fine. I’m sure a Magic Belt would take you over these hills.”

“It might, if I knew how to work it,” said the little girl. “Ozma knows a lot of its magic, but I’ve never found out about it. All I know is that while I am wearing it nothing can hurt me.”

“Try wishing yourself across, and see if it will obey you,” suggested the Wizard.

“But what good would that do?” asked Dorothy. “If I got across it wouldn’t help the rest of you, and I couldn’t go alone among all those giants and dragons, while you stayed here.”

“True enough,” agreed the Wizard, sadly; and then, after looking around the group, he inquired: “What is that on your finger, Trot?”

“A ring. The Mermaids gave it to me,” she explained, “and if ever I’m in

trouble when I'm on the water I can call the Mermaids and they'll come and help me. But the Mermaids can't help me on the land, you know, 'cause they swim, and — and — they haven't any legs."

"True enough," repeated the Wizard, more sadly.

There was a big, broad-spreading tree near the edge of the gulf and as the sun was hot above them they all gathered under the shade of the tree to study the problem of what to do next.

"If we had a long rope," said Betsy, "we could fasten it to this tree and let the other end of it down into the gulf and all slide down it."

"Well, what then?" asked the Wizard.

"Then, if we could manage to throw the rope up the other side," explained the girl, "we could all climb it and be on the other side of the gulf."

"There are too many 'if's' in that suggestion," remarked the little Wizard. "And you must remember that the other side is nothing but spinning mountains, so we couldn't possibly fasten a rope to them — even if we had one."

"That rope idea isn't half bad, though," said the Patchwork Girl, who had been dancing dangerously near to the edge of the gulf.

"What do you mean?" asked Dorothy.

The Patchwork Girl suddenly stood still and cast her button eyes around the group.

"Ha, I have it!" she exclaimed. "Unharness the Sawhorse, somebody; my fingers are too clumsy."

"Shall we?" asked Button-Bright doubtfully, turning to the others.

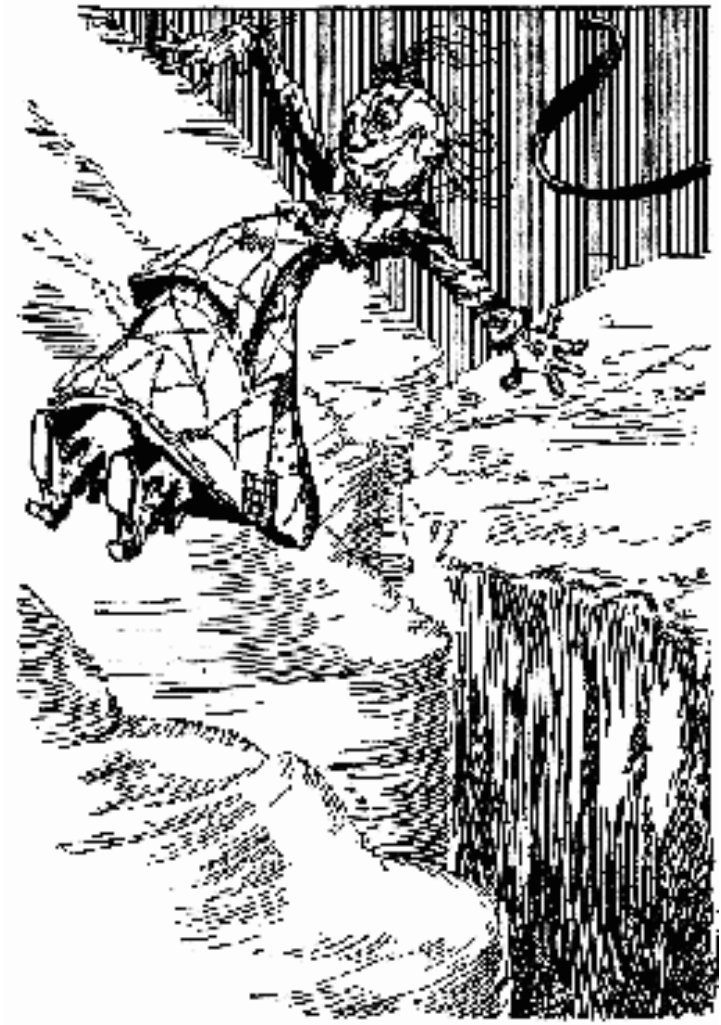
"Well, Scraps has a lot of brains, even if she is stuffed with cotton," asserted the Wizard. "If her brains can help us out of this trouble we ought to use them."

So he began unharnessing the Sawhorse, and Button-Bright and Dorothy helped him. When they had removed the harness the Patchwork Girl told them to take it all apart and buckle the straps together, end to end. And, after they had done this, they found they had one very long strap that was stronger than any rope.

"It would reach across the gulf, easily," said the Lion, who with the other animals had sat on his haunches and watched this proceeding. "But I don't see how it could be fastened to one of those dizzy mountains."

Scraps had no such notion as that in her baggy head. She told them to fasten one end of the strap to a stout limb of the tree, pointing to one which extended quite to the edge of the gulf. Button-Bright did that, climbing the tree and then crawling out upon the limb until he was nearly over the gulf. There he managed to fasten the strap, which reached to the ground below,

and then he slid down it and was caught by the Wizard, who feared he might fall into the chasm.



Scraps was delighted. She seized the lower end of the strap and telling them all to get out of her way she went back as far as the strap would reach and then made a sudden run toward the gulf. Over the edge she swung, clinging to the strap until it had gone as far as its length permitted, when she let go and sailed gracefully through the air until she alighted upon the mountain just in front of them.

Almost instantly, as the great cone continued to whirl, she was sent flying against the next mountain in the rear, and that one had only turned halfway around when Scraps was sent flying to the next mountain behind it. Then her patchwork form disappeared from view entirely and the amazed watchers under the tree wondered what had become of her.

“She’s gone, and she can’t get back,” said the Woozy.

“My, how she bounded from one mountain to another!” exclaimed the Lion.

“That was because they whirl so fast,” the Wizard explained. “Scraps had nothing to hold on to and so of course she was tossed from one hill to another. I’m afraid we shall never see the poor Patchwork Girl again.”

“*I* shall see her,” declared the Woozy. “Scraps is an old friend of mine and, if there are really Thistle-Eaters and Giants on the other side of those tops, she will need someone to protect her. So, here I go!”

He seized the dangling strap firmly in his square mouth and in the same way that Scraps had done swung himself over the gulf. He let go the strap at the right moment and fell upon the first whirling mountain. Then he bounded to the next one back of it — not on his feet but “all mixed up,” as Trot said — and then he shot across to another mountain, disappearing from view just as the Patchwork Girl had done.

“It seems to work, all right,” remarked Button-Bright. “I guess I’ll try it.”

“Wait a minute,” urged the Wizard. “Before any more of us make this desperate leap into the beyond, we must decide whether all will go, or if some of us will remain behind.”

“Do you s’pose it hurt them much, to bump against those mountains?” asked Trot.

“I don’t s’pose anything could hurt Scraps or the Woozy,” said Dorothy, “and nothing can hurt *me*, because I wear the Magic Belt. So, as I’m anxious to find Ozma, I mean to swing myself across, too.”

“I’ll take my chances,” decided Button-Bright.

“I’m sure it will hurt dreadfully, and I’m afraid to do it,” said the Lion, who was already trembling; “but I shall do it if Dorothy does.”

“Well, that will leave Betsy and the Mule and Trot,” said the Wizard; “for of course, I shall go, that I may look after Dorothy. Do you two girls think you can find your way back home again?” he asked, addressing Trot and Betsy.

“I’m not afraid; not much, that is,” said Trot. “It looks risky, I know, but I’m sure I can stand it if the others can.”

“If it wasn’t for leaving Hank,” began Betsy, in a hesitating voice; but the Mule interrupted her by saying:

“Go ahead, if you want to, and I’ll come after you. A mule is as brave as a lion, any day.”

“Braver,” said the Lion, “for I’m a coward, friend Hank, and you are not. But of course the Sawhorse — — ”

“Oh, nothing ever hurts *me*,” asserted the Sawhorse calmly. “There’s

never been any question about *my* going. I can't take the Red Wagon, though."

"No, we must leave the wagon," said the Wizard; "and also we must leave our food and blankets, I fear. But if we can defy these Merry-Go-Round Mountains to stop us we won't mind the sacrifice of some of our comforts."

"No one knows where we're going to land!" remarked the Lion, in a voice that sounded as if he were going to cry.

"We may not land at all," replied Hank; "but the best way to find out what will happen to us is to swing across, as Scraps and the Woozy have done."

"I think I shall go last," said the Wizard; "so who wants to go first?"

"I'll go," decided Dorothy.

“No, it’s my turn first,” said Button-Bright. “Watch me!”

Even as he spoke the boy seized the strap and after making a run swung himself across the gulf. Away he went, bumping from hill to hill until he disappeared. They listened intently, but the boy uttered no cry until he had been gone some moments, when they heart a faint “Hullo-a!” as if called from a great distance.

The sound gave them courage, however, and Dorothy picked up Toto and held him fast under one arm while with the other hand she seized the strap and bravely followed after Button-Bright.

When she struck the first whirling mountain she fell upon it quite softly, but before she had time to think she flew through the air and lit with a jar on the side of the next mountain. Again she flew, and alighted; and again, and still again, until after five successive bumps she fell sprawling upon a green meadow and was so dazed and bewildered by her bumpy journey across the Merry-Go-Round Mountains that she lay quite still for a time, to collect her thoughts. Toto had escaped from her arms just as she fell, and he now sat beside her panting with excitement.

Then Dorothy realized that someone was helping her to her feet, and here was Button-Bright on one side of her and Scraps on the other, both seeming to be unhurt. The next object her eyes fell upon was the Woozy, squatting upon his square back end and looking at her reflectively, while Toto barked joyously to find his mistress unhurt after her whirlwind trip.

“Good!” said the Woozy; “here’s another and a dog, both safe and sound. But, my word, Dorothy, you flew some! If you could have seen yourself, you’d have been absolutely astonished.”

“They say ‘Time flies,’“ laughed Button-Bright; “but Time never made a quicker journey than that.”

Just then, as Dorothy turned around to look at the whirling mountains, she was in time to see tiny Trot come flying from the nearest hill to fall upon the soft grass not a yard away from where she stood. Trot was so dizzy she couldn’t stand, at first, but she wasn’t at all hurt and presently Betsy came flying to them and would have bumped into the others had they not retreated in time to avoid her.

Then, in quick succession, came the Lion, Hank and the Sawhorse, bounding from mountain to mountain to fall safely upon the greensward. Only the Wizard was now left behind and they waited so long for him that Dorothy began to be worried. But suddenly he came flying from the nearest mountain and tumbled heels over head beside them. Then they saw that he had wound two of their blankets around his body, to keep the bumps from hurting him, and had fastened the blankets with some of the spare straps from

the harness of the Sawhorse.

CHAPTER 8

There they sat upon the grass, their heads still swimming from their dizzy flights, and looked at one another in silent bewilderment. But presently, when assured that no one was injured, they grew more calm and collected and the Lion said with a sigh of relief:

"Who would have thought those Merry-Go-Round Mountains were made of rubber?"

"Are they really rubber?" asked Trot.

"They must be," replied the Lion, "for otherwise we would not have bounded so swiftly from one to another without getting hurt."

"That is all guesswork," declared the Wizard, unwinding the blankets from his body, "for none of us stayed long enough on the mountains to discover what they are made of. But where are we?"

"That's guesswork, too," said Scraps. "The shepherd said the Thistle-Eaters live this side the mountains and are waited on by giants."

"Oh, no," said Dorothy; "it's the Herkus who have giant slaves, and the Thistle-Eaters hitch dragons to their chariots."

"How could they do that?" asked the Woozy. "Dragons have long tails, which would get in the way of the chariot wheels."

"And, if the Herkus have conquered the giants," said Trot, "they must be at least twice the size of giants. P'raps the Herkus are the biggest people in all the world!"

"Perhaps they are," assented the Wizard, in a thoughtful tone of voice. "And perhaps the shepherd didn't know what he was talking about. Let us travel on toward the west and discover for ourselves what the people of this country are like."

It seemed a pleasant enough country, and it was quite still and peaceful when they turned their eyes away from the silently whirling mountains. There were trees here and there and green bushes, while throughout the thick grass were scattered brilliantly colored flowers. About a mile away was a low hill that hid from them all the country beyond it, so they realized they could not tell much about the country until they had crossed the hill.

The Red Wagon having been left behind, it was now necessary to make other arrangements for traveling. The Lion told Dorothy she could ride upon his back, as she had often done before, and the Woozy said he could easily carry both Trot and the Patchwork Girl. Betsy still had her mule, Hank, and

Button-Bright and the Wizard could sit together upon the long, thin back of the Sawhorse, but they took care to soften their seat with a pad of blankets before they started. Thus mounted, the adventurers started for the hill, which was reached after a brief journey.

As they mounted the crest and gazed beyond the hill they discovered not far away a walled city, from the towers and spires of which gay banners were flying. It was not a very big city, indeed, but its walls were very high and thick and it appeared that the people who lived there must have feared attack by a powerful enemy, else they would not have surrounded their dwellings with so strong a barrier.

There was no path leading from the mountains to the city, and this proved

that the people seldom or never visited the whirling hills; but our friends found the grass soft and agreeable to travel over and with the city before them they could not well lose their way. When they drew nearer to the walls, the breeze carried to their ears the sound of music — dim at first but growing louder as they advanced.

"That doesn't seem like a very terr'ble place," remarked Dorothy.

"Well, it *looks* all right," replied Trot, from her seat on the Woozy, "but looks can't always be trusted."

"My looks can," said Scraps. "I *look* patchwork, and I *am* patchwork, and no one but a blind owl could ever doubt that I'm the Patchwork Girl." Saying which she turned a somersault off the Woozy and, alighting on her feet, began wildly dancing about.

"Are owls ever blind?" asked Trot.

"Always, in the daytime," said Button-Bright. "But Scraps can see with her button eyes both day and night. Isn't it queer?"

"It's queer that buttons can see at all," answered Trot; "but — good gracious! what's become of the city?"

"I was going to ask that myself," said Dorothy. "It's gone!"

The animals came to a sudden halt, for the city had really disappeared — walls and all — and before them lay the clear, unbroken sweep of the country.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Wizard. "This is rather disagreeable. It is annoying to travel almost to a place and then find it is not there."

"Where can it be, then?" asked Dorothy. "It cert'nly was there a minute ago."

"I can hear the music yet," declared Button-Bright, and when they all listened the strains of music could plainly be heard.

"Oh! there's the city — over at the left," called Scraps, and turning their eyes they saw the walls and towers and fluttering banners far to the left of them.

"We must have lost our way," suggested Dorothy.

"Nonsense," said the Lion. "I, and all the other animals, have been tramping straight toward the city ever since we first saw it."

"Then how does it happen — "

"Never mind," interrupted the Wizard, "we are no farther from it than we were before. It is in a different direction, that's all; so let us hurry and get there before it again escapes us."

So on they went, directly toward the city, which seemed only a couple of miles distant; but when they had traveled less than a mile it suddenly disappeared again. Once more they paused, somewhat discouraged, but in a

moment the button eyes of Scraps again discovered the city, only this time it was just behind them, in the direction from which they had come.

"Goodness gracious!" cried Dorothy. "There's surely something wrong with that city. Do you s'pose it's on wheels, Wizard?"

"It may not be a city at all," he replied, looking toward it with a speculative gaze.

"What *could* it be, then?"

"Just an illusion."

"What's that?" asked Trot.

"Something you think you see and don't see."

"I can't believe that," said Button-Bright. "If we only saw it, we might be mistaken, but if we can see it and hear it, too, it must be there."

"Where?" asked the Patchwork Girl.

"Somewhere near us," he insisted.

"We will have to go back, I suppose," said the Woozy, with a sigh.

So back they turned and headed for the walled city until it disappeared again, only to reappear at the right of them. They were constantly getting nearer to it, however, so they kept their faces turned toward it as it flitted here and there to all points of the compass. Presently the Lion, who was leading the procession, halted abruptly and cried out: "Ouch!"

"What's the matter?" asked Dorothy.

"Ouch — ouch!" repeated the Lion, and leaped backward so suddenly that Dorothy nearly tumbled from his back. At the same time Hank the Mule yelled "Ouch!" almost as loudly as the Lion had done, and he also pranced backward a few paces.

"It's the thistles," said Betsy. "They prick their legs."

Hearing this, all looked down, and sure enough the ground was thick with thistles, which covered the plain from the point where they stood way up to the walls of the mysterious city. No pathways through them could be seen at all; here the soft grass ended and the growth of thistles began.

"They're the prickliest thistles I ever felt," grumbled the Lion. "My legs smart yet from their stings, though I jumped out of them as quick as I could."

"Here is a new difficulty," remarked the Wizard in a grieved tone. "The city has stopped hopping around, it is true; but how are we to get to it, over this mass of prickers?"

"They can't hurt *me*," said the thick-skinned Woozy, advancing fearlessly and trampling among the thistles.

"Nor me," said the Wooden Sawhorse.

"But the Lion and the Mule cannot stand the prickers," asserted Dorothy, "and we can't leave them behind."

“Must we all go back?” asked Trot.

“Course not!” replied Button-Bright scornfully. “Always, when there’s trouble, there’s a way out of it, if you can find it.”

“I wish the Scarecrow was here,” said Scraps, standing on her head on the Woozy’s square back. “His splendid brains would soon show us how to conquer this field of thistles.”

“What’s the matter with *your* brains?” asked the boy.

“Nothing,” she said, making a flip-flop into the thistles and dancing among them without feeling their sharp points. “I could tell you in half a minute how to get over the thistles, if I wanted to.”

“Tell us, Scraps!” begged Dorothy.

“I don’t want to wear my brains out with overwork,” replied the Patchwork Girl.

“Don’t you love Ozma? And don’t you want to find her?” asked Betsy reproachfully.

“Yes, indeed,” said Scraps, walking on her hands as an acrobat does at the circus.

“Well, we can’t find Ozma unless we get past these thistles,” declared Dorothy.

Scraps danced around them two or three times, without reply. Then she said:

“Don’t look at me, you stupid folks; look at those blankets.”

The Wizard’s face brightened at once.

“Of course!” he exclaimed. “Why didn’t we think of those blankets before?”

“Because you haven’t magic brains,” laughed Scraps. “Such brains as you have are of the common sort that grow in your heads, like weeds in a garden. I’m sorry for you people who have to be born in order to be alive.”

But the Wizard was not listening to her. He quickly removed the blankets from the back of the Sawhorse and spread one of them upon the thistles, just next the grass. The thick cloth rendered the prickers harmless, so the Wizard walked over this first blanket and spread the second one farther on, in the direction of the phantom city.

“These blankets,” said he, “are for the Lion and the Mule to walk upon. The Sawhorse and the Woozy can walk on the thistles.”

So the Lion and the Mule walked over the first blanket and stood upon the second one until the Wizard had picked up the one they had passed over and spread it in front of them, when they advanced to that one and waited while the one behind them was again spread in front.

“This is slow work,” said the Wizard, “but it will get us to the city after a

while."

"The city is a good half mile away, yet," announced Button-Bright.

"And this is awful hard work for the Wizard," added Trot.

"Why couldn't the Lion ride on the Woozy's back?" asked Dorothy. "It's a big, flat back, and the Woozy's mighty strong. Perhaps the Lion wouldn't fall off."

"You may try it, if you like," said the Woozy to the Lion. "I can take you to the city in a jiffy and then come back for Hank."

"I'm — I'm afraid," said the Cowardly Lion. He was twice as big as the Woozy.

"Try it," pleaded Dorothy.

“And take a tumble among the thistles?” asked the Lion reproachfully. But when the Woozy came close to him the big beast suddenly bounded upon its back and managed to balance himself there, although forced to hold his four legs so close together that he was in danger of toppling over. The great weight of the monster Lion did not seem to affect the Woozy, who called to his rider: “Hold on tight!” and ran swiftly over the thistles toward the city.

The others stood on the blankets and watched the strange sight anxiously. Of course the Lion couldn’t “hold on tight” because there was nothing to hold to, and he swayed from side to side as if likely to fall off any moment. Still, he managed to stick to the Woozy’s back until they were close to the walls of the city, when he leaped to the ground. Next moment the Woozy came dashing back at full speed.

“There’s a little strip of ground next the wall where there are no thistles,” he told them, when he had reached the adventurers once more. “Now, then, friend Hank, see if you can ride as well as the Lion did.”

“Take the others first,” proposed the Mule. So the Sawhorse and the Woozy made a couple of trips over the thistles to the city walls and carried all the people in safety, Dorothy holding little Toto in her arms. The travelers then sat in a group on a little hillock, just outside the wall, and looked at the great blocks of gray stone and waited for the Woozy to bring Hank to them. The Mule was very awkward and his legs trembled so badly that more than once they thought he would tumble off, but finally he reached them in safety and the entire party was now reunited. More than that, they had reached the city that had eluded them for so long and in so strange a manner.

“The gates must be around the other side,” said the Wizard. “Let us follow the curve of the wall until we reach an opening in it.”

“Which way?” asked Dorothy.

“We must guess at that,” he replied. “Suppose we go to the left? One direction is as good as another.”

They formed in marching order and went around the city wall to the left. It wasn’t a big city, as I have said, but to go way around it, outside the high wall, was quite a walk, as they became aware. But around it our adventurers went, without finding any sign of a gateway or other opening. When they had returned to the little mound from which they had started, they dismounted from the animals and again seated themselves on the grassy mound.

“It’s mighty queer, isn’t it?” asked Button-Bright.

“There must be *some* way for the people to get out and in,” declared Dorothy. “Do you s’pose they have flying machines, Wizard?”

“No,” he replied, “for in that case they would be flying all over the Land

of Oz, and we know they have not done that. Flying machines are unknown here. I think it more likely that the people use ladders to get over the walls."

"It would be an awful climb, over that high stone wall," said Betsy.

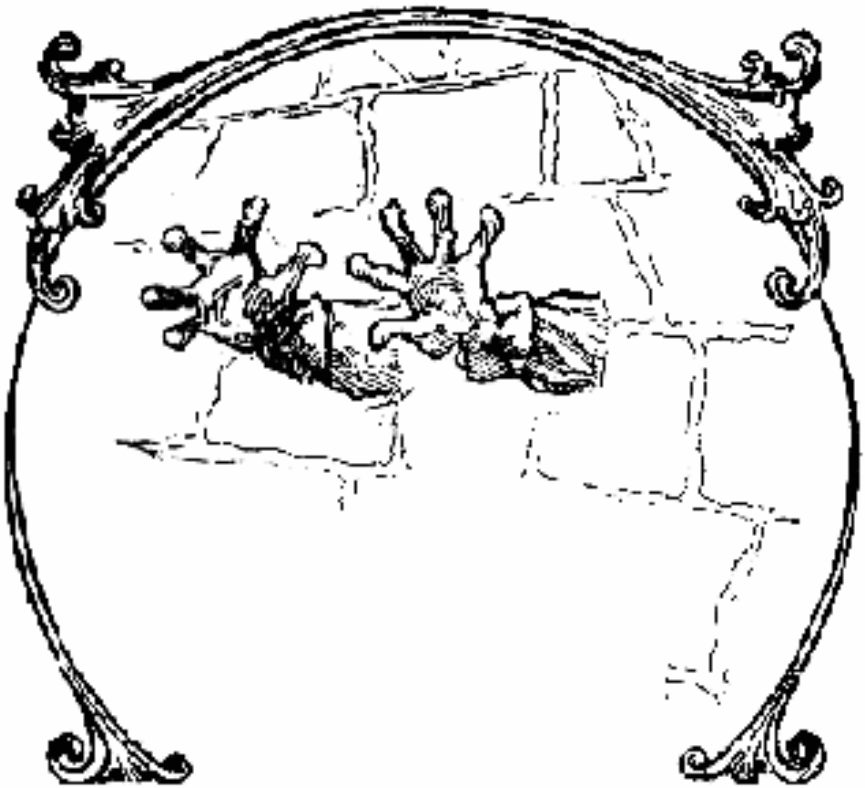
"Stone, is it?" cried Scraps, who was again dancing wildly around, for she never tired and could never keep still for long.

"Course it's stone," answered Betsy scornfully. "Can't you see?"

"Yes," said Scraps, going closer, "I can *see* the wall, but I can't *feel* it." And then, with her arms outstretched, she did a very queer thing. She walked right into the wall and disappeared.

"For goodness sake!" cried Dorothy amazed, as indeed they all were.

The High Coco-Lorum of Thi



CHAPTER 9

And now the
Patchwork Girl
came dancing out
of the wall again.

"Come on!" she called. "It isn't there. There isn't any wall at all."

"What! No wall?" exclaimed the Wizard.

"Nothing like it," said Scraps. "It's a make-believe. You see it, but it isn't. Come on into the city; we've been wasting time."

With this she danced into the wall again and once more disappeared. Button-Bright, who was rather venturesome, dashed away after her and also became invisible to them. The others followed more cautiously, stretching out their hands to feel the wall and finding, to their astonishment, that they could feel nothing because nothing opposed them. They walked on a few steps and found themselves in the streets of a very beautiful city. Behind them they again saw the wall, grim and forbidding as ever; but now they knew it was merely an illusion, prepared to keep strangers from entering the city.

But the wall was soon forgotten, for in front of them were a number of quaint people who stared at them in amazement, as if wondering where they had come from. Our friends forgot their good manners, for a time, and returned the stares with interest, for so remarkable a people had never before been discovered in all the remarkable Land of Oz.

Their heads were shaped like diamonds and their bodies like hearts. All the hair they had was a little bunch at the tip top of their diamond-shaped heads and their eyes were very large and round and their noses and mouths very small. Their clothing was tight-fitting and of brilliant colors, being handsomely embroidered in quaint designs with gold or silver threads; but on their feet they wore sandals, with no stockings whatever. The expression of their faces was pleasant enough, although they now showed surprise at the appearance of strangers so unlike themselves, and our friends thought they seemed quite harmless.

"I beg your pardon," said the Wizard, speaking for his party, "for intruding upon you uninvited, but we are traveling on important business and find it necessary to visit your city. Will you kindly tell us by what name your city is called?"

They looked at one another uncertainly, each expecting some other to answer. Finally a short one whose heart-shaped body was very broad replied:

"We have no occasion to call our city anything. It is where we live, that is

all."

"But by what name do others call your city?" asked the Wizard.

"We know of no others, except yourselves," said the man. And then he inquired: "Were you born with those queer forms you have, or has some cruel magician transformed you to them from your natural shapes?"

"These are our natural shapes," declared the Wizard, "and we consider them very good shapes, too."

The group of inhabitants was constantly being enlarged by others who joined it. All were evidently startled and uneasy at the arrival of strangers.

"Have you a King?" asked Dorothy, who knew it was better to speak with someone in authority. But the man shook his diamond-like head.

“What is a King?” he asked.

“Isn’t there anyone who rules over you?” inquired the Wizard.

“No,” was the reply, “each of us rules himself; or, at least, tries to do so. It is not an easy thing to do, as you probably know.”

The Wizard reflected.

“If you have disputes among you,” said he, after a little thought, “who settles them?”

“The High Coco-Lorum,” they answered in a chorus.

“And who is he?”

“The judge who enforces the laws,” said the man who had first spoken.

“Then he is the principal person here?” continued the Wizard.

“Well, I would not say that,” returned the man in a puzzled way. “The High Coco-Lorum is a public servant. However, he represents the laws, which we must all obey.”

“I think,” said the Wizard, “we ought to see your High Coco-Lorum and talk with him. Our mission here requires us to consult one high in authority, and the High Coco-Lorum ought to be high, whatever else he is.”

The inhabitants seemed to consider this proposition reasonable, for they nodded their diamond-shaped heads in approval. So the broad one who had been their spokesman said: “Follow me,” and, turning, led the way along one of the streets.

The entire party followed him, the natives falling in behind. The dwellings they passed were quite nicely planned and seemed comfortable and convenient. After leading them a few blocks their conductor stopped before a house which was neither better nor worse than the others. The doorway was shaped to admit the strangely formed bodies of these people, being narrow at the top, broad in the middle and tapering at the bottom. The windows were made in much the same way, giving the house a most peculiar appearance. When their guide opened the gate a music-box concealed in the gate-post began to play, and the sound attracted the attention of the High Coco-Lorum, who appeared at an open window and inquired:

“What has happened now?”

But in the same moment his eyes fell upon the strangers and he hastened to open the door and admit them — all but the animals, which were left outside with the throng of natives that had now gathered. For a small city there seemed to be a large number of inhabitants, but they did not try to enter the house and contented themselves with staring curiously at the strange animals. Toto followed Dorothy.

Our friends entered a large room at the front of the house, where the High Coco-Lorum asked them to be seated.

“I hope your mission here is a peaceful one,” he said, looking a little worried, “for the Thists are not very good fighters and object to being conquered.”

“Are your people called Thists?” asked Dorothy.

“Yes. I thought you knew that. And we call our city Thi.”

“Oh!”

“We are Thists because we eat thistles, you know,” continued the High Coco-Lorum.

“Do you really eat those prickly things?” inquired Button-Bright wonderingly.

“Why not?” replied the other. “The sharp points of the thistles cannot hurt us, because all our insides are gold-lined.”

“Gold-lined!”

“To be sure. Our throats and stomachs are lined with solid gold, and we find the thistles nourishing and good to eat. As a matter of fact, there is nothing else in our country that is fit for food. All around the City of Thi grow countless thistles, and all we need do is to go and gather them. If we wanted anything else to eat we would have to plant it, and grow it, and harvest it, and that would be a lot of trouble and make us work, which is an occupation we detest.”

“But, tell me, please,” said the Wizard, “how does it happen that your city jumps around so, from one part of the country to another?”

“The city doesn’t jump; it doesn’t move at all,” declared the High Coco-Lorum. “However, I will admit that the land that surrounds it has a trick of turning this way or that; and so, if one is standing upon the plain and facing north, he is likely to find himself suddenly facing west — or east — or south. But once you reach the thistle fields you are on solid ground.”

“Ah, I begin to understand,” said the Wizard, nodding his head. “But I have another question to ask: How does it happen that the Thists have no King to rule over them?”

“Hush!” whispered the High Coco-Lorum, looking uneasily around to make sure they were not overheard. “In reality, I am the King, but the people don’t know it. They think they rule themselves, but the fact is I have everything my own way. No one else knows anything about our laws, and so I make the laws to suit myself. If any oppose me, or question my acts, I tell them it’s the law, and that settles it. If I called myself King, however, and wore a crown and lived in royal state, the people would not like me, and might do me harm. As the High Coco-Lorum of Thi, I’m considered a very agreeable person.”

“It seems a very clever arrangement,” said the Wizard. “And now, as you

are the principal person in Thi, I beg you to tell us if the Royal Ozma is a captive in your city."

"No," answered the diamond-headed man, "we have no captives. No strangers but yourselves are here, and we have never before heard of the Royal Ozma."

"She rules all of Oz," said Dorothy, "and so she rules your city and you, because you are in the Winkie Country, which is a part of the Land of Oz."

"It may be," returned the High Coco-Lorum, "for we do not study geography and have never inquired whether we live in the Land of Oz or not. And any Ruler who rules us from a distance, and unknown to us, is welcome to the job. But what has happened to your Royal Ozma?"

"Someone has stolen her," said the Wizard. "Do you happen to have any talented magician among your people — one who is especially clever, you know?"

"No, none especially clever. We do some magic, of course, but it is all of the ordinary kind. I do not think any of us has yet aspired to stealing Rulers, either by magic or otherwise."

"Then we've come a long way for nothing!" exclaimed Trot regretfully.

"But we are going farther than this," asserted the Patchwork Girl, bending her stuffed body backward until her yarn hair touched the floor and then walking around on her hands with her feet in the air.

The High Coco-Lorum watched Scraps admiringly.

"You may go farther on, of course," said he, "but I advise you not to. The Herkus live back of us, beyond the thistles and the twisting lands, and they are not very nice people to meet, I assure you."

"Are they giants?" asked Betsy.

"They are worse than that," was the reply. "They have giants for their slaves and they are so much stronger than giants that the poor slaves dare not rebel, for fear of being torn to pieces."

"How do you know?" asked Scraps.

"Everyone says so," answered the High Coco-Lorum.

"Have you seen the Herkus yourself?" inquired Dorothy.

"No, but what everyone says must be true; otherwise, what would be the use of their saying it?"

"We were told, before we got here, that you people hitch dragons to your chariots," said the little girl.

“So we do,” declared the High Coco-Lorum. “And that reminds me that I ought to entertain you, as strangers and my guests, by taking you for a ride around our splendid City of Thi.”

He touched a button and a band began to play; at least, they heard the music of a band, but couldn’t tell where it came from.

“That tune is the order to my charioteer to bring around my dragon-chariot,” said the High Coco-Lorum. “Every time I give an order it is in music, which is a much more pleasant way to address servants than in cold, stern words.”

“Does this dragon of yours bite?” asked Button-Bright.

“Mercy, no! Do you think I’d risk the safety of my innocent people by using a biting dragon to draw my chariot? I’m proud to say that my dragon is harmless — unless his steering-gear breaks — and he was manufactured at the famous dragon-factory in this City of Thi. Here he comes and you may examine him for yourselves.”

They heard a low rumble and a shrill squeaking sound and, going out to the front of the house, they saw coming around the corner a car drawn by a gorgeous jeweled dragon, which moved its head to right and left and flashed its eyes like the headlights of an automobile and uttered a growling noise as it slowly moved toward them.

When it stopped before the High Coco-Lorum’s house Toto barked sharply at the sprawling beast, but even tiny Trot could see that the dragon was not alive. Its scales were of gold and each one was set with sparkling jewels, while it walked in such a stiff, regular manner that it could be nothing else than a machine. The chariot that trailed behind it was likewise of gold and jewels, and when they entered it they found there were no seats. Everyone was supposed to stand up while riding.

The charioteer was a little diamond-headed fellow who straddled the neck of the dragon and moved the levers that made it go.

“This,” said the High Coco-Lorum, pompously, “is a wonderful invention. We are all very proud of our auto-dragons, many of which are in use by our wealthy inhabitants. Start the thing going, charioteer!”

The charioteer did not move.

“You forgot to order him in music,” suggested Dorothy.

“Ah, so I did.” He touched a button and a music-box in the dragon’s head began to play a tune. At once the little charioteer pulled over a lever and the dragon began to move — very slowly and groaning dismally as it drew the clumsy chariot after it. Toto trotted between the wheels. The Sawhorse, the Mule, the Lion and the Woozy followed after and had no trouble in keeping up with the machine; indeed, they had to go slow to keep from running into

it. When the wheels turned another music-box concealed somewhere under the chariot played a lively march tune which was in striking contrast with the dragging movement of the strange vehicle and Button-Bright decided that the music he had heard when they first sighted this city was nothing else than a chariot plodding its weary way through the streets.

All the travelers from the Emerald City thought this ride the most uninteresting and dreary they had ever experienced, but the High Coco-Lorum seemed to think it was grand. He pointed out the different buildings and parks and fountains, in much the same way that the conductor of an American "sight-seeing wagon" does, and being guests they were obliged to submit to the ordeal. But they became a little worried when their host told them he had ordered a banquet prepared for them in the City Hall.

"What are we going to eat?" asked Button-Bright suspiciously.

"Thistles," was the reply; "fine, fresh thistles, gathered this very day."

Scraps laughed, for she never ate anything, but Dorothy said in a protesting voice:

"*Our* insides are not lined with gold, you know."

"How sad!" exclaimed the High Coco-Lorum; and then he added, as an afterthought: "But we can have the thistles boiled, if you prefer."

"I'm 'fraid they wouldn't taste good, even then," said little Trot. "Haven't you anything else to eat?"

The High Coco-Lorum shook his diamond-shaped head.

"Nothing that I know of," said he. "But why should we have anything else, when we have so many thistles? However, if you can't eat what we eat, don't eat anything. We shall not be offended and the banquet will be just as merry and delightful."

Knowing his companions were all hungry the Wizard said:

"I trust you will excuse us from the banquet, sir, which will be merry enough without us, although it is given in our honor. For, as Ozma is not in your city, we must leave here at once and seek her elsewhere."

"Sure we must!" agreed Dorothy, and she whispered to Betsy and Trot: "I'd rather starve somewhere else than in this city, and — who knows? — we may run across somebody who eats reg'lar food and will give us some."

So, when the ride was finished, in spite of the protests of the High Coco-Lorum they insisted on continuing their journey.

"It will soon be dark," he objected.

"We don't mind the darkness," replied the Wizard.

"Some wandering Herku may get you."

"Do you think the Herkus would hurt us?" asked Dorothy.

"I cannot say, not having the honor of their acquaintance. But they are

said to be so strong that, if they had any other place to stand upon, they could lift the world."

"All of them together?" asked Button-Bright wonderingly.

"Any one of them could do it," said the High Coco-Lorum.

"Have you heard of any magicians being among them?" asked the Wizard, knowing that only a magician could have stolen Ozma in the way she had been stolen.

"I am told it is quite a magical country," declared the High Coco-Lorum, "and magic is usually performed by magicians. But I have never heard that they have any invention or sorcery to equal our wonderful auto-dragons."

They thanked him for his courtesy and, mounting their own animals, rode to the farther side of the city and right through the Wall of Illusion out into the open country.

"I'm glad we got away so easily," said Betsy. "I didn't like those queer-shaped people."

"Nor did I," agreed Dorothy. "It seems dreadful to be lined with sheets of pure gold and have nothing to eat but thistles."

"They seemed happy and contented, though," remarked the little Wizard, "and those who are contented have nothing to regret and nothing more to wish for."

Toto Loses Something

CHAPTER 10

For a while the travelers were constantly losing their direction, for beyond the thistle fields they again found themselves upon the turning-lands, which swung them around in such a freakish manner that first they were headed one way and then another. But by keeping the City of Thi constantly behind them the adventurers finally passed the treacherous turning-lands and came upon a stony country where no grass grew at all. There were plenty of bushes, however, and although it was now almost dark the girls discovered some delicious yellow berries growing upon the bushes, one taste of which set them all to picking as many as they could find. The berries relieved their pangs of hunger, for a time, and as it now became too dark to see anything they camped where they were.

The three girls lay down upon one of the blankets — all in a row — and then the Wizard covered them with the other blanket and tucked them in. Button-Bright crawled under the shelter of some bushes and was asleep in half a minute. The Wizard sat down with his back to a big stone and looked at the stars in the sky and thought gravely upon the dangerous adventure they had undertaken, wondering if they would ever be able to find their beloved Ozma again. The animals lay in a group by themselves, a little distance from the others.

"I've lost my growl!" said Toto, who had been very silent and sober all that day. "What do you suppose has become of it?"

"If you had asked me to keep track of your growl, I might be able to tell you," remarked the Lion sleepily. "But, frankly, Toto, I supposed you were taking care of it yourself."

"It's an awful thing to lose one's growl," said Toto, wagging his tail disconsolately. "What if you lost your roar, Lion? Wouldn't you feel terrible?"

"My roar," replied the Lion, "is the fiercest thing about me. I depend on it to frighten my enemies so badly that they won't dare to fight me."

"Once," said the Mule, "I lost my bray, so that I couldn't call to Betsy to let her know I was hungry. That was before I could talk, you know, for I had not yet come into the Land of Oz, and I found it was certainly very uncomfortable not to be able to make a noise."

"You make enough noise now," declared Toto. "But none of you has

answered my question: Where is my growl?"

"You may search *me*" said the Woozy. "I don't care for such things myself."

"You snore terribly," asserted Toto.

"It may be," said the Woozy. "What one does when asleep one is not accountable for. I wish you would wake me up, some time when I'm snoring, and let me hear the sound. Then I can judge whether it is terrible or delightful."

"It isn't pleasant, I assure you," said the Lion, yawning.

"To me it seems wholly unnecessary," declared Hank the Mule.

"You ought to break yourself of the habit," said the Sawhorse. "You never hear me snore, because I never sleep. I don't even whinny, as those puffy meat horses do. I wish that whoever stole Toto's growl had taken the Mule's bray and the Lion's roar and the Woozy's snore at the same time."

"Do you think, then, that my growl was stolen?"

"You have never lost it before, have you?" inquired the Sawhorse.

"Only once, when I had a sore throat from barking too long at the moon."

"Is your throat sore now?" asked the Woozy.

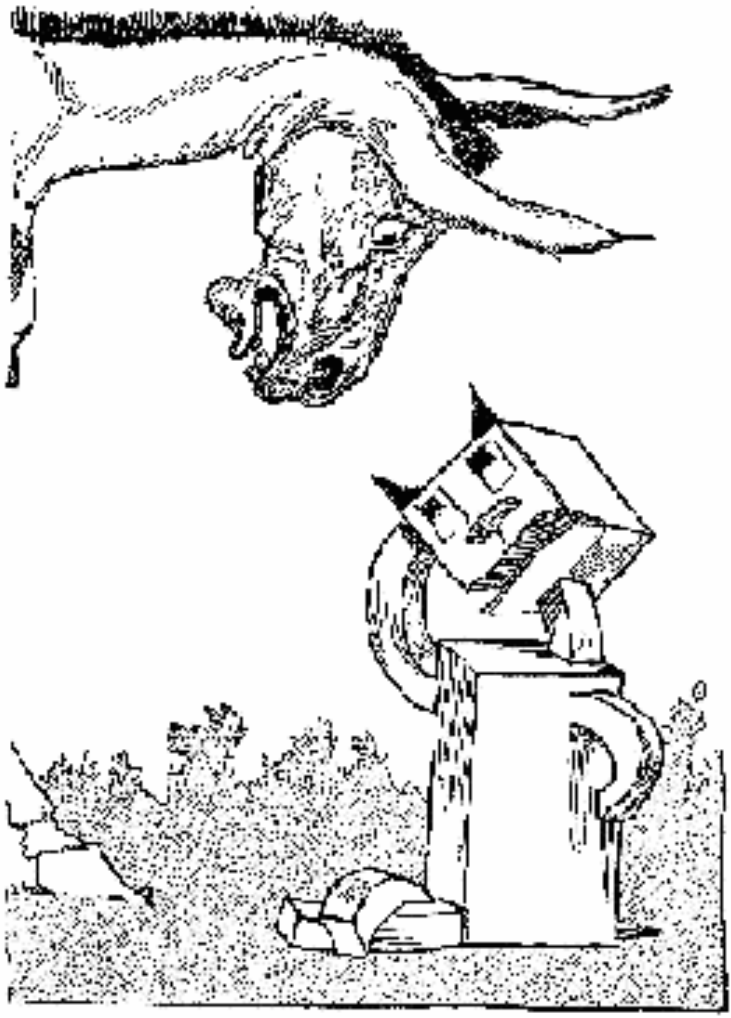
"No," replied the dog.

"I can't understand," said Hank, "why dogs bark at the moon. They can't scare the moon, and the moon doesn't pay any attention to the bark. So why do dogs do it?"

"Were you ever a dog?" asked Toto.

"No, indeed," replied Hank. "I am thankful to say I was created a mule — the most beautiful of all beasts — and have always remained one."

The Woozy sat upon his square haunches to examine Hank with care.



"Beauty," said he, "must be a matter of taste. I don't say your judgment is bad, friend Hank, or that you are so vulgar as to be conceited. But if you admire big waggly ears, and a tail like a paint-brush, and hoofs big enough for an elephant, and a long neck and a body so skinny that one can count the ribs with one eye shut — if that's your idea of beauty, Hank — then either you or I must be much mistaken."

"You're full of edges," sneered the Mule. "If I were square, as you are, I suppose you'd think me lovely."

"Outwardly, dear Hank, I would," replied the Woozy. "But to be really lovely one must be beautiful without and within."

The Mule couldn't deny this statement, so he gave a disgusted grunt and

rolled over so that his back was toward the Woozy. But the Lion, regarding the two calmly with his great yellow eyes, said to the dog:

"My dear Toto, our friends have taught us a lesson in humility. If the Woozy and the Mule are indeed beautiful creatures, as they seem to think, you and I must be decidedly ugly."

"Not to ourselves," protested Toto, who was a shrewd little dog. "You and I, Lion, are fine specimens of our own races. I am a fine dog and you are a fine lion. Only in point of comparison, one with another, can we be properly judged, so I will leave it to the poor old Sawhorse to decide which is the most beautiful animal among us all. The Sawhorse is wood, so he won't be prejudiced and will speak the truth."

"I surely will," responded the Sawhorse, wagging his ears, which were chips set in his wooden head. "Are you all agreed to accept my judgment?"

"We are!" they declared, each one hopeful.

"Then," said the Sawhorse, "I must point out to you the fact that you are all meat creatures, who tire unless they sleep, and starve unless they eat, and suffer from thirst unless they drink. Such animals must be very imperfect, and imperfect creatures cannot be beautiful. Now, *I* am made of wood."

"You surely have a wooden head," said the Mule.

"Yes, and a wooden body and wooden legs — which are as swift as the wind and as tireless. I've heard Dorothy say that 'handsome is as handsome does,' and I surely perform my duties in a handsome manner. Therefore, if you wish my honest judgment, I will confess that among us all I am the most beautiful."

The Mule snorted and the Woozy laughed; Toto had lost his growl and could only look scornfully at the Sawhorse, who stood in his place unmoved. But the Lion stretched himself and yawned, saying quietly:

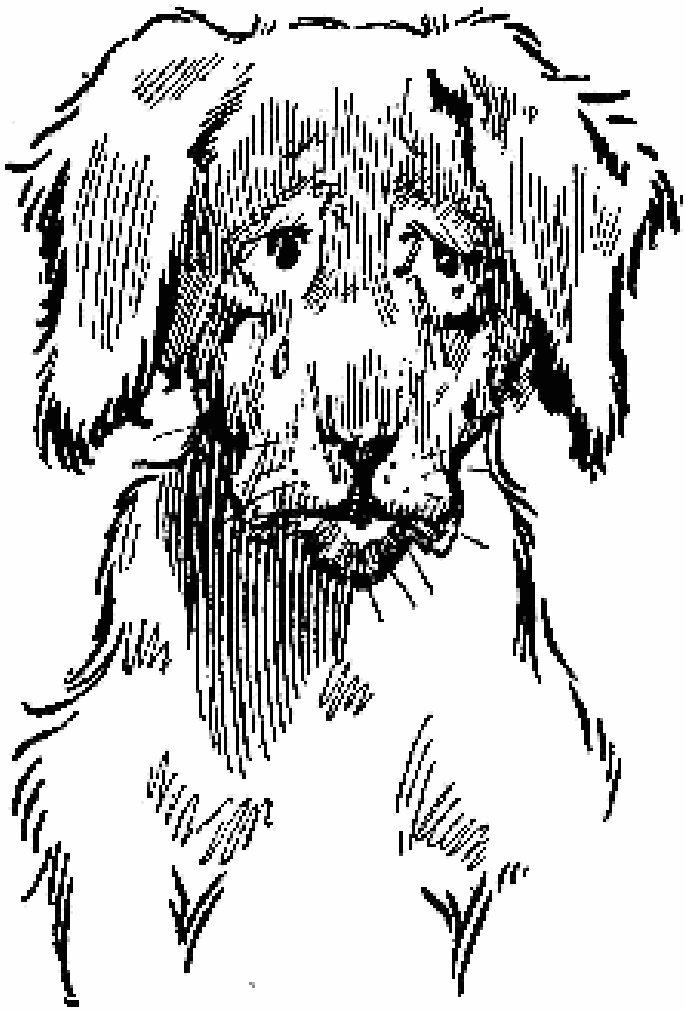
"Were we all like the Sawhorse we would all be Sawhorses, which would be too many of the kind; were we all like Hank, we would be a herd of mules; if like Toto, we would be a pack of dogs; should we all become the shape of the Woozy, he would no longer be remarkable for his unusual appearance. Finally, were you all like me, I would consider you so common that I would not care to associate with you. To be individual, my friends, to be different from others, is the only way to become distinguished from the common herd. Let us be glad, therefore, that we differ from one another in form and in disposition. Variety is the spice of life and we are various enough to enjoy one another's society; so let us be content."

"There is some truth in that speech," remarked Toto reflectively. "But how about my lost growl?"

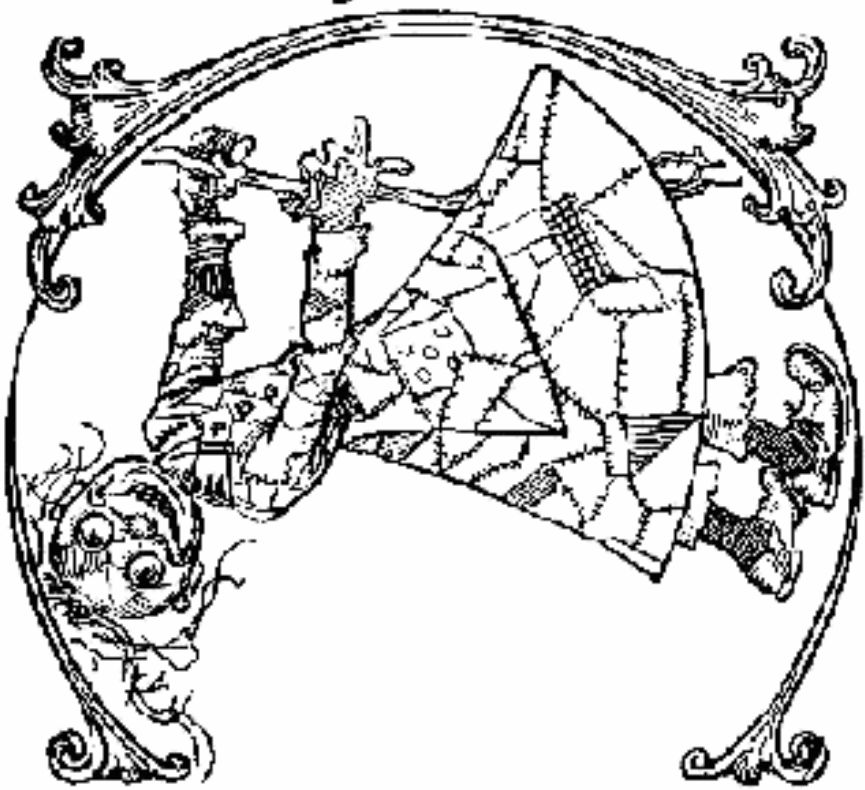
"The growl is of importance only to you," responded the Lion, "so it is

your business to worry over the loss, not ours. If you love us, do not inflict your burdens on us; be unhappy all by yourself."

"If the same person stole my growl who stole Ozma," said the little dog, "I hope we shall find him very soon and punish him as he deserves. He must be the most cruel person in all the world, for to prevent a dog from growling when it is his nature to growl is just as wicked, in my opinion, as stealing all the magic in Oz."



Button-Bright Loses Himself



CHAPTER 11

The Patchwork Girl, who never slept and who could see very well in the dark, had wandered among the rocks and bushes all night long, with the result that she was able to tell some good news the next morning.

"Over the crest of the hill before us," she said, "is a big grove of trees of many kinds, on which all sorts of fruits grow. If you will go there you will find a nice breakfast awaiting you."

This made them eager to start, so as soon as the blankets were folded and strapped to the back of the Sawhorse they all took their places on the animals and set out for the big grove Scraps had told them of.

As soon as they got over the brow of the hill they discovered it to be a really immense orchard, extending for miles to the right and left of them. As their way led straight through the trees they hurried forward as fast as possible.

The first trees they came to bore quinces, which they did not like. Then there were rows of citron trees and then crab apples and afterward limes and lemons. But beyond these they found a grove of big golden oranges, juicy and sweet, and the fruit hung low on the branches, so they could pluck it easily.

They helped themselves freely and all ate oranges as they continued on their way. Then, a little farther along, they came to some trees bearing fine red apples, which they also feasted on, and the Wizard stopped here long enough to tie a lot of the apples in one end of a blanket.

"We do not know what will happen to us after we leave this delightful orchard," he said, "so I think it wise to carry a supply of apples with us. We can't starve as long as we have apples, you know."

Scraps wasn't riding the Woozy just now. She loved to climb the trees and swing herself by the branches from one tree to another. Some of the choicest fruit was gathered by the Patchwork Girl from the very highest limbs and tossed down to the others.

Suddenly Trot asked: "Where's Button-Bright?" and when the others looked for him they found the boy had disappeared.

"Dear me!" cried Dorothy. "I guess he's lost again, and that will mean our waiting here until we can find him."

"It's a good place to wait," suggested Betsy, who had found a plum tree

and was eating some of its fruit.

"How can you wait here, and find Button-Bright, at one and the same time?" inquired the Patchwork Girl, hanging by her toes on a limb just over the heads of the three mortal girls.

"Perhaps he'll come back here," answered Dorothy.

"If he tries that, he'll prob'ly lose his way," said Trot. "I've known him to do that, lots of times. It's losing his way that gets him lost."

"Very true," said the Wizard. "So all the rest of you must stay here while I go look for the boy."

"Won't *you* get lost, too?" asked Betsy.

"I hope not, my dear."

"Let *me* go," said Scraps, dropping lightly to the ground. "I can't get lost, and I'm more likely to find Button-Bright than any of you."

Without waiting for permission she darted away through the trees and soon disappeared from their view.

"Dorothy," said Toto, squatting beside his little mistress, "I've lost my growl."

"How did that happen?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied Toto. "Yesterday morning the Woozy nearly stepped on me and I tried to growl at him and found I couldn't growl a bit."

"Can you bark?" inquired Dorothy.

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Then never mind the growl," said she.

"But what will I do when I get home to the Glass Cat and the Pink Kitten?" asked the little dog in an anxious voice.

"They won't mind, if you can't growl at them, I'm sure," said Dorothy. "I'm sorry for you, of course, Toto, for it's just those things we can't do that we want to do most of all; but before we get back you may find your growl again."

"Do you think the person who stole Ozma stole my growl?"

Dorothy smiled.

"Perhaps, Toto."

"Then he's a scoundrel!" cried the little dog.

"Anyone who would steal Ozma is as bad as bad can be," agreed Dorothy, "and when we remember that our dear friend, the lovely Ruler of Oz, is lost, we ought not to worry over just a growl."

Toto was not entirely satisfied with this remark, for the more he thought upon his lost growl the more important his misfortune became. When no one was looking he went away among the trees and tried his best to growl — even a little bit — but could not manage to do so. All he could do was bark,

and a bark cannot take the place of a growl, so he sadly returned to the others.

Now, Button-Bright had no idea that he was lost, at first. He had merely wandered from tree to tree, seeking the finest fruit, until he discovered he was alone in the great orchard. But that didn't worry him just then and seeing some apricot trees farther on he went to them; then he discovered some cherry trees; just beyond these were some tangerines.

"We've found 'most ev'ry kind of fruit but peaches," he said to himself, "so I guess there are peaches here, too, if I can find the trees."

He searched here and there, paying no attention to his way, until he found that the trees surrounding him bore only nuts. He put some walnuts in his pockets and kept on searching and at last — right among the nut trees — he came upon one solitary peach tree. It was a graceful, beautiful tree, but although it was thickly leaved it bore no fruit except one large, splendid peach, rosy-cheeked and fuzzy and just right to eat.

Button-Bright had some trouble getting that lonesome peach, for it hung far out of reach; but he climbed the tree nimbly and crept out on the branch on which it grew and after several trials, during which he was in danger of falling, he finally managed to pick it. Then he got back to the ground and decided the fruit was well worth his trouble. It was delightfully fragrant and when he bit into it he found it the most delicious morsel he had ever tasted.

"I really ought to divide it with Trot and Dorothy and Betsy," he said; "but p'rhaps there are plenty more in some other part of the orchard."

In his heart he doubted this statement, for this was a solitary peach tree, while all the other fruits grew upon many trees set close to one another; but that one luscious bite made him unable to resist eating the rest of it and soon the peach was all gone except the pit.

Button-Bright was about to throw this peach-pit away when he noticed that it was of pure gold. Of course this surprised him, but so many things in the Land of Oz were surprising that he did not give much thought to the golden peach-pit. He put it in his pocket, however, to show to the girls, and five minutes afterward had forgotten all about it.

For now he realized that he was far separated from his companions, and knowing that this would worry them and delay their journey, he began to shout as loud as he could. His voice did not penetrate very far among all those trees, and after shouting a dozen times and getting no answer he sat down on the ground and said:

"Well, I'm lost again. It's too bad, but I don't see how it can be helped."

As he leaned his back against a tree he looked up and saw a Bluefinch fly down from the sky and alight upon a branch just before him. The bird looked

and looked at him. First it looked with one bright eye and then turned its head and looked at him with the other eye. Then, fluttering its wings a little, it said:

"Oho! so you've eaten the enchanted peach, have you?"

"Was it enchanted?" asked Button-Bright.

"Of course," replied the Bluefinch. "Ugu the Shoemaker did that."

"But why? And how was it enchanted? And what will happen to one who eats it?" questioned the boy.

"Ask Ugu the Shoemaker; he knows," said the bird, pruning its feathers with its bill.

"And who is Ugu the Shoemaker?"

“The one who enchanted the peach, and placed it here — in the exact center of the Great Orchard — so no one would ever find it. We birds didn’t dare to eat it; we are too wise for that. But you are Button-Bright, from the Emerald City, and you — *you* — YOU ate the enchanted peach! You must explain to Ugu the Shoemaker why you did that.”

And then, before the boy could ask any more questions, the bird flew away and left him alone.

Button-Bright was not much worried to find that the peach he had eaten was enchanted. It certainly had tasted very good and his stomach didn’t ache a bit. So again he began to reflect upon the best way to rejoin his friends.

“Whichever direction I follow is likely to be the wrong one,” he said to himself, “so I’d better stay just where I am and let *them* find *me* — if they can.”

A White Rabbit came hopping through the orchard and paused a little way off to look at him.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Button-Bright; “I won’t hurt you.”

“Oh, I’m not afraid for myself,” returned the White Rabbit. “It’s you I’m worried about.”

“Yes; I’m lost,” said the boy.

“I fear you are, indeed,” answered the Rabbit. “Why on earth did you eat the enchanted peach?”

The boy looked at the excited little animal thoughtfully.

“There were two reasons,” he explained. “One reason was that I like peaches, and the other reason was that I didn’t know it was enchanted.”

“That won’t save you from Ugu the Shoemaker,” declared the White Rabbit and it scurried away before the boy could ask any more questions.

“Rabbits and birds,” he thought, “are timid creatures and seem afraid of this shoemaker — whoever he may be. If there was another peach half as good as that other, I’d eat it in spite of a dozen enchantments or a hundred shoemakers!”

Just then Scraps came dancing along and saw him sitting at the foot of the tree.

“Oh, here you are!” she said. “Up to your old tricks, eh? Don’t you know it’s impolite to get lost and keep everybody waiting for you? Come along, and I’ll lead you back to Dorothy and the others.”

Button-Bright rose slowly to accompany her.

“That wasn’t much of a loss,” he said cheerfully. “I haven’t been gone half a day, so there’s no harm done.”

Dorothy, however, when the boy rejoined the party, gave him a good scolding.

“When we’re doing such an important thing as searching for Ozma,” said she, “it’s naughty for you to wander away and keep us from getting on. S’pose she’s a pris’ner — in a dungeon cell! — do you want to keep our dear Ozma there any longer than we can help?”

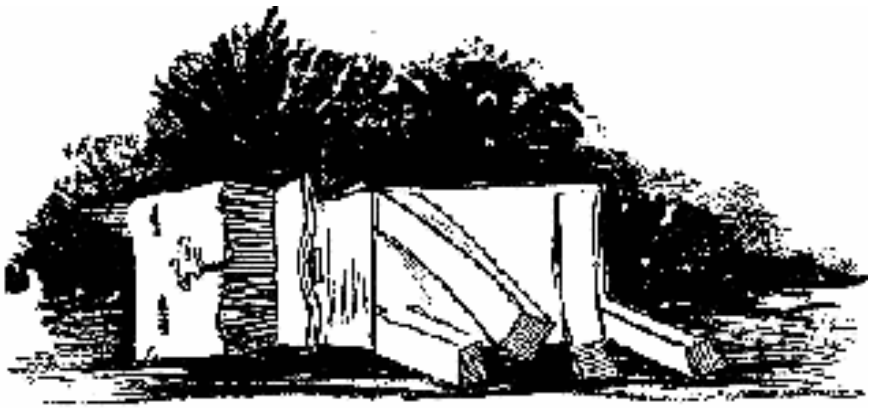
“If she’s in a dungeon cell, how are you going to get her out?” inquired the boy.

“Never you mind; we’ll leave that to the Wizard; he’s sure to find a way.”

The Wizard said nothing, for he realized that without his magic tools he could do no more than any other person. But there was no use reminding his companions of that fact; it might discourage them.

“The important thing just now,” he remarked, “is to find Ozma; and, as our party is again happily reunited, I propose we move on.”

As they came to the edge of the Great Orchard the sun was setting and they knew it would soon be dark. So it was decided to camp under the trees, as another broad plain was before them. The Wizard spread the blankets on a bed of soft leaves and presently all of them except Scraps and the Sawhorse were fast asleep. Toto snuggled close to his friend the Lion, and the Woozy snored so loudly that the Patchwork Girl covered his square head with her apron to deaden the sound.



The Czarover of Herku

CHAPTER 12

Trot wakened just
as the sun rose
and, slipping out
of the blankets,
went to the edge of the Great Orchard and looked across the plain. Something glittered in the far distance.

"That looks like another city," she said half aloud.

"And another city it is," declared Scraps, who had crept to Trot's side unheard, for her stuffed feet made no sound. "The Sawhorse and I made a journey in the dark, while you were all asleep, and we found over there a bigger city than Thi. There's a wall around it, too, but it has gates and plenty of pathways."

"Did you go in?" asked Trot.

"No, for the gates were locked and the wall was a real wall. So we came back here again. It isn't far to the city. We can reach it in two hours after you've had your breakfasts."

Trot went back and, finding the other girls now awake, told them what Scraps had said. So they hurriedly ate some fruit — there were plenty of plums and fijoas in this part of the orchard — and then they mounted the animals and set out upon the journey to the strange city. Hank the Mule had breakfasted on grass and the Lion had stolen away and found a breakfast to his liking; he never told what it was, but Dorothy hoped the little rabbits and the field mice had kept out of his way. She warned Toto not to chase birds and gave the dog some apple, with which he was quite content. The Woozy was as fond of fruit as of any other food, except honey, and the Sawhorse never ate at all.

Except for their worry over Ozma they were all in good spirits as they proceeded swiftly over the plain. Toto still worried over his lost growl, but like a wise little dog kept his worry to himself. Before long the city grew nearer and they could examine it with interest.

In outward appearance the place was more imposing than Thi, and it was a square city, with a square, four-sided wall around it and on each side was a square gate of burnished copper. Everything about the city looked solid and substantial; there were no banners flying and the towers that rose above the city wall seemed bare of any ornament whatever.

A path led from the fruit orchard directly to one of the city gates, showing that the inhabitants preferred fruit to thistles. Our friends followed this path to the gate, which they found fast shut. But the Wizard advanced and

pounded upon it with his fist, saying in a loud voice: “Open!”

At once there rose above the great wall a row of immense heads, all of which looked down at them as if to see who was intruding. The size of these heads was astonishing and our friends at once realized that they belonged to giants, who were standing within the city. All had thick, bushy hair and whiskers, on some the hair being white and on others black or red or yellow, while the hair of a few was just turning gray, showing that the giants were of all ages. However fierce the heads might seem the eyes were mild in expression, as if the creatures had been long subdued, and their faces expressed patience rather than ferocity.

“What’s wanted?” asked one old giant, in a low, grumbling voice.

“We are strangers and we wish to enter the city,” replied the Wizard.

“Do you come in war or peace?” asked another.

“In peace, of course,” retorted the Wizard, and he added impatiently: “Do we look like an army of conquest?”

“No,” said the first giant who had spoken, “you look like innocent tramps; but one never can tell by appearances. Wait here until we report to our masters. No one can enter here without the permission of Vig, the Czarover.”

“Who’s that?” inquired Dorothy. But the heads had all bobbed down and disappeared behind the wall, so there was no answer.

They waited a long time before the gate rolled back with a rumbling sound and a loud voice cried: “Enter!” But they lost no time in taking advantage of the invitation.

On either side of the broad street that led into the city from the gate stood a row of huge giants — twenty of them on a side and all standing so close together that their elbows touched. They wore uniforms of blue and yellow and were armed with clubs as big around as tree-trunks. Each giant had around his neck a broad band of gold, riveted on, to show he was a slave.

As our friends entered, riding upon the Lion, the Woozy, the Sawhorse and the Mule, the giants half turned and walked in two files on either side of them, as if escorting them on their way. It looked to Dorothy as if all her party had been made prisoners, for even mounted on their animals their heads scarcely reached to the knees of the marching giants. The girls and Button-Bright were anxious to know what sort of a city they had entered, and

what the people were like who had made these powerful creatures their slaves. Through the legs of the giants, as they walked, Dorothy could see rows of houses on each side the street and throngs of people standing on the sidewalks; but the people were of ordinary size and the only remarkable thing about them was the fact that they were dreadfully lean and thin. Between their skin and their bones there seemed to be little or no flesh, and they were mostly stoop-shouldered and weary looking, even to the little children.

More and more Dorothy wondered how and why the great giants had ever submitted to become slaves of such skinny, languid masters, but there was no chance to question anyone until they arrived at a big palace located in the heart of the city. Here the giants formed lines to the entrance and stood still while our friends rode into the courtyard of the palace. Then the gates closed behind them and before them was a skinny little man who bowed low and said in a sad voice:

"If you will be so obliging as to dismount, it will give me pleasure to lead you into the presence of the World's Most Mighty Ruler, Vig the Czarover."

"I don't believe it!" said Dorothy indignantly.

"What don't you believe?" asked the man.

"I don't believe your Czarover can hold a candle to our Ozma."

"He wouldn't hold a candle under any circumstances, or to any living person," replied the man very seriously, "for he has slaves to do such things and the Mighty Vig is too dignified to do anything that others can do for him. He even obliges a slave to sneeze for him, if ever he catches cold. However, if you dare to face our powerful ruler, follow me."

"We dare anything," said the Wizard, "so go ahead."

Through several marble corridors having lofty ceilings they passed, finding each corridor and doorway guarded by servants; but these servants of the palace were of the people and not giants, and they were so thin that they almost resembled skeletons. Finally they entered a great circular room with a high domed ceiling where the Czarover sat on a throne cut from a solid block of white marble and decorated with purple silk hangings and gold tassels.

The ruler of these people was combing his eyebrows when our friends entered his throne-room and stood before him, but he put the comb in his pocket and examined the strangers with evident curiosity. Then he said:

"Dear me, what a surprise! You have really shocked me. For no outsider has ever before come to our City of Herku, and I cannot imagine why *you* have ventured to do so."

"We are looking for Ozma, the Supreme Ruler of the Land of Oz," replied the Wizard.

“Do you see her anywhere around here?” asked the Czarover.

“Not yet, Your Majesty; but perhaps you may tell us where she is.”

“No; I have my hands full keeping track of my own people. I find them hard to manage because they are so tremendously strong.”

“They don’t look very strong,” said Dorothy. “It seems as if a good wind would blow ‘em way out of the city, if it wasn’t for the wall.”

“Just so — just so,” admitted the Czarover. “They really look that way, don’t they? But you must never trust to appearances, which have a way of fooling one. Perhaps you noticed that I prevented you from meeting any of my people. I protected you with my giants while you were on the way from the gates to my palace, so that not a Herku got near you.”

“Are your people so dangerous, then?” asked the Wizard.

“To strangers, yes; but only because they are so friendly. For, if they shake hands with you, they are likely to break your arms or crush your fingers to a jelly.”

“Why?” asked Button-Bright.

“Because we are the strongest people in all the world.”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed the boy, “that’s bragging. You prob’ly don’t know how strong other people are. Why, once I knew a man in Philadelphi’ who could bend iron bars with just his hands!”

“But — mercy me! — it’s no trick to bend iron bars,” said His Majesty. “Tell me, could this man crush a block of stone with his bare hands?”

“No one could do that,” declared the boy.

“If I had a block of stone I’d show you,” said the Czarover, looking around the room. “Ah, here is my throne. The back is too high, anyhow, so I’ll just break off a piece of that.”

He rose to his feet and tottered in an uncertain way around the throne. Then he took hold of the back and broke off a piece of marble over a foot thick.

“This,” said he, coming back to his seat, “is very solid marble and much harder than ordinary stone. Yet I can crumble it easily with my fingers — a proof that I am very strong.”

Even as he spoke he began breaking off chunks of marble and crumbling them as one would a bit of earth. The Wizard was so astonished that he took a piece in his own hands and tested it, finding it very hard indeed.

Just then one of the giant servants entered and exclaimed:

“Oh, Your Majesty, the cook has burned the soup! What shall we do?”

“How dare you interrupt me?” asked the Czarover, and grasping the immense giant by one of his legs he raised him in the air and threw him headfirst out of an open window.

“Now, tell me,” he said, turning to Button-Bright, “could your man in Philadelphia crumble marble in his fingers?”

“I guess not,” said Button-Bright, much impressed by the skinny monarch’s strength.

“What makes you so strong?” inquired Dorothy.

“It’s the zosozo,” he explained, “which is an invention of my own. I and all my people eat zosozo, and it gives us tremendous strength. Would you

like to eat some?"

"No, thank you," replied the girl. "I — I don't want to get so thin."

"Well, of course one can't have strength and flesh at the same time," said the Czarover. "Zosozo is pure energy, and it's the only compound of its sort in existence. I never allow our giants to have it, you know, or they would soon become our masters, since they are bigger than we; so I keep all the stuff locked up in my private laboratory. Once a year I feed a teaspoonful of it to each of my people — men, women and children — so every one of them is nearly as strong as I am. Wouldn't *you* like a dose, sir?" he asked, turning to the Wizard.

"Well," said the Wizard, "if you would give me a little zosozo in a bottle, I'd like to take it with me on my travels. It might come handy, on occasion."

"To be sure. I'll give you enough for six doses," promised the Czarover. "But don't take more than a teaspoonful at a time. Once Ugu the Shoemaker took two teaspoonsful, and it made him so strong that when he leaned against the city wall he pushed it over, and we had to build it up again."

"Who is Ugu the Shoemaker?" asked Button-Bright curiously, for he now remembered that the bird and the rabbit had claimed Ugu the Shoemaker had enchanted the peach he had eaten.

"Why, Ugu is a great magician, who used to live here. But he's gone away, now," replied the Czarover.

"Where has he gone?" asked the Wizard quickly.

"I am told he lives in a wickerwork castle in the mountains to the west of here. You see, Ugu became such a powerful magician that he didn't care to live in our city any longer, for fear we would discover some of his secrets. So he went to the mountains and built him a splendid wicker castle, which is so strong that even I and my people could not batter it down, and there he lives all by himself."

"This is good news," declared the Wizard, "for I think this is just the magician we are searching for. But why is he called Ugu the Shoemaker?"

"Once he was a very common citizen here and made shoes for a living," replied the monarch of Herku. "But he was descended from the greatest wizard and sorcerer who has ever lived — in this or in any other country — and one day Ugu the Shoemaker discovered all the magical books and recipes of his famous great-grandfather, which had been hidden away in the attic of his house. So he began to study the papers and books and to practice magic, and in time he became so skillful that, as I said, he scorned our city and built a solitary castle for himself."

"Do you think," asked Dorothy anxiously, "that Ugu the Shoemaker would be wicked enough to steal our Ozma of Oz?"

“And the Magic Picture?” asked Trot.

“And the Great Book of Records of Glinda the Good?” asked Betsy.

“And my own magic tools?” asked the Wizard.

“Well,” replied the Czarover, “I won’t say that Ugu is wicked, exactly, but he is very ambitious to become the most powerful magician in the world, and so I suppose he would not be too proud to steal any magic things that belonged to anybody else — if he could manage to do so.”

“But how about Ozma? Why would he wish to steal *her*?” questioned Dorothy.

“Don’t ask me, my dear. Ugu doesn’t tell me why he does things, I assure you.”

“Then we must go and ask him ourselves,” declared the little girl.

“I wouldn’t do that, if I were you,” advised the Czarover, looking first at the three girls and then at the boy and the little Wizard and finally at the stuffed Patchwork Girl. “If Ugu has really stolen your Ozma, he will probably keep her a prisoner, in spite of all your threats or entreaties. And, with all his magical knowledge, he would be a dangerous person to attack. Therefore, if you are wise, you will go home again and find a new Ruler for the Emerald City and the Land of Oz. But perhaps it isn’t Ugu the Shoemaker who has stolen your Ozma.”

“The only way to settle that question,” replied the Wizard, “is to go to Ugu’s castle and see if Ozma is there. If she is, we will report the matter to the great Sorceress, Glinda the Good, and I’m pretty sure she will find a way to rescue our darling ruler from the Shoemaker.”

“Well, do as you please,” said the Czarover. “But, if you are all transformed into hummingbirds or caterpillars, don’t blame me for not warning you.”

They stayed the rest of that day in the City of Herku and were fed at the royal table of the Czarover and given sleeping rooms in his palace. The strong monarch treated them very nicely and gave the Wizard a little golden vial of zosozo, to use if ever he or any of his party wished to acquire great strength.

Even at the last the Czarover tried to persuade them not to go near Ugu the Shoemaker, but they were resolved on the venture and the next morning bade the friendly monarch a cordial good-bye and, mounting upon their animals, left the Herkus and the City of Herku and headed for the mountains that lay to the west.

The Truth Pond

CHAPTER 13

It seems a long time since we have heard anything of the Frogman and Cayke the Cookie Cook, who had left the Yip Country in search of the diamond-studded gold dishpan which had been mysteriously stolen the same night that Ozma had disappeared from the Emerald City. But you must remember that while the Frogman and the Cookie Cook were preparing to descend from their mountain-top, and even while on their way to the farmhouse of Wiljon the Winkie, Dorothy and the Wizard and their friends were encountering the adventures we have just related.

So it was that on the very morning when the travelers from the Emerald City bade farewell to the Czarover of the City of Herku, Cayke and the Frogman awoke in a grove in which they had passed the night sleeping on beds of leaves. There were plenty of farmhouses in the neighborhood, but no one seemed to welcome the puffy, haughty Frogman or the little dried-up Cookie Cook, and so they slept comfortably enough underneath the trees of the grove.

The Frogman wakened first, on this morning, and after going to the tree where Cayke slept and finding her still wrapt in slumber, he decided to take a little walk and seek some breakfast. Coming to the edge of the grove he observed, half a mile away, a pretty yellow house that was surrounded by a yellow picket fence, so he walked toward this house and on entering the yard found a Winkie woman picking up sticks with which to build a fire to cook her morning meal.

"For goodness sakes!" she exclaimed on seeing the Frogman, "what are you doing out of your frog-pond?"

"I am traveling in search of a jeweled gold dishpan, my good woman," he replied, with an air of great dignity.

"You won't find it here, then," said she. "Our dishpans are tin, and they're good enough for anybody. So go back to your pond and leave me alone."

She spoke rather crossly and with a lack of respect that greatly annoyed the Frogman.

"Allow me to tell you, madam," he said, "that although I am a frog I am the Greatest and Wisest Frog in all the world. I may add that I possess much more wisdom than any Winkie — man or woman — in this land. Wherever I go, people fall on their knees before me and render homage to the Great Frogman! No one else knows so much as I; no one else is so grand — so

magnificent!”

“If you know so much,” she retorted, “why don’t you know where your dishpan is, instead of chasing around the country after it?”

“Presently,” he answered, “I am going where it is; but just now I am traveling and have had no breakfast. Therefore I honor you by asking you for something to eat.”

“Oho! the Great Frogman is hungry as any tramp, is he? Then pick up these sticks and help me to build the fire,” said the woman contemptuously.

“Me! The Great Frogman pick up sticks?” he exclaimed in horror. “In the Yip Country, where I am more honored and powerful than any King could be, people weep with joy when I ask them to feed me.”

“Then that’s the place to go for your breakfast,” declared the woman.

“I fear you do not realize my importance,” urged the Frogman. “Exceeding wisdom renders me superior to menial duties.”

“It’s a great wonder to me,” remarked the woman, carrying her sticks to the house, “that your wisdom doesn’t inform you that you’ll get no breakfast here,” and she went in and slammed the door behind her.

The Frogman felt he had been insulted, so he gave a loud croak of indignation and turned away. After going a short distance he came upon a faint path which led across a meadow in the direction of a grove of pretty trees, and thinking this circle of evergreens must surround a house — where perhaps he would be kindly received — he decided to follow the path. And by and by he came to the trees, which were set close together, and pushing aside some branches he found no house inside the circle, but instead a very beautiful pond of clear water.

Now the Frogman, although he was so big and so well educated and now aped the ways and customs of human beings, was still a frog. As he gazed at this solitary, deserted pond, his love for water returned to him with irresistible force.

“If I cannot get a breakfast I may at least have a fine swim,” said he, and pushing his way between the trees he reached the bank. There he took off his fine clothing, laying his shiny purple hat and his gold-headed cane beside it. A moment later he sprang with one leap into the water and dived to the very bottom of the pond.

The water was deliciously cool and grateful to his thick, rough skin, and the Frogman swam around the pond several times before he stopped to rest. Then he floated upon the surface and examined the pond with some curiosity. The bottom and sides were all lined with glossy tiles of a light pink color; just one place in the bottom, where the water bubbled up from a hidden spring, had been left free. On the banks the green grass grew to the edge of

the pink tiling.

And now, as the Frogman examined the place, he found that on one side the pool, just above the water line, had been set a golden plate on which some words were deeply engraved. He swam toward this plate and on reaching it read the following inscription:

This is
THE TRUTH POND
Whoever bathes in this
water must always
afterward tell
THE TRUTH

This statement startled the Frogman. It even worried him, so that he leaped upon the bank and hurriedly began to dress himself.

"A great misfortune has befallen me," he told himself, "for hereafter I cannot tell people I am wise, since it is not the truth. The truth is that my boasted wisdom is all a sham, assumed by me to deceive people and make them defer to me. In truth, no living creature can know much more than his fellows, for one may know one thing, and another know another thing, so that wisdom is evenly scattered throughout the world. But — ah, me! — what a terrible fate will now be mine. Even Cayke the Cookie Cook will soon discover that my knowledge is no greater than her own; for having bathed in the enchanted water of the Truth Pond, I can no longer deceive her or tell a lie."

More humbled than he had been for many years, the Frogman went back to the grove where he had left Cayke and found the woman now awake and washing her face in a tiny brook.

"Where has Your Honor been?" she asked.

"To a farmhouse to ask for something to eat," said he, "but the woman refused me."

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "But never mind; there are other houses, where the people will be glad to feed the Wisest Creature in all the World."

"Do you mean yourself?" he asked.

"No, I mean you."

The Frogman felt strongly impelled to tell the truth, but struggled hard

against it. His reason told him there was no use in letting Cayke know he was not wise, for then she would lose much respect for him, but each time he opened his mouth to speak he realized he was about to tell the truth and shut it again as quickly as possible. He tried to talk about something else, but the words necessary to undeceive the woman would force themselves to his lips in spite of all his struggles. Finally, knowing that he must either remain dumb or let the truth prevail, he gave a low groan of despair and said:

"Cayke, I am *not* the Wisest Creature in all the World; I am not wise at all."

"Oh, you must be!" she protested. "You told me so yourself, only last evening."

“Then last evening I failed to tell you the truth,” he admitted, looking very shamefaced, for a frog. “I am sorry I told you that lie, my good Cayke; but, if you must know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I am not really as wise as you are.”

The Cookie Cook was greatly shocked to hear this, for it shattered one of her most pleasing illusions. She looked at the gorgeously dressed Frogman in amazement.

“What has caused you to change your mind so suddenly?” she inquired.

“I have bathed in the Truth Pond,” he said, “and whoever bathes in that water is ever afterward obliged to tell the truth.”

“You were foolish to do that,” declared the woman. “It is often very embarrassing to tell the truth. I’m glad *I* didn’t bathe in that dreadful water!”

The Frogman looked at his companion thoughtfully.

“Cayke,” said he, “I want you to go to the Truth Pond and take a bath in its water. For, if we are to travel together and encounter unknown adventures, it would not be fair that I alone must always tell you the truth, while you could tell me whatever you pleased. If we both dip in the enchanted water there will be no chance in the future of our deceiving one another.”

“No,” she asserted, shaking her head positively, “I won’t do it, Your Honor. For, if I told you the truth, I’m sure you wouldn’t like me. No Truth Pond for me. I’ll be just as I am, an honest woman who can say what she wants to without hurting anyone’s feelings.”

With this decision the Frogman was forced to be content, although he was sorry the Cookie Cook would not listen to his advice.

The Unhappy Ferryman

CHAPTER 14

Leaving the grove
where they had
slept, the Frogman
and the Cookie
Cook turned to the east to seek another house and after a short walk came to one where the people received them very politely. The children stared rather hard at the big, pompous Frogman, but the woman of the house, when Cayke asked for something to eat, at once brought them food and said they were welcome to it.

"Few people in need of help pass this way," she remarked, "for the Winkies are all prosperous and love to stay in their own homes. But perhaps you are not a Winkle," she added.

"No," said Cayke, "I am a Yip, and my home is on a high mountain at the southeast of your country."

"And the Frogman — is he, also, a Yip?"

"I do not know what he is, other than a very remarkable and highly educated creature," replied the Cookie Cook. "But he has lived many years among the Yips, who have found him so wise and intelligent that they always go to him for advice."

"May I ask why you have left your home, and where you are going?" said the Winkie woman.

Then Cayke told her of the diamond-studded gold dishpan and how it had been mysteriously stolen from her house, after which she had discovered that she could no longer cook good cookies. So she had resolved to search until she found her dishpan again, because a Cookie Cook who cannot cook good cookies is not of much use. The Frogman, who wanted to see more of the world, had accompanied her to assist in the search. When the woman had listened to this story she asked.

"Then you have no idea, as yet, who has stolen your dishpan?"

"I only know it must have been some mischievous fairy, or a magician, or some such powerful person, because none other could have climbed the steep mountain to the Yip Country. And who else could have carried away my beautiful, magic dishpan without being seen?"

The woman thought about this during the time that Cayke and the Frogman ate their breakfast. When they had finished she said:

"Where are you going next?"

"We have not decided," answered the Cookie Cook.

"Our plan," explained the Frogman, in his important way, "is to travel

from place to place until we learn where the thief is located, and then to force him to return the dishpan to its proper owner."

"The plan is all right," agreed the woman, "but it may take you a long time before you succeed, your method being sort of haphazard and indefinite. However, I advise you to travel toward the east."

"Why?" asked the Frogman.

"Because if you went west you would soon come to the desert, and also because in this part of the Winkie Country no one steals, so your time here would be wasted. But toward the east, beyond the river, live many strange people whose honesty I would not vouch for. Moreover, if you journey far enough east and cross the river for a second time, you will come to the

Emerald City, where there is much magic and sorcery. The Emerald City is ruled by a dear little girl called Ozma, who also rules the Emperor of the Winkies and all the Land of Oz. So, as Ozma is a fairy, she may be able to tell you just who has taken your precious dishpan. Provided, of course, you do not find it before you reach her."

"This seems to me to be excellent advice," said the Frogman, and Cayke agreed with him.

"The most sensible thing for you to do," continued the woman, "would be to return to your home and use another dishpan, learning to cook cookies as other people cook cookies, without the aid of magic. But, if you cannot be happy without the magic dishpan you have lost, you are likely to learn more about it in the Emerald City than at any other place in Oz."

They thanked the good woman and on leaving her house faced the east and continued in that direction all the way. Toward evening they came to the west branch of the Winkie River and there, on the river bank, found a ferryman who lived all alone in a little yellow house.

This ferryman was a Winkie with a very small head and a very large body. He was sitting in his doorway as the travelers approached him and did not even turn his head to look at them.

"Good evening," said the Frogman.

The ferryman made no reply.

"We would like some supper and the privilege of sleeping in your house until morning," continued the Frogman. "At daybreak we would like some breakfast and then we would like to have you row us across the river."

The ferryman neither moved nor spoke. He sat in his doorway and looked straight ahead.

"I think he must be deaf and dumb," Cayke whispered to her companion. Then she stood directly in front of the ferryman and putting her mouth close to his ear she yelled as loudly as she could:

"Good evening!"

The ferryman scowled.

"Why do you yell at me, woman?" he asked.

"Can you hear what I say?" she asked in her ordinary tone of voice.

"Of course," replied the man.

"Then why didn't you answer the Frogman?"

"Because," said the ferryman, "I don't understand the frog language."

"He speaks the same words that I do and in the same way," declared Cayke.

"Perhaps," replied the ferryman; "but to me his voice sounded like a frog's croak. I know that in the Land of Oz animals can speak our language,

and so can the birds and bugs and fishes; but in *my* ears they sound merely like growls and chirps and croaks."

"Why is that?" asked the Cookie Cook in surprise.

"Once, many years ago, I cut the tail off a fox which had taunted me; and I stole some birds' eggs from a nest to make an omelet with, and also I pulled a fish from the river and left it lying on the bank to gasp for lack of water until it died. I don't know why I did those wicked things, but I did them. So the Emperor of the Winkies — who is the Tin Woodman and has a very tender tin heart — punished me by denying me any communication with beasts, birds or fishes. I cannot understand them when they speak to me, although I know that other people can do so, nor can the creatures understand a word I say to them. Every time I meet one of them I am reminded of my former cruelty, and it makes me very unhappy."

"Really," said Cayke, "I'm sorry for you, although the Tin Woodman is not to blame for punishing you."

"What is he mumbling about?" asked the Frogman.

“He is talking to me, but you don’t understand him,” she replied. And then she told him of the ferryman’s punishment and afterward explained to the ferryman that they wanted to stay all night with him and be fed.

He gave them some fruit and bread, which was the only sort of food he had, and he allowed Cayke to sleep in a room of his cottage. But the Frogman he refused to admit to his house, saying that the frog’s presence made him miserable and unhappy. At no time would he look directly at the Frogman, or even toward him, fearing he would shed tears if he did so; so the big frog slept on the river bank, where he could hear little frogs croaking in the river all the night through. But that did not keep him awake; it merely soothed him to slumber, for he realized how much superior he was to them.

Just as the sun was rising on a new day the ferryman rowed the two travelers across the river — keeping his back to the Frogman all the way — and then Cayke thanked him and bade him good-bye and the ferryman rowed home again.

On this side the river there were no paths at all, so it was evident they had reached a part of the country little frequented by travelers. There was a marsh at the south of them, sandhills at the north and a growth of scrubby underbrush leading toward a forest at the east. So the east was really the least difficult way to go and that direction was the one they had determined to follow.

Now the Frogman, although he wore green patent-leather shoes with ruby buttons, had very large and flat feet, and when he tramped through the scrub his weight crushed down the underbrush and made a path for Cayke to follow him. Therefore they soon reached the forest, where the tall trees were set far apart but were so leafy that they shaded all the spaces between them with their branches.

"There are no bushes here," said Cayke, much pleased, "so we can now travel faster and with more comfort."

The Big Lavender Bear

CHAPTER 15

It was a pleasant
place to wander in
and the two travelers
were proceeding
at a brisk pace when suddenly a voice shouted:
"Halt!"

They looked around in surprise, seeing at first no one at all. Then from behind a tree there stepped a brown fuzzy bear, whose head came about as high as Cayke's waist — and Cayke was a small woman. The bear was chubby as well as fuzzy; his body was even puffy, while his legs and arms seemed jointed at the knees and elbows and fastened to his body by pins or rivets. His ears were round in shape and stuck out in a comical way, while his round black eyes were bright and sparkling as beads. Over his shoulder the little brown bear bore a gun with a tin barrel. The barrel had a cork in the end of it and a string was attached to the cork and to the handle of the gun.

Both the Frogman and Cayke gazed hard at this curious bear, standing silent for some time. But finally the Frogman recovered from his surprise and remarked:

"It seems to me that you are stuffed with sawdust and ought not to be alive."

"That's all you know about it," answered the little Brown Bear in a squeaky voice. "I am stuffed with a very good quality of curled hair and my skin is the best plush that was ever made. As for my being alive, that is my own affair and cannot concern you at all — except that it gives me the privilege to say you are my prisoners."

"Prisoners! Why do you speak such nonsense?" asked the Frogman angrily. "Do you think we are afraid of a toy bear with a toy gun?"

"You ought to be," was the confident reply, "for I am merely the sentry guarding the way to Bear Center, which is a city containing hundreds of my race, who are ruled by a very powerful sorcerer known as the Lavender Bear. He ought to be a purple color, you know, seeing he is a King, but he's only light lavender, which is, of course, second-cousin to royal purple. So, unless you come with me peaceably, as my prisoners, I shall fire my gun and bring a hundred bears — of all sizes and colors — to capture you."

"Why do you wish to capture us?" inquired the Frogman, who had listened to this speech with much astonishment.

"I don't wish to, as a matter of fact," replied the little Brown Bear, "but it is my duty to, because you are now trespassing on the domain of His Majesty

the King of Bear Center. Also I will admit that things are rather quiet in our city, just now, and the excitement of your capture, followed by your trial and execution, should afford us much entertainment."

"We defy you!" said the Frogman.

"Oh, no; don't do that," pleaded Cayke, speaking to her companion. "He says his King is a sorcerer, so perhaps it is he or one of his bears who ventured to steal my jeweled dishpan. Let us go to the City of the Bears and discover if my dishpan is there."

"I must now register one more charge against you," remarked the little Brown Bear, with evident satisfaction. "You have just accused us of stealing, and that is such a dreadful thing to say that I am quite sure our noble King will command you to be executed."

"But how could you execute us?" inquired the Cookie Cook.

"I've no idea. But our King is a wonderful inventor and there is no doubt he can find a proper way to destroy you. So, tell me, are you going to struggle, or will you go peaceably to meet your doom?"

It was all so ridiculous that Cayke laughed aloud and even the Frogman's wide mouth curled in a smile. Neither was a bit afraid to go to the Bear City and it seemed to both that there was a possibility they might discover the missing dishpan. So the Frogman said:

"Lead the way, little Bear, and we will follow without a struggle."

"That's very sensible of you; very sensible, indeed!" declared the Brown Bear. "So — for-ward *march*!" and with the command he turned around and began to waddle along a path that led between the trees.

Cayke and the Frogman, as they followed their conductor, could scarce forbear laughing at his stiff, awkward manner of walking and, although he moved his stuffy legs fast, his steps were so short that they had to go slowly in order not to run into him. But after a time they reached a large, circular space in the center of the forest, which was clear of any stumps or underbrush. The ground was covered by a soft gray moss, pleasant to tread upon. All the trees surrounding this space seemed to be hollow and had round holes in their trunks, set a little way above the ground, but otherwise there was nothing unusual about the place and nothing, in the opinion of the prisoners, to indicate a settlement. But the little Brown Bear said in a proud and impressive voice (although it still squeaked):

"This is the wonderful city known to fame as Bear Center!"

"But there are no houses; there are no bears living here at all!" exclaimed Cayke.

"Oh, indeed!" retorted their captor and raising his gun he pulled the trigger. The cork flew out of the tin barrel with a loud "pop!" and at once

from every hole in every tree within view of the clearing appeared the head of a bear. They were of many colors and of many sizes, but all were made in the same manner as the bear who had met and captured them.

At first a chorus of growls arose and then a sharp voice cried:

"What has happened, Corporal Waddle?"

"Captives, Your Majesty!" answered the Brown Bear. "Intruders upon our domain and slanderers of our good name."

"Ah, that's important," answered the voice.

Then from out the hollow trees tumbled a whole regiment of stuffed bears, some carrying tin swords, some popguns and others long spears with gay ribbons tied to the handles. There were hundreds of them, altogether, and they quickly formed a circle around the Frogman and the Cookie Cook but kept at a distance and left a large space for the prisoners to stand in.

Presently this circle parted and into the center of it stalked a huge toy bear

of a lovely lavender color. He walked upon his hind legs, as did all the others, and on his head he wore a tin crown set with diamonds and amethysts, while in one paw he carried a short wand of some glittering metal that resembled silver but wasn't.

"His Majesty the King!" shouted Corporal Waddle, and all the bears bowed low. Some bowed so low that they lost their balance and toppled over, but they soon scrambled up again and the Lavender King squatted on his haunches before the prisoners and gazed at them steadily with his bright pink eyes.

The Little Pink Bear

CHAPTER 16

"One Person and one Freak," said the big Lavender Bear, when he had carefully examined the strangers.

"I am sorry to hear you call poor Cayke the Cookie Cook a Freak," remonstrated the Frogman.

"She is the Person," asserted the King. "Unless I am mistaken, it is you who are the Freak."

The Frogman was silent, for he could not truthfully deny it.

"Why have you dared intrude in my forest?" demanded the Bear King.

"We didn't know it *was* your forest," said Cayke, "and we are on our way to the far east, where the Emerald City is."

"Ah, it's a long way from here to the Emerald City," remarked the King. "It is so far away, indeed, that no bear among us has ever been there. But what errand requires you to travel such a distance?"

"Someone has stolen my diamond-studded gold dishpan," explained Cayke; "and, as I cannot be happy without it, I have decided to search the world over until I find it again. The Frogman, who is very learned and wonderfully wise, has come with me to give me his assistance. Isn't it kind of him?"

The King looked at the Frogman.

"What makes you so wonderfully wise?" he asked.

"I'm not," was the candid reply. "The Cookie Cook, and some others in the Yip Country, think because I am a big frog and talk and act like a man, that I must be very wise. I have learned more than a frog usually knows, it is true, but I am not yet so wise as I hope to become at some future time."

The King nodded, and when he did so something squeaked in his chest.

"Did Your Majesty speak?" asked Cayke.

"Not just then," answered the Lavender Bear, seeming to be somewhat embarrassed. "I am so built, you must know, that when anything pushes against my chest, as my chin accidentally did just then, I make that silly noise. In this city it isn't considered good manners to notice it. But I like your Frogman. He is honest and truthful, which is more than can be said of many others. As for your late lamented dishpan, I'll show it to you."

With this he waved three times the metal wand which he held in his paw and instantly there appeared upon the ground, midway between the King and Cayke, a big round pan made of beaten gold. Around the top edge was a row

of small diamonds; around the center of the pan was another row of larger diamonds; and at the bottom was a row of exceedingly large and brilliant diamonds. In fact, they all sparkled magnificently and the pan was so big and broad that it took a lot of diamonds to go around it three times.

Cayke stared so hard that her eyes seemed about to pop out of her head.

"O-o-o-oh!" she exclaimed, drawing a deep breath of delight.

"Is this your dishpan?" inquired the King.

"It is — it is!" cried the Cookie Cook, and rushing forward she fell on her knees and threw her arms around the precious pan. But her arms came together without meeting any resistance at all. Cayke tried to seize the edge, but found nothing to grasp. The pan was surely there, she thought, for she

could see it plainly; but it was not solid; she could not feel it at all. With a moan of astonishment and despair she raised her head to look at the Bear King, who was watching her actions curiously. Then she turned to the pan again, only to find it had completely disappeared.

"Poor creature!" murmured the King pityingly. "You must have thought, for the moment, that you had actually recovered your dishpan. But what you saw was merely the image of it, conjured up by means of my magic. It is a pretty dishpan, indeed, though rather big and awkward to handle. I hope you will some day find it."

Cayke was grievously disappointed. She began to cry, wiping her eyes on her apron. The King turned to the throng of toy bears surrounding him and asked:

"Has any of you ever seen this golden dishpan before?"

"No," they answered in a chorus.

The King seemed to reflect. Presently he inquired:

"Where is the Little Pink Bear?"

"At home, Your Majesty," was the reply, "Fetch him here," commanded the King.

Several of the bears waddled over to one of the trees and pulled from its hollow a tiny pink bear, smaller than any of the others. A big white bear carried the pink one in his arms and set it down beside the King, arranging the joints of its legs so that it would stand upright.

This Pink Bear seemed lifeless until the King turned a crank which protruded from its side, when the little creature turned its head stiffly from side to side and said in a small shrill voice:

"Hurrah for the King of Bear Center!"

"Very good," said the big Lavender Bear; "he seems to be working very well to-day. Tell me, my Pink Pinkerton, what has become of this lady's jeweled dishpan?"

"U — u — u," said the Pink Bear, and then stopped short.

The King turned the crank again.

"U-g-u the Shoemaker has it," said the Pink Bear.

"Who is Ugu the Shoemaker?" demanded the King, again turning the crank.

"A magician who lives on a mountain in a wickerwork castle," was the reply.

"Where is this mountain?" was the next question.

"Nineteen miles and three furlongs from Bear Center to the northeast."

"And is the dishpan still at the castle of Ugu the Shoemaker?" asked the King.

“It is.”

The King turned to Cayke.

“You may rely on this information,” said he. “The Pink Bear can tell us anything we wish to know, and his words are always words of truth.”

“Is he alive?” asked the Frogman, much interested in the Pink Bear.

“Something animates him — when you turn his crank,” replied the King. “I do not know if it is life, or what it is, or how it happens that the Little Pink Bear can answer correctly every question put to him. We discovered his talent a long time ago and whenever we wish to know anything — which is not very often — we ask the Pink Bear. There is no doubt whatever, madam, that Ugu the Magician has your dishpan, and if you dare go to him you may be able to recover it. But of that I am not certain.”

“Can’t the Pink Bear tell?” asked Cayke anxiously.

"No, for that is in the future. He can tell anything that *has* happened, but nothing that is going to happen. Don't ask me why, for I don't know."

"Well," said the Cookie Cook, after a little thought, "I mean to go to this magician, anyhow, and tell him I want my dishpan. I wish I knew what Ugu the Shoemaker is like."

"Then I'll show him to you," promised the King. "But do not be frightened; it won't be Ugu, remember, but only his image."

With this he waved his metal wand again and in the circle suddenly appeared a thin little man, very old and skinny, who was seated on a wicker stool before a wicker table. On the table lay a Great Book with gold clasps. The Book was open and the man was reading in it. He wore great spectacles,

which were fastened before his eyes by means of a ribbon that passed around his head and was tied in a bow at the back. His hair was very thin and white; his skin, which clung fast to his bones, was brown and seared with furrows; he had a big, fat nose and little eyes set close together.

On no account was Ugu the Shoemaker a pleasant person to gaze at. As his image appeared before them, all were silent and intent until Corporal Waddle, the Brown Bear, became nervous and pulled the trigger of his gun. Instantly the cork flew out of the tin barrel with a loud "pop!" that made them all jump. And, at this sound, the image of the magician vanished.

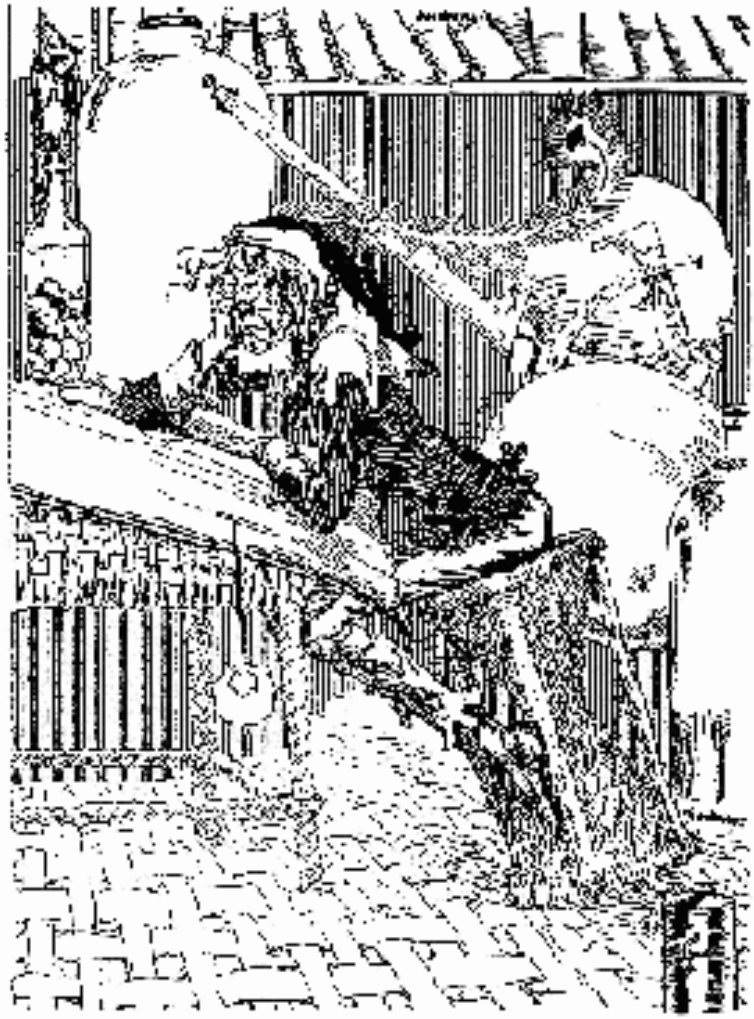
"So! *that's* the thief, is it?" said Cayke, in an angry voice. "I should think he'd be ashamed of himself for stealing a poor woman's diamond dishpan! But I mean to face him in his wicker castle and force him to return my property."

"To me," said the Bear King, reflectively, "he looked like a dangerous person. I hope he won't be so unkind as to argue the matter with you."

The Frogman was much disturbed by the vision of Ugu the Shoemaker, and Cayke's determination to go to the magician filled her companion with misgivings. But he would not break his pledged word to assist the Cookie Cook and after breathing a deep sigh of resignation he asked the King:

"Will Your Majesty lend us this Pink Bear who answers questions, that we may take him with us on our journey? He would be very useful to us and we will promise to bring him safely back to you."

The King did not reply at once; he seemed to be thinking.



"*Please* let us take the Pink Bear," begged Cayke. "I'm sure he would be a great help to us."

"The Pink Bear," said the King, "is the best bit of magic I possess, and there is not another like him in the world. I do not care to let him out of my sight; nor do I wish to disappoint you; so I believe I will make the journey in your company and carry my Pink Bear with me. He can walk, when you wind the other side of him, but so slowly and awkwardly that he would delay you. But if I go along I can carry him in my arms, so I will join your party. Whenever you are ready to start, let me know."

"But — Your Majesty!" exclaimed Corporal Waddle in protest, "I hope you do not intend to let these prisoners escape without punishment."

“Of what crime do you accuse them?” inquired the King.

“Why, they trespassed on your domain, for one thing,” said the Brown Bear.

“We didn’t know it was private property, Your Majesty,” said the Cookie Cook.

“And they asked if any of us had stolen the dishpan!” continued Corporal Waddle indignantly. “That is the same thing as calling us thieves and robbers, and bandits and brigands, is it not?”

“Every person has the right to ask questions,” said the Frogman.

“But the Corporal is quite correct,” declared the Lavender Bear. “I condemn you both to death, the execution to take place ten years from this

hour."

"But we belong in the Land of Oz, where no one ever dies," Cayke reminded him.

"Very true," said the King. "I condemn you to death merely as a matter of form. It sounds quite terrible, and in ten years we shall have forgotten all about it. Are you ready to start for the wicker castle of Ugu the Shoemaker?"

"Quite ready, Your Majesty."

"But who will rule in your place, while you are gone?" asked a big Yellow Bear.

"I myself will rule while I am gone," was the reply. "A King isn't required to stay at home forever, and if he takes a notion to travel, whose business is it but his own? All I ask is that you bears behave yourselves while I am away. If any of you is naughty, I'll send him to some girl or boy in America to play with."

This dreadful threat made all the toy bears look solemn. They assured the King, in a chorus of growls, that they would be good. Then the big Lavender Bear picked up the little Pink Bear and after tucking it carefully under one arm he said "Good-bye till I come back!" and waddled along the path that led through the forest. The Frogman and Cayke the Cookie Cook also said good-bye to the bears and then followed after the King, much to the regret of the little Brown Bear, who pulled the trigger of his gun and popped the cork as a parting salute.

The Meeting

CHAPTER 17

While the Frogman
and his party
were advancing
from the west,

Dorothy and her party were advancing from the east, and so it happened that on the following night they all camped at a little hill that was only a few miles from the wicker castle of Ugu the Shoemaker. But the two parties did not see one another that night, for one camped on one side of the hill while the other camped on the opposite side. But the next morning the Frogman thought he would climb the hill and see what was on top of it, and at the same time Scraps, the Patchwork Girl, also decided to climb the hill to find if the wicker castle was visible from its top. So she stuck her head over an edge just as the Frogman's head appeared over another edge and both, being surprised, kept still while they took a good look at one another.

Scraps recovered from her astonishment first and bounding upward she turned a somersault and landed sitting down and facing the big Frogman, who slowly advanced and sat opposite her.

"Well met, Stranger!" cried the Patchwork Girl, with a whoop of laughter. "You are quite the funniest individual I have seen in all my travels."

"Do you suppose I can be any funnier than you?" asked the Frogman, gazing at her in wonder.

"I'm not funny to myself, you know," returned Scraps. "I wish I were. And perhaps you are so used to your own absurd shape that you do not laugh whenever you see your reflection in a pool, or in a mirror."

"No," said the Frogman gravely, "I do not. I used to be proud of my great size and vain of my culture and education, but since I bathed in the Truth Pond I sometimes think it is not right that I should be different from all other frogs."

"Right or wrong," said the Patchwork Girl, "to be different is to be distinguished. Now, in my case, I'm just like all other Patchwork Girls because I'm the only one there is. But, tell me, where did you come from?"

"The Yip Country," said he.

"Is that in the Land of Oz?"

"Of course," replied the Frogman.

"And do you know that your Ruler, Ozma of Oz, has been stolen?"

"I was not aware that I had a Ruler, so of course I couldn't know that she was stolen."

"Well, you have. All the people of Oz," explained Scraps, "are ruled by

Ozma, whether they know it or not. And she has been stolen. Aren't you angry? Aren't you indignant? Your Ruler, whom you didn't know you had, has positively been stolen!"

"That is queer," remarked the Frogman thoughtfully. "Stealing is a thing practically unknown in Oz, yet this Ozma has been taken and a friend of mine has also had her dishpan stolen. With her I have traveled all the way from the Yip Country in order to recover it."

"I don't see any connection between a Royal Ruler of Oz and a dishpan!" declared Scraps.

"They've both been stolen, haven't they?"

"True. But why can't your friend wash her dishes in another dishpan?"

asked Scraps.

"Why can't you use another Royal Ruler? I suppose you prefer the one who is lost, and my friend wants her own dishpan, which is made of gold and studded with diamonds and has magic powers."

"Magic, eh?" exclaimed Scraps. "*There* is a link that connects the two steals, anyhow, for it seems that all the magic in the Land of Oz was stolen at the same time, whether it was in the Emerald City or in Glinda's castle or in the Yip Country. Seems mighty strange and mysterious, doesn't it?"

"It used to seem that way to us," admitted the Frogman, "but we have now discovered who took our dishpan. It was Ugu the Shoemaker."

"Ugu? Good gracious! That's the same magician we think has stolen Ozma. We are now on our way to the castle of this Shoemaker."

"So are we," said the Frogman.

"Then follow me, quick! and let me introduce you to Dorothy and the other girls and to the Wizard of Oz and all the rest of us."

She sprang up and seized his coat-sleeve, dragging him off the hilltop and down the other side from that whence he had come. And at the foot of the hill the Frogman was astonished to find the three girls and the Wizard and Button-Bright, who were surrounded by a wooden Sawhorse, a lean Mule, a square Woozy and a Cowardly Lion. A little black dog ran up and smelled at the Frogman, but couldn't growl at him.

"I've discovered another party that has been robbed," shouted Scraps as she joined them. "This is their leader and they're all going to Ugu's castle to fight the wicked Shoemaker!"

They regarded the Frogman with much curiosity and interest and, finding all eyes fixed upon him, the newcomer arranged his necktie and smoothed his

beautiful vest and swung his gold-headed cane like a regular dandy. The big spectacles over his eyes quite altered his froglike countenance and gave him a learned and impressive look. Used as she was to seeing strange creatures in the Land of Oz, Dorothy was amazed at discovering the Frogman. So were all her companions. Toto wanted to growl at him, but couldn't, and he didn't dare bark. The Sawhorse snorted rather contemptuously, but the Lion whispered to the wooden steed: "Bear with this strange creature, my friend, and remember he is no more extraordinary than you are. Indeed, it is more natural for a frog to be big than for a Sawhorse to be alive."

On being questioned, the Frogman told them the whole story of the loss of Cayke's highly prized dishpan and their adventures in search of it. When he came to tell of the Lavender Bear King and of the Little Pink Bear who could tell anything you wanted to know, his hearers became eager to see such interesting animals.

"It will be best," said the Wizard, "to unite our two parties and share our fortunes together, for we are all bound on the same errand and as one band we may more easily defy this shoemaker magician than if separate. Let us be allies."

"I will ask my friends about that," replied the Frogman, and climbed over the hill to find Cayke and the toy bears. The Patchwork Girl accompanied him and when they came upon the Cookie Cook and the Lavender Bear and the Pink Bear it was hard to tell which of the lot was the most surprised.

"Mercy me!" cried Cayke, addressing the Patchwork Girl. "However did you come alive?"

Scraps stared at the bears.

"Mercy me!" she echoed; "you are stuffed, as I am, with cotton, and yet you appear to be living. That makes me feel ashamed, for I have prided myself on being the only live cotton-stuffed person in Oz."

"Perhaps you are," returned the Lavender Bear, "for I am stuffed with extra-quality curled hair, and so is the Little Pink Bear."

"You have relieved my mind of a great anxiety," declared the Patchwork Girl, now speaking more cheerfully. "The Scarecrow is stuffed with straw, and you with hair, so I am still the Original and Only Cotton-Stuffed!"

"I hope I am too polite to criticize cotton, as compared with curled hair," said the King, "especially as you seem satisfied with it."

Then the Frogman told of his interview with the party from the Emerald City and added that the Wizard of Oz had invited the bears and Cayke and himself to travel in company with them to the castle of Ugu the Shoemaker. Cayke was much pleased, but the Bear King looked solemn. He set the Little Pink Bear on his lap and turned the crank in its side and asked:

“Is it safe for us to associate with those people from the Emerald City?”

And the Pink Bear at once replied:

“Safe for you and safe for me;
Perhaps no others safe will be.”

“That ‘perhaps’ need not worry us,” said the King; “so let us join the others and offer them our protection.”

Even the Lavender Bear was astonished, however, when on climbing over the hill he found on the other side the group of queer animals and the people from the Emerald City. The bears and Cayke were received very cordially, although Button-Bright was cross when they wouldn’t let him play with the Little Pink Bear. The three girls greatly admired the toy bears, and especially the pink one, which they longed to hold.

“You see,” explained the Lavender King, in denying them this privilege, “he’s a very valuable bear, because his magic is a correct guide on all occasions, and especially if one is in difficulties. It was the Pink Bear who told us that Ugu the Shoemaker had stolen the Cookie Cook’s dishpan.”

“And the King’s magic is just as wonderful,” added Cayke, “because it showed us the Magician himself.”

“What did he look like?” inquired Dorothy.

“He was dreadful!”

“He was sitting at a table and examining an immense Book which had three golden clasps,” remarked the King.

“Why, that must have been Glinda’s Great Book of Records!” exclaimed Dorothy. “If it is, it proves that Ugu the Shoemaker stole Ozma, and with her all the magic in the Emerald City.”

“And my dishpan,” said Cayke. And the Wizard added:

“It also proves that he is following our adventures in the Book of Records, and therefore knows that we are seeking him and that we are determined to find him and rescue Ozma at all hazards.”

“If we can,” added the Woozy, but everybody frowned at him.

The Wizard’s statement was so true that the faces around him were very serious until the Patchwork Girl broke into a peal of laughter.

“Wouldn’t it be a rich joke if he made prisoners of *us*, too?” she said.

“No one but a crazy Patchwork Girl would consider *that* a joke,” grumbled Button-Bright. And then the Lavender Bear King asked:

“Would you like to see this magical shoemaker?”

“Wouldn’t he know it?” Dorothy inquired.

"No, I think not."

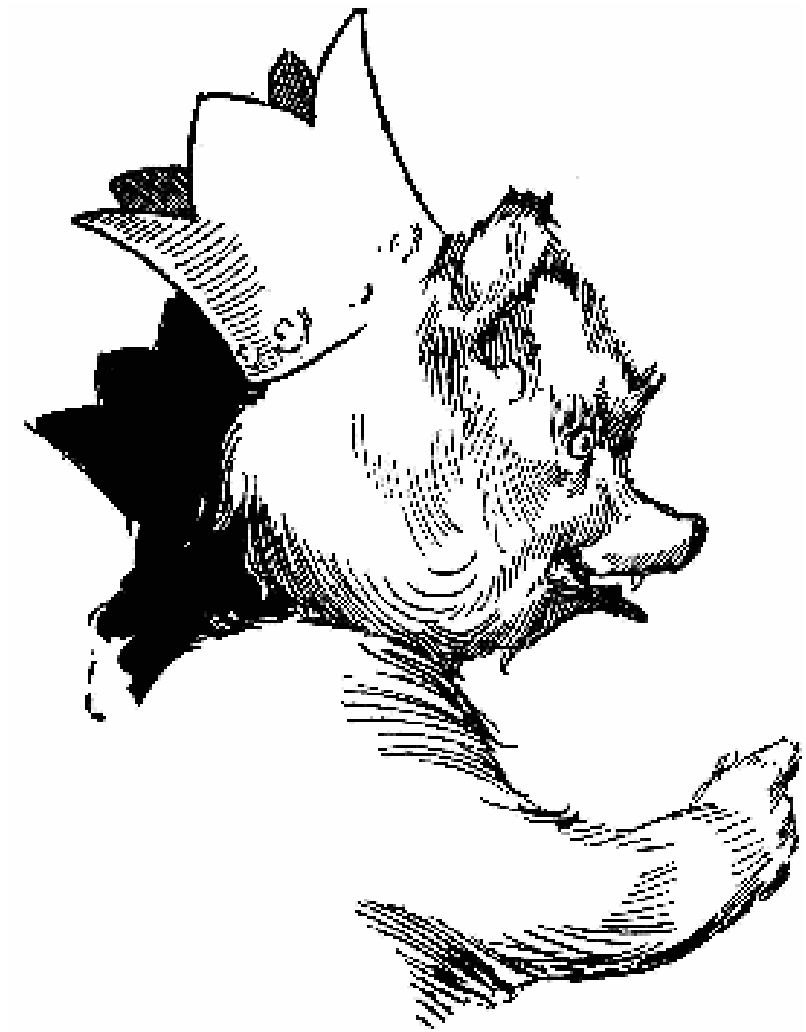
Then the King waved his metal wand and before them appeared a room in the wicker castle of Ugu. On the wall of the room hung Ozma's Magic Picture, and seated before it was the Magician. They could see the Picture as well as he could, because it faced them, and in the Picture was the hillside where they were now sitting, all their forms being reproduced in miniature. And, curiously enough, within the scene of the Picture was the scene they were now beholding, so they knew that the Magician was at this moment watching them in the Picture, and also that he saw himself and the room he was in become visible to the people on the hillside. Therefore he knew very well that they were watching him while he was watching them.

In proof of this, Ugu sprang from his seat and turned a scowling face in their direction; but now he could not see the travelers who were seeking him, although they could still see him. His actions were so distinct, indeed, that it seemed he was actually before them.

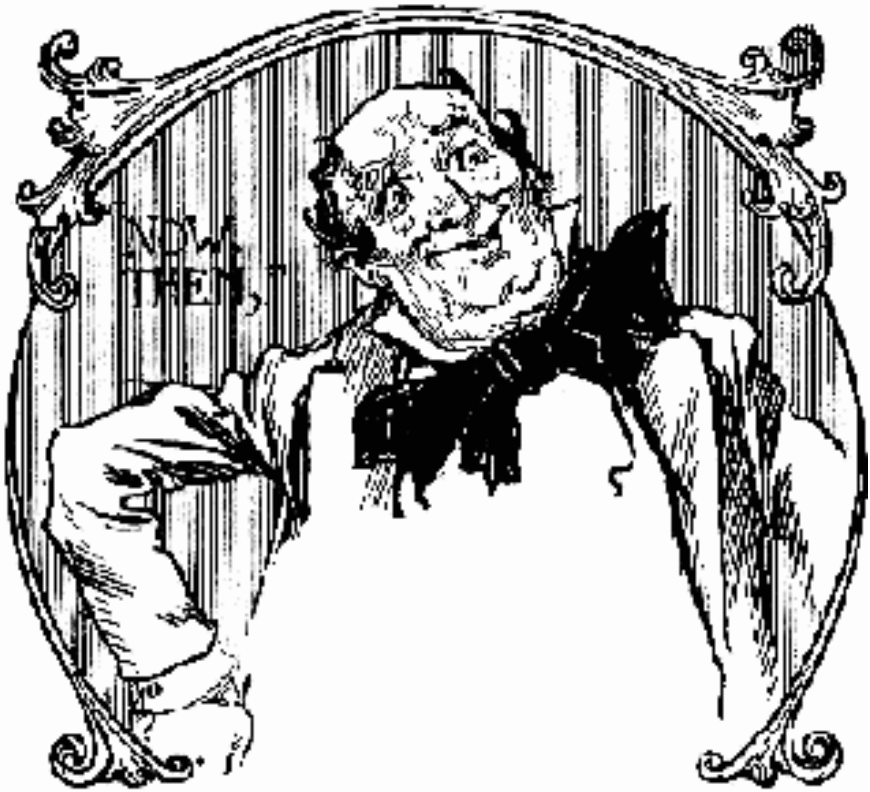
"It is only a ghost," said the Bear King. "It isn't real at all, except that it shows us Ugu just as he looks and tells us truly just what he is doing."

"I don't see anything of my lost growl, though," said Toto, as if to himself.

Then the vision faded away and they could see nothing but the grass and trees and bushes around them.



The Conference



CHAPTER 18

"Now, then," said the Wizard, "let us talk this matter over and decide what to do when we get to Ugu's wicker castle. There can be no doubt that the Shoemaker is a powerful Magician, and his powers have been increased a hundredfold since he secured the Great Book of Records, the Magic Picture, all of Glinda's recipes for sorcery and my own black bag — which was full of tools of wizardry. The man who could rob us of those things, and the man with all their powers at his command, is one who may prove somewhat difficult to conquer; therefore we should plan our actions well before we venture too near to his castle."

"I didn't see Ozma in the Magic Picture," said Trot. "What do you suppose Ugu has done with her?"

"Couldn't the Little Pink Bear tell us what he did with Ozma?" asked Button-Bright.

"To be sure," replied the Lavender King; "I'll ask him."

So he turned the crank in the Little Pink Bear's side and inquired:

"Did Ugu the Shoemaker steal Ozma of Oz?"

"Yes," answered the Little Pink Bear.

"Then what did he do with her?" asked the King.

"Shut her up in a dark place," answered the Little Pink Bear.

"Oh, that must be a dungeon cell!" cried Dorothy, horrified. "How dreadful!"

"Well, we must get her out of it," said the Wizard. "That is what we came for and of course we must rescue Ozma. But — how?"

Each one looked at some other one for an answer and all shook their heads in a grave and dismal manner. All but Scraps, who danced around them gleefully.

"You're afraid," said the Patchwork Girl, "because so many things can hurt your meat bodies. Why don't you give it up and go home? How can you fight a great magician when you have nothing to fight with?"

Dorothy looked at her reflectively.

"Scraps," said she, "you know that Ugu couldn't hurt you, a bit, whatever he did; nor could he hurt me, 'cause I wear the Nome King's Magic Belt. S'pose just we two go on together, and leave the others here to wait for us?"

"No, no!" said the Wizard positively. "That won't do at all. Ozma is more powerful than either of you, yet she could not defeat the wicked Ugu, who

has shut her up in a dungeon. We must go to the Shoemaker in one mighty band, for only in union is there strength."

"That is excellent advice," said the Lavender Bear, approvingly.

"But what can we do, when we get to Ugu?" inquired the Cookie Cook anxiously.

"Do not expect a prompt answer to that important question," replied the Wizard, "for we must first plan our line of conduct. Ugu knows, of course, that we are after him, for he has seen our approach in the Magic Picture, and he has read of all we have done up to the present moment in the Great Book of Records. Therefore we cannot expect to take him by surprise."

"Don't you suppose Ugu would listen to reason?" asked Betsy. "If we explained to him how wicked he has been, don't you think he'd let poor Ozma go?"

"And give me back my dishpan?" added the Cookie Cook eagerly.

"Yes, yes; won't he say he's sorry and get on his knees and beg our pardon?" cried Scraps, turning a flip-flop to show her scorn of the suggestion. "When Ugu the Shoemaker does that, please knock at the front door and let me know."

The Wizard sighed and rubbed his bald head with a puzzled air.

"I'm quite sure Ugu will not be polite to us," said he, "so we must conquer this cruel magician by force, much as we dislike to be rude to anyone. But none of you has yet suggested a way to do that. Couldn't the Little Pink Bear tell us how?" he asked, turning to the Bear King.

"No, for that is something that is *going* to happen," replied the Lavender Bear. "He can only tell us what already *has* happened."

Again they were grave and thoughtful. But after a time Betsy said in a hesitating voice:

"Hank is a great fighter; perhaps *he* could conquer the magician."

The Mule turned his head to look reproachfully at his old friend, the young girl.

"Who can fight against magic?" he asked.

"The Cowardly Lion could," said Dorothy.

The Lion, who was lying with his front legs spread out, his chin on his paws, raised his shaggy head.

"I can fight when I'm not afraid," said he calmly; "but the mere mention of a fight sets me to trembling."

"Ugu's magic couldn't hurt the Sawhorse," suggested tiny Trot.

"And the Sawhorse couldn't hurt the Magician," declared that wooden animal.

"For my part," said Toto, "I am helpless, having lost my growl."

“Then,” said Cayke the Cookie Cook, “we must depend upon the Frogman. His marvelous wisdom will surely inform him how to conquer the wicked Magician and restore to me my dishpan.”

All eyes were now turned questioningly upon the Frogman. Finding himself the center of observation, he swung his gold-headed cane, adjusted his big spectacles and after swelling out his chest, sighed and said in a modest tone of voice:

“Respect for truth obliges me to confess that Cayke is mistaken in regard to my superior wisdom. I am not very wise. Neither have I had any practical experience in conquering magicians. But let us consider this case. What is Ugu, and what is a magician? Ugu is a renegade shoemaker and a magician is an ordinary man who, having learned how to do magical tricks, considers himself above his fellows. In this case, the Shoemaker has been naughty enough to steal a lot of magical tools and things that did not belong to him, and it is more wicked to steal than to be a magician. Yet, with all the arts at his command, Ugu is still a man, and surely there are ways in which a man may be conquered. How, do you say, how? Allow me to state that I don’t know. In my judgment we cannot decide how best to act until we get to Ugu’s castle. So let us go to it and take a look at it. After that we may discover an idea that will guide us to victory.”

“That may not be a wise speech, but it sounds good,” said Dorothy approvingly. “Ugu the Shoemaker is not only a common man, but he’s a wicked man and a cruel man and deserves to be conquered. We mustn’t have any mercy on him till Ozma is set free. So let’s go to his castle, as the Frogman says, and see what the place looks like.”

No one offered an objection to this plan and so it was adopted. They broke camp and were about to start on the journey to Ugu’s castle when they discovered that Button-Bright was lost again. The girls and the Wizard shouted his name and the Lion roared and the Donkey brayed and the Frogman croaked and the Big Lavender Bear growled (to the envy of Toto, who couldn’t growl but barked his loudest) yet none of them could make Button-Bright hear. So, after vainly searching for the boy a full hour, they formed a procession and proceeded in the direction of the wicker castle of Ugu the Shoemaker.

“Button-Bright’s always getting lost,” said Dorothy. “And, if he wasn’t always getting found again, I’d prob’ly worry. He may have gone ahead of us, and he may have gone back; but, wherever he is, we’ll find him sometime and somewhere, I’m almost sure.”

Ugu the Shoemaker

CHAPTER 19

A curious thing
about Ugu the
Shoemaker was
that he didn't suspect,
in the least, that he was wicked. He wanted to be powerful and great and he hoped to make himself master of all the Land of Oz, that he might compel everyone in that fairy country to obey him. His ambition blinded him to the rights of others and he imagined anyone else would act just as he did if anyone else happened to be as clever as himself.

When he inhabited his little shoemaking shop in the City of Herku he had been discontented, for a shoemaker is not looked upon with high respect and Ugu knew that his ancestors had been famous magicians for many centuries past and therefore his family was above the ordinary. Even his father practiced magic, when Ugu was a boy; but his father had wandered away from Herku and had never come back again. So, when Ugu grew up, he was forced to make shoes for a living, knowing nothing of the magic of his forefathers. But one day, in searching through the attic of his house, he discovered all the books of magical recipes and many magical instruments which had formerly been in use in his family. From that day he stopped making shoes and began to study magic. Finally he aspired to become the greatest magician in Oz, and for days and weeks and months he thought on a plan to render all the other sorcerers and wizards, as well as those with fairy powers, helpless to oppose him.

From the books of his ancestors he learned the following facts:

(1) That Ozma of Oz was the fairy ruler of the Emerald City and the Land of Oz, and that she could not be destroyed by any magic ever devised. Also, by means of her Magic Picture she would be able to discover anyone who approached her royal palace with the idea of conquering it.

(2) That Glinda the Good was the most powerful Sorceress in Oz, among her other magical possessions being the Great Book of Records, which told her all that happened anywhere in the world. This Book of Records was very dangerous to Ugu's plans and Glinda was in the service of Ozma and would use her arts of sorcery to protect the girl Ruler.

(3) That the Wizard of Oz, who lived in Ozma's palace, had been taught much powerful magic by Glinda and had a bag of magic tools with which he might be able to conquer the Shoemaker.

(4) That there existed in Oz — in the Yip Country — a jeweled dishpan made of gold, which dishpan possessed marvelous powers of magic. At a

magic word, which Ugu learned from the book, the dishpan would grow large enough for a man to sit inside it. Then, when he grasped both the golden handles, the dishpan would transport him in an instant to any place he wished to go within the borders of the Land of Oz.

No one now living, except Ugu, knew of the powers of this Magic Dishpan; so, after long study, the shoemaker decided that if he could manage to secure the dishpan he could, by its means, rob Ozma and Glinda and the Wizard of Oz of all their magic, thus becoming himself the most powerful person in all the land.

His first act was to go away from the City of Herku and build for himself the Wicker Castle in the hills. Here he carried his books and instruments of magic and here for a full year he diligently practiced all the magical arts learned from his ancestors. At the end of that time he could do a good many wonderful things.

Then, when all his preparations were made, he set out for the Yip Country and climbing the steep mountain at night he entered the house of Cayke the Cookie Cook and stole her diamond-studded gold dishpan while all the Yips were asleep. Taking his prize outside, he set the pan upon the ground and uttered the required magic word. Instantly the dishpan grew as large as a big washtub and Ugu seated himself in it and grasped the two handles. Then he wished himself in the great drawing-room of Glinda the Good.

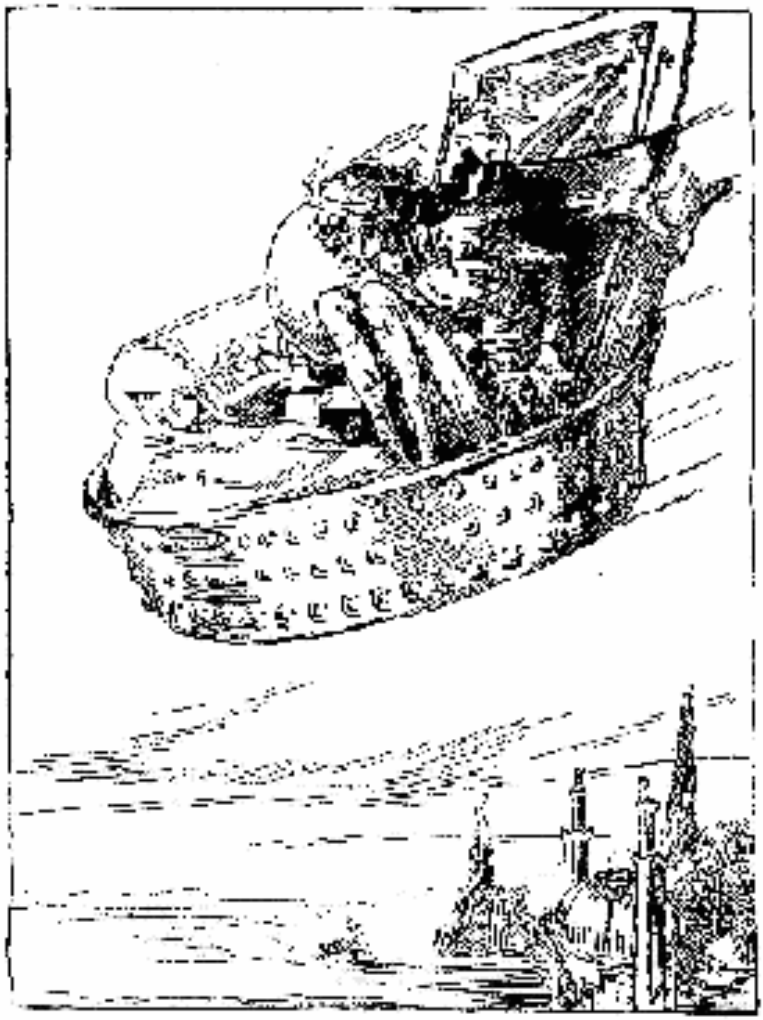
He was there in a flash. First he took the Great Book of Records and put it in the dishpan. Then he went to Glinda's laboratory and took all her rare chemical compounds and her instruments of sorcery, placing these also in the dishpan, which he caused to grow large enough to hold them. Next he seated himself amongst the treasures he had stolen and wished himself in the room in Ozma's palace which the Wizard occupied and where he kept his bag of magic tools. This bag Ugu added to his plunder and then wished himself in the apartments of Ozma.

Here he first took the Magic Picture from the wall and then seized all the other magical things which Ozma possessed. Having placed these in the dishpan he was about to climb in himself when he looked up and saw Ozma standing beside him. Her fairy instinct had warned her that danger was threatening her, so the beautiful girl Ruler rose from her couch and leaving her bedchamber at once confronted the thief.

Ugu had to think quickly, for he realized that if he permitted Ozma to rouse the inmates of her palace all his plans and his present successes were likely to come to naught. So he threw a scarf over the girl's head, so she could not scream, and pushed her into the dishpan and tied her fast, so she could not move. Then he climbed in beside her and wished himself in his

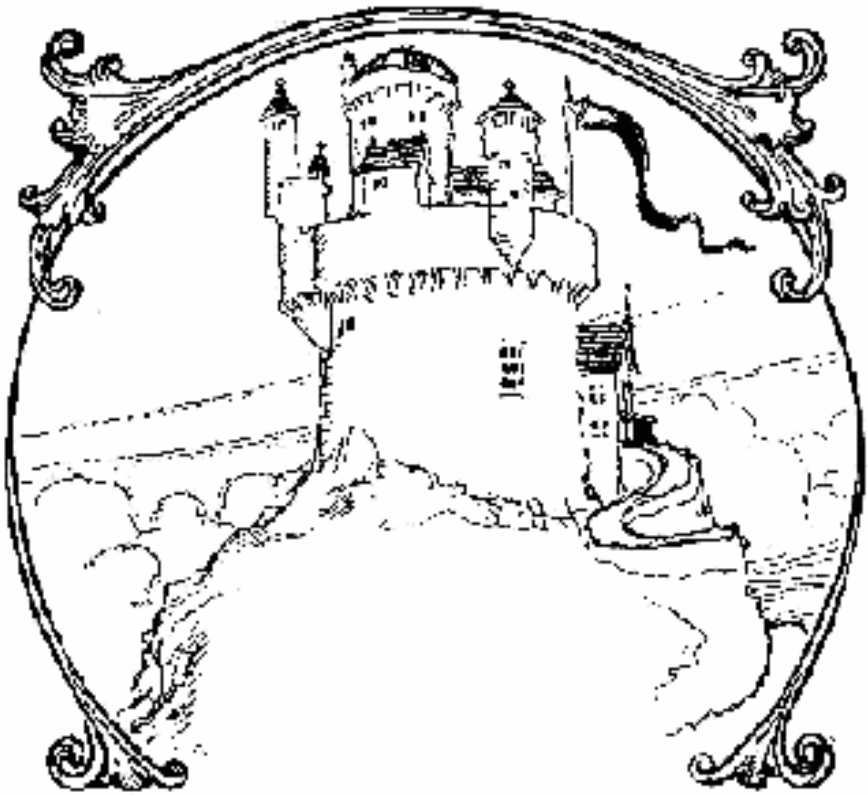
own wicker castle. The Magic Dishpan was there in an instant, with all its contents, and Ugu rubbed his hands together in triumphant joy as he realized that he now possessed all the important magic in the Land of Oz and could force all the inhabitants of that fairyland to do as he willed.

So quickly had his journey been accomplished that before daylight the robber magician had locked Ozma in a room, making her a prisoner, and had unpacked and arranged all his stolen goods. The next day he placed the Book of Records on his table and hung the Magic Picture on his wall and put away in his cupboards and drawers all the elixirs and magic compounds he had stolen. The magical instruments he polished and arranged, and this was fascinating work and made him very happy. The only thing that bothered him was Ozma. By turns the imprisoned Ruler wept and scolded the Shoemaker, haughtily threatening him with dire punishment for the wicked deeds he had done. Ugu became somewhat afraid of his fairy prisoner, in spite of the fact that he believed he had robbed her of all her powers; so he performed an enchantment that quickly disposed of her and placed her out of his sight and hearing. After that, being occupied with other things, he soon forgot her.



But now, when he looked into the Magic Picture and read the Great Book of Records, the Shoemaker learned that his wickedness was not to go unchallenged. Two important expeditions had set out to find him and force him to give up his stolen property. One was the party headed by the Wizard and Dorothy, while the other consisted of Cayke and the Frogman. Others were also searching, but not in the right places. These two groups, however, were headed straight for the wicker castle and so Ugu began to plan how best to meet them and to defeat their efforts to conquer him.

More Surprises



CHAPTER 20

All that first day after the union of the two parties our friends marched steadily toward the wicker castle of Ugu the Shoemaker. When night came they camped in a little grove and passed a pleasant evening together, although some of them were worried because Button-Bright was still lost.

"Perhaps," said Toto, as the animals lay grouped together for the night, "this Shoemaker who stole my growl, and who stole Ozma, has also stolen Button-Bright."

"How do you know that the Shoemaker stole your growl?" demanded the Woozy.

"He has stolen about everything else of value in Oz, hasn't he?" replied the dog.

"He has stolen everything he wants, perhaps," agreed the Lion; "but what could anyone want with your growl?"

"Well," said the dog, wagging his tail slowly, "my recollection is that it was a wonderful growl, soft and low and — and — "

"And ragged at the edges," said the Sawhorse.

"So," continued Toto, "if that magician hadn't any growl of his own, he might have wanted mine and stolen it."

"And, if he has, he will soon wish he hadn't," remarked the Mule. "Also, if he has stolen Button-Bright he will be sorry."

"Don't you like Button-Bright, then?" asked the Lion in surprise.

"It isn't a question of liking him," replied the Mule. "It's a question of watching him and looking after him. Any boy who causes his friends so much worry isn't worth having around. *I* never get lost."

"If you did," said Toto, "no one would worry a bit. I think Button-Bright is a very lucky boy, because he always gets found."

"See here," said the Lion, "this chatter is keeping us all awake and tomorrow is likely to be a busy day. Go to sleep and forget your quarrels."

"Friend Lion," retorted the dog, "if I hadn't lost my growl you would hear it now. I have as much right to talk as you have to sleep."

The Lion sighed.

"If only you had lost your voice, when you lost your growl," said he, "you would be a more agreeable companion."

But they quieted down, after that, and soon the entire camp was wrapped in slumber.

Next morning they made an early start but had hardly proceeded on their way an hour when, on climbing a slight elevation, they beheld in the distance a low mountain, on top of which stood Ugu's wicker castle. It was a good-sized building and rather pretty because the sides, roofs and domes were all of wicker closely woven, as it is in fine baskets.

"I wonder if it is strong?" said Dorothy musingly, as she eyed the queer castle.

"I suppose it is, since a magician built it," answered the Wizard. "With magic to protect it, even a paper castle might be as strong as if made of stone. This Ugu must be a man of ideas, because he does things in a different way from other people."

"Yes; no one else would steal our dear Ozma," sighed tiny Trot.

"I wonder if Ozma is there?" said Betsy, indicating the castle with a nod of her head.

"Where else could she be?" asked Scraps.

"S'pose we ask the Pink Bear," suggested Dorothy.

That seemed a good idea, so they halted the procession and the Bear King held the little Pink Bear on his lap and turned the crank in its side and asked:

"Where is Ozma of Oz?"

And the little Pink Bear answered:

"She is in a hole in the ground, a half mile away, at your left."

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy. "Then she is not in Ugu's castle at all."

"It is lucky we asked that question," said the Wizard; "for, if we can find Ozma and rescue her, there will be no need for us to fight that wicked and dangerous magician."

"Indeed!" said Cayke. "Then what about my dishpan?"

The Wizard looked puzzled at her tone of remonstrance, so she added:

"Didn't you people from the Emerald City promise that we would all stick together, and that you would help me to get my dishpan if I would help you to get your Ozma? And didn't I bring to you the little Pink Bear, which has told you where Ozma is hidden?"

"She's right," said Dorothy to the Wizard. "We must do as we agreed."

"Well, first of all, let us go and rescue Ozma," proposed the Wizard. "Then our beloved Ruler may be able to advise us how to conquer Ugu the Shoemaker."

So they turned to the left and marched for half a mile until they came to a small but deep hole in the ground. At once all rushed to the brim to peer into the hole, but instead of finding there Princess Ozma of Oz, all that they saw was Button-Bright, who was lying asleep on the bottom.

Their cries soon wakened the boy, who sat up and rubbed his eyes. When

he recognized his friends he smiled sweetly, saying: “Found again!”

“Where is Ozma?” inquired Dorothy anxiously.

“I don’t know,” answered Button-Bright from the depths of the hole. “I got lost, yesterday, as you may remember, and in the night, while I was wandering around in the moonlight, trying to find my way back to you, I suddenly fell into this hole.”

“And wasn’t Ozma in it then?”

“There was no one in it but me, and I was sorry it wasn’t entirely empty. The sides are so steep I can’t climb out, so there was nothing to be done but sleep until someone found me. Thank you for coming. If you’ll please let down a rope I’ll empty this hole in a hurry.”

“How strange!” said Dorothy, greatly disappointed. “It’s evident the Pink Bear didn’t tell us the truth.”

“He never makes a mistake,” declared the Lavender Bear King, in a tone that showed his feelings were hurt. And then he turned the crank of the little Pink Bear again and asked: “Is this the hole that Ozma of Oz is in?”

“Yes,” answered the Pink Bear.

“That settles it,” said the King, positively. “Your Ozma is in this hole in the ground.”

“Don’t be silly,” returned Dorothy impatiently. “Even your beady eyes can see there is no one in the hole but Button-Bright.”

“Perhaps Button-Bright is Ozma,” suggested the King.

"And perhaps he isn't! Ozma is a girl, and Button-Bright is a boy."

"Your Pink Bear must be out of order," said the Wizard; "for, this time at least, his machinery has caused him to make an untrue statement."

The Bear King was so angry at this remark that he turned away, holding the Pink Bear in his paws, and refused to discuss the matter in any further way.

"At any rate," said the Frogman, "the Pink Bear has led us to your boy friend and so enabled you to rescue him."

Scraps was leaning so far over the hole, trying to find Ozma in it, that suddenly she lost her balance and pitched in headforemost. She fell upon Button-Bright and tumbled him over, but he was not hurt by her soft stuffed

body and only laughed at the mishap. The Wizard buckled some straps together and let one end of them down into the hole, and soon both Scraps and the boy had climbed up and were standing safely beside the others.

They looked once more for Ozma, but the hole was now absolutely vacant. It was a round hole, so from the top they could plainly see every part of it. Before they left the place Dorothy went to the Bear King and said:

"I'm sorry we couldn't believe what the little Pink Bear said, 'cause we don't want to make you feel bad by doubting him. There must be a mistake, somewhere, and we prob'ly don't understand just what the little Pink Bear means. Will you let me ask him one more question?"

The Lavender Bear King was a good-natured bear, considering how he

was made and stuffed and jointed, so he accepted Dorothy's apology and turned the crank and allowed the little girl to question his wee Pink Bear.

"Is Ozma *really* in this hole?" asked Dorothy.

"No," said the little Pink Bear.

This surprised everybody. Even the Bear King was now puzzled by the contradictory statements of his oracle.

"Where *is* she?" asked the King.

"Here, among you," answered the little Pink Bear.

"Well," said Dorothy, "this beats me, entirely! I guess the little Pink Bear has gone crazy."

"Perhaps," called Scraps, who was rapidly turning "cart-wheels" all around the perplexed group, "Ozma is invisible."

"Of course!" cried Betsy. "That would account for it."

"Well, I've noticed that people can speak, even when they've been made invisible," said the Wizard. And then he looked all around him and said in a solemn voice: "Ozma, are you here?"

There was no reply. Dorothy asked the question, too, and so did Button-Bright and Trot and Betsy; but none received any reply at all.

"It's strange — it's terrible strange!" muttered Cayke the Cookie Cook. "I was sure that the little Pink Bear always tells the truth."

"I still believe in his honesty," said the Frogman, and this tribute so pleased the Bear King that he gave these last speakers grateful looks, but still gazed sourly on the others.

"Come to think of it," remarked the Wizard, "Ozma couldn't be invisible, for she is a fairy and fairies cannot be made invisible against their will. Of course she could be imprisoned by the magician, or even enchanted, or transformed, in spite of her fairy powers; but Ugu could not render her invisible by any magic at his command."

"I wonder if she's been transformed into Button-Bright?" said Dorothy nervously. Then she looked steadily at the boy and asked: "Are you Ozma? Tell me truly!"

Button-Bright laughed.

"You're getting rattled, Dorothy," he replied. "Nothing ever enchants *me*. If I were Ozma, do you think I'd have tumbled into that hole?"

"Anyhow," said the Wizard, "Ozma would never try to deceive her friends, or prevent them from recognizing her, in whatever form she happened to be. The puzzle is still a puzzle, so let us go on to the wicker castle and question the magician himself. Since it was he who stole our Ozma, Ugu is the one who must tell us where to find her."

Magic Against Magic

CHAPTER 21

The Wizard's advice was good, so again they started in the direction of the low mountain on the crest of which the wicker castle had been built. They had been gradually advancing up hill, so now the elevation seemed to them more like a round knoll than a mountain-top. However, the sides of the knoll were sloping and covered with green grass, so there was a stiff climb before them yet.

Undaunted, they plodded on and had almost reached the knoll when they suddenly observed that it was surrounded by a circle of flame. At first the flames barely rose above the ground, but presently they grew higher and higher until a circle of flaming tongues of fire taller than any of their heads quite surrounded the hill on which the wicker castle stood. When they approached the flames the heat was so intense that it drove them back again.

"This will never do for me!" exclaimed the Patchwork Girl. "I catch fire very easily."

"It won't do for me, either," grumbled the Sawhorse, prancing to the rear.

"I also object strongly to fire," said the Bear King, following the Sawhorse to a safe distance and hugging the little Pink Bear with his paws.

"I suppose the foolish Shoemaker imagines these blazes will stop us," remarked the Wizard, with a smile of scorn for Ugu. "But I am able to inform you that this is merely a simple magic trick which the robber stole from Glinda the Good, and by good fortune I know how to destroy these flames, as well as how to produce them. Will some one of you kindly give me a match?"

You may be sure the girls carried no matches, nor did the Frogman or Cayke or any of the animals. But Button-Bright, after searching carefully through his pockets, which contained all sorts of useful and useless things, finally produced a match and handed it to the Wizard, who tied it to the end of a branch which he tore from a small tree growing near them. Then the little Wizard carefully lighted the match and running forward thrust it into the nearest flame. Instantly the circle of fire began to die away and soon vanished completely, leaving the way clear for them to proceed.

"That was funny!" laughed Button-Bright.

"Yes," agreed the Wizard, "it seems odd that a little match could destroy such a great circle of fire, but when Glinda invented this trick she believed no one would ever think of a match being a remedy for fire. I suppose even Ugu

doesn't know how we managed to quench the flames of his barrier, for only Glinda and I know the secret. Glinda's Book of Magic, which Ugu stole, told how to make the flames, but not how to put them out."

They now formed in marching order and proceeded to advance up the slope of the hill; but had not gone far when before them rose a wall of steel, the surface of which was thickly covered with sharp, gleaming points resembling daggers. The wall completely surrounded the wicker castle and its sharp points prevented anyone from climbing it. Even the Patchwork Girl might be ripped to pieces if she dared attempt it.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Wizard cheerfully, "Ugu is now using one of my own tricks against me. But this is more serious than the Barrier of Fire,

because the only way to destroy the wall is to get on the other side of it."

"How can that be done?" asked Dorothy.

The Wizard looked thoughtfully around his little party and his face grew troubled.

"It's a pretty high wall," he sadly remarked. "I'm pretty sure the Cowardly Lion could not leap over it."

"I'm sure of that, too!" said the Lion with a shudder of fear. "If I foolishly tried such a leap I would be caught on those dreadful spikes."

"I think I could do it, sir," said the Frogman, with a bow to the Wizard. "It is an up-hill jump, as well as being a high jump, but I'm considered something of a jumper by my friends in the Yip Country and I believe a good strong leap will carry me to the other side."

"I'm sure it would," agreed the Cookie Cook.

"Leaping, you know, is a froglike accomplishment," continued the Frogman, modestly, "but please tell me what I am to do when I reach the other side of the wall."

"You're a brave creature," said the Wizard, admiringly. "Has anyone a pin?"

Betsy had one, which she gave him.

"All you need do," said the Wizard to the Frogman, giving him the pin, "is to stick this into the other side of the wall."

"But the wall is of steel!" exclaimed the big frog.

"I know; at least, it *seems* to be steel; but do as I tell you. Stick the pin into the wall and it will disappear."

The Frogman took off his handsome coat and carefully folded it and laid it on the grass. Then he removed his hat and laid it, together with his gold-headed cane, beside the coat. He then went back a way and made three powerful leaps, in rapid succession. The first two leaps took him to the wall and the third leap carried him well over it, to the amazement of all. For a short time he disappeared from their view, but when he had obeyed the Wizard's injunction and had thrust the pin into the wall, the huge barrier vanished and showed them the form of the Frogman, who now went to where his coat lay and put it on again.

"We thank you very much," said the delighted Wizard. "That was the most wonderful leap I ever saw and it has saved us from defeat by our enemy. Let us now hurry on to the castle before Ugu the Shoemaker thinks of some other means to stop us."

"We must have surprised him, so far," declared Dorothy.

"Yes, indeed. The fellow knows a lot of magic — all of our tricks and some of his own," replied the Wizard. "So, if he is half as clever as he ought

to be, we shall have trouble with him yet."

He had scarcely spoken these words when out from the gates of the wicker castle marched a regiment of soldiers, clad in gay uniforms and all bearing long, pointed spears and sharp battle-axes. These soldiers were girls, and the uniforms were short skirts of yellow and black satin, golden shoes, bands of gold across their foreheads and necklaces of glittering jewels. Their jackets were scarlet, braided with silver cords. There were hundreds of these girl-soldiers, and they were more terrible than beautiful, being strong and fierce in appearance. They formed a circle all around the castle and faced outward, their spears pointed toward the invaders and their battle-axes held over their shoulders, ready to strike.

Of course our friends halted at once, for they had not expected this dreadful array of soldiery. The Wizard seemed puzzled and his companions exchanged discouraged looks.

"I'd no idea Ugu had such an army as that," said Dorothy. "The castle doesn't look big enough to hold them all."

"It isn't," declared the Wizard.

"But they all marched out of it."

"They seemed to; but I don't believe it is a real army at all. If Ugu the Shoemaker had so many people living with him, I'm sure the Czarover of Herku would have mentioned the fact to us."

"They're only girls!" laughed Scraps.

"Girls are the fiercest soldiers of all," declared the Frogman. "They are more brave than men and they have better nerves. That is probably why the magician uses them for soldiers and has sent them to oppose us."

No one argued this statement, for all were staring hard at the line of soldiers, which now, having taken a defiant position, remained motionless.

"Here is a trick of magic new to me," admitted the Wizard, after a time. "I do not believe the army is real, but the spears may be sharp enough to prick us, nevertheless, so we must be cautious. Let us take time to consider how to meet this difficulty."

While they were thinking it over Scraps danced closer to the line of girl soldiers. Her button eyes sometimes saw more than did the natural eyes of her comrades and so, after staring hard at the magician's army, she boldly advanced and danced right through the threatening line! On the other side she waved her stuffed arms and called out:

"Come on, folks. The spears can't hurt you."

"Ah!" said the Wizard, gayly, "an optical illusion, as I thought. Let us all follow the Patchwork Girl."

The three little girls were somewhat nervous in attempting to brave the spears and battle-axes, but after the others had safely passed the line they ventured to follow. And, when all had passed through the ranks of the girl

army, the army itself magically disappeared from view.

All this time our friends had been getting farther up the hill and nearer to the wicker castle. Now, continuing their advance, they expected something else to oppose their way, but to their astonishment nothing happened and presently they arrived at the wicker gates, which stood wide open, and boldly entered the domain of Ugu the Shoemaker.

In the Wicker Castle

CHAPTER 22

No sooner were the Wizard of Oz and his followers well within the castle entrance when the big gates swung to with a clang and heavy bars dropped across them. They looked at one another uneasily, but no one cared to speak of the incident. If they were indeed prisoners in the wicker castle it was evident they must find a way to escape, but their first duty was to attend to the errand on which they had come and seek the Royal Ozma, whom they believed to be a prisoner of the magician, and rescue her.

They found they had entered a square courtyard, from which an entrance led into the main building of the castle. No person had appeared to greet them, so far, although a gaudy peacock, perched upon the wall, cackled with laughter and said in its sharp, shrill voice: “Poor fools! Poor fools!”

“I hope the peacock is mistaken,” remarked the Frogman, but no one else paid any attention to the bird. They were a little awed by the stillness and loneliness of the place.

As they entered the doors of the castle, which stood invitingly open, these also closed behind them and huge bolts shot into place. The animals had all accompanied the party into the castle, because they felt it would be dangerous for them to separate. They were forced to follow a zigzag passage, turning this way and that, until finally they entered a great central hall, circular in form and with a high dome from which was suspended an enormous chandelier.

The Wizard went first, and Dorothy, Betsy and Trot followed him, Toto keeping at the heels of his little mistress. Then came the Lion, the Woozy and the Sawhorse; then Cayke the Cookie Cook and Button-Bright; then the Lavender Bear carrying the Pink Bear, and finally the Frogman and the Patchwork Girl, with Hank the Mule tagging behind. So it was the Wizard who caught the first glimpse of the big domed hall, but the others quickly followed and gathered in a wondering group just within the entrance.

Upon a raised platform at one side was a heavy table on which lay Glinda’s Great Book of Records; but the platform was firmly fastened to the floor and the table was fastened to the platform and the Book was chained fast to the table — just as it had been when it was kept in Glinda’s palace. On the wall over the table hung Ozma’s Magic Picture. On a row of shelves at the opposite side of the hall stood all the chemicals and essences of magic and all the magical instruments that had been stolen from Glinda and Ozma

and the Wizard, with glass doors covering the shelves so that no one could get at them.

And in a far corner sat Ugu the Shoemaker, his feet lazily extended, his skinny hands clasped behind his head. He was leaning back at his ease and calmly smoking a long pipe. Around the magician was a sort of cage, seemingly made of golden bars set wide apart, and at his feet — also within the cage — reposed the long-sought diamond-studded dishpan of Cayke the Cookie Cook.

Princess Ozma of Oz was nowhere to be seen.

"Well, well," said Ugu, when the invaders had stood in silence for a moment, staring about them, "this visit is an expected pleasure, I assure you. I knew you were coming and I know why you are here. You are not welcome, for I cannot use any of you to my advantage, but as you have insisted on coming I hope you will make the afternoon call as brief as possible. It won't take long to transact your business with me. You will ask me for Ozma, and my reply will be that you may find her — if you can."

"Sir," answered the Wizard, in a tone of rebuke, "you are a very wicked and cruel person. I suppose you imagine, because you have stolen this poor woman's dishpan and all the best magic in Oz, that you are more powerful than we are and will be able to triumph over us."

"Yes," said Ugu the Shoemaker, slowly filling his pipe with fresh tobacco from a silver bowl that stood beside him, "that is exactly what I imagine. It will do you no good to demand from me the girl who was formerly the Ruler of Oz, because I will not tell you where I have hidden her — and you can't guess in a thousand years. Neither will I restore to you any of the magic I have captured. I am not so foolish. But bear this in mind: I mean to be the Ruler of Oz myself, hereafter, so I advise you to be careful how you address your future Monarch."

"Ozma is still Ruler of Oz, wherever you may have hidden her," declared the Wizard. "And bear this in mind, miserable Shoemaker: We intend to find her and to rescue her, in time, but our first duty and pleasure will be to conquer you and then punish you for your misdeeds."

"Very well; go ahead and conquer," said Ugu. "I'd really like to see how you can do it."

Now, although the little Wizard had spoken so boldly, he had at the moment no idea how they might conquer the magician. He had that morning given the Frogman, at his request, a dose of zosozo from his bottle, and the Frogman had promised to fight a good fight if it was necessary; but the Wizard knew that strength alone could not avail against magical arts. The toy Bear King seemed to have some pretty good magic, however, and the Wizard

depended to an extent on that. But something ought to be done right away, and the Wizard didn't know what it was.

While he considered this perplexing question and the others stood looking at him as their leader, a queer thing happened. The floor of the great circular hall, on which they were standing, suddenly began to tip. Instead of being flat and level it became a slant, and the slant grew steeper and steeper until none of the party could manage to stand upon it. Presently they all slid down to the wall, which was now under them, and then it became evident that the whole vast room was slowly turning upside down! Only Ugu the Shoemaker, kept in place by the bars of his golden cage, remained in his former position, and the wicked magician seemed to enjoy the surprise of his victims immensely.

First, they all slid down to the wall back of them, but as the room continued to turn over they next slid down the wall and found themselves at the bottom of the great dome, bumping against the big chandelier which, like everything else, was now upside-down.

The turning movement now stopped and the room became stationary. Looking far up, they saw Ugu suspended in his cage at the very top, which had once been the floor.

"Ah," said he, grinning down at them, "the way to conquer is to act, and he who acts promptly is sure to win. This makes a very good prison, from which I am sure you cannot escape. Please amuse yourselves in any way you like, but I must beg you to excuse me, as I have business in another part of my castle."

Saying this, he opened a trap door in the floor of his cage (which was now over his head) and climbed through it and disappeared from their view. The diamond dishpan still remained in the cage, but the bars kept it from falling down on their heads.

"Well, I declare!" said the Patchwork Girl, seizing one of the bars of the chandelier and swinging from it, "we must peg one for the Shoemaker, for he has trapped us very cleverly."

"Get off my foot, please," said the Lion to the Sawhorse.

"And oblige me, Mr. Mule," remarked the Woozy, "by taking your tail out of my left eye."

"It's rather crowded down here," explained Dorothy, "because the dome

is rounding and we have all slid into the middle of it. But let us keep as quiet as possible until we can think what's best to be done."

"Dear, dear!" wailed Cayke; "I wish I had my darling dishpan," and she held her arms longingly toward it.

"I wish I had the magic on those shelves up there," sighed the Wizard.

"Don't you s'pose we could get to it?" asked Trot anxiously.

"We'd have to fly," laughed the Patchwork Girl.

But the Wizard took the suggestion seriously, and so did the Frogman. They talked it over and soon planned an attempt to reach the shelves where the magical instruments were. First the Frogman lay against the rounding dome and braced his foot on the stem of the chandelier; then the Wizard climbed over him and lay on the dome with his feet on the Frogman's shoulders; the Cookie Cook came next; then Button-Bright climbed to the woman's shoulders; then Dorothy climbed up, and Betsy and Trot, and finally the Patchwork Girl, and all their lengths made a long line that reached far up the dome but not far enough for Scraps to touch the shelves.

"Wait a minute; perhaps I can reach the magic," called the Bear King, and began scrambling up the bodies of the others. But when he came to the Cookie Cook his soft paws tickled her side so that she squirmed and upset the whole line. Down they came, tumbling in a heap against the animals, and although no one was much hurt it was a bad mix-up and the Frogman, who was at the bottom, almost lost his temper before he could get on his feet again.

Cayke positively refused to try what she called "the pyramid act" again, and as the Wizard was now convinced they could not reach the magic tools in that manner the attempt was abandoned.

"But *something* must be done," said the Wizard, and then he turned to the Lavender Bear and asked: "Cannot Your Majesty's magic help us to escape from here?"

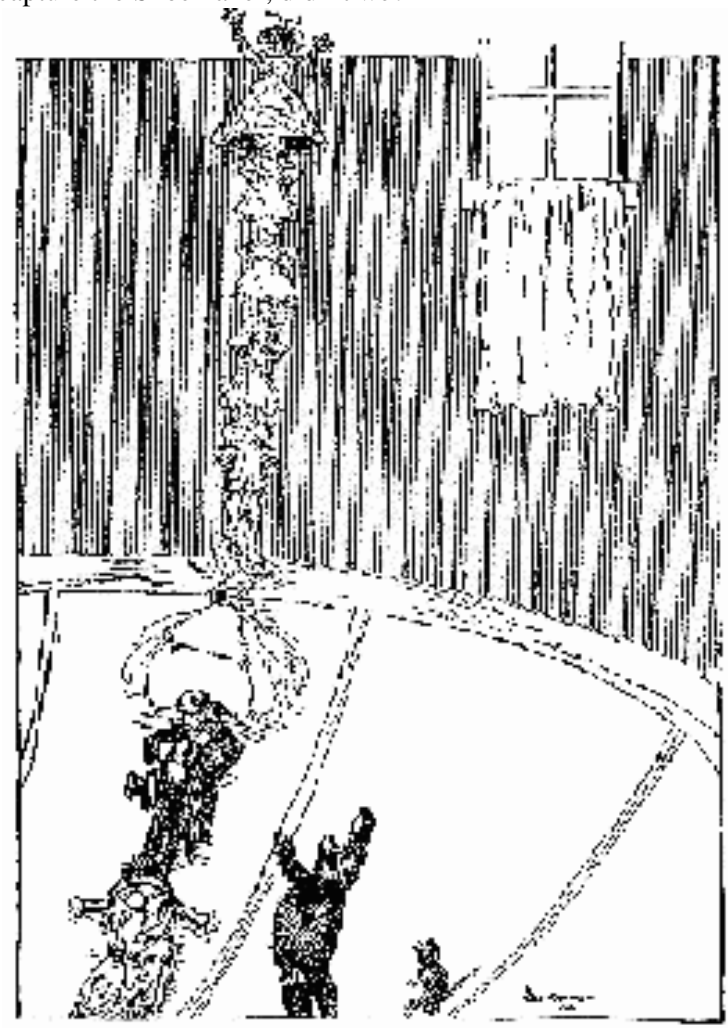
"My magic powers are limited," was the reply. "When I was stuffed, the fairies stood by and slyly dropped some magic into my stuffing. Therefore I can do any of the magic that's inside me, but nothing else. You, however, are a wizard, and a wizard should be able to do anything."

"Your Majesty forgets that my tools of magic have been stolen," said the Wizard sadly, "and a wizard without tools is as helpless as a carpenter without a hammer or saw."

"Don't give up," pleaded Button-Bright, "'cause if we can't get out of this queer prison we'll all starve to death."

"Not I!" laughed the Patchwork Girl, now standing on top the chandelier, at the place that was meant to be the bottom of it.

“Don’t talk of such dreadful things,” said Trot, shuddering. “We came here to capture the Shoemaker, didn’t we?”



“And here we are, captured ourselves, and my darling dishpan up there in plain sight!” wailed the Cookie Cook, wiping her eyes on the tail of the Frogman’s coat.

“Hush!” called the Lion, with a low, deep growl. “Give the Wizard time to think.”

“He has plenty of time,” said Scraps. “What he needs is the Scarecrow’s brains.”

After all, it was little Dorothy who came to their rescue, and her ability to save them was almost as much a surprise to the girl as it was to her friends.

Dorothy had been secretly testing the powers of her Magic Belt, which she had once captured from the Nome King, and experimenting with it in various ways, ever since she had started on this eventful journey. At different times she had stolen away from the others of her party and in solitude had tried to find out what the Magic Belt could do and what it could not do. There were a lot of things it could not do, she discovered, but she learned some things about the Belt which even her girl friends did not suspect she knew.

For one thing, she had remembered that when the Nome King owned it the Magic Belt used to perform transformations, and by thinking hard she had finally recalled the way in which such transformations had been accomplished. Better than this, however, was the discovery that the Magic

Belt would grant its wearer one wish a day. All she need do was close her right eye and wiggle her left toe and then draw a long breath and make her wish. Yesterday she had wished in secret for a box of caramels, and instantly found the box beside her. To-day she had saved her daily wish, in case she might need it in an emergency, and the time had now come when she must use the wish to enable her to escape with her friends from the prison in which Ugu had caught them.

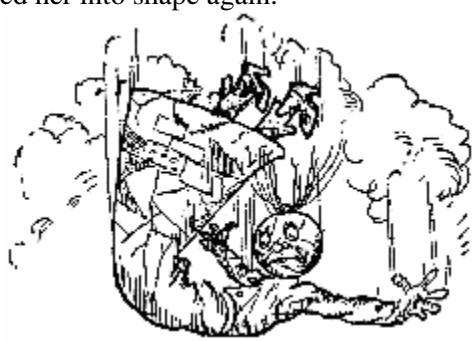
So, without telling anyone what she intended to do — for she had only used the wish once and could not be certain how powerful the Magic Belt might be — Dorothy closed her right eye and wiggled her left big toe and drew a long breath and wished with all her might. The next moment the room began to revolve again, as slowly as before, and by degrees they all slid to the side wall and down the wall to the floor — all but Scraps, who was so astonished that she still clung to the chandelier. When the big hall was in its proper position again and the others stood firmly upon the floor of it, they looked far up to the dome and saw the Patchwork Girl swinging from the chandelier.

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy. "How ever will you get down?"

"Won't the room keep turning?" asked Scraps.

"I hope not. I believe it has stopped for good," said Princess Dorothy.

"Then stand from under, so you won't get hurt!" shouted the Patchwork Girl, and as soon as they had obeyed this request she let go the chandelier and came tumbling down heels over head and twisting and turning in a very exciting manner. Plump! she fell on the tiled floor and they ran to her and rolled her and patted her into shape again.



The Defiance of Ugu the Shoemaker

CHAPTER 23

The delay caused by Scraps had prevented anyone from running to the shelves to secure the magic instruments so badly needed. Even Cayke neglected to get her diamond-studded dishpan because she was watching the Patchwork Girl. And now the magician had opened his trap door and appeared in his golden cage again, frowning angrily because his prisoners had been able to turn their upside-down prison right-side-up.

"Which of you has dared defy my magic?" he shouted in a terrible voice.

"It was I," answered Dorothy calmly.

"Then I shall destroy you, for you are only an Earth girl and no fairy," he said, and began to mumble some magic words.

Dorothy now realized that Ugu must be treated as an enemy, so she advanced toward the corner in which he sat, saying as she went:

"I am not afraid of you, Mr. Shoemaker, and I think you'll be sorry, pretty soon, that you're such a bad man. You can't destroy me and I won't destroy you, but I'm going to punish you for your wickedness."

Ugu laughed a laugh that was not nice to hear, and then he waved his hand. Dorothy was halfway across the room when suddenly a wall of glass rose before her and stopped her progress. Through the glass she could see the magician sneering at her because she was a weak little girl, and this provoked her. Although the glass wall obliged her to halt she instantly pressed both hands to her Magic Belt and cried in a loud voice:

"Ugu the Shoemaker, by the magic virtues of the Magic Belt, I command you to become a dove!"

The magician instantly realized he was being enchanted, for he could feel his form changing. He struggled desperately against the enchantment, mumbling magic words and making magic passes with his hands. And in one way he succeeded in defeating Dorothy's purpose, for while his form soon changed to that of a gray dove, the dove was of an enormous size — bigger even than Ugu had been as a man — and this feat he had been able to accomplish before his powers of magic wholly deserted him.

And the dove was not gentle, as doves usually are, for Ugu was terribly enraged at the little girl's success. His books had told him nothing of the Nome King's Magic Belt, the Country of the Nomes being outside the Land of Oz. He knew, however, that he was likely to be conquered unless he made a fierce fight, so he spread his wings and rose in the air and flew directly

toward Dorothy. The Wall of Glass had disappeared the instant Ugu became transformed.

Dorothy had meant to command the Belt to transform the magician into a Dove of Peace, but in her excitement she forgot to say more than “dove,” and now Ugu was not a Dove of Peace by any means, but rather a spiteful Dove of War. His size made his sharp beak and claws very dangerous, but Dorothy was not afraid when he came darting toward her with his talons outstretched and his sword-like beak open.

She knew the Magic Belt would protect its wearer from harm.

But the Frogman did not know that fact and became alarmed at the little girl’s seeming danger. So he gave a sudden leap and leaped full upon the

back of the great dove.

Then began a desperate struggle. The dove was as strong as Ugu had been, and in size it was considerably bigger than the Frogman. But the Frogman had eaten the zosozo and it had made him fully as strong as Ugu the Dove. At the first leap he bore the dove to the floor, but the giant bird got free and began to bite and claw the Frogman, beating him down with its great wings whenever he attempted to rise. The thick, tough skin of the big frog was not easily damaged, but Dorothy feared for her champion and by again using the transformation power of the Magic Belt she made the dove grow small, until it was no larger than a canary bird.

Ugu had not lost his knowledge of magic when he lost his shape as a man, and he now realized it was hopeless to oppose the power of the Magic Belt and knew that his only hope of escape lay in instant action. So he quickly flew into the golden jeweled dishpan he had stolen from Cayke the Cookie Cook and, as birds can talk as well as beasts or men in the Fairyland of Oz, he muttered the magic word that was required and wished himself in the Country of the Quadlings — which was as far away from the wicker castle as he believed he could get.

Our friends did not know, of course, what Ugu was about to do. They saw the dishpan tremble an instant and then disappear, the dove disappearing with it, and although they waited expectantly for some minutes for the magician's return, Ugu did not come back again.

"Seems to me," said the Wizard in a cheerful voice, "that we have conquered the wicked magician more quickly than we expected to."

"Don't say 'we' — Dorothy did it!" cried the Patchwork Girl, turning three somersaults in succession and then walking around on her hands. "Hurrah for Dorothy!"

"I thought you said you did not know how to use the magic of the Nome King's Belt," said the Wizard to Dorothy.

"I didn't know, at that time," she replied, "but afterward I remembered how the Nome King once used the Magic Belt to enchant people and transform 'em into ornaments and all sorts of things; so I tried some enchantments in secret and after awhile I transformed the Sawhorse into a potato-masher and back again, and the Cowardly Lion into a pussycat and back again, and then I knew the thing would work all right."

"When did you perform those enchantments?" asked the Wizard, much surprised.

"One night when all the rest of you were asleep but Scraps, and she had gone chasing moonbeams."

"Well," remarked the Wizard, "your discovery has certainly saved us a lot

of trouble, and we must all thank the Frogman, too, for making such a good fight. The dove's shape had Ugu's evil disposition inside it, and that made the monster bird dangerous."

The Frogman was looking sad because the bird's talons had torn his pretty clothes, but he bowed with much dignity at this well-deserved praise. Cayke, however, had squatted on the floor and was sobbing bitterly.

"My precious dishpan is gone!" she wailed. "Gone, just as I had found it again!"

"Never mind," said Trot, trying to comfort her, "it's sure to be *some*where, so we'll cert'nly run across it some day."

"Yes, indeed," added Betsy; "now that we have Ozma's Magic Picture, we can tell just where the Dove went with your dishpan."

They all approached the Magic Picture, and Dorothy wished it to show the enchanted form of Ugu the Shoemaker, wherever it might be. At once there appeared in the frame of the Picture a scene in the far Quadling Country, where the Dove was perched disconsolately on the limb of a tree and the jeweled dishpan lay on the ground just underneath the limb.

"But where is the place — how far or how near?" asked Cayke anxiously.

"The Book of Records will tell us that," answered the Wizard. So they looked in the Great Book and read the following:

"Ugu the Magician, being transformed into a dove by Princess Dorothy of Oz, has used the magic of the golden dishpan to carry him instantly to the northeast corner of the Quadling Country."

"That's all right," said Dorothy. "Don't worry, Cayke, for the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman are in that part of the country, looking for Ozma, and they'll surely find your dishpan."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Button-Bright, "we've forgot all about Ozma. Let's find out where the magician hid her."

Back to the Magic Picture they trooped, but when they wished to see Ozma, wherever she might be hidden, only a round black spot appeared in the center of the canvas.

"I don't see how *that* can be Ozma!" said Dorothy, much puzzled.

"It seems to be the best the Magic Picture can do, however," said the Wizard, no less surprised. "If it's an enchantment, it looks as if the magician had transformed Ozma into a chunk of pitch."

The Little Pink Bear Speaks Truly

CHAPTER 24

For several minutes they all stood staring at the black spot on the canvas of the Magic Picture, wondering what it could mean.

"P'r'aps we'd better ask the little Pink Bear about Ozma," suggested Trot.

"Pshaw!" said Button-Bright, "*he* don't know anything."

"He never makes a mistake," declared the King.

"He did once, surely," said Betsy. "But perhaps he wouldn't make a mistake again."

"He won't have the chance," grumbled the Bear King.

"We might hear what he has to say," said Dorothy. "It won't do any harm to ask the Pink Bear where Ozma is."

"I will not have him questioned," declared the King, in a surly voice. "I do not intend to allow my little Pink Bear to be again insulted by your foolish doubts. He never makes a mistake."

"Didn't he say Ozma was in that hole in the ground?" asked Betsy.

"He did; and I am certain she was there," replied the Lavender Bear.

Scraps laughed jeeringly and the others saw there was no use arguing with the stubborn Bear King, who seemed to have absolute faith in his Pink Bear. The Wizard, who knew that magical things can usually be depended upon, and that the little Pink Bear was able to answer questions by some remarkable power of magic, thought it wise to apologize to the Lavender Bear for the unbelief of his friends, at the same time urging the King to consent to question the Pink Bear once more. Cayke and the Frogman also pleaded with the big Bear, who finally agreed, although rather ungraciously, to put the little Bear's wisdom to the test once more. So he sat the little one on his knee and turned the crank and the Wizard himself asked the questions in a very respectful tone of voice.

"Where is Ozma?" was his first query.

"Here, in this room," answered the little Pink Bear.

They all looked around the room, but of course did not see her.

"In what part of this room is she?" was the Wizard's next question.

"In Button-Bright's pocket," said the little Pink Bear.

This reply amazed them all, you may be sure, and although the three girls smiled and Scraps yelled: "Hoo-ray!" in derision, the Wizard seemed to consider the matter with grave thoughtfulness.

"In which one of Button-Bright's pockets is Ozma?" he presently inquired.

"In the lefthand jacket-pocket," said the little Pink Bear.

“The pink one has gone crazy!” exclaimed Button-Bright, staring hard at the little bear on the big bear’s knee.

“I am not so sure of that,” declared the Wizard. “If Ozma proves to be really in your pocket, then the little Pink Bear spoke truly when he said Ozma was in that hole in the ground. For at that time you were also in the hole, and after we had pulled you out of it the little Pink Bear said Ozma was not in the hole.”

“He never makes a mistake,” asserted the Bear King, stoutly.

“Empty that pocket, Button-Bright, and let’s see what’s in it,” requested Dorothy.

So Button-Bright laid the contents of his left jacket-pocket on the table. These proved to be a peg-top, a bunch of string, a small rubber ball and a golden peach-pit.

“What’s this?” asked the Wizard, picking up the peach-pit and examining it closely.

“Oh,” said the boy, “I saved that to show to the girls, and then forgot all about it. It came out of a lonesome peach that I found in the orchard back yonder, and which I ate while I was lost. It looks like gold, and I never saw a peach-pit like it before.”

“Nor I,” said the Wizard, “and that makes it seem suspicious.”

All heads were bent over the golden peach-pit. The Wizard turned it over several times and then took out his pocket-knife and pried the pit open.

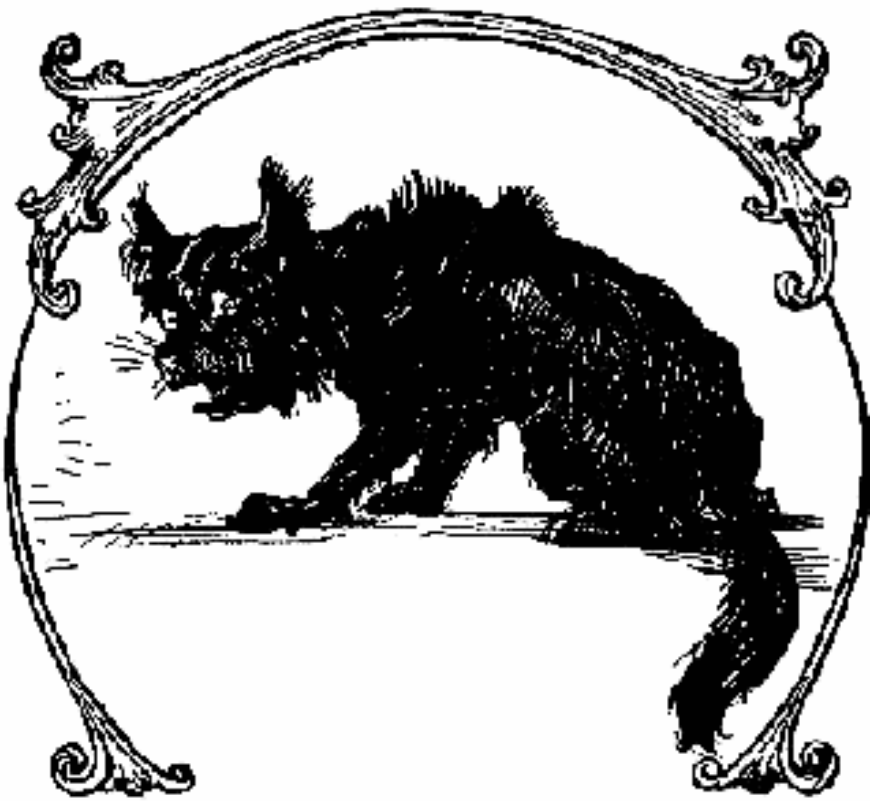
As the two halves fell apart a pink, cloud-like haze came pouring from the golden peach-pit, almost filling the big room, and from the haze a form took shape and settled beside them. Then, as the haze faded away, a sweet voice said: “Thank you, my friends!” and there before them stood their lovely girl Ruler, Ozma of Oz.

With a cry of delight Dorothy rushed forward and embraced her. Scraps turned gleeful flip-flops all around the room. Button-Bright gave a low whistle of astonishment. The Frogman took off his tall hat and bowed low before the beautiful girl who had been freed from her enchantment in so startling a manner.

For a time no sound was heard beyond the low murmur of delight that came from the amazed group, but presently the growl of the big Lavender Bear grew louder and he said in a tone of triumph:

“He never makes a mistake!”

Ozma of Oz



CHAPTER 25

"It's funny," said Toto, standing before his friend the Lion and wagging his tail, "but I've found my growl at last! I am positive, now, that it was the cruel magician who stole it."

"Let's hear your growl," requested the Lion.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" said Toto.

"That is fine," declared the big beast. "It isn't as loud or as deep as the growl of the big Lavender Bear, but it is a very respectable growl for a small dog. Where did you find it, Toto?"

"I was smelling in the corner, yonder," said Toto, "when suddenly a mouse ran out — and I growled!"

The others were all busy congratulating Ozma, who was very happy at being released from the confinement of the golden peach-pit, where the magician had placed her with the notion that she never could be found or liberated.

"And only to think," cried Dorothy, "that Button-Bright has been carrying you in his pocket all this time, and we never knew it!"

"The little Pink Bear told you," said the Bear King, "but you wouldn't believe him."

"Never mind, my dears," said Ozma graciously; "all is well that ends well, and you couldn't be expected to know I was inside the peach-pit. Indeed, I feared I would remain a captive much longer than I did, for Ugu is a bold and clever magician and he had hidden me very securely."

"You were in a fine peach," said Button-Bright; "the best I ever ate."

"The magician was foolish to make the peach so tempting," remarked the Wizard; "but Ozma would lend beauty to any transformation."

"How did you manage to conquer Ugu the Shoemaker?" inquired the girl Ruler of Oz.

Dorothy started to tell the story and Trot helped her, and Button-Bright wanted to relate it in his own way, and the Wizard tried to make it clear to Ozma, and Betsy had to remind them of important things they left out, and all together there was such a chatter that it was a wonder that Ozma understood any of it. But she listened patiently, with a smile on her lovely face at their eagerness, and presently had gleaned all the details of their adventures.

Ozma thanked the Frogman very earnestly for his assistance and she

advised Cayke the Cookie Cook to dry her weeping eyes, for she promised to take her to the Emerald City and see that her cherished dishpan was restored to her. Then the beautiful Ruler took a chain of emeralds from around her own neck and placed it around the neck of the little Pink Bear.

"Your wise answers to the questions of my friends," said she, "helped them to rescue me. Therefore I am deeply grateful to you and to your noble King."

The bead eyes of the little Pink Bear stared unresponsive to this praise until the Big Lavender Bear turned the crank in its side, when it said in its squeaky voice:

"I thank Your Majesty."

"For my part," returned the Bear King, "I realize that you were well worth saving, Miss Ozma, and so I am much pleased that we could be of service to you. By means of my Magic Wand I have been creating exact images of your Emerald City and your Royal Palace, and I must confess that they are more attractive than any places I have ever seen — not excepting Bear Center."

"I would like to entertain you in my palace," returned Ozma, sweetly, "and you are welcome to return with me and to make me a long visit, if your bear subjects can spare you from your own kingdom."

"As for that," answered the King, "my kingdom causes me little worry, and I often find it somewhat tame and uninteresting. Therefore I am in no hurry to return to it and will be glad to accept your kind invitation. Corporal Waddle may be trusted to care for my bears in my absence."

"And you'll bring the little Pink Bear?" asked Dorothy eagerly.

"Of course, my dear; I would not willingly part with him."

They remained in the wicker castle for three days, carefully packing all the magical things that had been stolen by Ugu and also taking whatever in the way of magic the shoemaker had inherited from his ancestors.

"For," said Ozma, "I have forbidden any of my subjects except Glinda the Good and the Wizard of Oz to practice magical arts, because they cannot be trusted to do good and not harm. Therefore Ugu must never again be permitted to work magic of any sort."

"Well," remarked Dorothy cheerfully, "a dove can't do much in the way of magic, anyhow, and I'm going to keep Ugu in the form of a dove until he reforms and becomes a good and honest shoemaker."

When everything was packed and loaded on the backs of the animals, they set out for the river, taking a more direct route than that by which Cayke and the Frogman had come. In this way they avoided the Cities of Thi and Herku and Bear Center and after a pleasant journey reached the Winkie River and found a jolly ferryman who had a fine big boat and was willing to carry the

entire party by water to a place quite near to the Emerald City.

The river had many windings and many branches, and the journey did not end in a day, but finally the boat floated into a pretty lake which was but a short distance from Ozma's home. Here the jolly ferryman was rewarded for his labors and then the entire party set out in a grand procession to march to the Emerald City.

News that the Royal Ozma had been found spread quickly throughout the neighborhood and both sides of the road soon became lined with loyal subjects of the beautiful and beloved Ruler. Therefore Ozma's ears heard little but cheers and her eyes beheld little else than waving handkerchiefs and banners during all the triumphal march from the lake to the city's gates.

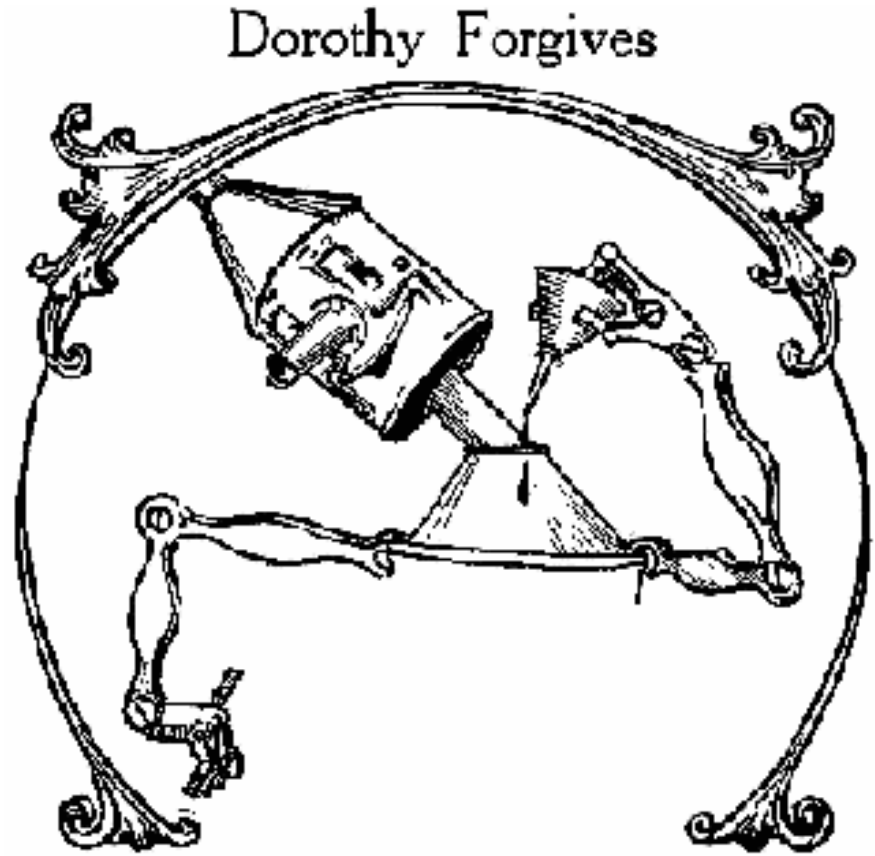
And there she met a still greater concourse, for all the inhabitants of the Emerald City turned out to welcome her return and several bands played gay music and all the houses were decorated with flags and bunting and never before were the people so joyous and happy as at this moment when they welcomed home their girl Ruler. For she had been lost and was now found again, and surely that was cause for rejoicing.

Glinda was at the royal palace to meet the returning party and the good Sorceress was indeed glad to have her Great Book of Records returned to her, as well as all the precious collection of magic instruments and elixirs and chemicals that had been stolen from her castle. Cap'n Bill and the Wizard at once hung the Magic Picture upon the wall of Ozma's boudoir and the Wizard was so light-hearted that he did several tricks with the tools in his black bag to amuse his companions and prove that once again he was a powerful wizard.

For a whole week there was feasting and merriment and all sorts of joyous festivities at the palace, in honor of Ozma's safe return. The Lavender Bear and the little Pink Bear received much attention and were honored by all, much to the Bear King's satisfaction. The Frogman speedily became a favorite at the Emerald City and the Shaggy Man and Tik-Tok and Jack Pumpkinhead, who had now returned from their search, were very polite to the big frog and made him feel quite at home. Even the Cookie Cook, because she was a stranger and Ozma's guest, was shown as much deference as if she had been a queen.

"All the same, Your Majesty," said Cayke to Ozma, day after day, with tiresome repetition, "I hope you will soon find my jeweled dishpan, for never

can I be quite happy without it.”



CHAPTER 26

The gray dove
which had once
been Ugu the
Shoemaker sat on
its tree in the far Quadling Country and moped, chirping dismally and brooding over its misfortunes. After a time the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman came along and sat beneath the tree, paying no heed to the mutterings of the gray dove.

The Tin Woodman took a small oilcan from his tin pocket and carefully oiled his tin joints with it. While he was thus engaged the Scarecrow remarked:

"I feel much better, dear comrade, since we found that heap of nice clean straw and you stuffed me anew with it."

"And I feel much better now that my joints are oiled," returned the Tin Woodman, with a sigh of pleasure. "You and I, friend Scarecrow, are much more easily cared for than those clumsy meat people, who spend half their time dressing in fine clothes and who must live in splendid dwellings in order to be contented and happy. You and I do not eat, and so we are spared the dreadful bother of getting three meals a day. Nor do we waste half our lives in sleep, a condition that causes the meat people to lose all consciousness and become as thoughtless and helpless as logs of wood."

"You speak truly," responded the Scarecrow, tucking some wisps of straw into his breast with his padded fingers. "I often feel sorry for the meat people, many of whom are my friends. Even the beasts are happier than they, for they require less to make them content. And the birds are the luckiest creatures of all, for they can fly swiftly where they will and find a home at any place they care to perch; their food consists of seeds and grains they gather from the fields and their drink is a sip of water from some running brook. If I could not be a Scarecrow — or a Tin Woodman — my next choice would be to live as a bird does."

The gray dove had listened carefully to this speech and seemed to find comfort in it, for it hushed its moaning. And just then the Tin Woodman discovered Cayke's dishpan, which was on the ground quite near to him.

"Here is a rather pretty utensil," he said, taking it in his tin hands to examine it, "but I would not care to own it. Whoever fashioned it of gold and covered it with diamonds did not add to its usefulness, nor do I consider it as beautiful as the bright dishpans of tin one usually sees. No yellow color is ever so handsome as the silver sheen of tin," and he turned to look at his tin legs and body with approval.

"I cannot quite agree with you there," replied the Scarecrow. "My straw stuffing has a light yellow color, and it is not only pretty to look at but it

crunkles most delightfully when I move."

"Let us admit that all colors are good in their proper places," said the Tin Woodman, who was too kind-hearted to quarrel; "but you must agree with me that a dishpan that is yellow is unnatural. What shall we do with this one, which we have just found?"

"Let us carry it back to the Emerald City," suggested the Scarecrow. "Some of our friends might like to have it for a foot-bath, and in using it that way its golden color and sparkling ornaments would not injure its usefulness."

So they went away and took the jeweled dishpan with them. And, after wandering through the country for a day or so longer, they learned the news that Ozma had been found. Therefore they straightway returned to the Emerald City and presented the dishpan to Princess Ozma as a token of their joy that she had been restored to them.

Ozma promptly gave the diamond-studded gold dishpan to Cayke the Cookie Cook, who was so delighted at regaining her lost treasure that she danced up and down in glee and then threw her skinny arms around Ozma's neck and kissed her gratefully. Cayke's mission was now successfully accomplished, but she was having such a good time at the Emerald City that she seemed in no hurry to go back to the Country of the Yips.

It was several weeks after the dishpan had been restored to the Cookie Cook when one day, as Dorothy was seated in the royal gardens with Trot and Betsy beside her, a gray dove came flying down and alighted at the girl's feet.

"I am Ugu the Shoemaker," said the dove in a soft, mourning voice, "and I have come to ask you to forgive me for the great wrong I did in stealing Ozma and the magic that belonged to her and to others."

"Are you sorry, then?" asked Dorothy, looking hard at the bird.

"I am *very* sorry," declared Ugu. "I've been thinking over my misdeeds for a long time, for doves have little else to do but think, and I'm surprised that I was such a wicked man and had so little regard for the rights of others. I am now convinced that even had I succeeded in making myself ruler of all Oz I should not have been happy, for many days of quiet thought have shown me that only those things one acquires honestly are able to render one content."

"I guess that's so," said Trot.

"Anyhow," said Betsy, "the bad man seems truly sorry, and if he has now become a good and honest man we ought to forgive him."

"I fear I cannot become a good *man* again," said Ugu, "for the transformation I am under will always keep me in the form of a dove. But,

with the kind forgiveness of my former enemies, I hope to become a very good dove, and highly respected."

"Wait here till I run for my Magic Belt," said Dorothy, "and I'll transform you back to your reg'lar shape in a jiffy."

"No — don't do that!" pleaded the dove, fluttering its wings in an excited way. "I only want your forgiveness; I don't want to be a man again. As Ugu the Shoemaker I was skinny and old and unlovely; as a dove I am quite pretty to look at. As a man I was ambitious and cruel, while as a dove I can be content with my lot and happy in my simple life. I have learned to love the free and independent life of a bird and I'd rather not change back."

"Just as you like, Ugu," said Dorothy, resuming her seat. "Perhaps you are right, for you're cert'nly a better dove than you were a man, and if you should ever backslide, an' feel wicked again, you couldn't do much harm as a gray dove."

"Then you forgive me for all the trouble I caused you?" he asked earnestly.

"Of course; anyone who's sorry just *has* to be forgiven."

"Thank you," said the gray dove, and flew away again.

THE
END

THE TIN WOODMAN OF OZ

Baum's twelfth Oz book, *The Tin Woodman of Oz*, appeared in 1918, published by Reilly & Britton and illustrated by John R. Neill. When asked by a visiting Gillikin boy, Woot the Wanderer, about his history, the Tin Woodman recounts the familiar tale about how he lost his limbs and eventually met Dorothy Gale and traveled to the Emerald City for a heart. Woot tells the Tin Woodman that with a new heart he may be kind, but he is not a loving person, or he would have returned to his sweetheart, Nimmie Amee. Ashamed, the Tin Woodman and Woot, accompanied by the Scarecrow, travel into the Gillikin Country where they meet a variety of strange magical creatures as well as a wicked enchantress, a giantess named Mrs. Yoop, who promptly transforms them. Further exciting adventures ensue as well as encounters with even more unusual friends and foes. Along the way, the reader also learns something of the fascinating background history of the Land of Oz.

First edition copy of 'The Tin Woodman of Oz'

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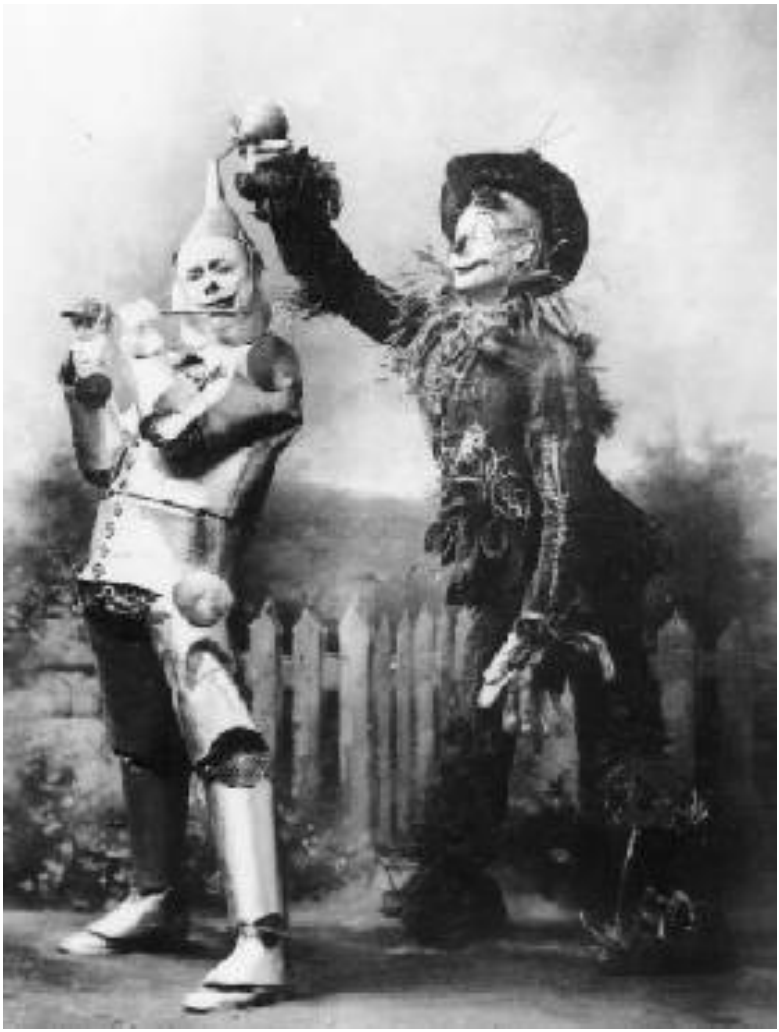
Through the Tunnel
The Curtain Falls

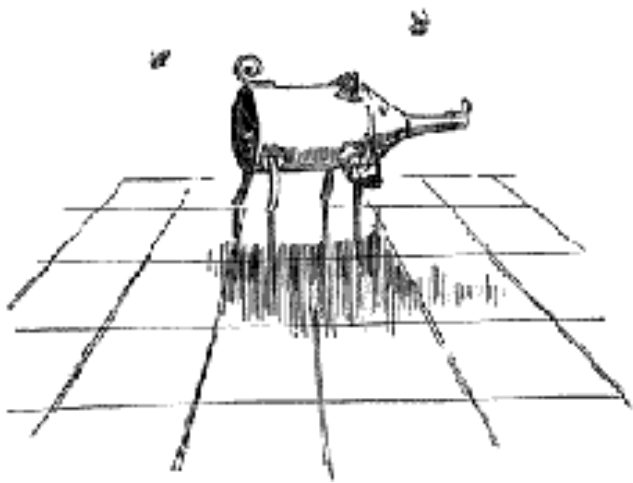
Fred Stone and David Montgomery in the 1902-03 musical, The Wizard of Oz

Fred Stone and David Montgomery in the 1902-03 musical, The Wizard of Oz



Fred Stone and David Montgomery in the 1902-03 musical, The Wizard of Oz

THE TINWOODMAN OF OZ



PRINCESS
DOROTHY

THE TIN WOODMAN OF OZ

A Faithful Story of the Astonishing Adventure
Undertaken by the Tin Woodman, assisted
by Woot the Wanderer, the Scarecrow
of Oz, and Polychrome, the Rainbow's
Daughter

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This Book
is dedicated
to the son of my son
Frank Alden Baum

TO MY READERS

I know that some of you have been waiting for this story of the Tin Woodman, because many of my correspondents have asked me, time and again, what ever became of the "pretty Munchkin girl" whom Nick Chopper was engaged to marry before the Wicked Witch enchanted his axe and he traded his flesh for tin. I, too, have wondered what became of her, but until Woot the Wanderer interested himself in the matter the Tin Woodman knew no more than we did. However, he found her, after many thrilling adventures, as you will discover when you have read this story.

I am delighted at the continued interest of both young and old in the Oz stories. A learned college professor recently wrote me to ask: "For readers of

what age are your books intended?" It puzzled me to answer that properly, until I had looked over some of the letters I have received. One says: "I'm a little boy 5 years old, and I just love your Oz stories. My sister, who is writing this for me, reads me the Oz books, but I wish I could read them myself." Another letter says: "I'm a great girl 13 years old, so you'll be surprised when I tell you I am not too old yet for the Oz stories." Here's another letter: "Since I was a young girl I've never missed getting a Baum book for Christmas. I'm married, now, but am as eager to get and read the Oz stories as ever." And still another writes: "My good wife and I, both more than 70 years of age, believe that we find more real enjoyment in your Oz books than in any other books we read." Considering these statements, I wrote the college professor that my books are intended for all those whose hearts are young, no matter what their ages may be.

And while on this subject of letters I am reminded that a good many of my correspondents neglect to slip a 3-cent postage-stamp into their letters, for the answer. You are sending but one letter, you know, while I get so many hundreds of letters that to prepay postage on all the answers to them would be no small burden to me.

I think I am justified in promising that there will be some astonishing revelations about The Magic of Oz in my book for 1919.

Always your loving and grateful friend,

L. Frank Baum,

Royal Historian of Oz.

"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA
1918.

Woot
in cond. dress

Woot the Wanderer

CHAPTER 1

The Tin Woodman sat on his glittering tin throne in the handsome tin hall of his splendid tin castle in the Winkie Country of the Land of Oz. Beside him, in a chair of woven straw, sat his best friend, the Scarecrow of Oz. At times they spoke to one another of curious things they had seen and strange adventures they had known since first they two had met and become comrades. But at times they were silent, for these things had been talked over many times between them, and they found themselves contented in merely being together, speaking now and then a brief sentence to prove they were wide awake and attentive. But then, these two quaint persons never slept. Why should they sleep, when they never tired?

And now, as the brilliant sun sank low over the Winkie Country of Oz, tinting the glistening tin towers and tin minarets of the tin castle with glorious sunset hues, there approached along a winding pathway Woot the Wanderer, who met at the castle entrance a Winkie servant.

The servants of the Tin Woodman all wore tin helmets and tin breastplates and uniforms covered with tiny tin discs sewed closely together on silver cloth, so that their bodies sparkled as beautifully as did the tin castle — and almost as beautifully as did the Tin Woodman himself.

Woot the Wanderer looked at the man servant — all bright and glittering — and at the magnificent castle — all bright and glittering — and as he looked his eyes grew big with wonder. For Woot was not very big and not very old and, wanderer though he was, this proved the most gorgeous sight that had ever met his boyish gaze.

"Who lives here?" he asked.

"The Emperor of the Winkies, who is the famous Tin Woodman of Oz," replied the servant, who had been trained to treat all strangers with courtesy.

"A Tin Woodman? How queer!" exclaimed the little wanderer.

"Well, perhaps our Emperor is queer," admitted the servant; "but he is a kind master and as honest and true as good tin can make him; so we, who gladly serve him, are apt to forget that he is not like other people."

"May I see him?" asked Woot the Wanderer, after a moment's thought.

"If it please you to wait a moment, I will go and ask him," said the servant, and then he went into the hall where the Tin Woodman sat with his friend the Scarecrow. Both were glad to learn that a stranger had arrived at the castle, for this would give them something new to talk about, so the servant was asked to admit the boy at once.

By the time Woot the Wanderer had passed through the grand corridors

— all lined with ornamental tin — and under stately tin archways and through the many tin rooms all set with beautiful tin furniture, his eyes had grown bigger than ever and his whole little body thrilled with amazement. But, astonished though he was, he was able to make a polite bow before the throne and to say in a respectful voice: “I salute your Illustrious Majesty and offer you my humble services.”

“Very good!” answered the Tin Woodman in his accustomed cheerful manner. “Tell me who you are, and whence you come.”

“I am known as Woot the Wanderer,” answered the boy, “and I have come, through many travels and by roundabout ways, from my former home in a far corner of the Gillikin Country of Oz.”

“To wander from one’s home,” remarked the Scarecrow, “is to encounter dangers and hardships, especially if one is made of meat and bone. Had you no friends in that corner of the Gillikin Country? Was it not homelike and comfortable?”

To hear a man stuffed with straw speak, and speak so well, quite startled Woot, and perhaps he stared a bit rudely at the Scarecrow. But after a moment he replied:

“I had home and friends, your Honorable Strawness, but they were so quiet and happy and comfortable that I found them dismally stupid. Nothing in that corner of Oz interested me, but I believed that in other parts of the country I would find strange people and see new sights, and so I set out upon my wandering journey. I have been a wanderer for nearly a full year, and now my wanderings have brought me to this splendid castle.”

“I suppose,” said the Tin Woodman, “that in this year you have seen so much that you have become very wise.”

“No,” replied Woot, thoughtfully, “I am not at all wise, I beg to assure your Majesty. The more I wander the less I find that I know, for in the Land of Oz much wisdom and many things may be learned.”

“To learn is simple. Don’t you ask questions?” inquired the Scarecrow.

“Yes; I ask as many questions as I dare; but some people refuse to answer questions.”

“That is not kind of them,” declared the Tin Woodman. “If one does not ask for information he seldom receives it; so I, for my part, make it a rule to answer any civil question that is asked me.”

“So do I,” added the Scarecrow, nodding.

“I am glad to hear this,” said the Wanderer, “for it makes me bold to ask for something to eat.” 18

"Bless the boy!" cried the Emperor of the Winkies; "how careless of me not to remember that wanderers are usually hungry. I will have food brought you at once."

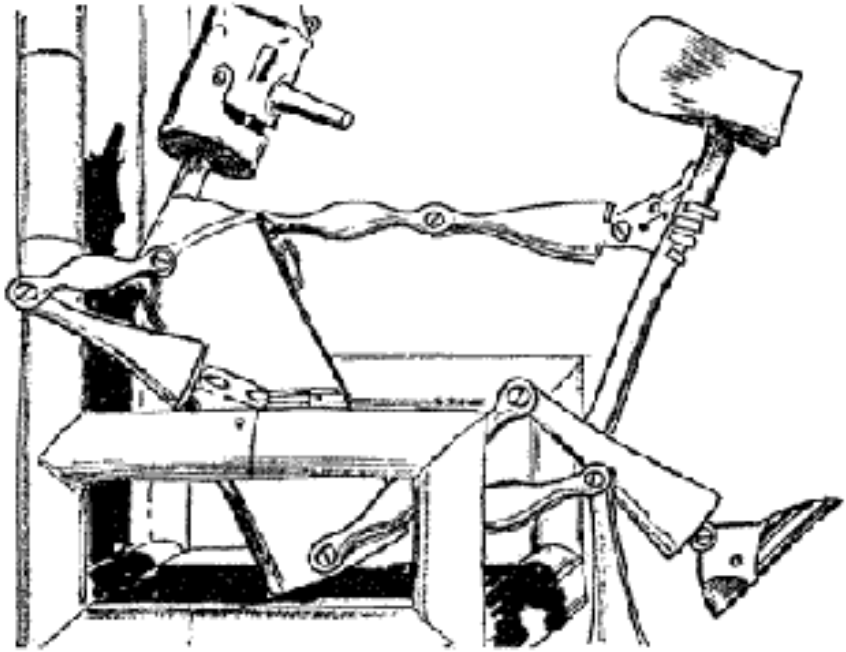
Saying this he blew upon a tin whistle that was suspended from his tin neck, and at the summons a servant appeared and bowed low. The Tin Woodman ordered food for the stranger, and in a few minutes the servant brought in a tin tray heaped with a choice array of good things to eat, all neatly displayed on tin dishes that were polished till they shone like mirrors. The tray was set upon a tin table drawn before the throne, and the servant placed a tin chair before the table for the boy to seat himself.

"Eat, friend Wanderer," said the Emperor cordially, "and I trust the feast will be to your liking. I, myself, do not eat, being made in such manner that I require no food to keep me alive. Neither does my friend the Scarecrow. But all my Winkie people eat, being formed of flesh, as you are, and so my tin cupboard is never bare, and strangers are always welcome to whatever it contains."21

The boy ate in silence for a time, being really hungry, but after his appetite was somewhat satisfied, he said:

"How happened your Majesty to be made of tin, and still be alive?"

"That," replied the tin man, "is a long story."



"The longer the better," said the boy. "Won't you please tell me the story?"

"If you desire it," promised the Tin Woodman, leaning back in his tin throne and crossing his tin legs. "I haven't related my history in a long while, because everyone here knows it nearly as well as I do. But you, being a stranger, are no doubt curious to learn how I became so beautiful and prosperous, so I will recite for your benefit my strange adventures."

"Thank you," said Woot the Wanderer, still eating.

"I was not always made of tin," began the Emperor, "for in the beginning I was a man of flesh and bone and blood and lived in the Munchkin Country of Oz. There I was, by trade, a woodchopper, and contributed my share to the comfort of the Oz people by chopping up the trees of the forest to make firewood, with which the women would cook their meals while the children warmed themselves about the fires. For my home I had a little hut by the edge of the forest, and my life was one of much content until I fell in love with a beautiful Munchkin girl who lived not far away."

"What was the Munchkin girl's name?" asked Woot.

"Nimmie Amee. This girl, so fair that the sunsets blushed when their rays fell upon her, lived with a powerful witch who wore silver shoes and who had made the poor child her slave. Nimmie Amee was obliged to work from morning till night for the old Witch of the East, scrubbing and sweeping her

hut and cooking her meals and washing her dishes. She had to cut firewood, too, until I found her one day in the forest and fell in love with her. After that, I always brought plenty of firewood to Nimmie Amee and we became very friendly. Finally I asked her to marry me, and she agreed to do so, but the Witch happened to overhear our conversation and it made her very angry, for she did not wish her slave to be taken away from her. The Witch commanded me never to come near Nimmie Amee again, but I told her I was my own master and would do as I pleased, not realizing that this was a careless way to speak to a Witch.

"The next day, as I was cutting wood in the forest, the cruel Witch enchanted my axe, so that it slipped and cut off my right leg."

"How dreadful!" cried Woot the Wanderer.

"Yes, it was a seeming misfortune," agreed the Tin Man, "for a one-legged woodchopper is of little use in his trade. But I would not allow the Witch to conquer me so easily. I knew a very skillful mechanic at the other side of the forest, who was my friend, so I hopped on one leg to him and asked him to help me. He soon made me a new leg out of tin and fastened it cleverly to my meat body. It had joints at the knee and at the ankle and was almost as comfortable as the leg I had lost."

"Your friend must have been a wonderful workman!" exclaimed Woot.

"He was, indeed," admitted the Emperor. "He was a tinsmith by trade and could make anything out of tin. When I returned to Nimmie Amee, the girl was delighted and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me, declaring she was proud of me. The Witch saw the kiss and was more angry than before. When I went to work in the forest, next day, my axe, being still enchanted, slipped and cut off my other leg. Again I hopped — on my tin leg — to my friend the tinsmith, who kindly made me another tin leg and fastened it to my body. So I returned joyfully to Nimmie Amee, who was much pleased with my glittering legs and promised that when we were wed she would always keep them oiled and polished. But the Witch was more furious than ever, and as soon as I raised my axe to chop, it twisted around and cut off one of my arms. The tinsmith made me a tin arm and I was not much worried, because Nimmie Amee declared she still loved me."

The Heart of the Tin Woodman

CHAPTER 2

The Emperor of the Winkies paused in his story to reach for an oil-can, with which he carefully oiled the joints in his tin throat, for his voice had begun to squeak a little. Woot the Wanderer, having satisfied his hunger, watched this oiling process with much curiosity, but begged the Tin Man to go on with his tale.

"The Witch with the Silver Shoes hated me for having defied her," resumed the Emperor, his voice now sounding clear as a bell, "and she insisted that Nimmie Amee should never marry me. Therefore she made the enchanted axe cut off my other arm, and the tinsmith also replaced that member with tin, including these finely-jointed hands that you see me using. But, alas! after that, the axe, still enchanted by the cruel Witch, cut my body in two, so that I fell to the ground. Then the Witch, who was watching from a near-by bush, rushed up and seized the axe and chopped my body into several small pieces, after which, thinking that at last she had destroyed me, she ran away laughing in wicked glee.

"But Nimmie Amee found me. She picked up my arms and legs and head, and made a bundle of them and carried them to the tinsmith, who set to work and made me a fine body of pure tin. When he had joined the arms and legs to the body, and set my head in the tin collar, I was a much better man than ever, for my body could not ache or pain me, and I was so beautiful and bright that I had no need of clothing. Clothing is always a nuisance, because it soils and tears and has to be replaced; but my tin body only needs to be oiled and polished.

"Nimmie Amee still declared she would marry me, as she still loved me in spite of the Witch's evil deeds. The girl declared I would make the brightest husband in all the world, which was quite true. However, the Wicked Witch was not yet defeated. When I returned to my work the axe slipped and cut off my head, which was the only meat part of me then remaining. Moreover, the old woman grabbed up my severed head and carried it away with her and hid it. But Nimmie Amee came into the forest and found me wandering around helplessly, because I could not see where to go, and she led me to my friend the tinsmith. The faithful fellow at once set to work to make me a tin head, and he had just completed it when Nimmie Amee came running up with my old head, which she had stolen from the Witch. But, on reflection, I

considered the tin head far superior to the meat one — I am wearing it yet, so you can see its beauty and grace of outline — and the girl agreed with me that a man all made of tin was far more perfect than one formed of different materials. The tinsmith was as proud of his workmanship as I was, and for three whole days, all admired me and praised my beauty.

"Being now completely formed of tin, I had no more fear of the Wicked Witch, for she was powerless to injure me. Nimmie Amee said we must be married at once, for then she could come to my cottage and live with me and keep me bright and sparkling.

"'I am sure, my dear Nick,' said the brave and beautiful girl — my name was then Nick Chopper, you should be told — 'that you will make the best husband any girl could have. I shall not be obliged to cook for you, for now you do not eat; I shall not have to make your bed, for tin does not tire or require sleep; when we go to a dance, you will not get weary before the music stops and say you want to go home. All day long, while you are chopping wood in the forest, I shall be able to amuse myself in my own way — a privilege few wives enjoy. There is no temper in your new head, so you will not get angry with me. Finally, I shall take pride in being the wife of the only live Tin Woodman in all the world!' Which shows that Nimmie Amee was as wise as she was brave and beautiful."

"I think she was a very nice girl," said Woot the Wanderer. "But, tell me, please, why were you not killed when you were chopped to pieces?"

"In the Land of Oz," replied the Emperor, "no one can ever be killed. A man with a wooden leg or a tin leg is still the same man; and, as I lost parts of my meat body by degrees, I always remained the same person as in the beginning, even though in the end I was all tin and no meat."

"I see," said the boy, thoughtfully. "And did you marry Nimmie Amee?"

"No," answered the Tin Woodman, "I did not. She said she still loved me, but I found that I no longer loved her. My tin body contained no heart, and without a heart no one can love. So the Wicked Witch conquered in the end, and when I left the Munchkin Country of Oz, the poor girl was still the slave of the Witch and had to do her bidding day and night."

"Where did you go?" asked Woot.

"Well, I first started out to find a heart, so I could love Nimmie Amee again; but hearts are more scarce than one would think. One day, in a big forest that was strange to me, my joints suddenly became rusted, because I had forgotten to oil them. There I stood, unable to move hand or foot. And there I continued to stand — while days came and went — until Dorothy and the Scarecrow came along and rescued me. They oiled my joints and set me free, and I've taken good care never to rust again."31

“Who was this Dorothy?” questioned the Wanderer.

“A little girl who happened to be in a house when it was carried by a cyclone all the way from Kansas to the Land of Oz. When the house fell, in the Munchkin Country, it fortunately landed on the Wicked Witch and smashed her flat. It was a big house, and I think the Witch is under it yet.”

“No,” said the Scarecrow, correcting him, “Dorothy says the Witch turned to dust, and the wind scattered the dust in every direction.”

“Well,” continued the Tin Woodman, “after meeting the Scarecrow and Dorothy, I went with them to the Emerald City, where the Wizard of Oz gave me a heart. But the Wizard’s stock of hearts was low, and he gave me a Kind Heart instead of a Loving Heart, so that I could not love Nimmie Amee any more than I did when I was heartless.”

“Couldn’t the Wizard give you a heart that was both Kind and Loving?” asked the boy.

“No; that was what I asked for, but he said he was so short on hearts, just then, that there was but one in stock, and I could take that or none at all. So I accepted it, and I must say that for its kind it is a very good heart indeed.”32

“It seems to me,” said Woot, musingly, “that the Wizard fooled you. It can’t be a very Kind Heart, you know.”

“Why not?” demanded the Emperor.

“Because it was unkind of you to desert the girl who loved you, and who had been faithful and true to you when you were in trouble. Had the heart the Wizard gave you been a Kind Heart, you would have gone back home and made the beautiful Munchkin girl your wife, and then brought her here to be an Empress and live in your splendid tin castle.”

The Tin Woodman was so surprised at this frank speech that for a time he did nothing but stare hard at the boy Wanderer. But the Scarecrow wagged his stuffed head and said in a positive tone:

“This boy is right. I’ve often wondered, myself, why you didn’t go back and find that poor Munchkin girl.”

Then the Tin Woodman stared hard at his friend the Scarecrow. But finally he said in a serious tone of voice:

“I must admit that never before have I thought of such a thing as finding Nimmie Amee and making her Empress of the Winkies. But it is surely not too late, even now, to do this, for the girl must still be living in the Munchkin Country. And, since this strange Wanderer has reminded me of Nimmie Amee, I believe it is my duty to set out and find her. Surely it is not the girl’s fault that I no longer love her, and so, if I can make her happy, it is proper that I should do so, and in this way reward her for her faithfulness.”

"Quite right, my friend!" agreed the Scarecrow.

"Will you accompany me on this errand?" asked the Tin Emperor.

"Of course," said the Scarecrow.

"And will you take me along?" pleaded Woot the Wanderer in an eager voice.

"To be sure," said the Tin Woodman, "if you care to join our party. It was you who first told me it was my duty to find and marry Nimmie Amee, and I'd like you to know that Nick Chopper, the Tin Emperor of the Winkies, is a man who never shirks his duty, once it is pointed out to him."

"It ought to be a pleasure, as well as a duty, if the girl is so beautiful," said Woot, well pleased with the idea of the adventure.

"Beautiful things may be admired, if not loved," asserted the Tin Man. "Flowers are beautiful, for instance, but we are not inclined to marry them. Duty, on the contrary, is a bugle call to action, whether you are inclined to act, or not. In this case, I obey the bugle call of duty."

"When shall we start?" inquired the Scarecrow, who was always glad to embark upon a new adventure. "I don't hear any bugle, but when do we go?"

"As soon as we can get ready," answered the Emperor. "I'll call my servants at once and order them to make preparations for our journey."

Roundabout

CHAPTER 3

Woot the Wanderer slept that night in the tin castle of the Emperor of the Winkies and found his tin bed quite comfortable. Early the next morning he rose and took a walk through the gardens, where there were tin fountains and beds of curious tin flowers, and where tin birds perched upon the branches of tin trees and sang songs that sounded like the notes of tin whistles. All these wonders had been made by the clever Winkie tinsmiths, who wound the birds up every morning so that they would move about and sing.

After breakfast the boy went into the throne room, where the Emperor was having his tin joints carefully oiled by a servant, while other servants were stuffing sweet, fresh straw into the body of the Scarecrow.

Woot watched this operation with much interest, for the Scarecrow's body was only a suit of clothes filled with straw. The coat was buttoned tight to keep the packed straw from falling out and a rope was tied around the waist to hold it in shape and prevent the straw from sagging down. The Scarecrow's head was a gunnysack filled with bran, on which the eyes, nose and mouth had been painted. His hands were white cotton gloves stuffed with fine straw. Woot noticed that even when carefully stuffed and patted into shape, the straw man was awkward in his movements and decidedly wobbly on his feet, so the boy wondered if the Scarecrow would be able to travel with them all the way to the forests of the Munchkin Country of Oz.

The preparations made for this important journey were very simple. A knapsack was filled with food and given Woot the Wanderer to carry upon his back, for the food was for his use alone. The Tin Woodman shouldered an axe which was sharp and brightly polished, and the Scarecrow put the Emperor's oil-can in his pocket, that he might oil his friend's joints should they need it.

"Who will govern the Winkie Country during your absence?" asked the boy.

"Why, the Country will run itself," answered the Emperor. "As a matter of fact, my people do not need an Emperor, for Ozma of Oz watches over the welfare of all her subjects, including the Winkies. Like a good many kings and emperors, I have a grand title, but very little real power, which allows me time to amuse myself in my own way. The people of Oz have but one law to obey, which is: 'Behave Yourself,' so it is easy for them to abide by this Law, and you'll notice they behave very well. But it is time for us to be off, and I am eager to start because I suppose that that poor Munchkin girl is anxiously awaiting my coming."

"She's waited a long time already, seems to me," remarked the Scarecrow, as they left the grounds of the castle and followed a path that led eastward.

"True," replied the Tin Woodman; "but I've noticed that the last end of a wait, however long it has been, is the hardest to endure; so I must try to make Nimmie Amee happy as soon as possible."

"Ah; that proves you have a Kind Heart," remarked the Scarecrow, approvingly.

"It's too bad he hasn't a Loving Heart," said Woot. "This Tin Man is going to marry a nice girl through kindness, and not because he loves her, and somehow that doesn't seem quite right."

"Even so, I am not sure it isn't best for the girl," said the Scarecrow, who seemed very intelligent for a straw man, "for a loving husband is not always

kind, while a kind husband is sure to make any girl content."

"Nimmie Amee will become an Empress!" announced the Tin Woodman, proudly. "I shall have a tin gown made for her, with tin ruffles and tucks on it, and she shall have tin slippers, and tin earrings and bracelets, and wear a tin crown on her head. I am sure that will delight Nimmie Amee, for all girls are fond of finery."

"Are we going to the Munchkin Country by way of the Emerald City?" inquired the Scarecrow, who looked upon the Tin Woodman as the leader of the party.

"I think not," was the reply. "We are engaged upon a rather delicate adventure, for we are seeking a girl who fears her former lover has forgotten her. It will be rather hard for me, you must admit, when I confess to Nimmie Amee that I have come to marry her because it is my duty to do so, and therefore the fewer witnesses there are to our meeting the better for both of us. After I have found Nimmie Amee and she has managed to control her joy at our reunion, I shall take her to the Emerald City and introduce her to Ozma and Dorothy, and to Betsy Bobbin and Tiny Trot, and all our other friends; but, if I remember rightly, poor Nimmie Amee has a sharp tongue when angry, and she may be a trifle angry with me, at first, because I have been so long in coming to her."

"I can understand that," said Woot gravely. "But how can we get to that part of the Munchkin Country where you once lived without passing through the Emerald City?"

"Why, that is easy," the Tin Man assured him.

"I have a map of Oz in my pocket," persisted the boy, "and it shows that the Winkie Country, where we now are, is at the west of Oz, and the Munchkin Country at the east, while directly between them lies the Emerald City."

"True enough; but we shall go toward the north, first of all, into the Gillikin Country, and so pass around the Emerald City," explained the Tin Woodman.

"That may prove a dangerous journey," replied the boy. "I used to live in one of the top corners of the Gillikin Country, near to Oogaboo, and I have been told that in this northland country are many people whom it is not pleasant to meet. I was very careful to avoid them during my journey south."

"A Wanderer should have no fear," observed the Scarecrow, who was wabbling along in a funny, haphazard manner, but keeping pace with his friends.

"Fear does not make one a coward," returned Woot, growing a little red in the face, "but I believe it is more easy to avoid danger than to overcome it. The safest way is the best way, even for one who is brave and determined."42

"Do not worry, for we shall not go far to the north," said the Emperor. "My one idea is to avoid the Emerald City without going out of our way more than is necessary. Once around the Emerald City we will turn south into the Munchkin Country, where the Scarecrow and I are well acquainted and have many friends."

"I have traveled some in the Gillikin Country," remarked the Scarecrow, "and while I must say I have met some strange people there at times, I have never yet been harmed by them."

"Well, it's all the same to me," said Woot, with assumed carelessness. "Dangers, when they cannot be avoided, are often quite interesting, and I am willing to go wherever you two venture to go."

So they left the path they had been following and began to travel toward the northeast, and all that day they were in the pleasant Winkie Country, and all the people they met saluted the Emperor with great respect and wished him good luck on his journey. At night they stopped at a house where they were well entertained and where Woot was given a comfortable bed to sleep in.

"Were the Scarecrow and I alone," said the Tin Woodman, "we would travel by night as well as by day; but with a meat person in our party, we

must halt at night to permit him to rest."

"Meat tires, after a day's travel," added the Scarecrow, "while straw and tin never tire at all. Which proves," said he, "that we are somewhat superior to people made in the common way."

Woot could not deny that he was tired, and he slept soundly until morning, when he was given a good breakfast, smoking hot.

"You two miss a great deal by not eating," he said to his companions.

"It is true," responded the Scarecrow. "We miss suffering from hunger, when food cannot be had, and we miss a stomach-ache, now and then."

As he said this, the Scarecrow glanced at the Tin Woodman, who nodded his assent.

All that second day they traveled steadily, entertaining one another the while with stories of adventures they had formerly met and listening to the Scarecrow recite poetry. He had learned a great many poems from Professor Wogglebug and loved to repeat them whenever anybody would listen to him. Of course Woot and the Tin Woodman now listened, because they could not do otherwise — unless they rudely ran away from their stuffed comrade.

One of the Scarecrow's recitations was like this:

"What sound is so sweet As the straw from the wheat When it crunkles so tender and low? It is yellow and bright, So it gives me delight To crunkle wherever I go.

"Sweet, fresh, golden Straw! There is surely no flaw In a stuffing so clean and compact. It creaks when I walk, And it thrills when I talk, And its fragrance is fine, for a fact.

"To cut me don't hurt, For I've no blood to squirt, And I therefore can suffer no pain; The straw that I use Doesn't lump up or bruise, Though it's pounded again and again!

"I know it is said That my beautiful head Has brains of mixed wheat-straw and bran, But my thoughts are so good I'd not change, if I could, For the brains of a common meat man.

"Content with my lot, I'm glad that I'm not Like others I meet day by day; If my insides get musty, Or mussed-up, or dusty, I get newly stuffed right away."

The Loons of Loonville

CHAPTER 4

Toward evening, the travelers found there was no longer a path to guide them, and the purple hues of the grass and trees warned them that they were now in the Country of the Gillikins, where strange peoples dwelt in places that were quite unknown to the other inhabitants of Oz. The fields were wild and uncultivated and there were no houses of any sort to be seen. But our friends kept on walking even after the sun went down, hoping to find a good place for Woot the Wanderer to sleep; but when it grew quite dark and the boy was weary with his long walk, they halted right in the middle of a field and allowed Woot to get his supper from the food he carried in his knapsack. Then the Scarecrow laid himself down, so that Woot could use his stuffed body as a pillow, and the Tin Woodman stood up beside them all night, so the dampness of the ground might not rust his joints or dull his brilliant polish. Whenever the dew settled on his body he carefully wiped it off with a cloth, and so in the morning the Emperor shone as brightly as ever in the rays of the rising sun.

They wakened the boy at daybreak, the Scarecrow saying to him:

"We have discovered something queer, and therefore we must counsel together what to do about it."

"What have you discovered?" asked Woot, rubbing the sleep from his eyes with his knuckles and giving three wide yawns to prove he was fully awake.

"A Sign," said the Tin Woodman. "A Sign, and another path."48

"What does the Sign say?" inquired the boy.

"It says that 'All Strangers are Warned not to Follow this Path to Loonville,'" answered the Scarecrow, who could read very well when his eyes had been freshly painted.

"In that case," said the boy, opening his knapsack to get some breakfast, "let us travel in some other direction."

But this did not seem to please either of his companions.

"I'd like to see what Loonville looks like," remarked the Tin Woodman.

"When one travels, it is foolish to miss any interesting sight," added the Scarecrow.

"But a warning means danger," protested Woot the Wanderer, "and I believe it sensible to keep out of danger whenever we can."

They made no reply to this speech for a while. Then said the Scarecrow:

"I have escaped so many dangers, during my lifetime, that I am not much afraid of anything that can happen."

"Nor am I!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman, swinging his glittering axe around his tin head, in a series of circles. "Few things can injure tin, and my axe is a powerful weapon to use against a foe. But our boy friend," he continued, looking solemnly at Woot, "might perhaps be injured if the people of Loonville are really dangerous; so I propose he waits here while you and I, Friend Scarecrow, visit the forbidden City of Loonville."

"Don't worry about me," advised Woot, calmly. "Wherever you wish to go, I will go, and share your dangers. During my wanderings I have found it more wise to keep out of danger than to venture in, but at that time I was alone, and now I have two powerful friends to protect me."

So, when he had finished his breakfast, they all set out along the path that led to Loonville.

"It is a place I have never heard of before," remarked the Scarecrow, as they approached a dense forest. "The inhabitants may be people, of some sort, or they may be animals, but whatever they prove to be, we will have an interesting story to relate to Dorothy and Ozma on our return."

The path led into the forest, but the big trees grew so closely together and the vines and underbrush were so thick and matted that they had to clear a path at each step in order to proceed. In one or two places the Tin Man, who went first to clear the way, cut the branches with a blow of his axe. Woot followed next, and last of the three came the Scarecrow, who could not have kept the path at all had not his comrades broken the way for his straw-stuffed body.

Presently the Tin Woodman pushed his way through some heavy underbrush, and almost tumbled headlong into a vast cleared space in the forest. The clearing was circular, big and roomy, yet the top branches of the tall trees reached over and formed a complete dome or roof for it. Strangely enough, it was not dark in this immense natural chamber in the woodland, for the place glowed with a soft, white light that seemed to come from some unseen source.

In the chamber were grouped dozens of queer creatures, and these so astonished the Tin Man that Woot had to push his metal body aside, that he might see, too. And the Scarecrow pushed Woot aside, so that the three travelers stood in a row, staring with all their eyes.

The creatures they beheld were round and ball-like; round in body, round in legs and arms, round in hands and feet and round of head. The only exception to the roundness was a slight hollow on the top of each head, making it saucer-shaped instead of dome-shaped. They wore no clothes on their puffy bodies, nor had they any hair. Their skins were all of a light gray color, and their eyes were mere purple spots. Their noses were as puffy as the rest of them.

"Are they rubber, do you think?" asked the Scarecrow, who noticed that the creatures bounded, as they moved, and seemed almost as light as air.

"It is difficult to tell what they are," answered Woot, "they seem to be covered with warts."52

The Loons — for so these folks were called — had been doing many things, some playing together, some working at tasks and some gathered in groups to talk; but at the sound of strange voices, which echoed rather loudly through the clearing, all turned in the direction of the intruders. Then, in a body, they all rushed forward, running and bounding with tremendous speed.

The Tin Woodman was so surprised by this sudden dash that he had no time to raise his axe before the Loons were on them. The creatures swung their puffy hands, which looked like boxing-gloves, and pounded the three travelers as hard as they could, on all sides. The blows were quite soft and did not hurt our friends at all, but the onslaught quite bewildered them, so that in a brief period all three were knocked over and fell flat upon the ground. Once down, many of the Loons held them, to prevent their getting up again, while others wound long tendrils of vines about them, binding their arms and legs to their bodies and so rendering them helpless.

"Aha!" cried the biggest Loon of all; "we've got 'em safe; so let's carry 'em to King Bal and have 'em tried, and condemned and perforated!"

They had to drag their captives to the center of the domed chamber, for their weight, as compared with that of the Loons, prevented their being carried. Even the Scarecrow was much heavier than the puffy Loons. But finally the party halted before a raised platform, on which stood a sort of throne, consisting of a big, wide chair with a string tied to one arm of it. This string led upward to the roof of the dome.

Arranged before the platform, the prisoners were allowed to sit up, facing the empty throne.

"Good!" said the big Loon who had commanded the party. "Now to get King Bal to judge these terrible creatures we have so bravely captured."

As he spoke he took hold of the string and began to pull as hard as he could. One or two of the others helped him and pretty soon, as they drew in the cord, the leaves above them parted and a Loon appeared at the other end of the string. It didn't take long to draw him down to the throne, where he seated himself and was tied in, so he wouldn't float upward again.

"Hello," said the King, blinking his purple eyes at his followers; "what's up now!"

"Strangers, your Majesty — strangers and captives," replied the big Loon, pompously.

"Dear me! I see 'em. I see 'em very plainly," exclaimed the King, his purple eyes bulging out as he looked at the three prisoners. "What curious animals! Are they dangerous, do you think, my good Panta?"

"I'm 'fraid so, your Majesty. Of course, they may *not* be dangerous, but we mustn't take chances. Enough accidents happen to us poor Loons as it is, and my advice is to condemn and perforate 'em as quickly as possible."

"Keep your advice to yourself," said the monarch, in a peeved tone. "Who's King here, anyhow? You or Me?"

"We made you our King because you have less common sense than the rest of us," answered Panta Loon, indignantly. "I could have been King

myself, had I wanted to, but I didn't care for the hard work and responsibility."

As he said this, the big Loon strutted back and forth in the space between the throne of King Bal and the prisoners, and the other Loons seemed much impressed by his defiance. But suddenly there came a sharp report and Panta Loon instantly disappeared, to the great astonishment of the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and Woot the Wanderer, who saw on the spot where the big fellow had stood a little heap of flabby, wrinkled skin that looked like a collapsed rubber balloon.

"There!" exclaimed the King; "I expected that would happen. The conceited rascal wanted to puff himself up until he was bigger than the rest of you, and this is the result of his folly. Get the pump working, some of you, and blow him up again."

"We will have to mend the puncture first, your Majesty," suggested one of the Loons, and the prisoners noticed that none of them seemed surprised or shocked at the sad accident to Panta.

"All right," grumbled the King. "Fetch Til to mend him."

One or two ran away and presently returned, followed by a lady Loon wearing huge, puffed-up rubber skirts. Also she had a purple feather fastened to a wart on the top of her head, and around her waist was a sash of fibre-like vines, dried and tough, that looked like strings.

"Get to work, Til," commanded King Bal. "Panta has just exploded."

The lady Loon picked up the bunch of skin and examined it carefully until she discovered a hole in one foot. Then she pulled a strand of string from her sash, and drawing the edges of the hole together, she tied them fast with the string, thus making one of those curious warts which the strangers had noticed on so many Loons. Having done this, Til Loon tossed the bit of skin to the other Loons and was about to go away when she noticed the prisoners and stopped to inspect them.

"Dear me!" said Til; "what dreadful creatures. Where did they come from?"

"We captured them," replied one of the Loons.

"And what are we going to do with them?" inquired the girl Loon.

"Perhaps we'll condemn 'em and puncture 'em," answered the King.

"Well," said she, still eyeing the captives, "I'm not sure they'll puncture. Let's try it, and see."

One of the Loons ran to the forest's edge and quickly returned with a long, sharp thorn. He glanced at the King, who nodded his head in assent, and then he rushed forward and stuck the thorn into the leg of the Scarecrow. The Scarecrow merely smiled and said nothing, for the thorn didn't hurt him

at all.

Then the Loon tried to prick the Tin Woodman's leg, but the tin only blunted the point of the thorn. 57

"Just as I thought," said Til, blinking her purple eyes and shaking her puffy head; but just then the Loon stuck the thorn into the leg of Woot the Wanderer, and while it had been blunted somewhat, it was still sharp enough to hurt.

"Ouch!" yelled Woot, and kicked out his leg with so much energy that the frail bonds that tied him burst apart. His foot caught the Loon — who was leaning over him — full on his puffy stomach, and sent him shooting up into the air. When he was high over their heads he exploded with a loud "pop"

and his skin fell to the ground.

"I really believe," said the King, rolling his spot-like eyes in a frightened way, "that Panta was right in claiming these prisoners are dangerous. Is the pump ready?"

Some of the Loons had wheeled a big machine in front of the throne and now took Panta's skin and began to pump air into it. Slowly it swelled out until the King cried "Stop!"

"No, no!" yelled Panta, "I'm not big enough yet."

"You're as big as you're going to be," declared the King. "Before you exploded you were bigger than the rest of us, and that caused you to be proud and overbearing. Now you're a little smaller than the rest, and you will last longer and be more humble."59

"Pump me up — pump me up!" wailed Panta. "If you don't you'll break my heart."

"If we do we'll break your skin," replied the King.

So the Loons stopped pumping air into Panta, and pushed him away from the pump. He was certainly more humble than before his accident, for he crept into the background and said nothing more.

"Now pump up the other one," ordered the King. Til had already mended him, and the Loons set to work to pump him full of air.

During these last few moments none had paid much attention to the prisoners, so Woot, finding his legs free, crept over to the Tin Woodman and rubbed the bonds that were still around his arms and body against the sharp edge of the axe, which quickly cut them.

The boy was now free, and the thorn which the Loon had stuck into his leg was lying unnoticed on the ground, where the creature had dropped it when he exploded. Woot leaned forward and picked up the thorn, and while the Loons were busy watching the pump, the boy sprang to his feet and suddenly rushed upon the group.

"Pop" — "pop" — "pop!" went three of the Loons, when the Wanderer pricked them with his thorn, and at the sounds the others looked around and saw their danger. With yells of fear they bounded away in all directions, scattering about the clearing, with Woot the Wanderer in full chase. While they could run much faster than the boy, they often stumbled and fell, or got in one another's way, so he managed to catch several and prick them with his thorn.

It astonished him to see how easily the Loons exploded. When the air was let out of them they were quite helpless. Til Loon was one of those who ran against his thorn and many others suffered the same fate. The creatures could not escape from the enclosure, but in their fright many bounded upward and caught branches of the trees, and then climbed out of reach of the dreaded thorn.

Woot was getting pretty tired chasing them, so he stopped and came over, panting, to where his friends were sitting, still bound.

"Very well done, my Wanderer," said the Tin Woodman. "It is evident that we need fear these puffed-up creatures no longer, so be kind enough to unfasten our bonds and we will proceed upon our journey."

Woot untied the bonds of the Scarecrow and helped him to his feet. Then he freed the Tin Woodman, who got up without help. Looking around them, they saw that the only Loon now remaining within reach was Bal Loon, the King, who had remained seated in his throne, watching the punishment of his people with a bewildered look in his purple eyes.

"Shall I puncture the King?" the boy asked his companions. 62

King Bal must have overheard the question, for he fumbled with the cord that fastened him to the throne and managed to release it. Then he floated upward until he reached the leafy dome, and parting the branches he disappeared from sight. But the string that was tied to his body was still connected with the arm of the throne, and they knew they could pull his Majesty down again, if they wanted to.

"Let him alone," suggested the Scarecrow. "He seems a good enough king for his peculiar people, and after we are gone, the Loons will have something of a job to pump up all those whom Woot has punctured."

"Every one of them ought to be exploded," declared Woot, who was angry because his leg still hurt him.

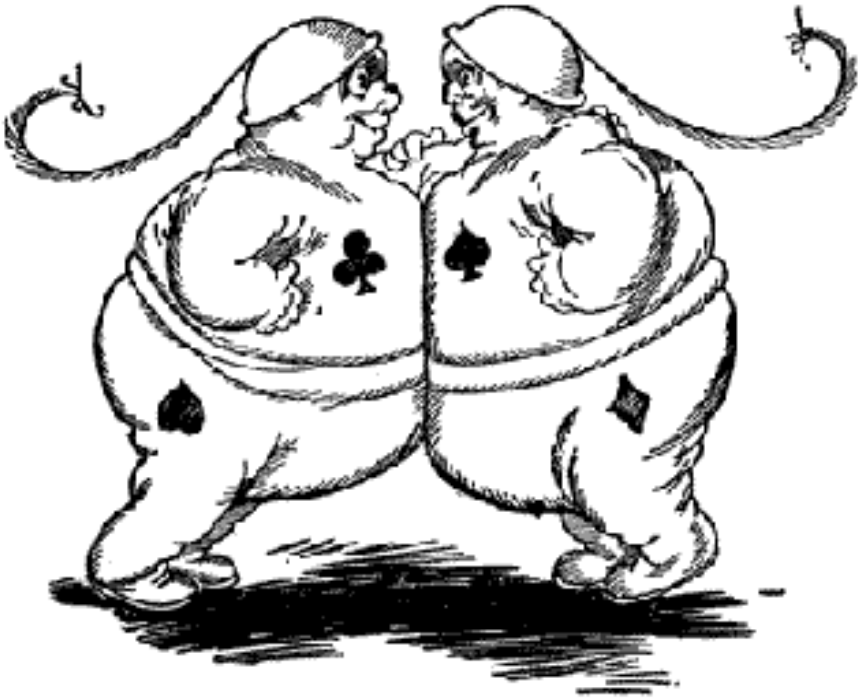
"No," said the Tin Woodman, "that would not be just fair. They were quite right to capture us, because we had no business to intrude here, having been warned to keep away from Loonville. This is their country, not ours, and since the poor things can't get out of the clearing, they can harm no one save those who venture here out of curiosity, as we did."

"Well said, my friend," agreed the Scarecrow. "We really had no right to disturb their peace and comfort; so let us go away."

They easily found the place where they had forced their way into the enclosure, so the Tin Woodman pushed aside the underbrush and started first along the path. The Scarecrow followed next and last came Woot, who looked back and saw that the Loons were still clinging to their perches on the

trees and watching their former captives with frightened eyes.

"I guess they're glad to see the last of us," remarked the boy, and laughing at the happy ending of the adventure, he followed his comrades along the path.



Mrs. Yoop, the Giantess

CHAPTER 5

When they had reached the end of the path, where they had first seen the warning sign, they set off across the country in an easterly direction. Before long they reached Rolling Lands, which were a succession of hills and valleys where constant climbs and descents were required, and their journey now became tedious, because on climbing each hill, they found before them nothing in the valley below it — except grass, or weeds or stones.

Up and down they went for hours, with nothing to relieve the monotony of the landscape, until finally, when they had topped a higher hill than usual, they discovered a cup-shaped valley before them in the center of which stood an enormous castle, built of purple stone. The castle was high and broad and long, but had no turrets and towers. So far as they could see, there was but one small window and one big door on each side of the great building.

"This is strange!" mused the Scarecrow. "I'd no idea such a big castle existed in this Gillikin Country. I wonder who lives here?"

"It seems to me, from this distance," remarked the Tin Woodman, "that it's the biggest castle I ever saw. It is really too big for any use, and no one could open or shut those big doors without a stepladder."

"Perhaps, if we go nearer, we shall find out whether anybody lives there or not," suggested Woot. "Looks to me as if nobody lived there."

On they went, and when they reached the center of the valley, where the great stone castle stood, it was beginning to grow dark. So they hesitated as to what to do.

"If friendly people happen to live here," said Woot, "I shall be glad of a bed; but should enemies occupy the place, I prefer to sleep upon the ground."

"And if no one at all lives here," added the Scarecrow, "we can enter, and take possession, and make ourselves at home."

While speaking he went nearer to one of the great doors, which was three times as high and broad as any he had ever seen in a house before, and then he discovered, engraved in big letters upon a stone over the doorway, the words:

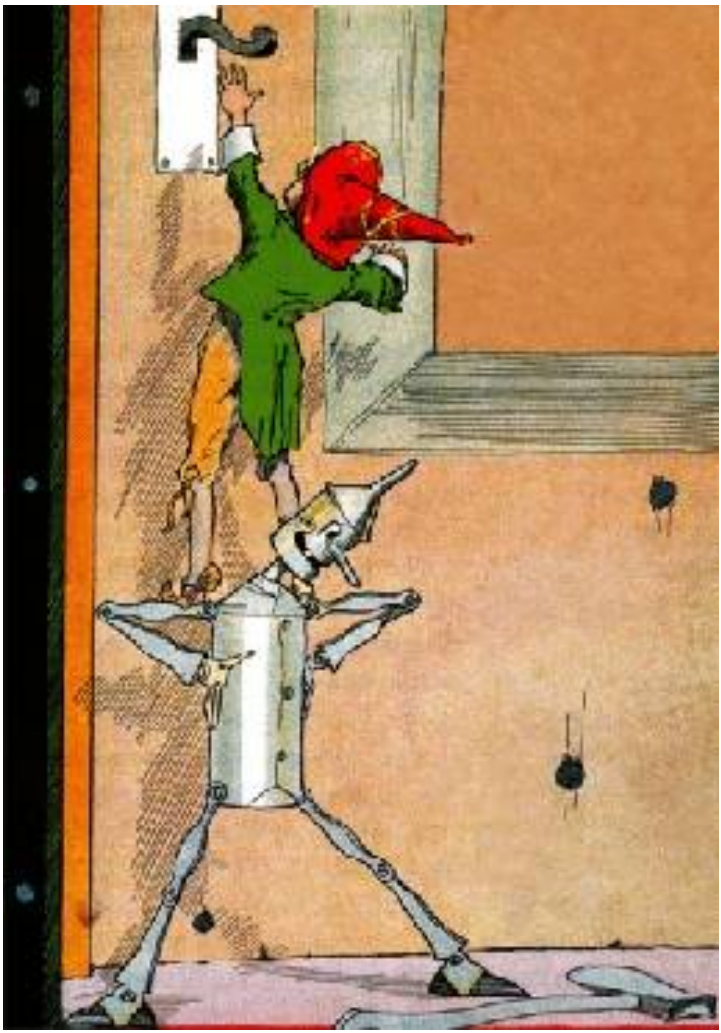
"YOOP CASTLE"

"Oho!" he exclaimed; "I know the place now. This was probably the home of Mr. Yoop, a terrible giant whom I have seen confined in a cage, a long way from here. Therefore this castle is likely to be empty and we may use it in any way we please."

"Yes, yes," said the Tin Emperor, nodding; "I also remember Mr. Yoop. But how are we to get into his deserted castle? The latch of the door is so far

above our heads that none of us can reach it."

They considered this problem for a while, and then Woot said to the Tin Man:



"If I stand upon your shoulders, I think I can unlatch the door."

"Climb up, then," was the reply, and when the boy was perched upon the tin shoulders of Nick Chopper, he was just able to reach the latch and raise it.

At once the door swung open, its great hinges making a groaning sound as if in protest, so Woot leaped down and followed his companions into a big, bare hallway. Scarcely were the three inside, however, when they heard the door slam shut behind them, and this astonished them because no one had touched it. It had closed of its own accord, as if by magic. Moreover, the

latch was on the outside, and the thought occurred to each one of them that they were now prisoners in this unknown castle.

"However," mumbled the Scarecrow, "we are not to blame for what cannot be helped; so let us push bravely ahead and see what may be seen."

It was quite dark in the hallway, now that the outside door was shut, so as they stumbled along a stone passage they kept close together, not knowing what danger was likely to befall them.

Suddenly a soft glow enveloped them. It grew brighter, until they could see their surroundings distinctly. They had reached the end of the passage and before them was another huge door. This noiselessly swung open before them, without the help of anyone, and through the doorway they observed a big chamber, the walls of which were lined with plates of pure gold, highly polished.

This room was also lighted, although they could discover no lamps, and in the center of it was a great table at which sat an immense woman. She was clad in silver robes embroidered with gay floral designs, and wore over this splendid raiment a short apron of elaborate lace-work. Such an apron was no protection, and was not in keeping with the handsome gown, but the huge woman wore it, nevertheless. The table at which she sat was spread with a white cloth and had golden dishes upon it, so the travelers saw that they had surprised the Giantess while she was eating her supper.

She had her back toward them and did not even turn around, but taking a biscuit from a dish she began to butter it and said in a voice that was big and deep but not especially unpleasant:

"Why don't you come in and allow the door to shut? You're causing a draught, and I shall catch cold and sneeze. When I sneeze, I get cross, and when I get cross I'm liable to do something wicked. Come in, you foolish strangers; come in!"

Being thus urged, they entered the room and approached the table, until they stood where they faced the great Giantess. She continued eating, but smiled in a curious way as she looked at them. Woot noticed that the door had closed silently after they had entered, and that didn't please him at all.

"Well," said the Giantess, "what excuse have you to offer?"

"We didn't know anyone lived here, Madam," explained the Scarecrow; "so, being travelers and strangers in these parts, and wishing to find a place for our boy friend to sleep, we ventured to enter your castle."

"You knew it was private property, I suppose?" said she, buttering another biscuit.

"We saw the words, 'Yoop Castle,' over the door, but we knew that Mr. Yoop is a prisoner in a cage in a far-off part of the land of Oz, so we decided

there was no one now at home and that we might use the castle for the night."

"I see," remarked the Giantess, nodding her head and smiling again in that curious way — a way that made Woot shudder. "You didn't know that Mr. Yoop was married, or that after he was cruelly captured his wife still lived in his castle, and ran it to suit herself."

"Who captured Mr. Yoop?" asked Woot, looking gravely at the big woman.

"Wicked enemies. People who selfishly objected to Yoop's taking their cows and sheep for his food. I must admit, however, that Yoop had a bad temper, and had the habit of knocking over a few houses, now and then, when he was angry. So one day the little folks came in a great crowd and captured Mr. Yoop, and carried him away to a cage somewhere in the mountains. I don't know where it is, and I don't care, for my husband treated me badly at times, forgetting the respect a giant owes to a giantess. Often he kicked me on my shins, when I wouldn't wait on him. So I'm glad he is gone."

"It's a wonder the people didn't capture you, too," remarked Woot.

"Well, I was too clever for them," said she, giving a sudden laugh that caused such a breeze that the wobbly Scarecrow was almost blown off his feet and had to grab his friend Nick Chopper to steady himself. "I saw the people coming," continued Mrs. Yoop, "and knowing they meant mischief I transformed myself into a mouse and hid in a cupboard. After they had gone away, carrying my shin-kicking husband with them, I transformed myself back to my former shape again, and here I've lived in peace and comfort ever since."

"Are you a Witch, then?" inquired Woot.

"Well, not exactly a Witch," she replied, "but I'm an Artist in Transformations. In other words, I'm more of a Yookoohoo than a Witch, and of course you know that the Yookoohoos are the cleverest magic-workers in the world."

The travelers were silent for a time, uneasily considering this statement and the effect it might have on their future. No doubt the Giantess had wilfully made them her prisoners; yet she spoke so cheerfully, in her big voice, that until now they had not been alarmed in the least.

By and by the Scarecrow, whose mixed brains had been working steadily, asked the woman:

"Are we to consider you our friend, Mrs. Yoop, or do you intend to be our enemy?"

"I never have friends," she said in a matter-of-fact tone, "because friends

get too familiar and always forget to mind their own business. But I am not your enemy; not yet, anyhow. Indeed, I'm glad you've come, for my life here is rather lonely. I've had no one to talk to since I transformed Polychrome, the Daughter of the Rainbow, into a canary-bird."

"How did you manage to do that?" asked the Tin Woodman, in amazement. "Polychrome is a powerful fairy!"

"She *was*," said the Giantess; "but now she's a canary-bird. One day after a rain, Polychrome danced off the Rainbow and fell asleep on a little mound in this valley, not far from my castle. The sun came out and drove the Rainbow away, and before Poly wakened, I stole out and transformed her into a canary-bird in a gold cage studded with diamonds. The cage was so she couldn't fly away. I expected she'd sing and talk and we'd have good times together; but she has proved no company for me at all. Ever since the moment of her transformation, she has refused to speak a single word."

"Where is she now?" inquired Woot, who had heard tales of lovely Polychrome and was much interested in her.

"The cage is hanging up in my bedroom," said the Giantess, eating another biscuit.

The travelers were now more uneasy and suspicious of the Giantess than before. If Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter, who was a real fairy, had been transformed and enslaved by this huge woman, who claimed to be a Yookoohoo, what was liable to happen to *them*? Said the Scarecrow, twisting his stuffed head around in Mrs. Yoop's direction:

"Do you know, Ma'am, who we are?"

"Of course," said she; "a straw man, a tin man and a boy."

"We are very important people," declared the Tin Woodman.

"All the better," she replied. "I shall enjoy your society the more on that account. For I mean to keep you here as long as I live, to amuse me when I get lonely. And," she added slowly, "in this Valley no one ever dies."

They didn't like this speech at all, so the Scarecrow frowned in a way that made Mrs. Yoop smile, while the Tin Woodman looked so fierce that Mrs. Yoop laughed. The Scarecrow suspected she was going to laugh, so he slipped behind his friends to escape the wind from her breath. From this safe position he said warningly:

"We have powerful friends who will soon come to rescue us." 76

"Let them come," she returned, with an accent of scorn. "When they get here they will find neither a boy, nor a tin man, nor a scarecrow, for tomorrow morning I intend to transform you all into other shapes, so that you cannot be recognized."

This threat filled them with dismay. The good-natured Giantess was more terrible than they had imagined. She could smile and wear pretty clothes and at the same time be even more cruel than her wicked husband had been.

Both the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman tried to think of some way to escape from the castle before morning, but she seemed to read their thoughts and shook her head.

"Don't worry your poor brains," said she. "You can't escape me, however hard you try. But why should you wish to escape? I shall give you new forms that are much better than the ones you now have. Be contented with your fate, for discontent leads to unhappiness, and unhappiness, in any form, is the greatest evil that can befall you."

"What forms do you intend to give us?" asked Woot earnestly.

"I haven't decided, as yet. I'll dream over it tonight, so in the morning I shall have made up my mind how to transform you. Perhaps you'd prefer to choose your own transformations?"

"No," said Woot, "I prefer to remain as I am."

"That's funny," she retorted. "You are little, and you're weak; as you are, you're not much account, anyhow. The best thing about you is that you're

alive, for I shall be able to make of you some sort of live creature which will be a great improvement on your present form.”

She took another biscuit from a plate and dipped it in a pot of honey and calmly began eating it.

The Scarecrow watched her thoughtfully.

“There are no fields of grain in your Valley,” said he; “where, then, did you get the flour to make your biscuits?”

“Mercy me! do you think I’d bother to make biscuits out of flour?” she replied. “That is altogether too tedious a process for a Yookoohoo. I set some traps this afternoon and caught a lot of field-mice, but as I do not like to eat mice, I transformed them into hot biscuits for my supper. The honey in this pot was once a wasp’s nest, but since being transformed it has become sweet and delicious. All I need do, when I wish to eat, is to take something I don’t care to keep, and transform it into any sort of food I like, and eat it. Are you hungry?”

“I don’t eat, thank you,” said the Scarecrow.

“Nor do I,” said the Tin Woodman.

“I have still a little natural food in my knapsack,” said Woot the Wanderer, “and I’d rather eat that than any wasp’s nest.”

“Every one to his taste,” said the Giantess carelessly, and having now finished her supper she rose to her feet, clapped her hands together, and the supper table at once disappeared.

The Magic of a Yookoohoo

CHAPTER 6

Woot had seen very little of magic during his wanderings, while the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman had seen a great deal of many sorts in their lives, yet all three were greatly impressed by Mrs. Yoop's powers. She did not affect any mysterious airs or indulge in chants or mystic rites, as most witches do, nor was the Giantess old and ugly or disagreeable in face or manner. Nevertheless, she frightened her prisoners more than any witch could have done.

"Please be seated," she said to them, as she sat herself down in a great arm-chair and spread her beautiful embroidered skirts for them to admire. But all the chairs in the room were so high that our friends could not climb to the seats of them. Mrs. Yoop observed this and waved her hand, when instantly a golden ladder appeared leaning against a chair opposite her own.

"Climb up," said she, and they obeyed, the Tin Man and the boy assisting the more clumsy Scarecrow. When they were all seated in a row on the cushion of the chair, the Giantess continued: "Now tell me how you happened to travel in this direction, and where you came from and what your errand is."

So the Tin Woodman told her all about Nimmie Amee, and how he had decided to find her and marry her, although he had no Loving Heart. The story seemed to amuse the big woman, who then began to ask the Scarecrow questions and for the first time in her life heard of Ozma of Oz, and of Dorothy and Jack Pumpkinhead and Dr. Pipt and Tik-tok and many other Oz people who are well known in the Emerald City. Also Woot had to tell his story, which was very simple and did not take long. The Giantess laughed heartily when the boy related their adventure at Loonville, but said she knew nothing of the Loons because she never left her Valley.

"There are wicked people who would like to capture me, as they did my giant husband, Mr. Yoop," said she; "so I stay at home and mind my own business."

"If Ozma knew that you dared to work magic without her consent, she would punish you severely," declared the Scarecrow, "for this castle is in the Land of Oz, and no persons in the Land of Oz are permitted to work magic except Glinda the Good and the little Wizard who lives with Ozma in the Emerald City."

"*That* for your Ozma!" exclaimed the Giantess, snapping her fingers in derision. "What do I care for a girl whom I have never seen and who has never seen me?"

“But Ozma is a fairy,” said the Tin Woodman, “and therefore she is very powerful. Also, we are under Ozma’s protection, and to injure us in any way would make her extremely angry.”

“What I do here, in my own private castle in this secluded Valley — where no one comes but fools like you — can never be known to your fairy Ozma,” returned the Giantess. “Do not seek to frighten me from my purpose, and do not allow yourselves to be frightened, for it is best to meet bravely what cannot be avoided. I am now going to bed, and in the morning I will give you all new forms, such as will be more interesting to me than the ones you now wear. Good night, and pleasant dreams.”

Saying this, Mrs. Yoop rose from her chair and walked through a doorway into another room. So heavy was the tread of the Giantess that even the walls of the big stone castle trembled as she stepped. She closed the door of her bedroom behind her, and then suddenly the light went out and the three prisoners found themselves in total darkness.

The Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow didn’t mind the dark at all, but Woot the Wanderer felt worried to be left in this strange place in this strange manner, without being able to see any danger that might threaten.

“The big woman might have given me a bed, anyhow,” he said to his companions, and scarcely had he spoken when he felt something press against his legs, which were then dangling from the seat of the chair. Leaning down, he put out his hand and found that a bedstead had appeared, with mattress, sheets and covers, all complete. He lost no time in slipping down upon the bed and was soon fast asleep.

During the night the Scarecrow and the Emperor talked in low tones together, and they got out of the chair and moved all about the room, feeling for some hidden spring that might open a door or window and permit them to escape.

Morning found them still unsuccessful in the quest and as soon as it was daylight Woot’s bed suddenly disappeared, and he dropped to the floor with a thump that quickly wakened him. And after a time the Giantess came from her bedroom, wearing another dress that was quite as elaborate as the one in which she had been attired the evening before, and also wearing the pretty lace apron. Having seated herself in a chair, she said:

“I’m hungry; so I’ll have breakfast at once.”

She clapped her hands together and instantly the table appeared before her, spread with snowy linen and laden with golden dishes. But there was no food upon the table, nor anything else except a pitcher of water, a bundle of weeds and a handful of pebbles. But the Giantess poured some water into her coffee-pot, patted it once or twice with her hand, and then poured out a

cupful of steaming hot coffee.

"Would you like some?" she asked Woot.

He was suspicious of magic coffee, but it smelled so good that he could not resist it; so he answered: "If you please, Madam."

The Giantess poured out another cup and set it on the floor for Woot. It was as big as a tub, and the golden spoon in the saucer beside the cup was so heavy the boy could scarcely lift it. But Woot managed to get a sip of the coffee and found it delicious.

Mrs. Yoop next transformed the weeds into a dish of oatmeal, which she ate with good appetite.

"Now, then," said she, picking up the pebbles, "I'm wondering whether I shall have fish-balls or lamb-chops to complete my meal. Which would you prefer, Woot the Wanderer?"

"If you please, I'll eat the food in my knapsack," answered the boy. "Your magic food might taste good, but I'm afraid of it."

The woman laughed at his fears and transformed the pebbles into fish-balls.

"I suppose you think that after you had eaten this food it would turn to stones again and make you sick," she remarked; "but that would be impossible. *Nothing I transform ever gets back to its former shape again*, so these fish-balls can never more be pebbles. That is why I have to be careful of my transformations," she added, busily eating while she talked, "for while I can change forms at will I can never change them back again — which proves that even the powers of a clever Yookoohoo are limited. When I have transformed you three people, you must always wear the shapes that I have given you."

"Then please don't transform us," begged Woot, "for we are quite satisfied to remain as we are."

“I am not expecting to satisfy you, but intend to please myself,” she declared, “and my pleasure is to give you new shapes. For, if by chance your friends came in search of you, not one of them would be able to recognize you.”

Her tone was so positive that they knew it would be useless to protest. The woman was not unpleasant to look at; her face was not cruel; her voice was big but gracious in tone; but her words showed that she possessed a merciless heart and no pleadings would alter her wicked purpose.

Mrs. Yoop took ample time to finish her breakfast and the prisoners had no desire to hurry her, but finally the meal was concluded and she folded her napkin and made the table disappear by clapping her hands together. Then she turned to her captives and said:

“The next thing on the programme is to change your forms.”

“Have you decided what forms to give us?” asked the Scarecrow, uneasily.

“Yes; I dreamed it all out while I was asleep. This Tin Man seems a very solemn person” — indeed, the Tin Woodman *was* looking solemn, just then, for he was greatly disturbed — ”so I shall change him into an Owl.”

All she did was to point one finger at him as she spoke, but immediately the form of the Tin Woodman began to change and in a few seconds Nick Chopper, the Emperor of the Winkies, had been transformed into an Owl, with eyes as big as saucers and a hooked beak and strong claws. But he was still tin. He was a Tin Owl, with tin legs and beak and eyes and feathers. When he flew to the back of a chair and perched upon it, his tin feathers rattled against one another with a tinny clatter.

The Giantess seemed much amused by the Tin Owl’s appearance, for her laugh was big and jolly.

“You’re not liable to get lost,” said she, “for your wings and feathers will make a racket wherever you go. And, on my word, a Tin Owl is so rare and pretty that it is an improvement on the ordinary bird. I did not intend to make you tin, but I forgot to wish you to be meat. However, tin you were, and tin you are, and as it’s too late to change you, that settles it.”

Until now the Scarecrow had rather doubted the possibility of Mrs. Yoop’s being able to transform him, or his friend the Tin Woodman, for they were not made as ordinary people are. He had worried more over what might happen to Woot than to himself, but now he began to worry about himself.

“Madam,” he said hastily, “I consider this action very impolite. It may even be called rude, considering we are your guests.”

“You are not guests, for I did not invite you here,” she replied.

“Perhaps not; but we craved hospitality. We threw ourselves upon your

mercy, so to speak, and we now find you have no mercy. Therefore, if you will excuse the expression, I must say it is downright wicked to take our proper forms away from us and give us others that we do not care for."

"Are you trying to make me angry?" she asked, frowning.

"By no means," said the Scarecrow; "I'm just trying to make you act more ladylike."

"Oh, indeed! In *my* opinion, Mr. Scarecrow, you are now acting like a bear — so a Bear you shall be!"

Again the dreadful finger pointed, this time in the Scarecrow's direction, and at once his form began to change. In a few seconds he had become a small Brown Bear, but he was stuffed with straw as he had been before, and when the little Brown Bear shuffled across the floor he was just as wobbly as the Scarecrow had been and moved just as awkwardly.

Woot was amazed, but he was also thoroughly frightened.

"Did it hurt?" he asked the little Brown Bear.

"No, of course not," growled the Scarecrow in the Bear's form; "but I don't like walking on four legs; it's undignified."

"Consider *my* humiliation!" chirped the Tin Owl, trying to settle its tin feathers smoothly with its tin beak. "And I can't see very well, either. The light seems to hurt my eyes."

“That’s because you are an Owl,” said Woot. “I think you will see better in the dark.”

“Well,” remarked the Giantess, “I’m very well pleased with these new forms, for my part, and I’m sure you will like them better when you get used to them. So now,” she added, turning to the boy, “it is *your* turn.”

“Don’t you think you’d better leave me as I am?” asked Woot in a trembling voice.

“No,” she replied, “I’m going to make a Monkey of you. I love monkeys — they’re so cute! — and I think a Green Monkey will be lots of fun and amuse me when I am sad.”

Woot shivered, for again the terrible magic finger pointed, and pointed directly his way. He felt himself changing; not so very much, however, and it didn’t hurt him a bit. He looked down at his limbs and body and found that his clothes were gone and his skin covered with a fine, silk-like green fur. His hands and feet were now those of a monkey. He realized he really *was* a monkey, and his first feeling was one of anger. He began to chatter as monkeys do. He bounded to the seat of a giant chair, and then to its back and with a wild leap sprang upon the laughing Giantess. His idea was to seize her hair and pull it out by the roots, and so have revenge for her wicked transformations. But she raised her hand and said:

“Gently, my dear Monkey — gently! You’re not angry; you’re happy as can be!”

Woot stopped short. No; he wasn’t a bit angry now; he felt as good-humored and gay as ever he did when a boy. Instead of pulling Mrs. Yoop’s hair, he perched on her shoulder and smoothed her soft cheek with his hairy paw. In return, she smiled at the funny green animal and patted his head.

“Very good,” said the Giantess. “Let us all become friends and be happy together. How is my Tin Owl feeling?”

“Quite comfortable,” said the Owl. “I don’t like it, to be sure, but I’m not going to allow my new form to make me unhappy. But, tell me, please: What is a Tin Owl good for?”

“You are only good to make me laugh,” replied the Giantess.

“Will a stuffed Bear also make you laugh?” inquired the Scarecrow, sitting back on his haunches to look up at her.

“Of course,” declared the Giantess; “and I have added a little magic to your transformations to make you all contented with wearing your new forms. I’m sorry I didn’t think to do that when I transformed Polychrome into a Canary-Bird. But perhaps, when she sees how cheerful you are, she will cease to be silent and sullen and take to singing. I will go get the bird and let you see her.”

With this, Mrs. Yoop went into the next room and soon returned bearing a golden cage in which sat upon a swinging perch a lovely yellow Canary.

"Polychrome," said the Giantess, "permit me to introduce to you a Green Monkey, which used to be a boy called Woot the Wanderer, and a Tin Owl, which used to be a Tin Woodman named Nick Chopper, and a straw-stuffed little Brown Bear which used to be a live Scarecrow."

"We already know one another," declared the Scarecrow. "The bird is Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter, and she and I used to be good friends."

"Are you really my old friend, the Scarecrow?" asked the bird, in a sweet, low voice.

“There!” cried Mrs. Yoop; “that’s the first time she has spoken since she was transformed.”

“I am really your old friend,” answered the Scarecrow; “but you must pardon me for appearing just now in this brutal form.”

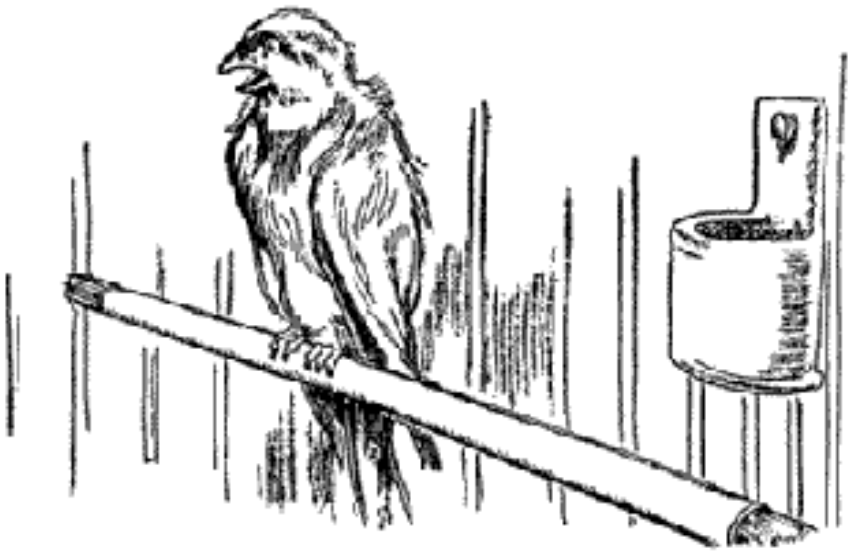
“I am a bird, as you are, dear Poly,” said the Tin Woodman; “but, alas! a Tin Owl is not as beautiful as a Canary-Bird.”

“How dreadful it all is!” sighed the Canary. “Couldn’t you manage to escape from this terrible Yookoohoo?”

“No,” answered the Scarecrow, “we tried to escape, but failed. She first made us her prisoners and then transformed us. But how did she manage to get *you*, Polychrome?”97

“I was asleep, and she took unfair advantage of me,” answered the bird sadly. “Had I been awake, I could easily have protected myself.”

“Tell me,” said the Green Monkey earnestly, as he came close to the cage, “what must we do, Daughter of the Rainbow, to escape from these transformations? Can’t you help us, being a Fairy?”



“At present I am powerless to help even myself,” replied the Canary.

“That’s the exact truth!” exclaimed the Giantess, who seemed pleased to hear the bird talk, even though it complained; “you are all helpless and in my power, so you may as well make up your minds to accept your fate and be content. Remember that you are transformed for good, since no magic on earth can break your enchantments. I am now going out for my morning walk, for each day after breakfast I walk sixteen times around my castle for exercise. Amuse yourselves while I am gone, and when I return I hope to find

you all reconciled and happy."

So the Giantess walked to the door by which our friends had entered the great hall and spoke one word: "Open!" Then the door swung open and after Mrs. Yoop had passed out it closed again with a snap as its powerful bolts shot into place. The Green Monkey had rushed toward the opening, hoping to escape, but he was too late and only got a bump on his nose as the door slammed shut.

The Lace Apron

CHAPTER 7

"Now," said the Canary, in a tone more brisk than before, "we may talk together more freely, as Mrs. Yoop cannot hear us. Perhaps we can figure out a way to escape."

"Open!" said Woot the Monkey, still facing the door; but his command had no effect and he slowly rejoined the others.

"You cannot open any door or window in this enchanted castle unless you are wearing the Magic Apron," said the Canary.

"What Magic Apron do you mean?" asked the Tin Owl, in a curious voice.

"The lace one, which the Giantess always wears. I have been her prisoner, in this cage, for several weeks, and she hangs my cage in her bedroom every night, so that she can keep her eye on me," explained Polychrome the Canary. "Therefore I have discovered that it is the Magic Apron that opens the doors and windows, and nothing else can move them. When she goes to bed, Mrs. Yoop hangs her apron on the bedpost, and one morning she forgot to put it on when she commanded the door to open, and the door would not move. So then she put on the lace apron and the door obeyed her. That was how I learned the magic power of the apron."

"I see — I see!" said the little Brown Bear, wagging his stuffed head. "Then, if we could get the apron from Mrs. Yoop, we could open the doors and escape from our prison."

"That is true, and it is the plan I was about to suggest," replied Polychrome the Canary-Bird. "However, I don't believe the Owl could steal the apron, or even the Bear, but perhaps the Monkey could hide in her room at night and get the apron while she is asleep."

"I'll try it!" cried Woot the Monkey. "I'll try it this very night, if I can manage to steal into her bedroom."

"You mustn't think about it, though," warned the bird, "for she can read your thoughts whenever she cares to do so. And do not forget, before you escape, to take me with you. Once I am out of the power of the Giantess, I may discover a way to save us all."

"We won't forget our fairy friend," promised the boy; "but perhaps you can tell me how to get into the bedroom."

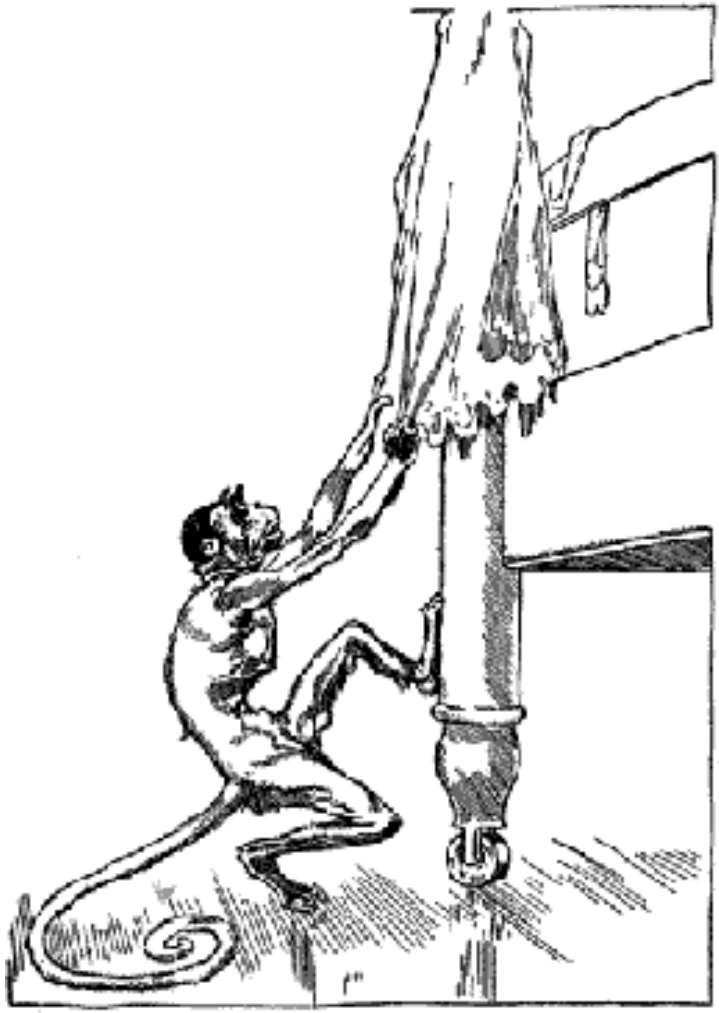
"No," declared Polychrome, "I cannot advise you as to that. You must watch for a chance, and slip in when Mrs. Yoop isn't looking."

They talked it over for a while longer and then Mrs. Yoop returned. When she entered, the door opened suddenly, at her command, and closed as soon

as her huge form had passed through the doorway. During that day she entered her bedroom several times, on one errand or another, but always she commanded the door to close behind her and her prisoners found not the slightest chance to leave the big hall in which they were confined.

The Green Monkey thought it would be wise to make a friend of the big woman, so as to gain her confidence, so he sat on the back of her chair and chattered to her while she mended her stockings and sewed silver buttons on some golden shoes that were as big as row-boats. This pleased the Giantess and she would pause at times to pat the Monkey's head. The little Brown Bear curled up in a corner and lay still all day. The Owl and the Canary found they could converse together in the bird language, which neither the Giantess nor the Bear nor the Monkey could understand; so at times they twittered away to each other and passed the long, dreary day quite cheerfully.

After dinner Mrs. Yoop took a big fiddle from a big cupboard and played such loud and dreadful music that her prisoners were all thankful when at last she stopped and said she was going to bed.



After cautioning the Monkey and Bear and Owl to behave themselves during the night, she picked up the cage containing the Canary and, going to the door of her bedroom, commanded it to open. Just then, however, she remembered she had left her fiddle lying upon a table, so she went back for it and put it away in the cupboard, and while her back was turned the Green Monkey slipped through the open door into her bedroom and hid underneath the bed. The Giantess, being sleepy, did not notice this, and entering her room she made the door close behind her and then hung the bird-cage on a peg by the window. Then she began to undress, first taking off the lace apron and laying it over the bedpost, where it was within easy reach of her hand.

As soon as Mrs. Yoop was in bed the lights all went out, and Woot the

Monkey crouched under the bed and waited patiently until he heard the Giantess snoring. Then he crept out and in the dark felt around until he got hold of the apron, which he at once tied around his own waist.

Next, Woot tried to find the Canary, and there was just enough moonlight showing through the window to enable him to see where the cage hung; but it was out of his reach. At first he was tempted to leave Polychrome and escape with his other friends, but remembering his promise to the Rainbow's Daughter Woot tried to think how to save her.

A chair stood near the window, and this — showing dimly in the moonlight — gave him an idea. By pushing against it with all his might, he found he could move the giant chair a few inches at a time. So he pushed and pushed until the chair was beneath the bird-cage, and then he sprang noiselessly upon the seat — for his monkey form enabled him to jump higher than he could do as a boy — and from there to the back of the chair, and so managed to reach the cage and take it off the peg. Then down he sprang to the floor and made his way to the door.

"Open!" he commanded, and at once the door obeyed and swung open. But his voice wakened Mrs. Yoop, who gave a wild cry and sprang out of bed with one bound. The Green Monkey dashed through the doorway, carrying the cage with him, and before the Giantess could reach the door it slammed shut and imprisoned her in her own bed-chamber!

The noise she made, pounding upon the door, and her yells of anger and

dreadful threats of vengeance, filled all our friends with terror, and Woot the Monkey was so excited that in the dark he could not find the outer door of the hall. But the Tin Owl could see very nicely in the dark, so he guided his friends to the right place and when all were grouped before the door Woot commanded it to open. The Magic Apron proved as powerful as when it had been worn by the Giantess, so a moment later they had rushed through the passage and were standing in the fresh night air outside the castle, free to go wherever they willed.

The Menace of the Forest

CHAPTER 8

"Quick!" cried Polychrome the Canary; "we must hurry, or Mrs. Yoop may find some way to recapture us, even now. Let us get out of her Valley as soon as possible."

So they set off toward the east, moving as swiftly as they could, and for a long time they could hear the yells and struggles of the imprisoned Giantess. The Green Monkey could run over the ground very swiftly, and he carried with him the bird-cage containing Polychrome the Rainbow's Daughter. Also the Tin Owl could skip and fly along at a good rate of speed, his feathers rattling against one another with a tinkling sound as he moved. But the little Brown Bear, being stuffed with straw, was a clumsy traveler and the others had to wait for him to follow.

However, they were not very long in reaching the ridge that led out of Mrs. Yoop's Valley, and when they had passed this ridge and descended into the next valley they stopped to rest, for the Green Monkey was tired.

"I believe we are safe, now," said Polychrome, when her cage was set down and the others had all gathered around it, "for Mrs. Yoop dares not go outside of her own Valley, for fear of being captured by her enemies. So we may take our time to consider what to do next."

"I'm afraid poor Mrs. Yoop will starve to death, if no one lets her out of her bedroom," said Woot, who had a heart as kind as that of the Tin Woodman. "We've taken her Magic Apron away, and now the doors will never open."109

"Don't worry about that," advised Polychrome. "Mrs. Yoop has plenty of magic left to console her."

"Are you sure of that?" asked the Green Monkey.

"Yes, for I've been watching her for weeks," said the Canary. "She has six magic hairpins, which she wears in her hair, and a magic ring which she wears on her thumb and which is invisible to all eyes except those of a fairy, and magic bracelets on both her ankles. So I am positive that she will manage to find a way out of her prison."

"She might transform the door into an archway," suggested the little Brown Bear.

"That would be easy for her," said the Tin Owl; "but I'm glad she was too angry to think of that before we got out of her Valley."

"Well, we have escaped the big woman, to be sure," remarked the Green Monkey, "but we still wear the awful forms the cruel yookoohoo gave us. How are we going to get rid of these shapes, and become ourselves again?"

None could answer that question. They sat around the cage, brooding over the problem, until the Monkey fell asleep. Seeing this, the Canary tucked her head under her wing and also slept, and the Tin Owl and the Brown Bear did not disturb them until morning came and it was broad daylight.

"I'm hungry," said Woot, when he wakened, for his knapsack of food had been left behind at the castle.

"Then let us travel on until we can find something for you to eat," returned the Scarecrow Bear.

"There is no use in your lugging my cage any farther," declared the Canary. "Let me out, and throw the cage away. Then I can fly with you and find my own breakfast of seeds. Also I can search for water, and tell you where to find it."

So the Green Monkey unfastened the door of the golden cage and the Canary hopped out. At first she flew high in the air and made great circles overhead, but after a time she returned and perched beside them.

"At the east, in the direction we were following," announced the Canary, "there is a fine forest, with a brook running through it. In the forest there may be fruits or nuts growing, or berry bushes at its edge, so let us go that way."

They agreed to this and promptly set off, this time moving more deliberately. The Tin Owl, which had guided their way during the night, now found the sunshine very trying to his big eyes, so he shut them tight and perched upon the back of the little Brown Bear, which carried the Owl's weight with ease. The Canary sometimes perched upon the Green Monkey's shoulder and sometimes fluttered on ahead of the party, and in this manner they traveled in good spirits across that valley and into the next one to the east of it.

This they found to be an immense hollow, shaped like a saucer, and on its farther edge appeared the forest which Polychrome had seen from the sky.

"Come to think of it," said the Tin Owl, waking up and blinking comically at his friends, "there's no object, now, in our traveling to the Munchkin

Country. My idea in going there was to marry Nimmie Amee, but however much the Munchkin girl may have loved a Tin Woodman, I cannot reasonably expect her to marry a Tin Owl."

"There is some truth in that, my friend," remarked the Brown Bear. "And to think that I, who was considered the handsomest Scarecrow in the world, am now condemned to be a scrubby, no-account beast, whose only redeeming feature is that he is stuffed with straw!"

"Consider *my* case, please," said Woot. "The cruel Giantess has made a Monkey of a Boy, and that is the most dreadful deed of all!"

"Your color is rather pretty," said the Brown Bear, eyeing Woot critically. "I have never seen a pea-green monkey before, and it strikes me you are quite gorgeous."

"It isn't so bad to be a bird," asserted the Canary, fluttering from one to another with a free and graceful motion, "but I long to enjoy my own shape again."

"As Polychrome, you were the loveliest maiden I have ever seen — except, of course, Ozma," said the Tin Owl; "so the Giantess did well to transform you into the loveliest of all birds, if you were to be transformed at all. But tell me, since you are a fairy, and have a fairy wisdom: do you think we shall be able to break these enchantments?"

"Queer things happen in the Land of Oz," replied the Canary, again perching on the Green Monkey's shoulder and turning one bright eye thoughtfully toward her questioner. "Mrs. Yoop has declared that none of her transformations can ever be changed, even by herself, but I believe that if we could get to Glinda, the Good Sorceress, she might find a way to restore us to our natural shapes. Glinda, as you know, is the most powerful Sorceress in the world, and there are few things she cannot do if she tries."

"In that case," said the Little Brown Bear, "let us return southward and try to get to Glinda's castle. It lies in the Quadling Country, you know, so it is a good way from here."

"First, however, let us visit the forest and search for something to eat," pleaded Woot. So they continued on to the edge of the forest, which consisted of many tall and beautiful trees. They discovered no fruit trees, at first, so the Green Monkey pushed on into the forest depths and the others followed close behind him.

They were traveling quietly along, under the shade of the trees, when suddenly an enormous jaguar leaped upon them from a limb and with one blow of his paw sent the little Brown Bear tumbling over and over until he was stopped by a tree-trunk. Instantly they all took alarm. The Tin Owl shrieked: "Hoot — hoot!" and flew straight up to the branch of a tall tree,

although he could scarcely see where he was going. The Canary swiftly darted to a place beside the Owl, and the Green Monkey sprang up, caught a limb, and soon scrambled to a high perch of safety.

The Jaguar crouched low and with hungry eyes regarded the little Brown Bear, which slowly got upon its feet and asked reproachfully:

"For goodness' sake, Beast, what were you trying to do?"

"Trying to get my breakfast," answered the Jaguar with a snarl, "and I believe I've succeeded. You ought to make a delicious meal — unless you happen to be old and tough."

"I'm worse than that, considered as a breakfast," said the Bear, "for I'm only a skin stuffed with straw, and therefore not fit to eat."

"Indeed!" cried the Jaguar, in a disappointed voice; "then you must be a magic Bear, or enchanted, and I must seek my breakfast from among your companions."

With this he raised his lean head to look up at the Tin Owl and the Canary and the Monkey, and he lashed his tail upon the ground and growled as fiercely as any jaguar could.

"My friends are enchanted, also," said the little Brown Bear.

"All of them?" asked the Jaguar.

"Yes. The Owl is tin, so you couldn't possibly eat him. The Canary is a fairy — Polychrome, the Daughter of the Rainbow — and you never could catch her because she can easily fly out of your reach."

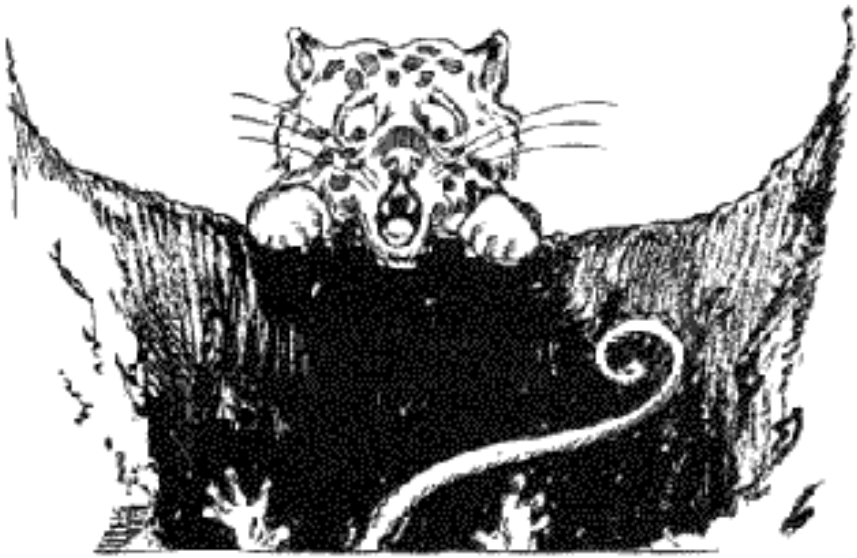
"There still remains the Green Monkey," remarked the Jaguar hungrily. "He is neither made of tin nor stuffed with straw, nor can he fly. I'm pretty good at climbing trees, myself, so I think I'll capture the Monkey and eat him for my breakfast."

Woot the Monkey, hearing this speech from his perch on the tree, became much frightened, for he knew the nature of jaguars and realized they could climb trees and leap from limb to limb with the agility of cats. So he at once began to scamper through the forest as fast as he could go, catching at a branch with his long monkey arms and swinging his green body through space to grasp another branch in a neighboring tree, and so on, while the Jaguar followed him from below, his eyes fixed steadfastly on his prey. But presently Woot got his feet tangled in the Lace Apron, which he was still wearing, and that tripped him in his flight and made him fall to the ground, where the Jaguar placed one huge paw upon him and said grimly:

"I've got you, now!"

The fact that the Apron had tripped him made Woot remember its magic powers, and in his terror he cried out: "Open!" without stopping to consider how this command might save him. But, at the word, the earth opened at the

exact spot where he lay under the Jaguar's paw, and his body sank downward, the earth closing over it again. The last thing Woot the Monkey saw, as he glanced upward, was the Jaguar peering into the hole in astonishment.



"He's gone!" cried the beast, with a long-drawn sigh of disappointment; "he's gone, and now I shall have no breakfast."117

The clatter of the Tin Owl's wings sounded above him, and the little Brown Bear came trotting up and asked:

"Where is the monkey? Have you eaten him so quickly?"

"No, indeed," answered the Jaguar. "He disappeared into the earth before I could take one bite of him!"

And now the Canary perched upon a stump, a little way from the forest beast, and said:

"I am glad our friend has escaped you; but, as it is natural for a hungry beast to wish his breakfast, I will try to give you one."

"Thank you," replied the Jaguar. "You're rather small for a full meal, but it's kind of you to sacrifice yourself to my appetite."

"Oh, I don't intend to be eaten, I assure you," said the Canary, "but as I am a fairy I know something of magic, and though I am now transformed into a bird's shape, I am sure I can conjure up a breakfast that will satisfy you."

"If you can work magic, why don't you break the enchantment you are under and return to your proper form?" inquired the beast doubtingly.

"I haven't the power to do that," answered the Canary, "for Mrs. Yoop,

the Giantess who transformed me, used a peculiar form of yookoohoo magic that is unknown to me. However, she could not deprive me of my own fairy knowledge, so I will try to get you a breakfast."

"Do you think a magic breakfast would taste good, or relieve the pangs of hunger I now suffer?" asked the Jaguar.

"I am sure it would. What would you like to eat?"

"Give me a couple of fat rabbits," said the beast.

"Rabbits! No, indeed. I'd not allow you to eat the dear little things," declared Polychrome the Canary.

"Well, three or four squirrels, then," pleaded the Jaguar.

"Do you think me so cruel?" demanded the Canary, indignantly. "The squirrels are my especial friends."

"How about a plump owl?" asked the beast. "Not a tin one, you know, but a real meat owl."

"Neither beast nor bird shall you have," said Polychrome in a positive voice.

"Give me a fish, then; there's a river a little way off," proposed the Jaguar.

"No living thing shall be sacrificed to feed you," returned the Canary.

"Then what in the world do you expect me to eat?" said the Jaguar in a scornful tone.

"How would mush-and-milk do?" asked the Canary.

The Jaguar snarled in derision and lashed his tail against the ground angrily.

"Give him some scrambled eggs on toast, Poly," suggested the Bear Scarecrow. "He ought to like that."

"I will," responded the Canary, and fluttering her wings she made a flight of three circles around the stump. Then she flew up to a tree and the Bear and the Owl and the Jaguar saw that upon the stump had appeared a great green leaf upon which was a large portion of scrambled eggs on toast, smoking hot.

“There!” said the Bear; “eat your breakfast, friend Jaguar, and be content.”

The Jaguar crept closer to the stump and sniffed the fragrance of the scrambled eggs. They smelled so good that he tasted them, and they tasted so good that he ate the strange meal in a hurry, proving he had been really hungry.

“I prefer rabbits,” he muttered, licking his chops, “but I must admit the magic breakfast has filled my stomach full, and brought me comfort. So I’m much obliged for the kindness, little Fairy, and I’ll now leave you in peace.”

Saying this, he plunged into the thick underbrush and soon disappeared, although they could hear his great body crashing through the bushes until he was far distant.

“That was a good way to get rid of the savage beast, Poly,” said the Tin Woodman to the Canary; “but I’m surprised that you didn’t give our friend Woot a magic breakfast, when you knew he was hungry.”121

“The reason for that,” answered Polychrome, “was that my mind was so intent on other things that I quite forgot my power to produce food by magic. But where *is* the monkey boy?”

“Gone!” said the Scarecrow Bear, solemnly. “The earth has swallowed him up.”

The Quarrelsome Dragons

CHAPTER 9

The Green Monkey sank gently into the earth for a little way and then tumbled swiftly through space, landing on a rocky floor with a thump that astonished him. Then he sat up, found that no bones were broken, and gazed around him.

He seemed to be in a big underground cave, which was dimly lighted by dozens of big round discs that looked like moons. They were not moons, however, as Woot discovered when he had examined the place more carefully. They were eyes. The eyes were in the heads of enormous beasts whose bodies trailed far behind them. Each beast was bigger than an elephant, and three times as long, and there were a dozen or more of the creatures scattered here and there about the cavern. On their bodies were big scales, as round as pie-plates, which were beautifully tinted in shades of green, purple and orange. On the ends of their long tails were clusters of jewels. Around the great, moon-like eyes were circles of diamonds which sparkled in the subdued light that glowed from the eyes.

Woot saw that the creatures had wide mouths and rows of terrible teeth and, from tales he had heard of such beings, he knew he had fallen into a cavern inhabited by the great Dragons that had been driven from the surface of the earth and were only allowed to come out once in a hundred years to search for food. Of course he had never seen Dragons before, yet there was no mistaking them, for they were unlike any other living creatures.

Woot sat upon the floor where he had fallen, staring around, and the owners of the big eyes returned his look, silently and motionless. Finally one of the Dragons which was farthest away from him asked, in a deep, grave voice:

"What was that?"

And the greatest Dragon of all, who was just in front of the Green Monkey, answered in a still deeper voice:

"It is some foolish animal from Outside."

"Is it good to eat?" inquired a smaller Dragon beside the great one. "I'm hungry."

"Hungry!" exclaimed all the Dragons, in a reproachful chorus; and then the great one said chidingly: "Tut-tut, my son! You've no reason to be hungry at *this* time."

"Why not?" asked the little Dragon. "I haven't eaten anything in eleven years."

"Eleven years is nothing," remarked another Dragon, sleepily opening and

closing his eyes; "*I* haven't feasted for eighty-seven years, and I dare not get hungry for a dozen or so years to come. Children who eat between meals should be broken of the habit."

"All I had, eleven years ago, was a rhinoceros, and that's not a full meal at all," grumbled the young one. "And, before that, I had waited sixty-two years to be fed; so it's no wonder I'm hungry."

"How old are you now?" asked Woot, forgetting his own dangerous position in his interest in the conversation.

"Why, I'm — I'm — How old am I, Father?" asked the little Dragon.

"Goodness gracious! what a child to ask questions. Do you want to keep me thinking all the time? Don't you know that thinking is very bad for Dragons?" returned the big one, impatiently.

"How old am I, Father?" persisted the small Dragon.

"About six hundred and thirty, I believe. Ask your mother."

"No; don't!" said an old Dragon in the background; "haven't I enough worries, what with being wakened in the middle of a nap, without being obliged to keep track of my children's ages?"

"You've been fast asleep for over sixty years, Mother," said the child Dragon. "How long a nap do you wish?"

"I should have slept forty years longer. And this strange little green beast should be punished for falling into our cavern and disturbing us."126

"I didn't know you were here, and I didn't know I was going to fall in," explained Woot.

"Nevertheless, here you are," said the great Dragon, "and you have carelessly wakened our entire tribe; so it stands to reason you must be punished."

"In what way?" inquired the Green Monkey, trembling a little.

"Give me time and I'll think of a way. You're in no hurry, are you?" asked the great Dragon.

"No, indeed," cried Woot. "Take your time. I'd much rather you'd all go to sleep again, and punish me when you wake up in a hundred years or so."

"Let me eat him!" pleaded the littlest Dragon.

"He is too small," said the father. "To eat this one Green Monkey would only serve to make you hungry for more, and there *are* no more."

"Quit this chatter and let me get to sleep," protested another Dragon, yawning in a fearful manner, for when he opened his mouth a sheet of flame leaped forth from it and made Woot jump back to get out of its way.

In his jump he bumped against the nose of a Dragon behind him, which opened its mouth to growl and shot another sheet of flame at him. The flame was bright, but not very hot, yet Woot screamed with terror and sprang forward with a great bound. This time he landed on the paw of the great Chief Dragon, who angrily raised his other front paw and struck the Green Monkey a fierce blow. Woot went sailing through the air and fell sprawling upon the rocky floor far beyond the place where the Dragon Tribe was grouped.

All the great beasts were now thoroughly wakened and aroused, and they blamed the monkey for disturbing their quiet. The littlest Dragon darted after Woot and the others turned their unwieldy bodies in his direction and

followed, flashing from their eyes and mouths flames which lighted up the entire cavern.

Woot almost gave himself up for lost, at that moment, but he scrambled to his feet and dashed away to the farthest end of the cave, the Dragons following more leisurely because they were too clumsy to move fast. Perhaps they thought there was no need of haste, as the monkey could not escape from the cave. But, away up at the end of the place, the cavern floor was heaped with tumbled rocks, so Woot, with an agility born of fear, climbed from rock to rock until he found himself crouched against the cavern roof. There he waited, for he could go no farther, while on over the tumbled rocks slowly crept the Dragons — the littlest one coming first because he was hungry as well as angry.

The beasts had almost reached him when Woot, remembering his lace apron — now sadly torn and soiled — recovered his wits and shouted: "Open!" At the cry a hole appeared in the roof of the cavern, just over his head, and through it the sunlight streamed full upon the Green Monkey.

The Dragons paused, astonished at the magic and blinking at the sunlight, and this gave Woot time to climb through the opening. As soon as he reached the surface of the earth the hole closed again, and the boy monkey realized, with a thrill of joy, that he had seen the last of the dangerous Dragon family.

He sat upon the ground, still panting hard from his exertions, when the bushes before him parted and his former enemy, the Jaguar, appeared.

"Don't run," said the woodland beast, as Woot sprang up; "you are perfectly safe, so far as I am concerned, for since you so mysteriously disappeared I have had my breakfast. I am now on my way home, to sleep the rest of the day."

"Oh, indeed!" returned the Green Monkey, in a tone both sorry and startled. "Which of my friends did you manage to eat?"130

"None of them," returned the Jaguar, with a sly grin. "I had a dish of magic scrambled eggs — on toast — and it wasn't a bad feast, at all. There isn't room in me for even you, and I don't regret it because I judge, from your green color, that you are not ripe, and would make an indifferent meal. We jaguars have to be careful of our digestions. Farewell, Friend Monkey. Follow the path I made through the bushes and you will find your friends."

With this the Jaguar marched on his way and Woot took his advice and followed the trail he had made until he came to the place where the little Brown Bear, and the Tin Owl, and the Canary were conferring together and wondering what had become of their comrade, the Green Monkey.

Tommy Kwikstep

CHAPTER 10

"Our best plan," said the Scarecrow Bear, when the Green Monkey had related the story of his adventure with the Dragons, "is to get out of this Gillikin Country as soon as we can and try to find our way to the castle of Glinda, the Good Sorceress. There are too many dangers lurking here to suit me, and Glinda may be able to restore us to our proper forms."

"If we turn south now," the Tin Owl replied, "we might go straight into the Emerald City. That's a place I wish to avoid, for I'd hate to have my friends see me in this sad plight," and he blinked his eyes and fluttered his tin wings mournfully.

"But I am certain we have passed *beyond* Emerald City," the Canary assured him, sailing lightly around their heads. "So, should we turn south from here, we would pass into the Munchkin Country, and continuing south we would reach the Quadling Country where Glinda's castle is located."

"Well, since you're sure of that, let's start right away," proposed the Bear. "It's a long journey, at the best, and I'm getting tired of walking on four legs."

"I thought you never tired, being stuffed with straw," said Woot.

"I mean that it annoys me, to be obliged to go on all fours, when two legs are my proper walking equipment," replied the Scarecrow. "I consider it beneath my dignity. In other words, my remarkable brains can tire, through humiliation, although my body cannot tire."

"That is one of the penalties of having brains,"133 remarked the Tin Owl with a sigh. "I have had no brains since I was a man of meat, and so I never worry. Nevertheless, I prefer my former manly form to this owl's shape and would be glad to break Mrs. Yoop's enchantment as soon as possible. I am so noisy, just now, that I disturb myself," and he fluttered his wings with a clatter that echoed throughout the forest.

So, being all of one mind, they turned southward, traveling steadily on until the woods were left behind and the landscape turned from purple tints to blue tints, which assured them they had entered the Country of the Munchkins.

"Now I feel myself more safe," said the Scarecrow Bear. "I know this country pretty well, having been made here by a Munchkin farmer and having wandered over these lovely blue lands many times. Seems to me, indeed, that I even remember that group of three tall trees ahead of us; and, if I do, we are not far from the home of my friend Jinjur."

"Who is Jinjur?" asked Woot, the Green Monkey.

“Haven’t you heard of Jinjur?” exclaimed the Scarecrow, in surprise.

“No,” said Woot. “Is Jinjur a man, a woman, a beast or a bird?”134

“Jinjur is a girl,” explained the Scarecrow Bear. “She’s a fine girl, too, although a bit restless and liable to get excited. Once, a long time ago, she raised an army of girls and called herself ‘General Jinjur.’ With her army she captured the Emerald City, and drove me out of it, because I insisted that an army in Oz was highly improper. But Ozma punished the rash girl, and afterward Jinjur and I became fast friends. Now Jinjur lives peacefully on a farm, near here, and raises fields of cream-puffs, chocolate-caramels and macaroons. They say she’s a pretty good farmer, and in addition to that she’s an artist, and paints pictures so perfect that one can scarcely tell them from nature. She often repaints my face for me, when it gets worn or mussy, and the lovely expression I wore when the Giantess transformed me was painted by Jinjur only a month or so ago.”

“It was certainly a pleasant expression,” agreed Woot.

“Jinjur can paint anything,” continued the Scarecrow Bear, with enthusiasm, as they walked along together. “Once, when I came to her house, my straw was old and crumpled, so that my body sagged dreadfully. I needed new straw to replace the old, but Jinjur had no straw on all her ranch and I was really unable to travel farther until I had been restuffed. When I explained this to Jinjur, the girl at once painted a straw-stack which was so natural that I went to it and secured enough straw to fill all my body. It was a good quality of straw, too, and lasted me a long time.”

This seemed very wonderful to Woot, who knew that such a thing could never happen in any place but a fairy country like Oz.

The Munchkin Country was much nicer than the Gillikin Country, and all the fields were separated by blue fences, with grassy lanes and paths of blue ground, and the land seemed well cultivated. They were on a little hill looking down upon this favored country, but had not quite reached the settled parts, when on turning a bend in the path they were halted by a form that barred their way.

A more curious creature they had seldom seen, even in the Land of Oz, where curious creatures abound. It had the head of a young man — evidently a Munchkin — with a pleasant face and hair neatly combed. But the body was very long, for it had twenty legs — ten legs on each side — and this caused the body to stretch out and lie in a horizontal position, so that all the legs could touch the ground and stand firm. From the shoulders extended two small arms; at least, they seemed small beside so many legs.

This odd creature was dressed in the regulation clothing of the Munchkin people, a dark blue coat neatly fitting the long body and each pair of legs

having a pair of sky-blue trousers, with blue-tinted stockings and blue leather shoes turned up at the pointed toes.

“I wonder who you are?” said Polychrome the Canary, fluttering above the strange creature, who had probably been asleep on the path.

“I sometimes wonder, myself, who I am,” replied the many-legged young man; “but, in reality, I am Tommy Kwikstep, and I live in a hollow tree that fell to the ground with age. I have polished the inside of it, and made a door at each end, and that’s a very comfortable residence for me because it just fits my shape.”

“How did you happen to have such a shape?” asked the Scarecrow Bear, sitting on his haunches and regarding Tommy Kwikstep with a serious look. “Is the shape natural?”137

"No; it was wished on me," replied Tommy, with a sigh. "I used to be very active and loved to run errands for anyone who needed my services. That was how I got my name of Tommy Kwikstep. I could run an errand more quickly than any other boy, and so I was very proud of myself. One day, however, I met an old lady who was a fairy, or a witch, or something of the sort, and she said if I would run an errand for her — to carry some magic medicine to another old woman — she would grant me just one Wish, whatever the Wish happened to be. Of course I consented and, taking the medicine, I hurried away. It was a long distance, mostly up hill, and my legs began to grow weary. Without thinking what I was doing I said aloud: 'Dear me; I wish I had twenty legs!' and in an instant I became the unusual creature

you see beside you. Twenty legs! Twenty on one man! You may count them, if you doubt my word."

"You've got 'em, all right," said Woot the Monkey, who had already counted them.

"After I had delivered the magic medicine to the old woman, I returned and tried to find the witch, or fairy, or whatever she was, who had given me the unlucky wish, so she could take it away again. I've been searching for her ever since, but never can I find her," continued poor Tommy Kwikstep, sadly.

"I suppose," said the Tin Owl, blinking at him, "you can travel very fast, with those twenty legs."

"At first I was able to," was the reply; "but I traveled so much, searching for the fairy, or witch, or whatever she was, that I soon got corns on my toes. Now, a corn on one toe is not so bad, but when you have a hundred toes — as I have — and get corns on most of them, it is far from pleasant. Instead of running, I now painfully crawl, and although I try not to be discouraged I do hope I shall find that witch or fairy, or whatever she was, before long."

"I hope so, too," said the Scarecrow. "But, after all, you have the pleasure of knowing you are unusual, and therefore remarkable among the people of Oz. To be just like other persons is small credit to one, while to be unlike others is a mark of distinction."

"That *sounds* very pretty," returned Tommy Kwikstep, "but if you had to put on ten pair of trousers every morning, and tie up twenty shoes, you would prefer not to be so distinguished."

"Was the witch, or fairy, or whatever she was, an old person, with wrinkled skin, and half her teeth gone?" inquired the Tin Owl.

"No," said Tommy Kwikstep.

"Then she wasn't Old Mombi," remarked the transformed Emperor.

"I'm not interested in who it *wasn't*, so much as I am in who it *was*," said the twenty-legged young man. "And, whatever or whomsoever she was, she has managed to keep out of my way."

"If you found her, do you suppose she'd change you back into a two-legged boy?" asked Woot.

"Perhaps so, if I could run another errand for her and so earn another wish."

"Would you really like to be as you were before?" asked Polychrome the Canary, perching upon the Green Monkey's shoulder to observe Tommy Kwikstep more attentively.

"I would, indeed," was the earnest reply.

"Then I will see what I can do for you," promised the Rainbow's

Daughter, and flying to the ground she took a small twig in her bill and with it made several mystic figures on each side of Tommy Kwikstep.

"Are *you* a witch, or fairy, or something of the sort?" he asked as he watched her wonderingly.

The Canary made no answer, for she was busy, but the Scarecrow Bear replied: "Yes; she's something of the sort, and a bird of a magician."141

The twenty-legged boy's transformation happened so queerly that they were all surprised at its method. First, Tommy Kwikstep's last two legs disappeared; then the next two, and the next, and as each pair of legs vanished his body shortened. All this while Polychrome was running around him and chirping mystical words, and when all the young man's legs had

disappeared but two he noticed that the Canary was still busy and cried out in alarm:

"Stop — stop! Leave me *two* of my legs, or I shall be worse off than before."

"I know," said the Canary. "I'm only removing with my magic the corns from your last ten toes."

"Thank you for being so thoughtful," he said gratefully, and now they noticed that Tommy Kwikstep was quite a nice looking young fellow.

"What will you do now?" asked Woot the Monkey.

"First," he answered, "I must deliver a note which I've carried in my pocket ever since the witch, or fairy, or whatever she was, granted my foolish wish. And I am resolved never to speak again without taking time to think carefully on what I am going to say, for I realize that speech without thought is dangerous. And after I've delivered the note, I shall run errands again for anyone who needs my services."

So he thanked Polychrome again and started away in a different direction from their own, and that was the last they saw of Tommy Kwikstep.

Jinjur's Ranch

CHAPTER 11

As they followed a path down the blue-grass hillside, the first house that met the view of the travelers was joyously recognized by the Scarecrow Bear as the one inhabited by his friend Jinjur, so they increased their speed and hurried toward it.

On reaching the place, however, they found the house deserted. The front door stood open, but no one was inside. In the garden surrounding the house were neat rows of bushes bearing cream-puffs and macaroons, some of which were still green, but others ripe and ready to eat. Farther back were fields of caramels, and all the land seemed well cultivated and carefully tended. They looked through the fields for the girl farmer, but she was nowhere to be seen.

"Well," finally remarked the little Brown Bear, "let us go into the house and make ourselves at home. That will be sure to please my friend Jinjur, who happens to be away from home just now. When she returns, she will be greatly surprised."

"Would she care if I ate some of those ripe cream-puffs?" asked the Green Monkey.

"No, indeed; Jinjur is very generous. Help yourself to all you want," said the Scarecrow Bear.

So Woot gathered a lot of the cream-puffs that were golden yellow and filled with a sweet, creamy substance, and ate until his hunger was satisfied. Then he entered the house with his friends and sat in a rocking-chair — just as he was accustomed to do when a boy. The Canary perched herself upon the mantel and daintily plumed her feathers; the Tin Owl sat on the back of another chair; the Scarecrow squatted on his hairy haunches in the middle of the room.

"I believe I remember the girl Jinjur," remarked the Canary, in her sweet voice. "She cannot help us very much, except to direct us on our way to Glinda's castle, for she does not understand magic. But she's a good girl, honest and sensible, and I'll be glad to see her."

"All our troubles," said the Owl with a deep sigh, "arose from my foolish resolve to seek Nimmie Amee and make her Empress of the Winkies, and while I146 wish to reproach no one, I must say that it was Woot the Wanderer who put the notion into my head."

"Well, for my part, I am glad he did," responded the Canary. "Your journey resulted in saving me from the Giantess, and had you not traveled to the Yoop Valley, I would still be Mrs. Yoop's prisoner. It is much nicer to be free, even though I still bear the enchanted form of a Canary-Bird."

"Do you think we shall ever be able to get our proper forms back again?" asked the Green Monkey earnestly.

Polychrome did not make reply at once to this important question, but after a period of thoughtfulness she said:

"I have been taught to believe that there is an antidote for every magic charm, yet Mrs. Yoop insists that no power can alter her transformations. I realize that my own fairy magic cannot do it, although I have thought that we Sky Fairies have more power than is accorded to Earth Fairies. The yookoohoo magic is admitted to be very strange in its workings and different from the magic usually practiced, but perhaps Glinda or Ozma may understand it better than I. In them lies our only hope. Unless they can help us, we must remain forever as we are."147

"A Canary-Bird on a Rainbow wouldn't be so bad," asserted the Tin Owl, winking and blinking with his round tin eyes, "so if you can manage to find your Rainbow again you need have little to worry about."

"That's nonsense, Friend Chopper," exclaimed Woot. "I know just how

Polychrome feels. A beautiful girl is much superior to a little yellow bird, and a boy — such as I was — far better than a Green Monkey. Neither of us can be happy again unless we recover our rightful forms."

"I feel the same way," announced the stuffed Bear. "What do you suppose my friend the Patchwork Girl would think of me, if she saw me wearing this beastly shape?"

"She'd laugh till she cried," admitted the Tin Owl. "For my part, I'll have to give up the notion of marrying Nimmie Amee, but I'll try not to let that make me unhappy. If it's my duty, I'd like to do my duty, but if magic prevents my getting married I'll flutter along all by myself and be just as contented."

Their serious misfortunes made them all silent for a time, and as their thoughts were busy in dwelling upon the evils with which fate had burdened them, none noticed that Jinjur had suddenly appeared in the doorway and was looking at them in astonishment. The next moment her astonishment changed to anger, for there, in her best rocking-chair, sat a Green Monkey. A great shiny Owl perched upon another chair and a Brown Bear squatted upon her parlor rug. Jinjur did not notice the Canary, but she caught up a broomstick and dashed into the room, shouting as she came:

"Get out of here, you wild creatures! How dare you enter my house?"

With a blow of her broom she knocked the Brown Bear over, and the Tin Owl tried to fly out of her reach and made a great clatter with his tin wings. The Green Monkey was so startled by the sudden attack that he sprang into the fireplace — where there was fortunately no fire — and tried to escape by climbing up the chimney. But he found the opening too small, and so was forced to drop down again. Then he crouched trembling in the fireplace, his pretty green hair all blackened with soot and covered with ashes. From this position Woot watched to see what would happen next.

"Stop, Jinjur — stop!" cried the Brown Bear, when the broom again threatened him. "Don't you know me? I'm your old friend the Scarecrow?"149

"You're trying to deceive me, you naughty beast! I can see plainly that you are a bear, and a mighty poor specimen of a bear, too," retorted the girl.

"That's because I'm not properly stuffed," he assured her. "When Mrs. Yoop transformed me, she didn't realize I should have more stuffing."

"Who is Mrs. Yoop?" inquired Jinjur, pausing with the broom still upraised.

"A Giantess in the Gillikin Country."

"Oh; I begin to understand. And Mrs. Yoop transformed you? You are really the famous Scarecrow of Oz?"

"I *was*, Jinjur. Just now I'm as you see me — a miserable little Brown Bear with a poor quality of stuffing. That Tin Owl is none other than our dear Tin Woodman — Nick Chopper, the Emperor of the Winkies — while this Green Monkey is a nice little boy we recently became acquainted with, Woot the Wanderer."

"And I," said the Canary, flying close to Jinjur, "am Polychrome, the Daughter of the Rainbow, in the form of a bird."

"Goodness me!" cried Jinjur, amazed; "that Giantess must be a powerful Sorceress, and as wicked as she is powerful."150

"She's a yookoohoo," said Polychrome. "Fortunately, we managed to escape from her castle, and we are now on our way to Glinda the Good to see if she possesses the power to restore us to our former shapes."

"Then I must beg your pardons; all of you must forgive me," said Jinjur, putting away the broom. "I took you to be a lot of wild, unmannerly animals, as was quite natural. You are very welcome to my home and I'm sorry I haven't the power to help you out of your troubles. Please use my house and all that I have, as if it were your own."

At this declaration of peace, the Bear got upon his feet and the Owl resumed his perch upon the chair and the Monkey crept out of the fireplace. Jinjur looked at Woot critically, and scowled.

"For a Green Monkey," said she, "you're the blackest creature I ever saw. And you'll get my nice clean room all dirty with soot and ashes. Whatever

possessed you to jump up the chimney?”

“I — I was scared,” explained Woot, somewhat ashamed.

“Well, you need renovating, and that’s what will happen to you, right away. Come with me!” she commanded.

“What are you going to do?” asked Woot.

“Give you a good scrubbing,” said Jinjur.

Now, neither boys nor monkeys relish being scrubbed, so Woot shrank away from the energetic girl, trembling fearfully. But Jinjur grabbed him by his paw and dragged him out to the back yard, where, in spite of his whines and struggles, she plunged him into a tub of cold water and began to scrub him with a stiff brush and a cake of yellow soap.

This was the hardest trial that Woot had endured since he became a monkey, but no protest had any influence with Jinjur, who lathered and scrubbed him in a business-like manner and afterward dried him with a coarse towel.

The Bear and the Owl gravely watched this operation and nodded approval when Woot's silky green fur shone clear and bright in the afternoon sun. The Canary seemed much amused and laughed a silvery ripple of laughter as she said:

"Very well done, my good Jinjur; I admire your energy and judgment. But I had no idea a monkey could look so comical as this monkey did while he was being bathed."

"I'm *not* a monkey!" declared Woot, resentfully;154 "I'm just a boy in a monkey's shape, that's all."

"If you can explain to me the difference," said Jinjur, "I'll agree not to wash you again — that is, unless you foolishly get into the fireplace. All persons are usually judged by the shapes in which they appear to the eyes of others. Look at *me*, Woot; what am *I*?"

Woot looked at her.

"You're as pretty a girl as I've ever seen," he replied.

Jinjur frowned. That is, she tried hard to frown.

"Come out into the garden with me," she said, "and I'll give you some of the most delicious caramels you ever ate. They're a new variety, that no one can grow but me, and they have a heliotrope flavor."

Ozma and Dorothy

CHAPTER 12

In her magnificent palace in the Emerald City, the beautiful girl Ruler of all the wonderful Land of Oz sat in her dainty boudoir with her friend Princess Dorothy beside her. Ozma was studying a roll of manuscript which she had taken from the Royal Library, while Dorothy worked at her embroidery and at times stooped to pat a shaggy little black dog that lay at her feet. The little dog's name was Toto, and he was Dorothy's faithful companion.

To judge Ozma of Oz by the standards of our world, you would think her very young — perhaps fourteen or fifteen years of age — yet for years she had ruled the Land of Oz and had never seemed a bit older. Dorothy appeared much younger than Ozma. She had been a little girl when first she came to the Land of Oz, and she was a little girl still, and would never seem to be a day older while she lived in this wonderful fairyland.

Oz was not always a fairyland, I am told. Once it was much like other lands, except it was shut in by a dreadful desert of sandy wastes that lay all around it, thus preventing its people from all contact with the rest of the world. Seeing this isolation, the fairy band of Queen Lurline, passing over Oz while on a journey, enchanted the country and so made it a Fairyland. And Queen Lurline left one of her fairies to rule this enchanted Land of Oz, and then passed on and forgot all about it.

From that moment no one in Oz ever died. Those who were old remained old; those who were young and strong did not change as years passed them by;157 the children remained children always, and played and romped to their hearts' content, while all the babies lived in their cradles and were tenderly cared for and never grew up. So people in Oz stopped counting how old they were in years, for years made no difference in their appearance and could not alter their station. They did not get sick, so there were no doctors among them. Accidents might happen to some, on rare occasions, it is true, and while no one could die naturally, as other people do, it was possible that one might be totally destroyed. Such incidents, however, were very unusual, and so seldom was there anything to worry over that the Oz people were as happy and contented as can be.

Another strange thing about this fairy Land of Oz was that whoever managed to enter it from the outside world came under the magic spell of the place and did not change in appearance as long as they lived there. So Dorothy, who now lived with Ozma, seemed just the same sweet little girl she had been when first she came to this delightful fairyland.

Perhaps all parts of Oz might not be called truly delightful, but it was

surely delightful in the neighborhood of the Emerald City, where Ozma reigned. Her loving influence was felt for many miles around, but there were places in the mountains of the Gillikin Country, and the forests of the Quadling Country, and perhaps in far-away parts of the Munchkin and Winkie Countries, where the inhabitants were somewhat rude and uncivilized and had not yet come under the spell of Ozma's wise and kindly rule. Also, when Oz first became a fairyland, it harbored several witches and magicians and sorcerers and necromancers, who were scattered in various parts, but most of these had been deprived of their magic powers, and Ozma had issued a royal edict forbidding anyone in her dominions to work magic except Glinda the Good and the Wizard of Oz. Ozma herself, being a real fairy, knew a lot of magic, but she only used it to benefit her subjects.

This little explanation will help you to understand better the story you are reading, but most of it is already known to those who are familiar with the Oz people whose adventures they have followed in other Oz books.

Ozma and Dorothy were fast friends and were much together. Everyone in Oz loved Dorothy almost as well as they did their lovely Ruler, for the little Kansas girl's good fortune had not spoiled her or rendered her at all vain. She was just the same brave and true and adventurous child as before she lived in a royal palace and became the chum of the fairy Ozma.

In the room in which the two sat — which was one of Ozma's private suite of apartments — hung the famous Magic Picture. This was the source of constant interest to little Dorothy. One had but to stand before it and wish to see what any person was doing, and at once a scene would flash upon the magic canvas which showed exactly where that person was, and like our own moving pictures would reproduce the actions of that person as long as you cared to watch them. So today, when Dorothy tired of her embroidery, she drew the curtains from before the Magic Picture and wished to see what her friend Button Bright was doing. Button Bright, she saw, was playing ball with Ojo, the Munchkin boy, so Dorothy next wished to see what her Aunt Em was doing. The picture showed Aunt Em quietly engaged in darning socks for Uncle Henry, so Dorothy wished to see what her old friend the Tin Woodman was doing.

The Tin Woodman was then just leaving his tin castle in the company of the Scarecrow and Woot the Wanderer. Dorothy had never seen this boy before, so she wondered who he was. Also she was curious to know where the three were going, for she noticed Woot's knapsack and guessed they had started on a long journey. She asked Ozma about it, but Ozma did not know.

That afternoon Dorothy again saw the travelers in the Magic Picture, but they were merely tramping through the country and Dorothy was not much

interested in them. A couple of days later, however, the girl, being again with Ozma, wished to see her friends, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman in the Magic Picture, and on this occasion found them in the great castle of Mrs. Yoop, the Giantess, who was at the time about to transform them. Both Dorothy and Ozma now became greatly interested and watched the transformations with indignation and horror.

"What a wicked Giantess!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Yes," answered Ozma, "she must be punished for this cruelty to our friends, and to the poor boy who is with them."

After this they followed the adventure of the little Brown Bear and the Tin Owl and the Green Monkey with breathless interest, and were delighted when they escaped from Mrs. Yoop. They did not know, then, who the Canary was, but realized it must be the transformation of some person of consequence, whom the Giantess had also enchanted.

When, finally, the day came when the adventurers headed south into the Munchkin Country, Dorothy asked anxiously:

"Can't something be done for them, Ozma? Can't you change 'em back into their own shapes? They've suffered enough from these dreadful transformations, seems to me."

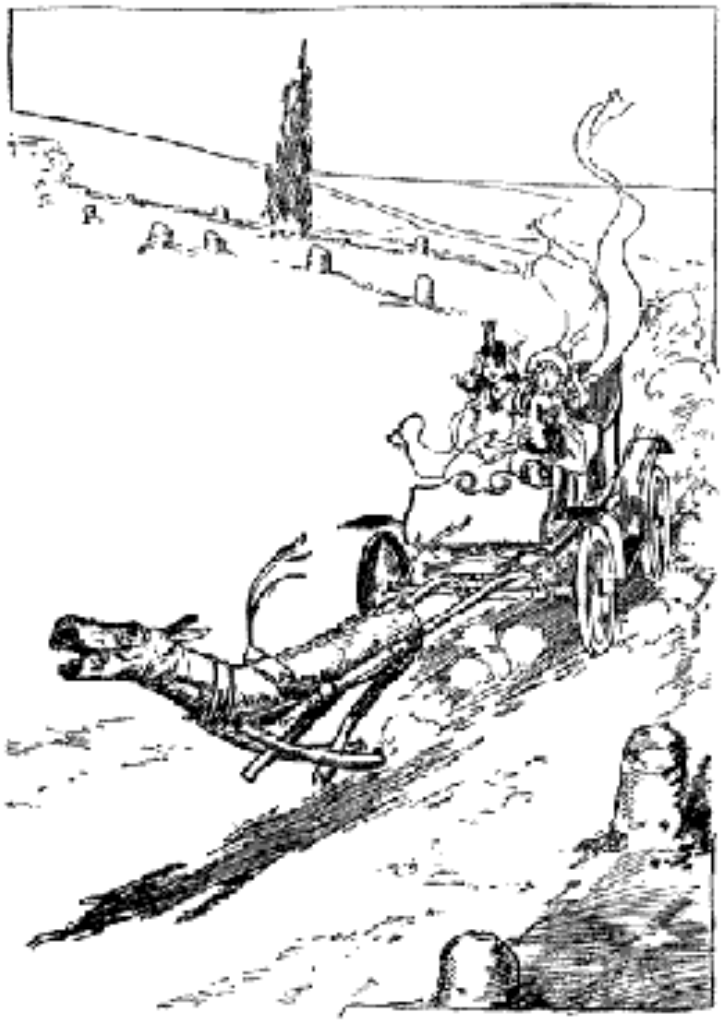
"I've been studying ways to help them, ever since they were

transformed," replied Ozma. "Mrs. Yoop is now the only yookoohoo in my dominions, and the yookoohoo magic is very peculiar and hard for others to understand, yet I am resolved to make the attempt to break these enchantments. I may not succeed, but I shall do the best I can. From the directions our friends are taking, I believe they are going to pass by Jinjur's Ranch, so if we start now we may meet them there. Would you like to go with me, Dorothy?"

"Of course," answered the little girl; "I wouldn't miss it for anything."

"Then order the Red Wagon," said Ozma of Oz, "and we will start at once."

Dorothy ran to do as she was bid, while Ozma went to her Magic Room to make ready the things she believed she would need. In half an hour the Red Wagon stood before the grand entrance of the palace, and before it was hitched the Wooden Sawhorse, which was Ozma's favorite steed.



This Sawhorse, while made of wood, was very much alive and could travel swiftly and without tiring. To keep the ends of his wooden legs from wearing down short, Ozma had shod the Sawhorse with plates of pure gold. His harness was studded with brilliant emeralds and other jewels and so, while he himself was not at all handsome, his outfit made a splendid appearance.

Since the Sawhorse could understand her spoken words, Ozma used no reins to guide him. She merely told him where to go. When she came from the palace with Dorothy, they both climbed into the Red Wagon and then the little dog, Toto, ran up and asked:

"Are you going to leave me behind, Dorothy?"

Dorothy looked at Ozma, who smiled in return and said:

“Toto may go with us, if you wish him to.”

So Dorothy lifted the little dog into the wagon, for, while he could run fast, he could not keep up with the speed of the wonderful Sawhorse.

Away they went, over hills and through meadows, covering the ground with astonishing speed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Red Wagon arrived before Jinjur’s house just as that energetic young lady had finished scrubbing the Green Monkey and was about to lead him to the caramel patch.

The Restoration

CHAPTER 13

The Tin Owl gave a hoot of delight when he saw the Red Wagon draw up before Jinjur's house, and the Brown Bear grunted and growled with glee and trotted toward Ozma as fast as he could wobble. As for the Canary, it flew swiftly to Dorothy's shoulder and perched there, saying in her ear:166

"Thank goodness you have come to our rescue!"

"But who are you?" asked Dorothy.

"Don't you know?" returned the Canary.

"No; for the first time we noticed you in the Magic Picture, you were just a bird, as you are now. But we've guessed that the giant woman had transformed you, as she did the others."

"Yes; I'm Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter," announced the Canary.

"Goodness me!" cried Dorothy. "How dreadful."

"Well, I make a rather pretty bird, I think," returned Polychrome, "but of course I'm anxious to resume my own shape and get back upon my rainbow."

"Ozma will help you, I'm sure," said Dorothy. "How does it feel, Scarecrow, to be a Bear?" she asked, addressing her old friend.

"I don't like it," declared the Scarecrow Bear. "This brutal form is quite beneath the dignity of a wholesome straw man."

"And think of me," said the Owl, perching upon the dashboard of the Red Wagon with much noisy clattering of his tin feathers. "Don't I look horrid, Dorothy, with eyes several sizes too big for my body, and so weak that I ought to wear spectacles?"167

"Well," said Dorothy critically, as she looked him over, "you're nothing to brag of, I must confess. But Ozma will soon fix you up again."

The Green Monkey had hung back, bashful at meeting two lovely girls while in the form of a beast; but Jinjur now took his hand and led him forward while she introduced him to Ozma, and Woot managed to make a low bow, not really ungraceful, before her girlish Majesty, the Ruler of Oz.

"You have all been forced to endure a sad experience," said Ozma, "and so I am anxious to do all in my power to break Mrs. Yoop's enchantments. But first tell me how you happened to stray into that lonely Valley where Yoop Castle stands."

Between them they related the object of their journey, the Scarecrow Bear telling of the Tin Woodman's resolve to find Nimmie Amee and marry her, as a just reward for her loyalty to him. Woot told of their adventures with the Loons of Loonville, and the Tin Owl described the manner in which they had

been captured and transformed by the Giantess. Then Polychrome related her story, and when all had been told, and Dorothy had several times reproved Toto for growling at the Tin Owl, Ozma remained thoughtful for a while, pondering upon what she had heard. Finally she looked up, and with one of her delightful smiles, said to the anxious group:

"I am not sure my magic will be able to restore every one of you, because your transformations are of such a strange and unusual character. Indeed, Mrs. Yoop was quite justified in believing no power could alter her enchantments. However, I am sure I can restore the Scarecrow to his original shape. He was stuffed with straw from the beginning, and even the yookoohoo magic could not alter that. The Giantess was merely able to make a bear's shape of a man's shape, but the bear is stuffed with straw, just as the man was. So I feel confident I can make a man of the bear again."

"Hurrah!" cried the Brown Bear, and tried clumsily to dance a jig of delight.

"As for the Tin Woodman, his case is much the same," resumed Ozma, still smiling. "The power of the Giantess could not make him anything but a tin creature, whatever shape she transformed him into, so it will not be impossible to restore him to his manly form. Anyhow, I shall test my magic at once, and see if it will do what I have promised."

She drew from her bosom a small silver Wand and, making passes with the Wand over the head of the Bear, she succeeded in the brief space of a moment in breaking his enchantment. The original Scarecrow of Oz again stood before them, well stuffed with straw and with his features nicely painted upon the bag which formed his head.

The Scarecrow was greatly delighted, as you may suppose, and he strutted proudly around while the powerful fairy, Ozma of Oz, broke the enchantment that had transformed the Tin Woodman and made a Tin Owl into a Tin Man again.

"Now, then," chirped the Canary, eagerly; "I'm next, Ozma!"

"But your case is different," replied Ozma, no longer smiling but wearing

a grave expression on her sweet face. “I shall have to experiment on you, Polychrome, and I may fail in all my attempts.”

She then tried two or three different methods of magic, hoping one of them would succeed in breaking Polychrome’s enchantment, but still the Rainbow’s Daughter remained a Canary-Bird. Finally, however, she experimented in another way. She transformed the Canary into a Dove, and then transformed the Dove into a Speckled Hen, and then changed the Speckled Hen into a rabbit, and then the rabbit into a Fawn. And at the last, after mixing several powders and sprinkling them upon the Fawn, the yookoohoo enchantment was suddenly broken and before them stood one of the daintiest and loveliest creatures in any fairyland in the world. Polychrome was as sweet and merry in disposition as she was beautiful, and when she danced and capered around in delight, her beautiful hair floated around her like a golden mist and her many-hued raiment, as soft as cobwebs, reminded one of drifting clouds in a summer sky.

Woot was so awed by the entrancing sight of this exquisite Sky Fairy that he quite forgot his own sad plight until he noticed Ozma gazing upon him with an intent expression that denoted sympathy and sorrow. Dorothy whispered in her friend’s ear, but the Ruler of Oz shook her head sadly.

Jinjur, noticing this and understanding Ozma’s looks, took the paw of the Green Monkey in her own hand and patted it softly.

“Never mind,” she said to him. “You are a very beautiful color, and a monkey can climb better than a boy and do a lot of other things no boy can ever do.”

“What’s the matter?” asked Woot, a sinking feeling at his heart. “Is Ozma’s magic all used up?”171

Ozma herself answered him.

"Your form of enchantment, my poor boy," she said pityingly, "is different from that of the others. Indeed, it is a form that is impossible to alter by any magic known to fairies or yookoohoos. The wicked Giantess was well aware, when she gave you the form of a Green Monkey, that the Green Monkey must exist in the Land of Oz for all future time."

Woot drew a long sigh.

"Well, that's pretty hard luck," he said bravely, "but if it can't be helped I must endure it; that's all. I don't like being a monkey, but what's the use of kicking against my fate?"

They were all very sorry for him, and Dorothy anxiously asked Ozma:

“Couldn’t Glinda save him?”

“No,” was the reply. “Glinda’s power in transformations is no greater than my own. Before I left my palace I went to my Magic Room and studied Woot’s case very carefully. I found that no power can do away with the Green Monkey. He might transfer, or exchange his form with some other person, it is true; but the Green Monkey we cannot get rid of by any magic arts known to science.”

“But — see here,” said the Scarecrow, who had listened intently to this explanation, “why not put the monkey’s form on some one else?”

“Who would agree to make the change?” asked Ozma. “If by force we caused anyone else to become a Green Monkey, we would be as cruel and wicked as Mrs. Yoop. And what good would an exchange do?” she continued. “Suppose, for instance, we worked the enchantment, and made Toto into a Green Monkey. At the same moment Woot would become a little dog.”

“Leave me out of your magic, please,” said Toto, with a reproachful growl. “I wouldn’t become a Green Monkey for anything.”

“And I wouldn’t become a dog,” said Woot. “A green monkey is much better than a dog, it seems to me.”

“That is only a matter of opinion,” answered Toto.

“Now, here’s another idea,” said the Scarecrow. “My brains are working finely today, you must admit. Why not transform Toto into Woot the Wanderer, and then have them exchange forms? The dog would become a green monkey and the monkey would have his own natural shape again.”

“To be sure!” cried Jinjur. “That’s a fine idea.”

“Leave me out of it,” said Toto. “I won’t do it.”

“Wouldn’t you be willing to become a green monkey — see what a pretty color it is — so that this poor boy could be restored to his own shape?” asked Jinjur, pleadingly.

“No,” said Toto.

“I don’t like that plan the least bit,” declared Dorothy, “for then I wouldn’t have any little dog.”

“But you’d have a green monkey in his place,” persisted Jinjur, who liked Woot and wanted to help him.

“I don’t want a green monkey,” said Dorothy positively.

“Don’t speak of this again, I beg of you,” said Woot. “This is my own misfortune and I would rather suffer it alone than deprive Princess Dorothy of her dog, or deprive the dog of his proper shape. And perhaps even her Majesty, Ozma of Oz, might not be able to transform anyone else into the shape of Woot the Wanderer.”

“Yes; I believe I might do that,” Ozma returned; “but Woot is quite right; we are not justified in inflicting upon anyone — man or dog — the form of a green monkey. Also it is certain that in order to relieve the boy of the form he now wears, we must give it to someone else, who would be forced to wear it always.”

“I wonder,” said Dorothy, thoughtfully, “if we couldn’t find someone in the Land of Oz who would be willing to become a green monkey? Seems to me a monkey is active and spry, and he can climb trees and do a lot of clever things, and green isn’t a bad color for a monkey — it makes him unusual.”

“I wouldn’t ask anyone to take this dreadful form,” said Woot; “it wouldn’t be right, you know. I’ve been a monkey for some time, now, and I don’t like it. It makes me ashamed to be a beast of this sort when by right of birth I’m a boy; so I’m sure it would be wicked to ask anyone else to take my place.”

They were all silent, for they knew he spoke the truth. Dorothy was almost ready to cry with pity and Ozma’s sweet face was sad and disturbed. The Scarecrow rubbed and patted his stuffed head to try to make it think better, while the Tin Woodman went into the house and began to oil his tin joints so that the sorrow of his friends might not cause him to weep. Weeping is liable to rust tin, and the Emperor prided himself upon his highly polished body — now doubly dear to him because for a time he had been deprived of it.

Polychrome had danced down the garden paths and back again a dozen times, for she was seldom still a moment, yet she had heard Ozma’s speech and understood very well Woot’s unfortunate position. But the Rainbow’s Daughter, even while dancing, could think and reason very clearly, and suddenly she solved the problem in the nicest possible way. Coming close to Ozma, she said:

“Your Majesty, all this trouble was caused by the wickedness of Mrs. Yoop, the Giantess. Yet even now that cruel woman is living in her secluded castle, enjoying the thought that she has put this terrible enchantment on Woot the Wanderer. Even now she is laughing at our despair because we can find no way to get rid of the green monkey. Very well, we do not wish to get rid of it. Let the woman who created the form wear it herself, as a just punishment for her wickedness. I am sure your fairy power can give to Mrs. Yoop the form of Woot the Wanderer — even at this distance from her — and then it will be possible to exchange the two forms. Mrs. Yoop will become the Green Monkey, and Woot will recover his own form again.”177

Ozma's face brightened as she listened to this clever proposal.

"Thank you, Polychrome," said she. "The task you propose is not so easy as you suppose, but I will make the attempt, and perhaps I may succeed."

The Green Monkey

CHAPTER 14

They now entered the house, and as an interested group, watched Jinjur, at Ozma's command, build a fire and put a kettle of water over to boil. The Ruler of Oz stood before the fire silent and grave, while the others, realizing that an important ceremony of magic was about to be performed, stood quietly 180in the background so as not to interrupt Ozma's proceedings. Only Polychrome kept going in and coming out, humming softly to herself as she danced, for the Rainbow's Daughter could not keep still for long, and the four walls of a room always made her nervous and ill at ease. She moved so noiselessly, however, that her movements were like the shifting of sunbeams and did not annoy anyone.

When the water in the kettle bubbled, Ozma drew from her bosom two tiny packets containing powders. These powders she threw into the kettle and after briskly stirring the contents with a branch from a macaroon bush, Ozma poured the mystic broth upon a broad platter which Jinjur had placed upon the table. As the broth cooled it became as silver, reflecting all objects from its smooth surface like a mirror.

While her companions gathered around the table, eagerly attentive — and Dorothy even held little Toto in her arms that he might see — Ozma waved her wand over the mirror-like surface. At once it reflected the interior of Yoop Castle, and in the big hall sat Mrs. Yoop, in her best embroidered silken robes, engaged in weaving a new lace apron to replace the one she had lost.

The Giantess seemed rather uneasy, as if she had a faint idea that someone was spying upon her, for she kept looking behind her and this way and that, as though expecting danger from an unknown source. Perhaps some yookoohoo instinct warned her. Woot saw that she had escaped from her room by some of the magical means at her disposal, after her prisoners had escaped her. She was now occupying the big hall of her castle as she used to do. Also Woot thought, from the cruel expression on the face of the Giantess, that she was planning revenge on them, as soon as her new magic apron was finished.

But Ozma was now making passes over the platter with her silver Wand, and presently the form of the Giantess began to shrink in size and to change

its shape. And now, in her place sat the form of Woot the Wanderer, and as if suddenly realizing her transformation Mrs. Yoop threw down her work and rushed to a looking-glass that stood against the wall of her room. When she saw the boy's form reflected as her own, she grew violently angry and dashed her head against the mirror, smashing it to atoms.

Just then Ozma was busy with her magic Wand, making strange figures, and she had also placed her left hand firmly upon the shoulder of the Green 183Monkey. So now, as all eyes were turned upon the platter, the form of Mrs. Yoop gradually changed again. She was slowly transformed into the Green Monkey, and at the same time Woot slowly regained his natural form.

It was quite a surprise to them all when they raised their eyes from the platter and saw Woot the Wanderer standing beside Ozma. And, when they glanced at the platter again, it reflected nothing more than the walls of the room in Jinjur's house in which they stood. The magic ceremonial was ended, and Ozma of Oz had triumphed over the wicked Giantess.

"What will become of her, I wonder?" said Dorothy, as she drew a long breath.

"She will always remain a Green Monkey," replied Ozma, "and in that form she will be unable to perform any magical arts whatsoever. She need not be unhappy, however, and as she lives all alone in her castle she probably won't mind the transformation very much after she gets used to it."

"Anyhow, it serves her right," declared Dorothy, and all agreed with her.

"But," said the kind hearted Tin Woodman, "I'm afraid the Green Monkey will starve, for Mrs. Yoop 184used to get her food by magic, and now that the magic is taken away from her, what can she eat?"

"Why, she'll eat what other monkeys do," returned the Scarecrow. "Even in the form of a Green Monkey, she's a very clever person, and I'm sure her wits will show her how to get plenty to eat."

"Don't worry about her," advised Dorothy. "She didn't worry about you, and her condition is no worse than the condition she imposed on poor Woot. She can't starve *to death* in the Land of Oz, that's certain, and if she gets hungry at times it's no more than the wicked thing deserves. Let's forget Mrs. Yoop; for, in spite of her being a yookoohoo, our fairy friends have broken all of her transformations."

The Man of Tin

CHAPTER 15

Ozma and Dorothy were quite pleased with Woot the Wanderer, whom they found modest and intelligent and very well mannered. The boy was truly grateful for his release from the cruel enchantment, and he promised to love, revere and defend the girl Ruler of Oz forever afterward, as a faithful subject.

"You may visit me at my palace, if you wish," said Ozma, "where I will be glad to introduce you to two other nice boys, Ojo the Munchkin and Button-Bright."

"Thank your Majesty," replied Woot, and then he turned to the Tin Woodman and inquired: "What are your further plans, Mr. Emperor? Will you still seek Nimmie Amee and marry her, or will you abandon the quest and return to the Emerald City and your own castle?"

The Tin Woodman, now as highly polished and well-oiled as ever, reflected a while on this question and then answered:

"Well, I see no reason why I should not find Nimmie Amee. We are now in the Munchkin Country, where we are perfectly safe, and if it was right for me, before our enchantment, to marry Nimmie Amee and make her Empress of the Winkies, it must be right now, when the enchantment has been broken and I am once more myself. Am I correct, friend Scarecrow?"

"You are, indeed," answered the Scarecrow. "No one can oppose such logic."

"But I'm afraid you don't love Nimmie Amee," suggested Dorothy.

"That is just because I can't love anyone," replied the Tin Woodman. "But, if I cannot love my wife, I can at least be kind to her, and all husbands are not able to do that."

"Do you s'pose Nimmie Amee still loves you, after all these years?" asked Dorothy.

"I'm quite sure of it, and that is why I am going to her to make her happy. Woot the Wanderer thinks I ought to reward her for being faithful to me after my meat body was chopped to pieces and I became tin. What do *you* think, Ozma?"

Ozma smiled as she said:

"I do not know your Nimmie Amee, and so I cannot tell what she most needs to make her happy. But there is no harm in your going to her and asking her if she still wishes to marry you. If she does, we will give you a grand wedding at the Emerald City and, afterward, as Empress of the Winkies, Nimmie Amee would become one of the most important ladies in all Oz."

So it was decided that the Tin Woodman would continue his journey, and that the Scarecrow and Woot the Wanderer should accompany him, as before. Polychrome also decided to join their party, somewhat to the surprise of all.

"I hate to be cooped up in a palace," she said to Ozma, "and of course the first time I meet my Rainbow I shall return to my own dear home in the skies, where my fairy sisters are even now awaiting me and my father is cross because I get lost so often. But I can find my Rainbow just as quickly while traveling in the Munchkin Country as I could if living in the Emerald City — or any other place in Oz — so I shall go with the Tin Woodman and help him woo Nimmie Amee."

Dorothy wanted to go, too, but as the Tin Woodman did not invite her to join his party, she felt she might be intruding if she asked to be taken. She hinted, but she found he didn't take the hint. It is quite a delicate matter for one to ask a girl to marry him, however much she loves him, and perhaps the Tin Woodman did not desire to have too many looking on when he found his old sweetheart, Nimmie Amee. So Dorothy contented herself with the thought that she would help Ozma prepare a splendid wedding feast, to be followed by a round of parties and festivities when the Emperor of the Winkies reached the Emerald City with his bride.

Ozma offered to take them all in the Red Wagon to a place as near to the great Munchkin forest as a wagon could get. The Red Wagon was big enough to seat them all, and so, bidding good-bye to Jinjur, who gave Woot a basket of ripe cream-puffs and caramels to take with him, Ozma commanded the Wooden Sawhorse to start, and the strange creature moved swiftly over the lanes and presently came to the Road of Yellow Bricks. This road led straight to a dense forest, where the path was too narrow for the Red Wagon to proceed farther, so here the party separated.

Ozma and Dorothy and Toto returned to the Emerald City, after wishing their friends a safe and successful journey, while the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, Woot the Wanderer and Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter, prepared to push their way through the thick forest. However, these forest paths were well known to the Tin Man and the Scarecrow, who felt quite at home among the trees.

"I was born in this grand forest," said Nick Chopper, the tin Emperor, speaking proudly, "and it was here that the Witch enchanted my axe and I lost different parts of my meat body until I became all tin. Here, also — for it is a big forest — Nimmie Amee lived with the Wicked Witch, and at the other edge of the trees stands the cottage of my friend Ku-Klip, the famous tinsmith who made my present beautiful form."

“He must be a clever workman,” declared Woot, admiringly.

“He is simply wonderful,” declared the Tin Woodman.

“I shall be glad to make his acquaintance,” said Woot.

“If you wish to meet with real cleverness,” remarked the Scarecrow, “you should visit the Munchkin farmer who first made *me*. I won’t say that my friend the Emperor isn’t all right for a tin man, but any judge of beauty can understand that a Scarecrow is far more artistic and refined.”

“You are too soft and flimsy,” said the Tin Woodman.

“You are too hard and stiff,” said the Scarecrow, and this was as near to quarreling as the two friends ever came. Polychrome laughed at them both, as well she might, and Woot hastened to change the subject.

At night they all camped underneath the trees. The boy ate cream-puffs for supper and offered Polychrome some, but she preferred other food and at daybreak sipped the dew that was clustered thick on the forest flowers. Then they tramped onward again, and presently the Scarecrow paused and said:

“It was on this very spot that Dorothy and I first met the Tin Woodman, who was rusted so badly that none of his joints would move. But after we had oiled him up, he was as good as new and accompanied us to the Emerald City.”

“Ah, that was a sad experience,” asserted the Tin Woodman soberly. “I was caught in a rainstorm while chopping down a tree for exercise, and before I realized it, I was firmly rusted in every joint. There I stood, axe in hand, but unable to move, for days and weeks and months! Indeed, I have never known exactly how long the time was; but finally along came Dorothy and I was saved. See! This is the very tree I was chopping at the time I rusted.”

“You cannot be far from your old home, in that case,” said Woot.

“No; my little cabin stands not a great way off, but there is no occasion for us to visit it. Our errand is with Nimmie Amee, and her house is somewhat farther away, to the left of us.”

“Didn’t you say she lives with a Wicked Witch, who makes her a slave?” asked the boy.

“She did, but she doesn’t,” was the reply. “I am told the Witch was destroyed when Dorothy’s house fell on her, so now Nimmie Amee must live all alone. I haven’t seen her, of course, since the Witch was crushed, for at that time I was standing rusted in the forest and had been there a long time, but the poor girl must have felt very happy to be free from her cruel mistress.”

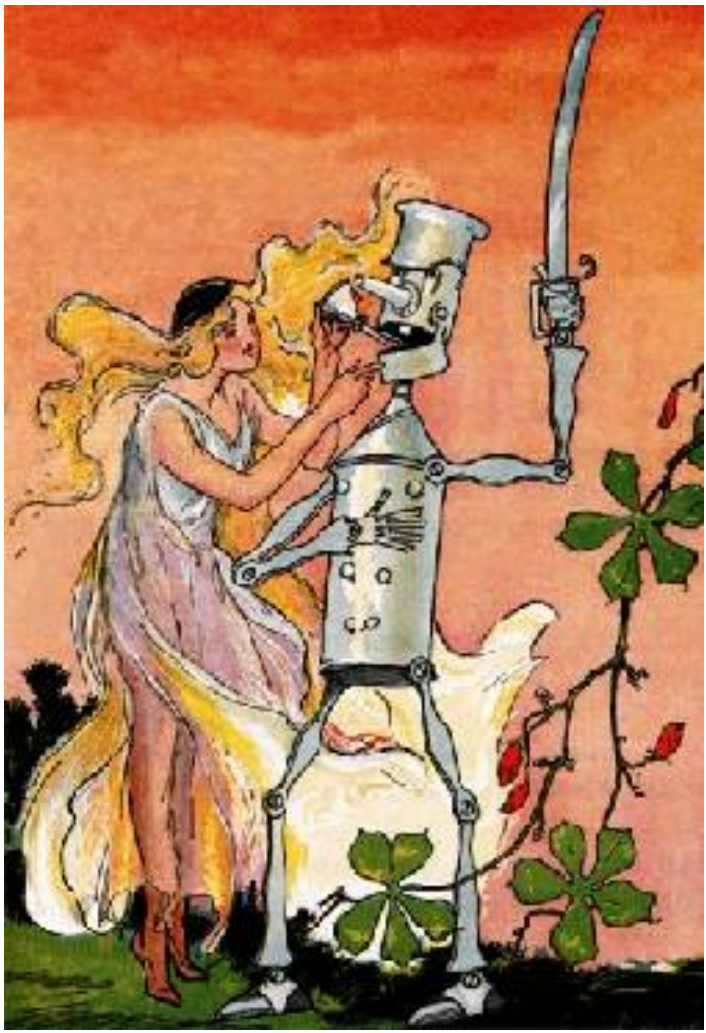
“Well,” said the Scarecrow, “let’s travel on and find Nimmie Amee. Lead on, your Majesty, since you know the way, and we will follow.”

So the Tin Woodman took a path that led through the thickest part of the forest, and they followed it for some time. The light was dim here, because vines and bushes and leafy foliage were all about them, and often the Tin Man had to push aside the branches that obstructed their way, or cut them off with his axe. After they had proceeded some distance, the Emperor suddenly stopped short and exclaimed: “Good gracious!”

The Scarecrow, who was next, first bumped into his friend and then peered around his tin body, and said in a tone of wonder:

“Well, I declare!”

Woot the Wanderer pushed forward to see what was the matter, and cried out in astonishment:



“For goodness’ sake!”

Then the three stood motionless, staring hard, until Polychrome’s merry laughter rang out behind them and aroused them from their stupor.

In the path before them stood a tin man who was the exact duplicate of the Tin Woodman. He was of the same size, he was jointed in the same manner, and he was made of shining tin from top to toe. But he stood immovable, with his tin jaws half parted and his tin eyes turned upward. In one of his hands was held a long, gleaming sword. Yes, *there* was the difference, the only thing that distinguished him from the Emperor of the Winkies. This tin man bore a sword, while the Tin Woodman bore an axe.

“It’s a dream; it *must* be a dream!” gasped Woot.

“That’s it, of course,” said the Scarecrow; “there couldn’t be *two* Tin Woodmen.”

“No,” agreed Polychrome, dancing nearer to the stranger, “this one is a Tin Soldier. Don’t you see his sword?”

The Tin Woodman cautiously put out one tin hand and felt of his double’s arm. Then he said in a voice that trembled with emotion:

“Who are you, friend?”194

There was no reply.

“Can’t you see he’s rusted, just as you were once?” asked Polychrome, laughing again. “Here, Nick Chopper, lend me your oil-can a minute!”

The Tin Woodman silently handed her his oil-can, without which he never traveled, and Polychrome first oiled the stranger’s tin jaws and then worked them gently to and fro until the Tin Soldier said:

“That’s enough. Thank you. I can now talk. But please oil my other joints.”

Woot seized the oil-can and did this, but all the others helped wiggle the soldier’s joints as soon as they were oiled, until they moved freely.

The Tin Soldier seemed highly pleased at his release. He strutted up and down the path, saying in a high, thin voice:

“The Soldier is a splendid man When marching on parade, And when he meets the enemy He never is afraid. He rights the wrongs of nations, His country’s flag defends, The foe he’ll fight with great delight, But seldom fights his friends.”

Captain Fyter

CHAPTER 16

"Are you really a soldier?" asked Woot, when they had all watched this strange tin person parade up and down the path and proudly flourish his sword.

"I *was* a soldier," was the reply, "but I've been a prisoner to Mr. Rust so long that I don't know exactly *what* I am."196

"But — dear me!" cried the Tin Woodman, sadly perplexed; "how came you to be made of tin?"

"That," answered the Soldier, "is a sad, sad story. I was in love with a beautiful Munchkin girl, who lived with a Wicked Witch. The Witch did not wish me to marry the girl, so she enchanted my sword, which began hacking me to pieces. When I lost my legs I went to the tinsmith, Ku-Klip, and he made me some tin legs. When I lost my arms, Ku-Klip made me tin arms, and when I lost my head he made me this fine one out of tin. It was the same way with my body, and finally I was all tin. But I was not unhappy, for Ku-Klip made a good job of me, having had experience in making another tin man before me."

"Yes," observed the Tin Woodman, "it was Ku-Klip who made me. But, tell me, what was the name of the Munchkin girl you were in love with?"

"She is called Nimmie Amee," said the Tin Soldier.

Hearing this, they were all so astonished that they were silent for a time, regarding the stranger with wondering looks. Finally the Tin Woodman ventured to ask:

"And did Nimmie Amee return your love?"

"Not at first," admitted the Soldier. "When first I marched into the forest and met her, she was weeping over the loss of her former sweetheart, a woodman whose name was Nick Chopper."

"That is me," said the Tin Woodman.

"She told me he was nicer than a soldier, because he was all made of tin and shone beautifully in the sun. She said a tin man appealed to her artistic instincts more than an ordinary meat man, as I was then. But I did not despair, because her tin sweetheart had disappeared, and could not be found. And finally Nimmie Amee permitted me to call upon her and we became friends. It was then that the Wicked Witch discovered me and became furiously angry when I said I wanted to marry the girl. She enchanted my sword, as I said, and then my troubles began. When I got my tin legs, Nimmie Amee began to take an interest in me; when I got my tin arms, she began to like me better than ever, and when I was all made of tin, she said I

looked like her dear Nick Chopper and she would be willing to marry me.

"The day of our wedding was set, and it turned out to be a rainy day. Nevertheless I started out to get Nimmie Amee, because the Witch had been absent for some time, and we meant to elope before she got back. As I traveled the forest paths the rain wetted my joints, but I paid no attention to this because my thoughts were all on my wedding with beautiful Nimmie Amee and I could think of nothing else until suddenly my legs stopped moving. Then my arms rusted at the joints and I became frightened and cried for help, for now I was unable to oil myself. No one heard my calls and before long my jaws rusted, and I was unable to utter another sound. So I stood helpless in this spot, hoping some wanderer would come my way and save me. But this forest path is seldom used, and I have been standing here so long that I have lost all track of time. In my mind I composed poetry and sang songs, but not a sound have I been able to utter. But this desperate condition has now been relieved by your coming my way and I must thank you for my rescue."

"This is wonderful!" said the Scarecrow, heaving a stuffy, long sigh. "I think Ku-Klip was wrong to make two tin men, just alike, and the strangest thing of all is that both you tin men fell in love with the same girl."

"As for that," returned the Soldier, seriously, "I must admit I lost my ability to love when I lost my meat heart. Ku-Klip gave me a tin heart, to be sure, but it doesn't love anything, as far as I can discover, and merely rattles against my tin ribs, which makes me wish I had no heart at all."

"Yet, in spite of this condition, you were going to marry Nimmie Amee?"

"Well, you see I had promised to marry her, and I am an honest man and always try to keep my promises. I didn't like to disappoint the poor girl, who had been disappointed by one tin man already."

"That was not my fault," declared the Emperor of the Winkies, and then he related how he, also, had rusted in the forest and after a long time had been rescued by Dorothy and the Scarecrow and had traveled with them to the Emerald City in search of a heart that could love.

"If you have found such a heart, sir," said the Soldier, "I will gladly allow you to marry Nimmie Amee in my place."

"If she loves you best, sir," answered the Woodman, "I shall not interfere with your wedding her. For, to be quite frank with you, I cannot yet love Nimmie Amee as I did before I became tin."

"Still, one of you ought to marry the poor girl," remarked Woot; "and, if she likes tin men, there is not much choice between you. Why don't you draw lots for her?"200

"That wouldn't be right," said the Scarecrow.

“The girl should be permitted to choose her own husband,” asserted Polychrome. “You should both go to her and allow her to take her choice. Then she will surely be happy.”

“That, to me, seems a very fair arrangement,” said the Tin Soldier.

“I agree to it,” said the Tin Woodman, shaking the hand of his twin to show the matter was settled. “May I ask your name, sir?” he continued.

“Before I was so cut up,” replied the other, “I was known as Captain Fyter, but afterward I was merely called ‘The Tin Soldier.’“

“Well, Captain, if you are agreeable, let us now go to Nimmie Amee’s house and let her choose between us.”

“Very well; and if we meet the Witch, we will both fight her — you with your axe and I with my sword.”

“The Witch is destroyed,” announced the Scarecrow, and as they walked away he told the Tin Soldier of much that had happened in the Land of Oz since he had stood rusted in the forest.

“I must have stood there longer than I had imagined,” he said thoughtfully.

The Workshop of Ku-Klip

CHAPTER 17

It was not more than a two hours' journey to the house where Nimmie Amee had lived, but when our travelers arrived there they found the place deserted. The door was partly off its hinges, the roof had fallen in at the rear and the interior of the cottage was thick with dust. Not only was the place vacant, but it was evident that no one had lived there for a long time.

"I suppose," said the Scarecrow, as they all stood looking wonderingly at the ruined house, "that after the Wicked Witch was destroyed, Nimmie Amee became lonely and went somewhere else to live."

"One could scarcely expect a young girl to live all alone in a forest," added Woot. "She would want company, of course, and so I believe she has gone where other people live."

"And perhaps she is still crying her poor little heart out because no tin man comes to marry her," suggested Polychrome.

"Well, in that case, it is the clear duty of you two tin persons to seek Nimmie Amee until you find her," declared the Scarecrow.

"I do not know where to look for the girl," said the Tin Soldier, "for I am almost a stranger to this part of the country."

"I was born here," said the Tin Woodman, "but the forest has few inhabitants except the wild beasts. I cannot think of anyone living near here

with whom Nimmie Amee might care to live."

"Why not go to Ku-Klip and ask him what has become of the girl?" proposed Polychrome.

That struck them all as being a good suggestion, so once more they started to tramp through the forest, taking the direct path to Ku-Klip's house, for both the tin twins knew the way, having followed it many times.

Ku-Klip lived at the far edge of the great forest, his house facing the broad plains of the Munchkin Country that lay to the eastward. But, when they came to this residence by the forest's edge, the tinsmith was not at home.

It was a pretty place, all painted dark blue with trimmings of lighter blue. There was a neat blue fence around the yard and several blue benches had been placed underneath the shady blue trees which marked the line between forest and plain. There was a blue lawn before the house, which was a good sized building. Ku-Klip lived in the front part of the house and had his workshop in the back part, where he had also built a lean-to addition, in order to give him more room.

Although they found the tinsmith absent on their arrival, there was smoke coming out of his chimney, which proved that he would soon return.

"And perhaps Nimmie Amee will be with him," said the Scarecrow in a cheerful voice.

While they waited, the Tin Woodman went to the door of the workshop and, finding it unlocked, entered and looked curiously around the room where he had been made.

"It seems almost like home to me," he told his friends, who had followed him in. "The first time I came here I had lost a leg, so I had to carry it in my hand while I hopped on the other leg all the way from the place in the forest where the enchanted axe cut me. I remember that old Ku-Klip carefully put my meat leg into a barrel — I think that is the same barrel, still standing in the corner yonder — and then at once he began to make a tin leg for me. He worked fast and with skill, and I was much interested in the job."

"My experience was much the same," said the Tin Soldier. "I used to bring all the parts of me, which the enchanted sword had cut away, here to the tinsmith, and Ku-Klip would put them into the barrel."

"I wonder," said Woot, "if those cast-off parts of you two unfortunates are still in that barrel in the corner?"

"I suppose so," replied the Tin Woodman. "In the Land of Oz no part of a living creature can ever be destroyed."207

"If that is true, how was that Wicked Witch destroyed?" inquired Woot.

"Why, she was very old and was all dried up and withered before Oz became a fairyland," explained the Scarecrow. "Only her magic arts had kept

her alive so long, and when Dorothy's house fell upon her she just turned to dust, and was blown away and scattered by the wind. I do not think, however, that the parts cut away from these two young men could ever be entirely destroyed and, if they are still in those barrels, they are likely to be just the same as when the enchanted axe or sword severed them."

"It doesn't matter, however," said the Tin Woodman; "our tin bodies are more brilliant and durable, and quite satisfy us."

"Yes, the tin bodies are best," agreed the Tin Soldier. "Nothing can hurt them."

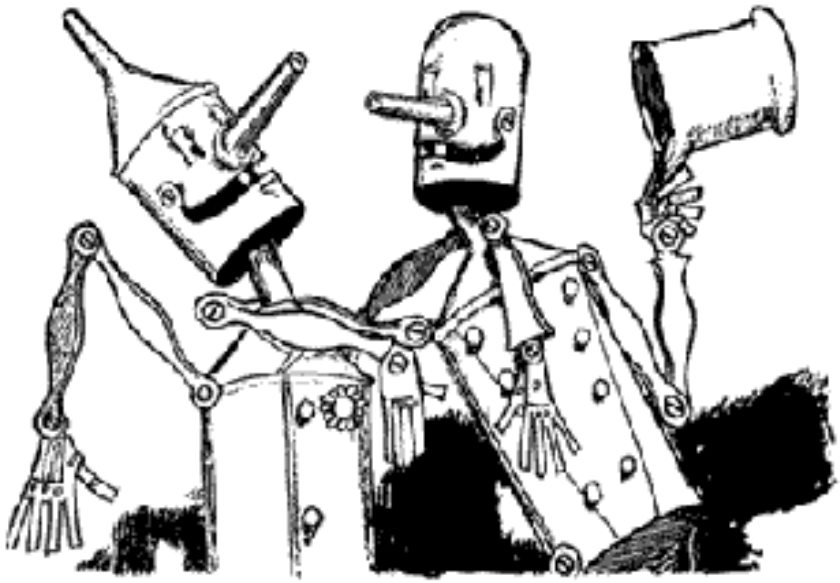
"Unless they get dented or rusted," said Woot, but both the tin men frowned on him.

Scraps of tin, of all shapes and sizes, lay scattered around the workshop. Also there were hammers and anvils and soldering irons and a charcoal furnace and many other tools such as a tinsmith works with. Against two of the side walls had been built stout work-benches and in the center of the room was a long table. At the end of the shop, which adjoined the dwelling, were several cupboards.

After examining the interior of the workshop until his curiosity was satisfied, Woot said:

"I think I will go outside until Ku-Klip comes. It does not seem quite proper for us to take possession of his house while he is absent."

"That is true," agreed the Scarecrow, and they were all about to leave the room when the Tin Woodman said: "Wait a minute," and they halted in obedience to the command.



The Tin Woodman Talks to Himself

CHAPTER 18

The Tin Woodman had just noticed the cupboards and was curious to know what they contained, so he went to one of them and opened the door. There were shelves inside, and upon one of the shelves which was about on a level with his tin chin the Emperor discovered a Head — it looked like a doll's head, only it was larger, and he soon saw it was the Head of some person. It was facing the Tin Woodman and as the cupboard door swung back, the eyes of the Head slowly opened and looked at him. The Tin Woodman was not at all surprised, for in the Land of Oz one runs into magic at every turn.

"Dear me!" said the Tin Woodman, staring hard. "It seems as if I had met you, somewhere, before. Good morning, sir!"

"You have the advantage of me," replied the Head. "I never saw you before in my life."

"Still, your face is very familiar," persisted the Tin Woodman. "Pardon me, but may I ask if you — eh — eh — if you ever had a Body?"

"Yes, at one time," answered the Head, "but that is so long ago I can't remember it. Did you think," with a pleasant smile, "that I was born just as I am? That a Head would be created without a Body?"

"No, of course not," said the other. "But how came you to lose your body?"

"Well, I can't recollect the details; you'll have to ask Ku-Klip about it," returned the Head. "For, curious as it may seem to you, my memory is not good since my separation from the rest of me. I still possess my brains and my intellect is as good as ever, but my memory of some of the events I formerly experienced is quite hazy."

"How long have you been in this cupboard?" asked the Emperor.

"I don't know."

"Haven't you a name?"

"Oh, yes," said the Head; "I used to be called Nick Chopper, when I was a woodman and cut down trees for a living."

"Good gracious!" cried the Tin Woodman in astonishment. "If you are Nick Chopper's Head, then you are *Me* — or I'm *You* — or — or — What relation *are* we, anyhow?"

"Don't ask me," replied the Head. "For my part, I'm not anxious to claim relationship with any common, manufactured article, like you. You may be all right in your class, but your class isn't my class. You're tin."

The poor Emperor felt so bewildered that for a time he could only stare at his old Head in silence. Then he said:

"I must admit that I wasn't at all bad looking before I became tin. You're almost handsome — for meat. If your hair was combed, you'd be quite attractive."213

"How do you expect me to comb my hair without help?" demanded the Head, indignantly. "I used to keep it smooth and neat, when I had arms, but after I was removed from the rest of me, my hair got mussed, and old Ku-Klip never has combed it for me."

"I'll speak to him about it," said the Tin Woodman. "Do you remember loving a pretty Munchkin girl named Nimmie Amee?"

"No," answered the Head. "That is a foolish question. The heart in my body — when I had a body — might have loved someone, for all I know, but a head isn't made to love; it's made to think."

"Oh; do you think, then?"

"I used to think."

"You must have been shut up in this cupboard for years and years. What have you thought about, in all that time?"

"Nothing. That's another foolish question. A little reflection will convince you that I have had nothing to think about, except the boards on the inside of the cupboard door, and it didn't take me long to think of everything about those boards that could be thought of. Then, of course, I quit thinking."

"And are you happy?"

"Happy? What's that?"214

"Don't you know what happiness is?" inquired the Tin Woodman.

"I haven't the faintest idea whether it's round or square, or black or white, or what it is. And, if you will pardon my lack of interest in it, I will say that I don't care."

The Tin Woodman was much puzzled by these answers. His traveling companions had grouped themselves at his back, and had fixed their eyes on the Head and listened to the conversation with much interest, but until now, they had not interrupted because they thought the Tin Woodman had the best right to talk to his own head and renew acquaintance with it.

But now the Tin Soldier remarked:

"I wonder if *my* old head happens to be in any of these cupboards," and he proceeded to open all the cupboard doors. But no other head was to be found on any of the shelves.

"Oh, well; never mind," said Woot the Wanderer; "I can't imagine what anyone wants of a cast-off head, anyhow."

"I can understand the Soldier's interest," asserted Polychrome, dancing

around the grimy workshop until her draperies formed a cloud around her dainty form. “For sentimental reasons a man might like to see his old head once more, just as one likes to revisit an old home.”

“And then to kiss it good-bye,” added the Scarecrow.

“I hope that tin thing won’t try to kiss *me* goodbye!” exclaimed the Tin Woodman’s former head. “And I don’t see what right you folks have to disturb my peace and comfort, either.”

“You belong to me,” the Tin Woodman declared.

“I do not!”

“You and I are one.”

“We’ve been parted,” asserted the Head. “It would be unnatural for me to have any interest in a man made of tin. Please close the door and leave me alone.”

“I did not think that my old Head could be so disagreeable,” said the Emperor. “I — I’m quite ashamed of myself; meaning *you*.”

“You ought to be glad that I’ve enough sense to know what my rights are,” retorted the Head. “In this cupboard I am leading a simple life, peaceful and dignified, and when a mob of people in whom I am not interested disturb me, *they* are the disagreeable ones; not I.”216

With a sigh the Tin Woodman closed and latched the cupboard door and turned away.

“Well,” said the Tin Soldier, “if my old head would have treated me as coldly and in so unfriendly a manner as your old head has treated you, friend Chopper, I’m glad I could not find it.”

“Yes; I’m rather surprised at my head, myself,” replied the Tin Woodman, thoughtfully. “I thought I had a more pleasant disposition when I was made of meat.”

But just then old Ku-Klip the Tinsmith arrived, and he seemed surprised to find so many visitors. Ku-Klip was a stout man and a short man. He had his sleeves rolled above his elbows, showing muscular arms, and he wore a leathern apron that covered all the front of him, and was so long that Woot was surprised he didn’t step on it and trip whenever he walked. And Ku-Klip had a gray beard that was almost as long as his apron, and his head was bald on top and his ears stuck out from his head like two fans. Over his eyes, which were bright and twinkling, he wore big spectacles. It was easy to see that the tinsmith was a kind hearted man, as well as a merry and agreeable one.

“Oh-ho!” he cried in a joyous bass voice; “here are both my tin men come to visit me, and they and their friends are welcome indeed. I’m very proud of you two characters, I assure you, for you are so perfect that you are proof

that I'm a good workman. Sit down. Sit down, all of you — if you can find anything to sit on — and tell me why you are here."

So they found seats and told him all of their adventures that they thought he would like to know. Ku-Klip was glad to learn that Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman, was now Emperor of the Winkies and a friend of Ozma of Oz, and the tinsmith was also interested in the Scarecrow and Polychrome.

He turned the straw man around, examining him curiously, and patted him on all sides, and then said:

"You are certainly wonderful, but I think you would be more durable and steady on your legs if you were made of tin. Would you like me to — "

"No, indeed!" interrupted the Scarecrow hastily; "I like myself better as I am."

But to Polychrome the tinsmith said:

"Nothing could improve *you*, my dear, for you are the most beautiful maiden I have ever seen. It is pure happiness just to look at you."218

"That is praise, indeed, from so skillful a workman," returned the Rainbow's Daughter, laughing and dancing in and out the room.

"Then it must be this boy you wish me to help," said Ku-Klip, looking at Woot.

"No," said Woot, "we are not here to seek your skill, but have merely come to you for information."

Then, between them, they related their search for Nimmie Amee, whom the Tin Woodman explained he had resolved to marry, yet who had promised

to become the bride of the Tin Soldier before he unfortunately became rusted. And when the story was told, they asked Ku-Klip if he knew what had become of Nimmie Amee.

"Not exactly," replied the old man, "but I know that she wept bitterly when the Tin Soldier did not come to marry her, as he had promised to do. The old Witch was so provoked at the girl's tears that she beat Nimmie Amee with her crooked stick and then hobbled away to gather some magic herbs, with which she intended to transform the girl into an old hag, so that no one would again love her or care to marry her. It was while she was away on this errand that Dorothy's house fell on the Wicked Witch, and she turned to dust and blew away. When I heard this good news, I sent Nimmie Amee to find the Silver Shoes which the Witch had worn, but Dorothy had taken them with her to the Emerald City."221

"Yes, we know all about those Silver Shoes," said the Scarecrow.

"Well," continued Ku-Klip, "after that, Nimmie Amee decided to go away from the forest and live with some people she was acquainted with who had a house on Mount Munch. I have never seen the girl since."

"Do you know the name of the people on Mount Munch, with whom she went to live?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"No, Nimmie Amee did not mention her friend's name, and I did not ask her. She took with her all that she could carry of the goods that were in the Witch's house, and she told me I could have the rest. But when I went there I found nothing worth taking except some magic powders that I did not know how to use, and a bottle of Magic Glue."

“What is Magic Glue?” asked Woot.

“It is a magic preparation with which to mend people when they cut themselves. One time, long ago, I cut off one of my fingers by accident, and I carried it to the Witch, who took down her bottle and glued it on again for me. See!” showing them his finger, “it is as good as ever it was. No one else that I ever heard of had this Magic Glue, and of course when Nick Chopper cut himself to pieces with his enchanted axe and Captain Fyter cut himself to pieces with his enchanted sword, the Witch would not mend them, or allow me to glue them together, because she had herself wickedly enchanted the axe and sword. Nothing remained but for me to make them new parts out of tin; but, as you see, tin answered the purpose very well, and I am sure their tin bodies are a great improvement on their meat bodies.”

“Very true,” said the Tin Soldier.

“I quite agree with you,” said the Tin Woodman. “I happened to find my old head in your cupboard, a while ago, and certainly it is not as desirable a head as the tin one I now wear.”

“By the way,” said the Tin Soldier, “what ever became of *my* old head, Ku-Klip?”

“And of the different parts of our bodies?” added the Tin Woodman.

“Let me think a minute,” replied Ku-Klip. “If I remember right, you two boys used to bring me most of your parts, when they were cut off, and I saved them in that barrel in the corner. You must not have brought me all the parts, for when I made Chopfyt I had hard work finding enough pieces to complete the job. I finally had to finish him with one arm.”

“Who is Chopfyt?” inquired Woot.

“Oh, haven’t I told you about Chopfyt?” exclaimed Ku-Klip. “Of course not! And he’s quite a curiosity, too. You’ll be interested in hearing about Chopfyt. This is how he happened:

“One day, after the Witch had been destroyed and Nimmie Amee had gone to live with her friends on Mount Munch, I was looking around the shop for something and came upon the bottle of Magic Glue which I had brought from the old Witch’s house. It occurred to me to piece together the odds and ends of you two people, which of course were just as good as ever, and see if I couldn’t make a man out of them. If I succeeded, I would have an assistant to help me with my work, and I thought it would be a clever idea to put to some practical use the scraps of Nick Chopper and Captain Fyter. There were two perfectly good heads in my cupboard, and a lot of feet and legs and parts of bodies in the barrel, so I set to work to see what I could do.

“First, I pieced together a body, gluing it with the Witch’s Magic Glue, which worked perfectly. That was the hardest part of my job, however,

because the bodies didn't match up well and some parts were missing. But by using a piece of Captain Fyter here and a piece of Nick Chopper there, I finally got together a very decent body, with heart and all the trimmings complete."

"Whose heart did you use in making the body?" asked the Tin Woodman anxiously.

"I can't tell, for the parts had no tags on them and one heart looks much like another. After the body was completed, I glued two fine legs and feet onto it. One leg was Nick Chopper's and one was Captain Fyter's and, finding one leg longer than the other, I trimmed it down to make them match. I was much disappointed to find that I had but one arm. There was an extra leg in the barrel, but I could find only one arm. Having glued this onto the body, I was ready for the head, and I had some difficulty in making up my mind which head to use. Finally I shut my eyes and reached out my hand toward the cupboard shelf, and the first head I touched I glued upon my new man."

"It was mine!" declared the Tin Soldier, gloomily.

"No, it was mine," asserted Ku-Klip, "for I had given you another in exchange for it — the beautiful tin head you now wear. When the glue had dried, my man was quite an interesting fellow. I named him Chopfyt, using a part of Nick Chopper's name and a part of Captain Fyter's name, because he was a mixture of both your cast-off parts. Chopfyt was interesting, as I said, but he did not prove a very agreeable companion. He complained bitterly because I had given him but one arm — as if it were my fault! — and he grumbled because the suit of blue Munchkin clothes, which I got for him from a neighbor, did not fit him perfectly."

"Ah, that was because he was wearing my old head," remarked the Tin Soldier. "I remember that head used to be very particular about its clothes."

"As an assistant," the old tinsmith continued, "Chopfyt was not a success. He was awkward with tools and was always hungry. He demanded something to eat six or eight times a day, so I wondered if I had fitted his insides properly. Indeed, Chopfyt ate so much that little food was left for myself; so, when he proposed, one day, to go out into the world and seek adventures, I was delighted to be rid of him. I even made him a tin arm to take the place of the missing one, and that pleased him very much, so that we parted good friends."

"What became of Chopfyt after that?" the Scarecrow inquired.

“I never heard. He started off toward the east, into the plains of the Munchkin Country, and that was the last I ever saw of him.”

“It seems to me,” said the Tin Woodman reflectively, “that you did wrong in making a man out of our cast-off parts. It is evident that Chopfyt could, with justice, claim relationship with both of us.”

“Don’t worry about that,” advised Ku-Klip cheerfully; “it is not likely that you will ever meet the fellow. And, if you should meet him, he doesn’t know who he is made of, for I never told him the secret of his manufacture. Indeed, you are the only ones who know of it, and you may keep the secret to yourselves, if you wish to.”

“Never mind Chopfyt,” said the Scarecrow. “Our business now is to find poor Nimmie Amee and let her choose her tin husband. To do that, it seems, from the information Ku-Klip has given us, we must travel to Mount Munch.”

“If that’s the programme, let us start at once,” suggested Woot.

So they all went outside, where they found Polychrome dancing about among the trees and talking with the birds and laughing as merrily as if she had not lost her Rainbow and so been separated from all her fairy sisters.

They told her they were going to Mount Munch, and she replied:

“Very well; I am as likely to find my Rainbow there as here, and any other place is as likely as there. It all depends on the weather. Do you think it looks like rain?”

They shook their heads, and Polychrome laughed again and danced on after them when they resumed their journey.

The Invisible Country

CHAPTER 19

They were proceeding so easily and comfortably on their way to Mount Munch that Woot said in a serious tone of voice:

"I'm afraid something is going to happen."

"Why?" asked Polychrome, dancing around the group of travelers.

"Because," said the boy, thoughtfully, "I've noticed that when we have the least reason for getting into trouble, something is sure to go wrong. Just now the weather is delightful; the grass is beautifully blue and quite soft to our feet; the mountain we are seeking shows clearly in the distance and there is no reason anything should happen to delay us in getting there. Our troubles all seem to be over, and — well, that's why I'm afraid," he added, with a sigh.

"Dear me!" remarked the Scarecrow, "what unhappy thoughts you have, to be sure. This is proof that born brains cannot equal manufactured brains, for *my* brains dwell only on facts and never borrow trouble. When there is occasion for my brains to think, they think, but I would be ashamed of my brains if they kept shooting out thoughts that were merely fears and imaginings, such as do no good, but are likely to do harm."

"For my part," said the Tin Woodman, "I do not think at all, but allow my velvet heart to guide me at all times."

"The tinsmith filled my hollow head with scraps and clippings of tin," said the Soldier, "and he told me they would do nicely for brains, but when I begin to think, the tin scraps rattle around and get so mixed that I'm soon bewildered. So I try not to think. My tin heart is almost as useless to me, for it is hard and cold, so I'm sure the red velvet heart of my friend Nick Chopper is a better guide."

"Thoughtless people are not unusual," observed the Scarecrow, "but I consider them more fortunate than those who have useless or wicked thoughts and do not try to curb them. Your oil can, friend Woodman, is filled with oil, but you only apply the oil to your joints, drop by drop, as you need it, and do not keep spilling it where it will do no good. Thoughts should be restrained in the same way as your oil, and only applied when necessary, and for a good purpose. If used carefully, thoughts are good things to have."

Polychrome laughed at him, for the Rainbow's Daughter knew more about thoughts than the Scarecrow did. But the others were solemn, feeling they had been rebuked, and tramped on in silence.

Suddenly Woot, who was in the lead, looked around and found that all his comrades had mysteriously disappeared. But where could they have gone to?

The broad plain was all about him and there were neither trees nor bushes that could hide even a rabbit, nor any hole for one to fall into. Yet there he stood, alone.

Surprise had caused him to halt, and with a thoughtful and puzzled expression on his face he looked down at his feet. It startled him anew to discover that he had no feet. He reached out his hands, but he could not see them. He could feel his hands and arms and body; he stamped his feet on the grass and knew they were there, but in some strange way they had become invisible.

While Woot stood, wondering, a crash of metal sounded in his ears and he heard two heavy bodies tumble to the earth just beside him.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the voice of the Tin Woodman.

"Mercy me!" cried the voice of the Tin Soldier.

"Why didn't you look where you were going?" asked the Tin Woodman reproachfully.

"I did, but I couldn't see you," said the Tin Soldier. "Something has happened to my tin eyes. I can't see you, even now, nor can I see anyone else!"

"It's the same way with me," admitted the Tin Woodman.

Woot couldn't see either of them, although he heard them plainly, and just then something smashed against him unexpectedly and knocked him over; but it was only the straw-stuffed body of the Scarecrow that fell upon him and while he could not see the Scarecrow he managed to push him off and rose to his feet just as Polychrome whirled against him and made him tumble again.

Sitting upon the ground, the boy asked:

"Can *you* see us, Poly?"

"No, indeed," answered the Rainbow's Daughter; "we've all become invisible."

"How did it happen, do you suppose?" inquired the Scarecrow, lying

where he had fallen.

“We have met with no enemy,” answered Polychrome, “so it must be that this part of the country has the magic quality of making people invisible — even fairies falling under the charm. We can see the grass, and the flowers, and the stretch of plain before us, and we can still see Mount Munch in the distance; but we cannot see ourselves or one another.”

“Well, what are we to do about it?” demanded Woot.

“I think this magic affects only a small part of the plain,” replied Polychrome; “perhaps there is only a streak of the country where an enchantment makes people become invisible. So, if we get together and hold hands, we can travel toward Mount Munch until the enchanted streak is passed.”235

“All right,” said Woot, jumping up, “give me your hand, Polychrome. Where are you?”

“Here,” she answered. “Whistle, Woot, and keep whistling until I come to you.”

So Woot whistled, and presently Polychrome found him and grasped his hand.

“Someone must help me up,” said the Scarecrow, lying near them; so they found the straw man and sat him upon his feet, after which he held fast to Polychrome’s other hand.

Nick Chopper and the Tin Soldier had managed to scramble up without assistance, but it was awkward for them and the Tin Woodman said:

“I don’t seem to stand straight, somehow. But my joints all work, so I guess I can walk.”

Guided by his voice, they reached his side, where Woot grasped his tin fingers so they might keep together.

The Tin Soldier was standing near by and the Scarecrow soon touched him and took hold of his arm.

“I hope you’re not wobbly,” said the straw man, “for if two of us walk unsteadily we will be sure to fall.”

“I’m not wobbly,” the Tin Soldier assured him, “but I’m certain that one of my legs is shorter than the other. I can’t see it, to tell what’s gone wrong, but I’ll limp on with the rest of you until we are out of this enchanted territory.”

They now formed a line, holding hands, and turning their faces toward Mount Munch resumed their journey. They had not gone far, however, when a terrible growl saluted their ears. The sound seemed to come from a place just in front of them, so they halted abruptly and remained silent, listening with all their ears.

“I smell straw!” cried a hoarse, harsh voice, with more growls and snarls. “I smell straw, and I’m a Hip-po-gy-raf who loves straw and eats all he can find. I want to eat *this* straw! Where is it? Where is it?”

The Scarecrow, hearing this, trembled but kept silent. All the others were silent, too, hoping that the invisible beast would be unable to find them. But the creature sniffed the odor of the straw and drew nearer and nearer to them until he reached the Tin Woodman, on one end of the line. It was a big beast and it smelled of the Tin Woodman and grated two rows of enormous teeth against the Emperor’s tin body.

“Bah! that’s not straw,” said the harsh voice, and the beast advanced along the line to Woot.

“Meat! Pooh, you’re no good! I can’t eat meat,” grumbled the beast, and passed on to Polychrome.

“Sweetmeats and perfume — cobwebs and dew! Nothing to eat in a fairy like you,” said the creature.

Now, the Scarecrow was next to Polychrome in the line, and he realized if the beast devoured his straw he would be helpless for a long time, because the last farmhouse was far behind them and only grass covered the vast expanse of plain. So in his fright he let go of Polychrome’s hand and put the hand of the Tin Soldier in that of the Rainbow’s Daughter. Then he slipped back of the line and went to the other end, where he silently seized the Tin Woodman’s hand.

Meantime, the beast had smelled the Tin Soldier and found he was the last of the line.

“That’s funny!” growled the Hip-po-gy-raf; “I can smell straw, but I can’t find it. Well, it’s here, somewhere, and I must hunt around until I *do* find it, for I’m hungry.”

His voice was now at the left of them, so they started on, hoping to avoid him, and traveled as fast as they could in the direction of Mount Munch.

“I don’t like this invisible country,” said Woot with a shudder. “We can’t tell how many dreadful, invisible beasts are roaming around us, or what danger we’ll come to next.”

“Quit thinking about danger, please,” said the Scarecrow, warningly.

“Why?” asked the boy.

“If you think of some dreadful thing, it’s liable to happen, but if you don’t think of it, and no one else thinks of it, it just *can’t* happen. Do you see?”

“No,” answered Woot. “I won’t be able to see much of anything until we escape from this enchantment.”

But they got out of the invisible strip of country as suddenly as they had entered it, and the instant they got out they stopped short, for just before

them was a deep ditch, running at right angles as far as their eyes could see and stopping all further progress toward Mount Munch.

"It's not so very wide," said Woot, "but I'm sure none of us can jump across it."

Polychrome began to laugh, and the Scarecrow said: "What's the matter?"

"Look at the tin men!" she said, with another burst of merry laughter.

Woot and the Scarecrow looked, and the tin men looked at themselves.

"It was the collision," said the Tin Woodman regretfully. "I knew something was wrong with me, and now I can see that my side is dented in so that I lean over toward the left. It was the Soldier's fault; he shouldn't have been so careless."

"It is your fault that my right leg is bent, making it shorter than the other, so that I limp badly," retorted the Soldier. "You shouldn't have stood where I was walking."

"You shouldn't have walked where I was standing," replied the Tin Woodman.

It was almost a quarrel, so Polychrome said soothingly:

"Never mind, friends; as soon as we have time I am sure we can straighten the Soldier's leg and get the dent out of the Woodman's body. The Scarecrow needs patting into shape, too, for he had a bad tumble, but our first task is to get over this ditch."

"Yes, the ditch is the most important thing, just now," added Woot.

They were standing in a row, looking hard at the unexpected barrier, when a fierce growl from behind them made them all turn quickly. Out of the invisible country marched a huge beast with a thick, leathery skin and a surprisingly long neck. The head on the top of this neck was broad and flat and the eyes and mouth were very big and the nose and ears very small. When the head was drawn down toward the beast's shoulders, the neck was all wrinkles, but the head could shoot up very high indeed, if the creature wished it to.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, "this must be the Hip-po-gy-raf."

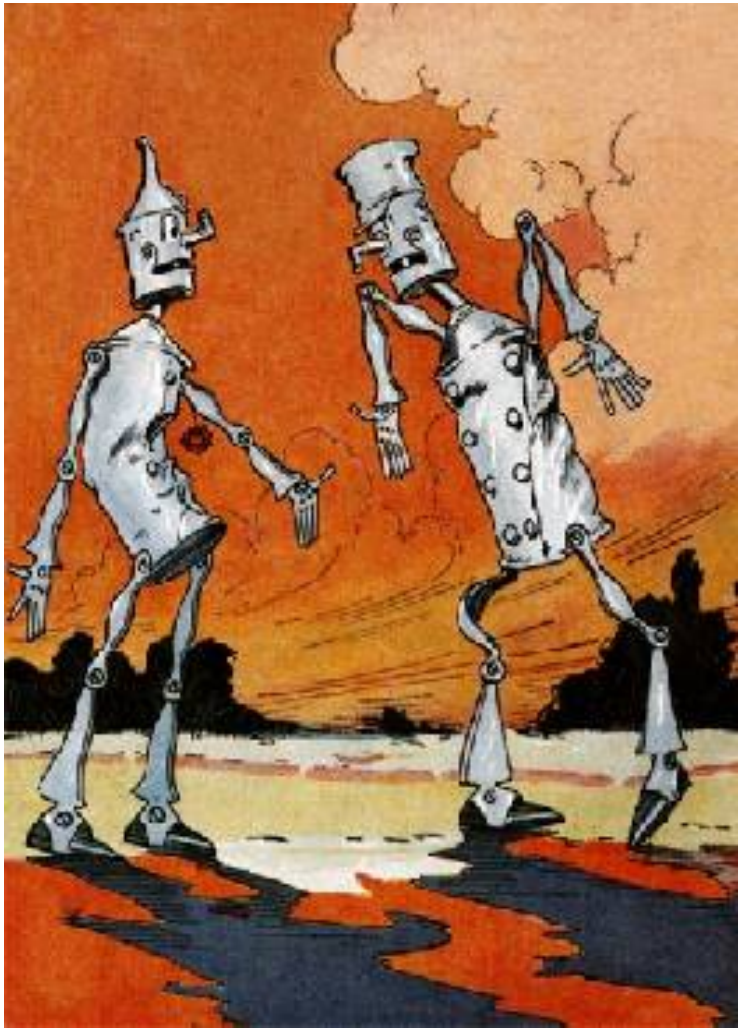
"Quite right," said the beast; "and you're the straw which I'm to eat for my dinner. Oh, how I love straw! I hope you don't resent my affectionate appetite?"

With its four great legs it advanced straight toward the Scarecrow, but the Tin Woodman and the Tin Soldier both sprang in front of their friend and flourished their weapons.

"Keep off!" said the Tin Woodman, warningly, "or I'll chop you with my axe."

"Keep off!" said the Tin Soldier, "or I'll cut you with my sword."

“Would you really do that?” asked the Hip-po-gy-raf, in a disappointed voice.



"We would," they both replied, and the Tin Woodman added: "The Scarecrow is our friend, and he would be useless without his straw stuffing. So, as we are comrades, faithful and true, we will defend our friend's stuffing against all enemies."

The Hip-po-gy-raf sat down and looked at them sorrowfully.

"When one has made up his mind to have a meal of delicious straw, and then finds he can't have it, it is certainly hard luck," he said. "And what good is the straw man to you, or to himself, when the ditch keeps you from going any further?"

"Well, we can go back again," suggested Woot.

"True," said the Hip-po; "and if you do, you'll be as disappointed as I am.

That's some comfort, anyhow."

The travelers looked at the beast, and then they looked across the ditch at the level plain beyond. On the other side the grass had grown tall, and the sun had dried it, so there was a fine crop of hay that only needed to be cut and stacked.

"Why don't you cross over and eat hay?" the boy asked the beast.

"I'm not fond of hay," replied the Hip-po-gy-raf; "straw is much more delicious, to my notion, and it's more scarce in this neighborhood, too. Also I243 must confess that I can't get across the ditch, for my body is too heavy and clumsy for me to jump the distance. I can stretch my neck across, though, and you will notice that I've nibbled the hay on the farther edge — not because I liked it, but because one must eat, and if one can't get the sort of food he desires, he must take what is offered or go hungry."

"Ah, I see you are a philosopher," remarked the Scarecrow.

"No, I'm just a Hip-po-gy-raf," was the reply.

Polychrome was not afraid of the big beast. She danced close to him and said:

"If you can stretch your neck across the ditch, why not help us over? We can sit on your big head, one at a time, and then you can lift us across."

"Yes; I *can*, it is true," answered the Hip-po; "but I refuse to do it. Unless — " he added, and stopped short.

"Unless what?" asked Polychrome.

"Unless you first allow me to eat the straw with which the Scarecrow is stuffed."

"No," said the Rainbow's Daughter, "that is too high a price to pay. Our friend's straw is nice and fresh, for he was restuffed only a little while ago."244

"I know," agreed the Hip-po-gy-raf. "That's why I want it. If it was old, musty straw, I wouldn't care for it."

"*Please* lift us across," pleaded Polychrome.

"No," replied the beast; "since you refuse my generous offer, I can be as stubborn as you are."

After that they were all silent for a time, but then the Scarecrow said bravely:

"Friends, let us agree to the beast's terms. Give him my straw, and carry the rest of me with you across the ditch. Once on the other side, the Tin Soldier can cut some of the hay with his sharp sword, and you can stuff me with that material until we reach a place where there is straw. It is true I have been stuffed with straw all my life and it will be somewhat humiliating to be filled with common hay, but I am willing to sacrifice my pride in a good

cause. Moreover, to abandon our errand and so deprive the great Emperor of the Winkies — or this noble Soldier — of his bride, would be equally humiliating, if not more so."

"You're a very honest and clever man!" exclaimed the Hip-po-gy-raf, admiringly. "When I have eaten your head, perhaps I also will become clever."

"You're not to eat my head, you know," returned the Scarecrow hastily. "My head isn't stuffed with straw and I cannot part with it. When one loses his head he loses his brains."

"Very well, then; you may keep your head," said the beast.

The Scarecrow's companions thanked him warmly for his loyal sacrifice to their mutual good, and then he laid down and permitted them to pull the straw from his body. As fast as they did this, the Hip-po-gy-raf ate up the straw, and when all was consumed Polychrome made a neat bundle of the clothes and boots and gloves and hat and said she would carry them, while Woot tucked the Scarecrow's head under his arm and promised to guard its safety.

"Now, then," said the Tin Woodman, "keep your promise, Beast, and lift us over the ditch."

"M-m-m-mum, but that was a fine dinner!" said the Hip-po, smacking his thick lips in satisfaction, "and I'm as good as my word. Sit on my head, one at a time, and I'll land you safely on the other side."

He approached close to the edge of the ditch and squatted down. Polychrome climbed over his big body and sat herself lightly upon the flat head, holding the bundle of the Scarecrow's raiment in her hand. Slowly the elastic neck stretched out until it reached the far side of the ditch, when the beast lowered his head and permitted the beautiful fairy to leap to the ground.

Woot made the queer journey next, and then the Tin Soldier and the Tin Woodman went over, and all were well pleased to have overcome this serious barrier to their progress.

"Now, Soldier, cut the hay," said the Scarecrow's head, which was still held by Woot the Wanderer.

"I'd like to, but I can't stoop over, with my bent leg, without falling," replied Captain Fyter.

"What can we do about that leg, anyhow?" asked Woot, appealing to Polychrome.

She danced around in a circle several times without replying, and the boy feared she had not heard him; but the Rainbow's Daughter was merely thinking upon the problem, and presently she paused beside the Tin Soldier and said:

“I’ve been taught a little fairy magic, but I’ve never before been asked to mend tin legs with it, so I’m not sure I can help you. It all depends on the good will of my unseen fairy guardians, so I’ll try, and if I fail, you will be no worse off than you are now.”247

She danced around the circle again, and then laid both hands upon the twisted tin leg and sang in her sweet voice:

“Fairy Powers, come to my aid! This bent leg of tin is made; Make it straight and strong and true, And I’ll render thanks to you.”

“Ah!” murmured Captain Fyter in a glad voice, as she withdrew her hands and danced away, and they saw he was standing straight as ever, because his leg was as shapely and strong as it had been before his accident.

The Tin Woodman had watched Polychrome with much interest, and he now said:

“Please take the dent out of my side, Poly, for I am more crippled than was the Soldier.”

So the Rainbow’s Daughter touched his side lightly and sang:

“Here’s a dent by accident; Such a thing was never meant. Fairy Powers, so wondrous great, Make our dear Tin Woodman straight!”

“Good!” cried the Emperor, again standing erect and strutting around to show his fine figure. “Your fairy magic may not be able to accomplish all things, sweet Polychrome, but it works splendidly on tin. Thank you very much.”

“The hay — the hay!” pleaded the Scarecrow’s head.

“Oh, yes; the hay,” said Woot. “What are you waiting for, Captain Fyter?”

At once the Tin Soldier set to work cutting hay with his sword and in a few minutes there was quite enough with which to stuff the Scarecrow’s body. Woot and Polychrome did this and it was no easy task because the hay packed together more than straw and as they had little experience in such work their job, when completed, left the Scarecrow’s arms and legs rather bunchy. Also there was a hump on his back which made Woot laugh and say it reminded him of a camel, but it was the best they could do and when the head was fastened on to the body they asked the Scarecrow how he felt.

“A little heavy, and not quite natural,” he cheerfully replied; “but I’ll get along somehow until we reach a straw-stack. Don’t laugh at me, please, because I’m a little ashamed of myself and I don’t want to regret a good action.”

They started at once in the direction of Mount Munch, and as the Scarecrow proved very clumsy in his movements, Woot took one of his arms and the Tin Woodman the other and so helped their friend to walk in a straight line.

And the Rainbow’s Daughter, as before, danced ahead of them and behind them and all around them, and they never minded her odd ways, because to them she was like a ray of sunshine.

Over Night

CHAPTER 20

The Land of the Munchkins is full of surprises, as our travelers had already learned, and although Mount Munch was constantly growing larger as they advanced toward it, they knew it was still a long way off and were not certain, by any means, that they had escaped all danger or encountered their last adventure.

The plain was broad, and as far as the eye could see, there seemed to be a level stretch of country between them and the mountain, but toward evening they came upon a hollow, in which stood a tiny blue Munchkin dwelling with a garden around it and fields of grain filling in all the rest of the hollow.

They did not discover this place until they came close to the edge of it, and they were astonished at the sight that greeted them because they had imagined that this part of the plain had no inhabitants.

"It's a very small house," Woot declared. "I wonder who lives there?"

"The way to find out is to knock on the door and ask," replied the Tin Woodman. "Perhaps it is the home of Nimmie Amee."

"Is she a dwarf?" asked the boy.

"No, indeed; Nimmie Amee is a full sized woman."

"Then I'm sure she couldn't live in that little house," said Woot.

"Let's go down," suggested the Scarecrow. "I'm almost sure I can see a straw-stack in the back yard."

They descended the hollow, which was rather steep at the sides, and soon came to the house, which was indeed rather small. Woot knocked upon a door that was not much higher than his waist, but got no reply. He knocked again, but not a sound was heard.

"Smoke is coming out of the chimney," announced Polychrome, who was dancing lightly through the garden, where cabbages and beets and turnips and the like were growing finely.

"Then someone surely lives here," said Woot, and knocked again.

Now a window at the side of the house opened and a queer head appeared. It was white and hairy and had a long snout and little round eyes. The ears were hidden by a blue sunbonnet tied under the chin.

"Oh; it's a pig!" exclaimed Woot.

"Pardon me; I am Mrs. Squealina Swyne, wife of Professor Grunter Swyne, and this is our home," said the one in the window. "What do you want?"

"What sort of a Professor is your husband?" inquired the Tin Woodman curiously.

“He is Professor of Cabbage Culture and Corn Perfection. He is very famous in his own family, and would be the wonder of the world if he went abroad,” said Mrs. Swyne in a voice that was half proud and half irritable. “I must also inform you intruders that the Professor is a dangerous individual, for he files his teeth every morning until they are sharp as needles. If you are butchers, you’d better run away and avoid trouble.”

“We are not butchers,” the Tin Woodman assured her.

“Then what are you doing with that axe? And why has the other tin man a sword?”

“They are the only weapons we have to defend our friends from their enemies,” explained the Emperor of the Winkies, and Woot added:

“Do not be afraid of us, Mrs. Swyne, for we are harmless travelers. The tin men and the Scarecrow never eat anything and Polychrome feasts only on dewdrops. As for me, I’m rather hungry, but there is plenty of food in your garden to satisfy me.”

Professor Swyne now joined his wife at the window, looking rather scared in spite of the boy’s assuring speech. He wore a blue Munchkin hat, with pointed crown and broad brim, and big spectacles covered his eyes. He peeked around from behind his wife and after looking hard at the strangers, he said:

“My wisdom assures me that you are merely travelers, as you say, and not butchers. Butchers have reason to be afraid of me, but you are safe. We cannot invite you in, for you are too big for our house, but the boy who eats is welcome to all the carrots and turnips he wants. Make yourselves at home in the garden and stay all night, if you like; but in the morning you must go away, for we are quiet people and do not care for company.”

“May I have some of your straw?” asked the Scarecrow.

“Help yourself,” replied Professor Swyne.

“For pigs, they’re quite respectable,” remarked Woot, as they all went toward the straw-stack.

“I’m glad they didn’t invite us in,” said Captain Fyter. “I hope I’m not too particular about my associates, but I draw the line at pigs.”

The Scarecrow was glad to be rid of his hay, for during the long walk it had sagged down and made him fat and squatty and more bumpy than at first.

“I’m not specially proud,” he said, “but I love a manly figure, such as only straw stuffing can create. I’ve not felt like myself since that hungry Hip-po ate my last straw.”

Polychrome and Woot set to work removing the hay and then they selected the finest straw, crisp and golden, and with it stuffed the Scarecrow anew. He certainly looked better after the operation, and he was so pleased at

being reformed that he tried to dance a little jig, and almost succeeded.

"I shall sleep under the straw-stack tonight," Woot decided, after he had eaten some of the vegetables from the garden, and in fact he slept very well, with the two tin men and the Scarecrow sitting silently beside him and Polychrome away somewhere in the moonlight dancing her fairy dances.

At daybreak the Tin Woodman and the Tin Soldier took occasion to polish their bodies and oil their joints, for both were exceedingly careful of their personal appearance. They had forgotten the quarrel due to their accidental bumping of one another in the invisible country, and being now good friends the Tin Woodman polished the Tin Soldier's back for him and then the Tin Soldier polished the Tin Woodman's back.

For breakfast the Wanderer ate crisp lettuce and radishes, and the Rainbow's Daughter, who had now returned to her friends, sipped the dewdrops that had formed on the petals of the wild-flowers.

As they passed the little house to renew their journey, Woot called out:

"Good-bye, Mr. and Mrs. Swyne!"

The window opened and the two pigs looked out.

"A pleasant journey," said the Professor.

"Have you any children?" asked the Scarecrow, who was a great friend of children.

"We have nine," answered the Professor; "but they do not live with us, for when they were tiny piglets the Wizard of Oz came here and offered to care

for them and to educate them. So we let him have our nine tiny piglets, for he's a good Wizard and can be relied upon to keep his promises."

"I know the Nine Tiny Piglets," said the Tin Woodman.

"So do I," said the Scarecrow. "They still live in the Emerald City, and the Wizard takes good care of them and teaches them to do all sorts of tricks."

"Did they ever grow up?" inquired Mrs. Squealina Swyne, in an anxious voice.

"No," answered the Scarecrow; "like all other children in the Land of Oz, they will always remain children, and in the case of the tiny piglets that is a good thing, because they would not be nearly so cute and cunning if they were bigger."

"But are they happy?" asked Mrs. Swyne.

"Everyone in the Emerald City is happy," said the Tin Woodman. "They can't help it."

Then the travelers said good-bye, and climbed the side of the basin that was toward Mount Munch.

Polychrome's Magic

CHAPTER 21

On this morning, which ought to be the last of this important journey, our friends started away as bright and cheery as could be, and Woot whistled a merry tune so that Polychrome could dance to the music.

On reaching the top of the hill, the plain spread out before them in all its beauty of blue grasses and wildflowers, and Mount Munch seemed much nearer than it had the previous evening. They trudged on at a brisk pace, and by noon the mountain was so close that they could admire its appearance. Its slopes were partly clothed with pretty evergreens, and its foot-hills were tufted with a slender waving bluegrass that had a tassel on the end of every blade. And, for the first time, they perceived, near the foot of the mountain, a charming house, not of great size but neatly painted and with many flowers surrounding it and vines climbing over the doors and windows.

It was toward this solitary house that our travelers now directed their steps, thinking to inquire of the people who lived there where Nimmie Amee might be found.

There were no paths, but the way was quite open and clear, and they were drawing near to the dwelling when Woot the Wanderer, who was then in the lead of the little party, halted with such an abrupt jerk that he stumbled over backward and lay flat on his back in the meadow. The Scarecrow stopped to look at the boy.

"Why did you do that?" he asked in surprise.

Woot sat up and gazed around him in amazement.

"I — I don't know!" he replied.

The two tin men, arm in arm, started to pass them, when both halted and tumbled, with a great clatter, into a heap beside Woot. Polychrome, laughing at the absurd sight, came dancing up and she, also, came to a sudden stop, but managed to save herself from falling.

Everyone of them was much astonished, and the Scarecrow said with a puzzled look:

"I don't see anything."

"Nor I," said Woot; "but something hit me, just the same."

"Some invisible person struck me a heavy blow," declared the Tin Woodman, struggling to separate himself from the Tin Soldier, whose legs and arms were mixed with his own.

"I'm not sure it was a person," said Polychrome, looking more grave than usual. "It seems to me that I merely ran into some hard substance which barred my way. In order to make sure of this, let me try another place."

She ran back a way and then with much caution advanced in a different place, but when she reached a position on a line with the others she halted, her arms outstretched before her.

"I can feel something hard — something smooth as glass," she said, "but I'm sure it is not glass."

"Let me try," suggested Woot, getting up; but when he tried to go forward, he discovered the same barrier that Polychrome had encountered.

"No," he said, "it isn't glass. But what is it?"

"Air," replied a small voice beside him. "Solid air; that's all."

They all looked downward and found a sky-blue rabbit had stuck his head out of a burrow in the ground. The rabbit's eyes were a deeper blue than his

fur, and the pretty creature seemed friendly and unafraid.

"Air!" exclaimed Woot, staring in astonishment into the rabbit's blue eyes; "whoever heard of air so solid that one cannot push it aside?"

"You can't push *this* air aside," declared the rabbit, "for it was made hard by powerful sorcery, and it forms a wall that is intended to keep people from getting to that house yonder."

"Oh; it's a wall, is it?" said the Tin Woodman.

"Yes, it is really a wall," answered the rabbit, "and it is fully six feet thick."

"How high is it?" inquired Captain Fyter, the Tin Soldier.

"Oh, ever so high; perhaps a mile," said the rabbit.

"Couldn't we go around it?" asked Woot.

"Of course, for the wall is a circle," explained the rabbit. "In the center of the circle stands the house, so you may walk around the Wall of Solid Air, but you can't get to the house."

"Who put the air wall around the house?" was the Scarecrow's question.

"Nimmie Amee did that."

"Nimmie Amee!" they all exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes," answered the rabbit. "She used to live with an old Witch, who was suddenly destroyed, and when Nimmie Amee ran away from the Witch's house, she took with her just one magic formula — pure sorcery it was — which enabled her to build this air wall around her house — the house yonder. It was quite a clever idea, I think, for it doesn't mar the beauty of the landscape, solid air being invisible, and yet it keeps all strangers away from the house."

"Does Nimmie Amee live there now?" asked the Tin Woodman anxiously.

"Yes, indeed," said the rabbit.

"And does she weep and wail from morning till night?" continued the Emperor.

"No; she seems quite happy," asserted the rabbit.

The Tin Woodman seemed quite disappointed to hear this report of his old sweetheart, but the Scarecrow reassured his friend, saying:

"Never mind, your Majesty; however happy Nimmie Amee is now, I'm sure she will be much happier as Empress of the Winkies."

"Perhaps," said Captain Fyter, somewhat stiffly, "she will be still more happy to become the bride of a Tin Soldier."267

"She shall choose between us, as we have agreed," the Tin Woodman promised; "but how shall we get to the poor girl?"

Polychrome, although dancing lightly back and forth, had listened to every word of the conversation. Now she came forward and sat herself down just in front of the Blue Rabbit, her many-hued draperies giving her the appearance of some beautiful flower. The rabbit didn't back away an inch. Instead, he gazed at the Rainbow's Daughter admiringly.

"Does your burrow go underneath this Wall of Air?" asked Polychrome.

"To be sure," answered the Blue Rabbit; "I dug it that way so I could roam in these broad fields, by going out one way, or eat the cabbages in Nimmie Amee's garden by leaving my burrow at the other end. I don't think Nimmie Amee ought to mind the little I take from her garden, or the hole I've made under her magic wall. A rabbit may go and come as he pleases, but no one who is bigger than I am could get through my burrow."

"Will you allow us to pass through it, if we are able to?" inquired Polychrome.

"Yes, indeed," answered the Blue Rabbit. "I'm no especial friend of Nimmie Amee, for once she threw stones at me, just because I was nibbling some lettuce, and only yesterday she yelled 'Shoo!' at me, which made me nervous. You're welcome to use my burrow in any way you choose."

“But this is all nonsense!” declared Woot the Wanderer. “We are every one too big to crawl through a rabbit’s burrow.”

“We are too big *now*,” agreed the Scarecrow, “but you must remember that Polychrome is a fairy, and fairies have many magic powers.”

Woot’s face brightened as he turned to the lovely Daughter of the Rainbow.

“Could you make us all as small as that rabbit?” he asked eagerly.

“I can try,” answered Polychrome, with a smile.

And presently she did it — so easily that Woot was not the only one astonished. As the now tiny people grouped themselves before the rabbit’s burrow the hole appeared to them like the entrance to a tunnel, which indeed it was.

“I’ll go first,” said wee Polychrome, who had made herself grow as small as the others, and into the tunnel she danced without hesitation. A tiny Scarecrow went next and then the two funny little tin men.

“Walk in; it’s your turn,” said the Blue Rabbit to Woot the Wanderer. “I’m coming after, to see how you get along. This will be a regular surprise party to Nimmie Amee.”

So Woot entered the hole and felt his way along its smooth sides in the dark until he finally saw the glimmer of daylight ahead and knew the journey was almost over. Had he remained his natural size, the distance could have been covered in a few steps, but to a thumb-high Woot it was quite a promenade. When he emerged from the burrow he found himself but a short distance from the house, in the center of the vegetable garden, where the leaves of rhubarb waving above his head seemed like trees. Outside the hole, and waiting for him, he found all his friends.

“So far, so good!” remarked the Scarecrow cheerfully.

“Yes; *so far*, but no farther,” returned the Tin Woodman in a plaintive and disturbed tone of voice. “I am now close to Nimmie Amee, whom I have come ever so far to seek, but I cannot ask the girl to marry such a little man as I am now.”

“I’m no bigger than a toy soldier!” said Captain Fyter, sorrowfully. “Unless Polychrome can make us big again, there is little use in our visiting Nimmie Amee at all, for I’m sure she wouldn’t care for a husband she might carelessly step on and ruin.”

Polychrome laughed merrily.

“If I make you big, you can’t get out of here again,” said she, “and if you remain little Nimmie Amee will laugh at you. So make your choice.”

“I think we’d better go back,” said Woot seriously.

“No,” said the Tin Woodman, stoutly, “I have decided that it’s my duty to

make Nimmie Amee happy, in case she wishes to marry me."

"So have I," announced Captain Fyter. "A good soldier never shrinks from doing his duty."

"As for that," said the Scarecrow, "tin doesn't shrink any to speak of, under any circumstances. But Woot and I intend to stick to our comrades, whatever they decide to do, so we will ask Polychrome to make us as big as we were before."

Polychrome agreed to this request and in half a minute all of them, including herself, had been enlarged again to their natural sizes. They then thanked the Blue Rabbit for his kind assistance, and at once approached the house of Nimmie Amee.

Nimmie Amee

CHAPTER 22

We may be sure that at this moment our friends were all anxious to see the end of the adventure that had caused them so many trials and troubles. Perhaps the Tin Woodman's heart did not beat any faster, because it was made of red velvet and stuffed with sawdust, and the Tin Soldier's heart was made of tin and reposed in his tin bosom without a hint of emotion. However, there is little doubt that they both knew that a critical moment in their lives had arrived, and that Nimmie Amee's decision was destined to influence the future of one or the other.

As they assumed their natural sizes and the rhubarb leaves that had before towered above their heads now barely covered their feet, they looked around the garden and found that no person was visible save themselves. No sound of activity came from the house, either, but they walked to the front door, which had a little porch built before it, and there the two tinmen stood side by side while both knocked upon the door with their tin knuckles.

As no one seemed eager to answer the summons they knocked again; and then again. Finally they heard a stir from within and someone coughed.

"Who's there?" called a girl's voice.

"It's I!" cried the tin twins, together.

"How did you get there?" asked the voice.

They hesitated how to reply, so Woot answered for them:

"By means of magic."

"Oh," said the unseen girl. "Are you friends, or foes?"273

"Friends!" they all exclaimed.

Then they heard footsteps approach the door, which slowly opened and revealed a very pretty Munchkin girl standing in the doorway.

"Nimmie Amee!" cried the tin twins.

"That's my name," replied the girl, looking at them in cold surprise. "But who can *you* be?"

"Don't you know me, Nimmie?" said the Tin Woodman. "I'm your old sweetheart, Nick Chopper!"

"Don't you know *me*, my dear?" said the Tin Soldier. "I'm your old sweetheart, Captain Fyter!"

Nimmie Amee smiled at them both. Then she looked beyond them at the rest of the party and smiled again. However, she seemed more amused than pleased.

"Come in," she said, leading the way inside. "Even sweethearts are forgotten after a time, but you and your friends are welcome."

The room they now entered was cosy and comfortable, being neatly furnished and well swept and dusted. But they found someone there besides Nimmie Amee. A man dressed in the attractive Munchkin costume was lazily reclining in an easy chair, and he sat up and turned his eyes on the visitors with a cold and indifferent stare that was almost insolent. He did not even rise from his seat to greet the strangers, but after glaring at them he looked away with a scowl, as if they were of too little importance to interest him.

The tin men returned this man's stare with interest, but they did not look away from him because neither of them seemed able to take his eyes off this Munchkin, who was remarkable in having one tin arm — quite like their own tin arms.

"Seems to me," said Captain Fyter, in a voice that sounded harsh and indignant, "that you, sir, are a vile impostor!"

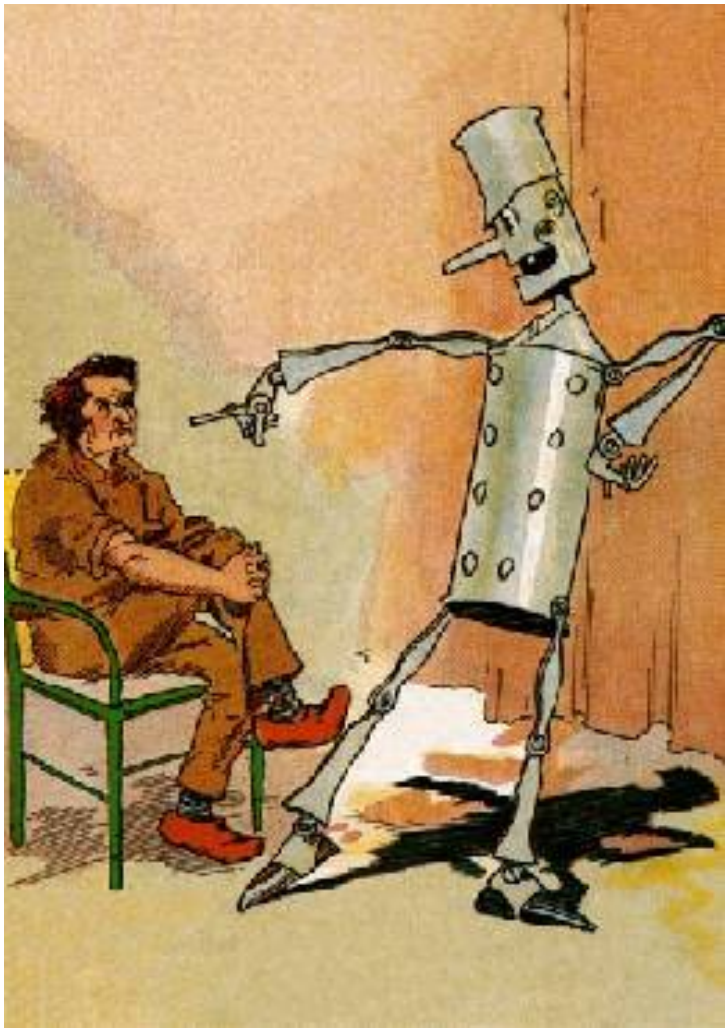
"Gently — gently!" cautioned the Scarecrow; "don't be rude to strangers, Captain."

"Rude?" shouted the Tin Soldier, now very much provoked; "why, he's a scoundrel — a thief! *The villain is wearing my own head!*"

"Yes," added the Tin Woodman, "and he's wearing my right arm! I can recognize it by the two warts on the little finger."

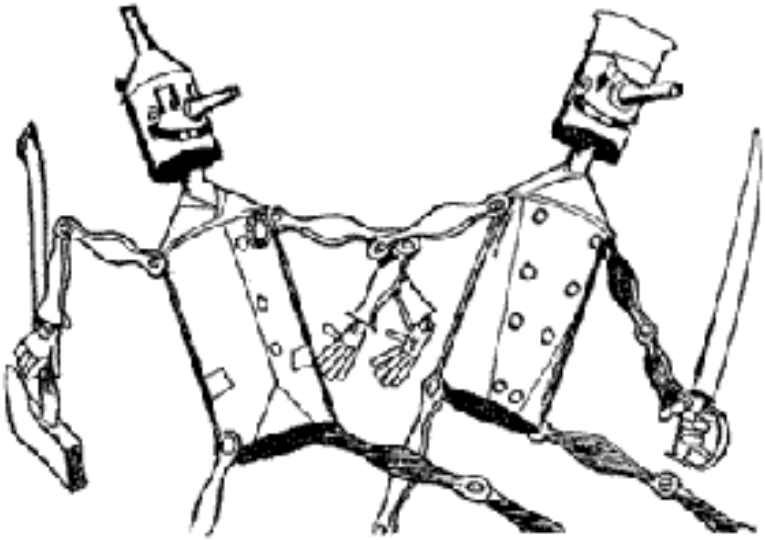
"Good gracious!" exclaimed Woot. "Then this must be the man whom old Ku-Klip patched together and named Chopfyt."

The man now turned toward them, still scowling.



“Yes, that is my name,” he said in a voice like a growl, “and it is absurd for you tin creatures, or for anyone else, to claim my head, or arm, or any part of me, for they are my personal property.”

“You? You’re a Nobody!” shouted Captain Fyter.



"You're just a mix-up," declared the Emperor.

"Now, now, gentlemen," interrupted Nimmie Amee, "I must ask you to be more respectful to poor Chopfyt. For, being my guests, it is not polite for you to insult my husband."276

"Your husband!" the tin twins exclaimed in dismay.

"Yes," said she. "I married Chopfyt a long time ago, because my other two sweethearts had deserted me."

This reproof embarrassed both Nick Chopper and Captain Fyter. They looked down, shamefaced, for a moment, and then the Tin Woodman explained in an earnest voice:

"I rusted."

"So did I," said the Tin Soldier.

"I could not know that, of course," asserted Nimmie Amee. "All I knew was that neither of you came to marry me, as you had promised to do. But men are not scarce in the Land of Oz. After I came here to live, I met Mr. Chopfyt, and he was the more interesting because he reminded me strongly of both of you, as you were before you became tin. He even had a tin arm, and that reminded me of you the more."

"No wonder!" remarked the Scarecrow.

"But, listen, Nimmie Amee!" said the astonished Woot; "he really *is* both of them, for he is made of their cast-off parts."

"Oh, you're quite wrong," declared Polychrome, laughing, for she was greatly enjoying the confusion of the others. "The tin men are still themselves, as they will tell you, and so Chopfyt must be someone else."

They looked at her bewildered, for the facts in the case were too puzzling to be grasped at once.

"It is all the fault of old Ku-Klip," muttered the Tin Woodman. "He had no right to use our cast-off parts to make another man with."

"It seems he did it, however," said Nimmie Amee calmly, "and I married him because he resembled you both. I won't say he is a husband to be proud of, because he has a mixed nature and isn't always an agreeable companion. There are times when I have to chide him gently, both with my tongue and with my broomstick. But he is my husband, and I must make the best of him."

"If you don't like him," suggested the Tin Woodman, "Captain Fyter and I can chop him up with our axe and sword, and each take such parts of the fellow as belong to him. Then we are willing for you to select one of us as your husband."

"That is a good idea," approved Captain Fyter, drawing his sword.

"No," said Nimmie Amee; "I think I'll keep the husband I now have. He is now trained to draw the water and carry in the wood and hoe the cabbages and weed the flower-beds and dust the furniture and perform many tasks of a like character. A new husband would have to be scolded — and gently chided — until he learns my ways. So I think it will be better to keep my Chopfyt, and I see no reason why you should object to him. You two gentlemen threw him away when you became tin, because you had no further use for him, so you cannot justly claim him now. I advise you to go back to your own homes and forget me, as I have forgotten you."

"Good advice!" laughed Polychrome, dancing.

"Are you happy?" asked the Tin Soldier.

"Of course I am," said Nimmie Amee; "I'm the mistress of all I survey — the queen of my little domain."

"Wouldn't you like to be the Empress of the Winkies?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"Mercy, no," she answered. "That would be a lot of bother. I don't care for society, or pomp, or posing. All I ask is to be left alone and not to be annoyed by visitors."

The Scarecrow nudged Woot the Wanderer.

"That sounds to me like a hint," he said.

"Looks as if we'd had our journey for nothing," remarked Woot, who was a little ashamed and disappointed because he had proposed the journey.

"I am glad, however," said the Tin Woodman, "that I have found Nimmie Amee, and discovered that she is already married and happy. It will relieve me of any further anxiety concerning her."

“For my part,” said the Tin Soldier, “I am not sorry to be free. The only thing that really annoys me is finding my head upon Chopfyt’s body.”

“As for that, I’m pretty sure it is *my* body, or a part of it, anyway,” remarked the Emperor of the Winkies. “But never mind, friend Soldier; let us be willing to donate our cast-off members to insure the happiness of Nimmie Amee, and be thankful it is not our fate to hoe cabbages and draw water — and be chided — in the place of this creature Chopfyt.”

“Yes,” agreed the Soldier, “we have much to be thankful for.”

Polychrome, who had wandered outside, now poked her pretty head through an open window and exclaimed in a pleased voice:

“It’s getting cloudy. Perhaps it is going to rain!”

Through the Tunnel

CHAPTER 23

It didn't rain just then, although the clouds in the sky grew thicker and more threatening. Polychrome hoped for a thunder-storm, followed by her Rainbow, but the two tin men did not relish the idea of getting wet. They even preferred to remain in Nimmie Amee's house, although they felt they were not welcome there, rather than go out and face the coming storm. But the Scarecrow, who was a very thoughtful person, said to his friends:

"If we remain here until after the storm, and Polychrome goes away on her Rainbow, then we will be prisoners inside the Wall of Solid Air; so it seems best to start upon our return journey at once. If I get wet, my straw stuffing will be ruined, and if you two tin gentlemen get wet, you may perhaps rust again, and become useless. But even that is better than to stay here. Once we are free of the barrier, we have Woot the Wanderer to help us, and he can oil your joints and restuff my body, if it becomes necessary, for the boy is made of meat, which neither rusts nor gets soggy or moldy."

"Come along, then!" cried Polychrome from the window, and the others, realizing the wisdom of the Scarecrow's speech, took leave of Nimmie Amee, who was glad to be rid of them, and said good-bye to her husband, who merely scowled and made no answer, and then they hurried from the house.

"Your old parts are not very polite, I must say," remarked the Scarecrow, when they were in the garden.

"No," said Woot, "Chopfyt is a regular grouch. He might have wished us a pleasant journey, at the very least."

"I beg you not to hold us responsible for that creature's actions," pleaded the Tin Woodman. "We are through with Chopfyt and shall have nothing further to do with him."

Polychrome danced ahead of the party and led them straight to the burrow of the Blue Rabbit, which they might have had some difficulty in finding without her. There she lost no time in making them all small again. The Blue Rabbit was busy nibbling cabbage leaves in Nimmie Amee's garden, so they did not ask his permission but at once entered the burrow.

Even now the raindrops were beginning to fall, but it was quite dry inside the tunnel and by the time they had reached the other end, outside the circular Wall of Solid Air, the storm was at its height and the rain was coming down in torrents.

"Let us wait here," proposed Polychrome, peering out of the hole and then quickly retreating. "The Rainbow won't appear until after the storm and I can

make you big again in a jiffy, before I join my sisters on our bow."

"That's a good plan," said the Scarecrow approvingly. "It will save me from getting soaked and soggy."

"It will save me from rusting," said the Tin Soldier.

"It will enable me to remain highly polished," said the Tin Woodman.

"Oh, as for that, I myself prefer not to get my pretty clothes wet," laughed the Rainbow's daughter. "But while we wait I will bid you all adieu. I must also thank you for saving me from that dreadful Giantess, Mrs. Yoop. You have been good and patient comrades and I have enjoyed our adventures together, but I am never so happy as when on my dear Rainbow."

"Will your father scold you for getting left on the earth?" asked Woot.

"I suppose so," said Polychrome gaily; "I'm always getting scolded for my mad pranks, as they are called. My sisters are so sweet and lovely and proper that they never dance off our Rainbow, and so they never have any adventures. Adventures to me are good fun, only I never like to stay too long on earth, because I really don't belong here. I shall tell my Father the Rainbow that I'll try not to be so careless again, and he will forgive me because in our sky mansions there is always joy and happiness."

They were indeed sorry to part with their dainty and beautiful companion and assured her of their devotion if they ever chanced to meet again. She shook hands with the Scarecrow and the Tin Men and kissed Woot the Wanderer lightly upon his forehead.

And then the rain suddenly ceased, and as the tiny people left the burrow of the Blue Rabbit, a glorious big Rainbow appeared in the sky and the end of its arch slowly descended and touched the ground just where they stood.

Woot was so busy watching a score of lovely maidens — sisters of Polychrome — who were leaning over the edge of the bow, and another score who danced gaily amid the radiance of the splendid hues, that he did not notice he was growing big again. But now Polychrome joined her sisters on the Rainbow and the huge arch lifted and slowly melted away as the sun burst from the clouds and sent its own white beams dancing over the meadows.

"Why, she's gone!" exclaimed the boy, and turned to see his companions still waving their hands in token of adieu to the vanished Polychrome.

The Curtain Falls

CHAPTER 24

Well, the rest of the story is quickly told, for the return journey of our adventurers was without any important incident. The Scarecrow was so afraid of meeting the Hip-po-gy-raf, and having his straw eaten again, that he urged his comrades to select another route to the Emerald City, and they willingly consented, so that the Invisible Country was wholly avoided.

Of course, when they reached the Emerald City their first duty was to visit Ozma's palace, where they were royally entertained. The Tin Soldier and Woot the Wanderer were welcomed as warmly as any strangers might be who had been the traveling companions of Ozma's dear old friends, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman.

At the banquet table that evening they related the manner in which they had discovered Nimmie Amee, and told how they had found her happily married to Chopfyt, whose relationship to Nick Chopper and Captain Fyter was so bewildering that they asked Ozma's advice what to do about it.

"You need not consider Chopfyt at all," replied the beautiful girl Ruler of Oz. "If Nimmie Amee is content with that misfit man for a husband, we have not even just cause to blame Ku-Klip for gluing him together."

"I think it was a very good idea," added little Dorothy, "for if Ku-Klip hadn't used up your cast-off parts, they would have been wasted. It's wicked to be wasteful, isn't it?"

"Well, anyhow," said Woot the Wanderer, "Chopfyt, being kept a prisoner by his wife, is too far away from anyone to bother either of you tin men in any way. If you hadn't gone where he is and discovered him, you would never have worried about him."

"What do you care, anyhow," Betsy Bobbin asked the Tin Woodman, "so long as Nimmie Amee is satisfied?"

"And just to think," remarked Tiny Trot, "that any girl would rather live with a mixture like Chopfyt, on far-away Mount Munch, than to be the Empress of the Winkies!"

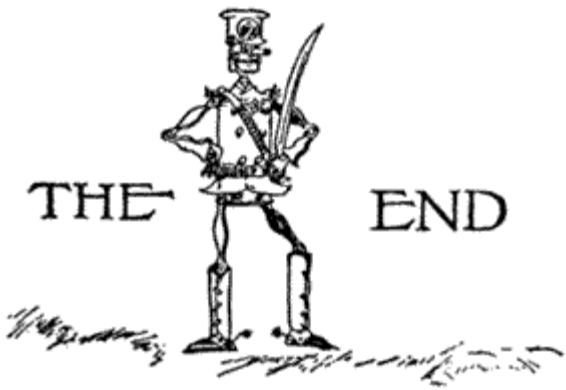
"It is her own choice," said the Tin Woodman contentedly; "and, after all, I'm not sure the Winkies would care to have an Empress."

It puzzled Ozma, for a time, to decide what to do with the Tin Soldier. If he went with the Tin Woodman to the Emperor's castle, she felt that the two tin men might not be able to live together in harmony, and moreover the Emperor would not be so distinguished if he had a double constantly beside him. So she asked Captain Fyter if he was willing to serve her as a soldier, and he promptly declared that nothing would please him more. After he had

been in her service for some time, Ozma sent him into the Gillikin Country, with instructions to keep order among the wild people who inhabit some parts of that unknown country of Oz.

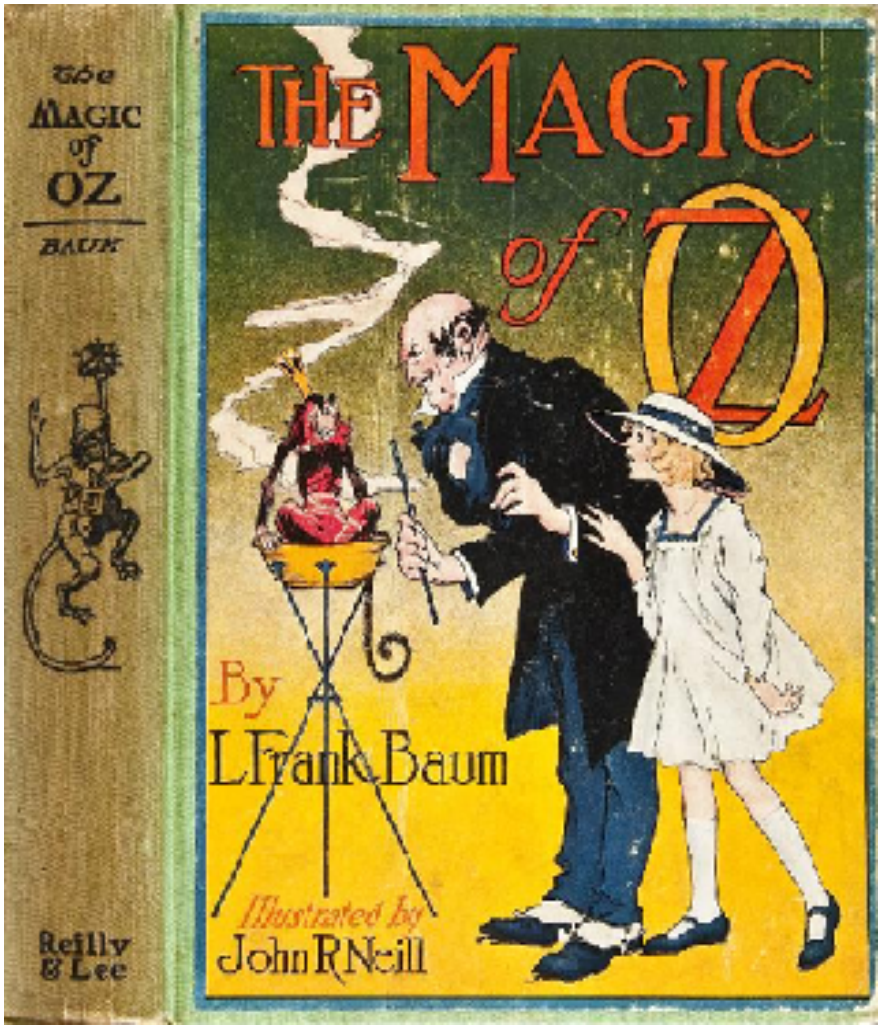
As for Woot, being a Wanderer by profession, he was allowed to wander wherever he desired, and Ozma promised to keep watch over his future journeys and to protect the boy as well as she was able, in case he ever got into more trouble.

All this having been happily arranged, the Tin Woodman returned to his tin castle, and his chosen comrade, the Scarecrow, accompanied him on the way. The two friends were sure to pass many pleasant hours together in talking over their recent adventures, for as they neither ate nor slept they found their greatest amusement in conversation.



THE MAGIC OF OZ

The Magic of Oz was Baum's thirteenth Oz book, published in 1919 by Reilly & Lee, illustrated by John R. Neill. The novel appeared one month after Baum's death. Ruggedo, the former Nome King, along with a Munchkin boy, Kiki Aru, plan to invade and conquer Oz. The adventurous Kiki learns and uses forbidden magic, later harnessed by Ruggedo. Together they recruit an army of wild animals from the Forest of Gugu within Oz. The tale includes a variety of intriguing transformations, most memorable the "Li-Mon-Eags," a creature with the head of a lion, the body of a monkey, and the wings of eagles. *The Magic of Oz* also delights with many familiar and beloved characters featured in other Oz books.



First edition copy of The Magic of Oz

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A Parker Brothers Oz game from 1921

The board from the Parker Brothers Oz game, 1921

The Famous Oz Books

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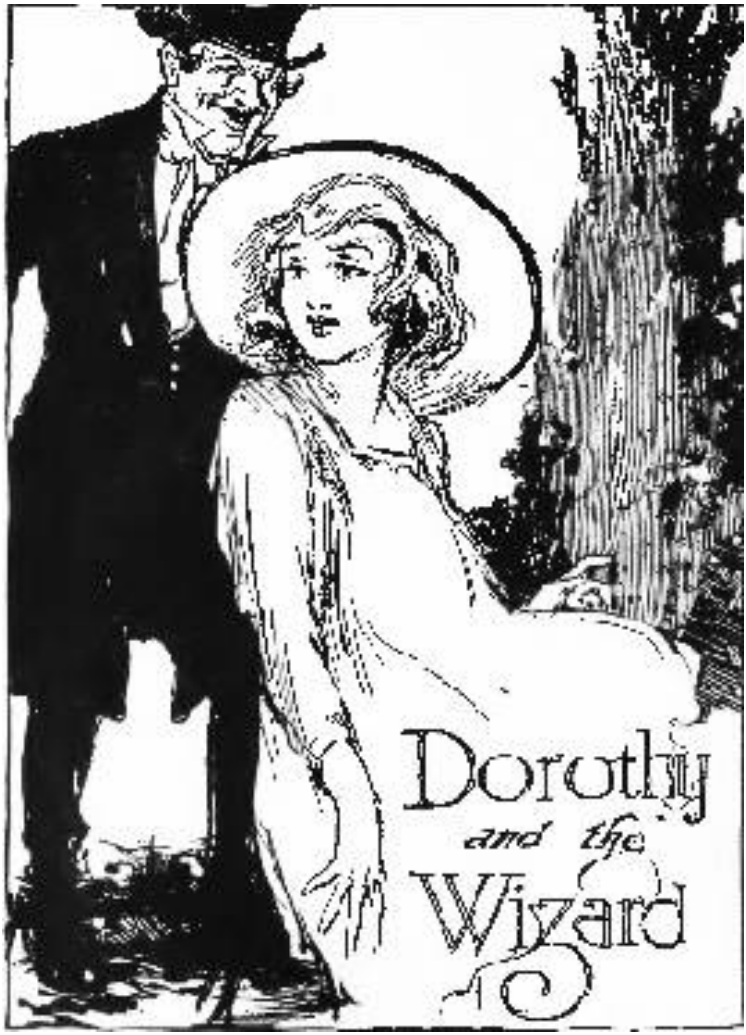
Dorothy
and the
Wizard

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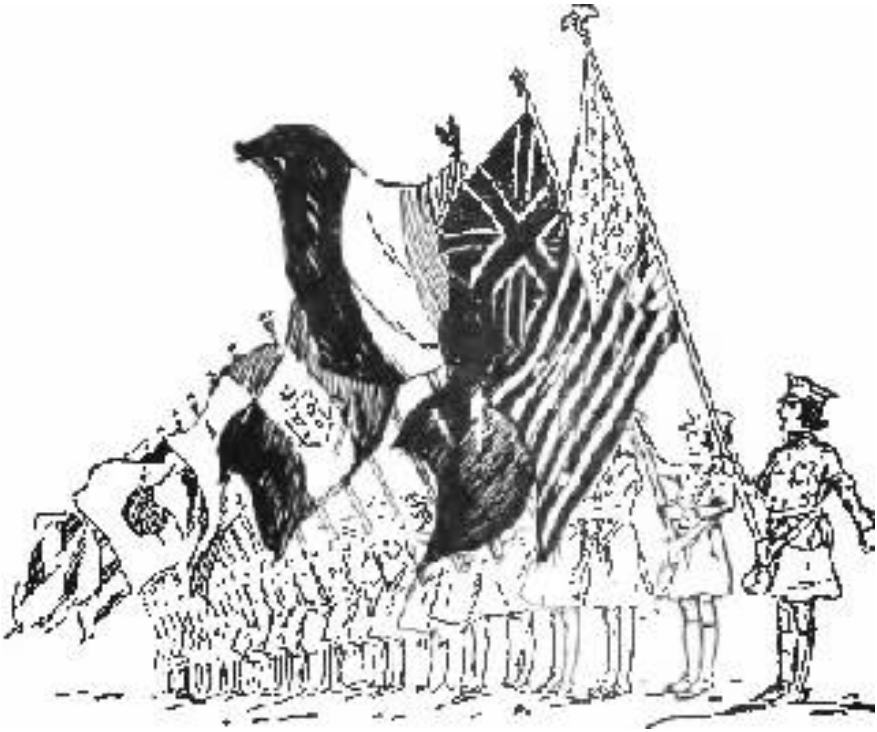


THE HUNGRY
TIGER
AND THE
COWARDLY LION

To My Readers

Curiously enough, in the events which have taken place in the last few years in our "great outside world," we may find incidents so marvelous and inspiring that I cannot hope to equal them with stories of The Land of Oz.

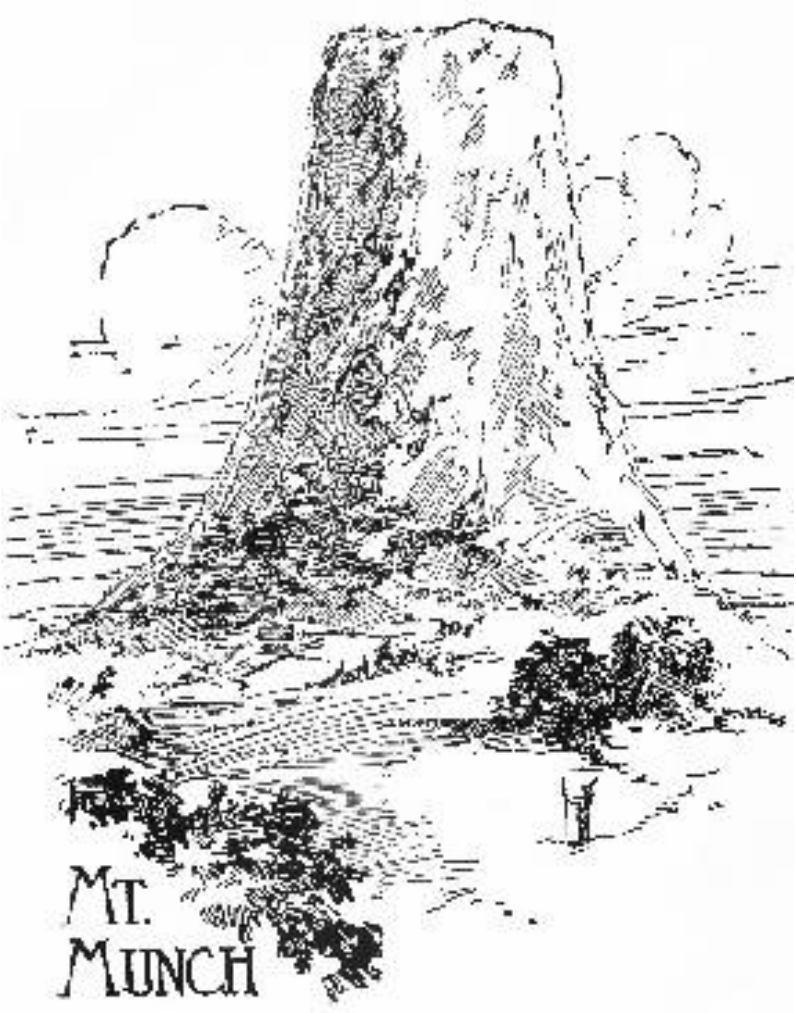
However, "The Magic of Oz" is really more strange and unusual than anything I have read or heard about on our side of The Great Sandy Desert which shuts us off from The Land of Oz, even during the past exciting years, so I hope it will appeal to your love of novelty.

A long and confining illness has prevented my answering all the good letters sent me — unless stamps were enclosed — but from now on I hope to be able to give prompt attention to each and every letter with which my readers favor me.

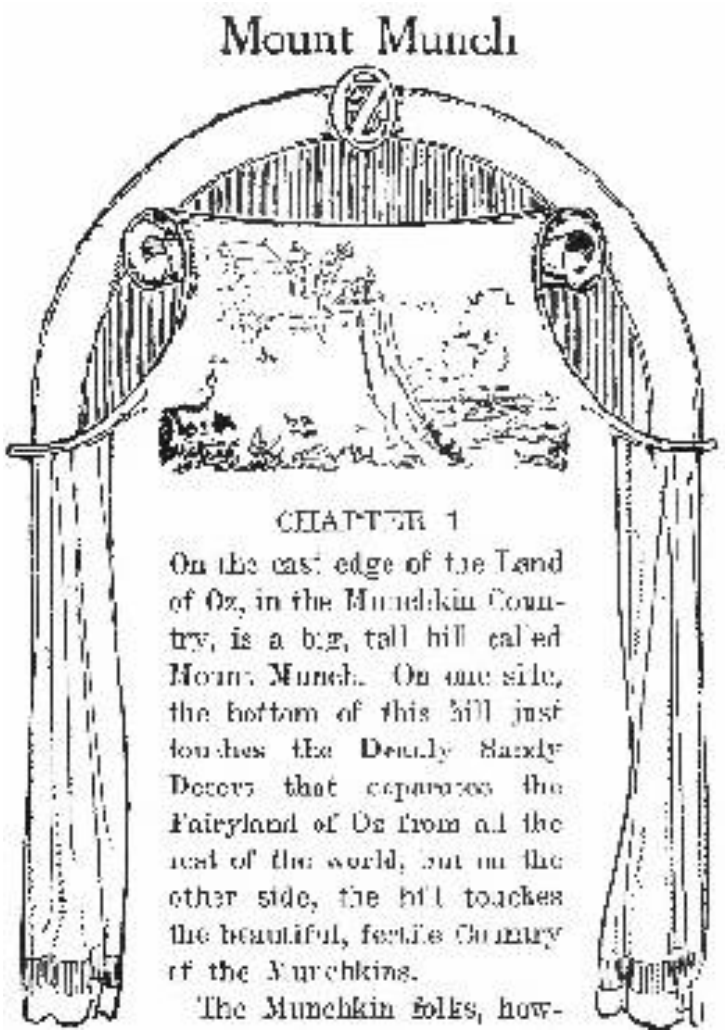
Assuring you that my love for you has never faltered and hoping the Oz Books will continue to give you pleasure as long as I am able to write them, I am

Yours affectionately,
L. FRANK BAUM,
"Royal Historian of Oz."
"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA
1919

The Magic of Oz


MT.
MUNCH

1. Mount Munch


Mount Munch

CHAPTER 1

On the east edge of the Land of Oz, in the Munchkin Country, is a big, tall hill called Mount Munch. On one side, the bottom of this hill just touches the Deadly Sandy Desert that separates the Fairyland of Oz from all the rest of the world, but on the other side, the hill touches the beautiful, fertile Country of the Munchkins.

The Munchkin folks, how-

On the east edge of the Land of Oz, in the Munchkin Country, is a big, tall hill called Mount Munch. One one side, the bottom of this hill just touches the Deadly Sandy Desert that separates the Fairyland of Oz from all the rest of the world, but on the other side, the hill touches the beautiful, fertile Country of the Munchkins.

The Munchkin folks, however, merely stand off and look at Mount Munch and know very little about it; for, about a third of the way up, its sides become too steep to climb, and if any people live upon the top of that great towering peak that seems to reach nearly to the skies, the Munchkins are not

aware of the fact.

But people DO live there, just the same. The top of Mount Munch is shaped like a saucer, broad and deep, and in the saucer are fields where grains and vegetables grow, and flocks are fed, and brooks flow and trees bear all sorts of things. There are houses scattered here and there, each having its family of Hyups, as the people call themselves. The Hyups seldom go down the mountain, for the same reason that the Munchkins never climb up: the sides are too steep.

In one of the houses lived a wise old Hyup named Bini Aru, who used to be a clever Sorcerer. But Ozma of Oz, who rules everyone in the Land of Oz, had made a decree that no one should practice magic in her dominions except Glinda the Good and the Wizard of Oz, and when Glinda sent this royal command to the Hyups by means of a strong-winged Eagle, old Bini Aru at once stopped performing magical arts. He destroyed many of his magic powders and tools of magic, and afterward honestly obeyed the law. He had never seen Ozma, but he knew she was his Ruler and must be obeyed.

There was only one thing that grieved him. He had discovered a new and secret method of transformations that was unknown to any other Sorcerer. Glinda the Good did not know it, nor did the little Wizard of Oz, nor Dr. Pipt nor old Mombi, nor anyone else who dealt in magic arts. It was Bini Aru's own secret. By its means, it was the simplest thing in the world to transform anyone into beast, bird or fish, or anything else, and back again, once you know how to pronounce the mystical word: "Pyrzqxgl."

Bini Aru had used this secret many times, but not to cause evil or suffering to others. When he had wandered far from home and was hungry, he would say: "I want to become a cow — Pyrzqxgl!" In an instant he would be a cow, and then he would eat grass and satisfy his hunger. All beasts and birds can talk in the Land of Oz, so when the cow was no longer hungry, it would say: "I want to be Bini Aru again: Pyrzqxgl!" and the magic word, properly pronounced, would instantly restore him to his proper form.

Now, of course, I would not dare to write down this magic word so plainly if I thought my readers would pronounce it properly and so be able to transform themselves and others, but it is a fact that no one in all the world except Bini Aru, had ever (up to the time this story begins) been able to pronounce "Pyrzqxgl!" the right way, so I think it is safe to give it to you. It might be well, however, in reading this story aloud, to be careful not to pronounce Pyrzqxgl the proper way, and thus avoid all danger of the secret being able to work mischief.

Bini Aru, having discovered the secret of instant transformation, which required no tools or powders or other chemicals or herbs and always worked

perfectly, was reluctant to have such a wonderful discovery entirely unknown or lost to all human knowledge. He decided not to use it again, since Ozma had forbidden him to do so, but he reflected that Ozma was a girl and some time might change her mind and allow her subjects to practice magic, in which case Bini Aru could again transform himself and others at will, — unless, of course, he forgot how to pronounce Pyrzqxgl in the meantime.

After giving the matter careful thought, he decided to write the word, and how it should be pronounced, in some secret place, so that he could find it after many years, but where no one else could ever find it.

That was a clever idea, but what bothered the old Sorcerer was to find a secret place. He wandered all over the Saucer at the top of Mount Munch, but found no place in which to write the secret word where others might not be likely to stumble upon it. So finally he decided it must be written somewhere in his own house.

Bini Aru had a wife named Mopsi Aru who was famous for making fine huckleberry pies, and he had a son named Kiki Aru who was not famous at all. He was noted as being cross and disagreeable because he was not happy, and he was not happy because he wanted to go down the mountain and visit the big world below and his father would not let him. No one paid any attention to Kiki Aru, because he didn't amount to anything, anyway.

Once a year there was a festival on Mount Munch which all the Hyups attended. It was held in the center of the saucer-shaped country, and the day was given over to feasting and merry-making. The young folks danced and sang songs; the women spread the tables with good things to eat, and the men played on musical instruments and told fairy tales.

Kiki Aru usually went to these festivals with his parents, and then sat sullenly outside the circle and would not dance or sing or even talk to the other young people. So the festival did not make him any happier than other days, and this time he told Bini Aru and Mopsi Aru that he would not go. He would rather stay at home and be unhappy all by himself, he said, and so they gladly let him stay.

But after he was left alone Kiki decided to enter his father's private room, where he was forbidden to go, and see if he could find any of the magic tools Bini Aru used to work with when he practiced sorcery. As he went in Kiki stubbed his toe on one of the floor boards. He searched everywhere but found no trace of his father's magic. All had been destroyed.

Much disappointed, he started to go out again when he stubbed his toe on the same floor board. That set him thinking. Examining the board more closely, Kiki found it had been pried up and then nailed down again in such a

manner that it was a little higher than the other boards. But why had his father taken up the board? Had he hidden some of his magic tools underneath the floor?

Kiki got a chisel and pried up the board, but found nothing under it. He was just about to replace the board when it slipped from his hand and turned over, and he saw something written on the underside of it. The light was rather dim, so he took the board to the window and examined it, and found that the writing described exactly how to pronounce the magic word Pyrzqxgl, which would transform anyone into anything instantly, and back again when the word was repeated.

Now, at first, Kiki Aru didn't realize what a wonderful secret he had

discovered; but he thought it might be of use to him and so he took a piece of paper and made on it an exact copy of the instructions for pronouncing Pyrzqxgl. Then he folded the paper and put it in his pocket, and replaced the board in the floor so that no one would suspect it had been removed.

After this Kiki went into the garden and sitting beneath a tree made a careful study of the paper. He had always wanted to get away from Mount Munch and visit the big world — especially the Land of Oz — and the idea now came to him that if he could transform himself into a bird, he could fly to any place he wished to go and fly back again whenever he cared to. It was necessary, however, to learn by heart the way to pronounce the magic word, because a bird would have no way to carry a paper with it, and Kiki would be unable to resume his proper shape if he forgot the word or its pronunciation.

So he studied it a long time, repeating it a hundred times in his mind until he was sure he would not forget it. But to make safety doubly sure he placed the paper in a tin box in a neglected part of the garden and covered the box with small stones.

By this time it was getting late in the day and Kiki wished to attempt his first transformation before his parents returned from the festival. So he stood on the front porch of his home and said:

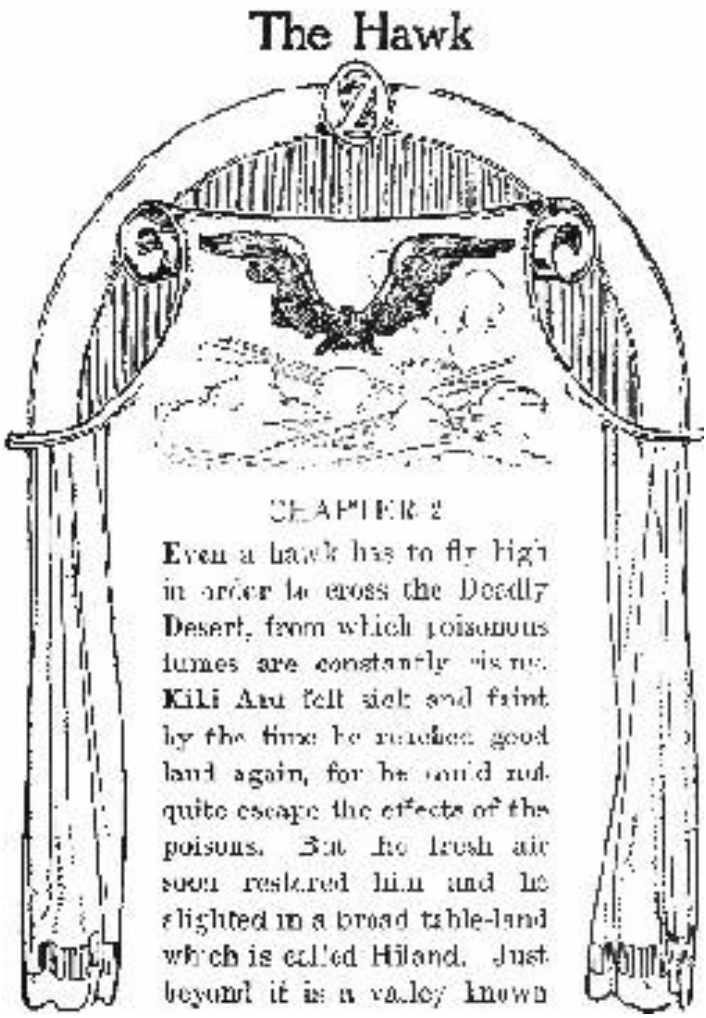
"I want to become a big, strong bird, like a hawk — Pyrzqxgl!" He pronounced it the right way, so in a flash he felt that he was completely changed in form. He flapped his wings, hopped to the porch railing and said: "Caw-oo! Caw-oo!"

Then he laughed and said half aloud: "I suppose that's the funny sound this sort of a bird makes. But now let me try my wings and see if I'm strong enough to fly across the desert."

For he had decided to make his first trip to the country outside the Land of Oz. He had stolen this secret of transformation and he knew he had disobeyed the law of Oz by working magic. Perhaps Glinda or the Wizard of Oz would discover him and punish him, so it would be good policy to keep away from Oz altogether.

Slowly Kiki rose into the air, and resting on his broad wings, floated in graceful circles above the saucer-shaped mountain-top. From his height, he could see, far across the burning sands of the Deadly Desert, another country that might be pleasant to explore, so he headed that way, and with strong, steady strokes of his wings, began the long flight.

2. The Hawk



The Hawk

CHAPTER 2

Even a hawk has to fly high in order to cross the Deadly Desert, from which poisonous fumes are constantly rising. Kiki Aru felt sick and faint by the time he reached good land again, for he could not quite escape the effects of the poisons. But the fresh air soon restored him and he alighted in a broad table-land which is called Hiland. Just beyond it is a valley known

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of the Desert, he turned north and settled on a tree-top in the Kingdom of Noland.

Kiki was tired by this time, and the sun was now setting, so he decided to remain here till morning. From his tree-top he could see a house near by, which looked very comfortable. A man was milking a cow in the yard and a pleasant-faced woman came to the door and called him to supper.

That made Kiki wonder what sort of food hawks ate. He felt hungry, but didn't know what to eat or where to get it. Also he thought a bed would be more comfortable than a tree-top for sleeping, so he hopped to the ground and said: "I want to become Kiki Aru again — Pyrzqxgl!"

Instantly he had resumed his natural shape, and going to the house, he knocked upon the door and asked for some supper.

"Who are you?" asked the man of the house.

"A stranger from the Land of Oz," replied Kiki Aru.

"Then you are welcome," said the man.

Kiki was given a good supper and a good bed, and he behaved very well, although he refused to answer all the questions the good people of Noland asked him. Having escaped from his home and found a way to see the world, the young man was no longer unhappy, and so he was no longer cross and disagreeable. The people thought him a very respectable person and gave him breakfast next morning, after which he started on his way feeling quite contented.

Having walked for an hour or two through the pretty country that is ruled by King Bud, Kiki Aru decided he could travel faster and see more as a bird, so he transformed himself into a white dove and visited the great city of Nole and saw the King's palace and gardens and many other places of interest. Then he flew westward into the Kingdom of Ix, and after a day in Queen Zixi's country went on westward into the Land of Ev. Every place he visited he thought was much more pleasant than the saucer-country of the Hyups, and he decided that when he reached the finest country of all he would settle there and enjoy his future life to the utmost.

In the land of Ev he resumed his own shape again, for the cities and villages were close together and he could easily go on foot from one to another of them.

Toward evening he came to a good Inn and asked the inn-keeper if he could have food and lodging.

"You can if you have the money to pay," said the man, "otherwise you must go elsewhere."

This surprised Kiki, for in the Land of Oz they do not use money at all, everyone being allowed to take what he wishes without price. He had no

money, therefore, and so he turned away to seek hospitality elsewhere. Looking through an open window into one of the rooms of the Inn, as he passed along, he saw an old man counting on a table a big heap of gold pieces, which Kiki thought to be money. One of these would buy him supper and a bed, he reflected, so he transformed himself into a magpie and, flying through the open window, caught up one of the gold pieces in his beak and flew out again before the old man could interfere. Indeed, the old man who was robbed was quite helpless, for he dared not leave his pile of gold to chase the magpie, and before he could place the gold in a sack in his pocket the robber bird was out of sight and to seek it would be folly.

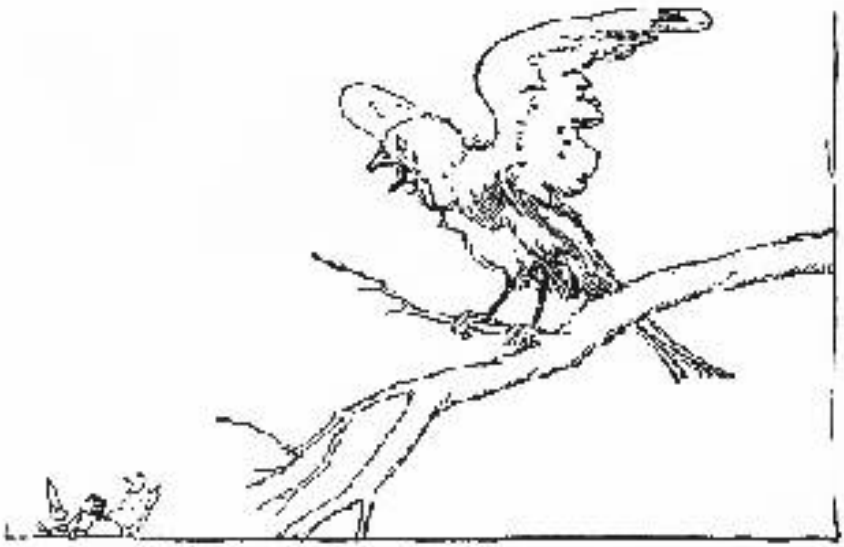
Kiki Aru flew to a group of trees and, dropping the gold piece to the ground, resumed his proper shape, and then picked up the money and put it in his pocket.

"You'll be sorry for this!" exclaimed a small voice just over his head.

Kiki looked up and saw that a sparrow, perched upon a branch, was watching him.

"Sorry for what?" he demanded.

"Oh, I saw the whole thing," asserted the sparrow. "I saw you look in the window at the gold, and then make yourself into a magpie and rob the poor man, and then I saw you fly here and make the bird into your former shape. That's magic, and magic is wicked and unlawful; and you stole money, and that's a still greater crime. You'll be sorry, some day."



"I don't care," replied Kiki Aru, scowling.

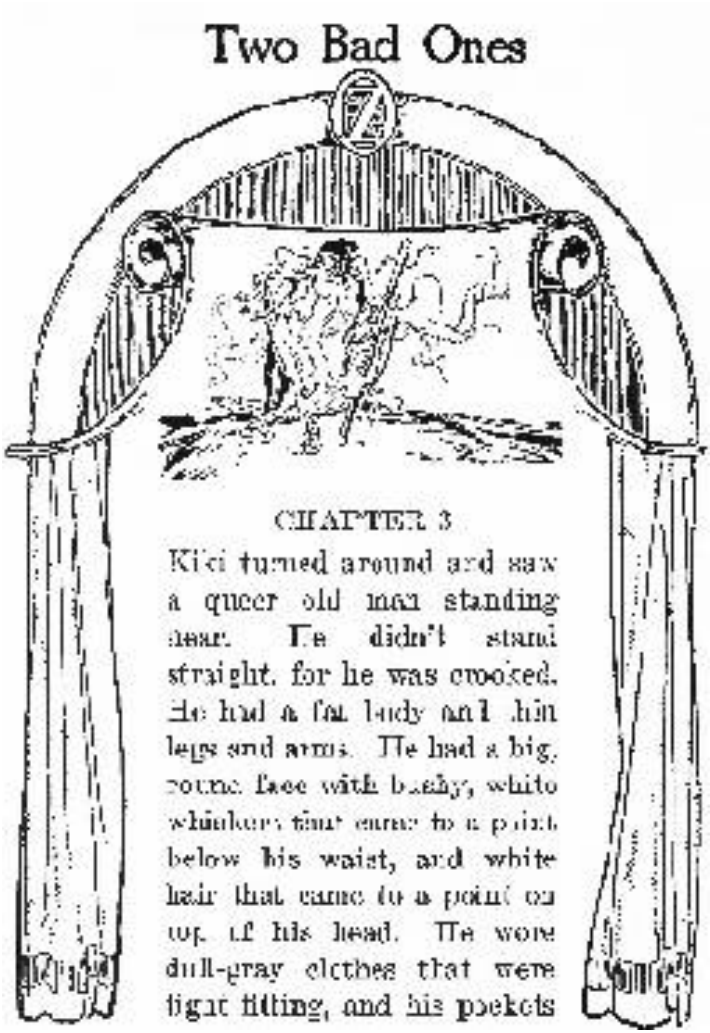
"Aren't you afraid to be wicked?" asked the sparrow.

"No, I didn't know I was being wicked," said Kiki, "but if I was, I'm glad of it. I hate good people. I've always wanted to be wicked, but I didn't know how."

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed someone behind him, in a big voice; "that's the proper spirit, my lad! I'm glad I've met you; shake hands."

The sparrow gave a frightened squeak and flew away.

3. Two Bad Ones


Two Bad Ones

CHAPTER 3

Kiki turned around and saw a queer old man standing near. He didn't stand straight, for he was crooked. He had a fat body and thin legs and arms. He had a big, round face with bushy, white whiskers that came to a point below his waist, and white hair that came to a point on top of his head. He wore dull-gray clothes that were tight fitting, and his pockets

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"I didn't know you were here," said Kiki.

"I didn't come until after you did," said the queer old man.

"Who are you?" asked Kiki.

“My name’s Ruggedo. I used to be the Nome King; but I got kicked out of my country, and now I’m a wanderer.”

“What made them kick you out?” inquired the Hyup boy.

“Well, it’s the fashion to kick kings nowadays. I was a pretty good King — to myself — but those dreadful Oz people wouldn’t let me alone. So I had to abdicate.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means to be kicked out. But let’s talk about something pleasant. Who are you and where did you come from?”

“I’m called Kiki Aru. I used to live on Mount Munch in the Land of Oz, but now I’m a wanderer like yourself.”

The Nome King gave him a shrewd look.

“I heard that bird say that you transformed yourself into a magpie and back again. Is that true?”

Kiki hesitated, but saw no reason to deny it. He felt that it would make him appear more important.

“Well — yes,” he said.

“Then you’re a wizard?”

“No; I only understand transformations,” he admitted.

“Well, that’s pretty good magic, anyhow,” declared old Ruggedo. “I used to have some very fine magic, myself, but my enemies took it all away from me. Where are you going now?”

“I’m going into the inn, to get some supper and a bed,” said Kiki.

“Have you the money to pay for it?” asked the Nome.

“I have one gold piece.”

“Which you stole. Very good. And you’re glad that you’re wicked. Better yet. I like you, young man, and I’ll go to the inn with you if you’ll promise not to eat eggs for supper.”

“Don’t you like eggs?” asked Kiki.

“I’m afraid of ‘em; they’re dangerous!” said Ruggedo, with a shudder.

“All right,” agreed Kiki; “I won’t ask for eggs.”

“Then come along,” said the Nome.

When they entered the inn, the landlord scowled at Kiki and said:

“I told you I would not feed you unless you had money.”

Kiki showed him the gold piece.

“And how about you?” asked the landlord, turning to Ruggedo. “Have you money?”

“I’ve something better,” answered the old Nome, and taking a bag from one of his pockets he poured from it upon the table a mass of glittering gems — diamonds, rubies and emeralds.

The landlord was very polite to the strangers after that. He served them an excellent supper, and while they ate it, the Hyup boy asked his companion:

"Where did you get so many jewels?"

"Well, I'll tell you," answered the Nome. "When those Oz people took my kingdom away from me — just because it was my kingdom and I wanted to run it to suit myself — they said I could take as many precious stones as I could carry. So I had a lot of pockets made in my clothes and loaded them all up. Jewels are fine things to have with you when you travel; you can trade them for anything."

"Are they better than gold pieces?" asked Kiki.

"The smallest of these jewels is worth a hundred gold pieces such as you stole from the old man."

"Don't talk so loud," begged Kiki, uneasily. "Some one else might hear what you are saying."

After supper they took a walk together, and the former Nome King said:

"Do you know the Shaggy Man, and the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman, and Dorothy, and Ozma and all the other Oz people?"

"No," replied the boy, "I have never been away from Mount Munch until I flew over the Deadly Desert the other day in the shape of a hawk."

"Then you've never seen the Emerald City of Oz?"

"Never."

"Well," said the Nome, "I knew all the Oz people, and you can guess I do not love them. All during my wanderings I have brooded on how I can be revenged on them. Now that I've met you I can see a way to conquer the Land of Oz and be King there myself, which is better than being King of the Nomes."

"How can you do that?" inquired Kiki Aru, wonderingly.

"Never mind how. In the first place, I'll make a bargain with you. Tell me the secret of how to perform transformations and I will give you a pocketful of jewels, the biggest and finest that I possess."

"No," said Kiki, who realized that to share his power with another would be dangerous to himself.

"I'll give you TWO pocketsful of jewels," said the Nome.

"No," answered Kiki.

"I'll give you every jewel I possess."

"No, no, no!" said Kiki, who was beginning to be frightened.

"Then," said the Nome, with a wicked look at the boy, "I'll tell the innkeeper that you stole that gold piece and he will have you put in prison."

Kiki laughed at the threat.

"Before he can do that," said he, "I will transform myself into a lion and

tear him to pieces, or into a bear and eat him up, or into a fly and fly away where he could not find me."

"Can you really do such wonderful transformations?" asked the old Nome, looking at him curiously.

"Of course," declared Kiki. "I can transform you into a stick of wood, in a flash, or into a stone, and leave you here by the roadside."

"The wicked Nome shivered a little when he heard that, but it made him long more than ever to possess the great secret. After a while he said:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If you will help me to conquer Oz and to transform the Oz people, who are my enemies, into sticks or stones, by telling me your secret, I'll agree to make YOU the Ruler of all Oz, and I will be your Prime Minister and see that your orders are obeyed."

"I'll help do that," said Kiki, "but I won't tell you my secret."

The Nome was so furious at this refusal that he jumped up and down with rage and spluttered and choked for a long time before he could control his passion. But the boy was not at all frightened. He laughed at the wicked old Nome, which made him more furious than ever.

"Let's give up the idea," he proposed, when Ruggedo had quieted somewhat. "I don't know the Oz people you mention and so they are not my enemies. If they've kicked you out of your kingdom, that's your affair — not mine."

"Wouldn't you like to be king of that splendid fairyland?" asked Ruggedo.

"Yes, I would," replied Kiki Aru; "but you want to be king yourself, and we would quarrel over it."

"No," said the Nome, trying to deceive him. "I don't care to be King of Oz, come to think it over. I don't even care to live in that country. What I want first is revenge. If we can conquer Oz, I'll get enough magic then to conquer my own Kingdom of the Nomes, and I'll go back and live in my underground caverns, which are more home-like than the top of the earth. So here's my proposition: Help me conquer Oz and get revenge, and help me get the magic away from Glinda and the Wizard, and I'll let you be King of Oz forever afterward."

"I'll think it over," answered Kiki, and that is all he would say that evening.

In the night when all in the Inn were asleep but himself, old Ruggedo the Nome rose softly from his couch and went into the room of Kiki Aru the Hyup, and searched everywhere for the magic tool that performed his transformations. Of course, there was no such tool, and although Ruggedo searched in all the boy's pockets, he found nothing magical whatever. So he went back to his bed and began to doubt that Kiki could perform transformations.

Next morning he said:

"Which way do you travel to-day?"

"I think I shall visit the Rose Kingdom," answered the boy.

"That is a long journey," declared the Nome.

"I shall transform myself into a bird," said Kiki, "and so fly to the Rose Kingdom in an hour."

"Then transform me, also, into a bird, and I will go with you," suggested Ruggedo. "But, in that case, let us fly together to the Land of Oz, and see what it looks like."

Kiki thought this over. Pleasant as were the countries he had visited, he heard everywhere that the Land of Oz was more beautiful and delightful. The Land of Oz was his own country, too, and if there was any possibility of his becoming its King, he must know something about it.

While Kiki the Hyup thought, Ruggedo the Nome was also thinking. This

boy possessed a marvelous power, and although very simple in some ways, he was determined not to part with his secret. However, if Ruggedo could get him to transport the wily old Nome to Oz, which he could reach in no other way, he might then induce the boy to follow his advice and enter into the plot for revenge, which he had already planned in his wicked heart.

"There are wizards and magicians in Oz," remarked Kiki, after a time. "They might discover us, in spite of our transformations."

"Not if we are careful," Ruggedo assured him. "Ozma has a Magic Picture, in which she can see whatever she wishes to see; but Ozma will know nothing of our going to Oz, and so she will not command her Magic Picture to show where we are or what we are doing. Glinda the Good has a Great Book called the Book of Records, in which is magically written everything that people do in the Land of Oz, just the instant they do it."

"Then," said Kiki, "there is no use our attempting to conquer the country, for Glinda would read in her book all that we do, and as her magic is greater than mine, she would soon put a stop to our plans."

"I said 'people,' didn't I?" retorted the Nome. "The book doesn't make a record of what birds do, or beasts. It only tells the doings of people. So, if we fly into the country as birds, Glinda won't know anything about it."

"Two birds couldn't conquer the Land of Oz," asserted the boy, scornfully.

"No; that's true," admitted Ruggedo, and then he rubbed his forehead and stroked his long pointed beard and thought some more.

"Ah, now I have the idea!" he declared. "I suppose you can transform us

into beasts as well as birds?"

"Of course."

"And can you make a bird a beast, and a beast a bird again, without taking a human form in between?"

"Certainly," said Kiki. "I can transform myself or others into anything that can talk. There's a magic word that must be spoken in connection with the transformations, and as beasts and birds and dragons and fishes can talk in Oz, we may become any of these we desire to. However, if I transformed myself into a tree, I would always remain a tree, because then I could not utter the magic word to change the transformation."

"I see; I see," said Ruggedo, nodding his bushy, white head until the point of his hair waved back and forth like a pendulum. "That fits in with my idea, exactly. Now, listen, and I'll explain to you my plan. We'll fly to Oz as birds and settle in one of the thick forests in the Gillikin Country. There you will transform us into powerful beasts, and as Glinda doesn't keep any track of the doings of beasts we can act without being discovered."

"But how can two beasts raise an army to conquer the powerful people of Oz?" inquired Kiki.

"That's easy. But not an army of PEOPLE, mind you. That would be quickly discovered. And while we are in Oz you and I will never resume our human forms until we've conquered the country and destroyed Glinda, and Ozma, and the Wizard, and Dorothy, and all the rest, and so have nothing more to fear from them."

"It is impossible to kill anyone in the Land of Oz," declared Kiki.

"It isn't necessary to kill the Oz people," rejoined Ruggedo.

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," objected the boy. "What will happen to the Oz people, and what sort of an army could we get together, except of people?"

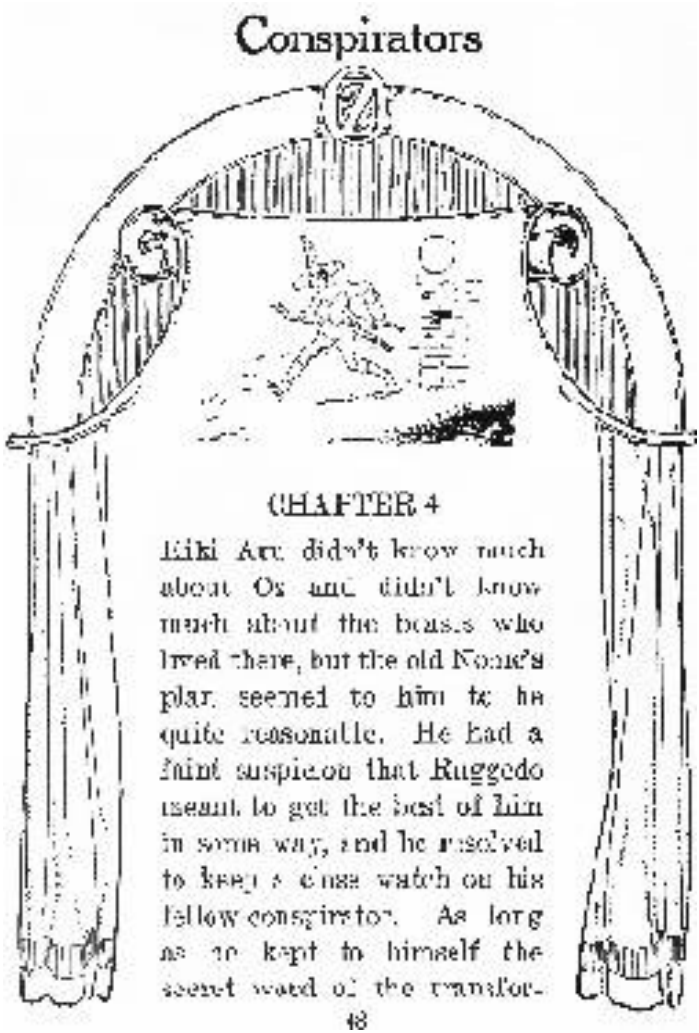
"I'll tell you. The forests of Oz are full of beasts. Some of them, in the far-away places, are savage and cruel, and would gladly follow a leader as savage as themselves. They have never troubled the Oz people much, because they had no leader to urge them on, but we will tell them to help us conquer Oz and as a reward we will transform all the beasts into men and women, and let them live in the houses and enjoy all the good things; and we will transform all the people of Oz into beasts of various sorts, and send them to live in the forests and the jungles. That is a splendid idea, you must admit, and it's so easy that we won't have any trouble at all to carry it through to success."

"Will the beasts consent, do you think?" asked the boy.

"To be sure they will. We can get every beast in Oz on our side — except

a few who live in Ozma's palace, and they won't count."

4. Conspirators



Conspirators

CHAPTER 4

Kiki Aru didn't know much about Oz and didn't know much about the beasts who lived there, but the old Nome's plan seemed to him to be quite reasonable. He had a faint suspicion that Ruggedo meant to get the best of him in some way, and he resolved to keep a close watch on his fellow conspirator. As long as he kept to himself the secret word of the transfor-

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Ruggedo, on his part, decided that he could, by careful watching and

listening, surprise the boy's secret, and when he had learned the magic word he would transform Kiki Aru into a bundle of faggots and burn him up and so be rid of him.

This is always the way with wicked people. They cannot be trusted even by one another. Ruggedo thought he was fooling Kiki, and Kiki thought he was fooling Ruggedo; so both were pleased.

"It's a long way across the Desert," remarked the boy, "and the sands are hot and send up poisonous vapors. Let us wait until evening and then fly across in the night when it will be cooler."

The former Nome King agreed to this, and the two spent the rest of that day in talking over their plans. When evening came they paid the inn-keeper and walked out to a little grove of trees that stood near by.

"Remain here for a few minutes and I'll soon be back," said Kiki, and walking swiftly away, he left the Nome standing in the grove. Ruggedo wondered where he had gone, but stood quietly in his place until, all of a sudden, his form changed to that of a great eagle, and he uttered a piercing cry of astonishment and flapped his wings in a sort of panic. At once his eagle cry was answered from beyond the grove, and another eagle, even larger and more powerful than the transformed Ruggedo, came sailing through the trees and alighted beside him.

"Now we are ready for the start," said the voice of Kiki, coming from the eagle.

Ruggedo realized that this time he had been outwitted. He had thought Kiki would utter the magic word in his presence, and so he would learn what it was, but the boy had been too shrewd for that.

As the two eagles mounted high into the air and began their flight across the great Desert that separates the Land of Oz from all the rest of the world, the Nome said:

"When I was King of the Nomes I had a magic way of working transformations that I thought was good, but it could not compare with your secret word. I had to have certain tools and make passes and say a lot of mystic words before I could transform anybody."

"What became of your magic tools?" inquired Kiki.

"The Oz people took them all away from me — that horrid girl, Dorothy, and that terrible fairy, Ozma, the Ruler of Oz — at the time they took away my underground kingdom and kicked me upstairs into the cold, heartless world."

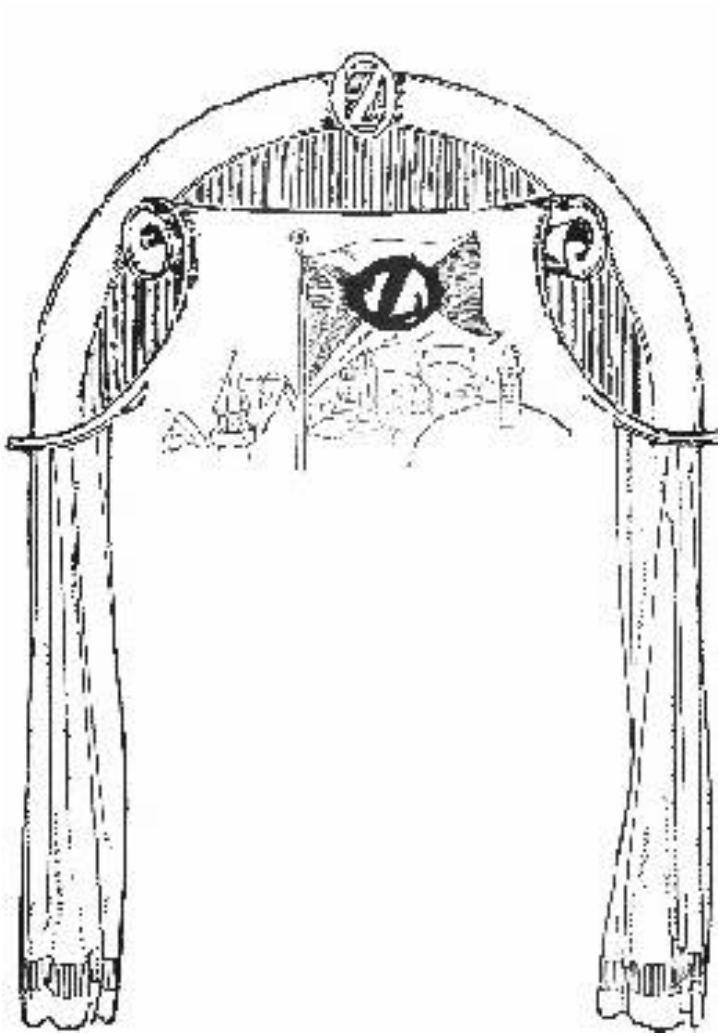
"Why did you let them do that?" asked the boy.

"Well," said Ruggedo, "I couldn't help it. They rolled eggs at me — EGGS — dreadful eggs! — and if an egg even touches a Nome, he is ruined for life."

"Is any kind of an egg dangerous to a Nome?"

"Any kind and every kind. An egg is the only thing I'm afraid of."

5. A Happy Corner of Oz



There is no other country so beautiful as the Land of Oz. There are no other people so happy and contented and prosperous as the Oz people. They have all they desire; they love and admire their beautiful girl Ruler, Ozma of Oz, and they mix work and play so justly that both are delightful and satisfying and no one has any reason to complain. Once in a while something happens in Oz to disturb the people's happiness for a brief time, for so rich and attractive a fairyland is sure to make a few selfish and greedy outsiders envious, and therefore certain evil-doers have treacherously plotted to conquer Oz and enslave its people and destroy its girl Ruler, and so gain the

wealth of Oz for themselves. But up to the time when the cruel and crafty Nome, Ruggedo, conspired with Kiki Aru, the Hyup, all such attempts had failed. The Oz people suspected no danger. Life in the world's nicest fairyland was one round of joyous, happy days.

In the center of the Emerald City of Oz, the capital city of Ozma's dominions, is a vast and beautiful garden, surrounded by a wall inlaid with shining emeralds, and in the center of this garden stands Ozma's Royal Palace, the most splendid building ever constructed. From a hundred towers and domes floated the banners of Oz, which included the Ozmies, the Munchkins, the Gillikins, the Winkies and the Quadlings. The banner of the Munchkins is blue, that of the Winkies yellow; the Gillikin banner is purple, and the Quadling's banner is red. The colors of the Emerald City are of course green. Ozma's own banner has a green center, and is divided into four quarters. These quarters are colored blue, purple, yellow and red, indicating that she rules over all the countries of the Land of Oz.

This fairyland is so big, however, that all of it is not yet known to its girl Ruler, and it is said that in some far parts of the country, in forests and mountain fastnesses, in hidden valleys and thick jungles, are people and beasts that know as little about Ozma as she knows of them. Still, these unknown subjects are not nearly so numerous as the known inhabitants of Oz, who occupy all the countries near to the Emerald City. Indeed, I'm sure it will not be long until all parts of the fairyland of Oz are explored and their peoples made acquainted with their Ruler, for in Ozma's palace are several of her friends who are so curious that they are constantly discovering new and extraordinary places and inhabitants.

One of the most frequent discoverers of these hidden places in Oz is a little Kansas girl named Dorothy, who is Ozma's dearest friend and lives in luxurious rooms in the Royal Palace. Dorothy is, indeed, a Princess of Oz, but she does not like to be called a princess, and because she is simple and sweet and does not pretend to be anything but an ordinary little girl, she is called just "Dorothy" by everybody and is the most popular person, next to Ozma, in all the Land of Oz.

One morning Dorothy crossed the hall of the palace and knocked on the door of another girl named Trot, also a guest and friend of Ozma. When told to enter, Dorothy found that Trot had company, an old sailor-man with one wooden leg and one meat leg, who was sitting by the open window puffing smoke from a corn-cob pipe. This sailor-man was named Cap'n Bill, and he had accompanied Trot to the Land of Oz and was her oldest and most faithful comrade and friend. Dorothy liked Cap'n Bill, too, and after she had greeted him, she said to Trot:

"You know, Ozma's birthday is next month, and I've been wondering what I can give here as a birthday present. She's so good to us all that we certainly ought to remember her birthday."

"That's true," agreed Trot. "I've been wondering, too, what I could give Ozma. It's pretty hard to decide, 'cause she's got already all she wants, and as she's a fairy and knows a lot about magic, she could satisfy any wish."

"I know," returned Dorothy, "but that isn't the point. It isn't that Ozma NEEDS anything, but that it will please her to know we've remembered her birthday. But what shall we give her?"

Trot shook her head in despair.

"I've tried to think and I can't," she declared.

"It's the same way with me," said Dorothy.

"I know one thing that 'ud please her," remarked Cap'n Bill, turning his round face with its fringe of whiskers toward the two girls and staring at them with his big, light-blue eyes wide open.

“What is it, Cap’n Bill?”

“It’s an Enchanted Flower,” said he. “It’s a pretty plant that stands in a golden flower-pot an’ grows all sorts o’ flowers, one after another. One minute a fine rose buds an’ blooms, an’ then a tulip, an’ next a chrys — chrys — ”

“ — anthemum,” said Dorothy, helping him.

“That’s it; and next a dahlia, an’ then a daffydil, an’ on all through the range o’ posies. Jus’ as soon as one fades away, another comes, of a different sort, an’ the perfume from ‘em is mighty snifty, an’ they keeps bloomin’ night and day, year in an’ year out.”

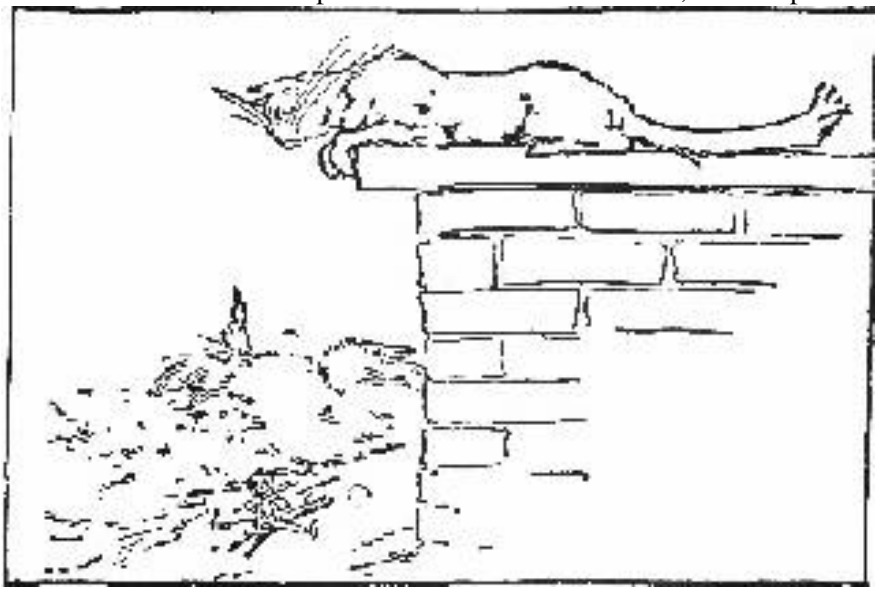
“That’s wonderful!” exclaimed Dorothy. “I think Ozma would like it.”

“But where is the Magic Flower, and how can we get it?” asked Trot.

“Dun’no, zac’ly,” slowly replied Cap’n Bill. “The Glass Cat tol’ me about it only yesterday, an’ said it was in some lonely place up at the nor’east o’ here. The Glass Cat goes travelin’ all around Oz, you know, an’ the little critter sees a lot o’ things no one else does.”

“That’s true,” said Dorothy, thoughtfully. “Northeast of here must be in the Munchkin Country, and perhaps a good way off, so let’s ask the Glass Cat to tell us how to get to the Magic Flower.”

So the two girls, with Cap’n Bill stumping along on his wooden leg after them, went out into the garden, and after some time spent in searching, they found the Glass Cat curled up in the sunshine beside a bush, fast sleep.



The Glass Cat is one of the most curious creatures in all Oz. It was made by

a famous magician named Dr. Pipt before Ozma had forbidden her subjects to work magic. Dr. Pipt had made the Glass Cat to catch mice, but the Cat refused to catch mice and was considered more curious than useful.

This astonished cat was made all of glass and was so clear and transparent that you could see through it as easily as through a window. In the top of its head, however, was a mass of delicate pink balls which looked like jewels but were intended for brains. It had a heart made of blood-red ruby. The eyes were two large emeralds. But, aside from these colors, all the rest of the animal was of clear glass, and it had a spun-glass tail that was really beautiful.

"Here, wake up," said Cap'n Bill. "We want to talk to you."

Slowly the Glass Cat got upon its feed, yawned and then looked at the three who stood before it.

"How dare you disturb me?" it asked in a peevish voice. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

"Never mind that," returned the Sailor. "Do you remember tellin' me yesterday 'bout a Magic Flower in a Gold Pot?"

"Do you think I'm a fool? Look at my brains — you can see 'em work. Of course I remember!" said the cat.

"Well, where can we find it?"

"You can't. It's none of your business, anyhow. Go away and let me sleep," advised the Glass Cat.

"Now, see here," said Dorothy; "we want the Magic Flower to give to Ozma on her birthday. You'd be glad to please Ozma, wouldn't you?"

"I'm not sure," replied the creature. "Why should I want to please anybody?"

"You've got a heart, 'cause I can see it inside of you," said Trot.

"Yes; it's a pretty heart, and I'm fond of it," said the cat, twisting around to view its own body. "But it's made from a ruby, and it's hard as nails."

"Aren't you good for ANYthing?" asked Trot.

"Yes, I'm pretty to look at, and that's more than can be said of you," retorted the creature.

Trot laughed at this, and Dorothy, who understood the Glass Cat pretty well, said soothingly:

"You are indeed beautiful, and if you can tell Cap'n Bill where to find the Magic Flower, all the people in Oz will praise your cleverness. The Flower will belong to Ozma, but everyone will know the Glass Cat discovered it."

This was the kind of praise the crystal creature liked.

"Well," it said, while the pink brains rolled around, "I found the Magic Flower way up in the north of the Munchkin Country where few people live or ever go. There's a river there that flows through a forest, and in the middle of the forest there is a small island on which stands the gold pot in which grows the Magic Flower."

"How did you get to the island?" asked Dorothy. "Glass cats can't swim."

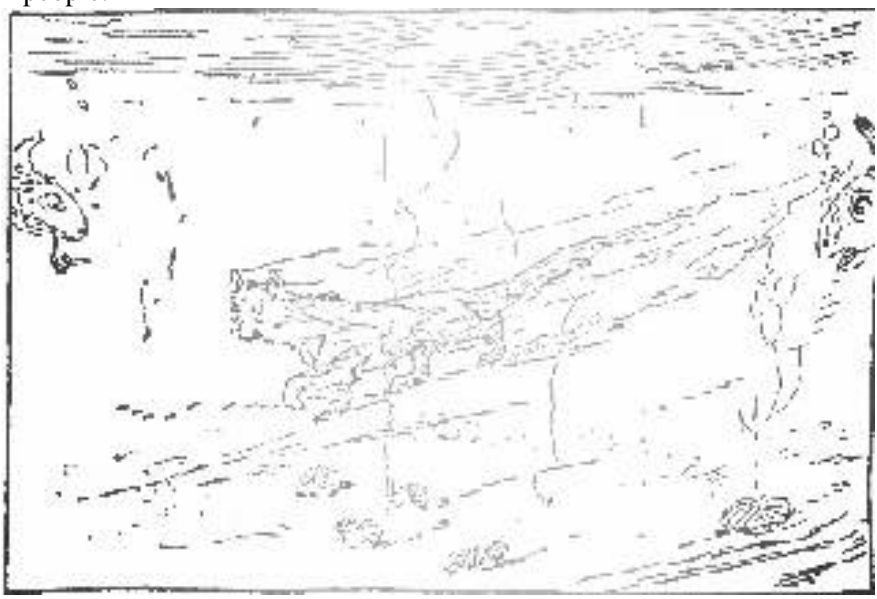
"No, but I'm not afraid of water," was the reply. "I just walked across the river on the bottom."

"Under the water?" exclaimed Trot.

The cat gave her a scornful look.

"How could I walk OVER the water on the BOTTOM of the river? If you

were transparent, anyone could see YOUR brains were not working. But I'm sure you could never find the place alone. It has always been hidden from the Oz people."



"But you, with your fine pink brains, could find it again, I s'pose," remarked Dorothy.

"Yes; and if you want that Magic Flower for Ozma, I'll go with you and show you the way."

"That's lovely of you!" declared Dorothy. "Trot and Cap'n Bill will go with you, for this is to be their birthday present to Ozma. While you're gone I'll have to find something else to give her."

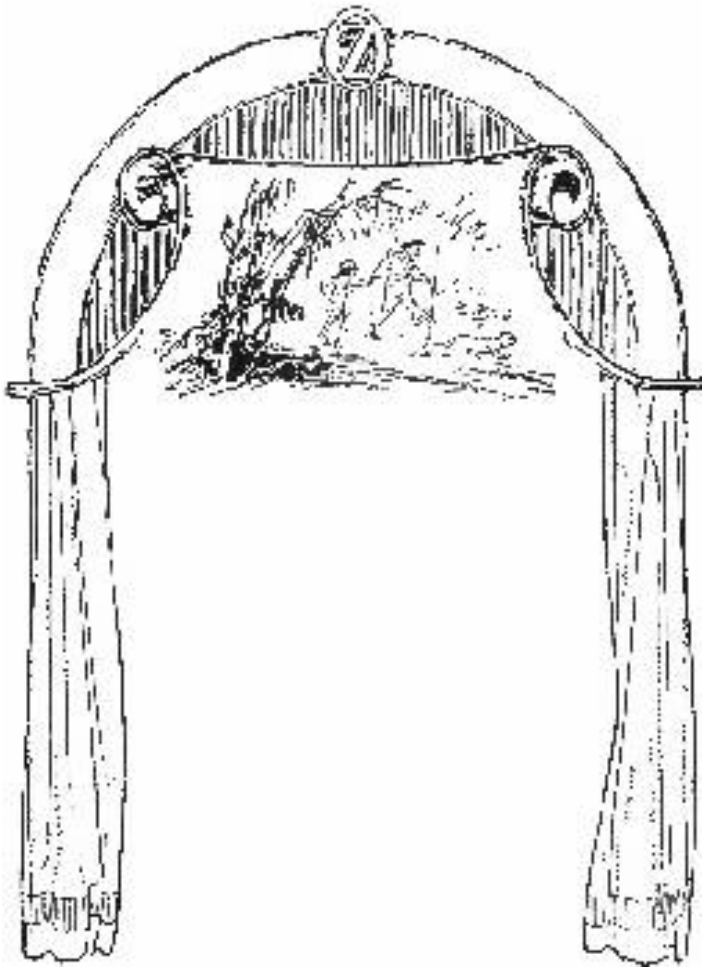
"All right. Come on, then, Cap'n," said the Glass Cat, starting to move away.

"Wait a minute," begged Trot. "How long will we be gone?"

"Oh, about a week."

"Then I'll put some things in a basket to take with us," said the girl, and ran into the palace to make her preparations for the journey.

6. Ozma's Birthday Presents



When Cap'n Bill and Trot and the Glass Cat had started for the hidden island in the far-off river to get the Magic Flower, Dorothy wondered again what she could give Ozma on her birthday. She met the Patchwork Girl and said:

"What are you going to give Ozma for a birthday present?"

"I've written a song for her," answered the strange Patchwork Girl, who went by the name of "Scraps," and who, through stuffed with cotton, had a fair assortment of mixed brains. "It's a splendid song and the chorus runs this way:

I am crazy;

You're a daisy,
   Ozma dear;
I'm demented;
You're contented,
   Ozma dear;
I am patched and gay and glary;
You're a sweet and lovely fairy;
May your birthdays all be happy,
   Ozma dear!"

"How do you like it, Dorothy?" inquired the Patchwork Girl.

"Is it good poetry, Scraps?" asked Dorothy, doubtfully.

"It's as good as any ordinary song," was the reply. "I have given it a dandy title, too. I shall call the song: 'When Ozma Has a Birthday, Everybody's Sure to Be Gay, for She Cannot Help the Fact That She Was Born.'"

"That's a pretty long title, Scraps," said Dorothy.

"That makes it stylish," replied the Patchwork Girl, turning a somersault and alighting on one stuffed foot. "Now-a-days the titles are sometimes longer than the songs."

Dorothy left her and walked slowly toward the place, where she met the Tin Woodman just going up the front steps.

"What are you going to give Ozma on her birthday?" she asked.

“It’s a secret, but I’ll tell you,” replied the Tin Woodman, who was Emperor of the Winkies. “I am having my people make Ozma a lovely girdle set with beautiful tin nuggets. Each tin nugget will be surrounded by a circle of emeralds, just to set it off to good advantage. The clasp of the girdle will be pure tin! Won’t that be fine?”

“I’m sure she’ll like it,” said Dorothy. “Do you know what I can give her?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea, Dorothy. It took me three months to think of my own present for Ozma.”

The girl walked thoughtfully around to the back of the palace, and presently came upon the famous Scarecrow of Oz, who has having two of the palace servants stuff his legs with fresh straw.

“What are you going to give Ozma on her birthday?” asked Dorothy.

“I want to surprise her,” answered the Scarecrow.

“I won’t tell,” promised Dorothy.

“Well, I’m having some straw slippers made for her — all straw, mind you, and braided very artistically. Ozma has always admired my straw filling, so I’m sure she’ll be pleased with these lovely straw slippers.”

“Ozma will be pleased with anything her loving friends give her,” said the girl. “What I’M worried about, Scarecrow, is what to give Ozma that she hasn’t got already.”

“That’s what worried me, until I thought of the slippers,” said the Scarecrow. “You’ll have to THINK, Dorothy; that’s the only way to get a

good idea. If I hadn't such wonderful brains, I'd never have thought of those straw foot-decorations."

Dorothy left him and went to her room, where she sat down and tried to think hard. A Pink Kitten was curled up on the window-sill and Dorothy asked her:

"What can I give Ozma for her birthday present?"

"Oh, give her some milk," replied the Pink Kitten; "that's the nicest thing I know of."

A fuzzy little black dog had squatted down at Dorothy's feet and now looked up at her with intelligent eyes.

"Tell me, Toto," said the girl; "what would Ozma like best for a birthday present?"

The little black dog wagged his tail.

"Your love," said he. "Ozma wants to be loved more than anything else."

"But I already love her, Toto!"

"Then tell her you love her twice as much as you ever did before."

"That wouldn't be true," objected Dorothy, "for I've always loved her as much as I could, and, really, Toto, I want to give Ozma some PRESENT, 'cause everyone else will give her a present."

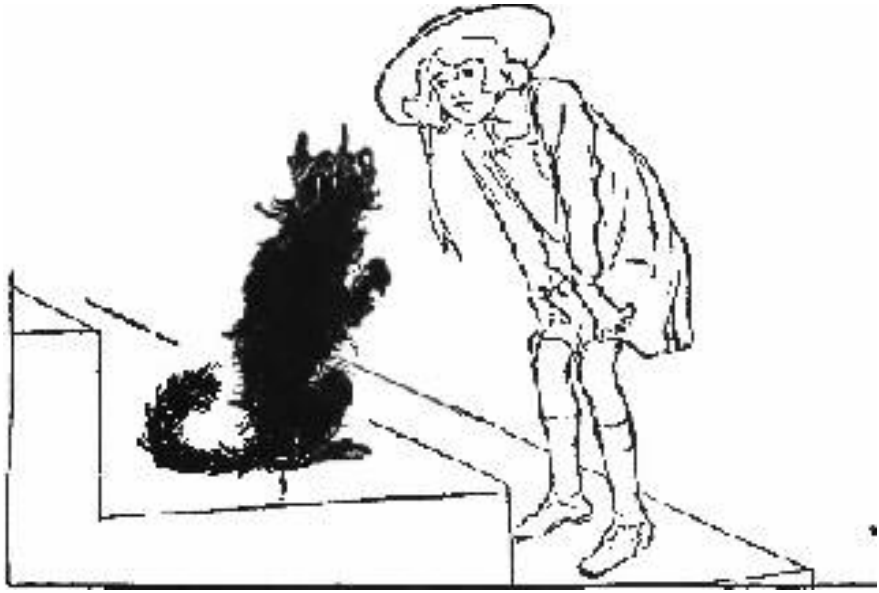
"Let me see," said Toto. "How would it be to give her that useless Pink Kitten?"

"No, Toto; that wouldn't do."

"Then six kisses."

"No; that's no present."

"Well, I guess you'll have to figure it out for yourself, Dorothy," said the little dog. "To MY notion you're more particular than Ozma will be."



Dorothy decided that if anyone could help her it would be Glinda the Good, the wonderful Sorceress of Oz who was Ozma's faithful subject and friend. But Glinda's castle was in the Quadling Country and quite a journey from the Emerald City.

So the little girl went to Ozma and asked permission to use the Wooden Sawhorse and the royal Red Wagon to pay a visit to Glinda, and the girl Ruler kissed Princess Dorothy and graciously granted permission.

The Wooden Sawhorse was one of the most remarkable creatures in Oz. Its body was a small log and its legs were limbs of trees stuck in the body. Its eyes were knots, its mouth was sawed in the end of the log and its ears were two chips. A small branch had been left at the rear end of the log to serve as a tail.

Ozma herself, during one of her early adventures, had brought this wooden horse to life, and so she was much attached to the queer animal and had shod the bottoms of its wooden legs with plates of gold so they would not wear out. The Sawhorse was a swift and willing traveler, and though it could talk if need arose, it seldom said anything unless spoken to. When the Sawhorse was harnessed to the Red Wagon there were no reins to guide him because all that was needed was to tell him where to go.

Dorothy now told him to go to Glinda's Castle and the Sawhorse carried her there with marvelous speed.

"Glinda," said Dorothy, when she had been greeted by the Sorceress, who was tall and stately, with handsome and dignified features and dressed in a

splendid and becoming gown, “what are you going to give Ozma for a birthday present?”

The Sorceress smiled and answered:

“Come into my patio and I will show you.”

So they entered a place that was surrounded by the wings of the great castle but had no roof, and was filled with flowers and fountains and exquisite statuary and many settees and chairs of polished marble or filigree gold. Here there were gathered fifty beautiful young girls, Glinda’s handmaids, who had been selected from all parts of the Land of Oz on account of their wit and beauty and sweet dispositions. It was a great honor to be made one of Glinda’s handmaidens.

When Dorothy followed the Sorceress into this delightful patio all the fifty girls were busily weaving, and their shuttles were filled with a sparkling green spun glass such as the little girl had never seen before.

“What is it, Glinda?” she asked.

“One of my recent discoveries,” explained the Sorceress. “I have found a way to make threads from emeralds, by softening the stones and then spinning them into long, silken strands. With these emerald threads we are weaving cloth to make Ozma a splendid court gown for her birthday. You will notice that the threads have all the beautiful glitter and luster of the emeralds from which they are made, and so Ozma’s new dress will be the most magnificent the world has ever seen, and quite fitting for our lovely Ruler of the Fairyland of Oz.”

Dorothy's eyes were fairly dazed by the brilliance of the emerald cloth, some of which the girls had already woven.

"I've never seen ANYthing so beautiful!" she said, with a sigh. "But tell me, Glinda, what can I give our lovely Ozma on her birthday?"

The good Sorceress considered this question for a long time before she replied. Finally she said:

"Of course there will be a grand feast at the Royal Palace on Ozma's birthday, and all our friends will be present. So I suggest that you make a fine big birthday cake of Ozma, and surround it with candles."

"Oh, just a CAKE!" exclaimed Dorothy, in disappointment.

"Nothing is nicer for a birthday," said the Sorceress.

"How many candles should there be on the cake?" asked the girl.

"Just a row of them," replied Glinda, "for no one knows how old Ozma is, although she appears to us to be just a young girl — as fresh and fair as if she had lived but a few years."

"A cake doesn't seem like much of a present," Dorothy asserted.

"Make it a surprise cake," suggested the Sorceress. "Don't you remember the four and twenty blackbirds that were baked in a pie? Well, you need not use live blackbirds in your cake, but you could have some surprise of a different sort."

"Like what?" questioned Dorothy, eagerly.

"If I told you, it wouldn't be YOUR present to Ozma, but MINE," answered the Sorceress, with a smile. "Think it over, my dear, and I am sure you can originate a surprise that will add greatly to the joy and merriment of Ozma's birthday banquet."

Dorothy thanked her friend and entered the Red Wagon and told the Sawhorse to take her back home to the palace in the Emerald City.

On the way she thought the matter over seriously of making a surprise birthday cake and finally decided what to do.

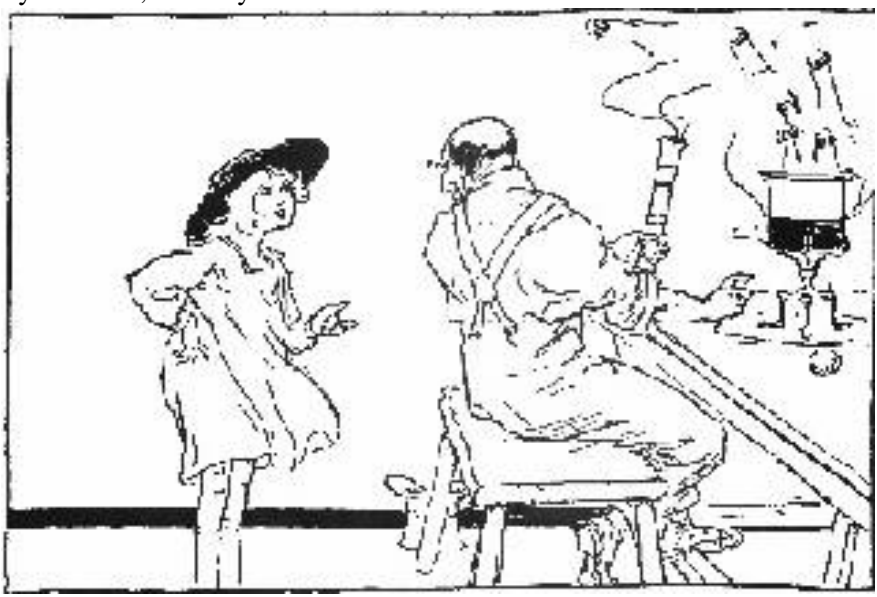
As soon as she reached home, she went to the Wizard of Oz, who had a room fitted up in one of the high towers of the palace, where he studied magic so as to be able to perform such wizardry as Ozma commanded him to do for the welfare of her subjects.

The Wizard and Dorothy were firm friends and had enjoyed many strange adventures together. He was a little man with a bald head and sharp eyes and a round, jolly face, and because he was neither haughty nor proud he had become a great favorite with the Oz people.

"Wizard," said Dorothy, "I want you to help me fix up a present for Ozma's birthday."

"I'll be glad to do anything for you and for Ozma," he answered. "What's

on your mind, Dorothy?”



“I’m going to make a great cake, with frosting and candles, and all that, you know.”

“Very good,” said the Wizard.

“In the center of this cake I’m going to leave a hollow place, with just a roof of the frosting over it,” continued the girl.

“Very good,” repeated the Wizard, nodding his bald head.

“In that hollow place,” said Dorothy, “I want to hide a lot of monkeys about three inches high, and after the cake is placed on the banquet table, I want the monkeys to break through the frosting and dance around on the table-cloth. Then, I want each monkey to cut out a piece of cake and hand it to a guest.”

“Mercy me!” cried the little Wizard, as he chuckled with laughter. “Is that ALL you want, Dorothy?”

“Almost,” said she. “Can you think of anything more the little monkeys can do, Wizard?”

“Not just now,” he replied. “But where will you get such tiny monkeys?”

“That’s where you’re to help me,” said Dorothy. “In some of those wild forests in the Gillikin Country are lots of monkeys.”

“Big ones,” said the Wizard.

“Well, you and I will go there, and we’ll get some of the big monkeys, and you will make them small — just three inches high — by means of your magic, and we’ll put the little monkeys all in a basket and bring them home

with us. Then you'll train them to dance — up here in your room, where no one can see them — and on Ozma's birthday we'll put 'em into the cake and they'll know by that time just what to do."

The Wizard looked at Dorothy with admiring approval, and chuckled again.

"That's really clever, my dear," he said, "and I see no reason why we can't do it, just the way you say, if only we can get the wild monkeys to agree to it."

"Do you think they'll object?" asked the girl.

"Yes; but perhaps we can argue them into it. Anyhow it's worth trying, and I'll help you if you'll agree to let this Surprise Cake be a present to Ozma from you and me together. I've been wondering what I could give Ozma, and as I've got to train the monkeys as well as make them small, I think you ought to make me your partner."

"Of course," said Dorothy; "I'll be glad to do so."

"Then it's a bargain," declared the Wizard. "We must go to seek those monkeys at once, however, for it will take time to train them and we'll have to travel a good way to the Gillikin forests where they live."

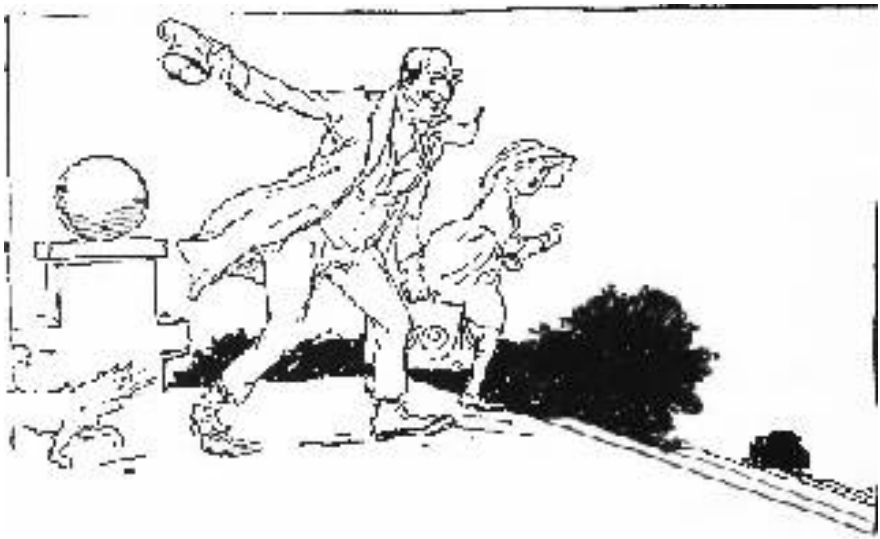
"I'm ready to go any time," agreed Dorothy. "Shall we ask Ozma to let us take the Sawhorse?"

The Wizard did not answer that at once. He took time to think of the suggestion.

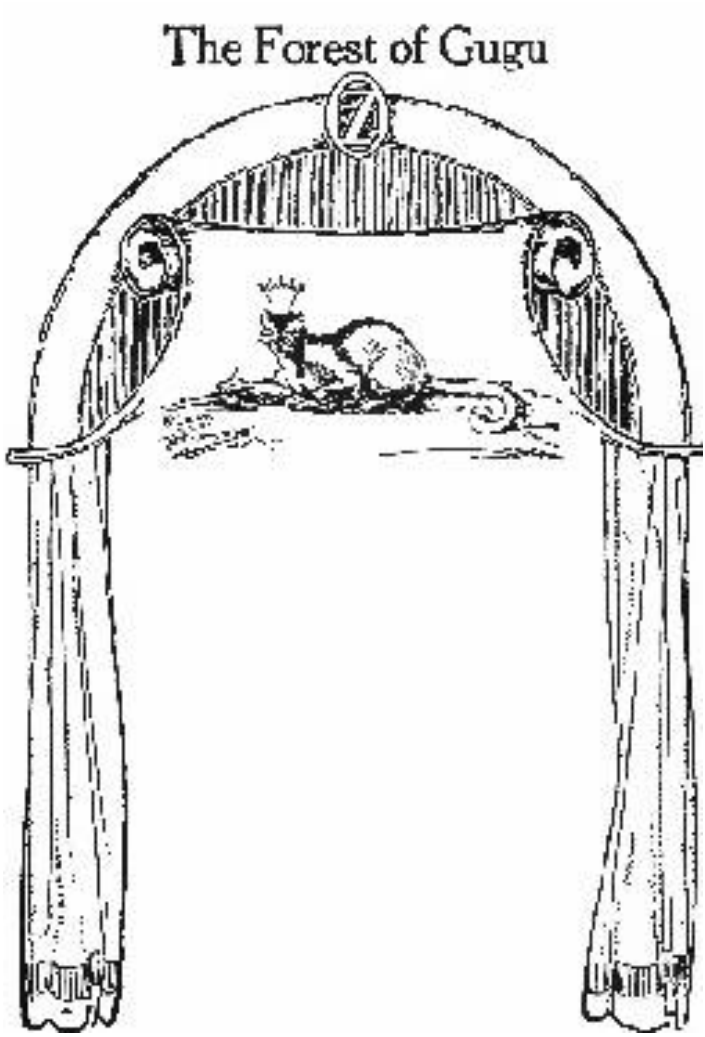
"No," he answered at length, "the Red Wagon couldn't get through the thick forests and there's some danger to us in going into the wild places to search for monkeys. So I propose we take the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger. We can ride on their backs as well as in the Red Wagon, and if there is danger to us from other beasts, these two friendly champions will protect us from all harm."

"That's a splendid idea!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Let's go now and ask the Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion if they will help us. Shall we ask Ozma if we can go?"

"I think not," said the Wizard, getting his hat and his black bag of magic tools. "This is to be a surprise for her birthday, and so she mustn't know where we're going. We'll just leave word, in case Ozma inquires for us, that we'll be back in a few days."



7. The Forest of Gugu



In the central western part of the Gillikin Country is a great tangle of trees called Gugu Forest. It is the biggest forest in all Oz and stretches miles and miles in every direction — north, south, east and west. Adjoining it on the east side is a range of rugged mountains covered with underbrush and small twisted trees. You can find this place by looking at the Map of the Land of Oz.

Gugu Forest is the home of most of the wild beasts that inhabit Oz. These are seldom disturbed in their leafy haunts because there is no reason why Oz people should go there, except on rare occasions, and most parts of the forest

have never been seen by any eyes but the eyes of the beasts who make their home there. The biggest beasts inhabit the great forest, while the smaller ones live mostly in the mountain underbrush at the east.

Now, you must know that there are laws in the forests, as well as in every other place, and these laws are made by the beasts themselves, and are necessary to keep them from fighting and tearing one another to pieces. In Gugu Forest there is a King — an enormous yellow leopard called "Gugu" — after whom the forest is named. And this King has three other beasts to advise him in keeping the laws and maintaining order — Bru the Bear, Loo the Unicorn and Rango the Gray Ape — who are known as the King's Counselors. All these are fierce and ferocious beasts, and hold their high offices because they are more intelligent and more feared then their fellows.

Since Oz became a fairyland, no man, woman or child ever dies in that land nor is anyone ever sick. Likewise the beasts of the forests never die, so that long years add to their cunning and wisdom, as well as to their size and strength. It is possible for beasts — or even people — to be destroyed, but the task is so difficult that it is seldom attempted. Because it is free from sickness and death is one reason why Oz is a fairyland, but it is doubtful whether those who come to Oz from the outside world, as Dorothy and Button-Bright and Trot and Cap'n Bill and the Wizard did, will live forever or cannot be injured. Even Ozma is not sure about this, and so the guests of Ozma from other lands are always carefully protected from any danger, so as to be on the safe side.

In spite of the laws of the forests there are often fights among the beasts; some of them have lost an eye or an ear or even had a leg torn off. The King and the King's Counselors always punish those who start a fight, but so fierce is the nature of some beasts that they will at times fight in spite of laws and punishment.

Over this vast, wild Forest of Gugu flew two eagles, one morning, and near the center of the jungle the eagles alighted on a branch of a tall tree.

"Here is the place for us to begin our work," said one, who was Ruggedo, the Nome.

"Do many beasts live here?" asked Kiki Aru, the other eagle.

"The forest is full of them," said the Nome. "There are enough beasts right here to enable us to conquer the people of Oz, if we can get them to consent to join us. To do that, we must go among them and tell them our plans, so we must now decide on what shapes we had better assume while in the forest."

"I suppose we must take the shapes of beasts?" said Kiki.

"Of course. But that requires some thought. All kinds of beasts live here,

and a yellow leopard is King. If we become leopards, the King will be jealous of us. If we take the forms of some of the other beasts, we shall not command proper respect."

"I wonder if the beasts will attack us?" asked Kiki.

"I'm a Nome, and immortal, so nothing can hurt me," replied Ruggedo.

"I was born in the Land of Oz, so nothing can hurt me," said Kiki.

"But, in order to carry out our plans, we must win the favor of all the animals of the forest."

"Then what shall we do?" asked Kiki.

"Let us mix the shapes of several beasts, so we will not look like any one of them," proposed the wily old Nome. "Let us have the heads of lions, the bodies of monkeys, the wings of eagles and the tails of wild asses, with knobs of gold on the end of them instead of bunches of hair."

"Won't that make a queer combination?" inquired Kiki.

"The queerer the better," declared Ruggedo.

"All right," said Kiki. "You stay here, and I'll fly away to another tree and transform us both, and then we'll climb down our trees and meet in the forest."

"No," said the Nome, "we mustn't separate. You must transform us while we are together."

"I won't do that," asserted Kiki, firmly. "You're trying to get my secret, and I won't let you."

The eyes of the other eagle flashed angrily, but Ruggedo did not dare insist. If he offended this boy, he might have to remain an eagle always and he wouldn't like that. Some day he hoped to be able to learn the secret word of the magical transformations, but just now he must let Kiki have his own way.

"All right," he said gruffly; "do as you please."

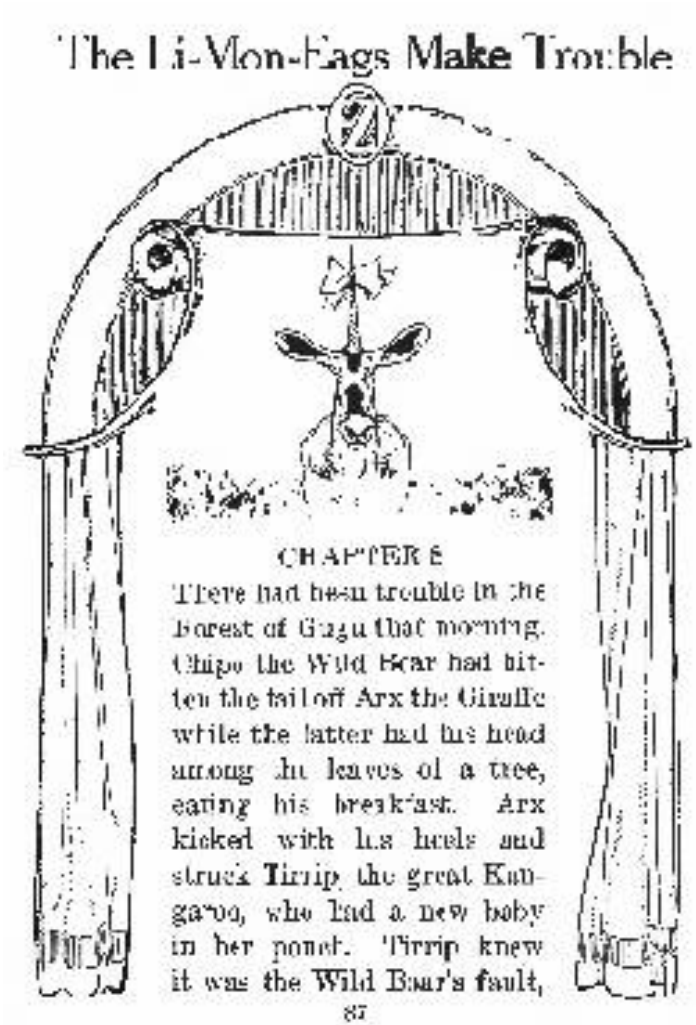
So Kiki flew to a tree that was far enough distant so that Ruggedo could not overhear him and said: "I want Ruggedo, the Nome, and myself to have the heads of lions, the bodies of monkeys, the wings of eagles and the tails of wild asses, with knobs of gold on the ends of them instead of bunches of hair — Pyrzqxgl!"

He pronounced the magic word in the proper manner and at once his form changed to the one he had described. He spread his eagle's wings and finding they were strong enough to support his monkey body and lion head he flew swiftly to the tree where he had left Ruggedo. The Nome was also transformed and was climbing down the tree because the branches all around him were so thickly entwined that there was no room between them to fly.

Kiki quickly joined his comrade and it did not take them long to reach the

ground.

8. The Li-Mon-Eags Make Trouble



The Li-Mon-Eags Make Trouble

8

CHAPTER 8

There had been trouble in the Forest of Gugu that morning. Chipo the Wild Boar had bitten the tail off Arx the Giraffe while the latter had his head among the leaves of a tree, eating his breakfast. Arx kicked with his heels and struck Tirrip the great Kangaroo, who had a new baby in her pouch. Tirrip knew it was the Wild Boar's fault,

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There had been trouble in the Forest of Gugu that morning. Chipo the Wild Boar had bitten the tail off Arx the Giraffe while the latter had his head among the leaves of a tree, eating his breakfast. Arx kicked with his heels and struck Tirrip, the great Kangaroo, who had a new baby in her pouch. Tirrip knew it was the Wild Boar's fault, so she knocked him over with one powerful blow and then ran away to escape Chipo's sharp tusks. In the chase that followed a giant porcupine stuck fifty sharp quills into the Boar and a chimpanzee in a tree threw a cocoanut at the porcupine that jammed its head into its body.

All this was against the Laws of the Forest, and when the excitement was over, Gugu the Leopard King called his royal Counselors together to decide how best to punish the offenders.

The four lords of the forest were holding solemn council in a small clearing when they saw two strange beasts approaching them — beasts the like of which they had never seen before.

Not one of the four, however, relaxed his dignity or showed by a movement that he was startled. The great Leopard crouched at full length upon a fallen tree-trunk. Bru the Bear sat on his haunches before the King; Rango the Gray Ape stood with his muscular arms folded, and Loo the Unicorn reclined, much as a horse does, between his fellow-councillors. With one consent they remained silent, eyeing with steadfast looks the intruders, who were making their way into their forest domain.

"Well met, Brothers!" said one of the strange beasts, coming to a halt beside the group, while his comrade with hesitation lagged behind.

"We are not brothers," returned the Gray Ape, sternly. "Who are you, and how came you in the forest of Gugu?"

"We are two Li-Mon-Eags," said Ruggedo, inventing the name. "Our home is in Sky Island, and we have come to earth to warn the forest beasts that the people of Oz are about to make war upon them and enslave them, so that they will become beasts of burden forever after and obey only the will of their two-legged masters."

A low roar of anger arose from the Council of Beasts.

“WHO’S going to do that?” asked Loo the Unicorn, in a high, squeaky voice, at the same time rising to his feet.

“The people of Oz,” said Ruggedo.

“But what will WE be doing?” inquired the Unicorn.

“That’s what I’ve come to talk to you about.”

“You needn’t talk! We’ll fight the Oz people!” screamed the Unicorn. “We’ll smash ‘em; we’ll trample ‘em; we’ll gore ‘em; we’ll — ”

“Silence!” growled Gugu the King, and Loo obeyed, although still trembling with wrath. The cold, steady gaze of the Leopard wandered over the two strange beasts. “The people of Oz,” said he, “have not been our friends; they have not been our enemies. They have let us alone, and we have let them alone. There is no reason for war between us. They have no slaves. They could not use us as slaves if they should conquer us. I think you are telling us lies, you strange Li-Mon-Eag — you mixed-up beast who are neither one thing nor another.”

“Oh, on my word, it’s the truth!” protested the Nome in the beast’s shape. “I wouldn’t lie for the world; I — ”

“Silence!” again growled Gugu the King; and somehow, even Ruggedo was abashed and obeyed the edict.

“What do you say, Bru?” asked the King, turning to the great Bear, who had until now said nothing.

“How does the Mixed Beast know that what he says is true?” asked the Bear.

“Why, I can fly, you know, having the wings of an Eagle,” explained the Nome. “I and my comrade yonder,” turning to Kiki, “flew to a grove in Oz, and there we heard the people telling how they will make many ropes to snare you beasts, and then they will surround this forest, and all other forests, and make you prisoners. So we came here to warn you, for being beasts ourselves, although we live in the sky, we are your friends.”

The Leopard’s lip curled and showed his enormous teeth, sharp as needles. He turned to the Gray Ape.

“What do YOU think, Rango?” he asked.

“Send these mixed beasts away, Your Majesty,” replied the Gray Ape. “They are mischief-makers.”

“Don’t do that — don’t do that!” cried the Unicorn, nervously. “The stranger said he would tell us what to do. Let him tell us, then. Are we fools, not to heed a warning?”

Gugu the King turned to Ruggedo.

“Speak, Stranger,” he commanded.

“Well,” said the Nome, “it’s this way: The Land of Oz is a fine country.

The people of Oz have many good things — houses with soft beds, all sorts of nice-tasting food, pretty clothes, lovely jewels, and many other things that beasts know nothing of. Here in the dark forests the poor beasts have hard work to get enough to eat and to find a bed to rest in. But the beasts are better than the people, and why should they not have all the good things the people have? So I propose that before the Oz people have the time to make all those ropes to snare you with, that all we beasts get together and march against the Oz people and capture them. Then the beasts will become the masters and the people their slaves."

"What good would that do us?" asked Bru the Bear.

"It would save you from slavery, for one thing, and you could enjoy all the fine things of Oz people have."

"Beasts wouldn't know what to do with the things people use," said the Gray Ape.

"But this is only part of my plan," insisted the Nome. "Listen to the rest of it. We two Li-Mon-Eags are powerful magicians. When you have conquered the Oz people we will transform them all into beasts, and send them to the forests to live, and we will transform all the beasts into people, so they can enjoy all the wonderful delights of the Emerald City."

For a moment no beast spoke. Then the King said: "Prove it."

"Prove what?" asked Ruggedo.

"Prove that you can transform us. If you are a magician transform the Unicorn into a man. Then we will believe you. If you fail, we will destroy you."

"All right," said the Nome. "But I'm tired, so I'll let my comrade make the transformation."

Kiki Aru had stood back from the circle, but he had heard all that was said. He now realized that he must make good Ruggedo's boast, so he retreated to the edge of the clearing and whispered the magic word.

Instantly the Unicorn became a fat, chubby little man, dressed in the purple Gillikin costume, and it was hard to tell which was the more astonished, the King, the Bear, the Ape or the former Unicorn.

"It's true!" shorted the man-beast. "Good gracious, look what I am! It's wonderful!"

The King of Beasts now addressed Ruggedo in a more friendly tone.

"We must believe your story, since you have given us proof of your power," said he. "But why, if you are so great a magician, cannot you conquer the Oz people without our help, and so save us the trouble?"

"Alas!" replied the crafty old Nome, "no magician is able to do everything. The transformations are easy to us because we are Li-Mon-Eags,

but we cannot fight, or conquer even such weak creatures as the Oz people. But we will stay with you and advise and help you, and we will transform all the Oz people into beasts, when the time comes, and all the beasts into people."

Gugu the King turned to his Counselors.

"How shall we answer this friendly stranger?" he asked.

Loo the former Unicorn was dancing around and cutting capers like a clown.

"On my word, your Majesty," he said, "this being a man is more fun than being a Unicorn."

"You look like a fool," said the Gray Ape.

"Well, I FEEL fine!" declared the man-beast.

"I think I prefer to be a Bear," said Big Bru. "I was born a Bear, and I know a Bear's ways. So I am satisfied to live as a Bear lives."

"That," said the old Nome, "is because you know nothing better. When we have conquered the Oz people, and you become a man, you'll be glad of it."

The immense Leopard rested his chin on the log and seemed thoughtful.

"The beasts of the forest must decide this matter for themselves," he said. "Go you, Rango the Gray Ape, and tell your monkey tribe to order all the forest beasts to assemble in the Great Clearing at sunrise to-morrow. When all are gathered together, this mixed-up Beast who is a magician shall talk to them and tell them what he has told us. Then, if they decide to fight the Oz people, who have declared war on us, I will lead the beasts to battle."

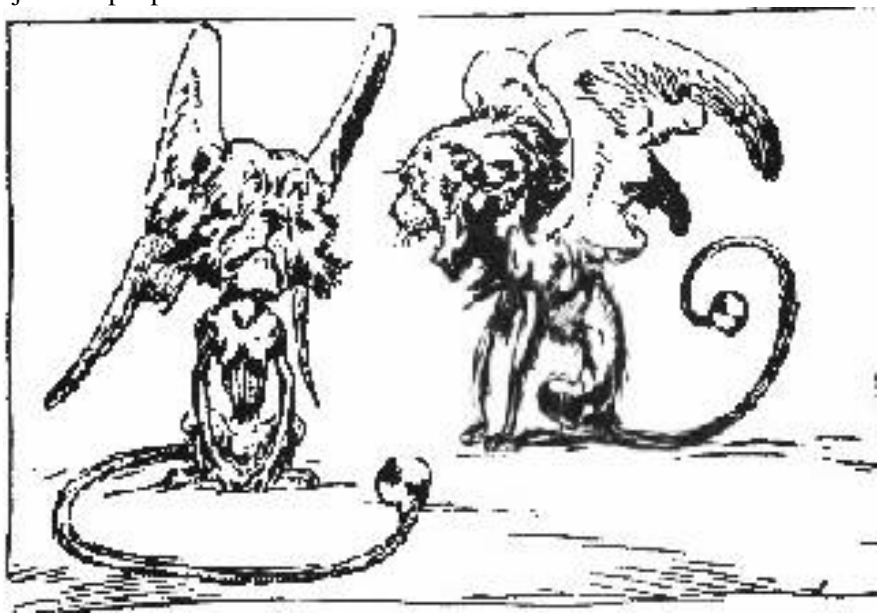
Rango the Gray Ape turned at once and glided swiftly through the forest

on his mission. The Bear gave a grunt and walked away. Gugu the King rose and stretched himself. Then he said to Ruggedo: “Meet us at sunrise to-morrow,” and with stately stride vanished among the trees.

The man-unicorn, left alone with the strangers, suddenly stopped his foolish prancing.

“You’d better make me a Unicorn again,” he said. “I like being a man, but the forest beasts won’t know I’m their friend, Loo, and they might tear me in pieces before morning.”

So Kiki changed him back to his former shape, and the Unicorn departed to join his people.



Ruggedo the Nome was much pleased with his success.

“To-morrow,” he said to Kiki Aru, “we’ll win over these beasts and set them to fight and conquer the Oz people. Then I will have my revenge on Ozma and Dorothy and all the rest of my enemies.”

“But I am doing all the work,” said Kiki.

“Never mind; you’re going to be King of Oz,” promised Ruggedo.

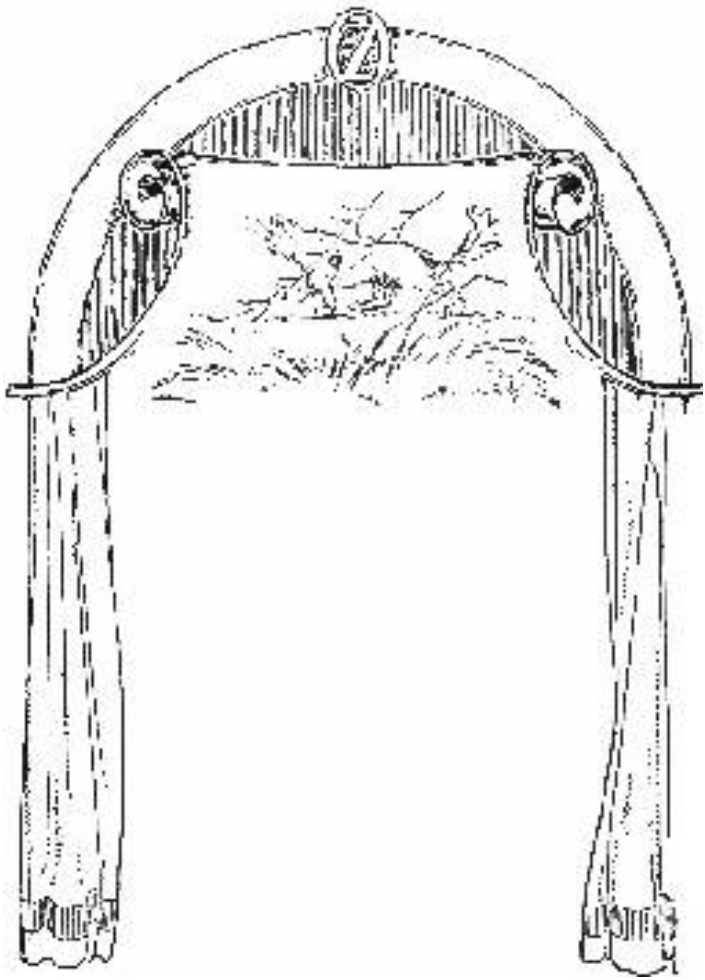
“Will the big Leopard let me be King?” asked the boy anxiously.

The Nome came close to him and whispered:

“If Gugu the Leopard opposes us, you will transform him into a tree, and then he will be helpless.”

“Of course,” agreed Kiki, and he said to himself: “I shall also transform this deceitful Nome into a tree, for he lies and I cannot trust him.”

9. The Isle of the Magic Flower



The Glass Cat was a good guide and led Trot and Cap'n Bill by straight and easy paths through all the settled part of the Munchkin Country, and then into the north section where there were few houses, and finally through a wild country where there were no houses or paths at all. But the walking was not difficult and at last they came to the edge of a forest and stopped there to make camp and sleep until morning.

From branches of trees Cap'n Bill made a tiny house that was just big enough for the little girl to crawl into and lie down. But first they ate some of the food Trot had carried in the basket.

“Don’t you want some, too?” she asked the Glass Cat.

“No,” answered the creature.

“I suppose you’ll hunt around an’ catch a mouse,” remarked Cap’n Bill.

“Me? Catch a mouse! Why should I do that?” inquired the Glass Cat.

“Why, then you could eat it,” said the sailor-man.

“I beg to inform you,” returned the crystal tabby, “that I do not eat mice. Being transparent, so anyone can see through me, I’d look nice, wouldn’t I, with a common mouse inside me? But the fact is that I haven’t any stomach or other machinery that would permit me to eat things. The careless magician who made me didn’t think I’d need to eat, I suppose.”

“Don’t you ever get hungry or thirsty?” asked Trot.

“Never. I don’t complain, you know, at the way I’m made, for I’ve never yet seen any living thing as beautiful as I am. I have the handsomest brains in the world. They’re pink, and you can see ‘em work.”

“I wonder,” said Trot thoughtfully, as she ate her bread and jam, “if MY brains whirl around in the same way yours do.”

“No; not the same way, surely,” returned the Glass Cat; “for, in that case, they’d be as good as MY brains, except that they’re hidden under a thick, boney skull.”

“Brains,” remarked Cap’n Bill, “is of all kinds and work different ways. But I’ve noticed that them as thinks that their brains is best is often mistook.”

Trot was a little disturbed by sounds from the forest, that night, for many beasts seemed prowling among the trees, but she was confident Cap’n Bill

would protect her from harm. And in fact, no beast ventured from the forest to attack them.

At daybreak they were up again, and after a simple breakfast Cap'n Bill said to the Glass Cat:

"Up anchor, Mate, and let's forge ahead. I don't suppose we're far from that Magic Flower, are we?"

"Not far," answered the transparent one, as it led the way into the forest, "but it may take you some time to get to it."

Before long they reached the bank of a river. It was not very wide, at this place, but as they followed the banks in a northerly direction it gradually broadened.

Suddenly the blue-green leaves of the trees changed to a purple hue, and Trot noticed this and said:

"I wonder what made the colors change like that?"

"It's because we have left the Munchkin Country and entered the Gillikin Country," explained the Glass Cat. "Also it's a sign our journey is nearly ended."

The river made a sudden turn, and after the travelers had passed around the bend, they saw that the stream had now become as broad as a small lake, and in the center of the Lake they beheld a little island, not more than fifty feet in extent, either way. Something glittered in the middle of this tiny island, and the Glass Cat paused on the bank and said:

"There is the gold flower-pot containing the Magic Flower, which is very curious and beautiful. If you can get to the island, your task is ended — except to carry the thing home with you."

Cap'n Bill looked at the broad expanse of water and began to whistle a low, quavering tune. Trot knew that the whistle meant that Cap'n Bill was thinking, and the old sailor didn't look at the island as much as he looked at the trees upon the bank where they stood. Presently he took from the big pocket of his coat an axe-blade, wound in an old cloth to keep the sharp edge from cutting his clothing. Then, with a large pocket knife, he cut a small limb from a tree and whittled it into a handle for his axe.

"Sit down, Trot," he advised the girl, as he worked. "I've got quite a job ahead of me now, for I've got to build us a raft."

"What do we need a raft for, Cap'n?"

"Why, to take us to the island. We can't walk under water, in the river bed, as the Glass Cat did, so we must float atop the water."

"Can you make a raft, Cap'n Bill?"

"O' course, Trot, if you give me time."

The little girl sat down on a log and gazed at the Island of the Magic

Flower. Nothing else seemed to grow on the tiny isle. There was no tree, no shrub, no grass, even, as far as she could make out from that distance. But the gold pot glittered in the rays of the sun, and Trot could catch glimpses of glowing colors above it, as the Magic Flower changed from one sort to another.

"When I was here before," remarked the Glass Cat, lazily reclining at the girl's feet, "I saw two Kalidahs on this very bank, where they had come to drink."

"What are Kalidahs?" asked the girl.

"The most powerful and ferocious beasts in all Oz. This forest is their especial home, and so there are few other beasts to be found except monkeys. The monkeys are spry enough to keep out of the way of the fierce Kalidahs, which attack all other animals and often fight among themselves."

"Did they try to fight you when you saw 'em?" asked Trot, getting very much excited.

"Yes. They sprang upon me in an instant; but I lay flat on the ground, so I wouldn't get my legs broken by the great weight of the beasts, and when they tried to bite me I laughed at them and jeered them until they were frantic with rage, for they nearly broke their teeth on my hard glass. So, after a time, they discovered they could not hurt me, and went away. It was great fun."

"I hope they don't come here again to drink, — not while we're here, anyhow," returned the girl, "for I'm not made of glass, nor is Cap'n Bill, and if those bad beasts bit us, we'd get hurt."

Cap'n Bill was cutting from the trees some long stakes, making them

sharp at one end and leaving a crotch at the other end. These were to bind the logs of his raft together. He had fashioned several and was just finishing another when the Glass Cat cried: “Look out! There’s a Kalidah coming toward us.”

Trot jumped up, greatly frightened, and looked at the terrible animal as if fascinated by its fierce eyes, for the Kalidah was looking at her, too, and its look wasn’t at all friendly. But Cap’n Bill called to her: “Wade into the river, Trot, up to your knees — an’ stay there!” and she obeyed him at once. The sailor-man hobbled forward, the stake in one hand and his axe in the other, and got between the girl and the beast, which sprang upon him with a growl of defiance.

Cap'n Bill moved pretty slowly, sometimes, but now he was quick as could be. As the Kalidah sprang toward him he stuck out his wooden leg and the point of it struck the beast between the eyes and sent it rolling upon the ground. Before it could get upon its feet again the sailor pushed the sharp stake right through its body and then with the flat side of the axe he hammered the stake as far into the ground as it would go. By this means he captured the great beast and made it harmless, for try as it would, it could not get away from the stake that held it.

Cap'n Bill knew he could not kill the Kalidah, for no living thing in Oz can be killed, so he stood back and watched the beast wriggle and growl and paw the earth with its sharp claws, and then, satisfied it could not escape, he told Trot to come out of the water again and dry her wet shoes and stockings in the sun.

"Are you sure he can't get away?" she asked.

"I'd bet a cookie on it," said Cap'n Bill, so Trot came ashore and took off her shoes and stockings and laid them on the log to dry, while the sailor-man resumed his work on the raft.

The Kalidah, realizing after many struggles that it could not escape, now became quiet, but it said in a harsh, snarling voice:

"I suppose you think you're clever, to pin me to the ground in this manner. But when my friends, the other Kalidahs, come here, they'll tear you to pieces for treating me this way."

"P'raps," remarked Cap'n Bill, coolly, as he chopped at the logs, "an' p'raps not. When are your folks comin' here?"

"I don't know," admitted the Kalidah. "But when they DO come, you can't escape them."

"If they hold off long enough, I'll have my raft ready," said Cap'n Bill.

"What are you going to do with a raft?" inquired the beast.

"We're goin' over to that island, to get the Magic Flower."

The huge beast looked at him in surprise a moment, and then it began to laugh. The laugh was a good deal like a roar, and it had a cruel and derisive sound, but it was a laugh nevertheless.

"Good!" said the Kalidah. "Good! Very good! I'm glad you're going to get the Magic Flower. But what will you do with it?"

"We're going to take it to Ozma, as a present on her birthday."

The Kalidah laughed again; then it became sober. "If you get to the land on your raft before my people can catch you," it said, "you will be safe from us. We can swim like ducks, so the girl couldn't have escaped me by getting into the water; but Kalidahs don't go to that island over there."

"Why not?" asked Trot.

The beast was silent.

"Tell us the reason," urged Cap'n Bill.

"Well, it's the Isle of the Magic Flower," answered the Kalidah, "and we don't care much for magic. If you hadn't had a magic leg, instead of a meat one, you couldn't have knocked me over so easily and stuck this wooden pin through me."

"I've been to the Magic Isle," said the Glass Cat, "and I've watched the Magic Flower bloom, and I'm sure it's too pretty to be left in that lonely place where only beasts prowl around it and no else sees it. So we're going to take it away to the Emerald City."

"I don't care," the beast replied in a surly tone. "We Kalidahs would be just as contented if there wasn't a flower in our forest. What good are the things anyhow?"

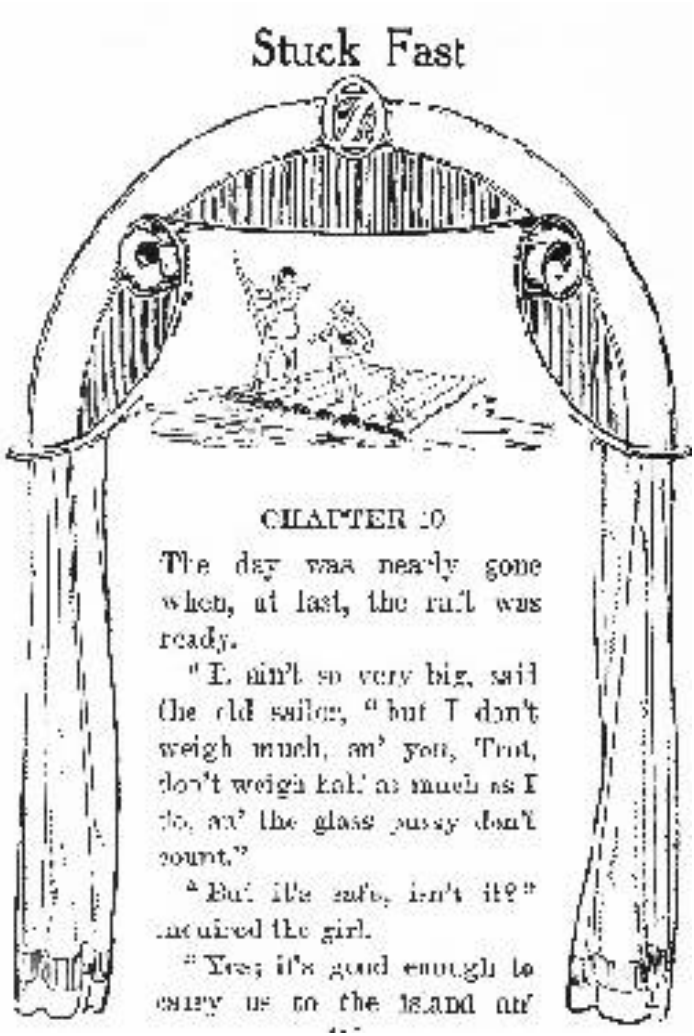
"Don't you like pretty things?" asked Trot.

"No."

"You ought to admire my pink brains, anyhow," declared the Glass Cat. "They're beautiful and you can see 'em work."

The beast only growled in reply, and Cap'n Bill, having now cut all his logs to a proper size, began to roll them to the water's edge and fasten them together.

10. Stuck Fast



Stuck Fast

CHAPTER 10

The day was nearly gone when, at last, the raft was ready.

"It ain't so very big, said the old sailor, "but I don't weigh much, an' you, Trot, don't weigh half as much as I do, an' the glass pussy don't count."

"But it's safe, isn't it?" inquired the girl.

"Yes; it's good enough to carry us to the island an'

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"But it's safe, isn't it?" inquired the girl.

"Yes; it's good enough to carry us to the island an' back again, an' that's about all we can expect of it."

Saying this, Cap'n Bill pushed the raft into the water, and when it was afloat, stepped upon it and held out his hand to Trot, who quickly followed him. The Glass Cat boarded the raft last of all.

The sailor had cut a long pole, and had also whittled a flat paddle, and with these he easily propelled the raft across the river. As they approached the island, the Wonderful Flower became more plainly visible, and they quickly decided that the Glass Cat had not praised it too highly. The colors of the flowers that bloomed in quick succession were strikingly bright and beautiful, and the shapes of the blossoms were varied and curious. Indeed, they did not resemble ordinary flowers at all.

So intently did Trot and Cap'n Bill gaze upon the Golden Flower-pot that held the Magic Flower that they scarcely noticed the island itself until the raft beached upon its sands. But then the girl exclaimed: "How funny it is, Cap'n Bill, that nothing else grows here excep' the Magic Flower."

Then the sailor glanced at the island and saw that it was all bare ground, without a weed, a stone or a blade of grass. Trot, eager to examine the Flower closer, sprang from the raft and ran up the bank until she reached the Golden Flower-pot. Then she stood beside it motionless and filled with wonder. Cap'n Bill joined her, coming more leisurely, and he, too, stood in silent admiration for a time.

"Ozma will like this," remarked the Glass Cat, sitting down to watch the shifting hues of the flowers. "I'm sure she won't have as fine a birthday present from anyone else."

"Do you 'spose it's very heavy, Cap'n? And can we get it home without breaking it?" asked Trot anxiously.

"Well, I've lifted many bigger things than that," he replied; "but let's see what it weighs."

He tried to take a step forward, but could not lift his meat foot from the ground. His wooden leg seemed free enough, but the other would not budge.

"I seem stuck, Trot," he said, with a perplexed look at his foot. "It ain't mud, an' it ain't glue, but somethin's holdin' me down."

The girl attempted to lift her own feet, to go nearer to her friend, but the ground held them as fast as it held Cap'n Bill's foot. She tried to slide them, or to twist them around, but it was no use; she could not move either foot a hair's breadth.

"This is funny!" she exclaimed. "What do you 'spose has happened to us, Cap'n Bill?"

"I'm tryin' to make out," he answered. "Take off your shoes, Trot. P'raps it's the leather soles that's stuck to the ground."

She leaned down and unlaced her shoes, but found she could not pull her feet out of them. The Glass Cat, which was walking around as naturally as ever, now said:

"Your foot has got roots to it, Cap'n, and I can see the roots going into the ground, where they spread out in all directions. It's the same way with Trot. That's why you can't move. The roots hold you fast."

Cap'n Bill was rather fat and couldn't see his own feet very well, but he squatted down and examined Trot's feet and decided that the Glass Cat was right.

"This is hard luck," he declared, in a voice that showed he was uneasy at the discovery. "We're pris'ners, Trot, on this funny island, an' I'd like to know how we're ever goin' to get loose, so's we can get home again."

"Now I know why the Kalidah laughed at us," said the girl, "and why he said none of the beasts ever came to this island. The horrid creature knew we'd be caught, and wouldn't warn us."

In the meantime, the Kalidah, although pinned fast to the earth by Cap'n Bill's stake, was facing the island, and now the ugly expression which passed over its face when it defied and sneered at Cap'n Bill and Trot, had changed to one of amusement and curiosity. When it saw the adventurers had actually reached the island and were standing beside the Magic Flower, it heaved a breath of satisfaction — a long, deep breath that swelled its deep chest until the beast could feel the stake that held him move a little, as if withdrawing itself from the ground.

"Ah ha!" murmured the Kalidah, "a little more of this will set me free and

allow me to escape!”

So he began breathing as hard as he could, puffing out his chest as much as possible with each indrawing breath, and by doing this he managed to raise the stake with each powerful breath, until at last the Kalidah — using the muscles of his four legs as well as his deep breaths — found itself free of the sandy soil. The stake was sticking right through him, however, so he found a rock deeply set in the bank and pressed the sharp point of the stake upon the surface of this rock until he had driven it clear through his body. Then, by getting the stake tangled among some thorny bushes, and wiggling his body, he managed to draw it out altogether.

“There!” he exclaimed, “except for those two holes in me, I’m as good as ever; but I must admit that that old wooden-legged fellow saved both himself and the girl by making me a prisoner.”

Now the Kalidahs, although the most disagreeable creatures in the Land of Oz, were nevertheless magical inhabitants of a magical Fairyland, and in their natures a certain amount of good was mingled with the evil. This one was not very revengeful, and now that his late foes were in danger of perishing, his anger against them faded away.

“Our own Kalidah King,” he reflected, “has certain magical powers of his own. Perhaps he knows how to fill up these two holes in my body.”

So without paying any more attention to Trot and Cap’n Bill than they were paying to him, he entered the forest and trotted along a secret path that led to the hidden lair of all the Kalidahs.

While the Kalidah was making good its escape Cap’n Bill took his pipe from his pocket and filled it with tobacco and lighted it. Then, as he puffed out the smoke, he tried to think what could be done.

“The Glass Cat seems all right,” he said, “an’ my wooden leg didn’t take roots and grow, either. So it’s only flesh that gets caught.”

“It’s magic that does it, Cap’n!”

“I know, Trot, and that’s what sticks me. We’re livin’ in a magic country, but neither of us knows any magic an’ so we can’t help ourselves.”

“Couldn’t the Wizard of Oz help us — or Glinda the Good?” asked the little girl.

“Ah, now we’re beginnin’ to reason,” he answered. “I’d probably thought o’ that, myself, in a minute more. By good luck the Glass Cat is free, an’ so it can run back to the Emerald City an’ tell the Wizard about our fix, an’ ask him to come an’ help us get loose.”

“Will you go?” Trot asked the cat, speaking very earnestly.

“I’m no messenger, to be sent here and there,” asserted the curious animal in a sulky tone of voice.

“Well,” said Cap’n Bill, “you’ve got to go home, anyhow, ‘cause you don’t want to stay here, I take it. And, when you get home, it wouldn’t worry you much to tell the Wizard what’s happened to us.”

“That’s true,” said the cat, sitting on its haunches and lazily washing its face with one glass paw. “I don’t mind telling the Wizard — when I get home.”

“Won’t you go now?” pleaded Trot. “We don’t want to stay here any longer than we can help, and everybody in Oz will be interested in you, and call you a hero, and say nice things about you because you helped your friends out of trouble.”

That was the best way to manage the Glass Cat, which was so vain that it loved to be praised.

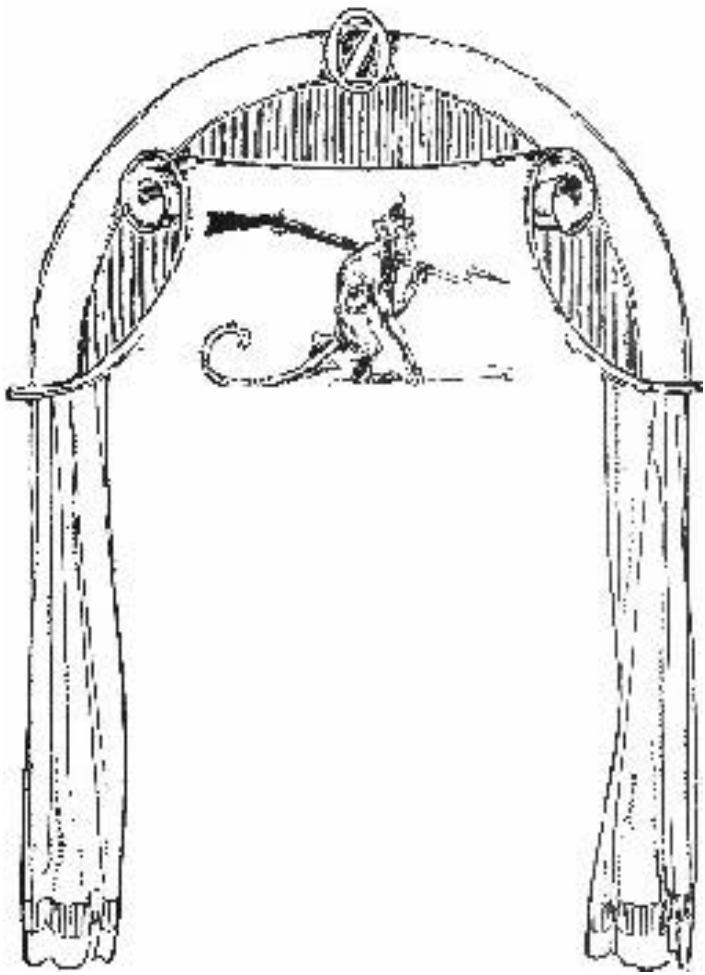
“I’m going home right away,” said the creature, “and I’ll tell the Wizard to come and help you.”

Saying this, it walked down to the water and disappeared under the surface. Not being able to manage the raft alone, the Glass Cat walked on the bottom of the river as it had done when it visited the island before, and soon they saw it appear on the farther bank and trot into the forest, where it was quickly lost to sight among the trees.

Then Trot heaved a deep sigh.

“Cap’n,” said she, “we’re in a bad fix. There’s nothing here to eat, and we can’t even lie down to sleep. Unless the Glass Cat hurries, and the Wizard hurries, I don’t know what’s going to become of us!”

11. The Beasts of the Forest of Gugu



That was a wonderful gathering of wild animals in the Forest of Gugu next sunrise. Rango, the Gray Ape, had even called his monkey sentinels away from the forest edge, and every beast, little and big, was in the great clearing where meetings were held on occasions of great importance.

In the center of the clearing stood a great shelving rock, having a flat, inclined surface, and on this sat the stately Leopard Gugu, who was King of the Forest. On the ground beneath him squatted Bru the Bear, Loo the Unicorn, and Rango the Gray Ape, the King's three Counselors, and in front of them stood the two strange beasts who had called themselves Li-Mon-

Eags, but were really the transformations of Ruggedo the Nome, and Kiki Aru the Hyup.

Then came the beasts — rows and rows and rows of them! The smallest beasts were nearest the King's rock throne; then there were wolves and foxes, lynxes and hyenas, and the like; behind them were gathered the monkey tribes, who were hard to keep in order because they teased the other animals and were full of mischievous tricks. Back of the monkeys were the pumas, jaguars, tigers and lions, and their kind; next the bears, all sizes and colors; after them bisons, wild asses, zebras and unicorns; farther on the rhinoceri and hippopotami, and at the far edge of the forest, close to the trees that shut in the clearing, was a row of thick-skinned elephants, still as statues but with eyes bright and intelligent.

Many other kinds of beasts, too numerous to mention, were there, and some were unlike any beasts we see in the menageries and zoos in our country. Some were from the mountains west of the forest, and some from the plains at the east, and some from the river; but all present acknowledged the leadership of Gugu, who for many years had ruled them wisely and forced all to obey the laws.

When the beasts had taken their places in the clearing and the rising sun was shooting its first bright rays over the treetops, King Gugu rose on his throne. The Leopard's giant form, towering above all the others, caused a sudden hush to fall on the assemblage.

"Brothers," he said in his deep voice, "a stranger has come among us, a beast of curious form who is a great magician and is able to change the shapes of men or beasts at his will. This stranger has come to us, with another of his kind, from out of the sky, to warn us of a danger which threatens us all, and to offer us a way to escape from that danger. He says he is our friend, and he has proved to me and to my Counselors his magic powers. Will you listen to what he has to say to you — to the message he has brought from the sky?"

"Let him speak!" came in a great roar from the great company of assembled beasts.

So Ruggedo the Nome sprang upon the flat rock beside Gugu the King, and another roar, gentle this time, showed how astonished the beasts were at the sight of his curious form. His lion's face was surrounded by a mane of pure white hair; his eagle's wings were attached to the shoulders of his monkey body and were so long that they nearly touched the ground; he had powerful arms and legs in addition to the wings, and at the end of his long, strong tail was a golden ball. Never had any beast beheld such a curious creature before, and so the very sight of the stranger, who was said to be a great magician, filled all present with awe and wonder.

Kiki stayed down below and, half hidden by the shelf of rock, was scarcely noticed. The boy realized that the old Nome was helpless without

his magic power, but he also realized that Ruggedo was the best talker. So he was willing the Nome should take the lead.

"Beasts of the Forest of Gugu," began Ruggedo the Nome, "my comrade and I are your friends. We are magicians, and from our home in the sky we can look down into the Land of Oz and see everything that is going on. Also we can hear what the people below us are saying. That is how we heard Ozma, who rules the Land of Oz, say to her people: 'The beasts in the Forest of Gugu are lazy and are of no use to us. Let us go to their forest and make them all our prisoners. Let us tie them with ropes, and beat them with sticks, until they work for us and become our willing slaves.' And when the people heard Ozma of Oz say this, they were glad and raised a great shout and said: 'We will do it! We will make the beasts of the Forest of Gugu our slaves!'"

The wicked old Nome could say no more, just then, for such a fierce roar of anger rose from the multitude of beasts that his voice was drowned by the clamor. Finally the roar died away, like distant thunder, and Ruggedo the Nome went on with his speech.

"Having heard the Oz people plot against your liberty, we watched to see what they would do, and saw them all begin making ropes — ropes long and short — with which to snare our friends the beasts. You are angry, but we also were angry, for when the Oz people became the enemies of the beasts they also became our enemies; for we, too, are beasts, although we live in the sky. And my comrade and I said: 'We will save our friends and have revenge on the Oz people,' and so we came here to tell you of your danger and of our plan to save you."

"We can save ourselves," cried an old Elephant. "We can fight."

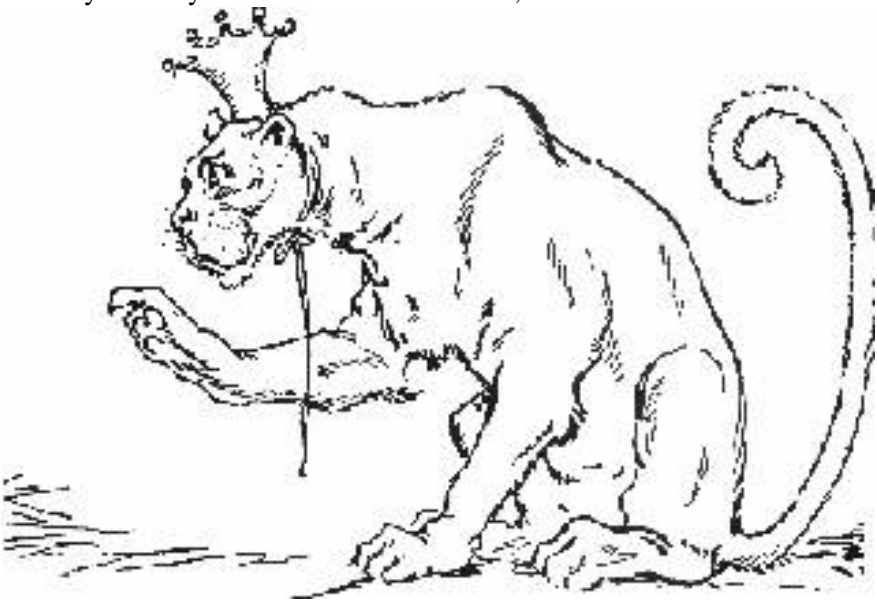
"The Oz people are fairies, and you can't fight against magic unless you also have magic," answered the Nome.

"Tell us your plan!" shouted the huge Tiger, and the other beasts echoed his words, crying: "Tell us your plan."

"My plan is simple," replied Ruggedo. "By our magic we will transform all you animals into men and women — like the Oz people — and we will transform all the Oz people into beasts. You can then live in the fine houses of the Land of Oz, and eat the fine food of the Oz people, and wear their fine clothes, and sing and dance and be happy. And the Oz people, having become beasts, will have to live here in the forest and hunt and fight for food, and often go hungry, as you now do, and have no place to sleep but a bed of leaves or a hole in the ground. Having become men and women, you beasts will have all the comforts you desire, and having become beasts, the Oz people will be very miserable. That is our plan, and if you agree to it, we will all march at once into the Land of Oz and quickly conquer our enemies."

When the stranger ceased speaking, a great silence fell on the assemblage, for the beasts were thinking of what he had said. Finally one of the walruses asked:

"Can you really transform beasts into men, and men into beasts?"



"He can — he can!" cried Loo the Unicorn, prancing up and down in an excited manner. "He transformed ME, only last evening, and he can transform us all."

Gugu the King now stepped forward.

"You have heard the stranger speak," said he, "and now you must answer him. It is for you to decide. Shall we agree to this plan, or not?"

"Yes!" shouted some of the animals.

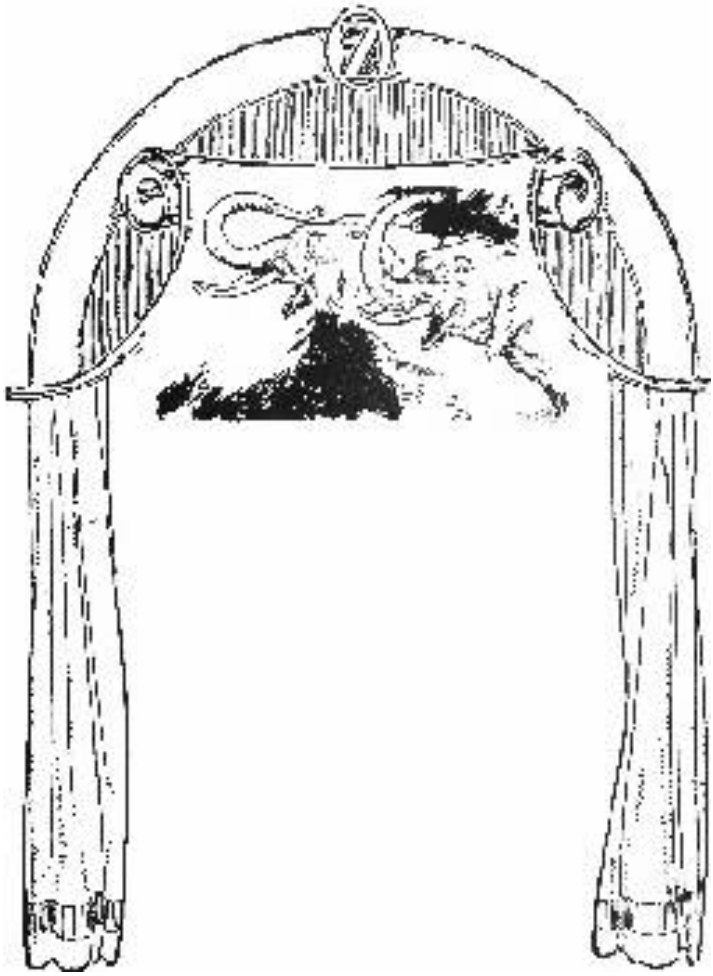
"No!" shouted others.

And some were yet silent.

Gugu looked around the great circle.

"Take more time to think," he suggested. "Your answer is very important. Up to this time we have had no trouble with the Oz people, but we are proud and free, and never will become slaves. Think carefully, and when you are ready to answer, I will hear you."

12. Kiki Uses His Magic



Then arose a great confusion of sounds as all the animals began talking to their fellows. The monkeys chattered and the bears growled and the voices of the jaguars and lions rumbled, and the wolves yelped and the elephants had to trumpet loudly to make their voices heard. Such a hubbub had never been known in the forest before, and each beast argued with his neighbor until it seemed the noise would never cease.

Ruggedo the Nome waved his arms and fluttered his wings to try to make them listen to him again, but the beasts paid no attention. Some wanted to fight the Oz people, some wanted to be transformed, and some wanted to do

nothing at all.

The growling and confusion had grown greater than ever when in a flash silence fell on all the beasts present, the arguments were hushed, and all gazed in astonishment at a strange sight.

For into the circle strode a great Lion — bigger and more powerful than any other lion there — and on his back rode a little girl who smiled fearlessly at the multitude of beasts. And behind the Lion and the little girl came another beast — a monstrous Tiger, who bore upon his back a funny little man carrying a black bag. Right past the rows of wondering beasts the strange animals walked, advancing until they stood just before the rock throne of Gugu.

Then the little girl and the funny little man dismounted, and the great Lion demanded in a loud voice:

"Who is King in this forest?"

"I am!" answered Gugu, looking steadily at the other. "I am Gugu the Leopard, and I am King of this forest."

"Then I greet Your Majesty with great respect," said the Lion. "Perhaps you have heard of me, Gugu. I am called the 'Cowardly Lion,' and I am King of all Beasts, the world over."

Gugu's eyes flashed angrily.

"Yes," said he, "I have heard of you. You have long claimed to be King of Beasts, but no beast who is a coward can be King over me."

"He isn't a coward, Your Majesty," asserted the little girl, "He's just cowardly, that's all."

Gugu looked at her. All the other beasts were looking at her, too.

"Who are you?" asked the King.

"Me? Oh, I'm just Dorothy," she answered.

"How dare you come here?" demanded the King.

"Why, I'm not afraid to go anywhere, if the Cowardly Lion is with me," she said. "I know him pretty well, and so I can trust him. He's always afraid, when we get into trouble, and that's why he's cowardly; but he's a terrible fighter, and that's why he isn't a coward. He doesn't like to fight, you know, but when he HAS to, there isn't any beast living that can conquer him."

Gugu the King looked at the big, powerful form of the Cowardly Lion, and knew she spoke the truth. Also the other Lions of the forest now came forward and bowed low before the strange Lion.

"We welcome Your Majesty," said one. "We have known you many years ago, before you went to live at the Emerald City, and we have seen you fight the terrible Kalidahs and conquer them, so we know you are the King of all Beasts."

"It is true," replied the Cowardly Lion; "but I did not come here to rule the beasts of this forest. Gugu is King here, and I believe he is a good King and just and wise. I come, with my friends, to be the guest of Gugu, and I hope we are welcome."

That pleased the great Leopard, who said very quickly:

"Yes; you, at least, are welcome to my forest. But who are these strangers with you?"

“Dorothy has introduced herself,” replied the Lion, “and you are sure to like her when you know her better. This man is the Wizard of Oz, a friend of mine who can do wonderful tricks of magic. And here is my true and tried friend, the Hungry Tiger, who lives with me in the Emerald City.”

“Is he ALWAYS hungry?” asked Loo the Unicorn.

“I am,” replied the Tiger, answering the question himself. “I am always hungry for fat babies.”

“Can’t you find any fat babies in Oz to eat?” inquired Loo, the Unicorn.

“There are plenty of them, of course,” said the Tiger, “but unfortunately I have such a tender conscience that it won’t allow me to eat babies. So I’m always hungry for ‘em and never can eat ‘em, because my conscience won’t let me.”

Now of all the surprised beasts in that clearing, not one was so much surprised at the sudden appearance of these four strangers as Ruggedo the Nome. He was frightened, too, for he recognized them as his most powerful enemies; but he also realized that they could not know he was the former King of the Nomes, because of the beast’s form he wore, which disguised him so effectually. So he took courage and resolved that the Wizard and Dorothy should not defeat his plans.

It was hard to tell, just yet, what the vast assemblage of beasts thought of the new arrivals. Some glared angrily at them, but more of them seemed to be curious and wondering. All were interested, however, and they kept very quiet and listened carefully to all that was said.

Kiki Aru, who had remained unnoticed in the shadow of the rock, was at first more alarmed by the coming of the strangers than even Ruggedo was, and the boy told himself that unless he acted quickly and without waiting to ask the advice of the old Nome, their conspiracy was likely to be discovered and all their plans to conquer and rule Oz be defeated. Kiki didn’t like the way Ruggedo acted either, for the former King of the Nomes wanted to do everything his own way, and made the boy, who alone possessed the power of transformations, obey his orders as if he were a slave.

Another thing that disturbed Kiki Aru was the fact that a real Wizard had arrived, who was said to possess many magical powers, and this Wizard carried his tools in a black bag, and was the friend of the Oz people, and so would probably try to prevent war between the beasts of the forest and the people of Oz.

All these things passed through the mind of the Hyup boy while the Cowardly Lion and Gugu the King were talking together, and that was why he now began to do several strange things.

He had found a place, near to the point where he stood, where there was a

deep hollow in the rock, so he put his face into this hollow and whispered softly, so he would not be heard:

"I want the Wizard of Oz to become a fox — Pyrzqxgl!"

The Wizard, who had stood smilingly beside his friends, suddenly felt his form change to that of a fox, and his black bag fell to the ground. Kiki reached out an arm and seized the bag, and the Fox cried as loud as it could:

"Treason! There's a traitor here with magic powers!"

Everyone was startled at this cry, and Dorothy, seeing her old friend's plight, screamed and exclaimed: "Mercy me!"

But the next instant the little girl's form had changed to that of a lamb with fleecy white wool, and Dorothy was too bewildered to do anything but look around her in wonder.

The Cowardly Lion's eyes now flashed fire; he crouched low and lashed the ground with his tail and gazed around to discover who the treacherous magician might be. But Kiki, who had kept his face in the hollow rock, again whispered the magic word, and the great lion disappeared and in his place stood a little boy dressed in Munchkin costume. The little Munchkin boy was as angry as the lion had been, but he was small and helpless.

Ruggedo the Nome saw what was happening and was afraid Kiki would spoil all his plans, so he leaned over the rock and shouted: "Stop, Kiki — stop!"

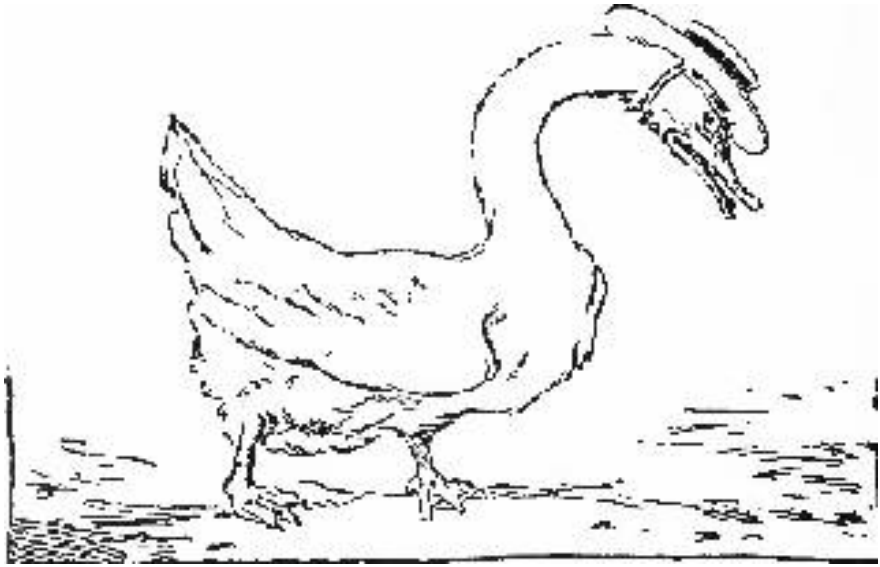
Kiki would not stop, however. Instead, he transformed the Nome into a goose, to Ruggedo's horror and dismay. But the Hungry Tiger had witnessed all these transformations, and he was watching to see which of those present was to blame for them. When Ruggedo spoke to Kiki, the Hungry Tiger knew that he was the magician, so he made a sudden spring and hurled his great body full upon the form of the Li-Mon-Eag crouching against the rock. Kiki didn't see the Tiger coming because his face was still in the hollow, and the heavy body of the tiger bore him to the earth just as he said "Pyrzqxgl!" for the fifth time.

So now the tiger which was crushing him changed to a rabbit, and relieved of its weight, Kiki sprang up and, spreading his eagle's wings, flew into the branches of a tree, where no beast could easily reach him. He was not an instant too quick in doing this, for Gugu the King had crouched on the rock's edge and was about to spring on the boy.

From his tree Kiki transformed Gugu into a fat Gillikin woman, and laughed aloud to see how the woman pranced with rage, and how astonished all the beasts were at their King's new shape.

The beasts were frightened, too, fearing they would share the fate of Gugu, so a stampede began when Rango the Gray Ape sprang into the forest, and Bru the Bear and Loo the Unicorn followed as quickly as they could. The elephants backed into the forest, and all the other animals, big and little, rushed after them, scattering through the jungles until the clearing was far behind. The monkeys scrambled into the trees and swung themselves from limb to limb, to avoid being trampled upon by the bigger beasts, and they were so quick that they distanced all the rest. A panic of fear seemed to have overtaken the forest people and they got as far away from the terrible Magician as they possibly could.

But the transformed ones stayed in the clearing, being so astonished and bewildered by their new shapes that they could only look at one another in a dazed and helpless fashion, although each one was greatly annoyed at the trick that had been played on him.



"Who are you?" the Munchkin boy asked the Rabbit; and "Who are you?" the Fox asked the Lamb; and "Who are you?" the Rabbit asked the fat Gillikin woman.

"I'm Dorothy," said the woolly Lamb.

"I'm the Wizard," said the Fox.

"I'm the Cowardly Lion," said the Munchkin boy.

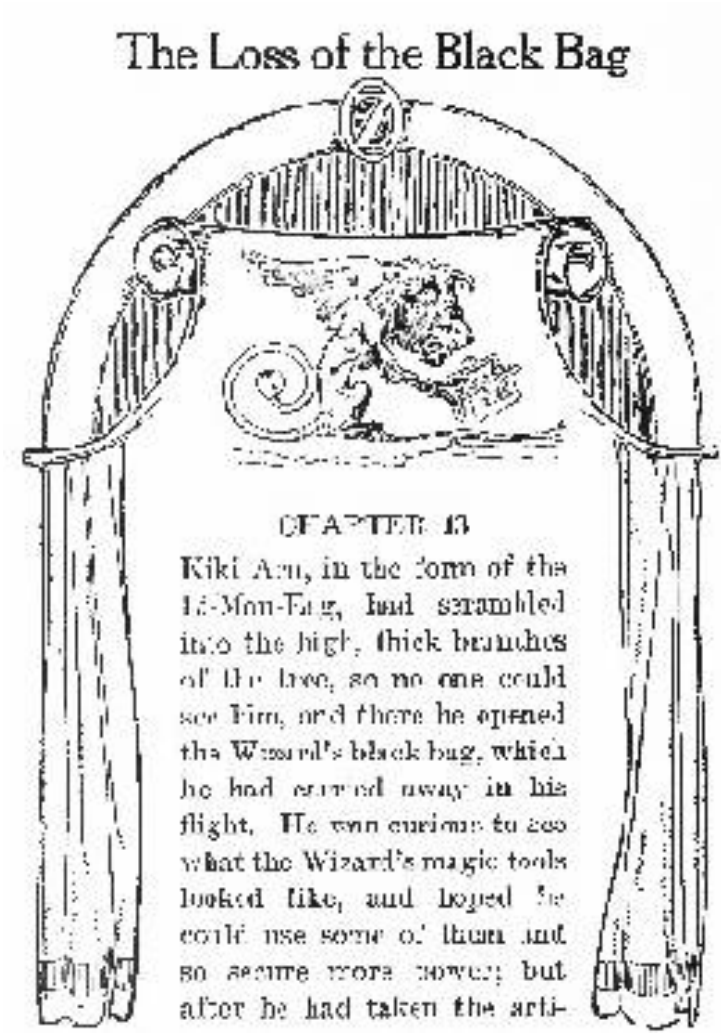
"I'm the Hungry Tiger," said the Rabbit.

"I'm Gugu the King," said the fat Woman.

But when they asked the Goose who he was, Ruggedo the Nome would not tell them.

"I'm just a Goose," he replied, "and what I was before, I cannot remember."

13. The Loss of the Black Bag



The Loss of the Black Bag

CHAPTER 13

Kiki Aru, in the form of the Li-Mon-Eag, had scrambled into the high, thick branches of the tree, so no one could see him, and there he opened the Wizard's black bag, which he had carried away in his flight. He was curious to see what the Wizard's magic tools looked like, and hoped he could use some of them and so secure more power; but after he had taken the arti-

Kiki Aru, in the form of the Li-Mon-Eag, had scrambled into the high, thick branches of the tree, so no one could see him, and there he opened the Wizard's black bag, which he had carried away in his flight. He was curious to see what the Wizard's magic tools looked like, and hoped he could use some of them and so secure more power; but after he had taken the articles, one by one, from the bag, he had to admit they were puzzles to him. For, unless he understood their uses, they were of no value whatever. Kiki Aru, the Hyup boy, was no wizard or magician at all, and could do nothing unusual except to use the Magic Word he had stolen from his father on

Mount Munch. So he hung the Wizard's black bag on a branch of the tree and then climbed down to the lower limbs that he might see what the victims of his transformations were doing.

They were all on top of the flat rock, talking together in tones so low that Kiki could not hear what they said.

"This is certainly a misfortune," remarked the Wizard in the Fox's form, "but our transformations are a sort of enchantment which is very easy to break — when you know how and have the tools to do it with. The tools are in my Black Bag; but where is the Bag?"

No one knew that, for none had seen Kiki Aru fly away with it.

"Let's look and see if we can find it," suggested Dorothy the Lamb.

So they left the rock, and all of them searched the clearing high and low without finding the Bag of Magic Tools. The Goose searched as earnestly as the others, for if he could discover it, he meant to hide it where the Wizard could never find it, because if the Wizard changed him back to his proper form, along with the others, he would then be recognized as Ruggedo the Nome, and they would send him out of the Land of Oz and so ruin all his hopes of conquest.

Ruggedo was not really sorry, now that he thought about it, that Kiki had transformed all these Oz folks. The forest beasts, it was true, had been so frightened that they would now never consent to be transformed into men, but Kiki could transform them against their will, and once they were all in human forms, it would not be impossible to induce them to conquer the Oz people.

So all was not lost, thought the old Nome, and the best thing for him to do was to rejoin the Hyup boy who had the secret of the transformations. So, having made sure the Wizard's black bag was not in the clearing, the Goose wandered away through the trees when the others were not looking, and when out of their hearing, he began calling, "Kiki Aru! Kiki Aru! Quack — quack! Kiki Aru!"

The Boy and the Woman, the Fox, the Lamb, and the Rabbit, not being able to find the bag, went back to the rock, all feeling exceedingly strange.

"Where's the Goose?" asked the Wizard.

"He must have run away," replied Dorothy. "I wonder who he was?"

"I think," said Gugu the King, who was the fat Woman, "that the Goose was the stranger who proposed that we make war upon the Oz people. If so, his transformation was merely a trick to deceive us, and he has now gone to join his comrade, that wicked Li-Mon-Eag who obeyed all his commands."

"What shall we do now?" asked Dorothy. "Shall we go back to the Emerald City, as we are, and then visit Glinda the Good and ask her to break

the enchantments?"

"I think so," replied the Wizard Fox. "And we can take Gugu the King with us, and have Glinda restore him to his natural shape. But I hate to leave my Bag of Magic Tools behind me, for without it I shall lose much of my power as a Wizard. Also, if I go back to the Emerald City in the shape of a Fox, the Oz people will think I'm a poor Wizard and will lose their respect for me."

"Let us make still another search for your tools," suggested the Cowardly Lion, "and then, if we fail to find the Black Bag anywhere in this forest, we must go back home as we are."

"Why did you come here, anyway?" inquired Gugu.

"We wanted to borrow a dozen monkeys, to use on Ozma's birthday," explained the Wizard. "We were going to make them small, and train them to do tricks, and put them inside Ozma's birthday cake."

"Well," said the Forest King, "you would have to get the consent of Rango the Gray Ape, to do that. He commands all the tribes of monkeys."

"I'm afraid it's too late, now," said Dorothy, regretfully. "It was a splendid plan, but we've got troubles of our own, and I don't like being a lamb at all."

"You're nice and fuzzy," said the Cowardly Lion.

"That's nothing," declared Dorothy. "I've never been 'specially proud of myself, but I'd rather be the way I was born than anything else in the whole world."

The Glass Cat, although it had some disagreeable ways and manners, nevertheless realized that Trot and Cap'n Bill were its friends and so was quite disturbed at the fix it had gotten them into by leading them to the Isle of the Magic Flower. The ruby heart of the Glass Cat was cold and hard, but still it was a heart, and to have a heart of any sort is to have some consideration for others. But the queer transparent creature didn't want Trot and Cap'n Bill to know it was sorry for them, and therefore it moved very slowly until it had crossed the river and was out of sight among the trees of the forest. Then it headed straight toward the Emerald City, and trotted so fast that it was like a crystal streak crossing the valleys and plains. Being glass, the cat was tireless, and with no reason to delay its journey, it reached Ozma's palace in wonderfully quick time.

"Where's the Wizard?" it asked the Pink Kitten, which was curled up in the sunshine on the lowest step of the palace entrance.

"Don't bother me," lazily answered the Pink Kitten, whose name was Eureka.

“I must find the Wizard at once!” said the Glass Cat.

“Then find him,” advised Eureka, and went to sleep again.

The Glass Cat darted up the stairway and came upon Toto, Dorothy’s little black dog.

“Where’s the Wizard?” asked the Cat.

“Gone on a journey with Dorothy,” replied Toto.

“When did they go, and where have they gone?” demanded the Cat.

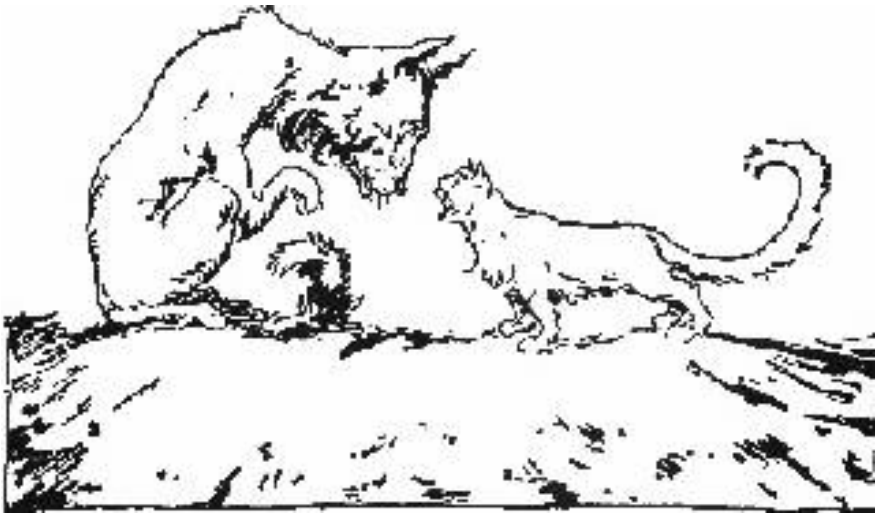
“They went yesterday, and I heard them say they would go to the Great Forest in the Munchkin Country.”

“Dear me,” said the Glass Cat; “that is a long journey.”

“But they rode on the Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion,” explained Toto, “and the Wizard carried his Black Bag of Magic Tools.”

The Glass Cat knew the Great Forest of Gugu well, for it had traveled through this forest many times in its journeys through the Land of Oz. And it reflected that the Forest of Gugu was nearer to the Isle of the Magic Flower than the Emerald City was, and so, if it could manage to find the Wizard, it could lead him across the Gillikin Country to where Trot and Cap’n Bill were prisoned. It was a wild country and little traveled, but the Glass Cat knew every path. So very little time need be lost, after all.

Without stopping to ask any more questions the Cat darted out of the palace and away from the Emerald City, taking the most direct route to the Forest of Gugu. Again the creature flashed through the country like a streak of light, and it would surprise you to know how quickly it reached the edge of the Great Forest.



There were no monkey guards among the trees to cry out a warning, and this was so unusual that it astonished the Glass Cat. Going farther into the forest

it presently came upon a wolf, which at first bounded away in terror. But then, seeing it was only a Glass Cat, the Wolf stopped, and the Cat could see it was trembling, as if from a terrible fright.

"What's the matter?" asked the Cat.

"A dreadful Magician has come among us!" exclaimed the Wolf, "and he's changing the forms of all the beasts — quick as a wink — and making them all his slaves."

The Glass Cat smiled and said:

"Why, that's only the Wizard of Oz. He may be having some fun with you forest people, but the Wizard wouldn't hurt a beast for anything."

"I don't mean the Wizard," explained the Wolf. "And if the Wizard of Oz is that funny little man who rode a great Tiger into the clearing, he's been transformed himself by the terrible Magician."

"The Wizard transformed? Why, that's impossible," declared the Glass Cat.

"No; it isn't. I saw him with my own eyes, changed into the form of a Fox, and the girl who was with him was changed to a woolly Lamb."

The Glass Cat was indeed surprised.

"When did that happen?" it asked.

"Just a little while ago in the clearing. All the animals had met there, but they ran away when the Magician began his transformations, and I'm thankful I escaped with my natural shape. But I'm still afraid, and I'm going somewhere to hide."

With this the Wolf ran on, and the Glass Cat, which knew where the big clearing was, went toward it. But now it walked more slowly, and its pink brains rolled and tumbled around at a great rate because it was thinking over the amazing news the Wolf had told it.

When the Glass Cat reached the clearing, it saw a Fox, a Lamb, a Rabbit, a Munchkin boy and a fat Gillikin woman, all wandering around in an aimless sort of way, for they were again searching for the Black Bag of Magic Tools.

The Cat watched them a moment and then it walked slowly into the open space. At once the Lamb ran toward it, crying:

"Oh, Wizard, here's the Glass Cat!"

"Where, Dorothy?" asked the Fox.

"Here!"

The Boy and the Woman and the Rabbit now joined the Fox and the Lamb, and they all stood before the Glass Cat and speaking together, almost like a chorus, asked: "Have you seen the Black Bag?"

"Often," replied the Glass Cat, "but not lately."

“It’s lost,” said the Fox, “and we must find it.”

“Are you the Wizard?” asked the Cat.

“Yes.”

“And who are these others?”

“I’m Dorothy,” said the Lamb.

“I’m the Cowardly Lion,” said the Munchkin boy.

“I’m the Hungry Tiger,” said the Rabbit.

“I’m Gugu, King of the Forest,” said the fat Woman.

The Glass Cat sat on its hind legs and began to laugh. “My, what a funny lot!” exclaimed the Creature. “Who played this joke on you?”

“It’s no joke at all,” declared the Wizard. “It was a cruel, wicked transformation, and the Magician that did it has the head of a lion, the body of a monkey, the wings of an eagle and a round ball on the end of his tail.”

The Glass Cat laughed again. “That Magician must look funnier than you do,” it said. “Where is he now?”

“Somewhere in the forest,” said the Cowardly Lion. “He just jumped into that tall maple tree over there, for he can climb like a monkey and fly like an eagle, and then he disappeared in the forest.”

“And there was another Magician, just like him, who was his friend,” added Dorothy, “but they probably quarreled, for the wickedest one changed his friend into the form of a Goose.”

“What became of the Goose?” asked the Cat, looking around.

“He must have gone away to find his friend,” answered Gugu the King. “But a Goose can’t travel very fast, so we could easily find him if we wanted to.”

“The worst thing of all,” said the Wizard, “is that my Black Bag is lost. It disappeared when I was transformed. If I could find it I could easily break these enchantments by means of my magic, and we would resume our own forms again. Will you help us search for the Black Bag, Friend Cat?”

"Of course," replied the Glass Cat. "But I expect the strange Magician carried it away with him. If he's a magician, he knows you need that Bag, and perhaps he's afraid of your magic. So he's probably taken the Bag with him, and you won't see it again unless you find the Magician."

"That sounds reasonable," remarked the Lamb, which was Dorothy. "Those pink brains of yours seem to be working pretty well to-day."

"If the Glass Cat is right," said the Wizard in a solemn voice, "there's more trouble ahead of us. That Magician is dangerous, and if we go near him he may transform us into shapes not as nice as these."

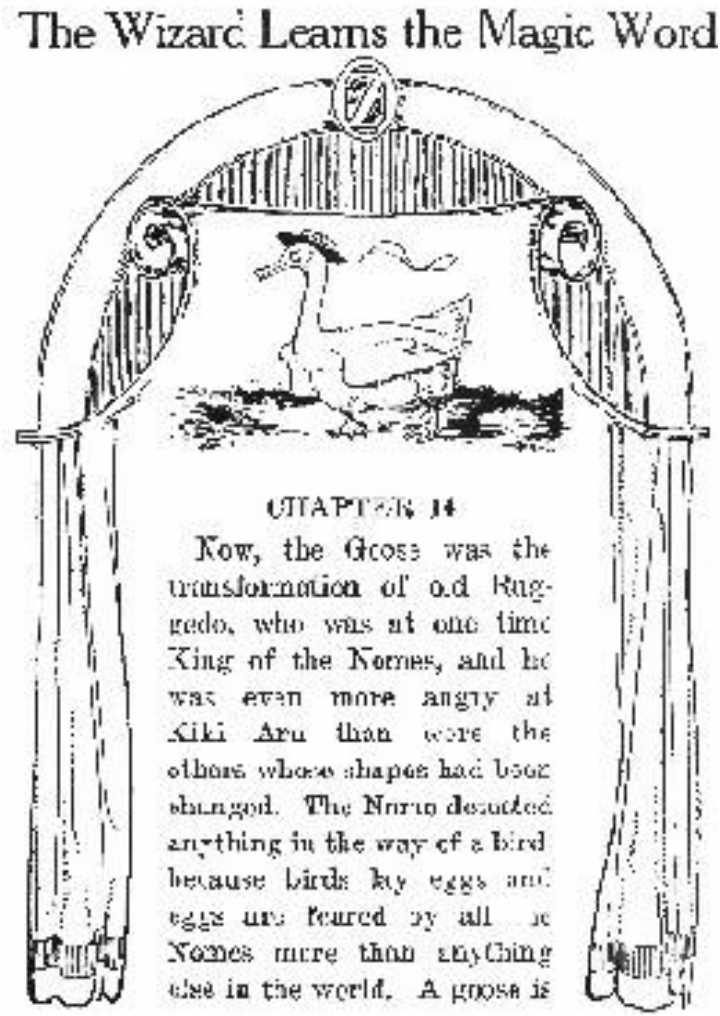
"I don't see how we could be any WORSE off," growled Gugu, who was indignant because he was forced to appear in the form of a fat woman.

"Anyway," said the Cowardly Lion, "our best plan is to find the Magician and try to get the Black Bag from him. We may manage to steal it, or perhaps we can argue him into giving it to us."

"Why not find the Goose, first?" asked Dorothy. "The Goose will be angry at the Magician, and he may be able to help us."

"That isn't a bad idea," returned the Wizard. "Come on, Friends; let's find that Goose. We will separate and search in different directions, and the first to find the Goose must bring him here, where we will all meet again in an hour."

14. The Wizard Learns the Magic Word


The Wizard Learns the Magic Word

CHAPTER 14

Now, the Goose was the transformation of old Ruggedo, who was at one time King of the Nomes, and he was even more angry at Kiki Aru than were the others whose shapes had been changed. The Nome detested anything in the way of a bird because birds lay eggs and eggs are feared by all the Nomes more than anything else in the world. A goose is

Now, the Goose was the transformation of old Ruggedo, who was at one time King of the Nomes, and he was even more angry at Kiki Aru than were the others who shapes had been changed. The Nome detested anything in the way of a bird, because birds lay eggs and eggs are feared by all the Nomes more than anything else in the world. A goose is a foolish bird, too, and Ruggedo was dreadfully ashamed of the shape he was forced to wear. And it would make him shudder to reflect that the Goose might lay an egg!

So the Nome was afraid of himself and afraid of everything around him. If an egg touched him he could then be destroyed, and almost any animal he

met in the forest might easily conquer him. And that would be the end of old Ruggedo the Nome.

Aside from these fears, however, he was filled with anger against Kiki, whom he had meant to trap by cleverly stealing from him the Magic Word. The boy must have been crazy to spoil everything the way he did, but Ruggedo knew that the arrival of the Wizard had scared Kiki, and he was not sorry the boy had transformed the Wizard and Dorothy and made them helpless. It was his own transformation that annoyed him and made him indignant, so he ran about the forest hunting for Kiki, so that he might get a better shape and coax the boy to follow his plans to conquer the Land of Oz.

Kiki Aru hadn't gone very far away, for he had surprised himself as well as the others by the quick transformations and was puzzled as to what to do next. Ruggedo the Nome was overbearing and tricky, and Kiki knew he was not to be depended on; but the Nome could plan and plot, which the Hyup boy was not wise enough to do, and so, when he looked down through the branches of a tree and saw a Goose waddling along below and heard it cry out, "Kiki Aru! Quack — quack! Kiki Aru!" the boy answered in a low voice, "Here I am," and swung himself down to the lowest limb of the tree.

The Goose looked up and saw him.

"You've bungled things in a dreadful way!" exclaimed the Goose. "Why did you do it?"

"Because I wanted to," answered Kiki. "You acted as if I was your slave, and I wanted to show these forest people that I am more powerful than you."

The Goose hissed softly, but Kiki did not hear that.

Old Ruggedo quickly recovered his wits and muttered to himself: "This boy is the goose, although it is I who wear the goose's shape. I will be gentle with him now, and fierce with him when I have him in my power." Then he said aloud to Kiki:

"Well, hereafter I will be content to acknowledge you the master. You bungled things, as I said, but we can still conquer Oz."

"How?" asked the boy.

"First give me back the shape of the Li-Mon-Eag, and then we can talk together more conveniently," suggested the Nome.

"Wait a moment, then," said Kiki, and climbed higher up the tree. There he whispered the Magic Word and the Goose became a Li-Mon-Eag, as he had been before.

"Good!" said the Nome, well pleased, as Kiki joined him by dropping down from the tree. "Now let us find a quiet place where we can talk without being overheard by the beasts."

So the two started away and crossed the forest until they came to a place

where the trees were not so tall nor so close together, and among these scattered trees was another clearing, not so large as the first one, where the meeting of the beasts had been held. Standing on the edge of this clearing and looking across it, they saw the trees on the farther side full of monkeys, who were chattering together at a great rate of the sights they had witnessed at the meeting.

The old Nome whispered to Kiki not to enter the clearing or allow the monkeys to see them.

"Why not?" asked the boy, drawing back.

"Because those monkeys are to be our army — the army which will conquer Oz," said the Nome. "Sit down here with me, Kiki, and keep quiet, and I will explain to you my plan."

Now, neither Kiki Aru nor Ruggedo had noticed that a sly Fox had followed them all the way from the tree where the Goose had been transformed to the Li-Mon-Eag. Indeed, this Fox, who was none other than the Wizard of Oz, had witnessed the transformation of the Goose and now decided he would keep watch on the conspirators and see what they would do next.

A Fox can move through a forest very softly, without making any noise, and so the Wizard's enemies did not suspect his presence. But when they sat down by the edge of the clearing, to talk, with their backs toward him, the Wizard did not know whether to risk being seen, by creeping closer to hear what they said, or whether it would be better for him to hide himself until they moved on again.

While he considered this question he discovered near him a great tree which had a hollow trunk, and there was a round hole in this tree, about three feet above the ground. The Wizard Fox decided it would be safer for him to hide inside the hollow tree, so he sprang into the hole and crouched down in the hollow, so that his eyes just came to the edge of the hole by which he had entered, and from here he watched the forms of the two Li-Mon-Eags.

"This is my plan," said the Nome to Kiki, speaking so low that the Wizard could only hear the rumble of his voice. "Since you can transform anything into any form you wish, we will transform these monkeys into an army, and with that army we will conquer the Oz people."

"The monkeys won't make much of an army," objected Kiki.

"We need a great army, but not a numerous one," responded the Nome. "You will transform each monkey into a giant man, dressed in a fine uniform and armed with a sharp sword. There are fifty monkeys over there and fifty giants would make as big an army as we need."

"What will they do with the swords?" asked Kiki. "Nothing can kill the

Oz people."

"True," said Ruggedo. "The Oz people cannot be killed, but they can be cut into small pieces, and while every piece will still be alive, we can scatter the pieces around so that they will be quite helpless. Therefore, the Oz people will be afraid of the swords of our army, and we will conquer them with ease."

"That seems like a good idea," replied the boy, approvingly. "And in such a case, we need not bother with the other beasts of the forest."

"No; you have frightened the beasts, and they would no longer consent to assist us in conquering Oz. But those monkeys are foolish creatures, and once they are transformed to Giants, they will do just as we say and obey our commands. Can you transform them all at once?"

"No, I must take one at a time," said Kiki. "But the fifty transformations can be made in an hour or so. Stay here, Ruggedo, and I will change the first monkey — that one at the left, on the end of the limb — into a Giant with a sword."

"Where are you going?" asked the Nome.

"I must not speak the Magic Word in the presence of another person," declared Kiki, who was determined not to allow his treacherous companion to learn his secret, "so I will go where you cannot hear me."

Ruggedo the Nome was disappointed, but he hoped still to catch the boy unawares and surprise the Magic Word. So he merely nodded his lion head, and Kiki got up and went back into the forest a short distance. Here he spied a hollow tree, and by chance it was the same hollow tree in which the Wizard of Oz, now in the form of a Fox, had hidden himself.

As Kiki ran up to the tree the Fox ducked its head, so that it was out of sight in the dark hollow beneath the hole, and then Kiki put his face into the hole and whispered: "I want that monkey on the branch at the left to become a Giant man fifty feet tall, dressed in a uniform and with a sharp sword — Pyrzqxgl!"

Then he ran back to Ruggedo, but the Wizard Fox had heard quite plainly every word that he had said.

The monkey was instantly transformed into the Giant, and the Giant was so big that as he stood on the ground his head was higher than the trees of the forest. The monkeys raised a great chatter but did not seem to understand that the Giant was one of themselves.

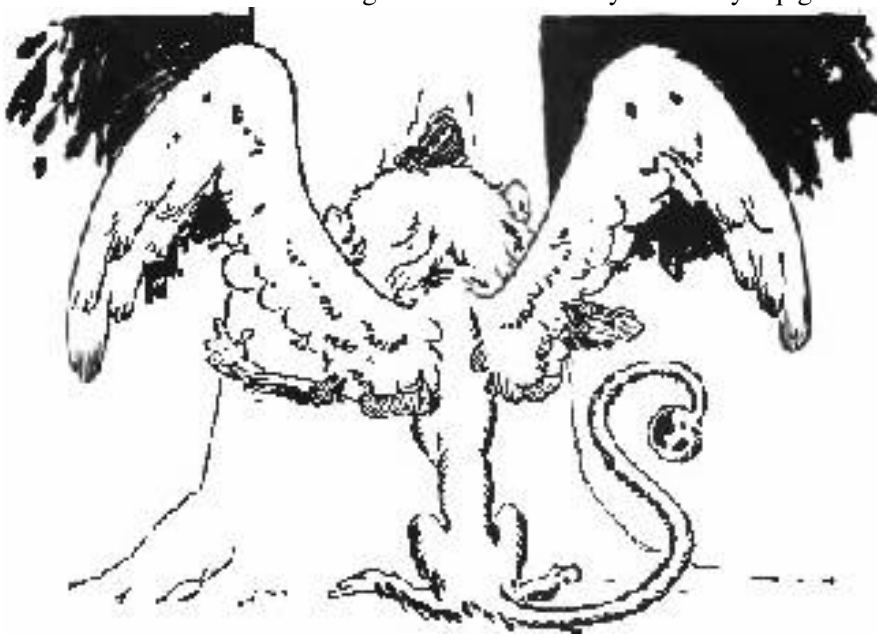
"Good!" cried the Nome. "Hurry, Kiki, and transform the others."

So Kiki rushed back to the tree and putting his face to the hollow, whispered:

"I want the next monkey to be just like the first — Pyrzqxgl!"

Again the Wizard Fox heard the Magic Word, and just how it was pronounced. But he sat still in the hollow and waited to hear it again, so it would be impressed on his mind and he would not forget it.

Kiki kept running to the edge of the forest and back to the hollow tree again until he had whispered the Magic Word six times and six monkeys had been changed to six great Giants. Then the Wizard decided he would make an experiment and use the Magic Word himself. So, while Kiki was running back to the Nome, the Fox stuck his head out of the hollow and said softly: "I want that creature who is running to become a hickory-nut — Pyrzqxgl!"



Instantly the Li-Mon-Eag form of Kiki Aru the Hyup disappeared and a small hickory-nut rolled upon the ground a moment and then lay still.

The Wizard was delighted, and leaped from the hollow just as Ruggedo looked around to see what had become of Kiki. The Nome saw the Fox but no Kiki, so he hastily rose to his feet. The Wizard did not know how powerful the queer beast might be, so he resolved to take no chances.

"I want this creature to become a walnut — Pyrzqxgl!" he said aloud. But he did not pronounce the Magic Word in quite the right way, and Ruggedo's form did not change. But the Nome knew at once that "Pyrzqxgl!" was the Magic Word, so he rushed at the Fox and cried:

"I want you to become a Goose — Pyrzqxgl!"

But the Nome did not pronounce the word aright, either, having never heard it spoken but once before, and then with a wrong accent. So the Fox

was not transformed, but it had to run away to escape being caught by the angry Nome.

Ruggedo now began pronouncing the Magic Word in every way he could think of, hoping to hit the right one, and the Fox, hiding in a bush, was somewhat troubled by the fear that he might succeed. However, the Wizard, who was used to magic arts, remained calm and soon remembered exactly how Kiki Aru had pronounced the word. So he repeated the sentence he had before uttered and Ruggedo the Nome became an ordinary walnut.

The Wizard now crept out from the bush and said: "I want my own form again — Pyrzqxgl!"

Instantly he was the Wizard of Oz, and after picking up the hickory-nut and the walnut, and carefully placing them in his pocket, he ran back to the big clearing.

Dorothy the Lamb uttered a bleat of delight when she saw her old friend restored to his natural shape. The others were all there, not having found the Goose. The fat Gillikin woman, the Munchkin boy, the Rabbit and the Glass Cat crowded around the Wizard and asked what had happened.

Before he explained anything of his adventure, he transformed them all — except, of course, the Glass Cat — into their natural shapes, and when their joy permitted them to quiet somewhat, he told how he had by chance surprised the Magician's secret and been able to change the two Li-Mon-Eags into shapes that could not speak, and therefore would be unable to help themselves. And the little Wizard showed his astonished friends the hickory-nut and the walnut to prove that he had spoken the truth.

"But — see here!" — exclaimed Dorothy. "What has become of those

Giant Soldiers who used to be monkeys?”

“I forgot all about them!” admitted the Wizard; “but I suppose they are still standing there in the forest.”

15. The Lonesome Duck

The Lonesome Duck

CHAPTER 15

Trot and Cap'n Bill stood before the Magic Flower, actually rooted to the spot.

"Aren't you hungry, Cap'n?" asked the little girl, with a long sigh, for she had been standing there for hours and hours.

"Well," replied the sailor-man, "I ain't sayin' as I couldn't eat, Trot — if a dinner was handy — but I guess

Trot and Cap'n Bill stood before the Magic Flower, actually rooted to the spot.

"Aren't you hungry, Cap'n?" asked the little girl, with a long sigh, for she had been standing there for hours and hours.

"Well," replied the sailor-man, "I ain't sayin' as I couldn't EAT, Trot — if a dinner was handy — but I guess old folks don't get as hungry as young folks do."

"I'm not sure 'bout that, Cap'n Bill," she said thoughtfully. "Age MIGHT make a diff'rence, but seems to me SIZE would make a bigger diff'rence.

Seeing you're twice as big as me, you ought to be twice as hungry."

"I hope I am," he rejoined, "for I can stand it a while longer. I do hope the Glass Cat will hurry, and I hope the Wizard won't waste time a-comin' to us."

Trot sighed again and watched the wonderful Magic Flower, because there was nothing else to do. Just now a lovely group of pink peonies budded and bloomed, but soon they faded away, and a mass of deep blue lilies took their place. Then some yellow chrysanthemums blossomed on the plant, and when they had opened all their petals and reached perfection, they gave way to a lot of white floral balls spotted with crimson — a flower Trot had never seen before.

"But I get awful tired watchin' flowers an' flowers an' flowers," she said impatiently.

"They're might pretty," observed Cap'n Bill.

"I know; and if a person could come and look at the Magic Flower just when she felt like it, it would be a fine thing, but to HAVE TO stand and watch it, whether you want to or not, isn't so much fun. I wish, Cap'n Bill, the thing would grow fruit for a while instead of flowers."

Scarcely had she spoken when the white balls with crimson spots faded away and a lot of beautiful ripe peaches took their place. With a cry of mingled surprise and delight Trot reached out and plucked a peach from the bush and began to eat it, finding it delicious. Cap'n Bill was somewhat dazed at the girl's wish being granted so quickly, so before he could pick a peach they had faded away and bananas took their place. "Grab one, Cap'n!" exclaimed Trot, and even while eating the peach she seized a banana with her other hand and tore it from the bush.

The old sailor was still bewildered. He put out a hand indeed, but he was too late, for now the bananas disappeared and lemons took their place.

"Pshaw!" cried Trot. "You can't eat those things; but watch out, Cap'n, for something else."

Cocoanuts next appeared, but Cap'n Bill shook his head.

"Ca'n't crack 'em," he remarked, "'cause we haven't anything handy to smash 'em with."

"Well, take one, anyhow," advised Trot; but the cocoanuts were gone now, and a deep, purple, pear-shaped fruit which was unknown to them took their place. Again Cap'n Bill hesitated, and Trot said to him:

"You ought to have captured a peach and a banana, as I did. If you're not careful, Cap'n, you'll miss all your chances. Here, I'll divide my banana with you."

Even as she spoke, the Magic Plant was covered with big red apples,

growing on every branch, and Cap'n Bill hesitated no longer. He grabbed with both hands and picked two apples, while Trot had only time to secure one before they were gone.

"It's curious," remarked the sailor, munching his apple, "how these fruits keep good when you've picked 'em, but dis'pear inter thin air if they're left on the bush."

"The whole thing is curious," declared the girl, "and it couldn't exist in any country but this, where magic is so common. Those are limes. Don't pick 'em, for they'd pucker up your mouth and — Ooo! here come plums!" and she tucked her apple in her apron pocket and captured three plums — each one almost as big as an egg — before they disappeared. Cap'n Bill got some too, but both were too hungry to fast any longer, so they began eating their apples and plums and let the magic bush bear all sorts of fruits, one after another. The Cap'n stopped once to pick a fine cantaloupe, which he held under his arm, and Trot, having finished her plums, got a handful of cherries and an orange; but when almost every sort of fruit had appeared on the bush, the crop ceased and only flowers, as before, bloomed upon it.

"I wonder why it changed back," mused Trot, who was not worried because she had enough fruit to satisfy her hunger.

"Well, you only wished it would bear fruit 'for a while,'" said the sailor, "and it did. P'raps if you'd said 'forever,' Trot, it would have always been fruit."

"But why should MY wish be obeyed?" asked the girl. "I'm not a fairy or a wizard or any kind of a magic-maker."

"I guess," replied Cap'n Bill, "that this little island is a magic island, and any folks on it can tell the bush what to produce, an' it'll produce it."

"Do you think I could wish for anything else, Cap'n and get it?" she inquired anxiously.

“What are you thinkin’ of, Trot?”

“I’m thinking of wishing that these roots on our feet would disappear, and let us free.”

“Try it, Trot.”

So she tried it, and the wish had no effect whatever.

“Try it yourself, Cap’n,” she suggested.

Then Cap’n Bill made the wish to be free, with no better result.

“No,” said he, “it’s no use; the wishes only affect the Magic Plant; but I’m glad we can make it bear fruit, ‘cause now we know we won’t starve before the Wizard gets to us.”

“But I’m gett’n’ tired standing here so long,” complained the girl. “If I could only lift one foot, and rest it, I’d feel better.”

“Same with me, Trot. I’ve noticed that if you’ve got to do a thing, and can’t help yourself, it gets to be a hardship mighty quick.”

“Folks that can raise their feet don’t appreciate what a blessing it is,” said Trot thoughtfully. “I never knew before what fun it is to raise one foot, an’ then another, any time you feel like it.”

“There’s lots o’ things folks don’t ‘preciate,” replied the sailor-man. “If somethin’ would ‘most stop your breath, you’d think breathin’ easy was the finest thing in life. When a person’s well, he don’t realize how jolly it is, but when he gets sick he ‘members the time he was well, an’ wishes that time would come back. Most folks forget to thank God for givin’ ‘em two good legs, till they lose one o’ ‘em, like I did; and then it’s too late, ‘cept to praise God for leavin’ one.”

“Your wooden leg ain’t so bad, Cap’n,” she remarked, looking at it critically. “Anyhow, it don’t take root on a Magic Island, like our meat legs do.”

“I ain’t complainin’,” said Cap’n Bill. “What’s that swimmin’ towards us, Trot?” he added, looking over the Magic Flower and across the water.

The girl looked, too, and then she replied.

“It’s a bird of some sort. It’s like a duck, only I never saw a duck have so many colors.”

The bird swam swiftly and gracefully toward the Magic Isle, and as it drew nearer its gorgeously colored plumage astonished them. The feathers were of many hues of glistening greens and blues and purples, and it had a yellow head with a red plume, and pink, white and violet in its tail. When it reached the Isle, it came ashore and approached them, waddling slowly and turning its head first to one side and then to the other, so as to see the girl and the sailor better.

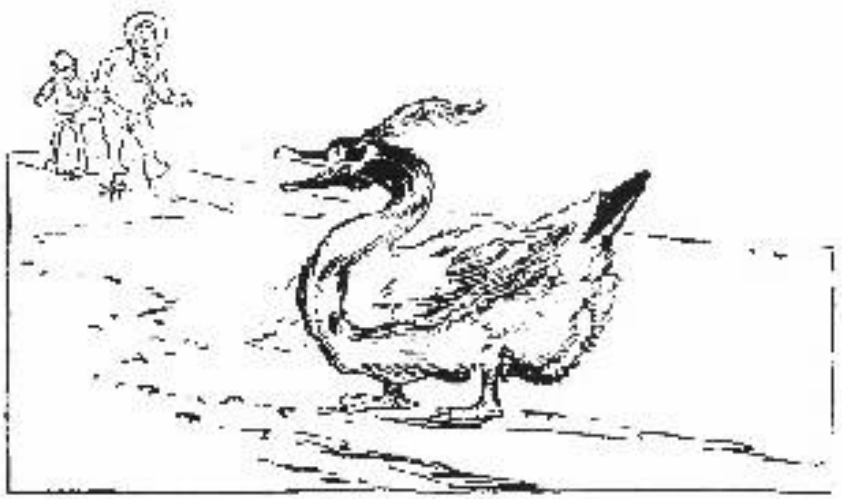
“You’re strangers,” said the bird, coming to a halt near them, “and you’ve

been caught by the Magic Isle and made prisoners."

"Yes," returned Trot, with a sigh; "we're rooted. But I hope we won't grow."

"You'll grow small," said the Bird. "You'll keep growing smaller every day, until bye and bye there'll be nothing left of you. That's the usual way, on this Magic Isle."

"How do you know about it, and who are you, anyhow?" asked Cap'n Bill.



"I'm the Lonesome Duck," replied the bird. "I suppose you've heard of me?"

"No," said Trot, "I can't say I have. What makes you lonesome?"

"Why, I haven't any family or any relations," returned the Duck.

"Haven't you any friends?"

"Not a friend. And I've nothing to do. I've lived a long time, and I've got to live forever, because I belong in the Land of Oz, where no living thing dies. Think of existing year after year, with no friends, no family, and nothing to do! Can you wonder I'm lonesome?"

"Why don't you make a few friends, and find something to do?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

"I can't make friends because everyone I meet — bird, beast, or person — is disagreeable to me. In a few minutes I shall be unable to bear your society longer, and then I'll go away and leave you," said the Lonesome Duck. "And, as for doing anything, there's no use in it. All I meet are doing something, so I have decided it's common and uninteresting and I prefer to remain lonesome."

“Don’t you have to hunt for your food?” asked Trot.

“No. In my diamond palace, a little way up the river, food is magically supplied me; but I seldom eat, because it is so common.”

“You must be a Magician Duck,” remarked Cap’n Bill.

“Why so?”

“Well, ordinary ducks don’t have diamond palaces an’ magic food, like you do.”

“True; and that’s another reason why I’m lonesome. You must remember I’m the only Duck in the Land of Oz, and I’m not like any other duck in the outside world.”

“Seems to me you LIKE bein’ lonesome,” observed Cap’n Bill.

“I can’t say I like it, exactly,” replied the Duck, “but since it seems to be my fate, I’m rather proud of it.”

“How do you s’pose a single, solitary Duck happened to be in the Land of Oz?” asked Trot, wonderingly.

“I used to know the reason, many years ago, but I’ve quite forgotten it,” declared the Duck. “The reason for a thing is never so important as the thing itself, so there’s no use remembering anything but the fact that I’m lonesome.”

“I guess you’d be happier if you tried to do something,” asserted Trot. “If you can’t do anything for yourself, you can do things for others, and then you’d get lots of friends and stop being lonesome.”

“Now you’re getting disagreeable,” said the Lonesome Duck, “and I shall have to go and leave you.”

“Can’t you help us any,” pleaded the girl. “If there’s anything magic about you, you might get us out of this scrape.”

“I haven’t any magic strong enough to get you off the Magic Isle,” replied the Lonesome Duck. “What magic I possess is very simple, but I find it enough for my own needs.”

“If we could only sit down a while, we could stand it better,” said Trot, “but we have nothing to sit on.”

“Then you will have to stand it,” said the Lonesome Duck.

“P’raps you’ve enough magic to give us a couple of stools,” suggested Cap’n Bill.

“A duck isn’t supposed to know what stools are,” was the reply.

“But you’re diff’rent from all other ducks.”

“That is true.” The strange creature seemed to reflect for a moment, looking at them sharply from its round black eyes. Then it said: “Sometimes, when the sun is hot, I grow a toadstool to shelter me from its rays. Perhaps you could sit on toadstools.”

“Well, if they were strong enough, they’d do,” answered Cap’n Bill.

“Then, before I do I’ll give you a couple,” said the Lonesome Duck, and began waddling about in a small circle. It went around the circle to the right three times, and then it went around to the left three times. Then it hopped backward three times and forward three times.

“What are you doing?” asked Trot.

“Don’t interrupt. This is an incantation,” replied the Lonesome Duck, but now it began making a succession of soft noises that sounded like quacks and seemed to mean nothing at all. And it kept up these sounds so long that Trot finally exclaimed:

“Can’t you hurry up and finish that ‘cantation? If it takes all summer to make a couple of toadstools, you’re not much of a magician.”

“I told you not to interrupt,” said the Lonesome Duck, sternly. “If you get TOO disagreeable, you’ll drive me away before I finish this incantation.”

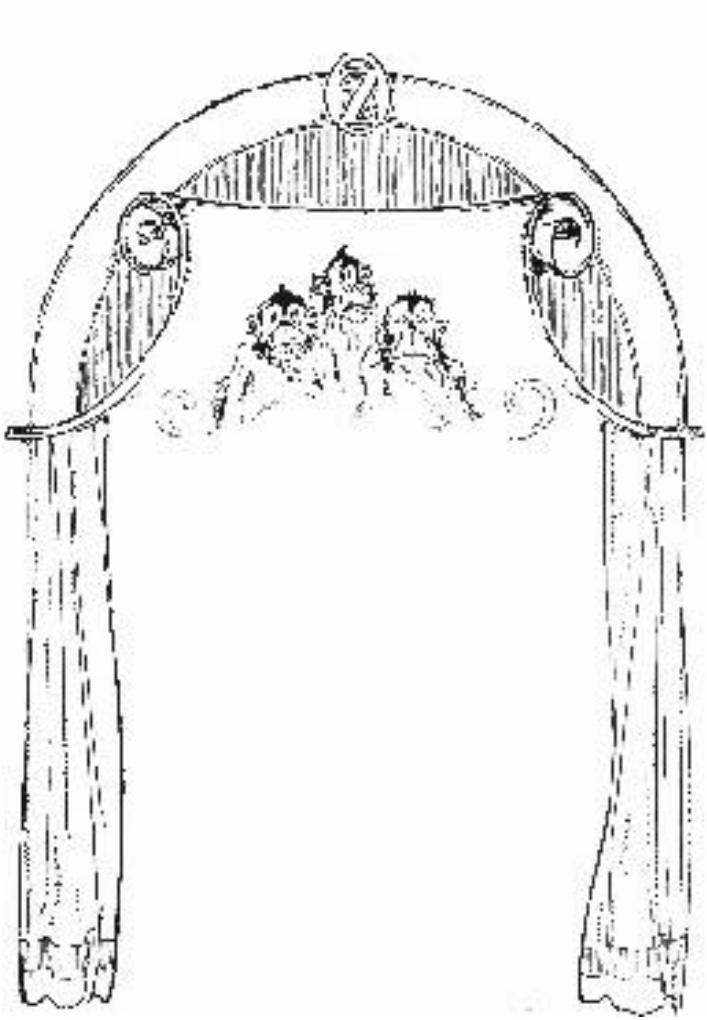
Trot kept quiet, after the rebuke, and the Duck resumed the quacky muttering. Cap’n Bill chuckled a little to himself and remarked to Trot in a whisper: “For a bird that ain’t got anything to do, this Lonesome Duck is makin’ consider’ble fuss. An’ I ain’t sure, after all, as toadstools would be worth sittin’ on.”

Even as he spoke, the sailor-man felt something touch him from behind and, turning his head, he found a big toadstool in just the right place and of just the right size to sit upon. There was one behind Trot, too, and with a cry of pleasure the little girl sank back upon it and found it a very comfortable seat — solid, yet almost like a cushion. Even Cap’n Bill’s weight did not break his toadstool down, and when both were seated, they found that the Lonesome Duck had waddled away and was now at the water’s edge.

“Thank you, ever so much!” cried Trot, and the sailor called out: “Much obliged!”

But the Lonesome Duck paid no attention. Without even looking in their direction again, the gaudy fowl entered the water and swam gracefully away.

16. The Glass Cat Finds the Black Bag



When the six monkeys were transformed by Kiki Aru into six giant soldiers fifty feet tall, their heads came above the top of the trees, which in this part of the forest were not so high as in some other parts; and, although the trees were somewhat scattered, the bodies of the giant soldiers were so big that they quite filled the spaces in which they stood and the branches pressed them on every side.

Of course, Kiki was foolish to have made his soldiers so big, for now they could not get out of the forest. Indeed, they could not stir a step, but were imprisoned by the trees. Even had they been in the little clearing they could

not have made their way out of it, but they were a little beyond the clearing. At first, the other monkeys who had not been enchanted were afraid of the soldiers, and hastily quitted the place; but soon finding that the great men stood stock still, although grunting indignantly at their transformation, the band of monkeys returned to the spot and looked at them curiously, not guessing that they were really monkeys and their own friends.

The soldiers couldn't see them, their heads being above the trees; they could not even raise their arms or draw their sharp swords, so closely were they held by the leafy branches. So the monkeys, finding the giants helpless, began climbing up their bodies, and presently all the band were perched on the shoulders of the giants and peering into their faces.

"I'm Ebu, your father," cried one soldier to a monkey who had perched upon his left ear, "but some cruel person has enchanted me."

"I'm your Uncle Peeker," said another soldier to another monkey.

So, very soon all the monkeys knew the truth and were sorry for their friends and relations and angry at the person — whoever it was — who had transformed them. There was a great chattering among the tree-tops, and the noise attracted other monkeys, so that the clearing and all the trees around were full of them.

Rango the Gray Ape, who was the Chief of all the monkey tribes of the forest, heard the uproar and came to see what was wrong with his people. And Rango, being wiser and more experienced, at once knew that the strange magician who looked like a mixed-up beast was responsible for the transformations. He realized that the six giant soldiers were helpless prisoners, because of their size, and knew he was powerless to release them. So, although he feared to meet the terrible magician, he hurried away to the Great Clearing to tell Gugu the King what had happened and to try to find the Wizard of Oz and get him to save his six enchanted subjects.

Rango darted into the Great Clearing just as the Wizard had restored all the enchanted ones around him to their proper shapes, and the Gray Ape was glad to hear that the wicked magician-beast had been conquered.

"But now, O mighty Wizard, you must come with me to where six of my people are transformed into six great giant men," he said, "for if they are allowed to remain there, their happiness and their future lives will be ruined."

The Wizard did not reply at once, for he was thinking this a good opportunity to win Rango's consent to his taking some monkeys to the Emerald City for Ozma's birthday cake.

"It is a great thing you ask of me, O Rango the Gray Ape," said he, "for the bigger the giants are the more powerful their enchantment, and the more

difficult it will be to restore them to their natural forms. However, I will think it over."

Then the Wizard went to another part of the clearing and sat on a log and appeared to be in deep thought.

The Glass Cat had been greatly interested in the Gray Ape's story and was curious to see what the giant soldiers looked like. Hearing that their heads extended above the tree-tops, the Glass Cat decided that if it climbed the tall avocado tree that stood at the side of the clearing, it might be able to see the giants' heads. So, without mentioning her errand, the crystal creature went to the tree and, by sticking her sharp glass claws in the bark, easily climbed the tree to its very top and, looking over the forest, saw the six giant heads, although they were now a long way off. It was, indeed, a remarkable sight, for the huge heads had immense soldier caps on them, with red and yellow plumes and looked very fierce and terrible, although the monkey hearts of the giants were at that moment filled with fear.

Having satisfied her curiosity, the Glass Cat began to climb down from the tree more slowly. Suddenly she discerned the Wizard's black bag hanging from a limb of the tree. She grasped the black bag in her glass teeth, and although it was rather heavy for so small an animal, managed to get it free and to carry it safely down to the ground. Then she looked around for the Wizard and seeing him seated upon the stump she hid the black bag among some leaves and then went over to where the Wizard sat.

"I forgot to tell you," said the Glass Cat, "that Trot and Cap'n Bill are in trouble, and I came here to hunt you up and get you to go and rescue them."

"Good gracious, Cat! Why didn't you tell me before?" exclaimed the Wizard.

"For the reason that I found so much excitement here that I forgot Trot and Cap'n Bill."

"What's wrong with them?" asked the Wizard.

Then the Glass Cat explained how they had gone to get the Magic Flower for Ozma's birthday gift and had been trapped by the magic of the queer island. The Wizard was really alarmed, but he shook his head and said sadly:

"I'm afraid I can't help my dear friends, because I've lost my black bag."

"If I find it, will you go to them?" asked the creature.

"Of course," replied the Wizard. "But I do not think that a Glass Cat with nothing but pink brains can succeed when all the rest of us have failed."

"Don't you admire my pink brains?" demanded the Cat.

"They're pretty," admitted the Wizard, "but they're not regular brains, you know, and so we don't expect them to amount to much."

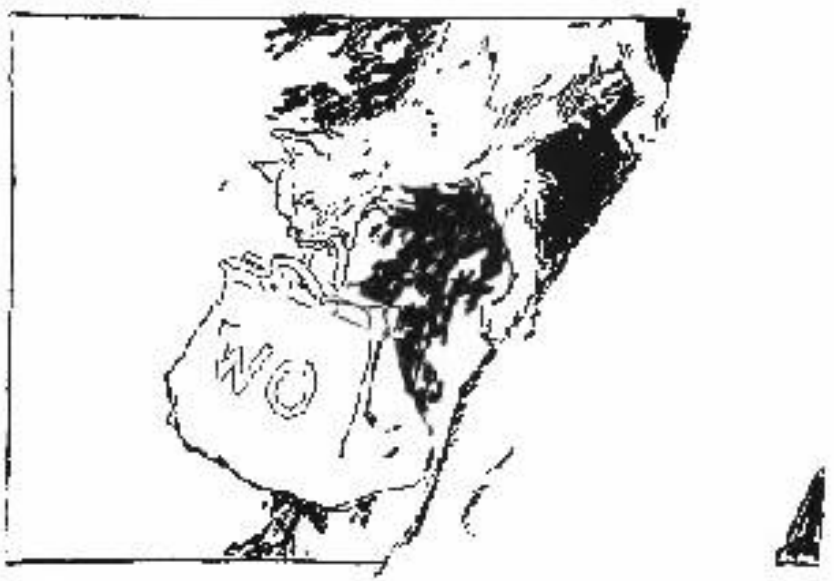
"But if I find your black bag — and find it inside of five minutes — will

you admit my pink brains are better than your common human brains?"

"Well, I'll admit they're better HUNTERS," said the Wizard, reluctantly, "but you can't do it. We've searched everywhere, and the black bag isn't to be found."

"That shows how much you know!" retorted the Glass Cat, scornfully. "Watch my brains a minute, and see them whirl around."

The Wizard watched, for he was anxious to regain his black bag, and the pink brains really did whirl around in a remarkable manner.



"Now, come with me," commanded the Glass Cat, and led the Wizard straight to the spot where it had covered the bag with leaves. "According to my brains," said the creature, "your black bag ought to be here."

Then it scratched at the leaves and uncovered the bag, which the Wizard promptly seized with a cry of delight. Now that he had regained his Magic Tools, he felt confident he could rescue Trot and Cap'n Bill.

Rango the Gray Ape was getting impatient. He now approached the Wizard and said:

"Well, what do you intend to do about those poor enchanted monkeys?"

"I'll make a bargain with you, Rango," replied the little man. "If you will let me take a dozen of your monkeys to the Emerald City, and keep them until after Ozma's birthday, I'll break the enchantment of the six Giant Soldiers and return them to their natural forms."

But the Gray Ape shook his head.

“I can’t do it,” he declared. “The monkeys would be very lonesome and unhappy in the Emerald City and your people would tease them and throw stones at them, which would cause them to fight and bite.”

“The people won’t see them till Ozma’s birthday dinner,” promised the Wizard. “I’ll make them very small — about four inches high, and I’ll keep them in a pretty cage in my own room, where they will be safe from harm. I’ll feed them the nicest kind of food, train them to do some clever tricks, and on Ozma’s birthday I’ll hide the twelve little monkeys inside a cake. When Ozma cuts the cake the monkeys will jump out on to the table and do their tricks. The next day I will bring them back to the forest and make them big as ever, and they’ll have some exciting stories to tell their friends. What do you say, Rango?”

“I say no!” answered the Gray Ape. “I won’t have my monkeys enchanted and made to do tricks for the Oz people.”

“Very well,” said the Wizard calmly; “then I’ll go. Come, Dorothy,” he called to the little girl, “let’s start on our journey.”

“Aren’t you going to save those six monkeys who are giant soldiers?” asked Rango, anxiously.

“Why should I?” returned the Wizard. “If you will not do me the favor I ask, you cannot expect me to favor you.”

“Wait a minute,” said the Gray Ape. “I’ve changed my mind. If you will treat the twelve monkeys nicely and bring them safely back to the forest, I’ll let you take them.”

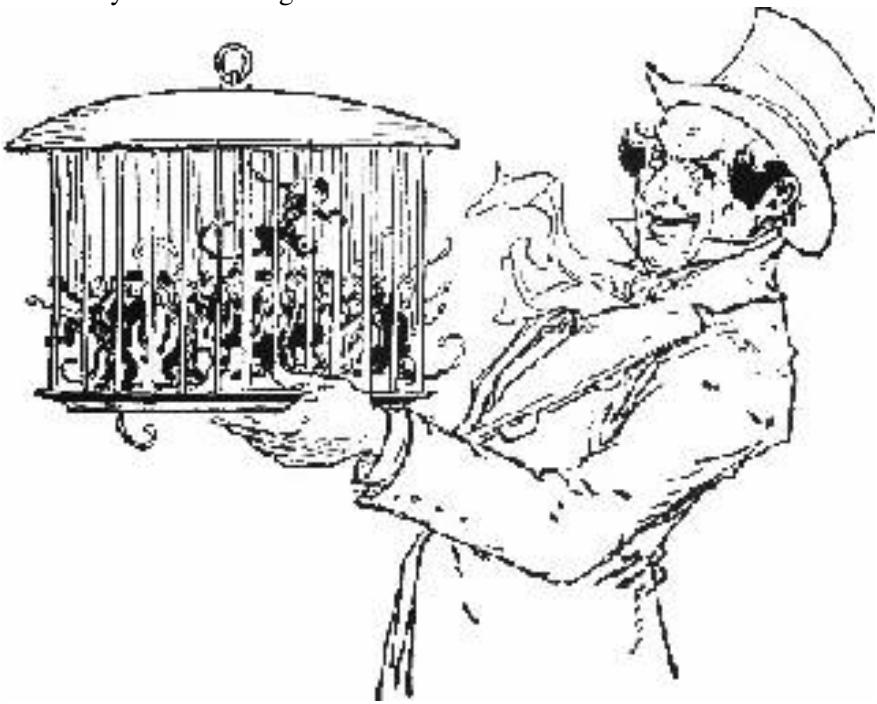
“Thank you,” replied the Wizard, cheerfully. “We’ll go at once and save those giant soldiers.”

So all the party left the clearing and proceeded to the place where the giants still stood among the trees. Hundreds of monkeys, apes, baboons and orangoutangs had gathered round, and their wild chatter could be heard a mile away. But the Gray Ape soon hushed the babel of sounds, and the Wizard lost no time in breaking the enchantments. First one and then another giant soldier disappeared and became an ordinary monkey again, and the six were shortly returned to their friends in their proper forms.

This action made the Wizard very popular with the great army of monkeys, and when the Gray Ape announced that the Wizard wanted to borrow twelve monkeys to take to the Emerald City for a couple of weeks, and asked for volunteers, nearly a hundred offered to go, so great was their confidence in the little man who had saved their comrades.

The Wizard selected a dozen that seemed intelligent and good-tempered, and then he opened his black bag and took out a queerly shaped dish that was silver on the outside and gold on the inside. Into this dish he poured a powder

and set fire to it. It made a thick smoke that quite enveloped the twelve monkeys, as well as the form of the Wizard, but when the smoke cleared away the dish had been changed to a golden cage with silver bars, and the twelve monkeys had become about three inches high and were all seated comfortably inside the cage.



The thousands of hairy animals who had witnessed this act of magic were much astonished and applauded the Wizard by barking aloud and shaking the limbs of the trees in which they sat. Dorothy said: "That was a fine trick, Wizard!" and the Gray Ape remarked: "You are certainly the most wonderful magician in all the Land of Oz!"

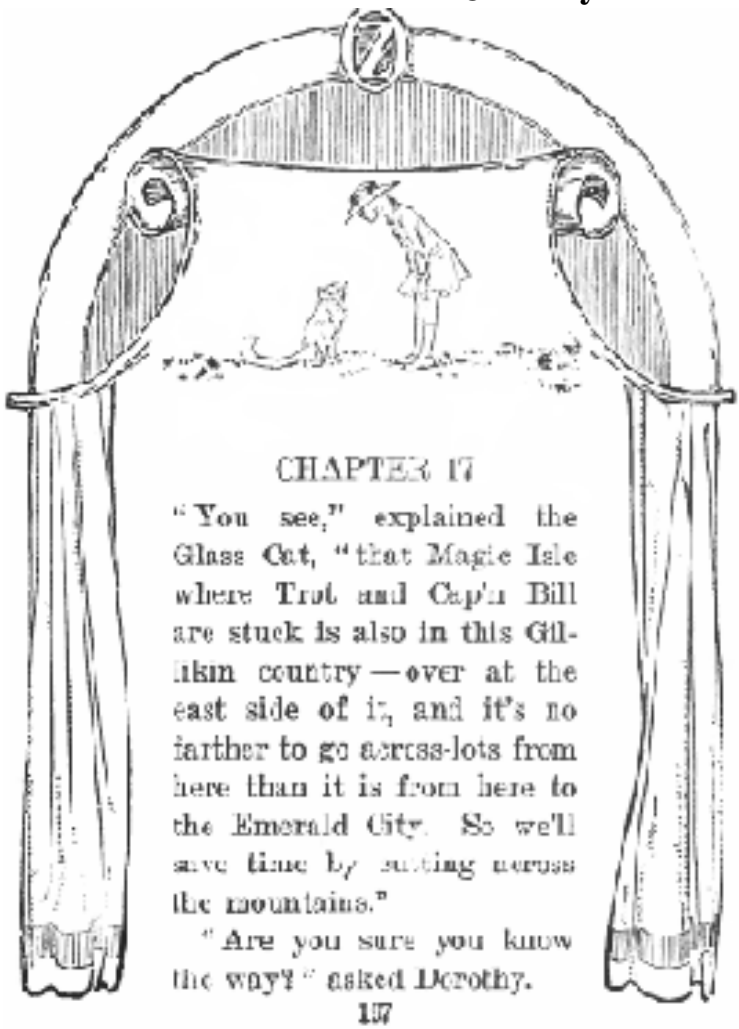
"Oh, no," modestly replied the little man. "Glinda's magic is better than mine, but mine seems good enough to use on ordinary occasions. And now, Rango, we will say good-bye, and I promise to return your monkeys as happy and safe as they are now."

The Wizard rode on the back of the Hungry Tiger and carried the cage of monkeys very carefully, so as not to joggle them. Dorothy rode on the back of the Cowardly Lion, and the Glass Cat trotted, as before, to show them the way.

Gugu the King crouched upon a log and watched them go, but as he bade them farewell, the enormous Leopard said:

“I know now that you are the friends of beasts and that the forest people may trust you. Whenever the Wizard of Oz and Princess Dorothy enter the Forest of Gugu hereafter, they will be as welcome and as safe with us as ever they are in the Emerald City.”

17. A Remarkable Journey



CHAPTER 17

"You see," explained the Glass Cat, "that Magic Isle where Trot and Cap'n Bill are stuck is also in this Gillikin country — over at the east side of it, and it's no farther to go across-lots from here than it is from here to the Emerald City. So we'll save time by cutting across the mountains."

"Are you sure you know the way?" asked Dorothy.

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"You see," explained the Glass Cat, "that Magic Isle where Trot and Cap'n Bill are stuck is also in this Gillikin Country — over at the east side of it, and it's no farther to go across-lots from here than it is from here to the Emerald City. So we'll save time by cutting across the mountains."

"Are you sure you know the way?" asked Dorothy.

"I know all the Land of Oz better than any other living creature knows it," asserted the Glass Cat.

"Go ahead, then, and guide us," said the Wizard. "We've left our poor friends helpless too long already, and the sooner we rescue them the happier

they'll be."

"Are you sure you can get 'em out of their fix?" the little girl inquired.

"I've no doubt of it," the Wizard assured her. "But I can't tell what sort of magic I must use until I get to the place and discover just how they are enchanted."

"I've heard of that Magic Isle where the Wonderful Flower grows," remarked the Cowardly Lion. "Long ago, when I used to live in the forests, the beasts told stories about the Isle and how the Magic Flower was placed there to entrap strangers — men or beasts."

"Is the Flower really wonderful?" questioned Dorothy.

"I have heard it is the most beautiful plant in the world," answered the Lion. "I have never seen it myself, but friendly beasts have told me that they have stood on the shore of the river and looked across at the plant in the gold flower-pot and seen hundreds of flowers, of all sorts and sizes, blossom upon it in quick succession. It is said that if one picks the flowers while they are in bloom they will remain perfect for a long time, but if they are not picked they soon disappear and are replaced by other flowers. That, in my opinion, make the Magic Plant the most wonderful in existence."

"But these are only stories," said the girl. "Has any of your friends ever picked a flower from the wonderful plant?"

"No," admitted the Cowardly Lion, "for if any living thing ventures upon the Magic Isle, where the golden flower-pot stands, that man or beast takes root in the soil and cannot get away again."

"What happens to them, then?" asked Dorothy.

"They grow smaller, hour by hour and day by day, and finally disappear entirely."

"Then," said the girl anxiously, "we must hurry up, or Cap'n Bill an' Trot will get too small to be comf'table."

They were proceeding at a rapid pace during this conversation, for the Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion were obliged to move swiftly in order to keep pace with the Glass Cat. After leaving the Forest of Gugu they crossed a mountain range, and then a broad plain, after which they reached another forest, much smaller than that where Gugu ruled.

"The Magic Isle is in this forest," said the Glass Cat, "but the river is at the other side of the forest. There is no path through the trees, but if we keep going east, we will find the river, and then it will be easy to find the Magic Isle."

"Have you ever traveled this way before?" inquired the Wizard.

"Not exactly," admitted the Cat, "but I know we shall reach the river if we go east through the forest."

“Lead on, then,” said the Wizard.

The Glass Cat started away, and at first it was easy to pass between the trees; but before long the underbrush and vines became thick and tangled, and after pushing their way through these obstacles for a time, our travelers came to a place where even the Glass Cat could not push through.

“We’d better go back and find a path,” suggested the Hungry Tiger.

“I’m s’prised at you,” said Dorothy, eyeing the Glass Cat severely.

“I’m surprised, myself,” replied the Cat. “But it’s a long way around the forest to where the river enters it, and I thought we could save time by going straight through.”

“No one can blame you,” said the Wizard, “and I think, instead of turning back, I can make a path that will allow us to proceed.”

He opened his black bag and after searching among his magic tools drew out a small axe, made of some metal so highly polished that it glittered brightly even in the dark forest. The Wizard laid the little axe on the ground and said in a commanding voice:

“Chop, Little Axe, chop clean and true;
A path for our feet you must quickly hew.
Chop till this tangle of jungle is passed;
Chop to the east, Little Axe — chop fast!”

Then the little axe began to move and flashed its bright blade right and left, clearing a way through vine and brush and scattering the tangled barrier so quickly that the Lion and the Tiger, carrying Dorothy and the Wizard and the cage of monkeys on their backs, were able to stride through the forest at a fast walk. The brush seemed to melt away before them and the little axe chopped so fast that their eyes only saw a twinkling of the blade. Then, suddenly, the forest was open again, and the little axe, having obeyed its orders, lay still upon the ground.

The Wizard picked up the magic axe and after carefully wiping it with his silk handkerchief put it away in his black bag. Then they went on and in a short time reached the river.

“Let me see,” said the Glass Cat, looking up and down the stream, “I think we are below the Magic Isle; so we must go up the stream until we come to it.”

So up the stream they traveled, walking comfortably on the river bank, and after a while the water broadened and a sharp bend appeared in the river, hiding all below from their view. They walked briskly along, however, and had nearly reached the bend when a voice cried warningly: “Look out!”

The travelers halted abruptly and the Wizard said: “Look out for what?”

“You almost stepped on my Diamond Palace,” replied the voice, and a duck with gorgeously colored feathers appeared before them. “Beasts and men are terribly clumsy,” continued the Duck in an irritated tone, “and you’ve no business on this side of the River, anyway. What are you doing here?”

“We’ve come to rescue some friends of ours who are stuck fast on the Magic Isle in this river,” explained Dorothy.

“I know ‘em,” said the Duck. “I’ve been to see ‘em, and they’re stuck fast, all right. You may as well go back home, for no power can save them.”

“This is the Wonderful Wizard of Oz,” said Dorothy, pointing to the little man.

“Well, I’m the Lonesome Duck,” was the reply, as the fowl strutted up and down to show its feathers to best advantage. “I’m the great Forest Magician, as any beast can tell you, but even I have no power to destroy the dreadful charm of the Magic Isle.”

“Are you lonesome because you’re a magician?” inquired Dorothy.

“No; I’m lonesome because I have no family and no friends. But I like to be lonesome, so please don’t offer to be friendly with me. Go away, and try not to step on my Diamond Palace.”

“Where is it?” asked the girl.

“Behind this bush.”

Dorothy hopped off the lion’s back and ran around the bush to see the Diamond Palace of the Lonesome Duck, although the gaudy fowl protested in a series of low quacks. The girl found, indeed, a glistening dome formed

of clearest diamonds, neatly cemented together, with a doorway at the side just big enough to admit the duck.

"Where did you find so many diamonds?" asked Dorothy, wonderingly.

"I know a place in the mountains where they are thick as pebbles," said the Lonesome Duck, "and I brought them here in my bill, one by one and put them in the river and let the water run over them until they were brightly polished. Then I built this palace, and I'm positive it's the only Diamond Palace in all the world."

"It's the only one I know of," said the little girl; "but if you live in it all alone, I don't see why it's any better than a wooden palace, or one of bricks or cobble-stones."

"You're not supposed to understand that," retorted the Lonesome Duck. "But I might tell you, as a matter of education, that a home of any sort should be beautiful to those who live in it, and should not be intended to please strangers. The Diamond Palace is my home, and I like it. So I don't care a quack whether YOU like it or not."

"Oh, but I do!" exclaimed Dorothy. "It's lovely on the outside, but — " Then she stopped speaking, for the Lonesome Duck had entered his palace through the little door without even saying good-bye. So Dorothy returned to her friends and they resumed their journey.

"Do you think, Wizard, the Duck was right in saying no magic can rescue Trot and Cap'n Bill?" asked the girl in a worried tone of voice.

"No, I don't think the Lonesome Duck was right in saying that," answered

the Wizard, gravely, “but it is possible that their enchantment will be harder to overcome than I expected. I’ll do my best, of course, and no one can do more than his best.”

That didn’t entirely relieve Dorothy’s anxiety, but she said nothing more, and soon, on turning the bend in the river, they came in sight of the Magic Isle.

“There they are!” exclaimed Dorothy eagerly.

“Yes, I see them,” replied the Wizard, nodding. “They are sitting on two big toadstools.”

“That’s queer,” remarked the Glass Cat. “There were no toadstools there when I left them.”

“What a lovely flower!” cried Dorothy in rapture, as her gaze fell on the Magic Plant.

“Never mind the Flower, just now,” advised the Wizard. “The most important thing is to rescue our friends.”

By this time they had arrived at a place just opposite the Magic Isle, and now both Trot and Cap’n Bill saw the arrival of their friends and called to them for help.

“How are you?” shouted the Wizard, putting his hands to his mouth so they could hear him better across the water.

“We’re in hard luck,” shouted Cap’n Bill, in reply. “We’re anchored here and can’t move till you find a way to cut the hawser.”

“What does he mean by that?” asked Dorothy.

“We can’t move our feet a bit!” called Trot, speaking as loud as she could.

“Why not?” inquired Dorothy.

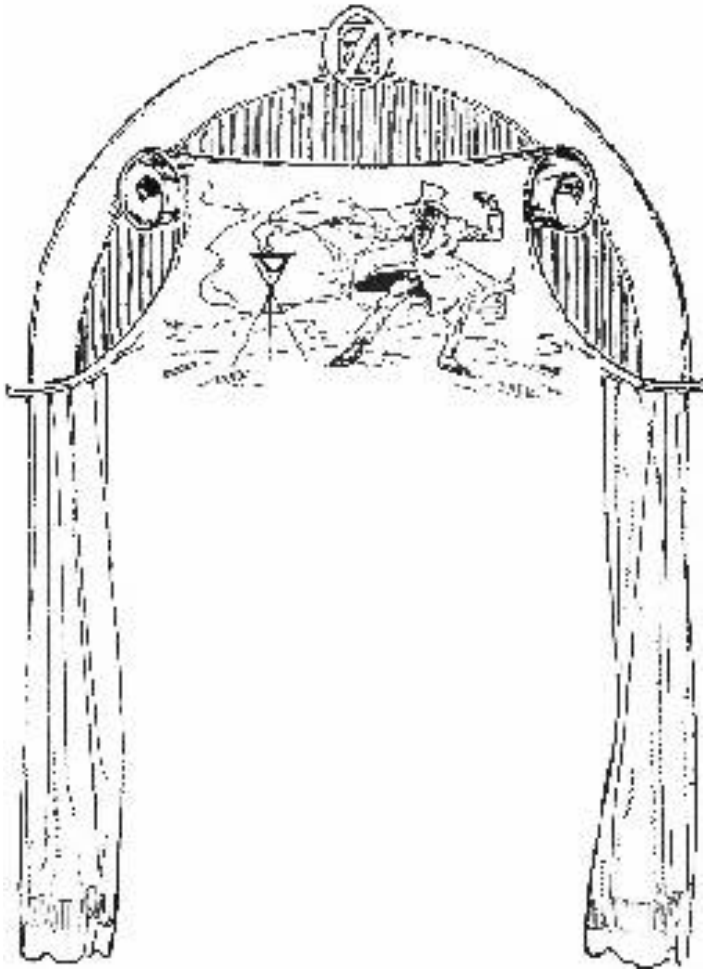
“They’ve got roots on ‘em,” explained Trot.

It was hard to talk from so great a distance, so the Wizard said to the Glass Cat:

“Go to the island and tell our friends to be patient, for we have come to save them. It may take a little time to release them, for the Magic of the Isle is new to me and I shall have to experiment. But tell them I’ll hurry as fast as I can.”

So the Glass Cat walked across the river under the water to tell Trot and Cap’n Bill not to worry, and the Wizard at once opened his black bag and began to make his preparations.

18. The Magic of the Wizard



He first set up a small silver tripod and placed a gold basin at the top of it. Into this basin he put two powders — a pink one and a sky-blue one — and poured over them a yellow liquid from a crystal vial. Then he mumbled some magic words, and the powders began to sizzle and burn and send out a cloud of violet smoke that floated across the river and completely enveloped both Trot and Cap'n Bill, as well as the toadstools on which they sat, and even the Magic Plant in the gold flower-pot. Then, after the smoke had disappeared into air, the Wizard called out to the prisoners:

"Are you free?"

Both Trot and Cap'n Bill tried to move their feet and failed.

"No!" they shouted in answer.

The Wizard rubbed his bald head thoughtfully and then took some other magic tools from the bag.

First he placed a little black ball in a silver pistol and shot it toward the Magic Isle. The ball exploded just over the head of Trot and scattered a thousand sparks over the little girl.

"Oh!" said the Wizard, "I guess that will set her free."

But Trot's feet were still rooted in the ground of the Magic Isle, and the disappointed Wizard had to try something else.

For almost an hour he worked hard, using almost every magic tool in his black bag, and still Cap'n Bill and Trot were not rescued.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dorothy, "I'm 'fraid we'll have to go to Glinda, after all."

That made the little Wizard blush, for it shamed him to think that his magic was not equal to that of the Magic Isle.

"I won't give up yet, Dorothy," he said, "for I know a lot of wizardry that I haven't yet tried. I don't know what magician enchanted this little island, or what his powers were, but I DO know that I can break any enchantment known to the ordinary witches and magicians that used to inhabit the Land of Oz. It's like unlocking a door; all you need is to find the right key."

"But 'spose you haven't the right key with you." suggested Dorothy; "what then?"

"Then we'll have to make the key," he answered.

The Glass Cat now came back to their side of the river, walking under the water, and said to the Wizard: "They're getting frightened over there on the island because they're both growing smaller every minute. Just now, when I left them, both Trot and Cap'n Bill were only about half their natural sizes."

"I think," said the Wizard reflectively, "that I'd better go to the shore of the island, where I can talk to them and work to better advantage. How did Trot and Cap'n Bill get to the island?"

"On a raft," answered the Glass Cat. "It's over there now on the beach."

"I suppose you're not strong enough to bring the raft to this side, are you?"

"No; I couldn't move it an inch," said the Cat.

"I'll try to get it for you," volunteered the Cowardly Lion. "I'm dreadfully scared for fear the Magic Isle will capture me, too; but I'll try to get the raft and bring it to this side for you."

"Thank you, my friend," said the Wizard.

So the Lion plunged into the river and swam with powerful strokes across

to where the raft was beached upon the island. Placing one paw on the raft, he turned and struck out with his other three legs and so strong was the great beast that he managed to drag the raft from off the beach and propel it slowly to where the Wizard stood on the river bank.

"Good!" exclaimed the little man, well pleased.

"May I go across with you?" asked Dorothy.

The Wizard hesitated.

"If you'll take care not to leave the raft or step foot on the island, you'll be quite safe," he decided. So the Wizard told the Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion to guard the cage of monkeys until he returned, and then he and Dorothy got upon the raft. The paddle which Cap'n Bill had made was still there, so the little Wizard paddled the clumsy raft across the water and ran it upon the beach of the Magic Isle as close to the place where Cap'n Bill and Trot were rooted as he could.

Dorothy was shocked to see how small the prisoners had become, and Trot said to her friends: “If you can’t save us soon, there’ll be nothing left of us.”

“Be patient, my dear,” counseled the Wizard, and took the little axe from his black bag.

“What are you going to do with that?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“It’s a magic axe,” replied the Wizard, “and when I tell it to chop, it will chop those roots from your feet and you can run to the raft before they grow again.”

“Don’t!” shouted the sailor in alarm. “Don’t do it! Those roots are all flesh roots, and our bodies are feeding ‘em while they’re growing into the ground.”

“To cut off the roots,” said Trot, “would be like cutting off our fingers and toes.”

The Wizard put the little axe back in the black bag and took out a pair of silver pincers.

“Grow — grow — grow!” he said to the pincers, and at once they grew and extended until they reached from the raft to the prisoners.

“What are you going to do now?” demanded Cap’n Bill, fearfully eyeing the pincers.

“This magic tool will pull you up, roots and all, and land you on this raft,” declared the Wizard.

“Don’t do it!” pleaded the sailor, with a shudder. “It would hurt us awfully.”

“It would be just like pulling teeth to pull us up by the roots,” explained Trot.

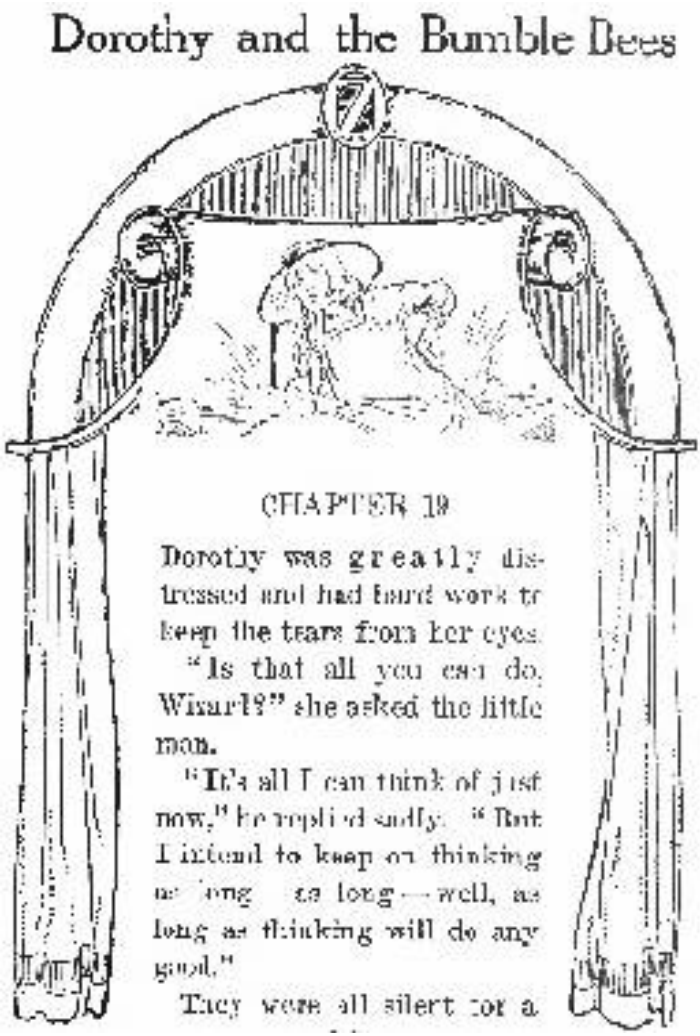
“Grow small!” said the Wizard to the pincers, and at once they became small and he threw them into the black bag.

“I guess, friends, it’s all up with us, this time,” remarked Cap’n Bill, with a dismal sigh.

“Please tell Ozma, Dorothy,” said Trot, “that we got into trouble trying to get her a nice birthday present. Then she’ll forgive us. The Magic Flower is lovely and wonderful, but it’s just a lure to catch folks on this dreadful island and then destroy them. You’ll have a nice birthday party, without us, I’m sure; and I hope, Dorothy, that none of you in the Emerald City will forget

me — or dear ol' Cap'n Bill."

19. Dorothy and the Bumble Bees



Dorothy and the Bumble Bees

CHAPTER 19

Dorothy was greatly distressed and had hard work to keep the tears from her eyes.

"Is that all you can do, Wizard?" she asked the little man.

"It's all I can think of just now," he replied sadly. "But I intend to keep on thinking as long — as long — well, as long as thinking will do any good."

They were all silent for a

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They were all silent for a time, Dorothy and the Wizard sitting thoughtfully on the raft, and Trot and Cap'n Bill sitting thoughtfully on the toadstools and growing gradually smaller and smaller in size.

Suddenly Dorothy said: "Wizard, I've thought of something!"

“What have you thought of?” he asked, looking at the little girl with interest.

“Can you remember the Magic Word that transforms people?” she asked.

“Of course,” said he.

“Then you can transform Trot and Cap’n Bill into birds or bumblebees, and they can fly away to the other shore. When they’re there, you can transform ‘em into their reg’lar shapes again!”

“Can you do that, Wizard?” asked Cap’n Bill, eagerly.

“I think so.”

“Roots an’ all?” inquired Trot.

“Why, the roots are now a part of you, and if you were transformed to a bumblebee the whole of you would be transformed, of course, and you’d be free of this awful island.”

“All right; do it!” cried the sailor-man.

So the Wizard said slowly and distinctly:

“I want Trot and Cap’n Bill to become bumblebees — Pyrzqxgl!”

Fortunately, he pronounced the Magic Word in the right way, and instantly Trot and Cap’n Bill vanished from view, and up from the places where they had been flew two bumblebees.

“Hooray!” shouted Dorothy in delight; “they’re saved!”

“I guess they are,” agreed the Wizard, equally delighted.

The bees hovered over the raft an instant and then flew across the river to where the Lion and the Tiger waited. The Wizard picked up the paddle and paddled the raft across as fast as he could. When it reached the river bank, both Dorothy and the Wizard leaped ashore and the little man asked excitedly:

“Where are the bees?”

“The bees?” inquired the Lion, who was half asleep and did not know what had happened on the Magic Isle.

“Yes; there were two of them.”

“Two bees?” said the Hungry Tiger, yawning. “Why, I ate one of them and the Cowardly Lion ate the other.”

“Goodness gracious!” cried Dorothy horrified.

“It was little enough for our lunch,” remarked the Tiger, “but the bees were the only things we could find.”

“How dreadful!” wailed Dorothy, wringing her hands in despair. “You’ve eaten Trot and Cap’n Bill.”

But just then she heard a buzzing overhead and two bees alighted on her shoulder.

“Here we are,” said a small voice in her ear. “I’m Trot, Dorothy.”

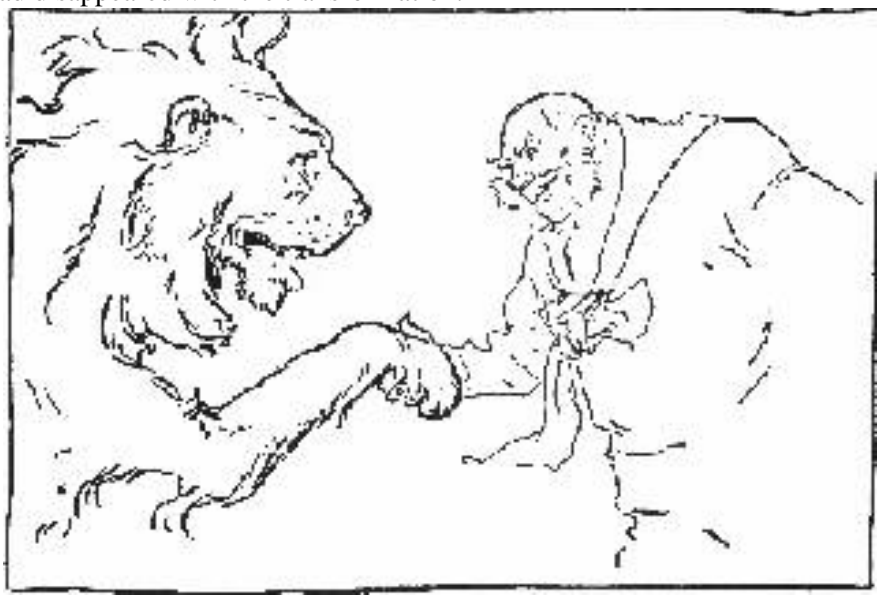
“And I’m Cap’n Bill,” said the other bee.

Dorothy almost fainted, with relief, and the Wizard, who was close by and had heard the tiny voices, gave a laugh and said:

“You are not the only two bees in the forest, it seems, but I advise you to keep away from the Lion and the Tiger until you regain your proper forms.”

“Do it now, Wizard!” advised Dorothy. “They’re so small that you never can tell what might happen to ‘em.”

So the Wizard gave the command and pronounced the Magic Word, and in the instant Trot and Cap’n Bill stood beside them as natural as before they had met their fearful adventure. For they were no longer small in size, because the Wizard had transformed them from bumblebees into the shapes and sizes that nature had formerly given them. The ugly roots on their feet had disappeared with the transformation.



While Dorothy was hugging Trot, and Trot was softly crying because she was so happy, the Wizard shook hands with Cap’n Bill and congratulated him on his escape. The old sailor-man was so pleased that he also shook the Lion’s paw and took off his hat and bowed politely to the cage of monkeys.

Then Cap’n Bill did a curious thing. He went to a big tree and, taking out his knife, cut away a big, broad piece of thick bark. Then he sat down on the ground and after taking a roll of stout cord from his pocket — which seemed to be full of all sorts of things — he proceeded to bind the flat piece of bark to the bottom of his good foot, over the leather sole.

“What’s that for?” inquired the Wizard.

“I hate to be stumped,” replied the sailor-man; “so I’m goin’ back to that island.”

“And get enchanted again?” exclaimed Trot, with evident disapproval.

“No; this time I’ll dodge the magic of the island. I noticed that my wooden leg didn’t get stuck, or take root, an’ neither did the glass feet of the Glass Cat. It’s only a thing that’s made of meat — like man an’ beasts — that the magic can hold an’ root to the ground. Our shoes are leather, an’ leather comes from a beast’s hide. Our stockin’s are wool, an’ wool comes from a sheep’s back. So, when we walked on the Magic Isle, our feet took root there an’ held us fast. But not my wooden leg. So now I’ll put a wooden bottom on my other foot an’ the magic can’t stop me.”

“But why do you wish to go back to the island?” asked Dorothy.

“Didn’t you see the Magic Flower in the gold flower-pot?” returned Cap’n Bill.

“Of course I saw it, and it’s lovely and wonderful.”

“Well, Trot an’ I set out to get the magic plant for a present to Ozma on her birthday, and I mean to get it an’ take it back with us to the Emerald City.”

“That would be fine,” cried Trot eagerly, “if you think you can do it, and it would be safe to try!”

“I’m pretty sure it is safe, the way I’ve fixed my foot,” said the sailor, “an’ if I SHOULD happen to get caught, I s’pose the Wizard could save me again.”

“I suppose I could,” agreed the Wizard. “Anyhow, if you wish to try it, Cap’n Bill, go ahead and we’ll stand by and watch what happens.”

So the sailor-man got upon the raft again and paddled over to the Magic Isle, landing as close to the golden flower-pot as he could. They watched him walk across the land, put both arms around the flower-pot and lift it easily from its place. Then he carried it to the raft and set it down very gently. The removal did not seem to affect the Magic Flower in any way, for it was growing daffodils when Cap’n Bill picked it up and on the way to the raft it grew tulips and gladioli. During the time the sailor was paddling across the river to where his friends awaited him, seven different varieties of flowers bloomed in succession on the plant.

“I guess the Magician who put it on the island never thought that any one would carry it off,” said Dorothy.

“He figured that only men would want the plant, and any man who went upon the island to get it would be caught by the enchantment,” added the Wizard.

“After this,” remarked Trot, “no one will care to go on the island, so it

won’t be a trap any more.”

“There,” exclaimed Cap’n Bill, setting down the Magic Plant in triumph upon the river bank, “if Ozma gets a better birthday present than that, I’d like to know what it can be!”

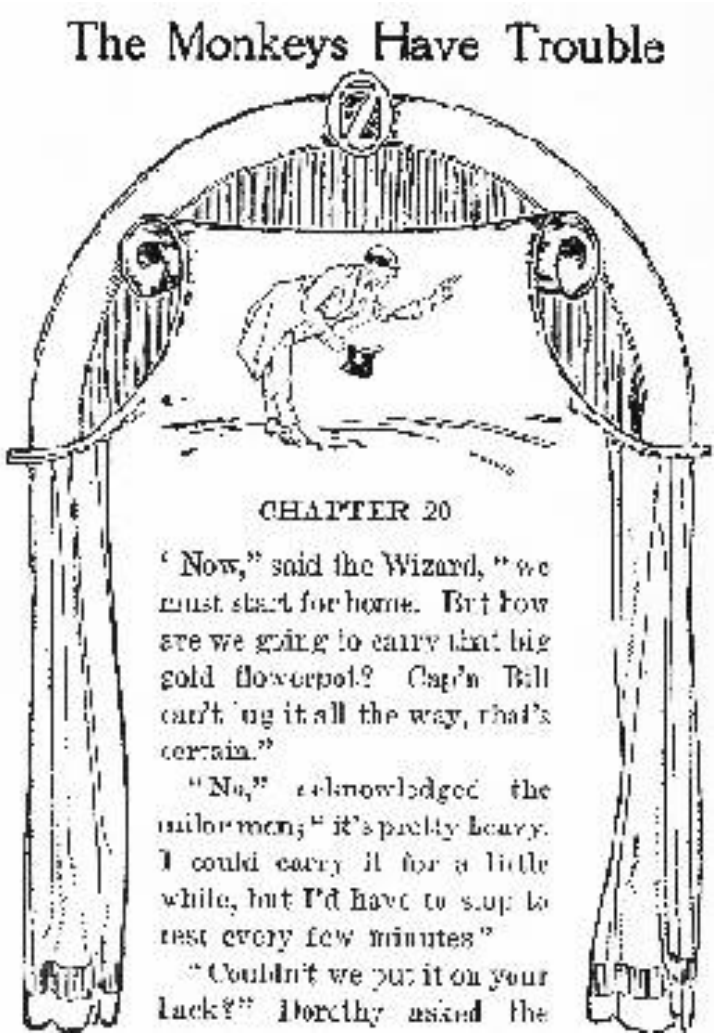
“It’ll s’prise her, all right,” declared Dorothy, standing in awed wonder before the gorgeous blossoms and watching them change from yellow roses to violets.

“It’ll s’prise ev’rybody in the Em’rald City,” Trot asserted in glee, “and it’ll be Ozma’s present from Cap’n Bill and me.”

“I think I ought to have a little credit,” objected the Glass Cat. “I discovered the thing, and led you to it, and brought the Wizard here to save you when you got caught.”

“That’s true,” admitted Trot, “and I’ll tell Ozma the whole story, so she’ll know how good you’ve been.”

20. The Monkeys Have Trouble



The Monkeys Have Trouble

CHAPTER 20

"Now," said the Wizard, "we must start for home. But how are we going to carry that big gold flowerpot? Cap'n Bill can't lug it all the way, that's certain."

"No," acknowledged the sailor-man; "it's pretty heavy. I could carry it for a little while, but I'd have to stop to rest every few minutes."

"Couldn't we put it on your back?" Dorothy asked the

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"Couldn't we put it on your back?" Dorothy asked the Cowardly Lion, with a good-natured yawn.

"I don't object to carrying it, if you can fasten it on," answered the Lion.

"If it falls off," said Trot, "it might get smashed an' be ruined."

“I’ll fix it,” promised Cap’n Bill. “I’ll make a flat board out of one of these tree trunks, an’ tie the board on the lion’s back, an’ set the flower-pot on the board.” He set to work at once to do this, but as he only had his big knife for a tool his progress was slow.

So the Wizard took from his black bag a tiny saw that shone like silver and said to it:

“Saw, Little Saw, come show your power;
Make us a board for the Magic Flower.”

And at once the Little Saw began to move and it sawed the log so fast that those who watched it work were astonished. It seemed to understand, too, just what the board was to be used for, for when it was completed it was flat on top and hollowed beneath in such a manner that it exactly fitted the Lion’s back.

“That beats whittlin’!” exclaimed Cap’n Bill, admiringly. “You don’t happen to have TWO o’ them saws; do you, Wizard?”

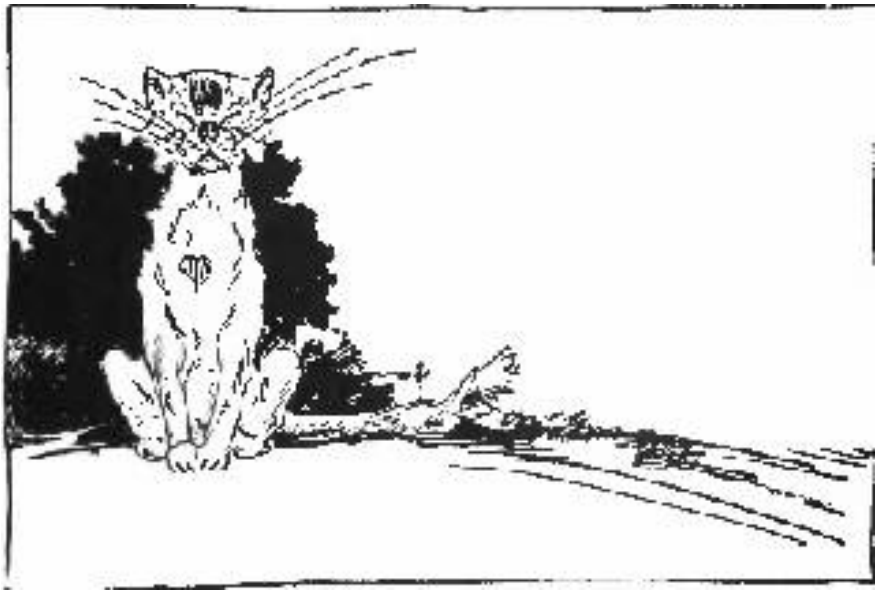
“No,” replied the Wizard, wiping the Magic Saw carefully with his silk handkerchief and putting it back in the black bag. “It’s the only saw of its kind in the world; and if there were more like it, it wouldn’t be so wonderful.”

They now tied the board on the Lion’s back, flat side up, and Cap’n Bill carefully placed the Magic Flower on the board.

“For fear o’ accidents,” he said, “I’ll walk beside the Lion and hold onto the flower-pot.”

Trot and Dorothy could both ride on the back of the Hungry Tiger, and between them they carried the cage of monkeys. But this arrangement left the Wizard, as well as the sailor, to make the journey on foot, and so the procession moved slowly and the Glass Cat grumbled because it would take so long to get to the Emerald City.

The Cat was sour-tempered and grumpy, at first, but before they had journeyed far, the crystal creature had discovered a fine amusement. The long tails of the monkeys were constantly sticking through the bars of their cage, and when they did, the Glass Cat would slyly seize the tails in her paws and pull them. That made the monkeys scream, and their screams pleased the Glass Cat immensely. Trot and Dorothy tried to stop this naughty amusement, but when they were not looking the Cat would pull the tails again, and the creature was so sly and quick that the monkeys could seldom escape. They scolded the Cat angrily and shook the bars of their cage, but they could not get out and the Cat only laughed at them.



After the party had left the forest and were on the plains of the Munchkin Country, it grew dark, and they were obliged to make camp for the night, choosing a pretty place beside a brook. By means of his magic the Wizard created three tents, pitched in a row on the grass and nicely fitted with all that was needful for the comfort of his comrades. The middle tent was for Dorothy and Trot, and had in it two cosy white beds and two chairs. Another tent, also with beds and chairs, was for the Wizard and Cap'n Bill, while the third tent was for the Hungry Tiger, the Cowardly Lion, the cage of Monkeys and the Glass Cat. Outside the tents the Wizard made a fire and placed over it a magic kettle from which he presently drew all sorts of nice things for their supper, smoking hot.

After they had eaten and talked together for a while under the twinkling stars, they all went to bed and the people were soon asleep. The Lion and the Tiger had almost fallen asleep, too, when they were roused by the screams of the monkeys, for the Glass Cat was pulling their tails again. Annoyed by the uproar, the Hungry Tiger cried: "Stop that racket!" and getting sight of the Glass Cat, he raised his big paw and struck at the creature. The cat was quick enough to dodge the blow, but the claws of the Hungry Tiger scraped the monkey's cage and bent two of the bars.

Then the Tiger lay down again to sleep, but the monkeys soon discovered that the bending of the bars would allow them to squeeze through. They did not leave the cage, however, but after whispering together they let their tails stick out and all remained quiet. Presently the Glass Cat stole near the cage

again and gave a yank to one of the tails. Instantly the monkeys leaped through the bars, one after another, and although they were so small the entire dozen of them surrounded the Glass Cat and clung to her claws and tail and ears and made her a prisoner. Then they forced her out of the tent and down to the banks of the stream. The monkeys had noticed that these banks were covered with thick, slimy mud of a dark blue color, and when they had taken the Cat to the stream, they smeared this mud all over the glass body of the cat, filling the creature's ears and eyes with it, so that she could neither see nor hear. She was no longer transparent and so thick was the mud upon her that no one could see her pink brains or her ruby heart.

In this condition they led the pussy back to the tent and then got inside their cage again.

By morning the mud had dried hard on the Glass Cat and it was a dull blue color throughout. Dorothy and Trot were horrified, but the Wizard shook his head and said it served the Glass Cat right for teasing the monkeys.

Cap'n Bill, with his strong hands, soon bent the golden wires of the monkeys' cage into the proper position and then he asked the Wizard if he should wash the Glass Cat in the water of the brook.

"Not just yet," answered the Wizard. "The Cat deserves to be punished, so I think I'll leave that blue mud — which is as bad as paint — upon her body until she gets to the Emerald City. The silly creature is so vain that she will be greatly shamed when the Oz people see her in this condition, and perhaps she'll take the lesson to heart and leave the monkeys alone hereafter."

However, the Glass Cat could not see or hear, and to avoid carrying her on the journey the Wizard picked the mud out of her eyes and ears and Dorothy dampened her handkerchief and washed both the eyes and ears clean.

As soon as she could speak the Glass Cat asked indignantly: "Aren't you going to punish those monkeys for playing such a trick on me?"

"No," answered the Wizard. "You played a trick on them by pulling their tails, so this is only tit-for-tat, and I'm glad the monkeys had their revenge."

He wouldn't allow the Glass Cat to go near the water, to wash herself, but made her follow them when they resumed their journey toward the Emerald City.

"This is only part of your punishment," said the Wizard, severely. "Ozma will laugh at you, when we get to her palace, and so will the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman, and Tik-Tok, and the Shaggy Man, and Button-Bright, and the Patchwork Girl, and — "

"And the Pink Kitten," added Dorothy.

That suggestion hurt the Glass Cat more than anything else. The Pink Kitten always quarreled with the Glass Cat and insisted that flesh was superior to glass, while the Glass Cat would jeer at the Pink Kitten, because it had no pink brains. But the pink brains were all daubed with blue mud, just now, and if the Pink Kitten should see the Glass Cat in such a condition, it would be dreadfully humiliating.

For several hours the Glass Cat walked along very meekly, but toward noon it seized an opportunity when no one was looking and darted away through the long grass. It remembered that there was a tiny lake of pure water near by, and to this lake the Cat sped as fast as it could go.

The others never missed her until they stopped for lunch, and then it was too late to hunt for her.

"I s'pect she's gone somewhere to clean herself," said Dorothy.

"Never mind," replied the Wizard. "Perhaps this glass creature has been punished enough, and we must not forget she saved both Trot and Cap'n Bill."

"After first leading 'em onto an enchanted island," added Dorothy. "But I think, as you do, that the Glass Cat is punished enough, and p'raps she won't try to pull the monkeys' tails again."

The Glass Cat did not rejoin the party of travelers. She was still resentful, and they moved too slowly to suit her, besides. When they arrived at the Royal Palace, one of the first things they saw was the Glass Cat curled up on a bench as bright and clean and transparent as ever. But she pretended not to notice them, and they passed her by without remark.

21. The College of Athletic Arts

Dorothy and her friends arrived at the Royal Palace at an opportune time, for Ozma was holding high court in her Throne Room, where Professor H. M. Wogglebug, T.E., was appealing to her to punish some of the students of the Royal Athletic College, of which he was the Principal.

This College is located in the Munchkin Country, but not far from the Emerald City. To enable the students to devote their entire time to athletic exercises, such as boating, foot-ball, and the like, Professor Wogglebug had invented an assortment of Tablets of Learning. One of these tablets, eaten by a scholar after breakfast, would instantly enable him to understand arithmetic

or algebra or any other branch of mathematics. Another tablet eaten after lunch gave a student a complete knowledge of geography. Another tablet made it possible for the eater to spell the most difficult words, and still another enabled him to write a beautiful hand. There were tablets for history, mechanics, home cooking and agriculture, and it mattered not whether a boy or a girl was stupid or bright, for the tablets taught them everything in the twinkling of an eye.

This method, which is patented in the Land of Oz by Professor Wogglebug, saves paper and books, as well as the tedious hours devoted to study in some of our less favored schools, and it also allows the students to devote all their time to racing, base-ball, tennis and other manly and womanly sports, which are greatly interfered with by study in those Temples of Learning where Tablets of Learning are unknown.

But it so happened that Professor Wogglebug (who had invented so much that he had acquired the habit) carelessly invented a Square-Meal Tablet, which was no bigger than your little finger-nail but contained, in condensed form, the equal of a bowl of soup, a portion of fried fish, a roast, a salad and a dessert, all of which gave the same nourishment as a square meal.

The Professor was so proud of these Square-Meal Tablets that he began to feed them to the students at his college, instead of other food, but the boys and girls objected because they wanted food that they could enjoy the taste of. It was no fun at all to swallow a tablet, with a glass of water, and call it a dinner; so they refused to eat the Square-Meal Tablets. Professor Wogglebug insisted, and the result was that the Senior Class seized the learned Professor one day and threw him into the river — clothes and all. Everyone knows that a wogglebug cannot swim, and so the inventor of the wonderful Square-Meal Tablets lay helpless on the bottom of the river for three days before a fisherman caught one of his legs on a fishhook and dragged him out upon the bank.

The learned Professor was naturally indignant at such treatment, and so he brought the entire Senior Class to the Emerald City and appealed to Ozma of Oz to punish them for their rebellion.

I do not suppose the girl Ruler was very severe with the rebellious boys and girls, because she had herself refused to eat the Square-Meal Tablets in place of food, but while she was listening to the interesting case in her Throne Room, Cap'n Bill managed to carry the golden flower-pot containing the Magic Flower up to Trot's room without it being seen by anyone except Jellia Jamb, Ozma's chief Maid of Honor, and Jellia promised not to tell.

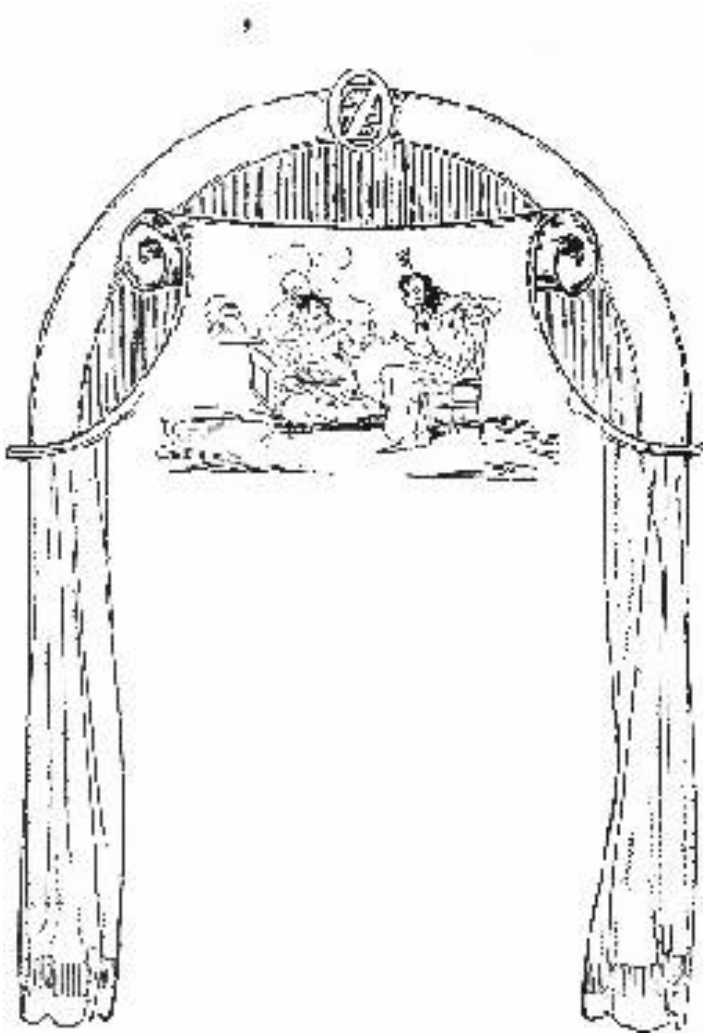
Also the Wizard was able to carry the cage of monkeys up to one of the top towers of the palace, where he had a room of his own, to which no one

came unless invited. So Trot and Dorothy and Cap'n Bill and the Wizard were all delighted at the successful end of their adventure. The Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger went to the marble stables behind the Royal Palace, where they lived while at home, and they too kept the secret, even refusing to tell the Wooden Sawhorse, and Hank the Mule, and the Yellow Hen, and the Pink Kitten where they had been.

Trot watered the Magic Flower every day and allowed no one in her room to see the beautiful blossoms except her friends, Betsy Bobbin and Dorothy. The wonderful plant did not seem to lose any of its magic by being removed from its island, and Trot was sure that Ozma would prize it as one of her most delightful treasures.

Up in his tower the little Wizard of Oz began training his twelve tiny monkeys, and the little creatures were so intelligent that they learned every trick the Wizard tried to teach them. The Wizard treated them with great kindness and gentleness and gave them the food that monkeys love best, so they promised to do their best on the great occasion of Ozma's birthday.

22. Ozma's Birthday Party



It seems odd that a fairy should have a birthday, for fairies, they say, were born at the beginning of time and live forever. Yet, on the other hand, it would be a shame to deprive a fairy, who has so many other good things, of the delights of a birthday. So we need not wonder that the fairies keep their birthdays just as other folks do, and consider them occasions for feasting and rejoicing.

Ozma, the beautiful girl Ruler of the Fairyland of Oz, was a real fairy, and so sweet and gentle in caring for her people that she was greatly beloved by them all. She lived in the most magnificent palace in the most magnificent

city in the world, but that did not prevent her from being the friend of the most humble person in her dominions. She would mount her Wooden Sawhorse, and ride out to a farm house and sit in the kitchen to talk with the good wife of the farmer while she did her family baking; or she would play with the children and give them rides on her famous wooden steed; or she would stop in a forest to speak to a charcoal burner and ask if he was happy or desired anything to make him more content; or she would teach young girls how to sew and plan pretty dresses, or enter the shops where the jewelers and craftsmen were busy and watch them at their work, giving to each and all a cheering word or sunny smile.

And then Ozma would sit in her jeweled throne, with her chosen courtiers all about her, and listen patiently to any complaint brought to her by her subjects, striving to accord equal justice to all. Knowing she was fair in her decisions, the Oz people never murmured at her judgments, but agreed, if Ozma decided against them, she was right and they wrong.

When Dorothy and Trot and Betsy Bobbin and Ozma were together, one would think they were all about of an age, and the fairy Ruler no older and no more "grown up" than the other three. She would laugh and romp with them in regular girlish fashion, yet there was an air of quiet dignity about Ozma, even in her merriest moods, that, in a manner, distinguished her from the others. The three girls loved her devotedly, but they were never able to quite forget that Ozma was the Royal Ruler of the wonderful Fairyland of Oz, and by birth belonged to a powerful race.

Ozma's palace stood in the center of a delightful and extensive garden, where splendid trees and flowering shrubs and statuary and fountains abounded. One could walk for hours in this fascinating park and see something interesting at every step. In one place was an aquarium, where strange and beautiful fish swam; at another spot all the birds of the air gathered daily to a great feast which Ozma's servants provided for them, and were so fearless of harm that they would alight upon one's shoulders and eat from one's hand. There was also the Fountain of the Water of Oblivion, but it was dangerous to drink of this water, because it made one forget everything he had ever before known, even to his own name, and therefore Ozma had placed a sign of warning upon the fountain. But there were also fountains that were delightfully perfumed, and fountains of delicious nectar, cool and richly flavored, where all were welcome to refresh themselves.

Around the palace grounds was a great wall, thickly encrusted with glittering emeralds, but the gates stood open and no one was forbidden entrance. On holidays the people of the Emerald City often took their children to see the wonders of Ozma's gardens, and even entered the Royal Palace, if they felt so inclined, for they knew that they and their Ruler were friends, and that Ozma delighted to give them pleasure.

When all this is considered, you will not be surprised that the people throughout the Land of Oz, as well as Ozma's most intimate friends and her royal courtiers, were eager to celebrate her birthday, and made preparations for the festival weeks in advance. All the brass bands practiced their nicest tunes, for they were to march in the numerous processions to be made in the

Winkie Country, the Gillikin Country, the Munchkin Country and the Quadling Country, as well as in the Emerald City. Not all the people could go to congratulate their Ruler, but all could celebrate her birthday, in one way or another, however far distant from her palace they might be. Every home and building throughout the Land of Oz was to be decorated with banners and bunting, and there were to be games, and plays, and a general good time for every one.

It was Ozma's custom on her birthday to give a grand feast at the palace, to which all her closest friends were invited. It was a queerly assorted company, indeed, for there are more quaint and unusual characters in Oz than in all the rest of the world, and Ozma was more interested in unusual people than in ordinary ones — just as you and I are.

On this especial birthday of the lovely girl Ruler, a long table was set in the royal Banquet Hall of the palace, at which were place-cards for the invited guests, and at one end of the great room was a smaller table, not so high, for Ozma's animal friends, whom she never forgot, and at the other end was a big table where all of the birthday gifts were to be arranged.

When the guests arrived, they placed their gifts on this table and then found their places at the banquet table. And, after the guests were all placed, the animals entered in a solemn procession and were placed at their table by Jellia Jamb. Then, while an orchestra hidden by a bank of roses and ferns played a march composed for the occasion, the Royal Ozma entered the Banquet Hall, attended by her Maids of Honor, and took her seat at the head of the table.

She was greeted by a cheer from all the assembled company, the animals adding their roars and growls and barks and mewing and cackling to swell the glad tumult, and then all seated themselves at their tables.

At Ozma's right sat the famous Scarecrow of Oz, whose straw-stuffed body was not beautiful, but whose happy nature and shrewd wit had made him a general favorite. On the left of the Ruler was placed the Tin Woodman, whose metal body had been brightly polished for this event. The Tin Woodman was the Emperor of the Winkie Country and one of the most important persons in Oz.

Next to the Scarecrow, Dorothy was seated, and next to her was Tik-Tok, the Clockwork Man, who had been wound up as tightly as his clockwork

would permit, so he wouldn't interrupt the festivities by running down. Then came Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, Dorothy's own relations, two kindly old people who had a cozy home in the Emerald City and were very happy and contented there. Then Betsy Bobbin was seated, and next to her the droll and delightful Shaggy Man, who was a favorite wherever he went.

On the other side of the table, opposite the Tin Woodman was placed Trot, and next to her, Cap'n Bill. Then was seated Button-Bright and Ojo the Lucky, and Dr. Pipt and his good wife Margalot, and the astonishing Frogman, who had come from the Yip country to be present at Ozma's birthday feast.

At the foot of the table, facing Ozma, was seated the queenly Glinda, the good Sorceress of Oz, for this was really the place of honor next to the head of the table where Ozma herself sat. On Glinda's right was the Little Wizard of Oz, who owed to Glinda all of the magical arts he knew. Then came Jinjur, a pretty girl farmer of whom Ozma and Dorothy were quite fond. The adjoining seat was occupied by the Tin Soldier, and next to him was Professor H. M. Wogglebug, T.E., of the Royal Athletic College.

On Glinda's left was placed the jolly Patchwork Girl, who was a little afraid of the Sorceress and so was likely to behave herself pretty well. The Shaggy Man's brother was beside the Patchwork Girl, and then came that interesting personage, Jack Pumpkinhead, who had grown a splendid big pumpkin for a new head to be worn on Ozma's birthday, and had carved a face on it that was even jollier in expression than the one he had last worn. New heads were not unusual with Jack, for the pumpkins did not keep long, and when the seeds — which served him as brains — began to get soft and mushy, he realized his head would soon spoil, and so he procured a new one from his great field of pumpkins — grown by him so that he need never lack a head.

You will have noticed that the company at Ozma's banquet table was somewhat mixed, but every one invited was a tried and trusted friend of the girl Ruler, and their presence made her quite happy.

No sooner had Ozma seated herself, with her back to the birthday table, than she noticed that all present were eyeing with curiosity and pleasure something behind her, for the gorgeous Magic Flower was blooming gloriously and the mammoth blossoms that quickly succeeded one another on the plant were beautiful to view and filled the entire room with their delicate fragrance. Ozma wanted to look, too, to see what all were staring at, but she controlled her curiosity because it was not proper that she should yet view her birthday gifts.

So the sweet and lovely Ruler devoted herself to her guests, several of

whom, such as the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, the Patchwork Girl, Tik-Tok, Jack Pumpkinhead and the Tin Soldier, never ate anything but sat very politely in their places and tried to entertain those of the guests who did eat.

And, at the animal table, there was another interesting group, consisting of the Cowardly Lion, the Hungry Tiger, Toto — Dorothy's little shaggy black dog — Hank the Mule, the Pink Kitten, the Wooden Sawhorse, the Yellow Hen, and the Glass Cat. All of these had good appetites except the Sawhorse and the Glass Cat, and each was given a plentiful supply of the food it liked best.

Finally, when the banquet was nearly over and the ice-cream was to be served, four servants entered bearing a huge cake, all frosted and decorated with candy flowers. Around the edge of the cake was a row of lighted candles, and in the center were raised candy letters that spelled the words:

OZMA'S
Birthday Cake
from
Dorothy and the Wizard

"Oh, how beautiful!" cried Ozma, greatly delighted, and Dorothy said eagerly: "Now you must cut the cake, Ozma, and each of us will eat a piece with our ice-cream."

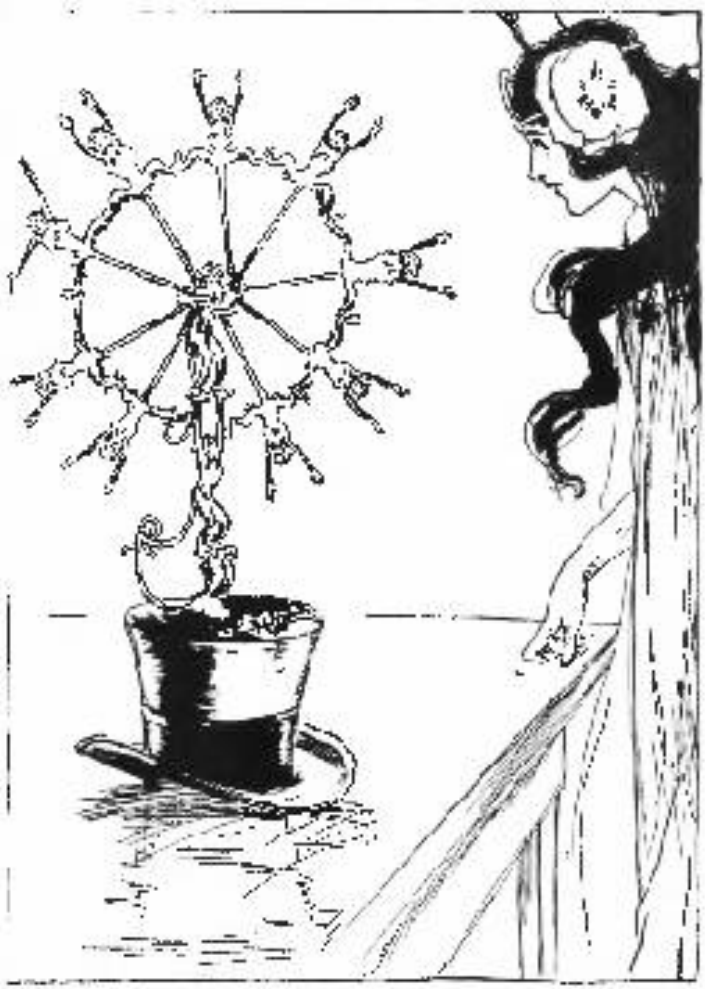
Jellia Jamb brought a large golden knife with a jeweled handle, and Ozma stood up in her place and attempted to cut the cake. But as soon as the frosting in the center broke under the pressure of the knife there leaped from the cake a tiny monkey three inches high, and he was followed by another and another, until twelve monkeys stood on the tablecloth and bowed low to Ozma.

"Congratulations to our gracious Ruler!" they exclaimed in a chorus, and then they began a dance, so droll and amusing that all the company roared with laughter and even Ozma joined in the merriment. But after the dance the monkeys performed some wonderful acrobatic feats, and then they ran to the hollow of the cake and took out some band instruments of burnished gold — cornets, horns, drums, and the like — and forming into a procession the monkeys marched up and down the table playing a jolly tune with the ease of skilled musicians.

Dorothy was delighted with the success of her "Surprise Cake," and after the monkeys had finished their performance, the banquet came to an end.

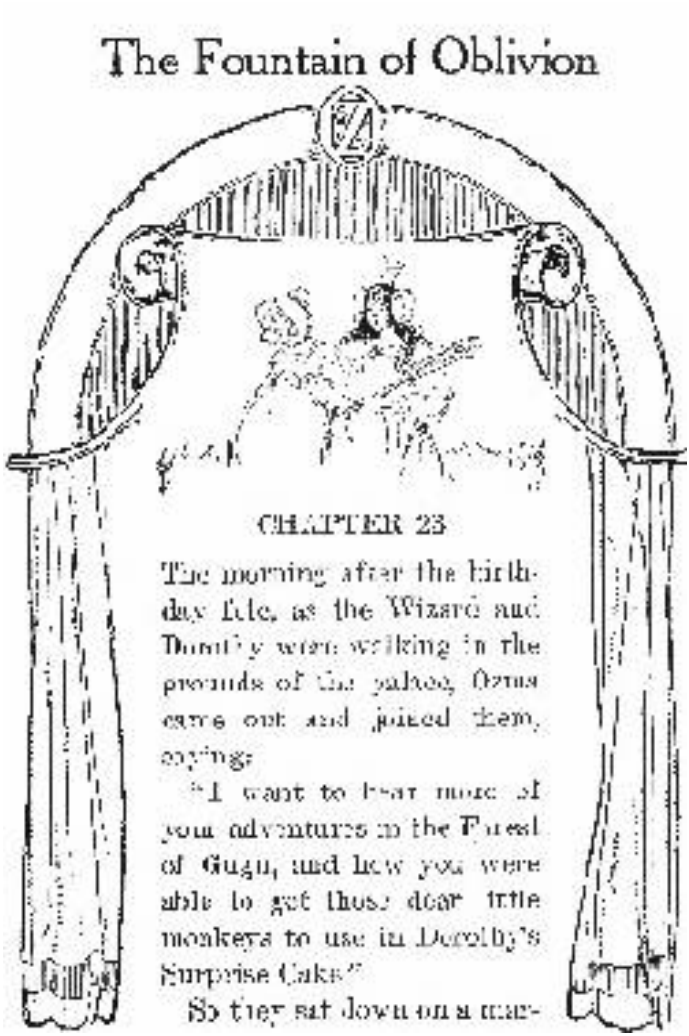
Now was the time for Ozma to see her other presents, so Glinda the Good rose and, taking the girl Ruler by her hand, led her to the table where all her gifts were placed in magnificent array. The Magic Flower of course attracted her attention first, and Trot had to tell her the whole story of their adventures

in getting it. The little girl did not forget to give due credit to the Glass Cat and the little Wizard, but it was really Cap'n Bill who had bravely carried the golden flower-pot away from the enchanted Isle.



Ozma thanked them all, and said she would place the Magic Flower in her boudoir where she might enjoy its beauty and fragrance continually. But now she discovered the marvelous gown woven by Glinda and her maidens from strands drawn from pure emeralds, and being a girl who loved pretty clothes, Ozma's ecstasy at being presented with this exquisite gown may well be imagined. She could hardly wait to put it on, but the table was loaded with other pretty gifts and the night was far spent before the happy girl Ruler had examined all her presents and thanked those who had lovingly donated them.

23. The Fountain of Oblivion



The Fountain of Oblivion

CHAPTER 23

The morning after the birthday fete, as the Wizard and Dorothy were walking in the grounds of the palace, Ozma came out and joined them, saying:

"I want to hear more of your adventures in the Forest of Gugu, and how you were able to get those dear little monkeys to use in Dorothy's Surprise Cake."

So they sat down on a marble-

The morning after the birthday fete, as the Wizard and Dorothy were walking in the grounds of the palace, Ozma came out and joined them, saying:

"I want to hear more of your adventures in the Forest of Gugu, and how you were able to get those dear little monkeys to use in Dorothy's Surprise Cake."

So they sat down on a marble bench near to the Fountain of the Water of Oblivion, and between them Dorothy and the Wizard related their adventures.

"I was dreadfully fussy while I was a woolly lamb," said Dorothy, "for it

didn't feel good, a bit. And I wasn't quite sure, you know, that I'd ever get to be a girl again."

"You might have been a woolly lamb yet, if I hadn't happened to have discovered that Magic Transformation Word," declared the Wizard.

"But what became of the walnut and the hickory-nut into which you transformed those dreadful beast magicians?" inquired Ozma.

"Why, I'd almost forgotten them," was the reply; "but I believe they are still here in my pocket."

Then he searched in his pockets and brought out the two nuts and showed them to her.

Ozma regarded them thoughtfully.

"It isn't right to leave any living creatures in such helpless forms," said she. "I think, Wizard, you ought to transform them into their natural shapes again."

"But I don't know what their natural shapes are," he objected, "for of course the forms of mixed animals which they had assumed were not natural to them. And you must not forget, Ozma, that their natures were cruel and mischievous, so if I bring them back to life they might cause us a great deal of trouble."

"Nevertheless," said the Ruler of Oz, "we must free them from their present enchantments. When you restore them to their natural forms we will discover who they really are, and surely we need not fear any two people, even though they prove to be magicians and our enemies."

"I am not so sure of that," protested the Wizard, with a shake of his bald head. "The one bit of magic I robbed them of — which was the Word of Transformation — is so simple, yet so powerful, that neither Glinda nor I can equal it. It isn't all in the word, you know, it's the way the word is pronounced. So if the two strange magicians have other magic of the same sort, they might prove very dangerous to us, if we liberated them."

"I've an idea!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I'm no wizard, and no fairy, but if you do as I say, we needn't fear these people at all."

"What is your thought, my dear?" asked Ozma.

"Well," replied the girl, "here is this Fountain of the Water of Oblivion, and that's what put the notion into my head. When the Wizard speaks that ter'ble word that will change 'em back to their real forms, he can make 'em dreadful thirsty, too, and we'll put a cup right here by the fountain, so it'll be handy. Then they'll drink the water and forget all the magic they ever knew — and everything else, too."

"That's not a bad idea," said the Wizard, looking at Dorothy approvingly.

"It's a very GOOD idea," declared Ozma. "Run for a cup, Dorothy."

So Dorothy ran to get a cup, and while she was gone the Wizard said:

"I don't know whether the real forms of these magicians are those of men or beasts. If they're beasts, they would not drink from a cup but might attack us at once and drink afterward. So it might be safer for us to have the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger here to protect us if necessary."

Ozma drew out a silver whistle which was attached to a slender gold chain and blew upon the whistle two shrill blasts. The sound, though not harsh, was very penetrating, and as soon as it reached the ears of the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, the two huge beasts quickly came bounding toward them. Ozma explained to them what the Wizard was about to do, and told them to keep quiet unless danger threatened. So the two powerful guardians of the Ruler of Oz crouched beside the fountain and waited.

Dorothy returned and set the cup on the edge of the fountain. Then the Wizard placed the hickory-nut beside the fountain and said in a solemn voice:

"I want you to resume your natural form, and to be very thirsty — Pyrzqxgl!"

In an instant there appeared, in the place of the hickory-nut, the form of Kiki Aru, the Hyup boy. He seemed bewildered, at first, as if trying to remember what had happened to him and why he was in this strange place. But he was facing the fountain, and the bubbling water reminded him that he was thirsty. Without noticing Ozma, the Wizard and Dorothy, who were behind him, he picked up the cup, filled it with the Water of Oblivion, and

drank it to the last drop.

He was now no longer thirsty, but he felt more bewildered than ever, for now he could remember nothing at all — not even his name or where he came from. He looked around the beautiful garden with a pleased expression, and then, turning, he beheld Ozma and the Wizard and Dorothy regarding him curiously and the two great beasts crouching behind them.

Kiki Aru did not know who they were, but he thought Ozma very lovely and Dorothy very pleasant. So he smiled at them — the same innocent, happy smile that a baby might have indulged in, and that pleased Dorothy, who seized his hand and led him to a seat beside her on the bench.

"Why, I thought you were a dreadful magician," she exclaimed, "and you're only a boy!"

"What is a magician?" he asked, "and what is a boy?"

"Don't you know?" inquired the girl.

Kiki shook his head. Then he laughed.

"I do not seem to know anything," he replied.

"It's very curious," remarked the Wizard. "He wears the dress of the Munchkins, so he must have lived at one time in the Munchkin Country. Of course the boy can tell us nothing of his history or his family, for he has forgotten all that he ever knew."

"He seems a nice boy, now that all the wickedness has gone from him," said Ozma. "So we will keep him here with us and teach him our ways — to be true and considerate of others."

“Why, in that case, it’s lucky for him he drank the Water of Oblivion,” said Dorothy.

“It is indeed,” agreed the Wizard. “But the remarkable thing, to me, is how such a young boy ever learned the secret of the Magic Word of Transformation. Perhaps his companion, who is at present this walnut, was the real magician, although I seem to remember that it was this boy in the beast’s form who whispered the Magic Word into the hollow tree, where I overheard it.”

“Well, we will soon know who the other is,” suggested Ozma. “He may prove to be another Munchkin boy.”

The Wizard placed the walnut near the fountain and said, as slowly and solemnly as before:

“I want you to resume your natural form, and to be very thirsty — Pyrzqxgl!”

Then the walnut disappeared and Ruggedo the Nome stood in its place. He also was facing the fountain, and he reached for the cup, filled it, and was about to drink when Dorothy exclaimed:

“Why, it’s the old Nome King!”

Ruggedo swung around and faced them, the cup still in his hand.

“Yes,” he said in an angry voice, “it’s the old Nome King, and I’m going to conquer all Oz and be revenged on you for kicking me out of my throne.” He looked around a moment, and then continued: “There isn’t an egg in sight, and I’m stronger than all of you people put together! I don’t know how I came here, but I’m going to fight the fight of my life — and I’ll win!”

His long white hair and beard waved in the breeze; his eyes flashed hate and vengeance, and so astonished and shocked were they by the sudden appearance of this old enemy of the Oz people that they could only stare at him in silence and shrink away from his wild glare.

Ruggedo laughed. He drank the water, threw the cup on the ground and said fiercely:

"And now — and now — and — "

His voice grew gentle. He rubbed his forehead with a puzzled air and stroked his long beard.

"What was I going to say?" he asked, pleadingly.

"Don't you remember?" said the Wizard.

"No; I've forgotten."

"Who ARE you?" asked Dorothy.

He tried to think. "I — I'm sure I don't know," he stammered.

"Don't you know who WE are, either?" questioned the girl.

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the Nome.

"Tell us who this Munchkin boy is," suggested Ozma.

Ruggedo looked at the boy and shook his head.

"He's a stranger to me. You are all strangers. I — I'm a stranger to myself," he said.

Then he patted the Lion's head and murmured, "Good doggie!" and the Lion growled indignantly.

"What shall we do with him?" asked the Wizard, perplexed.

"Once before the wicked old Nome came here to conquer us, and then, as now, he drank of the Water of Oblivion and became harmless. But we sent

him back to the Nome Kingdom, where he soon learned the old evil ways again.

"For that reason," said Ozma, "we must find a place for him in the Land of Oz, and keep him here. For here he can learn no evil and will always be as innocent of guile as our own people."

And so the wandering ex-King of the Nomes found a new home, a peaceful and happy home, where he was quite content and passed his days in innocent enjoyment.

GLINDA OF OZ

Glinda of Oz is the fourteenth and final book in L. Frank Baum's original Oz series, published by Reilly & Lee in 1920, illustrated by John R. Neill. The novel features two journeys, that of Princess Ozma and Dorothy Gale, who set out to avert a war between the Flatheads and the Skeezers, and by Glinda the Good and friends, who must rescue Ozma and Dorothy. As is typical in many of the Oz books, the adventurers encounter a great variety of magical creatures, both benign and dangerous. Among others, in *Glinda of Oz*, the reader meets gigantic purple spiders and lovely Mist Maidens, as well as the strange and frightening Flatheads, who wear their brains in canisters in their pockets.

A first edition copy of Glinda of Oz

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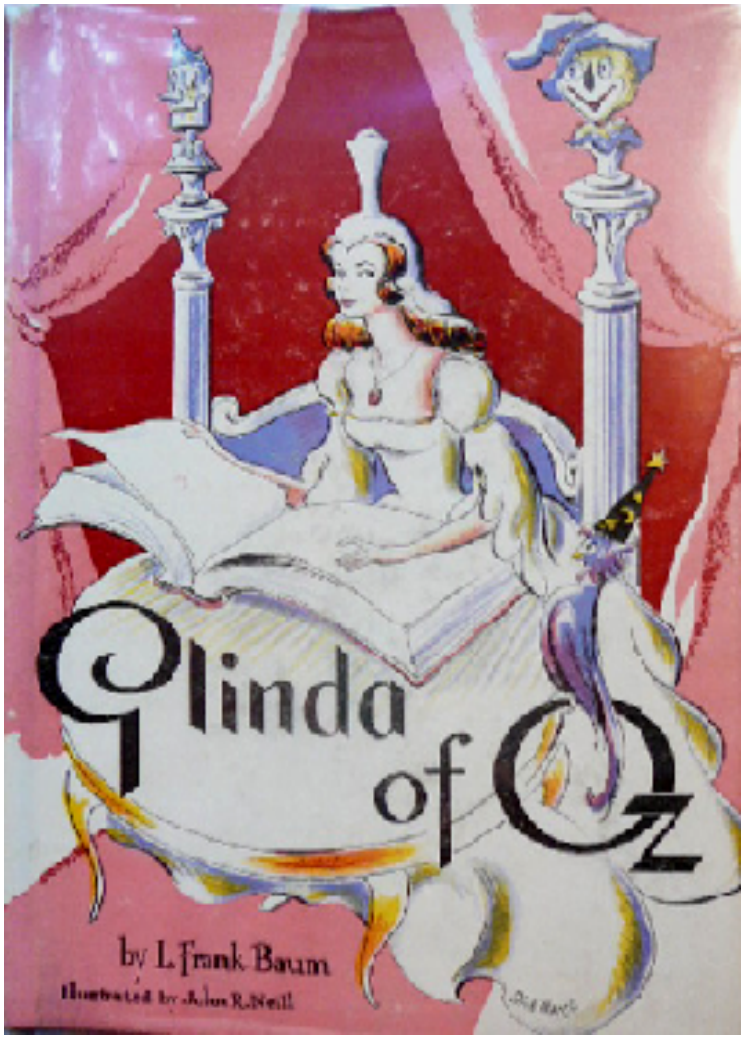


A copy of the 1959 edition

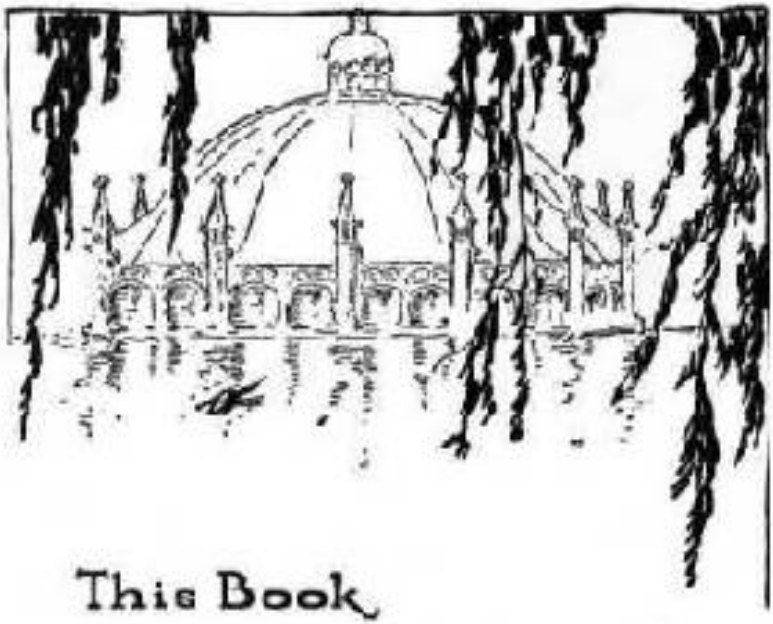
GLINDA OF OZ

In which are related the Exciting Experiences of Princess Ozma of Oz, and Dorothy, in their hazardous journey to the home of the Flatheads, and to the Magic Isle of the Skeezers, and how they were rescued from dire peril by the sorcery of Glinda the Good.

BY

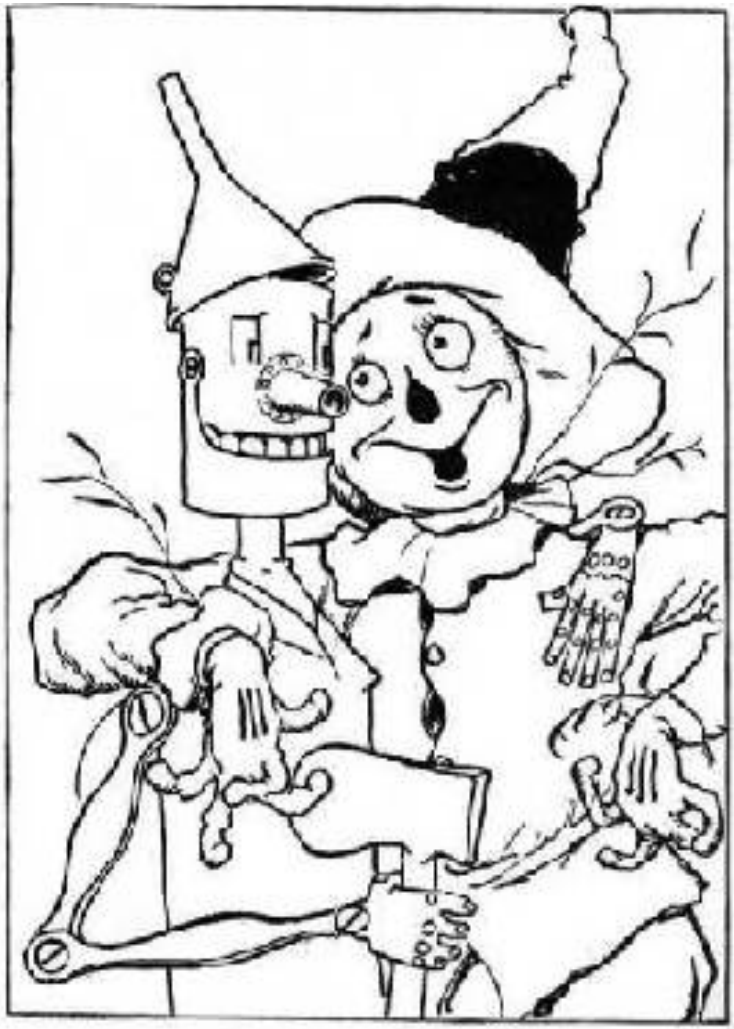
L. FRANK BAUM

“Royal Historian of Oz”



This Book
is Dedicated
to

My Son
Robert Stanton Baum



TO OUR READERS

Glinda the Good, lovely Sorceress of the Land of Oz and friend of Princess Ozma and Dorothy, has lots of personal acquaintances who want to know

more about her. So, in the new Oz story, Mr. L. Frank Baum, Royal Historian of Oz, has written a whole book about how Glinda and the Wizard worked with all their might to save the Princess and Dorothy from the dire dangers which threatened them when they went among the warring tribes of the Flatheads and Skeezers.

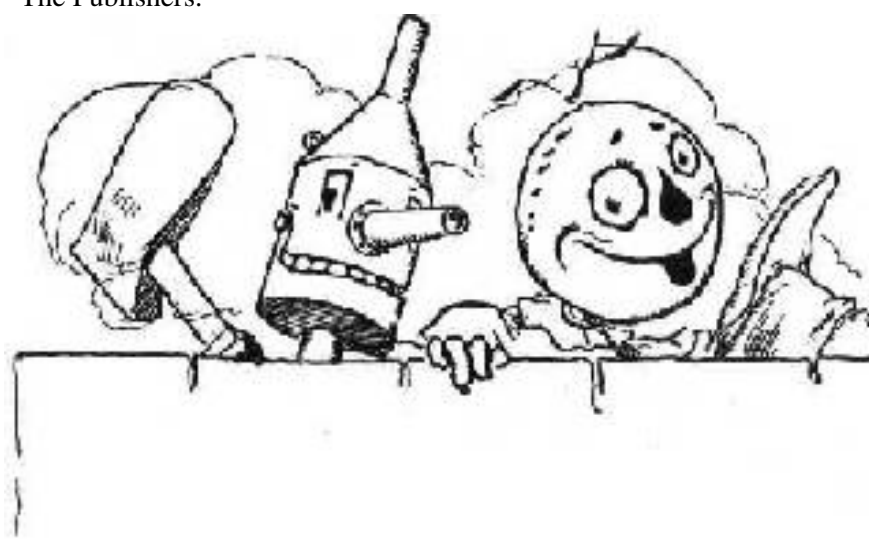
The wicked Queen Coo-ee-oh, a vain and evil witch, was really to blame for all the trouble. She surely succeeded in getting every one on the magic, glass-domed island of the Skeezers into amazing difficulties. When Mr. Baum tells you how worried everybody in the Land of Oz felt about the Princess Ozma and Dorothy and what wonderful sorcery Glinda had to perform to save them, you'll be thrilled with excitement and admiration. He reveals the most hidden mysteries of magic.

Mr. Baum did his best to answer all the letters from his small earth-friends before he had to leave them, but he couldn't answer quite all, for there were very many. In May, nineteen hundred nineteen, he went away to take his stories to the little child-souls who had lived here too long ago to read the Oz stories for themselves.

We are sorry he could not stay here and we are sad to tell you this is his last complete story. But he left some unfinished notes about the Princess Ozma and Dorothy and the Oz people and we promise that some day we will put them all together like a picture puzzle and give you more stories of the wonderful Land of Oz.

Cordially, your friends,

The Publishers.



Glinda
of Oz

CHAPTER 1

The Call to Duty

Glinda, the good Sorceress of Oz, sat in the grand court of her palace, surrounded by her maids of honor — a hundred of the most beautiful girls of the Fairyland of Oz. The palace court was built of rare marbles, exquisitely polished. Fountains tinkled musically here and there; the vast colonnade, open to the south, allowed the maidens, as they raised their heads from their embroideries, to gaze upon a vista of rose-hued fields and groves of trees bearing fruits or laden with sweet-scented flowers. At times one of the girls would start a song, the others joining in the chorus, or one would rise and dance, gracefully swaying to the music of a harp played by a companion. And then Glinda smiled, glad to see her maids mixing play with work.

Presently among the fields an object was seen moving, threading the broad path that led to the castle gate. Some of the girls looked upon this object enviously; the Sorceress merely gave it a glance and nodded her stately head as if pleased, for it meant the coming of her friend and mistress — the only one in all the land that Glinda bowed to.

Then up the path trotted a wooden animal attached to a red wagon, and as the quaint steed halted at the gate there descended from the wagon two young girls, Ozma, Ruler of Oz, and her companion, Princess Dorothy. Both were dressed in simple white muslin gowns, and as they ran up the marble steps of the palace they laughed and chatted as gaily as if they were not the most important persons in the world's loveliest fairyland.

The maids of honor had risen and stood with bowed heads to greet the royal Ozma, while Glinda came forward with outstretched arms to greet her guests.

"We've just come on a visit, you know," said Ozma. "Both Dorothy and I were wondering how we should pass the day when we happened to think we'd not been to your Quadling Country for weeks, so we took the Sawhorse and rode straight here."

"And we came so fast," added Dorothy, "that our hair is blown all fuzzy, for the Sawhorse makes a wind of his own. Usually it's a day's journey from the Em'rald City, but I don't s'pose we were two hours on the way."

"You are most welcome," said Glinda the Sorceress, and led them through the court to her magnificent reception hall. Ozma took the arm of her hostess, but Dorothy lagged behind, kissing some of the maids she knew best, talking with others, and making them all feel that she was their friend. When at last she joined Glinda and Ozma in the reception hall, she found them talking earnestly about the condition of the people, and how to make them more

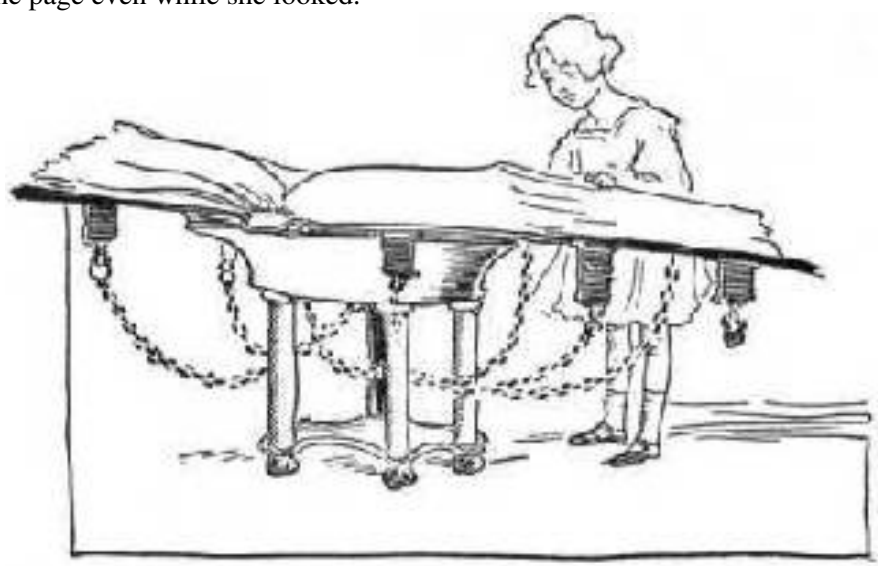
happy and contented — although they were already the happiest and most contented folks in all the world.

This interested Ozma, of course, but it didn't interest Dorothy very much, so the little girl ran over to a big table on which was lying open Glinda's Great Book of Records.

This Book is one of the greatest treasures in Oz, and the Sorceress prizes it more highly than any of her magical possessions. That is the reason it is firmly attached to the big marble table by means of golden chains, and whenever Glinda leaves home she locks the Great Book together with five jeweled padlocks, and carries the keys safely hidden in her bosom.

I do not suppose there is any magical thing in any fairyland to compare with the Record Book, on the pages of which are constantly being printed a record of every event that happens in any part of the world, at exactly the moment it happens. And the records are always truthful, although sometimes they do not give as many details as one could wish. But then, lots of things happen, and so the records have to be brief or even Glinda's Great Book could not hold them all.

Glinda looked at the records several times each day, and Dorothy, whenever she visited the Sorceress, loved to look in the Book and see what was happening everywhere. Not much was recorded about the Land of Oz, which is usually peaceful and uneventful, but today Dorothy found something which interested her. Indeed, the printed letters were appearing on the page even while she looked.



"This is funny!" she exclaimed. "Did you know, Ozma, that there were

people in your Land of Oz called Skeezers?"

"Yes," replied Ozma, coming to her side, "I know that on Professor Wogglebug's Map of the Land of Oz there is a place marked 'Skeezer,' but what the Skeezers are like I do not know. No one I know has ever seen them or heard of them. The Skeezer Country is 'way at the upper edge of the Gillikin Country, with the sandy, impassable desert on one side and the mountains of Oogaboo on another side. That is a part of the Land of Oz of which I know very little."

"I guess no one else knows much about it either, unless it's the Skeezers themselves," remarked Dorothy. "But the Book says: 'The Skeezers of Oz have declared war on the Flatheads of Oz, and there is likely to be fighting and much trouble as the result.'"

"Is that all the Book says?" asked Ozma.

"Every word," said Dorothy, and Ozma and Glinda both looked at the Record and seemed surprised and perplexed.

"Tell me, Glinda," said Ozma, "who are the Flatheads?"

"I cannot, your Majesty," confessed the Sorceress. "Until now I never have heard of them, nor have I ever heard the Skeezers mentioned. In the faraway corners of Oz are hidden many curious tribes of people, and those who never leave their own countries and never are visited by those from our favored part of Oz, naturally are unknown to me. However, if you so desire, I can learn through my arts of sorcery something of the Skeezers and the Flatheads."

"I wish you would," answered Ozma seriously. "You see, Glinda, if these are Oz people they are my subjects and I cannot allow any wars or troubles in the Land I rule, if I can possibly help it."

"Very well, your Majesty," said the Sorceress, "I will try to get some information to guide you. Please excuse me for a time, while I retire to my Room of Magic and Sorcery."

"May I go with you?" asked Dorothy, eagerly.

"No, Princess," was the reply. "It would spoil the charm to have anyone present."

So Glinda locked herself in her own Room of Magic and Dorothy and Ozma waited patiently for her to come out again.

In about an hour Glinda appeared, looking grave and thoughtful.

"Your Majesty," she said to Ozma, "the Skeezers live on a Magic Isle in a great lake. For that reason — because the Skeezers deal in magic — I can learn little about them."

"Why, I didn't know there was a lake in that part of Oz," exclaimed Ozma. "The map shows a river running through the Skeezer Country, but no

lake."

"That is because the person who made the map never had visited that part of the country," explained the Sorceress. "The lake surely is there, and in the lake is an island — a Magic Isle — and on that island live the people called the Skeezers."

"What are they like?" inquired the Ruler of Oz.

"My magic cannot tell me that," confessed Glinda, "for the magic of the Skeezers prevents anyone outside of their domain knowing anything about them."

"The Flatheads must know, if they're going to fight the Skeezers," suggested Dorothy.

"Perhaps so," Glinda replied, "but I can get little information concerning the Flatheads, either. They are people who inhabit a mountain just south of the Lake of the Skeezers. The mountain has steep sides and a broad, hollow top, like a basin, and in this basin the Flatheads have their dwellings. They also are magic-workers and usually keep to themselves and allow no one from outside to visit them. I have learned that the Flatheads number about one hundred people — men, women and children — while the Skeezers number just one hundred and one."

"What did they quarrel about, and why do they wish to fight one another?" was Ozma's next question.

"I cannot tell your Majesty that," said Glinda.

"But see here!" cried Dorothy, "it's against the law for anyone but Glinda and the Wizard to work magic in the Land of Oz, so if these two strange people are magic-makers they are breaking the law and ought to be punished!"

Ozma smiled upon her little friend.

"Those who do not know me or my laws," she said, "cannot be expected to obey my laws. If we know nothing of the Skeezers or the Flatheads, it is likely that they know nothing of us."

"But they *ought* to know, Ozma, and *we* ought to know. Who's going to tell them, and how are we going to make them behave?"

"That," returned Ozma, "is what I am now considering. What would you advise, Glinda?"

The Sorceress took a little time to consider this question, before she made reply. Then she said:

"Had you not learned of the existence of the Flatheads and the Skeezers, through my Book of Records, you would never have worried about them or their quarrels. So, if you pay no attention to these peoples, you may never hear of them again."

“But that wouldn’t be right,” declared Ozma. “I am Ruler of all the Land of Oz, which includes the Gillikin Country, the Quadling Country, the Winkie Country and the Munchkin Country, as well as the Emerald City, and being the Princess of this fairyland it is my duty to make all my people — wherever they may be — happy and content and to settle their disputes and keep them from quarreling. So, while the Skeezers and Flatheads may not know me or that I am their lawful Ruler, I now know that they inhabit my kingdom and are my subjects, so I would not be doing my duty if I kept away from them and allowed them to fight.”

“That’s a fact, Ozma,” commented Dorothy. “You’ve got to go up to the Gillikin Country and make these people behave themselves and make up their quarrels. But how are you going to do it?”

“That is what is puzzling me also, your Majesty,” said the Sorceress. “It may be dangerous for you to go into those strange countries, where the people are possibly fierce and warlike.”

“I am not afraid,” said Ozma, with a smile.

“‘Tisn’t a question of being ‘fraid,” argued Dorothy. “Of course we know you’re a fairy, and can’t be killed or hurt, and we know you’ve a lot of magic of your own to help you. But, Ozma dear, in spite of all this you’ve been in trouble before, on account of wicked enemies, and it isn’t right for the Ruler of all Oz to put herself in danger.”

“Perhaps I shall be in no danger at all,” returned Ozma, with a little laugh. “You mustn’t *imagine* danger, Dorothy, for one should only imagine nice things, and we do not know that the Skeezers and Flatheads are wicked people or my enemies. Perhaps they would be good and listen to reason.”

“Dorothy is right, your Majesty,” asserted the Sorceress. “It is true we know nothing of these faraway subjects, except that they intend to fight one another, and have a certain amount of magic power at their command. Such folks do not like to submit to interference and they are more likely to resent your coming among them than to receive you kindly and graciously, as is your due.”

“If you had an army to take with you,” added Dorothy, “it wouldn’t be so bad; but there isn’t such a thing as an army in all Oz.”

“I have one soldier,” said Ozma.

“Yes, the soldier with the green whiskers; but he’s dreadful ‘fraid of his gun and never loads it. I’m sure he’d run rather than fight. And one soldier, even if he were brave, couldn’t do much against two hundred and one Flatheads and Skeezers.”

“What then, my friends, would you suggest?” inquired Ozma.

“I advise you to send the Wizard of Oz to them, and let him inform them

that it is against the laws of Oz to fight, and that you command them to settle their differences and become friends," proposed Glinda. "Let the Wizard tell them they will be punished if they refuse to obey the commands of the Princess of all the Land of Oz."

Ozma shook her head, to indicate that the advice was not to her satisfaction.

"If they refuse, what then?" she asked. "I should be obliged to carry out my threat and punish them, and that would be an unpleasant and difficult thing to do. I am sure it would be better for me to go peacefully, without an army and armed only with my authority as Ruler, and plead with them to obey me. Then, if they prove obstinate I could resort to other means to win their obedience."

"It's a ticklish thing, anyhow you look at it," sighed Dorothy. "I'm sorry now that I noticed the Record in the Great Book."

"But can't you realize, my dear, that I must do my duty, now that I am aware of this trouble?" asked Ozma. "I am fully determined to go at once to the Magic Isle of the Skeezers and to the enchanted mountain of the Flatheads, and prevent war and strife between their inhabitants. The only question to decide is whether it is better for me to go alone, or to assemble a party of my friends and loyal supporters to accompany me."

"If you go I want to go, too," declared Dorothy. "Whatever happens it's going to be fun — 'cause all excitement is fun — and I wouldn't miss it for the world!"

Neither Ozma nor Glinda paid any attention to this statement, for they were gravely considering the serious aspect of this proposed adventure.

"There are plenty of friends who would like to go with you," said the Sorceress, "but none of them would afford your Majesty any protection in case you were in danger. You are yourself the most powerful fairy in Oz, although both I and the Wizard have more varied arts of magic at our command. However, you have one art that no other in all the world can equal — the art of winning hearts and making people love to bow to your gracious presence. For that reason I believe you can accomplish more good alone than with a large number of subjects in your train."

"I believe that also," agreed the Princess. "I shall be quite able to take care of myself, you know, but might not be able to protect others so well. I do not look for opposition, however. I shall speak to these people in kindly words and settle their dispute — whatever it may be — in a just manner."

"Aren't you going to take *me*?" pleaded Dorothy. "You'll need *some* companion, Ozma."

The Princess smiled upon her little friend.

"I see no reason why you should not accompany me," was her reply. "Two girls are not very warlike and they will not suspect us of being on any errand but a kindly and peaceful one. But, in order to prevent war and strife

between these angry peoples, we must go to them at once. Let us return immediately to the Emerald City and prepare to start on our journey early tomorrow morning."

Glinda was not quite satisfied with this plan, but could not think of any better way to meet the problem. She knew that Ozma, with all her gentleness and sweet disposition, was accustomed to abide by any decision she had made and could not easily be turned from her purpose. Moreover she could see no great danger to the fairy Ruler of Oz in the undertaking, even though the unknown people she was to visit proved obstinate. But Dorothy was not a fairy; she was a little girl who had come from Kansas to live in the Land of Oz. Dorothy might encounter dangers that to Ozma would be as nothing but to an "Earth child" would be very serious.

The very fact that Dorothy lived in Oz, and had been made a Princess by her friend Ozma, prevented her from being killed or suffering any great bodily pain as long as she lived in that fairyland. She could not grow big, either, and would always remain the same little girl who had come to Oz, unless in some way she left that fairyland or was spirited away from it. But Dorothy was a mortal, nevertheless, and might possibly be destroyed, or hidden where none of her friends could ever find her. She could, for instance, be cut into pieces, and the pieces, while still alive and free from pain, could be widely scattered; or she might be buried deep underground, or "destroyed" in other ways by evil magicians, were she not properly protected. These facts Glinda was

considering while she paced with stately tread her marble hall.

Finally the good Sorceress paused and drew a ring from her finger, handing it to Dorothy.

"Wear this ring constantly until your return," she said to the girl. "If serious danger threatens you, turn the ring around on your finger once to the right and another turn to the left. That will ring the alarm bell in my palace and I will at once come to your rescue. But do not use the ring unless you are actually in danger of destruction. While you remain with Princess Ozma I believe she will be able to protect you from all lesser ills."

"Thank you, Glinda," responded Dorothy gratefully, as she placed the ring on her finger. "I'm going to wear my Magic Belt which I took from the Nome King, too, so I guess I'll be safe from anything the Skeezers and Flatheads try to do to me."

Ozma had many arrangements to make before she could leave her throne and her palace in the Emerald City, even for a trip of a few days, so she bade good-bye to Glinda and with Dorothy climbed into the Red Wagon. A word to the wooden Sawhorse started that astonishing creature on the return journey, and so swiftly did he run that Dorothy was unable to talk or do anything but hold tight to her seat all the way back to the Emerald City.

CHAPTER 2

Ozma and Dorothy

Residing in Ozma's palace at this time was a live Scarecrow, a most remarkable and intelligent creature who had once ruled the Land of Oz for a brief period and was much loved and respected by all the people. Once a Munchkin farmer had stuffed an old suit of clothes with straw and put stuffed boots on the feet and used a pair of stuffed cotton gloves for hands. The head of the Scarecrow was a stuffed sack fastened to the body, with eyes, nose, mouth and ears painted on the sack. When a hat had been put on the head, the thing was a good imitation of a man. The farmer placed the Scarecrow on a pole in his cornfield and it came to life in a curious manner. Dorothy, who was passing by the field, was hailed by the live Scarecrow and lifted him off his pole. He then went with her to the Emerald City, where the Wizard of Oz gave him some excellent brains, and the Scarecrow soon became an important personage.

Ozma considered the Scarecrow one of her best friends and most loyal subjects, so the morning after her visit to Glinda she asked him to take her place as Ruler of the Land of Oz while she was absent on a journey, and the Scarecrow at once consented without asking any questions.

Ozma had warned Dorothy to keep their journey a secret and say nothing to anyone about the Skeezers and Flatheads until their return, and Dorothy promised to obey. She longed to tell her girl friends, tiny Trot and Betsy Bobbin, of the adventure they were undertaking, but refrained from saying a word on the subject although both these girls lived with her in Ozma's palace.

Indeed, only Glinda the Sorceress knew they were going, until after they had gone, and even the Sorceress didn't know what their errand might be.

Princess Ozma took the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon, although she was not sure there was a wagon road all the way to the Lake of the Skeezers. The Land of Oz is a pretty big place, surrounded on all sides by a Deadly Desert which it is impossible to cross, and the Skeezer Country, according to the map, was in the farthest northwestern part of Oz, bordering on the north desert. As the Emerald City was exactly in the center of Oz, it was no small journey from there to the Skeezers.

Around the Emerald City the country is thickly settled in every direction, but the farther away you get from the city the fewer people there are, until those parts that border on the desert have small populations. Also those faraway sections are little known to the Oz people, except in the south, where Glinda lives and where Dorothy has often wandered on trips of exploration.

The least known of all is the Gillikin Country, which harbors many strange bands of people among its mountains and valleys and forests and streams, and Ozma was now bound for the most distant part of the Gillikin Country.

"I am really sorry," said Ozma to Dorothy, as they rode away in the Red Wagon, "not to know more about the wonderful Land I rule. It is my duty to be acquainted with every tribe of people and every strange and hidden country in all Oz, but I am kept so busy at my palace making laws and planning for the comforts of those who live near the Emerald City, that I do not often find time to make long journeys."

"Well," replied Dorothy, "we'll prob'bly find out a lot on this trip, and we'll learn all about the Skeezers and Flatheads, anyhow. Time doesn't make much diff'rence in the Land of Oz, 'cause we don't grow up, or get old, or become sick and die, as they do other places; so, if we explore one place at a time, we'll by-an'-by know all about every nook and corner in Oz."

Dorothy wore around her waist the Nome King's Magic Belt, which protected her from harm, and the Magic Ring which Glinda had given her was on her finger. Ozma had merely slipped a small silver wand into the bosom of her gown, for fairies do not use chemicals and herbs and the tools of wizards and sorcerers to perform their magic. The Silver Wand was Ozma's one weapon of offense and defense and by its use she could accomplish many things.

They had left the Emerald City just at sunrise and the Sawhorse traveled very swiftly over the roads towards the north, but in a few hours the wooden animal had to slacken his pace because the farm houses had become few and

far between and often there were no paths at all in the direction they wished to follow. At such times they crossed the fields, avoiding groups of trees and fording the streams and rivulets whenever they came to them. But finally they reached a broad hillside closely covered with scrubby brush, through which the wagon could not pass.

"It will be difficult even for you and me to get through without tearing our dresses," said Ozma, "so we must leave the Sawhorse and the Wagon here until our return."

"That's all right," Dorothy replied, "I'm tired riding, anyhow. Do you s'pose, Ozma, we're anywhere near the Skeezer Country?"

"I cannot tell, Dorothy dear, but I know we've been going in the right direction, so we are sure to find it in time."

The scrubby brush was almost like a grove of small trees, for it reached as high as the heads of the two girls, neither of whom was very tall. They were obliged to thread their way in and out, until Dorothy was afraid they would get lost, and finally they were halted by a curious thing that barred their further progress. It was a huge web — as if woven by gigantic spiders — and the delicate, lacy film was fastened stoutly to the branches of the bushes and continued to the right and left in the form of a half circle. The threads of this web were of a brilliant purple color and woven into numerous artistic patterns, but it reached from the ground to branches above the heads of the girls and formed a sort of fence that hedged them in.

"It doesn't look very strong, though," said Dorothy. "I wonder if we couldn't break through." She tried but found the web stronger than it seemed. All her efforts could not break a single thread.

"We must go back, I think, and try to get around this peculiar web," Ozma decided.

So they turned to the right and, following the web, found that it seemed to spread in a regular circle. On and on they went until finally Ozma said they had returned to the exact spot from which they had started. "Here is a handkerchief you dropped when we were here before," she said to Dorothy.

"In that case, they must have built the web behind us, after we walked into the trap," exclaimed the little girl.

"True," agreed Ozma, "an enemy has tried to imprison us."

"And they did it, too," said Dorothy. "I wonder who it was."

"It's a spider-web, I'm quite sure," returned Ozma, "but it must be the work of enormous spiders."

"Quite right!" cried a voice behind them. Turning quickly around they beheld a huge purple spider sitting not two yards away and regarding them with its small bright eyes.

Then there crawled from the bushes a dozen more great purple spiders, which saluted the first one and said:

“The web is finished, O King, and the strangers are our prisoners.”

Dorothy did not like the looks of these spiders at all. They had big heads, sharp claws, small eyes and fuzzy hair all over their purple bodies.

“They look wicked,” she whispered to Ozma. “What shall we do?”

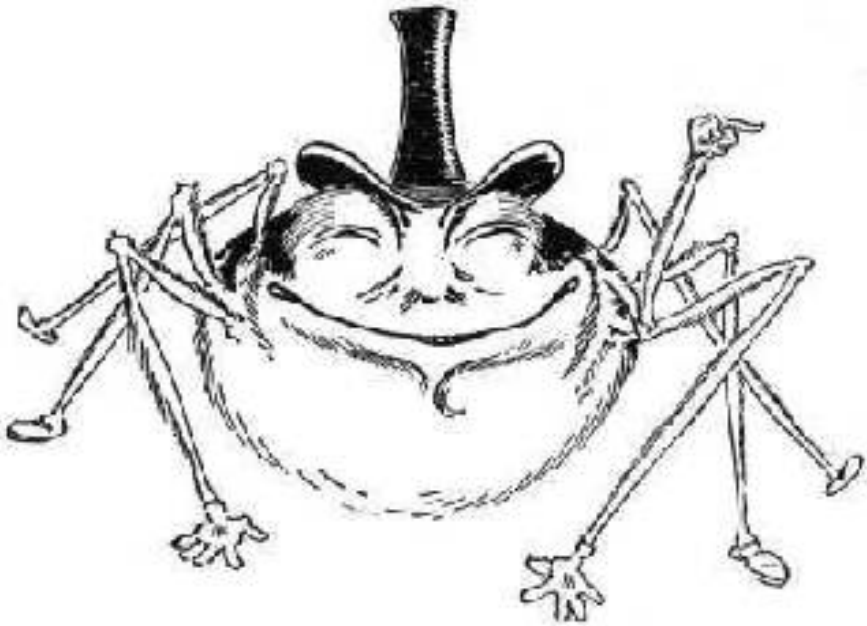
Ozma gazed upon the spiders with a serious face.

“What is your object in making us prisoners?” she inquired.

“We need someone to keep house for us,” answered the Spider King. “There is sweeping and dusting to be done, and polishing and washing of dishes, and that is work my people dislike to do. So we decided that if any strangers came our way we would capture them and make them our servants.”

“I am Princess Ozma, Ruler of all Oz,” said the girl with dignity.

“Well, I am King of all Spiders,” was the reply, “and that makes me your master. Come with me to my palace and I will instruct you in your work.”



"I won't," said Dorothy indignantly. "We won't have anything to do with you."

"We'll see about that," returned the Spider in a severe tone, and the next instant he made a dive straight at Dorothy, opening the claws in his legs as if to grab and pinch her with the sharp points. But the girl was wearing her Magic Belt and was not harmed. The Spider King could not even touch her.

He turned swiftly and made a dash at Ozma, but she held her Magic Wand over his head and the monster recoiled as if it had been struck.

"You'd better let us go," Dorothy advised him, "for you see you can't hurt us."

"So I see," returned the Spider King angrily. "Your magic is greater than mine. But I'll not help you to escape. If you can break the magic web my people have woven you may go; if not you must stay here and starve." With that the Spider King uttered a peculiar whistle and all the spiders disappeared.

"There is more magic in my fairyland than I dreamed of," remarked the beautiful Ozma, with a sigh of regret. "It seems that my laws have not been obeyed, for even these monstrous spiders defy me by means of magic."

"Never mind that now," said Dorothy; "let's see what we can do to get out of this trap."

They now examined the web with great care and were amazed at its strength. Although finer than the finest silken hairs, it resisted all their efforts

to work through, even though both girls threw all their weight against it.

"We must find some instrument which will cut the threads of the web," said Ozma, finally. "Let us look about for such a tool."

So they wandered among the bushes and finally came to a shallow pool of water, formed by a small bubbling spring. Dorothy stooped to get a drink and discovered in the water a green crab, about as big as her hand. The crab had two big, sharp claws, and as soon as Dorothy saw them she had an idea that those claws could save them.

"Come out of the water," she called to the crab; "I want to talk to you."

Rather lazily the crab rose to the surface and caught hold of a bit of rock. With his head above the water he said in a cross voice:

"What do you want?"

"We want you to cut the web of the purple spiders with your claws, so we can get through it," answered Dorothy. "You can do that, can't you?"

"I suppose so," replied the crab. "But if I do what will you give me?"

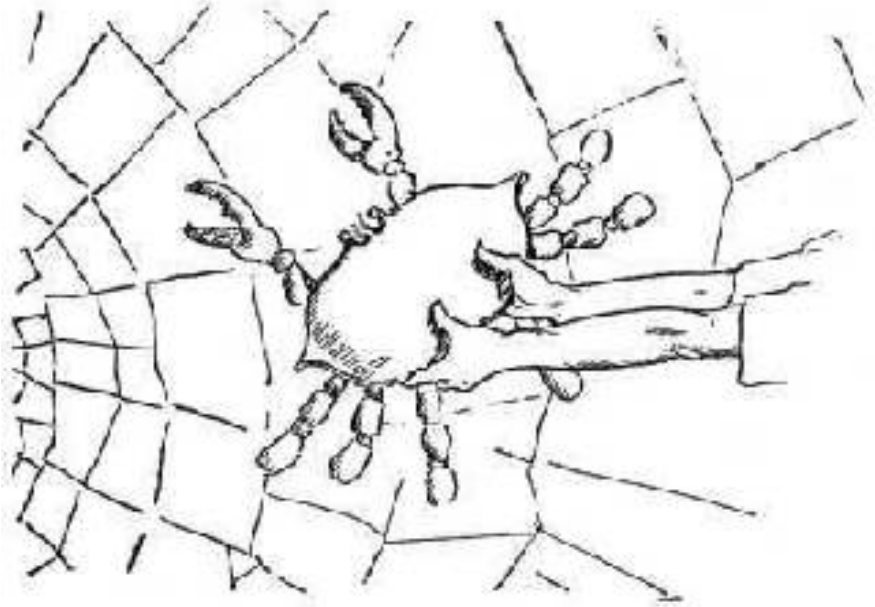
"What do you wish?" Ozma inquired.

"I wish to be white, instead of green," said the crab. "Green crabs are very common, and white ones are rare; besides the purple spiders, which infest this hillside, are afraid of white crabs. Could you make me white if I should agree to cut the web for you?"

"Yes," said Ozma, "I can do that easily. And, so you may know I am speaking the truth, I will change your color now."

She waved her silver wand over the pool and the crab instantly became snow-white — all except his eyes, which remained black. The creature saw his reflection in the water and was so delighted that he at once climbed out of the pool and began moving slowly toward the web, by backing away from the pool. He moved so very slowly that Dorothy cried out impatiently: "Dear me, this will never do!" Catching the crab in her hands she ran with him to the web.

She had to hold him up even then, so he could reach with his claws strand after strand of the filmy purple web, which he was able to sever with one nip.



When enough of the web had been cut to allow them to pass, Dorothy ran back to the pool and placed the white crab in the water, after which she rejoined Ozma. They were just in time to escape through the web, for several of the purple spiders now appeared, having discovered that their web had been cut, and had the girls not rushed through the opening the spiders would have quickly repaired the cuts and again imprisoned them.

Ozma and Dorothy ran as fast as they could and although the angry spiders threw a number of strands of web after them, hoping to lasso them or entangle them in the coils, they managed to escape and clamber to the top of the hill.

CHAPTER 3

The Mist Maidens

From the top of the hill Ozma and Dorothy looked down into the valley beyond and were surprised to find it filled with a floating mist that was as dense as smoke. Nothing in the valley was visible except these rolling waves of mist, but beyond, on the other side, rose a grassy hill that appeared quite beautiful.

"Well," said Dorothy, "what are we to do, Ozma? Walk down into that thick fog, an' prob'bly get lost in it, or wait till it clears away?"

"I'm not sure it will clear away, however long we wait," replied Ozma, doubtfully. "If we wish to get on, I think we must venture into the mist."

"But we can't see where we're going, or what we're stepping on," protested Dorothy. "There may be dreadful things mixed up in that fog, an' I'm scared just to think of wading into it."

Even Ozma seemed to hesitate. She was silent and thoughtful for a little while, looking at the rolling drifts that were so gray and forbidding. Finally she said:

"I believe this is a Mist Valley, where these moist clouds always remain, for even the sunshine above does not drive them away. Therefore the Mist Maids must live here, and they are fairies and should answer my call."

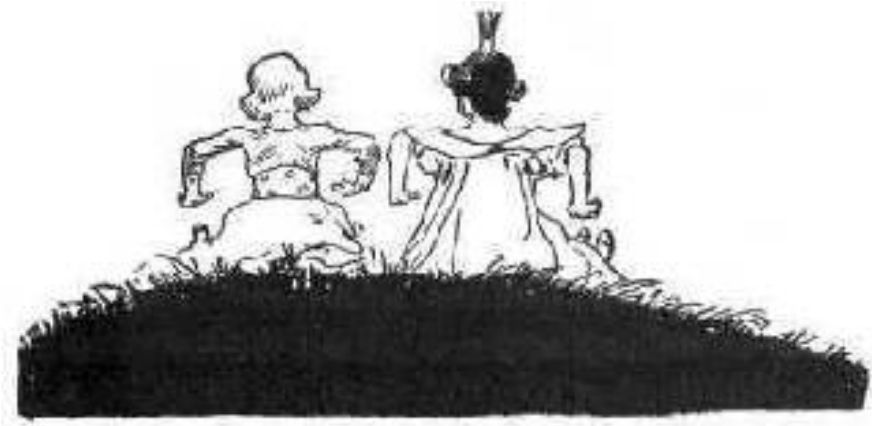
She placed her two hands before her mouth, forming a hollow with them, and uttered a clear, thrilling, bird-like cry. It floated far out over the mist waves and presently was answered by a similar sound, as of a far-off echo.

Dorothy was much impressed. She had seen many strange things since coming to this fairy country, but here was a new experience. At ordinary times Ozma was just like any little girl one might chance to meet — simple, merry, lovable as could be — yet with a certain reserve that lent her dignity in her most joyous moods. There were times, however, when seated on her throne and commanding her subjects, or when her fairy powers were called into use, when Dorothy and all others about her stood in awe of their lovely girl Ruler and realized her superiority.

Ozma waited. Presently out from the billows rose beautiful forms, clothed in fleecy, trailing garments of gray that could scarcely be distinguished from the mist. Their hair was mist-color, too; only their gleaming arms and sweet, pallid faces proved they were living, intelligent creatures answering the call of a sister fairy.

Like sea nymphs they rested on the bosom of the clouds, their eyes turned questioningly upon the two girls who stood upon the bank. One came quite near and to her Ozma said:

“Will you please take us to the opposite hillside? We are afraid to venture into the mist. I am Princess Ozma of Oz, and this is my friend Dorothy, a Princess of Oz.”



The Mist Maids came nearer, holding out their arms. Without hesitation Ozma advanced and allowed them to embrace her and Dorothy plucked up courage to follow. Very gently the Mist Maids held them. Dorothy thought the arms were cold and misty — they didn’t seem real at all — yet they supported the two girls above the surface of the billows and floated with them so swiftly to the green hillside opposite that the girls were astonished to find themselves set upon the grass before they realized they had fairly started.

“Thank you!” said Ozma gratefully, and Dorothy also added her thanks for the service.

The Mist Maids made no answer, but they smiled and waved their hands in good-bye as again they floated out into the mist and disappeared from view.

CHAPTER 4

The Magic Tent

"Well," said Dorothy with a laugh, "that was easier than I expected. It's worth while, sometimes, to be a real fairy. But I wouldn't like to be that kind, and live in a dreadful fog all the time."

They now climbed the bank and found before them a delightful plain that spread for miles in all directions. Fragrant wild flowers were scattered throughout the grass; there were bushes bearing lovely blossoms and luscious fruits; now and then a group of stately trees added to the beauty of the landscape. But there were no dwellings or signs of life.

The farther side of the plain was bordered by a row of palms, and just in front of the palms rose a queerly shaped hill that towered above the plain like a mountain. The sides of this hill were straight up and down; it was oblong in shape and the top seemed flat and level.

"Oh, ho!" cried Dorothy; "I'll bet that's the mountain Glinda told us of, where the Flatheads live."

"If it is," replied Ozma, "the Lake of the Skeezers must be just beyond the line of palm trees. Can you walk that far, Dorothy?"

"Of course, in time," was the prompt answer. "I'm sorry we had to leave the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon behind us, for they'd come in handy just now; but with the end of our journey in sight a tramp across these pretty green fields won't tire us a bit."

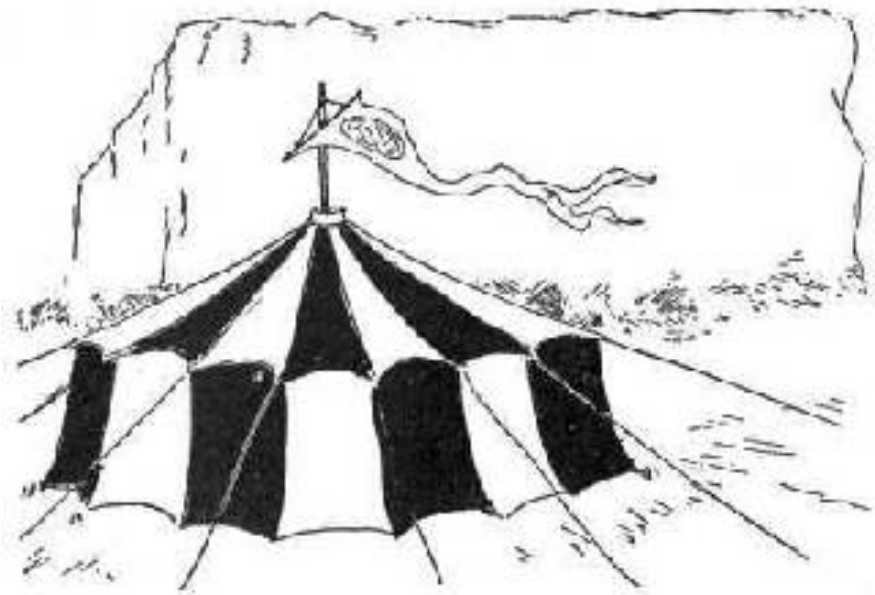
It was a longer tramp than they suspected, however, and night overtook them before they could reach the flat mountain. So Ozma proposed they camp for the night and Dorothy was quite ready to approve. She didn't like to admit to her friend she was tired, but she told herself that her legs "had prickers in 'em," meaning they had begun to ache.

Usually when Dorothy started on a journey of exploration or adventure, she carried with her a basket of food, and other things that a traveler in a strange country might require, but to go away with Ozma was quite a different thing, as experience had taught her. The fairy Ruler of Oz only needed her silver wand — tipped at one end with a great sparkling emerald — to provide through its magic all that they might need. Therefore Ozma, having halted with her companion and selected a smooth, grassy spot on the plain, waved her wand in graceful curves and chanted some mystic words in her sweet voice, and in an instant a handsome tent appeared before them. The canvas was striped purple and white, and from the center pole fluttered the royal banner of Oz.

"Come, dear," said Ozma, taking Dorothy's hand, "I am hungry and I'm

sure you must be also; so let us go in and have our feast."

On entering the tent they found a table set for two, with snowy linen, bright silver and sparkling glassware, a vase of roses in the center and many dishes of delicious food, some smoking hot, waiting to satisfy their hunger. Also, on either side of the tent were beds, with satin sheets, warm blankets and pillows filled with swansdown. There were chairs, too, and tall lamps that lighted the interior of the tent with a soft, rosy glow.



Dorothy, resting herself at her fairy friend's command, and eating her dinner with unusual enjoyment, thought of the wonders of magic. If one were a fairy and knew the secret laws of nature and the mystic words and ceremonies that commanded those laws, then a simple wave of a silver wand would produce instantly all that men work hard and anxiously for through weary years. And Dorothy wished in her kindly, innocent heart, that all men and women could be fairies with silver wands, and satisfy all their needs without so much work and worry, for then, she imagined, they would have all their working hours to be happy in. But Ozma, looking into her friend's face and reading those thoughts, gave a laugh and said:

"No, no, Dorothy, that wouldn't do at all. Instead of happiness your plan would bring weariness to the world. If every one could wave a wand and have his wants fulfilled there would be little to wish for. There would be no eager striving to obtain the difficult, for nothing would then be difficult, and the pleasure of earning something longed for, and only to be secured by hard work and careful thought, would be utterly lost. There would be nothing to

do, you see, and no interest in life and in our fellow creatures. That is all that makes life worth our while — to do good deeds and to help those less fortunate than ourselves."

"Well, you're a fairy, Ozma. Aren't you happy?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, dear, because I can use my fairy powers to make others happy. Had I no kingdom to rule, and no subjects to look after, I would be miserable. Also, you must realize that while I am a more powerful fairy than any other inhabitant of Oz, I am not as powerful as Glinda the Sorceress, who has studied many arts of magic that I know nothing of. Even the little Wizard of Oz can do some things I am unable to accomplish, while I can accomplish things unknown to the Wizard. This is to explain that I am not all-powerful, by any means. My magic is simply fairy magic, and not sorcery or wizardry."

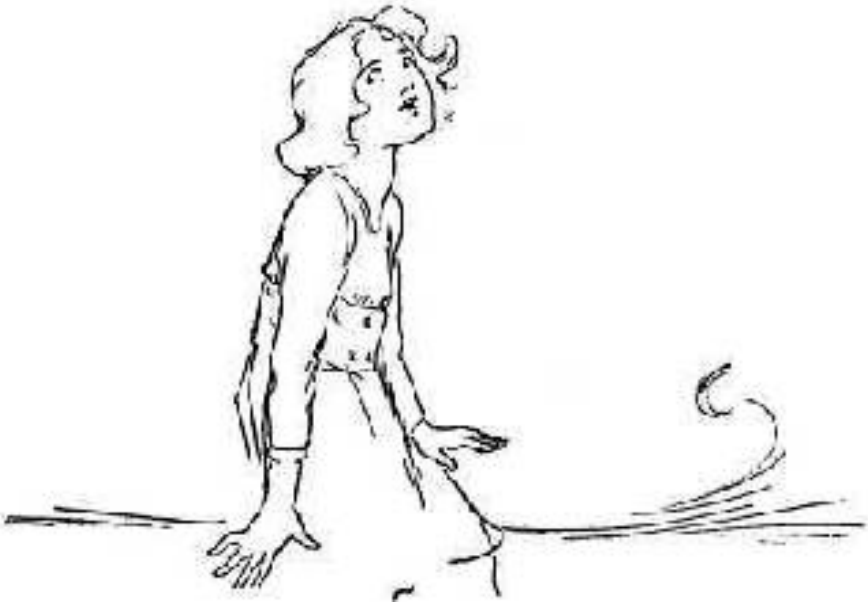
"All the same," said Dorothy, "I'm mighty glad you could make this tent appear, with our dinners and beds all ready for us."

Ozma smiled.

"Yes, it is indeed wonderful," she agreed. "Not all fairies know that sort of magic, but some fairies can do magic that fills me with astonishment. I think that is what makes us modest and unassuming — the fact that our magic arts are divided, some being given each of us. I'm glad I don't know everything, Dorothy, and that there still are things in both nature and in wit for me to marvel at."

Dorothy couldn't quite understand this, so she said nothing more on the subject and presently had a new reason to marvel. For when they had quite finished their meal table and contents disappeared in a flash.

"No dishes to wash, Ozma!" she said with a laugh. "I guess you'd make a lot of folks happy if you could teach 'em just that one trick."



For an hour Ozma told stories, and talked with Dorothy about various people in whom they were interested. And then it was bedtime, and they undressed and crept into their soft beds and fell asleep almost as soon as their heads touched their pillows.

CHAPTER 5

The Magic Stairway

The flat mountain looked much nearer in the clear light of the morning sun, but Dorothy and Ozma knew there was a long tramp before them, even yet. They finished dressing only to find a warm, delicious breakfast awaiting them, and having eaten they left the tent and started toward the mountain which was their first goal. After going a little way Dorothy looked back and found that the fairy tent had entirely disappeared. She was not surprised, for she knew this would happen.

"Can't your magic give us a horse an' wagon, or an automobile?" inquired Dorothy.

"No, dear; I'm sorry that such magic is beyond my power," confessed her fairy friend.

"Perhaps Glinda could," said Dorothy thoughtfully.

"Glinda has a stork chariot that carries her through the air," said Ozma, "but even our great Sorceress cannot conjure up other modes of travel. Don't forget what I told you last night, that no one is powerful enough to do everything."

"Well, I s'pose I ought to know that, having lived so long in the Land of Oz," replied Dorothy; "but *I* can't do any magic at all, an' so I can't figure out e'zactly how you an' Glinda an' the Wizard do it."

"Don't try," laughed Ozma. "But you have at least one magical art, Dorothy: you know the trick of winning all hearts."

"No, I don't," said Dorothy earnestly. "If I really can do it, Ozma, I am sure I don't know *how* I do it."

It took them a good two hours to reach the foot of the round, flat mountain, and then they found the sides so steep that they were like the wall of a house.

"Even my purple kitten couldn't climb 'em," remarked Dorothy, gazing upward.

"But there is some way for the Flatheads to get down and up again," declared Ozma; "otherwise they couldn't make war with the Skeezers, or even meet them and quarrel with them."

"That's so, Ozma. Let's walk around a ways; perhaps we'll find a ladder or something."

They walked quite a distance, for it was a big mountain, and as they circled around it and came to the side that faced the palm trees, they suddenly discovered an entrance way cut out of the rock wall. This entrance was arched overhead and not very deep because it merely led to a short flight

of stone stairs.

"Oh, we've found a way to the top at last," announced Ozma, and the two girls turned and walked straight toward the entrance. Suddenly they bumped against something and stood still, unable to proceed farther.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dorothy, rubbing her nose, which had struck something hard, although she could not see what it was; "this isn't as easy as it looks. What has stopped us, Ozma? Is it magic of some sort?"

Ozma was feeling around, her hands outstretched before her.

"Yes, dear, it is magic," she replied. "The Flatheads had to have a way from their mountain top from the plain below, but to prevent enemies from rushing up the stairs to conquer them, they have built, at a small distance before the entrance a wall of solid stone, the stones being held in place by cement, and then they made the wall invisible."

"I wonder why they did that?" mused Dorothy. "A wall would keep folks out anyhow, whether it could be seen or not, so there wasn't any use making it invisible. Seems to me it would have been better to have left it solid, for then no one would have seen the entrance behind it. Now anybody can see the entrance, as we did. And prob'bly anybody that tries to go up the stairs gets bumped, as we did."

Ozma made no reply at once. Her face was grave and thoughtful.

"I think I know the reason for making the wall invisible," she said after a while. "The Flatheads use the stairs for coming down and going up. If there was a solid stone wall to keep them from reaching the plain they would themselves be imprisoned by the wall. So they had to leave some place to get around the wall, and, if the wall was visible, all strangers or enemies would find the place to go around it and then the wall would be useless. So the Flatheads cunningly made their wall invisible, believing that everyone who saw the entrance to the mountain would walk straight toward it, as we did, and find it impossible to go any farther. I suppose the wall is really high and thick, and can't be broken through, so those who find it in their way are obliged to go away again."

"Well," said Dorothy, "if there's a way around the wall, where is it?"

"We must find it," returned Ozma, and began feeling her way along the wall. Dorothy followed and began to get discouraged when Ozma had walked nearly a quarter of a mile away from the entrance. But now the invisible wall curved in toward the side of the mountain and suddenly ended, leaving just space enough between the wall and the mountain for an ordinary person to pass through.

The girls went in, single file, and Ozma explained that they were now behind the barrier and could go back to the entrance. They met no further

obstructions.

"Most people, Ozma, wouldn't have figured this thing out the way you did," remarked Dorothy. "If I'd been alone the invisible wall surely would have stumped me."

Reaching the entrance they began to mount the stone stairs. They went up ten stairs and then down five stairs, following a passage cut from the rock. The stairs were just wide enough for the two girls to walk abreast, arm in arm. At the bottom of the five stairs the passage turned to the right, and they ascended ten more stairs, only to find at the top of the flight five stairs leading straight down again. Again the passage turned abruptly, this time to the left, and ten more stairs led upward.

The passage was now quite dark, for they were in the heart of the mountain and all daylight had been shut out by the turns of the passage. However, Ozma drew her silver wand from her bosom and the great jewel at its end gave out a lustrous, green-tinted light which lighted the place well enough for them to see their way plainly.

Ten steps up, five steps down, and a turn, this way or that. That was the program, and Dorothy figured that they were only gaining five stairs upward each trip that they made.

"Those Flatheads must be funny people," she said to Ozma. "They don't seem to do anything in a bold, straightforward manner. In making this passage they forced everyone to walk three times as far as is necessary. And of course this trip is just as tiresome to the Flatheads as it is to other folks."

"That is true," answered Ozma; "yet it is a clever arrangement to prevent their being surprised by intruders. Every time we reach the tenth step of a flight, the pressure of our feet on the stone makes a bell ring on top of the mountain, to warn the Flatheads of our coming."

"How do you know that?" demanded Dorothy, astonished.

"I've heard the bell ever since we started," Ozma told her. "You could not hear it, I know, but when I am holding my wand in my hand I can hear sounds a great distance off."

"Do you hear anything on top of the mountain 'cept the bell?" inquired Dorothy.

"Yes. The people are calling to one another in alarm and many footsteps are approaching the place where we will reach the flat top of the mountain."

This made Dorothy feel somewhat anxious.

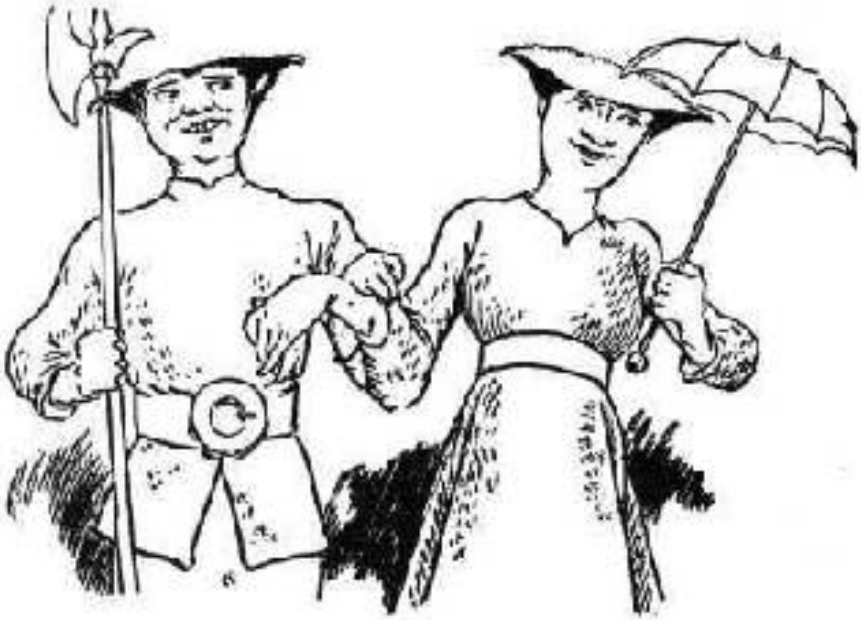
"I'd thought we were going to visit just common, ordinary people," she remarked, "but they're pretty clever, it seems, and they know some kinds of magic, too. They may be dangerous, Ozma. P'raps we'd better stayed at home."

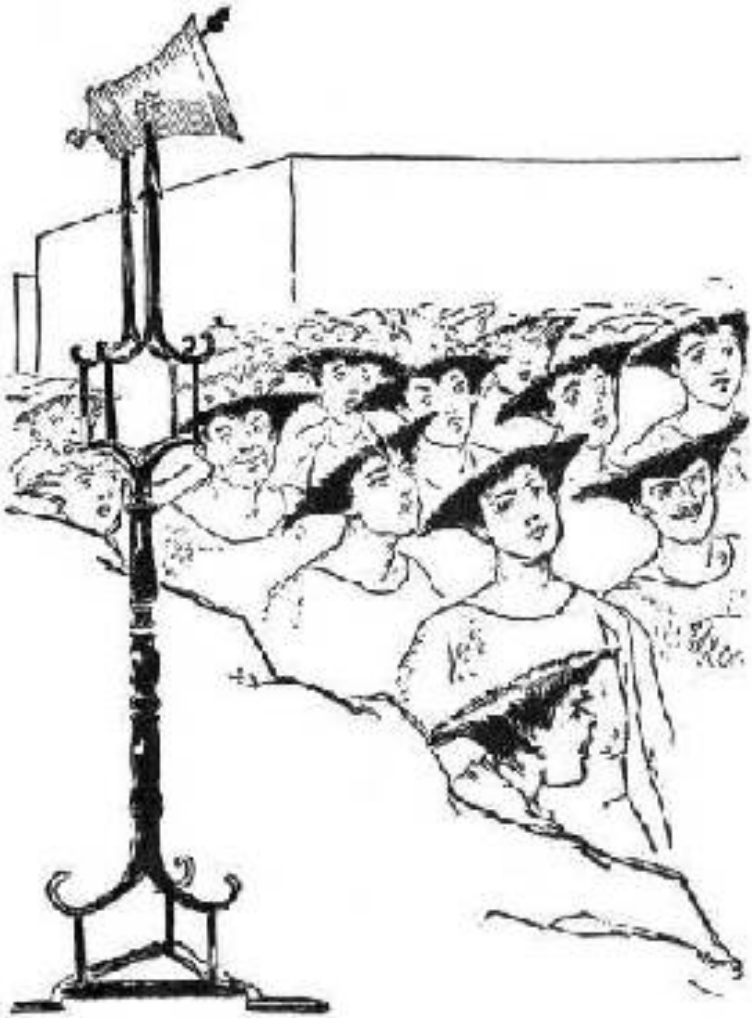
Finally the upstairs-and-downstairs passage seemed coming to an end, for daylight again appeared ahead of the two girls and Ozma replaced her wand in the bosom of her gown. The last ten steps brought them to the surface, where they found themselves surrounded by such a throng of queer people that for a time they halted, speechless, and stared into the faces that confronted them.

Dorothy knew at once why these mountain people were called Flatheads. Their heads were really flat on top, as if they had been cut off just above the eyes and ears. Also the heads were bald, with no hair on top at all, and the ears were big and stuck straight out, and the noses were small and stubby, while the mouths of the Flatheads were well shaped and not unusual. Their eyes were perhaps their best feature, being large and bright and a deep violet in color.

The costumes of the Flatheads were all made of metals dug from their mountain. Small gold, silver, tin and iron discs, about the size of pennies, and very thin, were cleverly wired together and made to form knee trousers and jackets for the men and skirts and waists for the women. The colored metals were skillfully mixed to form stripes and checks of various sorts, so that the costumes were quite gorgeous and reminded Dorothy of pictures she had seen of Knights of old clothed in armor.

Aside from their flat heads, these people were not really bad looking. The men were armed with bows and arrows and had small axes of steel stuck in their metal belts. They wore no hats nor ornaments.





CHAPTER 6

Flathead Mountain

When they saw that the intruders on their mountain were only two little girls, the Flatheads grunted with satisfaction and drew back, permitting them to see what the mountain top looked like. It was shaped like a saucer, so that the houses and other buildings — all made of rocks — could not be seen over the edge by anyone standing in the plain below.

But now a big fat Flathead stood before the girls and in a gruff voice demanded:

"What are you doing here? Have the Skeezers sent you to spy upon us?"

"I am Princess Ozma, Ruler of all the Land of Oz."

"Well, I've never heard of the Land of Oz, so you may be what you claim," returned the Flathead.

"This is the Land of Oz — part of it, anyway," exclaimed Dorothy. "So Princess Ozma rules you Flathead people, as well as all the other people in Oz."

The man laughed, and all the others who stood around laughed, too. Some one in the crowd called:

"She'd better not tell the Supreme Dictator about ruling the Flatheads. Eh, friends?"

"No, indeed!" they all answered in positive tones.

"Who is your Supreme Dictator?" answered Ozma.

"I think I'll let him tell you that himself," answered the man who had first spoken. "You have broken our laws by coming here; and whoever you are the Supreme Dictator must fix your punishment. Come along with me."

He started down a path and Ozma and Dorothy followed him without protest, as they wanted to see the most important person in this queer country. The houses they passed seemed pleasant enough and each had a little yard in which were flowers and vegetables. Walls of rock separated the dwellings, and all the paths were paved with smooth slabs of rock. This seemed their only building material and they utilized it cleverly for every purpose.

Directly in the center of the great saucer stood a larger building which the Flathead informed the girls was the palace of the Supreme Dictator. He led them through an entrance hall into a big reception room, where they sat upon stone benches and awaited the coming of the Dictator. Pretty soon he entered from another room — a rather lean and rather old Flathead, dressed much like the others of this strange race, and only distinguished from them by the sly and cunning expression of his face. He kept his eyes half closed and looked through the slits of them at Ozma and Dorothy, who rose to receive him.

"Are you the Supreme Dictator of the Flatheads?" inquired Ozma.

"Yes, that's me," he said, rubbing his hands slowly together. "My word is law. I'm the head of the Flatheads on this flat headland."

"I am Princess Ozma of Oz, and I have come from the Emerald City to — — "

"Stop a minute," interrupted the Dictator, and turned to the man who had brought the girls there. "Go away, Dictator Felo Flathead!" he commanded. "Return to your duty and guard the Stairway. I will look after these strangers." The man bowed and departed, and Dorothy asked wonderingly:

"Is *he* a Dictator, too?"

"Of course," was the answer. "Everybody here is a dictator of something or other. They're all office holders. That's what keeps them contented. But I'm the Supreme Dictator of all, and I'm elected once a year. This is a democracy, you know, where the people are allowed to vote for their rulers. A good many others would like to be Supreme Dictator, but as I made a law that I am always to count the votes myself, I am always elected."

"What is your name?" asked Ozma.

“I am called the Su-dic, which is short for Supreme Dictator. I sent that man away because the moment you mentioned Ozma of Oz, and the Emerald City, I knew who you are. I suppose I’m the only Flathead that ever heard of you, but that’s because I have more brains than the rest.”

Dorothy was staring hard at the Su-dic.

“I don’t see how you can have any brains at all,” she remarked, “because the part of your head is gone where brains are kept.”

“I don’t blame you for thinking that,” he said. “Once the Flatheads had no brains because, as you say, there is no upper part to their heads, to hold brains. But long, long ago a band of fairies flew over this country and made it all a fairyland, and when they came to the Flatheads the fairies were sorry to find them all very stupid and quite unable to think. So, as there was no good place in their bodies in which to put brains the Fairy Queen gave each one of us a nice can of brains to carry in his pocket and that made us just as intelligent as other people. See,” he continued, “here is one of the cans of brains the fairies gave us.” He took from a pocket a bright tin can having a pretty red label on it which said: “Flathead Concentrated Brains, Extra Quality.”

“And does every Flathead have the same kind of brains?” asked Dorothy.

“Yes, they’re all alike. Here’s another can.” From another pocket he

produced a second can of brains.

"Did the fairies give you a double supply?" inquired Dorothy.

"No, but one of the Flatheads thought he wanted to be the Su-dic and tried to get my people to rebel against me, so I punished him by taking away his brains. One day my wife scolded me severely, so I took away her can of brains. She didn't like that and went out and robbed several women of *their* brains. Then I made a law that if anyone stole another's brains, or even tried to borrow them, he would forfeit his own brains to the Su-dic. So each one is content with his own canned brains and my wife and I are the only ones on the mountain with more than one can. I have three cans and that makes me very clever — so clever that I'm a good Sorcerer, if I do say it myself. My poor wife had four cans of brains and became a remarkable witch, but alas! that was before those terrible enemies, the Skeezers, transformed her into a Golden Pig."

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy; "is your wife really a Golden Pig?"

"She is. The Skeezers did it and so I have declared war on them. In revenge for making my wife a Pig I intend to ruin their Magic Island and make the Skeezers the slaves of the Flatheads!"

The Su-dic was very angry now; his eyes flashed and his face took on a wicked and fierce expression. But Ozma said to him, very sweetly and in a friendly voice:

"I am sorry to hear this. Will you please tell me more about your troubles with the Skeezers? Then perhaps I can help you."

She was only a girl, but there was dignity in her pose and speech which impressed the Su-dic.

"If you are really Princess Ozma of Oz," the Flathead said, "you are one of that band of fairies who, under Queen Lurline, made all Oz a Fairyland. I have heard that Lurline left one of her own fairies to rule Oz, and gave the fairy the name of Ozma."

"If you knew this why did you not come to me at the Emerald City and tender me your loyalty and obedience?" asked the Ruler of Oz.

"Well, I only learned the fact lately, and I've been too busy to leave home," he explained, looking at the floor instead of into Ozma's eyes. She knew he had spoken a falsehood, but only said:

"Why did you quarrel with the Skeezers?"

"It was this way," began the Su-dic, glad to change the subject. "We Flatheads love fish, and as we have no fish on this mountain we would sometimes go to the Lake of the Skeezers to catch fish. This made the Skeezers angry, for they declared the fish in their lake belonged to them and were under their protection and they forbade us to catch them. That was very

mean and unfriendly in the Skeezers, you must admit, and when we paid no attention to their orders they set a guard on the shore of the lake to prevent our fishing.

"Now, my wife, Rora Flathead, having four cans of brains, had become a wonderful witch, and fish being brain food, she loved to eat fish better than any one of us. So she vowed she would destroy every fish in the lake, unless the Skeezers let us catch what we wanted. They defied us, so Rora prepared a kettleful of magic poison and went down to the lake one night to dump it all in the water and poison the fish. It was a clever idea, quite worthy of my dear wife, but the Skeezer Queen — a young lady named Coo-ee-oh — hid on the bank of the lake and taking Rora unawares, transformed her into a Golden Pig. The poison was spilled on the ground and wicked Queen Coo-ee-oh, not content with her cruel transformation, even took away my wife's four cans of brains, so she is now a common grunting pig without even brains enough to know her own name."

"Then," said Ozma thoughtfully, "the Queen of the Skeezers must be a Sorceress."

"Yes," said the Su-dic, "but she doesn't know much magic, after all. She is not as powerful as Rora Flathead was, nor half as powerful as I am now, as Queen Coo-ee-oh will discover when we fight our great battle and destroy her."

"The Golden Pig can't be a witch any more, of course," observed Dorothy.

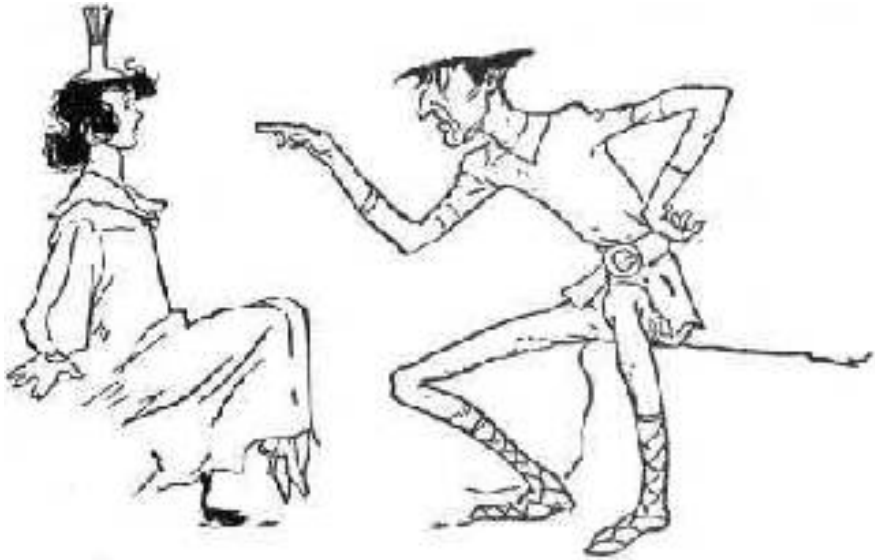
"No; even had Queen Coo-ee-oh left her the four cans of brains, poor Rora, in a pig's shape, couldn't do any witchcraft. A witch has to use her fingers, and a pig has only cloven hoofs."

"It seems a sad story," was Ozma's comment, "and all the trouble arose because the Flatheads wanted fish that did not belong to them."

"As for that," said the Su-dic, again angry, "I made a law that any of my people could catch fish in the Lake of the Skeezers, whenever they wanted to. So the trouble was through the Skeezers defying my law."

"You can only make laws to govern your own people," asserted Ozma sternly. "I, alone, am empowered to make laws that must be obeyed by all the peoples of Oz."

"Pooh!" cried the Su-dic scornfully. "You can't make *me* obey your laws, I assure you. I know the extent of your powers, Princess Ozma of Oz, and I know that I am more powerful than you are. To prove it I shall keep you and your companion prisoners in this mountain until after we have fought and conquered the Skeezers. Then, if you promise to be good, I may let you go home again."



Dorothy was amazed by this effrontery and defiance of the beautiful girl Ruler of Oz, whom all until now had obeyed without question. But Ozma, still unruffled and dignified, looked at the Su-dic and said:

"You did not mean that. You are angry and speak unwisely, without reflection. I came here from my palace in the Emerald City to prevent war and to make peace between you and the Skeezers. I do not approve of Queen Coo-ee-oh's action in transforming your wife Rora into a pig, nor do I approve of Rora's cruel attempt to poison the fishes in the lake. No one has the right to work magic in my dominions without my consent, so the Flatheads and the Skeezers have both broken my laws — which must be obeyed."

"If you want to make peace," said the Su-dic, "make the Skeezers restore my wife to her proper form and give back her four cans of brains. Also make them agree to allow us to catch fish in their lake."

"No," returned Ozma, "I will not do that, for it would be unjust. I will have the Golden Pig again transformed into your wife Rora, and give her one can of brains, but the other three cans must be restored to those she robbed. Neither may you catch fish in the Lake of the Skeezers, for it is their lake and the fish belong to them. This arrangement is just and honorable, and you must agree to it."

"Never!" cried the Su-dic. Just then a pig came running into the room, uttering dismal grunts. It was made of solid gold, with joints at the bends of the legs and in the neck and jaws. The Golden Pig's eyes were rubies, and its teeth were polished ivory.

“There!” said the Su-dic, “gaze on the evil work of Queen Coo-ee-oh, and then say if you can prevent my making war on the Skeezers. That grunting beast was once my wife — the most beautiful Flathead on our mountain and a skillful witch. Now look at her!”

“Fight the Skeezers, fight the Skeezers, fight the Skeezers!” grunted the Golden Pig.

“I *will* fight the Skeezers,” exclaimed the Flathead chief, “and if a dozen Ozmas of Oz forbade me I would fight just the same.”

“Not if I can prevent it!” asserted Ozma.

“You can’t prevent it. But since you threaten me, I’ll have you confined in the bronze prison until the war is over,” said the Su-dic. He whistled and four stout Flatheads, armed with axes and spears, entered the room and saluted him. Turning to the men he said: “Take these two girls, bind them with wire ropes and cast them into the bronze prison.”.

The four men bowed low and one of them asked:

“Where are the two girls, most noble Su-dic?”

The Su-dic turned to where Ozma and Dorothy had stood but they had vanished!

CHAPTER 7

The Magic Isle

Ozma, seeing it was useless to argue with the Supreme Dictator of the Flatheads, had been considering how best to escape from his power. She realized that his sorcery might be difficult to overcome, and when he threatened to cast Dorothy and her into a bronze prison she slipped her hand into her bosom and grasped her silver wand. With the other hand she grasped the hand of Dorothy, but these motions were so natural that the Su-dic did not notice them. Then when he turned to meet his four soldiers, Ozma instantly rendered both herself and Dorothy invisible and swiftly led her companion around the group of Flatheads and out of the room. As they reached the entry and descended the stone steps, Ozma whispered:

"Let us run, dear! We are invisible, so no one will see us."

Dorothy understood and she was a good runner. Ozma had marked the place where the grand stairway that led to the plain was located, so they made directly for it. Some people were in the paths but these they dodged around. One or two Flatheads heard the pattering of footsteps of the girls on the stone pavement and stopped with bewildered looks to gaze around them, but no one interfered with the invisible fugitives.

The Su-dic had lost no time in starting the chase. He and his men ran so fast that they might have overtaken the girls before they reached the stairway had not the Golden Pig suddenly run across their path. The Su-dic tripped over the pig and fell flat, and his four men tripped over him and tumbled in a heap. Before they could scramble up and reach the mouth of the passage it was too late to stop the two girls.

There was a guard on each side of the stairway, but of course they did not see Ozma and Dorothy as they sped past and descended the steps. Then they had to go up five steps and down another ten, and so on, in the same manner in which they had climbed to the top of the mountain. Ozma lighted their way with her wand and they kept on without relaxing their speed until they reached the bottom. Then they ran to the right and turned the corner of the invisible wall just as the Su-dic and his followers rushed out of the arched entrance and looked around in an attempt to discover the fugitives.

Ozma now knew they were safe, so she told Dorothy to stop and both of them sat down on the grass until they could breathe freely and become rested from their mad flight.

As for the Su-dic, he realized he was foiled and soon turned and climbed his stairs again. He was very angry — angry with Ozma and angry with himself — because, now that he took time to think, he remembered that he

knew very well the art of making people invisible, and visible again, and if he had only thought of it in time he could have used his magic knowledge to make the girls visible and so have captured them easily. However, it was now too late for regrets and he determined to make preparations at once to march all his forces against the Skeezers.

"What shall we do next?" asked Dorothy, when they were rested.

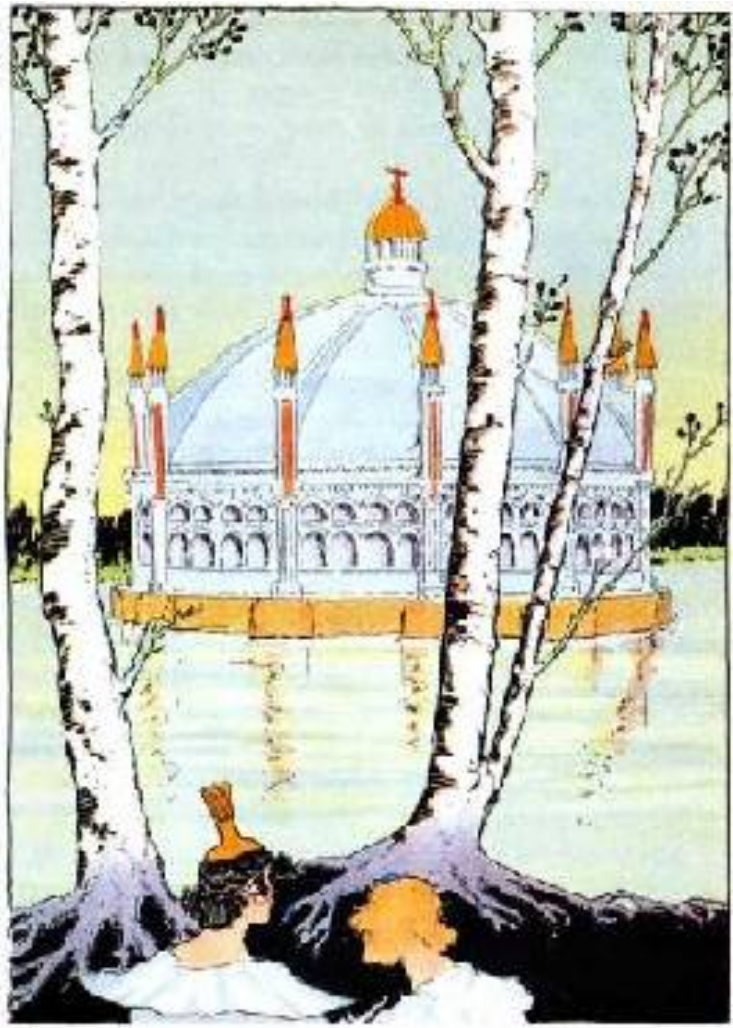
"Let us find the Lake of the Skeezers," replied Ozma. "From what that dreadful Su-dic said I imagine the Skeezers are good people and worthy of our friendship, and if we go to them we may help them to defeat the Flatheads."

"I s'pose we can't stop the war now," remarked Dorothy reflectively, as they walked toward the row of palm trees.

"No; the Su-dic is determined to fight the Skeezers, so all we can do is to warn them of their danger and help them as much as possible."

"Of course you'll punish the Flatheads," said Dorothy.

"Well, I do not think the Flathead people are as much to blame as their Supreme Dictator," was the answer. "If he is removed from power and his unlawful magic taken from him, the people will probably be good and respect the laws of the Land of Oz, and live at peace with all their neighbors in the future."



"I hope so," said Dorothy with a sigh of doubt.

The palms were not far from the mountain and the girls reached them after a brisk walk. The huge trees were set close together, in three rows, and had been planted so as to keep people from passing them, but the Flatheads had cut a passage through this barrier and Ozma found the path and led Dorothy to the other side.

Beyond the palms they discovered a very beautiful scene. Bordered by a green lawn was a great lake fully a mile from shore to shore, the waters of which were exquisitely blue and sparkling, with little wavelets breaking its smooth surface where the breezes touched it. In the center of this lake appeared a lovely island, not of great extent but almost entirely covered by a

huge round building with glass walls and a high glass dome which glittered brilliantly in the sunshine. Between the glass building and the edge of the island was no grass, flowers or shrubbery, but only an expanse of highly polished white marble. There were no boats on either shore and no signs of life could be seen anywhere on the island.

"Well," said Dorothy, gazing wistfully at the island, "we've found the Lake of the Skeezers and their Magic Isle. I guess the Skeezers are in that big glass palace, but we can't get at 'em."

CHAPTER 8

Queen Coo-ee-oh

Princess Ozma considered the situation gravely. Then she tied her handkerchief to her wand and, standing at the water's edge, waved the handkerchief like a flag, as a signal. For a time they could observe no response.

"I don't see what good that will do," said Dorothy. "Even if the Skeezers are on that island and see us, and know we're friends, they haven't any boats to come and get us."

But the Skeezers didn't need boats, as the girls soon discovered. For on a sudden an opening appeared at the base of the palace and from the opening came a slender shaft of steel, reaching out slowly but steadily across the water in the direction of the place where they stood. To the girls this steel arrangement looked like a triangle, with the base nearest the water. It came toward them in the form of an arch, stretching out from the palace wall until its end reached the bank and rested there, while the other end still remained on the island.

Then they saw that it was a bridge, consisting of a steel footway just broad enough to walk on, and two slender guide rails, one on either side, which were connected with the footway by steel bars. The bridge looked rather frail and Dorothy feared it would not bear their weight, but Ozma at once called, "Come on!" and started to walk across, holding fast to the rail on either side. So Dorothy summoned her courage and followed after. Before Ozma had taken three steps she halted and so forced Dorothy to halt, for the bridge was again moving and returning to the island.

"We need not walk after all," said Ozma. So they stood still in their places and let the steel bridge draw them onward. Indeed, the bridge drew them well into the glass-domed building which covered the island, and soon they found themselves standing in a marble room where two handsomely dressed young men stood on a platform to receive them.

Ozma at once stepped from the end of the bridge to the marble platform, followed by Dorothy, and then the bridge disappeared with a slight clang of steel and a marble slab covered the opening from which it had emerged.

The two young men bowed profoundly to Ozma, and one of them said:

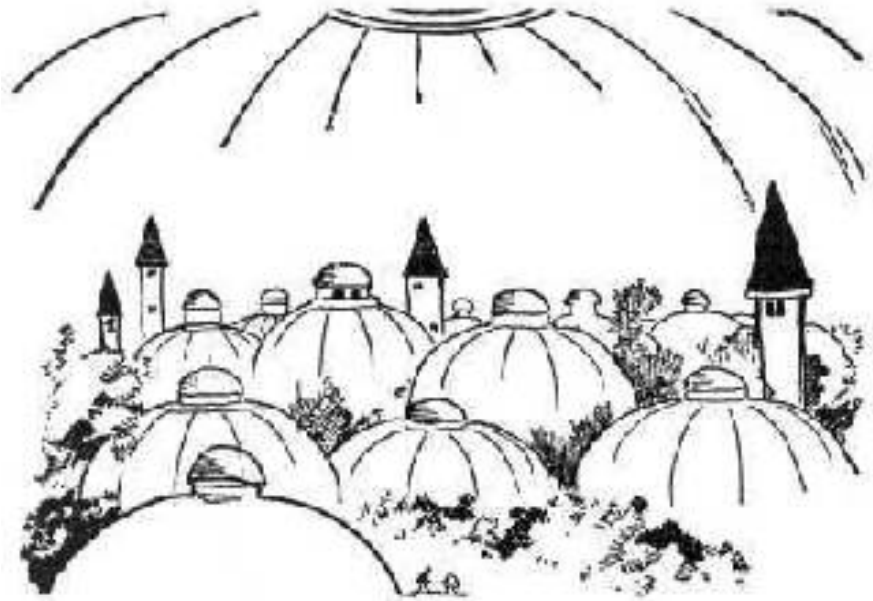
"Queen Coo-ee-oh bids you welcome, O Strangers. Her Majesty is waiting to receive you in her palace."

"Lead on," replied Ozma with dignity.

But instead of "leading on," the platform of marble began to rise, carrying them upward through a square hole above which just fitted it. A moment later

they found themselves within the great glass dome that covered almost all of the island.

Within this dome was a little village, with houses, streets, gardens and parks. The houses were of colored marbles, prettily designed, with many stained-glass windows, and the streets and gardens seemed well cared for. Exactly under the center of the lofty dome was a small park filled with brilliant flowers, with an elaborate fountain, and facing this park stood a building larger and more imposing than the others. Toward this building the young men escorted Ozma and Dorothy.

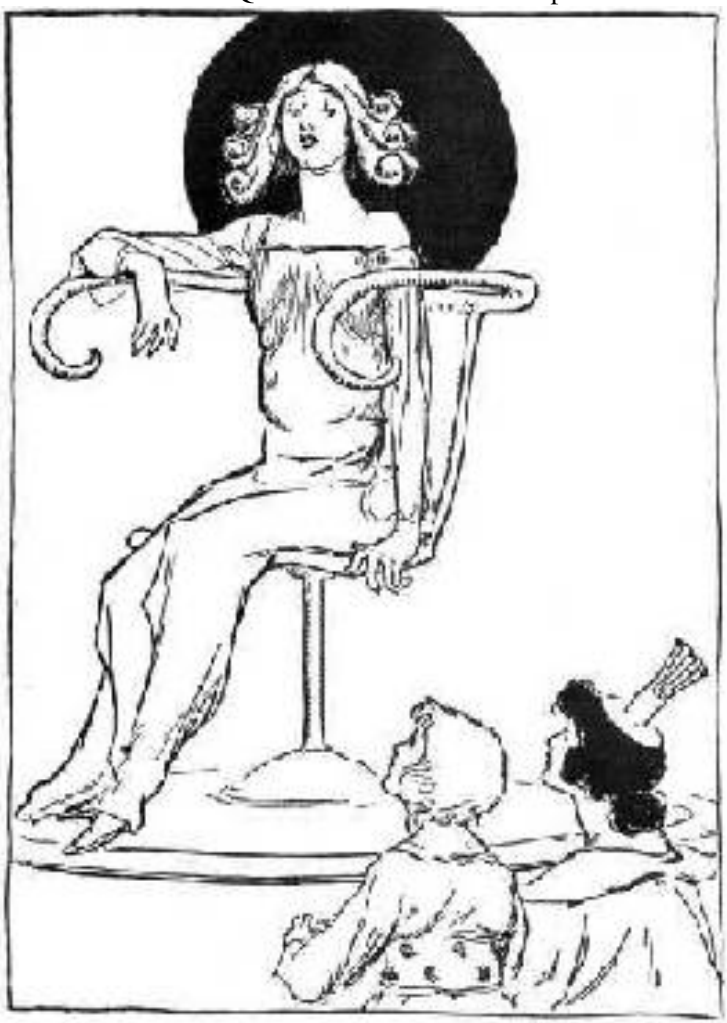


On the streets and in the doorways or open windows of the houses were men, women and children, all richly dressed. These were much like other people in different parts of the Land of Oz, except that instead of seeming merry and contented they all wore expressions of much solemnity or of nervous irritation. They had beautiful homes, splendid clothes, and ample food, but Dorothy at once decided something was wrong with their lives and that they were not happy. She said nothing, however, but looked curiously at the Skeezers.

At the entrance of the palace Ozma and Dorothy were met by two other young men, in uniform and armed with queer weapons that seemed about halfway between pistols and guns, but were like neither. Their conductors bowed and left them, and the two in uniforms led the girls into the palace.

In a beautiful throne room, surrounded by a dozen or more young men and

women, sat the Queen of the Skeezers, Coo-ee-oh. She was a girl who looked older than Ozma or Dorothy — fifteen or sixteen, at least — and although she was elaborately dressed as if she were going to a ball she was too thin and plain of feature to be pretty. But evidently Queen Coo-ee-oh did not realize this fact, for her air and manner betrayed her as proud and haughty and with a high
regard for her own importance. Dorothy at once decided she was "snippy" and that she would not like Queen Coo-ee-oh as a companion.



The Queen's hair was as black as her skin was white and her eyes were black, too. The eyes, as she calmly examined Ozma and Dorothy, had a suspicious and unfriendly look in them, but she said quietly:

“I know who you are, for I have consulted my Magic Oracle, which told me that one calls herself Princess Ozma, the Ruler of all the Land of Oz, and the other is Princess Dorothy of Oz, who came from a country called Kansas. I know nothing of the Land of Oz, and I know nothing of Kansas.”

“Why, *this* is the Land of Oz!” cried Dorothy. “It’s a *part* of the Land of Oz, anyhow, whether you know it or not.”

“Oh, in-deed!” answered Queen Coo-ee-oh, scornfully. “I suppose you will claim next that this Princess Ozma, ruling the Land of Oz, rules me!”

“Of course,” returned Dorothy. “There’s no doubt of it.”

The Queen turned to Ozma.

“Do you dare make such a claim?” she asked.

By this time Ozma had made up her mind as to the character of this haughty and disdainful creature, whose self-pride evidently led her to believe herself superior to all others.

“I did not come here to quarrel with your Majesty,” said the girl Ruler of Oz, quietly. “What and who I am is well established, and my authority comes from the Fairy Queen Lurline, of whose band I was a member when Lurline made all Oz a Fairyland. There are several countries and several different peoples in this broad land, each of which has its separate rulers, Kings, Emperors and Queens. But all these render obedience to my laws and acknowledge me as the supreme Ruler.”

“If other Kings and Queens are fools that does not interest me in the least,” replied Coo-ee-oh, disdainfully. “In the Land of the Skeezers I alone am supreme. You are impudent to think I would defer to you — or to anyone else.”

“Let us not speak of this now, please,” answered Ozma. “Your island is in danger, for a powerful foe is preparing to destroy it.”

“Pah! The Flatheads. I do not fear them.”

“Their Supreme Dictator is a Sorcerer.”

“My magic is greater than his. Let the Flatheads come! They will never return to their barren mountain-top. I will see to that.”

Ozma did not like this attitude, for it meant that the Skeezers were eager to fight the Flatheads, and Ozma’s object in coming here was to prevent fighting and induce the two quarrelsome neighbors to make peace. She was also greatly disappointed in Coo-ee-oh, for the reports of Su-dic had led her to imagine the Queen more just and honorable than were the Flatheads. Indeed Ozma reflected that the girl might be better at heart than her self-pride and overbearing manner indicated, and in any event it would be wise not to antagonize her but to try to win her friendship.

“I do not like wars, your Majesty,” said Ozma. “In the Emerald City,

where I rule thousands of people, and in the countries near to the Emerald City, where thousands more acknowledge my rule, there is no army at all, because there is no quarreling and no need to fight. If differences arise between my people, they come to me and I judge the cases and award justice to all. So, when I learned there might be war between two faraway people of Oz, I came here to settle the dispute and adjust the quarrel."

"No one asked you to come," declared Queen Coo-ee-oh. "It is *my* business to settle this dispute, not yours. You say my island is a part of the Land of Oz, which you rule, but that is all nonsense, for I've never heard of the Land of Oz, nor of you. You say you are a fairy, and that fairies gave you command over me. I don't believe it! What I *do* believe is that you are an impostor and have come here to stir up trouble among my people, who are already becoming difficult to manage. You two girls may even be spies of the vile Flatheads, for all I know, and may be trying to trick me. But understand this," she added, proudly rising from her jeweled throne to confront them, "I have magic powers greater than any fairy possesses, and greater than any Flathead possesses. I am a Krumbic Witch — the only Krumbic Witch in the world — and I fear the magic of no other creature that exists! You say you rule thousands. I rule one hundred and one Skeezers. But every one of them trembles at my word. Now that Ozma of Oz and Princess Dorothy are here, I shall rule one hundred and three subjects, for you also shall bow before my

power. More than that, in ruling you I also rule the thousands you say you rule."

Dorothy was very indignant at this speech.

"I've got a pink kitten that sometimes talks like that," she said, "but after I give her a good whipping she doesn't think she's so high and mighty after all. If you only knew who Ozma is you'd be scared to death to talk to her like that!"

Queen Coo-ee-oh gave the girl a supercilious look. Then she turned again to Ozma.

"I happen to know," said she, "that the Flatheads intend to attack us tomorrow, but we are ready for them. Until the battle is over, I shall keep you two strangers prisoners on my island, from which there is no chance for you to escape."

She turned and looked around the band of courtiers who stood silently around her throne.

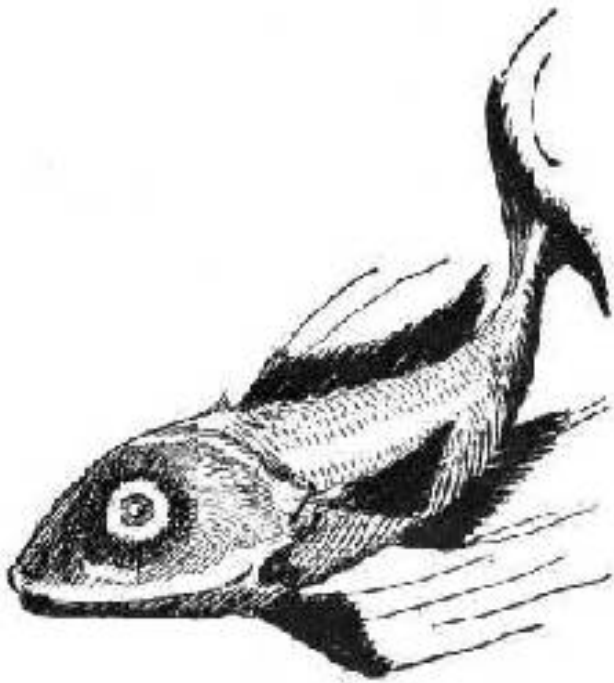
"Lady Aurex," she continued, singling out one of the young women, "take these children to your house and care for them, giving them food and lodging. You may allow them to wander anywhere under the Great Dome, for they are harmless. After I have attended to the Flatheads I will consider what next to do with these foolish girls."

She resumed her seat and the Lady Aurex bowed low and said in a humble manner:

"I obey your Majesty's commands." Then to Ozma and Dorothy she

added, “Follow me,” and turned to leave the throne room.

Dorothy looked to see what Ozma would do. To her surprise and a little to her disappointment Ozma turned and followed Lady Aurex. So Dorothy trailed after them, but not without giving a parting, haughty look toward Queen Coo-ee-oh, who had her face turned the other way and did not see the disapproving look.



CHAPTER 9

Lady Aurex

Lady Aurex led Ozma and Dorothy along a street to a pretty marble house near to one edge of the great glass dome that covered the village. She did not speak to the girls until she had ushered them into a pleasant room, comfortably furnished, nor did any of the solemn people they met on the street venture to speak.

When they were seated Lady Aurex asked if they were hungry, and finding they were summoned a maid and ordered food to be brought.

This Lady Aurex looked to be about twenty years old, although in the Land of Oz where people have never changed in appearance since the fairies made it a fairyland — where no one grows old or dies — it is always difficult to say how many years anyone has lived. She had a pleasant, attractive face, even though it was solemn and sad as the faces of all Skeezers seemed to be, and her costume was rich and elaborate, as became a lady in waiting upon the Queen.

Ozma had observed Lady Aurex closely and now asked her in a gentle tone:

"Do you, also, believe me to be an impostor?"

"I dare not say," replied Lady Aurex in a low tone.

"Why are you afraid to speak freely?" inquired Ozma.

"The Queen punishes us if we make remarks that she does not like."

"Are we not alone then, in this house?"

"The Queen can hear everything that is spoken on this island — even the slightest whisper," declared Lady Aurex. "She is a wonderful witch, as she has told you, and it is folly to criticise her or disobey her commands."

Ozma looked into her eyes and saw that she would like to say more if she dared. So she drew from her bosom her silver wand, and having muttered a magic phrase in a strange tongue, she left the room and walked slowly around the outside of the house, making a complete circle and waving her wand in mystic curves as she walked. Lady Aurex watched her curiously and, when Ozma had again entered the room and seated herself, she asked:

"What have you done?"

"I've enchanted this house in such a manner that Queen Coo-ee-oh, with all her witchcraft, cannot hear one word we speak within the magic circle I have made," replied Ozma. "We may now speak freely and as loudly as we wish, without fear of the Queen's anger."

Lady Aurex brightened at this.

"Can I trust you?" she asked.

“Ev’rybody trusts Ozma,” exclaimed Dorothy. “She is true and honest, and your wicked Queen will be sorry she insulted the powerful Ruler of all the Land of Oz.”

“The Queen does not know me yet,” said Ozma, “but I want you to know me, Lady Aurex, and I want you to tell me why you, and all the Skeezers, are unhappy. Do not fear Coo-ee-oh’s anger, for she cannot hear a word we say, I assure you.”

Lady Aurex was thoughtful a moment; then she said: “I shall trust you, Princess Ozma, for I believe you are what you say you are — our supreme Ruler. If you knew the dreadful punishments our Queen inflicts upon us, you would not wonder we are so unhappy. The Skeezers are not bad people; they do not care to quarrel and fight, even with their enemies the Flatheads; but they are so cowed and fearful of Coo-ee-oh that they obey her slightest word, rather than suffer her anger.”

“Hasn’t she any heart, then?” asked Dorothy.

“She never displays mercy. She loves no one but herself,” asserted Lady Aurex, but she trembled as she said it, as if afraid even yet of her terrible Queen.

“That’s pretty bad,” said Dorothy, shaking her head gravely. “I see you’ve a lot to do here, Ozma, in this forsaken corner of the Land of Oz. First place, you’ve got to take the magic away from Queen Coo-ee-oh, and from that awful Su-dic, too. *My* idea is that neither of them is fit to rule anybody, ‘cause they’re cruel and hateful. So you’ll have to give the Skeezers and Flatheads new rulers and teach all their people that they’re part of the Land of Oz and must obey, above all, the lawful Ruler, Ozma of Oz. Then, when you’ve done that, we can go back home again.”

Ozma smiled at her little friend’s earnest counsel, but Lady Aurex said in an anxious tone:

“I am surprised that you suggest these reforms while you are yet prisoners on this island and in Coo-ee-oh’s power. That these things should be done, there is no doubt, but just now a dreadful war is likely to break out, and frightful things may happen to us all. Our Queen has such conceit that she thinks she can overcome the Su-dic and his people, but it is said Su-dic’s magic is very powerful, although not as great as that possessed by his wife Rora, before Coo-ee-oh transformed her into a Golden Pig.”

“I don’t blame her very much for doing that,” remarked Dorothy, “for the Flatheads were wicked to try to catch your beautiful fish and the Witch Rora wanted to poison all the fishes in the lake.”

“Do you know the reason?” asked the Lady Aurex.

“I don’t s’pose there *was* any reason, ‘cept just wickedness,” replied

Dorothy.

"Tell us the reason," said Ozma earnestly.

"Well, your Majesty, once — a long time ago — the Flatheads and the Skeezers were friendly. They visited our island and we visited their mountain, and everything was pleasant between the two peoples. At that time the Flatheads were ruled by three Adepts in Sorcery, beautiful girls who were not Flatheads, but had wandered to the Flat Mountain and made their home there. These three Adepts used their magic only for good, and the mountain people gladly made them their rulers. They taught the Flatheads how to use their canned brains and how to work metals into clothing that would never wear out, and many other things that added to their happiness and content.

"Coo-ee-oh was our Queen then, as now, but she knew no magic and so had nothing to be proud of. But the three Adepts were very kind to Coo-ee-oh. They built for us this wonderful dome of glass and our houses of marble and taught us to make beautiful clothing and many other things. Coo-ee-oh pretended to be very grateful for these favors, but it seems that all the time she was jealous of the three Adepts and secretly tried to discover their arts of magic. In this she was more clever than anyone suspected. She invited the three Adepts to a banquet one day, and while they were feasting Coo-ee-oh stole their charms and magical instruments and transformed them into three fishes — a gold fish, a silver fish and a bronze fish. While the poor fishes were gasping and flopping helplessly on the floor of the banquet room one of them said reproachfully: 'You will be punished for this, Coo-ee-oh, for if one of us dies or is destroyed, you will become shrivelled and helpless, and all your stolen magic will depart from you.' Frightened by this threat, Coo-ee-oh at once caught up the three fish and ran with them to the shore of the lake, where she cast them into the water. This revived the three Adepts and they swam away and disappeared.

"I, myself, witnessed this shocking scene," continued Lady Aurex, "and so did many other Skeezers. The news was carried to the Flatheads, who then turned from friends to enemies. The Su-dic and his wife Rora were the only ones on the mountain who were glad the three Adepts had been lost to them, and they at once became Rulers of the Flatheads and stole their canned brains from others to make themselves the more powerful. Some of the Adepts' magic tools had been left on the mountain, and these Rora seized and by the use of them she became a witch.

"The result of Coo-ee-oh's treachery was to make both the Skeezers and the Flatheads miserable instead of happy. Not only were the Su-dic and his wife cruel to their people, but our Queen at once became proud and arrogant and treated us very unkindly. All the Skeezers knew she had stolen her magic

powers and so she hated us and made us humble ourselves before her and obey her slightest word. If we disobeyed, or did not please her, or if we talked about her when we were in our own homes she would have us dragged to the whipping post in her palace and lashed with knotted cords. That is why we fear her so greatly."

This story filled Ozma's heart with sorrow and Dorothy's heart with indignation.

"I now understand," said Ozma, "why the fishes in the lake have brought about war between the Skeezers and the Flatheads."

"Yes," Lady Aurex answered, "now that you know the story it is easy to understand. The Su-dic and his wife came to our lake hoping to catch the silver fish, or gold fish, or bronze fish — any one of them *would* do — and by destroying it deprive Coo-ee-oh of her magic. Then they could easily conquer her. Also they had another reason for wanting to catch the fish — they feared that in some way the three Adepts might regain their proper forms and then they would be sure to return to the mountain and punish Rora and the Su-dic. That was why Rora finally tried to poison all the fishes in the lake, at the time Coo-ee-oh transformed her into a Golden Pig. Of course this attempt to destroy the fishes frightened the Queen, for her safety lies in keeping the three fishes alive."

"I s'pose Coo-ee-oh will fight the Flatheads with all her might," observed Dorothy.

"And with all her magic," added Ozma, thoughtfully.

"I do not see how the Flatheads can get to this island to hurt us," said Lady Aurex.

"They have bows and arrows, and I guess they mean to shoot the arrows at your big dome, and break all the glass in it," suggested Dorothy.

But Lady Aurex shook her head with a smile.

"They cannot do that," she replied.

"Why not?"

"I dare not tell you why, but if the Flatheads come to-morrow morning you will yourselves see the reason."

"I do not think they will attempt to harm the island," Ozma declared. "I believe they will first attempt to destroy the fishes, by poison or some other means. If they succeed in that, the conquest of the island will not be difficult."

"They have no boats," said Lady Aurex, "and Coo-ee-oh, who has long expected this war, has been preparing for it in many astonishing ways. I almost wish the Flatheads would conquer us, for then we would be free from our dreadful Queen; but I do not wish to see the three transformed fishes destroyed, for in them lies our only hope of future happiness."

"Ozma will take care of you, whatever happens," Dorothy assured her. But the Lady Aurex, not knowing the extent of Ozma's power — which was, in fact, not so great as Dorothy imagined — could not take much comfort in this promise.

It was evident there would be exciting times on the morrow, if the Flatheads really attacked the Skeezers of the Magic Isle.

CHAPTER 10

Under Water

When night fell all the interior of the Great Dome, streets and houses, became lighted with brilliant incandescent lamps, which rendered it bright as day. Dorothy thought the island must look beautiful by night from the outer shore of the lake. There was revelry and feasting in the Queen's palace, and the music of the royal band could be plainly heard in Lady Aurex's house, where Ozma and Dorothy remained with their hostess and keeper. They were prisoners, but treated with much consideration.

Lady Aurex gave them a nice supper and when they wished to retire showed them to a pretty room with comfortable beds and wished them a good night and pleasant dreams.

"What do you think of all this, Ozma?" Dorothy anxiously inquired when they were alone.

"I am glad we came," was the reply, "for although there may be mischief done to-morrow, it was necessary I should know about these people, whose leaders are wild and lawless and oppress their subjects with injustice and cruelties. My task, therefore, is to liberate the Skeezers and the Flatheads and secure for them freedom and happiness. I have no doubt I can accomplish this in time."

"Just now, though, we're in a bad fix," asserted Dorothy. "If Queen Coo-ee-oh conquers to-morrow, she won't be nice to us, and if the Su-dic conquers, he'll be worse."

"Do not worry, dear," said Ozma, "I do not think we are in danger, whatever happens, and the result of our adventure is sure to be good."

Dorothy was not worrying, especially. She had confidence in her friend, the fairy Princess of Oz, and she enjoyed the excitement of the events in which she was taking part. So she crept into bed and fell asleep as easily as if she had been in her own cosy room in Ozma's palace.

A sort of grating, grinding sound awakened her. The whole island seemed to tremble and sway, as it might do in an earthquake. Dorothy sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes to get the sleep out of them, and then found it was daybreak.

Ozma was hurriedly dressing herself.

"What is it?" asked Dorothy, jumping out of bed.

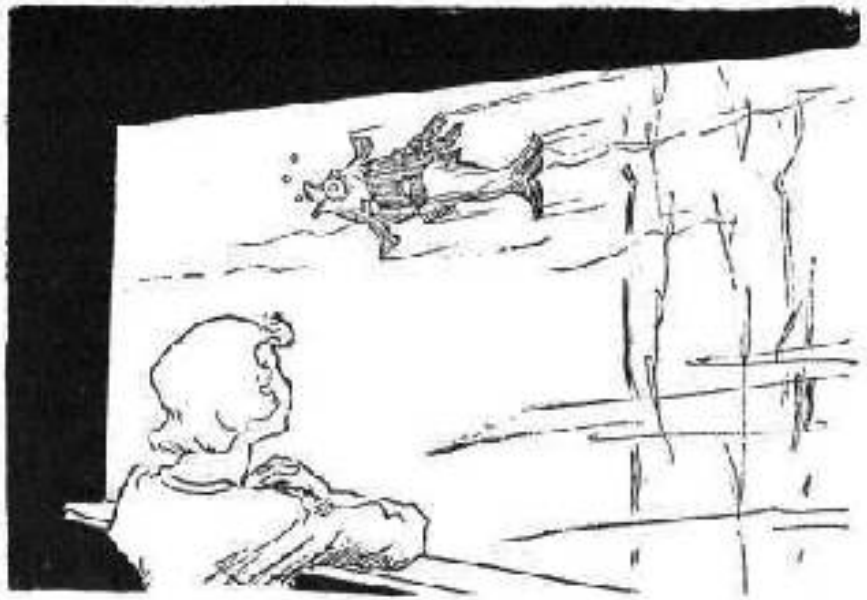
"I'm not sure," answered Ozma "but it feels as if the island is sinking."

As soon as possible they finished dressing, while the creaking and swaying continued. Then they rushed into the living room of the house and found Lady Aurex, fully dressed, awaiting them.

“Do not be alarmed,” said their hostess. “Coo-ee-oh has decided to submerge the island, that is all. But it proves the Flatheads are coming to attack us.”

“What do you mean by sub-sub-merging the island?” asked Dorothy.

“Come here and see,” was the reply.



Lady Aurex led them to a window which faced the side of the great dome which covered all the village, and they could see that the island was indeed sinking, for the water of the lake was already half way up the side of the dome. Through the glass could be seen swimming fishes, and tall stalks of swaying seaweeds, for the water was clear as crystal and through it they could distinguish even the farther shore of the lake.

“The Flatheads are not here yet,” said Lady Aurex. “They will come soon, but not until all of this dome is under the surface of the water.”

“Won’t the dome leak?” Dorothy inquired anxiously.

“No, indeed.”

“Was the island ever sub-sub-sunk before?”

“Oh, yes; on several occasions. But Coo-ee-oh doesn’t care to do that often, for it requires a lot of hard work to operate the machinery. The dome was built so that the island could disappear. I think,” she continued, “that our Queen fears the Flatheads will attack the island and try to break the glass of the dome.”

“Well, if we’re under water, they can’t fight us, and we can’t fight them,” asserted Dorothy.

“They could kill the fishes, however,” said Ozma gravely.

“We have ways to fight, also, even though our island is under water,” claimed Lady Aurex. “I cannot tell you all our secrets, but this island is full of surprises. Also our Queen’s magic is astonishing.”

“Did she steal it all from the three Adepts in Sorcery that are now fishes?”

“She stole the knowledge and the magic tools, but she has used them as the three Adepts never would have done.”

By this time the top of the dome was quite under water and suddenly the island stopped sinking and became stationary.

“See!” cried Lady Aurex, pointing to the shore. “The Flatheads have come.”

On the bank, which was now far above their heads, a crowd of dark figures could be seen.

“Now let us see what Coo-ee-oh will do to oppose them,” continued Lady Aurex, in a voice that betrayed her excitement.

The Flatheads, pushing their way through the line of palm trees, had reached the shore of the lake just as the top of the island’s dome disappeared beneath the surface. The water now flowed from shore to shore, but through the clear water the dome was still visible and the houses of the Skeezers could be dimly seen through the panes of glass.

“Good!” exclaimed the Su-dic, who had armed all his followers and had brought with him two copper vessels, which he carefully set down upon the ground beside him. “If Coo-ee-oh wants to hide instead of fighting our job will be easy, for in one of these copper vessels I have enough poison to kill every fish in the lake.”

“Kill them, then, while we have time, and then we can go home again,” advised one of the chief officers.

“Not yet,” objected the Su-dic. “The Queen of the Skeezers has defied me, and I want to get her into my power, as well as to destroy her magic. She transformed my poor wife into a Golden Pig, and I must have revenge for that, whatever else we do.”

“Look out!” suddenly exclaimed the officers, pointing into the lake; “something’s going to happen.”

From the submerged dome a door opened and something black shot swiftly out into the water. The door instantly closed behind it and the dark object cleaved its way through the water, without rising to the surface, directly toward the place where the Flatheads were standing.

“What is that?” Dorothy asked the Lady Aurex.

“That is one of the Queen’s submarines,” was the reply. “It is all enclosed, and can move under water. Coo-ee-oh has several of these boats which are kept in little rooms in the basement under our village. When the island is submerged, the Queen uses these boats to reach the shore, and I believe she now intends to fight the Flatheads with them.”

The Su-dic and his people knew nothing of Coo-ee-oh’s submarines, so they watched with surprise as the under-water boat approached them. When it was quite near the shore it rose to the surface and the top parted and fell back, disclosing a boat full of armed Skeezers. At the head was the Queen, standing up in the bow and holding in one hand a coil of magic rope that gleamed like silver.

The boat halted and Coo-ee-oh drew back her arm to throw the silver rope toward the Su-dic, who was now but a few feet from her. But the wily Flathead leader quickly realized his danger and before the Queen could throw the rope he caught up one of the copper vessels and dashed its contents full in her face!

CHAPTER 11

The Conquest of the Skeezers

Queen Coo-ee-oh dropped the rope, tottered and fell headlong into the water, sinking beneath the surface, while the Skeezers in the submarine were too bewildered to assist her and only stared at the ripples in the water where she had disappeared. A moment later there arose to the surface a beautiful White Swan. This Swan was of large size, very gracefully formed, and scattered all over its white feathers were tiny diamonds, so thickly placed that as the rays of the morning sun fell upon them the entire body of the Swan glistened like one brilliant diamond. The head of the Diamond Swan had a bill of polished gold and its eyes were two sparkling amethysts.

"Hooray!" cried the Su-dic, dancing up and down with wicked glee. "My poor wife, Rora, is avenged at last. You made her a Golden Pig, Coo-ee-oh, and now I have made you a Diamond Swan. Float on your lake forever, if you like, for your web feet can do no more magic and you are as powerless as the Pig you made of my wife!"

"Villain! Scoundrel!" croaked the Diamond Swan. "You will be punished for this. Oh, what a fool I was to let you enchant me!"

"A fool you were, and a fool you are!" laughed the Su-dic, dancing madly in his delight. And then he carelessly tipped over the other copper vessel with his heel and its contents spilled on the sands and were lost to the last drop.

The Su-dic stopped short and looked at the overturned vessel with a rueful countenance.

"That's too bad — too bad!" he exclaimed sorrowfully. "I've lost all the poison I had to kill the fishes with, and I can't make any more because only my wife knew the secret of it, and she is now a foolish Pig and has forgotten all her magic."

"Very well," said the Diamond Swan scornfully, as she floated upon the water and swam gracefully here and there. "I'm glad to see you are foiled. Your punishment is just beginning, for although you have enchanted me and taken away my powers of sorcery you have still the three magic fishes to deal with, and they'll destroy you in time, mark my words."

The Su-dic stared at the Swan a moment. Then he yelled to his men:

"Shoot her! Shoot the saucy bird!"

They let fly some arrows at the Diamond Swan, but she dove under the water and the missiles fell harmless. When Coo-ee-oh rose to the surface she was far from the shore and she swiftly swam across the lake to where no arrows or spears could reach her.

The Su-dic rubbed his chin and thought what to do next. Near by floated

the submarine in which the Queen had come, but the Skeezers who were in it were puzzled what to do with themselves. Perhaps they were not sorry their cruel mistress had been transformed into a Diamond Swan, but the transformation had left them quite helpless. The under-water boat was not operated by machinery, but by certain mystic words uttered by Coo-ee-oh. They didn't know how to submerge it, or how to make the water-tight shield cover them again, or how to make the boat go back to the castle, or make it enter the little basement room where it was usually kept. As a matter of fact, they were now shut out of their village under the Great Dome and could not get back again. So one of the men called to the Supreme Dictator of the Flatheads, saying:

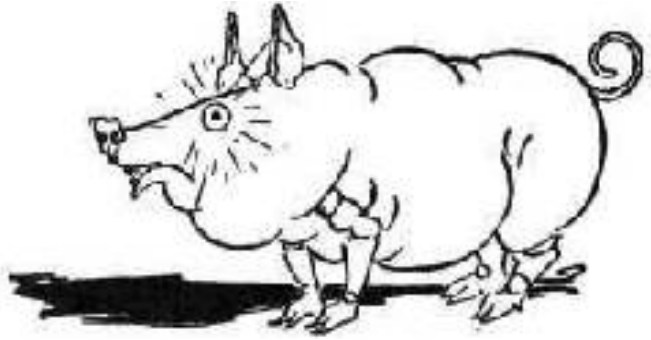
"Please make us prisoners and take us to your mountain, and feed and keep us, for we have nowhere to go."

Then the Su-dic laughed and answered:

"Not so. I can't be bothered by caring for a lot of stupid Skeezers. Stay where you are, or go wherever you please, so long as you keep away from our mountain." He turned to his men and added: "We have conquered Queen Coo-ee-oh and made her a helpless swan. The Skeezers are under water and may stay there. So, having won the war, let us go home again and make merry and feast, having after many years proved the Flatheads to be greater and more powerful than the Skeezers."

So the Flatheads marched away and passed through the row of palms and went back to their mountain, where the Su-dic and a few of his officers feasted and all the others were forced to wait on them.

"I'm sorry we couldn't have roast pig," said the Su-dic, "but as the only pig we have is made of gold, we can't eat her. Also the Golden Pig happens to be my wife, and even were she not gold I am sure she would be too tough to eat."



CHAPTER 12

The Diamond Swan

When the Flatheads had gone away the Diamond Swan swam back to the boat and one of the young Skeezers named Ervic said to her eagerly:

"How can we get back to the island, your Majesty?"

"Am I not beautiful?" asked Coo-ee-oh, arching her neck gracefully and spreading her diamond-sprinkled wings. "I can see my reflection in the water, and I'm sure there is no bird nor beast, nor human as magnificent as I am!"

"How shall we get back to the island, your Majesty?" pleaded Ervic.

"When my fame spreads throughout the land, people will travel from all parts of this lake to look upon my loveliness," said Coo-ee-oh, shaking her feathers to make the diamonds glitter more brilliantly.

"But, your Majesty, we must go home and we do not know how to get there," Ervic persisted.

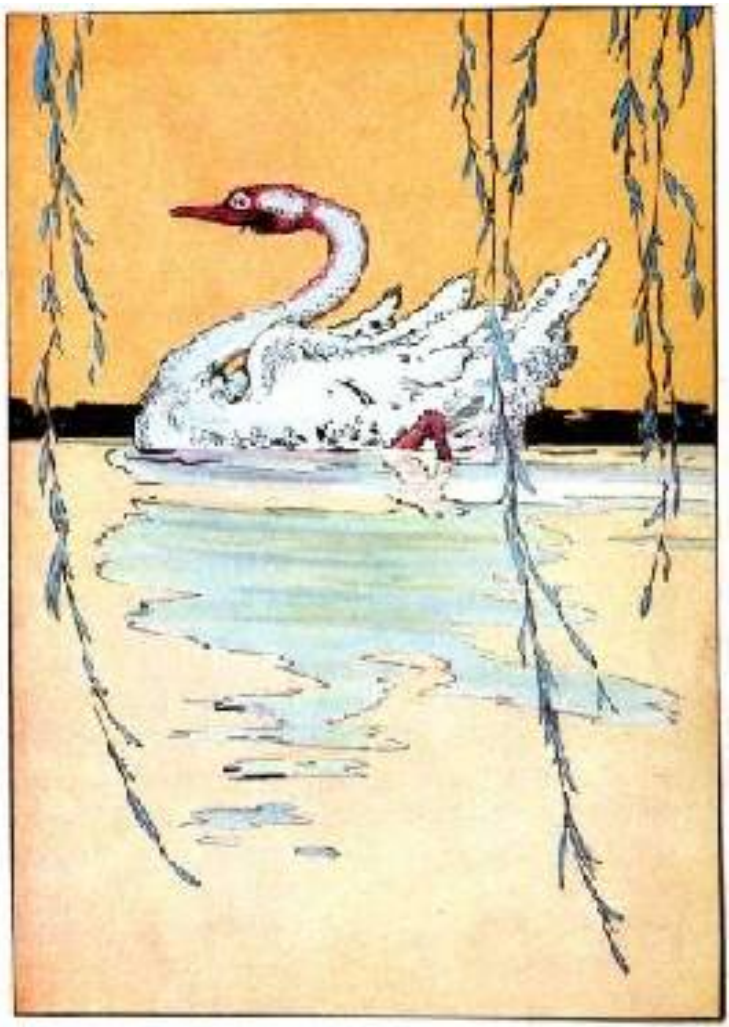
"My eyes," remarked the Diamond Swan, "are wonderfully blue and bright and will charm all beholders."

"Tell us how to make the boat go — how to get back into the island," begged Ervic and the others cried just as earnestly: "Tell us, Coo-ee-oh; tell us!"

"I don't know," replied the Queen in a careless tone.

"You are a magic-worker, a sorceress, a witch!"

"I was, of course, when I was a girl," she said, bending her head over the clear water to catch her reflection in it; "but now I've forgotten all such foolish things as magic. Swans are lovelier than girls, especially when they're sprinkled with diamonds. Don't you think so?" And she gracefully swam away, without seeming to care whether they answered or not.



Ervic and his companions were in despair. They saw plainly that Coo-ee-oh could not or would not help them. The former Queen had no further thought for her island, her people, or her wonderful magic; she was only intent on admiring her own beauty.

"Truly," said Ervic, in a gloomy voice, "the Flatheads have conquered us!"

Some of these events had been witnessed by Ozma and Dorothy and Lady Aurex, who had left the house and gone close to the glass of the dome, in order to see what was going on. Many of the Skeezers had also crowded against the dome, wondering what would happen next. Although their vision

was to an extent blurred by the water and the necessity of looking upward at an angle, they had observed the main points of the drama enacted above. They saw Queen Coo-ee-oh's submarine come to the surface and open; they saw the Queen standing erect to throw her magic rope; they saw her sudden transformation into a Diamond Swan, and a cry of amazement went up from the Skeezers inside the dome.

"Good!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I hate that old Su-dic, but I'm glad Coo-ee-oh is punished."

"This is a dreadful misfortune!" cried Lady Aurex, pressing her hands upon her heart.

"Yes," agreed Ozma, nodding her head thoughtfully; "Coo-ee-oh's misfortune will prove a terrible blow to her people."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Dorothy in surprise. "Seems to *me* the Skeezers are in luck to lose their cruel Queen."

"If that were all you would be right," responded Lady Aurex; "and if the island were above water it would not be so serious. But here we all are, at the bottom of the lake, and fast prisoners in this dome."

"Can't you raise the island?" inquired Dorothy.

"No. Only Coo-ee-oh knew how to do that," was the answer.

"We can try," insisted Dorothy. "If it can be made to go down, it can be made to come up. The machinery is still here, I suppose.

"Yes; but the machinery works by magic, and Coo-ee-oh would never share her secret power with any one of us."

Dorothy's face grew grave; but she was thinking.

"Ozma knows a lot of magic," she said.

"But not that kind of magic," Ozma replied.

"Can't you learn how, by looking at the machinery?"

"I'm afraid not, my dear. It isn't fairy magic at all; it is witchcraft."

"Well," said Dorothy, turning to Lady Aurex, "you say there are other sub-sub-sinking boats. We can get in one of those, and shoot out to the top of the water, like Coo-ee-oh did, and so escape. And then we can help to rescue all the Skeezers down here."

"No one knows how to work the under-water boats but the Queen," declared Lady Aurex.

"Isn't there any door or window in this dome that we could open?"

"No; and, if there were, the water would rush in to flood the dome, and we could not get out."

"The Skeezers," said Ozma, "could not drown; they only get wet and soggy and in that condition they would be very uncomfortable and unhappy. But *you* are a mortal girl, Dorothy, and if your Magic Belt protected you

from death you would have to lie forever at the bottom of the lake."

"No, I'd rather die quickly," asserted the little girl. "But there are doors in the basement that open — to let out the bridges and the boats — and that would not flood the dome, you know."

"Those doors open by a magic word, and only Coo-ee-oh knows the word that must be uttered," said Lady Aurex.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dorothy, "that dreadful Queen's witchcraft upsets all my plans to escape. I guess I'll give it up, Ozma, and let *you* save us."

Ozma smiled, but her smile was not so cheerful as usual. The Princess of Oz found herself confronted with a serious problem, and although she had no thought of despairing she realized that the Skeezers and their island, as well as Dorothy and herself, were in grave trouble and that unless she could find a means to save them they would be lost to the Land of Oz for all future time.

"In such a dilemma," said she, musingly, "nothing is gained by haste. Careful thought may aid us, and so may the course of events. The unexpected is always likely to happen, and cheerful patience is better than reckless action."

"All right," returned Dorothy; "take your time, Ozma; there's no hurry. How about some breakfast, Lady Aurex?"

Their hostess led them back to the house, where she ordered her trembling servants to prepare and serve breakfast. All the Skeezers were frightened and anxious over the transformation of their Queen into a swan. Coo-ee-oh was feared and hated, but they had depended on her magic to conquer the Flatheads and she was the only one who could raise their island to the surface of the lake again.

Before breakfast was over several of the leading Skeezers came to Aurex to ask her advice and to question Princess Ozma, of whom they knew nothing except that she claimed to be a fairy and the Ruler of all the land, including the Lake of the Skeezers.

"If what you told Queen Coo-ee-oh was the truth," they said to her, "you are our lawful mistress, and we may depend on you to get us out of our difficulties."

"I will try to do that," Ozma graciously assured them, "but you must remember that the powers of fairies are granted them to bring comfort and happiness to all who appeal to them. On the contrary, such magic as Coo-ee-oh knew and practiced is unlawful witchcraft and her arts are such as no fairy would condescend to use. However, it is sometimes necessary to consider evil in order to accomplish good, and perhaps by studying Coo-ee-oh's tools and charms of witchcraft I may be able to save us. Do you promise to accept me as your Ruler and to obey my commands?"

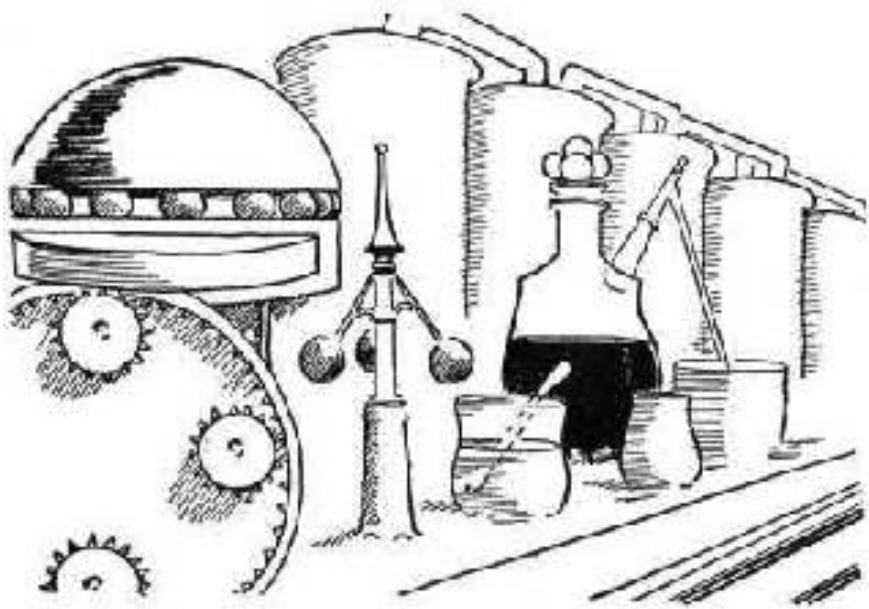
They promised willingly.

"Then," continued Ozma, "I will go to Coo-ee-oh's palace and take possession of it. Perhaps what I find there will be of use to me. In the meantime tell all the Skeezers to fear nothing, but have patience. Let them return to their homes and perform their daily tasks as usual. Coo-ee-oh's loss may not prove a misfortune, but rather a blessing."

This speech cheered the Skeezers amazingly. Really, they had no one now to depend upon but Ozma, and in spite of their dangerous position their hearts were lightened by the transformation and absence of their cruel Queen.

They got out their brass band and a grand procession escorted Ozma and Dorothy to the palace, where all of Coo-ee-oh's former servants were eager to wait upon them. Ozma invited Lady Aurex to stay at the palace also, for she knew all about the Skeezers and their island and had also been a favorite of the former Queen, so her advice and information were sure to prove valuable.

Ozma was somewhat disappointed in what she found in the palace. One room of Coo-ee-oh's private suite was entirely devoted to the practice of witchcraft, and here were countless queer instruments and jars of ointments and bottles of potions labeled with queer names, and strange machines that Ozma could not guess the use of, and pickled toads and snails and lizards, and a shelf of books that were written in blood, but in a language which the Ruler of Oz did not know.



“I do not see,” said Ozma to Dorothy, who accompanied her in her search, “how Coo-ee-oh knew the use of the magic tools she stole from the three Adept Witches. Moreover, from all reports these Adepts practiced only good witchcraft, such as would be helpful to their people, while Coo-ee-oh performed only evil.”

“Perhaps she turned the good things to evil uses?” suggested Dorothy.

“Yes, and with the knowledge she gained Coo-ee-oh doubtless invented many evil things quite unknown to the good Adepts, who are now fishes,” added Ozma. “It is unfortunate for us that the Queen kept her secrets so closely guarded, for no one but herself could use any of these strange things gathered in this room.”

“Couldn’t we capture the Diamond Swan and make her tell the secrets?” asked Dorothy.

“No; even were we able to capture her, Coo-ee-oh now has forgotten all the magic she ever knew. But until we ourselves escape from this dome we could not capture the Swan, and were we to escape we would have no use for Coo-ee-oh’s magic.”

“That’s a fact,” admitted Dorothy. “But — say, Ozma, here’s a good idea! Couldn’t we capture the three fishes — the gold and silver and bronze ones, and couldn’t you transform ‘em back to their own shapes, and then couldn’t the three Adepts get us out of here?”

“You are not very practical, Dorothy dear. It would be as hard for us to capture the three fishes, from among all the other fishes in the lake, as to capture the Swan.”

“But if we could, it would be more help to us,” persisted the little girl.

“That is true,” answered Ozma, smiling at her friend’s eagerness. “You find a way to catch the fish, and I’ll promise when they are caught to restore them to their proper forms.”

“I know you think I can’t do it,” replied Dorothy, “but I’m going to try.”

She left the palace and went to a place where she could look through a clear pane of the glass dome into the surrounding water. Immediately she became interested in the queer sights that met her view.

The Lake of the Skeezers was inhabited by fishes of many kinds and many sizes. The water was so transparent that the girl could see for a long distance and the fishes came so close to the glass of the dome that sometimes they actually touched it. On the white sands at the bottom of the lake were star-fish, lobsters, crabs and many shell fish of strange shapes and with shells of gorgeous hues. The water foliage was of brilliant colors and to Dorothy it resembled a splendid garden.

But the fishes were the most interesting of all. Some were big and lazy,

floating slowly along or lying at rest with just their fins waving. Many with big round eyes looked full at the girl as she watched them and Dorothy wondered if they could hear her through the glass if she spoke to them. In Oz, where all the animals and birds can talk, many fishes are able to talk also, but usually they are more stupid than birds and animals because they think slowly and haven't much to talk about.

In the Lake of the Skeezers the fish of smaller size were more active than the big ones and darted quickly in and out among the swaying weeds, as if they had important business and were in a hurry. It was among the smaller varieties that Dorothy hoped to spy the gold and silver and bronze fishes. She had an idea the three would keep together, being companions now as they were in their natural forms, but such a multitude of fishes constantly passed, the scene shifting every moment, that she was not sure she would notice them even if they appeared in view. Her eyes couldn't look in all directions and the fishes she sought might be on the other side of the dome, or far away in the lake.

"P'raps, because they were afraid of Coo-ee-oh, they've hid themselves somewhere, and don't know their enemy has been transformed," she reflected.

She watched the fishes for a long time, until she became hungry and went back to the palace for lunch. But she was not discouraged.

"Anything new, Ozma?" she asked.

"No, dear. Did you discover the three fishes?"

"Not yet. But there isn't anything better for me to do, Ozma, so I guess I'll go back and watch again."

CHAPTER 13

The Alarm Bell

Glinda, the Good, in her palace in the Quadling Country, had many things to occupy her mind, for not only did she look after the weaving and embroidery of her bevy of maids, and assist all those who came to her to implore her help — beasts and birds as well as people — but she was a close student of the arts of sorcery and spent much time in her Magical Laboratory, where she strove to find a remedy for every evil and to perfect her skill in magic.

Nevertheless, she did not forget to look in the Great Book of Records each day to see if any mention was made of the visit of Ozma and Dorothy to the Enchanted Mountain of the Flatheads and the Magic Isle of the Skeezers. The Records told her that Ozma had arrived at the mountain, that she had escaped, with her companion, and gone to the island of the Skeezers, and that Queen Coo-ee-oh had submerged the island so that it was entirely under water. Then came the statement that the Flatheads had come to the lake to poison the fishes and that their Supreme Dictator had transformed Queen Coo-ee-oh into a swan.

No other details were given in the Great Book and so Glinda did not know that since Coo-ee-oh had forgotten her magic none of the Skeezers knew how to raise the island to the surface again. So Glinda was not worried about Ozma and Dorothy until one morning, while she sat with her maids, there came a sudden clang of the great alarm bell. This was so unusual that every maid gave a start and even the Sorceress for a moment could not think what the alarm meant.

Then she remembered the ring she had given Dorothy when she left the palace to start on her venture. In giving the ring Glinda had warned the little girl not to use its magic powers unless she and Ozma were in real danger, but then she was to turn it on her finger once to the right and once to the left and Glinda's alarm bell would ring.

So the Sorceress now knew that danger threatened her beloved Ruler and Princess Dorothy, and she hurried to her magic room to seek information as to what sort of danger it was. The answer to her question was not very satisfactory, for it was only: "Ozma and Dorothy are prisoners in the great Dome of the Isle of the Skeezers, and the Dome is under the water of the lake."

"Hasn't Ozma the power to raise the island to the surface?" inquired Glinda.

"No," was the reply, and the Record refused to say more except that Queen Coo-ee-oh, who alone could command the island to rise, had been

transformed by the Flathead Su-dic into a Diamond Swan.

Then Glinda consulted the past records of the Skeezers in the Great Book. After diligent search she discovered that Coo-ee-oh was a powerful sorceress, who had gained most of her power by treacherously transforming the Adepts of Magic, who were visiting her, into three fishes — gold, silver and bronze — after which she had them cast into the lake.

Glinda reflected earnestly on this information and decided that someone must go to Ozma's assistance. While there was no great need of haste, because Ozma and Dorothy could live in a submerged dome a long time, it was evident they could not get out until someone was able to raise the island.

The Sorceress looked through all her recipes and books of sorcery, but could find no magic that would raise a sunken island. Such a thing had never before been required in sorcery. Then Glinda made a little island, covered by a glass dome, and sunk it in a pond near her castle, and experimented in magical ways to bring it to the surface. She made several such experiments, but all were failures. It seemed a simple thing to do, yet she could not do it.

Nevertheless, the wise Sorceress did not despair of finding a way to liberate her friends. Finally she concluded that the best thing to do was to go to the Skeezer country and examine the lake. While there she was more likely to discover a solution to the problem that bothered her, and to work out a plan for the rescue of Ozma and Dorothy.

So Glinda summoned her storks and her aerial chariot, and telling her maids she was going on a journey and might not soon return, she entered the chariot and was carried swiftly to the Emerald City.

In Princess Ozma's palace the Scarecrow was now acting as Ruler of the Land of Oz. There wasn't much for him to do, because all the affairs of state moved so smoothly, but he was there in case anything unforeseen should

happen.

Glinda found the Scarecrow playing croquet with Trot and Betsy Bobbin, two little girls who lived at the palace under Ozma's protection and were great friends of Dorothy and much loved by all the Oz people.

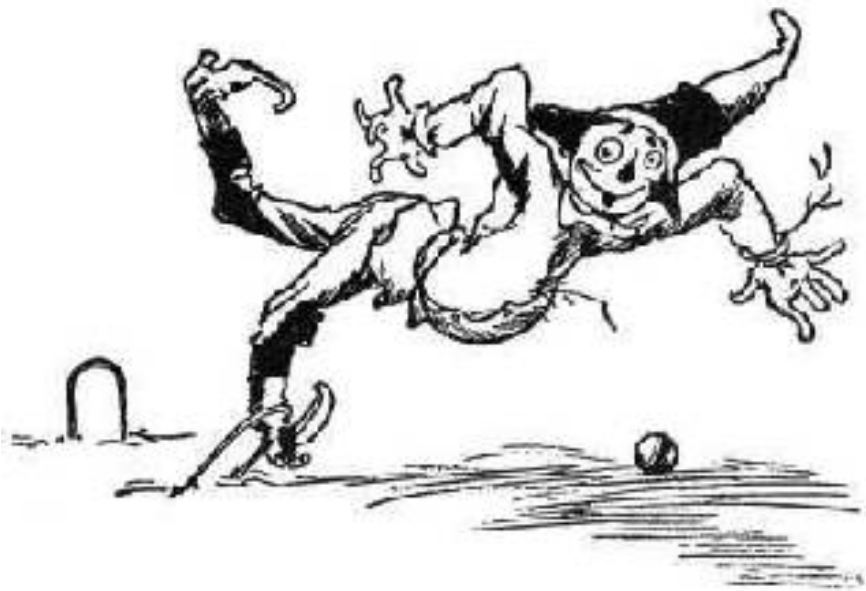
"Something's happened!" cried Trot, as the chariot of the Sorceress descended near them. "Glinda never comes here 'cept something's gone wrong."

"I hope no harm has come to Ozma, or Dorothy," said Betsy anxiously, as the lovely Sorceress stepped down from her chariot.

Glinda approached the Scarecrow and told him of the dilemma of Ozma and Dorothy and she added: "We must save them, somehow, Scarecrow."

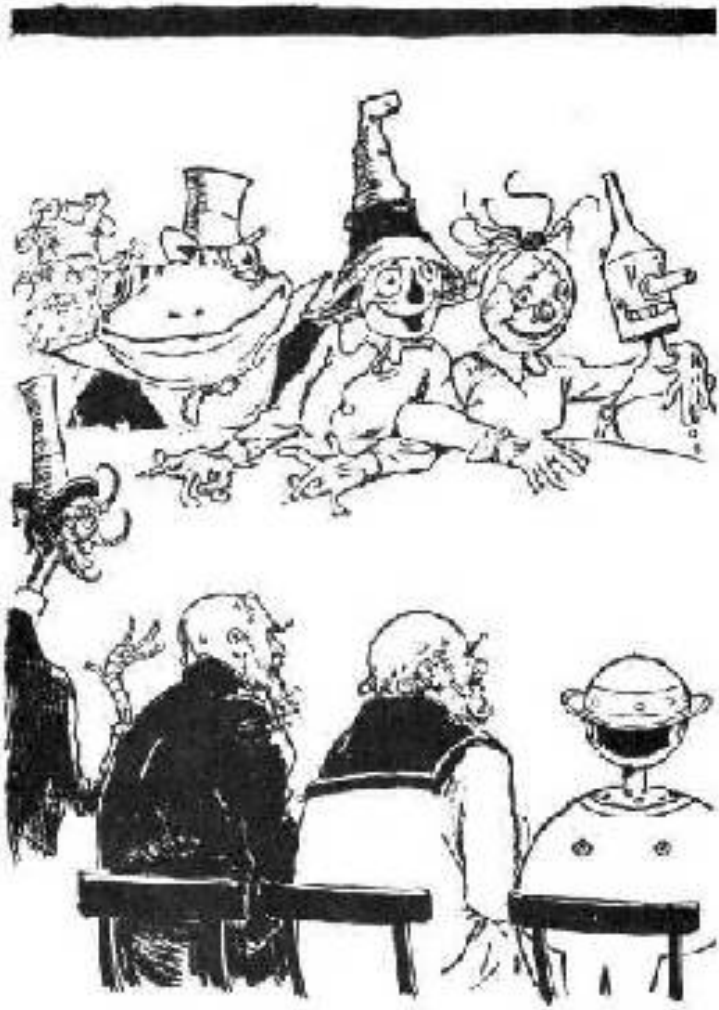
"Of course," replied the Scarecrow, stumbling over a wicket and falling flat on his painted face.

The girls picked him up and patted his straw stuffing into shape, and he continued, as if nothing had occurred: "But you'll have to tell me what to do, for I never have raised a sunken island in all my life."



"We must have a Council of State as soon as possible," proposed the Sorceress. "Please send messengers to summon all of Ozma's counsellors to this palace. Then we can decide what is best to be done."

The Scarecrow lost no time in doing this. Fortunately most of the royal counsellors were in the Emerald City or near to it, so they all met in the throne room of the palace that same evening.



CHAPTER 14

Ozma's Counsellors

No Ruler ever had such a queer assortment of advisers as the Princess Ozma had gathered about her throne. Indeed, in no other country could such amazing people exist. But Ozma loved them for their peculiarities and could trust every one of them.

First there was the Tin Woodman. Every bit of him was tin, brightly polished. All his joints were kept well oiled and moved smoothly. He carried a gleaming axe to prove he was a woodman, but seldom had cause to use it because he lived in a magnificent tin castle in the Winkie Country of Oz and was the Emperor of all the Winkies. The Tin Woodman's name was Nick Chopper. He had a very good mind, but his heart was not of much account, so he was very careful to do nothing unkind or to hurt anyone's feelings.

Another counsellor was Scraps, the Patchwork Girl of Oz, who was made of a gaudy patchwork quilt, cut into shape and stuffed with cotton. This Patchwork Girl was very intelligent, but so full of fun and mad pranks that a lot of more stupid folks thought she must be crazy. Scraps was jolly under all conditions, however grave they might be, but her laughter and good spirits were of value in cheering others and in her seemingly careless remarks much wisdom could often be found.

Then there was the Shaggy Man — shaggy from head to foot, hair and whiskers, clothes and shoes — but very kind and gentle and one of Ozma's most loyal supporters.

Tik-Tok was there, a copper man with machinery inside him, so cleverly constructed that he moved, spoke and thought by three separate clock-works. Tik-Tok was very reliable because he always did exactly what he was wound up to do, but his machinery was liable to run down at times and then he was quite helpless until wound up again.

A different sort of person was Jack Pumpkinhead, one of Ozma's oldest friends and her companion on many adventures. Jack's body was very crude and awkward, being formed of limbs of trees of different sizes, jointed with wooden pegs. But it was a substantial body and not likely to break or wear out, and when it was dressed the clothes covered much of its roughness. The head of Jack Pumpkinhead was, as you have guessed, a ripe pumpkin, with the eyes, nose and mouth carved upon one side. The pumpkin was stuck on Jack's wooden neck and was liable to get turned sidewise or backward and then he would have to straighten it with his wooden hands.

The worst thing about this sort of a head was that it did not keep well and was sure to spoil sooner or later. So Jack's main business was to grow a field

of fine pumpkins each year, and always before his old head spoiled he would select a fresh pumpkin from the field and carve the features on it very neatly, and have it ready to replace the old head whenever it became necessary. He didn't always carve it the same way, so his friends never knew exactly what sort of an expression they would find on his face. But there was no mistaking him, because he was the only pumpkin-headed man alive in the Land of Oz.

A one-legged sailor-man was a member of Ozma's council. His name was Cap'n Bill and he had come to the Land of Oz with Trot, and had been made welcome on account of his cleverness, honesty and good-nature. He wore a wooden leg to replace the one he had lost and was a great friend of all the children in Oz because he could whittle all sorts of toys out of wood with his big jack-knife.

Professor H. M. Wogglebug, T. E., was another member of the council. The "H. M." meant Highly Magnified, for the Professor was once a little bug, who became magnified to the size of a man and always remained so. The "T. E." meant that he was Thoroughly Educated. He was at the head of Princess Ozma's Royal Athletic College, and so that the students would not have to study and so lose much time that could be devoted to athletic sports, such as football, baseball and the like, Professor Wogglebug had invented the famous Educational Pills. If one of the college students took a Geography Pill after breakfast, he knew his geography lesson in an instant; if he took a Spelling Pill he at once knew his spelling lesson, and an Arithmetic Pill enabled the student to do any kind of sum without having to think about it.

These useful pills made the college very popular and taught the boys and girls of Oz their lessons in the easiest possible way. In spite of this, Professor Wogglebug was not a favorite outside his college, for he was very conceited and admired himself so much and displayed his cleverness and learning so constantly, that no one cared to associate with him. Ozma found him of value in her councils, nevertheless.

Perhaps the most splendidly dressed of all those present was a great frog as large as a man, called the Frogman, who was noted for his wise sayings. He had come to the Emerald City from the Yip Country of Oz and was a guest of honor. His long-tailed coat was of velvet, his vest of satin and his trousers of finest silk. There were diamond buckles on his shoes and he carried a gold-headed cane and a high silk hat. All of the bright colors were represented in his rich attire, so it tired one's eyes to look at him for long, until one became used to his splendor.

The best farmer in all Oz was Uncle Henry, who was Dorothy's own uncle, and who now lived near the Emerald City with his wife Aunt Em. Uncle Henry taught the Oz people how to grow the finest vegetables and

fruits and grains and was of much use to Ozma in keeping the Royal Storehouses well filled. He, too, was a counsellor.

The reason I mention the little Wizard of Oz last is because he was the most important man in the Land of Oz. He wasn't a big man in size, but he was a big man in power and intelligence and second only to Glinda the Good in all the mystic arts of magic. Glinda had taught him, and the Wizard and the Sorceress were the only ones in Oz permitted by law to practice wizardry and sorcery, which they applied only to good uses and for the benefit of the people.

The Wizard wasn't exactly handsome but he was pleasant to look at. His bald head was as shiny as if it had been varnished; there was always a merry twinkle in his eyes and he was as spry as a schoolboy. Dorothy says the reason the Wizard is not as powerful as Glinda is because Glinda didn't teach him all she knows, but what the Wizard knows he knows very well and so he performs some very remarkable magic.

The ten I have mentioned assembled, with the Scarecrow and Glinda, in Ozma's throne room, right after dinner that evening, and the Sorceress told them all she knew of the plight of Ozma and Dorothy.

"Of course we must rescue them," she continued, "and the sooner they are rescued the better pleased they will be; but what we must now determine is how they can be saved. That is why I have called you together in council."

"The easiest way," remarked the Shaggy Man, "is to raise the sunken island of the Skeezers to the top of the water again."

"Tell me how?" said Glinda.

"I don't know how, your Highness, for I have never raised a sunken island."

"We might all get under it and lift," suggested Professor Wogglebug.

"How can we get under it when it rests on the bottom of the lake?" asked the Sorceress.

"Couldn't we throw a rope around it and pull it ashore?" inquired Jack Pumpkinhead.

"Why not pump the water out of the lake?" suggested the Patchwork Girl with a laugh.

"Do be sensible!" pleaded Glinda. "This is a serious matter, and we must give it serious thought."

"How big is the lake and how big is the island?" was the Frogman's question.

"None of us can tell, for we have not been there."

"In that case," said the Scarecrow, "it appears to me we ought to go to the Skeezer country and examine it carefully."

“Quite right,” agreed the Tin Woodman.

“We-will-have-to-go-there-any-how,” remarked Tik-Tok in his jerky machine voice.

“The question is which of us shall go, and how many of us?” said the Wizard.

“I shall go of course,” declared the Scarecrow.

“And I,” said Scraps.

“It is my duty to Ozma to go,” asserted the Tin Woodman.

“I could not stay away, knowing our loved Princess is in danger,” said the Wizard.

“We all feel like that,” Uncle Henry said.

Finally one and all present decided to go to the Skeezer country, with Glinda and the little Wizard to lead them. Magic must meet magic in order to conquer it, so these two skillful magic-workers were necessary to insure the success of the expedition.

They were all ready to start at a moment’s notice, for none had any affairs of importance to attend to. Jack was wearing a newly made Pumpkin-head and the Scarecrow had recently been stuffed with fresh straw. Tik-Tok’s machinery was in good running order and the Tin Woodman always was well oiled. “It is quite a long journey,” said Glinda, “and while I might travel quickly to the Skeezer country by means of my stork chariot the rest of you will be obliged to walk. So, as we must keep together, I will send my chariot back to my castle and we will plan to leave the Emerald City at sunrise tomorrow.”

CHAPTER 15

The Great Sorceress

Betsy and Trot, when they heard of the rescue expedition, begged the Wizard to permit them to join it and he consented. The Glass Cat, overhearing the conversation, wanted to go also and to this the Wizard made no objection.

This Glass Cat was one of the real curiosities of Oz. It had been made and brought to life by a clever magician named Dr. Pipt, who was not now permitted to work magic and was an ordinary citizen of the Emerald City. The cat was of transparent glass, through which one could plainly see its ruby heart beating and its pink brains whirling around in the top of the head.

The Glass Cat's eyes were emeralds; its fluffy tail was of spun glass and very beautiful. The ruby heart, while pretty to look at, was hard and cold and the Glass Cat's disposition was not pleasant at all times. It scorned to catch mice, did not eat, and was extremely lazy. If you complimented the remarkable cat on her beauty, she would be very friendly, for she loved admiration above everything. The pink brains were always working and their owner was indeed more intelligent than most common cats.

Three other additions to the rescue party were made the next morning, just as they were setting out upon their journey. The first was a little boy called Button Bright, because he had no other name that anyone could remember. He was a fine, manly little fellow, well mannered and good humored, who had only one bad fault. He was continually getting lost. To be sure, Button Bright got found as often as he got lost, but when he was missing his friends could not help being anxious about him.

"Some day," predicted the Patchwork Girl, "he won't be found, and that will be the last of him." But that didn't worry Button Bright, who was so careless that he did not seem to be able to break the habit of getting lost.

The second addition to the party was a Munchkin boy of about Button Bright's age, named Ojo. He was often called "Ojo the Lucky," because good fortune followed him wherever he went. He and Button Bright were close friends, although of such different natures, and Trot and Betsy were fond of both.

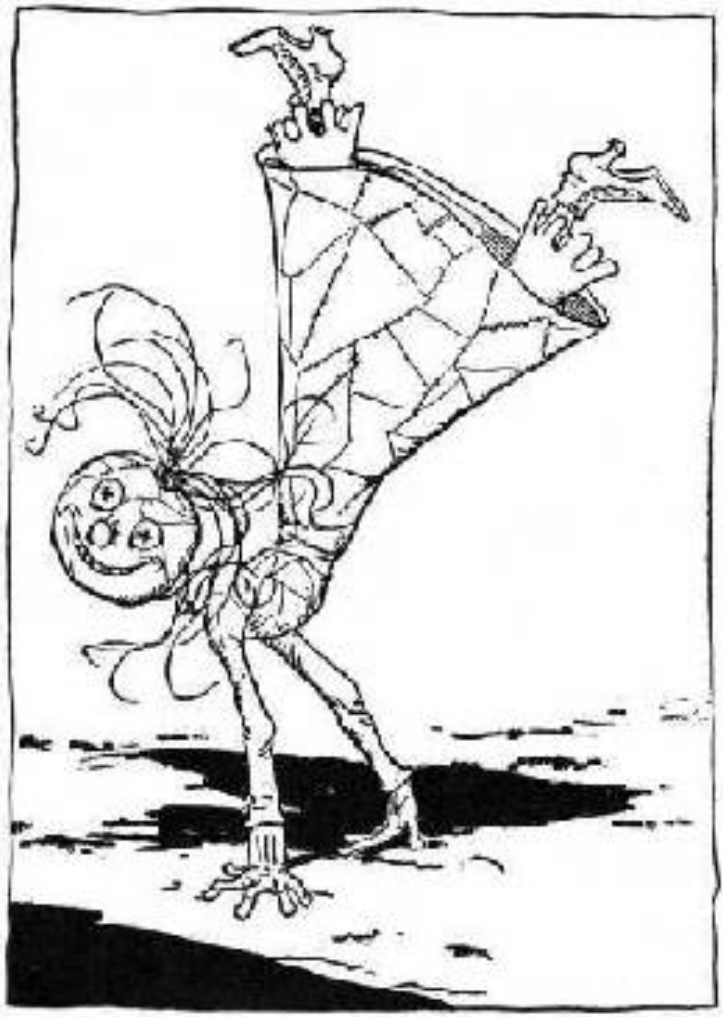
The third and last to join the expedition was an enormous lion, one of Ozma's regular guardians and the most important and intelligent beast in all Oz. He called himself the Cowardly Lion, saying that every little danger

scared him so badly that his heart thumped against his ribs, but all who knew him knew that the Cowardly Lion's fears were coupled with bravery and that however much he might be frightened he summoned courage to meet every danger he encountered. Often he had saved Dorothy and Ozma in times of peril, but afterward he moaned and trembled and wept because he had been so scared.

"If Ozma needs help, I'm going to help her," said the great beast. "Also, I suspect the rest of you may need me on the journey — especially Trot and Betsy — for you may pass through a dangerous part of the country. I know that wild Gillikin country pretty well. Its forests harbor many ferocious beasts."

They were glad the Cowardly Lion was to join them, and in good spirits the entire party formed a procession and marched out of the Emerald City amid the shouts of the people, who wished them success and a safe return with their beloved Ruler.

They followed a different route from that taken by Ozma and Dorothy, for they went through the Winkie Country and up north toward Oogaboo. But before they got there they swerved to the left and entered the Great Gillikin Forest, the nearest thing to a wilderness in all Oz. Even the Cowardly Lion had to admit that certain parts of this forest were unknown to him, although he had often wandered among the trees, and the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, who were great travelers, never had been there at all.



The forest was only reached after a tedious tramp, for some of the Rescue Expedition were quite awkward on their feet. The Patchwork Girl was as light as a feather and very spry; the Tin Woodman covered the ground as easily as Uncle Henry and the Wizard; but Tik-Tok moved slowly and the slightest obstruction in the road would halt him until the others cleared it away. Then, too, Tik-Tok's machinery kept running down, so Betsy and Trot took turns in winding it up.

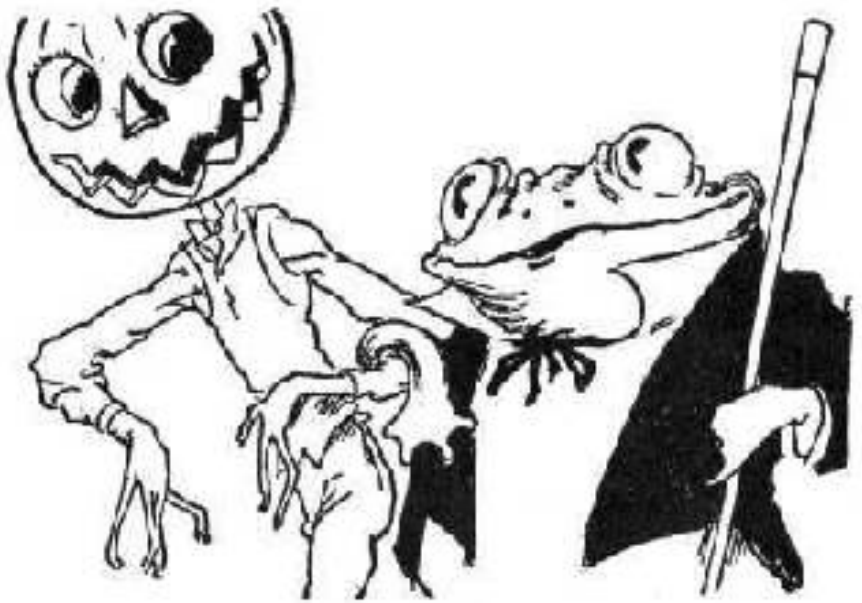
The Scarecrow was more clumsy but less bother, for although he often stumbled and fell he could scramble up again and a little patting of his straw-stuffed body would put him in good shape again.

Another awkward one was Jack Pumpkinhead, for walking would jar his

head around on his neck and then he would be likely to go in the wrong direction. But the Frogman took Jack's arm and then he followed the path more easily.

Cap'n Bill's wooden leg didn't prevent him from keeping up with the others and the old sailor could walk as far as any of them.

When they entered the forest the Cowardly lion took the lead. There was no path here for men, but many beasts had made paths of their own which only the eyes of the lion, practiced in woodcraft, could discern. So he stalked ahead and wound his way in and out, the others following in single file, Glinda being next to the Lion.



There are dangers in the forest, of course, but as the huge Lion headed the party he kept the wild denizens of the wilderness from bothering the travelers. Once, to be sure, an enormous leopard sprang upon the Glass Cat and caught her in his powerful jaws, but he broke several of his teeth and with howls of pain and dismay dropped his prey and vanished among the trees.

"Are you hurt?" Trot anxiously inquired of the Glass Cat.

"How silly!" exclaimed the creature in an irritated tone of voice; "nothing can hurt glass, and I'm too solid to break easily. But I'm annoyed at that leopard's impudence. He has no respect for beauty or intelligence. If he had noticed my pink brains work, I'm sure he would have realized I'm too important to be grabbed in a wild beast's jaws."

“Never mind,” said Trot consolingly; “I’m sure he won’t do it again.”

They were almost in the center of the forest when Ojo, the Munchkin boy, suddenly said: “Why, where’s Button Bright?”

They halted and looked around them. Button Bright was not with the party.

“Dear me,” remarked Betsy, “I expect he’s lost again!”

“When did you see him last, Ojo?” inquired Glinda.

“It was some time ago,” replied Ojo. “He was trailing along at the end and throwing twigs at the squirrels in the trees. Then I went to talk to Betsy and Trot, and just now I noticed he was gone.”

“This is too bad,” declared the Wizard, “for it is sure to delay our journey. We must find Button Bright before we go any farther, for this forest is full of ferocious beasts that would not hesitate to tear the boy to pieces.”

“But what shall we do?” asked the Scarecrow. “If any of us leaves the party to search for Button Bright he or she might fall a victim to the beasts, and if the Lion leaves us we will have no protector.

“The Glass Cat could go,” suggested the Frogman. “The beasts can do her no harm, as we have discovered.”

The Wizard turned to Glinda.

“Cannot your sorcery discover where Button Bright is?” he asked.

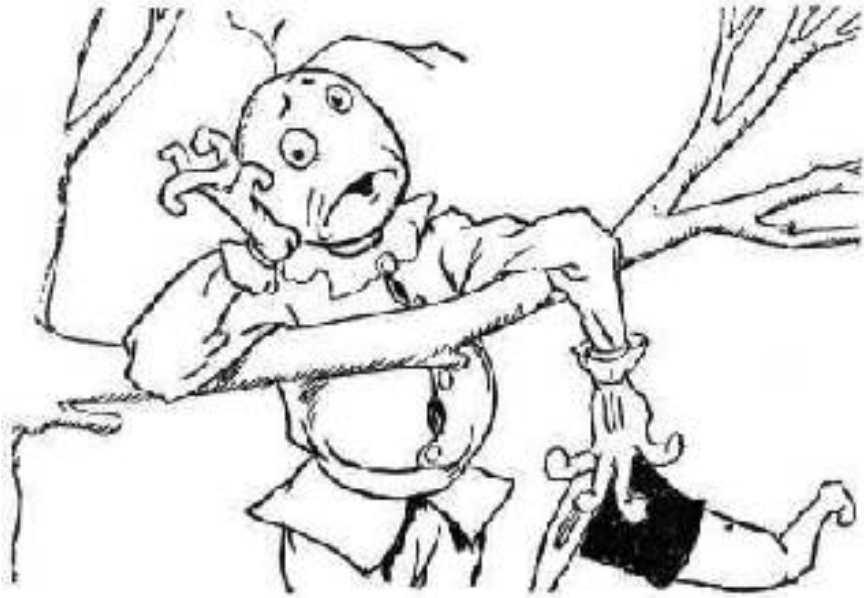
“I think so,” replied the Sorceress.

She called to Uncle Henry, who had been carrying her wicker box, to bring it to her, and when he obeyed she opened it and drew out a small round mirror. On the surface of the glass she dusted a white powder and then wiped it away with her handkerchief and looked in the mirror. It reflected a part of the forest, and there, beneath a wide-spreading tree, Button Bright was lying asleep. On one side of him crouched a tiger, ready to spring; on the other side was a big gray wolf, its bared fangs glistening in a wicked way.

“Goodness me!” cried Trot, looking over Glinda’s shoulder. “They’ll catch and kill him sure.”

Everyone crowded around for a glimpse at the magic mirror.

“Pretty bad — pretty bad!” said the Scarecrow sorrowfully.



"Comes of getting lost!" said Cap'n Bill, sighing.

"Guess he's a goner!" said the Frogman, wiping his eyes on his purple silk handkerchief.

"But where is he? Can't we save him?" asked Ojo the Lucky.

"If we knew where he is we could probably save him," replied the little Wizard, "but that tree looks so much like all the other trees, that we can't tell whether it's far away or near by."

"Look at Glinda!" exclaimed Betsy.

Glinda, having handed the mirror to the Wizard, had stepped aside and was making strange passes with her outstretched arms and reciting in low, sweet tones a mystical incantation. Most of them watched the Sorceress with anxious eyes, despair giving way to the hope that she might be able to save their friend. The Wizard, however, watched the scene in the mirror, while over his shoulders peered Trot, the Scarecrow and the Shaggy Man.

What they saw was more strange than Glinda's actions. The tiger started to spring on the sleeping boy, but suddenly lost its power to move and lay flat upon the ground. The gray wolf seemed unable to lift its feet from the ground. It pulled first at one leg and then at another, and finding itself strangely confined to the spot began to bark and snarl angrily. They couldn't hear the barkings and snarls, but they could see the creature's mouth open and its thick lips move. Button Bright, however, being but a few feet away from the wolf, heard its cries of rage, which wakened him from his

untroubled sleep.

The boy sat up and looked first at the tiger and then at the wolf. His face showed that for a moment he was quite frightened, but he soon saw that the beasts were unable to approach him and so he got upon his feet and examined them curiously, with a mischievous smile upon his face. Then he deliberately kicked the tiger's head with his foot and catching up a fallen branch of a tree he went to the wolf and gave it a good whacking. Both the beasts were furious at such treatment but could not resent it.

Button Bright now threw down the stick and with his hands in his pockets wandered carelessly away.

"Now," said Glinda, "let the Glass Cat run and find him. He is in that direction," pointing the way, "but how far off I do not know. Make haste and lead him back to us as quickly as you can."

The Glass Cat did not obey everyone's orders, but she really feared the great Sorceress, so as soon as the words were spoken the crystal animal darted away and was quickly lost to sight.

The Wizard handed the mirror back to Glinda, for the woodland scene had now faded from the glass. Then those who cared to rest sat down to await Button Bright's coming. It was not long before he appeared through the trees and as he rejoined his friends he said in a peevish tone:

"Don't ever send that Glass Cat to find me again. She was very impolite and, if we didn't all know that she had no manners, I'd say she insulted me."

Glinda turned upon the boy sternly.

"You have caused all of us much anxiety and annoyance," said she. "Only my magic saved you from destruction. I forbid you to get lost again."

"Of course," he answered. "It won't be *my* fault if I get lost again; but it wasn't my fault *this* time."

CHAPTER 16

The Enchanted Fishes

I must now tell you what happened to Ervic and the three other Skeezers who were left floating in the iron boat after Queen Coo-ee-oh had been transformed into a Diamond Swan by the magic of the Flathead Su-dic.

The four Skeezers were all young men and their leader was Ervic. Coo-ee-oh had taken them with her in the boat to assist her if she captured the Flathead chief, as she hoped to do by means of her silver rope. They knew nothing about the witchcraft that moved the submarine and so, when left floating upon the lake, were at a loss what to do. The submarine could not be submerged by them or made to return to the sunken island. There were neither oars nor sails in the boat, which was not anchored but drifted quietly upon the surface of the lake.

The Diamond Swan had no further thought or care for her people. She had sailed over to the other side of the lake and all the calls and pleadings of Ervic and his companions were unheeded by the vain bird. As there was nothing else for them to do, they sat quietly in their boat and waited as patiently as they could for someone to come to their aid.

The Flatheads had refused to help them and had gone back to their mountain. All the Skeezers were imprisoned in the Great Dome and could not help even themselves. When evening came, they saw the Diamond Swan, still keeping to the opposite shore of the lake, walk out of the water to the sands, shake her diamond-sprinkled feathers, and then disappear among the bushes to seek a resting place for the night.

"I'm hungry," said Ervic.

"I'm cold," said another Skeezer.

"I'm tired," said a third.

"I'm afraid," said the last one of them.

But it did them no good to complain. Night fell and the moon rose and cast a silvery sheen over the surface of the water.

"Go to sleep," said Ervic to his companions. "I'll stay awake and watch, for we may be rescued in some unexpected way."

So the other three laid themselves down in the bottom of the boat and were soon fast asleep.

Ervic watched. He rested himself by leaning over the bow of the boat, his face near to the moonlit water, and thought dreamily of the day's surprising events and wondered what would happen to the prisoners in the Great Dome.

Suddenly a tiny goldfish popped its head above the surface of the lake, not more than a foot from his eyes. A silverfish then raised its head beside that of

the goldfish, and a moment later a bronzefish lifted its head beside the others. The three fish, all in a row, looked earnestly with their round, bright eyes into the astonished eyes of Ervic the Skeezer.

"We are the three Adepts whom Queen Coo-ee-oh betrayed and wickedly transformed," said the goldfish, its voice low and soft but distinctly heard in the stillness of the night.

"I know of our Queen's treacherous deed," replied Ervic, "and I am sorry for your misfortune. Have you been in the lake ever since?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"I — I hope you are well — and comfortable," stammered Ervic, not knowing what else to say.

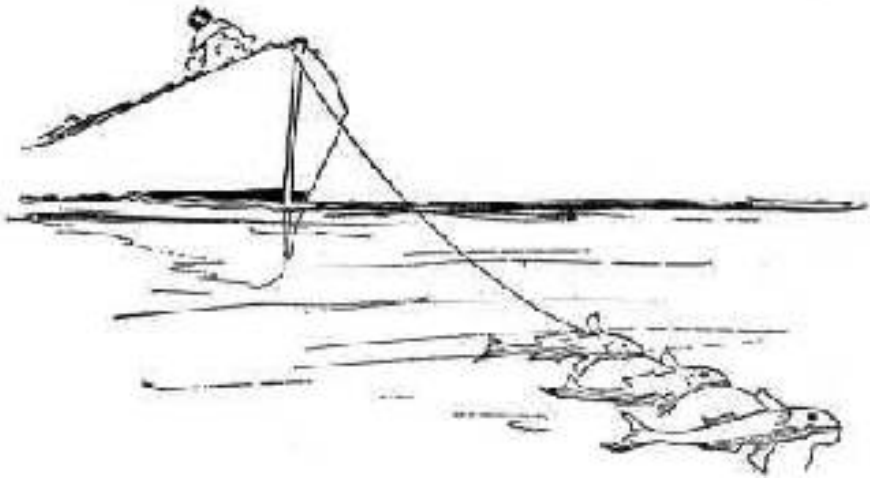
"We knew that some day Coo-ee-oh would meet with the fate she so richly deserves," declared the bronzefish. "We have waited and watched for this time. Now if you will promise to help us and will be faithful and true, you can aid us in regaining our natural forms, and save yourself and all your people from the dangers that now threaten you."

"Well," said Ervic, "you can depend on my doing the best I can. But I'm no witch, nor magician, you must know."

"All we ask is that you obey our instructions," returned the silverfish. "We know that you are honest and that you served Coo-ee-oh only because you were obliged to in order to escape her anger. Do as we command and all will be well."

"I promise!" exclaimed the young man. "Tell me what I am to do first."

"You will find in the bottom of your boat the silver cord which dropped from Coo-ee-oh's hand when she was transformed," said the goldfish. "Tie one end of that cord to the bow of your boat and drop the other end to us in the water. Together we will pull your boat to the shore."



Ervic much doubted that the three small fishes could move so heavy a boat, but he did as he was told and the fishes all seized their end of the silver cord in their mouths and headed toward the nearest shore, which was the very place where the Flatheads had stood when they conquered Queen Coo-ee-oh.

At first the boat did not move at all, although the fishes pulled with all their strength. But presently the strain began to tell. Very slowly the boat crept toward the shore, gaining more speed at every moment. A couple of yards away from the sandy beach the fishes dropped the cord from their mouths and swam to one side, while the iron boat, being now under way, continued to move until its prow grated upon the sands.

Ervic leaned over the side and said to the fishes: “What next?”

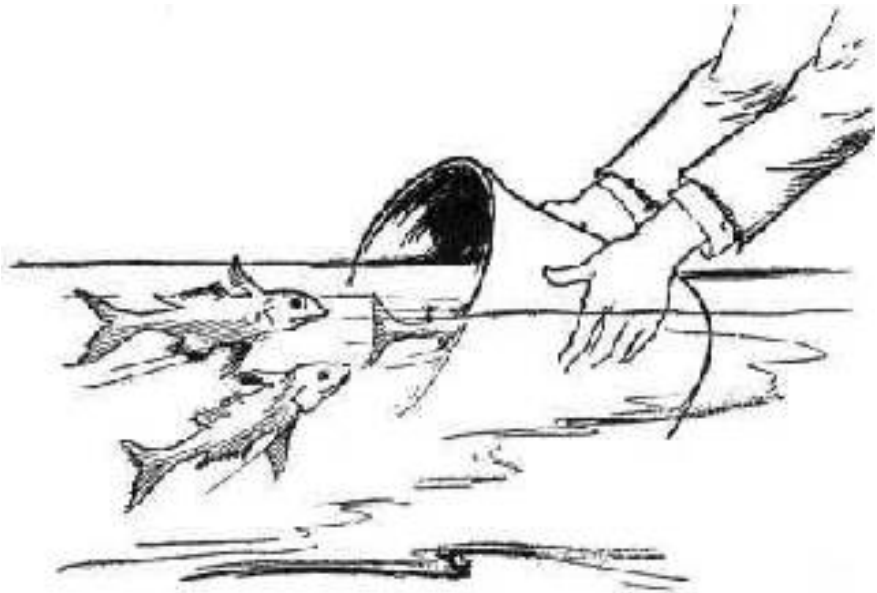
“You will find upon the sand,” said the silverfish, “a copper kettle, which the Su-dic forgot when he went away. Cleanse it thoroughly in the water of the lake, for it has had poison in it. When it is cleaned, fill it with fresh water and hold it over the side of the boat, so that we three may swim into the kettle. We will then instruct you further.”

“Do you wish me to catch you, then?” asked Ervic in surprise.

“Yes,” was the reply.

So Ervic jumped out of the boat and found the copper kettle. Carrying it a little way down the beach, he washed it well, scrubbing away every drop of the poison it had contained with sand from the shore.

Then he went back to the boat.



Ervic's comrades were still sound asleep and knew nothing of the three fishes or what strange happenings were taking place about them. Ervic dipped the kettle in the lake, holding fast to the handle until it was under water. The gold and silver and bronze fishes promptly swam into the kettle. The young Skeezer then lifted it, poured out a little of the water so it would not spill over the edge, and said to the fishes: "What next?"

"Carry the kettle to the shore. Take one hundred steps to the east, along the edge of the lake, and then you will see a path leading through the meadows, up hill and down dale. Follow the path until you come to a cottage which is painted a purple color with white trimmings. When you stop at the gate of this cottage we will tell you what to do next. Be careful, above all, not to stumble and spill the water from the kettle, or you would destroy us and all you have done would be in vain."

The goldfish issued these commands and Ervic promised to be careful and started to obey. He left his sleeping comrades in the boat, stepping cautiously over their bodies, and on reaching the shore took exactly one hundred steps to the east. Then he looked for the path and the moonlight was so bright that he easily discovered it, although it was hidden from view by tall weeds until one came full upon it. This path was very narrow and did not seem to be much used, but it was quite distinct and Ervic had no difficulty in following it. He walked through a broad meadow, covered with tall grass and weeds, up a hill and down into a valley and then up another hill and down again.

It seemed to Ervic that he had walked miles and miles. Indeed the moon

sank low and day was beginning to dawn when finally he discovered by the roadside a pretty little cottage, painted purple with white trimmings. It was a lonely place — no other buildings were anywhere about and the ground was not tilled at all. No farmer lived here, that was certain. Who would care to dwell in such an isolated place?

But Ervic did not bother his head long with such questions. He went up to the gate that led to the cottage, set the copper kettle carefully down and bending over it asked:

"What next?"

CHAPTER 17

Under the Great Dome

When Glinda the Good and her followers of the Rescue Expedition came in sight of the Enchanted Mountain of the Flatheads, it was away to the left of them, for the route they had taken through the Great Forest was some distance from that followed by Ozma and Dorothy.

They halted awhile to decide whether they should call upon the Supreme Dictator first, or go on to the Lake of the Skeezers.

"If we go to the mountain," said the Wizard, "we may get into trouble with that wicked Su-dic, and then we would be delayed in rescuing Ozma and Dorothy. So I think our best plan will be to go to the Skeezer Country, raise the sunken island and save our friends and the imprisoned Skeezers. Afterward we can visit the mountain and punish the cruel magician of the Flatheads."

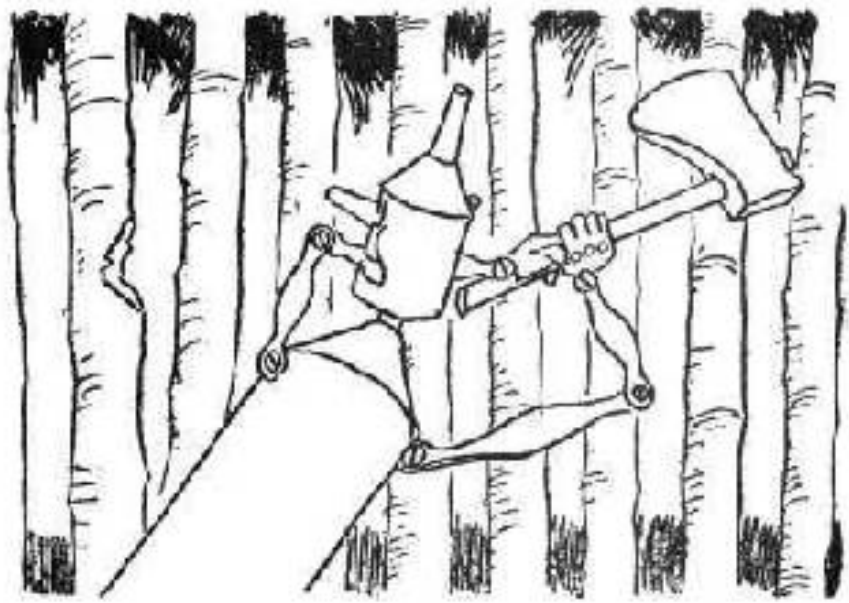
"That is sensible," approved the Shaggy Man. "I quite agree with you."

The others, too, seemed to think the Wizard's plan the best, and Glinda herself commended it, so on they marched toward the line of palm trees that hid the Skeezers' lake from view.

Pretty soon they came to the palms. These were set closely together, the branches, which came quite to the ground, being so tightly interlaced that even the Glass Cat could scarcely find a place to squeeze through. The path which the Flatheads used was some distance away.

"Here's a job for the Tin Woodman," said the Scarecrow.

So the Tin Woodman, who was always glad to be of use, set to work with his sharp, gleaming axe, which he always carried, and in a surprisingly short time had chopped away enough branches to permit them all to pass easily through the trees.



Now the clear waters of the beautiful lake were before them and by looking closely they could see the outlines of the Great Dome of the sunken island, far from shore and directly in the center of the lake.

Of course every eye was at first fixed upon this dome, where Ozma and Dorothy and the Skeezers were still fast prisoners. But soon their attention was caught by a more brilliant sight, for here was the Diamond Swan swimming just before them, its long neck arched proudly, the amethyst eyes gleaming and all the diamond-sprinkled feathers glistening splendidly under the rays of the sun.

"That," said Glinda, "is the transformation of Queen Coo-ee-oh, the haughty and wicked witch who betrayed the three Adepts at Magic and treated her people like slaves."

"She's wonderfully beautiful now," remarked the Frogman.

"It doesn't seem like much of a punishment," said Trot. "The Flathead Sudic ought to have made her a toad."

"I am sure Coo-ee-oh is punished," said Glinda, "for she has lost all her magic power and her grand palace and can no longer misrule the poor Skeezers."

"Let us call to her, and hear what she has to say," proposed the Wizard.

So Glinda beckoned the Diamond Swan, which swam gracefully to a position near them. Before anyone could speak Coo-ee-oh called to them in a rasping voice — for the voice of a swan is always harsh and unpleasant —

and said with much pride:

"Admire me, Strangers! Admire the lovely Coo-ee-oh, the handsomest creature in all Oz. Admire me!"

"Handsome is as handsome does," replied the Scarecrow. "Are your deeds lovely, Coo-ee-oh?"

"Deeds? What deeds can a swan do but swim around and give pleasure to all beholders?" said the sparkling bird.

"Have you forgotten your former life? Have you forgotten your magic and witchcraft?" inquired the Wizard.

"Magic — witchcraft? Pshaw, who cares for such silly things?" retorted Coo-ee-oh. "As for my past life, it seems like an unpleasant dream. I wouldn't go back to it if I could. Don't you admire my beauty, Strangers?"

"Tell us, Coo-ee-oh," said Glinda earnestly, "if you can recall enough of your witchcraft to enable us to raise the sunken island to the surface of the lake. Tell us that and I'll give you a string of pearls to wear around your neck and add to your beauty."

"Nothing can add to my beauty, for I'm the most beautiful creature anywhere in the whole world."

"But how can we raise the island?"

"I don't know and I don't care. If ever I knew I've forgotten, and I'm glad of it," was the response. "Just watch me circle around and see me glitter!"

"It's no use," said Button Bright; "the old Swan is too much in love with herself to think of anything else."

"That's a fact," agreed Betsy with a sigh; "but we've got to get Ozma and Dorothy out of that lake, somehow or other."

"And we must do it in our own way," added the Scarecrow.

"But how?" asked Uncle Henry in a grave voice, for he could not bear to think of his dear niece Dorothy being out there under water; "how shall we do it?"

"Leave that to Glinda," advised the Wizard, realizing he was helpless to do it himself.

"If it were just an ordinary sunken island," said the powerful Sorceress, "there would be several ways by which I might bring it to the surface again. But this is a Magic Isle, and by some curious art of witchcraft, unknown to any but Queen Coo-ee-oh, it obeys certain commands of magic and will not respond to any other. I do not despair in the least, but it will require some deep study to solve this difficult problem. If the Swan could only remember the witchcraft that she invented and knew as a woman, I could force her to tell me the secret, but all her former knowledge is now forgotten."

"It seems to me," said the Wizard after a brief silence had followed

Glinda's speech, "that there are three fishes in this lake that used to be Adepts at Magic and from whom Coo-ee-oh stole much of her knowledge. If we could find those fishes and return them to their former shapes, they could doubtless tell us what to do to bring the sunken island to the surface."

"I have thought of those fishes," replied Glinda, "but among so many fishes as this lake contains how are we to single them out?"

You will understand, of course, that had Glinda been at home in her castle, where the Great Book of Records was, she would have known that Ervic the Skeezer already had taken the gold and silver and bronze fishes from the lake. But that act had been recorded in the Book after Glinda had set out on this journey, so it was all unknown to her.

"I think I see a boat yonder on the shore," said Ojo the Munchkin boy, pointing to a place around the edge of the lake. "If we could get that boat and row all over the lake, calling to the magic fishes, we might be able to find them."

"Let us go to the boat," said the Wizard.

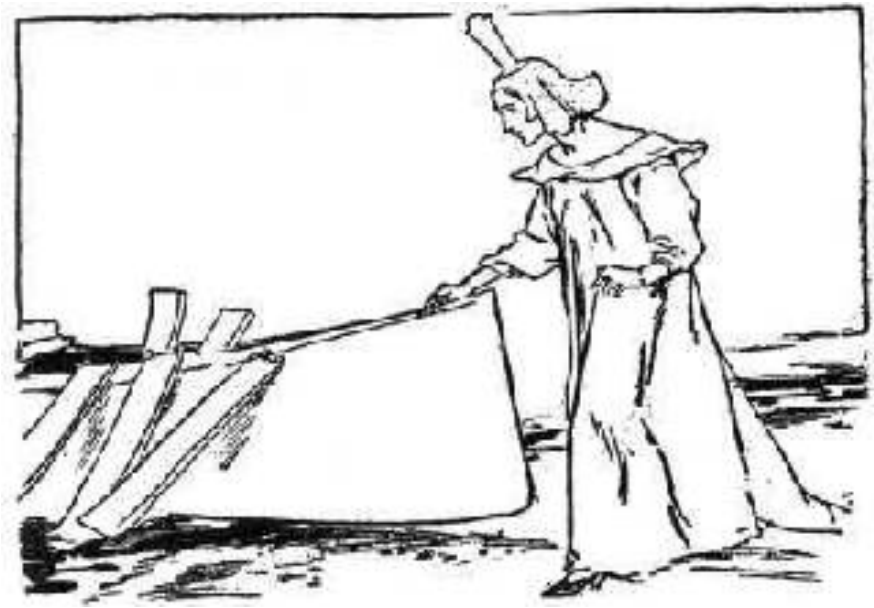
They walked around the lake to where the boat was stranded upon the beach, but found it empty. It was a mere shell of blackened steel, with a collapsible roof that, when in position, made the submarine water-tight, but at present the roof rested in slots on either side of the magic craft. There were no oars or sails, no machinery to make the boat go, and although Glinda promptly realized it was meant to be operated by witchcraft, she was not acquainted with that sort of magic.

"However," said she, "the boat is merely a boat, and I believe I can make it obey a command of sorcery, as well as it did the command of witchcraft. After I have given a little thought to the matter, the boat will take us wherever we desire to go."

"Not all of us," returned the Wizard, "for it won't hold so many. But, most noble Sorceress, provided you can make the boat go, of what use will it be to us?"

"Can't we use it to catch the three fishes?" asked Button Bright.

"It will not be necessary to use the boat for that purpose," replied Glinda. "Wherever in the lake the enchanted fishes may be, they will answer to my call. What I am trying to discover is how the boat came to be on this shore, while the island on which it belongs is under water yonder. Did Coo-ee-oh come here in the boat to meet the Flatheads before the island was sunk, or afterward?"



No one could answer that question, of course; but while they pondered the matter three young men advanced from the line of trees, and rather timidly bowed to the strangers.

"Who are you, and where did you come from!" inquired the Wizard.

"We are Skeezers," answered one of them, "and our home is on the Magic Isle of the Lake. We ran away when we saw you coming, and hid behind the trees, but as you are Strangers and seem to be friendly we decided to meet you, for we are in great trouble and need assistance."

"If you belong on the island, why are you here?" demanded Glinda.

So they told her all the story: How the Queen had defied the Flatheads and submerged the whole island so that her enemies could not get to it or destroy it; how, when the Flatheads came to the shore, Coo-ee-oh had commanded them, together with their friend Ervic, to go with her in the submarine to conquer the Su-dic, and how the boat had shot out from the basement of the sunken isle, obeying a magic word, and risen to the surface, where it opened and floated upon the water.

Then followed the account of how the Su-dic had transformed Coo-ee-oh into a swan, after which she had forgotten all the witchcraft she ever knew. The young men told how in the night when they were asleep, their comrade Ervic had mysteriously disappeared, while the boat in some strange manner had floated to the shore and stranded upon the beach.

That was all they knew. They had searched in vain for three days for Ervic. As their island was under water and they could not get back to it, the

three Skeezers had no place to go, and so had waited patiently beside their boat for something to happen.

Being questioned by Glinda and the Wizard, they told all they knew about Ozma and Dorothy and declared the two girls were still in the village under the Great Dome. They were quite safe and would be well cared for by Lady Aurex, now that the Queen who opposed them was out of the way.

When they had gleaned all the information they could from these Skeezers, the Wizard said to Glinda:

"If you find you can make this boat obey your sorcery, you could have it return to the island, submerge itself, and enter the door in the basement from which it came. But I cannot see that our going to the sunken island would enable our friends to escape. We would only join them as prisoners."

"Not so, friend Wizard," replied Glinda. "If the boat would obey my commands to enter the basement door, it would also obey my commands to come out again, and I could bring Ozma and Dorothy back with me."

"And leave all of our people still imprisoned?" asked one of the Skeezers reproachfully.

"By making several trips in the boat, Glinda could fetch all your people to the shore," replied the Wizard.

"But what could they do then?" inquired another Skeezer. "They would have no homes and no place to go, and would be at the mercy of their enemies, the Flatheads."

"That is true," said Glinda the Good. "And as these people are Ozma's subjects, I think she would refuse to escape with Dorothy and leave the others behind, or to abandon the island which is the lawful home of the Skeezers. I believe the best plan will be to summon the three fishes and learn from them how to raise the island."

The little Wizard seemed to think that this was rather a forlorn hope.

"How will you summon them," he asked the lovely Sorceress, "and how can they hear you?"

"That is something we must consider carefully," responded stately Glinda, with a serene smile. "I think I can find a way."

All of Ozma's counsellors applauded this sentiment, for they knew well the powers of the Sorceress.

"Very well," agreed the Wizard. "Summon them, most noble Glinda."

CHAPTER 18

The Cleverness of Ervic

We must now return to Ervic the Skeezer, who, when he had set down the copper kettle containing the three fishes at the gate of the lonely cottage, had asked, "What next?"

The goldfish stuck its head above the water in the kettle and said in its small but distinct voice:

"You are to lift the latch, open the door, and walk boldly into the cottage. Do not be afraid of anything you see, for however you seem to be threatened with dangers, nothing can harm you. The cottage is the home of a powerful Yookoohoo, named Reera the Red, who assumes all sorts of forms, sometimes changing her form several times in a day, according to her fancy. What her real form may be we do not know. This strange creature cannot be bribed with treasure, or coaxed through friendship, or won by pity. She has never assisted anyone, or done wrong to anyone, that we know of. All her wonderful powers are used for her own selfish amusement. She will order you out of the house but you must refuse to go. Remain and watch Reera closely and try to see what she uses to accomplish her transformations. If you can discover the secret whisper it to us and we will then tell you what to do next."

"That sounds easy," returned Ervic, who had listened carefully. "But are you sure she will not hurt me, or try to transform me?"

"She may change your form," replied the goldfish, "but do not worry if that happens, for we can break that enchantment easily. You may be sure that nothing will harm you, so you must not be frightened at anything you see or hear."

Now Ervic was as brave as any ordinary young man, and he knew the fishes who spoke to him were truthful and to be relied upon, nevertheless he experienced a strange sinking of the heart as he picked up the kettle and approached the door of the cottage. His hand trembled as he raised the latch, but he was resolved to obey his instructions. He pushed the door open, took three strides into the middle of the one room the cottage contained, and then stood still and looked around him.

The sights that met his gaze were enough to frighten anyone who had not been properly warned. On the floor just before Ervic lay a great crocodile, its red eyes gleaming wickedly and its wide open mouth displaying rows of sharp teeth. Horned toads hopped about; each of the four upper corners of the room was festooned with a thick cobweb, in the center of which sat a spider as big around as a washbasin, and armed with pincher-like claws; a red-and-

green lizard was stretched at full length on the window-sill and black rats darted in and out of the holes they had gnawed in the floor of the cottage.

But the most startling thing was a huge gray ape which sat upon a bench and knitted. It wore a lace cap, such as old ladies wear, and a little apron of lace, but no other clothing. Its eyes were bright and looked as if coals were burning in them. The ape moved as naturally as an ordinary person might, and on Ervic's entrance stopped knitting and raised its head to look at him.

"Get out!" cried a sharp voice, seeming to come from the ape's mouth.

Ervic saw another bench, empty, just beyond him, so he stepped over the crocodile, sat down upon the bench and carefully placed the kettle beside him.

"Get out!" again cried the voice.

Ervic shook his head.

"No," said he, "I'm going to stay."

The spiders left their four corners, dropped to the floor and made a rush toward the young Skeezer, circling around his legs with their pinchers extended. Ervic paid no attention to them. An enormous black rat ran up Ervic's body, passed around his shoulders and uttered piercing squeals in his ears, but he did not wince. The green-and-red lizard, coming from the window-sill, approached Ervic and began spitting a flaming fluid at him, but Ervic merely stared at the creature and its flame did not touch him.

The crocodile raised its tail and, swinging around, swept Ervic off the bench with a powerful blow. But the Skeezer managed to save the kettle from upsetting and he got up, shook off the horned toads that were crawling over him and resumed his seat on the bench.

All the creatures, after this first attack, remained motionless, as if awaiting orders. The old gray ape knitted on, not looking toward Ervic now, and the young Skeezer stolidly kept his seat. He expected something else to happen, but nothing did. A full hour passed and Ervic was growing nervous.

"What do you want?" the ape asked at last.

"Nothing," said Ervic.

"You may have that!" retorted the ape, and at this all the strange creatures in the room broke into a chorus of cackling laughter.

Another long wait.

"Do you know who I am?" questioned the ape.

"You must be Reera the Red — the Yookoohoo," Ervic answered.

"Knowing so much, you must also know that I do not like strangers. Your presence here in my home annoys me. Do you not fear my anger?"

"No," said the young man.

"Do you intend to obey me, and leave this house?"

“No,” replied Ervic, just as quietly as the Yookoohoo had spoken.

The ape knitted for a long time before resuming the conversation.

“Curiosity,” it said, “has led to many a man’s undoing. I suppose in some way you have learned that I do tricks of magic, and so through curiosity you have come here. You may have been told that I do not injure anyone, so you are bold enough to disobey my commands to go away. You imagine that you may witness some of the rites of witchcraft, and that they may amuse you. Have I spoken truly?”

“Well,” remarked Ervic, who had been pondering on the strange circumstances of his coming here, “you are right in some ways, but not in others. I am told that you work magic only for your own amusement. That seems to me very selfish. Few people understand magic. I’m told that you are the only real Yookoohoo in all Oz. Why don’t you amuse others as well as yourself?”

“What right have you to question my actions?”

“None at all.”

“And you say you are not here to demand any favors of me?”

“For myself I want nothing from you.”

“You are wise in that. I never grant favors.”

“That doesn’t worry me,” declared Ervic.

“But you are curious? You hope to witness some of my magic transformations?”

“If you wish to perform any magic, go ahead,” said Ervic. “It may interest me and it may not. If you’d rather go on with your knitting, it’s all the same to me. I am in no hurry at all.”

This may have puzzled Red Reera, but the face beneath the lace cap could show no expression, being covered with hair. Perhaps in all her career the Yookoohoo had never been visited by anyone who, like this young man, asked for nothing, expected nothing, and had no reason for coming except curiosity. This attitude practically disarmed the witch and she began to regard the Skeezer in a more friendly way. She knitted for some time, seemingly in deep thought, and then she arose and walked to a big cupboard that stood against the wall of the room. When the cupboard door was opened Ervic could see a lot of drawers inside, and into one of these drawers — the second from the bottom — Reera thrust a hairy hand.

Until now Ervic could see over the bent form of the ape, but suddenly the form, with its back to him,

seemed to straighten up and blot out the cupboard of drawers. The ape had changed to the form of a woman, dressed in the pretty Gillikin costume, and when she turned around he saw that it was a young woman, whose face was

quite attractive.

"Do you like me better this way?" Reera inquired with a smile.

"You *look* better," he said calmly, "but I'm not sure I *like* you any better."

She laughed, saying: "During the heat of the day I like to be an ape, for an ape doesn't wear any clothes to speak of. But if one has gentlemen callers it is proper to dress up."

Ervic noticed her right hand was closed, as if she held something in it. She shut the cupboard door, bent over the crocodile and in a moment the creature had changed to a red wolf. It was not pretty even now, and the wolf crouched beside its mistress as a dog might have done. Its teeth looked as dangerous as had those of the crocodile.

Next the Yookoohoo went about touching all the lizards and toads, and at her touch they became kittens. The rats she changed into chipmunks. Now the only horrid creatures remaining were the four great spiders, which hid themselves behind their thick webs.

"There!" Reera cried, "now my cottage presents a more comfortable appearance. I love the toads and lizards and rats, because most people hate them, but I would tire of them if they always remained the same. Sometimes I change their forms a dozen times a day."

"You are clever," said Ervic. "I did not hear you utter any incantations or magic words. All you did was to touch the creatures."

"Oh, do you think so?" she replied. "Well, touch them yourself, if you like, and see if you can change their forms."

"No," said the Skeezer, "I don't understand magic and if I did I would not try to imitate your skill. You are a wonderful Yookoohoo, while I am only a common Skeezer."

This confession seemed to please Reera, who liked to have her witchcraft appreciated.

"Will you go away now?" she asked. "I prefer to be alone."

"I prefer to stay here," said Ervic.

"In another person's home, where you are not wanted?"

"Yes."

"Is not your curiosity yet satisfied?" demanded Reera, with a smile.

"I don't know. Is there anything else you can do?"

"Many things. But why should I exhibit my powers to a stranger?"

"I can think of no reason at all," he replied.

She looked at him curiously.

"You want no power for yourself, you say, and you're too stupid to be able to steal my secrets. This isn't a pretty cottage, while outside are sunshine, broad prairies and beautiful wildflowers. Yet you insist on sitting on that bench and annoying me with your unwelcome presence. What have you in that kettle?"

"Three fishes," he answered readily.

"Where did you get them?"

"I caught them in the Lake of the Skeezers."

"What do you intend to do with the fishes?"

"I shall carry them to the home of a friend of mine who has three children. The children will love to have the fishes for pets."

She came over to the bench and looked into the kettle, where the three fishes were swimming quietly in the water.

"They're pretty," said Reera. "Let me transform them into something else."

"No," objected the Skeezer.

"I love to transform things; it's so interesting. And I've never transformed any fishes in all my life."

"Let them alone," said Ervic.

"What shapes would you prefer them to have? I can make them turtles, or cute little sea-horses; or I could make them piglets, or rabbits, or guinea-pigs; or, if you like I can make chickens of them, or eagles, or bluejays."

"Let them alone!" repeated Ervic.

"You're not a very pleasant visitor," laughed Red Reera. "People accuse *me* of being cross and crabbed and unsociable, and they are quite right. If you had come here pleading and begging for favors, and half afraid of my Yookoohoo magic, I'd have abused you until you ran away; but you're quite different from that. *You're* the unsociable and crabbed and disagreeable one, and so I like you, and bear with your grumpiness. It's time for my midday meal; are you hungry?"

"No," said Ervic, although he really desired food.

"Well, I am," Reera declared and clapped her hands together. Instantly a table appeared, spread with linen and bearing dishes of various foods, some smoking hot. There were two plates laid, one at each end of the table, and as

soon as Reera seated herself all her creatures gathered around her, as if they were accustomed to be fed when she ate. The wolf squatted at her right hand and the kittens and chipmunks gathered at her left.

"Come, Stranger, sit down and eat," she called cheerfully, "and while we're eating let us decide into what forms we shall change your fishes."

"They're all right as they are," asserted Ervic, drawing up his bench to the table. "The fishes are beauties — one gold, one silver and one bronze. Nothing that has life is more lovely than a beautiful fish."

"What! Am *I* not more lovely?" Reera asked, smiling at his serious face.

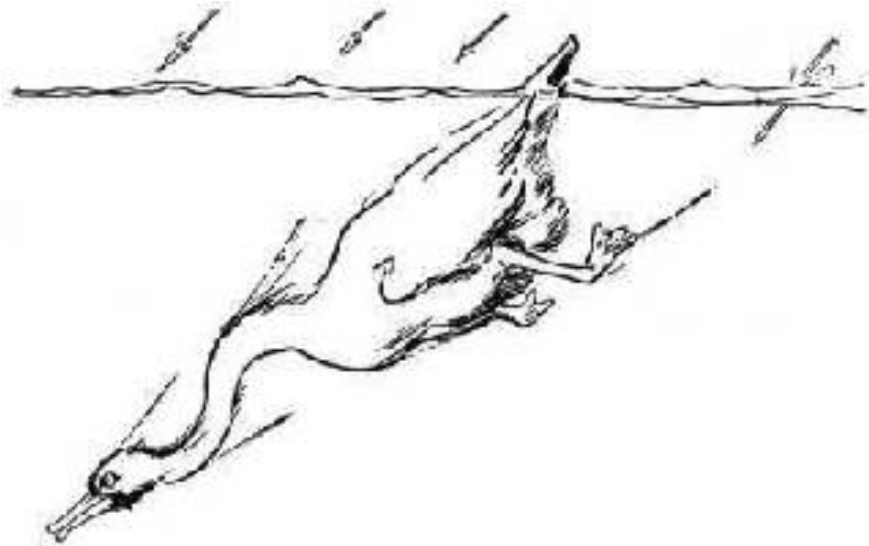
"I don't object to you — for a Yookoohoo, you know," he said, helping himself to the food and eating with good appetite.

"And don't you consider a beautiful girl more lovely than a fish, however pretty the fish may be?"

"Well," replied Ervic, after a period of thought, "that might be. If you transformed my three fish into three girls — girls who would be Adepts at Magic, you know they might please me as well as the fish do. You won't do that of course, because you can't, with all your skill. And, should you be able to do so, I fear my troubles would be more than I could bear. They would not consent to be my slaves — especially if they were Adepts at Magic — and so they would command *me* to obey *them*. No, Mistress Reera, let us not transform the fishes at all."

The Skeezer had put his case with remarkable cleverness. He realized that

if he appeared anxious for such a transformation the Yookoohoo would not perform it, yet he had skillfully suggested that they be made Adepts at Magic.



CHAPTER 19

Red Reera the Yookoohoo

After the meal was over and Reera had fed her pets, including the four monster spiders which had come down from their webs to secure their share, she made the table disappear from the floor of the cottage.

"I wish you'd consent to my transforming your fishes," she said, as she took up her knitting again.

The Skeezer made no reply. He thought it unwise to hurry matters. All during the afternoon they sat silent. Once Reera went to her cupboard and after thrusting her hand into the same drawer as before, touched the wolf and transformed it into a bird with gorgeous colored feathers. This bird was larger than a parrot and of a somewhat different form, but Ervic had never seen one like it before.

"Sing!" said Reera to the bird, which had perched itself on a big wooden peg — as if it had been in the cottage before and knew just what to do.

And the bird sang jolly, rollicking songs with words to them — just as a person who had been carefully trained might do. The songs were entertaining and Ervic enjoyed listening to them. In an hour or so the bird stopped singing, tucked its head under its wing and went to sleep. Reera continued knitting but seemed thoughtful.

Now Ervic had marked this cupboard drawer well and had concluded that Reera took something from it which enabled her to perform her transformations. He thought that if he managed to remain in the cottage, and Reera fell asleep, he could slyly open the cupboard, take a portion of whatever was in the drawer, and by dropping it into the copper kettle transform the three fishes into their natural shapes. Indeed, he had firmly resolved to carry out this plan when the Yookoohoo put down her knitting and walked toward the door.

"I'm going out for a few minutes," said she; "do you wish to go with me, or will you remain here?"

Ervic did not answer but sat quietly on his bench. So Reera went out and closed the cottage door.

As soon as she was gone, Ervic rose and tiptoed to the cupboard.

"Take care! Take care!" cried several voices, coming from the kittens and chipmunks. "If you touch anything we'll tell the Yookoohoo!"

Ervic hesitated a moment but, remembering that he need not consider Reera's anger if he succeeded in transforming the fishes, he was about to open the cupboard when he was arrested by the voices of the fishes, which stuck their heads above the water in the kettle and called out:

“Come here, Ervic!”

So he went back to the kettle and bent over it.

“Let the cupboard alone,” said the goldfish to him earnestly. “You could not succeed by getting that magic powder, for only the Yookoohoo knows how to use it. The best way is to allow her to transform us into three girls, for then we will have our natural shapes and be able to perform all the Arts of Magic we have learned and well understand. You are acting wisely and in the most effective manner. We did not know you were so intelligent, or that Reera could be so easily deceived by you. Continue as you have begun and try to persuade her to transform us. But insist that we be given the forms of girls.”

The goldfish ducked its head down just as Reera re-entered the cottage. She saw Ervic bent over the kettle, so she came and joined him.

“Can your fishes talk?” she asked.

“Sometimes,” he replied, “for all fishes in the Land of Oz know how to speak. Just now they were asking me for some bread. They are hungry.”

“Well, they can have some bread,” said Reera. “But it is nearly supper-time, and if you would allow me to transform your fishes into girls they could join us at the table and have plenty of food much nicer than crumbs. Why not let me transform them?”

“Well,” said Ervic, as if hesitating, “ask the fishes. If they consent, why — why, then, I’ll think it over.”

Reera bent over the kettle and asked:

“Can you hear me, little fishes?”

All three popped their heads above water.

“We can hear you,” said the bronzefish.

“I want to give you other forms, such as rabbits, or turtles or girls, or something; but your master, the surly Skeezer, does not wish me to. However, he has agreed to the plan if you will consent.”

“We’d like to be girls,” said the silverfish.

“No, no!” exclaimed Ervic.

“If you promise to make us three beautiful girls, we will consent,” said the goldfish.

“No, no!” exclaimed Ervic again.

“Also make us Adepts at Magic,” added the bronzefish.

“I don’t know exactly what that means,” replied Reera musingly, “but as no Adept at Magic is as powerful as Yookoohoo, I’ll add that to the transformation.”

“We won’t try to harm you, or to interfere with your magic in any way,” promised the goldfish. “On the contrary, we will be your friends.”

“Will you agree to go away and leave me alone in my cottage, whenever I command you to do so?” asked Reera.

“We promise that,” cried the three fishes.

“Don’t do it! Don’t consent to the transformation,” urged Ervic.

“They have already consented,” said the Yookoohoo, laughing in his face, “and you have promised me to abide by their decision. So, friend Skeezer, I shall perform the transformation whether you like it or not.”

Ervic seated himself on the bench again, a deep scowl on his face but joy in his heart. Reera moved over to the cupboard, took something from the drawer and returned to the copper kettle. She was clutching something tightly in her right hand, but with her left she reached within the kettle, took out the three fishes and laid them carefully on the floor, where they gasped in distress at being out of water.

Reera did not keep them in misery more than a few seconds, for she touched each one with her right hand and instantly the fishes were transformed into three tall and slender young women, with fine, intelligent faces and clothed in handsome, clinging gowns. The one who had been a goldfish had beautiful golden hair and blue eyes and was exceedingly fair of skin; the one who had been a bronzefish had dark brown hair and clear gray eyes and her complexion matched these lovely features. The one who had been a silverfish had snow-white hair of the finest texture and deep brown eyes. The hair contrasted exquisitely with her pink cheeks and ruby-red lips, nor did it make her look a day older than her two companions.

As soon as they secured these girlish shapes, all three bowed low to the Yookoohoo and said:

“We thank you, Reera.”

Then they bowed to the Skeezer and said:

“We thank you, Ervic.”

“Very good!” cried the Yookoohoo, examining her work with critical approval. “You are much better and more interesting than fishes, and this ungracious Skeezer would scarcely allow me to do the transformations. You surely have nothing to thank *him* for. But now let us dine in honor of the occasion.”

She clapped her hands together and again a table loaded with food appeared in the cottage. It was a longer table, this time, and places were set for the three Adepts as well as for Reera and Ervic.

“Sit down, friends, and eat your fill,” said the Yookoohoo, but instead of seating herself at the head of the table she went to the cupboard, saying to the Adepts: “Your beauty and grace, my fair friends, quite outshine my own. So that I may appear properly at the banquet table I intend, in honor of this

occasion, to take upon myself my natural shape."

Scarcely had she finished this speech when Reera transformed herself into a young woman fully as lovely as the three Adepts. She was not quite so tall as they, but her form was more rounded and more handsomely clothed, with a wonderful jeweled girdle and a necklace of shining pearls. Her hair was a bright auburn red, and her eyes large and dark.

"Do you claim this is your natural form?" asked Ervic of the Yookoohoo.

"Yes," she replied. "This is the only form I am really entitled to wear. But I seldom assume it because there is no one here to admire or appreciate it and I get tired admiring it myself."

"I see now why you are named Reera the Red," remarked Ervic.

"It is on account of my red hair," she explained smiling. "I do not care for red hair myself, which is one reason I usually wear other forms."

"It is beautiful," asserted the young man; and then remembering the other women present he added: "But, of course, all women should not have red hair, because that would make it too common. Gold and silver and brown hair are equally handsome."

The smiles that he saw interchanged between the four filled the poor Skeezer with embarrassment, so he fell silent and attended to eating his supper, leaving the others to do the talking. The three Adepts frankly told Reera who they were, how they became fishes and how they had planned secretly to induce the Yookoohoo to transform them. They admitted that they had feared, had they asked her to help, that she would have refused them.

"You were quite right," returned the Yookoohoo. "I make it my rule never to perform magic to assist others, for if I did there would always be crowds at my cottage demanding help and I hate crowds and want to be left alone.

"However, now that you are restored to your proper shapes, I do not regret my action and I hope you will be of use in saving the Skeezer people by raising their island to the surface of the lake, where it really belongs. But you must promise me that after you go away you will never come here again, nor tell anyone what I have done for you."

The three Adepts and Ervic thanked the Yookoohoo warmly. They promised to remember her wish that they should not come to her cottage again and so, with a good-bye, took their departure.

CHAPTER 20

A Puzzling Problem

Glinda the Good, having decided to try her sorcery upon the abandoned submarine, so that it would obey her commands, asked all of her party, including the Skeezers, to withdraw from the shore of the lake to the line of palm trees. She kept with her only the little Wizard of Oz, who was her pupil and knew how to assist her in her magic rites. When they two were alone beside the stranded boat, Glinda said to the Wizard:

"I shall first try my magic recipe No. 1163, which is intended to make inanimate objects move at my command. Have you a skeropythrope with you?"

"Yes, I always carry one in my bag," replied the Wizard. He opened his black bag of magic tools and took out a brightly polished skeropythrope, which he handed to the Sorceress. Glinda had also brought a small wicker bag, containing various requirements of sorcery, and from this she took a parcel of powder and a vial of liquid. She poured the liquid into the skeropythrope and added the powder. At once the skeropythrope began to sputter and emit sparks of a violet color, which spread in all directions. The Sorceress instantly stepped into the middle of the boat and held the instrument so that the sparks fell all around her and covered every bit of the blackened steel boat. At the same time Glinda crooned a weird incantation in the language of sorcery, her voice sounding low and musical.

After a little the violet sparks ceased, and those that had fallen upon the boat had disappeared and left no mark upon its surface. The ceremony was ended and Glinda returned the skeropythrope to the Wizard, who put it away in his black bag.

“That ought to do the business all right,” he said confidently.

“Let us make a trial and see,” she replied.

So they both entered the boat and seated themselves.

Speaking in a tone of command the Sorceress said to the boat: “Carry us across the lake, to the farther shore.”

At once the boat backed off the sandy beach, turned its prow and moved swiftly over the water.

“Very good — very good indeed!” cried the Wizard, when the boat slowed up at the shore opposite from that whence they had departed. “Even Coo-ee-oh, with all her witchcraft, could do no better.”

The Sorceress now said to the boat:

“Close up, submerge and carry us to the basement door of the sunken island — the door from which you emerged at the command of Queen Coo-ee-oh.”

The boat obeyed. As it sank into the water the top sections rose from the sides and joined together over the heads of Glinda and the Wizard, who were thus enclosed in a water-proof chamber. There were four glass windows in this covering, one on each side and one on either end, so that the passengers could see exactly where they were going. Moving under water more slowly than on the surface, the submarine gradually approached the island and halted with its bow pressed against the huge marble door in the basement under the Dome. This door was tightly closed and it was evident to both Glinda and the Wizard that it would not open to admit the under-water boat unless a magic word was spoken by them or someone from within the basement of the island. But what was this magic word? Neither of them knew.

“I’m afraid,” said the Wizard regretfully, “that we can’t get in, after all. Unless your sorcery can discover the word to open the marble door.”

“That is probably some word only known to Coo-ee-oh,” replied the Sorceress. “I may be able to discover what it is, but that will require time. Let us go back again to our companions.”

“It seems a shame, after we have made the boat obey us, to be balked by just a marble door,” grumbled the Wizard.

At Glinda’s command the boat rose until it was on a level with the glass dome that covered the Skeezer village, when the Sorceress made it slowly circle all around the Great Dome.

Many faces were pressed against the glass from the inside, eagerly watching the submarine, and in one place were Dorothy and Ozma, who quickly recognized Glinda and the Wizard through the glass windows of the boat. Glinda saw them, too, and held the boat close to the Dome while the friends exchanged greetings in pantomime. Their voices, unfortunately, could not be heard through the Dome and the water and the side of the boat. The Wizard tried to make the girls understand, through signs, that he and Glinda had come to their rescue, and Ozma and Dorothy understood this from the very fact that the Sorceress and the Wizard had appeared. The two girl prisoners were smiling and in safety, and knowing this Glinda felt she could take all the time necessary in order to effect their final rescue.

As nothing more could be done just then, Glinda ordered the boat to return to shore, and it obeyed readily. First it ascended to the surface of the water, then the roof parted and fell into the slots at the side of the boat, and then the magic craft quickly made the shore and beached itself on the sands

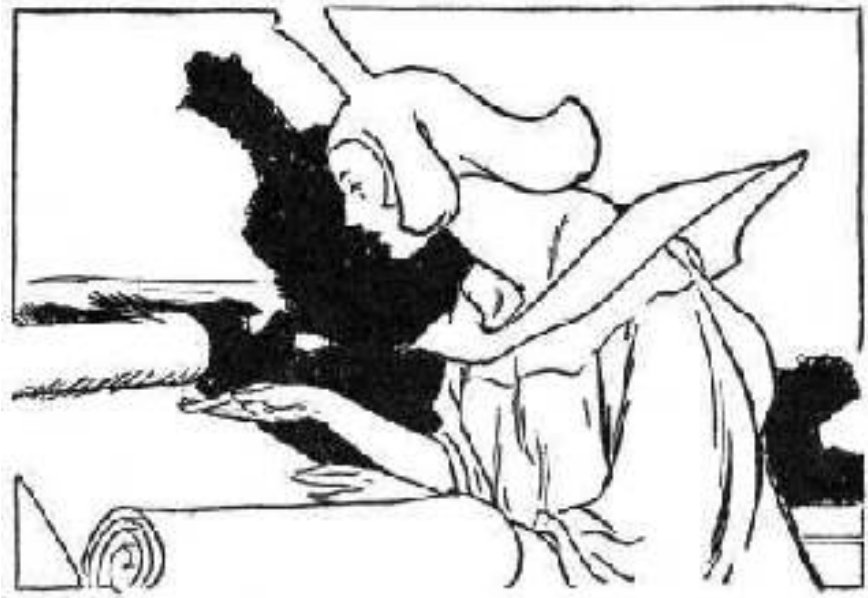
at the very spot from which it had departed at Glinda's command.

All the Oz people and the Skeezers at once ran to the boat to ask if they had reached the island, and whether they had seen Ozma and Dorothy. The Wizard told them of the obstacle they had met in the way of a marble door, and how Glinda would now undertake to find a magic way to conquer the door.

Realizing that it would require several days to succeed in reaching the island, raising it and liberating their friends and the Skeezer people, Glinda now prepared a camp half way between the lake shore and the palm trees.

The Wizard's wizardry made a number of tents appear and the sorcery of the Sorceress furnished these tents all complete, with beds, chairs, tables, rugs, lamps and even books with which to pass idle hours. All the tents had the Royal Banner of Oz flying from the centerpoles and one big tent, not now occupied, had Ozma's own banner moving in the breeze.

Betsy and Trot had a tent to themselves, and Button Bright and Ojo had another. The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman paired together in one tent and so did Jack Pumpkinhead and the Shaggy Man, Cap'n Bill and Uncle Henry, Tik-Tok and Professor Wogglebug. Glinda had the most splendid tent of all, except that reserved for Ozma, while the Wizard had a little one of his own. Whenever it was meal time, tables loaded with food magically appeared in the tents of those who were in the habit of eating, and these complete arrangements made the rescue party just as comfortable as they would have been in their own homes.



Far into the night Glinda sat in her tent studying a roll of mystic scrolls in search of a word that would open the basement door of the island and admit her to the Great Dome. She also made many magical experiments, hoping to discover something that would aid her. Yet the morning found the powerful Sorceress still unsuccessful.

Glinda's art could have opened any ordinary door, you may be sure, but you must realize that this marble door of the island had been commanded not to open save in obedience to one magic word, and therefore all other magic words could have no effect upon it. The magic word that guarded the door had probably been invented by Coo-ee-oh, who had now forgotten it. The only way, then, to gain entrance to the sunken island was to break the charm that held the door fast shut. If this could be done no magic would be required to open it.

The next day the Sorceress and the Wizard again entered the boat and made it submerge and go to the marble door, which they tried in various ways to open, but without success.

"We shall have to abandon this attempt, I think," said Glinda. "The easiest way to raise the island would be for us to gain admittance to the Dome and then descend to the basement and see in what manner Coo-ee-oh made the entire island sink or rise at her command. It naturally occurred to me that the easiest way to gain admittance would be by having the boat take us into the basement through the marble door from which Coo-ee-oh launched it. But there must be other ways to get inside the Dome and join Ozma and Dorothy,

and such ways we must find by study and the proper use of our powers of magic."

"It won't be easy," declared the Wizard, "for we must not forget that Ozma herself understands considerable magic, and has doubtless tried to raise the island or find other means of escape from it and failed."

"That is true," returned Glinda, "but Ozma's magic is fairy magic, while you are a Wizard and I am a Sorceress. In this way the three of us have a great variety of magic to work with, and if we should all fail it will be because the island is raised and lowered by a magic power none of us is acquainted with. My idea therefore is to seek — by such magic as we possess — to accomplish our object in another way."

They made the circle of the Dome again in their boat, and once more saw Ozma and Dorothy through their windows and exchanged signals with the two imprisoned girls.

Ozma realized that her friends were doing all in their power to rescue her and smiled an encouragement to their efforts. Dorothy seemed a little anxious but was trying to be as brave as her companion.

After the boat had returned to the camp and Glinda was seated in her tent, working out various ways by which Ozma and Dorothy could be rescued, the Wizard stood on the shore dreamily eying the outlines of the Great Dome which showed beneath the clear water, when he raised his eyes and saw a group of strange people approaching from around the lake. Three were young women of stately presence, very beautifully dressed, who moved with remarkable grace. They were followed at a little distance by a good-looking young Skeezer.

The Wizard saw at a glance that these people might be very important, so he advanced to meet them. The three maidens received him graciously and the one with the golden hair said:

"I believe you are the famous Wizard of Oz, of whom I have often heard. We are seeking Glinda, the Sorceress, and perhaps you can lead us to her."

"I can, and will, right gladly," answered the Wizard. "Follow me, please."

The little Wizard was puzzled as to the identity of the three lovely visitors but he gave no sign that might embarrass them.

He understood they did not wish to be questioned, and so he made no remarks as he led the way to Glinda's tent.

With a courtly bow the Wizard ushered the three visitors into the gracious presence of Glinda, the Good.

CHAPTER 21

The Three Adepts

The Sorceress looked up from her work as the three maidens entered, and something in their appearance and manner led her to rise and bow to them in her most dignified manner.

The three knelt an instant before the great Sorceress and then stood upright and waited for her to speak.

"Whoever you may be," said Glinda, "I bid you welcome."

"My name is Audah," said one.

"My name is Aurah," said another.

"My name is Aujah," said the third.

Glinda had never heard these names before, but looking closely at the three she asked:

"Are you witches or workers in magic?"

"Some of the secret arts we have gleaned from Nature," replied the brownhaired maiden modestly, "but we do not place our skill beside that of the Great Sorceress, Glinda the Good."

"I suppose you are aware it is unlawful to practice magic in the Land of Oz, without the permission of our Ruler, Princess Ozma?"

"No, we were not aware of that," was the reply. "We have heard of Ozma, who is the appointed Ruler of all this great fairyland, but her laws have not reached us, as yet."

Glinda studied the strange maidens thoughtfully; then she said to them:

"Princess Ozma is even now imprisoned in the Skeezer village, for the whole island with its Great Dome, was sunk to the bottom of the lake by the witchcraft of Coo-ee-oh, whom the Flathead Su-dic transformed into a silly swan. I am seeking some way to overcome Coo-ee-oh's magic and raise the isle to the surface again. Can you help me do this?"

The maidens exchanged glances, and the white-haired one replied

"We do not know; but we will try to assist you."

"It seems," continued Glinda musingly, "that Coo-ee-oh derived most of her witchcraft from three Adepts at Magic, who at one time ruled the Flatheads. While the Adepts were being entertained by Coo-ee-oh at a banquet in her palace, she cruelly betrayed them and after transforming them into fishes cast them into the lake.

"If I could find these three fishes and return them to their natural shapes — they might know what magic Coo-ee-oh used to sink the island. I was about to go to the shore and call these fishes to me when you arrived. So, if you will join me, we will try to find them."

The maidens exchanged smiles now, and the golden-haired one, Audah, said to Glinda:

"It will not be necessary to go to the lake. We are the three fishes."

"Indeed!" cried Glinda. "Then you are the three Adepts at Magic, restored to your proper forms?"

"We are the three Adepts," admitted Aujah.

"Then," said Glinda, "my task is half accomplished. But who destroyed the transformation that made you fishes?"

"We have promised not to tell," answered Aurah; "but this young Skeezer was largely responsible for our release; he is brave and clever, and we owe him our gratitude."

Glinda looked at Ervic, who stood modestly behind the Adepts, hat in hand. "He shall be properly rewarded," she declared, "for in helping you he has helped us all, and perhaps saved his people from being imprisoned forever in the sunken isle."

The Sorceress now asked her guests to seat themselves and a long talk followed, in which the Wizard of Oz shared.

"We are quite certain," said Aurah, "that if we could get inside the Dome we could discover Coo-ee-oh's secrets, for in all her work, after we became fishes, she used the formulas and incantations and arts that she stole from us. She may have added to these things, but they were the foundation of all her work."

"What means do you suggest for our getting into the Dome?" inquired Glinda.

The three Adepts hesitated to reply, for they had not yet considered what could be done to reach the inside of the Great Dome. While they were in deep thought, and Glinda and the Wizard were quietly awaiting their suggestions, into the tent rushed Trot and Betsy, dragging between them the Patchwork Girl.

"Oh, Glinda," cried Trot, "Scraps has thought of a way to rescue Ozma and Dorothy and all of the Skeezers."

The three Adepts could not avoid laughing merrily, for not only were they amused by the queer form of the Patchwork Girl, but Trot's enthusiastic speech struck them as really funny. If the Great Sorceress and the famous Wizard and the three talented Adepts at Magic were unable as yet to solve the important problem of the sunken isle, there was little chance for a patched girl stuffed with cotton to succeed.

But Glinda, smiling indulgently at the earnest faces turned toward her, patted the children's heads and said:

"Scraps is very clever. Tell us what she has thought of, my dear."

“Well,” said Trot, “Scraps says that if you could dry up all the water in the lake the island would be on dry land, an’ everyone could come and go whenever they liked.”

Glinda smiled again, but the Wizard said to the girls:

"If we should dry up the lake, what would become of all the beautiful fishes that now live in the water?"

"Dear me! That's so," admitted Betsy, crestfallen; "we never thought of that, did we Trot?"

"Couldn't you transform 'em into polliwogs?" asked Scraps, turning a somersault and then standing on one leg. "You could give them a little, teeny pond to swim in, and they'd be just as happy as they are as fishes."

"No indeed!" replied the Wizard, severely. "It is wicked to transform any living creatures without their consent, and the lake is the home of the fishes and belongs to them."

“All right,” said Scraps, making a face at him; “I don’t care.”

“It’s too bad,” sighed Trot, “for I thought we’d struck a splendid idea.”

“So you did,” declared Glinda, her face now grave and thoughtful. “There is something in the Patchwork Girl’s idea that may be of real value to us.”

“I think so, too,” agreed the golden-haired Adept. “The top of the Great Dome is only a few feet below the surface of the water. If we could reduce the level of the lake until the Dome sticks a little above the water, we could remove some of the glass and let ourselves down into the village by means of ropes.”

“And there would be plenty of water left for the fishes to swim in,” added the white-haired maiden.

“If we succeed in raising the island we could fill up the lake again,” suggested the brown-haired Adept.

“I believe,” said the Wizard, rubbing his hands together in delight, “that the Patchwork Girl, has shown us the way to success.”

The girls were looking curiously at the three beautiful Adepts, wondering who they were, so Glinda introduced them to Trot and Betsy and Scraps, and then sent the children away while she considered how to carry the new idea into effect.

Not much could be done that night, so the Wizard prepared another tent for the Adepts, and in the evening Glinda held a reception and invited all her followers to meet the new arrivals. The Adepts were greatly astonished at the extraordinary personages presented to them, and marveled that Jack Pumpkinhead and the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and Tik-Tok could really live and think and talk just like other people. They were especially pleased with the lively Patchwork Girl and loved to watch her antics.

It was quite a pleasant party, for Glinda served some dainty refreshments to those who could eat, and the Scarecrow recited some poems, and the Cowardly Lion sang a song in his deep bass voice. The only thing that marred their joy was the thought that their beloved Ozma and dear little Dorothy were yet confined in the Great Dome of the Sunken Island.

CHAPTER 22

The Sunken Island

As soon as they had breakfasted the next morning, Glinda and the Wizard and the three Adepts went down to the shore of the lake and formed a line with their faces toward the submerged island. All the others came to watch them, but stood at a respectful distance in the background.

At the right of the Sorceress stood Audah and Aurah, while at the left stood the Wizard and Aujah. Together they stretched their arms over the water's edge and in unison the five chanted a rhythmic incantation.

This chant they repeated again and again, swaying their arms gently from side to side, and in a few minutes the watchers behind them noticed that the lake had begun to recede from the shore. Before long the highest point of the dome appeared above the water. Gradually the water fell, making the dome appear to rise. When it was three or four feet above the surface Glinda gave the signal to stop, for their work had been accomplished.

The blackened submarine was now entirely out of water, but Uncle Henry and Cap'n Bill managed to push it into the lake. Glinda, the Wizard, Ervic and the Adepts got into the boat, taking with them a coil of strong rope, and at the command of the Sorceress the craft cleaved its way through the water toward the part of the Dome which was now visible.

"There's still plenty of water for the fish to swim in," observed the Wizard as they rode along. "They might like more but I'm sure they can get along until we have raised the island and can fill up the lake again."

The boat touched gently on the sloping glass of the Dome, and the Wizard took some tools from his black bag and quickly removed one large pane of glass, thus making a hole large enough for their bodies to pass through. Stout frames of steel supported the glass of the Dome, and around one of these frames the Wizard tied the end of a rope.

"I'll go down first," said he, "for while I'm not as spry as Cap'n Bill I'm sure I can manage it easily. Are you sure the rope is long enough to reach the bottom?"

"Quite sure," replied the Sorceress.

So the Wizard let down the rope and climbing through the opening lowered himself down, hand over hand, clinging to the rope with his legs and feet. Below in the streets of the village were gathered all the Skeezers, men, women and children, and you may be sure that Ozma and Dorothy, with Lady Aurex, were filled with joy that their friends were at last coming to their rescue.

The Queen's palace, now occupied by Ozma, was directly in the center of

the Dome, so that when the rope was let down the end of it came just in front of the palace entrance. Several Skeezers held fast to the rope's end to steady it and the Wizard reached the ground in safety. He hugged first Ozma and then Dorothy, while all the Skeezers cheered as loud as they could.

The Wizard now discovered that the rope was long enough to reach from the top of the Dome to the ground when doubled, so he tied a chair to one end of the rope and called to Glinda to sit in the chair while he and some of the Skeezers lowered her to the pavement. In this way the Sorceress reached the ground quite comfortably and the three Adepts and Ervic soon followed her.

The Skeezers quickly recognized the three Adepts at Magic, whom they had learned to respect before their wicked Queen betrayed them, and welcomed them as friends. All the inhabitants of the village had been greatly frightened by their imprisonment under water, but now realized that an attempt was to be made to rescue them.

Glinda, the Wizard and the Adepts followed Ozma and Dorothy into the palace, and they asked Lady Aurex and Ervic to join them. After Ozma had told of her adventures in trying to prevent war between the Flatheads and the Skeezers, and Glinda had told all about the Rescue Expedition and the restoration of the three Adepts by the help of Ervic, a serious consultation was held as to how the island could be made to rise.

"I've tried every way in my power," said Ozma, "but Coo-ee-oh used a very unusual sort of magic which I do not understand. She seems to have prepared her witchcraft in such a way that a spoken word is necessary to accomplish her designs, and these spoken words are known only to herself."

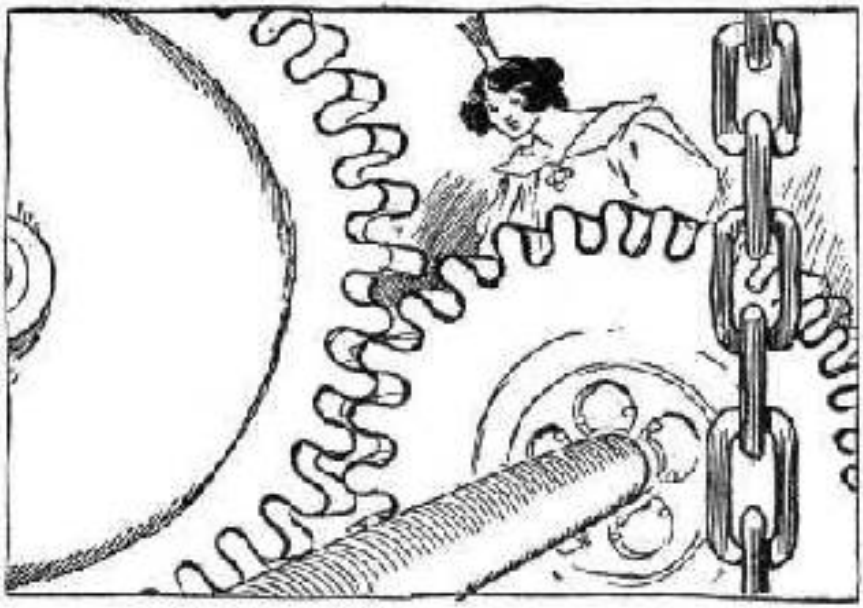
"That is a method we taught her," declared Aurah the Adept.

"I can do no more, Glinda," continued Ozma, "so I wish you would try what your sorcery can accomplish."

"First, then," said Glinda, "let us visit the basement of the island, which I am told is underneath the village."

A flight of marble stairs led from one of Coo-ee-oh's private rooms down to the basement, but when the party arrived all were puzzled by what they saw. In the center of a broad, low room, stood a mass of great cog-wheels, chains and pulleys, all interlocked and seeming to form a huge machine; but there was no engine or other motive power to make the wheels turn.

"This, I suppose, is the means by which the island is lowered or raised," said Ozma, "but the magic word which is needed to move the machinery is unknown to us."



The three Adepts were carefully examining the mass of wheels, and soon the golden-haired one said:

"These wheels do not control the island at all. On the contrary, one set of them is used to open the doors of the little rooms where the submarines are kept, as may be seen from the chains and pulleys used. Each boat is kept in a little room with two doors, one to the basement room where we are now and the other letting into the lake.

"When Coo-ee-oh used the boat in which she attacked the Flatheads, she first commanded the basement door to open and with her followers she got into the boat and made the top close over them. Then the basement door being closed, the outer door was slowly opened, letting the water fill the room to float the boat, which then left the island, keeping under water."

"But how could she expect to get back again?" asked the Wizard.

"Why the boat would enter the room filled with water and after the outer door was closed a word of command started a pump which pumped all the water from the room. Then the boat would open and Coo-ee-oh could enter the basement."

"I see," said the Wizard. "It is a clever contrivance, but won't work unless one knows the magic words."

"Another part of this machinery," explained the white-haired Adept, "is used to extend the bridge from the island to the mainland. The steel bridge is in a room much like that in which the boats are kept, and at Coo-ee-oh's

command it would reach out, joint by joint, until its far end touched the shore of the lake. The same magic command would make the bridge return to its former position. Of course the bridge could not be used unless the island was on the surface of the water."

"But how do you suppose Coo-ee-oh managed to sink the island, and make it rise again?" inquired Glinda.

This the Adepts could not yet explain. As nothing more could be learned from the basement they mounted the steps to the Queen's private suite again, and Ozma showed them to a special room where Coo-ee-oh kept her magical instruments and performed all her arts of witchcraft.

CHAPTER 23

The Magic Words

Many interesting things were to be seen in the Room of Magic, including much that had been stolen from the Adepts when they were transformed to fishes, but they had to admit that Coo-ee-oh had a rare genius for mechanics, and had used her knowledge in inventing a lot of mechanical apparatus that ordinary witches, wizards and sorcerers could not understand.

They all carefully inspected this room, taking care to examine every article they came across.

"The island," said Glinda thoughtfully, "rests on a base of solid marble. When it is submerged, as it is now, the base of the island is upon the bottom of the lake. What puzzles me is how such a great weight can be lifted and suspended in the water, even by magic."

"I now remember," returned Aujah, "that one of the arts we taught Coo-ee-oh was the way to expand steel, and I think that explains how the island is raised and lowered. I noticed in the basement a big steel pillar that passed through the floor and extended upward to this palace. Perhaps the end of it is concealed in this very room. If the lower end of the steel pillar is firmly embedded in the bottom of the lake, Coo-ee-oh could utter a magic word that would make the pillar expand, and so lift the entire island to the level of the water."

"I've found the end of the steel pillar. It's just here," announced the Wizard, pointing to one side of the room where a great basin of polished steel seemed to have been set upon the floor.

They all gathered around, and Ozma said:

"Yes, I am quite sure that is the upper end of the pillar that supports the island. I noticed it when I first came here. It has been hollowed out, you see, and something has been burned in the basin, for the fire has left its marks. I wondered what was under the great basin and got several of the Skeezers to come up here and try to lift it for me. They were strong men, but could not move it at all."

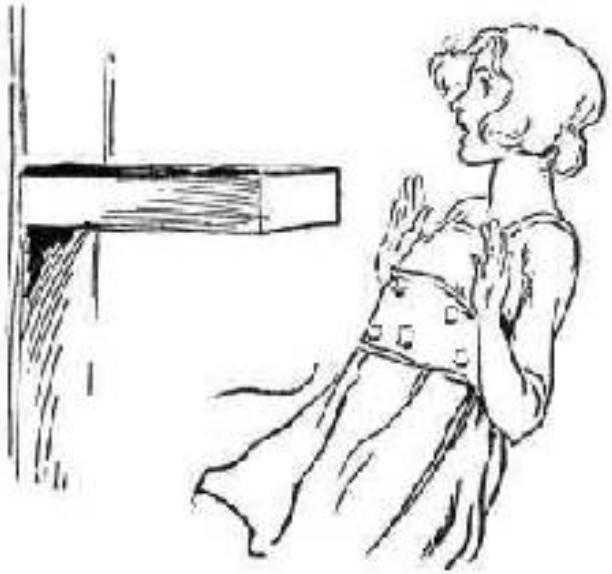
"It seems to me," said Audah the Adept, "that we have discovered the manner in which Coo-ee-oh raised the island. She would burn some sort of magic powder in the basin, utter the magic word, and the pillar would lengthen out and lift the island with it."

“What’s this?” asked Dorothy, who had been searching around with the others, and now noticed a slight hollow in the wall, near to where the steel basin stood. As she spoke Dorothy pushed her thumb into the hollow and instantly a small drawer popped out from the wall.

The three Adepts, Glinda and the Wizard sprang forward and peered into the drawer. It was half filled with a grayish powder, the tiny grains of which constantly moved as if impelled by some living force.

“It may be some kind of radium,” said the Wizard.

“No,” replied Glinda, “it is more wonderful than even radium, for I recognize it as a rare mineral powder called Gaulau by the sorcerers. I wonder how Coo-ee-oh discovered it and where she obtained it.”



“There is no doubt,” said Aujah the Adept, “that this is the magic powder Coo-ee-oh burned in the basin. If only we knew the magic word, I am quite sure we could raise the island.”

“How can we discover the magic word?” asked Ozma, turning to Glinda as she spoke.

“That we must now seriously consider,” answered the Sorceress.

So all of them sat down in the Room of Magic and began to think. It was so still that after a while Dorothy grew nervous. The little girl never could keep silent for long, and at the risk of displeasing her magic-working friends she suddenly said:

“Well, Coo-ee-oh used just three magic words, one to make the bridge work, and one to make the submarines go out of their holes, and one to raise

and lower the island. Three words. And Coo-ee-oh's name is made up of just three words. One is 'Coo,' and one is 'ee,' and one is 'oh.'"

The Wizard frowned but Glinda looked wonderingly at the young girl and Ozma cried out:

"A good thought, Dorothy dear! You may have solved our problem."

"I believe it is worth a trial," agreed Glinda. "It would be quite natural for Coo-ee-oh to divide her name into three magic syllables, and Dorothy's suggestion seems like an inspiration."

The three Adepts also approved the trial but the brown-haired one said:

"We must be careful not to use the wrong word, and send the bridge out under water. The main thing, if Dorothy's idea is correct, is to hit upon the one word that moves the island."

"Let us experiment," suggested the Wizard.

In the drawer with the moving gray powder was a tiny golden cup, which they thought was used for measuring. Glinda filled this cup with the powder and carefully poured it into the shallow basin, which was the top of the great steel pillar supporting the island. Then Aurah the Adept lighted a taper and touched it to the powder, which instantly glowed fiery red and tumbled about the basin with astonishing energy. While the grains of powder still glowed red the Sorceress bent over it and said in a voice of command: "Coo!"

They waited motionless to see what would happen. There was a grating noise and a whirl of machinery, but the island did not move a particle.

Dorothy rushed to the window, which overlooked the glass side of the dome.

"The boats!" she exclaimed. "The boats are all loose an' sailing under water."

"We've made a mistake," said the Wizard gloomily.

"But it's one which shows we are on the right track," declared Aujah the Adept. "We know now that Coo-ee-oh used the syllables of her name for the magic words."

"If 'Coo' sends out the boats, it is probable that 'ee' works the bridge," suggested Ozma. "So the last part of the name may raise the island."

"Let us try that next then," proposed the Wizard.

He scraped the embers of the burned powder out of the basin and Glinda again filled the golden cup from the drawer and placed it on top the steel pillar. Aurah lighted it with her taper and Ozma bent over the basin and murmured the long drawn syllable: "Oh-h-h!"

Instantly the island trembled and with a weird groaning noise it moved upward — slowly, very slowly, but with a steady motion, while all the company stood by in awed silence. It was a wonderful thing, even to those

skilled in the arts of magic, wizardry and sorcery, to realize that a single word could raise that great, heavy island, with its immense glass Dome.

"Why, we're way *above* the lake now!" exclaimed Dorothy from the window, when at last the island ceased to move.

"That is because we lowered the level of the water," explained Glinda.

They could hear the Skeezers cheering lustily in the streets of the village as they realized that they were saved.

"Come," said Ozma eagerly, "let us go down and join the people."

"Not just yet," returned Glinda, a happy smile upon her lovely face, for she was overjoyed at their success. "First let us extend the bridge to the mainland, where our friends from the Emerald City are waiting."

It didn't take long to put more powder in the basin, light it and utter the syllable "EE!" The result was that a door in the basement opened and the steel bridge moved out, extended itself joint by joint, and finally rested its far end on the shore of the lake just in front of the encampment.

"Now," said Glinda, "we can go up and receive the congratulations of the Skeezers and of our friends of the Rescue Expedition."

Across the water, on the shore of the lake, the Patchwork Girl was waving them a welcome.

CHAPTER 24

Glinda's Triumph

Of course all those who had joined Glinda's expedition at once crossed the bridge to the island, where they were warmly welcomed by the Skeezers. Before all the concourse of people Princess Ozma made a speech from a porch of the palace and demanded that they recognize her as their lawful Ruler and promise to obey the laws of the Land of Oz. In return she agreed to protect them from all future harm and declared they would no longer be subjected to cruelty and abuse.

This pleased the Skeezers greatly, and when Ozma told them they might elect a Queen to rule over them, who in turn would be subject to Ozma of Oz, they voted for Lady Aurex, and that same day the ceremony of crowning the new Queen was held and Aurex was installed as mistress of the palace.

For her Prime Minister the Queen selected Ervic, for the three Adepts had told of his good judgment, faithfulness and cleverness, and all the Skeezers approved the appointment.

Glinda, the Wizard and the Adepts stood on the bridge and recited an incantation that quite filled the lake with water again, and the Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl climbed to the top of the Great Dome and replaced the pane of glass that had been removed to allow Glinda and her followers to enter.

When evening came Ozma ordered a great feast prepared, to which every Skeezer was invited. The village was beautifully decorated and brilliantly lighted and there was music and dancing until a late hour to celebrate the liberation of the people. For the Skeezers had been freed, not only from the water of the lake but from the cruelty of their former Queen.

As the people from the Emerald City prepared the next morning to depart Queen Aurex said to Ozma:

"There is only one thing I now fear for my people, and that is the enmity of the terrible Su-dic of the Flatheads. He is liable to come here at any time and try to annoy us, and my Skeezers are peaceful folks and unable to fight the wild and wilful Flatheads."

"Do not worry," returned Ozma, reassuringly. "We intend to stop on our way at the Flatheads' Enchanted Mountain and punish the Su-dic for his misdeeds."

That satisfied Aurex and when Ozma and her followers trooped over the bridge to the shore, having taken leave of their friends, all the Skeezers cheered them and waved their hats and handkerchiefs, and the band played and the departure was indeed a ceremony long to be remembered.

The three Adepts at Magic, who had formerly ruled the Flatheads wisely and considerately, went with Princess Ozma and her people, for they had promised Ozma to stay on the mountain and again see that the laws were enforced.

Glinda had been told all about the curious Flatheads and she had consulted with the Wizard and formed a plan to render them more intelligent and agreeable.

When the party reached the mountain Ozma and Dorothy showed them how to pass around the invisible wall — which had been built by the Flatheads after the Adepts were transformed — and how to gain the up-and-down stairway that led to the mountain top.

The Su-dic had watched the approach of the party from the edge of the mountain and was frightened when he saw that the three Adepts had recovered their natural forms and were coming back to their former home. He realized that his power would soon be gone and yet he determined to fight to the last. He called all the Flatheads together and armed them, and told them to arrest all who came up the stairway and hurl them over the edge of the mountain to the plain below. But although they feared the Supreme Dictator, who had threatened to punish them if they did not obey his commands, as soon as they saw the three Adepts they threw down their arms and begged their former rulers to protect them.

The three Adepts assured the excited Flatheads that they had nothing to fear.

Seeing that his people had rebelled the Su-dic ran away and tried to hide, but the Adepts found him and had him cast into a prison, all his cans of brains being taken away from him.

After this easy conquest of the Su-dic, Glinda told the Adepts of her plan, which had already been approved by Ozma of Oz, and they joyfully agreed to it. So, during the next few days, the great Sorceress transformed, in a way, every Flathead on the mountain.

Taking them one at a time, she had the can of brains that belonged to each one opened and the contents spread on the flat head, after which, by means of her arts of sorcery, she caused the head to grow over the brains — in the manner most people wear them — and they were thus rendered as intelligent and good looking as any of the other inhabitants of the Land of Oz.

When all had been treated in this manner there were no more Flatheads at all, and the Adepts decided to name their people Mountaineers. One good result of Glinda's sorcery was that no one could now be deprived of the brains that belonged to him and each person had exactly the share he was entitled to.

Even the Su-dic was given his portion of brains and his flat head made round, like the others, but he was deprived of all power to work further mischief, and with the Adepts constantly watching him he would be forced to become obedient and humble.

The Golden Pig, which ran grunting about the streets, with no brains at all, was disenchanted by Glinda, and in her woman's form was given brains and a round head. This wife of the Su-dic had once been even more wicked than her evil husband, but she had now forgotten all her wickedness and was likely to be a good woman thereafter.

These things being accomplished in a satisfactory manner, Princess Ozma and her people bade farewell to the three Adepts and departed for the Emerald City, well pleased with their interesting adventures.

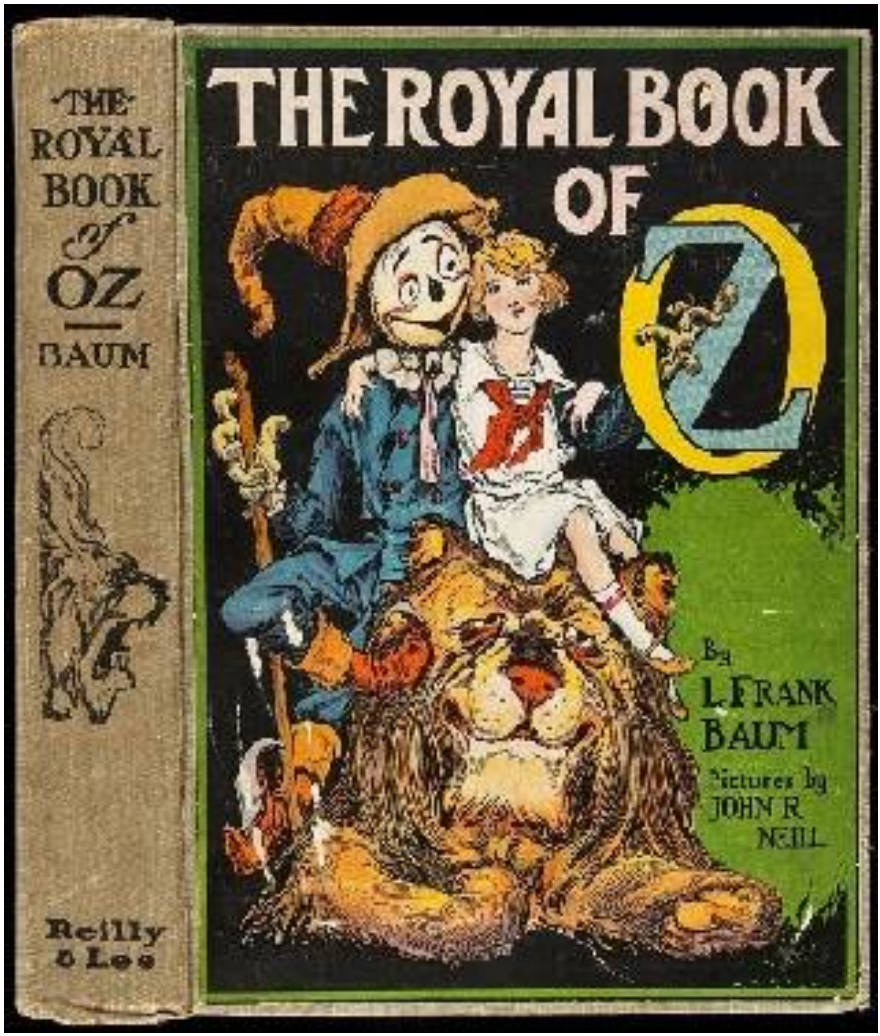
They returned by the road over which Ozma and Dorothy had come, stopping to get the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon where they had left them.

"I'm very glad I went to see these peoples," said Princess Ozma, "for I not only prevented any further warfare between them, but they have been freed from the rule of the Su-dic and Coo-ee-oh and are now happy and loyal subjects of the Land of Oz. Which proves that it is always wise to do one's

duty, however unpleasant that duty may seem to be.”

THE ROYAL BOOK OF OZ by Ruth Plumly Thompson

After L. Frank Baum's death in 1919, there were two extant manuscripts on hand, published over the next two years. Since sales had mushroomed in recent years, Baum's publisher, Reilly & Lee, decided to continue the series. They published their first effort, *The Royal Book of Oz*, under Baum's name, but he had nothing to do with it. Ruth Plumly Thompson was the author. She would go on to write twenty more Oz books. *The Royal Book of Oz* appeared in 1921, illustrated by John R. Neill, who had done the artwork for most of Baum's Oz books. The Scarecrow, saddened by Professor Woggle-Bug's comment that he has no family, travels to his old cornfield, in search of his "roots." Dorothy Gale and the Cowardly Lion go looking for him and meet such newly introduced characters as the knight, Sir Hokus, the Comfortable Camel, and the Doubtful Dromedary. The Scarecrow makes a startling discovery about his past and makes a momentous decision about his future.



A copy of the first edition of 'The Royal Book of Oz'

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Ruth Plumly Thompson, circa 1972, with some of the Oz books she authored

A map of Oz from 1920, given away by publishers Reilly & Lee

This Book
belongs to

THE ROYAL BOOK
of

THE ROYAL BOOK OF OZ

In which the Scarecrow goes to search for his family tree and discovers that he is the Long Lost Emperor of the Silver Island, and how he was rescued and brought back to Oz by Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion

Dear Children:

You will remember that, in the front part of Glinda of Oz, the Publishers told you that when Mr. Baum went away from this world he left behind some unfinished notes about the Princess Ozma and Dorothy and the jolly people of the Wonderful Land of Oz. The Publishers promised that they would try to put these notes together into a new Oz book for you.

Well, here it is — The Royal Book of Oz.

I am sure that Mr. Baum would be pleased that Ruth Plumly Thompson, who has known and loved the Oz Stories ever since she was a little girl, has made this new Oz story, with all the Oz folks in it and true to life.

You see I am Mrs. Baum, the wife of the Royal Historian of Oz, and so I know how he feels about everything.

Now, about the story:

Of course, we all knew the Scarecrow was a very fine fellow, but surely we never guessed he ascended from an emperor. Most of us descend from our ancestors, but the Scarecrow really ASCENDED.

The Scarecrow had a most exciting and adventurous time on the Silver Isle and Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion just ran out of one adventure into another trying to rescue him. They made some charming new friends in their travels — Sir Hokus of Pokes, the Doubtful Dromedary, and the Comfortable Camel. You'll find them very unusual and likable. They have the same peculiar, delightful and informal natures that we love in all the queer Oz people.

Of course every one of us is happy that John R. Neill has drawn the funny

and lovely pictures for the new book. Mr. Neill surely is the Royal Painter of Oz.

This note is intended for all the children of America, who knew and loved Mr. Baum, and it goes to each of you with his love and mine.

MAUD G. BAUM.

OZCOT
HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA
IN THE SPRING, 1921

FUNERAL PIN

CHAPTER 1

PROFESSOR WOGGLEBUG'S GREAT IDEA

"The very thing!" exclaimed Professor Wogglebug, bounding into the air and upsetting his gold inkwell. "The very next idea!"

"Who — me?" A round-faced little Munchkin boy stuck his head in the door and regarded Professor Wogglebug solemnly. He was working his way through the Professor's Athletic college, and one of his duties was to wait upon this eminent educator of Oz.

"Certainly not!" snapped Professor Wogglebug. "You're a nobody or a nothing. Stop gaping and fetch me my hat. I'm off to the Emerald City. And mind the pupils take their history pills regularly while I'm gone," he added, clapping his tall hat Zif held out to him on the back of his head.

"Yes, sir!" said the little Munchkin respectfully.

"Don't hurry back, sir!" This last remark the Professor did not hear, for he was already half way down the college steps.

"Ozma will be delighted with the idea. How clever I am!" he murmured, twirling his antennae and walking rapidly down the pleasant blue lane.

The Professor, whose College of Art and Athletic Perfection is in the southwestern part of the Munchkin country, is the biggest bug in Oz, or in anyplace else, for that matter. He has made education painless by substituting school pills for books. His students take Latin, history and spelling pills; they swallow knowledge of every kind with ease and pleasure and spend the rest of their time in sport. No wonder he is so well thought of in Oz! No wonder he thinks so well of himself!

Swinging his cane jauntily, the Professor hurried toward the yellow brick road that leads to the Emerald City, and by nightfall had reached the lovely capital of Oz.

Oz! — that marvelous country where no one grows old — where animals and birds talk as sensibly as people, and adventures happen every day. Indeed, of all fairylands in the world, Oz is the most delightful, and of all fairy cities, the Emerald City is the most beautiful. A soft green light shone for miles about, and the gemmed turrets and spires of the palace flashed more brightly than the stars. But its loveliness was familiar to Professor Wogglebug, and without a pause he proceeded to Ozma's palace and was at once admitted to the great hall.

A roar of merriment greeted his ears. Ozma, the lovely girl ruler of Oz, was having a party, and the room was full of most surprising people — surprising to some, that is, but old friends to most of us.

Jack, holding tightly to his pumpkin head, was running as fast as his

wooden feet and wobbly legs would take him from Dorothy. A game of blind-man's-buff was in full swing, and Scraps and Tik-Tok, the Scarecrow and Nick Chopper, the Glass Cat and the Cowardly Lion, the Wizard of Oz and the wooden Sawhorse, Cap'n Bill and Betsy Bobbin, Billina and the Hungry Tiger were tumbling over each other in an effort to keep away from the blindfolded little girl.

But Dorothy was too quick for them. With a sudden whirl, she spun 'round and grasped a coatsleeve.

"The Scarecrow!" she laughed triumphantly. "I can tell by the way he skwoshes — and now *he's* it!"

"I'm always *it!"* chuckled the droll person. "But — hah! Behold the learned Professor standing so aloofly in our midst."

No one had noticed Professor Wogglebug, who had been quietly watching the game.

"I don't like to interrupt the party," he began, approaching Ozma's throne apologetically, "but I've just had a most brilliant idea!"

"What? Another?" murmured the Scarecrow, rolling up his eyes.

"Where did you lose it?" asked Jack Pumpkinhead, edging forward anxiously.

"Lose it! Who said I'd lost it?" snapped the Professor, glaring at poor Jack.

"Well, you said you'd had it, and had is the past tense, so — " Jack's voice trailed off uncertainly, and Ozma, seeing he was embarrassed, begged the Professor to explain.

"Your Highness!" began Professor Wogglebug, while the company settled down in a resigned circle on the floor, "As Oz is the most interesting and delightful country on the Continent of Imagination and its people the most unusual and talented, I am about to compile a Royal Book which will give the names and history of all our people. In other words, I am to be the Great, Grand Genealogist of Oz!"

"Whatever that is," the Scarecrow whispered in Dorothy's ear.

"And," the Professor frowned severely on the Scarecrow, "with your Majesty's permission, I shall start at once!"

"Please do," said the Scarecrow with a wave toward the door, "and we will go on with the party!"

Scraps, the Patchwork Girl, who had been staring fixedly at the Professor with her silver suspender-button eyes, now sprang to her feet:

"What is a genealogist?
It's something no one here has missed;
What puts such notions in your head?
Turn out your toes — or go to bed!"

she shouted gaily, then, catching Ozma's disapproving glance, fell over backwards.

"I don't understand it at all," said Jack Pumpkinhead in a depressed voice. "I'm afraid my head's too ripe."

"Nor I," said Tik-Tok, the copper clockwork man. "Please wind me up a

lit-tle tight-er Dor-o-thy, I want to think!"

Dorothy obligingly took a key suspended from a hook on his back and wound him up under his left arm. Everybody began to talk at once, and what with the Cowardly Lion's deep growl and Tik-Tok's squeaky voice and all the rest of the tin and meat and wooden voices, the confusion was terrible.

"Wait!" cried Ozma, clapping her hands.

Immediately the room grew so still that one could hear Tik-Tok's machinery whirring 'round.

"Now!" said Ozma, "One at a time, please, and let us hear from the Scarecrow first."

The Scarecrow rose. "I think, your Highness," he said modestly, "that anyone who has studied his Geozify already knows who we are and — "

"Who you are?" broke in the Wogglebug scornfully — "Of course they do — but *I* shall tell them who you *were!"*

"Who I were?" gasped the Scarecrow in a dazed voice, raising his cotton glove to his forehead. "Who I were? Well, who were I?"

"That's just the point," said Professor Wogglebug. "Who were you? Who were your ancestors? Where is your family? Where is your family tree? From what did you descend?"

At each question, the Scarecrow looked more embarrassed. He repeated the last one several times.

"From what did I descend? From what did I descend? Why, from a bean pole!" he cried.

This was perfectly true, for Dorothy, a little girl blown by a Kansas cyclone to the Kingdom of Oz, had discovered the Scarecrow in a farmer's cornfield and had lifted him down from his pole. Together they had made the journey to the Emerald City, where the Wizard of Oz had fitted him out with a fine set of brains. At one time, he had ruled Oz and was generally considered its cleverest citizen.

Before he could reply further, the Patchwork Girl, who was simply irrepressible, burst out:

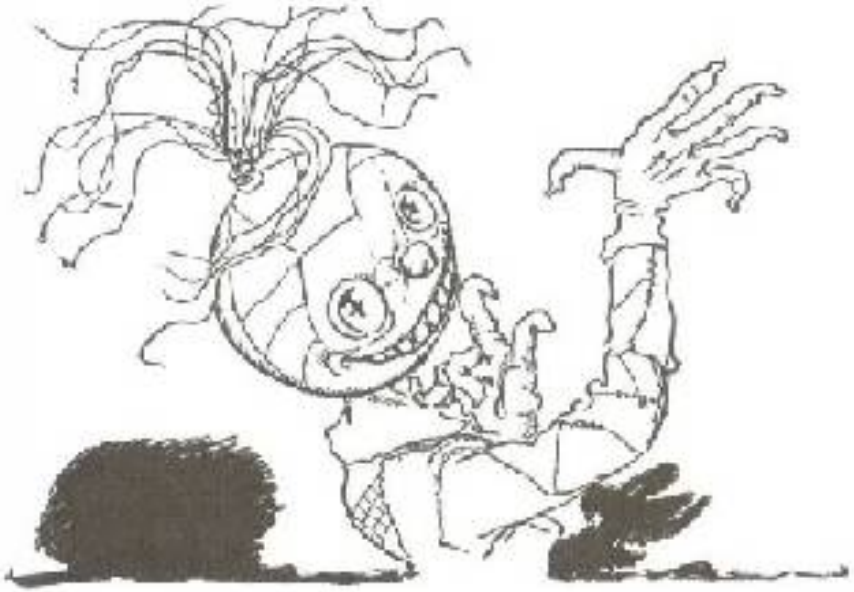
"An ex-straw-ordinary man is he!
A bean pole for his family tree,
A Cornishman, upon my soul,
Descended from a tall, thin Pole!"

"Nonsense!" said Professor Wogglebug sharply, "Being stuffed with straw may make him extraordinary, but it is quite plain that the Scarecrow was nobody before he was himself. He has no ancestors, no family; only a bean pole for a family tree, and is therefore entitled to the merest mention in the Royal Book of Oz!"

“How about my brains?” asked the Scarecrow in a hurt voice. “Aren’t they enough?”

“Brains have simply nothing to do with royalty!” Professor Wogglebug waved his fountain pen firmly. “Now — ”

“But see here, wasn’t I ruler of Oz?” put in the Scarecrow anxiously.



“A Ruler but *never* a royalty!” snapped out the Professor. “Now, if you will all answer my questions as I call your names, I’ll get the necessary data and be off.”

He took out a small memorandum book.

“Your Highness,” he bowed to Ozma, “need not bother. I have already entered your name at the head of the list. Being descended as you are from a long line of fairies, your family tree is the oldest and most illustrious in Oz.”

“Princess Dorothy!”

At the sound of her name, the little girl stood up.

“I know you are from Kansas and were created a Princess of Oz by our gracious Ruler, but can you tell me anything of your ancestors in America?” demanded the Professor, staring over the top of his thick glasses.

“You’ll have to ask Uncle Henry and Aunt Em,” said Dorothy rather sulkily. The Professor had hurt the feelings of her best friend, the Scarecrow, and ancestors did not interest her one little bit.

“Very well,” said the Professor, writing industriously in his book. “I’ll just enter you as ‘Dorothy, Princess of Oz and sixth cousin to a President!’“

“I’m not!” Dorothy shook her head positively.

“Oh, everyone in America can claim that!” said the Professor easily.

“Nick Chopper!”

Now up rose our old friend the Tin Woodman, who had also been discovered by Dorothy on her first trip to the Fairyland of Oz.

“You were a man of meat at one time and a woodman by trade?” queried Professor Wogglebug, poising his pen in the air.

“I am a Tin Woodman, and you may enter me in your book under the name of Smith, for a tin Smith made me, and as Royal Emperor of the Winkies, I do not care to go back to my meat connections,” said the Tin Woodman in a dignified voice.

The company applauded, and the Cowardly Lion thumped the floor with his tail.

“Smith is a very good name. I can work up a whole chapter on that,” smiled the Professor. The Tin Woodman *had* once been a regular person, but a wicked witch enchanted his ax, and first it chopped off one leg, then the other, and next both arms and his head. After each accident, Nick went to a tinsmith for repairs, and finally was entirely made of tin. Nowhere but in Oz could such a thing happen. But no one can be killed in this marvelous country, and Nick, with his tin body, went gaily on living and was considered so distinguished that the Winkies had begged him to be their Emperor.

“Scraps!” called the Professor as Nick sat stiffly down beside Dorothy.

The Patchwork Girl pirouetted madly to the front. Putting one finger in her mouth, she sang:

“I’m made of patches, as you see.
A clothes tree is my family tree
But, pshaw! It’s all the same to me!”

A clothes tree? Even Professor Wogglebug grinned. Who could help laughing at Scraps? Made of odd pieces of goods and brought to life by the powder of life, the comical girl was the jolliest person imaginable.

“Put me down as a man of me-tal!” drawled Tik-Tok the copper man as the laugh following Scraps’ rhyme had subsided. Tik-Tok was still another of Dorothy’s discoveries, and this marvelous machine man, guaranteed to last a thousand years, could think, walk, and talk when properly wound.

The Cowardly Lion was entered as a King in his own right. One after the other, the celebrities of Oz came forward to answer Professor Wogglebug’s questions. The Professor wrote rapidly in his little book. Ozma listened attentively to each one, and they all seemed interested except the Scarecrow. Slumped down beside Dorothy, he stared morosely at the ceiling, his jolly face all wrinkled down on one side.

“If I only knew who I were!” he muttered over and over. “I must think!”

“Don’t you mind.” Dorothy patted his shoulder kindly. “Royalties are out of date, and I’ll bet the Professor’s family tree was a milkweed!”

But the Scarecrow refused to be comforted, and long after the company had retired he sat hunched sadly in his corner.

“I’ll do it! I’ll do it!” he exclaimed at last, rising unsteadily to his feet. Jellia Jamb, Ozma’s little waiting maid, returning somewhat later to fetch a handkerchief her mistress had dropped, was surprised to see him running through the long hall.

“Why, where are you going?” asked Jellia.

“To find my family tree!” said the Scarecrow darkly, and drawing himself up to his full height, he fell through the doorway.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCARECROW'S FAMILY TREE

The moon shone brightly, but everyone in the Emerald City was fast asleep! Through the deserted streets hurried the Scarecrow. For the first time since his discovery by little Dorothy, he was really unhappy. Living as he did in a Fairyland, he had taken many things for granted and had rather prided himself on his unusual appearance. Indeed, not until Professor Wogglebug's rude remarks concerning his family had he given his past a thought.

"I am the only person in Oz without a family!" he reflected sorrowfully. "Even the Cowardly Lion has kingly parents and a palm tree! But I must keep thinking. My brains have never failed me yet. Who was I? Who were I? Who were I?"

Often he thought so hard that he forgot to look where he was going and ran headlong into fences, stumbled down gutters, and over stiles. But fortunately, the dear fellow could not hurt himself, and he would struggle up, pat his straw into shape, and walk straightway into something else. He made good time in between falls, however, and was soon well on his way down the yellow brick road that ran through the Munchkin Country. For he had determined to return to the Munchkin farm where Dorothy had first discovered him and try to find some traces of his family.

Now being stuffed with straw had many advantages, for requiring neither food nor sleep the Scarecrow could travel night and day without interruption. The stars winked out one by one, and by the time the cocks of the Munchkin farmers began to crow, he had come to the banks of a broad blue river!

The Scarecrow took off his hat and scratched his head thoughtfully. Crossing rivers is no easy matter in Oz, for there isn't a ferry in the Kingdom, and unless one is a good swimmer or equipped with some of the Wizard's magic it is mighty troublesome. Water does not agree with the Scarecrow at all, and as for swimming, he can no more swim than a bag of meal.

But he was too wise a person to give up merely because a thing appeared to be impossible. It was for just such emergencies that his excellent brains had been given to him.

"If Nick Chopper were here, he would build a raft in no time," murmured the Scarecrow, "but as he is not, I must think of another way!"

Turning his back on the river, which distracted his mind, he began to think with all his might. Before he could collect his thoughts, there was a tremendous crash, and next minute he was lying face down in the mud. Several little crashes followed, and a shower of water. Then a wet voice

called out with a cheerful chuckle:

"Come on out, my dear Rattles. Not a bad place at all, and here's breakfast already waiting!"

"Breakfast!" The Scarecrow turned over cautiously. A huge and curious creature was slashing through the grass toward him. A smaller and still more curious one followed. Both were extremely damp and had evidently just come out of the river.

"Good morning!" quavered the Scarecrow, sitting up with a jerk and at the same time reaching for a stick that lay just behind him.

"I won't eat it if it talks — so there!" The smaller creature stopped and stared fixedly at the Scarecrow.

The Scarecrow, hearing this, tried to think of something else to say, but the appearance of the two was so amazing that, as he told Dorothy afterwards, he was struck dumb. The larger was at least two hundred feet long and made entirely of blocks of wood. On each block was a letter of the alphabet. The head was a huge square block with a serpent's face and long, curling, tape-measure tongue. The little one was very much smaller and seemed to consist of hundreds of rattles, wood, celluloid, and rubber, fastened together with wires. Every time it moved, the rattles tinkled. Its face, however, was not unpleasant, so the Scarecrow took heart and made a deep bow.

"And I'm not going to eat anything that squirms." This time it was the big serpent who spoke.

“Thank you!” said the Scarecrow, bowing several times more. “You relieve my mind. I’ve never been a breakfast yet, and I’d rather not begin. But if I cannot be your breakfast, let me be your friend!” He extended his arms impulsively.

There was something so jolly about the Scarecrow’s smile that the two creatures became friendly at once, and moreover told him the story of their lives.

“As you have doubtless noted,” began the larger creature, “I am an A-B-Sea Serpent. I am employed in the nursery of the Mer children to teach them their letters. My friend, here, is a Rattlesnake, and it is his business to amuse the Mer babies while the Mermaids are mer-marketing. Once a year, we take a vacation, and proceeding from the sea depths up a strange river, we came out upon this shore. Perhaps you, Sir, will be able to tell us where we are?”

“You are in the Munchkin Country of the Land of Oz,” explained the Scarecrow politely. “It is a charming place for a vacation. I would show you about myself if I were not bound on an important mission.” Here the Scarecrow sighed deeply.

“Have you a family?” he asked the A-B-Sea Serpent curiously.

“Yes, indeed,” replied the monster, snapping its tape-measure tongue in and out, “I have five great-grandmothers, twenty-one grandnieces, seven brothers, and six sisters-in-law!”

“Ah!” murmured the Scarecrow, clasping his hands tragically, “How I envy you. I have no one — no aunts — no ancestors — no family — no family tree but a bean pole. I am, alas, a man without a *past!”* The Scarecrow looked so dejected that the Rattlesnake thought he was going to cry.

“Oh, cheer up!” it begged in a distressed voice. “Think of your *presence* — here — I give you permission to shake me!” The Scarecrow was so affected by this kind offer that he cheered up immediately.

“No past but a presence — I’ll remember that!” He swelled out his straw chest complacently, and leaning over, stroked the Rattlesnake on the head.

“Are you good at riddles?” asked the Rattlesnake timidly.

“Well,” answered the Scarecrow judiciously, “I have very good brains, given me by the famous Wizard of Oz.”

“Then why is the A-B-Sea Serpent like a city?” asked the Rattlesnake promptly.

The Scarecrow thought hard for several seconds.

“Because it is made up of blocks!” he roared triumphantly. “That’s easy; now it’s my turn. Why is the A-B-Sea Serpent such a slow talker?”

“Give it up!” said the Rattlesnake after shaking himself several times.

“Because his tongue is a tape measure, and he has to measure his words!”

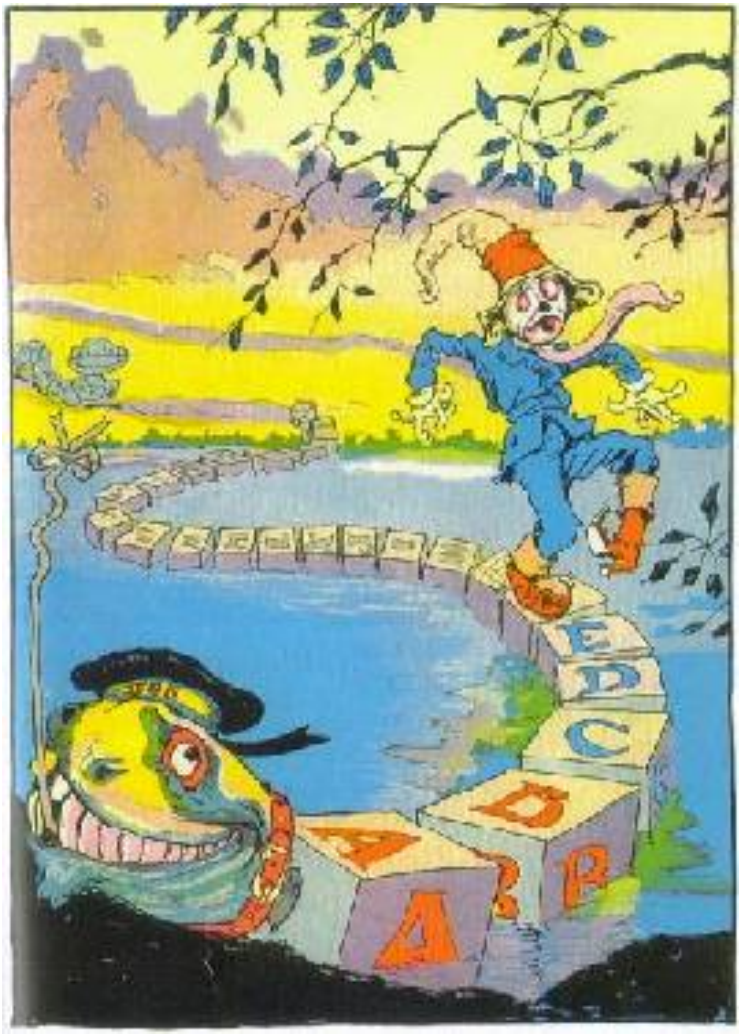
cried the Scarecrow, snapping his clumsy fingers. “And that’s a good one, if I did make it myself. I must remember to tell it to Dorothy!”

Then he sobered quite suddenly, for the thought of Dorothy brought back the purpose of his journey. Interrupting the Rattlesnake in the midst of a new riddle, he explained how anxious he was to return to the little farm where he had been discovered and try to find some traces of his family.

“And the real riddle,” he sighed with a wave of his hand, “is how to cross this river.”

“That’s easy and no riddle at all,” rumbled the A-B-Sea Serpent, who had been listening attentively to the Scarecrow’s remarks. “I’ll stretch across, and you can walk over.” Suiting the action to the word, he began backing very cautiously toward the river so as not to shake the Scarecrow off his feet.

“Mind your P’s and Q’s!” called the Rattlesnake warningly. It was well that he spoke, for the A-B-Sea Serpent had doubled the P and Q blocks under, and they were ready to snap off. Finally, however, he managed to make a bridge of himself, and the Scarecrow stepped easily over the blocks, the huge serpent holding himself rigid. Just as he reached Y, the unfortunate creature sneezed, and all the blocks rattled together. Up flew the Scarecrow and escaped falling into the stream only by the narrowest margin.



"Blockhead!" shrilled the Rattlesnake, who had taken a great fancy to the Scarecrow.

"I'm all right," cried the Scarecrow rather breathlessly. "Thank you very much!" He sprang nimbly up the bank. "Hope you have a pleasant vacation!"

"Can't, with a rattlepate like that." The A-B-Sea Serpent nodded glumly in the Rattlesnake's direction.

"Now don't quarrel," begged the Scarecrow. "You are both charming and unusual, and if you follow that Yellow Road, you will come to the Emerald City, and Ozma will be delighted to welcome you."

"The Emerald City! We must see that, my dear Rattles." Forgetting his momentary displeasure, the A-B-Sea Serpent pulled himself out of the river,

and waving his X Y Z blocks in farewell to the Scarecrow, went clattering down the road, the little Rattlesnake rattling along behind him.

As for the Scarecrow, he continued his journey, and the day was so delightful and the country so pleasant that he almost forgot he had no family. He was treated everywhere with the greatest courtesy and had innumerable invitations from the hospitable Munchkins. He was anxious to reach his destination, however, so he refused them all, and traveling night and day came without further mishap or adventure late on the second evening to the little Munchkin farm where Dorothy had first discovered him. He was curious to know whether the pole on which he had been hoisted to scare away the crows still stood in the cornfield and whether the farmer who had made him could tell him anything further about his history.

"It is a shame to waken him," thought the kind Scarecrow. "I'll just take a look in the cornfield." The moon shone so brightly that he had no trouble finding his way about. With a little cry of pleasure, he pushed his way through the dry cornstalks. There in the center of the field stood a tall pole — the very identical bean pole from which he had descended.

"All the family or family tree I've got!" cried the Scarecrow, running toward it with emotion.

"What's that?" A window in the farmhouse was thrown up, and a sleepy Munchkin thrust out his head. "What are you doing?" he called crossly.

"Thinking!" said the Scarecrow, leaning heavily against the bean pole.

"Well, don't do it out loud," snapped the farmer. Then, catching a better view of the Scarecrow, he cried in surprise: "Why, it's you! — Come right in, my dear fellow, and give us the latest news from the Emerald City. I'll fetch a candle!"

The farmer was very proud of the Scarecrow. He had made him long ago by stuffing one of his old suits with straw, painting a jolly face on a sack, stuffing that, and fastening the two together. Red boots, a hat, and yellow gloves had finished his man — and nothing could have been jollier than the result. Later on, when the Scarecrow had run off with Dorothy and got his brains from the Wizard of Oz and become ruler of the Emerald City, the little farmer had felt highly gratified.

The Scarecrow, however, was not in a humor for conversation. He wanted to think in peace. "Don't bother!" he called up. "I'm going to spend the night here. I'll see you in the morning."

"All right! Take care of yourself," yawned the farmer, and drew in his head.

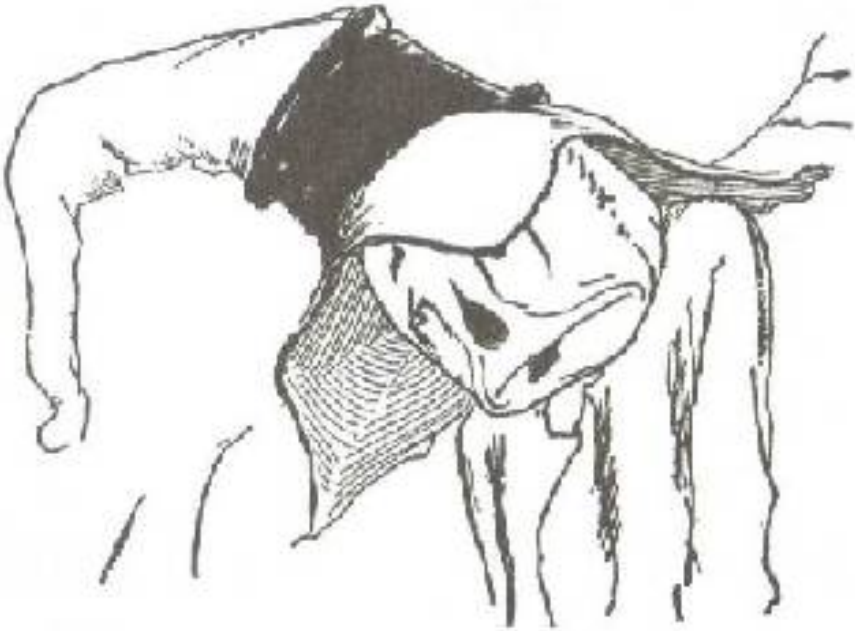
For a long time the Scarecrow stood perfectly still beside the bean pole — thinking. Then he got a spade from the shed and began clearing away the cornstalks and dried leaves from around the base of the pole. It was slow work, for his fingers were clumsy, but he persevered. Then a wonderful idea came to him.

"Perhaps if I dig down a bit, I may discover — " He got no further, for at the word "discover," he pushed the spade down with all his might. There was a loud crash. The bottom dropped out of things, and the Scarecrow fell through.

"Gr-eat cornstalks!" cried the Scarecrow, throwing up his arms. To his

surprise, they came in contact with a stout pole, which he embraced. It was a lifesaver, for he was shooting down into the darkness at a great rate.

"Why!" he gasped as soon as he regained his breath, for he was falling at a terrific rate of speed, "Why, I believe I'm sliding down the *bean pole!"*



CHAPTER 3

DOWN THE MAGIC BEAN POLE

Hugging the bean pole for dear life, the Scarecrow slid rapidly downward, Everything was dark, but at times a confused roaring sounded in his ears. "Father, I hear something falling past!" shouted a gruff voice all at once.

"Then reach out and pull it in," growled a still deeper voice. There was a flash of light, a door opened suddenly, and a giant hand snatched the air just above the Scarecrow's head.

"It's a good thing I haven't a heart to fail me," murmured the Scarecrow, glancing up fearfully and clinging more tightly to the pole. "Though I fall, I shall not falter. But where under the earth am I falling to?" At that minute, a door opened far below, and someone called up:

"Who are you? Have out your toll and be ready to salute the Royal Ruler of the Middlings!"

The Scarecrow had learned in the course of his many and strange adventures that it was best to accede to every request that was reasonable or possible. Realizing that unless he answered at once he would fall past his strange questioners, he shouted amiably:

"I am the Scarecrow of Oz, sliding down my family tree!" The words echoed oddly in the narrow passageway, and by the time he reached the word "tree" the Scarecrow could make out two large brown men leaning from a door somewhere below. Next minute he came to a sharp stop. A board had shot out and closed off the passageway. So sudden was the stop that the Scarecrow was tossed violently upward. While he endeavored to regain his balance, the two Middlings eyed him curiously.

"So this is the kind of thing they grow on top," said one, holding a lantern close to the Scarecrow's head.

"Toll, Toll!" droned the other, holding out a horribly twisted hand.

"One moment, your Royal Middleness!" cried the Scarecrow, backing as far away from the lantern as he could, for with a straw stuffing one cannot be too careful of fire. He felt in his pocket for an emerald he had picked up in the Emerald City a few days before and handed it gingerly to the Muddy monarch.

"Why do you call me Middleness?" the King demanded angrily, taking the emerald.

"Is your kingdom not in the middle of the earth, and are you not royalty? What could be more proper than Royal Middleness?" asked the Scarecrow, flecking the dust from his hat.

Now that he had a better view, he saw that *the two were entirely men of*

mud, and very roughly put together. Dried grass hair stood erect upon each head, and their faces were large and lumpy and had a disconcerting way of changing shape. Indeed, when the King leaned over to examine the Scarecrow, his features were so soft they seemed to run into his cheek, which hung down alarmingly, while his nose turned sideways and lengthened at least an inch!

Muddle pushed the King's nose back and began spreading his cheek into place. Instead of hands and feet, the Middlings had gnarled and twisted roots which curled up in a perfectly terrifying manner. Their teeth were gold, and their eyes shone like small electric lights. They wore stiff coats of dried mud, buttoned clumsily with lumps of coal, and the King had a tall mud crown. Altogether, the Scarecrow thought he had never seen more disagreeable looking creatures.

"What he needs," spluttered the King, fingering the jewel greedily, "is a coat of mud! Shall we pull him in, Muddle?"

"He's very poorly made, your Mudjesty. Can you work, Carescrow?" asked Muddle, thumping him rudely in the chest.

"Scarecrow, if you please!" The Scarecrow drew himself up and spoke with great difficulty. "I can work with my head!" he added proudly.

"Your head!" roared the King. "Did you hear that, Muddle? He works with his head. What's the matter with your hands?" Again the King lunged forward, and this time his face fell on the other side and had bulged enormously before Muddle could pat it into shape. They began whispering

excitedly together, but the Scarecrow made no reply, for looking over their shoulder he glimpsed a dark, forbidding cavern lighted only by the flashing red eyes of thousands of Middlings. They appeared to be digging, and above the rattle of the shovels and picks came the hoarse voice of one of them singing the Middling National Air. Or so the Scarecrow gathered from the words:

"Oh, chop the brown clods as they fall with a thud!
Three croaks for the Middlings, who stick in the Mud.
Oh, mud, rich and wormy! Oh, mud, sweet and squirmy!
Oh what is so lovely as Mud! Oh what is so lovely as Mud!
Three croaks for the Middlings, who delve all the day
In their beautiful Kingdom of soft mud and clay!"

The croaks that came at the end of the song were so terrifying that the Scarecrow shivered in spite of himself.

"Ugh! Hardly a place for a pleasant visit!" he gasped, flattening himself against the wall of the passage. Feeling that matters had gone far enough, he repeated in a loud voice:

"I am the Scarecrow of Oz and desire to continue my fall. I have paid my toll and unless your Royal Middleness release me — "

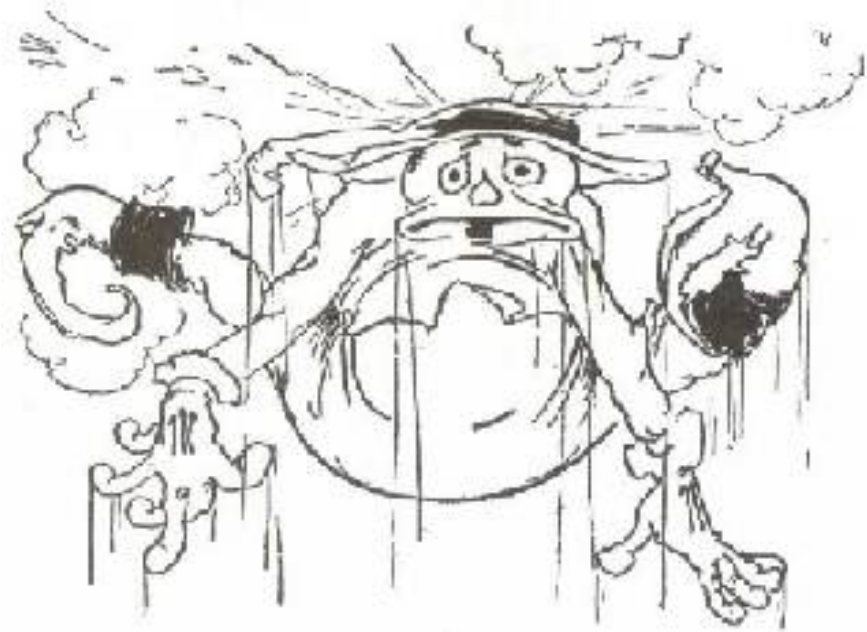
"Might as well drop him — a useless creature!" whispered Muddle, and before the King had time to object, he jerked the board back. "Fall on!" he screeched maliciously, and the Scarecrow shot down into the darkness, the hoarse screams of the two Middlings echoing after him through the gloom.

No use trying to think! The poor Scarecrow bumped and banged from side to side of the passage. It was all he could do to keep hold of the bean pole, so swiftly was he falling.

"A good thing I'm not made of meat like little Dorothy," he wheezed breathlessly. His gloves were getting worn through from friction with the pole, and the rush of air past his ears was so confusing that he gave up all idea of thinking. Even magic brains refuse to work under such conditions. Down — down — down he plunged till he lost all count of time. Down — down — down — hours and hours! Would he never stop? Then suddenly it grew quite light, and he flashed through what appeared to be a hole in the roof of a huge silver palace, whirled down several stories and landed in a heap on the floor of a great hall. In one hand he clutched a small fan, and in the other a parasol that had snapped off the beanstalk just before he reached the palace roof.

Shaken and bent over double though he was, the Scarecrow could see that he had fallen into a company of great magnificence. He had a confused glimpse of silken clad courtiers, embroidered screens, inlaid floors, and

flashing silver lanterns, when there was a thundering bang that hurled him halfway to the roof again. Falling to a sitting position and still clinging to the bean pole, he saw two giant kettle drums nearby, still vibrating from the terrible blows they had received.



The company were staring at him solemnly, and as he attempted to rise, they fell prostrate on their faces. Up flew the poor flimsy Scarecrow again, such was the draught, and this time landed on his face. He was beginning to feel terribly annoyed, but before he could open his mouth or stand up, a deep voice boomed:

"He has come!"

"He has come!" shrilled the rest of the company, thumping their heads on the stone floor. The language seemed strange to the Scarecrow, but oddly enough, he could understand it perfectly. Keeping a tight grasp on the bean pole, he gazed at the prostrate assemblage, too astonished to speak. They looked exactly like the pictures of some Chinamen he had seen in one of Dorothy's picture books back in Oz, but instead of being yellow, their skin was a curious gray, and the hair of old and young alike was silver and worn in long, stiff queues. Before he had time to observe any more, an old, old courtier hobbled forward and beckoned imperiously to a page at the door. The page immediately unfurled a huge silk umbrella and, running forward, held it over the Scarecrow's head.

"Welcome home, sublime and noble Ancestor! Welcome, honorable and

exalted Sir.” The old gentleman made several deep salaams.

“Welcome, immortal and illustrious Ancestor! Welcome, ancient and serene Father!” cried the others, banging their heads hard on the floor — so hard that their queues flew into the air.

“Ancestor! Father!” mumbled the Scarecrow in a puzzled voice. Then, collecting himself somewhat, he made a deep bow, and sweeping off his hat with a truly royal gesture began: “I am indeed honored — ” But he got no farther. The silken clad courtiers sprang to their feet in a frenzy of joy. A dozen seized him bodily and carried him to a great silver throne room.

“The same beautiful voice!” cried the ancient gentleman, clasping his hands in an ecstasy of feeling.

“It is he! The Emperor! The Emperor has returned! Long live the Emperor!” shouted everyone at once. The confusion grew worse and worse.

“Ancestor! Father! Emperor!” The Scarecrow could scarcely believe his ears. “For a fallen man, I am rising like yeast!” he murmured to himself. Half a dozen courtiers had run outdoors to spread the wonderful news, and soon silver gongs and bells began ringing all over the kingdom, and cries of “The Emperor! The Emperor!” added to the general excitement. Holding fast to the sides of the throne and still grasping the little fan and parasol, the Scarecrow sat blinking with embarrassment.

“If they would just stop emperoring, I could ask them who I am,” thought the poor Scarecrow. As if in answer to his thoughts, the tottery old nobleman raised his long arm, and at once the hall became absolutely silent.

“Now!” sighed the Scarecrow, leaning forward. “Now I shall hear something of interest.”

CHAPTER 4

DOROTHY'S LONELY BREAKFAST

Dorothy, who occupied one of the coziest apartments in Ozma's palace, wakened the morning after the party with a feeling of great uneasiness. At breakfast, the Scarecrow was missing. Although he, the Tin Woodman and Scraps did not require food, they always livened up the table with their conversation. Ordinarily Dorothy would have thought nothing of the Scarecrow's absence, but she could not forget his distressed expression when Professor Wogglebug had so rudely remarked on his family tree. The Professor himself had left before breakfast, and everybody but Dorothy had forgotten all about the Royal Book of Oz.

Already many of Ozma's guests who did not live in the palace were preparing to depart, but Dorothy could not get over her feeling of uneasiness. The Scarecrow was her very best friend, and it was not like him to go without saying goodbye. So she hunted through the gardens and in every room of the palace and questioned all the servants. Unfortunately, Jellia Jamb, who was the only one who had seen the Scarecrow go, was with her mistress. Ozma always breakfasted alone and spent the morning over state matters. Knowing how busy she was, Dorothy did not like to disturb her. Betsy Bobbin and Trot, real little girls like Dorothy, also lived in the Fairy palace, and Ozma was a great chum for them. But the Kingdom of Oz had to be governed in between times, and they all knew that unless Ozma had the mornings to herself, she could not play with them in the afternoons. So Dorothy searched by herself.

"Perhaps I didn't look hard enough," thought the little girl, and searched the palace all over again.

"Don't worry," advised the Tin Woodman, who was playing checkers with Scraps. "He's probably gone home."

"He is a man of brains; why worry

Because he's left us in a hurry?"

chuckled Scraps with a careless wave of her hand, and Dorothy, laughing in spite of herself, ran out to have another look in the garden.

"That is just what he has done, and if I hurry, I may overtake him. Anyway, I believe I'll go and pay him a visit," thought Dorothy.

Trot and Betsy Bobbin were swinging in one of the royal hammocks, and when Dorothy invited them to go along, they explained that they were going on a picnic with the Tin Woodman. So without waiting to ask anyone else or even whistling for Toto, her little dog, Dorothy skipped out of the garden.

The Cowardly Lion, half asleep under a rose bush, caught a glimpse of her blue dress flashing by, and bounding to his feet thudded after her.

"Where are you going?" he asked, stifling a giant yawn.

"To visit the Scarecrow," explained Dorothy. "He looked so unhappy last night. I am afraid he is worrying about his family tree, and I thought p'raps I could cheer him up."

The Cowardly Lion stretched luxuriously. "I'll go too," he rumbled, giving himself a shake. "But it's the first time I ever heard of the Scarecrow worrying."

"But you see," Dorothy said gently, "Professor Wogglebug told him he had no family."

"Family! Family fiddlesticks! Hasn't he got us?" The Cowardly Lion stopped and waved his tail indignantly.

"Why, you dear old thing!" Dorothy threw her arms around his neck. "You've given me a lovely idea!" The Cowardly Lion tried not to look pleased.

"Well, as long as I've given it to you, you might tell me what it is," he suggested mildly.

"Why," said Dorothy, skipping along happily, "we'll let him adopt us and be his really relations. I'll be his sister, and you'll be — "

"His cousin — that is, if you think he wouldn't mind having a great coward like me for a cousin," finished the Cowardly Lion in an anxious voice.

"Do you still feel as cowardly as ever?" asked Dorothy sympathetically.

"More so!" sighed the great beast, glancing apprehensively over his shoulder. This made Dorothy laugh, for although the lion trembled like a cup custard at the approach of danger, he always managed to fight with great valor, and the little girl felt safer with him than with the whole army of Oz, who never were frightened but who always ran away.

Now anyone who is at all familiar with his geozify knows that the Fairyland of Oz is divided into four parts, exactly like a parchesi board, with

the Emerald City in the very center, the purple Gillikin Country to the north, the red Quadling Country to the south, the blue Munchkin Country to the east, and the yellow Country of the Winkies to the west. It was toward the west that Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion turned their steps, for it was in the Winkie Country that the Scarecrow had built his gorgeous golden tower in exactly the shape of a huge ear of corn.

Dorothy ran along beside the Cowardly Lion, chatting over their many adventures in Oz, and stopping now and then to pick buttercups and daisies that dotted the roadside. She tied a big bunch to the tip of her friend's tail and twined some more in his mane, so that he presented a very festive appearance indeed. Then, when she grew tired, she climbed on his big back, and swiftly they jogged through the pleasant land of the Winkies. The people waved to them from windows and fields, for everyone loved little Dorothy and the big lion, and as they passed a neat yellow cottage, a little Winkie Lady came running down the path with a cup of tea in one hand and a bucket in the other.

"I saw you coming and thought you might be thirsty," she called hospitably. Dorothy drank her cup without alighting.

"We're in an awful hurry; we're visiting the Scarecrow," she exclaimed apologetically. The lion drank his bucket of tea at one gulp. It was so hot that it made his eyes water.

"How I loathe tea! If I hadn't been such a coward, I'd have upset the bucket," groaned the lion as the little Winkie Lady went back into her house.

“But no, I was afraid of hurting her feelings. Ugh, what a terrible thing it is to be a coward!”

“Nonsense!” said Dorothy, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. “You’re not a coward, you’re just polite. But let’s run very fast so we can reach the Scarecrow’s in time for lunch.”

So like the wind away raced the Cowardly Lion, Dorothy holding fast to his mane, with her curls blowing straight out behind, and in exactly two Oz hours and seventeen Winkie minutes they came to the dazzling corn-ear residence of their old friend. Hurrying through the cornfields that surrounded his singular mansion, Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion rushed through the open door.

“We’ve come for lunch,” announced Dorothy.

“And I’m hungry enough to eat crow,” rumbled the lion. Then both stopped in dismay, for the big reception room was empty. From a room above came a shuffling of feet, and Blink, the Scarecrow’s gentlemanly housekeeper, came running down the stairs.

“Where’s the Scarecrow?” asked Dorothy anxiously. “Isn’t he here?”

“Here! Isn’t he there? Isn’t he in the Emerald City?” gasped the little Winkie, putting his specs on upside down.

“No — at least, I don’t think so. Oh, dear, I just felt that something had happened to him!” wailed Dorothy, sinking into an ebony armchair and fanning herself with a silk sofa cushion.

"Now don't be alarmed." The Cowardly Lion rushed to Dorothy's side and knocked three vases and a clock off a little table, just to show how calm he was. "Think of his brains! The Scarecrow has never come to harm yet, and all we have to do is to return to the Emerald City and look in Ozma's Magic Picture. Then, when we know where he is, we can go and find him and tell him about our little adoption plan," he added, looking hopefully at Dorothy.

"The Scarecrow himself couldn't have spoken more sensibly," observed Blink with a great sigh of relief, and even Dorothy felt better.

In Ozma's palace, as many of you know, there is a Magic Picture, and when Ozma or Dorothy want to see any of their friends, they have merely to

wish to see them, and instantly the picture shows the person wished for and exactly what he is doing at that certain time.

"Of course!" sighed Dorothy. "Why didn't I think of it myself?"

"Better have some lunch before you start back," suggested Blink, and bustling about had soon set out an appetizing repast. Dorothy was too busy worrying about the Scarecrow to have much appetite, but the Cowardly Lion swallowed seventeen roasts and a bucket of corn syrup.

"To give me courage!" he explained to Dorothy, licking his chops. "There's nothing that makes me so cowardly as an empty stomach!"

It was quite late in the afternoon before they could get away. Blink insisted on putting up a lunch, and it took some time to make enough sandwiches for the Cowardly Lion. But at last it was ready and packed into an old hat box belonging to Mops, the Scarecrow's cook. Then Dorothy, balancing the box carefully on her lap, climbed on the Cowardly Lion's back, and assuring Blink that they would return in a few days with his master, they bade him farewell. Blink almost spoiled things by bursting into tears, but he managed to restrain himself long enough to say goodbye, and Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion, feeling a little solemn themselves, started toward the Emerald City.

"My, but it's growing dark," said Dorothy after they had gone several miles. "I believe it's going to storm."

Scarcely had she finished speaking before there was a terrific crash of thunder. The Cowardly Lion promptly sat down. Off of his back bounced the sandwich box and into the sandwich box rolled Dorothy, head first.

"How terribly upsetting," coughed the Cowardly Lion.

"I should say it was!" Dorothy crawled indignantly out of the hat box and began wiping the butter from her nose. "You've simply ruined the supper!"

"It was my heart," explained the Cowardly Lion sorrowfully. "It jumped so hard that it upset me, but climb on my back again, and I'll run very fast to some place of shelter."

"But where are you?" Dorothy asked in real alarm, for it had grown absolutely dark.

"Here," quavered the Cowardly Lion, and guided by his voice, Dorothy stumbled over to him and climbed again on his back. One crash of thunder followed another, and at each crash the Cowardly Lion leapt forward a bit faster until they fairly flew through the dark.

"It won't take us long to reach the Emerald City at this rate!" called Dorothy, but the wind tossed the words far behind her, and seeing that conversation was impossible, she clung fast to the lion's mane and began thinking about the Scarecrow. The thunder continued at frequent intervals,

but there was no rain, and after they had been running for what seemed to Dorothy hours and hours, a sudden terrific bump sent her flying over the lion's head into a bush. Too breathless to speak, she felt herself carefully all over. Then, finding that she was still in one piece, she called to the Cowardly Lion. She could hear him moaning and muttering about his heart.

"Any bones broken?" she asked anxiously.

"Only my head," groaned the lion dismally. Just then the darkness lifted as suddenly as it had fallen, and Dorothy saw him leaning against a tree with his eyes closed. There was a big bump on his head. With a little cry of sympathy, Dorothy hurried toward him, when all at once something strange about their surroundings struck her.

"Why, where are we?" cried the little girl, stopping short. The lion's eyes flew open, and forgetting all about his bump, he looked around in dismay. No sign of the Emerald City anywhere. Indeed, they were in a great, dim forest, and considering the number of trees, it is a wonder that they had not run into one long ago.

"I must have run the wrong way," faltered the Cowardly Lion in a distressed voice.

"You couldn't help that; anyone would lose his way in the dark," said Dorothy generously. "But I wish we hadn't fallen in the sandwiches. I'm hungry!"

"So am I. Do you think anyone lives in this forest, Dorothy?"

Dorothy did not answer, for just then she caught sight of a big sign nailed to one of the trees.

"Turn to the right," directed the sign.

"Oh, come on!" cried Dorothy, cheering up immediately. "I believe we're going to have another adventure."

"I'd rather have some supper," sighed the Cowardly Lion wistfully, "but unless we want to spend the night here, we might as well move along. I'm to be fed up on adventure, I suppose."

"Turn to the left," advised the next sign, and the two turned obediently and hurried on, trying to keep a straight course through the trees. In a Fairyland like Oz, where there are no trains or trolleys or even horses for traveling ('cepting Ozma's sawhorse), there are bound to be unexplored portions. And though Dorothy had been at one time or another in almost every part of Oz, the country through which they were now passing was totally unfamiliar to her. Night was coming on, and it was growing so dark that she could hardly read the third sign when they presently came upon it.

"Don't sing," directed the sign sternly.

"Sing!" snapped Dorothy indignantly, "Who wants to sing?"

“We might as well keep to the left,” said the Cowardly Lion in a resigned voice, and they walked along for some time in silence. The trees were thinning out, and as they came to the edge of the forest, another sign confronted them.

“Slow down,” read Dorothy with great difficulty. “What nonsense! If we slow down, how shall we ever get anywhere?”

“Wait a minute,” mused the Cowardly Lion, half closing his eyes. “Aren’t there two roads just ahead, one going up and one going down? We’re to take the down road, I suppose. ‘Slow down,’ isn’t that what it says?”

Slow down it surely was, for the road was so steep and full of stones that Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion had to pick their way with utmost care. But even bad roads must end somewhere, and coming suddenly to the edge of the woods, they saw a great city lying just below. A dim light burned over the main gate, and toward this the Cowardly Lion and Dorothy hurried as fast as they could. This was not very fast, for an unaccountable drowsiness was stealing over them.

Slowly and more slowly, the tired little girl and her great four-footed companion advanced toward the dimly lighted gate. They were so drowsy that they had ceased to talk. But they dragged on.

“Hah, hoh, hum!” yawned the Cowardly Lion. “What makes my feet so heavy?”

He stopped short and examined each of his four feet sleepily.

Dorothy swallowed a yawn and tried to run, but a walk was all she could manage.

“Hah, hoh, hum!” she gaped, stumbling along with her eyes closed.

By the time they had reached the gate, they were yawning so hard that the Cowardly Lion had nearly dislocated his jaw, and Dorothy was perfectly breathless. Holding to the lion’s mane to steady herself, Dorothy blinked up uncertainly at the sign over the gate.

“Hah — here we are — Hoh!” She held her hand wearily before her mouth.

Then, with a great effort, she read the words of the sign.

“Um — Great — Grand and Mighty Slow Kingdom of Pokes! Uh-hah — Pokes! Do you hear? Hah, hoh, hu, uum!”

Dorothy looked about in alarm, despite her sleepiness.

“Do you hear?” she repeated anxiously as no answer came through the gloom.

The Cowardly Lion did not hear. He had fallen down and was fast asleep, and so in another minute was Dorothy, her head pillowed against his kind, comfortable, cowardly heart. Fast asleep at the gates of a strange gray city!

CHAPTER 5

SIR HOKUS OF POKES

It was long past sunup before Dorothy awoke. She rubbed her eyes, yawned once or twice, and then shook the Cowardly Lion. The gates of the city were open, and although it looked even grayer in the daytime than it looked at night, the travelers were too hungry to be particular. A large placard was posted just inside:

THIS IS POKES!
DON'T RUN!
DON'T SING!
TALK SLOWLY!
DON'T WHISTLE!

Order of the Chief Poker.

read Dorothy. "How cheerful! Hah, hoh, hum-mm!"

"Don't!" begged the Cowardly Lion with tears in his eyes. "If I yawn again, I'll swallow my tail, and if I don't have something to eat soon, I'll do it anyway. Let's hurry! There's something queer about this place, Dorothy! Ah, hah, hoh, hum-mm!"

Stifling their yawns, the two started down the long, narrow street. The houses were of gray stone, tall and stiff with tiny barred windows. It was absolutely quiet, and not a person was in sight. But when they turned the corner, they saw a crowd of queer-looking people creeping toward them. These singular individuals stopped between each step and stood perfectly still, and Dorothy was so surprised at their unusual appearance that she laughed right in the middle of a yawn.

In the first place, they never lifted their feet, but pushed them along like skates. The women were dressed in gray polka-dot dresses with huge poke bonnets that almost hid their fat, sleepy, wide-mouthed faces. Most of them had pet snails on strings, and so slowly did they move that it looked as though the snails were tugging them along.

The men were dressed like a party of congressmen, but instead of high hats wore large red nightcaps, and they were all as solemn as owls. It seemed impossible for them to keep both eyes open at the same time, and at first Dorothy thought they were winking at her. But as the whole company continued to stare fixedly with one open eye, she burst out laughing. At the unexpected sound (for no one had ever laughed in Pokes before), the women picked up their snails in a great fright, and the men clapped their fingers to their ears or to the places where their ears were under the red nightcaps.

"These must be the Slow Pokes," giggled Dorothy, nudging the Cowardly

Lion. “Let’s go to meet them, for they’ll never reach us at the rate they are coming!”

“There’s something wrong with my feet,” rumbled the Cowardly Lion without looking up. “Hah, hoh, hum! What’s the use of hurrying?” The fact of the matter was that they couldn’t hurry if they tried. Indeed, they could hardly lift their feet at all.

“I wish the Scarecrow were with us,” sighed the Cowardly Lion, shuffling along unhappily. “He never grows sleepy, and he always knows what to do.”

“No use wishing,” yawned Dorothy. “I only hope he’s not as lost as we are.”

By struggling hard, they just managed to keep moving, and by the time they came up with the Slow Pokes, they were completely worn out. A cross-looking Poke held up his arm threateningly, and Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion stopped.

“You — ” said the Poke; then closed his mouth and stood staring vacantly for a whole minute.

“Are — ” He brought out the word with a perfectly enormous yawn, and Dorothy began fanning the Cowardly Lion with her hat, for he showed signs of falling asleep again.

“What?” she asked crossly.

“Under — ” sighed the Poke after a long pause, and Dorothy, seeing that there was no hurrying him, began counting to herself. Just as she reached sixty, the Poke pushed back his red nightcap and shouted:

“Arrest!”

“Arrest!” shouted all the other Pokes so loud that the Cowardly Lion roused himself with a start, and the pet snails stuck out their heads. “A rest? A rest is not what we want! We want breakfast!” growled the lion irritably and started to roar, but a yawn spoiled it. (One simply cannot look fierce by yawning.)

“You — ” began the Poke. But Dorothy could not stand hearing the same slow speech again. Putting her fingers in her ears, she shouted back:

“What for?”

The Pokes regarded her sternly. Some even opened both eyes. Then the one who had first addressed them, covering a terrific gape with one hand, pointed with the other to a sign on a large post at the corner of the street.

“Speed limit 1/4 mile an hour” said the sign.

“We’re arrested for speeding!” shouted Dorothy in the Cowardly Lion’s ear.

“Did you say feeding?” asked the poor lion, waking up with a start. “If I go to sleep again before I’m fed, I’ll starve to death!”

“Then keep awake,” yawned Dorothy. By this time, the Pokes had surrounded them and were waving them imperiously ahead. They looked so threatening that Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion began to creep in the direction of a gloomy, gray castle. Of the journey neither of them remembered a thing, for with the gaping and yawning Pokes it was almost impossible to keep awake. But they must have walked in their sleep, for the next thing Dorothy knew, a harsh voice called slowly:

“Poke — him!”

Greatly alarmed, Dorothy opened her eyes. They were in a huge stone hall hung all over with rusty armor, and seated on a great stone chair, snoring so loudly that all the steel helmets rattled, was a Knight. The tallest and crossest of the Pokes rushed at him with a long poker, giving him such a shove that he sprawled to the floor.

“So — ” yawned the Cowardly Lion, awakened by the clatter, “Knight has fallen!”

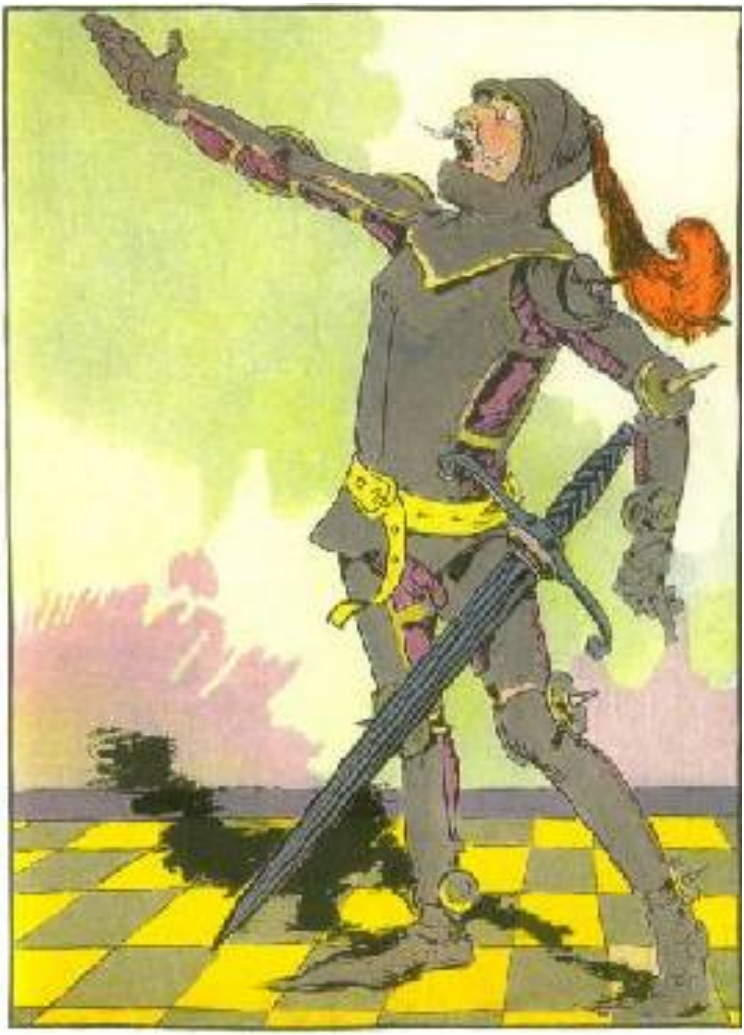
“Prisoners — Sir Hokus!” shouted the Chief Poker, lifting the Knight’s plume and speaking into the helmet as if he were telephoning.

The Knight arose with great dignity, and after straightening his armor, let down his visor, and Dorothy saw a kind, timid face with melancholy blue eyes — not at all Pokish, as she explained to Ozma later.

“What means this unwonted clamor?” asked Sir Hokus, peering curiously at the prisoners.

“We’re sorry to waken you,” said Dorothy politely, “but could you please give us some breakfast?”

“A lot!” added the Cowardly Lion, licking his chops.



"It's safer for me to sing," said the Knight mournfully, and throwing back his head, he roared in a high, hoarse voice:

"Don't yawn! Don't yawn!
We're out of breath —
Begone — BEGONE
Or die the death!"

The Cowardly Lion growled threateningly and began lashing his tail.

"If he weren't in a can, I'd eat him," he rumbled, "but I never could abide tinned meat."

"He's not in a can, he's in armor," explained Dorothy, too interested to pay much attention to the Cowardly Lion, for at the first note of the Knight's

song, the Pokes began scowling horribly, and by the time he had finished they were backing out of the room faster than Dorothy ever imagined they could go.

"So that's why the sign said don't sing," thought Dorothy to herself. The air seemed clearer somehow, and she no longer felt sleepy.

When the last Poke had disappeared, the Knight sighed and climbed gravely back on his stone chair.

"My singing makes them very wroth. In faith, they cannot endure music; it wakens them," explained Sir Hokus. "But hold, 'twas food you asked of me. Breakfast, I believe you called it." With an uneasy glance at the Cowardly Lion, who was sniffing the air hungrily, the Knight banged on his steel armor with his sword, and a fat, lazy Poke shuffled slowly into the hall.

"Pid, bring the stew," roared Sir Hokus as the Poke stood blinking at them dully.

"Stew, Pid!" he repeated loudly, and began to hum under his breath, at which Pid fairly ran out of the room, returning in a few minutes with a large yellow bowl. This he handed ungraciously to Dorothy. Then he brought a great copper tub of the stuff for the Cowardly Lion and retired sulkily.

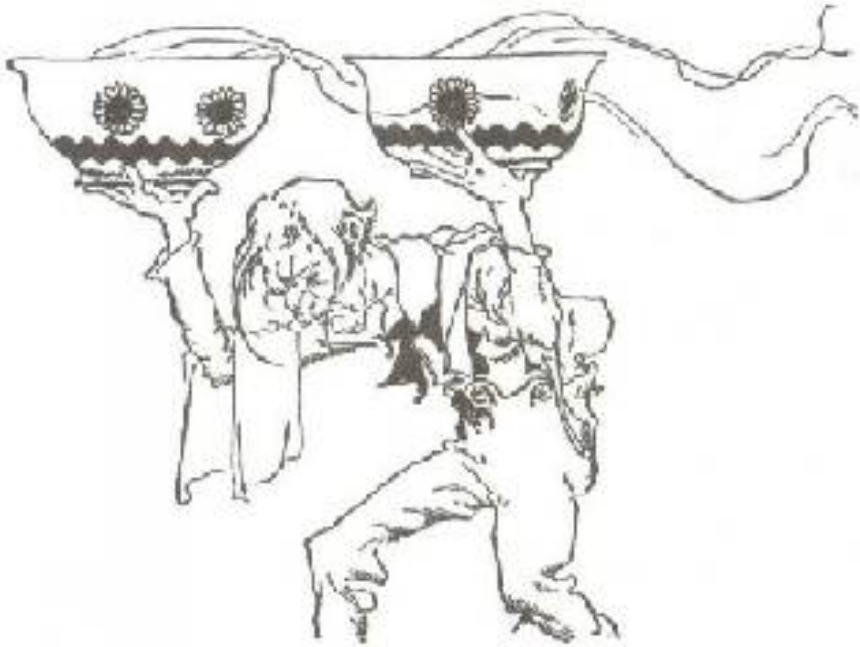
Dorothy thought she had never tasted anything more delicious. The Cowardly Lion was gulping down his share with closed eyes, and both, I am very sorry to say, forgot even to thank Sir Hokus.

"Are you perchance a damsel in distress?"

Quite startled, Dorothy looked up from her bowl and saw the Knight regarding her wistfully.

"She's in Pokes, and that's the same thing," said the Cowardly Lion without opening his eyes.

"We're lost," began the little girl, "but — "



There was something so quaint and gentle about the Knight, that she soon found herself talking to him like an old friend. She told him all of their adventures since leaving the Emerald City and even told about the disappearance of the Scarecrow.

"Passing strange, yet how refreshing," murmured Sir Hokus. "And if I seem a little behind times, you must not blame me. For centuries, I have dozed in this gray castle, and it cometh over me that things have greatly changed. This beast now, he talks quite manfully, and this Kingdom that you mention, this Oz? Never heard of it!"

"Never heard of Oz?" gasped the little girl. "Why, you're a subject of Oz, and Pokes is in Oz, though I don't know just where."

Here Dorothy gave him a short history of the Fairy country, and of the many adventures she had had since she had come there. Sir Hokus listened with growing melancholy.

"To think," he sighed mournfully, "that I was prisoner here while all that was happening!"

"Are *you* a prisoner?" asked Dorothy in surprise. "I thought you were King of the Pokes!"

"Uds daggers!" thundered Sir Hokus so suddenly that Dorothy jumped. "I am a *knight!"*

Seeing her startled expression, he controlled himself. "I was a knight," he

continued brokenly. “Long centuries ago, mounted on my goodly steed, I fared from my father’s castle to offer my sword to a mighty king. His name?” Sir Hokus tapped his forehead uncertainly. “Go to, I have forgot.”

“Could it have been King Arthur?” exclaimed Dorothy, wide-eyed with interest. “Why, just think of your being still alive!”

“That’s just the point,” choked the Knight. “I’ve been alive — still, so still that I’ve forgotten everything. Why, I can’t even remember how I used to talk,” he confessed miserably.

“But how did you get here?” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, who did not like being left out of the conversation.

“I had barely left my father’s castle before I met a stranger,” said Sir Hokus, sitting up very straight, “who challenged me to battle. I spurred my horse forward, our lances met, and the stranger was unseated. But by my faith, ‘twas no mortal Knight.” Sir Hokus sighed deeply and lapsed into silence.

“What happened?” asked Dorothy curiously, for Sir Hokus seemed to have forgotten them.

“The Knight,” said he with another mighty sigh, “struck the ground with his lance and cried, ‘Live Wretch, for centuries in the stupidest country out of the world,’ and disappeared. And here — here I am!” With a despairing gesture, Sir Hokus arose, big tears splashing down his armor.

“I feel that I am brave, very brave, but how am I to know until I have encountered danger? Ah, friends, behold in me a Knight who has never had a real adventure, never killed a dragon, nor championed a Lady, nor gone on a Quest!”

Dropping on his knees before the little girl, Sir Hokus took her hand. “Let me go with you on this Quest for the valiant Scarecrow. Let me be your good Night!” he begged eagerly.

“Good night,” coughed the Cowardly Lion, who, to tell the truth, was feeling a bit jealous. But Dorothy was thrilled, and as Sir Hokus continued to look at her pleadingly, she took off her hair ribbon and bound it ‘round his arm.

“You shall be my own true Knight, and I your Lady Fair!” she announced solemnly, and exactly as she had read in books.

At this interesting juncture the Cowardly Lion gave a tremendous yawn, and Sir Hokus with an exclamation of alarm jumped to his feet. The Pokes had returned to the hall, and Dorothy felt herself falling asleep again.

Up, up, my lieges and away!
We take the field again —
For Ladies fair we fight today
And KING! Up, up, my merry men!

shrilled the Knight as if he were leading an army to battle. The Pokes opened both eyes, but did not immediately retire. Sir Hokus bravely swallowed a yawn and hastily clearing his throat shouted another song, which he evidently made up on the spur of the moment:

Avaunt! Be off! Be gone — Methinks
We’ll be asleep in forty winks!

This time the Pokes left sullenly, but the effect of their presence had thrown Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion, and the Knight into a violent fit of the gapes.

"If I fall asleep, nothing can save you," said Sir Hokus in an agitated voice. "Hah, hoh, hum! Hah — !"

The Knight's eyes closed.

"Don't do it, don't do it!" begged Dorothy, shaking him violently. "Can't we run away?"

"I've been trying for five centuries," wailed the Knight in a discouraged voice, "but I always fall asleep before I reach the gate, and they bring me back here. They're rather fond of me in their slow way," he added apologetically.

"Couldn't you keep singing?" asked the Cowardly Lion anxiously, for the prospect of a five-century stay in Pokes was more than he could bear.

"Couldn't we *all* sing?" suggested Dorothy. "Surely all three of us won't fall asleep at once."

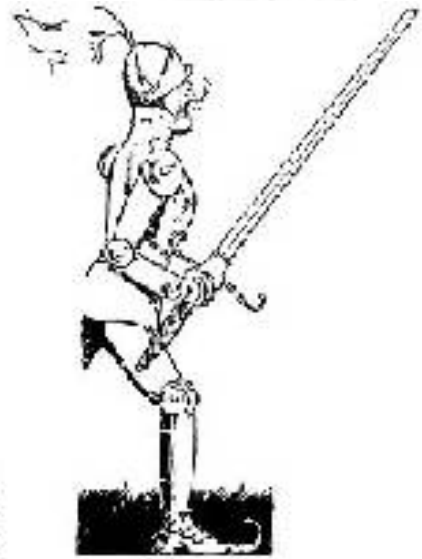
"I'm not much of a singer," groaned the Cowardly Lion, beginning to tremble, "but I'm willing to do my share!"

"I like you," said Sir Hokus, going over and thumping the Cowardly Lion approvingly on the back. "You ought to be knighted!"

The lion blinked his eyes, for Sir Hokus' iron fist bruised him severely, but knowing it was kindly meant, he bore it bravely.

"I am henceforth a beknighted lion," he whispered to Dorothy while Sir Hokus was straightening his armor. Next the Knight took down an iron poker, which he handed to Dorothy.

"To wake us up with," he explained. "And now, Lady Dorothy, if you are ready, we will start on the Quest for the honorable Scarecrow, and remember, everybody sing — *Sing for your life!"*



CHAPTER 6

SINGING THEIR WAY OUT OF POKES

Taking a deep breath, Sir Hokus, the Cowardly Lion and Dorothy burst out of the hall singing at the top of their voices.

"Three blind mice — !" sang Dorothy.

"Across the plain!" shouted Sir Hokus.

"I am the Cowardly Lion of Oz!" roared the lion.

The Pokes were so taken aback at the horrid sounds that they ran scurrying right and left. In another minute the three were out of the castle and singing their way through the gloomy garden. Dorothy stuck to the Three Blind Mice. Sir Hokus sang verse after verse of an old English ballad, and the Cowardly Lion roared and gurgled a song of his own making, which, considering it was a first attempt, was not so bad:

I am the Cowardly Lion of Oz!
Be good! Begone! Beware! Becoz
When I am scared full fierce I be;
Br — rah — grr — ruff, look out for me!

The Pokes stumbled this way and that, and all went well until they rushed into a company of Pokes who were playing croquet. The slowness with which they raised their mallets fascinated Dorothy, and she stopped to watch them in spite of herself.

"Don't stop! Sing!" growled the Cowardly Lion in the middle of a line. To make up for lost time, Dorothy closed her eyes and sang harder than ever, but alas! next instant she fell over a wicket, which so deprived her of breath that she could barely scramble up, let alone sing. As soon as she stopped singing, the Pokes paused in their flight, and as soon as they paused Dorothy began to gape. Singing for dear life, Sir Hokus jerked Dorothy by the arm, and the Cowardly Lion roared so loud that the Pokes covered their ears and began backing away.

"There was a Knight! Come on, come on!" sang Sir Hokus, and Dorothy came, and in a few minutes was able to take up the "Three Blind Mice" again. But running and singing at the same time is not an easy task. And running through Pokes is like trying to run through water. (You know how hard that is?)

"Three Blind Mice — uh — hah — Three Blind — Mice — uh-hah — I can't sing another note! Thu — ree — !" gasped poor Dorothy, stumbling along, while the Cowardly Lion was puffing like an engine. The Pokes in the garden had recovered from their first alarm and were following at a safe distance. The gates of the city were only a short distance off, but it seemed to

Dorothy that she could not go another step.

A large group of Pokes had gathered at the gates, and unless they could sing their way through, they would fall asleep and be carried ignominiously back to the castle.

"Now!" wheezed Sir Hokus, "Remember, it is for the Scarecrow!" All of them swallowed, took a deep breath, and put their last remaining strength into their voices. But a wily Poke who had stuffed some cotton in his ears now approached pushing a little cart.

"Take — !" he drawled, and before Dorothy realized what she was doing, she had accepted a cone from the Poke.

"Hah, hoh, hum! Why, it's hokey pokey!" spluttered Dorothy, and with a deep sigh of delight she took a large bite of the pink ice cream. How cool it felt on her dry throat! She opened her mouth for a second taste, yawned terrifically, and fell with a thud to the stone pavement.

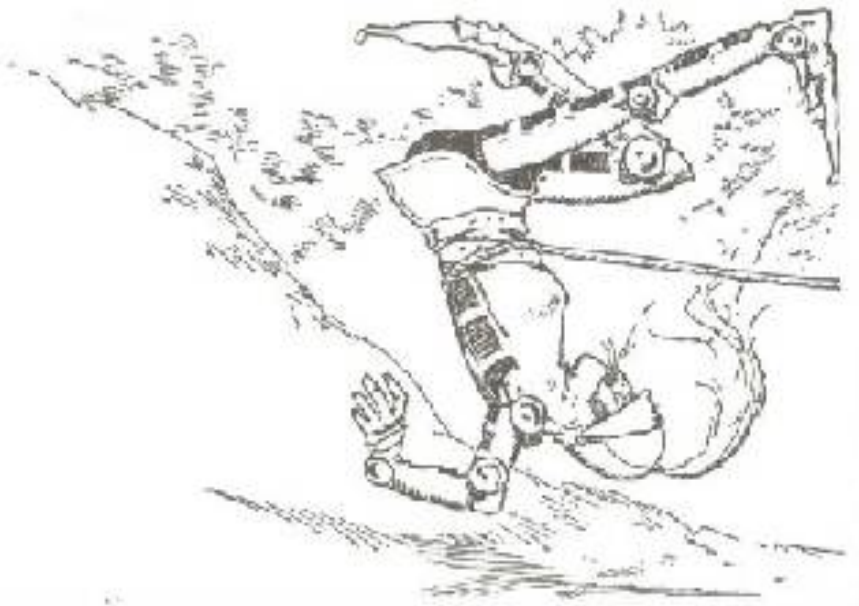
"Dorothy!" wailed Sir Hokus, stopping short in his song and bending over the little girl. The poor Cowardly Lion gave a gulp of despair and began running around the two, roaring and singing in a choked voice. The Pokes nodded to each other in a pleased fashion, and the Chief Poker started cautiously toward them with a long, thick rope. The Cowardly Lion redoubled his efforts. Then, seeing Sir Hokus about to fall, he jumped on the Knight with all his strength. Down crashed Sir Hokus, his armor clanging against the stones that paved the gateway.

"Sing!" roared the Cowardly Lion, glaring at him fiercely. The fall wakened the poor Knight, but he had not the strength to rise. Sitting on the hard stones and looking reproachfully at the Cowardly Lion, he began his ballad in a half-hearted fashion. The Cowardly Lion's heart was like to burst between lack of breath and fear, but making one last tremendous effort and still roaring his song, he bounded at the Chief Poker, seized the rope, and was back before the stupid creature had time to yawn.

"Tie it around your waist; take Dorothy in your arms!" gasped the Cowardly Lion out of the corner of his mouth. Sir Hokus, though completely dazed, had just enough presence of mind to obey, and the next minute the Cowardly Lion, growling between his teeth like a good fellow, was dashing through the group of Pokes, the other end of the rope in his mouth.

Bumpety bump — bump — bump! Bangety-bang-bang! went Sir Hokus over the cobbles, holding his helmet with one hand and Dorothy fast in the other arm. The Pokes fell this way and that, and such was the determination of the Cowardly Lion that he never stopped till he was out of the gate and halfway up the rough road they had so recently traveled. Then with a mighty sigh, he dropped the rope, rolled over and over down the hill, and lay panting

with exhaustion at the bottom.



The bumping over the cobbles had wakened Sir Hokus thoroughly. Indeed, the poor Knight was black and blue, and his armor dented and scraped frightfully in important places.

Dorothy, considerably shaken, opened her eyes and began feebly singing "Three Blind Mice."

"No need," puffed Sir Hokus, lifting her off his lap and rising stiffly.

"Yon noble beast has rescued us."

"Won't the Pokes come up here?" asked Dorothy, staring around a bit dizzily.

"They cannot live out of the kingdom," said the Knight, and Dorothy drew a big sigh of relief. Sir Hokus, however, was looking very grave.

"I have failed on my first adventure. Had it not been for the Cowardly Lion, we would now be prisoners in Pokes," he murmured sadly. Then he unfastened the plume from his helmet. "It beseemeth me not to wear it," sighed the Knight mournfully, and though Dorothy tried her best to comfort him, he refused to put it back. Finally, she fastened the plume to her dress, and they went down to the Cowardly Lion.

There was a little spring nearby, and after they had poured six helmets of water over his head, the lion opened his eyes. "Been in a good many fights," gasped the lion, "but I never fought one like this. Singing, bah!"

"Noble Sir, how can I ever repay you?" faltered the Knight. "Alas, that I have failed in the hour of trial!"

“Why, it wasn’t a question of courage at all,” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, greatly embarrassed. “I had the loudest voice and the most breath, that’s all! You got the rough end of it.” Sir Hokus looked ruefully at his armor. The back was entirely squashed.

“Never mind!” said the Knight bravely. “It is the front one presents to the foe.”

“Now you’re talking like a real Knight,” said Dorothy. “A while ago you said, ‘Yon’ and ‘beseemeth,’ and first thing you know the talk will all come back to you.” Sir Hokus’ honest face shone with pleasure.

“Odds bludgeons and truncheons! The little maid is right!” he exclaimed, striking an attitude. “And once it does, the rest will be easy.”

“Don’t say rest to me,” begged the Cowardly Lion, getting slowly to his feet. “Hah, hoh, hum! Just to think of it makes me yawn. Now don’t you think we had better start off?”

“If you’re rested,” began Dorothy. The Cowardly Lion put his paw over his ear and looked so comical that both Dorothy and Sir Hokus laughed heartily.

“If you’re ready,” amended Dorothy, and the three adventurers started up the steep road. “The first thing to do,” said the little girl, “is to get back to the Emerald City as quickly as we can.”

At this very minute Glinda, the Good Sorceress of Oz, in her palace in the Quadling Country, was puzzling over an entry in the Magic Record Book. This book tells everything that is happening in the world and out, and while it does not give details, it is a very useful possession.

“The Emperor of the Silver Islands,” read Glinda, “has returned to his people.”

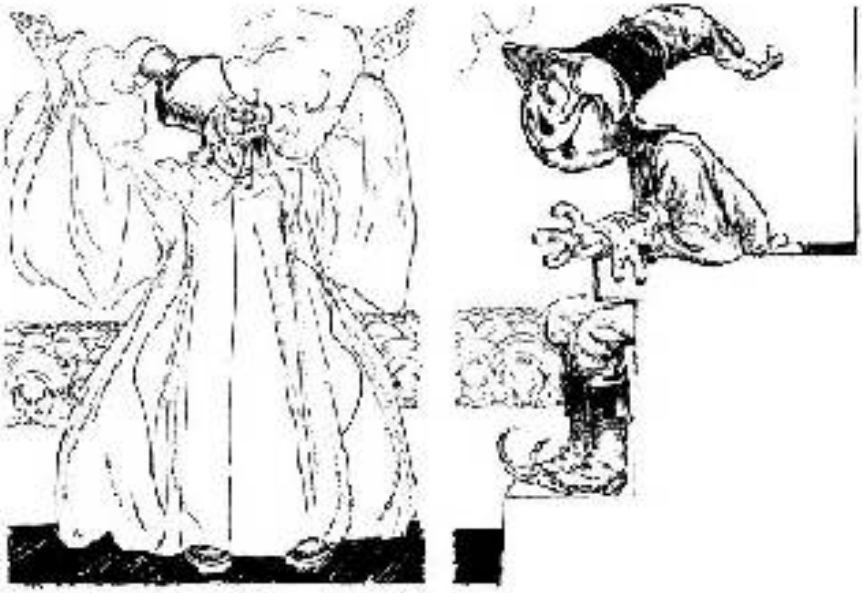
“Now who is the Emperor of the Silver Islands?” she asked herself. She puzzled about it for a long while, and then, deciding that it had nothing to do with the Fairy Kingdom of Oz, she closed the book and went for a walk in the palace garden.

Dorothy and Sir Hokus and the Cowardly Lion had meanwhile reached the first sign in the dim forest, the sign directing travelers to Pokes. Two roads branched out through the forest, and after much debating they took the wider.

“Do you ‘spose this leads to the Emerald City?” asked Cowardly Lion dubiously.

“Time will tell, time will tell,” said Sir Hokus cheerfully.

“Yes,” murmured the Cowardly Lion, “time will tell. But what?”



CHAPTER 7

THE SCARECROW IS HAILED AS EMPEROR!

Leaning forward on the great throne, the Scarecrow waited impatiently for the ancient gentleman to speak. The gray-skinned courtiers were eyeing him expectantly, and just as the suspense became almost unendurable, the old man threw up his arms and cried sharply:

"The prophecy of the magic beanstalk has been fulfilled. In this radiant and sublime Scarecrowcus, the spirit of Chang Wang Woe, the mighty, has returned. And I, the Grand Chew Chew of the realm, prostrate myself before this wonderful Scarecrowcus, Emperor of the Silver Islands." So, likewise, did all the company present, and the Scarecrow, taken unawares, flew up several feet and landed in a heap on the steps leading to the throne. He climbed back hurriedly, picking up the fan and parasol that he had plucked from the beanstalk.

"I wish Professor Wogglebug could hear this," said the Scarecrow, settling himself complacently. "But I must watch out, and remember to hold on."

The Grand Chew Chew was the first to rise, and folding his arms, he asked solemnly:

"What are your commands, Ancient and Honorable Scarecrowcus?"

"If you'd just omit the Cus," begged the Scarecrow in an embarrassed voice, "I believe I could think better. Am I in China, or where? Are you Chinamen, or what?"

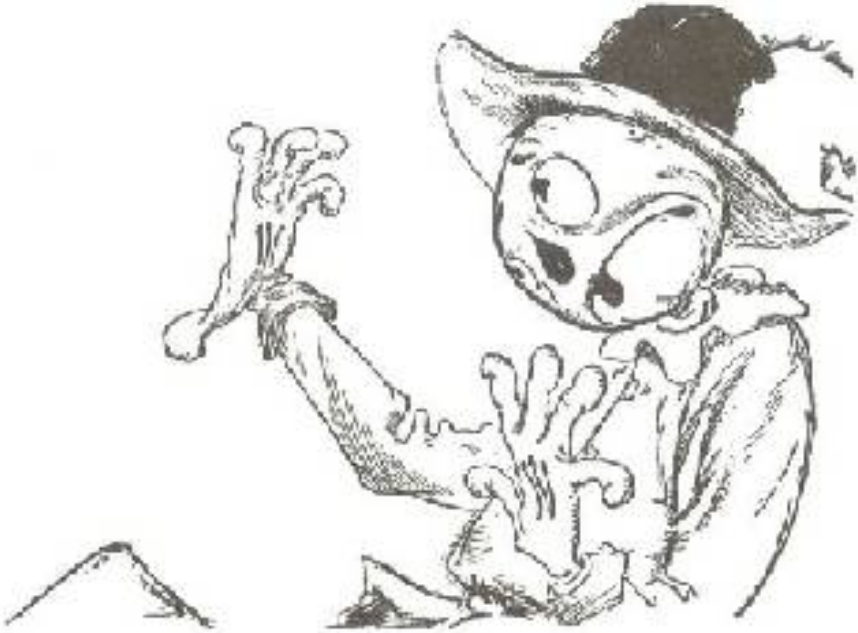
"We are Silvermen," said the Grand Chew Chew impressively, "and a much older race than our Chinese cousins. They are people of the sun. We are people of the stars. Has your Highness so soon forgotten?"

"I am afraid," said the Scarecrow, rubbing his chin reflectively, "that I have." He gazed slowly around the great throne room. Ozma's palace itself was not more dazzling. The floor of dull silver blocks was covered with rich blue rugs. Furniture, chairs, screens and everything were made of silver inlaid with precious stones. Filigreed silver lanterns hung from the high ceilings, and tall silver vases filled with pink and blue blossoms filled the rooms with their perfume. Blue flags embroidered with silver stars fluttered from the walls and the tips of the pikebearers' spears, and silver seemed to be so plentiful that even shoes were fashioned of it. Faintly through the windows came the sweet tones of a hundred silver chimes, and altogether the Scarecrow was quite dazed by his apparent good fortune. Surely they had called him Emperor, but how could that be? He turned to address the Grand Chew Chew; then as he saw out of the corner of his eye that the assemblage

were making ready to fall upon their faces, he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper:

"May I speak to you alone?" The Grand Chew Chew waved his hand imperiously, and the courtiers with a great crackling of silver brocade backed from the hall.

"Very kind of them to bow, but I wish they wouldn't," sighed the Scarecrow, sinking back on the great throne. "It blows one about so. I declare, if another person falls at my feet, I'll have nervous prostration."



Again he took a long survey of the hall, then turned to the Grand Chew Chew. "Would you mind," he asked simply, "telling me again who I am and how?"

"Who and how? Who — You are, illustrious Sir, the Emperor Chang Wang Woe, or to be more exact, his spirit!"

"I have always been a spirited person," observed the Scarecrow dubiously, "but never a spirit without a person. I must insist on being a person."

"How?" the Grand Chew Chew proceeded without noticing the Scarecrow's remarks. "Fifty years ago — after your Extreme Highness had defeated in battle the King of the Golden Islands — a magician entered the realm. This magician, in the employ of this wicked king, entered a room in the palace where your Highness lay sleeping and by an act of necromancy changed you to a crocus!"

"Ouch!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, shuddering involuntarily.

“And had it not been for the Empress, your faithful wife, you would have been lost forever to the Empire.”

“Wife?” gasped the Scarecrow faintly. “Have I a wife?”

“If your Highness will permit me to finish,” begged the Grand Chew Chew with great dignity. The Scarecrow nodded. “Your wife, Tsing Tsing, the beautiful, took the crocus, which was fading rapidly, and planted it in a silver bowl in the center of this very hall and for three days kept it fresh with her tears. Waking on the third morning, the Empress was amazed to see in place of the crocus a giant bean pole that extended to the roof of the palace and disappeared among the clouds.”

“Ah!” murmured the Scarecrow, looking up, “My family tree!”

“Beside the bean pole lay a crumpled parchment.” The Grand Chew Chew felt in the sleeve of his kimono and brought out a bit of crumpled silver paper, and adjusting his horn spectacles, read slowly.

“Into the first being who touches this magic pole — on the other side of the world — the spirit of Emperor Chang Wang Woe will enter. And fifty years from this day, he will return — to save his people.”

The Grand Chew Chew took off his specs and folded up the paper. “The day has come! You have come down the bean pole, and are undoubtedly that being who has gone from Emperor to crocus to Scarecrowcus. I have ruled the Islands these fifty years; have seen to the education of your sons and grandsons. And now, gracious and exalted Master, as I am an old man I ask you to relieve me from the cares of state.”

“Sons! Grandsons!” choked the Scarecrow, beginning to feel very much alarmed indeed. “How old am I?”

"Your Highness," said the Grand Chew Chew with a deep salaam, "is as old as I. In other words, you are in the ripe and glorious eighty-fifth year of your Majesty's illustrious and useful age."

"Eighty five!" gasped the Scarecrow, staring in dismay at the gray, wrinkled face of the old Silverman. "Now see here, Chew Chew, are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure, Immortal and Honored Master!"

The Scarecrow could not help but be convinced of the truth of the Grand Chew Chew's story. The pole in the Munchkin farmer's cornfield was none other than the magic beanstalk, and he, thrust on the pole by the farmer to scare away the crows, had received the spirit of the Emperor Chang Wang Woe. "Which accounts for my cleverness," he thought gloomily. Now, surely he should have been pleased, for he had come in search of a family, but the acquisition of an empire, sons and grandsons, and old age, all in a trice, fairly took his breath away.

"Does the prophecy say anything about restoring my imperial person?" he asked anxiously, for the thought of looking like Chew Chew was not a cheerful one.

"Alas, no!" sighed the Grand Chew Chew sorrowfully. "But we have very clever wizards on the Island, and I shall set them at work on the problem at once."

"Now don't be in such a rush," begged the Scarecrow, secretly determined to lock up the wizards at the first opportunity. "I'm rather fond of this shape.

You see, it requires no food and never grows tired — or old!"

"The royal robes will in a measure conceal it," murmured the Grand Chew Chew politely, and clapped his hands. A little servitor bounced into the hall.

"A royal robe, Quick Silver, for his Radiant Highness," snapped the Grand Chew Chew. In a moment Quick Silver had returned with a magnificent purple satin robe embroidered in silver threads and heavy with jewels, and a hat of silver cloth with upturned brim. The Scarecrow wrapped himself in the purple robe, took off his old Munchkin hat, and substituted the Imperial headpiece.

"How do I look, Chew?" he asked anxiously.

"Quite like your old Imperial Self, except — " The old Prime Minister ran

unsteadily out of the room. There was a muffled scream from the hall, and the next instant he returned with a long, shiny, silver queue which he had evidently clipped from the head of one of the servants. Removing the Scarecrow's hat, he pinned the queue to the back, set it on the Scarecrow's head, and stood regarding him with great satisfaction. "Ah, if the Empress could only see you!" he murmured rapturously.

"Where — where is she?" asked the Scarecrow, looking around nervously. His long, care-free life in Oz had somewhat unfitted him, he reflected, for family life.

"Alas!" sighed the Grand Chew Chew, wiping his eyes on the sleeve of his kimono, "She has returned to her silver ancestors."

"Then show me her picture," commanded the Scarecrow, visibly affected. The Grand Chew Chew stepped to a side wall, and pulling on a silken cord, disclosed the picture of a large, gray lady with curiously small eyes and a curiously large nose.

"Is she not beautiful?" asked the Grand Chew Chew, bowing his head.

"Beautiful — er — er, beautiful!" gulped the Scarecrow. He thought of lovely little Ozma and dear little Dorothy, and all at once felt terribly upset and homesick. He had no recollection of the Silver Island or his life here whatever. Who was he, anyway — the Scarecrow of Oz or Emperor Chang Wang Woe? He couldn't be both.

"Ah!" whispered the Grand Chew Chew, seeing his agitation. "You remember her?" The Scarecrow shook his head, with an inward shudder.

"Now show me myself, Chew," he asked curiously. Pulling the cord of a portrait beside the Empress, Chew Chew revealed the picture of Chang Wang Woe as he had been fifty years ago. His face was bland and jolly, and to be perfectly truthful, quite like the Scarecrow's in shape and expression. "I am beside myself," murmured the Scarecrow dazedly — which in truth he was.

"You were — er — are a very royal and handsome person," stammered the Grand Chew Chew.

The Scarecrow, stepping off the throne to examine himself more closely, dropped the little fan and parasol. He had really not had time to examine them since they snapped off the beanstalk, and now, looking at them carefully, he found them extremely pretty.

"Dorothy will like these," thought the Scarecrow, slipping them into a large inside pocket of his robe. Already, in the back of his head, was a queer notion that he would at some time or other return to Oz. He started to give the Grand Chew Chew a spirited description of that wonderful country, but the ancient gentleman yawned and, waving his hands toward the door, interrupted him with:

“Would not your Supreme Highness care to inspect your present dominions?”

“I suppose I may as well!” With a deep sigh, the Scarecrow took the Grand Chew Chew’s arm and, holding up his royal kimono (which was rather long) with the other hand, walked unsteadily down the great salon. They were about to pass into the garden when a little fat Silverman slid around the door, a huge silver drumstick upraised in his right hand and a great drum hung about his neck.

The drummer beamed on the Scarecrow.
Chang Wang Woe, the Beautiful,
The Beautiful has come!
Sublime and silver Scarecrow,
Let sound the royal drum!

chanted the little man in a high, thin voice, and started to bring the drumstick down upon the huge head of his noisy instrument.

“No you don’t!” cried the Scarecrow, leaping forward and catching his arm.

“I positively forbid it!”

“Then I shall have no work!” screamed the drummer, falling on his face. “Ah, Gracious Master, don’t you remember me?”

“Yes,” said the Scarecrow kindly, “who are you?”

“Oh, don’t you remember little Happy Toko?” wheezed the little man, the tears rolling down his cheeks. “I was only a boy, but you used to be fond of me.”

“Why, of course, my dear Tappy,” said the Scarecrow, not liking to hurt the little fellow’s feelings. “But why do you beat the drum?”

“It is customary to sound the drum at the approach of your Royal Highness,” put in the Grand Chew Chew importantly.

“Was customary,” said the Scarecrow firmly. “My dear Tappy Oko, never sound it in my presence again; it is too upsetting.” Which was true enough,

for one blow of the drum sent the flimsy Scarecrow flying into the air.

"You're dismissed, Happy," snapped the Grand Chew Chew. At this, the little Silver Islander began weeping and roaring with distress.

"Stop! What else can you do besides beat a drum?" asked the Scarecrow kindly.

"I can sing, stand on my head, and tell jokes," sniffed Happy Toko, shuffling from one foot to the other.

"Very good," said the Scarecrow. "You are henceforth Imperial Punster to my Person. Come along, we're going to look over the Island."

The Grand Chew Chew frowned so terribly that Happy Toko's knees shook with terror.

"It is not fitting for a slave to accompany the Grand Chew Chew and the Emperor," he hissed angrily.

The Scarecrow looked surprised, for the Kingdom of Oz is quite democratic, and no one is considered better than another. But seeing this was not the time to argue, he winked broadly behind the Grand Chew Chew's back.

"I'll see you again, Tappy my boy," he called genially, and passed out into the garden, where a magnificent silver palanquin, surrounded by pikemen and shieldbearers, awaited him.

CHAPTER 8

THE SCARECROW STUDIES THE SILVER ISLAND

Two days had passed since the Scarecrow had fallen into his Kingdom. He was not finding his royal duties as pleasant as he had anticipated. The country was beautiful enough, but being Emperor of the Silver Islands was not the simple affair that ruling Oz had been. The pigtail on the back of his hat was terribly distracting, and he was always tripping over his kimono, to which he could not seem to accustom himself. His subjects were extremely quarrelsome, always pulling one another's queues or stealing fruit, umbrellas, and silver polish. His ministers, the Grand Chew Chew, the Chief Chow Chow, and General Mugwump, were no better, and keeping peace in the palace took all the Scarecrow's cleverness.

In the daytime he tried culprits in the royal court, interviewed his seventeen secretaries, rode out in the royal palanquin, and made speeches to visiting princes. At night he sat in the great silver salon and by the light of the lanterns studied the Book of Ceremonies. His etiquette, the Grand Chew Chew informed him, was shocking. He was always doing something wrong, dodging the Imperial Umbrella, speaking kindly to a palace servant, or walking unattended in the gardens.

The royal palace itself was richly furnished, and the Scarecrow had more than five hundred robes of state. The gardens, with their sparkling waterfalls, glowing orange trees, silver temples, towers and bridges, were too lovely for words. Poppies, roses, lotus and other lilies perfumed the air, and at night a thousand silver lanterns turned them to a veritable fairyland.

The grass and trees were green as in other lands, but the sky as always full of tiny silver clouds, the waters surrounding the island were of a lovely liquid silver, and as all the houses and towers were of this gleaming metal, the effect was bewildering and beautiful.

But the Silver Islanders themselves were too stupid to appreciate this beauty. "And what use is it all when I have no one to enjoy it with me," sighed the Scarecrow. "And no time to *play!"*

In Oz no one thought it queer if Ozma, the little Queen, jumped rope with Dorothy or Betsy Bobbin, or had a quiet game of croquet with the palace cook. But here, alas, everything was different. If the Scarecrow so much as ventured a game of ball with the gardener's boy, the whole court was thrown into an uproar. At first, the Scarecrow tried to please everybody, but finding that nothing pleased the people in the palace, he decided to please himself.

"I don't care a kinkajou if I am the Emperor, I'm going to talk to whom I please!" he exclaimed on the second night, and shaking his glove at a bronze

statue, he threw the Book of Ceremonies into the fountain. The next morning, therefore, he ascended the throne with great firmness. Immediately, the courtiers prostrated themselves, and the Scarecrow's arms and legs blew about wildly.

"Stand up at once," puffed the Scarecrow when he had regained his balance.

"You are giving me nervous prostration. Chew, kindly issue an edict forbidding prostrations. Anyone caught bowing in my presence again shall lose — " the courtiers looked alarmed " — his pigtail!" finished the Scarecrow.

"And now, Chew, you will take my place, please. I am going for a walk with Tappy Oko."

The Grand Chew Chew's mouth fell open with surprise, but seeing the Scarecrow's determined expression, he dared not disobey, and he immediately began making strange marks on a long, red parchment. Happy Toko trembled as the Scarecrow Emperor took his arm, and the courtiers stared at one another in dismay as the two walked quietly out into the garden.

Nothing happened, however, and Tappy, regaining his composure, took out a little silver flute and started a lively tune.

"I had to take matters into my own hands, Tappy," said the Scarecrow, listening to the music with a pleased expression. "Are there any words to that song?"

"Yes, illustrious and Supreme Sir!"

Two spoons went down a Por-ce-Lane,
To meet a China saucer,
A ‘talking China in a way
To break a white man’s jaw, Sir!

sang Happy, and finished by standing gravely on his head.

“Your Majesty used to be very fond of this song,” spluttered Happy. (It is difficult to speak while upside down, and if you don’t think so, try it!)

“Ah!” said the Scarecrow, beginning to feel more cheerful, “Tell me something about myself and my family, Tappy Oko.”

“Happy Toko, if it pleases your Supreme Amiability,” corrected the little silver man, somersaulting to a standstill beside the Scarecrow.

“It does and it doesn’t,” murmured the Scarecrow. “There is something about you that reminds me of a pudding, and you tapped the drum, didn’t you? I believe I shall call you Tappy Oko, if you don’t mind!”

The Scarecrow seated himself on a silver bench and motioned for the Imperial Punster to sit down beside him. Tappy Oko sat down fearfully, first making sure that he was not observed.

“Saving your Imperial Presence, this is not permitted,” said Tappy uneasily.

“Never mind about my Imperial Presence,” chuckled the Scarecrow. “Tell me about my Imperial Past.”

“Ah!” said Tappy Oko, rolling up his eyes, “You were one of the most magnificent and magnanimous of monarchs.”

“Was I?” asked the Scarecrow in a pleased voice.

“You distributed rice among the poor, and advice among the rich, and fought many glorious battles,” continued the little man. “I composed a little song about you. Perhaps you would like to hear it?”

The Scarecrow nodded, and Tappy, throwing back his head, chanted with a will:

Chang Wang Woe did draw the bow —
And twist the queues of a thousand foe!

“In Oz,” murmured the Scarecrow reflectively as Tappy finished, “I twisted the necks of a flock of wild crows — that was before I had my excellent brains, too. Oh, I’m a fighting man, there’s no doubt about it. But tell me, Tappy, where did I meet my wife?”

“In the water!” chuckled Tappy Oko, screwing up his eyes.

“Never!” The Scarecrow looked out over the harbor and then down at his lumpy figure.

“Your Majesty forgets you were then a man like me — er — not stuffed with straw, I mean,” exclaimed Happy, looking embarrassed. “She was fishing,” continued the little Punster, “when a huge silver fish became entangled in her line. She stood up, the fish gave a mighty leap and pulled her out of the boat. Your Majesty, having seen the whole affair from the bank, plunged bravely into the water and, swimming out, rescued her, freed the fish, and in due time made her your bride. I’ve made a song about that, also.”

“Let’s hear it,” said the Scarecrow. And this is what Happy sung:

Tsing Tsing, a Silver Fisher’s daughter,
Was fishing in the silver water.
The moon shone on her silver hair
And there were fishes everywhere!
Then came a mighty silver fish,
It seized her line and with a swish
Of silver fins upset her boat.
Tsing Tsing could neither swim nor float.
She raised her silver voice in fear
And who her call of help should hear
But Chang Wang Woe, the Emperor,
Who saved and married her, what’s more!

“Did I really?” asked the Scarecrow, feeling quite flattered by Happy’s song.

“Yes,” said Happy positively, “and invited me to the wedding, though I was only a small boy.”

“Was Chew Chew there?” The Scarecrow couldn’t help wondering how the old Nobleman had taken his marriage with a poor fisherman’s daughter.

Happy chuckled at the memory. “He had a Princess all picked out for you,” he confided merrily:

And there he stood in awful pride
And scorned the father of the bride!

“Hoh!” roared the Scarecrow, falling off the bench. “That’s the Ozziest thing I’ve heard since I landed in the Silver Islands. Tappy, my boy, I believe we are going to be friends! But let’s forget the past and think of the present!”

The Scarecrow embraced his Imperial Punster on the spot. “Let’s find something jolly to do,” he suggested.

“Would your Extreme Highness care for kites?” asked Happy. “‘Tis a favorite sport here!”

“Would I! But wait, I will disguise myself.” Hiding his royal hat under the bench, he put on Happy Toko’s broad-rimmed peasant hat. It turned down all ‘round and almost hid his face. Then he turned his robe inside out and declared himself ready.

They passed through a small silver town before they reached the field where the kites were to be flown, and the Scarecrow was delighted with its picturesque and quaint appearance. The streets were narrow and full of queer shops. Silver lanterns and little pennants hung from each door, the merchants and maidens in their gay sedans and the people afoot made a bright and lively picture.

“If I could just live here instead of in the palace,” mused the Scarecrow, pausing before a modest rice shop. It is dangerous to stop in the narrow streets, and Happy jerked his master aside just in time to prevent his being trodden on by a huge camel. It sniffed at the Scarecrow suspiciously, and they were forced to flatten themselves against a wall to let it pass. Happy anxiously hurried the Emperor through the town, and they soon arrived at the kite flying field. A great throng had gathered to watch the exhibition, and there were more kites than one would see in a lifetime here. Huge fish, silver paper dragons, birds — every sort and shape of kite was tugging at its string, and hundreds of Silver Islanders — boys, girls and grown-ups — were looking on.

“How interesting,” said the Scarecrow, fascinated by a huge dragon that floated just over his head. “I wish Dorothy could see this, I do indeed!”

But the dragon kite seemed almost alive, and horrors! Just as it swooped down, a hook in the tail caught in the Scarecrow’s collar, and before Happy

Toko could even wink, the Emperor of the Silver Islands was sailing towards the clouds. The Scarecrow, as you must know, weighs almost nothing, and the people shouted with glee, for they thought him a dummy man and part of the performance. But Happy Toko ran after the kite as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

"Alas, alas, I shall lose my position!" wailed Happy Toko, quite convinced that the Scarecrow would be dashed to pieces on the rocks. "Oh, putty head that I am to set myself against the Grand Chew Chew!"

The Scarecrow, however, after recovering from the first shock, began to enjoy himself. Holding fast to the dragon's tail, he looked down with great interest upon his dominions. Rocks, mountains, tall silver pagodas, drooping willow trees, flashed beneath him. Truly a beautiful island! His gaze strayed over the silver waters surrounding the island, and he was astonished to see a great fleet sailing into the harbor — a great fleet of singular vessels with silken sails.

"What's this?" thought the Scarecrow. But just then the dragon kite became suddenly possessed. It jerked him up, it jerked him down, and shook him this way and that. His hat flew off, his arms and legs whirled wildly, and pieces of straw began to float downward. Then the hook ripped and tore through his coat and, making a terrible slit in his back, came out. Down, down, down flashed the Scarecrow and landed in a heap on the rocks. Poor Happy Toko rushed toward him with streaming eyes.

“Oh radiant and immortal Scarecrowcus, what have they done to you?” he moaned, dropping on his knees beside the flimsy shape of the Emperor.

“Merely knocked out my honorable stuffing,” mumbled the Scarecrow. “Now Tappy, my dear fellow, will you just turn me over? There’s a rock in my eye that keeps me from thinking.”

Happy Toko, at the sound of a voice from the rumpled heap of clothing, gave a great leap.

“Is there any straw about?” asked the Scarecrow anxiously. “Why don’t you turn me over?”

“It’s his ghost,” moaned Happy Toko, and because he dared not disobey a royal ghost, he turned the Scarecrow over with trembling hands.

“Don’t be alarmed,” said the Scarecrow, smiling reassuringly. “I’m not breakable like you meat people. A little straw will make me good as new. A little straw — straw, do you hear?” For Happy’s pigtail was still on end, and he was shaking so that his silver shoes clattered on the rocks.

“I command you to fetch straw!” cried the Scarecrow at last, in an angry voice. Happy dashed away.

When he returned with an arm full of straw, the Scarecrow managed to convince him that he was quite alive. “It is impossible to kill a person from Oz,” he explained proudly, “and that is why my present figure is so much more satisfactory than yours. I do not have to eat or sleep and can always be repaired. Have you some safety pins?” Happy produced several and under the Scarecrow’s direction stuffed out his chest and pinned up his rents.

“Let us return,” said the Scarecrow. “I’ve had enough pleasure for one day, and can’t you sing something, Tappy?” Running and fright had somewhat affected Happy’s voice, but he squeaked out a funny little song, and the two, keeping time to the tune, came without further mishap to the Imperial gardens. Happy had just set the royal hat upon the Scarecrow’s head and brushed off his robes when a company of courtiers dashed out of the palace door and came running toward them.

“Great Cornstarch!” exclaimed the Scarecrow, sitting heavily down on the silver bench. “What’s the matter now? Here are all the Pig-heads on the Island, and look how old Chew Chew is puffing!”

“One would expect a Chew Chew to puff,” observed Happy slyly. “One would — ” But he got no further, for the whole company was upon them.

“Save us! Save us!” wailed the courtiers, forgetting the royal edict and falling on their faces.

“What from?” asked the Scarecrow, holding fast to the silver bench.

“The King — the King of the Golden Islands!” shrieked the Grand Chew Chew.

“Ah yes!” murmured the Scarecrow, frowning thoughtfully. “Was that his fleet coming into the harbor?”

The Grand Chew Chew jumped up in astonishment. “How could your Highness see the fleet from here?” he stuttered.

“Not from here — there,” said the Scarecrow, pointing upward and winking at Happy Toko. “My Highness goes very high, you see!”

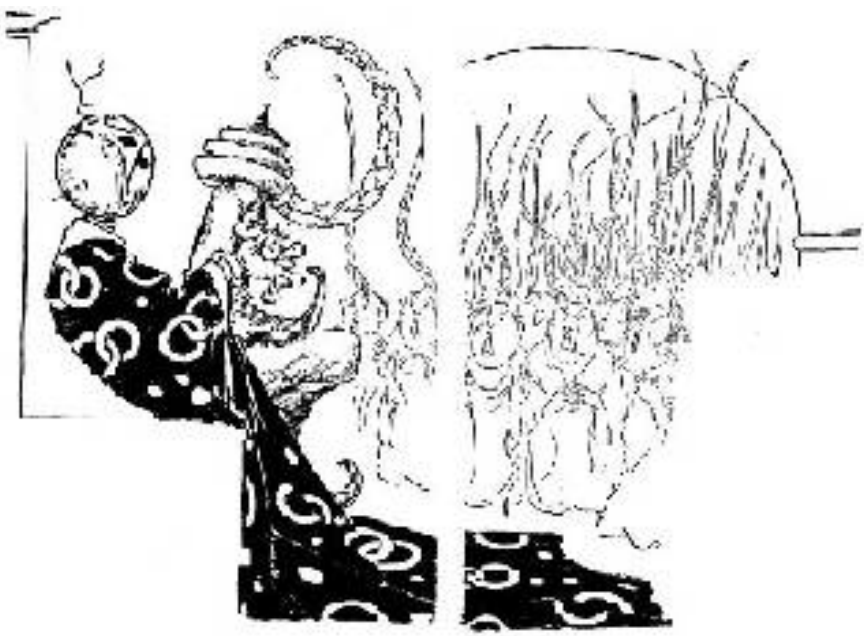
“Your Majesty does not seem to realize the seriousness of the matter,” choked the Grand Chew Chew. “He will set fire to the island and make us all slaves.” At this, the courtiers began banging their heads distractedly on the grass.

“Set fire to the island!” exclaimed the Scarecrow, jumping to his feet. “Then peace to *my* ashes! Tappy, will you see that they are sent back to Oz?”

“Save us! Save us!” screamed the frightened Silvermen.

“The prophecy of the beanstalk has promised that you would save us. You are the Emperor Chang Wang Woe,” persisted the Grand Chew Chew, waving his long arms.

“Woe is me,” murmured the Scarecrow, clasping his yellow gloves. “But let me think.”



CHAPTER 9

"SAVE US WITH YOUR MAGIC, EXALTED ONE!"

For several minutes, the Scarecrow sat perfectly still while the company stood shaking in their shoes. Then he asked loudly, "Where is the Imperial Army?"

"It has retired to the caves at the end of the Island," quavered the Grand Chew Chew.

"I thought as much," said the Scarecrow. "But never mind, there are quite a lot of us."

"Us!" spluttered a tall Silverman indignantly. "We are not common soldiers."

"No, very uncommon ones, but you have hard heads and long nails, and I dare say will manage somehow. Come on, let's go. Chew, you may take the lead."

"Go!" shrieked the Grand Chew Chew. "Us?" The Courtiers began backing away in alarm. "Where — er — what — are your Highness' plans?"

"Why, just to conquer the King of the Golden Islands and send him back home," said the Scarecrow, smiling engagingly. "That's what you wanted, isn't it?"

"But it is not honorable for noblemen to fight. It — "

"Oh, of course, if you prefer burning — " The Scarecrow rose unsteadily and started for the garden gates. Not a person stirred. The Scarecrow looked back, and his reproachful face was too much for Happy Toko.

"I'll come, exalted and radiant Scarecrowcus! Wait, honorable and valiant Sir!"

"Bring a watering can, if you love me," called the Scarecrow over his shoulder, and Happy, snatching one from a frightened gardener, dashed after his Master.

"If things get too hot, I'd like to know that you can put me out," said the Scarecrow, his voice quivering with emotion. "You shall be rewarded for this, my brave Tappy."

Happy did not answer, for his teeth were chattering so he could not speak.

The harbor lay just below the Imperial Palace, and the Scarecrow and Happy hurried on through the crowds of fleeing Silvermen, their household goods packed upon their heads. Some cheered faintly for Chang Wang Woe, but none offered to follow, save the faithful Happy.

"Is this king old?" asked the Scarecrow, looking anxiously at the small boats full of warriors that were putting out from the fleet.

"He is the son of the King whom your Majesty conquered fifty years ago," gulped Happy. "Ha — has your Imperial Highness any — plan?"

"Not yet," said the Scarecrow cheerfully, "but I'm thinking very hard."

"Then, goodbye to Silver Island!" choked Happy Toko, dropping the watering can with a crash.

"Never mind," said the Scarecrow kindly. "If they shoot me and I catch fire, I'll jump in the water and you must fish me out, Tappy. Now please don't talk any more. I must think!"

Poor Happy Toko had nothing else to say, for he considered his day finished. The first of the invaders were already landing on the beach, and standing up in a small boat, encased in glittering gold armor, was the King of the Golden Islands, himself. The sun was quite hot, and there was a smell of

gunpowder in the air.

Now the Scarecrow had encountered many dangers in Oz and had usually thought his way out of them, but as they came nearer and nearer to the shore and no idea presented itself, he began to feel extremely nervous. A bullet fired from the king's boat tore through his hat, and the smoke made him more anxious than ever about his straw stuffing. He felt hurriedly in his pocket, and his clumsy fingers closed over the little fan he had plucked from the bean pole.

Partly from agitation and partly because he did not know what else to do, the Scarecrow flipped the fan open. At that minute, a mighty roar went up from the enemy, for at the first motion of the fan they had been jerked fifty feet into the air, and there they hung suspended over their ships, kicking and squealing for dear life. The Scarecrow was as surprised as they, and as for Happy Toko, he fell straightway on his nose!

"Magic!" exclaimed the Scarecrow. "Someone is helping us," and he began fanning himself gently with the little fan, waiting to see what would happen next. At each wave of the fan, the King of the Golden Islands and his men flew higher until at last not one of them could be seen from the shore.

"The fan. The magic is in the fan!" gasped Happy Toko, jumping up and embracing the Scarecrow.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the Scarecrow, closing the fan with a snap. Happy's answer was drowned in a huge splash. As soon as the fan was closed, down whirled the king's army into the sea, and each man struck the water with such force that the spray rose high as a skyscraper. And not till then did the Scarecrow realize the power of the little fan he had been saving for Dorothy.

"Saved!" screamed Happy Toko, dancing up and down. "Hurrah for the Emperor!"

The Emperor, without a plan,
Has won the victory with a fan.

The Silver Islanders had paused in their flight at the queer noises coming from the harbor, and now all of them, hearing Tappy Oko's cries, came crowding down to the shore and were soon cheering themselves hoarse. No wonder! The drenched soldiers of the king were climbing swiftly back into their boats, and when they were all aboard, the Scarecrow waved his fan sidewise (he did not want to blow them up again), and the ships swept out of the harbor so fast that the water churned to silver suds behind them, and they soon were out of sight.

"Ah!" cried the Grand Chew Chew, arriving breathlessly at this point, "We have won the day!"

“So we have!” chuckled the Scarecrow, putting his arm around Happy Toko. “Call the brave army and decorate the generals!”

“It shall be done,” said the Grand Chew Chew, frowning at Happy. “There shall be a great celebration, a feast, and fireworks.”

“Fireworks,” quavered the Scarecrow, clutching his Imperial Punster. By this time, the Silver Islanders were crowding around the Emperor, shouting and squealing for joy, and before he could prevent it, they had placed him on their shoulders and carried him in triumph to the palace. He managed to signal Happy, and Happy nodded reassuringly and ran off as fast as his fat little legs could patter. He arrived at the palace almost as soon as the Scarecrow, lugging a giant silver watering can, and, sitting calmly on the steps of the throne, fanned himself with his hat. The Scarecrow eyed the watering can with satisfaction.

“Now let them have their old fireworks,” he muttered under his breath, and settled himself comfortably. The Grand Chew Chew was hopping about like a ditched kite, arranging for the celebration. The courtiers were shaking hands with themselves and forming in a long line. A great table was being set

in the hall.

"What a fuss they are making over nothing," said the Scarecrow to Happy Toko. "Now in Oz when we win a victory, we all play some jolly game and sit down to dinner with Ozma. Why, they haven't even set a place for you, Happy!"

"I'd rather sit here, amiable Master," sighed Happy Toko happily. "Is the little fan safely closed?"

The Scarecrow felt in his pocket to make sure, then leaned forward in surprise. The Royal Silver Army were marching stiffly into the hall, and the courtiers were bobbing and bowing and cheering like mad.

The General came straight to the great silver throne, clicked his silver heels, bowed, and stood at attention.

"Well," said the Scarecrow, surveying this splendid person curiously, "what is it?"

"They have come for their decorations," announced the Grand Chew Chew, stepping up with a large silver platter full of medals.

"But I thought Tappy Oko and I saved the Island," chuckled the Scarecrow, nudging the Imperial Punster.

"Had the Imperial Army not retired and left the field to you, there would have been no victory," faltered the General in a timid voice. "Therefore, in a way we are responsible for the victory. A great general always knows when to retire."

"There's something in that," admitted the Scarecrow, scratching his head thoughtfully. "Go ahead and decorate 'em, Chew Chew!"

This the Grand Chew Chew proceeded to do, making such a long speech to each soldier that half of the Court fell asleep and the Scarecrow fidgeted uncomfortably.

"They remind me of the Army of Oz," he confided to Happy Toko, "but we never have long speeches in Oz. I declare, I wish I could go to sleep, too, and that's something I have never seen any use in before."

"They've just begun," yawned Happy Toko, nearly rolling down the steps of the throne, and Happy was not far wrong, for all afternoon one after the other of the courtiers arose and droned about the great victory, and as they all addressed themselves to the Scarecrow, he was forced to listen politely. When the speeches were over, there was still the grand banquet to be got through, and as the Silver Islanders ate much the same fare as their Chinese cousins, you can imagine the poor Scarecrow's feelings.

"Ugh!" shivered the Scarecrow as the strange dishes appeared, "I'm glad none of my friends are here. How fortunate that I'm stuffed with straw!" The broiled mice, the stewed shark fins and the bird nest soup made him stare. He

had ordered Happy Toko to be placed at his side, and to watch him happily at work with his silver chopsticks and porcelain spoon was the only satisfaction he got out of the feast.

"And what is that?" he asked, pointing to a steaming bowl that had just been placed before Happy.

"Minced cat, your Highness," replied Happy, sprinkling it generously with silver polish.

"Cat?" shrieked the Scarecrow, pouncing to his feet in horror. "Do you mean to tell me you are eating a poor, innocent, little cat?"

"Not a poor one at all. A very rich one, I should say," replied Happy Toko with his mouth full. "Ah, had your Highness only your old body, how you would enjoy this!"

"Never!" shouted the Scarecrow so loudly that all of the Courtiers looked up in surprise. "How dare you eat innocent cats?" Indignantly he thought of Dorothy's pet kitten back in Oz. Oz — why had he ever left that wonderful country?

"Your Highness has eaten hundreds," announced the Grand Chew Chew calmly. "Hundreds!"

The Scarecrow dropped back into his chair, too shocked for speech. He, the Scarecrow of Oz, had eaten hundreds of cats! What would Dorothy say to that? Ugh! This was his first experience with Silver Island fare. He had always spent the dinner hours in the garden. He sighed, and looked wistfully at the bean pole in the center of the hall. Every minute he was feeling less

and less like the Emperor of the Silver Island and more and more like the plain Scarecrow of Oz.

"Your Majesty seems out of spirits," said Happy Toko as he placed himself and the huge watering can beside the Emperor's bench in the garden later in the evening.

"I wish I were," said the Scarecrow. "To have an Emperor's spirit wished on you is no joke, my dear Tappy. It's a blinking bore!" At that moment, the fireworks commenced. The garden, ablaze with many shaped silver lanterns, looked more like Fairyland than ever. But each rocket made the Scarecrow wince. Showers of stars and butterflies fell 'round his head, fiery dragons leaped over the trees, and in all the Fourth of July celebrations you could imagine there were never such marvelous fireworks as these. No wonder Happy Toko, gazing in delight, forgot his promises to his Royal Master.

Soon the Scarecrow's fears were realized, and his straw stuffing began to smoke.

"Put me out! Put me out!" cried the Scarecrow, as a shower of sparks settled in his lap. The royal band made such a din and the courtiers such a clatter that Happy did not hear.

All of the Silver Islanders were intent on the display, and they forgot all about their unhappy and smoking Emperor.

"Help! Water! Water! Fire!" screamed the Scarecrow, jumping off his throne and knocking Happy head over heels. Thus brought to his senses, Happy hurriedly seized the watering can and sprinkled its contents on the smoking Emperor.

"Am I out?" gasped the Emperor anxiously. "A fine way to celebrate a victory, lighting me up like a Roman candle!"

"Yes, dear Master," said the repentant Happy, helping the dripping Scarecrow to his feet, "it only scorched your royal robe. And it's all over, anyway. Let us go in."

The dripping Emperor was quite ready to follow his Imperial Punster's advice.

"Now that I am put out, let us by all means go in," said the Scarecrow gloomily, and the two slipped off without anyone noticing their departure.

"I'm afraid I'll have to have some new stuffing tomorrow," observed the Scarecrow, sinking dejectedly on his throne. "Tappy, my dear boy, after this

never leave me alone, do you hear?" Happy Toko made no reply. He had fallen asleep beside the Imperial Throne.

The Scarecrow might have called his court, but he was in no mood for more of the Silver Islanders' idea of a good time. He longed for the dear friends of his loved Land of Oz.

One by one the lights winked out in the gardens, and the noisy company dispersed, and soon no one in the palace was awake but the Scarecrow. His straw was wet and soggy, and even his excellent brains felt damp and dull.

"If it weren't for Tappy Oko, how lonely I should be." He stared through the long, dim, empty hall with its shimmering silver screens and vases. "I wonder what little Dorothy is doing," sighed the Scarecrow wistfully.

CHAPTER 10

PRINCESS OZMA AND BETSY BOBBIN TALK IT OVER

"Dorothy must be having a lovely time at the Scarecrow's," remarked Betsy Bobbin to Ozma one afternoon as they sat reading in the Royal Gardens several days after Dorothy's departure from the Emerald City of Oz.

"One always has a jolly time at the Scarecrow's," laughed the little Queen of Oz. "I must look in my Magic Picture and see what they are doing. Too bad she missed the A-B-Sea Serpent and Rattlesnakes. Weren't they the funniest creatures?"

Both the little girls (for Ozma is really just a little girl) went off into a gale of laughter. The two queer creatures had followed the Scarecrow's advice and had spent their vacation in the Emerald City, and partly because they were so dazzled by their surroundings and partly because they have no sort of memories whatever, they never mentioned the Scarecrow himself or said anything about his plan to hunt his family tree. They talked incessantly of the Mer City and told innumerable A-B-Sea stories to Scraps and the Tin Woodman and the children of the Emerald City. When they were ready to go, the A-B-Sea Serpent snapped off its X block for Ozma. X, he said, meant almost everything, and pretty well expressed his gratitude to the lovely little ruler of Oz. Ozma in turn gave each of the visitors an emerald collar, and that very morning they had started back to the Munchkin River, and all the celebrities of Oz had gotten up to see them off.

“Maybe they’ll come again some time,” said Betsy Bobbin, swinging her feet. “But look, Ozma, here comes a messenger.” A messenger it surely was, dressed in the quaint red costume of the Quadlings. It was from Glinda, the Good Sorceress, and caused the Princess to sigh with vexation.

“Tell Jack Pumpkinhead to harness the Sawhorse to the red wagon,” said Ozma after glancing hastily at the little note. “The Horners and Hoppers are at war again. And tell the Wizard to make ready for a journey.”

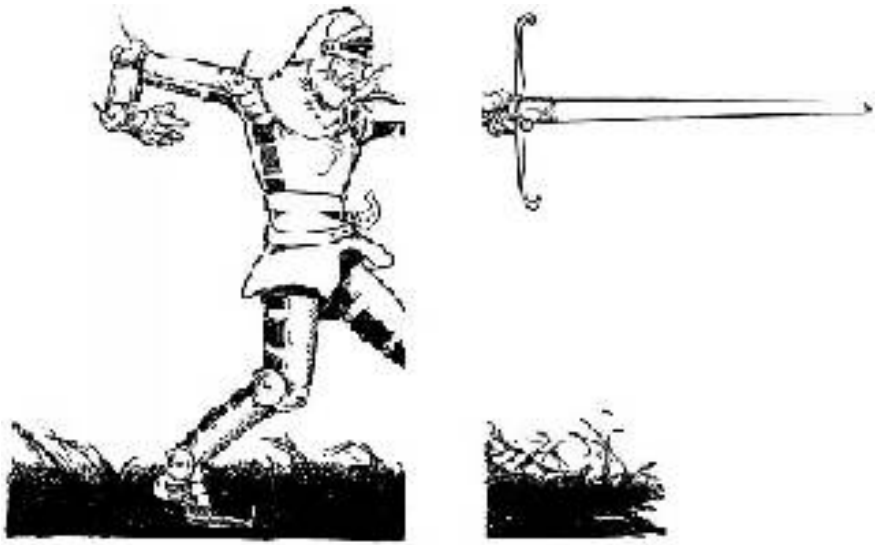
“May I come, too,?” asked Betsy. Ozma nodded with a troubled little frown, and Betsy bustled off importantly. Not many little girls are called upon to help settle wars and rule a country as wonderful as Oz.

The Horners and Hoppers are a quarrelsome and curious folk living in the Quadling mountains, and soon Ozma, Jack Pumpkinhead, Betsy and the Wizard of Oz were rattling off at the best speed the Sawhorse could manage. This was pretty fast, for the little horse, being made of wood and magically brought to life, never tires and could outrun anything on legs in the fairy Kingdom of Oz.

But the fact that interests us is that Ozma did not look in the Magic Picture or see what exciting adventures the Scarecrow and Dorothy really were having!

As for Professor Wogglebug, who had caused all the trouble, he was busily at work on the twelfth chapter of the Royal Book of Oz, which he had modestly headed:

H. M. WOGGLEBUG T.E., PRINCE OF BUGS,
Cultured and Eminent Educator
and also
Great Grand and General Genealogist of Oz.



CHAPTER 11

SIR HOKUS OVERCOMETH THE GIANT

"I don't believe we'll ever find the way out of this forest."

Dorothy stopped with a discouraged little sigh and leaned against a tree. They had followed the road for several hours. First it had been fine and wide, but it had gradually dwindled to a crooked little path that wound crazily in and out through the trees. Although it was almost noonday, not a ray of sun penetrated through the dim green depths.

"Methinks," said Sir Hokus, peering into the gloom ahead, "that a great adventure is at hand."

The Cowardly Lion put back his ears. "What makes you methink so?" he rumbled anxiously.

"Hark thee!" said Sir Hokus, holding up his finger warningly. From a great way off sounded a curious thumping. It was coming nearer and nearer.

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy, catching hold of the Cowardly Lion's mane.

"This is worse than Pokes!"

"Perchance it is a dragon," exulted the Knight, drawing his short sword. "Ah, how it would refresh me to slay a dragon!"

"I don't relish dragons myself. Scorched my tongue on one once," said the Cowardly Lion huskily. "But I'll fight with you, brother Hokus. Stand back, Dorothy dear."

As the thuds grew louder, the Knight fairly danced up and down with excitement. "Approach, villain!" he roared lustily.

"Approach till I impale thee on my lance. Ah, had I but a horse!"

"I'd let you ride on my back if it weren't for that hard tin suit," said the Cowardly Lion. "But cheer up, my dear Hokus, your voice is a little hoarse." Dorothy giggled nervously, then seized hold of a small tree, for the whole forest was rocking.

"How now!" gasped the Knight. There was a terrific quake that threw Sir Hokus on his face and sent every hair in the lion's mane on end, and then a great foot came crashing down through the treetops not three paces from the little party. Before they could even swallow, a giant hand flashed down-ward, jerked up a handful of trees by the roots, and disappeared, while a voice from somewhere way above shouted:

What are little humans for?
To feed the giant Bangladore.
Broiled or toasted, baked or roasted,
I smell three or maybe four!

"You hear that?" quavered the Cowardly Lion. Sir Hokus did not answer. His helmet had been jammed down by his fall, and he was tugging it upward with both hands. Frightened though Dorothy was, she ran to the Knight's assistance.

“Have at you!” cried Sir Hokus as soon as the opening in his helmet was opposite his eyes. “Forward!”

“My heart is beating a retreat,” gulped the Cowardly Lion, but he bounded boldly after Sir Hokus.

“Varlet!” hissed the Knight, and raising his sword gave a mighty slash at the giant’s ankle, which was broad as three tree trunks, while the Cowardly Lion gave a great spring and sank his teeth in the giant’s huge leg.

“Ouch!” roared the giant in a voice that shook every leaf in the forest. “You stop, or I’ll tell my father!” With that, he gave a hop that sent Sir Hokus flying into the treetops, stumbled over a huge rock, and came crashing to the earth, smashing trees like grass blades. At the giant’s first scream, Dorothy shut her eyes and, putting her hands over her ears, had run as far and as fast as she could. At the awful crash, she stopped short, opened her eyes, and stared ‘round giddily.

The giant was flat on his back, but as he was stretched as far as four city blocks, only half of him was visible. The Cowardly Lion still clung to his leg, and he was gurgling and struggling in a way Dorothy could not understand.

She looked around in a panic for the Knight. Just then, Sir Hokus dropped from the branch of a tree.

“Uds daggers!” he puffed, looking ruefully at his sword, which had snapped off at the handle, “‘Tis a pretty rogue!”

“Don’t you think we’d better run?” shiver Dorothy, thinking of the giant’s song.

“Not while I wear these colors!” exclaimed Sir Hokus, proudly touching Dorothy’s hair ribbon, which still adorned his arm. “Come, my good Lion, let us dispatch this braggart and saucy monster.”

“Father!” screamed the giant, making no attempt to move.

“He seems to be frightened, himself,” whispered Dorothy to the Knight. “But whatever is the matter with the Cowardly Lion?”

At that minute, the Cowardly Lion gave a great jerk and began backing with his four feet braced. The piece of giant leg that he had hold of stretched and stretched, and while Sir Hokus and Dorothy stared in amazement, it snapped off and the Cowardly Lion rolled head over paws.

“Taffy!” roared the Cowardly Lion, sitting up and trying to open his jaws, which were firmly stuck together.

“Taffy!” At this, Sir Hokus sprang nimbly on the giant’s leg, ran up his chest, and perched bravely on his peppermint collar.

“Surrender, Knave!” he demanded threateningly. Dorothy, seeing she could do nothing to help the Cowardly Lion, followed. On her way up, she broke off a tiny piece of his coat and found it most delicious chocolate.

“Why, he’s all made of candy!” she cried excitedly.

“Oh, hush!” sobbed the giant, rolling his great sourball eyes. “I’d be eaten in a minute if it were known.”

“You were mighty anxious to eat us a while ago,” said Dorothy, looking longingly at the giant’s coat buttons. They seemed to be large marshmallows.

“Go away!” screamed the giant, shaking so that Dorothy slid into his vest pocket. “No one under forty feet is allowed in this forest!”

Dorothy climbed crossly out of the giant’s pocket. “We didn’t come

because we wanted to," she assured him, wiping the chocolate off her nose.

"Odds bodikins! I cannot fight a great baby like this," sighed Sir Hokus, dodging just in time a great, sugary tear that had rolled down the giant's nose. "He's got to apologize for that song, though."

"Wait!" cried Dorothy suddenly. "I have an idea. If you set us down on the edge of the forest and give us all your vest buttons for lunch, we won't tell anyone you're made of candy. We'll let you go," she called loudly, for the giant had begun to sob again.

"Won't you? Will you?" sniffed the foolish giant.

"Never sing that song again!" commanded the Knight sternly.

"No, Sir," answered the giant meekly. "Did your dog chew much of my leg, Sir?" Then, before Dorothy or Sir Hokus had time to way a word, they were snatched up in sticky fingers and next minute were dropped with a thump in a large field of daisies.

"Oh!" spluttered Dorothy as the giant made off on his taffy legs. "Oh, we've forgotten the Cowardly Lion!" But at that minute, the giant reappeared, and the lion was dropped beside them.

"What's this? What's this?" growled the Cowardly Lion, looking around wildly.

"We got him to lift us out of the forest," explained Dorothy. "Have you swallowed the taffy?" The lion was still dizzy from his ride and only shook his head feebly.

Sir Hokus sighed and sat heavily down on a large rock. "There is no sort of honor, methinks, in overcoming a candy giant," he observed, looking wistfully at the plume still pinned to Dorothy's dress. "Ah, had it but been a proper fight!"

"You didn't know he was candy. I think you were just splendid." Jumping up, Dorothy fastened the plume in the Knight's helmet. "And you're talking just beautifully, more like a Knight every minute," she added with conviction. Sir Hokus tried not to look pleased.

"Give me a meat enemy! My teeth ache yet! First singing, then candy-leg pulling! Gr-ugh! What next?" growled the Cowardly Lion.

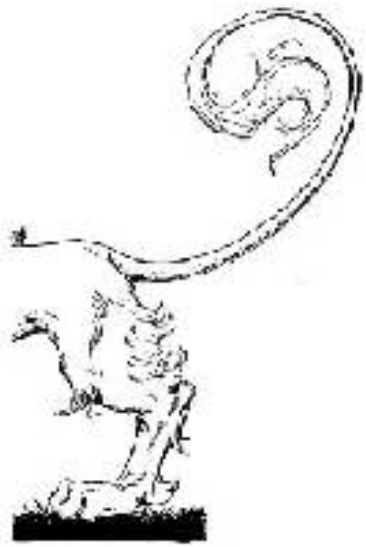
"Why, lunch, if you feel like eating," said Dorothy, beginning to give out the vest buttons which the giant had obediently ripped off and left for them. They *were* marshmallows, the size of pie plates, and Dorothy and Sir Hokus found them quite delicious. The Cowardly Lion, however, after a doubtful sniff and sneeze from the powdered sugar, declined and went off to find something more to his taste.

"We had better take some of these along," said Dorothy when she and Sir Hokus had eaten several. "We may need them later."

“Everything is yellow, so we must be in the Winkie Country,” announced the Cowardly Lion, who had just returned from his lunch. “There’s a road, too.”

“Mayhap it will take us to the jeweled city of your gracious Queen.” Sir Hokus shaded his eyes and stared curiously at the long lane stretching invitingly ahead of them.

“Well, anyway, we’re out of the forest and Pokes, and maybe we’ll meet someone who will tell us about the Scarecrow. Come on!” cried Dorothy gaily. “I think we’re on the right track this time.”



CHAPTER 12

DOROTHY AND SIR HOKUS COME TO FIX CITY

The afternoon went pleasantly for the three travelers. The road was wide and shady and really seemed a bit familiar. Dorothy rode comfortably on the Cowardly Lion's back and to pass the time told Sir Hokus all about Oz. He was particularly interested in the Scarecrow.

"Grammercy! He should be knighted!" he exclaimed, slapping his knee, as Dorothy told how the clever straw man had helped outwit the Gnome King when that wicked little rascal had tried to keep them prisoners in his underground kingdom.

"But, go to! Where is the gallant man now?" The Knight sobered quickly. "Mayhap in need of a strong arm! Mayhap at the mercy of some terrible monster!"

"Oh, I hope not!" cried Dorothy, dismayed at so dark a picture. "Why, oh why, did he bother about his family tree?"

"Trust the Scarecrow to take care of himself," said the Cowardly Lion in a gruff voice. Nevertheless, he quickened his steps. "The sooner we reach the Emerald City, the sooner we'll know where he is!"

The country through which they were passing was beautiful, but quite deserted. About five o'clock, they came to a clear little stream, and after Dorothy and Sir Hokus had washed their faces and the Cowardly Lion had taken a little plunge, they all felt refreshed. Later they came to a fine pear orchard, and as no one was about they helped themselves generously.

The more Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion saw of Sir Hokus, the fonder of him they grew. He was so kind-hearted and so polite.

"He'll be great company for us back in the Emerald City," whispered the Cowardly Lion as the Knight went off to get Dorothy a drink from a little spring. "That is, if he forgets this grammercy, bludgeon stuff."

"I think it sounds lovely," said Dorothy, "and he's remembering more of it all the time. But I wonder why there are no people here. I do hope we meet some before night." But no person did they meet. As it grew darker, Sir Hokus' armor began to creak in a quite frightful manner. Armor is not meant for walking, and the poor Knight was stiff and tired, but he made no complaint.

"Need oiling, don't you?" asked the Cowardly Lion, peering anxiously at him through the gloom.

"Joints in my armor a bit rusty," puffed Sir Hokus, easing one foot and then the other. "Ah, had I my good horse!" He expressively waved a piece of the giant's button at which he had been nibbling.

“Better climb up behind Dorothy,” advised the Cowardly Lion, but Sir Hokus shook his head, for he knew the lion was tired, too.

“I’ll manage famously. This very night I may find me a steed!”

“How?” asked the lion with a yawn.

“If I sleep beneath these trees, I may have a Knight mare,” chuckled Sir Hokus triumphantly.

“Br-rrr!” roared the Cowardly Lion while Dorothy clapped her hands. But they were not to sleep beneath the trees after all, for a sudden turn in the road brought them right to the gates of another city. They knew it must be a city because a huge, lighted sign hung over the gate.

“Fix City,” read Dorothy. “What a funny name!”

“Maybe they can fix us up,” rumbled the lion, winking at Sir Hokus.

“Perchance we shall hear news of the valiant Scarecrow!” cried the Knight, and limping forward he thumped on the gate with his mailed fist. Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion pressed close behind him and waited impatiently for someone to open the gate.

A bell rang loud back in the town. The next instant, the gates flew open so suddenly that the three adventurers were flung violently on their faces.

“Out upon them!” blustered Sir Hokus, getting up stiffly and running to help Dorothy. “What way is this to welcome strangers?” He pulled the little girl hastily to her feet, then they all ran forward, for the gates were swinging shut again.

It was almost as light as day, for lanterns were everywhere, but strangely enough they seemed to dart about like huge fireflies, and Dorothy ducked involuntarily as a red one bobbed down almost in her face. Then she gasped in real earnest and caught hold of Sir Hokus.

“Uds daggers!” wheezed the Knight. Two large bushes were running down the path, and right in front of Dorothy the larger caught the smaller and began pulling out its leaves.

“Leave off! Leave off!” screamed the little bush.

“That’s what I’m doing,” said the big bush savagely. “There won’t be a leaf on when I get through with you.”

“Unhand him, villain!” cried Sir Hokus, waving his sword at the large bush. The two bushes looked up in surprise, and when they saw Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion and Sir Hokus, they fell into each other’s branches and burst into the most uproarious laughter.

“My dear Magnolia, this is rich! Oh, dear fellow, wait till Sit sees this; he will be convulsed!” Quite forgetting their furious quarrel, the two went rollicking down the path together, stopping every few minutes to look back and laugh at the three strangers.

“Is this usual?” asked Sir Hokus, looking quite dazed.

“I never heard of bushes talking or running around, but I confess I’m a few centuries behind times!”

“Neither did I!” exclaimed Dorothy. “But then — almost anything’s likely to happen in Oz.”

“If these lanterns don’t look out something will happen. I’ll break ‘em to bits,” growled the Cowardly Lion, who had been dodging half a dozen at once.

“How would we look — out?” sniffed one, flying at Dorothy.

“You could light out — or go out,” giggled the little girl.

“We never go out unless we’re put out,” cried another, but as the Cowardly Lion made a few springs, they flew high into the air and began talking indignantly among themselves. By this time, the three had become accustomed to the changing lights.

“I wonder where the people are,” said Dorothy, peering down a wide avenue. “There don’t seem to be any houses. Oh, look!”

Three tables set for dinner with the most appetizing viands were walking jauntily down the street, talking fluent china.

“There must be people!” cried Dorothy.

“One dinner for each of us,” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, licking his chops. “Come on!”

“Perchance they will invite us. If we follow the dinners, we’ll come to the diners,” said Sir Hokus mildly.

“Right — as usual.” The Cowardly Lion looked embarrassed, for he had intended pouncing on the tables without further ceremony.

“Hush! Let’s go quietly. If they hear us, they may run and upset the dishes,” warned Dorothy. So the three walked softly after the dinner tables, their curiosity about the people of Fix growing keener at every step. Several chairs, a sofa and a clothes tree rushed past them, but as Dorothy said later to Ozma, after talking bushes, nothing surprised them. The tables turned the corner at the end of the avenue three abreast, and the sight that greeted Dorothy and her comrades was strange indeed. Down each side of a long street as far as they could see stood rows and rows of people. Each one was in the exact center of a chalked circle, and they were so still that Dorothy thought they must be statues.

But no sooner had the three tables made their appearance than bells began ringing furiously all up and down the street, and dinner tables and chairs came running from every direction. All the inhabitants of Fix City looked alike. They had large, round heads, broad placid faces, double chins, and no waists whatever. Their feet were flat and about three times as long as the longest you have ever seen. The women wore plain Mother Hubbard dresses and straw sailor hats, and the men gingham suits.

While the three friends were observing all this, the tables had been taking their places. One stopped before each Fix, and the chairs, after much bumping and quarreling, placed themselves properly. At a signal from the Fix in the center, the whole company sat down without so much as moving their feet. Dorothy, Sir Hokus and the Cowardly Lion had been too interested to speak, but at this minute a whole flock of the mischievous lanterns clustered over their heads, and at the sudden blare of light the whole street stopped eating and stared.

"Oh!" cried the Fix nearest them, pointing with his fork, "Look at the runabouts!"

"This way, please! This way, please! Don't bark your shins. Don't take any more steps than you can help!" boomed an important voice from the middle of the street. So down the center marched the three, feeling — as the Cowardly Lion put it — exactly like a circus.

"Stop! Names, please!" The Fix next to the center put up his knife commandingly. Sir Hokus stepped forward with a bow:

"Princess Dorothy of Oz, the Cowardly Lion of Oz."

“And Sir Hokus of Pokes,” roared the Lion as the Knight modestly stepped back without announcing himself.

“Sir Pokus of Hoax, Howardly Kion of Boz, and Little Girl Beginning with D,” bellowed the Fix, “meet His Royal Highness, King Fix It, and the noble Fixitives.”

“Little Girl Beginning with D! That’s too long,” complained the King, who, with the exception of his crown, looked like all the rest of them, “I’ll leave out the middle. What do you want, Little With D?”

“My name is Dorothy, and if your Highness could give us some dinner and tell us something about the Scarecrow and — ”

“One thing at a time, please,” said the King reprovingly. “What does Poker want, and Boz? Have they anything to spend?”

“Only the night, an’ it please your Gracious Highness,” said Sir Hokus with his best bow.

“It doesn’t please me especially,” said the King, taking a sip of water. “And there! You’ve brought up another question. How do you want to spend it?”

He folded his hands helplessly on the table and looked appealingly at the Fix next to him. “How am I to settle all these questions, Sticken? First they come running around like crazy chairs, and — ”

“You might ring for a settle,” suggested Sticken, looking curiously at Sir Hokus. The King leaned back with a sigh of relief, then touched a bell. There were at least twenty bells set on a high post at his right hand, and all of the Fixes seemed to have similar bell posts.

“He’s talking perfect nonsense,” said Dorothy angrily. The Cowardly Lion began to roll his eyes ominously.

“Let me handle this, my dear. I’m used to Kings,” whispered Sir Hokus. “Most of ‘em talk nonsense. But if he grows wroth, we’ll have all the furniture in the place around our ears. Now just — ”

Bump! Sir Hokus and Dorothy sat down quite suddenly. The settle had arrived and hit them smartly behind the knees. The Cowardly Lion dodged just in time and lay down with a growl beside it.

“Now that you’re settled,” began the King in a resigned voice, “we might try again. What is your motto?”

This took even Sir Hokus by surprise, but before he could answer, the King snapped out:

“Come late and stay early! How’s that?”

“Very good,” said Sir Hokus with a wink at Dorothy.

“Next time, don’t come at all,” mumbled Sticken Plaster, his mouth full of biscuit.

“And you wanted?” the King asked uneasily.

“Dinner for three,” said the Knight promptly and with another bow.

“Now that’s talking.” The King looked admiringly at Sir Hokus. “This Little With D had matters all tangled up. One time at a thing! That’s my motto!”

Leaning over, the King pressed another button. By this time, the Fixes had lost interest in the visitors and went calmly on with their dinners. Three tables came pattering up, and the settle drew itself up of its own accord. Dorothy placed the Cowardly Lion’s dinner on the ground, and then she and Sir Hokus enjoyed the first good meal they had had since they left Pokes. They were gradually becoming used to their strange surroundings.

“You ask him about the Scarecrow,” begged Dorothy. Everybody had finished, and the tables were withdrawing in orderly groups. The King was leaning sleepily back in his chair.

“Ahem,” began the Knight, rising stiffly, “has your Majesty seen aught of a noble Scarecrow? And could your Supreme Fixity tell us aught — ”

The King’s eyes opened. “You’re out of turn,” he interrupted crossly. “We’re only to the second question. How will you spend the night?”

“In sleep,” answered Sir Hokus promptly, “if your Majesty permits.”

“I do,” said the King solemnly. “That gets me out of entertaining. Early to bed and late to rise, that’s my motto. Next! It’s your turn,” he added irritably as Sir Hokus did not immediately answer.

“Have you seen aught of the noble Scarecrow?” asked Sir Hokus, and all of them waited anxiously for the King’s reply.

“I don’t know about *the* Scarecrow. I’ve seen *a* Scarecrow, and a sensible chap he was, hanging still like a reasonable person and letting chairs and tables chase themselves ‘round.”

“Where was he?” asked Sir Hokus in great agitation.

“In a picture,” said the King. “Wait, I’ll ring for it.”

“No use,” said the Knight in a disappointed voice. “We’re looking for a man.”

“Would you mind telling me why you are all so still, and why all your furniture runs around?” asked Dorothy, who was growing a little restless.

“You forget where you are, and you’re out of turn. But I’ll overlook it this once,” said the King. “Have you ever noticed, Little With D, that furniture lasts longer than people?”

“Why, yes,” admitted Dorothy.

“Well, there you are!” King Fix Sit folded his hands and regarded her complacently. “Here we manage things better. We stand still and let the furniture run around and wear itself out. How does it strike you?”

“It seem sensible,” acknowledged Dorothy. “But don’t you ever grow tired of standing still?”

“I’ve heard of growing hair and flowers and corn, but never of growing tired. What is it?” asked Sticken Plaster, leaning toward Dorothy.

“I think she’s talked enough,” said the King, closing his eyes.

Sir Hokus had been staring anxiously at the King for some time. Now he came close to the monarch’s side, and standing on tiptoe whispered hoarsely: “Hast any dragons here?”

“Did you say wagons?” asked the King, opening his eyes with a terrible yawn.

“Dragons!” hissed the Knight.

“Never heard of ‘em,” said the King. The Cowardly Lion chuckled behind his whiskers, and Sir Hokus in great confusion stepped back.

“What time is it?” demanded the King suddenly. He touched a bell, and next minute a whole company of clocks came running down the street. The big ones pushed the little ones, and a grandfather clock ran so fast that it tripped over a cobblestone and fell on its face, which cracked all the way across.

“You’ve plenty of time; why don’t you take it?” called the King angrily, while two clothes trees helped the clock to its feet.

“They’re all different,” giggled Dorothy, nudging the Cowardly Lion. Some pointed to eight o’clock, some to nine, and others to half past ten.

“Why shouldn’t they be different?” asked Sticken haughtily. “Some run faster than others!”

“Pass the time, please,” said the King, looking hard at Dorothy.

“The lazy lump!” growled the Cowardly Lion. But Dorothy picked up the nearest little clock and handed it to King Fix Sit.

“I thought so,” yawned the King, pointing at the clock. At this, everybody began ringing bells till Dorothy was obliged to cover her ears. In an instant, the whole street was filled with beds, “rolling up just as if they were taxis,” laughed Dorothy to Sir Hokus. The Knight smiled faintly, but as he had never seen a taxi, he could not appreciate Dorothy’s remark.

“Here come your beds,” said the King shortly. “Tell them to take you around the corner. I can’t abide snoring.”

“I don’t snore, thank you,” said Dorothy angrily, but the King had stepped into his bed and drawn the curtains tight.

“We might as well go to bed, I ‘spose,” said the little girl. “I’m so tired!”

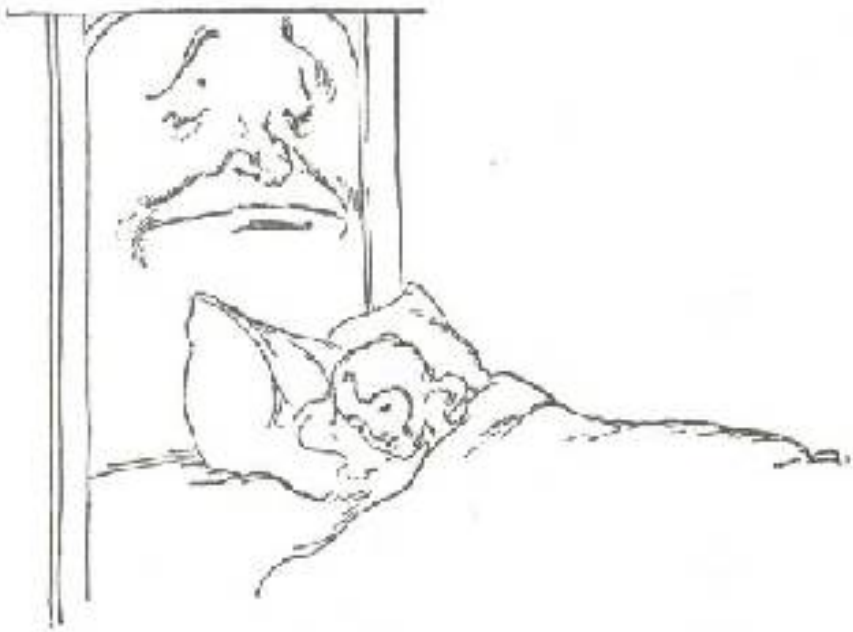
The three beds were swaying restlessly in the middle of the street. They were tall, four-post affairs with heavy chintz hangings. Dorothy chose the blue one, and Sir Hokus lifted her up carefully and then went off to catch his

bed, which had gotten into an argument with a lamppost. When he spoke to it sharply, it left off and came trotting over to him. The Cowardly Lion, contrary to his usual custom, leaped into his bed, and soon the three four-posters were walking quietly down the street, evidently following the King's instructions.

Dorothy slipped off her shoes and dress and nestled comfortably down among the soft covers. "Just like sleeping in a train," she thought drowsily. "What a lot I shall have to tell the Scarecrow and Ozma when I get home."

"Good night!" said the bed politely.

"Good night!" said Dorothy, too nearly asleep to even think it strange for a bed to talk. "Good night!"



CHAPTER 13

DANCING BEDS AND THE ROADS THAT UNROLLED

"It must be a shipwreck," thought Dorothy, sitting up in alarm. She seemed to be tossing about wildly.

"Time for little girls to get up," grumbled a harsh voice that seemed to come from the pillows.

Dorothy rubbed her eyes. One of the bedposts was addressing her, and the big four-poster itself was dancing a regular jig.

"Oh, stop!" cried Dorothy, holding on to the post to keep from bouncing out.

"Can't you see I'm awake?"

"Well, I go off duty now, and you'll have to hurry," said the bed sulkily. "I'm due at the lecture at nine."

"Lecture?" gasped Dorothy.

"What's so queer about that?" demanded the bed coldly. "I've got to keep well posted, haven't I? I belong to a polished set, I do. Hurry up, little girl, or I'll throw you out."

"I'm glad my bed doesn't talk to me in this impertinent fashion," thought Dorothy, slipping into her dress and combing her hair with her side comb. "Imagine being ordered about by a bed! I wonder if Sir Hokus is up." Parting the curtains, she jumped down, and the bed, without even saying goodbye, took itself off.

Sir Hokus was sitting on a stile, polishing his armor with a pillowslip he had taken from his bed, and the Cowardly Lion was lying beside him lazily thumping his tail and making fun of the passing furniture.

"Have you had breakfast?" asked Dorothy, joining her friends.

"We were waiting for your Ladyship," chuckled the Cowardly Lion. "Would you mind ordering two for me, Hokus? I find one quite insufficient."

Sir Hokus threw away the pillowslip, and talking cheerfully they walked toward King Fix Sit's circle. The beds had been replaced by breakfast tables, and the whole street was eating busily.

"Good morning, King," said Sir Hokus. "Four breakfasts, please."

The king rang a bell four times without looking up from his oatmeal. Seeing that he did not wish to be disturbed, the three waited quietly for their tables.

"In some ways," said Dorothy, contentedly munching a hot roll, "in some ways this is a very comfortable place."

"In sooth 'tis that," mumbled Sir Hokus, his mouth full of baked apple. As for the Cowardly Lion, he finished his two breakfasts in no time. "And now,"

said Sir Hokus as the tables walked off, “let us continue our quest. Could’st tell us the way to the Emerald City, my good King Fix?”

“If you go, go away. And if you stay, stay away. That’s my motto,” answered King Fix shortly. “I can’t have people running around here like common furniture,” he added in a grieved voice. All the Fix Its nodded vigorously.

“Let them take their stand or their departure,” said Sticken Plaster firmly.

The King felt in his pocket and brought out three pieces of chalk. “Go to the end of the street. Choose a place and draw your circle. In five minutes you will find it impossible to move out of the circle, and you will be saved all this unnecessary motion.”

“But we don’t want to come to a standstill,” objected Dorothy.

“No, by my good sword!” spluttered the Knight, glaring around nervously. Then, seeing the King looked displeased, he made a low bow. “If your Highness could graciously direct us out of the city — ”

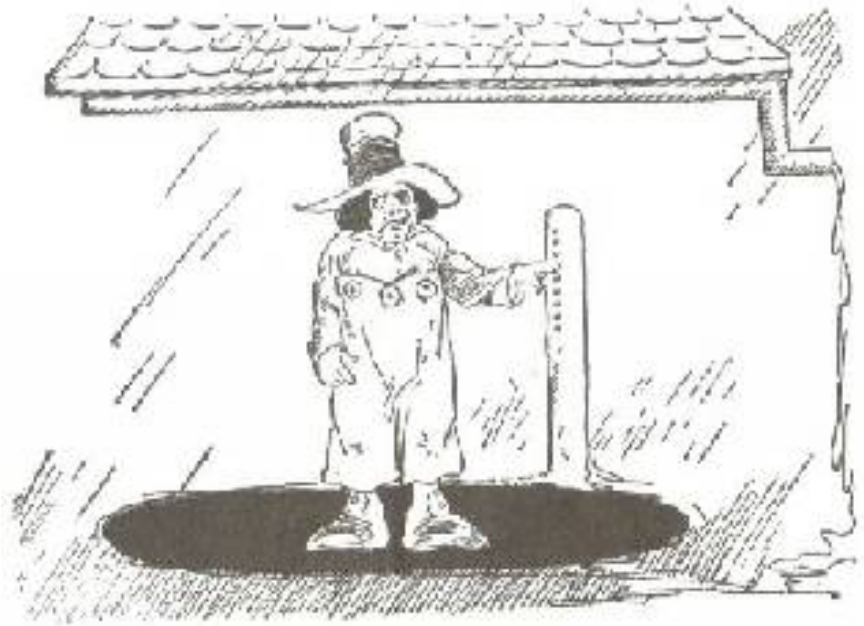
“Buy a piece of road and go where it takes you,” snapped the King.

Seeing no more was to be got out of him, they started down the long street.

“I wonder what they do when it rains?” said Dorothy, looking curiously at the solemn rows of people.

“Call for roofs, silly!” snapped a Fix, staring at her rudely. “If you would spend your time thinking instead of walking, you’d know more.”

“Go to, and swallow a gooseberry!” roared the Knight, waving his sword at the Fix, and Dorothy, fearing an encounter, begged him to come on, which he did — though with many backward glances.



Fix City seemed to consist of one long street, and they had soon come to the very end.

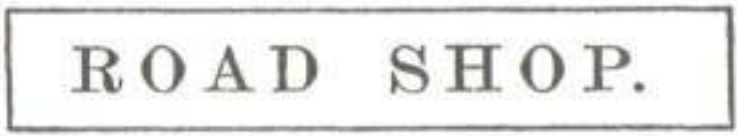
"Uds daggers!" gasped Sir Hokus.

"Great palm trees," roared the Cowardly Lion.

As for Dorothy, she could do nothing but stare. The street ended surely enough, and beyond there was nothing at all. That is, nothing but air.

"Well," said the Cowardly Lion, backing a few paces, "this is a pretty fix."

"Glad you like it," said a wheezy voice. The three travelers turned in surprise. A huge Fix was regarding them with interest. His circle, which was the last in the row, was about twenty times as large as the other circles, and on the edge stood a big sign:'



"Don't you remember, the King said something about buying a road," said Dorothy in an excited undertone to the Knight.

"Can'st direct us to a road, my good man?" asked Sir Hokus with a bow. The Fix jerked his thumb back at the sign. "What kind of a road to you

want?" he asked hoarsely.

"A road that will take us back to the Emerald City, please," said Dorothy.

"I can't guarantee anything like that," declared the Fix, shaking his head.

"Our roads go where they please, and you'll have to go where they take you. Do you want to go on or off?"

"On," shivered the Cowardly Lion, looking with a shudder over the precipice at the end of the street.

"What kind of a road will you have? Make up your minds, please. I am busy."

"What kind of roads have you?" asked Dorothy timidly. It was her first experience at buying roads, and she felt a bit perplexed.

"Sunny, shady, straight, crooked, and cross-roads," snapped the Fix.

"We wouldn't want a cross one," said Dorothy positively. "Have you any with trees at both sides and water at the end?"

"How many yards?" asked the Fix, taking a pair of shears as large as himself off a long counter beside him.

"Five miles," said Sir Hokus as Dorothy looked confused. "That ought to take us somewhere!"

The Fix rang one of the bells in the counter. The next minute, a big trap door in the ground opened, and a perfectly huge roll bounced out at his feet.

"Get on," commanded the Fix in such a sharp tone that the three jumped to obey. Holding fast to Sir Hokus, Dorothy stepped on the piece of road that had already unrolled. The Cowardly Lion, looking very anxious, followed. No sooner had they done so than the road gave a terrific leap forward that stretched the three flat upon their backs and started unwinding from its spool at a terrifying speed. As it unrolled, tall trees snapped erect on each side and began laughing derisively at the three travelers huddled together in the middle.

"G-g-glad we only took five miles," stuttered Dorothy to the Knight, whose armor was rattling like a Ford.

The Cowardly Lion had wound his tail around a tree and dug his claws into the road, for he had no intention of falling off into nothingness. As for the road, it snapped along at about a mile a minute, and before they had time to grow accustomed to this singular mode of travel, it gave a final jump that sent them circling into the air, and began rapidly winding itself up.

Down, down, down whirled Dorothy, falling with a resounding splash into a broad stream of water. Then down, down, down again, almost to the bottom.

"Help!" screamed Dorothy as her head rose above water, and she began striking out feebly. But the fall through the air had taken all her breath.

"What do you want?" A thin, neat little man was watching her anxiously from the bank, making careful notes in a book that he held in one hand.

"Help! Save me!" choked Dorothy, feeling herself going down in the muddy stream again.

"Wait! I'll look it up under the 'H's," called the little man, making a trumpet of his hands. "Are you an island? An island is a body of land entirely surrounded by water, but this seems to be a some-body," Dorothy heard him mutter as he whipped over several pages of his book. "Sorry," he called back, shaking his head slowly, "but this is the wrong day. I only save lives on Monday."

"Stand aside, Mem, you villain!" A second little man exactly like the first except that he was exceedingly untidy plunged into the stream.

"It's no use," thought Dorothy, closing her eyes, for he had jumped in far below the spot where she had fallen and was making no progress whatever. The waters rushed over her head the second time. Then she felt herself being dragged upward.

When she opened her eyes, the Cowardly Lion was standing over her. "Are you all right?" he rumbled anxiously. "I came as soon as I could. Fell in way upstream. Seen Hokus?"

"Oh, he'll drown," cried Dorothy, forgetting her own narrow escape. "He can't swim in that heavy armor!"

"Never fear, I'll get him," puffed the Cowardly Lion, and without waiting to catch his breath he plunged back into the stream. The little man who only saved lives on Monday now approached timidly. "I'd like to get a statement

from you, if you don't mind. It might help me in the future."

"You might have helped me in the present," said Dorothy, wringing out her dress. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I'll make a note of that," said the little man earnestly. "But how did you feel when you went down?" He waited, his pencil poised over the little book.

"Go away," cried Dorothy in disgust.

"But my dear young lady — "

"I'm not your dear young lady. Oh, dear, why doesn't the Cowardly Lion come back?"

"Go away, Mem." The second little man, dripping wet, came up hurriedly.

"I was only trying to get a little information," grumbled Mem sulkily.

"I'm sorry I couldn't swim faster," said the wet little man, approaching Dorothy apologetically.

"Well, thank you for trying," said Dorothy. "Is he your brother? And could you tell me where you are? You're dressed in yellow, so I 'spose it must be somewhere in the Winkie Country."

"Right in both cases," chuckled the little fellow. "My name is Ran and his name is Memo." He jerked his thumb at the retiring twin. "Randum and Memo — see?"

"I think I do," said Dorothy, half closing her eyes. "Is that why he's always taking notes?"

“Exactly,” said Ran. “I do everything at Random, and he does everything at memorandum.”

“It must be rather confusing,” said Dorothy. Then as she caught sight of the Cowardly Lion dragging Sir Hokus, she jumped up excitedly. Ran, however, took one look at the huge beast and then fled, calling for Mem at the top of his voice. And that is the last Dorothy saw of these singular twins.

The Lion dropped Sir Hokus in a limp heap. When Dorothy unfastened his armor, gallons of water rushed out.

“Sho good of — of — you,” choked the poor Knight, trying to straighten up.

“Save your breath, old fellow,” said the Cowardly Lion, regarding him affectionately.

“Oh, why did I ask for water on the end of the road?” sighed Dorothy. “But, anyway, we’re in some part of the Winkie Country.”

Sir Hokus, though still spluttering, was beginning to revive. “Yon noble bheast shall be knighted. Uds daggers! That’s the shecond time he’s shaved my life!” Rising unsteadily, he tottered over to the Lion and struck him a sharp blow on the shoulder. “Rishe, Shir Cowardly Lion,” he cried hoarsely, and fell headlong, and before Dorothy or the lion had recovered from their surprise he was fast asleep, mumbling happily of dragons and bludgeons.

“We’ll have to wait till he gets rested,” said Dorothy. “And until I get dry.” She began running up and down, then stopped suddenly before the Lion.

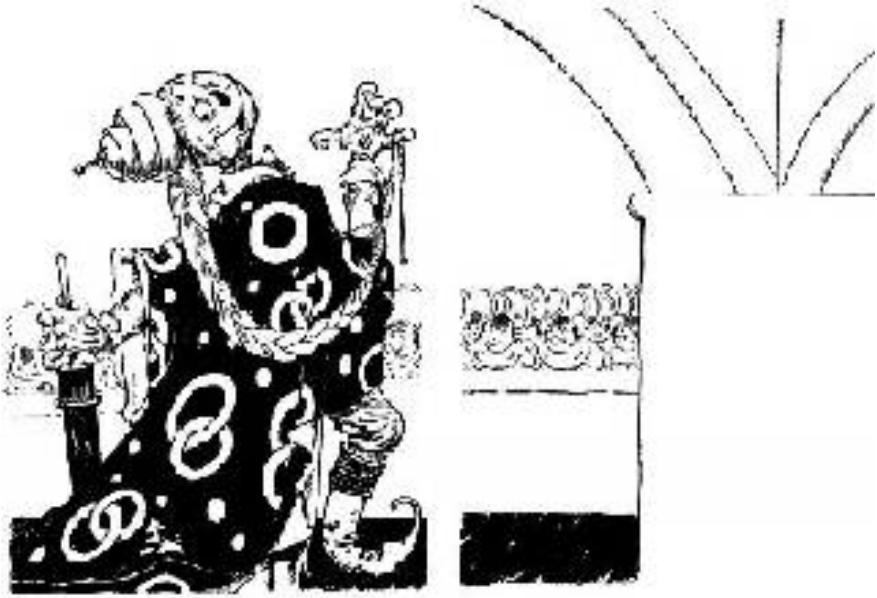
“And there’s something else for Professor Wogglebug to put in his book, Sir Cowardly Lion.”

“Oh, that!” mumbled the Cowardly Lion, looking terribly embarrassed. “Whoever heard of a Cowardly Knight? Nonsense!”

“No, it isn’t nonsense,” said Dorothy stoutly. “You’re a knight from now on. Won’t the Scarecrow be pleased?”

“If we ever find him,” sighed the Lion, settling himself beside Sir Hokus.

“We will,” said Dorothy gaily. “I just feel it.”



CHAPTER 14

SONS AND GRANDSONS GREET THE SCARECROW

Although the Scarecrow had been on Silver Island only a few days, he had already instituted many reforms, and thanks to his cleverness the people were more prosperous than ever before. Cheers greeted him wherever he went, and even old Chew Chew was more agreeable and no longer made bitter remarks to Happy Toko. The Scarecrow himself, however, had four new wrinkles and was exceedingly melancholy. He missed the carefree life in Oz, and every minute that he was not ruling the island he was thinking about his old home and dear, jolly comrades in the Emerald City.

"I almost hope they will look in the Magic Picture and wish me back again," he mused pensively. "But it is my duty to stay here. I have a family to support." So he resolved to put the best face he could on the matter, and Happy Toko did his utmost to cheer up his royal master. The second morning after the great victory, he came running into the silver throne room in a great state of excitement.

"The honorable Offspring have arriven!" announced Happy, turning a somersault. "Come, ancient and amiable Sir, and gaze upon your sons and grandsons!" The Scarecrow sprang joyously from his silver throne, upsetting a bowl of silver fish and three silver vases. At last a real family! Ever since his arrival, the three Princes and their fifteen little sons had been cruising on the royal pleasure barge, so that the Scarecrow had not caught a glimpse of them.

"This is the happiest moment of my life!" he exclaimed, clasping his yellow gloves and watching the door intently. Happy looked a little uneasy, for he knew the three Princes to be exceedingly haughty and overbearing, but he said nothing, and next minute the Scarecrow's family stepped solemnly into the royal presence.

"Children!" cried the Scarecrow, and with his usual impetuousness rushed forward and flung his arms around the first richly clad Prince.

"Take care! Take care, ancient and honorable papa!" cried the young Silverman, backing away. "Such excitement is not good for one of your advanced years." He drew himself away firmly and, adjusting a huge pair of silver spectacles, regarded the Scarecrow attentively. "Ah, how you have changed!"

"He looks very feeble, Too Fang, but may he live long to rule this flowery island and our humble selves!" said the second Prince, bowing stiffly.

"Do you not find the affairs of state fatiguing, darling papa?" inquired the third Prince, fingering a jeweled chain that hung around his neck.

"I, as your eldest son, shall be delighted to relieve you should you wish to retire. Get back ten paces, you!" he roared at Happy Toko.

The poor Scarecrow had been so taken aback by this cool reception that he just stared in disbelief.

“If the three honorable Princes will retire themselves, I will speak with my grandsons,” he said dryly, bowing in his most royal manner. The three Princes exchanged startled glances. Then, with three low salaams, they retired backward from the hall.

“And now, my dears — !” The Scarecrow looked wistfully at his fifteen silken-clad little grandsons. Their silver hair, plaited tightly into little queues, stood out stiffly on each side of their heads and gave them a very curious appearance. At his first word, the fifteen fell dutifully on their noses. As soon as they were right side up, the Scarecrow, beginning at the end of the row, addressed a joking question to each in his most approved Oz style. But over they went again, and answered merely:

“Yes, gracious Grand-papapapah!” or “No honorable Grandpapapapah!” And the constant bobbing up and down and papahing so confused the poor Scarecrow that he nearly gave up the conversation.

“It’s no use trying to talk to these children,” he wailed in disgust, “they’re so solemn. Don’t you ever laugh?” he cried in exasperation, for he had told them stories that would have sent the Oz youngsters into hysterics.

“It is not permissible for a Prince to laugh at the remarks of his honorable grandparent,” whispered Happy Toko, while the fifteen little Princes banged their heads solemnly on the floor.

“Honorable fiddlesticks!” exclaimed the Scarecrow, slumping back on his throne. “Bring cushions.” Happy Toko ran off nimbly, and soon the fifteen little Princes were seated in a circle at the Scarecrow’s feet. “To prevent prostrations,” said the Scarecrow.

“Yes, old Grandpapapapapah!” chorused the Princes, bending over as far as they could.

“Wait!” said the Scarecrow hastily, “I’ll tell you a story. Once upon a time, to a beautiful country called Oz, which is surrounded on all sides by a deadly desert, there came a little girl named Dorothy. A terrible gale — Well, what’s the matter now?” The Scarecrow stopped short, for the oldest Prince had jerked a book out of his sleeve and was flipping over the pages industriously.

“It is not on the map, great Grand papapapah,” he announced solemnly, and all of the other little Princes shook their heads and said dully, “Not on the map.”

“Not on the map — Oz? Of course it’s not. Do you suppose we want all the humans in creation coming there?” Calming down, the Scarecrow tried to continue his story, but every time he mentioned Oz, the little Princes shook their heads stubbornly and whispered, “Not on the map,” till the usually good-tempered Scarecrow flew into perfect passion.

“Not on the map, you little villains!” he screamed, forgetting they were his grandsons. “What difference does that make? Are your heads solid silver?”

“We do not believe in Oz,” announced the oldest Prince serenely. “There is no such place.”

“No such place as Oz — Happy, do you hear that?” The Scarecrow’s voice fairly crackled with indignation. “Why, I thought everybody believed in Oz!”

“Perhaps your Highness can convince them later,” suggested the Imperial Punster. “This way, offspring.” His Master, he felt, had had enough family for one day. So the fifteen little Princes, with fifteen stiff little bows, took

themselves back to the royal nursery. As for the Scarecrow, he paced disconsolately up and down his magnificent throne room, tripping over his kimona at every other step.

"You're a good boy, Tappy," said the Scarecrow as Happy returned, "but I tell you being a grandparent is not what I thought it would be. Did you hear them tell me right to my face they did not believe in Oz? And my sons — ugh!"

"Fault of their bringing up," said Happy Toko comfortingly. "If your serene Highness would just tell me more of that illustrious country!" Happy knew that nothing cheered the Scarecrow like talking of Oz, and to tell the truth Happy himself never tired of the Scarecrow's marvelous stories. So the two slipped quietly into the palace gardens, and the Scarecrow related for the fourteenth time the story of his discovery by Dorothy and the story of Ozma, and almost forgot that he was an Emperor.

"Your Highness knows the history of Oz by heart," said Happy admiringly as the Scarecrow paused.

"I couldn't do that," said the Scarecrow gently, "for you see, Happy, I have no heart."

"Then I wish we all had none!" exclaimed Happy Toko, rolling up his eyes. The Scarecrow looked embarrassed, so the little Punster threw back his head and sang a song he had been making up while the Scarecrow had been telling his stories:

The Scarecrow was standing alone in a field,
Inviting the crows to keep off,
When the straw in his chest began tickling his vest
And he couldn't resist a loud cough.
The noise that was heard so surprised ev'ry bird,
that the flock flew away in a fright,
But the Scarecrow looked pleased, and he said "If I'd sneezed
It wouldn't have been so polite."

"Ho!" roared the Scarecrow, "You're almost as good at making verses as Scraps, Write that down for me, Tappy. I'd like to show it to her."

"Hush!" whispered Happy, holding up his finger warningly. The Scarecrow turned so suddenly that the silver pigtail pinned to the back of his hat wound itself tightly around his neck. No wonder! On the other side of the hedge the three Princes were walking up and down, conversing in indignant whispers.

"What a horrible shape our honorable Papa has reappeared in. I hear that it never wears out," muttered one. "He may continue just as he is for years and years. How am I ever to succeed him, I'd like to know. Why, he may

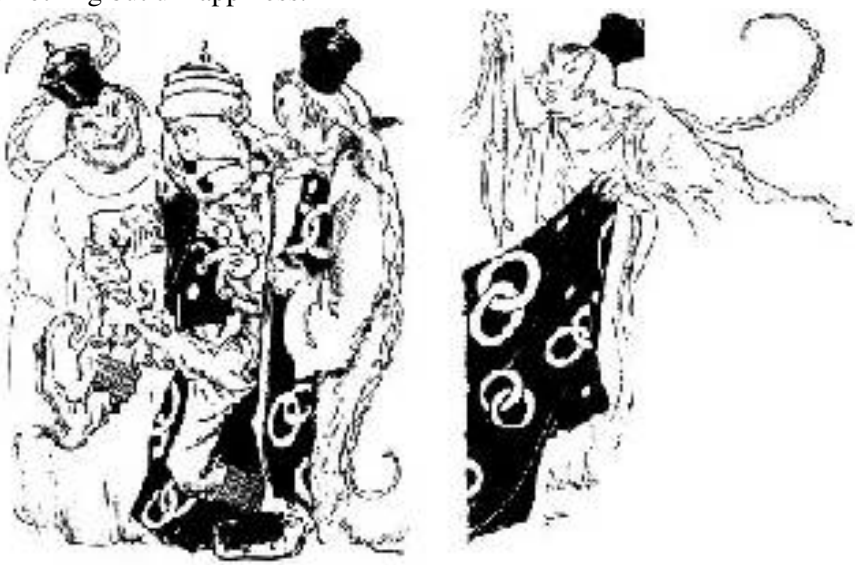
outlive us all!”

“We might throw him into the silver river,” said the second hopefully.

“No use,” choked the third. “I was just talking to the Imperial Soothsayer, and he tells me that no one from this miserable Kingdom of Oz can be destroyed. But I have a plan. Incline your Royal ears — listen.” The voices dropped to such a low whisper that neither Happy nor the Scarecrow could hear one word.

“Treason!” spluttered Happy, making ready to spring through the hedge, but the Scarecrow seized him by the arm and drew him away.

“I don’t believe they like their poor papa,” exclaimed the Scarecrow when they were safely back in the throne room. “I’m feeling older than a Kinkajou. Ah, Happy Oko, why did I ever slide down my family tree? It has brought me nothing but unhappiness.”



CHAPTER 15

THE THREE PRINCES PLOT TO UNDO THE EMPEROR

"Let me help your Imperial Serenity!"

"Bring a cane!"

"Carefully, now!"

The three royal Princes, with every show of affection, were supporting the Scarecrow to the silver bench in the garden where he usually sat during luncheon.

"Are you quite comfortable?" asked the elder. "Here, Happy, you rogue, fetch a scarf for his Imperial Highness. You must be careful, dear Papa Scarecrow. At your age, drafts are dangerous." The rascally Prince wound the scarf about the Scarecrow's neck.

"What do you suppose they are up to?" asked the Scarecrow, staring after the three suspiciously. "Why this sudden devotion? It upsets my Imperial Serenity a lot."

"Trying to make you feel old," grumbled Happy. Several hours had passed since they had overheard the conversation in the garden. The Scarecrow had decided to watch his sons closely and fall in with any plan they suggested so they would suspect nothing. Then, when the time came, he would act. Just what he would do he did not know, but his excellent brains would not, he felt sure, desert him. Happy Toko sat as close to the Scarecrow as he could and scowled terribly whenever the Princes approached, which was every minute or so during the afternoon.

"How is the Scarecrow's celestial old head?"

"Does he suffer from honorable gout?"

"Should they fetch the Imperial Doctor?"

The Scarecrow, who had never thought of age in his whole straw life, became extremely nervous.

Was he really old? Did his head ache? When no one was looking, he felt himself carefully all over. Then something of his old time Oz spirit returned. Seizing the cushion that his eldest son was placing at his back, he hurled it over his head. Leaping from his throne, he began turning handsprings in a careless and sprightly manner.

"Don't you worry about your honorable old papa," chuckled the Scarecrow, winking at Happy Toko. "He's good for a couple of centuries!"

The three Princes stared sourly at this exhibition of youth.

"But your heart," objected the eldest Prince.

"Have none," laughed the Scarecrow. Snatching off the silver cord from around his waist, he began skipping rope up and down the hall. The Princes,

tapping their foreheads significantly, retired, and the Scarecrow, throwing his arm around Happy Toko, began whispering in his ear. He had a plan himself. They would see!

* * * * *

Meanwhile, off in his dark cave in one of the silver mountains, the Grand Gheewizard of the Silver Island was stirring a huge kettle of magic. Every few moments he paused to read out of a great yellow book that he had propped up on the mantle. The fire in the huge grate leaped fiercely under the big, black pot, and the sputtering candles on each side of the book sent creepy shadows into the dark cave. Dark chests, books, bundles of herbs, and heaps of gold and silver were everywhere. Whenever the Gheewizard turned his back, a rheumatic silver-scaled old dragon would crawl toward the fire and swallow a mouthful of coals, until the old Gheewizard caught him in the act and chained him to a ring in the corner of the cave.

"Be patient, little joy of my heart! Our fortune is about to be made," hissed the wizened little man, waving a long iron spoon at the dragon. "You shall have a bucket of red-hot coals every hour and I a silver cap with a tassel. Have not the Royal Princes promised it?" The dragon shuffled about and finally went to sleep, smoking sulkily.

"Is it finished, son of a yellow dog?" Through the narrow opening of the cave, the youngest Prince stuck his head.

"I am working as fast as I can, Honorable Prince, but the elixir must boil yet one more night. Tomorrow, when the sun shines on the first bar of your celestial window, come, and all will be ready."

"Are you sure you have found it?" asked the Prince, withdrawing his head, for the smoking dragon and steam from the kettle made him cough.

"Quite sure," wheezed the Grand Gheewizard, and fell to stirring the kettle with all his might.

* * * * *

The Scarecrow, although busy with trials in the great courtroom of the palace, felt that something unusual was in the air. The Princes kept nodding to one another, and the Grand Chew Chew and General Mugwump had their heads together at every opportunity.

"Something's going to happen, Tappy. I feel it in my straw," whispered the Scarecrow as he finished trying the last case. At that very minute, the Grand Chew Chew arose and held up his hand for silence. Everybody paused in their way to the exits and looked with surprise at the old Silverman.

"I have to announce," said the Grand Chew Chew in a solemn voice, "that the Great and Imperial Chang Wang Woe will tomorrow be restored to his own rightful shape. The Grand Gheewizard of the realm has discovered a

magic formula to break the enchantment and free him from this distressing Scarecrow body. Behold for the last the Scarecrow of Oz. Tomorrow he will be our old and glorious Emperor!"

"Old and glorious?" gasped the Scarecrow, nearly falling from his throne.

"Tappy! I forgot to lock up the wizards. Great Cornstarch! Tomorrow I will be eighty-five years old."

Such cheers greeted the Grand Chew Chew's announcement that no one even noticed the Scarecrow's distress.

"I, also, have an announcement!" cried the eldest Prince, standing up proudly. "To make the celebration of my royal Papa's restoration complete, we have chosen the lovely and charming Orange Blossom for his bride."

"Bride!" gulped the Scarecrow. "But I do not approve of second marriages. I refuse to — "

No one paid the slightest attention to the Scarecrow's remarks.

"Hold my hand, Tappy," sighed the Scarecrow weakly. "It may be your last chance." Then he sat up and stared in good earnest, for the Prince was leading forward a tall, richly clad lady.

"Orange Blossom!" muttered the Scarecrow under his breath. "He means Lemon Peel! Silver grandmother, Tappy!" Orange Blossom was a cross-looking Princess of seventy-five, at least.

"She is a sister of the King of the Golden Islands," whispered General Mugwump. "Of a richness surpassing your own. Let me felicitate your Highness."

"Fan me, Tappy! Fan me!" gasped the Scarecrow. Then he straightened himself suddenly. The time had come for action. He would say nothing to anyone, but that night he would escape and try to find his way back to Oz, family or no family! He bowed graciously to Princess Orange Blossom, to the Grand Chew Chew, and to his sons.

"Let everything be made ready for the ceremony, and may tomorrow indeed bring me to myself," he repeated solemnly. Nothing was talked of that evening but the Emperor's impending marriage and the Grand Gheewizard's discovery. The Scarecrow seemed the least excited person in the palace. Sitting on his throne, he pretended to read the Royal Silver Journal, but he was really waiting impatiently for the courtiers to retire. Finally, when the last one had bowed himself out and only Happy Toko remained in the throne room, the Scarecrow began making his plans.

"It's no use, Tappy," said he, tying up a few little trinkets for Dorothy in a silk handkerchief, "I'd rather be straw than meat. I'd rather be a plain Scarecrow in Oz than Emperor of the Earth! They may be my sons, but all they want is my death. I'm going back to my old friends. I'd rather — ". He

got no farther. A huge slave seized him suddenly from behind, while another caught Happy Toko around his fat little waist.

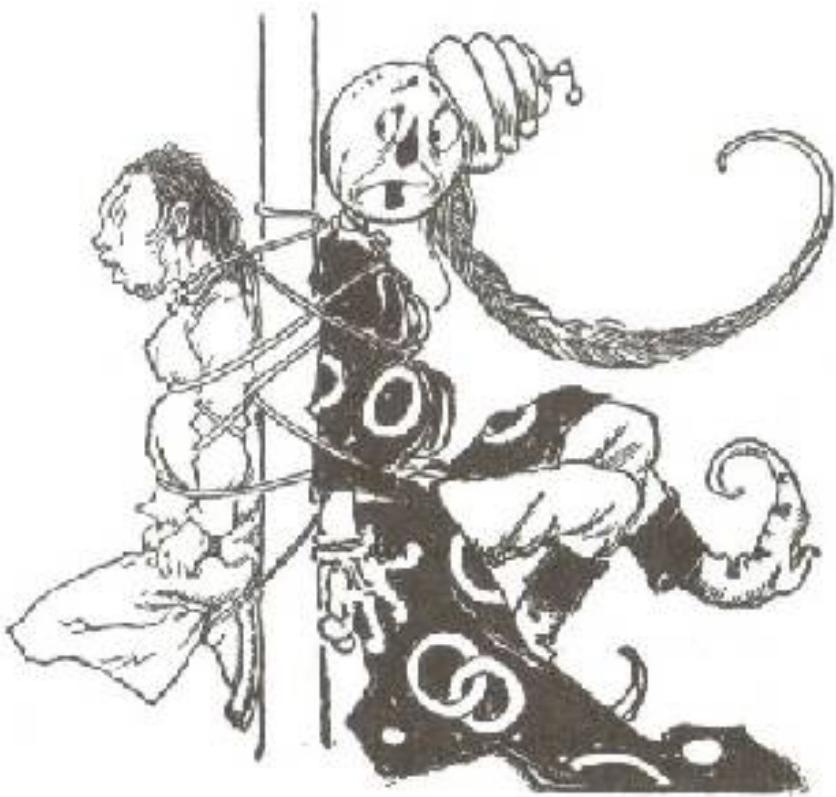
"Tie them fast," said the eldest Prince, smiling wickedly at the Scarecrow. "Here, tie him to the beanstalk. Merely a part of the Grand Gheewizard's formula," he exclaimed maliciously as the struggling Scarecrow was bound securely to his family tree. "Good night, dear papa Scarecrow. Tomorrow you will be your old self again, and in a few short years *I* will be Emperor of the Silver Islands!"

"This rather upsets our plans, eh Tappy?" wheezed the Scarecrow after a struggle with his bonds.

"Pigs! Weasels!" choked Tappy. "What are we to do?"

"Alas!" groaned the Scarecrow. "Tomorrow there will be no Scarecrow in Oz. What will Dorothy and Ozma think? And once I am changed into my old Imperial self, I can never make the journey to the Emerald City. Eighty-six is too old for traveling."

"Has your Majesty forgotten the wonderful brains given to you by the Wizard of Oz?"



“I had — for a moment,” confessed the Scarecrow. “Be quiet, Tappy, while I think.” Pressing his head against the magic beanpole, the Scarecrow thought and thought, harder than he had ever done in the course of his adventurous life, and in the great, silent hall Happy Toko struggled to set himself free.

CHAPTER 16

DOROTHY AND HER GUARDIANS MEET NEW FRIENDS

While all these exciting things were happening to the poor Scarecrow, Dorothy, Sir Hokus and the Cowardly Lion had been having adventures of their own. For three days, they had wandered through a deserted part of the Winkie Country, subsisting largely on berries, sleeping under trees, and looking in vain for a road to lead them back to the Emerald City. On the second day, they had encountered an ancient woodsman, too old and deaf to give them any information. He did, however, invite them into his hut and give them a good dinner and a dozen sandwiches to carry away with them.

"But, oh, for a good old pasty!" sighed Sir Hokus late on the third afternoon as they finished the last of the crumbly sandwiches.

"Do you know," said Dorothy, looking through the straggly fields and woods ahead, "I believe we've been going in the wrong direction again."

"Again!" choked the Cowardly Lion. "You mean still. I've been in a good many parts of Oz, but this — this is the worst."

"Not even one little dragon!" Sir Hokus shook his head mournfully. Then, seeing that Dorothy was tired and discouraged, he pretended to strum on a guitar and sang in his high-pitched voice:

A rusty Knight in steel bedite
And Lady Dot, so fair,
Sir Lion bold, with mane of gold
And might besides to spa — ha — hare!
And might beside to spare!
The dauntless three, a company
Of wit and bravery are,
Who seek the valiant Scarecrow man,
Who seek him near and fa — har — har,
Who seek him near and fa — har!

"Oh, I like that!" cried Dorothy, jumping up and giving Sir Hokus a little squeeze. "Only you should have said trusty Knight."

The Cowardly Lion shook his golden mane. "Let's do a little reconnoitering, Hokus," he said carelessly. He felt he must live up to the song somehow. "Perhaps we'll find a sign."

"I don't believe in signs anymore," laughed Dorothy, "but I'm coming too." Sir Hokus' song had cheered them all, and it wasn't the first time the Knight had helped make the best of a tiresome journey.

"The air seemeth to grow very hot," observed Sir Hokus after they had walked along silently for a time. "Hast noticed it, Sir Cowardly?"

“No, but I’ve swallowed some of it,” coughed the Cowardly Lion, looking suspiciously through the trees.

“I’ll just step forward and see what it is,” said the Knight. As he disappeared, the truth dawned on Dorothy.

“Wait! Wait! Don’t go! Please, please, Sir Hokus, come back, come back!” cried the little girl, running after him as fast as she could.

“What’s the matter?” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, thudding behind her. Then both, coming suddenly out of the woods, gave a terrible scream, which so startled Sir Hokus that he fell over backwards. Just in time, too, for another step would have taken him straight on to the Deadly Desert, which destroys every living thing and keeps all intruders away from Oz.

“What befell?” puffed Sir Hokus, getting to his feet. Naturally, he knew nothing of the poisonous sands.

“You did,” wheezed the Cowardly Lion in an agitated voice.

“Was it a dragon?” asked the Knight, limping toward them hopefully.

“Sit down!” The Cowardly Lion mopped his brow with his tail. “One step on that desert and it would have been one long goodnight.”

“I should say it would!” shuddered Dorothy, and explained to Sir Hokus the deadly nature of the sands. “And do you know what this means?” Dorothy was nearer to tears than even I like to think about. “It means we’ve come in exactly the wrong direction and are farther away from the Emerald City than we were when we started.”

“And seek him near and fa — hah — har,” mumbled Sir Hokus with a very troubled light in his kindly blue eyes.

“And seek him near and far.”

“Fah — har — har! I should say it was,” said the Cowardly Lion bitterly. “But you needn’t sing it.”

“No, I s’pose not. Uds helmets and hauberks! I s’pose not!” The Knight lapsed into a discouraged silence, and all three sat and stared drearily at the stretch of desert before them and thought gloomily of the rough country behind.

“It’s a caravan,” wheezed a hoarse voice.

“I doubt that, Camy, I doubt it very much.” The shrill nasal voices so startled the three travelers that they swung about in astonishment.

“Great dates and deserts!” burst out the Cowardly Lion, jumping up. And on the whole, this exclamation was entirely suitable, for ambling toward them were a long-legged camel and a wobbly-necked dromedary.

“At last! A steed!” cried the Knight, bounding to his feet.

“I doubt that.” The dromedary stopped and looked at him coldly.

“Try me,” said the camel amiably. “I’m more comfortable.”

“I doubt that, too.”

“The doubtful dromedary wept,
As o’er the desert sands he stept,
Association with the sphinx
Has made him doubtful, so he thinks!”

chortled the Knight with his head on one side.

“How did you know?” asked the Dromedary, opening his eyes wide.

“It just occurred to me,” admitted Sir Hokus, clearing his throat modestly.

“I doubt that. Somebody told you,” said the Doubtful Dromedary bitterly.

“Pon my honor,” said Sir Hokus.

“I doubt it, I doubt it very much,” persisted the Dromedary, wagging his head sorrowfully.

“You seem to doubt everything!” Dorothy laughed in spite of herself, and the Dromedary regarded her sulkily.

“He does,” said the Camel. “It makes him very doubtful company. Now, I like to be comfortable and happy, and you can’t be if you’re always doubting things and people and places. Eh, my dear?”

“Where did you comfortable and doubtful parties come from?” asked the Cowardly Lion. “Strangers here?”

“Well, yes,” admitted the Camel, nibbling the branch of a tree. “There was a terrific sandstorm, and after blowing and blowing and blowing, we found ourselves in this little wood. The odd part of it is that you talk in our language. Never knew a two-leg to understand a word of Camelia before.”

“You’re not talking Camelia, you’re talking Ozish,” laughed Dorothy. “All animals can talk here.”

“Well, now, that’s very comfortable, I must say,” sighed the Camel, “and if you’d just tell me where to go, it would be more comfortable still.”

“I doubt that,” snapped the Dromedary. “They’re no caravan.”

“Where do you want to go?” asked the Cowardly Lion, ignoring the Doubtful Dromedary.

“Anywhere, just so we keep moving. We’re used to being told when to start and stop, and life is mighty lonely without our Karwan Bashi,” sighed the Comfortable Camel.

“Why, I didn’t know you smoked!” exclaimed Dorothy in surprise. She thought the camel was referring to a brand of tobacco.

“He means his camel driver,” whispered Sir Hokus, eyeing the soft, pillowed seat on the camel’s back longingly. Besides the seat, great sacks and bales of goods hung from its sides. The Doubtful Dromedary was similarly loaded.

“Goodness!” exclaimed Dorothy. A sudden idea had struck her. “You haven’t anything to eat in those sacks, have you?”

“Plenty, my child — plenty!” answered the Camel calmly.

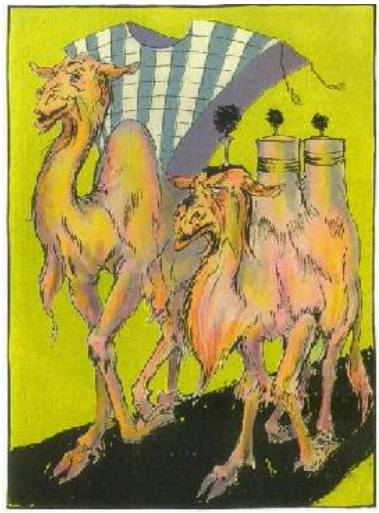
“Three cheers for the Comfortable Camel!” roared the Cowardly Lion, while Sir Hokus, following the camel’s directions, carefully unfastened a large, woven basket from one of the sacks on its side.

“You may be my Karwan Bashi,” announced the Comfortable Camel judiciously as Sir Hokus paused for breath.

“Hear that, Lady Dot?” Sir Hokus swept the camel a bow and fairly beamed with pleasure. Dorothy, meanwhile, had set out an appetizing repast on a small, rocky ledge — a regular feast, it appeared to the hungry travelers. There were loaves of black bread, figs, dates, cheese, and a curious sort of dried meat which the Cowardly Lion swallowed in great quantities.

“Isn’t this cozy?” said Dorothy, forgetting the long, weary way ahead. “My, I’m glad we met you!”

“Very comforting to us, too, my dear,” said the Camel, swaying complacently. “Isn’t it, Doubty?”



"There are some silk cushions in my right-hand saddle sack, but I doubt very much whether you'll like 'em," mumbled the Dromedary gruffly.

"Out with them!" cried Sir Hokus, pouncing on the Doubtful Dromedary, and in a minute each of the party had a cushion and was as snug as possible.

"Could anything have been more fortunate?" exulted the Knight. "We can now resume our journey properly mounted."

"I think I'll ride the Cowardly Lion," said Dorothy, looking uneasily at the high seat on the camel's back. "Let's start before it grows any darker."

They had eaten to heart's content, and now, packing up the remainder of the feast, the little party made ready to start.

Sir Hokus, using the Cowardly Lion as a footstool, mounted the camel, and then Dorothy climbed on her old friend's back, and the little caravan moved slowly through the forest.

"There's a tent in my left-hand saddle sack, but I doubt very much whether you can put it up," said the Doubtful Dromedary, falling in behind the Comfortable Camel. "I doubt it very much indeed."

"How now, what means this doubting?" called Sir Hokus from his perilous seat. "I'll pitch it when the time comes."

"Mind you don't pitch out when the Camel goes!" called the Cowardly Lion, who would have his little joke. Sir Hokus, to tell the truth, was feeling tossed about and dizzy, but he was too polite to mention the fact. As they proceeded, Dorothy told the Comfortable Camel all about the Scarecrow and Oz.

An occasional word jolted down from above told her that the Knight was singing. They had gone possibly a mile when Dorothy pointed in excitement to a road just ahead.

“We must have missed it before! Wait, I’ll see what it’s like.” Jumping down from the Cowardly Lion’s back, she peered curiously at the narrow, tree-lined path. “Why, here’s a sign!”

“What of?” asked the Comfortable Camel, lurching forward eagerly and nearly unseating the Knight.

W I S H W A Y

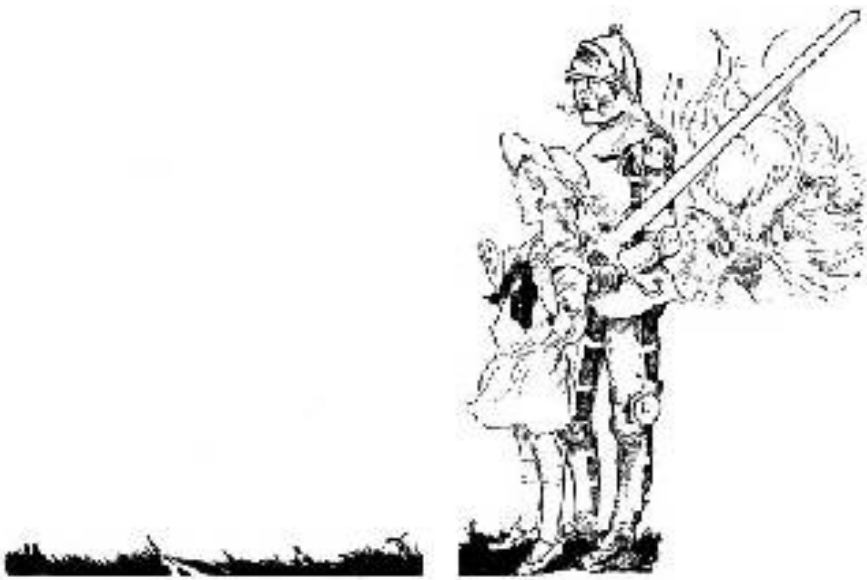
read Dorothy in a puzzled voice.

“Looks like a pretty good road,” said the Comfortable Camel, squinting up its eyes.

“I doubt it, Camy, I doubt it very much,” said the Doubtful Dromedary tremulously.

“What does my dear Karwan Bashi think?” asked the Comfortable Camel, looking adoringly back at the Knight.

“It is unwise to go back when the journey lieth forward,” said the Knight, and immediately returned to his song. So, single file, the little company turned in at the narrow path, the Comfortable Camel advancing with timid steps and the Doubtful Dromedary bobbing his head dubiously.



CHAPTER 17

DOUBTY AND CAMY VANISH INTO SPACE

For a short time, everything went well. Then Dorothy, turning to see how Sir Hokus was getting along, discovered that the Doubtful Dromedary had disappeared.

"Why, where in the world?" exclaimed Dorothy. The Comfortable Camel craned his wobbly neck and, when he saw that his friend was gone, burst into tears. His sobs heaved Sir Hokus clear out of his seat and flung him, helmet first, into the dust.

"Go to!" exploded the Knight, sitting up. "If I were a bird, riding in yon nest would be easier." The last of his sentence ended in a hoarse croak. Sir Hokus vanished, and a great raven flopped down in the center of the road.

"Oh, where is my dear Karwan Bashi? Oh, where is Doubty?" screamed the Comfortable Camel, running around in frenzied circles. "I wish I'd never come on this path!"

"Magic!" gasped Dorothy, clutching the Cowardly Lion's mane. The Comfortable Camel had melted into air before their very eyes.

"I doubt it, I doubt it very much!" coughed a faint voice close to her ear. Dorothy ducked her head involuntarily as a big yellow butterfly settled on the Cowardly Lion's ear.

"Our doubtful friend," whispered the lion weakly. "Oh, be careful, Dorothy dear. We may turn into frogs or something worse any minute."

Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion had had experiences with magic transformations, and the little girl, pressing her fingers to her eyes, tried to think of something to do. The raven was making awkward attempts to fly and cawing "Go to, now!" every other second.

"Oh, I wish dear Sir Hokus were himself again," wailed Dorothy after trying in vain to recall some magic sentences. Presto! The Knight stood before them, a bit breathless from flying, but hearty as ever.

"I see! I see!" said the Cowardly Lion with a little prance. "Every wish you make on this road comes true. Remember the sign: 'Wish Way.' I wish the Comfortable Camel were back. I wish the Doubtful Dromedary were himself again," muttered the Cowardly Lion rapidly, and in an instant the two creatures were standing in the path.

"Uds bodikins! So I did wish myself a bird!" gasped the Knight, rubbing his gauntlets together excitedly.

"There you are! There you are!" cried the Comfortable Camel, stumbling toward him and resting his foolish head on his shoulder. "Dear, dear Karwan Bashi! And Doubty, old fellow, there you are too! Ah, how comfortable this

all is.”

“Not two — one,” wheezed the Doubtful Dromedary. “And Camy, I doubt very much whether I’d care for butterflying. I just happened to wish myself one!”

“Don’t make any more wishes,” said the Cowardly Lion sternly.

“Methinks a proper wish might serve us well,” observed Sir Hokus. He had been pacing up and down in great excitement. “Why not wish — ”

“Oh, stop!” begged Dorothy. “Wait till we’ve thought it all out. Wishing’s awfully particular work!”

“One person better speak for the party,” said the Cowardly Lion. “Now, I suggest — ”

“Oh, be careful!” screamed Dorothy again. “I wish you would all stop wishing!” Sir Hokus looked at her reproachfully. No wonder. At Dorothy’s words, they all found themselves unable to speak. The Doubtful Dromedary’s eyes grew rounder and rounder. For the first time in its life, it was unable to doubt anything.

“Now I’ll have to do it all,” thought Dorothy, and closing her eyes she tried to think of the very best wish for everybody concerned. It was night and growing darker. The Cowardly Lion, the Camel and Dromedary and Sir Hokus peered anxiously at the little girl, wondering what in the world was going to happen. Being wished around is no joke. For five minutes Dorothy thought and thought. Then, standing in the middle of the road, she made her wish in a clear, distinct voice. It was not a very long wish. To be exact, it had only eight words. Eight — short — little words! But stars! No sooner were they out of Dorothy’s mouth than the earth opened with a splintering crash and swallowed up the whole company!

CHAPTER 18

DOROTHY FINDS THE SCARECROW!

The next thing Dorothy knew, she was sitting on the hard floor of a great, dark hall. One lantern burned feebly, and in the dim, silvery light she could just make out the Comfortable Camel scrambling awkwardly to his feet.

"I smell straw," sniffed the Camel softly.

"I doubt very much whether I am going to like this place." The voice of the Doubtful Dromedary came hesitatingly through the gloom.

"By sword and scepter!" gasped the Knight, "Are you there, Sir Cowardly?"

"Thank goodness, they are!" said Dorothy. Wishing other people about is a risky and responsible business. "They're all here, but I wonder where here is." She jumped up, but at a shuffle of feet drew back.

"Pigs! Weasels!" shrilled an angry voice, and a fat little man hurled himself at Sir Hokus, who happened to have fallen in the lead.

"Uds trudgeons and bludgeons and maugre thy head!" roared the Knight, shaking him off like a fly.

"Tappy, Tappy, my dear boy. Caution! What's all this?" At the sound of that dear, familiar voice Dorothy's heart gave a skip of joy, and without stopping to explain she rushed forward.

"Dorothy!" cried the Scarecrow, stepping on his kimona and falling off his silvery throne. "Lights, Tappy! More lights, at once!" But Tappy was too busy backing away from Sir Hokus of Pokes.

"Approach, vassal!" thundered the Knight, who under-stood not a word of Tappy's speech. "Approach! I think I've been insulted!" He drew his sword and glared angrily through the darkness, and Tappy, having backed as far as possible, fell heels over pigtail into the silver fountain. At the loud splash, Dorothy hastened to the rescue.

"They're friends, and we've found the Scarecrow, we've found the Scarecrow!" She seized Sir Hokus and shook him till his armor rattled.

"Tappy! Tappy!" called the Scarecrow. "Where in the world did he pagota?" That's exactly what he said, but to Dorothy it sounded like no language at all.

"Why," she cried in dismay, "it's the Scarecrow, but I can't understand a word he's saying!"

"I think he must be talking Turkey," droned the Comfortable Camel, "or donkey! I knew a donkey once, a very uncomfortable party, I — "

"I doubt it's donkey," put in the Dromedary importantly, but no one paid any attention to the two beasts. For Happy Toko had at last dragged himself

out of the fountain and set fifteen lanterns glowing.

“Oh!” gasped Dorothy as the magnificent silver throne room was flooded with light, “Where are we?”

The Scarecrow had picked himself up, and with outstretched arms came running toward her talking a perfect Niagara of Silver Islandish.

“Have you forgotten your Ozish so soon?” rumbled the Cowardly Lion reproachfully as Dorothy flung her arms around the Scarecrow. The Scarecrow, seeing the Cowardly Lion for the first time, fairly fell upon his neck. Then he brushed his clumsy hand across his forehead.

“Wasn’t I talking Ozish?” he asked in a puzzled voice.

“Oh, now you are!” exclaimed Dorothy. And sure enough, the Scarecrow was talking plain Ozish again. (Which I don’t mind telling you is also plain English.)

The Knight had been watching this little reunion with hardly repressed emotion. Advancing hastily, he dropped on one knee.

“My good sword and lance are ever at thy service, my Lord Scarecrow!” he exclaimed feelingly.

“Who is this impulsive person?” gulped the Scarecrow, staring in undisguised astonishment at the kneeling figure of the Sir Hokus of Pokes.

“He’s my Knight Errant, and he’s taken such good care of me,” explained Dorothy eagerly.

“Splendid fellow,” hissed the Cowardly Lion in the Scarecrow’s other painted ear, “if he does talk odds and ends.”

“Any friend of little Dorothy’s is my friend,” said the Scarecrow, shaking hands with Sir Hokus warmly. “But what I want to know is how you all got here.”

"First tell us where we are," begged the little girl, for the Scarecrow's silver hat and queue filled her with alarm.

"You are on the Silver Island," said the Scarecrow slowly. "And I am the Emperor — or his good-for-nothing spirit — and tomorrow," the Scarecrow glared around wildly, "tomorrow I'll be eighty-five going on eighty-six." His voice broke and ended in a barely controlled sob.

"Doubt that," drawled the Doubtful Dromedary sleepily.

"Eighty-five years old!" gasped Dorothy. "Why, no one in Oz grows any older!"

"We are no longer in Oz." The Scarecrow shook his head sadly. Then, fixing the group with a puzzled stare, he exclaimed, "But how did you get here?"

"On a *wish*," said the Knight in a hollow voice.

"Yes," said Dorothy, "we've been hunting you all over Oz, and at last we came to Wish Way, and I said 'I wish we were all with the Scarecrow,' just like that — and next minute — "

"We fell and fell — and fell — and fell," wheezed the Comfortable Camel.

"And fell — and fell — and fell — and fell," droned the Dromedary, "And — "

"Here you are," finished the Scarecrow hastily, for the Dromedary showed

signs of going on forever.

“Now tell us every single thing that has happened to you,” demanded Dorothy eagerly.

Happy Toko had recognized Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion from the Scarecrow’s description, and he now approached with an arm full of cushions. These he set in a circle on the floor, with one for the Scarecrow in the center, and with a warning finger on his lips placed himself behind his Master.

“Tappy is right!” exclaimed the Scarecrow. “We must be as quiet as possible, for a great danger hangs over me.”

Without more ado, he told them of his amazing fall down the beanstalk; of his adventures on Silver Island; of his sons and grandsons and the Gheewizard’s elixir which would turn him from a lively Scarecrow into an old, old Emperor. All that I have told you, he told Dorothy, up to the very point where his eldest son had bound him to the bean pole and tied up poor, faithful Happy Toko. Happy, it seems, had at last managed to free himself, and they were about to make their escape when Dorothy and her party had fallen into the throne room. The Comfortable Camel and Doubtful Dromedary lis-tened politely at first, but worn out by their exciting adventures, fell asleep in the middle of the story.

Nothing could have exceeded Dorothy’s dismay to learn that the jolly Scarecrow of Oz, whom she had discovered herself, was in reality Chang Wang Woe, Emperor of Silver Island.

“Oh, this spoils everything!” wailed the little girl. (The thought of Oz without the Scarecrow was unthinkable.) “It spoils everything! We were going to adopt you and be your truly family. Weren’t we?”

The Cowardly Lion nodded. “I was going to be your cousin,” he mumbled in a choked voice, “but now that you have a family of your own — ” The lion miserably slunk down beside Dorothy.

Sir Hokus looked fierce and rattled his sword, but he could think of nothing that would help them out of their trouble.

“To-morrow there won’t be any Scarecrow in Oz!” wailed Dorothy. “Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” And the little girl began to cry as if her heart would break.

“Stop! Stop!” begged the Scarecrow, while Sir Hokus awkwardly patted Dorothy on the back. “I’d rather have you for my family any day. I don’t care a Kinkajou for being Emperor, and as for my sons, they are unnatural villains who make my life miserable by telling me how old I am!”

“Just like a poem I once read,” said Dorothy, brightening up:

“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white,

And yet you incessantly stand on your head!
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"That's it, that's it exactly!" exclaimed the Scarecrow as Dorothy finished repeating the verse. "'You are old, Father Scarecrow!' That's all I hear. I did stand on my head, too. And Dorothy, I can't seem to get used to being a grandparent," added the Scarecrow in a melancholy voice. "It's turning my straws gray." He plucked several from his chest and held them out to her. "Why, those little villains don't even believe in Oz! 'It's not on the map, old Grandpapapapapah!' " he mumbled, imitating the tones of his little grandsons so cleverly that Dorothy laughed in spite of herself.

"This is what becomes of pride!" The Scarecrow extended his hands expressively. "Most people who hunt up their family trees are in for a fall, and I've had mine."

"But who do you want to be?" asked the Knight gravely. "A Scarecrow in Oz — or the — er — Emperor that you were?"

"I don't care who I were!" In his excitement, the Scarecrow lost his grammar completely. "I want to be who I am. I want to be myself."

"But which one?" asked the Cowardly Lion, who was still a bit confused.

"Why, my best self, of course," said the Scarecrow with a bright smile. The sight of his old friends had quite restored his cheerfulness. "I've been here long enough to know that I am a better Scarecrow than an Emperor."

"Why, how simple it is!" sighed Dorothy contentedly. "Professor Wogglebug was all wrong. It's not what you were, but what you are — it's being yourself that counts."

"By my Halidom, the little maid is right!" said Sir Hokus, slapping his knee in delight. "Let your Gheewizard but try his transformations! Out on him! But what says yon honest henchman?" Happy Toko, although he understood no word of the conversation, had been watching the discussion with great interest. He had been trying to attract the Scarecrow's attention for some time, but the Knight was the only one who had noticed him.

"What is it, Tappy?" asked the Scarecrow, dropping easily back into Silver Islandish.

"Honored Master, the dawn approaches and with it the Royal Princes and the Grand Gheewizard — and your bride!" Happy paused significantly. The Scarecrow shuddered.

"Let's go back to Oz!" said the Cowardly Lion uneasily.

The Scarecrow was feeling in the pocket of his old Munchkin suit which he always wore under his robes of state. "Here!" said he, giving a little pill to Happy Toko. "It's one of Professor Wogglebug's language pills," he exclaimed to Dorothy, "and will enable him to speak and understand Ozish."

Happy swallowed the pill gravely.

“Greetings, honorable Ozites!” he said politely as soon as the pill was down. Dorothy clapped her hands in delight, for it was so comfortable to have him speak their own language.

“I could never have stood it here without Tappy Oko!” The Scarecrow looked fondly at his Imperial Punster.

“Queer name he has,” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, looking at Happy Toko as if he had thoughts of eating him.

“Methinks he should be knighted,” rumbled Sir Hokus, beaming on the little Silverman. “Rise, Sir Pudding!”

“The sun will do that in a minute or more, and then, then we shall all be thrown into prison!” wailed Happy Toko dismally.

“We were going to escape in a small boat,” explained the Scarecrow, “but — ” It was not necessary for him to finish. A boat large enough to hold Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, Happy Toko, the camel and the dromedary could not very well be launched in secret.

“Oh, dear!” sighed Dorothy, “If I’d only wished you and all of us back in the Emerald City!”

“You wished very well, Lady Dot,” said the Knight. “When I think of what I was going to wish for — ”

“What were you going to wish, Hokus?” asked the Cowardly Lion curiously.

“For a dragon!” faltered the Knight, looking terribly ashamed.

“A dragon!” gasped Dorothy. “Why, what good would that have done us?”

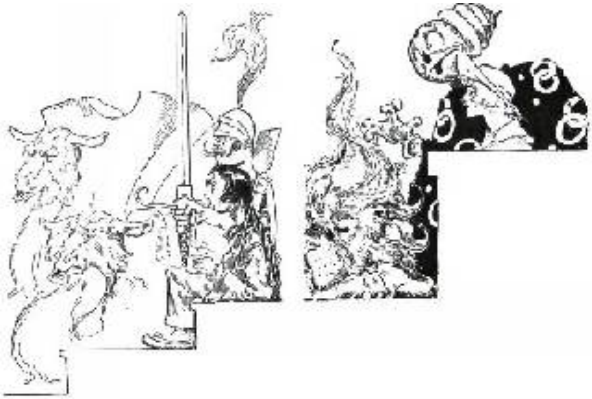
“Wait!” interrupted the Scarecrow. “I have thought of something! Why not climb my family tree? It is a long, long way, but at the top lies Oz!”

“Grammercy, a pretty plan!” exclaimed Sir Hokus, peering up at the bean pole.

“Wouldn’t that be social climbing?” chuckled Happy Toko, recovering his spirits with a bound. The Cowardly Lion said nothing, but heaved a mighty sigh which no one heard, for they were all running toward the bean pole. It was a good family tree to climb, sure enough, for there were handy little notches in the stalk.

“You go first!” Sir Hokus helped Dorothy up. When she had gone a few steps, the Scarecrow, holding his robes carefully, followed, then honest Happy Toko.

“I’ll go last,” said Sir Hokus bravely, and had just set his foot on the first notch when a hoarse scream rang through the hall.



CHAPTER 19

PLANNING TO FLY FROM THE SILVER ISLAND

It was the Comfortable Camel. Waking suddenly, he found himself deserted. “Oh, where is my dear Karwan Bashi?” he roared dismally. “Come back! Come back!”

“Hush up, can’t you?” rumbled the Cowardly Lion. “Do you want Dorothy and everybody to be thrown into prison on our account? We can’t climb the bean pole and will have to wait here and face it out.”

“But how uncomfortable,” wailed the camel. He began to sob heavily. Dorothy, although highest up the bean pole, heard all of this distinctly. “Oh,” she cried remorsefully, “we can’t desert the Cowardly Lion like this. I never thought about him.”

“Spoken like the dear little Maid you are,” said the Knight. “The good beast never reminded us of it, either. There’s bravery for you!”

“Let us descend at once, I’ll not move a step without the Cowardly Lion!” In his agitation, the Scarecrow lost his balance and fell headlong to the ground, knocking Sir Hokus’s helmet terribly askew as he passed. The others made haste to follow him and were soon gathered gravely at the foot of the beanstalk.

“I’ll have to think of some other plan,” said the Scarecrow, looking nervously at the sky, which showed, through the long windows, the first streaks of dawn. The Comfortable Camel controlled its sobs with difficulty and pressed as close to Sir Hokus as it could. The Doubtful Dromedary was still asleep.

“It would have been a terrible climb,” mused the Scarecrow, thinking of his long, long fall down the pole. “Ah, I have it!”

“What?” asked Dorothy anxiously.

"I wonder I did not think of it before. Ah, my brains are working better! I will abdicate," exclaimed the Scarecrow triumphantly. "I will abdicate, make a farewell speech, and return with you to Oz!"

"What if they refuse to let your radiant Highness go?" put in Happy Toko tremulously. "What if the Gheewizard should work his magic before you finished your speech?"

"Then we'll make a dash for it!" said Sir Hokus, twirling his sword recklessly.

"I'm with you," said the Cowardly Lion huskily, "but you needn't have come back for me."

"All right!" said the Scarecrow cheerfully. "And now that everything's settled so nicely, we might as well enjoy the little time left. Put out the lights, Tappy. Dorothy and I will sit on the throne, and the rest of you come as close as possible."

Sir Hokus wakened the Doubtful Dromedary and pulled and tugged it across the hall, where it immediately fell down asleep again. The Comfortable Camel ambled about eating the flowers out of the vases. The Cowardly Lion had placed himself at Dorothy's feet, and Sir Hokus and

Happy Toko seated themselves upon the first step of the gorgeous silver throne.

Then, while they waited for morning, Dorothy told the Scarecrow all about the Pokes and Fix City, and the Scarecrow told once again of his victory over the king of the Golden Islands.

“Where is the magic fan now?” asked Dorothy at the end of the story.

The Scarecrow smiled broadly, and feeling in a deep pocket brought out the little fan and also the parasol he had plucked from the beanstalk. “Do you know,” he said smiling, “so much has happened I haven’t thought of them since the battle. I was saving them for you, Dorothy.”

“For me!” exclaimed the little girl in delight. “Let me see them!” The Scarecrow handed them over obligingly, but Happy Toko trembled so violently that he rolled down the steps of the throne.

“I beg of you!” He scrambled to his feet and held up his hands in terror. “I beg of you, don’t open that fan!”

“She’s used to magic, Tappy. You needn’t worry,” said the Scarecrow easily.

“Of course I am,” said Dorothy with great dignity. “But this’ll be mighty useful if anyone tries to conquer Oz again. We can just fan ‘em away.”

Dorothy pulled a hair from the Cowardly Lion's mane, and winding it around the little fan, put it carefully in the pocket of her dress. The parasol she hung by its ribbon to her arm.

"Perhaps Ozma will look in the Magic Picture and wish us all back again," said the little girl after they had sat for a time in silence.

"I doubt it." The Dromedary stirred and mumbled in its sleep.

"Singular beast, that!" ejaculated the Knight. "Doubting never gets one anywhere."

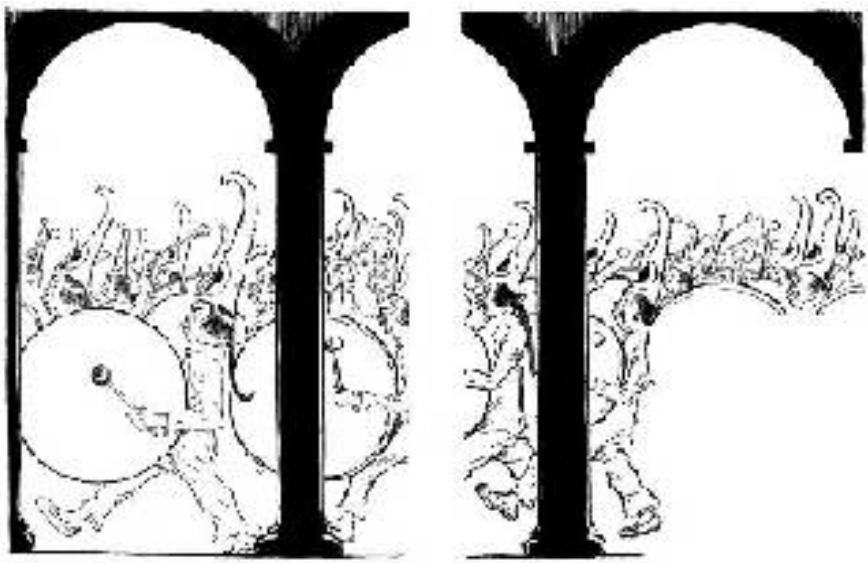
"Hush!" warned the Scarecrow. "I hear footsteps!"

"Come here." Sir Hokus called hoarsely to the camel, who was eating a paper lantern at the other end of the room. The beast ran awkwardly over to

the throne, and swallowing the lantern with a convulsive gulp, settled down beside the dromedary.

"Whatever happens, we must stick together," said the Knight emphatically. "Ah — !"

Dorothy held fast to the Scarecrow with one hand and to the throne with the other. The sun had risen at last. There was a loud crash of drums and trumpets, a rush of feet, and into the hall marched the most splendid company Dorothy had seen in her whole life of adventures.



CHAPTER 20

DOROTHY UPSETS THE CEREMONY OF THE ISLAND

"A caravan!" whistled the Comfortable Camel, lurching to his feet. "How nice!"

"I doubt that!" The dromedary's eyes flew open, and he stared sleepily at the magnificent procession of Silver Islanders.

First came the musicians, playing their shining silver trumpets and flutes. The Grand Chew Chew and General Mugwump followed, attired in brilliant silk robes of state. Then came the three Princes, glittering with jeweled chains and medals, and the fifteen little Princes, like so many silver butterflies in their satin kimonas. Next appeared a palanquin bearing the veiled Princess Orange Blossom, followed by a whole company of splendid courtiers and after them as many of the everyday Silver Islanders as the hall would hold. There was a moment of silence. Then the whole assemblage, contrary to the Scarecrow's edict, fell upon their faces.

"My!" exclaimed Dorothy, impressed in spite of herself. "Are you sure you want to give up all this?"

"Great Emperor, beautiful as the sun, wise as the stars, and radiant as the clouds, the Ceremony of Restoration is about to begin!" quavered the Grand Chew Chew, rising slowly. Then he paused, for he was suddenly confused by the strange company around the Scarecrow's throne.

"Treachery!" hissed the eldest Prince to the others. "We left him tied to the bean pole. Ancient Papa Scarecrow needs watching! Who are these curious objects he has gathered about him, pray?"

Now by some magic which even I cannot explain, the people from Oz found they could understand all that was being said. When Dorothy heard herself called an object and saw the wicked faces of the three Princes and the stupid little grandsons, she no longer wondered at the Scarecrow's decision.

The Scarecrow himself bowed calmly. "First," said he cheerfully, "let me introduce my friends and visitors from Oz."

The Silver Islanders, who really loved the Scarecrow, bowed politely as he called out the names of Dorothy and the others. But the three Silver Princes scowled and whispered indignantly among themselves.

"I am growing very wroth!" choked Sir Hokus to the Cowardly Lion.

"Let the ceremony proceed!" called the eldest Prince harshly, before the Scarecrow had finished his introductions. "Let the proper body of his Serene Highness be immediately restored. Way for the Grand Gheewizard! Way for the Grand Gheewizard!"

"One moment," put in the Scarecrow in a dignified voice. "I have

something to say." The Silver Islanders clapped loudly at this, and Dorothy felt a bit reassured. Perhaps they would listen to reason after all and let the Scarecrow depart peacefully. How they were ever to escape if they didn't, the little girl could not see.

"My dear children," began the Scarecrow in his jolly voice, "nothing could have been more wonderful than my return to this lovely island, but in the years I have been away from you I have changed very much, and I find I no longer care for being Emperor. So with your kind permission, I will keep the excellent body I now have and will abdicate in favor of my eldest son and return with my friends to Oz. For in Oz I really belong."

A dead silence followed the Scarecrow's speech — then perfect pandemonium.

"No! No! You are a good Emperor! We will not let you go!" shrieked the people. "You are our honorable little Father. The Prince shall be Emperor after you have peacefully returned to your ancestors, but not now. No! No! We will not have it!"

"I feared this!" quavered Happy Toko.

"It is not the Emperor, but the Scarecrow who speaks!" shrilled the Grand Chew Chew craftily. "He knows not what he says. But after the transformation — Ah, you shall see!"

The company calmed down at this. "Let the ceremony proceed! Way for the Grand Gheewizard!" they cried exultantly.

"Chew Chew," wailed the Scarecrow, "you're off the track!" But it was too late. No one would listen.

"I'll have to think of something else," muttered the Scarecrow, sinking dejectedly back on his throne.

"Oh!" shuddered Dorothy, clutching the Scarecrow, "Here he comes!"

"Way for the Grand Gheewizard! Way for the Grand Gheewizard!"

The crowd parted. Hobbling toward the throne came the ugly little Gheewizard of the Silver Island holding a large silver vase high above his head, and after him — !

When Sir Hokus caught a glimpse of what came after, he leaped clean over the Comfortable Camel.

"Uds daggers!" roared the Knight. "*At last!*"

He rushed forward violently. There was a sharp thrust of his good sword, then an explosion like twenty giant firecrackers in one, and the room became quite black with smoke. Before anyone realized what had happened, Sir Hokus was back, dragging something after him and shouting exuberantly, "A dragon! I have slain a dragon! What happiness!"

Everyone was coughing and spluttering from the smoke, but as it cleared Dorothy saw that it was indeed a dragon Sir Hokus had slain, the rheumatic dragon of the old Gheewizard himself.

"Why didn't you get the wizard?" rumbled the Cowardly Lion angrily.

"Must have exploded," said the Comfortable Camel, sniffing the skin daintily.

"Treason!" yelled the three Princes, while the Grand Gheewizard flung himself on the stone floor and began tearing strand after strand from his silver pigtail.

"He has killed the little joy of my hearth!" screeched the old man. "I will turn him to a cat, a miserable yellow cat, and roast him for dinner!"

"Oh!" cried Dorothy, looking at Sir Hokus sorrowfully. "How could you?"

The slaying of the dragon had thrown the whole hall into utmost confusion. Sir Hokus turned a little pale under his armor, but faced the angry mob without flinching.

"Oh, my dear Karwan Bashi, this is so uncomfortable!" wheezed the camel, glancing back of him with frightened eyes.

"There's a shiny dagger in my left-hand saddlesack. I doubt very much whether they would like it," coughed the Doubtful Dromedary, pressing close to the Knight.

"On with the ceremony!" cried the eldest Prince, seeing that the excitement was giving the Scarecrow's friends too much time to think. "The

son of an iron pot shall be punished later!"

"That's right!" cried a voice from the crowd. "Let the Emperor be restored!"

"I guess it's all over," gulped the Scarecrow. "Give my love to Ozma and tell her I tried to come back."

In helpless terror, the little company watched the Gheewizard approach. One could fight real enemies, but *magic!* Even Sir Hokus, brave as he was, felt that nothing could be done.

"One move and you shall be so many prunes," shrilled the angry old man, fixing the people from Oz with his wicked little eyes. The great room was so still you could have heard a pin drop. Even the Doubtful Dromedary had not the heart to doubt the wizard's power, but stood rigid as a statue.

The wizard advanced slowly, holding the sealed vase carefully over his head. The poor Scarecrow regarded it with gloomy fascination. One more moment and he would be an old, old Silverman. Better to be lost forever! He held convulsively to Dorothy.

As for Dorothy herself, she was trembling with fright and grief. When the Grand Gheewizard raised the vase higher and higher and made ready to hurl it at the Scarecrow, disregarding his dire threat she gave a shrill scream and threw up both hands.

"Great grandmothers!" gasped the Scarecrow, jumping to his feet. As Dorothy had thrown up her arms, the little parasol swinging at her wrist had jerked open. Up, up, up, and out through the broken skylight in the roof sailed the little Princess of Oz!

The Grand Gheewizard, startled as anyone, failed to throw the vase. Every neck was craned upward, and everyone was gasping with astonishment.

The oldest Prince, as usual, was the first to recover. “Don’t stand staring like an idiot! Now’s your chance!” he hissed angrily in the Gheewizard’s ear.

“I didn’t come here to be harried and hurried by foreigners,” sobbed the little man. “How is one to work magic when interrupted every other minute? I want my little dragon.”

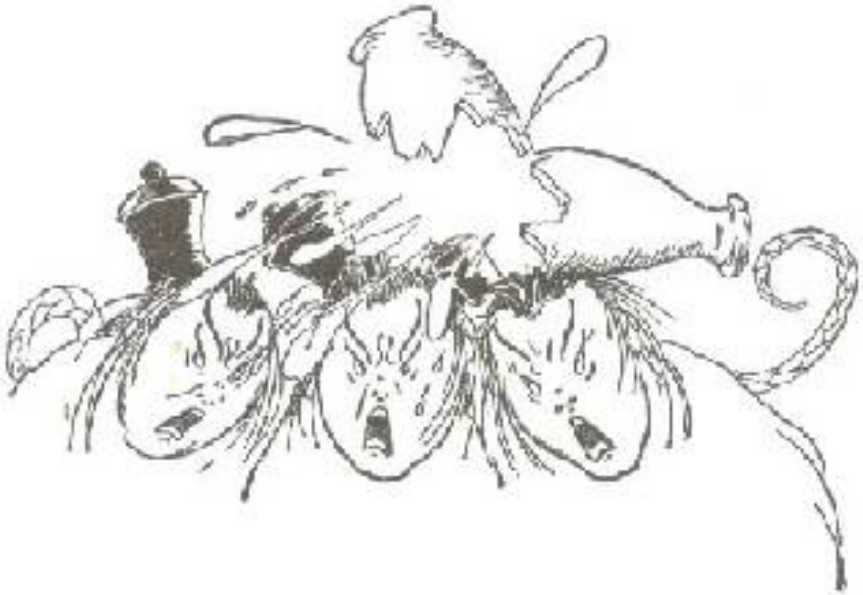
“Oh, come on now, just throw it. I’ll get you another dragon,” begged the Prince, his hands trembling with excitement.

In the face of this new disaster, the Scarecrow had forgotten all about the Gheewizard. He and the Cowardly Lion and Sir Hokus were running distractedly around the great throne trying to think up a way to rescue Dorothy. As for the Doubtful Dromedary, he was doubting everything in a loud, bitter voice, while the Comfortable Camel fairly snorted with sorrow.

“There! Now’s your chance,” whispered the Prince. The Scarecrow, with his back to the crowd, was gesturing frantically.

Taking a firm hold on the neck of the vase and with a long incantation which there is no use at all in repeating, the Gheewizard flung the bottle straight at the Scarecrow’s head. But scarcely had it left his hand before there was a flash and a flutter and down came Dorothy and the magic parasol right on top of the vase.

Zip! The vase flew in quite another direction, and next minute had burst over the luckless heads of the three plotting Princes, while Dorothy floated gently to earth.



Sir Hokus embraced the Scarecrow, and the Scarecrow hugged the Cowardly Lion, and I don't wonder at all. For no sooner had the magic elixir touched the Princes, than two of them became silver pigs and the eldest a weasel. They had been turned to their true shapes instead of the Scarecrow. And while the company hopped about in alarm, they ran squealing from the hall and disappeared in the gardens.

"Seize the Gheewizard and take him to his cave," ordered the Scarecrow, asserting his authority for the first time since the proceedings has started. He had noticed the old man making queer signs and passes toward Sir Hokus. A dozen took hold of the struggling Gheewizard and hurried him out of the hall.

Sir Hokus, at the request of the Scarecrow, clapped his iron gauntlets for silence.

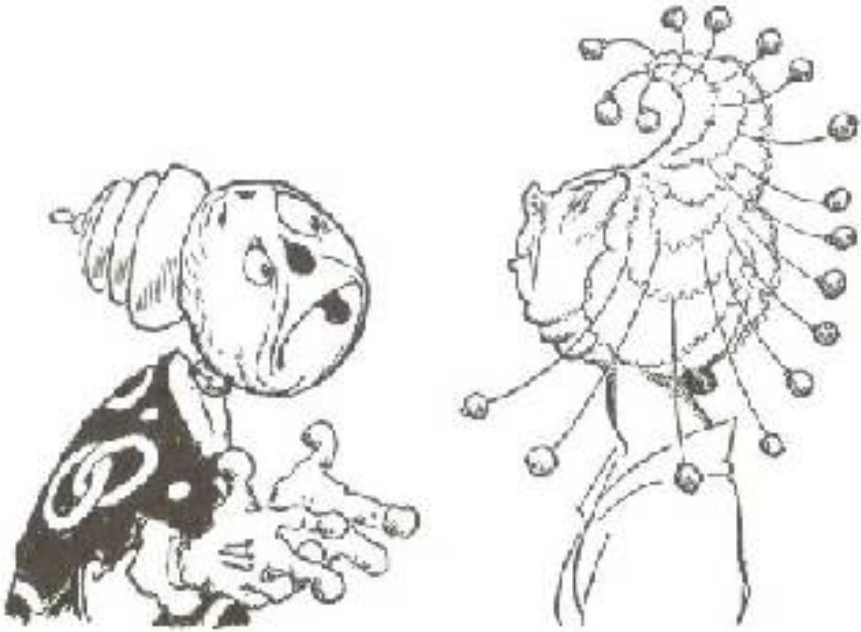
"You will agree with me, I'm sure," said the Scarecrow in a slightly unsteady voice, "that magic is a serious matter to meddle with. If you will all return quietly to your homes, I will try to find a way out of our difficulties."

The Silver Islanders listened respectfully and after a little arguing among themselves backed out of the throne room. To tell the truth, they were anxious to spread abroad the tale of the morning's happenings.

Princess Orange Blossom, however, refused to depart. Magic or no magic, she had come to marry the Emperor, and she would not leave till the ceremony had been performed.

“But my dear old Lady, would you wish to marry a Scarecrow?” coaxed the Emperor.

“All men are Scarecrows,” snapped the Princess sourly.



“Then why marry at all?” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, making a playful leap at her palanquin. This was too much. The Princess swooned on the spot, and the Scarecrow, taking advantage of her unconscious condition, ordered her chair bearers to carry her away as far and as fast as they could run.

“Now,” said the Scarecrow when the last of the company had disappeared, “let us talk this over.”

CHAPTER 21

THE ESCAPE FROM THE SILVER ISLAND

"Well!" gasped Dorothy, fanning herself with her hat, "I never was so s'prised in my life!"

"Nor I," exclaimed the Scarecrow. "The Grand Gheewizard will be suing you for parassault and battery. But how did it happen?"

"Well," began Dorothy, "as soon as the parasol opened, I flew up so fast that I could hardly breathe. Then, after I'd gone ever so far, it came to me that if the parasol went up when it was up, it would come down when it was down. I couldn't leave you all in such a fix — so I closed it, and — "

"Came down!" finished the Scarecrow with a wave of his hand. "You always do the right thing in the right place, my dear."

"It was lucky I hit the vase, wasn't it?" sighed Dorothy. "But I'm rather sorry about the Princes."

"Served 'em right," growled the Cowardly Lion. "They'll make very good pigs!"

"But who's to rule the island?" demanded Sir Hokus, turning his gaze reluctantly from the smoking dragonskin.

"This will require thought," said the Scarecrow pensively. "Let us all think."

"I doubt that I can ever think again." The Doubtful Dromedary wagged his head from side to side in a dazed fashion.

"Just leave it to our dear Karwan Bashi." The Comfortable Camel nodded complacently at the Knight and began plucking sly wisps from the Scarecrow's boot top. For a short time there was absolute silence.

Then Sir Hokus, who had been thinking tremendously with his elbows on his knees, burst out, "Why not Sir Pudding, here? Why not this honest Punster? Who but Happy Toko deserves the throne?"

"The very person!" cried the Scarecrow, clasping his yellow gloves, and taking off his silver hat, he set it impulsively upon the head of the fat little Silver Islander.

"He'll make a lovely Emperor," said Dorothy. "He's so kind-hearted and jolly. And now the Scarecrow can abdicate and come home to Oz."

They all looked triumphantly at the Imperial Punster, but Happy Toko, snatching off the royal hat, burst into tears.

"Don't leave me behind, amiable Master!" he sobbed disconsolately. "Oh, how I shall miss you!"

"But don't you see," coaxed Dorothy, "the Scarecrow needs you here more than anyplace, and think of all the fine clothes you will have and how

rich you will be!”

“And Tappy, my dear boy,” said the Scarecrow, putting his arm around Happy Toko, “you might not like Oz any more than I like Silver Island. Then think — if everything goes well, you can visit me — just as one Emperor visits another!”

“And you won’t forget me?” sniffed Happy, beginning to like the idea of being Emperor.

“Never!” cried the Scarecrow with an impressive wave.

“And if anything goes wrong, will you help me out?” questioned Happy uncertainly.

“We’ll look in the Magic Picture of Oz every month,” declared Dorothy, “and if you need us we’ll surely find some way to help you.”

“An’ you ever require a trusty sword, Odds Bodikins!” exclaimed Sir Hokus, pressing Tappy’s hand, “I’m your man!”

“All right, dear Master!” Happy slowly picked up the Imperial hat and set it sideways on his head. “I’ll do my best.”

“I don’t doubt it at all,” said the Doubtful Dromedary to everyone’s surprise.

“Three cheers for the Emperor! Long live the Emperor of the Silver Island,” rumbled the Cowardly Lion, and everybody from Oz, even the camel and dromedary, fell upon their knees before Happy Toko.

“You may have my bride, too, Tappy,” chuckled the Scarecrow with a wink at Dorothy. “And Tappy,” he asked, sobering suddenly, “will you have my grandsons brought up like real children? Just as soon as I return, I shall send them all the Books of Oz.”

Happy bowed, too confused and excited for speech.

“Now,” said the Scarecrow, seizing Dorothy’s hand, “I can return to Oz with an easy mind.”

“Doubt that,” said the Doubtful Dromedary.

“You needn’t!” announced Dorothy. “I’ve thought it all out.” In a few short sentences she outlined her plan.

“Bravo!” roared the Cowardly Lion, and now the little party began in real earnest the preparation for the journey back to Oz.

First, Happy brought them a delicious luncheon, with plenty of twigs and hay for the camel and dromedary and meat for the Cowardly Lion. The Scarecrow packed into the camel’s sacks a few little souvenirs for the people of Oz. Then they dressed Happy Toko in the Scarecrow’s most splendid robe and ordered him to sit upon the throne. Next, the Scarecrow rang for one of the palace servants and ordered the people of the Silver Islands to assemble in the hall.

Presently the Silvermen began to come trooping in, packing the great throne room until it could hold no more. Everyone was chattering excitedly.

It was quite a different company that greeted them. The Scarecrow, cheerful and witty in his old Munchkin suit, Dorothy and Sir Hokus smiling happily, and the three animal members of the party fairly blinking with contentment.

“This,” said the Scarecrow pleasantly when everyone was quiet, “is your new Emperor, to whom I ask you to pledge allegiance.” He waved proudly in the direction of Happy Toko, who, to tell the truth, presented a truly royal appearance. “It is not possible for me to remain with you, but I shall always watch over this delightful island and with the magic fan vanquish all its

enemies and punish all offenders."

Happy Toko bowed to his subjects.

The Silver Islanders exchanged startled glances, then, as the Scarecrow carelessly lifted the fan, they fell prostrate to the earth.

"Ah!" said the Scarecrow with a broad wink at Happy. "This is delightful. You agree with me, I see. Now then, three cheers for Tappy Oko, Imperial Emperor of the Silver Island."

The cheers were given with a will, and Happy in acknowledgement made a speech that has since been written into the Royal Book of state as a masterpiece of eloquence.

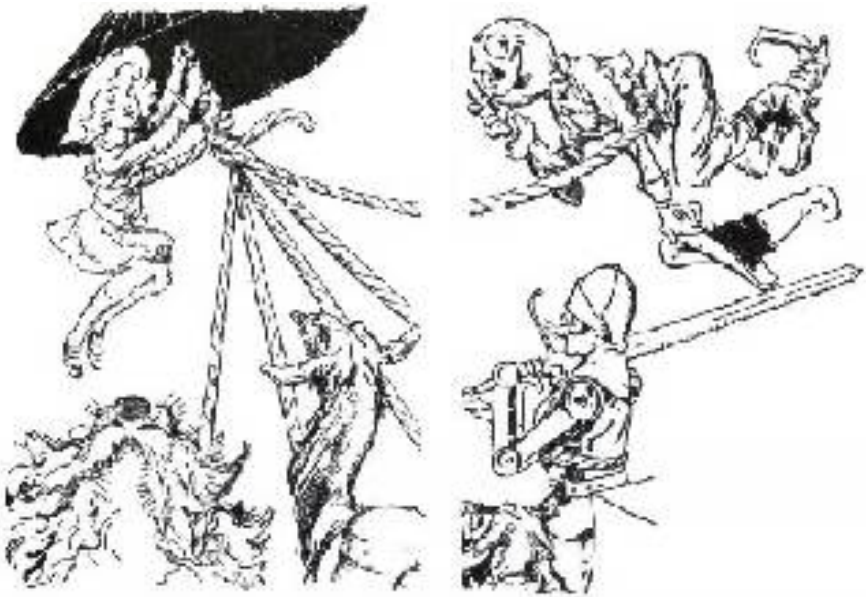
Having arranged affairs so satisfactorily, the Scarecrow embraced Happy Toko with deep emotion. Dorothy and Sir Hokus shook hands with him and wished him every success and happiness. Then the little party from Oz walked deliberately to the bean pole in the center of the hall.

The Silver Islanders were still a bit dazed by the turn affairs had taken and stared in astonishment as the Scarecrow and Sir Hokus fastened thick ropes around the Cowardly Lion, the Doubtful Dromedary and the Comfortable Camel. Similar ropes they tied around their own waists and Dorothy's, and the ends of all were fastened securely to the handle of the magic parasol, which Dorothy held carefully.

"Goodbye, everybody!" called the little girl, suddenly opening the parasol.

"Goodbye!" cried the genial Scarecrow, waving his hand.

Too stupefied for speech, the assemblage gaped with amazement as the party floated gently upward. Up — up — and out of sight whirled the entire party.



CHAPTER 22

THE FLIGHT OF THE PARASOL

Holding the handle of the parasol, Dorothy steered it with all the skill of an aviator, and in several minutes after their start the party had entered the deep, black passage down which the Scarecrow had fallen. Each one of the adventurers was fastened to the parasol with ropes of different length so that none of them bumped together, but even with all the care in the world it was not possible to keep them from bumping the sides of the tube. The Comfortable Camel grunted plaintively from time to time, and Dorothy could hear the Doubtful Dromedary complaining bitterly in the darkness. It was pitch dark, but by keeping one hand in touch with the bean pole, Dorothy managed to hold the parasol in the center.

"How long will it take?" she called breathlessly to the Scarecrow, who was dangling just below.

"Hours!" wheezed the Scarecrow, holding fast to his hat. "I hope none of the parties on this line hear us," he added nervously, thinking of the Middlings.

"What recks it?" blustered Sir Hokus. "Hast forgotten my trusty sword?" But his words were completely drowned in the rattle of his armor.

"Hush!" warned the Scarecrow, "Or we'll be pulled in." So for almost an hour, they flew up the dark, chimney-like tube with only an occasional groan as one or another scraped against the rough sides of the passage. Then, before they knew what was happening, the parasol crashed into something, half closed, and the whole party started to fall head over heels over helmets.

"O!" gasped Dorothy, turning a complete somersault, "catch hold of the bean pole, somebody!"

"Put up the parasol!" shrieked the Scarecrow. Just then Dorothy, finding herself right side up, grasped the pole herself and snapped the parasol wide open. Up, up, up they soared again, faster than ever!

"We're flying up much faster than I fell down. We must be at the top!" called the Scarecrow hoarsely, "and somebody has closed the opening!"

CHAPTER 23

SAFE AT LAST IN THE LAND OF OZ

"Must we keep bumping until we bump through?" panted Dorothy anxiously.

"No, by my hilts!" roared Sir Hokus, and setting his foot in a notch of the beanstalk, he cut with his sword the rope that bound him to the parasol. "Put the parasol down half way, and I'll climb ahead and cut an opening."

With great difficulty Dorothy partially lowered the parasol, and instantly their speed diminished. Indeed, they barely moved at all, and the Knight had soon passed them on his climb to the top.

"Are you there?" rumbled the Cowardly Lion anxiously. A great clod of earth landed on his head, filling his eyes and mouth with mud.

"Ugh!" roared the lion.

"It's getting light! It's getting light!" screamed Dorothy, and in her excitement snapped the parasol up.

Sir Hokus, having cut with his sword a large circular hole in the thin crust of earth covering the tube, was about to step out when the parasol, hurling up from below, caught him neatly on its top, and out burst the whole party and sailed up almost to the clouds!

"Welcome to Oz!" cried Dorothy, looking down happily on the dear familiar Munchkin landscape.

"Home at last!" exulted the Scarecrow, wafting a kiss downward.

"Let's get down to earth before we knock the sun into a cocked hat," gasped the Cowardly Lion, for Dorothy, in her excitement, had forgotten to lower the parasol.

Now the little girl lowered the parasol carefully at first, then faster and faster and finally shut it altogether.

Sir Hokus took a high dive from the top. Down tumbled the others, over and over. But fortunately for all, there was a great haystack below, and upon this they landed in a jumbled heap close to the magic bean pole. As it happened, there was no one in sight. Up they jumped in a trice, and while the Comfortable Camel and Doubtful Dromedary munched contentedly at the hay, Sir Hokus and the Scarecrow placed some loose boards over the opening around the bean pole and covered them with dirt and cornstalks.

"I will get Ozma to close it properly with the Magic Belt," said the Scarecrow gravely. "It wouldn't do to have people sliding down my family tree and scaring poor Tappy. As for me, I shall never leave Oz again!"

"I hope not," growled the Cowardly Lion, tenderly examining his scratched hide.

"But if you hadn't, I'd never have had such lovely adventures or found Sir

Hokus and the Comfortable Camel and Doubtful Dromedary," said Dorothy. "And what a lot I have to tell Ozma! Let's go straight to the Emerald City."

"It's quite a journey," explained the Scarecrow to Sir Hokus, who was cleaning off his armor with a handful of straw.

"I go where Lady Dot goes," replied the Knight, smiling affectionately at the little girl and straightening the ragged hair ribbon which he still wore on his arm.

"Don't forget me, dear Karwan Bashi," wheezed the Comfortable Camel, putting his head on the Knight's shoulder.

"You're a sentimental dunce, Camy. I doubt whether they'll take us at all!" The Doubtful Dromedary looked wistfully at Dorothy.

"Go to, now!" cried Sir Hokus, putting an arm around each neck. "You're just like two of the family!"

"It will be very comfortable to go to now," sighed the camel.

"We're all a big, jolly family here," said the Scarecrow, smiling brightly, "and Oz is the friendliest country in the world."

"Right," said the Cowardly Lion, "but let's get started!" He stretched his tired muscles and began limping stiffly toward the yellow brick road.

"Wait," cried Dorothy, "have you forgotten the parasol?"

"I wish I could," groaned the Cowardly Lion, rolling his eyes.

Sir Hokus, with folded arms, was gazing regretfully at the bean pole. "It has been a brave quest," he sighed, "but now, I take it, our adventures are over!" Absently, the Knight felt in his boot-top and drawing out a small red

bean popped it into his mouth. Just before reaching the top of the tube, he had pulled a handful of them from the beanstalk, but the others had fallen out when he dove into the hay.

“Shall we use the parasol again, Lady Dot?” he asked, still staring pensively at the bean pole. “Shall — ?”

He got no farther, nor did Dorothy answer his question. Instead, she gave a loud scream and clutched the Scarecrow’s arm. The Scarecrow, taken by surprise, fell over backward, and the Comfortable Camel, raising his head inquiringly, gave a bellow of terror. From the Knight’s shoulders a green branch had sprung, and while the company gazed in round-eyed amazement it stretched toward the bean pole, attached itself firmly, and then shot straight up into the air, the Knight kicking and struggling on the end. In another second, he was out of sight.

“Come back! Come back!” screamed the Comfortable Camel, running around distractedly.

“I doubt we’ll ever see him again!” groaned the Doubtful Dromedary, craning his neck upward.

“Do something! Do something!” begged Dorothy. At which the Scarecrow jumped up and dashed toward the little farmhouse.

“I’ll get an ax,” he called over his shoulder, “and chop down the bean pole.”

"No, don't do that!" roared the Cowardly Lion, starting after him. "Do you want to break him to pieces?"

"Oh! Oh! Can't you think of something else?" cried Dorothy. "And hurry, or he'll be up to the moon!"

The Scarecrow put both hands to his head and stared around wildly. Then, with a triumphant wave of his hat, declared himself ready to act.

"The parasol!" cried the late Emperor of Silver Island. "Quick, Dorothy, put up the parasol!"

Snatching the parasol, which lay at the foot of the bean pole, Dorothy snapped it open, and the Scarecrow just had time to make a flying leap and seize the handle before it soared upward, and in a trice they, too, had disappeared.

"Doubty! Doubty!" wailed the Comfortable Camel, crowding up to his humpbacked friend, "we're having a pack of trouble. My knees are all a-tremble!"

"Now don't you worry," advised the Cowardly Lion, sitting down resignedly. "I'm frightened myself, but that's because I'm so cowardly. Queer things happen in Oz, but they usually turn out all right. Why, Hokus is just growing up with the country, that's all, just growing up with the country."

“Doubt that,” sniffed the Doubtful Dromedary faintly. “He was grown up in the beginning.”

“But think of the Scarecrow’s brains. You leave things to the Scarecrow.” But it was no use. Both beasts began to roar dismally.

“I don’t want a plant. I want my Karwan Bashi,” sobbed the Comfortable Camel broken-heartedly.

“Well, don’t drown me,” begged the Cowardly Lion, moving out of the way of the camel’s tears. “Say, what’s that draft?”

What indeed? In the trees overhead, a very cyclone whistled, and before the three had even time to catch their breath, they were blown high into the air and the next instant were hurtling toward the Emerald City like three furry cannonballs, faster and faster.

CHAPTER 24

HOMEWARD BOUND TO THE EMERALD CITY

Dorothy and the Scarecrow, clinging fast to the magic parasol, had followed the Knight almost to the clouds. At first, it looked as if they would never catch up with him, so swiftly was the branch growing, but it was not long before the little umbrella began to gain, and in several minutes more they were beside Sir Hokus himself.

"Beshrew me, now!" gasped the Knight, stretching out his hand toward Dorothy. "Can'st stop this reckless plant?"

"Give me your sword," commanded the Scarecrow, "and I'll cut you off."

Dorothy, with great difficulty, kept the parasol close to the Knight while the Scarecrow reached for the sword. But Sir Hokus backed away in alarm.

"'Tis part of me, an' you cut it off, I will be cut off, too. 'Tis rooted in my back," he puffed.

"What shall we do?" cried Dorothy in distress. "Maybe if we take hold of his hands we can keep him from going any higher."

The Scarecrow, jamming down his hat so it wouldn't blow off, nodded approvingly, and each holding the parasol with one hand gave the other to the Knight. And when Dorothy pointed the parasol down, to her great delight Sir Hokus came also, the thin green branch growing just about as fast as they moved.

Just then the little fan, which had been rolling around merrily in Dorothy's pocket, slipped out and fell straight down toward the three unsuspecting beasts below. Draft! No wonder!

But Dorothy never missed it, and quite unconscious of such a calamity anxiously talked over the Knight's predicament with the Scarecrow. They both decided that the best plan was to fly straight to the Emerald City and have Ozma release the Knight from the enchanted beanstalk.

"I'm sorry you got tangled up in my family tree, old fellow," said the Scarecrow after they had flown some time in silence, "but this makes us relations, doesn't it?" He winked broadly at the Knight.

"So it does," said Sir Hokus jovially. "I'm a branch of your family now. Yet methinks I should not have swallowed that bean."

"Bean?" questioned Dorothy. "What bean?" The Knight carefully explained how he had plucked a handful of red beans from the beanstalk just before reaching the top of the tube and how he had eaten one.

"So that's what started you growing!" exclaimed Dorothy in surprise.

"Alas, yes!" admitted the Knight. "I've never felt more grown-up in my life," he finished solemnly. "An adventurous country, this Oz!"

“I should say it was,” chuckled the Scarecrow. “But isn’t it almost time we were reaching the Emerald City, Dorothy?”

“I think I’m going in the right direction,” answered the little girl, “but I’ll fly a little lower to be sure.”

“Not too fast! Not too fast!” warned Sir Hokus, looking nervously over his shoulder at his long, wriggling stem.

“There’s Ozma’s palace!” cried the Scarecrow all at once.

“And there’s Ozma!” screamed Dorothy, peering down delightedly. “And Scraps and Tik-Tok and everybody!”

She pointed the parasol straight down, when a sharp tug from Sir Hokus jerked them all back. They were going faster than the poor Knight was growing, so Dorothy lowered the parasol half way, and slowly they floated toward the earth, landing gently in one of the flower beds of Ozma’s lovely garden.

“Come along and meet the folks,” said the Scarecrow as Dorothy closed the parasol. But Sir Hokus clutched him in alarm.

“Hold! Hold!” gasped the Knight. “I’ve stopped growing, but if you leave me I’ll shoot up into the air again.”

The Scarecrow and Dorothy looked at each other in dismay. Sure enough, the Knight had stopped growing, and it was all they could do to hold him down to earth, for the stubborn branch of beanstalk was trying to straighten up. They had fallen quite a distance from the palace itself, and all the people of Oz had their backs turned, so had not seen their singular arrival.

“Hello!” called the Scarecrow loudly. Then “Help! Help!” as the Knight jerked him twice into the air. But Ozma, Trot, Jack Pumpkinhead and all the rest were staring upward and talking so busily among themselves that they did not hear either Dorothy’s or the Scarecrow’s cries. First one, then the other was snatched off his feet, and although Sir Hokus, with tears in his eyes, begged them to leave him to his fate, they held on with all their might. Just as it looked as if they all three would fly into the air again, the little Wizard of Oz happened to turn around.

“Look! Look!” he cried, tugging Ozma’s sleeve.

“Why, it’s Dorothy!” gasped Ozma, rubbing her eyes. “It’s Dorothy and — ”

“Help! Help!” screamed the Scarecrow, waving one arm wildly. Without waiting another second, all the celebrities of Oz came running toward the three adventurers.

“Somebody heavy come take hold!” puffed Dorothy, out of breath with her efforts to keep Sir Hokus on the ground.

The Ozites, seeing that help was needed at once, suppressed their curiosity.

“I’m heavy,” said Tik-Tok solemnly, clasping the Knight’s arm. The Tin Woodman seized his other hand, and Dorothy sank down exhausted on the grass.

Princess Ozma pressed forward.

“What does it all mean? Where did you come from?” asked the little Queen of Oz, staring in amazement at the strange spectacle before her.

“And who is this medieval person?” asked Professor Wogglebug, pushing

forward importantly. (He had returned to the palace to collect more data for the Royal Book of Oz.)

"He doesn't look evil to me," giggled Scraps, dancing up to Sir Hokus, her suspender button eyes snapping with fun.

"He isn't," said Dorothy indignantly, for Sir Hokus was too shaken about to answer. "He's my Knight Errant."

"Ah, I see," replied Professor Wogglebug. "A case of 'When Knighthood was in flower.'" And would you believe it — the beanstalk at that minute burst into a perfect shower of red blossoms that came tumbling down over everyone. Before they had recovered from their surprise, the branch snapped off close to the Knight's armor, and Tik-Tok, the Tin Woodman and Sir Hokus rolled over in a heap. The branch itself whistled through the air and disappeared.

"Oh," cried Dorothy, hugging the Knight impulsively, "I'm so glad."

"Are you all right?" asked the Scarecrow anxiously.

"Good as ever!" announced Sir Hokus, and indeed all traces of the magic stalk had disappeared from his shoulders.

"Dorothy!" cried Ozma again. "What does it all mean?"

"Merely that I slid down my family tree and that Dorothy and this Knight rescued me," said the Scarecrow calmly.

"And he's a real Royalty — so there!" cried Dorothy with a wave at the Scarecrow and making a little face at Professor Wogglebug. "Meet his Supreme Highness, Chang Wang Woe of Silver Island, who had abdicated his throne and returned to be a plain Scarecrow in Oz!"

Then, as the eminent Educator of Oz stood gaping at the Scarecrow, "Oh, Ozma, I've so much to tell you!"

"Begin! Begin!" cried the little Wizard. "For everything's mighty mysterious. First, the Cowardly Lion and two unknown beasts shoot through the air and stop just outside the third-story windows, and there they hang although I've tried all my magic to get them down. Then you and the Scarecrow drop in with a strange Knight!"

"Oh, the poor Cowardly Lion!" gasped Dorothy as the Wizard finished speaking. "The magic fan!" She felt hurriedly in her pocket. "It's gone!"

"It must have slipped out of your pocket and blown them here, and they'll never come down till that fan is closed," cried the Scarecrow in an agitated voice.

All of this was Greek to Ozma and the others, but when Dorothy begged the little Queen to send for her Magic Belt, she did it without question. This belt Dorothy had captured from the Gnome King, and it enabled the wearer to wish people and objects wherever one wanted them.

“I wish the magic fan to close and to come safely back to me,” said Dorothy as soon as she had clasped the belt around her waist. No sooner were the words out before there was a loud crash and a series of roars and groans. Everybody started on a run for the palace, Sir Hokus ahead of all the rest. The fan had mysteriously returned to Dorothy’s pocket.

The three animals had fallen into a huge cluster of rose bushes and, though badly scratched and frightened, were really unhurt.

“I doubt that I’ll like Oz,” quavered the Doubtful Dromedary, lurching toward Sir Hokus.

“You might have been more careful of that fan,” growled the Cowardly Lion reproachfully, plucking thorns from his hide. The Comfortable Camel was so overjoyed to see the Knight that he rested his head on Sir Hokus’s shoulder and began weeping down his armor.

And now that their adventures seemed really over, what explanations were to be made! Sitting on the top step of the palace with all of them around her, Dorothy told the whole wonderful story of the Scarecrow’s family tree. When her breath gave out, the Scarecrow took up the tale himself, and as they all realized how nearly they had lost their jolly comrade, many of the party shed real tears. Indeed, Nick Chopper hugged the Scarecrow till there was not a whole straw in his body.

“Never leave us again,” begged Ozma, and the Scarecrow, crossing Nick Chopper’s heart (he had none of his own), promised that he never would.

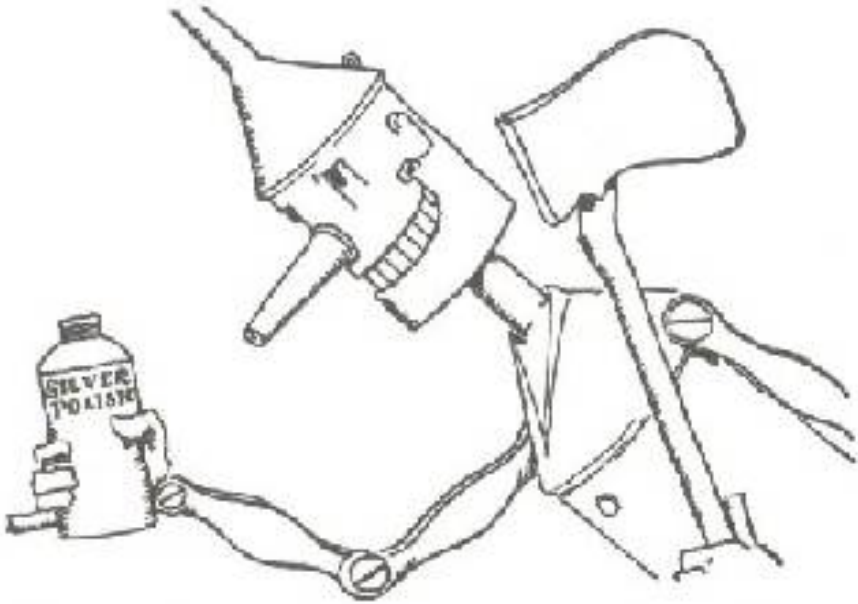
And what a welcome they gave Sir Hokus, the Doubtful Dromedary and the Comfortable Camel! Only Professor Wogglebug seemed disturbed. During the strange recital, he had grown quieter and quieter and finally, with an embarrassed cough, had excused himself and hurried into the palace.

He went directly to the study, and seating himself at a desk opened a large book, none other than *The Royal Book of Oz*. Dipping an emerald pen in the ink, he began a new chapter headed thus:

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THE SCARECROW
Late Emperor and Imperial Sovereign of
Silver Island

Then, flipping over several pages to a chapter headed “Princess Dorothy!”, he wrote carefully at the end, “Dorothy, Princess and Royal Discoverer of Oz.”

Meanwhile, below stairs, the Scarecrow was distributing his gifts. There were silver chains for everyone in the palace and shining silver slippers for Ozma, Betsy Bobbin, Trot and Dorothy, and a bottle of silver polish for Nick Chopper.



Dorothy presented Ozma with the magic fan and parasol, and they were safely put away by Jellia Jamb with the other magic treasures of Oz.

Next, because they were all curious to see the Scarecrow's wonderful Kingdom, they hurried upstairs to look in the Magic Picture.

"Show us the Emperor of Silver Island," commanded Ozma. Immediately the beautiful silver throne room appeared. Happy Toko had removed his imperial hat and was standing on his head to the great delight of the whole court, and a host of little Silver Islander boys were peeking in at the windows.

"Now doesn't that look cheerful?" asked the Scarecrow delightedly. "I knew he'd make a good Emperor."

"I wish we would hear what he's saying," said Dorothy. "Oh, do look at Chew Chew!" The Grand Chew Chew was standing beside the throne scowling horribly.

"I think I can arrange for you to hear," muttered the Wizard of Oz, and taking a queer magic instrument from his pocket, he whispered "Aohbeeobbuy."

Instantly they heard the jolly voice of Happy Toko singing:

Oh shine his shoes of silver,
And brush his silver queue,
For I am but an Emperor
And he's the Grand Chew Chew!

Ozma laughed heartily as the picture faded away, and so did the others. Indeed, there was so much to ask and wonder about that it seemed as if they never would finish talking.

"Let's have a party — an old-fashioned Oz party," proposed Ozma when the excitement had calmed down a bit. And an old-fashioned party it was, with places for everybody and a special table for the Cowardly Lion, the Hungry Tiger, Toto, the Glass Cat, the Comfortable Camel, the Doubtful Dromedary and all the other dear creatures of that amazing Kingdom.

Sir Hokus insisted upon stirring up a huge pasty for the occasion, and there were songs, speeches and cheers for everyone, not forgetting the Doubtful Dromedary.

At the cheering he rose with an embarrassed jerk of his long neck. "In my left-hand saddle-sack," he said gruffly, "there is a quantity of silken shawls and jewels. I doubt whether they are good enough, but I would like Dorothy and Queen Ozma to have them."

"Hear! Hear!" cried the Scarecrow, pounding on the table with his knife. Then everything grew quiet as Ozma told how she, with the help of Glinda, the Good Sorceress, had stopped the war between the Horners and Hoppers.

When she had finished, Sir Hokus sprang up impulsively. "I prithee, lovely Lady, never trouble your royal head about wars again. From now on, I will do battle for you and little Dorothy and Oz, and *I* will be your good Knight every day." At this, the applause was tremendous.

Ye good Knight of Oz, full of courage and vim,
Will do battle for us, and we'll take care of him!

shouted Scraps, who was becoming more excited every minute.

"I'll lend you some of my polish for your armor, old fellow," said Nick Chopper as the Knight sat down, beaming with pleasure.

"Well," said Ozma with a smile when everyone had feasted and talked to heart's content, "is everybody happy?"

"I am!" cried the Comfortable Camel. "For here I am perfectly comfortable."

"I am!" cried Dorothy, putting her arm around the Scarecrow, who sat next to her. "For I have found my old friend and made some new ones."

"I'm happy!" cried the Scarecrow, waving his glass, "because there is no age in Oz, and I am still my old Ozish self."

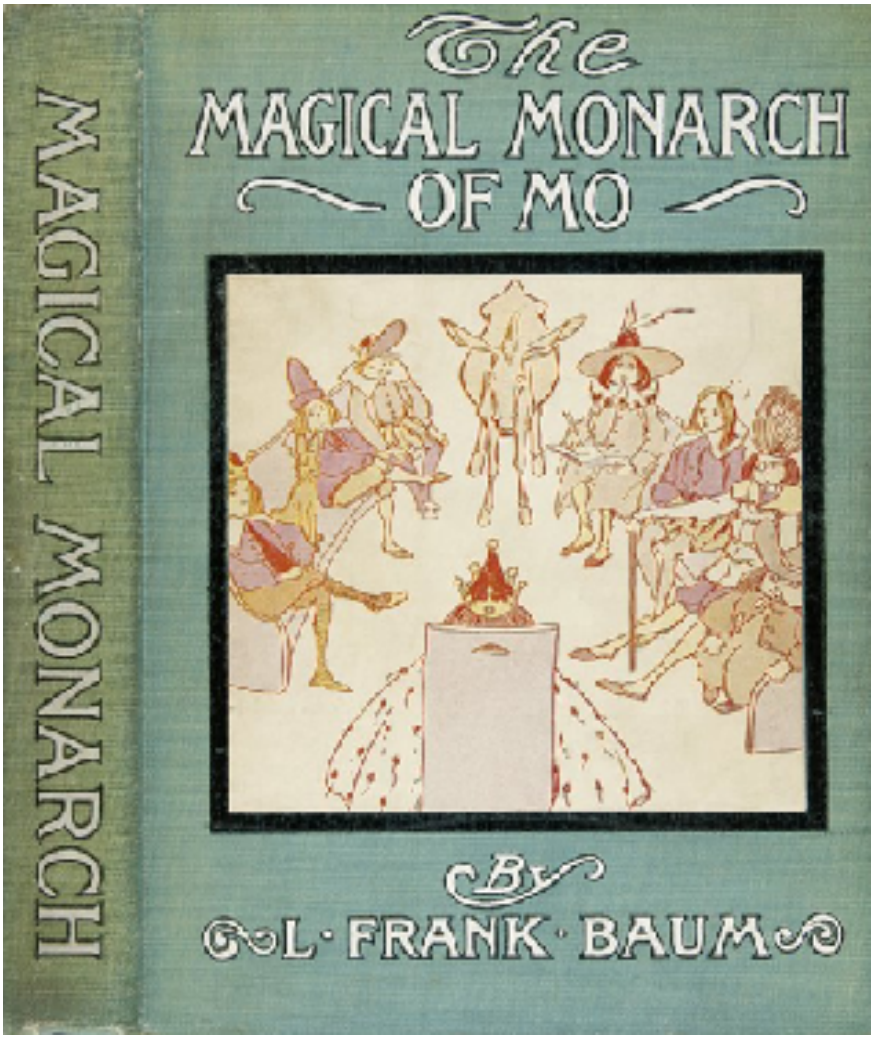
"As for me," said the Knight, "I am happy, for I have served a Lady, gone on a Quest, and *Slain a Dragon! Ozma, and Oz forever!*

Other Fantasy Works

Humboldt Boulevard, Chicago, where Baum wrote 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz'

THE MAGICAL MONARCH OF MO

Bobbs-Merrill published L. Frank Baum's fantasy, *The Magical Monarch of Mo*, in 1903, illustrated by Frank Ver Beck. Mo is a magical land neighboring the Deadly Desert which surrounds the Land of Oz. Baum first composed the linked stories in the late 1890's under the title, *The King of Phunnyland*, but it remained unpublished. In 1900, the publisher, Robert Howard Russell, published a version under the title, *A New Wonderland*. The best known version is Bobbs-Merrill's of 1903. Baum's nonsense stories feature a great variety of royalty and magical characters, from a Cast-Iron Man to a wise donkey, prototypes of characters later appearing in Oz books. In *The Scarecrow of Oz*, Trot, Cap'n Bill and the Ork travel through Mo on their way to Oz.



A first edition copy of 'The Magical Monarch of Mo'

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A copy of the 1947 edition

To the Comrade of my
boyhood days
Dr. Henry Clay Baum

THIS book has been written for children. I have no shame in acknowledging that I, who wrote it, am also a child; for since I can remember my eyes have always grown big at tales of the marvelous, and my heart is still accustomed to go pit-a-pat when I read of impossible adventures. It is the nature of children to scorn realities, which crowd into their lives all too quickly with advancing years. Childhood is the time for fables, for dreams, for joy.

These stories are not true; they could no be true and be so marvelous. No one is expected to believe them; they were meant to excite laughter and to gladden the heart.

Perhaps some of those big, grown-up people will poke fun of us — at you for reading these nonsense tales of the Magical Monarch, and at me for writing them. Never mind. Many of the big folk are still children — even as you and I. We cannot measure a child by a standard of size or age. The big folk who are children will be our comrades; the others we need not consider at all, for they are self-exiled from our domain.

L. FRANK BAUM.

June, 1903.

THE FIRST SURPRISE: THE BEAUTIFUL VALLEY OF MO

There are several questions you would like to ask at the very beginning of this history. First: Who is the Monarch of Mo? And why is he called the Magical Monarch? And where is Mo, anyhow? And why have you never heard of it before? And can it be reached by a railroad or a trolley-car, or must one walk all the way?

These questions I realize should be answered before we (that "we" means you and the book) can settle down for a comfortable reading of all the wonders and astonishing adventures I shall endeavor faithfully to relate.

In the first place, the Monarch of Mo is a very pleasant personage holding the rank of King. He is not very tall, nor is he very short; he is midway between fat and lean; he is delightfully jolly when he is not sad, and seldom sad if he can possibly be jolly. How old he may be I have never dared to inquire; but when we realize that he is destined to live as long as the Valley of Mo exists we may reasonably suppose the Monarch of Mo is exactly as old as his native land. And no one in Mo has ever reckoned up the years to see how many they have been. So we will just say that the Monarch of Mo and the Valley of Mo are each a part of the other, and can not be separated.

He is not called the Magical Monarch because he deals in magic — for he doesn't deal in magic. But he leads such a queer life in such a queer country that his history will surely seem magical to us who inhabit the civilized places of the world and think that anything we can not find a reason for must be due to magic. The life of the Monarch of Mo seems simple enough to him, you may be sure, for he knows no other existence. And our ways of living, could he know of them, would doubtless astonish him greatly.

The land of Mo, which is ruled by the King we call the Magical Monarch, is often spoken of as the "Beautiful Valley." If they would only put it on the maps of our geographies and paint it pink or light green, and print a big round dot where the King's castle stands, it would be easy enough to point out to you its exact location. But I can not find the Valley of Mo in any geography I have examined; so I suspect the men who made these instructive books really know nothing about Mo, else it would surely be on the maps.

Of one thing I am certain: that no other country included in the maps is so altogether delightful as the Beautiful Valley of Mo.

The sun shines all the time, and its rays are perfumed. The people who live in the Valley do not sleep, because there is no night. Everything they can possibly need grows on the trees, so they have no use for money at all, and that saves them a deal of worry.

There are no poor people in this quaint Valley. When a person desires a new hat he waits till one is ripe, and then picks it and wears it without asking anybody's permission. If a lady wishes a new ring, she examines carefully those upon the ring-tree, and when she finds one that fits her finger she picks it and wears it upon her hand. In this way they procure all they desire.

There are two rivers in the Land of Mo, one of which flows milk of a very rich quality. Some of the islands in Milk River are made of excellent cheese, and the people are welcome to spade up this cheese whenever they wish to eat it. In the little pools near the bank, where the current does not flow swiftly, delicious cream rises to the top of the milk, and instead of water-lilies great strawberry leaves grow upon the surface, and the ripe, red berries lie dipping their noses into the cream, as if inviting you to come and eat them. The sand that forms the river bank is pure white sugar, and all kinds of candies and bonbons grow thick on the low bushes, so that any one may pluck them easily.

These are only a few of the remarkable things that exist in the Beautiful Valley.

The people are merry, light- hearted folk, who live in beautiful houses of pure crystal, where they can rest themselves and play their games and go in when it rains. For it rains in Mo as it does everywhere else, only it rains lemonade; and the lightning in the sky resembles the most beautiful fireworks; and the thunder is usually a chorus from the opera of Tannhauser.

No one ever dies in this Valley, and the people are always young and beautiful. There is the King and a Queen, besides several princes and princesses. But it is not much use being a prince in Mo, because the King can not die; therefore a prince is a prince to the end of his days, and his days never end.

Strange things occur in this strange land, as you may imagine; and while I relate some of these you will learn more of the peculiar features of the Beautiful Valley.

THE SECOND SURPRISE: THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF THE KING'S HEAD

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF THE KING'S HEAD

A GOOD many years ago, the Magical Monarch of Mo became annoyed by the Purple Dragon, which came down from the mountains and ate up a patch of his best chocolate caramels just as they were getting ripe.

So the King went out to the sword-tree and picked a long, sharp sword, and tied it to his belt and went away to the mountains to fight the Purple Dragon.

The people all applauded him, saying one to another:

"Our King is a good King. He will destroy this naughty Purple Dragon and we shall be able to eat the caramels ourselves."

But the Dragon was not alone naughty; it was big, and fierce, and strong, and did not want to be destroyed at all.

Therefore the King had a terrible fight with the Purple Dragon and cut it with his sword in several places, so that the raspberry juice which ran in its veins squirted all over the ground.

It is always difficult to kill Dragons. They are by nature thick-skinned and tough, as doubtless every one has heard. Besides, you must not forget that this was a Purple Dragon, and all scientists who have studied deeply the character of Dragons say those of a purple color at the most disagreeable to fight with. So all the King's cutting and slashing had no effect upon the monster other than to make him angry. Forgetful of the respect due to a crowned King, the wicked Dragon presently opening wide its jaws and bit his Majesty's head clean off his body. Then he swallowed it.

Of course the King realized it was useless to continue to fight after that, for he could not see where the Dragon was. SO he turned and tried to find his way back to his people. But at every other step he would bump into a tree, which made the naughty Dragon laugh at him. Furthermore, he could not tell in which direction he was going, which is an unpleasant feeling under any circumstances.

At last some of the people came to see if the King had succeeded in destroying the Dragon, and found their monarch running around in a circle, bumping into trees and rocks, but not getting a step nearer home. So they took his hand and led him back to the palace, where every one was filled with sorrow at the sad sight of the headless King. Indeed, his devoted subjects, for the first time in their lives, came as near to weeping as an inhabitant of the Valley of Mo can.

"Never mind," said the King, cheerfully; "I can get along very well without a head; and, as a matter of fact, the loss has its advantages. I shall not

be obliged to brush my hair, or clean my teeth, or wash my ears. So do not grieve, I beg of you, but be happy and joyful as you were before." Which showed the King had a good heart; and, after all, a good heart is better than a head, any say.

The people, hearing him speak out of his neck (for he had no mouth), immediately began to laugh, which in a short time led to their being as happy as ever.

But the Queen was not contented.

"My love," she said to him, "I can not kiss you any more, and that will break my heart."

Thereupon the King sent word throughout the Valley that any one who could procure for him a new head should wed one of the princesses.

The princesses were all exceedingly pretty girls, and so it was not long before one man made a very nice head out of candy and brought it to the King. It did not look exactly like the old head, but the efface was very sweet, nevertheless; so the King put it on and the Queen kissed it at once with much satisfaction.

The young man had put a pair of glass eyes in the head, with which the King could see very well after he got used to them.

According to the royal promise, the young man was now called into the palace and asked to take his pick of the princesses. There were all so sweet and lady-like that he had some trouble in making a choice; but at last he took the biggest, thinking that he would thus secure the greatest reward, and they were married amid great rejoicing.

But, a few days afterward, the King was caught out in a rainstorm, and before he could get home his new head had melted in the great shower of lemonade that fell. Only the glass eyes were left, and these he put in his pocket and went sorrowfully to tell the Queen of his new misfortune.

Then another young man who wanted to marry a princess made the King a head out of dough, sticking in it the glass eyes; and the King tried it on and found that it fitted very well. So the young man was given the next biggest princess.

But the following day the sun chance to shine extremely hot, and when the King walked out it baked his dough head into bread, at which the monarch felt very light-headed. And when the birds saw the bread they flew down from the trees, perched upon the King's shoulder and quickly ate up his new head. All but the glass eyes.

Again the good King was forced to go home to the Queen without a head, and the lady firmly declared that this time her husband must have a head warranted to last at least as long as the honeymoon of the young man who

made it; which was not at all unreasonable under the circumstances.

So a request was sent to all loyal subjects throughout the Valley asking them to find a head for their King that was neat and substantial.

In the meantime the King had a rather hard time of it. When he wished to go any place he was obliged to hold out in front of him, between his thumbs and fingers, the glass eyes, that they might guide his footsteps. This, as you may imagine, made his Majesty look rather undignified, and dignity is very important to every royal personage.

At last a wood-chopper in the mountains made a head out of wood and sent it to the King. It was neatly carved, besides being solid and durable; moreover, it fitted the monarch's neck to the T. So the King rummaged in his pocket and found the glass eyes, and when these were put in the new head the King announced his satisfaction.

There was only one drawback — he couldn't smile, as the wooden face was too stiff; and it was funny to hear his Majesty laughing heartily while his face maintained a solemn expression. But the glass eyes twinkled merrily and every one knew that he was the same kind-hearted monarch of old, although he had become, of necessity, rather hard-headed.

Then the King sent word to the wood-chopper to come to the palace and take his pick of the princesses, and preparations were at once begun for the wedding.

But the wood-chopper, on his way to the court, unfortunately passed by the dwelling of the Purple Dragon and stopped to speak to the monster.

Now it seems that when the Dragon had swallowed the King's head, the unusual meal made the beast ill. It was more accustomed to berries and caramels for dinner than to heads, and the sharp points of the King's crown (which was firmly fastened to the head) pricked the Dragon's stomach and made the creature miserable. After a few days of suffering the Dragon disgorged the head, and, not knowing what else to do with it, locked it up in a cupboard and put the key in its pocket.

When the Dragon met the wood-chopper and learned he had made a new head for the King, and as a reward was to wed one of the princesses, the monster became very angry. It resolved to do a wicked thing; which will not surprise you when you remember the beast's purple color.

"Step into my parlor and rest yourself," said the Dragon, politely. Wicked people are most polite when they mean mischief.

"Thank you, I'll stop for a few minutes," replied the wood-chopper; "but I can not stay long, as I am expected at court."

When he had entered the parlor the Dragon suddenly opened its mouth and snapped off the poor wood-chopper's head. Being warned by experience,

however, it did not swallow the head, but placed it in the cupboard. Then the Dragon took from a shelf the King's head and glued it on the wood-chopper's neck.

"Now," said the beast, with a cruel laugh, "you are the King! Go home and claim your wife and your kingdom."

The poor wood-chopper was much amazed; for at first he did not really know which he was, the King or the wood-chopper.

He looked in the mirror and, seeing the King, made a low bow. Then the King's head thought: "Who am I bowing to? There is no one greater than the King!" And so at once there began a conflict between the wood-chopper's heart and the King's head.

The Dragon was mightily pleased at the result of its wicked stratagem, and having pushed the bewildered wood-chopper out of the castle, immediately sent him on his way to the court.

When the poor man neared the town the people ran out and said: "Why, this is the King come back again. All hail, your Majesty!"

"All nonsense!" returned the wood-chopper. "I am only a poor man with the King's head on my shoulders. You can easily see it isn't mine, for it's crooked; the Dragon didn't glue it on straight."

"Where, then, is your own head?" they asked.

"Locked up in the Dragon's cupboard," replied the poor fellow, beginning to weep.

"Here," cried the King's head; "stop this. You mustn't cry out of my eyes! The King never weeps."

"I beg pardon, your Majesty," said the wood-chopper, meekly, "I'll not do it again."

"Well, see that you don't," returned the head more cheerfully.

The people were greatly amazed at this, and took the wood-chopper to the palace, where all was soon explained.

When the Queen saw the King's head she immediately kissed it; but the King rebuked her, saying she must kiss only him.

"But it is your head," said the poor Queen.

"Probably it is," replied the King; "but it is on another man. You must confine yourself to kissing my wooden head."

"I'm sorry," sighed the Queen, "for I like to kiss the real head best."

"And so you shall," said the King's head; "I don't approve your kissing that wooden head at all."

The poor lady looked from one to the other in perplexity. Finally a happy thought occurred to her.

"Why don't you trade heads?" she asked.

“Just the thing!” cried the King; and, the wood-chopper consenting, the exchange was made, and the Monarch of Mo found himself in possession of his own head again, whereat he was so greatly pleased that he laughed long and merrily.

The wood-chopper, however, did not even smile. He couldn’t because of the wooden face. The head he had made for the King he now was compelled to wear himself.

“Bring hither the princesses,” commanded the King. “This good man shall choose his bride at once, for he has restored to me my own head.”

But when the princesses arrived and saw that the wood-chopper had a wooden head, they each and all refused to marry him, and begged so hard to escape that the King was in a quandary.

“I promised him one of my daughters,” he argued, “and a King never breaks his word.”

“But he hadn’t a wooden head then,” explained one of the girls.

The King realized the truth of this. Indeed, when he came to look carefully at the wooden head, he did not blame his daughters for not wishing to marry it. Should he force one of them to consent, it was not unlikely she would call her husband a blockhead — a term almost certain to cause trouble in any family.

After giving the matter deep thought, the King resolved to go to the Purple Dragon and oblige it to give up the wood-chopper’s head.

So all the fighting men in the kingdom were got together, and, having picked ripe swords off the sword-trees, they marched in a great body to the Dragon’s castle.

Now the Purple Dragon realized that if it attempted to fight all this army, it would perhaps be cut to pieces; so it retired within its castle and refused to come out.

The wood-chopper was a brave man.

“I’ll go in and fight the Dragon alone,” he said; and in he went. By this time the Dragon was both frightened and angry, and the moment it saw the man it rushed forward and made a snap at his head.

The wooden head came off at once, and the Dragon’s long, sharp teeth got stuck in the wood and would not come out again; so the monster was unable to do anything but flop its tail and groan.

The wood-chopper now ran to the cupboard, took out his head and placed it upon his shoulders where it belonged. Then he proudly walked out of the castle and was greeted with loud shouts by the army, which carried him back in triumph to the King’s palace.

And, now that he wore his own head again, one of the prettiest of the

young princesses willingly agreed to marry him; so the wedding ceremony was performed amidst great rejoicing.

THE THIRD SURPRISE: THE TRAMP DOG AND THE MONARCH'S LOST TEMPER

THE TRAMP DOG AND THE MONARCH'S LAST TEMPER

ONE day the Monarch of Mo, having nothing better to do, resolved to go hunting blackberries among the bushes that grew at the foot of the mountains.

So he put on an old crown that would not get tarnished if it rained, and, having found a tin pail in the pantry, started off without telling any one where he was going.

For some distance the path was a nice, smooth taffy, that was very agreeable to walk on; but as he got nearer the mountains the ground became gravelly, the stones being jackson-balls and gum-drops; so that his boots, which were a little green when he picked them, began to hurt his feet.

But the King was not easily discouraged, and kept on until he found the blackberry bushes, when he immediately began to fill his pail, the berries being remarkably big and sweet.

While thus occupied he heard a sound of footsteps coming down the mountain side, and presently a little dog ran out from the bushes and trotted up to him.

Now there were no dogs at all in Mo, and the King had never seen a creature like this before; therefore he was greatly surprised, and said:

"What are you, and where do you come from?"

The dog also was surprised at this question, and looked suspiciously at the King's tin pail; for many times wicked boys had tied such a pail to the end of his tail. In fact, that was the reason he had run away from home and found his way, by accident, to the Valley of Mo.

"My name is Prince," replied the gravely; "and I have come from a country beyond the mountains and the desert."

"Indeed! are you in truth a prince?" exclaimed the monarch; "then you will be welcome in my kingdom, where we always treat nobility with proper respect. But why do you have four feet?"

"Because six would be too many," replied the dog.

"But I have only two," said the King.

"I am sorry," said the dog, who was something of a wag, "because where I come from it is more fashionable to walk on four feet."

"I like to be in the fashion," remarked the King, thoughtfully; "but what am I to do, having only two legs?"

"Why, I suppose you could walk on your hands and feet," returned the dog with a laugh.

“So I will,” said the King, being pleased with the idea; “and you shall come to the palace with me and teach me all the fashions of the country from whence you came.”

The King got down on his hands and knees, and was delighted to find he could get along in this way very nicely.

“How am I to carry my pail?” he asked.

“In your mouth, of course,” replied the dog. This suggestion seeming a happy one, the King took the pail in his mouth and they started back toward the palace. But when his Majesty came to the gum-drops and jackson-balls they hurt his hands and knees, so that he groaned aloud. But the dog only laughed. Finally they reached a place where it was quite muddy. Of course the mud was only jelly, but it hadn’t dried up since the last rain. The dog jumped over the place nimbly enough, but when the King tried to do likewise he failed, and came down into the jelly with both hands and knees, and stuck fast.

Now the monarch had a very good temper, which he carried in his vest pocket; but as he passed over the gum- drop pebbles on his hands and knees this temper dropped out of his pocket, and, having lost it, he became very angry at the dog for getting him into such a scrape.

So he began to scold, and when he opened his mouth the pail dropped out and the berries were all spilled. This made the dog laugh more than ever, at which the King pulled himself out of the jelly, jumped to his feet, and began to chase the dog as fast as he could. Finally the dog climbed a tall tree where the King could not reach him, and when safe among the branches he looked down and said: “See how foolish a man becomes who tries to be in fashion rather than live as nature intended he should! You can no more be a dog than I can be a king; so hereafter, if you are wise, you will be content to walk on two legs.”

“There is much truth in what you say,” replied the Monarch of Mo. “Come with me to the palace, and you shall be forgiven; indeed, we shall have a fine feast in honor of your arrival.”

So the dog climbed down from the tree and followed the King to the palace, where all the courtiers were astonished to see so queer an animal, and made a great favorite of him.

After dinner the King invited the dog to take a walk around the grounds of the royal mansion, and they started out merrily enough. But the King’s boots had begun to hurt him again; for, as they did not fit, being picked green, they had rubbed his toes until he had corns on them. So when they reached the porch in front of the palace the King asked:

“My friend, what is good for corns?”

“Tight boots,” replied the dog, laughing; “but they are not very good for your feet.”

Now the King, not yet having found his lost temper, became exceedingly angry at this poor jest; so he rushed at the dog and gave it a tremendous kick.

Up into the air like a ball flew the dog, while the King, having hurt his toe by the kick, sat down on the door-step and nursed his foot while he watched the dog go farther and farther up, until it seemed like a tiny speck against the blue of the sky.

“I must have kicked harder than I thought,” said the King, ruefully; “there he goes, out of sight, and I shall never see him again!”

He now limped away into the back garden, where he picked a new pair of boots that would not hurt his feet; and while he was gone the dog began to fall down again. Of course he fell faster than he went up, and finally landed with a crash exactly on the King’s door-step. But so great was the force of the fall and so hard the door-step that the poor dog was flattened out like a pancake, and could not move a bit.

When the King came back he said:

“Hullo! some kind friend has brought me a new door-mat as a present,” and he leaned down and stroked the soft hair with much pleasure. Then he wiped his feet on the new mat and went into the palace to tell the Queen.

When her Majesty saw the nice, soft door-mat she declared it was too good to be left outside; so she brought it into the parlor and put it on the floor before the fire-place.

The good King was sorry he had treated the dog so harshly, and for fear he might do some other dreadful thing he went back to the place where he had lost his temper and searched until he found it again, when he put it carefully away in his pocket where it would stay.

Then he returned to the palace an entered the parlor; but as he passed the mat, his new boots were so clumsy, he stumbled against the edge and pushed the mat together into a roll.

Immediately the dog gave a bark, got upon its legs and said:

“Well, this is better! Now I can breathe again, but while I was so flat I could not draw a single breath.”

The monarch and his Queen were much surprised to find that what they had taken for a mat was only the dog, that had fallen so flat on their door-step; but they could not forbear laughing at his queer appearance. For, as the King had kicked the mat on the edge, the dog was more than six feet long, and no bigger around than a lead-pencil; which brought its font legs so far from its rear legs that it could scarcely turn around in the room without getting tangled up.

“But it is better than being a door-mat,” said the dog; and the King and Queen agreed with him in this.

Then the King went away to tell the people he had found the dog again, and when he left the palace he slammed the front door behind him. The dog had started to follow the King out, so when the front door slammed it hit the poor animal so sharp a blow on the nose that it pushed his body together again; and, lo and behold! there was the dog in his natural shape, just as he was before the King kicked him.

After this the dog and the King agreed very well; for the King was careful not to kick, since he had recovered his temper, and the dog took care not to say anything that would provoke the King to anger.

And one day the dog saved the Kingdom and all the Valley of Mo from destruction, as I shall tell you another time.

THE FOURTH SURPRISE: THE PECULIAR PAINS OF FRUITCAKE ISLAND

PRINCE ZINGLE, who was the eldest of all the princes of the Valley of Mo, at one time became much irritated because the King, his father, would not allow him to milk the cow with the golden horns. This cow was a great favorite with the King, because she gave as large a quantity of ice-cream at a milking as an ordinary cow does of milk, and in the warm days this was an agreeable luxury. The King liked to keep the cow with the golden horns for his own use and that of the Queen; so Prince Zingle thought he was being abused, having a great fondness for ice-cream himself.

To be sure, there was the great fountain of ice- cream soda-water playing constantly in the courtyard, which was free to every one; but the Prince longed for what he could not have.

Therefore, being filled with anger against his father, the King, he wandered away until he chanced to come near to the castle of the Purple Dragon.

When the wicked monster saw the Prince, it decided that here was a splendid opportunity to make mischief; so it said, politely:

"Good morning, King Zingle."

"I am not a king — I am only a prince," replied Zingle.

"What! not a king?" exclaimed the Dragon, as if surprised; "that is too bad."

"I can never be a king while my father lives," continued the Prince, "and it is impossible for him to die. So what can I do?"

"Since you ask my advice, I will tell you," answered the naughty Dragon. "Down near Rootbeer River, where the peanut trees grow, is a very deep hole in the ground. You must get the King to go and look into this hole, and while he is leaning over the edge, push him in. Of course, he will not die, for that, as you say, is impossible; but no one will know where to find him. So, your father being out of the way, you will be king in his place."

"That is surely good advice," said the Prince, "and I will go and do it at once. Then the cow with the golden horns will be mine, and I shall become the Monarch of Mo."

The Prince turned to go back to the palace, and as soon as he was out of sight, the horrid Dragon laughed to think what a fool it had made of the boy.

When Zingle saw his father he called him aside and said:

"Your Majesty, I have discovered something very funny at the bottom of the hole near the peanut trees. Come and see what it is."

So the King went with the Prince, without suspecting his evil design, and

while he leaned over the hole the Prince gave him a sudden push. The next moment down fell the Monarch of Mo — way to the bottom!

Then Prince Zingle went back to the palace and began to milk the cow with the golden horns.

Now when the King found himself at the bottom of the hole he at first did not know what to do; so he sat down and thought about it. Presently a happy idea came into his head. He knew if only he was at the other end of the hole, he would be at the top instead of the bottom, and could make his escape. So the King took hold of the hole, and exerting all his strength, turned the hole upside down. Being now at the top he stepped upon the ground and walked back to the palace, where he caught Prince Zingle milking the cow with the golden horns.

"Oh, ho!" he said, "you wish to be King, do you? Well, we'll see about that!" Then he took the naughty Prince by the ear and led him into the palace, where he locked him up in a room from which he could not escape.

The King now sat himself down in an easy chair and began to think on how he could best punish the Prince, but after an hour of deep thought he was unable to decide on anything that seemed a sufficient chastisement for so great an offense.

At last he resolved to consult the Wise Donkey.

The Wise Donkey lived in a pretty little house away at the end of the Valley, for he didn't like to mix with the gay life at the court. He had not always been wise, but at one time was a very stupid donkey indeed, and he acquired his wisdom in this way.

One Friday afternoon, just as school was letting out, the stupid donkey strayed into the school-house, and the teachers and scholars were all so anxious to get home that they never noticed the donkey, but locked him up in the school-house and went away without knowing he was there.

No one came into the building from Friday afternoon until Monday morning; so the donkey got very hungry, and certainly would have starved had he not chanced to taste of a geography that was sticking out from one of the desks. The hungry donkey decided it was not so very bad, so he ate it all up. Then he ate an arithmetic, an algebra, and two first readers. After that he lay down and went to sleep; but becoming hungry again he awoke and commenced on the school library, which he completely devoured. This library comprised all the solid and substantial wisdom in the Valley of Mo, and when the janitor opened the school-house door on Monday morning, all the books of learning in the whole land had been eaten up by the stupid donkey.

You can readily understand that after he had digested all this knowledge

he became very wise, and thereafter the King and the people often consulted the Wise Donkey when their own intelligence was at fault.

So now the monarch went to the donkey's house and told him of the Prince's wickedness, asking how he could best punish him.

The Wise Donkey thought about the matter for a moment and then replied:

"I do not know a worse punishment than a pain in the stomach. Among the books I ate in the school-house was a trigonometry, and before I had digested it I suffered very severe pains indeed."

"But I can not feed the Prince a trigonometry," returned the King. "You ate the last one yourself."

"True," answered the donkey; "but there are other things that cause pain in the stomach. You know there is a certain island in Rootbeer River that is made of fruit cake of a very rich quality. I advise you to put the Prince on this island and allow him nothing to eat except the fruit cake. Presently he will have violent pains in his stomach and will be punished as greatly as you could desire."

The King was well pleased with this plan, and having thanked the donkey for his wise advice hurried back to the palace.

Prince Zingle was now brought from his room and rowed in a boat to the Fruit Cake Island in Rootbeer River, where he was left without any way to escape. He knew how to swim, to be sure, but it was forbidden by law to swim in the Rootbeer, as many people came to this river to drink.

"You shall stay here," said the King, sternly, "until you are sorry for your wickedness; and you shall have nothing to eat but fruit cake."

The Prince laughed, because he thought the punishment was no punishment at all. When the King had rowed away in the boat and Zingle was left alone, he said to himself:

"Why, this is delightful! I shall have a jolly time here, and can eat all the cake I want, without any one scolding me for being greedy."

He broke off a large piece of the island where the raisins and citron were thickest, and commenced to eat it. But after a time he became tired of eating nothing but fruit cake, and longed for something to go with it. But the island did not contain a single thing except the cake of which it was composed.

Presently Prince Zingle began to have a pain inside him. He paid no attention to it at first, thinking it would pass away; but instead it grew more severe, so that he began to cry out; but no one heard him.

The pain steadily increased, and the Prince wept and rolled on the ground and began to feel exceeding sorry he had been so wicked. Finally he seized the telephone, which was connected with the palace, and called up the King.

“Hullo!” said the King’s voice, in reply; “what’s wanted?”

“I have a terrible pain,” said the Prince, with a groan, “and I’m very sorry indeed that I pushed your Majesty down the hole. If you’ll only take me off this dreadful island I’ll be the best prince in all the Valley from this time forth!”

So the King sent the boat and had the Prince brought back to the palace, where he forgave his naughty actions. Being a kind parent he next fed his suffering son a blossom from a medicine tree, which quickly relieved his pain and led him to appreciate the pleasure of repentance.

THE FIFTH SURPRISE: THE MONARCH CELEBRATES HIS BIRTHDAY

THERE were great festivities in the Valley of Mo when the King had a birthday. The jolly monarch was born so many years ago that so every one had forgotten the date. One of the Wise Men said the King was born in February; another declared it was in May, and a third figured the great event happened in October. So the King issued a royal decree that he should have three birthdays every year, in order to be on the safe side; and whenever he happened to think of it he put in an odd birthday or two for luck. The King's birthdays came to be regarded as very joyful events, for on these occasions festivities of unusual magnificence were held, and everybody in the kingdom was invited to participate.

On one occasion the King, suddenly recollecting he had not celebrated his birthday for several weeks, announced a royal festival on a most elaborate scale. The cream-puff crop was an unusually large one, and the bushes were hanging full of the delicious ripe puffs, which were highly prized by the people of Mo.

So all the maidens got out their best dresses and brightest ribbons, and the young men carefully brushed their hair and polished their boots, and soon the streets leading to the palace were thronged with gay merry- makers.

When the guests were all assembled a grand feast was served, in which the newly-picked cream puffs were an important item.

Then the King stood up at the head of the table and ordered his ruby casket to be brought him, and when the people heard this they at once became quiet and attentive, for the Ruby Casket was one of the most curious things in the Valley. It was given the King many years before by the sorceress, Maetta, and whenever it was opened something was found in it that no living person had seen before.

So the people, and even the King himself, always watched the opening of the Ruby Casket with much curiosity, for they never knew what would be disclosed.

The King placed the casket on a small table before him, and then, after a solemn look at the expectant faces, he said, slowly:

"Giggle-gaggle-goo!" which was the magic word that opened the box.

At once the lid flew back, and the King peered within and exclaimed: "Ha!"

This made the guests more excited than before, for they did not know what he was saying "ha!" about; and they held their breaths when the King put his thumb and finger into the box and drew out a little wooden man about

as big as my finger. He wore a blue jacket and a red cap and held a little brass horn in his hand.

The King stood the wooden man upon the table and then reached within the box and brought out another wooden man, dressed just the same as the other, and also holding a horn in his hand. This the King stood beside the first wooden man, and then took out another, and another, until ten little wooden men were standing in a row on the table, holding drums, and cymbals, and horns in their small, stiff hands.

"I declare," said the King, when he had stood them all up, "it's a little German band. But what a shame it is they can not play."

No sooner had the King uttered the word "play" than every little wooden man put his horn to his mouth, or beat his drum, or clashed his cymbal; and immediately they began to play such delicious music that all the people were delighted, and even the King clapped his hands in applause.

Just then from out the casket leaped a tiny Baby Elephant, about as large as a mouse, and began capering about on its toes. It was dressed in short, fluffy skirts, like those worn by a ballet-dancer, and it danced so funnily that all who saw it roared with laughter.

When the elephant stopped to rest, two pretty Green Frogs sprang from the casket and began to play leapfrog before the astonished guests, who had never before seen such a thing as a frog. The little green strangers jumped over each other quick as a flash, and finally one of them jumped down the other's throat. Then, as the Baby Elephant opened his mouth to yawn, the remaining frog jumped down the elephant's throat.

The audience was so much amused at this feat that the Baby Elephant thought he would see what he could do to please them; so he stood on his head and gave a great jump, and disappeared down his own throat, leaving the musicians to play by themselves.

Then all the young men caught the girls about their waists and began spinning around in a pretty dance of their own, and the fun continued until they were tired out.

The King thanked the tiny wooden musicians and put them back in the Ruby Casket. He did not offer to take up a collection for them, there being no money of any kind in the Valley of Mo. The casket was then carried back to the royal treasury, where it was guarded with much care when not in use.

Just then a young man approached the King, asking permission for the people to skate on the Crystal Lake, and his Majesty graciously consented.

As it was never cold in the Kingdom of Mo there was, of course, no ice for skating. But the Crystal Lake was composed of sugar-syrup, and the sun had candied the surface of the lake, so it had become solid enough to skate

on, and was, moreover, as smooth as glass.

It was not often the King allowed skating there, for he feared some one might break through the crust; but as it was his birthday he could refuse the people nothing. So presently hundreds of the boys and girls were skating swiftly on the Crystal Lake and having rare sport; for it was just as good as ice, without being cold or damp.

In the center there was one place where the crust was quite thin, and just as the merriment was at its height, crack! went the ice — or candy, rather — and down into the sugar-syrup sank the Princess Truella, and the Prince Jollikin, and the King's royal chamberlain, Nuphsed.

Down and down they went until they reached the bottom of the lake; and there they stood, stuck fast in the syrup and unable to move a bit, while all the people gathered on the shore to look at them, the lake being as clear as the clearest water.

Of course, this calamity put an end to further skating, and the King rushed around asking every one how he could get his daughter and his son and his royal chamberlain out of the mass. But no one could tell him.

Finally the King consulted the Wise Donkey; and after he had thought the matter over and consulted his learning, the donkey advised his Majesty to fish for them.

"Fish!" exclaimed the King; "how can we do that?"

"Take a fish-line and put a sinker on it, to make it sink through the syrup. Then bait the end of the line with the thing that each one of them likes best. In that way you can catch hold of them and draw them out of the lake."

"Well," said the King, "I'll try it, for of course you know what you are talking about."

"Have you ever eaten a geography?" demanded the Wise Donkey.

"No," said the King.

"Well, I have," declared the donkey, haughtily; "and what I don't know about lakes and such things isn't in the geography."

So the King went back to the Crystal Lake and got a strong fish-line, which he tied to the end of a long pole. Then he put a sinker on the end of the line and was ready for the bait.

"What does the Princess Truella like best?" he asked the Queen.

"I'm sure I do not know," replied the royal lady; "but you might try her with a kiss."

So one of the nicest young men sent a kiss to the Princess, and the King tied it to the end of the line and put it in the lake. The sinker carried it down through the sugar-syrup until the kiss was just before the sweet, red lips of the pretty Princess. She took the kiss at once, as the Queen had guessed, and

the King pulled up the line, with the Princess at the end of it, until he finally landed her on the shore.

Then all the people shouted for joy and the Queen took the Princess Truella home to change her clothes, for they were very sticky.

"What does the Prince Jollikin like best?" asked the King.

"A laugh!" replied a dozen at once, for every one knew the Prince's failing.

Then one of the girls laughed quite hard, and the King tied it to the end of the line and dropped it into the lake. The Prince caught the laugh at once, and was quickly drawn from the syrup and likewise sent home to change his clothes.

Then the King looked around on the people and asked:

"What does the Chamberlain Nuphsed like best?"

But they were all silent, for Nuphsed liked so many things it was difficult to say which he liked best. So again the King was obliged to go to the Wise Donkey, in order to find out how he should bait the line to catch the royal chamberlain.

The Wise Donkey happened to be busy that day over his own affairs and was annoyed at being consulted so frequently without receiving anything in return for his wisdom. But he pretended to consider the matter, as was his wont, and said:

"I believe the royal chamberlain is fond of apples. Try to catch him with a red apple."

At this the King and his people hunted all over the kingdom, and at last found a tree with one solitary red apple growing on a little branch nearly at the top. But unfortunately some one had sawed off the trunk of the tree, close up to the branches, and had carried it away and chopped it up for kindling wood. For this reason there was no way to climb the tree to secure the apple.

While the King and the people were considering how they might get into the tree, Prince Thinkabit came up to them and asked what they wanted.

"We want the apple," replied the King, "but some one has cut away the tree trunk, so that we can not climb up."

Prince Thinkabit rubbed the top of his head a minute, to get his brain into good working order. It was a habit he had acquired. Then he walked to the bank of the river, which was near, and whistled three times. Immediately a school of fishes swam up to him, and one of the biggest cried out:

"Good afternoon, Prince Thinkabit; what can we do for you?"

"I wish to borrow a flying fish for a few minutes," replied the Prince.

Scarcely had he spoken when a fish flew out of the river and perched upon his shoulder. Then he walked up to the tree and said to the fish: "Get me the

apple."

The flying fish at once flew into the tree and bit off the stem of the apple, which fell down and hit the King on the nose, for, unfortunately, he was standing exactly under it. Then the Prince thanked the flying fish and sent it back to the river, and the King, having first put a plaster over his nose, took the apple and started for the Crystal Lake, followed by all his people.

But when the apple was fastened to the fish-line and let down through the syrup to the royal chamberlain, Nuphsed refused to touch it.

"He doesn't like it," said the King, with a sigh; and he went again to the Wise Donkey.

"Didn't he want the apple?" asked the donkey, as if surprised. But you must know he was not surprised at all, as he had planned to get the apple for himself.

"No, indeed," replied the King. "We had an awful job to find the apple, too."

"Where is it?" inquired the donkey.

"Here," said the King, taking it out of his pocket.

The donkey took the apple, looked at it thoughtfully for a moment, and then ate it up and smacked his lips, for he was especially fond of red apples.

"What shall we do now?" asked the King.

"I believe the thing Nuphsed likes best is a kind word. Bait the line with that, and you may catch him."

So the King went again to the lake, and having put a kind word on the fish-line quickly succeeded in bringing the royal chamberlain to the shore in safety. You can well imagine poor Nuphsed was glad enough to be on dry land after his long immersion in the sugar- syrup.

And now that all had been rescued from the Crystal Lake, the King put a rope around the broken crust and stuck up a sign that said "Danger!" so that no one else would fall in.

After that the festivities began again, and as there were no further accidents the King's birthday ended very happily.

THE SIXTH SURPRISE: KING SCOWLEYOW AND HIS CAST-IRON MAN

ACROSS the mountains at the north of the Valley of Mo there reigned a wicked King named Scowleyow, whose people lived in caves and mines and dug iron and tin out of the rocks and melted them into bars. These bars they then carried away and sold for money.

King Scowleyow hated the Monarch of Mo and all his people, because they lived so happily and cared nothing for money; and he would have sent his army into the Valley to destroy the merry people who dwelt there had he not been afraid of the sharp swords that grew on their trees, which they knew so well how to use against their foes.

So King Scowleyow pondered for a long time how to destroy the Valley of Mo without getting hurt himself; and at last he hit on a plan he believed would succeed.

He put all his mechanics to work and built a great man out of cast-iron, with machinery inside of him. When he was wound up the Cast-iron Man could roar, and roll his eyes, and gnash his teeth and march across the Valley, crushing trees and houses to the earth as he went. For the Cast-iron Man was as tall as a church and as heavy as iron could make him, and each of his feet was as big as a barn.

It took a long time to build this man, as you may suppose; but King Scowleyow was so determined to ruin the pretty Valley of Mo that he made his men work night and day, and at last the Cast-iron Man was ready to be wound up and sent on his journey of destruction.

They stood him on the top of the mountain, with his face toward the Beautiful Valley, and began to wind him up. It took a hundred men a whole week to do this; but at last he was tightly wound, and the wicked King Scowleyow stood ready to touch the spring that made him go.

"One — two — three!" said the King, and touched the spring with his ringer.

The Cast-iron Man gave so terrible a roar that he even frightened the men who had made him; and then he rolled his eyes till they flashed fire, and gnashed his teeth till the noise sounded like thunder.

The next minute he raised one great foot and stepped forward, crushing fifty trees that stood in his path, and then away he went, striding down the mountain, destroying everything that stood in his way, and nearing with every step the Beautiful Valley of Mo.

The King and his people were having a game of ball that day, and the dog was acting as umpire. Suddenly, just as Prince Jollikin had made a home run

and everybody was applauding him, a terrible roaring noise sounded in their ears, and they heard a great crashing of trees on the mountain side and saw a monstrous man approaching the Valley.

The people were so frightened they stood perfectly still, being unable to move through surprise and terror; but the dog ran with all his might toward the mountain to see what was the matter. Just as the dog reached the foot of the mountain the Cast-iron Man came tramping along and stepped into the Valley, where he ruined in one instant a large bed of lady-fingers and a whole patch of ripe pumpkin pies. Indeed, the entire Valley would soon have been destroyed had not the Cast-iron Man stubbed his toe against the dog and fallen flat on his face, where he lay roaring and gnashing his teeth, but unable to do any further harm.

Presently the King and his people recovered from their fright and gathered around their prostrate foe, marveling at his great size and strength.

"Had you not tripped him up," said the King to the dog, "this giant would certainly have destroyed my kingdom. Who do you suppose was so wicked as to send this monster to crush us?"

"It must have been King Scowleyow," declared the dog, "for no one else would care to harm you, and the giant came from the direction of the wicked King's country."

"Yes," replied the monarch, thoughtfully, "it must indeed have been Scowleyow; and it was a very unkind act, for we never harmed him in any way. But what shall we do with this great man? If he is left here he will scare all the children with his roarings, and none of the ladies will care to walk near this end of the Valley. He is so heavy that not all of us together could lift him, and even if we succeeded we have no place to put him where he would be out of the way."

This was indeed true; so all the people sat down in a circle around the Cast-iron Man and thought upon the matter intently for the space of an hour.

Then the monarch asked, solemnly, as became the importance of the occasion:

"Has any one thought of a way to get rid of him?"

The people shook their heads gravely and thought deeply for another hour. At the end of that time the dog suddenly laughed, and called out in a voice so loud that it startled them:

"I have thought of a way!"

"Good!" exclaimed the King. "Let us hear your plan."

"You see," explained the dog, "the Cast-iron Man is now lying on his face. If we could only roll him over on to his back, and then raise him to his feet again, he would be turned around, and would march straight back to

where he came from, and do us no further harm."

"That is a capital idea," replied the King. "But how can we roll him over, or make him stand up?"

That puzzled them all for a while, but by and by Prince Thinkabit, who was a very clever young man, announced his readiness to undertake the job.

"First, bring me a feather," commanded the Prince.

The royal chamberlain hunted around and soon found for him a long, fluffy feather. Taking this in his hand the Prince approached the Cast-iron Man and tickled him under the left arm with the end of the feather.

"Ouch!" said the Cast-iron Man, giving a jump and rolling completely over, so that he lay on his back.

"Hurrah!" cried the people, clapping their hands with joy at this successful stratagem; "the Prince is a very wise Prince, indeed!"

Prince Thinkabit took off his hat and bowed politely to them in return for the compliment. Then he said:

"Bring me a pin."

So Nuphsed brought him a pin with a very sharp point, and the Prince took it and walked up to the Cast-iron Man, and gave him a sharp prod in the back with the point of the pin.

"Ouch!" again yelled the Cast-iron Man, giving at the same time such a great jump that he leaped square on his feet. But now, to their joy, they saw he was facing the mountains instead of the Valley.

As soon as the Cast-iron Man stood up the machinery began to work again, and he marched with great steps up the mountain side and over into the kingdom of the wicked Scowleyow, where he crushed the King and all his people, and laid waste the land wherever he went.

And that was their punishment for being envious of the good people of Mo.

As to the fate of the Cast-iron Man, he was wound up so tightly that he kept walking straight on until he reached the sea, where he stepped into the water, went down to the bottom, and stuck fast in the mud.

And I have no doubt he is there to this day.

THE SEVENTH SURPRISE: TIMTOM AND THE PRINCESS PATTYCAKE

NOW of all the monarch's daughters the most beautiful by far was the Princess Pattycake. The deep blue of her eyes made even the sky envious, and the moss roses blushed when they saw the delicate bloom on her cheeks. The long strands of her silken hair were brighter than sunbeams, while her ears were like two tiny pink shells from the seashore. Indeed, there was nothing in all the Valley so dainty and pretty as Princess Pattycake, and many young men would have loved her had they dared. But, alas! the Princess had a most terrible temper, and never was pleased with anything; so the young men, and even the old ones, were afraid to come near her.

She scolded from morning till night; she stamped her pretty foot with rage when any one spoke to her; and if ever her brothers tried to reason with her she boxed their ears so soundly that they were glad to let her alone. Even the good Queen could not love Pattycake as she did her other children, and the King often sighed when he thought of the ugly disposition of his beautiful daughter. Of course no one cared very much for her society, and she sat in her room all day long, refusing to join the others in their sports and games, and becoming more moody and bad-tempered the older she grew.

One day a young man came to the court to bring pickled peaches to his Majesty, the King. The youth's name was Timtom, and he lived so far away and came so seldom to court that never before had he seen the Princess Pattycake.

When he looked into her sweet, blue eyes he loved her at once for her beauty, and being both brave and bold he went directly to the King and asked for Pattycake's hand in marriage.

His Majesty was naturally surprised at so strange a request; so he said to the young man:

"What does the Princess say? Does she love you?"

"I do not know," replied Timtom, "for I have never spoken with her."

"Well," said the King, much amazed at the ignorance and temerity of the youth, "go and speak to my daughter about the matter, and then come and tell me what she replies."

Timtom went at once to the room where Princess Pattycake was moodily sitting, and said, boldly:

"I should like to marry you."

"What!" screamed the Princess, in a great rage; "marry me! Go away this instant, you impudent boy, or I shall throw my shoe at your head!"

Timtom was both surprised and shocked at this outburst, but he realized

that the Princess had a remarkably bad temper. Still he was not moved from his purpose, for she was so pretty he decided not to abandon the attempt to win her.

"Do not be angry, for I love you," he pleaded, looking bravely into Pattycake's blue eyes.

"Love me?" echoed the surprised Princess; "that is not possible! Every one else hates me."

"They do not hate you," ventured Timtom; "it is your temper they hate."

"But my temper and I are one," answered the Princess, harshly, as she stamped her foot.

"Surely that is not so," returned the young man, "for certainly I love you, while your temper I do not like a bit. Don't you think you could love me?"

"Perhaps I might, if you could cure my bad temper; but my temper will not allow me to love any one. In fact, I believe that unless you go away at once I shall be obliged to box your ears!"

There seemed to be no help for her, so Timtom left the room sadly, and going to the King, told him what she had said.

"Then that is the end of the matter," declared the King, "for no one can cure Pattycake of her bad temper."

"I am resolved to try, nevertheless," replied Timtom, "and, if I succeed, you must give me the Princess in marriage."

"I will, and my blessing into the bargain," answered the King, heartily.

Then Timtom left the court, and went back to his father's house, where he thought on the problem for a week and a day. At the end of that time he was no nearer solving it than he was before; but his mother, who had noticed that her boy was in trouble, now came to him to ask the cause of his sad looks. Timtom told her all about the Princess Pattycake, and of his love for her, and the evil temper that would not be cured.

His mother gave him her sympathy, and after some thought, said to him: "You must go to the sorceress Maëtta and ask her assistance. She is a good lady, and a friend to all the King's family. I am quite sure she will aid you, if only you can find your way to the castle in which she lives."

"Where is this castle?" asked Timtom, brightening up.

"Away to the south, in the midst of a thick wood," answered his mother.

"Then," said he, sturdily, "if this castle exists, I will surely find it, for to win Pattycake is my only hope of happiness."

The next day he set out on his journey, filled with the hope of finding Maëtta's castle and securing her assistance.

Before he had gone very far a snow-storm began to rage. Now, the snow-storms in Mo are different from ours, for the snow is popcorn, and on this

day it fell so thick and fast that poor Timtom had much difficulty in wading through it. He was obliged to stop frequently to rest, and ate a great deal of the popcorn that cumbered his path, for it was nicely buttered and salted.

Finally, to his joy, it stopped snowing, and then he was able to walk along easily until he came to the River of Needles.

When he looked on this river he was nearly discouraged, and could not think of a way to get across; for instead of water the river flowed a perfect stream of sharp, glittering needles.

Sitting down on the bank, he was wondering what he should do when to his astonishment a small but sharp and disagreeable voice said to him:

"Where are you going, stranger?"

Timtom looked down between his feet and saw a black spider, which sat on a blade of grass and watched him curiously.

"I am on my way to visit the sorceress Maëtta," replied Timtom; "But I can not get across the River of Needles."

"They are very sharp, and would make a thousand holes through you in an instant," remarked the spider, thoughtfully. "But perhaps I can help you. If you are willing to grant me a favor in return, I will gladly build a bridge, so you may cross the river in safety."

"What is the favor?" he asked.

"I have lost an eye, and you must ask the sorceress to give me a new one, for I can see but half as well as I could before."

"I will gladly do this for you," said Timtom.

"Very well; then I will build you a bridge," promised the spider; "but if you have not the eye with you when you return I shall destroy the bridge, and you will never be able to get home again."

The young man agreed to this, for he was anxious to proceed. So the spider threw a web across the river, and then another, and another, until it had made a bridge of spider-web strong enough for Timtom to cross over.

It bent and swayed when his weight was on the slender bridge, but it did not break, and after he was safe across he thanked the spider and renewed his promise to bring back the eye. Then he hurried away on his journey, for he had lost much time at the river.

But, to his dismay, the young man shortly came to a deep gulf, that barred his way as completely as had the River of Needles. He peered down into it and saw it had no bottom, but opened away off at the other side of the world. Here was an obstacle which might well dishearten the boldest traveler, and Timtom was so grieved that he sat down on the brink and wept tears of disappointment.

"What is troubling you?" asked a soft voice in his ear.

Turning his head the youth saw a beautiful white bird sitting beside him.

"I wish to visit the castle of the sorceress Maëtta on very important business," he replied, "but I can not get over the gulf."

"I could carry you over with ease," said the bird, "and shall gladly do so if, in return, you promise to grant me one favor."

"What is the favor?" inquired Timtom.

"I have forgotten my song, through having a sore throat for a long time," replied the bird. "So, try as I may, I can not sing a single note. If you will agree to bring me a new song from the sorceress I will take you over the gulf, and bring you back when you return. But unless you bring the song I shall not carry you over again."

Timtom joyfully agreed to this bargain, and then, sitting on the bird's neck, he was borne safely across the deep gulf.

After continuing his journey for an hour without further interruption he saw before him the edge of a great wood, and knew that in the midst of this forest of trees was the castle of Maëtta.

He thought then that his difficulties were all over, and tramped bravely on until he reached the wood. What, now, was the youth's horror on discovering on one side of his path a great lion, crouched ready to spring on any one who ventured to enter the wood, while on the other side was a monstrous tiger, likewise prepared to attack any intruder. The fierce beasts were growling terribly, and their eyes glowed like balls of fire.

Timtom gladly would have turned back had such a thing been possible, for his heart was full of fear. But he remembered that without the bird's song and the spider's eye he could never reach home again. He also thought of the pretty face of Princess Pattycake, and this gave him courage. Resolving to perish, if need be, rather than fail in his adventure, the youth stepped boldly forward, and when he approached the snarling guardians of the forest he gave one bound and dashed into the wood.

At the same moment the lion leaped at him from one side and the tiger from the other, and no doubt they would have devoured him had not Timtom's foot slipped just then and thrown him flat on the ground. The lion and the tiger therefore met in mid air, and each one thinking it had hold of Timtom, tried to tear him to pieces, with the result that in a few moments they had devoured each other instead of him.

The youth now strode rapidly through the wood, and was getting along famously when he came to a high wall of jasper that completely blocked his way. It was smooth as glass, and Timtom saw no way of climbing over it.

While he stood wondering how he might overcome this new obstacle a gray rabbit hopped out from the bushes and asked:

“Where do you wish to go, stranger?”

“To the castle of the sorceress Maëtta,” answered Timtom.

“Well, perhaps I can assist you,” said the rabbit. “I need a new tail badly, for my old one is merely a stump, and no use at all in fly-time. If you will be kind enough to get me a new tail from the sorceress Maëtta — a long, nice, bushy tail — I will dig under the wall, and so make a passage for you to the other side.”

“I shall be pleased to return the favor by bringing you the tail,” declared Timtom, eagerly.

“Very well; then you shall see how fast I can work,” returned the rabbit. Immediately it began digging away with its little paws, and in a very short time had made a hole large enough for Timtom to crawl under the wall.

“If you do not bring the tail,” said the rabbit, in a warning voice, “I shall fill up the hole again, so that you will be unable to get back.”

“Oh, I shall bring the tail, never fear,” answered the youth, and hurried away toward the castle of Maëtta, which was now visible through the trees.

The castle was built of pure, white marble, and was very big and beautiful. It stood in a lovely garden filled with blue roses and pink buttercups, where fountains of gold spouted showers of diamonds, and rubies, and emeralds, and amethysts, all of which sparkled in the sun so gorgeously that it made Timtom’s eyes ache just to look at them.

However, he had not come to admire these things, gorgeous and beautiful though they were, but to win the Princess Pattycake; so he walked to the entrance of the castle, and seeing no one about, entered the great door-way and passed through.

He found himself in a passage-way covered with mother-of-pearl, where many electric lights were hidden in shells of most exquisite tintings. At the other end of the passage was a door studded with costly gems.

Timtom walked up to this door and knocked on it. Immediately it swung open, and the youth found himself in a chamber entirely covered with diamonds. In the center was a large diamond throne, and on this sat Maëtta, clothed in a pure white gown, with a crown of diamonds on her brow and in her hand a golden scepter tipped with one enormous diamond that glowed like a ball of fire. Above the throne was a diamond-covered chandelier, with hundreds of electric lights, and these made the Grand Chamber of Diamonds glitter so brightly that Timtom was nearly blinded, and had to shade his eyes with his hand.

But after a few moments he grew accustomed to the brightness and advancing to the throne fell on his knees before the sorceress and begged her earnestly to grant him her assistance.

Maëtta was the most beautiful woman in all the world, but she was likewise gracious and kind. So she smiled sweetly on the youth, bidding him, in a voice like a silver bell, to arise from his knees and sit before her. Timtom obeyed and looked around for a chair, but could see none in the room. The lady made a motion with her scepter and instantly at his side appeared a splendid diamond chair, in which the young man seated himself, finding it remarkably comfortable.

"Tell me what you desire," said the sorceress, in her sweet voice.

"I love the Princess Pattycake," replied Timtom, without hesitation. "But she has so evil a disposition that she has refused to marry me unless I am able to cure her of her bad temper, which not only makes her miserable but ruins the pleasure of every one about her. So, knowing your power and the kindness of your heart, I have been bold enough to seek your castle, that I might crave your assistance, without which I can not hope to accomplish my purpose."

Maëtta waved her scepter thrice above her head, and a golden pill dropped at Timtom's feet.

"Your request is granted," she said. "If you can induce the Princess to swallow this pill her evil temper will disappear, and I know she will love you dearly for having cured her. Take great care of it, for if it should be lost I can not give you another. Do you wish me to grant any other request before you return to the court?"

Then Timtom remembered the rabbit, and the bird, and the spider, and told Maëtta how he had promised to bring back a gift for each of them.

So the kind sorceress gave him a nice, bushy tail for the rabbit, and a very pretty song for the bird, and a new, bright eye for the spider. These Timtom put in a little red box and placed the box carefully in his pocket. But the golden pill he tied into the corner of his handkerchief, for that was more precious than the rest.

Having thanked the generous lady for her kindness and respectfully kissed the white hand she held out to him, Timtom left the Chamber of Diamonds and was soon proceeding joyfully on his homeward way.

In a short time he reached the wall of jasper, but the rabbit was not to be seen. So, while he awaited its coming, he lay down to rest, and being tired by the long journey was soon fast asleep. And while he slept a Sly Fox stole out from the wood and discovered Timtom lying on the ground.

"Oh, ho!" said the Sly Fox to himself, "this young man has been to visit the sorceress, and I'll warrant he has some fine gift from her in that little red box I see sticking out from his pocket. I must try to steal that box and see what is in it!"

Then, while the youth slumbered, unconscious of danger, the Sly Fox carefully drew the little red box from his pocket, and, taking it in his mouth, ran off into the woods with it.

Soon after this the rabbit came back, and when it saw Timtom lying asleep it awakened him and asked:

"Where is my new tail?"

"Oh, I have brought you a fine one," replied Timtom, with a smile. "It is in this little red box." But when he searched for the box he discovered it had been stolen.

So great was his distress at the loss that the gray rabbit was sorry for him.

"I shall never be able to get home again," he moaned, weeping tears of despair, "for all the gifts Maëtta gave me are now lost forever!"

"Never mind," said the rabbit, "I shall allow you to go under the wall without giving me the tail, for I know you tried to keep your promise. I suppose I can make this stubby tail do a while longer, since it is the only one I ever possessed. But beware when you come to the bird and the spider, for they will not be so kind to you as I am. The bird has no heart at all, and the spider's heart is hard as a stone. Still I advise you to keep up your courage, for if you are brave and fearless you may succeed in getting home, after all. If you can not cross the gulf and the River of Needles, you are welcome to come back and live with me."

Hearing this, Timtom dried his eyes and thanked the kind rabbit, after which he crawled under the wall and resumed his journey. He became more cheerful as he trudged along, for the golden pill was still safe in the corner of his handkerchief.

When he came to the white bird and began to explain how it was he had lost the song and could not keep his promise, the bird became very angry and refused to listen to his excuses. Nor could he induce it to carry him again across the gulf.

"I shall keep my word," declared the bird, stiffly; "for I warned you that if you returned without the song I should refuse to assist you further."

Poor Timtom was at his wits' end to know what to do; so he sat down near the brink of the gulf and twirled his thumbs and tried to keep up his courage and think of some plan, while the white bird strutted around in a cold and stately manner.

Now it seems that just about this time the Sly Fox reached his den and opened the little red box to see what was in it. The spider's eye, being small, rolled out into the moss and was lost. The fox thought he would put the bushy tail on himself and see if it would not add to his beauty, and while he did this the song escaped from the box and was blown by the wind directly to

the spot where Timtom was sitting beside the gulf.

He happened to hear the song coming, so he took off his hat and caught it, after which he called to the bird that he had found the song again.

“Then I shall keep my promise,” said the bird. “First, however, let me try the song and see if it is suited to my voice.”

So he tried the song and liked it fairly well.

“It sounds something like a comic opera,” said the bird, “but, after all, it will serve my purpose very nicely.”

A minute later Timtom rejoiced to find himself on the other side of the gulf, and so much nearer home. But when he came to the River of Needles there was more trouble in store for him, for the spider became so angry at the loss of its eye that it tore down the spider-web bridge, and refused to build another.

This was indeed discouraging to the traveler, and he sat down beside the river and looked longingly at the farther shore. The spider paid no attention to him, but curled up and went to sleep, and the needles looked at him curiously out of their small eyes as they flowed by in an endless stream.

After a time a wren came flying along, and when it noticed the look of despair on Timtom’s face the little creature perched on his shoulder and asked:

“What is your trouble, young man?”

Timtom related his adventures to the sympathetic wren, and when he came to the loss of the spider’s eye and the refusal of the spiteful creature to allow him to cross the bridge, the wren exclaimed, with every appearance of surprise:

“A spider’s eye, did you say? Why, I believe that is what I have here in my claw!”

“Where?” cried Timtom, eagerly.

The wren hopped into his lap, and carefully opening one of its tiny claws disclosed the identical spider’s eye which Maëtta had given him.

“That is wonderful!” exclaimed Timtom, in amazement. “But where did you get it?”

“I found it in the wood, hidden in the moss near the den of the Sly Fox. It is so bright and sparkling I thought I would take it home for my children to play with. But now, as you seem to want it so badly, I shall have much pleasure in restoring it to you.”

Timtom thanked the little wren most gratefully, and called to the spider to come and get its eye. When the spider tried the eye, and found that it fitted perfectly and was even brighter than the old one, it became very polite to the young man, and soon built the bridge again.

Having passed over the glittering needles in safety Timtom pushed forward on his way, being urged to haste by the delays he had suffered. When he reached the place where he had encountered the snow-storm, he found the birds had eaten all the pop-corn, so he was able to proceed without interruption.

At last he reached the Monarch of Mo's palace and demanded an audience with the Princess Pattycake. But the young lady, being in an especially bad temper that day, positively refused to see him.

Having overcome so many obstacles, Timtom did not intend to be thwarted by a sulky girl, so he walked boldly to the room where the Princess sat alone, every one being afraid to go near her.

"Good day, my dear Pattycake," he said pleasantly; "I have come to cure your bad temper."

"I do not want to be cured!" cried the Princess, angrily. "Go away at once, or I shall hurt you!"

"I shall not go away until you have promised to marry me," replied Timtom, firmly.

At this Pattycake began to scream with rage, and threw her shoe straight at his head. Timtom dodged the shoe and paid no attention to the naughty action, but continued to look at the pretty Princess smilingly. Seeing this, Pattycake rushed forward and seizing him by his hair began to pull with all her strength. At the same time she opened her mouth to scream, and while it was open Timtom threw the golden pill down her throat.

Immediately the Princess released his hair and sank at his feet sobbing and trembling, while she covered her pretty face with her hands to hide her blushes and shame.

Timtom tenderly patted her bowed head, and tried to comfort her, saying:

"Do not weep, sweetheart; for the bad temper has left you at last, and now every one will love you dearly."

"Can you forgive me for having been so naughty?" asked Pattycake, looking up at him pleadingly from her sweet blue eyes.

"I have forgiven you already," answered Timtom, promptly; "for it was not you, but the temper, that made you so naughty."

The Princess Pattycake dried her tears and kissed Timtom, promising to marry him; and together they went to seek the King and Queen. Those good people were greatly delighted at the change in their daughter, and consented at once to the betrothal.

A week later there was a great feast in the Valley of Mo, and much rejoicing among the people, for it was the wedding-day of Timtom and the Princess Pattycake.

THE EIGHTH SURPRISE: THE BRAVERY OF PRINCE JOLLIKIN

THERE is no country so delightful but that it suffers some disadvantages, and so it was with the Valley of Mo. At times the good people were obliged to leave their games and sports to defend themselves against a foe or some threatened disaster. But there was one danger they never suspected, which at last came upon them very suddenly.

Away at the eastern end of the Valley was a rough plain, composed entirely of loaf sugar covered with boulders of rock candy which were piled up in great masses reaching nearly to the foot of the mountains, containing many caves and recesses.

The people seldom came here, as there was nothing to tempt them, the rock candy being very hard and difficult to walk on.

In one of the great hollows formed by the rock candy lived a monstrous Gigaboo, completely shut in by the walls of its cavern. It had been growing and growing for so many years that it had attained an enormous size.

For fear you may not know what a Gigaboo is I shall describe this one. Its body was round, like that of a turtle, and on its back was a thick shell. From the center of the body rose a long neck, much like that of a goose, with a most horrible looking head perched on the top of it. This head was round as a ball, and had four mouths on the sides of it and seven eyes set in a circle and projecting several inches from the head. The Gigaboo walked on ten short but thick legs, and in front of its body were two long arms, tipped with claws like those of a lobster. So sharp and strong were these claws that the creature could pinch a tree in two easily. Its eyes were remarkably bright and glittering, one being red in color, another green, and the others yellow, blue, black, purple and crimson.

It was a dreadful monster to see — only no one had yet seen it, for it had grown up in the confinement of its cave.

But one day the Gigaboo became so big and strong that in turning around it broke down the walls of the cavern, and finding itself at liberty, the monster walked out into the lovely Valley of Mo to see how much evil it could do.

The first thing the Gigaboo came to was a large orchard of preserved apricots, and after eating a great quantity of the preserves it wilfully cut off the trees with its sharp claws and utterly ruined them. Why the Gigaboo should have done this I can not tell; but scientists say these creatures are by nature destructive, and love to ruin everything they come across.

One of the people, being in the neighborhood, came on the monster and

witnessed its terrible deeds; whereupon he ran in great terror to tell the King that the Gigaboo was on them and ready to destroy the entire valley. Although no one had ever before seen a Gigaboo, or even heard of one, the news was so serious that in a short time the King and many of his people came to the place where the monster was, all having hastily armed themselves with swords and spears.

But when they saw the Gigaboo they were afraid, and stood gazing at it in alarm, without knowing what to do or how to attack it.

"Who among us can hope to conquer this great beast?" asked the King, in dismay. "Yet something must be done, or soon we shall not have a tree left standing in all the Valley of Mo." The people looked at one another in a frightened way, but no one volunteered his services or offered to advise the monarch what to do.

At length Prince Jollikin, who had been watching the monster earnestly, stepped forward and offered to fight the Gigaboo alone.

"In a matter of this kind," said he, "one man is as good as a dozen. So you will all stand back while I see where the beast can best be attacked."

"Is your sword sharp?" asked his father, the King, anxiously.

"It was the sharpest on the tree," replied the Prince. "If I fail to kill the monster, at least it can not kill me, although it may cause me some annoyance. At any rate, our trees must be saved, so I will do the best I can."

With this manly speech he walked straight toward the Gigaboo, which, when it saw him approaching, raised and lowered its long neck and twirled its head around, so that all the seven eyes might get a glimpse of its enemy.

Now you must remember, when you read what follows, that no inhabitant of the Valley of Mo can ever be killed by anything. If one is cut to pieces, the pieces still live; and, although this seems strange, you will find, if you ever go to this queer Valley, that it is true. Perhaps it was the knowledge of this fact that made Prince Jollikin so courageous.

"If I can but manage to cut off that horrible head with my sword," thought he, "the beast will surely die."

So the Prince rushed forward and made a powerful stroke at its neck; but the blow fell short, and cut off, instead, one of the Gigaboo's ten legs. Quick as lightning the monster put out a claw and nipped the Prince's arm which held the sword, cutting it from its body. As the sword fell the Prince caught it in his other hand and struck again; but the blow fell on the beast's shell, and did no harm.

The Gigaboo, now very angry, at once nipped off the Prince's left arm with one of its claws, and his head with the other. The arm fell on the ground and the head rolled down a little hill behind some bonbon bushes. The

Prince, having lost both arms, and his head as well, now abandoned the fight and turned to run, knowing it would be folly to resist the monster further. But the Gigaboo gave chase, and so swiftly did its nine legs carry it that soon it overtook the Prince and nipped off both his legs.

Then, its seven eyes flashing with anger, the Gigaboo turned toward the rest of the people, as if seeking a new enemy; but the brave Men of Mo, seeing the sad plight of their Prince and being afraid of the awful nippers on the beast's claws, decided to run away; which they did, uttering as they went loud cries of terror.

But had they looked back they might not have gone so fast nor so far; for when the Gigaboo heard their cries it, in turn, became frightened, having been accustomed all its life to silence; so that it rushed back to its cavern of rock candy and hid itself among the boulders.

When Prince Jollikin's head stopped rolling, he opened his eyes and looked about him, but could see no one; for the people and the Gigaboo had now gone. So, being unable to move, he decided to lie quiet for a time, and this was not a pleasant thing for an active young man like the Prince to do. To be sure, he could wiggle his ears a bit, and wink his eyes; but that was the extent of his powers. After a few minutes, because he had a cheerful disposition and wished to keep himself amused, he began to whistle a popular song; and then, becoming interested in the tune, he whistled it over again with variations.

The Prince's left leg, lying a short distance away, heard his whistle, and, recognizing the variations, at once ran up to the head.

"Well," said the Prince, "here is a part of me, at any rate. I wonder where the rest of me can be."

Just then, hearing the sound of his voice, the right leg ran up to the head. "Where is my body?" asked the Prince. But the legs did not know.

"Pick up my head and place it on top of my legs," continued the Prince; "then, with my eyes and your feet, we can hunt around until we find the rest of me."

Obeying this command, the legs took the head and started off; and perhaps you can imagine how funny the Prince's head looked perched on his legs, with neither body nor arms.

After a careful search they found the body lying upon the ground at the foot of a shrimp-salad tree. But nothing more could be done without the arms; so they next searched for those, and, having discovered them, the legs kicked them to where the body lay.

The arms now took the head from the legs and put the legs on the body where they belonged. Then the right arm stuck the left arm in its place, after

which the left arm picked up the right arm and placed it also where it belonged. Then all that remained was for the Prince to place his head on his shoulders, and there he was — as good as new!

He picked up his sword, and was feeling himself all over to see if he was put together right, when he chanced to look up and saw the Gigaboo again coming toward him. The beast had recovered from its fright, and, tempted by its former success, again ventured forth.

But Prince Jollikin did not intend to be cut to pieces a second time. He quickly climbed a tree and hid himself among the branches.

Presently the Gigaboo came to the tree and reached its head up to eat a cranberry tart. Quick as a flash the Prince swung his sword downward, and so true was his stroke that he cut off the monster's head with ease.

Then the Gigaboo rolled over on its back and died, for wild and ferocious beasts may be killed in Mo as well as in other parts of the world. Having vanquished his enemy, Prince Jollikin climbed down from the tree and went to tell the people that the Gigaboo was dead.

When they heard this joyful news they gave their Prince three cheers, and loved him better than ever for his bravery. The King was so pleased that he presented his son with a tin badge, set with diamonds, on the back of which was engraved the picture of a Gigaboo.

Although Prince Jollikin was glad to be the hero of his nation, and enjoyed the triumph of having been able to conquer his ferocious enemy, he did not escape some inconvenience. For, as the result of his adventure, he found himself very stiff in the joints for several days after his fight with the Gigaboo.

THE NINTH SURPRISE: THE WIZARD AND THE PRINCESS

WITHIN the depths of the mountains which bordered the Valley of Mo to the east lived a Wicked Wizard in a cavern of rubies. It was many, many feet below the surface of the earth and cut off entirely from the rest of the world, save for one passage which led through dangerous caves and tunnels to the top of the highest mountain. So that, in order to get out of his cavern, the Wizard was obliged to come to this mountain top, and from there descend to the outside world.

The Wizard lived all alone; but he did not mind that, for his thoughts were always on his books and studies, and he seldom showed himself on the surface of the earth. But when he did go out every one laughed at him; for this powerful magician was no taller than my knee, and was very old and wrinkled, so that he looked comical indeed beside an ordinary man.

The Wizard was nearly as sensitive as he was wicked, and was sorry he had not grown as big as other people; so the laughter that always greeted him made him angry.

At last he determined to find some magical compound that would make him grow bigger. He shut himself up in his cave and searched diligently amongst his books until, finally, he found a formula recommended by some dead and gone magician as sure to make any one grow a foot each day so long as the dose was taken. Most of the ingredients were quite easy to procure, being such as spiders' livers, kerosene oil and the teeth of canary birds, mixed together in a boiling caldron. But the last item of the recipe was so unusual that it made the Wizard scratch his head in perplexity.

It was the big toe of a young and beautiful princess.

The Wizard thought on the matter for three days, but nowhere could he think of a young and beautiful princess who would willingly part with her big toe — even that he might grow to be as big as he wished.

Then, as such a thing was not to be come by honestly, the Wicked Wizard resolved to steal it. So he went through all the caves and passages until he came to the mountain-top. Standing on the point of a rock he placed one hand on his chin and the other on the back of his neck, and then recited the following magical incantation:

"I wish to go
To steal the big toe
Of a princess I know,
In order to grow
Quite big. And so

I'll change, to a crow!"

No sooner had he spoken the words than he changed into a Black Crow, and flew away into the Valley of Mo, where he hid himself in a tall tree that grew near the King's palace.

That morning, as the Princess Truella was lying late in bed, with one of her dainty pink feet sticking out from under the covers, in through the window fluttered a Black Crow, which picked off her big toe and immediately flew away with it.

The Princess awoke with a scream and was horrified to find her beautiful foot ruined by the loss of her biggest toe. When the King and Queen and the Princes and Princesses, having heard her outcry, came running in to see what was the matter, they were each and all very indignant at the theft.

But, search as they might, nowhere could they find the audacious Black Crow, nor the Princess' big toe, and the whole court was in despair.

Finally Timtom, who was now a Prince, suggested that Truella seek assistance from the kind sorceress Maëtta, who had helped him out of his own difficulties. The Princess thought well of this idea, and determined to undertake a journey to the castle.

She whistled for her favorite Stork, and soon the great bird came to her side. It was pure white, and of an extraordinary size. When the Stork had been saddled the Princess kissed her father and mother good by and seated herself on the bird's back, when it instantly rose into the air and flew away toward the castle of Maëtta.

Traveling in this pleasant way, high in the air, the Princess crossed the River of Needles and the deep gulf and the dangerous wood, and at last was set down safe at the castle gates.

Maëtta welcomed the pretty Princess very cordially and, on being told of her misfortune, at once agreed to assist her. So the sorceress consulted her Oracle, which told her truly anything she wanted to know, and then said to the Princess:

"Your toe is in the possession of the Wicked Wizard who lives in the ruby cave under the mountains. In order to recover it you must go yourself to seek it; but I warn you that the Wizard will put every obstacle in your path to prevent your finding the toe and taking it from him."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Truella, "I am afraid I shall never be able to get my toe from such a horrid man."

"Have courage, and trust in me," returned Maëtta, "for I believe my powers are stronger than his. I shall now furnish you the weapons you must use to overcome him. Here is a magic umbrella, and in this basket which you must carry on your arm, you will find a lump of putty, an iron ball, a mirror,

a package of chewing-gum and a magic veil, all of which will be very useful. Here, also, is a winged dagger, with which you must protect yourself if the Wizard attempts to harm you. With these enchanted weapons and a brave heart I believe you will succeed. So kiss me, my child, and start on your journey."

Truella thanked the kind sorceress, and mounting the saddle of her Stork flew away toward the high mountain in which dwelt the Wicked Wizard.

But the naughty man, by means of his black magic, saw her coming, and sent such a fierce wind to blow against her that it prevented the Stork from making any headway through the air. Therefore, in spite of his huge wings and remarkable strength, the brave bird was unable to get an inch nearer the mountain.

When Truella saw this she put up the umbrella and held it in front of the Stork; whereupon, being shielded from the wind, he flew easily to the mountain.

The Princess now dismounted and, looking into the hole at the top of the mountain, discovered a flight of stairs leading downward.

Taking her basket on her arm, as she had been directed, Truella walked boldly down the steps until she came to a door. But then she shrank back in affright, for before the door was coiled a great serpent, not quite a mile long and fully as large around as a stick of wood. The girl knew she must manage in some way to overcome this terrible creature, so when the serpent opened its mouth and raised its head to bite her, she reached within the basket, and finding the lump of putty, threw it quickly into the serpent's mouth. The creature snapped its jaws together so suddenly that its teeth stuck fast in the putty, and this made it so furious that it wriggled around until it had tied itself into a hard knot, and could wriggle no longer.

Seeing there was no further danger, the Princess passed the door and entered a large cave, which was but dimly lighted. While she paused to allow her eyes to become accustomed to the darkness, so she might see her way, a faint rustling sound reached her ears, and a moment later there came toward her a hideous old woman, lean and bent, with wrinkled face and piercing black eyes. She had only one tooth, but that was of enormous size, being nearly as large as the tusk of an elephant; and it curved out of her mouth and down under her chin, where it ended in a very sharp point. Her finger-nails were a foot long, and they, also, were very sharp and strong.

"What are you doing here?" asked the old woman, in a harsh voice, while she moved her horrible fingers, as if about to scratch out Truella's eyes.

"I came to see the Wizard," said the Princess, calmly, "and if you will allow me to pass I shall give you, in return for the favor, some delicious

chewing-gum."

"Chewing-gum!" croaked the old woman, "what is that?"

"It is a dainty of which all ladies are very fond," replied Truella, taking the packet from her basket. "This is it."

The old woman hesitated a moment, and then said:

"Well, I'll try the chewing-gum and see what it is like; there will be plenty of time to scratch out your eyes afterwards."

She placed the gum in her mouth and tried to chew it, but when she shut her jaws together the great tusk went straight through her neck and came out at the back. The old hag gave a scream and put up her hands to pull out the tusk again, but so great was her excitement that in her haste she scratched out both her own eyes, and could no longer see where the Princess was standing.

So Truella ran through the cave and came to, a door, on which she knocked. Instantly it flew open, and before her she saw another cave, this time brightly lighted, but filled with knives and daggers, which were flying about in every direction. To enter this cave was impossible, for the Princess saw she would immediately be pierced by dozens of the sharp daggers. So she hesitated for a time, not knowing how to proceed; but, chancing to remember her basket, she took from it the iron ball, which she tossed into the center of the Cave of Daggers. At once the dangerous weapons began to strike against the ball, and as soon as they touched it they were broken and fell to the floor. In a short time every one of the knives and daggers had been spoiled by contact with the iron ball, and Truella passed safely through the cave and came to another long stairway leading downward. At the bottom of this she reached the third cave, and came upon a horrible monster.

It had the body of a zebra, the legs of a rhinoceros, the neck of a giraffe, the head of a bull dog, and three corrugated tails. This monster at once began to growl and run toward her, showing its terrible teeth and lashing its three tails. The Princess snatched the mirror from her basket and, as the creature came near her, she held the glittering surface before its eyes. It gave one look into the mirror and fell lifeless at her feet, being frightened to death by its own reflection in the mirror.

Truella now walked through several more caves and descended a long flight of stairs, which brought her to another door, on which was a sign that read:

"A. WIZARD, Esq.,
Office hours:
From 10:45 until
a quarter to 11."

The Princess, knowing that she had now reached the den of the Wizard

who had stolen her big toe, knocked boldly on the door.

"Come in!" called a voice.

Truella obeyed, and found herself in a large cave, the walls of which were lined with rubies. In each of the four corners were big electric lights, and these, shining upon the rubies, filled the cave with a deep red glow. The Wizard himself sat at his desk in one of the corners, and when the Princess entered he looked up and exclaimed:

"What! Is it you? Really, I did not expect to see you. How did you manage to pass the guards I placed within the caves and passageways to prevent your coming here?"

"Oh, that was not difficult," answered Truella, "for you must know I am protected by a power stronger than your own."

The Wizard was much annoyed at this reply, for he knew it was true, and that only by cunning could he hope to oppose the pretty Princess. Still, he was resolved not to give up the big toe unless obliged to, for it was necessary to complete the magic compound.

"What do you want?" he asked, after a moment's thought.

"I want the toe you stole from me while I was asleep."

The Wizard knew it was useless to deny the theft, so he replied:

"Very well; take a chair, and I will see if I can find it."

But Truella feared the little man was deceiving her; so when he turned his back she took the magic veil from her basket and threw it over her head. Immediately it began unfolding until it covered her completely, from head to foot.

The Wizard walked over to a cupboard, which he opened; and, while pretending to search for the toe, he suddenly turned on a big faucet that was concealed under a shelf. At once the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed, and from the arched ceiling of the cavern drops of fire began to fall, coming thicker and thicker until a perfect shower of burning drops filled the room.

These fell hissing upon Truella's veil, but could not penetrate it, for they all bounded off and were scattered upon the rocky floor, where they soon burned themselves out. Seeing this the Wizard gave a sigh of disappointment and turned off the faucet, when the fire-drops ceased to fall.

"Please excuse this little interruption," he said, as if he had not been the cause of it himself. "I'll find the toe in a few minutes. I must have mislaid it somewhere."

But Truella suspected he was up to more mischief, and was on her guard. She saw him stealthily press a button, and in the same instant a deep gulf opened in the floor of the cave, half way between the Princess and the Wizard.

Truella did not know what this meant, at first, unless it was to prevent her getting across the room to where her toe was; but soon she noticed that the gulf was moving toward her, slowly, but steadily; and, as it extended across the cave from wall to wall, it would in time be sure to reach the spot where she stood, when she would, of course, fall into it.

When she saw her danger the Princess became frightened, and tried to escape through the door by which she had entered; but to her dismay she found it locked. Then she turned to look at the Wizard. The little man had perched himself upon a high stool, and was carelessly swinging his feet and laughing with glee at Truella's awful peril. He thought that at last he had certainly found a way to destroy her. The poor Princess again looked into the gulf, which was gradually getting nearer and nearer; and she shuddered at its vast depths.

A cold wind began to sweep up from the abyss, and she heard mocking laughter and savage growls from below, as if evil spirits were eagerly waiting to seize her.

Just as she was giving way to despair, and the gulf had crept very close to her feet, Truella thought of her winged dagger. She drew it from her bosom and, pointing it toward her enemy, said:

"Save me from the Wizard's art —
Fly until you reach his heart.
Foil his power and set me free,
This is my command to thee!"

In a flash the dagger flew from her hand and struck the Wizard full on his breast. With a loud cry he fell forward into the gulf, which in the same instant closed up with a crash. Then, when the rocks about her had ceased trembling from the shock, the door swung open, leaving the Princess at liberty to go where she pleased.

She now searched the Wizard's cupboard until she found her toe, which had been safely hidden in a little ivory box. Truella stopped only long enough to put on her toe, and then she ran through the caves and up the stairways until she reached the top of the mountain again.

There she found her Stork patiently awaiting her and, having seated herself on its back, she rode safely and triumphantly back to her father's palace.

The King and Queen were delighted when she recounted to them the success of her adventure, but they shuddered when they learned of the fearful dangers their sweet little daughter had encountered.

"It seems to me," said the good Queen, "that a big toe is scarcely worth all the trouble you have had in recovering it."

“Perhaps not,” replied the Princess, thoughtfully; “but a big toe is very handy to have when you wish to dance; and, after all, I succeeded in destroying the Wicked Wizard, which surely repays me for the trials I have been forced to undergo.”

THE TENTH SURPRISE: THE DUCHESS BREDENBUTTA'S VISIT TO TURVYLAND

DUCHESS BREDENBUTTA'S VISIT TO TURVYLAND

THE Duchess Bredenbutta was forty-seventh cousin to the Monarch of Mo and great- grandniece to the Queen; so you can readily see she was nearly related to the Princess Pattycake and had blue blood in her veins. She lived in a pretty house on the banks of Rootbeer River, and one of her favorite amusements was to row on the river in her boat, which, although rather small, was light as a cork.

One day, as usual, the Duchess went for a row on the river, expecting to return home in about an hour; but after floating a long distance down the stream she fell asleep in the boat and did not awake until she felt a sudden shock.

Then, sitting up and looking about her, she found, to her alarm, that the boat had drifted to the end of the Land of Mo, and was in the rapids leading to the Great Hole in the ground where the river disappeared from view. Becoming very much frightened, Bredenbutta looked for the oars of her boat, that she might row to the bank; but soon she discovered that the oars had fallen overboard and were lost, leaving her without any means of saving herself.

The poor Duchess now began to cry out; but no one heard her. Gradually the boat came nearer and nearer to the Great Hole, now bumping against the rocks and now spinning around with the current, until at last it paused for an instant on the very brink of the chasm down which the river fell.

The girl seized the sides of the boat in a firm grasp, and the next moment it plunged headlong into the Hole.

After the shock was over Bredenbutta wiped the moisture from her eyes and looked to see where she was, and what had become of her. She found that she had landed in a very remarkable country, and for a time could do nothing but gaze in wonder on the strange sights that met her view.

The trees were all growing on their top branches, with their roots high in the air; and the houses rested on the tops of their chimneys, the smoke going into the ground, and the doorsteps being at the tops of the buildings. A rabbit was flying around in the air, and a flock of skylarks walked on the ground, as if they belonged there.

Bredenbutta rubbed her eyes, for at first the girl thought she must be dreaming; but when she looked again everything was in the same unnatural position.

To add to her amazement she now saw a queer creature coming toward

her. She might have taken him for a young man, only ho was just the reverse of any young man Bredenbutta had ever seen. He stood upon his hands, which were clad in boots, and used his feet as we use our hands, seeming to be very handy with his toes. His teeth were in his ears, and he ate with them and heard with his mouth. He also smelled with his eyes and saw out of his nose — which was all very curious. When he walked he ran, and when he ran he stood still. He spoke when he was silent and remained dumb when he had anything to say. In addition to this, he wept real tears when he was pleased, and laughed merrily whenever anything grieved him.

It was no wonder the Duchess Bredenbutta stared in surprise when such an odd creature came up to her backward and looked at her solemnly from his pug nose.

"Who are you?" asked Bredenbutta, as soon as she could find breath to speak.

The young man kept quiet and answered: "My name is Upsydoun."

"I think you are," laughed Bredenbutta.

"You think I am what?" demanded the young man, the voice coming from his ear.

"Up-side-down," she replied.

At this retort the tears rolled down his cheeks with joy.

"Why, it is *you* who are up-side- down," he said; "how in the world did you get up here?"

"Down here, you mean," corrected the Duchess, with dignity.

"I mean nothing of the kind," he said, silently, while his nose twinkled with amusement; "this country is up, and not down."

"What country is it?" inquired Bredenbutta, much perplexed by such an absurd statement.

"Why, Turvyland, to be sure," was the answer.

"Oh!" sighed Bredenbutta; but she was no wiser than before.

"Now you are here," said Upsydoun, "you may come home with me and eat some dinner."

"I shall be very glad to," answered the Duchess, who was really hungry. "Where do you live?"

"Over there," replied Upsydoun, pointing to the south; "so stay where you are and follow me." Then he walked away on his hands in exactly the opposite direction from that he had indicated.

Bredenbutta followed him, and shortly after encountered several other people, of just the same queer appearance as her conductor. They looked out of their noses at her in great surprise, and, without speaking, asked Upsydoun who she was.

“The Duchess Bredenbutta,” he silently answered, “I found her where the Rootbeer River bubbles up. Isn’t she a queer-looking creature?”

“She is, indeed,” they all answered, in a still chorus, and then they followed the girl out of curiosity, as boys follow a band or a dancing bear. When they reached the house of Upsydoun more than a hundred inhabitants of Turvyland were at Bredenbutta’s heels and Upsydoun’s thumbs.

She was welcomed very kindly, however, and the young man’s mother kissed the Duchess with her left ear, an act which was considered a special mark of favor in Turvyland,

“Would you like to stand up and rest yourself until dinner-time?” asked the lady when the girl had entered the parlor.

“No, thank you,” replied Bredenbutta, who was very tired. Being ignorant of their customs she did not know these people usually stood up when they slept or rested. Her answer seemed to satisfy Upsydoun’s mother, who thought when she said “no” she meant “yes.”

“You really don’t look equal to lying down,” she remarked, pleasantly; “so you may stand until I call you to dinner, which will be in a long time.” Then she excused herself and walked backward out of the window, which Bredenbutta noticed they all used instead of doors.

“Dear me,” said the Duchess, when she was left alone; “I am sure I shall never be able to understand these strange people. But I mean to sit down, anyway, and if it really is a long time before dinner, I shall probably starve in the meantime.”

She had not rested more than a few minutes, however, before the lady again put her foot through the window, and waving it invitingly toward her exclaimed: “Go away to dinner.”

“Go away!” replied the Duchess in dismay; “where shall I go to?”

“Why, to me, of course,” answered Upsydoun’s mother, dumbly; but she winked her nose thoughtfully, as if she scarcely knew how to converse with her strange visitor. Surely Bredenbutta ought to know that when they said “go” in Turvyland, they meant “come.”

In spite of her uncertainty, she followed her hostess, and when they entered the dining-room the Duchess was shocked to see all the family stand on their heads on the chairs and pick up their knives and forks with their toes. She was more horrified, however, when they began to eat; for, contrary to all custom, these people placed their food in their ears. And they did it so calmly that she did not even remonstrate, remembering it must be their habit to eat in this way.

She, herself, sat down in her chair in a proper manner, and began to eat with the fork in her hand; and when the people of Turvyland saw this, they

all shed tears of merriment.

Just then the youngest child of the family began laughing, and the mother rushed to it as fast as her hands could carry her, to see what was the matter. But the child had only put its foot into its pocket and could not get it out again. The mother soon managed to get it free, and then the child stopped laughing and began weeping as happily as any of the others.

Bredenbutta was greatly bewildered at all this, but she ate heartily, nevertheless, and after having begged her in vain to stand on her head, as they did, the family let her alone, being surprised to see how well she could use her hands. After dinner Upsydoun's sister played on the piano with her toes, while the others indulged in a dance, whirling around on their thumbs in a manner truly marvelous, and seeming, by their tears, to enjoy themselves very much.

As the dance ended a kitten came running into the room on its ears and the tip of its tail, and this looked so funny that Bredenbutta began laughing. But seeing she had frightened her kind friends, who wanted to send for a doctor, she refrained from laughing, and asked, gravely, if she could not find a way to return to the Valley of Mo.

"The only possible way of getting down there," replied Upsydoun, "is to jump into the Rootbeer River; but that would be dangerous, and none of our people have ever tried it"

"Any danger," said the Duchess, "I will gladly brave; for otherwise I shall be obliged to spend my entire life down here, among people whose ways are exactly opposite to my own. If you will kindly take me to the river I shall lose no time in making an effort to return home."

They good-naturedly assented to this, and walked backward with her until they came to the place where the river bubbled up. It really did bubble *up*, Bredenbutta noticed, although she knew very well she had fallen *down* the Great Hole. But, then, everything was topsyturvy in this strange land.

The girl found her little boat, which had stranded on the beach, and having placed it where she could push it into the river, she turned to say good by to the queer people of Turvyland.

"I am glad to see you go," said Upsydoun, without speaking, "for I like you. But you are a strange creature, and perhaps know what is best for you. Here are some oars for your boat, for I see you have none, and when you get down to your country you may need them."

Bredenbutta joyfully accepted the oars, and placed them in her boat. Then the people of Turvyland all kissed her with their left ears and waved their toes in farewell, while the Duchess got into the boat and pushed it out into the river

Instantly she was in the midst of such a whirling of foam and rushing and roaring of rootbeer that she could neither see nor hear anything. Gasping for breath, the girl clung tightly to the sides of the boat, and in a few minutes it was all over, and the boat bobbed up in the Valley of Mo — just above the Great Hole. Bredenbutta then seized the oars and rowed hard until there was no danger of her falling in again, and soon she had passed the rapids and was rowing safely up the river to her own home.

Of course the Duchess was very glad again to be among the people who acted in a natural manner, instead of the absurd fashion of her friends, the Turvylanders. She resolved that whenever she rowed her boat upon the river again, she would be careful to keep away from the Great Hole, for she realized that another visit to Upsydoun and his people would be very trying to her nerves.

THE ELEVENTH SURPRISE: PRINCE FIDDLECUMDOO AND THE GIANT

One morning, that the Monarch of Mo was not in his usual pleasant humor; and, of course, there was an excellent reason for this.

At the back of his garden grew one tree that generally bore an abundant crop of animal-crackers, and although the King and his court, being surfeited with all the dainties of the land, did not care much for these edibles, the younger inhabitants of Mo were especially fond of them, and yelled with delight whenever the King divided the crop of his tree among them.

A few days before the King had examined the tree and found the animal-crackers not quite ripe. Whereupon he had gone away and forgotten all about them. And, in his absence, they had ripened to a delicious light brown; and their forms had rounded out, so that they hung as thickly together as peas in a pod. As they swung from their stems, swaying backward and forward in the light breeze, they waited and waited for some one to come and pick them. But no one came near the tree, and the animals grew cross and restless in consequence.

"I wonder when we shall be gathered," remarked a hippopotamus-cracker, with a yawn.

"Oh, you wonder, do you?" mockingly replied a camel-cracker hanging near, "do you really expect any one to gather *you*, with your thick hide and clumsy legs? Why, the children would break their teeth on you at the first bite."

"What!" screamed the hippopotamus, in much anger, "do you dare insult *me*, you humpbacked beast of burden?"

"Now then — now then!" interrupted a wolf-cracker that hung from a stem just above them; "what's the use of fighting, when we are so soon to be eaten?"

But the camel-cracker would not be appeased.

"Thick-headed brute!" he yelled at the hippopotamus, angrily.

"Hump-backed idiot!" shrieked the other.

At this the camel swung himself fiercely on his branch, and bumped against the hippopotamus, knocking him off from the tree. The ground underneath was chocolate, and it was soft and sticky, not having dried since the last rain. So when the hippopotamus fell he sank half way into the ground, and his beautiful brown color was spattered with the muddy chocolate.

At this vengeful deed on the part of the camel all the other animals became furious. A full-grown goat-cracker swung himself against the camel

and knocked it, in turn, from its stem; and in falling on the ground it broke its hump off. Then a lion-cracker knocked the goat down, and an elephant knocked a cat down, and soon the whole tree was in a violent commotion. The animals fought with each other so desperately that before long the entire treeful of animal-crackers had fallen to the ground, where many lay broken and disfigured, and the remainder were sunk deep in the chocolate mud.

So when the King, finally remembering his tree, came and looked on the sorry sight, it dampened his usual good spirits, and he heartily wished he had picked the quarrelsome crackers before they began to fight among themselves.

While he stood thinking dismally on this, up came Prince Fiddlecumdoo and asked permission to go on a journey.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked the King.

"I am tired of this beautiful Valley," answered Fiddlecumdoo, "and as the bicycle tree beside the Crystal Lake is now hanging full of ripe wheels, I thought I would gather one and ride over into the next valley in search of adventure." You see, this Prince was the King's youngest son, and had been rather spoiled by petting, as youngest sons often are.

"The next valley, my son, is inhabited by the giant Hartilaf," said the King, "and should you meet him he might do you an injury."

"Oh, I am not afraid of Hartilaf," replied Fiddlecumdoo, boldly. "If he should not be pleasant to me, I could run away from him on my wheel."

"I don't know about that," responded the King. "There may be bicycle trees in the next valley, as well as here; and it is always dangerous and foolish for any one to leave this Valley, where there is everything that heart could wish. Instead of running away in search of adventures, you would do better to remain at home and help your mother pick collar buttons and neckties for the family."

"That is work," said Fiddlecumdoo, sulkily, "and I hate work."

"Yet somebody has to pick the collar buttons," returned the King, "or we should be unable to keep our collars on."

"Then let Jollikin help my mother. I am horribly tired of this stupid place, and shall not be happy until I have traveled around and seen something more of the world."

"Well, well! go if you wish," answered the King, impatiently. "But take care of yourself, for when you are away from this Valley there will be no one to protect you from danger."

"I can take care of myself," cried the Prince, "so do not worry about me," and he ran away quickly, before his father had time to change his mind and withdraw his consent.

He selected the best and ripest bicycle on the tree, and, having mounted it, was soon speeding away along the path to the mountains.

When he reached the far eastern part of Mo he came on a bush bearing a very good quality of violins, and this at once attracted Fiddlecumdoo, who was a most excellent violinist, being able to play correctly a great number of tunes. So he dismounted and selected from the bush a small violin that seemed to have a sweet tone. This he carried with him, under his arm, thinking if he became lonesome he could amuse himself with the music.

Shortly after resuming his journey he came to the Maple Plains, a level stretch of country composed entirely of maple sugar. These plains were quite smooth, and very pleasant to ride on; but so swiftly did his bicycle carry him that he soon crossed the plains and came on a river of pure maple syrup, so wide and deep that he could neither leap nor swim it.

Dismounting from his bicycle the Prince began looking for some means of crossing the river. No bridge was visible in either direction, and the bank was bare save for a few low bushes on which grew maple bonbons and maple caramels.

But Prince Fiddlecumdoo did not mean to be turned back by so small a matter as a river, so he scooped a hole in the maple sand, and having filled it with syrup from the river, lighted a match and began boiling it. After it had boiled for a time the maple syrup became stringy, and the Prince quickly threw a string of it across the river. It hardened almost immediately, and on this simple bridge the Prince rode over the stream.

Once on the other side he sped up the mountain and over the top into the next valley, where, he stopped and began to look about him.

He could see no roads in any direction, but away down at the foot of the valley was a monstrous house, so big you could easily put a small village inside it, including the church. This, Fiddlecumdoo thought, must be where the giant lived; and, although he saw no one about the house, he decided to make a call and introduce himself to Mr. Hartilaf. So he rode slowly down the valley, playing on his violin as he went, that the music might announce his coming.

The giant Hartilaf was lying on the sofa in his sitting-room, waiting for his wife to prepare the dinner; and he had nearly fallen asleep when the sound of Fiddlecumdoo's music fell on his ear. This was so unusual in his valley that the giant arose and went to the front door to see what caused it.

The Prince had by this time nearly reached the house, and when the giant appeared he was somewhat startled, as he had not expected to see any one quite so big. But he took care not to show any fear, and, taking off his hat, he bowed politely to the giant and said:

“This is Mr. Hartilaf, I suppose?”

“That is my name,” replied the giant, grinning at the small size of his visitor. “May I ask who you are?”

“I am Prince Fiddlecumdoo, and I live in the next valley, which is called the Valley of Mo. Being determined to see something of the world, I am traveling for pleasure, and have just dropped in on you for a friendly call.”

“You are very welcome, I am sure,” returned the giant. “If you will graciously step into my humble home I shall be glad to entertain you at dinner.”

Prince Fiddlecumdoo bowed low and accepted the invitation, but when he endeavored to enter the house he found the steps so big that even the first one was higher than his head, and he could not climb to the top of it.

Seeing his difficulty the giant carefully picked him up with one finger and his thumb, and put him down on the palm of his other hand.

“Do not leave my bicycle,” said the Prince, “for should anything happen to it I could not get home again.”

So the giant put the bicycle in his vest pocket, and then he entered the house and walked to the kitchen, where his wife was engaged preparing the dinner.

“Guess what I’ve found,” said the giant to his wife, holding his hand doubled up so she could not see the Prince.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” answered the woman.

“But, guess!” pleaded the giant.

“Go away and don’t bother me,” she replied, bending over the stewpan, “or you won’t have any dinner to-day.”

The giant, however, was in a merry mood, and for a joke he suddenly opened his hand and dropped the Prince down his wife’s neck.

“Oh, oh!” she screamed, trying to get at the place where the Prince had fallen, which was near the small of her back. “What is it? I’m sure it’s some horrible crocodile, or dragon, or something that will bite me!” And the poor woman lay down on the carpet and began to kick her heels against the floor in terror.

The giant roared with laughter, but the Prince, now being able to crawl out, scrambled from the lady’s neck, and, standing beside her head, he made a low bow and said:

“Do not be afraid, Madam; it is only I. But I must say it was a very ungallant trick for your husband to play on you, to say nothing of my feelings in the matter.”

“So it was,” she exclaimed, getting upon her feet again, and staring curiously at Fiddlecumdoo. “But tell me who you are and where you came

from.”

The giant, having enjoyed his laugh, now introduced the Prince to his wife, and as dinner was ready to serve they sat down at the table together.

Fiddlecumdoo got along very well at dinner, for the giant thoughtfully placed him on the top of the table, where he could walk around as he pleased. There being no knife nor fork small enough for him to use, the Prince took one of the giant’s toothpicks, which was as big as a sword, and with this served himself from the various dishes that stood on the table.

When the meal was over the giant lighted his pipe, the bowl of which was as big as a barrel, and asked Fiddlecumdoo if he would kindly favor them with some music.

“Certainly,” replied the Prince.

“Please come into the kitchen,” said the giantess, “for then I can listen to the music while I am washing the dishes.”

The prince did not like to refuse this request, although at home he was not allowed to enter his mother’s kitchen; so the giant carried him in and placed him on a high shelf, where Fiddlecumdoo seated himself on a spool of thread and began to play his violin.

The big people enjoyed the music very much at first, for the Prince was a capital player. But soon came a disagreeable interruption.

About a month before the giant had caught several dancing-bears in the mountains, and, having brought them home, had made them into strings of sausages. These were hanging in graceful festoons from the beams of the kitchen ceiling, awaiting the time when they should be eaten.

Now when the dancing-bear sausages heard the music of Fiddlecumdoo’s violin, they could not resist dancing; for it is well known that sausages made from real dancing-bears can not remain quiet where there is music. The Prince was playing such a lively tune, that presently the strings of sausage broke away from the ceiling and fell clattering to the floor, where they danced about furiously. Not being able to see where they were going, they bumped against the giant and his wife, thumping them on their heads and backs, and pounding them so severely that the woman became frightened and hid under the table, while the giant started to run away.

Seeing their plight, Fiddlecumdoo stopped playing, and at once the sausages fell to the floor and lay still.

“That was strange,” said the giant, as soon as he could catch his breath; “the bears evidently do not forget how to dance even after they are chopped up into sausage meat. I must beg you to abandon your concert for the present, but before you visit us again we shall have eaten the sausages, and then you may play to your heart’s content.”

“Had I known they were so lively,” remarked the giantess, as she crawled from beneath the table, “we should have eaten them before this.”

“That reminds me that I intended to have stewed polar bears for supper,” continued the giant; “so I think I will walk over into Alaska and catch some.”

“Perhaps the Prince would prefer elephant pie,” suggested the lady, “and in that case you might make a run into South America for elephants.”

“I have no choice in the matter,” said the Prince, “never having eaten either. But is it not rather a long journey to Alaska or to South America?”

“Not at all!” protested the giant. “I shall enjoy the walk, and can easily be back by sundown. Won’t you come with me?” he asked the boy. But Fiddlecumdoo did not like the idea of so long a journey, and begged to be excused.

The giantess brought her lord a great bag to put the polar bears in, and he prepared to start.

“I leave you to amuse my wife during my absence,” he said to the Prince. “Pray make yourself entirely at home, and use my castle as you would your own house, and if I have good luck you shall eat a delicious polar-bear stew for your supper.”

Then he slung the sack across his back and went away, whistling merrily. And so great were his strides that in less than a minute he was out of sight.

“This is my busy day,” said the giantess to Fiddlecumdoo, “and I fear I shall not be able to entertain you in a proper manner, for I must hasten to the laundry to wash the clothes. However, if you care to accompany me, we may converse together while I am doing my work.”

“I shall take great pleasure in visiting your laundry,” he replied, “for never before have I been in such a place. And surely it will be more agreeable to watch you at your work than to spend the day alone in these great rooms.”

“Come along, then,” she said, and picking him up she placed him in the pocket of her apron, for she knew he would be unable to walk down the flight of stairs that led to the laundry. He was very comfortable in the pocket, which was just deep enough to allow his head and shoulders to project from the top. Therefore he was able to see all that was going on while the lady was at work. He watched her wash and rinse the clothes, and was greatly interested in the operation, as it was all new to him.

By and by the giantess brought an immense clothes-wringer from a shelf, and having fastened it to the side of the big wash tub began to wring out the clothes.

Prince Fiddlecumdoo had never seen a clothes-wringer before, and so pleased was he with the novelty of it that he leaned far out of the pocket to watch it work. But, unfortunately, he lost his balance, and before he knew

what had happened to him had fallen from the pocket and lay sprawling on one of the giant's shirts, which was just then passing through the wringer.

The woman did not notice his fall, and the next instant he was drawn between the two great rollers, and came out on the other side as thin and flat as a sheet of paper.

Then the giant's wife saw what she had done, and realizing how serious was the Prince's condition, the good lady was much grieved over the accident. She picked Fiddlecumdoo up and tried to stand him on his feet, but he was so thin that at the least draft he fluttered like a flag, while a puff of wind would blow him completely over.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the woman, sorrowfully, "whatever can we do with you in that shape?"

"I really do not know what will become of me," replied the Prince. "I am certainly no good in this condition. I can not even walk across the room without toppling over. Can not you manage to push me together again?" The giantess tried to do this, but the Prince was so sharp that his edges hurt her hands, and all she could do was to fold him up and carry him into the drawing-room, where she laid him carefully on the center-table.

Just before sundown the giant returned from Alaska, bringing several fat polar-bears in his bag; and scarcely had he set foot within the house before he inquired after his guest, the Prince.

"You will find him on the drawing-room table," said the giantess. "I accidently ran him through the clothes-wringer this afternoon, and the poor boy is as thin as a pie crust. So I folded him up and put him away until you returned."

The giant immediately went to the table and unfolded Fiddlecumdoo, asking him how he felt.

"Very miserable," answered the Prince, "for I can not move at all when I am folded up. Where is my bicycle?"

The giant searched all his pockets, but could not find it.

"I must have lost it on my journey to Alaska," he said.

"Then how am I ever to get home again?" asked the Prince.

"That is a puzzle," the giant responded, thoughtfully. "I do not see how you could ride on a bicycle even if you had one, and you certainly can not walk far in your present condition."

"Not if the wind blows," acknowledged the Prince.

"Couldn't you go edgewise?" asked the giant after a moment's reflection.

"I might try," answered Fiddlecumdoo, hopefully.

So the giant stood him up, and he tried to walk edgewise. But whenever a breath of wind struck him he fell over at once, and several times he got badly

crumpled up, so that the giant had to smooth him out again with his hands.

"This certainly will not do at all," declared the giant; "for not only are you getting wrinkled, but you are liable to be blown away; altogether. I have just thought of a plan to get you back into the Valley of Mo again, and when you are in your own country your friends may get you out of the scrape the best way they can."

Hartilaf then made the Prince into a neat roll and tied a string around the middle, to hold it in place. Then he tucked the roll under his arm and carried it to the top of the mountain that stood between the two valleys. Placing the Prince carefully on the ground he started him rolling, and in a short time he had rolled down the mountain side into the Valley of Mo.

At first the people were much frightened, not knowing what this strange thing could be that had come rolling into their midst. They stood around, curiously looking at the roll, but afraid to touch it, when suddenly Fiddlecumdoo began to cry out. And then, so fearful was the sound, they all ran away as fast as their legs could carry them.

Prince Thinkabit, however, being more courageous than the rest, at last ventured to approach and cut the string that fastened the roll. Instantly it opened, and to their amazement the people saw what it was.

"Upon my word, it is brother Fiddlecumdoo!" cried Prince Thinkabit. "The giant must have stepped on him."

"No, indeed," said poor Fiddlecumdoo, "I've been run through a clothes-wringer, which is much worse than being stepped on."

With many expressions of pity the kind people stood the Prince up and helped him to the palace, where the King was greatly shocked at his sad plight. Fiddlecumdoo was so broad that the only thing he could sit down on was the sofa, and he was so thin that when Princess Pattycake sneezed he was blown half way across the room.

At dinner he could eat nothing that was not sliced as thin as a shaving, and so sad was his predicament that the King determined to ask the Wise Donkey what could be done to relieve his unfortunate son.

After hearing all the particulars of the accident, the Donkey said: "Blow him up."

"I did blow him up, for being so careless," replied the King; "but it didn't make him any thicker."

"What I mean," explained the Donkey, "is to bore a hole in the top of his head, and blow air into him until he resumes his natural shape. Then, if he takes care of himself, he soon will be all right again."

So the King returned to the palace and bored a hole in Fiddlecumdoo's head, and then pumped him full of air with a bicycle pump. When he had

filled out into his natural shape they put a plug in the hole, and stopped it up; and after that Fiddlecumdoo could walk around as well as before his accident.

His only danger now was that he might get punctured; and, indeed, his friends found him one day lying in the garden, all flattened out again, the Prince having pricked his finger on a rose-bush and thereby allowed his air to escape. But they inflated him once again, and afterward he was more careful of himself.

Fiddlecumdoo had such a horror of being flat that, if his father ever wished to make him behave, he threatened to stick a pin into him, and that always had the desired effect.

After several years, the Prince, being a hearty eater, filled up with solid flesh, and had no further use for the air-pump; but his experience had made him so nervous that he never again visited the giant Hartilaf, for fear of encountering another accident.

THE TWELFTH SURPRISE: THE LAND OF THE CIVILIZED MONKEYS

I MUST now tell you of a very strange adventure that befell Prince Zingle, which, had it not turned out exactly as it did, might have resulted in making him a captive for life in a remarkable country.

By consulting Smith's History of Prince Zingle you will notice that from boyhood he had a great passion for flying kites, and unlike other boys, he always undertook to make each kite larger than the last one. Therefore his kites grew in size, and became larger and larger, until at length the Prince made one twice as tall as himself.

When it was finished he was very proud of this great kite, and took it out to a level place to see how well it would fly, being accompanied by many of the people of Mo, who took considerable interest in the Prince's amusement.

There happened to be a strong south wind blowing and, fearing the kite might get away from him, Zingle tied the string around his waist. It flew beautifully at first, but pulled so hard the Prince could scarcely hold it.

At last, when the string was all let out, there came a sudden gust of wind, and in an instant poor Zingle was drawn into the air as easily as an ordinary kite draws its tail. Up and up he soared, and the kite followed the wind and carried him over many countries until the strength died out of the air, when the kite slowly settled toward the earth and landed the Prince in the top of a tall tree.

He now untied the string from his waist and fastened it to a branch of the tree, as he did not wish to lose the kite after all his bother in making it.

Then he began to climb down to the ground, but on reaching the lower branches he was arrested by a most curious sight.

Standing on the ground, and gazing up at him, were a dozen monkeys, all very neatly dressed and all evidently filled with surprise at the Prince's sudden appearance in the tree.

"What a very queer animal!" exclaimed an old monkey, who wore a tall silk hat and had white kid gloves on his hands. Gold spectacles rested on his nose, and he pointed toward the Prince with a gold-headed cane. By his side was a little girl-monkey, dressed in pink skirts and a blue bonnet; and when she saw Zingle she clung to the old monkey's hand and seemed frightened.

"Oh, grandpapa!" she cried; "take me back to mamma; I'm afraid the strange beast will bite me."

Just then a big monkey, wearing a blue coat with brass buttons and swinging a short club in his hand, strutted up to them and said:

"Don't be afraid, little one. The beast can't hurt you while I'm around!"

And then he tipped his cap over his left ear and shook his club at the Prince, as if he did not know what fear meant.

Two monkeys, who were dressed in red jackets and carried muskets in their hands, now came running up, and, having looked at Zingle with much interest, they called for some one to bring them a strong rope.

"We will capture the brute and put him in the Zoo," said one of the soldier-monkeys.

"What kind of animal is it?" asked the other.

"I do not know. But some of our college professors can doubtless tell, and even if they can't they will give it some scientific name that will satisfy the people just as well."

All this time Prince Zingle remained clinging to the branches of the tree. He could not understand a word of the monkey language, and therefore had no idea what they were talking about; but he judged from their actions that the monkeys were not friendly. When they brought a long and stout rope, and prepared to throw one end of it over his head, in order to capture him, he became angry and called out to them:

"Stop — I command you! What is the meaning of this strange conduct? I am Prince Zingle, eldest son of the Monarch of Mo, and, since I have been blown into your country through an accident, I certainly deserve kind treatment at your hands."

But this speech had no meaning in the ears of the monkeys, who said to each other:

"Hear him bark! He jabbers away almost as if he could talk!"

By this time a large crowd of monkeys had surrounded the tree, some being barefooted boy-monkeys, and some lady-monkeys dressed in silken gowns and gorgeous raiment of the latest mode, and others men-monkeys of all sorts and conditions. There were dandified monkeys and sober-looking business monkeys, as well as several who appeared to be politicians and officials of high degree.

"Stand back, all of you!" shouted one of the soldiers. "We're going to capture this remarkable beast for the royal menagerie, and unless you stand out of the way he may show fight and bite some one."

So they moved back to a safe distance, and the soldier-monkey prepared to throw a rope.

"Stop!" cried Zingle, again; "do you take me for a thief, that you try to bind me? I am a prince of the royal blood, and unless you treat me respectfully I shall have my father, the King, march his army on you and destroy your whole country."

"He barks louder," said the soldier. "Look out for him; he may be

dangerous." The next moment he threw the rope and caught poor Zingle around his arms and body, so that he was helpless. Then the soldier-monkey pulled hard on the rope, and Prince Zingle fell out of the tree to the ground.

At first the monkeys all pressed backward, as if frightened, but their soldiers cried out:

"We've got him; he can't bite now."

Then one of them approached the Prince and punched him with a stick, saying, "Stand up!"

Zingle did not understand the words, but he resented being prodded with the stick, so he sprang up and rushed on the soldier, kicking the stick from his hands, his own arms being bound by the rope.

The monkeys screamed and rushed in every direction, but the other soldier came behind the Prince and knocked him down with the butt of his gun. Then he tied his legs with another rope, and, seeing him thus bound, the crowd of monkeys, which had scattered and fallen over one another in their efforts to escape, came creeping timidly back, and looked on him with fear and trembling.

"We've subdued him at last," remarked the soldier who had been kicked. "But he's a very fierce animal, and I shall take him to the Zoo and lock him in one of the strongest cages."

So they led poor Zingle away to where the Royal Zoological Gardens were located, and there they put him into a big cage with iron bars, the door being fastened with two great padlocks.

Before very long every monkey in the country learned that a strange beast had been captured and brought to the Zoo; and soon a large crowd had gathered before Zingle's cage to examine him.

"Isn't he sweet!" said a lady-monkey who held a green parasol over her head and wore a purple veil on her face.

"Sweet!" grunted a man-monkey standing beside her, "he's the ugliest looking brute I ever saw! Scarcely has any hair on him at all, and no tail, and very little chin. I wonder where on earth the creature came from?"

"It may be one of those beings from whom our race is descended," said another onlooker. "The professors say we evolved from some primitive creature of this sort."

"Heaven forbid!" cried a dandy-monkey, whose collar was so high that it kept tipping his hat over his eyes. "If I thought such a creature as that was one of my forefathers, I should commit suicide at once."

Zingle had been sitting on the floor of his cage and wondering what was to become of him in this strange country of monkeys, and now, to show his authority, one of the keepers took a long stick and began to poke the Prince

to make him stand up.

"Stop that!" shouted the angry captive, and catching hold of the stick he jerked it from the keeper's hand and struck him a sharp blow on the head with it.

All the lady-monkeys screamed at this, and the men-monkeys exclaimed:

"What an ugly disposition the beast has!"

The children-monkeys began to throw peanuts between the bars of the cage, and Zingle, who had now become very hungry, picked them up and ate them. This act so pleased the little monkeys that they shouted with laughter.

At last two solemn-looking monkeys with gray hair, and wearing long black coats and white neckties, came up to the cage, where they were greeted with much respect by the other monkeys.

"So this is the strange animal," said one of the new-comers, putting on his spectacles and looking sharply at the captive; "do you recognize the species, Professor?"

The other aged monkey also regarded the Prince critically before he answered:

"I can not say I have ever seen a specimen of this genus before. But one of our text-books mentions an obscure animal called Homo Peculiaris, and I have no doubt this is one of that family. I shall write an article on the creature and claim he is a Homo, and without doubt the paper will create quite a stir in the scientific world."

"See here," suddenly demanded Prince Zingle, standing up and shaking the bars of his cage, "are you going to give me anything to eat? Or do you expect me to live on peanuts forever?"

Not knowing what he said, none of the monkeys paid any attention to this question. But one of the professor-monkeys appeared to listen attentively, and remarked to friend: "There seems to be a smoothness and variety of sound in his speech that indicates that he possesses some sort of language. Had I time to study this brute, I might learn his method of communicating with his fellows. Indeed, there is a possibility that he may turn out to be the missing link."

However, the professor not yet having learned his language, Prince Zingle was obliged to remain hungry. The monkeys threw several cocoanuts into the cage, but the prisoner did not know what kind of fruit these were; so, after several attempts to bite the hard shell, he decided they were not good to eat.

Day after day now passed away, and, although crowds of monkeys came to examine Zingle in his cage, the poor Prince grew very pale and thin for lack of proper food, while the continuance of his unhappy imprisonment made him sad and melancholy.

“Could I but escape and find my way back to my father’s valley,” he moaned, wearily, “I should be willing to fly small kites forever afterward.”

Often he begged them to let him go, but the monkeys gruffly commanded him to “stop his jabbering,” and poked him with long sticks having sharp points; so that the Prince’s life became one of great misery.

At the end of about two weeks a happy relief came to Zingle, for then a baby hippopotamus was captured and brought to the Royal Zoo, and after this the monkeys left the Prince’s cage and crowded around that of the new arrival.

Finding himself thus deserted, Prince Zingle began to seek a means of escape from his confinement. His first attempt was to break the iron bars; but soon he found they were too big and strong. Then he shook the door with all his strength; but the big padlocks held firm, and could not be broken. Then the prisoner gave way to despair, and threw himself on the floor of the cage, weeping bitterly.

Suddenly he heard a great shout from the direction of the cage where the baby hippopotamus was confined, and, rising to his feet, the Prince walked to the bars and attempted to look out and discover what was causing the excitement. To his astonishment he found he was able to thrust his head between two of the iron bars, having grown so thin through hunger and abuse, that he was much smaller than when the monkeys had first captured him. He realized at once that if his head would pass between the bars, his body could be made to do so, likewise. So he struggled bravely, and at last succeeded in squeezing his body between the bars and leaping safely to the ground.

Finding himself at liberty, the Prince lost no time in running to the tree where he had left his kite. But on the way some of the boy-monkeys discovered him and raised a great cry, which soon brought hundreds of his enemies in pursuit.

Zingle had a good start, however, and soon reached the tree. Quickly he climbed up the trunk and branches until he had gained the limb where the string of his kite was still fastened. Untying the cord, he wound it around his waist several times, and then, finding a strong north wind blowing, he skilfully tossed the kite into the air. At once it filled and mounted to the sky, lifting Zingle from the tree and carrying him with perfect ease.

It was fortunate he got away at that moment, for several of the monkeys had scrambled up the tree after him, and were almost near enough to seize him by the legs when, to their surprise, he shot into the air. Indeed, so amazed were they by this remarkable escape of their prisoner that the monkeys remained staring into the air until Prince Zingle had become a little

speck in the sky above them and finally disappeared.

That was the last our Prince ever saw of the strange country of the monkeys, for the wind carried his kite straight back to the Valley of Mo. When Zingle found himself above his father's palace, he took out his pocket-knife and cut the string of the kite, and immediately fell head foremost into a pond of custard that lay in the back yard, where he dived through a floating island of whipped cream and disappeared from view.

Nuphsed, who was sitting on the bank of the custard lake, was nearly frightened into fits by this sight; and he ran to tell the King that a new meteor had fallen and ruined one of his floating islands.

Thereupon the monarch and several of his courtiers rushed out and found Prince Zingle swimming ashore; and the King was so delighted at seeing his lost son again that he clasped him joyfully in his arms.

The next moment he regretted this act, for his best ermine robe was smeared its whole length with custard, and would need considerable cleaning before it would be fit to wear again.

The Prince and the King soon changed their clothes, and then there was much rejoicing throughout the land. Of course the first thing Zingle asked for was something to eat, and before long he was sitting at a table heaped with all sorts of good things, plucked fresh from the trees.

The people crowded around him, demanding the tale of his adventures, and their surprise was only equaled by their horror when they learned he had been captured by a band of monkeys, and shut up in a cage because he was thought to be a dangerous wild beast.

Experience is said to be an excellent teacher, although a very cruel one. Prince Zingle had now seen enough of foreign countries to remain contented with his own beautiful Valley, and, although it was many years before he again attempted to fly a kite, it was noticed that, when he at last did indulge in that sport, the kite was of a very small size.

THE THIRTEENTH SURPRISE: THE STOLEN PLUM PUDDING

THE King's plum-pudding crop had for some time suffered from the devastations of a secret enemy. Each day, as he examined the vines, he found more and more of the plum-pudding missing, and finally the monarch called his Wise Men together and asked them what he should do.

The Wise Men immediately shut their eyes and pondered so long over the problem that they fell fast asleep. While they slept still more of the plum-pudding was stolen. When they awoke the King was justly incensed, and told the Wise Men that unless they discovered the thief within three days he would give them no cake with their ice-cream.

This terrible threat at last aroused them to action, and, after consulting together, they declared that in their opinion it was the Fox that had stolen the pudding.

Hearing this, the King ordered out his soldiers, who soon captured the Fox and brought him to the palace, where the King sat in state, surrounded by his Wise Men.

"So ho! Master Fox," exclaimed the King, "we have caught you at last."

"So it seems," returned the Fox, calmly. "May I ask your Majesty why I am thus torn from my home, from my wife and children, and brought before you like any common criminal?"

"You have stolen the plum- pudding," answered the King.

"I beg your Majesty's pardon for contradicting you, but I have stolen nothing," declared the Fox. "I can easily prove my innocence. When was the plum-pudding taken?"

"A great deal of it was taken this morning, while the Wise Men slept," said the King.

"Then I can not be the thief," replied the Fox, "as you will admit when you have heard my story."

"Ah! Have you a story to tell?" inquired the King, who dearly loved to hear stories.

"It is a short story, your Majesty; but it will prove clearly that I have not taken your pudding."

"Then tell it," commanded the King. "It is far from my wish to condemn any one who is innocent."

The Wise Men then placed themselves in comfortable positions, and the King crossed his legs and put his hands in his pockets, while the Fox sat before them on his haunches and spoke as follows:

THE FOX'S STORY.

"It has been unusually damp in my den of late, so that both my family and myself have suffered much. First my wife became ill, and then I was afflicted with a bad cold, and in both cases it settled in our throats. Then my four children, who are all of an age, began to complain of sore throats, so that my den became a regular hospital.

"We tried all the medicines we knew of, but they did no good at all. My wife finally begged me to go to consult Doctor Prairiedog, who lives in a hole in the ground away toward the south. So one morning I said good by to my family and ran swiftly to where the doctor lives.

"Finding no one outside the hole to whom I might apply for admission I walked boldly in, and having followed a long, dark tunnel for some distance, I suddenly came to a door.

"'Come in!' said a voice; so in I walked, and found myself in a very beautiful room, lighted by forty-eight fireflies, which sat in a row on a rail running all around the apartment. In the center of the room was a table, made of clay and painted in bright colors; and seated at this table, with his spectacles on his nose, was the famous Doctor Prairiedog, engaged in eating a dish of stewed snails.

"'Good morning,' said the Doctor; 'will you have some breakfast?'

"'No, thank you,' I replied, for the snails were not to my liking; 'I wish to procure some medicine for my children, who are suffering from sore throats.'

"' How do you know their throats are sore?' inquired the Doctor.

"'It hurts them to swallow,' I explained.

"'Then tell them not to swallow,' said the Doctor, and went on eating.

"'Sir!' I exclaimed, 'if they did not swallow, they would starve to death.'

"'That is true,' remarked the Doctor; 'we must think of something else.' After a moment of silence he cried out: 'Ha! I have it! Go home and cut off their necks, after which you must turn them inside out and hang them on the bushes in the sun. When the necks are thoroughly cured in the sun, turn them right-side-out again and place them on your children's shoulders. Then they will find it does not hurt them to swallow.'

"I thanked the great Doctor and returned home, where I did as he had told me. For the last three days the necks of not only my children but of my wife and myself, as well, have been hanging on the bushes to be cured; so we could not possibly have eaten your plum-pudding. Indeed, it was only an hour ago when I finished putting the neck on the last of my children, and at that moment your soldiers came and arrested me."

When the Fox ceased speaking the King was silent for a while. Then he asked:

“Were the necks all cured?”

“Oh, yes,” replied the fox; “the sun cured them nicely.”

“You see,” remarked the King, turning to his Wise Men; “the Fox has proved his innocence. You were wrong, as usual, in accusing him. I shall now send him home with six baskets of cherry phosphate, as a reward for his honesty. If you have not discovered the thief by the time I return I shall keep my threat and stop your allowance of cake.”

Then the Wise Men fell a- trembling, and put their heads together, counseling with one another.

When the King returned, they said: “Your Majesty, it must have been the Bullfrog.”

So the King sent his soldiers, who captured the Bullfrog and brought him to the palace.

“Why have you stolen the plum-pudding?” demanded the King, in a stern voice.

“I! Steal your plum-pudding!” exclaimed the Frog, indignantly. “Surely you must be mistaken! I am not at all fond of plum-pudding, and, besides, I have been very busy at home during the past week.”

“What have you been doing?” asked the King.

“I will tell you, for then you will know I am innocent of this theft.”

So the Bullfrog squatted on a footstool, and, after blinking solemnly at the King and his Wise Men for a moment, spoke as follows:

THE FROG’S STORY.

“Some time ago my wife and I hatched out twelve little tadpoles. They were the sweetest children parents ever looked on. Their heads were all very large and round, and their tails were long and feathery, while their skins were as black and shiny as could be. We were proud of them, my wife and I, and took great pains to train our children properly, that they might become respectable frogs, in time, and be a credit to us.

“We lived in a snug little hole under the bank of the river, and in front of our dwelling was a large stone on which we could sit and watch the baby tadpoles grow. Although they loved best to lie in the mud at the bottom of the river, we knew that exercise is necessary to the proper development of a tadpole; so we decided to teach our youngsters to swim. We divided them into two lots, my wife training six of the children, while I took charge of the other six. We drilled them to swim in single file, in column of twos and in line of battle; but I must acknowledge they were quite stupid, being so young, and, unless we told them when to stop, they would keep on swimming until they bumped themselves into a bank or a stone.

“One day, about a week ago, while teaching our children to swim, we started them all going in single file, one after the other. They swam in a straight line that was very pretty to see, and my wife and I sat on the flat stone and watched them with much pride. Unfortunately at that very moment a large fish swam into our neighborhood and lay on the bottom of the river to rest. It was one of those fishes that hold their great mouths wide open, and I was horrified when I saw the advancing line of tadpoles headed directly toward the gaping mouth of the monster fish. I croaked as loudly as I could for them to stop; but either they failed to hear me, or they would not obey. The next moment all the line of swimming tadpoles had entered the fish’s mouth and were lost to our view.

“Mrs. Frog threw herself into my arms with a cry or anguish, exclaiming:

“‘Oh, what shall we do? Our children are lost to us forever!’

“‘Do not despair,’ I answered, although I was myself greatly frightened; ‘we must try to prevent the fish from swimming away with our loved ones. If we can keep him here, some way may yet be found to rescue the children.’

“Up to this time the big fish had remained motionless, but there was an expression of surprise in its round eyes, as if it did not know what to make of the lively inhabitants of its stomach.

“Mrs. Frog thought for a moment, and then said:

“‘A short distance away is an old fish-line and hook, lying at the bottom of the river, where some boys lost it while fishing one day. If we could only — ‘

“‘Fetch it at once,’ I interrupted. ‘With its aid we shall endeavor to capture the fish.’

“She hastened away, soon returning with the line, which had a large hook on one end. I tied the other end firmly about the flat stone, and then, advancing cautiously from behind, that the fish might not see me, I stuck the iron hook through its right gill.

“The monster gave a sudden flop that sent me head over heels a yard away. Then it tried to swim down the stream. But the hook and line held fast, and soon the fish realized it was firmly caught, after which it wisely abandoned the struggle.

“Mrs. Frog and I now sat down to watch the result, and the time of waiting was long and tedious. After several weary days, however, the great fish lay over on its side and expired, and soon after there hopped from its mouth the sweetest little green frog you ever laid eyes on. Another and another followed, until twelve of them stood beside us; and then my wife exclaimed:

“‘They are our children, the tadpoles! They have lost their tails and their

legs have grown out, but they are our own little ones, nevertheless!'

"Indeed, this was true; for tadpoles always become frogs when a few days old. The children told us they had been quite comfortable inside the great fish, but they were now hungry, for young frogs always have wonderful appetites. So Mrs. Frog and I set to work to feed them, and had just finished this pleasant task when your soldiers came to arrest me. I assure your Majesty this is the first time I have been out of the water for a week. And now, if you will permit me to depart, I will hop back home and see how the youngsters are growing."

When the Bullfrog had ceased speaking the King turned toward the Wise Men and said, angrily:

"It seems you are wrong again, for the Frog is innocent. Your boasted wisdom appears to me very like folly; but I will give you one more chance. If you fail to discover the culprit next time, I shall punish you far more severely than I at first promised."

The King now gave the Bullfrog a present of a red silk necktie, and also sent a bottle of perfumery to Mrs. Frog. The soldiers at once released the prisoner, who joyfully hopped away toward the river.

The Wise Men now rolled their eyes toward the ceiling and twirled their thumbs and thought as hard as they could. At last they told the King they had decided the Yellow Hen was undoubtedly responsible for the theft of the plum-pudding.

So the King sent his soldiers, who searched throughout the Valley and at last captured the Yellow Hen and brought her into the royal presence.

"My Wise Men say you have stolen my plum-pudding," said his Majesty. "If this is true, I am going to punish you severely."

"But it is not true," answered the Yellow Hen; "for I have just returned from a long journey."

"Where have you been?" inquired the King.

"I will tell you," she replied; and, after rearranging a few of her feathers that the rough hands of the soldiers had mussed, the Yellow Hen spoke as follows:

THE YELLOW HEN'S STORY

"All my life I have been accustomed to hatching out thirteen eggs; but the last time there were only twelve eggs in the nest when I got ready to set. Being experienced in these matters I knew it would never do to set on twelve eggs, so I asked the Red Rooster for his advice.

"He considered the question carefully, and finally told me he had seen a very nice, large egg lying on the rocks near the sugar mountain.

“‘If you wish,’ said he, ‘I will get it for you.’

“‘I am very sorry to trouble you, yet certainly I need thirteen eggs,’ I answered.

“The Red Rooster is an accommodating fowl, so away he flew, and shortly returned with a large white egg under his wing. This egg I put with the other twelve, and then I set faithfully on my nest for three weeks, at the end of which time I hatched out my chickens.

“Twelve of them were as yellow and fluffy as any mother could wish. But the one that came from the strange egg was black and awkward, and had a large bill and sharp claws. Still thinking he was one of my children, despite his deformity, I gave him as much care as any of them, and soon he outgrew the others and became very big and strong.

“The Red Rooster shook his head, and said, bluntly:

“‘That chick will be a great trouble to you, for it looks to me strangely like one of our enemies, the Hawks.’

“‘What!’ I exclaimed, reproachfully, ‘do you think one of my darling children could possibly be a Hawk? I consider that remark almost an insult, Mr. Rooster!’

“The Red Rooster said nothing more; but he kept away from my big, black chick, as if really afraid of it.

“To my great grief this chick suddenly developed a very bad temper, and one day I was obliged to reprove it for grabbing the food away from its brothers. Suddenly it began screaming with anger, and the next moment it sprang on me, digging its sharp claws into my back.

“While I struggled to free myself, he flew far up into the air, carrying me with him, and uttering loud cries that filled me with misgivings. For I now realized, when it was too late, that his voice sounded exactly like the cry of a Hawk!

“Away and away he flew, over mountains, and valleys, and rivers, and lakes, until at last, as I looked down, I saw a man pointing a gun at us. A moment later he shot, and the black chick gave a scream of pain, at the same time releasing his hold of me; so that I fell over and over and finally fluttered to the ground.

“Then I found I had escaped one danger only to encounter another, for as I reached the ground the man seized me and carried me under his arm to his home. Entering the house, he said to his wife:

“‘Here is a nice, fat hen for our breakfast.’

“‘Put her in the coop,’ replied the woman. ‘After supper I will cut off her head and pick the feathers from her body.’

“This frightened me greatly, as you may suppose, and when the man

placed me in the coop I nearly gave way to despair. But, finding myself alone, I plucked up courage and began looking for a way to escape. To my great joy I soon discovered that one of the slats of the coop was loose, and, having pushed it aside, I was not long in gaining my liberty.

"Once free, I ran away from the place as fast as possible, but did not know in which direction to go, the country being so strange to me. So I fluttered on, half running and half flying, until I reached the place where an army of soldiers was encamped. If these men saw me I feared they would also wish to eat me for breakfast; so I crept into the mouth of a big cannon, thinking I should escape attention and be safe until morning. Soon I fell asleep, and so sound was my slumber that the next thing I heard was the conversation of some soldiers who stood beside the cannon.

"'It is nearly sunrise,' said one. 'You must fire the salute. Is the cannon loaded?'

"'Oh, yes,' answered the other. 'What shall I shoot at?'

"' Fire into the air, for then you will not hurt any one,' said the first soldier.

"By this time I was trembling with fear, and had decided to creep out of the cannon and take the chances of being caught, when, suddenly, 'Bang!' went the big gun, and I shot into the air with a rush like that of a whirlwind.

"The noise nearly deafened me, and my nerves were so shattered that for a time I was helpless. I felt myself go up and up into the air, until soon I was far above the clouds. Then I recovered my wits, and when I began to come down again I tried to fly. I knew the Valley of Mo must be somewhere to the west; so I flew in that direction until I found myself just over the Valley, when I allowed myself to flutter to the ground.

"It seems my troubles were not yet over; for, before I had fully recovered my breath after this long flight, your soldiers seized me and brought me here.

"I am accused of stealing your plum-pudding; but, in truth, your Majesty, I have been away from your kingdom for nine days, and am therefore wholly innocent."

The Yellow Hen had scarce finished this story when the King flew into a violent rage at the deceptions of his Wise Men, and turning to his soldiers he ordered them to arrest the Wise Men and cast them into prison.

Having given the unfortunate Hen a pair of gold earrings that fitted her ears and matched her complexion, the King sent her home with many apologies for having accused her wrongfully.

Then his Majesty seated himself in an easy chair, and pondered how best to punish the foolish Wise Men.

"I would rather have one really Wise Man," he said to himself, "than fifty

of these, who pretend to be wise and are not.”

That gave him an idea; so the next morning he ordered the Wise Men taken to the royal kitchen, where all were run through the meat chopper until they were ground as fine as mincemeat. Having thoroughly mixed them, the King stirred in a handful of salt, and then made them into one man, which the cook baked in the oven until it was well done.

“Now,” said the King, “I have one Wise Man instead of several foolish ones. Perhaps he can tell me who stole the plum-pudding.”

“Certainly,” replied the Wise Man. “That is quite easy. It was the Purple Dragon.”

“Good,” cried the monarch; “I have discovered the truth at last!”

And so he had, as you will find by reading the next surprise.

THE FOURTEENTH SURPRISE: THE PUNISHMENT OF THE PURPLE DRAGON

SCARCELY had the King spoken when some of his soldiers came running with news that they had seen the Purple Dragon eating plum-pudding in the royal garden.

"What did you do about it?" asked the monarch.

"We did nothing," they answered; "for, had we interfered with its repast, the Dragon would probably have eaten us for dessert."

"That is true," remarked the King. "Yet something must be done to protect us from this monster. For many years it has annoyed us by eating our choicest crops, and nothing we can do seems of any avail to save us from its ravages."

"If we were able to destroy the Dragon," said Prince Thinkabit, "we should be doing our country the greatest possible service."

"We have often tried to destroy it," replied the King, "but the beast always manages to get the best of the fight, having wonderful strength and great cunning. However, let us hold a council of war, and see what is suggested."

So a council of war was called. The Wise Man, all the Princes and Noblemen, the Dog and the Wise Donkey being assembled to talk the matter over.

"I advise that you build a high wall around the Dragon," said the Wise Man. "Then it will be unable to get out, and will starve to death."

"It is strong enough to break down the wall," said the King.

"I suggest you dig a great hole in the ground," remarked the Donkey. "Then the Dragon will fall into it and perish."

"It is too clever to fall into the hole," said the King.

"The best thing to do," declared Timtom, "is to cut off its legs; for then it could not walk into our gardens."

"The scales on its legs are too hard and thick," said the King. "We have tried that, and failed."

"We might take a red-hot iron, and put the Dragon's eyes out," ventured Prince Jollikin.

"Its eyes are glass," replied the King with a sigh, "and the iron would have no effect on them."

"Suppose we tie a tin can to its tail," suggested the Dog. "The rattling of the can would so frighten the Dragon that it would run out of the country."

"Its tail is so long," answered the King, gloomily, "that the Dragon could not hear the can rattle."

Then they all remained silent for a time, thinking so hard that their heads

began to ache; but no one seemed able to think of the right thing to do.

Finally the King himself made a proposition.

"One thing we might attempt with some hope of success," said his Majesty. "Should it fail, we can not be worse off than we are at present. My idea is for us to go in a great body to the castle of the Dragon, and pull out its teeth with a pair of forceps. Having no teeth, the monster will be harmless to annoy us in any way; and, since we seem unable to kill it, I believe this is the best way out of our difficulty."

The King's plan pleased every one, and met with shouts of approval. The council then adjourned, and all the members went to prepare for the fight with the Purple Dragon.

First the blacksmith made a large pair of forceps, to pull the Dragon's teeth with. The handles of the forceps were so long that fifty men could take hold of them at one time. Then the people armed themselves with swords and spears and marched in a great body to the castle of the Purple Dragon.

This remarkable beast, which for so long had kept the Valley of Mo in constant terror, was standing on the front porch of its castle when the army arrived. It looked at the crowd of people in surprise, and said:

"Are you not weary with your attempts to destroy me? What selfish people you must be! Whenever I eat anything that belongs to you, there is a great row, and immediately you come here to fight me. These battles are unpleasant to all of us. The best thing for you to do is to return home and behave yourselves; for I am not in the least afraid of you."

Neither the King nor his people replied to these taunts. They simply brought forward the big pair of forceps and reached them toward the Dragon.

This movement astonished the monster, who, never having been to a dentist in his life, had no idea what the strange instrument was for.

"Surely you can not think to hurt me with that iron thing," it called out, in derision. And then the Dragon laughed at the idea of any one attempting to injure it.

But when the Dragon opened its mouth to laugh, the King opened the jaws of the forceps, quickly closing them again on one of the monster's front teeth.

"Pull!" cried the King; and fifty men seized the handles of the forceps and began to pull with all their strength.

But, pull as they might, the tooth would not come out, and this was the reason: The teeth of Dragons are different from ours, for they go through the jaw and are clinched on the other side. Therefore, no amount of pulling will draw them out.

The King did not know this fact, but thought the tooth must have a long

root; so he called again:

"Pull! my brave men; pull!"

And they pulled so hard that the Dragon was nearly pulled from the porch of its castle. To avoid this danger the cunning beast wound the end of its tail around a post of the porch, and tied a hard knot in it.

"Pull!" shouted the King for the third time.

Then a surprising thing happened. Any one who knows anything at all about Dragons is aware that these beasts stretch as easily as if made of india-rubber. Therefore the strong pulling of the fifty men resulted in the Dragon being pulled from its foothold, and, as its tail was fastened to the post, its body began to stretch out.

The King and his people, thinking the tooth was being pulled, started down the hill, the forceps still clinging fast to the monster's big front tooth. And the farther they went the more Dragon's body stretched out.

"Keep going!" cried the King; "we mustn't let go now!" And away marched the fifty men, and farther and farther stretched the body of the Dragon.

Still holding fast to the forceps, the King and his army marched into the Valley, and away across it, and up the hills on the other side, not even stopping to take breath. When they came to the mountains and the forests, and could go no farther, they looked back; and behold! the Dragon had stretched out so far that it was now no bigger around than a fiddle-string!

"What shall we do now?" asked the fifty men, who were perspiring with the long pull and the march across the Valley.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied the panting King. "Let us tie this end of the beast around a tree. Then we can think what is best to be done."

So they tied that end of the Dragon to a big tree, and sat down to rest, being filled with wonder that the mighty Purple Dragon was now no larger around than a piece of twine.

"The wicked creature will never bother us again," said the King. "Yet it was only by accident we found a way to destroy it. The question now is, what shall we do with this long, thin Dragon? If we leave it here it will trip any one who stumbles against it."

"I shall use it for fiddle-strings," said Prince Fiddlecumdoo, "for the crop failed this year, and I have none for my violin. Let us cut the Dragon up into the proper sizes, and store the strings in the royal warehouse for general use."

The King and the people heartily approved this plan. So the Prince brought a pair of shears and cut the Dragon into equal lengths to use on his violin. Thus the wicked monster was made good use of at last, for the strings had an excellent tone.

And that was not only the end of the Purple Dragon, but there were two other ends of him; one tied to a tree in the mountains and the other fastened to a post of the castle.

That same day the Monarch of Mo gave a magnificent feast to all his people to celebrate the destruction of their greatest foe; and ever afterward the gardens of the Beautiful Valley were free from molestation.

DOT AND TOT OF MERRYLAND

Dot and Tot of Merryland appeared in 1901, published by George M. Hill Company with artwork by W. W. Denslow, famous for his illustrations in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, published the year before. It was his last collaboration with L. Frank Baum. The fantasy follows the adventures of two children, who after picnicking, float along a river in their boat, pass through a tunnel and reach the seven valleys of magical Merryland, a land near Oz. Two citizens from Merryland, the queen and the Candy Man visit the Emerald City for Princess Ozma's birthday party in *The Road to Oz*.

A first edition copy of Dot and Tot of Merryland

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L. Frank Baum at work, circa 1899

DOT AND TOT OF MERRYLAND

BY L. FRANK BAUM

PICTURES BY W. W. DENSLOW

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The success achieved last year by "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" — a book that not only ran through many large editions, but brought the author hundreds of letters from interested little folks — has induced me to follow that tale with another, herein presented.

Should "Dot and Tot of Merryland" win the approval of my young friends, I shall be pleased and contented.

In any event Mr. Denslow's quaint and merry pictures, which, in this book excel all his previous work, will be sure to induce happiness in the heart of every beholder.

L. FRANK BAUM.

Chicago, July 1, 1901.

DEDICATION.

To ev'ry laughter-loving Tot —
Whether your name be Dot or not;
And may you find a Merryland
Forever lying close at hand.

I. — Roselawn

YOU should have seen Dot as she nestled among the cushions of the carriage on her way to the railway station with her father and governess, Miss Bombien. Her dainty white gown was covered with tucks and puffings and embroideries, as became the dress of the daughter of the wealthy banker who sat smilingly beside her. Her soft, braided white hat had a wide brim that drooped languidly over the pale little face beneath, and broad, white ribbons drew down the brim until all the yellow curls were hidden away. Indeed, the only bits of color about Dot that showed were her deep blue eyes and rosy lips. Even these last were not so rosy as they should have been, for Dot was not in her usual good health, having been confined to the big city house during a long winter and a chill, uncomfortable spring.

But, now that the flowers were blooming and the birds singing in the new-leaved trees, she was going, in charge of her governess, to pass the summer at Roselawn, a beautiful country home her father had recently purchased.

"You must try not to be lonely, dear," said her father, as he held her little hand in his big, strong one. "I have told Miss Bombien to let you run and romp to your heart's content, so the roses may more quickly return to your pale cheeks."

Dot's eyes brightened. To run and romp as she pleased would indeed be a new experience to her, and she was happy even to think of such delight.

"You will have no one but Miss Bombien for company," continued her father; "but there are plenty of servants, and I am told the grounds are in beautiful condition. In a few days, at most, Sweetheart, I shall run down to see you, and then you can tell me how you like your new home. In the meanwhile, Miss Bombien will simply look after your comfort; there will be no lessons to bother you. All you must do is eat and sleep and play, and to grow strong and rosy-cheeked again."

Dot listened to al this with much pleasure, and decided she was about to have a fine holiday. Her real name, by the way, was Evangeline Josephine Freeland; but mamma and papa had always called her "Dot" from the day she was born, so sometimes she almost forgot she had such a beautiful name as Evangeline Josephine.

Dot's mamma was an invalid, and had been taken by her father — Dot's grandfather, you know — for a trip to Europe, in search of better health, and so she had been forced to leave her little daughter to the watchful care of Miss Bombien. Mr. Freeland, although he loved Dot dearly, was a very busy man and could devote but little time to his child. "So, Sweetheart," he told her, "you will be Queen of Roselawn this summer, and I will come down

once in a while to bow before your Majesty's throne."

What he really feared was that Dot might grow up weak and delicate as her mother was; but he did not tell the child this. He resolved, however, that if fresh air and healthy surroundings could give his little girl strength and health, they should be at her command, and therefore he had purchased Roselawn almost entirely on Dot's account.

Before she realized it, Dot found herself at the railway station and aboard a parlor car, where her father gave her a long and loving farewell kiss. Then Mr. Freeland stood upon the platform and waved his hand to his daughter, while the train slowly glided out from the station and began its journey into the sweet, fresh country.

Roselawn won the girl's heart at first sight. The cool but sun-kissed mansion seemed delightful after the stuffy, formal city house. It was built in a quaint yet pretty fashion, with many wings and gables and broad verandas on every side. Before it were acres and acres of velvety green lawn, sprinkled with shrubbery and dotted with beds of bright flowers. In every direction were winding paths, covered with white gravel, which led to all parts of the grounds, looking for all the world like a map, Dot thought.

From the first day of her arrival, Dot was all eagerness and joy. Miss Bombien fully obeyed her instructions to let the child run. Dot entered the house only to eat her meals, which she did with growing appetite, and then away she would romp to chase butterflies, visit the stables or poultry yard, or sit near the river bank and watch the driftwood float by. Sometimes a boat danced over the broad, blue waters, and then Dot would jump up and down and clap her hands in ecstasy at the pretty sight. The river soon became her favorite resort, for the green banks and terraces before the house ran down to the water's edge.

Miss Bombien passed her days in hammock swung under a side porch, where she read a great many books and enjoyed herself in her own way. She did not bother to watch Dot, thinking the child could get into no mischief beyond a torn frock or a soiled face.

One morning, having finished her breakfast and scampered out upon the lawn, as usual, Dot chanced to notice a tiny path that led through a small opening in a high and thick hedge. She had never been in this direction before, and although she had often seen the hedge, she had not thought there was a way to pass through it. So a spirit of adventure came over her.

"I'll explore," said Dot to herself.

Pat, pat, patter went the little feet on the gravel, and soon the busy hedge was reached and the opening passed.

Then Dot stopped suddenly and looked around. A cozy little vine-covered

cottage nearly surrounded by blooming posies, was before her. From the doorway, however, a path led to Dot's feet, and sitting in the middle of this path, slowly piling pebbles into his broad-brimmed straw hat, was a little boy.

II. — Tot

THE boy was a year or two younger than Dot, and seemed a chubby little fellow as he sat with his legs spread apart and his dark eyes raised wonderingly to the face of his unexpected visitor. Waves of brown hair clustered loosely about his broad forehead, and his dress was neat, though of a coarse material.

He paused in his play and stared hard at Dot for a moment; then dropped his eyes bashfully and ran his fingers through the white pebbles in an embarrassed way.

"Who are you?" asked the girl, in the calm, matter-of-fact tone peculiar to children, while she continued to regard the boy with the interest of a discoverer.

"Tot," was the low reply.

"Tot who?" she demanded.

"Tot Tompum," murmured the boy.

"Tompum! That doesn't mean anything," said Dot, decidedly.

This positive statement seemed to annoy the little fellow. He raised his eyes half shyly a moment and said, in a louder voice:

"Papa Tompum cuts the grass, an' makes the flowers grow. I'm Tot Tompum."

"Oh," said Dot; "you must mean Thompson. Thompson's the gardener, I know, and gardeners make the flowers grow and cut the grass."

The boy nodded his head twice as if to say she was right.

"Gard'ner," he repeated. "Papa Tompum. I'm Tot Tompum."

Then he took courage to look up again, and seeing a friendly smile upon Dot's face he asked boldly, "Who is you?"

"Oh, I'm Dot," she answered, sitting down beside him. "My whole name is Dot Freeland."

"Dot F'eelan'," said Tot.

"Freeland," corrected Dot.

"F'eelan'," said Tot.

"Never mind," laughed the girl; "let us play together. What were you doing with the pebbles?"

"Jack-stones," said the boy, and gravely picking out five of the white pebbles, nearly of one size, he tossed them into the air and tried to catch them on the back of his hand. Two tumbled off, and Dot laughed. The boy laughed, too, and tried it again. Before long they had become fast friends, and were laughing and chatting together as happily as if they had known one another for months.

Tot's mother, hearing their voices, came to the door of her cottage; but seeing her boy's new playmate was "the young lady at the mansion," she smiled and returned to her work.

Presently Dot jumped up.

"Come, Tot," she cried, "let us go where your father is working. I saw him weeding one of the flower beds this morning."

Tot scrambled to his feet and poured the white pebbles from his hat, after which he placed it upon the back of his head; so far back, indeed, that Dot wondered why it did not tumble off.

"We'll go see Papa Tompum," he said, trotting along beside his new friend.

Thompson, the gardener, was quite surprised to see his little boy holding fast to the hand of the rich banker's daughter, and chatting away as frankly as if he had known her for years; but Thompson had learned by this time that Dot ruled everyone about the place and did exactly as she pleased, so he made no protest. As he watched the children running about the grounds where Tot was usually forbidden to play, Thompson felt proud that his boy had been selected by "the young lady" for so high and honorable a position as her playmate.

He made no protest when they raced across a flower bed and left the prints of their small feet upon the soft earth, for Dot held Tot firmly by the hand, and he obediently followed wherever she led. The big red roses attracted her fancy, and she ruthlessly plucked a handful and stuck them in rows around the rim of Tot's hat as well as her own, although the poor gardener, who had tended these flowers so patiently that they had become precious in his eyes, actually winced and shivered with dismay at witnessing the careless and, to him, cruel manner in which the young mistress of the house destroyed them. But Dot knew they were her property and enjoyed the roses in her own way; while Tot, although he may have felt guilty, wisely shifted all responsibility to his companion, and admired the royal way in which she accepted everything about the place as her very own.

When the luncheon gong sounded from the big house, and Dot left Tot to obey the summons, she said to him, "Tomorrow I will bring a basket of sandwiches and cake, and we'll have a picnic down by the river bank."

"All right!" answered Tot, and trotted away toward his father's cottage.

It had been an eventful day to him, for he had found a delightful playmate.

III. — The Boat

Early next morning Dot came out of the house with a basket on her arm so big and heavy she could hardly carry it. Indeed, she stopped several times between the house and the gap in the big hedge to set the basket down while she rested. Once she was sorely tempted to chase a pretty butterfly that fluttered lazily over the lawn near by; but a glance at the basket and a thought of Tot recalled her to the fact that this was "a picnic day," and so she trudged steadily on and passed through the hedge.

Tot was sitting on the door-step waiting for her. He wore a clean sailor waist and blue brownie overalls, and his face and hands had been freshly washed for the important occasion.

When he saw Dot's basket his eyes grew big and round, and he asked, "What you got?"

"Oh, that's our lunch," said the girl, setting down her burden with a sigh of relief.

"What's lunch?" demanded Tot.

"Why — something to eat, you know," she answered.

"Oh," said Tot. Then he looked at the basket with new interest and asked, "Basket all full somefin' t'eat?"

"Yes," replied Dot, with some pride. "I begged cook to give me all the good things she had in the pantry, 'cause you and I are going to have a picnic, and eat our lunch down by the river. So she filled it way up to the top, 'cause cook always does anything I ask. And it's a great big basket, Tot, too."

"Yes," answered Tot, gravely, "big basket!" Then he jumped up and, all eagerness, approached the basket.

"Let's eat it!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no," cried Dot reprovingly. "It isn't time for lunch yet. And I've just had my breakfast. But we'll go down to the river and start the picnic right away. And, if you're good, Tot, perhaps I'll give you just one piece of jelly-cake before lunch time."

Tot's mother came out and kissed her boy good-bye, and then he and Dot took hold of the handle of the big basket and started for the river.

Of course, it took them a long time to get there, for often they set down the basket to pick flowers or watch a robin redbreast carrying food to its nest full of babies, or to run over the soft, close-cropped grass and chase each other, in very joyful and good spirits.

But they always returned to the basket, and at last carried it down to the water's edge, where they placed it upon a large, flat stone.

“That will be our table, when it’s time for lunch,” said Dot.

“Time now,” remarked Tot, wistfully.

“Not yet,” said the girl, “but you shall have the jelly-cake, ‘cause there’s plenty to last all day.”

So she drew aside the white cloth that covered the basket and took out two big slices of cake, one for Tot and one for herself. While they ate it, they walked along the shore. The river was entirely deserted by boats, for it was a warm day and even the fisher folk did not care to be out. On the opposite shore were great walls of rock rising up from the river, but at the foot of the cliffs were bushy trees that lined the further edge of the water.

“Just like whiskers,” said Tot.

“So they are, from here,” agreed Dot; “but if we were on the other side of the river we would find them to be big trees. It’s because they are so far away that they look like the river’s whiskers.”

They walked farther along the shore until they were past the grounds of Roselawn, and then, turning a little bend in the river, they came to some low bushes growing down by the water.

“Oh, Tot,” cried the girl, “wouldn’t it be nice to lunch under those trees, where it is cool and shady? Let us go back and fetch the basket.”

Tot followed obediently, for he recognized Dot as the leader not only because she was older, but because she possessed the wonderful basket of good things. They walked back to the big stone where they had left the basket, and after a good deal of labor managed to carry it to the grove of low trees. Pushing the branches aside, they crept through the bushes until they reached the edge of the river, and then Dot uttered an exclamation of delight.

“Here’s a boat!” she said. “And a pretty boat, too. I wonder whom it belongs to. But never mind, there’s no one here; so we will climb into it and eat our luncheon on the seats.”

It really was a pretty boat, painted all white, except for a red stripe running along the outer edge. There was a broad seat at each end and two seats in the middle, and in the bottom of the boat, under the seats, were two oars.

One end of the boat was drawn up on the shore, while the rest of it lay quietly upon the water; but the branches of the trees threw a cool shade over all, and it seemed to Dot and Tot the most pleasant place to eat their luncheon.

They carried the basket to the broad seat farthest out in the water, and Dot spread her white cloth over it, and laid upon that all the good things cook had put into her basket.

“Let’s play house,” said Tot.

“Not house,” corrected Dot; “we’ll play this is a ship, and we’re on a trip across the ocean. Won’t it be jolly?”

Sitting upon the bottom of the boat, close to the seat which formed their table, they laughed and talked and ate their luncheon with the keen appetites all healthy children have.

The time passed so quickly they never knew how long they sat there; but suddenly Tot exclaimed, “It’s hot!” and put on his hat to keep the sun from his head.

Dot looked up, surprised to find that the sun was indeed shining full upon them. Then she noticed that the shade of the trees was gone and only the blue of the sky was over the boat.

She stood up and gave a little cry of dismay.

“We’re in the river, Tot,” she said; “the boat has got away!”

IV. — Under the Cliffs

Tot scrambled to his feet and sat upon a seat of the boat, holding fast to the sides with both hands. As he looked around and saw the boat was far from land, he smiled and nodded his head, saying, “Now we’ll play ship, an’ ride on ‘e ocean. Won’t we, Dot F’eelun’?”

“Oh, Tot!” exclaimed the little girl; “I’m afraid we’ll be drowned. How can we ever get home again?”

“Ride in ‘e boat,” said Tot, composedly.

“But the boat is carrying us farther away every minute. We’re floating downstream; and by-and-by we’ll come to the ocean, where there are big waves,” declared Dot, who was really frightened.

But Tot refused to be afraid. As the swift current carried them along, he clapped his hands together joyfully and gave a little laugh of delight. “Nice ride!” he said again and again. “Hooray!”

Dot was older and wiser. She knew a boat could be rowed by means of oars, and there were two oars lying on the bottom of the boat. She decided to make an attempt to reach the shore, for then someone might be found to help them back to Roselawn, which they had now left far behind.

She drew out one of the oars and with difficulty, for it was heavy for the child to handle, managed to push one end into the water and rest the other against the row-lock of the boat. Then she began to row as hard as she could; but her strength was not great, and all she did was to push the front of the boat half around, so that it headed toward the rocky cliffs on the far side of the river.

Her efforts pleased Tot, who laughed merrily as the oar splashed in the water; but Dot was determined to get to land if possible and struggled desperately at her task.

The boat was still headed toward the rocky cliffs, when suddenly the oar flew out of Dot’s hands and she fell backward off the seat.

She was not hurt, but when she got up she saw the oar floating in the water, out of her reach; still she was reassured to notice that the boat was now gliding swiftly along, and presently, to her joy, she saw it was headed directly toward the fringe of trees, and getting nearer to the bank every moment.

“It must be another current, Tot,” she cried, “and this one is taking us to the shore. So I did some good by rowing, even if I lost the oar.”

Tot nodded, but said nothing. He was still enjoying the novel boat ride. Dot sat down on the seat beside him, and they watched the shore grow nearer and more distinct every moment as the boat glided steadily on.

The trees were bigger than they had thought, and grew close down to the water's edge. Dot became worried when she noticed the speed of the boat increasing as they drew nearer to the shore.

"If we bump those trees," she said, "we may be hurt, and the branches will scratch our faces dreadfully."

Tot stopped smiling when he heard this, and took hold of Dot's hand, which he clasped tightly in his own.

The next moment, still speeding onward, the boat reached the trees. The two children were caught by the branches, swept quickly from the seat, and sent sprawling at the bottom of the boat. But the boat itself never stopped an instant. There was just room for it to float underneath the thick branches, and instead of bumping into the shore, the water carried it through a small opening in the face of the rocky cliff, and then, in total darkness, it continued swiftly on its way!

Dot and Tot, who were both startled by this unexpected danger, managed to get up and sit together upon the seat of the boat; but they could see nothing before them and only a faint light behind, where they had entered this hidden tunnel in the cliff.

For some moments they sat in silence. Then Dot reached out her hand to see if she could feel anything; but the cool, damp air was all around them. Then she reached upward, and her hand struck against a piece of projecting rock which hurt her.

"Tot," she whispered, "I think we'd better lie down in the bottom of the boat. The roof isn't very high up, and it may bump our heads if we sit here."

Tot slipped off the seat at once and stretched himself out on the boards underneath. Dot quickly followed him, and then for a time they lay very still in the darkness, listening to the water as it rippled softly along the sides of the boat.

Presently the girl asked, "Are you frightened, Tot?"

"Not, much," was the hesitating answer; and then, after a long pause, he added, "but some."

"Oh, I'm some frightened myself," said Dot. "But I don't know what we can do."

"I know," declared Tot, solemnly.

"What?" she inquired, in an anxious voice.

"Nuthin'."

Dot saw no need of replying to this, and another long period of silence followed.

They did not seem to be in any immediate danger, for the boat swept along with a free, easy motion that was very pleasant, and the air was

delightfully cool after the heat of the sun outside in the open river.

But two things worried Dot. One was the fact that she was being carried a long ways from home, and the other a fear of where the underground river might lead them. She wasn't at all sure they were not floating down into the middle of the earth, and the chances of ever seeing Roselawn again were growing smaller every minute.

Nothing seemed to worry Tot, however. The darkness and the murmuring of the water made him drowsy, and before long he was fast asleep, with his chubby little arms clasped around Dot's neck.

The girl was also gradually recovering from her fright, since nothing terrible seemed to happen. They were having a long journey under the cliffs; but she knew there must come an end to it some time, and probably they would float out of the dark tunnel into the daylight sooner or later.

On and on sped the little boat, until at last, as Dot lay staring into the darkness, she noticed a dim light about her, and began to see the rocky roof of the cavern through which they were passing.

Then she sat up, and, far away in the distance, she saw a round, bright spot that reminded her of a full moon. It seemed to be getting nearer and bigger, and finally she gave a cry of joy and awakened her companion.

"Tot! Oh, Tot!" she called. "We've got to the end at last and are coming out of the tunnel!"

Tot sat up and rubbed his eyes. He gave one careless glance at the opening, and then turned his eyes upon the lunch basket, saying, sleepily, "I'm hungry!"

V. — The Watch-Dog of Merryland

Of course, Dot paid no attention, during this exciting moment, to the boy's demand for food.

There would be plenty of time to eat after they were out of the tunnel and in safety.

The boat glided on as gracefully as a swan, and in a few minutes it passed through the jagged rocks that formed the mouth of the tunnel and floated into a broad, open river.

Dot and Tot quickly scrambled upon the seat and looked around them.

They were in a deep valley, shaped very much like a chopping bowl, only around the outer edge were high, peaked mountains. Not a tree nor a green thing was to be seen anywhere, but the valley was thickly covered with stones — big stones and little stones and stones of all sizes — scattered about in every direction.

Through the center of the valley ran the broad, blue river, at one end of which was now the boat, while at the other end the children saw a low archway, through which the water seemed to pass into some country beyond.

Very slowly the boat was floating toward this archway, and Dot decided there would be ample time to eat something from the basket before they had passed through the valley of stones.

"We may as well go on, Tot," she said, as she arranged the luncheon; "for this isn't a pleasant place to stop in, and we should never be able to climb over those high mountains."

"Never could," agreed Tot, as he bit into a sandwich.

"What a queer place this is," she continued, looking around them. "I don't believe anyone has ever been here before. Let us give it a name. That's what all explorers do. We'll call it Stony Vale."

"All right," said Tot, contentedly. Then he stretched out his arm and pointed to something that was moving among the stones.

"See!" he said. "Funny man."

"Why, I really believe it is, Tot!" exclaimed the girl, looking toward the place. "No, it isn't a man; it's a bear."

"Bear!" repeated Tot, with wide open eyes. "Funny bear!"

Halfway up the valley they saw a shaggy-looking creature sitting upon a rock. It seemed to have the form of a man, as Tot had first declared; but it was covered with long, thick hair, which made Dot decide it must be a bear.

Whatever it was, the creature was surely alive, and it had also seen the boat, for the next moment it rose from the rock and came bounding down to the shore of the river, leaping from stone to stone, and moving so swiftly that

its long hair streamed out behind it in the wind.

The boat was now being carried by the current directly toward the shore, and soon its front end touched softly upon the gravelly beach. At the same time the strange creature drew closer to them and sat down upon a big stone only a few feet away.

Dot and Tot had been watching it, and now saw that what they had taken for a bear was an old man, with whiskers and hair so long that they reached down to the soles of his feet, and probably would have grown still longer had not the rough stones worn away the ends of the hair. Not a bit of his body could be seen; the flowing white hair covered him everywhere like a gown, except upon the top of his head, which was smooth and bald. So thick, indeed, was the covering that when he stretched out his arms, the old man could only push his hands and wrists through the masses of hair.

The curious appearance of this strange person surprised the children, and they remained for some time staring at him without trying to say a word.

The hairy man looked at them, in return with equal interest, and was the first to speak, saying in a mild, sad voice:

"Strangers, who are you?"

"I'm Dot, sir," answered the girl. "Dot Freeland."

"She's Dot F'eelun'," repeated Tot.

"And this is my friend, Tot Thompson," she continued.

"I'm Tot Tompum," said Tot gravely.

"Oh," replied the man. "I'm pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm the Watch-Dog of Merryland."

"What a queer name!" exclaimed Dot. "Why do they call you that?"

"Because I'm placed here to keep everyone from passing through the archway that spans the river into the fair and happy valleys of Merryland."

"How can you keep them from passing through?" asked the girl.

"Why, tell them they mustn't, of course."

"But suppose they won't mind you, what will you do then?"

The old man looked puzzled, and shook his head slowly.

"I'm sure I don't know what I could do in that case," he answered. "You see, no one has ever before come here since I was commanded to guard the entrance to Merryland."

"How long have you been here?" inquired Dot.

"About three hundred years, I think; but I've lost track of the exact time."

"Don't you ever die?" asked Tot wondering at this great age.

"I haven't died yet," answered the old man, thoughtfully.

"But you will, won't you?" persisted the boy.

"Why, I suppose so, if the Queen lets me," was the reply.

“Who is the Queen?” questioned Dot.

“She who rules Merryland,” answered the man.

Then, for a few moments, there was silence, while Dot and Tot stared at the hairy old man and he stared at them.

Presently Dot broke the silence the stillness by asking, “What do you do in this lonesome place, where you have no one to talk to?”

“Why, most of the time I watch, as it is my duty to do. And when I get lonely, I count my whiskers.”

“Oh!” said Dot. Then she inquired, curiously, “How many whiskers have you?”

“Well,” answered the Watch-Dog of Merryland, confidentially, “there are either eighty-seven thousand four hundred and twenty-six, or else eighty-seven thousand four hundred and twenty-eight. Sometimes I make it one figure and sometimes the other, so I can’t really tell which is right. I was engaged in counting my whiskers when I looked up and saw your boat. I had then counted sixty-nine thousand three hundred and fifty-four; but I was so surprised to see you that I missed the count, and now I shall have to begin all over again.”

“I’m sorry,” said Dot, sympathetically; “I’d like to know just which is the right number.”

“If you will wait I’ll count them,” he replied, eagerly. “Perhaps then you can tell if I make a mistake.”

“How long will it take?” she asked.

“I can do it in about four months.”

“Oh, we couldn’t possibly wait that long,” declared the girl. “I really think we should be going now.”

“Where will you go?” he asked.

“There is only one way for us to go — through that archway into Merryland, as you call it. We are not strong enough to pull the boat upstream, so we must let it float where it will.”

“It will be a terrible disgrace to me,” said the Watch-Dog of Merryland, in a solemn voice, “if you escape me. What will the Queen say when she knows I have watched here three hundred years without seeing anyone, and then allowed the first strangers who came along to pass through the archway?”

“I do not see that she can blame you,” returned Dot. “You say yourself you would be unable to stop us if we decided not to mind you. So the Queen can only blame us for not minding you.”

“That is true,” said the old man, more cheerfully.

“Want somethin’ t’eat?” inquired Tot, holding out a slice of jellycake.

“Dear me!” said the Watch-Dog, taking the cake in his hand and looking

at it with much curiosity. “What is it?”

“Eat it,” said Tot; “it’s good.”

“But I can’t eat,” replied the old man. “I don’t know how. I’ve never eaten anything in my life.”

“Not even when you were a little boy?” Tot asked, in wonder.

“Well, I’ve forgotten what happened when I was a little boy, it’s so long ago,” returned the man. “But I certainly have no desire to eat now, and if I had there is nothing in the Valley to devour except stones. I suppose eating is a habit you have acquired. Why don’t you break yourself of it?”

“I get hungry,” answered Tot.

“Hunger must be a habit, too,” remarked the old man, “for I never have had it since I have been in this valley. However, if you will allow me to keep the cake, I will amuse myself by looking at it when I’m tired of counting my whiskers.”

“You are quite welcome to the cake,” said Dot. “But now I must ask you to excuse us, for it is time we started upon our journey.”

“Oh, don’t let me detain you,” replied the Watch-dog of Merryland, politely; “that is, if you are determined to disobey my orders.”

“I fear we must,” said the girl. “Is Merryland the other side of that archway?”

“Part of it is,” answered the old man. “There are Seven Valleys in Merryland, connected by archways, for the river flows through them all.”

“And what is beyond the Seventh Valley?” asked Dot.

“No one knows except those who pass through, and those who pass through never return to tell,” he replied.

“Well, good-bye,” said Dot.

“Bye!” repeated Tot, briefly.

“Good-bye,” answered the Watch-Dog.

The girl took the remaining oar and pushed the boat away from the shore with it. The little craft glided out into the river very slowly, and drifted along with the current in the direction of the archway.

Dot and Tot sat on the seat and watched the friendly old man until a shadow fell upon them, and called their attention to the fact that they were passing through the arch into the First Valley of Merryland.

VI. — The First Valley

The rocky arch was not very thick, yet before Dot and Tot had floated to the other side of it, shouts of merry laughter and the chattering of many voices came to their ears. Some of the voices sounded loud and shrill, others low and deep, but all rang with a happy tone that aroused the children's interest at once, and made them wonder what occasion could cause so much amusement.

Then, so suddenly that it quite startled the childish voyagers, the boat glided from the archway into the most beautiful country one could imagine.

It was a Valley, as the Watch-Dog had said; but it was level and sunny and dotted with broad-leaved trees; while soft, tender grasses, mingled with brilliant flowers, covered the ground in every direction. There seemed to be no houses at all, yet streets were laid out in regular order, having at their sides raised platforms in place of houses. Each of the platforms was four feet high and fifteen feet square on the top, and they were separated from one another by stretches of the flower-strewn lawn. The top and sides of every platform were padded like the mattresses of a bed, and were covered with silks and velvets of the most gorgeous patterns, no two being of the same combinations of colors.

On many of these raised and padded platforms, Dot and Tot saw groups of funny-looking Clowns, all dressed in wide, baggy trousers, puffy jackets and soft, pointed caps. Yet in their costumes was an endless variety of colorings and combinations of colors, making the groups look remarkably bright and pleasing.

The faces of the Clowns were painted in a fanciful way, with rings of red and blue and yellow on their cheeks, and spots and streaks of the same gorgeous colors over their eyes and around their chins.

When the children first came into the Valley of the Clowns, they saw many of them leaping and tumbling and turning somersaults upon the platforms, while others were juggling with balls, or balancing long feathers and sticks upon their noses and chins. These feats were greeted with shouts of laughter by other Clowns who were resting and looking on, and these spectators also cried out their approval or poked fun at the performers when they failed to accomplish the acts they were attempting.

While Dot and Tot sat in their boat, looking with amazement at the strange sights all about them, one of the Clowns chanced to look their way, and upon seeing the children, he set up a shout and rushed down to the shore, followed by more than a hundred of his fellows.

As they ran, the Clowns leaped over one another, turned somersaults into the air, and walked upon their hands nearly as fast as they could upon their feet; and so swift were all their movements that, in less time than one could think possible, they were all crowded along the river bank, and shouting loud greetings to the new arrivals.

Dot had to put her fingers in her ears at first, for the noise bewildered her, and while she wondered what she should say to these lively creatures, she noticed a richly dressed Clown standing before the others, and making low bows to her and to Tot. As his lips seemed to move, she took away her fingers from her ears that she might hear what he was saying.

Everyone was talking at the same time, and at first Dot could hear nothing plainly; but the Clown who was standing in front of his comrades clapped his hands loudly together three times, at which the others instantly became silent and motionless.

Then, with another bow, the leader addressed her, speaking in a sweet and most pleasing tone of voice, "Welcome, O King and Queen of Children, to the Valley of Clowns! We live but for your amusement; we love your happy and smiling faces more than anything else in the world, and this day on which you have come to visit your slaves is the most joyful we have ever known."

Here he made another bow and threw his pointed cap high into the air, where it whirled over and over and finally fell straight upon his head again. There was a shout of applause at this feat, and Tot laughed loudly and clapped his hands.

Then the leader of the Clowns again spoke, "If you will graciously consent to land in our country, where everything we have is at your service, we shall be delighted to amuse you to the best of our ability."

"You are very kind," answered Dot, "and as we are tired by sitting in the boat so long, we shall be glad to accept your invitation."

Then she pushed the boat to the shore, where a dozen Clowns seized it and drew it far up on the grassy bank. Then Dot and Tot stepped out upon land, and as they did so every Clown present turned a backward somersault and shouted, "Here we are again!"

The one who had first spoken to them now came forward and shook hands with both Dot and Tot in a very polite manner.

"My name is Flippityflop," he said, "and I am the Prince of Clowns, ruling here under the gracious favor of her Majesty the Queen of Merryland. I beg you will allow me to escort you to my dwelling; but first I should like to know your names, and how you came here."

"I'm Tot Tompum," said the boy, looking up into the Clown's painted

face, “and here’s Dot F’eelun. We’ve come in a boat, long, long ways off. An’ we don’t know how to get home again.”

“We are delighted to have you with us, however you came here,” replied the Clown; “and as for your getting home again, why, that is worry, and no one ever worries in the Valley of Clowns. You are welcome to remain our guests as long as you please, and while you are with us you must consider us your slaves, for Clowns have always been the slaves of children.” Then he turned to the others.

“Brothers!” he shouted. “Allow me to introduce you to our friends Dot and Tot, of the Big Round World. We are all their slaves. Salute them!”

Instantly every Clown stood upon his head and knocked his heels together in the air. As they wore silver bells around their ankles, this made a most delightful, tinkling sound, and the sight of so many topsy-turvy Clowns was so pretty that Dot and Tot both laughed and clapped their hands.

Then Flippityflop caught the children in his arms and seated one of them upon each of his shoulders, after which he marched up the street, followed by the rest of the Clowns, who sang and danced as they came.

The Prince carried them to one of the prettiest platforms and set them gently upon its cushioned top. Then he leaped into the air, whirled around like a windmill and landed gracefully beside them.

“Welcome to my dwelling,” he said.

“But this isn’t a dwelling,” exclaimed Dot. “A dwelling is a house.”

“And this is a sofa!” declared Tot.

“Oh, no; it’s a real house,” said Flippityflop, “although it may be different from the dwellings you are accustomed to. Let us enter.”

He seized a silken strap and opened a trap-door in the top of the platform.

“Come on!” he cried, and jumping down the hole, disappeared from view.

Dot crept up to the trapdoor and looked down. Just beneath her was Flippityflop, holding out his arms.

“Come on!” he said again; “I’ll catch you.”

Dot did not hesitate, but dropped through the opening, and the Prince caught her safely in his arms. Tot followed a moment later, and then the children gazed about them curiously.

VII. — The Clown Country

Flippityflop's house proved to be one big room, built under the platform, and lighted by a soft glow from hidden electric lamps. The walls were covered with bright-yellow silk hangings and on the floor was a crimson carpet. All around the sides were wide benches with soft cushions of purple velvet, and near the middle of the room was a small table of blue and silver. On the walls Dot noticed several gaudily colored pictures of Clowns, and when Flippityflop saw the children looking at these pictures he said:

"Those are portraits of my father and grandfather and great-grandfather. They were all Princes of this Valley of Merryland, as well as good men and clever Clowns. Therefore I am proud of them."

"They look very jolly," said Dot.

"They were jolly, and proved a comfort to thousands of children. But you must be hungry, and I trust you will allow me to offer you some dinner. What will you have?"

"What you got?" inquired Tot.

"Well, I have in my cupboard some fried goldfish, boiled buttercups and pickled shoelaces," he answered.

"Don't want any," said Tot.

"These seem rather foolish things to eat," remarked Dot.

"Of course, they are foolish things," agreed Flippityflop, cheerfully. "Everything we do here is foolish. You certainly can't expect wisdom in a country of Clowns."

"Course not," said Tot.

"If you'll send to the boat for our basket, I think we will prefer to eat the things we brought with us," declared Dot.

"Certainly!" answered the Prince, and immediately sticking his head through the trapdoor, he asked a Clown who stood outside to fetch the basket.

It came in a remarkably short time, and then Flippityflop assisted Dot to lay the cloth on the blue and silver table, while the children proceeded to eat of the sandwiches, cake and apple-tarts that remained in the basket.

"Wouldn't you like something to drink?" asked the Prince.

"I am rather thirsty," admitted Dot; "have you any milk?"

"No, we do not use milk in this Valley," he answered. "But we have some excellent green paint, or, if you prefer it, I can give a bottle of red mucilage."

"No, thank you," said Dot; "we couldn't drink those. Perhaps you will bring us some fresh water from the river."

"But the water is quite wet," exclaimed the Clown, "and is liable to make

you damp. Surely you won't think of drinking it!"

"Oh, yes; we're accustomed to drinking water," said the girl.

So the water was sent for, and Dot and Tot took long and refreshing drinks, although their action alarmed Flippityflop, who urged them to eat a few handfuls of sawdust afterward to absorb the dampness.

"Do all the Clowns live in this Valley?" asked the girl, when the table was cleared.

"Yes, all except those we send into the world to amuse the children," answered Flippityflop. "You see, we train them all very carefully, and every year one is selected to go into the world."

"How do they get there?" asked the child.

"At the upper edge of our Valley there is one place not so steep as the rest. The Clown who is leaving us climbs to this place and finds himself on the top of a mountain. So he makes himself into a ball, as he has been taught to do, and rolls down the mountain into the outside world, where he travels around until he finds a circus to join."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dot. "I've seen 'em — in circuses."

"To be sure; that's the proper place for Clowns. Do they make the children laugh?"

"Sometimes," said the girl.

"When they do not," said Flippityflop, gravely, "they are imitation Clowns, and were never trained in this Valley of Merryland. The real Clowns are sure to make you laugh. But come, it is time our people were gathering on the platforms for their evening practice. Would you like to watch them?"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Dot, joyfully; and Tot clapped his hands and echoed: "'Deed, yes!"

So Flippityflop lifted them through the hole to the top of the padded platform, where they saw a strange and merry sight.

All the platforms on both sides of the street were now occupied by Clowns, who were performing in a most marvelous manner. The trees were full of electric lights, which shed brilliant rays over the scene and enabled the children to see everything distinctly.

"Come with me," said their friend, "and I will lead you through the street, that you may see what my brothers are doing."

They left the Prince's platform and came to the next, where three gaily dressed Clowns were bounding into the air and whirling around before they came down again. Every time they jumped they cried: "All right, Mr. Johnson!" in their shrill voices, and often one of them would fall on his head or back instead of landing on his feet. When this happened they were not hurt, for the platform was soft and yielding; so they sprang up at once and

tried it over again, laughing at their own mishaps.

At the next platform were some juggling Clowns. One of these placed a light ladder on his shoulders, and another ran up it and stood upon his head on the top rung.

In another place the Clowns threw small silver balls into the air, one after the other, and then caught them cleverly as they came down.

Near the end of the street a Clown, dressed in a costume of scarlet with green spots upon it, and wearing a white, pointed cap upon his head, was singing a comic song. They stopped to listen while he sang as follows:

A goat to a barber went one day;
"Just trim my beard," the goat did say,
"And cut my hair in a stylish way" —
Sing shivvy, shovvy, shavey!
The barber then began to snip,
But soon he let the scissors slip,
And cut the goat upon his lip —
Sing shivvy, shovvy, shavey!
Then Mr. Goat, with angry bleat,
Gave one big jump from out his seat,
And knocked the barber off his feet —
Sing shivvy, shovvy, shavey!
"Enough!" he cried, "I'll have you know,
If barbers treat their patrons so,
I'll just allow my beard to grow!"
Sing shivvy, shovvy, shavey!

After each verse another Clown cracked a long whip at the singer, which made him leap into the air and screw his face up in such a comical way that Dot and Tot were greatly amused, and applauded him rapturously.

Just across the street was another singing Clown; but this one was dressed in a curious costume that was all white on one side of his body and all red on the other side. This fellow balanced the point of his cap upon the end of his nose, and then, making a bow, sang the following song:

Little Tommy Harris
Made a trip to Paris.
There he went within a tent,
Saw a convex firmament;
Then he peered within a booth,
Saw a shark without a tooth,
Heard a dumb man sing and chant,

Saw a crimson elephant.
Next he walked into a street,
Saw a lamp-post drink and eat,
Heard a turtle loudly roar,
Saw a rainbow through a door.
Then a man without a leg
Danced upon a horse's egg.
Then a steeple on a dome
Cried, "My boy, you'd best go home."
But as Tommy homeward sped,
He awoke — and was in bed!
Little Tommy Harris
Never went to Paris!

This singer had so droll an expression on his face that Tot yelled with rapture, and Dot found herself laughing heartily. Indeed, the whole performance was a delight to the children, and they were sorry when a bell rang and put a stop to the antics of the Clowns.

At once the they all dived into the trapdoors of their platforms, and Flippityflop said they had gone to bed and would not appear until the next morning.

The children were somewhat tired by the adventures of the day, so when Flippityflop helped them to gain the room under his platform, they crept to the soft-cushioned benches that lined the walls and lay down. In less than a minute Dot and Tot were fast asleep, curled up side by side, with their arms entwined.

Next morning they were awakened by the strains of sweet music. Dot at once sat up and asked, "What is that?"

"That is my alarm clock," answered Flippityflop, who had been reclining upon a bench at the other side of the room. "It tells me when it is time to get up."

"It's a queer alarm clock," said the girl.

"But a very good one," returned the Clown. "It is really a big music-box under the bench, which starts playing every morning at seven o'clock. So, instead of being awakened by a rattling and clanging of bells, such as most alarm clocks make, I open my eyes with a sensation of pleasure, and get up feeling jolly and content.

"I think it's a lovely clock," said Tot.

"Won't you join me at breakfast?" asked the prince. "I'm going to have a dish of scrambled egg-shells and a few fried buttons. The eggshells make our complexion white and chalky, and we are very fond of them."

“I prefer to eat something from our basket,” replied the girl. “But Tot may eat the egg-shells and buttons, if he wants them.”

“Don’t want ‘em!” cried Tot. “Want bread and butter.”

“Well, I declare!” said the Clown. “What peculiar tastes you children have!”

But he allowed them to breakfast from their own stock of food, and when the meal was finished Dot said, “We must be going now; but first I wish to thank you for the pleasant time we have had in your Valley. We enjoyed the Clowns very much indeed.”

“Nice Clowns,” declared Tot, with emphasis.

“I’m sorry to have you go,” said Flippityflop, “but I suppose you cannot stay here always, especially as you are going to visit our Queen.”

Then he carried the big basket down to the boat for them, and all the Clowns came to the river bank in a long procession, to bid them good-bye.

After they were seated in the boat and had begun to float out into the river again, the Clowns started singing a comic song, in one big chorus, as a farewell entertainment.

Dot and Tot laughed and waved their handkerchiefs at the jolly fellows until the archway leading into the next Valley was reached, and as the shadow of the rocks fell upon them and shut out their view of the First Valley of Merryland, they sighed and turned wonderingly to face whatever adventures might lie before them.

VIII. — The Second Valley

Gliding out of the archway into the Second Valley of Merryland, our little voyagers saw before them a big enclosure shaped like a diamond. Along two sides of this diamond the river ran very slowly, and upon the bank at their left rose a huge, straight wall of solid rock, that seemed, as they looked up, to reach to the clouds.

Upon the bank at their right hand, however, was a broad, flat country, which seemed at first sight to resemble any other beautiful valley, having trees and meadow, roads and fences, and a few pretty houses clustered near the river bank.

But on looking closer, Dot and Tot saw that all the trees had smooth trunks, with bright colors twisted around them like sticks of candy. The branches, though smaller than the trunks, had the same stick-candy appearance; while the leaves, which were of various colors, looked soft and thick, as if they were made of candy, too.

The houses were many-colored, being pink and brown and white and lavender, and the walls of all of them were as smooth as taffy. One big house, that was built exactly at the bend in the river, seemed to Dot to be made entirely of molasses candy, for it had the same color and appearance.

The trees and houses and fences were all smaller than one usually sees, but the brilliant colors made them look very pretty indeed.

The boat floated slowly toward the bend in the stream, and finally came close to the bank in front of the big molasses-candy house, where it stopped. Dot stepped out upon the bank and fastened the boat, and then Tot jumped out beside her. There was a little path, brown in color and rather rough, that led past the house and down to the river where they stood, and as Tot jumped upon this path he stubbed his toe and fell down. Then Dot saw him pick up a piece of the brown path that had become loosened, and after looking at it a moment put it into his mouth.

"Don't do that, Tot!" called the girl, in horror. "You mustn't eat mud."

"T'ain't mud," said Tot, with his mouth full. "It's fudge."

"Fudge!" echoed Dot. "You must be crazy, Tot." But she tasted a small piece herself and found that Tot was right. It was very nice fudge, too.

Just then as Dot was looking curiously toward the house, she saw the door open and a little man come out, followed the next moment by a little woman. They were not only very little, but short and very fat. The man wore a tall hat, a swallow-tail coat and tight breeches; but all his garments seemed fastened to him in some way, as if they were not made to come off, and their bright colors looked to have been painted on. The woman's dress had the

same appearance, and the big Shaker bonnet she wore seemed really a part of her head.

When these people saw Dot and Tot, they stopped short and looked at each other in surprise; but the man seemed soon to recover himself and walked quickly toward the children, swinging a candy cane in his hand as he came.

"Good morning, my dears," he said, pleasantly.

"Good morning," answered Dot.

"Mornin'," said Tot.

"Will you kindly tell us how you came here?" continued the fat little man. "You must excuse my curiosity, but I cannot remember ever having seen any real children before."

"Our boat brought us," said Dot. "We're drifting down the river and have to go wherever it takes us."

"Oh, I see," said the man. "Well, since you are here, permit me to welcome you to the Valley of Bonbons," and he reached out his hand, with a graceful bow, to the little girl.

Dot shook hands with him, of course; but it made her shiver a little, the hand felt so soft and flabby; and when she withdrew her own hand she noticed upon it a fine white powder like flour. This she brushed off, but the little man laughed and said. "It's only powdered sugar, my dear. I'm obliged to keep myself covered with it, you know, so I won't stick to things."

"But — but I don't understand," stammered the girl. "Aren't you made like other people?"

"Certainly; I am made like everyone I have ever seen until I met you and this little boy. It strikes me you are the ones who are queerly made. You don't seem to be candy at all."

"Oh no!" said Dot, in a matter-of-fact way. "We're just flesh and blood and bones."

"And clothes," added Tot, who was looking with greedy eyes at the strange little man.

"Well, well!" said the man, thoughtfully tapping the ground with his cane; "what strange creatures you must be. In this Valley everyone is made of candy."

"And everything else is candy," exclaimed the little woman, who was peering over the man's shoulder and had not spoken before.

"Oh yes; everything we know of is candy except the river," continued the man.

"Are you candy?" asked Tot, with wide open eyes.

"To be sure. My bones are all made of stick candy and my flesh is

marshmallow. That is why I must keep myself covered with powdered sugar; otherwise I would melt or stick to everything I touched. My wife is made in the same way, and we are very proud to know we are very pure and wholesome."

"What do you eat?" asked Tot, curiously.

"We eat candy, of course; that is what makes us so fat. Candy is very fattening, you know," said the little man cheerfully.

"But you haven't any teeth," remarked Dot, who had noticed this fact.

"Teeth! Certainly not. No one can eat much candy and still have teeth. Haven't you heard that candy always destroys a person's teeth?"

"I've been told so," replied Dot.

"But we get along very nicely without them. Indeed, our lives are decidedly sweet and peaceful."

Just then they heard a shrill scream, and at once the woman rushed toward the house, running in a very comical manner because she was so short and fat.

"That's the voice of our youngest child, the baby," explained the man. "I fear some accident has happened to it. One of our greatest troubles is that we cannot depend upon our colored servants, who are chocolate. Chocolates can seldom be depended on, you know."

"I hope nothing serious has happened to your baby," said Dot, with ready sympathy.

"Probably not," answered the candy man. "But I hope you will now permit me to escort you to my house. You must be hungry; and I will have luncheon served at once."

"Thank you," said Dot.

So, led by their fat little host, who waddled as he walked in a way that made Tot laugh, they went to the house and were ushered into the front parlor.

The room was beautifully furnished; but the chairs, tables, pictures and ornaments were all composed of candy of some sort, and there was a fragrant odor of wintergreen, peppermint and rose about the room that made Tot's mouth water in delightful anticipation. The boy seated himself in a pretty pink and white chair, and Dot sat down upon a small sofa; but happening to remember the sofa was candy, she quickly arose and remained standing, although she was also a little afraid of the sticky floor, which seemed to be well powdered.

Soon the woman entered the room and, having welcomed them, she said, "Our colored nurse, Aunt Lowney, had left the baby, little Huyler, out in the sun, and before she noticed he was getting warm, his left hand had all melted

away. That was what made him cry."

"Oh, that is terrible!" cried Dot, clasping her hands in horror at the sad accident. "What can you do for the poor child?"

"I have sent Aunt Lowney into the marshmallow field to get him some more fingers. We shall be able to patch him up all right, I think, so do not let it distress you. Accidents are always happening in our Valley. But I will order luncheon served at once, for you must be hungry after your journey."

She then left the room, but soon returned, followed by two serving maids, with complexions so dark brown in color that Dot was almost afraid of them.

"They are only chocolate, you know," whispered the man, "and quite harmless when taken in moderation."

Dot hardly understood what he meant, but felt more at ease after the explanation.

The maids brought many candy dishes to the table all filled with delicious bonbons and sugar-plums of every description. There were apples, pears, oranges and grapes, berries and peaches, rose-leaves and violets; but all were composed of candy and proved delightful eating. For drink they had pink lemonade, served in dainty candy cups.

"This pink lemonade," said the woman, "is one of the features of our Valley, through which it flows in a pretty stream. Sometimes we also drink the river water, but not often, for it is hardly sticky enough for our taste. Our luncheon is now ready, so please draw your chairs to the table."

Tot tried to rise then, but found he was stuck fast to his chair, owing to the heat of his body having warmed the candy. Finding he could not get up he began to cry, but Dot helped him, and by carefully pulling his clothes away, an inch at a time, she managed to get him loose. His clothes left a soft fuzz upon the seat and back of the chair, and to avoid further trouble, the candy man scattered powdered sugar over the chairs in which Dot and Tot sat at the table.

"I suppose it will powder your clothes somewhat," said he, "but they can be brushed clean before you leave the Valley."

The children enjoyed their novel luncheon. "It's the first time," whispered Dot to Tot, "I ever had all the candy I wanted to eat."

"Won't we get sick?" asked the boy, who was busily eating a delicious peach — rose candy outside and a soft, delicate cream within.

"I suppose so," answered Dot, truthfully, "but there's nothing else to eat, you see."

"Don't want nuthin' else," said Tot.

"Allegretti," called the woman to one of the brown maids, "bring a dish of those new cocoanut-kisses for our guests. Won't you have a few more maple

caramels?" she asked, politely, turning to Dot.

"No, thank you," replied the child; "I've eaten so much already that I fear I shall be ill."

"Oh, nonsense!" returned the little man; "you cannot become ill eating this sort of candy, for it's the purest in all the world. But if you lived here always you would doubtless become as fat as we are, and probably you would lose all your teeth."

"We're not going to stay," answered Dot, in alarm. "We shall have to start in just a few minutes."

"But not until you have taken a short walk around our Valley," remonstrated the little man. "You may never come here again, you know, and it is a very sweet sight."

They agreed to join their kind host in a walk, and after the candy man had carefully dusted himself afresh with powdered sugar, they started out.

As they walked up the street, they noticed that many people came to the doors of the candy houses and looked at the strangers with great curiosity. These people seemed made of many different kinds of candy, but all were quite fat, and had their clothes painted upon them in bright colors, like the candy images that are sold in shops at Christmas time.

"Aren't the people here very brittle?" asked Dot, as they walked along.

"Yes, I may admit they are somewhat brittle," answered the man. "That is one of the drawbacks we suffer from being made of candy. Only two days ago, Mr. Gunther, a particular friend of mine, fell down a hill and was broken into seventeen different pieces."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dot. "What did you do with him?"

"Oh, as he was ruined beyond repair, we divided him up among the neighbors who loved him best, and ate him the next morning for breakfast."

"Ate him!" cried the girl, who was greatly shocked.

"Certainly; Mr. Gunther was a very sweet man."

"But this is horrible," said Dot, with a shudder. "You are all cannibals!"

"Cannibals! What are those?" inquired the candy man.

"Why, people who eat each other," said Dot.

"Oh, then we are cannibals, sure enough," declared the little man, calmly.

"But cannibals are wicked creatures," said the child, aghast at such savagery.

"Is it wicked to eat candy in the country where you live?" demanded the man.

"No; but then people are not made of candy there."

"Well, here there is nothing else than candy; so if we eat at all we must eat candy. Is it wicked to eat in the country you came from?"

“No,” replied Dot, who was beginning to be puzzled at all this.

“Then,” said the little man, “you cannot consider us wicked for eating each other. Of course, we never eat anyone who is not broken; but when a man breaks himself into seventeen parts, it is considered quite a compliment to him for the neighbors who feast upon his pieces.”

This did not seem quite right to Dot, but she did not know how to reply; and to add to her confusion, the candy man suddenly held up his left hand, which he had placed behind him as he talked, and showed her that his thumb and two of the fingers were missing.

“Why, what can have happened to them?” she asked, in real distress.

The candy man looked at his hand carefully, and then quickly turned and looked at Tot.

“There are marks of teeth on my hand,” said he, “and no one in this Valley has teeth except you two children.”

“Tot!” cried Dot; “did you bite off this gentleman’s fingers?”

Tot hung his head.

“Answer me!” said the girl. “Have you been eating our friend?”

“Well,” said Tot, slowly, “he said the folks here were good to eat; an’ — an’ — he held his hand behind his back — right in front of my mouth; an’ — so I took one of little bite off his fingers, an’ — “

“Tot,” said Dot, “I’m ashamed of you! The idea of eating one who has been so kind to us, and so soon after luncheon, too!”

“Pray, do not scold him,” said the candy man. “He says I am good to eat, and that makes me so proud that I shall not mind the loss of my fingers. When I have time I can get some new ones patched on; so it does not matter much in the least.”

Still, Dot was hurt and angry at the occurrence, and Tot walked behind them with hanging head.

Very soon they saw, sitting by the roadside, a child who was so exceedingly black in color that Dot exclaimed:

“Surely, that baby isn’t made of chocolate!”

“No,” said her friend, “that’s a licorice child. We have a few of them in the Valley and they are much admired. But here is our stream of pink lemonade, and we will cross it by this little bridge.”

The bridge was remarkably pretty, being made of pea-green and orange-colored candy, twisted together and ornamented with dainty frosted work such as bakers put upon wedding cakes.

Upon reaching the other side of the stream they found themselves near the mountains, which shut in the far side of the Valley. Dot looked up at these

mountains and asked, curiously, “Who are all those people sitting on the rocks?”

At the question, Tot looked up also and saw long rows of candy men and women sitting close together at the foot of the mountains.

“Those people are the gum chewers,” replied their guide.

“What are they doing there?” inquired the girl.

“They are being punished,” returned the candy man, gravely. “If you look over yonder, to the left, you will see a number of low bushes. On these grow all kinds of chewing gums, and sometimes those who are naughty go out there and pick the sticks of gum.”

“But I thought they had no teeth,” said Dot.

“Nor have they; but their gums are hardened by long use, so they are able to chew as well as you do. This gum-chewing is a very disagreeable habit, as doubtless you know; so when anyone is discovered indulging in this habit, we make them come out here to the mountains and sit on the rocks for seven days and seven nights. It is a terrible disgrace, of course; but all naughtiness must be punished in some way.”

Dot watched the gum-chewers thoughtfully for a time, being ashamed to remember that she herself had often been guilty of indulging in this condemned habit; but she said nothing about it, and soon they turned and retraced their steps past the bridge and the village and the home of their kind host, coming at last to the river’s edge where they had landed.

Here Dot and Tot were surprised to find one end of their boat filled with delicious looking candies, which the colored maids had placed there during their walk, being directed in the work by the little candy woman with the Shaker bonnet.

Dot thanked the kind lady earnestly, for the food she had brought in the basket was nearly gone. Then the candy lady gave each of the children a sweet kiss, and the candy man shook hands with them, being careful not to let Tot bite off any more of his fingers.

Our little adventurers now seated themselves in the boat, and the chocolate maids pushed it off the bank for them. Soon they were drifting down the river again, and before long reached the archway that led to the Third Valley of Merryland.

IX. — The Third Valley

Soft strains of sweet and soothing music fell upon the ears of the children as the boat glided silently through the arch that led into the Third Valley. Then the jagged rocks surrounding them melted away in the rear, and they passed into a country that lay peaceful and smiling under the pleasant rays of the sun.

At first, Dot thought the entire Valley was carpeted with soft, white plush, but afterward she found it was a silken moss which grew thickly everywhere. There were a few trees, with wide-spreading branches, and upon these grew beautiful flowers that filled the air with delicate perfume, but in most places the Valley, which was shaped like a great cup with gently sloping sides, was open to the warm rays of summer sunshine which flooded it.

The entire scene was pretty to look upon; but what made the children's eyes open wide with wonder was the sight of hundreds of little, naked babies lying about upon the soft moss. They were waving their dimpled arms about, kicking out their chubby feet, or holding their tiny, fat thumbs in their mouths, while they cooed and crowed in a very happy and contented way. The breeze that blew gently through the trees made the music Dot and Tot heard; but the strains were soft and low, and seemed like a lullaby to hush the babies to sleep.

Some of these little ones were sleeping as the boat drew near, and they looked cozy and comfortable as they lay curled up on the moss; but others were wide awake and full of playfulness, while none of them cried or fretted or seemed a bit cross.

The babies were not the only inhabitants of this strange Valley, however. Walking among them were several long-legged, solemn-looking Storks, pure white in color, with splashes of black upon their wings. They appeared to act as nurses or guardians of the babies, and every now and then would fill a bottle with sweet milk from the fountain, and placed it beside a baby that acted as if it might be hungry. This fountain stood in about the center of the Valley and sent many sprays of new milk into the air, from whence it fell in graceful curves into a big basin of pure white marble. The nursing bottles were kept on a wide shelf at the edge of the fountain, where they were handy for the Storks to use.

While Dot and Tot were looking at the strange sights of this Valley, which was so different from the others they had seen, their boat drifted close to the shore, and one or two of the Storks came down to the river bank and looked at them curiously with their bright eyes.

Then one of the big, long-legged birds spoke to them in a voice that was

soft and pleasing. “Why did you come to our Valley?” it asked. “You are too old to become babies again.”

“Oh, we’re not babies,” said Dot, earnestly. “We’re quite grown up. And we came here because we could not help it. In a few minutes we will go away again into the next Valley.”

“Oh,” said the Stork, “very well.”

“Isn’t that milk I see in the fountain?” asked the child, after a little pause.

“Certainly it is,” answered the Stork; “we feed the babies with it.”

“Could — could I have a drink of it?” asked Dot, who was thirsty from eating so much candy.

“Why, bless the child! Of course you can. We have plenty and to spare. Come on shore at once, but be careful not to step on the babies.”

“I want a drink, too!” cried Tot, who had been so much astonished to hear a bird speak that he had remained silent until now.

“You may both drink as much as you wish,” replied the Stork, in a kindly voice.

So the children stepped out upon the bank and fastened their boat, that it might not float away without them. Then, taking each other’s hands, they followed the Stork over the silken moss to the fountain. There were no cups, so Dot and Tot drank from bottles; but they thought it the most delicious milk they had ever tasted.

While Dot was drinking she happened to look up into the sky, and something she saw there made her utter a cry of surprise. A fleecy, flower-like bud was floating, lightly as thistle-down, high in the air, and seemed to be slowly dropping into the Valley.

“What is that?” asked the girl, wonderingly.

“That?” answered the Stork, turning its head sideways so that its round, black eye could look at the sky; “why, that’s a baby-blossom to be sure.”

“And what is a baby-blossom?” inquired Dot.

“Wait a moment and you will see,” replied the Stork.

Slowly and gently the white object floated downward, and even as Dot and Tot watched it, the fleecy blossom sank upon the moss a few feet from where they stood. Then one white leaf unfolded, and another, and still another, until they saw lying in the center of the flower a beautiful baby, fast asleep. While the children looked upon this sight, hushed and silent at the wonder of it, the leaves of the blossom faded away and disappeared, while the new baby rolled over and opened wide its big, blue eyes.

“It will be hungry after the long journey,” said the old Stork, and, filling a bottle at the fountain, the bird carried it in its long bill to the baby and began to feed it, crooning at the same time the following verse:

Hushaby, lullaby,
Sweet flower from the sky;
Glad be thy dreams, for thy
Life lies before thee.
Soon shalt thou be at rest,
Soon fondled and caressed,
Pressed to the mother's breast
Who will adore thee.

The baby looked up at the Stork, smiled sweetly and then closed its eyes in sleep; while Tot, who had watched this scene with much interest, asked in a low voice, "Do all the babies come from the sky?"

The old Stork did not seem to hear him; but another bird, which was busily filling nursing bottles at the fountain, replied:

"Certainly, they do."

"I should think it would get crowded," said practical Dot, "for here comes another blossom."

"Two of 'em!" added Tot, looking upwards.

Indeed, two more of the baby-blossoms were seen floating down from the clear, blue sky, and the children watched them until they settled upon the white moss and opened their leaves, setting free two more rosy, new-born babies.

The Stork at the fountain was now singing an odd little song in a soft, cooing voice, and as Dot listened she caught the following words:

Coo-oo-oo, Coo-oo-oo!
Babies are born ev'ry minute, 'tis true
Babies are best when they're chubby and new;
'Most anybody will want one or two;
Some people willingly take quite a few.
Here comes another! For babies are due
To fall when they're fresh and tender and new.
Coo-oo-oo, Coo-oo-oo!
Babies are blossoms that fall like the dew.

Just then the older Stork, which seemed to be the chief of the nurses, came toward the fountain and said to another of the birds, "It is time to take one of the babies into the world. They are coming quite fast to-day, and we must make room for the new ones."

"Very well," answered the other. They walked among the babies until they came to one quite big and strong, who was lying fast asleep. This baby the Stork picked up very tenderly and placed upon the other bird's back, twining its little arms around the long, soft neck, to which it clung tightly.

Then, spreading its great wings, the Stork flew into the air, bearing the baby gently, and sailed over the edge of the Valley into the world beyond, where it disappeared from view.

"That is the way we keep our Valley from getting crowded," said the old Stork.

"Do you suppose," asked Dot, "that I lived here once, when I was a baby?"

"Probably," answered the bird. "But, of course, I cannot remember all the babies, especially after they grow big."

"Oh, of course not," exclaimed the girl.

"Course not," said Tot; "too many of 'em."

"Now, if you will excuse me, I'll feed the two babies who have just arrived," said the motherly old Stork; and so the children watched it and the other Storks for some time, and admired the gentle way in which they tended the babies, and heard again and again the crooning song:

Hushaby, lullaby,
Sweet flower from the sky,

which always seemed to have the effect of sending the babies to sleep.

Having taken one more drink at the fountain and said goodbye to the kind Storks, Dot and Tot returned to their boat.

As they pushed it out into the stream, Dot asked a Stork that stood watching them:

"What is in the next Valley?"

"Oh, the Queen of all Merryland lives there," answered the bird, "for that is the Fourth Valley, and lies in the center of the Seven."

Then, with a feeling of awe at their approach to the Queen who ruled this wonderful land, the children turned their eyes anxiously toward the fourth archway. But as the boat drifted through its entrance, Tot looked back into the Valley they were leaving and noticed another baby-blossom floating down from the sky, while the voice of a Stork sang softly:

"Coo-oo-oo, Coo-oo-oo!
Babies are born every minute, 'tis true."

X. — The Queen of Merryland

When the boat carried Dot and Tot beyond the rocky arch that led to the Fourth and most important Valley of Merry-land, the children held their breaths in suspense; for here lived the Queen of all this wonderful country, and they had no idea what she was like.

"Perhaps she will be angry with us for disobeying the Watch-Dog's orders," Dot whispered; "and then she may punish us in some terrible manner."

"No, she won't," replied Tot, confidently.

"Perhaps she will make us slaves and compel us to work for her," continued Dot, with a little shudder.

"No, she won't," protested Tot, stoutly.

"Why won't she, Tot?" asked the girl.

"'Cause it's Merryland," returned the boy.

"Ah! That's true," said Dot, thoughtfully; "the Queen of this lovely and happy country couldn't be very cross with us."

"Course not," agreed Tot.

"Then we won't be afraid," she added, her courage restored by Tot's simple faith; "but will wait and see what happens to us."

The boat now swept around a bend in the river, and they saw they were in a Valley somewhat larger than any they had yet visited; but their view was shut off by a high wall that ran along the river bank on one side, and by the rocky edge of the Valley on the other side.

The wall was higher than their heads when they stood up in the boat, and upon its top Dot noticed several little wooden soldiers, with guns on their shoulders, walking stiffly back and forth, as if they were keeping guard. Each of these soldiers was seemingly made out of one piece of wood, and wore a high black hat and a red coat with black buttons, while his trousers were painted white. The guns did not look very dangerous, and Dot remembered that once she had owned a box of just such looking soldiers as these.

But the soldiers on the wall were moving around, and Dot's soldiers had never moved at all — at least, while she was looking at them. What they might have done when she was not looking she, of course, could not tell.

The wooden soldiers paid no attention to the boat, which glided slowly down the stream, while the children looked for a place to land.

"Perhaps we'll float right through the Valley," whispered Dot, "and then the Queen will never know we've been in her country at all."

In a few moments, however, they saw a gate in the wall, made of wood and nearly covered with gold and silver plates that shone brightly in the sun. In front of this gate was a little landing place and some steps leading down to

the river. They floated up to the steps and stopped, so Dot and Tot got out and tied the boat to a silver ring in the wall. Then they walked to the gate, where Dot was just putting out her hand to open it, when she heard a voice cry:

"Halt!"

She looked up and saw that on each side of the gate was standing one of the wooden soldiers. Their guns were pointed straight at Dot and Tot, and although the soldiers were not much taller than Tot's knee, the children were startled at their warlike attitude and stood still in surprise.

"Can't we open the gate?" asked the girl, after a moment.

"No!" answered one of the soldiers, in a voice he tried to make gruff, but which sounded rather squeaky, as if it needed oiling.

"Why not?" inquired Tot.

"It's against orders," replied the soldier. "The Queen has commanded me to shoot any stranger who tries to open the gate."

"But your gun is only wood," said Dot, who was annoyed at the soldier's interference.

"Wooden guns can't shoot!" shouted Tot, gleefully.

The soldier seemed somewhat embarrassed at this and Dot thought he blushed a little.

"It does not matter whether my gun will shoot or not," he answered, stiffly. "I am ordered not to let anyone open the gate."

"But you have no right to give me orders," said the girl. "I don't belong to Merryland, so your Queen has no authority over either Tot or me."

"Then why are you here, if you don't belong here?" asked the soldier.

Dot hesitated to reply, for she felt the rebuke this question implied.

"We couldn't help coming," she explained, at last; "the boat brought us."

"Well, since you are here," said the soldier, "you must obey the laws of this country and the Queen who rules it."

"That's rubbish!" cried Dot, now thoroughly provoked. "You can't obey the orders of your Queen yourself."

"Why not?" inquired the soldier, in surprise.

"You were ordered to shoot, were you not?"

"Certainly."

"Well, you can't shoot, for your gun is made of wood. So you cannot obey orders."

"But if you had not come here," protested the soldier, "I should have had no occasion to shoot. So it is all your fault."

"Perhaps so," replied Dot; "but I mean to open the gate in spite of your orders."

She raised the latch and the gate began to swing slowly back upon its hinges; but when it had partly opened, she saw standing before her another wooden soldier, dressed like a Captain, who held in his hand a wooden sword.

"Stand back!" cried the Captain. "If you advance another step I will stick my sword into you."

Dot looked at the sword and saw that the point of it was really sharp. So she stopped short and said, "Does the Queen of Merryland live here?"

"She does," replied the Captain.

"Then please let her know that I have come to call upon her," continued Dot. She was a wise little girl, and knew that while she might safely argue with the helpless soldiers, it was far better to be polite to the Captain with the sharp sword.

At her request the officer bowed courteously and blew upon a pewter whistle that hung around his neck. In answer to the summons another soldier appeared, who saluted his Captain respectfully.

"Go to her Majesty the Queen," commanded the officer, "and tell her there are two strangers at the gate who wish to see her."

At once the soldier started upon his mission, and the little wooden Captain turned to Dot and Tot, saying, "You may come within the gate and sit down while you await the commands of our Queen; but if she will not receive you, of course you must go out again."

So the children passed through the gateway, which the Captain closed behind them, and sat down upon a small wooden bench built against the wall. Then they began to look around, for now before their eyes was the Fourth Valley of Merryland, the home of the Queen.

"Why, it's just like a toy village!" cried Dot, after the first look.

It really was something like a toy village. There were several pretty streets, with rows of little houses facing them, and each house was much ornamented and brightly painted. Before the houses were rows of trees which seemed to have been whittled out of wood, for the leaves looked like shavings. These trees were colored a bright emerald green, and each one stood upon a little round platform of its own. The grass also looked like wood shavings, and was dyed the same bright green color as the trees.

Dot gazed dreamily at the houses and thought they resembled the big doll's playhouse her papa had once given her for Christmas, and which now was standing in the attic of her city home.

At the far end of the main street, which ran down to the gate where they sat, was a house much bigger than the others, having for a roof a round dome which shone in the sun as if made of gold. This house was built in a

remarkably beautiful and artistic manner, and before it, upon a bright green lawn, stood many trees and flowering shrubs.

"Who lives there?" Dot asked the wooden Captain.

"That is the palace of her Majesty the Queen," was the reply.

"Oh!" said Dot; "is she very big?"

"Quite big," answered the Captain, proudly.

"But," he added, "of course she is not so extremely large as you are."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dot again, and before he had time to say anything more she saw a carriage drive around to the front of the palace. Then the door quickly opened, and what looked to be a lady came out and entered the carriage.

It was so far away she could not see the lady clearly at first; but soon the carriage came rolling swiftly toward them, and both Dot and Tot stood up that they might see plainly who was coming.

In a remarkably short time the carriage reached the gate and stopped short, and now the children's eyes were big with wonder as they looked upon it and its occupants.

The carriage itself was of the kind that are sold in toy shops, and it was drawn by two horses standing upon wooden platforms with rollers underneath, so that instead of the horses themselves running, the wheels of the platforms whirled around, taking the carriage wherever the driver might direct. This driver looked for all the world like a rag doll dressed in a coachman's uniform. His neck was rather weak, and that caused his head to lean slightly to one side, giving him a somewhat broken-down appearance; but he held the reins firmly in his stuffed hands and looked straight ahead, like a well-trained servant.

Seated in the carriage was the loveliest Wax Doll the children had ever looked upon. She was nearly as big as Tot, and was exquisitely dressed in a gown of soft, fluffy white material, with many pink ribbons upon her shoulders and sleeves, and a broad sash around her waist. Her silken hair was long and of a golden color, while her eyes were blue, and had in their depths a sweet and gentle expression. As for her complexion, it was a dainty pink-and-white, delicately blended. Upon her head she wore a golden crown with seven points upon it, and each point was tipped with a gleaming jewel.

Almost at first sight Dot longed to hold the Wax Doll in her arms and love and fondle her, and Tot suddenly became so bashful that he took off his hat and bowed his head to the "sweet lady" (as he called her), with his eyes bent upon the ground.

Yet scarcely had the children taken a good look at this delightful creature, when the Wax Doll leaped lightly from the carriage and stood before them,

showing, as she did so, that her feet were clad in white satin slippers, embroidered with silver.

"Who are you?" she asked, in a pleasant voice, but with some anxiety, Dot thought; "and how did you ever get to Merryland?"

"We came in a boat," replied the girl; "and this is my friend, Tot Thompson, and I am Dot Freeland."

"Dot F'eelun," murmured Tot, shyly lifting his eyes and nodding his head.

"But you shouldn't have come here," said the little lady. "This is private property, and I have placed guards to prevent anyone entering my Valleys."

"Are you the Queen?" asked the girl.

"Yes, I am Queen of all Merryland; and I cannot understand why my guards have disobeyed my orders."

"Oh, the guards were all right," said Dot. "It was we who disobeyed. But we really couldn't help it, for we had to go wherever the boat carried us."

Then she told the Queen all the story of their adventures, and of how they had been carried by accident into the Valleys of Merryland.

After she had heard the story, the little lady looked puzzled for a moment and then said, "No one who enters my kingdom should ever be allowed to leave it again, for if they did the world should soon know all about me and my people. If that happened, all our comfort and fun would be spoiled, for strangers would be coming here every day."

"Have strangers been here before?" asked Dot, timidly.

"Never," answered the Queen.

"Then what are you going to do with us?" inquired the girl.

"Really, I do not know. You see, I am so perplexed that I have stopped smiling, and that will never do in the world; for should the weather change and cool my wax, I would remain solemn until it warmed up again, and my people would then think me unworthy to be the Queen of Merryland."

"I'm sorry to have caused you so much trouble," said Dot, softly. "I'd much rather be at home again, if I could, although your Valleys are so queer and delightful."

Then the Queen again smiled upon them.

"Don't worry, my dear," she exclaimed, brightly, "I'll find some way out of our difficulty when I have used my thinking machine. Until then you must come to my palace and be treated as my guests."

"Thank you," said Dot and Tot together.

The Queen turned to the wooden Captain and commanded:

"Escort these strangers to my royal palace, and see that you treat them most politely; for although they are in reality my prisoners, they have been guilty of no intentional wrong and seem to be nice children."

The wooden Captain removed his wooden hat and bowed very low, so low indeed that Tot could see the peg on the top of his head that held the hat on when it was in place.

"Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed," he said.

Then the Queen stepped into her carriage, the rag coachman cracked his whip, and the wheels of the horses' platform began spinning around. Then the Queen rode swiftly up the street to her royal palace.

Dot and Tot followed more slowly, for the Captain who escorted them was exceedingly small and walked stiffly, having no joints in his knees. As they trudged along Tot asked the Captain:

"Why do the horses go on wheels?"

"Because they're made that way, I suppose," was the reply.

"Why don't they make 'em to walk on their legs?" continued the boy.

"It would tire them too much," answered the Captain. "Being on platforms, the horses never get tired, you see, for the wheels do all the work."

"Oh!" said Tot, "I see." Then, after a pause, he asked:

"What do you feed 'em?"

"Cotton," answered the Captain. "We keep them quite full of it all the time. That's what makes them look so plump and healthy. What do they feed horses on in your country?"

"Hay," said Tot.

"We tried stuffing ours with hay once," remarked the Captain; "but it made their skins look lumpy, it was so coarse; so now we use cotton altogether."

"I see," said Tot again, in a rather bewildered voice.

The street they were walking upon was smooth and level, and the houses they passed were neat and pretty; but both the children noticed there were no people to be seen anywhere about the village. This seemed strange, and Dot was about ask who lived in the houses, when they arrived at the gate of the palace, upon which the Captain knocked three times with the handle of his wooden sword.

Thereupon the gate opened slowly, and they passed into a beautiful flower garden, and walked along the green-bordered paths until they came to the high-arched doorway of the palace.

Dot had only time to notice that there were seven golden stars above the doorway, when the Queen herself appeared and led them through a hall into her drawing room, having dismissed the wooden Captain with a nod of her royal head.

Although the house was by far the biggest one in the Valley, the tops of the doors were only a little way above Dot's head, and when the children sat

down in the drawing room they chose the biggest chairs, and found them just about the right size.

"Now, my dears," said the pretty Queen, "it is almost dinner time, and I know you must be nearly starved; so I will have you shown at once to your rooms, and when you have bathed your faces and brushed your clothes you shall have something nice to eat."

She touched a bell that stood upon a table near by, and at once there came into the room a little boy doll, dressed in a brown suit with brass buttons. He was larger in size than any doll Tot had seen outside of Merryland, yet he was not so big as the Queen herself. When the children looked at him closely, they could see that his face and hands and feet were knitted from colored worsteds, while his eyes were two big black beads.

This curious doll walked straight up to the Queen and bowed before her, while she said, "Scollops, show this young man to the laughing chamber, and wait upon him while he arranges his toilet."

Scollops, as the knitted boy seemed named, bowed again and murmured, "Your Majesty shall be obeyed." Then, turning to Tot, he took his hand and led him from the room. The hand felt soft and woolly to Tot, but he did not object to it, for Scollops had a merry expression to his face that won the little boy's heart at once.

"Where are we going?" he asked, as they began to mount the stairs.

"To the laughing chamber," replied Scollops; and having reached the top of the stairs, they walked down a long hallway and entered a room so odd and pretty that Tot stopped short and gazed at it in astonishment.

In many ways it was like an ordinary room, for it contained a dresser, a bed, chairs and a table. But upon the wall were painted hundreds of heads of children — boys and girls of all countries, with light and dark hair, straight and curly hair, blue and black and brown and gray eyes, and all with laughing faces. The posts of the bed were also carved into laughing baby faces; the chairs and the dresser showed a face upon every spot where there was a place for one, and every face throughout the whole room had a smile upon it. To match the rest of the furniture, the carpet had woven upon it in bright colors all kinds of laughing children's faces, and the effect of the queer room was to make Tot himself laugh until the tears roll down his cheeks.

When the boy had looked the room over and seen all the faces, Scollops helped him to wash his hands and face, to comb his hair and to brush his clothes, and when this task was finished, the woolly doll said:

"I will now show you why this room is called the laughing chamber. Lie down upon the bed a moment — but don't get your shoes against the clean covers."

Tot lay down upon the bed, and at once heard a sweet, tinkling chorus of laughter coming from every part of the room. It was so delightful and soothing that he listened to it rapture. Softly his eyes closed, and in another moment he would have been sound asleep had not Scollops raised him to his feet and said:

"It is not time for sleep yet, for you haven't had your dinner. But the laughing faces will make you slumber peacefully when the time comes, and give you pleasant dreams, too."

XI. — The Palace of Wonders

No sooner had Scollops taken Tot from the drawing room than the Queen touched her bell a second time, and in answer to the summons a neatly dressed doll maid entered the room and made her bow before her pretty mistress. This maid was a pleasant looking little person; but Dot noticed her eyebrows were painted upon her face, and her hair seemed painted on, too, only the little white cap nearly covered it, so it didn't show much.

"Twinkle," said the Queen, "show this young lady to the musical chamber and wait upon her as she dresses for dinner." Then, turning to Dot, she added, "I shall retire to my own room and use my thinking machine while you are gone, so that I may know what to do with you. Your coming has completely upset my life, for I never thought to see strangers in Merryland. But you must not worry. Doubtless, my thinking machine will show me exactly what to do with you, and in any event I could not harm two such gentle children as you and Tot."

She nodded smilingly and left the room, while the maid Twinkle led Dot up the stairs and along the hallway to her room.

The girl thought she had never seen a prettier chamber, although she had always been daintily cared for by her wealthy parents. The bedstead was of pure ivory, and the pillows were covered with creamy-white silk, embroidered with white flowers. The bedspread was of pure white, too, and over it were thickly sewn many brilliant diamonds, while the fringe along the edges was made of diamond beads. The chairs and sofas were covered with white brocaded silks, and the velvet carpet was scattered with lilies-of-the-valley on a delicate green groundwork.

In one corner stood a beautiful little dressing table with a big mirror above it, and through a draped doorway Dot saw a luxurious little bathroom with a tub of white marble.

"It's a lovely room," said Dot to the maid; "but why did the Queen call it the musical chamber?"

"Sit down, please," was Twinkle's reply. So Dot seated herself in an easy chair, and no sooner had she touched the cushions than the sweetest strains of music fell upon her ears. She listened to it delightedly until the piece was finished, when Twinkle raised her to her feet.

"The music will play as long as you sit there," she said. "Try the sofa."

Then Dot sat upon one of the sofas, and heard the strains of a military band, seemingly far away, but sounding sweetly and distinctly, nevertheless.

Twinkle now led her to the bath-room that she might bathe her face and hands, and when the water fell into the basin it played an inspiring waltz

tune. The brushes which the maid passed through Dot's hair were musical, too, and everything she touched seemed to play to her the most ravishing strains of melody.

"Now," said Twinkle, "lie down upon the bed a moment."

Dot obeyed, and heard a chorus of sweet, childish voices singing such dreamy, soothing lullabies that her eyes closed in spite of herself, and she was almost asleep when Twinkle aroused her and bade her attend the Queen's banquet.

"The voices will sing you to sleep when bedtime comes," said the maid; "but now you must have dinner and learn what fate the Queen of Merryland has in store for you."

She walked to a door that was half hidden behind a rich drapery, and, pushing it open, showed Dot that it led to the laughing chamber. It was with real pleasure that the girl saw her friend Tot, who had at that moment just risen from his bed.

The boy eagerly showed her all the gay, mirthful faces in his room, and they made Dot laugh out of pure sympathy. Then she brought Tot into her own dainty chamber, where he sat upon a chair and heard an orchestra play a merry schottische. But Twinkle and Scollops were now impatient to hurry them away, so soon they descended the stairway again and were ushered into the royal banquet room.

The Queen had arrived there before them, and her was face was smiling as sweetly as ever. She set Dot upon one side of her at the big table and Tot upon the other side.

This table was spread with delicate glassware and rare vases of fragrant flowers, and the dishes they ate from they perceived were of solid gold.

"How did you like your chamber?" the Queen asked Dot.

"It is delightful," she answered. "I did not think there could be such a beautiful room in all the world."

"And were you also pleased?" inquired the Wax Doll, turning toward the boy.

"My room's fine," replied Tot; "it made me laugh!"

The dinner was now served, and certainly no more delicious meal was ever eaten by children, unless they chanced to dine with the Queen of Merryland. There were many courses of rich and rare edibles, and each dish Dot and Tot thought could not be surpassed until they tasted the next one.

"Really," said Dot with an admiring glance at her Majesty, "you must be a fairy."

"To be sure I am!" laughed the pretty Queen.

"Still, you are not like any fairy I have read about," continued the child,

gravely.

"No, I suppose not," returned the Wax Doll. "You must know that fairies are as different from one another as other people are, and the reason you have not read about me is because the folk who write fairy tales have never been to Merryland."

"That is true," agreed Dot. "Tot and I were the first to discover you."

"Yes, and you were very wrong to do so," added the Queen, reprovingly. "But I have used my thinking machine, as I promised, and it has shown me an easy way out of my difficulties."

"What will you do with us?" asked Dot, looking at the Queen so anxiously that she forgot to drink her nectar.

"I'm going to adopt you," was the calm reply.

"Adopt us!" exclaimed the girl, wonderingly.

"Yes, that is the only thing to do. You are going to be my adopted daughter, the Princess Dot of Merryland; and your companion must become my adopted son, Prince Tot of Merryland."

"But must we always live here?" enquired Dot.

"Can't we go home again?" demanded Tot.

"Those are questions I cannot answer now," said the Queen. "For the time, at least, you must live with me, and I think you will be delighted with this Valley and all the pretty things I have to show you. Should you ever grow tired of Merryland we will talk about your leaving it. At present you will be wise to think of nothing but your happiness in becoming members of the royal family of this kingdom."

The boy and girl listened to this silently and thoughtfully, for although the Queen smiled, she spoke with a dignity and authority that made them realize she was very much in earnest. But seeing that her guests looked serious and troubled, the little lady soon rose from the table, saying more cheerfully as she did so, "It is nearly time for my army to drill, so, if it please you, we will sit upon the balcony and eat our ice cream while we watch the soldiers."

Dot and Tot sprang up at once and followed the Queen to a balcony that ran across the front of the palace. Here they seated themselves and were served with delicate ice-cream hollyhocks upon golden saucers by Twinkle and Scollops.

"Why do you call the maid Twinkle?" Dot asked the Queen.

"Because she steps so quickly and so softly, like the twinkling of a star, and because her eyes are so bright and sparkling," answered the Wax Doll.

"Why do you call him Scollops?" enquired Tot, pointing his finger at the boy doll.

"Because his hair is all knitted in scollops, and he has scollops around his

wrists and at the bottom of his trousers."

Tot looked, and sure enough the scollops were there.

"You see we always have a reason for the names we bear in this kingdom. It is only in the big outside world that people have names that mean nothing," said the Queen.

"What is your name?" asked the girl.

"Haven't you heard it?" enquired the Queen, with a surprised look.

"No; I have only heard you called the Queen," said Dot; "but, of course, you must have a name of your own."

"Oh, I certainly have," answered the little lady. "My name is — — ." Then she stopped suddenly and leaned over the balcony, while she held up one of her pink hands and whispered: "Listen!"

The children now heard the sound of martial music approaching, and in a few minutes there marched around the corner of the palace a band of pewter musicians. They were dressed in brightly painted uniforms and marched proudly and in excellent time, while they played as loudly as possible upon their instruments.

Following the band came a squadron of pewter soldiers on horseback, and the horses reared and pranced, while the officers waved their pewter swords above their heads in an impressive manner. Next came the foot soldiers, company after company, wearing red painted uniforms and blue painted uniforms, as well as uniforms of green and yellow paint.

Not a man in the entire army was more than six inches high, and all were made of pewter — just like the boxes of soldiers you buy at the toy shops; but they marched like real live soldiers, and there were so many of them that it was actually an impressive sight.

As each company passed beneath the balcony where the Queen sat, the men saluted her respectfully and the officers raised their hats, while the doll Queen bowed graciously in return.

"Isn't that a fine army?" she asked, proudly.

"They're rather small for soldiers," replied Dot.

"I could kick 'em all over with my foot!" said Tot.

"Oh, but that would be wrong," exclaimed the Queen. "Surely they haven't done you any harm."

"No," said Tot; "but I could fight 'em all."

"It's wrong to fight," remarked the Queen, reprovingly.

"Then what do you have soldiers for?" questioned Dot.

"Why, to march and drill and look pretty, of course," answered the Queen. "I thought everyone loved to see soldiers march."

"I suppose they do," said the girl.

“No one should wish to hurt such brightly dressed creatures,” continued her Majesty, “nor should a soldier wish to harm anyone else.”

“Yet the wooden Captain at the gate threatened to stick his sword into us,” declared the child.

“That’s different,” replied the Queen. “The wooden soldiers are guardians of the Valley, and it is their duty to threaten and scare folks. But had the Captain really hurt you with his sword, I should have had the quarrelsome fellow chopped into kindling wood. He’s quite dry and would burn nicely.”

They sat for some time watching the pewter soldiers drill, and finally the entire army marched away again. When they had gone, the little village seemed as silent and deserted as it had been before.

XII. — Prince Tot and Princess Dot

Now," said the Queen, "you must come to my throne room and be adopted." So she led the way and they followed her to a beautiful apartment, large and grand, with high ceilings set with precious stones. In the middle of the room stood the Queen's magnificent throne.

Seating herself among the cushions of the throne, her Majesty touched a bell which brought Scollops running in.

"Send to me all the people of my household, as quickly as possible," commanded the Queen of Merryland. "I am about to perform an important ceremony, and they must all witness my act."

Scollops bowed and retired, and the Wax Doll turned to Dot and Tot and remarked, "I've never adopted anyone before so I don't know exactly the form of ceremony I ought to employ; but I shall do the best I can, and that ought to be satisfactory to you."

"Oh, yes," said Dot. "I suppose so."

"Does it hurt?" asked Tot.

"Does what hurt?"

"To be 'dopted."

"I hope not," said the little Queen; "I shall try to be as gentle as possible."

The members of the household now entered the room and the children found there were a good many of them. All were dolls of some sort; but Dot noticed the Queen was the only wax doll in the Valley, so far as she had seen. Among the household servants the cooks were black dolls, the chambermaids were china dolls, and the others seemed mostly made of wood, although there was one elderly doll that was clearly papier-maché. These knelt down in a circle before the Queen and remained in this humble position during the Ceremony of Adoption.

Her Majesty began by making a speech, in which she told how the strangers had been carried by accident into Merryland.

"It was not their fault," she said, "but when I consulted my thinking machine I found I must do one of two things — either turn them into dolls by means of my fairy wand, or else adopt them as my children. They seem so much bigger and prettier than dolls that I have decided to adopt them, so I have called all my people in to witness my act."

The servants of the household loudly applauded this speech, and one of the chambermaids clapped her hands so earnestly that she broke off one of her little fingers.

"Dot Freeland," now said the Queen, in a solemn voice, "kneel down upon my footstool."

Dot was a little frightened, for never before had she heard the Queen speak in any voice but a laughing one; but she knelt down obediently, and the Queen placed upon her head a small golden crown with four points, each point being tipped with a flashing gem. Then the Queen said:

Thou art made a Princess now
By this crown upon thy brow;
All must bow to thy command,
Who reside in Merryland;
And my daughter thou shalt be,
Living long and happily.
Rise, my Princess, fair and sweet,
At my right hand take thy seat.

Dot rose at once and sat on the Queen's right hand, while all the household applauded again; but this time the china chambermaids were more careful of their fingers. The girl longed to take off her pretty crown and look at it, but she felt it might not be dignified to do so; therefore she sat quietly, as a princess should, while Tot in turn knelt upon the Queen's footstool.

The fairy doll placed upon Tot's head a crown almost exactly like the one Dot wore, saying to him in her gentle voice:

By this crown I give to thee,
I, the Queen, hereby decree,
Thou shalt be a princeling grand
In our happy Merryland.
Purest joy shall be thy lot,
All thy troubles be forgot;
Rise, Prince Tot, for thou shalt be
Loving son henceforth to me!

Tot shoved the crown to the back of his head, where he usually wore his hat, and seated himself at the Queen's left hand.

The assembled household now cheered loudly and long, and in the midst of the uproar the wooden Captain entered at the head of the pewter band, and the musicians blew upon their instruments so powerfully that the big throne room was filled with music.

All this was decidedly pleasing to Princess Dot and Prince Tot, who felt very proud of themselves and most grateful to the generous Queen.

Scollops and Twinkle now served lavender-colored ices to those present at the Ceremony of Adoption, and the pewter band finished playing and marched away again. Then the Queen took Dot and Tot to the drawing room of the palace, where the children had leisure to thank her and to admire their pretty crowns. The Wax Doll smiled sweetly upon them, and seemed quite as

pleased as her adopted children at the success of the ceremony.

Presently Dot asked, “Does no one live in those pretty houses in the village?”

“Yes, Princess,” answered her Majesty; “they are full of people.”

“But we have seen no one except the dolls who live in this palace,” remarked the child.

“That is true,” returned the Queen, “for I have been so busy since your arrival that I have not had a chance to awaken them.”

“Are they all asleep?” asked Tot.

“Well, not exactly asleep,” answered the Queen; “but they are dolls, like all the rest of us in this Valley, and they only move around and talk when I bring them to life by means of my fairy wand. At one time I kept them alive continually, but it was such a bother to manage them all that I changed my plans, and now I let them lie in their houses until I wish to amuse myself with their pranks. I have only to wave my fairy wand three times and blow my magic whistle to arouse the whole village to activity. But then I always have my hands full trying to make them behave properly.”

“That seems a nice way to rule,” said Dot, thoughtfully. “If every king and queen were able to do the same thing with their people, there could not be so much quarreling nor so many wars.”

“True enough,” laughed the Queen; “but real, live people would not like to be treated that way. Would you like to see my village wake up?”

“Yes, indeed!” exclaimed Dot.

“Then I will order our carriages so we may drive down to the village.”

The Queen called Scollops and sent him for three carriages “For,” she said to Dot and Tot, “there is just enough room in the royal carriage for me, and as there are no bigger ones in the Valley, we must each ride in a separate carriage.”

It was not long before the three carriages, each drawn by horses standing upon wheeled platforms, and driven by rag doll coachmen dressed in the royal livery of pink and blue drew up before the gate of the palace. Dot had hard work to squeeze into the seat of her vehicle, and when she succeeded she had some fears that it would tip over, or the wheels would come off the horses. But Tot, being smaller, fit his carriage nicely, and being younger and a boy, he had no fears of any accidents.

So now the drivers cracked their whips and away they rolled, the Queen first, Dot next and Tot last of all. When they reached the main street of the village, the three carriages drew up near the sidewalk, all in a row, and the Queen said:

“Now I will awaken the people.”

She waved the fairy wand three times around her head and blew a shrill blast upon the magic whistle.

Instantly a commotion arose all about them. Doors and windows began to open, and from the houses flocked many dolls of all sorts and sizes. There were china, bisque, wooden, papier-maché, rag and rubber dolls, with yellow hair, red and brown and white hair, and complexions ranging from the daintiest pink to the deepest black. Some were finely dressed, some well dressed and some shabbily dressed; but all seemed and light-hearted, and they ran about singing and dancing chatting to each other as happily as if they had not been asleep for so long a time by their Queen.

"I don't understand how you can make dolls act like real people," said Dot, as she watched them with wonder.

"No, I suppose not," replied her Majesty. "But if you were a fairy, as I am, you would know all about it."

The Queen now left her seat in the carriage and entered a pretty little cottage that stood near by. Dot followed to doorway and, peeping in, saw that this entire cottage was occupied by an enormous music box.

"I'll make it play," said the Queen, "for my dolls love to dance to the music."

Thereupon she touched a spring, and at once strains of delightful melody came from the big music box.

Dot hastened outside again and found the street filled with dolls, who were dancing joyously to the bewitching music. After watching them for a time in silence the Queen said:

"Now they have had enough fun for one day, so I will send them to sleep again."

She waved her wand once and the music stopped playing. The dolls stopped dancing and began to say good-night to one another. A second time the Queen waved her wand above her head, and then every doll hurried to its own home, and the doors and windows began to close again. But Dot and Tot could hear the dolls laughing and talking in the houses until the Queen waved her wand for the third and last time, when silence fell on the village, and her Majesty turned to the children and said:

"Now they are fast asleep again, and will remain so until I choose to awaken them."

"They are lovely dolls," said Dot, sighing to think the entertainment was ended, "and I should love to play with them all day long."

"Sometimes I have kept them awake all day myself," replied the Queen; "but that is when I am lonely and need amusement. No one can be dull while those laughing, romping, mischievous dolls are awake. But I must have a talk

with my new Prince and Princess this evening, so I could devote but little time to my people, and only awakened them to satisfy your curiosity."

"Can't I have a doll to keep?" asked Tot, as they drove back to the palace.

"Yes, my dear Prince," answered the Queen. "I'll give you Scollops. You will find him very useful and a jolly playmate."

Tot nodded his thanks, and soon they reached the palace and accompanied the Queen to her room. When all were seated the Wax Doll said, "Tomorrow I must leave you here alone, for I am going upon a journey."

"Where to?" enquired Dot, greatly surprised at this announcement.

"I shall go up the river to the end of Merryland, where you entered the First Valley. Since you have found a way to enter my kingdom from the big outside world, I have been greatly worried for fear others would also come here. To prevent this I must visit the Watch-Dog of Merryland, and tell him how to keep anyone from passing the archway."

"Oh, the Watch-Dog cannot keep people out," said Dot. "He's too polite and good-natured. When we said we would not mind him he was sorry, but he didn't try to stop us."

"Well," replied the Queen, "that is why I must make the journey. I shall command the Watch-Dog to sit hereafter upon a rocky shelf above the arch, and then if people will not obey him, and try to get through the arch in spite of my orders, the old man must jump into the river in front of the opening. As soon as he touches the water he will be turned into a great rock, which will block up the archway and prevent anyone from entering my kingdom."

"Oh, I see," said Dot. "Then the Watch-Dog may be of some use, after all."

"I hope so," declared the Queen.

"But what shall we do while you are away?" asked the girl, anxiously.

"You may amuse yourselves by running about the palace, and all my household will wait upon you and obey your orders; for you are now Prince Tot and Princess Dot of Merryland, and your power is second only to my own."

"That's nice," said Tot.

Twinkle now led Dot to her room and helped her prepare for bed. The diamond coverlet was rather heavy to sleep under, so Twinkle laid it aside and covered the girl with a soft, fleecy robe.

Tot also went to his laughing chamber, accompanied by Scollops, who helped him undress and threw over his head a pretty pink silk nightgown. Tot wanted the door between his room and Dot's left open while they slept, so Scollops opened it and the children called good-night to each other.

When Dot lay down upon her bed, the fairy chorus began to sing softly

and sweetly; and when Tot lay down the invisible laughter of childish voices rang out like chimes, keeping time to the tinkling chorus from Dot's bed. This was all so soothing and delightful that in less than a minute the children's eyes had closed, and soon they were fast asleep and dreaming sweet dreams of the wonders of Merryland.

XIII. — The Revolt of the Dolls

Dot and Tot awoke early, but the sun was already flooding the palace with its silver rays, and they made haste to dress and join the Queen at breakfast.

This meal was as dainty and satisfying as the one they had partaken of the night before, and the wax Queen laughed and talked so pleasantly that no one would have suspected she was about to undertake a long journey.

"I shall try to return by sundown," she said to them, "so you will only be alone during the day. I advise you to pass the time by exploring the Valley, and if you wish to ride, the royal coachmen will take you wherever you wish to go."

"May I ask a favor?" said Dot, timidly.

"Certainly, Princess; ask whatever you will," returned the Queen, as she threw a scarlet cloak over her shoulders and prepared to start.

"I would like you to waken the dolls of the village before you go, so that Tot and I may play with them," said the girl.

The Queen reflected a moment before she replied, "The dolls are often mischievous when they have a whole day to themselves, and you might find them troublesome. However, as you will be sure to enjoy their merry pranks, I'll do as you wish, and leave you the dolls for playmates."

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" cried Dot, gratefully.

The Queen now called the carriages and they all rolled down to the main street of the village. Here her Majesty waved the magic wand three times, and the dolls immediately awoke and began such a chattering and such romping play that the Queen herself became bewildered and ordered the coachman to hasten to the river bank.

Dot and Tot went with her to see her start upon her journey, and when they had passed out of the big gate, which the wooden soldiers opened for them with respectful salutes, the Queen said:

"I am going to borrow your boat, for it will be the easiest way for me to reach the Valley of the Watch-Dog."

"But you can never row it up stream," said Dot; "and there is but one oar."

"Oh, I shall not need the oars at all," responded the Wax Doll, and seated herself in the boat.

"Do you know," said the girl, "that you have not yet told us your name?"

"Didn't I tell you yesterday?" returned the Queen, as if surprised.

"No, indeed," said the girl.

"Well, that was very careless of me. I am so busy that sometimes I forget to do things. But I must be going, so goodbye my dears; I hope the dolls won't bother you too much."

“We shall enjoy them,” replied Dot.

The Queen now waved her fairy wand and at once the boat glided from the shore.

“Good-bye, your Majesty!” cried Dot and Tot together.

Swiftly the boat floated up the stream — so swiftly, indeed, that the water rippled like music against the bow. The children waved their handkerchiefs at the fairy doll until she had reached the arch leading to the Valley of Babies, when they passed through the gateway and, dismissing their coachmen, walked up the village street to visit the dolls.

These were really becoming rather boisterous and ran about in circles, playing “I spy,” and blind-man’s buff, and London Bridge with much laughter and noise. When they saw Dot and Tot they ran up to them and cried:

“Start the music box! We want to dance.”

“I do not know how. The Queen has the key with her,” answered Dot, shouting loudly that she might be heard above the tumult.

The dolls seemed greatly disappointed at this, and one saucy-looking wooden-jointed doll said crossly:

“The Queen has no right to go away and take the key. How are we to amuse ourselves all day unless we can dance?”

“Tot and I will play with you,” answered Dot.

“Very well,” said a big China doll which wore a rather soiled and ragged dress. “What new games do you know?”

Dot mentioned several; but the dolls laughed at her, crying out: “That’s old! We’re tired of that! Give us something new!”

“The old games are very nice games,” said the girl, “and I do not see why you should object to playing them.”

“We’ll object if we want to!” declared a worn-looking kid doll, whose joints were so ripped that they scattered sawdust whenever it moved. “You’re not our Queen.”

“But I’m your Princess,” said Dot, with dignity, “and while the Queen is away I have the right to rule in this Valley.”

“So have I,” said Tot.

“Then rule!” shouted the saucy wooden doll. “Rule as the Queen does, and give us music to dance by.”

“Yes! yes!” they all cried. “We want to dance!” And they flung their arms over their heads, and leaped and pranced so energetically that the ground was quite strewn with sawdust that leaked out of them.

Dot was much troubled at the noisy demands of the dolls. She had expected a quiet and happy day playing with these pretty creatures, and now,

even in the first hour of their awakening, they were proving very troublesome. Tot seemed to enjoy the excitement, however, and stood behind Dot, with his hands in his pockets, smiling gleefully.

While she was thinking what was best to be done, the rag doll Scollops came up to Dot and said:

"Since the music box is locked up, why do you not order out the pewter band to play for them?"

"That is a good idea," she exclaimed, her face brightening. "Go at once, Scollops and tell the musicians to come and play."

While Scollops was on this errand the dolls became more noisy than ever, and one of them tried to knock Tot's crown off. But the boy gave the naughty doll such a strong push that he pushed over a dozen or more that stood behind it.

"Don't hurt them, Tot," said the girl; "remember they are not strong and will break easily."

"I'll smash 'em if they touch me!" cried the boy, indignantly; "I'm Prince Tot."

Fortunately, the pewter band now made its appearance, and at Dot's command they stood in a circle at one edge of the road and began to play a waltz.

The effect of the music upon the dolls was laughable. They immediately began waltzing around as merrily as could be, and paid no further attention to Dot and Tot. While they danced the dolls kept up a continual chattering and laughter, and they looked so sweet and happy that the children could hardly realize they had been so cross and unreasonable a short time before.

"If they are kept busy they won't get into mischief," said Scollops, who had come back with the band; "but even her Majesty the Queen cannot manage them when they have nothing to amuse themselves with. I'm a doll myself and I know."

"What does she do when they are naughty?" asked Dot.

"She puts them to sleep," was the answer.

Dot had almost regretted asking the Queen to leave the village dolls awake all day; but she loved to watch them dance, and they seemed quite contented now.

"Don't they ever remain quiet, and visit with each other, and rest?" asked the girl.

"Never," replied Scollops. "They always are unhappy unless they are rushing around or playing or dancing."

"They wouldn't make very comfortable playmates, would they, Tot?" she said.

“No,” he answered, gravely; “don’t like live dolls.”

But it amused them to watch the little creatures capering about, so the children sat down upon a door-step and enjoyed the dancing until Twinkle came to tell them their luncheon was ready. Then they quietly stole away, unnoticed by the dolls, and walked to the palace, where they had a delightful luncheon and were waited upon by Scollops and Twinkle.

While they were yet at the table they suddenly heard a great noise and clamor at the palace gate, so they at once ran out to see what was the matter. Crowding before the gates was an excited throng of dolls, screaming and stamping and waving their hands in the air as if they had really become crazy.

At first Dot could make nothing of their cries, for all were talking at the same time; but she asked Twinkle what the trouble was about and the maid answered:

“The musicians must have stopped playing.”

“I wonder why they did that,” said the girl.

Here Scollops, who had been down to the gate and spoken to the dolls, came up to Dot, bringing with him the leader of the pewter band.

“What caused this trouble?” she asked.

“They are so unreasonable,” replied the musician, in a complaining voice, “that no one can manage them except the Queen. We had played dance music for several hours and were all tired out, for our lungs are only pewter, and no true musician likes to play such common music continually. So we thought we would rest ourselves by playing something slow and really classical — for all classical music is slow, you know. But no sooner had we started the introduction than those soulless dolls became violent. They rushed at my poor musicians, threw them down, and trampled upon them! Every member of my band is either bent or broken. Even I have a bent back and a twisted leg, and my horn is badly damaged.”

Dot looked at him and saw that he spoke truly.

“I’m very sorry,” she said, nervously. “I’m sure I don’t know what to do with them, for the Queen will not return before sundown.”

The dolls had remained outside the palace gates until now; but as Dot looked anxiously toward them, the gate flew open and one of the rebellious creatures ran up the path to where the children stood. She was dressed in a rather fussy way, and had big black eyes that stared straight at one. Her hair was tangled and matted, and she had lost one shoe and worn a great hole in her stocking, through which her toes peeped out.

“What do you want?” asked Dot, as this doll came near.

“We want our dinner, of course,” answered the doll, saucily.

“But I didn’t know dolls could eat,” said the girl.

“Well we do, and now we want to be fed. Do you think it is right and proper to keep us awake all day and then refuse to give us any dinner?”

“What do you eat?” enquired Dot.

“What could a doll eat but sawdust? Nearly all of us have danced more or less sawdust out of our bodies, and now we want them filled up again,” continued the doll.

“But I have no sawdust, nor do I know where to get it,” answered the child.

“The Queen has a house full of it in the village. Give us the key and we will help ourselves,” said the doll.

“The Queen must have taken the key with her,” returned Dot, helplessly; “I know nothing about it.”

“Then we shall break down the door,” declared the doll, and stamping her feet with anger she rushed back to her companions.

When they learned that the Queen had carried away the key to the sawdust house the dolls became much excited and ran off with loud shouts to tear down the door of the house.

Dot was both vexed and worried, for Twinkle declared the Queen would be much provoked if her pretty house was battered and broken.

“Let’s call out the army,” exclaimed Tot, suddenly.

“That’s a good idea, Tot,” said the girl, and at once sent Scollops to order the pewter soldiers to march into the village and preserve order. But the rag boy soon returned with the news that the soldiers refused to obey.

“They are not used to fighting,” explained Scollops, “and they fear the dolls will treat them as they did the pewter band. Besides, they declare the Queen detests fighting, and would blame them for interfering with the people of the village.”

“The soldiers are toys and the people are dolls,” added Twinkle; “so they sympathize with each other.”

“They didn’t seem to sympathize with the band,” said Dot.

“No, but the band had no right to play classical music in public.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Dot, thoughtfully.

She saw now that she must let the naughty dolls have their own way; but she went down the street with Tot and Scollops and watched the crowd break down the door of the house. They took away quantities of the Queen’s sawdust and carried it to their homes, where they made it into pies and cakes and feasted merrily upon this queer food.

This gave them something to do and made them happy for a while, and Dot was profoundly grateful for a period of rest and quiet; but she feared the

dolls would break forth into more mischief before the day passed, and so it proved.

For toward evening they again became restless, and as there was no music to be had they decided to make some of their own. So they gathered up a lot of tin pans for drums and pot covers for cymbals, and several of the dolls got combs and put paper over them. When they blew upon these combs and hummed a tune it sounded almost like music; so they formed a procession, with the doll musicians at the head of it, and marched all over the village, singing loudly:

Tum, tum — tum!
Tum, tum — tum!
Here comes the band with a tin-pan drum;
Here come the cymbals, clangety-clang!
Here come the combs with their twang, twang, twang!
Here come the marchers, happy and gay,
Strangers must keep out of our way!
Tum, tum — tum!
Tum, tum — tum!
Clatter the cymbals and bang the drum!

They marched up to the palace gate and back again, and when they came to the house in which was the big music box, one of the cried:

"Let us break the door down and start the music!"

"Good, we will!" screamed some of the most mischievous dolls.

"What do we care for the Queen?" yelled others.

They made a rush for the house, and Dot, now angry and determined that the Queen's music box should not be spoiled, ran to the door and placed her back against it, while she cried out, "If any of you dare to come nearer I will whip you soundly!"

The dolls hung back at this, but they threw a shower of tin pans and combs and pot covers at her, which rattled against the house, but did not hurt her a bit. Suddenly, amidst all this riot and turmoil, the girl was amazed to see every doll become silent and motionless. They ran in all directions to their homes, and as the street became clear Dot saw, standing there alone, the Queen of Merryland, who was waving for the third and last time the fairy wand which would put every doll in the village fast asleep.

"Oh, your Majesty!" cried the girl, running to her, "I'm so glad you've come home again!"

XIV. — The Queen's Fairy Wand

You see, Princess," said the Queen, when they were safely within the palace, "it is rather dangerous to leave the dolls awake while I am away. I feared, after I had started, you might have trouble with them, and so hurried back as soon as I could. Did they frighten you?"

"A little," said Dot, "for they would not be quiet an instant."

"No; that is the way with dolls. If one wishes to take any comfort with them they must be kept asleep. Then we can love them and play with them as much as we desire, but while they are awake they are sure to cause no end of trouble."

"I'll keep my dolls asleep," said Tot, with decision.

"Yes," agreed the girl, "they are nicer that way. But did you see the Watch-Dog of Merryland?" she asked the Queen.

"Yes, indeed; and I told him just how to block up the archway if any more strangers appeared," was the answer.

"Was he countin' his whiskers?" asked Tot.

"Not when I arrived. I think he was playing with a piece of jelly cake."

"Oh, yes," said the girl. "Tot gave it to him."

The Queen was silent for a time, and appeared to be thinking without her machine, which made the girl anxious. But finally her Majesty said, "Now that I have looked after the safety of my first three Valleys, I feel I should visit the last three, for it has been years since I have entered them."

"Can't we go with you?" asked Dot, eagerly.

"I cannot answer that question now, for I have not consulted my thinking machine, without which I never make an important move, but I will let you know in the morning."

Dot and Tot were all excitement after that to know what the thinking machine would advise, for they were curious to see the remaining Valleys of this wonderful country. But the Queen said no more about the journey that evening, and devoted herself to entertaining them in such a pretty and modest way that they grew to love the big Wax Doll very dearly.

Before breakfast the next morning, however, they asked what her thinking machine had said, and she at once replied:

"You may, if you wish, go with me to visit the other Valleys. Since you are my adopted children and a Prince and Princess of Merryland, it is right you should know all about your own country; therefore we will make the journey together."

"That's lovely!" cried Dot, with delight. "When shall we start?"

"Whenever you please," answered the Queen. "As you seem so anxious,

we may as well start after breakfast."

"Good!" exclaimed Tot, who was already busily eating; "I'm ready."

So, breakfast being finished, they all walked down to the river, wearing their golden crowns and feeling happy at the prospect of new adventures.

They found the boat lying beside the steps outside the wall, and the wooden soldiers who were on guard saluted them respectfully as they seated themselves and made ready to start. The Queen sat in the middle of the boat, with Dot at one end and Tot at the other. But now they were not obliged to wait for the slow current to carry them along.

For when the pretty Queen waved her fairy wand around her golden head, the boat shot out from the shore and glided swiftly toward the rocky arch that led to the Fifth Valley of Merryland. This they reached in a few minutes and passed quickly through, while Dot and Tot looked eagerly ahead to see what the Fifth Valley was like.

It seemed very quiet as it lay under the rays of the morning sun, and at first the children thought the Valley resembled one of the quiet country scenes at home. For nothing remarkable met their eyes, and they felt rather relieved at the contrast between this and the wonderful Toy Valley they had just left.

Yet Dot soon decided the place was inhabited, for they came to a queer looking group of buildings standing near the shore. These could not be seen clearly at first, but the boat drew nearer every moment, and finally the Queen waved her fairy wand and some magic power carried them quickly to the shore at a spot near to the buildings.

The children sprang out upon the grass, and then they could see better what these strange houses looked like.

All the buildings were exactly alike, and stood about as high as a tall man. In shape they were square, with a flat roof, but around each roof was a stout railing. There were no windows at all, and each house had but one door, which was placed in the center, halfway between the floor and the roof. Even this was more a doorway than a door, being nothing but a square hole, with a broad shelf projecting outside and inside the bottom of the opening.

The entire group of buildings was painted a pure white, but underneath each hole, or doorway, was a big, black number. The house nearest the river on the left side was number 1, and the one on the right side was number 47; yet the houses were not laid out into streets, but stood here and there upon the smooth lawn, without any attempt at order or regularity.

"Well, how do you like this Valley?" asked the Queen, with a laugh as she saw Dot and Tot looking at the queer place with sober faces.

"The houses seem very odd — if they are houses," replied Dot. Then she

enquired: “Who lives in them?”

“King Felis lives in number 1,” said the Queen. “At least, he did several years ago when I last visited him. I will now call him, that I may introduce you to his Majesty.”

Thereupon she gave a shrill whistle, and a moment later a great Maltese pussycat sprang upon the shelf of the doorway at number 1 and sat there for an instant crouched, with its ears pointing into the air and its big yellow eyes gazing steadily at the visitors. Then the pussy leaped lightly to the ground, and standing upon its rear legs before the Queen, he bobbed his head solemnly up and down and said, “Welcome, Queen of Merryland, to the Valley of Pussycats!”

“I thank you, King Felis,” responded the Wax Doll sweetly. “But permit me to introduce to you my adopted children, Princess Dot and Prince Tot of Merryland.”

The big pussy looked at the children with surprise, but nodded his head politely.

“The Prince and Princess seem like people from the big, outside world,” he said, with a wise look; and then he turned to Dot and asked:

“Do you pull the tails of pussycats?”

“Oh, no!” exclaimed the girl, who was just then admiring the beauty of the cat King as well as his ability to speak.

“Or pinch their ears?” he continued.

“Never!” declared Dot.

“I did — once,” remarked Tot, composedly. “An’ it yelled.”

The big kitty looked at the boy gravely and said:

“Should you do such a thing in this Valley I would ask the Queen to send you away at once. It is really a wicked amusement, for it hurts a pussy as much as if someone should pinch your own ears.”

“All right,” remarked Tot. “I’ll be good.”

“You will find my adopted children both kind and gentle,” said the Queen; “so pray do not fear them, King Felis.”

“Your Majesty rules all Merryland,” he replied; “and your children shall be as welcome in our Valley as yourself. But I must call my people, that they may pay their respects to your Majesty.”

“Where are they?” asked Tot, who had been looking around and could see no other living thing than the big Maltese.

“At this time of day they are asleep, as all good pussycats should be,” was the King’s answer. “The sun is warm and pleasant just now, and my people are enjoying their mid-day naps.”

He then lifted his voice and uttered a loud, wailing cry.

Scarcely had it died away when the pussys began to appear. They leaped from the roofs of the houses, from the doorways, and even from among the shady clumps of long grass. Every house added six or seven to the number, and soon hundreds of pussycats were standing before the Queen, bowing gracefully and crying, “Welcome, your Majesty!” in all sorts of voices.

They were plump and comfortable looking, and Dot had no idea there were so many kinds and colors of pussys in the world. Some had long, silky hair, and some short, velvety hair; some had long, bushy tails, some short tails and some no tails at all. They were white and black, blue and gray, yellow and red, speckled and tortoise-shell in color. Some had pretty ribbons around their necks and some of the older ones wore spectacles; but all were as neat as wax, and seemed well cared for.

The big King was the largest of them all; yet there were many various sizes, down to the tiniest kittens with their eyes just open.

When all this array of pussys had saluted the Queen they sat down upon the grass and began to purr, while some indulged in a yawn behind their paws and others commenced to wash their faces; for they had just been aroused from a long nap.

“Your people seem happy and contented, King Felis,” remarked the Queen, when she had looked them over carefully.

“Oh, yes; they are thriving finely,” replied the Maltese King. “But why should they not? They have no troubles nor cares, and pass their lives in eating and sleeping. With comfortable homes and plenty of food they cannot help being the happiest pussycats in the big round world.”

“I should think not, indeed,” said the Queen.

“But now you must permit me to offer you the hospitality of my house,” said the King. “It is nearly dinner time, and you will wish to rest and eat. Our houses are not very large, so I must divide your party and place you in separate families. The boy will be cared for by my cousin Tabby, who lives at number 16. The girl I will place with Uncle Palladius, who lives at number 9. And your Majesty will, I trust, partake of the hospitality of my humble home.” And he bowed again, very politely.

“We accept your kindness with much pleasure and many thanks,” answered the Queen; and then she whispered to Dot and Tot not to be afraid, for the pussys would treat them with great courtesy.

XV. — The Valley of Pussycats

Tot wasn't a bit frightened when a gentle looking pussy of uncertain age came up to him and said:

"I am Cousin Tabby, and as you are to be my guest please follow me to number 16."

The boy laughed at the idea of entering a cat's house, but he walked after the softly-moving pussy, who, when she reached number 16, sprang upon the shelf and said:

"Climb in, please."

This was hard work, for the shelf was nearly as high as his chin. But Tot had already learned to climb the trees at home, so he managed in some way to pull himself up, with the result that he lost his balance and fell head foremost inside the house.

To his surprise he alighted on a soft cushion, and then he scrambled quickly to his feet and looked around him.

The room was dimly lighted by the square doorway, but after his eyes got accustomed to the twilight he saw that upon the floor was a soft carpet, while big cushions lay around in every direction. At the side of the room was a long, low table, not higher than Tot's knee, and standing in a row upon this table were four white bowls. There was a cupboard in one corner, a big fireplace at the end of the room, and in a second corner two little gray kittens lay asleep upon a cushion.

While the boy looked at these things there sprang through the doorway another gray kitten, older and larger than the others, and Mrs. Tabby said, politely:

"This is my niece, Miss Flitter, who lives with me; and these two little ones, who were too young to go and welcome the Queen, belong to Mrs. Mewling. She has such a large family that I have adopted these children, for my house is much too large for myself and Flitter."

"Oh," returned Tot, who was rather bewildered. Then, as Cousin Tabby seemed to expect some further reply, he added: "all right."

"Now, if you will please make yourself comfortable," continued the pussy, in a soft, purring voice, "I will get our dinner ready."

She took a white apron from the peg near the fireplace and tied it around her waist. Then she placed another bowl on the table for Tot, and busied herself about the work while the boy lay on the soft carpet and stroked the silk-like fur of the two gray kittens.

While Tot was being thus entertained, Dot was led by Uncle Palladius to number 9, where he lived. Uncle Palladius was a great black pussy, and was

one of those who wore spectacles, giving him a comical appearance.

Dot had harder work than Tot to climb through the square doorway of the house, but she succeeded after a struggle and was pleased with the cozy appearance of the room.

Uncle Palladius was the head of a large family, and as strangers were rare in their Valley they all gathered around the girl and looked at her curiously, while one pure white kitten came softly up and rubbed its back against Dot's leg. She stooped down, and picking up the pretty kitten snuggled it close in her arms and gently caressed it. Then she sat down upon a cushion, while the other kittens gathered around her or stretched themselves lazily upon the carpet near by.

All this delighted the girl, for she was especially fond of pussycats, although her invalid mother did not like them and had always declared she "would not have a cat in the house."

So the child had often longed in vain for a pet of this kind, and was now very happy to be able to play with so many.

She leaned down and pressed her cheek against the white kitten, while she whispered: "You sweet little darling!"

"I've got a new ribbon," said the kitten, proudly.

"So I see," replied Dot, who had noticed this. Then she asked:

"How old are you, dear?"

"It's pink," said the white kitty.

"What is pink?" enquired the child.

"My ribbon."

"Oh, yes. But tell me," she added "is Uncle Palladius your father, or your grandfather?"

"It's got a bow-knot on it," purred the kitten softly, with half closed eyes.

"What has a bow-knot on it?" asked Dot.

"My ribbon."

"Yes, dear; but we'll talk of something else," said the girl. "Are all these other kitties your sisters and brothers?"

"Mamma gave it to me," sang the white kitten, contentedly.

"Gave you what, dear?"

"My ribbon."

"Don't mind her," said another of the pussys, in a rather contemptuous voice; "it's her first ribbon, and she's so vain she can think of nothing else. Put her down and take one of us; we can talk to you in a sensible way."

"Well, let us talk, then," said the child, but she still held the vain kitten cuddled in her arms — it was so soft and pretty, she thought. "Tell me about Uncle Palladius."

“He is our grandfather,” said one that had white fur with big black spots scattered over it, and which, moreover, presented a curious appearance, because one eye was surrounded by a black spot and the other by pure white fur.

“Uncle Palladius is very old and wise, and is uncle to half the pussys in our Valley. Our mother, who is named Snowball, lives with him, as he has at present no family of his own.”

“Here is mother, now!” cried another kitten, and Dot looked up and saw a pussy entering the room that was by far the most beautiful she had ever seen. Snowball was large and very graceful, and her fur was the purest white, without a black mark anywhere. She sat down near Dot and asked: “Have my children been bothering you?”

“Oh, no!” declared Dot; “they are the loveliest pussys in the world.”

Snowball smiled in a gratified way.

“I think, myself,” she said, “that no house has a prettier or lazier lot of kittens than number 9. We can outsleep any other family I know of, and when it comes to our midnight concerts Uncle Palladius’ voice is so strong it can be heard above all the rest.”

“What are these midnight concerts like?” asked the girl.

“Oh, they are wonderfully entertaining,” answered Snowball, “and I wish you could hear one of them. Perhaps you have noticed the railings around the roofs of our houses. Well, in the middle of the night we all sit upon these railings and have a grand concert. There are no people to throw stones or bootjacks at us, so we enjoy ourselves immensely. The house that can produce the loudest chorus, with the most varied sound, is considered the most aristocratic in the Valley, and I am proud to say that Uncle Palladius and I have the reputation of fully holding our own.”

“Yes, yes!” spoke up Uncle Palladius, in a deep, bass voice; “I flatter myself I can be heard throughout the whole Valley.”

“But the kittens cannot jump to the roofs of the houses, can they?” asked Dot.

“No, indeed,” replied Snowball; “only those who are old enough and strong enough to jump to the roofs are considered worthy to take part in the concerts. But the little ones have the pleasure of lying inside before the fire and listening to us.”

“Do you have fires?” enquired the child.

“Yes; we consider nothing more cozy and comfortable than lying before a glowing grate fire. When the evenings are chilly there is a fire in every house, and we pussys lie before it upon our cushions and enjoy its warmth. Usually we sleep all day long, and most of the night, except during the concert, which

lasts from midnight until dawn."

"You must enjoy yourselves very much," said Dot, earnestly.

"Oh, we do, indeed!" replied the white pussycat; "but I see that dinner is now ready, so please come to the table."

The girl walked toward the low table with some curiosity to know how these pussys ate, and what they had for food. She found a row of white bowls sitting upon a white cloth, and each bowl was filled with fresh milk. At the ends of the table were plates of light bread with deep brown crusts.

The kittens all brought cushions to the sides of the table and sat upon them, their heads being then just high enough to reach the bowls. Dot was placed at one end of the table, with Snowball at her right hand, and Uncle Palladius sat at the other end.

"Where do you get such nice milk?" asked the girl.

"We have several springs in the Valley," answered Snowball, "where it bubbles up constantly."

"And where do you get the bread?" Dot next enquired.

"That grows upon the tall trees you see scattered about. We climb the bread-trees every day and gather fresh loaves."

"Don't you catch mice?" asked Dot.

"Mercy, no!" replied Snowball, in a horrified voice. "Do you suppose mice would be foolish enough to come into a Valley of Pussycats?"

"No, I suppose not," replied the girl; "but I always thought pussys liked mice."

"I have never seen the horrid animals," returned the white cat; "but there is a tradition in the Valley that some of our forefathers found mice here at one time and quickly destroyed them. They may have eaten them, for all I know; no one can be certain what his forefathers did. But none of us now living here has ever eaten anything but bread and milk, of that I am positive."

"It's such nice bread and milk," said Dot, "that I should think you would prefer it to anything else."

"We do, for there's nothing else to prefer," was the answer.

After dinner the kittens washed their faces carefully and then all of them, accompanied by Dot, left the room and walked to King Felis' house where they found Tot and the Queen surrounded by a crowd of pussys.

"Oh, Dot!" cried Tot, when he saw the girl. "I held the gray kittens after dinner, an' never dropped 'em once!"

"Was he good?" Dot asked Cousin Tabby. "Yes, he behaved very nicely," answered Cousin Tabby. "We must now bid our friends farewell," said the Queen, "for it is time to proceed upon our journey."

So they returned to the boat, and all the pussys, headed by King Felis and

Uncle Palladius, went with them and politely bade them good-bye.

When they were floating in the river again the Queen asked Dot, “How did you like the pussycats?”

“They’re lovely!” exclaimed the girl. “I should have liked to stay all night with them.”

“Well, I wouldn’t,” rejoined the Queen. “The last time I passed the night in this Valley the pussys screamed so loudly at their midnight concert that the noise cracked my wax. They are much nicer to visit in the daytime.”

“Why is the King named Felis?” enquired Dot, after a moment’s thought.

“Because that is the name of his race. All our names have some meaning in Merryland,” answered the Queen.

“I suppose your own name has a meaning, if only we knew what it was,” said Dot, slyly.

“Good gracious!” cried the Queen; “haven’t I told you my name yet?”

“No,” said Dot.

“Then I must have forgotten that you asked it. It was very stupid of me, and I assure you I didn’t mean to be rude.” Then her Majesty turned to Tot and asked:

“How did you like the Valley of Pussys?”

“Fine!” said the boy. “The kitties were soft an’ fuzzy, an’ the bread and milk was good. But the doors,” he added, solemnly, “are built too high up to be ‘zactly comf’table.”

XVI. — The Busy Mr. Split

When the boat entered the Sixth Valley of Merryland our voyagers saw before them a forest of green trees growing close down to the river bank. These were so thick that they formed almost a solid wall, and they had passed halfway through the Valley before they came to a small opening, or path, running from the water's edge through the forest. To this spot the Queen directed the boat, and soon it grounded gently against a pebbly beach, and they all stepped out and stood upon the narrow path.

"Isn't there anything but trees here?" asked Tot.

"Yes, indeed, there is a very pleasant country behind the trees," answered the Wax Doll. "Follow me and I will guide your steps."

So they followed the Queen slowly along the shady path, while over their heads the branches met and sheltered them from the rays of the afternoon sun. This was gratefully appreciated by Dot and Tot, for they had left their hats in the boat and wore only their golden crowns.

After walking a short distance the Queen stopped suddenly — so suddenly that Dot nearly ran against her and Tot bumped his nose upon Dot's shoulder. Looking ahead to see what was the matter, the children found lying across the path a bright green Alligator nearly three feet long. Its back was scaly and made in short lengths, which were jointed together in a peculiar way.

While Dot and Tot were trying to make up their minds whether to be afraid or not, the Alligator turned his head toward the Queen and said, gently:

"Step on my middle, please!"

"With pleasure," returned the Queen; and she placed one of her kid slippers upon the middle of the Alligator's back and stepped to the other side of him. As she did so the pressure of her foot made a faint squeak, and the Alligator sighed with delight. Then he turned his head to Dot and repeated

"Step on my middle, please!"

"Why?" asked the girl, hesitating.

"So I can hear my squeak, of course," answered the Alligator. "If no one steps on me I might as well have no squeak at all. It is now some years since I have listened to the music of my squeak, but each day I have crawled into this path as soon as I was wound up, for I knew that sooner or later someone was sure to walk down the path and tread on me. You look heavier than the Queen, so perhaps I'll squeak louder."

"Let Tot try it first," said Dot; "I'm afraid I'll break you."

"Oh, don't worry, I've been used so little that I ought to be in good

condition," said the Alligator. But Tot went first, and gave his foot a great push as he stepped on the creature's body.

The squeak was so loud and shrill that the Alligator laughed from pure joy, and cried, "Wasn't that splendid? I believe I have the finest squeak in the world! The person who made me knew his business all right."

"Who made you?" asked Dot, with quick interest.

But instead of replying, the Alligator winked his left eye at her three times and murmured softly, "Step on my middle, please!"

So Dot stepped upon his back, and being heavier than Tot, the Alligator squeaked louder than before.

"Thank you! Thank you very much!" he called, in a happy voice. "I have never enjoyed myself so much since I was made."

They walked on and left him smiling contentedly as he lay across the path, and before many minutes they reached a circular space of flat country where no trees grew at all, although the forest surrounded it on every side.

Around the edge of the clearing were wooden barns and stables with their fronts wide open, showing stalls and mangers and stabling for all kinds of toy animals. One had a sign over the door reading "Fire Engine," and another "Police Patrol." The stables were all about as high as Dot's waist, and in some of them were toy animals and stablemen, while others were entirely empty.

In the center of the space was a big merry-go-round, having thirty-four animals in rows upon its edge, all of which wore pretty saddles and bridles of bright red and blue leather. There were lions, elephants, tigers, deer, camels, horses, donkeys and several other animals, all whirling around in pairs, while a barrel-organ played sweet music. But no one was riding on any of the animals.

Between the merry-go-round and the stables was a narrow, iron railway track, built in a circle, around which was rushing a big tin engine, drawing a gaily painted train of tin cars, filled with tin passengers that never moved a bit.

The rest of the opening in the forest was filled with groups of animals of all sorts, some standing perfectly still, some walking stiffly about, and others pretending to eat grass, or slowly wagging their tails from side to side and nodding their heads up and down. Some were covered with real fur, while others were made of tin or wood and painted in natural colors.

Near the spot where Dot and Tot were standing they noticed a group of wooden rocking horses talking with their heads together, while they rocked gently to and fro upon their rockers. Back of them was one that had broken its rocker and was lying upon its side in quite a helpless condition.

Almost in front of their path stood a black, woolly dancing bear upon one of its rear legs. It remained perfectly motionless, and the Queen walked up to it and asked:

"Where is Mr. Split?"

"He is in the forest winding up the panthers and in the police patrol house oiling up the wagon, your Majesty," answered the dancing bear in a weak voice. "I've been run down now for over three hours, and expected at least half of Mr. Split to come long ago and start me going again; but he seems especially busy this morning."

"Yes, there is a great deal of work for him in the Valley," said the Queen, thoughtfully; "there really should be four of him."

"But he has only two arms when he is hooked together," returned the bear; "so there could not be more than two parts of Mr. Split that could hold a key."

"That is true," said the Queen. Then she looked up and exclaimed. "Here comes Mr. Left Split now."

Hopping toward them with wonderful speed was the queerest man the children had seen in all this queer kingdom. He was not, in fact, a complete man, but just half of a man, as if he had been cut in two from the middle of his head straight downward. This left him one ear, one eye, half of a nose and of a mouth, one arm and one leg. He was dressed in a bright red suit and carried in his hand a brass key.

"Even — , Your Maj — ," he cried out, as he drew near. "Hap — see!"

He meant to say: "Good evening, your Majesty, I'm happy to see you," but there being only half of him he spoke but half of each word.

"Good evening, Mr. Left Split," replied the Queen. "I see you are as busy as ever."

"Ind — am. Anim — al — get — out ord — " By this he meant to say: "Indeed I am. The animals are always getting out of order."

"Please wind me up at once," said the dancing bear, in a complaining tone; "I've been run down for three hours."

"Ver — sor — , but can't help," remarked Mr. Left Split, cheerfully, meaning that he was very sorry. He placed the key in a small hole at the back of the bear's neck and wound it up tightly.

As soon as he withdrew the key the bear began to move its head by slow jerks from side to side, and to rest first upon one leg and then upon the other, as if it were dancing.

"That's better," it said, in a more pleasant voice; "I ought to run now until sundown."

Just then the Queen exclaimed: "Here comes Mr. Right Split," and the

children looked up and saw the other half of the split man coming out of the forest a short distance away. He also had a key in his hand, but when he saw the Queen and her companions he came hopping toward them, saying in his jerky voice " — Ning, — jesty! — Come our — ley." By which he meant to say: "Good evening, your Majesty! Welcome to our Valley." But being the right half of the man he spoke on the right half of each word.

As soon as he came up, however, there was an end of this mode of speech, for the right half of Mr. Split placed his flat side close to the left half's flat side and then with both hands he hooked the two halves together with little brass hooks. Then Mr. Split looked more like a complete man, although the left side was dressed in a bright red suit while the right side wore white, so it was easy to see where he was joined together.

When he had fastened himself securely, which he did with great rapidity, the man spoke, saying, "Your Majesty has found us as busy as ever. The fact is, these animals and cars and merry-go-rounds run down very quickly, and they require so much attention that this is the first time we have been hooked together since early this morning. It is the same every day, but I try to do my duty, and you will find this Valley in good condition and everything properly cared for."

"I am sure of that, Mr. Split," answered the Queen.

Dot and Tot had been so astonished at all this that they had stood perfectly still, and noticing this Mr. Split came toward them with his key raised and said, briskly:

"Where are your key holes my dears? You must have run down."

"Oh, no!" cried Dot, shrinking back; "We're — we're alive!"

"Oh, that is different," returned the man, with a laugh. "I'm glad you are not to be wound up, for I am so busy now that there ought to be three or four of me instead of two."

"You're funny," remarked Tot, who had been staring at Mr. Split.

"Thank you, sir," replied the man, bowing politely.

"What are you made of?" asked the boy, curiously.

"Wood, of course," answered the man. "Wood is the strongest and best material for that purpose. My feet are beech, my arms and legs are limbs of ash, my body is pine and my heart is oak. As for my head, it is mostly chestnut, although my hair is curly maple, my eyes mahogany and my teeth hickory."

"Oh!" said Tot.

"You may notice my voice is very strong," continued the man; "it is made of birch bark."

"Oh!" said Tot.

“And my hands are made of the rubber tree so I can wiggle my fingers easily and turn the keys to wind the machinery.”

“Oh!” said Tot.

“If you had not told us this,” remarked Dot, shyly, “we should have thought you were made entirely of witch hazel.”

The Queen laughed at this, and said: “Now, Mr. Split, if you will kindly gather some fruit and nuts from the forest for our supper we will ride on the merry-go-round until you return.”

The man bowed and at once ran into the forest on his errand, while Dot and Tot followed the Queen toward the merry-go-round.

XVII. — The Animals that Wound Up

When they came to the railway track they were careful not to get run into by the rushing tin train. They waited until the cars had passed the spot where they stood and then quickly ran across the track before the engine came around again.

The merry-go-round was turning smoothly, and the saddled animals galloped along in an inviting way, while the barrel-organ played some very loud and frisky circus tunes.

"It's almost like a side show!" cried Dot enthusiastically, as she seated herself upon a camel. Tot bestrode a dapple-gray horse, and the Queen sat upon a lion and took hold of its mane to steady herself.

They whirled around in a very pleasant and exhilarating manner for some time, and Dot was laughing and enjoying herself immensely when she happened to notice a number of big teardrops rolling down the cheeks of the tiger that was galloping just in front of her.

"I — I think it's — it's — real mean of you," whimpered the tiger with sobs in his voice, "for you to ride on that humpbacked animal all the time, and — and neglect a roy — royal Bengal tiger!"

"Oh, I shall be glad to make a change," she cried, and leaping off the camel's back she sprang upon the tiger, who thereupon dried his tears and smiled in a most delightful manner.

"We seldom have visitors in this Valley," he said, after he had wiped his eyes with a handkerchief that was sticking in his bridle, "so most of the time there is no one to ride us. I don't see the good of a merry-go-round if it isn't used."

The Queen now noticed some of the other animals looking discontented, so she and Tot changed seats also, and by the time Mr. Split came to call them to supper they had ridden all the animals in turn, and the keeper noticed that his merry-go-round was bathed in one whirling smile of gladness and content.

"It is good for my animals to have visitors," he said, happily, "it cheers them up."

Mr. Split had spread a white cloth upon the grass close to one edge of the forest, and Dot and Tot and the Queen sat around this and ate of the delicious fruit the queer man had gathered. There were melons, grapes, bananas, oranges, plums, strawberries, and pears and all were ripe and exquisitely flavored.

By the time they finished their meal it had become twilight, and the Queen declared it would soon be dark.

“I wonder where we can sleep,” said Tot. But Dot looked around and saw that Mr. Split was fastening three big hammocks between the trees at the edge of the forest. These hammocks were lined with soft, silken cushions and looked very pleasant and cozy to the sleepy children.

The Queen and Dot and Tot each climbed into one of the hammocks and were covered over with silk-quilted comfortables, after which Mr. Split turned a key at the end of each hammock and set them moving gently to and fro like the rocking of a cradle.

Before she went to sleep Dot looked over the edge of her hammock and saw that the merry-go-round and the tin train were now motionless, while all the animals seemed to have run down and were standing quite still waiting for morning, when Mr. Split would come and wind them up again.

The little girl was awakened next morning by a sharp clicking sound near by, and opening her eyes she saw a tin monkey running up and down a string fastened to a branch of the tree.

“Dear me!” she said, looking at him intently; “are you wound up so early in the morning?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied the monkey, still busily climbing his string; “Mr. Split was here some time ago. I suppose nearly everyone in the Valley must be going by this time.”

“I didn’t know it was so late,” said Dot, slipping from her hammock to the ground and feeling rather ashamed of her laziness.

Tot was already up and sitting near the railway track watching the tin train go round. The Queen now joined Dot and they called Tot to breakfast, for Mr. Split had loaded the cloth with a variety of cool, fresh fruit and berries.

“He gathered those before he unhooked himself,” said the Queen, “for then he had two arms to carry them. But when it came to winding up the animals he had to separate in order that he might use each hand in a different place, and so get around quicker.”

“Mr. Split’s name suits him very well,” said Dot, who was enjoying the fruit.

“Yes, it would be hard to call him anything else,” replied the Queen.

“I suppose your own name fits you in the same way,” ventured the girl.

“Certainly it does,” answered the Queen.

Dot’s heart now began to beat rapidly, for she thought she would at last discover what the Queen’s name was. Tot also looked interested, and forgot his slice of melon as he listened.

“You haven’t told us yet what it is,” said the girl.

The little Queen laughed merrily. “Isn’t it funny,” she exclaimed, “that I always forget to tell you? There is no reason in the world why you should not

know my name."

"Then," said Tot, sharply, "tell it!"

"Well," she said, "it's — "

Just then they heard a great crash, a whirling of wheels and the scream of a whistle. Springing to their feet they saw the tin train lying upside down near the track, with its wheels whirling around like the wind, and near by was a wooden goat and cart, completely wrecked and splintered into many pieces.

They all ran down to the place, and the brave little Queen picked up the tin train and set it upon its track. It started to run again in its usual rushing way, but Dot noticed that the cow-catcher was badly bent and that some of the paint had been knocked off.

"There has been a collision," said her Majesty, calmly. "I was afraid that goat-cart would get into trouble if it ran so near to the engine. But it is wrecked now, beyond repair, so there is nothing more to worry about."

As she spoke the Police Patrol and the Fire Engine both dashed up to the spot, and one of the officers asked: "What's the trouble?"

"You are too late," said the Queen; "the trouble is all over."

"Then we may as well go back," said the officer, grumpily. "The trouble usually is over when we get anywhere; that's why we take our time about coming."

"Well," said the Queen, when the Patrol and the Fire Engine had gone back to their stables, "it is time for us to go."

They looked around for Mr. Split, but not seeing him they walked across the opening to the path that led through the forest to the river. They each squeaked the Alligator when they came to him, and left him feeling joyful and contented.

The boat was lying where they had left it, and they at once stepped in and seated themselves.

"I'm sorry not to say good-bye to Mr. Split," said Dot, as the boat glided out into the river.

"He is so busy he won't mind it," answered the Queen. "I suppose he was in the forest winding up the animals there when we came away. I do not think there is another man in the whole world that does so much work as Mr. Split, and he seems to enjoy it, too."

The boat was rushing swiftly through the water, now, and soon the forest of trees was passed and our voyagers entered a deep archway that led to the Seventh and last Valley of Merryland.

XVIII. — The Valley of Lost Things

It was morning, and the sun shone as brightly as it had every day since they came to Merryland; yet the stillness of the Seventh Valley was so intense that the children became sober the moment they entered it, and even the smile upon the little Queen's wax face looked strained and out of place.

"The people here are either asleep, like the dolls, or run down, like the animals," said Dot, sinking her voice to a whisper.

"There are no people," replied the Queen.

"Then what is the Valley for?" asked the girl.

"Wait a moment and you will see," was the answer.

The boat now drew near the shore, but the banks of the river were so high and steep that they could see nothing above them, and Dot thought at first they would be unable to land.

Presently, however, they reached a small place where the bank sloped gently down to the water, and here the Queen stopped the boat and asked the children to step out.

"Now follow me," said Her Majesty, when they had all landed. So they walked up the sloping bank and found themselves upon a big, circular plain as flat as a platter, which was thickly covered with thousands and thousands of pins. There were no trees at all, but lying scattered upon the ground were heaps and stacks of the most curious things.

Nearest to Dot was a great pyramid of thimbles, of all sizes and made of many different materials. Further on were piles of buttons, of all shapes and colors imaginable, and there were also vast collections of hairpins, rings, and many sorts of jewelry.

Tot noticed at his side a mammoth heap of lead pencils, some short and stubby and worn, and others long and almost new.

"What does it all mean?" asked Dot, wonderingly, after she had gazed about her.

"It is the Valley of Lost Things," answered the Queen.

"Oh!" said Dot.

"Oh!" echoed Tot.

And again they began looking with wide-open eyes.

"It is rather dangerous to walk on the pins," said the Queen; "so we must choose some overshoes from this pile and put them on our feet. There are so many pins lost that they cover the entire Valley, and sometimes the points turn up and are liable to stick into your feet."

The pile of overshoes was quite near them, so they hunted through it until they found the right sizes. Of course they could not get mates, but that did

not matter so much, if the soles were but thick enough to keep the pins from sticking through.

When at last their feet were clad in lost overshoes they started to walk through the Valley, and Tot was surprised to see so many heaps of caps and coats that had been worn by boys.

"Where do they all come from?" he asked.

"Well," replied the Queen, "it seems boys in the big outside world seldom hang up their caps and coats; so they are easily lost. Perhaps if they knew they would get to this Valley, and could never be found again, boys would be more careful."

"Would they?" asked Tot.

"I suppose so. Here is a big pile of pennies. I expect most of those were lost by children, too."

"Let's take some!" cried Tot.

"No, indeed," said Dot, "if we took them they wouldn't be lost any more."

"Won't they ever be found?" asked the boy.

"I think not," replied the Queen. "No one has ever been here but you, and probably no stranger will ever come to this Valley again."

"It's all right for us to come," declared Tot.

"Why?" enquired the girl.

'"Cause we're lost, too!"

"So we are, Tot," said Dot, rather sadly; "but lost people are usually found again, for I don't see any others here."

They walked a little farther on and saw a mass of broken toys lying scattered about. There were dollies, too, for suddenly Tot made a pounce and grabbed up a sorry looking doll with one arm broken, one eye out and a scratched and battered face.

"I've found her!" he cried, joyfully; "I've found Jane! An' I'm going to keep her, too."

"Is it really your doll?" asked the Queen, with some curiosity.

"Course it is," replied Tot; "I lost her."

"Then I do not see why you should not keep her with you; for, being found, she doesn't belong here any more."

"Course not," said the boy, hugging the broken doll in his arms.

"There are a good many gloves and handkerchiefs lost," remarked Dot, looking at the heaps lying around.

"Yes," replied the Queen; "and over at the further side of the Valley are many piles of pocket-books, each pile as big as a haystack. People are so careless with pocketbooks."

"Have they money in them?" asked the girl.

“Some have a great deal of money inside them, and some only a few pennies. Others are stuffed with cards and samples and papers,” said the Queen. “I would take you to look at them, but we should have to climb over a hill of lost needles, and I fear our overshoes would not protect us from their sharp points.”

“It’s always hard to get at money,” said Tot, with a sigh.

Among other things lying near her Dot now noticed a hurdy-gurdy, such as she had seen musicians carrying around the streets. There was no monkey with it, and it looked quite old and battered.

“I wonder how long it has been here, she remarked, thoughtfully.

“Play it, and see,” suggested the Queen.

So Dot set the hurdy-gurdy up straight and turned the crank, when it began playing in a jerky and wheezy manner a tune called “Silver Threads Among the Gold.”

“My! But that’s an old tune,” said Dot.

“It’s rather pretty,” declared the Queen, who had never heard the air before. “Play another.”

This time the tune was “Little Annie Rooney,” and then followed “Captain Jinks” and “Two Little Girls in Blue.”

“I guess this hurdy-gurdy was lost before I was born,” sighed Dot. “It’s certainly very old.”

XIX. — The Lost Crowns

Well, shall we return to the boat?" asked the Queen, when they had looked at the lost things a while longer.

"Yes," they answered willingly, for the Valley was a rather sad sight.

So they walked back to the bank, where they took off their overshoes and threw them upon the pile. Then they went down the sloping bank to the river and sat down upon the sand to rest.

"I'm hungry," said Tot.

"I forgot to bring anything to eat," answered the Queen. "But that will not matter. Fetch me your basket from the boat."

Dot brought it to the little lady, who simply waved her fairy wand over it and said:

"Now we shall have a good dinner."

The girl removed the cover and found that the big basket was filled to the brim with dainties of all kinds.

"That's nice," said Tot. "Were all those things in the end of your stick?"

"No one has ever yet discovered," answered the Queen, "how fairies are able to do such wonderful things. In fact, fairies could not explain them clearly if they wished to. So it is best not to ask questions, but to eat freely of these good things and be thankful my magic wand was able to fill the basket."

"All right," said Tot.

Although they enjoyed their dinner, the little party seemed to be unusually silent and thoughtful, and finally Dot asked:

"What shall we do next? We have seen all of the Seven Valleys now."

"When we have finished our dinner we will return to my palace in the Fourth Valley," replied the Queen, gaily.

A long pause followed this remark, and it was broken by Tot saying in a loud and decided voice:

"I want to go home!"

The Queen looked up quickly, with an anxious expression upon her face, and asked, "Do you really?"

"Yes. I want to see my mamma!" declared the boy.

"And leave this beautiful country, where you are a Prince?"

"Yes," said Tot decidedly.

"You surprise me, indeed," said the Queen, "and I am rather disappointed that you are not content to remain in my kingdom." Then she turned to Dot, and enquired: "Do you also wish to return to your home?"

"Well," replied the girl, "I love these beautiful Valleys dearly, and never

expect to be as happy again as I have been here. But if Tot goes home of course I must go with him, for his mother left him in my care, you know."

"I am very sorry," said the Queen, after another long pause; "I had hoped to keep you with me always. But in my Kingdom of Merryland no one must be unhappy — it is the law. And if you really wish to return home it would make you unhappy to stay. So," she added, quietly, "you may go whenever you wish."

"How?" asked Tot, excited at the prospect.

"In your boat, of course. You have only to float down the river and through another tunnel to reach the big outside world again. But when you have passed through I shall close up the tunnel forever, so you will never be able to return."

"That's all right," returned Tot, gleefully.

"I shall be sorry never to see you again," said Dot, gently, as she clasped one of the fairy doll's pretty hands in her own. "You have been so kind to us, and I'm sure Tot is as grateful as I am. But he's a boy, you know."

"I know," said the Queen, with a smile.

"Let's go now," urged Tot, as if he couldn't wait a minute, now the matter was decided.

"How can you get to the Fourth Valley if we take the boat?" Dot asked the Queen.

"That will be easy," she answered, pleasantly; "my fairy wand will carry me home."

"Come on, then!" cried Tot, leaping into the boat.

Dot turned to kiss the pretty Queen, who exclaimed: "Be careful of my wax!"

But she stood on her tiptoes and gave the little girl a dainty, airy kiss that just brushed her lips.

"Good-bye my Princess," she said, and turning to the boy, added:

"Good-bye, Prince Tot of Merryland."

"Good-bye," called Tot from the boat. "You're nice, an' I love you. But I love my mamma, too."

"To be sure," answered the Queen, sweetly.

Dot now stepped in beside Tot, and the fairy doll placed the basket in the boat and pushed it away from the shore.

As they floated slowly down the stream the Queen followed along the top of the high bank, as if to keep them in sight as long as possible; and Dot was looking at her almost regretfully when suddenly a thought flashed into her mind. She stood up in the boat and called out:

"You've never told us your name!"

“Haven’t I, really?” asked the Queen, as if greatly surprised.

“No,” said Dot. “I want to know what it is.”

“So do I,” yelled Tot, standing up beside the girl and steadying himself by her arm.

“Certainly. I’ll tell you now,” cried the Queen, still running along the bank. But scarcely had she spoken when she threw up both her hands and screamed:

“Look out for the arch!”

Dot and Tot both turned around to look, but they were too late. A low, gloomy archway was just before them, and as the boat glided into it, the jagged rocks of the roof caught the children and threw them flat upon the bottom of the boat.

In falling, both the pretty gold crowns were knocked from their heads and fell splashing into the dark waters of the river, where they were lost forever.

Dot and Tot lay quite still for a time, while the light in the tunnel turned to twilight, and the twilight turned to utter darkness.

Suddenly they heard a great crash, with the sound of falling rocks and the splashing of water. The boat rocked with a little shiver, but neither of the children spoke, for they knew the Queen had kept her promise and closed up the archway behind them.

Finally Tot whispered, “I’ve got her yet.”

“Who?” asked Dot.

“Jane.”

The girl did not reply. She was rubbing her head where the roof had struck it and thinking earnestly of the wonderful country she had just left. Tot might, in time, forget his visit to Merryland, but Dot never would.

“It’s goin’ to be as long as the first tun’l, Dot,” said the boy; and then he curled himself up and fell asleep, while the boat glided swiftly through the dark tunnel, and no sound broke the stillness save the soft rippling of the unseen waters.

XX. — The Voyage Ends

Suddenly Dot, who had also fallen asleep, awoke with a start.

The sun was just sinking in the west, and the boat had left the tunnel while they slept and was slowly floating down the middle of a big river.

The girl at once awakened Tot and they looked carefully along both sides of the river to see if they could find the place where they had come out of the tunnel. But nothing could be seen except a line of low trees growing close down to the water.

"It doesn't make any difference, anyway," said the girl; "for the Queen has closed up the end of the tunnel."

"Where are we?" asked Tot.

"I don't exactly know. But this looks very much like the river that flows past Roselawn."

"Yes!" cried the boy, nodding his head, "I 'member those trees."

"Then," rejoined Dot, slowly, "I think I know how it happened. The Valleys of Merryland are not in a straight line, but lie in the form of a half circle; so in passing through them we have come upon the same river again, only higher up the stream. We'll soon be opposite Roselawn, Tot."

The boy was staring at the bank and did not answer at once. But as the boat swept around a bend in the river he cried:

"Look!" and pointed with his finger to the shore.

Before them were the green banks of Roselawn, and someone had already seen the children, for a boat pushed out from the shore and came rapidly toward them.

A few minutes afterward Dot was closely clasped in her father's arms, while Tot was rapturously kissing the bearded face of Thompson the gardener.

"How do you happen to be at Roselawn, Papa?" Dot asked.

"Miss Bombien telegraphed me you were lost, so I came by the first train and have been searching everywhere for you. Thompson and I had both nearly despaired, for we feared our little ones had been drowned."

"Oh, no," said Dot, "we've only been on a trip to Merryland. But I'll tell you the whole story when we get home."

Mr. Freeland noticed his daughter's round, plump cheeks, slightly sunburned, but with a fresh, rosy tint showing through the skin, and saw how her eyes sparkled and danced with health. Very gratefully he pressed her again to his heart and whispered:

"Wherever you may have been, my darling, the change has restored your health, and that repays me for all my anxiety."

* * *

As they walked up the white-graveled paths of Roselawn, Dot skipped happily along by her father's side, while Tot held fast to the gardener's big finger with one hand and carried Jane in the other.

Soon they came to the place where the path branched off to the gap in the hedge beyond which Tot lived, and he called out, "Good-bye, Dot."

"Good-bye," answered the girl; "I'll see you tomorrow."

But before she had gone far Tot came running up, calling for her to stop.

"Oh, Dot!" he said, "I know what the Queen's name is!"

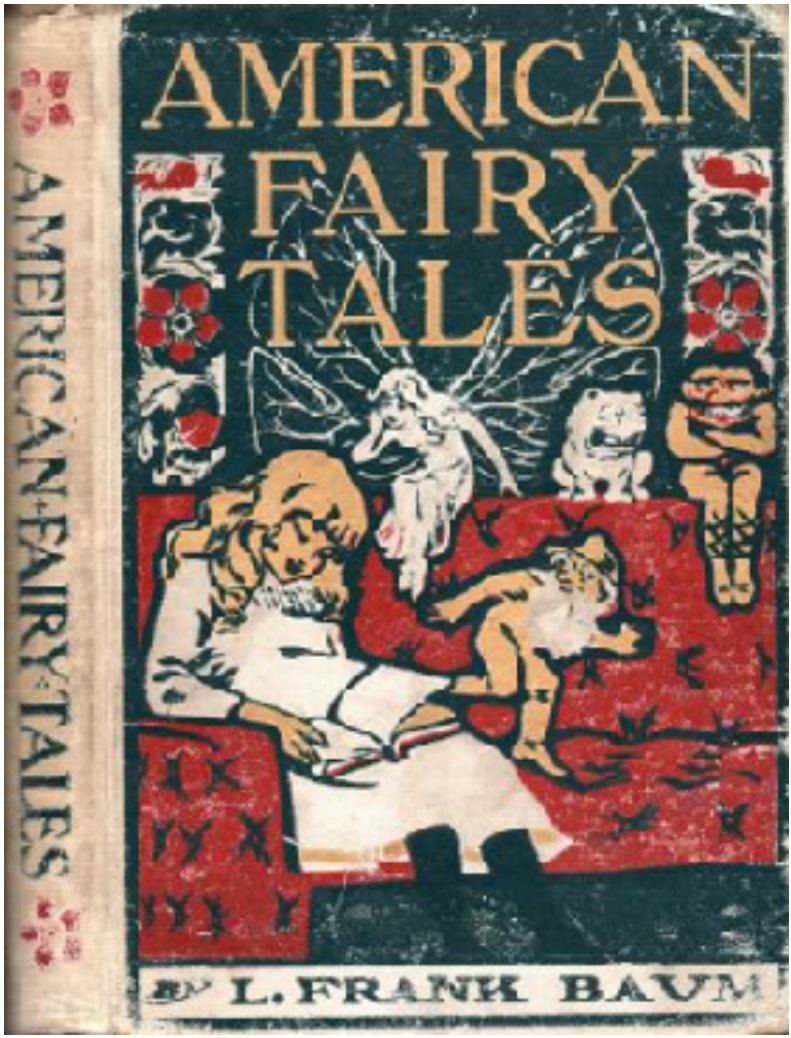
"Do you?" she asked eagerly. "Tell me, quick!"

"Why it's Dolly, of course," said Tot.

"Of course!" answered Dot, with a smile. "Funny we never thought of that, isn't it?"

AMERICAN FAIRY TALES

George M. Hill Company published Baum's *American Fairy Tales* in 1901, a year after they issued *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.* Ralph Fletcher Seymour designed the cover, title page and page borders, while Harry Kennedy, Ike Morgan, and Norman P. Hall provided illustrations for the twelve fantasy stories. Unusual in Baum's canon, the stories tend to have an ironic or satirical tone, perhaps appropriate for adult readers of the newspapers they first appeared in. "The Enchanted Types" and "The Dummy that Lived" include "knooks" and "ryls," fairies which feature in Baum's *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*, published in 1902. The 1908 edition by Bobbs-Merrill of *American Fairy Tales* includes three further stories and appeared under the title, *Baum's American Fairy Tales: Stories of Astonishing Adventures of American Boys and Girls with the Fairies of Their Native Land*.



The rare first edition of 'American Fairy Tales'

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A copy of the 1908 edition

THE BOX OF ROBBERS

No one intended to leave Martha alone that afternoon, but it happened that everyone was called away, for one reason or another. Mrs. McFarland was attending the weekly card party held by the Women's Anti-Gambling League. Sister Nell's young man had called quite unexpectedly to take her for a long drive. Papa was at the office, as usual. It was Mary Ann's day out. As for Emeline, she certainly should have stayed in the house and looked after the little girl; but Emeline had a restless nature.

"Would you mind, miss, if I just crossed the alley to speak a word to Mrs. Carleton's girl?" she asked Martha.

"'Course not," replied the child. "You'd better lock the back door, though, and take the key, for I shall be upstairs."

"Oh, I'll do that, of course, miss," said the delighted maid, and ran away to spend the afternoon with her friend, leaving Martha quite alone in the big house, and locked in, into the bargain.

The little girl read a few pages in her new book, sewed a few stitches in her embroidery and started to "play visiting" with her four favorite dolls. Then she remembered that in the attic was a doll's playhouse that hadn't been used for months, so she decided she would dust it and put it in order.

Filled with this idea, the girl climbed the winding stairs to the big room under the roof. It was well lighted by three dormer windows and was warm and pleasant. Around the walls were rows of boxes and trunks, piles of old carpeting, pieces of damaged furniture, bundles of discarded clothing and other odds and ends of more or less value. Every well-regulated house has an attic of this sort, so I need not describe it.

The doll's house had been moved, but after a search Martha found it away over in a corner near the big chimney.

She drew it out and noticed that behind it was a black wooden chest which Uncle Walter had sent over from Italy years and years ago — before Martha was born, in fact. Mamma had told her about it one day; how there was no key to it, because Uncle Walter wished it to remain unopened until he returned home; and how this wandering uncle, who was a mighty hunter, had gone into Africa to hunt elephants and had never been heard from afterwards.

The little girl looked at the chest curiously, now that it had by accident attracted her attention.

It was quite big — bigger even than mamma's traveling trunk — and was studded all over with tarnished brassheaded nails. It was heavy, too, for when Martha tried to lift one end of it she found she could not stir it a bit. But there was a place in the side of the cover for a key. She stooped to examine the

lock, and saw that it would take a rather big key to open it.

Then, as you may suspect, the little girl longed to open Uncle Walter's big box and see what was in it. For we are all curious, and little girls are just as curious as the rest of us.

"I don't b'lieve Uncle Walter'll ever come back," she thought. "Papa said once that some elephant must have killed him. If I only had a key — " She stopped and clapped her little hands together gayly as she remembered a big basket of keys on the shelf in the linen closet. They were of all sorts and sizes; perhaps one of them would unlock the mysterious chest!

She flew down the stairs, found the basket and returned with it to the attic. Then she sat down before the brass-studded box and began trying one key after another in the curious old lock. Some were too large, but most were too small. One would go into the lock but would not turn; another stuck so fast that she feared for a time that she would never get it out again. But at last, when the basket was almost empty, an oddly-shaped, ancient brass key slipped easily into the lock. With a cry of joy Martha turned the key with both hands; then she heard a sharp "click," and the next moment the heavy lid flew up of its own accord!

The little girl leaned over the edge of the chest an instant, and the sight that met her eyes caused her to start back in amazement.

Slowly and carefully a man unpacked himself from the chest, stepped out upon the floor, stretched his limbs and then took off his hat and bowed politely to the astonished child.

He was tall and thin and his face seemed badly tanned or sunburnt.

Then another man emerged from the chest, yawning and rubbing his eyes like a sleepy schoolboy. He was of middle size and his skin seemed as badly tanned as that of the first.

While Martha stared open-mouthed at the remarkable sight a third man crawled from the chest. He had the same complexion as his fellows, but was short and fat.

All three were dressed in a curious manner. They wore short jackets of red velvet braided with gold, and knee breeches of sky-blue satin with silver buttons. Over their stockings were laced wide ribbons of red and yellow and blue, while their hats had broad brims with high, peaked crowns, from which fluttered yards of bright-colored ribbons.

They had big gold rings in their ears and rows of knives and pistols in their belts. Their eyes were black and glittering and they wore long, fierce mustaches, curling at the ends like a pig's tail.

"My! but you were heavy," exclaimed the fat one, when he had pulled down his velvet jacket and brushed the dust from his sky-blue breeches.

“And you squeezed me all out of shape.”

“It was unavoidable, Luigi,” responded the thin man, lightly; “the lid of the chest pressed me down upon you. Yet I tender you my regrets.”

“As for me,” said the middle-sized man, carelessly rolling a cigarette and lighting it, “you must acknowledge I have been your nearest friend for years; so do not be disagreeable.”

“You mustn’t smoke in the attic,” said Martha, recovering herself at sight of the cigarette. “You might set the house on fire.”

The middle-sized man, who had not noticed her before, at this speech turned to the girl and bowed.

“Since a lady requests it,” said he, “I shall abandon my cigarette,” and he threw it on the floor and extinguished it with his foot.

“Who are you?” asked Martha, who until now had been too astonished to be frightened.

“Permit us to introduce ourselves,” said the thin man, flourishing his hat gracefully. “This is Lugui,” the fat man nodded; “and this is Beni,” the middle-sized man bowed; “and I am Victor. We are three bandits — Italian bandits.”

“Bandits!” cried Martha, with a look of horror.

“Exactly. Perhaps in all the world there are not three other bandits so terrible and fierce as ourselves,” said Victor, proudly.

“‘Tis so,” said the fat man, nodding gravely.

“But it’s wicked!” exclaimed Martha.

“Yes, indeed,” replied Victor. “We are extremely and tremendously wicked. Perhaps in all the world you could not find three men more wicked than those who now stand before you.”

“‘Tis so,” said the fat man, approvingly.

“But you shouldn’t be so wicked,” said the girl; “it’s — it’s — naughty!”

Victor cast down his eyes and blushed.

“Naughty!” gasped Beni, with a horrified look.

“‘Tis a hard word,” said Luigi, sadly, and buried his face in his hands.

“I little thought,” murmured Victor, in a voice broken by emotion, “ever to be so reviled — and by a lady! Yet, perhaps you spoke thoughtlessly. You must consider, miss, that our wickedness has an excuse. For how are we to be bandits, let me ask, unless we are wicked?”

Martha was puzzled and shook her head, thoughtfully. Then she remembered something.

“You can’t remain bandits any longer,” said she, “because you are now in America.”

“America!” cried the three, together.

“Certainly. You are on Prairie avenue, in Chicago. Uncle Walter sent you here from Italy in this chest.”

The bandits seemed greatly bewildered by this announcement. Lugui sat down on an old chair with a broken rocker and wiped his forehead with a yellow silk handkerchief. Beni and Victor fell back upon the chest and looked at her with pale faces and staring eyes.

When he had somewhat recovered himself Victor spoke.

“Your Uncle Walter has greatly wronged us,” he said, reproachfully. “He has taken us from our beloved Italy, where bandits are highly respected, and brought us to a strange country where we shall not know whom to rob or how much to ask for a ransom.”

“‘Tis so!” said the fat man, slapping his leg sharply.

“And we had won such fine reputations in Italy!” said Beni, regretfully.

“Perhaps Uncle Walter wanted to reform you,” suggested Martha.

“Are there, then, no bandits in Chicago?” asked Victor.

“Well,” replied the girl, blushing in her turn, “we do not call them bandits.”

“Then what shall we do for a living?” inquired Beni, despairingly.

“A great deal can be done in a big American city,” said the child. “My father is a lawyer” (the bandits shuddered), “and my mother’s cousin is a police inspector.”

“Ah,” said Victor, “that is a good employment. The police need to be inspected, especially in Italy.”

“Everywhere!” added Beni.

“Then you could do other things,” continued Martha, encouragingly. “You could be motor men on trolley cars, or clerks in a department store. Some people even become aldermen to earn a living.”

The bandits shook their heads sadly.

“We are not fitted for such work,” said Victor. “Our business is to rob.”

Martha tried to think.

“It is rather hard to get positions in the gas office,” she said, “but you might become politicians.”

“No!” cried Beni, with sudden fierceness; “we must not abandon our high calling. Bandits we have always been, and bandits we must remain!”

“‘Tis so!” agreed the fat man.

“Even in Chicago there must be people to rob,” remarked Victor, with cheerfulness.

Martha was distressed.

“I think they have all been robbed,” she objected.

“Then we can rob the robbers, for we have experience and talent beyond

the ordinary," said Beni.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear!" moaned the girl; "why did Uncle Walter ever send you here in this chest?"

The bandits became interested.

"That is what we should like to know," declared Victor, eagerly.

"But no one will ever know, for Uncle Walter was lost while hunting elephants in Africa," she continued, with conviction.

"Then we must accept our fate and rob to the best of our ability," said Victor. "So long as we are faithful to our beloved profession we need not be ashamed."

"'Tis so!" cried the fat man.

"Brothers! we will begin now. Let us rob the house we are in."

"Good!" shouted the others and sprang to their feet.

Beni turned threateningly upon the child.

"Remain here!" he commanded. "If you stir one step your blood will be on your own head!" Then he added, in a gentler voice: "Don't be afraid; that's the way all bandits talk to their captives. But of course we wouldn't hurt a young lady under any circumstances."

"Of course not," said Victor.

The fat man drew a big knife from his belt and flourished it about his head.

"S'blood!" he ejaculated, fiercely.

"S'bananas!" cried Beni, in a terrible voice.

"Confusion to our foes!" hissed Victor.

And then the three bent themselves nearly double and crept stealthily down the stairway with cocked pistols in their hands and glittering knives between their teeth, leaving Martha trembling with fear and too horrified to even cry for help.

How long she remained alone in the attic she never knew, but finally she heard the catlike tread of the returning bandits and saw them coming up the stairs in single file.

All bore heavy loads of plunder in their arms, and Lugui was balancing a mince pie on the top of a pile of her mother's best evening dresses. Victor came next with an armful of bric-a-brac, a brass candelabra and the parlor clock. Beni had the family Bible, the basket of silverware from the sideboard, a copper kettle and papa's fur overcoat.

"Oh, joy!" said Victor, putting down his load; "it is pleasant to rob once more."

"Oh, ecstacy!" said Beni; but he let the kettle drop on his toe and immediately began dancing around in anguish, while he muttered queer

words in the Italian language.

"We have much wealth," continued Victor, holding the mince pie while Lugui added his spoils to the heap; "and all from one house! This America must be a rich place."

With a dagger he then cut himself a piece of the pie and handed the remainder to his comrades. Whereupon all three sat upon the floor and consumed the pie while Martha looked on sadly.

"We should have a cave," remarked Beni; "for we must store our plunder in a safe place. Can you tell us of a secret cave?" he asked Martha.

"There's a Mammoth cave," she answered, "but it's in Kentucky. You would be obliged to ride on the cars a long time to get there."

The three bandits looked thoughtful and munched their pie silently, but the next moment they were startled by the ringing of the electric doorbell, which was heard plainly even in the remote attic.

"What's that?" demanded Victor, in a hoarse voice, as the three scrambled to their feet with drawn daggers.

Martha ran to the window and saw it was only the postman, who had dropped a letter in the box and gone away again. But the incident gave her an idea of how to get rid of her troublesome bandits, so she began wringing her hands as if in great distress and cried out:

"It's the police!"

The robbers looked at one another with genuine alarm, and Lugui asked, tremblingly:

"Are there many of them?"

"A hundred and twelve!" exclaimed Martha, after pretending to count them.

"Then we are lost!" declared Beni; "for we could never fight so many and live."

"Are they armed?" inquired Victor, who was shivering as if cold.

"Oh, yes," said she. "They have guns and swords and pistols and axes and — and — "

"And what?" demanded Lugui.

"And cannons!"

The three wicked ones groaned aloud and Beni said, in a hollow voice:

"I hope they will kill us quickly and not put us to the torture. I have been told these Americans are painted Indians, who are bloodthirsty and terrible."

"'Tis so!" gasped the fat man, with a shudder.

Suddenly Martha turned from the window.

"You are my friends, are you not?" she asked.

"We are devoted!" answered Victor.

“We adore you!” cried Beni.

“We would die for you!” added Lugui, thinking he was about to die anyway.

“Then I will save you,” said the girl.

“How?” asked the three, with one voice.

“Get back into the chest,” she said. “I will then close the lid, so they will be unable to find you.”

They looked around the room in a dazed and irresolute way, but she exclaimed:

“You must be quick! They will soon be here to arrest you.”

Then Lugui sprang into the chest and lay fat upon the bottom. Beni tumbled in next and packed himself in the back side. Victor followed after pausing to kiss her hand to the girl in a graceful manner.

Then Martha ran up to press down the lid, but could not make it catch.

“You must squeeze down,” she said to them.

Lugui groaned.

“I am doing my best, miss,” said Victor, who was nearest the top; “but although we fitted in very nicely before, the chest now seems rather small for us.”

“‘Tis so!” came the muffled voice of the fat man from the bottom.

“I know what takes up the room,” said Beni.

“What?” inquired Victor, anxiously.

“The pie,” returned Beni.

“‘Tis so!” came from the bottom, in faint accents.

Then Martha sat upon the lid and pressed it down with all her weight. To her great delight the lock caught, and, springing down, she exerted all her strength and turned the key.

This story should teach us not to interfere in matters that do not concern us. For had Martha refrained from opening Uncle Walter’s mysterious chest she would not have been obliged to carry downstairs all the plunder the robbers had brought into the attic.

THE GLASS DOG

An accomplished wizard once lived on the top floor of a tenement house and passed his time in thoughtful study and studious thought. What he didn't know about wizardry was hardly worth knowing, for he possessed all the books and recipes of all the wizards who had lived before him; and, moreover, he had invented several wizardments himself.

This admirable person would have been completely happy but for the numerous interruptions to his studies caused by folk who came to consult him about their troubles (in which he was not interested), and by the loud knocks of the iceman, the milkman, the baker's boy, the laundryman and the peanut woman. He never dealt with any of these people; but they rapped at his door every day to see him about this or that or to try to sell him their wares. Just when he was most deeply interested in his books or engaged in watching the bubbling of a cauldron there would come a knock at his door. And after sending the intruder away he always found he had lost his train of thought or ruined his compound.

At length these interruptions aroused his anger, and he decided he must have a dog to keep people away from his door. He didn't know where to find a dog, but in the next room lived a poor glass-blower with whom he had a slight acquaintance; so he went into the man's apartment and asked:

"Where can I find a dog?"

"What sort of a dog?" inquired the glass-blower.

"A good dog. One that will bark at people and drive them away. One that will be no trouble to keep and won't expect to be fed. One that has no fleas and is neat in his habits. One that will obey me when I speak to him. In short, a good dog," said the wizard.

"Such a dog is hard to find," returned the glass-blower, who was busy making a blue glass flower pot with a pink glass rosebush in it, having green glass leaves and yellow glass roses.

The wizard watched him thoughtfully.

"Why cannot you blow me a dog out of glass?" he asked, presently.

"I can," declared the glass-blower; "but it would not bark at people, you know."

"Oh, I'll fix that easily enough," replied the other. "If I could not make a glass dog bark I would be a mighty poor wizard."

"Very well; if you can use a glass dog I'll be pleased to blow one for you. Only, you must pay for my work."

"Certainly," agreed the wizard. "But I have none of that horrid stuff you call money. You must take some of my wares in exchange."

The glass-blower considered the matter for a moment.

“Could you give me something to cure my rheumatism?” he asked.

“Oh, yes; easily.”

“Then it’s a bargain. I’ll start the dog at once. What color of glass shall I use?”

“Pink is a pretty color,” said the wizard, “and it’s unusual for a dog, isn’t it?”

“Very,” answered the glass-blower; “but it shall be pink.”

So the wizard went back to his studies and the glass-blower began to make the dog.

Next morning he entered the wizard’s room with the glass dog under his arm and set it carefully upon the table. It was a beautiful pink in color, with a fine coat of spun glass, and about its neck was twisted a blue glass ribbon. Its eyes were specks of black glass and sparkled intelligently, as do many of the glass eyes worn by men.

The wizard expressed himself pleased with the glass-blower’s skill and at once handed him a small vial.

“This will cure your rheumatism,” he said.

“But the vial is empty!” protested the glass-blower.

“Oh, no; there is one drop of liquid in it,” was the wizard’s reply.

“Will one drop cure my rheumatism?” inquired the glass-blower, in wonder.

“Most certainly. That is a marvelous remedy. The one drop contained in the vial will cure instantly any kind of disease ever known to humanity. Therefore it is especially good for rheumatism. But guard it well, for it is the only drop of its kind in the world, and I’ve forgotten the recipe.”

“Thank you,” said the glass-blower, and went back to his room.

Then the wizard cast a wizzy spell and mumbled several very learned words in the wizardese language over the glass dog. Whereupon the little animal first wagged its tail from side to side, then winked his left eye knowingly, and at last began barking in a most frightful manner — that is, when you stop to consider the noise came from a pink glass dog. There is something almost astonishing in the magic arts of wizards; unless, of course, you know how to do the things yourself, when you are not expected to be surprised at them.

The wizard was as delighted as a school teacher at the success of his spell, although he was not astonished. Immediately he placed the dog outside his door, where it would bark at anyone who dared knock and so disturb the studies of its master.

The glass-blower, on returning to his room, decided not to use the one

drop of wizard cure-all just then.

"My rheumatism is better to-day," he reflected, "and I will be wise to save the medicine for a time when I am very ill, when it will be of more service to me."

So he placed the vial in his cupboard and went to work blowing more roses out of glass. Presently he happened to think the medicine might not keep, so he started to ask the wizard about it. But when he reached the door the glass dog barked so fiercely that he dared not knock, and returned in great haste to his own room. Indeed, the poor man was quite upset at so unfriendly a reception from the dog he had himself so carefully and skillfully made.

The next morning, as he read his newspaper, he noticed an article stating that the beautiful Miss Mydas, the richest young lady in town, was very ill, and the doctors had given up hope of her recovery.

The glass-blower, although miserably poor, hard-working and homely of feature, was a man of ideas. He suddenly recollected his precious medicine, and determined to use it to better advantage than relieving his own ills. He dressed himself in his best clothes, brushed his hair and combed his whiskers, washed his hands and tied his necktie, blackened his hoes and sponged his vest, and then put the vial of magic cure-all in his pocket. Next he locked his door, went downstairs and walked through the streets to the grand mansion where the wealthy Miss Mydas resided.

The butler opened the door and said:

"No soap, no chromos, no vegetables, no hair oil, no books, no baking powder. My young lady is dying and we're well supplied for the funeral."

The glass-blower was grieved at being taken for a peddler.

"My friend," he began, proudly; but the butler interrupted him, saying:

"No tombstones, either; there's a family graveyard and the monument's built."

"The graveyard won't be needed if you will permit me to speak," said the glass-blower.

"No doctors, sir; they've given up my young lady, and she's given up the doctors," continued the butler, calmly.

"I'm no doctor," returned the glass-blower.

"Nor are the others. But what is your errand?"

"I called to cure your young lady by means of a magical compound."

"Step in, please, and take a seat in the hall. I'll speak to the housekeeper," said the butler, more politely.

So he spoke to the housekeeper and the housekeeper mentioned the matter to the steward and the steward consulted the chef and the chef kissed the lady's maid and sent her to see the stranger. Thus are the very wealthy

hedged around with ceremony, even when dying.

When the lady's maid heard from the glass-blower that he had a medicine which would cure her mistress, she said:

"I'm glad you came."

"But," said he, "if I restore your mistress to health she must marry me."

"I'll make inquiries and see if she's willing," answered the maid, and went at once to consult Miss Mydas.

The young lady did not hesitate an instant.

"I'd marry any old thing rather than die!" she cried. "Bring him here at once!"

So the glass-blower came, poured the magic drop into a little water, gave it to the patient, and the next minute Miss Mydas was as well as she had ever been in her life.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed; "I've an engagement at the Fritters' reception to-night. Bring my pearl-colored silk, Marie, and I will begin my toilet at once. And don't forget to cancel the order for the funeral flowers and your mourning gown."

"But, Miss Mydas," remonstrated the glass-blower, who stood by, "you promised to marry me if I cured you."

"I know," said the young lady, "but we must have time to make proper announcement in the society papers and have the wedding cards engraved. Call to-morrow and we'll talk it over."

The glass-blower had not impressed her favorably as a husband, and she was glad to find an excuse for getting rid of him for a time. And she did not want to miss the Fritters' reception.

Yet the man went home filled with joy; for he thought his stratagem had succeeded and he was about to marry a rich wife who would keep him in luxury forever afterward.

The first thing he did on reaching his room was to smash his glass-blowing tools and throw them out of the window.

He then sat down to figure out ways of spending his wife's money.

The following day he called upon Miss Mydas, who was reading a novel and eating chocolate creams as happily as if she had never been ill in her life.

"Where did you get the magic compound that cured me?" she asked.

"From a learned wizard," said he; and then, thinking it would interest her, he told how he had made the glass dog for the wizard, and how it barked and kept everybody from bothering him.

"How delightful!" she said. "I've always wanted a glass dog that could bark."

"But there is only one in the world," he answered, "and it belongs to the

wizard."

"You must buy it for me," said the lady.

"The wizard cares nothing for money," replied the glass-blower.

"Then you must steal it for me," she retorted. "I can never live happily another day unless I have a glass dog that can bark."

The glass-blower was much distressed at this, but said he would see what he could do. For a man should always try to please his wife, and Miss Mydas has promised to marry him within a week.

On his way home he purchased a heavy sack, and when he passed the wizard's door and the pink glass dog ran out to bark at him he threw the sack over the dog, tied the opening with a piece of twine, and carried him away to his own room.

The next day he sent the sack by a messenger boy to Miss Mydas, with his compliments, and later in the afternoon he called upon her in person, feeling quite sure he would be received with gratitude for stealing the dog she so greatly desired.

But when he came to the door and the butler opened it, what was his amazement to see the glass dog rush out and begin barking at him furiously.

"Call off your dog," he shouted, in terror.

"I can't, sir," answered the butler. "My young lady has ordered the glass dog to bark whenever you call here. You'd better look out, sir," he added, "for if it bites you, you may have glassophobia!"

This so frightened the poor glass-blower that he went away hurriedly. But he stopped at a drug store and put his last dime in the telephone box so he could talk to Miss Mydas without being bitten by the dog.

"Give me Pelf 6742!" he called.

"Hello! What is it?" said a voice.

"I want to speak with Miss Mydas," said the glass-blower.

Presently a sweet voice said: "This is Miss Mydas. What is it?"

"Why have you treated me so cruelly and set the glass dog on me?" asked the poor fellow.

"Well, to tell the truth," said the lady, "I don't like your looks. Your cheeks are pale and baggy, your hair is coarse and long, your eyes are small and red, your hands are big and rough, and you are bow-legged."

"But I can't help my looks!" pleaded the glass-blower; "and you really promised to marry me."

"If you were better looking I'd keep my promise," she returned. "But under the circumstances you are no fit mate for me, and unless you keep away from my mansion I shall set my glass dog on you!" Then she dropped the 'phone and would have nothing more to say.

The miserable glass-blower went home with a heart bursting with disappointment and began tying a rope to the bedpost by which to hang himself.

Some one knocked at the door, and, upon opening it, he saw the wizard.

“I’ve lost my dog,” he announced.

“Have you, indeed?” replied the glass-blower tying a knot in the rope.

“Yes; some one has stolen him.”

“That’s too bad,” declared the glass-blower, indifferently.

“You must make me another,” said the wizard.

“But I cannot; I’ve thrown away my tools.”

“Then what shall I do?” asked the wizard.

“I do not know, unless you offer a reward for the dog.”

“But I have no money,” said the wizard.

“Offer some of your compounds, then,” suggested the glass-blower, who was making a noose in the rope for his head to go through.

“The only thing I can spare,” replied the wizard, thoughtfully, “is a Beauty Powder.”

“What!” cried the glass-blower, throwing down the rope, “have you really such a thing?”

“Yes, indeed. Whoever takes the powder will become the most beautiful person in the world.”

“If you will offer that as a reward,” said the glass-blower, eagerly, “I’ll try to find the dog for you, for above everything else I long to be beautiful.”

“But I warn you the beauty will only be skin deep,” said the wizard.

“That’s all right,” replied the happy glass-blower; “when I lose my skin I shan’t care to remain beautiful.”

“Then tell me where to find my dog and you shall have the powder,” promised the wizard.

So the glass-blower went out and pretended to search, and by-and-by he returned and said:

“I’ve discovered the dog. You will find him in the mansion of Miss Mydas.”

The wizard went at once to see if this were true, and, sure enough, the glass dog ran out and began barking at him. Then the wizard spread out his hands and chanted a magic spell which sent the dog fast asleep, when he picked him up and carried him to his own room on the top floor of the tenement house.

Afterward he carried the Beauty Powder to the glass-blower as a reward, and the fellow immediately swallowed it and became the most beautiful man in the world.

The next time he called upon Miss Mydas there was no dog to bark at him, and when the young lady saw him she fell in love with his beauty at once.

"If only you were a count or a prince," she sighed, "I'd willingly marry you."

"But I am a prince," he answered; "the Prince of Dogblowers."

"Ah!" said she; "then if you are willing to accept an allowance of four dollars a week I'll order the wedding cards engraved."

The man hesitated, but when he thought of the rope hanging from his bedpost he consented to the terms.

So they were married, and the bride was very jealous of her husband's beauty and led him a dog's life. So he managed to get into debt and made her miserable in turn.

As for the glass dog, the wizard set him barking again by means of his wizardness and put him outside his door. I suppose he is there yet, and am rather sorry, for I should like to consult the wizard about the moral to this story.

THE QUEEN OF QUOK

A king once died, as kings are apt to do, being as liable to shortness of breath as other mortals.

It was high time this king abandoned his earth life, for he had lived in a sadly extravagant manner, and his subjects could spare him without the slightest inconvenience.

His father had left him a full treasury, both money and jewels being in abundance. But the foolish king just deceased had squandered every penny in riotous living. He had then taxed his subjects until most of them became paupers, and this money vanished in more riotous living. Next he sold all the grand old furniture in the palace; all the silver and gold plate and bric-a-brac; all the rich carpets and furnishings and even his own kingly wardrobe, reserving only a soiled and moth-eaten ermine robe to fold over his threadbare raiment. And he spent the money in further riotous living.

Don't ask me to explain what riotous living is. I only know, from hearsay, that it is an excellent way to get rid of money. And so this spendthrift king found it.

He now picked all the magnificent jewels from this kingly crown and from the round ball on the top of his scepter, and sold them and spent the money. Riotous living, of course. But at last he was at the end of his resources. He couldn't sell the crown itself, because no one but the king had the right to wear it. Neither could he sell the royal palace, because only the king had the right to live there.

So, finally, he found himself reduced to a bare palace, containing only a big mahogany bedstead that he slept in, a small stool on which he sat to pull off his shoes and the moth-eaten ermine robe.

In this straight he was reduced to the necessity of borrowing an occasional dime from his chief counselor, with which to buy a ham sandwich. And the chief counselor hadn't many dimes. One who counseled his king so foolishly was likely to ruin his own prospects as well.

So the king, having nothing more to live for, died suddenly and left a ten-year-old son to inherit the dismantled kingdom, the moth-eaten robe and the jewel-stripped crown.

No one envied the child, who had scarcely been thought of until he became king himself. Then he was recognized as a personage of some importance, and the politicians and hangers-on, headed by the chief counselor of the kingdom, held a meeting to determine what could be done for him.

These folk had helped the old king to live riotously while his money

lasted, and now they were poor and too proud to work. So they tried to think of a plan that would bring more money into the little king's treasury, where it would be handy for them to help themselves.

After the meeting was over the chief counselor came to the young king, who was playing peg-top in the courtyard, and said:

"Your majesty, we have thought of a way to restore your kingdom to its former power and magnificence."

"All right," replied his majesty, carelessly. "How will you do it?"

"By marrying you to a lady of great wealth," replied the counselor.

"Marrying me!" cried the king. "Why, I am only ten years old!"

"I know; it is to be regretted. But your majesty will grow older, and the affairs of the kingdom demand that you marry a wife."

"Can't I marry a mother, instead?" asked the poor little king, who had lost his mother when a baby.

"Certainly not," declared the counselor. "To marry a mother would be illegal; to marry a wife is right and proper."

"Can't you marry her yourself?" inquired his majesty, aiming his peg-top at the chief counselor's toe, and laughing to see how he jumped to escape it.

"Let me explain," said the other. "You haven't a penny in the world, but you have a kingdom. There are many rich women who would be glad to give their wealth in exchange for a queen's coronet — even if the king is but a child. So we have decided to advertise that the one who bids the highest shall become the queen of Quok."

"If I must marry at all," said the king, after a moment's thought, "I prefer to marry Nyana, the armorer's daughter."

"She is too poor," replied the counselor.

"Her teeth are pearls, her eyes are amethysts, and her hair is gold," declared the little king.

"True, your majesty. But consider that your wife's wealth must be used. How would Nyana look after you have pulled her teeth of pearls, plucked out her amethyst eyes and shaved her golden head?"

The boy shuddered.

"Have your own way," he said, despairingly. "Only let the lady be as dainty as possible and a good playfellow."

"We shall do our best," returned the chief counselor, and went away to advertise throughout the neighboring kingdoms for a wife for the boy king of Quok.

There were so many applicants for the privilege of marrying the little king that it was decided to put him up at auction, in order that the largest possible sum of money should be brought into the kingdom. So, on the day appointed,

the ladies gathered at the palace from all the surrounding kingdoms — from Bilkon, Mulgravia, Junkum and even as far away as the republic of Macvelt.

The chief counselor came to the palace early in the morning and had the king's face washed and his hair combed; and then he padded the inside of the crown with old newspapers to make it small enough to fit his majesty's head. It was a sorry looking crown, having many big and little holes in it where the jewels had once been; and it had been neglected and knocked around until it was quite battered and tarnished. Yet, as the counselor said, it was the king's crown, and it was quite proper he should wear it on the solemn occasion of his auction.

Like all boys, be they kings or paupers, his majesty had torn and soiled his one suit of clothes, so that they were hardly presentable; and there was no money to buy new ones. Therefore the counselor wound the old ermine robe around the king and sat him upon the stool in the middle of the otherwise empty audience chamber.

And around him stood all the courtiers and politicians and hangers-on of the kingdom, consisting of such people as were too proud or lazy to work for a living. There was a great number of them, you may be sure, and they made an imposing appearance.

Then the doors of the audience chamber were thrown open, and the wealthy ladies who aspired to being queen of Quok came trooping in. The king looked them over with much anxiety, and decided they were each and all old enough to be his grandmother, and ugly enough to scare away the crows from the royal cornfields. After which he lost interest in them.

But the rich ladies never looked at the poor little king squatting upon his stool. They gathered at once about the chief counselor, who acted as auctioneer.

"How much am I offered for the coronet of the queen of Quok?" asked the counselor, in a loud voice.

"Where is the coronet?" inquired a fussy old lady who had just buried her ninth husband and was worth several millions.

"There isn't any coronet at present," explained the chief counselor, "but whoever bids highest will have the right to wear one, and she can then buy it."

"Oh," said the fussy old lady, "I see." Then she added: "I'll bid fourteen dollars."

"Fourteen thousand dollars!" cried a sour-looking woman who was thin and tall and had wrinkles all over her skin — "like a frosted apple," the king thought.

The bidding now became fast and furious, and the poverty-stricken

courtiers brightened up as the sum began to mount into the millions.

"He'll bring us a very pretty fortune, after all," whispered one to his comrade, "and then we shall have the pleasure of helping him spend it."

The king began to be anxious. All the women who looked at all kind-hearted or pleasant had stopped bidding for lack of money, and the slender old dame with the wrinkles seemed determined to get the coronet at any price, and with it the boy husband. This ancient creature finally became so excited that her wig got crosswise of her head and her false teeth kept slipping out, which horrified the little king greatly; but she would not give up.

At last the chief counselor ended the auction by crying out:

"Sold to Mary Ann Brodjinsky de la Porkus for three million, nine hundred thousand, six hundred and twenty-four dollars and sixteen cents!" And the sour-looking old woman paid the money in cash and on the spot, which proves this is a fairy story.

The king was so disturbed at the thought that he must marry this hideous creature that he began to wail and weep; whereupon the woman boxed his ears soundly. But the counselor reproved her for punishing her future husband in public, saying:

"You are not married yet. Wait until to-morrow, after the wedding takes place. Then you can abuse him as much as you wish. But at present we prefer to have people think this is a love match."

The poor king slept but little that night, so filled was he with terror of his future wife. Nor could he get the idea out of his head that he preferred to marry the armorer's daughter, who was about his own age. He tossed and tumbled around upon his hard bed until the moonlight came in at the window and lay like a great white sheet upon the bare floor. Finally, in turning over for the hundredth time, his hand struck against a secret spring in the headboard of the big mahogany bedstead, and at once, with a sharp click, a panel flew open.

The noise caused the king to look up, and, seeing the open panel, he stood upon tiptoe, and, reaching within, drew out a folded paper. It had several leaves fastened together like a book, and upon the first page was written:

"When the king is in trouble
This leaf he must double
And set it on fire
To obtain his desire."

This was not very good poetry, but when the king had spelled it out in the moonlight he was filled with joy.

"There's no doubt about my being in trouble," he exclaimed; "so I'll burn

it at once, and see what happens."

He tore off the leaf and put the rest of the book in its secret hiding place. Then, folding the paper double, he placed it on the top of his stool, lighted a match and set fire to it.

It made a horrid smudge for so small a paper, and the king sat on the edge of the bed and watched it eagerly.

When the smoke cleared away he was surprised to see, sitting upon the stool, a round little man, who, with folded arms and crossed legs, sat calmly facing the king and smoking a black briarwood pipe.

"Well, here I am," said he.

"So I see," replied the little king. "But how did you get here?"

"Didn't you burn the paper?" demanded the round man, by way of answer.

"Yes, I did," acknowledged the king.

"Then you are in trouble, and I've come to help you out of it. I'm the Slave of the Royal Bedstead."

"Oh!" said the king. "I didn't know there was one."

"Neither did your father, or he would not have been so foolish as to sell everything he had for money. By the way, it's lucky for you he did not sell this bedstead. Now, then, what do you want?"

"I'm not sure what I want," replied the king; "but I know what I don't want, and that is the old woman who is going to marry me."

"That's easy enough," said the Slave of the Royal Bedstead. "All you need do is to return her the money she paid the chief counselor and declare the match off. Don't be afraid. You are the king, and your word is law."

"To be sure," said the majesty. "But I am in great need of money. How am I going to live if the chief counselor returns to Mary Ann Brodjinski her millions?"

"Phoo! that's easy enough," again answered the man, and, putting his hand in his pocket, he drew out and tossed to the king an old-fashioned leather purse. "Keep that with you," said he, "and you will always be rich, for you can take out of the purse as many twenty-five-cent silver pieces as you wish, one at a time. No matter how often you take one out, another will instantly appear in its place within the purse."

"Thank you," said the king, gratefully. "You have rendered me a rare favor; for now I shall have money for all my needs and will not be obliged to marry anyone. Thank you a thousand times!"

"Don't mention it," answered the other, puffing his pipe slowly and watching the smoke curl into the moonlight. "Such things are easy to me. Is that all you want?"

“All I can think of just now,” returned the king.

“Then, please close that secret panel in the bedstead,” said the man; “the other leaves of the book may be of use to you some time.”

The boy stood upon the bed as before and, reaching up, closed the opening so that no one else could discover it. Then he turned to face his visitor, but the Slave of the Royal Bedstead had disappeared.

“I expected that,” said his majesty; “yet I am sorry he did not wait to say good-by.”

With a lightened heart and a sense of great relief the boy king placed the leathern purse underneath his pillow, and climbing into bed again slept soundly until morning.

When the sun rose his majesty rose also, refreshed and comforted, and the first thing he did was to send for the chief counselor.

That mighty personage arrived looking glum and unhappy, but the boy was too full of his own good fortune to notice it. Said he:

“I have decided not to marry anyone, for I have just come into a fortune of my own. Therefore I command you return to that old woman the money she has paid you for the right to wear the coronet of the queen of Quok. And make public declaration that the wedding will not take place.”

Hearing this the counselor began to tremble, for he saw the young king had decided to reign in earnest; and he looked so guilty that his majesty inquired:

“Well! what is the matter now?”

“Sire,” replied the wretch, in a shaking voice, “I cannot return the woman her money, for I have lost it!”

“Lost it!” cried the king, in mingled astonishment and anger.

“Even so, your majesty. On my way home from the auction last night I stopped at the drug store to get some potash lozenges for my throat, which was dry and hoarse with so much loud talking; and your majesty will admit it was through my efforts the woman was induced to pay so great a price. Well, going into the drug store I carelessly left the package of money lying on the seat of my carriage, and when I came out again it was gone. Nor was the thief anywhere to be seen.”

“Did you call the police?” asked the king.

“Yes, I called; but they were all on the next block, and although they have promised to search for the robber I have little hope they will ever find him.”

The king sighed.

“What shall we do now?” he asked.

“I fear you must marry Mary Ann Brodjinski,” answered the chief counselor; “unless, indeed, you order the executioner to cut her head off.”

“That would be wrong,” declared the king. “The woman must not be harmed. And it is just that we return her money, for I will not marry her under any circumstances.”

“Is that private fortune you mentioned large enough to repay her?” asked the counselor.

“Why, yes,” said the king, thoughtfully, “but it will take some time to do it, and that shall be your task. Call the woman here.”

The counselor went in search of Mary Ann, who, when she heard she was not to become a queen, but would receive her money back, flew into a violent passion and boxed the chief counselor’s ears so viciously that they stung for nearly an hour. But she followed him into the king’s audience chamber, where she demanded her money in a loud voice, claiming as well the interest due upon it over night.

“The counselor has lost your money,” said the boy king, “but he shall pay you every penny out of my own private purse. I fear, however, you will be obliged to take it in small change.”

“That will not matter,” she said, scowling upon the counselor as if she longed to reach his ears again; “I don’t care how small the change is so long as I get every penny that belongs to me, and the interest. Where is it?”

“Here,” answered the king, handing the counselor the leathern purse. “It is all in silver quarters, and they must be taken from the purse one at a time; but there will be plenty to pay your demands, and to spare.”

So, there being no chairs, the counselor sat down upon the floor in one corner and began counting out silver twenty-five-cent pieces from the purse, one by one. And the old woman sat upon the floor opposite him and took each piece of money from his hand.

It was a large sum: three million, nine hundred thousand, six hundred and twenty-four dollars and sixteen cents. And it takes four times as many twenty-five-cent pieces as it would dollars to make up the amount.

The king left them sitting there and went to school, and often thereafter he came to the counselor and interrupted him long enough to get from the purse what money he needed to reign in a proper and dignified manner. This somewhat delayed the counting, but as it was a long job, anyway, that did not matter much.

The king grew to manhood and married the pretty daughter of the armorer, and they now have two lovely children of their own. Once in awhile they go into the big audience chamber of the palace and let the little ones watch the aged, hoary-headed counselor count out silver twenty-five-cent pieces to a withered old woman, who watched his every movement to see that he does not cheat her.

It is a big sum, three million, nine hundred thousand, six hundred and twenty-four dollars and sixteen cents in twenty-five-cent pieces.

But this is how the counselor was punished for being so careless with the woman's money. And this is how Mary Ann Brodjinski de la Porkus was also punished for wishing to marry a ten-year-old king in order that she might wear the coronet of the queen of Quok.

THE GIRL WHO OWNED A BEAR

Mamma had gone down-town to shop. She had asked Nora to look after Jane Gladys, and Nora promised she would. But it was her afternoon for polishing the silver, so she stayed in the pantry and left Jane Gladys to amuse herself alone in the big sitting-room upstairs.

The little girl did not mind being alone, for she was working on her first piece of embroidery — a sofa pillow for papa's birthday present. So she crept into the big bay window and curled herself up on the broad sill while she bent her brown head over her work.

Soon the door opened and closed again, quietly. Jane Gladys thought it was Nora, so she didn't look up until she had taken a couple more stitches on a forget-me-not. Then she raised her eyes and was astonished to find a strange man in the middle of the room, who regarded her earnestly.

He was short and fat, and seemed to be breathing heavily from his climb up the stairs. He held a work silk hat in one hand and underneath his other elbow was tucked a good-sized book. He was dressed in a black suit that looked old and rather shabby, and his head was bald upon the top.

"Excuse me," he said, while the child gazed at him in solemn surprise. "Are you Jane Gladys Brown?"

"Yes, sir," she answered.

"Very good; very good, indeed!" he remarked, with a queer sort of smile. "I've had quite a hunt to find you, but I've succeeded at last."

"How did you get in?" inquired Jane Gladys, with a growing distrust of her visitor.

"That is a secret," he said, mysteriously.

This was enough to put the girl on her guard. She looked at the man and the man looked at her, and both looks were grave and somewhat anxious.

"What do you want?" she asked, straightening herself up with a dignified air.

"Ah! — now we are coming to business," said the man, briskly. "I'm going to be quite frank with you. To begin with, your father has abused me in a most ungentlemanly manner."

Jane Gladys got off the window sill and pointed her small finger at the door.

"Leave this room 'meejitly!" she cried, her voice trembling with indignation. "My papa is the best man in the world. He never 'bused anybody!"

"Allow me to explain, please," said the visitor, without paying any attention to her request to go away. "Your father may be very kind to you,

for you are his little girl, you know. But when he's down-town in his office he's inclined to be rather severe, especially on book agents. Now, I called on him the other day and asked him to buy the 'Complete Works of Peter Smith,' and what do you suppose he did?"

She said nothing.

"Why," continued the man, with growing excitement, "he ordered me from his office, and had me put out of the building by the janitor! What do you think of such treatment as that from the 'best papa in the world,' eh?"

"I think he was quite right," said Jane Gladys.

"Oh, you do? Well," said the man, "I resolved to be revenged for the insult. So, as your father is big and strong and a dangerous man, I have decided to be revenged upon his little girl."

Jane Gladys shivered.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I'm going to present you with this book," he answered, taking it from under his arm. Then he sat down on the edge of a chair, placed his hat on the rug and drew a fountain pen from his vest pocket.

"I'll write your name in it," said he. "How do you spell Gladys?"

"G-l-a-d-y-s," she replied.

"Thank you. Now this," he continued, rising and handing her the book with a bow, "is my revenge for your father's treatment of me. Perhaps he'll be sorry he didn't buy the 'Complete Works of Peter Smith.' Good-by, my dear."

He walked to the door, gave her another bow, and left the room, and Jane Gladys could see that he was laughing to himself as if very much amused.

When the door had closed behind the queer little man the child sat down in the window again and glanced at the book. It had a red and yellow cover and the word "Thingamajigs" was across the front in big letters.

Then she opened it, curiously, and saw her name written in black letters upon the first white leaf.

"He was a funny little man," she said to herself, thoughtfully.

She turned the next leaf, and saw a big picture of a clown, dressed in green and red and yellow, and having a very white face with three-cornered spots of red on each cheek and over the eyes. While she looked at this the book trembled in her hands, the leaf crackled and creaked and suddenly the clown jumped out of it and stood upon the floor beside her, becoming instantly as big as any ordinary clown.

After stretching his arms and legs and yawning in a rather impolite manner, he gave a silly chuckle and said:

"This is better! You don't know how cramped one gets, standing so long

upon a page of flat paper."

Perhaps you can imagine how startled Jane Gladys was, and how she stared at the clown who had just leaped out of the book.

"You didn't expect anything of this sort, did you?" he asked, leering at her in clown fashion. Then he turned around to take a look at the room and Jane Gladys laughed in spite of her astonishment.

"What amuses you?" demanded the clown.

"Why, the back of you is all white!" cried the girl. "You're only a clown in front of you."

"Quite likely," he returned, in an annoyed tone. "The artist made a front view of me. He wasn't expected to make the back of me, for that was against the page of the book."

"But it makes you look so funny!" said Jane Gladys, laughing until her eyes were moist with tears.

The clown looked sulky and sat down upon a chair so she couldn't see his back.

"I'm not the only thing in the book," he remarked, crossly.

This reminded her to turn another page, and she had scarcely noted that it contained the picture of a monkey when the animal sprang from the book with a great crumpling of paper and landed upon the window seat beside her.

"He-he-he-he-he!" chattered the creature, springing to the girl's shoulder and then to the center table. "This is great fun! Now I can be a real monkey instead of a picture of one."

"Real monkeys can't talk," said Jane Gladys, reprovingly.

"How do you know? Have you ever been one yourself?" inquired the animal; and then he laughed loudly, and the clown laughed, too, as if he enjoyed the remark.

The girl was quite bewildered by this time. She thoughtlessly turned another leaf, and before she had time to look twice a gray donkey leaped from the book and stumbled from the window seat to the floor with a great clatter.

"You're clumsy enough, I'm sure!" said the child, indignantly, for the beast had nearly upset her.

"Clumsy! And why not?" demanded the donkey, with angry voice. "If the fool artist had drawn you out of perspective, as he did me, I guess you'd be clumsy yourself."

"What's wrong with you?" asked Jane Gladys.

"My front and rear legs on the left side are nearly six inches too short, that's what's the matter! If that artist didn't know how to draw properly why did he try to make a donkey at all?"

“I don’t know,” replied the child, seeing an answer was expected.

“I can hardly stand up,” grumbled the donkey; “and the least little thing will topple me over.”

“Don’t mind that,” said the monkey, making a spring at the chandelier and swinging from it by his tail until Jane Gladys feared he would knock all the globes off; “the same artist has made my ears as big as that clown’s and everyone knows a monkey hasn’t any ears to speak of — much less to draw.”

“He should be prosecuted,” remarked the clown, gloomily. “I haven’t any back.”

Jane Gladys looked from one to the other with a puzzled expression upon her sweet face, and turned another page of the book.

Swift as a flash there sprang over her shoulder a tawney, spotted leopard, which landed upon the back of a big leather armchair and turned upon the others with a fierce movement.

The monkey climbed to the top of the chandelier and chattered with fright. The donkey tried to run and straightway tipped over on his left side. The clown grew paler than ever, but he sat still in his chair and gave a low whistle of surprise.

The leopard crouched upon the back of the chair, lashed his tail from side to side and glared at all of them, by turns, including Jane Gladys.

“Which of us are you going to attack first?” asked the donkey, trying hard to get upon his feet again.

“I can’t attack any of you,” snarled the leopard. “The artist made my mouth shut, so I haven’t any teeth; and he forgot to make my claws. But I’m a frightful looking creature, nevertheless; am I not?”

“Oh, yes;” said the clown, indifferently. “I suppose you’re frightful looking enough. But if you have no teeth nor claws we don’t mind your looks at all.”

This so annoyed the leopard that he growled horribly, and the monkey laughed at him.

Just then the book slipped from the girl’s lap, and as she made a movement to catch it one of the pages near the back opened wide. She caught a glimpse of a fierce grizzly bear looking at her from the page, and quickly threw the book from her. It fell with a crash in the middle of the room, but beside it stood the great grizzly, who had wrenched himself from the page before the book closed.

“Now,” cried the leopard from his perch, “you’d better look out for yourselves! You can’t laugh at him as you did at me. The bear has both claws and teeth.”

“Indeed I have,” said the bear, in a low, deep, growling voice. “And I

know how to use them, too. If you read in that book you'll find I'm described as a horrible, cruel and remorseless grizzly, whose only business in life is to eat up little girls — shoes, dresses, ribbons and all! And then, the author says, I smack my lips and glory in my wickedness."

"That's awful!" said the donkey, sitting upon his haunches and shaking his head sadly. "What do you suppose possessed the author to make you so hungry for girls? Do you eat animals, also?"

"The author does not mention my eating anything but little girls," replied the bear.

"Very good," remarked the clown, drawing a long breath of relief. "you may begin eating Jane Gladys as soon as you wish. She laughed because I had no back."

"And she laughed because my legs are out of perspective," brayed the donkey.

"But you also deserve to be eaten," screamed the leopard from the back of the leather chair; "for you laughed and poked fun at me because I had no claws nor teeth! Don't you suppose Mr. Grizzly, you could manage to eat a clown, a donkey and a monkey after you finish the girl?"

"Perhaps so, and a leopard into the bargain," growled the bear. "It will depend on how hungry I am. But I must begin on the little girl first, because the author says I prefer girls to anything."

Jane Gladys was much frightened on hearing this conversation, and she began to realize what the man meant when he said he gave her the book to be revenged. Surely papa would be sorry he hadn't bought the "Complete Works of Peter Smith" when he came home and found his little girl eaten up by a grizzly bear — shoes, dress, ribbons and all!

The bear stood up and balanced himself on his rear legs.

"This is the way I look in the book," he said. "Now watch me eat the little girl."

He advanced slowly toward Jane Gladys, and the monkey, the leopard, the donkey and the clown all stood around in a circle and watched the bear with much interest.

But before the grizzly reached her the child had a sudden thought, and cried out:

"Stop! You mustn't eat me. It would be wrong."

"Why?" asked the bear, in surprise.

"Because I own you. You're my private property," she answered.

"I don't see how you make that out," said the bear, in a disappointed tone.

"Why, the book was given to me; my name's on the front leaf. And you belong, by rights, in the book. So you mustn't dare to eat your owner!"

The Grizzly hesitated.

“Can any of you read?” he asked.

“I can,” said the clown.

“Then see if she speaks the truth. Is her name really in the book?”

The clown picked it up and looked at the name.

“It is,” said he. “‘Jane Gladys Brown;’ and written quite plainly in big letters.”

The bear sighed.

“Then, of course, I can’t eat her,” he decided. “That author is as disappointing as most authors are.”

“But he’s not as bad as the artist,” exclaimed the donkey, who was still trying to stand up straight.

“The fault lies with yourselves,” said Jane Gladys, severely. “Why didn’t you stay in the book, where you were put?”

The animals looked at each other in a foolish way, and the clown blushed under his white paint.

“Really — “ began the bear, and then he stopped short.

The door bell rang loudly.

“It’s mamma!” cried Jane Gladys, springing to her feet. “She’s come home at last. Now, you stupid creatures — “

But she was interrupted by them all making a rush for the book. There was a swish and a whirr and a rustling of leaves, and an instant later the book lay upon the floor looking just like any other book, while Jane Gladys’ strange companions had all disappeared.

This story should teach us to think quickly and clearly upon all occasions; for had Jane Gladys not remembered that she owned the bear he probably would have eaten her before the bell rang.

THE ENCHANTED TYPES

One time a knook became tired of his beautiful life and longed for something new to do. The knooks have more wonderful powers than any other immortal folk — except, perhaps, the fairies and ryls. So one would suppose that a knook who might gain anything he desired by a simple wish could not be otherwise than happy and contented. But such was not the case with Popopo, the knook we are speaking of. He had lived thousands of years, and had enjoyed all the wonders he could think of. Yet life had become as tedious to him now as it might be to one who was unable to gratify a single wish.

Finally, by chance, Popopo thought of the earth people who dwell in cities, and so he resolved to visit them and see how they lived. This would surely be fine amusement, and serve to pass away many wearisome hours.

Therefore one morning, after a breakfast so dainty that you could scarcely imagine it, Popopo set out for the earth and at once was in the midst of a big city.

His own dwelling was so quiet and peaceful that the roaring noise of the town startled him. His nerves were so shocked that before he had looked around three minutes he decided to give up the adventure, and instantly returned home.

This satisfied for a time his desire to visit the earth cities, but soon the monotony of his existence again made him restless and gave him another thought. At night the people slept and the cities would be quiet. He would visit them at night.

So at the proper time Popopo transported himself in a jiffy to a great city, where he began wandering about the streets. Everyone was in bed. No wagons rattled along the pavements; no throngs of busy men shouted and halloaed. Even the policemen slumbered slyly and there happened to be no prowling thieves abroad.

His nerves being soothed by the stillness, Popopo began to enjoy himself. He entered many of the houses and examined their rooms with much curiosity. Locks and bolts made no difference to a knook, and he saw as well in darkness as in daylight.

After a time he strolled into the business portion of the city. Stores are unknown among the immortals, who have no need of money or of barter and exchange; so Popopo was greatly interested by the novel sight of so many collections of goods and merchandise.

During his wanderings he entered a millinery shop, and was surprised to see within a large glass case a great number of women's hats, each bearing in one position or another a stuffed bird. Indeed, some of the most elaborate

hats had two or three birds upon them.

Now knooks are the especial guardians of birds, and love them dearly. To see so many of his little friends shut up in a glass case annoyed and grieved Popopo, who had no idea they had purposely been placed upon the hats by the milliner. So he slid back one of the doors of the case, gave the little chirruping whistle of the knooks that all birds know well, and called:

"Come, friends; the door is open — fly out!"

Popopo did not know the birds were stuffed; but, stuffed or not, every bird is bound to obey a knook's whistle and a knook's call. So they left the hats, flew out of the case and began fluttering about the room.

"Poor dears!" said the kind-hearted knook, "you long to be in the fields and forests again."

Then he opened the outer door for them and cried: "Off with you! Fly away, my beauties, and be happy again."

The astonished birds at once obeyed, and when they had soared away into the night air the knook closed the door and continued his wandering through the streets.

By dawn he saw many interesting sights, but day broke before he had finished the city, and he resolved to come the next evening a few hours earlier.

As soon as it was dark the following day he came again to the city and on passing the millinery shop noticed a light within. Entering he found two women, one of whom leaned her head upon the table and sobbed bitterly, while the other strove to comfort her.

Of course Popopo was invisible to mortal eyes, so he stood by and listened to their conversation.

"Cheer up, sister," said one. "Even though your pretty birds have all been stolen the hats themselves remain."

"Alas!" cried the other, who was the milliner, "no one will buy my hats partly trimmed, for the fashion is to wear birds upon them. And if I cannot sell my goods I shall be utterly ruined."

Then she renewed her sobbing and the knook stole away, feeling a little ashamed to realized that in his love for the birds he had unconsciously wronged one of the earth people and made her unhappy.

This thought brought him back to the millinery shop later in the night, when the two women had gone home. He wanted, in some way, to replace the birds upon the hats, that the poor woman might be happy again. So he searched until he came upon a nearby cellar full of little gray mice, who lived quite undisturbed and gained a livelihood by gnawing through the walls into neighboring houses and stealing food from the pantries.

“Here are just the creatures,” thought Popopo, “to place upon the woman’s hats. Their fur is almost as soft as the plumage of the birds, and it strikes me the mice are remarkably pretty and graceful animals. Moreover, they now pass their lives in stealing, and were they obliged to remain always upon women’s hats their morals would be much improved.”

So he exercised a charm that drew all the mice from the cellar and placed them upon the hats in the glass case, where they occupied the places the birds had vacated and looked very becoming — at least, in the eyes of the unworldly knook. To prevent their running about and leaving the hats Popopo rendered them motionless, and then he was so pleased with his work that he decided to remain in the shop and witness the delight of the milliner when she saw how daintily her hats were now trimmed.

She came in the early morning, accompanied by her sister, and her face wore a sad and resigned expression. After sweeping and dusting the shop and drawing the blinds she opened the glass case and took out a hat.

But when she saw a tiny gray mouse nestling among the ribbons and laces she gave a loud shriek, and, dropping the hat, sprang with one bound to the top of the table. The sister, knowing the shriek to be one of fear, leaped upon a chair and exclaimed:

“What is it? Oh! what is it?”

“A mouse!” gasped the milliner, trembling with terror.

Popopo, seeing this commotion, now realized that mice are especially disagreeable to human beings, and that he had made a grave mistake in placing them upon the hats; so he gave a low whistle of command that was heard only by the mice.

Instantly they all jumped from the hats, dashed out the open door of the glass case and scampered away to their cellar. But this action so frightened the milliner and her sister that after giving several loud screams they fell upon their backs on the floor and fainted away.

Popopo was a kind-hearted knook, but on witnessing all this misery, caused by his own ignorance of the ways of humans, he straightway wished himself at home, and so left the poor women to recover as best they could.

Yet he could not escape a sad feeling of responsibility, and after thinking upon the matter he decided that since he had caused the milliner’s unhappiness by freeing the birds, he could set the matter right by restoring them to the glass case. He loved the birds, and disliked to condemn them to slavery again; but that seemed the only way to end the trouble.

So he set off to find the birds. They had flown a long distance, but it was nothing to Popopo to reach them in a second, and he discovered them sitting upon the branches of a big chestnut tree and singing gayly.

When they saw the knook the birds cried:

“Thank you, Popopo. Thank you for setting us free.”

“Do not thank me,” returned the knook, “for I have come to send you back to the millinery shop.”

“Why?” demanded a blue jay, angrily, while the others stopped their songs.

“Because I find the woman considers you her property, and your loss has caused her much unhappiness,” answered Popopo.

“But remember how unhappy we were in her glass case,” said a robin redbreast, gravely. “And as for being her property, you are a knook, and the natural guardian of all birds; so you know that Nature created us free. To be sure, wicked men shot and stuffed us, and sold us to the milliner; but the idea of our being her property is nonsense!”

Popopo was puzzled.

“If I leave you free,” he said, “wicked men will shoot you again, and you will be no better off than before.”

“Pooh!” exclaimed the blue jay, “we cannot be shot now, for we are stuffed. Indeed, two men fired several shots at us this morning, but the bullets only ruffled our feathers and buried themselves in our stuffing. We do not fear men now.”

“Listen!” said Popopo, sternly, for he felt the birds were getting the best of the argument; “the poor milliner’s business will be ruined if I do not return you to her shop. It seems you are necessary to trim the hats properly. It is the fashion for women to wear birds upon their headgear. So the poor milliner’s wares, although beautified by lace and ribbons, are worthless unless you are perched upon them.”

“Fashions,” said a black bird, solemnly, “are made by men. What law is there, among birds or knooks, that requires us to be the slaves of fashion?”

“What have we to do with fashions, anyway?” screamed a linnet. “If it were the fashion to wear knooks perched upon women’s hats would you be contented to stay there? Answer me, Popopo!”

But Popopo was in despair. He could not wrong the birds by sending them back to the milliner, nor did he wish the milliner to suffer by their loss. So he went home to think what could be done.

After much meditation he decided to consult the king of the knooks, and going at once to his majesty he told him the whole story.

The king frowned.

“This should teach you the folly of interfering with earth people,” he said. “But since you have caused all this trouble, it is your duty to remedy it. Our birds cannot be enslaved, that is certain; therefore you must have the fashions

changed, so it will no longer be stylish for women to wear birds upon their hats."

"How shall I do that?" asked Popopo.

"Easily enough. Fashions often change among the earth people, who tire quickly of any one thing. When they read in their newspapers and magazines that the style is so-and-so, they never question the matter, but at once obey the mandate of fashion. So you must visit the newspapers and magazines and enchant the types."

"Enchant the types!" echoed Popopo, in wonder.

"Just so. Make them read that it is no longer the fashion to wear birds upon hats. That will afford relief to your poor milliner and at the same time set free thousands of our darling birds who have been so cruelly used."

Popopo thanked the wise king and followed his advice.

The office of every newspaper and magazine in the city was visited by the knook, and then he went to other cities, until there was not a publication in the land that had not a "new fashion note" in its pages. Sometimes Popopo enchanted the types, so that whoever read the print would see only what the knook wished them to. Sometimes he called upon the busy editors and befuddled their brains until they wrote exactly what he wanted them to. Mortals seldom know how greatly they are influenced by fairies, knooks and ryls, who often put thoughts into their heads that only the wise little immortals could have conceived.

The following morning when the poor milliner looked over her newspaper she was overjoyed to read that "no woman could now wear a bird upon her hat and be in style, for the newest fashion required only ribbons and laces."

Popopo after this found much enjoyment in visiting every millinery shop he could find and giving new life to the stuffed birds which were carelessly tossed aside as useless. And they flew to the fields and forests with songs of thanks to the good knook who had rescued them.

Sometimes a hunter fires his gun at a bird and then wonders why he did not hit it. But, having read this story, you will understand that the bird must have been a stuffed one from some millinery shop, which cannot, of course, be killed by a gun.

THE LAUGHING HIPPOPOTAMUS

On one of the upper branches of the Congo river lived an ancient and aristocratic family of hippopotamuses, which boasted a pedigree dating back beyond the days of Noah — beyond the existence of mankind — far into the dim ages when the world was new.

They had always lived upon the banks of this same river, so that every curve and sweep of its waters, every pit and shallow of its bed, every rock and stump and wallow upon its bank was as familiar to them as their own mothers. And they are living there yet, I suppose.

Not long ago the queen of this tribe of hippopotamuses had a child which she named Keo, because it was so fat and round. Still, that you may not be misled, I will say that in the hippopotamus language "Keo," properly translated, means "fat and lazy" instead of fat and round. However, no one called the queen's attention to this error, because her tusks were monstrous long and sharp, and she thought Keo the sweetest baby in the world.

He was, indeed, all right for a hippopotamus. He rolled and played in the soft mud of the river bank, and waddled inland to nibble the leaves of the wild cabbage that grew there, and was happy and contented from morning till night. And he was the jolliest hippopotamus that ancient family had ever known. His little red eyes were forever twinkling with fun, and he laughed his merry laugh on all occasions, whether there was anything to laugh at or not.

Therefore the black people who dwelt in that region called him "Ippi" — the jolly one, although they dared not come anigh him on account of his fierce mother, and his equally fierce uncles and aunts and cousins, who lived in a vast colony upon the river bank.

And while these black people, who lived in little villages scattered among the trees, dared not openly attack the royal family of hippopotamuses, they were amazingly fond of eating hippopotamus meat whenever they could get it. This was no secret to the hippopotamuses. And, again, when the blacks managed to catch these animals alive, they had a trick of riding them through the jungles as if they were horses, thus reducing them to a condition of slavery.

Therefore, having these things in mind, whenever the tribe of hippopotamuses smelled the oily odor of black people they were accustomed to charge upon them furiously, and if by chance they overtook one of the enemy they would rip him with their sharp tusks or stamp him into the earth with their huge feet.

It was continual warfare between the hippopotamuses and the black

people.

Gouie lived in one of the little villages of the blacks. He was the son of the chief's brother and grandson of the village sorcerer, the latter being an aged man known as the "the boneless wonder," because he could twist himself into as many coils as a serpent and had no bones to hinder his bending his flesh into any position. This made him walk in a wabbly fashion, but the black people had great respect for him.

Gouie's hut was made of branches of trees stuck together with mud, and his clothing consisted of a grass mat tied around his middle. But his relationship to the chief and the sorcerer gave him a certain dignity, and he was much addicted to solitary thought. Perhaps it was natural that these thoughts frequently turned upon his enemies, the hippopotamuses, and that he should consider many ways of capturing them.

Finally he completed his plans, and set about digging a great pit in the ground, midway between two sharp curves of the river. When the pit was finished he covered it over with small branches of trees, and strewed earth upon them, smoothing the surface so artfully that no one would suspect there was a big hole underneath. Then Gouie laughed softly to himself and went home to supper.

That evening the queen said to Keo, who was growing to be a fine child for his age:

"I wish you'd run across the bend and ask your Uncle Nikki to come here. I have found a strange plant, and want him to tell me if it is good to eat."

The jolly one laughed heartily as he started upon his errand, for he felt as important as a boy does when he is sent for the first time to the corner grocery to buy a yeast cake.

"Guk-uk-uk-uk! guk-uk-uk-uk!" was the way he laughed; and if you think a hippopotamus does not laugh this way you have but to listen to one and you will find I am right.

He crawled out of the mud where he was wallowing and tramped away through the bushes, and the last his mother heard as she lay half in and half out of the water was his musical "guk-uk-uk-uk!" dying away in the distance.

Keo was in such a happy mood that he scarcely noticed where he stepped, so he was much surprised when, in the middle of a laugh, the ground gave way beneath him, and he fell to the bottom of Gouie's deep pit. He was not badly hurt, but had bumped his nose severely as he went down; so he stopped laughing and began to think how he should get out again. Then he found the walls were higher than his head, and that he was a prisoner.

So he laughed a little at his own misfortune, and the laughter soothed him to sleep, so that he snored all through the night until daylight came.

When Gouie peered over the edge of the pit next morning he exclaimed:

"Why, 'tis Ippi — the Jolly One!"

Keo recognized the scent of a black man and tried to raise his head high enough to bite him. Seeing which Gouie spoke in the hippopotamus language, which he had learned from his grandfather, the sorcerer.

"Have peace, little one; you are my captive."

"Yes; I will have a piece of your leg, if I can reach it," retorted Keo; and then he laughed at his own joke: "Guk-uk-uk-uk!"

But Gouie, being a thoughtful black man, went away without further talk, and did not return until the following morning. When he again leaned over the pit Keo was so weak from hunger that he could hardly laugh at all.

"Do you give up?" asked Gouie, "or do you still wish to fight?"

"What will happen if I give up?" inquired Keo.

The black man scratched his woolly head in perplexity.

"It is hard to say, Ippi. You are too young to work, and if I kill you for food I shall lose your tusks, which are not yet grown. Why, O Jolly One, did you fall into my hole? I wanted to catch your mother or one of your uncles."

"Guk-uk-uk-uk!" laughed Keo. "You must let me go, after all, black man; for I am of no use to you!"

"That I will not do," declared Gouie; "unless," he added, as an afterthought, "you will make a bargain with me."

"Let me hear about the bargain, black one, for I am hungry," said Keo.

"I will let your go if you swear by the tusks of your grandfather that you will return to me in a year and a day and become my prisoner again."

The youthful hippopotamus paused to think, for he knew it was a solemn thing to swear by the tusks of his grandfather; but he was exceedingly hungry, and a year and a day seemed a long time off; so he said, with another careless laugh:

"Very well; if you will now let me go I swear by the tusks of my grandfather to return to you in a year and a day and become your prisoner."

Gouie was much pleased, for he knew that in a year and a day Keo would be almost full grown. So he began digging away one end of the pit and filling it up with the earth until he had made an incline which would allow the hippopotamus to climb out.

Keo was so pleased when he found himself upon the surface of the earth again that he indulged in a merry fit of laughter, after which he said:

"Good-by, Gouie; in a year and a day you will see me again."

Then he waddled away toward the river to see his mother and get his breakfast, and Gouie returned to his village.

During the months that followed, as the black man lay in his hut or hunted

in the forest, he heard at times the faraway "Guk-uk-uk-uk!" of the laughing hippopotamus. But he only smiled to himself and thought: "A year and a day will soon pass away!"

Now when Keo returned to his mother safe and well every member of his tribe was filled with joy, for the Jolly One was a general favorite. But when he told them that in a year and a day he must again become the slave of the black man, they began to wail and weep, and so many were their tears that the river rose several inches.

Of course Keo only laughed at their sorrow; but a great meeting of the tribe was called and the matter discussed seriously.

"Having sworn by the tusks of his grandfather," said Uncle Nikki, "he must keep his promise. But it is our duty to try in some way to rescue him from death or a life of slavery."

To this all agreed, but no one could think of any method of saving Keo from his fate. So months passed away, during which all the royal hippopotamuses were sad and gloomy except the Jolly One himself.

Finally but a week of freedom remained to Keo, and his mother, the queen, became so nervous and worried that another meeting of the tribe was called. By this time the laughing hippopotamus had grown to enormous size, and measured nearly fifteen feet long and six feet high, while his sharp tusks were whiter and harder than those of an elephant.

"Unless something is done to save my child," said the mother, "I shall die of grief."

Then some of her relations began to make foolish suggestions; but presently Uncle Nep, a wise and very big hippopotamus, said:

"We must go to Glinkomok and implore his aid."

Then all were silent, for it was a bold thing to face the mighty Glinkomok. But the mother's love was equal to any heroism.

"I will myself go to him, if Uncle Nep will accompany me," she said, quickly.

Uncle Nep thoughtfully patted the soft mud with his fore foot and wagged his short tail leisurely from side to side.

"We have always been obedient to Glinkomok, and shown him great respect," said he. "Therefore I fear no danger in facing him. I will go with you."

All the others snorted approval, being very glad they were not called upon to go themselves.

So the queen and Uncle Nep, with Keo swimming between them, set out upon their journey. They swam up the river all that day and all the next, until they came at sundown to a high, rocky wall, beneath which was the cave

where the might Glinkomok dwelt.

This fearful creature was part beast, part man, part fowl and part fish. It had lived since the world began. Through years of wisdom it had become part sorcerer, part wizard, part magician and part fairy. Mankind knew it not, but the ancient beasts knew and feared it.

The three hippopotamuses paused before the cave, with their front feet upon the bank and their bodies in the water, and called in chorus a greeting to Glinkomok. Instantly thereafter the mouth of the cave darkened and the creature glided silently toward them.

The hippopotamuses were afraid to look upon it, and bowed their heads between their legs.

"We come, O Glinkomok, to implore your mercy and friendly assistance!" began Uncle Nep; and then he told the story of Keo's capture, and how he had promised to return to the black man.

"He must keep his promise," said the creature, in a voice that sounded like a sigh.

The mother hippopotamus groaned aloud.

"But I will prepare him to overcome the black man, and to regain his liberty," continued Glinkomok.

Keo laughed.

"Lift your right paw," commanded Glinkomok. Keo obeyed, and the creature touched it with its long, hairy tongue. Then it held four skinny hands over Keo's bowed head and mumbled some words in a language unknown to man or beast or fowl or fish. After this it spoke again in hippopotamese:

"Your skin has now become so tough that no man can hurt you. Your strength is greater than that of ten elephants. Your foot is so swift that you can distance the wind. Your wit is sharper than the bulthorn. Let the man fear, but drive fear from your own breast forever; for of all your race you are the mightiest!"

Then the terrible Glinkomok leaned over, and Keo felt its fiery breath scorch him as it whispered some further instructions in his ear. The next moment it glided back into its cave, followed by the loud thanks of the three hippopotamuses, who slid into the water and immediately began their journey home.

The mother's heart was full of joy; Uncle Nep shivered once or twice as he remembered a glimpse he had caught of Glinkomok; but Keo was as jolly as possible, and, not content to swim with his dignified elders, he dived under their bodies, raced all around them and laughed merrily every inch of the way home.

Then all the tribe held high jinks and praised the mighty Glinkomok for

befriending their queen's son. And when the day came for the Jolly One to give himself up to the black man they all kissed him good-by without a single fear for his safety.

Keo went away in good spirits, and they could hear his laughing "guk-uk-uk-uk!" long after he was lost in sight in the jungle.

Gouie had counted the days and knew when to expect Keo; but he was astonished at the monstrous size to which his captive had grown, and congratulated himself on the wise bargain he had made. And Keo was so fat that Gouie determined to eat him — that is, all of him he possibly could, and the remainder of the carcass he would trade off to his fellow villagers.

So he took a knife and tried to stick it into the hippopotamus, but the skin was so tough the knife was blunted against it. Then he tried other means; but Keo remained unhurt.

And now indeed the Jolly One laughed his most gleeful laugh, till all the forest echoed the "guk-uk-uk-uk-uk!" And Gouie decided not to kill him, since that was impossible, but to use him for a beast of burden. He mounted upon Keo's back and commanded him to march. So Keo trotted briskly through the village, his little eyes twinkling with merriment.

The other blacks were delighted with Gouie's captive, and begged permission to ride upon the Jolly One's back. So Gouie bargained with them for bracelets and shell necklaces and little gold ornaments, until he had acquired quite a heap of trinkets. Then a dozen black men climbed upon Keo's back to enjoy a ride, and the one nearest his nose cried out:

"Run, Mud-dog — run!"

And Keo ran. Swift as the wind he strode, away from the village, through the forest and straight up the river bank. The black men howled with fear; the Jolly One roared with laughter; and on, on, on they rushed!

Then before them, on the opposite side of the river, appeared the black mouth of Glinkomok's cave. Keo dashed into the water, dived to the bottom and left the black people struggling to swim out. But Glinkomok had heard the laughter of Keo and knew what to do. When the Jolly One rose to the surface and blew the water from his throat there was no black man to be seen.

Keo returned alone to the village, and Gouie asked, with surprise:

"Where are my brothers:"

"I do not know," answered Keo. "I took them far away, and they remained where I left them."

Gouie would have asked more questions then, but another crowd of black men impatiently waited to ride on the back of the laughing hippopotamus. So they paid the price and climbed to their seats, after which the foremost said:

“Run, mud-wallower — run!”

And Keo ran as before and carried them to the mouth of Glinkomok’s cave, and returned alone.

But now Gouie became anxious to know the fate of his fellows, for he was the only black man left in his village. So he mounted the hippopotamus and cried:

“Run, river-hog — run!”

Keo laughed his jolly “guk-uk-uk-uk!” and ran with the speed of the wind. But this time he made straight for the river bank where his own tribe lived, and when he reached it he waded into the river, dived to the bottom and left Gouie floating in the middle of the stream.

The black man began swimming toward the right bank, but there he saw Uncle Nep and half the royal tribe waiting to stamp him into the soft mud. So he turned toward the left bank, and there stood the queen mother and Uncle Nikki, red-eyed and angry, waiting to tear him with their tusks.

Then Gouie uttered loud screams of terror, and, spying the Jolly One, who swam near him, he cried:

“Save me, Keo! Save me, and I will release you from slavery!”

“That is not enough,” laughed Keo.

“I will serve you all my life!” screamed Gouie; “I will do everything you bid me!”

“Will you return to me in a year and a day and become my captive, if I allow you to escape?” asked Keo.

“I will! I will! I will!” cried Gouie.

“Swear it by the bones of your grandfather!” commanded Keo, remembering that black men have no tusks to swear by.

And Gouie swore it by the bones of his grandfather.

Then Keo swam to the black one, who clambered upon his back again. In this fashion they came to the bank, where Keo told his mother and all the tribe of the bargain he had made with Gouie, who was to return in a year and a day and become his slave.

Therefore the black man was permitted to depart in peace, and once more the Jolly One lived with his own people and was happy.

When a year and a day had passed Keo began watching for the return of Gouie; but he did not come, then or ever afterwards.

For the black man had made a bundle of his bracelets and shell necklaces and little gold ornaments and had traveled many miles into another country, where the ancient and royal tribe of hippopotamuses was unknown. And he set up for a great chief, because of his riches, and people bowed down before him.

By day he was proud and swaggering. But at night he tumbled and tossed upon his bed and could not sleep. His conscience troubled him.

For he had sworn by the bones of his grandfather; and his grandfather had no bones.

THE MAGIC BON BONS

There lived in Boston a wise and ancient chemist by the name of Dr. Daws, who dabbled somewhat in magic. There also lived in Boston a young lady by the name of Claribel Sudds, who was possessed of much money, little wit and an intense desire to go upon the stage.

So Claribel went to Dr. Daws and said:

"I can neither sing nor dance; I cannot recite verse nor play upon the piano; I am no acrobat nor leaper nor high kicker; yet I wish to go upon the stage. What shall I do?"

"Are you willing to pay for such accomplishments?" asked the wise chemist.

"Certainly," answered Claribel, jingling her purse.

"Then come to me to-morrow at two o'clock," said he.

All that night he practiced what is known as chemical sorcery; so that when Claribel Sudds came next day at two o'clock he showed her a small box filled with compounds that closely resembled French bonbons.

"This is a progressive age," said the old man, "and I flatter myself your Uncle Daws keeps right along with the procession. Now, one of your old-fashioned sorcerers would have made you some nasty, bitter pills to swallow; but I have consulted your taste and convenience. Here are some magic bonbons. If you eat this one with the lavender color you can dance thereafter as lightly and gracefully as if you had been trained a lifetime. After you consume the pink confection you will sing like a nightingale. Eating the white one will enable you to become the finest elocutionist in the land. The chocolate piece will charm you into playing the piano better than Rubenstein, while after eating you lemon-yellow bonbon you can easily kick six feet above your head."

"How delightful!" exclaimed Claribel, who was truly enraptured. "You are certainly a most clever sorcerer as well as a considerate compounder," and she held out her hand for the box.

"Ahem!" said the wise one; "a check, please."

"Oh, yes; to be sure! How stupid of me to forget it," she returned.

He considerately retained the box in his own hand while she signed a check for a large amount of money, after which he allowed her to hold the box herself.

"Are you sure you have made them strong enough?" she inquired, anxiously; "it usually takes a great deal to affect me."

"My only fear," replied Dr. Daws, "is that I have made them too strong. For this is the first time I have ever been called upon to prepare these

wonderful confections."

"Don't worry," said Claribel; "the stronger they act the better I shall act myself."

She went away, after saying this, but stopping in at a dry goods store to shop, she forgot the precious box in her new interest and left it lying on the ribbon counter.

Then little Bessie Bostwick came to the counter to buy a hair ribbon and laid her parcels beside the box. When she went away she gathered up the box with her other bundles and trotted off home with it.

Bessie never knew, until after she had hung her coat in the hall closet and counted up her parcels, that she had one too many. Then she opened it and exclaimed:

"Why, it's a box of candy! Someone must have mislaid it. But it is too small a matter to worry about; there are only a few pieces." So she dumped the contents of the box into a bonbon dish that stood upon the hall table and picking out the chocolate piece — she was fond of chocolates — ate it daintily while she examined her purchases.

These were not many, for Bessie was only twelve years old and was not yet trusted by her parents to expend much money at the stores. But while she tried on the hair ribbon she suddenly felt a great desire to play upon the piano, and the desire at last became so overpowering that she went into the parlor and opened the instrument.

The little girl had, with infinite pains, contrived to learn two "pieces" which she usually executed with a jerky movement of her right hand and a left hand that forgot to keep up and so made dreadful discords. But under the influence of the chocolate bonbon she sat down and ran her fingers lightly over the keys producing such exquisite harmony that she was filled with amazement at her own performance.

That was the prelude, however. The next moment she dashed into Beethoven's seventh sonata and played it magnificently.

Her mother, hearing the unusual burst of melody, came downstairs to see what musical guest had arrived; but when she discovered it was her own little daughter who was playing so divinely she had an attack of palpitation of the heart (to which she was subject) and sat down upon a sofa until it should pass away.

Meanwhile Bessie played one piece after another with untiring energy. She loved music, and now found that all she need do was to sit at the piano and listen and watch her hands twinkle over the keyboard.

Twilight deepened in the room and Bessie's father came home and hung up his hat and overcoat and placed his umbrella in the rack. Then he peeped

into the parlor to see who was playing.

"Great Caesar!" he exclaimed. But the mother came to him softly with her finger on her lips and whispered: "Don't interrupt her, John. Our child seems to be in a trance. Did you ever hear such superb music?"

"Why, she's an infant prodigy!" gasped the astounded father. "Beats Blind Tom all hollow! It's — it's wonderful!"

As they stood listening the senator arrived, having been invited to dine with them that evening. And before he had taken off his coat the Yale professor — a man of deep learning and scholarly attainments — joined the party.

Bessie played on; and the four elders stood in a huddled but silent and amazed group, listening to the music and waiting for the sound of the dinner gong.

Mr. Bostwick, who was hungry, picked up the bonbon dish that lay on the table beside him and ate the pink confection. The professor was watching him, so Mr. Bostwick courteously held the dish toward him. The professor ate the lemon-yellow piece and the senator reached out his hand and took the lavender piece. He did not eat it, however, for, chancing to remember that it might spoil his dinner, he put it in his vest pocket. Mrs. Bostwick, still intently listening to her precocious daughter, without thinking what she did, took the remaining piece, which was the white one, and slowly devoured it.

The dish was now empty, and Claribel Sudds' precious bonbons had passed from her possession forever!

Suddenly Mr. Bostwick, who was a big man, began to sing in a shrill, tremolo soprano voice. It was not the same song Bessie was playing, and the discord was shocking that the professor smiled, the senator put his hands to his ears and Mrs. Bostwick cried in a horrified voice:

"William!"

Her husband continued to sing as if endeavoring to emulate the famous Christine Nillson, and paid no attention whatever to his wife or his guests.

Fortunately the dinner gong now sounded, and Mrs. Bostwick dragged Bessie from the piano and ushered her guests into the dining-room. Mr. Bostwick followed, singing "The Last Rose of Summer" as if it had been an encore demanded by a thousand delighted hearers.

The poor woman was in despair at witnessing her husband's undignified actions and wondered what she might do to control him. The professor seemed more grave than usual; the senator's face wore an offended expression, and Bessie kept moving her fingers as if she still wanted to play the piano.

Mrs. Bostwick managed to get them all seated, although her husband had

broken into another aria; and then the maid brought in the soup.

When she carried a plate to the professor, he cried, in an excited voice:

"Hold it higher! Higher — I say!" And springing up he gave it a sudden kick that sent it nearly to the ceiling, from whence the dish descended to scatter soup over Bessie and the maid and to smash in pieces upon the crown of the professor's bald head.

At this atrocious act the senator rose from his seat with an exclamation of horror and glanced at his hostess.

For some time Mrs. Bostwick had been staring straight ahead, with a dazed expression; but now, catching the senator's eye, she bowed gracefully and began reciting "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in forceful tones.

The senator shuddered. Such disgraceful rioting he had never seen nor heard before in a decent private family. He felt that his reputation was at stake, and, being the only sane person, apparently, in the room, there was no one to whom he might appeal.

The maid had run away to cry hysterically in the kitchen; Mr. Bostwick was singing "O Promise Me;" the professor was trying to kick the globes off the chandelier; Mrs. Bostwick had switched her recitation to "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck," and Bessie had stolen into the parlor and was pounding out the overture from the "Flying Dutchman."

The senator was not at all sure he would not go crazy himself, presently; so he slipped away from the turmoil, and, catching up his had and coat in the hall, hurried from the house.

That night he sat up late writing a political speech he was to deliver the next afternoon at Faneuil hall, but his experiences at the Bostwicks' had so unnerved him that he could scarcely collect his thoughts, and often he would pause and shake his head pityingly as he remembered the strange things he had seen in that usually respectable home.

The next day he met Mr. Bostwick in the street, but passed him by with a stony glare of oblivion. He felt he really could not afford to know this gentleman in the future. Mr. Bostwick was naturally indignant at the direct snub; yet in his mind lingered a faint memory of some quite unusual occurrences at his dinner party the evening before, and he hardly knew whether he dared resent the senator's treatment or not.

The political meeting was the feature of the day, for the senator's eloquence was well known in Boston. So the big hall was crowded with people, and in one of the front rows sat the Bostwick family, with the learned Yale professor beside them. They all looked tired and pale, as if they had passed a rather dissipated evening, and the senator was rendered so nervous by seeing them that he refused to look in their direction a second time.

While the mayor was introducing him the great man sat fidgeting in his chair; and, happening to put his thumb and finger into his vest pocket, he found the lavender-colored bonbon he had placed there the evening before.

"This may clear my throat," thought the senator, and slipped the bonbon into his mouth.

A few minutes afterwards he arose before the vast audience, which greeted him with enthusiastic plaudits.

"My friends," began the senator, in a grave voice, "this is a most impressive and important occasion."

Then he paused, balanced himself upon his left foot, and kicked his right leg into the air in the way favored by ballet-dancers!

There was a hum of amazement and horror from the spectators, but the senator appeared not to notice it. He whirled around upon the tips of his toes, kicked right and left in a graceful manner, and startled a bald-headed man in the front row by casting a languishing glance in his direction.

Suddenly Claribel Sudds, who happened to be present, uttered a scream and sprang to her feet. Pointing an accusing finger at the dancing senator, she cried in a loud voice:

"That's the man who stole my bonbons! Seize him! Arrest him! Don't let him escape!"

But the ushers rushed her out of the hall, thinking she had gone suddenly insane; and the senator's friends seized him firmly and carried him out the stage entrance to the street, where they put him into an open carriage and instructed the driver to take him home.

The effect of the magic bonbon was still powerful enough to control the poor senator, who stood upon the rear seat of the carriage and danced energetically all the way home, to the delight of the crowd of small boys who followed the carriage and the grief of the sober-minded citizens, who shook their heads sadly and whispered that "another good man had gone wrong."

It took the senator several months to recover from the shame and humiliation of this escapade; and, curiously enough, he never had the slightest idea what had induced him to act in so extraordinary a manner. Perhaps it was fortunate the last bonbon had now been eaten, for they might easily have caused considerably more trouble than they did.

Of course Claribel went again to the wise chemist and signed a check for another box of magic bonbons; but she must have taken better care of these, for she is now a famous vaudeville actress.

This story should teach us the folly of condemning others for actions that we do not understand, for we never know what may happen to ourselves. It may

also serve as a hint to be careful about leaving parcels in public places, and, incidentally, to let other people's packages severely alone.

THE CAPTURE OF FATHER TIME

Jim was the son of a cowboy, and lived on the broad plains of Arizona. His father had trained him to lasso a bronco or a young bull with perfect accuracy, and had Jim possessed the strength to back up his skill he would have been as good a cowboy as any in all Arizona.

When he was twelve years old he made his first visit to the east, where Uncle Charles, his father's brother, lived. Of course Jim took his lasso with him, for he was proud of his skill in casting it, and wanted to show his cousins what a cowboy could do.

At first the city boys and girls were much interested in watching Jim lasso posts and fence pickets, but they soon tired of it, and even Jim decided it was not the right sort of sport for cities.

But one day the butcher asked Jim to ride one of his horses into the country, to a pasture that had been engaged, and Jim eagerly consented. He had been longing for a horseback ride, and to make it seem like old times he took his lasso with him.

He rode through the streets demurely enough, but on reaching the open country roads his spirits broke forth into wild jubilation, and, urging the butcher's horse to full gallop, he dashed away in true cowboy fashion.

Then he wanted still more liberty, and letting down the bars that led into a big field he began riding over the meadow and throwing his lasso at imaginary cattle, while he yelled and whooped to his heart's content.

Suddenly, on making a long cast with his lasso, the loop caught upon something and rested about three feet from the ground, while the rope drew taut and nearly pulled Jim from his horse.

This was unexpected. More than that, it was wonderful; for the field seemed bare of even a stump. Jim's eyes grew big with amazement, but he knew he had caught something when a voice cried out:

"Here, let go! Let go, I say! Can't you see what you've done?"

No, Jim couldn't see, nor did he intend to let go until he found out what was holding the loop of the lasso. So he resorted to an old trick his father had taught him and, putting the butcher's horse to a run, began riding in a circle around the spot where his lasso had caught.

As he thus drew nearer and nearer his quarry he saw the rope coil up, yet it looked to be coiling over nothing but air. One end of the lasso was made fast to a ring in the saddle, and when the rope was almost wound up and the horse began to pull away and snort with fear, Jim dismounted. Holding the reins of the bridle in one hand, he followed the rope, and an instant later saw an old man caught fast in the coils of the lasso.

His head was bald and uncovered, but long white whiskers grew down to his waist. About his body was thrown a loose robe of fine white linen. In one hand he bore a great scythe, and beneath the other arm he carried an hourglass.

While Jim gazed wonderingly upon him, this venerable old man spoke in an angry voice:

"Now, then — get that rope off as fast as you can! You've brought everything on earth to a standstill by your foolishness! Well — what are you staring at? Don't you know who I am?"

"No," said Jim, stupidly.

"Well, I'm Time — Father Time! Now, make haste and set me free — if you want the world to run properly."

"How did I happen to catch you?" asked Jim, without making a move to release his captive.

"I don't know. I've never been caught before," growled Father Time. "But I suppose it was because you were foolishly throwing your lasso at nothing."

"I didn't see you," said Jim.

"Of course you didn't. I'm invisible to the eyes of human beings unless they get within three feet of me, and I take care to keep more than that distance away from them. That's why I was crossing this field, where I supposed no one would be. And I should have been perfectly safe had it not been for your beastly lasso. Now, then," he added, crossly, "are you going to get that rope off?"

"Why should I?" asked Jim.

"Because everything in the world stopped moving the moment you caught me. I don't suppose you want to make an end of all business and pleasure, and war and love, and misery and ambition and everything else, do you? Not a watch has ticked since you tied me up here like a mummy!"

Jim laughed. It really was funny to see the old man wound round and round with coils of rope from his knees up to his chin.

"It'll do you good to rest," said the boy. "From all I've heard you lead a rather busy life."

"Indeed I do," replied Father Time, with a sigh. "I'm due in Kamchatka this very minute. And to think one small boy is upsetting all my regular habits!"

"Too bad!" said Jim, with a grin. "But since the world has stopped anyhow, it won't matter if it takes a little longer recess. As soon as I let you go Time will fly again. Where are your wings?"

"I haven't any," answered the old man. "That is a story cooked up by some one who never saw me. As a matter of fact, I move rather slowly."

“I see, you take your time,” remarked the boy. “What do you use that scythe for?”

“To mow down the people,” said the ancient one. “Every time I swing my scythe some one dies.”

“Then I ought to win a life-saving medal by keeping you tied up,” said Jim. “Some folks will live this much longer.”

“But they won’t know it,” said Father Time, with a sad smile; “so it will do them no good. You may as well untie me at once.”

“No,” said Jim, with a determined air. “I may never capture you again; so I’ll hold you for awhile and see how the world wags without you.”

Then he swung the old man, bound as he was, upon the back of the butcher’s horse, and, getting into the saddle himself, started back toward town, one hand holding his prisoner and the other guiding the reins.

When he reached the road his eye fell on a strange tableau. A horse and buggy stood in the middle of the road, the horse in the act of trotting, with his head held high and two legs in the air, but perfectly motionless. In the buggy a man and a woman were seated; but had they been turned into stone they could not have been more still and stiff.

“There’s no Time for them!” sighed the old man. “Won’t you let me go now?”

“Not yet,” replied the boy.

He rode on until he reached the city, where all the people stood in exactly the same positions they were in when Jim lassoed Father Time. Stopping in front of a big dry goods store, the boy hitched his horse and went in. The clerks were measuring out goods and showing patterns to the rows of customers in front of them, but everyone seemed suddenly to have become a statue.

There was something very unpleasant in this scene, and a cold shiver began to run up and down Jim’s back; so he hurried out again.

On the edge of the sidewalk sat a poor, crippled beggar, holding out his hat, and beside him stood a prosperous-looking gentleman who was about to drop a penny into the beggar’s hat. Jim knew this gentleman to be very rich but rather stingy, so he ventured to run his hand into the man’s pocket and take out his purse, in which was a $20 gold piece. This glittering coin he put in the gentleman’s fingers instead of the penny and then restored the purse to the rich man’s pocket.

“That donation will surprise him when he comes to life,” thought the boy.

He mounted the horse again and rode up the street. As he passed the shop of his friend, the butcher, he noticed several pieces of meat hanging outside.

“I’m afraid that meat’ll spoil,” he remarked.

“It takes Time to spoil meat,” answered the old man.

This struck Jim as being queer, but true.

“It seems Time meddles with everything,” said he.

“Yes; you’ve made a prisoner of the most important personage in the world,” groaned the old man; “and you haven’t enough sense to let him go again.”

Jim did not reply, and soon they came to his uncle’s house, where he again dismounted. The street was filled with teams and people, but all were motionless. His two little cousins were just coming out the gate on their way to school, with their books and slates underneath their arms; so Jim had to jump over the fence to avoid knocking them down.

In the front room sat his aunt, reading her Bible. She was just turning a page when Time stopped. In the dining-room was his uncle, finishing his luncheon. His mouth was open and his fork poised just before it, while his eyes were fixed upon the newspaper folded beside him. Jim helped himself to his uncle’s pie, and while he ate it he walked out to his prisoner.

“There’s one thing I don’t understand,” said he.

“What’s that?” asked Father Time.

“Why is it that I’m able to move around while everyone else is — is — froze up?”

“That is because I’m your prisoner,” answered the other. “You can do anything you wish with Time now. But unless you are careful you’ll do something you will be sorry for.”

Jim threw the crust of his pie at a bird that was suspended in the air, where it had been flying when Time stopped.

“Anyway,” he laughed, “I’m living longer than anyone else. No one will ever be able to catch up with me again.”

“Each life has its allotted span,” said the old man. “When you have lived your proper time my scythe will mow you down.”

“I forgot your scythe,” said Jim, thoughtfully.

Then a spirit of mischief came into the boy’s head, for he happened to think that the present opportunity to have fun would never occur again. He tied Father Time to his uncle’s hitching post, that he might not escape, and then crossed the road to the corner grocery.

The grocer had scolded Jim that very morning for stepping into a basket of turnips by accident. So the boy went to the back end of the grocery and turned on the faucet of the molasses barrel.

“That’ll make a nice mess when Time starts the molasses running all over the floor,” said Jim, with a laugh.

A little further down the street was a barber shop, and sitting in the

barber's chair Jim saw the man that all the boys declared was the "meanest man in town." He certainly did not like the boys and the boys knew it. The barber was in the act of shampooing this person when Time was captured. Jim ran to the drug store, and, getting a bottle of mucilage, he returned and poured it over the ruffled hair of the unpopular citizen.

"That'll probably surprise him when he wakes up," thought Jim.

Near by was the schoolhouse. Jim entered it and found that only a few of the pupils were assembled. But the teacher sat at his desk, stern and frowning as usual.

Taking a piece of chalk, Jim marked upon the blackboard in big letters the following words:

"Every scholar is requested to yell the minute he enters the room. He will also please throw his books at the teacher's head. Signed, Prof. Sharpe."

"That ought to raise a nice rumpus," murmured the mischiefmaker, as he walked away.

On the corner stood Policeman Mulligan, talking with old Miss Scrapple, the worst gossip in town, who always delighted in saying something disagreeable about her neighbors. Jim thought this opportunity was too good to lose. So he took off the policeman's cap and brass-buttoned coat and put them on Miss Scrapple, while the lady's feathered and ribboned hat he placed jauntily upon the policeman's head.

The effect was so comical that the boy laughed aloud, and as a good many people were standing near the corner Jim decided that Miss Scrapple and Officer Mulligan would create a sensation when Time started upon his travels.

Then the young cowboy remembered his prisoner, and, walking back to the hitching post, he came within three feet of it and saw Father Time still standing patiently within the toils of the lasso. He looked angry and annoyed, however, and growled out:

"Well, when do you intend to release me?"

"I've been thinking about that ugly scythe of yours," said Jim.

"What about it?" asked Father Time.

"Perhaps if I let you go you'll swing it at me the first thing, to be revenged," replied the boy.

Father Time gave him a severe look, but said:

"I've known boys for thousands of years, and of course I know they're mischievous and reckless. But I like boys, because they grow up to be men and people my world. Now, if a man had caught me by accident, as you did, I could have scared him into letting me go instantly; but boys are harder to scare. I don't know as I blame you. I was a boy myself, long ago, when the

world was new. But surely you've had enough fun with me by this time, and now I hope you'll show the respect that is due to old age. Let me go, and in return I will promise to forget all about my capture. The incident won't do much harm, anyway, for no one will ever know that Time has halted the last three hours or so."

"All right," said Jim, cheerfully, "since you've promised not to mow me down, I'll let you go." But he had a notion some people in the town would suspect Time had stopped when they returned to life.

He carefully unwound the rope from the old man, who, when he was free, at once shouldered his scythe, rearranged his white robe and nodded farewell.

The next moment he had disappeared, and with a rustle and rumble and roar of activity the world came to life again and jogged along as it always had before.

Jim wound up his lasso, mounted the butcher's horse and rode slowly down the street.

Loud screams came from the corner, where a great crowd of people quickly assembled. From his seat on the horse Jim saw Miss Scrapple, attired in the policeman's uniform, angrily shaking her fists in Mulligan's face, while the officer was furiously stamping upon the lady's hat, which he had torn from his own head amidst the jeers of the crowd.

As he rode past the schoolhouse he heard a tremendous chorus of yells, and knew Prof. Sharpe was having a hard time to quell the riot caused by the sign on the blackboard.

Through the window of the barber shop he saw the "mean man" frantically belaboring the barber with a hair brush, while his hair stood up stiff as bayonets in all directions. And the grocer ran out of his door and yelled "Fire!" while his shoes left a track of molasses wherever he stepped.

Jim's heart was filled with joy. He was fairly reveling in the excitement he had caused when some one caught his leg and pulled him from the horse.

"What're ye doin' hear, ye rascal?" cried the butcher, angrily; "didn't ye promise to put that beast inter Plympton's pasture? An' now I find ye ridin' the poor nag around like a gentleman o' leisure!"

"That's a fact," said Jim, with surprise; "I clean forgot about the horse!"

This story should teach us the supreme importance of Time and the folly of trying to stop it. For should you succeed, as Jim did, in bringing Time to a standstill, the world would soon become a dreary place and life decidedly unpleasant.

THE WONDERFUL PUMP

Not many years ago there lived on a stony, barren New England farm a man and his wife. They were sober, honest people, working hard from early morning until dark to enable them to secure a scanty living from their poor land.

Their house, a small, one-storied building, stood upon the side of a steep hill, and the stones lay so thickly about it that scarce anything green could grow from the ground. At the foot of the hill, a quarter of a mile from the house by the winding path, was a small brook, and the woman was obliged to go there for water and to carry it up the hill to the house. This was a tedious task, and with the other hard work that fell to her share had made her gaunt and bent and lean.

Yet she never complained, but meekly and faithfully performed her duties, doing the housework, carrying the water and helping her husband hoe the scanty crop that grew upon the best part of their land.

One day, as she walked down the path to the brook, her big shoes scattering the pebbles right and left, she noticed a large beetle lying upon its back and struggling hard with its little legs to turn over, that its feet might again touch the ground. But this it could not accomplish; so the woman, who had a kind heart, reached down and gently turned the beetle with her finger. At once it scampered from the path and she went on to the brook.

The next day, as she came for water, she was surprised to see the beetle again lying upon its back and struggling helplessly to turn. Once more the woman stopped and set him upon his feet; and then, as she stooped over the tiny creature, she heard a small voice say:

"Oh, thank you! Thank you so much for saving me!"

Half frightened at hearing a beetle speak in her own language, the woman started back and exclaimed:

"La sakes! Surely you can't talk like humans!" Then, recovering from her alarm, she again bent over the beetle, who answered her:

"Why shouldn't I talk, if I have anything to say?

"'Cause you're a bug," replied the woman.

"That is true; and you saved my life — saved me from my enemies, the sparrows. And this is the second time you have come to my assistance, so I owe you a debt of gratitude. Bugs value their lives as much as human beings, and I am a more important creature than you, in your ignorance, may suppose. But, tell me, why do you come each day to the brook?"

"For water," she answered, staring stupidly down at the talking beetle.

"Isn't it hard work?" the creature inquired.

“Yes; but there’s no water on the hill,” said she.

“Then dig a well and put a pump in it,” replied the beetle.

She shook her head.

“My man tried it once; but there was no water,” she said, sadly.

“Try it again,” commanded the beetle; “and in return for your kindness to me I will make this promise: if you do not get water from the well you will get that which is more precious to you. I must go now. Do not forget. Dig a well.”

And then, without pausing to say good-by, it ran swiftly away and was lost among the stones.

The woman returned to the house much perplexed by what the beetle had said, and when her husband came in from his work she told him the whole story.

The poor man thought deeply for a time, and then declared:

“Wife, there may be truth in what the bug told you. There must be magic in the world yet, if a beetle can speak; and if there is such a thing as magic we may get water from the well. The pump I bought to use in the well which proved to be dry is now lying in the barn, and the only expense in following the talking bug’s advice will be the labor of digging the hole. Labor I am used to; so I will dig the well.”

Next day he set about it, and dug so far down in the ground that he could hardly reach the top to climb out again; but not a drop of water was found.

“Perhaps you did not dig deep enough,” his wife said, when he told her of his failure.

So the following day he made a long ladder, which he put into the hole; and then he dug, and dug, and dug, until the top of the ladder barely reached the top of the hole. But still there was no water.

When the woman next went to the brook with her pail she saw the beetle sitting upon a stone beside her path. So she stopped and said:

“My husband has dug the well; but there is no water.”

“Did he put the pump in the well?” asked the beetle.

“No,” she answered.

“Then do as I commanded; put in the pump, and if you do not get water I promise you something still more precious.”

Saying which, the beetle swiftly slid from the stone and disappeared. The woman went back to the house and told her husband what the bug had said.

“Well,” replied the simple fellow, “there can be no harm in trying.”

So he got the pump from the barn and placed it in the well, and then he took hold of the handle and began to pump, while his wife stood by to watch what would happen.

No water came, but after a few moments a gold piece dropped from the spout of the pump, and then another, and another, until several handfuls of gold lay in a little heap upon the ground.

The man stopped pumping then and ran to help his wife gather the gold pieces into her apron; but their hands trembled so greatly through excitement and joy that they could scarcely pick up the sparkling coins.

At last she gathered them close to her bosom and together they ran to the house, where they emptied the precious gold upon the table and counted the pieces.

All were stamped with the design of the United States mint and were worth five dollars each. Some were worn and somewhat discolored from use, while others seemed bright and new, as if they had not been much handled. When the value of the pieces was added together they were found to be worth three hundred dollars.

Suddenly the woman spoke.

"Husband, the beetle said truly when he declared we should get something more precious than water from the well. But run at once and take away the handle from the pump, lest anyone should pass this way and discover our secret."

So the man ran to the pump and removed the handle, which he carried to the house and hid underneath the bed.

They hardly slept a wink that night, lying awake to think of their good fortune and what they should do with their store of yellow gold. In all their former lives they had never possessed more than a few dollars at a time, and now the cracked teapot was nearly full of gold coins.

The following day was Sunday, and they arose early and ran to see if their treasure was safe. There it lay, heaped snugly within the teapot, and they were so willing to feast their eyes upon it that it was long before the man could leave it to build the fire or the woman to cook the breakfast.

While they ate their simple meal the woman said:

"We will go to church to-day and return thanks for the riches that have come to us so suddenly. And I will give the pastor one of the gold pieces."

"It is well enough to go to church," replied her husband, "and also to return thanks. But in the night I decided how we will spend all our money; so there will be none left for the pastor."

"We can pump more," said the woman.

"Perhaps; and perhaps not," he answered, cautiously. "What we have we can depend upon, but whether or not there be more in the well I cannot say."

"Then go and find out," she returned, "for I am anxious to give something to the pastor, who is a poor man and deserving."

So the man got the pump handle from beneath the bed, and, going to the pump, fitted it in place. Then he set a large wooden bucket under the spout and began to pump. To their joy the gold pieces soon began flowing into the pail, and, seeing it about to run over the brim, the woman brought another pail. But now the stream suddenly stopped, and the man said, cheerfully:

"That is enough for to-day, good wife! We have added greatly to our treasure, and the parson shall have his gold piece. Indeed, I think I shall also put a coin into the contribution box."

Then, because the teapot would hold no more gold, the farmer emptied the pail into the wood-box, covering the money with dried leaves and twigs, that no one might suspect what lay underneath.

Afterward they dressed themselves in their best clothing and started for the church, each taking a bright gold piece from the teapot as a gift to the pastor.

Over the hill and down into the valley beyond they walked, feeling so gay and light-hearted that they did not mind the distance at all. At last they came to the little country church and entered just as the services began.

Being proud of their wealth and of the gifts they had brought for the pastor, they could scarcely wait for the moment when the deacon passed the contribution box. But at last the time came, and the farmer held his hand high over the box and dropped the gold piece so that all the congregation could see what he had given. The woman did likewise, feeling important and happy at being able to give the good parson so much.

The parson, watching from the pulpit, saw the gold drop into the box, and could hardly believe that his eyes did not deceive him. However, when the box was laid upon his desk there were the two gold pieces, and he was so surprised that he nearly forgot his sermon.

When the people were leaving the church at the close of the services the good man stopped the farmer and his wife and asked:

"Where did you get so much gold?"

The woman gladly told him how she had rescued the beetle, and how, in return, they had been rewarded with the wonderful pump. The pastor listened to it all gravely, and when the story was finished he said:

"According to tradition strange things happened in this world ages ago, and now I find that strange things may also happen to-day. For by your tale you have found a beetle that can speak and also has power to bestow upon you great wealth." Then he looked carefully at the gold pieces and continued: "Either this money is fairy gold or it is genuine metal, stamped at the mint of the United States government. If it is fairy gold it will disappear within 24 hours, and will therefore do no one any good. If it is real money, then your

beetle must have robbed some one of the gold and placed it in your well. For all money belongs to some one, and if you have not earned it honestly, but have come by it in the mysterious way you mention, it was surely taken from the persons who owned it, without their consent. Where else could real money come from?"

The farmer and his wife were confused by this statement and looked guiltily at each other, for they were honest people and wished to wrong no one.

"Then you think the beetle stole the money?" asked the woman.

"By his magic powers he probably took it from its rightful owners. Even bugs which can speak have no consciences and cannot tell the difference between right and wrong. With a desire to reward you for your kindness the beetle took from its lawful possessors the money you pumped from the well."

"Perhaps it really is fairy gold," suggested the man. "If so, we must go to the town and spend the money before it disappears."

"That would be wrong," answered the pastor; "for then the merchants would have neither money nor goods. To give them fairy gold would be to rob them."

"What, then, shall we do?" asked the poor woman, wringing her hands with grief and disappointment.

"Go home and wait until to-morrow. If the gold is then in your possession it is real money and not fairy gold. But if it is real money you must try to restore it to its rightful owners. Take, also, these pieces which you have given me, for I cannot accept gold that is not honestly come by."

Sadly the poor people returned to their home, being greatly disturbed by what they had heard. Another sleepless night was passed, and on Monday morning they arose at daylight and ran to see if the gold was still visible.

"It is real money, after all!" cried the man; "for not a single piece has disappeared."

When the woman went to the brook that day she looked for the beetle, and, sure enough, there he sat upon the flat stone.

"Are you happy now?" asked the beetle, as the woman paused before him.

"We are very unhappy," she answered; "for, although you have given us much gold, our good parson says it surely belongs to some one else, and was stolen by you to reward us."

"Your parson may be a good man," returned the beetle, with some indignation, "but he certainly is not overwise. Nevertheless, if you do not want the gold I can take it from you as easily as I gave it."

"But we do want it!" cried the woman, fearfully. "That is," she added, "if

it is honestly come by."

"It is not stolen," replied the beetle, sulkily, "and now belongs to no one but yourselves. When you saved my life I thought how I might reward you; and, knowing you to be poor, I decided gold would make you happier than anything else.

"You must know," he continued, "that although I appear so small and insignificant, I am really king of all the insects, and my people obey my slightest wish. Living, as they do, close to the ground, the insects often come across gold and other pieces of money which have been lost by men and have fallen into cracks or crevasses or become covered with earth or hidden by grass or weeds. Whenever my people find money in this way they report the fact to me; but I have always let it lie, because it could be of no possible use to an insect.

"However, when I decided to give you gold I knew just where to obtain it without robbing any of your fellow creatures. Thousands of insects were at once sent by me in every direction to bring the pieces of lost gold to his hill. It cost my people several days of hard labor, as you may suppose; but by the time your husband had finished the well the gold began to arrive from all parts of the country, and during the night my subjects dumped it all into the well. So you may use it with a clear conscience, knowing that you wrong no one."

This explanation delighted the woman, and when she returned to the house and reported to her husband what the beetle had said he also was overjoyed.

So they at once took a number of the gold pieces and went to the town to purchase provisions and clothing and many things of which they had long stood in need; but so proud were they of their newly acquired wealth that they took no pains to conceal it. They wanted everyone to know they had money, and so it was no wonder that when some of the wicked men in the village saw the gold they longed to possess it themselves.

"If they spend this money so freely," whispered one to another, "there must be a great store of gold at their home."

"That is true," was the answer. "Let us hasten there before they return and ransack the house."

So they left the village and hurried away to the farm on the hill, where they broke down the door and turned everything topsy turvy until they had discovered the gold in the wood-box and the teapot. It did not take them long to make this into bundles, which they slung upon their backs and carried off, and it was probably because they were in a great hurry that they did not stop to put the house in order again.

Presently the good woman and her husband came up the hill from the village with their arms full of bundles and followed by a crowd of small boys who had been hired to help carry the purchases. Then followed others, youngsters and country louts, attracted by the wealth and prodigality of the pair, who, from simple curiosity, trailed along behind like the tail of a comet and helped swell the concourse into a triumphal procession. Last of all came Guggins, the shopkeeper, carrying with much tenderness a new silk dress which was to be paid for when they reached the house, all the money they had taken to the village having been lavishly expended.

The farmer, who had formerly been a modest man, was now so swelled with pride that he tipped the rim of his hat over his left ear and smoked a big cigar that was fast making him ill. His wife strutted along beside him like a peacock, enjoying to the full the homage and respect her wealth had won from those who formerly deigned not to notice her, and glancing from time to time at the admiring procession in the rear.

But, alas for their new-born pride! when they reached the farmhouse they found the door broken in, the furniture strewn in all directions and their treasure stolen to the very last gold piece.

The crowd grinned and made slighting remarks of a personal nature, and Guggins, the shopkeeper, demanded in a loud voice the money for the silk dress he had brought.

Then the woman whispered to her husband to run and pump some more gold while she kept the crowd quiet, and he obeyed quickly. But after a few moments he returned with a white face to tell her the pump was dry, and not a gold piece could now be coaxed from the spout.

The procession marched back to the village laughing and jeering at the farmer and his wife, who had pretended to be so rich; and some of the boys were naughty enough to throw stones at the house from the top of the hill. Mr. Guggins carried away his dress after severely scolding the woman for deceiving him, and when the couple at last found themselves alone their pride had turned to humiliation and their joy to bitter grief.

Just before sundown the woman dried her eyes and, having resumed her ordinary attire, went to the brook for water. When she came to the flat stone she saw the King Beetle sitting upon it.

“The well is dry!” she cried out, angrily.

“Yes,” answered the beetle, calmly, “you have pumped from it all the gold my people could find.”

“But we are now ruined,” said the woman, sitting down in the path beginning to weep; “for robbers have stolen from us every penny we possessed.”

“I’m sorry,” returned the beetle; “but it is your own fault. Had you not made so great a show of your wealth no one would have suspected you possessed a treasure, or thought to rob you. As it is, you have merely lost the gold which others have lost before you. It will probably be lost many times more before the world comes to an end.”

“But what are we to do now?” she asked.

“What did you do before I gave you the money?”

“We worked from morning ‘til night,” said she.

“Then work still remains for you,” remarked the beetle, composedly; “no one will ever try to rob you of that, you may be sure!” And he slid from the stone and disappeared for the last time.

This story should teach us to accept good fortune with humble hearts and to use it with moderation. For, had the farmer and his wife resisted the temptation to display their wealth ostentatiously, they might have retained it to this very day.

THE DUMMY THAT LIVED

In all Fairyland there is no more mischievous a person than Tanko-Mankie the Yellow Ryl. He flew through the city one afternoon — quite invisible to moral eyes, but seeing everything himself — and noticed a figure of a wax lady standing behind the big plate glass window of Mr. Floman's department store.

The wax lady was beautifully dressed, and extended in her stiff left hand was a card bearing the words:

"RARE BARGIN!
This Stylish Costume
(Imported from Paris)
Former Price, $20,
REDUCED TO ONLY $19.98."

This impressive announcement had drawn before the window a crowd of women shoppers, who stood looking at the wax lady with critical eyes.

Tanko-Mankie laughed to himself the low, gurgling little laugh that always means mischief. Then he flew close to the wax figure and breathed twice upon its forehead.

From that instant the dummy began to live, but so dazed and astonished was she at the unexpected sensation that she continued to stand stupidly staring at the women outside and holding out the placard as before.

The ryl laughed again and flew away. Anyone but Tanko-Mankie would have remained to help the wax lady out of the troubles that were sure to overtake her; but this naughty elf thought it rare fun to turn the inexperienced lady loose in a cold and heartless world and leave her to shift for herself.

Fortunately it was almost six o'clock when the dummy first realized that she was alive, and before she had collected her new thoughts and decided what to do a man came around and drew down all the window shades, shutting off the view from the curious shoppers.

Then the clerks and cashiers and floorwalkers and cash girls went home and the store was closed for the night, although the sweepers and scrubbers remained to clean the floors for the following day.

The window inhabited by the wax lady was boxed in, like a little room, one small door being left at the side for the window-trimmer to creep in and out of. So the scrubbers never noticed that the dummy, when left to herself, dropped the placard to the floor and sat down upon a pile of silks to wonder who she was, where she was, and how she happened to be alive.

For you must consider, dear reader, that in spite of her size and her rich costume, in spite of her pink cheeks and fluffy yellow hair, this lady was very

young — no older, in reality, than a baby born but half an hour. All she knew of the world was contained in the glimpse she had secured of the busy street facing her window; all she knew of people lay in the actions of the group of women which had stood before her on the other side of the window pane and criticised the fit of her dress or remarked upon its stylish appearance.

So she had little enough to think about, and her thoughts moved somewhat slowly; yet one thing she really decided upon, and that was not to remain in the window and be insolently stared at by a lot of women who were not nearly so handsome or well dressed as herself.

By the time she reached this important conclusion, it was after midnight; but dim lights were burning in the big, deserted store, so she crept through the door of her window and walked down the long aisles, pausing now and then to look with much curiosity at the wealth of finery confronting her on every side.

When she came to the glass cases filled with trimmed hats she remembered having seen upon the heads of the women in the street similar creations. So she selected one that suited her fancy and placed it carefully upon her yellow locks. I won't attempt to explain what instinct it was that made her glance into a near-by mirror to see if the hat was straight, but this she certainly did. It didn't correspond with her dress very well, but the poor thing was too young to have much taste in matching colors.

When she reached the glove counter she remembered that gloves were also worn by the women she had seen. She took a pair from the case and tried to fit them upon her stiff, wax-coated fingers; but the gloves were too small and ripped in the seams. Then she tried another pair, and several others, as well; but hours passed before she finally succeeded in getting her hands covered with a pair of pea-green kids.

Next she selected a parasol from a large and varied assortment in the rear of the store. Not that she had any idea what it was used for; but other ladies carried such things, so she also would have one.

When she again examined herself critically in the mirror she decided her outfit was now complete, and to her inexperienced eyes there was no perceptible difference between her and the women who had stood outside the window. Whereupon she tried to leave the store, but found every door fast locked.

The wax lady was in no hurry. She inherited patience from her previous existence. Just to be alive and to wear beautiful clothes was sufficient enjoyment for her at present. So she sat down upon a stool and waited quietly until daylight.

When the janitor unlocked the door in the morning the wax lady swept

past him and walked with stiff but stately strides down the street. The poor fellow was so completely whuckered at seeing the well-known wax lady leave her window and march away from the store that he fell over in a heap and only saved himself from fainting by striking his funny bone against the doorstep. When he recovered his wits she had turned the corner and disappeared.

The wax lady's immature mind had reasoned that, since she had come to life, her evident duty was to mix with the world and do whatever other folks did. She could not realize how different she was from people of flesh and blood; nor did she know she was the first dummy that had ever lived, or that she owed her unique experience to Tanko-Mankie's love of mischief. So ignorance gave her a confidence in herself that she was not justly entitled to.

It was yet early in the day, and the few people she met were hurrying along the streets. Many of them turned into restaurants and eating houses, and following their example the wax lady also entered one and sat upon a stool before a lunch counter.

"Coffee 'n' rolls!" said a shop girl on the next stool.

"Coffee 'n' rolls!" repeated the dummy, and soon the waiter placed them before her. Of course she had no appetite, as her constitution, being mostly wood, did not require food; but she watched the shop girl, and saw her put the coffee to her mouth and drink it. Therefore the wax lady did the same, and the next instant was surprised to feel the hot liquid trickling out between her wooden ribs. The coffee also blistered her wax lips, and so disagreeable was the experience that she arose and left the restaurant, paying no attention to the demands of the waiter for "20 cents, mum." Not that she intended to defraud him, but the poor creature had no idea what he meant by "20 cents, mum."

As she came out she met the window trimmer at Floman's store. The man was rather near-sighted, but seeing something familiar in the lady's features he politely raised his hat. The wax lady also raised her hat, thinking it the proper thing to do, and the man hurried away with a horrified face.

Then a woman touched her arm and said:

"Beg pardon, ma'am; but there's a price-mark hanging on your dress behind."

"Yes, I know," replied the wax lady, stiffly; "it was originally $20, but it's been reduced to $19.98."

The woman looked surprised at such indifference and walked on. Some carriages were standing at the edge of the sidewalk, and seeing the dummy hesitate a driver approached her and touched his cap.

"Cab, ma'am?" he asked.

“No,” said she, misunderstanding him; “I’m wax.”

“Oh!” he exclaimed, and looked after her wonderingly.

“Here’s yer mornin’ paper!” yelled a newsboy.

“Mine, did you say?” she asked.

“Sure! Chronicle, ‘Quirer, R’public ‘n’ ‘Spatch! Wot’ll ye ‘ave?”

“What are they for?” inquired the wax lady, simply.

“W’y, ter read, o’ course. All the news, you know.”

She shook her head and glanced at a paper.

“It looks all speckled and mixed up,” she said. “I’m afraid I can’t read.”

“Ever ben to school?” asked the boy, becoming interested.

“No; what’s school?” she inquired.

The boy gave her an indignant look.

“Say!” he cried, “ye’r just a dummy, that’s wot ye are!” and ran away to seek a more promising customer.

“I wonder that he means,” thought the poor lady. “Am I really different in some way from all the others? I look like them, certainly; and I try to act like them; yet that boy called me a dummy and seemed to think I acted queerly.”

This idea worried her a little, but she walked on to the corner, where she noticed a street car stop to let some people on. The wax lady, still determined to do as others did, also boarded the car and sat down quietly in a corner.

After riding a few blocks the conductor approached her and said:

“Fare, please!”

“What’s that?” she inquired, innocently.

“Your fare!” said the man, impatiently.

She stared at him stupidly, trying to think what he meant.

“Come, come!” growled the conductor, “either pay up or get off!”

Still she did not understand, and he grabbed her rudely by the arm and lifted her to her feet. But when his hand came in contact with the hard wood of which her arm was made the fellow was filled with surprise. He stooped down and peered into her face, and, seeing it was wax instead of flesh, he gave a yell of fear and jumped from the car, running as if he had seen a ghost.

At this the other passengers also yelled and sprang from the car, fearing a collision; and the motorman, knowing something was wrong, followed suit. The wax lady, seeing the others run, jumped from the car last of all, and stepped in front of another car coming at full speed from the opposite direction.

She heard cries of fear and of warning on all sides, but before she understood her danger she was knocked down and dragged for half a block.

When the car was brought to a stop a policeman reached down and pulled

her from under the wheels. Her dress was badly torn and soiled. Her left ear was entirely gone, and the left side of her head was caved in; but she quickly scrambled to her feet and asked for her hat. This a gentleman had already picked up, and when the policeman handed it to her and noticed the great hole in her head and the hollow place it disclosed, the poor fellow trembled so frightfully that his knees actually knocked together.

"Why — why, ma'am, you're killed!" he gasped.

"What does it mean to be killed?" asked the wax lady.

The policeman shuddered and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"You're it!" he answered, with a groan.

The crowd that had collected were looking upon the lady wonderingly, and a middle-aged gentleman now exclaimed:

"Why, she's wax!"

"Wax!" echoed the policeman.

"Certainly. She's one of those dummies they put in the windows," declared the middle-aged man.

The people who had collected shouted: "You're right!" "That's what she is!" "She's a dummy!"

"Are you?" inquired the policeman, sternly.

The wax lady did not reply. She began to fear she was getting into trouble, and the staring crowd seemed to embarrass her.

Suddenly a bootblack attempted to solve the problem by saying: "You guys is all wrong! Can a dummy talk? Can a dummy walk? Can a dummy live?"

"Hush!" murmured the policeman. "Look here!" and he pointed to the hold in the lady's head. The newsboy looked, turned pale and whistled to keep himself from shivering.

A second policeman now arrived, and after a brief conference it was decided to take the strange creature to headquarters. So they called a hurry-up wagon, and the damaged wax lady was helped inside and driven to the police station. There the policeman locked her in a cell and hastened to tell Inspector Mugg their wonderful story.

Inspector Mugg had just eaten a poor breakfast, and was not in a pleasant mood; so he roared and stormed at the unlucky policemen, saying they were themselves dummies to bring such a fairy tale to a man of sense. He also hinted that they had been guilty of intemperance.

The policemen tried to explain, but Inspector Mugg would not listen; and while they were still disputing in rushed Mr. Floman, the owner of the department store.

"I want a dozen detectives, at once, inspector!" he cried.

“What for?” demanded Mugg.

“One of the wax ladies has escaped from my store and eloped with a $19.98 costume, a $4.23 hat, a $2.19 parasol and a 76-cent pair of gloves, and I want her arrested!”

While he paused for breath the inspector glared at him in amazement.

“Is everybody going crazy at the same time?” he inquired, sarcastically. “How could a wax dummy run away?”

“I don’t know; but she did. When my janitor opened the door this morning he saw her run out.”

“Why didn’t he stop her?” asked Mugg.

“He was too frightened. But she’s stolen my property, your honor, and I want her arrested!” declared the storekeeper.

The inspector thought for a moment.

“You wouldn’t be able to prosecute her,” he said, “for there’s no law against dummies stealing.”

Mr. Floman sighed bitterly.

“Am I to lose that $19.98 costume and the $4.25 hat and — “

“By no means,” interrupted Inspector Mugg. “The police of this city are ever prompt to act in defense of our worthy citizens. We have already arrested the wax lady, and she is locked up in cell No. 16. You may go there and recover your property, if you wish, but before you prosecute her for stealing you’d better hunt up a law that applies to dummies.”

“All I want,” said Mr. Floman, “is that $19.98 costume and — “

“Come along!” interrupted the policeman. “I’ll take you to the cell.”

But when they entered No. 16 they found only a lifeless dummy lying prone upon the floor. Its wax was cracked and blistered, its head was badly damaged, and the bargain costume was dusty, soiled and much bedraggled. For the mischief-loving Tanko-Mankie had flown by and breathed once more upon the poor wax lady, and in that instant her brief life ended.

“It’s just as I thought,” said Inspector Mugg, leaning back in his chair contentedly. “I knew all the time the thing was a fake. It seems sometimes as though the whole world would go crazy if there wasn’t some level-headed man around to bring ‘em to their senses. Dummies are wood an’ wax, an’ that’s all there is of ‘em.”

“That may be the rule,” whispered the policeman to himself, “but this one were a dummy as lived!”

THE KING OF THE POLAR BEARS

The King of the Polar Bears lived among the icebergs in the far north country. He was old and monstrous big; he was wise and friendly to all who knew him. His body was thickly covered with long, white hair that glistened like silver under the rays of the midnight sun. His claws were strong and sharp, that he might walk safely over the smooth ice or grasp and tear the fishes and seals upon which he fed.

The seals were afraid when he drew near, and tried to avoid him; but the gulls, both white and gray, loved him because he left the remnants of his feasts for them to devour.

Often his subjects, the polar bears, came to him for advice when ill or in trouble; but they wisely kept away from his hunting grounds, lest they might interfere with his sport and arouse his anger.

The wolves, who sometimes came as far north as the icebergs, whispered among themselves that the King of the Polar Bears was either a magician or under the protection of a powerful fairy. For no earthly thing seemed able to harm him; he never failed to secure plenty of food, and he grew bigger and stronger day by day and year by year.

Yet the time came when this monarch of the north met man, and his wisdom failed him.

He came out of his cave among the icebergs one day and saw a boat moving through the strip of water which had been uncovered by the shifting of the summer ice. In the boat were men.

The great bear had never seen such creatures before, and therefore advanced toward the boat, sniffing the strange scent with aroused curiosity and wondering whether he might take them for friends or foes, food or carrion.

When the king came near the water's edge a man stood up in the boat and with a queer instrument made a loud "bang!" The polar bear felt a shock; his brain became numb; his thoughts deserted him; his great limbs shook and gave way beneath him and his body fell heavily upon the hard ice.

That was all he remembered for a time.

When he awoke he was smarting with pain on every inch of his huge bulk, for the men had cut away his hide with its glorious white hair and carried it with them to a distant ship.

Above him circled thousands of his friends the gulls, wondering if their benefactor were really dead and it was proper to eat him. But when they saw him raise his head and groan and tremble they knew he still lived, and one of them said to his comrades:

“The wolves were right. The king is a great magician, for even men cannot kill him. But he suffers for lack of covering. Let us repay his kindness to us by each giving him as many feathers as we can spare.”

This idea pleased the gulls. One after another they plucked with their beaks the softest feathers from under their wings, and, flying down, dropped then gently upon the body of the King of the Polar Bears.

Then they called to him in a chorus:

“Courage, friend! Our feathers are as soft and beautiful as your own shaggy hair. They will guard you from the cold winds and warm you while you sleep. Have courage, then, and live!”

And the King of the Polar Bears had courage to bear his pain and lived and was strong again.

The feathers grew as they had grown upon the bodies of the birds and covered him as his own hair had done. Mostly they were pure white in color, but some from the gray gulls gave his majesty a slight mottled appearance.

The rest of that summer and all through the six months of night the king left his icy cavern only to fish or catch seals for food. He felt no shame at his feathery covering, but it was still strange to him, and he avoided meeting any of his brother bears.

During this period of retirement he thought much of the men who had harmed him, and remembered the way they had made the great “bang!” And he decided it was best to keep away from such fierce creatures. Thus he added to his store of wisdom.

When the moon fell away from the sky and the sun came to make the icebergs glitter with the gorgeous tintings of the rainbow, two of the polar bears arrived at the king’s cavern to ask his advice about the hunting season. But when they saw his great body covered with feathers instead of hair they began to laugh, and one said:

“Our mighty king has become a bird! Who ever before heard of a feathered polar bear?”

Then the king gave way to wrath. He advanced upon them with deep growls and stately tread and with one blow of his monstrous paw stretched the mocker lifeless at his feet.

The other ran away to his fellows and carried the news of the king’s strange appearance. The result was a meeting of all the polar bears upon a broad field of ice, where they talked gravely of the remarkable change that had come upon their monarch.

“He is, in reality, no longer a bear,” said one; “nor can he justly be called a bird. But he is half bird and half bear, and so unfitted to remain our king.”

“Then who shall take his place?” asked another.

“He who can fight the bird-bear and overcome him,” answered an aged member of the group. “Only the strongest is fit to rule our race.”

There was silence for a time, but at length a great bear moved to the front and said:

“I will fight him; I — Woof — the strongest of our race! And I will be King of the Polar Bears.”

The others nodded assent, and dispatched a messenger to the king to say he must fight the great Woof and master him or resign his sovereignty.

“For a bear with feathers,” added the messenger, “is no bear at all, and the king we obey must resemble the rest of us.”

“I wear feathers because it pleases me,” growled the king. “Am I not a great magician? But I will fight, nevertheless, and if Woof masters me he shall be king in my stead.”

Then he visited his friends, the gulls, who were even then feasting upon the dead bear, and told them of the coming battle.

“I shall conquer,” he said, proudly. “Yet my people are in the right, for only a hairy one like themselves can hope to command their obedience.”

The queen gull said:

“I met an eagle yesterday, which had made its escape from a big city of men. And the eagle told me he had seen a monstrous polar bear skin thrown over the back of a carriage that rolled along the street. That skin must have been yours, oh king, and if you wish I will sent an hundred of my gulls to the city to bring it back to you.”

“Let them go!” said the king, gruffly. And the hundred gulls were soon flying rapidly southward.

For three days they flew straight as an arrow, until they came to scattered houses, to villages, and to cities. Then their search began.

The gulls were brave, and cunning, and wise. Upon the fourth day they reached the great metropolis, and hovered over the streets until a carriage rolled along with a great white bear robe thrown over the back seat. Then the birds swooped down — the whole hundred of them — and seizing the skin in their beaks flew quickly away.

They were late. The king’s great battle was upon the seventh day, and they must fly swiftly to reach the Polar regions by that time.

Meanwhile the bird-bear was preparing for his fight. He sharpened his claws in the small crevasses of the ice. He caught a seal and tested his big yellow teeth by crunching its bones between them. And the queen gull set her band to pluming the king bear’s feathers until they lay smoothly upon his body.

But every day they cast anxious glances into the southern sky, watching

for the hundred gulls to bring back the king's own skin.

The seventh day came, and all the Polar bears in that region gathered around the king's cavern. Among them was Woof, strong and confident of his success.

"The bird-bear's feathers will fly fast enough when I get my claws upon him!" he boasted; and the others laughed and encouraged him.

The king was disappointed at not having recovered his skin, but he resolved to fight bravely without it. He advanced from the opening of his cavern with a proud and kingly bearing, and when he faced his enemy he gave so terrible a growl that Woof's heart stopped beating for a moment, and he began to realize that a fight with the wise and mighty king of his race was no laughing matter.

After exchanging one or two heavy blows with his foe Woof's courage returned, and he determined to dishearten his adversary by bluster.

"Come nearer, bird-bear!" he cried. "Come nearer, that I may pluck your plumage!"

The defiance filled the king with rage. He ruffled his feathers as a bird does, till he appeared to be twice his actual size, and then he strode forward and struck Woof so powerful a blow that his skull crackled like an egg-shell and he fell prone upon the ground.

While the assembled bears stood looking with fear and wonder at their fallen champion the sky became darkened.

An hundred gulls flew down from above and dripped upon the king's body a skin covered with pure white hair that glittered in the sun like silver.

And behold! the bears saw before them the well-known form of their wise and respected master, and with one accord they bowed their shaggy heads in homage to the mighty King of the Polar Bears.

This story teaches us that true dignity and courage depend not upon outward appearance, but come rather from within; also that brag and bluster are poor weapons to carry into battle.

THE MANDARIN AND THE BUTTERFLY

A mandarin once lived in Kiang-ho who was so exceedingly cross and disagreeable that everyone hated him. He snarled and stormed at every person he met and was never known to laugh or be merry under any circumstances. Especially he hated boys and girls; for the boys jeered at him, which aroused his wrath, and the girls made fun of him, which hurt his pride.

When he had become so unpopular that no one would speak to him, the emperor heard about it and commanded him to emigrate to America. This suited the mandarin very well; but before he left China he stole the Great Book of Magic that belonged to the wise magician Haot-sai. Then, gathering up his little store of money, he took ship for America.

He settled in a city of the middle west and of course started a laundry, since that seems to be the natural vocation of every Chinaman, be he coolie or mandarin.

He made no acquaintances with the other Chinamen of the town, who, when they met him and saw the red button in his hat, knew him for a real mandarin and bowed low before him. He put up a red and white sign and people brought their laundry to him and got paper checks, with Chinese characters upon them, in exchange, this being the only sort of character the mandarin had left.

One day as the ugly one was ironing in his shop in the basement of 263 1/2 Main street, he looked up and saw a crowd of childish faces pressed against the window. Most Chinamen make friends with children; this one hated them and tried to drive them away. But as soon as he returned to his work they were back at the window again, mischievously smiling down upon him.

The naughty mandarin uttered horrid words in the Manchu language and made fierce gestures; but this did no good at all. The children stayed as long as they pleased, and they came again the very next day as soon as school was over, and likewise the next day, and the next. For they saw their presence at the window bothered the Chinaman and were delighted accordingly.

The following day being Sunday the children did not appear, but as the mandarin, being a heathen, worked in his little shop a big butterfly flew in at the open door and fluttered about the room.

The mandarin closed the door and chased the butterfly until he caught it, when he pinned it against the wall by sticking two pins through its beautiful wings. This did not hurt the butterfly, there being no feeling in its wings; but it made him a safe prisoner.

This butterfly was of large size and its wings were exquisitely marked by

gorgeous colors laid out in regular designs like the stained glass windows of a cathedral.

The mandarin now opened his wooden chest and drew forth the Great Book of Magic he had stolen from Haot-sai. Turning the pages slowly he came to a passage describing "How to understand the language of butterflies." This he read carefully and then mixed a magic formula in a tin cup and drank it down with a wry face. Immediately thereafter he spoke to the butterfly in its own language, saying:

"Why did you enter this room?"

"I smelled bees-wax," answered the butterfly; "therefore I thought I might find honey here."

"But you are my prisoner," said the mandarin. "If I please I can kill you, or leave you on the wall to starve to death."

"I expect that," replied the butterfly, with a sigh. "But my race is shortlived, anyway; it doesn't matter whether death comes sooner or later."

"Yet you like to live, do you not?" asked the mandarin.

"Yet; life is pleasant and the world is beautiful. I do not seek death."

"Then," said the mandarin, "I will give you life — a long and pleasant life — if you will promise to obey me for a time and carry out my instructions."

"How can a butterfly serve a man?" asked the creature, in surprise.

"Usually they cannot," was the reply. "But I have a book of magic which teaches me strange things. Do you promise?"

"Oh, yes; I promise," answered the butterfly; "for even as your slave I will get some enjoyment out of life, while should you kill me — that is the end of everything!"

"Truly," said the mandarin, "butterflies have no souls, and therefore cannot live again."

"But I have enjoyed three lives already," returned the butterfly, with some pride. "I have been a caterpillar and a chrysalis before I became a butterfly. You were never anything but a Chinaman, although I admit your life is longer than mine."

"I will extend your life for many days, if you will obey me," declared the Chinaman. "I can easily do so by means of my magic."

"Of course I will obey you," said the butterfly, carelessly.

"Then, listen! You know children, do you not? — boys and girls?"

"Yes, I know them. They chase me, and try to catch me, as you have done," replied the butterfly.

"And they mock me, and jeer at me through the window," continued the mandarin, bitterly. "Therefore, they are your enemies and mine! But with your aid and the help of the magic book we shall have a fine revenge for their

insults."

"I don't care much for revenge," said the butterfly. "They are but children, and 'tis natural they should wish to catch such a beautiful creature as I am."

"Nevertheless, I care! and you must obey me," retorted the mandarin, harshly. "I, at least, will have my revenge."

Then he stuck a drop of molasses upon the wall beside the butterfly's head and said:

"Eat that, while I read my book and prepare my magic formula."

So the butterfly feasted upon the molasses and the mandarin studied his book, after which he began to mix a magic compound in the tin cup.

When the mixture was ready he released the butterfly from the wall and said to it:

"I command you to dip your two front feet into this magic compound and then fly away until you meet a child. Fly close, whether it be a boy or a girl, and touch the child upon its forehead with your feet. Whosoever is thus touched, the book declares, will at once become a pig, and will remain such forever after. Then return to me and dip you legs afresh in the contents of this cup. So shall all my enemies, the children, become miserable swine, while no one will think of accusing me of the sorcery."

"Very well; since such is your command, I obey," said the butterfly. Then it dipped its front legs, which were the shortest of the six, into the contents of the tin cup, and flew out of the door and away over the houses to the edge of the town. There it alighted in a flower garden and soon forgot all about its mission to turn children into swine.

In going from flower to flower it soon brushed the magic compound from its legs, so that when the sun began to set and the butterfly finally remembered its master, the mandarin, it could not have injured a child had it tried.

But it did not intend to try.

"That horrid old Chinaman," it thought, "hates children and wishes to destroy them. But I rather like children myself and shall not harm them. Of course I must return to my master, for he is a magician, and would seek me out and kill me; but I can deceive him about this matter easily enough."

When the butterfly flew in at the door of the mandarin's laundry he asked, eagerly:

"Well, did you meet a child?"

"I did," replied the butterfly, calmly. "It was a pretty, golden-haired girl — but now 'tis a grunting pig!"

"Good! Good! Good!" cried the mandarin, dancing joyfully about the room. "You shall have molasses for your supper, and to-morrow you must

change two children into pigs.”

The butterfly did not reply, but ate the molasses in silence. Having no soul it had no conscience, and having no conscience it was able to lie to the mandarin with great readiness and a certain amount of enjoyment.

Next morning, by the mandarin’s command, the butterfly dipped its legs in the mixture and flew away in search of children.

When it came to the edge of the town it noticed a pig in a sty, and alighting upon the rail of the sty it looked down at the creature and thought.

“If I could change a child into a pig by touching it with the magic compound, what could I change a pig into, I wonder?”

Being curious to determine this fine point in sorcery the butterfly fluttered down and touched its front feet to the pig’s nose. Instantly the animal disappeared, and in its place was a shock-headed, dirty looking boy, which sprang from the sty and ran down the road uttering load whoops.

“That’s funny,” said the butterfly to itself. “The mandarin would be very angry with me if he knew of this, for I have liberated one more of the creatures that bother him.”

It fluttered along after the boy, who had paused to throw stones at a cat. But pussy escaped by running up a tree, where thick branches protected her from the stones. Then the boy discovered a newly-planted garden, and trampled upon the beds until the seeds were scattered far and wide, and the garden was ruined. Next he caught up a switch and struck with it a young calf that stood quietly grazing in a field. The poor creature ran away with piteous bleats, and the boy laughed and followed after it, striking the frightened animal again and again.

“Really,” thought the butterfly, “I do not wonder the mandarin hates children, if they are all so cruel and wicked as this one.”

The calf having escaped him the boy came back to the road, where he met two little girls on their way to school. One of them had a red apple in her hand, and the boy snatched it away and began eating it. The little girl commenced to cry, but her companion, more brave and sturdy, cried out:

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you nasty boy!”

At this the boy reached out and slapped her pretty face, whereupon she also began to sob.

Although possessed of neither soul nor conscience, the butterfly had a very tender heart, and now decided it could endure this boy no longer.

“If I permitted him to exist,” it reflected, “I should never forgive myself, for the monster would do nothing but evil from morning ‘til night.”

So it flew directly into his face and touched his forehead with its sticky front feet.

The next instant the boy had disappeared, but a grunting pig ran swiftly up the road in the direction of its sty.

The butterfly gave a sigh of relief.

“This time I have indeed used the mandarin’s magic upon a child,” it whispered, as it floated lazily upon the light breeze; “but since the child was originally a pig I do not think I have any cause to reproach myself. The little girls were sweet and gentle, and I would not injure them to save my life, but were all boys like this transformed pig, I should not hesitate to carry out the mandarin’s orders.”

Then it flew into a rose bush, where it remained comfortably until evening. At sundown it returned to its master.

“Have you changed two of them into pigs?” he asked, at once.

“I have,” replied the butterfly. “One was a pretty, black-eyed baby, and the other a freckle-faced, red-haired, barefooted newboy.”

“Good! Good! Good!” screamed the mandarin, in an ecstasy of delight. “Those are the ones who torment me the most! Change every newboy you meet into a pig!”

“Very well,” answered the butterfly, quietly, and ate its supper of molasses.

Several days were passed by the butterfly in the same manner. It fluttered aimlessly about the flower gardens while the sun shone, and returned at night to the mandarin with false tales of turning children into swine. Sometimes it would be one child which was transformed, sometimes two, and occasionally three; but the mandarin always greeted the butterfly’s report with intense delight and gave him molasses for supper.

One evening, however, the butterfly thought it might be well to vary the report, so that the mandarin might not grow suspicious; and when its master asked what child had been had been changed into a pig that day the lying creature answered:

“It was a Chinese boy, and when I touched him he became a black pig.”

This angered the mandarin, who was in an especially cross mood. He spitefully snapped the butterfly with his finger, and nearly broke its beautiful wing; for he forgot that Chinese boys had once mocked him and only remembered his hatred for American boys.

The butterfly became very indignant at this abuse from the mandarin. It refused to eat its molasses and sulked all the evening, for it had grown to hate the mandarin almost as much as the mandarin hated children.

When morning came it was still trembling with indignation; but the mandarin cried out:

“Make haste, miserable slave; for to-day you must change four children

into pigs, to make up for yesterday.”

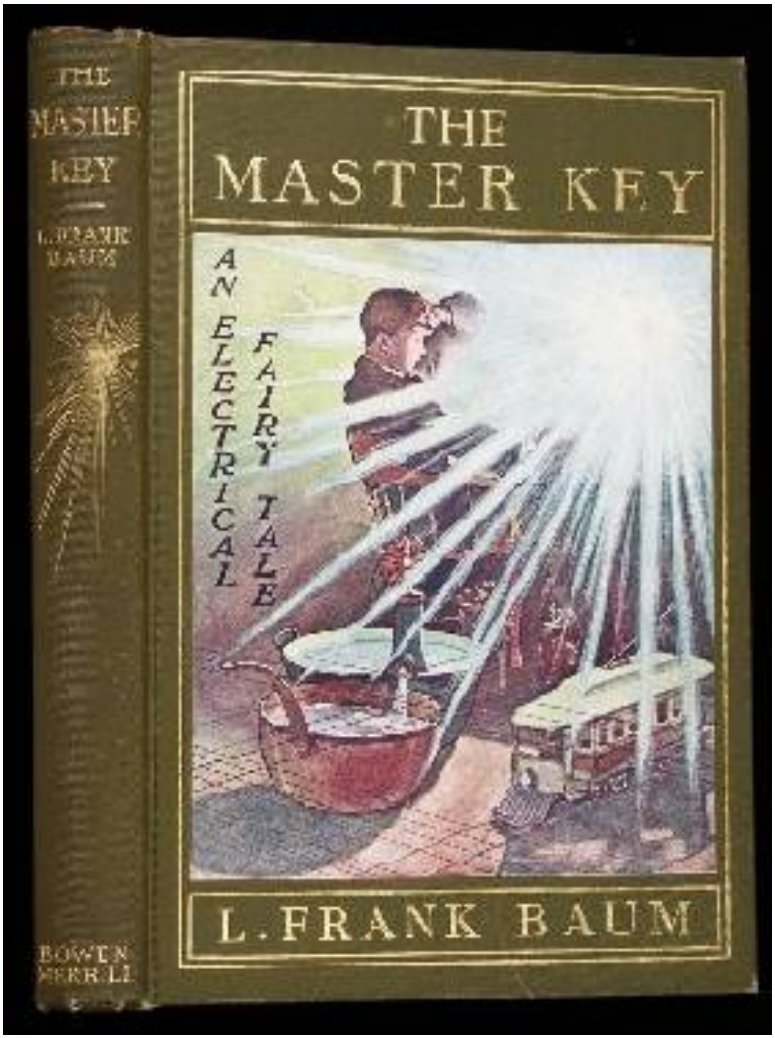
The butterfly did not reply. His little black eyes were sparkling wickedly, and no sooner had he dipped his feet into the magic compound than he flew full in the mandarin’s face, and touched him upon his ugly, flat forehead.

Soon after a gentleman came into the room for his laundry. The mandarin was not there, but running around the place was a repulsive, scrawny pig, which squealed most miserably.

The butterfly flew away to a brook and washed from its feet all traces of the magic compound. When night came it slept in a rose bush.

THE MASTER KEY: AN ELECTRICAL FAIRY TALE

Published by Bowen-Merrill in 1901, *The Master Key: An Electrical Fairy Tale* featured illustrations by Fanny Young Cory, famous for her comic strip, *Little Miss Muffet*. Baum based the novel's hero, Rob Joslyn, on his second son, Robert Stanton Baum, who had his own electrical workshop in the Baum attic. One day, while experimenting with electricity, a blinding flash of light reveals a being called the "Demon of Electricity." Like a genie, it offers Rob three gifts each week for three weeks. The novel focuses on Rob's wild adventures using these futuristic gifts and his decisions about them. Although including strong fantasy elements, some influenced by *The Arabian Nights*, many scholars classify the novel as an early work of science fiction.



A copy of the first edition of The Master Key

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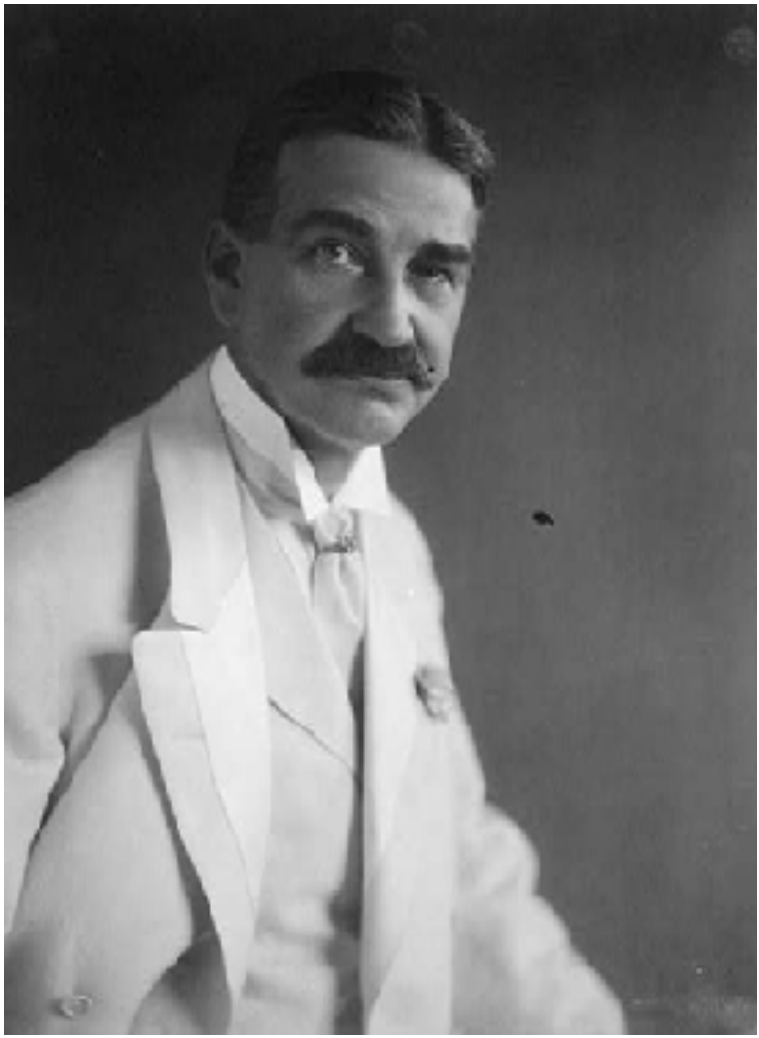


A portrait of L. Frank Baum

Who Knows?

These things are quite improbable, to be sure; but are they impossible?

Our big world rolls over as smoothly as it did centuries ago, without a squeak to show it needs oiling after all these years of revolution. But times change because men change, and because civilization, like John Brown's soul, goes ever marching on.

The impossibilities of yesterday become the accepted facts of to-day.

Here is a fairy tale founded upon the wonders of electricity and written for children of this generation. Yet when my readers shall have become men and women my story may not seem to their children like a fairy tale at all.

Perhaps one, perhaps two — perhaps several of the Demon's devices will be, by that time, in popular use.

Who knows?

1. Rob's Workshop

When Rob became interested in electricity his clear-headed father considered the boy's fancy to be instructive as well as amusing; so he heartily encouraged his son, and Rob never lacked batteries, motors or supplies of any sort that his experiments might require.

He fitted up the little back room in the attic as his workshop, and from thence a net-work of wires soon ran throughout the house. Not only had every outside door its electric bell, but every window was fitted with a burglar alarm; moreover no one could cross the threshold of any interior room without registering the fact in Rob's workshop. The gas was lighted by an electric fob; a chime, connected with an erratic clock in the boy's room, woke the servants at all hours of the night and caused the cook to give warning; a bell rang whenever the postman dropped a letter into the box; there were bells, bells, bells everywhere, ringing at the right time, the wrong time and all the time. And there were telephones in the different rooms, too, through which Rob could call up the different members of the family just when they did not wish to be disturbed.

His mother and sisters soon came to vote the boy's scientific craze a nuisance; but his father was delighted with these evidences of Rob's skill as an electrician, and insisted that he be allowed perfect freedom in carrying out his ideas.

"Electricity," said the old gentleman, sagely, "is destined to become the motive power of the world. The future advance of civilization will be along electrical lines. Our boy may become a great inventor and astonish the world with his wonderful creations."

"And in the meantime," said the mother, despairingly, "we shall all be electrocuted, or the house burned down by crossed wires, or we shall be blown into eternity by an explosion of chemicals!"

"Nonsense!" ejaculated the proud father. "Rob's storage batteries are not powerful enough to electrocute one or set the house on fire. Do give the boy a chance, Belinda."

"And the pranks are so humiliating," continued the lady. "When the minister called yesterday and rang the bell a big card appeared on the front door on which was printed the words: 'Busy; Call Again.' Fortunately Helen saw him and let him in, but when I reproved Robert for the act he said he was just trying the sign to see if it would work."

"Exactly! The boy is an inventor already. I shall have one of those cards attached to the door of my private office at once. I tell you, Belinda, our son will be a great man one of these days," said Mr. Joslyn, walking up and down

with pompous strides and almost bursting with the pride he took in his young hopeful.

Mrs. Joslyn sighed. She knew remonstrance was useless so long as her husband encouraged the boy, and that she would be wise to bear her cross with fortitude.

Rob also knew his mother's protests would be of no avail; so he continued to revel in electrical processes of all sorts, using the house as an experimental station to test the powers of his productions.

It was in his own room, however, — his "workshop" — that he especially delighted. For not only was it the center of all his numerous "lines" throughout the house, but he had rigged up therein a wonderful array of devices for his own amusement. A trolley-car moved around a circular track and stopped regularly at all stations; an engine and train of cars moved jerkily up and down a steep grade and through a tunnel; a windmill was busily pumping water from the dishpan into the copper skillet; a sawmill was in full operation and a host of mechanical blacksmiths, scissors-grinders, carpenters, wood-choppers and millers were connected with a motor which kept them working away at their trades in awkward but persevering fashion.

The room was crossed and recrossed with wires. They crept up the walls, lined the floor, made a grille of the ceiling and would catch an unwary visitor under the chin or above the ankle just when he least expected it. Yet visitors were forbidden in so crowded a room, and even his father declined to go farther than the doorway. As for Rob, he thought he knew all about the wires, and what each one was for; but they puzzled even him, at times, and he was often perplexed to know how to utilize them all.

One day when he had locked himself in to avoid interruption while he planned the electrical illumination of a gorgeous pasteboard palace, he really became confused over the network of wires. He had a "switchboard," to be sure, where he could make and break connections as he chose; but the wires had somehow become mixed, and he could not tell what combinations to use to throw the power on to his miniature electric lights.

So he experimented in a rather haphazard fashion, connecting this and that wire blindly and by guesswork, in the hope that he would strike the right combination. Then he thought the combination might be right and there was a lack of power; so he added other lines of wire to his connections, and still others, until he had employed almost every wire in the room.

Yet it would not work; and after pausing a moment to try to think what was wrong he went at it again, putting this and that line into connection, adding another here and another there, until suddenly, as he made a last change, a quick flash of light almost blinded him, and the switch-board

crackled ominously, as if struggling to carry a powerful current.

Rob covered his face at the flash, but finding himself unhurt he took away his hands and with blinking eyes attempted to look at a wonderful radiance which seemed to fill the room, making it many times brighter than the brightest day.

Although at first completely dazzled, he peered before him until he discovered that the light was concentrated near one spot, from which all the glorious rays seemed to scintillate.

He closed his eyes a moment to rest them; then re-opening them and shading them somewhat with his hands, he made out the form of a curious Being standing with majesty and composure in the center of the magnificent radiance and looking down upon him!

2. The Demon of Electricity

Rob was a courageous boy, but a thrill of fear passed over him in spite of his bravest endeavor as he gazed upon the wondrous apparition that confronted him. For several moments he sat as if turned to stone, so motionless was he; but his eyes were nevertheless fastened upon the Being and devouring every detail of his appearance.

And how strange an appearance he presented!

His jacket was a wavering mass of white light, edged with braid of red flames that shot little tongues in all directions. The buttons blazed in golden fire. His trousers had a bluish, incandescent color, with glowing stripes of crimson braid. His vest was gorgeous with all the colors of the rainbow blended into a flashing, resplendent mass. In feature he was most majestic, and his eyes held the soft but penetrating brilliance of electric lights.

It was hard to meet the gaze of those searching eyes, but Rob did it, and at once the splendid apparition bowed and said in a low, clear voice:

"I am here."

"I know that," answered the boy, trembling, "but WHY are you here?"

"Because you have touched the Master Key of Electricity, and I must obey the laws of nature that compel me to respond to your summons."

"I — I didn't know I touched the Master Key," faltered the boy.

"I understand that. You did it unconsciously. No one in the world has ever done it before, for Nature has hitherto kept the secret safe locked within her bosom."

Rob took time to wonder at this statement.

"Then who are you?" he inquired, at length.

"The Demon of Electricity," was the solemn answer.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Rob, "a demon!"

"Certainly. I am, in truth, the Slave of the Master Key, and am forced to obey the commands of any one who is wise and brave enough — or, as in your own case, fortunate and fool-hardy enough — to touch it."

"I — I've never guessed there was such a thing as a Master Key, or — or a Demon of Electricity, and — and I'm awfully sorry I — I called you up!" stammered the boy, abashed by the imposing appearance of his companion.

The Demon actually smiled at this speech, — a smile that was almost reassuring.

"I am not sorry," he said, in kindlier tone, "for it is not much pleasure waiting century after century for some one to command my services. I have often thought my existence uncalled for, since you Earth people are so stupid and ignorant that you seem unlikely ever to master the secret of electrical

power.”

“Oh, we have some great masters among us!” cried Rob, rather nettled at this statement. “Now, there’s Edison — “

“Edison!” exclaimed the Demon, with a faint sneer; “what does he know?”

“Lots of things,” declared the boy. “He’s invented no end of wonderful electrical things.”

“You are wrong to call them wonderful,” replied the Demon, lightly. “He really knows little more than yourself about the laws that control electricity. His inventions are trifling things in comparison with the really wonderful results to be obtained by one who would actually know how to direct the electric powers instead of groping blindly after insignificant effects. Why, I’ve stood for months by Edison’s elbow, hoping and longing for him to touch the Master Key; but I can see plainly he will never accomplish it.”

“Then there’s Tesla,” said the boy.

The Demon laughed.

“There is Tesla, to be sure,” he said. “But what of him?”

“Why, he’s discovered a powerful light,” the Demon gave an amused chuckle, “and he’s in communication with the people in Mars.”

“What people?”

“Why, the people who live there.”

“There are none.”

This great statement almost took Rob’s breath away, and caused him to stare hard at his visitor.

“It’s generally thought,” he resumed, in an annoyed tone, “that Mars has inhabitants who are far in advance of ourselves in civilization. Many scientific men think the people of Mars have been trying to signal us for years, only we don’t understand their signals. And great novelists have written about the Martians and their wonderful civilization, and — “

“And they all know as much about that little planet as you do yourself,” interrupted the Demon, impatiently. “The trouble with you Earth people is that you delight in guessing about what you can not know. Now I happen to know all about Mars, because I can traverse all space and have had ample leisure to investigate the different planets. Mars is not peopled at all, nor is any other of the planets you recognize in the heavens. Some contain low orders of beasts, to be sure, but Earth alone has an intelligent, thinking, reasoning population, and your scientists and novelists would do better trying to comprehend their own planet than in groping through space to unravel the mysteries of barren and unimportant worlds.”

Rob listened to this with surprise and disappointment; but he reflected that

the Demon ought to know what he was talking about, so he did not venture to contradict him.

"It is really astonishing," continued the Apparition, "how little you people have learned about electricity. It is an Earth element that has existed since the Earth itself was formed, and if you but understood its proper use humanity would be marvelously benefited in many ways."

"We are, already," protested Rob; "our discoveries in electricity have enabled us to live much more conveniently."

"Then imagine your condition were you able fully to control this great element," replied the other, gravely. "The weaknesses and privations of mankind would be converted into power and luxury."

"That's true, Mr. — Mr. — Demon," said the boy. "Excuse me if I don't get your name right, but I understood you to say you are a demon."

"Certainly. The Demon of Electricity."

"But electricity is a good thing, you know, and — and — "

"Well?"

"I've always understood that demons were bad things," added Rob, boldly.

"Not necessarily," returned his visitor. "If you will take the trouble to consult your dictionary, you will find that demons may be either good or bad, like any other class of beings. Originally all demons were good, yet of late years people have come to consider all demons evil. I do not know why. Should you read Hesiod you will find he says:

'Soon was a world of holy demons made,
Aerial spirits, by great Jove designed
To be on earth the guardians of mankind.'"

"But Jove was himself a myth," objected Rob, who had been studying mythology.

The Demon shrugged his shoulders.

"Then take the words of Mr. Shakespeare, to whom you all defer," he replied. "Do you not remember that he says:

'Thy demon (that's thy spirit which keeps thee) is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable.'"

"Oh, if Shakespeare says it, that's all right," answered the boy. "But it seems you're more like a genius, for you answer the summons of the Master Key of Electricity in the same way Aladdin's genius answered the rubbing of the lamp."

"To be sure. A demon is also a genius; and a genius is a demon," said the

Being. “What matters a name? I am here to do your bidding.”

3. The Three Gifts

Familiarity with any great thing removes our awe of it. The great general is only terrible to the enemy; the great poet is frequently scolded by his wife; the children of the great statesman clamber about his knees with perfect trust and impunity; the great actor who is called before the curtain by admiring audiences is often waylaid at the stage door by his creditors.

So Rob, having conversed for a time with the glorious Demon of Electricity, began to regard him with more composure and less awe, as his eyes grew more and more accustomed to the splendor that at first had well-nigh blinded them.

When the Demon announced himself ready to do the boy's bidding, he frankly replied:

"I am no skilled electrician, as you very well know. My calling you here was an accident. So I don't know how to command you, nor what to ask you to do."

"But I must not take advantage of your ignorance," answered the Demon. "Also, I am quite anxious to utilize this opportunity to show the world what a powerful element electricity really is. So permit me to inform you that, having struck the Master Key, you are at liberty to demand from me three gifts each week for three successive weeks. These gifts, provided they are within the scope of electricity, I will grant."

Rob shook his head regretfully.

"If I were a great electrician I should know what to ask," he said. "But I am too ignorant to take advantage of your kind offer."

"Then," replied the Demon, "I will myself suggest the gifts, and they will be of such a character that the Earth people will learn the possibilities that lie before them and be encouraged to work more intelligently and to persevere in mastering those natural and simple laws which control electricity. For one of the greatest errors they now labor under is that electricity is complicated and hard to understand. It is really the simplest Earth element, lying within easy reach of any one who stretches out his hand to grasp and control its powers."

Rob yawned, for he thought the Demon's speeches were growing rather tiresome. Perhaps the genius noticed this rudeness, for he continued:

"I regret, of course, that you are a boy instead of a grown man, for it will appear singular to your friends that so thoughtless a youth should seemingly have mastered the secrets that have baffled your most learned scientists. But that can not be helped, and presently you will become, through my aid, the most powerful and wonderful personage in all the world."

“Thank you,” said Rob, meekly. “It’ll be no end of fun.”

“Fun!” echoed the Demon, scornfully. “But never mind; I must use the material Fate has provided for me, and make the best of it.”

“What will you give me first?” asked the boy, eagerly.

“That requires some thought,” returned the Demon, and paused for several moments, while Rob feasted his eyes upon the gorgeous rays of color that flashed and vibrated in every direction and surrounded the figure of his visitor with an intense glow that resembled a halo.

Then the Demon raised his head and said:

“The thing most necessary to man is food to nourish his body. He passes a considerable part of his life in the struggle to procure food, to prepare it properly, and in the act of eating. This is not right. Your body can not be very valuable to you if all your time is required to feed it. I shall, therefore, present you, as my first gift, this box of tablets. Within each tablet are stored certain elements of electricity which are capable of nourishing a human body for a full day. All you need do is to toss one into your mouth each day and swallow it. It will nourish you, satisfy your hunger and build up your health and strength. The ordinary food of mankind is more or less injurious; this is entirely beneficial. Moreover, you may carry enough tablets in your pocket to last for months.”

Here he presented Rob the silver box of tablets, and the boy, somewhat nervously, thanked him for the gift.

“The next requirement of man,” continued the Demon, “is defense from his enemies. I notice with sorrow that men frequently have wars and kill one another. Also, even in civilized communities, man is in constant danger from highwaymen, cranks and policemen. To defend himself he uses heavy and dangerous guns, with which to destroy his enemies. This is wrong. He has no right to take away what he can not bestow; to destroy what he can not create. To kill a fellow-creature is a horrid crime, even if done in self-defense. Therefore, my second gift to you is this little tube. You may carry it within your pocket. Whenever an enemy threatens you, be it man or beast, simply point the tube and press this button in the handle. An electric current will instantly be directed upon your foe, rendering him wholly unconscious for the period of one hour. During that time you will have opportunity to escape. As for your enemy, after regaining consciousness he will suffer no inconvenience from the encounter beyond a slight headache.”

“That’s fine!” said Rob, as he took the tube. It was scarcely six inches long, and hollow at one end.

“The busy lives of men,” proceeded the Demon, “require them to move about and travel in all directions. Yet to assist them there are only such crude

and awkward machines as electric trolleys, cable cars, steam railways and automobiles. These crawl slowly over the uneven surface of the earth and frequently get out of order. It has grieved me that men have not yet discovered what even birds know: that the atmosphere offers them swift and easy means of traveling from one part of the earth's surface to another."

"Some people have tried to build airships," remarked Rob.

"So they have; great, unwieldy machines which offer so much resistance to the air that they are quite useless. A big machine is not needed to carry one through the air. There are forces in nature which may be readily used for such purpose. Tell me, what holds you to the Earth, and makes a stone fall to the ground?"

"Attraction of gravitation," said Rob, promptly.

"Exactly. That is one force I refer to," said the Demon. "The force of repulsion, which is little known, but just as powerful, is another that mankind may direct. Then there are the Polar electric forces, attracting objects toward the north or south poles. You have guessed something of this by the use of the compass, or electric needle. Opposed to these is centrifugal electric force, drawing objects from east to west, or in the opposite direction. This force is created by the whirl of the earth upon its axis, and is easily utilized, although your scientific men have as yet paid little attention to it.

"These forces, operating in all directions, absolute and immutable, are at the disposal of mankind. They will carry you through the atmosphere wherever and whenever you choose. That is, if you know how to control them. Now, here is a machine I have myself perfected."

The Demon drew from his pocket something that resembled an open-faced watch, having a narrow, flexible band attached to it.

"When you wish to travel," said he, "attach this little machine to your left wrist by means of the band. It is very light and will not be in your way. On this dial are points marked 'up' and 'down' as well as a perfect compass. When you desire to rise into the air set the indicator to the word 'up,' using a finger of your right hand to turn it. When you have risen as high as you wish, set the indicator to the point of the compass you want to follow and you will be carried by the proper electric force in that direction. To descend, set the indicator to the word 'down.' Do you understand?"

"Perfectly!" cried Rob, taking the machine from the Demon with unfeigned delight. "This is really wonderful, and I'm awfully obliged to you!"

"Don't mention it," returned the Demon, dryly. "These three gifts you may amuse yourself with for the next week. It seems hard to entrust such great scientific discoveries to the discretion of a mere boy; but they are quite

harmless, so if you exercise proper care you can not get into trouble through their possession. And who knows what benefits to humanity may result? One week from to-day, at this hour, I will again appear to you, at which time you shall receive the second series of electrical gifts."

"I'm not sure," said Rob, "that I shall be able again to make the connections that will strike the Master Key."

"Probably not," answered the Demon. "Could you accomplish that, you might command my services forever. But, having once succeeded, you are entitled to the nine gifts — three each week for three weeks — so you have no need to call me to do my duty. I shall appear of my own accord."

"Thank you," murmured the boy.

The Demon bowed and spread his hands in the form of a semi-circle. An instant later there was a blinding flash, and when Rob recovered from it and opened his eyes the Demon of Electricity had disappeared.

4. Testing the Instruments

There is little doubt that this strange experience befallen a grown man he would have been stricken with a fit of trembling or a sense of apprehension, or even fear, at the thought of having faced the terrible Demon of Electricity, of having struck the Master Key of the world's greatest natural forces, and finding himself possessed of three such wonderful and useful gifts. But a boy takes everything as a matter of course. As the tree of knowledge sprouts and expands within him, shooting out leaf after leaf of practical experience, the succession of surprises dulls his faculty of wonderment. It takes a great deal to startle a boy.

Rob was full of delight at his unexpected good fortune; but he did not stop to consider that there was anything remarkably queer or uncanny in the manner in which it had come to him. His chief sensation was one of pride. He would now be able to surprise those who had made fun of his electrical craze and force them to respect his marvelous powers. He decided to say nothing about the Demon or the accidental striking of the Master Key. In exhibiting to his friends the electrical devices he had acquired it would be "no end of fun" to mark their amazement and leave them to guess how he performed his feats.

So he put his treasures into his pocket, locked his workshop and went downstairs to his room to prepare for dinner.

While brushing his hair he remembered it was no longer necessary for him to eat ordinary food. He was feeling quite hungry at that moment, for he had a boy's ravenous appetite; but, taking the silver box from his pocket, he swallowed a tablet and at once felt his hunger as fully satisfied as if he had partaken of a hearty meal, while at the same time he experienced an exhilarating glow throughout his body and a clearness of brain and gaiety of spirits which filled him with intense gratification.

Still, he entered the dining-room when the bell rang and found his father and mother and sisters already assembled there.

"Where have you been all day, Robert?" inquired his mother.

"No need to ask," said Mr. Joslyn, with a laugh. "Fussing over electricity, I'll bet a cookie!"

"I do wish," said the mother, fretfully, "that he would get over that mania. It unfits him for anything else."

"Precisely," returned her husband, dishing the soup; "but it fits him for a great career when he becomes a man. Why shouldn't he spend his summer vacation in pursuit of useful knowledge instead of romping around like ordinary boys?"

“No soup, thank you,” said Rob.

“What!” exclaimed his father, looking at him in surprise, “it’s your favorite soup.”

“I know,” said Rob, quietly, “but I don’t want any.”

“Are you ill, Robert?” asked his mother.

“Never felt better in my life,” answered Rob, truthfully.

Yet Mrs. Joslyn looked worried, and when Rob refused the roast, she was really shocked.

“Let me feel your pulse, my poor boy!” she commanded, and wondered to find it so regular.

In fact, Rob’s action surprised them all. He sat calmly throughout the meal, eating nothing, but apparently in good health and spirits, while even his sisters regarded him with troubled countenances.

“He’s worked too hard, I guess,” said Mr. Joslyn, shaking his head sadly.

“Oh, no; I haven’t,” protested Rob; “but I’ve decided not to eat anything, hereafter. It’s a bad habit, and does more harm than good.”

“Wait till breakfast,” said sister Helen, with a laugh; “you’ll be hungry enough by that time.”

However, the boy had no desire for food at breakfast time, either, as the tablet sufficed for an entire day. So he renewed the anxiety of the family by refusing to join them at the table.

“If this goes on,” Mr Joslyn said to his son, when breakfast was finished, “I shall be obliged to send you away for your health.”

“I think of making a trip this morning,” said Rob, carelessly.

“Where to?”

“Oh, I may go to Boston, or take a run over to Cuba or Jamaica,” replied the boy.

“But you can not go so far by yourself,” declared his father; “and there is no one to go with you, just now. Nor can I spare the money at present for so expensive a trip.”

“Oh, it won’t cost anything,” replied Rob, with a smile.

Mr. Joslyn looked upon him gravely and sighed. Mrs. Joslyn bent over her son with tears in her eyes and said:

“This electrical nonsense has affected your mind, dear. You must promise me to keep away from that horrid workshop for a time.”

“I won’t enter it for a week,” he answered. “But you needn’t worry about me. I haven’t been experimenting with electricity all this time for nothing, I can tell you. As for my health, I’m as well and strong as any boy need be, and there’s nothing wrong with my head, either. Common folks always think great men are crazy, but Edison and Tesla and I don’t pay any attention to

that. We've got our discoveries to look after. Now, as I said, I'm going for a little trip in the interests of science. I may be back to-night, or I may be gone several days. Anyhow, I'll be back in a week, and you mustn't worry about me a single minute."

"How are you going?" inquired his father, in the gentle, soothing tone persons use in addressing maniacs.

"Through the air," said Rob.

His father groaned.

"Where's your balloon?" inquired sister Mabel, sarcastically.

"I don't need a balloon," returned the boy. "That's a clumsy way of traveling, at best. I shall go by electric propulsion."

"Good gracious!" cried Mr. Joslyn, and the mother murmured: "My poor boy! my poor boy!"

"As you are my nearest relatives," continued Rob, not noticing these exclamations, "I will allow you to come into the back yard and see me start. You will then understand something of my electrical powers."

They followed him at once, although with unbelieving faces, and on the way Rob clasped the little machine to his left wrist, so that his coat sleeve nearly hid it.

When they reached the lawn at the back of the house Rob kissed them all good-by, much to his sisters' amusement, and turned the indicator of the little instrument to the word "up."

Immediately he began to rise into the air.

"Don't worry about me!" he called down to them. "Good-by!"

Mrs. Joslyn, with a scream of terror, hid her face in her hands.

"He'll break his neck!" cried the astounded father, tipping back his head to look after his departing son.

"Come back! Come back!" shouted the girls to the soaring adventurer.

"I will — some day!" was the far-away answer.

Having risen high enough to pass over the tallest tree or steeple, Rob put the indicator to the east of the compass-dial and at once began moving rapidly in that direction.

The sensation was delightful. He rode as gently as a feather floats, without any exertion at all on his own part; yet he moved so swiftly that he easily distanced a railway train that was speeding in the same direction.

"This is great!" reflected the youth. "Here I am, traveling in fine style, without a penny to pay any one! And I've enough food to last me a month in my coat pocket. This electricity is the proper stuff, after all! And the Demon's a trump, and no mistake. Whee-ee! How small everything looks down below there. The people are bugs, and the houses are soap-boxes, and

the trees are like clumps of grass. I seem to be passing over a town. Guess I'll drop down a bit, and take in the sights."

He pointed the indicator to the word "down," and at once began dropping through the air. He experienced the sensation one feels while descending in an elevator. When he reached a point just above the town he put the indicator to the zero mark and remained stationary, while he examined the place. But there was nothing to interest him, particularly; so after a brief survey he once more ascended and continued his journey toward the east.

At about two o'clock in the afternoon he reached the city of Boston, and alighting unobserved in a quiet street he walked around for several hours enjoying the sights and wondering what people would think of him if they but knew his remarkable powers. But as he looked just like any other boy no one noticed him in any way.

It was nearly evening, and Rob had wandered down by the wharves to look at the shipping, when his attention was called to an ugly looking bull dog, which ran toward him and began barking ferociously.

"Get out!" said the boy, carelessly, and made a kick at the brute.

The dog uttered a fierce growl and sprang upon him with bared teeth and flashing red eyes. Instantly Rob drew the electric tube from his pocket, pointed it at the dog and pressed the button. Almost at the same moment the dog gave a yelp, rolled over once or twice and lay still.

"I guess that'll settle him," laughed the boy; but just then he heard an angry shout, and looking around saw a policeman running toward him.

"Kill me dog, will ye — eh?" yelled the officer; "well, I'll just run ye in for that same, an' ye'll spend the night in the lockup!" And on he came, with drawn club in one hand and a big revolver in the other.

"You'll have to catch me first," said Rob, still laughing, and to the amazement of the policeman he began rising straight into the air.

"Come down here! Come down, or I'll shoot!" shouted the fellow, flourishing his revolver.

Rob was afraid he would; so, to avoid accidents, he pointed the tube at him and pressed the button. The red-whiskered policeman keeled over quite gracefully and fell across the body of the dog, while Rob continued to mount upward until he was out of sight of those in the streets.

"That was a narrow escape," he thought, breathing more freely. "I hated to paralyze that policeman, but he might have sent a bullet after me. Anyhow, he'll be all right again in an hour, so I needn't worry."

It was beginning to grow dark, and he wondered what he should do next. Had he possessed any money he would have descended to the town and taken a bed at a hotel, but he had left home without a single penny.

Fortunately the nights were warm at this season, so he determined to travel all night, that he might reach by morning some place he had never before visited.

Cuba had always interested him, and he judged it ought to lie in a southeasterly direction from Boston. So he set the indicator to that point and began gliding swiftly toward the southeast.

He now remembered that it was twenty-four hours since he had eaten the first electrical tablet. As he rode through the air he consumed another. All hunger at once left him, while he felt the same invigorating sensations as before.

After a time the moon came out, and Rob amused himself gazing at the countless stars in the sky and wondering if the Demon was right when he said the world was the most important of all the planets.

But presently he grew sleepy, and before he realized what was happening he had fallen into a sound and peaceful slumber, while the indicator still pointed to the southeast and he continued to move rapidly through the cool night air.

5. The Cannibal Island

Doubtless the adventures of the day had tired Rob, for he slept throughout the night as comfortably as if he had been within his own room, lying upon his own bed. When, at last, he opened his eyes and gazed sleepily about him, he found himself over a great body of water, moving along with considerable speed.

"It's the ocean, of course," he said to himself. "I haven't reached Cuba yet."

It is to be regretted that Rob's knowledge of geography was so superficial; for, as he had intended to reach Cuba, he should have taken a course almost southwest from Boston, instead of southeast. The sad result of his ignorance you will presently learn, for during the entire day he continued to travel over a boundless waste of ocean, without the sight of even an island to cheer him.

The sun shone so hot that he regretted he had not brought an umbrella. But he wore a wide-brimmed straw hat, which protected him somewhat, and he finally discovered that by rising to a considerable distance above the ocean he avoided the reflection of the sun upon the water and also came with the current of good breeze.

Of course he dared no stop, for there was no place to land; so he calmly continued his journey.

"It may be I've missed Cuba," he thought; "but I can not change my course now, for if I did I might get lost, and never be able to find land again. If I keep on as I am I shall be sure to reach land of some sort, in time, and when I wish to return home I can set the indicator to the northwest and that will take me directly back to Boston."

This was good reasoning, but the rash youth had no idea he was speeding over the ocean, or that he was destined to arrive shortly at the barbarous island of Brava, off the coast of Africa. Yet such was the case; just as the sun sank over the edge of the waves he saw, to his great relief, a large island directly in his path.

He dropped to a lower position in the air, and when he judged himself to be over the center of the island he turned the indicator to zero and stopped short.

The country was beautifully wooded, while pretty brooks sparkled through the rich green foliage of the trees. The island sloped upwards from the sea-coast in all directions, rising to a hill that was almost a mountain in the center. There were two open spaces, one on each side of the island, and Rob saw that these spaces were occupied by queer-looking huts built from brushwood and branches of trees. This showed that the island was inhabited,

but as Rob had no idea what island it was he wisely determined not to meet the natives until he had discovered what they were like and whether they were disposed to be friendly.

So he moved over the hill, the top of which proved to be a flat, grass-covered plateau about fifty feet in diameter. Finding it could not be easily reached from below, on account of its steep sides, and contained neither men nor animals, he alighted on the hill-top and touched his feet to the earth for the first time in twenty-four hours.

The ride through the air had not tired him in the least; in fact, he felt as fresh and vigorous as if he had been resting throughout the journey. As he walked upon the soft grass of the plateau he felt elated, and compared himself to the explorers of ancient days; for it was evident that civilization had not yet reached this delightful spot.

There was scarcely any twilight in this tropical climate and it grew dark quickly. Within a few minutes the entire island, save where he stood, became dim and indistinct. He ate his daily tablet, and after watching the red glow fade in the western sky and the gray shadows of night settle around him he stretched himself comfortably upon the grass and went to sleep.

The events of the day must have deepened his slumber, for when he awoke the sun was shining almost directly over him, showing that the day was well advanced. He stood up, rubbed the sleep from his eyes and decided he would like a drink of water. From where he stood he could see several little brooks following winding paths through the forest, so he settled upon one that seemed farthest from the brushwood villages, and turning his indicator in that direction soon floated through the air to a sheltered spot upon the bank.

Kneeling down, he enjoyed a long, refreshing drink of the clear water, but as he started to regain his feet a coil of rope was suddenly thrown about him, pinning his arms to his sides and rendering him absolutely helpless.

At the same time his ears were saluted with a wild chattering in an unknown tongue, and he found himself surrounded by a group of natives of hideous appearance. They were nearly naked, and bore spears and heavy clubs as their only weapons. Their hair was long, curly, and thick as bushes, and through their noses and ears were stuck the teeth of sharks and curious metal ornaments.

These creatures had stolen upon Rob so quietly that he had not heard a sound, but now they jabbered loudly, as if much excited.

Finally one fat and somewhat aged native, who seemed to be a chief, came close to Rob and said, in broken English:

“How get here?”

“I flew,” said the boy, with a grin.

The chief shook his head, saying:

“No boat come. How white man come?”

“Through the air,” replied Rob, who was rather flattered at being called a “man.”

The chief looked into the air with a puzzled expression and shook his head again.

“White man lie,” he said calmly.

Then he held further conversation with his fellows, after which he turned to Rob and announced:

“Me see white man many times. Come in big boats. White man all bad. Make kill with bang-sticks. We kill white man with club. Then we eat white man. Dead white man good. Live white man bad!”

This did not please Rob at all. The idea of being eaten by savages had never occurred to him as a sequel to his adventures. So he said rather anxiously to the chief.

“Look here, old fellow; do you want to die?”

“Me no die. You die,” was the reply.

“You’ll die, too, if you eat me,” said Rob. “I’m full of poison.”

“Poison? Don’t know poison,” returned the chief, much perplexed to understand him.

“Well, poison will make you sick — awful sick. Then you’ll die. I’m full of it; eat it every day for breakfast. It don’t hurt white men, you see, but it kills black men quicker than the bang-stick.”

The chief listened to this statement carefully, but only understood it in part. After a moment’s reflection he declared:

“White man lie. Lie all time. Me eat plenty white man. Never get sick; never die.” Then he added, with renewed cheerfulness: “Me eat you, too!”

Before Rob could think of a further protest, his captors caught up the end of the rope and led him away through the forest. He was tightly bound, and one strand of rope ran across the machine on his wrist and pressed it into his flesh until the pain was severe. But he resolved to be brave, whatever happened, so he stumbled along after the savages without a word.

After a brief journey they came to a village, where Rob was thrust into a brushwood hut and thrown upon the ground, still tightly bound.

“We light fire,” said the chief. “Then kill little white man. Then eat him.”

With this comforting promise he went away and left Rob alone to think the matter over.

“This is tough,” reflected the boy, with a groan. “I never expected to feed cannibals. Wish I was at home with mother and dad and the girls. Wish I’d

never seen the Demon of Electricity and his wonderful inventions. I was happy enough before I struck that awful Master Key. And now I'll be eaten — with salt and pepper, probably. Wonder if there'll be any gravy. Perhaps they'll boil me, with biscuits, as mother does chickens. Oh-h-h-h-h! It's just awful!"

In the midst of these depressing thoughts he became aware that something was hurting his back. After rolling over he found that he had been lying upon a sharp stone that stuck out of the earth. This gave him an idea. He rolled upon the stone again and began rubbing the rope that bound him against the sharp edge.

Outside he could hear the crackling of fagots and the roar of a newly-kindled fire, so he knew he had no time to spare. He wriggled and pushed his body right and left, right and left, sawing away at the rope, until the strain and exertion started the perspiration from every pore.

At length the rope parted, and hastily uncoiling it from his body Rob stood up and rubbed his benumbed muscles and tried to regain his lost breath. He had not freed himself a moment too soon, he found, for hearing a grunt of surprise behind him he turned around and saw a native standing in the door of the hut.

Rob laughed, for he was not a bit afraid of the blacks now. As the native made a rush toward him the boy drew the electric tube from his pocket, pointed it at the foe, and pressed the button. The fellow sank to the earth without even a groan, and lay still.

Then another black entered, followed by the fat chief. When they saw Rob at liberty, and their comrade lying apparently dead, the chief cried out in surprise, using some expressive words in his own language.

"If it's just the same to you, old chap," said Rob, coolly, "I won't be eaten to-day. You can make a pie of that fellow on the ground."

"No! We eat you," cried the chief, angrily. "You cut rope, but no get away; no boat!"

"I don't need a boat, thank you," said the boy; and then, as the other native sprang forward, he pointed the tube and laid him out beside his first victim.

At this act the chief stood an instant in amazed uncertainty. Then he turned and rushed from the hut.

Laughing with amusement at the waddling, fat figure, Rob followed the chief and found himself standing almost in the center of the native village. A big fire was blazing merrily and the blacks were busy making preparations for a grand feast.

Rob was quickly surrounded by a crowd of the villagers, who chattered

fiercely and made threatening motions in his direction; but as the chief cried out to them a warning in the native tongue they kept a respectful distance and contented themselves with brandishing their spears and clubs.

"If any of your fellows come nearer," Rob said to the fat chief, "I'll knock 'em over."

"What you make do?" asked the chief, nervously.

"Watch sharp, and you'll see," answered Rob. Then he made a mocking bow to the circle and continued: "I'm pleased to have met you fellows, and proud to think you like me well enough to want to eat me; but I'm in a bit of a hurry to-day, so I can't stop to be digested." After which, as the crowd broke into a hum of surprise, he added: "Good-day, black folks!" and quickly turned the indicator of his traveling machine to the word "up."

Slowly he rose into the air, until his heels were just above the gaping blacks; but there he stopped short. With a thrill of fear he glanced at the indicator. It was pointed properly, and he knew at once that something was wrong with the delicate mechanism that controlled it. Probably the pressure of the rope across its face, when he was bound, had put it out of order. There he was, seven feet in the air, but without the power to rise an inch farther.

This short flight, however, had greatly astonished the blacks, who, seeing his body suspended in mid-air, immediately hailed him as a god, and prostrated themselves upon the ground before him.

The fat chief had seen something of white men in his youth, and had learned to mistrust them. So, while he remained as prostrate as the rest, he peeped at Rob with one of his little black eyes and saw that the boy was ill at ease, and seemed both annoyed and frightened.

So he muttered some orders to the man next him, who wriggled along the ground until he had reached a position behind Rob, when he rose and pricked the suspended "god" with the point of his spear.

"Ouch!" yelled the boy; "stop that!"

He twisted his head around, and seeing the black again make a movement with the spear, Rob turned his electric tube upon him and keeled him over like a ten-pin.

The natives, who had looked up at his cry of pain, again prostrated themselves, kicking their toes against the ground in a terrified tattoo at this new evidence of the god's powers.

The situation was growing somewhat strained by this time, and Rob did not know what the savages would decide to do next; so he thought it best to move away from them, since he was unable to rise to a greater height. He turned the indicator towards the south, where a level space appeared between the trees; but instead of taking that direction he moved towards the northeast,

a proof that his machine had now become absolutely unreliable. Moreover, he was slowly approaching the fire, which, although it had ceased blazing, was a mass of glowing red embers.

In his excitement he turned the indicator this way and that, trying to change the direction of his flight, but the only result of his endeavor was to carry him directly over the fire, where he came to a full stop.

“Murder! Help! Fire and blazes!” he cried, as he felt the glow of the coals beneath him. “I’ll be roasted, after all! Here; help, Fatty, help!”

The fat chief sprang to his feet and came to the rescue. He reached up, caught Rob by the heels, and pulled him down to the ground, away from the fire. But the next moment, as he clung to the boy’s feet, they both soared into the air again, and, although now far enough from the fire to escape its heat, the savage, finding himself lifted from the earth, uttered a scream of horror and let go of Rob, to fall head over heels upon the ground.

The other blacks had by this time regained their feet, and now they crowded around their chief and set him upright again.

Rob continued to float in the air, just above their heads, and now abandoned all thoughts of escaping by means of his wrecked traveling machine. But he resolved to regain a foothold upon the earth and take his chances of escape by running rather than flying. So he turned the indicator to the word “down,” and very slowly it obeyed, allowing him, to his great relief, to sink gently to the ground.

6. The Buccaneers

Once more the blacks formed a circle around our adventurer, who coolly drew his tube and said to the chief:

"Tell your people I'm going to walk away through those trees, and if any one dares to interfere with me I'll paralyze him."

The chief understood enough English to catch his meaning, and repeated the message to his men. Having seen the terrible effect of the electric tube they wisely fell back and allowed the boy to pass.

He marched through their lines with a fine air of dignity, although he was fearful lest some of the blacks should stick a spear into him or bump his head with a war-club. But they were awed by the wonders they had seen and were still inclined to believe him a god, so he was not molested.

When he found himself outside the village he made for the high plateau in the center of the island, where he could be safe from the cannibals while he collected his thoughts. But when he reached the place he found the sides so steep he could not climb them, so he adjusted the indicator to the word "up" and found it had still had enough power to support his body while he clambered up the rocks to the level, grass-covered space at the top.

Then, reclining upon his back, he gave himself up to thoughts of how he might escape from his unpleasant predicament.

"Here I am, on a cannibal island, hundreds of miles from civilization, with no way to get back," he reflected. "The family will look for me every day, and finally decide I've broken my neck. The Demon will call upon me when the week is up and won't find me at home; so I'll miss the next three gifts. I don't mind that so much, for they might bring me into worst scrapes than this. But how am I to get away from this beastly island? I'll be eaten, after all, if I don't look out!"

These and similar thoughts occupied him for some time, yet in spite of much planning and thinking he could find no practical means of escape.

At the end of an hour he looked over the edge of the plateau and found it surrounded by a ring of the black cannibals, who had calmly seated themselves to watch his movements.

"Perhaps they intend to starve me into surrender," he thought; "but they won't succeed so long as my tablets hold out. And if, in time, they should starve me, I'll be too thin and tough to make good eating; so I'll get the best of them, anyhow."

Then he again lay down and began to examine his electrical traveling machine. He did not dare take it apart, fearing he might not be able to get it together again, for he knew nothing at all about its construction. But he

discovered two little dents on the edge, one on each side, which had evidently been caused by the pressure of the rope.

"If I could get those dents out," he thought, "the machine might work."

He first tried to pry out the edges with his pocket knife, but the attempt resulted in failure, Then, as the sides seemed a little bulged outward by the dents, he placed the machine between two flat stones and pressed them together until the little instrument was nearly round again. The dents remained, to be sure, but he hoped he had removed the pressure upon the works.

There was just one way to discover how well he had succeeded, so he fastened the machine to his wrist and turned the indicator to the word "up."

Slowly he ascended, this time to a height of nearly twenty feet. Then his progress became slower and finally ceased altogether.

"That's a little better," he thought. "Now let's see if it will go sidewise."

He put the indicator to "north-west," — the direction of home — and very slowly the machine obeyed and carried him away from the plateau and across the island.

The natives saw him go, and springing to their feet began uttering excited shouts and throwing their spears at him. But he was already so high and so far away that they failed to reach him, and the boy continued his journey unharmed.

Once the branches of a tall tree caught him and nearly tipped him over; but he managed to escape others by drawing up his feet. At last he was free of the island and traveling over the ocean again. He was not at all sorry to bid good-by to the cannibal island, but he was worried about the machine, which clearly was not in good working order. The vast ocean was beneath him, and he moved no faster than an ordinary walk.

"At this rate I'll get home some time next year," he grumbled. "However, I suppose I ought to be glad the machine works at all." And he really was glad.

All the afternoon and all the long summer night he moved slowly over the water. It was annoying to go at "a reg'lar jog-trot," as Rob called it, after his former swift flight; but there was no help for it.

Just as dawn was breaking he saw in the distance a small vessel, sailing in the direction he was following, yet scarcely moving for lack of wind. He soon caught up with it, but saw no one on deck, and the craft had a dingy and uncared-for appearance that was not reassuring. But after hovering over it for some time Rob decided to board the ship and rest for a while. He alighted near the bow, where the deck was highest, and was about to explore the place when a man came out of the low cabin and espied him.

This person had a most villainous countenance, and was dark-skinned, black-bearded and dressed in an outlandish, piratical costume. On seeing the boy he gave a loud shout and was immediately joined by four companions, each as disagreeable in appearance as the first.

Rob knew there would be trouble the moment he looked at this evil crew, and when they drew their daggers and pistols and began fiercely shouting in an unknown tongue, the boy sighed and took the electric tube from his coat pocket.

The buccaneers did not notice the movement, but rushed upon him so quickly that he had to press the button at a lively rate. The tube made no noise at all, so it was a strange and remarkable sight to see the pirates suddenly drop to the deck and lie motionless. Indeed, one was so nearly upon him when the electric current struck him that his head, in falling, bumped into Rob's stomach and sent him reeling against the side of the vessel.

He quickly recovered himself, and seeing his enemies were rendered harmless, the boy entered the cabin and examined it curiously. It was dirty and ill-smelling enough, but the corners and spare berths were heaped with merchandise of all kinds which had been taken from those so unlucky as to have met these cruel and desperate men.

After a short inspection of the place he returned to the deck and again seated himself in the bow.

The crippled condition of his traveling machine was now his chief trouble, and although a good breeze had sprung up to fill the sails and the little bark was making fair headway, Rob knew he could never expect to reach home unless he could discover a better mode of conveyance than this.

He unstrapped the machine from his wrist to examine it better, and while holding it carelessly in his hand it slipped and fell with a bang to the deck, striking upon its round edge and rolling quickly past the cabin and out of sight. With a cry of alarm he ran after it, and after much search found it lying against the bulwark near the edge of a scupper hole, where the least jar of the ship would have sent it to the bottom of the ocean. Rob hastily seized his treasure and upon examining it found the fall had bulged the rim so that the old dents scarcely showed at all. But its original shape was more distorted than ever, and Rob feared he had utterly ruined its delicate mechanism. Should this prove to be true, he might now consider himself a prisoner of this piratical band, the members of which, although temporarily disabled, would soon regain consciousness.

He sat in the bow, sadly thinking of his misfortunes, until he noticed that one of the men began to stir. The effect of the electric shock conveyed by the tube was beginning to wear away, and now the buccaneer sat up, rubbed his

head in a bewildered fashion and looked around him. When he saw Rob he gave a shout of rage and drew his knife, but one motion of the electric tube made him cringe and slip away to the cabin, where he remained out of danger.

And now the other four sat up, groaning and muttering in their outlandish speech; But they had no notion of facing Rob's tube a second time, so one by one they joined their leader in the cabin, leaving the boy undisturbed.

By this time the ship had begun to pitch and toss in an uncomfortable fashion, and Rob noticed that the breeze had increased to a gale. There being no one to look after the sails, the vessel was in grave danger of capsizing or breaking her masts. The waves were now running high, too, and Rob began to be worried.

Presently the captain of the pirates stuck his head out of the cabin door, jabbered some unintelligible words and pointed to the sails. The boy nodded, for he understood they wanted to attend to the rigging. So the crew trooped forth, rather fearfully, and began to reef the sails and put the ship into condition to weather the storm.

Rob paid no further attention to them. He looked at his traveling machine rather doubtfully and wondered if he dared risk its power to carry him through the air. Whether he remained in the ship or trusted to the machine, he stood a good chance of dropping into the sea at any moment. So, while he hesitated, he attached the machine to his wrist and leaned over the bulwarks to watch the progress of the storm. He might stay in the ship until it foundered, he thought, and then take his chances with the machine. He decided to wait until a climax arrived.

The climax came the next moment, for while he leaned over the bulwarks the buccaneers stole up behind him and suddenly seized him in their grasp. While two of them held his arms the others searched his pockets, taking from him the electric tube and the silver box containing his tablets. These they carried to the cabin and threw upon the heap of other valuables they had stolen. They did not notice his traveling machine, however, but seeing him now unarmed they began jeering and laughing at him, while the brutal captain relieved his anger by giving the prisoner several malicious kicks.

Rob bore his misfortune meekly, although he was almost ready to cry with grief and disappointment. But when one of the pirates, to inflict further punishment on the boy, came towards him with a heavy strap, he resolved not to await the blow.

Turning the indicator to the word "up" he found, to his joy and relief, that it would yet obey the influence of the power of repulsion. Seeing him rise into the air the fellow made a grab for his foot and held it firmly, while his

companions ran to help him. Weight seemed to make no difference in the machine; it lifted the pirate as well as Rob; it lifted another who clung to the first man's leg, and another who clung to him. The other two also caught hold, hoping their united strength would pull him down, and the next minute Rob was soaring through the air with the entire string of five buccaneers dangling from his left leg.

At first the villains were too astounded to speak, but as they realized that they were being carried through the air and away from their ship they broke into loud shouts of dismay, and finally the one who grasped Rob's leg lost his hold and the five plunged downward and splashed into the sea.

Finding the machine disposed to work accurately, Rob left the buccaneers to swim to the ship in the best way they could, while he dropped down to the deck again and recovered from the cabin his box of tablets and the electric tube. The fellows were just scrambling on board when he again escaped, shooting into the air with considerable speed.

Indeed, the instrument now worked better than at any time since he had reached the cannibal island, and the boy was greatly delighted.

The wind at first sent him spinning away to the south, but he continued to rise until he was above the air currents, and the storm raged far beneath him. Then he set the indicator to the northwest and breathlessly waited to see if it would obey. Hurrah! away he sped at a fair rate of speed, while all his anxiety changed to a feeling of sweet contentment.

His success had greatly surprised him, but he concluded that the jar caused by dropping the instrument had relieved the pressure upon the works, and so helped rather than harmed the free action of the electric currents.

While he moved through the air with an easy, gliding motion he watched with much interest the storm raging below. Above his head the sun was peacefully shining and the contrast was strange and impressive. After an hour or so the storm abated, or else he passed away from it, for the deep blue of the ocean again greeted his eyes. He dropped downward until he was about a hundred feet above the water, when he continued his northwesterly course.

But now he regretted having interfered for a moment with the action of the machine, for his progress, instead of being swift as a bird's flight, became slow and jerky, nor was he sure that the damaged machine might not break down altogether at any moment. Yet so far his progress was in the right direction, and he resolved to experiment no further with the instrument, but to let it go as it would, so long as it supported him above the water. However irregular the motion might be, it was sure, if continued, to bring him to land in time, and that was all he cared about just then.

When night fell his slumber was broken and uneasy, for he wakened more

than once with a start of fear that the machine had broken and he was falling into the sea. Sometimes he was carried along at a swift pace, and again the machine scarcely worked at all; so his anxiety was excusable.

The following day was one of continued uneasiness for the boy, who began to be harrassed by doubts as to whether, after all, he was moving in the right direction. The machine had failed at one time in this respect and it might again. He had lost all confidence in its accuracy.

In spite of these perplexities Rob passed the second night of his uneven flight in profound slumber, being exhausted by the strain and excitement he had undergone. When he awoke at daybreak, he saw, to his profound delight, that he was approaching land.

The rising sun found him passing over a big city, which he knew to be Boston.

He did not stop. The machine was so little to be depended upon that he dared make no halt. But he was obliged to alter the direction from northwest to west, and the result of this slight change was so great a reduction in speed that it was mid-day before he saw beneath him the familiar village in which he lived.

Carefully marking the location of his father's house, he came to a stop directly over it, and a few moments later he managed to land upon the exact spot in the back yard whence he had taken his first successful flight.

7. The Demon Becomes Angry

When Rob had been hugged and kissed by his mother and sisters, and even Mr. Joslyn had embraced him warmly, he gave them a brief account of his adventures. The story was received with many doubtful looks and much grave shaking of heads, as was quite natural under the circumstances.

"I hope, my dear son," said the father, "that you have now passed through enough dangers to last you a lifetime, so that hereafter you will be contented to remain at home."

"Oh, Robert!" cried his mother, with tears in her loving eyes, "you don't know how we've all worried about you for the past week!"

"A week?" asked Rob, with surprise.

"Yes; it's a week to-morrow morning since you flew into the air and disappeared."

"Then," said the boy, thoughtfully, "I've reached home just in time."

"In time for what?" she asked.

But he did not answer that question. He was thinking of the Demon, and that on the afternoon of this very day he might expect the wise and splendid genius to visit him a second time.

At luncheon, although he did not feel hungry, he joined the family at the table and pleased his mother by eating as heartily as of old. He was surprised to find how good the food tasted, and to realize what a pleasure it is to gratify one's sense of taste. The tablets were all right for a journey, he thought, but if he always ate them he would be sure to miss a great deal of enjoyment, since there was no taste to them at all.

At four o'clock he went to his workshop and unlocked the door. Everything was exactly as he had left it, and he looked at his simple electrical devices with some amusement. They seemed tame beside the wonders now in his possession; yet he recollected that his numerous wires had enabled him to strike the Master Key, and therefore should not be despised.

Before long he noticed a quickening in the air, as if it were suddenly surcharged with electric fluid, and the next instant, in a dazzling flash of light, appeared the Demon.

"I am here!" he announced.

"So am I," answered Rob. "But at one time I really thought I should never see you again. I've been — "

"Spare me your history," said the Demon, coldly. "I am aware of your adventures."

"Oh, you are!" said Rob, amazed. "Then you know — "

“I know all about your foolish experiences,” interrupted the Demon, “for I have been with you constantly, although I remained invisible.”

“Then you know what a jolly time I’ve had,” returned the boy. “But why do you call them foolish experiences?”

“Because they were, abominably foolish!” retorted the Demon, bitterly. “I entrusted to you gifts of rare scientific interest — electrical devices of such utility that their general adoption by mankind would create a new era in earth life. I hoped your use of these devices would convey such hints to electrical engineers that they would quickly comprehend their mechanism and be able to reproduce them in sufficient quantities to supply the world. And how do you treat these marvelous gifts? Why, you carry them to a cannibal island, where even your crude civilization has not yet penetrated!”

“I wanted to astonish the natives,” said Rob, grinning.

The Demon uttered an exclamation of anger, and stamped his foot so fiercely that thousands of electric sparks filled the air, to disappear quickly with a hissing, crinkling sound.

“You might have astonished those ignorant natives as easily by showing them an ordinary electric light,” he cried, mockingly. “The power of your gifts would have startled the most advanced electricians of the world. Why did you waste them upon barbarians?”

“Really,” faltered Rob, who was frightened and awed by the Demon’s vehement anger, “I never intended to visit a cannibal island. I meant to go to Cuba.”

“Cuba! Is that a center of advanced scientific thought? Why did you not take your marvels to New York or Chicago; or, if you wished to cross the ocean, to Paris or Vienna?”

“I never thought of those places,” acknowledged Rob, meekly.

“Then you were foolish, as I said,” declared the Demon, in a calmer tone. “Can you not realize that it is better to be considered great by the intelligent thinkers of the earth, than to be taken for a god by stupid cannibals?”

“Oh, yes, of course,” said Rob. “I wish now that I had gone to Europe. But you’re not the only one who has a kick coming,” he continued. “Your flimsy traveling machine was nearly the death of me.”

“Ah, it is true,” acknowledged the Demon, frankly. “The case was made of too light material. When the rim was bent it pressed against the works and impeded the proper action of the currents. Had you gone to a civilized country such an accident could not have happened; but to avoid possible trouble in the future I have prepared a new instrument, having a stronger case, which I will exchange for the one you now have.”

“That’s very kind of you,” said Rob, eagerly handing his battered machine

to the Demon and receiving the new one in return. “Are you sure this will work?”

“It is impossible for you to injure it,” answered the other.

“And how about the next three gifts?” inquired the boy, anxiously.

“Before I grant them,” replied the Demon, “you must give me a promise to keep away from uncivilized places and to exhibit your acquirements only among people of intelligence.”

“All right,” agreed the boy; “I’m not anxious to visit that island again, or any other uncivilized country.”

“Then I will add to your possessions three gifts, each more precious and important than the three you have already received.”

At this announcement Rob began to quiver with excitement, and sat staring eagerly at the Demon, while the latter increased in stature and sparkled and glowed more brilliantly than ever.

8. Rob Acquires New Powers

"I have seen the folly of sending you into the world with an offensive instrument, yet with no method of defense," resumed the Demon, presently. "You have knocked over a good many people with that tube during the past week."

"I know," said Rob; "but I couldn't help it. It was the only way I had to protect myself."

"Therefore my next gift shall be this Garment of Protection. You must wear it underneath your clothing. It has power to accumulate and exercise electrical repellent force. Perhaps you do not know what that means, so I will explain more fully. When any missile, such as a bullet, sword or lance, approaches your person, its rush through the air will arouse the repellent force of which I speak, and this force, being more powerful than the projective force, will arrest the flight of the missile and throw it back again. Therefore nothing can touch your person that comes with any degree of force or swiftness, and you will be safe from all ordinary weapons. When wearing this Garment you will find it unnecessary to use the electric tube except on rare occasions. Never allow revenge or animosity to influence your conduct. Men may threaten, but they can not injure you, so you must remember that they do not possess your mighty advantages, and that, because of your strength, you should bear with them patiently."

Rob examined the garment with much curiosity. It glittered like silver, yet was soft and pliable as lamb's wool. Evidently the Demon had prepared it especially for his use, for it was just Rob's size.

"Now," continued the Demon, more gravely, "we approach the subject of an electrical device so truly marvelous that even I am awed when I contemplate the accuracy and perfection of the natural laws which guide it and permit it to exercise its functions. Mankind has as yet conceived nothing like it, for it requires full knowledge of electrical power to understand even its possibilities."

The Being paused, and drew from an inner pocket something resembling a flat metal box. In size it was about four inches by six, and nearly an inch in thickness.

"What is it?" asked Rob, wonderingly.

"It is an automatic Record of Events," answered the Demon.

"I don't understand," said Rob, with hesitation.

"I will explain to you its use," returned the Demon, "although the electrical forces which operate it and the vibratory currents which are the true records must remain unknown to you until your brain has mastered the

higher knowledge of electricity. At present the practical side of this invention will be more interesting to you than a review of its scientific construction.

"Suppose you wish to know the principal events that are occurring in Germany at the present moment. You first turn this little wheel at the side until the word 'Germany' appears in the slot at the small end. Then open the top cover, which is hinged, and those passing events in which you are interested will appear before your eyes."

The Demon, as he spoke, opened the cover, and, looking within, the boy saw, as in a mirror, a moving picture before him. A regiment of soldiers was marching through the streets of Berlin, and at its head rode a body of horsemen, in the midst of which was the Emperor himself. The people who thronged the sidewalks cheered and waved their hats and handkerchiefs with enthusiasm, while a band of musicians played a German air, which Rob could distinctly hear.

While he gazed, spell-bound, the scene changed, and he looked upon a great warship entering a harbor with flying pennants. The rails were lined with officers and men straining their eyes for the first sight of their beloved "VATERLAND" after a long foreign cruise, and a ringing cheer, as from a thousand throats, came faintly to Rob's ear.

Again the scene changed, and within a dingy, underground room, hemmed in by walls of stone, and dimly lighted by a flickering lamp, a body of wild-eyed, desperate men were plighting an oath to murder the Emperor and overthrow his government.

"Anarchists?" asked Rob, trembling with excitement.

"Anarchists!" answered the Demon, with a faint sneer, and he shut the cover of the Record with a sudden snap.

"It's wonderful!" cried the boy, with a sigh that was followed by a slight shiver.

"The Record is, indeed, proof within itself of the marvelous possibilities of electricity. Men are now obliged to depend upon newspapers for information; but these can only relate events long after they have occurred. And newspaper statements are often unreliable and sometimes wholly false, while many events of real importance are never printed in their columns. You may guess what an improvement is this automatic Record of Events, which is as reliable as Truth itself. Nothing can be altered or falsified, for the vibratory currents convey the actual events to your vision, even as they happen."

"But suppose," said Rob, "that something important should happen while I'm asleep, or not looking at the box?"

"I have called this a Record," replied the Demon, "and such it really is,

although I have shown you only such events as are in process of being recorded. By pressing this spring you may open the opposite cover of the box, where all events of importance that have occurred throughout the world during the previous twenty-four hours will appear before you in succession. You may thus study them at your leisure. The various scenes constitute a register of the world's history, and may be recalled to view as often as you desire."

"It's — it's like knowing everything," murmured Rob, deeply impressed for perhaps the first time in his life.

"It IS knowing everything," returning the Demon; "and this mighty gift I have decided to entrust to your care. Be very careful as to whom you permit to gaze upon these pictures of passing events, for knowledge may often cause great misery to the human race."

"I'll be careful," promised the boy, as he took the box reverently within his own hands.

"The third and last gift of the present series," resumed the Demon, "is one no less curious than the Record of Events, although it has an entirely different value. It is a Character Marker."

"What's that?" inquired Rob.

"I will explain. Perhaps you know that your fellow-creatures are more or less hypocritical. That is, they try to appear good when they are not, and wise when in reality they are foolish. They tell you they are friendly when they positively hate you, and try to make you believe they are kind when their natures are cruel. This hypocrisy seems to be a human failing. One of your writers has said, with truth, that among civilized people things are seldom what they seem."

"I've heard that," remarked Rob.

"On the other hand," continued the Demon, "some people with fierce countenances are kindly by nature, and many who appear to be evil are in reality honorable and trustworthy. Therefore, that you may judge all your fellow-creatures truly, and know upon whom to depend, I give you the Character Marker. It consists of this pair of spectacles. While you wear them every one you meet will be marked upon the forehead with a letter indicating his or her character. The good will bear the letter 'G,' the evil the letter 'E.' The wise will be marked with a 'W' and the foolish with an 'F.' The kind will show a 'K' upon their foreheads and the cruel a letter 'C.' Thus you may determine by a single look the true natures of all those you encounter."

"And are these, also, electrical in their construction?" asked the boy, as he took the spectacles.

"Certainly. Goodness, wisdom and kindness are natural forces, creating

character. For this reason men are not always to blame for bad character, as they acquire it unconsciously. All character sends out certain electrical vibrations, which these spectacles concentrate in their lenses and exhibit to the gaze of their wearer, as I have explained."

"It's a fine idea," said the boy; "who discovered it?"

"It is a fact that has always existed, but is now utilized for the first time."

"Oh!" said Rob.

"With these gifts, and the ones you acquired a week ago, you are now equipped to astound the world and awaken mankind to a realization of the wonders that may be accomplished by natural forces. See that you employ these powers wisely, in the interests of science, and do not forget your promise to exhibit your electrical marvels only to those who are most capable of comprehending them."

"I'll remember," said Rob.

"Then adieu until a week from to-day, when I will meet you here at this hour and bestow upon you the last three gifts which you are entitled to receive. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" repeated Rob, and in a gorgeous flash of color the Demon disappeared, leaving the boy alone in the room with his new and wonderful possessions.

9. The Second Journey

By this time you will have gained a fair idea of Rob's character. He is, in truth, a typical American boy, possessing an average intelligence not yet regulated by the balance-wheel of experience. The mysteries of electricity were so attractive to his eager nature that he had devoted considerable time and some study to electrical experiment; but his study was the superficial kind that seeks to master only such details as may be required at the moment. Moreover, he was full of boyish recklessness and irresponsibility and therefore difficult to impress with the dignity of science and the gravity of human existence. Life, to him, was a great theater wherein he saw himself the most interesting if not the most important actor, and so enjoyed the play with unbounded enthusiasm.

Aside from the extraordinary accident which had forced the Electrical Demon into this life, Rob may be considered one of those youngsters who might possibly develop into a brilliant manhood or enter upon an ordinary, humdrum existence, as Fate should determine. Just at present he had no thought beyond the passing hour, nor would he bother himself by attempting to look ahead or plan for the future.

Yet the importance of his electrical possessions and the stern injunction of the Demon to use them wisely had rendered the boy more thoughtful than at any previous time during his brief life, and he became so preoccupied at the dinner table that his father and mother cast many anxious looks in his direction.

Of course Rob was anxious to test his newly-acquired powers, and decided to lose no time in starting upon another journey. But he said nothing to any of the family about it, fearing to meet with opposition.

He passed the evening in the sitting-room, in company with his father and mother and sisters, and even controlled his impatience to the extent of playing a game of carom with Nell; but he grew so nervous and impatient at last that his sister gave up the game in disgust and left him to his own amusement.

At one time he thought of putting on the electric spectacles and seeing what the real character of each member of his family might be; but a sudden fear took possession of him that he might regret the act forever afterward. They were his nearest and dearest friends on earth, and in his boyish heart he loved them all and believed in their goodness and sincerity. The possibility of finding a bad character mark on any of their familiar faces made him shudder, and he determined then and there never to use the spectacles to view the face of a friend or relative. Had any one, at that moment, been gazing at

Rob through the lenses of the wonderful Character Marker, I am sure a big "W" would have been found upon the boy's forehead.

When the family circle broke up, and all retired for the night, Rob kissed his parents and sisters with real affection before going to his own room. But, on reaching his cozy little chamber, instead of preparing for bed Rob clothed himself in the Garment of Repulsion. Then he covered the glittering Garment with his best summer suit of clothes, which effectually concealed it.

He now looked around to see what else he should take, and thought of an umbrella, a rain-coat, a book or two to read during the journey, and several things besides; but he ended by leaving them all behind.

"I can't be loaded down with so much truck," he decided; "and I'm going into civilized countries, this time, where I can get anything I need."

However, to prevent a recurrence of the mistake he had previously made, he tore a map of the world and a map of Europe from his geography, and, folding them up, placed them in his pocket. He also took a small compass that had once been a watch-charm, and, finally, the contents of a small iron bank that opened with a combination lock. This represented all his savings, amounting to two dollars and seventeen cents in dimes, nickles and pennies.

"It isn't a fortune," he thought, as he counted it up, "but I didn't need any money the last trip, so perhaps I'll get along somehow. I don't like to tackle Dad for more, for he might ask questions and try to keep me at home."

By the time he had finished his preparations and stowed all his electrical belongings in his various pockets, it was nearly midnight and the house was quiet. So Rob stole down stairs in his stocking feet and noiselessly opened the back door.

It was a beautiful July night and, in addition to the light of the full moon, the sky was filled with the radiance of countless thousands of brilliant stars.

After Rob had put on his shoes he unfolded the map, which was plainly visible by the starlight, and marked the direction he must take to cross the Atlantic and reach London, his first stopping place. Then he consulted his compass, put the indicator of his traveling machine to the word "up," and shot swiftly into the air. When he had reached a sufficient height he placed the indicator to a point north of east and, with a steady and remarkably swift flight, began his journey.

"Here goes," he remarked, with a sense of exaltation, "for another week of adventure! I wonder what'll happen between now and next Saturday."

10. How Rob Served a Mighty King

The new traveling machine was a distinct improvement over the old one, for it carried Rob with wonderful speed across the broad Atlantic.

He fell asleep soon after starting, and only wakened when the sun was high in the heavens. But he found himself whirling along at a good rate, with the greenish shimmer of the peaceful ocean waves spread beneath him far beyond his range of vision.

Being in the track of the ocean steamers it was not long before he found himself overtaking a magnificent vessel whose decks were crowded with passengers. He dropped down some distance, to enable him to see these people more plainly, and while he hovered near he could hear the excited exclamations of the passengers, who focused dozens of marine glasses upon his floating form. This inspection somewhat embarrassed him, and having no mind to be stared at he put on additional speed and soon left the steamer far behind him.

About noon the sky clouded over, and Rob feared a rainstorm was approaching. So he rose to a point considerably beyond the clouds, where the air was thin but remarkably pleasant to inhale and the rays of the sun were not so hot as when reflected by the surface of the water.

He could see the dark clouds rolling beneath him like volumes of smoke from a factory chimney, and knew the earth was catching a severe shower of rain; yet he congratulated himself on his foresight in not being burdened with umbrella or raincoat, since his elevated position rendered him secure from rain-clouds.

But, having cut himself off from the earth, there remained nothing to see except the clear sky overhead and the tumbling clouds beneath; so he took from his pocket the Automatic Record of Events, and watched with breathless interest the incidents occurring in different parts of the world. A big battle was being fought in the Philippines, and so fiercely was it contested that Rob watched its progress for hours, with rapt attention. Finally a brave rally by the Americans sent their foes to the cover of the woods, where they scattered in every direction, only to form again in a deep valley hidden by high hills.

“If only I was there,” thought Rob, “I could show that captain where to find the rebels and capture them. But I guess the Philippines are rather out of my way, so our soldiers will never know how near they are to a complete victory.”

The boy also found considerable amusement in watching the course of an insurrection in Venezuela, where opposing armies of well-armed men

preferred to bluster and threaten rather than come to blows.

During the evening he found that an "important event" was Madame Bernhardt's production of a new play, and Rob followed it from beginning to end with great enjoyment, although he felt a bit guilty at not having purchased a ticket.

"But it's a crowded house, anyway," he reflected, "and I'm not taking up a reserved seat or keeping any one else from seeing the show. So where's the harm? Yet it seems to me if these Records get to be common, as the Demon wishes, people will all stay at home and see the shows, and the poor actors 'll starve to death."

The thought made him uneasy, and he began, for the first time, to entertain a doubt of the Demon's wisdom in forcing such devices upon humanity.

The clouds had now passed away and the moon sent her rays to turn the edges of the waves into glistening showers of jewels.

Rob closed the lid of the wonderful Record of Events and soon fell into a deep sleep that held him unconscious for many hours.

When he awoke he gave a start of surprise, for beneath him was land. How long it was since he had left the ocean behind him he could not guess, but his first thought was to set the indicator of the traveling machine to zero and to hover over the country until he could determine where he was.

This was no easy matter. He saw green fields, lakes, groves and villages; but these might exist in any country. Being still at a great elevation he descended gradually until he was about twenty feet from the surface of the earth, where he paused near the edge of a small village.

At once a crowd of excited people assembled, shouting to one another and pointing towards him in wonder. In order to be prepared for emergencies Rob had taken the electric tube from his pocket, and now, as he examined the dress and features of the people below, the tube suddenly slipped from his grasp and fell to the ground, where one end stuck slantingly into the soft earth.

A man rushed eagerly towards it, but the next moment he threw up his hands and fell upon his back, unconscious. Others who ran to assist their fallen comrade quickly tumbled into a heap beside him.

It was evident to Rob that the tube had fallen in such a position that the button was being pressed continually and a current of electric fluid issued to shock whoever came near. Not wishing to injure these people he dropped to the ground and drew the tube from the earth, thus releasing the pressure upon the button.

But the villagers had now decided that the boy was their enemy, and no

sooner had he touched the ground than a shower of stones and sticks rained about him. Not one reached his body, however, for the Garment of Repulsion stopped their flight and returned them to rattle with more or less force against those who had thrown them — "like regular boomerangs," thought Rob.

To receive their own blows in this fashion seemed so like magic to the simple folk that with roars of fear and pain they ran away in all directions.

"It's no use stopping here," remarked Rob, regretfully, "for I've spoiled my welcome by this accident. I think these people are Irish, by their looks and speech, so I must be somewhere in the Emerald Isle."

He consulted his map and decided upon the general direction he should take to reach England, after which he again rose into the air and before long was passing over the channel towards the shores of England.

Either his map or compass or his calculations proved wrong, for it was high noon before, having changed his direction a half dozen times, he came to the great city of London. He saw at a glance that it would never do to drop into the crowded streets, unless he wanted to become an object of public curiosity; so he looked around for a suitable place to alight.

Near by was a monstrous church that sent a sharp steeple far into the air. Rob examined this spire and saw a narrow opening in the masonry that led to a small room where a chime of bells hung. He crept through the opening and, finding a ladder that connected the belfry with a platform below, began to descend.

There were three ladders, and then a winding flight of narrow, rickety stairs to be passed before Rob finally reached a small room in the body of the church. This room proved to have two doors, one connecting with the auditorium and the other letting into a side street. Both were locked, but Rob pointed the electric tube at the outside door and broke the lock in an instant. Then he walked into the street as composedly as if he had lived all his life in London.

There were plenty of sights to see, you may be sure, and Rob walked around until he was so tired that he was glad to rest upon one of the benches in a beautiful park. Here, half hidden by the trees, he amused himself by looking at the Record of Events.

"London's a great town, and no mistake," he said to himself; "but let's see what the British are doing in South Africa to-day."

He turned the cylinder to "South Africa," and, opening the lid, at once became interested. An English column, commanded by a brave but stubborn officer, was surrounded by the Boer forces and fighting desperately to avoid capture or annihilation.

"This would be interesting to King Edward," thought the boy. "Guess I'll

hunt him up and tell him about it."

A few steps away stood a policeman. Rob approached him and asked:

"Where's the king to-day?"

The officer looked at him with mingled surprise and suspicion.

"'Is Majesty is sojournin' at Marlb'ro 'Ouse, just now," was the reply. "Per'aps you wants to make 'im a wissit," he continued, with lofty sarcasm.

"That's it, exactly," said Rob. "I'm an American, and thought while I was in London I'd drop in on His Royal Highness and say 'hello' to him."

The officer chuckled, as if much amused.

"Hamericans is bloomin' green," he remarked, "so youse can stand for Hamerican, right enough. No other wissitors is such blarsted fools. But yon's the palace, an' I s'pose 'is Majesty'll give ye a 'ot reception."

"Thanks; I'll look him up," said the boy, and left the officer convulsed with laughter.

He soon knew why. The palace was surrounded by a cordon of the king's own life guards, who admitted no one save those who presented proper credentials.

"There's only one thing to do;" thought Rob, "and that's to walk straight in, as I haven't any friends to give me a regular introduction."

So he boldly advanced to the gate, where he found himself stopped by crossed carbines and a cry of "Halt!"

"Excuse me," said Rob; "I'm in a hurry."

He pushed the carbines aside and marched on. The soldiers made thrusts at him with their weapons, and an officer jabbed at his breast with a glittering sword, but the Garment of Repulsion protected him from these dangers as well as from a hail of bullets that followed his advancing figure.

He reached the entrance of the palace only to face another group of guardsmen and a second order to halt, and as these soldiers were over six feet tall and stood shoulder to shoulder Rob saw that he could not hope to pass them without using his electric tube.

"Stand aside, you fellows!" he ordered.

There was no response. He extended the tube and, as he pressed the button, described a semi-circle with the instrument. Immediately the tall guardsmen toppled over like so many tenpins, and Rob stepped across their bodies and penetrated to the reception room, where a brilliant assemblage awaited, in hushed and anxious groups, for opportunity to obtain audience with the king.

"I hope his Majesty isn't busy," said Rob to a solemn-visaged official who confronted him. "I want to have a little talk with him."

"I — I — ah — beg pardon!" exclaimed the astounded master of

ceremonies. “What name, please?”

“Oh, never mind my name,” replied Rob, and pushing the gentleman aside he entered the audience chamber of the great king.

King Edward was engaged in earnest consultation with one of his ministers, and after a look of surprise in Rob’s direction and a grave bow he bestowed no further attention upon the intruder.

But Rob was not to be baffled now.

“Your Majesty,” he interrupted, “I’ve important news for you. A big fight is taking place in South Africa and your soldiers will probably be cut into mince meat.”

The minister strode towards the boy angrily.

“Explain this intrusion!” he cried.

“I have explained. The Boers are having a regular killing-bee. Here! take a look at it yourselves.”

He drew the Record from his pocket, and at the movement the minister shrank back as if he suspected it was an infernal machine and might blow his head off; but the king stepped quietly to the boy’s side and looked into the box when Rob threw open the lid.

As he comprehended the full wonder of the phenomenon he was observing Edward uttered a low cry of amazement, but thereafter he silently gazed upon the fierce battle that still raged far away upon the African VELD. Before long his keen eye recognized the troops engaged and realized their imminent danger.

“They’ll be utterly annihilated!” he gasped. “What shall we do?”

“Oh, we can’t do anything just now,” answered Rob. “But it’s curious to watch how bravely the poor fellows fight for their lives.”

The minister, who by this time was also peering into the box, groaned aloud, and then all three forgot their surroundings in the tragedy they were beholding.

Hemmed in by vastly superior numbers, the English were calmly and stubbornly resisting every inch of advance and selling their lives as dearly as possible. Their leader fell pierced by a hundred bullets, and the king, who had known him from boyhood, passed his hand across his eyes as if to shut out the awful sight. But the fascination of the battle forced him to look again, and the next moment he cried aloud:

“Look there! Look there!”

Over the edge of a line of hills appeared the helmets of a file of English soldiers. They reached the summit, followed by rank after rank, until the hillside was alive with them. And then, with a ringing cheer that came like a faint echo to the ears of the three watchers, they broke into a run and dashed

forward to the rescue of their brave comrades. The Boers faltered, gave back, and the next moment fled precipitately, while the exhausted survivors of the courageous band fell sobbing into the arms of their rescuers.

Rob closed the lid of the Record with a sudden snap that betrayed his deep feeling, and the king pretended to cough behind his handkerchief and stealthily wiped his eyes.

"'Twasn't so bad, after all," remarked the boy, with assumed cheerfulness; "but it looked mighty ticklish for your men at one time."

King Edward regarded the boy curiously, remembering his abrupt entrance and the marvelous device he had exhibited.

"What do you call that?" he asked, pointing at the Record with a finger that trembled slightly from excitement.

"It is a new electrical invention," replied Rob, replacing it in his pocket, "and so constructed that events are reproduced at the exact moment they occur."

"Where can I purchase one?" demanded the king, eagerly.

"They're not for sale," said Rob. "This one of mine is the first that ever happened."

"Oh!"

"I really think," continued the boy, nodding sagely, "that it wouldn't be well to have these Records scattered around. Their use would give some folks unfair advantage over others, you know."

"Certainly."

"I only showed you this battle because I happened to be in London at the time and thought you'd be interested."

"It was very kind of you," said Edward; "but how did you gain admittance?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I was obliged to knock over a few of your tall life-guards. They seem to think you're a good thing and need looking after, like jam in a cupboard."

The king smiled.

"I hope you haven't killed my guards," said he.

"Oh, no; they'll come around all right."

"It is necessary," continued Edward, "that public men be protected from intrusion, no matter how democratic they may be personally. You would probably find it as difficult to approach the President of the United States as the King of England."

"Oh, I'm not complaining," said Rob. "It wasn't much trouble to break through."

"You seem quite young to have mastered such wonderful secrets of

Nature," continued the king.

"So I am," replied Rob, modestly; "but these natural forces have really existed since the beginning of the world, and some one was sure to discover them in time." He was quoting the Demon, although unconsciously.

"You are an American, I suppose," said the minister, coming close to Rob and staring him in the face.

"Guessed right the first time," answered the boy, and drawing his Character Marking spectacles from his pocket, he put them on and stared at the minister in turn.

Upon the man's forehead appeared the letter "E."

"Your Majesty," said Rob, "I have here another queer invention. Will you please wear these spectacles for a few moments?"

The king at once put them on.

"They are called Character Markers," continued the boy, "because the lenses catch and concentrate the character vibrations radiating from every human individual and reflect the true character of the person upon his forehead. If a letter 'G' appears, you may be sure his disposition is good; if his forehead is marked with an 'E' his character is evil, and you must beware of treachery."

The king saw the "E" plainly marked upon his minister's forehead, but he said nothing except "Thank you," and returned the spectacles to Rob.

But the minister, who from the first had been ill at ease, now became positively angry.

"Do not believe him, your Majesty!" he cried. "It is a trick, and meant to deceive you."

"I did not accuse you," answered the king, sternly. Then he added: "I wish to be alone with this young gentleman."

The minister left the room with an anxious face and hanging head.

"Now," said Rob, "let's look over the record of the past day and see if that fellow has been up to any mischief."

He turned the cylinder of the Record to "England," and slowly the events of the last twenty-four hours were reproduced, one after the other, upon the polished plate.

Before long the king uttered an exclamation. The Record pictured a small room in which were seated three gentlemen engaged in earnest conversation. One of them was the accused minister.

"Those men," said the king in a low voice, while he pointed out the other two, "are my avowed enemies. This is proof that your wonderful spectacles indicated my minister's character with perfect truth. I am grateful to you for thus putting me upon my guard, for I have trusted the man fully."

“Oh, don’t mention it,” replied the boy, lightly; “I’m glad to have been of service to you. But it’s time for me to go.”

“I hope you will favor me with another interview,” said the king, “for I am much interested in your electrical inventions. I will instruct my guards to admit you at any time, so you will not be obliged to fight your way in.”

“All right. But it really doesn’t matter,” answered Rob. “It’s no trouble at all to knock ‘em over.”

Then he remembered his manners and bowed low before the king, who seemed to him “a fine fellow and not a bit stuck up.” And then he walked calmly from the palace.

The people in the outer room stared at him wonderingly and the officer of the guard saluted the boy respectfully. But Rob only smiled in an amused way as he marched past them with his hands thrust deep into his trousers’ pockets and his straw hat tipped jauntily upon the back of his head.

11. The Man of Science

Rob passed the remainder of the day wandering about London and amusing himself by watching the peculiar ways of the people. When it became so dark that there was no danger of his being observed, he rose through the air to the narrow slit in the church tower and lay upon the floor of the little room, with the bells hanging all around him, to pass the night.

He was just falling asleep when a tremendous din and clatter nearly deafened him, and set the whole tower trembling. It was the midnight chime.

Rob clutched his ears tightly, and when the vibrations had died away descended by the ladder to a lower platform. But even here the next hourly chime made his ears ring, and he kept descending from platform to platform until the last half of a restless night was passed in the little room at the bottom of the tower.

When, at daylight, the boy sat up and rubbed his eyes, he said, wearily: "Churches are all right as churches; but as hotels they are rank failures. I ought to have bunked in with my friend, King Edward."

He climbed up the stairs and the ladders again and looked out the little window in the belfry. Then he examined his map of Europe.

"I believe I'll take a run over to Paris," he thought. "I must be home again by Saturday, to meet the Demon, so I'll have to make every day count."

Without waiting for breakfast, since he had eaten a tablet the evening before, he crept through the window and mounted into the fresh morning air until the great city with its broad waterway lay spread out beneath him. Then he sped away to the southeast and, crossing the channel, passed between Amiens and Rouen and reached Paris before ten o'clock.

Near the outskirts of the city appeared a high tower, upon the flat roof of which a man was engaged in adjusting a telescope. Upon seeing Rob, who was passing at no great distance from this tower, the man cried out:

"APPROCHEZ! — VENEZ ICI!"

Then he waved his hands frantically in the air, and fairly danced with excitement. So the boy laughed and dropped down to the roof where, standing beside the Frenchman, whose eyes were actually protruding from their sockets, he asked, coolly:

"Well, what do you want?"

The other was for a moment speechless. He was a tall, lean man, having a bald head but a thick, iron-gray beard, and his black eyes sparkled brightly from behind a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. After attentively regarding the boy for a time he said, in broken English:

"But, M'sieur, how can you fly wizout ze — ze machine? I have

experiment myself wiz some air-ship; but you — zere is nossing to make go!"

Rob guessed that here was his opportunity to do the Demon a favor by explaining his electrical devices to this new acquaintance, who was evidently a man of science.

"Here is the secret, Professor," he said, and holding out his wrist displayed the traveling machine and explained, as well as he could, the forces that operated it.

The Frenchman, as you may suppose, was greatly astonished, and to show how perfectly the machine worked Rob turned the indicator and rose a short distance above the tower, circling around it before he rejoined the professor on the roof. Then he showed his food tablets, explaining how each was stored with sufficient nourishment for an entire day.

The scientist positively gasped for breath, so powerful was the excitement he experienced at witnessing these marvels.

"Eet is wonderful — grand — magnifique!" he exclaimed.

"But here is something of still greater interest," continued Rob, and taking the Automatic Record of Events from his pocket he allowed the professor to view the remarkable scenes that were being enacted throughout the civilized world.

The Frenchman was now trembling violently, and he implored Rob to tell him where he might obtain similar electrical machines.

"I can't do that," replied the boy, decidedly; "but, having seen these, you may be able to discover their construction for yourself. Now that you know such things to be possible and practical, the hint should be sufficient to enable a shrewd electrician to prepare duplicates of them."

The scientist glared at him with evident disappointment, and Rob continued:

"These are not all the wonders I can exhibit. Here is another electrical device that is, perhaps, the most remarkable of any I possess."

He took the Character Marking spectacles from his pocket and fitted them to his eyes. Then he gave a whistle of surprise and turned his back upon his new friend. He had seen upon the Frenchman's forehead the letters "E" and "C."

"Guess I've struck the wrong sort of scientist, after all!" he muttered, in a disgusted tone.

His companion was quick to prove the accuracy of the Character Marker. Seeing the boy's back turned, he seized a long iron bar that was used to operate the telescope, and struck at Rob so fiercely that had he not worn the Garment of Protection his skull would have been crushed by the blow. At it

was, the bar rebounded with a force that sent the murderous Frenchman sprawling upon the roof, and Rob turned around and laughed at him.

"It won't work, Professor," he said. "I'm proof against assassins. Perhaps you had an idea that when you had killed me you could rob me of my valuable possessions; but they wouldn't be a particle of use to a scoundrel like you, I assure you! Good morning."

Before the surprised and baffled scientist could collect himself sufficiently to reply, the boy was soaring far above his head and searching for a convenient place to alight, that he might investigate the charms of this famed city of Paris.

It was indeed a beautiful place, with many stately buildings lining the shady boulevards. So thronged were the streets that Rob well knew he would soon be the center of a curious crowd should he alight upon them. Already a few sky-gazers had noted the boy moving high in the air, above their heads, and one or two groups stood pointing their fingers at him.

Pausing at length above the imposing structure of the Hotel Anglais, Rob noticed at one of the upper floors an open window, before which was a small iron balcony. Alighting upon this he proceeded to enter, without hesitation, the open window. He heard a shriek and a cry of "AU VOLEUR!" and caught sight of a woman's figure as she dashed into an adjoining room, slamming and locking the door behind her.

"I don't know as I blame her," observed Rob, with a smile at the panic he had created. "I s'pose she takes me for a burglar, and thinks I've climbed up the lightning rod."

He soon found the door leading into the hallway and walked down several flights of stairs until he reached the office of the hotel.

"How much do you charge a day?" he inquired, addressing a fat and pompous-looking gentlemen behind the desk.

The man looked at him in a surprised way, for he had not heard the boy enter the room. But he said something in French to a waiter who was passing, and the latter came to Rob and made a low bow.

"I speak ze Eengliss ver' fine," he said. "What desire have you?"

"What are your rates by the day?" asked the boy.

"Ten francs, M'sieur."

"How many dollars is that?"

"Dollar Americaine?"

"Yes; United States money."

"Ah, OUI! Eet is ze two dollar, M'sieur."

"All right; I can stay about a day before I go bankrupt. Give me a room."

"CERTAINEMENT, M'sieur. Have you ze luggage?"

“No; but I’ll pay in advance,” said Rob, and began counting out his dimes and nickles and pennies, to the unbounded amazement of the waiter, who looked as if he had never seen such coins before.

He carried the money to the fat gentleman, who examined the pieces curiously, and there was a long conference between them before it was decided to accept them in payment for a room for a day. But at this season the hotel was almost empty, and when Rob protested that he had no other money the fat gentleman put the coins into his cash box with a resigned sigh and the waiter showed the boy to a little room at the very top of the building.

Rob washed and brushed the dust from his clothes, after which he sat down and amused himself by viewing the pictures that constantly formed upon the polished plate of the Record of Events.

12. How Rob Saved A Republic

While following the shifting scenes of the fascinating Record Rob noted an occurrence that caused him to give a low whistle of astonishment and devote several moments to serious thought.

"I believe it's about time I interfered with the politics of this Republic," he said, at last, as he closed the lid of the metal box and restored it to his pocket. "If I don't take a hand there probably won't be a Republic of France very long and, as a good American, I prefer a republic to a monarchy."

Then he walked down-stairs and found his English-speaking waiter.

"Where's President Loubet?" he asked.

"Ze President! Ah, he is wiz his mansion. To be at his residence, M'sieur."

"Where is his residence?"

The waiter began a series of voluble and explicit directions which so confused the boy that he exclaimed:

"Oh, much obliged!" and walked away in disgust.

Gaining the street he approached a gendarme and repeated his question, with no better result than before, for the fellow waved his arms wildly in all directions and roared a volley of incomprehensible French phrases that conveyed no meaning whatever.

"If ever I travel in foreign countries again," said Rob, "I'll learn their lingo in advance. Why doesn't the Demon get up a conversation machine that will speak all languages?"

By dint of much inquiry, however, and after walking several miles following ambiguous directions, he managed to reach the residence of President Loubet. But there he was politely informed that the President was busily engaged in his garden, and would see no one.

"That's all right," said the boy, calmly. "If he's in the garden I'll have no trouble finding him."

Then, to the amazement of the Frenchmen, Rob shot into the air fifty feet or so, from which elevation he overlooked a pretty garden in the rear of the President's mansion. The place was protected from ordinary intrusion by high walls, but Rob descended within the enclosure and walked up to a man who was writing at a small table placed under the spreading branches of a large tree.

"Is this President Loubet?" he inquired, with a bow.

The gentleman looked up.

"My servants were instructed to allow no one to disturb me," he said, speaking in excellent English.

“It isn’t their fault; I flew over the wall,” returned Rob. “The fact is,” he added, hastily, as he noted the President’s frown, “I have come to save the Republic; and I haven’t much time to waste over a bundle of Frenchmen, either.”

The President seemed surprised.

“Your name!” he demanded, sharply.

“Robert Billings Joslyn, United States of America!”

“Your business, Monsieur Joslyn!”

Rob drew the Record from his pocket and placed it upon the table.

“This, sir,” said he, “is an electrical device that records all important events. I wish to call your attention to a scene enacted in Paris last evening which may have an effect upon the future history of your country.”

He opened the lid, placed the Record so that the President could see clearly, and then watched the changing expressions upon the great man’s face; first indifference, then interest, the next moment eagerness and amazement.

“MON DIEU!” he gasped; “the Orleanists!”

Rob nodded.

“Yes; they’ve worked up a rather pretty plot, haven’t they?”

The President did not reply. He was anxiously watching the Record and scribbling notes on a paper beside him. His face was pale and his lips tightly compressed.

Finally he leaned back in his chair and asked:

“Can you reproduce this scene again?”

“Certainly, sir,” answered the boy; “as often as you like.”

“Will you remain here while I send for my minister of police? It will require but a short time.”

“Call him up, then. I’m in something of a hurry myself, but now I’ve mixed up with this thing I’ll see it through.”

The President touched a bell and gave an order to his servant. Then he turned to Rob and said, wonderingly:

“You are a boy!”

“That’s true, Mr. President,” was the answer; “but an American boy, you must remember. That makes a big difference, I assure you.”

The President bowed gravely.

“This is your invention?” he asked.

“No; I’m hardly equal to that. But the inventor has made me a present of the Record, and it’s the only one in the world.”

“It is a marvel,” remarked the President, thoughtfully. “More! It is a real miracle. We are living in an age of wonders, my young friend.”

“No one knows that better than myself, sir,” replied Rob. “But, tell me, can you trust your chief of police?”

“I think so,” said the President, slowly; “yet since your invention has shown me that many men I have considered honest are criminally implicated in this royalist plot, I hardly know whom to depend upon.”

“Then please wear these spectacles during your interview with the minister of police,” said the boy. “You must say nothing, while he is with us, about certain marks that will appear upon his forehead; but when he has gone I will explain those marks so you will understand them.”

The President covered his eyes with the spectacles.

“Why,” he exclaimed, “I see upon your own brow the letters — “

“Stop, sir!” interrupted Rob, with a blush; “I don’t care to know what the letters are, if it’s just the same to you.”

The President seemed puzzled by this speech, but fortunately the minister of police arrived just then and, under Rob’s guidance, the pictured record of the Orleanist plot was reproduced before the startled eyes of the official.

“And now,” said the boy, “let us see if any of this foolishness is going on just at present.”

He turned to the opposite side of the Record and allowed the President and his minister of police to witness the quick succession of events even as they occurred.

Suddenly the minister cried, “Ha!” and, pointing to the figure of a man disembarking from an English boat at Calais, he said, excitedly:

“That, your Excellency, is the Duke of Orleans, in disguise! I must leave you for a time, that I may issue some necessary orders to my men; but this evening I shall call to confer with you regarding the best mode of suppressing this terrible plot.”

When the official had departed, the President removed the spectacles from his eyes and handed them to Rob.

“What did you see?” asked the boy.

“The letters ‘G’ and ‘W’.”

“Then you may trust him fully,” declared Rob, and explained the construction of the Character Marker to the interested and amazed statesman.

“And now I must go,” he continued, “for my stay in your city will be a short one and I want to see all I can.”

The President scrawled something on a sheet of paper and signed his name to it, afterward presenting it, with a courteous bow, to his visitor.

“This will enable you to go wherever you please, while in Paris,” he said. “I regret my inability to reward you properly for the great service you have rendered my country; but you have my sincerest gratitude, and may

command me in any way.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” answered Rob. “I thought it was my duty to warn you, and if you look sharp you’ll be able to break up this conspiracy. But I don’t want any reward. Good day, sir.”

He turned the indicator of his traveling machine and immediately rose into the air, followed by a startled exclamation from the President of France.

Moving leisurely over the city, he selected a deserted thoroughfare to alight in, from whence he wandered unobserved into the beautiful boulevards. These were now brilliantly lighted, and crowds of pleasure seekers thronged them everywhere. Rob experienced a decided sense of relief as he mixed with the gay populace and enjoyed the sights of the splendid city, for it enabled him to forget, for a time, the responsibilities thrust upon him by the possession of the Demon’s marvelous electrical devices.

13. Rob Loses His Treasures

Our young adventurer had intended to pass the night in the little bed at his hotel, but the atmosphere of Paris proved so hot and disagreeable that he decided it would be more enjoyable to sleep while journeying through the cooler air that lay far above the earth's surface. So just as the clocks were striking the midnight hour Rob mounted skyward and turned the indicator of the traveling machine to the east, intending to make the city of Vienna his next stop.

He had risen to a considerable distance, where the air was remarkably fresh and exhilarating, and the relief he experienced from the close and muggy streets of Paris was of such a soothing nature that he presently fell fast asleep. His day in the metropolis had been a busy one, for, like all boys, he had forgotten himself in the delight of sight-seeing and had tired his muscles and exhausted his strength to an unusual degree.

It was about three o'clock in the morning when Rob, moving restlessly in his sleep, accidently touched with his right hand the indicator of the machine which was fastened to his left wrist, setting it a couple of points to the south of east. He was, of course, unaware of the slight alteration in his course, which was destined to prove of serious importance in the near future. For the boy's fatigue induced him to sleep far beyond daybreak, and during this period of unconsciousness he was passing over the face of European countries and approaching the lawless and dangerous dominions of the Orient.

When, at last, he opened his eyes, he was puzzled to determine where he was. Beneath him stretched a vast, sandy plain, and speeding across this he came to a land abounding in luxuriant vegetation.

The centrifugal force which propelled him was evidently, for some reason, greatly accelerated, for the scenery of the country he was crossing glided by him at so rapid a rate of speed that it nearly took his breath away.

"I wonder if I've passed Vienna in the night," he thought. "It ought not to have taken me more than a few hours to reach there from Paris."

Vienna was at that moment fifteen hundred miles behind him; but Rob's geography had always been his stumbling block at school, and he had not learned to gage the speed of the traveling machine; so he was completely mystified as to his whereabouts.

Presently a village having many queer spires and minarets whisked by him like a flash. Rob became worried, and resolved to slow up at the next sign of habitation.

This was a good resolution, but Turkestan is so thinly settled that before

the boy could plan out a course of action he had passed the barren mountain range of Thian-Shan as nimbly as an acrobat leaps a jumping-bar.

"This won't do at all!" he exclaimed, earnestly. "The traveling machine seems to be running away with me, and I'm missing no end of sights by scooting along up here in the clouds."

He turned the indicator to zero, and was relieved to find it obey with customary quickness. In a few moments he had slowed up and stopped, when he found himself suspended above another stretch of sandy plain. Being too high to see the surface of the plain distinctly he dropped down a few hundred feet to a lower level, where he discovered he was surrounded by billows of sand as far as his eye could reach.

"It's a desert, all right," was his comment; "perhaps old Sahara herself."

He started the machine again towards the east, and at a more moderate rate of speed skimmed over the surface of the desert. Before long he noticed a dark spot ahead of him which proved to be a large body of fierce looking men, riding upon dromedaries and slender, spirited horses and armed with long rifles and crookedly shaped simitars.

"Those fellows seem to be looking for trouble," remarked the boy, as he glided over them, "and it wouldn't be exactly healthy for an enemy to get in their way. But I haven't time to stop, so I'm not likely to get mixed up in any rumpus with them."

However, the armed caravan was scarcely out of sight before Rob discovered he was approaching a rich, wooded oasis of the desert, in the midst of which was built the walled city of Yarkand. Not that he had ever heard of the place, or knew its name; for few Europeans and only one American traveler had ever visited it. But he guessed it was a city of some importance from its size and beauty, and resolved to make a stop there.

Above the high walls projected many slender, white minarets, indicating that the inhabitants were either Turks or some race of Mohammedans; so Rob decided to make investigations before trusting himself to their company.

A cluster of tall trees with leafy tops stood a short distance outside the walls, and here the boy landed and sat down to rest in the refreshing shade.

The city seemed as hushed and still as if it were deserted, and before him stretched the vast plain of white, heated sands. He strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of the band of warriors he had passed, but they were moving slowly and had not yet appeared.

The trees that sheltered Rob were the only ones without the city, although many low bushes or shrubs grew scattering over the space between him and the walls. An arched gateway broke the enclosure at his left, but the gates were tightly shut.

Something in the stillness and the intense heat of the mid-day sun made the boy drowsy. He stretched himself upon the ground beneath the dense foliage of the biggest tree and abandoned himself to the languor that was creeping over him.

"I'll wait until that army of the desert arrives," he thought, sleepily. "They either belong in this city or have come to capture it, so I can tell better what to dance when I find out what the band plays."

The next moment he was sound asleep, sprawling upon his back in the shade and slumbering as peacefully as an infant.

And while he lay motionless three men dropped in quick succession from the top of the city wall and hid among the low bushes, crawling noiselessly from one to another and so approaching, by degrees, the little group of trees.

They were Turks, and had been sent by those in authority within the city to climb the tallest tree of the group and discover if the enemy was near. For Rob's conjecture had been correct, and the city of Yarkand awaited, with more or less anxiety, a threatened assault from its hereditary enemies, the Tatars.

The three spies were not less forbidding in appearance than the horde of warriors Rob had passed upon the desert. Their features were coarse and swarthy, and their eyes had a most villainous glare. Old fashioned pistols and double-edged daggers were stuck in their belts and their clothing, though of gorgeous colors, was soiled and neglected.

With all the caution of the American savage these Turks approached the tree, where, to their unbounded amazement, they saw the boy lying asleep. His dress and fairness of skin at once proclaimed him, in their shrewd eyes, a European, and their first thought was to glance around in search of his horse or dromedary. Seeing nothing of the kind near they were much puzzled to account for his presence, and stood looking down at him with evident curiosity.

The sun struck the polished surface of the traveling machine which was attached to Rob's wrist and made the metal glitter like silver. This attracted the eyes of the tallest Turk, who stooped down and stealthily unclasped the band of the machine from the boy's outstretched arm. Then, after a hurried but puzzled examination of the little instrument, he slipped it into the pocket of his jacket.

Rob stirred uneasily in his sleep, and one of the Turks drew a slight but stout rope from his breast and with gentle but deft movement passed it around the boy's wrists and drew them together behind him. The action was not swift enough to arouse the power of repulsion in the Garment of Protection, but it awakened Rob effectually, so that he sat up and stared hard

at his captors.

"What are you trying to do, anyhow?" he demanded.

The Turks laughed and said something in their own language. They had no knowledge of English.

"You're only making fools of yourselves," continued the boy, wrathfully. "It's impossible for you to injure me."

The three paid no attention to his words. One of them thrust his hand into Rob's pocket and drew out the electric tube. His ignorance of modern appliances was so great that he did not know enough to push the button. Rob saw him looking down the hollow end of the tube and murmured:

"I wish it would blow your ugly head off!"

But the fellow, thinking the shining metal might be of some value to him, put the tube in his own pocket and then took from the prisoner the silver box of tablets.

Rob writhed and groaned at losing his possessions in this way, and while his hands were fastened behind him tried to feel for and touch the indicator of the traveling machine. When he found that the machine also had been taken, his anger gave way to fear, for he realized he was in a dangerously helpless condition.

The third Turk now drew the Record of Events from the boy's inner pocket. He knew nothing of the springs that opened the lids, so, after a curious glance at it, he secreted the box in the folds of his sash and continued the search of the captive. The Character Marking Spectacles were next abstracted, but the Turk, seeing in them nothing but spectacles, scornfully thrust them back into Rob's pocket, while his comrades laughed at him. The boy was now rifled of seventeen cents in pennies, a broken pocket knife and a lead-pencil, the last article seeming to be highly prized.

After they had secured all the booty they could find, the tall Turk, who seemed the leader of the three, violently kicked at the prisoner with his heavy boot. His surprise was great when the Garment of Repulsion arrested the blow and nearly overthrew the aggressor in turn. Snatching a dagger from his sash, he bounded upon the boy so fiercely that the next instant the enraged Turk found himself lying upon his back three yards away, while his dagger flew through the air and landed deep in the desert sands.

"Keep it up!" cried Rob, bitterly. "I hope you'll enjoy yourself."

The other Turks raised their comrade to his feet, and the three stared at one another in surprise, being unable to understand how a bound prisoner could so effectually defend himself. But at a whispered word from the leader, they drew their long pistols and fired point blank into Rob's face. The volley echoed sharply from the city walls, but as the smoke drifted slowly away the

Turks were horrified to see their intended victim laughing at them.

Uttering cries of terror and dismay, the three took to their heels and bounded towards the wall, where a gate quickly opened to receive them, the populace feeling sure the Tatar horde was upon them.

Nor was this guess so very far wrong; for as Rob, sitting disconsolate upon the sand, raised his eyes, he saw across the desert a dark line that marked the approach of the invaders.

Nearer and nearer they came, while Rob watched them and bemoaned the foolish impulse that had led him to fall asleep in an unknown land where he could so easily be overpowered and robbed of his treasures.

"I always suspected these electrical inventions would be my ruin some day," he reflected, sadly; "and now I'm side-tracked and left helpless in this outlandish country, without a single hope of ever getting home again. They probably won't be able to kill me, unless they find my Garment of Repulsion and strip that off; but I never could cross this terrible desert on foot and, having lost my food tablets, I'd soon starve if I attempted it."

Fortunately, he had eaten one of the tablets just before going to sleep, so there was no danger of immediate starvation. But he was miserable and unhappy, and remained brooding over his cruel fate until a sudden shout caused him to look up.

14. Turk and Tatar

The Tatars had arrived, swiftly and noiselessly, and a dozen of the warriors, still mounted, were surrounding him.

His helpless condition aroused their curiosity, and while some of them hastily cut away his bonds and raised him to his feet, other plied him with questions in their own language. Rob shook his head to indicate that he could not understand; so they led him to the chief — an immense, bearded representative of the tribe of Kara-Khitai, the terrible and relentless Black Tatars of Thibet. The huge frame of this fellow was clothed in flowing robes of cloth-of-gold, braided with jewels, and he sat majestically upon the back of a jet-black camel.

Under ordinary circumstances the stern features and flashing black eyes of this redoubtable warrior would have struck a chill of fear to the boy's heart; but now under the influence of the crushing misfortunes he had experienced, he was able to gaze with indifference upon the terrible visage of the desert chief.

The Tatar seemed not to consider Rob an enemy. Instead, he looked upon him as an ally, since the Turks had bound and robbed him.

Finding it impossible to converse with the chief, Rob took refuge in the sign language. He turned his pockets wrong side out, showed the red welts left upon his wrists by the tight cord, and then shook his fists angrily in the direction of the town.

In return the Tatar nodded gravely and issued an order to his men.

By this time the warriors were busily pitching tents before the walls of Yarkand and making preparations for a formal siege. In obedience to the chieftain's orders, Rob was given a place within one of the tents nearest the wall and supplied with a brace of brass-mounted pistols and a dagger with a sharp, zigzag edge. These were evidently to assist the boy in fighting the Turks, and he was well pleased to have them. His spirits rose considerably when he found he had fallen among friends, although most of his new comrades had such evil faces that it was unnecessary to put on the Character Markers to judge their natures with a fair degree of accuracy.

"I can't be very particular about the company I keep," he thought, "and this gang hasn't tried to murder me, as the rascally Turks did. So for the present I'll stand in with the scowling chief and try to get a shot at the thieves who robbed me. If our side wins I may get a chance to recover some of my property. It's a slim chance, of course, but it's the only hope I have left."

That very evening an opportunity occurred for Rob to win glory in the eyes of his new friends. Just before sundown the gates of the city flew open

and a swarm of Turks, mounted upon fleet horses and camels, issued forth and fell upon their enemies. The Tatars, who did not expect the sally, were scarcely able to form an opposing rank when they found themselves engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict, fighting desperately for their lives. In such a battle, however, the Turks were at a disadvantage, for the active Tatars slipped beneath their horses and disabled them, bringing both the animals and their riders to the earth.

At the first onslaught Rob shot his pistol at a Turk and wounded him so severely that he fell from his horse. Instantly the boy seized the bridle and sprang upon the steed's back, and the next moment he had dashed into the thickest part of the fray. Bullets and blows rained upon him from all sides, but the Garment of Repulsion saved him from a single scratch.

When his pistols had been discharged he caught up the broken handle of a spear, and used it as a club, galloping into the ranks of the Turks and belaboring them as hard as he could. The Tatars cheered and followed him, and the Turks were so amazed at his miraculous escape from their bullets that they became terrified, thinking he bore a charmed life and was protected by unseen powers.

This terror helped turn the tide of battle, and before long the enemy was pressed back to the walls and retreated through the gates, which were hastily fastened behind them.

In order to prevent a repetition of this sally the Tatars at once invested the gates, so that if the Turks should open them they were as likely to let their foes in as to oppose them.

While the tents were being moved up Rob had an opportunity to search the battlefield for the bodies of the three Turks who had robbed him, but they were not among the fallen.

"Those fellows were too cowardly to take part in a fair fight," declared the boy; but he was much disappointed, nevertheless, as he felt very helpless without the electric tube or the traveling machine.

The Tatar chief now called Rob to his tent and presented him with a beautiful ring set with a glowing pigeon's-blood ruby, in acknowledgment of his services. This gift made the boy feel very proud, and he said to the chief:

"You're all right, old man, even if you do look like a pirate. If you can manage to capture that city, so I can get my electrical devices back, I'll consider you a trump as long as I live."

The chief thought this speech was intended to express Rob's gratitude, so he bowed solemnly in return.

During the night that followed upon the first engagement of the Turks and Tatars, the boy lay awake trying to devise some plan to capture the city. The

walls seemed too high and thick to be either scaled or broken by the Tatars, who had no artillery whatever; and within the walls lay all the fertile part of the oasis, giving the besieged a good supply of water and provisions, while the besiegers were obliged to subsist on what water and food they had brought with them.

Just before dawn Rob left his tent and went out to look at the great wall. The stars gave plenty of light, but the boy was worried to find that, according to Eastern custom, no sentries or guards whatever had been posted and all the Tatars were slumbering soundly.

The city was likewise wrapped in profound silence, but just as Rob was turning away he saw a head project stealthily over the edge of the wall before him, and recognized in the features one of the Turks who had robbed him.

Finding no one awake except the boy the fellow sat upon the edge of the wall, with his feet dangling downward, and grinned wickedly at his former victim. Rob watched him with almost breathless eagerness.

After making many motions that conveyed no meaning whatever, the Turk drew the electric tube from his pocket and pointed his finger first at the boy and then at the instrument, as if inquiring what it was used for. Rob shook his head. The Turk turned the tube over several times and examined it carefully, after which he also shook his head, seeming greatly puzzled.

By this time the boy was fairly trembling with excitement. He longed to recover this valuable weapon, and feared that at any moment the curious Turk would discover its use. He held out his hand toward the tube, and tried to say, by motions, that he would show the fellow how to use it. The man seemed to understand, by he would not let the glittering instrument out of his possession.

Rob was almost in despair, when he happened to notice upon his hand the ruby ring given him by the chief. Drawing the jewel from his finger he made offer, by signs, that he would exchange it for the tube.

The Turk was much pleased with the idea, and nodded his head repeatedly, holding out his hand for the ring. Rob had little confidence in the man's honor, but he was so eager to regain the tube that he decided to trust him. So he threw the ring to the top of the wall, where the Turk caught it skilfully; but when Rob held out his hand for the tube the scoundrel only laughed at him and began to scramble to his feet in order to beat a retreat. Chance, however, foiled this disgraceful treachery, for in his hurry the Turk allowed the tube to slip from his grasp, and it rolled off the wall and fell upon the sand at Rob's very feet.

The robber turned to watch its fall and, filled with sudden anger, the boy grabbed the weapon, pointed it at his enemy, and pressed the button. Down

tumbled the Turk, without a cry, and lay motionless at the foot of the wall.

Rob's first thought was to search the pockets of his captive, and to his delight he found and recovered his box of food tablets. The Record of Events and the traveling machine were doubtless in the possession of the other robbers, but Rob did not despair of recovering them, now that he had the tube to aid him.

Day was now breaking, and several of the Tatars appeared and examined the body of the Turk with grunts of surprise, for there was no mark upon him to show how he had been slain. Supposing him to be dead, they tossed him aside and forgot all about him.

Rob had secured his ruby ring again, and going to the chief's tent he showed the jewel to the guard and was at once admitted. The black-bearded chieftain was still reclining upon his pillows, but Rob bowed before him, and by means of signs managed to ask for a band of warriors to assist him in assaulting the town. The chieftain appeared to doubt the wisdom of the enterprise, not being able to understand how the boy could expect to succeed; but he graciously issued the required order, and by the time Rob reached the city gate he found a large group of Tatars gathered to support him, while the entire camp, roused to interest in the proceedings, stood looking on.

Rob cared little for the quarrel between the Turks and Tatars, and under ordinary circumstances would have refused to side with one or the other; but he knew he could not hope to recover his electrical machines unless the city was taken by the band of warriors who had befriended him, so he determined to force an entrance for them.

Without hesitation he walked close to the great gate and shattered its fastenings with the force of the electric current directed upon them from the tube. Then, shouting to his friends the Tatars for assistance, they rushed in a body upon the gate and dashed it open.

The Turks had expected trouble when they heard the fastenings of the huge gate splinter and fall apart, so they had assembled in force before the opening. As the Tatars poured through the gateway in a compact mass they were met by a hail of bullets, spears and arrows, which did fearful execution among them. Many were killed outright, while others fell wounded to be trampled upon by those who pressed on from the rear.

Rob maintained his position in the front rank, but escaped all injury through the possession of the Garment of Repulsion. But he took an active part in the fight and pressed the button of the electric tube again and again, tumbling the enemy into heaps on every side, even the horses and camels falling helplessly before the resistless current of electricity.

The Tatars shouted joyfully as they witnessed this marvelous feat and

rushed forward to assist in the slaughter; but the boy motioned them all back. He did not wish any more bloodshed than was necessary, and knew that the heaps of unconscious Turks around him would soon recover.

So he stood alone and faced the enemy, calmly knocking them over as fast as they came near. Two of the Turks managed to creep up behind the boy, and one of them, who wielded an immense simitar with a two-edged blade as sharp as a razor, swung the weapon fiercely to cut off Rob's head. But the repulsive force aroused in the Garment was so terrific that it sent the weapon flying backwards with redoubled swiftness, so that it caught the second Turk at the waist and cut him fairly in two.

Thereafter they all avoided coming near the boy, and in a surprisingly short time the Turkish forces were entirely conquered, all having been reduced to unconsciousness except a few cowards who had run away and hidden in the cellars or garrets of the houses.

The Tatars entered the city with shouts of triumph, and the chief was so delighted that he threw his arms around Rob's neck and embraced him warmly.

Then began the sack of Yarkand, the fierce Tatars plundering the bazaars and houses, stripping them of everything of value they could find.

Rob searched anxiously among the bodies of the unconscious Turks for the two men who had robbed him, but neither could be found. He was more successful later, for in running through the streets he came upon a band of Tatars leading a man with a rope around his neck, whom Rob quickly recognized as one of the thieves he was hunting for. The Tatars willingly allowed him to search the fellow, and in one of his pockets Rob found the Record of Events.

He had now recovered all his property, except the traveling machine, the one thing that was absolutely necessary to enable him to escape from this barbarous country.

He continued his search persistently, and an hour later found the dead body of the third robber lying in the square in the center of the city. But the traveling machine was not on his person, and for the first time the boy began to give way to despair.

In the distance he heard loud shouts and sound of renewed strife, warning him that the Turks were recovering consciousness and engaging the Tatars with great fierceness. The latter had scattered throughout the town, thinking themselves perfectly secure, so that not only were they unprepared to fight, but they became panic-stricken at seeing their foes return, as it seemed, from death to life. Their usual courage forsook them, and they ran, terrified, in every direction, only to be cut down by the revengeful Turkish simitars.

Rob was sitting upon the edge of a marble fountain in the center of the square when a crowd of victorious Turks appeared and quickly surrounded him. The boy paid no attention to their gestures and the Turks feared to approach him nearly, so they stood a short distance away and fired volleys at him from their rifles and pistols.

Rob glared at them scornfully, and seeing they could not injure him the Turks desisted; but they still surrounded him, and the crowd grew thicker every moment.

Women now came creeping from their hiding places and mingled with the ranks of the men, and Rob guessed, from their joyous chattering, that the Turks had regained the city and driven out or killed the Tatar warriors. He reflected, gloomily, that this did not affect his own position in any way, since he could not escape from the oasis.

Suddenly, on glancing at the crowd, Rob saw something that arrested his attention. A young girl was fastening some article to the wrist of a burly, villainous-looking Turk. The boy saw a glitter that reminded him of the traveling machine, but immediately afterward the man and the girl bent their heads over the fellow's wrist in such a way that Rob could see nothing more.

While the couple were apparently examining the strange device, Rob started to his feet and walked toward them. The crowd fell back at his approach, but the man and the girl were so interested that they did not notice him. He was still several paces away when the girl put out her finger and touched the indicator on the dial.

To Rob's horror and consternation the big Turk began to rise slowly into the air, while a howl of fear burst from the crowd. But the boy made a mighty spring and caught the Turk by his foot, clinging to it with desperate tenacity, while they both mounted steadily upward until they were far above the city of the desert.

The big Turk screamed pitifully at first, and then actually fainted away from fright. Rob was much frightened, on his part, for he knew if his hands slipped from their hold he would fall to his death. Indeed, one hand was slipping already, so he made a frantic clutch and caught firmly hold of the Turk's baggy trousers. Then, slowly and carefully, he drew himself up and seized the leather belt that encircled the man's waist. This firm grip gave him new confidence, and he began to breathe more freely.

He now clung to the body of the Turk with both legs entwined, in the way he was accustomed to cling to a tree-trunk when he climbed after cherries at home. He had conquered his fear of falling, and took time to recover his wits and his strength.

They had now reached such a tremendous height that the city looked like

a speck on the desert beneath them. Knowing he must act quickly, Rob seized the dangling left arm of the unconscious Turk and raised it until he could reach the dial of the traveling machine. He feared to unclasp the machine just then, for two reasons: if it slipped from his grasp they would both plunge downward to their death; and he was not sure the machine would work at all if in any other position than fastened to the left wrist.

Rob determined to take no chances, so he left the machine attached to the Turk and turned the indicator to zero and then to "East," for he did not wish to rejoin either his enemies the Turks or his equally undesirable friends the Tatars.

After traveling eastward a few minutes he lost sight of the city altogether; so, still clinging to the body of the Turk, he again turned the indicator and began to descend. When, at last, they landed gently upon a rocky eminence of the Kuen-Lun mountains, the boy's strength was almost exhausted, and his limbs ached with the strain of clinging to the Turk's body.

His first act was to transfer the traveling machine to his own wrist and to see that his other electrical devices were safely bestowed in his pockets. Then he sat upon the rock to rest until the Turk recovered consciousness.

Presently the fellow moved uneasily, rolled over, and then sat up and stared at his surroundings. Perhaps he thought he had been dreaming, for he rubbed his eyes and looked again with mingled surprise and alarm. Then, seeing Rob, he uttered a savage shout and drew his dagger.

Rob smiled and pointed the electric tube at the man, who doubtless recognized its power, for he fell back scowling and trembling.

"This place seems like a good jog from civilization," remarked the boy, as coolly as if his companion could understand what he said; "but as your legs are long and strong you may be able to find your way. It's true you're liable to starve to death, but if you do it will be your own misfortune and not my fault."

The Turk glared at him sullenly, but did not attempt to reply.

Rob took out his box of tablets, ate one of them and offered another to his enemy. The fellow accepted it ungraciously enough, but seeing Rob eat one he decided to follow his example, and consumed the tablet with a queer expression of distrust upon his face.

"Brave man!" cried Rob, laughingly; "you've avoided the pangs of starvation for a time, anyhow, so I can leave you with a clear conscience."

Without more ado, he turned the indicator of the traveling machine and mounted into the air, leaving the Turk sitting upon the rocks and staring after him in comical bewilderment.

15. A Battle with Monsters

Our young adventurer never experienced a more grateful feeling of relief and security than when he found himself once more high in the air, alone, and in undisputed possession of the electrical devices bestowed upon him by the Demon.

The dangers he had passed through since landing at the city of the desert and the desperate chance that alone had permitted him to regain the traveling machine made him shudder at the bare recollection and rendered him more sober and thoughtful than usual.

We who stick closely to the earth's surface can scarcely realize how Rob could travel through the air at such dizzy heights without any fear or concern whatsoever. But he had come to consider the air a veritable refuge. Experience had given him implicit confidence in the powers of the electrical instrument whose unseen forces carried him so swiftly and surely, and while the tiny, watch-like machine was clasped to his wrist he felt himself to be absolutely safe.

Having slipped away from the Turk and attained a fair altitude, he set the indicator at zero and paused long enough to consult his map and decide what direction it was best for him to take. The mischance that had swept him unwittingly over the countries of Europe had also carried him more than half way around the world from his home. Therefore the nearest way to reach America would be to continue traveling to the eastward.

So much time had been consumed at the desert oasis that he felt he must now hasten if he wished to reach home by Saturday afternoon; so, having quickly come to a decision, he turned the indicator and began a swift flight into the east.

For several hours he traveled above the great desert of Gobi, but by noon signs of a more fertile country began to appear, and, dropping to a point nearer the earth, he was able to observe closely the country of the Chinese, with its crowded population and ancient but crude civilization.

Then he came to the Great Wall of China and to mighty Peking, above which he hovered some time, examining it curiously. He really longed to make a stop there, but with his late experiences fresh in his mind he thought it much safer to view the wonderful city from a distance.

Resuming his flight he presently came to the gulf of Laou Tong, whose fair face was freckled with many ships of many nations, and so on to Korea, which seemed to him a land fully a century behind the times.

Night overtook him while speeding across the Sea of Japan, and having a great desire to view the Mikado's famous islands, he put the indicator at

zero, and, coming to a full stop, composed himself to sleep until morning, that he might run no chances of being carried beyond his knowledge during the night.

You might suppose it no easy task to sleep suspended in mid-air, yet the magnetic currents controlled by the traveling machine were so evenly balanced that Rob was fully as comfortable as if reposing upon a bed of down. He had become somewhat accustomed to passing the night in the air and now slept remarkably well, having no fear of burglars or fire or other interruptions that dwellers in cities are subject to.

One thing, however, he should have remembered: that he was in an ancient and little known part of the world and reposing above a sea famous in fable as the home of many fierce and terrible creatures; while not far away lay the land of the dragon, the simurg and other ferocious monsters.

Rob may have read of these things in fairy tales and books of travel, but if so they had entirely slipped his mind; so he slumbered peacefully and actually snored a little, I believe, towards morning.

But even as the red sun peeped curiously over the horizon he was awakened by a most unusual disturbance — a succession of hoarse screams and a pounding of the air as from the quickly revolving blades of some huge windmill.

He rubbed his eyes and looked around.

Coming towards him at his right hand was an immense bird, whose body seemed almost as big as that of a horse. Its wide-open, curving beak was set with rows of pointed teeth, and the talons held against its breast and turned threateningly outward were more powerful and dreadful than a tiger's claws.

While, fascinated and horrified, he watched the approach of this feathered monster, a scream sounded just behind him and the next instant the stroke of a mighty wing sent him whirling over and over through the air.

He soon came to a stop, however, and saw that another of the monsters had come upon him from the rear and was now, with its mate, circling closely around him, while both uttered continuously their hoarse, savage cries.

Rob wondered why the Garment of Repulsion had not protected him from the blow of the bird's wing; but, as a matter of fact, it had protected him. For it was not the wing itself but the force of the eddying currents of air that had sent him whirling away from the monster. With the indicator at zero the magnetic currents and the opposing powers of attraction and repulsion were so evenly balanced that any violent atmospheric disturbance affected him in the same way that thistledown is affected by a summer breeze. He had noticed something of this before, but whenever a strong wind was blowing

he was accustomed to rise to a position above the air currents. This was the first time he had slept with the indicator at zero.

The huge birds at once renewed their attack, but Rob had now recovered his wits sufficiently to draw the electric tube from his pocket. The first one to dart towards him received the powerful electric current direct from the tube, and fell stunned and fluttering to the surface of the sea, where it floated motionless. Its mate, perhaps warned by this sudden disaster, renewed its circling flight, moving so swiftly that Rob could scarcely follow it, and drawing nearer and nearer every moment to its intended victim. The boy could not turn in the air very quickly, and he feared an attack in the back, mistrusting the saving power of the Garment of Repulsion under such circumstances; so in desperation he pressed his finger upon the button of the tube and whirled the instrument around his head in the opposite direction to that in which the monster was circling. Presently the current and the bird met, and with one last scream the creature tumbled downwards to join its fellow upon the waves, where they lay like two floating islands.

Their presence had left a rank, sickening stench in the surrounding atmosphere, so Rob made haste to resume his journey and was soon moving rapidly eastward.

He could not control a shudder at the recollection of his recent combat, and realized the horror of a meeting with such creatures by one who had no protection from their sharp beaks and talons.

"It's no wonder the Japs draw ugly pictures of those monsters," he thought. "People who live in these parts must pass most of their lives in a tremble."

The sun was now shining brilliantly, and when the beautiful islands of Japan came in sight Rob found that he had recovered his wonted cheerfulness. He moved along slowly, hovering with curious interest over the quaint and picturesque villages and watching the industrious Japanese patiently toiling at their tasks. Just before he reached Tokio he came to a military fort, and for nearly an hour watched the skilful maneuvers of a regiment of soldiers at their morning drill. They were not very big people, compared with other nations, but they seemed alert and well trained, and the boy decided it would require a brave enemy to face them on a field of battle.

Having at length satisfied his curiosity as to Japanese life and customs Rob prepared for his long flight across the Pacific Ocean.

By consulting his map he discovered that should he maintain his course due east, as before, he would arrive at a point in America very near to San Francisco, which suited his plans excellently.

Having found that he moved more swiftly when farthest from the earth's

surface, because the air was more rarefied and offered less resistance, Rob mounted upwards until the islands of Japan were mere specks visible through the clear, sunny atmosphere.

Then he began his eastward flight, the broad surface of the Pacific seeming like a blue cloud far beneath him.

16. Shipwrecked Mariners

Ample proof of Rob's careless and restless nature having been frankly placed before the reader in these pages, you will doubtless be surprised when I relate that during the next few hours our young gentleman suffered from a severe attack of homesickness, becoming as gloomy and unhappy in its duration as ever a homesick boy could be.

It may have been because he was just then cut off from all his fellow-creatures and even from the world itself; it may have been because he was satiated with marvels and with the almost absolute control over the powers which the Demon had conferred upon him; or it may have been because he was born and reared a hearty, healthy American boy, with a disposition to battle openly with the world and take his chances equally with his fellows, rather than be placed in such an exclusive position that no one could hope successfully to oppose him.

Perhaps he himself did not know what gave him this horrible attack of "the blues," but the truth is he took out his handkerchief and cried like a baby from very loneliness and misery.

There was no one to see him, thank goodness! and the tears gave him considerable relief. He dried his eyes, made an honest struggle to regain his cheerfulness, and then muttered to himself:

"If I stay up here, like an air-bubble in the sky, I shall certainly go crazy. I suppose there's nothing but water to look at down below, but if I could only sight a ship, or even see a fish jump, it would do me no end of good."

Thereupon he descended until, as the ocean's surface same nearer and nearer, he discovered a tiny island lying almost directly underneath him. It was hardly big enough to make a dot on the biggest map, but a clump of trees grew in the central portion, while around the edges were jagged rocks protecting a sandy beach and a stretch of flower-strewn upland leading to the trees.

It looked beautiful from Rob's elevated position, and his spirits brightened at once.

"I'll drop down and pick a bouquet," he exclaimed, and a few moments later his feet touched the firm earth of the island.

But before he could gather a dozen of the brilliant flowers a glad shout reached his ears, and, looking up, he saw two men running towards him from the trees.

They were dressed in sailor fashion, but their clothing was reduced to rags and scarcely clung to their brown, skinny bodies. As they advanced they waved their arms wildly in the air and cried in joyful tones:

“A boat! a boat!”

Rob stared at them wonderingly, and had much ado to prevent the poor fellows from hugging him outright, so great was their joy at his appearance. One of them rolled upon the ground, laughing and crying by turns, while the other danced and cut capers until he became so exhausted that he sank down breathless beside his comrade.

“How came you here?” then inquired the boy, in pitying tones.

“We’re shipwrecked American sailors from the bark ‘Cynthia Jane,’ which went down near here over a month ago,” answered the smallest and thinnest of the two. “We escaped by clinging to a bit of wreckage and floated to this island, where we have nearly starved to death. Indeed, we now have eaten everything on the island that was eatable, and had your boat arrived a few days later you’d have found us lying dead upon the beach!”

Rob listened to this sad tale with real sympathy.

“But I didn’t come here in a boat,” said he.

The men sprang to their feet with white, scared faces.

“No boat!” they cried; “are you, too, shipwrecked?”

“No;” he answered. “I flew here through the air.” And then he explained to them the wonderful electric traveling machine.

But the sailors had no interest whatever in the relation. Their disappointment was something awful to witness, and one of them laid his head upon his comrade’s shoulder and wept with unrestrained grief, so weak and discouraged had they become through suffering.

Suddenly Rob remembered that he could assist them, and took the box of concentrated food tablets from his pocket.

“Eat these,” he said, offering one of each to the sailors.

At first they could not understand that these small tablets would be able to allay the pangs of hunger; but when Rob explained their virtues the men ate them greedily. Within a few moments they were so greatly restored to strength and courage that their eyes brightened, their sunken cheeks flushed, and they were able to converse with their benefactor with calmness and intelligence.

Then the boy sat beside them upon the grass and told them the story of his acquaintance with the Demon and of all his adventures since he had come into possession of the wonderful electric contrivances. In his present mood he felt it would be a relief to confide in some one, and so these poor, lonely men were the first to hear his story.

When he related the manner in which he had clung to the Turk while both ascended into the air, the elder of the two sailors listened with rapt attention, and then, after some thought, asked:

“Why couldn’t you carry one or both of us to America?”

Rob took time seriously to consider this idea, while the sailors eyed him with eager interest. Finally he said:

“I’m afraid I couldn’t support your weight long enough to reach any other land. It’s a long journey, and you’d pull my arms out of joint before we’d been up an hour.”

Their faces fell at this, but one of them said:

“Why couldn’t we swing ourselves over your shoulders with a rope? Our two bodies would balance each other and we are so thin and emaciated that we do not weigh very much.”

While considering this suggestion Rob remembered how at one time five pirates had clung to his left leg and been carried some distance through the air.

“Have you a rope?” he asked.

“No,” was the answer; “but there are plenty of long, tough vines growing on the island that are just as strong and pliable as ropes.”

“Then, if you are willing to run the chances,” decided the boy, “I will make the attempt to save you. But I must warn you that in case I find I can not support the weight of your bodies I shall drop one or both of you into the sea.”

They looked grave at this prospect, but the biggest one said:

“We would soon meet death from starvation if you left us here on the island; so, as there is at least a chance of our being able to escape in your company I, for one, am willing to risk being drowned. It is easier and quicker than being starved. And, as I’m the heavier, I suppose you’ll drop me first.”

“Certainly,” declared Rob, promptly.

This announcement seemed to be an encouragement to the little sailor, but he said, nervously:

“I hope you’ll keep near the water, for I haven’t a good head for heights — they always make me dizzy.”

“Oh, if you don’t want to go,” began Rob, “I can easily — “

“But I do! I do! I do!” cried the little man, interrupting him. “I shall die if you leave me behind!”

“Well, then, get your ropes, and we’ll do the best we can,” said the boy.

They ran to the trees, around the trunks of which were clinging many tendrils of greenish-brown vine which possessed remarkable strength. With their knives they cut a long section of this vine, the ends of which were then tied into loops large enough to permit the sailors to sit in them comfortably. The connecting piece Rob padded with seaweed gathered from the shore, to prevent its cutting into his shoulders.

“Now, then,” he said, when all was ready, “take your places.”

The sailors squatted in the loops, and Rob swung the vine over his shoulders and turned the indicator of the traveling machine to “up.”

As they slowly mounted into the sky the little sailor gave a squeal of terror and clung to the boy’s arm; but the other, although seemingly anxious, sat quietly in his place and made no trouble.

“D — d — don’t g — g — go so high!” stammered the little one, tremblingly; “suppose we should f — f — fall!”

“Well, s’pose we should?” answered Rob, gruffly. “You couldn’t drown until you struck the water, so the higher we are the longer you’ll live in case of accident.”

This phase of the question seemed to comfort the frightened fellow somewhat; but, as he said, he had not a good head for heights, and so continued to tremble in spite of his resolve to be brave.

The weight on Rob’s shoulders was not so great as he had feared, the traveling machine seeming to give a certain lightness and buoyancy to everything that came into contact with its wearer.

As soon as he had reached a sufficient elevation to admit of good speed he turned the indicator once more to the east and began moving rapidly through the air, the shipwrecked sailors dangling at either side.

“This is aw — aw — awful!” gasped the little one.

“Say, you shut up!” commanded the boy, angrily. “If your friend was as big a coward as you are I’d drop you both this minute. Let go my arm and keep quiet, if you want to reach land alive.”

The fellow whimpered a little, but managed to remain silent for several minutes. Then he gave a sudden twitch and grabbed Rob’s arm again.

“S’pose — s’pose the vine should break!” he moaned, a horrified look upon his face.

“I’ve had about enough of this,” said Rob, savagely. “If you haven’t any sense you don’t deserve to live.” He turned the indicator on the dial of the machine and they began to descend rapidly.

The little fellow screamed with fear, but Rob paid no attention to him until the feet of the two suspended sailors were actually dipping into the waves, when he brought their progress to an abrupt halt.

“Wh — wh — what are you g — g — going to do?” gurgled the cowardly sailor.

“I’m going to feed you to the sharks — unless you promise to keep your mouth shut,” retorted the boy. “Now, then; decide at once! Which will it be — sharks or silence?”

“I won’t say a word — ‘pon my honor, I won’t!” said the sailor

shudderingly.

“All right; remember your promise and we’ll have no further trouble,” remarked Rob, who had hard work to keep from laughing at the man’s abject terror.

Once more he ascended and continued the journey, and for several hours they rode along swiftly and silently. Rob’s shoulders were beginning to ache with the continued tugging of the vine upon them, but the thought that he was saving the lives of two unfortunate fellow-creatures gave him strength and courage to persevere.

Night was falling when they first sighted land; a wild and seemingly uninhabited stretch of the American coast. Rob made no effort to select a landing place, for he was nearly worn out with a strain and anxiety of the journey. He dropped his burden upon the brow of a high bluff overlooking the sea and, casting the vine from his shoulders, fell to the earth exhausted and half fainting.

17. The Coast of Oregon

When he had somewhat recovered, Rob sat up and looked around him. The elder sailor was kneeling in earnest prayer, offering grateful thanks for his escape from suffering and death. The younger one lay upon the ground sobbing and still violently agitated by recollections of the frightful experiences he had undergone. Although he did not show his feelings as plainly as the men, the boy was none the less gratified at having been instrumental in saving the lives of two fellow-beings.

The darkness was by this time rapidly enveloping them, so Rob asked his companions to gather some brushwood and light a fire, which they quickly did. The evening was cool for the time of year, and the heat from the fire was cheering and grateful; so they all lay near the glowing embers and fell fast asleep.

The sound of voices aroused Rob next morning, and on opening his eyes and gazing around he saw several rudely dressed men approaching. The two shipwrecked sailors were still sound asleep.

Rob stood up and waited for the strangers to draw near. They seemed to be fishermen, and were much surprised at finding three people asleep upon the bluff.

"Whar 'n thunder 'd ye come from?" asked the foremost fisherman, in a surprised voice.

"From the sea," replied the boy. "My friends here are shipwrecked sailors from the 'Cynthia Jane.'"

"But how'd ye make out to climb the bluff?" inquired a second fisherman; "no one ever did it afore, as we knows on."

"Oh, that is a long story," replied the boy, evasively.

The two sailors had awakened and now saluted the new-comers. Soon they were exchanging a running fire of questions and answers.

"Where are we?" Rob heard the little sailor ask.

"Coast of Oregon," was the reply. "We're about seven miles from Port Orford by land an' about ten miles by sea."

"Do you live at Port Orford?" inquired the sailor.

"That's what we do, friend; an' if your party wants to join us we'll do our best to make you comf'table, bein' as you're shipwrecked an' need help."

Just then a loud laugh came from another group, where the elder sailor had been trying to explain Rob's method of flying through the air.

"Laugh all you want to," said the sailor, sullenly; "it's true — ev'ry word of it!"

"Mebbe you think it, friend," answered a big, good-natured fisherman;

“but it’s well known that shipwrecked folks go crazy sometimes, an’ imagine strange things. Your mind seems clear enough in other ways, so I advise you to try and forget your dreams about flyin’.”

Rob now stepped forward and shook hands with the sailors.

“I see you have found friends,” he said to them, “so I will leave you and continue my journey, as I’m in something of a hurry.”

Both sailors began to thank him profusely for their rescue, but he cut them short.

“That’s all right. Of course I couldn’t leave you on that island to starve to death, and I’m glad I was able to bring you away with me.”

“But you threatened to drop me into the sea,” remarked the little sailor, in a grieved voice.

“So I did,” said Rob, laughing; “but I wouldn’t have done it for the world — not even to have saved my own life. Good-by!”

He turned the indicator and mounted skyward, to the unbounded amazement of the fishermen, who stared after him with round eyes and wide open mouths.

“This sight will prove to them that the sailors are not crazy,” he thought, as he turned to the south and sped away from the bluff. “I suppose those simple fishermen will never forget this wonderful occurrence, and they’ll probably make reg’lar heroes of the two men who have crossed the Pacific through the air.”

He followed the coast line, keeping but a short distance above the earth, and after an hour’s swift flight reached the city of San Francisco.

His shoulders were sore and stiff from the heavy strain upon them of the previous day, and he wished more than once that he had some of his mother’s household liniment to rub them with. Yet so great was his delight at reaching once more his native land that all discomforts were speedily forgotten.

Much as he would have enjoyed a day in the great metropolis of the Pacific slope, Rob dared not delay longer than to take a general view of the place, to note its handsome edifices and to wonder at the throng of Chinese inhabiting one section of the town.

These things were much more plainly and quickly viewed by Rob from above than by threading a way through the streets on foot; for he looked down upon the city as a bird does, and covered miles with a single glance.

Having satisfied his curiosity without attempting to alight, he turned to the southeast and followed the peninsula as far as Palo Alto, where he viewed the magnificent buildings of the university. Changing his course to the east, he soon reached Mount Hamilton, and, being attracted by the great tower of

the Lick Observatory, he hovered over it until he found he had attracted the excited gaze of the inhabitants, who doubtless observed him very plainly through the big telescope.

But so unreal and seemingly impossible was the sight witnessed by the learned astronomers that they have never ventured to make the incident public, although long after the boy had darted away into the east they argued together concerning the marvelous and incomprehensible vision. Afterward they secretly engrossed the circumstance upon their records, but resolved never to mention it in public, lest their wisdom and veracity should be assailed by the skeptical.

Meantime Rob rose to a higher altitude, and sped swiftly across the great continent. By noon he sighted Chicago, and after a brief inspection of the place from the air determined to devote at least an hour to forming the acquaintance of this most wonderful and cosmopolitan city.

18. A Narrow Escape

The Auditorium Tower, where "the weather man" sits to flash his reports throughout the country, offered an inviting place for the boy to alight. He dropped quietly upon the roof of the great building and walked down the staircase until he reached the elevators, by means of which he descended to the ground floor without exciting special attention.

The eager rush and hurry of the people crowding the sidewalks impressed Rob with the idea that they were all behind time and were trying hard to catch up. He found it impossible to walk along comfortably without being elbowed and pushed from side to side; so a half hour's sight-seeing under such difficulties tired him greatly. It was a beautiful afternoon, and finding himself upon the Lake Front, Rob hunted up a vacant bench and sat down to rest.

Presently an elderly gentleman with a reserved and dignified appearance and dressed in black took a seat next to the boy and drew a magazine from his pocket. Rob saw that he opened it to an article on "The Progress of Modern Science," in which he seemed greatly interested.

After a time the boy remembered that he was hungry, not having eaten a tablet in more than twenty-four hours. So he took out the silver box and ate one of the small, round disks it contained.

"What are those?" inquired the old gentleman in a soft voice. "You are too young to be taking patent medicines."

"There are not medicines, exactly," answered the boy, with a smile. "They are Concentrated Food Tablets, sorted with nourishment by means of electricity. One of them furnishes a person with food for an entire day."

The old gentleman stared at Rob a moment and then laid down his magazine and took the box in his hands, examining the tablets curiously.

"Are these patented?" he asked.

"No," said Rob; "they are unknown to any one but myself."

"I will give you a half million dollars for the recipe to make them," said the gentleman.

"I fear I must refuse your offer," returned Rob, with a laugh.

"I'll make it a million," said the gentleman, coolly.

Rob shook his head.

"Money can't buy the recipe," he said; "for I don't know it myself."

"Couldn't the tablets be chemically analyzed, and the secret discovered?" inquired the other.

"I don't know; but I'm not going to give any one the chance to try," declared the boy, firmly.

The old gentleman picked up his magazine without another word, and resumed his reading.

For amusement Rob took the Record of Events from his pocket and began looking at the scenes reflected from its polished plate.

Presently he became aware that the old gentleman was peering over his shoulder with intense interest. General Funston was just then engaged in capturing the rebel chief, Aguinaldo, and for a few moments both man and boy observed the occurrence with rapt attention. As the scene was replaced by one showing a secret tunnel of the Russian Nihilists, with the conspirators carrying dynamite to a recess underneath the palace of the Czar, the gentleman uttered a long sigh and asked:

"Will you sell that box?"

"No," answered Rob, shortly, and put it back into his pocket.

"I'll give you a million dollars to control the sale in Chicago alone," continued the gentleman, with an eager inflection in his smooth voice.

"You seem quite anxious to get rid of money," remarked Rob, carelessly. "How much are you worth?"

"Personally?"

"Yes."

"Nothing at all, young man. I am not offering you my own money. But with such inventions as you have exhibited I could easily secure millions of capital. Suppose we form a trust, and place them upon the market. We'll capitalize it for a hundred millions, and you can have a quarter of the stock — twenty-five millions. That would keep you from worrying about grocery bills."

"But I wouldn't need groceries if I had the tablets," said Rob, laughing.

"True enough! But you could take life easily and read your newspaper in comfort, without being in any hurry to get down town to business. Twenty-five millions would bring you a cozy little income, if properly invested."

"I don't see why one should read newspapers when the Record of Events shows all that is going on in the world," objected Rob.

"True, true! But what do you say to the proposition?"

"I must decline, with thanks. These inventions are not for sale."

The gentleman sighed and resumed his magazine, in which he became much absorbed.

Rob put on the Character Marking Spectacles and looked at him. The letters "E," "W" and "C" were plainly visible upon the composed, respectable looking brow of his companion.

"Evil, wise and cruel," reflected Rob, as he restored the spectacles to his pocket. "How easily such a man could impose upon people. To look at him

one would think that butter wouldn't melt in his mouth!"

He decided to part company with this chance acquaintance and, rising from his seat, strolled leisurely up the walk. A moment later, on looking back, he discovered that the old gentleman had disappeared.

He walked down State Street to the river and back again, amused by the activity displayed in this busy section of the city. But the time he had allowed himself in Chicago had now expired, so he began looking around for some high building from the roof of which he could depart unnoticed.

This was not at all difficult, and selecting one of many stores he ascended by an elevator to the top floor and from there mounted an iron stairway leading to the flat roof. As he climbed this stairway he found himself followed by a pleasant looking young man, who also seemed desirous of viewing the city from the roof.

Annoyed at the inopportune intrusion, Rob's first thought was to go back to the street and try another building; but, upon reflecting that the young man was not likely to remain long and he would soon be alone, he decided to wait. So he walked to the edge of the roof and appeared to be interested in the scenery spread out below him.

"Fine view from here, ain't it?" said the young man, coming up to him and placing his hand carelessly upon the boy's shoulder.

"It is, indeed," replied Rob, leaning over the edge to look into the street.

As he spoke he felt himself gently but firmly pushed from behind and, losing his balance, he plunged headforemost from the roof and whirled through the intervening space toward the sidewalk far below.

Terrified though he was by the sudden disaster, the boy had still wit enough remaining to reach out his right hand and move the indicator of the machine upon his left wrist to the zero mark. Immediately he paused in his fearful flight and presently came to a stop at a distance of less than fifteen feet from the flagstones which had threatened to crush out his life.

As he stared downward, trying to recover his self-possession, he saw the old gentleman he had met on the Lake Front standing just below and looking at him with a half frightened, half curious expression in his eyes.

At once Rob saw through the whole plot to kill him and thus secure possession of his electrical devices. The young man upon the roof who had attempted to push him to his death was a confederate of the innocent appearing old gentleman, it seemed, and the latter had calmly awaited his fall to the pavement to seize the coveted treasures from his dead body. It was an awful idea, and Rob was more frightened than he had ever been before in his life — or ever has been since.

But now the shouts of a vast concourse of amazed spectators reached the

boy's ears. He remembered that he was suspended in mid-air over the crowded street of a great city, while thousands of wondering eyes were fixed upon him.

So he quickly set the indicator to the word "up," and mounted sky-ward until the watchers below could scarcely see him. Then he fled away into the east, even yet shuddering with the horror of his recent escape from death and filled with disgust at the knowledge that there were people who held human life so lightly that they were willing to destroy it to further their own selfish ends.

"And the Demon wants such people as these to possess his electrical devices, which are as powerful to accomplish evil when in wrong hands as they are good!" thought the boy, resentfully. "This would be a fine world if Electric Tubes and Records of Events and Traveling Machines could be acquired by selfish and unprincipled persons!"

So unnerved was Rob by his recent experiences that he determined to make no more stops. However, he alighted at nightfall in the country, and slept upon the sweet hay in a farmer's barn.

But, early the next morning, before any one else was astir, he resumed his journey, and at precisely ten o'clock of this day, which was Saturday, he completed his flying trip around the world by alighting unobserved upon the well-trimmed lawn of his own home.

19. Rob Makes a Resolution

When Rob opened the front door he came face to face with Nell, who gave an exclamation of joy and threw herself into his arms.

"Oh, Rob!" she cried, "I'm so glad you've come. We have all been dreadfully worried about you, and mother — "

"Well, what about mother?" inquired the boy, anxiously, as she paused.

"She's been very ill, Rob; and the doctor said to-day that unless we heard from you soon he would not be able to save her life. The uncertainty about you is killing her."

Rob stood stock still, all the eager joy of his return frozen into horror at the thought that he had caused his dear mother so much suffering.

"Where is she, Nell?" he asked, brokenly.

"In her room. Come; I'll take you to her."

Rob followed with beating heart, and soon was clasped close to his mother's breast.

"Oh, my boy — my dear boy!" she murmured, and then for very joy and love she was unable to say more, but held him tight and stroked his hair gently and kissed him again and again.

Rob said little, except to promise that he would never again leave home without her full consent and knowledge. But in his mind he contrasted the love and comfort that now surrounded him with the lonely and unnatural life he had been leading and, boy though he was in years, a mighty resolution that would have been creditable to an experienced man took firm root in his heart.

He was obliged to recount all his adventures to his mother and, although he made light of the dangers he had passed through, the story drew many sighs and shudders from her.

When luncheon time arrived he met his father, and Mr. Joslyn took occasion to reprove his son in strong language for running away from home and leaving them filled with anxiety as to his fate. However, when he saw how happy and improved in health his dear wife was at her boy's return, and when he had listened to Rob's manly confession of error and expressions of repentance, he speedily forgave the culprit and treated him as genially as ever.

Of course the whole story had to be repeated, his sisters listening this time with open eyes and ears and admiring their adventurous brother immensely. Even Mr. Joslyn could not help becoming profoundly interested, but he took care not to show any pride he might feel in his son's achievements.

When his father returned to his office Rob went to his own bed-chamber

and sat for a long time by the window in deep thought. When at last he aroused himself, he found it was nearly four o'clock.

"The Demon will be here presently," he said, with a thrill of aversion, "and I must be in the workshop to receive him."

Silently he stole to the foot of the attic stairs and then paused to listen. The house seemed very quiet, but he could hear his mother's voice softly humming a cradle-song that she had sung to him when he was a baby.

He had been nervous and unsettled and a little fearful until then, but perhaps the sound of his mother's voice gave him courage, for he boldly ascended the stairs and entered the workshop, closing and locking the door behind him.

20. The Unhappy Fate of the Demon

Again the atmosphere quickened and pulsed with accumulating vibrations. Again the boy found himself aroused to eager expectancy. There was a whirl in the air; a crackling like distant musketry; a flash of dazzling light — and the Demon stood before him for the third time.

"I give you greetings!" said he, in a voice not unkindly.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Demon," answered the boy, bowing gravely.

"I see you have returned safely from your trip," continued the Apparition, cheerfully, "although at one time I thought you would be unable to escape. Indeed, unless I had knocked that tube from the rascally Turk's hand as he clambered to the top of the wall, I believe you would have been at the Yarkand oasis yet — either dead or alive, as chance might determine."

"Were you there?" asked Rob.

"To be sure. And I recovered the tube for you, without which you would have been helpless. But that is the only time I saw fit to interfere in any way."

"I'm afraid I did not get a chance to give many hints to inventors or scientists," said Rob.

"True, and I have deeply regretted it," replied the Demon. "But your unusual powers caused more astonishment and consternation than you, perhaps, imagined; for many saw you whom you were too busy to notice. As a result several able electricians are now thinking new thoughts along new lines, and some of them may soon give these or similar inventions to the world."

"You are satisfied, then?" asked Rob.

"As to that," returned the Demon, composedly, "I am not. But I have hopes that with the addition of the three marvelous devices I shall present you with to-day you will succeed in arousing so much popular interest in electrical inventions as to render me wholly satisfied with the result of this experiment."

Rob regarded the brilliant apparition with a solemn face, but made no answer.

"No living person," continued the Demon, "has ever before been favored with such comforting devices for the preservation and extension of human life as yourself. You seem quite unappreciative, it is true; but since our connection I have come to realize that you are but an ordinary boy, with many boyish limitations; so I do not condemn your foolish actions too harshly."

"That is kind of you," said Rob.

“To prove my friendliness,” pursued the Demon, “I have brought, as the first of to-day’s offerings this Electro-Magnetic Restorer. You see it is shaped like a thin metal band, and is to be worn upon the brow, clasping at the back of the head. Its virtues surpass those of either the fabulous ‘Fountain of Youth,’ or the ‘Elixir of Life,’ so vainly sought for in past ages. For its wearer will instantly become free from any bodily disease or pain and will enjoy perfect health and vigor. In truth, so great are its powers that even the dead may be restored to life, provided the blood has not yet chilled. In presenting you with this appliance, I feel I am bestowing upon you the greatest blessing and most longed-for boon ever bequeathed of suffering humanity.”

Here he held the slender, dull-colored metallic band toward the boy.

“Keep it,” said Rob.

The Demon started, and gave him an odd look.

“What did you say?” he asked.

“I told you to keep it,” answered Rob. “I don’t want it.”

The Demon staggered back as if he had been struck.

“Don’t want it!” he gasped.

“No; I’ve had enough of your infernal inventions!” cried the boy, with sudden anger.

He unclasped the traveling machine from his wrist and laid it on the table beside the Demon.

“There’s the thing that’s responsible for most of my troubles,” said he, bitterly. “What right has one person to fly through the air while all his fellow-creatures crawl over the earth’s surface? And why should I be cut off from all the rest of the world because you have given me this confounded traveling machine? I didn’t ask for it, and I won’t keep it a moment longer. Give it to some one you hate more than you do me!”

The Demon stared aghast and turned his glittering eyes wonderingly from Rob to the traveling machine and back again, as if to be sure he had heard and seen aright.

“And here are your food tablets,” continued the boy, placing the box upon the table. “I’ve only enjoyed one square meal since you gave them to me. They’re all right to preserve life, of course, and answer the purpose for which they were made; but I don’t believe nature ever intended us to exist upon such things, or we wouldn’t have the sense of taste, which enables us to enjoy natural food. As long as I’m a human being I’m going to eat like a human being, so I’ve consumed my last Electrical Concentrated Food Tablet — and don’t you forget it!”

The Demon sank into a chair, nerveless and limp, but still staring fearfully

at the boy.

"And there's another of your unnatural devices," said Rob, putting the Automatic Record of Events upon the table beside the other things. "What right have you to capture vibrations that radiate from private and secret actions and discover them to others who have no business to know them? This would be a fine world if every body could peep into every one else's affairs, wouldn't it? And here is your Character Marker. Nice thing for a decent person to own, isn't it? Any one who would take advantage of such a sneaking invention as that would be worse than a thief! Oh, I've used them, of course, and I ought to be spanked for having been so mean and underhanded; but I'll never be guilty of looking through them again."

The Demon's face was frowning and indignant. He made a motion to rise, but thought better of it and sank back in his chair.

"As for the Garment of Protection," resumed the boy, after a pause, "I've worn it for the last time, and here it is, at your service. I'll put the Electric Tube with it. Not that these are such very bad things in themselves, but I'll have none of your magical contrivances. I'll say this, however: if all armies were equipped with Electrical Tubes instead of guns and swords the world would be spared a lot of misery and unnecessary bloodshed. Perhaps in time; but that time hasn't arrived yet."

"You might have hastened it," said the Demon, sternly, "if you had been wise enough to use your powers properly."

"That's just it," answered Rob. "I'm NOT wise enough. Nor is the majority of mankind wise enough to use such inventions as yours unselfishly and for the good of the world. If people were better, and every one had an equal show, it would be different."

For some moments the Demon sat quietly thinking. Finally the frown left his face and he said, with animation:

"I have other inventions, which you may use without any such qualms of conscience. The Electro-Magnetic Restorer I offered you would be a great boon to your race, and could not possibly do harm. And, besides this, I have brought you what I call the Illimitable Communicator. It is a simple electric device which will enable you, wherever you may be, to converse with people in any part of the world, without the use of such crude connections as wires. In fact, you may — "

"Stop!" cried Rob. "It is useless for you to describe it, because I'll have nothing more to do with you or your inventions. I have given them a fair trial, and they've got me into all sorts of trouble and made all my friends miserable. If I was some high-up scientist it would be different; but I'm just a common boy, and I don't want to be anything else."

“But, your duty — “ began the Demon.

“My duty I owe to myself and to my family,” interrupted Rob. “I have never cultivated science, more than to fool with some simple electrical experiments, so I owe nothing to either science or the Demon of Electricity, so far as I can see.”

“But consider,” remonstrated the Demon, rising to his feet and speaking in a pleading voice, “consider the years that must elapse before any one else is likely to strike the Master Key! And, in the meanwhile, consider my helpless position, cut off from all interest in the world while I have such wonderful inventions on my hands for the benefit of mankind. If you have no love for science or for the advancement of civilization, DO have some consideration for your fellow-creatures, and for me!”

“If my fellow-creatures would have as much trouble with your electrical inventions as I had, I am doing them a service by depriving them of your devices,” said the boy. “As for yourself, I’ve no fault to find with you, personally. You’re a very decent sort of Demon, and I’ve no doubt you mean well; but there’s something wrong about our present combination, I’m sure. It isn’t natural.”

The Demon made a gesture of despair.

“Why, oh why did not some intelligent person strike the Master Key!” he moaned.

“That’s it!” exclaimed Rob. “I believe that’s the root of the whole evil.”

“What is?” inquired the Demon, stupidly.

“The fact that an intelligent person did not strike the Master Key. You don’t seem to understand. Well, I’ll explain. You’re the Demon of Electricity, aren’t you?”

“I am,” said the other, drawing himself up proudly.

“Your mission is to obey the commands of whoever is able to strike the Master Key of Electricity.”

“That is true.”

“I once read in a book that all things are regulated by exact laws of nature. If that is so you probably owe your existence to those laws.” The Demon nodded. “Doubtless it was intended that when mankind became intelligent enough and advanced enough to strike the Master Key, you and all your devices would not only be necessary and acceptable to them, but the world would be prepared for their general use. That seems reasonable, doesn’t it?”

“Perhaps so. Yes; it seems reasonable,” answered the Demon, thoughtfully.

“Accidents are always liable to happen,” continued the boy. “By accident the Master Key was struck long before the world of science was ready for it

— or for you. Instead of considering it an accident and paying no attention to it you immediately appeared to me — a mere boy — and offered your services."

"I was very anxious to do something," returned the Demon, evasively. "You've no idea how stupid it is for me to live invisible and unknown, while all the time I have in my possession secrets of untold benefit to the world."

"Well, you'll have to keep cool and bide your time," said Rob. "The world wasn't made in a minute, and while civilization is going on at a pretty good pace, we're not up to the Demon of Electricity yet."

"What shall I do!" groaned the Apparition, wringing his hands miserably; "oh, what shall I do!"

"Go home and lie down," replied Rob, sympathetically. "Take it easy and don't get rattled. Nothing was every created without a use, they say; so your turn will come some day, sure! I'm sorry for you, old fellow, but it's all your own fault."

"You are right!" exclaimed the Demon, striding up and down the room, and causing thereby such a crackling of electricity in the air that Rob's hair became rigid enough to stand on end. "You are right, and I must wait — wait — wait — patiently and silently — until my bonds are loosed by intelligence rather than chance! It is a dreary fate. But I must wait — I must wait — I must wait!"

"I'm glad you've come to your senses," remarked Rob, drily. "So, if you've nothing more to say — "

"No! I have nothing more to say. There IS nothing more to say. You and I are two. We should never had met!" retorted the Demon, showing great excitement.

"Oh, I didn't seek your acquaintance," said Rob. "But I've tried to treat you decently, and I've no fault to find with you except that you forgot you were a slave and tried to be a master."

The Demon did not reply. He was busily forcing the various electrical devices that Rob had relinquished into the pockets of his fiery jacket.

Finally he turned with an abrupt movement.

"Good-by!" he cried. "When mortal eyes next behold me they will be those of one fit to command my services! As for you, your days will be passed in obscurity and your name be unknown to fame. Good-by, — forever!"

The room filled with a flash of white light so like a sheet of lightning that the boy went reeling backwards, half stunned and blinded by its dazzling intensity.

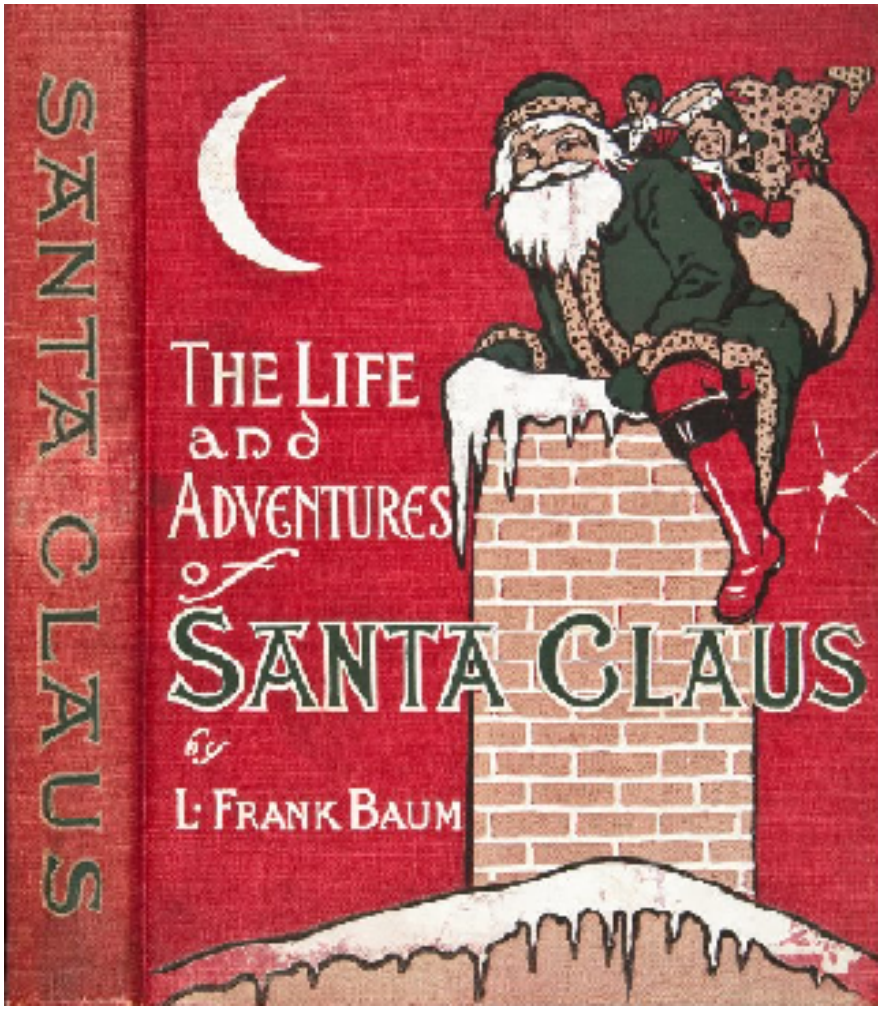
When he recovered himself the Demon of Electricity had disappeared.

Rob's heart was very light as he left the workshop and made his way down the attic stairs.

"Some people might think I was a fool to give up those electrical inventions," he reflected; "but I'm one of those persons who know when they've had enough. It strikes me the fool is the fellow who can't learn a lesson. I've learned mine, all right. It's no fun being a century ahead of the times!"

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF SANTA CLAUS

The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus appeared in 1902, published by Bowen Merrill, illustrated by Mary Cowles Clark. Baum's charming tale depicts the life history of Santa Claus and provides colorful answers to many questions children have about the beloved Christmas icon and traditions associated with him. The "biography" also introduces the Nome King, famous for his appearances in the Oz series. Santa Claus and some fairy creatures, ryls and knooks, travel to the Emerald City for Ozma's birthday party in *The Road to Oz*.



A first edition copy of The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

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4. How Little Mayrie Became Frightened
5. How Bessie Blithesome Came to the Laughing Valley
6. The Wickedness of the Awgwas
7. The Great Battle Between Good and Evil
8. The First Journey with the Reindeer
9. “Santa Claus!”
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OLD AGE
1. The Mantle of Immortality
2. When the World Grew Old
3. The Deputies of Santa Claus

YOUTH

1. Burzee

Have you heard of the great Forest of Burzee? Nurse used to sing of it when I was a child. She sang of the big tree-trunks, standing close together, with their roots intertwining below the earth and their branches intertwining above it; of their rough coating of bark and queer, gnarled limbs; of the bushy foliage that roofed the entire forest, save where the sunbeams found a path through which to touch the ground in little spots and to cast weird and curious shadows over the mosses, the lichens and the drifts of dried leaves.

The Forest of Burzee is mighty and grand and awesome to those who steal beneath its shade. Coming from the sunlit meadows into its mazes it seems at first gloomy, then pleasant, and afterward filled with never-ending delights.

For hundreds of years it has flourished in all its magnificence, the silence of its inclosure unbroken save by the chirp of busy chipmunks, the growl of wild beasts and the songs of birds.

Yet Burzee has its inhabitants — for all this. Nature peopled it in the beginning with Fairies, Knooks, Ryls and Nymphs. As long as the Forest stands it will be a home, a refuge and a playground to these sweet immortals, who revel undisturbed in its depths.

Civilization has never yet reached Burzee. Will it ever, I wonder?

2. The Child of the Forest

Once, so long ago our great-grandfathers could scarcely have heard it mentioned, there lived within the great Forest of Burzee a wood-nymph named Necile. She was closely related to the mighty Queen Zurline, and her home was beneath the shade of a widespreading oak. Once every year, on Budding Day, when the trees put forth their new buds, Necile held the Golden Chalice of Ak to the lips of the Queen, who drank therefrom to the prosperity of the Forest. So you see she was a nymph of some importance, and, moreover, it is said she was highly regarded because of her beauty and grace.

When she was created she could not have told; Queen Zurline could not have told; the great Ak himself could not have told. It was long ago when the world was new and nymphs were needed to guard the forests and to minister to the wants of the young trees. Then, on some day not remembered, Necile sprang into being; radiant, lovely, straight and slim as the sapling she was created to guard.

Her hair was the color that lines a chestnut-bur; her eyes were blue in the sunlight and purple in the shade; her cheeks bloomed with the faint pink that edges the clouds at sunset; her lips were full red, pouting and sweet. For costume she adopted oak-leaf green; all the wood-nymphs dress in that color and know no other so desirable. Her dainty feet were sandal-clad, while her head remained bare of covering other than her silken tresses.

Necile's duties were few and simple. She kept hurtful weeds from growing beneath her trees and sapping the earth-food required by her charges. She frightened away the Gadgols, who took evil delight in flying against the tree-trunks and wounding them so that they drooped and died from the poisonous contact. In dry seasons she carried water from the brooks and pools and moistened the roots of her thirsty dependents.

That was in the beginning. The weeds had now learned to avoid the forests where wood-nymphs dwelt; the loathsome Gadgols no longer dared come nigh; the trees had become old and sturdy and could bear the drought better than when fresh-sprouted. So Necile's duties were lessened, and time grew laggard, while succeeding years became more tiresome and uneventful than the nymph's joyous spirit loved.

Truly the forest-dwellers did not lack amusement. Each full moon they danced in the Royal Circle of the Queen. There were also the Feast of Nuts, the Jubilee of Autumn Tintings, the solemn ceremony of Leaf Shedding and the revelry of Budding Day. But these periods of enjoyment were far apart, and left many weary hours between.

That a wood-nymph should grow discontented was not thought of by Necile's sisters. It came upon her only after many years of brooding. But when once she had settled in her mind that life was irksome she had no patience with her condition, and longed to do something of real interest and to pass her days in ways hitherto undreamed of by forest nymphs. The Law of the Forest alone restrained her from going forth in search of adventure.

While this mood lay heavy upon pretty Necile it chanced that the great Ak visited the Forest of Burzee and allowed the wood-nymphs as was their wont — to lie at his feet and listen to the words of wisdom that fell from his lips. Ak is the Master Woodsman of the world; he sees everything, and knows more than the sons of men.

That night he held the Queen's hand, for he loved the nymphs as a father loves his children; and Necile lay at his feet with many of her sisters and earnestly harkened as he spoke.

"We live so happily, my fair ones, in our forest glades," said Ak, stroking his grizzled beard thoughtfully, "that we know nothing of the sorrow and misery that fall to the lot of those poor mortals who inhabit the open spaces of the earth. They are not of our race, it is true, yet compassion well befits beings so fairly favored as ourselves. Often as I pass by the dwelling of some suffering mortal I am tempted to stop and banish the poor thing's misery. Yet suffering, in moderation, is the natural lot of mortals, and it is not our place to interfere with the laws of Nature."

"Nevertheless," said the fair Queen, nodding her golden head at the Master Woodsman, "it would not be a vain guess that Ak has often assisted these hapless mortals."

Ak smiled.

"Sometimes," he replied, "when they are very young — 'children,' the mortals call them — I have stopped to rescue them from misery. The men and women I dare not interfere with; they must bear the burdens Nature has imposed upon them. But the helpless infants, the innocent children of men, have a right to be happy until they become full-grown and able to bear the trials of humanity. So I feel I am justified in assisting them. Not long ago — a year, maybe — I found four poor children huddled in a wooden hut, slowly freezing to death. Their parents had gone to a neighboring village for food, and had left a fire to warm their little ones while they were absent. But a storm arose and drifted the snow in their path, so they were long on the road. Meantime the fire went out and the frost crept into the bones of the waiting children."

"Poor things!" murmured the Queen softly. "What did you do?"

"I called Nelko, bidding him fetch wood from my forests and breathe

upon it until the fire blazed again and warmed the little room where the children lay. Then they ceased shivering and fell asleep until their parents came."

"I am glad you did thus," said the good Queen, beaming upon the Master; and Necile, who had eagerly listened to every word, echoed in a whisper: "I, too, am glad!"

"And this very night," continued Ak, "as I came to the edge of Burzee I heard a feeble cry, which I judged came from a human infant. I looked about me and found, close to the forest, a helpless babe, lying quite naked upon the grasses and wailing piteously. Not far away, screened by the forest, crouched Shiegra, the lioness, intent upon devouring the infant for her evening meal."

"And what did you do, Ak?" asked the Queen, breathlessly.

"Not much, being in a hurry to greet my nymphs. But I commanded Shiegra to lie close to the babe, and to give it her milk to quiet its hunger. And I told her to send word throughout the forest, to all beasts and reptiles, that the child should not be harmed."

"I am glad you did thus," said the good Queen again, in a tone of relief; but this time Necile did not echo her words, for the nymph, filled with a strange resolve, had suddenly stolen away from the group.

Swiftly her lithe form darted through the forest paths until she reached the edge of mighty Burzee, when she paused to gaze curiously about her. Never until now had she ventured so far, for the Law of the Forest had placed the nymphs in its inmost depths.

Necile knew she was breaking the Law, but the thought did not give pause to her dainty feet. She had decided to see with her own eyes this infant Ak had told of, for she had never yet beheld a child of man. All the immortals are full-grown; there are no children among them. Peering through the trees Necile saw the child lying on the grass. But now it was sweetly sleeping, having been comforted by the milk drawn from Shiegra. It was not old enough to know what peril means; if it did not feel hunger it was content.

Softly the nymph stole to the side of the babe and knelt upon the sward, her long robe of rose leaf color spreading about her like a gossamer cloud. Her lovely countenance expressed curiosity and surprise, but, most of all, a tender, womanly pity. The babe was newborn, chubby and pink. It was entirely helpless. While the nymph gazed the infant opened its eyes, smiled upon her, and stretched out two dimpled arms. In another instant Necile had caught it to her breast and was hurrying with it through the forest paths.

3. The Adoption

The Master Woodsman suddenly rose, with knitted brows. “There is a strange presence in the Forest,” he declared. Then the Queen and her nymphs turned and saw standing before them Necile, with the sleeping infant clasped tightly in her arms and a defiant look in her deep blue eyes.

And thus for a moment they remained, the nymphs filled with surprise and consternation, but the brow of the Master Woodsman gradually clearing as he gazed intently upon the beautiful immortal who had wilfully broken the Law. Then the great Ak, to the wonder of all, laid his hand softly on Necile’s flowing locks and kissed her on her fair forehead.

“For the first time within my knowledge,” said he, gently, “a nymph has defied me and my laws; yet in my heart can I find no word of chiding. What is your desire, Necile?”

“Let me keep the child!” she answered, beginning to tremble and falling on her knees in supplication.

“Here, in the Forest of Burzee, where the human race has never yet penetrated?” questioned Ak.

“Here, in the Forest of Burzee,” replied the nymph, boldly. “It is my home, and I am weary for lack of occupation. Let me care for the babe! See how weak and helpless it is. Surely it can not harm Burzee nor the Master Woodsman of the World!”

“But the Law, child, the Law!” cried Ak, sternly.

“The Law is made by the Master Woodsman,” returned Necile; “if he bids me care for the babe he himself has saved from death, who in all the world dare oppose me?” Queen Zurline, who had listened intently to this conversation, clapped her pretty hands gleefully at the nymph’s answer.

“You are fairly trapped, O Ak!” she exclaimed, laughing. “Now, I pray you, give heed to Necile’s petition.”

The Woodsman, as was his habit when in thought, stroked his grizzled beard slowly. Then he said:

“She shall keep the babe, and I will give it my protection. But I warn you all that as this is the first time I have relaxed the Law, so shall it be the last time. Never more, to the end of the World, shall a mortal be adopted by an immortal. Otherwise would we abandon our happy existence for one of trouble and anxiety. Good night, my nymphs!”

Then Ak was gone from their midst, and Necile hurried away to her bower to rejoice over her new-found treasure.

4. Claus

Another day found Necile's bower the most popular place in the Forest. The nymphs clustered around her and the child that lay asleep in her lap, with expressions of curiosity and delight. Nor were they wanting in praises for the great Ak's kindness in allowing Necile to keep the babe and to care for it. Even the Queen came to peer into the innocent childish face and to hold a helpless, chubby fist in her own fair hand.

"What shall we call him, Necile?" she asked, smiling. "He must have a name, you know."

"Let him be called Claus," answered Necile, "for that means 'a little one.'"

"Rather let him be called Neclaus,"** returned the Queen, "for that will mean 'Necile's little one.'"

The nymphs clapped their hands in delight, and Neclaus became the infant's name, although Necile loved best to call him Claus, and in afterdays many of her sisters followed her example.

Necile gathered the softest moss in all the forest for Claus to lie upon, and she made his bed in her own bower. Of food the infant had no lack. The nymphs searched the forest for bell-udders, which grow upon the goa-tree and when opened are found to be filled with sweet milk. And the soft-eyed does willingly gave a share of their milk to support the little stranger, while Shiegra, the lioness, often crept stealthily into Necile's bower and purred softly as she lay beside the babe and fed it.

So the little one flourished and grew big and sturdy day by day, while Necile taught him to speak and to walk and to play.

His thoughts and words were sweet and gentle, for the nymphs knew no evil and their hearts were pure and loving. He became the pet of the forest, for Ak's decree had forbidden beast or reptile to molest him, and he walked fearlessly wherever his will guided him.

Presently the news reached the other immortals that the nymphs of Burzee had adopted a human infant, and that the act had been sanctioned by the great Ak. Therefore many of them came to visit the little stranger, looking upon him with much interest. First the Ryls, who are first cousins to the wood-nymphs, although so differently formed. For the Ryls are required to watch over the flowers and plants, as the nymphs watch over the forest trees. They search the wide world for the food required by the roots of the flowering plants, while the brilliant colors possessed by the full-blown flowers are due to the dyes placed in the soil by the Ryls, which are drawn through the little veins in the roots and the body of the plants, as they reach maturity. The Ryls

are a busy people, for their flowers bloom and fade continually, but they are merry and light-hearted and are very popular with the other immortals.

Next came the Knooks, whose duty it is to watch over the beasts of the world, both gentle and wild. The Knooks have a hard time of it, since many of the beasts are ungovernable and rebel against restraint. But they know how to manage them, after all, and you will find that certain laws of the Knooks are obeyed by even the most ferocious animals. Their anxieties make the Knooks look old and worn and crooked, and their natures are a bit rough from associating with wild creatures continually; yet they are most useful to humanity and to the world in general, as their laws are the only laws the forest beasts recognize except those of the Master Woodsman.

Then there were the Fairies, the guardians of mankind, who were much interested in the adoption of Claus because their own laws forbade them to become familiar with their human charges. There are instances on record where the Fairies have shown themselves to human beings, and have even conversed with them; but they are supposed to guard the lives of mankind unseen and unknown, and if they favor some people more than others it is because these have won such distinction fairly, as the Fairies are very just and impartial. But the idea of adopting a child of men had never occurred to them because it was in every way opposed to their laws; so their curiosity was intense to behold the little stranger adopted by Necile and her sister nymphs.

Claus looked upon the immortals who thronged around him with fearless eyes and smiling lips. He rode laughingly upon the shoulders of the merry Ryls; he mischievously pulled the gray beards of the low-browed Knooks; he rested his curly head confidently upon the dainty bosom of the Fairy Queen herself. And the Ryls loved the sound of his laughter; the Knooks loved his courage; the Fairies loved his innocence.

The boy made friends of them all, and learned to know their laws intimately. No forest flower was trampled beneath his feet, lest the friendly Ryls should be grieved. He never interfered with the beasts of the forest, lest his friends the Knooks should become angry. The Fairies he loved dearly, but, knowing nothing of mankind, he could not understand that he was the only one of his race admitted to friendly intercourse with them.

Indeed, Claus came to consider that he alone, of all the forest people, had no like nor fellow. To him the forest was the world. He had no idea that millions of toiling, striving human creatures existed.

And he was happy and content.

** Some people have spelled this name Nicklaus and others Nicolas,

which is the reason that Santa Claus is still known in some lands as St. Nicolas. But, of course, Neclaus is his right name, and Claus the nickname given him by his adopted mother, the fair nymph Necile.

5. The Master Woodsman

Years pass swiftly in Burzee, for the nymphs have no need to regard time in any way. Even centuries make no change in the dainty creatures; ever and ever they remain the same, immortal and unchanging.

Claus, however, being mortal, grew to manhood day by day. Necile was disturbed, presently, to find him too big to lie in her lap, and he had a desire for other food than milk. His stout legs carried him far into Burzee's heart, where he gathered supplies of nuts and berries, as well as several sweet and wholesome roots, which suited his stomach better than the belludders. He sought Necile's bower less frequently, till finally it became his custom to return thither only to sleep.

The nymph, who had come to love him dearly, was puzzled to comprehend the changed nature of her charge, and unconsciously altered her own mode of life to conform to his whims. She followed him readily through the forest paths, as did many of her sister nymphs, explaining as they walked all the mysteries of the gigantic wood and the habits and nature of the living things which dwelt beneath its shade.

The language of the beasts became clear to little Claus; but he never could understand their sulky and morose tempers. Only the squirrels, the mice and the rabbits seemed to possess cheerful and merry natures; yet would the boy laugh when the panther growled, and stroke the bear's glossy coat while the creature snarled and bared its teeth menacingly. The growls and snarls were not for Claus, he well knew, so what did they matter?

He could sing the songs of the bees, recite the poetry of the wood-flowers and relate the history of every blinking owl in Burzee. He helped the Ryls to feed their plants and the Knooks to keep order among the animals. The little immortals regarded him as a privileged person, being especially protected by Queen Zurline and her nymphs and favored by the great Ak himself.

One day the Master Woodsman came back to the forest of Burzee. He had visited, in turn, all his forests throughout the world, and they were many and broad.

Not until he entered the glade where the Queen and her nymphs were assembled to greet him did Ak remember the child he had permitted Necile to adopt. Then he found, sitting familiarly in the circle of lovely immortals, a broad-shouldered, stalwart youth, who, when erect, stood fully as high as the shoulder of the Master himself.

Ak paused, silent and frowning, to bend his piercing gaze upon Claus. The clear eyes met his own steadfastly, and the Woodsman gave a sigh of relief as he marked their placid depths and read the youth's brave and innocent

heart. Nevertheless, as Ak sat beside the fair Queen, and the golden chalice, filled with rare nectar, passed from lip to lip, the Master Woodsman was strangely silent and reserved, and stroked his beard many times with a thoughtful motion.

With morning he called Claus aside, in kindly fashion, saying:

"Bid good by, for a time, to Necile and her sisters; for you shall accompany me on my journey through the world."

The venture pleased Claus, who knew well the honor of being companion of the Master Woodsman of the world. But Necile wept for the first time in her life, and clung to the boy's neck as if she could not bear to let him go. The nymph who had mothered this sturdy youth was still as dainty, as charming and beautiful as when she had dared to face Ak with the babe clasped to her breast; nor was her love less great. Ak beheld the two clinging together, seemingly as brother and sister to one another, and again he wore his thoughtful look.

6. Claus Discovers Humanity

Taking Claus to a small clearing in the forest, the Master said: “Place your hand upon my girdle and hold fast while we journey through the air; for now shall we encircle the world and look upon many of the haunts of those men from whom you are descended.”

These words caused Claus to marvel, for until now he had thought himself the only one of his kind upon the earth; yet in silence he grasped firmly the girdle of the great Ak, his astonishment forbidding speech.

Then the vast forest of Burzee seemed to fall away from their feet, and the youth found himself passing swiftly through the air at a great height.

Ere long there were spires beneath them, while buildings of many shapes and colors met their downward view. It was a city of men, and Ak, pausing to descend, led Claus to its inclosure. Said the Master:

“So long as you hold fast to my girdle you will remain unseen by all mankind, though seeing clearly yourself. To release your grasp will be to separate yourself forever from me and your home in Burzee.”

One of the first laws of the Forest is obedience, and Claus had no thought of disobeying the Master’s wish. He clung fast to the girdle and remained invisible.

Thereafter with each moment passed in the city the youth’s wonder grew. He, who had supposed himself created differently from all others, now found the earth swarming with creatures of his own kind.

“Indeed,” said Ak, “the immortals are few; but the mortals are many.”

Claus looked earnestly upon his fellows. There were sad faces, gay and reckless faces, pleasant faces, anxious faces and kindly faces, all mingled in puzzling disorder. Some worked at tedious tasks; some strutted in impudent conceit; some were thoughtful and grave while others seemed happy and content. Men of many natures were there, as everywhere, and Claus found much to please him and much to make him sad.

But especially he noted the children — first curiously, then eagerly, then lovingly. Ragged little ones rolled in the dust of the streets, playing with scraps and pebbles. Other children, gaily dressed, were propped upon cushions and fed with sugar-plums. Yet the children of the rich were not happier than those playing with the dust and pebbles, it seemed to Claus.

“Childhood is the time of man’s greatest content,” said Ak, following the youth’s thoughts. “‘Tis during these years of innocent pleasure that the little ones are most free from care.”

“Tell me,” said Claus, “why do not all these babies fare alike?”

“Because they are born in both cottage and palace,” returned the Master.

“The difference in the wealth of the parents determines the lot of the child. Some are carefully tended and clothed in silks and dainty linen; others are neglected and covered with rags.”

“Yet all seem equally fair and sweet,” said Claus, thoughtfully.

“While they are babes — yes;” agreed Ak. “Their joy is in being alive, and they do not stop to think. In after years the doom of mankind overtakes them, and they find they must struggle and worry, work and fret, to gain the wealth that is so dear to the hearts of men. Such things are unknown in the Forest where you were reared.” Claus was silent a moment. Then he asked:

“Why was I reared in the forest, among those who are not of my race?”

Then Ak, in gentle voice, told him the story of his babyhood: how he had been abandoned at the forest’s edge and left a prey to wild beasts, and how the loving nymph Necile had rescued him and brought him to manhood under the protection of the immortals.

“Yet I am not of them,” said Claus, musingly.

“You are not of them,” returned the Woodsman. “The nymph who cared for you as a mother seems now like a sister to you; by and by, when you grow old and gray, she will seem like a daughter. Yet another brief span and you will be but a memory, while she remains Necile.”

“Then why, if man must perish, is he born?” demanded the boy.

“Everything perishes except the world itself and its keepers,” answered Ak. “But while life lasts everything on earth has its use. The wise seek ways to be helpful to the world, for the helpful ones are sure to live again.”

Much of this Claus failed to understand fully, but a longing seized him to become helpful to his fellows, and he remained grave and thoughtful while they resumed their journey.

They visited many dwellings of men in many parts of the world, watching farmers toil in the fields, warriors dash into cruel fray, and merchants exchange their goods for bits of white and yellow metal. And everywhere the eyes of Claus sought out the children in love and pity, for the thought of his own helpless babyhood was strong within him and he yearned to give help to the innocent little ones of his race even as he had been succored by the kindly nymph.

Day by day the Master Woodsman and his pupil traversed the earth, Ak speaking but seldom to the youth who clung steadfastly to his girdle, but guiding him into all places where he might become familiar with the lives of human beings.

And at last they returned to the grand old Forest of Burzee, where the Master set Claus down within the circle of nymphs, among whom the pretty Necile anxiously awaited him.

The brow of the great Ak was now calm and peaceful; but the brow of Claus had become lined with deep thought. Necile sighed at the change in her foster-son, who until now had been ever joyous and smiling, and the thought came to her that never again would the life of the boy be the same as before this eventful journey with the Master.

7. Claus Leaves the Forest

When good Queen Zurline had touched the golden chalice with her fair lips and it had passed around the circle in honor of the travelers' return, the Master Woodsman of the World, who had not yet spoken, turned his gaze frankly upon Claus and said:

"Well?"

The boy understood, and rose slowly to his feet beside Necile. Once only his eyes passed around the familiar circle of nymphs, every one of whom he remembered as a loving comrade; but tears came unbidden to dim his sight, so he gazed thereafter steadfastly at the Master.

"I have been ignorant," said he, simply, "until the great Ak in his kindness taught me who and what I am. You, who live so sweetly in your forest bowers, ever fair and youthful and innocent, are no fit comrades for a son of humanity. For I have looked upon man, finding him doomed to live for a brief space upon earth, to toil for the things he needs, to fade into old age, and then to pass away as the leaves in autumn. Yet every man has his mission, which is to leave the world better, in some way, than he found it. I am of the race of men, and man's lot is my lot. For your tender care of the poor, forsaken babe you adopted, as well as for your loving comradeship during my boyhood, my heart will ever overflow with gratitude. My foster-mother," here he stopped and kissed Necile's white forehead, "I shall love and cherish while life lasts. But I must leave you, to take my part in the endless struggle to which humanity is doomed, and to live my life in my own way."

"What will you do?" asked the Queen, gravely.

"I must devote myself to the care of the children of mankind, and try to make them happy," he answered. "Since your own tender care of a babe brought to me happiness and strength, it is just and right that I devote my life to the pleasure of other babes. Thus will the memory of the loving nymph Necile be planted within the hearts of thousands of my race for many years to come, and her kindly act be recounted in song and in story while the world shall last. Have I spoken well, O Master?"

"You have spoken well," returned Ak, and rising to his feet he continued: "Yet one thing must not be forgotten. Having been adopted as the child of the Forest, and the playfellow of the nymphs, you have gained a distinction which forever separates you from your kind. Therefore, when you go forth into the world of men you shall retain the protection of the Forest, and the powers you now enjoy will remain with you to assist you in your labors. In any need you may call upon the Nymphs, the Ryls, the Knooks and the

Fairies, and they will serve you gladly. I, the Master Woodsman of the World, have said it, and my Word is the Law!"

Claus looked upon Ak with grateful eyes.

"This will make me mighty among men," he replied. "Protected by these kind friends I may be able to make thousands of little children happy. I will try very hard to do my duty, and I know the Forest people will give me their sympathy and help."

"We will!" said the Fairy Queen, earnestly.

"We will!" cried the merry Ryls, laughing.

"We will!" shouted the crooked Knooks, scowling.

"We will!" exclaimed the sweet nymphs, proudly. But Necile said nothing. She only folded Claus in her arms and kissed him tenderly.

"The world is big," continued the boy, turning again to his loyal friends, "but men are everywhere. I shall begin my work near my friends, so that if I meet with misfortune I can come to the Forest for counsel or help."

With that he gave them all a loving look and turned away. There was no need to say good by, by for him the sweet, wild life of the Forest was over. He went forth bravely to meet his doom — the doom of the race of man — the necessity to worry and work.

But Ak, who knew the boy's heart, was merciful and guided his steps.

Coming through Burzee to its eastern edge Claus reached the Laughing Valley of Hohaho. On each side were rolling green hills, and a brook wandered midway between them to wind afar off beyond the valley. At his back was the grim Forest; at the far end of the valley a broad plain. The eyes of the young man, which had until now reflected his grave thoughts, became brighter as he stood silent, looking out upon the Laughing Valley. Then on a sudden his eyes twinkled, as stars do on a still night, and grew merry and wide.

For at his feet the cowslips and daisies smiled on him in friendly regard; the breeze whistled gaily as it passed by and fluttered the locks on his forehead; the brook laughed joyously as it leaped over the pebbles and swept around the green curves of its banks; the bees sang sweet songs as they flew from dandelion to daffodil; the beetles chirruped happily in the long grass, and the sunbeams glinted pleasantly over all the scene.

"Here," cried Claus, stretching out his arms as if to embrace the Valley, "will I make my home!"

That was many, many years ago. It has been his home ever since. It is his home now.

MANHOOD

1. The Laughing Valley

When Claus came the Valley was empty save for the grass, the brook, the wildflowers, the bees and the butterflies. If he would make his home here and live after the fashion of men he must have a house. This puzzled him at first, but while he stood smiling in the sunshine he suddenly found beside him old Nelko, the servant of the Master Woodsman. Nelko bore an ax, strong and broad, with blade that gleamed like burnished silver. This he placed in the young man's hand, then disappeared without a word.

Claus understood, and turning to the Forest's edge he selected a number of fallen tree-trunks, which he began to clear of their dead branches. He would not cut into a living tree. His life among the nymphs who guarded the Forest had taught him that a live tree is sacred, being a created thing endowed with feeling. But with the dead and fallen trees it was different. They had fulfilled their destiny, as active members of the Forest community, and now it was fitting that their remains should minister to the needs of man.

The ax bit deep into the logs at every stroke. It seemed to have a force of its own, and Claus had but to swing and guide it.

When shadows began creeping over the green hills to lie in the Valley overnight, the young man had chopped many logs into equal lengths and proper shapes for building a house such as he had seen the poorer classes of men inhabit. Then, resolving to await another day before he tried to fit the logs together, Claus ate some of the sweet roots he well knew how to find, drank deeply from the laughing brook, and lay down to sleep on the grass, first seeking a spot where no flowers grew, lest the weight of his body should crush them.

And while he slumbered and breathed in the perfume of the wondrous Valley the Spirit of Happiness crept into his heart and drove out all terror and care and misgivings. Never more would the face of Claus be clouded with anxieties; never more would the trials of life weigh him down as with a burden. The Laughing Valley had claimed him for its own.

Would that we all might live in that delightful place! — but then, maybe, it would become overcrowded. For ages it had awaited a tenant. Was it chance that led young Claus to make his home in this happy vale? Or may we guess that his thoughtful friends, the immortals, had directed his steps when he wandered away from Burzee to seek a home in the great world?

Certain it is that while the moon peered over the hilltop and flooded with its soft beams the body of the sleeping stranger, the Laughing Valley was filled with the queer, crooked shapes of the friendly Knooks. These people spoke no words, but worked with skill and swiftness. The logs Claus had

trimmed with his bright ax were carried to a spot beside the brook and fitted one upon another, and during the night a strong and roomy dwelling was built.

The birds came sweeping into the Valley at daybreak, and their songs, so seldom heard in the deep wood, aroused the stranger. He rubbed the web of sleep from his eyelids and looked around. The house met his gaze.

"I must thank the Knooks for this," said he, gratefully. Then he walked to his dwelling and entered at the doorway. A large room faced him, having a fireplace at the end and a table and bench in the middle. Beside the fireplace was a cupboard. Another doorway was beyond. Claus entered here, also, and saw a smaller room with a bed against the wall and a stool set near a small stand. On the bed were many layers of dried moss brought from the Forest.

"Indeed, it is a palace!" exclaimed the smiling Claus. "I must thank the good Knooks again, for their knowledge of man's needs as well as for their labors in my behalf."

He left his new home with a glad feeling that he was not quite alone in the world, although he had chosen to abandon his Forest life. Friendships are not easily broken, and the immortals are everywhere.

Upon reaching the brook he drank of the pure water, and then sat down on the bank to laugh at the mischievous gambols of the ripples as they pushed one another against rocks or crowded desperately to see which should first reach the turn beyond. And as they raced away he listened to the song they sang:

"Rushing, pushing, on we go!
Not a wave may gently flow —
All are too excited.
Ev'ry drop, delighted,
Turns to spray in merry play
As we tumble on our way!"

Next Claus searched for roots to eat, while the daffodils turned their little eyes up to him laughingly and lisped their dainty song:

"Blooming fairly, growing rarely,
Never flowerets were so gay!
Perfume breathing, joy bequeathing,
As our colors we display."

It made Claus laugh to hear the little things voice their happiness as they nodded gracefully on their stems. But another strain caught his ear as the sunbeams fell gently across his face and whispered:

"Here is gladness, that our rays

Warm the valley through the days;
Here is happiness, to give
Comfort unto all who live!"

"Yes!" cried Claus in answer, "there is happiness and joy in all things here. The Laughing Valley is a valley of peace and good-will."

He passed the day talking with the ants and beetles and exchanging jokes with the light-hearted butterflies. And at night he lay on his bed of soft moss and slept soundly.

Then came the Fairies, merry but noiseless, bringing skillets and pots and dishes and pans and all the tools necessary to prepare food and to comfort a mortal. With these they filled cupboard and fireplace, finally placing a stout suit of wool clothing on the stool by the bedside.

When Claus awoke he rubbed his eyes again, and laughed, and spoke aloud his thanks to the Fairies and the Master Woodsman who had sent them. With eager joy he examined all his new possessions, wondering what some might be used for. But, in the days when he had clung to the girdle of the great Ak and visited the cities of men, his eyes had been quick to note all the manners and customs of the race to which he belonged; so he guessed from the gifts brought by the Fairies that the Master expected him hereafter to live in the fashion of his fellow-creatures.

"Which means that I must plow the earth and plant corn," he reflected; "so that when winter comes I shall have garnered food in plenty."

But, as he stood in the grassy Valley, he saw that to turn up the earth in furrows would be to destroy hundreds of pretty, helpless flowers, as well as thousands of the tender blades of grass. And this he could not bear to do.

Therefore he stretched out his arms and uttered a peculiar whistle he had learned in the Forest, afterward crying:

"Ryls of the Field Flowers — come to me!"

Instantly a dozen of the queer little Ryls were squatting upon the ground before him, and they nodded to him in cheerful greeting.

Claus gazed upon them earnestly.

"Your brothers of the Forest," he said, "I have known and loved many years. I shall love you, also, when we have become friends. To me the laws of the Ryls, whether those of the Forest or of the field, are sacred. I have never wilfully destroyed one of the flowers you tend so carefully; but I must plant grain to use for food during the cold winter, and how am I to do this without killing the little creatures that sing to me so prettily of their fragrant blossoms?"

The Yellow Ryl, he who tends the buttercups, made answer:

“Fret not, friend Claus. The great Ak has spoken to us of you. There is better work for you in life than to labor for food, and though, not being of the Forest, Ak has no command over us, nevertheless are we glad to favor one he loves. Live, therefore, to do the good work you are resolved to undertake. We, the Field Ryls, will attend to your food supplies.”

After this speech the Ryls were no longer to be seen, and Claus drove from his mind the thought of tilling the earth.

When next he wandered back to his dwelling a bowl of fresh milk stood upon the table; bread was in the cupboard and sweet honey filled a dish beside it. A pretty basket of rosy apples and new-plucked grapes was also awaiting him. He called out “Thanks, my friends!” to the invisible Ryls, and straightway began to eat of the food.

Thereafter, when hungry, he had but to look into the cupboard to find goodly supplies brought by the kindly Ryls. And the Knooks cut and stacked much wood for his fireplace. And the Fairies brought him warm blankets and clothing.

So began his life in the Laughing Valley, with the favor and friendship of the immortals to minister to his every want.

2. How Claus Made the First Toy

Truly our Claus had wisdom, for his good fortune but strengthened his resolve to befriend the little ones of his own race. He knew his plan was approved by the immortals, else they would not have favored him so greatly.

So he began at once to make acquaintance with mankind. He walked through the Valley to the plain beyond, and crossed the plain in many directions to reach the abodes of men. These stood singly or in groups of dwellings called villages, and in nearly all the houses, whether big or little, Claus found children.

The youngsters soon came to know his merry, laughing face and the kind glance of his bright eyes; and the parents, while they regarded the young man with some scorn for loving children more than their elders, were content that the girls and boys had found a playfellow who seemed willing to amuse them.

So the children romped and played games with Claus, and the boys rode upon his shoulders, and the girls nestled in his strong arms, and the babies clung fondly to his knees. Wherever the young man chanced to be, the sound of childish laughter followed him; and to understand this better you must know that children were much neglected in those days and received little attention from their parents, so that it became to them a marvel that so goodly a man as Claus devoted his time to making them happy. And those who knew him were, you may be sure, very happy indeed. The sad faces of the poor and abused grew bright for once; the cripple smiled despite his misfortune; the ailing ones hushed their moans and the grieved ones their cries when their merry friend came nigh to comfort them.

Only at the beautiful palace of the Lord of Lerd and at the frowning castle of the Baron Braun was Claus refused admittance. There were children at both places; but the servants at the palace shut the door in the young stranger's face, and the fierce Baron threatened to hang him from an iron hook on the castle walls. Whereupon Claus sighed and went back to the poorer dwellings where he was welcome.

After a time the winter drew near.

The flowers lived out their lives and faded and disappeared; the beetles burrowed far into the warm earth; the butterflies deserted the meadows; and the voice of the brook grew hoarse, as if it had taken cold.

One day snowflakes filled all the air in the Laughing Valley, dancing boisterously toward the earth and clothing in pure white raiment the roof of Claus's dwelling.

At night Jack Frost rapped at the door.

“Come in!” cried Claus.

“Come out!” answered Jack, “for you have a fire inside.”

So Claus came out. He had known Jack Frost in the Forest, and liked the jolly rogue, even while he mistrusted him.

“There will be rare sport for me to-night, Claus!” shouted the sprite. “Isn’t this glorious weather? I shall nip scores of noses and ears and toes before daybreak.”

“If you love me, Jack, spare the children,” begged Claus.

“And why?” asked the other, in surprise.

“They are tender and helpless,” answered Claus.

“But I love to nip the tender ones!” declared Jack. “The older ones are tough, and tire my fingers.”

“The young ones are weak, and can not fight you,” said Claus.

“True,” agreed Jack, thoughtfully. “Well, I will not pinch a child this night — if I can resist the temptation,” he promised. “Good night, Claus!”

“Good night.”

The young man went in and closed the door, and Jack Frost ran on to the nearest village.

Claus threw a log on the fire, which burned up brightly. Beside the hearth sat Blinkie, a big cat give him by Peter the Knook. Her fur was soft and glossy, and she purred never-ending songs of contentment.

“I shall not see the children again soon,” said Claus to the cat, who kindly paused in her song to listen. “The winter is upon us, the snow will be deep for many days, and I shall be unable to play with my little friends.”

The cat raised a paw and stroked her nose thoughtfully, but made no reply. So long as the fire burned and Claus sat in his easy chair by the hearth she did not mind the weather.

So passed many days and many long evenings. The cupboard was always full, but Claus became weary with having nothing to do more than to feed the fire from the big wood-pile the Knooks had brought him.

One evening he picked up a stick of wood and began to cut it with his sharp knife. He had no thought, at first, except to occupy his time, and he whistled and sang to the cat as he carved away portions of the stick. Puss sat up on her haunches and watched him, listening at the same time to her master’s merry whistle, which she loved to hear even more than her own purring songs.

Claus glanced at puss and then at the stick he was whittling, until presently the wood began to have a shape, and the shape was like the head of a cat, with two ears sticking upward.

Claus stopped whistling to laugh, and then both he and the cat looked at

the wooden image in some surprise. Then he carved out the eyes and the nose, and rounded the lower part of the head so that it rested upon a neck.

Puss hardly knew what to make of it now, and sat up stiffly, as if watching with some suspicion what would come next.

Claus knew. The head gave him an idea. He plied his knife carefully and with skill, forming slowly the body of the cat, which he made to sit upon its haunches as the real cat did, with her tail wound around her two front legs.

The work cost him much time, but the evening was long and he had nothing better to do. Finally he gave a loud and delighted laugh at the result of his labors and placed the wooden cat, now completed, upon the hearth opposite the real one.

Puss thereupon glared at her image, raised her hair in anger, and uttered a defiant mew. The wooden cat paid no attention, and Claus, much amused, laughed again.

Then Blinkie advanced toward the wooden image to eye it closely and smell of it intelligently: Eyes and nose told her the creature was wood, in spite of its natural appearance; so puss resumed her seat and her purring, but as she neatly washed her face with her padded paw she cast more than one admiring glance at her clever master. Perhaps she felt the same satisfaction we feel when we look upon good photographs of ourselves.

The cat's master was himself pleased with his handiwork, without knowing exactly why. Indeed, he had great cause to congratulate himself that night, and all the children throughout the world should have joined him rejoicing. For Claus had made his first toy.

3. How the Ryls Colored the Toys

A hush lay on the Laughing Valley now. Snow covered it like a white spread and pillows of downy flakes drifted before the dwelling where Claus sat feeding the blaze of the fire. The brook gurgled on beneath a heavy sheet of ice and all living plants and insects nestled close to Mother Earth to keep warm. The face of the moon was hid by dark clouds, and the wind, delighting in the wintry sport, pushed and whirled the snowflakes in so many directions that they could get no chance to fall to the ground.

Claus heard the wind whistling and shrieking in its play and thanked the good Knooks again for his comfortable shelter. Blinkie washed her face lazily and stared at the coals with a look of perfect content. The toy cat sat opposite the real one and gazed straight ahead, as toy cats should.

Suddenly Claus heard a noise that sounded different from the voice of the wind. It was more like a wail of suffering and despair.

He stood up and listened, but the wind, growing boisterous, shook the door and rattled the windows to distract his attention. He waited until the wind was tired and then, still listening, he heard once more the shrill cry of distress.

Quickly he drew on his coat, pulled his cap over his eyes and opened the door. The wind dashed in and scattered the embers over the hearth, at the same time blowing Blinkie's fur so furiously that she crept under the table to escape. Then the door was closed and Claus was outside, peering anxiously into the darkness.

The wind laughed and scolded and tried to push him over, but he stood firm. The helpless flakes stumbled against his eyes and dimmed his sight, but he rubbed them away and looked again. Snow was everywhere, white and glittering. It covered the earth and filled the air.

The cry was not repeated.

Claus turned to go back into the house, but the wind caught him unawares and he stumbled and fell across a snowdrift. His hand plunged into the drift and touched something that was not snow. This he seized and, pulling it gently toward him, found it to be a child. The next moment he had lifted it in his arms and carried it into the house.

The wind followed him through the door, but Claus shut it out quickly. He laid the rescued child on the hearth, and brushing away the snow he discovered it to be Weekum, a little boy who lived in a house beyond the Valley.

Claus wrapped a warm blanket around the little one and rubbed the frost from its limbs. Before long the child opened his eyes and, seeing where he

was, smiled happily. Then Claus warmed milk and fed it to the boy slowly, while the cat looked on with sober curiosity. Finally the little one curled up in his friend's arms and sighed and fell asleep, and Claus, filled with gladness that he had found the wanderer, held him closely while he slumbered.

The wind, finding no more mischief to do, climbed the hill and swept on toward the north. This gave the weary snowflakes time to settle down to earth, and the Valley became still again.

The boy, having slept well in the arms of his friend, opened his eyes and sat up. Then, as a child will, he looked around the room and saw all that it contained.

"Your cat is a nice cat, Claus," he said, at last. "Let me hold it."

But puss objected and ran away.

"The other cat won't run, Claus," continued the boy. "Let me hold that one." Claus placed the toy in his arms, and the boy held it lovingly and kissed the tip of its wooden ear.

"How did you get lost in the storm, Weekum?" asked Claus.

"I started to walk to my auntie's house and lost my way," answered Weekum.

"Were you frightened?"

"It was cold," said Weekum, "and the snow got in my eyes, so I could not see. Then I kept on till I fell in the snow, without knowing where I was, and the wind blew the flakes over me and covered me up."

Claus gently stroked his head, and the boy looked up at him and smiled.

"I'm all right now," said Weekum.

"Yes," replied Claus, happily. "Now I will put you in my warm bed, and you must sleep until morning, when I will carry you back to your mother."

"May the cat sleep with me?" asked the boy.

"Yes, if you wish it to," answered Claus.

"It's a nice cat!" Weekum said, smiling, as Claus tucked the blankets around him; and presently the little one fell asleep with the wooden toy in his arms.

When morning came the sun claimed the Laughing Valley and flooded it with his rays; so Claus prepared to take the lost child back to its mother.

"May I keep the cat, Claus?" asked Weekum. "It's nicer than real cats. It doesn't run away, or scratch or bite. May I keep it?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Claus, pleased that the toy he had made could give pleasure to the child. So he wrapped the boy and the wooden cat in a warm cloak, perching the bundle upon his own broad shoulders, and then he tramped through the snow and the drifts of the Valley and across the plain

beyond to the poor cottage where Weekum's mother lived.

"See, mama!" cried the boy, as soon as they entered, "I've got a cat!"

The good woman wept tears of joy over the rescue of her darling and thanked Claus many times for his kind act. So he carried a warm and happy heart back to his home in the Valley.

That night he said to puss: "I believe the children will love the wooden cats almost as well as the real ones, and they can't hurt them by pulling their tails and ears. I'll make another."

So this was the beginning of his great work.

The next cat was better made than the first. While Claus sat whittling it out the Yellow Ryl came in to make him a visit, and so pleased was he with the man's skill that he ran away and brought several of his fellows.

There sat the Red Ryl, the Black Ryl, the Green Ryl, the Blue Ryl and the Yellow Ryl in a circle on the floor, while Claus whittled and whistled and the wooden cat grew into shape.

"If it could be made the same color as the real cat, no one would know the difference," said the Yellow Ryl, thoughtfully.

"The little ones, maybe, would not know the difference," replied Claus, pleased with the idea.

"I will bring you some of the red that I color my roses and tulips with," cried the Red Ryl; "and then you can make the cat's lips and tongue red."

"I will bring some of the green that I color my grasses and leaves with," said the Green Ryl; "and then you can color the cat's eyes green."

"They will need a bit of yellow, also," remarked the Yellow Ryl; "I must fetch some of the yellow that I use to color my buttercups and goldenrods with."

"The real cat is black," said the Black Ryl; "I will bring some of the black that I use to color the eyes of my pansies with, and then you can paint your wooden cat black."

"I see you have a blue ribbon around Blinkie's neck," added the Blue Ryl. "I will get some of the color that I use to paint the bluebells and forget-me-nots with, and then you can carve a wooden ribbon on the toy cat's neck and paint it blue."

So the Ryls disappeared, and by the time Claus had finished carving out the form of the cat they were all back with the paints and brushes.

They made Blinkie sit upon the table, that Claus might paint the toy cat just the right color, and when the work was done the Ryls declared it was exactly as good as a live cat.

"That is, to all appearances," added the Red Ryl.

Blinkie seemed a little offended by the attention bestowed upon the toy,

and that she might not seem to approve the imitation cat she walked to the corner of the hearth and sat down with a dignified air.

But Claus was delighted, and as soon as morning came he started out and tramped through the snow, across the Valley and the plain, until he came to a village. There, in a poor hut near the walls of the beautiful palace of the Lord of Lerd, a little girl lay upon a wretched cot, moaning with pain.

Claus approached the child and kissed her and comforted her, and then he drew the toy cat from beneath his coat, where he had hidden it, and placed it in her arms.

Ah, how well he felt himself repaid for his labor and his long walk when he saw the little one's eyes grow bright with pleasure! She hugged the kitty tight to her breast, as if it had been a precious gem, and would not let it go for a single moment. The fever was quieted, the pain grew less, and she fell into a sweet and refreshing sleep.

Claus laughed and whistled and sang all the way home. Never had he been so happy as on that day.

When he entered his house he found Shiegra, the lioness, awaiting him. Since his babyhood Shiegra had loved Claus, and while he dwelt in the Forest she had often come to visit him at Necile's bower. After Claus had gone to live in the Laughing Valley Shiegra became lonely and ill at ease, and now she had braved the snow-drifts, which all lions abhor, to see him once more. Shiegra was getting old and her teeth were beginning to fall out, while the hairs that tipped her ears and tail had changed from tawny-yellow to white.

Claus found her lying on his hearth, and he put his arms around the neck of the lioness and hugged her lovingly. The cat had retired into a far corner. She did not care to associate with Shiegra.

Claus told his old friend about the cats he had made, and how much pleasure they had given Weekum and the sick girl. Shiegra did not know much about children; indeed, if she met a child she could scarcely be trusted not to devour it. But she was interested in Claus' new labors, and said:

"These images seem to me very attractive. Yet I can not see why you should make cats, which are very unimportant animals. Suppose, now that I am here, you make the image of a lioness, the Queen of all beasts. Then, indeed, your children will be happy — and safe at the same time!"

Claus thought this was a good suggestion. So he got a piece of wood and sharpened his knife, while Shiegra crouched upon the hearth at his feet. With much care he carved the head in the likeness of the lioness, even to the two fierce teeth that curved over her lower lip and the deep, frowning lines above her wide-open eyes.

When it was finished he said:

“You have a terrible look, Shiegra.”

“Then the image is like me,” she answered; “for I am indeed terrible to all who are not my friends.”

Claus now carved out the body, with Shiegra’s long tail trailing behind it. The image of the crouching lioness was very life-like.

“It pleases me,” said Shiegra, yawning and stretching her body gracefully. “Now I will watch while you paint.”

He brought the paints the Ryls had given him from the cupboard and colored the image to resemble the real Shiegra.

The lioness placed her big, padded paws upon the edge of the table and raised herself while she carefully examined the toy that was her likeness.

“You are indeed skillful!” she said, proudly. “The children will like that better than cats, I’m sure.”

Then snarling at Blinkie, who arched her back in terror and whined fearfully, she walked away toward her forest home with stately strides.

4. How Little Mayrie Became Frightened

The winter was over now, and all the Laughing Valley was filled with joyous excitement. The brook was so happy at being free once again that it gurgled more boisterously than ever and dashed so recklessly against the rocks that it sent showers of spray high in the air. The grass thrust its sharp little blades upward through the mat of dead stalks where it had hidden from the snow, but the flowers were yet too timid to show themselves, although the Ryls were busy feeding their roots. The sun was in remarkably good humor, and sent his rays dancing merrily throughout the Valley.

Claus was eating his dinner one day when he heard a timid knock on his door.

"Come in!" he called.

No one entered, but after a pause came another rapping.

Claus jumped up and threw open the door. Before him stood a small girl holding a smaller brother fast by the hand.

"Is you Tlaus?" she asked, shyly.

"Indeed I am, my dear!" he answered, with a laugh, as he caught both children in his arms and kissed them. "You are very welcome, and you have come just in time to share my dinner."

He took them to the table and fed them with fresh milk and nut-cakes. When they had eaten enough he asked:

"Why have you made this long journey to see me?"

"I wants a tat!" replied little Mayrie; and her brother, who had not yet learned to speak many words, nodded his head and exclaimed like an echo: "Tat!"

"Oh, you want my toy cats, do you?" returned Claus, greatly pleased to discover that his creations were so popular with children.

The little visitors nodded eagerly.

"Unfortunately," he continued, "I have but one cat now ready, for I carried two to children in the town yesterday. And the one I have shall be given to your brother, Mayrie, because he is the smaller; and the next one I make shall be for you."

The boy's face was bright with smiles as he took the precious toy Claus held out to him; but little Mayrie covered her face with her arm and began to sob grievously.

"I — I — I wants a t — t — tat now!" she wailed.

Her disappointment made Claus feel miserable for a moment. Then he suddenly remembered Shiegra.

"Don't cry, darling!" he said, soothingly; "I have a toy much nicer than a

cat, and you shall have that."

He went to the cupboard and drew out the image of the lioness, which he placed on the table before Mayrie.

The girl raised her arm and gave one glance at the fierce teeth and glaring eyes of the beast, and then, uttering a terrified scream, she rushed from the house. The boy followed her, also screaming lustily, and even dropping his precious cat in his fear.

For a moment Claus stood motionless, being puzzled and astonished. Then he threw Shiegra's image into the cupboard and ran after the children, calling to them not to be frightened.

Little Mayrie stopped in her flight and her brother clung to her skirt; but they both cast fearful glances at the house until Claus had assured them many times that the beast had been locked in the cupboard.

"Yet why were you frightened at seeing it?" he asked. "It is only a toy to play with!"

"It's bad!" said Mayrie, decidedly, "an' — an' — just horrid, an' not a bit nice, like tats!"

"Perhaps you are right," returned Claus, thoughtfully. "But if you will return with me to the house I will soon make you a pretty cat."

So they timidly entered the house again, having faith in their friend's words; and afterward they had the joy of watching Claus carve out a cat from a bit of wood and paint it in natural colors. It did not take him long to do this, for he had become skillful with his knife by this time, and Mayrie loved her toy the more dearly because she had seen it made.

After his little visitors had trotted away on their journey homeward Claus sat long in deep thought. And he then decided that such fierce creatures as his friend the lioness would never do as models from which to fashion his toys.

"There must be nothing to frighten the dear babies," he reflected; "and while I know Shiegra well, and am not afraid of her, it is but natural that children should look upon her image with terror. Hereafter I will choose such mild-mannered animals as squirrels and rabbits and deer and lambkins from which to carve my toys, for then the little ones will love rather than fear them."

He began his work that very day, and before bedtime had made a wooden rabbit and a lamb. They were not quite so lifelike as the cats had been, because they were formed from memory, while Blinkie had sat very still for Claus to look at while he worked.

But the new toys pleased the children nevertheless, and the fame of Claus' playthings quickly spread to every cottage on plain and in village. He always carried his gifts to the sick or crippled children, but those who were strong

enough walked to the house in the Valley to ask for them, so a little path was soon worn from the plain to the door of the toy-maker's cottage.

First came the children who had been playmates of Claus, before he began to make toys. These, you may be sure, were well supplied. Then children who lived farther away heard of the wonderful images and made journeys to the Valley to secure them. All little ones were welcome, and never a one went away empty-handed.

This demand for his handiwork kept Claus busily occupied, but he was quite happy in knowing the pleasure he gave to so many of the dear children. His friends the immortals were pleased with his success and supported him bravely.

The Knooks selected for him clear pieces of soft wood, that his knife might not be blunted in cutting them; the Ryls kept him supplied with paints of all colors and brushes fashioned from the tips of timothy grasses; the Fairies discovered that the workman needed saws and chisels and hammers and nails, as well as knives, and brought him a goodly array of such tools.

Claus soon turned his living room into a most wonderful workshop. He built a bench before the window, and arranged his tools and paints so that he could reach everything as he sat on his stool. And as he finished toy after toy to delight the hearts of little children he found himself growing so gay and happy that he could not refrain from singing and laughing and whistling all the day long.

"It's because I live in the Laughing Valley, where everything else laughs!" said Claus.

But that was not the reason.

5. How Bessie Blithesome Came to the Laughing Valley

One day, as Claus sat before his door to enjoy the sunshine while he busily carved the head and horns of a toy deer, he looked up and discovered a glittering cavalcade of horsemen approaching through the Valley.

When they drew nearer he saw that the band consisted of a score of men-at-arms, clad in bright armor and bearing in their hands spears and battle-axes. In front of these rode little Bessie Blithesome, the pretty daughter of that proud Lord of Lerd who had once driven Claus from his palace. Her palfrey was pure white, its bridle was covered with glittering gems, and its saddle draped with cloth of gold, richly broidered. The soldiers were sent to protect her from harm while she journeyed.

Claus was surprised, but he continued to whittle and to sing until the cavalcade drew up before him. Then the little girl leaned over the neck of her palfrey and said:

"Please, Mr. Claus, I want a toy!"

Her voice was so pleading that Claus jumped up at once and stood beside her. But he was puzzled how to answer her request.

"You are a rich lord's daughter," said he, "and have all that you desire."

"Except toys," added Bessie. "There are no toys in all the world but yours."

"And I make them for the poor children, who have nothing else to amuse them," continued Claus.

"Do poor children love to play with toys more than rich ones?" asked Bessie.

"I suppose not," said Claus, thoughtfully.

"Am I to blame because my father is a lord? Must I be denied the pretty toys I long for because other children are poorer than I?" she inquired earnestly.

"I'm afraid you must, dear," he answered; "for the poor have nothing else with which to amuse themselves. You have your pony to ride, your servants to wait on you, and every comfort that money can procure."

"But I want toys!" cried Bessie, wiping away the tears that forced themselves into her eyes. "If I can not have them, I shall be very unhappy."

Claus was troubled, for her grief recalled to him the thought that his desire was to make all children happy, without regard to their condition in life. Yet, while so many poor children were clamoring for his toys he could not bear to give one to them to Bessie Blithesome, who had so much already to make her happy.

"Listen, my child," said he, gently; "all the toys I am now making are

promised to others. But the next shall be yours, since your heart so longs for it. Come to me again in two days and it shall be ready for you."

Bessie gave a cry of delight, and leaning over her pony's neck she kissed Claus prettily upon his forehead. Then, calling to her men-at-arms, she rode gaily away, leaving Claus to resume his work.

"If I am to supply the rich children as well as the poor ones," he thought, "I shall not have a spare moment in the whole year! But is it right I should give to the rich? Surely I must go to Necile and talk with her about this matter."

So when he had finished the toy deer, which was very like a deer he had known in the Forest glades, he walked into Burzee and made his way to the bower of the beautiful Nymph Necile, who had been his foster mother.

She greeted him tenderly and lovingly, listening with interest to his story of the visit of Bessie Blithesome.

"And now tell me," said he, "shall I give toys to rich children?"

"We of the Forest know nothing of riches," she replied. "It seems to me that one child is like another child, since they are all made of the same clay, and that riches are like a gown, which may be put on or taken away, leaving the child unchanged. But the Fairies are guardians of mankind, and know mortal children better than I. Let us call the Fairy Queen."

This was done, and the Queen of the Fairies sat beside them and heard Claus relate his reasons for thinking the rich children could get along without his toys, and also what the Nymph had said.

"Necile is right," declared the Queen; "for, whether it be rich or poor, a child's longings for pretty playthings are but natural. Rich Bessie's heart may suffer as much grief as poor Mayrie's; she can be just as lonely and discontented, and just as gay and happy. I think, friend Claus, it is your duty to make all little ones glad, whether they chance to live in palaces or in cottages."

"Your words are wise, fair Queen," replied Claus, "and my heart tells me they are as just as they are wise. Hereafter all children may claim my services."

Then he bowed before the gracious Fairy and, kissing Necile's red lips, went back into his Valley.

At the brook he stopped to drink, and afterward he sat on the bank and took a piece of moist clay in his hands while he thought what sort of toy he should make for Bessie Blithesome. He did not notice that his fingers were working the clay into shape until, glancing downward, he found he had unconsciously formed a head that bore a slight resemblance to the Nymph Necile!

At once he became interested. Gathering more of the clay from the bank he carried it to his house. Then, with the aid of his knife and a bit of wood he succeeded in working the clay into the image of a toy nymph. With skillful strokes he formed long, waving hair on the head and covered the body with a gown of oakleaves, while the two feet sticking out at the bottom of the gown were clad in sandals.

But the clay was soft, and Claus found he must handle it gently to avoid ruining his pretty work.

"Perhaps the rays of the sun will draw out the moisture and cause the clay to become hard," he thought. So he laid the image on a flat board and placed it in the glare of the sun.

This done, he went to his bench and began painting the toy deer, and soon he became so interested in the work that he forgot all about the clay nymph. But next morning, happening to notice it as it lay on the board, he found the sun had baked it to the hardness of stone, and it was strong enough to be safely handled.

Claus now painted the nymph with great care in the likeness of Necile, giving it deep-blue eyes, white teeth, rosy lips and ruddy-brown hair. The gown he colored oak-leaf green, and when the paint was dry Claus himself was charmed with the new toy. Of course it was not nearly so lovely as the real Necile; but, considering the material of which it was made, Claus thought it was very beautiful.

When Bessie, riding upon her white palfrey, came to his dwelling next day, Claus presented her with the new toy. The little girl's eyes were brighter than ever as she examined the pretty image, and she loved it at once, and held it close to her breast, as a mother does to her child.

"What is it called, Claus?" she asked.

Now Claus knew that Nymphs do not like to be spoken of by mortals, so he could not tell Bessie it was an image of Necile he had given her. But as it was a new toy he searched his mind for a new name to call it by, and the first word he thought of he decided would do very well.

"It is called a dolly, my dear," he said to Bessie.

"I shall call the dolly my baby," returned Bessie, kissing it fondly; "and I shall tend it and care for it just as Nurse cares for me. Thank you very much, Claus; your gift has made me happier than I have ever been before!"

Then she rode away, hugging the toy in her arms, and Claus, seeing her delight, thought he would make another dolly, better and more natural than the first.

He brought more clay from the brook, and remembering that Bessie had called the dolly her baby he resolved to form this one into a baby's image.

That was no difficult task to the clever workman, and soon the baby dolly was lying on the board and placed in the sun to dry. Then, with the clay that was left, he began to make an image of Bessie Blithesome herself.

This was not so easy, for he found he could not make the silken robe of the lord's daughter out of the common clay. So he called the Fairies to his aid, and asked them to bring him colored silks with which to make a real dress for the clay image. The Fairies set off at once on their errand, and before nightfall they returned with a generous supply of silks and laces and golden threads.

Claus now became impatient to complete his new dolly, and instead of waiting for the next day's sun he placed the clay image upon his hearth and covered it over with glowing coals. By morning, when he drew the dolly from the ashes, it had baked as hard as if it had lain a full day in the hot sun.

Now our Claus became a dressmaker as well as a toymaker. He cut the lavender silk, and nearly sewed it into a beautiful gown that just fitted the new dolly. And he put a lace collar around its neck and pink silk shoes on its feet. The natural color of baked clay is a light gray, but Claus painted the face to resemble the color of flesh, and he gave the dolly Bessie's brown eyes and golden hair and rosy cheeks.

It was really a beautiful thing to look upon, and sure to bring joy to some childish heart. While Claus was admiring it he heard a knock at his door, and little Mayrie entered. Her face was sad and her eyes red with continued weeping.

"Why, what has grieved you, my dear?" asked Claus, taking the child in his arms.

"I've — I've — bwoke my tat!" sobbed Mayrie.

"How?" he inquired, his eyes twinkling.

"I — I dwopped him, an' bwoke off him's tail; an' — an' — then I dwopped him an' bwoke off him's ear! An' — an' now him's all spoilt!"

Claus laughed.

"Never mind, Mayrie dear," he said. "How would you like this new dolly, instead of a cat?"

Mayrie looked at the silk-robed dolly and her eyes grew big with astonishment.

"Oh, Tlaus!" she cried, clapping her small hands together with rapture; "tan I have 'at boo'ful lady?"

"Do you like it?" he asked.

"I love it!" said she. "It's better 'an tats!"

"Then take it, dear, and be careful not to break it."

Mayrie took the dolly with a joy that was almost reverent, and her face

dimpled with smiles as she started along the path toward home.

6. The Wickedness of the Awgwas

I must now tell you something about the Awgwas, that terrible race of creatures which caused our good Claus so much trouble and nearly succeeded in robbing the children of the world of their earliest and best friend.

I do not like to mention the Awgwas, but they are a part of this history, and can not be ignored. They were neither mortals nor immortals, but stood midway between those classes of beings. The Awgwas were invisible to ordinary people, but not to immortals. They could pass swiftly through the air from one part of the world to another, and had the power of influencing the minds of human beings to do their wicked will.

They were of gigantic stature and had coarse, scowling countenances which showed plainly their hatred of all mankind. They possessed no consciences whatever and delighted only in evil deeds.

Their homes were in rocky, mountainous places, from whence they sallied forth to accomplish their wicked purposes.

The one of their number that could think of the most horrible deed for them to do was always elected the King Awgwa, and all the race obeyed his orders. Sometimes these creatures lived to become a hundred years old, but usually they fought so fiercely among themselves that many were destroyed in combat, and when they died that was the end of them. Mortals were powerless to harm them and the immortals shuddered when the Awgwas were mentioned, and always avoided them. So they flourished for many years unopposed and accomplished much evil.

I am glad to assure you that these vile creatures have long since perished and passed from earth; but in the days when Claus was making his first toys they were a numerous and powerful tribe.

One of the principal sports of the Awgwas was to inspire angry passions in the hearts of little children, so that they quarreled and fought with one another. They would tempt boys to eat of unripe fruit, and then delight in the pain they suffered; they urged little girls to disobey their parents, and then would laugh when the children were punished. I do not know what causes a child to be naughty in these days, but when the Awgwas were on earth naughty children were usually under their influence.

Now, when Claus began to make children happy he kept them out of the power of the Awgwas; for children possessing such lovely playthings as he gave them had no wish to obey the evil thoughts the Awgwas tried to thrust into their minds.

Therefore, one year when the wicked tribe was to elect a new King, they

chose an Awgwa who proposed to destroy Claus and take him away from the children.

"There are, as you know, fewer naughty children in the world since Claus came to the Laughing Valley and began to make his toys," said the new King, as he squatted upon a rock and looked around at the scowling faces of his people. "Why, Bessie Blithesome has not stamped her foot once this month, nor has Mayrie's brother slapped his sister's face or thrown the puppy into the rain-barrel. Little Weekum took his bath last night without screaming or struggling, because his mother had promised he should take his toy cat to bed with him! Such a condition of affairs is awful for any Awgwa to think of, and the only way we can direct the naughty actions of children is to take this person Claus away from them."

"Good! good!" cried the big Awgwas, in a chorus, and they clapped their hands to applaud the speech of the King.

"But what shall we do with him?" asked one of the creatures.

"I have a plan," replied the wicked King; and what his plan was you will soon discover.

That night Claus went to bed feeling very happy, for he had completed no less than four pretty toys during the day, and they were sure, he thought, to make four little children happy. But while he slept the band of invisible Awgwas surrounded his bed, bound him with stout cords, and then flew away with him to the middle of a dark forest in far off Ethop, where they laid him down and left him.

When morning came Claus found himself thousands of miles from any human being, a prisoner in the wild jungle of an unknown land.

From the limb of a tree above his head swayed a huge python, one of those reptiles that are able to crush a man's bones in their coils. A few yards away crouched a savage panther, its glaring red eyes fixed full on the helpless Claus. One of those monstrous spotted spiders whose sting is death crept stealthily toward him over the matted leaves, which shriveled and turned black at its very touch.

But Claus had been reared in Burzee, and was not afraid.

"Come to me, ye Knooks of the Forest!" he cried, and gave the low, peculiar whistle that the Knooks know.

The panther, which was about to spring upon its victim, turned and slunk away. The python swung itself into the tree and disappeared among the leaves. The spider stopped short in its advance and hid beneath a rotting log.

Claus had no time to notice them, for he was surrounded by a band of harsh-featured Knooks, more crooked and deformed in appearance than any he had ever seen.

“Who are you that call on us?” demanded one, in a gruff voice.

“The friend of your brothers in Burzee,” answered Claus. “I have been brought here by my enemies, the Awgwas, and left to perish miserably. Yet now I implore your help to release me and to send me home again.”

“Have you the sign?” asked another.

“Yes,” said Claus.

They cut his bonds, and with his free arms he made the secret sign of the Knooks.

Instantly they assisted him to stand upon his feet, and they brought him food and drink to strengthen him.

“Our brothers of Burzee make queer friends,” grumbled an ancient Knook whose flowing beard was pure white. “But he who knows our secret sign and signal is entitled to our help, whoever he may be. Close your eyes, stranger, and we will conduct you to your home. Where shall we seek it?”

“‘Tis in the Laughing Valley,” answered Claus, shutting his eyes.

“There is but one Laughing Valley in the known world, so we can not go astray,” remarked the Knook.

As he spoke the sound of his voice seemed to die away, so Claus opened his eyes to see what caused the change. To his astonishment he found himself seated on the bench by his own door, with the Laughing Valley spread out before him. That day he visited the Wood-Nymphs and related his adventure to Queen Zurline and Necile.

“The Awgwas have become your enemies,” said the lovely Queen, thoughtfully; “so we must do all we can to protect you from their power.”

“It was cowardly to bind him while he slept,” remarked Necile, with indignation.

“The evil ones are ever cowardly,” answered Zurline, “but our friend’s slumber shall not be disturbed again.”

The Queen herself came to the dwelling of Claus that evening and placed her Seal on every door and window, to keep out the Awgwas. And under the Seal of Queen Zurline was placed the Seal of the Fairies and the Seal of the Ryls and the Seals of the Knooks, that the charm might become more powerful.

And Claus carried his toys to the children again, and made many more of the little ones happy.

You may guess how angry the King Awgwa and his fierce band were when it was known to them that Claus had escaped from the Forest of Ethop.

They raged madly for a whole week, and then held another meeting among the rocks.

“It is useless to carry him where the Knooks reign,” said the King, “for he

has their protection. So let us cast him into a cave of our own mountains, where he will surely perish."

This was promptly agreed to, and the wicked band set out that night to seize Claus. But they found his dwelling guarded by the Seals of the Immortals and were obliged to go away baffled and disappointed.

"Never mind," said the King; "he does not sleep always!"

Next day, as Claus traveled to the village across the plain, where he intended to present a toy squirrel to a lame boy, he was suddenly set upon by the Awgwas, who seized him and carried him away to the mountains.

There they thrust him within a deep cavern and rolled many huge rocks against the entrance to prevent his escape.

Deprived thus of light and food, and with little air to breathe, our Claus was, indeed, in a pitiful plight. But he spoke the mystic words of the Fairies, which always command their friendly aid, and they came to his rescue and transported him to the Laughing Valley in the twinkling of an eye.

Thus the Awgwas discovered they might not destroy one who had earned the friendship of the immortals; so the evil band sought other means of keeping Claus from bringing happiness to children and so making them obedient.

Whenever Claus set out to carry his toys to the little ones an Awgwa, who had been set to watch his movements, sprang upon him and snatched the toys from his grasp. And the children were no more disappointed than was Claus when he was obliged to return home disconsolate. Still he persevered, and made many toys for his little friends and started with them for the villages. And always the Awgwas robbed him as soon as he had left the Valley.

They threw the stolen playthings into one of their lonely caverns, and quite a heap of toys accumulated before Claus became discouraged and gave up all attempts to leave the Valley. Then children began coming to him, since they found he did not go to them; but the wicked Awgwas flew around them and caused their steps to stray and the paths to become crooked, so never a little one could find a way into the Laughing Valley.

Lonely days now fell upon Claus, for he was denied the pleasure of bringing happiness to the children whom he had learned to love. Yet he bore up bravely, for he thought surely the time would come when the Awgwas would abandon their evil designs to injure him.

He devoted all his hours to toy-making, and when one plaything had been completed he stood it on a shelf he had built for that purpose. When the shelf became filled with rows of toys he made another one, and filled that also. So that in time he had many shelves filled with gay and beautiful toys representing horses, dogs, cats, elephants, lambs, rabbits and deer, as well as

pretty dolls of all sizes and balls and marbles of baked clay painted in gay colors.

Often, as he glanced at this array of childish treasures, the heart of good old Claus became sad, so greatly did he long to carry the toys to his children. And at last, because he could bear it no longer, he ventured to go to the great Ak, to whom he told the story of his persecution by the Awgwas, and begged the Master Woodsman to assist him.

7. The Great Battle Between Good and Evil

Ak listened gravely to the recital of Claus, stroking his beard the while with the slow, graceful motion that betokened deep thought. He nodded approvingly when Claus told how the Knooks and Fairies had saved him from death, and frowned when he heard how the Awgwas had stolen the children's toys. At last he said:

"From the beginning I have approved the work you are doing among the children of men, and it annoys me that your good deeds should be thwarted by the Awgwas. We immortals have no connection whatever with the evil creatures who have attacked you. Always have we avoided them, and they, in turn, have hitherto taken care not to cross our pathway. But in this matter I find they have interfered with one of our friends, and I will ask them to abandon their persecutions, as you are under our protection."

Claus thanked the Master Woodsman most gratefully and returned to his Valley, while Ak, who never delayed carrying out his promises, at once traveled to the mountains of the Awgwas.

There, standing on the bare rocks, he called on the King and his people to appear.

Instantly the place was filled with throngs of the scowling Awgwas, and their King, perching himself on a point of rock, demanded fiercely:

"Who dares call on us?"

"It is I, the Master Woodsman of the World," responded Ak.

"Here are no forests for you to claim," cried the King, angrily. "We owe no allegiance to you, nor to any immortal!"

"That is true," replied Ak, calmly. "Yet you have ventured to interfere with the actions of Claus, who dwells in the Laughing Valley, and is under our protection."

Many of the Awgwas began muttering at this speech, and their King turned threateningly on the Master Woodsman.

"You are set to rule the forests, but the plains and the valleys are ours!" he shouted. "Keep to your own dark woods! We will do as we please with Claus."

"You shall not harm our friend in any way!" replied Ak.

"Shall we not?" asked the King, impudently. "You will see! Our powers are vastly superior to those of mortals, and fully as great as those of immortals."

"It is your conceit that misleads you!" said Ak, sternly. "You are a transient race, passing from life into nothingness. We, who live forever, pity but despise you. On earth you are scorned by all, and in Heaven you have no

place! Even the mortals, after their earth life, enter another existence for all time, and so are your superiors. How then dare you, who are neither mortal nor immortal, refuse to obey my wish?"

The Awgwas sprang to their feet with menacing gestures, but their King motioned them back.

"Never before," he cried to Ak, while his voice trembled with rage, "has an immortal declared himself the master of the Awgwas! Never shall an immortal venture to interfere with our actions again! For we will avenge your scornful words by killing your friend Claus within three days. Nor you, nor all the immortals can save him from our wrath. We defy your powers! Begone, Master Woodsman of the World! In the country of the Awgwas you have no place."

"It is war!" declared Ak, with flashing eyes.

"It is war!" returned the King, savagely. "In three days your friend will be dead."

The Master turned away and came to his Forest of Burzee, where he called a meeting of the immortals and told them of the defiance of the Awgwas and their purpose to kill Claus within three days.

The little folk listened to him quietly.

"What shall we do?" asked Ak.

"These creatures are of no benefit to the world," said the Prince of the Knooks; "we must destroy them."

"Their lives are devoted only to evil deeds," said the Prince of the Ryls. "We must destroy them."

"They have no conscience, and endeavor to make all mortals as bad as themselves," said the Queen of the Fairies. "We must destroy them."

"They have defied the great Ak, and threaten the life of our adopted son," said beautiful Queen Zurline. "We must destroy them."

The Master Woodsman smiled.

"You speak well," said he. "These Awgwas we know to be a powerful race, and they will fight desperately; yet the outcome is certain. For we who live can never die, even though conquered by our enemies, while every Awgwa who is struck down is one foe the less to oppose us. Prepare, then, for battle, and let us resolve to show no mercy to the wicked!"

Thus arose that terrible war between the immortals and the spirits of evil which is sung of in Fairyland to this very day.

The King Awgwa and his band determined to carry out the threat to destroy Claus. They now hated him for two reasons: he made children happy and was a friend of the Master Woodsman. But since Ak's visit they had reason to fear the opposition of the immortals, and they dreaded defeat. So

the King sent swift messengers to all parts of the world to summon every evil creature to his aid.

And on the third day after the declaration of war a mighty army was at the command of the King Awgwa. There were three hundred Asiatic Dragons, breathing fire that consumed everything it touched. These hated mankind and all good spirits. And there were the three-eyed Giants of Tatary, a host in themselves, who liked nothing better than to fight. And next came the Black Demons from Patalonia, with great spreading wings like those of a bat, which swept terror and misery through the world as they beat upon the air. And joined to these were the Goozzle-Goblins, with long talons as sharp as swords, with which they clawed the flesh from their foes. Finally, every mountain Awgwa in the world had come to participate in the great battle with the immortals.

The King Awgwa looked around upon this vast army and his heart beat high with wicked pride, for he believed he would surely triumph over his gentle enemies, who had never before been known to fight. But the Master Woodsman had not been idle. None of his people was used to warfare, yet now that they were called upon to face the hosts of evil they willingly prepared for the fray.

Ak had commanded them to assemble in the Laughing Valley, where Claus, ignorant of the terrible battle that was to be waged on his account, was quietly making his toys.

Soon the entire Valley, from hill to hill, was filled with the little immortals. The Master Woodsman stood first, bearing a gleaming ax that shone like burnished silver. Next came the Ryls, armed with sharp thorns from bramblebushes. Then the Knooks, bearing the spears they used when they were forced to prod their savage beasts into submission. The Fairies, dressed in white gauze with rainbow-hued wings, bore golden wands, and the Wood-nymphs, in their uniforms of oak-leaf green, carried switches from ash trees as weapons.

Loud laughed the Awgwa King when he beheld the size and the arms of his foes. To be sure the mighty ax of the Woodsman was to be dreaded, but the sweet-faced Nymphs and pretty Fairies, the gentle Ryls and crooked Knooks were such harmless folk that he almost felt shame at having called such a terrible host to oppose them.

“Since these fools dare fight,” he said to the leader of the Tatary Giants, “I will overwhelm them with our evil powers!”

To begin the battle he poised a great stone in his left hand and cast it full against the sturdy form of the Master Woodsman, who turned it aside with his ax. Then rushed the three-eyed Giants of Tatary upon the Knooks, and

the Goozzle-Goblins upon the Ryls, and the firebreathing Dragons upon the sweet Fairies. Because the Nymphs were Ak's own people the band of Awgwas sought them out, thinking to overcome them with ease.

But it is the Law that while Evil, unopposed, may accomplish terrible deeds, the powers of Good can never be overthrown when opposed to Evil. Well had it been for the King Awgwa had he known the Law!

His ignorance cost him his existence, for one flash of the ax borne by the Master Woodsman of the World cleft the wicked King in twain and rid the earth of the vilest creature it contained.

Greatly marveled the Tatary Giants when the spears of the little Knooks pierced their thick walls of flesh and sent them reeling to the ground with howls of agony.

Woe came upon the sharp-taloned Goblins when the thorns of the Ryls reached their savage hearts and let their life-blood sprinkle all the plain. And afterward from every drop a thistle grew.

The Dragons paused astonished before the Fairy wands, from whence rushed a power that caused their fiery breaths to flow back on themselves so that they shriveled away and died.

As for the Awgwas, they had scant time to realize how they were destroyed, for the ash switches of the Nymphs bore a charm unknown to any Awgwa, and turned their foes into clods of earth at the slightest touch!

When Ak leaned upon his gleaming ax and turned to look over the field of battle he saw the few Giants who were able to run disappearing over the distant hills on their return to Tatary. The Goblins had perished every one, as had the terrible Dragons, while all that remained of the wicked Awgwas was a great number of earthen hillocks dotting the plain.

And now the immortals melted from the Valley like dew at sunrise, to resume their duties in the Forest, while Ak walked slowly and thoughtfully to the house of Claus and entered.

"You have many toys ready for the children," said the Woodsman, "and now you may carry them across the plain to the dwellings and the villages without fear."

"Will not the Awgwas harm me?" asked Claus, eagerly.

"The Awgwas," said Ak, "have perished!"

Now I will gladly have done with wicked spirits and with fighting and bloodshed. It was not from choice that I told of the Awgwas and their allies, and of their great battle with the immortals. They were part of this history, and could not be avoided.

8. The First Journey with the Reindeer

Those were happy days for Claus when he carried his accumulation of toys to the children who had awaited them so long. During his imprisonment in the Valley he had been so industrious that all his shelves were filled with playthings, and after quickly supplying the little ones living near by he saw he must now extend his travels to wider fields.

Remembering the time when he had journeyed with Ak through all the world, he know children were everywhere, and he longed to make as many as possible happy with his gifts.

So he loaded a great sack with all kinds of toys, slung it upon his back that he might carry it more easily, and started off on a longer trip than he had yet undertaken.

Wherever he showed his merry face, in hamlet or in farmhouse, he received a cordial welcome, for his fame had spread into far lands. At each village the children swarmed about him, following his footsteps wherever he went; and the women thanked him gratefully for the joy he brought their little ones; and the men looked upon him curiously that he should devote his time to such a queer occupation as toy-making. But every one smiled on him and gave him kindly words, and Claus felt amply repaid for his long journey.

When the sack was empty he went back again to the Laughing Valley and once more filled it to the brim. This time he followed another road, into a different part of the country, and carried happiness to many children who never before had owned a toy or guessed that such a delightful plaything existed.

After a third journey, so far away that Claus was many days walking the distance, the store of toys became exhausted and without delay he set about making a fresh supply.

From seeing so many children and studying their tastes he had acquired several new ideas about toys.

The dollies were, he had found, the most delightful of all playthings for babies and little girls, and often those who could not say “dolly” would call for a “doll” in their sweet baby talk. So Claus resolved to make many dolls, of all sizes, and to dress them in bright-colored clothing. The older boys — and even some of the girls — loved the images of animals, so he still made cats and elephants and horses. And many of the little fellows had musical natures, and longed for drums and cymbals and whistles and horns. So he made a number of toy drums, with tiny sticks to beat them with; and he made whistles from the willow trees, and horns from the bog-reeds, and cymbals from bits of beaten metal.

All this kept him busily at work, and before he realized it the winter season came, with deeper snows than usual, and he knew he could not leave the Valley with his heavy pack. Moreover, the next trip would take him farther from home than every before, and Jack Frost was mischievous enough to nip his nose and ears if he undertook the long journey while the Frost King reigned. The Frost King was Jack's father and never reproved him for his pranks.

So Claus remained at his work-bench; but he whistled and sang as merrily as ever, for he would allow no disappointment to sour his temper or make him unhappy.

One bright morning he looked from his window and saw two of the deer he had known in the Forest walking toward his house.

Claus was surprised; not that the friendly deer should visit him, but that they walked on the surface of the snow as easily as if it were solid ground, notwithstanding the fact that throughout the Valley the snow lay many feet deep. He had walked out of his house a day or two before and had sunk to his armpits in a drift.

So when the deer came near he opened the door and called to them:

"Good morning, Flossie! Tell me how you are able to walk on the snow so easily."

"It is frozen hard," answered Flossie.

"The Frost King has breathed on it," said Glossie, coming up, "and the surface is now as solid as ice."

"Perhaps," remarked Claus, thoughtfully, "I might now carry my pack of toys to the children."

"Is it a long journey?" asked Flossie.

"Yes; it will take me many days, for the pack is heavy," answered Claus.

"Then the snow would melt before you could get back," said the deer. "You must wait until spring, Claus."

Claus sighed. "Had I your fleet feet," said he, "I could make the journey in a day."

"But you have not," returned Glossie, looking at his own slender legs with pride.

"Perhaps I could ride upon your back," Claus ventured to remark, after a pause.

"Oh no; our backs are not strong enough to bear your weight," said Flossie, decidedly. "But if you had a sledge, and could harness us to it, we might draw you easily, and your pack as well."

"I'll make a sledge!" exclaimed Claus. "Will you agree to draw me if I do?"

“Well,” replied Flossie, “we must first go and ask the Knooks, who are our guardians, for permission; but if they consent, and you can make a sledge and harness, we will gladly assist you.”

“Then go at once!” cried Claus, eagerly. “I am sure the friendly Knooks will give their consent, and by the time you are back I shall be ready to harness you to my sledge.”

Flossie and Glossie, being deer of much intelligence, had long wished to see the great world, so they gladly ran over the frozen snow to ask the Knooks if they might carry Claus on his journey.

Meantime the toy-maker hurriedly began the construction of a sledge, using material from his wood-pile. He made two long runners that turned upward at the front ends, and across these nailed short boards, to make a platform. It was soon completed, but was as rude in appearance as it is possible for a sledge to be.

The harness was more difficult to prepare, but Claus twisted strong cords together and knotted them so they would fit around the necks of the deer, in the shape of a collar. From these ran other cords to fasten the deer to the front of the sledge.

Before the work was completed Glossie and Flossie were back from the Forest, having been granted permission by Will Knook to make the journey with Claus provided they would to Burzee by daybreak the next morning.

“That is not a very long time,” said Flossie; “but we are swift and strong, and if we get started by this evening we can travel many miles during the night.”

Claus decided to make the attempt, so he hurried on his preparations as fast as possible. After a time he fastened the collars around the necks of his steeds and harnessed them to his rude sledge. Then he placed a stool on the little platform, to serve as a seat, and filled a sack with his prettiest toys.

“How do you intend to guide us?” asked Glossie. “We have never been out of the Forest before, except to visit your house, so we shall not know the way.”

Claus thought about that for a moment. Then he brought more cords and fastened two of them to the spreading antlers of each deer, one on the right and the other on the left.

“Those will be my reins,” said Claus, “and when I pull them to the right or to the left you must go in that direction. If I do not pull the reins at all you may go straight ahead.”

“Very well,” answered Glossie and Flossie; and then they asked: “Are you ready?”

Claus seated himself upon the stool, placed the sack of toys at his feet,

and then gathered up the reins.

"All ready!" he shouted; "away we go!"

The deer leaned forward, lifted their slender limbs, and the next moment away flew the sledge over the frozen snow. The swiftness of the motion surprised Claus, for in a few strides they were across the Valley and gliding over the broad plain beyond.

The day had melted into evening by the time they started; for, swiftly as Claus had worked, many hours had been consumed in making his preparations. But the moon shone brightly to light their way, and Claus soon decided it was just as pleasant to travel by night as by day.

The deer liked it better; for, although they wished to see something of the world, they were timid about meeting men, and now all the dwellers in the towns and farmhouses were sound asleep and could not see them.

Away and away they sped, on and on over the hills and through the valleys and across the plains until they reached a village where Claus had never been before.

Here he called on them to stop, and they immediately obeyed. But a new difficulty now presented itself, for the people had locked their doors when they went to bed, and Claus found he could not enter the houses to leave his toys.

"I am afraid, my friends, we have made our journey for nothing," said he, "for I shall be obliged to carry my playthings back home again without giving them to the children of this village."

"What's the matter?" asked Flossie.

"The doors are locked," answered Claus, "and I can not get in."

Glossie looked around at the houses. The snow was quite deep in that village, and just before them was a roof only a few feet above the sledge. A broad chimney, which seemed to Glossie big enough to admit Claus, was at the peak of the roof.

"Why don't you climb down that chimney?" asked Glossie.

Claus looked at it.

"That would be easy enough if I were on top of the roof," he answered.

"Then hold fast and we will take you there," said the deer, and they gave one bound to the roof and landed beside the big chimney.

"Good!" cried Claus, well pleased, and he slung the pack of toys over his shoulder and got into the chimney.

There was plenty of soot on the bricks, but he did not mind that, and by placing his hands and knees against the sides he crept downward until he had reached the fireplace. Leaping lightly over the smoldering coals he found himself in a large sitting-room, where a dim light was burning.

From this room two doorways led into smaller chambers. In one a woman lay asleep, with a baby beside her in a crib.

Claus laughed, but he did not laugh aloud for fear of waking the baby. Then he slipped a big doll from his pack and laid it in the crib. The little one smiled, as if it dreamed of the pretty plaything it was to find on the morrow, and Claus crept softly from the room and entered at the other doorway.

Here were two boys, fast asleep with their arms around each other's neck. Claus gazed at them lovingly a moment and then placed upon the bed a drum, two horns and a wooden elephant.

He did not linger, now that his work in this house was done, but climbed the chimney again and seated himself on his sledge.

"Can you find another chimney?" he asked the reindeer.

"Easily enough," replied Glossie and Flossie.

Down to the edge of the roof they raced, and then, without pausing, leaped through the air to the top of the next building, where a huge, old-fashioned chimney stood.

"Don't be so long, this time," called Flossie, "or we shall never get back to the Forest by daybreak."

Claus made a trip down this chimney also and found five children sleeping in the house, all of whom were quickly supplied with toys.

When he returned the deer sprang to the next roof, but on descending the chimney Claus found no children there at all. That was not often the case in this village, however, so he lost less time than you might suppose in visiting the dreary homes where there were no little ones.

When he had climbed down the chimneys of all the houses in that village, and had left a toy for every sleeping child, Claus found that his great sack was not yet half emptied.

"Onward, friends!" he called to the deer; "we must seek another village."

So away they dashed, although it was long past midnight, and in a surprisingly short time they came to a large city, the largest Claus had ever visited since he began to make toys. But, nothing daunted by the throng of houses, he set to work at once and his beautiful steeds carried him rapidly from one roof to another, only the highest being beyond the leaps of the agile deer.

At last the supply of toys was exhausted and Claus seated himself in the sledge, with the empty sack at his feet, and turned the heads of Glossie and Flossie toward home.

Presently Flossie asked:

"What is that gray streak in the sky?"

"It is the coming dawn of day," answered Claus, surprised to find that it

was so late.

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Glossie; “then we shall not be home by daybreak, and the Knooks will punish us and never let us come again.”

“We must race for the Laughing Valley and make our best speed,” returned Flossie; “so hold fast, friend Claus!”

Claus held fast and the next moment was flying so swiftly over the snow that he could not see the trees as they whirled past. Up hill and down dale, swift as an arrow shot from a bow they dashed, and Claus shut his eyes to keep the wind out of them and left the deer to find their own way.

It seemed to him they were plunging through space, but he was not at all afraid. The Knooks were severe masters, and must be obeyed at all hazards, and the gray streak in the sky was growing brighter every moment.

Finally the sledge came to a sudden stop and Claus, who was taken unawares, tumbled from his seat into a snowdrift. As he picked himself up he heard the deer crying:

“Quick, friend, quick! Cut away our harness!”

He drew his knife and rapidly severed the cords, and then he wiped the moisture from his eyes and looked around him.

The sledge had come to a stop in the Laughing Valley, only a few feet, he found, from his own door. In the East the day was breaking, and turning to the edge of Burzee he saw Glossie and Flossie just disappearing in the Forest.

9. “Santa Claus!”

Claus thought that none of the children would ever know where the toys came from which they found by their bedsides when they wakened the following morning. But kindly deeds are sure to bring fame, and fame has many wings to carry its tidings into far lands; so for miles and miles in every direction people were talking of Claus and his wonderful gifts to children. The sweet generousness of his work caused a few selfish folk to sneer, but even these were forced to admit their respect for a man so gentle-natured that he loved to devote his life to pleasing the helpless little ones of his race.

Therefore the inhabitants of every city and village had been eagerly watching the coming of Claus, and remarkable stories of his beautiful playthings were told the children to keep them patient and contented.

When, on the morning following the first trip of Claus with his deer, the little ones came running to their parents with the pretty toys they had found, and asked from whence they came, they was but one reply to the question.

“The good Claus must have been here, my darlings; for his are the only toys in all the world!”

“But how did he get in?” asked the children.

At this the fathers shook their heads, being themselves unable to understand how Claus had gained admittance to their homes; but the mothers, watching the glad faces of their dear ones, whispered that the good Claus was no mortal man but assuredly a Saint, and they piously blessed his name for the happiness he had bestowed upon their children.

“A Saint,” said one, with bowed head, “has no need to unlock doors if it pleases him to enter our homes.”

And, afterward, when a child was naughty or disobedient, its mother would say:

“You must pray to the good Santa Claus for forgiveness. He does not like naughty children, and, unless you repent, he will bring you no more pretty toys.”

But Santa Claus himself would not have approved this speech. He brought toys to the children because they were little and helpless, and because he loved them. He knew that the best of children were sometimes naughty, and that the naughty ones were often good. It is the way with children, the world over, and he would not have changed their natures had he possessed the power to do so.

And that is how our Claus became Santa Claus. It is possible for any man, by good deeds, to enshrine himself as a Saint in the hearts of the people.

10. Christmas Eve

The day that broke as Claus returned from his night ride with Glossie and Flossie brought to him a new trouble. Will Knook, the chief guardian of the deer, came to him, surly and ill-tempered, to complain that he had kept Glossie and Flossie beyond daybreak, in opposition to his orders.

"Yet it could not have been very long after daybreak," said Claus.

"It was one minute after," answered Will Knook, "and that is as bad as one hour. I shall set the stinging gnats on Glossie and Flossie, and they will thus suffer terribly for their disobedience."

"Don't do that!" begged Claus. "It was my fault."

But Will Knook would listen to no excuses, and went away grumbling and growling in his ill-natured way.

For this reason Claus entered the Forest to consult Necile about rescuing the good deer from punishment. To his delight he found his old friend, the Master Woodsman, seated in the circle of Nymphs.

Ak listened to the story of the night journey to the children and of the great assistance the deer had been to Claus by drawing his sledge over the frozen snow.

"I do not wish my friends to be punished if I can save them," said the toy-maker, when he had finished the relation. "They were only one minute late, and they ran swifter than a bird flies to get home before daybreak."

Ak stroked his beard thoughtfully a moment, and then sent for the Prince of the Knooks, who rules all his people in Burzee, and also for the Queen of the Fairies and the Prince of the Ryls.

When all had assembled Claus told his story again, at Ak's command, and then the Master addressed the Prince of the Knooks, saying:

"The good work that Claus is doing among mankind deserves the support of every honest immortal. Already he is called a Saint in some of the towns, and before long the name of Santa Claus will be lovingly known in every home that is blessed with children. Moreover, he is a son of our Forest, so we owe him our encouragement. You, Ruler of the Knooks, have known him these many years; am I not right in saying he deserves our friendship?"

The Prince, crooked and sour of visage as all Knooks are, looked only upon the dead leaves at his feet and muttered: "You are the Master Woodsman of the World!"

Ak smiled, but continued, in soft tones: "It seems that the deer which are guarded by your people can be of great assistance to Claus, and as they seem willing to draw his sledge I beg that you will permit him to use their services whenever he pleases."

The Prince did not reply, but tapped the curled point of his sandal with the tip of his spear, as if in thought.

Then the Fairy Queen spoke to him in this way: “If you consent to Ak’s request I will see that no harm comes to your deer while they are away from the Forest.”

And the Prince of the Ryls added: “For my part I will allow to every deer that assists Claus the privilege of eating my casa plants, which give strength, and my grawle plants, which give fleetness of foot, and my marbon plants, which give long life.”

And the Queen of the Nymphs said: “The deer which draw the sledge of Claus will be permitted to bathe in the Forest pool of Nares, which will give them sleek coats and wonderful beauty.”

The Prince of the Knooks, hearing these promises, shifted uneasily on his seat, for in his heart he hated to refuse a request of his fellow immortals, although they were asking an unusual favor at his hands, and the Knooks are unaccustomed to granting favors of any kind. Finally he turned to his servants and said:

“Call Will Knook.”

When surly Will came and heard the demands of the immortals he protested loudly against granting them.

“Deer are deer,” said he, “and nothing but deer. Were they horses it would be right to harness them like horses. But no one harnesses deer because they are free, wild creatures, owing no service of any sort to mankind. It would degrade my deer to labor for Claus, who is only a man in spite of the friendship lavished on him by the immortals.”

“You have heard,” said the Prince to Ak. “There is truth in what Will says.”

“Call Glossie and Flossie,” returned the Master.

The deer were brought to the conference and Ak asked them if they objected to drawing the sledge for Claus.

“No, indeed!” replied Glossie; “we enjoyed the trip very much.”

“And we tried to get home by daybreak,” added Flossie, “but were unfortunately a minute too late.”

“A minute lost at daybreak doesn’t matter,” said Ak. “You are forgiven for that delay.”

“Provided it does not happen again,” said the Prince of the Knooks, sternly.

“And will you permit them to make another journey with me?” asked Claus, eagerly.

The Prince reflected while he gazed at Will, who was scowling, and at the

Master Woodsman, who was smiling.

Then he stood up and addressed the company as follows:

"Since you all urge me to grant the favor I will permit the deer to go with Claus once every year, on Christmas Eve, provided they always return to the Forest by daybreak. He may select any number he pleases, up to ten, to draw his sledge, and those shall be known among us as Reindeer, to distinguish them from the others. And they shall bathe in the Pool of Nares, and eat the casa and grawle and marbon plants and shall be under the especial protection of the Fairy Queen. And now cease scowling, Will Knook, for my words shall be obeyed!"

He hobbled quickly away through the trees, to avoid the thanks of Claus and the approval of the other immortals, and Will, looking as cross as ever, followed him.

But Ak was satisfied, knowing that he could rely on the promise of the Prince, however grudgingly given; and Glossie and Flossie ran home, kicking up their heels delightedly at every step.

"When is Christmas Eve?" Claus asked the Master.

"In about ten days," he replied.

"Then I can not use the deer this year," said Claus, thoughtfully, "for I shall not have time enough to make my sackful of toys."

"The shrewd Prince foresaw that," responded Ak, "and therefore named Christmas Eve as the day you might use the deer, knowing it would cause you to lose an entire year."

"If I only had the toys the Awgwas stole from me," said Claus, sadly, "I could easily fill my sack for the children."

"Where are they?" asked the Master.

"I do not know," replied Claus, "but the wicked Awgwas probably hid them in the mountains."

Ak turned to the Fairy Queen.

"Can you find them?" he asked.

"I will try," she replied, brightly.

Then Claus went back to the Laughing Valley, to work as hard as he could, and a band of Fairies immediately flew to the mountain that had been haunted by the Awgwas and began a search for the stolen toys.

The Fairies, as we well know, possess wonderful powers; but the cunning Awgwas had hidden the toys in a deep cave and covered the opening with rocks, so no one could look in. Therefore all search for the missing playthings proved in vain for several days, and Claus, who sat at home waiting for news from the Fairies, almost despaired of getting the toys before Christmas Eve.

He worked hard every moment, but it took considerable time to carve out and to shape each toy and to paint it properly, so that on the morning before Christmas Eve only half of one small shelf above the window was filled with playthings ready for the children.

But on this morning the Fairies who were searching in the mountains had a new thought. They joined hands and moved in a straight line through the rocks that formed the mountain, beginning at the topmost peak and working downward, so that no spot could be missed by their bright eyes. And at last they discovered the cave where the toys had been heaped up by the wicked Awgwas.

It did not take them long to burst open the mouth of the cave, and then each one seized as many toys as he could carry and they all flew to Claus and laid the treasure before him.

The good man was rejoiced to receive, just in the nick of time, such a store of playthings with which to load his sledge, and he sent word to Glossie and Flossie to be ready for the journey at nightfall.

With all his other labors he had managed to find time, since the last trip, to repair the harness and to strengthen his sledge, so that when the deer came to him at twilight he had no difficulty in harnessing them.

"We must go in another direction to-night," he told them, "where we shall find children I have never yet visited. And we must travel fast and work quickly, for my sack is full of toys and running over the brim!"

So, just as the moon arose, they dashed out of the Laughing Valley and across the plain and over the hills to the south. The air was sharp and frosty and the starlight touched the snowflakes and made them glitter like countless diamonds. The reindeer leaped onward with strong, steady bounds, and Claus' heart was so light and merry that he laughed and sang while the wind whistled past his ears:

"With a ho, ho, ho!
And a ha, ha, ha!
And a ho, ho! ha, ha, hee!
Now away we go
O'er the frozen snow,
As merry as we can be!"

Jack Frost heard him and came racing up with his nippers, but when he saw it was Claus he laughed and turned away again.

The mother owls heard him as he passed near a wood and stuck their heads out of the hollow places in the tree-trunks; but when they saw who it was they whispered to the owlets nestling near them that it was only Santa

Claus carrying toys to the children. It is strange how much those mother owls know.

Claus stopped at some of the scattered farmhouses and climbed down the chimneys to leave presents for the babies. Soon after he reached a village and worked merrily for an hour distributing playthings among the sleeping little ones. Then away again he went, signing his joyous carol:

"Now away we go
O'er the gleaming snow,
While the deer run swift and free!
For to girls and boys
We carry the toys
That will fill their hearts with glee!"

The deer liked the sound of his deep bass voice and kept time to the song with their hoofbeats on the hard snow; but soon they stopped at another chimney and Santa Claus, with sparkling eyes and face brushed red by the wind, climbed down its smoky sides and left a present for every child the house contained.

It was a merry, happy night. Swiftly the deer ran, and busily their driver worked to scatter his gifts among the sleeping children.

But the sack was empty at last, and the sledge headed homeward; and now again the race with daybreak began. Glossie and Flossie had no mind to be rebuked a second time for tardiness, so they fled with a swiftness that enabled them to pass the gale on which the Frost King rode, and soon brought them to the Laughing Valley.

It is true when Claus released his steeds from their harness the eastern sky was streaked with gray, but Glossie and Flossie were deep in the Forest before day fairly broke.

Claus was so wearied with his night's work that he threw himself upon his bed and fell into a deep slumber, and while he slept the Christmas sun appeared in the sky and shone upon hundreds of happy homes where the sound of childish laughter proclaimed that Santa Claus had made them a visit.

God bless him! It was his first Christmas Eve, and for hundreds of years since then he has nobly fulfilled his mission to bring happiness to the hearts of little children.

11. How the First Stockings Were Hung by the Chimneys

When you remember that no child, until Santa Claus began his travels, had ever known the pleasure of possessing a toy, you will understand how joy crept into the homes of those who had been favored with a visit from the good man, and how they talked of him day by day in loving tones and were honestly grateful for his kindly deeds. It is true that great warriors and mighty kings and clever scholars of that day were often spoken of by the people; but no one of them was so greatly beloved as Santa Claus, because none other was so unselfish as to devote himself to making others happy. For a generous deed lives longer than a great battle or a king's decree of a scholar's essay, because it spreads and leaves its mark on all nature and endures through many generations.

The bargain made with the Knook Prince changed the plans of Claus for all future time; for, being able to use the reindeer on but one night of each year, he decided to devote all the other days to the manufacture of playthings, and on Christmas Eve to carry them to the children of the world.

But a year's work would, he knew, result in a vast accumulation of toys, so he resolved to build a new sledge that would be larger and stronger and better-fitted for swift travel than the old and clumsy one.

His first act was to visit the Gnome King, with whom he made a bargain to exchange three drums, a trumpet and two dolls for a pair of fine steel runners, curled beautifully at the ends. For the Gnome King had children of his own, who, living in the hollows under the earth, in mines and caverns, needed something to amuse them.

In three days the steel runners were ready, and when Claus brought the playthings to the Gnome King, his Majesty was so greatly pleased with them that he presented Claus with a string of sweet-toned sleigh-bells, in addition to the runners.

"These will please Glossie and Flossie," said Claus, as he jingled the bells and listened to their merry sound. "But I should have two strings of bells, one for each deer."

"Bring me another trumpet and a toy cat," replied the King, "and you shall have a second string of bells like the first."

"It is a bargain!" cried Claus, and he went home again for the toys.

The new sledge was carefully built, the Knooks bringing plenty of strong but thin boards to use in its construction. Claus made a high, rounding dash-board to keep off the snow cast behind by the fleet hoofs of the deer; and he made high sides to the platform so that many toys could be carried, and

finally he mounted the sledge upon the slender steel runners made by the Gnome King.

It was certainly a handsome sledge, and big and roomy. Claus painted it in bright colors, although no one was likely to see it during his midnight journeys, and when all was finished he sent for Glossie and Flossie to come and look at it.

The deer admired the sledge, but gravely declared it was too big and heavy for them to draw.

"We might pull it over the snow, to be sure," said Glossie; "but we would not pull it fast enough to enable us to visit the far-away cities and villages and return to the Forest by daybreak."

"Then I must add two more deer to my team," declared Claus, after a moment's thought.

"The Knook Prince allowed you as many as ten. Why not use them all?" asked Flossie. "Then we could speed like the lightning and leap to the highest roofs with ease."

"A team of ten reindeer!" cried Claus, delightedly. "That will be splendid. Please return to the Forest at once and select eight other deer as like yourselves as possible. And you must all eat of the casa plant, to become strong, and of the grawle plant, to become fleet of foot, and of the marbon plant, that you may live long to accompany me on my journeys. Likewise it will be well for you to bathe in the Pool of Nares, which the lovely Queen Zurline declares will render you rarely beautiful. Should you perform these duties faithfully there is no doubt that on next Christmas Eve my ten reindeer will be the most powerful and beautiful steeds the world has ever seen!"

So Glossie and Flossie went to the Forest to choose their mates, and Claus began to consider the question of a harness for them all.

In the end he called upon Peter Knook for assistance, for Peter's heart is as kind as his body is crooked, and he is remarkably shrewd, as well. And Peter agreed to furnish strips of tough leather for the harness.

This leather was cut from the skins of lions that had reached such an advanced age that they died naturally, and on one side was tawny hair while the other side was cured to the softness of velvet by the deft Knooks. When Claus received these strips of leather he sewed them neatly into a harness for the ten reindeer, and it proved strong and serviceable and lasted him for many years.

The harness and sledge were prepared at odd times, for Claus devoted most of his days to the making of toys. These were now much better than the first ones had been, for the immortals often came to his house to watch him work and to offer suggestions. It was Necile's idea to make some of the dolls

say “papa” and “mama.” It was a thought of the Knooks to put a squeak inside the lambs, so that when a child squeezed them they would say “baa-a-a-a!” And the Fairy Queen advised Claus to put whistles in the birds, so they could be made to sing, and wheels on the horses, so children could draw them around. Many animals perished in the Forest, from one cause or another, and their fur was brought to Claus that he might cover with it the small images of beasts he made for playthings. A merry Ryl suggested that Claus make a donkey with a nodding head, which he did, and afterward found that it amused the little ones immensely. And so the toys grew in beauty and attractiveness every day, until they were the wonder of even the immortals.

When another Christmas Eve drew near there was a monster load of beautiful gifts for the children ready to be loaded upon the big sledge. Claus filled three sacks to the brim, and tucked every corner of the sledge-box full of toys besides.

Then, at twilight, the ten reindeer appeared and Flossie introduced them all to Claus. They were Racer and Pacer, Reckless and Speckless, Fearless and Peerless, and Ready and Steady, who, with Glossie and Flossie, made up the ten who have traversed the world these hundreds of years with their generous master. They were all exceedingly beautiful, with slender limbs, spreading antlers, velvety dark eyes and smooth coats of fawn color spotted with white.

Claus loved them at once, and has loved them ever since, for they are loyal friends and have rendered him priceless service.

The new harness fitted them nicely and soon they were all fastened to the sledge by twos, with Glossie and Flossie in the lead. These wore the strings of sleigh-bells, and were so delighted with the music they made that they kept prancing up and down to make the bells ring.

Claus now seated himself in the sledge, drew a warm robe over his knees and his fur cap over his ears, and cracked his long whip as a signal to start.

Instantly the ten leaped forward and were away like the wind, while jolly Claus laughed gleefully to see them run and shouted a song in his big, hearty voice:

“With a ho, ho, ho!
And a ha, ha, ha!
And a ho, ho, ha, ha, hee!
Now away we go
O’er the frozen snow,
As merry as we can be!
There are many joys

In our load of toys,
As many a child will know;
We'll scatter them wide
On our wild night ride
O'er the crisp and sparkling snow!"

Now it was on this same Christmas Eve that little Margot and her brother Dick and her cousins Ned and Sara, who were visiting at Margot's house, came in from making a snow man, with their clothes damp, their mittens dripping and their shoes and stockings wet through and through. They were not scolded, for Margot's mother knew the snow was melting, but they were sent early to bed that their clothes might be hung over chairs to dry. The shoes were placed on the red tiles of the hearth, where the heat from the hot embers would strike them, and the stockings were carefully hung in a row by the chimney, directly over the fireplace. That was the reason Santa Claus noticed them when he came down the chimney that night and all the household were fast asleep. He was in a tremendous hurry and seeing the stockings all belonged to children he quickly stuffed his toys into them and dashed up the chimney again, appearing on the roof so suddenly that the reindeer were astonished at his agility.

"I wish they would all hang up their stockings," he thought, as he drove to the next chimney. "It would save me a lot of time and I could then visit more children before daybreak."

When Margot and Dick and Ned and Sara jumped out of bed next morning and ran downstairs to get their stockings from the fireplace they were filled with delight to find the toys from Santa Claus inside them. In face, I think they found more presents in their stockings than any other children of that city had received, for Santa Claus was in a hurry and did not stop to count the toys.

Of course they told all their little friends about it, and of course every one of them decided to hang his own stockings by the fireplace the next Christmas Eve. Even Bessie Blithesome, who made a visit to that city with her father, the great Lord of Lerd, heard the story from the children and hung her own pretty stockings by the chimney when she returned home at Christmas time.

On his next trip Santa Claus found so many stockings hung up in anticipation of his visit that he could fill them in a jiffy and be away again in half the time required to hunt the children up and place the toys by their bedsides.

The custom grew year after year, and has always been a great help to

Santa Claus. And, with so many children to visit, he surely needs all the help we are able to give him.

12. The First Christmas Tree

Claus had always kept his promise to the Knooks by returning to the Laughing Valley by daybreak, but only the swiftness of his reindeer has enabled him to do this, for he travels over all the world.

He loved his work and he loved the brisk night ride on his sledge and the gay tinkle of the sleigh-bells. On that first trip with the ten reindeer only Glossie and Flossie wore bells; but each year thereafter for eight years Claus carried presents to the children of the Gnome King, and that good-natured monarch gave him in return a string of bells at each visit, so that finally every one of the ten deer was supplied, and you may imagine what a merry tune the bells played as the sledge sped over the snow.

The children's stockings were so long that it required a great many toys to fill them, and soon Claus found there were other things besides toys that children love. So he sent some of the Fairies, who were always his good friends, into the Tropics, from whence they returned with great bags full of oranges and bananas which they had plucked from the trees. And other Fairies flew to the wonderful Valley of Phunnyland, where delicious candies and bonbons grow thickly on the bushes, and returned laden with many boxes of sweetmeats for the little ones. These things Santa Claus, on each Christmas Eve, placed in the long stockings, together with his toys, and the children were glad to get them, you may be sure.

There are also warm countries where there is no snow in winter, but Claus and his reindeer visited them as well as the colder climes, for there were little wheels inside the runners of his sledge which permitted it to run as smoothly over bare ground as on the snow. And the children who lived in the warm countries learned to know the name of Santa Claus as well as those who lived nearer to the Laughing Valley.

Once, just as the reindeer were ready to start on their yearly trip, a Fairy came to Claus and told him of three little children who lived beneath a rude tent of skins on a broad plain where there were no trees whatever. These poor babies were miserable and unhappy, for their parents were ignorant people who neglected them sadly. Claus resolved to visit these children before he returned home, and during his ride he picked up the bushy top of a pine tree which the wind had broken off and placed it in his sledge.

It was nearly morning when the deer stopped before the lonely tent of skins where the poor children lay asleep. Claus at once planted the bit of pine tree in the sand and stuck many candles on the branches. Then he hung some of his prettiest toys on the tree, as well as several bags of candies. It did not take long to do all this, for Santa Claus works quickly, and when all was

ready he lighted the candles and, thrusting his head in at the opening of the tent, he shouted:

"Merry Christmas, little ones!"

With that he leaped into his sledge and was out of sight before the children, rubbing the sleep from their eyes, could come out to see who had called them.

You can imagine the wonder and joy of those little ones, who had never in their lives known a real pleasure before, when they saw the tree, sparkling with lights that shone brilliant in the gray dawn and hung with toys enough to make them happy for years to come! They joined hands and danced around the tree, shouting and laughing, until they were obliged to pause for breath. And their parents, also, came out to look and wonder, and thereafter had more respect and consideration for their children, since Santa Claus had honored them with such beautiful gifts.

The idea of the Christmas tree pleased Claus, and so the following year he carried many of them in his sledge and set them up in the homes of poor people who seldom saw trees, and placed candles and toys on the branches. Of course he could not carry enough trees in one load of all who wanted them, but in some homes the fathers were able to get trees and have them all ready for Santa Claus when he arrived; and these the good Claus always decorated as prettily as possible and hung with toys enough for all the children who came to see the tree lighted.

These novel ideas and the generous manner in which they were carried out made the children long for that one night in the year when their friend Santa Claus should visit them, and as such anticipation is very pleasant and comforting the little ones gleaned much happiness by wondering what would happen when Santa Claus next arrived.

Perhaps you remember that stern Baron Braun who once drove Claus from his castle and forbade him to visit his children? Well, many years afterward, when the old Baron was dead and his son ruled in his place, the new Baron Braun came to the house of Claus with his train of knights and pages and henchmen and, dismounting from his charger, bared his head humbly before the friend of children.

"My father did not know your goodness and worth," he said, "and therefore threatened to hang you from the castle walls. But I have children of my own, who long for a visit from Santa Claus, and I have come to beg that you will favor them hereafter as you do other children."

Claus was pleased with this speech, for Castle Braun was the only place he had never visited, and he gladly promised to bring presents to the Baron's children the next Christmas Eve.

The Baron went away contented, and Claus kept his promise faithfully.

Thus did this man, through very goodness, conquer the hearts of all; and it is no wonder he was ever merry and gay, for there was no home in the wide world where he was not welcomed more royally than any king.

OLD AGE

1. The Mantle of Immortality

And now we come to a turning-point in the career of Santa Claus, and it is my duty to relate the most remarkable that has happened since the world began or mankind was created.

We have followed the life of Claus from the time he was found a helpless infant by the Wood-Nymph Necile and reared to manhood in the great Forest of Burzee. And we know how he began to make toys for children and how, with the assistance and goodwill of the immortals, he was able to distribute them to the little ones throughout the world.

For many years he carried on this noble work; for the simple, hard-working life he led gave him perfect health and strength. And doubtless a man can live longer in the beautiful Laughing Valley, where there are no cares and everything is peaceful and merry, than in any other part of the world.

But when many years had rolled away Santa Claus grew old. The long beard of golden brown that once covered his cheeks and chin gradually became gray, and finally turned to pure white. His hair was white, too, and there were wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, which showed plainly when he laughed. He had never been a very tall man, and now he became fat, and waddled very much like a duck when he walked. But in spite of these things he remained as lively as ever, and was just as jolly and gay, and his kind eyes sparkled as brightly as they did that first day when he came to the Laughing Valley.

Yet a time is sure to come when every mortal who has grown old and lived his life is required to leave this world for another; so it is no wonder that, after Santa Claus had driven his reindeer on many and many a Christmas Eve, those stanch friends finally whispered among themselves that they had probably drawn his sledge for the last time.

Then all the Forest of Burzee became sad and all the Laughing Valley was hushed; for every living thing that had known Claus had used to love him and to brighten at the sound of his footsteps or the notes of his merry whistle.

No doubt the old man's strength was at last exhausted, for he made no more toys, but lay on his bed as in a dream.

The Nymph Necile, she who had reared him and been his foster-mother, was still youthful and strong and beautiful, and it seemed to her but a short time since this aged, gray-bearded man had lain in her arms and smiled on her with his innocent, baby lips.

In this is shown the difference between mortals and immortals.

It was fortunate that the great Ak came to the Forest at this time. Necile

sought him with troubled eyes and told him of the fate that threatened their friend Claus.

At once the Master became grave, and he leaned upon his ax and stroked his grizzled beard thoughtfully for many minutes. Then suddenly he stood up straight, and poised his powerful head with firm resolve, and stretched out his great right arm as if determined on doing some mighty deed. For a thought had come to him so grand in its conception that all the world might well bow before the Master Woodsman and honor his name forever!

It is well known that when the great Ak once undertakes to do a thing he never hesitates an instant. Now he summoned his fleetest messengers, and sent them in a flash to many parts of the earth. And when they were gone he turned to the anxious Necile and comforted her, saying:

"Be of good heart, my child; our friend still lives. And now run to your Queen and tell her that I have summoned a council of all the immortals of the world to meet with me here in Burzee this night. If they obey, and harken unto my words, Claus will drive his reindeer for countless ages yet to come."

At midnight there was a wondrous scene in the ancient Forest of Burzee, where for the first time in many centuries the rulers of the immortals who inhabit the earth were gathered together.

There was the Queen of the Water Sprites, whose beautiful form was as clear as crystal but continually dripped water on the bank of moss where she sat. And beside her was the King of the Sleep Fays, who carried a wand from the end of which a fine dust fell all around, so that no mortal could keep awake long enough to see him, as mortal eyes were sure to close in sleep as soon as the dust filled them. And next to him sat the Gnome King, whose people inhabit all that region under the earth's surface, where they guard the precious metals and the jewel stones that lie buried in rock and ore. At his right hand stood the King of the Sound Imps, who had wings on his feet, for his people are swift to carry all sounds that are made. When they are busy they carry the sounds but short distances, for there are many of them; but sometimes they speed with the sounds to places miles and miles away from where they are made. The King of the Sound Imps had an anxious and careworn face, for most people have no consideration for his Imps and, especially the boys and girls, make a great many unnecessary sounds which the Imps are obliged to carry when they might be better employed.

The next in the circle of immortals was the King of the Wind Demons, slender of frame, restless and uneasy at being confined to one place for even an hour. Once in a while he would leave his place and circle around the glade, and each time he did this the Fairy Queen was obliged to untangle the flowing locks of her golden hair and tuck them back of her pink ears. But she

did not complain, for it was not often that the King of the Wind Demons came into the heart of the Forest. After the Fairy Queen, whose home you know was in old Burzee, came the King of the Light Elves, with his two Princes, Flash and Twilight, at his back. He never went anywhere without his Princes, for they were so mischievous that he dared not let them wander alone.

Prince Flash bore a lightning-bolt in his right hand and a horn of gunpowder in his left, and his bright eyes roved constantly around, as if he longed to use his blinding flashes. Prince Twilight held a great snuffer in one hand and a big black cloak in the other, and it is well known that unless Twilight is carefully watched the snuffers or the cloak will throw everything into darkness, and Darkness is the greatest enemy the King of the Light Elves has.

In addition to the immortals I have named were the King of the Knooks, who had come from his home in the jungles of India; and the King of the Ryls, who lived among the gay flowers and luscious fruits of Valencia. Sweet Queen Zurline of the Wood-Nymphs completed the circle of immortals.

But in the center of the circle sat three others who possessed powers so great that all the Kings and Queens showed them reverence.

These were Ak, the Master Woodsman of the World, who rules the forests and the orchards and the groves; and Kern, the Master Husbandman of the World, who rules the grain fields and the meadows and the gardens; and Bo, the Master Mariner of the World, who rules the seas and all the craft that float thereon. And all other immortals are more or less subject to these three.

When all had assembled the Master Woodsman of the World stood up to address them, since he himself had summoned them to the council.

Very clearly he told them the story of Claus, beginning at the time when as a babe he had been adopted a child of the Forest, and telling of his noble and generous nature and his life-long labors to make children happy.

“And now,” said Ak, “when he had won the love of all the world, the Spirit of Death is hovering over him. Of all men who have inhabited the earth none other so well deserves immortality, for such a life can not be spared so long as there are children of mankind to miss him and to grieve over his loss. We immortals are the servants of the world, and to serve the world we were permitted in the Beginning to exist. But what one of us is more worthy of immortality than this man Claus, who so sweetly ministers to the little children?”

He paused and glanced around the circle, to find every immortal listening to him eagerly and nodding approval. Finally the King of the Wind Demons, who had been whistling softly to himself, cried out:

“What is your desire, O Ak?”

“To bestow upon Claus the Mantle of Immortality!” said Ak, boldly.

That this demand was wholly unexpected was proved by the immortals springing to their feet and looking into each other’s face with dismay and then upon Ak with wonder. For it was a grave matter, this parting with the Mantle of Immortality.

The Queen of the Water Sprites spoke in her low, clear voice, and the words sounded like raindrops splashing upon a window-pane.

“In all the world there is but one Mantle of Immortality,” she said.

The King of the Sound Fays added:

“It has existed since the Beginning, and no mortal has ever dared to claim it.”

And the Master Mariner of the World arose and stretched his limbs, saying:

“Only by the vote of every immortal can it be bestowed upon a mortal.”

“I know all this,” answered Ak, quietly. “But the Mantle exists, and if it was created, as you say, in the Beginning, it was because the Supreme Master knew that some day it would be required. Until now no mortal has deserved it, but who among you dares deny that the good Claus deserves it? Will you not all vote to bestow it upon him?”

They were silent, still looking upon one another questioningly.

“Of what use is the Mantle of Immortality unless it is worn?” demanded Ak. “What will it profit any one of us to allow it to remain in its lonely shrine for all time to come?”

“Enough!” cried the Gnome King, abruptly. “We will vote on the matter, yes or no. For my part, I say yes!”

“And I!” said the Fairy Queen, promptly, and Ak rewarded her with a smile.

“My people in Burzee tell me they have learned to love him; therefore I vote to give Claus the Mantle,” said the King of the Ryls.

“He is already a comrade of the Knooks,” announced the ancient King of that band. “Let him have immortality!”

“Let him have it — let him have it!” sighed the King of the Wind Demons.

“Why not?” asked the King of the Sleep Fays. “He never disturbs the slumbers my people allow humanity. Let the good Claus be immortal!”

“I do not object,” said the King of the Sound Imps.

“Nor I,” murmured the Queen of the Water Sprites.

“If Claus does not receive the Mantle it is clear none other can ever claim it,” remarked the King of the Light Elves, “so let us have done with the thing

for all time."

"The Wood-Nymphs were first to adopt him," said Queen Zurline. "Of course I shall vote to make him immortal."

Ak now turned to the Master Husbandman of the World, who held up his right arm and said "Yes!"

And the Master Mariner of the World did likewise, after which Ak, with sparkling eyes and smiling face, cried out:

"I thank you, fellow immortals! For all have voted 'yes,' and so to our dear Claus shall fall the one Mantle of Immortality that it is in our power to bestow!"

"Let us fetch it at once," said the Fay King; "I'm in a hurry."

They bowed assent, and instantly the Forest glade was deserted. But in a place midway between the earth and the sky was suspended a gleaming crypt of gold and platinum, aglow with soft lights shed from the facets of countless gems. Within a high dome hung the precious Mantle of Immortality, and each immortal placed a hand on the hem of the splendid Robe and said, as with one voice:

"We bestow this Mantle upon Claus, who is called the Patron Saint of Children!"

At this the Mantle came away from its lofty crypt, and they carried it to the house in the Laughing Valley.

The Spirit of Death was crouching very near to the bedside of Claus, and as the immortals approached she sprang up and motioned them back with an angry gesture. But when her eyes fell upon the Mantle they bore she shrank away with a low moan of disappointment and quitted that house forever.

Softly and silently the immortal Band dropped upon Claus the precious Mantle, and it closed about him and sank into the outlines of his body and disappeared from view. It became a part of his being, and neither mortal nor immortal might ever take it from him.

Then the Kings and Queens who had wrought this great deed dispersed to their various homes, and all were well contented that they had added another immortal to their Band.

And Claus slept on, the red blood of everlasting life coursing swiftly through his veins; and on his brow was a tiny drop of water that had fallen from the ever-melting gown of the Queen of the Water Sprites, and over his lips hovered a tender kiss that had been left by the sweet Nymph Necile. For she had stolen in when the others were gone to gaze with rapture upon the immortal form of her foster son.

2. When the World Grew Old

The next morning, when Santa Claus opened his eyes and gazed around the familiar room, which he had feared he might never see again, he was astonished to find his old strength renewed and to feel the red blood of perfect health coursing through his veins. He sprang from his bed and stood where the bright sunshine came in through his window and flooded him with its merry, dancing rays. He did not then understand what had happened to restore to him the vigor of youth, but in spite of the fact that his beard remained the color of snow and that wrinkles still lingered in the corners of his bright eyes, old Santa Claus felt as brisk and merry as a boy of sixteen, and was soon whistling contentedly as he busied himself fashioning new toys.

Then Ak came to him and told of the Mantle of Immortality and how Claus had won it through his love for little children.

It made old Santa look grave for a moment to think he had been so favored; but it also made him glad to realize that now he need never fear being parted from his dear ones. At once he began preparations for making a remarkable assortment of pretty and amusing playthings, and in larger quantities than ever before; for now that he might always devote himself to this work he decided that no child in the world, poor or rich, should hereafter go without a Christmas gift if he could manage to supply it.

The world was new in the days when dear old Santa Claus first began toy-making and won, by his loving deeds, the Mantle of Immortality. And the task of supplying cheering words, sympathy and pretty playthings to all the young of his race did not seem a difficult undertaking at all. But every year more and more children were born into the world, and these, when they grew up, began spreading slowly over all the face of the earth, seeking new homes; so that Santa Claus found each year that his journeys must extend farther and farther from the Laughing Valley, and that the packs of toys must be made larger and ever larger.

So at length he took counsel with his fellow immortals how his work might keep pace with the increasing number of children that none might be neglected. And the immortals were so greatly interested in his labors that they gladly rendered him their assistance. Ak gave him his man Kilter, “the silent and swift.” And the Knook Prince gave him Peter, who was more crooked and less surly than any of his brothers. And the Ryl Prince gave him Nuter, the sweetest tempered Ryl ever known. And the Fairy Queen gave him Wisk, that tiny, mischievous but lovable Fairy who knows today almost as many children as does Santa Claus himself.

With these people to help make the toys and to keep his house in order and to look after the sledge and the harness, Santa Claus found it much easier to prepare his yearly load of gifts, and his days began to follow one another smoothly and pleasantly.

Yet after a few generations his worries were renewed, for it was remarkable how the number of people continued to grow, and how many more children there were every year to be served. When the people filled all the cities and lands of one country they wandered into another part of the world; and the men cut down the trees in many of the great forests that had been ruled by Ak, and with the wood they built new cities, and where the forests had been were fields of grain and herds of browsing cattle.

You might think the Master Woodsman would rebel at the loss of his forests; but not so. The wisdom of Ak was mighty and farseeing.

"The world was made for men," said he to Santa Claus, "and I have but guarded the forests until men needed them for their use. I am glad my strong trees can furnish shelter for men's weak bodies, and warm them through the cold winters. But I hope they will not cut down all the trees, for mankind needs the shelter of the woods in summer as much as the warmth of blazing logs in winter. And, however crowded the world may grow, I do not think men will ever come to Burzee, nor to the Great Black Forest, nor to the wooded wilderness of Braz; unless they seek their shades for pleasure and not to destroy their giant trees."

By and by people made ships from the tree-trunks and crossed over oceans and built cities in far lands; but the oceans made little difference to the journeys of Santa Claus. His reindeer sped over the waters as swiftly as over land, and his sledge headed from east to west and followed in the wake of the sun. So that as the earth rolled slowly over Santa Claus had all of twenty-four hours to encircle it each Christmas Eve, and the speedy reindeer enjoyed these wonderful journeys more and more.

So year after year, and generation after generation, and century after century, the world grew older and the people became more numerous and the labors of Santa Claus steadily increased. The fame of his good deeds spread to every household where children dwelt. And all the little ones loved him dearly; and the fathers and mothers honored him for the happiness he had given them when they too were young; and the aged grandsires and granddames remembered him with tender gratitude and blessed his name.

3. The Deputies of Santa Claus

However, there was one evil following in the path of civilization that caused Santa Claus a vast amount of trouble before he discovered a way to overcome it. But, fortunately, it was the last trial he was forced to undergo.

One Christmas Eve, when his reindeer had leaped to the top of a new building, Santa Claus was surprised to find that the chimney had been built much smaller than usual. But he had no time to think about it just then, so he drew in his breath and made himself as small as possible and slid down the chimney.

"I ought to be at the bottom by this time," he thought, as he continued to slip downward; but no fireplace of any sort met his view, and by and by he reached the very end of the chimney, which was in the cellar.

"This is odd!" he reflected, much puzzled by this experience. "If there is no fireplace, what on earth is the chimney good for?"

Then he began to climb out again, and found it hard work — the space being so small. And on his way up he noticed a thin, round pipe sticking through the side of the chimney, but could not guess what it was for.

Finally he reached the roof and said to the reindeer:

"There was no need of my going down that chimney, for I could find no fireplace through which to enter the house. I fear the children who live there must go without playthings this Christmas."

Then he drove on, but soon came to another new house with a small chimney. This caused Santa Claus to shake his head doubtfully, but he tried the chimney, nevertheless, and found it exactly like the other. Moreover, he nearly stuck fast in the narrow flue and tore his jacket trying to get out again; so, although he came to several such chimneys that night, he did not venture to descend any more of them.

"What in the world are people thinking of, to build such useless chimneys?" he exclaimed. "In all the years I have traveled with my reindeer I have never seen the like before."

True enough; but Santa Claus had not then discovered that stoves had been invented and were fast coming into use. When he did find it out he wondered how the builders of those houses could have so little consideration for him, when they knew very well it was his custom to climb down chimneys and enter houses by way of the fireplaces. Perhaps the men who built those houses had outgrown their own love for toys, and were indifferent whether Santa Claus called on their children or not. Whatever the explanation might be, the poor children were forced to bear the burden of grief and disappointment.

The following year Santa Claus found more and more of the new-fashioned chimneys that had no fireplaces, and the next year still more. The third year, so numerous had the narrow chimneys become, he even had a few toys left in his sledge that he was unable to give away, because he could not get to the children.

The matter had now become so serious that it worried the good man greatly, and he decided to talk it over with Kilter and Peter and Nuter and Wisk.

Kilter already knew something about it, for it had been his duty to run around to all the houses, just before Christmas, and gather up the notes and letters to Santa Claus that the children had written, telling what they wished put in their stockings or hung on their Christmas trees. But Kilter was a silent fellow, and seldom spoke of what he saw in the cities and villages. The others were very indignant.

"Those people act as if they do not wish their children to be made happy!" said sensible Peter, in a vexed tone. "The idea of shutting out such a generous friend to their little ones!"

"But it is my intention to make children happy whether their parents wish it or not," returned Santa Claus. "Years ago, when I first began making toys, children were even more neglected by their parents than they are now; so I have learned to pay no attention to thoughtless or selfish parents, but to consider only the longings of childhood."

"You are right, my master," said Nuter, the Ryl; "many children would lack a friend if you did not consider them, and try to make them happy."

"Then," declared the laughing Wisk, "we must abandon any thought of using these new-fashioned chimneys, but become burglars, and break into the houses some other way."

"What way?" asked Santa Claus.

"Why, walls of brick and wood and plaster are nothing to Fairies. I can easily pass through them whenever I wish, and so can Peter and Nuter and Kilter. Is it not so, comrades?"

"I often pass through the walls when I gather up the letters," said Kilter, and that was a long speech for him, and so surprised Peter and Nuter that their big round eyes nearly popped out of their heads.

"Therefore," continued the Fairy, "you may as well take us with you on your next journey, and when we come to one of those houses with stoves instead of fireplaces we will distribute the toys to the children without the need of using a chimney."

"That seems to me a good plan," replied Santa Claus, well pleased at having solved the problem. "We will try it next year."

That was how the Fairy, the Pixie, the Knook and the Ryl all rode in the sledge with their master the following Christmas Eve; and they had no trouble at all in entering the new-fashioned houses and leaving toys for the children that lived in them.

And their deft services not only relieved Santa Claus of much labor, but enabled him to complete his own work more quickly than usual, so that the merry party found themselves at home with an empty sledge a full hour before daybreak.

The only drawback to the journey was that the mischievous Wisk persisted in tickling the reindeer with a long feather, to see them jump; and Santa Claus found it necessary to watch him every minute and to tweak his long ears once or twice to make him behave himself.

But, taken all together, the trip was a great success, and to this day the four little folk always accompany Santa Claus on his yearly ride and help him in the distribution of his gifts.

But the indifference of parents, which had so annoyed the good Saint, did not continue very long, and Santa Claus soon found they were really anxious he should visit their homes on Christmas Eve and leave presents for their children.

So, to lighten his task, which was fast becoming very difficult indeed, old Santa decided to ask the parents to assist him.

"Get your Christmas trees all ready for my coming," he said to them; "and then I shall be able to leave the presents without loss of time, and you can put them on the trees when I am gone."

And to others he said: "See that the children's stockings are hung up in readiness for my coming, and then I can fill them as quick as a wink."

And often, when parents were kind and good-natured, Santa Claus would simply fling down his package of gifts and leave the fathers and mothers to fill the stockings after he had darted away in his sledge.

"I will make all loving parents my deputies!" cried the jolly old fellow, "and they shall help me do my work. For in this way I shall save many precious minutes and few children need be neglected for lack of time to visit them."

Besides carrying around the big packs in his swift-flying sledge old Santa began to send great heaps of toys to the toy-shops, so that if parents wanted larger supplies for their children they could easily get them; and if any children were, by chance, missed by Santa Claus on his yearly rounds, they could go to the toy-shops and get enough to make them happy and contented. For the loving friend of the little ones decided that no child, if he could help it, should long for toys in vain. And the toy-shops also proved convenient

whenever a child fell ill, and needed a new toy to amuse it; and sometimes, on birthdays, the fathers and mothers go to the toy-shops and get pretty gifts for their children in honor of the happy event.

Perhaps you will now understand how, in spite of the bigness of the world, Santa Claus is able to supply all the children with beautiful gifts. To be sure, the old gentleman is rarely seen in these days; but it is not because he tries to keep out of sight, I assure you. Santa Claus is the same loving friend of children that in the old days used to play and romp with them by the hour; and I know he would love to do the same now, if he had the time. But, you see, he is so busy all the year making toys, and so hurried on that one night when he visits our homes with his packs, that he comes and goes among us like a flash; and it is almost impossible to catch a glimpse of him.

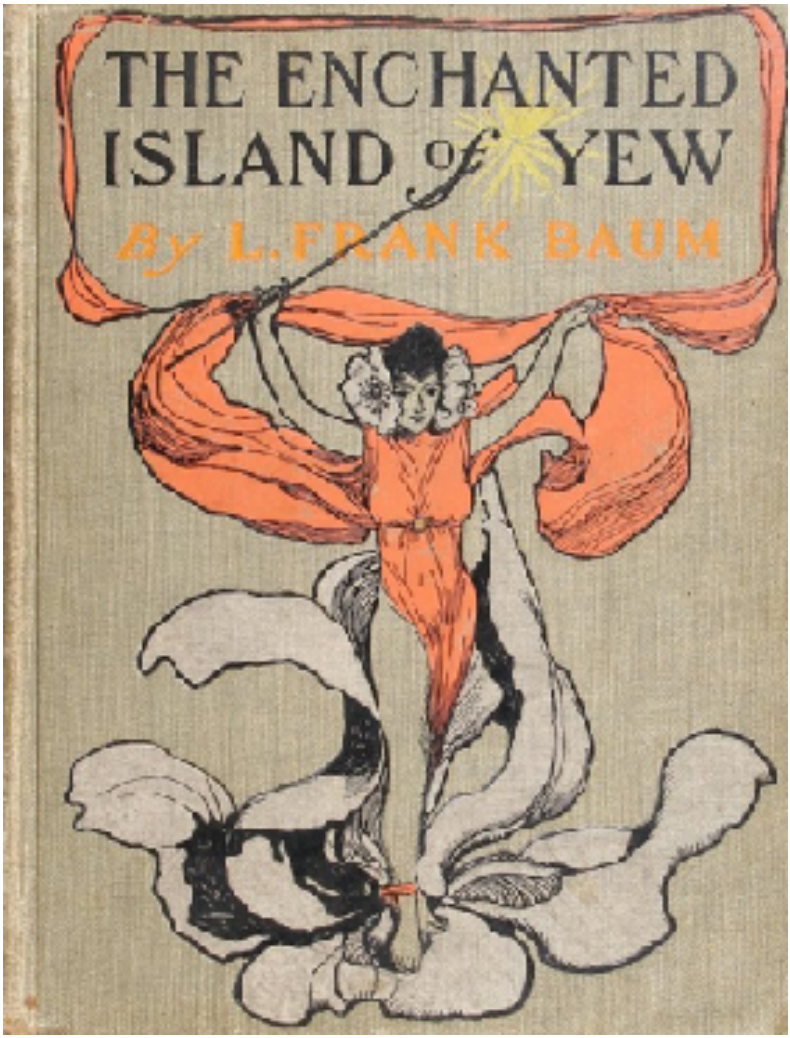
And, although there are millions and millions more children in the world than there used to be, Santa Claus has never been known to complain of their increasing numbers.

“The more the merrier!” he cries, with his jolly laugh; and the only difference to him is the fact that his little workmen have to make their busy fingers fly faster every year to satisfy the demands of so many little ones.

“In all this world there is nothing so beautiful as a happy child,” says good old Santa Claus; and if he had his way the children would all be beautiful, for all would be happy.

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND OF YEW

Bobbs-Merrill published *The Enchanted Island of Yew* in 1903, illustrated by Fanny Young Cory, well known for her comic strip, *Little Miss Muffet*. Like Oz, Yew divides into four countries with a fifth central and powerful country named Spor, which preys on the other countries through banditry. The former fairy, Prince Marvel, battles a band of thieves, acquires a squire-boy named Nerle, and, in Spor, faces the Royal Dragon of King Terribus. Following further exciting adventures in the mysterious doubling twilight kingdom of Twi, and elsewhere, he fights the dangerous Red Rogue of Dawna. Baum historians consider *The Enchanted Island of Yew* to be his most traditional fairyland and most similar to the countries featured in *Queen Zixi of Ix* than those in his Oz tales.



First edition copy of The Enchanted Island of Yew

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1. “Once on a Time”

I am going to tell a story, one of those tales of astonishing adventures that happened years and years and years ago. Perhaps you wonder why it is that so many stories are told of “once on a time”, and so few of these days in which we live; but that is easily explained.

In the old days, when the world was young, there were no automobiles nor flying-machines to make one wonder; nor were there railway trains, nor telephones, nor mechanical inventions of any sort to keep people keyed up to a high pitch of excitement. Men and women lived simply and quietly. They were Nature’s children, and breathed fresh air into their lungs instead of smoke and coal gas; and tramped through green meadows and deep forests instead of riding in street cars; and went to bed when it grew dark and rose with the sun--which is vastly different from the present custom. Having no books to read they told their adventures to one another and to their little ones; and the stories were handed down from generation to generation and reverently believed.

Those who peopled the world in the old days, having nothing but their hands to depend on, were to a certain extent helpless, and so the fairies were sorry for them and ministered to their wants patiently and frankly, often showing themselves to those they befriended.

So people knew fairies in those days, my dear, and loved them, together with all the ryls and knooks and pixies and nymphs and other beings that belong to the hordes of immortals. And a fairy tale was a thing to be wondered at and spoken of in awed whispers; for no one thought of doubting its truth.

To-day the fairies are shy; for so many curious inventions of men have come into use that the wonders of Fairyland are somewhat tame beside them, and even the boys and girls can not be so easily interested or surprised as in the old days. So the sweet and gentle little immortals perform their tasks unseen and unknown, and live mostly in their own beautiful realms, where they are almost unthought of by our busy, bustling world.

Yet when we come to story-telling the marvels of our own age shrink into insignificance beside the brave deeds and absorbing experiences of the days when fairies were better known; and so we go back to “once on a time” for the tales that we most love--and that children have ever loved since mankind knew that fairies exist.

2. The Enchanted Isle

Once there was an enchanted island in the middle of the sea. It was called the Isle of Yew. And in it were five important kingdoms ruled by men, and many woodland dells and forest glades and pleasant meadows and grim mountains inhabited by fairies.

From the fairies some of the men had learned wonderful secrets, and had become magicians and sorcerers, with powers so great that the entire island was reputed to be one of enchantments. Who these men were the common people did not always know; for while some were kings and rulers, others lived quietly hidden away in forests or mountains, and seldom or never showed themselves. Indeed, there were not so many of these magicians as people thought, only it was so hard to tell them from common folk that every stranger was regarded with a certain amount of curiosity and fear.

The island was round--like a mince pie. And it was divided into four quarters--also like a pie--except that there was a big place in the center where the fifth kingdom, called Spor, lay in the midst of the mountains. Spor was ruled by King Terribus, whom no one but his own subjects had ever seen--and not many of them. For no one was allowed to enter the Kingdom of Spor, and its king never left his palace. But the people of Spor had a bad habit of rushing down from their mountains and stealing the goods of the inhabitants of the other four kingdoms, and carrying them home with them, without offering any apologies whatever for such horrid conduct. Sometimes those they robbed tried to fight them; but they were a terrible people, consisting of giants with huge clubs, and dwarfs who threw flaming darts, and the stern Gray Men of Spor, who were most frightful of all. So, as a rule, every one fled before them, and the people were thankful that the fierce warriors of Spor seldom came to rob them oftener than once a year.

It was on this account that all who could afford the expense built castles to live in, with stone walls so thick that even the giants of Spor could not batter them down. And the children were not allowed to stray far from home for fear some roving band of robbers might steal them and make their parents pay large sums for their safe return.

Yet for all this the people of the Enchanted Isle of Yew were happy and prosperous. No grass was greener, no forests more cool and delightful, no skies more sunny, no sea more blue and rippling than theirs.

And the nations of the world envied them, but dared not attempt to conquer an island abounding in enchantments.

3. The Fairy Bower

That part of the Enchanted Isle which was kissed by the rising sun was called Dawna; the kingdom that was tinted rose and purple by the setting sun was known as Auriel, and the southland, where fruits and flowers abounded, was the kingdom of Plenta. Up at the north lay Heg, the home of the great barons who feared not even the men of Spor; and in the Kingdom of Heg our story opens.

Upon a beautiful plain stood the castle of the great Baron Merd--renowned alike in war and peace, and second in importance only to the King of Heg. It was a castle of vast extent, built with thick walls and protected by strong gates. In front of it sloped a pretty stretch of land with the sea glistening far beyond; and back of it, but a short distance away, was the edge of the Forest of Lurla.

One fair summer day the custodian of the castle gates opened a wicket and let down a draw-bridge, when out trooped three pretty girls with baskets dangling on their arms. One of the maids walked in front of her companions, as became the only daughter of the mighty Baron Merd. She was named Seseley, and had yellow hair and red cheeks and big, blue eyes. Behind her, merry and laughing, yet with a distinct deference to the high station of their young lady, walked Berna and Helda--dark brunettes with mischievous eyes and slender, lithe limbs. Berna was the daughter of the chief archer, and Helda the niece of the captain of the guard, and they were appointed play-fellows and comrades of the fair Seseley.

Up the hill to the forest's edge ran the three, and then without hesitation plunged into the shade of the ancient trees. There was no sunlight now, but the air was cool and fragrant of nuts and mosses, and the children skipped along the paths joyously and without fear.

To be sure, the Forest of Lurla was well known as the home of fairies, but Seseley and her comrades feared nothing from such gentle creatures and only longed for an interview with the powerful immortals whom they had been taught to love as the tender guardians of mankind. Nymphs there were in Lurla, as well, and crooked knooks, it was said; yet for many years past no person could boast the favor of meeting any one of the fairy creatures face to face.

So, gathering a few nuts here and a sweet forest flower there, the three maidens walked farther and farther into the forest until they came upon a clearing--formed like a circle--with mosses and ferns for its carpet and great overhanging branches for its roof.

"How pretty!" cried Seseley, gaily. "Let us eat our luncheon in this lovely

banquet-hall!”

So Berna and Helda spread a cloth and brought from their baskets some golden platters and a store of food. Yet there was little ceremony over the meal, you may be sure, and within a short space all the children had satisfied their appetites and were laughing and chatting as merrily as if they were at home in the great castle. Indeed, it is certain they were happier in their forest glade than when facing grim walls of stone, and the three were in such gay spirits that whatever one chanced to say the others promptly joined in laughing over.

Soon, however, they were startled to hear a silvery peal of laughter answering their own, and turning to see whence the sound proceeded, they found seated near them a creature so beautiful that at once the three pairs of eyes opened to their widest extent, and three hearts beat much faster than before.

“Well, I must say you DO stare!” exclaimed the newcomer, who was clothed in soft floating robes of rose and pearl color, and whose eyes shone upon them like two stars.

“Forgive our impertinence,” answered the little Lady Seseley, trying to appear dignified and unmoved; “but you must acknowledge that you came among us uninvited, and--and you are certainly rather odd in appearance.”

Again the silvery laughter rang through the glade.

“Uninvited!” echoed the creature, clapping her hands together delightedly; “uninvited to my own forest home! Why, my dear girls, you are the uninvited ones--indeed you are--to thus come romping into our fairy bower.”

The children did not open their eyes any wider on hearing this speech, for they could not; but their faces expressed their amazement fully, while Helda gasped the words:

“A fairy bower! We are in a fairy bower!”

“Most certainly,” was the reply. “And as for being odd in appearance, let me ask how you could reasonably expect a fairy to appear as mortal maidens do?”

“A fairy!” exclaimed Seseley. “Are you, then, a real fairy?”

“I regret to say I am,” returned the other, more soberly, as she patted a moss-bank with a silver-tipped wand.

Then for a moment there was silence, while the three girls sat very still and stared at their immortal companion with evident curiosity. Finally Seseley asked:

“Why do you regret being a fairy? I have always thought them the happiest creatures in the world.”

“Perhaps we ought to be happy,” answered the fairy, gravely, “for we

have wonderful powers and do much to assist you helpless mortals. And I suppose some of us really are happy. But, for my part, I am so utterly tired of a fairy life that I would do anything to change it."

"That is strange," declared Berna. "You seem very young to be already discontented with your lot."

Now at this the fairy burst into laughter again, and presently asked:

"How old do you think me?"

"About our own age," said Berna, after a glance at her and a moment's reflection.

"Nonsense!" retorted the fairy, sharply. "These trees are hundreds of years old, yet I remember when they were mere twigs. And I remember when mortals first came to live upon this island, yes--and when this island was first created and rose from the sea after a great earthquake. I remember for many, many centuries, my dears. I have grown tired of remembering--and of being a fairy continually, without any change to brighten my life."

"To be sure!" said Seseley, with sympathy. "I never thought of fairy life in that way before. It must get to be quite tiresome."

"And think of the centuries I must yet live!" exclaimed the fairy in a dismal voice. "Isn't it an awful thing to look forward to?"

"It is, indeed," agreed Seseley.

"I'd be glad to exchange lives with you," said Helda, looking at the fairy with intense admiration.

"But you can't do that," answered the little creature quickly. "Mortals can't become fairies, you know--although I believe there was once a mortal who was made immortal."

"But fairies can become anything they desire!" cried Berna.

"Oh, no, they can't. You are mistaken if you believe that," was the reply. "I could change YOU into a fly, or a crocodile, or a bobolink, if I wanted to; but fairies can't change themselves into anything else."

"How strange!" murmured Seseley, much impressed.

"But YOU can," cried the fairy, jumping up and coming toward them. "You are mortals, and, by the laws that govern us, a mortal can change a fairy into anything she pleases."

"Oh!" said Seseley, filled with amazement at the idea.

The fairy fell on her knees before the baron's daughter. "Please--please, dear Seseley," she pleaded, "change me into a mortal!"

4. Prince Marvel

It is easy to imagine the astonishment of the three girls at hearing this strange request. They gazed in a bewildered fashion upon the kneeling fairy, and were at first unable to answer one word. Then Seseley said--sadly, for she grieved to disappoint the pretty creature:

"We are but mortal children, and have no powers of enchantment at all."

"Ah, that is true, so far as concerns yourselves," replied the fairy, eagerly; "yet mortals may easily transform fairies into anything they wish."

"If that is so, why have we never heard of this power before?" asked Seseley.

"Because fairies, as a rule, are content with their lot, and do not wish to appear in any form but their own. And, knowing that evil or mischievous mortals can transform them at will, the fairies take great care to remain invisible, so they can not be interfered with. Have you ever," she asked, suddenly, "seen a fairy before?"

"Never," replied Seseley.

"Nor would you have seen me to-day, had I not known you were kind and pure-hearted, or had I not resolved to ask you to exercise your powers upon me."

"I must say," remarked Helda, boldly, "that you are foolish to wish to become anything different from what you are."

"For you are very beautiful NOW," added Berna, admiringly.

"Beautiful!" retorted the fairy, with a little frown; "what does beauty amount to, if one is to remain invisible?"

"Not much, that is true," agreed Berna, smoothing her own dark locks.

"And as for being foolish," continued the fairy, "I ought to be allowed to act foolishly if I want to. For centuries past I have not had a chance to do a single foolish thing."

"Poor dear!" said Helda, softly.

Seseley had listened silently to this conversation. Now she inquired:

"What do you wish to become?"

"A mortal!" answered the fairy, promptly.

"A girl, like ourselves?" questioned the baron's daughter.

"Perhaps," said the fairy, as if undecided.

"Then you would be likely to endure many privations," said Seseley, gently. "For you would have neither father nor mother to befriend you, nor any house to live in."

"And if you hired your services to some baron, you would be obliged to wash dishes all day, or mend clothing, or herd cattle," said Berna.

“But I should travel all over the island,” said the fairy, brightly, “and that is what I long to do. I do not care to work.”

“I fear a girl would not be allowed to travel alone,” Seseley remarked, after some further thought. “At least,” she added, “I have never heard of such a thing.”

“No,” said the fairy, rather bitterly, “your men are the ones that roam abroad and have adventures of all kinds. Your women are poor, weak creatures, I remember.”

There was no denying this, so the three girls sat silent until Seseley asked:

“Why do you wish to become a mortal?”

“To gain exciting experiences,” answered the fairy. “I’m tired of being a humdrum fairy year in and year out. Of course, I do not wish to become a mortal for all time, for that would get monotonous, too; but to live a short while as the earth people do would amuse me very much.”

“If you want variety, you should become a boy,” said Helda, with a laugh, “The life of a boy is one round of excitement.”

“Then make me a boy!” exclaimed the fairy eagerly.

“A boy!” they all cried in consternation. And Seseley added:

“Why--you’re a GIRL fairy, aren’t you?”

“Well--yes; I suppose I am,” answered the beautiful creature, smiling; “but as you are going to change me anyway, I may as well become a boy as a girl.”

“Better!” declared Helda, clapping her hands; “for then you can do as you please.”

“But would it be right?” asked Seseley, with hesitation.

“Why not?” retorted the fairy. “I can see nothing wrong in being a boy. Make me a tall, slender youth, with waving brown hair and dark eyes. Then I shall be as unlike my own self as possible, and the adventure will be all the more interesting. Yes; I like the idea of being a boy very much indeed.”

“But I don’t know how to transform you; some one will have to show me the way to do it,” protested Seseley, who was getting worried over the task set her.

“Oh, that will be easy enough,” returned the little immortal. “Have you a wand?”

“No.”

“Then I’ll loan you mine, for I shall not need it. And you must wave it over my head three times and say: ‘By my mortal powers I transform you into a boy for the space of one year’.”

“One year! Isn’t that too long?”

“It’s a very short time to one who has lived thousands of years as a fairy.”

“That is true,” answered the baron’s daughter.

“Now, I’ll begin by doing a little transforming myself,” said the fairy, getting upon her feet again, “and you can watch and see how I do it.” She brushed a bit of moss from her gauzy skirts and continued: “If I’m to become a boy I shall need a horse, you know. A handsome, prancing steed, very fleet of foot.”

A moment she stood motionless, as if listening. Then she uttered a low but shrill whistle.

The three girls, filled with eager interest, watched her intently.

Presently a trampling of footsteps was heard through the brushwood, and a beautiful deer burst from the forest and fearlessly ran to the fairy. Without hesitation she waved her wand above the deer’s head and exclaimed:

“By all my fairy powers I command you to become a war-horse for the period of one year.”

Instantly the deer disappeared, and in its place was a handsome charger, milk-white in color, with flowing mane and tail. Upon its back was a saddle sparkling with brilliant gems sewn upon fine dressed leather.

The girls uttered cries of astonishment and delight, and the fairy said:

“You see, these transformations are not at all difficult. I must now have a sword.”

She plucked a twig from a near-by tree and cast it upon the ground at her feet. Again she waved her wand--and the twig turned to a gleaming sword, richly engraved, that seemed to the silent watchers to tremble slightly in its sheath, as if its heart of steel throbbed with hopes of battles to come.

“And now I must have shield and armor,” said the fairy, gaily. “This will make a shield,”--and she stripped a sheet of loose bark from a tree-trunk,--”but for armor I must have something better. Will you give me your cloak?”

This appeal was made to Seseley, and the baron’s daughter drew her white velvet cloak from her shoulders and handed it to the fairy. A moment later it was transformed into a suit of glittering armor that seemed fashioned of pure silver inlaid with gold, while the sheet of bark at the same time became a handsome shield, with the figures of three girls graven upon it. Seseley recognized the features as those of herself and her comrades, and noted also that they appeared sitting at the edge of a forest, the great trees showing plainly in the background.

“I shall be your champion, you see,” laughed the fairy, gleefully, “and maybe I shall be able to repay you for the loss of your cloak.”

“I do not mind the cloak,” returned the child, who had been greatly interested in these strange transformations. “But it seems impossible that a

dainty little girl like you can ride this horse and carry these heavy arms."

"I'll not be a girl much longer," said the little creature. "Here, take my wand, and transform me into a noble youth!"

Again the pretty fairy kneeled before Seseley, her dainty, rounded limbs of white and rose showing plainly through her gauzy attire. And the baron's daughter was suddenly inspired to be brave, not wishing to disappoint the venturous immortal. So she rose and took the magic wand in her hand, waving it three times above the head of the fairy.

"By my powers as a mortal," she said, marveling even then at the strange speech, "I command you to become a brave and gallant youth--handsome, strong, fearless! And such shall you remain for the space of one year."

As she ceased speaking the fairy was gone, and a slender youth, dark-eyed and laughing, was holding her hand in his and kissing it gratefully.

"I thank you, most lovely maiden," he said, in a pleasant voice, "for giving me a place in the world of mortals. I shall ride at once in search of adventure, but my good sword is ever at your service."

With this he gracefully arose and began to buckle on his magnificent armor and to fasten the sword to his belt.

Seseley drew a long, sighing breath of amazement at her own powers, and turning to Berna and Helda she asked:

"Do I see aright? Is the little fairy really transformed to this youth?"

"It certainly seems so," returned Helda, who, being unabashed by the marvels she had beheld, turned to gaze boldly upon the young knight.

"Do you still remember that a moment ago you were a fairy?" she inquired.

"Yes, indeed," said he, smiling; "and I am really a fairy now, being but changed in outward form. But no one must know this save yourselves, until the year has expired and I resume my true station. Will you promise to guard my secret?"

"Oh, yes!" they exclaimed, in chorus. For they were delighted, as any children might well be, at having so remarkable a secret to keep and talk over among themselves.

"I must ask one more favor," continued the youth: "that you give me a name; for in this island I believe all men bear names of some sort, to distinguish them one from another."

"True," said Seseley, thoughtfully. "What were you called as a fairy?"

"That does not matter in the least," he answered, hastily. "I must have an entirely new name."

"Suppose we call him the Silver Knight," suggested Berna, as she eyed his glistening armor.

“Oh, no!--that is no name at all!” declared Helda. “We might better call him Baron Strongarm.”

“I do not like that, either,” said the Lady Seseley, “for we do not know whether his arm is strong or not. But he has been transformed in a most astonishing and bewildering manner before our very eyes, and I think the name of Prince Marvel would suit him very well.”

“Excellent!” cried the youth, picking up his richly graven shield. “The name seems fitting in every way. And for a year I shall be known to all this island as Prince Marvel!”

5. The King of Thieves

Old Marshelm, the captain of the guard, was much surprised when he saw the baron's daughter and her playmates approach her father's castle escorted by a knight in glittering armor.

To be sure it was a rather small knight, but the horse he led by the bridle was so stately and magnificent in appearance that old Marshelm, who was an excellent judge of horses, at once decided the stranger must be a personage of unusual importance.

As they came nearer the captain of the guard also observed the beauty of the little knight's armor, and caught the glint of jewels set in the handle of his sword; so he called his men about him and prepared to receive the knight with the honors doubtless due his high rank.

But to the captain's disappointment the stranger showed no intention of entering the castle. On the contrary, he kissed the little Lady Seseley's hand respectfully, waved an adieu to the others, and then mounted his charger and galloped away over the plains.

The drawbridge was let down to permit the three children to enter, and the great Baron Merd came himself to question his daughter.

"Who was the little knight?" he asked.

"His name is Prince Marvel," answered Seseley, demurely.

"Prince Marvel?" exclaimed the Baron. "I have never heard of him. Does he come from the Kingdom of Dawna, or that of Auriel, or Plenta?"

"That I do not know," said Seseley, with truth.

"Where did you meet him?" continued the baron.

"In the forest, my father, and he kindly escorted us home."

"Hm!" muttered the baron, thoughtfully. "Did he say what adventure brought him to our Kingdom of Heg?"

"No, father. But he mentioned being in search of adventure."

"Oh, he'll find enough to busy him in this wild island, where every man he meets would rather draw his sword than eat," returned the old warrior, smiling. "How old may this Prince Marvel be?"

"He looks not over fifteen years of age," said Seseley, uneasy at so much questioning, for she did not wish to be forced to tell an untruth. "But it is possible he is much older," she added, beginning to get confused.

"Well, well; I am sorry he did not pay my castle a visit," declared the baron. "He is very small and slight to be traveling this dangerous country alone, and I might have advised him as to his welfare."

Seseley thought that Prince Marvel would need no advice from any one as to his conduct; but she wisely refrained from speaking this thought, and the

old baron walked away to glance through a slit in the stone wall at the figure of the now distant knight.

Prince Marvel was riding swiftly toward the brow of the hill, and shortly his great war-horse mounted the ascent and disappeared on its farther slope.

The youth's heart was merry and light, and he reflected joyously, as he rode along, that a whole year of freedom and fascinating adventure lay before him.

The valley in which he now found himself was very beautiful, the soft grass beneath his horse's feet being sprinkled with bright flowers, while clumps of trees stood here and there to break the monotony of the landscape.

For an hour the prince rode along, rejoicing in the free motion of his horse and breathing in the perfume-laden air. Then he found he had crossed the valley and was approaching a series of hills. These were broken by huge rocks, the ground being cluttered with boulders of rough stone. His horse speedily found a pathway leading through these rocks, but was obliged to proceed at a walk, turning first one way and then another as the path zigzagged up the hill.

Presently, being engaged in deep thought and little noting the way, Prince Marvel rode between two high walls of rock standing so close together that horse and rider could scarcely pass between the sides. Having traversed this narrow space some distance the wall opened suddenly upon a level plat of ground, where grass and trees grew. It was not a very big place, but was surely the end of the path, as all around it stood bare walls so high and steep that neither horse nor man could climb them. In the side of the rocky wall facing the entrance the traveler noticed a hollow, like the mouth of a cave, across which was placed an iron gate. And above the gateway was painted in red letters on the gray stone the following words:

WUL-TAKIM KING OF THIEVES

HIS TREASURE HOUSE
KEEP OUT

Prince Marvel laughed on reading this, and after getting down from his saddle he advanced to the iron gate and peered through its heavy bars.

"I have no idea who this Wul-Takim is," he said, "for I know nothing at all of the ways of men outside the forest in which I have always dwelt. But thieves are bad people, I am quite sure, and since Wul-Takim is the king of thieves he must be by far the worst man on this island."

Then he saw, through the bars of the gate, that a great cavern lay beyond,

in which were stacked treasures of all sorts: rich cloths, golden dishes and ornaments, gemmed coronets and bracelets, cleverly forged armor, shields and battle-axes. Also there were casks and bales of merchandise of every sort.

The gate appeared to have no lock, so Prince Marvel opened it and walked in. Then he perceived, perched on the very top of a pyramid of casks, the form of a boy, who sat very still and watched him with a look of astonishment upon his face.

"What are you doing up there?" asked the prince.

"Nothing," said the boy. "If I moved the least little bit this pile of casks would topple over, and I should be thrown to the ground."

"Well," returned the prince, "what of it?"

But just then he glanced at the ground and saw why the boy did not care to tumble down. For in the earth were planted many swords, with their sharp blades pointing upward, and to fall upon these meant serious wounds and perhaps death.

"Oh, ho!" cried Marvel; "I begin to understand. You are a prisoner."

"Yes; as you will also be shortly," answered the boy. "And then you will understand another thing--that you were very reckless ever to enter this cave."

"Why?" inquired the prince, who really knew little of the world, and was interested in everything he saw and heard.

"Because it is the stronghold of the robber king, and when you opened that gate you caused a bell to ring far down on the hillside. So the robbers are now warned that an enemy is in their cave, and they will soon arrive to make you a prisoner, even as I am."

"Ah, I see!" said the prince, with a laugh, "It is a rather clever contrivance; but having been warned in time I should indeed be foolish to be caught in such a trap."

With this he half drew his sword, but thinking that robbers were not worthy to be slain with its untarnished steel, he pushed it back into the jeweled scabbard and looked around for another weapon. A stout oaken staff lay upon the ground, and this he caught up and ran with it from the cave, placing himself just beside the narrow opening that led into this rock-encompassed plain. For he quickly saw that this was the only way any one could enter or leave the place, and therefore knew the robbers were coming up the narrow gorge even as he had himself done.

Soon they were heard stumbling along at a rapid pace, crying to one another to make haste and catch the intruder. The first that came through the opening received so sharp a blow upon the head from Prince Marvel's oak

staff that he fell to the ground and lay still, while the next was treated in a like manner and fell beside his comrade.

Perhaps the thieves had not expected so sturdy an enemy, for they continued to rush through the opening in the rocks and to fall beneath the steady blows of the prince's staff until every one of them lay senseless before the victor. At first they had piled themselves upon one another very neatly; but the pile got so high at last that the prince was obliged to assist the last thieves to leap to the top of the heap before they completely lost their senses.

I have no doubt our prince, feeling himself yet strange in the new form he had acquired, and freshly transported from the forest glades in which he had always lived, was fully as much astonished at his deed of valor as were the robbers themselves; and if he shuddered a little when looking upon the heap of senseless thieves you must forgive him this weakness. For he straightway resolved to steel his heart to such sights and to be every bit as stern and severe as a mortal knight would have been.

Throwing down his staff he ran to the cave again, and stepping between the sword points he approached the pile of casks and held out his arms to the boy who was perched upon the top.

"The thieves are conquered," he cried. "Jump down!"

"I won't," said the boy.

"Why not?" inquired the prince.

"Can't you see I'm very miserable?" asked the boy, in return; "don't you understand that every minute I expect to fall upon those sword points?"

"But I will catch you," cried the prince.

"I don't want you to catch me," said the boy. "I want to be miserable. It's the first chance I've ever had, and I'm enjoying my misery very much."

This speech so astonished Prince Marvel that for a moment he stood motionless. Then he retorted, angrily:

"You're a fool!"

"If I wasn't so miserable up here, I'd come down and thrash you for that," said the boy, with a sigh.

This answer so greatly annoyed Prince Marvel that he gave the central cask of the pyramid a sudden push, and the next moment the casks were tumbling in every direction, while the boy fell headlong in their midst.

But Marvel caught him deftly in his arms, and so saved him from the sword points.

"There!" he said, standing the boy upon his feet; "now you are released from your misery."

"And I should be glad to punish you for your interference," declared the boy, gloomily eying his preserver, "had you not saved my life by catching

me. According to the code of honor of knighthood I can not harm one who has saved my life until I have returned the obligation. Therefore, for the present I shall pardon your insulting speeches and actions."

"But you have also saved my life," answered Prince Marvel; "for had you not warned me of the robbers' return they would surely have caught me."

"True," said the boy, brightening up; "therefore our score is now even. But take care not to affront me again, for hereafter I will show you no mercy!"

Prince Marvel looked at the boy with wonder. He was about his own size, yet strong and well formed, and he would have been handsome except for the expression of discontent upon his face. Yet his manner and words were so absurd and unnatural that the prince was more amused than angered by his new acquaintance, and presently laughed in his face.

"If all the people in this island are like you," he said, "I shall have lots of fun with them. And you are only a boy, after all."

"I'm bigger than you!" declared the other, glaring fiercely at the prince.

"How much bigger?" asked Marvel, his eyes twinkling.

"Oh, ever so much!"

"Then fetch along that coil of rope, and follow me," said Prince Marvel.

"Fetch the rope yourself!" retorted the boy, bluntly. "I'm not your servant." Then he put his hands in his pockets and coolly walked out of the cave to look at the pile of senseless robbers.

Prince Marvel made no reply, but taking the coil of rope on his shoulder he carried it to where the thieves lay and threw it down beside them. Then he cut lengths from the coil with his sword and bound the limbs of each robber securely. Within a half-hour he had laid out a row of thieves extending half way across the grassy plain, and on counting their number he found he had captured fifty-nine of them.

This task being accomplished and the robbers rendered helpless, Prince Marvel turned to the boy who stood watching him.

"Get a suit of armor from the cave, and a strong sword, and then return here," he said, in a stern voice.

"Why should I do that?" asked the boy, rather impudently.

"Because I am going to fight you for disobeying my orders; and if you do not protect yourself I shall probably kill you."

"That sounds pleasant," said the boy. "But if you should prove my superior in skill I beg you will not kill me at once, but let me die a lingering death."

"Why?" asked the prince.

"Because I shall suffer more, and that will be delightful."

“I am not anxious to kill you, nor to make you suffer,” said Marvel, “all that I ask is that you acknowledge me your master.”

“I won’t!” answered the boy. “I acknowledge no master in all the world!”

“Then you must fight,” declared the prince, gravely. “If you win, I will promise to serve you faithfully; and if I conquer you, then you must acknowledge me your master, and obey my commands.”

“Agreed!” cried the boy, with sudden energy, and he rushed into the cave and soon returned clad in armor and bearing a sword and shield. On the shield was pictured a bolt of lightning.

“Lightning will soon strike those three girls whose champion you seem to be,” he said tauntingly.

“The three girls defy your lightning!” returned the prince with a smile. “I see you are brave enough.”

“Brave! Why should I not be?” answered the boy proudly. “I am the Lord Nerle, the son of Neggar, the chief baron of Heg!”

The other bowed low.

“I am pleased to know your station,” he said. “I am called Prince Marvel, and this is my first adventure.”

“And likely to be your last,” exclaimed the boy, sneeringly. “For I am stronger than you, and I have fought many times with full grown men.”

“Are you ready?” asked Prince Marvel, for answer.

“Yes.”

Then the swords clashed and sparks flew from the blades. But it was not for long. Suddenly Nerle’s sword went flying through the air and shattered its blade against a wall of rock. He scowled at Prince Marvel a moment, who smiled back at him. Then the boy rushed into the cave and returned with another sword.

Scarcely had the weapons crossed again when with a sudden blow Prince Marvel snapped Nerle’s blade in two, and followed this up with a sharp slap upon his ear with the flat of his own sword that fairly bewildered the boy, and made him sit down on the grass to think what had happened to him.

Then Prince Marvel’s merry laugh rang far across the hills, and so delighted was he at the astonished expression upon Nerle’s face that it was many minutes before he could control his merriment and ask his foeman if he had had enough fight.

“I suppose I have,” replied the boy, rubbing his ear tenderly. “That blow stings most deliciously. But it is a hard thought that the son of Baron Neggar should serve Prince Marvel!”

“Do not worry about that,” said the prince; “for I assure you my rank is so far above your own that it is no degradation for the son of Neggar to serve

me. But come, we must dispose of these thieves. What is the proper fate for such men?"

"They are always hanged," answered Nerle, getting upon his feet.

"Well, there are trees handy," remarked the prince, although his girlish heart insisted on making him shiver in spite of his resolve to be manly and stern. "Let us get to work and hang them as soon as possible. And then we can proceed upon our journey."

Nerle now willingly lent his assistance to his new master, and soon they had placed a rope around the neck of each thief and were ready to dangle them all from the limbs of the trees.

But at this juncture the thieves began to regain consciousness, and now Wul-Takim, the big, red-bearded king of the thieves, sat up and asked:

"Who is our conqueror?"

"Prince Marvel," answered Nerle.

"And what army assisted him?" inquired Wul-Takim, curiously gazing upon the prince.

"He conquered you alone and single-handed," said Nerle.

Hearing this, the big king began to weep bitterly, and the tear-drops ran down his face in such a stream that Prince Marvel ordered Nerle to wipe them away with his handkerchief, as the thief's hands were tied behind his back.

"To think!" sobbed Wul-Takim, miserably; "only to think, that after all my terrible deeds and untold wickedness, I have been captured by a mere boy! Oh, boo-hoo! boo-hoo! boo-hoo! It is a terrible disgrace!"

"You will not have to bear it long," said the prince, soothingly. "I am going to hang you in a few minutes."

"Thanks! Thank you very much!" answered the king, ceasing to weep. "I have always expected to be hanged some day, and I am glad no one but you two boys will witness me when my feet begin kicking about."

"I shall not kick," declared another of the thieves, who had also regained his senses. "I shall sing while I am being hanged."

"But you can not, my good Gunder," protested the king; "for the rope will cut off your breath, and no man can sing without breath."

"Then I shall whistle," said Gunder, composedly.

The king cast at him a look of reproach, and turning to Prince Marvel he said:

"It will be a great task to string up so many thieves. You look tired. Permit me to assist you to hang the others, and then I will climb into a tree and hang myself from a strong branch, with as little bother as possible."

"Oh, I won't think of troubling you," exclaimed Marvel, with a laugh.

“Having conquered you alone, I feel it my duty to hang you without assistance--save that of my esquire.”

“It’s no trouble, I assure you; but suit your own convenience,” said the thief, carelessly. Then he cast his eye toward the cave and asked: “What will you do with all our treasure?”

“Give it to the poor,” said Prince Marvel, promptly.

“What poor?”

“Oh, the poorest people I can find.”

“Will you permit me to advise you in this matter?” asked the king of thieves, politely.

“Yes, indeed; for I am a stranger in this land,” returned the prince.

“Well, I know a lot of people who are so poor that they have no possessions whatever, neither food to eat, houses to live in, nor any clothing but that which covers their bodies. They can call no man friend, nor will any lift a hand to help them. Indeed, good sir, I verily believe they will soon perish miserably unless you come to their assistance!”

“Poor creatures!” exclaimed Prince Marvel, with ready sympathy; “tell me who they are, and I will divide amongst them all your ill-gotten gains.”

“They are ourselves,” replied the king of thieves, with a sigh.

Marvel looked at him in amazement, and then burst into joyous laughter.

“Yourselves!” he cried, greatly amused.

“Indeed, yes!” said Wul-Takim, sadly. “There are no poorer people in all the world, for we have ropes about our necks and are soon to be hanged. To-morrow we shall not have even our flesh left, for the crows will pick our bones.”

“That is true,” remarked Marvel, thoughtfully. “But, if I restore to you the treasure, how will it benefit you, since you are about to die?”

“Must you really hang us?” asked the thief.

“Yes; I have decreed it, and you deserve your fate.”

“Why?”

“Because you have wickedly taken from helpless people their property, and committed many other crimes besides.”

“But I have reformed! We have all reformed--have we not, brothers?”

“We have!” answered the other thieves, who, having regained their senses, were listening to this conversation with much interest.

“And, if you will return to us our treasure, we will promise never to steal again, but to remain honest men and enjoy our wealth in peace,” promised the king.

“Honest men could not enjoy treasures they have stolen,” said Prince Marvel.

“True; but this treasure is now yours, having been won by you in fair battle. And if you present it to us it will no longer be stolen treasure, but a generous gift from a mighty prince, which we may enjoy with clear consciences.”

“Yet there remains the fact that I have promised to hang you,” suggested Prince Marvel, with a smile, for the king amused him greatly.

“Not at all! Not at all!” cried Wul-Takim. “You promised to hang fifty-nine thieves, and there is no doubt the fifty-nine thieves deserved to be hung. But, consider! We have all reformed our ways and become honest men; so it would be a sad and unkindly act to hang fifty-nine honest men!”

“What think you, Nerle?” asked the Prince, turning to his esquire.

“Why, the rogue seems to speak truth,” said Nerle, scratching his head with a puzzled air, “yet, if he speaks truth, there is little difference between a rogue and an honest man. Ask him, my master, what caused them all to reform so suddenly.”

“Because we were about to die, and we thought it a good way to save our lives,” replied the robber king.

“That’s an honest answer, anyway,” said Nerle. “Perhaps, sir, they have really reformed.”

“And if so, I will not have the death of fifty-nine honest men on my conscience,” declared the prince. Then he turned to Wul-Takim and added: “I will release you and give you the treasure, as you request. But you owe me allegiance from this time forth, and if I ever hear of your becoming thieves again, I promise to return and hang every one of you.”

“Never fear!” answered Wul-Takim, joyfully. “It is hard work to steal, and while we have so much treasure it is wholly unnecessary. Moreover, having accepted from you our lives and our fortunes, we shall hereafter be your devoted servants, and whenever you need our services you have but to call upon us, and we will support you loyally and gladly.”

“I accept your service,” answered the prince, graciously.

And then he unbound the fifty-nine honest men and took the ropes from their necks. As nightfall was fast approaching the new servants set to work to prepare a great feast in honor of their master. It was laid in the middle of the grassy clearing, that all might sit around and celebrate the joyous occasion.

“Do you think you can trust these men?” asked Nerle, suspiciously.

“Why not?” replied the prince. “They have been exceedingly wicked, it is true; but they are now intent upon being exceedingly good. Let us encourage them in this. If we mistrusted all who have ever done an evil act there would be fewer honest people in the world. And if it were as interesting to do a good act as an evil one there is no doubt every one would choose the good.”

6. The Troubles of Nerle

That night Prince Marvel slept within the cave, surrounded by the fifty-nine reformed thieves, and suffered no harm at their hands. In the morning, accompanied by his esquire, Nerle, who was mounted upon a spirited horse brought him by Wul-Takim, he charged the honest men to remember their promises, bade them good by, and set out in search of further adventure.

As they left the clearing by the narrow passage that led between the overhanging rocks, the prince looked back and saw that the sign above the gate of the cave, which had told of the thieves' treasure house, had been changed. It now read as follows:

WUL-TAKIM
KING OF HONEST MEN

HIS PLEASURE HOUSE
WALK IN

"That is much better," laughed the prince. "I accomplished some good by my adventure, anyway!"

Nerle did not reply. He seemed especially quiet and thoughtful as he rode by his master's side, and after they had traveled some distance in silence Prince Marvel said:

"Tell me how you came to be in the cave of thieves, and perched upon the casks where I found you."

"It is a sad story," returned Nerle, with a sigh; "but since you request me to tell it, the tale may serve to relieve the tedium of your journey.

"My father is a mighty baron, very wealthy and with a heart so kind that he has ever taken pleasure in thrusting on me whatever gift he could think of. I had not a single desire unsatisfied, for before I could wish for anything it was given me.

"My mother was much like my father. She and her women were always making jams, jellies, candies, cakes and the like for me to eat; so I never knew the pleasure of hunger. My clothes were the gayest satins and velvets, richly made and sewn with gold and silver braid; so it was impossible to wish for more in the way of apparel. They let me study my lessons whenever I felt like it and go fishing or hunting as I pleased; so I could not complain that I was unable to do just as I wanted to. All the servants obeyed my slightest wish: if I wanted to sit up late at night no one objected; if I wished to lie in bed till noon they kept the house quiet so as not to disturb me.

“This condition of affairs, as you may imagine, grew more and more tedious and exasperating the older I became. Try as I might, I could find nothing to complain of. I once saw the son of one of our servants receive a flogging; and my heart grew light. I immediately begged my father to flog me, by way of variety; and he, who could refuse me nothing, at once consented. For this reason there was less satisfaction in the operation than I had expected, although for the time being it was a distinct novelty.

“Now, no one could expect a high-spirited boy to put up with such a life as mine. With nothing to desire and no chance of doing anything that would annoy my parents, my days were dreary indeed.”

He paused to wipe the tears from his eyes, and the prince murmured, sympathetically: “Poor boy! Poor boy!”

“Ah, you may well say that!” continued Nerle. “But one day a stranger came to my father’s castle with tales of many troubles he had met with. He had been lost in a forest and nearly starved to death. He had been robbed and beaten and left wounded and sore by the wayside. He had begged from door to door and been refused food or assistance. In short, his story was so delightful that it made me envy him, and I yearned to suffer as he had done. When I could speak with him alone I said: ‘Pray tell me how I can manage to acquire the misfortunes you have undergone. Here I have everything that I desire, and it makes me very unhappy.’

“The stranger laughed at me, at first; and I found some pleasure in the humiliation I then felt. But it did not last long, for presently he grew sober and advised me to run away from home and seek adventure.

“‘Once away from your father’s castle,’ said he, ‘troubles will fall upon you thick enough to satisfy even your longings.’

“‘That is what I am afraid of!’ I answered. ‘I don’t want to be satisfied, even with troubles. What I seek is unsatisfied longings.’

“‘Nevertheless,’ said he, ‘I advise you to travel. Everything will probably go wrong with you, and then you will be happy.’

“I acted upon the stranger’s advice and ran away from home the next day. After journeying a long time I commenced to feel the pangs of hunger, and was just beginning to enjoy myself when a knight rode by and gave me a supply of food. At this rebuff I could not restrain my tears, but while I wept my horse stumbled and threw me over his head. I hoped at first I had broken my neck, and was just congratulating myself upon the misfortune, when a witch-woman came along and rubbed some ointment upon my bruises, in spite of my protests. To my great grief the pain left me, and I was soon well again. But, as a slight compensation for my disappointment, my horse had run away; so I began my journey anew and on foot.

“That afternoon I stepped into a nest of wasps, but the thoughtless creatures flew away without stinging me. Then I met a fierce tiger, and my heart grew light and gay. ‘Surely this will cause me suffering!’ I cried, and advanced swiftly upon the brute. But the cowardly tiger turned tail and ran to hide in the bushes, leaving me unhurt!

“Of course, my many disappointments were some consolation; but not much. That night I slept on the bare ground, and hoped I should catch a severe cold; but no such joy was to be mine.

“Yet the next afternoon I experienced my first pleasure. The thieves caught me, stripped off all my fine clothes and jewels and beat me well. Then they carried me to their cave, dressed me in rags, and perched me on the top of the casks, where the slightest movement on my part would send me tumbling among the sword points. This was really delightful, and I was quite happy until you came and released me.

“I thought then that I might gain some pleasure by provoking you to anger; and our fight was the result. That blow on the ear was exquisite, and by forcing me to become your servant you have made me, for the first time in my life, almost contented. For I hope in your company to experience a great many griefs and disappointments.”

As Nerle concluded his story Prince Marvel turned to him and grasped his hand.

“Accept my sympathy!” said he. “I know exactly how you feel, for my own life during the past few centuries has not been much different.”

“The past few centuries!” gasped Nerle. “What do you mean?”

At this the prince blushed, seeing he had nearly disclosed his secret. But he said, quickly:

“Does it not seem centuries when one is unhappy?”

“It does, indeed!” responded Nerle, earnestly. “But please tell me your story.”

“Not now,” said Prince Marvel, with a smile. “It will please you to desire in vain to hear a tale I will not tell. Yet I promise that on the day we part company I shall inform you who I am.”

7. The Gray Men

The adventurers gave no heed to the path they followed after leaving the cave of the reformed thieves, but their horses accidentally took the direction of the foot-hills that led into the wild interior Kingdom of Spor. Therefore the travelers, when they had finished their conversation and begun to look about them, found themselves in a rugged, mountainous country that was wholly unlike the green plains of Heg they had left behind.

Now, as I have before said, the most curious and fearful of the island people dwelt in this Kingdom of Spor. They held no friendly communication with their neighbors, and only left their own mountains to plunder and rob; and so sullen and fierce were they on these occasions that every one took good care to keep out of their way until they had gone back home again.

There was much gossip about the unknown king of Spor, who had never yet been seen by any one except his subjects; and some thought he must be one of the huge giants of Spor; and others claimed he was a dwarf, like his tiny but ferocious dart-slingers; and still others imagined him one of the barbarian tribe, or a fellow to the terrible Gray Men. But, of course, no one knew positively, and all these guesses were very wide of the mark. The only certainty about this king was that his giants, dwarfs, barbarians and Gray Men meekly acknowledged his rule and obeyed his slightest wish; for though they might be terrible to others, their king was still more terrible to them.

Into this Kingdom of Spor Prince Marvel and Nerle had now penetrated and, neither knowing nor caring where they were, continued along the faintly defined paths the horses had found. Presently, however, they were startled by a peal of shrill, elfish laughter, and raising their eyes they beheld a horrid-looking old man seated upon a high rock near by.

“Why do you laugh?” asked Prince Marvel, stopping his horse.

“Have you been invited? Tell me--have you been invited?” demanded the old man, chuckling to himself as if much amused.

“Invited where?” inquired the prince.

“To Spor, stupid! To the Kingdom of Spor! To the land of King Terribus!” shrieked the old man, going into violent peals of laughter.

“We go and come as we please,” answered Prince Marvel, calmly.

“Go--yes! Go if you will. But you’ll never come back--never! never! never!” The little old man seemed to consider this such a good joke that he bent nearly double with laughing, and so lost his balance and toppled off the rock, disappearing from their view; but they could hear him laugh long after they had passed on and left him far behind them.

“A strange creature!” exclaimed the prince thoughtfully.

“But perhaps he speaks truth,” answered Nerle, “if, in fact, we have been rash enough to enter the Kingdom of Spor. Even my father, the bravest baron in Heg, has never dared venture within the borders of Spor. For all men fear its mysterious king.”

“In that case,” replied Prince Marvel, “it is time some one investigated this strange kingdom. People have left King Terribus and his wild subjects too much to themselves; instead of stirring them up and making them behave themselves.”

Nerle smiled at this speech.

“They are the fiercest people on the Enchanted Island,” said he, “and there are thousands upon thousands who obey this unknown king. But if you think we dare defy them I am willing to go on. Perhaps our boldness will lead them into torturing me, or starving me to death; and at the very least I ought to find much trouble and privation in the Kingdom of Spor.”

“Time will determine that,” said the prince, cheerfully.

They had now ridden into a narrow defile of the mountains, the pathway being lined with great fragments of rock. Happening to look over his shoulder Prince Marvel saw that as they passed these rocks a man stepped from behind each fragment and followed after them, their numbers thus constantly increasing until hundreds were silently treading in the wake of the travelers.

These men were very peculiar in appearance, their skins being as gray as the rocks themselves, while their only clothing consisted of gray cloth tunics belted around the waists with bands of gray fox-hide. They bore no weapons except that each was armed with a fork, having three sharp tines six inches in length, which the Gray Men carried stuck through their fox-hide belts.

Nerle also looked back and saw the silent throng following them, and the sight sent such a cold shiver creeping up his spine that he smiled with pleasure. There was no way to avoid the Gray Men, for the path was so narrow that the horsemen could not turn aside; but Prince Marvel was not disturbed, and seemed not to mind being followed, so long as no one hindered his advance.

He rode steadily on, Nerle following, and after climbing upward for a long way the path began to descend, presently leading them into a valley of wide extent, in the center of which stood an immense castle with tall domes that glittered as if covered with pure gold. A broad roadway paved with white marble reached from the mountain pass to the entrance of this castle, and on each side of this roadway stood lines of monstrous giants, armed with huge axes thrust into their belts and thick oak clubs, studded with silver spikes, which were carried over their left shoulders.

The assembled giants were as silent as the Gray Men, and stood motionless while Prince Marvel and Nerle rode slowly up the marble roadway. But all their brows were scowling terribly and their eyes were red and glaring--as if they were balls of fire.

"I begin to feel very pleasant," said Nerle, "for surely we shall not get away from these folks without a vast deal of trouble. They do not seem to oppose our advance, but it is plain they will not allow us any chance of retreat."

"We do not wish to retreat," declared the prince.

Nerle cast another glance behind, and saw that the Gray Men had halted at the edge of the valley, while the giants were closing up as soon as the horses passed them and now marched in close file in their rear.

"It strikes me," he muttered, softly, "that this is like to prove our last adventure." But although Prince Marvel might have heard the words he made no reply, being evidently engaged in deep thought.

As they drew nearer the castle it towered above them like a veritable mountain, so big and high was it; and the walls cast deep shadows far around, as if twilight had fallen. They heard the loud blare of a trumpet sounding far up on the battlements; the portals of the castle suddenly opened wide, and they entered a vast courtyard paved with plates of gold. Tiny dwarfs, so crooked that they resembled crabs, rushed forward and seized the bridles of the horses, while the strangers slowly dismounted and looked around them.

While the steeds were being led to the stables an old man, clothed in a flowing robe as white in color as his beard, bowed before Prince Marvel and said in a soft voice:

"Follow me!"

The prince stretched his arms, yawned as if tired with his ride, and then glared upon the old man with an expression of haughty surprise.

"I follow no one!" said he, proudly. "I am Prince Marvel, sirrah, and if the owner of this castle wishes to see me I shall receive him here, as befits my rank and station."

The man looked surprised, but only bowed lower than before.

"It is the king's command," he answered.

"The king?"

"Yes; you are in the castle of King Terribus, the lord and ruler of Spor."

"That is different," remarked the prince, lightly. "Still, I will follow no man. Point out the way and I will go to meet his Majesty."

The old man extended a lean and trembling finger toward an archway. Prince Marvel strode forward, followed by Nerle, and passing under the arch

he threw open a door at the far end and boldly entered the throne-room of King Terribus.

8. The Fool-Killer

The room was round, with a dome at the top. The bare walls were of gray stone, with square, open windows set full twenty feet from the floor. Rough gray stone also composed the floor, and in the center of the room stood one great rock with a seat hollowed in its middle. This was the throne, and round about it stood a swarm of men and women dressed in rich satins, velvets and brocades, brilliantly ornamented with gold and precious stones. The men were of many shapes and sizes--giants and dwarfs being among them. The women all seemed young and beautiful.

Prince Marvel cast but a passing glance at this assemblage, for his eye quickly sought the rude throne on which was seated King Terribus.

The personal appearance of this monster was doubtless the most hideous known in that age of the world. His head was large and shaped like an egg; it was bright scarlet in color and no hair whatever grew upon it. It had three eyes--one in the center of his face, one on the top of his head and one in the back. Thus he was always able to see in every direction at the same time. His nose was shaped like an elephant's trunk, and swayed constantly from side to side. His mouth was very wide and had no lips at all, two rows of sharp and white teeth being always plainly visible beneath the swaying nose.

King Terribus, although surrounded by so splendid a court, wore a simple robe of gray cloth, with no ornament or other finery, and his strange and fearful appearance was strongly contrasted with the glittering raiment of his courtiers and the beauty of his ladies in waiting.

When Prince Marvel, with Nerle marching close behind, entered the great room, Terribus looked at him sharply a moment, and then bowed. And when he bowed the eye upon the top of his head also looked sharply at the intruders.

Then the king spoke, his voice sounding so sweet and agreeable that it almost shocked Nerle, who had expected to hear a roar like that from a wild beast.

"Why are you here?" asked Terribus.

"Partly by chance and partly from curiosity," answered Prince Marvel. "No one in this island, except your own people, had ever seen the king of Spor; so, finding myself in your country, I decided to come here and have a look at you."

The faces of the people who stood about the throne wore frightened looks at the unheard of boldness of this speech to their terrible monarch. But the king merely nodded and inquired:

"Since you have seen me, what do you think of me?"

“I am sorry you asked that question,” returned the prince; “for I must confess you are a very frightful-looking creature, and not at all agreeable to gaze upon.”

“Ha! you are honest, as well as frank,” exclaimed the king. “But that is the reason I do not leave my kingdom, as you will readily understand. And that is the reason I never permit strangers to come here, under penalty of death. So long as no one knows the King of Spor is a monster people will not gossip about my looks, and I am very sensitive regarding my personal appearance. You will perhaps understand that if I could have chosen I should have been born beautiful instead of ugly.”

“I certainly understand that. And permit me to say I wish you were beautiful. I shall probably dream of you for many nights,” added the prince.

“Not for many,” said King Terribus, quietly. “By coming here you have chosen death, and the dead do not dream.”

“Why should I die?” inquired Prince Marvel, curiously.

“Because you have seen me. Should I allow you to go away you would tell the world about my ugly face. I do not like to kill you, believe me; but you must pay the penalty of your rashness--you and the man behind you.”

Nerle smiled at this; but whether from pride at being called a man or in pleasurable anticipation of the sufferings to come I leave you to guess.

“Will you allow me to object to being killed?” asked the prince.

“Certainly,” answered the king, courteously. “I expect you to object. It is natural. But it will do you no good.”

Then Terribus turned to an attendant and commanded:

“Send hither the Fool-Killer.”

At this Prince Marvel laughed outright.

“The Fool-Killer!” he cried; “surely your Majesty does me little credit. Am I, then, a fool?”

“You entered my kingdom uninvited,” retorted the king, “and you tell me to my face I am ugly. Moreover, you laugh when I condemn you to death. From this I conclude the Fool-Killer is the proper one to execute you. Behold!”

Marvel turned quickly, to find a tall, stalwart man standing behind him. His features were strong but very grave, and the prince caught a look of compassion in his eye as their gaze met. His skin was fair and without blemish, a robe of silver cloth fell from his shoulders, and in his right hand he bore a gleaming sword.

“Well met!” cried Marvel, heartily, as he bowed to the Fool-Killer. “I have often heard your name mentioned, but ‘tis said in the world that you are a laggard in your duty.”

“Had I my way,” answered the Fool-Killer, “my blade would always drip. It is my master, yonder, who thwarts my duty.” And he nodded toward King Terribus.

“Then you should exercise your right on him, and cleave the ugly head from his shoulders,” declared the prince.

“Nay, unless I interfered with the Fool-Killer,” said the king, “I should soon have no subjects left to rule; for at one time or another they all deserve the blade.”

“Why, that may be true enough,” replied Prince Marvel. “But I think, under such circumstances, your Fool-Killer is a needless servant. So I will rid you of him in a few moments.”

With that he whipped out his sword and stood calmly confronting the Fool-Killer, whose grave face never changed in expression as he advanced menacingly upon his intended victim. The blades clashed together, and that of the Fool-Killer broke short off at the hilt. He took a step backward, stumbled and fell prone upon the rocky floor, while Prince Marvel sprang forward and pressed the point of his sword against his opponent’s breast.

“Hold!” cried the king, starting to his feet. “Would you slay my Fool-Killer? Think of the harm you would do the world!”

“But he is laggard and unfaithful to his calling!” answered the prince, sternly.

“Nevertheless, if he remove but one fool a year he is a benefit to mankind,” declared the king. “Release him, I pray you!”

Then the victor withdrew his sword and stood aside, while the Fool-Killer slowly got upon his feet and bowed humbly before the king.

“Go!” shouted Terribus, his eye flashing angrily. “You have humiliated me before my enemy. As an atonement see that you kill me a fool a day for sixty days.”

Hearing this command, many of the people about the throne began to tremble; but the king paid no attention to their fears, and the Fool-Killer bowed again before his master and withdrew from the chamber.

9. The Royal Dragon of Spor

"Now," said Terribus, regarding the prince gloomily, "I must dispose of you in another way."

For a moment he dropped his scarlet head in thought. Then he turned fiercely upon his attendants.

"Let the Wrestler come forward!" he shouted, as loudly as his mild voice would carry.

Instantly a tall blackamoor advanced from the throng and cast off his flowing robe, showing a strong figure clad only in a silver loincloth.

"Crack me this fellow's bones!" commanded Terribus.

"I beg your Majesty will not compel me to touch him," said Prince Marvel, with a slight shudder; "for his skin is greasy, and will soil my hands. Here, Nerle!" he continued, turning to his esquire, "dispose of this black man, and save me the trouble."

Nerle laughed pleasantly. The black was a powerfully built man, and compared with Nerle and the prince, who had but the stature of boys, he towered like a very giant in size. Nevertheless, Nerle did not hesitate to spring upon the Wrestler, who with a quick movement sent the boy crashing against the stone pavement.

Nerle was much bruised by the fall, and as he painfully raised himself to his feet a great lump was swelling behind his left ear, where his head had struck the floor, and he was so dizzy that the room seemed swimming around him in a circle. But he gave a happy little laugh, and said to the prince, gratefully:

"Thank you very much, my master! The fall is hurting me delightfully. I almost feel as if I could cry, and that would be joy indeed!"

"Well," answered the prince, with a sigh, "I see I must get my hands greased after all"--for the black's body had really been greased to enable him to elude the grasp of his opponents.

But Marvel made a quick leap and seized the Wrestler firmly around the waist. The next moment, to the astonishment of all, the black man flew swiftly into the air, plunged through one of the open windows high up in the wall, and disappeared from view. When the king and his people again turned their wondering eyes upon the prince he was wiping his hands carefully upon a silk handkerchief.

At this sight a pretty young girl, who stood near the throne, laughed aloud, and the sound of her laughter made King Terribus very angry.

"Come here!" he commanded, sternly. The girl stepped forward, her face now pale and frightened, while tear-drops trembled upon the lashes that

fringed her downcast eyes. “You have dared to laugh at the humiliation of your king,” said Terribus, his horrid face more crimson than ever, “and as atonement I command that you drink of the poisoned cup.”

Instantly a dwarf came near, bearing a beautiful golden goblet in his crooked hands.

“Drink!” he said, an evil leer upon his face.

The girl well knew this goblet contained a vile poison, one drop of which on her tongue would cause death; so she hesitated, trembling and shrinking from the ordeal.

Prince Marvel looked into her sweet face with pitying eyes, and stepping quickly to her side, took her hand in his.

“Now drink!” he said, smiling upon her; “the poison will not hurt you.”

She drank obediently, while the dwarf chuckled with awful glee and the king looked on eagerly, expecting her to fall dead at his feet. But instead the girl stood upright and pressed Marvel’s hand, looking gratefully into his face.

“You are a fairy!” she whispered, so low that no one else heard her voice. “I knew that you would save me.”

“Keep my secret,” whispered the prince in return, and still holding her hand he led her back to her former place.

King Terribus was almost wild with rage and disappointment, and his elephant nose twisted and squirmed horribly.

“So you dare to thwart my commands, do you!” he cried, excitedly. “Well, we shall soon see which of us is the more powerful. I have decreed your death--and die you shall!”

For a moment his eye roved around the chamber uncertainly. Then he shouted, suddenly:

“Ho, there! Keepers of the royal menagerie--appear!”

Three men entered the room and bowed before the king. They were of the Gray Men of the mountains, who had followed Prince Marvel and Nerle through the rocky passes.

“Bring hither the Royal Dragon,” cried the king, “and let him consume these strangers before my very eyes!”

The men withdrew, and presently was heard a distant shouting, followed by a low rumbling sound, with groans, snorts, roars and a hissing like steam from the spout of a teakettle.

The noise and shouting drew nearer, while the people huddled together like frightened sheep; and then suddenly the doors flew open and the Royal Dragon advanced to the center of the room.

This creature was at once the pride and terror of the Kingdom of Spor. It was more than thirty feet in length and covered everywhere with large green

scales set with diamonds, making the dragon, when it moved, a very glittering spectacle. Its eyes were as big as pie-plates, and its mouth--when wide opened--fully as large as a bath-tub. Its tail was very long and ended in a golden ball, such as you see on the top of flagstaffs. Its legs, which were as thick as those of an elephant, had scales which were set with rubies and emeralds. It had two monstrous, big ears and two horns of carved ivory, and its teeth were also carved into various fantastic shapes--such as castles, horses' heads, chinamen and griffins--so that if any of them broke it would make an excellent umbrella handle.

The Royal Dragon of Spor came crawling into the throne-room rather clumsily, groaning and moaning with every step and waving its ears like two blankets flying from a clothesline.

The king looked on it and frowned.

"Why are you not breathing fire and brimstone?" he demanded, angrily.

"Why, I was caught out in a gale the other night," returned the Dragon, rubbing the back of its ear with its left front paw, as it paused and looked at the king, "and the wind put out my fire."

"Then why didn't you light it again?" asked Terribus, turning on the keepers.

"We--we were out of matches, your Majesty!" stammered the trembling Gray Men.

"So--ho!" yelled the king, and was about to order the keepers beheaded; but just then Nerle pulled out his match-box, lit one of the matches, and held it in front of the Dragon's mouth. Instantly the creature's breath caught fire; and it began to breathe flames a yard in length.

"That's better," sighed the Dragon, contentedly. "I hope your Majesty is now satisfied."

"No,--I am not satisfied!" declared King Terribus. "Why do you not lash your tail?"

"Ah, I can't do that!" replied the Dragon. "It's all stiffened up with rheumatism from the dampness of my cave. It hurts too much to lash it."

"Well, then, gnash your teeth!" commanded the king.

"Tut--tut!" answered the Dragon, mildly; "I can't do that, either; for since you had them so beautifully carved it makes my teeth ache to gnash them."

"Well, then, what are you good for?" cried the king, in a fury.

"Don't I look awful? Am I not terrible to gaze on?" inquired the Dragon, proudly, as it breathed out red and yellow flames and made them curl in circles around its horns. "I guess there's no need for me to suggest terror to any one that happens to see me," it added, winking one of the pie-plate eyes at King Terribus.

The king looked at the monster critically, and it really seemed to him that it was a frightful thing to behold. So he curbed his anger and said, in his ordinary sweet voice:

"I have called you here to destroy these two strangers."

"How?" asked the Dragon, looking upon Prince Marvel and Nerle with interest.

"I am not particular," answered the king. "You may consume them with your fiery breath, or smash them with your tail, or grind them to atoms between your teeth, or tear them to pieces with your claws. Only, do hurry up and get it over with!"

"Hm-m-m!" said the Dragon, thoughtfully, as if it didn't relish the job; "this one isn't Saint George, is it?"

"No, no!" exclaimed the king, irritably; "it's Prince Marvel. Do get to work as soon as possible."

"Prince Marvel--Prince Marvel," repeated the Dragon. "Why, there isn't a prince in the whole world named Marvel! I'm pretty well posted on the history of royal families, you know. I'm afraid he's Saint George in disguise."

"Isn't your name Prince Marvel?" inquired the king, turning to the boyish-looking stranger.

"It is," answered Marvel.

"Well, it's mighty strange I've never heard of you," persisted the Dragon. "But tell me, please, how would you prefer to be killed?"

"Oh, I'm not going to be killed at all," replied the prince, laughing.

"Do you hear that, Terribus?" asked the Dragon, turning to the king; "he says he isn't going to be killed."

"But I say he is!" cried Terribus. "I have decreed his death."

"But do you suppose I'm going to kill a man against his will?" inquired the Dragon, in a reproachful voice; "and such a small man, too! Do you take me for a common assassin--or a murderer?"

"Do you intend to obey my orders?" roared the king.

"No, I don't; and that's flat!" returned the Dragon, sharply. "It's time for me to take my cough medicine; so if you've nothing more to say I'll go back to my cave."

"Go, go, go!" shrieked the king, stamping his foot in passion. "You've outlived your usefulness! You're a coward! You're a traitor! You're a--a--a--"

"I'm a dragon and a gentleman!" answered the monster, proudly, as the king paused for lack of a word; "and I believe I know what's proper for dragons to do and what isn't. I've learned wisdom from my father, who got

into trouble with Saint George, and if I fought with this person who calls himself Prince Marvel, I'd deserve to be a victim of your Fool-Killer. Oh, I know my business, King Terribus; and if you knew yours, you'd get rid of this pretended prince as soon as possible!"

With this speech he winked at Prince Marvel, turned soberly around and crawled from the room. One of the keepers got too near and the Dragon's breath set fire to his robe, the flames being with difficulty extinguished; and the gold ball on the end of the Dragon's tail struck a giant upon his shins and made him dance and howl in pain.

But, aside from these slight accidents, the monster managed to leave the throne-room without undue confusion, and every one, including the king, seemed glad to be rid of him.

10. Prince Marvel Wins His Fight

When the door had closed on the Royal Dragon, King Terribus turned again to Prince Marvel, while his crimson face glowed with embarrassment, and his front eye rolled with baffled rage as he thought how vain had been all his efforts to kill this impudent invader of his domains.

But his powers were by no means exhausted. He was a mighty king--the mightiest of all in the Enchanted Island, he believed--and ways to destroy his enemies were numerous.

"Send for a hundred of my Gray Men!" he suddenly cried; and a courtier ran at once to summon them. The Gray Men would obey his orders without question, he well knew. They were silent, stubborn, quick, and faithful to their king. Terribus had but to command and his will would be obeyed.

They entered the room so quietly that Nerle never knew they were there until he turned and found the hundred gray ones standing close together in the center of the hall. Then Prince Marvel came to Nerle's side and whispered something in his ear.

"Will you obey my orders?" they heard the king ask. And the Gray Men, with their eyes fixed upon their master, nodded all their hundred heads and put their hands upon the dangerous three-tined forks that were stuck in every one of the hundred belts.

Prince Marvel handed one end of a coiled rope to Nerle, and then they both sprang forward and ran around the spot where the hundred Gray Men stood huddled together. Then they were pulled closer together than before--closer, and still closer--for the prince and Nerle had surrounded them with the rope and were tying the two ends together in a tight knot. The rope cut into the waists of those on the outside, and they pressed inward against their fellows until there was scarcely space to stick a knife-blade between any two of them. When the prince had tied the rope firmly King Terribus, who had been looking on amazed, saw that his hundred Gray Men were fastened together like a bundle of kindling-wood, and were unable to stir hand or foot.

And, while he still gazed open-mouthed at the strange sight, Prince Marvel tilted the bundle of men up on its edge and rolled it out of the door. It went rolling swiftly through the courtyard and bounded down the castle steps, where the rope broke and the men fell sprawling in all directions on the marble walk.

King Terribus sighed, for such treatment of his Gray Men, whom he dearly loved, made him very unhappy.

But more than ever was he resolved to kill these impudent strangers, who, in the very heart of his kingdom where thousands bowed to his will, dared

openly defy his power. So, after a moment's thought, Terribus beckoned to a dwarf who, robed in gay and glittering apparel, stood near his throne.

"Summon the royal Dart Slingers!" he said, with a scowl.

The little man bowed and hastened away, to return presently with twenty curiously crooked dwarfs, each armed with a sling and a quiver full of slender, sharp-pointed darts.

"Slay me these strangers!" exclaimed the king, in his gruffest voice.

Now Nerle, when he beheld these terrible Dart Slingers, of whom he had heard many tales in his boyhood, began to shiver and shake with fright, so that his teeth rattled one upon another. And he reflected: "Soon shall I be content, for these darts will doubtless pierce every part of my body."

The dwarfs formed a line at one side of the gloomy throne-room, and Prince Marvel, who had been earnestly regarding them, caught Nerle by the arm and led him to the opposite wall.

"Stand close behind me and you will be safe," he whispered to his esquire.

Then each dwarf fixed a dart in his sling, and at a word from their chief they all drew back their arms and launched a shower of the sharp missiles at the strangers.

Swift and true they sped, each dart intended to pierce the body of the youthful knight who stood so calm before them. Prince Marvel had raised his right arm, and in his hand was a small leather sack, with a wide mouth. As the darts flew near him a strange thing happened: they each and all swerved from their true course and fell rattling into the leathern sack, to the wonder of the royal slingers and the dismay of King Terribus himself.

"Again!" screamed the king, his usually mild voice hoarse with anger.

So again the dwarfs cast their darts, and again the leathern sack caught them every one. Another flight followed, and yet another, till the magic sack was packed full of the darts and not a dwarf had one remaining in his quiver.

Amid the awed silence of the beholders of this feat the merry laughter of Prince Marvel rang loud and clear; for the sight of the puzzled and terrified faces about him was very comical. Plucking a dart from the sack he raised his arm and cried:

"Now it is my turn. You shall have back your darts!"

"Hold!" shouted the king, in great fear. "Do not, I beg you, slay my faithful servants." And with a wave of his hand he dismissed the dwarfs, who were glad to rush from the room and escape.

Nerle wiped the tears from his eyes, for he was sorely disappointed at having again escaped all pain and discomfort; but Prince Marvel seated himself quietly upon a stool and looked at the scowling face of King Terribus with real amusement.

The monarch of Spor had never before been so foiled and scorned by any living creature. Defeated and humbled before his own people, he bowed his crimson head on his hands and sullenly regarded his foe with his top eye. Then it was that the idea came to him that no ordinary mortal could have thwarted him so easily, and he began to fear he was dealing--perhaps unawares--with some great magician or sorcerer. That a fairy should have assumed a mortal form he never once considered, for such a thing was until then unheard of in the Enchanted Island of Yew. But with the knowledge that he had met his master, whoever he might prove to be, and that further attempts upon the stranger's life might lead to his own undoing, King Terribus decided to adopt a new line of conduct, hoping to accomplish by stratagem what he could not do by force. To be sure, there remained his regiment of Giants, the pride of his kingdom; but Terribus dreaded to meet with another defeat; and he was not at all sure, after what had happened, that the giants would succeed in conquering or destroying the strangers.

"After all," he thought, "my only object in killing them was to prevent their carrying news of my monstrous appearance to the outside world; so if I can but manage to keep them forever in my kingdom it will answer my purpose equally well."

As the result of this thought he presently raised his head and spoke to Prince Marvel in a quiet and even cheerful voice.

"Enough of these rude and boisterous games," said he, with a smile that showed his white teeth in a repulsive manner. "They may have seemed to my people an ill welcome to my good friend, Prince Marvel; yet they were only designed to show the powers of the mighty magician who has become my guest. Nay, do not deny it, Prince; from the first I guessed your secret, and to prove myself right I called my servants to oppose you, being sure they could not do you an injury. But no more of such fooling,--and pray forgive my merry game at your expense. Henceforth we shall be friends, and you are heartily welcome to the best my kingdom affords."

With this speech Terribus stepped down from his throne and approached Prince Marvel with outstretched hand. The prince was not at all deceived, but he was pleased to see how cunningly the king excused his attempts to kill him. So he laughed and touched the hand Terribus extended, for this fairy prince seemed to have no anger against any mortal who ventured to oppose him.

The strangers were now conducted, with every mark of respect, to a beautiful suite of apartments in the castle, wherein were soft beds with velvet spreads, marble baths with perfumed waters, and a variety of silken and brocaded costumes from which they might select a change of raiment.

No sooner had they bathed and adorned themselves fittingly than they were summoned to the king's banquet hall, being escorted thither by twelve young maidens bearing torches with lavender-colored flames.

The night had fallen upon the mountains outside, but the great banquet hall was brilliant with the glow of a thousand candles, and seated at the head of the long table was King Terribus.

Yet here, as in the throne-room, the ruler of Spor was dressed in simplest garments, and his seat was a rough block of stone. All about him were lords and ladies in gorgeous array; the walls were hung with rare embroideries; the table was weighted with gold platters and richly carved goblets filled with sweet nectars. But the king himself, with his horrid, ugly head, was like a great blot on a fair parchment, and even Prince Marvel could not repress a shudder as he gazed upon him.

Terribus placed his guest upon his right hand and loaded him with honors. Nerle stood behind the prince's chair and served him faithfully, as an esquire should. But the other servants treated Nerle with much deference, noting in him an air of breeding that marked him the unusual servant of an unusual master.

Indeed, most curious were the looks cast on these marvelous men who had calmly walked into the castle of mighty Terribus and successfully defied his anger; for in spite of his youthful appearance and smiling face every attendant at the banquet feared Prince Marvel even more than they feared their own fierce king.

11. The Cunning of King Terribus

The days that followed were pleasant ones for Prince Marvel and Nerle, who were treated as honored guests by both the king and his courtiers. But the prince seemed to be the favorite, for at all games of skill and trials at arms he was invariably the victor, while in the evenings, when the grand ball-room was lighted up and the musicians played sweet music, none was so graceful in the dance as the fairy prince.

Nerle soon tired of the games and dancing, for he had been accustomed to them at his father's castle; and moreover he was shy in the society of ladies; so before many weeks had passed he began to mope and show a discontented face.

One day the prince noticed his esquire's dismal expression of countenance, and asked the cause of it.

"Why," said Nerle, "here I have left my home to seek worries and troubles, and have found but the same humdrum life that existed at my father's castle. Here our days are made smooth and pleasant, and there is no excitement or grief, whatever. You have become a carpet-knight, Prince Marvel, and think more of bright eyes than of daring deeds. So, if you will release me from your service I will seek further adventures."

"Nay," returned the prince, "we will go together; for I, too, am tired of this life of pleasure."

So next morning Marvel sought the presence of King Terribus and said:

"I have come to bid your Majesty adieu, for my esquire and I are about to leave your dominions."

At first the king laughed, and his long nose began to sway from side to side. Then, seeing the prince was in earnest, his Majesty frowned and grew disturbed. Finally he said:

"I must implore you to remain my guests a short time longer. No one has ever before visited me in my mountain home, and I do not wish to lose the pleasure of your society so soon."

"Nevertheless, we must go," answered the prince, briefly.

"Are you not contented?" asked Terribus. "Ask whatever you may desire, and it shall be granted you."

"We desire adventures amid new scenes," said Marvel, "and these you can not give us except by permission to depart."

Seeing his guest was obstinate the king ceased further argument and said:

"Very well; go if you wish. But I shall hope to see you return to us this evening."

The prince paid no heed to this peculiar speech, but left the hall and

hurried to the courtyard of the castle, where Nerle was holding the horses in readiness for their journey.

Standing around were many rows and files of the Gray Men, and when they reached the marble roadway they found it lined with motionless forms of the huge giants. But no one interfered with them in any way, although both Prince Marvel and Nerle knew that every eye followed them as they rode forward.

Curiously enough, they had both forgotten from what direction they had approached the castle; for, whereas they had at that time noticed but one marble roadway leading to the entrance, they now saw that there were several of these, each one connecting with a path through the mountains.

"It really doesn't matter which way we go, so long as we get away from the Kingdom of Spor," said Prince Marvel; so he selected a path by chance, and soon they were riding through a mountain pass.

The pleased, expectant look on Nerle's face had gradually turned to one of gloom.

"I hoped we should have a fight to get away," he said, sadly; "and in that case I might have suffered considerable injury and pain. But no one has injured us in any way, and perhaps King Terribus is really glad to be rid of us."

"With good reason, too, if such is the case," laughed Marvel; "for, mark you, Nerle, the king has discovered we are more powerful than he is, and had he continued to oppose us, we might have destroyed his entire army."

On they rode through the rough hill paths, winding this way and that, until they lost all sense of the direction in which they were going.

"Never mind," said the prince; "so long as we get farther and farther away from the ugly Terribus I shall be satisfied."

"Perhaps we are getting into more serious danger than ever," answered Nerle, brightening; "one of the giants told me the other day that near the foot of these mountains is the Kingdom of the High Ki of Twi."

"Who is the High Ki of Twi?" asked Prince Marvel.

"No one knows," answered Nerle.

"And what is the Kingdom of Twi like?"

"No one knows that," answered Nerle.

"Then," returned the prince, with a smile, "if by chance we visit the place we shall know more than any one else."

At noon they ate luncheon by the wayside, Nerle having filled his pouch by stealth at the breakfast table. There were great fragments of rock lying all about them, and the sun beat down so fiercely that the heat reflected from the rocks was hard to bear. So the travelers did not linger over their meal, but

remounted and rode away as soon as possible. When the sun began to get lower in the sky the rocks beside the path threw the riders into shadow, so that their journey became more pleasant. They rode along, paying little attention to the way, but talking and laughing merrily together, until it began to grow dark.

"Does this path never end?" asked Prince Marvel, suddenly. "We ought to reach some place where men dwell before long, else we shall be obliged to spend the night among these rocks."

"And then perhaps the wolves will attack us," said Nerle, cheerfully, "and tear us into pieces with their sharp teeth and claws."

But even as he spoke they rode around a turn in the path and saw a sight that made them pause in astonishment. For just before them rose the castle of King Terribus, and along both sides of the marble walk leading up to it were ranged the lines of giants, exactly as they had stood in the morning.

Nerle turned around in his saddle. Sure enough, there were the Gray Men in the rear--stepping from behind every boulder and completely filling the rocky pathway.

"Well, what shall we do?" asked the esquire; "fight?"

"No, indeed!" returned Prince Marvel, laughing at his friend's eager face. "It appears the path we chose winds around in a circle, and so has brought us back to our starting-point. So we must make the best of a bad blunder and spend another night with our ugly friend King Terribus."

They rode forward through the rows of giants to the castle, where the ever-courteous servants took their horses and escorted them to their former handsome apartments with every mark of respect.

No one seemed in the least surprised at their speedy return, and this fact at first puzzled Nerle, and then made him suspicious.

After bathing and dusting their clothing they descended to the banquet hall, where King Terribus sat upon his gray stone throne and welcomed them with quiet courtesy.

The sight of the king's crimson skin and deformed face sent a thrill of repugnance through Prince Marvel, and under the impulse of a sudden thought he extended his hand toward Terribus and whispered a magic word which was unheard by any around him.

Nerle did not notice the prince's swift gesture nor the whispered word; but he was staring straight at Terribus at the time, and he saw with surprise the eye on the top of the king's head move down toward his forehead, and the eye in the center of his forehead slide slightly toward the left, and the elephant-like nose shrink and shorten at the same time. Also it seemed to him that the king's skin was not so crimson in color as before, and that a thin

growth of hair had covered his head.

However, no one else appeared to notice any change--least of all Terribus--so Nerle seated himself at the table and began to eat.

“It was very kind of you to return so soon to my poor castle,” said the king to Prince Marvel, in his sweet voice.

“We could not help it,” laughed the prince, in reply; “for the road wound right and left until we knew not which way we traveled; and then it finally circled around again to your castle. But to-morrow we shall seek a new path and bid you farewell forever.”

“Still,” remarked the king, gravely, “should you again miss your way, I shall be glad to welcome your return.”

The prince bowed politely by way of reply, and turned to address the little maiden he had once saved from death by poison. And so in feasting, dancing and laughter the evening passed pleasantly enough to the prince, and it was late when he called Nerle to attend him to their apartment.

12. The Gift of Beauty

The following morning Marvel and Nerle once more set out to leave the Kingdom of Spor and its ugly king. They selected another pathway leading from the castle and traveled all day, coming at nightfall into view of the place whence they had started, with its solemn rows of giants and Gray Men standing ready to receive them.

This repetition of their former experience somewhat annoyed the prince, while Nerle's usually despondent face wore a smile.

"I see trouble ahead," murmured the esquire, almost cheerfully. "Since the king can not conquer us by force he intends to do it by sorcery."

Marvel did not reply, but greeted the king quietly, while Terribus welcomed their return as calmly as if he well knew they could not escape him.

That evening the prince made another pass toward the king with his hand and muttered again the magic word. Nerle was watching, and saw the upper eye of Terribus glide still farther down his forehead and the other eye move again toward the left. The swaying nose shrank to a few inches in length, and the skin that had once been so brilliantly crimson turned to a dull red color. This time the courtiers and ladies in waiting also noticed the change in the king's features, but were afraid to speak of it, as any reference to their monarch's personal appearance was by law punishable by death. Terribus saw the startled looks directed upon him, and raised his hand to feel of his nose and eyes; but thinking that if any change in his appearance had taken place, he must be uglier than before, he only frowned and turned away his head.

The next day the king's guests made a third attempt to leave his dominions, but met with no better success than before, for a long and tedious ride only brought them back to their starting-place in the evening.

This time Prince Marvel was really angry, and striding into the king's presence he reproached him bitterly, saying:

"Why do you prevent us from leaving your kingdom? We have not injured you in any way."

"You have seen ME," returned Terribus, calmly, "and I do not intend you shall go back to the world and tell people how ugly I am."

The prince looked at him, and could not repress a smile. The two eyes of the king, having been twice removed from their first position, were now both in his forehead, instead of below it, and one was much higher than the other. And the nose, although small when compared to what it had been, still resembled an elephant's trunk. Other changes had been made for the better,

but Terribus was still exceedingly repulsive to look upon.

Seeing the prince look at him and smile, the king flew into a fury of anger and declared that the strangers should never, while they lived, be permitted to leave his castle again. Prince Marvel became thoughtful at this, reflecting that the king's enmity all arose from his sensitiveness about his ugly appearance, and this filled the youthful knight with pity rather than resentment.

When they had all assembled at the evening banquet the prince, for a third time, made a mystic pass at the king and whispered a magic word. And behold! this time the charm was complete. For the two front eyes of Terribus fell into their proper places, his nose became straight and well formed, and his skin took on a natural, healthy color. Moreover, he now had a fine head of soft brown hair, with eyebrows and eyelashes to match, and his head was shapely and in proportion to his body. As for the eye that had formerly been in the back of his head, it had disappeared completely.

So amazed were the subjects of the transformed king--who was now quite handsome to look upon--that they began to murmur together excitedly, and something in the new sensations he experienced gave to the king's face likewise an expression of surprise. Knowing from their pleased looks that he must have improved in appearance, he found courage to raise his hand to his nose, and found it well formed. Then he touched his eyes, and realized they were looking straight out from his face, like those of other people.

For some moments after making these discoveries the king remained motionless, a smile of joy gradually spreading over his features. Then he said, aloud:

"What has happened? Why do you all look so startled?"

"Your Majesty is no longer ugly," replied Marvel, laughingly; "so that when Nerle and I leave your kingdom we can proclaim nothing less than praise of your dignified and handsome appearance."

"Is my face indeed pleasing?" demanded the king, eagerly.

"It is!" cried the assembled courtiers and ladies, as with one voice.

"Bring me a mirror!" said the king. "I shall look at my reflection for the first time in many years."

The mirror being brought King Terribus regarded himself for a long time with pleased astonishment; and then, his sensitive nature being overcome by the shock of his good fortune, he burst into a flood of tears and rushed from the room.

The courtiers and ladies now bestowed many grateful thanks upon Prince Marvel for his kind deed; for they realized that thereafter their lives would be safer from the king's anger and much pleasanter in every way.

“Terribus is not bad by nature,” said one; “but he brooded upon his ugliness so much that the least thing served to throw him into a violent passion, and our lives were never safe from one day to another.”

By and by two giants entered the hall and carried away the throne of gray stone where Terribus had been accustomed to sit; and other slaves brought a gorgeous throne of gold, studded with precious jewels, which they put in its place. And after a time the king himself returned to the room, his simple gray gown replaced by flowing robes of purple, with rich embroideries, such as he had not worn for many years.

“My people,” said he, addressing those present with kindness and dignity, “it seems to me fitting that a handsome king should be handsomely attired, and an ugly one clothed simply. For years I have been so terrible in feature that I dared not even look at my own image in a mirror. But now, thanks to the gracious magic of my guest, I have become like other men, and hereafter you will find my rule as kind as it was formerly cruel. To-night, in honor of this joyous occasion, we shall feast and make merry, and it is my royal command that you all do honor and reverence to the illustrious Prince Marvel!”

A loud shout of approval greeted this speech, and the evening was merry indeed. Terribus joined freely in the revelry, laughing as gaily as the lightest-hearted damsel present.

It was nearly morning before they all retired, and as they sought their beds Nerle asked the prince in a voice that sounded like an ill-natured growl:

“Why did you give the king beauty, after his treatment of us?”

Marvel looked at the reproachful face of his esquire and smiled. “When you are older,” said he, “you will find that often there are many ways to accomplish a single purpose. The king’s ugliness was the bar to our leaving his country, for he feared our gossip. So the easiest way for us to compass our escape was to take away his reason for detaining us. Thus I conquered the king in my own way, and at the same time gained his gratitude and friendship.”

“Will he allow us to depart in the morning?” inquired Nerle.

“I think so,” said Marvel.

It was late when they rose from their slumbers; but, having breakfasted, the prince’s first act was to seek the king.

“We wish to leave your kingdom,” said he. “Will you let us go?”

Terribus grasped the hand of his guest and pressed it with fervor, while tears of gratitude stood in his eyes.

“I should prefer that you remain with me always, and be my friend,” he answered. “But if you choose to leave me I shall not interfere in any way

with your wishes."

Prince Marvel looked at him thoughtfully, and then said: "My time on this island is short. In a few months Prince Marvel will have passed out of the knowledge of men, and his name will be forgotten. Before then I hope to visit the Kingdoms of Dawna and Auriel and Plenta; so I must not delay, but beg you will permit me to depart at once."

"Very well," answered Terribus. "Come with me, and I shall show you the way."

He led the prince and Nerle to a high wall of rock, and placing his hand upon its rough surface, touched a hidden spring. Instantly an immense block of stone began to swing backward, disclosing a passage large enough for a man on horseback to ride through.

"This is the one road that leads out of my kingdom," said Terribus. "The others all begin and end at the castle. So that unless you know the secret of this passage you could never escape from Spor."

"But where does this road lead?" asked Marvel.

"To the Kingdom of Auriel, which you desire to visit. It is not a straight road, for it winds around the Land of Twi, so it will carry you a little out of your way."

"What is the Land of Twi?" inquired the prince.

"A small country hidden from the view of all travelers," said Terribus. "No one has ever yet found a way to enter the land of Twi; yet there is a rumor that it is ruled by a mighty personage called the High Ki."

"And does the rumor state what the High Ki of Twi is like?"

"No, indeed," returned the king, smiling, "so it will do you no good to be curious. And now farewell, and may good luck attend you. Yet bear in mind the fact that King Terribus of Spor owes you a mighty debt of gratitude; and if you ever need my services, you have but to call on me, and I shall gladly come to your assistance."

"I thank you," said Marvel, "but there is small chance of my needing help. Farewell, and may your future life be pleasant and happy!"

With this he sprang to the saddle of his prancing charger and, followed by Nerle, rode slowly through the stone arch. The courtiers and ladies had flocked from the palace to witness their departure, and the giants and dwarfs and Gray Men were drawn up in long lines to speed the king's guests. So it was a brilliant sight that Marvel and Nerle looked back on; but once they were clear of the arch, the great stone rolled back into its place, shutting them out completely from the Kingdom of Spor, with its turreted castle and transformed king.

13. The Hidden Kingdom of Twi

Knowing that at last they were free to roam according to their desire, the travelers rode gaily along the paths, taking but scant heed of their way.

"Our faces are set toward new adventures," remarked the prince. "Let us hope they will prove more pleasant than the last."

"To be sure!" responded Nerle. "Let us hope, at any rate, that we shall suffer more privations and encounter more trouble than we did in that mountainous Kingdom of Spor." Then he added: "For one reason, I regret you are my master."

"What is that reason?" asked the prince, turning to smile upon his esquire.

"You have a way of overcoming all difficulties without any trouble whatsoever, and that deprives me of any chance of coming to harm while in your company."

"Cheer up, my boy!" cried Marvel. "Did I not say there are new adventures before us? We may not come through them so easily as we came through the others."

"That is true," replied Nerle; "it is always best to hope." And then he inquired: "Why do you stop here, in the middle of the path?"

"Because the path has ended rather suddenly," answered Marvel. "Here is a thick hedge of prickly briers barring our way."

Nerle looked over his master's shoulder and saw that a great hedge, high and exceedingly thick, cut off all prospect of their advancing.

"This is pleasant," said he; "but I might try to force our way through the hedge. The briers would probably prick me severely, and that would be delightful."

"Try it!" the prince returned, with twinkling eyes.

Nerle sprang from his horse to obey, but at the first contact with the briers he uttered a howl of pain and held up his hands, which were bleeding in a dozen places from the wounds of the thorns.

"Ah, that will content you for a time, I trust," said Marvel. "Now follow me, and we will ride along beside the hedge until we find an opening. For either it will come to an end or there will prove to be a way through it to the other side."

So they rode alongside the hedge for hour after hour; yet it did not end, nor could they espy any way to get through the thickly matted briers. By and by night fell, and they tethered their horses to some shrubs, where there were a few scanty blades of grass for them to crop, and then laid themselves down upon the ground, with bare rocks for pillows, where they managed to sleep soundly until morning.

They had brought a supply of food in their pouches, and on this they breakfasted, afterward continuing their journey beside the hedge.

At noon Prince Marvel uttered an exclamation of surprise and stopped his horse.

“What is it?” asked Nerle.

“I have found the handkerchief with which you wiped the blood from your hands yesterday morning, and then carelessly dropped,” replied the prince. “This proves that we have made a complete circle around this hedge without finding a way to pass through it.”

“In that case,” said Nerle, “we had better leave the hedge and go in another direction.”

“Not so,” declared Marvel. “The hedge incloses some unknown country, and I am curious to find out what it is.”

“But there is no opening,” remonstrated Nerle.

“Then we must make one. Wouldn’t you like to enjoy a little more pain?”

“Thank you,” answered Nerle, “my hands are still smarting very comfortably from the pricks of yesterday.”

“Therefore I must make the attempt myself,” said the prince, and drawing his sword he whispered a queer word to it, and straightway began slashing at the hedge.

The brambles fell fast before his blade, and when he had cut a big heap of branches from the hedge Nerle dragged them to one side, and the prince began again.

It was marvelous how thick the hedge proved. Only a magic sword could have done this work and remained sharp, and only a fairy arm could have proved strong enough to hew through the tough wood. But the magic sword and fairy arm were at work, and naught could resist them.

After a time the last branches were severed and dragged from the path, and then the travelers rode their horses through the gap into the unknown country beyond.

They saw at first glance that it was a land of great beauty; but after that one look both Prince Marvel and Nerle paused and rubbed their eyes, to assure themselves that their vision was not blurred.

Before them were two trees, exactly alike. And underneath the trees two cows were grazing--each a perfect likeness of the other. At their left were two cottages, with every door and window and chimney the exact counterpart of another. Before these houses two little boys were playing, evidently twins, for they not only looked alike and dressed alike, but every motion one made was also made by the other at the same time and in precisely the same way. When one laughed the other laughed, and when one stubbed his toe and fell

down, the other did likewise, and then they both sat up and cried lustily at the same time.

At this two women--it was impossible to tell one from the other--rushed out of the two houses, caught up the two boys, shook and dusted them in precisely the same way, and led them by their ears back into the houses.

Again the astonished travelers rubbed their eyes, and then Prince Marvel looked at Nerle and said:

"I thought at first that I saw everything double, but there seems to be only one of YOU."

"And of you," answered the boy. "But see! there are two hills ahead of us, and two paths lead from the houses over the hills! How strange it all is!"

Just then two birds flew by, close together and perfect mates; and the cows raised their heads and "mooed" at the same time; and two men--also twins--came over the two hills along the two paths with two dinner-pails in their hands and entered the two houses. They were met at the doors by the two women, who kissed them exactly at the same time and helped them off with their coats with the same motions, and closed the two doors with two slams at the same instant.

Nerle laughed. "What sort of country have we got into?" he asked.

"Let us find out," replied the prince, and riding up to one of the houses he knocked on the door with the hilt of his sword.

Instantly the doors of both houses flew open, and both men appeared in the doorways. Both started back in amazement at sight of the strangers, and both women shrieked and both little boys began to cry. Both mothers boxed the children's ears, and both men gasped out:

"Who--who are you?"

Their voices were exactly alike, and their words were spoken in unison. Prince Marvel replied, courteously:

"We are two strangers who have strayed into your country. But I do not understand why our appearance should so terrify you."

"Why--you are singular! There is only half of each of you!" exclaimed the two men, together.

"Not so," said the prince, trying hard not to laugh in their faces. "We may be single, while you appear to be double; but each of us is perfect, nevertheless."

"Perfect! And only half of you!" cried the men. And again the two women, who were looking over their husbands' shoulders, screamed at sight of the strangers; and again the two boys, who were clinging to their mothers' dresses in the same positions, began to cry.

"We did not know such strange people existed!" said the two men, both

staring at the strangers and then wiping the beads of perspiration from their two brows with two faded yellow handkerchiefs.

"Nor did we!" retorted the prince. "I assure you we are as much surprised as you are."

Nerle laughed again at this, and to hear only one of the strangers speak and the other only laugh seemed to terrify the double people anew. So Prince Marvel quickly asked:

"Please tell us what country this is?"

"The Land of Twi," answered both men, together.

"Oh! the Land of Twi. And why is the light here so dim?" continued the prince.

"Dim?" repeated the men, as if surprised; "why, this is twilight, of course."

"Of course," said Nerle. "I hadn't thought of that. We are in the long hidden Land of Twi, which all men have heard of, but no man has found before."

"And who may you be?" questioned the prince, looking from one man to the other, curiously.

"We are Twis," they answered.

"Twice?"

"Twis--inhabitants of Twi."

"It's the same thing," laughed Nerle. "You see everything twice in this land."

"Are none of your people single?" asked Prince Marvel.

"Single," returned the men, as if perplexed. "We don't understand."

"Are you all double?--or are some of you just one?" said the prince, who found it difficult to put his question plainly.

"What does 'one' mean?" asked the men. "There is no such word as 'one' in our language."

"They have no need of such a word," declared Nerle.

"We are only poor laborers," explained the men. "But over the hills lie the cities of Twi, where the Ki and the Ki-Ki dwell, and also the High Ki."

"Ah!" said Marvel, "I've heard of your High Ki. Who is he?"

The men shook their heads, together and with the same motion.

"We have never seen the glorious High Ki," they answered. "The sight of their faces is forbidden. None but the Ki and the Ki-Ki has seen the Supreme Rulers and High Ki."

"I'm getting mixed," said Nerle. "All this about the Ki and the Ki-Ki and the High Ki makes me dizzy. Let's go on to the city and explore it."

"That is a good suggestion," replied the prince. "Good by, my friends," he

added, addressing the men.

They both bowed, and although they still seemed somewhat frightened they answered him civilly and in the same words, and closed their doors at the same time.

So Prince Marvel and Nerle rode up the double path to the hills, and the two cows became frightened and ran away with the same swinging step, keeping an exact space apart. And when they were a safe distance they both stopped, looked over their right shoulders, and “mooed” at the same instant.

14. The Ki and the Ki-Ki

From the tops of the hills the travelers caught their first glimpse of the wonderful cities of Twi. Two walls surrounded the cities, and in the walls were two gates just alike. Within the inclosures stood many houses, but all were built in pairs, from the poorest huts to the most splendid palaces. Every street was double, the pavements running side by side. There were two lamp-posts on every corner, and in the dim twilight that existed these lamp-posts were quite necessary. If there were trees or bushes anywhere, they invariably grew in pairs, and if a branch was broken on one it was sure to be broken on the other, and dead leaves fell from both trees at identically the same moment.

Much of this Marvel and Nerle learned after they had entered the cities, but the view from the hills showed plainly enough that the "double" plan existed everywhere and in every way in this strange land.

They followed the paths down to the gates of the walls, where two pairs of soldiers rushed out and seized their horses by the bridles. These soldiers all seemed to be twins, or at least mates, and each one of each pair was as like the other as are two peas growing in the same pod. If one had a red nose the other's was red in the same degree, and the soldiers that held the bridles of Nerle's horse both had their left eyes bruised and blackened, as from a blow of the same force.

These soldiers, as they looked upon Nerle and the prince, seemed fully as much astonished and certainly more frightened than their prisoners. They were dressed in bright yellow uniforms with green buttons, and the soldiers who had arrested the prince had both torn their left coat-sleeves and had patches of the same shape upon the seats of their trousers.

"How dare you stop us, fellows?" asked the prince, sternly.

The soldiers holding his horse both turned and looked inquiringly at the soldiers holding Nerle's horse; and these turned to look at a double captain who came out of two doors in the wall and walked up to them.

"Such things were never before heard of!" said the two captains, their startled eyes fixed upon the prisoners. "We must take them to the Ki and the Ki-Ki."

"Why so?" asked Prince Marvel.

"Because," replied the officers, "they are our rulers, under grace of the High Ki, and all unusual happenings must be brought to their notice. It is our law, you know--the law of the Kingdom of Twi."

"Very well," said Marvel, quietly; "take us where you will; but if any harm is intended us you will be made to regret it."

“The Ki and the Ki-Ki will decide,” returned the captains gravely, their words sounding at the same instant.

And then the two pairs of soldiers led the horses through the double streets, the captains marching ahead with drawn swords, and crowds of twin men and twin women coming from the double doors of the double houses to gaze upon the strange sight of men and horses who were not double.

Presently they came upon a twin palace with twin turrets rising high into the air; and before the twin doors the prisoners dismounted. Marvel was escorted through one door and Nerle through another, and then they saw each other going down a double hallway to a room with a double entrance.

Passing through this they found themselves in a large hall with two domes set side by side in the roof. The domes were formed of stained glass, and the walls of the hall were ornamented by pictures in pairs, each pair showing identically the same scenes. This, was, of course, reasonable enough in such a land, where two people would always look at two pictures at the same time and admire them in the same way with the same thoughts.

Beneath one of the domes stood a double throne, on which sat the Ki of Twi--a pair of gray-bearded and bald-headed men who were lean and lank and stoop-shouldered. They had small eyes, black and flashing, long hooked noses, great pointed ears, and they were smoking two pipes from which the smoke curled in exactly the same circles and clouds.

Beneath the other dome sat the Ki-Ki of Twi, also on double thrones, similar to those of the Ki. The Ki-Ki were two young men, and had golden hair combed over their brows and “banged” straight across; and their eyes were blue and mild in expression, and their cheeks pink and soft. The Ki-Ki were playing softly upon a pair of musical instruments that resembled mandolins, and they were evidently trying to learn a new piece of music, for when one Ki-Ki struck a false note the other Ki-Ki struck the same false note at the same time, and the same expression of annoyance came over the two faces at the same moment.

When the prisoners entered, the pairs of captains and soldiers bowed low to the two pairs of rulers, and the Ki exclaimed--both in the same voice of surprise:

“Great Kika-koo! what have we here?”

“Most wonderful prisoners, your Highnesses,” answered the captains. “We found them at your cities’ gates and brought them to you at once. They are, as your Highnesses will see, each singular, and but half of what he should be.”

“‘Tis so!” cried the double Ki, in loud voices, and slapping their right thighs with their right palms at the same time. “Most remarkable! Most

remarkable!”

“I don’t see anything remarkable about it,” returned Prince Marvel, calmly. “It is you, who are not singular, but double, that seem strange and outlandish.”

“Perhaps--perhaps!” said the two old men, thoughtfully. “It is what we are not accustomed to that seems to us remarkable. Eh, Ki-Ki?” they added, turning to the other rulers.

The Ki-Ki, who had not spoken a word but continued to play softly, simply nodded their blond heads carelessly; so the Ki looked again at the prisoners and asked:

“How did you get here?”

“We cut a hole through the prickly hedge,” replied Prince Marvel.

“A hole through the hedge! Great Kika-koo!” cried the gray-bearded Ki; “is there, then, anything or any place on the other side of the hedge?”

“Why, of course! The world is there,” returned the prince, laughing.

The old men looked puzzled, and glanced sharply from their little black eyes at their prisoners.

“We thought nothing existed outside the hedge of Twi,” they answered, simply. “But your presence here proves we were wrong. Eh! Ki-Ki?”

This last was again directed toward the pair of musicians, who continued to play and only nodded quietly, as before.

“Now that you are here,” said the twin Ki, stroking their two gray beards with their two left hands in a nervous way, “it must be evident to you that you do not belong here. Therefore you must go back through the hedge again and stay on the other side. Eh, Ki-Ki?”

The Ki-Ki still continued playing, but now spoke the first words the prisoners had heard from them.

“They must die,” said the Ki-Ki, in soft and agreeable voices.

“Die!” echoed the twin Ki, “die? Great Kika-koo! And why so?”

“Because, if there is a world on the other side of the hedge, they would tell on their return all about the Land of Twi, and others of their kind would come through the hedge from curiosity and annoy us. We can not be annoyed. We are busy.”

Having delivered this speech both the Ki-Ki went on playing the new tune, as if the matter was settled.

“Nonsense!” retorted the old Ki, angrily. “You are getting more and more bloodthirsty every day, our sweet and gentle Ki-Ki! But we are the Ki--and we say the prisoners shall not die!”

“We say they shall!” answered the youthful Ki-Ki, nodding their two heads at the same time, with a positive motion. “You may be the Ki, but we

are the Ki-Ki, and your superior."

"Not in this case," declared the old men. "Where life and death are concerned we have equal powers with you."

"And if we disagree?" asked the players, gently.

"Great Kika-koo! If we disagree the High Ki must judge between us!" roared the twin Ki, excitedly.

"Quite so," answered the Ki-Ki. "The strangers shall die."

"They shall not die!" stormed the old men, with fierce gestures toward the others, while both pairs of black eyes flashed angrily.

"Then we disagree, and they must be taken to the High Ki," returned the blond musicians, beginning to play another tune.

The two Ki rose from their thrones, paced two steps to the right and three steps to the left, and then sat down again.

"Very well!" they said to the captains, who had listened unmoved to the quarrel of the rulers; "keep these half-men safe prisoners until to-morrow morning, and then the Ki-Ki and we ourselves will conduct them to the mighty High Ki."

At this command the twin captains bowed again to both pairs of rulers and led Prince Marvel and Nerle from the room. Then they were escorted along the streets to the twin houses of the captains, and here the officers paused and scratched their left ears with uncertain gestures.

"There being only half of each of you," they said, "we do not know how to lock each of you in double rooms."

"Oh, let us both occupy the same room," said Prince Marvel. "We prefer it."

"Very well," answered the captains; "we must transgress our usual customs in any event, so you may as well be lodged as you wish."

So Nerle and the prince were thrust into a large and pleasant room of one of the twin houses, the double doors were locked upon them by twin soldiers, and they were left to their own thoughts.

15. The High Ki of Twi

“Tell me, Prince, are we awake or asleep?” asked Nerle, as soon as they were alone.

“There is no question of our being awake,” replied the prince, with a laugh. “But what a curious country it is--and what a funny people!”

“We can’t call them odd or singular,” said the esquire, “for everything is even in numbers and double in appearance. It makes me giddy to look at them, and I keep feeling of myself to make sure there is still only one of me.”

“You are but half a boy!” laughed the prince--”at least so long as you remain in the Land of Twi.”

“I’d like to get out of it in double-quick time,” answered Nerle; “and we should even now be on the other side of the hedge were it not for that wicked pair of Ki-Ki, who are determined to kill us.”

“It is strange,” said the prince, thoughtfully, “that the fierce-looking old Ki should be our friends and the gentle Ki-Ki our enemies. How little one can tell from appearances what sort of heart beats in a person’s body!”

Before Nerle could answer the two doors opened and two pairs of soldiers entered. They drew two small tables before the prince and two before Nerle, and then other pairs of twin soldiers came and spread cloths on the tables and set twin platters of meat and bread and fruit on each of the tables. When the meal had been arranged the prisoners saw that there was enough for four people instead of two; and the soldiers realized this also, for they turned puzzled looks first on the tables and then on the prisoners. Then they shook all their twin heads gravely and went away, locking the twin doors behind them.

“We have one advantage in being singular,” said Nerle, cheerfully; “and that is we are not likely to starve to death. For we can eat the portions of our missing twins as well as our own.”

“I should think you would enjoy starving,” remarked the prince.

“No; I believe I have more exquisite suffering in store for me, since I have met that gentle pair of Ki-Ki,” said Nerle.

While they were eating the two captains came in and sat down in two chairs. These captains seemed friendly fellows, and after watching the strangers for a while they remarked:

“We are glad to see you able to eat so heartily; for to-morrow you will probably die.”

“That is by no means certain,” replied Marvel, cutting a piece from one of the twin birds on a platter before him--to the extreme surprise of the captains, who had always before seen both birds carved alike at the same time. “Your

gray-bearded old Ki say we shall not die."

"True," answered the captains. "But the Ki-Ki have declared you shall."

"Their powers seem to be equal," said Nerle, "and we are to be taken before the High Ki for judgment."

"Therein lies your danger," returned the captains, speaking in the same tones and with the same accents on their words. "For it is well known the Ki-Ki has more influence with the High Ki than the Ki has."

"Hold on!" cried Nerle; "you are making me dizzy again. I can't keep track of all these Kis."

"What is the High Ki like?" asked Prince Marvel, who was much interested in the conversation of the captains. But this question the officers seemed unable to answer. They shook their heads slowly and said:

"The High Ki are not visible to the people of Twi. Only in cases of the greatest importance are the High Ki ever bothered or even approached by the Ki and the Ki-Ki, who are supposed to rule the land according to their own judgment. But if they chance to disagree, then the matter is carried before the High Ki, who live in a palace surrounded by high walls, in which there are no gates. Only these rulers have ever seen the other side of the walls, or know what the High Ki are like."

"That is strange," said the prince. "But we, ourselves, it seems, are to see the High Ki to-morrow, and whoever they may chance to be, we hope to remain alive after the interview."

"That is a vain hope," answered the captains, "for it is well known that the High Ki usually decide in favor of the Ki-Ki, and against the wishes of the old Ki."

"That is certainly encouraging," said Nerle.

When the captains had gone and left them to themselves, the esquire confided to his master his expectations in the following speech:

"This High Ki sounds something terrible and fierce in my ears, and as they are doubtless a pair, they will be twice terrible and fierce. Perhaps his royal doublets will torture me most exquisitely before putting me to death, and then I shall feel that I have not lived in vain."

They slept in comfortable beds that night, although an empty twin bed stood beside each one they occupied. And in the morning they were served another excellent meal, after which the captains escorted them again to the twin palaces of the Ki and the Ki-Ki.

There the two pairs of rulers met them and headed the long procession of soldiers toward the palace of the High Ki. First came a band of music, in which many queer sorts of instruments were played in pairs by twin musicians; and it was amusing to Nerle to see the twin drummers roll their

twin drums exactly at the same time and the twin trumpets peal out twin notes. After the band marched the double Ki-Ki and the double Ki, their four bodies side by side in a straight line. The Ki-Ki had left their musical instruments in the palace, and now wore yellow gloves with green stitching down the backs and swung gold-headed canes jauntily as they walked. The Ki stooped their aged shoulders and shuffled along with their hands in their pockets, and only once did they speak, and that was to roar "Great Kika-koo!" when the Ki-Ki jabbed their canes down on the Ki's toes.

Following the Ki-Ki and the Ki came the prince and Nerle, escorted by the twin captains, and then there were files of twin soldiers bringing up the rear.

Crowds of twin people, with many twin children amongst them, turned out to watch the unusual display, and many pairs of twin dogs barked together in unison and snapped at the heels of the marching twin soldiers.

By and by they reached the great wall surrounding the High Ki's palace, and, sure enough, there was never a gate in the wall by which any might enter. But when the Ki and the Ki-Ki had blown a shrill signal upon two pairs of whistles, they all beheld two flights of silver steps begin to descend from the top of the wall, and these came nearer and nearer the ground until at last they rested at the feet of the Ki. Then the old men began ascending the steps carefully and slowly, and the captains motioned to the prisoners to follow. So Prince Marvel followed one of the Ki up the steps and Nerle the other Ki, while the two Ki-Ki came behind them so they could not escape.

So to the top of the wall they climbed, where a pair of twin servants in yellow and green--which seemed to be the royal colors--welcomed them and drew up the pair of silver steps, afterward letting them down on the other side of the wall, side by side.

They descended in the same order as they had mounted to the top of the wall, and now Prince Marvel and Nerle found themselves in a most beautiful garden, filled with twin beds of twin flowers, with many pairs of rare shrubs. Also, there were several double statuettes on pedestals, and double fountains sending exactly the same sprays of water the same distance into the air.

Double walks ran in every direction through the garden, and in the center of the inclosure stood a magnificent twin palace, built of blocks of white marble exquisitely carved.

The Ki and the Ki-Ki at once led their prisoners toward the palace and entered at its large arched double doors, where several pairs of servants met them. These servants, they found, were all dumb, so that should they escape from the palace walls they could tell no tales of the High Ki.

The prisoners now proceeded through several pairs of halls, winding this

way and that, and at last came to a pair of golden double doors leading into the throne-room of the mighty High Ki. Here they all paused, and the Ki-Ki both turned to the prince and Nerle and said:

"You are the only persons, excepting ourselves and the palace servants, who have ever been permitted to see the High Ki of Twi. As you are about to die, that does not matter; but should you by any chance be permitted to live, you must never breathe a word of what you are about to see, under penalty of a sure and horrible death."

The prisoners made no reply to this speech, and, after the two Ki-Ki had given them another mild look from their gentle blue eyes, these officials clapped their twin hands together and the doors of gold flew open.

A perfect silence greeted them, during which the double Ki and the double Ki-Ki bent their four bodies low and advanced into the throne-room, followed by Prince Marvel and Nerle.

In the center of the room stood two thrones of dainty filigree work in solid gold, and over them were canopies of yellow velvet, the folds of which were caught up and draped with bands of green ribbon. And on the thrones were seated two of the sweetest and fairest little maidens that mortal man had ever beheld. Their lovely hair was fine as a spider's web; their eyes were kind and smiling, their cheeks soft and dimpled, their mouths shapely as a cupid's bow and tinted like the petals of a rose. Upon their heads were set two crowns of fine spun gold, worked into fantastic shapes and set with glittering gems. Their robes were soft silks of pale yellow, with strings of sparkling emeralds for ornament.

Anything so lovely and fascinating as these little maids, who were precisely alike in every particular, neither Prince Marvel nor Nerle had ever dreamed could exist. They stood for a time spellbound and filled with admiration, while the two pairs of rulers bowed again and again before the dainty and lovable persons of their High Ki.

But it was hard for Nerle to keep quiet for long, and presently he exclaimed, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all present:

"By the Great Kika-koo of our friends the Ki, these darling High Ki of Twi are sweet enough to be kissed!"

16. The Rebellion of the High Ki

The bold speech of Nerle's made the two damsels laugh at the same time, and their sweet laughter sounded like rippling strains of harmonious music. But the two Ki-Ki frowned angrily, and the two Ki looked at the boy in surprise, as if wondering at his temerity.

"Who are these strangers?" asked the pretty High Ki, speaking together as all the twins of Twi did; "and why are they not mates, but only half of each other?"

"These questions, your Supreme Highnesses," said the blond-haired pair of Ki-Ki, "we are unable to answer."

"Perhaps, then, the strangers can answer themselves," said the little maids, smiling first upon the Ki-Ki and then upon the prisoners.

Prince Marvel bowed.

"I am from the great outside world," said he, "and my name is Prince Marvel. Until now I have never seen people that live in pairs, and speak in unison, and act in the same way and think the same thoughts. My world is much bigger than your world, and in it every person is proud to think and act for himself. You say I am only a 'half,' but that is not so. I am perfect, without a counterpart; my friend Nerle is perfect without a counterpart, and it is yourselves who are halved. For in the Land of Twi no person is complete or perfect without its other half, and it seems to take two of you to make one man--or one maid."

The sweet faces of the twin High Ki grew thoughtful at this speech, and they said:

"Indeed, it may be you are right. But it is our custom in Twi to do everything double and to live double." Then, turning to the Ki, they asked: "Why have you brought these strangers here?"

"To ask your Supreme Highnesses to permit them to return again to the world from whence they came," answered the Ki, both of them regarding their supreme rulers earnestly.

But here the Ki-Ki spoke up quickly in their mild voices, saying:

"That is not our idea, your Highnesses. We, the Ki-Ki of Twi, think it best the strangers should be put to death. And we pray your Supreme Highnesses to favor our wish."

The two little maids looked from the Ki to the Ki-Ki, and frowned and pouted their rosy lips in evident perplexity.

But Nerle whispered to Prince Marvel:

"It's all up with us! I know very well why her royal doublets always favors the Ki-Ki. It's because they are young and handsome, while the Ki are

old and ugly. Both of her will condemn us to death--you see if she don't!"

This seemed somewhat mixed, but Nerle was in earnest, and Prince Marvel, who had not forgotten his fairy lore, began to weave a silent spell over the head of the nearest twin High Ki. But just as it was completed, and before he had time to work the spell on the other twin, the Ki-Ki grew impatient, and exclaimed:

"We beg your Highnesses not to keep us waiting. Let us have your decision at once!"

And the twin maidens raised their fair heads and replied. But the reply was of such a nature that both the old Ki and both the young Ki-Ki staggered backward in amazement. For one of the twin High Ki said:

"They shall die!"

And the other twin High Ki said at the same instant:

"They shall NOT die!"

Had twin thunderbolts fallen through the twin roofs of the twin palaces and struck the twin Ki and the twin Ki-Ki upon their twin heads it would have created no more stupendous a sensation than did this remark. Never before had any two halves of a twin of the Land of Twi thought differently or spoken differently. Indeed, it startled the two maidens themselves as much as it did their hearers, for each one turned her head toward the other and, for the first time in her life, looked into the other's face!

This act was fully as strange as their speech, and a sudden horrible thought came into the startled heads of the twin Ki and the twin Ki-Ki: THE HIGH KI OF TWI WAS NO LONGER ONE, BUT TWO. AND THESE TWO WERE THINKING AND ACTING EACH INDEPENDENT OF THE OTHER!

It is no wonder the shock rendered them speechless for a time, and they stood swaying their four bodies, with their eight eyes bulging out like those of fishes and their four mouths wide open, as if the two pairs had become one quartet.

The faces of the two maids flushed as they gazed upon each other.

"How DARE you contradict me?" asked one.

"How dare you contradict ME?" demanded the other, and not only were these questions asked separately, but the accent on the words was different. And their twin minds seemed to get farther apart every moment.

"I'm the High Ki of Twi!" said one.

"You're not! I'M the High Ki!" retorted the other.

"The strangers shall die!" snapped one.

"They shall live!" cried the other. "My will is supreme."

"It's not! MY will is supreme," returned the other twin.

The bald heads of the ancient Ki were bobbing in amazement, first to one maid and then toward the other. The blond hairs of the two Ki-Ki were standing almost on end, and their eyes stared straight before them as if stupefied with astonishment. Nerle was bellowing with rude laughter and holding his sides to keep from getting a stitch in them, while Prince Marvel stood quietly attentive and smiling with genuine amusement. For he alone understood what had happened to separate the twin High Ki.

The girls did not seem to know how to act under their altered conditions. After a time one of them said:

"We will leave our dispute to be settled by the Ki and the Ki-Ki."

"Very well," agreed the other.

"Then I say your half is right," declared the Ki-Ki, both their right forefingers pointing to the maiden who had condemned the strangers to death.

"And I decide that your half is right," exclaimed the Ki, both their trembling forefingers pointing to the maiden who had said the strangers should live.

"Well?" said one girl.

"Well?" said the other.

"The powers of the Ki and the Ki-Ki are equal," said the first. "We are no nearer a settlement of our dispute than we were before."

"My dear young ladies," said Prince Marvel, politely, "I beg you will take time to think the matter over, and see if you can not come to an agreement. We are in no hurry."

"Very well," decided the twins, speaking both together this time. "We command you all to remain in the palace until we have settled our own strange dispute. The servants will care for you, and when we are ready to announce our decision we shall again send for you."

Every one bowed at this command and retired from the room; but Nerle looked over his shoulder as he went through the doorway, and saw that the two High Ki had turned in their seats and were facing each other, and that both their faces wore angry and determined expressions.

17. The Separation of the High Ki

For nearly a week Prince Marvel and Nerle remained confined to the palace and gardens of the High Ki. Together with the twin Ki, who seemed to be friendly to them, they occupied one of the twin palaces, while the Ki-Ki secluded themselves in the other.

The pretty High Ki maidens they did not see at all, nor did they know what part of the palaces they occupied, not being permitted to wander away from the rooms allotted to them, except to walk in the garden. There was no way for them to escape, had they felt inclined to, for the silver steps had disappeared.

From the garden walks they sometimes caught sight of the solemn heads of the handsome Ki-Ki looking at them through the twin windows of the other palace, and although the expression of their faces was always mild and gentle, Nerle and Marvel well knew the Ki-Ki were only waiting in the hope of having them killed.

“Are you nervous about the decision of the pretty High Ki?” asked Nerle one day.

“No, indeed,” said the prince, laughing; “for I do not expect them to kill me, in any event.”

“If I felt as sure of my safety,” returned the boy, “it would destroy all my pleasure. These are really happy days for me. Every moment I expect to see the executioner arrive with his ax.”

“The executioner is double,” said the two old Ki, breaking into the conversation. “You should say you expect to see the executioners arrive with their axes.”

“Then how will they cut off my head with two axes? For I suppose they will both chop at the same time, and I have but one neck.”

“Wait and see,” answered the two Ki, sighing deeply and rubbing their red noses thoughtfully.

“Oh, I’ll wait,” answered the boy; “but as for seeing them cut off my head, I refuse; for I intend to shut my eyes.”

So they sat in their rooms or walked in the gardens, yawning and waiting, until one day, just as the two clocks on the wall were striking twenty-four o’clock, the door opened and to their surprise one of the High Ki twins walked in upon them.

She was as sweet and fair to look upon as when she occupied one of the beautiful thrones, but at first no one could tell which of the High Ki she was--their friend or their enemy. Even the Ki were puzzled and anxious, until the girl said:

“My other half and I have completely separated, for we have agreed to disagree for all time. And she has gone to ask the Ki-Ki to assist her, for war is declared between us. And hereafter her color is to be the green and mine the yellow, and we intend to fight until one of us conquers and overthrows the other.”

This announcement was interesting to Marvel and Nerle, but greatly shocked the aged Ki, who asked:

“What is to become of our kingdom? Half of a High Ki can not rule it. It is against the law.”

“I will make my own laws when I have won the fight,” returned the girl, with a lovely smile; “so do not let that bother you. And now tell me, will you help me to fight my battles?”

“Willingly!” exclaimed Nerle and Prince Marvel, almost as if they had been twins of Twi. And the Ki rubbed their bald heads a moment, and then sneezed together and wiped their eyes on faded yellow handkerchiefs, and finally declared they would “stick to her Supreme Highness through thick and thin!”

“Then go over the wall to the cities, at once, and get together all the soldiers to fight for me and my cause,” commanded the girl.

The twin Ki at once left the room, and the High Ki sat down and began to ask questions of Prince Marvel and Nerle about the big outside world from whence they came. Nerle was rather shy and bashful before the dainty little maiden, whose yellow robe contrasted delightfully with her pink cheeks and blue eyes and brown flowing locks; but Prince Marvel did not mind girls at all, so he talked with her freely, and she in return allowed him to examine the pretty gold crown she wore upon her brow.

By and by the Ki came back with both faces sad and gloomy.

“Your Highness,” they announced, “we have bad news for you. The other High Ki, who is wearing a green gown, has been more prompt in action than yourself. She and the Ki-Ki have secured the silver steps and will allow no others to use them; and already they have sent for the soldiers of the royal armies to come and aid them. So we are unable to leave the garden, and presently the army will be here to destroy us.”

Then the girl showed her good courage; for she laughed and said:

“Then we must remain here and fight to the last; and if I am unable to save you, who are my friends, it will be because I can not save myself.”

This speech pleased Prince Marvel greatly. He kissed the little maid’s hand respectfully and said:

“Fear nothing, your Highness. My friend and I are not so helpless as you think. We consider it our privilege to protect and save you, instead of your

saving us; and we are really able to do this in spite of the other High Ki and her entire army."

So they remained quietly in the palace the rest of that day, and no one molested them in the least. In the evening the girl played and sang for them, and the ancient pair of Ki danced a double-shuffle for their amusement that nearly convulsed them with laughter. For one danced exactly like the other, and the old men's legs were still very nimble, although their wrinkled faces remained anxiously grave throughout their antics. Nerle also sang a song about the King of Thieves whom Prince Marvel had conquered, and another about the Red Rogue of Dawna, so that altogether the evening passed pleasantly enough, and they managed to forget all their uneasy doubts of the morrow.

When at last they separated for the night, Prince Marvel alone did not seek his bed; there was still some business he wished to transact. So he shut himself up in his room and summoned before him, by means of his fairy knowledge, the Prince of the Knooks, the King of the Ryls and the Governor of the Goblins. These were all three his especial friends, and he soon told them the story of the quarrel and separation of the twin High Ki, and claimed their assistance. Then he told them how they might aid him, and afterward dismissed them. Having thus accomplished his task, the fairy prince went to bed and slept peacefully the remainder of the night.

The next morning the blond Ki-Ki and all the army of Twi, which had been won to their cause, came climbing up the silver steps and over the wall to the palace of the green High Ki; but what was their amazement to find the twin palaces separated by a wall so high that no ladders nor steps they possessed could reach to the top! It had been built in a single night, and only Prince Marvel and his fairy friends knew how the work had been done so quickly.

The yellow High Ki, coming downstairs to breakfast with her friends, found herself securely shut in from her enemies, and the bald-headed old Ki were so pleased to escape that they danced another jig from pure joy.

Over the wall could be heard the shouts and threats of the army of Twi, who were seeking a way to get at the fugitives; but for the present our friends knew themselves to be perfectly safe, and they could afford to laugh at the fury of the entire population of Twi.

18. The Rescue of the High Ki

After several days of siege Prince Marvel began to feel less confident of the safety of his little party. The frantic Ki-Ki had built double battering-rams and were trying to batter down the high wall; and they had built several pairs of long ladders with which to climb over the wall; and their soldiers were digging two tunnels in the ground in order to crawl under the wall.

Not at once could they succeed, for the wall was strong and it would take long to batter it down; and Nerle stood on top of the wall and kicked over the ladders as fast as the soldiers of Twi set them up; and the gray-bearded Ki stood in the garden holding two big flat boards with which to whack the heads of any who might come through the tunnels.

But Prince Marvel realized that the perseverance of his foes might win in the end, unless he took measures to defeat them effectually. So he summoned swift messengers from among the Sound Elves, who are accustomed to travel quickly, and they carried messages from him to Wul-Takim, the King of the Reformed Thieves, and to King Terribus of Spor, who had both promised him their assistance in case he needed it. The prince did not tell his friends of this action, but after the messengers had been dispatched he felt easier in his mind.

The little High Ki remained as sweet and brave and lovable as ever, striving constantly to cheer and encourage her little band of defenders. But none of them was very much worried, and Nerle confided to the maiden in yellow the fact that he expected to suffer quite agreeably when the Ki-Ki at last got him in their clutches.

Finally a day came when two big holes were battered through the wall, and then the twin soldiers of Twi poured through the holes and began to pound on the doors of the palace itself, in which Prince Marvel and Nerle, the Ki and the yellow High Ki had locked themselves as securely as possible.

The prince now decided it was high time for his friends to come to their rescue; but they did not appear, and before long the doors of the palace gave way and the soldiers rushed upon them in a vast throng.

Nerle wanted to fight, and to slay as many of the Twi people as possible; but the prince would not let him.

“These poor soldiers are but doing what they consider their duty,” he said, “and it would be cruel to cut them down with our swords. Have patience, I pray you. Our triumph will come in good time.”

The Ki-Ki, who came into the palace accompanied by the green High Ki, ordered the twin soldiers to bind all the prisoners with cords. So one pair of soldiers bound the Ki and another pair Nerle and the prince, using exactly the

same motions in the operation. But when it came to binding the yellow High Ki the scene was very funny. For twin soldiers tried to do the binding, and there was only one to bind; so that one soldier went through the same motions as his twin on empty air, and when his other half had firmly bound the girl, his own rope fell harmless to the ground. But it seemed impossible for one of the twins to do anything different from the other, so that was the only way the act could be accomplished.

Then the green-robed High Ki walked up to the one in yellow and laughed in her face, saying:

"You now see which of us is the most powerful, and therefore the most worthy to rule. Had you remained faithful to our handsome Ki-Ki, as I did, you would not now be defeated and disgraced."

"There is no disgrace in losing one battle," returned the other girl, proudly. "You are mistaken if you think you have conquered me, and you are wrong to insult one who is, for the time being, your captive."

The maiden in green looked for an instant confused and ashamed; then she tossed her pretty head and walked away.

They led all the prisoners out into the garden and then through the broken wall, and up and down the silver steps, into the great square of the cities of Twi. And here all the population crowded around them, for this was the first time any of them had seen their High Ki, or even known that they were girls; and the news of their quarrel and separation had aroused a great deal of excitement.

"Let the executioners come forward!" cried the Ki-Ki, gleefully, and in answer to the command the twin executioners stepped up to the prisoners.

They were big men, these executioners, each having a squint in one eye and a scar on the left cheek. They polished their axes a moment on their coat-sleeves, and then said to Prince Marvel and Nerle, who were to be the first victims:

"Don't dodge, please, or our axes may not strike the right place. And do not be afraid, for the blows will only hurt you an instant. In the Land of Twi it is usually considered a pleasure to be executed by us, we are so exceedingly skillful."

"I can well believe that," replied Nerle, although his teeth were chattering.

But at this instant a loud shout was heard, and the twin people of Twi all turned their heads to find themselves surrounded by throngs of fierce enemies.

Prince Marvel smiled, for he saw among the new-comers the giants and dwarfs and the stern Gray Men of King Terribus, with their monarch calmly directing their movements; and on the other side of the circle were the jolly

faces and bushy whiskers of the fifty-nine reformed thieves, with burly Wul-Takim at their head.

19. The Reunion of the High Ki

The twins of Twi were too startled and amazed to offer to fight with the odd people surrounding them. Even the executioners allowed their axes to fall harmlessly to the ground, and the double people, soldiers and citizens alike, turned to stare at the strangers in wonder.

"We're here, Prince!" yelled Wul-Takim, his bristly beard showing over the heads of those who stood between.

"Thank you," answered Prince Marvel.

"And the men of Spor are here!" added King Terribus, who was mounted on a fine milk-white charger, richly caparisoned.

"I thank the men of Spor," returned Prince Marvel, graciously.

"Shall we cut your foes into small pieces, or would you prefer to hang them?" questioned the King of the Reformed Thieves, loudly enough to set most of his hearers shivering.

But now the little maid in yellow stepped up to Prince Marvel and, regarding the youthful knight with considerable awe, said sweetly:

"I beg you will pardon my people and spare them. They are usually good and loyal subjects, and if they fought against me--their lawful High Ki--it was only because they were misled by my separation from my other half."

"That is true," replied the prince; "and as you are still the lawful High Ki of Twi, I will leave you to deal with your own people as you see fit. For those who have conquered your people are but your own allies, and are still under your orders, as I am myself."

Hearing this, the green High Ki walked up to her twin High Ki and said, boldly:

"I am your prisoner. It is now your turn. Do with me as you will."

"I forgive you," replied her sister, in kindly tones.

Then the little maid who had met with defeat gave a sob and turned away weeping, for she had expected anything but forgiveness.

And now the Ki-Ki came forward and, bowing their handsome blond heads before the High Ki, demanded: "Are we forgiven also?"

"Yes," said the girl, "but you are no longer fit to be rulers of my people. Therefore, you are henceforth deprived of your honorable offices of Ki-Ki, which I shall now bestow upon these good captains here," and she indicated the good-natured officers who had first captured the prince and Nerle.

The people of Twi eagerly applauded this act, for the captains were more popular with them than the former Ki-Ki; but the blond ones both flushed with humiliation and anger, and said:

"The captains fought against you, even as we did."

“Yet the captains only obeyed your orders,” returned the High Ki. “So I hold them blameless.”

“And what is to become of us now?” asked the former Ki-Ki.

“You will belong to the common people, and earn your living playing tunes for them to dance by,” answered the High Ki. And at this retort every one laughed, so that the handsome youths turned away with twin scowls upon their faces and departed amidst the jeers of the crowd.

“Better hang ‘em to a tree, little one,” shouted Wul-Takim, in his big voice; “they won’t enjoy life much, anyhow.”

But the maid shook her pretty head and turned to the prince.

“Will you stay here and help me to rule my kingdom?” she asked.

“I can not do that,” replied Prince Marvel, “for I am but a wandering adventurer and must soon continue my travels. But I believe you will be able to rule your people without my help.”

“It is not so easy a task,” she answered, sighing. “For I am singular and my people are all double.”

“Well, let us hold a meeting in your palace,” said the prince, “and then we can decide what is best to be done.”

So they dismissed the people, who cheered their High Ki enthusiastically, returning quietly to their daily tasks and the gossip that was sure to follow such important events as they had witnessed.

The army of King Terribus and the fifty-nine reformed thieves went to the twin palaces of the Ki and the Ki-Ki and made merry with feasting and songs to celebrate their conquest. And the High Ki, followed by the prince, Nerle, King Terribus and Wul-Takim, as well as by the Ki and the newly-appointed Ki-Ki, mounted the silver steps and passed over the wall to the royal palaces. The green High Ki followed them, still weeping disconsolately.

When they had all reached the throne-room, the High Ki seated herself on one of the beautiful thrones and said:

“By some strange chance, which I am unable to explain, my twin and I have become separated; so that instead of thinking and acting alike, we are now individuals--as are all the strange men who have passed through the hole in the hedge. And, being individuals, we can no longer agree, nor can one of us lawfully rule over the Kingdom of Twi, where all the subjects are twins, thinking and acting in unison.”

Said Prince Marvel:

“Your Highness, I alone can explain why you became separated from your twin. By means of a fairy enchantment, which I learned years ago, I worked upon you a spell, which compelled your brain to work independent of your sister’s brain. It seems to me that it is better each person should think

her own thoughts and live her own life, rather than be yoked to another person and obliged to think and act as a twin, or one-half of a complete whole. And since you are now the one High Ki, and the acknowledged ruler of this country, I will agree to work the same fairy spell on all your people, so that no longer will there be twin minds in all this Land of Twi."

"But all the cows and dogs and horses and other animals are double, as well as the people," suggested the old Ki, blinking their little eyes in amazement at the thought of being forever separated from each other.

"I can also work the spell upon all the twin animals," said the prince, after a moment's hesitation.

"And all our houses are built double, with twin doors and windows and chimneys, to accommodate our twin people," continued the High Ki. "And the trees and flowers--and even the blades of grass--are all double. And our roads are double, and--and everything else is double. I alone, the ruler of this land, am singular!"

Prince Marvel became thoughtful now, for he did not know how to separate trees and flowers, and it would be a tedious task to separate the twin houses.

"Why not leave the country as it is?" asked King Terribus of Spor. "The High Ki is welcome to come to my castle to live, and then she need no longer bother about the Land of Twi, which seems to me a poor place, after all."

"And your sister may come with me to my cave, and be the queen of the reformed thieves, which is a much more important office than being High Ki of Twi," added big Wul-Takim, who had placed the maiden in green upon a cushion at his feet, and was striving to comfort her by gently stroking her silken hair with his rough hand.

"But I love my country, and do not wish to leave it," answered the yellow High Ki. "And I love my twin sister, and regret that our minds have become separated," she continued, sadly.

"I have it!" exclaimed Nerle. "Let the prince reunite you, making you regular twins of Twi again, and then you can continue to rule the country as the double High Ki, and everything will be as it was before."

The yellow High Ki clapped her pink hands with delight and looked eagerly at the prince.

"Will you?" she asked. "Will you please reunite us? And then all our troubles will be ended!"

This really seemed to Marvel the best thing to be done. So he led the maid in green to the other throne, where she had once sat, and after replacing the golden crown upon her brow he whispered a fairy spell of much mystical power.

Then the prince stepped back and regarded the maidens earnestly, and after a moment both the High Ki smiled upon him in unison and said--speaking the same words in the same voices and with the same accents:

“Thank you very much!”

20. Kwytoffle, the Tyrant

Having restored the High Ki to their former condition, to the great joy of the ancient Ki, Prince Marvel led his friends back to the palaces where his men were waiting.

They were just in time to prevent serious trouble, for the fifty-eight reformed thieves had been boasting of their prowess to the huge giants and tiny dwarfs of King Terribus, and this had resulted in a quarrel as to which were the best fighters. Had not their masters arrived at the right moment there would certainly have been a fierce battle and much bloodshed,--and all over something of no importance.

Terribus and Wul-Takim soon restored order, and then they accompanied the Ki and the Ki-Ki to the public square, where the people were informed that their Supreme Highnesses, the High Ki, had been reunited and would thereafter rule them with twin minds as well as twin bodies. There was great rejoicing at this news, for every twin in Twi was glad to have his troubles ended so easily and satisfactorily.

That night the ryls and knooks and other invisible friends of Prince Marvel came and removed the dividing wall between the twin palaces of the High Ki, repairing speedily all the damage that had been done. And when our friends called upon the High Ki the next morning they found the two maids again dressed exactly alike in yellow robes, with strings of sparkling emeralds for ornament. And not even Prince Marvel could now tell one of the High Ki from the other.

As for the maids themselves, it seemed difficult to imagine they had ever existed apart for a single moment.

They were very pleasant and agreeable to their new friends, and when they heard that Prince Marvel was about to leave them to seek new adventures they said:

“Please take us with you! It seems to us that we ought to know something of the big outside world from whence you came. If we see other kingdoms and people we shall be better able to rule our own wisely.”

“That seems reasonable,” answered Marvel, “and I shall be very glad to have you accompany me. But who will rule the Land of Twi in your absence?”

“The Ki-Ki shall be the rulers,” answered the High Ki, “and we will take the Ki with us.”

“Then I will delay my departure until to-morrow morning,” said the prince, “in order that your Highnesses may have time to prepare for the journey.”

And then he went back to the palaces of the other rulers, where the Ki expressed themselves greatly pleased at the idea of traveling, and the new Ki-Ki were proud to learn they should rule for some time the Land of Twi.

Wul-Takim also begged to join the party, and so also did King Terribus, who had never before been outside of his own Kingdom of Spor; so Prince Marvel willingly consented.

The fifty-eight reformed thieves, led by Gunder, returned to their cave, where they were living comfortably on the treasure Prince Marvel had given them; and the Gray Men and giants and dwarfs of Spor departed for their own country.

In the morning Prince Marvel led his own gay cavalcade through the hole in the hedge, and they rode merrily away in search of adventure.

By his side were the High Ki, mounted upon twin chestnut ponies that had remarkably slender limbs and graceful, arched necks. The ponies moved with exactly the same steps, and shook their manes and swished their tails at exactly the same time. Behind the prince and the High Ki were King Terribus, riding his great white charger, and Wul-Takim on a stout horse of jet-black color. The two ancient Ki and Nerle, being of lesser rank than the others, brought up the rear.

"When we return to our Land of Twi," said the High Ki, "we shall close up for all time the hole you made in the hedge; for, if we are different from the rest of the world, it is better that we remain in seclusion."

"I think it is right you should do that," replied Prince Marvel. "Yet I do not regret that I cut a hole in your hedge."

"It was the hedge that delayed us in coming more promptly to your assistance," said Terribus; "for we had hard work to find the hole you had made, and so lost much valuable time."

"All is well that ends well!" laughed the prince. "You certainly came in good time to rescue us from our difficulties."

They turned into a path that led to Auriel, which Nerle had heard spoken of as "the Kingdom of the Setting Sun."

Soon the landscape grew very pleasant to look upon, the meadows being broad and green, with groups of handsome trees standing about. The twilight of the Land of Twi was now replaced by bright sunshine, and in the air was the freshness of the near-by sea.

At evening they came to a large farmhouse, where the owner welcomed them hospitably and gave them the best his house afforded.

In answer to their questions about the Kingdom of Auriel, he shook his head sadly and replied:

"It is a rich and beautiful country, but has fallen under great misfortunes.

For when the good king died, about two years ago, the kingdom was seized by a fierce and cruel sorcerer, named Kwytoffle, who rules the people with great severity, and makes them bring him all their money and valuable possessions. So every one is now very poor and unhappy, and that is a great pity in a country so fair and fertile."

"But why do not the people rebel?" asked Nerle.

"They dare not rebel," answered the farmer, "because they fear the sorcery of Kwytoffle. If they do not obey him he threatens to change them into grasshoppers and June-bugs."

"Has he ever changed any one into a grasshopper or a June-bug?" asked Prince Marvel.

"No; but the people are too frightened to oppose him, and so he does not get the opportunity. And he has an army of fierce soldiers, who are accustomed to beat the people terribly if they do not carry every bit of their wealth to the sorcerer. So there is no choice but to obey him."

"We certainly ought to hang this wicked creature!" exclaimed Wul-Takim.

"I wish I had brought my Fool-Killer with me," sighed King Terribus; "for I could have kept him quite busy in this kingdom."

"Can not something be done to rescue these poor people from their sad fate?" asked the lovely High Ki, anxiously.

"We will make a call upon this Kwytoffle to-morrow," answered Prince Marvel, "and see what the fellow is like."

"Alas! Alas!" wailed the good farmer, "you will all become grasshoppers and June-bugs--every one of you!"

But none of the party seemed to fear that, and having passed the night comfortably with the farmer they left his house and journeyed on into the Kingdom of Auriel.

Before noon they came upon the edge of a forest, where a poor man was chopping logs into firewood. Seeing Prince Marvel's party approach, this man ran toward them waving his hands and shouting excitedly:

"Take the other path! Take the other path!"

"And why should we take the other path?" inquired the prince, reining in his steed.

"Because this one leads to the castle of the great sorcerer, Kwytoffle," answered the man.

"But there is where we wish to go," said Marvel.

"What! You wish to go there?" cried the man. "Then you will be robbed and enslaved!"

"Not as long as we are able to fight," laughed the big Wul-Takim.

“If you resist the sorcerer, you will be turned into grasshoppers and June-bugs,” declared the man, staring at them in wonder.

“How do you know that?” asked Marvel.

“Kwytoffle says so. He promises to enchant every one who dares defy his power.”

“Has any one ever yet dared defy him?” asked Nerle.

“Certainly not!” said the man. “No one wishes to become a June-bug or a grasshopper. No one dares defy him.”.

“I am anxious to see this sorcerer,” exclaimed King Terribus. “He ought to prove an interesting person, for he is able to accomplish his purposes by threats alone.”

“Then let us ride on,” said Marvel.

“Dear us! Dear us!” remonstrated the bald-headed Ki; “are we to become grasshoppers, then?”

“We shall see,” returned the prince, briefly.

“With your long legs,” added the pretty pair of High Ki, laughingly, “you ought to be able to jump farther than any other grasshopper in the kingdom.”

“Great Kika-koo!” cried the Ki, nervously, “what a fate! what a terrible fate! And your Highnesses, I suppose, will become June-bugs, and flutter your wings with noises like buzz-saws!”

21. The Wonderful Book of Magic

Whatever their fears might be, none of Prince Marvel's party hesitated to follow him along the path through the forest in search of the sorcerer, and by and by they came upon a large clearing. In the middle of this open space was a big building in such bad repair that its walls were tumbling down in several places, and all around it the ground was uncared for and littered with rubbish. A man was walking up and down in front of this building, with his head bowed low; but when he heard the sound of approaching horses' hoofs he looked up and stared for a moment in amazement. Then, with a shout of rage, he rushed toward them and caught Prince Marvel's horse by the bridle.

"How dare you!" he cried; "how dare you enter my forest?"

Marvel jerked his bridle from the man's grasp and said in return:

"Who are you?"

"Me! Who am I? Why, I am the great and powerful Kwytoffle! So beware! Beware my sorcery!"

They all looked at the man curiously. He was short and very fat, and had a face like a puff-ball, with little red eyes and scarcely any nose at all. He wore a black gown with scarlet grasshoppers and june-bugs embroidered upon the cloth; and his hat was high and peaked, with an imitation grasshopper of extraordinary size perched upon its point. In his right hand he carried a small black wand, and around his neck hung a silver whistle on a silver cord.

Seeing that the strangers were gazing on him so earnestly, Kwytoffle thought they were frightened; so he said again, in a big voice:

"Beware my vengeance!"

"Beware yourself!" retorted the prince. "For if you do not treat us more respectfully, I shall have you flogged."

"What! Flog me!" shouted Kwytoffle, furiously. "For this I will turn every one of you into grasshoppers--unless you at once give me all the wealth you possess!"

"Poor man!" exclaimed Nerle; "I can see you are longing for that flogging. Will you have it now?" and he raised his riding-whip above his head.

Kwytoffle stumbled backward a few paces and blew shrilly upon his silver whistle. Instantly a number of soldiers came running from the building, others following quickly after them until fully a hundred rough-looking warriors, armed with swords and axes, had formed in battle array, facing the little party of Prince Marvel.

"Arrest these strangers!" commanded Kwytoffle, in a voice like a roar. "Capture them and bind them securely, and then I will change them all into

grasshoppers!”

“All right,” answered the captain of the soldiers; and then he turned to his men and shouted: “Forward--double-quick--march!”

They came on with drawn swords; at first running, and then gradually dropping into a walk, as they beheld Nerle, Wul-Takim, King Terribus and Marvel standing quietly waiting to receive them, weapons in hand and ready for battle. A few paces off the soldiers hesitated and stopped altogether, and Kwytoffle yelled at the captain:

“Why don’t you go on? Why don’t you capture them? Why don’t you fight them?”

“Why, they have drawn their swords!” responded the captain, reproachfully.

“Who cares?” roared the sorcerer.

“We care,” said the captain, giving a shudder, as he looked upon the strangers. “Their swords are sharp, and some of us would get hurt.”

“You’re cowards!” shrieked the enraged Kwytoffle. “I’ll turn you all into June-bugs!”

At this threat the soldiers dropped their swords and axes, and all fell upon their knees, trembling visibly and imploring their cruel master not to change them into june-bugs.

“Bah!” cried Nerle, scornfully; “why don’t you fight? If we kill you, then you will escape being June-bugs.”

“The fact is,” said the captain, woefully, “we simply can’t fight. For our swords are only tin, and our axes are made of wood, with silver-paper pasted over them.”

“But why is that?” asked Wul-Takim, while all the party showed their surprise.

“Why, until now we have never had any need to fight,” said the captain, “for every one has quickly surrendered to us or run away the moment we came near. But you people do not appear to be properly frightened, and now, alas! since you have drawn upon us the great sorcerer’s anger, we shall all be transformed into June-bugs.”

“Yes!” roared Kwytoffle, hopping up and down with anger, “you shall all be June-bugs, and these strangers I will transform into grasshoppers!”

“Very well,” said Prince Marvel, quietly; “you can do it now.”

“I will! I will!” cried the sorcerer.

“Then why don’t you begin?” inquired the prince.

“Why don’t I begin? Why, I haven’t got the enchantments with me, that’s why. Do you suppose we great magicians carry around enchantments in our pockets?” returned the other, in a milder tone.

“Where do you keep your enchantments?” asked the prince.

“They’re in my dwelling,” snapped Kwytoffle, taking off his hat and fanning his fat face with the brim.

“Then go and get them,” said Marvel.

“Nonsense! If I went to get the enchantments you would all run away!” retorted the sorcerer.

“Not so!” protested Nerle, who was beginning to be amused. “My greatest longing in life is to become a grasshopper.”

“Oh, yes! PLEASE let us be grasshoppers!” exclaimed the High Ki maids in the same breath.

“We want to hop! We want to hop! Please--PLEASE let us hop!” implored the bald-headed Ki, winking their left eyes at Wul-Takim.

“By all means let us become grasshoppers,” said King Terribus, smiling; and Wul-Takim added:

“I’m sure your soldiers would enjoy being June-bugs, for then they wouldn’t have to work. Isn’t that so, boys?”

The bewildered soldiers looked at one another in perplexity, and the still more bewildered sorcerer gazed on the speakers with staring eyes and wide-open mouth.

“I insist,” said Prince Marvel, “upon your turning us into grasshoppers and your soldiers into June-bugs, as you promised. If you do not, then I will flog you--as I promised.”

“Very well,” returned the sorcerer, with a desperate look upon his face; “I’ll go and find the enchantment.”

“And we’ll go with you,” remarked the prince, pleasantly.

So the entire party accompanied Kwytoffle into the house, where they entered a large room that was in a state of much disorder.

“Let me see,” said the sorcerer, rubbing his ears, as if trying to think; “I wonder if I put them in this cupboard. You see,” he explained, “no one has ever before dared me to transform him into a June-bug or grasshopper, so I have almost forgotten where I keep my book of enchantments. No, it’s not in the cupboard,” he continued, looking there; “but it surely must be in this chest.”

It was not in the chest, either, and so the sorcerer continued to look in all sorts of queer places for his book of enchantments, without finding it. Whenever he paused in his search Prince Marvel would say, sternly:

“Go on! Find the book! Hunt it up. We are all anxious to become grasshoppers.” And then Kwytoffle would set to work again, although big drops of perspiration were now streaming down his face.

Finally he pulled an old book from underneath the pillow of his bed, and

crying, “Here it is!” carried it to the window.

He turned a few leaves of the book and then said:

“How unfortunate! The compound I require to change you into grasshoppers must be mixed on the first day of September; and as this is now the eighth day of September I must wait nearly a year before I can work the enchantment.”

“How about the June-bugs?” asked Nerle.

“Oh! Ah! The June-bug mixture can only be made at the dark o’ the moon,” said the sorcerer, pretending to read, “and that is three weeks from now.”

“Let me read it,” said Prince Marvel, suddenly snatching the book from Kwytoffle’s hands. Then he turned to the title-page and read:

“‘Lives of Famous Thieves and Impostors.’ Why, this is not a book of enchantments.”

“That is what I suspected,” said Terribus.

“No one but a sorcerer can read the enchantments in this book,” declared Kwytoffle; but he hung his head with a sheepish look, for he knew his deception had been well understood.

“Is your own history written in this volume?” inquired Marvel.

“No,” answered the sorcerer.

“Then it ought to be,” said the prince, “for you are no sorcerer at all, but merely a thief and an impostor!”

22. The Queen of Plenta

The soldiers of Kwytoffle wanted to hang their old master at once, for he had won their enmity by abusing them in many ways; but Prince Marvel would not let them do this. However, they tied the false sorcerer to a post, and the captain gave him a good whipping--one lash for each letter in the words "grasshopper" and "June-bug." Kwytoffle howled loudly for mercy, but no one was at all sorry for him.

Wul-Takim tied a rope around the impostor's neck, and when the party left the castle they journeyed all through the kingdom of Auriel, and at every town or city they came to the reformed thief would cry out to the populace:

"Here is the terrible sorcerer Kwytoffle, who threatened to change you into grasshoppers and june-bugs. But you may see that he is a very common man, with no powers of sorcery whatever!"

And then the people would laugh and pelt mud at their former tyrant, and thank Prince Marvel for haying exposed the false and wicked creature.

And they called the son of their old king back to his lawful throne, where he ruled wisely and well; and the hoarded wealth of Kwytoffle was divided among the people again, and soon the country became prosperous once more.

This adventure was very amusing to the pretty High Ki of Twi. It afforded them laughter for many days, and none of the party ever saw a grasshopper or a june-bug afterward without thinking of the terrible sorcerer Kwytoffle.

They left that disgraced person grooming horses for his board in the stables of the new king, and proceeded upon their journey.

Without further event they reached the splendid southern Kingdom of Plenta, which was the most delightfully situated of any dominion in the Enchanted Island of Yew. It was ruled by a good and generous queen, who welcomed the strangers to her palace and gave a series of gay entertainments in their honor.

King Terribus was especially an object of interest, for every one had heard his name and feared him and his fierce people. But when they beheld his pleasant countenance and listened to his gentle voice they began to regard him with much love and respect; and really Terribus was worthy of their friendship since he had changed from a deformed monster into an ordinary man, and had forbidden his people ever again to rob and plunder their weaker neighbors.

But the most popular personages visiting at the court of the Queen of Plenta were the lovely High Ki of Twi. Although beautiful girls abounded in this kingdom, none could compare with the royal twins, and their peculiar condition only served to render them the more interesting.

Two youths would approach the High Ki at the same time and invite them to dance, and in united voices they would accept the invitation and go whirling around the room with exactly the same steps, laughing at the same instant and enjoying the dance equally. But if one youth asked his partner a question, both the twins would make answer, and that was sure to confuse and embarrass the youth. Still, the maids managed very well to adapt themselves to the ways of people who were singular, although they sometimes became a little homesick for Twi, where they were like all the other people.

The bald-headed Ki kept watchful eyes on their youthful rulers, and served them very cheerfully. But with all their travels and experiences, the old men could never be convinced it was better to be singular than double.

Prince Marvel was the real hero of the party, and Nerle received much attention on account of his master's popularity. He did not seem as unhappy as usual, and when the prince inquired the reason, his esquire answered that he believed the excitement of their adventures was fast curing him of his longing for something he could not have. As for the pleasure of suffering, he had had some experience of that, too, and it was not nearly so delightful as he had expected.

Wul-Takim was not a society man, so he stayed around the royal stables and made friends with the grooms, and traded his big black horse for two bay ones and a gold neck-chain, and was fairly content with his lot.

And so the party enjoyed several happy weeks at the court of the good Queen of Plenta, until one day the terrible news arrived that carried them once more into exciting adventures.

23. The Red Rogue of Dawna

One morning, while they were all standing in the courtyard waiting for their horses, as they were about to go for a ride, a courier came galloping swiftly up to the palace and cried:

"Does any one know where Prince Marvel can be found?"

"I am Prince Marvel," replied the young knight, stepping out from among the others.

"Then have I reached my journey's end!" said the courier, whose horse was nearly exhausted from long and hard riding. "The Lady Seseley is in great danger, and sends for you to come and rescue her. The great Baron Merd, her father, has been killed and his castle destroyed, and all his people are either captives or have been slain outright."

"And who has done this evil thing?" asked Prince Marvel, looking very stern and grave.

"The Red Rogue of Dawna," answered the messenger. "He quarreled with the Baron Merd and sent his savage hordes to tear down his castle and slay him. I myself barely escaped with my life, and the Lady Seseley had but time to say, before she was carried off, that if I could find Prince Marvel he would surely rescue her."

"And so I will!" declared the prince, "if she be still alive."

"Who is this Lady Seseley?" asked Nerle, who had come to his master's side.

"She is my first friend, to whom I owe my very existence. It is her image, together with those of her two friends, which is graven on my shield," answered Prince Marvel, thoughtfully.

"And what will you do?" inquired the esquire.

"I must go to her at once."

When they heard of his mission all the party insisted on accompanying him. Even the dainty High Ki could not be deterred by any thoughts of dangers they might encounter; and after some discussion Prince Marvel allowed them to join him.

So Wul-Takim sharpened his big broadsword, and Nerle carefully prepared his master's horse, so that before an hour had passed they were galloping toward the province of the Red Rogue of Dawna.

Prince Marvel knew little concerning this personage, but Nerle had much to tell of him. The Red Rogue had once been page to a wise scholar and magician, who lived in a fine old castle in Dawna and ruled over a large territory. The boy was very small and weak--smaller even than the average dwarf--and his master did not think it worth while to watch him. But one

evening, while the magician was standing upon the top of the highest tower of his castle, the boy gave him a push from behind, and he met death on the sharp rocks below. Then the boy took his master's book of magic and found a recipe to make one grow. He made the mixture and swallowed it, and straightway began to grow big and tall. This greatly delighted him, until he found he was getting much bigger than the average man and rapidly becoming a giant. So he sought for a way to arrest the action of the magical draft; but before he could find it he had grown to enormous proportions, and was bigger than the biggest giant. There was nothing in the book of magic to make one grow smaller, so he was obliged to remain as he was--the largest man in the Enchanted Island.

All this had happened in a single night. The morning after his master's murder the page announced himself lord of the castle; and, seeing his enormous size, none dared deny his right to rule. On account of his bushy hair, which was fiery red in color, and the bushy red beard that covered his face when he became older, people came to call him the Red One. And after his evil deeds and quarrelsome temper had made him infamous throughout the island, people began to call him the Red Rogue of Dawna.

He had gathered around him a number of savage barbarians, as wicked and quarrelsome as himself, and so none dared to interfere with him, or even to meet him, if it were possible to avoid it.

This same Red Rogue it was who had drawn the good Baron Merd into a quarrel and afterward slain the old knight and his followers, destroyed his castle, and carried his little daughter Seseley and her girl friends, Berna and Helda, into captivity, shutting them up in his own gloomy castle.

The Red Rogue thought he had done a very clever thing, and had no fear of the consequences until one of his men came running up to the castle to announce that Prince Marvel and his companions were approaching to rescue the Lady Seseley.

"How many of them are there?" demanded the Red Rogue.

"There are eight, altogether," answered the man, "but two of them are girls."

"And they expect to force me to give up my captives?" asked the Red One, laughing with a noise like the roar of a waterfall. "Why, I shall make prisoners of every one of them!"

The man looked at his master fearfully, and replied:

"This Prince Marvel is very famous, and all people speak of his bravery and power. It was he who conquered King Terribus of Spor, and that mighty ruler is now his friend, and is one of the eight who approach."

The Red Rogue stopped laughing, for the fame of Spor's terrible king had

long ago reached him. And he reflected that any one who could conquer the army of giants and dwarfs and Gray Men that served Terribus must surely be one to be regarded seriously. Moreover--and this was a secret--the Red Rogue had never been able to gain the strength to correspond with his gigantic size, but had ever remained as weak as when he was a puny boy. So he was accustomed to rely on his cunning and on the terror his very presence usually excited to triumph over his enemies. And he began to be afraid of this prince.

"You say two of the party are girls?" he asked.

"Yes," said the man, "but also among them are King Terribus himself, and the renowned Wul-Takim, formerly king of thieves, who was conquered by the prince, although accounted a hard fighter, and is now his devoted servant. And there are two old men who are just alike and have a very fierce look about them. They are said to come from the hidden Kingdom of Twi."

By this time the Red Rogue was thoroughly frightened, but he did not yet despair of defeating his enemies. He knew better than to attempt to oppose Prince Marvel by force, but he still hoped to conquer him by trickery and deceit.

Among the wonderful things that the Red Rogue's former master, the wise scholar and magician, had made were two large enchanted mirrors, which were set on each side of the great hallway of the castle. Heavy curtains were drawn over the surfaces of these mirrors, because they both possessed a dreadful magical power. For whenever any one looked into one of them his reflection was instantly caught and imprisoned in the mirror, and his body at the same time became invisible to all earthly eyes, only the mirror retaining his form.

While considering a way to prevent the prince from freeing the Lady Seseley, the Red Rogue happened to think of these mirrors, which had never yet been used. So he went stealthily into the great hall and drew aside the covering from one of the mirrors. He did not dare look into the mirror himself, but hurried away to another room, and then sent a page up a back stairway to summon the Lady Seseley and her two maids into his presence.

The girls at once obeyed, for they greatly feared the Red Rogue; and of course they descended the front stairway and walked through the great hall. At once the large mirror that had been exposed to view caught the eye of Seseley, and she paused to regard her reflection in the glass. Her two companions did likewise, and instantly all three girls became invisible, while the mirror held their reflections fast in its magic surface.

The Red Rogue was watching them through a crack in the door, and seeing the girls disappear he gave a joyful laugh and exclaimed:

“Now let Prince Marvel find them if he can!”

The three girls began to wander aimlessly through the castle; for not only were they invisible to others, but also to themselves and to one another, and they knew not what to do nor which way to turn.

24. The Enchanted Mirrors

Presently Prince Marvel and his party arrived and paused before the doors of the castle, where the Red Rogue stood bowing to them with mock politeness and with an evil grin showing on his red face.

"I come to demand the release of the Lady Seseley and her companions!" Prince Marvel announced, in a bold voice. "And I also intend to call you to account for the murder of Baron Merd."

"You must be at the wrong castle," answered the Red One, "for I have murdered no baron, nor have I any Lady Seseley as prisoner."

"Are you not the Red Rogue of Dawna?" demanded the prince.

"Men call me by that name," acknowledged the other.

"Then you are deceiving me," said the prince.

"No, indeed!" answered the Red Rogue, mockingly. "I wouldn't deceive any one for the world. But, if you don't believe me, you are welcome to search my castle."

"That I shall do," returned the prince, sternly, "whether I have your permission or not," and he began to dismount. But Nerle restrained him, saying:

"Master, I beg you will allow me to search the castle. For this Red Rogue is playing some trick upon us, I am sure, and if anything happened to you there would be no one to protect the little High Ki and our other friends."

"But suppose something should happen to you?" inquired the prince, anxiously.

"In that case," said Nerle, "you can avenge me."

The advice was so reasonable, under the circumstances, that the prince decided to act upon it.

"Very well," said he, "go and search the castle, and I will remain with our friends. But if anything happens to you, I shall call the Red Rogue to account."

So Nerle entered the castle, passing by the huge form of its owner, who only nodded to the boy and grinned with delight.

The esquire found himself in the great hall and began to look around him, but without seeing any one. Then he advanced a few steps and, to his surprise, discovered a large mirror, in which were reflected the faces and forms of three girls, as well as his own.

"Why, here they are!" he attempted to say; but he could not hear his own voice. He glanced down at himself but could see nothing at all--for his body had become invisible. His reflection was still in the glass, and he knew that his body existed the same as before; but although he yet saw plainly the hall

and all that it contained, he could see neither himself nor any other person of flesh.

After waiting a considerable time for his esquire to reappear Prince Marvel became impatient.

“What have you done with Nerle?” he asked of the Red Rogue.

“Nothing,” was the reply. “I have been here, plainly within your sight, every moment.”

“Let me go and find him!” exclaimed King Terribus, and rushed into the castle before the prince could reply. But Terribus also encountered the enchanted mirror, and the prince waited in vain for his return.

Then Wul-Takim volunteered to go in search of the others, and drew his big, sharp sword before entering the hall. But an hour passed by and he did not return.

The Red Rogue was overjoyed at the success of his stratagem, and could scarce refrain from laughing outright at the prince’s anxiety.

Marvel was really perplexed. He knew some treachery was afoot, but could not imagine what it was. And when the pretty High Ki declared their intention of entering the castle, he used every endeavor to dissuade them. But the twin girls would not be denied, so great was their curiosity. So the prince said:

“Well, we will all go together, so that the Ki and I may be able to protect you.”

The Red Rogue gladly granted them admittance, and they passed him and entered the great hall.

The place appeared to them to be completely empty, so they walked along and came opposite the mirror. Here all stopped at once, and the twin High Ki uttered exclamations of surprise, and the twin Ki shouted, “Great Kika-koo!”

For there in the glass were the reflections of the three girls and Nerle and King Terribus and Wul-Takim. And there were also the reflections of the twin High Ki and the twin Ki. Only Prince Marvel’s reflection was missing, and this was because of his fairy origin. For the glass could reflect and hold only the forms of mortals.

But the prince saw the reflections of all the others, and then made the discovery that the forms of the Ki and the High Ki had become invisible. No one except himself appeared to be standing in the great hall of the Red Rogue’s castle! Yet grouped within the glass were the likenesses of all his friends, as well as those of Lady Seseley and her companions; and all were staring back at him earnestly, as if imploring him to save them.

The mystery was now explained, and Prince Marvel rushed from the hall to find the treacherous Red Rogue. But that clever trickster had hidden

himself in an upper room, and for the present was safely concealed.

For a time Prince Marvel could not think what to do. Such magic was all unknown to him, and how to free the imprisoned forms of his friends was a real problem. He walked around the castle, but no one was in sight, the Rogue having given orders to all his people to keep away. Only the tethered horses did he see, and these raised their heads and whinnied as if in sympathy with his perplexity.

Then he went back into the hall and searched all the rooms of the castle without finding a single person. On his return he stopped in front of the mirror and sorrowfully regarded the faces of his friends, who again seemed to plead for relief.

And while he looked a sudden fit of anger came over him at being outwitted by this Red Rogue of Dawna. Scarcely knowing what he did, he seized his sword by the blade and struck the mirror a powerful blow with the heavy hilt. It shattered into a thousand fragments, which fell clattering upon the stone floor in every direction. And at once the charm was broken; each of his friends now became visible. They appeared running toward him from all parts of the castle, where they had been wandering in their invisible forms.

They called out joyful greetings to one another, and then all of them surrounded the prince and thanked him earnestly for releasing them.

The little Lady Seseley and her friends, Berna and Helda, were a bit shy in the presence of so many strangers; but they alone knew the prince's secret, and that he was a fairy transformed for a year; so they regarded him as an old and intimate acquaintance, and after being introduced by him to the others of his party they became more at ease.

The sweet little High Ki maids at once attracted Seseley, and she loved them almost at first sight. But it was Nerle who became the little lady's staunchest friend; for there was something rather mystical and unnatural to him about the High Ki, who seemed almost like fairies, while in Seseley he recognized a hearty, substantial girl of his own rank in life.

While they stood talking and congratulating one another outside of the castle, the Red Rogue of Dawna appeared among them. He had heard the noise of the smashing of his great mirror, and had come running downstairs from his hiding-place to find his cunning had all been for naught and his captives were free.

A furious anger then took possession of the Rogue, and forgetting his personal weakness he caught up a huge battle-ax and rushed out to hurl himself upon Prince Marvel, intending to do him serious injury.

But the prince was not taken unawares. He saw the Red Rogue coming and met him with drawn sword, striking quickly at the arm that wielded the

big ax. The stroke was as sure as it was quick, and piercing the arm of the giant caused him to drop the ax with a howl of pain.

Then Prince Marvel seized the Red Rogue by the ear--which he was just tall enough to reach--and dragged him up the steps and into the castle, the big fellow crying for mercy at every step and trembling like a leaf through cowardice.

But down the hall Marvel marched him, seeking some room where the Rogue might be safely locked in. The great curtain that covered the second enchanted mirror now caught Prince Marvel's eye, and, still holding his prisoner by the ear, he reached out his left hand and pulled aside the drapery.

The Red Rogue looked to see what his captor was doing, and beheld his own reflection in the magic mirror. Instantly he gave a wild cry and disappeared, his body becoming absolutely invisible, while his coarse red countenance stared back from the mirror.

And then Prince Marvel gave a sigh of relief and dropped the curtain over the surface of the mirror. For he realized that the Red Rogue of Dawna had at last met with just punishment and was safely imprisoned for all time.

25. The Adventurers Separate

When Prince Marvel and his friends had ridden away from the castle the savage followers of the Red One came creeping up to listen for their master's voice. But silence reigned in every part of the castle, and after stealing fearfully through the rooms without seeing any one the fellows became filled with terror and fled from the place, never to return.

And afterward the neighbors whispered that the castle was haunted by the spirit of the terrible Red Rogue, and travelers dared not stop in the neighborhood, but passed by quickly and with averted faces.

The prince and his party rode gaily along toward the Kingdom of Heg, for Nerle had invited them all to visit his father's castle. They were very happy over their escape, and only the little Lady Seseley became sad at times, when she thought of her father's sad fate.

The Baron Neggar, who was Nerle's father, was not only a wealthy nobleman, but exceedingly kind and courteous; so that every member of Prince Marvel's party was welcomed to the big castle in a very hospitable manner.

Nerle was eagerly embraced by both his father and mother, who were overjoyed to see him return safe and sound after his wanderings and adventures.

"And have you been cured of your longing for something that you can not have?" asked the baron, anxiously.

"Not quite," said Nerle, laughing; "but I am more reconciled to my lot. For I find wherever I go people are longing for just the things they can not get, and probably would not want if they had them. So, as it seems to be the fate of most mortals to live unsatisfied, I shall try hereafter to be more contented."

These words delighted the good baron, and he gave a rich and magnificent feast in honor of his son's return.

The High Ki of Twi, after passing several pleasant days at Nerle's home, now decided that they had seen enough of the world and would be glad to return to their own kingdom, where all was peaceful and uneventful, and rule it to the end of their days. So the baron furnished them an escort of twenty men-at-arms, and these conducted the High Ki and the aged Ki safely back to the hole in the hedge.

And after they had entered the Land of Twi, the first act of the High Ki was to order the hedge repaired and the hole blocked up; and I have never heard that any one, from that time forth, ever succeeded in gaining admittance to the hidden kingdom. So its subsequent history is unknown.

King Terribus also bade the prince an affectionate farewell and rode back to his own kingdom; and burly Wul-Takim accompanied him as far as the cave, where the fifty-eight reformed thieves awaited him.

Nerle's mother gladly adopted the Lady Seseley and her two companions, and thereafter they made their home at the baron's castle. And years afterward, when they had grown to be women, Seseley was married to Nerle and became the lady of the castle herself.

Prince Marvel enjoyed the feasting and dancing at the castle very much, but after the party began to break up, and the High Ki and the Ki had left him, as well as King Terribus and honest Wul-Takim, the young knight grew thoughtful and sometimes uneasy, and his happy laugh was less frequently heard. Nerle often regarded his young master with a feeling of awe, for there occasionally came a look into Marvel's eyes that reminded him more of the immortals than of any human being. But the prince treated him with rare kindness and always pressed Nerle's hand affectionately when he bade him good night, for he had grown fond of his esquire. Also they had long conversations together, during which Nerle gleaned a great deal of knowledge and received some advice that was of much use to him in his later life.

One day Prince Marvel sought out Lady Seseley and said:

"Will you ride with me to the Forest of Lurla?"

"Willingly," she answered; and calling Berna and Helda to attend them, they mounted their horses and rode swiftly away, for it was a long distance to Lurla.

By noon the party entered the forest, and although the path they traversed was unknown to the girls, who had usually entered the forest from its other side, near to where the Baron Merd's castle had stood, the prince seemed to have no difficulty in finding his way.

He guided them carefully along the paths, his handsome war-charger stepping with much grace and dignity, until at length they came to a clearing.

Here the prince paused abruptly, and Seseley looked around her and at once recognized the place.

"Why," she exclaimed, in surprise, "it is the Fairy Bower!"

And then she turned to Prince Marvel and asked in a soft voice:

"Is the year ended, Prince?"

His smile was a bit sad as he answered, slowly:

"The year will be ended in five minutes!"

26. The End of the Year

The girls sat upon the green moss and waited. Prince Marvel stood silent beside his horse. The silver armor was as bright as the day he donned it, nor was there a dent in his untarnished shield. The sword that had done such good service he held lightly in his hand, and the horse now and then neighed softly and turned to look at him with affectionate eyes.

Seseley began to tremble with excitement, and Berna and Helda stared at the prince with big round eyes.

But, after all, they saw nothing so remarkable as they expected. For presently--and it all happened in a flash--Prince Marvel was gone from their midst, and a handsome, slender-limbed deer darted from the bower and was quickly lost in the thick forest. On the ground lay a sheet of bark and a twig from a tree, and beside them was Lady Seseley's white velvet cloak.

Then the three girls each drew a long breath and looked into one another's eyes, and, while thus engaged, a peal of silvery laughter sounded in their ears and made them spring quickly to their feet.

Before them stood a tiny and very beautiful fairy, clothed in floating gossamer robes of rose and pearl color, and with eyes sparkling like twin stars.

"Prince Marvel!" exclaimed the three, together.

"No, indeed!" cried the fairy, with a pretty little pout. "I am no one but myself; and, really, I believe I shall now be content to exist for a few hundred years in my natural form. I have quite enjoyed my year as a mortal; but after all there are, I find, some advantages in being a fairy. Good by, my dears!"

And with another ripple of laughter the pretty creature vanished, and the girls were left alone.

27. A Hundred Years Afterward

About a hundred years after Prince Marvel enjoyed his strange adventures in the Enchanted Island of Yew an odd thing happened.

A hidden mirror in a crumbling old castle of Dawna broke loose from its fastenings and fell crashing on the stone pavement of the deserted hall. And from amid the ruins rose the gigantic form of a man. His hair and beard were a fiery red, and he gazed at the desolation around him in absolute amazement.

It was the Red Rogue of Dawna, set free from his imprisonment.

He wandered out and found strange scenes confronting him, for during the hundred years a great change had taken place in the Enchanted Island. Great cities had been built and great kingdoms established. Civilization had won the people, and they no longer robbed or fought or indulged in magical arts, but were busily employed and leading respectable lives.

When the Red Rogue tried to tell folks who he was, they but laughed at him, thinking the fellow crazy. He tried to get together a band of thieves, as Wul-Takim had done in the old days, but none would join him.

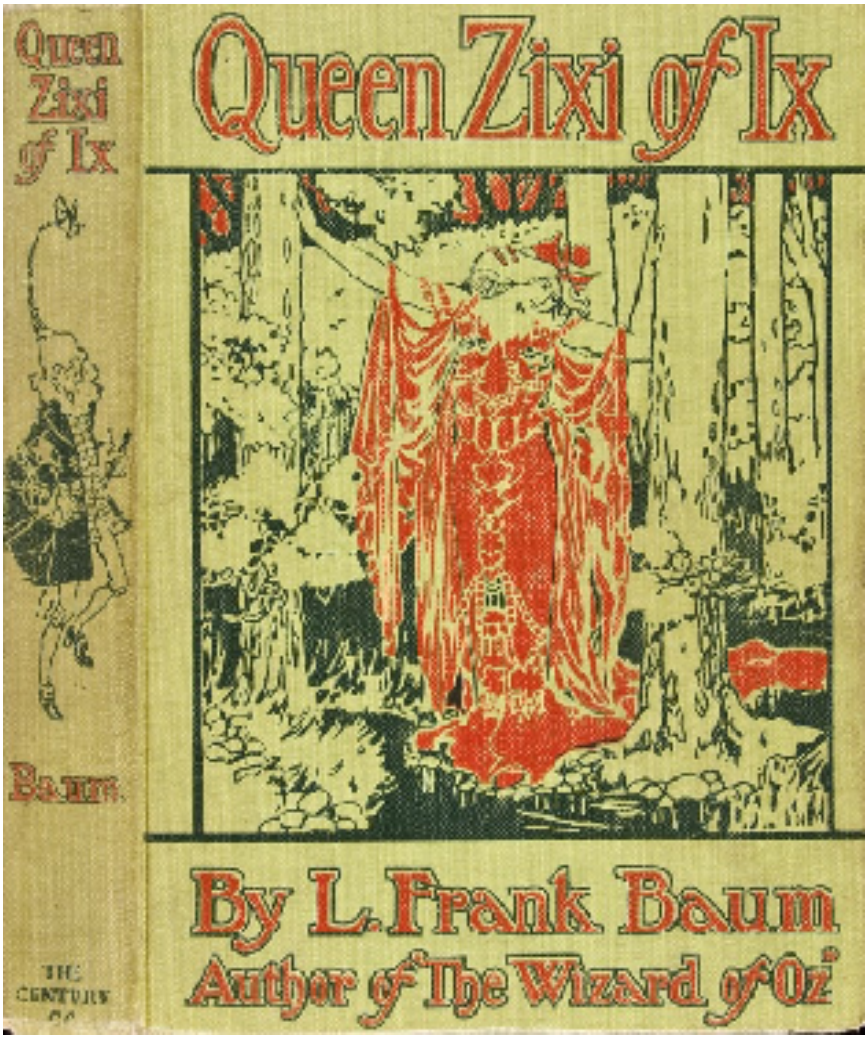
And so, forced to be honest against his will, the Rogue was driven to earn a living by digging in the garden of a wealthy noble, of whom he had never before heard.

But often he would pause in his labors and lean on his spade, while thoughts of the old days of wild adventure passed through his mind in rapid succession; and then the big man would shake his red head with a puzzled air and mutter:

“I wonder who that Prince Marvel could have been! And I wonder what ever became of him!”

QUEEN ZIXI OF IX

Queen Zixi of Ix originally appeared as a serial in the children's magazine, *St. Nicholas*, in 1904-05. The Century Company published it as a book in 1905, with artwork by popular illustrator, Frederick Richardson. The novel remains one of Baum's best loved tales, with some readers finding it superior to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The story alternates between two lands near Oz, Ix and Noland, where a magic cloak grants wishes to its residents. Queen Zixi of Ix, a witch-queen, covets the cloak and sets out to retrieve it. The tale deals with alliances and attaining wisdom as well as an intriguing battle with the strange ball-shaped people known as the Roly-Rogues. King Bud, Princess Fluff, and Queen Zixi later appear in *The Road to Oz*, visiting Ozma at the Emerald City on her birthday.



A first edition copy of 'Queen Zixi of Ix'

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A poster for the serial publication of Queen Zixi of Ix in St. Nicholas

The Weaving of the Magic Cloak

The fairies assembled one moonlit night in a pretty clearing of the ancient forest of Burzee. The clearing was in the form of a circle, and all around stood giant oak and fir trees, while in the center the grass grew green and soft as velvet. If any mortal had ever penetrated so far into the great forest and could have looked upon the fairy circle by daylight, he might perhaps have seen a tiny path worn in the grass by the feet of the dancing elves. For here, during the full of the moon, the famous fairy band ruled by good Queen Lulea loved to dance and make merry while the silvery rays flooded the clearing and caused their gauzy wings to sparkle with every color of the rainbow. On this especial night, however, they were not dancing. For the queen had seated herself upon a little green mound, and while her band clustered about her, she began to address the fairies in a tone of discontent. “I am tired of dancing, my dears,” said she. “Every evening since the moon grew big and round we have come here to frisk about and laugh and disport ourselves; and although those are good things to keep the heart light, one may grow weary even of merrymaking. So I ask you to suggest some new way to divert both me and yourselves during this night.” “That is a hard task,” answered one pretty sprite, opening and folding her wings slowly--as a lady toys with her fan. “We have lived through so many ages that we long ago exhausted everything that might be considered a novelty, and of all of recreations nothing gives us such continued pleasure as dancing.” “But I do not care to dance tonight,” replied Lulea with a little frown. “We might create something by virtue of our fairy powers,” suggested one who reclined at the foot of the queen. “Ah, that is just the idea!” exclaimed the dainty Lulea with brightening countenance. “Let us create something. But what?” “I have heard,” remarked another member of the band, “of a thinking-cap having been made by some fairies in America. And whatever mortal wore this thinking-cap was able to conceive the most noble and beautiful thoughts.” “That was indeed a worthy creation,” cried the little queen. “What became of the cap?” “The man who received it was so afraid someone else would get it and be able to think the same exquisite thoughts as himself that he hid it safely away--so safely that he himself never could think afterward where he had placed it.” “How unfortunate! But we must not make another thinking-cap, lest it meet a like fate. Cannot you suggest something else?” “I have heard,” said another, “of certain fairies who created a pair of enchanted boots which would always carry their mortal wearer away from danger and never into it.” “What a great boon to those blundering mortals!” cried the queen. “And whatever became of the boots?” “They came at last into the

possession of a great general who did not know their powers. So he wore them into battle one day, and immediately ran away, followed by all his men, and the fight was won by the enemy." "But did not the general escape danger?" "Yes, at the expense of his reputation. So he retired to a farm and wore out the boots tramping up and down a country road and trying to decide why he had suddenly become such a coward." "The boots were worn by the wrong man, surely," said the queen, "and that is why they proved a curse rather than a blessing. But we want no enchanted boots. Think of something else." "Suppose we weave a magic cloak," proposed Espa, a sweet little fairy who had not before spoken. "A cloak? Indeed, we might easily weave that," returned the queen. "But what sort of magic powers must it possess?" "Let its wearer have any wish instantly fulfilled," said Espa brightly. But at this there arose quite a murmur of protest on all sides, which the queen immediately silenced with a wave of her royal hand. "Our sister did not think of the probable consequences of what she suggested," declared Lulea, smiling into the downcast face of little Espa, who seemed to feel rebuked by the disapproval of the others. "An instant's reflection would enable her to see that such power would give the cloak's mortal wearer as many privileges as we ourselves possess. And I suppose you intended the magic cloak for a mortal wearer?" she inquired. "Yes," answered Espa shyly, "that was my intention." "But the idea is good nevertheless," continued the queen, "and I propose we devote this evening to weaving the magic cloak. Only its magic shall give to the wearer the fulfillment of but one wish; and I am quite sure that even that should prove a great boon to the helpless mortals." "Suppose more than one person wears the cloak," one of the band said. "Which then shall have the one wish fulfilled?" The queen devoted a moment to thought, and then replied, "Each possessor of the magic cloak may have one wish granted, provided the cloak is not stolen from its last wearer. In that case, the magic power will not be exercised on behalf of the thief." "But should there not be a limit to the number of the cloak's wearers?" asked the fairy lying at the queen's feet. "I think not. If used properly, our gift will prove of great value to mortals. And if we find it is misused, we can at any time take back the cloak and revoke the magic power. So now, if we are all agreed upon this novel amusement, let us set to work." At these words the fairies sprang up eagerly; and their queen, smiling upon them, waved her wand toward the center of the clearing. At once a beautiful fairy loom appeared in the space. It was not such a loom as mortals use. It consisted of a large and a small ring of gold supported by a tall pole of jasper. The entire band danced around it thrice, the fairies carrying in each hand a silver shuttle wound with glossy filaments finer than the finest silk. And the threads on each shuttle appeared a

different hue from those of all the other shuttles. At a sign from the queen, they one and all approached the golden loom and fastened an end of thread in its warp. Next moment they were gleefully dancing hither and thither, while the silver shuttles flew swiftly from hand to hand and the gossamer-like web began to grow upon the loom. Presently the queen herself took part in the sport, and the thread she wove into the fabric was the magical one which was destined to give the cloak its wondrous power. Long and swiftly the fairy band worked beneath the old moon's rays, while their feet tripped gracefully over the grass and their joyous laughter tinkled like silver bells and awoke the echoes of the grim forest surrounding them. And at last they paused and threw themselves upon the green with little sighs of content. For the shuttles and loom had vanished; the work was complete, and Queen Lulea stood upon the mound holding in her hand the magic cloak. The garment was as beautiful as it was marvelous--each and every hue of the rainbow glinted and sparkled from the soft folds; and while it was light in weight as swan's down, its strength was so great that the fabric was well-nigh indestructible. The fairy band regarded it with great satisfaction, for everyone had assisted in its manufacture and could admire with pardonable pride its glossy folds. "It is very lovely indeed!" cried little Espa. "But to whom shall we present it?" The question aroused a dozen suggestions, each fairy seeming to favor a different mortal. Every member of this band, as you doubtless know, was the unseen guardian of some man or woman or child in the great world beyond the forest, and it was but natural that each should wish her own ward to have the magic cloak. While they thus disputed, another fairy joined them and pressed to the side of the queen. "Welcome, Ereol," said Lulea. "You are late." The newcomer was very lovely in appearance, and with her fluffy golden hair and clear blue eyes was marvelously fair to look upon. In a low, grave voice she answered the queen: "Yes, your Majesty, I am late. But I could not help it. The old King of Noland whose guardian I have been since his birth has passed away this evening, and I could not bear to leave him until the end came." "So the old king is dead at last!" said the queen thoughtfully. "He was a good man, but woefully uninteresting, and he must have wearied you greatly at times, my sweet Ereol." "All mortals are, I think, wearisome," returned the fairy with a sigh. "And who is the new King of Noland?" asked Lulea. "There is none," answered Ereol. "The old king died without a single relative to succeed to his throne, and his five high counselors were in great dilemma when I came away." "Well, my dear, you may rest and enjoy yourself for a period in order to regain your old lightsome spirits. By and by I will appoint you guardian to some newly born babe, that your duties may be less arduous. But I am sorry you were not with us tonight, for we have had

rare sport. See! We have woven a magic cloak." Ereol examined the garment with pleasure. "And who is to wear it?" she asked. There again arose the good-natured dispute as to which mortal in all the world should possess the magic cloak. Finally the queen, laughing at the arguments of her band, said to them, "Come! Let us leave the decision to the Man in the Moon. He has been watching us with a great deal of amusement, and once, I am sure, I caught him winking at us in quite a roguish way." At this every head was turned toward the moon, and then a man's face, full-bearded and wrinkled, but with a jolly look upon the rough features, appeared sharply defined upon the moon's broad surface. "So I'm to decide another dispute, eh?" said he in a clear voice. "Well, my dears, what is it this time?" "We wish you to say what mortal shall wear the magic cloak which I and the ladies of my court have woven," replied Queen Lulea. "Give it to the first unhappy person you meet," said the Man in the Moon. "The happy mortals have no need of magic cloaks." And with this advice the friendly face of the Man in the Moon faded away until only the outlines remained visible against the silver disk. The queen clapped her hands delightedly. "Our Man in the Moon is very wise," she declared, "and we shall follow his suggestion. Go, Ereol, since you are free for a time, and carry the magic cloak to Noland. And the first person you meet who is really unhappy, be it man, woman or child, shall receive from you the cloak as a gift from our fairy band." Ereol bowed and folded the cloak over her arm. "Come, my children," continued Lulea, "the moon is hiding behind the treetops, and it is time for us to depart." A moment later the fairies had disappeared, and the clearing wherein they had danced and woven the magic cloak lay shrouded in deepest gloom.

The Book of Laws

On this same night great confusion and excitement prevailed among the five high counselors of the kingdom of Noland. The old king was dead, and there was none to succeed him as ruler of the country. He had outlived every one of his relatives, and since the crown had been in this one family for generations, it puzzled the high counselors to decide upon a fitting successor. These five high counselors were very important men. It was said that they ruled the kingdom while the king ruled them; which made it quite easy for the king and rather difficult for the people. The chief counselor was named Tullydub. He was old and very pompous, and had a great respect for the laws of the land. The next in rank was Tollydob, the lord high general of the king's army. The third was Tillydib, the lord high pursebearer. The fourth was Tallydab, the lord high steward. And the fifth and last of the high counselors was Tellydeb, the lord high executioner. These five had been careful not to tell the people when the old king had become ill, for they feared being annoyed by many foolish questions. They sat in a big room next the bedchamber of the king, in the royal palace of Nole--which is the capital city of Noland--and kept everyone out except the king's physician, who was half blind and wholly dumb and could not gossip with outsiders had he wanted to. And while the high counselors sat and waited for the king to recover or die, as he might choose, Jikki waited upon them and brought them their meals. Jikki was the king's valet and principal servant. He was as old as any of the five high counselors; but they were all fat, whereas Jikki was wonderfully lean and thin, and the counselors were solemn and dignified, whereas Jikki was terribly nervous and very talkative. "Beg pardon, my masters," he would say every few minutes, "but do you think his Majesty will get well?" And then, before any of the high counselors could collect themselves to answer, he continued: "Beg pardon, but do you think his Majesty will die?" And the next moment he would say: "Beg pardon, but do you think his Majesty is any better or any worse?" And all this was so annoying to the high counselors that several times one of them took up some object in the room with the intention of hurling it at Jikki's head, but before he could throw it, the old servant had nervously turned away and left the room. Tellydeb, the lord high executioner, would often sigh, "I wish there were some law that would permit me to chop off Jikki's head." But then Tullydub, the chief counselor, would say gloomily, "There is no law but the king's will, and he insists that Jikki be allowed to live." So they were forced to bear with Jikki as best they could, but after the king breathed his last breath the old servant became more nervous and annoying than ever. Hearing

that the king was dead, Jikki made a rush for the door of the bell tower, but tripped over the foot of Tollydob and fell upon the marble floor so violently that his bones rattled, and he picked himself up half dazed by the fall. “Where are you going?” asked Tollydob. “To toll the bell for the king’s death,” answered Jikki. “Well, remain here until we give you permission to go,” commanded the lord high general. “But the bell ought to be tolled!” said Jikki. “Be silent!” growled the lord high pursebearer. “We know what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.” But this was not strictly true. In fact, the five high counselors did not know what ought to be done under these strange circumstances. If they told the people the king was dead and did not immediately appoint his successor, then the whole population would lose faith in them and fall to fighting and quarreling among themselves as to who should become king, and that would never in the world do. No, it was evident that a new king must be chosen before they told the people that the old king was dead. But whom should they choose for the new king? That was the important question. While they talked of these matters, the ever-active Jikki kept rushing in and saying, “Hadn’t I better toll the bell?” “No!” they would shout in a chorus, and then Jikki would rush out again. So they sat and thought and counseled together during the whole long night, and by morning they were no nearer a solution of the problem than before. At daybreak Jikki stuck his head into the room and said, “Hadn’t I better--” “No!” they all shouted in a breath. “Very well,” returned Jikki. “I was only going to ask if I hadn’t better get you some breakfast.” “Yes!” they cried again in one breath. “And shall I toll the bell?” “No!” they screamed, and the lord high steward threw an inkstand that hit the door several seconds after Jikki had closed it and disappeared. While they were at breakfast they again discussed their future action in the choice of a king, and finally the chief counselor had a thought that caused him to start so suddenly that he nearly choked. “The book!” he gasped, staring at his brother counselors in a rather wild manner. “What book?” asked the lord high general. “The book of laws,” answered the chief counselor. “I never knew there was such a thing,” remarked the lord high executioner, looking puzzled. “I always thought the king’s will was the law.” “So it was! So it was when we had a king,” answered Tullydub excitedly. “But this book of laws was written years ago and was meant to be used when the king was absent or ill or asleep.” For a moment there was silence. “Have you ever read the book?” then asked Tillydib. “No, but I will fetch it at once, and we shall see if there is not a law to help us out of our difficulty.” So the chief counselor brought the book--a huge old volume that had a musty smell to it and was locked together with a silver padlock. Then the key had to be found, which was no easy task; but finally the great book of

laws lay open upon the table, and all the five periwigs of the five fat counselors were bent over it at once. Long and earnestly they searched the pages, but it was not until after noon that Tullydub suddenly placed his broad thumb upon a passage and shouted, “I have it! I have it!” “What is it? Read it! Read it aloud!” cried the others. Just then Jikki rushed into the room and asked, “Shall I toll the bell?” “No!” they yelled, glaring at him; so Jikki ran out, shaking his head dolefully. Then Tullydub adjusted his spectacles and leaned over the book, reading aloud the following words: “In case the king dies and there is no one to succeed him, the chief counselor of the kingdom shall go at sunrise to the eastward gate of the city of Nole and count the persons who enter through such gate as soon as it is opened by the guards. And the forty-seventh person that so enters, be it man, woman or child, rich or poor, humble or noble, shall immediately be proclaimed king or queen, as the case may be, and shall rule all the kingdom of Noland forever after, so long as he or she may live. And if anyone in all the kingdom of Nole shall refuse to obey the slightest wish of the new ruler, such person shall at once be put to death. This is the law.” Then all the five high counselors heaved a deep sigh of relief and repeated together the words, “This is the law.” “But it’s a strange law, nevertheless,” remarked the lord high pursebearer. “I wish I knew who will be the forty-seventh person to enter the east gate tomorrow at sunrise.” “We must wait and see,” answered the lord high general. “And I will have my army assembled and marshaled at the gateway that the new ruler of Noland may be welcomed in a truly kingly manner, as well as to keep the people in order when they hear the strange news.” “Beg pardon!” exclaimed Jikki, looking in at the doorway, “But shall I toll the bell?” “No, you numskull!” retorted Tullydub angrily. “If the bell is tolled, the people will be told, and they must not know that the old king is dead until the forty-seventh person enters the east gateway tomorrow morning!”

The Gift of the Magic Cloak

Nearly two days journey from the city of Nole, yet still within the borders of the great kingdom of Noland, was a little village lying at the edge of a broad river. It consisted of a cluster of houses of the humblest description, for the people of this village were all poor and lived in simple fashion. Yet one house appeared to be somewhat better than the others, for it stood on the riverbank and had been built by the ferryman whose business it was to carry all travelers across the river. And as many traveled that way, the ferryman was able in time to erect a very comfortable cottage and to buy good furniture for it, and to clothe warmly and neatly his two children. One of these children was a little girl named Margaret, who was called "Meg" by the villagers and "Fluff" by the ferryman her father, because her hair was so soft and fluffy. Her brother, who was two years younger, was named Timothy, but Margaret had always called him "Bud" because she could not say "brother" more plainly when first she began to talk; so nearly everyone who knew Timothy called him Bud as little Meg did. These children had lost their mother when very young, and the ferryman had tried to be both mother and father to them and had reared them very gently and lovingly. They were good children and were liked by everyone in the village. But one day a terrible misfortune befell them. The ferryman tried to cross the river for a passenger one very stormy night, but he never reached the other shore. When the storm subsided and morning came, they found his body lying on the riverbank, and the two children were left alone in the world. The news was carried by travelers to the city of Nole, where the ferryman's only sister lived, and a few days afterward the woman came to the village and took charge of her orphaned niece and nephew. She was not a bad-hearted woman, this Aunt Rivette, but she had worked hard all her life and had a stern face and a stern voice. She thought the only way to make children behave was to box their ears every now and then, so poor Meg, who had been well-nigh heartbroken at her dear father's loss, had still more occasion for tears after Aunt Rivette came to the village. As for Bud, he was so impudent and ill-mannered to the old lady that she felt obliged to switch him, and afterward the boy became surly and silent and neither wept nor answered his aunt a single word. It hurt Margaret dreadfully to see her little brother whipped, and she soon became so unhappy at the sorrowful circumstances in which she and her brother found themselves that she sobbed from morning to night and knew no comfort. Aunt Rivette, who was a laundress in the city of Nole, decided she would take Meg and Bud back home with her. "The boy can carry water for my tubs, and the girl can help me with the ironing," she said. So she sold all

the heavier articles of furniture that the cottage contained, as well as the cottage itself; and all the remainder of her dead brother's belongings she loaded upon the back of the little donkey she had ridden on her journey from Nole. It made such a pile of packages that the load seemed bigger than the donkey himself; but he was a strong little animal and made no complaint of his burden. All this being accomplished, they set out one morning for Nole, Aunt Rivette leading the donkey by the bridle with one hand and little Bud with the other, while Margaret followed behind, weeping anew at this and parting with her old home and all she had so long loved. It was a hard journey. The old woman soon became cross and fretful and scolded the little ones at almost every step. When Bud stumbled, as he often did, for he was unused to walking very far, Aunt Rivette would box his ears or shake him violently by the arm or tell him he was "a good-for-nothing little beggar." And Bud would turn upon her with a revengeful look in his eyes, but say not a word. The woman paid no attention to Meg, who continued to follow the donkey with tearful eyes and drooping head. The first night they obtained shelter at a farmhouse. But in the morning it was found that the boy's feet were so swollen and sore from the long walk of the day before that he could not stand upon them. So Aunt Rivette, scolding fretfully at his weakness, perched Bud among the bundles atop the donkey's back, and in this way they journeyed the second day, the woman walking ahead and leading the donkey, and Margaret following behind. The woman had hoped to reach the city of Nole at the close of this day, but the overburdened donkey would not walk very fast, so nightfall found them still a two-hours' journey from the city gates, and they were forced to stop at a small inn. But this inn was already overflowing with travelers, and the landlord could give them no beds nor even a room. "You can sleep in the stable if you like," said he. "There is plenty of hay to lie down upon." So they were obliged to content themselves with this poor accommodation. The old woman aroused them at the first streaks of daybreak the next morning, and while she fastened the packages to the donkey's back, Margaret stood in the stable yard and shivered in the cold morning air. The little girl felt that she had never been more unhappy than at that moment, and when she thought of her kind father and the happy home she had once known, her sobs broke out afresh and she leaned against the stable door and wept as if her little heart would break. Suddenly someone touched her arm, and she looked up to see a tall and handsome youth standing before her. It was none other than Ereol the fairy, who had assumed this form for her appearance among mortals, and over the youth's arm lay folded the magic cloak that had been woven the evening before in the fairy circle of Burzee. "Are you very unhappy, my dear?" asked Ereol in kindly

tones. “I am the most unhappy person in all the world!” replied the girl, beginning to sob afresh. “Then,” said Ereol, “I will present you with this magic cloak, which has been woven by the fairies. And while you wear it you may have your first wish granted; and if you give it freely to any other mortal, that person may also have one wish granted. So use the cloak wisely and guard it as a great treasure.” Saying this, the fairy messenger spread the folds of the cloak and threw the brilliant-hued garment over the shoulders of the girl. Just then Aunt Rivette led the donkey from the stable, and seeing the beautiful cloak which the child wore, she stopped short and demanded, “Where did you get that?” “This stranger gave it to me,” answered Meg, pointing to the youth. “Take it off! Take it off this minute and give it me--or I will whip you soundly!” cried the woman. “Stop!” said Ereol sternly. “The cloak belongs to this child alone, and if you dare take it from her, I will punish you severely.” “What! Punish me! Punish me, you rascally fellow! We’ll see about that.” “We will indeed,” returned Ereol, more calmly. “The cloak is a gift from the fairies, and you dare not anger them, for your punishment would be swift and terrible.” Now no one feared to provoke the mysterious fairies more than Aunt Rivette, but she suspected the youth was not telling her the truth, so she rushed upon Ereol and struck at him with her upraised cane. But to her amazement, the form of the youth vanished quickly into air, and then indeed she knew it was a fairy that had spoken to her. “You may keep your cloak,” she said to Margaret with a little shiver of fear. “I would not touch it for the world!” The girl was very proud of her glittering garment, and when Bud was perched upon the donkey’s back and the old woman began trudging along the road to the city, Meg followed after with much lighter steps than before. Presently the sun rose over the horizon, and its splendid rays shone upon the cloak and made it glitter gorgeously. “Ah me!” sighed the little girl, half aloud. “I wish I could be happy again!” Then her childish heart gave a bound of delight, and she laughed aloud and brushed from her eyes the last tear she was destined to shed for many a day. For though she spoke thoughtlessly, the magic cloak quickly granted to its first wearer the fulfillment of her wish. Aunt Rivette turned upon her in surprise. “What’s the matter with you?” she asked suspiciously, for she had not heard the girl laugh since her father’s death. “Why, the sun is shining,” answered Meg, laughing again. “And the air is sweet and fresh, and the trees are green and beautiful, and the whole world is very pleasant and delightful.” And then she danced lightly along the dusty road and broke into a verse of a pretty song she had learned at her father’s knee. The old woman scowled and trudged on again. Bud looked down at his merry sister and grinned from pure sympathy with her high spirits, and the donkey stopped and turned his head

to look solemnly at the laughing girl behind him. “Come along!” cried the laundress, jerking at the bridle. “Everyone is passing us upon the road, and we must hurry to get home before noon.” It was true. A good many travelers, some on horseback and some on foot, had passed them by since the sun rose, and although the east gate of the city of Nole was now in sight, they were obliged to take their places in the long line that sought entrance at the gate.

King Bud of Noland

The five high counselors of the kingdom of Noland were both eager and anxious upon this important morning. Long before sunrise Tollydob, the lord high general, had assembled his army at the east gate of the city; and the soldiers stood in two long lines beside the entrance, looking very impressive in their uniforms. And all the people, noting this unusual display, gathered around at the gate to see what was going to happen. Of course no one knew what was going to happen, not even the chief counselor nor his brother counselors. They could only obey the law and abide by the results. Finally the sun arose and the east gate of the city was thrown open. There were a few people waiting outside, and they promptly entered. "One, two, three, four, five, six!" counted the chief counselor in a loud voice. The people were much surprised at hearing this and began to question one another with perplexed looks. Even the soldiers were mystified. "Seven, eight, nine!" continued the chief counselor, still counting those who came in. A breathless hush fell upon the assemblage. Something very important and mysterious was going on, that was evident. But what? They could only wait and find out. "Ten, eleven!" counted Tullydub, and then heaved a deep sigh. For a famous nobleman had just entered the gate, and the chief counselor could not help wishing he had been number forty-seven. So the counting went on, and the people became more and more interested and excited. When the number had reached thirty-one, a strange thing happened. A loud "boom!" sounded through the stillness, and then another, and another. Someone was tolling the great bell in the palace bell tower, and people began saying to one another in awed whispers that the old king must be dead. The five high counselors, filled with furious anger but absolutely helpless, as they could not leave the gate, lifted up their five chubby fists and shook them violently in the direction of the bell tower. Poor Jikki, finding himself left alone in the palace, could no longer resist the temptation to toll the bell, and it continued to peal out its dull, solemn tones while the chief counselor stood by the gate and shouted, "Thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-four!" Only the mystery of this action could have kept the people quiet when they learned from the bell that their old king was dead. But now they began to guess that the scene at the east gate promised more of interest than anything they might learn at the palace, so they stood very quiet, and Jikki's disobedience of orders did no great harm to the plans of the five high counselors. When Tullydub had counted up to forty, the excitement redoubled, for everyone could see big drops of perspiration standing upon the chief counselor's brow, and all the other high counselors, who stood just behind him, were trembling violently with nervousness. A ragged, limping

peddler entered the gate. “Forty-five!” shouted Tullydub. Then came Aunt Rivette, dragging at the bridle of the donkey. “Forty-six!” screamed Tullydub. And now Bud rode through the gates, perched among the bundles on the donkey’s back and looking composedly upon the throng of anxious faces that greeted him. “Forty-Seven!” cried the chief counselor; and then in his loudest voice he continued, “Long live the new King of Noland!” All the high counselors prostrated themselves in the dusty road before the donkey. The old woman was thrust back in the crowd by a soldier, where she stood staring in amazement, and Margaret, clothed in her beautiful cloak, stepped to the donkey’s side and looked first at her brother and then at the group of periwigged men who bobbed their heads in the dust before him and shouted, “Long live the king!” Then, while the crowd still wondered, the lord high counselor arose and took from a soldier a golden crown set with brilliants, a jeweled scepter, and a robe of ermine. Advancing to Bud, he placed the crown upon the boy’s head and the scepter in his hand, while over his shoulders he threw the ermine robe. The crown fell over Bud’s ears, but he pushed it back upon his head so it would stay there, and as the kingly robe spread over all the bundles on the donkey’s back and quite covered them, the boy really presented a very imposing appearance. The people quickly rose to the spirit of the occasion. What mattered if the old king was dead now that a new king was already before them? They broke into sudden cheer and, joyously waving their hats and bonnets above their heads, joined eagerly in the cry, “Long live the King of Noland!” Aunt Rivette was fairly stupified. Such a thing was too wonderful to be believed. A man in the crowd snatched the bonnet from the old woman’s head and said to her brusquely, “Why don’t you greet the new king? Are you a traitor to your country?” So she also waved her bonnet and screamed “Long live the king!” But she hardly knew what she was doing or why she did it. Meantime the high counselors had risen from their knees and now stood around the donkey. “May it please your Serene Majesty to condescend to tell us who this young lady is?” asked Tullydub, bowing respectfully. “That’s my sister Fluff,” said Bud, who was enjoying his new position very much. All the counselors, at this, bowed low to Margaret. “A horse for the Princess Fluff!” cried the lord high general. And the next moment she was mounted upon a handsome white palfrey, where, with her fluffy golden hair and smiling face and the magnificent cloak flowing from her shoulders, she looked every inch a princess. The people cheered her, too, for it was long since any girl or woman had occupied the palace of the King of Noland, and she was so pretty and sweet that everyone loved her immediately. And now the king’s chariot drove up, with its six prancing steeds, and Bud was lifted from the back of the donkey and placed

in the high seat of the chariot. Again the people shouted joyful greetings; the band struck up a gay march tune, and then the royal procession started for the palace. First came Tollydob and his officers; then the king's chariot, surrounded by soldiers; then the four high counselors upon black horses, riding two on each side of Princess Fluff; and finally the band of musicians and the remainder of the royal army. It was an imposing sight, and the people followed after with cheers and rejoicings, while the lord high pursebearer tossed silver coins from his pouch for anyone to catch who could. A message had been sent to warn Jikki that the new king was coming, so he stopped tolling the death knell and instead rang out a glorious chime of welcome. As for old Rivette, finding herself and the donkey alike deserted, she once more seized the bridle and led the patient beast to her humble dwelling; and it was just as she reached her door that King Bud of Noland, amid the cheers and shouts of thousands, entered for the first time the royal palace of Nole.

Princess Fluff

Now when the new king had entered the palace with his sister, the chief counselor stood upon a golden balcony with the great book in his hand and read aloud to all the people who were gathered below the law in regard to choosing a new king, and the severe penalty in case any refused to obey his slightest wish. And the people were glad enough to have a change of rulers and pleased that so young a king had been given them. So they accepted both the law and the new king cheerfully, and soon dispersed to their homes to talk over the wonderful events of the day. Bud and Meg were ushered into beautifully furnished rooms on the second floor of the palace, and old Jikki, finding that he had a new master to serve, flew about in his usual nervous manner and brought the children the most delicious breakfast they had ever eaten in their lives. Bud had been so surprised at his reception at the gate and the sudden change in his condition that as yet he had not been able to collect his thoughts. His principal idea was that he was in a dream, and he kept waiting until he should wake up. But the breakfast was very real and entirely satisfying, and he began to wonder if he could be dreaming after all. The old servant, when he carried away the dishes, bowed low to Bud and said, "Beg pardon, your Majesty! But the lord high counselor desires to know the king's will." Bud stared at him a moment thoughtfully. "Tell him I want to be left alone to talk with my sister Fluff," he replied. Jikki again bowed low and withdrew, closing the door behind him, and then the children looked at each other solemnly until Meg burst into a merry laugh. "Oh Bud!" she cried. "Think of it! I'm the royal Princess Fluff and you're the King of all Noland! Isn't it funny!" And they she danced about the room in great delight. Bud answered her seriously. "What does it all mean, Fluff?" he said. "We're only poor children, you know, so I can't really be a king. And I wouldn't be surprised if Aunt Rivette came in any minute and boxed my ears." "Nonsense!" laughed Margaret. "Didn't you hear what that fat, periwigged man said about the law? The old king is dead, and someone else had to be king, you know, and the forty-seventh person who entered the east gate was you, Bud, and so by law you are the king of all this great country. Don't you see?" Bud shook his head and looked at his sister. "No I don't see," he said. "But if you say it's all right, Fluff, why, it must be all right." "Of course it's all right," declared the girl, throwing off her pretty cloak and placing it on a chair. "You're the rightful king and can do whatever you please, and I'm the rightful princess because I'm your sister, so I can do whatever I please. Don't you see, Bud?" "But look here, Fluff," returned her brother. "If you're a princess, why do you wear that old gray dress and those patched-up shoes?

Father used to tell us that princesses always wore the loveliest dresses." Meg looked at herself and sighed. "I really ought to have some new dresses, Bud. And I suppose if you order them, they will be ready in no time. And you must have some new clothes, too, for your jacket is ragged and soiled." "Do you really think it's true, Fluff?" he asked anxiously. "Of course it's true. Look at your kingly robe, and your golden crown, and that stick with all those jewels in it!"--meaning the scepter. "They're true enough, aren't they?" Bud nodded. "Call in that old man," he said. "I'll order something and see if he obeys me. If he does, then I'll believe I'm really a king." "But now listen, Bud," said Meg gravely. "Don't you let these folks see you're afraid or that you're not sure whether you're a king or not. Order them around and make them afraid of you! That's what the kings do in all the stories I ever read." "I will," replied Bud. "I'll order them around. So you call in that old donkey with the silver buttons all over him." "Here's a bell rope," said Meg. "I'll pull it." Instantly Jikki entered and bowed low to each of the children. "What's your name?" asked Bud. "Jikki, your gracious Majesty." "Who are you?" "Your Majesty's valet, if you please," answered Jikki. "Oh!" said Bud. He didn't know what a valet was, but he wasn't going to tell Jikki so. "I want some new clothes, and so does my sister," Bud announced as boldly as possible. "Certainly, your Majesty. I'll send the lord high steward here at once." With this he bowed and rushed away, and presently Tallydab, the lord high steward, entered the room and with a low bow presented himself respectfully before the children. "I beg your Majesty to command me," said Tallydab gravely. Bud was a little awed by his appearance, but he resolved to be brave. "We want some new clothes," he said. "They are already ordered, your Majesty, and will be here presently." "Oh!" said Bud, and stopped short. "I have ordered twenty suits for your Majesty and forty gowns for the princess," continued Tallydab, "and I hope these will content your Majesty and the princess until you have time to select a larger assortment." "Oh!" said Bud, greatly amazed. "I have also selected seven maidens, the most noble in all the land, to wait upon the princess. They are even now awaiting her Highness in her own apartments." Meg clapped her hands delightedly. "I'll go to them at once," she cried. "Has your Majesty any further commands?" asked Tallydab. "If not, your five high counselors would like to confer with you in regard to your new duties and responsibilities." "Send 'em in," said Bud promptly. And while Margaret went to meet her new maids, the king held his first conference with his high counselors. In answer to Tallydab's summons, the other four periwigs, pompous and solemn, filed into the room and stood in a row before Bud, who looked upon them with a sensation of awe. "Your Majesty," began the venerable Tullydub in a grave

voice. “We are here to instruct you, with your gracious consent, in your new and important duties.” Bud shifted uneasily in his chair. It all seemed so unreal and absurd--this kingly title and polite deference bestowed upon a poor boy by five dignified and periwigged men--that it was hard for Bud to curb his suspicion that all was not right. “See here, all of you,” said he suddenly. “Is this thing a joke? Tell me, is it a joke?” “A joke?” echoed all of the five counselors in several degrees of shocked and horrified tones, and Tellydeb, the lord high executioner, added reproachfully, “Could we, by any chance, have the temerity to joke with your mighty and glorious Majesty?” “That’s just it,” answered the boy. “I am not a mighty and glorious Majesty. I’m just Bud, the ferryman’s son, and you know it.” “You are Bud, the ferryman’s son, to be sure,” agreed the chief counselor, bowing courteously. “But by the decree of fate and the just and unalterable laws of the land you are now become absolute ruler of the great kingdom of Noland, therefore all that dwell therein are your loyal and obedient servants.” Bud thought this over. “Are you sure there’s no mistake?” he asked with hesitation. “There can be no mistake,” returned old Tullydub firmly, “for we, the five high counselors of the kingdom, have ourselves interpreted and carried out the laws of the land, and the people, your subjects, have approved our action.” “Then,” said Bud, “I suppose I’ll have to be king whether I want to or not.” “Your Majesty speaks but the truth,” returned the chief counselor with a sigh. “With or without your consent, you are the king. It is the law.” And all the others chanted in a chorus, “It is the law.” Bud felt much relieved. He had no notion whatever of refusing to be a king. If there was no mistake and he was really the powerful monarch of Noland, then there ought to be no end of fun and freedom for him during the rest of his life. To be his own master; to have plenty of money; to live in a palace and order people around as he pleased--all this seemed to the poor and friendless boy of yesterday to be quite the most delightful fate that could possibly overtake one. So lost did he become in thoughts of the marvelous existence opening before him that he paid scant attention to the droning speeches of the five aged counselors who were endeavoring to acquaint him with the condition of affairs in his new kingdom and to instruct him in his many and difficult duties as its future ruler. For a full hour he sat quiet and motionless, and they thought he was listening to these dreary affairs of state, but suddenly he jumped up and astonished the dignitaries by exclaiming, “See here, you just fix things to suit yourselves. I’m going to find Fluff.” And with no heed to protests, the new king ran from the room and slammed the door behind him.

Bud Dispenses Justice

The next day the funeral of the old king took place, and the new king rode in the grand procession in a fine chariot, clothed in black velvet embroidered with silver. Not knowing how to act in his new position, Bud sat still and did nothing at all, which was just what was expected of him. But when they returned from the funeral, he was ushered into the great throne room of the palace and seated on the golden throne. And then the chief counselor informed him that he must listen to the grievances of his people and receive the homage of the noblemen of Noland. Fluff sat on a stool beside the king, and the five high counselors stood back of him in a circle. And then the doors were thrown open and all the noblemen of the country crowded in. One by one they kissed first the king's hand and then the princess's hand and vowed they would always serve them faithfully. Bud did not like this ceremony. He whispered to Fluff that it made him tired. "I want to go upstairs and play," he said to the lord high steward. "I don't see why I can't." "Very soon your Majesty may go. Just now it is your duty to hear the grievances of your people," answered Tallydab gently. "What's the matter with 'em?" asked Bud crossly. "Why don't they keep out of trouble?" "I do not know, your Majesty, but there are always disputes among the people." "But that isn't the king's fault, is it?" said Bud. "No, your Majesty, but it's the king's place to settle these disputes, for he has the supreme power." "Well, tell 'em to hurry up and get it over with," said the boy restlessly. Then a venerable old man came in leading a boy by the arm and holding a switch in his other hand. "Your Majesty," began the man, having first humbly bowed to the floor before the king. "My son, whom I have brought here with me, insists upon running away from home, and I wish you would tell me what to do with him." "Why do you run away?" Bud asked the boy. "Because he whips me," was the answer. Bud turned to the man. "Why do you whip the boy?" he inquired. "Because he runs away," said the man. For a minute, Bud looked puzzled. "Well, if anyone whipped me, I'd run away, too," he said at last. "And if the boy isn't whipped or abused he ought to stay at home and be good. But it's none of my business anyhow." "Oh, your Majesty!" cried the chief counselor. "It really must be your business. You're the king, you know, and everybody's business is the king's." "That isn't fair," said Bud sulkily. "I've got my own business to attend to, and I want to go upstairs and play." But now Princess Fluff leaned toward the young king and whispered something in his ear which made his face brighten. "See here!" exclaimed Bud. "The first time this man whips the boy again or the first time the boy runs away, I order my lord high executioner to give them both a good

switching. Now let them go home and try to behave themselves." Everyone applauded his decision, and Bud also thought with satisfaction that he had hit upon a good way out of the difficulty. Next came two old women, one very fat and the other very thin, and between them they led a cow, the fat woman having a rope around one horn and the thin woman a rope around the other horn. Each woman claimed she owned the cow, and they quarreled so loudly and so long that the lord high executioner had to tie a bandage over their mouths. When peace was thus restored, the high counselor said, "Now, your Majesty, please decide which of these two women owns the cow." "I can't," said Bud helplessly. "Oh, your Majesty, but you must!" cried all the five high counselors. Then Meg whispered to the king again, and the boy nodded. The children had always lived in a little village where there were plenty of cows, and the girl thought she knew a way to decide which of the claimants owned this animal. "Send one of the women away," said Bud. So they led the lean woman to a little room nearby and locked her in. "Bring a pail and a milking stool," ordered the king. When they were brought, Bud turned to the fat woman and ordered the bandage taken from her mouth. "The cow's mine! It's my cow! I own it!" she screamed the moment she could speak. "Hold!" said the king. "If the cow belongs to you, let me see you milk her." "Certainly, your Majesty, certainly!" she cried, and seizing the pail and the stool, she ran up to the left side of the cow, placed the stool, and sat down upon it. But before she could touch the cow, the animal suddenly gave a wild kick that sent the startled woman in a heap upon the floor, with her head stuck fast in the milk pail. Then the cow moved forward a few steps and looked blandly around. Two of the guards picked the woman up and pulled the pail from her head. "What's the matter?" asked Bud. "She's frightened, of course," whimpered the woman, "and I'll be black and blue by tomorrow morning, your Majesty. Any cow would kick in such a place as this." "Put this woman in the room and fetch the other woman here," commanded the king. So the lean woman was brought out and ordered to milk the cow. She took the stool in one hand and the pail in the other, and approaching the cow softly on the right side, patted the animal gently and said to it, "So, Boss! So-o-o-o, Bossie my darlin'! Good Bossie! Nice Bossie!" The cow turned her head to look at the lean woman, and made no objection when she sat down and began milking. In a moment the king said, "The cow is yours! Take her and go home!" Then all the courtiers and people, and even the five high counselors, applauded the king enthusiastically, and the chief counselor lifted up his hands and said, "Another Solomon has come to rule us!" And the people applauded again, till Bud looked very proud and quite red in the face with satisfaction. "Tell me," he said to the woman, who was about to lead the

cow away, “tell me, where did you get such a nice faithful Bossie as that?” “Must I tell you the truth?” asked the woman. “Of course,” said Bud. “Then, your Majesty,” she returned, “I stole her from that fat woman you have locked up in that room. But no one can take the cow from me now, for the king has given her to me.” At this a sudden hush fell on the room, and Bud looked redder than ever. “Then how did it happen that you could milk the cow and she couldn’t?” demanded the king angrily. “Why, she doesn’t understand cows, and I do,” answered the woman. “Good day, your Majesty. Much obliged, I’m sure!” And she walked away with the cow, leaving the king and Princess Fluff and all the people much embarrassed. “Have we any cows in the royal stables?” asked Bud, turning to Tullydub. “Certainly, your Majesty, there are several,” answered the chief counselor. “Then,” said Bud, “give one of them to the fat woman and send her home. I’ve done all the judging I am going to do today, and now I’ll take my sister upstairs to play.” “Hold on! Hold on!” cried a shrill voice. “I demand justice! Justice of the king! Justice of the law! Justice to the king’s aunt.” Bud looked down the room and saw Aunt Rivette struggling with some of the guards. Then she broke away from them and rushed to the throne, crying again, “Justice, your Majesty!” “What’s the matter with you?” asked Bud. “Matter? Everything’s the matter with me. Aren’t you the new king?” “Yes,” said Bud. “That’s what I am.” “Am I not your aunt? Am I not your aunt?” “Yes,” said Bud again. “Well, why am I left to live in a hut and dress in rags? Doesn’t the law say that every blood relative of the king shall live in a royal palace?” “Does it?” asked Bud, turning to Tullydub. “The law says so, your Majesty.” “And must I have that old crosspatch around me all the time?” wailed the new king. “Crosspatch yourself!” screamed Aunt Rivette, shaking her fist at Bud. “I’ll teach you to crosspatch me when I get you alone!” Bud shuddered. Then he turned again to Tullydub. “The king can do what he likes, can’t he?” the boy asked. “Certainly, your Majesty.” “Then let the lord high executioner step forward!” “Oh Bud! What are you going to do?” said Fluff, seizing him tightly by the arm. “You let me alone!” answered Bud. “I’m not going to be a king for nothing. And Aunt Rivette whipped me once, sixteen hard switches! I counted ‘em.” The executioner was now bowing before him. “Get a switch,” commanded the king. The executioner brought a long, slender birch bough. “Now,” said Bud, “you give Aunt Rivette sixteen good switches.” “Oh, don’t! Don’t, Bud!” pleaded Meg. Aunt Rivette fell on her knees, pale and trembling. In agony she raised her hands. “I’ll never do it again! Let me off, your Majesty!” she screamed. “Let me off this once! I’ll never do it again! Never! Never!” “All right,” said Bud with a cheery smile. “I’ll let you off this time. But if you don’t behave or if you interfere with me or Fluff, I’ll

have the lord high executioner take charge of you. Just remember I'm the king, and then we'll get along all right. Now you may go upstairs if you wish to and pick out a room on the top story. Fluff and I are going to play." With this, he laid his crown carefully on the seat of the throne and threw off his ermine robe. "Come on, Fluff! We've had enough business for today," he said, and dragged the laughing princess from the room, while Aunt Rivette meekly followed the lord high steward up the stairs to a comfortable apartment just underneath the roof. She was very well satisfied at last, and very soon she sent for the lord high pursebearer and demanded money with which to buy some fine clothes for herself. This was given her willingly, for the law provided for the comfort of every relative of the king, and knowing this Aunt Rivette fully intended to be the most comfortable woman in the kingdom of Noland.

The Wings of Aunt Rivette

Bud and Meg had plenty to occupy them in looking over and admiring their new possessions. First they went to the princess's rooms, where Fluff ordered her seven maids to spread out all the beautiful gowns she had received. And forty of them made quite an imposing show, I assure you. They were all dainty and sweet and of rich material suitable for all occasions and of all colors and shades. Of course there were none with trains, for Margaret, although a princess, was only a little girl; but the gowns were gay with bright ribbons and jeweled buttons and clasps, and each one had its hat and hosiery and slippers to match. After admiring the dresses for a time, they looked at Bud's new clothes--twenty suits of velvets, brocades, and finely woven cloths. Some had diamonds and precious gems sewn on them for ornaments, while others were plain; but the poorest suit there was finer than the boy had ever dreamed of possessing. There were also many articles of apparel to go with these suits, such as shoes with diamond buckles, silken stockings, neck laces, and fine linen; and there was a beautiful little sword with a gold scabbard and a jeweled hilt that the little king could wear on state occasions. However, when the children had examined the gowns and suits to their satisfaction, they began looking for other amusement. "Do you know, Fluff," said the boy, "there isn't a single toy or plaything in this whole palace?" "I suppose the old king didn't care for playthings," replied Fluff thoughtfully. Just then there was a knock at the door, and Aunt Rivette came hobbling into the room. Her wrinkled old face was full of eagerness, and in her hands she clasped the purse of golden coins the lord high pursebearer had given her. "See what I've got!" she cried, holding out the purse. "And I'm going to buy the finest clothes in all the kingdom! And ride in the king's carriage. And have a man to wait upon me! And make Mammy Skib and Mistress Kappleson and all the other neighbors wild with jealousy!" "I don't care," said Bud. "Why, you owe everything to me!" cried Aunt Rivette. "If I hadn't brought you to Nole on the donkey's back, you wouldn't have been the forty-seventh person to enter the gate." "That's true," said Meg. But Bud was angry. "I know it's true," he said, "but look here, you mustn't bother us. Just keep out of our way, please, and let me alone, and then I won't care how many new dresses you buy." "I'm going to spend every piece of this gold!" she exclaimed, clasping the purse with her wrinkled hands. "But I don't like to go through the streets in this poor dress. Won't you lend me your cloak, Meg, until I get back?" "Of course I will," returned the girl, and going to the closet, she brought out the magic cloak the fairy had given her and threw it over Aunt Rivette's shoulders. For she was sorry for the old woman, and this

was the prettiest cloak she had. So old Rivette, feeling very proud and anxious to spend her money, left the palace and walked as fast as her tottering legs would carry her down the street in the direction of the shops. “I’ll buy a yellow silk,” she mumbled to herself, half aloud, “and a white velvet and a purple brocade and a sky-blue bonnet with crimson plumes! And won’t the neighbors stare then? Oh dear! If I could only walk faster! And the shops are so far! I wish I could fly!” Now she was wearing the magic cloak when she expressed this wish, and no sooner had she spoken than two great, feathery wings appeared, fastened to her shoulders. The old woman stopped short, turned her head and saw the wings; and then she gave a scream and a jump and began waving her arms frantically. The wings flopped at the same time, raising her slowly from the ground, and she began to soar gracefully above the heads of the astonished people, who thronged the streets below. “Stop! Help! Murder!” shrieked Rivette, kicking her feet in great agitation, and at the same time flopping nervously her new wings. “Save me, someone! Save me!” “Why don’t you save yourself?” asked a man below. “Stop flying if you want to reach the earth again!” This struck old Rivette as a sensible suggestion. She was quite a distance in the air by this time, but she tried to hold her wings steady and not flop them, and the result was that she began to float slowly downward. Then, with horror, she saw she was sinking directly upon the branches of a prickly pear tree, so she screamed and began flying again, and the swift movement of her wings sent her high into the air. So great was her terror that she nearly fainted; but she shut her eyes so that she might not see how high up she was and held her wings rigid and began gracefully to float downward again. By and by she opened her eyes and found one of her sleeves was just missing the sharp point of a lightning rod on a tower of the palace. So she began struggling and flopping anew, and almost before she knew it, Aunt Rivette had descended to the roof of the royal stables. Here she sat down and began to weep and wail, while a great crowd gathered below and watched her. “Get a ladder! Please get a ladder!” begged old Rivette. “If you don’t, I shall fall and break my neck.” By this time Bud and Fluff had come out to see what caused the excitement, and to their amazement they found their old aunt perched high up on the stable roof with two great wings growing out of her back. For a moment they could not understand what had happened. Then Margaret cried, “Oh, Bud, I let her wear the magic cloak! She must have made a wish!” “Help! Help! Get a ladder!” wailed the old woman, catching sight of her nephew and niece. “Well, you are a bird, Aunt Rivette!” shouted Bud gleefully, for he was in a teasing mood. “You don’t need a ladder! I don’t see why you can’t fly down the same way you flew up.” And all the people shouted, “Yes, yes! The King

is right! Fly down!" Just then Rivette's feet began to slip on the sloping roof, so she made a wild struggle to save herself, and the result was that she fluttered her wings in just exactly the right way to sink down gradually to the ground. "You'll be all right as soon as you know how to use your wings," said Bud with a laugh. "But where did you get 'em, anyhow?" "I don't know," said Aunt Rivette, much relieved to be on earth again and rather pleased to have attracted so much attention. "Are the wings pretty?" "They are perfectly lovely!" cried Fluff, clapping her hands in glee. "Why, Aunt Rivette, I do believe you must be the only person in all the world who can fly!" "But I think you look like an overgrown buzzard," said Bud. Now it happened that all this praise and the wondering looks of the people did a great deal to reconcile Rivette to her new wings. Indeed, she began to feel a certain pride and distinction in them; and finding she had through all the excitement retained her grasp on the purse of gold, she now wrapped the magic cloak around her and walked away to the shops, followed by a crowd of men, women and children.

The Royal Reception

As for the king and Princess Fluff, they returned to the palace and dressed themselves in some of their prettiest garments, telling Jikki to have two ponies saddled and ready for them to ride upon. “We really must have some toys,” said Meg with decision, “and now that we are rich, there is no reason why we can’t buy what we want.” “That’s true,” answered Bud. “The old king hadn’t anything to play with. Poor old man! I wonder what he did to amuse himself.” They mounted their ponies and, followed by the chief counselor and the lord high pursebearer in one of the state carriages and a guard of soldiers for escort, they rode down the streets of the city on a pleasure jaunt amid the shouts of the loyal population. By and by Bud saw a toy shop in one of the streets, and he and Fluff slipped down from their ponies and went inside to examine the toys. It was a well stocked shop, and there were rows upon rows of beautiful dolls on the shelves, which attracted Margaret’s attention at once. “Oh Bud!” she exclaimed. “I must have one of these dollies!” “Take your choice,” said her brother calmly, although his own heart was beating with delight at the sight of all the toys arranged before him. “I don’t know which to choose,” sighed the little princess, looking from one doll to another with longing and indecision. “We’ll take ‘em all,” declared Bud. “All! What, all these rows of dollies?” she gasped. “Why not?” asked the king. Then he turned to the men who kept the shop and said, “Call in that old fellow who carries the money.” When the lord high pursebearer appeared, Bud said to him, “Pay the man for all these dolls, and for this--and this--and this!” and he began picking out the prettiest toys in all the shop in the most reckless way you can imagine. The soldiers loaded the carriage down with Meg’s dolls, and a big cart was filled with Bud’s toys. Then the pursebearer paid the bill, although he sighed deeply several times while counting out the money. But the new king paid no attention to old Tillydib; and when the treasures were all secured, the children mounted their ponies and rode joyfully back to the palace, followed in a procession by the carriage filled with dolls and the cart loaded with toys, while Tullydub and Tillydib, being unable to ride in the carriage, trotted along at the rear on foot. Bud had the toys and dolls all carried upstairs into a big room, and then he ordered everybody to keep out while he and Fluff arranged their playthings around the room and upon the tables and chairs, besides littering the floor so that they could hardly find a clear place large enough for some of their romping games. “After all,” he said to his sister, “it’s a good thing to be a king!” “Or even a princess,” added Meg, busily dressing and arranging her dolls. They made Jikki bring their dinner to them in the “playroom,” as Bud called it, but

neither of the children could spare much time to eat, their treasures being all so new and delightful. Soon after dusk, while Jikki was lighting the candles, the chief counselor came to the door to say that the king must be ready to attend the royal reception in five minutes. “I won’t,” said Bud. “I just won’t.” “But you must, your Majesty!” declared old Tullydub. “Am I not the king?” demanded Bud, looking up from where he was arranging an army of wooden soldiers. “Certainly, your Majesty,” was the reply. “And isn’t the king’s will the law?” continued Bud. “Certainly, your Majesty!” “Well, if that is so, just understand that I won’t come. Go away and let me alone!” “But the people expect your Majesty to attend the royal reception,” protested old Tullydub, greatly astonished. “It is the usual custom, you know, and they would be greatly disappointed if your Majesty did not appear.” “I don’t care,” said Bud. “You get out of here and let me alone!” “But your Majesty--” Bud threw a toy cannon at his chief counselor, and the old man ducked to escape it, and then quickly closed the door. “Bud,” said the princess softly, “you were just saying it’s great fun to be a king.” “So it is,” he answered promptly. “But father used to tell us,” continued the girl, trying a red hat on a brown-haired doll, “that people in this world always have to pay for any good thing they get.” “What do you mean?” said Bud with surprise. “I mean if you’re going to be the king and wear fine clothes and eat lovely dinners and live in a palace and have countless servants and all the playthings you want and your own way in everything and with everybody, then you ought to be willing to pay for all these pleasures.” “How? But how can I pay for them?” demanded Bud, staring at her. “By attending the royal reception and doing all the disagreeable things the king is expected to do,” she answered. Bud thought about it for a minute. Then he got up, walked over to his sister, and kissed her. “I b’lieve you’re right, Fluff,” he said with a sigh. “I’ll go to that reception tonight and take it as I would take a dose of medicine.” “Of course you will!” returned Fluff, looking at him brightly, “And I’ll go with you! The dolls can wait till tomorrow. Have Jikki brush your hair, and I’ll get my maids to dress me!” Old Tullydub was wondering how he might best explain the king’s absence to the throng of courtiers gathered to attend the royal reception when to his surprise and relief his Majesty entered the room accompanied by the Princess Fluff. The king wore a velvet suit trimmed with gold lace, and at his side hung the beautiful jeweled sword. Meg was dressed in a soft, white, silken gown and looked as sweet and fair as a lily. The courtiers and their ladies, who were all wearing their most handsome and becoming apparel, received their little king with great respect, and several of the wealthiest and most noble among them came up to Bud to converse with him. But the king did not know what to say to these great personages, and so

the royal reception began to be a very stupid affair. Fluff saw that all the people were standing in stiff rows and looking at one another uneasily, so she went to Bud and whispered to him. “Is there a band of musicians in the palace?” the king inquired of Tellydeb, who stood near. “Yes, your Majesty.” “Send for them, then,” commanded Bud. Presently the musicians appeared, and the king ordered them to play a waltz. But the chief counselor rushed up and exclaimed, “Oh, your Majesty! This is against all rule and custom!” “Silence!” said Bud angrily. “I’ll make the rules and customs in this kingdom hereafter. We’re going to have a dance.” “But it’s so dreadful, so unconventional, your Majesty! It’s so--what shall I call it?” “Here! I’ve had enough of this,” declared Bud. “You go and stand in that corner with your face to the wall till I tell you to sit down,” he added, remembering a time when his father, the ferryman, had inflicted a like punishment upon him. Somewhat to his surprise, Tullydub at once obeyed the command, and then Bud made his first speech to the people. “We’re going to have a dance,” he said, “so pitch in and have a good time. If there’s anything you want, ask for it. You’re all welcome to stay as long as you please and go home when you get ready.” This seemed to please the company, for everyone applauded the king’s speech. Then the musicians began to play, and the people were soon dancing and enjoying themselves greatly. Princess Fluff had a good many partners that evening, but Bud did not care to dance; he preferred to look on, and after a time he brought old Tullydub out of his corner and made the chief counselor promise to be good and not annoy him again. “But it is my duty to counsel the king,” protested the old man solemnly. “When I want your advice, I’ll ask for it,” said Bud. While Tullydub stood beside the throne, looking somewhat sulky and disagreeable, the door opened and Aunt Rivette entered the reception room. She was clothed in a handsome gown of bright green velvet trimmed with red and yellow flowers, and her wings stuck out from the folds at her back in a way that was truly wonderful. Aunt Rivette seemed in an amiable mood. She smiled and curtsied to all the people, who stopped dancing to stare at her, and she even fluttered her wings once or twice to show that she was proud of being unlike all the others present. Bud had to laugh at her, she looked so funny, and then a mischievous thought came to him, and he commanded old Tullydub to dance with her. “But I don’t dance, your Majesty!” exclaimed the horrified chief counselor. “Try it. I’m sure you can dance,” returned Bud. “If you don’t know how, it’s time you learned.” So the poor man was forced to place his arm about Aunt Rivette’s waist and to whirl her around in a waltz. The old woman knew as little about dancing as did Tullydub, and they were exceedingly awkward, bumping into everyone they came near. Presently Aunt Rivette’s feet slipped,

and she would have tumbled upon the floor with the chief counselor had she not begun to flutter her wings wildly. So instead of falling, she rose gradually into the air, carrying Tullydub with her, for they clung to each other in terror, and one screamed, “Murder!” and the other “Help!” in their loudest voices. Bud laughed until the tears stood in his eyes, but Aunt Rivette, after bumping both her own head and that of the chief counselor against the ceiling several times, finally managed to control the action of her wings and to descend to the floor again. As soon as he was released, old Tullydub fled from the room, and Aunt Rivette, vowing she would dance no more, seated herself beside Bud and watched the revel until nearly midnight, when the courtiers and their ladies dispersed to their own homes, declaring that they had never enjoyed a more delightful evening.

Jikki has a Wish Granted

Next morning Aunt Rivette summoned Jikki to her room and said, “Take these shoes and clean and polish them; and carry down this tray of breakfast dishes; and send this hat to the milliner to have the feathers curled; and return this cloak to the Princess Fluff with my compliments, and say I’m much obliged for the loan of it.” Poor Jikki hardly knew how to manage so many orders. He took the shoes in his left hand, and the tray of dishes he balanced upon the other upraised palm. But the hat and cloak were too many for him. So Aunt Rivette, calling him “a stupid idiot”--probably because he had no more hands--set the plumed hat upon Jikki’s head and spread the cloak over his shoulders and ordered him to make haste away. Jikki was glad enough to go, for the fluttering of Aunt Rivette’s wings made him nervous; but he had to descend the stairs cautiously, for the hat was tipped nearly over his eyes, and if he stumbled, he would be sure to spill the tray of dishes. He reached the first landing of the broad stairs in safety, but at the second landing the hat joggled forward so that he could see nothing at all, and one of the shoes dropped from his hand. “Dear me!” sighed the old man. “I wonder what I shall do now? If I pick up the shoe, I shall drop the dishes; and I can’t set down this tray because I’m blinded by this terrible hat! Dear, dear! If I’m to be at the beck and call of that old woman and serve the new king at the same time, I shall have my hands full. My hands, in fact, are full now. I really wish I had half a dozen servants to wait on me!” Jikki knew nothing at all about the magic power of the cloak that fell from his shoulders, so his astonishment was profound when someone seized the shoe from his left hand and someone else removed the tray from his right hand, and still another person snatched the plumed hat from his head. But then he saw, bowing and smirking before him, six young men who looked as much alike as peas in the same pod, and all of whom wore very neat and handsome liveries of wine color with silver buttons on their coats. Jikki blinked and stared at all these people, and rubbed his eyes to make sure he was awake. “Who are you?” he managed to ask. “We are your half a dozen servants, sir,” answered the young men, speaking all together and bowing again. Jikki gasped and raised his hands with sudden amazement as he gazed in wonder upon the row of six smart servants. “But what are you doing here?” he stammered. “We are here to wait upon you, sir, as is our duty,” they answered promptly. Jikki rubbed his left ear, as was his custom when perplexed, and then he thought it all over. And the more he thought, the more perplexed he became. “I don’t understand!” he finally said in a weak voice. “You wished for us, and here we are,” declared the six, once more bowing low before him. “I know,” said Jikki. “But I’ve often wished

for many other things, and never got a single one of the wishes before!" The young men did not attempt to explain this curious fact. They stood in a straight row before their master as if awaiting his orders. One held the shoe Jikki had dropped, another its mate, still another the plumed hat, and a fourth the tray of dishes. "You see," remarked Jikki, shaking his head sadly at the six, "I'm only a servant myself." "You are our master, sir!" announced the young men, their voices blended into one. "I wish," said Jikki solemnly, "you were all back where you came from." And then he paused to see if this wish also would be fulfilled. But now the magic cloak conferred the fulfillment of but one wish upon its wearer, and the half a dozen servants remained standing rigidly before him. Jikki arose with a sigh. "Come downstairs to my private room," he said, "and we'll talk the matter over." So they descended the grand stairway to the main hall of the grand palace, Jikki going first and his servants following at a respectful distance. Just off the hall Jikki had a pleasant room where he could sit when not employed, and into this he led the six. After all, he considered, it would not be a bad thing to have half a dozen servants. They would save his old legs from many a tiresome errand. But just as they reached the hall, a new thought struck him, and he turned suddenly upon his followers. "See here!" he exclaimed. "How much wages do you fellows expect?" "We expect no wages at all, sir," they answered. "What? Nothing at all?" Jikki was so startled that he scarcely had strength remaining to stagger into his private room and sink into a chair. "No wages! Six servants and no wages to pay!" he muttered. "Why, it's wonderful, marvelous, astounding!" Then he thought to himself, "I'll try 'em and see if they'll really work." And aloud he asked, "How can I tell you apart, one from another?" Each servant raised his right arm and pointed to a silver badge upon his left breast; and then Jikki discovered that they were all numbered, from "one" up to "six." "Ah! Very good!" said Jikki. "Now, number six, take this shoe into the bedroom and clean and polish it." Number six bowed and glided from the room as swiftly and silently as if he were obeying a command of the King of Noland. "Number five," continued Jikki, "take this tray to the kitchen." Number five obeyed instantly, and Jikki chuckled with delight. "Number two, take this to the milliner in Royal Street and have the feathers curled." Number two bowed and departed almost before the words had left Jikki's mouth, and then the king's valet regarded the remaining three in some perplexity. "Half a dozen servants is almost too many," he thought. "It will keep me busy to keep them busy. I should have wished for only one--or two at the most." Just then he remembered something. "Number four," said he, "go after number two and tell the milliner that the hat belongs to Madame Rivette, the king's aunt." And a few

moments later, when the remaining two servants, standing upright before him, had begun to make him nervous, Jikki cried out, “Number three, take this other shoe down to the boot room and tell number six to clean and polish it also.” This left but one of the six unoccupied, and Jikki was wondering what to do with him when a bell rang. “That’s the king’s bell,” said Jikki. “I am not the king’s servant; I am here only to wait upon you,” said number one without moving to answer the bell. “Then I must go myself,” sighed the valet, and rushed away to obey the king’s summons. Scarcely had he disappeared when Tollydob, the lord high general, entered the room and said in a gruff voice, “Where is Jikki? Where’s that rascal Jikki?” Number one, standing stiffly at one end of the room, made no reply. “Answer me, you scoundrel!” roared the old gentleman. “Where’s Jikki?” Still number one stood silent, and this so enraged old Tollydob that he raised his cane and aimed a furious blow at the young man. The cane seemed to pass directly through the fellow, and it struck the wall behind so forcibly that it split into two parts. This amazed Tollydob. He stared a moment at the silent servant, and then turned his back upon him and sat down in Jikki’s chair. Here his eyes fell upon the magic cloak, which the king’s valet had thrown down. Tollydob, attracted by the gorgeous coloring and soft texture of the garment, picked up the cloak and threw it over his shoulders; and then he walked to a mirror and began admiring his reflection. While thus engaged, Jikki returned, and the valet was so startled at seeing the lord high general that he never noticed the cloak at all. “His Majesty has asked to see your Highness,” said Jikki, “and I was about to go in search of you.” “I’ll go to the king at once,” answered Tollydob, and as he walked away Jikki suddenly noticed that he was wearing the cloak. “Oho!” thought the valet. “He has gone off with the Princess Fluff’s pretty cloak, but when he returns from the king’s chamber I’ll get it again and send number one to carry it to its rightful owner.”

10. The Counselors Wear the Magic Cloak

When Tollydob, still wearing the magic cloak, had bowed before the king, Bud asked, “How many men are there in the royal army, general?” “Seven thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven, may it please your generous Majesty,” returned Tollydob. “That is without counting myself.” “And do they obey your orders promptly?” inquired Bud, who felt a little doubt on this point. “Yes indeed!” answered the general proudly. “They are terribly afraid of my anger.” “And yet you’re a very small man to command so large an army,” said the king. The lord high general flushed with shame, for although he was both old and fat, he was so short of stature that he stood but a trifle taller than Bud himself. And, like all short men, he was very sensitive about his height. “I’m a terrible fighter, your Majesty,” declared Tollydob

earnestly, “and when I’m on horseback, my small size is little noticed. Nevertheless,” he added with a sigh, “it is a good thing to be tall. I wish I were ten feet high.” No sooner were the words spoken than Bud gave a cry of astonishment, for the general’s head shot suddenly upward until his gorgeous hat struck the ceiling and was jammed down tightly over the startled man’s eyes and nose. The room was just ten feet high, and Tollydob was now ten feet tall; but for a time the old general could not think what had happened to him, and Bud, observing for the first time that Tollydob wore the magic cloak, began to shriek with laughter at the comical result of the old man’s wish. Hearing the king laugh, the general tore the hat from his head and looked at himself in mingled terror and admiration. From being a very small man he had suddenly become a giant, and the change was so great that Tollydob might well be amazed. “What has happened, your Majesty?” he asked in a trembling voice. “Why, don’t you see, you were wearing my sister’s magic cloak,” said Bud, still laughing at the big man’s woeful face, “and it grants to every wearer the fulfillment of one wish.” “Only one?” inquired poor Tollydob. “I’d like to be a little smaller, I confess.” “It can’t be helped now,” said Bud. “You wished to be ten feet tall, and there you are! And there you’ll have to stay, Tollydob, whether you like it or not. But I’m very proud of you. You must be the greatest general in all the world, you know!” Tollydob brightened up at this and tried to sit down in a chair, but it crushed to pieces under his weight, so he sighed and remained standing. Then he threw the magic cloak upon the floor with a little shudder at its fairy powers, and said, “If I’d only known, I might have become just six feet tall instead of ten!” “Never mind,” said Bud consolingly. “If we ever have a war, you will strike terror into the ranks of the enemy, and everyone in Noland will admire you immensely. Hereafter you will be not only the lord high general, but the lord very high general.” So Tollydob went away to show himself to the chief counselor, and he had to stoop very low to pass through the doorway. When Jikki saw the gigantic man coming out of the king’s chamber, he gave a scream and fled in terror, and strange to say, this effect was very agreeable to the lord high general, who loved to make people fear him. Bud ran to tell Fluff the curious thing that had happened to the general, and so it was that when the lord high executioner entered the palace there was no one around to receive him. He made his way into the king’s chamber, and there he found the magic cloak lying upon the floor. “I’ve seen the Princess Fluff wearing this,” thought the lord high executioner, “so it must belong to her. I’ll take it to her rooms, for it is far too pretty to be lying around in this careless way, and Jikki ought to be scolded for allowing it.” So Tellydeb picked up the cloak and laid it over his arm, then he admired the

bright hues that ran through the fabric, and presently his curiosity got the better of him; he decided to try it on and see how he would look in it. While thus employed, the sound of a girl's sweet laughter fell upon Tellydeb's ears, seeming to come from a far distance. "The princess must be in the royal gardens," he said to himself. "I'll go there and find her." So the lord high executioner walked through the great hall still wearing the cloak, and finally came to the back of the palace and passed a doorway leading into the gardens. All was quiet here save for the song of the birds as they fluttered among the trees, but at the other end of the garden Tellydeb caught a glimpse of a white gown, which he suspected might be that of the little princess. He walked along the paths slowly, enjoying the scent of the flowers and the peacefulness of the scene, for the lord high executioner was a gentle-natured man and delighted in beautiful sights. After a time he reached a fruit orchard and saw hanging far up in a big tree a fine red apple. Tellydeb paused and looked at this longingly. "I wish I could reach that apple!" he said with a sigh as he extended his arm upward. Instantly the arm stretched toward the apple, which was at least forty feet away from the lord high executioner; and while the astonished man eyed his elongated arm in surprise, the hand clutched the apple, plucked it, and drew it back to him; and there he stood, the apple in his hand and his arm apparently the same as it had been before he accomplished the wonderful feat. For a moment the counselor was overcome with fear. The cloak dropped unnoticed from his shoulders and fell upon the graveled walk, while Tellydeb sank upon a bench and shivered. "It--it was like magic!" he murmured. "I but reached out my hand, so. It went nearly to the top of the tree, and--" Here he gave a cry of wonder, for again his arm stretched the distance and touched the topmost branches of the tree. He drew it back hastily, and turned to see if anyone had observed him. But this part of the garden was deserted, so the old man eagerly tested his new accomplishment. He plucked a rose from a bush a dozen yards to the right, and having smelled its odor, he placed it in a vase that stood twenty feet to his left. Then he noted a fountain far across a hedge, and reaching the distance easily dipped his hand in the splashing water. It was all very amazing, this sudden power to reach a great distance, and the lord high executioner was so pleased with the faculty that when he discovered old Jikki standing in the palace doorway, he laughingly fetched him a box on the ear that sent the valet scampering away to his room in amazed terror. Said Tellydeb to himself, "Now I'll go home and show my wife what a surprising gift I have acquired." So he left the garden, and not long afterward old Tallydab, the lord high steward, came walking down the path, followed by his little dog Ruffles. I am not certain whether it was because his coat was so shaggy or his temper so uncertain that

Tallydab's dog was named Ruffles, but the name fitted well both the looks and the disposition of the tiny animal. Nevertheless, the lord high steward was very fond of his dog, which followed him everywhere except to the king's council chamber; and often the old man would tell Ruffles his troubles and worries and talk to the dog just as one would to a person. Today, as they came slowly down the garden walk, Tallydab noticed a splendid cloak lying upon the path. "How very beautiful!" he exclaimed as he stooped to pick it up. "I have never seen anything like this since the Princess Fluff first rode into Nole beside her brother the king. Isn't it a lovely cloak, Ruffles?" The dog gave a subdued yelp and wagged his stubby tail. "How do I look in it, Ruffles?" continued the lord high steward, wrapping the folds of the magic cloak about him. "How do I look in such gorgeous apparel?" The dog stopped wagging its tail and looked up at its master earnestly. "How do I look?" again said Tallydab. "I declare, I wish you could talk!" "You look perfectly ridiculous," replied the dog in a rather harsh voice. The lord high steward jumped nearly three feet in the air, so startled was he at Ruffles' reply. Then he bent down, a hand on each knee, and regarded the dog curiously. "I thought at first you had spoken!" said he. "What caused you to change your mind?" asked Ruffles peevishly. "I did speak, I am speaking. Can't you believe it?" The lord high steward drew a deep sigh of conviction. "I believe it!" he made answer. "I have always declared you were a wonderful dog, and now you prove I am right. Why, you are the only dog I ever heard of who could talk." "Except in fairy tales," said Ruffles calmly. "Don't forget the fairy tales." "I don't forget," replied Tallydab. "But this isn't a fairy tale, Ruffles. It's real life in the kingdom of Noland." "To be sure," answered Ruffles. "But see here, my dear master, now that I am at last able to talk, please allow me to ask you for something decent to eat. I'd like a good meal for once just to see what it is like." "A good meal!" exclaimed the steward. "Why, my friend, don't I give you a big bone every day?" "You do," said the dog, "and I nearly break my teeth on it, trying to crack it to get a little marrow. Whatever induces people to give their dogs bones instead of meat?" "Why, I thought you liked bones!" protested Tallydab, sitting on the bench and looking at his dog in astonishment. "Well, I don't. I prefer something to eat, something good and wholesome, such as you eat yourself," growled Ruffles. The lord high steward gave a laugh. "Why," said he, "don't you remember that old Mother Hubbard?" "Ah! That was a fairy tale," interrupted Ruffles impatiently. "And there wasn't even a bone in her cupboard, after all. Don't mention Mother Hubbard to me if you want to retain my friendship." "And that reminds me," resumed the lord high steward with a scowl, "that a few minutes ago you said I looked ridiculous in this

lovely cloak." "You do!" said Ruffles with a sniff. "It is a girl's cloak, and not fit for a wrinkled old man like you." "I believe you are right," answered Tallydab with a sigh; and he removed the cloak from his shoulders and hung it over the back of the garden seat. "In regard to the meat that you so long for," he added, "if you will follow me to the royal kitchen, I will see that you have all you desire." "Spoken like a good friend!" exclaimed the dog. "Let us go at once." So they passed down the garden to the kitchen door, and the magic cloak, which had wrought such wonderful things that day, still remained neglectfully cast aside. It was growing dark when old Tillydib, the lord high pursebearer, stole into the garden to smoke his pipe in peace. All the afternoon he had been worried by people with bills for this thing or that, and the royal purse was very light indeed when Tillydib had at last managed to escape to the garden. "If this keeps up," he reflected, "there will be no money left, and then I'm sure I don't know what will become of us all!" The air was chilly. The old counselor shivered a little, and noting the cloak that lay over the back of the seat, drew it about his shoulders. "It will be five months," he muttered half aloud, "before we can tax the people for more money, and before five months are up the king and his counselors may all starve to death, even in this splendid palace! Heigh-ho! I wish the royal purse would always remain full no matter how much money I drew from it!" The big purse, which had lain lightly on his knee, now slid off and pulled heavily upon the golden chain which the old man wore around his neck to fasten the purse to him securely. Aroused from his anxious thoughts, Tillydib lifted the purse to his lap again and was astonished to feel its weight. He opened the clasp and saw that the huge sack was actually running over with gold pieces. "Now, where on earth did all this wealth come from?" he exclaimed, shaking his head in a puzzled way. "I'll go at once and pay some of the creditors who are waiting for me." So he ran to the royal treasury, which was a front room in the palace, and began paying everyone who presented an account. He expected presently to empty the purse, but no matter how heavily he drew upon the contents, it remained as full as in the beginning. "It must be," thought the old man when the last bill had been paid, "that my idle wish has in some mysterious way been granted." But he did not know he owed his good fortune to the magic cloak, which he still wore. As he was leaving the room, he met the king and Princess Fluff, who were just come from dinner; and the girl exclaimed, "Why, there is my cloak! Where did you get it, Tillydib?" "I found it in the garden," answered the lord high pursebearer. "But take it if it is yours. And here is something to repay you for the loan of it," and he poured into her hands a heap of glittering gold. "Oh thank you!" cried Fluff, and taking the precious cloak, she dropped the gold into it and

carried it to her room. “I’ll never lend it again unless it is really necessary,” she said to herself. “It was very careless of Aunt Rivette to leave my fairy cloak in the garden.” And then after carefully folding it and wrapping it up, she locked it in a drawer and hid the key where no one but herself could find it.

The Witch-Queen

It is not very far from the kingdom of Noland to the kingdom of Ix. If you followed the steps of Quavo the minstrel, you would climb the sides of a steep mountain range and go down on the other side and cross a broad and swift river and pick your way through a dark forest. You would then have reached the land of Ix and would find an easy path into the big city. But even before he came to the city he would see the high marble towers of Queen Zixi's magnificent palace, and pause to wonder at its beauty. Quavo the minstrel had been playing his harp in the city of Nole, and his eyes were sharp, so he had seen many things to gossip and sing about, and therefore he never doubted he would be warmly welcomed by Queen Zixi. He reached the marble palace about dusk one evening and was bidden to the feast which was about to be served. A long table ran down the length of the lofty hall built in the center of the palace, and this table was covered with gold and silver platters bearing many kinds of meat and fruits and vegetables, while tall, ornamented stands contained sweets and delicacies to tickle the palate. At the head of the table, on a jeweled throne, sat Queen Zixi herself, a vision of radiant beauty and charming grace. Her hair was yellow as spun gold and her wondrous eyes raven black in hue. Her skin was fair as a lily save where her cheek was faintly tinted with a flush of rose color. There were graybeards at her side this evening who could remember the queen's rare beauty since they were boys; ay, and who had been told by their fathers and grandfathers of Queen Zixi's loveliness when they also were mere children. In fact, no one in Ix had ever heard of the time when the land was not ruled by this same queen, or when she was not in appearance as young and fair as she was today. Which easily proves she was not an ordinary person at all. And I may as well tell you here that Queen Zixi, despite the fact that she looked to be no more than sixteen, was in reality six hundred and eighty-three years of age and had prolonged her life in this extraordinary way be means of the arts of witchcraft. I do not mean by this that she was an evil person. She had always ruled her kingdom wisely and liberally, and the people of Ix made no manner of complaint against their queen. If there were a war, she led her armies in person, clad in golden mail and helmet; and in years of peace she taught them to sow and reap grain, and to fashion many useful articles of metal, and to build strong and substantial houses. Nor were her taxes ever more than the people could bear. Yet for all this, Zixi was more feared than loved; for everyone remembered she was a witch and also knew she was six hundreds of years old. So no matter how amiable their queen might be, she was always treated with extreme respect, and folks weighed well their words when they

conversed with her. Next the queen, on both sides of the table, sat her most favored nobles and their ladies; farther down were the rich merchants and officers of the army; and at the lower end were servants and members of the household. For this was the custom in the land of Ix. Quavo the harpist sat near the lower end; and when all had been comfortably fed, the queen called upon him for a song. This was the moment Quavo had eagerly awaited. He took his harp, seated himself in a niche of the wall, and according to the manner of ancient minstrels, he sang of the things he had seen in other lands, thus serving his hearers with the news of the day as well as pleasing them with his music. This is the way he began:

"Of Noland now a tale I'll sing, Where reigns a strangely youthful king--A boy who has by chance alone Been called to sit upon a throne. His sister shares his luck, and she. The fairies' friend is said to be; For they did mystic arts invoke. And weave for her a magic cloak Which grants its wearer--this I'm told--. Gifts more precious far than gold. She's but to wish, and her desire. Quite instantly she will acquire; And when she lends it to her friends. The favor unto them extends. For one who wears the cloak can fly. Like any eagle in the sky, And one did wish, by sudden freak,. His dog be granted power to speak; And now the beast can talk as well. As I, and also read and spell. And--"

"Stop!" cried the queen with sudden excitement. "Do you lie, minstrel, or are you speaking the truth?" Secretly glad that his news was received this eagerly, Quavo continued to twang the harp as he replied in verse:

"Now may I die at break of day. If false is any word I say."

"And what is this cloak like, and who owns it?" demanded the queen impetuously. Sang the minstrel:

"The cloak belongs to Princess Fluff; 'T is woven of some secret stuff Which makes it gleam with splendor bright. That fills beholders with delight."

Thereafter the beautiful Zixi remained lost in thought, her dainty chin resting within the hollow of her hand and her eyes dreamily fixed upon the minstrel. And Quavo, judging that his news had brought him into rare favor, told more and more wonderful tales of the magic cloak, some of which were true, while others were mere inventions of his own; for newsmongers, as everyone knows, were ever unable to stick to facts since the world began. All the courtiers and officers and servants listened with wide eyes and parted lips to the song, marveling greatly at what they had heard. And when it was finally ended and the evening far spent, Queen Zixi threw a golden chain to the minstrel as a reward and left the hall, attended by her maidens. Throughout the night which followed, she tossed sleeplessly upon her bed

thinking of the magic cloak and longing to possess it. And when the morning sun rose over the horizon, she made a solemn vow that she would secure the magic cloak within a year, even if it cost her the half of her kingdom. Now the reason for this rash vow, showing Zixi's intense desire to possess the cloak, was very peculiar. Although she had been an adept at witchcraft for more than six hundred years and was able to retain her health and remain in appearance young and beautiful, there was one thing her art was unable to deceive, and that one thing was a mirror. To mortal eyes Zixi was charming and attractive, yet her reflection in a mirror showed to her an ugly old hag, bald of head, wrinkled, with toothless gums and withered, sunken cheeks. For this reason the queen had no mirror of any sort about the palace. Even from her own dressing room the mirror had been banished, and she depended upon her maids and hairdressers to make her look as lovely as possible. She knew she was beautiful in appearance to others; her maids declared it continually, and in all eyes she truly read admiration. But Zixi wanted to admire herself, and that was impossible so long as the cold mirrors showed her reflection to be the old hag others would also have seen had not her arts of witchcraft deceived them. Everything else a woman and a queen might desire Zixi was able to obtain by her arts. Yet the one thing she could not have made her very unhappy. As I have already said, she was not a bad queen. She used her knowledge of sorcery to please her own fancy or to benefit her kingdom, but never to injure anyone else. So she may be forgiven for wanting to see a beautiful girl reflected in a mirror instead of a haggard old woman in her six hundred and eighty-fourth year. Zixi had given up all hope of ever accomplishing her object until she heard of the magic cloak. The powers of witches are somewhat limited; but she knew that the powers of fairies are boundless. So if the magic cloak could grant any human wish as Quavo's song had told her was the case, she would manage to secure it and would at once wish for a reflection in the mirror of the same features all others beheld--and then she would become happy and content.

Zixi Discovers Herself

Now as might be expected, Queen Zixi lost no time in endeavoring to secure the magic cloak. The people of Ix were not on friendly terms with the people of Noland, so she could not visit Princess Fluff openly, and she knew it was useless to try to borrow so priceless a treasure as a cloak which had been the gift of the fairies. But one way remained to her--to steal the precious robe. So she began her preparations by telling her people she would be absent from Ix for a month, and then she retired to her own room and mixed, by the rules of witchcraft, a black mess in a silver kettle and boiled it until it was as thick as molasses. Of this inky mixture she swallowed two teaspoonfuls every hour for six hours, muttering an incantation each time. At the end of the six hours her golden hair had become brown, and her black eyes had become blue, and this was quite sufficient to disguise the pretty queen so that no one would recognize her. Then she took off her richly embroidered queenly robes and hung them up in a closet, putting on a simple gingham dress, a white apron, and a plain hat such as common people of her country wore. When these preparations had been made, Zixi slipped out the back door of the palace and walked through the city to the forest, and although she met many people, no one suspected that she was the queen. It was rough walking in the forest, but she got through at last, and reached the bank of the river. Here a fisherman was found who consented to ferry her across in his boat, and afterward Zixi climbed the high mountain and came down the other side into the kingdom of Noland. She rented a neat little cottage just at the north gateway of the city of Nole, and by the next morning there was a sign over the doorway which announced:

MISS TRUST'S ACADEMY OF WITCHERY FOR YOUNG LADIES

Then Zixi had printed on green paper a lot of handbills which read as follows:

"MISS TRUST, a pupil of the celebrated Professor Hatrack of Hooktown-on-the-Creek, is now located at Woodbine Villa (North Gateway of Nole) and is prepared to teach the young ladies of this city the Arts of Witchcraft according to the most modern and approved methods. Terms moderate. References required."

These handbills she hired a little boy to carry to all the aristocratic houses in Nole and to leave one on each doorstep. Several were left on the different doorsteps of the palace, and one of these came to the notice of Princess Fluff. "How funny!" she exclaimed on reading it. "I'll go and take all my eight maids with me. It will be no end of fun to learn to be a witch." Many other people in Nole applied for instruction in "Miss Trust's Academy," but Zixi

told them all she had no vacancies. When, however, Fluff and her maids arrived, she welcomed them with the utmost cordiality and consented to give them their first lesson at once. When she had seated them in her parlor, Zixi said:

"If you wish to be a witch, You must speak an incantation; You must with deliberation Say, 'The when of why is which!'"

"What does that mean?" asked Fluff. "No one knows," answered Zixi, "and therefore it is a fine incantation. Now, all the class will repeat after me the following words: 'Erig-a-ma-role, erig-a-ma-ree; Jig-ger-nut, jog-ger-nit, que-jig-ger-ee. Sim-mer-kin, sam-mer-kin, sem-mer-ga-roo; Zil-li-pop, zel-li-pop, lol-li-pop-loo!'" They tried to do this, but their tongues stumbled constantly over the syllables, and one of the maids began to laugh. "Stop laughing, please!" cried Zixi, rapping her ruler on the table. "This is no laughing matter, I assure you, young ladies. The science of witchcraft is a solemn and serious study, and I cannot teach it you unless you behave." "But what's it all about?" asked Fluff. "I'll explain what it's about tomorrow," said Zixi with dignity. "Now, here are two important incantations which you must learn by heart before you come to tomorrow's lesson. If you can speak them correctly and rapidly and above all very distinctly, I will then allow you to perform a wonderful witchery." She handed each of them a slip of paper on which were written the incantations, as follows:

Incantation No. 1 (To be spoken only in the presence of a black cat.) This is that, and that is this; Bliss is blest, and blest is bliss. Who is that, and what is who; Shed is shod, and shod is shoe!

Incantation No. 2 (To be spoken when the clock strikes twelve.) What is which, and which is what; Pat is pet, and pit is pat; Hid is hide, and hod is hid; Did is deed, and done is did!

"Now there is one thing more," continued Zixi, "and this is very important. You must each wear the handsomest and most splendid cloak you can secure when you come to me tomorrow morning." This request made Princess Fluff thoughtful all the way home, for she at once remembered her magic cloak and wondered if the strange Miss Trust knew she possessed it. She asked Bud about it that night, and the young king said, "I'm afraid this witch-woman is someone trying to get hold of your magic cloak. I would advise you not to wear it when she is around or more than likely she may steal it." So Fluff did not wear her magic cloak the next day, but selected in its place a pretty blue cape edged with gold. When she and her maids reached the cottage, Zixi cried out angrily, "That is not your handsomest cloak. Go home at once and get the other one!" "I won't," said Fluff shortly. "You must! You must!" insisted the witch-woman. "I can teach you nothing unless

you wear the other cloak." "How did you know I had another cloak?" asked the princess suspiciously. "By witchcraft, perhaps," said Zixi mildly. "If you want to be a witch, you must wear it." "I don't want to be a witch," declared Fluff. "Come, girls, come; let's go home at once." "Wait--wait!" implored Zixi eagerly. "If you'll get the cloak, I will teach you the most wonderful things in the world! I will make you the most powerful witch that ever lived!" "I don't believe you," replied Fluff, and then she marched back to the palace with all her maids. But Zixi knew her plot had failed, so she locked up the cottage and went back again to Ix, climbing the mountain and crossing the river and threading the forest with angry thoughts and harsh words. Yet the queen was more determined than ever to secure the magic cloak. As soon as she had reentered her palace and by more incantations had again transformed her hair to yellow and her eyes to black and dressed herself in her royal robes, she summoned her generals and counselors and told them to make ready to war upon the kingdom of Noland. Quavo the minstrel, who wandered constantly about, was on his way to Noland again, and while Queen Zixi's army was cutting a path through the forest and making a bridge to cross the river, he came speedily by a little-known path to the city of Nole, where he told Tullydub, the lord high counselor, what was threatening his king. So, trembling with terror, Tullydub hastened to the palace and called a meeting of the five high counselors in the king's antechamber. When all were assembled, together with Bud and Fluff, the old man told his news and cried, "We shall all be slaughtered and our kingdom sacked and destroyed, for the army of Ix is twice as big as our own--yes, twice as big!" "Oh, pooh! What of that?" said Tollydob scornfully. "Have they a general as tall as I am?" "Certainly not," said the chief counselor. "Who ever saw a man as tall as you are?" "Then I'll fight and conquer them!" declared Tollydob, rising and walking about the room so that all might see where his head just grazed the ceiling. "But you can't, general; you can't fight an army by yourself!" remonstrated Tullydub excitedly. "And being so big, you are a better mark for their arrows and axes." At this the general sat down rather suddenly and grew pale. "Perhaps we can buy them off," remarked the lord high pursebearer, jingling the purse that now never became empty. "No, I'm afraid not," sighed Tullydub. "Quavo the minstrel said they were bent upon conquest and were resolved upon a battle." "And their queen is a witch," added Tallydab nervously. "We must not forget that." "A witch!" exclaimed Princess Fluff with sudden interest. "What does she look like?" But all shook their heads at the question, and Tullydub explained, "None of us has ever seen her, for we have never been friendly with the people of Ix. But from all reports, Queen Zixi is both young and beautiful." "Maybe it is the one who

wanted to teach me witchcraft in order to steal my magic cloak!" said Fluff with sudden excitement. "And when she found she couldn't steal it, she went back after her army." "What magic cloak do you refer to?" asked Tullydub. "Why, the one the fairies gave me," replied Fluff. "Is it of gorgeous colors with golden threads running through it?" asked the lord high general, now thoroughly interested. "Yes," said the princess, "the very same." "And what peculiar powers does it possess?" "Why, it grants the wearer the fulfillment of one wish," she answered. All the high counselors regarded her earnestly. "Then that was the cloak I wore when I wished to be ten feet high!" said Tollydob. "And I wore it when I wished I could reach the apple," said Tellydeb. "And I wore it when I wished that my dog Ruffles could speak," said Tallydab. "And I wore it when I wished the royal purse would always remain full," said Tillydib. "I did not know that," remarked Fluff thoughtfully. "But I'll never forget that I lent it to Aunt Rivette and that was the time she wished she could fly!" "Why, it's wonderful!" cried old Tullydub. "Has it granted you, also, a wish?" "Yes," said Fluff brightly. "And I've been happy ever since." "And has your brother, the king, had a wish?" Tullydub inquired eagerly. "No," said Bud. "I can still have mine." "Then why doesn't your Majesty wear the cloak and wish that your army shall conquer the Queen of Ix's?" asked the lord high counselor. "I'm saving my wish," answered Bud, "and it won't be that, either." "But unless something is done, we shall all be destroyed," protested Tullydub. "Then wear the cloak yourself," said Bud. "You haven't had a wish yet." "Good!" cried the other four counselors, and the lord high general added, "That will surely save us from any further worry." "I'll fetch the cloak at once," said Fluff, and she ran quickly from the room to get it. "Supposing," Tullydub remarked hesitantly, "the magic power shouldn't work?" "Oh, but it will!" answered the general. "I'm sure it will," said the steward. "I know it will," declared the pursebearer. "It cannot fail," affirmed the executioner. "Remember what it has already done for us!" Then Fluff arrived with the cloak, and after considering carefully how he would speak his wish, the lord high counselor drew the cloak over his shoulders and said solemnly, "I wish that we shall be able to defeat our enemies and drive them all from the kingdom of Noland." "Didn't you make two wishes instead of one?" asked the princess anxiously. "Never mind," said the general. "If we defeat them, it will be easy enough to drive them from the kingdom." The lord high counselor removed the cloak and carefully refolded it. "If it grants my wish," said he thoughtfully, "it will indeed be lucky for our country that the Princess Fluff came to live in the palace of the king." The queen formed her men into a line of battle facing the army of Nole, and they were so numerous in

comparison with their enemies that even the more timorous soldiers gained confidence and stood up straight and threw out their chests as if to show how brave they were. Then Queen Zixi, clad in her flashing mail and mounted upon her magnificent white charger, rode slowly along the ranks, her white plume nodding gracefully with the motion of the horse. And when she reached the center of the line, she halted and addressed her army in a voice that sounded clear as the tones of a bell and reached to every listening ear. “Soldiers of the land of Ix,” she began. “We are about to engage in a great battle for conquest and glory. Before you lies the rich city of Nole, and when you have defeated yonder army and gained the gates, you may divide among yourselves all the plunder of gold and silver and jewels and precious stones that the place contains.” Hearing this, a great shout of joy arose from the soldiers, which Zixi quickly silenced with a wave of her white hand. “For myself,” she continued, “I desire nothing more than a cloak that is owned by the Princess Fluff. All else shall be given to my brave army.” “But--suppose we do not win the battle?” asked one of her generals anxiously. “What then do we gain?” “Nothing but disgrace,” answered the queen haughtily. “But how can we fail to win when I myself lead the assault? Queen Zixi of Ix has fought a hundred battles and never yet met with defeat!” There was much cheering at this, for Zixi’s words were quite true. Nevertheless, her soldiers did not like the look of the silent army of Nole standing so steadfastly before the gates and facing the invaders with calm determination. Zixi herself was somewhat disturbed at this sight, for she could not guess what powers the magic cloak had given to the Nolanders. But in a loud and undaunted voice she shouted the command to advance, and while trumpets blared and drums rolled, the great army of Ix awoke to action and marched steadily upon the men of Nole. Bud, who could not bear to remain shut up in his palace while all this excitement was occurring outside the city gates, had slipped away from Fluff and joined his gigantic general, Tollydob. He was, of course, unused to war, and when he beheld the vast array of Zixi’s army, he grew fearful that the magic cloak might not be able to save his city from conquest. Yet the five high counselors, who were all present, seemed not to worry the least bit. “They’re very pretty soldiers to look at,” remarked old Tollydob complacently. “I’m really sorry to defeat them, they march so beautifully.” “But do not let your kind-hearted admiration for the enemy interfere with our plans,” said the lord high executioner, who was standing by with his hands in his pockets. “Oh, I won’t!” answered the big general with a laugh which was succeeded by a frown. “Yet I can never resist admiring a fine soldier, whether he fights for or against me. For instance, just look at that handsome officer riding beside Queen Zixi--her chief general, I think. Isn’t he sweet?

He looks just like an apple, he is so round and wears such a tight-fitting jacket. Can't you pick him for me, friend Tellydeb?" "I'll try." And the lord high executioner suddenly stretched out his long arm and reached the faraway general of Ix and pulled him from the back of his horse. Then, amid the terrified cries that came from the opposing army, Tellydeb dragged his victim swiftly over the ground until he was seized by the men of Nole and firmly bound with cords. "Thank you, my friend," said the general, again laughing and then frowning. "Now get for me that pretty queen, if you please." Once more the long arm of the lord high executioner shot out toward the army of Ix. But Zixi's keen eyes saw it coming, and instantly she disappeared, her magical arts giving her power to become invisible. Tellydeb, puzzled to find the queen gone, seized another officer instead of her and dragged him quickly over the intervening space to his own side, where he was bound by the Nolanders and placed beside his fellow captive. Another cry of horror came from the army of Ix, and with one accord the soldiers stopped short in their advance. Queen Zixi, appearing again in their midst, called upon her wavering soldiers to charge quickly upon the foe. But the men, bewildered and terrified, were deaf to her appeals. They fled swiftly back over the brow of the hill and concealed themselves in the wooded valley until the sun set. And it was far into the night before Queen Zixi succeeded in restoring her line of battle.

The Rout of the Royal Army of Ix

The next day was a busy one in the city of Nole. The ten-foot lord high general marched his seven thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven men out of the city gates and formed them in line of battle on the brow of a hill. Then he asked Aunt Rivette to fly over the top of the mountain and see where the enemy was located. The old woman gladly undertook the mission. She had by this time become an expert flier, and being proud to resemble a bird, she dressed herself in flowing robes of as many colors as a poll-parrot could boast. When she mounted into the air, streamers of green and yellow silk floated behind her in quite a beautiful and interesting fashion, and she was admired by all beholders. Aunt Rivette flew high above the mountaintop, and there she saw the great army of Queen Zixi climbing up the slope on the other side. The army also saw her and stopped short in amazement at seeing a woman fly like a bird. They had before this thought their queen sure of victory because she was a witch and possessed many wonderful arts; but now they saw that the people of Noland could also do wonderful things, and it speedily disheartened them. Zixi ordered them to shoot a thousand arrows at Aunt Rivette, but quickly countermanded the order as the old woman was too high to be injured, and the arrows would have been wasted. When the army of Ix had climbed the mountain and was marching down again toward Nole, the lord high steward sent his dog Ruffles to them to make more mischief. Ruffles trotted soberly among the soldiers of Ix, and once in a while he would pause and say in a loud voice, “The army of Noland will conquer you.” Then all the soldiers would look around to see who had spoken these fearful words, but could see nothing but a little dog, and Ruffles would pretend to be scratching his nose with his left hind foot and would look so innocent that they never for a moment suspected he could speak. “We are surrounded by invisible foes!” cried the soldiers, and they would have fled even then had not Queen Zixi called them cowards and stubbornly declared they only fancied they had heard the voices speak. Some of them believed her, and some did not, but they decided to remain and fight since they had come so far to do so. Then they formed in line of battle again and marched boldly toward the army of Noland. While they were still a good way off and the generals were riding in front of their soldiers, the lord high executioner suddenly stretched out his long arm and pulled another general of Ix from his horse as he had done the day before, dragging him swiftly over the ground between the opposing armies until he was seized by the men of Nole and tightly bound with cords. The soldiers of Ix uttered murmurs of horror at this sight and stopped again. Immediately the long arm shot out and pulled

another general from their ranks and made him prisoner. Queen Zixi raved and stormed with anger, but the lord high executioner, who was enjoying himself immensely, continued to grab officer after officer and make them prisoners, and so far there had been no sign of battle; not an arrow had been fired nor an ax swung. Then, to complete the amazement of the enemy, the gigantic ten-foot general of the army of Nole stepped in front of his men and waved around his head a flashing sword six feet in length while he shouted in a voice like a roar of thunder that made the army of Ix tremble, “Forward, soldiers of Noland, forward! Destroy the enemy and let none escape!” It was more than the army of Ix could bear. Filled with terror, the soldiers threw down their arms and fled in a great panic, racing over the mountaintop and down the other side and then scattering in every direction, each man for himself and as if he feared the entire army of Noland was at his heels. But it wasn’t. Not a soldier of Nole had moved in pursuit. Every one was delighted at the easy victory, and King Bud was so amused at the sight of the flying foe that he rolled on the ground in laughter, and even the fierce-looking General Tollydob grinned in sympathy. Then, with bands playing and banners flying, the entire army marched back into the city, and the war between Noland and Ix was over.

The Theft of the Magic Cloak

When the soldiers of Queen Zixi ran away, they fled in so many different directions that the bewildered queen could not keep track of them. Her horse, taking fright, dashed up the mountainside and tossed Zixi into a lilac bush, after which he ran off and left her. One would think such a chain of misfortunes could not fail to daunt the bravest. But Zixi had lived too many years to allow such trifles as defeat and flight to ruin her nerves; so she calmly disentangled herself from the lilac bush and looked around to see where she was. It was very quiet and peaceful on this part of the mountainside. Her glittering army had disappeared to the last man. In the far distance she could see the spires and turreted palaces of the city of Nole, and behind her was a thick grove of lilac trees bearing flowers in full bloom. This lilac grove gave Zixi an idea. She pushed aside some of the branches and entered the cool, shadowy avenues between the trees. The air was heavy with the scent of the violet flowers, and tiny hummingbirds were darting here and there to thrust their long bills into the blossoms and draw out the honey for food. Butterflies there were, too, and a few chipmunks perched high among the branches. But Zixi walked on through the trees in deep thought, and presently she had laid new plans. For since the magic cloak was so hard to get, she wanted it more than ever. By and by she gathered some bits of the lilac bush and dug some roots from the ground. Next she caught six spotted butterflies, from the wings of which she brushed off all the round, purple spots. Then she wandered on until she came upon a little spring of water bubbling from the ground, and filling a cup-shaped leaf of the tatti-plant from the spring, she mixed her bark and roots and butterfly-spots in the liquid and boiled it carefully over a fire of twigs; for tatti-leaves will not burn so long as there is water inside them. When her magical compound was ready, Zixi muttered an incantation and drank it in a single draught. A few moments later, the witch-queen had disappeared, and in her place stood the likeness of a pretty young girl dressed in a simple white gown with pink ribbons at the shoulders and a pink sash around her waist. Her light-brown hair was gathered into two long braids that hung down her back, and she had two big, blue eyes that looked very innocent and sweet. Besides these changes, both the nose and the mouth of the girl differed in shape from those of Zixi; so that no one would have seen the slightest resemblance between the two people, or between Miss Trust and the girl who stood in the lilac grove. The transformed witch-queen gave a sweet, rippling laugh and glanced at her reflection in the still waters of the spring. And then the girlish face frowned, for the image staring up at her was that of a wrinkled, toothless, old hag. “I

really must have that cloak," sighed the girl, and then she turned and walked out of the lilac grove and down the mountainside toward the city of Nole. The Princess Fluff was playing tennis with her maids in a courtyard of the royal palace when Jikki came to say that a girl wished to speak with her Highness. "Send her here," said Fluff. So the witch-queen came to her in the guise of the fair young girl, and bowing in a humble manner before the princess she said, "Please, your Highness, may I be one of your maids?" "Why, I have eight already!" answered Fluff, laughing. "But my father and mother are both dead, and I have come all the way from my castle to beg you to let me wait upon you," said the girl, looking at the little princess with a pleading expression in her blue eyes. "Who are you?" asked Fluff. "I am daughter of the Lord Hurrydole, and my name is Adlena," replied the girl, which was not altogether falsehood, because one of her ancestors had borne the name Hurrydole, and Adlena was one of her own names. "Then, Adlena," said Fluff brightly, "you shall certainly be one of my maids, for there is plenty of room in the palace, and the more girls I have around me, the happier I shall be." So Queen Zixi, under the name of Adlena, became an inmate of the king's palace, and it was not many days before she learned where the magic cloak was kept. But the princess gave her a key to a drawer and told her to get from it a blue silk scarf she wished to wear, and directly under the scarf lay the fairy garment. Adlena would have seized it at that moment had she dared, but Fluff was in the same room, so she only said, "Please, princess, may I look at that pretty cloak?" "Of course," answered Fluff, "but handle it carefully, for it was given me by the fairies." So Adlena unfolded the cloak and looked at it very carefully, noting exactly the manner in which it was woven. Then she folded it again, arranged it in the drawer, and turned the key, which the princess immediately attached to a chain which she always wore around her neck. That night, when the witch-queen was safely locked in her own room and could not be disturbed, she called about her a great many of those invisible imps that serve the most skillful witches, commanding them to weave for her a cloak in the exact likeness of the one given Princess Fluff by the fairies. Of course the imps had never seen the magic cloak, but Zixi described it to them accurately, and before morning they had woven a garment so closely resembling the original that the imitation was likely to deceive anyone. Only one thing was missing, and that was the golden thread woven by Queen Lulea herself, and which gave the cloak its magic powers. Of course the imps of Zixi could not get this golden thread, nor could they give any magical properties to the garment they had made at the witch's command, but they managed to give the cloak all of the many brilliant colors of the original, and Zixi was quite satisfied. The next

day Adlena wore this cloak while she walked in the garden. Very soon Princess Fluff saw her and ran after the girl, crying indignantly, “See here! What do you mean by wearing my cloak? Take it off instantly!” “It isn’t your cloak. It is one of my own,” replied the girl calmly. “Nonsense! There can’t be two such cloaks in the world,” retorted Fluff. “But there are,” persisted Adlena. “How could I get the one in your drawer when the key is around your own neck?” “I’m sure I don’t know,” admitted the princess, beginning to be puzzled. “But come with me into my rooms. If my fairy cloak is indeed in the drawer, then I will believe you.” So they went to the drawer, and of course found the magic cloak, as the cunning Zixi had planned. Fluff pulled it out and held the two up together to compare them, and they seemed to be exactly alike. “I think yours is a little the longer,” said Adlena, and threw it over the shoulders of the princess. “No, I think mine is the longer,” she continued, and removing the magic cloak, put her own upon Fluff. They seemed to be about the same length, but Adlena kept putting first one and then the other upon the princess until they were completely mixed, and the child could not have told one from the other. “Which is mine?” she finally asked in a startled voice. “This, of course,” answered Adlena, folding up the imitation cloak which the imps had made and putting it away in the drawer. Fluff never suspected the trick, so Zixi carried away the magic cloak she had thus cleverly stolen, and she was so delighted with the success of her stratagem that she could have screamed aloud for pure joy. As soon as she was alone and unobserved, the witch-queen slipped out of the palace, and carrying the magic cloak in a bundle under her arm, ran down the streets of Nole and out through the gate in the wall and away toward the mountain where the lilac grove lay. “At last!” she kept saying to herself. “At last I shall see my own beautiful reflection in a mirror, instead of that horrid old hag!” When she was safe in the grove, she succeeded by means of her witchcraft in transforming the girl Adlena back into the beautiful woman known throughout the kingdom of Ix as Queen Zixi. And then she lost no time in throwing the magic cloak over her shoulders. “I wish,” she cried in a loud voice, “that my reflection in every mirror will hereafter show the same face and form as that in which I appear to exist in the sight of all mortals!” Then she threw off the cloak and ran to the crystal spring, saying, “Now, indeed, I shall at last see the lovely Queen Zixi!” But as she bent over the spring, she gave a sudden shriek of disappointed rage, for glaring up at her from the glassy surface of the water was the same fearful hag she had always seen as the reflection of her likeness! The magic cloak would grant no wish to a person who had stolen it. Zixi, more wretched than she had ever been before in her life, threw herself down upon her face in the lilac grove and wept for

more than an hour, which is an exceedingly long time for tears to run from one's eyes. And when she finally arose, two tiny brooks flowed from the spot and wound through the lilac trees, one to the right and one to the left. Then, leaving the magic cloak--to possess which she had struggled so hard and sinfully--lying unheeded upon the ground, the disappointed witch-queen walked slowly away and finally reached the bank of the great river. Here she found a rugged old alligator who lay upon the bank, weeping with such bitterness that the sight reminded Zixi of her own recent outburst of sorrow. "Why do you weep, friend?" she asked, for her experience as a witch had long since taught her the language of the beasts and birds and reptiles. "Because I cannot climb a tree," answered the alligator. "But why do you wish to climb a tree?" she questioned, surprised. "Because I can't," returned the alligator, squeezing two more tears from his eyes. "But that is very foolish!" exclaimed the witch-queen scornfully. "Oh, I don't know," said the alligator. "It doesn't strike me that it's much more foolish than the fancies some other people have." "Perhaps not," replied Zixi more gently, and walked away in deep thought. While she followed the river bank to find a ferry across, the dusk fell, and presently a gray owl came out of a hollow in a tall tree and sat upon a limb, wailing dismally. Zixi stopped and looked at the bird. "Why do you wail so loudly?" she asked. "Because I cannot swim in the river like a fish," answered the owl, and it screeched so sadly that it made the queen shiver. "Why do you wish to swim?" she inquired. "Because I can't," said the owl, and buried its head under its wing with a groan. "But that is absurd!" cried Zixi with impatience. The owl had an ear out and heard her. So it withdrew its head long enough to retort, "I don't think it's any more absurd than the longings of some other folks." "Perhaps you are right," said the queen, and hung her head as she walked on. By and by she found a ferryman with a boat, and he agreed to row her across the river. In one end of the boat crouched a little girl, the ferryman's daughter, and she sobbed continually, so that the sound of the child's grief finally attracted Zixi's attention. "Why do you sob?" questioned the queen. "Because I want to be a man," replied the child, trying to stifle her sobs. "Why do you want to be a man?" asked Zixi curiously. "Because I'm a little girl," was the reply. This made Zixi angry. "You're a little fool!" she exclaimed loudly. "There are other fools in the world," said the child, and renewed her sobs. Zixi did not reply, but she thought to herself, "We are all alike--the alligator, the owl, the girl, and the powerful Queen of Ix. We long for what we cannot have, yet desire it not so much because it would benefit us as because it is beyond our reach. If I call the others fools, I must also call myself a fool for wishing to see the reflection of a beautiful girl in my mirror when I know it is

impossible. So hereafter I shall strive to be contented with my lot." This was a wise resolution, and the witch-queen abided by it for many years. She was not very bad, this Zixi, for it must be admitted that few have the courage to acknowledge their faults and strive to correct them as she did.

The Plain Above the Clouds

I have already mentioned how high the mountains were between Noland and the land of Ix, but at the north of the city of Nole were mountains much higher--so high, indeed, that they seemed to pierce the clouds, and it was said the moon often stopped on the highest peak to rest. It was not one single slope up from the lowlands, but first there was a high mountain with a level plain at the top, and then another high mountain rising from the level and capped with a second plain, and then another mountain, and so on; which made them somewhat resemble a pair of stairs. So that the people of Nole, who looked upon the North Mountains with much pride, used to point them out as "The Giant's Stairway," forgetting that no giant was ever big enough to use such an immense flight of stairs. Many people had climbed the first mountain, and upon the plain at its top flocks of sheep were fed; and two or three people boasted they had climbed the second steep; but beyond that the mountains were all unknown to the dwellers in the valley of Noland. As a matter of fact, no one lived upon them; they were inhabited only by a few small animals and an occasional vulture or eagle which nested in some rugged crag. But at the top of all was an enormous plain that lay far above the clouds, and here the Roly-Rogues dwelt in great numbers. I must describe these Roly-Rogues to you, for they were unlike any other people in all the world. Their bodies were as round as a ball--if you can imagine a ball fully four feet in thickness at the middle. And their muscles were as tough and elastic as india rubber. They had heads and arms resembling our own, and very short legs, and all these they could withdraw into their ball-like bodies whenever they wished, very much as a turtle withdraws its legs and head into its shell. The Roly-Rogues lived all by themselves in their country among the clouds, and there were thousands and thousands of them. They were quarrelsome by nature, but could seldom hurt one another because if they fought they could withdraw their arms and legs and heads into their bodies and roll themselves at one another with much fierceness. But when they collided, they would bounce apart again, and little harm was done. In spite of their savage disposition, the Roly-Rogues had as yet done no harm to anyone but themselves, as they lived so high above the world that other people knew nothing of their existence. Nor did they themselves know, because of the clouds that floated between, of the valleys which lay below them. But as ill luck would have it, a few days after King Bud's army had defeated the army of Ix, one of the Roly-Rogues, while fighting with another, rolled too near the edge of the plain whereon they dwelt, and bounded down the mountainside that faced Noland. Wind had scattered the clouds, so his

fellows immediately rolled themselves to the edge and watched the luckless Roly-Rogue fly down the mountain, bounce across the plain and thence speed down the next mountain. By and by he became a dot to their eyes and then a mere speck, but as the clouds had just rolled away for a few moments, the Roly-Rogues could see, by straining their eyes, the city of Nole lying in the valley far below. It seemed from that distance merely a toy city, but they knew it must be a big place to show so far away, and since they had no cities of their own, they became curious to visit the one they had just discovered. The ruler of the Roly-Rogues, who was more quarrelsome than any of the rest, had a talk with his chief men about visiting the unknown city. “We can roll down the mountain just as our brother did,” he argued. “But how in the world could we ever get back again?” said one of the chiefs, sticking his head up to look with astonishment at the other. “We don’t want to get back,” said the other excitedly. “Someone has built many houses and palaces at the foot of the mountains, and we can live in those if they are big enough and if there are enough of them.” “Perhaps the people won’t let us,” suggested another chief who was not in favor of the expedition. “We will fight them and destroy them,” retorted the ruler, scowling at the chief as if he would make him ashamed of his cowardice. “Then we must all go together,” said a third chief, “for if only a few go, we may find ourselves many times outnumbered and at last be overcome.” “Every Roly-Rogue in the country shall go!” declared the ruler, who brooked no opposition when once he had made up his mind to a thing. On the plain grew a grove of big thorn trees bearing thorns as long and sharp as swords, so the ruler commanded each of his people to cut two of the thorns, one for each hand, with which to attack whatever foes they might meet when they reached the unknown valley. Then, on a certain day, all the hundreds and thousands of Roly-Rogues that were in existence assembled upon the edge of their plain and, at the word of their ruler, hurled themselves down the mountain with terrible cries and went bounding away toward the peaceful city of Nole.

The Descent of the Roly-Rogues

King Bud and Princess Fluff were leading very happy and peaceful lives in their beautiful palace. All wars and dangers seemed at an end, and there was nothing to disturb their content. All the gold that was needed the royal pursebearer was able to supply from his overflowing purse. The gigantic General Tollydob became famous throughout the world, and no nation dared attack the army of Noland. The talking dog of old Tallydab made everyone wonder, and people came many miles to see Ruffles and hear him speak. It was said that all this good fortune had been brought to Noland by the pretty Princess Fluff, who was a favorite of the fairies, and the people loved her on this account as well as for her bright and sunny disposition. King Bud caused his subjects some little anxiety, to be sure, for they never could tell what he was liable to do next, except that he was sure to do something unexpected. But much is forgiven a king, and if Bud made some pompous old noble-man stand on his head to amuse a mob of people, he would give him a good dinner afterward and fill his purse with gold to make up for the indignity. Fluff often reproved her brother for such pranks, but Bud's soul was flooded with mischief, and it was hard for him to resist letting a little of the surplus escape now and then. After all, the people were fairly content and prosperous, and no one was at all prepared for the disaster soon to overtake them. One day, while King Bud was playing at ball with some of his courtiers on a field outside the city gates, the first warning of trouble reached him. Bud had batted a ball high into the air, and while looking upward for it to descend, he saw another ball bound from the plain at the top of the North Mountains, fly into the air, and then sink gradually toward him. As it approached, it grew bigger and bigger until it assumed mammoth proportions, and then, while the courtiers screamed in terror, the great ball struck the field near them, bounced high into the air, and came down directly upon the sharp point of one of the palace towers, where it stuck fast with a yell that sounded almost human. For some moments Bud and his companions were motionless through surprise and fear, then they rushed into the city and stood among the crowd of people which had congregated at the foot of the tower to stare at the big ball impaled upon its point. Once in a while, two arms, two short legs and head would dart out from the ball and wiggle frantically, and then the yell would be repeated and the head and limbs withdrawn swiftly into the ball. It was all so curious that the people were justified in staring at it in amazement, for certainly no one had ever seen or heard of a Roly-Rogue before, or even known such a creature existed. Finally, as no one else could reach the steeple-top, Aunt Rivette flew into the

air and circled slowly around the ball. When next its head was thrust out, she called, “Are you a mud turtle or a man?” “I’ll show you which if I get hold of you,” answered the Roly-Rogue fiercely. “Where did you come from?” asked Aunt Rivette, taking care the wiggling arms did not grab her. “That is none of your business,” said the Roly-Rogue. “But I didn’t intend to come, that you may depend upon.” “Are you hurt?” she inquired, seeing that the struggles of the creature made him spin around upon the steeple point like a windmill. “No, I’m not hurt at all,” declared the Roly-Rogue, “but I’d like to know how to get down.” “What would you do if we helped you to get free?” asked Aunt Rivette. “I’d fight every one of those idiots who are laughing at me down there!” said the creature, its eyes flashing wickedly. “Then you’d best stay where you are,” returned old Rivette, who flew back to earth again to tell Bud what the Roly-Rogue had said. “I believe that is the best place for him,” said Bud, “so we’ll let him stay where he is. He’s not very ornamental, I must say, but he’s very safe up there on top of the steeple.” “We might have him gilded,” proposed the old woman, “and then he’d look better.” “I’ll think it over,” said the king, and he went away to finish his ball game. The people talked and wondered about the queer creature on the steeple, but no one could say where it came from or what it was; they were naturally much puzzled. The next day was bright with sunshine, so early in the forenoon Bud and Fluff had the royal cook fill their baskets with good things to eat and set out to picnic on the bank of the river that separated Noland from the kingdom of Ix. They rode ponies to reach the river sooner than by walking, and their only companions were Tallydab, the lord high steward, and his talking dog Ruffles. It was after this picnic party had passed over the mountain and were securely hidden from anyone in the city of Nole that the ruler of the Roly-Rogues and his thousands of followers hurled themselves down from their land above the clouds and began bounding toward the plain below. The people first heard a roar that sounded like distant thunder, and when they looked toward the North Mountains they saw the air black with tiny bouncing balls that seemed to drop from the drifting clouds which always had obscured the highest peak. But although appearing small when first seen, these balls grew rapidly larger as they came nearer, and then, with sharp reports like pistol shots, they began dropping upon the plain by dozens and hundreds and then thousands. As soon as they touched the ground, they bounded upward again, like rubber balls the children throw upon the floor, but each bound was less violent than the one preceding it, until finally within the streets of the city and upon all the fields surrounding it lay the thousands of Roly-Rogues that had fallen from the mountain peak. At first they lay still, as if stunned by their swift journey and collision with the hard earth, but after

a few seconds they recovered, thrust out their heads and limbs, and scrambled upon their flat feet. Then the savage Roly-Rogues uttered hoarse shouts of joy, for they were safely arrived at the city they had seen from afar, and the audacious adventure was a success.

The Conquest of Noland

It would be impossible to describe the amazement of the people of Nole when the Roly-Rogues came upon them. Not only was the descent wholly unexpected, but the appearance of the invaders was queer enough to strike terror to the stoutest heart. Their round bodies were supported by short, strong legs having broad, flattened feet to keep them steady. Their arms were short, and the fingers of their hands, while not long, were very powerful. But the heads were the most startling portions of these strange creatures. They were flat and thick on the top, with leathery rolls around their necks; so that, when the head was drawn in, its upper part rounded out the surface of the ball. In this peculiar head the Roly-Rogue had two big eyes as shiny as porcelain, a small, stubby nose, and a huge mouth. Their strange, leather-like clothing fitted their bodies closely and was of different colors--green, yellow, red and brown. Taken altogether, the Roly-Rogues were not pretty to look at, and although their big eyes gave them a startled or astonished expression, nothing seemed ever to startle or astonish them in the least. When they arrived in the valley of Nole, they scrambled to their feet, extended their long arms with the thorns clasped tight in their talon-like fingers, and rushed in a furious crowd and with loud cries upon the terror-stricken people. The soldiers of Tollydob's brave army had not even time to seize their weapons, for such a foe coming upon them through the air had never been dreamed of. And the men of Nole, who might have resisted the enemy, were too much frightened to do more than tremble violently and gasp with open mouths. As for the women and children, they fled screaming into the houses and bolted or locked the doors, which was doubtless the wisest thing they could have done. General Tollydob was asleep when the calamity of this invasion occurred, but hearing the shouts, he ran out of his mansion and met several of the Roly-Rogues face to face. Without hesitation the brave general rushed upon them, but two of the creatures promptly rolled themselves against him from opposite directions so that the ten-foot giant was crushed between them until there was not a particle of breath left in his body. No sooner did these release him than two other Roly-Rogues rolled toward him; but Tollydob was not to be caught twice, so he gave a mighty jump and jumped right over their heads, with the result that the balls crashed against each other. This made the two Roly-Rogues so angry that they began to fight each other savagely, and the general started to run away. But other foes rolled after him, knocked him down and stuck their thorns into him until he yelled for mercy and promised to become their slave. Tullydub, the chief counselor, watched all this from his window, and it frightened him so greatly that he crawled

under his bed and hid, hoping the creatures would not find him. But their big, round eyes were sharp at discovering things, so the Roly-Rogues had not been in Tullydub's room two minutes before he was dragged from beneath his bed and prodded with thorns until he promised obedience to his conquerors. The lord high pursebearer at the first alarm dug a hole in the garden of the royal palace and buried his purse so no one could find it but himself. But he might have saved himself this trouble, for the Roly-Rogues knew nothing of money or its uses, being accustomed to seizing whatever they desired without a thought of rendering payment for it. Having buried his purse, old Tillydib gave himself up to the invaders as their prisoner, and this saved him the indignity of being conquered. The lord high executioner may really be credited with making the only serious fight of the day, for when the Roly-Rogues came upon him, Tellydeb seized his ax, and before the enemy could come near, he reached out his long arm and cleverly sliced the heads off several of their round bodies. The others paused for a moment, being unused to such warfare and not understanding how an arm could reach so far. But seeing their heads were in danger, about a hundred of the creatures formed themselves into balls and rolled upon the executioner in a straight line, hoping to crush him. They could not see what happened after they began to roll, their heads being withdrawn, but Tellydeb watched them speed toward him and stepping aside, he aimed a strong blow with his ax at the body of the first Roly-Rogue that passed him. Instead of cutting the rubber-like body, the ax bounded back and flew from Tellydeb's hand into the air, falling farther away than the long arm of the executioner could reach. Therefore he was left helpless and was wise enough to surrender without further resistance. Finding no one else to resist them, the Roly-Rogues contented themselves with bounding against the terrorized people, great and humble alike, and knocking them over, laughing boisterously at the figures sprawling in the mud of the streets. And then they would prick the bodies of the men with their sharp thorns, making them spring to their feet again with shrieks of fear, only to be bowled over again the next minute. But the monsters soon grew weary of this amusement, for they were anxious to explore the city they had so successfully invaded. They flocked into the palace and public buildings and gazed eagerly at the many beautiful and, to them, novel things that were found. The mirrors delighted them, and they fought one another for the privilege of standing before the glasses to admire the reflections of their horrid bodies. They could not sit in the chairs, for the round bodies would not fit them; neither could the Roly-Rogues understand the use of beds. For when they rested or slept, the creatures merely withdrew their limbs and heads, rolled over upon their backs, and slept soundly no

matter where they might be. The shops were all entered and robbed of their wares, the Roly-Rogues wantonly destroying all that they could not use. They were like ostriches in eating anything that looked attractive to them; one of the monsters swallowed several pretty glass beads, and some of the more inquisitive of them invaded the grocery shops and satisfied their curiosity by tasting of nearly everything in sight. It was funny to see their wry faces when they sampled the salt and vinegar. Presently the entire city was under the dominion of the Roly-Rogues, who forced the unhappy people to wait upon them and amuse them; and if any hesitated to obey their commands, the monsters would bump against them, pull their hair, and make them suffer most miserably. Aunt Rivette was in her room at the top of the palace when the Roly-Rogues invaded the city of Nole. At first she was as much frightened as the others, but she soon remembered she could escape the creatures by flying, so she quietly watched them from the windows. By and by, as they explored the palace, they came to Aunt Rivette's room and broke in the door, but the old woman calmly stepped out of her window upon a little iron balcony, spread her great wings, and flew away before the Roly-Rogues could catch her. Then she soared calmly through the air, and having remembered that Bud and Fluff had gone to the river on a picnic, she flew swiftly in that direction and before long came to where the children and old Tallydab were eating their luncheon, while the dog Ruffles, who was in good spirits, sang a comic song to amuse them. They were much surprised to see Aunt Rivette flying toward them, but when she alighted and told Bud that his kingdom had been conquered by the Roly-Rogues and all his people enslaved, the little party was so astonished that they stared at one another in speechless amazement. "Oh, Bud, what shall we do?" finally asked Fluff in distress. "Don't know," said Bud, struggling to swallow a large piece of sandwich that in his excitement had stuck fast in his throat. "One thing is certain," remarked Aunt Rivette, helping herself to a slice of cake, "our happy lives are now ruined forever. We should be foolish to remain here, and the sooner we escape to some other country where the Roly-Rogues cannot find us, the safer we shall be." "But why run away?" asked Bud. "Can't something else be done? Here, Tallydab, you're one of my counselors. What do you say about this affair?" Now the lord high steward was a deliberate old fellow, and before he replied he dusted the crumbs from his lap, filled and lighted his long pipe, and smoked several whiffs in a thoughtful manner. "It strikes me," said he at last, "that by means of the Princess Fluff's magic cloak we can either destroy or scatter these rascally invaders and restore the kingdom to peace and prosperity." "Sure enough!" replied Bud. "Why didn't we think of that before?" "You will have to make the wish, Bud," said Fluff,

“for all the rest of us have wished, and you have not made yours yet.” “All right,” answered the king. “If I must, I must. But I’m sorry I have to do it now, for I was saving my wish for something else.” “But where’s the cloak?” asked the dog, rudely breaking into the conversation. “You can’t wish without the cloak.” “The cloak is locked up in a drawer in my room at the palace,” said Fluff. “And our enemies have possession of the palace,” continued Tallydab gloomily. “Was there ever such ill luck!” “Never mind,” said Aunt Rivette. “I’ll fly back and get it. That is, if the Roly-Rogues have not already broken open the drawer and discovered the cloak.” “Please go at once, then!” exclaimed Fluff. “Here is the key.” And she unfastened it from the chain at her neck and handed it to her aunt. “But be careful, whatever you do, that those horrible creatures do not catch you.” “I’m not afraid,” said Aunt Rivette confidently. And taking the key, the old lady at once flew away in the direction of the city of Nole, promising to return very soon.

The Bravery of Aunt Rivette

The Roly-Rogues were so busy rioting that they did not look into the air and discover Aunt Rivette flying over the city. So she alighted, all unobserved, upon a balcony of the palace just outside the chamber of the Princess Fluff and succeeded in entering the room. The creatures had ransacked this apartment as they had every other part of the royal palace, and Fluff's pretty dresses and ornaments were strewn about in dreadful confusion. But the drawer in which rested the magic cloak was still locked, and in a few moments the old woman had the precious garment in her hands. It was, as we know, the imitation cloak Queen Zixi had made and exchanged for the real one, but so closely did it resemble the fairy cloak that Aunt Rivette had no idea she was carrying a useless garment back to her little niece and nephew. On the contrary, she thought to herself, "Now we can quickly dispose of these monstrous rogues and drive them back to their own country." Hearing someone moving about in the next room, she ran to the window and soon was flying away with the cloak to the place where she had left Bud and Fluff. "Good!" cried the lord high steward when he saw the cloak. "Now we have nothing more to fear. Put on your cloak, your Majesty, and make the wish." Bud threw the cloak over his shoulders. "What shall I wish?" he asked. "Let me see," answered Tallydab. "What we want is to get rid of these invaders. Wish them all in the kingdom of Ix." "Oh, no!" cried Fluff. "It would be wicked to injure Queen Zixi and her people. Let us wish the Roly-Rogues back where they came from." "That would be folly!" said the dog Ruffles with an accent of scorn. "For they could easily return again to our city of Nole, having once learned the way there." "That is true," agreed Aunt Rivette. "The safest thing to do is to wish them all dead." "But it would be an awful job to bury so many great balls," objected Bud. "It would keep all our people busy for a month at least." "Why not wish them dead and buried?" asked Ruffles. "Then they would be out of the way for good and all." "A capital idea!" responded Tallydab. "But I haven't seen these curious creatures yet," said Bud, "and if I now wish them all dead and buried, I shall never get a glimpse of one of them. So let's walk boldly into the city, and when they appear to interfere with us, I'll make the wish and the Roly-Rogues will instantly disappear." So the entire party returned to the city of Nole; Bud and Fluff riding their ponies, Aunt Rivette fluttering along beside them, and the lord high steward walking behind with his dog. The Roly-Rogues were so much surprised to see this little party boldly entering the streets of the city and showing no particle of fear of them that they at first made no offer to molest them. Even when Bud roared with laughter at their

queer appearance and called them “mud-turtles” and “footballs” they did not resent the insults, for they had never heard of either a turtle or a football before. When the party had reached the palace and the children had dismounted, Bud laughed yet louder, for the gigantic General Tollydob came to the kitchen door wearing an apron while he polished a big dishpan, the Roly-Rogues having made him a scullion. The ruler of the Roly-Rogues was suffering from a tooth-ache, so he had rolled himself into a ball and made old Tullydub, the lord high counselor, rock him gently as he lay upon his back, just as one would rock a baby’s cradle. Jikki was scratching the back of another Roly-Rogue with a sharp garden rake, while Jikki’s six servants stood in a solemn row at his back. They would do anything for Jikki, but they would not lift a finger to serve anyone else, so the old valet had to do the scratching unaided. These six young men had proved a great puzzle to the Roly-Rogues, for they found it impossible to touch them or injure them in any way; so, after several vain attempts to conquer them, they decided to leave Jikki’s servants alone. The lord high pursebearer was waving a fan to keep the flies off two of the slumbering monsters, and the lord high executioner was feeding another Roly-Rogue with soup from a great ladle, the creature finding much amusement in being fed in this manner. King Bud, feeling sure of making all his enemies disappear with a wish, found rare sport in watching his periwigged counselors thus serving their captors; so he laughed and made fun of them until the Roly-Rogue ruler stuck out his head and commanded the boy to run away. “Why, you ugly rascals, I’m the King of Noland,” replied Bud, “so you’d better show me proper respect.” With that he picked up a good-sized pebble and threw it at the ruler. It struck him just over his aching tooth, and with a roar of anger the Roly-Rogue bounded toward Bud and his party. The assault was so sudden that they had much ado to scramble out of the way, and as soon as Bud could escape the rush of the huge ball, he turned squarely around and shouted, “I wish every one of the Roly-Rogues dead and buried!” Hearing this and seeing that the king wore the magic cloak, all the high counselors at once raised a joyful shout, and Fluff and Bud gazed upon the Roly-Rogues expectantly, thinking that of course they would disappear. But Zixi’s cloak had no magic powers whatever; and now dozens of the Roly-Rogues, aroused to anger, bounded toward Bud’s little party. I am sure the result would have been terrible had not Aunt Rivette suddenly come to the children’s rescue. She threw one lean arm around Bud and the other around Fluff, and then, quickly fluttering her wings, she flew with them to the roof of the palace, which they reached in safety. The lord high steward and his dog went down before the rush, and the next moment old Tallydab was crying loudly for mercy, while Ruffles limped

away to a safe spot beneath a bench under an apple tree, howling at every step and shouting angry epithets at the Roly-Rogues. “I wonder what’s wrong with the cloak,” gasped Bud. “The old thing’s a fraud; it didn’t work.” “Something went wrong, that’s certain,” replied Fluff. “You’re sure you hadn’t wished before, aren’t you?” “Yes, I’m sure,” said Bud. “Perhaps,” said Aunt Rivette, “the fairies have no power over these horrible creatures.” “That must be it, of course,” said the princess. “But what shall we do now? Our country is entirely conquered by these monsters, so it isn’t a safe place for us to stay in.” “I believe I can carry you anywhere you’d like to go,” said Aunt Rivette. “You’re not so very heavy.” “Suppose we go to Queen Zixi and ask her to protect us?” the princess suggested. “That’s all right if she doesn’t bear us a grudge. You know we knocked out her whole army,” remarked Bud. “Quavo the minstrel says she is very beautiful and kind to her people,” said the girl. “Well, there’s no one else we can trust,” Bud answered gloomily, “so we may as well try Zixi. But if you drop either of us on the way, Aunt Rivette, I’ll have to call in the lord high executioner.” “Never fear,” said the old woman. “If I drop you, you’ll never know what has happened. So each one of you put an arm around my neck and cling tight and I’ll soon carry you over the mountain and the river into the kingdom of Ix.”

In the Palace of the Witch-Queen

Bud and Fluff were surprised at the magnificence of the city of Ix. The witch-queen had reigned there so many centuries that she found plenty of time to carry out her ideas; and the gardens, shrubbery and buildings were beautifully planned and cared for. The splendid palace of the queen was in the center of a delightful park, with white marble walks leading up to the front door. Aunt Rivette landed the children at the entrance to this royal park, and they walked slowly toward the palace, admiring the gleaming white statues, the fountains and flowers as they went. It was beginning to grow dusk, and the lights were gleaming in the palace windows when they reached it. Dozens of liveried servants were standing near the entrance, and some of these escorted the strangers with much courtesy to a reception room. There a gray-haired master of ceremonies met them and asked in what way he might serve them. This politeness almost took Bud's breath away, for he had considered Queen Zixi in the light of an enemy rather than a friend; but he decided not to sail under false colors, so he drew himself up in royal fashion and answered, "I am King Bud of Noland, and this is my sister, Princess Fluff and my Aunt Rivette. My kingdom has been conquered by a horde of monsters, and I have come to the Queen of Ix to ask her assistance." The master of ceremonies bowed low and said, "I am sure Queen Zixi will be glad to assist your Majesty. Permit me to escort you to rooms that you may prepare for an interview with her as soon as she can receive you." So they were led to luxurious chambers and were supplied with perfumed baths and clean raiment, which proved very refreshing after their tedious journey through the air. It was now evening, and when they were ushered into the queen's reception room, the palace was brilliantly lighted. Zixi, since her great disappointment in the lilac grove, had decided that her longing to behold a beautiful reflection in her mirror was both impossible and foolish, so she had driven the desire from her heart and devoted herself to ruling her kingdom wisely as she had ruled before the idea of stealing the magic cloak had taken possession of her. And when her mind was in normal condition, the witch-queen was very sweet and agreeable in disposition. So Queen Zixi greeted Bud and his sister and aunt with great kindness, kissing Fluff affectionately upon her cheek and giving her own hand to Bud to kiss. It is not strange that the children considered her the most beautiful person they had ever beheld, and to them she was as gentle as beautiful, listening with much interest to their tale of the invasion of the Roly-Rogues and promising to assist them by every means in her power. This made Bud somewhat ashamed of his past enmity, so he said bluntly, "I am sorry we defeated your

army and made them run." "Why, that was the only thing you could do when I had invaded your dominion," answered Zixi. "I admit that you were in the right, and that I deserved my defeat." "But why did you try to conquer us?" asked Fluff. "Because I wanted to secure the magic cloak, of which I had heard so much," returned the queen frankly. "Oh!" said the girl. "But of course, you understand that if I had known the magic cloak could not grant any more wishes I would not have been so eager to secure it," continued Zixi. "No," said Bud. "The old thing won't work any more, and we nearly got captured by the Roly-Rogues before we found it out." "Oh, have you the cloak again?" asked Zixi with a look of astonishment. "Yes indeed," returned the prisoner. "It was locked up in my drawer, and Aunt Rivette managed to get it for me before the Roly-Rogues could find it." "Locked in your drawer?" repeated the queen musingly. "Then I am sorry to say you have not the fairy cloak at all, but the imitation one." "What do you mean?" asked Fluff, greatly surprised. "Why, I must make a confession," said Zixi with a laugh. "I tried many ways to steal your magic cloak. First I came to Nole as 'Miss Trust.' Do you remember?" "Oh yes!" cried Fluff. "And I mistrusted you from the first." "And then I sent my army to capture the cloak. But when both of these plans failed, I disguised myself as the girl Adlena!" "Adlena!" exclaimed the princess. "Why, I've often wondered what became of my maid Adlena and why she left me so suddenly and mysteriously." "Well, she exchanged an imitation cloak for the one the fairies had given you," said Zixi with a smile. "And then she ran away with the precious garment, leaving in your drawer a cloak that resembled the magic garment but had no magical charms." "How dreadful!" said Fluff. "But it did me no good," went on the queen sadly, "for when I made a wish the cloak could not grant it." "Because it was stolen!" cried the girl eagerly. "The fairy who gave it to me said that if the cloak was stolen, it would never grant a wish to the thief." "Oh," said Zixi, astonished. "I did not know that." "Of course not," Fluff replied with a rather triumphant smile. "But if you had only come to me and told me frankly that you wanted to use the cloak, I would gladly have lent it to you, and then you could have had your wish." "Well, well!" said Zixi, much provoked with herself. "To think I have been so wicked all for nothing when I might have succeeded without the least trouble had I frankly asked for what I wanted!" "But see here!" said Bud, beginning to understand the tangle of events. "I must have worn the imitation cloak when I made my wish, and that was the reason that my wish didn't come true." "To be sure," rejoined Fluff. "And so it is nothing but the imitation cloak we have brought here." "No wonder it would not destroy and bury the Roly-Rogues!" declared the boy sulkily. "But if this is the imitation, where then is the real magic cloak?"

“Why, I believe I left it in the lilac grove,” replied Zixi. “Then we must find it at once,” said Bud, “for only by its aid can we get rid of those Roly-Rogues.” “And afterward I will gladly lend it to you also; I promise now to lend it to you,” said Fluff, turning to the queen, “and your wish will be fulfilled after all--whatever it may be.” This expression of kindness and good will brought great joy to Zixi, and she seized the generous child in her arms and kissed her with real gratitude. “We will start for the lilac grove tomorrow morning,” she exclaimed delightedly, “and before night both King Bud and I will have our wishes fulfilled!” Then the witch-queen led them to her royal banquet hall, where a most delightful dinner was served. And all the courtiers and officers of Zixi bowed low, first before the King of Noland and then before his sweet little sister, and promised them the friendship of the entire kingdom of Ix. Quavo the wandering minstrel chanced to be present that evening, and he sang a complimentary song about King Bud, and a wonderful song about the “Flying Lady,” meaning Aunt Rivette, and a beautiful song about the lovely Princess Fluff. So everyone was happy and contented as they all looked forward to the morrow to regain the magic cloak and by its means to bring an end to all their worries.

The Search for the Magic Cloak

The sun had scarcely risen next morning when our friends left the city of Ix in search of the magic cloak. All were mounted on strong horses with a dozen soldiers riding behind to protect them from harm, while the royal steward of the witch-queen followed with two donkeys laden with hampers of provisions from which to feed the travelers on their way. It was a long journey to the wide river, but they finally reached it and engaged the ferryman to take them across. The ferryman did not like to visit the other shore, which was in the kingdom of Noland, for several of the Roly-Rogues had already been seen upon the mountaintop. But the guard of soldiers reassured the man, so he rowed his big boat across with the entire party and set them safely on the shore. The ferryman's little daughter was in the boat, but she was not sobbing today. On the contrary, her face was all smiles. "Do you not still wish to be a man?" asked Zixi, patting the child's head. "No indeed!" answered the little maid. "For I have discovered all men must work very hard to support their wives and children and to buy them food and raiment. So I have changed my mind about becoming a man, especially as that would be impossible." It was not far from the ferry to the grove of lilacs, and as they rode along, Zixi saw the gray old owl sitting contentedly in a tree and pruning (sic) its feathers. "Are you no longer wailing because you cannot swim in the river?" asked the witch-queen, speaking in the owl language. "No indeed," answered the gray owl. "For, as I watched a fish swimming in the water, a man caught it on a sharp hook, and the fish was killed. I believe I'm safer in a tree." "I believe so, too," said Zixi, and rode along more thoughtfully, for she remembered her own desire and wondered if it would also prove foolish. Just as they left the riverbank, she noticed the old alligator sunning himself happily upon the bank. "Have you ceased weeping because you cannot climb a tree?" asked the witch-queen. "Of course," answered the alligator, opening one eye to observe his questioner. "For a boy climbed a tree near me yesterday and fell out of it and broke his leg. It is quite foolish to climb trees. I'm sure I am safer in the water." Zixi made no reply, but she agreed with the alligator, who called after her sleepily, "Isn't it fortunate we cannot have everything we are stupid enough to wish for?" Shortly afterward they left the riverbank and approached the lilac grove, the witch-queen riding first through the trees to show the place where she had dropped the magic cloak. She knew it was near the little spring where she had gazed at her reflection in the water, but although they searched over every inch of ground, they could discover no trace of the lost cloak. "It is really too bad!" exclaimed Zixi with vexation. "Someone must have come through the grove

and taken the cloak away." "But we must find it," said Bud earnestly, "for otherwise I shall not be able to rescue my people from the Roly-Rogues." "Let us inquire of everyone we meet if they have seen the cloak," suggested Princess Fluff. "In that way we may discover who has taken it." So they made a camp on the edge of the grove, and for two days they stopped and questioned all who passed that way. But none had ever seen or heard of a cloak like that described. Finally an old shepherd came along, hobbling painfully after a flock of sheep, for he suffered much from rheumatism. "We have lost a beautiful cloak in the lilac grove," said Zixi to the shepherd. "When did you lose it?" asked the old man, pausing to lean upon his stick. "Several days ago," returned the queen. "It was bright as the rainbow and woven with threads finer than--" "I know, I know!" interrupted the shepherd. "For I myself found it lying upon the ground beneath the lilac trees." "Hurrah!" cried Bud gleefully. "At last we have found it!" And all the others were fully as delighted as he was. "But where have you put the cloak?" inquired Zixi. "Why, I gave it to Dame Dingle, who lives under the hill yonder," replied the man, pointing far away over the fields, "and she gave me in exchange some medicine for my rheumatism, which has made the pain considerably worse. So today I threw the bottle into the river." They did not pause to listen further to the shepherd's talk, for all were now intent on reaching the cottage of Dame Dingle. So the soldiers saddled the horses, and in a few minutes they were galloping away toward the hill. It was a long ride over rough ground, but finally they came near the hill and saw a tiny, tumbledown cottage just at its foot. Hastily dismounting, Bud, Fluff and the queen rushed into the cottage, where a wrinkled old woman was bent nearly double over a crazy quilt upon which she was sewing patches. "Where is the cloak?" cried the three in a breath. The woman did not raise her head, but counted her stitches in a slow, monotonous tone. "Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen--" "Where is the magic cloak?" demanded Zixi, stamping her foot impatiently. "Nineteen--" said Dame Dingle slowly. "There! I've broken my needle!" "Answer us at once!" commanded Bud sternly. "Where is the magic cloak?" The woman paid no attention to him whatever. She carefully selected a new needle, threaded it after several attempts, and began anew to stitch the patch. "Twenty!" she mumbled in a low voice. "Twenty-one--" But now Zixi snatched the work from her hands and exclaimed, "If you do not answer at once, I will give you a good beating!" "That is all right," said the dame, looking up at them through her spectacles. "The patches take twenty-one stitches on each side, and if I lose my count I get mixed up. But it's all right now. What do you want?" "The cloak the old shepherd gave you," replied the queen sharply. "The pretty cloak with the bright colors?" asked the dame

calmly. “Yes! Yes!” answered the three excitedly. “Why, that very patch I was sewing was cut from the cloak,” said Dame Dingle. “Isn’t it lovely? And it brightens the rest of the crazy quilt beautifully.” “Do you mean that you have cut up my magic cloak?” asked Fluff in amazement, while the others were too horrified to speak. “Certainly,” said the woman. “The cloak was too fine for me to wear, and I needed something bright in my crazy quilt. So I cut up half of the cloak and made patches of it.” The witch-queen gave a gasp and sat down suddenly upon a rickety bench. Princess Fluff walked to the door and stood looking out, that the others might not see the tears of disappointment in her eyes. Bud alone stood scowling in front of the old dame, and presently he said to her in a harsh tone, “You ought to be smothered with your own crazy quilt for daring to cut up the fairy cloak!” “The fairy cloak!” echoed Dame Dingle. “What do you mean?” “That cloak was a gift to my sister from the fairies,” said Bud, “and it had a magic charm. Aren’t you afraid the fairies will punish you for what you have done?” Dame Dingle was greatly dismayed. “How could I know it?” she asked anxiously. “How could I know it was a magic cloak that old Edi gave to me?” “Well, it was, and woven by the fairies themselves,” retorted the boy. “And a whole nation is in danger because you have wickedly cut it up.” Dame Dingle tried to cry to show that she was sorry and so escape punishment. She put her apron over her face and rocked back and forth and made an attempt to squeeze a tear out of her eyes. Suddenly Zixi jumped up. “Why, it isn’t so bad after all!” she exclaimed. “We can sew the cloak together again!” “Of course!” said Fluff, coming from the doorway. “Why didn’t we think of that at once?” “Where is the rest of the cloak?” demanded Zixi. Dame Dingle went to a chest and drew forth the half of the cloak that had not been cut up. There was no doubt about its being the magic cloak. The golden thread Queen Lulea had woven could be seen plainly in the web, and the brilliant colors were as fresh and lovely as ever. But the flowing skirt of the cloak had been ruthlessly hacked by Dame Dingle’s shears and presented a sorry plight. “Get us the patches you have cut!” commanded Zixi, and without a word the dame drew from her basket five small squares and then ripped from the crazy quilt the one she had just sewn on. “But this isn’t enough,” said Fluff when she had spread the cloak upon the floor and matched the pieces. “Where is the rest of the cloak?” “Why, why,” stammered Dame Dingle with hesitation. “I gave them away.” “Gave them away! Who got them?” said Bud. “Why, some friends of mine were here from the village last evening, and we traded patches so each of us would have a variety for our crazy quilts.” “Well?” “And I gave each of them one of the patches from the pretty cloak.” “Well, you are a ninny!” declared Bud scornfully. “Yes, your Majesty, I believe I

am," answered Dame Dingle meekly. "We must go to the village and gather up those pieces," said Zixi. "Can you tell us the names of your friends?" she asked the woman. "Of course," responded Dame Dingle. "They were Nancy Nink, Betty Barx, Sally Sog, Molly Mitt, and Lucy Lum." "Before we go the village, let us make Dame Dingle sew these portions of the cloak together," suggested Fluff. The dame was good enough to do this, and she threaded her needle at once. So deft and fine was her needlework that she mended the cloak most beautifully so that from a short distance away no one could discover that the cloak had been darned. But a great square was still missing from the front, and our friends were now eager to hasten to the village. "This will cause us some delay," said the witch-queen more cheerfully, "but the cloak will soon be complete again, and then we can have our wishes." Fluff took the precious cloak over her arm, and then they all mounted their horses and rode away toward the village, which Dame Dingle pointed out from her doorway. Zixi was sorry for the old creature, who had been more foolish than wicked; and the witch-queen left a bright gold piece in the woman's hand when she bade her goodbye, which was worth more to Dame Dingle than three pretty cloaks. The ground was boggy and uneven, so they were forced to ride slowly to the little village, but they arrived there at last and began hunting for the old women who had received pieces of the magic cloak. They were easily found, and all seemed willing enough to give up their patches when the importance of the matter was explained to them. At the witch-queen's suggestion, each woman fitted her patch to the cloak and sewed it on very neatly, but Lucy Lum, the last of the five, said to the them, "This is only half of the patch Dame Dingle gave me. The other part I gave to the miller's wife down in the valley where the river bends. But I'm sure she will be glad to let you have it. See--it only requires that small piece to complete the cloak and make it as good as new." It was true--the magic cloak, except for a small square at the bottom, was now complete, and such skillful needlewomen were these crazy-quilt makers that it was difficult to tell where it had been cut and afterward mended. But the miller's wife must now be seen, so they all remounted the horses again except Aunt Rivette, who grumbled that so much riding made her bones rattle and that she preferred to fly. Which she did, frightening the horses to such an extent with her wings that Bud made her keep well in advance of them. They were all in good spirits now, for soon the magic cloak, almost as good as new, would be again in their possession, and Fluff and Bud had been greatly worried over the fate of their friends who had been left to the mercy of the terrible Roly-Rogues. The path ran in a zigzag direction down into the valley, but at length it led the party to the mill, where old Rivette was found sitting in the doorway awaiting them. The miller's

wife, when summoned, came to them drying her hands on her apron, for she had been washing the dishes. “We want to get the bright-colored patch Lucy Lum gave you,” explained Fluff, “for it was part of my magic cloak, which the fairies gave to me, and this is the place where it must be sewn to complete the garment.” And she showed the woman the cloak with the square missing. “I see,” said the miller’s wife, nodding her head, “and I am very sorry I cannot give you the piece to complete your cloak. But the fact is, I considered it too pretty for my crazy quilt, so I gave it to my son for a necktie.” “And where is your son?” demanded Zixi. “Oh, he is gone to sea, for he is a sailor. By this time he is far away upon the ocean.” Bud, Fluff and the witch-queen looked at one another in despair. This seemed, indeed, to destroy all their hopes, for the one portion of the cloak that they needed was far beyond their reach. Nothing remained but for them to return to Zixi’s palace and await the time when the miller’s son should return from his voyage. But before they went, the queen said to the woman, “When he returns, you may tell your son that if he will bring to me the necktie you gave him, I will give him in return fifty gold pieces.” “And I will give him fifty more,” said Bud promptly. “And I will give him enough ribbon to make fifty neckties,” added Fluff. The miller’s wife was delighted at the prospect. “Thank you! Thank you!” she exclaimed. “My boy’s fortune is made. He can now marry Imogene Gubb and settle down on a farm and give up the sea forever! And his neckties will be the envy of all the men in the country. As soon as he returns, I will send him to you with the bit of the cloak which you need.” But Zixi was so anxious that nothing might happen to prevent the miller’s son from returning the necktie that she left two of her soldiers at the mill with instructions to bring the man to her palace the instant he returned home. As they rode away, they were all very despondent over the ill luck of their journey. “He may be drowned at sea,” said Bud. “Or he may lose the necktie on the voyage,” said Fluff. “Oh, a thousand things might happen,” returned the queen, “but we need not make ourselves unhappy imagining them. Let us hope the miller’s son will soon return and restore to us the missing patch.” Which showed that Zixi had not lived six hundred and eighty-three years without gaining some wisdom.

Ruffles Carries the Silver Vial

When they were back at the witch-queen's palace in the city of Ix, the queen insisted that Bud and Fluff with their Aunt Rivette should remain her guests until the cloak could be restored to its former complete state. And for fear something else might happen to the precious garment, a silver chest was placed in Princess Fluff's room and the magic cloak safely locked therein, the key being carried upon the chain around the girl's neck. But their plans to wait patiently were soon interfered with by the arrival at Zixi's court of the talking dog, Ruffles, which had with much difficulty escaped from the Roly-Rogues. Ruffles brought to them so sad and harrowing a tale of the sufferings of the five high counselors and all the people of Noland at the hands of the fierce Roly-Rogues that Princess Fluff wept bitterly for her friends, and Bud became so cross and disagreeable that even Zixi was provoked with him. "Something really must be done," declared the queen. "I'll brew a magical mess in my witch kettle tonight and see if I can find a way to destroy those detestable Roly-Rogues." Indeed, she feared the creatures would some day find their way into Ix, so when all the rest of those in the palace were sound asleep, Zixi worked her magic spell, and from the imps she summoned she obtained advice how to act in order to get rid of the Roly-Rogues. Next morning she questioned Ruffles carefully. "What do the Roly-Rogues eat?" she asked. "Everything," said the dog, "for they have no judgment and consume buttons and hairpins as eagerly as they do food. But there is one thing they are really fond of, and that is soup. They oblige old Tollydob, the lord high general who works in the palace kitchen, to make them a kettle of soup every morning, and this they all eat as if they were half starving." "Very good!" exclaimed the witch-queen with pleasure. "I think I see a way of ridding all Noland of these monsters. Here is a Silver Vial filled with a magic liquid. I will tie it around your neck, and you must return to the city of Nole and carry the vial to Tollydob, the lord high general. Tell him that on Thursday morning, when he makes the kettle of soup, he must put the contents of the vial into the compound. But let no one taste it afterward except the Roly-Rogues." "And what then?" asked Ruffles curiously. "Then I will myself take charge of the monsters, and I have reason to believe the good citizens of Noland will no longer find themselves slaves." "All right," said the dog. "I will do as you bid me, for I long to free my master and have revenge on the Roly-Rogues." So Queen Zixi tied the Silver Vial to the dog's neck by means of a broad ribbon, and he started at once to return to Nole. And when he had gone, the queen summoned all her generals and bade them assemble the entire army and prepare to march into Noland again. Only this

time, instead of being at enmity with the people of Noland, the army of Ix was to march to their relief, and instead of bearing swords and spears, each man bore a coil of strong rope. “For,” said Zixi, “swords and spears are useless where the Roly-Rogues are concerned, as nothing can pierce their tough, rubber-like bodies. And more nations have been conquered by cunning than by force of arms.” Bud and Fluff, not knowing what the witch-queen meant to do, were much disturbed by these preparations to march upon the Roly-Rogues. The monsters had terrified them so greatly that they dreaded to meet with them again, and Bud declared that the safest plan was to remain in Zixi’s kingdom and await the coming of the miller’s son with the necktie. “But,” remonstrated Zixi, “in the meantime your people are suffering terribly.” “I know,” said Bud, “and it nearly drives me frantic to think of it. But they will be no better off if we try to fight the Roly-Rogues and are ourselves made slaves.” “Why not try the magic cloak as it is,” suggested the little princess, “and see if it won’t grant wishes as before? There’s only a small piece missing, and it may not make any difference with the power the fairies gave to it.” “Hooray!” shouted Bud. “That’s a good idea. It’s a magic cloak just the same, even if there is a chunk cut out of it.” Zixi agreed that it was worth a trial, so the cloak was taken from the silver casket and brought into the queen’s reception room. “Let us try it on one of your maids of honor first,” said Fluff, “and if it grants her wish, we will know the cloak has lost none of its magic powers. Then you and Bud may both make your wishes.” “Very well,” returned the queen, and she summoned one of her maids. “I am going to give you my cloak,” said the princess to the maid, “and while you wear it, you must make a wish.” She threw the cloak over the girl’s shoulders and after a moment’s thought, the maid said, “I wish for a bushel of candies.” “Fudge!” said Bud scornfully. “No, all kinds of candies,” answered the maid of honor. But although they watched her intently, the wish failed absolutely, for no bushel of candies appeared in sight. “Let us try it again,” suggested Fluff while the others wore disappointed expressions. “It was a foolish wish anyhow, and perhaps the fairies did not care to grant it.” So another maid was called and given the cloak to wear. “And may I wish for anything I desire?” she asked eagerly. “Of course,” answered the princess, “but as you can have but one wish, you must choose something sensible.” “Oh, I will,” declared the maid. “I wish I had yellow hair and blue eyes.” “Why did you wish that?” asked Fluff angrily, for the girl had pretty brown hair and eyes. “Because the young man I am going to marry says he likes blondes better than brunettes,” answered the maid, blushing. But her hair did not change its color, for all the wish, and the maid said, with evident disappointment, “Your magic cloak seems to be a

fraud.” “It does not grant foolish wishes,” returned the princess as she dismissed her. When the maid had gone, Zixi asked, “Well, are you satisfied?” “Yes,” acknowledged Fluff. “The cloak will not grant wishes unless it is complete. We must wait for the sailorman’s necktie.” “Then my army shall march tomorrow morning,” said the queen, and she went away to give the order to her generals.

The Destruction of the Monsters

It was Tuesday when the army of Ix started upon its second march into Noland. With it were the witch-queen, King Bud, Princess Fluff, and Aunt Rivette. At evening they encamped on the bank of the river, and on Wednesday the army was ferried across and marched up the side of the mountain that separated them from the valley of Noland. By night they had reached the summit of the mountain, but they did not mount upon the ridge for fear they might be seen by the Roly-Rogues. Zixi commanded them all to remain quietly behind the ridge, and they lighted no fires and spoke only in whispers. And although so many thousands of men lay close to the valley of Noland, not a sound came from them to warn the monsters that an enemy was near. Thursday morning dawned bright and pleasant, and as soon as the sun was up, the Roly-Rogues came crowding around the palace kitchen demanding that old Tollydob hurry the preparation of their soup. This the general did, trembling in spite of his ten feet of stature, for if they were kept waiting, the monsters were liable to prod his flesh with their thorns. But Tollydob did not forget to empty the contents of the Silver Vial into the soup as the dog Ruffles had told him to do, and soon it was being ladled out to the Roly-Rogues by Jikki, the four high counselors, and a dozen other enslaved officers of King Bud. And the dog Ruffles ran through the city, crying to every Roly-Rogue he met, “Hurry and get your soup before it is gone. It is especially good this morning!” So every Roly-Rogue in the valley hurried to the palace kitchen for soup, and there were so many that it was noon before the last was served, while these became so impatient that they abused their slaves in a sad manner. Yet even while the last were eating, those who had earlier partaken of the soup lay around the palace asleep and snoring loudly, for the contents of the Silver Vial had the effect of sending all of them to sleep within an hour and rendering them wholly unconscious for a period of ten hours. All through the city the Roly-Rogues lay asleep, and as they always withdrew their heads and limbs into their bodies when they slumbered, they presented a spectacle of thousands of huge balls lying motionless. When the big kettle was finally empty and the lord high general paused to wipe the perspiration from his brow, the last of the Roly-Rogues were rolling over on their backs from the effects of the potion which the witch-queen brewed and placed in the Silver Vial. Aunt Rivette had been flying over the city since early morning, and although the Roly-Rogues had been too intent upon their breakfast to notice her, the old woman’s sharp eyes had watched everything that took place below. Now when all the monsters had succumbed to the witch-potion, Aunt Rivette flew back to the mountain

where the army of Ix was hidden and carried the news to the witch-queen. Zixi at once ordered her generals to advance, and the entire army quickly mounted the summit of the ridge and ran down the side of the mountain to the gates of the city. The people, who saw that something unusual was taking place, greeted Bud and Fluff and the witch-queen with shouts of gladness, and even Aunt Rivette, when she flew down among them, was given three hearty cheers. But there was no time for joyous demonstrations while the streets and public squares were cluttered with the sleeping bodies of the terrible Roly-Rogues. The army of Ix lost no time in carrying out their queen's instructions, and as soon as they entered the city they took the long ropes they carried and wound them fast about the round bodies of the monsters, securely fastening their heads and limbs into their forms so that they could not stick them out again. Their enemies being thus rendered helpless, the people renewed their shouts of joy and gratitude and eagerly assisted the soldiers of Ix in rolling all the Roly-Rogues outside the gates and to a wide ledge of the mountain. The lord high general and all the other counselors threw away their aprons and symbols of servitude and dressed themselves in their official robes. The soldiers of Tollydob's army ran for their swords and pikes, and the women unlocked their doors and trooped into the streets of Nole for the first time since the descent of the monsters. But the task of liberation was not yet accomplished. All the Roly-Rogues had to be rolled up the side of the mountain to the topmost ridge, and so great was the bulk of their bodies that it took five or six men to roll each one to the mountaintop, and even then they were obliged to stop frequently to rest. But as soon as they got a Roly-Rogue to the ridge, they gave it a push and sent it bounding down the other side of the mountain until it fell into the big river flowing swiftly below. During the afternoon all the Roly-Rogues were thus dumped into the river, where they bobbed up and down in the water, spinning around and bumping against one another until the current carried them out of sight on their journey to the sea. It was rumored later that they had reached an uninhabited island where they harm no one except themselves. "I'm glad they floated," said Zixi as she stood upon the mountain ridge and watched the last of the monsters float out of sight, "for if they had sunk, they would have filled up the river, there were so many of them." It was evening when Noland at last became free from her terrible tyrants, and the citizens illuminated the entire city that they might spend the night in feasting and rejoicing over their freedom. The soldiers of Ix were embraced and made much of, and at all the feasts they were the honored guests, while the people of Noland pledged them their sincere friendship forever. King Bud took possession of the royal palace again, and Jikki bustled about and

prepared a grand banquet for the king's guests, although the old valet grumbled a great deal because his six solemn servants would not assist in waiting upon anyone but himself. The Roly-Rogues had destroyed many things, but the servants of the palace managed to quickly clear away the rubbish and to decorate the banquet hall handsomely. Bud placed the beautiful witch-queen upon his right hand and showed her great honor, for he was really very grateful for her assistance in rescuing his country from the invaders. The feasting and dancing lasted far into the night, but when at last the people sought their beds, they knew they might rest peacefully and free from care, for the Roly-Rogues had gone forever.

The Sailorman's Return

Next day the witch-queen returned with her army to the city of Ix to await the coming of the sailorman with the necktie, and King Bud set about getting his kingdom into running order again. The lord high pursebearer dug up his magic purse, and Bud ordered him to pay the shopkeepers full value for everything the Roly-Rogues had destroyed. The merchants were thus enabled to make purchases of new stocks of goods, and although all travelers had for many days kept away from Noland for fear of the monsters, caravans now flocked in vast numbers to the city of Nole with rich stores of merchandise to sell, so that soon the entire city looked like a huge bazaar. Bud also ordered a gold piece given to the head of every family, and this did no damage to the ever-filled royal purse, while it meant riches to the poor people who had suffered so much. Princess Fluff carried her silver chest back to the palace of her brother, and in it lay, carefully folded, the magic cloak. Being now fearful of losing it, she wanted Jikki to allow no one to enter the room in which lay the silver chest except with her full consent, explaining to him the value of the cloak. "And was it this cloak I wore when I wished for half a dozen servants?" asked the old valet. "Yes," answered Fluff. "Aunt Rivette bade you return it to me, and you were so careless of it that nearly all the high counselors used it before I found it again." "Then," said Jikki, heedless of the reproof, "will your Highness please use the cloak to rid me of these stupid servants? They are continually at my heels, waiting to serve me, and I am so busy myself serving others that those six young men almost drive me distracted. It wouldn't be so bad if they would serve anyone else, but they claim they are my servants alone and refuse to wait upon even his Majesty the king." "Sometime I will try to help you," answered Fluff, "but I shall not use the cloak again until the miller's son returns from his voyage at sea." So Jikki was forced to wait as impatiently as the others for the sailorman, and his servants had now become such a burden upon him that he grumbled every time he looked around and saw them standing in a stiff line behind him. Aunt Rivette again took possession of her rooms at the top of the palace, and although Bud, grateful for her courage in saving him and his sister from the Roly-Rogues, would gladly have given her handsomer apartments, the old woman preferred to be near the roof, where she could take flight into the air whenever it pleased her to go out. With her big wings and her power to fly as a bird, she was the envy of all the old gossips she had known in the days when she worked as a laundress, and now she would often alight upon the doorstep of some humble friend and tell of the wonderful adventures she had encountered. This never failed to surround her with an

admiring circle of listeners, and Aunt Rivette derived far more pleasure from her tattle than from living in a palace with her nephew the king. The kingdom of Noland soon took on a semblance to its former prosperity, and the Roly-Rogues were only remembered with shudders of repugnance and spoken of in awed whispers. And so the days wore away until late in the autumn, when one morning a mounted soldier from Queen Zixi dashed into Nole and rode furiously up to the palace gate. “The sailorman is found!” he shouted, throwing himself from his horse and bowing low before little King Bud, who had come out to meet him. “Good,” remarked Bud. “The Queen of Ix is even now riding to your Majesty’s city with a large escort surrounding the sailorman,” continued the soldier. “And has he the necktie?” asked Bud eagerly. “He is wearing it, your Majesty,” answered the man, “but he refuses to give it to anyone but the Princess Fluff.” “That’s all right,” said the king, and reentering the palace, he ordered Jikki to make preparations to receive the witch-queen and her retinue. When Zixi came to the city gates, she found General Tollydob in a gorgeous new uniform waiting to escort her to the palace. The houses were gay with flags and streamers, bands were playing, and on each side of the street along which the witch-queen rode were lines of soldiers to keep the way clear of the crowding populace. Behind the queen came the sailorman, carefully guarded by Zixi’s most trusted soldiers. He looked uneasy at so great a reception, and rode his horse as awkwardly as a sailor might. So the cavalcade came to the palace, which was thronged with courtiers and ladies in waiting. Zixi and the sailorman were ushered into the great throne room, where King Bud, wearing his ermine robe and jeweled crown, sat gravely upon his throne with Princess Fluff beside him. “Your Majesty,” began the witch-queen, bowing prettily, “I have brought you the sailorman at last. He has just returned from his voyage, and my soldiers captured him at his mother’s cottage by the mill. But he refuses to give the necktie to anyone except the Princess Fluff.” “I am the Princess Fluff,” said Meg to the sailor, “and your necktie is part of my magic cloak. So please give it back to me.” The sailorman shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. “My mother told me,” he finally said, “that King Bud would give me fifty gold pieces for it, and the Queen of Ix would give me another fifty gold pieces, and that your Highness would give me fifty neckties.” “That is all true,” returned Fluff, “so here are the fifty neckties.” Tillydib, the lord high pursebearer, counted out fifty gold pieces, and Zixi’s treasurer counted out another fifty, and all were given to the sailorman. Then the miller’s son unfastened the necktie from about his collar and handed it to Fluff. During the murmur of satisfaction that followed, the girl unlocked her silver chest, which Jikki had brought, and drew out the magic cloak. Lifting the skirt of

the garment, she attempted to fit the sailor's necktie into the place it should go. And then, while everyone looked on with breathless interest, the girl lifted a white face to the sailorman and exclaimed, "This is not the necktie your mother gave you!" For a moment there was silence while the assemblage glared angrily upon the sailor. Then the king, rising from his seat, demanded, "Are you sure, Fluff? Are you sure of that?" "Of course I'm sure," said the girl. "It is neither the shape nor the color of the missing patch." Bud turned to the now-trembling sailor. "Why have you tried to deceive us?" he asked sternly. "Oh, your Majesty!" returned the man, wringing his hands miserably. "I lost the necktie in a gale at sea, for I knew nothing of its value. And when I came home, my mother told me of all the gold you had offered for its return and advised me to deceive you by wearing another necktie. She said you would never know the difference." "Your mother is a foolish woman, as well as dishonest," answered Bud, "and you shall both be severely punished. Tellydeb," he continued, addressing the lord high executioner, "take this man to prison and see that he is fed on bread and water until further orders." "Not so!" exclaimed a sweet voice near the king. And then all looked up to see the beautiful Lulea, queen of the fairies, standing beside the throne.

The Fairy Queen

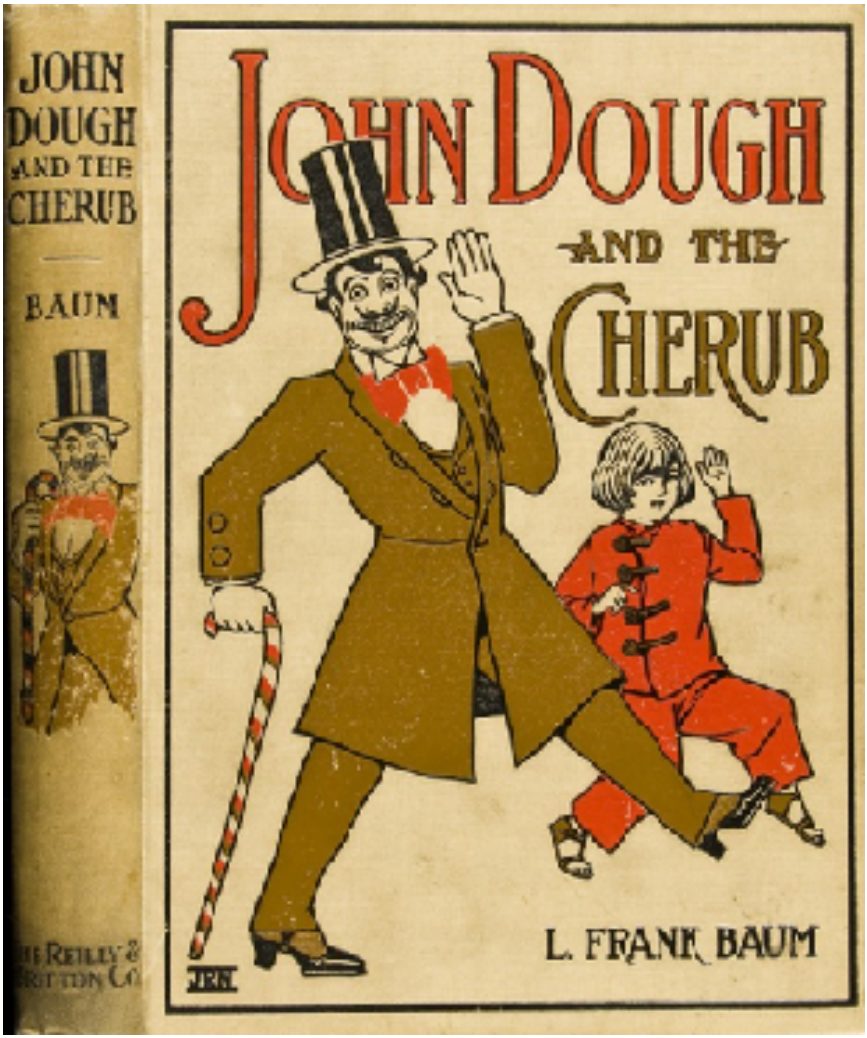
Every eye was now fixed upon the exquisite form of the fairy queen, which shed a glorious radiance throughout the room and filled every heart with an awe and admiration not unmingled with fear. “The magic cloak was woven by my band,” said the fairy, speaking so distinctly that all could hear the words, “and our object was to bring relief to suffering mortals, not to add to their worries. Some good the cloak has accomplished, I am sure, but also has it been used foolishly and to no serious purpose. Therefore I, who gave the cloak, shall now take it away. The good that has been done shall remain, but the foolish wishes granted shall now be canceled.” With these words, she turned and lightly lifted the shimmering magic garment from the lap of the princess. “One moment, please!” cried Bud eagerly. “Cannot I have my wish? I waited until I could wish wisely, you know, and then the cloak wouldn’t work.” With a smile, Lulea threw the cloak over the boy’s shoulders. “Wish!” said she. “I wish,” announced Bud gravely, “that I shall become the best king that Noland has ever had!” “Your wish is granted,” returned the fairy sweetly, “and it shall be the last wish fulfilled through the magic cloak.” But now Zixi rushed forward and threw herself upon her knees before the fairy. “Oh, your Majesty--” she began eagerly, but Lulea instantly silenced her with an abrupt gesture. “Plead not to me, Queen of Ix!” said the dainty immortal, drawing back from Zixi’s prostrate form. “You know that we fairies do not approve of witchcraft. However long your arts may permit you to live, you must always beware a mirror!” Zixi gave a sob and buried her pretty face in her hands, and it was Fluff whose tender heart prompted her to raise the witch-queen and try to comfort her. For a moment all present looked at Zixi. When their eyes again sought the form of the fairy, Lulea had vanished, and with her disappeared forever from Noland the magic cloak. Some important changes had been wrought through the visit of the fairy. Jikki’s six servants were gone, to the old valet’s great delight. The ten-foot general had shrunken to six feet in height, Lulea having generously refrained from reducing old Tollydob to his former short stature. Ruffles, to the grief of the lord high steward, could no longer talk, but Tallydab comforted himself with the knowledge that his dog could at least understand every word addressed to him. The lord high executioner found he could no longer reach farther than other men, but the royal purse of old Tillydib remained ever filled, which assured the future prosperity of the kingdom of Noland. As for Zixi, she soon became reconciled to her fate and returned to Ix to govern her country with her former liberality and justice. The last wish granted by the magic cloak was doubtless the most beneficial and far-reaching of all, for

King Bud ruled many years with exceeding wisdom and gentleness and was greatly beloved by each and every one of his admiring subjects. The cheerfulness and sweet disposition of Princess Fluff became renowned throughout the world, and when she grew to womanhood, many brave and handsome princes from other countries came to Nole to sue for her heart and hand. One of these she married, and reigned as queen of a great nation in after years, winning quite as much love and respect from her people as his loyal subjects bestowed upon her famous brother, King Bud of Noland.

THE END

JOHN DOUGH AND THE CHERUB

Reilly & Britton published *John Dough and the Cherub* in 1906, with artwork by John R. Neill, best known for illustrating all but the first of Baum's Oz books. First serialized in newspapers, the fantasy sold well for over a decade. The novel follows the adventures of John Dough, a gingerbread man brought to life by inclusion of the "Great Elixir" in his ingredients. Ali Dubh, who claims the "Great Elixir," attempts to eat John Dough, but the gingerbread man escapes by rocket to the Isle of Phreex, where he meets Chick the Cherub. Pursued by Ali Dubh, John Dough and Chick the Cherub flee to other exotic islands and magical lands until they find a safe haven. John Dough, Chick the Cherub and a rubber bear they encounter named Para Bruin, visit the Emerald City as guests of Ozma in the fifth Oz book, *The Road to Oz*. A nasty, gnome-like creature, known as a mifket, appears briefly in Baum's tenth Oz book, *Rinkitink in Oz*.



A first edition copy of 'John Dough and the Cherub'

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Chapter 1: The Great Elixir

Over the door appeared a weather-worn sign that read: “Jules Grogrande, Baker.” In one of the windows, painted upon a sheet of cardboard, was another sign: “Home-made Bread by the Best Modern Machinery.” There was a third sign in the window beyond the doorway, and this was marked upon a bit of wrapping-paper, and said: “Fresh Gingerbread Every Day.” When you opened the door, the top of it struck a brass bell suspended from the ceiling and made it tinkle merrily. Hearing the sound, Madame Leontine Grogrande would come from her little room back of the shop and stand behind the counter and ask you what you would like to purchase. Madame Leontine--or Madame Tina, as the children called her--was quite short and quite fat; and she had a round, pleasant face that was good to look upon. She moved somewhat slowly, for the rheumatism troubled her more or less; but no one minded if Madame was a bit slow in tying up her parcels. For surely no cakes or buns in all the town were so delicious or fresh as those she sold, and she had a way of giving the biggest cakes to the smallest girls and boys who came into her shop, that proved she was fond of children and had a generous heart. People loved to come to the Grogrande Bakery. When one opened the door an exquisite fragrance of newly baked bread and cakes greeted the nostrils; and, if you were not hungry when you entered, you were sure to become so when you examined and smelled the delicious pies and doughnuts and gingerbread and buns with which the shelves and show-cases were stocked. There were trays of French candies, too; and because all the goods were fresh and wholesome the bakery was well patronized and did a thriving business. The reason no one saw Monsieur Jules in the shop was because his time was always occupied in the bakery in the rear--a long, low room filled with ovens and tables covered with pots and pans and dishes (which the skillful baker used for mixing and stirring) and long shelves bearing sugars and spices and baking-powders and sweet-smelling extracts that made his wares taste so sweet and agreeable. The bake-room was three times as big as the shop; but Monsieur Jules needed all the space in the preparation of the great variety of goods required by his patrons, and he prided himself on the fact that his edibles were fresh-made each day. In order to have the bread and rolls ready at breakfast time he was obliged to get up at three o’clock every morning, and so he went to bed about sundown. On a certain forenoon the door of the shop opened so abruptly that the little brass bell made a furious jingling. An Arab dashed into the room, stopped short, looked around with a bewildered air, and then rushed away again and banged the door after him. Madame looked surprised, but said nothing. She

recognized the Arab to be a certain Ali Dubh, living in the neighborhood, who was accustomed to purchase a loaf from her every morning. Perhaps he had forgotten his money, Madame thought. When the afternoon was half over he entered again, running as if fiends were at his heels. In the center of the room he paused, slapped his forehead despairingly with both palms, and said in a wailing voice: “They’re after me!” Next moment he dashed away at full speed, even forgetting to close the door; so Madame came from behind the counter and did it herself. She delayed a moment to gaze at the figure of Ali Dubh racing up the street. Then he turned the corner of an alley and disappeared from view. Things did not startle Madame easily; but the Arab’s queer behavior aroused in her a mild curiosity, and while she stood looking through the glass of the door, and wondering what had excited the man, she saw two strange forms glide past her shop with a stealthy motion and proceed in the same direction Ali Dubh had taken. They were also Arabs, without a doubt; for although their forms were muffled in long cloaks, the turbans they wore and the glint of their dark, beady eyes proclaimed them children of the desert. When they came to the alley where Ali Dubh had disappeared, the two strangers were joined by a third, who crept up to them with the sly, cat-like tread Madame had noted, and seemed to confer with them. Afterward one turned to the east, a second continued up the street, and the third stole into the alley. “Yes,” thought Madame, “they are after Ali Dubh, sure enough. But if they move so slowly they are not likely to catch the poor fellow at all.” Now, Madame knew very little of her queer customer; for although he made a daily visit to the bakery for a loaf and a few cakes, he was of a gloomy disposition, and never stopped for a chat or a bit of gossip. It was his custom to silently make his simple purchases and then steal softly away. Therefore his excited actions upon this eventful day were really remarkable, and the good lady was puzzled how to explain them. She sat late in the shop that evening, burning a dingy oil lamp that swung in the center of the room. For her rheumatism was more painful than usual, and she dreaded to go to bed and waken Monsieur Jules with her moanings. The good man was slumbering peacefully upstairs--she could hear his lusty snores even where she sat--and it was a shame to disturb him when he must rise so early. So she sat in her little room at the end of the counter, trying to knit by the light of a flickering candle, and rocking back and forth in her chair with a monotonous motion. Suddenly the little bell tinkled and a gust of air entered the shop, sending the mingled odors of baked stuff whirling and scurrying about the room in a most fragrant manner. Then the door closed, and Madame laid down her knitting and turned to greet the new-comer. To her astonishment, it proved to be Ali Dubh. His brown cheeks were flushed, and

his glittering black eyes roamed swiftly over the shop before they turned full upon the Madame's calm face. "Good!" he exclaimed, "you are alone." "It is too late for trade. I am going to bed presently," said Madame. "I am in great trouble, and you must help me," returned the Arab, hastily. "Lock your door and come with me into your little room, so that no one can see us through the street windows." Madame hesitated. The request was unusual, and she knew nothing of the Arab's history. But she reflected that if the man attempted robbery or other mischief she could summon Monsieur Jules with a cry. Also, her interest had been aroused by Ali Dubh's queer behavior during the day. While she thought the matter over the Arab himself locked the street door and hurried into the little room, where Madame composedly joined him a moment later. "How can I help you?" she asked, picking up her knitting again. "Listen!" said the Arab. "I must tell you all. You must know the truth!" He put his hand in a pocket of his loose robe and drew out a small flask. It was no bigger than two fingers and was made of pure gold, upon which strange characters had been richly engraved. "This," said the Arab, in a low, impressive voice, "is the Great Elixir!" "What does that mean?" asked Madame, glancing at the flask doubtfully. "The Great Elixir? Ah, it is the Essence of Vitality, the Water of Life--the Greatest Thing in all the World!" "I don't understand," said Madame. "Not understand? Why, a drop of the priceless liquid which this Golden Flask contains, if placed upon your tongue, would send new life coursing through your veins. It would give you power, strength, vitality greater than youth itself! You could do anything--accomplish wonders--perform miracles--if you but tasted this precious liquid!" "How odd!" exclaimed Madame, beginning to feel bewildered. And then she asked: "Where did you get it?" "Ah! that is the story. That is what you must know," answered Ali Dubh. "It is centuries old, the Great Elixir. There is no more of it in all the world. The contents of this flask came into the keeping of the Ancestor of the Chief of my Tribe--whom we call a Sheik--and has been handed down from father to son as an heirloom more priceless than diamonds. The Chief of my Tribe, its last owner, carried the flask always hidden in his breast. But one day, when he and I were hunting together, a mad camel trampled the Sheik to his death, and with his last breath he gave the Great Elixir into my keeping. The Sheik had no son, and the flask was really mine. But many other Arab Sheiks longed for the treasure and sought to gain it. So I escaped and wandered over the world. I came here, thinking I was safe from pursuit. But they have followed me!" "All the way from Arabia?" asked Madame. "Yes. To-day I saw them. They know my lodgings. They are secretly hidden near, and before morning I know they plot to kill me and secure the Great Elixir. But for a time I have

escaped them. I came here unseen. You must help me. You must take charge of the Great Elixir and keep it safely for me." "Nonsense!" cried Madame, becoming aroused at last. "Do not say that, I beg of you," exclaimed the eager Arab. "You are honest--I know you are! And they will never suspect you of having the Golden Flask." "Perhaps not," said Madame, "and then, again, they may. My business is to tend the shop, and I am not going to get myself killed by a lot of desperate foreigners just to oblige you, Monsieur Ali Dubh! Take your Great Elixir to some one else. I don't want it." For a minute the Arab seemed in despair. Then his face suddenly brightened. "You suffer from rheumatism, do you not?" he asked. "Yes, it's pretty bad to-night," she replied. "Then I will cure it! I will cure your pains forever if you will keep my precious Elixir in secret until I come to reclaim it." Madame hesitated, for just then she had a very bad twinge indeed. "You think you can cure my pains?" she asked. "I know it!" declared the Arab. He put his hand in a pocket and drew out another flask--a mate to the one containing the Great Elixir; only this was made of solid silver instead of gold. "This flask," said Ali Dubh, "contains a positive cure for rheumatism. It will not fail. It never has failed. Take it and use it to make yourself well. Five drops in a bowl of water are enough. Bathe well the limbs that ache, and all pain will be gone forever. Accept it, gracious Madame, and keep for me the other flask in safe hiding until my enemies have gone away." Madame was a practical woman, and it seemed an easy thing to do as the Arab desired. If she could get relief from those dreadful pains it would be well worth while to undertake a little trouble and responsibility by caring for Ali Dubh's other and more precious flask. "Very well," said she. "I agree." The Arab's face flushed with joy. "Good," he cried; "I am saved! Guard well my precious flask--the one of gold. Show it to no one--not even to your good husband. Remember that diamonds and rubies could not buy the Great Elixir--the marvelous Essence of Vitality. As for the silver flask, I give it to you freely. Its contents will cure all your ailments. And now, good night, and may Allah bless you!" Swiftly he stole from the room, unlocked the street door and vanished into the darkness. And Madame sat looking thoughtfully at the flasks.

Chapter 2: The Two Flasks

Presently she remembered that the front door was yet unlocked. So she trotted out into the shop, bolted the door securely, drew down the curtains, and put out the dim light that had burned over the counter. Then Madame returned to the little room and looked at the two flasks again. Aside from her rheumatism the good lady had one other physical weakness; she was color-blind. That is, she could seldom distinguish one color from another, and was quite liable to think blue was green and green was yellow. Many people have this trouble with their eyes; but it never had bothered Madame especially in waiting upon her customers. Now, however, when she came back into her room and gazed at the two flasks upon her table, she had no idea which one was of gold and which of silver, for the weakness of her eyes prevented her from telling them apart by means of their color. “Let me see,” she murmured; “this must be the flask which the Arab first drew from his pocket. No--I think this was the one.” But the more she hesitated the more confused she became, and in the end she told herself honestly that she had not the faintest clue to guide her in knowing which flask contained the Essence of Vitality and which the cure for rheumatism. And the pains were now so bad that she was anxious to cure them without a moment’s delay. The engraving on the two flasks was nearly the same; and if some of those queer foreign characters really differed, Madame did not know it. Also in size and shape the flasks were exactly alike. Truly Madame was in a fine quandary, and there seemed no way of getting out of it with safety. She had almost decided to hide both flasks until the Arab returned, when several sharp twinges of pain caught her and made her long most earnestly for relief. If she went to bed now she would be sure to suffer all night, and in one of the flasks was a sure cure. “I’ll guess at it, and take the chances!” declared Madame, firmly. And then, choosing at haphazard, she hid the silver flask behind the mirror and put the gold one in her pocket. Afterward she picked up the lamp and walked as silently as possible through the short passage that led to Monsieur Jules’ bake-room. The big place was still and dark, and the little lamp only brightened a small part of it. But Madame did not care for that. Those pains were getting extremely hard to bear, and she had even ceased to care whether or not she had selected the right flask. Taking a brown bowl from the shelf she drew it nearly full of water and then placed it upon a corner of the long, white mixing-table, beside the lamp. Next she took the golden flask from her pocket. “How much did the Arab say to put in the water?” she wondered, pausing in perplexed thought. “I declare, I’ve actually forgotten! But he said it was sure to cure me, so I may as well use all the flask contains. For, after I

am cured, I shall not need any more of it." Reasoning thus, Madame removed the stopper and poured into the bowl every drop of that precious Elixir which Ali Dubh had prized more than life itself, and which his wild countrymen had come all the way from Arabia to America to possess. For generation after generation the priceless liquor had been preserved with jealous care, and now the baker's wife was rubbing it upon her limbs in an endeavor to cure the pangs of rheumatism! She used very little of the contents of the bowl, after all. The touch of the Elixir upon her skin, although it was diluted with so much water, sent a glow of exhilaration throughout all her stout body. The pains were suddenly eased, and Madame began to feel as light and airy as a fairy, in spite of her great mass of flesh. It occurred to her that she would like to dance; to run and shout, to caper about as she used to do as a girl. But soon her shrewd common sense returned, and she told herself this was but the effect of the wonderful medicine, and that the wisest thing she could do was to go to bed and sleep soundly while she might. Being still somewhat bewildered, the good woman picked up the lamp, and, leaving the bowl containing the Elixir standing upon the table, mounted the stairs with lighter steps than she had known in years. Five minutes later she was in bed, snoring as loudly as Monsieur Jules himself.

Chapter 3: The Gingerbread Man

The baker awoke at three o'clock, and soon afterward came downstairs yawning and rubbing his eyes in his accustomed manner. For it is a real hardship to arise in the middle of the night and go to work, and Monsieur Jules sometimes regretted he was such a skillful baker; for any other profession would have allowed him to sleep until daylight. But the bread and rolls and gingerbread must be fresh and warm by breakfast time, or the people would be sadly disappointed; and the only possible way to get them ready was to start the work at three o'clock. First, he lighted the big swinging lamps, which made the room bright as day, and then he built the fires in the great furnaces. Presently these last were roaring in a very business-like manner, and as soon as he heard the roar Monsieur Jules began to whistle. It was his custom, and kept him from getting lonesome while he worked. Next he kneaded the bread, formed it into loaves, and placed them in long rows upon the slabs--ready for the oven. The rolls were then mixed and kneaded, and it took a longer time to get them ready than it had the bread, for they were small and quite daintily shaped. But at last the important task was completed, and while they were rising and the ovens heating, Monsieur mixed his gingerbread and cakes. Somehow, the work progressed very swiftly this morning, and after a time the baker found he had a good hour to spare before the ovens would be ready. Then a sudden idea struck him. "Why, to-day is the Fourth of July," he thought, "and that is a National Holiday. I think I will make a fine gingerbread man, such as I used to make in Paris, and put it in the shop window to attract attention. These Americans like enterprise, and they have never seen a gingerbread man, for I have not made one since I came to this country." With Monsieur Jules, to think was to act, and scarcely had he spoken these words when he began to gather his material together for a great batch of gingerbread dough. For he resolved that the man he was about to make should be big enough and fine enough to arouse the wonder of all beholders. He began by filling a great bowl with flour, and then rubbed into the flour some butter and lard. "That will make it short," said Monsieur, "although it is to be a tall man." Then he added some molasses. "He will be a sweet fellow," thought the baker, smiling at his own pleasantries. Then he shook in the ginger and several fragrant spices, and began mixing the dough into one great mass. "It is too stiff," reflected the baker, a few moments later. "My man must not be stiff, for that would render him disagreeable." He laughed at the whimsical thought, and glancing around, saw the brown bowl that Madame had left sitting upon a corner of the table. It was nearly full of the precious liquid, and Monsieur Jules, with

his mind intent upon his work, never stopped to wonder how it came there. Perhaps he thought he had himself unconsciously filled the bowl with water. Anyway, he dumped all of the Essence of Vitality--the Great Elixir which could never be duplicated in all the world--into the mass of dough he was preparing for his gingerbread man! Monsieur merely noticed that the dough had now become the proper consistency, and mixed easily. Whistling merrily, he presently spread the huge batch of dough upon the big table and began rolling it and working it into the shape he desired. Ah, but Monsieur Jules Grogrande was a true artist, although a baker! Under his skillful hands the gingerbread man slowly but surely took form; and the form was fully as large as that of a well-grown fourteen-year-old boy. But it was by no means a boy that Monsieur was forming with such care; it was, rather, the figure of a typical French gentleman, such as may seldom be met with elsewhere than on the boulevards of Paris. It was interesting to watch the figure grow: interesting, of course, to Monsieur Jules, as there was no one else in the bake-room to see. The man appeared to be dressed in excellent fashion. Monsieur made him a collar and shirt-front of white bread dough, which looked very beautiful in contrast to the brown gingerbread-dough of his clothes. Then with a lump of dough, carefully kneaded, he formed the man's necktie, making a very artistic bow indeed. A waistcoat of fashionable cut was next added. The buttons on the man's coat were white lozenges, and to represent shoes the baker mixed his dough with licorice, until the shoes seemed as black and shiny as if freshly polished. You would have loved to see, could you have been present, the delicate skill with which the clever baker carved the hands and fingers of his man, using a small but sharp knife, and patting and rounding each dough finger into proper shape. He even clipped from a sheet of transparent celluloid the finger-nails, and pressed them carefully into the dough at the ends of the fingers. Who but Monsieur would ever have thought of such a thing? But, after all, it was upon the face that the baker exercised his best skill. As a sculptor forms his models out of clay, so Monsieur pressed and squeezed and molded his pliant dough, until every feature of the gingerbread man became wonderfully lifelike. Of course the face was made of the white dough, with just a trifle of the pink coloring mixed into it to make it resemble real flesh. But the wavy hair that surrounded the face was of gingerbread-dough, as its brown color, after it had been baked, would be quite natural and lifelike. Among the things brought from Paris by the Grograndes was a pair of excellent glass eyes, and Monsieur Jules rummaged in a drawer until he found them, and then pressed them into the dough face. And now it positively seemed that the gingerbread man was looking at you, and the eyes lent its face a gentle and kindly

expression. “There’s something lacking, however,” murmured the baker, looking at his work critically. “Ah, I know--it’s the teeth!” Teeth for a gingerbread man! But nothing was easier to represent, once their absence was noted. Between the lips of the man our baker pressed two rows of small white candies, and it was wonderful to remark the pleasant smile that now lent its charm to the face. With a sigh of satisfaction in the result of his work, the baker at last declared his gingerbread man ready for the oven. “And it is my masterpiece!” cried Monsieur Jules, proudly. “Never, even in Paris, have I seen so perfect a man of dough. He is well worthy to have a name, and I will call him John Dough, which will be appropriate, indeed!” But the great ovens were now glowing brightly, so Monsieur filled them with bread and rolls, and watched them carefully until the big and little loaves were all done to a turn. The cakes and cookies came next, and by the time that dawn arrived the front shop was stocked with heaps of the warm, fresh-smelling loaves and rolls, and trays of delicious cakes and buns, hot from the ovens. Then the baker came back to his gingerbread man, which he first placed gently upon a great iron slab, and then slid it all into the open door of a perfectly heated oven. With great anxiety Monsieur watched the oven. The dough was properly mixed, the workmanship was most excellent. Would the baking turn out to be as perfect as the rest? Much good dough may be spoiled in the baking. None knew that better than Jules Grogrande. So he tended the oven with nervous care, and finally, at exactly the right moment, the baker threw open the oven door and drew out the sheet of iron upon which the great and grand gingerbread man rested. He was baked to perfection! Filled with pride and satisfaction, Monsieur bent admiringly over his great creation; and as he did so, the gingerbread man moved, bent his back, sat up, and looked about him with his glass eyes, while a wondering expression crept over his face. “Dear me!” said he, “isn’t it very warm and close in this room?” The Great Elixir had accomplished its purpose. The wonderful Essence of Vitality, prized for centuries and closely guarded, had lent its marvelous powers of energy, strength, and life to a gingerbread man! And all through the stupidity of a baker’s wife who was color-blind and could not distinguish a golden flask from a silver one! Monsieur Jules, who knew nothing of the Arab’s flasks, or of the Great Elixir, glared wildly into the glass eyes of the gingerbread man. He was at first sure that his own eyes, and also his ears, had played him a trick. “John Dough--John Dough!” he cried, “did you speak? Merciful heavens! Did you speak, John Dough?” “I did,” said the gingerbread man, struggling to rise from the slab, “and I declare that it is warm and close in this room!” Monsieur Jules gave a scream of terror. Then he turned and fled. A moment later he staggered into the shop, tossed

his hands above his head, and fell in a heap upon the floor--being overcome by a fainting spell. Madame, who had just come downstairs and opened the shop, gazed upon her husband's terrified actions with an amazement that prevented her from moving a limb or uttering a sound. What in the world could have happened to Jules? Then she received the greatest shock of her life. From out the door of the bake-room came a gingerbread man, so fresh from the oven that the odor of hot gingerbread surrounded him like a cloud. He looked neither to right nor left, but picked Monsieur's tall silk hat from off a peg and placed it carelessly upon his own head. Next he caught up a large candy cane from a show-case, stepped over the prostrate body of the baker, and so left the shop, closing the front door behind him. Madame saw him passing the windows, stepping along briskly and swinging the cane in his left hand. Then the good lady imitated her husband's example. She gave a shrill scream, threw up her hands, and tumbled over unconscious.

Chapter 4: John Dough Begins his Adventures

Now, when John Dough left Madame Grogrande's shop and wandered up the street, he was reeking with the delightful odor of fresh gingerbread. Indeed, he was still so hot from the oven that I am positive you could not have held your hand against him for more than a second. The Great Elixir had brought him to life, and given him a certain standing in the world; but during the first half-hour of his existence John Dough was very hot-headed. Also he was hot-footed, for he discovered that, by walking fast, the contact with the fresh morning air drew the heat from his body and made him feel much more comfortable. One virtue lent by the Great Elixir was knowledge, and while John Dough felt that he possessed unlimited knowledge (having had an overdose of the Elixir), he could not very well apply it to his surroundings because he lacked experience with the world, which alone renders knowledge of any value to mankind. John Dough could speak all languages--modern and classic. He had a logical and clear mind--what is called a "level head," you know; and this was coupled with good sense, fair judgment, and a tangled mass of wisdom that had been dumped into him in a haphazard fashion. But these rare qualities were as yet of no use to our man because he had acquired no experience. It was like putting tools into a scholar's hands and asking him to make a watch. John Dough might accomplish wonders in time, if he did not grow stale and crumble; but just now he was the freshest individual that ever came out of a bake-room. It was still early morning, and most folks were in bed. A prowling dog smelled the gingerbread and came trotting up with the intention of having a bite of it; but John Dough raised his candy cane and hit the dog a clip on the end of its nose that sent the animal in another direction with its tail between its legs. Then, whistling merrily, the gingerbread man walked on. He knew no tune whatever, but he could whistle, and so he managed to express an erratic mixture of notes that would have made Herr Wagner very proud. His flesh (or bread, rather) was cooling off beautifully now. He was growing hard and crisp and felt much more substantial than at first. The baker had made him light and the Elixir had made him strong and vigorous. A great future lay before John Dough, if no accident happened to him. Presently some one said, "Hello!" John stopped short, for in front of him stood a bright-eyed boy with a piece of lighted punk in one hand and a bunch of firecrackers in the other. It was Ned Robbins, who had been up since daybreak celebrating the Glorious Fourth. "You skeered me at first," said the boy, with a look of amazement that he tried to cover with a laugh. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure," returned John Dough, politely. "Been to a masquerade?" asked Ned, staring hard at the gingerbread

man. “No, indeed,” replied the other. “I am not disguised, I assure you. You see me as I am.” “G’wan!” exclaimed Ned. But he could smell the gingerbread, and he began to grow frightened. So he touched the punk to the fuse of his biggest firecracker, dropped it on the ground at the feet of John Dough, and then turned and scampered up an alley as fast as he could go. The gingerbread man stood still and looked after Ned until the cracker suddenly exploded with a bang that caused John’s candy teeth to chatter. His whole body was terribly jarred and he nearly fell backward in the shock of surprise. Then he, also, started to run. It was not fear, so much as ignorance of what might happen next, that caused him to fly from the spot; but he ran with a speed that was simply wonderful, considering that his limbs were of gingerbread. Truly, that Arabian Elixir was a marvelous thing! Bang! He had run plump into another group of boys, knocking two of them over before they could get out of his way. His silk hat was jammed over his eyes and the candy cane struck the wheel of a toy cannon and broke off a good two inches from its end. As he pulled off his hat he heard a shout and saw the boys all scrambling for the broken end of the candy cane. One of them grabbed it and ran away, and the others followed in a mad chase and were soon out of sight. John Dough looked after them wonderingly. Then he drew himself up, pulled down his fine vest, sighed at discovering a slight crack in his shirt-front, and walked slowly along the street again. His first experience of life was not altogether pleasant. “Good gracious!” said a voice. He paused, and saw a woman leaning over a gate beside him and glaring at him in mingled surprise and terror. She held a broom in her hand, for she had been sweeping the walk. John lifted his hat politely. “Good morning, madam,” said he. “Why, it’s really alive!” gasped the woman. “Is a live person so very unusual?” asked John, curiously. “Surely, when he’s made of cake!” answered the woman, still staring as if she could not believe her eyes. “Pardon me; I am not cake, but gingerbread,” he answered, in a rather dignified way. “It’s all the same,” she answered. “You haven’t any right to be alive. There’s no excuse for it.” “But how can I help it?” he asked, somewhat puzzled by this remark. “Oh, I don’t suppose it’s your fault. But it isn’t right, you know. Who made you?” “Jules Grogrande, the baker,” he said, for he had read the name over the door. “I always knew there was something wrong with those Frenchies,” she declared. “Are you done?” Before he could reply she had drawn a large straw from the broom and stuck it several inches into his side. “Don’t do that!” he cried, indignantly, as she drew out the bit of broom again. “I was only tryin’ you,” she remarked. “You’re done to a turn, and ought to make good eating while you’re fresh.” John gazed at her in horror. “Good eating!” he cried; “woman, would you murder me?” “I can’t say it

would be exactly murder," she replied, looking at him hungrily. "To destroy life is murder!" he said, sternly. "But to destroy gingerbread isn't," she rejoined. "And I can't see that it's cannibalism to eat a man if he happens to be cake, and fresh baked. And that frosting looks good. Come inside while I get a knife." She opened the gate and tried to grab John Dough by an arm. But he gave a sudden backward leap and then sped down the street at a furious run, looking neither to right nor left in his eager flight. Luckily, he was not in the center of the town, but near the outskirts, and the houses were few and scattered. By and by he saw a deserted barn near the roadside. The door was half open and sagged on its hinges, so it could not be closed. John darted into the barn and hid behind some hay in the far side. He was thoroughly frightened, and believed he must avoid mingling with the people of the town if he would escape instant destruction. A knife! A knife! The word kept ringing in his ears and filled him with horror. A knife could slice him into pieces easily. He imagined himself sliced and lying on a plate ready for hungry folks to eat, and the picture made him groan aloud. All through the day he kept securely hidden behind the hay. Toward evening he decided to revisit the bakery. It was a difficult task, for he had passed through many streets and lanes without noticing where he was going, and it grew darker every minute. But at last, just as he was beginning to despair, he saw a dim light in a window and read over the door the sign: "Jules Grogrande, Baker." He opened the door so softly that the little bell scarcely tinkled. But no one would have heard it had it rung loudly, for there was a confused murmur of fierce voices coming from the little room Madame usually occupied. John Dough skipped behind the counter, where he could see into the room without being seen himself. Around the little table stood the Arab, Monsieur Jules, and Madame, and they were all staring angrily into each other's faces. "But the flask!" cried Ali Dubh. "Where is my precious flask?" "It is here," said Madame, reaching behind the mirror and drawing forth something that glittered in the lamplight. "But this is the silver flask--the cure for rheumatism," exclaimed the Arab. "Where is my Golden Flask--containing the priceless Elixir of Life?" "I must have made a mistake," said Madame, honestly; "for my eyes are so queer that I cannot tell gold from silver. Anyway, the contents of the other flask I emptied into a bowl of water, and rubbed my limbs with it." The Arab shouted a despairing cry in his native tongue and then glared wildly at the woman. "Was it the brown bowl, Leontine?" asked Monsieur Jules, trembling with excitement. "Yes," she answered. "Where is it? Where is it?" demanded the Arab, in a hoarse voice. "The precious liquor may yet be saved." "Too late, Monsieur," said the baker, shaking his head, sadly. "I used the contents of the bowl to mix the

dough for my gingerbread man." "A gingerbread man! What do you mean?" asked Ali Dubh. "I baked a man out of gingerbread this morning," said Monsieur Jules, "and to my horror he came alive, and spoke to me, and walked out of the shop while he was still smoking hot." "It is no wonder," said the Arab, dolefully; "for within him was enough of the Great Elixir to bring a dozen men to life, and give them strength and energy for many years. Ah, Monsieur and Madame, think of what your stupidity has cost the world!" "I do not comprehend," said Madame, firmly, "how the world has ever yet been benefited by the Great Elixir, which you and your selfish countrymen have kept for centuries corked up in a golden flask." "Bismillah!" shouted the Arab, striking himself fiercely across the forehead with his clinched fist. "Cannot you understand, you stupid one, that it was mine--mine!--this Wonderful Water of Life? I had planned to use it myself--drop by drop--that I might live forever." "I'm sorry," said Monsieur; "but it is your own fault. You forced my wife to care for the flask, and you would not let her tell me about it. So, through your own stupidity, I used it in the gingerbread man." "Ah!" said Ali Dubh, an eager gleam in his eyes, "where, then, is that same gingerbread man? If I can find him, and eat him, a bit at a time, I shall get the benefit of the Great Elixir after all! It would not be so powerful, perhaps, as in its natural state; but it would enable me to live for many, many years!" John Dough heard this speech with a thrill of horror. Also he now began to understand how he happened to be alive. "I do not know where the gingerbread man is," said Monsieur. "He walked out of my shop while he was quite hot." "But he can be found," said the Arab. "It is impossible for a gingerbread man, who is alive, to escape notice. Come, let us search for him at once! I must find him and eat him." He fairly dragged Monsieur and Madame from the room in his desperation, and John Dough crouched out of sight behind the counter until he heard them pass through the door and their footsteps die away up the street. The talk he had overheard made the gingerbread man very sad indeed. The bakery was no safe home for him, after all. Evidently it was the Arab's intention to find him and insist upon eating him; and John Dough did not want to be eaten at all. Therefore his enemies must not find him. They were no safer to meet with than the awful woman who wanted to cut him into slices; and he was learning, by degrees, that all men were dangerous enemies to him, although he had himself the form of a man. He left the bakery and stole out into the street once more, walking now in the opposite direction from that taken by the Arab and the Grograndes. As he hurried along he met with few people on the streets; and these, in the dark, paid little attention to the gingerbread man; so gradually his spirits rose and his confidence in his future returned. By and by he heard

a strange popping and hissing coming from the direction of the square in the center of the town, and then he saw red and green lights illuminating the houses, and fiery comets go sailing into the sky to break into dozens of beautiful colored stars. The people were having their Fourth of July fireworks, and John Dough became curious to witness the display from near by. So, forgetting his fears, he ran through the streets until he came to a big crowd of people, who were too busy watching the fireworks to notice that a gingerbread man stood beside them. John Dough pressed forward until he was quite in the front row, and just behind the men who were firing the rockets. For a time he watched the rush of the colored fires with much pleasure, and thoroughly enjoyed the sputtering of a big wheel that refused to go around, merely sending out weak and listless spurts of green and red sparks, as is the manner of such wheels. But now the event of the evening was to occur. Two men brought out an enormous rocket, fully fifteen feet tall and filled with a tremendous charge of powder. This they leaned against a wooden trough that stood upright; but the rocket was too tall to stay in place, and swayed from side to side awkwardly. “Here! Hold that stick!” cried one of the men, and John Dough stepped forward and grasped the stick of the big rocket firmly, not knowing there was any danger in doing so. Then the man ran to get a piece of rope to tie the rocket in place; but the other man, being excited and thinking the rocket was ready to fire, touched off the fuse without noticing that John Dough was clinging fast to the stick. There was a sudden shriek, a rush of fire, and then--slowly at first, but with ever-increasing speed--the huge rocket mounted far into the sky, carrying with it the form of the gingerbread man!

Chapter 5: Chick, the Cherub

The rocket continued to send out fiery sparks of burning powder as it plunged higher and higher into the black vault of the heavens; but few of these came in contact with John Dough, who clung to the far side of the stick and so escaped being seriously damaged. Also the rocket curved, and presently sped miles away over land and sea, impelled by the terrible force of the powder it contained. John fully expected that it would burst presently, and blow him to bits amid a cloud of colored stars. But the giant rocket was not made in the same way as the other and smaller ones that had been fired, the intention being merely to make it go as high and as far as possible. So it finally burned itself out, but so great was the speed it had attained that it continued to fly for many minutes after the last spark had died away. Then the rocket began to take a downward course; but it was so high up, by that time, that the stick and the empty shell flew onward hour after hour, gradually nearing the ground, until finally, just as a new day began to break, the huge stick, with John Dough still holding fast to its end, fell lightly upon an island washed on all sides by the waves of a mighty sea. John fell on a soft bush, and thence bounded to the ground, where for a time he lay quite still and tried to recover his thoughts. He had not done much thinking, it seems, while he was in the air. The rush of wind past his ears had dazed him, and he only realized he must cling fast to the stick and await what might happen. Indeed, that was the only thing to be done in such an emergency. The shock of the fall had for a moment dazed the gingerbread man; and as he lay upon the ground he heard a voice cry: “Get off from me! Will you? Get off, I say!” John rolled over and sat up, and then another person--a little man with a large head--also sat up and faced him. “What do you mean by it?” asked the little man, glaring upon John Dough angrily. “Can’t you see where you’re falling?” “No,” answered John. It was growing lighter every minute, and the gray mists of morning were fading away before the rising sun. John looked around him and saw he was upon a broad, sandy beach which the waves of a great sea lapped peacefully. Behind was a green meadow, and then mountains that rose high into the air. “How did you happen to be where I fell?” he asked, turning to the little man again. “I always sleep on the sands,” replied the other, wagging his head solemnly. “It’s my fad. Fresh air, you know. I’m called the ‘Fresh-Air Fiend.’ I suppose you’re a new inhabitant. You seem rather queer.” “I’m made of gingerbread,” said John. “Well, that certainly is unusual, so I’ve no doubt you will be warmly welcomed in our Island,” replied the man. “But where am I?” asked John, looking around again with a puzzled expression. “This is the Isle of Phreex,”

answered the other, “and it is inhabited by unusual people. I’m one, and you’re another.” He made such a droll face as he said this that the gingerbread man could not resist smiling, but it startled him to hear another laugh at his back--a sound merry and sweet, such as a bird trills. He swung around quickly and saw a child standing upon the sands, where the rays of the sun fell brightly upon its little form. And then the glass eyes of the gingerbread man grew big, and stood out from his cake face in a way that fully expressed his astonishment. “It’s a Vision!” he exclaimed. “No, it’s the Cherub--whom we call Chick,” answered the big-headed man, carelessly. The child had fair hair, falling in fleecy waves to its shoulders, but more or less tangled and neglected. It had delicate features, rosy cheeks, and round blue eyes. When these eyes were grave--which was seldom--there were questions in them; when they smiled--which was often--sunbeams rippled over their blue surfaces. For clothing the child wore garments of pure white, which reached from the neck to the ankles, and had wide flowing sleeves and legs, like those of a youngster’s pajamas. The little one’s head and feet were bare, but the pink soles were protected by sandals fastened with straps across the toes and ankles. “Good morning,” said John, again smiling and hoping he had not stared too rudely. “It gives me great pleasure to meet you.” “My name’s Chick,” replied the child, laughing in sweet trills, while the blue eyes regarded the gingerbread man with evident wonder. “That’s a funny name,” said John. “Yes, it is funny,” the child agreed, with a friendly nod. “Chick means a chicken, you know. But I’m not a chicken.” “Of course not,” returned John. “A chicken is covered with feathers. And you are not.” At this Chick laughed merrily, and said, as if it were the simplest thing in the world: “I’m the Incubator Baby, you know.” “Dear me, I hadn’t the least idea of it,” John answered gravely. “May I ask what an Incubator Baby is?” The child squatted down in the sand, hugged its chubby knees, and uttered peal after peal of joyous laughter. “How funny!” it gurgled; “how funny that you don’t know what the Incubator Baby is! Really, you must be fresh-baked!” “I am,” said John, feeling rather ashamed to acknowledge the fact, but resolving to be truthful. “Then, of course, you are very ignorant,” remarked the Fresh-Air Fiend, rubbing his big head complacently. “Oh, as for that,” said John, “I acquired, in course of manufacture, a vast deal of ancient learning, which I got from an Arabian Elixir with which the baker mixed me. I am well posted in all events down to the last century, but I cannot recall any knowledge of an Incubator Baby.” “No, they’re a recent invention,” declared the big-headed man, patting tenderly the child’s golden curls. “Were you, by any chance, at the Pan-American Exposition? Or the Louisiana Purchase Exposition?” “No,” answered John. “My knowledge was corked up about then.” “Well,”

continued the man, “there were a good many Incubator Babies at both those expositions, and lots of people saw them. But Chick is the first and only Original Incubator Baby, and so Chick properly belongs in the Isle of Phreex.” Chick jumped up, made a stiff bow, and with eyes sparkling with mischief exclaimed: “I’m six years old and quite strong and well.” “Tut-tut, Chick!” remonstrated the big-headed man; “it was more than two years ago you were taught to make that speech. You can’t be always six years old, you know.” The little sprite enjoyed the joke so much that John was forced to laugh in sympathy. But just then a thought struck him, and he asked, a little nervously: “Do you like gingerbread?” “I don’t know,” replied Chick. “Are you gingerbread?” “I am,” said John, bravely. “Then I like gingerbread,” the child declared; “for you smell sweet and look kind and gentle.” John didn’t know whether to accept this as a compliment or not. He was sorry to learn that he smelled sweet, although to be called kind and gentle was grateful praise. “Some folks,” he remarked, timidly, “have an idea they like to eat gingerbread.” “I couldn’t eat you,” the child said, seriously, “because, being the Incubator Baby, I have to be very careful of my diet. You might not agree with me.” “I’m sure I couldn’t agree with any one who ate me,” John declared. “For, although as yet I have had no experience of that sort, it seems to me a very undesirable fate.” “Very true,” remarked the big-headed man. “Let’s be friends!” exclaimed Chick, coming close to John and taking his soft brown hand in a firm clasp. “I’ll take care of you.” John looked down at the merry little elf in positive wonder. “We’ll be friends, all right,” said he; “but instead of your taking care of me, Chick, I’ll take care of you.” “Oh, there you are entirely wrong,” broke in the big-headed man. “Chick’s a privileged character in the Isle of Phreex, and the only one of us who dares defy our awful kinglet. And in case of danger--” “Danger!” cried John, with a start. “Is there danger here, too?” Chick’s laughter rang out at the foolish question, but the man replied seriously: “There is danger everywhere, to those who are unusual, and especially in the Isle of Phreex, where we are at the mercy of a horrid kinglet. But come; we must go and report your arrival to that same graceless ruler, or we shall all be punished.” “Very well,” said John, meekly. But as he took Chick’s hand and turned to depart the Fresh-Air Fiend uttered an exclamation of annoyance, and said: “Here’s bad luck already! The Failings are coming this way.” As he spoke a noise of shouting and chattering reached their ears, and presently several people came around a corner of rock and stood before John and his newly found friends. “It’s the Brotherhood of Failings,” whispered the big-headed man. “Look out for them, or they’ll do you a mischief.” “Don’t worry; I’ll take care of you,” said Chick, pressing the dough hand. John stared at the new-comers, and they

returned the compliment by staring at him. A queerer lot of folks could seldom have been seen together. “This is the Blunderer,” said the Fresh-Air Fiend, indicating a short, fat man who was clothed in glittering armor and bore a lance over his shoulder. The Blunderer acknowledged the introduction by bowing. “And here is the Thoughtless One,” continued the man, pointing to a tall, lean man who was clothed in chamois-leather and carried a wide-mouthed blunderbuss under his arm. “Look out for the gun,” said Chick; “he never knows whether or not it is loaded.” “And here are the Disagreeable, and the Unlucky, and the Sorrowful, and the Ugly, and the Awkward,” continued the big-headed man, pointing out each Failing in turn. “Their peculiarities you will have no trouble to discover. Indeed, on all the Isle of Phreex, there is no one more unpleasant to meet with than this same lot of Failings.” At this the Brothers all bowed, saying at the same time: “We are proud of ourselves!” At that instant the Awkward tripped over his own toes and fell against the Blunderer, who tumbled headlong and thrust his slim lance straight through the body of John Dough. “Oh!” cried Chick, greatly horrified. “I told you so!” growled the Fresh-Air Fiend, pulling out the lance hastily. “Tell me, John Dough, are you dead, or are you just dying?” “Neither one,” said John, ruefully pushing together the hole that the lance had made; “but it doesn’t add to my personal appearance to be prodded in that fashion. I’m made of gingerbread,” he explained, turning to the man in armor. “I beg your pardon! I really beg your pardon!” said the Blunderer, greatly distressed at what he had done. “I had no intention of hurting you.” “He means well,” said the Incubator Baby; but that doesn’t help much.” “He won’t last long in this Island,” grunted the Bad-Tempered, referring to John Dough. “Being made of gingerbread, he can’t be expected to last,” remarked the Disagreeable, smiling in a way that made John shudder. “He shall have my protection,” said the Blunderer. “It’s the least I can do to make amends. Here--put on this armor!” He hastily began stripping off the plates of metal, and placed the steel helmet over the head of the gingerbread man. “No, no!” exclaimed John. “I don’t want to wear all that hardware.” “But you must!” cried the Blunderer. “It’s the only way you can escape accident in this awful Island.” “That’s true enough,” agreed the big-headed man. “I advise you to wear the armor, my gingerbread friend.” So John submitted to being dressed in the armor, and no sooner had the plates been strapped upon him than the wisdom of the act was apparent. For there came a rush and whirl of sound, and suddenly a great monster swept over the sands at the very spot where they stood. It sent the Brotherhood of Failings sprawling in every direction, while the Incubator Baby flew to the water’s edge, and John Dough’s armor-clad body was knocked down and pressed into the soft sand until it was level

with the surface. But presently Chick came back and made the others dig him out and set him upon his feet again, and then it was seen that no one had been seriously injured. “What was it?” asked John, gazing in amazement at the place where the monster had disappeared in the distance. “It’s the one-wheeled automobile,” answered the Sorrowful, “and unless it gets smashed mighty soon the Isle of Phreex will be an Isle of Cripples. I don’t understand why they license the thing.” “Why, to make room for new arrivals, of course,” declared the Disagreeable. “But it was lucky for the Pudding Man that he happened to be dressed in steel.” “I am not pudding, if you please,” said John, indignantly. “I beg you to remember that I am gingerbread.” “It’s all one,” remarked the Thoughtless, “your cake is dough, anyhow.” “Let us return to the castle,” the Ugly said. “Our Kinglet should be introduced to his new subject.” So they all started off across the green, Chick leading the gingerbread man, until they came to a path leading upward through the rocks, along which they began to ascend. John had much difficulty in keeping out of the way of the Awkward, who tripped and stumbled constantly, while the Blunderer insisted upon taking the wrong path, and the Bad-Tempered stopped twice to fight with the Disagreeable and the Thoughtless. At last, however, they reached the top, which proved to be a broad plain of rock, upon which stood a great castle with many tall spires and grim towers and glittering minarets. While they paused for John Dough to admire the view, and that they all might get breath, a sharp voice said near them: “You’re late, you lot of Failings, and the Kinglet will scold.” John looked around, and saw perched upon a point of rock beside the path a most curious looking creature. “Don’t stare!” it said, with a laugh. “I don’t, and I’ve got a dozen eyes to your one. Let me introduce myself. I’m the Prize Potato from the Centerville Fair.” Indeed, John now noticed a big blue ribbon twined around the middle of the potato, and on the ribbon was printed in gold letters: “First Prize.” “Some day you’ll sprout,” said the Disagreeable, “and then you won’t have so many eyes.” The Prize Potato winked its numerous eyes, one after the other, in a droll fashion, and answered: “Some day you’ll meet with an accident, my dear Failing; but when you’re planted in the ground you’ll not sprout at all. That’s where I’m your superior, for I’m perpetual. Every one of my eyes is good for a half-peck of potatoes, at least.” “Unless you’re boiled with your jacket on,” remarked the Ugly, with a sour smile. “Come, come! Let us go on,” interrupted the little man with the big head. “Our Kinglet doubtless awaits us.” When they had gone a few steps farther the Incubator Baby paused to say: “Some one is following us, and it’s a stranger.” This remark caused John to look around, and immediately he stopped short with an expression of horror upon his frosted face. For there, turning the corner of

the rocky path, was Ali Dubh the Arab. The fellow at once uttered a yell of joy and triumph, and drawing his gleaming knife he rushed upon John Dough with great eagerness. The gingerbread man had given up all hope of escape and stood tremblingly awaiting his foe when Chick suddenly grasped the Blunderer's lance and tripped the Arab so neatly with it that Ali Dubh fell his full length upon the path and broke his knife-blade into a dozen pieces. But he squirmed forward and was about to bite into John's leg when the big-headed man came to the rescue and threw a handful of pebbles into the Arab's open mouth, and so prevented him from doing the gingerbread man any damage. "He seems dangerous," remarked the Blunderer. "Let's tie him up, before he hurts some one." So while the Arab was coughing the pebbles out of his mouth, the Brotherhood of Failings bound his hands and feet with strong cords, so that he could not move. "He's mine!" shouted the Arab, as soon as he could speak. "He belongs to me. I claim him for my own." "There's no harm in that," replied the Fresh-Air Fiend. "But one of the laws of this Isle is that no person shall be injured by any one except the kinglet. And every one here must obey the laws. So, unless you promise not to carve or to eat this man of gingerbread, who is now a subject of our kinglet, we must lock you up in prison." "I'll eat him as soon as I have the chance. I have a right to do so," cried the Arab. "You're a bad man!" said Chick, stamping one small foot indignantly. "I'm not," answered Ali Dubh, "I'm a good man. And I paid Jules Grogrande fifty cents for this gingerbread imitation of a man, who is mixed with my own magic Elixir. Also I paid a witch nine dollars to transport me to wherever the gingerbread man might be--which is right here--that I might take possession of my own property. So I've got him, and he's paid for, and he's mine, and I claim the right to eat him whenever I please." "You'll do no such thing," declared Chick. "Why, John Dough is alive, and no one has a right to make him dead and then eat him--even if he is paid for!" "Don't worry, my Cherub," said the big-headed man, soothingly; "we'll go at once and lock this Arab in a strong room of the castle, so that he can't possibly escape." Chick smiled sweetly at this promise; but the Arab scowled and said, grimly: "Never mind. My time will come. Some day I shall surely eat that gingerbread man, in spite of this Cherub and all the rest of you." This defiance made the Brotherhood of Failings and the big-headed man so angry that they at once dragged Ali Dubh away to the castle, and John Dough and Chick followed after, hand in hand, and feeling quite safe. Presently they came to a great archway that led into the courtyard of the castle. Having passed through this arch, the gingerbread man saw groups of the most astonishing people, who were busying themselves over extraordinary tasks, such as building machines, boiling strange-smelling

chemicals in queer pots, drawing curious designs, and like occupations. A sudden crash announced that the Blunderer had fallen into the middle of a delicate machine and smashed it into bits. Before they could pull him out the Unlucky One ran against the whirling arm of a windmill and was tossed halfway across the courtyard, while the Awkward One upset a boiling kettle and set every one to coughing who inhaled the odor of the compound that was spilled upon the ground. To John's surprise no one seemed much worried over these accidents. Even the victims joined in Chick's merry laughter, and those of the Failings who had escaped disaster calmly proceeded to lock up the Arab in a cell that had a strong iron grating for a door, and fastened with a huge padlock. Afterward they all entered through a second arch into the great hall of the castle. This was a long, wide room with a tiled floor, and walls that were covered with many trophies, such as armor, spears, battle-axes, and swords of ancient design. At the farther end was a raised platform upon which stood a gorgeous throne. Back of the throne was an electric sign, flashing one letter at a time, and reading: "What is Home without a Kinglet?" Over the throne was suspended an enormous crown--big enough for a giant--which sparkled with gems. Beside the throne a very fat man sat in a chair so low that his knees nearly touched his chin. He wore a short red coat, a wide white vest, and blue knee-breeches, and all were embroidered in gold. The fat man's eyes were closed and he seemed asleep. Within the throne sat the kinglet, propped upon purple cushions, so that he would fit it better. For the kinglet was a small boy with a long, freckled face, blue eyes, a pug nose, and black hair banged across his forehead, and hanging in lank, straight locks far down over his shoulders. He wore an ermine cloak lined with purple, and bore in his hand a scepter with a jeweled ball at one end, while beyond the ball projected a small golden knob. The kinglet's slim legs were crossed under him like those of a Turk, and he seemed very frail and delicate. However, when the Failings and the Fresh-Air Fiend and Chick and John Dough entered, the kinglet's brow was puckered into a frown, and his blue eyes fairly flashed fire. "Odds Zooks!" he cried, as they all knelt before the throne, "why have you dared to wait until this hour to pay me your devoirs?" Then he leaned down and prodded the fat man with the knob of his scepter, so that the sleeper started and opened his eyes. "Is that right, Nebbie? Is 'devoir' a kingly word?" he demanded. "Absolutely kingly, your Majesty," said the fat man, yawning. "It was used by King Arthur and Richard Coeur de Leon." "Very well!" said the kinglet, proudly. Then he turned again to the kneeling group before him. "Why don't you answer me?" he exclaimed. "Why are you so late in paying me your boudoirs?" "Devoirs, your Majesty!" said the fat man, hastily. "I said

‘devoirs’!” returned the kinglet, turning upon him in anger. “We are late because we did not get here sooner,” said the Awkward; “and we could not get here sooner because we were late.” “So!” shrieked his Majesty, with blazing eyes. “Now by my halidom--” he paused suddenly, and turned to the fat man, prodding him so fiercely that he jumped several feet into the air. “Is ‘halidom’ the right word, Nebbie?” “Sure,” said the fat man, nodding emphatically. “What does it mean?” asked the kinglet. “What does halidom mean?” “Yes.” “Why, a halidom is a halidom,” said the fat man, thoughtfully; “and belongs to kings.” “But what is it?” persisted the kinglet, impatiently. “It’s a--a--a sort of a royal prerogative, and is usually painted red,” returned the fat man, and immediately resumed his seat and closed his eyes again. The kinglet sighed, and turned anew to the Failings. “Let me see, he remarked; “where was I?” “You were by your halidom, your Majesty,” suggested the Blunderer. “Oh, yes.” Again the long freckled face took on a frown. “By my halidom, churl--” He stopped to glance at the fat man. “Churl is all right,” mumbled Nebbie, without opening his eyes. “By my halidom, churl, you shall either swallow my scepter or die the death!” “What death?” asked the Blunderer, trembling. “The one that makes people dead,” replied the kinglet, sternly. “Choose, then, varlet--” (“Varlet is good,” said Nebbie, quickly, to avoid a thrust) “whether to swallow my scepter or die the death!” The Blunderer glanced at the scepter, the jeweled ball of which was nearly as large as his head. “I’ll swallow the scepter,” he said. “Good,” cried the king, and held it toward him. “But not now,” added the Blunderer, hastily; “I’ll take my time about it. You didn’t say when, you know.” The kinglet turned red with rage. “Now, by the royal Juggernaut of Jowl--” he began. “If I should swallow it now,” continued the Blunderer, calmly, “you would cease to be a kinglet; for a kinglet without a scepter is nothing but a flibberjig.” “What!” shrieked his Majesty, jabbing the fat man furiously. “That’s right,” declared Nebbie, groaning and rubbing his fat side dolefully. “A kinglet without a scepter is a flibberjig, and I’ll be black and blue by to-morrow morning!” “Well,” said his Majesty, after considering the matter, “I forbid you, Sir Blunderer, to swallow my scepter until I give you leave.” Then his eye fell upon John Dough and Chick, who were standing at one side of the Failings, and immediately the little kinglet looked surprised, and then curious, and then annoyed. But perhaps the annoyed look was because Chick laughed in the royal face in a way that was certainly disrespectful, and even John Dough didn’t look at all humble. “Here, you Chick; behave yourself,” commanded the kinglet. “I won’t,” said Chick, pouting two pretty lips. “Well, this kingdom existed at one time without an Incubator Baby, and I believe we could spare you now. I’ll have your saucy head cut off,” declared

the kinglet. “I dare you!” said Chick, making a face. “There’s a nice child, I must say!” retorted the kinglet, scowling. “But what can we expect of a baby that has no parents and no proper bringing-up? Bah! I’m ashamed of you, Chick!” “Don’t you dare say anything against my Incubator!” cried Chick, angrily. “I guess I’ve had as good bringing-up as you have, you disagreeable kinglet, you!” His Majesty was at first about to retort with equal anger; but he suddenly changed his mind and turned to John Dough. “Who are you, stranger?” he asked. “And why are you wearing the Blunderer’s armor?” So much disrespect had been shown this kinglet by his subjects that John was about to reply lightly to these questions; but to his surprise Chick grasped his hand and whispered to him to make a low bow and to be very careful what he said. So the gingerbread man stepped forward and addressed his Majesty with great ceremony. “Oh, most puissant and serene kinglet!” he began; “I am called John Dough, because I am made of gingerbread; and I came to your Isle because I could not help it.” The kinglet looked upon the stranger with a kindly expression. “‘Puissant and serene’!” he murmured. “Evidently, John Dough, you are a person of wit and intelligence, such as are most welcome to the Isle of Phreex. Kneel thou at my feet.” John knelt, as commanded, and the kinglet at once dealt him a sharp blow upon the Blunderer’s helmet with the heavy end of the royal scepter. It dented in the steel plate, and would have crushed the gingerbread man’s head had it not been so well protected by the helmet. “I dub you Knight of Phreex,” said his Majesty. “Rise, Sir John Dough--villain no longer, but noble and favored among my subjects!” John stood up and bowed, although he was slightly dazed by the force of the blow. “Long live the gentle Kinglet of Phreex,” he managed to say. And Chick clapped two chubby hands with glee, and whispered: “Well done, my friend!” “You please me, Sir John,” remarked the little kinglet, swelling out his chest complacently. “I wish all the people of Phreex were so polite and discerning.” Then he looked around and inquired: “Where’s Sir Austed Alfrin, the Poet Laureate?” Immediately a drapery parted, and a man with a pale, thin face and long black hair entered and saluted his Majesty with profound respect. The Poet had a bandage over one eye and hobbled as if lame in one leg. He was clothed all in black, and his long frock coat had grease spots down the front of it. “Have you made me a sonnet to-day?” demanded the little kinglet. “Yes, my royal Master,” answered the Poet; and, pompously unrolling a scroll, he read in a loud, falsetto voice, these lines:

“There is a wise Kinglet of Phreex, Whose wit is so great that it leaks; His brain isn’t big, But who cares a fig While wisdom from him fairly reeks?”

“Now, that’s not so bad,” said his Majesty, reflectively. “But can’t you

make it a little stronger, Sir Poet?" "I'll try," replied Austed Alfrin; and after penciling some words on his tablets he read as follows:

"The Goddess of Wisdom felt sad; And when asked why she whimpered so bad, Said: 'There's one, it is true, Who knows more than I do-- And the Kinglet of Phreex is the lad!'"

"Now that," said his Majesty, "strikes me as being real poetry. How does it strike you, Sir John Dough?" "It's fairly good," replied the gingerbread man; "but it hardly does you justice." "The Poet doesn't dare do his Majesty justice," said the Disagreeable Failing. "If he did, there would soon be no Poet." "There's something in that, too," said the kinglet. "But now, Sir Austed, write me a sonnet on my new subject, Sir John Dough." The Poet sighed and began writing on his tablets; and presently he read this:

"The Kinglet of Phreex, it is said, Has a Knight made of stale gingerbread; We could eat him, but yet The dyspepsia we'd get Would soon make us wish we were dead."

"That," said John, indignantly, "is rank libel; and if your Majesty will loan me your scepter, I'll make an end of this Poet in seven seconds by the clock." "You have my permission to make mince-meat of him," replied the kinglet, cheerfully. "Mercy! mercy, my lord!" screamed the Poet, falling upon his knees before John and hastily wiping the verse off his tablets, "give me one more chance, I beg of you!" "Very well," said the gingerbread knight. "But if it's no better than the last you shall be discharged. Is it not so, your Majesty?" "Quite so," laughed the kinglet. The Poet nervously scribbled another set of lines, which he read in a voice that trembled with fear:

"The Gingerbread Man is so sweet, To eat him would be a rare treat; He's crisp and well spiced, And you'd find, were he sliced, That the eggs in him cannot be beat!"

"That's better," said John, "but I'm not sure about the eggs, as I did not pay much attention when I was mixed. However, this sincere tribute to my excellence will save you from my displeasure, and you may go free." The Poet did not wait an instant, but ran from the hall as fast as his legs would carry him. The kinglet now dismissed the Failings, who left the royal presence quarreling and threatening one another, and making so much noise and uproar that the gingerbread man was glad to see them go. "Aren't they nice?" asked the kinglet, looking after them. "I'd like to drown them all in the castle moat, like kittens; but every king, they say, has his Failings, so I suppose I must keep mine." He sighed, and continued: "But what did the Poet's sonnet say about your being crisp and well spiced, and rather good eating were you sliced?" "Don't pay any attention to that, your Majesty!" said John, hastily. "But why not?" persisted the kinglet. "I declare, Sir John,

there's something about you that makes me hungry whenever I look at you. I don't remember having eaten any gingerbread since I was a boy--ahem!--I mean since I came to rule over the Isle of Phreex. Ho there, my guards! Fetch me a knife!" John was now trembling with terror; but Chick said to the kinglet: "Your Majesty forgets that you are to have pancakes and maple-syrup for tea. What's the use of spoiling your appetite, when you know the gingerbread man will keep good for weeks?" "Are you sure?" asked the kinglet, anxiously. "Are you sure he'll keep? Won't he get stale?" "Of course not," answered the child. "He's the kind of gingerbread that always keeps good. And you mustn't forget he'll be a credit to the Isle of Phreex; for whoever saw a live gingerbread man before?" "Nobody," declared the kinglet, positively. "You're right, my Cherub; I'll save the gingerbread man for another meal, and in the mean time I can show him off before my people. We pride ourselves, Sir John, on having a greater variety of queer personages than any other kingdom in existence." "Then you ought to be careful of them, and not permit them to be eaten," said John, still anxious. But the kinglet did not seem to hear him. "Pancakes and maple-syrup!" muttered his Majesty, longingly. "Dear me, Chick; I wish tea were ready now." "So do I," said Chick, laughing; for John Dough was safe from being eaten just then, whatever might be his future fate, and the child had saved him by the mention of the cakes and syrup. But now a sudden hubbub was heard at the door, and in rushed a number of the royal guard wheeling a big platform on which was seated a woman so exceedingly fat that she appeared to be much wider than she was long. "Here! what's the trouble with Bebe Celeste?" asked the kinglet, frowning. "She has lost two ounces, your Majesty," puffed one of the guards, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his coat sleeve. "Two ounces!" shouted the kinglet. "Now, by the toga of Samson--by the way, Nebbie, did Samson wear a toga?" He punched the fat man so severely that Nebbie gave a roar of pain before he answered. "He wore several, your Majesty!" "Then, by the several togas of Samson, Bebe Celeste, how dare you come before me two ounces shy?" "I didn't come; I was brought," said the fat woman, in a wheezy voice. "She was weighed in the balance and found wanting," said the guardsman. "What was she wanting?" asked the kinglet. "Two ounces, your Majesty." The ruler rubbed his pug nose with one finger, in a reflective manner. "Bebe," said he, "you've been exercising again. You're trying to reduce!" The woman began to cry. "'Tain't my fault, your royal giblet--" "Kinglet, woman!" said the fat man, without opening his eyes. "Your royal kinglet, I didn't mean to lose a single flutter o' flesh. But my dog Duo got to quarreling with himself and I got exercised in my mind--" "Oh, the loss is in your mind, is it?" interrupted the

King. “I wouldn’t mind the loss if I had not forbidden you to exercise at all, even in your mind.” “I couldn’t help it, your fudgesty--” “Majesty, woman!” said the fat man, sleepily. “My dog Duo got to quarreling--” “Bring us the dog, varlets, churls, and vassals!” screeched the kinglet, in his shrill voice. The guards stumbled over each other to obey; and presently they returned leading such a curious animal that John Dough stared at it in amazement. It was a dog, without doubt; or rather, it was a dog’s body with a head and two legs at either end of it. So that when one end walked forward the other end had to walk backward, and that made the back end growl angrily. But the same end was not always the back end of the dog; for first one head, and then the other, would prove strongest, and drag the curious animal forward. When this double dog, which was named Duo, was brought in, both heads were snarling and barking in a very noisy manner. But however much enraged they were, they could never get together to do one another mischief. “Be silent!” yelled the kinglet, annoyed at the clamor. But the dog’s heads paid no attention to the command. “Very well,” said his Majesty; “I’ll put a stop to your noise for good and all! Here, you guards, fetch me the Royal Executioner!” The fat lady began crying anew at this, and presently the door opened and a young girl entered the hall. She was clothed in simple robes of pure white, over which her loose brown hair flowed in a soft cloud. Her eyes were large and dark and very gentle in expression, and her cheeks were fair as a lily. In one hand the maid bore a long sword, the naked blade of which shone brightly in the light. In the other hand was a sharpening-stone, and as she bowed before the kinglet she rubbed the stone gently against the keen edge of the blade. Although the dog’s heads were still quarreling, and Bebe Celeste still weeping, it was upon John Dough that the Royal Executioner first turned her eyes. “I hope it isn’t this one, your Majesty!” she said, in a voice of disappointment; “for he won’t bleed at all, being made of cake.” “I beg your pardon,” exclaimed John, hastily. “I am not cake, but gingerbread.” “It’s just the same,” she answered, sighing, “you wouldn’t bleed if I cut you into bits.” “Why are you so bloodthirsty?” asked John, looking reproachfully into the girl’s gentle eyes. “Because I’m the Royal Executioner, I suppose,” she answered. “I’ve held the office ever since my father was destroyed by an earthquake, but I’ve never yet executed a single person. The kinglet calls me in about a dozen times a day, but something always happens to rob me of my victim. I’ve worn out three sword blades, sharpening them, but I’ve never carved anything yet!” “Be of good cheer,” said his Majesty, “for now you shall see blood flow like water. This time I am fully resolved to be terrible. Cut me this snarling cur into two parts!” “What, the dog?” asked the girl, surprised. And Bebe began to scream loudly, and the fat man woke up and

shook his head, and Chick patted both heads of the animal tenderly, and a guardsman cried out: “Oh, no, your Majesty!” “And why not?” inquired the kinglet. “Why, this is the most valuable creature in all your dominions!” said the guard. “Do you desire to rob yourself of such a treasure, your Majesty?” The kinglet hesitated, and then jabbed the fat man with his scepter. “Is it so, Nebbie?” he asked. “It is so, my Lord,” answered the fat man. “If you want to butcher anything, cut up a few of the Royal Guards, or mince the Failings, or carve Chick, the Cherub. But the dog Duo is one of the remarkable features of your kingdom, and should be preserved at all hazards. Why, he’s worth more than Bebe Celeste.” “That reminds me of Bebe,” said the kinglet, looking at the fat one sternly, “Take her away, guards, and stuff her with mashed potatoes and pate de foie gras. If she doesn’t regain those two ounces in three days, she’ll disgrace my kingdom, and I’ll turn her over to the Royal Executioner.” So the guards trundled away the platform on which the fat lady sat, and the dog Duo followed, first one head leading, and then the other. And now his Majesty threw off his ermine robe and laid down the scepter and scrambled out of the throne. “The royal audience is ended for to-day,” he said, “and now I’ll go and see if those cakes and maple-syrup are ready for tea. And see here, you Incubator Baby, look after Sir John Dough, and mind that nobody eats him. If there’s one bite gone when I see him again I’ll turn you over to the Royal Executioner--and then there won’t be any Incubator Baby.” Then his Majesty walked away, chuckling to himself in a very disagreeable manner. At once the fat Nebbie rolled out of his low seat and stood up, yawning and stretching out his arms. “Our kinglet is a hard master,” said he, with a sigh, “and I really wish some one would get up a revolution and dethrone him. He’s been punching my ribs all day long, and I’ll be black and blue by to-morrow morning.” “He’s cruel,” said Chick, patting the fat man’s hand, as if to comfort him. “Yet he’s too tender-hearted to suit me,” complained the lovely Executioner. “If I could only shed a single drop of blood, I’d feel that I am of some use in the world.” “How dreadful!” cried John, with a shudder. “Oh, not at all!” said the girl. “For what’s the object of being an Executioner if one can’t execute?” And she tucked the sword under her arm and took out her handkerchief and went away weeping sorrowfully.

Chapter 6: The Freaks of Phreex

"Well, didn't I take care of you all right?" laughed the Incubator Baby, leading John Dough from the throne-room and up a broad flight of marble stairs. "Indeed you did," he answered, gratefully. "Really, my dear Chick, I believe that dreadful kinglet would have eaten me but for you." "'Course he would" said the Cherub, nodding gayly; "and won't he be wild when he finds there are no pancakes and maple-syrup for tea?" John stopped short. "Aren't there?" he asked. "Oh, Chick! I'm afraid he'll punish you for deceiving him." "I don't mind," declared the child. "No one shall eat a friend of mine that I've given my promise to take care of. So come along, John Dough, and don't worry. I've got a lovely room on the top floor of this castle, and I'll share it with you." So John mounted more marble steps, until finally Chick brought him to a handsome apartment on the third story. "Here we are!" cried the Baby. "Now, make yourself at home, John, for we needn't fear the kinglet until to-morrow morning, and then he'll have forgotten that I fooled him." Our hero's first act was to take off the Blunderer's heavy armor and pile it in one corner of the room. When free from the weight of metal he felt more like himself again, and walked to the window to view the scenery. "It's a pretty place, Chick," he remarked. "Oh, the Isle is all right," answered the child. "It's the people here that are all wrong, as you'll soon find out. Do you ever eat, John Dough?" "Never," said John. "Then, while you're waiting here, I'll go over to the dairy and get my milk for tea. You don't mind if I leave you for a few minutes, do you?" "Not at all," he declared. "But it has just started to rain, outside; you'll get wet, won't you?" "That's nothing," laughed Chick. "I won't melt." "It's different with me," said John, sadly. "If my gingerbread body got soaked it would fall to pieces." That made the little one laugh again, and it ran merrily from the room and left John Dough alone to stare out of the window. There was a projecting cornice overhead, so he had pushed his head well out to observe the pretty scenery, when suddenly he heard a voice say, in a tone of astonishment: "Hello, neighbor!" Turning toward the left, he saw sticking out of the next window to his own a long bald head that slanted up to a peak, underneath which appeared a little withered face that was smiling in a most friendly manner. John bowed politely. "Well, well," said the owner of the bald head. "Here's another curiosity come to our island! Wait a minute, and I'll run in and make your acquaintance." So presently the bald head, which was perched upon the body of a little, dried-up looking man, entered John's room and bowed politely. "I'm Sir Pryse Bocks," he said, "and the remarkable thing about me is that I'm an inventor, and a successful one. You, I perceive, are a delicatessen; a

friend in knead; I might say, a Pan-American. Ha, ha!" "Pleased to make your acquaintance," returned John, bowing. "But do not joke about my person, Sir Pryse. I'm proud of it." "I respect your pride, sir," said the other. "It's bread in the bone, doubtless. Ha, ha!" John looked at him reproachfully, and the little man at once grew grave. "This island is full of inventors," said he; "but they're all cranks, and don't amount to anything--except me." "What have you invented?" asked John. "This!" said the other, taking a little tube from his pocket. "You will notice that it often rains--it's raining now, if you'll look outside. And the reason it rains is because the drops of water fall to the earth by the attraction of gravitation." "I suppose so," said John. "Now, what do people usually do when it rains?" asked the little man. "They grumble," said John. "Yes, and they use umbrellas--umbrellas, mind you, to keep themselves dry!" "And that is quite sensible," declared John. The bald-headed one gave a scornful laugh. "It's ridiculous!" he said, angrily. "An umbrella is a big, clumsy thing, that the wind jerks out of your hand, or turns inside out; and it's a nuisance to carry it around; and people always borrow it and never bring it back. An umbrella, sir, is a humbug! A relic of the Dark Ages! I've done away with the use of umbrellas entirely, by means of this invention--this little tube, which can be carried in one's pocket!" He held up a small instrument that looked like a tin whistle. "How curious!" said John. "Isn't it? You see, within this tube is stored a Power of Repulsion that overcomes the Attraction of Gravitation, and sends the rain-drops flying upward again. You stick the tube in your hatband and walk out boldly into the rain. Immediately all the rain-drops shoot up into the air, and before they can fall again you have passed on! It's always dry where the wearer of this tube goes, for it protects him perfectly. And when it stops raining, you put it in your pocket again and it's all ready for another time. Isn't it great, sir? Isn't it wonderful? Isn't the inventor of this tube the greatest man in the world?" "I'd like to try it," said John, "for no one needs protection from the rain more than I do. Being made of gingerbread, it would ruin me to get wet." "True," agreed the other. "I'll lend you the tube, with pleasure. Stick it in your hat-band." "I have no hat," said John; and then he remembered that he had left both the baker's hat and his candy cane lying on the sands where he had first fallen. "Well, carry the tube in your hand, then," said the inventor. "It will work just as well that way, but it's not so convenient." So John took the tube; and having thanked the bald-headed man for his kindness, he left the room and walked down the stairs and through the big, empty hall, and so out into the courtyard. The rain seemed to have driven every one in doors, for not a person could he see. Holding the tube upright, he boldly walked into the rain; and it gave him great pleasure to notice that

not a drop fell near him. Indeed, by looking upward, he could see the falling drops stop short and then fly toward the clouds; and he began to believe that the bald-headed inventor was really as great a man as he claimed to be. After descending the slippery path through the rocks, he crossed the patch of green, and at last reached the sandy shore, where he found the baker's hat, soaked through by the rain. As he lifted it he saw the crooked handle of the candy cane sticking out of the sand, and drew it forth to find it in excellent condition, little of the dampness having reached it. But now, as John Dough began to retrace his steps, he discovered that his feet were soft and swollen. For he had been walking on the damp ground and through the wet grass, and although no rain had fallen upon his body, his feet were getting to be in a dangerous condition, and the licorice in them had become sticky. After he had recrossed the grass and come to the edge of the rocks he began to be frightened, for bits of his left heel now commenced to crumble and drop in the path; and when he tried walking on his flabby toes, they were so soggy and soft that he knew they would not last very long. While he paused, bewildered, another calamity overtook him. For the tube suddenly lost its power of repulsion and ceased to work, and the raindrops began to pelt his unprotected body and sink into his flesh. He looked around with a groan of dismay, and discovered a round hole, or tunnel, in the rock near by. Staggering toward this, he entered the tunnel and found that now no rain could reach him. The floor was smooth and dry, and in the far distance he saw a light twinkling. Not daring to walk farther upon his mushy feet, John got down on his hands and knees and began crawling toward the farther end of the tunnel. He made slow progress, in that position; but soon he heard a noise of machinery, and felt the warm air of a furnace coming to meet him. That gave him courage to proceed, and he crawled onward until he had reached a large, circular chamber, where a tall man with whiskers that resembled those of a billy-goat was busily working among a number of machines. "Hello!" this personage exclaimed, as he saw the gingerbread man. "What have we here?" The voice and eyes were alike kindly; so John told the man his story and asked permission to dry his feet at the glowing furnace. "Make yourself at home," said the man, and turned to his work again. The place was lighted by electricity, and was warm and comfortable. John put his feet as near to the furnace as he dared, and soon felt the heat drying up his soaked feet. It was not long, indeed, before his entire body was as crisp and solid as ever; and then our hero stood upon his feet and found that the damage to his heel would not interfere much with his walking. "What are you doing?" he asked the man. "Making diamonds," replied the other, calmly. "I suppose I am the only one in the world who ever succeeded

in making real diamonds; but people did not believe in me, you see, so they sent me to the Isle of Phreex. Here I have manufactured the finest diamonds the world has ever known, for no one interferes with my work. Look at these." He threw back the lid of a large tin box, and John saw that it was full to the brim with sparkling gems of a clear white color. "Take some," said the man, offering him a handful. "They are of no use to me here, because I cannot dispose of them. But I have the satisfaction of making them, just the same. Help yourself!" "No, thank you," said John. "I have no use for diamonds, any more than you have." "But the time may come when riches will be a great help to you," said the man, and picking out three very big stones he began pressing them into John Dough's gingerbread body, one after the other. "There!" he exclaimed. "They are now safely concealed, and if you ever need them you can dig them out and sell them. Those three stones would be worth several thousand dollars if you ever get into the world again, where diamonds are valued." "You are very generous," said John. "Oh, not at all, I assure you!" said the man, wagging his goatlike beard with every word he spoke. "In this curious island there is no value to anything whatever, not even to life. All I can do with my diamonds here is to stick them into the kinglet's crown and scepter; so I'm getting a big stock of them laid by. Very soon I shall begin studding the roof of the throne-room with diamonds, and it will be a pretty sight to see them glittering in one mass." "Well," said our hero, "if it has stopped raining, I believe I'll bid you good-by." "Never mind the rain," answered the man. "Here is a winding staircase that leads directly upward into the castle. If you go that way, the rain cannot reach you. The tunnel through which you entered is only used for ventilation." John thanked the good-natured diamond-maker and started to climb the stairs. There were a good many steps, but after a while he came to a gallery of the castle, and had little difficulty in finding the passage that led to his own room. As he walked along he heard the sound of a piano, and paused at an open door to peer within the room, for he imagined some one was pounding upon the keys of the piano with a sledge-hammer. But immediately a fluffy-haired man looked up and saw him, and the next instant pounced upon the gingerbread man in much the same way that a cat would pounce upon a rat, and seized him fast, drew him into the room, and closed and locked the door. John was astonished, but the fluffy-haired musician began pacing up and down the room, swinging his arms and shouting: "I have it! I have it at last! I am great! I am magnificent! I am better than Vogner himself!" He paused to glare upon John. "Why don't you shout, you baked idiot? Why don't you weep with joy?" he cried. "It is great, I tell you! It is great!" "What is great?" asked John. "The symphonie! The divine symphonie, you heartless molasses-cake,

or devil's food, or whatever you are! And I composed it--I--Tietjamus Toips! I am greater than Vogner!" "I didn't hear it," said the gingerbread man. The musician threw himself upon the piano, and produced a succession of such remarkable sounds that John was surprised. "Did you understand it?" demanded the fluffy-haired one, jumping up again. "No," said John. "No! Of course not! No one can understand it. It is genius! It will be played at all the great concerts. The critics will write columns in praise of it. Some folks can understand Vogner a little. No one can understand me at all! I am wonderful! I am superb!" "Well," said John, "I'm not a judge. It seemed to me like awful discord." The musician threw himself upon his knees and burst into tears. "Thank you, my friend!--my dear friend!" said he, between the sobs. "Such praise gladdens my heart and makes me very happy! Ah! glorious moment, in which I produce music that is not understood and sounds like discord!" John left the musician still shedding tears of happiness, and walked to his room. "The people of this island are certainly peculiar," he reflected; "and I am very glad indeed that I am an ordinary gingerbread man, and not a crank." He found the bald-headed inventor of the power of repulsion awaiting him in the room. "Well, how did the tube please you? Is it not wonderful?" he inquired. "It's wonderful enough when it works," said John; "but it suddenly quit working, and nearly ruined me." "Ah, the power became exhausted," returned the man, calmly, "But that is nothing. It can be easily renewed." "However," John remarked, "I think that whenever any one uses your tube as a protection from the rain, he should also carry an umbrella to use in case of accident." "An umbrella! Bah!" cried the inventor, and left the room in a rage, slamming the door behind him.

Chapter 7: The Lady Executioner

Presently Chick returned, looking bright and happy as ever; but when the child heard the tale of John's wanderings in the rain he received a sound scolding for being so careless. "You mustn't pay any attention to the inventors," said the Cherub. "This Isle is full of 'em, and most of their inventions won't work." "I've discovered that," said John. "But they're good fun, if you don't take 'em in earnest," continued the Baby; "and as it's going to rain all the afternoon I'll take you around the castle to make some calls on some of the cranks that are harmless. John readily agreed to this proposal; so Chick took his hand and led him through some of the wide halls, stopping frequently to call upon the different inventors and scientific discoverers who inhabited the various rooms. They were all glad to see the pretty child and welcomed John Dough almost as cordially. One personage presented the gingerbread man with a smokeless cigar that he had recently invented. Another wanted him to listen to a noiseless music-box, and was delighted when John declared he could hear nothing at all. A third wanted him to try a dish of hot ice-cream made in a glowing freezer, and was grieved because the gingerbread man was constructed in such a way that it was impossible for him to eat. "Really," said John, "I don't see the use of these things." "Oh, they're not useful at all," replied Chick, laughing; "but these folks are all trying to do something queer, and most of them are doing it. Now we'll climb this tower, and I'll show you what I call a really fine invention." So up they climbed to the top of one of the turrets, winding round and round a narrow staircase until they came upon a broad platform. And on this platform rested a queer machine that somewhat resembled a bird, for it had two great wings and a big body that glittered as brightly as if it were made of silver. While they stood looking at this odd contrivance a door in the body of the bird opened and a young man stepped out and greeted them. John thought him quite the most agreeable person, in looks and manner, that he had yet met in the Isle of Phreex; excepting, of course, his friend Chick. The young man had a sad face, but his eyes were pleasant and intelligent and his brow thoughtful. In a few polite and well-chosen words he welcomed his guests. "This is Imar," said Chick, introducing John; "and he has invented a real flying-machine." "One that will fly?" asked John, curiously. "Of course," said the Baby. "I've had many a ride in it--haven't I, Imar?" "To be sure," replied the young man. "I have often taken Chick to ride as far as forty yards from the tower. If it did not rain, just now, nothing would give me more pleasure than to prove to you that my invention will work perfectly." "I see you have made it resemble a bird," remarked John, who was quite interested

in the machine. “Yes,” said the dreamy Imar, “and the reason I have succeeded in my invention is because I have kept close to Nature’s own design. Every muscle of a bird’s wings is duplicated in this machine. But instead of being animated by life, I have found it necessary to employ electric batteries and motors. Perhaps the bird isn’t exactly as good as a real bird, but it will fly all right, as you shall see when I take you for a ride in it.” He then allowed John to enter the tiny room in the body of the bird, which was just big enough to allow two to sit close together. And in front of the seat were various push-buttons and a silver lever, by means of which the flight of the machine was controlled. “It is very simple,” said Imar, proudly. “Even Chick could guide the machine, if properly instructed. The only fault of the invention is that the wings are too light to be strong, and that is why I do not take very long trips in it.” “I understand,” answered John. “It’s quite a distance to the ground, if anything happened to break.” “True,” acknowledged Imar, sadly; “and I do not wish to break my neck before I am able to make a bigger and better machine.” “That is not to be wondered at,” said John. Then he thanked the inventor and followed Chick down the winding stairs and through the halls until they again reached their own room, where they sat and talked until darkness came and drove the Incubator Baby to its snowy couch. As for the gingerbread man, he never required sleep or rest; so he sat quietly in a chair and thought of many things until a new day dawned. By morning the rain had ceased and the sun arose in a blue sky and flooded the Isle with its warm and brilliant rays. The Incubator Baby was so happy this pleasant day that it fairly danced away to get its regular breakfast of milk and oatmeal. But John Dough’s little friend was back at his side before long, and together they went hand in hand through the halls of the castle to the throne-room of the kinglet. They found his Majesty already seated in the throne, with the fat Nebbie asleep at one side of him and the girl executioner carefully sharpening her sword on the other side. “This is my busy day,” said the kinglet, nodding graciously to Chick and the gingerbread man. “There are too many useless people in my kingdom, and I’m going to kill off some of them. Sit down and watch the flash of the executioner’s sword.” Then he turned to his guards and commanded: “Bring in the General.” Immediately they ushered before the kinglet a soldierly man clothed in a gorgeous uniform. His head was erect and his countenance calm and set. The eyes seemed dull and listless, and he walked stiffly, as if his limbs were rheumatic. “Sire, I salute you!” the General exclaimed, in a hollow voice. “Why am I brought before you as a prisoner--I, the hero of a hundred battles?” “You are accused of being foolish,” said the kinglet, with a broad grin upon his freckled face. “Sire, at the battle of Waterloo--” “Never

mind the battle of Waterloo," interrupted his Majesty. "I am told you are scattered all over the world, as the result of your foolishness." "To an extent, Sire, I am scattered. But it is the result of bravery, not foolishness." He unstrapped his left arm and tossed it on the floor before the throne. "I lost that at Bull Run," he said. Then he unhooked his right leg and cast it down. "That, Sire, was blown off at Sedan." Then he suddenly lifted his right arm, seized his hair firmly, and lifted the head from his shoulders. "It is true I lost my head at Santiago," he said, "but I could not help it." John was astonished. The old general seemed to come to pieces very easily. He had tucked the head under his right elbow, and now stood before the kinglet on one foot, presenting a remarkably strange appearance. His Majesty seemed interested. "What is your head made of?" he asked. "Wax, your Majesty." "And what are your legs made of?" continued the kinglet. "One is cork, Sire, and the other--the one I am now standing on--is basswood." "And your arms?" "Rubber, my kinglet." "You may go, General. There is no doubt you were very unwise to get so broken up; but there is nothing left for the Royal Executioner to do." The girl sighed and felt the edge of her blade; and the old general replaced his head, had his leg and arm again strapped to his body by the guards, and hobbled away after making a low bow before the throne. Just then a great noise of quarrelling and fighting was heard near the doorway, and while all eyes were turned toward the sound, a wooden Indian sprang into the hall, waving a wooden tomahawk over his head, and uttering terrible war-whoops. Following him came a number of the Brotherhood of Failings, trying to capture the Indian. The Awkward tripped up and fell flat on his face; the Unlucky got in the way of the tomahawk and received a crack on the head that laid him low; the Blunderer was kicked on the shin so violently that he howled and limped away to a safe distance. But just before the throne the Disagreeable, the Bad-Tempered, and the Ugly managed to throw a rope about the Indian's arms and bind them fast to his body, so that he ceased to struggle. "What's the trouble?" asked the kinglet. "Sir," said the Indian, proudly; "once I had the honor to be a beautiful sign in front of a cigar store, and now these miserable Failings dare to insult me." "He claims his name is Wart-on-the-Nose," answered the Disagreeable, "and any one can see there is no wart at all on his nose." "So we decided to fight him," added the Ugly. "And he dared to resist," said the Bad-Tempered. "I am a great chief," the Indian declared, scowling fiercely. "I am made of oak, and my paint is the best ready-mixed that can be purchased!" "But why do you claim your name is Wart-on-the-Nose?" asked the kinglet. "I have a right to call myself what I please!" answered the Indian, sulkily. "Are not white girls called Rose and Violet when they have not that color? John Brown was white and Mary

Green was white. If the white people deceive us about their names, I also have a right to deceive." "Now, by my--my--my--" The kinglet jabbed the fat man with his scepter. "Halidom!" yelled Nebbie, with a jump. "By my halidom!" said the kinglet, "I will allow no one in my kingdom to tell an untruth. There being no wart on your nose, you must die the death! Executioner, do your duty!" The Failings tripped up the Indian so that he fell upon his face, and then the girl advanced solemnly with her sword. Three times she swung the glittering blade around her head, and then she glanced at the kinglet and said: "Well!" "Well, what?" asked his Majesty. "Isn't it time to change your mind?" "I'm not going to change my mind in this case," said the kinglet. "Chop off his head!" At this the girl screamed and drew back. "Do you really mean it?" "Of course." "Oh, your Majesty, I couldn't hurt the poor thing!" sobbed the Executioner. "It would be simply awful! Please change your mind, as you always have done." "I won't," said the kinglet, sternly. "You do as I tell you, Maria Simpson, or I'll have you executed next!" The girl hesitated. Then she took the sword in both her hands, shut her eyes, and struck downward with all her might. The blade fell upon the Indian's neck and shivered into several pieces. "He's wood, your Majesty," said the Executioner. "I simply can't cut his head off." "Get a meat cleaver!" cried the kinglet. "Do you suppose I'll allow Wart-on-the-Nose to live when he hasn't any wart on his nose? Get the cleaver instantly!" So the girl brought a big meat cleaver, and lifting it high in the air, struck the Indian's neck as hard as she could. The cleaver stuck fast in the wood; but it didn't cut far enough to do much harm to the victim. Indeed, Wart-on-the-Nose even laughed, and then he said: "There's a knot in that neck--a good oak knot. You couldn't chop my head off in a thousand years!" The kinglet was annoyed. "Pull out that cleaver," he commanded. The girl tried to obey, but the cleaver stuck fast. Then the Failings tried, one after another; but it wouldn't budge. "Never mind, leave it there," said the Indian, rolling over and then getting upon his feet. "It won't bother me in the least. In fact, it will make a curious ornament." "Look here, Sir John Dough," said the kinglet, turning to the gingerbread man; "what am I going to do? I've said the Indian must die, because he has no wart on his nose. And I find I can't kill him. Now, you must either tell me how to get out of this scrape or I'll cut your head off! And it won't be as hard to cut gingerbread as it is wood, I promise you." This speech rather frightened John, for he knew he was in great danger. But after thinking a moment he replied: "Why, it seems to me very easy to get out of the difficulty, your Majesty. The Indian's only offense is that he has no wart on his nose." "But that is a great offense!" cried the kinglet. "Well, let us whittle a wart on his nose," said John, "and then all will be

well." The kinglet looked at him in astonishment. "Can that be done?" he asked. "Certainly, your Majesty. It is only necessary to carve away some of the wood of his nose, and leave a wart." "I'll do it!" shouted the kinglet, in great delight. And he at once sent for the Royal Carpenter and had the man whittle the Indian's nose until a beautiful wart showed plainly on the very end. "Good!" said the King. "Good!" echoed the Indian, proudly. "Now none of those miserable Failings dare say my name is not suitable!" "I'm very sorry about that cleaver," remarked the kinglet. "You'll have to carry it around wherever you go." "That's all right. I'll add to my name and call myself Wart-on-the-Nose-and-Cleaver-in-the-Neck. That will be a fine Indian name, and no one can prove it is not correct." Saying this, the wooden Indian bowed to the kinglet, gave a furious war-whoop, and stalked stiffly from the room. "Bring on the next prisoner!" shouted the kinglet, and both Chick and John gave a gasp of surprise as Imar was brought into the room. The inventor of the flying-machine, however, did not seem the least bit frightened, and bowed calmly before the throne. "What's the charge against this man?" inquired the kinglet. "He's accused of being a successful inventor," said one of the guards. The other inventors claim no one who succeeds has a right to live in the Isle of Phreex." "Quite correct," replied his Majesty. "Cut off his head, Maria." "Alas, Sire! my sword is broken!" she exclaimed. "Then get another." "But I have no other sword that is sharpened," she protested. "Then sharpen one!" retorted the kinglet, frowning. "Certainly, your Majesty. But a sword cannot be properly sharpened in a minute. It will take until to-morrow, at least, to get it ready." "Then," said the kinglet, "I'll postpone the execution until to-morrow morning at nine o'clock. "If you're not ready by that time I'll get a new Royal Executioner and you'll lose your job." "I shall be ready," said the girl, and walked away arm in arm with the sad young man, on whom she smiled sweetly. "It's all right," whispered Chick to John. "Imar won't get hurt, for the kinglet will forget all about him by to-morrow." "And now, my guards," said his Majesty, stretching his arms and yawning, "bring hither my two-legged horse, that I may take a ride around my kingdom." So presently the guards led in a big, raw-boned nag that had two legs instead of four, and these two set in the middle of its body. It seemed rather frisky and pranced around in a nervous manner, so that the kinglet had great difficulty in mounting the horse's back, whereon was a saddle made of purple velvet and cloth of gold. "Hold still, can't you?" cried the kinglet. "I can; but I won't," said the horse, in a cross tone, for it appeared the animal was able to talk. "I'll thrash you soundly, if you don't behave!" screamed the kinglet. "I'll kick you in the ribs, if you dare to threaten me!" returned the horse, laying

back its ears. “Why, you miserable little freckle-faced kinglet, I could run away with you and break your neck, if I wanted to!” “That’s true,” said his Majesty, meekly, “I beg your pardon for my harsh words. Let us be friends, by all means!” The horse snorted, as if with contempt, and the guards finally managed to hoist the little kinglet to his seat upon the animal’s back. “Throw away that mace!” cried the horse. His Majesty obeyed, at once. “Now,” said the animal, “you sit still and behave yourself, or I’ll dump you over my head. Understand?” “I understand,” said the kinglet. “Very good!” declared the horse. “When you’re on your throne you’re a tyrant; but when you’re on horseback you’re a coward, because you’re at my mercy, and you know it. Now, we are off.” The beast pranced down the hall and out of the arched entrance, bearing the kinglet upon his back; and when they were gone John and Chick started to take a walk along the beach of the seashore. But no sooner had they stepped into the courtyard than an awful yell saluted their ears, and before them stood the form of the terrible Arab!

Chapter 8: The Palace of Romance

"He must have broken loose!" cried Chick. "Let us run, John Dough, before he can eat you." At once John turned to fly, with Chick grasping his hand to urge him on. Ali Dubh had indeed succeeded in breaking through the iron grating of his prison, and had even managed to untie his hands. But his legs were still firmly bound together from his ankles to his knees, so that he could only move toward them by hopping. Nevertheless, at the sight of the gingerbread man, who was mixed with his precious Elixir, the Arab began bounding toward his victim with long hops, and had John and Chick not run so fast as they did it is certain the Arab would soon have overtaken them. Through the throne-room they fled, with Ali Dubh just behind them, and then they began mounting the marble stairways to the upper stories of the castle. Their pursuer, nothing daunted by his bound legs, hopped up the stairs after them with remarkable swiftness. "Hurry!" cried Chick; "hurry, John Dough, or you'll be eaten." They came to the second flight of stairs, and still the Arab followed. "We are lost," said John, in despair. "He'll surely get me this time." But Chick tugged at his puffy brown hand and hurried him on, for the Incubator Baby at that very moment thought of a clever way to save the gingerbread man. Still holding John's hand, the child ran through the upper passages to the foot of the tower of Imar, and began climbing up the steep stairs as fast as possible. Luckily for the fugitives, these stairs to the tower were very difficult for Ali Dubh to climb by hopping. When he was half-way up he lost his balance and tumbled down again, and this accident gave John and Chick time to enter the body of the bird flying-machine, which still lay stretched upon the roof of the tower. "Quick!" shouted the child, shutting and fastening the silver door behind them. "Pull over that lever, and away we go!" "Is it safe?" asked John, hesitating. "Is it safe to be eaten?" inquired Chick. John quickly grabbed the lever, pulled it over, and the huge bird fluttered its wings once or twice and rose slowly into the air. It sailed away from the roof just as the Arab appeared at the top of the stairs. "Stop!" screamed Ali Dubh. "You're mine, John Dough. Come back and be eaten." "Don't mind him," said the Cherub, peeping at the Arab through a little window in the bottom of the bird's body. "And don't worry about this flying-machine, either. Imar has told me how to run it, and it will carry us somewhere, never fear. This button that I pushed is to start it, and there's another button somewhere to stop it." "Where?" asked John. "I don't remember. But never mind that; we don't want to stop just yet, anyhow." John stooped to look through the little window, and saw spread out beneath him the Isle of Phreex. The Brotherhood of Failings stood upon the shore

watching the flight of the machine, and the kinglet was riding along calmly upon his two-legged horse without any idea that the Incubator Baby and the gingerbread man were leaving his kingdom for good and all and he would probably never see them again. The great bird flew steadily westward, and Chick laughed and chatted, and seemed to enjoy the journey immensely. They were flying over the ocean now, and before long the Isle they had left became a mere speck upon the water. “Where are we going?” John asked. “I don’t know,” answered Chick. “What land lies in this direction?” “I haven’t the faintest idea,” said the Baby. John became thoughtful. “How long will this machine fly?” he inquired. “Who knows?” said Chick. “Imar was always afraid to go very far from the island with it. We’ll just have to wait and find out.” This was not very encouraging, but it was too late to return now, the Isle of Phreex being lost in the vastness of the great sea. Moreover, John reflected that he would be in greater danger there from Ali Dubh than in riding in an untried flying-machine. The only thing to do was to continue the flight through the air until they sighted some other land--provided the machine did not suddenly break down. It seemed to be all right just at present, and John’s admiration of Imar’s genius in constructing it grew steadily as the bird flopped on and on without a sign of giving out. Chick wasn’t frightened, that was certain. The Baby laughed and sang little songs, and seemed as happy and contented as when upon firm land; so John gradually forgot his fears. The sun had sank low upon the horizon, and was looking for a good place to dive into the sea, when the voyagers discovered something far ahead of them that glittered brightly upon the water. Neither could determine what the glitter meant, until they drew nearer and saw a small, rocky islet, upon which was perched an enormous palace that seemed to be made of pure gold, having many crystal windows set in its domes and sides. “It is certainly a beautiful place,” said John. “Let us land upon the islet.” “All right,” returned Chick. “I’ll see if I can find out which button stops the thing.” The Baby pushed one of the buttons, and at once the bird shot up higher into the air. “That isn’t it!” cried John, in sudden alarm. Chick pushed another button, and the machine began whirling around in short circles. “Dear me!” said John; “what’s going to happen to us?” Chick laughed and pushed another button. “One of ‘em must be to stop,” declared Chick, cheerfully; “and there’s only two more left.” The bird paused, with a quick trembling of its wings, and slowly fluttered downward. “Oh, now we’re all right,” gayly announced the queer child, “for there’s only one button left; and when I push it, John Dough, you must pull back the silver lever and steer straight for the golden palace.” Down, down they sank, and fortunately the descent was made to the flat roof of a wing of the palace.

When they had almost reached it, Chick, who was watching the roof through the little window, pushed the last button, while John threw over the lever. Immediately the flying-machine fell with a thump that made the gingerbread man's candy teeth knock together. "Wow!" said Chick. "That was a jolt and a half! I hope nothing's broken." "I don't believe I will ever ride in it again," said John, smoothing the wrinkles out of his frosted shirt-front and pulling the baker's hat off his eyes, where it had become jammed. "These air-ships are too dangerous to suit me." "Why, the bird has saved your life, and it may save it again," said Chick. "For my part, I rather like flying through the air. You never know what's going to happen next. And see how lucky we are! This is the only part of the palace roof that is flat, and we struck it to a dot. If we'd fallen upon one of those spikes"--pointing to the numerous spires and minarets--"our clocks would have stopped by this time." "You have a queer way of expressing yourself, my friend," said John, looking upon the child gravely. "The vast knowledge I gained by means of the Elixir taught me nothing of your methods of twisting language." "That's too bad," answered Chick. "I can't always figure out what you mean to say; but you always know what I mean, don't you?" "Almost always," John acknowledged. "Then don't complain," said the Baby, sweetly; and the gingerbread man looked at his feet with a puzzled expression, and then back into the child's smiling face, and sighed. By this time they had climbed out of the bird's body and stood upon the roof. It was so high above the rocks that it made John dizzy to look down; but Chick soon discovered a trap-door that led downward into the palace by means of a tiny staircase. They descended the stairs, and, having pushed aside a heavy drapery that hung across a doorway, came upon a broad passage running through the upper story of the palace. This led to still another passage, and still another; but although they turned this way and that in the maze of passages, no living person did they meet with. The tiled floors and paneled walls were very beautiful and splendid; but they were so much alike that our adventurers completely lost their way before they came by accident to a broad staircase leading downward to the next story. These stairs were covered with soft carpeting and the balusters were of filigree gold. Still no one was to be seen either on the stairs or in the passages, and the palace was silent as could be. They found another staircase, by and by, and descended to the main floor of the palace, passing through magnificent parlors and galleries, until finally a hum of pleasant voices reached their ears. "I feel much relieved," said John, "for I had begun to think the place was uninhabited." "Let us go on," replied Chick, "and see who these people are." Turning first to the right and then to left, and now following a high-arched marble passage, the adventurers suddenly found

themselves before heavy draperies of crimson velvet, from beyond which came clearly the sounds of laughter and the merry chattering of many people. They pushed aside the draperies and entered a splendid domed chamber of such exquisite beauty that the sight made even Chick pause in astonishment. All around the sides and in the ceiling were set handsome windows made of bits of colored glass, so arranged that they formed very pleasing pictures. Between the windows were panels of wrought gold having many brilliant gems set in the metal. The floor was covered with priceless rugs of quaint patterns, and the furniture consisted of many settees and easy-chairs designed to afford the highest degree of comfort. Fountains of perfumed waters sparkled here and there, falling into golden basins; and little tables scattered about the room bore trays of dainty refreshments. Seated within the room were groups of ladies and gentlemen, all clothed in gorgeous apparel, soft of speech, graceful and courteous in demeanor, and with kindly faces. These looked up with joyous surprise as the gingerbread man and Chick entered, and the gentlemen all arose and bowed politely to the strangers. "Welcome!" cried the ladies, in a soft chorus; and then two of their number came forward and led their unexpected guests to seats in the very center of the room. Others offered them refreshment, of which Chick eagerly partook, for the child was hungry. John Dough was obliged to explain that he did not eat, and they accepted his speech very graciously and did not remark at all upon his unusual personality. When the child had finished eating, John said: "May I ask what palace this is, and who rules upon this island?" The ladies and gentlemen exchanged significant looks, and smiled; but one made answer, in a deferential voice: "Good sir, this is the Palace of Romance; and we have no ruler at all, each one of our number having equal power and authority with the others." "We pass our time," said another, "in telling of tales of romance and adventure; and, whenever a stranger comes to our palace, we require him to amuse us by telling all the stories he may know." "That is a fair requirement," replied John. "I think I shall like this Palace of Romance, although I do not know many tales." "The more tales you know the longer you may enjoy our palace," one of the ladies remarked, earnestly. "How is that?" asked John, surprised. They were silent for a time, and ceased laughing. But finally one of the gentlemen said: "Our laws oblige us to destroy every stranger, after he has related to us all the stories he knows. It grieves us very much to tell you this; but the laws cannot be changed, and the death is very simple and without much pain. For you will be dropped through a trap into a long slide leading to the bottom of the sea; and it is said there is little discomfort in drowning." Now, at this John looked pale and worried, and even the laughing Chick became thoughtful. Several of the ladies wiped

their eyes with delicate handkerchiefs, as if in sorrow for their fate, and the men all sighed sympathetically. “Why can we not live, and join your pleasant party?” asked John. “Why are your laws so severe regarding strangers?” “We number exactly one hundred--fifty ladies and fifty gentlemen,” was the reply. “And, as the island is small, a large number of people would crowd the palace and render it uncomfortable. We do not entice strangers here; but neither dare we permit them to escape and tell the world of our pleasant home; for then the ocean would be white with the ships of curious people coming to visit us. So, long ago, the laws were enacted obliging us to destroy whatever strangers chanced upon our retreat. But you are in no immediate danger. As long as your stories last you will live; and while you live you shall enjoy every pleasure our palace affords.” John tried to think how many stories he knew through the virtue of the magic Elixir; but the startling news he had just heard so confused his mind that it drove all recollection of romance out of his head. “Never mind,” whispered Chick. “All stories except the true ones have to be made up; so I’ll make up some. And don’t you worry, John Dough. I’ve been in worse boxes than this, I can tell you.” The gingerbread man didn’t know exactly what Chick meant, but the tone of confidence relieved his embarrassment and inspired him with hope. The ladies and gentlemen set Chick and John in the center of their group and drew their chairs around them and prepared to listen attentively to the child’s story. One might suppose the Incubator Baby’s lifetime had been so brief that it knew no stories at all; but Chick was full of imagination and glad of the chance to invent wonderful tales for others to listen to. And the child had resolved to make the stories so long and so interesting that a chance of escape from death might finally be discovered. The flying-machine still rested upon the roof, and if they could manage to regain it there would be no need of their being dumped through the trapdoor into the sea. So Chick began to tell the company a story about an astonishing Silver Pig that once lived in Dagupan (wherever that may be), and was the king of all the pigs of that vast country. His squeal could be heard for seven miles, the child solemnly declared, and the pig’s feet were so swift and tireless that he could have run around the world in a single day had there been no oceans to stop him. The ladies and gentlemen were much interested in the story, and listened very attentively while Chick related a host of wonderful adventures that befell the Silver Pig. Daylight faded away and the golden lamps were lighted, but still the Incubator Baby kept the story going. Finally one of the company interrupted the tale to say that it was bedtime and they must all retire, but that Chick should continue the story on the following day. That was exactly what the Cherub wanted, and presently John and his comrade

were escorted to beautiful rooms, and the company of ladies and gentlemen had bidden them a gracious and kindly good-night.

Chapter 9: The Silver Pig

"How long is that story of the Silver Pig?" asked John, when they were alone in their room. "As long as I want to make it," answered Chick, brightly. "But suppose they get tired of it?" John suggested, timidly. "Then they'll finish us and the story at the same time," laughed the child. "But we won't wait for that, John Dough. This palace isn't a healthy place for strangers, so I guess the quicker we get away from it the better. When everybody is asleep we'll go to the place where our machine lies, up on the roof, and fly away." "Very good," agreed John, with a sigh of relief. "I had begun to think we would be killed by these pleasant ladies and gentlemen." They waited for an hour or two, to be sure all others in the palace were asleep, and then they crept softly from the room and began to search for the staircase. The passages were so alike and so confusing that this was no easy task; but finally, just as they were about to despair, they came upon the stairs and mounted to the upper story of the palace. And now they really became lost in the maze of cross passages that led in every direction, nor could they come to that particular doorway that led to the stairs they had descended from the little flat roof where the flying-machine lay. Often they imagined they had found the right place; but the stairs would lead to some dome or turret that was strange to them, and they would be obliged to retrace their steps. Morning found the child and the gingerbread man still wandering through the endless passages, and at last they were obliged to abandon the quest and return to their room. All that following day the fair-haired, blue-eyed Baby continued the strange tale of the Silver Pig, while the ladies and gentlemen of the Palace of Romance seemed to listen with real pleasure. For, long ago, they had told each other all the stories they could themselves remember or imagine; so that it was a rare treat to them to hear of the wonderful adventures of Chick's Silver Pig, and they agreed that the longer the story lasted the better they would be pleased. "I hope you will not die for several days," one lady said to the child, with a sweet smile. That made Chick laugh. "Don't you worry about me," was the reply. "If stories will keep me alive I'll die of old age!" When bedtime again arrived the tale of the Silver Pig was still unfinished, and once more Chick and the gingerbread man were courteously escorted to their chambers. They spent the second night in another vain attempt to find the stairs leading to the flat roof, and morning found them as ignorant as ever of the location of their flying-machine. In spite of the little one's courage, the task of carrying the Silver Pig through so many adventures was a very difficult feat, and the child was weary for lack of sleep. On that third day John fully expected that Chick's invention would become exhausted, and

they would both be dropped through the trap-door into the sea. Chick thought of the sea, too, but the thought gave the child one more idea, and it promptly tumbled the Silver Pig over the side of a ship and landed the adventurous animal upon the bottom of the ocean, where (Chick went on to say) it became acquainted with pretty mermaids and huge green lobsters, and rescued an amaryllis from a fierce and disagreeable sea-dragon. This part of the tale soon became really exciting, and when bedtime again arrived the listeners were glad to believe they would hear more of the famous Silver Pig during the following day. But Chick knew very well that the story had now been stretched out to the very limit, and when they were alone the child took the gingerbread man's hand and said: "Unless we can find those stairs to-night, John Dough, our jig is up. For by to-morrow evening I'll be at the bottom of the deep blue sea, and the fishes will be having a nice supper of soaked Incubator Baby with gingerbread on the side." "Please do not mention such a horrible thing," exclaimed John, with a shiver. "The stairs are surely in existence, for once we came down them; so let us make one more careful search for them." This they did, walking for hours up and down the passages, pulling aside every drapery they came to, but never finding the slender staircase that led to the flat roof. Even when it grew daylight they did not abandon the quest; for they could see their way much better than when feeling along dim passages by the uncertain light of the moon; and, as the danger grew every moment, they redoubled their eagerness in the quest. All at once they heard footsteps approaching; and, as they were standing in the middle of a long passage, they pressed back against the marble wall to escape discovery. At once the wall gave way, and John tumbled backward into another passage, with the Cherub sprawling on top of him. For they had backed against a drapery painted to represent a wall of the outer passage, and now found themselves in a place they had not before explored. Hastily regaining their feet, the fugitives ran down the passage, and at the end came suddenly upon another heavy drapery, which, when thrust aside, was found to conceal the identical flight of steps they had sought for so long and unsuccessfully. Uttering cries of joy, Chick and John quickly mounted the stairs and found themselves upon the flat roof. The flying bird lay as they had left it, and they were about to crawl inside when the sound of footsteps mounting the stairs was heard. "Quick!" shouted the child. "Jump in, John Dough!" "Is it safe?" asked John, who remembered how they had bumped upon the roof. "Well, it's either air or water for us, my friend, and I prefer the air," laughed Chick, whose cheeks were red with excitement. John hesitated no longer and was soon inside the bird's body. Chick scrambled after and at once pressed the electric button, while John threw over the silver lever. The

big wings began to flop just as a number of men came upon the roof, uttering loud cries at the evident attempt of their prisoners to escape. But the strong pinions of the bird swept them flat, like so many ten-pins, and before they could get upon their feet again the flying-machine was high in the air and well out of their reach.

Chapter 10: Pittypat and the Mifkets

"This invention works better than I thought it would, after getting that bump," John remarked, as they flew onward over the vast expanse of rolling waves. "It's a bit wobbly, though," said Chick. "Don't you notice it flops a little sideways?" "Yes," answered John, "and it seems to me the bird does not move so swiftly as it did at first." "Guess the 'lectricity's giving out," returned Chick, calmly. "If it does, what'll happen?" "We'll be drowned, I suppose," said John. "I don't understand electricity, for the wisdom I derive from the magic Elixir dates far back beyond the discovery of electric fluid." "Your wisdom's bald-headed, I'm afraid," observed the child, smiling at the solemn countenance of the gingerbread man. "But, say! Isn't that another island over there?" Chick continued, after a look through one of the little windows. "It appears to be an island," replied John, also gazing through the window. Even as he spoke the bird gave a lurch and swooped downward toward the sea, tipping at such an angle that Chick and the gingerbread man were both tumbled off their seats. John's glass eyes had a look of fear in them, but Chick laughed as merrily as if there was no danger at all, and began pushing the electric buttons with great vigor, one after another. The result was that the flying-machine paused, righted itself, plunged higher into the air, circled around a few times, and then sailed rapidly toward the west. Chick scrambled back to the seat and threw over the steering wheel in order to make the machine head directly toward the island they had seen. "If we can keep her going till we get to that island, I don't care what happens afterward," said the child. "But if we're dumped in the sea I'm afraid we can't swim far." "I can't swim at all," John returned; "for in three strokes my gingerbread would become soaked through and fall to pieces. And the water would dilute the Elixir that I am mixed with and destroy all its magic powers. By the way, what's the thing doing now?" "It's getting more wobbly. But never mind. It's lots of fun, isn't it, John Dough?" "Not exactly fun," said John, seriously; "but I will admit this voyage is rather exciting." Just then something snapped, and they heard a rapid whir of machinery inside the bird, a squeak that sounded like a wail of despair, and then a dull crash. The big machine trembled, ceased flopping its wings, and remained poised in the air like an immense kite. "It's all up," said Chick. "The thing's busted." "What's going to happen?" asked John, anxiously. "Wait and see," returned Chick, with a laugh. "It's cruel to laugh when we are in such grave danger!" said John, reproachfully. "Shucks!" cried the child. "It might be my last laugh, and I'd be foolish to miss it." The bird was still floating, for its broad wings were rigidly spread out to their fullest extent; but every moment the machine

sailed nearer to the sea, and although it was surely nearing the island, neither John nor Chick could decide whether it would finally succeed in reaching the shore or fall into the water. Even the careless Cherub paused with bated breath to watch the final catastrophe, and John, resigned to whatever fate might befall him, nevertheless passed the most anxious moments of his brief lifetime. The bird sailed down, rested upon the water a few feet from the shore, and floated upon the surface. Chick and John dared not open the door for fear of letting in the ocean and so being drowned. Neither could they now see where they were, for the green water pressed close against the little windows. So they sat silently within the machine until there came a sudden jar and the bird rolled over upon one side and lay still. “We’re saved!” cried the Cherub. For now one of the windows was raised above the water and enabled them to see that the bird had drifted to the shore of the island and was fast upon the beach. Chick unfastened the door and crawled out, and then the child assisted John to leap from the machine to the shore without even wetting his feet. And it was indeed fortunate they acted so promptly, as no sooner were they safely upon the island than a big wave dashed up, caught the broken flying-machine in its grasp, and rolled it out to sea again, where it quickly sank to the bottom and disappeared from their view forever. “That’s all right,” said the child. “I wouldn’t care to ride in the thing again, anyhow. Would you, John Dough?” “No,” answered the gingerbread man. “But what a shame it was to accuse Imar of being a successful inventor! If the Kinglet of Phreex could have watched our flight he would know that Imar hasn’t solved the flying-machine problem yet.” “Still, it carried us away from two bad places,” said Chick, “and that’s all we wanted of it. Come on, John Dough; let’s go and explore our island.” It did not take our adventurers long to discover they were in a really remarkable place. Near the shore was a strip of land that at first sight seemed thickly covered with grass; but when Chick examined it closely it was found to be a mass of tiny trees set close together, and each tree was full of small and tender green leaves. And, as the trees were only an inch or two high, they really looked like grass from a distance and proved to be soft and pleasant to walk upon. But behind this green sward towered a forest so strange and magnificent that both Chick and John Dough held their breaths in amazed awe as they gazed upon it. For they beheld a confused group of the most gorgeous plants imaginable, most of them having broad leaves as big as the sails of a ship and of exceedingly vivid colorings. There were violet and carmine leaves side by side with brilliant yellows and pinks, blues and ambers, and among them great bunches of pure white leaves that in fairness rivaled those of a lily. Some of the huge forest plants were low and broad--no taller than an ordinary house--but many of them shot up

into the sky like spires and church steeples. And another strange thing was the fact that they were all filled with clusters of flowers of many beautiful shapes and designs. And the flowers were of various tints of greens--running from a delicate pea-green through all the different shades to bright emerald, and then to deep bottle-greens. Yet the flowers were the only green colors in all the vast forest of brilliant plants--which glowed so magnificently under the rays of the sun that the eyes of our friends were fairly dazzled as they gazed. “My!” gasped Chick. “Isn’t it splendiferous, John Dough?” “It is, indeed very gorgeous and beautiful,” answered the gingerbread man. “But has it occurred to you, little friend, that there may be nothing for you to eat in all this wilderness of color.” “Eat?” exclaimed Chick. “Why, John Dough, I’m hungry this very minute! I haven’t had a bite to eat since I left the Palace of Romance, and now you mention it, I’m half starved. But perhaps there isn’t a smitch of oatmeal or cream on all this island!” “Couldn’t you eat anything else?” asked John. “Oh, I could, I suppose. But other food might make me ill, you know. Incubator Babies have to be very careful of their diet.” “But if you don’t eat you will die,” said John; “so it will be best for you to dine upon whatever you may find.” “There may be fruits in the forest,” said Chick, thoughtfully; “but it’s such a queer forest that quite likely the fruits are poisonous.” “Still, you’d better try them,” persisted the gingerbread man. “If you don’t you’ll die; and if you are poisoned you’ll die. But there is a chance of your finding healthful fruits instead of poisonous ones. I regret that in all my store of wisdom, derived from the Arabian Elixir, there is no knowledge of such a forest or the fruits these gay plants may bear.” “Well, you wait here till I come back,” said Chick, more cheerfully. “I’ll explore and see what I can find. There’s no need to worry until the time comes, anyhow.” With that the little one waved a chubby hand toward John Dough, and then ran into the forest and disappeared beneath the great purple and orange colored leaves. And now it occurred to the gingerbread man to make an examination of himself and see what an extent of damage he had suffered since he had come, hot and fresh, from Monsieur Jules’ bakery. His lovely shirt-front was cracked in several places and speckled with tiny black spots where the powder of the rocket had burned it. His left shoulder was also blackened with burned powder, and he had lost one of the lozenge buttons from his red vest. Also, one of his heels was slightly crumbled, and there were three marks in his body where the diamonds had been pressed into him, beside the lance-thrust of the Blunderer. These damages were not at all serious, however, and he was beginning to congratulate himself upon his escape, when he discovered a curious sensation in his nose. Raising his hand, he found that the extreme end of his nose had been chipped off in some way

during his escape from the Palace of Romance, and this rather marred his personal appearance. The discovery made him sigh regretfully; and when he looked around, in the newly arrived sunlight, it seemed that his vision had become in some way twisted and unnatural. He could not understand this at first, and rose to his feet rather dazed and unhappy. Then an idea occurred to him, and he felt of his glass eyes and found that one--the left eye--had become loose in its socket and turned inward, making him

cross-eyed. He remedied this by turning it with his fingers until it

looked straight ahead again, and matched the other eye; but often thereafter that left eye would get twisted and bother him until he turned it straight again. While he awaited Chick's return, John strolled to the edge of the forest and sat down upon a big yellow mushroom that was strong enough to bear his weight. It seemed to be a peaceful island, and the gingerbread man was well pleased with his surroundings, having at that time no idea of all the desperate adventures that were to befall him before he saw the last of those brilliant shores. From his feet the beach sloped gently to meet the waves of the blue ocean, and on the sands were many shells of curious shapes and colors. The breath of the wind was full of the fragrance of the flowers, and in the forest plants many birds sang sweet songs. As he watched the waves, the birds, and the flowers, John heard a slight rustling sound, and turning his glass eyes downward saw at his feet a small animal which sat upon its haunches and regarded him with big and earnest eyes. "Who are you?" asked the gingerbread man; "and what is your name?" "My name is Pittypat, and I'm a rabbit," answered the animal. "But tell me, please, who you are, and what may be your name; for I have never seen your like before." "I am a gingerbread man, and my name is John Dough," he replied, readily. And then, more anxiously, he asked: "Do you eat gingerbread, friend Pittypat?" "No, indeed," was the reply. "I prefer clover and sweet roots. But please answer another question. How is that you understand my language, and can talk to me?" "I cannot tell you that, I'm sure," said John, "unless it's the effect of the Elixir. That seems to be responsible for almost everything, you know." The rabbit did not know, of course, and looked at its new acquaintance in a puzzled sort of way. "Are there any more like you on this island?" inquired John Dough "Oh, yes; there are lots of us!" exclaimed the rabbit. "But not so many of us as there are Mifkets." "And what is a Mifket?" asked John. "A sort of creature that is neither an animal nor a man," answered Pittypat. "And the Mifkets rule this island because they are bigger and fiercer than we rabbits are. Also I know many squirrels and birds and mice, and the Fairy King of the beavers--for I am well acquainted here. But I do not like the Mifkets, and scamper away when they come near. There is a

bouncing brown bear, also, who lives on a hill yonder, and once he claimed to be king of all the animals. But the Mifkets found out that our bear is not nearly so dreadful as he seems; so they refused to obey him, and now have a king of their own. For my part, however, I like the brown bear best of all our inhabitants, for he has a jolly nature and never hurts any one." "But are there no men--no people like me upon this island?" asked John. "No one like you, most surely," answered Pittypat, staring at the gingerbread man with its big eyes. "But as for human creatures, there are three who dwell with the Mifkets, near the other side of the forest." "Dear me!" sighed John; "I'm sorry to hear that. Who are the humans?" "Well, one is the Princess, and the Princess is very beautiful and lovely," answered Pittypat. "She isn't much bigger than the child I saw here with you a few minutes ago; but our little Princess is beloved by every creature on the island--except, perhaps, the Mifkets, who love only themselves." "Does the Princess live in a palace?" asked John. "Oh, yes; a beautiful palace made by bending downward the big leaves of the roi-tree and fastening the ends to the ground. One of the leaves is left loose, for a doorway, and in the room thus formed the Princess lives in great state and loneliness, and sleeps upon a bed of fragrant mosses." "Does she like gingerbread?" inquired John, after a thoughtful pause. "I don't believe she knows what gingerbread is," the rabbit replied. "But you may be sure the Princess will not harm you, however fond she might be of gingerbread." "I'm glad to hear that," said John. "But your Princess is the only one of the three human creatures you mentioned. Who are the others?" "Her father and mother," said the rabbit. "The three landed here in a small boat some years ago. They were shipwrecked, I suppose, and the boat is still lying upon the north shore. But the terrible Mifkets captured the father and mother of the Princess and made them slaves, to wait upon them and obey their wishes; and as the little girl was delicate and not very strong, they let her live by herself in the palace of the roi-tree, and mocked her by calling her a Princess. If she grows up to be strong I think they will make her a slave, too; but she is so frail and weak that none of us rabbits believe she will live very long." "This is all very interesting," said John. "I'd really like to meet these humans." "Then come with me and I will guide your steps to where they are," promised the rabbit. "I must wait until Chick comes back," said the gingerbread man, looking toward the plant forest. "Is Chick the child I saw going into the forest?" asked the rabbit. "Yes," replied John. "It's an Incubator Baby and very jolly and kind. Chick ought to be back in a few minutes." "I'm rather nervous when children are around," declared the rabbit, hesitating. "Are you sure Chick is kind?" "Very," said John, with conviction; "so don't you worry, friend Rabbit." At that moment the Cherub

came running up with both hands full of fruits, which were indeed odd in shape, but delicious in odor and enticing in appearance. “I won’t starve, John Dough!” was the merry greeting. “The forest is full of fruit plants, and I’ve eaten some already, and haven’t been poisoned. But where did you find this pretty rabbit? And how tame it seems to be!” “It’s a friend of mine named Pittypat, and I’ve discovered I can speak its language,” replied John. “Also there’s a Princess living near by, and Pittypat has promised to guide us to her royal palace.” “All right!” exclaimed Chick, busily eating of the fruit. “Let’s go now.” John turned to the little animal beside him and said, in the rabbit language: “We are ready to start, my friend.” “You’ll have to meet the Mifkets, you know,” said Pittypat, rather fearfully. “Never mind; we’re not afraid,” answered John, boldly; and Chick, who as yet had heard nothing of the Mifkets, continued to munch the fruit with perfect composure. So the rabbit whisked around, lifted its big ears a moment, sniffed the air, and then sprang away with long and graceful leaps along a tiny path that led through the magnificent forest.

Chapter 11: The Island Princess

John settled the baker's hat (which was showing distinct signs of having been frequently crumpled) upon his gingerbread head, picked up the remains of his candy cane, and followed the guidance of the white rabbit. Chick came after, tripping lightly along the path. Before they had gone very far beneath the bright-hued, mammoth foliage Pittypat gave a sudden whisk and disappeared from sight, having popped into a hole. John Dough, of course, stopped and gazed around with his glass eyes to see what had become of his new friend, and at the same moment a queer creature dropped from an overhead leaf and stood in the path of the gingerbread man. Another followed, and still another, and the three strange beings looked at John curiously, as if as much surprised at the meeting as he could be. Chick pressed close to the side of the gingerbread man and stared with big eyes at the new arrivals. Perhaps nowhere else in all the world could be found such unusual creatures as these Mifkets. Their heads had the appearance of coconuts, and were covered with coarse hair clipped close, and turning upward until it ended in a sharp peak at the very top. Their faces were like putty, with small, beady eyes that glittered brightly, flat noses, and wide, grinning mouths. The Mifkets' bodies were shaped like pears, and their legs were short and their arms long. For clothing they wore gay leaves of the forest plants, twisted and woven together in quite a clever way; and taken all together, they were as unlike any creatures that inhabit our part of the world as can well be imagined. "Ah, these must be the beings called Mifkets," remarked John Dough, speaking aloud in a language he had never used before, but that seemed well fitted to such creatures. "That's easy enough to guess," retorted one of the group, coming nearer to the gingerbread man and impudently thrusting forward its putty-like face, which it wrinkled and distorted in a disturbing manner. "It's easy enough to tell we're Mifkets; but what in the name of Jucklethub are you? And what strange child of the human's is this with you?" "I'm a gingerbread man," answered John, with dignity; "and this is my friend Chick." "We know what a man is; and we know what a child is; but what's gingerbread?" demanded another of the Mifkets. "I'm gingerbread," said John. "We'll take your word for it," growled the third creature. And then it added: "What are you doing here?" "Standing still, just now," said John, gravely. To his surprise all three began laughing at this reply, and they seemed so greatly amused that one hit another a merry cuff upon the ear, which he in turn passed on to the third. But the third--the growling one--turned suddenly upon John Dough and gave him such a sounding cuff upon the side of his head that the blow dazed him

for a moment. At this Chick doubled two fat fists and ran at the queer Mifkets so fiercely that they were greatly astonished at the angry buffets they received, and fell back a few steps from the path. Immediately John Dough recovered his wits and aimed a strong blow with the candy cane at the wild people of the forest. Much to his astonishment it sent all three of them tumbling to the ground--one overturning the others. For so great was the energy and strength lent to his gingerbread arm by the magic Elixir that the Mifkets could not stand before it. Chick laughed merrily at the howls of their enemies, who quickly scrambled to their feet and leaped into the leaves of the giant plants, where they were hidden from sight. But the sound of their rapid retreat could be heard until it died away in the distance. Then the rabbit stuck its nose from the hole in which it had hidden and said: "Bravely done, little one. Bravely done, John Dough. Yet I warn you to beware these wicked Mifkets, who will now consider you both their enemies." "I don't care," said Chick, "and I'm not afraid," added John, who was quite pleased to find himself so powerful. "Well, let us continue our journey," suggested Pittypat; "for I want you to meet our sweet Princess. But I advise you, whenever you meet with more of those Mifkets, to try to be friendly with them. There are hundreds of them, you know, and only two of you." "That sounds like good advice," acknowledged John. Again they started along the path, and presently it led them out of the forest to another part of the shore of the island, where a rocky headland curved into the sea in the shape of a new moon, forming a pretty bay, on which floated a small boat at anchor. On the inner edge of this headland and facing the bay stood a tall plant, whose broad colored leaves were bent downward to form a dome-shaped room, one leaf being turned up to make an opening that served as a door. "You must whistle at the door, and the Princess will appear," said Pittypat. "I cannot talk with her as I do with you, Mr. Dough; so I'll leave you now, and run home to tell my folks of the new friends I have found." With these parting words away darted the rabbit, and John and Chick shyly approached the novel palace of the Princess. "Can you whistle, Chick?" asked the gingerbread man; and the Baby, in reply, made so shrill a sound through the puckered pink lips that John gave a start of surprise. Almost immediately a girl appeared in the doorway of the plant-palace, and both John and Chick bowed low and then stood motionless to stare at the beautiful face that confronted them. For this mock Princess of the Mifkets was quite the loveliest and sweetest maiden that any one has ever looked upon; and so round and innocent were her clear eyes and so gentle and winning her smile, that to see her but once was to love her dearly. John did not marvel that the wild creatures of the forest had set this girl apart as too hallowed to become either their slave or companion; and

he instantly accepted this shipwrecked waif as a real Princess, and from that moment worshiped loyally at her shrine. Chick, standing solidly with brown feet spread wide apart, chubby fists clutching the last of the forest fruits, and tangled locks flowing carelessly around the laughing face, was a strong contrast to the little lady who advanced from the door with dainty steps to welcome the strangers. The Princess wore a gown of woven leaves plucked from the island plants, but so slight and graceful was her form that any sort of dress would be sure to seem fit and becoming if the maid wore it. “Hello!” said Chick. “We’ve come to see you.” “I’m glad of that,” answered the girl, in a soft voice, as she came close and kissed the Cherub’s rosy mouth. “It has been dreadfully lonesome in this place without any one to play with or to keep me company. But may I inquire who you are?” “This is John Dough,” answered the Cherub, briefly; “and I’m Chick.” “I’m pleased to make your acquaintance,” said the girl. “They call me the Princess; but that is in mockery, I am sure.” “But are you not treated as a Princess?” asked John. “Yes; and that is why I am so lonely,” the girl replied, sadly. “The naughty Mifkets have made my poor father and mother their slaves, and mock me by shutting me in this tree-house and calling it a palace and me a Princess. But really I am as much a slave as either of my dear parents.” “Can’t you go out if you want to?” asked Chick. “Oh, yes; but the island is small, and there is no one to play with except Pittypat, who is a white rabbit, and Para Bruin, who is a bouncing brown bear.” “What strange companions!” said John. “I’ve met Pittypat, and like the white rabbit very much; but a bouncing brown bear must be a dreadful creature.” “Not at all, I assure you,” returned the girl, earnestly. “Just wait until you meet him, and you’ll see that he couldn’t hurt any one if he could, and wouldn’t if he could.” “That’s all right,” said Chick. “But do the Mifkets ill treat you in any way?” asked John. “Oh, no; until now they have done me no real injury whatever,” the Princess answered, “but their tempers are so hateful that I am in constant fear of them. You must meet the Mifkets, of course, since you cannot leave this island; and you must obey them as we all do. But perhaps Mr. Dough, being made of gingerbread, will be treated with more respect than human beings are.” “Or with less,” said John, with a shudder. “Nevertheless, we will meet the Mifkets boldly, and I am not going to make myself unhappy by being afraid of them.” “Nor I,” said Chick. “They’re only beasts.” “Then, if you will please follow me, I will lead you to the king’s village,” said the girl; “and there you may see my father and mother.” “Very well,” agreed John. “But I must tell you that we have already encountered three of these creatures, and defeated them easily.” “I pounded ‘em like sixty,” added the Cherub, with a nod and a laugh. The Princess led them by a path deep into the forest,

passing underneath the broad leaves of the plants, which were so thick that they almost shut out the daylight and made the way gloomy and fearsome. But before long a big clearing was reached, in the center of which was a rocky mound with a broad, flat stone at the very top. All around were houses made by bending down the huge leaves of the plants and fastening them to the ground with wooden pegs, thus forming circular rooms. None of these houses seemed quite so handsome as the palace of the Princess; but they were big and of many colors, and when our friends stepped into the clearing a swarm of the Mifket people crowded out of the doorways to surround the strangers and gaze upon them curiously. Upon the flat stone in the center of the clearing reclined an aged Mifket, who was lazily sunning himself, and who seemed to pay no attention to the chattering of his fellows. Yet it was toward this stone that the Princess, after a half-frightened look at its occupant, led her new friends; and all the Mifkets, big and little, followed them and formed a circle around them and the aged one. “This is the King,” whispered the girl. “Be careful not to anger him.” Then she knelt humbly before the flat stone that served as a throne, and John Dough knelt beside her. But Chick stood upright and laughed at the sight of the lazy Mifket King reclining before them. The short, coarse hair that covered the head of the King was white, proving him to be very old; and his raiment was woven of pure white leaves, distinguishing him from all the others of his band. But he was not especially dignified in appearance. Hearing the murmur around him the King slowly rolled his fat body over and sat up, rubbing his eyes to clear them of the cobwebs of sleep. Then he looked upon John and Chick and gave a grunt. Immediately a little man rushed out of a dwelling just back of the throne and hurried to the King with a gourd filled with water. This the aged Mifket drank greedily, and while he was thus occupied the Princess grasped the hand of the little man and pressed it affectionately. “This is my father,” she whispered to John Dough and Chick. The little man seemed fussy and nervous, but perhaps this was caused by the fear in which he constantly lived. There was little hair upon his head, but he wore chin whiskers that were bright red in color and luxuriant in growth, and harmonized nicely with his light blue eyes. He wore a faded and ragged suit of blue clothes, to which he had doubtless clung ever since the days when he had been shipwrecked and cast upon this island. John Dough was about to express in polite words his pleasure in meeting the father of the Princess, when the King, having finished drinking, suddenly flung the gourd at the little man’s head. He ducked to escape it and the gourd struck the forehead of a big Mifket just behind and made a sound like the crack of a whip. At once the big Mifket--who was remarkable for having black hair upon his head instead of the dingy

brown that was common to all the Mifkets--uttered a roar of rage and aimed a blow at the bald head of the luckless slave. But the little man ducked this blow also, and then scampered away to the royal dwelling as fast as his thin legs could carry him. “Let him go,” said the King, speaking sleepily in the Mifket language. Then he turned to the black one and asked: “Who are these creatures, Ooboo? and how came they here?” “I don’t know,” answered Black Ooboo, sulkily; “the girl brought them.” “Perhaps I can explain,” said John Dough, speaking in their language. “My friend Chick and I arrived here but a short time ago in a flying-machine, which unfortunately broke down and prevented us from getting away again.” The Mifkets looked at the gingerbread man in astonishment. Not because they had any idea what a flying-machine might be, but to hear their own language spoken by so queer a personage, filled them with amazement. “Are you one of those miserable creatures called humans?” asked the King, blinking his eyes at the gingerbread man. “I cannot, in truth, claim to be precisely human,” replied John, “but it is certain that I possess a degree of human wisdom. It comes from the Elixir, you know.” “What are you made of?” demanded the King, who was certainly puzzled by John’s words. Now, the gingerbread man realized that if he told the Mifkets he was good to eat he would soon be destroyed; so he answered: “I am made of a kind of material known only to civilized men. In fact, I am very different from all the rest of the world.” The King didn’t understand, and when he didn’t understand it made him very tired. “Oh, well,” said he, lying back in the sun, “just make yourself at home here, and see that you don’t bother me by getting in my way.” That might have ended the interview had not Black Ooboo, scowling and angry, stepped forward and said: “If the stranger is to live with us he must fight for the right to live in peace. It is our custom, your Majesty.” “So it is,” returned the King, waking up again. “The stranger must fight.” At this decision all the Mifkets howled with delight, and Chick and the Princess began to be uneasy about their friend. But John said, calmly: “I have never fought with any one, your Majesty; but I’ll do the best I can. With whom must I fight?” “Why, with Black Ooboo, I suppose,” said the King; “and if you can manage to give him a sound thrashing I’ll be your friend for life.” Ooboo scowled first at the King and then at John, and all the other Mifkets scowled with him, for the black one was seemingly a great favorite among them. “Whatever material you may be made of, bold stranger,” he said, “I promise to crush you into bits and trample you into the dust.” Then the crowd having pressed backward, the black Mifket sprang upon the gingerbread man, with long, hairy arms outstretched as if to clutch him. But John was quicker than his foe. He grasped Ooboo about the waist, lifted him high in the air--big and

heavy though he was--and flung him far over the throne whereon the King squatted. The black one crashed into the leaves of a forest plant and then tumbled to the ground, where he lay still for a moment to recover from his surprise and the shock of defeat. The rabble of Mifkets didn't applaud the fall of their champion, but they looked upon the gingerbread man with wonder. And the King was so pleased that he laughed aloud. "Well done, stranger," said he. "Ooboo needed to be taken down a peg, and you did it very neatly. Now get away, all of you, and leave me to sleep." He proceeded to curl himself up once more upon the flat stone, and the Mifkets obeyed his command and stole away to their dwellings. John advanced to where Chick and the Princess stood, and the Cherub patted him on the hand and said: "I'd no idea you could do it, John. Wasn't it lovely, Princess, to see him toss that black beast like a football?" "I'm glad your friend won the fight," answered the girl; "but Black Ooboo is a dangerous enemy, and even the King is afraid of him. Now come with me, please. I want you to meet my dear mother, who is unfortunately degraded to the position of the King's cook" They entered with the Princess into the royal dwelling, where a woman quickly seized the girl in a warm embrace and kissed her tenderly. When Chick managed to get a full view of the woman she was seen to be nearly as round as an apple in form, with an apple's rosy cheeks, and with cute corkscrew curls of an iron-gray color running from her ears down to her neck. When her daughter entered she had been busily engaged cooking a vegetable stew for the King's dinner, nor dared she pause long in her work for fear of the King's anger. Chick was dreadfully sorry for these poor shipwrecked people, thus compelled to be slaves to the fierce Mifkets, and hoped they might find some way to escape. The little man with the red whiskers presently crept in and joined them, and they had a long talk together and tried to think of a plan to leave the island, but without success. Yet John encouraged them to believe a way would soon be found, and they all had great confidence in his ability to save the entire party; for he had proved himself both wise and powerful. While they were still talking the King rolled his fat body into the dwelling and demanded his dinner, at the same time ordering the Princess to get back to her own palace and to stay there. But he favored John Dough by sending several of the Mifkets to build a dwelling for the gingerbread man and the Incubator Baby just beside that of the little Princess, which pleased them all very much.

Chapter 12: Para Bruin, the Rubber Bear

Next morning the little Princess came to the door of the new dwelling built for Chick and John Dough, and said to them: “Let us take a walk, and I will show you how beautiful our island is in those parts where there are no Mifkets to worry us.” So together the three walked along the shore until they drew near to a high point of rock, the summit of which was reached by a winding path. When they had climbed up the steep the Princess had to stop to rest, for she was not strong and seemed to tire easily. And now, while they sat upon some rocks, a big brown bear came out of a cave and stood before them. “Don’t be afraid,” whispered the Princess. “He won’t hurt us. It’s Para Bruin.” The bear was fat and of monstrous size, and its color was a rich brown. It had no hair at all upon its body, as most bears have, but was smooth and shiny. He gave a yawn as he looked at the new-comers, and John shuddered at the rows of long, white teeth that showed so plainly. Also he noticed the fierce claws upon the bear’s toes, and decided that in spite of the rabbit’s and the Princess’ assurances he was in dangerous company. Indeed, although Chick laughed at the bear, the gingerbread man grew quite nervous as the big beast advanced and sniffed at him curiously--almost as if it realized John was made of gingerbread and that gingerbread is good to eat. Then it held out a fat paw, as if desiring to shake hands; and, not wishing to appear rude, John placed his own hand in the bear’s paw, which seemed even more soft and flabby than his own. The next moment the animal threw its great arms around the gingerbread man and hugged him close to its body. John gave a cry of fear, although it was hard to tell which was more soft and yielding--the bear’s fat body or the form of the gingerbread man. “Stop that!” he shouted, speaking in the bear language. “Let me go, instantly! What do you mean by such actions?” The bear, hearing this speech, at once released John, who began to feel of himself to see if he had been damaged by the hug. “Why didn’t you say you were a friend, and could speak my language?” asked the bear, in a tone of reproach. “You knew well enough I was a friend, since I came with the Princess,” retorted John, angrily. “I suppose you would like to eat me, just because I am gingerbread!” “I thought you smelled like gingerbread,” remarked the bear. “But don’t worry about my eating you. I don’t eat.” “No?” said John, surprised. “Why not?” “Well, the principal reason is that I’m made of rubber,” said the bear. “Rubber!” exclaimed John. “Yes, rubber. Not gutta-percha, you understand, nor any cheap composition; but pure Para rubber of the best quality. I’m practically indestructible.” “Well, I declare!” said John, who was really astonished. “Are your teeth rubber, also?” “To be sure,” acknowledged the bear, seeming to be somewhat

ashamed of the fact; “but they appear very terrible to look at, do they not? No one would suspect they would bend if I tried to bite with them.” “To me they were terrible in appearance,” said John, at which the bear seemed much gratified. “I don’t mind confiding to you, who are a friend and speak my language,” he resumed, “that I am as harmless as I am indestructible. But I pride myself upon my awful appearance, which should strike terror into the hearts of all beholders. At one time every creature in this island feared me, and acknowledged me their king, but those horrid Mifkets discovered I was rubber, and have defied me ever since.” “How came you to be alive?” asked John. “Was it the Great Elixir?” “I’ve never heard of the Great Elixir,” replied the bear, “and I’ve no idea how I came to be alive. My earliest recollection is that I was living in much the same way that I am now. Do you remember when you were not living?” “No” said John. This conversation, which she could not at all understand, surprised the Princess very much. But she was glad to see that the rubber bear and the gingerbread man had become friends, and so she took Chick’s hand and led the smiling Cherub up to where they stood. “This is my new friend, whose name is Chick,” she said to the bear, for the girl was accustomed to talking to Para Bruin just as she would to a person; “and you must be as good and kind to Chick as you have been to me, my dear Para, or I shall not love you any more.” The bear gave the Princess a generous hug, and then he hugged Chick; but the words the girl had spoken seemed to puzzle him, for he turned to John and said: “Why do you suppose so many different languages were ever invented? The Mifkets speak one language, and you and I speak another, and the Princess and Chick speak still another! And it is all very absurd, for the only language I can understand is my own.” “I can speak with and understand the Princess and the Mifkets as well as I can speak with you,” declared John. The bear looked at him admiringly. “If that is so, then tell me what the Princess said to me just now,” he requested. So John translated the girl’s words into the bear language, and when Para Bruin heard them he laughed with delight. “Tell the Princess that I’ll be as good to her friend Chick as possible,” said he, and John at once translated it so that the Princess understood. “That’s nice,” said she. “I knew Para would be friends with Chick. And now ask the bear to bounce for us. He does it often, and it is a very interesting sight.” So John requested the bear to bounce, which he at once agreed to do, seeming to feel considerable pride in the accomplishment. From the point upon which they stood, the hill descended in a steep incline toward the forest, and at the bottom of the hill was a big flat rock. Curling himself into a ball, the great bear rolled his body down the hill, speeding faster every moment, until he struck the flat rock at the bottom. Then he bounded high into the air (in the

same way that a rubber ball does when thrown down upon a hard pavement), and made a graceful backward curve until he reached the top of the hill again, where he bounced up and down a few times, and then stood upright and bowed before the gingerbread man and the gleeful Cherub--who was rapturously delighted by the performance. “Great act, isn’t it?” asked Para Bruin, grinning with pride. “No ordinary bear could do that, I assure you. And it proves the purity and high grade of my rubber.” “It does, indeed!” declared John. “I am greatly pleased to have met so remarkable and talented a bear.” “You must visit me often,” said the bear, making a dignified bow. “It is a great treat to hear my own language spoken, for I am the only bear upon the island. I haven’t any visiting cards, but my name is Para Bruin, and you are always welcome at my cave.” “I am called John Dough,” said the gingerbread man. “I cannot claim to be indestructible, but while I last I shall be proud of your friendship, and will bring the children to visit you often.” “Try to teach them my language,” suggested Para Bruin; “for I love children and have often wished I might talk with them. As for the little Princess, all the island people love her dearly--except, of course, the Mifkets--and we all worry, more or less, over her health. She’s weak and delicate, you know; and her life here is made so unhappy by the separation from her parents that I’m afraid she won’t be with us very long.” He wiped a tear from his eye with a puffy paw and glanced affectionately at the girl. “What’s the matter with her?” asked John, anxiously. “No strength and vitality,” answered the bear. “She’s failing every day, and there isn’t a drugstore or a doctor on the island. But don’t tell her, whatever you do. Perhaps she doesn’t realize it, and the knowledge would only make her more unhappy.” Then the bear, who seemed remarkably tender-hearted, trotted with bouncing footsteps into his cave, so that the little Princess for whom he grieved might not see the tears that stood in his rubber eyes. After that John and Chick and the Princess started to return to their dwellings by means of a short cut through the forest, known to the girl. John was feeling very contented in the companionship of the two children, and reflected that in spite of the Mifkets his life on this beautiful island bade fair to be pleasant and agreeable. But his content was suddenly interrupted by the Cherub, who gave a loud cry and pointed excitedly into the forest. The gingerbread man had cast but one look when he began to tremble violently. For there before him--only a few paces away--stood his bitter and relentless enemy, Ali Dubh the Arab! “At last,” said Ali Dubh, smiling most unpleasantly, “I have again found you.” John was too agitated to reply; but Chick asked, boldly: “How on earth did you ever get to this island?” “By means of the witch,” the Arab replied. “I purchased from her two transport powders. One transported me to the Isle of Phreex, and when you then

escaped me the other powder transported me here. But I cannot allow the gingerbread man to escape me again, because I have no more powders, nor any way to reach the witch who makes them. So, my dear John Dough, please accept your fate, and permit me to eat you at once." "That I cannot do," said John, firmly; "for if I am eaten, that is the end of me." "How selfish!" exclaimed the Arab. "Who are you, to be considered before Ali Dubh, son of a mighty Sheik, and chief of an ancient Tribe of the Desert? Remember, sir, that when I have eaten you I shall gain for myself the priceless powers of that Great Elixir contained in your gingerbread, and will thus become the most powerful and most intelligent man in the world, besides living forever! Dare you, sir, allow your selfish motives to interfere with so grand a result?" "I dare," replied John. "But you have nothing to say about it," continued the Arab. "You are not your own master. You belong to me, for I purchased you from Jules Grogrande, the baker, who made you, and I am therefore entitled to eat you whenever I please." "Nevertheless," answered John, "I will not be eaten if I can help it." "Ah! but that is unjust!" protested the Arab. "If to be just is to be eaten," said John, "you need not look to me for justice. I may be wrong in this decision, but it is better to be wrong than to be nothing." "Then," remarked Ali Dubh, sadly, "you force me to eat you without your consent, which it will grieve me to do." With this he drew his terrible knife and sprang upon John Dough with great ferocity. But in the recent encounter with Black Ooboo the gingerbread man had learned how powerful the Elixir made him; so he did not run this time from the Arab, but avoided the thrust of the knife and caught the body of Ali Dubh in a strong clasp. Next moment he had lifted him up and tossed him high into the air, as easily as he had tossed the Mifket. The Arab alighted in the top branches of a tall scarlet plant and clung to them in great fear lest he should fall to the ground and be killed. Indeed, so frightened was he that he uttered screams of terror with every breath, and forgot all about eating John Dough in the more important thought of how he might reach safety. "Let's run!" exclaimed Chick, grasping John's hand. "Don't mind the Arab. If he falls it's good enough for him!" "The Mifkets will rescue him, I'm sure," added the Princess. "See! there come some of the creatures now, with Black Ooboo at their head." Hearing this, John hesitated no longer, but fled down another pathway with the children, and soon left the sound of Ali Dubh's cries far behind him.

Chapter 13: Black Ooboo

That evening, when John came out of his tree house to watch the sunset, he found Pittypat, the white rabbit, sitting before his door. “I’ve news for you, my friend,” began the rabbit, in a grave voice. “Black Ooboo and the Arab who wanted to eat you have become fast friends, and together they are determined to destroy you.” “How did you know that the Arab wants to eat me?” asked John. “I was hidden among the plants when you met, and heard your talk,” replied the rabbit. “You must look out for Ooboo and the Arab, or they will surely do you a mischief, for the Mifkets now know that you are good to eat.” “It’s kind of you to warn me,” said John; but can you tell me of any way to escape from this island, good Pittypat?” “Not just at present,” returned the rabbit; “but our Prince is very wise indeed, and I will ask him what is best to be done. In the meantime you must keep away from your enemies as much as possible.” With these words the rabbit sprang into a low bush and disappeared, leaving John Dough to sad reflections upon his dangerous position in this lonely island. Soon after daybreak next morning, while Chick and the Princess were out hunting berries for their breakfast, John went for a walk along the shore, and so engrossed did he become in his thoughts that he did not notice when a band of Mifkets stole upon him from behind and threw a coil of stout rope around his shoulders. Before he realized his misfortune he was bound fast with many turns of the rope. Then he found that he had fallen into the hands of his old enemy, Black Ooboo; but the Arab, to his great relief, was not with the party that had captured him. Shouting with glee at the capture of the gingerbread man, the Mifkets led him away through the forest paths until they arrived at the clearing wherein the King lazily reclined upon his flat rock. Ooboo at once awoke the aged ruler, who sat up and said in a weary tone: “Have you taken the stranger prisoner, as I commanded?” “We have,” answered the black one. John Dough was very indignant at the treatment he had received, so he addressed the King angrily, saying: “By what right do you command me to be bound in this disgraceful manner? Did you not give me permission to live among you in peace?” “I am a king, and the promises of kings should never be relied upon,” said the old Mifket, winking slyly at his prisoner. “Since I first saw you the Arab has arrived, and he tells us that the material you are made of is very good to eat.” “Can the Arab understand your language?” asked John, in surprise. “It seems so,” answered the King. “In some parts of Arabia the people speak exactly as we do; so the Arabs are probably descended from our race. Anyhow, Ali Dubh understands us and we understand him, and we’ve decided to have a bite of you before he can eat you himself.” This was

disturbing news to the gingerbread man, and he stood before the King wondering how he might escape from this awkward situation when the black Mifket, who was squatting beside him, opened his mouth and bit off the thumb from John's left hand, which was tightly bound to his side. "How does is taste, Ooboo?" inquired the King, while the black one was chewing the thumb. "I can't exactly describe the flavor," said Ooboo, boldly biting off the forefinger of the hand. John was enraged at this dreadful treatment, and his glass eyes had a dangerous flash in them. It didn't pain him especially, for he had no nerves; but to be chewed up by a common forest Mifket was a liberty that any gingerbread man might well resent. "Seems to me there's molasses in him," said Ooboo, with a wink at the King, and immediately he bit off another finger and ate it. "Also a bit of ginger," he continued, calmly, eating the next finger. "And spices." Another finger was gone. "It isn't exactly cake, and it isn't exactly bread," the black one proceeded, smacking his lips; "but it's pretty good, whatever it is"; and with that he ate the last finger remaining on John's left hand. The King was no longer sleepy. He had become quite interested, and the circle of Mifkets that stood silently back of John were looking at their victim with hungry eyes. "Bring him here to me," said the King. "I'll eat the other hand and see what it's like." Ooboo immediately pushed the prisoner toward the rock; but John was now terribly frightened, and had made up his mind not to allow the rest of his body to be eaten without a struggle to save himself. So he suddenly exerted all the strength the Great Elixir had given him, and burst his rope bonds as easily as if they had been threads. At the same instant the Arab leaped into the group that surrounded the throne and placed himself between the King and John Dough. "Stop!" he screamed, his voice shrill with anger. "How dare you eat the gingerbread I have bought and paid for?" "There's enough for all," said the King. "We'll divide him up, and have a feast." "Not so!" shouted the Arab. "He's mine, and mine alone!" But while they were thus quarreling the gingerbread man, free of his bonds, turned and fled swiftly into the forest, and before the Mifkets or Ali Dubh knew he had gone their intended victim was far away. Chick was very indignant when John Dough entered the tree house and showed his mutilated hand. "You ought to stay near me every minute," said the Cherub, "so I can take care of you and keep you from getting into trouble. If this thing keeps on, John Dough, you won't be able to present a respectable appearance." "I know it," said John, sadly. "I'd escape in that little boat on the beach; only, if a rain-storm came up, there'd be no shelter and I'd become soaked and fall to pieces." "It isn't our boat, either," said Chick. "It belongs to the father and mother of the little Princess, and they may want to use it themselves, some day, to escape in." "That's true,"

said John. “How is the Princess to-day?” “She’s worse,” answered Chick. “Seems to me she gets weaker and more delicate every day.” “That’s what the rubber bear says,” John remarked, thoughtfully. “See here,” said the child, “that gingerbread of yours is full of strength and power, isn’t it?” “That’s what Ali Dubh says,” John responded. “The Elixir that I am mixed with is claimed to be very powerful.” “And it’s true,” declared Chick, “for I’ve seen you do things no gingerbread man could ever do without some magic Elixir being mixed up with him. Well, then, why don’t you let the Princess eat the rest of your left hand, and get well? The hand isn’t any use to you since Black Ooboo ate off the fingers.” John looked at his left hand nervously. “What you say, Chick, appears to be true,” said he; “but you’ve no idea how I dread to be eaten. I’m not very substantial at the best, and during my brief lifetime I’ve been crumbled and chipped and bitten to such an extent that I dread to lose even a crumb of my person more than is absolutely necessary. Of course I’d like to help the Princess, and restore her to health and strength; but perhaps we can find some better way to do that than to feed her on my gingerbread.” “Very well, John Dough,” said the Cherub, getting up to go to the Princess, “I suppose you can do as you please about feeding yourself to your friends; but if I was gingerbread you can just bet I wouldn’t be so stingy with myself!” Left alone, John sighed and wondered if it was really his duty to sacrifice his left hand to save the frail little girl and restore her to strength and health. He wanted to be kind and generous, yet the very thought of being eaten filled him with horror. Presently he left the tree house and wandered along the coast. Chick’s rebuke disturbed him not a little, and he wanted time to think it over. So by and by, when he thought he was alone, he sat down upon a rock and tried to decide what to do. Suddenly a low rustle disturbed him, and he looked up to see the brown bear squatting beside him. “Where’s the Princess?” asked Para Bruin. “Aren’t you a good way from your mountain?” inquired John, instead of answering the question. “Yes, I don’t often stray so far,” was the reply, “but I had an idea of calling on the Princess. Where is she?” “She’s sick to-day,” said the gingerbread man. “That’s bad,” declared the bear, shaking his head sadly. “She seems to be failing every day. Poor little Princess!” John moved uneasily, for every word was a reproach to him. “How are you getting on with the Mifkets?” asked Para Bruin. “They made me a prisoner this morning, and abused me shamefully,” said the gingerbread man. “See here!” and he held up the stump of his left hand. “What has become of your fingers?” “A black Mifket named Ooboo bit them off and ate them,” was the answer. “That’s curious,” said the bear, rubbing his nose thoughtfully with one paw. “Do you know, the Mifkets had an exciting time an hour ago? I

watched them from my mountain, and saw everything. Black Ooboo had a fight with the King and knocked him off his rock. That's really surprising, for Ooboo has always before been a coward, and afraid of the King. But now he has declared he'll be king himself, and offers to fight any one who opposes him. Isn't that funny? I don't know where Black Ooboo got so much courage and strength all of a sudden, I'm sure." "I know," said John. "He got it from my fingers, which he ate. My dough is mixed with the Great Elixir, you know, which is nothing less than concentrated energy and strength and vitality and knowledge. The fingers have made Ooboo the most powerful Mifket in the island, so it is no wonder he has become king." Para Bruin listened to this carefully, and after a moment's thought he said: "If that is the case, John Dough, you must feed some of yourself to the Princess to make her strong again." "That's what Chick says; but I don't like to do it," said John. "You will do it, though," said the bear; "for if you don't you are no friend of mine, or of any other honest person. I'm going back to my mountain, and if you don't save the little Princess I'll never speak to you again." Away stalked Para Bruin, and John Dough arose with a sigh and walked far into the forest, trying to make up his mind what to do. He came to the bank of the brook presently, and seating himself upon a fence beside the stream gazed into the rushing water in deep thought. From the distance came the roar of water falling over the big dam which the beavers had built, and once or twice a Mifket strayed that way and looked curiously at the silent figure of the gingerbread man. But they had orders from the Arab and Ooboo not to disturb him, so they crept away again and joined their fellows among the giant plants. A long time John Dough sat there by the stream, until suddenly he was aroused from his musings by a shriek of discordant laughter behind him. "Ho, ho, ho! What an absurd thing! Who'd ever have thought it?" He turned around and saw a gorgeous macaw standing on a log back of him. The bird was all aglow with crimson and green feathers, and its black eyes twinkled mischievously, while continuous shouts of laughter came from its ruffled throat. "Keep still, can't you?" said John, in an annoyed tone. "What are you laughing at, anyway?" The bird pushed its head underneath a wing and shook with suppressed mirth. "Oh dear! It's too funny for anything! What a lark--hoo, hoo, hoo! What a lark it is!" Its voice was somewhat smothered by the feathers, but John heard every word, and it made him angry. "You're a rampsy, that's what you are!" he cried. "There are two of us--two of us--two of us!" shrieked the macaw, hopping around and fluttering its brilliant plumage. "Honestly, my dear breakfast, I never had so much fun in my life!" John turned his head and looked at the bird earnestly. "Why do you call me your 'dear breakfast'?" he asked, with sudden

suspicion. “Because that’s what you are, my poor innocent! Ha, ha, ha! Breakfast is ready!” The bird made a quick thrust with its beak, and the next moment fluttered around in front of John with its mouth full of gingerbread. Our hero quickly stood up and put his right hand behind him. The baker had made two little coat tails at the back of his waist, and as John felt for them he found that the thieving macaw had eaten both of these coat tails entirely off, while he had sat upon the log thinking. “How stupid I am!” he exclaimed, with real grief. “I might have given those coat tails to the Princess, and now this silly bird has eaten them up!” “I said you were a chump!” remarked the macaw, winking, and then laughing again. “The idea of your sitting there and letting me eat you! I never had so much fun in all my life.” Just then a great chattering reached his ears, and looking around, he found that a numerous band of the fierce Mifkets had stolen upon him, and were now coming forward armed with huge clubs which they had broken from the forest plants, and which were as solid and heavy as the branches of trees. “Surrender!” cried the leader, knowing that the gingerbread man understood their language; “King Ooboo wants you for his luncheon, and Ali Dubh is also hungry.” For a moment John Dough was most frightened. It was not likely that his strength would enable him to escape from so many of his enemies, and he almost gave himself up for lost. For before him was the stream of water--almost as deadly to him as the close ranks of the Mifkets behind him. The macaw was strutting up and down beside him, and at his look of despair the bird said: “You’re surely in a bad way, my friend; but I believe I can save you. When I fly up, grab my feet, and I’ll carry you away to your dwelling.” “You!” he exclaimed, gazing at the bird in surprise; “you are by no means big enough to fly away with me.” “Size doesn’t count for much,” chuckled the macaw; “and since I breakfasted off your coattails I feel myself to be as strong as an ox. Just grab my legs, as I tell you to.” John decided that it was worth attempting, being the only thing to do. The Mifkets were pressing closer, and soon he would be within reach of their clubs. So, as the macaw flew into the air John grasped its legs with his right hand (which was the only hand that had fingers), and, sure enough, the strength of the little bird was so great that it easily drew him up into the air, high above the heads of his chattering and disappointed foe. “Fooled again,” cried the macaw; but of course the Mifkets did not understand the words. Away over the tops of the giant plants flew the bird, with John Dough clinging to its legs, and it was not long before it gradually descended again and landed the gingerbread man safely before the door of his own dwelling. “Don’t thank me,” said the macaw, turning toward him one black eye, in a saucy manner, and winking comically. “I ate part of you for my breakfast, and feel greatly refreshed.

Were it not for the Arab I'd hope to get another meal off you, but between the Arab and the Mifkets you're not likely to last long. Good bye." And then it flew away into the forest.

Chapter 14: Under Land And Water

Chick met him at the door. “There’s less of you than ever,” said the child, looking him over carefully. “Your coat tails are gone now.” “Yes,” said the gingerbread man, “a macaw ate them a few minutes ago. But there will be even less of me in another minute. Have you a knife, Chick?” “What are you going to do?” asked the Cherub, with sudden interest. “I’m going to save the Princess before I’m gone entirely,” said John, with decision. “Not that I have overcome my dislike to being eaten, you understand, but if a black Mifket and a foolish bird find it so easy to feast upon my person, Ali Dubh is sure to get me in time, and before that happens I want to do one good deed, and help the little girl to regain her strength and health.” “Good!” exclaimed Chick, approvingly. “You’re all right, John Dough, even if it did take you a long time to make up your mind. But we haven’t any knife.” “What shall we do?” John asked, anxiously. “Can’t we break off a chunk of you?” the Cherub inquired. “No!” replied the man, with a shudder. “Wait a minute!” cried Chick, “I’ve an idea.” Away trotted the chubby legs, and presently the child returned with a long, slender leaf, plucked from one of the strange forest plants. “This’ll saw gingerbread all right, I’m sure. Hold out your hand, John Dough!” John turned away his head and held out his left hand--the one from which Black Ooboo had eaten the finger. “There! It’s all over. Did it hurt?” asked Chick. “No.” John looked at the arm where his hand had been. “It isn’t much worse than it was before,” said the child. “You’ll never miss it in the world. Now wait here while I go to the Princess.” After Chick had vanished into the girl’s dwelling the gingerbread man gave a sigh of relief. “It wasn’t as bad as I feared,” he said to himself; “but I’m glad the ordeal is over. If I take good care of myself hereafter, and manage to escape from Ali Dubh, I can get along very well without the gingerbread I have lost.” The Princess slept sweetly that night, after her supper of gingerbread, and the next morning was so fresh and bright, and had so pretty a color to her cheeks, that Chick hugged her delightedly, and John Dough was proud and glad to think his small sacrifice had wrought such good results. Together they strolled into the forest, along the banks of the stream, and presently met Pittypat. “Be careful where you go,” said the rabbit, in a worried tone. “The Arab is after John Dough, and I hear that Black Ooboo has determined to destroy the little man with the red whiskers and the fat woman with the corkscrew curls, who are the father and mother of our Princess.” “Are you sure?” asked the girl, clasping her hands in real terror. “There’s no doubt of it,” Pittypat replied. “And I’m not sure but the Princess will share their fate. These are troublesome times, since the Arab arrived and Black Ooboo became king.”

“There’s the boat,” said Chick, turning to the girl; “can’t your parents escape in that?” “They have always said they would use the boat to leave the island, if there was any danger,” answered the Princess. “But the ocean is so big and the boat so very little that they did not like to make such a voyage unless it became necessary.” “Well, it seems to be necessary now,” said John. “But what will become of the rest of us? The boat will only hold two.” “It might hold me as well as my parents, if the water was calm,” said the girl; “but I will not escape and leave you and Chick to your fate. Unless we can find some way to save us all I will let my parents escape alone in the boat.” “That’s foolish,” said Chick. “You go in the boat. John Dough and I will get along all right.” But this the Princess refused to do, and after a long discussion the rabbit decided to go and consult a gray owl which was renowned for its wisdom. The others walked up to Para Bruin’s cave, and the first thing the bear said was: “Look out for yourselves. Black Ooboo has ordered all the humans on this island to be killed, and the Mifkets are arming themselves with long sticks, to which they have bound sharp thorns torn from a tree in the forest. The gingerbread man is to be eaten, I understand, so there’s likely to be an end of all of you, very soon.” “Is there no way to escape?” asked John. “None that I can think of,” said the bear. “But you can depend upon my assistance, if there is anything I can do. How well the Princess looks to-day!” “Yes,” answered John, proudly; “she’s been eating some of my gingerbread.” Hearing this, Para Bruin gave John a grateful hug; and then he hugged the Princess and even Chick, so happy did the bear feel at the girl’s recovery. Then he bounced for them several times, rolling himself down hill against the flat rock and then bounding high into the air. But the little Princess was worried and anxious about her parents, so the party soon bade good bye to Para Bruin and started to return to their dwellings. The forest seemed very quiet and peaceful as they walked along, and they had almost forgotten their fears, when, just as they reached the banks of the brook, a sudden sound of shouting fell upon their ears, mingled with the wail of human voices. “Oh, dear!” cried the little Princess, wringing her hands in great fear; “the Mifkets have attacked my dear parents, I am sure, and they will both be killed!” John strove to comfort her, but he suspected that the Princess had guessed truly, and that her parents were in great danger. They dared not return to the seashore, for that would mean their own destruction; so they remained hidden in the forest, while the Princess sobbed as if her heart was broken, and John wiped away her tears with her handkerchief. He had one of his own; but it was gingerbread, and would not stand the dampness. Suddenly they heard pattering footfalls, and the white rabbit crouched at their feet. He was panting from a hard run, and his eyes

were big and bright. “They are gone!” said he, as soon as he could speak. “Who are gone?” asked John, anxiously. “The red-whiskered man and the woman with the corkscrew curls,” replied Pittypat. “The Mifkets chased them to the shore, but they jumped into the boat and rowed away in time to escape. The Mifkets threw sticks at them and Black Ooboo screamed with rage; but the father and mother of our Princess got away without being hurt in the least.” This good news greatly pleased the girl, and her anxiety was much relieved. But the gingerbread man had become thoughtful, and asked Pittypat: “What are the Mifkets doing now.” “They are getting ready to search the forest for you and Chick and the Princess,” was the reply. “The Arab is with them.” “This is certainly unpleasant news,” remarked the gingerbread man. “Did the gray owl tell you how we may escape?” “The owl sent me to the King of the Fairy Beavers,” replied the rabbit, “and he has consented to hide you in his palace. It is a rare favor, I assure you; but the Mifkets cannot reach you there.” “A Fairy Beaver!” cried Chick, gleefully; and the Princess asked, wonderingly: “Can a beaver be a fairy?” “Why not?” inquired Pittypat. “All the animals have their fairies, just as you human folks do; and it is lucky for us that the Fairy Beaver lives on this very island. There is only one danger--that the Mifkets find you before I can lead you to the Beaver King. So follow me at once, I implore you, before it is too late!” He turned, with these words, and led them along the river bank at such a swift pace that the Princess could hardly keep up with him. “How far is it?” asked John. “The palace of the beavers is somewhere under the big dam in the river, which is not far away. The King promised to meet us at the waterfall; but he will not allow me to enter, because I am a rabbit, so you must go in alone. But have no fear. The King will allow nothing to harm you.” As Pittypat spoke they could hear the distant roar of the waterfall at the beavers’ dam. But another sound also fell upon their ears--a sound that quickly renewed their terror--for it was the yells of the approaching Mifkets. Presently the fierce creatures appeared, coming swiftly through the forest. “Hurry!” called Pittypat. “Hurry, or it will be too late!” John picked up a great wooden club that lay near their path, and while Chick and the Princess hurried after the rabbit he stopped and hurled it toward the Mifkets. It fell among them with such force that several were knocked over and many others howled with pain. It did not prevent them from coming on, but they kept at a more respectful distance from the gingerbread man, never doubting they would be able to capture him in time. “This way!” cried the rabbit, leaping down the bank to the side of the river, where they could travel more swiftly. The others followed, and now before them appeared a wide and high sheet of water that fell over the great dam that the beavers had built many years

before. They had almost reached it, and Pittypat had called out that he saw the Beaver King waiting behind the waterfall, when the fugitives stopped short with cries of despair. For just before them appeared another band of Mifkets, armed with the thorn sticks, and now they saw that they would be unable to reach their place of refuge. John looked around in desperation. There were Mifkets behind them and Mifkets before them; and on one side was the deep river, and on the other side a steep bank too high for the children to climb. It really seemed to the gingerbread man that they were lost, when suddenly a cry was heard, and looking upward he saw Para Bruin standing upon his high peak and watching them. The bear doubtless saw the danger of his friends, for he called to them: "Look out--I'm coming to the rescue!" Then he quickly curled his great body into a monster ball and rolled swiftly down the side of the mountain that faced them. The Mifkets who were near the waterfall turned. curiously to watch the bear. They had often seen him roll against the flat stone and bound back to his place again, and thought he would do the same thing now. But old Para Bruin was more clever than they suspected. He missed the flat stone altogether and came bounding along at a terrific speed. Before the group of Mifkets, who stood close together near the waterfall, knew what the bear meant to do, old Para's body shot upon them and dashed them in every direction. Some lay stunned upon the ground; but most of them were tumbled into the river, where they struggled frantically to regain the shore. "Quick!" cried Pittypat, "your friend has saved you. But do not lose an instant's time!" The children and the gingerbread man obeyed at once, and in a few steps reached the waterfall. "Creep behind the sheet of water!" commanded the rabbit. "You will find the Beaver King awaiting you. Do as he tells you, and I promise that you will be safe." "Good bye, Pittypat!" called the Princess, as she clung to the damp rocks behind the waterfall. "Good bye!" echoed Chick. "Much obliged to you, Pittypat!" "Good bye!" answered the white rabbit. "Don't forget me." Then he whisked away, and John Dough, shrinking as far from the spray as possible, crept under the waterfall and followed after the little ones.

Chapter 15: The Fairy Beavers

The Mifkets uttered cries of rage as they observed the escape of their intended victims, and rushed forward to follow them. But immediately a great flood of water began falling just at the place where the children and John had entered, and as the Mifkets recoiled from this new danger our friends heard a soft voice say, with a little laugh: “They will not dare to follow you now. Come with me, and be careful not to slip.” John looked down, and saw a handsome beaver standing beside him. His fur was the color of silver, and upon his head was a tiny golden crown set with jewels so bright and sparkling that the rays lighted the dim place like so many sunbeams. The Beaver King’s face was calm and dignified, and his eyes kindly and intelligent. Without further speech he led the way far under the roaring waterfall; and the space between the dark wall of the dam and the sheet of water was so narrow that the air was filled with a fine spray, which moistened John’s gingerbread in a way that caused him great uneasiness. But, lighted by the radiance of the King Beaver’s crown, they soon came to a place directly under the center of the fall, and here their conductor halted and tapped three times upon the surface of the wall. It opened instantly, disclosing a broad passage, and through this the King led them, the wall closing just behind them as they entered. The noise of the waterfall now sounded but dimly in their ears, and presently they emerged into a large vaulted room, which was so beautiful that the little Princess clasped her hands with a long-drawn sigh of delight, Chick laughed, and John removed from his head the crumpled and soiled silk hat that he had clung to ever since he had left the bakery. He had seen beautiful rooms in the Island of Romance, but nothing there could compare with the magnificence and grandeur of this hall of the Fairy Beaver’s palace. The walls were set thick with brilliant jewels, arranged in a way that formed exquisite pictures, all of these borrowing color from the natural tints of the gems. The ceiling was clustered with tiny glass globes, in each of which was a captured sunbeam; and these lent a charming radiance to the splendid room. Many cushions were strewn upon the floor, and the floor itself was of gold, richly engraved with scenes depicting the lives and adventures of beavers. While our friends admired the loveliness of the Hall of the Beavers, the silver-furred King spoke again, in his soft voice: “You are now underneath the deep water formed by our dam, which was built by the beavers who were our forefathers many years ago, and which has endured until now. But in all the years of its existence the little Princess and the Incubator Baby are the first human beings to be admitted to our fairy palace. Your companion, my dears, is merely

gingerbread, and lives by means of fairy powers that make him a fit comrade for fairies the world over." "It was very good of you to save us from the Mifkets, and we are grateful," said the girl. "You're all right!" added Chick, emphatically. "I am glad to be of service to one so sweet and beautiful," returned the King, with a dignified bow toward the Princess, "and to one so merry and frank," he continued, turning to Chick. "And now, if you will kindly follow me, I will show you the rooms of my palace, and introduce you to my people. You must be content to remain my guests until I can find means to restore you to the freedom of the upper world in which you are accustomed to exist." He led them through the gorgeous hall and along delightful passages into various rooms. Some were large and some were small, but all were extremely beautiful, and Chick wondered greatly at the extent of this under-water palace, the existence of which no one could suspect who stood in the forest above, beside the dam of the beavers. "Are all beavers' homes like this?" asked the child. "No, indeed!" answered the King, laughing softly. "They are usually houses composed of mud, mixed with bits of wood and the leaves and branches of trees. But I am King of the Beaver Fairies, who watch over the fortunes of all ordinary beavers and take care of them. We are invisible, even to beavers; and the eyes of mankind can never see us unless, as in your case, we permit them to do so. These rooms seem to you deserted, but I assure you they are filled with many beaver fairies, who are even now watching you with much curiosity." Both the children started at hearing this, and glanced hastily around; but nothing but the walls of the palace met their gaze, and the King smiled upon them indulgently. "At our banquet, this evening," said he, "I will permit you to see my people. But now please come to the music-room, where you may enjoy the strains of harmony that provide us with one of our chief amusements." He led the way to another room, the roof of which was dome-shaped. From different points in this dome projected the ends of many silver tubes, and near the floor of the room, directly underneath each of the tubes, was placed a plate of glass or of metal. The King invited his guests to seat themselves, and then pressed a diamond button that was placed in the wall. This allowed the water from the river above them to drip slowly through the silver tubes; and as it fell, drop by drop, on the plates beneath, it made sounds that were very sweet and harmonious. The metal plates gave out deep and resonant sounds, while the smaller glass plates tinkled melodiously as the drops of water fell upon them. Neither Chick nor the Princess recognized the first tune that was played, for it had been composed by one of the Fairy Beavers; but afterward the King played "Home, Sweet Home," for them, and "Annie Laurie"; and the music was so exquisitely sweet and soft that the girl declared she would never have

imagined that sounds so delightful could be produced, and Chick pronounced the entertainment “all right.” The gingerbread man was also pleased; for it was the first real music he had ever heard, and it soothed and comforted him beyond measure. The Fairy King seemed glad to give his new friends pleasure; and when the Princess remarked that she would like to know what the Mifkets thought of their sudden escape, the beaver led them to what he called the “Observation Room.” In it was a square box, draped with black silk and having a window in one side. Seating the girl and her companions before this window, the King said: “You will now observe what the Mifkets are doing.” Instantly a picture appeared in the box, and it seemed that through the little window they were gazing upon a section of the forest they had recently left. There were the Mifkets, indeed, with Black Ooboo and the Arab among them, and all were quarreling and fighting among themselves in their usual way, and trying to decide what had become of the gingerbread man and the children. “They are drowned and at the bottom of the river, by this time,” Black Ooboo said; and his words came as distinctly to their ears as if they had been standing beside him. “I hope not,” answered Ali Dubh; “for I’ve never yet had a single bite of the gingerbread man, although I bought and paid for him.” Then the scene changed, and they saw Para Bruin climbing slowly up the side of the steep hill to his den. He seemed none the worse for his roll down the mountain and his bath in the river, and they noticed that he laughed and chuckled to himself as if much amused. “That was a good fight,” John Dough heard him murmur, in the bear language; “and I’m mighty glad I was in time to save the Princess, Chick, and the delicatessen man. They’re safe enough with the beavers by this time, the white rabbit says!” Then he laughed again; and, reaching the top of the hill, entered his cave and lay down to rest. Again the scene changed, and the Princess beheld the open sea, upon which floated the boat that bore safely her father and mother. They seemed to be quite comfortable, and the girl was pleased to see that they had put enough provisions and fresh water into the boat to last them during a long voyage. The man, although little, was strong, and pulled sturdily at the oars; and the woman steered the boat in the right direction. Our Princess was very glad to see these sights, and to know Para Bruin was safe, and that her dear parents had escaped the fierce Mifkets. In company with her friend Chick and the gingerbread man, she wandered through the palace during all that afternoon, seeing many wonderful things that the Fairy Beavers had provided for the comfort and amusement of their community. It was, indeed, a little world by itself, placed under land and water, where no mortal could guess its existence. In the early evening the King escorted them to a splendid banquet hall, where a long, low table was

set in the center of the room. The dishes were all of sparkling cut-glass, and the eatables proved to be very delicious foods made from vegetables that grew at the bottom of the river, together with fish and lobsters and oysters, and many rare sweetmeats that could only have been created by the magic of the fairies themselves. Around the long table were rows of silken cushions; but when the children and the gingerbread man entered, the room seemed deserted by all save themselves and the King. His Majesty the King of the Fairy Beavers sat upon a cushion at the head of the table and graciously placed the Princess and Chick close to his right hand and John Dough at his left. Then he blew softly upon a silver whistle, and at once before the eyes of his guests appeared rows of Fairy Beavers, occupying the cushions beside the low table. They were all pretty to look upon, having silvery fur as soft as satin, and large dark eyes that regarded the strangers pleasantly and without fear. From the neck of each was suspended, by means of silken cords, a richly embroidered cloak, exquisitely woven from a material unknown to the Princess, and blazoned with an emblem denoting the rank or degree of the wearer. Also each of the Fairy Beavers wore a jeweled circlet upon the brow; but none of these was so magnificent as the diadem of their King. While our friends gazed wonderingly upon the Fairy Beavers, the King introduced them, saying: "This is a little mortal Princess named Jacquelin, whom I have protected because her heart is as fresh and innocent as the daisies that grow in the fields. This is Chick, known also as the Cherub, an Incubator Baby without relatives, but who is not lacking in friends. And this is John Dough, a strange creature, having the form of a man, made out of gingerbread. He is not exactly a fairy, but lives through the magic of a fairy compound known as the 'Great Elixir,' and is therefore not responsible for being alive and is liable to perish before he has grown very old. Each of these guests is, I believe, worthy of our friendship and protection, and I trust that my people will join me in welcoming them to our palace." Answering the King's speech, all the Beaver Fairies gracefully arose from their cushions and bowed thrice--once to the Princess and once to Chick and once to John Dough. Then they all reseated themselves and drank to the health of their guests from dainty tumblers no bigger than harebells, which contained water as pure as crystal. Then, while the feast began, a chorus of black beavers entered and chanted a pretty song; and afterward other beavers, so small that the Princess thought that they were quite young, entered and danced a minuet for the amusement of the entire company. Chick and the Princess Jacquelin were really hungry, and although the children at first feared the food placed before them was not such as they could enjoy, they tasted some of the dishes and found them so delicious that both ended by eating heartily, and afterward

decided they had never enjoyed a meal so much. Of course John Dough missed the pleasure of eating, but he had a good time listening to the music and watching the dancers; so he was quite content. Later he amused the company by telling the story of his adventures since he had come to life in the bake-shop. He spoke in the beaver language, so that all understood him; and even the Princess could understand most of his speech, for the portion of gingerbread she had eaten had conveyed to her some share of the powers of the Great Elixir. The Fairy Beavers were much interested, and loudly applauded the recital. After dinner the girl was escorted by six pretty Beaver Fairies to a cozy little room decorated with pink and white shells, which were polished smooth as glass. There was no regular bed in the room, but the beavers heaped many of the soft cushions into a corner, and upon these the Princess lay down and slept very peacefully until the next morning. Chick had a room of blue and gold, in the four corners of which perfumed fountains shot their sprays into the air. The tinkling sounds of these fountains might have soothed any child to sleep, yet Chick could have slept as soundly in the open forest as within this luxurious room. John Dough also was supplied with a room in the palace; but as he did not sleep he had no need to lie down, and so amused himself during the night by looking at the beautiful pictures that decorated the walls and ceiling. Most of these depicted the work of beavers engaged in building dams and houses; John found them very interesting, and therefore passed a pleasant night. Soon after daybreak the Beaver King came to John and escorted him to the Observation Room, where he found Chick and the Princess--who had already risen and finished their breakfasts--gazing earnestly through the window of the black box. He also approached the box to gaze at the shifting pictures, and discovered that the forest had become as quiet as usual, the Arab and Black Ooboo having returned to the village in the clearing, and only a few of the Mifkets being left to wander along the sides of the brook and watch the waterfall at the dam of the beavers. “Now,” said the Fairy Beaver to the girl, “I can do one more thing to please you. Make a wish, Princess, and I will grant it.” “Thank you!” she cried, eagerly. “I wish to rejoin my dear father and mother, wherever they may be.” “Very well,” returned the King; “come with me.” He led them through many passages, until they reached a sort of tunnel that brought them to a rocky cave under the river bank, some distance below the waterfall. The water of the river covered half the floor of the cave, and upon the sandy beach at its edge rested a large glass cylinder, which was pointed at both ends and had a door in the top. Harnessed to one end of the glass tube were twenty-four strong beavers, who sat motionless beside it. “The boat in which your father and mother are still riding is far out in the ocean,” said the King

to the Princess; “but in this submarine boat you will be drawn by my swimming beavers so swiftly that the journey will not seem long to you.” “Are we not to go with the Princess?” asked the gingerbread man. “There is room for only one more in the boat,” replied the King, “so the Cherub and you must bid farewell to your friend, in order that she may safely rejoin the parents she so dearly loves.” “I’m sorry,” said John, sadly. “I’m sorry, too,” declared the little Princess. “for you have been very good to me, John Dough. Yet my parents need me more than you do, and it is my duty to rejoin them.” “That is true,” said John. “Good bye, little friend, and may your life be long and happy.” Chick said nothing, but hugged the little girl in a long and warm embrace and kissed both her pretty cheeks. The King now opened the door in the top of the cylinder and the girl stepped inside. The space was just big enough to permit her to lie down comfortably, and the bottom of the cylinder had been thickly covered with soft cushions brought from the palace. When the King had closed and fastened the door, he gave a signal to the four-and-twenty beavers, and at once they dashed into the water, drawing the glass submarine after them, and began swimming with powerful strokes down the river. They swam well under the surface of the water, and the glass boat followed them without either touching the bottom or rising to the top. At first the Princess was much bewildered by her strange journey, for it seemed as if the water was pressing upon her from all sides. But presently she realized that she was quite safe in the glass tube, and began watching curiously the pretty weeds and water-flowers that grew at the bottom of the river, and the queer fishes that swam around her. The speed of the swimming beavers was surprising. It was not long, indeed, before they reached the mouth of the river and swam boldly out into the sea. Jacquelin had no idea of the direction they took, but she trusted to the wisdom of her friend the Fairy Beaver, and was not at all frightened. And now the sights that she saw were very strange indeed; for the seaweeds were of most gorgeous hues, and there were not only big and little fishes of every description, but brilliant sea-anemones and jelly-fish floating gracefully on all sides of her. The journey was long, but not at all tiresome, and the girl had not realized how far she had been drawn through the waters of the ocean when a dark gray object appeared just overhead, and the beavers came to a halt. Slowly the glass cylinder rose to the surface of the waves, and Jacquelin saw just beside her the boat containing her parents. The girl’s mother also saw, to her great surprise and joy, the form of her daughter lying in the glass case, and at once unfastened the door and assisted the child to crawl out and scramble into the boat. The first act of the little Princess was to kiss her father and mother delightedly, and then she leaned over the side of the boat and refastened the door of the

cylinder. “Tell your King that I thank him!” she called to the beavers, trying to speak their own language; and the intelligent little creatures must have understood, for the glass cylinder sank swiftly beneath the water, and she saw it no more. Many days the Princess and her parents rode in the boat, until one morning they came to another small island and ventured to land upon it. They found it to be a beautiful place, inhabited by no savage beasts of any sort, and containing a grove of trees that bore figs and bananas and dates and many other delicious fruits. So they built themselves a cottage on this island, and lived there in peace and happiness for many years.

Chapter 16: The Flight of the Flamingoes

After the Princess had left them, John Dough said to the King: “What is to become of Chick and of me? We cannot stay with you always.” “I hardly know,” answered the Beaver Fairy. “Is there any place you especially desire to visit?” “No special place is known to me,” said the gingerbread man. “It doesn’t matter where we go, so long as we keep going,” added the practical Chick. “You have been very kind to us,” continued John, “and we may rely upon your friendship. Since you possess such wonderful fairy powers, perhaps you will assist us to leave this island and get out into the world again, where we may seek new adventures.” “It shall be as you wish,” promised the King. “But I must think of a way for you to leave my palace in perfect safety. Chick is in no great danger, but should Black Ooboo or the terrible Arab chance to capture you, they would cut your gingerbread to bits in no time, and you would be ruined. For this reason it will be best for you to leave this island as quickly as possible.” John readily agreed to this, and the King remained silent for several minutes, engaged in deep thought. Then he said: “I believe I know a way to save you, John Dough. But I must have your permission to cut you into nine pieces.” “What good will I be when cut into pieces?” asked John, somewhat alarmed at the suggestion. “Do not fear,” said the beaver. “I promise to again restore you to your present form. The Mifkets have placed spies all about our dam, and if you attempted to walk away from here they would soon discover you. Therefore I will cut you into nine pieces, wrap each piece in a bit of cloth, and send the parcels by my beavers along different paths to the top of the hill where Para Bruin lives. There the bear and Chick can put you together again, for the child will have no trouble in reaching the bear’s cave. After the nine parts are in place I will give you a magic cordial to drink; it will render your body as solid and substantial as it is now.” “But how can we escape from the island, once we have reached Para Bruin’s cave?” asked John. “The Flamingo people owe me many favors,” answered the King. “You do not weigh much, so I will ask one of the flamingoes to fly with you to some other country. It will take two of the birds to carry Chick; but, if the child is not afraid, the journey will be perfectly safe.” “I’m not afraid,” said Chick. “Anything suits me.” “I think your plan is an excellent one,” declared John, “and we are both greatly obliged to your Majesty for your kindness.” So the King brought a great knife, and with the assistance of Chick, who was much interested in the operation, cut John Dough into nine pieces. These were wrapped into packages and eight beavers were summoned, who carried eight of the packages through secret passages to the forest and then up the mountain-side

to the cave of Para Bruin. The ninth package, containing the head of John Dough, the King undertook to carry himself, and although the Mifket spies of Black Ooboo noticed the nine beavers carrying packages up the hillside, they paid little attention to them, never suspecting that in this queer fashion the gingerbread man was making his escape. And Chick walked boldly along the river bank and up the hill to meet Para Bruin, who hugged the child joyfully in his rubber arms, and tried to lick the plump cheeks with his pink rubber tongue. The Mifkets were puzzled by Chick's appearance, and wondered where the little one had come from; but they did not offer to interfere with the child in any way. It was not long before the Beaver King reached the bear's cave and laid the ninth package, containing John's head, beside the other eight, which had already arrived. "What's all this?" asked Para Bruin, eying the packages with much surprise. "Be patient and you will see," replied the King, and then unwrapped John's head. When the bear saw it he uttered a groan and exclaimed: "Alas! my poor friend has come to a sad end!" "Not so," answered John's head. "The Fairy Beaver has cut me apart, but he has promised to put me together again, so that I will be as good as new. And you must assist us, friend Para." "Most willingly!" declared the bear. Then, under the King's direction, Para Bruin and Chick set up John's legs, and placed the sections of his body upon them, and afterward perched his head upon the body. John expected to tumble down at any moment, for he was just like a house of blocks that a child builds, and every one knows how easily that falls apart; but he kept as still as possible, and at length all the nine parts of him were in their proper places. Then the King handed a small silver flask to the child, and told Chick to pour the contents into John's mouth--just between the candy teeth. Chick, by standing on tiptoe, was able to do this, and John drank the cordial to the last drop. He seemed to feel it penetrate and spread through all his gingerbread body; and, as it did so, every one of the cut places became solid again, and presently John took a step forward, looked himself over, and found he was indeed as good as new. "That cordial is great stuff," he said to the King. "It's almost as powerful as the Great Elixir itself. "It is an excellent remedy for cuts," replied the King, "and as you are so crumbly and unsubstantial I will give you another bottle of it, so that if you ever meet with an accident you may drink the cordial and recover." He handed John another silver flask containing the wonderful liquid, which John accepted with much gratitude. "Now I must leave you," said the King. "The flamingoes have promised to send her their strongest flyers to bear you and the Incubator Baby to another land, so I believe you will both live to encounter many further adventures." Chick and John again thanked the kind beaver for all the favors they had received, and then the King and his people

returned to their beautiful palace, and left the gingerbread man and the cheerful Cherub and Para Bruin alone upon the mountain-top. “What has become of the Princess?” asked the bear. John told him the story of her escape, and Para said: “Well, I’m glad the dear child was able to rejoin her parents; but this island will be a dreary place without her. I wish I could leave it as easily as you and Chick can.” “Perhaps,” said John, “the flamingoes will also carry you.” “Do you think so?” asked Para, eagerly. “I’ll ask them about it, for I understand their language,” promised John; and this so delighted the rubber bear that he bounded up and down in glee. Before long four great birds were seen approaching through the air, and soon they alighted upon the mountain close to where our friends stood. “We were sent to carry a gingerbread man and a fair-haired child away from this island,” said one of the birds, in a squeaky voice. “I am the gingerbread man,” replied John, speaking as the flamingoes did; “and here is the fair-haired child. But we also wish you to carry our friend Para Bruin with us. One of you can carry me, and two can carry Chick. That will leave the fourth to fly with Para Bruin, if you will kindly consent.” “What, that monstrous bear!” exclaimed one of the birds, indignantly. “He’s large, it is true,” replied John; “but he’s made of rubber, and is hollow inside; so he really doesn’t weight much more than I do.” “Well,” said the flamingo, “if that is the case I do not object to carrying him.” John related this conversation to the bear, who was overjoyed at the thought of getting away from the island. A stout cord had been tied to the feet of each of the flamingoes, and John now proceeded to fasten the loose end of one of the cords around his own body, tying it in a firm knot, so it would not come undone and let him drop. The cords hanging from the two birds that were to carry the Cherub were tied together in a hard knot, and thus formed a swing in which the child sat quite comfortably. Para Bruin now tied himself to the fourth flamingo, and the preparations were complete. “Are you ready?” asked the leader of the flamingoes. “Yes,” said John. “Where do you wish to be taken?” “We don’t much care,” replied the gingerbread man. “Let us get to some island where there are no Mifkets. As for Ali Dubh, he will be obliged to stay here with his friend Black Ooboo, and once I am away from these shores I shall be sure he can never eat me.” So the big birds flew into the air, carrying with them the gingerbread man and the fair-haired child and the rubber bear, and so swift was their flight that in a few moments the island of the Mifkets had vanished from their view. “Nice ride,” isn’t it?” Chick called to John. “Rather nice,” answered the gingerbread man. “But this cord is so tight it’s wearing a crease in my body.” “What a pity you are not made of rubber, as I am!” said the bear, cheerfully. “Nothing ever injures me in the least. I’m practically indestructible.” “How are you getting on, Chick?”

asked John. “Fine!” answered the Cherub. “This knocks Imar’s flying-machine into a cocked hat.” Then for a time they sailed on in silence, dangling from the ends of their cords, while the strong wings of the flamingoes beat the air with regular strokes just above their heads.

Chapter 17: Sport of Pirate Island

The birds flew close together and made great speed, and in about three hours from the time they started an island appeared just ahead of them. Whereupon John said to the bird that bore him: “Let us stop here, so we can examine the island and see how we like it. This cord is cutting into my gingerbread body, and I’d like to stop for a time, anyway.” “Very well,” answered the bird; and when they were over the center of the island the flamingoes gradually descended and alighted upon the ground. John untied the cord from his waist, and also assisted Chick and Para Bruin to free themselves. The bear was not injured at all, but the cord had worn a straight line around John’s body, although not very deep; and in some way the gingerbread man had lost another of his lozenge buttons. The place where they had alighted was covered by grass and surrounded by groves of trees. “This looks like a fine country,” said Chick, gazing around. “It’s better than our old island, anyway,” remarked Para Bruin. But just as he spoke the flamingoes uttered shrill screams and flew quickly into the air, and our friends turned in time to see a most curious creature come from the grove and approach them. It had somewhat the likeness of a man, yet was too queer ever to be mistaken for a human being, although it was certainly alive. Its body was a huge punching-bag, and its head was a foot-ball. For legs it had two of those golf-clubs called “putters,” and one of its arms was a tennis-racket and the other a base-ball club. This was curious enough, in all conscience; but the face was more curious yet. For the eyes were golf balls, and the nose a square of billiard-chalk, and its mouth a mere slit in the foot-ball where the lacing had come undone. Taken altogether, this odd creature presented a most surprising appearance, and while John Dough and Para Bruin stared at it in amazement Chick boldly asked: “Who are you?” “Sport is my name, and sport is my nature,” answered the creature, winking one eye frightfully, and grinning until its queer mouth curled up at both corners of the slit. “Sport,” remarked the rubber bear, gravely, “is something amusing; so I am sure you are misnamed.” “Oh! you’re a balloon,” returned Sport, kicking at the bear with one of his golf-club feet; “the kid’s a chucklehead and the other’s a bun.” “I’m not a bun!” exclaimed John, indignantly. “Yes, you are! Cross bun, too. Hot cross bun. Cool off, old chap, and look pleasant.” John was too angry to reply to this speech, but Chick said to the creature: “If you’re going to be so disagreeable, you’d better leave us. We don’t care to associate with people of your sort.” “Ho, ho! ha, ha!” laughed Sport; “don’t care to associate, eh? Do you know where you are?” “No,” said Chick, “and I don’t care.” “Well, this island is inhabited by retired pirates and bandits, who make every one that

lands here pay a heavy ransom, or else--" "Or else what?" asked John, as Sport stopped short and gave another horrid wink. "Or else they boil 'em in oil for three days," was the reply. "Well," said the bear, "we can't pay a ransom, that's certain; but I'm not afraid of being boiled in oil. I'm practically indestructible." "But I'm not!" cried John, much alarmed. "It would ruin my gingerbread to be boiled in oil, and Chick would certainly get overheated. I'm afraid it would melt your rubber, too, my dear Para." "Would it?" asked the bear, with a start. "Then let us get away from this island at once!" "By all means!" agreed John Dough. "And the sooner the better," declared Chick. But as they turned to look for the flamingoes, the creature who called himself Sport began pounding his punching-bag body with his tennis-racket arm, and at the sound a crowd of men ran out of groves of trees and quickly surrounded the rubber bear and Chick and the gingerbread man. These men had heavy beards, hooked noses, and piercing black eyes; and they wore red sashes tied around their waists; and laced leggings, and blue flannel shirts open at the throats; and in their belts were stuck many daggers and knives and pistols. "Whoop! whoo--o--o!" they screeched, yelling like Indians; and their leader, who was uglier looking than any of his followers, cried out: "Avast, there, my hearties! Here's a chance for either a fine ransom or a pot of boiling oil!" "Then it's the oil," said Para Bruin, despondently; "for we have no ransom." "You may as well start the bonfire," remarked Chick. But John Dough stepped up to the pirate chief and asked: "How much ransom do you require?" "Well," answered the chief, "you're not worth much, yourself, and the child's too small to count; but a fine rubber bear like that is worth ten pieces-of-eight or a sparkling jewel." "I will give you a sparkling jewel for him, as a ransom," said John, "provided you will then permit us to depart in peace." "All right," agreed the pirate; "hand over the sparkler and you may go." So John borrowed a dagger from the chief and picked out of his body one of the three diamonds which the inventor had given him in the Isle of Phreex. It glittered most beautifully in the sunlight, and the eyes of the pirate also glittered with greed. For he had noticed two other scars on John's gingerbread body, similar to the one the diamond had been picked out of. Taking the diamond in his dirty hand he said: "Well, where are the other jewels?" "You agreed to accept this one as our ransom," answered the gingerbread man. "You misunderstood me. I said three," declared the pirate; and turning to his men he shouted: "Didn't I say three, boys?" "You did! You said three sparklers!" cried the retired pirates and bandits, in a loud chorus. So John, with a sigh of regret, picked the other two diamonds out of his body and gave them to the chief. "Now," said the pirate, "I will allow you to go. But where you can go to is a mystery to me,

for you are on an island." "Stop!" cried another man, as they turned to depart. "You've got to settle with me, now. I'm the bandit chief, and I also demand a ransom." "I have given the pirate chief all the diamonds I had," said John. "Then you shall surely boil in oil!" shouted the bandit, scowling fearfully. "Seize them, my men, and away with them to the fiery furnace." But just then came a flutter of wings, and the four flamingoes flew down and sailed along just over the heads of the prisoners. Instantly the bear clutched the end of a cord and was drawn upward by one of the birds. John Dough grasped the foot of another flamingo with his right hand, and was also raised high above the heads of the astonished pirates and bandits, while Chick coolly sat within the loop of string dangling from the two remaining birds and sailed into the sky with admirable grace. Meantime the robbers shook their fists and yelled at the escaped prisoners in a frenzy of helpless rage. "Wait a minute!" Para Bruin called to the flamingo which was carrying him; for he observed that just beneath him was the form of the dreadful person who had called himself Sport. The bird obeyed, remaining poised in the air; and at once the bear curled himself into a ball, let go the cord, and fell downward toward the ground. The ball of rubber, rapidly descending, struck the surprised Sport and smashed him flat upon the ground. Then up into the air bounded the bear again, and caught once more the cord that was attached to the flamingo's foot. "Well done!" called the Cherub, while the pirates and bandits were rushing to assist the helpless Sport. "That was a noble deed, my good Para!" said the gingerbread man. "Oh, I'm a bouncer, all right!" answered the bear, proudly. "But now let us get away from this awful place as soon as possible." So the flamingoes flew swiftly across the sea with them, and John Dough found that he sailed more easily while clutching the bird's foot than when the cord had been fastened around his body. Chick also rode with perfect comfort, but Para Bruin was obliged to wrap the cord several times around his fat paw, to prevent it from slipping out of his grasp.

Chapter 18: Hiland and Loland

After a long and steady flight the birds reached another island, larger than the first, and much more beautiful. The adventurers looked down upon green valleys and vine-covered hills, patches of stately forest and fields of waving grain. But aside from the scattered farm-houses, they saw no cities or villages until they were over the exact center of the island, where a most curious sight met their view. The island was divided into two halves by a high and strong wall of stone, that ran from ocean to ocean, passing exactly through the center of the land. In the middle of the island the dividing wall was broken by a great castle, which looked upon both sides of the wall, and had many imposing towers and turrets and spires stretching high into the air. Clustered near to the castle and upon the east side of the wall were many tail and narrow buildings, some of them rising to a height of three or four stories. The windows in these buildings were tall and narrow, and the doors were tall and narrow, and the chimneys were tall and narrow. It was quite a city in size, but the houses all looked as if they were set upon stilts, while the streets were also narrow. On the west side of the wall, adjoining the castle, was also a city, but of a quite different sort. For the houses were low, none being of more than one story, and the windows and doors in them were so broad and low that they were wider than they were high. As for the streets, they were remarkably broad. The cities upon both sides of the wall were pretty and well built, and there were many beautiful parks and pleasure grounds scattered about. Our friends had not much time to observe these things closely, for at John's request the flamingoes alighted upon the top of the great wall, near to an entrance of the castle. "We must leave you now," said one of the birds, "for we are obliged to hurry home again. But I am sure you will be quite safe in this beautiful country." "Good-bye," said John, "and thank you very much for bringing us here." Chick and the bear also thanked the kind flamingoes, and then the birds flew into the air and soon disappeared. "What a lovely place to bounce!" said Para Bruin, leaning over the edge of the wall nearest to the tall houses and gazing downward into the street. "It's a good way down," said Chick. "You'd better be careful." "Nonsense!" replied the bear, scornfully. "The higher the wall the finer the bounce." With that he made a ball of himself and rolled off the wall. John and Chick leaned over and saw the rubber bear strike the pavement far below and then bound upward again. When he was on a level with the top of the walls he reached out his paws, caught the edge of the stones, and drew himself up beside them. "Great,--wasn't it?" he asked, proudly. "Yes; but I advise you to be careful," said the gingerbread man. "We know nothing of the people who inhabit this country,

and if you should chance to miss the wall when you bound upwards you would become a prisoner and be at the mercy of those who captured you." "That's true," agreed the bear. "I'll be more careful until we get better acquainted. What shall we do now?" "Let's try to find a way into the castle," suggested Chick. "It's the only way to get off this wall, for I can't bounce as you do, Para Bruin." "Nor can I," added John. "How strange it is that the island should be divided by this great wall! And how queer to have everything short on one side and tall on the other! But perhaps the people in the castle can explain it all." They walked along the broad wall toward the castle, and presently came to the large entrance gate, one of the wickets of which stood ajar, as if inviting them to enter. "Shall we go in?" asked John, hesitating. "Of course," decided Chick, promptly. "What's the use of staying outside, when the door's open?" So they passed through the wicket and entered a lofty arched hall, built of blocks of exquisite marble, that gave it a grand and majestic appearance. There was a small stairway leading upward and a large stairway descending to the lower floors of the castle; but no one was in sight to greet them, so they decided to go down the stairs. "Evidently they did not expect us," remarked Para Bruin. "This must be the castle of the ruler, or king," replied John, "and perhaps the royal family is at dinner, or the king is holding court." But at the foot of the stairs they found the hallways and rooms as deserted and empty as could be, and their footsteps echoed with a hollow sound upon the tiled floors. The furniture of the castle was magnificent beyond description, and the draperies and pictures upon the walls were of exceptional beauty. Everything was in perfect order, yet the place seemed wholly deserted. After inspecting the rooms on this floor of the castle they found another stairway, built of polished white marble, with elaborately carved marble balustrades. This they also descended, and discovered that the rooms on the lower floor were even more splendid than those they had already seen. Occupying the entire central portion of the castle was a great marble hall, having a domed ceiling, and windows which looked upon the tall city to the east of the wall, as well as upon the low city to the west. There were also great entrance doors, admitting people from both sides of the wall; but these doors were closed. They were not locked, however, and John said to his companions: "We know nothing of the owner of this castle, nor of the people inhabiting the opposite sides of the great wall. They may prove to be either our enemies or our friends, so I advise that we be cautious until we know what treatment we may expect from them. Two of us should remain here while the third boldly enters into the cities to make inquiries." "I'll go," said Chick. "No, indeed; you're too young and too small," objected Para Bruin. "But I'm just a regular child, while you're a

rubber bear and John Dough's a gingerbread man," said the Cherub. "They wouldn't think anything of my being here; but if either of you two go there's liable to be trouble." "The Cherub is wise for one so young," observed John. "Therefore we will let the child visit the cities and report to us. Having found the castle deserted, we will take the liberty of occupying it until our little friend returns." So they opened one of the great doors, and Chick walked boldly out into the main street of the high and narrow city to the eastward. Pacing before the entrance, as if guarding the doorway from without, was a soldier who stood more than seven feet in height, but who was so exceedingly thin and slender that it really seemed as if some strange power had stretched him out lengthwise. But Chick noticed that all the people walking along the streets of this city were just as tall and slight as the soldier, and quickly understood why the doors and windows of their houses had been built so singularly tall and narrow. The soldier seemed surprised when the Cherub emerged from the deserted castle, but he took off his tall hat and bowed politely. His uniform was of blue cloth, with brass buttons. "What place is this?" asked Chick. "This, beauteous stranger, is the great country of Hiland," answered the soldier, respectfully. "And this is the great city of Hie which you see before you; and the great people you observe are called Hilanders; and I do not suppose there is so great and wonderful a country, or city, or people anywhere else in all the world." "What is the castle called?" asked the child. "We call it the castle of Hilo," said the man. "It was the dwelling of the former King of Hilo, who ruled over our great nation as well as over the miserable creatures residing on the other side of the wall." "But where is your King now?" inquired Chick. "The castle is empty." "To be sure the castle is vacant at present, for our King is long since dead," the soldier replied. "But we are patiently awaiting the arrival of his successor. There is a prophecy that our next ruler will be a King who is wise and just, but not made of flesh and blood, and although this seems an impossible thing, our people hope that the prophecy will some day be fulfilled." "But why don't you make one of your own people king?" asked Chick. "Because the island is divided into two sections, and one king must rule both sides of the wall," replied the man. "Of course we would not allow one of the insignificant Loes to rule us, nor will they consent to allow one of our noble Hies to rule them. Therefore we must get along without a king until the arrival of the wise and just ruler who is neither flesh nor blood." "Who are the Loes?" the child asked. "I have never seen them, my dear, for the great wall divides them from our superior nation," said the soldier; "but they are said to be short and squat, and very disagreeable. They live on the other side of the island." "Thank you for the information," said Chick, and then turned

and re-entered the castle. “What did you find out?” inquired John and Para Bruin, in the same breath. The child carefully related the conversation with the Hie soldier, and then said: “Now, I’ll go into the other city, and find out what the people on that side of the wall have to say.” So John and Para opened the door at the opposite side of the arched hall, and the Cherub passed out and came upon another soldier, who seemed to be standing guard at the castle entrance. This one was dressed in a red uniform, with silver buttons, and was the shortest and fattest person Chick had ever beheld. But his broad face was smiling and good-natured in expression, and he tipped his low, flat hat gracefully to the pretty Incubator Baby. “What country is this?” asked the child. “This, most lovely one, is the superb and grand country of Loland,” replied the man; “and this splendid city you behold is the city of Lo; and our magnificent people are called Lolanders.” “What is the castle called?” Chick inquired, curiously. “It is the Castle of Lohi, inhabited by our King--when we have one--who also rules the poor barbarians who dwell outside of our paradise, on the other side of the wall.” “When do you expect to have another king?” asked the Cherub. “Whenever one comes who is wise and just, and is not made of flesh and blood,” replied the man. “We have a legend that such a king shall rule us, but for my part I do not believe there is a person of that description in all the world.” “Yet there may be,” suggested Chick, who had been thinking that the description just fitted John Dough. “Oh, of course there may be,” agreed the man, cordially; “and if there is, and he comes to our island, every one on both sides the wall will hail him as king.” Looking along the streets of the city of Lo, Chick saw that all the people were as short and fat as this soldier, and that they waddled like ducks when they walked. But they seemed as busy as bees in a hive, and appeared to be happy and contented; so the child could not decide which was the finest country--that of the short people or that of the tall ones. Both cities seemed prosperous, and on both sides of the wall the island was charmingly beautiful. It may appear strange to the reader that neither of the soldiers Chick had spoken with made any attempt to question the child. But afterward our friends found that one of the established laws of the island forbade any of the people to ask questions either of strangers or of those inhabiting the country on the opposite side of the wall. However, they were not forbidden to answer any questions properly addressed to them, and by nature both the tall people and the short people were extremely courteous and polite. Chick decided this queer law was to blame for the misunderstanding between the two nations, for, as neither country knew anything at all about the other one, a feeling of mutual contempt and indifference had arisen between them.

Chapter 19: King Dough and his Court

After the conversation with the soldier, Chick went back to the hall of the castle and told John Dough and Para Bruin what the man had said. “They all expect a wise and just ruler, who is not made of flesh and blood,” reported the little one; “so I guess it’s up to you, John, to run this island.” “I’m surprised,” said Para Bruin, “that they do not prefer a king who is made of pure rubber and can bounce. But if they want John Dough instead of me I’m willing to yield in his favor.” “You shall be my Chief Counselor,” replied John; “only I reserve the right to act as I please in case I do not like your counsels.” “That is entirely fair and reasonable,” declared Para Bruin, “and I thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me.” “I’m going to be Head Booleywag,” said Chick, gravely. “What’s that?” asked John. “It’s the one that rules the ruler,” said the smiling Cherub. “So just behave yourselves--you and your Chief Counselor -- and you’ll both find I know my business.” Thereupon the child led John Dough to the King’s attiring-room, and hunted in the closets until a fine ermine robe and a crown and scepter were discovered. The crown was a little tarnished from lack of use, but the jewels in it still sparkled brightly; so the bear set it upon John’s gingerbread head and put the scepter in his right hand. Chick folded the ermine robe around him in such a way that his missing left hand was not noticed, and then they led the gingerbread man to the great hall and placed him in the royal throne. He might have looked more dignified had not his nose been badly chipped and his left glass eye so loose in its socket that it rolled every way but the right way; however, the robe concealed the fact that his shirt-front was soiled and cracked, and that several lozenge-buttons had broken off during his recent adventures. But kingly robes and a kingly crown cover many defects, and when Para Bruin and the Cherub stood back and took a critical look at their friend they felt quite proud of his regal appearance. When all had been made ready and John was seated in the throne, Chick went to the west door of the castle hall and threw it open, and at the same time Para Bruin opened wide the east door. Then, together, they cried out to the people: “The King has come! Enter his castle, all ye Hilanders and Lolanders, and greet the new ruler in a fitting manner!” So the tall and slender people trooped in at one door and the short and fat people trooped in at the other; and all gazed with awe and reverence at the strange form of the gingerbread king, who was surely not flesh and blood, and might easily be a wise and just ruler. There was no disputing the fulfillment of the prophecy; so all bowed humbly before John, whom Chick introduced to his subjects in a shrill, childish voice as “King Dough the First, ruler of the Twin Kingdoms

of Hiland and Loland." Afterward there was feasting and rejoicing in both cities, and John made a royal procession on both sides of the great wall, being everywhere received with shouts of enthusiastic joy. The gingerbread man proved a very successful ruler; and as neither he nor Para Bruin ate anything and Chick returned to a diet of oatmeal and cream, the King's expenses were very light, and he was not obliged to tax his people to support his royal state. One of the first laws he made was that no one in the two nations should eat gingerbread that was more than three days old, under pain of death; this prevented his ever being in danger when he traveled in either land. Another thing he did was to engage a fat little woman of Loland to make and bake him a new gingerbread hand, having five excellent fingers at the end of it. Also she made gingerbread patches to fit his broken ear and his crumbled nose and his damaged heel, as well as some lovely new coattails, and when the hand and all these patches were placed where they belonged, John drank the cordial contained in the silver flask that the Beaver Fairy had given him, and at once the new gingerbread became a part of his body, and he was as perfect as the day he had left Monsieur Jules' bake-shop. The woman also repaired his frosting and fastened some new lozenge-buttons to his waistcoat, after which John presented so neat and respectable an appearance that all his people were very proud of him. Para Bruin also became a great favorite in the two cities, and the tall and short folks loved to watch him stand upon the high wall that divided the two nations, from which he would leap to the ground and immediately bound back again to his station on the wall. He was always good-natured and cheerful, quite winning the hearts of the Hilanders by poking fun at the Lolanders, and afterward delighting the Lolanders by jeering at the Hilanders. So Para Bruin's life was a happy one, and for countless years he remained the close friend and companion of King Dough the First, the popular and worthy ruler of Hiland and Loland. The Records of the Kingdom say very little of Chick's later history, merely mentioning the fact that the King's most valuable assistant was the Head Booleywag, who grew up to be the especial favorite of all the inhabitants of the island. But, curiously enough, the Records fail to state whether the Head Booleywag was a man or a woman.

THE END

THE SEA FAIRIES

After publishing *The Emerald City of Oz* in 1910, Baum decided that he'd given his all to Oz and enough was enough. He would end the series and begin a new fantasy series for children. First up was *The Sea Fairies*, published by Reilly & Britton in 1911 and featuring delightful illustrations by John R. Neill, who had illustrated all but the first of the Oz books. An underwater fantasy, *The Sea Fairies* features a young girl named Trot and her peg-legged sailor friend, Cap'n Bill. After they explore a hidden cave along the coast of Southern California, a group of lovely mermaids transform them into mermaid and merman and take them on a magical journey beneath the surface of the ocean. The duo finds friends in Princess Clia, Queen Aquareine, and King Anko, who must deal with their adversary, the evil magician, Zog the Terrible. Trot and Cap'n Bill help the enchanted realm do battle, facing sea monsters and sea devils, doing their utmost to defeat Zog. *The Sea Fairies* did reasonably well its first year, but not as well as Baum's Oz books. After one more book, *Sky Island*, Baum and the publishers abandoned the series. Baum, however, had faith in Trot and Cap'n Bill and featured them in *The Scarecrow of Oz* and in the *Magic of Oz*, and Trot also appeared in *The Lost Princess of Oz* and *Glinda of Oz*.

A first edition copy of The Sea Fairies

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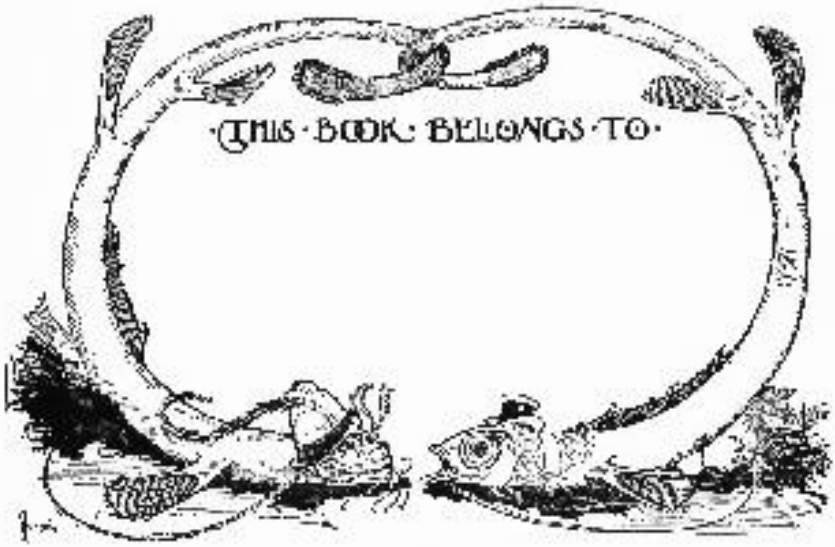
A copy of the 1920 edition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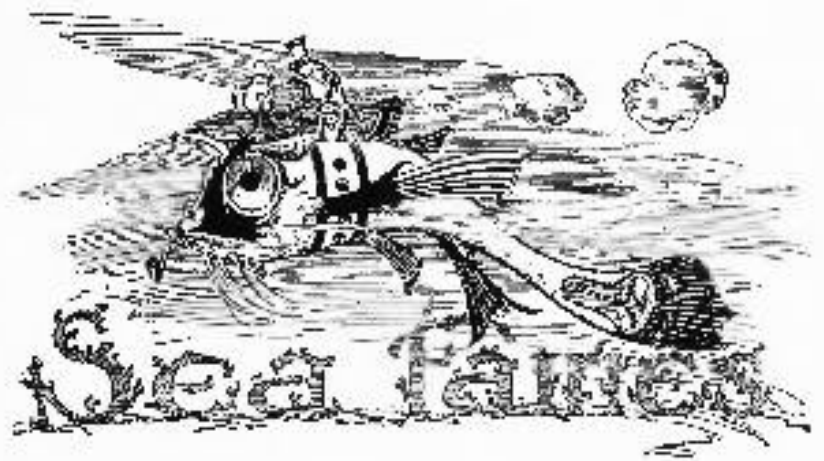
Sea Tales

GO
JUDITH
of Randolph
Massachusetts

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THE oceans are big and broad. I believe two-thirds of the earth's surface is covered with water. What people inhabit this water has always been a subject of curiosity to the inhabitants of the land. Strange creatures come from the seas at times, and perhaps in the ocean depths are many, more strange than mortal eye has ever gazed upon.

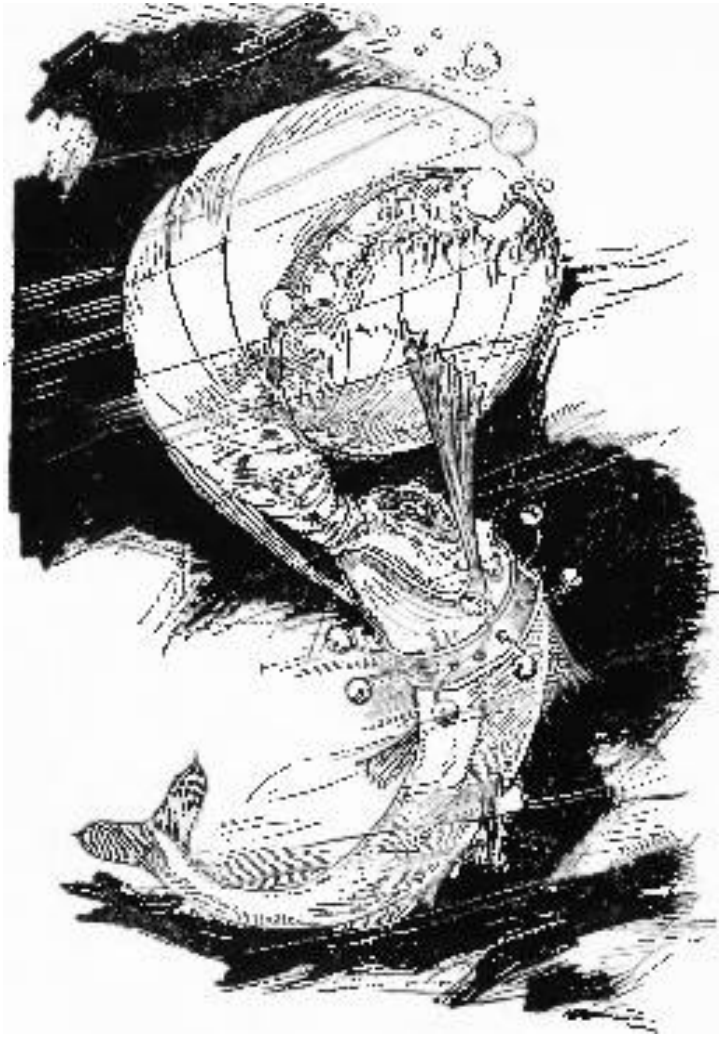
This story is fanciful. In it the sea people talk and act much as we do, and the mermaids especially are not unlike the fairies with whom we have learned to be familiar. Yet they are real sea people, for all that, and with the exception of Zog the Magician they are all supposed to exist in the ocean's depths.

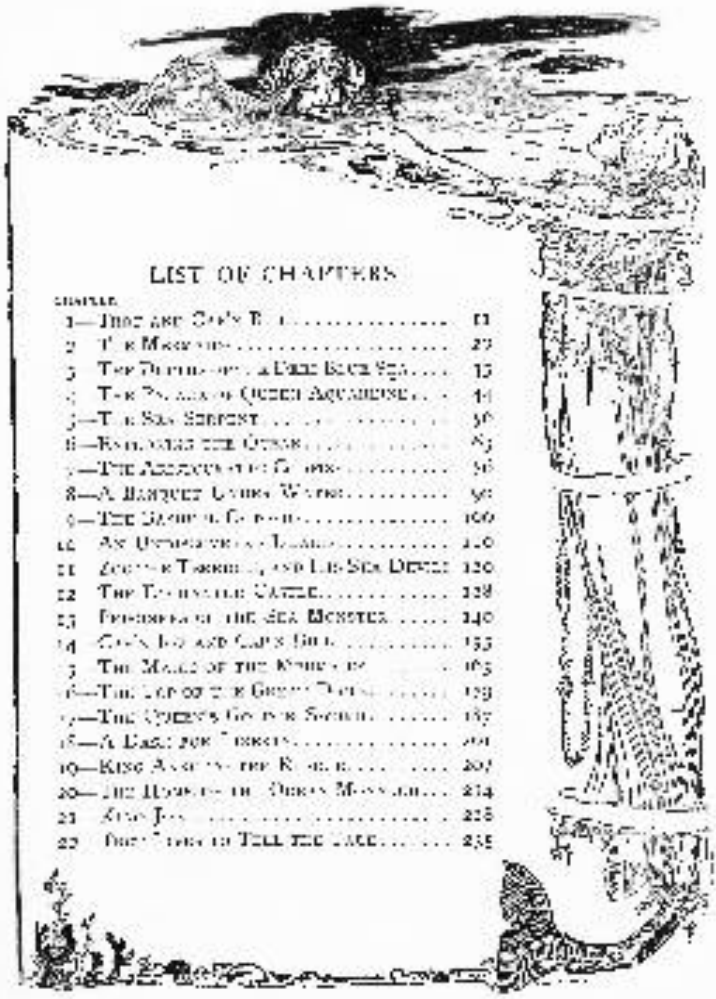
I am told that some very learned people deny that mermaids or sea-serpents have ever inhabited the oceans, but it would be very difficult for them to prove such an assertion unless they had lived under the water as Trot and Cap'n Bill did in this story.

I hope my readers who have so long followed Dorothy's adventures in the Land of Oz will be interested in Trot's equally strange experiences. The ocean has always appealed to me as a veritable wonderland, and this story has been suggested to me many times by my young correspondents in their letters. Indeed, a good many children have implored me to "write something about the mermaids," and I have willingly granted the request.

Hollywood, 1911.

L. FRANK BAUM.





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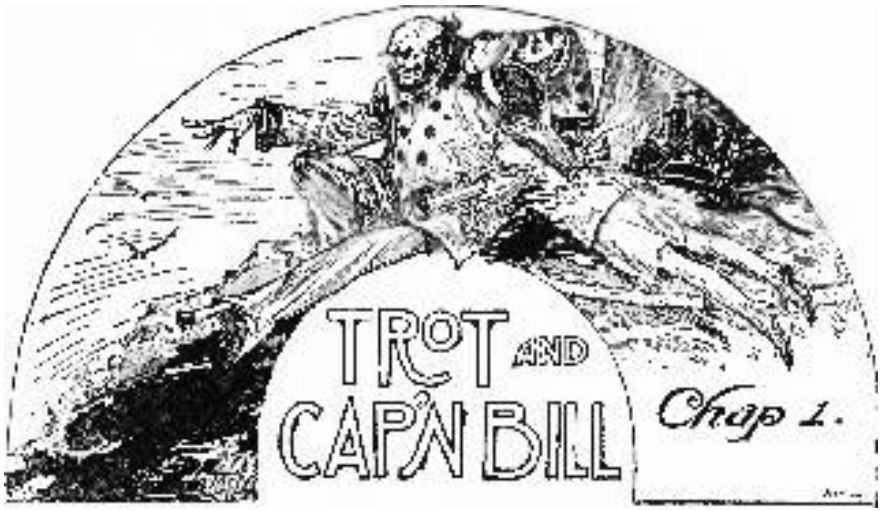
CHAPTER 1
TROT AND CAP'N BILL



"Nobody," said Cap'n Bill solemnly, "ever sawr a mermaid an' lived to tell the tale."

"Why not?" asked Trot, looking earnestly up into the old sailor's face.

They were seated on a bench built around a giant acacia tree that grew just at the edge of the bluff. Below them rolled the blue waves of the great Pacific. A little way behind them was the house, a neat frame cottage painted white and surrounded by huge eucalyptus and pepper trees. Still farther behind that — a quarter of a mile distant but built upon a bend of the coast — was the village, overlooking a pretty bay.

Cap'n Bill and Trot came often to this tree to sit and watch the ocean below them. The sailor man had one "meat leg" and one "hickory leg," and he often said the wooden one was the best of the two. Once Cap'n Bill had commanded and owned the "Anemone," a trading schooner that plied along the coast; and in those days Charlie Griffiths, who was Trot's father, had been the Captain's mate. But ever since Cap'n Bill's accident, when he lost his leg, Charlie Griffiths had been the captain of the little schooner while his old master lived peacefully ashore with the Griffiths family.

This was about the time Trot was born, and the old sailor became very fond of the baby girl. Her real name was Mayre, but when she grew big enough to walk, she took so many busy little steps every day that both her mother and Cap'n Bill nicknamed her "Trot," and so she was thereafter mostly called.

It was the old sailor who taught the child to love the sea, to love it almost

as much as he and her father did, and these two, who represented the "beginning and the end of life," became firm friends and constant companions.

"Why hasn't anybody seen a mermaid and lived?" asked Trot again.

"'Cause mermaids is fairies, an' ain't meant to be seen by us mortal folk," replied Cap'n Bill.

"But if anyone happens to see 'em, what then, Cap'n?"

"Then," he answered, slowly wagging his head, "the mermaids give 'em a smile an' a wink, an' they dive into the water an' gets drownded."

"S'pose they knew how to swim, Cap'n Bill?"

"That don't make any diff'rence, Trot. The mermaids live deep down, an'

the poor mortals never come up again."

The little girl was thoughtful for a moment. "But why do folks dive in the water when the mermaids smile an' wink?" she asked.

"Mermaids," he said gravely, "is the most beautiful creatures in the world — or the water, either. You know what they're like, Trot, they's got a lovely lady's form down to the waist, an' then the other half of 'em's a fish, with green an' purple an' pink scales all down it."

"Have they got arms, Cap'n Bill?"

"'Course, Trot; arms like any other lady. An' pretty faces that smile an' look mighty sweet an' fetchin'. Their hair is long an' soft an' silky, an' floats all around 'em in the water. When they comes up atop the waves, they wring the water out'n their hair and sing songs that go right to your heart. If anybody is unlucky enough to be 'round jes' then, the beauty o' them mermaids an' their sweet songs charm 'em like magic; so's they plunge into the waves to get to the mermaids. But the mermaids haven't any hearts, Trot, no more'n a fish has; so they laughs when the poor people drown an' don't care a fig. That's why I says, an' I says it true, that nobody never sawr a mermaid an' lived to tell the tale."

"Nobody?" asked Trot.

"Nobody a tall."

"Then how do you know, Cap'n Bill?" asked the little girl, looking up into his face with big, round eyes.

Cap'n Bill coughed. Then he tried to sneeze, to gain time. Then he took out his red cotton handkerchief and wiped his bald head with it, rubbing hard so as to make him think clearer. "Look, Trot; ain't that a brig out there?" he inquired, pointing to a sail far out in the sea.

"How does anybody know about mermaids if those who have seen them never lived to tell about them?" she asked again.

"Know what about 'em, Trot?"

"About their green and pink scales and pretty songs and wet hair."

"They don't know, I guess. But mermaids jes' natcherly has to be like that, or they wouldn't be mermaids."

She thought this over. "Somebody MUST have lived, Cap'n Bill," she declared positively. "Other fairies have been seen by mortals; why not mermaids?"

"P'raps they have, Trot, p'raps they have," he answered musingly. "I'm tellin' you as it was told to me, but I never stopped to inquire into the matter so close before. Seems like folks wouldn't know so much about mermaids if they hadn't seen 'em; an' yet accordin' to all accounts the victim is bound to get drownded."

“P’raps,” suggested Trot softly, “someone found a fotygraph of one of ‘em.”

“That might o’ been, Trot, that might o’ been,” answered Cap’n Bill.

A nice man was Cap’n Bill, and Trot knew he always liked to explain everything so she could fully understand it. The aged sailor was not a very tall man, and some people might have called him chubby, or even fat. He wore a blue sailor shirt with white anchors worked on the corners of the broad, square collar, and his blue trousers were very wide at the bottom. He always wore one trouser leg over his wooden limb and sometimes it would flutter in the wind like a flag because it was so wide and the wooden leg so slender. His rough kersey coat was a pea-jacket and came down to his waistline. In the big pockets of his jacket he kept a wonderful jackknife, and his pipe and tobacco, and many bits of string, and matches and keys and lots of other things. Whenever Cap’n Bill thrust a chubby hand into one of his pockets, Trot watched him with breathless interest, for she never knew what he was going to pull out.

The old sailor’s face was brown as a berry. He had a fringe of hair around the back of his head and a fringe of whisker around the edge of his face, running from ear to ear and underneath his chin. His eyes were light blue and kind in expression. His nose was big and broad, and his few teeth were not strong enough to crack nuts with.

Trot liked Cap’n Bill and had a great deal of confidence in his wisdom,

and a great admiration for his ability to make tops and whistles and toys with that marvelous jackknife of his. In the village were many boys and girls of her own age, but she never had as much fun playing with them as she had wandering by the sea accompanied by the old sailor and listening to his fascinating stories.

She knew all about the Flying Dutchman, and Davy Jones' Locker, and Captain Kidd, and how to harpoon a whale or dodge an iceberg or lasso a seal. Cap'n Bill had been everywhere in the world, almost, on his many voyages. He had been wrecked on desert islands like Robinson Crusoe and been attacked by cannibals, and had a host of other exciting adventures. So he was a delightful comrade for the little girl, and whatever Cap'n Bill knew Trot was sure to know in time.

"How do the mermaids live?" she asked. "Are they in caves, or just in the water like fishes, or how?"

"Can't say, Trot," he replied. "I've asked divers about that, but none of 'em ever run acrost a mermaid's nest yet, as I've heard of."

"If they're fairies," she said, "their homes must be very pretty."

"Mebbe so, Trot, but damp. They are sure to be damp, you know."

"I'd like to see a mermaid, Cap'n Bill," said the child earnestly.

"What, an' git drownded?" he exclaimed.

"No, and live to tell the tale. If they're beautiful, and laughing, and sweet, there can't be much harm in them, I'm sure."

"Mermaids is mermaids," remarked Cap'n Bill in his most solemn voice. "It wouldn't do us any good to mix up with 'em, Trot."

"May-re! May-re!" called a voice from the house.

"Yes, Mamma!"

"You an' Cap'n Bill come in to supper."

CHAPTER 2
THE MERMAIDS

The next morning, as soon as Trot had helped wipe the breakfast dishes and put them away in the cupboard, the little girl and Cap'n Bill started out toward the bluff. The air was soft and warm and the sun turned the edges of the waves into sparkling diamonds. Across the bay the last of the fisherboats was speeding away out to sea, for well the fishermen knew this was an ideal day to catch rockbass, barracuda and yellowtail.

The old man and the young girl stood on the bluff and watched all this with interest. Here was their world. "It isn't a bit rough this morning. Let's have a boat ride, Cap'n Bill," said the child.

"Suits me to a T," declared the sailor. So they found the winding path that led down the face of the cliff to the narrow beach below and cautiously began the descent. Trot never minded the steep path or the loose rocks at all, but Cap'n Bill's wooden leg was not so useful on a downgrade as on a level, and he had to be careful not to slip and take a tumble.

But by and by they reached the sands and walked to a spot just beneath the big acacia tree that grew on the bluff. Halfway to the top of the cliff hung suspended a little shed-like structure that sheltered Trot's rowboat, for it was necessary to pull the boat out of reach of the waves which beat in fury against the rocks at high tide. About as high up as Cap'n Bill could reach was an iron ring securely fastened to the cliff, and to this ring was tied a rope. The old sailor unfastened the knot and began paying out the rope, and the rowboat came out of its shed and glided slowly downward to the beach. It

hung on a pair of davits and was lowered just as a boat is lowered from a ship's side. When it reached the sands, the sailor unhooked the ropes and pushed the boat to the water's edge. It was a pretty little craft, light and strong, and Cap'n Bill knew how to sail it or row it, as Trot might desire.

Today they decided to row, so the girl climbed into the bow and her companion stuck his wooden leg into the water's edge "so he wouldn't get his foot wet" and pushed off the little boat as he climbed aboard. Then he seized the oars and began gently paddling.

"Whither away, Commodore Trot?" he asked gaily.

"I don't care, Cap'n. It's just fun enough to be on the water," she answered, trailing one hand overboard. So he rowed around by the North Promontory, where the great caves were, and much as they were enjoying the ride, they soon began to feel the heat of the sun.

"That's Dead Man's Cave, 'cause a skellington was found there," observed the child as they passed a dark, yawning mouth in the cliff. "And that's Bumble Cave, 'cause the bumblebees make nests in the top of it. And here's Smuggler's Cave, 'cause the smugglers used to hide things in it."

She knew all the caves well, and so did Cap'n Bill. Many of them opened just at the water's edge, and it was possible to row their boat far into their dusky depths.

"And here's Echo Cave," she continued, dreamily, as they slowly moved along the coast, "and Giant's Cave, and — oh, Cap'n Bill! Do you s'pose there were ever any giants in that cave?"

"'Pears like there must o' been, Trot, or they wouldn't o' named it that name," he replied, pausing to wipe his bald head with the red handkerchief while the oars dragged in the water.

"We've never been into that cave, Cap'n," she remarked, looking at the small hole in the cliff — an archway through which the water flowed. "Let's go in now."

"What for, Trot?"

"To see if there's a giant there."

"Hm. Aren't you 'fraid?"

"No, are you? I just don't b'lieve it's big enough for a giant to get into."

"Your father was in there once," remarked Cap'n Bill, "an' he says it's the biggest cave on the coast, but low down. It's full o' water, an' the water's deep down to the very bottom o' the ocean; but the rock roof's liable to bump your head at high tide ."

"It's low tide now," returned Trot. "And how could any giant live in there if the roof is so low down?"

"Why, he couldn't, mate. I reckon they must have called it Giant's Cave

‘cause it’s so big, an’ not ‘cause any giant man lived there.”

“Let’s go in,” said the girl again. “I’d like to ‘splore it.”

“All right,” replied the sailor. “It’ll be cooler in there than out here in the sun. We won’t go very far, for when the tide turns we mightn’t get out again.” He picked up the oars and rowed slowly toward the cave. The black archway that marked its entrance seemed hardly big enough to admit the boat at first, but as they drew nearer, the opening became bigger. The sea was very calm here, for the headland shielded it from the breeze.

“Look out fer your head, Trot!” cautioned Cap’n Bill as the boat glided slowly into the rocky arch. But it was the sailor who had to duck, instead of the little girl. Only for a moment, though. Just beyond the opening the cave was higher, and as the boat floated into the dim interior they found themselves on quite an extensive branch of the sea. For a time neither of them spoke and only the soft lapping of the water against the sides of the boat was heard. A beautiful sight met the eyes of the two adventurers and held them dumb with wonder and delight.

It was not dark in this vast cave, yet the light seemed to come from underneath the water, which all around them glowed with an exquisite sapphire color. Where the little waves crept up the sides of the rocks they shone like brilliant jewels, and every drop of spray seemed a gem fit to deck a queen. Trot leaned her chin on her hands and her elbows on her lap and gazed at this charming sight with real enjoyment. Cap’n Bill drew in the oars and let the boat drift where it would while he also sat silently admiring the scene.

Slowly the little craft crept farther and farther into the dim interior of the vast cavern, while its two passengers feasted their eyes on the beauties constantly revealed. Both the old seaman and the little girl loved the ocean in all its various moods. To them it was a constant companion and a genial comrade. If it stormed and raved, they laughed with glee; if it rolled great breakers against the shore, they clapped their hands joyfully; if it lay slumbering at their feet, they petted and caressed it, but always they loved it.

Here was the ocean yet. It had crept under the dome of overhanging rock to reveal itself crowned with sapphires and dressed in azure gown, revealing in this guise new and unexpected charms. “Good morning, Mayre,” said a sweet voice.

Trot gave a start and looked around her in wonder. Just beside her in the water were little eddies — circles within circles — such as are caused when anything sinks below the surface. “Did — did you hear that, Cap’n Bill?” she whispered solemnly.

Cap’n Bill did not answer. He was staring with eyes that fairly bulged out at a place behind Trot’s back, and he shook a little, as if trembling from cold. Trot turned half around, and then she stared, too. Rising from the blue water was a fair face around which floated a mass of long, blonde hair. It was a sweet, girlish face with eyes of the same deep blue as the water and red lips whose dainty smile disposed two rows of pearly teeth. The cheeks were plump and rosy, the brows gracefully penciled, while the chin was rounded and had a pretty dimple in it.

“The most beauti-ful-est in all the world,” murmured Cap’n Bill in a voice of horror, “an’ no one has ever lived to — to tell the tale!”

There was a peal of merry laughter at this, laughter that rippled and echoed throughout the cavern. Just at Trot’s side appeared a new face even fairer than the other, with a wealth of brown hair wreathing the lovely features. And the eyes smiled kindly into those of the child. “Are you a — a mermaid?” asked Trot curiously. She was not a bit afraid. They seemed both gentle and friendly.

“Yes, dear,” was the soft answer.

“We are all mermaids!” chimed a laughing chorus, and here and there, all about the boat, appeared pretty faces lying just upon the surface of the water.

“Are you part fishes?” asked Trot, greatly pleased by this wonderful sight.

“No, we are all mermaid,” replied the one with the brown hair. “The fishes are partly like us, because they live in the sea and must move about. And you are partly like us, Mayre dear, but have awkward stiff legs so you may walk on the land. But the mermaids lived before fishes and before mankind, so both have borrowed something from us.”

“Then you must be fairies if you’ve lived always,” remarked Trot, nodding wisely.

“We are, dear. We are the water fairies,” answered the one with the blonde hair, coming nearer and rising till her slender white throat showed plainly.

“We — we’re goners, Trot!” sighed Cap’n Bill with a white, woebegone face.

"I guess not, Cap'n," she answered calmly. "These pretty mermaids aren't going to hurt us, I'm sure."

"No indeed," said the first one who had spoken. "If we were wicked enough to wish to harm you, our magic could reach you as easily upon the land as in this cave. But we love little girls dearly and wish only to please them and make their lives more happy."

"I believe that!" cried Trot earnestly.

Cap'n Bill groaned.

"Guess why we have appeared to you," said another mermaid, coming to the side of the boat.

"Why?" asked the child.

“We heard you say yesterday you would like to see a mermaid, and so we decided to grant your wish.”

“That was real nice of you,” said Trot gratefully.

“Also, we heard all the foolish things Cap’n Bill said about us,” remarked the brown-haired one smilingly, “and we wanted to prove to him that they were wrong.”

“I on’y said what I’ve heard,” protested Cap’n Bill. “Never havin’ seen a mermaid afore, I couldn’t be ackerate, an’ I never expected to see one an’ live to tell the tale.”

Again the cave rang with merry laughter, and as it died away, Trot said, “May I see your scales, please? And are they green and purple and pink like Cap’n Bill said?” They seemed undecided what to say to this and swam a little way off, where the beautiful heads formed a group that was delightful to see. Perhaps they talked together, for the brown-haired mermaid soon came back to the side of the boat and asked, “Would you like to visit our kingdom and see all the wonders that exist below the sea?”

“I’d like to,” replied Trot promptly, “but I couldn’t. I’d get drowned.”

“That you would, mate!” cried Cap’n Bill.

“Oh no,” said the mermaid. “We would make you both like one of ourselves, and then you could live within the water as easily as we do.”

“I don’t know as I’d like that,” said the child, “at least for always.”

“You need not stay with us a moment longer than you please,” returned the mermaid, smiling as if amused at the remark. “Whenever you are ready to return home, we promise to bring you to this place again and restore to you the same forms you are now wearing.”

“Would I have a fish’s tail?” asked Trot earnestly.

“You would have a mermaid’s tail,” was the reply.

“What color would my scales be — pink, or purple?”

“You may choose the color yourself.”

“Look ahere, Trot!” said Cap’n Bill in excitement. “You ain’t thinkin’ o’ doin’ such a fool thing, are you?”

“‘Course I am,” declared the little girl. “We don’t get such inv’tations every day, Cap’n, and if I don’t go now I may never find out how the mermaids live.”

“I don’t care how they live, myself,” said Cap’n Bill. “I jes’ want ‘em to let ME live.”

“There’s no danger,” insisted Trot.

“I do’ know ‘bout that. That’s what all the other folks said when they dove after the mermaids an’ got drownded.”

“Who?” asked the girl.

“I don’t know who, but I’ve heard tell — ”

“You’ve heard that no one ever saw a mermaid and lived,” said Trot.

“To tell the tale,” he added, nodding. “An’ if we dives down like they says, we won’t live ourselves.”

All the mermaids laughed at this, and the brown-haired one said, “Well, if you are afraid, don’t come. You may row your boat out of this cave and never see us again, if you like. We merely thought it would please little Mayre, and were willing to show her the sights of our beautiful home.”

“I’d like to see ‘em, all right,” said Trot, her eyes glistening with pleasure.

“So would I,” admitted Cap’n Bill, “if we would live to tell the tale.”

“Don’t you believe us?” asked the mermaid, fixing her lovely eyes on those of the old sailor and smiling prettily. “Are you afraid to trust us to bring you safely back?”

“N-n-no,” said Cap’n Bill, “‘tain’t that. I’ve got to look after Trot.”

“Then you’ll have to come with me,” said Trot decidedly, “for I’m going to ‘cept this inv’tation. If you don’t care to come, Cap’n Bill, you go home and tell mother I’m visitin’ the mermaids.”

“She’d scold me inter shivers!” moaned Cap’n Bill with a shudder. “I guess I’d ruther take my chance down below.”

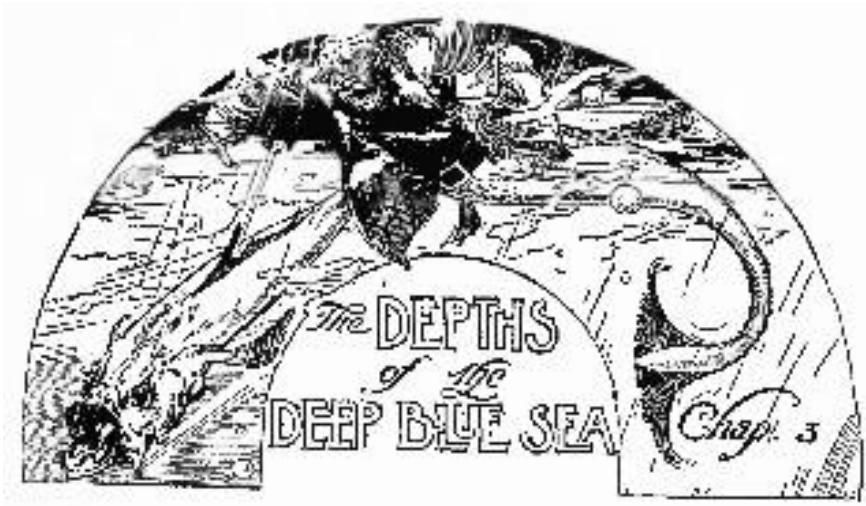
“All right, I’m ready, Miss Mermaid,” said Trot. “What shall I do? Jump in, clothes and all?”

“Give me your hand, dear,” answered the mermaid, lifting a lovely white arm from the water. Trot took the slender hand and found it warm and soft and not a bit “fishy.”

“My name is Clia,” continued the mermaid, “and I am a princess in our deep-sea kingdom.”

Just then Trot gave a flop and flopped right out of the boat into the water. Cap’n Bill caught a gleam of pink scales as his little friend went overboard, and the next moment there was Trot’s face in the water among those of the mermaids. She was laughing with glee as she looked up into Cap’n Bill’s face and called, “Come on in, Cap’n! It didn’t hurt a bit!”

CHAPTER 3
THE DEPTHS OF THE DEEP BLUE SEA



Cap'n Bill stood up in the boat as if undecided what to do. Never a sailor man was more bewildered than this old fellow by the strangeness of the adventure he had encountered. At first he could hardly believe it was all true and that he was not dreaming; but there was Trot in the water, laughing with the mermaids and floating comfortably about, and he couldn't leave his dear little companion to make the trip to the depths of the ocean alone.

"Take my hand, please, Cap'n Bill," said Princess Clia, reaching her dainty arm toward him; and suddenly the old man took courage and clasped the soft fingers in his own. He had to lean over the boat to do this, and then there came a queer lightness to his legs and he had a great longing to be in the water. So he gave a flop and flopped in beside Trot, where he found himself comfortable enough, but somewhat frightened.

"Law sakes!" he gasped. "Here's me in the water with my rheumatics! I'll be that stiff termorrer I can't wiggle."

"You're wigglin' all right now," observed Trot. "That's a fine tail you've got, Cap'n, an' its green scales is jus' beautiful."

"Are they green, eh?" he asked, twisting around to try to see them.

"Green as em'ralds, Cap'n. How do they feel?"

"Feel, Trot, feel? Why, this tail beats that ol' wooden leg all holler! I kin do stunts now that I couldn't o' done in a thousand years with ol' peg."

"And don't be afraid of the rheumatism," advised the Princess. "No mermaid ever catches cold or suffers pain in the water."

"Is Cap'n Bill a mermaid now?" asked Trot.

“Why, he’s a merMAN, I suppose,” laughed the pretty princess. “But when he gets home, he will be just Cap’n Bill again.”

“Wooden leg an’ all?” inquired the child.

“To be sure, my dear.”

The sailor was now trying his newly discovered power of swimming, and became astonished at the feats he could accomplish. He could dart this way and that with wonderful speed, and turn and dive, and caper about in the water far better than he had ever been able to do on land — even before he got the wooden leg. And a curious thing about this present experience was that the water did not cling to him and wet him as it had always done before. He still wore his flannel shirt and pea jacket and his sailor cap; but although

he was in the water and had been underneath the surface, the cloth still seemed dry and warm. As he dived down and came up again, the drops flashed from his head and the fringe of beard, but he never needed to wipe his face or eyes at all.

Trot, too, was having queer experiences and enjoying them. When she ducked under water, she saw plainly everything about her as easily and distinctly as she had ever seen anything above water. And by looking over her shoulder she could watch the motion of her new tail, all covered with pretty iridescent pink scales, which gleamed like jewels. She wore her dress the same as before, and the water failed to affect it in the least.

She now noticed that the mermaids were clothed, too, and their exquisite gowns were the loveliest thing the little girl had ever beheld. They seemed made of a material that was like sheeny silk, cut low in the neck and with wide, flowing sleeves that seldom covered the shapely, white arms of her new friends. The gowns had trains that floated far behind the mermaids as they swam, but were so fleecy and transparent that the sparkle of their scales might be seen reaching back of their waists, where the human form ended and the fish part began. The sea fairies wore strings of splendid pearls twined around their throats, while more pearls were sewn upon their gowns for trimmings. They did not dress their beautiful hair at all, but let it float around them in clouds.

The little girl had scarcely time to observe all this when the princess said, "Now, my dear, if you are ready, we will begin our journey, for it is a long way to our palaces."

"All right," answered Trot, and took the hand extended to her with a trustful smile.

"Will you allow me to guide you, Cap'n Bill?" asked the blonde mermaid, extending her hand to the old sailor.

"Of course, ma'am," he said, taking her fingers rather bashfully.

"My name is Merla," she continued, "and I am cousin to Princess Clia. We must all keep together, you know, and I will hold your hand to prevent your missing the way."

While she spoke they began to descend through the water, and it grew quite dark for a time because the cave shut out the light. But presently Trot, who was eagerly looking around her, began to notice the water lighten and saw they were coming into brighter parts of the sea. "We have left the cave now," said Clia, "and may swim straight home."

"I s'pose there are no winding roads in the ocean," remarked the child, swimming swiftly beside her new friend.

"Oh yes indeed. At the bottom, the way is far from being straight or

level," replied Clia. "But we are in mid-water now, where nothing will hinder our journey, unless — "

She seemed to hesitate, so Trot asked, "Unless what?"

"Unless we meet with disagreeable creatures," said the Princess. "The mid-water is not as safe as the very bottom, and that is the reason we are holding your hands."

"What good would that do?" asked Trot.

"You must remember that we are fairies," said Princess Clia. "For that reason, nothing in the ocean can injure us, but you two are mortals and therefore not entirely safe at all times unless we protect you."

Trot was thoughtful for a few moments and looked around her a little anxiously. Now and then a dark form would shoot across their pathway or pass them at some distance, but none was near enough for the girl to see plainly what it might be. Suddenly they swam right into a big school of fishes, all yellowtails and of very large size. There must have been hundreds of them lying lazily in the water, and when they saw the mermaids they merely wriggled to one side and opened a path for the sea fairies to pass through. "Will they hurt us?" asked Trot.

"No indeed," laughed the Princess. "Fishes are stupid creatures mostly, and this family is quite harmless."

"How about sharks?" asked Cap'n Bill, who was swimming gracefully beside them, his hand clutched in that of pretty Merla.

"Sharks may indeed be dangerous to you," replied Clia, "so I advise you to keep them at a safe distance. They never dare attempt to bite a mermaid, and it may be they will think you belong to our band; but it is well to avoid them if possible."

"Don't get careless, Cap'n," added Trot.

"I surely won't, mate," he replied. "You see, I didn't use to be 'fraid o' sharks 'cause if they came near I'd stick my wooden leg at 'em. But now, if

they happens to fancy these green scales, it's all up with ol' Bill."

"Never fear," said Merla, "I'll take care of you on our journey, and in our palaces you will find no sharks at all."

"Can't they get in?" he asked anxiously.

"No. The palaces of the mermaids are inhabited only by themselves."

"Is there anything else to be afraid of in the sea?" asked the little girl after they had swum quite a while in silence.

"One or two things, my dear," answered Princess Clia. "Of course, we mermaids have great powers, being fairies; yet among the sea people is one nearly as powerful as we are, and that is the devilfish."

"I know," said Trot. "I've seen 'em."

"You have seen the smaller ones, I suppose, which sometimes rise to the surface or go near the shore, and are often caught by fishermen," said Clia, "but they are only second cousins of the terrible deep-sea devilfish to which I refer."

"Those ones are bad enough, though," declared Cap'n Bill. "If you know any worse ones, I don't want a interduction to 'em."

"The monster devilfish inhabit caves in the rugged, mountainous regions of the ocean," resumed the Princess, "and they are evil spirits who delight in injuring all who meet them. None lives near our palaces, so there is little danger of your meeting any while you are our guests."

"I hope we won't," said Trot.

"None for me," added Cap'n Bill. "Devils of any sort ought to be give a wide berth, an' devilfish is worser ner sea serpents."

"Oh, do you know the sea serpents?" asked Merla as if surprised.

"Not much I don't," answered the sailor, "but I've heard tell of folks as has seen 'em."

"Did they ever live to tell the tale?" asked Trot.

"Sometimes," he replied. "They're jes' ORful creatures, mate."

"How easy it is to be mistaken," said Princess Clia softly. "We know the sea serpents very well, and we like them."

"You do!" exclaimed Trot.

"Yes, dear. There are only three of them in all the world, and not only are they harmless, but quite bashful and shy. They are kind-hearted, too, and although not beautiful in appearance, they do many kind deeds and are generally beloved."

"Where do they live?" asked the child.

"The oldest one, who is king of this ocean, lives quite near us," said Clia. "His name is Anko."

"How old is he?" inquired Cap'n Bill curiously.

“No one knows. He was here before the ocean came, and he stayed here because he learned to like the water better than the land as a habitation. Perhaps King Anko is ten thousand years old, perhaps twenty thousand. We often lose track of the centuries down here in the sea.”

“That’s pretty old, isn’t it?” said Trot. “Older than Cap’n Bill, I guess.”

“Summat,” chuckled the sailor man, “summat older, mate, but not much. P’raps the sea serpent ain’t got gray whiskers.”

“Oh yes he has,” responded Merla with a laugh. “And so have his two brothers, Unko and Inko. They each have an ocean of their own, you know; and once every hundred years they come here to visit their brother Anko. So we’ve seen all three many times.”

“Why, how old are mermaids, then?” asked Trot, looking around at the beautiful creatures wonderingly.

“We are like all ladies of uncertain age,” rejoined the Princess with a smile. “We don’t care to tell.”

“Older than Cap’n Bill?”

“Yes, dear,” said Clia.

“But we haven’t any gray whiskers,” added Merla merrily, “and our hearts are ever young.”

Trot was thoughtful. It made her feel solemn to be in the company of such old people. The band of mermaids seemed to all appearances young and fresh and not a bit as if they’d been soaked in water for hundreds of years. The girl began to take more notice of the sea maidens following after her. More than a dozen were in the group; all were lovely in appearance and clothed in the same gauzy robes as Merla and the Princess. These attendants did not join in the conversation but darted here and there in sportive play, and often Trot heard the tinkling chorus of their laughter. Whatever doubts might have arisen in the child’s mind through the ignorant tales of her sailor friend, she now found the mermaids to be light-hearted, joyous and gay, and from the first she had not been in the least afraid of her new companions.

“How much farther do we have to go?” asked Cap’n Bill presently.

“Are you getting tired?” Merla inquired.

“No,” said he, “but I’m sorter anxious to see what your palaces look like. Inside the water ain’t as interestin’ as the top of it. It’s fine swimmin’, I’ll agree, an’ I like it, but there ain’t nuthin’ special to see that I can make out.”

“That is true, sir,” replied the Princess. “We have purposely led you through the mid-water hoping you would see nothing to alarm you until you get more accustomed to our ocean life. Moreover, we are able to travel more swiftly here. How far do you think we have already come, Cap’n?”

“Oh, ‘bout two mile,” he answered.

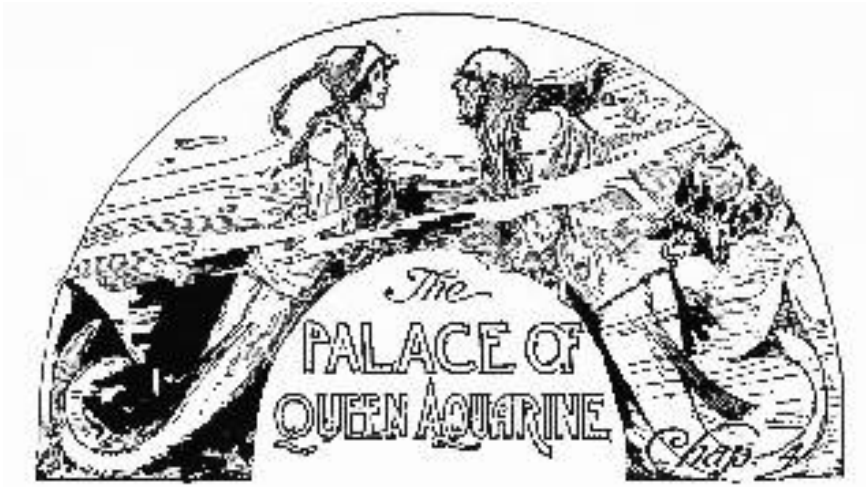
“Well, we are now hundreds of miles from the cave where we started,” she told him.

“You don’t mean it!” he exclaimed in wonder.

“Then there’s magic in it,” announced Trot soberly.

“True, my dear. To avoid tiring you and to save time, we have used a little of our fairy power,” said Clia. “The result is that we are nearing our home. Let us go downward a bit, now, for you must know that the mermaid palaces are at the very bottom of the ocean, and in its deepest part.”

CHAPTER 4
THE PALACE OF QUEEN AQUAREINE



Trot was surprised to find it was not at all dark or gloomy as they descended farther into the deep sea. Things were not quite so clear to her eyes as they had been in the bright sunshine above the ocean's surface, but every object was distinct nevertheless, as if she saw through a pane of green-tainted glass. The water was very clear except for this green shading, and the little girl had never before felt so light and buoyant as she did now. It was no effort at all to dart through the water, which seemed to support her on all sides.

"I don't believe I weigh anything at all," she said to Cap'n Bill.

"No more do I, Trot," said he. "But that's nat'ral, seein' as we're under water so far. What bothers me most is how we manage to breathe, havin' no gills like fishes have."

"Are you sure we haven't any gills?" she asked, lifting her free hand to feel her throat.

"Sure. Ner the mermaids haven't any, either," declared Cap'n Bill.

"Then," said Trot, "we're breathing by magic."

The mermaids laughed at this shrewd remark, and the Princess said, "You have guessed correctly, my dear. Go a little slower, now, for the palaces are in sight."

"Where?" asked Trot eagerly.

"Just before you."

"In that grove of trees?" inquired the girl. And really, it seemed to her that they were approaching a beautiful grove. The bottom of the sea was covered with white sand, in which grew many varieties of sea shrubs with branches

like those of trees. Not all of them were green, however, for the branches and leaves were of a variety of gorgeous colors. Some were purple, shading down to a light lavender; and there were reds all the way from a delicate rose-pink to vivid shades of scarlet. Orange, yellow and blue shades were there, too, mingling with the sea-greens in a most charming manner. Altogether, Trot found the brilliant coloring somewhat bewildering.

These sea shrubs, which in size were quite as big and tall as the trees on earth, were set so close together that their branches entwined; but there were several avenues leading into the groves, and at the entrance to each avenue the girl noticed several large fishes with long spikes growing upon their noses.

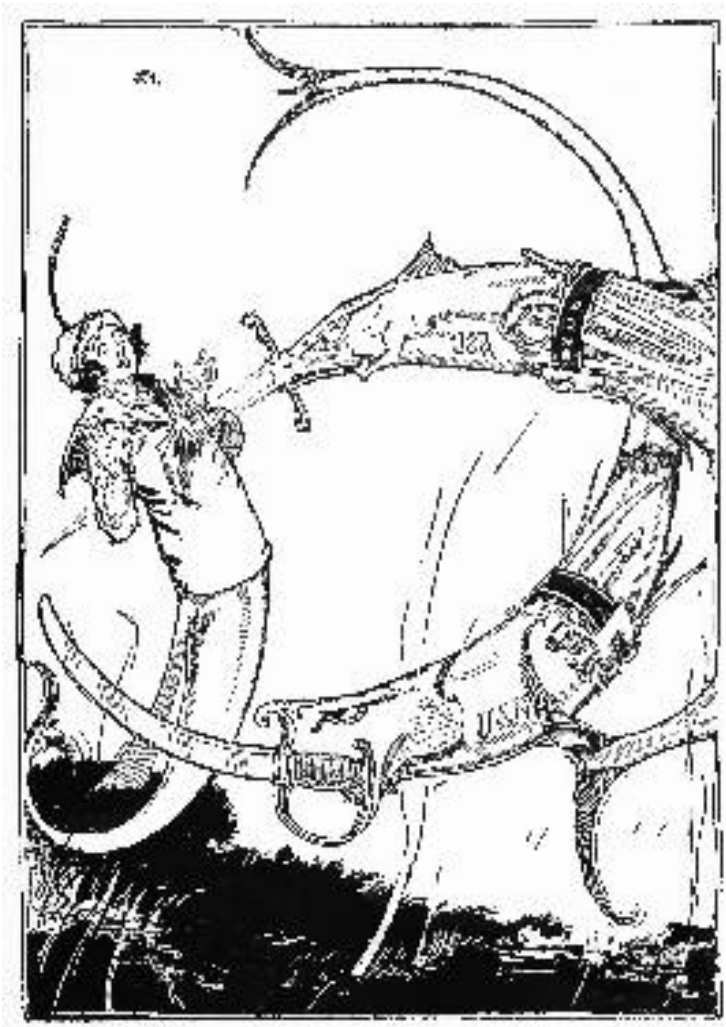
"Those are swordfishes," remarked the Princess as she led the band past one of these avenues.

"Are they dang'rous?" asked Trot.

"Not to us," was the reply. "The swordfishes are among our most valued and faithful servants, guarding the entrances to the gardens which surround our palaces. If any creatures try to enter uninvited, these guards fight them and drive them away. Their swords are sharp and strong, and they are fierce fighters, I assure you."

"I've known 'em to attack ships, an' stick their swords right through the wood," said Cap'n Bill.

"Those belonged to the wandering tribes of swordfishes," explained the Princess. "These, who are our servants, are too sensible and intelligent to attack ships."



The band now headed into a broad passage through the "gardens," as the mermaids called these gorgeous groves, and the great swordfishes guarding the entrance made way for them to pass, afterward resuming their posts with watchful eyes. As they slowly swam along the avenue, Trot noticed that some of the bushes seemed to have fruits growing upon them, but what these fruits might be neither she nor Cap'n Bill could guess.

The way wound here and there for some distance, till finally they came to a more open space all carpeted with sea flowers of exquisite colorings. Although Trot did not know it, these flowers resembled the rare orchids of earth in their fanciful shapes and marvelous hues. The child did not examine them very closely, for across the carpet of flowers loomed the magnificent

and extensive palaces of the mermaids.

These palaces were built of coral; white, pink and yellow being used, and the colors arranged in graceful designs. The front of the main palace, which now faced them, had circular ends connecting the straight wall, not unlike the architecture we are all familiar with; yet there seemed to be no windows to the building, although a series of archways served as doors.

Arriving at one of the central archways, the band of sea maidens separated. Princess Clia and Merla leading Trot and Cap'n Bill into the palace, while the other mermaids swam swiftly away to their own quarters.

"Welcome!" said Clia in her sweet voice. "Here you are surrounded only by friends and are in perfect safety. Please accept our hospitality as freely as you desire, for we consider you honored guests. I hope you will like our home," she added a little shyly.

"We are sure to, dear Princess," Trot hastened to say.

Then Clia escorted them through the archway and into a lofty hall. It was not a mere grotto, but had smoothly built walls of pink coral inlaid with white. Trot at first thought there was no roof, for looking upward she could see the water all above them. But the princess, reading her thought, said with a smile, "Yes, there is a roof, or we would be unable to keep all the sea people out of our palace. But the roof is made of glass to admit the light."

"Glass!" cried the astonished child. "Then it must be an awful big pane of glass."

"It is," agreed Clia. "Our roofs are considered quite wonderful, and we owe them to the fairy powers of our queen. Of course, you understand there is no natural way to make glass under water."

"No indeed," said Cap'n Bill. And then he asked, "Does your queen live here?"

"Yes. She is waiting now, in her throne room, to welcome you. Shall we go in?"

"I'd just as soon," replied Trot rather timidly, but she boldly followed the princess, who glided through another arch into another small room where several mermaids were reclining upon couches of coral. They were beautifully dressed and wore many sparkling jewels.

"Her Majesty is awaiting the strangers, Princess Clia," announced one of these. "You are asked to enter at once."

"Come, then," said Clia, and once more taking Trot's hand, she led the girl through still another arch, while Merla followed just behind them, escorting Cap'n Bill. They now entered an apartment so gorgeous that the child fairly gasped with astonishment. The queen's throne room was indeed the grandest and most beautiful chamber in all the ocean palaces. Its coral

walls were thickly inlaid with mother-of-pearl, exquisitely shaded and made into borders and floral decorations. In the corners were cabinets, upon the shelves of which many curious shells were arranged, all beautifully polished. The floor glittered with gems arranged in patterns of flowers, like a brilliant carpet.

Near the center of the room was a raised platform of mother-of-pearl upon which stood a couch thickly studded with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls. Here reclined Queen Aquareine, a being so lovely that Trot gazed upon her spellbound and Cap'n Bill took off his sailor cap and held it in his hands.

All about the room were grouped other mother-of-pearl couches, not raised like that of the queen, and upon each of these reclined a pretty mermaid. They could not sit down as we do, Trot readily understood, because of their tails; but they rested very gracefully upon the couches with their trailing gauzy robes arranged in fleecy folds.

When Clia and Merla escorted the strangers down the length of the great room toward the royal throne, they met with pleasant looks and smiles on every side, for the sea maidens were too polite to indulge in curious stares. They paused just before the throne, and the queen raised her head upon one elbow to observe them. "Welcome, Mayre," she said, "and welcome, Cap'n Bill. I trust you are pleased with your glimpse of the life beneath the surface of our sea."

"I am," answered Trot, looking admiringly at the beautiful face of the queen.

"It's all mighty cur'ous an' strange-like," said the sailor slowly. "I'd no idee you mermaids were like this, at all!"

"Allow me to explain that it was to correct your wrong ideas about us that led me to invite you to visit us," replied the Queen. "We usually pay little heed to the earth people, for we are content in our own dominions; but, of course, we know all that goes on upon your earth. So when Princess Clia chanced to overhear your absurd statements concerning us, we were greatly amused and decided to let you see with your own eyes just what we are like."

"I'm glad you did," answered Cap'n Bill, dropping his eyes in some confusion as he remembered his former description of the mermaids.

"Now that you are here," continued the Queen in a cordial, friendly tone, "you may as well remain with us a few days and see the wonderful sights of our ocean."

"I'm much obliged to you, ma'am," said Trot, "and I'd like to stay ever so much, but mother worries jus' dreadfully if we don't get home in time."

"I'll arrange all that," said Aquareine with a smile.

“How?” asked the girl.

“I will make your mother forget the passage of time so she will not realize how long you are away. Then she cannot worry.”

“Can you do that?” inquired Trot.

“Very easily. I will send your mother into a deep sleep that will last until you are ready to return home. Just at present she is seated in her chair by the front window, engaged in knitting.” The queen paused to raise an arm and wave it slowly to and fro. Then she added, “Now your good mother is asleep, little Mayre, and instead of worries I promise her pleasant dreams.”

“Won’t someone rob the house while she’s asleep?” asked the child anxiously.

“No, dear. My charm will protect the house from any intrusion.”

"That's fine!" exclaimed Trot in delight.

"It's jes' won-erful!" said Cap'n Bill. "I wish I knew it was so. Trot's mother has a awful sharp tongue when she's worried."

"You may see for yourselves," declared the Queen, and waved her hand again. At once they saw before them the room in the cottage, with Mayre's mother asleep by the window. Her knitting was in her lap, and the cat lay curled up beside her chair. It was all so natural that Trot thought she could hear the clock over the fireplace tick. After a moment the scene faded away, when the queen asked with another smile, "Are you satisfied?"

"Oh yes!" cried Trot. "But how could you do it?"

"It is a form of mirage," was the reply. "We are able to bring any earth

scene before us whenever we wish. Sometimes these scenes are reflected above the water so that mortals also observe them."

"I've seen 'em," said Cap'n Bill, nodding. "I've seen mirages, but I never knowed what caused 'em afore now."

"Whenever you see anything you do not understand and wish to ask questions, I will be very glad to answer them," said the Queen.

"One thing that bothers me," said Trot, "is why we don't get wet, being in the ocean with water all around us."

"That is because no water really touches you," explained the Queen. "Your bodies have been made just like those of the mermaids in order that you may fully enjoy your visit to us. One of our peculiar qualities is that water is never permitted to quite touch our bodies, or our gowns. Always there remains a very small space, hardly a hair's breadth, between us and the water, which is the reason we are always warm and dry."

"I see," said Trot. "That's why you don't get soggy or withered."

"Exactly," laughed the Queen, and the other mermaids joined in her merriment.

"I s'pose that's how we can breathe without gills," remarked Cap'n Bill thoughtfully.

"Yes. The air space is constantly replenished from the water, which contains air, and this enables us to breathe as freely as you do upon the earth."

"But we have fins," said Trot, looking at the fin that stood upright on Cap'n Bill's back.

"Yes. They allow us to guide ourselves as we swim, and so are very

useful," replied the Queen.

"They make us more finished," said Cap'n Bill with a chuckle. Then, suddenly becoming grave, he added, "How about my rheumatics, ma'am? Ain't I likely to get stiffened up with all this dampness?"

"No indeed," Aquareine answered. "There is no such thing as rheumatism in all our dominions. I promise no evil result shall follow this visit to us, so please be as happy and contented as possible."

CHAPTER 5
THE SEA-SERPENT

Just then Trot happened to look up at the glass roof and saw a startling sight. A big head with a face surrounded by stubby gray whiskers was poised just over them, and the head was connected with a long, curved body that looked much like a sewer pipe.

"Oh, there is King Anko," said the Queen, following the child's gaze. "Open a door and let him in, Clia, for I suppose our old friend is anxious to see the earth people."

"Won't he hurt us?" asked the little girl with a shiver of fear.

"Who, Anko? Oh no, my dear! We are very fond of the sea serpent, who is king of this ocean, although he does not rule the mermaids. Old Anko is a very agreeable fellow, as you will soon discover."

"Can he talk?" asked Trot.

"Yes indeed."

"And can we understand what he says?"

"Perfectly," replied the Queen. "I have given you power, while you remain here, to understand the language of every inhabitant of the sea."

"That's nice," said Trot gratefully.

The Princess Clia swam slowly to one of the walls of the throne room where, at a wave of her hand, a round hole appeared in the coral. The sea serpent at once observed this opening and the head left the roof of glass only to reappear presently at the round hole. Through this he slowly crawled until his head was just beneath the throne of Queen Aquareine, who said to him:

“Good morning, your Majesty. I hope you are quite well?”

“Quite well, thank your Majesty,” answered Anko; and then he turned to the strangers. “I suppose these are the earth folks you were expecting?”

“Yes,” returned the Queen. “The girl is named Mayre and the man Cap’n Bill.”

While the sea serpent looked at the visitors, they ventured to look at him. He certainly was a queer creature, yet Trot decided he was not at all frightful. His head was round as a ball, but his ears were sharp-pointed and had tassels at the ends of them. His nose was flat, and his mouth very wide indeed, but his eyes were blue and gentle in expression. The white, stubby hairs that surrounded his face were not thick like a beard, but scattered and scraggly. From the head, the long, brown body of the sea serpent extended to the hole in the coral wall, which was just big enough to admit it; and how much more of the body remained outside the child could not tell. On the back of the body were several fins, which made the creature look more like an eel than a serpent.

“The girl is young and the man is old,” said King Anko in a soft voice. “But I’m quite sure Cap’n Bill isn’t as old as I am.”

“How old are you?” asked the sailor.

“I can’t say exactly. I can remember several thousands of years back, but beyond that my memory fails me. How’s your memory, Cap’n Bill?”

“You’ve got me beat,” was the reply. “I’ll give in that you’re older than I am.”

This seemed to please the sea serpent. “Are you well?” he asked.

“Pretty fair,” said Cap’n Bill. “How’s yourself?”

“Oh, I’m very well, thank you,” answered Anko. “I never remember to have had a pain but three times in my life. The last time was when Julius Sneezer was on earth.”

“You mean Julius Caesar,” said Trot, correcting him.

“No, I mean Julius Sneezer,” insisted the Sea Serpent. “That was his real name — Sneezer. They called him Caesar sometimes just because he took everything he could lay hands on. I ought to know, because I saw him when he was alive. Did you see him when he was alive, Cap’n Bill?”

“I reckon not,” admitted the sailor.

“That time I had a toothache,” continued Anko, “but I got a lobster to pull the tooth with his claw, so the pain was soon over.”

“Did it hurt to pull it?” asked Trot.

“Hurt!” exclaimed the Sea Serpent, groaning at the recollection. “My dear, those creatures have been called lobsters ever since! The second pain I had way back in the time of Nevercouldnever.”

“Oh, I s’pose you mean Nebuchadnezzar,” said Trot.

“Do you call him that now?” asked the Sea Serpent as if surprised. “He used to be called Nevercouldnever when he was alive, but this new way of spelling seems to get everything mixed up. Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t mean anything at all, it seems to me.”

“It means he ate grass,” said the child.

“Oh no, he didn’t,” declared the Sea Serpent. “He was the first to discover that lettuce was good to eat, and he became very fond of it. The people may have called it grass, but they were wrong. I ought to know, because I was alive when Nevercouldnever lived. Were you alive, then?”

“No,” said Trot.

“The pain I had then,” remarked Anko, “was caused by a kink in my tail about three hundred feet from the end. There was an old octopus who did not like me, and so he tied a knot in my tail when I wasn’t looking.”

“What did you do?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“Well, first I transformed the octopus into a jellyfish, and then I waited for the tide to turn. When my tail was untied, the pain stopped.”

“I — I don’t understand that,” said Trot, somewhat bewildered.

“Thank you, my dear,” replied the Sea Serpent in a grateful voice. “People who are always understood are very common. You are sure to respect those you can’t understand, for you feel that perhaps they know more than you do.”

“About how long do you happen to be?” inquired Cap’n Bill.

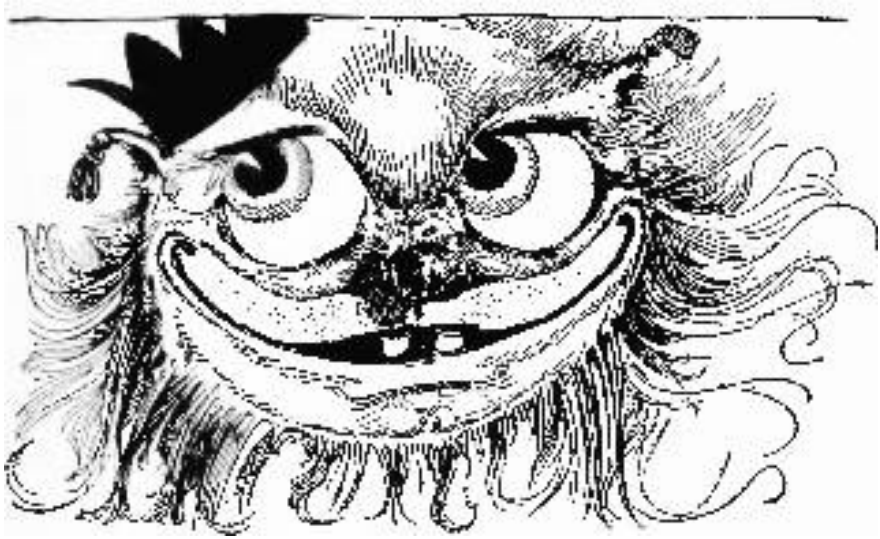
“When last measured, I was seven thousand four hundred and eighty-two feet, five inches and a quarter. I’m not sure about the quarter, but the rest is probably correct. Adam measured me when Cain was a baby.”

“Where’s the rest of you, then?” asked Trot.

“Safe at home, I hope, and coiled up in my parlor,” answered the Sea Serpent. “When I go out, I usually take along only what is needed. It saves a lot of bother and I can always find my way back in the darkest night by just coiling up the part that has been away.”

“Do you like to be a sea serpent?” inquired the child.

“Yes, for I’m King of my Ocean, and there is no other sea serpent to imagine he is just as good as I am. I have two brothers who live in other oceans, but one is seven inches shorter than I am, and the other several feet shorter. It’s curious to talk about feet when we haven’t any feet, isn’t it?”



"Seems so," acknowledged Trot.

"I feel I have much to be proud of," continued Anko in a dreamy tone. "My great age, my undisputed sway, and my exceptional length."

"I don't b'lieve I'd care to live so long," remarked Cap'n Bill thoughtfully.

"So long as seven thousand four hundred and eighty-two feet, five inches and a quarter?" asked the Sea Serpent.

"No, I mean so many years," replied the sailor.

"But what can one do if one happens to be a sea serpent?" Anko inquired. "There is nothing in the sea that can hurt me, and I cannot commit suicide because we have no carbolic acid or firearms or gas to turn on. So it isn't a matter of choice, and I'd about as soon be alive as dead. It does not seem quite so monotonous, you know. But I guess I've stayed about long enough, so I'll go home to dinner. Come and see me when you have time."

"Thank you," said Trot, and Merla added, "I'll take you over to his majesty's palace when we go out and let you see how he lives."

"Yes, do," said Anko. And then he slowly slid out of the hole, which immediately closed behind him, leaving the coral wall as solid as before.

"Oh!" exclaimed Trot. "King Anko forgot to tell us what his third pain was about."

"So he did," said Cap'n Bill. "We must ask him about that when we see him. But I guess the ol' boy's mem'ry is failin', an' he can't be depended on for pertic'lars."

EXPLORING
THE OCEAN

CHAPTER 6

EXPLORING THE OCEAN

The queen now requested her guests to recline upon couches that they might rest themselves from their long swim and talk more at their ease. So the girl and the sailor allowed themselves to float downward until they rested their bodies on two of the couches nearest the throne, which were willingly vacated for them by the mermaids who occupied them until then.

The visitors soon found themselves answering a great many questions about their life on the earth, for although the queen had said she kept track of what was going on on the land, there were many details of human life in which all the mermaids seemed greatly interested.

During the conversation several sea-maids came swimming into the room bearing trays of sea apples and other fruit, which they first offered to the queen, and then passed the refreshments around to the company assembled. Trot and Cap'n Bill each took some, and the little girl found the fruits delicious to eat, as they had a richer flavor than any that grew upon land. Queen Aquareine was much pleased when the old sailor asked for more, but Merla warned him dinner would soon be served and he must take care not to spoil his appetite for that meal. "Our dinner is at noon, for we have to cook in the middle of the day when the sun is shining," she said.

"Cook!" cried Trot. "Why, you can't build a fire in the water, can you?"

"We have no need of fires," was the reply. "The glass roof of our kitchen is so curved that it concentrates the heat of the sun's rays, which are then hot enough to cook anything we wish."

"But how do you get along if the day is cloudy, and the sun doesn't shine?" inquired the little girl.

"Then we use the hot springs that bubble up in another part of the palace," Merla answered. "But the sun is the best to cook by." So it was no surprise to Trot when, about noon, dinner was announced and all the mermaids, headed by their queen and their guests, swam into another spacious room where a great, long table was laid. The dishes were of polished gold and dainty-cut glass, and the cloth and napkins of fine gossamer. Around the table were ranged rows of couches for the mermaids to recline upon as they ate. Only the nobility and favorites of Queen Aquareine were invited to partake of this repast, for Clia explained that tables were set for the other mermaids in different parts of the numerous palaces.

Trot wondered who would serve the meal, but her curiosity was soon satisfied when several large lobsters came sliding into the room backward, bearing in their claws trays loaded with food. Each of these lobsters had a golden band behind its neck to show it was the slave of the mermaids.

These curious waiters were fussy creatures, and Trot found much amusement in watching their odd motions. They were so spry and excitable that at times they ran against one another and upset the platters of food, after which they began to scold and argue as to whose fault it was, until one of the mermaids quietly rebuked them and asked them to be more quiet and more careful.

The queen's guests had no cause to complain of the dinner provided. First the lobsters served bowls of turtle soup, which proved hot and deliciously flavored. Then came salmon steaks fried in fish oil, with a fungus bread that tasted much like field mushrooms. Oysters, clams, soft-shell crabs and various preparations of seafoods followed. The salad was a delicate leaf from some seaweed that Trot thought was much nicer than lettuce. Several courses were served, and the lobsters changed the plates with each course, chattering and scolding as they worked, and as Trot said, "doing everything backwards" in their nervous, fussy way.

Many of the things offered them to eat were unknown to the visitors, and the child was suspicious of some of them, but Cap'n Bill asked no questions and ate everything offered him, so Trot decided to follow his example. Certain it is they found the meal very satisfying, and evidently there was no danger of their being hungry while they remained the guests of the

mermaids. When the fruits came, Trot thought that must be the last course of the big dinner, but following the fruits were ice creams frozen into the shape of flowers.

"How funny," said the child, "to be eating ice cream at the bottom of the sea."

"Why does that surprise you?" inquired the Queen.

"I can't see where you get the ice to freeze it," Trot replied.

"It is brought to us from the icebergs that float in the northern parts of the ocean," explained Merla.

"O' course, Trot. You orter thought o' that. I did," said Cap'n Bill.

The little girl was glad there was no more to eat, for she was ashamed to feel she had eaten every morsel she could. Her only excuse for being so greedy was that "ev'rything tasted just splendid!" as she told the queen.

"And now," said Aquareine, "I will send you out for a swim with Merla, who will show you some of the curious sights of our sea. You need not go far this afternoon, and when you return, we will have another interesting talk together." So the blonde mermaid led Trot and Cap'n Bill outside the palace walls, where they found themselves in the pretty flower gardens.

"I'd feel all right, mate, if I could have a smoke," remarked the old sailor to the child, "but that's a thing as can't be did here in the water."

"Why not?" asked Merla, who overheard him.

"A pipe has to be lighted, an' a match wouldn't burn," he replied.

"Try it," suggested the mermaid. "I do not mind your smoking at all, if it will give you pleasure."

"It's a bad habit I've got, an' I'm too old to break myself of it," said Cap'n Bill. Then he felt in the big pocket of his coat and took out a pipe and a bag of tobacco. After he had carefully filled his pipe, rejoicing in the fact that the tobacco was not at all wet, he took out his matchbox and struck a light. The match burned brightly, and soon the sailor was puffing the smoke from his pipe in great contentment. The smoke ascended through the water in the shape of bubbles, and Trot wondered what anyone who happened to be floating upon the surface of the ocean would think to see smoke coming from the water.

"Well, I find I can smoke, all right," remarked Cap'n Bill, "but it bothers me to understand why."

"It is because of the air space existing between the water and everything you have about you," explained Merla. "But now, if you will come this way, I will take you to visit some of our neighbors." They passed over the carpet of sea flowers, the gorgeous blossoms swaying on their stems as the motion of the people in the water above them disturbed their repose, and presently

the three entered the dense shrubbery surrounding the palace. They had not proceeded far when they came to a clearing among the bushes, and here Merla paused.

Trot and Cap'n Bill paused, too, for floating in the clear water was a group of beautiful shapes that the child thought looked like molds of wine jelly. They were round as a dinner plate, soft and transparent, but tinted in such lovely hues that no artist's brush has ever been able to imitate them. Some were deep sapphire blue; others rose pink; still others a delicate topaz color. They seemed to have neither heads, eyes nor ears, yet it was easy to see they were alive and able to float in any direction they wished to go. In shape they resembled inverted flowerpots, with the upper edges fluted, and

from the centers floated what seemed to be bouquets of flowers.

"How pretty!" exclaimed Trot, enraptured by the sight.

"Yes, this is a rare variety of jellyfish," replied Merla. "The creatures are not so delicate as they appear, and live for a long time — unless they get too near the surface and the waves wash them ashore."

After watching the jellyfish a few moments, they followed Merla through the grove, and soon a low chant, like that of an Indian song, fell upon their ears. It was a chorus of many small voices and grew louder as they swam on. Presently a big rock rose suddenly before them from the bottom of the sea, rearing its steep side far up into the water overhead, and this rock was thickly covered with tiny shells that clung fast to its surface. The chorus they heard appeared to come from these shells, and Merla said to her companions, "These are the singing barnacles. They are really very amusing, and if you listen carefully, you can hear what they say."

So Trot and Cap'n Bill listened, and this is what the barnacles sang:

"We went to topsy-turvy land to see a man-o'-war,
And we were much attached to it, because we simply were;
We found an anchor-ite within the mud upon the lea
For the ghost of Jonah's whale he ran away and went to sea.
Oh, it was awful!
It was unlawful!
We rallied round the flag in sev'ral millions;
They couldn't shake us;
They had to take us;
So the halibut and cod they danced cotillions."

"What does it all mean?" asked Trot.

"I suppose they refer to the way barnacles have of clinging to ships," replied Merla, "but usually the songs mean nothing at all. The little barnacles haven't many brains, so we usually find their songs quite stupid."

"Do they write some comic operas?" asked the child.

"I think not," answered the mermaid.

"They seem to like the songs themselves," remarked Cap'n Bill.

"Oh yes, they sing all day long. But it never matters to them whether their songs mean anything or not. Let us go in this direction and visit some other sea people."

So they swam away from the barnacle-covered rock, and Trot heard the last chorus as she slowly followed their conductor. The barnacles were singing:

"Oh, very well, then, I hear the curfew, Please go away and come some other day; Goliath tussels With Samson's muscles, Yet the muscles never

fight in Oyster Bay."

"It's jus' nonsense!" said Trot scornfully. "Why don't they sing 'Annie Laurie' or 'Home, Sweet Home' or else keep quiet?"

"Why, if they were quiet," replied Merla, "they wouldn't be singing barnacles."

They now came to one of the avenues which led from the sea garden out into the broad ocean, and here two swordfishes were standing guard. "Is all quiet?" Merla asked them.

"Just as usual, your Highness," replied one of the guards. "Mummercubble was sick this morning and grunted dreadfully, but he's better now and has gone to sleep. King Anko has been stirring around some, but is now taking his after-dinner nap. I think it will be perfectly safe for you to swim out for a while, if you wish."

"Who's Mummercubble?" asked Trot as they passed out into deep water.

"He's the sea pig," replied Merla. "I am glad he's asleep, for now we won't meet him."

"Don't you like him?" inquired Trot.

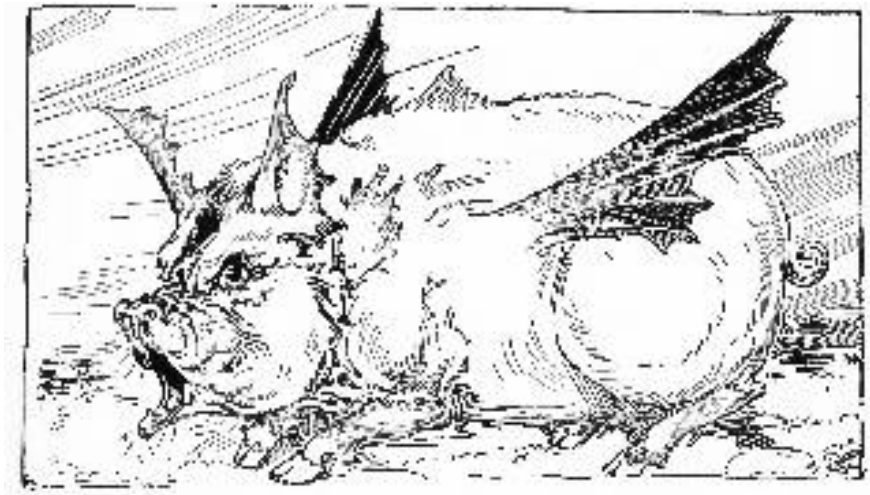
"Oh, he complains so bitterly of everything that he bores us," Merla answered. "Mummercubble is never contented or happy for a single minute."

"I've seen people like that," said Cap'n Bill with a nod of his head. "An' they has a way of upsettin' the happiest folks they meet."

"Look out!" suddenly cried the mermaid. "Look out for your fingers! Here are the snapping eels."

"Who? Where?" asked Trot anxiously.

And now they were in the midst of a cluster of wriggling, darting eels which sported all around them in the water with marvelous activity. "Yes, look out for your fingers and your noses!" said one of the eels, making a dash for Cap'n Bill. At first the sailor was tempted to put out a hand and push the creature away, but remembering that his fingers would thus be exposed, he remained quiet, and the eel snapped harmlessly just before his face and then darted away.



"Stop it!" said Merla. "Stop it this minute, or I'll report your impudence to Aquareine."

"Oh, who cares?" shouted the Eels. "We're not afraid of the mermaids."

"She'll stiffen you up again, as she did once before," said Merla, "if you try to hurt the earth people."

"Are these earth people?" asked one. And then they all stopped their play and regarded Trot and Cap'n Bill with their little black eyes.

"The old polliwog looks something like King Anko," said one of them.

"I'm not a polliwog!" answered Cap'n Bill angrily. "I'm a respec'ble sailor man, an' I'll have you treat me decent or I'll know why."

"Sailor!" said another. "That means to float on the water — not IN it. What are you doing down here?"

"I'm jes' a-visitin'," answered Cap'n Bill.

"He is the guest of our queen," said Merla, "and so is this little girl. If you do not behave nicely to them, you will surely be sorry."

"Oh, that's all right," replied one of the biggest eels, wriggling around in a circle and then snapping at a companion, which as quickly snapped out of his way. "We know how to be polite to company as well as the mermaids. We won't hurt them."

"Come on, fellows, let's go scare old Mummercubble," cried another; and then in a flash they all darted away and left our friends to themselves. Trot was greatly relieved.

"I don't like eels," she said.

"They are more mischievous than harmful," replied Merla, "but I do not care much for them myself."

"No," added Cap'n Bill, "they ain't respec'ful."

CHAPTER 7
THE ARISTOCRATIC CODFISH

The three swam slowly along, quite enjoying the cool depths of the water. Every little while they met with some strange creature — or one that seemed strange to the earth people — for although Trot and Cap'n Bill had seen many kinds of fish, after they had been caught and pulled from the water, that was very different from meeting them in their own element, "face to face," as Trot expressed it. Now that the various fishes were swimming around free and unafraid in their deep-sea home, they were quite different from the gasping, excited creatures struggling at the end of a fishline or flopping from a net.

Before long they came upon a group of large fishes lying lazily near the bottom of the sea. They were a dark color upon their backs and silver underneath, but not especially pretty to look at. The fishes made no effort to get out of Merla's way and remained motionless except for the gentle motion of their fins and gills.

"Here," said the mermaid, pausing, "is the most aristocratic family of fish in all the sea."

"What are they?" asked the girl.

"Codfish," was the reply. "Their only fault is that they are too haughty and foolishly proud of their pedigree."

Overhearing this speech, one codfish said to another in a very dignified

tone of voice, “What insolence!”

“Isn’t it?” replied the other. “There ought to be a law to prevent these common mermaids from discussing their superiors.”

“My sakes!” said Trot, astonished. “How stuck up they are, aren’t they?”

For a moment the group of fishes stared at her solemnly. Then one of the remarked in a disdainful manner, “Come, my dear, let us leave these vulgar creatures.”

“I’m not as vulgar as you are!” exclaimed Trot, much offended by this speech. “Where I come from, we only eat codfish when there’s nothing else in the house to eat.”

“How absurd!” observed one of the creatures arrogantly.

“Eat codfish indeed!” said another in a lofty manner.

“Yes, and you’re pretty salty, too, I can tell you. At home you’re nothing but a pick-up!” said Trot.

“Dear me!” exclaimed the first fish who had spoken. “Must we stand this insulting language — and from a person to whom we have never been introduced?”

“I don’t need no interduction,” replied the girl. “I’ve eaten you, and you always make me thirsty.”

Merla laughed merrily at this, and the codfish said, with much dignity, “Come, fellow aristocrats, let us go.”

“Never mind, we’re going ourselves,” announced Merla, and followed by her guests the pretty mermaid swam away.

“I’ve heard tell of codfish aristocracy,” said Cap’n Bill, “but I never knowed ‘zac’ly what it meant afore.”

“They jus’ made me mad with all their airs,” observed Trot, “so I gave ‘em a piece of my mind.”

“You surely did, mate,” said the sailor, “but I ain’t sure they understand what they’re like when they’re salted an’ hung up in the pantry. Folks gener’ly gets stuck-up ‘cause they don’t know theirselves like other folks knows ‘em.”

“We are near Crabville now,” declared Merla. “Shall we visit the crabs and see what they are doing?”

“Yes, let’s,” replied Trot. “The crabs are lots of fun. I’ve often caught them among the rocks on the shore and laughed at the way they act. Wasn’t it funny at dinnertime to see the way they slid around with the plates?”

"Those were not crabs, but lobsters and crawfish," remarked the mermaid. "They are very intelligent creatures, and by making them serve us we save ourselves much household work. Of course, they are awkward and provoke us sometimes, but no servants are perfect, it is said, so we get along with ours as well as we can."

"They're all right," protested the child, "even if they did tip things over once in a while. But it is easy to work in a sea palace, I'm sure, because there's no dusting or sweeping to be done."

"Or scrubbin'," added Cap'n Bill.

"The crabs," said Merla, "are second cousins to the lobsters, although much smaller in size. There are many families or varieties of crabs, and so

many of them live in one place near here that we call it Crabville. I think you will enjoy seeing these little creatures in their native haunts."

They now approached a kelp bed, the straight, thin stems of the kelp running far upward to the surface of the water. Here and there upon the stalks were leaves, but Trot thought the growing kelp looked much like sticks of macaroni, except they were a rich red-brown color. It was beyond the kelp — which they had to push aside as they swam through, so thickly did it grow — that they came to a higher level, a sort of plateau on the ocean's bottom. It was covered with scattered rocks of all sizes, which appeared to have broken off from big shelving rocks they observed nearby. The place they entered seemed like one of the rocky canyons you often see upon the earth.

"Here live the fiddler crabs," said Merla, "but we must have taken them by surprise, it is so quiet."

Even as she spoke, there was a stirring and scrambling among the rocks, and soon scores of light-green crabs were gathered before the visitors. The crabs bore fiddles of all sorts and shapes in their claws, and one big fellow carried a leader's baton. The latter crab climbed upon a flat rock and in an excited voice called out, "Ready, now — ready, good fiddlers. We'll play Number 19, Hail to the Mermaids. Ready! Take aim! Fire away!"

At this command every crab began scraping at his fiddle as hard as he could, and the sounds were so shrill and unmusical that Trot wondered when they would begin to play a tune. But they never did; it was one regular mix-up of sounds from beginning to end. When the noise finally stopped, the leader turned to his visitors and, waving his baton toward them, asked, "Well, what did you think of that?"

"Not much," said Trot honestly. "What's it all about?"

"I composed it myself!" said the Fiddler Crab. "But it's highly classical, I admit. All really great music is an acquired taste."

"I don't like it," remarked Cap'n Bill. "It might do all right to stir up a racket New Year's Eve, but to call that screechin' music — "

Just then the crabs started fiddling again, harder than ever, and as it promised to be a long performance, they left the little creatures scraping away at their fiddles as if for dear life and swam along the rocky canyon until, on turning a corner, they came upon a new and different scene.

There were crabs here, too, many of them, and they were performing the queerest antics imaginable. Some were building themselves into a pyramid, each standing on edge, with the biggest and strongest ones at the bottom. When the crabs were five or six rows high, they would all tumble over, still clinging to one another and, having reached the ground, they would separate and commence to build the pyramid over again. Others were chasing one

another around in a circle, always moving backward or sidewise, and trying to play "leapfrog" as they went. Still others were swinging on slight branches of seaweed or turning cartwheels or indulging in similar antics.

Merla and the earth people watched the busy little creatures for some time before they were themselves observed, but finally Trot gave a laugh when one crab fell on its back and began frantically waving its legs to get right-side-up again. At the sound of her laughter they all stopped their play and came toward the visitors in a flock, looking up at them with their bright eyes in a most comical way.

"Welcome home!" cried one as he turned a back somersault and knocked another crab over.

“What’s the difference between a mermaid and a tadpole?” asked another in a loud voice, and without a pause continued, “Why, one drops its tail and the other holds onto it. Ha, ha! Ho, ho! Hee, hee!”

“These,” said Merla, “are the clown crabs. They are very silly things, as you may already have discovered, but for a short time they are rather amusing. One tires of them very soon.”

“They’re funny,” said Trot, laughing again. “It’s almost as good as a circus. I don’t think they would make me tired, but then I’m not a mermaid.”

The clown crabs had now formed a row in front of them. “Mr. Johnsing,” asked one, “why is a mermaid like an automobile?”

“I don’t know, Tommy Blimken,” answered a big crab in the middle of the row. “WHY do you think a mermaid is like an automobile?”

“Because they both get tired,” said Tommy Blimken. Then all the crabs laughed, and Tommy seemed to laugh louder than the rest.

“How do the crabs in the sea know anything ‘bout automobiles?” asked Trot.

“Why, Tommy Blimken and Harry Hustle were both captured once by humans and put in an aquarium,” answered the mermaid. “But one day they climbed out and escaped, finally making their way back to the sea and home again. So they are quite traveled, you see, and great favorites among the crabs. While they were on land they saw a great many curious things, and so I suppose they saw automobiles.”

“We did, we did!” cried Harry Hustle, an awkward crab with one big claw and one little one. “And we saw earth people with legs, awfully funny they were; and animals called horses, with legs; and other creatures with legs; and the people cover themselves with the queerest things — they even wear feathers and flowers on their heads, and — ”

“Oh, we know all about that,” said Trot. “We live on the earth ourselves.”

“Well, you’re lucky to get off from it and into the good water,” said the Crab. “I nearly died on the earth; it was so stupid, dry and airy. But the circus was great. They held the performance right in front of the aquarium where we lived, and Tommy and I learned all the tricks of the tumblers. Hi! Come on, fellows, and show the earth people what you can do!”

At this the crabs began performing their antics again, but they did the same things over and over, so Cap’n Bill and Trot soon tired, as Merla said they would, and decided they had seen enough of the crab circus. So they proceeded to swim farther up the rocky canyon, and near its upper end they came to a lot of conch shells lying upon the sandy bottom. A funny-looking crab was sticking his head out from each of these shells.

“These are the hermit crabs,” said one of the mermaids. “They steal these

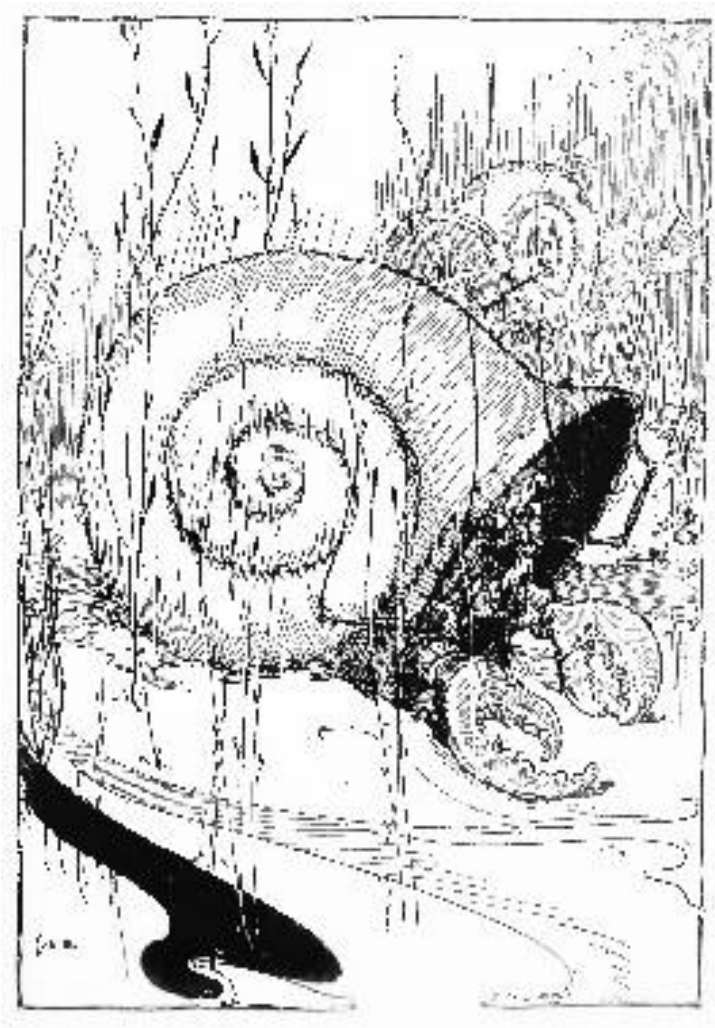
shells and live in them so no enemies can attack them."

"Don't they get lonesome?" asked Trot.

"Perhaps so, my dear. But they do not seem to mind being lonesome. They are great cowards, and think if they can but protect their lives there is nothing else to care for. Unlike the jolly crabs we have just left, the hermits are cross and unsociable."

"Oh, keep quiet and go away!" said one of the hermit crabs in a grumpy voice. "No one wants mermaids around here." Then every crab withdrew its head into its shell, and our friends saw them no more.

"They're not very polite," observed Trot, following the mermaid as Merla swam upward into the middle water.



“I know now why cross people are called ‘crabbed,’“ said Cap’n Bill. “They’ve got dispositions jes’ like these ‘ere hermit crabs.”

Presently they came upon a small flock of mackerel, and noticed that the fishes seemed much excited. When they saw the mermaid, they cried out, “Oh, Merla! What do you think? Our Flippity has just gone to glory!”

“When?” asked the mermaid.

“Just now,” one replied. “We were lying in the water, talking quietly together when a spinning, shining thing came along and our dear Flippity ate it. Then he went shooting up to the top of the water and gave a flop and — went to glory! Isn’t it splendid, Merla?”

“Poor Flippity!” sighed the mermaid. “I’m sorry, for he was the prettiest and nicest mackerel in your whole flock.”

“What does it mean?” asked Trot. “How did Flippity go to glory?”

“Why, he was caught by a hook and pulled out of the water into some boat,” Merla explained. “But these poor stupid creatures do not understand that, and when one of them is jerked out of the water and disappears, they have the idea he has gone to glory, which means to them some unknown but beautiful sea.”

“I’ve often wondered,” said Trot, “why fishes are foolish enough to bite on hooks.”

“They must know enough to know they’re hooks,” added Cap’n Bill musingly.

“Oh, they do,” replied Merla. “I’ve seen fishes gather around a hook and look at it carefully for a long time. They all know it is a hook and that if they bite the bait upon it they will be pulled out of the water. But they are curious to know what will happen to them afterward, and think it means happiness instead of death. So finally one takes the hook and disappears, and the others never know what becomes of him.”

“Why don’t you tell ‘em the truth?” asked Trot.

“Oh, we do. The mermaids have warned them many times, but it does no good at all. The fish are stupid creatures.”

“But I wish I was Flippity,” said one of the mackerel, staring at Trot with his big, round eyes. “He went to glory before I could eat the hook myself.”

“You’re lucky,” answered the child. “Flippity will be fried in a pan for someone’s dinner. You wouldn’t like that, would you?”

“Flippity has gone to glory!” said another, and then they swam away in haste to tell the news to all they met.

“I never heard of anything so foolish,” remarked Trot as she swam slowly on through the clear, blue water.

“Yes, it is very foolish and very sad,” answered Merla. “But if the fish

were wise, men could not catch them for food, and many poor people on your earth make their living by fishing."

"It seems wicked to catch such pretty things," said the child.

"I do not think so," Merla replied laughingly, "for they were born to become food for someone, and men are not the only ones that eat fishes. Many creatures of the sea feed upon them. They even eat one another at times. And if none was ever destroyed, they would soon become so numerous that they would clog the waters of the ocean and leave no room for the rest of us. So after all, perhaps it is just as well they are thoughtless and foolish."

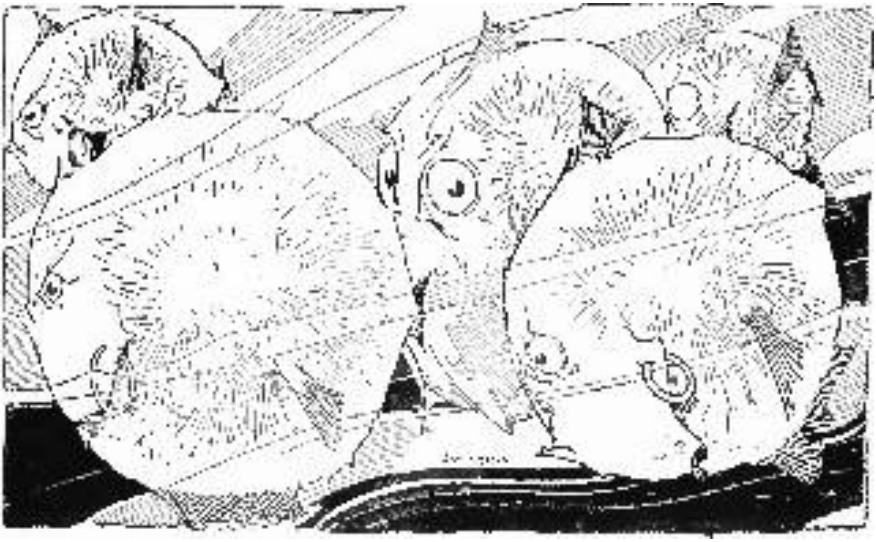
Presently they came to some round balls that looked much like balloons in shape and were gaily colored. They floated quietly in the water, and Trot inquired what they were.

"Balloonfish," answered Merla. "They are helpless creatures, but have little spikes all over them so their enemies dare not bite them for fear of getting pricked."

Trot found the balloonfish quite interesting. They had little dots of eyes and dots for mouths, but she could see no noses, and their fins and tails were very small.

"They catch these fish in the South Sea Islands and make lanterns of 'em," said Cap'n Bill. "They first skin 'em and sew the skin up again to let it dry, and then they put candles inside, and the light shines through the dried skin."

Many other curious sights they saw in the ocean that afternoon, and both Cap'n Bill and Trot thoroughly enjoyed their glimpse of sea life. At last Merla said it was time to return to the palace, from which she claimed they had not at any time been very far distant. "We must prepare for dinner, as it will soon begin to grow dark in the water," continued their conductor. So they swam leisurely back to the groves that surrounded the palaces, and as they entered the gardens the sun sank, and deep shadows began to form in the ocean depths.



CHAPTER 8
A BANQUET UNDER WATER

The palaces of the mermaids were all aglow with lights as they approached them, and Trot was amazed at the sight.

"Where do the lamps come from?" she asked their guide wonderingly.

"They are not lamps, my dear," replied Merla, much amused at this suggestion. "We use electric lights in our palaces and have done so for thousands of years — long before the earth people knew of electric lights."

"But where do you get 'em?" inquired Cap'n Bill, who was as much astonished as the girl.

"From a transparent jellyfish which naturally emits a strong and beautiful electric light," was the answer. "We have many hundreds of them in our palaces, as you will presently see."

Their way was now lighted by small, phosphorescent creatures scattered about the sea gardens and which Merla informed them were hyalaea, or sea glowworms. But their light was dim when compared to that of the electric jellyfish, which they found placed in clusters upon the ceilings of all the rooms of the palaces, rendering them light as day. Trot watched these curious creatures with delight, for delicately colored lights ran around their bodies in every direction in a continuous stream, shedding splendid rays throughout the vast halls.

A group of mermaids met the visitors in the hall of the main palace and told Merla the queen had instructed them to show the guests to their rooms as soon as they arrived. So Trot followed two of them through several passages, after which they swam upward and entered a circular opening. There were no

stairs here, because there was no need of them, and the little girl soon found herself in an upper room that was very beautiful indeed.

All the walls were covered with iridescent shells, polished till they resembled mother-of-pearl, and upon the glass ceiling were clusters of the brilliant electric jellyfish, rendering the room bright and cheerful with their radiance. In one corner stood a couch of white coral, with gossamer draperies hanging around it from the four high posts. Upon examining it, the child found the couch was covered with soft, amber sponges, which rendered it very comfortable to lie upon. In a wardrobe she found several beautiful gossamer gowns richly embroidered in colored seaweeds, and these Mayre was told she might wear while she remained the guest of the mermaids. She also found a toilet table with brushes, combs and other conveniences, all of which were made of polished tortoise-shell.

Really, the room was more dainty and comfortable than one might suppose possible in a palace far beneath the surface of the sea, and Trot was greatly delighted with her new quarters. The mermaid attendants assisted the child to dress herself in one of the prettiest robes, which she found to be quite dry and fitted her comfortably. Then the sea-maids brushed and dressed her hair, and tied it with ribbons of cherry-red seaweed. Finally they placed around her neck a string of pearls that would have been priceless upon the earth, and now the little girl announced she was ready for supper and had a good appetite.

Cap'n Bill had been given a similar room near Trot, but the old sailor refused to change his clothes for any others offered him, for which reason he was ready for supper long before his comrade. "What bothers me, mate," he said to the little girl as the y swam toward the great banquet hall where Queen Aquareine awaited them, "is why ain't we crushed by the pressin' of the water agin us, bein' as we're down here in the deep sea."

"How's that, Cap'n? Why should we be crushed?" she asked.

"Why, ev'r'body knows that the deeper you go in the sea, the more the water presses agin you," he explained. "Even the divers in their steel jackets can't stand it very deep down. An' here we be, miles from the top o' the water, I s'pect, an' we don't feel crowded a bit."

"I know why," answered the child wisely. "The water don't touch us, you see. If it did, it might crush us, but it don't. It's always held a little way off from our bodies by the magic of the fairy mermaids."

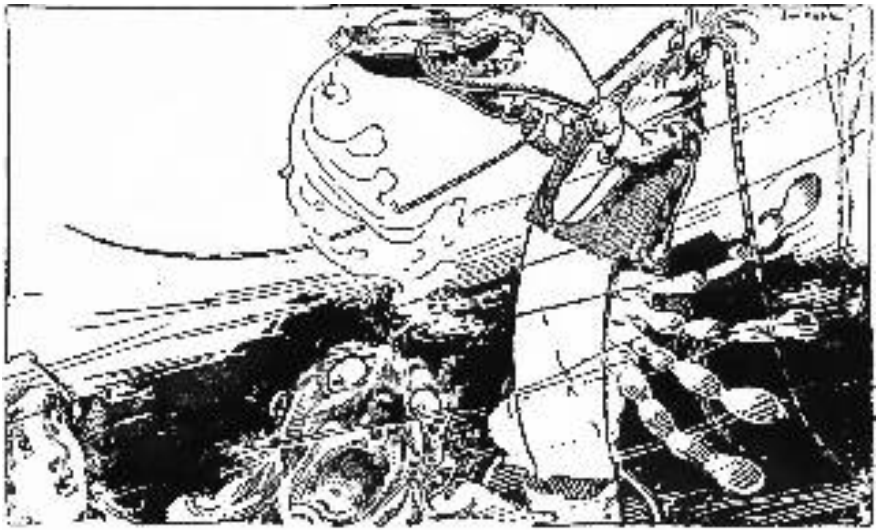
"True enough, Trot," declared the sailor man. "What an idjut I was not to think o' that myself!"

In the royal banquet hall were assembled many of the mermaids, headed by the lovely queen, and as soon as their earth guests arrived, Aquareine

ordered the meal to be served. The lobsters again waited upon the table, wearing little white caps and aprons which made them look very funny; but Trot was so hungry after her afternoon's excursion that she did not pay as much attention to the lobsters as she did to her supper, which was very delicious and consisted of many courses. A lobster spilled some soup on Cap'n Bill's bald head and made him yell for a minute, because it was hot and he had not expected it, but the queen apologized very sweetly for the awkwardness of her servants, and the sailor soon forgot all about the incident in his enjoyment of the meal.

After the feast ended, they all went to the big reception room, where some of the mermaids played upon harps while others sang pretty songs. They danced together, too — a graceful, swimming dance, so queer to the little girl that it interested and amused her greatly. Cap'n Bill seemed a bit bashful among so many beautiful mermaids, yet he was pleased when the queen offered him a place beside her throne, where he could see and hear all the delightful entertainment provided for the royal guests. He did not talk much, being a man of few words except when alone with Trot, but his light-blue eyes were big and round with wonder at the sights he saw.

Trot and the sailor man went to bed early and slept soundly upon their sponge-covered couches. The little girl never wakened until long after the sun was shining down through the glass roof of her room, and when she opened her eyes she was startled to find a number of big, small and middle-sized fishes staring at her through the glass. "That's one bad thing 'bout this mermaid palace," she said to herself. "It's too public. Ever'thing in the sea can look at you through the glass as much as it likes. I wouldn't mind fishes looking at me if they hadn't such big eyes, an' — goodness me! There's a monster that's all head! And there goes a fish with a sail on its back, an' here's old Mummercubble, I'm sure, for he's got a head just like a pig."



She might have watched the fishes on the roof for hours, had she not remembered it was late and breakfast must be ready. So she dressed and made her toilet, and swam down into the palace to find Cap'n Bill and the mermaids politely waiting for her to join them. The sea maidens were as fresh and lovely as ever, while each and all proved sweet tempered and merry, even at the breakfast table — and that is where people are cross, if they ever are. During the meal the queen said, "I shall take you this morning to the most interesting part of the ocean, where the largest and most remarkable sea creatures live. And we must visit King Anko, too, for the sea serpent would feel hurt and slighted if I did not bring my guests to call upon him."

"That will be nice," said Trot eagerly.

But Cap'n Bill asked, "Is there any danger, ma'am?"

"I think not," replied Queen Aquareine. "I cannot say that you will be exposed to any danger at all, so long as I'm with you. But we are going into the neighborhood of such fierce and even terrible beings which would attack you at once did they suspect you to be earth people. So in order to guard your safety, I intend to draw the Magic Circle around both of you before we start."

"What is the Magic Circle?" asked Trot.

"A fairy charm that prevents any enemy from touching you. No monster of the sea, however powerful, will be able to reach your body while you are protected by the Magic Circle," declared the Queen.

"Oh, then I'll not be a bit afraid," returned the child with perfect confidence.

"Am I to have the Magic Circle drawn around me, too?" asked Cap'n Bill.

“Of course,” answered Aquareine. “You will need no other protection than that, yet both Princess Clia and I will both be with you. For today I shall leave Merla to rule our palaces in my place until we return.”

No sooner was breakfast finished than Trot was anxious to start. The girl was also curious to discover what the powerful Magic Circle might prove to be, but she was a little disappointed in the ceremony. The queen merely grasped her fairy wand in her right hand and swam around the child in a circle, from left to right. Then she took her wand in her left hand and swam around Trot in another circle, from right to left. “Now, my dear,” said she, “you are safe from any creature we are liable to meet.”

She performed the same ceremony for Cap’n Bill, who was doubtful about the Magic Circle because he felt the same after it as he had before. But he said nothing of his unbelief, and soon they left the palace and started upon their journey.

CHAPTER 9
THE BASHFUL OCTOPUS

It was a lovely day, and the sea was like azure under the rays of the sun. Over the flower beds and through the gardens they swam, emerging into the open sea in a direction opposite that taken by the visitors the day before. The party consisted of but four: Queen Aquareine, Princess Clia, Trot and Cap'n Bill.

"People who live upon the land know only those sea creatures which they are able to catch in nets or upon hooks or those which become disabled and are washed ashore," remarked the Queen as they swam swiftly through the clear water. "And those who sail in ships see only the creatures who chance to come to the surface. But in the deep ocean caverns are queer beings that no mortal has ever heard of or beheld, and some of these we are to visit. We shall also see some sea shrubs and flowering weeds which are sure to delight you with their beauty."

The sights really began before they had gone very far from the palace, and a school of butterfly fish, having gorgeous colors spattered over their broad wings, was first to delight the strangers. They swam just as butterflies fly, with a darting, jerky motion, and called a merry "Good morning!" to the mermaids as they passed.

"These butterfly fish are remarkably active," said the Princess, "and their quick motions protect them from their enemies. We like to meet them; they are always so gay and good-natured."

"Why, so am I!" cried a sharp voice just beside them, and they all paused

to discover what creature had spoken to them.

“Take care,” said Clia in a low voice. “It’s an octopus.”

Trot looked eagerly around. A long, brown arm stretched across their way in front and another just behind them, but that did not worry her. The octopus himself came slowly sliding up to them and proved to be well worth looking at. He wore a red coat with brass buttons, and a silk hat was tipped over one ear. His eyes were somewhat dull and watery, and he had a moustache of long, hair-like “feelers” that curled stiffly at the ends. When he tried to smile at them, he showed two rows of sharp, white teeth. In spite of his red coat and yellow-embroidered vest, his standing collar and carefully tied cravat, the legs of the octopus were bare, and Trot noticed he used some of his legs for arms, as in one of them was held a slender cane and in another a handkerchief.

“Well, well!” said the Octopus. “Are you all dumb? Or don’t you know enough to be civil when you meet a neighbor?”

“We know how to be civil to our friends,” replied Trot, who did not like the way he spoke.

“Well, are we not friends, then?” asked the Octopus in an airy tone of voice.

“I think not,” said the little girl. “Octopuses are horrid creatures.”

“OctoPI, if you please; octoPI,” said the monster with a laugh.

“I don’t see any pie that pleases me,” replied Trot, beginning to get angry.

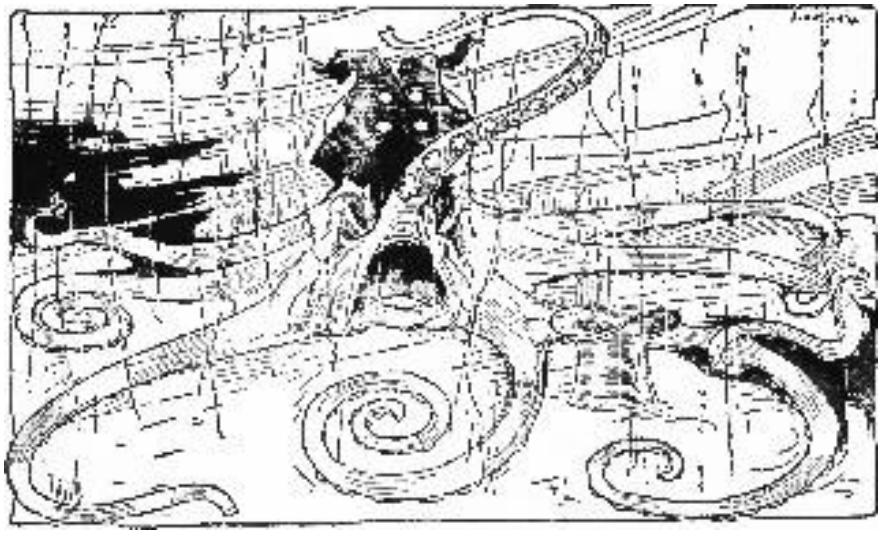
“OctoPUS means one of us; two or more are called octoPI,” remarked the creature, as if correcting her speech.

“I suppose a lot of you would be a whole bakery!” she said scornfully.

“Our name is Latin. It was given to us by learned scientists years ago,” said the Octopus.

“That’s true enough,” agreed Cap’n Bill. “The learned scientists named ev’ry blamed thing they come across, an’ gener’ly they picked out names as nobody could understand or pernounce.”

“That isn’t our fault, sir,” said the Octopus. “Indeed, it’s pretty hard for us to go through life with such terrible names. Think of the poor little seahorse. He used to be a merry and cheerful fellow, but since they named him ‘hippocampus’ he hasn’t smiled once.”



"Let's go," said Trot. "I don't like to 'sociate with octopuses."

"OctoPI," said the creature, again correcting her.

"You're jus' as horrid whether you're puses or pies," she declared.

"Horrid!" cried the monster in a shocked tone of voice.

"Not only horrid, but horrible!" persisted the girl.

"May I ask in what way?" he inquired, and it was easy to see he was offended.

"Why, ev'rybody knows that octopuses are jus' wicked an' deceitful," she said. "Up on the earth, where I live, we call the Stannerd Oil Company an octopus, an' the Coal Trust an octopus, an' — "

"Stop, stop!" cried the monster in a pleading voice. "Do you mean to tell me that the earth people whom I have always respected compare me to the Stannerd Oil Company?"

"Yes," said Trot positively.

"Oh, what a disgrace! What a cruel, direful, dreadful disgrace!" moaned the Octopus, drooping his head in shame, and Trot could see great tears falling down his cheeks.

"This comes of having a bad name," said the Queen gently, for she was moved by the monster's grief.

"It is unjust! It is cruel and unjust!" sobbed the creature mournfully. "Just because we have several long arms and take whatever we can reach, they accuse us of being like — like — oh, I cannot say it! It is too shameful, too humiliating."

"Come, let's go," said Trot again. So they left the poor octopus weeping and wiping his watery eyes with his handkerchief and swam on their way.

“I’m not a bit sorry for him,” remarked the child, “for his legs remind me of serpents.”

“So they do me,” agreed Cap’n Bill.

“But the octopi are not very bad,” said the Princess, “and we get along with them much better than we do with their cousins, the sea devils.”

“Oh. Are the sea devils their cousins?” asked Trot.

“Yes, and they are the only creatures of the ocean which we greatly fear,” replied Aquareine. “I hope we shall meet none today, for we are going near to the dismal caverns where they live.”

“What are the sea devils like, ma’am?” inquired Cap’n Bill a little uneasily.

“Something like the octopus you just saw, only much larger and of a bright scarlet color, striped with black,” answered the Queen. “They are very fierce and terrible creatures and nearly as much dreaded by the inhabitants of the ocean as is Zog, and nearly as powerful as King Anko himself.”

“Zog! Who is Zog?” questioned the girl. “I haven’t heard of him before now.”

“We do not like to mention Zog’s name,” responded the Queen in a low voice. “He is the wicked genius of the sea, and a magician of great power.”

“What’s he like?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“He is a dreadful creature, part fish, part man, part beast and part serpent. Centuries ago they cast him off the earth into the sea, where he has caused much trouble. Once he waged a terrible war against King Anko, but the sea serpent finally conquered Zog and drove the magician into his castle, where he now stays shut up. For if ever Anko catches the monster outside of his enchanted castle, he will kill him, and Zog knows that very well.”

“Seems like you have your troubles down here just as we do on top the ground,” remarked Cap’n Bill.

“But I’m glad old Zog is shut up in his castle,” added Trot. “Is it a sea castle like your own palace?”

“I cannot say, my dear, for the enchantment makes it invisible to all eyes but those of its inhabitants,” replied Aquareine. “No one sees Zog now, and we scarcely ever hear of him, but all the sea people know he is here someplace and fear his power. Even in the old days, before Anko conquered him, Zog was the enemy of the mermaids, as he was of all the good and respectable seafolk. But do not worry about the magician, I beg of you, for he has not dared to do an evil deed in many, many years.”

“Oh, I’m not afraid,” asserted Trot.

“I’m glad of that,” said the Queen. “Keep together, friends, and be careful not to separate, for here comes an army of sawfishes.”

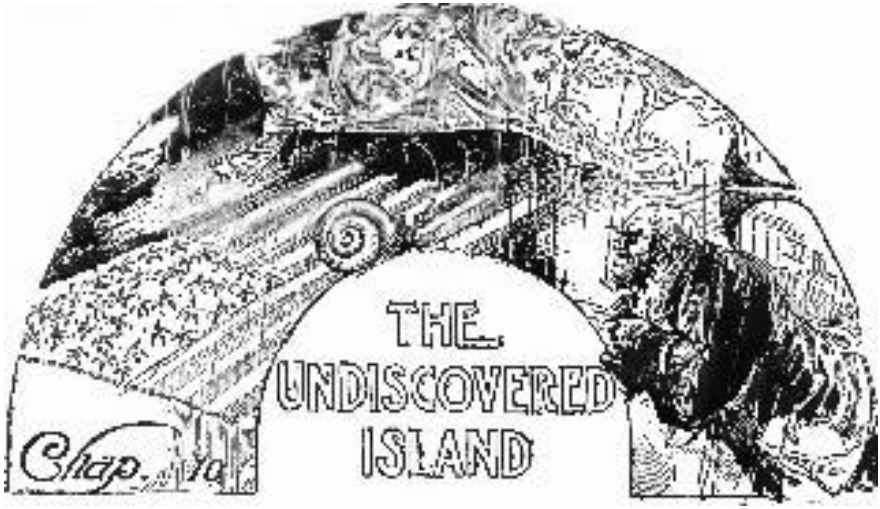
Even as Aquareine spoke, they saw a swirl and commotion in the water ahead of them, while a sound like a muffled roar fell upon their ears. Then swiftly there dashed upon them a group of great fishes with long saws sticking out in front of their noses, armed with sharp, hooked teeth, all set in a row. They were larger than the swordfishes and seemed more fierce and bold. But the mermaids and Trot and Cap'n Bill quietly awaited their attack, and instead of tearing them with their saws as they expected to do, the fishes were unable to touch them at all. They tried every possible way to get at their proposed victims, but the Magic Circle was all powerful and turned aside the ugly saws; so our friends were not disturbed at all. Seeing this, the sawfishes soon abandoned the attempt and with growls and roars of disappointment swam away and were quickly out of sight.

Trot had been a wee bit frightened during the attack, but now she laughed gleefully and told the queen that it seemed very nice to be protected by fairy powers. The water grew a darker blue as they descended into its depths, farther and farther away from the rays of the sun. Trot was surprised to find she could see so plainly through the high wall of water above her, but the sun was able to shoot its beams straight down through the transparent sea, and they seemed to penetrate to every nook and crevice of the rocky bottom.

In this deeper part of the ocean some of the fishes had a phosphorescent light of their own, and these could be seen far ahead as if they were lanterns. The explorers met a school of argonauts going up to the surface for a sail, and the child watched these strange creatures with much curiosity. The argonauts live in shells in which they are able to hide in case of danger from prowling wolf fishes, but otherwise they crawl out and carry their shells like humps upon their backs. Then they spread their skinny sails above them and sail away under water till they come to the surface, where they float and let the currents of air carry them along the same as the currents of water had done before. Trot thought the argonauts comical little creatures, with their big eyes and sharp noses, and to her they looked like a fleet of tiny ships.

It is said that men got their first idea of boats and of how to sail them from watching these little argonauts.

CHAPTER 10
THE UNDISCOVERED ISLAND



In following the fleet of argonauts, the four explorers had risen higher in the water and soon found they had wandered to an open space that seemed to Trot like the flat top of a high hill. The sands were covered with a growth of weeds so gorgeously colored that one who had never peered beneath the surface of the sea would scarcely believe they were not the product of a dye shop. Every known hue seemed represented in the delicate, fern-like leaves that swayed softly to and fro as the current moved them. They were not set close together, these branches of magnificent hues, but were scattered sparsely over the sandy bottom of the sea so that while from a distance they seemed thick, a nearer view found them spread out with ample spaces of sand between them.

In these sandy spaces lay the real attractiveness of the place, for here were many of those wonders of the deep that have surprised and interested people in all ages.

First were the starfishes — hundreds of them, it seemed — lying sleepily on the bottom, with their five or six points extended outward. They were of various colors, some rich and brilliant, others of dark brown hues. A few had wound their arms around the weeds or were creeping slowly from one place to another, in the latter case turning their points downward and using them as legs. But most of them were lying motionless, and as Trot looked down upon them she thought they resembled stars in the sky on a bright night, except that the blue of the heavens was here replaced by the white sand, and the twinkling diamond stars by the colored starfish.

“We are near an island,” said the Queen, “and that is why so many starfishes are here, as they love to keep close to shore. Also the little seahorses love these weeds, and to me they are more interesting than the starfish.”

Trot now noticed the seahorses for the first time. They were quite small — merely two or three inches high — but had funny little heads that were shaped much like the head of a horse, and bright, intelligent eyes. They had no legs, though, for their bodies ended in tails which they twined around the stems of seaweeds to support themselves and keep the currents from carrying them away.

Trot bent down close to examine one of the queer little creatures and exclaimed, “Why, the seahorses haven’t any fins or anything to swim with.”

“Oh yes we have,” replied the Sea Horse in a tiny but distinct voice. “These things on the side of my head are fins.”

“I thought they were ears,” said the girl.

“So they are. Fins and ears at the same time,” answered the little sea animal. “Also, there are small fins on our backs. Of course, we can’t swim as the mermaids do, or even as swiftly as fishes; but we manage to get around, thank you.”

“Don’t the fishes catch and eat you?” inquired Trot curiously.

“Sometimes,” admitted the Sea Horse, “and there are many other living things that have a way of destroying us. But here I am, as you see, over six weeks old, and during that time I have escaped every danger. That isn’t so bad, is it?”

“Phoo!” said a Starfish lying near. “I’m over three months old. You’re a mere baby, Sea Horse.”

“I’m not!” cried the Sea Horse excitedly. “I’m full-grown and may live to be as old as you are!”

“Not if I keep on living,” said the Starfish calmly, and Trot knew he was correct in his statement.

The little girl now noticed several sea spiders creeping around and drew back because she did not think them very pretty. They were shaped not unlike the starfishes, but had slender legs and big heads with wicked-looking eyes sticking out of them.

“Oh, I don’t like those things!” said Trot, coming closer to her companions.

“You don’t, eh?” said a big Sea Spider in a cross voice. “Why do you come around here, then, scaring away my dinner when you’re not wanted?”

“It isn’t YOUR ocean,” replied Trot.

“No, and it isn’t yours,” snapped the Spider. “But as it’s big enough for us both, I’d like you to go away.”

“So we will,” said Aquareine gently, and at once she moved toward the surface of the water. Trot and Cap’n Bill followed, with Clia, and the child asked, “What island are we near?”

“It has no name,” answered the Queen, “for it is not inhabited by man, nor

has it ever yet been discovered by them. Perhaps you will be the first humans to see this island. But it is a barren, rocky place, and only fit for seals and turtles."

"Are any of them there now?" Cap'n Bill inquired.

"I think so. We will see."

Trot was astonished to find how near they were to the "top" of the ocean, for they had not ascended through the water very long when suddenly her head popped into the air, and she gave a gasp of surprise to find herself looking at the clear sky for the first time since she had started upon this adventure by rowing into Giant's Cave.

She floated comfortably in the water, with her head and face just out of it, and began to look around her. Cap'n Bill was at her side, and so were the two mermaids. The day was fair, and the surface of the sea, which stretched far away as the eye could reach, rippled under a gentle breeze. They had risen almost at the edge of a small, rocky islet, high in the middle, but gradually slanting down to the water. No trees or bushes or grass grew anywhere about; only rocks, gray and bleak, were to be seen.

Trot scarcely noticed this at first, however, for the island seemed covered with groups of forms, some still and some moving, which the old sailor promptly recognized as seals. Many were lying asleep or sunning themselves; others crept awkwardly around, using their strong fins as legs or "paddles" and caring little if they disturbed the slumbers of the others. Once in a while one of those crowded out of place would give a loud and angry bark, which awakened others and set them to barking likewise.

Baby seals were there in great numbers, and were more active and playful than their elders. It was really wonderful how they could scramble around on the land, and Trot laughed more than once at their antics.

At the edge of the water lay many huge turtles, some as big around as a wagon wheel and others much smaller in size.

"The big ones are very old," said the Queen, seeing Trot's eyes fixed on the turtles.

"How old?" asked the child.

"Hundreds of years, I think. They live to a great age, for nothing can harm them when they withdraw their legs and heads into their thick shells. We use some of the turtles for food, but prefer the younger ones. Men also fish for turtles and eat them, but of course no men ever come to this out-of-the-way place in the ocean, so the inhabitants of this little island know they are perfectly safe."

In the center of the island rose high cliffs on top of which were to be seen great flocks of seagulls, some whirling in the air, while others were perched

upon the points of rock.

“What do the birds find to eat?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“They often feed upon seals which die of accident or old age, and they are expert fishermen,” explained Queen Aquareine. “Curiously enough, the seals also feed upon these birds, which they are often able to catch in their strong jaws when the gulls venture too near. And then, the seals frequently rob the nests of eggs, of which they are very fond.”

“I’d like a few gulls’ eggs now,” remarked a big seal that lay near them upon the shore. Trot had thought him sound asleep, but now he opened his eyes to blink lazily at the group in the water.

“Good morning,” said the Queen. “Aren’t you Chief Muffruff?”

“I am,” answered the old seal. “And you are Aquareine, the mermaid queen. You see, I remember you, although you haven’t been here for years. And isn’t that Princess Clia? To be sure! But the other mermaids are strangers to me, especially the bald-headed one.”

“I’m not a mermaid,” asserted Cap’n Bill. “I’m a sailor jes’ a-visitin’ the mermaids.”

“Our friends are earth dwellers,” explained the Queen.

“That’s odd,” said Muffruff. “I can’t remember that any earth dwellers ever came this way before. I never travel far, you see, for I’m chief of this disorderly family of seals that live on this island — on it and off it, that is.”

“You’re a poor chief,” said a big turtle lying beside the seal. “If your people are disorderly, it is your own fault.”

Muffruff gave a chuckling laugh. Then, with a movement quick as lightning, he pushed his head under the shell of the turtle and gave it a sudden jerk. The huge turtle was tossed up on edge and then turned flat upon its back, where its short legs struggled vainly to right its overturned body.

“There!” snorted the Seal contemptuously. “Perhaps you’ll dare insult me again in the presence of visitors, you old mud-wallower!”

Seeing the plight of the turtle, several young seals came laughingly wabbling to the spot, and as they approached the helpless creature drew in his legs and head and closed his two shells tightly together. The seals bumped against the turtle and gave it a push that sent it sliding down the beach like a toboggan, and a minute later it splashed into the water and sank out of sight. But that was just what the creature wanted. On shore the upset turtle was quite helpless; but the mischievous seals saved him. For as soon as he touched the water, he was able to turn and right himself, which he promptly did. Then he raised his head above the water and asked:

“Is it peace or war, Muffruff?”

“Whichever you like,” answered the Seal indifferently.

Perhaps the turtle was angry, for it ran on shore with remarkable swiftness, uttering a shrill cry as it advanced. At once all the other turtles awoke to life and with upraised heads joined their comrade in the rush for the seals. Most of Chief Muffruff’s band scrambled hastily down the rocks and plunged into the water of the sea without waiting for the turtles to reach them; but the chief himself was slow in escaping. It may be that he was ashamed to run while the mermaids were watching, but if this was so he made a great mistake. The turtles snapped at his fins and tail and began biting round chunks out of them so that Chief Muffruff screamed with pain and anger and floundered into the water as fast as he could go. The vengeful turtles were certainly the victors, and now held undisputed possession of the island.

Trot laughed joyously at the incident, not feeling a bit sorry for the old seal who had foolishly begun the battle. Even the gentle queen smiled as she said:

“These quarrels between the turtles and the seals are very frequent, but they are soon ended. An hour from now they will all be lying asleep together just as we found them; but we will not wait for that. Let us go.”

She sank slowly beneath the water again, and the others followed after her.

CHAPTER 11
ZOG THE TERRIBLE AND HIS SEA DEVILS

"The sun must be going under a cloud," said Trot, looking ahead.

They had descended far into the ocean depths again — further, the girl thought, than they had ever been before.

"No," the Queen answered after a glance ahead of them, "that is a cuttlefish, and he is dyeing the sea around him with ink so that he can hide from us. Let us turn a little to the left, for we could see nothing at all in that inky water."

Following her advice, they made a broad curve to the left, and at once the water began to darken in that direction.

"Why, there's another of 'em," said Cap'n Bill as the little party came to a sudden halt.

"So there is," returned the Queen, and Trot thought there was a little quiver of anxiety in her voice. "We must go far to the right to escape the ink."

So they again started, this time almost at a right angle to their former course, the little girl inquired:

"How can the cuttlefish color the water so very black?"

"They carry big sacks in front of them where they conceal the ink," Princess Clia answered. "Whenever they choose, the cuttlefish are able to press out this ink, and it colors the water for a great space around them."

The direction in which they were now swimming was taking them far out of their way. Aquareine did not wish to travel very far to the right, so when

she thought they had gone far enough to escape the inky water, she turned to lead her party toward the left — the direction in which she DID wish to go. At once another cloud of ink stained the water and drove them to the right again.

"Is anything wrong, ma'am?" asked Cap'n Bill, seeing a frown gather upon the queen's lovely face.

"I hope not," she said. "But I must warn you that these cuttlefish are the servants of the terrible sea devils, and from the way they are acting they seem determined to drive us toward the Devil Caves, which I wished to avoid."

This admission on the part of their powerful protector, the fairy mermaid, sent a chill to the hearts of the earth people. Neither spoke for a time, but finally Cap'n Bill asked in a timid voice:

"Hadn't we better go back, ma'am?"

"Yes," decided Aquareine after a moment's thought. "I think it will be wise to retreat. The sea devils are evidently aware of our movements and wish to annoy us. For my part, I have no fear of them, but I do not care to have you meet such creatures."

But when they turned around to abandon their journey, another inky cloud was to be seen behind them. They really had no choice but to swim in the only streak of clear water they could find, and the mermaids well knew this would lead them nearer and nearer to the caves of their enemies.

But Aquareine led the way, moving very slowly, and the others followed her. In every other direction they were hemmed in by the black waters, and they did not dare to halt, because the inky fluid crept swiftly up behind them and drove them on.

The queen and the princess had now become silent and grave. They swam on either side of their guests as if to better protect them.

"Don't look up," whispered Clia, pressing close to the little girl's side.

"Why not?" asked Trot, and then she did exactly what she had been told not to do. She lifted her head and saw stretched over them a network of scrawny, crimson arms interlaced like the branches of trees in winter when the leaves have fallen and left them bare.

Cap'n Bill gave a start and muttered "Land sakes!" for he, too, had gazed upward and seen the crimson network of limbs.

"Are these the sea devils?" asked the child, more curious than frightened.

"Yes, dear," replied the Queen. "But I advise you to pay no attention to them. Remember, they cannot touch us."

In order to avoid the threatening arms overhead, which followed them as they swam, our friends kept near to the bottom of the sea, which was here

thickly covered with rough and jagged rocks. The inky water had now been left far behind, but when Trot looked over her shoulder, she shuddered to find a great crimson monster following closely after them, with a dozen long, snaky feelers stretched out as if to grab anyone that lagged behind. And there, at the side of Princess Clia, was another devil, leering silently with his cruel, bulging eyes at the pretty mermaid. Beside the queen swam still another of their enemies. Indeed, the sea devils had crept upon them and surrounded them everywhere except at the front, and Trot began to feel nervous and worried for the first time.

Cap'n Bill kept mumbling queer words under his breath, for he had a way of talking to himself when anything "upsot him," as he would quaintly remark. Trot always knew he was disturbed or in trouble when he began to "growl."

The only way now open was straight ahead. They swam slowly, yet fast enough to keep a safe distance from the dreadful creature behind them.

"I'm afraid they are driving us into a trap," whispered the Queen softly. "But whatever happens, do not lose courage, earth friends. Clia and I are here to protect you, and our fairy powers are sufficient to keep you from all harm."

"Oh, I don't mind so very much," declared Trot calmly. "It's like the fairy adventures in storybooks, and I've often thought I'd like that kind of adventures, 'cause the story always turns out the right way."

Cap'n Bill growled something just then, but the only words Trot could make out were, "never lived to tell the tale."

"Oh, pshaw, Cap'n," she said. "We may be in danger, right enough, an' to be honest, I don't like the looks of these sea devils at all. But I'm sure it's no KILLING matter, for we've got the fairy circles all around us."

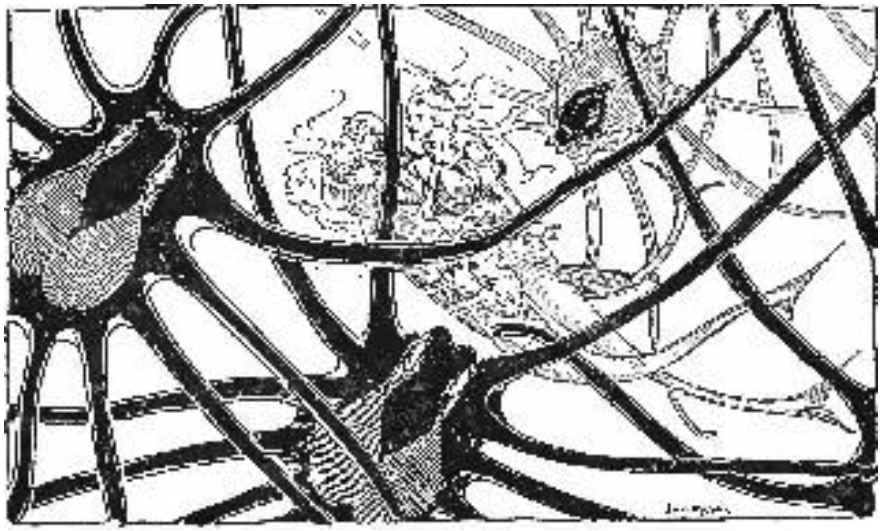
"Ha ha!" laughed the monster beside her. "WE know all about the fairy circles, don't we, Migg?"

"Ho ho!" laughed the monster on the other side. "We do, Slibb, my boy, and we don't think much of fairy circles, either!"

"They have foiled our enemies many a time," declared the Princess with much dignity.

"Ha ha!" laughed one. "That's why we're here now."

"Ho ho!" laughed the other. "We've learned a trick or two, and we've got you fast this time."



Then all the sea devils — those above and the one behind, and the two on the sides — laughed all together, and their laughter was so horrible that it made even Trot shudder.

But now the queen stopped short, and the others stopped with her.

"I will go no farther," she said firmly, not caring if the monsters overheard her. "It is evident that these monsters are trying to drive us into some secret place, and it is well known that they are in league with Zog the Terrible, whom they serve because they are as wicked as he is. We must be somewhere near the hidden castle of Zog, so I prefer to stay here rather than be driven into some place far more dangerous. As for the sea devils, they are powerless to injure us in any way. Not one of those thousand arms about us can possibly touch our bodies."

The only reply to this defiant speech was another burst of horrible laughter; and now there suddenly appeared before them still another of the monsters, which thus completely hemmed them in. Then the creatures began interlacing their long arms — or "feelers" — until they formed a perfect cage around the prisoners, not an opening being left that was large enough for one of them to escape through.

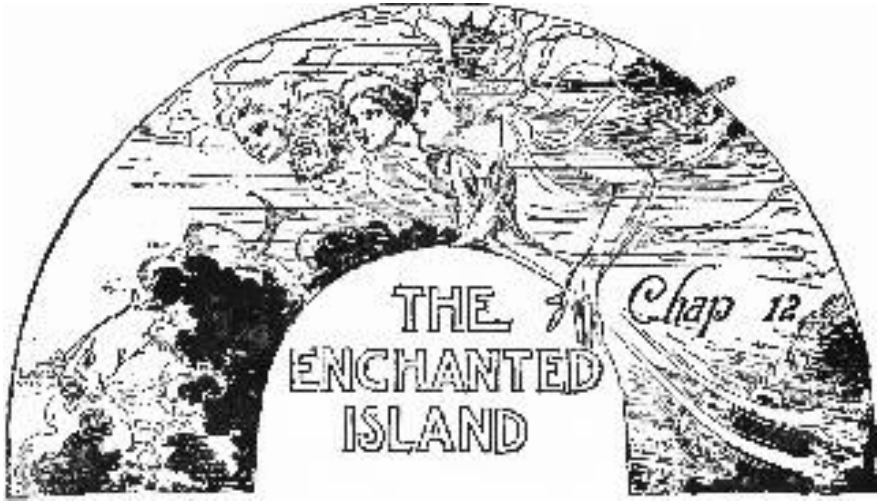
The mermaids and the girl and sailor man kept huddled close together, for although they might be walled in by the sea devils, their captors could not touch them because of the protecting magic circles.

All at once Trot exclaimed, "Why, we must be moving!"

This was startling news, but by watching the flow of water past them they saw that the little girl was right. The sea devils were swimming, all together, and as the cage they were in moved forward, our friends were carried with it.

Queen Aquareine had a stern look upon her beautiful face. Cap'n Bill guessed from this look that the mermaid was angry, for it seemed much like the look Trot's mother wore when they came home late to dinner. But however angry the queen might be, she was unable to help herself or her guests just now or to escape from the guidance of the dreaded sea devils. The rest of the party had become sober and thoughtful, and in dignified silence they awaited the outcome of this strange adventure.

CHAPTER 12
THE ENCHANTED ISLAND



All at once it grew dark around them. Neither Cap'n Bill nor Trot liked this gloom, for it made them nervous not to be able to see their enemies.

"We must be near a sea cavern, if not within one," whispered Princess Clia, and even as she spoke the network of scarlet arms parted before them, leaving an avenue for them to swim out of the cage. There was brighter water ahead, too, so the queen said without hesitation:

"Come along, dear friends; but let us clasp hands and keep close together."

They obeyed her commands and swam swiftly out of their prison and into the clear water before them, glad to put a distance between themselves and the loathesome sea devils. The monsters made no attempt to follow them, but they burst into a chorus of harsh laughter which warned our friends that they had not yet accomplished their escape.

The four now found themselves in a broad, rocky passage, which was dimly lighted from some unknown source. The walls overhead, below them and at the sides all glistened as if made of silver, and in places were set small statues of birds, beasts and fishes, occupying niches in the walls and seemingly made from the same glistening material.

The queen swam more slowly now that the sea devils had been left behind, and she looked exceedingly grave and thoughtful.

"Have you ever been here before?" asked Trot.

"No, dear," said the Queen with a sigh.

"And do you know where we are?" continued the girl.

“I can guess,” replied Aquareine. “There is only one place in all the sea where such a passage as that we are in could exist without my knowledge, and that is in the hidden dominions of Zog. If we are indeed in the power of that fearful magician, we must summon all our courage to resist him, or we are lost!”

“Is Zog more powerful than the mermaids?” asked Trot anxiously.

“I do not know, for we have never before met to measure our strength,” answered Aquareine. “But if King Anko could defeat the magician, as he surely did, then I think I shall be able to do so.”

“I wish I was sure of it,” muttered Cap’n Bill.

Absolute silence reigned in the silver passage. No fish were there; not even a sea flower grew to relieve the stern grandeur of this vast corridor. Trot began to be impressed with the fact that she was a good way from her home and mother, and she wondered if she would ever get back again to the white cottage on the cliff. Here she was, at the bottom of the great ocean, swimming through a big tunnel that had an enchanted castle at the end, and a group of horrible sea devils at the other! In spite of this thought, she was not very much afraid. Although two fairy mermaids were her companions, she relied, strange to say, more upon her tried and true friend, Cap’n Bill, than upon her newer acquaintances to see her safely out of her present trouble.

Cap’n Bill himself did not feel very confident.

“I don’t care two cents what becomes o’ me,” he told Princess Clia in a low voice, “but I’m drea’ful worried over our Trot. She’s too sweet an’ young to be made an end of in this ‘ere fashion.”

Clia smiled at this speech. “I’m sure you will find the little girl’s end a good way off,” she replied. “Trust to our powerful queen, and be sure she will find some means for us all to escape uninjured.”

The light grew brighter as they advanced, until finally they perceived a magnificent archway just ahead of them. Aquareine hesitated a moment whether to go on or turn back, but there was no escaping the sea devils behind them, and she decided the best way out of their difficulties was to bravely face the unknown Zog and rely upon her fairy powers to prevent his doing any mischief to herself or her friends. So she led the way, and together they approached the archway and passed through it.

They now found themselves in a vast cavern, so great in extent that the dome overhead looked like the sky when seen from earth. In the center of this immense sea cavern rose the towers of a splendid castle, all built of coral inlaid with silver and having windows of clear glass.

Surrounding the castle were beds of beautiful sea flowers, many being in full bloom, and these were laid out with great care in artistic designs. Goldfish and silverfish darted here and there among the foliage, and the whole scene was so pretty and peaceful that Trot began to doubt there was any danger lurking in such a lovely place.

As they approached to look around them, a brilliantly colored gregfish approached and gazed at them curiously with his big, saucer-like eyes. “So Zog has got you at last!” he said in a pitying tone. “How foolish you were to swim into that part of the sea where he is powerful.”

“The sea devils made us,” explained Clia.

“Well, I’m sorry for you, I’m sure,” remarked the Greg, and with a flash of his tail, he disappeared among the sea foliage.

“Let us go to the castle,” said the Queen in a determined voice. “We may as well boldly defy our fate as to wait until Zog seeks us out.”

So they swam to the entrance of the castle. The doors stood wide open, and the interior seemed as well lighted as the cavern itself, although none of them could discover from whence the light came.

At each side of the entrance lay a fish such as they had never seen before. It was flat as a doormat and seemed to cling fast to the coral floor. Upon its back were quills like those of a porcupine, all pointed and sharp. From the center of the fish arose a head shaped like a round ball, with a circle of piercing, bead-like eyes set in it. These strange guardians of the entrance might be able to tell what their numerous eyes saw, yet they remained silent and watchful. Even Aquareine gazed upon them curiously, and she gave a little shudder as she did so.

Inside the entrance was a domed hall with a flight of stairs leading to an upper balcony. Around the hall were several doorways hung with curtains made of woven seaweeds. Chairs and benches stood against the wall, and these astonished the visitors because neither stairs nor chairs seemed useful in a kingdom where every living thing was supposed to swim and have a fish’s tail. In Queen Aquareine’s palaces benches for reclining were used, and stairs were wholly unnecessary, but in the Palace of Zog the furniture and fittings were much like those of a house upon earth, and except that every space here was filled with water instead of air, Trot and Cap’n Bill might have imagined themselves in a handsome earthly castle.

The little group paused half fearfully in the hall, yet so far there was surely nothing to be afraid of. They were wondering what to do next when the curtains of an archway were pushed aside and a boy entered. To Trot’s astonishment, he had legs and walked upon them naturally and with perfect ease. He was a delicate, frail-looking little fellow, dressed in a black velvet

suit with knee breeches. The bows at his throat and knees were of colored seaweeds, woven into broad ribbons. His hair was yellow and banged across his forehead. His eyes were large and dark, with a pleasant, merry sparkle in them. Around his neck he wore a high ruff, but in spite of this Trot could see that below his plump cheeks were several scarlet-edged slits that looked like the gills of fishes, for they gently opened and closed as the boy breathed in the water by which he was surrounded. These gills did not greatly mar the lad's delicate beauty, and he spread out his arms and bowed low and gracefully in greeting.

"Hello," said Trot.

"Why, I'd like to," replied the boy with a laugh, "but being a mere slave, it isn't proper for me to hello. But it's good to see earth people again, and I'm glad you're here."

"We're not glad," observed the girl. "We're afraid."

"You'll get over that," declared the boy smilingly. "People lose a lot of time being afraid. Once I was myself afraid, but I found it was no fun, so I gave it up."

"Why were we brought here?" inquired Queen Aquareine gently.

"I can't say, madam, being a mere slave," replied the boy. "But you have reminded me of my errand. I am sent to inform you all that Zog the Forsaken, who hates all the world and is hated by all the world, commands your presence in his den."

"Do you hate Zog, too?" asked Trot.

"Oh no," answered the boy. "People lose a lot of time in hating others, and there's no fun in it at all. Zog may be hateful, but I'm not going to waste time hating him. You may do so, if you like."

"You are a queer child," remarked the Mermaid Queen, looking at him attentively. "Will you tell us who you are?"

"Once I was Prince Sacho of Sacharhineolaland, which is a sweet country, but hard to pronounce," he answered. "But in this domain I have but one title and one name, and that is 'Slave.'"

"How came you to be Zog's slave?" asked Clia.

"The funniest adventure you ever heard of," asserted the boy with eager pride. "I sailed in a ship that went to pieces in a storm. All on board were drowned but me, and I came mighty near it, to tell the truth. I went down deep, deep into the sea, and at the bottom was Zog, watching the people drown. I tumbled on his head, and he grabbed and saved me, saying I would make a useful slave. By his magic power he made me able to live under water as the fishes live, and he brought me to this castle and taught me to wait upon him as his other slaves do."

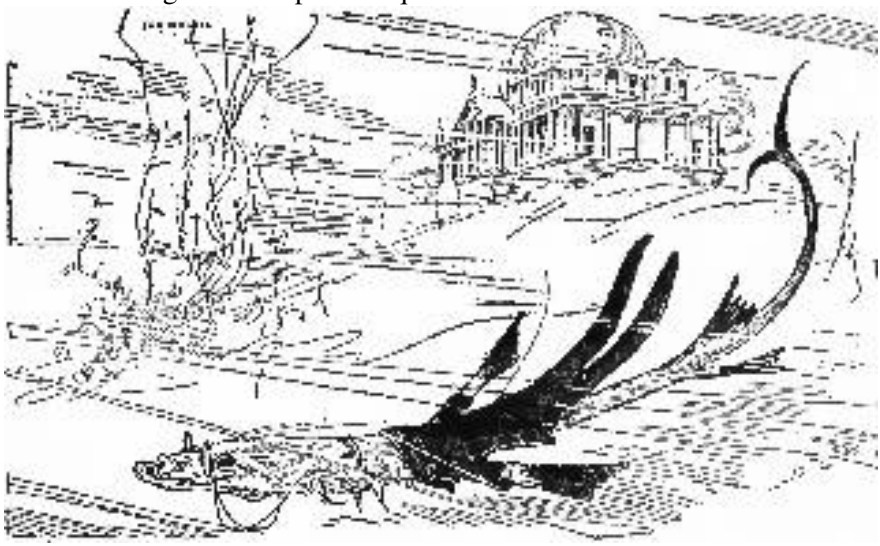
“Isn’t it a dreadful, lonely life?” asked Trot.

“No indeed,” said Sacho. “We haven’t any time to be lonely, and the dreadful things Zog does are very exciting and amusing, I assure you. He keeps us guessing every minute, and that makes the life here interesting. Things were getting a bit slow an hour ago, but now that you are here, I’m in hopes we will all be kept busy and amused for some time.”

“Are there many others in the castle besides you and Zog?” asked Aquareine.

“Dozens of us. Perhaps hundreds. I’ve never counted them,” said the boy. “But Zog is the only master; all the rest of us are in the same class, so there is no jealousy among the slaves.”

“What is Zog like?” Cap’n Bill questioned.



At this the boy laughed, and the laugh was full of mischief. “If I could tell you what Zog is like, it would take me a year,” was the reply. “But I can’t tell you. Every one has a different idea of what he’s like, and soon you will see him yourselves.”

“Are you fond of him?” asked Trot.

“If I said yes, I’d get a good whipping,” declared Sacho. “I am commanded to hate Zog, and being a good servant, I try to obey. If anyone dared to like Zog, I am sure he’d be instantly fed to the turtles; so I advise you not to like him.”

“Oh, we won’t,” promised Trot.

“But we’re keeping the master waiting, and that is also a dangerous thing to do,” continued the boy. “If we don’t hurry up, Zog will begin to smile, and when he smiles there is trouble brewing.”

The queen sighed. “Lead the way, Sacho,” she said. “We will follow.”

The boy bowed again, and going to an archway, held aside the curtains for them. They first swam into a small anteroom which led into a long corridor, at the end of which was another curtained arch. Through this Sacho also guided them, and now they found themselves in a cleverly constructed maze. Every few feet were twists and turns and sharp corners, and sometimes the passage would be wide, and again so narrow that they could just squeeze through in single file. “Seems like we’re gettin’ further into the trap,” growled Cap’n Bill. “We couldn’t find our way out o’ here to save our lives.”

“Oh yes we could,” replied Clia, who was just behind him. “Such a maze may indeed puzzle you, but the queen or I could lead you safely through it again, I assure you. Zog is not so clever as he thinks himself.”

The sailor, however, found the maze very bewildering, and so did Trot. Passages ran in every direction, crossing and recrossing, and it seemed wonderful that the boy Sacho knew just which way to go. But he never hesitated an instant. Trot looked carefully to see if there were any marks to guide him, but every wall was of plain, polished marble, and every turning looked just like all the others. Suddenly Sacho stopped short. They were now in a broader passage, but as they gathered around their conductor they found further advance blocked. Solid walls faced them, and here the corridor seemed to end.

“Enter!” said a clear voice.

“But we can’t!” protested Trot.

“Swim straight ahead,” whispered the boy in soft tones. “There is no real barrier before you. Your eyes are merely deceived by magic.”

“Ah, I understand,” said Aquareine, nodding her pretty head. And then she took Mayre’s hand and swam boldly forward, while Cap’n Bill followed holding the hand of Clia. And behold! the marble wall melted away before them, and they found themselves in a chamber more splendid than even the fairy mermaids had ever seen before.

PRISONERS
of the
SEA MONSTER

CHAPTER 13

PRISONERS OF THE SEA MONSTER

The room in the enchanted castle which Zog called the "den" and in which the wicked sea monster passed most of his time was a perfectly shaped dome of solid gold. The upper part of this dome was thickly set with precious jewels — diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds, which sparkled beautifully through the crystal water. The lower walls were as thickly studded with pearls, all being of perfect shape and color. Many of the pearls were larger than any which may be found upon earth, for the sea people knew where to find the very best and hide them away where men cannot discover them.

The golden floor was engraved with designs of rare beauty, depicting not only sea life, but many adventures upon land. In the room were several large, golden cabinets, the doors of which were closed and locked, and in addition to the cabinets there were tables, chairs and sofas, the latter upholstered with softest sealskins. Handsome rugs of exquisitely woven seaweeds were scattered about, the colors of which were artistically blended together. In one corner a fountain of air bubbled up through the water. The entire room was lighted as brilliantly as if exposed to the direct rays of the sun, yet where this light came from our friends could not imagine. No lamp or other similar device was visible anywhere.

The strangers at first scarcely glanced at all these beautiful things, for in an easy chair sat Zog himself, more wonderful than any other living creature, and as they gazed upon him, their eyes seemed fascinated as if held by a spell. Zog's face was the face of a man, except that the tops of his ears were pointed like horns and he had small horns instead of eyebrows and a horn on the end of his chin. In spite of these deformities, the expression of the face was not unpleasant or repulsive. His hair was carefully parted and brushed, and his mouth and nose were not only perfect in shape but quite handsome.

Only the eyes betrayed Zog and made him terrible to all beholders. They seemed like coals of glowing fire and sparkled so fiercely that no one ever cared to meet their gaze for more than an instant. Perhaps the monster realized this, for he usually drooped his long lashes over his fiery eyes to shut out their glare. Zog had two well-shaped legs which ended in the hoofs of beasts instead of feet, and these hoofs were shod with gold. His body was a shapeless mass covered with richly embroidered raiment, over which a great robe of cloth of gold fell in many folds. This robe was intended to hide the magician's body from view, but Trot noticed that the cloth moved constantly in little ripples, as if what lay underneath would not keep still.

The best features of which Zog could boast were his arms and hands, the latter being as well formed, as delicate and white as those of a well-bred woman. When he spoke, his voice sounded sweet and clear, and its tones were very gentle. He had given them a few moments to stare at him, for he was examining them in turn with considerable curiosity. "Well," said he, "do you not find me the most hateful creature you have ever beheld?"

The queen refrained from answering, but Trot said promptly, "We do. Nothing could be more horrider or more disgustin' than you are, it seems to me."

"Very good, very good indeed," declared the monster, lifting his lashes to flash his glowing eyes upon them. Then he turned toward Cap'n Bill. "Man-fish," he continued, "what do YOU think of me?"

"Mighty little," the sailor replied. "You orter be 'shamed to ask sech a question, knowin' you look worse ner the devil himself."

"Very true," answered Zog, frowning. He felt that he had received a high compliment, and the frown showed he was pleased with Cap'n Bill.

But now Queen Aquareine advanced to a position in front of their captor and said, "Tell me, Zog, why have you trapped us and brought us here?"

"To destroy you," was the quick answer, and the magician turned for an instant to flash his eyes upon the beautiful mermaid. "For two hundred years I have been awaiting a chance to get within my power some friend of Anko the Sea Serpent — of Anko, whom I hate!" he added, smiling sweetly. "When you left your palace today, my swift spies warned me, and so I sent the sea devils to capture you. Often have they tried to do this before, but always failed. Today, acting by my command, they tricked you, and by surrounding you forced you to the entrance of my enchanted castle. The result is a fine capture of important personages. I have now in my power the queen and princess of the fairy mermaids, as well as two wandering earth people, and I assure you I shall take great pleasure in destroying you utterly."

"You are a coward," declared the Queen proudly. "You dared not meet us in the open sea."

"No, I dare not leave this castle," Zog admitted, still smiling. "But here in my own domain my power is supreme. Nothing can interfere with my vengeance."

"That remains to be seen," said Aquareine, firmly meeting the gaze of the terrible eyes.

"Of course," he answered, nodding his head with a graceful movement. "You will try to thwart me and escape. You will pit your fairy power against my powers of magic. That will give me great pleasure, for the more you struggle, the greater will be my revenge."

“But why should you seek revenge upon us?” asked Clia. “We have never harmed you.”

“That is true,” replied Zog. “I bear you no personal ill will. But you are friends of my great enemy, King Anko, and it will annoy him very much when he finds that you have been destroyed by me. I cannot hurt the rascally old sea serpent himself, but through you I can make him feel my vengeance.”

“The mermaids have existed thousands of years,” said the Queen in a tone of pride. “Do you imagine the despised and conquered Zog has power to destroy them?”

“I do not know,” was the quiet answer. “It will be interesting to discover which is the more powerful.”

“I challenge you to begin the test at once, vile magician!” exclaimed Aquareine.

“There is no hurry, fair Queen,” answered Zog in his softest tones. “I have been so many years in accomplishing your capture that it is foolish to act hastily now. Besides, I am lonely. Here in my forced retirement I see only those uninteresting earth mortals whom I have made my slaves, for all sea dwellers are forbidden to serve me save the sea devils, and they dare not enter my castle. I have saved many mortals from drowning and brought them here to people my castle, but I do not love mortals. Two lovely mermaids are much more interesting, and before I allow you to perish, I shall have much amusement in witnessing your despair and your struggles to escape. You are now my prisoners. By slow degrees I shall wear out your fairy powers and break your hearts, as well as the hearts of these earth dwellers who have no magic powers, and I think it will be a long time before I finally permit you to die.”

“That’s all right,” said Trot cheerfully. “The longer you take, the better I’ll be satisfied.”

“That’s how I feel about it,” added Cap’n Bill. “Don’t get in a hurry to kill us Zog. It’ll be such a wear an’ tear on your nerves. Jes’ take it easy an’ let us live as long as we can.”

“Don’t you care to die?” asked the magician.

“It’s a thing I never longed for,” the sailor replied. “You see, we had no business to go on a trip with the mermaids to begin with. I’ve allus heard tell that mermaids is dangerous, an’ no one as met ‘em ever lived to tell the tale. Eh, Trot?”

“That’s what you said, Cap’n Bill.”

“So I guess we’re done for, one way ‘r ‘nother, an’ it don’t matter much which. But Trot’s a good child, an’ mighty young an’ tender. It don’t seem like her time has come to die. I’d like to have her sent safe home to her

mother. So I've got this 'ere proposition to make, Zog. If your magic could make ME die twice, or even THREE times fer good measure, why you go ahead an' do it an' I won't complain. All I ask is fer you to send this little girl safe back to dry land again."

"Don't you do it, Zog!" cried Trot indignantly, and turning to Cap'n Bill, she added, "I'm not goin' to leave you down here in all this mess, Cap'n, and don't you think it. If one of us gets out of the muddle we're in, we'll both get out, so don't you make any bargains with Zog to die twice."

Zog listened to this conversation very carefully. "The dying does not amount to much," he said. "It is the thinking about it that hurts you mortals most. I've watched many a shipwreck at sea, and the people would howl and

scream for hours before the ship broke up. Their terror was very enjoyable. But when the end came, they all drowned as peacefully as if they were going to sleep, so it didn't amuse me at all."

"I'm not worrying," said Trot.

"Ner me," said Cap'n Bill. "You'll find we can take what comes jes' as easy as anybody."

"I do not expect to get much from you poor mortals," said Zog carelessly. "You are merely a side show to my circus, a sort of dessert to my feast of vengeance. When the time comes, I can find a hundred ways to kill you. My most interesting prisoners are these pretty mermaids, who claim that none of their race has ever yet died or been destroyed. The first mermaid ever created is living yet, and I am told she is none other than Queen Aquareine. So I have a pretty problem before me to invent some way to destroy the mermaids or put them out of existence. And it will require some thought."

"Also, it will require some power you do not possess," suggested the Queen.

"That may be," replied Zog softly. "But I am going to experiment, and I believe I shall be able to cause you a lot of pain and sorrow before I finally make an end of you. I have not lived twenty-seven thousand years, Aquareine, without getting a certain amount of wisdom, and I am more powerful than you suspect."

"You are a monster and a wicked magician," said the Mermaid Queen.

"I am," agreed Zog, "but I cannot help it. I was created part man, part bird, part fish, part beast and part reptile, and such a monstrosity could not be otherwise than wicked. Everybody hates me, and I hate everybody."

"Why don't you kill yourself?" asked Trot.

"I've tried that and failed," he answered. "Only one being in the world has power to destroy me, and that is King Anko, the sea serpent."

"Then you'd better let him do it," advised the little girl.

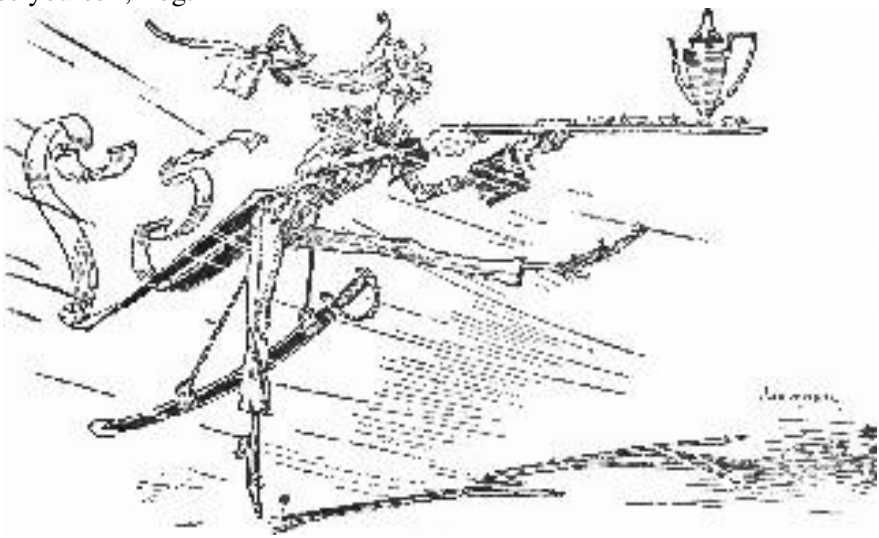
"No. Much as I long to die, I cannot allow King Anko the pleasure of killing me. He has always been my worst enemy, and it would be such a joy to him to kill me that I really cannot allow him. Indeed, I have always hoped to kill Anko. I have now been three thousand six hundred and forty-two years, eleven months and nine days figuring out a plan to destroy old Anko, and as yet I have not discovered a way."

"I'd give it up, if I were you," advised Trot. "Don't you think you could get some fun out of trying to be good?"

"No!" cried Zog, and his voice was not so soft as before. "Listen, Aquareine, you and your attendants shall be prisoners in this castle until I can manage to stop you from living. Rooms will be placed at your disposal, and I

wish you to go to them at o nce, as I am tired of looking at you."

"You're no more tired than we are," remarked Trot. "It's lucky you can't see yourself, Zog."



He turned his glowing eyes full upon her. "The worst of my queer body I keep concealed," he said. "If ever you see it, you will scream with terror." He touched a bell beside him, and the girl was surprised to find how clearly its tones rang out through the water. In an instant the boy Sacho appeared and bowed low before his dreadful master. "Take the mermaids and the child to the Rose Chamber," commanded Zog, "and take the old man-fish to the Peony Room."

Sacho turned to obey. "Are the outer passages well guarded?" asked the monster.

"Yes, as you have commanded," said the boy.

"Then you may allow the prisoners to roam at will throughout the castle. Now, go!"

The prisoners followed Sacho from the room, glad to get away. The presence of this evil being had grown oppressive to them, and Zog had himself seemed ill at ease during the last few minutes. The robe so closely wound around his body moved jerkily, as if something beneath disturbed it, and at such times Zog shifted nervously in his seat.

Sacho's thin little legs trotted through the water and led the way into a different passage from the one by which they had entered. They swam slowly after him and breathed easier when they had left the golden domed chamber where their wicked enemy sat enthroned. "Well, how do you like him?" asked Sacho with a laugh.

“We hate him!” declared Trot emphatically.

“Of course you do,” replied Sacho. “But you’re wasting time hating anything. It doesn’t do you any good, or him any harm. Can you sing?”

“A little,” said Trot, “but I don’t feel like singing now.”

“You’re wrong about that,” the boy asserted. “Anything that keeps you from singing is foolishness, unless it’s laughter. Laughter, joy and song are the only good things in the world.”

Trot did not answer this queer speech, for just then they came to a flight of stairs, and Sacho climbed up them while the others swam. And now they were in a lofty, broad corridor having many doors hung with seaweed draperies. At one of these doorways Sacho stopped and said, “Here is the Rose Chamber where the master commands you to live until you die. You may wander anywhere in the castle as you please; to leave it is impossible. Whenever you return to the Rose Chamber, you will know it by this design of roses sewn in pearls upon the hangings. The Peony Room where the man-fish is to live is the next one farther on.”

“Thank you,” replied Queen Aquareine. “Are we to be fed?”

“Meals will be served in your rooms. If you desire anything, ring the bell and some of the slaves will be sure to answer it. I am mostly in attendance upon my master, but whenever I am at liberty I will look after your comfort myself.”

Again they thanked the strange boy, and he turned and left them. They could hear him whistle and sing as he returned along the passage. Then Princess Clia parted the curtains that her queen and companions might enter the Rose Chamber.

CHAPTER 14

CAP'N JOE AND CAP'N BILL

The rooms Zog had given his prisoners were as handsome as all other parts of this strange enchanted castle. Gold was used plentifully in the decorations, and in the Rose Chamber occupied by the mermaids and Trot golden roses formed a border around the entire room. The sea maidens had evidently been expected, for the magician had provided couches for them to recline upon similar to the ones used in the mermaid palaces. The frames were of mother of pearl and the cushions of soft, white sponges. In the room were toilet tables, mirrors, ornaments and many articles used by earth people, which they afterward learned had been plundered by Zog from sunken ships and brought to his castle by his allies, the sea devils.

While the mermaids were examining and admiring their room, Cap'n Bill went to the Peony Room to see what it was like and found his quarters were very cozy and interesting. There were pictures on the wall, portraits of grave-looking porpoises, bashful seals, and smug and smiling walruses. Some of the wall panels were formed of mirrors and reflected clearly the interior of the room. Around the ceiling was a frieze of imitation peonies in silver, and the furniture was peony-shaped, the broad leaves being bent to form seats and couches. Beside a pretty dressing table hung a bell cord with a tassel at the end. Cap'n Bill did not know it was a bell cord, so he pulled it to see what would happen and was puzzled to find that nothing seemed to happen at all, the bell being too far away for him to hear it. Then he began looking at the treasures contained in this royal apartment, and was much pleased with a golden statue of a mermaid that resembled Princess Clia in feature. A silver

flower vase upon a stand contained a bouquet of gorgeous peonies, “as nat’ral as life,” said Cap’n Bill, although he saw plainly that they must be made of metal.

Trot came in just then to see how her dear friend was located. She entered from the doorway that connected the two rooms and said, “Isn’t it pretty, Cap’n? And who’d ever think that awful creature Zog owned such a splendid castle and kept his prisoners in such lovely rooms?”

“I once heard tell,” said the sailor, “of a foreign people that sacrificed humans to please their pagan gods, an’ before they killed ‘em outright they stuffed the victims full of good things to eat an’ dressed ‘em in pretty clothes an’ treated ‘em like princes. That’s why I don’t take much comfort in our fine surroundin’s, Trot. This Zog is a pagan, if ever there was one, an’ he don’t mean us any good, you may depend on ‘t.”

“No,” replied Trot soberly, “I’m sure he does not expect us to be happy here. But I’m going to fool him and have just as good a time as I can.” As she spoke they both turned around — an easy thing to do with a single flop of their flexible tails — and Cap’n Bill uttered a cry of surprise. Just across the room stood a perfect duplicate of himself. The round head, with its bald top and scraggly whiskers, the sailor cap and shirt, the wide pantaloons, even the wooden leg, each and every one were exact copies of those owned by Cap’n Bill. Even the expression in the light-blue eyes was the same, and it is no wonder the old sailor stared at his “double” in amazement. But the next minute he laughed and said, “Why, Trot, it’s ME reflected in a mirror. But at first I thought it was someone else.”

Trot was staring, too. “Look, Cap’n!” she whispered. “Look at the wooden leg.”

“Well, it’s MY wooden leg, ain’t it?” he inquired.

“If it is, it can’t be a reflection in a mirror,” she argued, “for YOU haven’t got a wooden leg. You’ve got a fish’s tail.”

The old sailor was so startled by this truth that he gave a great flop with his tail that upset his balance and made him keel a somersault in the water before he got right side up again. Then he found the other sailor man laughing at him and was horrified to find the “reflection” advancing toward them by stumping along on its wooden leg. “Keep away! Get out, there!” yelled Cap’n Bill. “You’re a ghost, the ghost o’ me that once was, an’ I can’t bear the sight o’ you. Git out!”

“Did you ring jes’ to tell me to git out?” asked the other in a mild voice.

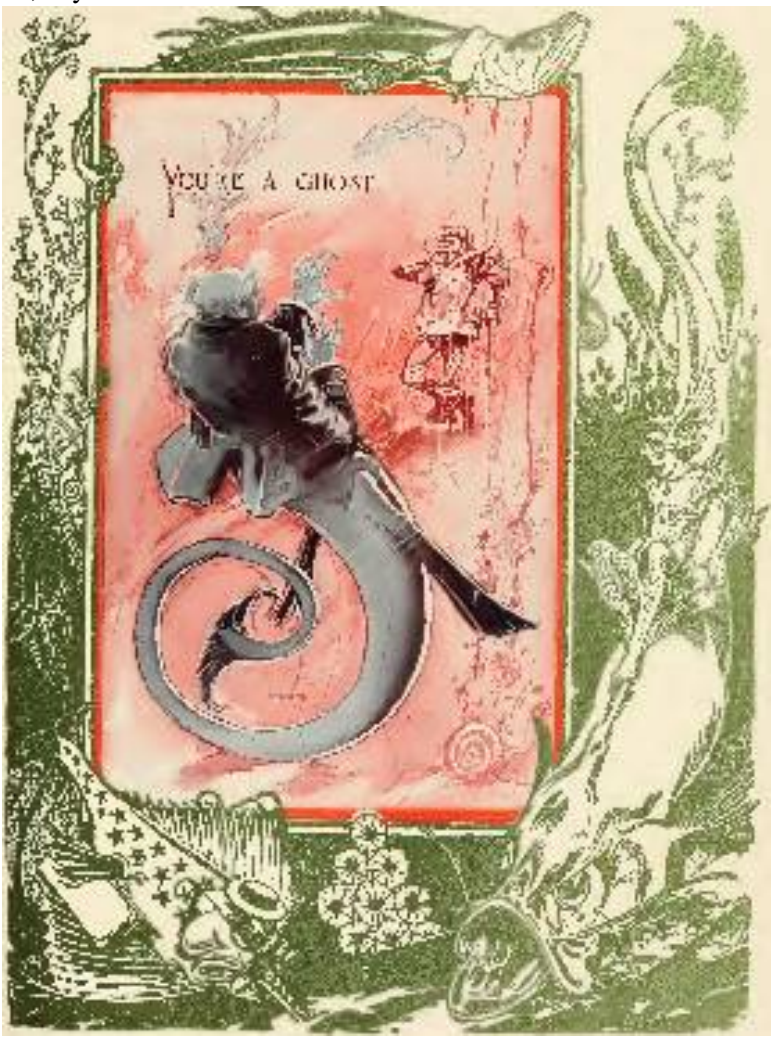
“I — I didn’t ring,” declared Cap’n Bill.

“You did. You pulled that bell cord,” said the one-legged (one or more lines missing here in this edition)

“Oh, did pullin’ that thing ring a bell?” inquired the Cap’n, a little ashamed of his ignorance and reassured by hearing the “ghost” talk.

“It surely did,” was the reply, “and Sacho told me to answer your bell and look after you. So I’m a-lookin’ after you.”

“I wish you wouldn’t,” protested Cap’n Bill. “I’ve no use fer — fer ghostses, anyhow.”



The strange sailor began to chuckle at hearing this, and his chuckle was just like Cap’n Bill’s chuckle, so full of merry humor that it usually made everyone laugh with him.

“Who are you?” asked Trot, who was very curious and much surprised.

“I’m Cap’n Joe,” was the reply. “Cap’n Joe Weedles, formerly o’ the brig

‘Gladsome’ an’ now a slave o’ Zog at the bottom o’ the sea.”

“J — J — Joe Wee-Weedles!” gasped Cap’n Bill, amazed. “Joe Weedles o’ the ‘Gladsome’! Why, dash my eyes, mate, you must be my brother!”

“Are YOU Bill Weedles?” asked the other. And then he added, “But no, you can’t be. Bill wasn’t no mermaid. He were a human critter like myself.”

“That’s what I am,” said Cap’n Bill hastily. “I’m a human critter, too. I’ve jes’ borrered this fish tail to swim with while I’m visitin’ the mermaids.”

“Well, well,” said Cap’n Joe in astonishment. “Who’d o’ thought it! An’ who’d ever o’ thought as I’d find my long-lost brother in Zog’s enchanted castle full fifty fathoms deep down in the wet, wet water!”

“Why, as fer that,” replied Cap’n Bill, “it’s YOU as is the long-lost brother, not me. You an’ your ship disappeared many a year ago, an’ ain’t never been heard of since, while, as you see, I’m livin’ on earth yet.”

“You don’t look it to all appearances,” remarked Cap’n Joe in a reflective tone of voice. “But I’ll agree it’s many a year since I saw the top o’ the water, an’ I’m not expectin’ to ever tramp on dry land again.”

“Are you dead, or drownded, or what?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“Neither one nor t’other,” was the answer. “But Zog gave me gills so’s I could live in the water like fishes do, an’ if I got on land I couldn’t breathe air any more’n a fish out o’ water can. So I guess as long as I live, I’ll hev to stay down here.”

“Do you like it?” asked Trot.

“Oh, I don’t objec’ much,” said Cap’n Joe. “There ain’t much excitement here, fer we don’t catch a flock o’ mermaids ev’ry day, but the work is easy an’ the rations fair. I might o’ been worse off, you know, for when my brig was wrecked, I’d ‘a’ gone to Davy Jones’s Locker if Zog hadn’t happened to find me an’ made me a fish.”

“You don’t look as much like a fish as Cap’n Bill does,” observed Trot.

“P’raps not,” said Cap’n Joe, “but I notice Bill ain’t got any gills an’ breathes like you an’ the mermaids does. When he gets back to land, he’ll have his two legs again an’ live in comfort breathin’ air.”

“I won’t have two legs,” asserted Cap’n Bill, “for when I’m on earth I’m fitted with one wooden leg, jes’ the same as you are, Joe.”

“Oh, I hadn’t heard o’ that, Bill, but I’m not surprised,” replied Brother Joe. “Many a sailor gets to wear a wooden leg in time. Mine’s hick’ry.”

“So’s mine,” said Cap’n Bill with a air of pride. “I’m glad I’ve run across you, Joe, for I often wondered what had become of you. Seems too bad, though, to have to spend all your life under water.”

“What’s the odds?” asked Cap’n Joe. “I never could keep away from the water since I was a boy, an’ there’s more dangers to be met floatin’ on it than

there is soakin' in it. An' one other thing pleases me when I think on it: I'm parted from my wife, a mighty good woman with a tongue like a two-edge sword, an' my pore widder'll get the insurance money an' live happy. As fer me, Bill, I'm a good deal happier than I was when she kep' scoldin' me from mornin' to night every minute I was home."

"Is Zog a kind master?" asked Trot.

"I can't say he's kind," replied Cap'n Joe, "for he's as near a devil as any livin' critter CAN be. He grumbles an' growls in his soft voice all day, an' hates himself an' everybody else. But I don't see much of him. There's so many of us slaves here that Zog don't pay much attention to us, an' we have a pretty good time when the ol' magician is shut up in his den, as he mostly is."

"Could you help us to escape?" asked the child.

"Why, I don't know how," admitted Cap'n Joe. "There's magic all around us, and we slaves are never allowed to leave this great cave. I'll do what I can, o' course, but Sacho is the boy to help you if anyone can. That little chap knows a heap, I can tell you. So now, if nothin' more's wanted, I must get back to work."

"What work do you do?" Cap'n Bill asked.

"I sew buttons on Zog's clothes. Every time he gets mad, he busts his buttons off, an' I have to sew 'em on again. As he's mad most o' the time, it keeps me busy."

"I'll see you again, won't I, Joe?" said Cap'n Bill.

"No reason why you shouldn't, if you manage to keep alive," said Cap'n Joe. "But you mustn't forget, Bill, this Zog has his grip on you, an' I've never known anything to escape him yet."

Saying this, the old sailor began to stump toward the door, but tripped his foot against his wooden leg and gave a swift dive forward. He would have fallen flat had he not grabbed the drapery at the doorway and saved himself by holding fast to it with both hands. Even then he rolled and twisted so awkwardly before he could get upon his legs that Trot had to laugh outright at his antics. "This hick'ry leg," said Cap'n Joe, "is so blamed light that it always wants to float. Agga-Groo, the goldworker, has promised me a gold leg that will stay down, but he never has time to make it. You're mighty lucky, Bill, to have a merman's tail instead o' legs."

"I guess I am, Joe," replied Cap'n Bill, "for in such a wet country the fishes have the best of it. But I ain't sure I'd like this sort o' thing always."

"Think o' the money you'd make in a side show," said Cap'n Joe with his funny chuckling laugh. Then he pounded his wooden leg against the hard floor and managed to hobble from the room without more accidents.

When he had gone, Trot said, "Aren't you glad to find your brother again, Cap'n Bill?"

"Why, so-so," replied the sailor. "I don't know much about Joe, seein' as we haven't met before for many a long year, an' all I remember about our boyhood days is that we fit an' pulled hair most o' the time. But what worries me most is Joe's lookin' so much like me myself, wooden leg an' all. Don't

you think it's rather cheeky an' unbrotherly, Trot?"

"Perhaps he can't help it," suggested the child. "And anyhow, he'll never be able to live on land again."

"No," said Cap'n Bill with a sigh. "Joe's a fish, now, an' so he ain't likely to be took for me by one of our friends on the earth."

CHAPTER 15
THE MAGIC OF THE MERMAIDS

When Trot and Cap'n Bill entered the Rose Chamber they found the two mermaids reclining before an air fountain that was sending thousands of tiny bubbles up through the water.

"These fountains of air are excellent things," remarked Queen Aquareine, "for they keep the water fresh and sweet, and that is the more necessary when it is confined by walls, as it is in this castle. But now, let us counsel together and decide what to do in the emergency that confronts us."

"How can we tell what to do without knowing what's going to happen?" asked Trot.

"Somethin's sure to happen," said Cap'n Bill.

As if to prove his words, a gong suddenly sounded at their door and in walked a fat little man clothed all in white, including a white apron and white cap. His face was round and jolly, and he had a big mustache that curled up at the ends.

"Well, well!" said the little man, spreading out his legs and putting his hands on his hips as he stood looking at them. "Of all the queer things in the sea, you're the queerest! Mermaids, eh?"

"Don't bunch us that way!" protested Cap'n Bill.

"You are quite wrong," said Trot. "I'm a — a girl."

"With a fish's tail?" he asked, laughing at her.

"That's only just for a while," she said, "while I'm in the water, you know. When I'm at home on the land I walk just as you do, an' so does

Cap'n Bill."

"But we haven't any gills," remarked the Cap'n, looking closely at the little man's throat, "so I take it we're not as fishy as some others."

"If you mean me, I must admit you are right," said the little man, twisting his mustache. "I'm as near a fish as a man can be. But you see, Cap'n, without the gills that make me a fish, I could not live under water."

"When it comes to that, you've no business to live under water," asserted the sailor. "But I s'pose you're a slave and can't help it."

"I'm chief cook for that old horror Zog. And that reminds me, good mermaids, or good people, or good girls and sailors, or whatever you are, that I'm sent here to ask what you'd like to eat."

“Glad to see you, sir,” said Cap’n Bill. “I’m nearly starved, myself.”

“I had it in mind,” said the little man, “to prepare a regular mermaid dinner, but since you’re not mermaids — ”

“Oh, two of us are,” said the Queen, smiling. “I, my good cook, am Aquareine, the ruler of the mermaids, and this is the Princess Clia.”

“I’ve often heard of you, your Majesty,” returned the chief cook, bowing respectfully, “and I must say I’ve heard only good of you. Now that you have unfortunately become my master’s prisoners, it will give me pleasure to serve you as well as I am able.”

“We thank you, good sir,” said Aquareine.

“What have you got to eat?” inquired Trot. “Seems to me I’m hollow way down to my toes — my tail, I mean — and it’ll take a lot to fill me up. We haven’t eaten a morsel since breakfast, you know.”

“I think I shall be able to give you almost anything you would like,” said the cook. “Zog is a wonderful magician and can procure anything that exists with no more effort than a wiggle of his thumb. But some eatables, you know, are hard to serve under water, because they get so damp that they are soon ruined.”

“Ah, it is different with the mermaids,” said Princess Clia.

“Yes, all your things are kept dry because they are surrounded by air. I’ve heard how the mermaids live. But here it is different.”

“Take this ring,” said the Queen, handing the chief cook a circlet which she drew from her finger. “While it is in your possession, the food you prepare will not get wet, or even moist.”

“I thank your Majesty,” returned the cook, taking the ring. “My name is Tom Atto, and I’ll do my best to please you. How would you like for luncheon some oysters on the half-shell, clam broth, shrimp salad, broiled turtle steak and watermelon?”

“That will do very nicely,” answered the Queen.

“Do watermelons grow in the sea?” asked Trot.

“Of course, that is why they are called watermelons,” replied Tom Atto. “I think I shall serve you a water ice, in addition to the rest. Water ice is an appropriate sea food.”

“Have some watercress with the salad,” said Cap’n Bill.

“I’d thought of that,” declared the cook. “Doesn’t my bill of fare make your mouths water?”

“Hurry up and get it ready,” suggested Trot.

Tom Atto at once bowed and retired, and when they were done, Cap’n Bill said to the queen, “Do you think, ma’am, we can manage to escape from Zog and his castle?”

“I hope we shall find a way,” replied Aquareine. “The evil powers of magic which Zog controls may not prove to be as strong as the fairy powers I possess, but of course I cannot be positive until I discover what this wicked magician is able to do.”

Princess Clia was looking out of one of the windows. “I think I can see an opening far up in the top of the dome,” she said. They all hastened to the windows to look, and although Trot and Cap’n Bill could see nothing but a solid dome above the castle — perhaps because it was so far away from them — the sharp eyes of Aquareine were not to be deceived.

“Yes,” she announced, “there is surely an opening in the center of the great dome. A little thought must convince us that such an opening is bound to exist, for otherwise the water confined within the dome would not be fresh or clear.”

“Then if we could escape from this castle, we could swim up to the hole in the dome and get free!” exclaimed Trot.

“Why, Zog has probably ordered the opening well guarded, as he has all the other outlets,” responded the Queen. “Yet it may be worth while for us to make the attempt to get back into the broad ocean this way. The night would be the best time, when all are asleep, and surely it will be quicker to reach the ocean through this hole in the roof than by means of the long, winding passages by which we entered.”

"But we will have to break out of the castle in some way," observed Cap'n Bill.

"That will not be difficult," answered Aquareine. "It will be no trouble for me to shatter one of these panes of glass, allowing us to pass out and swim straight up to the top of the dome."

"Let's do it now!" said Trot eagerly.

"No, my dear, we must wait for a good opportunity when we are not watched closely. We do not wish the terrible Zog to thwart our plan," answered the Queen gently.

Presently two sailor boys entered bearing trays of food, which they placed upon a large table. They were cheery-faced young fellows with gills at their

throats, but had laughing eyes, and Trot was astonished not to find any of the slaves of Zog weeping or miserable. Instead, they were as jolly and good-natured as could be and seemed to like their life under the water. Cap'n Bill asked one of the boys how many slaves were in the castle, and the youth replied that he would try to count them and let him know.

Tom Atto had, they found, prepared for them an excellent meal, and they ate heartily because they were really hungry. After luncheon Cap'n Bill smoked his pipe contentedly, and they renewed their conversation, planning various ways to outwit Zog and make their escape. While thus engaged, the gong at the door sounded and Sacho entered.

"My diabolical master commands you to attend him," said the boy.

"When?" asked Aquareine.

"At once, your Majesty."

"Very well, we will follow you," she said. So they swam down the corridors following Sacho until they again reached the golden-domed room they had formerly visited. Here sat Zog just as they had left him, seemingly, but when his prisoners entered, the magician arose and stood upon his cloven feet and then silently walked to a curtained archway.

Sacho commanded the prisoners to follow, and beyond the archway they found a vast chamber that occupied the center of the castle and was as big as a ballroom. Zog, who seemed to walk with much difficulty because his ungainly body swayed back and forth, did not go far beyond the arched entrance. A golden throne was set nearby, and in this the monster seated himself. At one side of the throne stood a group of slaves. They were men, women and children. All had broad gold bands clasped around their ankles as a badge of servitude, and at each throat were the fish's gills that enabled them to breathe and live under water. Yet every face was smiling and serene, even in the presence of their dread master. In parts of the big hall were groups of other slaves.

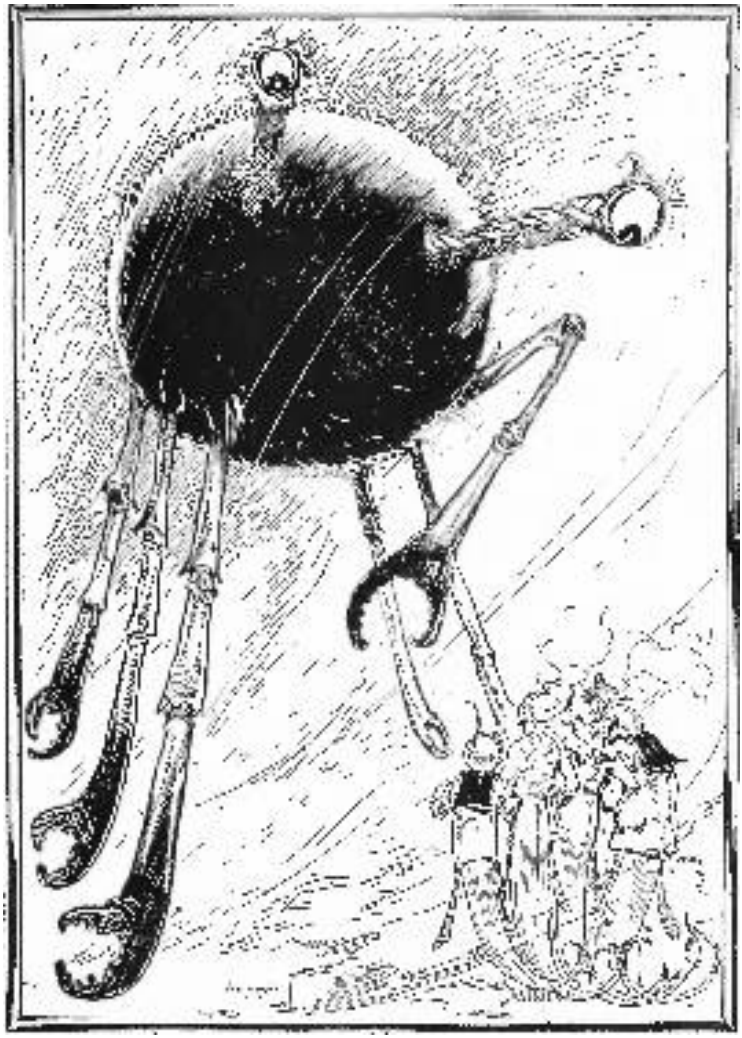
Sacho ranged the prisoners in a circle before Zog's throne, and slowly the magician turned his eyes, glowing like live coals, upon the four. "Captives," said he, speaking in his clear, sweet voice, "in our first interview you defied me, and both the mermaid queen and the princess declared they could not die. But if that is a true statement, as I have yet to discover, there are various ways to make you miserable and unhappy, and this I propose to do in order to amuse myself at your expense. You have been brought here to undergo the first trial of strength between us." None of the prisoners replied to this speech, so Zog turned to one of his slaves and said, "Rivivi, bring in the Yell-Maker."

Rivivi was a big fellow, brown of skin and with flashing, black eyes. He bowed to his master and left the room by an archway covered with heavy draperies. The next moment these curtains were violently pushed aside, and a dreadful sea creature swam into the hall. It had a body much like that of a crab, only more round and of a jet-black color. Its eyes were bright yellow balls set on the ends of two horns that stuck out of its head. They were cruel-looking eyes, too, and seemed able to see every person in the room at the same time. The legs of the Yell-Maker, however, were the most curious part of the creature. There were six of them, slender and black as coal, and each extended twelve to fifteen feet from its body when stretched out in a straight line. They were hinged in several places so they could be folded up or

extended at will. At the ends of these thin legs were immense claws shaped like those of a lobster, and they were real “nippers” of a most dangerous sort.

The prisoners knew, as soon as they saw the awful claws, why the thing was called the “Yell-Maker,” and Trot gave a little shiver and crept closer to Cap’n Bill. Zog looked with approval upon the creature he had summoned and said to it, “I give you four victims, the four people with fish’s tails. Let me hear how loud they can yell.”

The Yell-Maker uttered a grunt of pleasure and in a flash stretched out one of its long legs toward the queen’s nose, where its powerful claws came together with a loud noise. Aquareine did not stir; she only smiled. Both Zog and the creature that had attacked her seemed much surprised to find she was unhurt. “Again!” cried Zog, and again the Yell-Maker’s claw shot out and tried to pinch the queen’s pretty ear. But the magic of the fairy mermaid was proof against this sea-rascal’s strength and swiftness, nor could he touch any part of Aquareine, although he tried again and again, roaring with anger like a mad bull.



Trot began to enjoy this performance, and as her merry, childish laughter rang out, the Yell-Maker turned furiously upon the little girl, two of the dreadful claws trying to nip her at the same time. She had no chance to cry out or jump backward, yet she remained unharmed. For the Fairy Circle of Queen Aquareine kept her safe. Now Cap'n Bill was attacked, and Princess Clia as well. The half-dozen slender legs darted in every direction like sword thrusts to reach their victims, and the cruel claws snapped so rapidly that the sound was like the rattling of castanets. But the four prisoners regarded their enemy with smiling composure, and no yell greeted the Yell-Maker's efforts.

"Enough!" said Zog, softly and sweetly. "You may retire, my poor Yell-Maker, for with these people you are powerless."

The creature paused and rolled its yellow eyes. “May I nip just one of the slaves, oh Zog?” it asked pleadingly. “I hate to leave without pleasing your ears with a single yell.”

“Let my slaves alone,” was Zog’s answer. “They are here to serve me and must not be injured. Go, feeble one.”

“Not so!” cried the Queen. “It is a shame, Zog, that such an evil thing should exist in our fair sea.” With this, she drew her fairy wand from a fold of her gown and waved it toward the creature. At once the Yell-Maker sank down unconscious upon the floor; its legs fell apart in many pieces, the claws tumbling in a heap beside the body. Then all grew withered and lost shape, becoming a pulpy mass, like gelatin. A few moments later the creature had melted away to nothing at all, forever disappearing from the ocean where it had caused so much horror and pain.

Zog watched this destruction with surprising patience. When it was all over, he nodded his head and smiled, and Trot noticed that whenever Zog smiled, his slaves lost their jolly looks and began to tremble. “That is very pretty magic, Aquareine,” said the monster. “I myself learned the trick several thousand years ago, so it does not astonish me. Have you fairies nothing that is new to show me?”

“We desire only to protect ourselves,” replied the Queen with dignity.

“Then I will give you a chance to do so,” said Zog. As he spoke, the great marble blocks in the ceiling of the room directly over the heads of the captives gave way and came crashing down upon them. Many tons of weight were in these marble blocks, and the magician had planned to crush his victims where they stood. But the four were still unharmed. The marble,

being unable to touch them, was diverted from its course, and when the roar of the great crash had died away, Zog saw his intended victims standing quietly in their places and smiling scornfully at his weak attempts to destroy them.

CHAPTER 16
THE TOP OF THE GREAT DOME

Cap'n Bill's heart was beating pretty vast, but he did not let Zog know that. Trot was so sure of the protection of the fairy mermaids that she would not allow herself to become frightened. Aquareine and Clia were as calm as if nothing had happened.

"Please excuse this little interruption," said Zog. "I knew very well the marble blocks would not hurt you. But the play is over for a time. You may now retire to your rooms, and when I again invite you to my presence, I shall have found some better ways to entertain you."

Without reply to this threat, they turned and followed Sacho from the hall, and the boy led them straight back to their own rooms.

"Zog is making a great mistake," said Sacho with a laugh. "He has no time for vengeance, but the great magician does not know that."

"What is he trying to do, anyway?" asked Trot.

"He does not tell me all his secrets, but I've an idea he wants to kill you," replied Sacho. "How absurd it is to be plotting such a thing when he might spend his time in laughing and being jolly! Isn't it, now?"

"Zog is a wicked, wicked creature!" exclaimed Trot.

"But he had his good points," replied Sacho cheerfully. "There is no one about in the world so bad that there is nothing good about him."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Cap'n Bill. "What are Zog's good points?"

"All his slaves were saved from drowning, and he is kind to them," said Sacho.

"That is merely the kindness of selfishness," said Aquareine. "Tell me, my

lad, is the opening in the great dome outside guarded?"

"Yes indeed," was the reply. "You cannot hope to escape in that way, for the prince of the sea devils, who is the largest and fiercest of his race, lies crouched over the opening night and day, and none can pass his network of curling legs."

"Is there no avenue that is not guarded?" continued Aquareine.

"None at all, your Majesty. Zog is always careful to be well guarded, for he fears the approach of an enemy. What this enemy can be to terrify the great magician I do not know, but Zog is always afraid and never leaves an entrance unguarded. Besides, it is an enchanted castle, you know, and none in the ocean can see it unless Zog wishes him to. So it will be very hard for his enemy to find him."

"We wish to escape," said Clia. "Will you help us, Sacho?"

"In any way I can," replied the boy.

"If we succeed, we will take you with us," continued the Princess.

But Sacho shook his head and laughed. "I would indeed like to see you escape Zog's vengeance," said he, "for vengeance is wrong, and you are too pretty and too good to be destroyed. But I am happy here and have no wish to go away, having no other home or friends other than my fellow slaves."

Then he left them, and when they were again alone, Aquareine said, "We were able to escape Zog's attacks today, but I am quite sure he will plan more powerful ways to destroy us. He has shown that he knows some clever magic, and perhaps I shall not be able to foil it. So it will be well for us to escape tonight if possible."

"Can you fight and conquer the big sea devil up in the dome?" asked Trot.

The queen was thoughtful, and did not reply to this question at once. But Cap'n Bill said uneasily, "I can't abide them devil critters, an' I hopes, for my part, we won't be called on to tackle 'em. You see, Trot, we're in consider'ble of a bad mess, an' if we ever live to tell the tale — "

"Why not, Cap'n?" asked the child. "We're safe enough so far. Can't you trust our good friend, the queen?"

"She don't seem plumb sure o' things herself," remarked the sailor. "The mermaids is all right an' friendly, mate, but this 'ere magic maker, ol' Zog, is a bad one, out 'n' out, an' means to kill us if he can."

"But he can't!" cried Trot bravely.

"I hope you're right, dear. I wouldn't want to bet on Zog's chances jes' yet, an' at the same time it would be riskin' money to bet on our chances. Seems to me it's a case of luck which wins."

"Don't worry, friend," said the Queen. "I have a plan to save us. Let us wait patiently until nightfall." They waited in the Rose Chamber a long time,

talking earnestly together, but the brilliant light that flooded both the room and the great dome outside did not fade in the least. After several hours had passed away, the gong sounded and Tom Atto again appeared, followed by four slaves bearing many golden dishes upon silver trays. The friendly cook had prepared a fine dinner, and they were all glad to find that, whatever Zog intended to do to them, he had no intention of starving them. Perhaps the magician realized that Aquareine's fairy powers, if put to the test, would be able to provide food for her companions, but whatever his object may have been, their enemy had given them splendid rooms and plenty to eat.

"Isn't it nearly nighttime?" asked the Queen as Tom Atto spread the table with a cloth of woven seaweed and directed his men to place the dishes upon

it.

"Night!" he exclaimed as if surprised. "There is no night here."

"Doesn't it ever get dark?" inquired Trot.

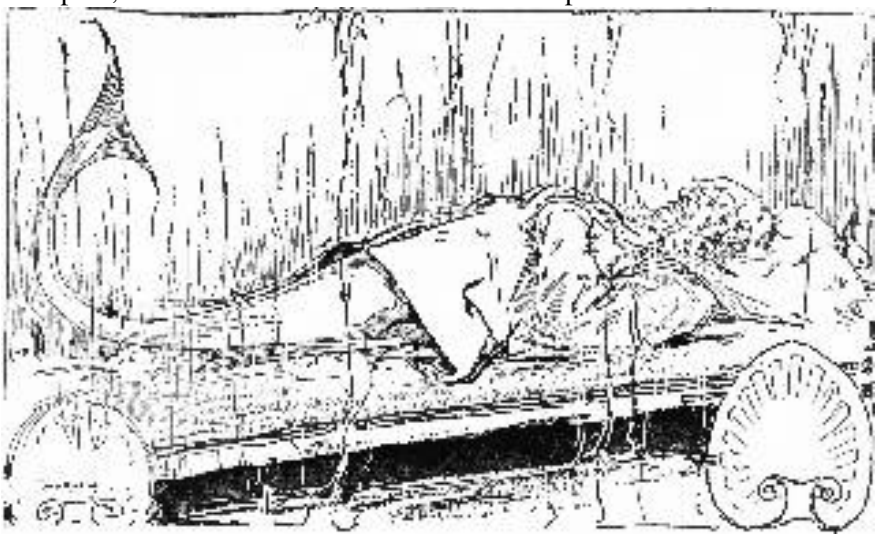
"Never. We know nothing of the passage of time or of day or night. The light always shines just as you see it now, and we sleep whenever we are tired and rise again as soon as we are rested."

"What causes the light?" Princess Clia asked.

"It's magic, your Highness," said the cook solemnly. "It's one of the curious things Zog is able to do. But you must remember all this place is a big cave in which the castle stands, so the light is never seen by anyone except those who live here."

"But why does Zog keep his light going all the time?" asked the Queen.

"I suppose it is because he himself never sleeps," replied Tom Atto. "They say the master hasn't slept for hundreds of years, not since Anko, the sea serpent, defeated him and drove him into this place."

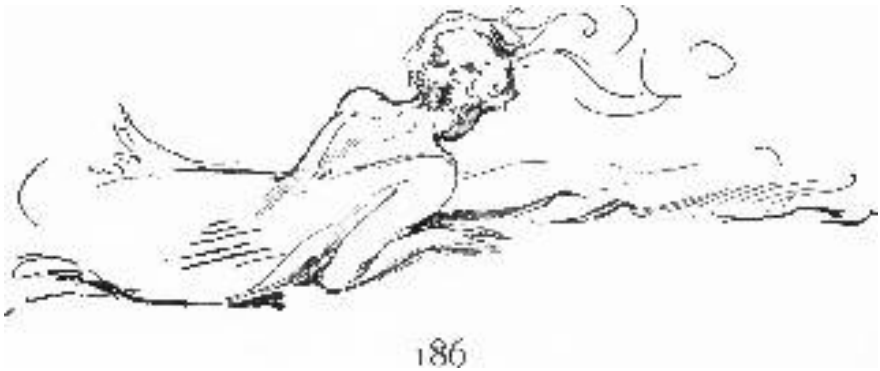


They asked no more questions and began to eat their dinner in silence. Before long, Cap'n Joe came in to visit his brother and took a seat at the table with the prisoners. He proved a jolly fellow, and when he and Cap'n Bill talked about their boyhood days, the stories were so funny that everybody laughed and for a time forgot their worries.

When dinner was over, however, and Cap'n Joe had gone back to his work of sewing on buttons and the servants had carried away the dishes, the prisoners remembered their troubles and the fate that awaited them. "I am much disappointed," said the Queen, "to find there is no night here and that Zog never sleeps. It will make our escape more difficult. Yet we must make

the attempt, and as we are tired and a great struggle is before us, it will be best for us to sleep and refresh ourselves."

They agreed to this, for the day had been long and adventurous, so Cap'n Bill kissed Trot and went in to the Peony Room, where he lay down upon his spongy couch and fell fast asleep. The mermaids and Trot followed this example, and I think none of them was much worried, after all, because they quickly sank into peaceful slumber and forgot all the dangers that threatened them.



CHAPTER 17
THE QUEEN'S GOLDEN SWORD

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Trot, raising herself by a flirt of her pink-scaled tail and a wave of her fins, "isn't it dreadful hot here?"

The mermaids had risen at the same time, and Cap'n Bill came swimming in from the Peony Room in time to hear the little girl's speech.

"Hot!" echoed the sailor. "Why, I feel like the inside of a steam engine!"

The perspiration was rolling down his round, red face, and he took out his handkerchief and carefully wiped it away, waving his fish tail gently at the same time.

"What we need most in this room," said he, "is a fan."

"What's the trouble, do you s'pose?" inquired Trot.

"It is another trick of the monster Zog," answered the Queen calmly. "He has made the water in our rooms boiling hot, and if it could touch us, we would be well cooked by this time. Even as it is, we are all made uncomfortable by breathing the heated air."

"What shall we do, ma'am?" the sailor man asked with a groan. "I expected to get into hot water afore we've done with this foolishness, but I don't like the feel o' bein' parboiled, jes' the same."

The queen was waving her fairy wand and paid no attention to Cap'n Bill's moans. Already the water felt cooler, and they began to breathe more easily. In a few moments more, the heat had passed from the surrounding water altogether, and all danger from this source was over.

"This is better," said Trot gratefully.

"Do you care to sleep again?" asked the Queen.

“No, I’m wide awake now,” answered the child.

“I’m afraid if I goes to sleep ag’in, I’ll wake up a pot roast,” said Cap’n Bill.

“Let us consider ways to escape,” suggested Clia. “It seems useless for us to remain here quietly until Zog discovers a way to destroy us.”

“But we must not blunder,” added Aquareine cautiously. “To fail in our attempt would be to acknowledge Zog’s superior power, so we must think well upon our plan before we begin to carry it out. What do you advise, sir?” she asked, turning to Cap’n Bill.

“My opinion, ma’am, is that the only way for us to escape is to get out o’ here,” was the sailor’s vague answer. “How to do it is your business, seein’ as I ain’t no fairy myself, either in looks or in eddication.”

The queen smiled and said to Trot, “What is your opinion, my dear?”

“I think we might swim out the same way we came in,” answered the child. “If we could get Sacho to lead us back through the maze, we would follow that long tunnel to the open ocean, and — ”

“And there would be the sea devils waitin’ for us,” added Cap’n Bill with a shake of his bald head. “They’d drive us back inter the tunnel like they did the first time, Trot. It won’t do, mate, it won’t do.”

“Have you a suggestion, Clia?” inquired the Queen.

“I have thought of an undertaking,” replied the pretty princess, “but it is a bold plan, your Majesty, and you may not care to risk it.”

“Let us hear it, anyway,” said Aquareine encouragingly.

“It is to destroy Zog himself and put him out of the world forever. Then we would be free to go home whenever we pleased.”

“Can you suggest a way to destroy Zog?” asked Aquareine.

“No, your Majesty,” Clia answered. “I must leave the way for you to determine.”

“In the old days,” said the Queen thoughtfully, “the mighty King Anko could not destroy this monster. He succeeded in defeating Zog and drove him into this great cavern, but even Anko could not destroy him.”

“I have heard the sea serpent explain that it was because he could not reach the magician,” returned Clia. “If King Anko could have seized Zog in his coils, he would have made an end of the wicked monster quickly. Zog knows this, and that is why he does not venture forth from his retreat. Anko is the enemy he constantly dreads. But with you, my queen, the case is different. You may easily reach Zog, and the only question is whether your power is sufficient to destroy him.”

For a while Aquareine remained silent. “I am not sure of my power over him,” she said at last, “and for that reason I hesitate to attack him personally.

His slaves and his allies, the sea devils, I can easily conquer, so I prefer to find a way to overcome the guards at the entrances rather than to encounter their terrible master. But even the guards have been given strength and power by the magician, as we have already discovered, so I must procure a weapon with which to fight them."

"A weapon, ma'am?" said Cap'n Bill, and then he took a jackknife from his coat pocket and opened the big blade, afterward handing it to the queen. "That ain't a bad weapon," he announced.

"But it is useless in this case," she replied, smiling at the old sailor's earnestness. "For my purpose I must have a golden sword."

"Well, there's plenty of gold around this castle," said Trot, looking around

her. “Even in this room there’s enough to make a hundred golden swords.”

“But we can’t melt or forge gold under water, mate,” the Cap’n said.

“Why not? Don’t you s’pose all these gold roses and things were made under water?” asked the little girl.

“Like enough,” remarked the sailor, “but I don’t see how.”

Just then the gong at the door sounded, and the boy Sacho came in smiling and cheerful as ever. He said Zog had sent him to inquire after their health and happiness. “You may tell him that his water became a trifle too warm, so we cooled it,” replied the Queen. Then they told Sacho how the boiling water had made them uncomfortable while they slept.

Sacho whistled a little tune and seemed thoughtful. “Zog is foolish,” said he. “How often have I told him that vengeance is a waste of time. He is worried to know how to destroy you, and that is wasting more time. You are worried for fear he will injure you, and so you also are wasting time. My, my! What a waste of time is going on in this castle!”

“Seems to me that we have so much time it doesn’t matter,” said Trot. “What’s time for, anyhow?”

“Time is given us to be happy, and for no other reason,” replied the boy soberly. “When we waste time, we waste happiness. But there is no time for preaching, so I’ll go.”

“Please wait a moment, Sacho,” said the Queen.

“Can I do anything to make you happy?” he asked, smiling again.

“Yes,” answered Aquareine. “We are curious to know who does all this beautiful gold work and ornamentation.”

“Some of the slaves here are goldsmiths, having been taught by Zog to forge and work metal under water,” explained Sacho. “In parts of the ocean lie many rocks filled with veins of pure gold and golden nuggets, and we get large supplies from sunken ships as well. There is no lack of gold here, but it is not as precious as it is upon the earth because here we have no need of money.”

“We would like to see the goldsmiths at work,” announced the Queen.

The boy hesitated a moment. Then he said, “I will take you to their room, where you may watch them for a time. I will not ask Zog’s permission to do this, for he might refuse. But my orders were to allow you the liberty of the castle, and so I will let you see the goldsmiths’ shop.”

“Thank you,” replied Aquareine quietly, and then the four followed Sacho along various corridors until they came to a large room where a dozen men were busily at work. Lying here and there were heaps of virgin gold, some in its natural state and some already fashioned into ornaments and furniture of various sorts. Each man worked at a bench where there was a curious iron

furnace in which glowed a vivid, white light. Although this workshop was all under water and the workmen were all obliged to breathe as fishes do, the furnaces glowed so hot that the water touching them was turned into steam. Gold or other metal held over a furnace quickly softened or melted, when it could be forged or molded into any shape desired.

"The furnaces are electric," explained Sacho, "and heat as well under water as they would in the open air. Let me introduce you to the foreman, who will tell you of his work better than I can."

The foreman was a slave named Agga-Groo, who was lean and lank and had an expression more surly and unhappy than any slave they had yet seen. Yet he seemed willing to leave his work and explain to the visitors how he

made so many beautiful things out of gold, for he took much pride in this labor and knew its artistic worth. Moreover, since he had been in Zog's castle these were the first strangers to enter his workshop, so he welcomed them in his own gruff way.

The queen asked him if he was happy, and he shook his head and replied, "It isn't like Calcutta, where I used to work in gold before I was wrecked at sea and nearly drowned. Zog rescued me and brought me here a slave. It is a stupid life we lead, doing the same things over and over every day, but perhaps it is better than being dead. I'm not sure. The only pleasure I get in life is in creating pretty things out of gold."

"Could you forge me a golden sword?" asked the Queen, smiling sweetly upon the goldsmith.

"I could, madam, but I won't unless Zog orders me to do it."

"Do you like Zog better than you do me?" inquired Aquareine.

"No," was the answer. "I hate Zog."

"Then won't you make the sword to please me and to show your skill?" pleaded the pretty mermaid.

"I'm afraid of my master. He might not like it," the man replied.

"But he will never know," said Princess Clia.

"You cannot say what Zog knows or what he doesn't know," growled the man. "I can't take chances of offending Zog, for I must live with him always as a slave." With this he turned away and resumed his work, hammering the leaf of a golden ship.

Cap'n Bill had listened carefully to this conversation, and being a wise old sailor in his way, he thought he understood the nature of old Agga-Groo better than the mermaids did. So he went close to the goldsmith, and feeling in the pockets of his coat drew out a silver compass shaped like a watch. "I'll give you this if you'll make the queen the golden sword," he said.

Agga-Groo looked at the compass with interest and tested its power of pointing north. Then he shook his head and handed it back to Cap'n Bill. The sailor dived into his pocket again and pulled out a pair of scissors, which he placed beside the compass on the palm of his big hand. "You may have them both," he said.

Agga-Groo hesitated, for he wanted the scissors badly, but finally he shook his head again. Cap'n Bill added a piece of cord, an iron thimble, some fishhooks, four buttons and a safety pin, but still the goldsmith would not be tempted. So with a sigh the sailor brought out his fine, big jackknife, and at sight of this Agga-Groo's eyes began to sparkle. Steel was not to be had at the bottom of the sea, although gold was so plentiful. "All right, friend," he said. "Give me that lot of trinkets and I'll make you a pretty gold

sword. But it won't be any good except to look at, for our gold is so pure that it is very soft."

"Never mind that," replied Cap'n Bill. "All we want is the sword."

The goldsmith set to work at once, and so skillful was he that in a few minutes he had forged a fine sword of yellow gold with an ornamental handle. The shape was graceful and the blade keen and slender. It was evident to them all that the golden sword would not stand hard use, for the edge of the blade would nick and curl like lead, but the queen was delighted with the prize and took it eagerly in her hand.

Just then Sacho returned to say that they must go back to their rooms, and after thanking the goldsmith, who was so busy examining his newly acquired treasure that he made no response, they joyfully followed the boy back to the Rose Chamber. Sacho told them that he had just come from Zog, who was still wasting time in plotting vengeance. "You must be careful," he advised them, "for my cruel master intends to stop you from living, and he may succeed. Don't be unhappy, but be careful. Zog is angry because you escaped his Yell-Maker and the falling stones and the hot water. While he is angry he is wasting time, but that will not help you. Take care not to waste any time yourselves."

"Do you know what Zog intends to do to us next?" asked Princess Clia.

"No," said Sacho, "but it is reasonable to guess that, being evil, he intends evil. He never intends to do good, I assure you." Then the boy went away.

"I am no longer afraid," declared the Mermaid Queen when they were alone. "When I have bestowed certain fairy powers upon this golden sword, it will fight its way against any who dare oppose us, and even Zog himself will not care to face so powerful a weapon. I am now able to promise you that we shall make our escape."

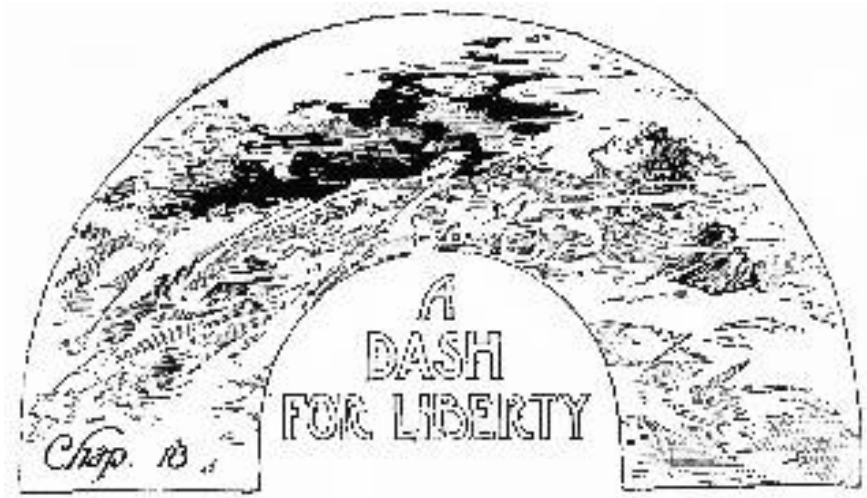
"Good!" cried Trot joyfully. "Shall we start now?"

"Not yet, my dear. It will take me a little while to charm this golden blade so that it will obey my commands and do my work. There is no need of

undue haste, so I propose we all sleep for a time and obtain what rest we can. We must be fresh and ready for our great adventure."

As their former nap had been interrupted, they readily agreed to Aquareine's proposal and at once went to their couches and composed themselves to slumber. When they were asleep, the fairy mermaid charmed her golden sword and then she also lay down to rest herself.

CHAPTER 18
A DASH FOR LIBERTY



Trot dreamed that she was at home in her own bed, but the night seemed chilly and she wanted to draw the coverlet up to her chin. She was not wide awake, but realized that she was cold and unable to move her arms to cover herself up. She tried, but could not stir. Then she roused herself a little more and tried again. Yes, it was cold, very cold! Really, she MUST do something to get warm, she thought. She opened her eyes and stared at a great wall of ice in front of her.

She was awake now, and frightened, too. But she could not move because the ice was all around her. She was frozen inside of it, and the air space around her was not big enough to allow her to turn over.

At once the little girl realized what had happened. Their wicked enemy Zog had by his magic art frozen all the water in their room while they slept, and now they were all imprisoned and helpless. Trot and Cap'n Bill were sure to freeze to death in a short time, for only a tiny air space remained between their bodies and the ice, and this air was like that of a winter day when the thermometer is below zero.

Across the room Trot could see the mermaid queen lying on her couch, for the solid ice was clear as crystal. Aquareine was imprisoned just as Trot was, and although she held her fairy wand in one hand and the golden sword in the other, she seemed unable to move either of them, and the girl remembered that the queen always waved her magic wand to accomplish anything. Princess Clia's couch was behind that of Trot, so the child could not see her, and Cap'n Bill was in his own room, probably frozen fast in the

ice as the others were.

The terrible Zog has surely been very clever in this last attempt to destroy them. Trot thought it all over, and she decided that inasmuch as the queen was unable to wave her fairy wand, she could do nothing to release herself or her friends.

But in this the girl was mistaken. The fairy mermaid was even now at work trying to save them, and in a few minutes Trot was astonished and delighted to see the queen rise from her couch. She could not go far from it at first, but the ice was melting rapidly all around her so that gradually Aquareine approached the place where the child lay. Trot could hear the mermaid's voice sounding through the ice as if from afar off, but it grew more distinct until she could make out that the queen was saying, "Courage, friends! Do not despair, for soon you will be free."

Before very long the ice between Trot and the queen had melted away entirely, and with a cry of joy the little girl flopped her pink tail and swam to the side of her deliverer.

“Are you very cold?” asked Aquareine.

“N-not v-v-very!” replied Trot, but her teeth chattered and she was still shivering.

“The water will be warm in a few minutes,” said the Queen. “But now I must melt the rest of the ice and liberate Clia.”

This she did in an astonishingly brief time, and the pretty princess, being herself a fairy, had not been at all affected by the cold surrounding her.

They now swam to the door of Cap’n Bill’s room and found the Peony

Chamber a solid block of ice. The queen worked her magic power as hard as she could, and the ice flowed and melted quickly before her fairy wand. Yet when they reached the old sailor, he was almost frozen stiff, and Trot and Clia had to rub his hands and nose and ears very briskly to warm him up and bring him back to life.

Cap'n Bill was pretty tough, and he came around, in time, and opened his eyes and sneezed and asked if the blizzard was over. So the queen waved her wand over his head a few times to restore him to his natural condition of warmth, and soon the old sailor became quite comfortable and was able to understand all about the strange adventure from which he had so marvelously escaped.

"I've made up my mind to one thing, Trot," he said confidentially. "If ever I get out o' this mess I'm in, I won't be an Arctic explorer, whatever else happens. Shivers an' shakes ain't to my likin', an' this ice business ain't what it's sometimes cracked up to be. To be friz once is enough fer anybody, an' if I was a gal like you, I wouldn't even wear frizzes on my hair."

"You haven't any hair, Cap'n Bill," answered Trot, "so you needn't worry."

The queen and Clia had been talking together very earnestly. They now approached their earth friends, and Aquareine said:

"We have decided not to remain in this castle any longer. Zog's cruel designs upon our lives and happiness are becoming too dangerous for us to endure. The golden sword now bears a fairy charm, and by its aid I will cut a way through our enemies. Are you ready and willing to follow me?"

"Of course we are!" cried Trot.

"It don't seem 'zactly right to ask a lady to do the fightin'," remarked Cap'n Bill, "but magic ain't my strong p'int, and it seems to be yours, ma'am. So swim ahead, and we'll wiggle the same way you do, an' try to wiggle out of our troubles."

"If I chance to fail," said the Queen, "try not to blame me. I will do all in my power to provide for our escape, and I am willing to risk everything, because I well know that to remain here will mean to perish in the end."

"That's all right," said Trot with fine courage. "Let's have it over with."

"Then we will leave here at once," said Aquareine.

She approached the window of the room and with one blow of her golden sword shattered the thick pane of glass. The opening thus made was large enough for them to swim through if they were careful not to scrape against the broken points of glass. The queen went first, followed by Trot and Cap'n Bill, with Clia last of all.

And now they were in the vast dome in which the castle and gardens of Zog had been built. Around them was a clear stretch of water, and far above — full half a mile distant — was the opening in the roof guarded by the prince of the sea devils. The mermaid queen had determined to attack this monster. If she succeeded in destroying it with her golden sword, the little band of fugitives might then swim through the opening into the clear waters of the ocean. Although this prince of the sea devils was said to be big and wise and mighty, there was but one of him to fight; whereas, if they attempted to escape through any of the passages, they must encounter scores of such enemies.

"Swim straight for the opening in the dome!" cried Aquareine, and in answer to the command, the four whisked their glittering tails, waved their fins, and shot away through the water at full speed, their course slanting upward toward the top of the dome.

CHAPTER 19
KING ANKO TO THE RESCUE

The great magician Zog never slept. He was always watchful and alert. Some strange power warned him that his prisoners were about to escape.

Scarcely had the four left the castle by the broken window when the monster stepped from a doorway below and saw them. Instantly he blew upon a golden whistle, and at the summons a band of wolf-fish appeared and dashed after the prisoners. These creatures swam so swiftly that soon they were between the fugitives and the dome, and then they turned and with wicked eyes and sharp fangs began a fierce attack upon the mermaids and the earth dwellers.

Trot was a little frightened at the evil looks of the sea wolves, whose heads were enormous, and whose jaws contained rows of curved and pointed teeth. But Aquareine advanced upon them with her golden sword, and every touch of the charmed weapon instantly killed an enemy, so that one by one the wolf-fish rolled over upon their backs and sank helplessly downward through the water, leaving the prisoners free to continue their way toward the opening in the dome.

Zog witnessed the destruction of his wolves and uttered a loud laugh that was terrible to hear. Then the dread monster determined to arrest the fugitives himself, and in order to do this he was forced to discover himself in all the horror of his awful form, a form he was so ashamed of and loathed so greatly that he always strove to keep it concealed, even from his own view. But it was important that his prisoners should not escape. Hastily casting off the folds of the robe that enveloped him, Zog allowed his body to uncoil and

shoot upward through the water in swift pursuit of his victims. His cloven hoofs, upon which he usually walked, being now useless, were drawn up under him, while coil after coil of his eel-like body wriggled away like a serpent. At his shoulders two broad, feathery wings expanded, and these enabled the monster to cleave his way through the water with terrific force.

Zog was part man, part beast, part fish, part fowl, and part reptile. His undulating body was broad and thin and like the body of an eel. It was as repulsive as one could well imagine, and no wonder Zog hated it and kept it covered with his robe. Now, with his horned head and its glowing eyes thrust forward, wings flapping from his shoulders and his eely body — ending in a fish's tail — wriggling far behind him, this strange and evil creature was a

thing of terror even to the sea dwellers, who were accustomed to remarkable sights.

The mermaids, the sailor and the child, one after another looking back as they swam toward liberty and safety, saw the monster coming and shuddered with uncontrollable fear. They were drawing nearer to the dome by this time, yet it was still some distance away. The four redoubled their speed, darting through the water with the swiftness of skyrockets. But fast as they swam, Zog swam faster, and the good queen's heart began to throb as she realized she would be forced to fight her loathesome foe.

Presently Zog's long body was circling around them like a whirlwind, lashing the water into foam and gradually drawing nearer and nearer to his victims. His eyes were no longer glowing coals, they were balls of flame, and as he circled around them, he laughed aloud that horrible laugh which was far more terrifying than any cry of rage could be. The queen struck out with her golden sword, but Zog wrapped a coil of his thin body around it and, wrestling it from her hand, crushed the weapon into a shapeless mass. Then Aquareine waved her fairy wand, but in a flash the monster sent it flying away through the water.

Cap'n Bill now decided that they were lost. He drew Trot closer to his side and placed one arm around her. "I can't save you, dear little mate," he said sadly, "but we've lived a long time together, an' now we'll die together. I knew, Trot, when first we sawr them mermaids, as we'd — we'd — "

"Never live to tell the tale," said the child. "But never mind, Cap'n Bill, we've done the best we could, and we've had a fine time."

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me!" cried Aquareine despairingly. "I tried to save you, my poor friends, but — "

"What's that?" exclaimed the Princess, pointing upward. They all looked past Zog's whirling body, which was slowly enveloping them in its folds, toward the round opening in the dome. A dark object had appeared there, sliding downward like a huge rope and descending toward them with lightning rapidly. They gave a great gasp as they recognized the countenance of King Anko, the sea serpent, its gray hair and whiskers bristling like those of an angry cat, and the usually mild blue eyes glowing with a ferocity even more terrifying than the orbs of Zog.

The magician gave a shrill scream at sight of his dreaded enemy, and abandoning his intended victims, Zog made a quick dash to escape. But nothing in the sea could equal the strength and quickness of King Anko when he was roused. In a flash the sea serpent had caught Zog fast in his coils, and his mighty body swept round the monster and imprisoned him tightly. The four, so suddenly rescued, swam away to a safer distance from the struggle,

and then they turned to watch the encounter between the two great opposing powers of the ocean's depths. Yet there was no desperate fight to observe, for the combatants were unequal. The end came before they were aware of it. Zog had been taken by surprise, and his great fear of Anko destroyed all of his magic power. When the sea serpent slowly released those awful coils, a mass of jelly-like pulp floated downward through the water with no remnant of life remaining in it, no form to show it had once been Zog, the Magician.

Then Anko shook his body that the water might cleanse it, and advanced his head toward the group of four whom he had so opportunely rescued. "It is all over, friends," said he in his gentle tones, while a mild expression once more reigned on his comical features. "You may go home at any time you please, for the way through the dome will be open as soon as I get my own body through it."

Indeed, so amazing was the length of the great sea serpent that only a part of him had descended through the hole into the dome. Without waiting for the thanks of those he had rescued, he swiftly retreated to the ocean above, and with grateful hearts they followed him, glad to leave the cavern where they had endured so much anxiety and danger.

CHAPTER 20
THE HOME OF THE OCEAN MONARCH

Trot sobbed quietly with her head on Cap'n Bill's shoulder. She had been a brave little girl during the trying times they had experienced and never once had she given way to tears, however desperate their fate had seemed to be. But now that the one enemy in all the sea to be dreaded was utterly destroyed and all dangers were past, the reaction was so great that she could not help having "just one good cry," as she naively expressed it.

Cap'n Bill was a big sailor man hardened by age and many adventures, but even he felt a "Lump in his throat" that he could not swallow, try as hard as he might. Cap'n Bill was glad. He was mostly glad on Trot's account, for he loved his sweet, childish companion very dearly, and did not want any harm to befall her.

They were now in the wide, open sea, with liberty to go wherever they wished, and if Cap'n Bill could have "had his way," he would have gone straight home and carried Trot to her mother. But the mermaids must be considered. Aquareine and Clia had been true and faithful friends to their earth guests while dangers were threatening, and it would not be very gracious to leave them at once. Moreover, King Anko was now with them, his big head keeping pace with the mermaids as they swam, and this mighty preserver had a distinct claim upon Trot and Cap'n Bill. The sailor felt that it would not be polite to ask to go home so soon.

"If you people had come to visit me as I invited you to do," said the Sea Serpent, "all this bother and trouble would have been saved. I had my palace put in order to receive the earth dwellers and sat in my den waiting patiently

to receive you. Yet you never came at all."

"That reminds me," said Trot, drying her eyes, "you never told us about that third pain you once had."

"Finally," continued Anko, "I sent to inquire as to what had become of you, and Merla said you had been gone from the palace a long time and she was getting anxious about you. Then I made inquiries. Everyone in the sea loves to serve me — except those sea devils and their cousins, the octopi — and it wasn't long before I heard you had been captured by Zog."

"Was the third pain as bad as the other two?" asked Trot.

"Naturally this news disturbed me and made me unhappy," said Anko, "for I well knew, my Aquareine, that the magician's evil powers were greater than your own fairy accomplishments. But I had never been able to find Zog's enchanted castle, and so I was at a loss to know how to save you from your dreadful fate. After I had wasted a good deal of time thinking it over, I decided that if the sea devils were slaves of Zog, the prince of the sea devils must know where the enchanted castle was located.

"I knew this prince and where to find him, for he always lay on a hollow rock on the bottom of the sea and never moved from that position. His people brought food to him and took his commands. So I had no trouble in finding this evil prince, and I went to him and asked the way to Zog's castle. Of course, he would not tell me. He was even cross and disrespectful, just as I had expected him to be, so I allowed myself to become angry and killed him, thinking he was much better dead than alive. But after the sea devil was destroyed, what was my surprise to find that all these years he had been lying over a round hole in the rock and covering it with his scarlet body!

"A light shone through this hole, so I thrust my head in and found a great domed cave underneath with a splendid silver castle built at the bottom. You, my friends, were at that moment swimming toward me as fast as you could come, and the monster Zog, my enemy for centuries past, was close behind you. Well, the rest of the story you know. I would be angry with all of you for so carelessly getting captured, had the incident not led to the destruction of the one evil genius in all my ocean. I shall rest easier and be much happier now that Zog is dead. He has defied me for hundreds of years."

"But about that third pain," said Trot. "If you don't tell us now, I'm afraid that I'll forget to ask you."

"If you should happen to forget, just remind me of it," said Anko, "and I'll be sure to tell you."

While Trot was thinking this over, the swimmers drew near to a great, circular palace made all of solid alabaster polished as smooth as ivory. Its roof was a vast dome, for domes seemed to be fashionable in the ocean houses. There were no doors or windows, but instead of these, several round holes appeared in different parts of the dome, some being high up and some low down and some in between. Out of one of these holes, which it just fitted, stretched the long, brown body of the sea serpent. Trot, being

astonished at this sight, asked, “Didn’t you take all of you when you went to the cavern, Anko?”

“Nearly all, my dear,” was the reply, accompanied by a cheerful smile, for Anko was proud of his great length. “But not quite all. Some of me remained, as usual, to keep house while my head was away. But I’ve been coiling up ever since we started back, and you will soon be able to see every inch of me all together.”

Even as he spoke, his head slid into the round hole, and at a signal from Aquareine they all paused outside and waited. Presently there came to them four beautiful winged fishes with faces like doll babies. Their long hair and eyelashes were of a purple color, and their cheeks had rosy spots that looked as if they had been painted upon them. “His Majesty bids you welcome,” said one of the doll fishes in a sweet voice. “Be kind enough to enter the royal palace, and our ocean monarch will graciously receive you.”

“Seems to me,” said Trot to the queen, “these things are putting on airs. Perhaps they don’t know we’re friends of Anko.”

“The king insists on certain formalities when anyone visits him,” was Aquareine’s reply. “It is right that his dignity should be maintained.”

They followed their winged conductors to one of the upper openings, and as they entered it Aquareine said in a clear voice, “May the glory and power of the ocean king continue forever!” Then she touched the palm of her hand to her forehead in token of allegiance, and Clia did the same, so Cap’n Bill and Trot followed suit. The brief ceremony being ended, the child looked curiously around to see what the palace of the mighty Anko was like.

An extensive hall lined with alabaster was before them. In the floor were five of the round holes. Upon the walls were engraved many interesting scenes of ocean life, all chiseled very artistically by the tusks of walruses who, Trot was afterward informed, are greatly skilled in such work. A few handsome rugs of woven sea grasses were spread upon the floor, but otherwise the vast hall was bare of furniture. The doll-faced fishes escorted them to an upper room where a table was set, and here the revelers were invited to refresh themselves. As all four were exceedingly hungry, they welcomed the repast, which was served by an army of lobsters in royal purple aprons and caps.

The meal being finished, they again descended to the hall, which seemed to occupy all the middle of the building. And now their conductors said, “His Majesty is ready to receive you in his den.”

They swam downward through one of the round holes in the floor and found themselves in a brilliantly lighted chamber which appeared bigger than all the rest of the palace put together. In the center was the quaint head of

King Anko, and around it was spread a great coverlet of purple and gold woven together. This concealed all of his body and stretched from wall to wall of the circular room. “Welcome, friends!” said Anko pleasantly. “How do you like my home?”

“It’s very grand,” replied Trot.

“Just the place for a sea serpent, seems to me,” said Cap’n Bill.

“I’m glad you admire it,” said the King. “Perhaps I ought to tell you that from this day you four belong to me.”

“How’s that?” asked the girl, surprised.

“It is a law of the ocean,” declared Anko, “that whoever saves any living creature from violent death owns that creature forever afterward, while life lasts. You will realize how just this law is when you remember that had I not saved you from Zog, you would now be dead. The law was suggested by Captain Kid Glove, when he once visited me.”

“Do you mean Captain Kidd?” asked Trot. “Because if you do — ”

“Give him his full name,” said Anko. “Captain Kid Glove was — ”

“There’s no glove to it,” protested Trot. “I ought to know, ‘cause I’ve read about him.”

“Didn’t it say anything about a glove?” asked Anko.

“Nothing at all. It jus’ called him Cap’n Kidd,” replied Trot.

“She’s right, ol’ man,” added Cap’n Bill.

“Books,” said the Sea Serpent, “are good enough as far as they go, but it seems to me your earth books don’t go far enough. Captain Kid Glove was a gentleman pirate, a kid-glove pirate. To leave off the glove and call him just Kidd is very disrespectful.”

“Oh! You told me to remind you of that third pain,” said the little girl.

“Which proves my friendship for you,” returned the Sea Serpent, blinking his blue eyes thoughtfully. “No one likes to be reminded of a pain, and that third pain was — was — ”

“What was it?” asked Trot.

“It was a stomach ache,” replied the King with a sigh.

“What made it?” she inquired.

“Just my carelessness,” said Anko. “I’d been away to foreign parts, seeing how the earth people were getting along. I found the Germans dancing the german and the Dutch making dutch cheese and the Belgians combing their belgian hares and the Turks eating turkey and the Sardinians sardonically pickling sardines. Then I called on the Prince of Whales, and — ”

“You mean the Prince of Wales,” corrected Trot.

“I mean what I say, my dear. I saw the battlefield where the Bull Run but the Americans didn’t, and when I got to France I paid a napoleon to see

Napoleon with his boney apart. He was — ”

“Of course you mean — ” Trot was beginning, but the king would not give her a chance to correct him this time.

“He was very hungry for Hungary,” he continued, “and was Russian so fast toward the Poles that I thought he’d discover them. So as I was not accorded a royal welcome, I took French leave and came home again.”

“But the pain — ”

“On the way home,” continued Anko calmly, “I was a little absent-minded and ate an anchor. There was a long chain attached to it, and as I continued to swallow the anchor I continued to eat the chain. I never realized what I had done until I found a ship on the other end of the chain. Then I bit it off.”

“The ship?” asked Trot.

“No, the chain. I didn’t care for the ship, as I saw it contained some skippers. On the way home the chain and anchor began to lie heavily on my stomach. I didn’t seem to digest them properly, and by the time I got to my palace, where you will notice there is no throne, I was thrown into throes of severe pain. So I at once sent for Dr. Shark — ”

“Are all your doctors sharks?” asked the child.

“Yes, aren’t your doctors sharks?” he replied.

“Not all of them,” said Trot.

“That is true,” remarked Cap’n Bill. “But when you talk of lawyers — ”

“I’m not talking of lawyers,” said Anko reprovingly. “I’m talking about my pain. I don’t imagine anyone could suffer more than I did with that stomach ache.”

“Did you suffer long?” inquired Trot.

“Why, about seven thousand four hundred and eighty-two feet and — ”

“I mean a long time.”

“It seemed like a long time,” answered the King. “Dr. Shark said I ought to put a mustard poultice on my stomach, so I uncoiled myself and summoned my servants, and they began putting on the mustard plaster. It had to be bound all around me so it wouldn’t slip off, and I began to look like an express package. In about four weeks fully one-half of the pain had been covered by the mustard poultice, which got so hot that it hurt me worse than the stomach ache did.”

“I know,” said Trot. “I had one, once.”

“One what?” asked Anko.

“A mustard plaster. They smart pretty bad, but I guess they’re a good thing.”

“I got myself unwrapped as soon as I could,” continued the King, “and then I hunted for the doctor, who hid himself until my anger had subsided.

He has never sent in a bill, so I think he must be terribly ashamed of himself."

"You're lucky, sir, to have escaped so easy," said Cap'n Bill. "But you seem pretty well now."

"Yes, I'm more careful of what I eat," replied the Sea Serpent. "But I was saying when Trot interrupted me, that you all belong to me, because I have saved your lives. By the law of the ocean, you must obey me in everything."

The sailor scowled a little at hearing this, but Trot laughed and said, "The law of the ocean isn't OUR law, 'cause we live on land."

"Just now you are living in the ocean," declared Anko, "and as long as you live here, you must obey my commands."

"What are your commands?" inquired the child.

"Ah, that's the point I was coming to," returned the King with his comical smile. "The ocean is a beautiful place, and we who belong here love it dearly. In many ways it's a nicer place for a home than the earth, for we have no sunstroke, mosquitoes, earthquakes or candy ships to bother us. But I am convinced that the ocean is no proper dwelling place for earth people, and I believe the mermaids did an unwise thing when they invited you to visit them."

"I don't," protested the girl. "We've had a fine time, haven't we, Cap'n Bill?"

"Well, it's been diff'rent from what I expected," admitted the sailor.

"Our only thought was to give the earth people pleasure, your Majesty," pleaded Aquareine.

"I know, I know, my dear Queen, and it was very good of you," replied Anko. "But still it was an unwise act, for earth people are as constantly in danger under water as we would be upon the land. So having won the right to command you all, I order you to take little Mayre and Cap'n Bill straight home, and there restore them to their natural forms. It's a dreadful condition, I know, and they must each have two stumbling legs instead of a strong, beautiful fish tail, but it is the fate of earth dwellers, and they cannot escape it."

"In my case, your Majesty, make it ONE leg," suggested Cap'n Bill.

“Ah yes, I remember. One leg and a wooden stick to keep it company. I issue this order, dear friends, not because I am not fond of your society, but to keep you from getting into more trouble in a country where all is strange and unnatural to you. Am I right, or do you think I am wrong?”

“You’re quite correct, sir,” said Cap’n Bill, nodding his head in approval.

“Well, I’m ready to go home,” said Trot. “But in spite of Zog, I’ve enjoyed my visit, and I shall always love the mermaids for being so good to me.” That speech pleased Aquareine and Clia, who smiled upon the child and kissed her affectionately.

“We shall escort you home at once,” announced the Queen.

“But before you go,” said King Anko, “I will give you a rare treat. It is one you will remember as long as you live. You shall see every inch of the mightiest sea serpent in the world, all at one time!”

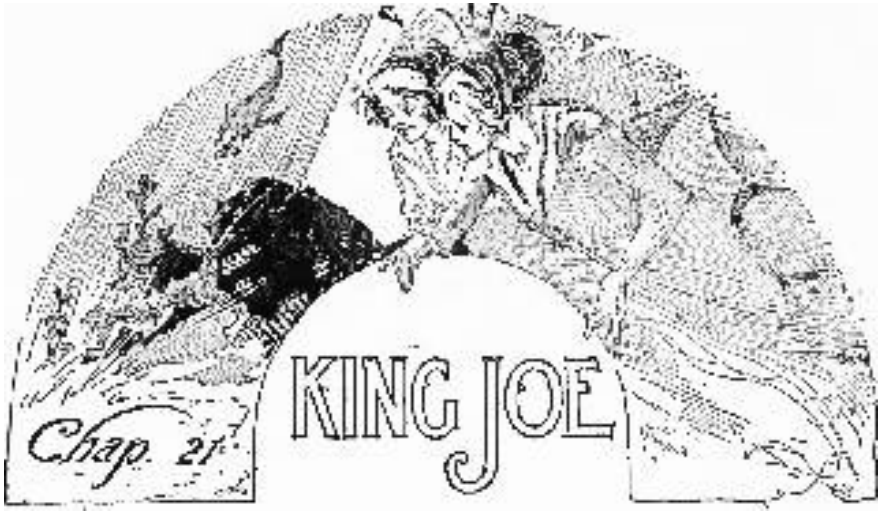
As he spoke, the purple and gold cloth was lifted by unseen hands and disappeared from view. And now Cap’n Bill and Trot looked down upon thousands and thousands of coils of the sea serpent’s body, which filled all of the space at the bottom of the immense circular room. It reminded them of a great coil of garden hose, only it was so much bigger around and very much longer.

Except for the astonishing size of the Ocean King, the sight was not an especially interesting one, but they told old Anko that they were pleased to see him, because it was evident he was very fond of his figure. Then the cloth descended again and covered all but the head, after which they bade the king goodbye and thanked him for all his kindness to them.

“I used to think sea serpents were horrid creatures,” said Trot, “but now I know they are good and — and — and — ”

“And big,” added Cap’n Bill, realizing his little friend could not find another word that was complimentary.

CHAPTER 21
KING JOE



As they swam out of Anko's palace and the doll-faced fishes left them, Aquareine asked:

"Would you rather go back to our mermaid home for a time and rest yourselves or would you prefer to start for Giant's Cave at once?"

"I guess we'd better go back home," decided Trot. "To our own home, I mean. We've been away quite a while, and King Anko seemed to think it was best."

"Very well," replied the Queen. "Let us turn in this direction, then."

"You can say goodbye to Merla for us," continued Trot. "She was very nice to us, an' 'specially to Cap'n Bill."

"So she was, mate," agreed the sailor, "an' a prettier lady I never knew, even if she is a mermaid, beggin' your pardon, ma'am."

"Are we going anywhere near Zog's castle?" asked the girl.

"Our way leads directly past the opening in the dome," said Aquareine.

"Then let's stop and see what Sacho and the others are doing," suggested Trot. "They can't be slaves any longer, you know, 'cause they haven't any master. I wonder if they're any happier than they were before?"

"They seemed to be pretty happy as it was," remarked Cap'n Bill.

"It will do no harm to pay them a brief visit," said Princess Clia. "All danger disappeared from the cavern with the destruction of Zog."

"I really ought to say goodbye to Brother Joe," observed the sailor man. "I won't see him again, you know, and I don't want to seem unbrotherly."

"Very well," said the Queen, "we will reenter the cavern, for I, too, am

anxious to know what will be the fate of the poor slaves of the magician."

When they came to the hole in the top of the dome, they dropped through it and swam leisurely down toward the castle. The water was clear and undisturbed and the silver castle looked very quiet and peaceful under the radiant light that still filled the cavern. They met no one at all, and passing around to the front of the building, they reached the broad entrance and passed into the golden hall.

Here a strange scene met their eyes. All the slaves of Zog, hundreds in number, were assembled in the room, while standing before the throne formerly occupied by the wicked magician was the boy Sacho, who was just beginning to make a speech to his fellow slaves. "At one time or another," he said, "all of us were born upon the earth and lived in the thin air, but now we are all living as the fishes live, and our home is in the water of the ocean. One by one we have come to this place, having been saved from drowning by Zog, the Magician, and by him given power to exist in comfort under water. The powerful master who made us his slaves has now passed away forever, but we continue to live, and are unable to return to our native land, where we would quickly perish. There is no one but us to inherit Zog's possessions, and so it will be best for us to remain in this fine castle and occupy ourselves as we have done before, in providing for the comforts of the community. Only in labor is happiness to be found, and we may as well labor for ourselves as for others.

"But we must have a king. Not an evil, cruel master like Zog, but one who will maintain order and issue laws for the benefit of all. We will govern ourselves most happily by having a ruler, or head, selected from among ourselves by popular vote. Therefore I ask you to decide who shall be our king, for only one who is accepted by all can sit in Zog's throne."

The slaves applauded this speech, but they seemed puzzled to make the choice of a ruler. Finally the chief cook came forward and said, "We all have our duties to perform and so cannot spend the time to be king. But you, Sacho, who were Zog's own attendant, have now no duties at all. So it will be best for you to rule us. What say you, comrades? Shall we make Sacho king?"

"Yes, yes!" they all cried.

"But I do not wish to be king," replied Sacho. "A king is a useless sort of person who merely issues orders for others to carry out. I want to be busy and useful. Whoever is king will need a good attendant as well as an officer who will see that his commands are obeyed. I am used to such duties, having served Zog in this same way."

"Who, then, has the time to rule over us?" asked Agga-Groo, the

goldsmith.

“It seems to me that Cap’n Joe is the proper person for king,” replied Sacho. “His former duty was to sew buttons on Zog’s garments, so now he is out of a job and has plenty of time to be king, for he can sew on his own buttons. What do you say, Cap’n Joe?”

“Oh, I don’t mind,” agreed Cap’n Joe. “That is, if you all want me to rule you.”

“We do!” shouted the slaves, glad to find someone willing to take the job.

“But I’ll want a few pointers,” continued Cap’n Bill’s brother. “I ain’t used to this sort o’ work, you know, an’ if I ain’t properly posted I’m liable to make mistakes.”

“Sacho will tell you,” said Tom Atto encouragingly. “And now I must go back to the kitchen and look after my dumplings, or you people won’t have any dinner today.”

“Very well,” announced Sacho. “I hereby proclaim Cap’n Joe elected King of the Castle, which is the Enchanted Castle no longer. You may all return to your work.”

The slaves went away well contented, and the boy and Cap’n Joe now came forward to greet their visitors. “We’re on our way home,” explained Cap’n Bill, “an’ we don’t expec’ to travel this way again. But it pleases me to know, Joe, that you’re the king o’ such a fine castle, an’ I’ll rest easier now that you’re well pervided for.”

“Oh, I’m all right, Bill,” returned Cap’n Joe. “It’s an easy life here, an’ a peaceful one. I wish you were as well fixed.”

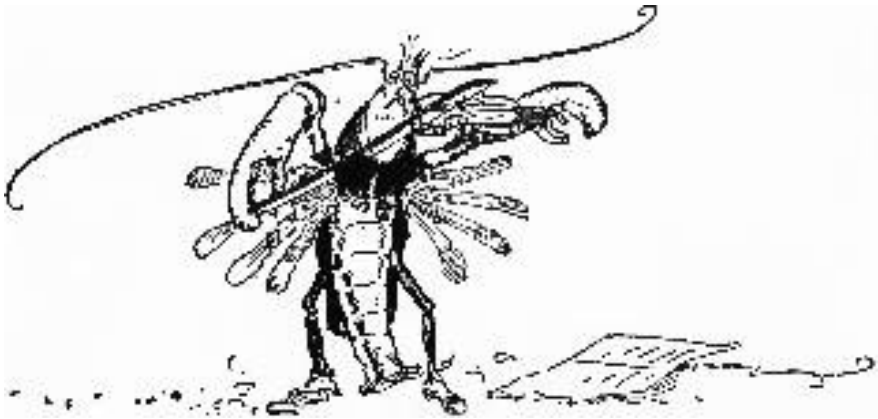
“If ever you need friends, Sacho, or any assistance or counsel, come to me,” said the Mermaid Queen to the boy.

"Thank you, madam," he replied. "Now that Zog has gone, I am sure we shall be very safe and contented. But I shall not forget to come to you if we need you. We are not going to waste any time in anger or revenge or evil deeds, so I believe we shall prosper from now on."

"I'm sure you will," declared Trot.

They now decided that they must continue their journey, and as neither Sacho nor King Joe could ascend to the top of the dome without swimming in the human way, which was slow and tedious work for them, the goodbyes were said at the castle entrance, and the four visitors started on their return. Trot took one last view of the beautiful silver castle from the hole high up in the dome, which was now open and unguarded, and the next moment she

was in the broad ocean again, swimming toward home beside her mermaid friends.



CHAPTER 22
TROT LIVES TO TELL THE TALE

Aquareine was thoughtful for a time. Then she drew from her finger a ring, a plain gold band set with a pearl of great value, and gave it to the little girl.

"If at any period of your life the mermaids can be of service to you, my dear," she said, "you have but to come to the edge of the ocean and call 'Aquareine.' If you are wearing the ring at the time, I shall instantly hear you and come to your assistance."

"Thank you!" cried the child, slipping the ring over her own chubby finger, which it fitted perfectly. "I shall never forget that I have good and loyal friends in the ocean, you may be sure."

Away and away they swam, swiftly and in a straight line, keeping in the middle water where they were not liable to meet many sea people. They passed a few schools of fishes, where the teachers were explaining to the young ones how to swim properly, and to conduct themselves in a dignified manner, but Trot did not care to stop and watch the exercises.

Although the queen had lost her fairy wand in Zog's domed chamber, she had still enough magic power to carry them all across the ocean in wonderfully quick time, and before Trot and Cap'n Bill were aware of the distance they had come, the mermaids paused while Princess Clia said:

"Now we must go a little deeper, for here is the Giant's Cave and the entrance to it is near the bottom of the sea."

"What, already?" cried the girl joyfully, and then through the dark water they swam, passing through the rocky entrance, and began to ascend slowly into the azure-blue water of the cave.

“You’ve been awfully good to us, and I don’t know jus’ how to thank you,” said Trot earnestly.

“We have enjoyed your visit to us,” said beautiful Queen Aquareine, smiling upon her little friend, “and you may easily repay any pleasure we have given you by speaking well of the mermaids when you hear ignorant earth people condemning us.”

“I’ll do that, of course,” exclaimed the child.

“How about changin’ us back to our reg’lar shapes?” inquired Cap’n Bill anxiously.

“That will be very easy,” replied Princess Clia with her merry laugh. “See! Here we are at the surface of the water.”

They pushed their heads above the blue water and looked around the cave. It was silent and deserted. Floating gently near the spot where they had left it was their own little boat. Cap'n Bill swam to it, took hold of the side, and then turned an inquiring face toward the mermaids. "Climb in," said the Queen. So he pulled himself up and awkwardly tumbled forward into the boat. As he did so, he heard his wooden leg clatter against the seat, and turned around to look at it wonderingly.

"It's me, all right!" he muttered. "One meat one, an' one hick'ry one. That's the same as belongs to me!"

"Will you lift Mayre aboard?" asked Princess Clia.

The old sailor aroused himself, and as Trot lifted up her arms, he seized them and drew her safely into the boat. She was dressed just as usual, and her chubby legs wore shoes and stockings. Strangely enough, neither of them were at all wet or even damp in any part of their clothing.

"I wonder where our legs have been while we've been gone?" mused Cap'n Bill, gazing at his little friend in great delight.

"And I wonder what's become of our pretty pink and green scaled tails!" returned the girl, laughing with glee, for it seemed good to be herself again.

Queen Aquareine and Princess Clia were a little way off, lying with their pretty faces just out of the water while their hair floated in soft clouds around them.

"Goodbye, friends!" they called.

"Goodbye!" shouted both Trot and Cap'n Bill, and the little girl blew two kisses from her fingers toward the mermaids.

Then the faces disappeared, leaving little ripples on the surface of the water.

Cap'n Bill picked up the oars and slowly headed the boat toward the mouth of the cave.

"I wonder, Trot, if your ma has missed us," he remarked uneasily.

"Of course not," replied the girl. "She's been sound asleep, you know."

As the boat crept out into the bright sunlight, they were both silent, but each sighed with pleasure at beholding their own everyday world again.

Finally Trot said softly, "The land's the best, Cap'n."

"It is, mate, for livin' on," he answered.

"But I'm glad to have seen the mermaids," she added..

"Well, so'm I, Trot," he agreed. "But I wouldn't 'a' believed any mortal could ever 'a' seen 'em an' — an' — "

Trot laughed merrily.

"An' lived to tell the tale!" she cried, her eyes dancing with mischief. "Oh, Cap'n Bill, how little we mortals know!"

“True enough, mate,” he replied, “but we’re a-learnin’ something ev’ry day.”

THE END

SKY ISLAND

Sky Island, published in 1912 by Reilly & Britton, was the second and last in Baum's projected series about young Trot and her sea-faring friend, Capn' Bill. Favorite Oz artist, John R. Neill, was again the illustrator. Although not as successful as the Oz books or even its predecessor, *The Sea Fairies*, Baum considered *Sky Island* one of his best works. *Sky Island* begins on a beach in Southern California, where Trot meets Button- Bright, a young boy carrying a magical umbrella inherited from an Arabian Knight. Trot and Cap'n Bill join Button Bright for a journey to "Sky Island," a land split into two distinct halves. The awful Boolooroo of the Blues rules the blue half, while Tourmaline the Poverty Queen reigns over the friendlier pink side. Each half presents distinct predicaments and threats for the heroes to overcome, while featuring a vivid setting and a cast of colorful and intriguing characters, including Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter, familiar to Oz readers from her appearance in *The Road to Oz* and others in the series.

A first edition copy of Sky Island with dustcover

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The Fate of the Magic Umbrella
The Elephant's Head Comes to Life
Trot Regulates the Pinkies
The Journey Home

A first edition copy of Sky Island

This Book Belongs
To

SKY ISLAND

TO
MY SISTER
MARY LOUISE BREWSTER

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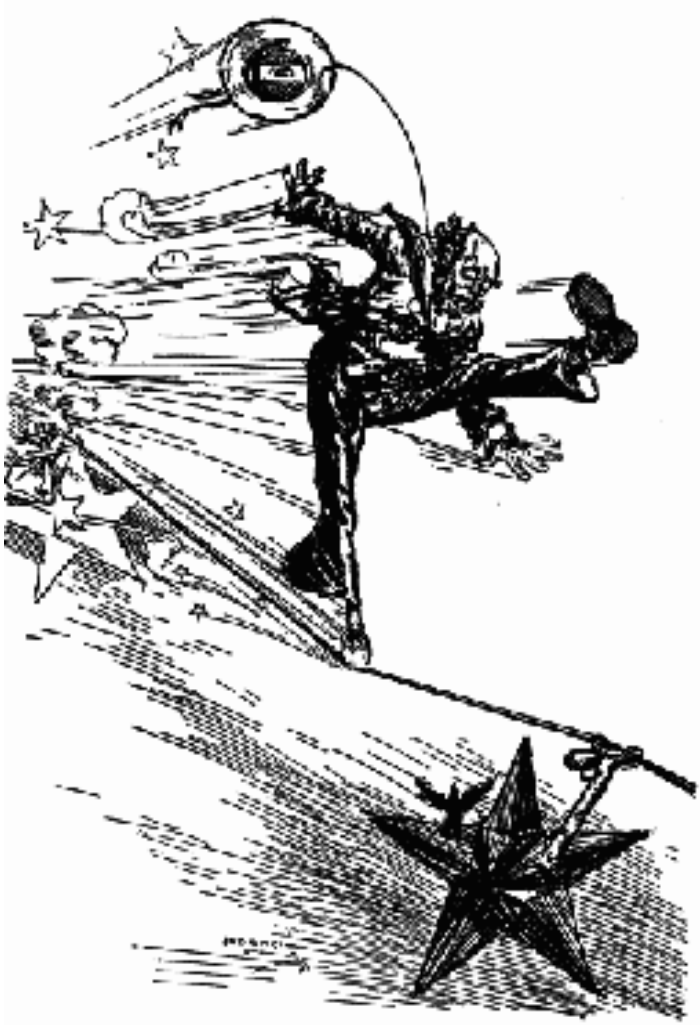

A Little Talk to My Readers

With "The Sea Fairies," my book for 1911, I ventured into a new field of fairy literature and to my delight the book was received with much approval by my former readers, many of whom have written me that they like Trot "almost as well as Dorothy." As Dorothy was an old, old friend and Trot a new one, I think this is very high praise for Cap'n Bill's little companion. Cap'n Bill is also a new character who seems to have won approval, and so both Trot and the old sailor are again introduced in the present story, which may be called the second of the series of adventures of Trot and Cap'n Bill.

But you will recognize some other acquaintances in "Sky Island." Here, for instance, is Button-Bright, who once had an adventure with Dorothy in Oz, and without Button-Bright and his Magic Umbrella you will see that the story of "Sky Island" could never have been written. As Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter, lives in the sky, it is natural that Trot and Button-Bright meet her during their adventures there.

This story of Sky Island has astonished me considerably, and I think it will also astonish you. The sky country is certainly a remarkable fairyland, but after reading about it I am sure you will agree with me that our old Mother Earth is a very good place to live upon and that Trot and Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill were fortunate to get back to it again.

By the way, one of my little correspondents has suggested that I print my address in this book, so that the children may know where letters will reach me. I am doing this, as you see, and hope that many will write to me and tell me how they like "Sky Island." My greatest treasures are these letters from my readers and I am always delighted to receive them.

L. FRANK BAUM.
"OZCOT"
at HOLLYWOOD
in CALIFORNIA

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A Mysterious Arrival

"HELLO," said the boy.

"Hello," answered Trot, looking up surprised. "Where did you come from?"

"Philadelphia," said he.

"Dear me," said Trot; "you're a long way from home, then."

"'Bout as far as I can get, in this country," the boy replied, gazing out over the water. "Isn't this the Pacific Ocean?"

"Of course."

"Why of course?" he asked.

"Because it's the biggest lot of water in all the world."

"How do you know?"

"Cap'n Bill told me," she said.

"Who's Cap'n Bill?"

"An old sailorman who's a friend of mine. He lives at my house, too — the white house you see over there on the bluff."

"Oh; is that your home?"

"Yes," said Trot, proudly. "Isn't it pretty?"

"It's pretty small, seems to me," answered the boy.

"But it's big enough for mother and me, an' for Cap'n Bill," said Trot.

"Haven't you any father?"

"Yes, 'ndeed; Cap'n Griffith is my father; but he's gone, most of the time, sailin' on his ship. You mus' be a stranger in these parts, little boy, not to know 'bout Cap'n Griffith," she added, looking at her new acquaintance

intently.

Trot wasn't very big herself, but the boy was not quite as big as Trot. He was thin, with a rather pale complexion and his blue eyes were round and earnest. He wore a blouse waist, a short jacket and knickerbockers. Under his arm he held an old umbrella that was as tall as he was. Its covering had once been of thick brown cloth, but the color had faded to a dull drab, except in the creases, and Trot thought it looked very old-fashioned and common. The handle, though, was really curious. It was of wood and carved to resemble an elephant's head. The long trunk of the elephant was curved to make a crook for the handle. The eyes of the beast were small red stones, and it had two tiny tusks of ivory.

The boy's dress was rich and expensive, even to his fine silk stockings and tan shoes; but the umbrella looked old and disreputable.

"It isn't the rainy season now," remarked Trot, with a smile.

The boy glanced at his umbrella and hugged it tighter.

"No," he said; "but umbrellas are good for other things 'sides rain."

"'Fraid of gett'n' sun-struck?" asked Trot.

He shook his head, still gazing far out over the water.

"I don't b'lieve this is bigger than any other ocean," said he. "I can't see any more of it than I can of the Atlantic."

"You'd find out, if you had to sail across it," she declared.

"When I was in Chicago I saw Lake Michigan," he went on dreamily, "and it looked just as big as this water does."

"Looks don't count, with oceans," she asserted. "Your eyes can only see jus' so far, whether you're lookin' at a pond or a great sea."

"Then it doesn't make any difference how big an ocean is," he replied. "What are those buildings over there?" pointing to the right, along the shore of the bay.

"That's the town," said Trot. "Most of the people earn their living by fishing. The town is half a mile from here an' my house is almost a half mile the other way; so it's 'bout a mile from my house to the town."

The boy sat down beside her on the flat rock.

"Do you like girls?" asked Trot, making room for him.

"Not very well," the boy replied. "Some of 'em are pretty good fellows, but not many. The girls with brothers are bossy, an' the girls without brothers haven't any 'go' to 'em. But the world's full o' both kinds, and so I try to take 'em as they come. They can't help being girls, of course. Do you like boys?"

"When they don't put on airs, or get rough-house," replied Trot. "My 'sperience with boys is that they don't know much, but think they do."

“That’s true,” he answered. “I don’t like boys much better than I do girls; but some are all right, and — you seem to be one of ‘em.”

“Much obliged,” laughed Trot. “You aren’t so bad, either, an’ if we don’t both turn out worse than we seem we ought to be friends.”

He nodded, rather absently, and tossed a pebble into the water.

“Been to town?” he asked.

“Yes. Mother wanted some yarn from the store. She’s knittin’ Cap’n Bill a stocking.”

“Doesn’t he wear but one?”

“That’s all. Cap’n Bill has one wooden leg,” she explained. “That’s why he don’t sailor any more. I’m glad of it, ‘cause Cap’n Bill knows ev’rything. I s’pose he knows more than anyone else in all the world.”

“Whew!” said the boy; “that’s taking a good deal for granted. A one-legged sailor can’t know much.”

“Why not?” asked Trot, a little indignantly. “Folks don’t learn things with their legs, do they?”

“No; but they can’t get around, without legs, to find out things.”

“Cap’n Bill got ‘round lively ‘nough once, when he had two meat legs,” she said. “He’s sailed to ‘most ev’ry country on the earth, an’ found out all that the people in ‘em knew, and a lot besides. He was shipwrecked on a desert island, once, and another time a cannibal king tried to boil him for dinner, an’ one day a shark chased him seven leagues through the water, an’ — ”

“What’s a league?” asked the boy.

“It’s a — a distance, like a mile is; but a league isn’t a mile, you know.”

“What is it, then?”

“You’ll have to ask Cap’n Bill; he knows ever’thing.”

“Not ever’thing,” objected the boy. “I know some things Cap’n Bill don’t know.”

“If you do you’re pretty smart,” said Trot.

“No; I’m not smart. Some folks think I’m stupid. I guess I am. But I know a few things that are wonderful. Cap’n Bill may know more’n I do — a good deal more — but I’m sure he can’t know the same things. Say, what’s your name?”

“I’m Mayre Griffith; but ever’body calls me ‘Trot.’ It’s a nickname I got when I was a baby, ‘cause I trotted so fast when I walked, an’ it seems to stick. What’s *your* name?”

“Button-Bright.”

“How did it happen?”

“How did what happen?”

“Such a funny name.”

The boy scowled a little.

“Just like your own nickname happened,” he answered gloomily. “My father once said I was bright as a button, an’ it made ever’body laugh. So they always call me Button-Bright.”

“What’s your real name?” she inquired.

“Saladin Paracelsus de Lambertine Evagne von Smith.”

“Guess I’ll call you Button-Bright,” said Trot, sighing. “The only other thing would be ‘Salad,’ an’ I don’t like salads. Don’t you find it hard work to ‘member all of your name?”

“I don’t try to,” he said. “There’s a lot more of it, but I’ve forgotten the rest.”

“Thank you,” said Trot. “Oh, here comes Cap’n Bill!” as she glanced over her shoulder.

Button-Bright turned also and looked solemnly at the old sailor who came stumping along the path toward them. Cap’n Bill wasn’t a very handsome man. He was old, not very tall, somewhat stout and chubby, with a round face, a bald head and a scraggly fringe of reddish whisker underneath his chin. But his blue eyes were frank and merry and his smile like a ray of sunshine. He wore a sailor shirt with a broad collar, a short peajacket and wide-bottomed sailor trousers, one leg of which covered his wooden limb but did not hide it. As he came “pegging” along the path, as he himself described his hobbling walk, his hands were pushed into his coat pockets, a pipe was in his mouth and his black neckscarf was fluttering behind him in the breeze like a sable banner.

Button-Bright liked the sailor’s looks. There was something very winning — something jolly and care-free and honest and sociable — about the ancient seaman that made him everybody’s friend; so the strange boy was glad to meet him.

“Well, well, Trot,” he said, coming up, “is this the way you hurry to town?”

“No, for I’m on my way back,” said she. “I did hurry when I was going, Cap’n Bill, but on my way home I sat down here to rest an’ watch the gulls — the gulls seem awful busy to-day, Cap’n Bill — an’ then I found this boy.”

Cap’n Bill looked at the boy curiously.

“Don’t think as ever I sawr him at the village,” he remarked. “Guess as you’re a stranger, my lad.”

Button-Bright nodded.

“Hain’t walked the nine mile from the railroad station, hev ye?” asked

Cap'n Bill.

"No," said Button-Bright.

The sailor glanced around him.

"Don't see no waggin, er no autymob'l'," he added.

"No," said Button-Bright.

"Catch a ride wi' some one?"

Button-Bright shook his head.

"A boat can't land here; the rocks is too thick an' too sharp," continued Cap'n Bill, peering down toward the foot of the bluff on which they sat and against which the waves broke in foam.

"No," said Button-Bright; "I didn't come by water."

Trot laughed.

"He must 'a' dropped from the sky, Cap'n Bill!" she exclaimed.

Button-Bright nodded, very seriously.

"That's it," he said.

"Oh; a airship, eh?" cried Cap'n Bill, in surprise. "I've hearn tell o' them sky keeridges; someth'n' like flyin' autymob'l's, ain't they?"

"I don't know," said Button-Bright; "I've never seen one."

Both Trot and Cap'n Bill now looked at the boy in astonishment.

"Now, then, lemme think a minute," said the sailor, reflectively. "Here's a riddle for us to guess, Trot. He dropped from the sky, he says, an' yet he did'nt come in a airship!

"'Riddlecum, riddlecum ree;

What can the answer be?'"

Trot looked the boy over carefully. She didn't see any wings on him. The only queer thing about him was his big umbrella.

"Oh!" she said suddenly, clapping her hands together; "I know now."

"Do you?" asked Cap'n Bill, doubtfully. "Then you're some smarter ner I am, mate."

"He sailed down with the umbrel!" she cried. "He used his umbrel as a para — para — "

"Shoot," said Cap'n Bill. "They're called parashoots, mate; but why, I can't say. Did you drop down in that way, my lad?" he asked the boy.

"Yes," said Button-Bright; "that was the way."

"But how did you get up there?" asked Trot. "You had to get up in the air before you could drop down, an' — oh, Cap'n Bill! he says he's from Phillydelfy, which is a big city way at the other end of America."

"Are you?" asked the sailor, surprised.

Button-Bright nodded again.

"I ought to tell you my story," he said, "and then you'd understand. But

I'm afraid you won't believe me, and — " he suddenly broke off and looked toward the white house in the distance — "Didn't you say you lived over there?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Trot. "Won't you come home with us?"

"I'd like to," replied Button-Bright.

"All right; let's go, then," said the girl, jumping up.

The three walked silently along the path. The old sailorman had refilled his pipe and lighted it again, and he smoked thoughtfully as he pegged along beside the children.

"Know anyone around here?" he asked Button-Bright.

"No one but you two," said the boy, following after Trot, with his umbrella tucked carefully underneath his arm.

"And you don't know us very well," remarked Cap'n Bill. "Seems to me you're pretty young to be travelin' so far from home, an' among strangers; but I won't say anything more till we've heard your story. Then, if you need my advice, or Trot's advice — she's a wise little girl, fer her size, Trot is — we'll freely give it an' be glad to help you."

"Thank you," replied Button-Bright; "I need a lot of things, I'm sure, and p'raps advice is one of 'em."

The Magic Umbrella

WHEN they reached the neat frame cottage which stood on a high bluff a little back from the sea and was covered with pretty green vines, a woman came to the door to meet them. She seemed motherly and good and when she saw Button-Bright she exclaimed:

"Goodness me! who's this you've got, Trot?"

"It's a boy I've just found," explained the girl. "He lives way off in Phillydelphy."

"Mercy sakes alive!" cried Mrs. Griffith, looking into his upturned face; "I don't believe he's had a bite to eat since he started. Ain't you hungry, child?"

"Yes," said Button-Bright.

"Run, Trot, an' get two slices o' bread-an'-butter," commanded Mrs. Griffith. "Cut 'em thick, dear, an' use plenty of butter."

"Sugar on 'em?" asked Trot, turning to obey.

"No," said Button-Bright, "just bread-an'-butter's good enough when you're hungry, and it takes time to spread sugar on."

"We'll have supper in an hour," observed Trot's mother, briskly; "but a hungry child can't wait a whole hour, I'm sure. What are you grinning at, Cap'n Bill? How dare you laugh when I'm talking? Stop it this minute, you old pirate, or I'll know the reason why!"

"I didn't, mum," said Cap'n Bill, meekly, "I on'y — "

"Stop right there, sir! How dare you speak when I'm talking?" She turned to Button-Bright and her tone changed to one of much gentleness as she said: "Come in the house, my poor boy, an' rest yourself. You seem tired out.

Here, give me that clumsy umbrella."

"No, please," said Button-Bright, holding the umbrella tighter.

"Then put it in the rack behind the door," she urged. The boy seemed a little frightened.

"I — I'd rather keep it with me, if you please," he pleaded.

"Never mind," Cap'n Bill ventured to say, "it won't worry him so much to hold the umbrella, mum, as to let it go. Guess he's afraid he'll lose it, but it ain't any great shakes, to my notion. Why, see here, Butt'n-Bright, we've got half-a-dozen umbrels in the closet that's better ner yours."

"Perhaps," said the boy. "Yours may look a heap better, sir, but — I'll keep this one, if you please."

"Where did you get it?" asked Trot, appearing just then with a plate of bread-and-butter.

"It — it belongs in our family," said Button-Bright, beginning to eat and speaking between bites. "This umbrella has been in our family years, an' years, an' years. But it was tucked away up in our attic an' no one ever used it 'cause it wasn't pretty."

"Don't blame 'em much," remarked Cap'n Bill, gazing at it curiously; "it's a pretty old-lookin' bumbershoot." They were all seated in the vine-shaded porch of the cottage — all but Mrs. Griffith, who had gone into the kitchen to look after the supper — and Trot was on one side of the boy, holding the plate for him, while Cap'n Bill sat on the other side.

"It *is* old," said Button-Bright. "One of my great-great-grandfathers was a Knight — an Arabian Knight — and it was he who first found this umbrella."

"An Arabian Night!" exclaimed Trot; "why, that was a magic night,

wasn't it?"

"There's diff'rent sorts o' nights, mate," said the sailor, "an' the knight Button-Bright means ain't the same night you mean. Soldiers used to be called knights, but that were in the dark ages, I guess, an' likely 'nough Butt'n-Bright's great-gran'ther were that sort of a knight."

"But he said an Arabian Knight," persisted Trot.

"Well, if he went to Araby, or was born there, he'd be an Arabian Knight, wouldn't he? The lad's gran'ther were prob'ly a furriner, an' yours an' mine were, too, Trot, if you go back far enough; for Ameriky wasn't diskivered in them days."

"There!" said Trot, triumphantly, "didn't I tell you, Button-Bright, that Cap'n Bill knows ever'thing?"

"He knows a lot, I expect," soberly answered the boy, finishing the last slice of bread-and-butter and then looking at the empty plate with a sigh; "but if he really knows everthing he knows about the Magic Umbrella, so I won't have to tell you anything about it."

"Magic!" cried Trot, with big, eager eyes; "did you say *Magic* Umbrel, Button-Bright?"

"I said 'Magic.' But none of our family knew it was a Magic Umbrella till I found it out for myself. You're the first people I've told the secret to," he added, glancing into their faces rather uneasily.

"Glory me!" exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands in ecstacy; "it must be jus' *elegant* to have a Magic Umbrel!"

Cap'n Bill coughed. He had a way of coughing when he was suspicious.

"Magic," he observed gravely, "was once lyin' 'round loose in the world. That was in the Dark Ages, I guess, when the magic Arabian Nights was. But the light o' Civilization has skeered it away long ago, an' magic's been a lost art since long afore you an' I was born, Trot."

"I know that fairies still live," said Trot, reflectively. She didn't like to contradict Cap'n Bill, who knew "ever'thing."

"So do I," added Button-Bright. "And I know there's magic still in the world — or in my umbrella, anyhow."

"Tell us about it!" begged the girl, excitedly.

"Well," said the boy, "I found it all out by accident. It rained in Philadelphia for three whole days, and all the umbrellas in our house were carried out by the family, and lost or mislaid, or something, so that when I wanted to go to Uncle Bob's house, which is at Germantown, there wasn't an umbrella to be found. My governess wouldn't let me go without one, and — "

"Oh," said Trot; "do you have a governess?"

"Yes; but I don't like her; she's cross. She said I couldn't go to Uncle Bob's because I had no umbrella. Instead she told me to go up in the attic and play. I was sorry 'bout that, but I went up in the attic and pretty soon I found in a corner this old umbrella. I didn't care how it looked. It was whole and strong and big, and would keep me from getting wet on the way to Uncle Bob's. So off I started for the car, but I found the streets awful muddy, and once I stepped in a mud-hole way up to my ankle.

"'Gee!' I said, 'I wish I could fly through the air to Uncle Bob's.'

"I was holding up the open umbrella when I said that, and as soon as I spoke, the umbrella began lifting me up into the air. I was awful scared, at

first, but I held on tight to the handle and it didn't pull very much, either. I was going pretty fast, for when I looked down, all the big buildings were sliding past me so swift that it made me dizzy, and before I really knew what had happened the umbrella settled down and stood me on my feet at Uncle Bob's front gate.

"I didn't tell anybody about the wonderful thing that had happened, 'cause I thought no one would believe me. Uncle Bob looked sharp at the thing an' said: 'Button-Bright, how did your father happen to let you take that umbrella?' 'He didn't,' I said. 'Father was away at the office, so I found it in the attic an' I jus' took it.' Then Uncle Bob shook his head an' said I ought to leave it alone. He said it was a fam'ly relic that had been handed down from father to son for many generations. But I told him my father had never handed it to me, though I'm his son. Uncle Bob said our fam'ly always believed that it brought 'em good luck to own this umbrella. He couldn't say why, not knowing its early history, but he was afraid that if I lost the umbrella bad luck would happen to us. So he made me go right home to put the umbrella back where I got it. I was sorry Uncle Bob was so cross, and I didn't want to go home yet, where the governess was crosser 'n he was. I wonder why folks get cross when it rains? But by that time it had stopped raining, for awhile, anyhow, and Uncle Bob told me to go straight home and put the umbrella in the attic an' never touch it again.

"When I was around the corner I thought I'd see if I could fly as I had before. I'd heard of Buffalo, but I didn't know just where it was; so I said to the umbrella: 'Take me to Buffalo.'

"Up in the air I went, just as soon as I said it, and the umbrella sailed so fast that I felt as if I was in a gale of wind. It was a long, long trip, and I got awful tired holding onto the handle, but just as I thought I'd have to let go I began to drop down slowly, and then I found myself in the streets of a big city. I put down the umbrella and asked a man what the name of the city was, and he said 'Buffalo.'"

"How wonderful!" gasped Trot. Cap'n Bill kept on smoking and said nothing.

"It was magic, I'm sure," said Button-Bright. "It surely couldn't have been anything else."

"P'raps," suggested Trot, "the umbrella can do other magic things."

"No," said the boy; "I've tried it. When I landed in Buffalo I was hot and thirsty. I had ten cents, car fare, but I was afraid to spend it. So I held up the umbrella and wished I had an ice-cream soda; but I didn't get it. Then I wished for a nickel to buy an ice-cream soda with; but I didn't get that, either. I got frightened and was afraid the umbrella didn't have any magic

left, so to try it I said: ‘Take me to Chicago.’ I didn’t want to go to Chicago, but that was the first place I thought of, and so I said it. Up again I flew, swifter than a bird, and I soon saw this was going to be another long journey; so I called out to the umbrella: ‘Never mind; stop! I guess I won’t go to Chicago. I’ve changed my mind, so take me home again.’ But the umbrella wouldn’t. It kept right on flying and I shut my eyes and held on. At last I landed in Chicago, and then I was in a pretty fix. It was nearly dark and I was too tired and hungry to make the trip home again. I knew I’d get an awful scolding, too, for running away and taking the family luck with me, so I thought that as long as I was in for it I’d better see a good deal of the country while I had the chance. I wouldn’t be allowed to come away again, you know.”

“No, of course not,” said Trot.

“I bought some buns and milk with my ten cents and then I walked around the streets of Chicago for a time and afterward slept on a bench in one of the parks. In the morning I tried to get the umbrella to give me a magic breakfast, but it won’t do anything but fly. I went to a house and asked a woman for something to eat and she gave me all I wanted and advised me to go straight home before my mother worried about me. She didn’t know I lived in Philadelphia. That was this morning.”

“This mornin’!” exclaimed Cap’n Bill. “Why, lad, it takes three or four days for the railroad trains to get to this coast from Chicago.”

“I know,” replied Button-Bright, “but I didn’t come on a railroad train. This umbrella goes faster than any train ever did. This morning I flew from Chicago to Denver, but no one there would give me any lunch. A policeman said he’d put me in jail if he caught me begging, so I got away and told the umbrella to take me to the Pacific Ocean. When I stopped I landed over there by the big rock. I shut up the umbrella and saw a girl sitting on the rock, so I went up and spoke to her. That’s all.”

“Goodness me!” said Trot; “if that isn’t a fairy story I never heard one.”

“It *is* a fairy story,” agreed Button-Bright. “Anyhow, it’s a magic story, and the funny part of it is, it’s true. I hope you believe me; but I don’t know as I’d believe it myself, if it hadn’t been me that it happened to.”

“I believe ev’ry word of it!” declared Trot, earnestly.

“As fer me,” said Cap’n Bill slowly, “I’m goin’ to believe it, too, by’m’by, when I’ve seen the umbrel fly once.”

“You’ll see me fly away with it,” asserted the boy. “But at present it’s pretty late in the day, and Philadelphia is a good way off. Do you s’pose, Trot, your mother would let me stay here all night?”

“Course she would!” answered Trot. “We’ve got an extra room with a

nice bed in it, and we'd love to have you stay — just as long as you want to — wouldn't we, Cap'n Bill?"

"Right you are, mate," replied the old man, nodding his bald head. "Whether the umbrel is magic or not, Butt'n-Bright is welcome."

Mrs. Griffith came out soon after, and seconded the invitation, so the boy felt quite at home in the little cottage. It was not long before supper was on the table and in spite of all the bread-and-butter he had eaten Button-Bright had a fine appetite for the good things Trot's mother had cooked. Mrs. Griffith was very kind to the children, but not quite so agreeable toward poor Cap'n Bill. When the old sailorman at one time spilled some tea on the tablecloth Trot's mother flew angry and gave the culprit such a tongue-lashing that Button-Bright was sorry for him. But Cap'n Bill was meek and made no reply. "He's used to it, you know," whispered Trot to her new friend; and, indeed, Cap'n Bill took it all cheerfully and never minded a bit.

Then it came Trot's turn to get a scolding. When she opened the parcel she had bought at the village it was found she had selected the wrong color of yarn, and Mrs. Griffith was so provoked that Trot's scolding was almost as severe as that of Cap'n Bill. Tears came to the little girl's eyes, and to comfort her the boy promised to take her to the village next morning with his magic umbrella, so she could exchange the yarn for the right color.

Trot quickly brightened at this promise, although Cap'n Bill looked grave and shook his head solemnly. When supper was over and Trot had helped with the dishes she joined Button-Bright and the sailorman on the little porch again. Dusk had fallen and the moon was just rising. They all sat in silence for a time and watched the silver trail that topped the crests of the waves far out to sea.

"Oh, Button-Bright!" cried the little girl, presently; "I'm so glad you're going to let me fly with you — way to town and back — to-morrow. Won't it be fine, Cap'n Bill?"

"Dunno, Trot," said he. "I can't figger how both o' you can hold on to the handle o' that umbrel."

Trot's face fell.

"I'll hold on to the handle," said Button-Bright, "and she can hold on to me. It doesn't pull hard at all. You've no idea how easy it is to fly that way — after you get used to it."

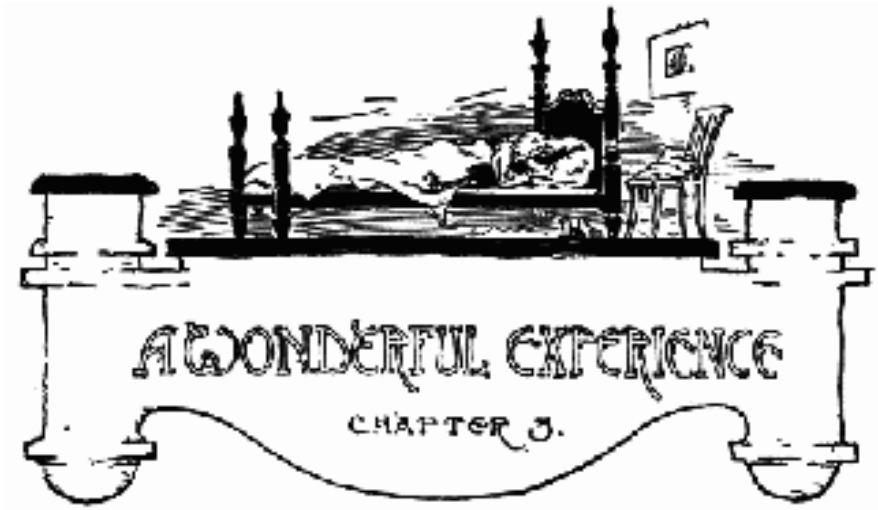
"But Trot ain't used to it," objected the sailor. "If she happened to lose her hold and let go, it's good-bye Trot. I don't like to risk it, for Trot's my chum, an' I can't afford to lose her."

"Can't you tie us together, then?" asked the boy.

"We'll see; we'll see," replied Cap'n Bill, and began to think very deeply.

He forgot that he didn't believe the umbrella could fly, and after Button-Bright and Trot had both gone to bed the old sailor went out into the shed and worked awhile before he, too, turned into his "bunk." The sandman wasn't around and Cap'n Bill lay awake for hours thinking of the strange tale of the Magic Umbrella before he finally sank into slumber. Then he dreamed about it, and waking or dreaming he found the tale hard to believe.

A Wonderful Experience

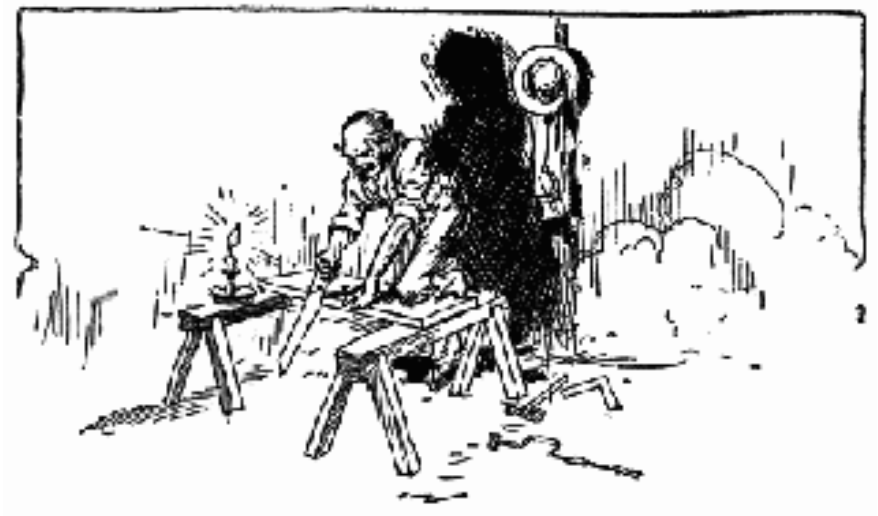


THEY had early breakfasts at Trot's house, because they all went to bed early and it is possible to sleep only a certain number of hours if one is healthy in body and mind. And right after breakfast Trot claimed Button-Bright's promise to take her to town with the Magic Umbrella.

"Any time suits me," said the boy. He had taken his precious umbrella to bed with him and even carried it to the breakfast table, where he stood it between his knees as he ate; so now he held it close to him and said he was ready to fly at a moment's notice. This confidence impressed Cap'n Bill, who said with a sigh:

"Well, if you *must* go, Trot, I've pervided a machine that'll carry you both comf'table. I'm summat of an inventor myself, though there ain't any magic about me."

Then he brought from the shed the contrivance he had made the night before. It was merely a swing seat. He had taken a wide board that was just long enough for both the boy and girl to sit upon, and had bored six holes in it — two holes at each end and two in the middle. Through these holes he had run stout ropes in such a way that the seat could not turn and the occupants could hold on to the ropes on either side of them. The ropes were all knotted together at the top, where there was a loop that could be hooked upon the crooked handle of the umbrella.



Button-Bright and Trot both thought Cap'n Bill's invention very clever. The sailor placed the board upon the ground while they sat in their places, Button-Bright at the right of Trot, and then the boy hooked the rope loop to the handle of the umbrella, which he spread wide open.

"I want to go to the town over yonder," he said, pointing with his finger to the roofs of the houses that showed around the bend in the cliff.

At once the umbrella rose into the air; slowly, at first, but quickly gathering speed. Trot and Button-Bright held fast to the ropes and were carried along very easily and comfortably. It seemed scarcely a minute before they were in the town, and when the umbrella set them down just in front of the store — for it seemed to know just where they wanted to go — a wondering crowd gathered around them. Trot ran in and changed the yarn, while Button-Bright stayed outside and stared at the people who stared at him. They asked questions, too, wanting to know what sort of an aëroplane this was, and where his power was stored, and lots of other things; but the boy answered not a word. When the little girl came back and took her seat Button-Bright said:

"I want to go to Trot's house."

The simple villagers could not understand how the umbrella suddenly lifted the two children into the air and carried them away. They had read of airships, but here was something wholly beyond their comprehension.

Cap'n Bill had stood in front of the house, watching with a feeling akin to bewilderment the flight of the Magic Umbrella. He could follow its course until it descended in the village and he was so amazed and absorbed that his pipe went out. He had not moved from his position when the umbrella started

back. The sailor's big blue eyes watched it draw near and settle down with its passengers upon just the spot it had started from.

Trot was joyous and greatly excited.

"Oh, Cap'n, it's gal-lor-ious!" she cried in ecstasy. "It beats ridin' in a boat or — or — in anything else. You feel so light an' free an' — an' — glad! I'm sorry the trip didn't last longer, though. Only trouble is, you go too fast."

Button-Bright was smiling contentedly. He had proved to both Trot and Cap'n Bill that he had told the truth about the Magic Umbrella, however marvelous his tale had seemed to them.

"I'll take you on another trip, if you like," said he, "I'm in no hurry to go home and if you will let me stay with you another day we can make two or three little trips with the family luck."

"You mus' stay a whole week," said Trot, decidedly. "An' you mus' take Cap'n Bill for an air-ride, too."

"Oh, Trot! I dunno as I'd like it," protested Cap'n Bill, nervously.

"Yes, you would. You're sure to like it."

"I guess I'm too heavy," he said.

"I'm sure the umbrella could carry twenty people, if they could be fastened to the handle," said Button-Bright.

"Solid land's pretty good to hold on to," decided Cap'n Bill. "A rope might break, you know."

"Oh, Cap'n Bill! You're scared stiff," said Trot.

"I ain't, mate; it ain't that at all. But I don't see that human critters has any call to fly in the air, anyhow. The air were made for the birds, an' — an' muskeeters, an' — "

"An' flyin'-fishes," added Trot. "I know all that, Cap'n; but why wasn't it made for humans, too, if they can manage to fly in it? We breathe the air, an' we can breathe it high up, just as well as down on the earth."

"Seein' as you like it so much, Trot, it would be cruel for me to go with Butt'n-Bright an' leave you at home," said the sailor. "When I were younger — which is ancient history — an' afore I had a wooden leg, I could climb a ship's ropes with the best of 'em, an' walk out on a boom, or stand atop a mast. So you know very well I ain't skeert about the highupness."

"Why can't we all go together?" asked the boy. "Make another seat, Cap'n, and swing it right under ours; then we can all three ride anywhere we want to go."

"Yes, do!" exclaimed Trot. "And, see here, Cap'n; let's take a day off and have a picnic. Mother is a little cross, to-day, and she wants to finish knitting your new stockin'; so I guess she'll be glad to get rid of us."

“Where’ll we go?” he asked, shifting on his wooden leg uneasily.

“Anywhere; I don’t care. There’ll be the air-ride there, an’ the air-ride back, an’ that’s the main thing with *me*. If you say you’ll go, Cap’n, I’ll run in an’ pack a basket of lunch.”

“How’ll we carry it?”

“Swing it to the bottom of your seat.”

The old sailor stood silent a moment. He really longed to take the air-ride but was fearful of danger. However, Trot had gone safely to town and back and had greatly enjoyed the experience.

“All right,” he said; “I’ll risk it, mate, although I guess I’m an old fool for temptin’ fate by tryin’ to make a bird o’ myself. Get the lunch, Trot, if your mother’ll let you have it, and I’ll rig up the seat.”

He went into the shed and Trot went to her mother. Mrs. Griffith, busy with her work, knew nothing of what was going on in regard to the flight of the Magic Umbrella. She never objected when Trot wanted to go away with Cap’n Bill for a day’s picnicking. She knew the child was perfectly safe with the old sailor, who cared for Trot even better than her mother would have done. If she had asked any questions to-day, and had found out they intended to fly in the air, she might have seriously objected; but Mrs. Griffith had her mind on other things and merely told the girl to take what she wanted from the cupboard and not bother her. So Trot, remembering that Button-Bright would be with them and had proved himself to be a hearty eater, loaded the basket with all the good things she could find.

By the time she came out, lugging the basket with both hands, Cap’n Bill appeared with the new seat he had made for his own use, which he attached by means of ropes to the double seat of the boy and girl.

“Now, then, where’ll we go?” asked Trot.

“Anywhere suits me,” replied Cap’n Bill.

They had walked to the high bluff overlooking the sea, where a gigantic acacia tree stood on the very edge. A seat had been built around the trunk of the tree, for this was a favorite spot for Trot and Cap’n Bill to sit and talk and watch the fleet of fishing boats sail to and from the village.

When they came to this tree Trot was still trying to think of the most pleasant place to picnic. She and Cap’n Bill had been every place that was desirable and near by, but to-day they didn’t want a near-by spot. They must decide upon one far enough away to afford them a fine trip through the air. Looking far out over the Pacific, the girl’s eyes fell upon a dim island lying on the horizon line — just where the sky and water seemed to meet — and the sight gave her an idea.

“Oh, Cap’n Bill!” she exclaimed, “let’s go to that island for our picnic.

We've never been there yet, you know."

The sailor shook his head.

"It's a good many miles away, Trot," he said; "further than it looks to be, from here."

"That won't matter," remarked Button-Bright; "the umbrella will carry us there in no time."

"Let's go!" repeated Trot. "We'll never have another such chance, Cap'n. It's too far to sail or row, and I've always wanted to visit that island."

"What's the name of it?" inquired Button-Bright, while the sailor hesitated how to decide.

"Oh, it's got an awful hard name to pernounce," replied the girl, "so Cap'n Bill and I jus' call it 'Sky Island,' 'cause it looks as if it was half in the sky. We've been told it's a very pretty island, and a few people live there and keep cows and goats, and fish for a living. There are woods and pastures and springs of clear water, and I'm sure we would find it a fine place for a picnic."

"If anything happened on the way," observed Cap'n Bill, "we'd drop in the water."

"Of course," said Trot; "and if anything happened while we were flyin' over the land we'd drop there. But nothing's goin' to happen, Cap'n. Didn't Button-Bright come safe all the way from Philydelfy?"

"I think I'd like to go to Sky Island," said the boy. "I've always flown above the land, so far, and it will be something new to fly over the ocean."

"All right; I'm agree'ble," decided Cap'n Bill. "But afore we starts on such a long journey, s'pose we make a little trial trip along the coast. I want to see if the new seat fits me, an' make certain the umbrel will carry all three of us."

"Very well," said Button-Bright. "Where shall we go?"

"Let's go as far as Smuggler's Cove, an' then turn 'round an' come back. If all's right an' shipshape, then we can start for the island."

They put the broad double seat on the ground and then the boy and girl sat in their places and Button-Bright spread open the Magic Umbrella. Cap'n Bill sat in his seat just in front of them, all being upon the ground.

"Don't we look funny?" said Trot, with a chuckle of glee. "But hold fast the ropes, Cap'n, an' take care of your wooden leg."

Button-Bright addressed the umbrella, speaking to it very respectfully, for it was a thing to inspire awe.

"I want to go as far as Smuggler's Cove, and then turn around in the air and come back here," he said.

At once the umbrella rose into the air, lifting after it, first the seat in which

the children sat, and then Cap'n Bill's seat.

"Don't kick your heels, Trot!" cried the sailor in a voice that proved he was excited by his novel experience; "you might bump me in the nose."

"All right," she called back; "I'll be careful."

It was really a wonderful, exhilarating ride, and Cap'n Bill wasn't long making up his mind he liked the sensation. When about fifty feet above the ground the umbrella began moving along the coast toward Smuggler's Cove, which it soon reached. Looking downward, Cap'n Bill suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, there's a boat cast loose, an' it's goin' to smash on the rocks. Hold on a minute, Butt'n-Bright, till we can land an' drag it ashore."

"Hold on a minute, Umbrella!" cried the boy.

But the Magic Umbrella kept steadily upon its way. It made a circle over the Cove and then started straight back the way it had come.

"It's no use, sir," said Button-Bright to the sailor. "If I once tell it to go to a certain place, the umbrella will go there, and nowhere else. I've found that out before this. You simply *can't* stop it."

"Won't let you change your mind, eh?" replied Cap'n Bill. "Well, that has its advantidges, an' its disadvantidges. If your ol' umbrel hadn't been so obstinate we could have saved that boat."

"Never mind," said Trot, briskly; "here we are safe back again. Wasn't it jus' the — the fascinatingest ride you ever took, Cap'n?"

"It's pretty good fun," admitted Cap'n Bill. "Beats them aëroplanes an' things all holler, 'cause it don't need any regulatin'."

"If we're going to that island we may as well start right away," said Button-Bright, when they had safely landed.

"All right; I'll tie on the lunch-basket," answered the sailor. He fastened it so it would swing underneath his own seat and then they all took their places again.

"Ready?" asked the boy.

"Let'er go, my lad."

"I want to go to Sky Island," said Button-Bright to the umbrella, using the name Trot had given him.

The umbrella started promptly. It rose higher than before, carrying the three voyagers with it, and then started straight away over the ocean.

The Island in the Sky

THEY clung tightly to the ropes, but the breeze was with them, so after a few moments, when they became accustomed to the motion, they began to enjoy the ride immensely.

Larger and larger grew the island, and although they were headed directly toward it, the umbrella seemed to rise higher and higher into the air the farther it traveled. They had not journeyed ten minutes before they came directly over the island, and looking down they could see the forests and meadows far below them. But the umbrella kept up its rapid flight.

"Hold on, there!" cried Cap'n Bill. "If it ain't keerful the ol' thing will pass way by the island."

"I — I'm sure it has passed it already," exclaimed Trot "What's wrong, Button-Bright? Why don't we stop?"

Button-Bright seemed astonished too.

"Perhaps I didn't say it right," he replied, after a moment's thought. Then, looking up at the umbrella, he repeated, distinctly: "I said I wanted to go to Sky Island! Sky Island; don't you understand?"

The umbrella swept steadily along, getting farther and farther out to sea and rising higher and higher toward the clouds.

"Mack'rel an' herrings!" roared Cap'n Bill, now really frightened; "ain't there any blamed way at all to stop her?"

"None that I know of," said Button-Bright, anxiously.

"P'raps," said Trot, after a pause during which she tried hard to think, "p'raps 'Sky Island' isn't the name of that island, at all."

“Why, we know very well it ain’t the name of it,” yelled Cap’n Bill, from below. “We jus’ called it that ‘cause its right name is too hard to say.”

“That’s the whole trouble, then,” returned Button-Bright. “Somewhere in the world there’s a real Sky Island, and having told the Magic Umbrella to take us there, it’s going to do so.”

“Well, I declare!” gasped the sailorman; “can’t we land anywhere else?”

“Not unless you care to tumble off,” said the boy. “I’ve told the umbrella to take us to Sky Island, so that’s the exact place we’re bound for. I’m sorry. It was your fault for giving me the wrong name.”

They glided along in silence for a while. The island was now far behind them, growing small in the distance.

“Where do you s’pose the real Sky Island can be?” asked Trot presently.

“We can’t tell anything about it until we get there,” Button-Bright answered. “Seems to me I’ve heard of the Isle of Skye, but that’s over in Great Britain, somewhere the other side of the world; and it isn’t Sky Island, anyhow.”

“This miser’ble ol’ umbrel is too pertic’ler,” growled Cap’n Bill. “It won’t let you change your mind an’ it goes ezzac’ly where you say.”

“If it didn’t,” said Trot, “we’d never know where we were going.”

“We don’t know now,” said the sailor. “One thing’s certain, folks: we’re gett’n’ a long way from home.”

“And see how the clouds are rolling just above us,” remarked the boy, who was almost as uneasy as Cap’n Bill.

“We’re in the sky, all right,” said the girl. “If there could be an island up here, among the clouds, I’d think it was there we’re going.”

“Couldn’t there be one?” asked Button-Bright. “Why couldn’t there be an island in the sky that would be named Sky Island?”

“Of course not!” declared Cap’n Bill. “There wouldn’t be anything to hold it up, you know.”

“What’s holding *us* up?” asked Trot.

“Magic, I guess.”

“Then magic might hold an island in the sky.... Whee-e-e-e! what a black cloud!”

It grew suddenly dark, for they were rushing through a thick cloud that rolled around them in billows. Trot felt little drops of moisture striking her face and knew her clothing was getting damp and soggy.

"It's a rain cloud," she said to Button-Bright, "and it seems like an awful big one, 'cause it takes so long for us to pass through it."

The umbrella never hesitated a moment. It made a path through the length of the heavy black cloud at last and carried its passengers into a misty, billowy bank of white, which seemed as soft and fleecy as a lady's veil. When this broke away they caught sight of a majestic rainbow spanning the heavens, its gorgeous colors glinting brightly in the sun, its arch perfect and unbroken from end to end. But it was only a glimpse they had, for quickly they dove into another bank of clouds and the rainbow disappeared.

Here the clouds were not black, nor heavy, but they assumed queer shapes. Some were like huge ships, some like forest trees, and others piled themselves into semblances of turreted castles and wonderful palaces. The shapes shifted here and there continually and the voyagers began to be bewildered by the phantoms.

"Seems to me we're goin' down," called Trot.

"Down where?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"Who knows?" said Button-Bright. "But we're dropping, all right."

It was a gradual descent. The Magic Umbrella maintained a uniform speed, swift and unfaltering, but its path through the heavens was now in the shape of an arch, as a flying arrow falls. The queer shapes of the clouds continued for some time, and once or twice Trot was a little frightened when a monstrous airy dragon passed beside them, or a huge giant stood upon a peak of cloud and stared savagely at the intruders into his domain. But none of these fanciful, vapory creatures seemed inclined to molest them or to interfere with their flight and after a while the umbrella dipped below this

queer cloudland and entered a clear space where the sky was of an exquisite blue color.

"Oh, look!" called Cap'n Bill. "There's land below us."

The boy and girl leaned over and tried to see this land, but Cap'n Bill was also leaning over and his big body hid all that was just underneath them.

"Is it an island?" asked Trot, anxiously.

"Seems so," the old sailor replied. "The blue is around all one side of it an' a pink sunshine around the other side. There's a big cloud just over the middle; but I guess it's surely an island, Trot, an' bein' as it's in the sky, it's likely to be Sky Island."

"Then we shall land there," said the boy confidently. "I knew the umbrella couldn't make a mistake."

Presently Cap'n Bill spoke again.

"We're goin' down on the blue part o' the island," he said. "I can see trees, an' ponds, an' houses. Hold tight, Trot! Hold tight, Butt'n-Bright! I'm afeared we're a-goin' to bump somethin'!"

They were certainly dropping very quickly, now, and the rush of air made their eyes fill with water, so that they could not see much below them. Suddenly the basket that was dangling below Cap'n Bill's seat struck something with a loud thud and this was followed by a yell of anger. Cap'n Bill sat flat upon the ground, landing with a force that jarred the sailorman and made his teeth click together, while down upon him came the seat that Trot and Button-Bright occupied, so that for a moment they were all tangled up.

"Get off from me! Get off from my feet, I say!" cried an excited voice. "What in the Sky do you mean by sitting on my feet? Get off! Get off at once!"

The Boolooroo of the Blues

CAP'N BILL suspected that these remarks were addressed to him, but he couldn't move just then because the seat was across him, and a boy and girl were sprawling on the seat. As the Magic Umbrella was now as motionless as any ordinary umbrella might be, Button-Bright first released the catch and closed it up, after which he unhooked the crooked handle from the rope and rose to his feet. Trot had managed by this time to stand up and she pulled the board off from Cap'n Bill. All this time the shrill, excited voice was loudly complaining because the sailor was on his feet, and Trot looked to see who was making the protest, while Cap'n Bill rolled over and got on his hands and knees so he could pull his meat leg and his wooden leg into an upright position, which wasn't a very easy thing to do.

Button-Bright and Trot were staring with all their might at the queerest person they had ever seen. They decided it must be a man, because he had two long legs, a body as round as a ball, a neck like an ostrich and a comical little head set on the top of it. But the most curious thing about him was his skin, which was of a lovely sky-blue tint. His eyes were also sky-blue, and his hair, which was trained straight up and ended in a curl at the top of his head, was likewise blue in color and matched his skin and his eyes. He wore tight-fitting clothes made of sky-blue silk, with a broad blue ruffle around his long neck, and on his breast glittered a magnificent jewel in the form of a star, set with splendid blue stones.

If the blue man astonished the travelers they were no less surprised by his surroundings, for look where they might, everything they beheld was of the

same blue color as the sky above. They seemed to have landed in a large garden, surrounded by a high wall of blue stone. The trees were all blue, the grass was blue, the flowers were blue and even the pebbles in the paths were blue. There were many handsomely carved benches and seats of blue wood scattered about the garden, and near them stood a fountain, made of blue marble, which shot lovely sprays of blue water into the blue air.

But the angry inhabitant of this blue place would not permit them to look around them in peace, for as soon as Cap'n Bill rolled off his toes he began dancing around in an excited way and saying very disrespectful things of his visitors.

"You brutes! you apes! you miserable white-skinned creatures! How dare you come into my garden and knock me on the head with that awful basket and then fall on my toes and cause me pain and suffering? How dare you, I say? Don't you know you will be punished for your impudence? Don't you know the Boolooroo of the Blues will have revenge? I can have you patched for this insult, and I will — just as sure as I'm the Royal Boolooroo of Sky Island!"

"Oh, is this Sky Island, then?" asked Trot.

"Of course it's Sky Island. What else could it be? And I'm its Ruler — its King — its sole Royal Potentate and Dictator. Behold in the Personage you have injured the Mighty Quitey Righty Boolooroo of the Blues!" Here he strutted around in a very pompous manner and wagged his little head contemptuously at them.

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Cap'n Bill. "I allus had a likin' for kings, bein' as they're summat unusual. Please 'scuse me for a-sittin' on your royal toes, not knowin' as your toes were there."

"I won't excuse you!" roared the Boolooroo. "But I'll punish you. You may depend upon that."

"Seems to me," said Trot, "you're actin' rather imperlite to strangers. If anyone comes to our country to visit us, we always treat 'em decent."

"*Your* country!" exclaimed the Boolooroo, looking at them more carefully and seeming interested in their appearance. "Where in the Sky did you come from, then, and where is your country located?"

"We live on the Earth, when we're at home," replied the girl.

"The Earth? Nonsense! I've heard of the Earth, my child, but it isn't inhabited. No one can live there because it's just a round, cold, barren ball of mud and water," declared the Blueskin.

"Oh, you're wrong about that," said Button-Bright.

"You surely are," added Cap'n Bill.

"Why, we live there ourselves," cried Trot.

“I don’t believe it. I believe you are living in Sky Island, where you have no right to be, with your horrid white skins. And you’ve intruded into the private garden of the palace of the Greatly Stately Irately Boolooroo, which is a criminal offense; and you’ve bumped my head with your basket and smashed my toes with your boards and bodies, which is a crime unparalleled in all the history of Sky Island! Aren’t you sorry for yourselves?”

“I’m sorry for you,” replied Trot, “‘cause you don’t seem to know the proper way to treat visitors. But we won’t stay long. We’ll go home, pretty soon.”

“Not until you have been punished!” exclaimed the Boolooroo, sternly. “You are my prisoners.”

“Beg parding, your Majesty,” said Cap’n Bill, “but you’re takin’ a good deal for granted. We’ve tried to be friendly an’ peaceable, an’ we’ve ‘poligized for hurtin’ you; but if that don’t satisfy you, you’ll have to make the most of it. You may be the Boolooroo of the Blues, but you ain’t even a tin whistle to us, an’ you can’t skeer us for half a minute. I’m an ol’ man, myself, but if you don’t behave I’ll spank you like I would a baby, an’ it won’t be any trouble at all to do it, thank’e. As a matter o’ fact, we’ve captured your whole bloomin’ blue island, but we don’t like the place very much, and I guess we’ll give it back. It gives us the blues — don’t it, Trot? — so as soon as we eat a bite o’ lunch from our basket we’ll sail away again.”

“Sail away? How?” asked the Boolooroo.

“With the Magic Umbrel,” said Cap’n Bill, pointing to the umbrella that Button-Bright was holding underneath his arm.

“Oh, ho! I see — I see,” said the Boolooroo, nodding his funny head. “Go ahead, then, and eat your lunch.”

He retreated a little way to a marble seat beside the fountain, but watched the strangers carefully. Cap’n Bill, feeling sure he had won the argument, whispered to the boy and girl that they must eat and get away as soon as possible, as this might prove a dangerous country for them to remain in. Trot longed to see more of the strange blue island, and especially wanted to explore the magnificent blue palace that adjoined the garden, and which had six hundred tall towers and turrets; but she felt that her old friend was wise in advising them to get away quickly. So she opened the basket and they all three sat in a row on a stone bench and began to eat sandwiches and cake and pickles and cheese and all the good things that were packed in the lunch basket.

They were hungry from the long ride, and while they ate they kept their eyes busily employed in examining all the queer things around them. The

Boolooroo seemed quite the queerest of anything, and Trot noticed that when he pulled the long curl that stuck up from the top of his head a bell tinkled somewhere in the palace. He next pulled at the bottom of his right ear, and another far-away bell tinkled; then he touched the end of his nose and still another bell was faintly heard. The Boolooroo said not a word while he was ringing the bells, and Trot wondered if that was the way he amused himself. But now the frown died away from his face and was replaced by a look of satisfaction.

"Have you nearly finished?" he inquired.

"No," said Trot; "we've got to eat our apples yet."

"Apples — apples? What are apples?" he asked.

Trot took some from the basket.

"Have one?" she said. "They're awful good."

The Boolooroo advanced a step and took the apple, which he regarded with much curiosity.

"Guess they don't grow anywhere but on the Earth," remarked Cap'n Bill.

"Are they good to eat?" asked the Boolooroo.

"Try it and see," answered Trot, biting into an apple herself.

The Blueskin sat down on the end of their bench, next to Button-Bright, and began to eat his apple. He seemed to like it, for he finished it in a hurry, and when it was gone he picked up the Magic Umbrella.

"Let that alone!" said Button-Bright, making a grab for it. But the Boolooroo jerked it away in an instant and standing up he held the umbrella behind him and laughed aloud.

"Now, then," said he, "you can't get away until I'm willing to let you go. You are my prisoners."

"I guess not," returned Cap'n Bill, and reaching out one of his long arms, the sailorman suddenly grasped the Boolooroo around his long, thin neck and shook him until his whole body fluttered like a flag.

"Drop that umbrel — drop it!" yelled Cap'n Bill, and the Boolooroo quickly obeyed. The Magic Umbrella fell to the ground and Button-Bright promptly seized it. Then the sailor let go his hold and the King staggered to a seat, choking and coughing to get his breath back.

"I told you to let things alone," growled Cap'n Bill. "If you don't behave, your Majesty, this Blue Island'll have to get another Boolooroo."

"Why?" asked the Blueskin.

"Because I'll prob'ly spoil you for a king, an' mebbe for anything else. Anyhow, you'll get badly damaged if you try to interfere with us — an' that's a fact."

"Don't kill him, Cap'n Bill," said Trot, cheerfully.

“Kill me? Why, he couldn’t do that,” observed the King, who was trying to rearrange the ruffle around his neck. “Nothing can kill me.”

“Why not?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“Because I haven’t lived my six hundred years yet. Perhaps you don’t know that every Blueskin in Sky Island lives exactly six hundred years from the time he is born.”

“No; I didn’t know that,” admitted the sailor.

“It’s a fact,” said the King. “Nothing can kill us until we’ve lived to the last day of our appointed lives. When the final minute is up, we die; but we’re obliged to live all of the six hundred years, whether we want to or not. So you needn’t think of trying to kill anybody on Sky Island. It can’t be done.”

“Never mind,” said Cap’n Bill. “I’m no murderer, thank goodness, and I wouldn’t kill you if I could — much as you deserve it.”

“But isn’t six hundred years an awful long time to live?” questioned Trot.

“It seems like it, at first,” replied the King, “but I notice that whenever any of my subjects get near the end of their six hundred, they grow nervous and say the life is altogether too short.”

“How long have you lived?” asked Button-Bright.

The King coughed again and turned a bit bluer.

“That is considered an impertinent question in Sky Island,” he answered; “but I will say that every Boolooroo is elected to reign three hundred years, and I’ve reigned not quite — ahem! — two hundred.”

“Are your kings elected, then?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“Yes, of course; this is a Republic, you know. The people elect all their officers, from the King down. Every man and every woman is a voter. The Boolooroo tells them whom to vote for, and if they don’t obey they are severely punished. It’s a fine system of government, and the only thing I object to is electing the Boolooroo for only three hundred years. It ought to be for life. My successor has already been elected, but he can’t reign for a hundred years to come.”

“I think three hundred years is plenty long enough,” said Trot. “It gives some one else a chance to rule, an’ I wouldn’t be s’prised if the next king is a better one. Seems to me you’re not much of a Boolooroo.”

“That,” replied the King, indignantly, “is a matter of opinion. I like myself very much, but I can’t expect you to like me, because you’re deformed and ignorant.”

“I’m not!” cried Trot.

“Yes, you are. Your legs are too short and your neck is nothing at all. Your color is most peculiar, but there isn’t a shade of blue about any of you,

except the deep blue color of the clothes the old ape that choked me wears. Also, you are ignorant, because you know nothing of Sky Island, which is the Center of the Universe and the only place anyone would care to live."

"Don't listen to him, Trot," said Button-Bright; "he's an ignorant himself."

Cap'n Bill packed up the lunch basket. One end of the rope was still tied to the handle of the basket and the other end to his swing seat, which lay on the ground before them.

"Well," said he, "let's go home. We've seen enough of this Blue Country and its Blue Boolooroo, I guess, an' it's a long journey back again."

"All right," agreed Trot, jumping up.

Button-Bright stood on the bench and held up the Magic Umbrella, so he could open it, and the sailor had just attached the ropes when a thin blue line shot out from behind them and in a twinkling wound itself around the umbrella. At the same instant another blue cord wound itself around the boy's body, and others caught Trot and Cap'n Bill in their coils, so that all had their arms pinned fast to their sides and found themselves absolutely helpless.

THE Boolooroo was laughing and dancing around in front of them as if well pleased. For a moment the prisoners could not imagine what had happened to them, but presently half a dozen Blueskins, resembling in shape and costume their ruler but less magnificently dressed, stepped in front of them and bowed low to the Boolooroo.

"Your orders, most Mighty, Flighty, Tight and Righty Monarch, have been obeyed," said the leader.

"Very well, Captain. Take that umbrella and carry it to my Royal Treasury. See that it is safely locked up. Here's the key, and if you don't return it to me within five minutes I'll have you patched."

The Captain took the key and the Magic Umbrella and hastened away to the palace. Button-Bright had already hooked the ropes to the elephant-trunk handle, so that when the Captain carried away the umbrella he dragged after him first the double seat, then Cap'n Bill's seat, which was fastened to it, and finally the lunch-basket, which was attached to the lower seat. At every few steps some of these would trip up the Captain and cause him to take a tumble, but as he had only five minutes' time in which to perform his errand he would scramble to his feet again and dash along the path until a board or the basket tripped him again.

They all watched him with interest until he had disappeared within the palace, when the King turned to his men and said:

"Release the prisoners. They are now quite safe, and cannot escape me."

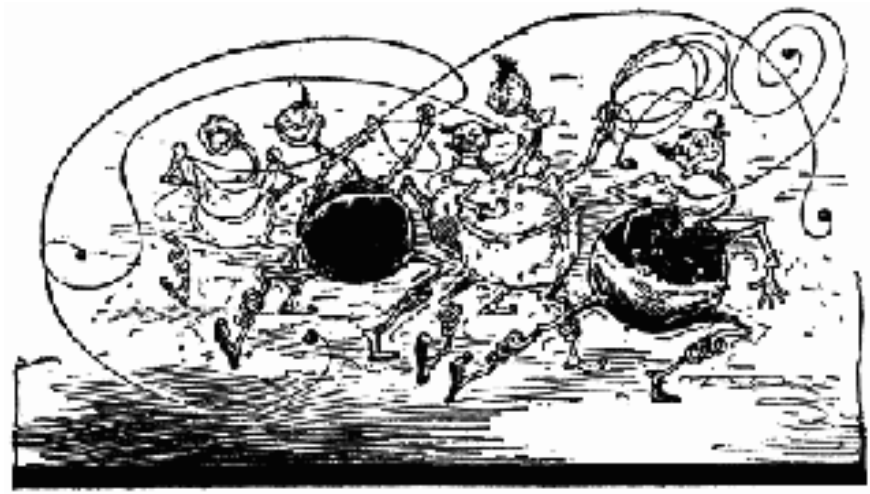
So the men unwound the long cords that were twined around the bodies of

our three friends, and set them free. These men seemed to be soldiers, although they bore no arms except the cords. Each cord had a weight at the end, and when the weight was skillfully thrown by a soldier it wound the cord around anything in the twinkling of an eye and held fast until it was unwound again.

Trot decided these Blueskins must have stolen into the garden when summoned by the bells the Boolooroo had rung, but they had kept out of sight and crept up behind the bench on which our friends were seated, until a signal from the king aroused them to action.

The little girl was greatly surprised by the suddenness of her capture, and so was Button-Bright. Cap'n Bill shook his head and said he was afeared they'd get into trouble. "Our mistake," he added, "was in stoppin' to eat our lunch. But it's too late now to cry over spilt milk."

"I don't mind; not much, anyhow," asserted Trot, bravely. "We're in no hurry to get back; are we, Button-Bright?"



"I'm not," said the boy. "If they hadn't taken the umbrella I wouldn't care how long we stopped in this funny island. Do you think it's a fairy country, Trot?"

"Can't say, I'm sure," she answered. "I haven't seen anything here yet that reminds me of fairies; but Cap'n Bill said a floating island in the sky was sure to be a fairyland."

"I think so yet, mate," returned the sailor. "But there's all sorts o' fairies, I've heard. Some is good, an' some is bad, an' if all the Blueskins are like their Boolooroo they can't be called fust-class."

"Don't let me hear any more impudence, prisoners!" called the Boolooroo, sternly. "You are already condemned to severe punishment, and

if I have any further trouble with you, you are liable to be patched."

"What's being patched?" inquired the girl.

The soldiers all laughed at this question, but the King did not reply. Just then a door in the palace opened and out trooped a group of girls. There were six of them, all gorgeously dressed in silken gowns with many puffs and tucks and ruffles and flounces and laces and ribbons, everything being in some shade of blue, grading from light blue to deep blue. Their blue hair was elaborately dressed and came to a point at the top of their heads.

The girls approached in a line along the garden path, all walking with mincing steps and holding their chins high. Their skirts prevented their long legs from appearing as grotesque as did those of the men, but their necks were so thin and long that the ruffles around them only made them seem the more absurd.

"Ah," said the King, with a frown, "here come the Six Snubnosed Princesses — the most beautiful and aristocratic ladies in Sky Island."

"They're snubnosed, all right," observed Trot, looking at the girls with much interest; "but I should think it would make 'em mad to call 'em that."

"Why?" asked the Boolooroo, in surprise. "Is not a snubnose the highest mark of female beauty?"

"Is it?" asked the girl.

"Most certainly. In this favored island, which is the Center of the Universe, a snubnose is an evidence of high breeding which any lady would be proud to possess."

The Six Snubnosed Princesses now approached the fountain and stood in a row, staring with haughty looks at the strangers.

"Goodness me, your Majesty!" exclaimed the first; "what queer, dreadful-looking creatures are these? Where in all the Sky did they come from?"

"They say they came from the Earth, Cerulia," answered the Boolooroo.

“But that is impossible,” said another Princess. “Our scientists have proved that the Earth is not inhabited.”

“Your scientists’ll have to guess again, then,” said Trot.

“But how did they get to Sky Island?” inquired the third snubnosed one.

“By means of a Magic Umbrella, which I have captured and put away in my Treasure Chamber,” replied the Boolooroo.

“What will you do with the monsters, papa?” asked the fourth Princess.

“I haven’t decided yet,” said the Boolooroo. “They’re curiosities, you see, and may serve to amuse us. But as they’re only half civilized I shall make them my slaves.”

“What are they good for? Can they do anything useful?” asked the fifth.

“We’ll see,” returned the King, impatiently. “I can’t decide in a hurry. Give me time, Azure; give me time. If there’s anything I hate it’s a hurry.”

“I’ve an idea, your Majesty,” announced the sixth Snubnosed Princess, whose complexion was rather darker than that of her sisters, “and it has come to me quite deliberately, without any hurry at all. Let us take the little girl to be our maid — to wait upon us and amuse us when we’re dull. All the other ladies of the court will be wild with envy, and if the child doesn’t prove of use to us we can keep her for a living pincushion.”

“Oh! Ah! That will be fine!” cried all the other five, and the Boolooroo said:

“Very well, Indigo; it shall be as you desire.” Then he turned to Trot and added: “I present you to the Six Lovely Snubnosed Princesses, to be their slave. If you are good and obedient you won’t get your ears boxed oftener than once an hour.”

“I won’t be anybody’s slave,” protested Trot. “I don’t like these snubnosed, fussy females an’ I won’t have anything to do with ‘em.”

“How impudent!” cried Cerulia.

“How vulgar!” cried Turquoise.

“How unladylike!” cried Sapphire.

“How silly!” cried Azure.

“How absurd!” cried Cobalt.

“How wicked!” cried Indigo. And then all six held up their hands as if horrified.

The Boolooroo laughed.

“You’ll know how to bring her to time, I imagine,” he remarked, “and if the girl isn’t reasonable and obedient, send her to me and I’ll have her patched. Now, then, take her away.”

But Trot was obstinate and wouldn’t budge a step.

“Keep us together, your Majesty,” begged Cap’n Bill. “If we’re to be

slaves, don't separate us, but make us all the same kind o' slaves."

"I shall do what pleases me," declared the Boolooroo, angrily. "Don't try to dictate, old Moonface, for there's only one Royal Will in Sky Island, and that's my own."

He then gave a command to a soldier, who hastened away to the palace and soon returned with a number of long blue ribbons. One he tied around Trot's waist and then attached to it six other ribbons. Each of the Six Snubnosed Princesses held the end of a ribbon, and then they turned and marched haughtily away to the palace, dragging the little girl after them.

"Don't worry, Trot," cried Button-Bright; "we'll get you out of this trouble pretty soon."

"Trust to us, mate," added Cap'n Bill; "we'll manage to take care o' you."

"Oh, I'm all right," answered Trot, with fine courage; "I'm not afraid of these gawkies."

But the princesses pulled her after them and soon they had all disappeared into one of the entrances to the Blue Palace.

"Now, then," said the Boolooroo, "I will instruct you two in your future duties. I shall make old Moonface — "

"My name's Cap'n Bill Weedles," interrupted the sailor.

"I don't care what your name is; I shall call you old Moonface," replied the king, "for that suits you quite well. I shall appoint you the Royal Nectar Mixer to the Court of Sky Island, and if you don't mix our nectar properly I'll have you patched.

"How do you mix it?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"I don't mix it; it's not the Boolooroo's place to mix nectar," was the stern reply. "But you may inquire of the palace servants and perhaps the Royal Chef or the Majordomo will condescend to tell you. Take him to the servants' quarters, Captain Ultramarine, and give him a suit of the royal livery."

So Cap'n Bill was led away by the chief of the soldiers, and when he had gone the king said to Button-Bright:

"You, slave, shall be the Royal Bootblue. Your duty will be to keep the boots and shoes of the royal family nicely polished with blue."

"I don't know how," answered Button-Bright, surlily.

"You'll soon learn. The Royal Steward will supply you with blue paste, and when you've brushed this on our shoes you must shine them with Q-rays of Moonshine. Do you understand?"

"No," said Button-Bright.

Then the Boolooroo told one of the soldiers to take the boy to the shoeblue den and have him instructed in his duties, and the soldier promptly

obeyed and dragged Button-Bright away to the end of the palace where the servants lived.

Ghip-Ghisizzle Proves Friendly

THE Royal Palace was certainly a magnificent building, with large and lofty rooms and superb furnishings, all being in shades of blue. The soldier and the boy passed through several broad corridors and then came to a big hall where many servants were congregated. These were staring in bewilderment at Cap'n Bill, who had been introduced to them by Captain Ultramarine. Now they turned in no less surprise to examine the boy, and their looks expressed not only astonishment but dislike.

The servants were all richly attired in blue silk liveries and they seemed disposed to resent the fact that these strangers had been added to their ranks. They scowled and muttered and behaved in a very unfriendly way, even after Captain Ultramarine had explained that the newcomers were merely base slaves, and not to be classed with the free royal servants of the palace.

One of those present, however, showed no especial enmity to Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill, and this Blueskin attracted the boy's notice because his appearance was so strange. He looked as if he were made of two separate men, each cut through the middle and then joined together, half of one to half of the other. One side of his blue hair was curly and the other half straight; one ear was big and stuck out from the side of his head, while the other ear was small and flat; one eye was half shut and twinkling while the other was big and staring; his nose was thin on one side and flat on the other, while one side of his mouth curled up and the other down. Button-Bright also noticed that he limped as he walked, because one leg was a trifle longer than the other, and that one hand was delicate and slender and the other thick and

hardened by use.

"Don't stare at him," a voice whispered in the boy's ear; "the poor fellow has been patched, that's all."

Button-Bright turned to see who had spoken and found by his side a tall young Blueskin with a blue-gold chain around his neck. He was quite the best looking person the boy had seen in Sky Island and he spoke in a pleasant way and seemed quite friendly. But the two-sided man had overheard the remark and he now stepped forward and said, in a careless tone:

"Never mind; it's no disgrace to be patched in a country ruled by such a cruel Boolooroo as we have. Let the boy look at me, if he wants to; I'm not pretty, but that's not my fault. Blame the Boolooroo."

"I — I'm glad to meet you, sir," stammered Button-Bright. "What is *your* name, please?"

"I'm now named Jimfred Jonesjinks, and my partner is called Fredjim Jinksjones. He's busy at present guarding the Treasure Chamber, but I'll introduce you to him when he comes back. We've had the misfortune to be patched, you know."

"What is being patched?" asked the boy.

"They cut two of us in halves and mismatch the halves — half of one to half of the other, you know — and then the other two halves are patched together. It destroys our individuality and makes us complex creatures, so it's the worst punishment than can be inflicted in Sky Island."

"Oh," said Button-Bright, alarmed at such dreadful butchery; "doesn't it hurt?"

"No; it doesn't hurt," replied Jimfred, "but it makes one frightfully nervous. They stand you under a big knife, which drops and slices you neatly in two — exactly in the middle. Then they match half of you to another person who has likewise been sliced — and there you are, patched to someone you don't care about and haven't much interest in. If your half wants to do something, the other half is likely to want to do something different, and the funny part of it is you don't quite know which is your half and which is the other half. It's a terrible punishment, and in a country where one can't die or be killed until he has lived his six hundred years, to be patched is a great misfortune."

"I'm sure it is," said Button-Bright, earnestly. "But can't you ever get — get — *un*-patched again?"

"If the Boolooroo would consent, I think it could be done," Jimfred replied; "but he never will consent. This is about the meanest Boolooroo who ever ruled this land, and he was the first to invent patching people as a punishment. I think we will all be glad when his three hundred years of rule

are ended."

"When will that be?" inquired the boy.

"Hush-sh-sh!" cried everyone, in a chorus, and they all looked over their shoulders as if frightened by the question. The officer with the blue-gold chain pulled Button-Bright's sleeve and whispered:

"Follow me, please." And then he beckoned to Cap'n Bill and led the two slaves to another room, where they were alone.

"I must instruct you in your duties," said he, when they were all comfortably seated in cosy chairs with blue cushions. "You must learn how to obey the Boolooroo's commands, so he won't become angry and have you patched."

"How could he patch *us*?" asked the sailorman, curiously.

"Oh, he'd just slice you all in halves and then patch half of the boy to half of the girl, and the other half to half of you, and the other half of you to the other half of the girl. See?"

"Can't say I do," said Cap'n Bill, much bewildered. "It's a reg'lar mix-up."

"That's what it's meant to be," explained the young officer.

"An' seein' as we're Earth folks, an' not natives of Sky Island, I've an idea the slicing machine would about end us, without bein' patched," continued the sailor.

"Oh," said Button-Bright; "so it would."

"While you are in this country you can't die till you've lived six hundred years," declared the officer.

"Oh," said Button-Bright; "that's different, of course. But who are you, please?"

"My name is Ghip-Ghi-siz-zle. Can you remember it?"

"I can 'member the 'sizzle,'" said the boy; "but I'm 'fraid the Gwip — Grip — Glip — — "

"Ghip-Ghi-siz-zle," repeated the officer, slowly. "I want you to remember my name, because if you are going to live here you are sure to hear of me a great many times. Can you keep a secret?"

"I can try," said Button-Bright.

"I've kep' secrets — once in a while," asserted Cap'n Bill.

"Well, try to keep this one. I'm to be the next Boolooroo of Sky Island."

"Good for you!" cried the sailor. "I wish you was the Boolooroo now, sir. But it seems you' ve got to wait a hundred years or more afore you can take his place."

Ghip-Ghisizzle rose to his feet and paced up and down the room for a time, a frown upon his blue face. Then he halted and faced Cap'n Bill.

“Sir,” said he, “there lies all my trouble. I’m quite sure the present Boolooroo has reigned three hundred years next Thursday; but he claims it is only two hundred years, and as he holds the Royal Book of Records under lock and key in the Royal Treasury, there is no way for us to prove he is wrong.”

“Oh,” said Button-Bright. “How old is the Boolooroo?”

“He was two hundred years old when he was elected,” replied Ghip-Ghisizzle. “If he has already reigned three hundred years, as I suspect, then he is now five hundred years old. You see, he is trying to steal another hundred years of rule, so as to remain a tyrant all his life.”

“He don’t seem as old as that,” observed Cap’n Bill, thoughtfully. “Why, I’m only sixty, myself, an’ I guess I look twice as old as your king does.”

“We do not show our age in looks,” the officer answered. “I am just about your own age, sir — sixty-two my next birth-day — but I’m sure I don’t look as old as you.”

“That’s a fact,” agreed Cap’n Bill. Then he turned to Button-Bright and added: “Don’t that prove Sky Island is a fairy country, as I said?”

“Oh, I’ve known that all along,” said the boy. “The slicing and patching proves it, and so do lots of other things.”

“Now, then,” said Ghip-Ghisizzle, “let us talk over your duties. It seems you must mix the royal nectar, Cap’n Bill. Do you know how to do that?”

“I’m free to say as I don’t, friend Sizzle.”

“The Boolooroo is very particular about his nectar. I think he has given you this job so he can find fault with you and have you punished. But we will fool him. You are strangers here, and I don’t want you imposed upon. I’ll send Tiggle to the royal pantry and keep him there to mix the nectar. Then when the Boolooroo, or the Queen, or any of the Snubnosed Princesses call for a drink, you can carry it to them and it will be sure to suit them.”

“Thank’e, sir,” said Cap’n Bill; “that’s real kind of you.”

“Your job, Button-Bright, is easier,” continued Ghip-Ghisizzle.

“I’m no bootblack,” declared the boy. “The Boolooroo has no right to make me do his dirty work.”

“You’re a slave,” the officer reminded him; “and a slave must obey.”

“Why?” asked Button-Bright.

“Because he can’t help himself. No slave ever wants to obey, but he just has to. And it isn’t dirty work at all. You don’t black the royal boots and shoes; you merely blue them with a finely perfumed blue paste. Then you shine them neatly and your task is done. You will not be humiliated by becoming a bootblack. You’ll be a bootblue.”

“Oh,” said Button-Bright. “I don’t see much difference, but perhaps it’s a

little more respectable."

"Yes; the Royal Bootblue is considered a high official in Sky Island. You do your work at evening or early morning, and the rest of the day you are at liberty to do as you please."

"It won't last long, Button-Bright," said Cap'n Bill, consolingly. "Somethin's bound to happen pretty soon, you know."

"I think so myself," answered the boy.

"And now," remarked Ghip-Ghisizzle, "since you understand your new duties, perhaps you'd like to walk out with me and see the Blue City and the glorious Blue Country of Sky Island."

"We would that!" cried Cap'n Bill, promptly.

So they accompanied their new friend through a maze of passages — for the palace was very big — and then through a high arched portal into the streets of the City. So rapid had been their descent when the umbrella landed them in the royal garden that they had not even caught a glimpse of the Blue City, so now they gazed with wonder and interest at the splendid sights that met their eyes.

The Blue City

THE Blue City was quite extensive, and consisted of many broad streets paved with blue marble and lined with splendid buildings of the same beautiful material. There were houses and castles and shops for the merchants and all were prettily designed and had many slender spires and imposing turrets that rose far into the blue air. Everything was blue here, just as was everything in the Royal Palace and gardens, and a blue haze overhung all the city.

"Doesn't the sun ever shine?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"Not in the blue part of Sky Island," replied Ghip-Ghisizzle. "The moon shines here every night, but we never see the sun. I am told, however, that on the other half of the Island — which I have never seen — the sun shines brightly but there is no moon at all."

"Oh," said Button-Bright; "is there another half to Sky Island?"

"Yes; a dreadful place called the Pink Country. I'm told everything there is pink instead of blue. A fearful place it must be, indeed!" said the Blueskin, with a shudder.

"I dunno 'bout that," remarked Cap'n Bill. "That Pink Country sounds kind o' cheerful to me. Is your Blue Country very big?"

"It is immense," was the proud reply. "This enormous City extends a half mile in all directions from the center, and the country outside the City is fully a half mile further in extent. That's very big, isn't it?"

"Not very," replied Cap'n Bill, with a smile. "We've cities on the Earth ten times bigger — an' then some big besides. We'd call this a small town in our country."

"Our Country is thousands of miles wide and thousands of miles long — it's the great United States of America!" added the boy, earnestly.

Ghip-Ghisizzle seemed astonished. He was silent a moment, and then he said:

"Here in Sky Island we prize truthfulness very highly. Our Boolooroo is not very truthful, I admit, for he is trying to misrepresent the length of his reign, but our people as a rule speak only the truth."

"So do we," asserted Cap'n Bill. "What Button-Bright said is the honest truth — every word of it."

"But we have been led to believe that Sky Island is the greatest country in the universe — meaning, of course, our half of it, the Blue Country."

"It may be for you, perhaps," the sailor stated, politely, "an' I don't imagine any island floatin' in the sky is any bigger. But the Universe is a big place an' you can't be sure of what's in it till you've traveled, like we have."

"Perhaps you are right," mused the Blueskin; but he still seemed to doubt them.

"Is the Pink side of Sky Island bigger than the Blue side?" asked Button-Bright.

"No; it is supposed to be the same size," was the reply.

“Then why haven’t you ever been there? Seems to me you could walk across the whole island in an hour,” said the boy.

“The two parts are separated by an impassable barrier,” answered Ghip-Ghisizzle. “Between them lies the Great Fog Bank.”

“A fog bank? Why, that’s no barrier!” exclaimed Cap’n Bill.

“It is, indeed,” returned the Blueskin. “The Fog Bank is so thick and heavy that it blinds one, and if once you got into the Bank you might wander forever and not find your way out again. Also it is full of dampness that wets your clothes and your hair until you become miserable. It is furthermore said that those who enter the Fog Bank forfeit the six hundred years allowed them to live, and are liable to die at any time. Here we do not die, you know; we merely pass away.”

“How’s that?” asked the sailor. “Isn’t ‘pass’n’ away’ jus’ the same as dyin’?”

“No, indeed. When our six hundred years are ended we march into the Great Blue Grotto, through the Arch of Phinis, and are never seen again.”

“That’s queer,” said Button-Bright. “What would happen if you didn’t march through the Arch?”

“I do not know, for no one has ever refused to do so. It is the Law, and we all obey it.”

“It saves funeral expenses, anyhow,” remarked Cap’n Bill. “Where is this Arch?”

“Just outside the gates of the City. There is a mountain in the center of the Blue land, and the entrance to the Great Blue Grotto is at the foot of the mountain. According to our figures the Boolooroo ought to march into this Grotto a hundred years from next Thursday, but he is trying to steal a hundred years and so perhaps he won’t enter the Arch of Phinis. Therefore, if you will please be patient for about a hundred years, you will discover what happens to one who breaks the Law.”

“Thank’e,” remarked Cap’n Bill. “I don’t expect to be very curious, a hundred years from now.”

“Nor I,” added Button-Bright, laughing at the whimsical speech. “But I don’t see how the Boolooroo is able to fool you all. Can’t any of you remember two or three hundred years back, when he first began to rule?”

“No,” said Ghip-Ghisizzle; “that’s a long time to remember, and we Blueskins try to forget all we can — especially whatever is unpleasant. Those who remember are usually the unhappy ones; only those able to forget find the most joy in life.”

During this conversation they had been walking along the streets of the Blue City, where many of the Blueskin inhabitants stopped to gaze

wonderingly at the sailor and the boy, whose strange appearance surprised them. They were a nervous, restless people and their egg-shaped heads, set on the ends of long thin necks, seemed so grotesque to the strangers that they could scarcely forbear laughing at them. The bodies of these people were short and round and their legs exceptionally long, so when a Blueskin walked he covered twice as much ground at one step as Cap'n Bill or Button-Bright did. The women seemed just as repellent as the men, and Button-Bright began to understand that the Six Snubnosed Princesses were, after all, rather better looking than most of the females of the Blue Country and so had a certain right to be proud and haughty.

There were no horses nor cows in this land, but there were plenty of blue goats, from which the people got their milk. Children tended the goats — wee Blueskin boys and girls whose appearance was so comical that Button-Bright laughed whenever he saw one of them.

Although the natives had never seen before this any human beings made as Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill were, they took a strong dislike to the strangers and several times threatened to attack them. Perhaps if Ghip-Ghisizzle, who was their favorite, had not been present, they would have mobbed our friends with vicious ill-will and might have seriously injured them. But Ghip-Ghisizzle's friendly protection made them hold aloof.

By and by they passed through a City gate and their guide showed them the outer walls, which protected the City from the country beyond. There were several of these gates, and from their recesses stone steps led to the top of the wall. They mounted a flight of these steps and from their elevation plainly saw the low mountain where the Arch of Phinis was located, and beyond that the thick, blue-gray Fog Bank, which constantly rolled like billows of the ocean and really seemed, from a distance, quite forbidding.

"But it wouldn't take long to get there," decided Button-Bright, "and if you were close up it might not be worse than any other fog. Is the Pink Country on the other side of it?"

"So we are told in the Book of Records," replied Ghip-Ghisizzle. "None of us now living know anything about it, but the Book of Records calls it the 'Sunset Country,' and says that at evening the pink shades are drowned by terrible colors of orange and crimson and golden-yellow and red. Wouldn't it be horrible to be obliged to look upon such a sight? It must give the poor people who live there dreadful headaches."

"I'd like to see that Book of Records," mused Cap'n Bill, who didn't think the discription of the Sunset Country at all dreadful.

"I'd like to see it myself," returned Ghip-Ghisizzle, with a sigh; "but no one can lay hands on it because the Boolooroo keeps it safely locked up in

his Treasure Chamber."

"Where's the key to the Treasure Chamber?" asked Button-Bright.

"The Boolooroo keeps it in his pocket, night and day," was the reply. "He is afraid to let anyone see the Book, because it would prove he has already reigned three hundred years next Thursday, and then he would have to resign the throne to me and leave the Palace and live in a common house."

"My Magic Umbrella is in that Treasure Chamber," said Button-Bright, "and I'm going to try to get it."

"Are you?" inquired Ghip-Ghisizzle, eagerly. "Well, if you manage to enter the Treasure Chamber, be sure to bring me the Book of Records. If you can do that I will be the best and most grateful friend you ever had!"

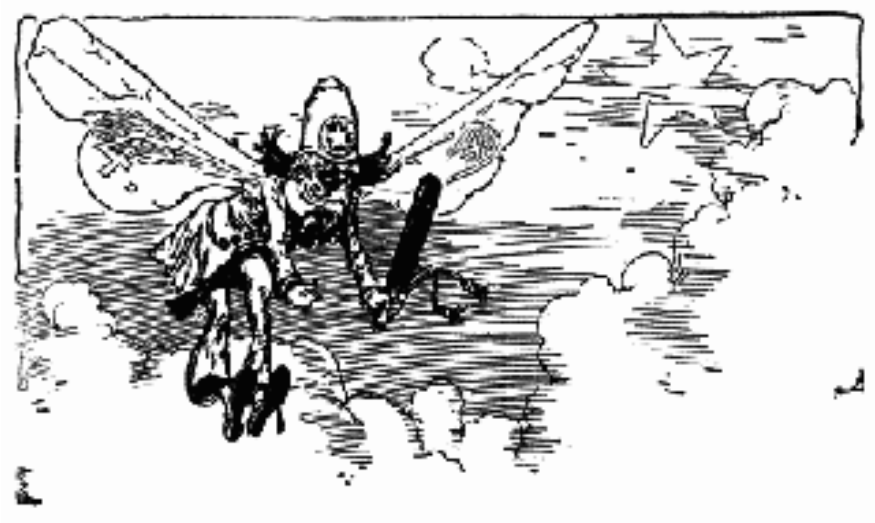
"I'll see," said the boy. "It ought not to be hard work to break into the Treasure Chamber. Is it guarded?"

"Yes; the outside guard is Jimfred Jinksjones, the double patch of the Fredjim whom you have met, and the inside guard is a ravenous creature known as the Blue Wolf, which has teeth a foot long and as sharp as needles."

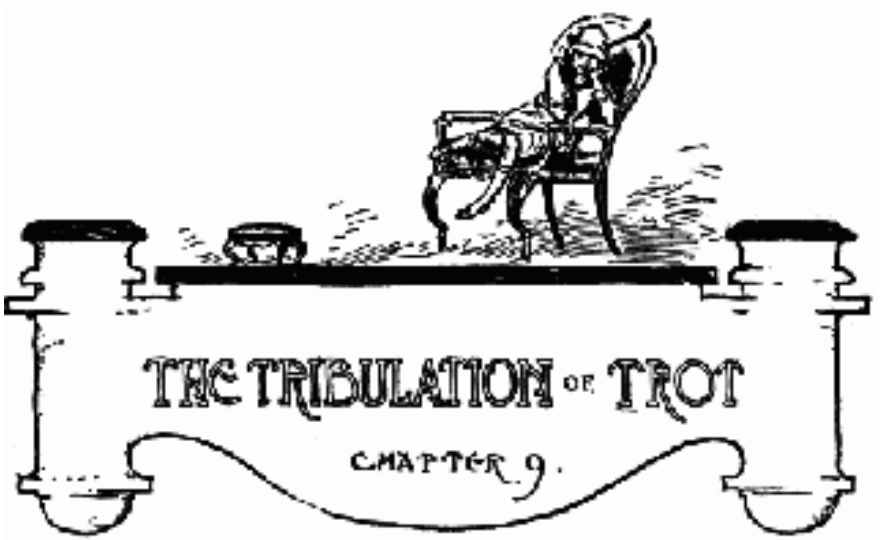
"Oh," said Button-Bright. "But never mind the Blue Wolf; I must manage to get my umbrella, somehow or other."

They now walked back to the palace, still objects of much curiosity to the natives, who sneered at them and mocked them but dared not interfere with their progress. At the palace they found that dinner was about to be served in the big dining hall of the servants and dependents and household officers of the royal Boolooroo. Ghip-Ghisizzle was the Majordomo and Master of Ceremonies, so he took his seat at the end of the long table and placed Cap'n Bill on one side of him and Button-Bright on the other, to the great annoyance of the other Blueskins present, who favored the strangers with nothing pleasanter than envious scowls.

The Boolooroo and his Queen and daughters — the Six Snubnosed Princesses — dined in formal state in the Banquet Hall, where they were waited upon by favorite soldiers of the Royal Bodyguard. Here in the servants' hall there was one vacant seat next to Button-Bright which was reserved for Trot; but the little girl had not yet appeared and the sailorman and the boy were beginning to be uneasy about her.



The Tribulation of Trot



THE apartments occupied by the Six Snubnosed Princesses were so magnificent that when Trot first entered them, led by her haughty captors, she thought they must be the most beautiful rooms in all the world. There was a long and broad reception room, with forty-seven windows in it, and opening out of it were six lovely bedchambers, each furnished in the greatest luxury. Adjoining each sleeping room was a marble bath, and each Princess had a separate boudoir and a dressing room. The furnishings were of the utmost splendor, blue-gold and blue gems being profusely used in the decorations, while the divans and chairs were of richly carved bluewood upholstered in blue satins and silks. The draperies were superbly embroidered and the rugs upon the marble floors were woven with beautiful scenes in every conceivable shade of blue.

When they first reached the reception room Princess Azure cast herself upon a divan while her five sisters sat or reclined in easy chairs, with their heads thrown back and their blue chins scornfully elevated. Trot, who was much annoyed at the treatment she had received, did not hesitate to seat herself, also, in a big easy chair.

"Slave!" cried Princess Cerulia, "fetch me a mirror."

"Slave!" cried Princess Turquoise, "a lock of my hair is loosened; bind it up."

"Slave!" cried Princess Cobalt, "unfasten my shoes; they're too tight."

"Slave!" cried Princess Sapphire, "bring hither my box of blue chocolates."

“Slave!” cried Princess Azure, “stand by my side and fan me.”

“Slave!” cried Princess Indigo, “get out of that chair. How dare you sit in our presence!”

“If you’re saying all those things to me,” replied Trot, “you may as well save your breath. I’m no slave.” And she cuddled down closer in the chair.

“You *are* a slave!” shouted the six, all together.

“I’m not!”

“Our father, the Revered and Resplendent Royal Ruler of the Blues, has made you our slave,” asserted Indigo, with a yawn.

“But he can’t,” objected the little girl. “I’m some Royal an’ Rapturous an’ Ridic’lous myself, an’ I won’t allow any cheap Boolooroo to order me ‘round.”

“Are you of royal birth?” asked Azure, seeming surprised.

“Royal! Why, I’m an American, Snubnoses, and if there’s anything royaler than an American I’d like to know what it is.”

The Princesses seemed uncertain what reply to make to this speech and began whispering together. Finally Indigo said to Trot:

“We do not think it matters what you were in your own country, for having left there you have forfeited your rank. By recklessly intruding into our domain you have become a slave, and being a slave you must obey us or suffer the consequences.”

“What cons’quences?” asked the girl.

“Dare to disobey us and you will quickly find out,” snapped Indigo, swaying her head from side to side on its long, swan-like neck, like the pendulum of a clock.

“I don’t want any trouble,” said Trot, gravely. “We came to Sky Island by mistake, and wanted to go right away again; but your father wouldn’t let us. It isn’t our fault we’re still here, an’ I’m free to say you’re a very dis’gree’ble an’ horrid lot of people, with no manners to speak of, or you’d treat us nicely.”

“No impertinence!” cried Indigo, savagely.

“Why, it’s the truth,” replied Trot.

Indigo made a rush and caught Trot by both shoulders. The Princess was twice the little girl’s size and she shook her victim so violently that Trot’s teeth rattled together. Then Princess Cobalt came up and slapped one side of the slave’s face and Princess Turquoise ran forward and slapped the other side. Cerulia gave Trot a push one way and Sapphire pushed her the other way, so the little girl was quite out of breath and very angry when finally her punishment ceased. She had not been much hurt, though, and she was wise enough to understand that these Princesses were all cruel and vindictive, so

that her safest plan was to pretend to obey them.

"Now, then," commanded Princess Indigo, "go and feed my little blue dog that crows like a rooster."

"And feed my pretty blue cat that sings like a bird," said Princess Azure.

"And feed my soft blue lamb that chatters like a monkey," said Princess Cobalt.

"And feed my poetic blue parrot that barks like a dog," said Princess Sapphire.

"And feed my fuzzy blue rabbit that roars like a lion," said Princess Turquoise.

"And feed my lovely blue peacock that mews like a cat," said Princess Cerulia.

"Anything else?" asked Trot, drawing a long breath.

"Not until you have properly fed our pets," replied Azure, with a scowl.

"What do they eat, then?"

"Meat!"

"Milk!"

"Clover!"

"Seeds!"

"Bread!"

"Carrots!"

"All right," said Trot; "where do you keep the menagerie?"

"Our pets are in our boudoirs," said Indigo, harshly. "What a little fool you are!"

"Perhaps," said Trot, pausing as she was about to leave the room, "when I grow up I'll be as big a fool as any of you."

Then she ran away to escape another shaking, and in the first boudoir she found the little blue dog curled up on a blue cushion in a corner. Trot patted his head gently and this surprised the dog, who was accustomed to cuffs and kicks. So he licked Trot's hand and wagged his funny little tail and then straightened up and crowed like a rooster. The girl was delighted with the queer doggie and she found some meat in a cupboard and fed him out of her hand, patting the tiny creature and stroking his soft blue hair. The doggie had never in his life known anyone so kind and gentle, so when Trot went into the next boudoir the animal followed close at her heels, wagging his tail every minute.

The blue cat was asleep on a window seat, but it woke up when Trot tenderly took it in her lap and fed it milk from a blue-gold dish. It was a pretty cat and instantly knew the little girl was a friend — vastly different from its own bad-tempered mistress — so it sang beautifully, as a bird sings,

and both the cat and the dog followed Trot into the third boudoir.

Here was a tiny baby lamb with fleece as blue as a larkspur and as soft as silk.

"Oh, you darling!" cried Trot, hugging the little lamb tight in her arms. At once the lamb began chattering, just as a monkey chatters, only in the most friendly and grateful way, and Trot fed it a handful of fresh blue clover and smoothed and petted it until the lamb was eager to follow her wherever she might go.

When she came to the fourth boudoir a handsome blue parrot sat on a blue perch and began barking as if it were nearly starved. Then it cried out:

"Rub-a-dub, dub, —

Gimme some grub!"

Trot laughed and gave it some seeds, and while the parrot ate them she stroked gently his soft feathers. The bird seemed much astonished at the unusual caress, and turned upon the girl first one little eye and then the other, as if trying to discover why she was so kind. He had never experienced kind treatment in all his life. So it was no wonder that when the little girl entered the fifth boudoir she was followed by the parrot, the lamb, the cat and the dog, who all stood beside her and watched her feed the peacock, which she found strutting around and mewing like a cat for his dinner. Said the parrot:

"I spy a peacock's eye

On every feather — I wonder why?"

The peacock soon came to love Trot as much as the other bird and all the beasts did, and it spread its tail and strutted after her into the next boudoir — the sixth one. As she entered this room Trot gave a start of fear, for a terrible roar, like the roar of a lion, greeted her. But there was no lion there; a fuzzy blue rabbit was making all the noise.

"For goodness sake, keep quiet," said Trot. "Here's a nice blue carrot for you. The color seems all wrong, but it may taste jus' as good as if it was red."

Evidently it did taste good, for the rabbit ate it greedily. When it was not roaring the creature was so soft and fluffy that Trot played with it and fondled it a long time after it had finished eating, and the rabbit played with the cat and the dog and the lamb and did not seem a bit afraid of the parrot or the peacock. But, all of a sudden, in pounced Princess Indigo, with a yell of anger.

"So, this is how you waste your time, is it?" exclaimed the Princess, and grabbing Trot's arm she jerked the girl to her feet and began pushing her from the room. All the pets began to follow her, and seeing this, Indigo yelled at them to keep back. As they paid no attention to this command the

princess seized a basin of water and dashed the fluid over the beasts and birds, after which she renewed her attempt to push Trot from the room. The pets rebelled at such treatment, and believing they ought to protect Trot, whom they knew to be their friend, they proceeded to defend her. The little blue dog dashed at Indigo and bit her right ankle, while the blue cat scratched her left leg with its claws and the parrot flew upon her shoulder and pecked her ear. The lamb ran up and butted Indigo so that she stumbled forward on her face, when the peacock proceeded to pound her head with his wings. Indigo, screaming with fright, sprang to her feet again, but the rabbit ran between her legs and tripped her up, all the time roaring loudly like a lion, and the dog crowed triumphantly, as a rooster crows, while the cat warbled noisily and the lamb chattered and the parrot barked and the peacock screeched: "me-ow!"

Altogether, Indigo was, as Trot said, "scared stiff," and she howled for help until her sisters ran in and rescued her, pulling her through the bedchamber into the reception room.

When she was alone Trot sat down on the floor and laughed until the tears came to her eyes, and she hugged all the pets and kissed them every one and thanked them for protecting her.

"That's all right;

We like a fight,"

declared the parrot, in reply.

The Princesses were horrified to find Indigo so scratched and bitten, and they were likewise amazed at the rebellion of their six pets, which they had never petted, indeed, but kept in their boudoirs so they could abuse them whenever they felt especially wicked or ill-natured. None of the snubnosed ones dared enter the room where the girl was, but they called through a crack in the door for Trot to come out instantly. Trot, pretending not to hear, paid no attention to these commands.

Finding themselves helpless and balked of their revenge, the Six Snubnosed Princesses finally recovered from their excitement and settled down to a pleasant sisterly quarrel, as was their customary amusement. Indigo wanted to have Trot patched, and Cerulia wanted her beaten with knotted cords, and Cobalt wanted her locked up in a dark room, and Sapphire wanted her fed on sand, and Turquoise wanted her bound to a windmill, and so between these various desires they quarrelled and argued until dinner time arrived.

Trot was occupying Indigo's room, so that Princess was obliged to dress with Azure, not daring to enter her own chamber, and the two sisters quarrelled so enthusiastically that they almost came to blows before they

were ready for dinner.

Before the Six Snubnosed Princesses went to the Royal Banquet Hall, Cobalt stuck her head through a crack of the door and said to Trot:

"If you want any dinner, you'll find it in the servants' hall. I advise you to eat, for after our dinner we will decide upon a fitting punishment for you, and then I'm sure you won't have much appetite."

"Thank you," replied the girl; "I'm right hungry, jus' now."

She waited until the snubnosed sextette had pranced haughtily away and then she came out, followed by all the pets, and found her way to the servants' quarters.

The King's Treasure Chamber

ALL the Blueskins assembled in the servants' hall were amazed to see the pets of the Princesses trailing after the strange little girl, but Trot took her place next to Button-Bright at the table, and the parrot perched upon her shoulder, while the peacock stood upon one side of her chair, and the lamb upon the other, and the cat and dog lay at her feet, and the blue rabbit climbed into her lap and cuddled down there. Some of the Blueskins insisted that the animals and birds must be put out of the room, but Ghip-Ghisizzle said they could remain, as they were the favored pets of the lovely Snubnosed Princesses.

Cap'n Bill was delighted to see his dear little friend again, and so was Button-Bright, and now that they were reunited — for a time, at least — they paid little heed to the sour looks and taunting remarks of the ugly Blueskins and ate heartily of the dinner, which was really very good.

The meal was no sooner over than Ghip-Ghisizzle was summoned to the chamber of his Majesty the Boolooroo, but before he went away he took Trot and Cap'n Bill and Button-Bright into a small room and advised them to stay there until he returned, so that the servants and soldiers would not molest them.

"My people seem to dislike strangers," said the Majordomo, thoughtfully, "and that surprises me because you are the first strangers they have ever seen. I think they imagine you will become favorites of the Boolooroo and of the Princesses, and that is why they are jealous and hate you."

"They needn't worry 'bout that," replied Trot; "the Snubnoses hate me

worse than the people do."

"I can't imagine a bootblue becoming a royal favorite," grumbled Button-Bright.

"Or a necktie mixer," added Cap'n Bill.

"You don't mix neckties; you're a nectar mixer," said Ghip-Ghisizzle, correcting the sailor. "I'll not be gone long, for I'm no favorite of the Boolooroo, either, so please stay quietly in this room until my return."

The Majordomo found the Boolooroo in a bad temper. He had finished his dinner, where his six daughters had bitterly denounced Trot all through the meal and implored their father to invent some new and terrible punishment for her. Also his wife, the Queen, had made him angry by begging for gold to buy ribbons with. Then, when he had retired to his own private room, he decided to send for the umbrella he had stolen from Button-Bright, and test its magic powers. But the umbrella, in his hands, proved just as common as any other umbrella might. He opened it and closed it, and turned it this way and that, commanding it to do all sorts of things; but of course the Magic Umbrella would obey no one but a member of the family that rightfully owned it. At last the Boolooroo threw it down and stamped upon it and then kicked it into a corner, where it rolled underneath a cabinet. Then he sent for Ghip-Ghisizzle.

"Do you know how to work that Magic Umbrella?" he asked the Majordomo.

"No, your Majesty; I do not," was the reply.

"Well, find out. Make the Whiteskins tell you, so that I can use it for my own amusement."

"I'll do my best, your Majesty," said Ghip-Ghisizzle.

"You'll do more than that, or I'll have you patched!" roared the angry Boolooroo. "And don't waste any time, either, for as soon as we find out the secret of the umbrella I'm going to have the three strangers marched through the Arch of Phinis — and that will be the end of them."

"You can't do that, your Majesty," said the Majordomo.

"Why can't I?"

"They haven't lived six hundred years yet, and only those who have lived that length of time are allowed to march through the Arch of Phinis into the Great Blue Grotto."

The King looked at him with a sneer.

"Has anyone ever come out of that Arch alive?" he asked.

"No," said Ghip-Ghisizzle. "But no one has ever gone into the Blue Grotto until his allotted time was up."

"Well, I'm going to try the experiment," declared the Boolooroo. "I shall

march these three strangers through the Arch, and if by any chance they come out alive I'll do a new sort of patching — I'll chop off their heads and mix 'em up, putting the wrong head on each of 'em. Ha, ha! Won't it be funny to see the old Moonface's head on the little girl? Ho, Ho! I really hope they'll come out of the Great Blue Grotto alive!"

"I also hope they will," replied Ghip-Ghisizzle.

"Then I'll bet you four button-holes they don't. I've a suspicion that once they enter the Great Blue Grotto that's the last of them."

Ghip-Ghisizzle went away quite sad and unhappy. He did not approve the way the strangers were being treated and thought it was wicked and cruel to try to destroy them.

During his absence the prisoners had been talking together very earnestly.

"We must get away from here, somehow 'r other," said Cap'n Bill; "but o' course we can't stir a step without the Magic Umbrel."

"No; I must surely manage to get my umbrella first," said Button-Bright.

"Do it quick, then," urged Trot, "for I can't stand those snubnoses much longer."

"I'll do it to-night," said the boy.

"The sooner the better, my lad," remarked the sailor; "but seein' as the Blue Boolooroo has locked it up in his Treasure Chamber, it mayn't be easy to get hold of."

"No; it won't be easy," Button-Bright admitted. "But it has to be done, Cap'n Bill, and there's no use waiting any longer. No one here likes us, and in a few days they may make an end of us."

"Oh, Button-Bright! There's a Blue Wolf in the Treasure Chamber!" exclaimed Trot.

"Yes; I know."

"An' a patched man on guard outside," Cap'n Bill reminded him.

"I know," repeated Button-Bright.

"And the key's in the King's own pocket," added Trot, despairingly.

The boy nodded. He didn't say how he would overcome all these difficulties, so the little girl feared they would never see the Magic Umbrella again. But their present position was a very serious one and even Cap'n Bill dared not advise Button-Bright to give up the desperate attempt.

When Ghip-Ghisizzle returned he said:

"You must be very careful not to anger the Boolooroo, or he may do you a mischief. I think the little girl had better keep away from the Princesses for to-night, unless they demand her presence. The boy must go for the King's shoes and blue them and polish them and then take them back to the Royal Bedchamber. Cap'n Bill won't have anything to do, for I've ordered Tiggle

to mix the nectar."

"Thank 'e, friend Sizzle," said Cap'n Bill.

"Now follow me and I will take you to your rooms."

He led them to the rear of the palace, where he gave them three small rooms on the ground floor, each having a bed in it. Cap'n Bill's room had a small door leading out into the street of the City, but Ghip-Ghisizzle advised him to keep this door locked, as the city people would be sure to hurt the strangers if they had the chance to attack them.

"You're safer in the palace than anywhere else," said the Majordomo, "for there is no way you can escape from the island, and here the servants and soldiers dare not injure you for fear of the Boolooroo."

He placed Trot and her six pets — which followed her wherever she went — in one room, and Cap'n Bill in another, and took Button-Bright away with him to show the boy the way to the King's bedchamber. As they proceeded they passed many rooms with closed doors, and before one of these a patched Blueskin was pacing up and down in a tired and sleepy way. It was Jimfred Jinksjones, the double of the Fredjim Jonesjinks they had talked with in the servants' hall, and he bowed low before the Majordomo.

"This is the King's new bootblue, a stranger who has lately arrived here," said Ghip-Ghisizzle, introducing the boy to the patched man.

"I'm sorry for him," muttered Jimfred. "He's a queer looking chap, with his pale yellow skin, and I imagine our cruel Boolooroo is likely to patch him before long, as he did me — I mean us."

"No, he won't," said Button-Bright, positively. "The Boolooroo's afraid of me."

"Oh, that's different," said Jimfred. "You're the first person I ever knew that could scare our Boolooroo."

They passed on, and Ghip-Ghisizzle whispered: "That is the Royal Treasure Chamber."

Button-Bright nodded. He had marked the place well, so he couldn't miss it when he wanted to find it again.

When they came to the King's apartments there was another guard before the door, this time a long-necked soldier with a terrible scowl.

"This slave is the Royal Bootblue," said Ghip-Ghisizzle to the guard. "You will allow him to pass into his Majesty's chamber to get the royal shoes and to return them when they are blued."

"All right," answered the guard. "Our Boolooroo is in an ugly mood tonight. It will go hard with this little short-necked creature if he doesn't polish the shoes properly."

Then Ghip-Ghisizzle left Button-Bright and went away, and the boy

passed through several rooms to the Royal Bedchamber, where his Majesty sat undressing.

"Hi, there! What are you doing here?" he roared, as he saw Button-Bright.

"I've come for the shoes," said the boy.

The king threw them at his head, aiming carefully, but Button-Bright dodged the missiles and one smashed a mirror while the other shattered a vase on a small table. His Majesty looked around for something else to throw, but the boy seized the shoes and ran away, returning to his own room.

While he polished the shoes he told his plans to Cap'n Bill and Trot, and asked them to be ready to fly with him as soon as he returned with the Magic Umbrella. All they need to do was to step out into the street, through the door of Cap'n Bill's room, and open the umbrella. Fortunately, the seats and the lunch-basket were still attached to the handle — or so they thought — and there would be nothing to prevent their quickly starting on the journey home.

They waited a long time, however, to give the Boolooroo time to get to sleep, so it was after midnight when Button-Bright finally took the shoes in his hand and started for the Royal Bedchamber. He passed the guard of the Royal Treasury and Fredjim nodded good-naturedly to the boy. But the sleepy guard before the King's apartments was cross and surly.

"What are you doing here at this hour?" he demanded.

"I'm returning his Majesty's shoes," said Button-Bright.

"Go back and wait till morning," commanded the guard.

"If you prevent me from obeying the Boolooroo's orders," returned the boy, quietly, "he will probably have you patched."

This threat frightened the long-necked guard, who did not know what orders the Boolooroo had given his Royal Bootblue.

"Go in, then," said he; "but if you make a noise and waken his Majesty, the chances are you'll get yourself patched."

"I'll be quiet," promised the boy.

Indeed, Button-Bright had no desire to waken the Boolooroo, whom he found snoring lustily with the curtains of his high-posted bed drawn tightly around him. The boy had taken off his own shoes after he passed the guard and now he tiptoed carefully into the room, set down the royal shoes very gently and then crept to the chair where his Majesty's clothes were piled. Scarcely daring to breathe, for fear of awakening the terrible monarch, the boy searched in the royal pockets until he found a blue-gold key attached to a blue-gold chain. At once he decided this must be the key to the Treasure Chamber, but in order to make sure he searched in every other pocket — without finding another key.

Then Button-Bright crept softly out of the room again, and in one of the

outer rooms he sat down near a big cabinet and put on his shoes. Poor Button-Bright did not know that lying disregarded beneath that very cabinet at his side was the precious umbrella he was seeking, or that he was undertaking a desperate adventure all for nothing. He passed the long-necked guard again, finding the man half asleep, and then made his way to the Treasure Chamber. Facing Jimfred he said to the patched man, in a serious tone:

"His Majesty commands you to go at once to the corridor leading to the apartments of the Six Snubnosed Princesses and to guard the entrance until morning. You are to permit no one to enter or to leave the apartments."

"But — good gracious!" exclaimed the surprised Jimfred; "who will guard the Treasure Chamber?"

"I am to take your place," said Button-Bright.

"Oh, very well," replied Jimfred; "this is a queer freak for our Boolooroo to indulge in, but he is always doing something absurd. You're not much of a guard, seems to me, but if anyone tries to rob the Treasure Chamber you must ring this big gong, which will alarm the whole palace and bring the soldiers to your assistance. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Button-Bright.

Then Fredjim stalked away to the other side of the palace to guard the Princesses, and Button-Bright was left alone with the key to the Treasure Chamber in his hand. But he had not forgotten that the ferocious Blue Wolf was guarding the interior of the Chamber, so he searched in some of the rooms until he found a sofa-pillow, which he put under his arm and then returned to the corridor.

He placed the key in the lock and the bolt turned with a sharp click. Button-Bright did not hesitate. He was afraid, to be sure, and his heart was beating fast with the excitement of the moment, but he knew he must regain the Magic Umbrella if he would save his comrades and himself from destruction, for without it they could never return to the Earth. So he summoned up his best courage, opened the door, stepped quickly inside — and closed the door after him.

Button-Bright Encounters the Blue Wolf

A LOW, fierce growl greeted him. The Treasure Chamber was pretty dark, although the moonlight came in through some of the windows, but the boy had brought with him the low brass lamp that lighted the corrider and this he set upon a table beside the door before he took time to look around him.

The Treasure Chamber was heaped and crowded with all the riches the Boolooroo had accumulated during his reign of two or three hundred years. Piles of gold and jewels were on all sides and precious ornaments and splendid cloths, rare pieces of carved furniture, vases, bric-a-brac and the like, were strewn about the room in astonishing profusion.

Just at the boy's feet crouched a monstrous animal of most fearful aspect. He knew at a glance it was the terrible Blue Wolf and the sight of the beast sent a shiver through him. The Blue Wolf's head was fully as big as that of a lion and its wide jaws were armed with rows of long, pointed teeth. Its shoulders and front legs were huge and powerful, but the rest of the wolf's body dwindled away until at the tail it was no bigger than a dog. The jaws were therefore the dangerous part of the creature, and its small blue eyes flashed wickedly at the intruder.

Just as the boy made his first step forward the Blue Wolf sprang upon him with its enormous jaws stretched wide open. Button-Bright jammed the sofa-pillow into the brute's mouth and crowded it in as hard as he could. The terrible teeth came together and buried themselves in the pillow, and then Mr. Wolf found he could not pull them out again — because his mouth was stuffed full. He could not even growl or yelp, but rolled upon the floor trying in vain to release himself from the conquering pillow.

Button-Bright paid no further attention to the helpless animal but caught up the blue-brass lamp and began a search for his umbrella. Of course he could not find it, as it was not there. He came across a small book, bound in light blue leather, which lay upon an exquisitely carved center-table. It was named, in dark blue letters stamped on the leather, "The Royal Record Book," and remembering that Ghip-Ghisizzle longed to possess this book Button-Bright hastily concealed it inside his blouse. Then he renewed his search for the umbrella, but it was quite in vain. He hunted in every crack and corner, tumbling the treasures here and there in the quest, but at last he became positive that the Magic Umbrella had been removed from the room.

The boy was bitterly disappointed and did not know what to do next. But he noticed that the Blue Wolf had finally seized an edge of the sofa-pillow in its sharp claws and was struggling to pull the thing out of his mouth; so, there being no object in his remaining longer in the room, where he might have to fight the wolf again, Button-Bright went out and locked the door behind him.

While he stood in the corridor wondering what to do next a sudden shouting reached his ears. It was the voice of the Boolooroo, crying: "My Key — my Key! Who has stolen my golden Key?" And then there followed shouts of soldiers and guards and servants and the rapid pattering of feet was heard throughout the palace.

Button-Bright took to his heels and ran along the passages until he came to Cap'n Bill's room, where the sailorman and Trot were anxiously awaiting him.

"Quick!" cried the boy; "we must escape from here at once or we will be caught and patched."

"Where's the umbrel?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"I don't know. I can't find it. But all the palace is aroused and the Boolooroo is furious. Come, let's get away at once!"

"Where'll we go?" inquired Trot.

"We must make for the open country and hide in the Fog Bank, or in the Arch of Phinis," replied the boy.

They did not stop to argue any longer, but all three stepped out of the little door into the street, where they first clasped hands, so they would not get separated in the dark, and then ran as swiftly as they could down the street, which was deserted at this hour by the citizens. They could not go very fast because the sailorman's wooden leg was awkward to run with and held them back, but Cap'n Bill hobbled quicker than he had ever hobbled before in all his life, and they really made pretty good progress.

They met no one on the streets and continued their flight until at last they came to the City Wall, which had a blue-iron gate in it. Here was a Blueskin

guard, who had been peacefully slumbering when aroused by the footsteps of the fugitives.

"Halt!" cried the guard, fiercely.

Cap'n Bill halted long enough to grab the man around his long neck with one hand and around his long leg with the other hand. Then he raised the Blueskin in the air and threw him far over the wall. A moment later they had unfastened the gate and fled into the open country, where they headed toward the low mountain whose outlines were plainly visible in the moonlight.

The guard was now howling and crying for help. In the city were answering shouts. A hue and cry came from every direction, reaching as far as the palace. Lights began to twinkle everywhere in the streets and the Blue City hummed like a beehive filled with angry bees.

"It won't do for us to get caught now," panted Cap'n Bill, as they ran along. "I'm more afeared o' them Blue citizens ner I am o' the Blue Boolooroo. They'd tear us to pieces, if they could."

Sky Island was not a very big place, especially the blue part of it, and our friends were now very close to the low mountain. Presently they paused before a grim archway of blue marble, above which was carved the one word: "Phinis." The interior seemed dark and terrible as they stopped to regard it as a possible place of refuge.

"Don't like that place, Cap'n," whispered Trot.

"No more do I, mate," he answered.

"I think I'd rather take a chance on the Fog Bank," said Button-Bright.

Just then they were all startled by a swift flapping of wings, and a voice cried in shrill tones:

"Where are you, Trot?
As like as not
I've been forgot!"

Cap'n Bill jumped this way and Button-Bright that, and then there alighted on Trot's shoulder the blue parrot that had been the pet of the Princess Cerulia.

Said the bird:

"Gee! I've flown
Here all alone.
It's pretty far,
But here we are!"

and then he barked like a dog and chuckled with glee at having found his little friend.

In escaping from the palace Trot had been obliged to leave all the pets behind her, but it seemed that the parrot had found some way to get free and

follow her. They were all astonished to hear the bird talk — and in poetry, too — but Cap'n Bill told Trot that some parrots he had known had possessed a pretty fair gift of language, and he added that this blue one seemed an unusually bright bird.

"As fer po'try," said he, "that's as how you look at po'try. Rhymes come from your head, but real po'try from your heart, an' whether the blue parrot has a heart or not he's sure got a head."

Having decided not to venture into the Arch of Phinis they again started on, this time across the country straight toward the Fog Bank, which hung like a blue-gray cloud directly across the center of the island. They knew they were being followed by bands of the Blueskins, for they could hear the shouts of their pursuers growing louder and louder every minute, since their long legs covered the ground more quickly than our friends could possibly go. Had the journey been much farther the fugitives would have been overtaken, but when the leaders of the pursuing Blueskins were only a few yards behind them they reached the edge of the Fog Bank and without hesitation plunged into its thick mist, which instantly hid them from view.

The Blueskins fell back, horrified at the mad act of the strangers. To them the Fog Bank was the most dreadful thing in existence and no Blueskin had ever ventured within it, even for a moment.

"That's the end of those short-necked Yellowskins," said one, shaking his head. "We may as well go back and report the matter to the Boolooroo."

Through the Fog Bank

IT was rather moist in the Fog Bank.

"Seems like a reg'lar drizzle," said Trot. "I'll be soaked through in a minute." She had been given a costume of blue silk, in exchange for her own dress, and the silk was so thin that the moisture easily wetted it.

"Never mind," said Cap'n Bill. "When it's a case of life 'n' death, clo's don't count for much. I'm sort o' drippy myself."

Cried the parrot, fluttering his feathers to try to keep them from sticking together:

"Floods and gushes fill our path —
This is not my day for a bath!
Shut it off, or fear my wrath."

"We can't," laughed Trot. "We'll jus' have to stick it out till we get to the other side."

"Had we better go to the other side?" asked Button-Bright, anxiously.

"Why not?" returned Cap'n Bill. "The other side's the only safe side for us."

"We don't know that, sir," said the boy. "Ghip-Ghisizzle said it was a terrible country."

"I don't believe it," retorted the sailor, stoutly. "Sizzle's never been there, an' he knows nothing about it. 'The Sunset Country' sounds sort o' good to me."

"But how'll we ever manage to get there?" inquired Trot. "Aren't we already lost in this fog?"

“Not yet,” said Cap’n Bill. “I’ve kep’ my face turned straight ahead, ever since we climbed inter this bank o’ wetness. If we don’t get twisted any, we’ll go straight through to the other side.”

It was no darker in the Fog Bank than it had been in the Blue Country. They could see dimly the mass of fog, which seemed to cling to them, and when they looked down they discovered that they were walking upon white pebbles that were slightly tinged with the blue color of the sky. Gradually this blue became fainter, until, as they progressed, everything became a dull gray.

“I wonder how far it is to the other side,” remarked Trot, wearily.

“We can’t say till we get there, mate,” answered the sailor in a cheerful voice. Cap’n Bill had a way of growing more and more cheerful when danger threatened.

“Never mind,” said the girl; “I’m as wet as a dish rag now, and I’ll never get any wetter.”

“Wet, wet, wet!
It’s awful wet, you bet!”
moaned the parrot on her shoulder.
“I’m a fish-pond, I’m a well;
I’m a clam without a shell!”

“Can’t you dry up?” asked Cap’n Bill.
“Not this evening, thank you, sir;
To talk and grumble I prefer,”
replied the parrot, dolefully.

They walked along more slowly now, still keeping hold of hands; for although they were anxious to get through the Fog Bank they were tired with the long run across the country and with their day’s adventures. They had had no sleep and it was a long time past midnight.

“Look out!” cried the parrot, sharply; and they all halted to find a monstrous frog obstructing their path. Cap’n Bill thought it was as big as a whale, and as it squatted on the gray pebbles its eyes were on a level with those of the old sailor.

“Ker-chug, ker-choo!” grunted the frog; “what in the Sky is *this* crowd?”

“W — we’re — strangers,” stammered Trot; “an’ we’re tryin’ to ‘scape from the Blueskins an’ get into the Pink Country.”

“I don’t blame you,” said the frog, in a friendly tone. “I hate those Blueskins. The Pinkies, however, are very decent neighbors.”

“Oh, I’m glad to hear that!” cried Button-Bright. “Can you tell us, Mister — Mistress — good Mr. Frog — eh — eh — your Royal Highness — if we’re on the right road to the Pink Country?”

The frog seemed to laugh, for he gurgled in his throat in a very funny way.

"I'm no Royal Highness," he said. "I'm just a common frog; and a little wee tiny frog, too. But I hope to grow, in time. This Fog Bank is the Paradise of Frogs and our King is about ten times as big as I am."

"Then he's a big un, an' no mistake," admitted Cap'n Bill. "I'm glad you like your country, but it's a mite too damp for us, an' we'd be glad to get out of it."

"Follow me," said the frog. "I'll lead you to the border. It's only about six jumps."

He turned around, made a mighty leap and disappeared in the gray mist.

Our friends looked at one another in bewilderment.

"Don't see how we can foller that lead," remarked Cap'n Bill; "but we may as well start in the same direction."

"Brooks and creeks,
How it leaks!"
muttered the parrot;
"How can we jog
To a frog in a fog?"

The big frog seemed to understand their difficulty, for he kept making noises in his throat to guide them to where he had leaped. When at last they came up to him he made a second jump — out of sight, as before — and when they attempted to follow they found a huge lizard lying across the path. Cap'n Bill thought it must be a giant alligator, at first, it was so big; but he looked at them sleepily and did not seem at all dangerous.

"O, Liz — you puffy Liz —
Get out of our way and mind your biz,"
cried the parrot.
"Creep-a-mousie, crawl-a-mousie, please move on!
We can't move a step till you are gone."

"Don't disturb me," said the lizard; "I'm dreaming about parsnips. Did you ever taste a parsnip?"

"We're in a hurry, if it's the same to you, sir," said Cap'n Bill, politely.

LITTLE LIZZIE

"Then climb over me — or go around — I don't care which," murmured the lizard. "When they're little, they're juicy; when they're big, there's more of 'em; but either way there's nothing so delicious as a parsnip. There are none here in the Fog Bank, so the best I can do is dream of them. Oh, parsnips — par-snips — p-a-r-snips!" He closed his eyes sleepily and resumed his dreams.

Walking around the lizard they resumed their journey and soon came to the frog, being guided by its grunts and croaks. Then off it went again, its tremendous leap carrying it far into the fog. Suddenly Cap'n Bill tripped and would have fallen flat had not Trot and Button-Bright held him up. Then he saw that he had stumbled over the claw of a gigantic land-crab, which lay

sprawled out upon the pebbly bottom.

"Oh; beg parding, I'm sure!" exclaimed Cap'n Bill backing away.

"Don't mention it," replied the crab, in a tired tone. "You did not disturb me, so there is no harm done."

"We didn't know you were here," explained Trot.

"Probably not," said the crab. "It's no place for me, anyhow, for I belong in the Constellations, you know, with Taurus and Gemini and the other fellows. But I had the misfortune to tumble out of the Zodiac some time ago. My name is Cancer — but I'm not a disease. Those who examine the heavens in these days, alas! can find no Cancer there."

"Yes, we can, sir,

Mister Cancer!"

said the parrot, with a chuckle.

"Once," remarked Cap'n Bill, "I sawr a picter of you in an almanac."

"Ah; the almanacs always did us full justice," the crab replied, "but I'm told they're not fashionable now."

"If you don't mind, we'd like to pass on," said Button-Bright.

"No; I don't mind; but be careful not to step on my legs. They're rheumatic, it's so moist here."

They climbed over some of the huge legs and walked around others. Soon they had left the creature far behind.

"Aren't you rather slow?" asked the frog, when once more they came up to him.

"It isn't that," said Trot. "You are rather swift, I guess."

The frog chuckled and leaped again. They noticed that the fog had caught a soft rose tint, and was lighter and less dense than before, for which reason the sailor remarked that they must be getting near to the Pink Country.

On this jump they saw nothing but a monstrous turtle, which lay asleep with its head and legs drawn into its shell. It was not in their way, so they hurried on and rejoined the frog, which said to them:

"I'm sorry, but I'm due at the King's Court in a few minutes and I can't wait for your short, weak legs to make the journey to the Pink Country. But if you will climb upon my back I think I can carry you to the border in one more leap."

"I'm tired," said Trot, "an' this awful fog's beginnin' to choke me. Let's ride on the frog, Cap'n."

"Right you are, mate," he replied, and although he shook a bit with fear, the old man at once began to climb to the frog's back. Trot seated herself on one side of him and Button-Bright on the other, and the sailor put his arms around them both to hold them tight together.

“Are you ready?” asked the frog.

“Ding-dong!” cried the parrot;

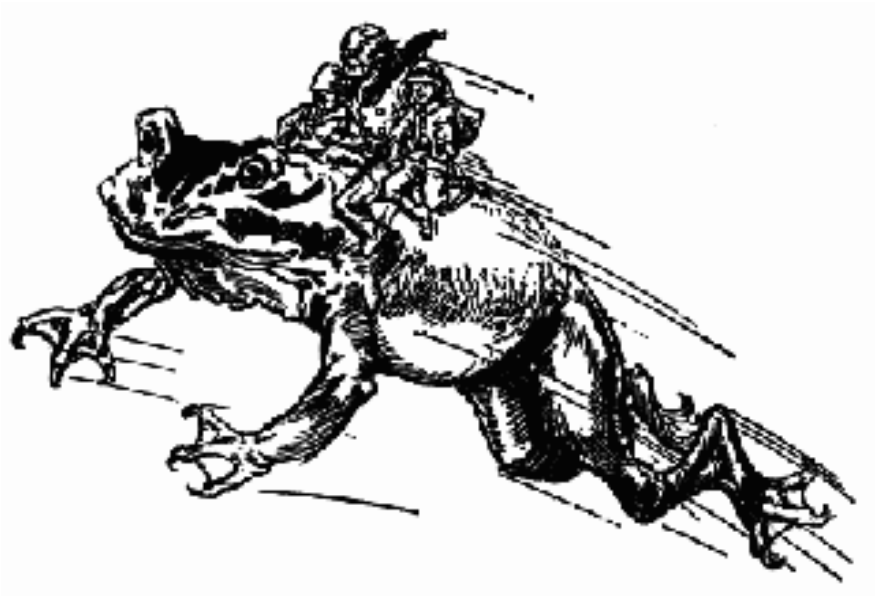
“All aboard! let ‘er go!

Jump the best jump that you know.”

“Don’t — don’t! Jump sort o’ easy, please,” begged Cap’n Bill.

But the frog was unable to obey his request. Its powerful hind legs straightened like steel springs and shot the big body, with its passengers, through the fog like an arrow launched from a bow. They gasped for breath and tried to hang on, and then suddenly the frog landed just at the edge of the Fog Bank, stopping so abruptly that his three riders left his back and shot far ahead of him.

They felt the fog melt away and found themselves bathed in glorious rays of sunshine; but they had no time to consider this change because they were still shooting through the air, and presently — before they could think of anything at all — all three were rolling heels over head on the soft grass of a meadow.



The Pink Country

WHEN the travelers could collect their senses and sit up they stared about them in bewilderment, for the transition from the sticky, damp fog to this brilliant scene was so abrupt as to daze them at first.

It was a Pink Country, indeed. The grass was a soft pink, the trees were pink, all the fences and buildings which they saw in the near distance were pink — even the gravel in the pretty paths was pink. Many shades of color were there, of course, grading from a faint blush rose to deep pink verging on red, but no other color was visible. In the sky hung a pink glow, with rosy clouds floating here and there, and the sun was not silvery white, as we see it from the Earth, but a distinct pink.

The sun was high in the sky, just now, which proved the adventurers had been a long time in passing through the Fog Bank. But all of them were wonderfully relieved to reach this beautiful country in safety, for aside from the danger that threatened them in the Blue Country, the other side of the island was very depressing. Here the scene that confronted them was pretty and homelike, except for the prevailing color and the fact that all the buildings were round, without a single corner or angle.

Half a mile distant was a large City, its pink tintings glistening bravely in the pink sunshine, while hundreds of pink banners floated from its numerous domes. The country between the Fog Bank and the City was like a vast garden, very carefully kept and as neat as wax.

The parrot was fluttering its wings and pruning its feathers to remove the wet of the fog. Trot and Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill were all soaked to the

skin and chilled through, but as they sat upon the pink grass they felt the rays of the sun sending them warmth and rapidly drying their clothes; so, being tired out, they laid themselves comfortably down and first one and then another fell cosily asleep.

It was the parrot that aroused them.

"Look out — look out —

There's folks about!"

it screamed;

"The apple-dumplings, fat and pink,

Will be here quicker than a wink!"

Trot started up in alarm and rubbed her eyes; Cap'n Bill rolled over and blinked, hardly remembering where he was; Button-Bright was on his feet in an instant. Advancing toward them were four of the natives of the Pink Country.

Two were men and two were women, and their appearance was in sharp contrast to that of the Blueskins. For the Pinkies were round and chubby — almost like "apple-dumplings," as the parrot had called them — and they were not very tall, the highest of the men being no taller than Trot or Button-Bright. They all had short necks and legs, pink hair and eyes, rosy cheeks and pink complexions, and their faces were good-natured and jolly in expression.

The men wore picturesque pink clothing and round hats with pink feathers in them, but the apparel of the women was still more gorgeous and striking. Their dresses consisted of layer after layer of gauzy tucks and ruffles and laces, caught here and there with bows of dainty ribbon. The skirts — which of course were of many shades of pink — were so fluffy and light that they stuck out from the fat bodies of the Pinkie women like the skirts of ballet-dancers, displaying their chubby pink ankles and pink kid shoes. They wore rings and necklaces and bracelets and brooches of rose-gold set with pink gems, and all four of the new arrivals, both men and women, carried sharp-pointed sticks, made of rosewood, for weapons.

They halted a little way from our adventurers and one of the women muttered in a horrified voice: "Blueskins!"

"Guess again! The more you guess

I rather think you'll know the less,"

retorted the parrot; and then he added grumblingly in Trot's ear: "Blue feathers don't make bluebirds."

"Really," said the little girl, standing up and bowing respectfully to the Pinkies, "we are not Blueskins, although we are wearing the blue uniforms of the Boolooroo and have just escaped from the Blue Country. If you will look

closely you will see that our skins are white."

"There is some truth in what she says," remarked one of the men, thoughtfully. "Their skins are not blue, but neither are they white. To be exact, I should call the skin of the girl and that of the boy a muddy pink, rather faded, while the skin of the gigantic monster with them is an unpleasant brown."

Cap'n Bill looked cross for a minute, for he did not like to be called a "gigantic monster," although he realized he was much larger than the pink people.

"What country did you come from?" asked the woman who had first spoken.

"From the Earth," replied Button-Bright.

"The Earth! The Earth!" they repeated. "That is a country we have never heard of. Where is it located?"

"Why, down below, somewhere," said the boy, who did not know in which direction the Earth lay. "It isn't just one country, but a good many countries."

"We have three countries in Sky Island," returned the woman. "They are the Blue Country, the Fog Country and the Pink Country; but of course this end of the Island is the most important."

"How came you in the Blue Country, from whence you say you escaped?" asked the man.

"We flew there by means of a Magic Umbrella," explained Button-Bright; "but the wicked Boolooroo stole it from us."

"Stole it! How dreadful," they all cried in a chorus.

"And they made us slaves," said Trot.

"An' wanted fer to patch us," added Cap'n Bill, indignantly.

"So we ran away and passed through the Fog Bank and came here," said Button-Bright.

The Pinkies turned away and conversed together in low tones. Then one of the women came forward and addressed the strangers.

"Your story is the strangest we have ever heard," said she; "and your presence here is still more strange and astonishing. So we have decided to take you to Tourmaline and let her decide what shall be your fate."

"Who is Tourmaline?" inquired Trot, doubtfully, for she didn't like the idea of being "taken" to anyone.

"The Queen of the Pinkies. She is the sole Ruler of our country, so the word of Tourmaline is the Law of the Land."

"Seems to me we've had 'bout enough of kings an' queens," remarked Cap'n Bill. "Can't we shy your Tut — Tor — mar-line — or whatever you

call her — in some way, an' deal with you direct?"

"No. Until we prove your truth and honor we must regard you as enemies of our race. If you had a Magic Umbrella you may be magicians and sorcerers, come here to deceive us and perhaps betray us to our natural enemies, the Blueskins."

"Mud and bricks — fiddlesticks!

We don't play such nasty tricks,"

yelled the parrot, angrily, and this caused the Pinkies to shrink back in alarm, for they had never seen a parrot before.

"Surely this is magic!" declared one of the men. "No bird can talk unless inspired by witchcraft."

"Oh, yes; parrots can," said Trot.

But this incident had determined the Pinkies to consider our friends prisoners and to take them immediately before their Queen.

"Must we fight you?" asked the woman, "or will you come with us peaceably?"

"We'll go peaceable," answered Cap'n Bill. "You're a-makin' a sad mistake, for we're as harmless as doves; but seein' as you're suspicious we'd better have it out with your Queen first as last."

Their clothing was quite dry by this time, although much wrinkled and discolored by the penetrating fog, so at once they prepared to follow the Pinkies. The two men walked on either side of them, holding the pointed sticks ready to jab them if they attempted to escape, and the two women followed in the rear, also armed with sharp sticks.

So the procession moved along the pretty roadways to the City, which they soon reached. There was a strong high wall of pink marble around it and they passed through a gate made of pink metal bars and found themselves in a most delightful and picturesque town. The houses were big and substantial, all round in shape, with domed roofs and circular windows and doorways. In all the place there was but one street — a circular one that started at the gate and wound like a corkscrew toward the center of the City. It was paved with pink marble and between the street and the houses that lined both sides of it were gardens filled with pink flowers and pink grass lawns, which were shaded by pink trees and shrubbery.

As the Queen lived in the very center of the city the captives were obliged to parade the entire length of this street, and that gave all the Pink Citizens a chance to have a good look at the strangers. The Pinkies were every one short and fat and gorgeously dressed in pink attire, and their faces indicated that they were contented and happy. They were much surprised at Cap'n Bill's great size and wooden leg — two very unusual things in their

experience — and the old sailor frightened more than one Pinky boy and girl and sent them scampering into the houses, where they viewed the passing procession from behind the window shutters, in comparative safety. As for the grown people, many of them got out their sharp-pointed sticks to use as weapons in case the strangers attacked them or broke away from their guards. A few, more bold than the others, followed on at the tail of the procession, and so presently they all reached an open, circular place in the exact center of the Pink City.

Tourmaline the Poverty Queen

THE open space which they entered was paved with pink marble and around it were two rows of large pink statues, at least life-size and beautifully sculptured. All were set upon nicely carved pink pedestals. They were, of course, statues of Pinky men and women and all had bands of pink metal around their foreheads, in the center of each band being a glistening pink jewel.

About the middle of the open space inside the statues, which appeared to be the public meeting place of the Pinkies, was a small, low house, domed like all the other houses but built of a coarse pink stone instead of the fine marble to be seen everywhere else. It had no ornamentation, being exceedingly plain in appearance. No banners floated from it; no flowers grew near it.

"Here," said one of their guides, as the procession halted before the little stone building, "is the palace of Tourmaline, who is our Queen."

"What! that little cabin?" exclaimed Trot.

"Of course. Did you suppose a palace would be like one of our handsome residences?" asked the woman, evidently surprised.

"I thought it would be better," said the girl. "All the palaces I've seen were splendid."

"A splendid palace!" exclaimed one of the Pinkies, and then they looked at one another in amazement and seemed to doubt that their ears had heard aright.

"These intruders are very peculiar people," remarked a man in the crowd.

“They seem very ignorant, poor things!” said another, in reply.

“Come!” commanded the woman who led the party; “you three must follow me to the presence of Tourmaline. The people must wait outside, for there is no room for them in the palace.”

So they followed her through the low archway, and in a room beyond, very simply furnished, sat a young girl engaged in darning a pair of pink stockings. She was a beautiful girl of about seventeen years of age, not fat like all the rest of the Pinkies, but slender and well formed according to our own ideas of beauty. Her complexion was not a decided pink but a soft rosy tint not much deeper than that of Trot’s skin. Instead of a silken gown, furbelowed like all the others they had seen women wear in this land, Tourmaline was dressed in a severely plain robe of coarse pink cloth much resembling bedticking. Across her brow, however, was a band of rose gold, in the center of which was set a luminous pink jewel which gleamed more brilliantly than a diamond. It was her badge of office, and seemed very incongruous when compared with her poor raiment and simple surroundings.

As they entered, the girl sighed and laid down her work. Her expression was patient and resigned as she faced her audience.

“What is it, Coralie?” she asked the woman.

“Here are three strange people, Tourmaline,” was the reply, “who say they have entered our country through the Fog Bank. They tell a queer story of an escape from the Blueskins, so I decided to bring them to you, that you may determine their fate.”

The Queen gazed upon our friends with evident interest. She smiled — a little sadly — at Trot, seemed to approve Button-Bright’s open, frank face and was quite surprised because Cap’n Bill was so much bigger than her own people.

“Are you a giant?” she asked the sailor, in a soft, sweet voice.

“No, your Majesty,” he replied; “I’m only — — ”

“Majesty!” she exclaimed, flushing a deeper pink. “Are you addressing that word to me?”

“O’ course, ma’am,” answered Cap’n Bill; “I’m told that’s the proper way to speak to a Queen.”

“Perhaps you are trying to ridicule me,” she continued, regarding the sailor’s face closely. “There is nothing majestic about me, as you know very well. Coralie, do you consider ‘majesty’ a proper word to use when addressing a Queen?” she added, appealing to the Pinky woman.

“By no means,” was the prompt reply.

“What shall I call her, then?” inquired Cap’n Bill.

“Just Tourmaline. That is her name, and it is sufficient,” said the woman.

“The Ruler of a country ought to be treated with great respec’,” declared Trot, a little indignantly, for she thought the pretty little queen was not being properly deferred to.

“Why?” asked Tourmaline, curiously.

“Because the Ruler is the mos’ ‘risticratic person in any land,” explained the little girl. “Even in America ever’body bows low to our President, an’ the Blueskins are so ‘fraid o’ their Boolooroo that they tremble whenever they go near him.”

“But surely that is all wrong,” said Tourmaline gravely. “The Ruler is appointed to protect and serve the people, and here in the Pink Country I have the full power to carry out the laws. I even decree death, when such a punishment is merited. Therefore I am a mere agent to direct the laws, which are the Will of the People, and am only a public servant, obliged constantly to guard the welfare of my subjects.”

“In that case,” said Button-Bright, “you’re entitled to the best there is, to pay for your trouble. A powerful ruler ought to be rich and to live in a splendid palace. Your folks ought to treat you with great respect, as Trot says.”

“Oh, no,” responded Tourmaline quickly; “that would indeed be very wrong. Too much should never be given to anyone. If, with my great power, conferred upon me by the people, I also possessed great wealth, I might be tempted to be cruel and overbearing. In that case my subjects would justly grow envious of my superior station. If I lived as luxuriously as my people do, and had servants and costly gowns, the good Pinkies would say that their Queen had more than they themselves — and it would be true. No; our way is best. The Ruler, be it king or queen, has absolute power to rule, but no riches — no high station — no false adulation. The people have the wealth and honor, for it is their due. The Queen has nothing but the power to execute the laws, to adjust grievances and to compel order.”

“What pays you, then, for all your bother?” asked Trot.

“I have one great privilege. After my death a pink marble statue of me will be set up in the Grand Court, with the statues of the other Kings and Queens who have ruled this land, and all the Pinkies in ages to come will then honor me as having been a just and upright queen. That is my reward.”

“I’m sorry for you, ma’am,” said Cap’n Bill. “Your pay for bein’ a queen is sort o’ like a life-insurance. It don’t come due till after you’re dead, an’ then you can’t get much fun out o’ it.”

“I did not choose to be the Queen,” answered Tourmaline, simply. “A misfortune of birth placed me here and I cannot escape my fate. It is much more desirable to be a private citizen, happy and care free. But we have

talked long enough of myself. Tell me who you are, and why you have come here."

Between them they told the story of how the Magic Umbrella had taken them to Sky Island, which they did not know, when they started, was anywhere in existence. Button-Bright told this, and then Trot related their adventures among the Blueskins and how the Boolooroo had stolen the umbrella and prevented them from going home again. The parrot on her shoulder kept interrupting her continually, for the mention of the Boolooroo seemed to make the bird frantic with rage.

"Naughty, naugh-ty Boo-loo-roo!

He's the worst I ev-er knew!"

the parrot repeated over and over again.

Cap'n Bill finished the story by telling of their escape through the Fog Bank. "We didn't know what your Pink Country was like, o' course," he said, "but we knew it couldn't be worse than the Blue Country, an' we didn't take any stock in their stories that the Fog Bank would be the death o' us."

"Pretty wet! Pretty wet

Was the journey, you can bet!"

declared the parrot, in conclusion.

"Yes, it was wet an' sticky, all right," agreed the sailor; "but the big frog helped us an' we got through all right."

"But what can you do here?" asked Tourmaline. "You are not like my people, the Pinkies, and there is no place for you in our country."

"That's true enough," said Cap'n Bill; "but we had to go somewhere, an' this was the likeliest place we could think of. Your Sky Island ain't very big, so when we couldn't stay in the Blue Country, where ever'body hated us, or in the Fog Bank, which ain't healthy an' is too wet for humans to live in for long, we nat'rally were forced to enter the Pink Country, where we expected to find nice people."

"We *are* nice," said Tourmaline; "but it is our country — not yours — and we have no place here for strangers. In all our history you are the first people from outside our borders who have ever stepped a foot in our land. We do not hate you, as you say the Blueskins do, nor are we savage or cruel; but we do not want you here and I am really puzzled what to do with you."

"Isn't there a law to cover this case?" asked Coralie.

"I do not remember any such law," replied the queen; "but I will search in the Great Book and see if I can find anything that refers to strange people entering our land."

"If not," said the woman, "you must make a law. It is your duty."

"I know," answered Tourmaline; "but I hope such a responsibility will not

fall upon my shoulders. These poor strangers are in a very uncomfortable position and I wish I could help them to get back to their own country."

"Thank you," said Trot. "We wish so, too. Haven't you any fairies here?"

"Oh, there are fairies, of course, as there are everywhere," answered Tourmaline; "but none that we can call to our assistance, or command to do our bidding."

"How about witches?" asked Button-Bright.

"I know of one witch," said Tourmaline, thoughtfully, "but she is not very obliging. She says it makes her head ache to perform witchcraft and so she seldom indulges in it. But, if there is no other way, I may be obliged to call upon Rosalie for help. I'll look in the Great Book first. Meantime you will go home with Coralie, who will feed you and give you entertainment. To-morrow morning come to me again and then I will decree your fate."

The little Queen then picked up her stocking and began to darn the holes in it, and Coralie, without any formal parting, led the strangers from the miserable palace.

The Sunrise Tribe and the Sunset Tribe

ALTHOUGH Trot and her comrades were still prisoners they were far more comfortable than they had been in the Blue Country. Coralie took them to her own home, where she lived in great luxury, being one of the prominent women of the Pinkies. In this country the women seemed fully as important as the men, and instead of being coddled and petted they performed their share of the work, both in public and private affairs, and were expected to fight in the wars exactly as the men did.

Our friends learned considerable about the Pinkies during that afternoon and evening, for their hostess proved kind and agreeable and frankly answered all their questions. Although this half of Sky Island was no larger than the Blue Country, being no more than two miles square, it had several hundred inhabitants. These were divided into two tribes, which were called the Sunrise Tribe and the Sunset Tribe. The Sunrise Tribe lived in the eastern half of the Pink Country and the Sunset Tribe in the west half, and there was great rivalry between them and, sometimes, wars.

It was all a question of social importance. The Sunrise Tribe claimed that every day the sun greeted them first of all, which proved they were the most important; but, on the other hand, the Sunset Tribe claimed that the sun always deserted the other tribe and came to them, which was evidence that they were the most attractive people. On Sky Island — at least on the Pink side — the sun arose in wonderful splendor, but also it set in a blaze of glory, and so there were arguments on both sides and for want of something better to argue about, the Pinkies took this queer subject as a cause of dispute.

Both Tribes acknowledged Tourmaline their Queen and obeyed the laws of the country, and just at this time there was peace in the land and all the inhabitants of the east and west were friendly. But they had been known, Coralie said, to fight one another fiercely with the sharp sticks, at which times a good many were sure to get hurt.

"Why do they call this an Island?" asked Button-Bright. "There isn't any water around it, is there?"

"No, but there is sky all around it," answered Coralie; "and, if one should step off the edge, he would go tumbling into the great sky and never be heard of again."

"Is there a fence around the edge?" asked Trot.

"Only a few places are fenced," was the reply. "Usually there are rows of thick bushes set close to the edge, to prevent people from falling off. Once there was a King of the Pinkies who was cruel and overbearing and imagined he was superior to the people he ruled, so one day his subjects carried him to the edge of the island and threw him over the bushes."

"Goodness me!" said Trot. "He might have hit some one on the Earth."

"Guess he skipped it, though," added Cap'n Bill, "for I never heard of a Pinky till I came here."

"And I have never heard of the Earth," retorted Coralie. "Of course there must be such a place, because you came from there, but the Earth is never visible in our sky."

"No," said Button-Bright, "'cause it's *under* your island. But it's there, all right, and it's a pretty good place to live. I wish I could get back to it."

"So do I, Button-Bright!" exclaimed Trot.

"Let's fly!" cried the parrot, turning his head so that one bright little eye looked directly into the girl's eye. "Say good-bye and let's fly through the sky, far and high!"

"If we only had my umbrella, we'd fly in a minute," sighed Button-Bright. "But the Boolooroo stole it."

"Naugh-ty, naugh-ty Boo-loo-roo;
What a wicked thing to do!"
wailed the parrot; and they all agreed with him.

Coralie belonged to the Sunset Tribe, as she lived west of the queen's palace, which was the center of the Pink Country. A servant came to the room where they were conversing, to state that the sun was about to set, and at once Coralie arose and took the strangers to an upper balcony, where all the household had assembled.

The neighboring houses also had their balconies and roofs filled with people, for it seemed all the Sunset Tribe came out every night to witness the setting of the sun. It was really a magnificent sight and Trot scarcely breathed as the great golden ball sank low in the sky and colored all the clouds with gorgeous tints of orange, red and yellow. Never on the Earth was there visible such splendor, and as the little girl watched the ever-changing scene

she decided the Sunset Tribe was amply justified in claiming that the West was the favored country of the sun.

"You see," said Cap'n Bill, "the sky is all around us, an' we're high up; so the sun really loses itself in the clouds an' leaves a trail of beauty behind him."

"He does that!" agreed Trot. "This is almost worth comin' for, Cap'n."

"But not quite," said Button-Bright, sadly. "I'd get along without the sunset if only we could go home."

They went in to dinner, after this, and sat at Coralie's own table, with her husband and children, and found the meal very good. After a pleasant evening, during which no reference was made to their being prisoners, they were shown to prettily furnished rooms — all in pink — and slept soundly in the soft beds provided for them.

Trot wakened early the next morning and went out on the balcony to see the sunrise. The little girl was well repaid, for the splendor of the rising sun was almost equal to that of the setting sun. Surely this was a wonderful country and much more delightful than the Blue side of the island, where the sun was hidden by the great Fog Bank and only the moon was visible.

When she went in she found that both Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill were up and dressed, so they decided to take a walk before breakfast. No one restrained them or interfered with them in any way.

"They know we can't get away," observed the sailor, "so they don't need to watch us."

"We could go into the Fog Bank again," suggested Trot.

"We could, mate, but we won't," answered Cap'n Bill. "If there's no way for us to get clean off'n Sky Island, I'd rather stay with the Pinkies than with the Blues."

"I wonder what they'll do with us," said Button-Bright. "The Queen seems like a nice girl and I don't think she'll hurt us, whatever happens."

They walked freely along the circular street, seeing such sights as the Pink City afforded, and then returned to Coralie's house for breakfast. Coralie herself was not there, as she had been summoned to the Queen's palace, but her husband looked after the guests and when breakfast was finished he said to them:

"I am to take you to Tourmaline, who has promised to decide your fate this morning. I am curious to know what she will do with you, for in all our history we have never before had strangers intrude upon us."

"We're curious, too," said Trot; "but we'll soon find out."

As they walked down the street they observed that the sky was now covered with dark clouds, which entirely hid the sun.

“Does it ever rain here?” inquired Button-Bright.

“Certainly,” answered Coralie’s husband; “that is the one drawback of our country; it rains quite often, and although it makes the flowers and the grass grow I think rain is very disagreeable. I am always glad to see the rainbow, which is a sign that the sun will shine again.”

“Looks like rain now,” remarked Cap’n Bill.

“It does,” said the man, glancing at the sky. “We must hurry, or we may get wet.”

“Haven’t you any umbrellas?” asked Button-Bright.

“No; we don’t know what umbrellas are,” replied the Pinky man.

It did not rain at once and they reached Tourmaline’s wretched hut in safety. There they found quite a number of Pinkies assembled, and a spirited discussion was taking place when they arrived.

“Come in, please,” said Tourmaline, opening the door for them, and when they had entered she placed a pinkwood bench for them to sit upon and went back to her throne, which was a common rocking-chair.

At her right were seated six men and women of the Sunrise Tribe and on her left six men and women of the Sunset Tribe, among the latter being Coralie. The contrast between the plain, simple dress of the Queen and the gorgeous apparel of her Counselors was quite remarkable, yet her beauty far surpassed that of any of her people and her demeanor was so modest and unassuming that it was difficult for the prisoners to believe that her word could decree life or death and that all the others were subservient to her. Tourmaline’s eyes were so deep a shade of pink that they were almost hazel, and her hair was darker than that of the others, being a golden-red in color. These points, taken with her light pink skin and slender form, rendered her distinctive among the Pinkies, whatever gown she might wear.

When the strangers were seated she turned to them and said:

“I have searched through the Great Book of Laws and found nothing about foreign people entering our land. There is a law that if any of the Blueskins break through the Fog Bank they shall be driven back with sharp sticks; but you are not Blueskins, so this Law does not apply to you. Therefore, in order to decide your fate, I have summoned a Council of twelve of my people, who will vote as to whether you shall be permitted to remain here or not. They wanted to see you before they cast their final vote, that they may examine you carefully and discover if you are worthy to become inhabitants of the Pink Country.”

“The rose is red, the violet’s blue,
But Trot is sweeter than the two!”

declared the parrot in a loud voice. It was a little verse Cap’n Bill had

taught the bird that very morning, while Trot was seeing the sun rise.

The Pinkies were startled and seemed a little frightened at hearing a bird speak so clearly. Trot laughed and patted the bird's head in return for the compliment.

"Is the Monster Man whose legs are part wood a dangerous creature?" asked one of the Sunrise Tribe.

"Not to my friends," replied Cap'n Bill, much amused. "I s'pose I could fight your whole crowd o' Pinkies, if I had to, an' make you run for your lives; but bein' as you're friendly to us you ain't in any danger."

The sailor thought this speech was diplomatic and might "head off any trouble," but the Pinkies seemed uneasy and several of them picked up their slender, pointed sticks and held them in their hands. They were not cowardly, but it was evident they mistrusted the big man, who on Earth was not considered big at all, but rather undersized.

"What we'd like," said Trot, "is to stay here, cosy an' peaceable, till we can find a way to get home to the Earth again. Your country is much nicer than the Blue Country, and we like you pretty well, from what we've seen of you; so, if you'll let us stay, we won't be any more trouble to you than we can help."

They all gazed upon the little girl curiously, and one of them said:

"How strangely light her color is! And it is pink, too, which is in her favor. But her eyes are of that dreadful blue tint which prevails in the other half of Sky Island, while her hair is a queer color all unknown to us. She is not like our people and would not harmonize with the universal color here."

"That's true," said another; "the three strangers are all inharmonious. If allowed to remain here they would ruin the color scheme of the country, where all is now pink."

"In spite of that," said Coralie, "they are harmless creatures and have done us no wrong."

"Yes, they have," replied a nervous little Sunrise man; "they wronged us by coming here."

"They could not help doing that," argued Coralie, "and it is their misfortune that they are here on Sky Island at all. Perhaps, if we keep them with us for awhile, they may find a way to return safely to their own country."

"We'll fly through the sky by-and-by — ki-yi!" yelled the parrot with startling suddenness.

"It that true?" asked a Pinky, seriously.

"Why, we would if we could," answered Trot. "We flew to this island, anyhow."

“Perhaps,” said another, “if we pushed them off the edge they could fly down again. Who knows?”

“We know,” answered Cap’n Bill hastily. “We’d tumble, but we wouldn’t fly.”

“They’d take a fall —

And that is all!”

observed the parrot, fluttering its wings.

There was silence for a moment, while all the Pinkies seemed to think deeply. Then the Queen asked the strangers to step outside while they counseled together. Our friends obeyed, and leaving the room they entered the courtyard and examined the rows of pink marble statues for nearly an hour before they were summoned to return to the little room in Tourmaline’s palace.

“We are now ready to vote as to your fate,” said the pretty Queen to them. “We have decided there are but two things for us to do: either permit you to remain here as honored guests or take you to an edge of the island and throw you over the bushes into the sky.”

They were silent at hearing this dreadful alternative, but the parrot screamed shrilly:

“Oh, what a dump! Oh, what a jump!

Won’t we all thump when we land with a bump?”

“If we do,” said Cap’n Bill, thoughtfully, “we’ll none of us know it.”

TROT and Button-Bright had now become worried and anxious, for they knew if they were tossed over the edge of the island they would be killed. Cap'n Bill frowned and set his jaws tight together. The old sailor had made up his mind to make a good fight for his boy and girl, as well as for his own life, if he was obliged to do so.

The twelve Counselors then voted, and when the vote was counted Tourmaline announced that six had voted to allow the strangers to remain and six to toss them over the bushes.

"We seem evenly divided on this matter," remarked the Queen, with a puzzled look at her Council.

Trot thought the pretty Queen was their friend, so she said:

"Of course you'll have the deciding vote, then, you being the Ruler."

"Oh, no," replied Tourmaline. "Since I have asked these good people to advise me it would be impolite to side against some of them and with the others. That would imply that the judgment of some of my Counselors is wrong, and the judgment of others right. I must ask some one else to cast the deciding vote."

"Who will it be, then?" inquired Trot. "Can't I do it? Or Cap'n Bill, or Button-Bright?"

Tourmaline smiled and shook her head, while all the Counselors murmured their protests.

"Let Trot do it
Or you'll rue it!"

advised the parrot, and then he barked like a dog and made them all jump.

"Let me think a moment," said the Queen, resting her chin on her hand.

"A Pink can think
As quick's a wink!"
the parrot declared.

But Tourmaline's thoughts required time and all her Counselors remained silent and watched her anxiously.

At last she raised her head and said:

"I shall call upon Rosalie the Witch. She is wise and honest and will decide the matter justly."

The Pinkies seemed to approve this choice, so Tourmaline rose and took a small pink paper parcel from a drawer. In it was a pink powder which she scattered upon the seat of a big armchair. Then she lighted this powder, which at first flashed vivid pink and then filled all the space around the chair with a thick pink cloud of smoke. Presently the smoke cleared away, when they all saw seated within the chair Rosalie the Witch.

This famous woman was much like the other Pinkies in appearance except that she was somewhat taller and not quite so fat as most of the people. Her skin and hair and eyes were all of a rosy pink color and her gown was of spider-web gauze that nicely matched her complexion. She did not seem very old, for her features were smiling and attractive and pleasant to view. She held in her hand a slender staff tipped with a lustrous pink jewel.

All the Pinkies present bowed very respectfully to Rosalie, who returned the salutation with a dignified nod. Then Tourmaline began to explain the presence of the three strangers and the difficulty of deciding what to do with them.

"I have summoned you here that you may cast the deciding vote," added the Queen. "What shall we do, Rosalie: allow them to remain here as honored guests, or toss them over the bushes into the sky?"

Rosalie, during Tourmaline's speech, had been attentively examining the faces of the three Earth people. Now she said:

"Before I decide I must see who these strangers are. I will follow their adventures in a vision, to discover if they have told you the truth. And, in order that you may all share my knowledge, you shall see the vision as I see it."

She then bowed her head and closed her eyes.

"Rock-a-bye, baby, on a tree-top;
Don't wake her up or the vision will stop,"
muttered the parrot; but no one paid any attention to the noisy bird.

Gradually a pink mist formed in the air about the Witch and in this mist

the vision began to appear.

First, there was Button-Bright in the attic of his house, finding the Magic Umbrella. Then his first flight was shown, and afterward his trip across the United States until he landed on the bluff where Trot sat. In rapid succession the scenes shifted and disclosed the trial flights, with Trot and Cap'n Bill as passengers, then the trip to Sky Island and the meeting with the Boolooroo. No sound was heard, but it was easy from the gestures of the actors for the Pinkies to follow all the adventures of the strangers in the Blue Country. Button-Bright was greatly astonished to see in this vision how the Boolooroo had tested the Magic Umbrella and in a fit of rage cast it into a corner underneath the cabinet, with the seats and lunch basket still attached to the handle by means of the rope. The boy now knew why he could not find the umbrella in the Treasure Chamber, and he was provoked to think he had several times been quite close to it without knowing it was there. The last scene ended with the trip through the Fog Bank and the assistance rendered them by the friendly frog. After the three tumbled upon the grass of the Pink Country the vision faded away and Rosalie lifted her head with a smile of triumph at the success of her witchcraft.

"Did you see clearly?" she asked.

"We did, O Wonderful Witch!" they declared.

"Then," said Rosalie, "there can be no doubt in your minds that these strangers have told you the truth."

"None at all," they admitted.

"What arguments are advanced by the six Counselors who voted to allow them to remain here as guests?" inquired the Witch.

"They have done us no harm," answered Coralie, speaking for her side; "therefore we should, in honor and justice, do them no harm."

Rosalie nodded. "What arguments have the others advanced?" she asked.

"They interfere with our color scheme, and do not harmonize with our people," a man of the Sunrise Tribe answered.

Again Rosalie nodded, and Trot thought her eyes twinkled a little.

"I think I now fully comprehend the matter," said she, "and so I will cast my vote. I favor taking the Earth people to the edge of the island and casting them into the sky."

For a moment there was perfect silence in the room. All present realized that this was a decree of death to the strangers.

Trot was greatly surprised at the decision and for a moment she thought her heart had stopped beating, for a wave of fear swept over her. Button-Bright flushed red as a Pinky and then grew very pale. He crept closer to Trot and took her hand in his own, pressing it to give the little girl courage. As for

Cap'n Bill, he was watching the smiling face of the Witch in a puzzled but not hopeless way, for he thought she did not seem wholly in earnest in what she had said.

"The case is decided," announced Tourmaline, in a clear, cold voice. "The three strangers shall be taken at once to the edge of the island and thrown over the bushes into the sky."

"It's raining hard outside," announced Coralie, who sat near the door; "why not wait until this shower is over?"

"I have said 'at once'," replied the little Queen, with dignity, "and so it must be at once. We are accustomed to rain, so it need not delay us, and when a disagreeable duty is to be performed the sooner it is accomplished the better."

"May I ask, ma'am," said Cap'n Bill, addressing the Witch, "why you have decided to murder of us in this cold-blooded way?"

"I did not decide to murder you," answered Rosalie.

"To throw us off the island will be murder," declared the sailor.

"Then they cannot throw you off," the Witch replied.

"The Queen says they will."

"I know," said Rosalie; "but I'm quite positive her people can't do it."

This statement astonished all the Pinkies, who looked at the Witch inquiringly.

"Why not?" asked Tourmaline.

"It is evident to me," said the Witch, speaking slowly and distinctly, "that these Earth people are protected in some way by fairies. They may not be aware of this themselves, nor did I see any fairies in my vision. But, if you will think upon it carefully, you will realize that the Magic Umbrella has no power in itself, but is enchanted by fairy powers, so that it is made to fly and to carry passengers through the air *by fairies*. This being the case, I do not think you will be allowed to injure these favored people in any way; but I am curious to see in what manner the fairies will defend them, and therefore I voted to have them thrown off the island. I bear these strangers no ill will, nor do I believe they are in any danger. But since you, Tourmaline, have determined to attempt this terrible thing at once, I shall go with you and see what will happen."

Some of the Pinkies looked pleased and some troubled at this speech, but they all prepared to escort the prisoners to the nearest edge of the island. The rain was pouring down in torrents and umbrellas were unknown; but all of them, both men and women, slipped gossamer raincoats over their clothing which kept the rain from wetting them. Then they caught up their sharp sticks and, surrounding the doomed captives, commanded them to march to

meet their fate.

The Arrival of Polychrome

CAP'N BILL had determined to fight desperately for their lives, but he was a shrewd old sailorman and he found much that was reasonable in the Witch's assertion that fairies would protect them. He had often wondered how the Magic Umbrella could fly and obey spoken commands, but now he plainly saw that the thing must be directed by some invisible power, and that power was quite likely to save them from the cruel death that had been decreed. To be sure, the Magic Umbrella was now in the Blue Country, and the fairies that directed its flight might be with the umbrella instead of with them, yet the old sailor had already experienced some strange adventures in Trot's company and knew she had managed to escape every danger that had threatened. So he decided not to fight until the last moment, and meekly hobbled along the street, as he was commanded to do. Trot was also encouraged by the Witch's suggestion, for she believed in fairies and trusted them; but Button-Bright could find no comfort in their situation and his face was very sad as he marched along by Trot's side.

If they had followed the corkscrew windings of the street it would have been a long journey to the outer edge of the Pink Country, but Tourmaline took a short cut, leading them through private gardens and even through houses, so that they followed almost a bee line to their destination. It rained all the way and the walking was very disagreeable; but our friends were confronting an important crisis in their strange adventures and with possible death at their journey's end they were in no hurry to arrive there.

Once free of the City they traversed the open country, and here they often

stepped into sticky pink mud up to their ankles. Cap'n Bill's wooden leg would often go down deep and stick fast in this mud, and at such times he would be helpless until two of the Pinkies — who were a strong people — pulled him out again.

The parrot was getting its feathers sadly draggled in the rain and the poor bird soon presented a wet and woebegone appearance.

"Soak us again —

Drown us with rain!"

it muttered in a resigned tone; and then it would turn to Trot and moan:

"The rose is red, the violet's blue;

The Pinkies are a beastly crew!"

The country was not so trim and neatly kept near the edge, for it was evident the people did not care to go too near to the dangerous place. There was a row of thick bushes, which concealed the gulf below, and as they approached these bushes the rain abruptly ceased and the clouds began to break and drift away in the sky.

"Two of you seize the girl and throw her over," said Tourmaline, in a calm, matter-of-fact way, "and two others must throw the boy over. It may take four, perhaps, to lift the huge and ancient man."

"More'n that," said Cap'n Bill, grimly. "I'm pretty sure it'll take all o' you, young lady, an' the chances are you won't do it then."

They had halted a short distance from the bushes and now there suddenly appeared through a rift in the clouds an immense Rainbow. It was perfectly formed and glistened with a dozen or more superb tintings that were so vivid and brilliant and blended into one another so exquisitely that every one paused to gaze enraptured upon the sight.

Steadily, yet with wonderful swiftness, the end of the great bow descended until it rested upon the pink field — almost at the feet of the little party of observers. Then they saw, dancing gaily upon the arch, a score of beautiful maidens, dressed in fleecy robes of rainbow tints which fluttered around them like clouds.

"The Daughters of the Rainbow!" whispered Tourmaline, in an awed voice, and the Witch beside her nodded and said: "Fairies of the sky. What did I tell you, Tourmaline?"

Just then one of the maidens tripped lightly down the span of the arch until near the very end, leaning over to observe the group below. She was exquisitely fair, dainty as a lily and graceful as a bough swaying in the breeze.

"Why, it's Polychrome!" exclaimed Button-Bright, in a voice of mingled wonder and delight. "Hello, Polly! Don't you remember me?"

“Of course I remember Button-Bright,” replied the maiden, in a sweet, tinkling voice. “The last time I saw you was in the Land of Oz.”

“Oh!” cried Trot, turning to stare at the boy with big, wide-open eyes; “were you ever in the Land of Oz?”

“Yes,” he answered, still looking at the Rainbow’s Daughter; and then he said appealingly: “These people want to kill us, Polly. Can’t you help us?”

“Polly wants a cracker! — Polly wants a cracker!” screeched the parrot.

Polychrome straightened up and glanced at her sisters.

"Tell Father to call for me in an hour or two," said she.

"There is work for me to do here, for one of my old friends is in trouble."

With this she sprang lightly from the rainbow and stood beside Button-Bright and Trot, and scarcely had she left the splendid arch when it lifted and rose into the sky. The other end had been hidden in the clouds and now the Rainbow began to fade gradually, like mist, and the sun broke through the clouds and shot its cheering rays over the Pink Country until presently the Rainbow had vanished altogether and the only reminder of it was the lovely Polychrome standing among the wondering band of Pinkies.

"Tell me," she said gently to the boy, "why are you here, and why do these people of the sky wish to destroy you?"

In a few hurried words Button-Bright related their adventure with the Magic Umbrella, and how the Boolooroo had stolen it and they had been obliged to escape into the Pink Country.

Polychrome listened and then turned to the Queen.

"Why have you decreed death to these innocent strangers?" she asked.

"They do not harmonize with our color scheme," replied Tourmaline.

"That is utter nonsense," declared Polychrome, impatiently. "You're so dreadfully pink here that your color, which in itself is beautiful, has become tame and insipid. What you really need is some sharp contrast to enhance the charm of your country, and to keep these three people with you would be a benefit rather than an injury to you."

At this the Pinkies looked downcast and ashamed, while only Rosalie the Witch laughed and seemed to enjoy the rebuke.

"But," protested Tourmaline, "the Great Book of Laws says our country shall harbor none but the Pinkies."

"Does it, indeed?" asked the Rainbow's Daughter. "Come, let us return at once to your City and examine your Book of Laws. I am quite sure I can find in them absolute protection for these poor wanderers."

They dared not disobey Polychrome's request, so at once they all turned and walked back to the City. As it was still muddy underfoot the Rainbow's Daughter took a cloak from one of the women, partly rolled it and threw it upon the ground. Then she stepped upon it and began walking forward. The cloak unrolled as she advanced, affording a constant carpet for her feet and for those of the others who followed her. So, being protected from the mud and wet, they speedily gained the City and in a short time were all gathered in the low room of Tourmaline's palace, where the Great Book of Laws lay upon a table.

Polychrome began turning over the leaves, while the others all watched her anxiously and in silence.

"Here," she said presently, "is a Law which reads as follows: 'Everyone in the Pink Country is entitled to the protection of the Ruler and to a house and a good living, except only the Blueskins. If any of the natives of the Blue Country should ever break through the Fog Bank they must be driven back with sharp sticks.' Have you read this Law, Tourmaline?"

"Yes," said the Queen; "but how does that apply to these strangers?"

"Why, being in the Pink Country, as they surely are, and not being Blueskins, they are by this Law entitled to protection, to a home and good living. The Law does not say 'Pinkies,' it says any who are in the Pink Country."

"True," agreed Coralie, greatly pleased, and all the other Pinkies nodded

their heads and repeated: “True — true!”

“The rose is red, the violet’s blue,
The law’s the thing, because it’s true!”
cried the parrot.

“I am indeed relieved to have you interpret the Law in this way,” declared Tourmaline. “I knew it was cruel to throw these poor people over the edge, but that seemed to us the only thing to be done.”

“It was cruel and unjust,” answered Polychrome, as sternly as her sweet voice could speak. “But here,” she added, for she had still continued to turn the leaves of the Great Book, “is another Law which you have also overlooked. It says: ‘The person, whether man or woman, boy or girl, living in the Pink Country who has the lightest skin, shall be the Ruler — King or Queen — as long as he or she lives, unless some one of a lighter skin is found, and this Ruler’s commands all the people must obey.’ Do you know this Law?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Tourmaline. “That is why I am the Queen. You will notice my complexion is of a lighter pink than that of any other of my people.”

“Yes,” remarked Polychrome, looking at her critically, “when you were made Queen without doubt you had the lightest colored skin in all the Pink Country. But now you are no longer Queen of the Pinkies, Tourmaline.”

Those assembled were so startled by this statement that they gazed at the Rainbow’s Daughter in astonishment for a time. Then Tourmaline asked:

“Why not, your Highness?”

“Because here is one lighter in color than yourself,” pointing to Trot. “This girl is, by the Law of the Great Book, the rightful Queen of the Pinkies, and as loyal citizens you are all obliged to obey her commands. Give me that circlet from your brow, Tourmaline.”

Without hesitation Tourmaline removed the rose-gold circlet with its glittering jewel and handed it to Polychrome, who turned and placed it upon Trot’s brow. Then she called in a loud, imperative voice:

“Greet your new Queen, Pinkies!”

One by one they all advanced, knelt before Trot and pressed her hand to their lips.

“Long live Queen Mayre!” called out Cap’n Bill, dancing around on his wooden leg in great delight; “vive la — vive la — ah, ah — Trot!”

“Thank you, Polly,” said Button-Bright gratefully. “This will fix us all right, I’m sure.”

“Why, I have done nothing,” returned Polychrome, smiling upon him; “it is the Law of the Country. Isn’t it surprising how little most people know of

their Laws? Are you all contented, Pinkies?" she asked, turning to the people.

"We are!" they cried. Then several of the men ran out to spread the news throughout the City and Country, so that a vast crowd soon began to gather in the Court of the Statues.

Mayre, Queen of the Pink Country

POLYCHROME now dismissed all but Button-Bright, Cap'n Bill, Rosalie the Witch and the new Queen of the Pinkies. Tourmaline hastened away to her father's house to put on a beautiful gown all covered with flounces and ribbons, for she was glad to be relieved of the duties of Queen and was eager to be gaily dressed and one of the people again.

"I s'pose," said Trot, "I'll have to put on one of Tourmaline's common pink dresses."

"Yes," replied Polychrome, "you must follow the customs of the country, absurd though they may be. In the little sleeping chamber adjoining this room you will find plenty of gowns poor enough for the Queen to wear. Shall I assist you to put one on?"

"No," answered Trot, "I guess I can manage it alone."

When she withdrew to the little chamber the Rainbow's Daughter began conversing with the Witch, whom she urged to stay with the new queen and protect her as long as she ruled the Pink Country. Rosalie, who longed to please the powerful Polychrome, whose fairy powers as Daughter of the Rainbow were far superior to her own witchcraft, promised faithfully to devote herself to Queen Mayre as long as she might need her services.

By the time Trot was dressed in pink, and had returned to the room, there was an excited and clamorous crowd assembled in the court, and Polychrome took the little girl's hand and led her out to greet her new subjects.

The Pinkies were much impressed by the fact that the Rainbow's Daughter was their new Queen's friend, and that Rosalie the Witch stood on

Trot's left hand and treated her with humble deference. So they shouted their approval very enthusiastically and pressed forward one by one to kneel before their new Ruler and kiss her hand.

The parrot was now on Cap'n Bill's shoulder, for Trot thought a Queen ought not to carry a bird around; but the parrot did not mind the change and was as much excited as anyone in the crowd.

"Oh, what bliss to kiss a miss!" he shouted, as Trot held out her hand to be kissed by her subjects; and then he would scream:

"We're in the sky and flyin' high:
We're goin' to live instead of die,
It's time to laugh instead of cry;
Oh, my! ki-yi! ain't this a pie!"

Cap'n Bill let the bird jabber as he pleased, for the occasion was a joyful one and it was no wonder the parrot was excited.

And, while the throng shouted greetings to the Queen, suddenly the great Rainbow appeared in the sky and dropped its end right on the Court of the Statues. Polychrome stooped to kiss Trot and Button-Bright, gave Cap'n Bill a charming smile and Rosalie the Witch a friendly nod of farewell. Then she sprang lightly upon the arch of the Rainbow and was greeted by the bevy of dancing, laughing maidens who were her sisters.

"I shall keep watch over you, Button-Bright," she called to the boy. "Don't despair, whatever happens, for behind the clouds is always the Rainbow!"

"Thank you, Polly," he answered, and Trot also thanked the lovely Polychrome — and so did Cap'n Bill. The parrot made quite a long speech, flying high above the arch where Polychrome stood and then back to Cap'n Bill's shoulder. Said he:

"We Pollys know our business, and we're — all — right!
We'll take good care of Cap'n Bill and Trot and Button-Bright
You watch 'em from the Rainbow, and I'll watch day and night,
And we'll call a sky policeman if trouble comes in sight!"

Suddenly the bow lifted and carried the dancing maidens into the sky. The colors faded, the arch slowly dissolved and the heavens were clear.

Trot turned to the Pinkies.

"Let's have a holiday to-day," she said. "Have a good time and enjoy yourselves. I don't jus' know how I'm goin' to rule this country, yet, but I'll think it over an' let you know."

Then she went into the palace hut with Cap'n Bill and Button-Bright and Rosalie the Witch, and the people went away to enjoy themselves and talk over the surprising events of the day.

“Dear me,” said Trot, throwing herself into a chair, “wasn’t that a sudden change of fortune, though? That Rainbow’s Daughter is a pretty good fairy. I’m glad you knew her, Button-Bright.”

“I was sure something would happen to save you,” remarked Rosalie, “and that was why I voted to have you thrown off the edge. I wanted to discover who would come to your assistance, and I found out. Now I have made a friend of Polychrome and that will render me more powerful as a Witch, for I can call upon her for assistance whenever I need her.”

“But — see here,” said Cap’n Bill; “you can’t afford to spend your time a-rulin’ this tucked-up country, Trot.”

“Why not?” asked Trot, who was pleased with her new and important position.

“It’d get pretty tiresome, mate, after you’d had a few quarrels with the Pinkies, for they expec’ their Queen to be as poor as poverty an’ never have any fun in life.”

“You wouldn’t like it for long, I’m sure,” added Button-Bright, seriously.

Trot seemed thoughtful.

“No; I don’t know’s I would,” she admitted. “But as long as we stay here it seems a pretty good thing to be Queen. I guess I’m a little proud of it. I wish mother could see me rulin’ the Pinkies — an’ Papa Griffith, too. Wouldn’t they open their eyes?”

“They would, mate; but they can’t see you,” said Cap’n Bill. “So the question is, what’s to be done?”

“We ought to get home,” observed the boy. “Our folks will worry about us and Earth’s the best place to live, after all. If we could only get hold of my Magic Umbrella, we’d be all right.”

“The rose is red, the violet’s blue,
But the umbrel’s stole by the Boo-loo-roo!”
screamed the parrot.

“That’s it,” said Cap’n Bill; “the Boolooroo’s got the umbrel, an’ that settles the question.”

“Tell me,” said Rosalie; “if you had your Magic Umbrella, could you fly home again in safety?”

“Of course we could,” replied Button-Bright.

“And would you prefer to go home to remaining here?”

“We would, indeed!”

“Then why do you not get the umbrella?”

“How?” asked Trot, eagerly.

The Witch paused a moment. Then she said:

“You must go into the Blue Country and force the Boolooroo to give up

your property."

"Through the Fog Bank?" asked Cap'n Bill, doubtfully.

"And let the Boolooroo capture us again?" demanded Button-Bright, with a shiver.

"An' have to wait on the Snubnoses instead of bein' a Queen!" said Trot.

"You must remember that conditions have changed, and you are now a powerful Ruler," replied Rosalie. "The Pinkies are really a great nation, and they are pledged to obey your commands. Why not assemble an army, march through the Fog Bank, fight and conquer the Boolooroo and recapture the Magic Umbrella?"

"Hooray!" shouted Cap'n Bill, pounding his wooden leg on the floor; "that's the proper talk! Let's do it, Queen Trot."

"It doesn't seem like a bad idea," added Button-Bright.

"Do you think the Pinkies could fight the Blueskins?" asked Trot.

"Why not?" replied the sailorman. "They have sharp sticks, an' know how to use 'em, whereas the Blueskins have only them windin'-up cords, with weights on the ends."

"The Blueskins are the biggest people," said the girl.

"But they're cowards, I'm sure," declared the boy.

"Anyhow," the sailor remarked, "that's our only hope of ever gett'n' home again. I'd like to try it, Trot."

"If you decide on this adventure," said Rosalie, "I believe I can be of much assistance to you."

"That'll help," asserted Cap'n Bill.

"And we've one good friend among the Blueskins," said Button-Bright. "I'm sure Ghip-Ghisizzle will side with us, and I've got the Royal Record Book, which proves that the Boolooroo has already reigned his lawful three hundred years."

"Does the book say that?" inquired Trot, with interest.

"Yes; I've been reading it."

"Then Sizzle'll be the new Boolooroo," said the girl, "an' p'raps we won't have to fight, after all."

"We'd better go prepared, though," advised Cap'n Bill, "fer that awful ol' Boolooroo won't give up without a struggle. When shall we start?"

Trot hesitated, so they all looked to Rosalie for advice.

"Just as soon as we can get the army together and ready," decided the Witch. "That will not take long — perhaps two or three days."

"Good!" cried Cap'n Bill, and the parrot screamed:

"Here's a lovely how-d'y'-do —

We're going to fight the Boo-loo-roo!

We'll get the Six Snubnoses, too,
And make'em all feel mighty blue."
"Either that or the other thing," said Trot. "Anyhow, we're in for it."

The War of the Pinks and Blues

MUCH to the surprise of the Earth people the Pinkies made no objection whatever to undertaking the adventure. Their lives were so monotonous and uninteresting that they welcomed anything in the way of excitement. This march through the unknown Fog Bank to fight the unknown Blueskins aroused them to enthusiasm, and although the result of the expedition could not be foretold and some of them were almost certain to get hurt, they did not hesitate to undertake the war.

It appeared that Coralie was Captain of the Sunset Tribe and a man named Tintint the Captain of the Sunrise Tribe. Tintint had a very pink skin and eyes so faded in their pink color that he squinted badly in order to see anything around him. He was a fat and pompous little fellow and loved to strut up and down his line of warriors twirling his long pointed stick so that all might admire him.

By Rosalie's advice the Army of Conquest consisted of one hundred Sunsets and one hundred Sunrises. Many more were eager to go, but the Witch thought that would be enough. The warriors consisted of both men and women, equally divided, and there was no need to provide uniforms for them because their regular pink clothing was a distinctive uniform in itself. Each one bore a long pointed stick as the main weapon and had two short pointed sticks stuck in his belt.

While the army was getting ready, Rosalie the Witch went to the central edge of the Fog Bank and fearlessly entered it. There she called for the King of the Giant Frogs, who came at her bidding, and the two held an earnest and

long talk together.

Meantime Cap'n Bill had the army assembled in the Court of the Statues, where Queen Mayre appeared and told the Pinkies that the sailorman was to be Commander in Chief of the Expedition and all must obey his commands. Then Cap'n Bill addressed the army and told what the Fog Bank was like. He advised them all to wear their raincoats over their pretty pink clothes, so they would not get wet, and he assured them that all the creatures to be met with in the Fog were perfectly harmless.

"When we come to the Blue Country, though," he added, "you're liable to be pretty busy. The Blueskins are tall an' lanky, an' ugly an' fierce, an' if they happen to capture you, you'll all be patched — which is a deep disgrace an' a uncomfertable mix-up."

"Will they throw us over the edge?" asked Captain Tintint, nervously.

"I don't think it," replied Cap'n Bill. "While I was there I never heard the edge mentioned. They're cruel enough to do that — 'specially the Boolooroo — but I guess they've never thought o' throwin' folks over the edge. They fight with long cords that have weights on the ends, which coil 'round you an' make you helpless in a jiffy; so whenever they throw them cords you mus' ward 'em off with your long sticks. Don't let 'em wind around your bodies, or you're done for."

He told them other things about the Blueskins, so they would not be frightened when they faced the enemy and found them so different in appearance from themselves, and also he assured them that the Pinkies were so much the braver and better armed that he had no doubt they would easily conquer.

On the third day, just at sunrise, the army moved forward to the Fog Bank, headed by Cap'n Bill, clad in an embroidered pink coat with wide, flowing pink trousers, and accompanied by Trot and Button-Bright and Rosalie the Witch — all bundled up in their pink raincoats. The parrot was there, too, as the bird refused to be left behind.

They had not advanced far into the deep fog when they were halted by a queer barrier consisting of a long line of gigantic frogs, crouching so close together that no Pinkie could squeeze between them. As the heads of the frogs were turned the other way, toward the Blue Country, the army could not at first imagine what the barrier was; but Rosalie said to them:

"Our friends the frogs have agreed to help us through the Fog Bank. Climb upon their backs — as many on each frog as are able to hold on — and then we shall make the journey more quickly."

Obeying this injunction, the Pinkies began climbing upon the frogs, and by crowding close together all were able to find places. On the back of the

King Frog rode Trot and her parrot, besides Rosalie, Button-Bright, Cap'n Bill and the captains of the two companies of the army.

When all were seated, clinging to one another so they would not slide off, Cap'n Bill gave the word of command and away leaped the frogs, all together. They bounded a long distance at this jump — some farther than others — and as soon as they landed they jumped again, without giving their passengers a chance to get their breaths. It was a bewildering and exciting ride, but a dozen of the huge jumps accomplished the journey and at the edge of Fog Bank each frog stopped so suddenly that the Pinkies went flying over their heads to tumble into the blue fields of the Blue Country, where they rolled in a confused mass until they could recover and scramble to their feet. No one was hurt, however, and the King Frog had been wise enough to treat his passengers more gently by slowing down at the edge and allowing his riders to slip to the ground very comfortably.

Cap'n Bill at once formed his army into line of battle and had them all remove the cumbersome raincoats, which they piled in a heap at the edge of the Fog Bank. It was a splendid array of warriors and from where they stood they could discover several Blueskins rushing in a panic toward the Blue City, as fast as their long blue legs could carry them.

"Well, they know we're here, anyhow," said Cap'n Bill, "and instead of waitin' to see what'll they do I guess we'll jus' march on the City an' ask 'em to please surrender."

So he raised the long sharp stick with which he had armed himself and shouted:

"For-rerd — march!"

"For-ward — march!" repeated Coralie to the Sunset Tribe.

“For-ward — march!” roared Tintint to the Sunrise people.

“March — April — June — October!” screamed the parrot.

Then the drums beat and the band played and away marched the Pinkies to capture the Blue City.

Ghip-Ghisizzle has a Bad Time

THE Boolooroo was quite busy at the time the Pinkies invaded his country. He had discovered the loss of the Book of Records and after being frightened 'most to death at the prospect of his fraud on the people's being made public, he decided to act boldly and hold his position as Boolooroo at any cost.

Since Ghip-Ghisizzle was to be the next Boolooroo, the king suspected him first of all, so he had the Majordomo bound with cords and brought before him, when he accused him of stealing the Book of Records. Of course Ghip-Ghisizzle denied taking the Book, but he became almost as nervous at its loss as had the Boolooroo. He secretly believed that Button-Bright had taken the Book from the Treasure Chamber, and if this were true it might prove as great a misfortune as if the king had kept it locked up. For Button-Bright had escaped into the Fog Bank and Ghip-Ghisizzle was afraid the boy would never again be seen in the Blue Country.

He did not tell the Boolooroo of this suspicion, because in that case the king would realize he was secure, and that his deception could never be proved against him. The Majordomo simply denied taking the Record Book, and the Boolooroo did not believe he spoke truly. To prevent his rival from ever becoming the Ruler of the Blue Country the Boolooroo determined to have him patched, but for some time he could find no other Blueskin to patch him with. No one had disobeyed a command or done anything wrong, so the king was in a quandary until he discovered that a servant named Tiggle had mixed the royal nectar for Cap'n Bill, who had been ordered to do it at the time of his capture. This was sufficient excuse for the Boolooroo, who at

once had Tiggle made a prisoner and brought before him.

This servant was not so long-legged as Ghip-Ghisizzle and his head was thicker and his nose flatter. But that pleased the Boolooroo all the more. He realized that when the great knife had sliced the prisoners in two, and their halves were patched together, they would present a ridiculous sight and all the Blueskins would laugh at them and avoid them. So, on the very morning that the Pinkies arrived, the Boolooroo had ordered his two prisoners brought into the room of the palace where the Great Knife stood and his soldiers were getting ready to perform the operation of patching Ghip-Ghisizzle with Tiggle, when a messenger came running to say that a great army of the Pinkies had broken through the Fog Bank.

"Never mind," said the Boolooroo, "I'll attend to them in a minute. I'm busy now."

"They are marching on the City," said the frightened messenger. "If you delay, Most High and Mighty One, we shall all be captured. You'd better save your City first and do your patching afterward."

"What!" roared the Boolooroo, "dare you dictate to me?" But he was impressed by the man's logic. After locking the prisoners, who were still bound, in the Room of the Great Knife, the Ruler hurried away to assemble his soldiers.

By this time the Pinkies had advanced halfway to the walls of the City, so the first thing the Boolooroo did was to order all the gates closed and locked and then he placed a line of soldiers on the wall to prevent any of the Pinkies from climbing over.

Therefore when Cap'n Bill's army reached the wall he was obliged to halt his ranks until he could find a way to enter the City.

Now when the Boolooroo looked through the blue-steel bars of the main gate and saw the enemy armed with sharp-pointed sticks, he began to tremble; and when he thought how painful it would be to have his body and arms and legs prodded and pricked by such weapons he groaned aloud and was very miserable. But the thought occurred to him that if he could avoid being caught by the Pinkies they would be unable to harm him. So he went among his people and reminded them how horrible it would feel to be punched full of holes by the invaders, and urged them to fight desperately and drive the Pinkies back into the Fog Bank.

Only a few of the Blueskins were soldiers, and these all belonged to the King's bodyguard, but the citizens realized they must indeed fight bravely to save themselves from getting hurt, so they promised the Boolooroo to do all they could. They armed themselves with long cords having weights fastened to the ends, and practiced throwing these weights in such a manner that the

cords would wind around their enemies. Also they assembled in the streets in small groups and told each other in frightened whispers that all their trouble was due to the Boolooroo's cruel treatment of the Earth people. If he had received them as friends instead of making them slaves, they would never have escaped to the Pinkies and brought an army into the Blue Country, that they might be revenged. The Blueskins had not liked their Boolooroo, before this, and now they began to hate him, forgetting they had also treated the strangers in a very disagreeable manner.

Meantime the Six Snubnosed Princesses had seen from their rooms in a tower of the palace the army of the Pinkies marching upon them, and the sight had served to excite them greatly. They had been quarreling bitterly among themselves all the morning, and strangely enough this quarrel was all about which of them should marry Ghip-Ghisizzle. They knew that some day the Majordomo would become Boolooroo, and each one of the six had determined to marry him so as to be the Queen — and thus force her sisters to obey her commands. They paid no attention to the fact that Ghip-Ghisizzle did not want to marry any of them, for they had determined that when it was agreed who should have him they would ask their father to force the man to marry.

While they quarreled in one room of the palace Ghip-Ghisizzle was in danger of being patched in another room; but the Six Snubnosed Princesses did not know that. The arrival of the Pinkies gave them something new to talk about, so they hurried downstairs and along the corridors so as to gain the courtyard and take part in the exciting scenes.

But as they passed the closed door of the Room of the Great Knife they heard a low moan and stopped to listen. The moan was repeated and, being curious, they unlocked the door — the key having been left on the outside — and entered the room.

At once the Pinkies were forgotten, for there upon the floor, tightly bound, lay Ghip-Ghisizzle, and beside him poor Tiggle, who had uttered the moans.

The six Princesses sat down in a circle facing the captives and Cerulia said:

"Ghip, my dear, we will release you on one condition: That you choose a wife from among us and promise to marry the one selected, as soon as the Pinkies are driven back into the Fog Bank."

Ghip-Ghisizzle managed to shake his head. Then he said:

"Really, ladies, you must excuse me. I'd rather be patched than mismatched, as I would be with a lovely snubnosed wife. You are too beautiful for me; go seek your husbands elsewhere."

"Monster!" cried Indigo; "if you choose me I'll scratch your eyes out!"

“If you choose me,” said Cobalt, in a rage, “I’ll tear out your hair by the roots!”

“If I am to be your wife,” screamed Azure. “I’ll mark your obstinate face with my finger nails!”

“And I,” said Turquoise, passionately, “will pound your head with a broomstick!”

“I’ll shake him till his teeth rattle!” shrieked Sapphire.

“The best way to manage a husband,” observed Cerulia angrily, “is to pull his nose.”

“Ladies,” said Ghip-Ghisizzle, when he had a chance to speak, “do not anticipate these pleasures, I beg of you, for I shall choose none among you for a wife.”

“We’ll see about that,” said Indigo.

“I think you will soon change your mind,” added Azure.

“I’m going to be patched to Tiggle, here, as soon as the Boolooroo returns,” said Ghip-Ghisizzle, “and it’s against the law for a patched man to marry anyone. It’s regarded as half-bigamy.”

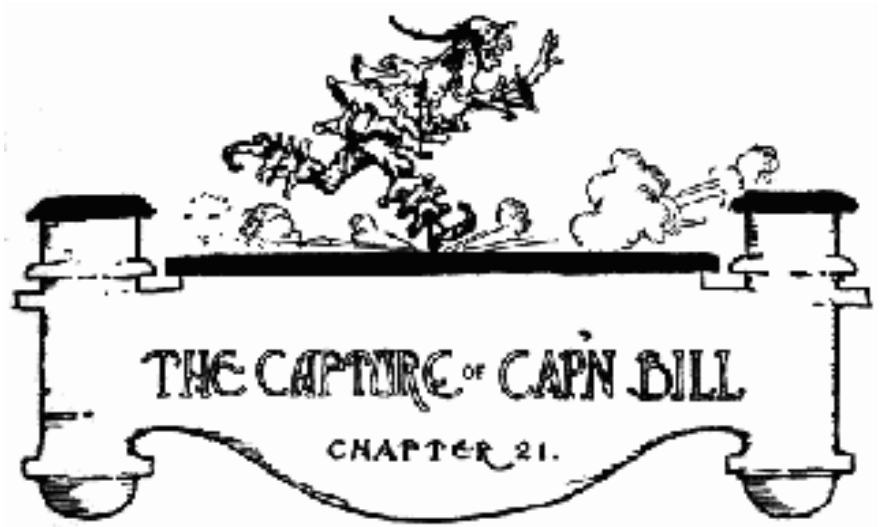
“Dear me!” cried Cobalt; “if he’s patched he never can be Boolooroo.”

“Then he mustn’t be patched,” declared Sapphire. “We must save him from that fate, girls, and force him to decide among us. Otherwise, none of us can ever be the Queen.”

This being evident, they proceeded to unbind the long legs of Ghip-Ghisizzle, leaving his body and arms, however, tied fast together. Then between them they got him upon his feet and led him away, paying no attention to poor Tiggle, who whined to be released so he could fight in the war.

After a hurried consultation the Six Snubnosed Princesses decided to hide the Majordomo in one of their boudoirs, so they dragged him up the stairs to their reception room and fell to quarreling as to whose boudoir should be occupied by their captive. Not being able to settle the question they finally locked him up in a vacant room across the hall and told him he must stay there until he had decided to marry one of the Princesses and could make a choice among them.

The Capture of Cap'n Bill



WHILE this was transpiring in the palace Cap'n Bill and the Pinkies had encamped before the principal gate of the City and a tent had been pitched for Trot and Button-Bright and Rosalie. The army had been very fearful and weak-kneed when it first entered the Blue Country, but perceiving that the Boolooroo and his people were afraid of them and had locked themselves up in the City, the Pinkies grew bolder and longed to make an attack.

One of them, in his curiosity to examine the Blue City, got a little too near the wall, and a blue soldier throw his cord-and-weight at him. The cord didn't wind around the Pinkie, as he was too far off, but the weight hit him in the eye and made him howl lustily as he trotted back to his comrades at full speed. After this experience the invaders were careful to keep a safe distance from the wall.

The Boolooroo, having made all preparations to receive the enemy, was annoyed because they held back. He was himself so nervous and excited that he became desperate and after an hour of tedious waiting, during which time he pranced around impatiently, he decided to attack the hated Pinkies and rid the country of them.

"Their dreadful color makes me hysterical," he said to his soldiers, "so if I am to have any peace of mind we must charge the foe and drive them back into the Fog Bank. But take all the prisoners you can, my brave men, and to-morrow we will have a jolly time patching them. Don't be afraid; those pink creatures have no blue blood in their veins and they'll run like rabbits when they see us coming."

Then he ordered the gate thrown open and immediately the Blueskins poured out into the open plain and began to run toward the Pinkies. The Boolooroo went out, too, but he kept well behind his people, remembering the sharp sticks with which the enemy were armed.

Cap'n Bill was alert and had told his army what to do in case of an attack. The Pinkies did not run like rabbits, but formed a solid line and knelt down with their long, sharp sticks pointed directly toward the Blueskins, the other ends being set firmly upon the ground. Of course the Blueskins couldn't run against these sharp points, so they halted a few feet away and began to swing their cord-and-weights. But the Pinkies were too close together to be caught in this manner, and now by command of Cap'n Bill they suddenly rose to their feet and began jabbing their sticks at the foe. The Blueskins hesitated until a few got pricked and began to yell with terror, when the whole of the Boolooroo's attacking party turned and ran back to the gate, their Ruler reaching it first of all. The Pinkies tried to chase them, but their round, fat legs were no match for the long, thin legs of the Blueskins, who quickly gained the gate and shut themselves up in the City again.

"It is evident," panted the Boolooroo, facing his defeated soldiers wrathfully, "that you are a pack of cowards!"

"We but followed your own royal example in running," replied the Captain.

"I merely ran back to the City to get a drink of water, for I was thirsty," declared the Boolooroo.

"So did we! So did we!" cried the soldiers, eagerly. "We were all thirsty."

"Your High and Mighty Spry and Flighty Majesty," remarked the Captain, respectfully, "it occurs to me that the weapons of the Pinkies are superior to our own. What we need, in order to oppose them successfully, is a number of sharp sticks which are longer than their own."

"True — true!" exclaimed the Boolooroo, enthusiastically. "Get to work at once and make yourselves long sharp sticks, and then we will attack the enemy again."

So the soldiers and citizens all set to work preparing long sharp sticks, and while they were doing this Rosalie the Witch had a vision in which she saw exactly what was going on inside the City wall. Queen Trot and Cap'n Bill and Button-Bright saw the vision, too, for they were all in the tent together, and the sight made them anxious.

"What can be done?" asked the girl. "The Blueskins are bigger and stronger than the Pinkies, and if they have sharp sticks which are longer than ours they will surely defeat us."

"I have one magic charm," said Rosalie, thoughtfully, "that will save our

army; but I am allowed to work only one magic charm every three days — not oftener — and perhaps I'll need the magic for other things."

"Strikes me, ma'am," returned the sailor, "that what we need most on this expedition is to capture the Blueskins. If we don't, we'll need plenty of magic to help us back to the Pink Country; but if we do, we can take care of ourselves without magic."

"Very well," replied Rosalie; "I will take your advice, Cap'n, and enchant the weapons of the Pinkies."

She then went out and had all the Pinkies come before her, one by one, and she enchanted their sharp sticks by muttering some cabalistic words and making queer passes with her hands over the weapons.

"Now," she said to them, "you will be powerful enough to defeat the Blueskins, whatever they may do."

The Pinkies were overjoyed at this promise and it made them very brave indeed, since they now believed they would surely be victorious.

When the Boolooroo's people were armed with long, thin lances of bluewood, all sharpened to fine points at one end, they prepared to march once more against the invaders. Their sticks were twice as long as those of the Pinkies and the Boolooroo chuckled with glee to think what fun they would have in punching holes in the round, fat bodies of his enemies.

Out from the gate they marched very boldly and pressed on to attack the Pinkies, who were drawn up in line of battle to receive them, with Cap'n Bill at their head. When the opposing forces came together, however, and the Blueskins pushed their points against the Pinkies, the weapons which had been enchanted by Rosalie began to whirl in swift circles — so swift that the eye could scarcely follow the motion. The result was that the lances of the Boolooroo's people could not touch the Pinkies, but were thrust aside with violence and either broken in two or sent hurling through the air in all directions. Finding themselves so suddenly disarmed, the amazed Blueskins turned about and ran again, while Cap'n Bill, greatly excited by his victory, shouted to his followers to pursue the enemy, and hobbled after them as fast as he could make his wooden leg go, swinging his sharp stick as he advanced.

The Blues were in such a frightened, confused mass that they got in one another's way and could not make very good progress on the retreat, so the old sailor soon caught up with them and began jabbing at the crowd with his stick. Unfortunately the Pinkies had not followed their commander, being for the moment dazed by their success, so that Cap'n Bill was all alone among the Blueskins when he stepped his wooden leg into a hole in the ground and tumbled full length, his sharp stick flying from his hand and pricking the

Boolooroo in the leg as it fell.

At this the Ruler of the Blues stopped short in his flight to yell with terror, but seeing that only the sailorman was pursuing them and that this solitary foe had tumbled flat upon the ground, he issued a command and several of his people fell upon poor Cap'n Bill, seized him in their long arms and carried him struggling into the City, where he was fast bound.

Then a panic fell upon the Pinkies at the loss of their leader, and Trot and Button-Bright called out in vain for them to rescue Cap'n Bill. By the time the army recovered their wits and prepared to obey, it was too late. And, although Trot ran with them, in her eagerness to save her friend, the gate was found to be fast barred and she knew it was impossible for them to force an entrance into the City.

So she went sorrowfully back to the camp, followed by the Pinkies, and asked Rosalie what could be done.

"I'm sure I do not know," replied the Witch. "I cannot use another magic charm until three days have expired, but if they do not harm Cap'n Bill during that time I believe I can then find a way to save him."

"Three days is a long time," remarked Trot, dismally.

"The Boolooroo may decide to patch him at once," added Button-Bright, with equal sadness, for he too mourned the sailor's loss.

"It can't be helped," replied Rosalie. "I am not a fairy, my dears, but merely a witch, and so my magic powers are limited. We can only hope that the Boolooroo won't patch Cap'n Bill for three days."

When night settled down upon the camp of the Pinkies, where many tents had now been pitched, all the invaders were filled with gloom. The band tried to enliven them by playing the "Dead March," but it was not a success. The Pinkies were despondent in spite of the fact that they had repulsed the attack of the Blues, for as yet they had not succeeded in gaining the City or finding the Magic Umbrella, and the blue dusk of this dread country — which was so different from their own land of sunsets — made them all very nervous. They saw the moon rise for the first time in their lives, and its cold, silvery radiance made them shudder and prevented them from going to sleep. Trot tried to interest them by telling them that on the Earth the people had both the sun and the moon, and loved them both; but nevertheless it is certain that had not the terrible Fog Bank stood between them and the Pink Land most of the invading army would have promptly deserted and gone back home.

Trot couldn't sleep, either, she was so worried over Cap'n Bill. She went back to the tent where Rosalie and Button-Bright were sitting in the moonlight and asked the Witch if there was no way in which she could secretly get into the City of the Blues and search for her friend. Rosalie

thought it over for some time and then replied:

"We can make a rope ladder that will enable you to climb to the top of the wall, and then you can lower it to the other side and descend into the City. But, if anyone should see you, you would be captured."

"I'll risk that," said the child, excited at the prospect of gaining the side of Cap'n Bill in this adventurous way. "Please make the rope ladder at once, Rosalie!"

So the Witch took some ropes and knotted together a ladder long enough to reach to the top of the wall. When it was finished, the three — Rosalie, Trot and Button-Bright — stole out into the moonlight and crept unobserved into the shadow of the wall. The Blueskins were not keeping a very close watch, as they were confident the Pinkies could not get into the City.

The hardest part of Rosalie's task was to toss up one end of the rope ladder until it would catch on some projection on top of the wall. There were few such projections, but after creeping along the wall for a distance they saw the end of a broken flagstaff near the top edge. The Witch tossed up the ladder, trying to catch it upon this point, and on the seventh attempt she succeeded.

"Good!" cried Trot; "now I can climb up."

"Don't you want me to go with you?" asked Button-Bright, a little wistfully.

"No," said the girl; "you must stay to lead the army. And, if you can think of a way, you must try to rescue us. Perhaps I'll be able to save Cap'n Bill myself; but if I don't it's all up to you, Button-Bright."

"I'll do my best," he promised.

"And here — keep my polly till I come back," added Trot, giving him the bird. "I can't take it with me, for it would be a bother, an' if it tried to spout po'try I'd be discovered in a jiffy."

As the beautiful Witch kissed the little girl good-bye she slipped upon her finger a curious ring. At once Button-Bright exclaimed:

"Why, where has she gone?"

"I'm right here," said Trot's voice by his side. "Can't you see me?"

"No," replied the boy, mystified.

Rosalie laughed. "It's a magic ring I've loaned you, my dear," said she, "and as long as you wear it you will be invisible to all eyes — those of Blueskins and Pinkies alike. I'm going to let you wear this wonderful ring, for it will save you from being discovered by your enemies. If at any time you wish to be seen, take the ring from your finger; but as long as you wear it, no one can see you — not even Earth people."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Trot. "That will be fine."

“I see you have another ring on your hand,” said Rosalie, “and I perceive it is enchanted in some way. Where did you get it?”

“The Queen of the Mermaids gave it to me,” answered Trot; “but Sky Island is so far away from the sea that the ring won’t do me any good while I’m here. It’s only to call the mermaids to me if I need them, and they can’t swim in the sky, you see.”

Rosalie smiled and kissed her again. “Be brave, my dear,” she said, “and I am sure you will be able to find Cap’n Bill without getting in danger yourself. But be careful not to let any Blueskin touch you, for while you are in contact with any person you will become visible. Keep out of their way and you will be perfectly safe. Don’t lose the ring, for you must give it back to me when you return. It is one of my witchcraft treasures and I need it in my business.”

Then Trot climbed the ladder, although neither Button-Bright nor Rosalie could see her do so, and when she was on top the broad wall she pulled up the knotted ropes and began to search for a place to let it down on the other side. A little way off she found a bluestone seat, near to the inner edge, and attaching the ladder to this she easily descended it and found herself in the Blue City. A guard was pacing up and down near her, but as he could not see the girl he of course paid no attention to her. So, after marking the place where the ladder hung, that she might know how to reach it again, Trot hurried away through the streets of the city.

All the Blueskins except a few sentries had gone to bed and were sound asleep. A blue gloom hung over the City, which was scarcely relieved by a few bluish, wavering lights here and there, but Trot knew the general direction in which the palace lay and she decided to go there first. She believed the Boolooroo would surely keep so important a prisoner as Cap'n Bill locked up in his own palace.

Once or twice the little girl lost her way, for the streets were very puzzling to one not accustomed to them, but finally she sighted the great palace and went up to the entrance. There she found a double guard posted. They were sitting on a bench outside the doorway and both stood up as she approached.

"We thought we heard footsteps," said one.

"So did we," replied the other; "yet there is no one in sight."

Trot then saw that the guards were the two patched men, Jimfred Jonesjinks and Fredjim Jinksjones, who had been talking together quite cheerfully. It was the first time the girl had seen them together and she marveled at the queer patching that had so strongly united them, yet so thoroughly separated them.

"You see," remarked Jimfred, as they seated themselves again upon the bench, "the Boolooroo has ordered the patching to take place to-morrow morning after breakfast. The old Earth man is to be patched to poor Tiggle, instead of Ghip-Ghisizzle, who has in some way managed to escape from the Room of the Great Knife — no one knows how but Tiggle, and Tiggle won't tell."

“We’re sorry for anyone who has to be patched,” replied Fredjim in a reflective tone, “for although it didn’t hurt us as much as we expected, it’s a terrible mix-up to be in — until we become used to our strange combination. You and we are about alike now, Jimfred, although we were so different before.”

“Not so,” said Jimfred; “we are really more intelligent than you are, for the left side of our brain was always the keenest before we were patched.”

“That may be,” admitted Fredjim, “but we are much the strongest, because our right arm was by far the best before we were patched.”

“We are not sure of that,” responded Jimfred, “for we have a right arm, too, and it is pretty strong.”

“We will test it,” suggested the other, “by all pulling upon one end of this bench with our right arms. Whichever can pull the bench from the others must be the stronger.”

While they were tussling at the bench, dragging it first here and then there in the trial of strength, Trot opened the door of the palace and walked in. It was pretty dark in the hall and only a few dim blue lights showed at intervals down the long corridors. As the girl walked through these passages she could hear snores of various degrees coming from behind some of the closed doors and knew that all the regular inmates of the place were sound asleep. So she mounted to the upper floor, and thinking she would be likely to find Cap’n Bill in the Room of the Great Knife she went there and tried the door. It was locked, but the key had been left on the outside. She waited until the sentry who was pacing the corridor had his back toward her and then she turned the key and slipped within, softly closing the door behind her.

It was dark as pitch in the room and Trot didn’t know how to make a light. After a moment’s thought she began feeling her way to the window, stumbling over objects as she went. Every time she made a noise some one groaned, and that made the child uneasy.

At last she found a window and managed to open the shutters and let the moonlight in. It wasn’t a very strong moonlight but it enabled her to examine the interior of the room. In the center stood the Great Knife which the Boolooroo used to split people in two when he patched them, and at one side was a dark form huddled upon the floor and securely bound.

Trot hastened to this form and knelt beside it, but was disappointed to find it was only Tiggle. The man stirred a little and rolled against Trot’s knee, when she at once became visible to him.

“Oh, it’s the Earth Child,” said he. “Are you condemned to be patched, too, little one?”

“No,” answered Trot. “Tell me where Cap’n Bill is.”

“I can’t,” said Tiggle. “The Boolooroo has hidden him until to-morrow morning, when he’s to be patched to me. Ghip-Ghisizzle was to have been my mate, but Ghip escaped, being carried away by the Six Snubnosed Princesses.”

“Why?” she asked.

“One of them means to marry him,” explained Tiggle.

“Oh, that’s worse than being patched!” cried Trot.

“Much worse,” said Tiggle, with a groan.

But now an idea occurred to the girl.

“Would you like to escape?” she asked the captive.

“I would, indeed!” said he.

“If I get you out of the palace, can you hide yourself so that you won’t be found?”

“Certainly!” he declared. “I know a house where I can hide so snugly that all the Boolooroo’s soldiers cannot find me.”

“All right,” said Trot; “I’ll do it; for when you’re gone the Boolooroo will have no one to patch Cap’n Bill to.”

“He may find some one else,” suggested the prisoner.

“But it will take him time to do that, and time is all I want,” answered the child. Even while she spoke Trot was busy with the knots in the cords, and presently she had unbound Tiggle, who soon got upon his feet.

“Now, I’ll go to one end of the passage and make a noise,” said she; “and when the guard runs to see what it is you must run the other way. Outside the palace Jimfred and Fredjim are on guard, but if you tip over the bench they are seated on you can easily escape them.”

“I’ll do that, all right,” promised the delighted Tiggle. “You’ve made a friend of me, little girl, and if ever I can help you I’ll do it with pleasure.”

Then Trot started for the door and Tiggle could no longer see her because she was not now touching him. The man was much surprised at her disappearance, but listened carefully and when he heard the girl make a noise at one end of the corridor he opened the door and ran in the opposite direction, as he had been told to do.

Of course the guard could not discover what made the noise and Trot ran little risk, as she was careful not to let him touch her. When Tiggle had safely escaped, the little girl wandered through the palace in search of Cap’n Bill, but soon decided such a quest in the dark was likely to fail and she must wait until morning. She was tired, too, and thought she would find a vacant room — of which there were many in the big palace — and go to sleep until daylight. She remembered there was a comfortable vacant room just opposite the suite of the Six Snubnosed Princesses, so she stole softly up to it and tried

the door. It was locked, but the key was outside, as the Blueskins seldom took a door-key away from its place. So she turned the key, opened the door, and walked in.

Now, this was the chamber in which Ghip-Ghisizzle had been confined by the Princesses, his arms being bound tight to his body but his legs left free. The Boolooroo in his search had failed to discover what had become of Ghip-Ghisizzle, but the poor man had been worried every minute for fear his retreat would be discovered or that the terrible Princesses would come for him and nag him until he went crazy. There was one window in his room and the prisoner had managed to push open the sash with his knees. Looking out, he found that a few feet below the window was the broad wall that ran all around the palace gardens. A little way to the right the wall joined the wall of the City, being on the same level with it.

Ghip-Ghisizzle had been thinking deeply upon this discovery, and he decided that if anyone entered his room he would get through the window, leap down upon the wall and try in this way to escape. It would be a dangerous leap, for as his arms were bound he might topple off the wall into the garden; but he resolved to take this chance.

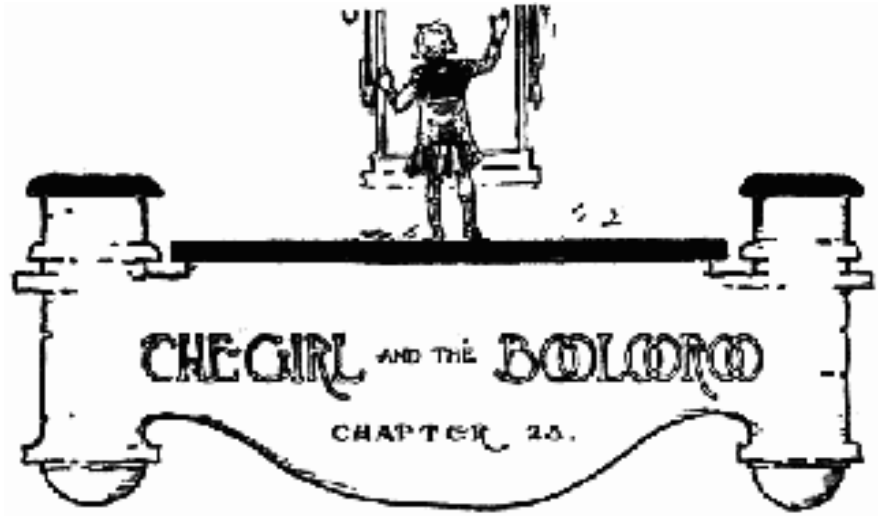
Therefore, when Trot rattled at the door of his room Ghip-Ghisizzle ran and seated himself upon the window-sill, dangling his long legs over the edge. When she finally opened the door he slipped off and let himself fall to the wall, where he doubled up in a heap. The next minute, however, he had scrambled to his feet and was running swiftly along the garden wall.

Trot, finding the window open, came and looked out, and she saw the Majordomo's tall form hastening along the top of the wall. The guards saw him, too, outlined against the sky in the moonlight, and they began yelling at him to stop; but Ghip-Ghisizzle kept right on until he reached the City Wall, when he began to follow that. More guards were yelling, now, running along the foot of the wall to keep the fugitive in sight, and people began to pour out of the houses and join in the chase.

Poor Ghip realized that if he kept on the wall he would merely circle the city and finally be caught. If he leaped down into the City he would be seized at once. Just then he came opposite the camp of the Pinkies and decided to trust himself to the mercies of his Earth friends rather than be made a prisoner by his own people, who would obey the commands of their detested but greatly feared Boolooroo. So, suddenly he gave a mighty leap and came down into the field outside the City. Again he fell in a heap and rolled over and over, for it was a high wall and the jump a dangerous one; but finally he recovered and got upon his feet, delighted to find he had broken none of his bones.

Some of the Blueskins had by now opened a gate, and out rushed a crowd to capture the fugitive; but Ghip-Ghisizzle made straight for the camp of the Pinkies and his pursuers did not dare follow him far in that direction. They soon gave up the chase and returned to the City, while the runaway Majordomo was captured by Captain Coralie and marched away to the tent of Rosalie the Witch, a prisoner of the Pinkies.

The Girl and the Boolooroo



TROT watched from the window the escape of Ghip-Ghisizzle but did not know, of course, who it was. Then, after the City had quieted down again, she lay upon the bed without undressing and was sound asleep in a minute.

The blue dawn was just breaking when she opened her eyes with a start of fear that she might have overslept, but soon she found that no one else in the palace was yet astir. Even the guards had gone to sleep by this time and were adding their snores to the snores of the other inhabitants of the Royal Palace. So the little girl got up and, finding a ewer of water and a basin upon the dresser, washed herself carefully and then looked in a big mirror to see how her hair was. To her astonishment there was no reflection at all; the mirror was blank so far as Trot was concerned. She laughed a little, at that, remembering she wore the ring of Rosalie the Witch, which rendered her invisible. Then she slipped quietly out of the room and found it was already light enough in the corridors for her to see all objects distinctly.

After hesitating a moment which way to turn she decided to visit the Snubnosed Princesses and passed through the big reception room to the sleeping room of Indigo. There this Princess, the crossest and most disagreeable of all the disagreeable six, was curled up in bed and slumbering cosily. The little blue dog came trotting out of Indigo's boudoir and crowed like a rooster, for although he could not see Trot his keen little nose scented her presence. Thinking it time the Princess awoke, Trot leaned over and gave her snubnose a good tweak, and at once Indigo yelled like an Indian and sat up, glaring around her to see who had dared to pull her nose. Trot, standing

back in the room, threw a sofa pillow that caught the Princess on the side of her head. At once Indigo sprang out of bed and rushed into the chamber of Cobalt, which adjoined her own. Thinking it was this sister who had slyly attacked her, Indigo rushed at the sleeping Cobalt and slapped her face.

At once there was war. The other four Princesses, hearing the screams and cries of rage, came running into Cobalt's room and as fast as they appeared Trot threw pillows at them, so that presently all six were indulging in a free-for-all battle and snarling like tigers.

The blue lamb came trotting into the room and Trot leaned over and patted the pretty little animal; but as she did so she became visible for an instant, each pat destroying the charm of the ring while the girl was in contact with a living creature. These flashes permitted some of the Princesses to see her and at once they rushed toward her with furious cries. But the girl realized what had happened, and leaving the lamb she stepped back into a corner and her frenzied enemies failed to find her. It was a little dangerous, though, remaining in a room where six girls were feeling all around for her, so she went away and left them to their vain search while she renewed her hunt for Cap'n Bill.

The sailorman did not seem to be in any of the rooms she entered, so she decided to visit the Boolooroo's own apartments. In the room where Rosalie's vision had shown them the Magic Umbrella lying under a cabinet, Trot attempted to find it, for she considered that next to rescuing Cap'n Bill this was the most important task to accomplish; but the umbrella had been taken away and was no longer beneath the cabinet. This was a severe disappointment to the child, but she reflected that the umbrella was surely some place in the Blue City, so there was no need to despair.

Finally she entered the King's own sleeping chamber and found the Boolooroo in bed and asleep, with a funny nightcap tied over his egg-shaped head. As Trot looked at him she was surprised to see that he had one foot out of bed and that to his big toe was tied a cord that led out of the bedchamber into a small dressing room beyond. Trot slowly followed this cord and in the dressing room came upon Cap'n Bill, who was lying asleep upon a lounge and snoring with great vigor. His arms were tied to his body and his body was tied fast to the lounge. The wooden leg stuck out into the room at an angle and the shoe on his one foot had been removed so that the end of the cord could be fastened to the sailor's big toe.

This arrangement had been a clever thought of the Boolooroo. Fearing his important prisoner might escape before he was patched, as Ghip-Ghisizzle had done, the cruel King of the Blues had kept Cap'n Bill in his private apartments and had tied his own big toe to the prisoner's big toe, so that if

the sailor made any attempt to get away he would pull on the cord, and that would arouse the Boolooroo.

Trot saw through this cunning scheme at once, so the first thing she did was to untie the cord from Cap'n Bill's big toe and retie it to a leg of the lounge. Then she unfastened her friend's bonds and leaned over to give his leathery face a smacking kiss.

Cap'n Bill sat up and rubbed his eyes. He looked around the room and rubbed his eyes again, seeing no one who could have kissed him. Then he discovered that his bonds had been removed and he rubbed his eyes once more to make sure he was not dreaming.

The little girl laughed softly.

"Trot!" exclaimed the sailor, recognizing her voice.

Then Trot came up and took his hand, the touch at once rendering her visible to him.

"Dear me!" said the bewildered sailor; "however did you get here, mate, in the Boolooroo's own den? Is the Blue City captured?"

"Not yet," she replied; "but *you* are, Cap'n, and I've come to save you."

"All alone, Trot?"

"All alone, Cap'n Bill. But it's got to be done, jus' the same." And then she explained about the magic ring Rosalie had lent her, which rendered her invisible while she wore it — unless she touched some living creature. Cap'n Bill was much interested.

"I'm willing to be saved, mate," he said, "for the Boo-l'roo is set on patchin' me right after breakfas', which I hope the cook'll be late with."

"Who are you to be patched with?" she asked.

"A feller named Tiggle, who's in disgrace 'cause he mixed the royal necktie for me."

"That was nectar — not necktie," corrected Trot. "But you needn't be 'fraid of bein' patched with Tiggle, 'cause I've set him loose. By this time he's in hiding, where he can't be found."

"That's good," said Cap'n Bill, nodding approval; "but the blamed ol' Bool'roo's sure to find some one else. What's to be done, mate?"

Trot thought about it for a moment. Then she remembered how some unknown man had escaped from the palace the night before, by means of the wall, which he had reached from the window of the very chamber in which she had slept. Cap'n Bill might easily do the same. And the rope ladder she had used would help the sailor down from the top of the wall.

"Could you climb down a rope ladder, Cap'n?" she asked.

"Like enough," said he. "I've done it many a time on shipboard."

"But you hadn't a wooden leg then," she reminded him.

“The wooden leg won’t bother much,” he assured her.

So Trot tied a small sofa cushion around the end of his wooden leg, so it wouldn’t make any noise pounding upon the floor, and then she quietly led the sailor through the room of the sleeping Boolooroo and through several other rooms until they came to the passage. Here a soldier was on guard, but he had fallen asleep for a moment, in order to rest himself. They passed this Blueskin without disturbing him and soon reached the chamber opposite the suite of the Six Snubnosed Princesses, whom they could hear still quarreling loudly among themselves.

Trot locked the door from the inside, so no one could disturb them, and then led the sailor to the window. The garden was just below.

“But — good gracious me! It’s a drop o’ ten feet, Trot,” he exclaimed.

“And you’ve only one foot to drop, Cap’n,” she said, laughing. “Couldn’t you let yourself down with one of the sheets from the bed?”

“I’ll try,” he rejoined. “But, can *you* do that circus act, Trot?”

“Oh, I’m goin’ to stay here an’ find the Magic Umbrella,” she replied. “Bein’ invis’ble, Cap’n, I’m safe enough. What I want to do is to see you safe back with the Pinkies, an’ then I’ll manage to hold my own all right, never fear.”

So they brought a blue sheet and tied one end to a post of the blue bed and let the other end dangle out the blue window.

“Good-bye, mate,” said Cap’n Bill, preparing to descend; “don’t get reckless.”

“I won’t, Cap’n. Don’t worry.”

Then he grasped the sheet with both hands and easily let himself down to the wall. Trot had told him where to find the rope ladder she had left and how to fasten it to the broken flagstaff so he could climb down into the field outside the City.

As soon as he was safe on the wall Cap’n Bill began to hobble along the broad top toward the connecting wall that surrounded the entire City — just as Ghip-Ghisizzle had done — and Trot anxiously watched him from the window.

But the Blue City was now beginning to waken to life. One of the soldiers came from a house, sleepily yawning and stretching himself, and presently his eyes lit upon the huge form of Cap’n Bill hastening along the top of the wall. The soldier gave a yell that aroused a score of his comrades and brought them tumbling into the street. When they saw how the Boolooroo’s precious prisoner was escaping they instantly became alert and wide-awake, and every one started in pursuit along the foot of the wall.

Of course the long-legged Blueskins could run faster than poor Cap’n

Bill. Some of them soon got ahead of the old sailorman and came to the rope ladder which Trot had left dangling from the stone bench, where it hung down inside the City. The Blue soldiers promptly mounted this ladder and so gained the wall, heading off the fugitive. When Cap'n Bill came up, panting and all out of breath, the Blueskins seized him and held him fast.

Cap'n Bill was terribly disappointed at being recaptured, and so was Trot, who had eagerly followed his every movement from her window in the palace. The little girl could have cried with vexation, and I think she did weep a few tears before she recovered her courage; but Cap'n Bill was a philosopher, in his way, and had learned to accept ill fortune cheerfully. Knowing he was helpless, he made no protest when they again bound him and carried him down the ladder like a bale of goods.

Others were also disappointed by his capture. Button-Bright had heard the parrot squawking:

"Oh, there's Cap'n Bill! There's **Cap'n Bill**!

I see him still — up on that hill!

It's Cap'n Bill!"

So the boy ran out of his tent to find the sailor hurrying along the top of the wall as fast as he could go. At once Button-Bright aroused Coralie, who got her Pinkies together and quickly marched them toward the wall to assist in the escape of her Commander in Chief.

But they were too late. Before they could reach the wall the Blueskins had captured Trot's old friend and lugged him down into the City, so Coralie and Button-Bright were forced to return to their camp discomfited. There Ghip-Ghisizzle and Rosalie were awaiting them and they all went into the Witch's tent and held a council of war.

"Tell me," said Ghip-Ghisizzle to Button-Bright, "did you not take the Royal Record Book from the Treasure Chamber of the Boolooroo?"

"I did," replied the boy. "I remember that you wanted it and so I have kept it with me ever since that night. Here it is," and he presented the little blue book to the Majordomo, the only friend the adventurers had found among all the Blueskins.

Ghip-Ghisizzle took the book eagerly and at once began turning over its leaves.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, presently, "it is just as I suspected. The wicked Boolooroo had already reigned over the Blue Country three hundred years last Thursday, so that now he has no right to rule at all. I, myself, have been the rightful Ruler of the Blues since Thursday, and yet this cruel and deceitful man has not only deprived me of my right to succeed him, but he has tried to have me patched, so that I could never become the Boolooroo."

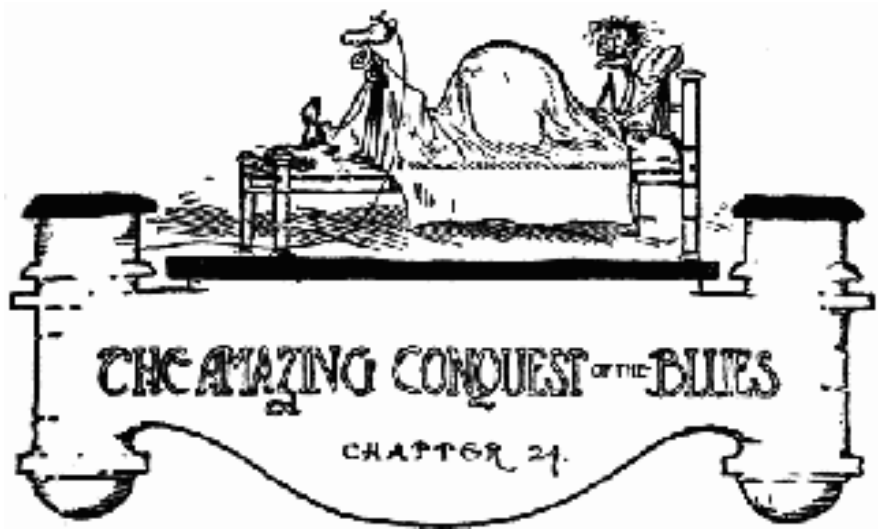
“Does the book tell how old he is?” asked Button-Bright.

“Yes; he is now five hundred years old, and has yet another hundred years to live. He planned to rule the Blue Country until the last, but I now know the deception he has practiced and have the Royal Record Book to prove it. With this I shall be able to force him to resign, that I may take his place, for all the people will support me and abide by the Law. The tyrant will perhaps fight me and my cause desperately, but I am sure to win in the end.”

“If we can help you,” said Button-Bright, “the whole Pink Army will fight for you. Only, if you win, you must promise to give me back my Magic Umbrella and let us fly away to our own homes again.”

“I will do that most willingly,” agreed Ghip-Ghisizzle. “And now let us consult together how best to take the Blue City and capture the Boolooroo. As I know my own country much better than you or the Pinkies do, I think I can find a way to accomplish our purpose.”

The Amazing Conquest of the Blues



THE shouting and excitement in the City following upon the recapture of Cap'n Bill aroused the sleeping Boolooroo. He found the cord still tied to his big toe and at first imagined his prisoner was safe in the dressing room. While he put on his clothes the king occasionally gave the cord a sudden pull, hoping to hurt Cap'n Bill's big toe and make him yell; but as no response came to this mean action the Boolooroo finally looked into the room, only to find he had been pulling on a leg of the couch and that his prisoner had escaped.

Then he flew into a mighty rage and running out into the hall he aimed a blow at the unfaithful guard, knocking the fellow off his feet. Then he rushed down stairs into the courtyard, shouting loudly for his soldiers and threatening to patch everybody in his dominions if the sailorman was not recaptured.

While the Boolooroo stormed and raged a band of soldiers and citizens came marching in, surrounding Cap'n Bill, who was again firmly bound.

"So-ho!" roared the monarch, "you thought you could defy me, Earth Clod, did you? But you were mistaken. No one can resist the Mighty Boolooroo of the Blues, so it is folly for you to rebel against my commands. Hold him fast, my men, and as soon as I've had my coffee and oatmeal I'll take him to the Room of the Great Knife and patch him."

"I wouldn't mind a cup o' coffee myself," said Cap'n Bill. "I've had consid'ble exercise this mornin' and I'm all ready for breakfas'."

"Very well," replied the Boolooroo, "you shall eat with me, for then I can

keep an eye on you. My guards are not to be trusted, and I don't mean to let you out of my sight again until you are patched."

So Cap'n Bill and the Boolooroo had breakfast together, six Blueskins standing in a row back of the sailorman to grab him if he attempted to escape. But Cap'n Bill made no such attempt, knowing it would be useless.

Trot was in the room, too, standing in a corner and listening to all that was said while she racked her little brain for an idea that would enable her to save Cap'n Bill from being patched. No one could see her, so no one — not even Cap'n Bill — knew she was there.

After breakfast was over a procession was formed, headed by the Boolooroo, and they marched the prisoner through the palace until they came to the Room of the Great Knife. Invisible Trot followed soberly after them, still wondering what she could do to save her friend.

As soon as they entered the Room of the Great Knife the Boolooroo gave a yell of disappointment.

"What's become of Tiggle?" he shouted. "Where's Tiggle? Who has released Tiggle? Go at once, you dummies, and find him — or it will go hard with you!"

The frightened soldiers hurried away to find Tiggle, and Trot was well pleased because she knew Tiggle was by this time safely hidden.

The Boolooroo stamped up and down the room, muttering threats and declaring Cap'n Bill should be patched whether Tiggle was found or not, and while they waited Trot took time to make an inspection of the place, which she now saw for the first time in broad daylight.

The Room of the Great Knife was high and big, and around it ran rows of benches for the spectators to sit upon. In one place — at the head of the room — was a raised platform for the royal family, with elegant throne-chairs for the King and Queen and six smaller but richly upholstered chairs for the Snubnosed Princesses. The poor Queen, by the way, was seldom seen, as she passed all her time playing solitaire with a deck that was one card short, hoping that before she had lived her entire six hundred years she would win the game. Therefore her Majesty paid no attention to anyone and no one paid any attention to her.

In the center of the room stood the terrible knife that gave the place its name — a name dreaded by every inhabitant of the Blue City. The knife was built into a huge framework, like a derrick, that reached to the ceiling, and it was so arranged that when the Boolooroo pulled a cord the great blade would drop down in its frame and neatly cut in two the person who stood under it. And, in order that the slicing would be accurate, there was another frame, to which the prisoner was tied so that he couldn't wiggle either way. This frame

was on rollers, so that it could be placed directly underneath the knife.

While Trot was observing this dreadful machine the door opened and in walked the Six Snubnosed Princesses, all in a row and with their chins up, as if they disdained everyone but themselves. They were magnificently dressed and their blue hair was carefully arranged in huge towers upon their heads, with blue plumes stuck into the tops. These plumes waved gracefully in the air with every mincing step the Princesses took. Rich jewels of blue stones glittered upon their persons and the royal ladies were fully as gorgeous as they were haughty and overbearing. They marched to their chairs and seated themselves to enjoy the cruel scene their father was about to enact, and Cap'n Bill bowed to them politely and said:

"Mornin', girls; hope ye feel as well as ye look."

"Papa," exclaimed Turquoise, angrily, "can you not prevent this vile Earth Being from addressing us? It is an insult to be spoken to by one about to be patched."

"Control yourselves, my dears," replied the Boolooroo; "the worst punishment I know how to inflict on anyone, this prisoner is about to suffer. You'll see a very pretty patching, my royal daughters."

"When?" inquired Cobalt.

"When? As soon as the soldiers return with Tiggle," said he.

But just then in came the soldiers to say that Tiggle could not be found anywhere in the City; he had disappeared as mysteriously as had Ghip-Ghisizzle. Immediately the Boolooroo flew into another towering rage.

"Villains!" he shouted, "go out and arrest the first living thing you meet, and whoever it proves to be will be instantly patched to Cap'n Bill."

The Captain of the Guards hesitated to obey this order.

"Suppose it's a friend?" he suggested.

"Friend!" roared the Boolooroo; "I haven't a friend in the country. Tell me, sir, do you know of anyone who is my friend?"

The Captain shook his head.

"I can't think of anyone just now, your Spry and Flighty High and Mighty Majesty," he answered.

"Of course not," said the Boolooroo. "Everyone hates me, and I don't object to that because I hate everybody. But I'm the Ruler here, and I'll do as I please. Go and capture the first living creature you see, and bring him here to be patched to Cap'n Bill."

So the Captain took a file of soldiers and went away very sorrowful, for he did not know who would be the victim, and if the Boolooroo had no friends, the Captain had plenty, and did not wish to see them patched.

Meantime Trot, being invisible to all, was roaming around the room and

behind a bench she found a small coil of rope, which she picked up. Then she seated herself in an out-of-the-way place and quietly waited.

Suddenly there was a noise in the corridor and evidence of scuffling and struggling. Then the door flew open and in came the soldiers dragging a great blue billygoat, which was desperately striving to get free.

"Villains!" howled the Boolooroo; "what does this mean?"

"Why, you said to fetch the first living creature we met, and that was this billygoat," replied the Captain, panting hard as he held fast to one of the goat's horns.

The Boolooroo stared a moment and then he fell back in his throne, laughing boisterously. The idea of patching Cap'n Bill to a goat was vastly amusing to him, and the more he thought of it the more he roared with laughter. Some of the soldiers laughed, too, being tickled with the absurd notion, and the Six Snubnosed Princesses all sat up straight and permitted themselves to smile contemptuously. This would indeed be a severe punishment; therefore the Princesses were pleased at the thought of Cap'n Bill's becoming half a billygoat, and the billygoat's being half Cap'n Bill.

"They look something alike, you know," suggested the Captain of the Guards, looking from one to the other doubtfully; "and they're nearly the same size if you stand the goat on his hind legs. They've both got the same style of whiskers and they're both of 'em obstinate and dangerous; so they ought to make a good patch."

"Splendid! Fine! Glorious!" cried the Boolooroo, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes. "We will proceed with the Ceremony of Patching at once."

Cap'n Bill regarded the billygoat with distinct disfavor, and the billygoat glared evilly upon Cap'n Bill. Trot was horrified, and wrung her little hands in sore perplexity, for this was a most horrible fate that awaited her dear old friend.

"First, bind the Earth Man in the frame," commanded the Boolooroo. "We'll slice him in two before we do the same to the billygoat."

So they seized Cap'n Bill and tied him into the frame so that he couldn't move a jot in any direction. Then they rolled the frame underneath the Great Knife and handed the Boolooroo the cord that released the blade.

But while this was going on Trot had crept up and fastened one end of her rope to the frame in which Cap'n Bill was confined. Then she stood back and watched the Boolooroo, and just as he pulled the cord she pulled on her rope and dragged the frame on its rollers away, so that the Great Knife fell with a crash and sliced nothing but the air.

"Huh!" exclaimed the Boolooroo; "that's queer. Roll him up again,

soldiers."

The soldiers again rolled the frame in position, having first pulled the Great Knife once more to the top of the derrick. The immense blade was so heavy that it took the strength of seven Blueskins to raise it.

When all was in readiness the King pulled the cord a second time and Trot at the same instant pulled upon her rope. The same thing happened as before. Cap'n Bill rolled away in his frame and the knife fell harmlessly.

Now, indeed, the Boolooroo was as angry as he was amazed. He jumped down from the platform and commanded the soldiers to raise the Great Knife into position. When this had been accomplished the Boolooroo leaned over to try to discover why the frame rolled away — seemingly of its own accord — and he was the more puzzled because it had never done such a thing before.

As he stood, bent nearly double, his back was toward the billygoat, which, in their interest and excitement, the soldiers were holding in a careless manner. At once the goat gave a leap, escaped from the soldiers and with bowed head rushed upon the Boolooroo. Before any could stop him he butted his Majesty so furiously that the King soared far into the air and tumbled in a heap among the benches, where he lay moaning and groaning.

The goat's warlike spirit was roused by this successful attack. Finding himself free, he turned and assaulted the soldiers, butting them so fiercely that they tumbled down in bunches and as soon as they could rise again ran frantically from the room and along the corridors as if a fiend was after them. By this time the goat was so animated by the spirit of conquest that he rushed at the Six Snubnosed Princesses, who had all climbed upon their chairs and were screaming in a panic of fear. Six times the goat butted and each time he tipped over a chair and sent a haughty Princess groveling upon the floor, where the ladies got mixed up in their long blue trains and flounces and laces, and struggled wildly until they recovered their footing. Then they sped in great haste for the door, and the goat gave a final butt that sent the row of royal ladies all diving into the corridor in another tangle, whereupon they shrieked in a manner that terrified everyone within sound of their voices.

As the Room of the Great Knife was now cleared of all but Cap'n Bill — who was tied in his frame — and of Trot and the moaning Boolooroo, who lay hidden behind the benches, the goat gave a victorious bleat and stood in the doorway to face any enemy that might appear.

Trot had been as surprised as anyone at this sudden change of conditions, but she was quick to take advantage of the opportunities it afforded. First she ran with her rope to the goat and, as the animal could not see her, she easily succeeded in tying the rope around its horns and fastening the loose end to a

pillar of the doorway. Next she hurried to Cap'n Bill and began to unbind him, and as she touched the sailor she became visible. He nodded cheerfully, then, and said:

"I had a notion it was you, mate, as saved me from the knife. But it were a pretty close call an' I hope it won't happen again. I couldn't shiver much, bein' bound so tight, but when I'm loose I mean to have jus' one good shiver to relieve my feelin's."

"Shiver all you want to, Cap'n," she said, as she removed the last bonds; "but first you've got to help me save us both."

"As how?" he asked, stepping from the frame.

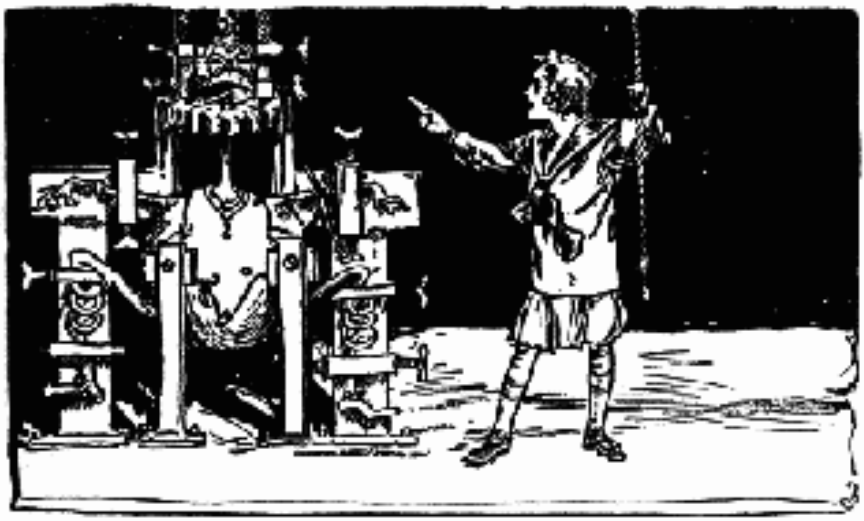
"Come and get the Boolooroo," she said, going toward the benches.

The sailor followed and pulled out the Boolooroo, who, when he saw the terrible goat was captured and tied fast, quickly recovered his courage.

"Hi, there!" he cried; "where are my soldiers? What do you mean, prisoner, by daring to lay hands upon me? Let me go this minute or I'll — I'll have you patched *twice*!"

"Don't mind him, Cap'n," said Trot, "but fetch him along to the frame."

The Boolooroo looked around to see where the voice came from and Cap'n Bill grinned joyfully and caught up the king in both his strong arms, dragging the struggling Monarch of the Blues to the frame.



"Stop it! How dare you?" roared the frightened Boolooroo. "I'll have revenge! — I'll — I'll — "

"You'll take it easy, 'cause you can't help yourself," said Cap'n Bill. "What next, Queen Trot?"

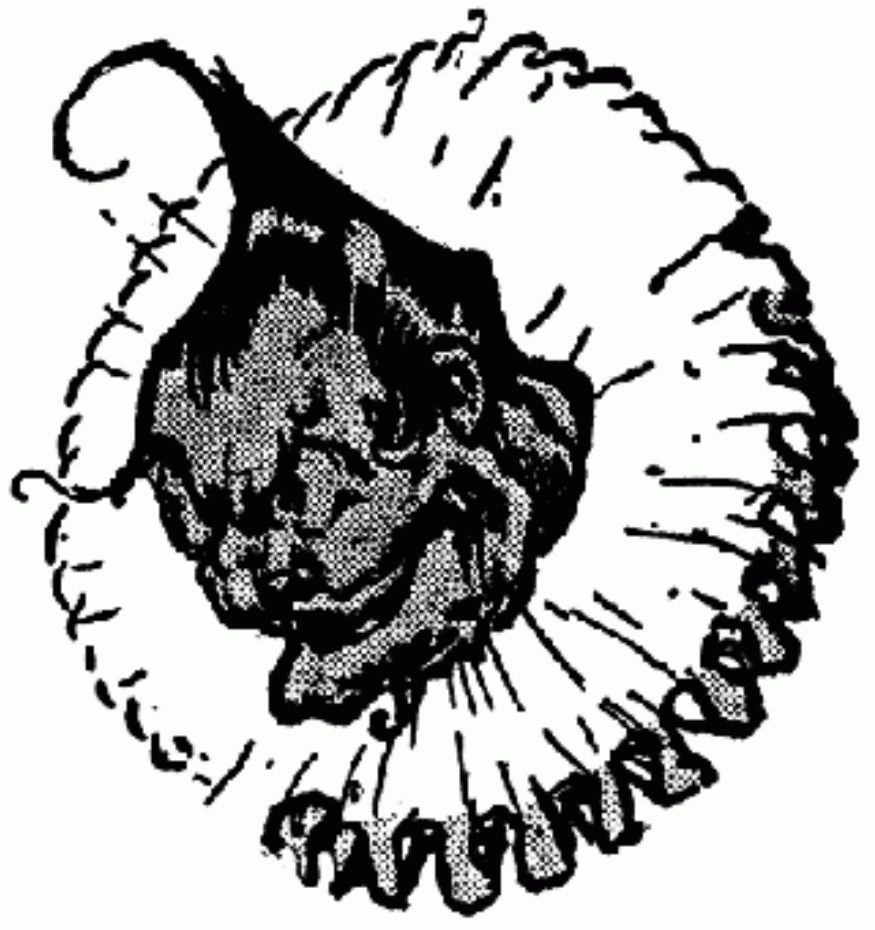
"Hold him steady in the frame and I'll tie him up," she replied. So Cap'n

Bill held the Boolooroo, and the girl tied him fast in position, as Cap'n Bill had been tied, so that his Majesty couldn't wiggle at all.

Then they rolled the frame in position underneath the Great Knife and Trot held in her hand the cord which would release it.

"All right, Cap'n," she said in a satisfied tone, "I guess we can run this Blue Country ourselves, after this."

The Boolooroo was terrified to find himself in danger of being sliced by the same knife he had so often wickedly employed to slice others. Like Cap'n Bill, he had no room to shiver, but he groaned very dismally and was so full of fear that his blue hair nearly stood on end.



THE girl now took off Rosalie's ring and put it carefully away in her pocket. "It won't matter who sees me now," she remarked, "an' I want 'em to know that you an' me, Cap'n, are running this kingdom. I'm Queen o' the Pinkies an' Booloorooess o' the Blues, an — — "

"What's that?" asked the sailor. "You're — you're *what*, Trot?"

"Booloorooess. Isn't that right, Cap'n?"

"I dunno, mate. It sounds bigger ner you are, an' I don't like the word, anyhow. S'pose you jus' call yourself the Boss? That fills the bill an' don't need pernouncin'."

"All right," she said; "Queen o' the Pinkies an' Boss o' the Blues. Seems funny, don't it, Cap'n Bill?"

Just then they heard a sound of footsteps in the corridor. The soldiers had partly recovered their courage and, fearful of the anger of their dreaded Boolooroo, whom the Princesses declared would punish them severely, had ventured to return to the room. They came rather haltingly, though, and the Captain of the Guards first put his head cautiously through the doorway to see if the coast was clear. The goat discovered him and tried to make a rush, but the rope held the animal back and when the Captain saw this he came forward more boldly.

"Halt!" cried Trot.

The Captain halted, his soldiers peering curiously over his shoulders and the Six Snubnosed Princesses looking on from behind, where they considered themselves safe.

“If anyone dares enter this room without my permission,” said Trot, “I’ll pull this cord and slice your master that once was the Boolooroo.”

“Don’t come in! Don’t come in!” yelled the Boolooroo in a terrified voice.

Then they saw that the sailor was free and the Boolooroo bound in his place. The soldiers were secretly glad to observe this, but the Princesses were highly indignant.

“Release his Majesty at once!” cried Indigo from the corridor. “You shall be severely punished for this rebellion.”

“Don’t worry,” replied Trot. “His Majesty isn’t his Majesty any longer; he’s jus’ a common Blueskin. Cap’n Bill and I perpose runnin’ this Island ourselves, after this. You’ve all got to obey *me*, for I’m the Booloorooess — no, I mean the Boss — o’ the Blues, and I’ve a notion to run things my own way.”

“You can’t,” said Turquoise, scornfully; “the Law says — — ”

“Bother the Law!” exclaimed Trot. “I’ll make the Laws myself, from now on, and I’ll unmake every Law you ever had before I conquered you.”

“Oh. Have you conquered us, then?” asked the Captain of the Guards, in a surprised tone.

“Of course,” said Trot. “Can’t you see?”

“It looks like it,” admitted the Captain.

“Cap’n Bill is goin’ to be my General o’ the Army an’ the Royal Manager o’ the Blue Country,” continued Trot; “so you’ll mind what he says.”

“Nonsense!” shouted Indigo. “March in and capture them, Captain! Never mind if they do slice the Boolooroo. I’m his daughter, and *I’ll* rule the kingdom.”

“You won’t!” screamed Cobalt. “I’ll rule it!”

“I’ll rule it myself!” cried Cerulia.

“No, no!” yelled Turquoise; “I’ll be the Ruler.”

“That shall be *my* privilege!” shouted Sapphire. Cobalt began to say:

“I’m the — — ”

“Be quiet!” said Trot, sternly. “Would you have your own father sliced, so that you could rule in his place?”

“Yes, yes; of course!” rejoined the six Princesses, without a second’s hesitation.

“Well, well! What d’ ye think o’ that, Mr. Boolooroo?” asked Cap’n Bill.

“They’re undutiful daughters; don’t pay any attention to them,” replied the frightened Boolooroo.

“We’re not goin’ to,” said Trot. “Now, you Blue Cap’n, who are you and your soldiers going to obey — me or the snubnosed ones?”

“You!” declared the Captain of the Guards, positively, for he hated the

Princesses, as did all the Blueskins.

"Then escort those girls to their rooms, lock 'em in, an' put a guard before the door."

At once the soldiers seized the Princesses and, notwithstanding their snarls and struggles, marched them to their rooms and locked them in. While they were gone on this errand the Boolooroo begged to be released, whining and wailing for fear the knife would fall upon him. But Trot did not think it safe to unbind him just then. When the soldiers returned she told their leader to put a strong guard before the palace and to admit no one unless either she or Cap'n Bill gave the order to do so.

The soldiers obeyed readily, and when Trot and Cap'n Bill were left alone they turned the goat loose in the Room of the Great Knife and then locked the animal in with the Boolooroo.

"The billygoat is the very best guard we could have, for ever'body's 'fraid o' him," remarked Cap'n Bill, as he put the key of the room in his pocket. "So now, Queen Trot, what's next on the program?"

"Next," said Trot, "we're goin' to hunt for that umbrel, Cap'n. I don't mean to stay in this dismal Blue Country long, even if I am the Queen. Let's find the umbrel and get home as soon as we can."

"That suits me," the sailor joyfully exclaimed, and then the two began a careful search through the palace.

They went into every room and looked behind the furniture and underneath the beds and in every crack and corner, but no place could they spy the Magic Umbrella. Cap'n Bill even ventured to enter the rooms of the Six Snubnosed Princesses, who were by this time so thoroughly alarmed that they had become meek and mild as could be. But the umbrella wasn't there, either.

Finally they returned to the great throne room of the palace, where they seated themselves on the throne and tried to think what could possibly have become of the precious umbrella. While they were sitting and talking together the Captain of the Guards entered and bowed respectfully.

"Beg pardon, your Small-Sized Majesty," said he to Trot, "but it is my duty to report that the Pinkies are preparing to attack the City."

"Oh; I'd forgotten the Pinkies!" exclaimed the girl. "Tell me, Captain, have you such a thing as a Brass Band in this City?"

"We have two fine bands, but they are not brass," replied the Captain. "Their instruments are made of blue metal."

"Well, order 'em out," commanded Trot. "And, say; get all the soldiers together and tell all the people there's going to be a high time in the Blue City to-night. We'll have music and dancing and eating and — — "

“An’ neckties to drink, Trot; don’t forget the royal neckties,” urged Cap’n Bill.

“We’ll have all the fun there is going,” continued the girl, “for we are to entertain the Army of the Pinkies.”

“The Pinkies!” exclaimed the Captain of the Guards; “why, they’re our enemies, your Short Highness.”

“Not any more,” replied Trot. “I’m Queen of the Pinkies, an’ I’m also Queen of the Blues, so I won’t have my people quarreling. Tell the Blue people we are to throw open the gates and welcome the Pinkies to the City, where everybody will join in a grand celebration. And jus’ as soon as you’ve spread the news an’ got the bands tuned up and the soldiers ready to march, you let us know and we’ll head the procession.”

“Your Microscopic Majesty shall be obeyed,” said the Captain, and went away to carry out these commands.

Trot Celebrates Her Victory

THE Blue people were by this time dazed with wonder at all the events that had transpired that eventful day, but they still had wit enough to be glad the war was over; for in war some one is likely to get hurt and it is foolish to take such chances when one can remain quietly at home. The Blues did not especially admire the Pinkies, but it was easier to entertain them than to fight them, and, above all, the Blueskins were greatly rejoiced that their wicked Boolooroo had been conquered and could no longer abuse them. So they were quite willing to obey the orders of their girl Queen and in a short time the blasts of trumpets and roll of drums and clashing of cymbals told Trot and Cap'n Bill that the Blue Bands had assembled before the palace.

So they went down and found that a great crowd of people had gathered, and these cheered Trot with much enthusiasm — which was very different from the scowls and surly looks with which they had formerly greeted their strange visitors from the Earth.

The soldiers wore their best blue uniforms and were formed before the palace in marching order, so Trot and Cap'n Bill headed the procession, and then came the soldiers — all keeping step — and then the bands, playing very loud noises on their instruments, and finally the crowd of Blue citizens waving flags and banners and shouting joyfully.

In this order they proceeded to the main gate, which Trot ordered the guards to throw wide open. Then they all marched out a little way into the fields and found that the Army of Pinkies had already formed and was advancing steadily toward them.

At the head of the Pinkies were Ghip-Ghisizzle and Button-Bright, who had the parrot on his shoulder, and they were supported by Captain Coralie and Captain Tintint and Rosalie the Witch. They had decided to capture the Blue City at all hazards, that they might rescue Trot and Cap'n Bill and conquer the Boolooroo, so when from a distance they saw the Blueskins march from the gate, with banners flying and bands playing, they supposed a most terrible fight was about to take place.

However, as the two forces came nearer together, Button-Bright spied Trot and Cap'n Bill standing before the enemy, and the sight astonished him considerably.

"Welcome, friends!" shouted Cap'n Bill in a loud voice; and "Welcome!" cried Trot; and "Welcome!" roared the Blue soldiers and the people of the Blue City.

"Hooray!" yelled the parrot,

"Welcome to our happy home
From which no longer will we roam!"

and then he flapped his wings and barked like a dog with pure delight, and added as fast as his bird's tongue could speak:

"One army's pink and one is blue,
But neither one is in a stew
Because the naughty Boolooroo
Is out of sight, so what we'll do
Is try to be a jolly crew
And dance and sing our too-ral-loo
And to our friends be ever true
And to our foes — — "

"Stop it!" said Button-Bright; "I can't hear myself think."

The Pinkies were amazed at the strange reception of the Blues and hesitated to advance; but Trot now ran up in front of them and made a little speech.

"Pinkies," said she, "your Queen has conquered the Boolooroo and is now the Queen of the Blues. All of Sky Island, except the Fog Bank, is now my kingdom, so I welcome my faithful Pinkies to my Blue City, where you are to be royally entertained and have a good time. The war is over an' ever'body must be sociable an' happy or I'll know the reason why!"

Now, indeed, the Pinkies raised a great shout of joy and the Blues responded with another joyful shout, and Rosalie kissed the little girl and said she had performed wonders, and everybody shook hands with Cap'n Bill and congratulated him upon his escape, and the parrot flew to Trot's shoulder and screeched:

"The Pinkies are pink, the Blues are blue
But Trot's the Queen, so too-ral-loo!"

When the Blueskins saw Ghip-Ghisizzle they raised another great shout, for he was the favorite of the soldiers and very popular with all the people. But Ghip-Ghisizzle did not heed the shouting. He was looking downcast and sad, and it was easy to see he was disappointed because he had not conquered the Boolooroo himself. But the people called upon him for a speech, so he faced the Blueskins and said:

"I escaped from the City because the Boolooroo tried to patch me, as you all know, and the Six Snubnosed Princesses tried to marry me, which would have been a far greater misfortune. But I have recovered the Book of Royal Records, which has long been hidden in the Treasure Chamber, and by reading it I find that the Boolooroo is not your lawful Boolooroo at all, having reigned more than his three hundred years. Since last Thursday, I, Ghip-Ghisizzle, have been the lawful Boolooroo of the Blue Country, but now that you are conquered by Queen Trot I suppose I am conquered, too, and you have no Boolooroo at all."

"Hooray!" cried the parrot;
"Here's a pretty howdy-do —
You haven't any Boolooroo!"

Trot had listened carefully to the Majordomo's speech. When he finished she said cheerfully:

"Don't worry, Sizzle dear; it'll all come right pretty soon. Now, then, let's enter the City an' enjoy the grand feast that's being cooked. I'm nearly starved, myself, for this conquerin' kingdoms is hard work."

So the Pinkies and the Blues marched side by side into the City and there was great rejoicing and music and dancing and feasting and games and merrymaking that lasted for three full days.

Trot carried Rosalie and Captain Coralie and Ghip-Ghisizzle to the palace, and of course Button-Bright and Cap'n Bill were with her. They had the Royal Chef serve dinner at once and they ate it in great state, seated in the Royal Banquet Hall, where they were waited on by a hundred servants. The parrot perched upon the back of Queen Trot's chair and the girl fed it herself, being glad to have the jolly bird with her again.

After they had eaten all they could, and the servants had been sent away, Trot related her adventures, telling how, with the assistance of the billygoat, she had turned the tables on the wicked Boolooroo. Then she gave Rosalie back her magic ring, thanking the kind Witch for all she had done for them.

"And now," said she, "I want to say to Ghip-'Sizzle that jus' as soon as we can find Button-Bright's umbrel we're going to fly home again. I'll

always be Queen of Sky Island, but the Pink and Blue Countries must each have a Ruler. I think I'll make 'Sizzle the Boolooroo of the Blues; but I want you to promise me, Ghip, that you'll destroy the Great Knife and its frame and clean up the room and turn it into a skating-rink an' never patch anyone as long as you rule the Blueskins."

Ghip-Ghisizzle was overjoyed at the prospect of being Boolooroo of the Blues, but he looked solemn at the promise Trot exacted.

"I'm not cruel," he said, "and I don't approve of patching in general, so I'll willingly destroy the Great Knife. But before I do that I want the privilege of patching the Snubnosed Princesses to each other — mixing the six as much as possible — and then I want to patch the former Boolooroo to the billygoat, which is the same punishment he was going to inflict upon Cap'n Bill."

"No," said Trot, positively, "there's been enough patching in this country and I won't have any more of it. The old Boolooroo and the six stuck-up Princesses will be punished enough by being put out of the palace. The people don't like 'em a bit, so they'll be outcasts and wanderers and that will make 'em sorry they were so wicked an' cruel when they were powerful. Am I right, Cap'n Bill?"

"You are, mate," replied the sailor.

"Please, Queen Trot," begged Ghip-Ghisizzle, "let me patch just the Boolooroo. It will be such a satisfaction."

"I have said no, an' I mean it," answered the girl. "You let the poor old Boolooroo alone. There's nothing that hurts so much as a come-down in life, an' I 'spect the old rascal's goin' to be pretty miser'ble by'm'by."

"What does he say to his reverse of fortune?" asked Rosalie.

"Why, I don't b'lieve he knows about it," said Trot. "Guess I'd better send for him an' tell him what's happened."

So the Captain of the Guards was given the key and told to fetch the Boolooroo from the Room of the Great Knife. The guards had a terrible struggle with the goat, which was loose in the room and still wanted to fight, but finally they subdued the animal and then they took the Boolooroo out of the frame he was tied in and brought both him and the goat before Queen Trot, who awaited them in the throne room of the palace.

When the courtiers and the people assembled saw the goat they gave a great cheer, for the beast had helped to dethrone their wicked Ruler.

"What's goin' to happen to this tough ol' warrior, Trot?" asked Cap'n Bill. "It's my idee as he's braver than the whole Blue Army put together."

"You're right, Cap'n," she returned. "I'll have 'Sizzle make a fine yard for the goat, where he'll have plenty of blue grass to eat. An' I'll have a pretty

fence put around it an' make all the people honor an' respec' him jus' as long as he lives."

"I'll gladly do that," promised the new Boolooroo; "and I'll feed the honorable goat all the shavings and leather and tin cans he can eat, besides the grass. He'll be the happiest goat in Sky Island, I assure you."

As they led the now famous animal from the room the Boolooroo shuddered and said:

"How dare you people give orders in my palace? I'm the Boolooroo!"

"'Scuse me," said Trot; "I neglected to tell you that you're not the Boolooroo any more. We've got the Royal Record Book, an' it proves you've already ruled this country longer than you had any right to. 'Sides all that, I'm the Queen o' Sky Island — which means Queen o' the Pinkies an' Queen o' the Blues — both of 'em. So things are run as I say, an' I've made Ghip-Ghisizzle Boolooroo in your place. He'll look after this end of the Island hereafter, an' unless I'm much mistaken he'll do it a heap better than you did."

The former Boolooroo groaned.

"What's going to become of me, then?" he asked. "Am I to be patched, or what?"

"You won't be hurt," answered the girl, "but you'll have to find some other place to stay besides this palace, an' perhaps you'll enjoy workin' for a livin, by way of variety."

"Can't I take any of the treasure with me?" he pleaded.

"Not even a bird cage," said she. "Ever'thing in the palace now belongs to Ghip-Ghisizzle."

"Except the Six Snubnosed Princesses," exclaimed the new Boolooroo, earnestly. "Won't you please get rid of them, too, your Majesty? Can't they be discharged?"

"Of course," said Trot; "they must go with their dear father an' mother. Isn't there some house in the City they can all live in, Ghip?"

"Why, I own a little cabin at the end of the town," said Ghip-Ghisizzle, "and I'll let them use that, as I won't need it any longer. It isn't a very pretty cabin and the furniture is cheap and common, but I'm sure it is good enough for this wicked man and his family."

"I'll not be wicked any more," sighed the old Boolooroo; "I'll reform. It's always best to reform when it is no longer safe to remain wicked. As a private citizen I shall be a model of deportment, because it would be dangerous to be otherwise."

Trot now sent for the Princesses, who had been weeping and wailing and fighting among themselves ever since they learned that their father had been

conquered. When first they entered the throne room they tried to be as haughty and scornful as ever, but the Blues who were assembled there all laughed at them and jeered them, for there was not a single person in all the Blue Country who loved the Princesses the least little bit.

Trot told the girls that they must go with their father to live in Ghip-Ghisizzle's little old cabin, and when they heard this dreadful decree the six snubnosed ones began to scream and have hysterics, and between them they managed to make so much noise that no one could hear anything else. So Ghip-Ghisizzle ordered the Captain to take a file of soldiers and escort the raving beauties to their new home.

This was done, the once royal family departing from the palace with shamed and downcast looks.

Then the Room of the Great Knife was cleared of its awful furniture. The frames were split into small pieces of bluewood, and the benches chopped into kindling, and the immense sharp knife broken into bits. All the rubbish was piled in the square before the palace and a bonfire made of it, while the Blue people clustered around and danced and sang with joy as the blue flames devoured the dreadful instrument that had once caused them so much unhappiness.

That evening Trot gave a grand ball in the palace, to which the most important of the Pinkies and the Blueskins were invited. The combined bands of both the countries played the music and a fine supper was served.

The Pinkies would not dance with the Blues, however, nor would the Blues dance with the Pinkies. The two nations were so different in all ways that they were unable to agree at all, and several times during the evening quarrels arose and there was fighting between them, which Trot promptly checked.

"I think it will be best for us to go back to our own country as soon as possible," suggested Rosalie the Witch; "for, if we stay here very long, the Blueskins may rise against us and cause the Pinkies much trouble."

"Jus' as soon as we find that umbrel," promised Trot, "we'll dive into the Fog Bank an' make tracks for the Land of Sunrise an' Sunset."

The Fate of the Magic Umbrella

NEXT morning the search for the Magic Umbrella began in earnest. With many to hunt for it and the liberty of the whole palace to aid them, every inch of the great building was carefully examined. But no trace of the umbrella could be found. Cap'n Bill and Button-Bright went down to the cabin of the former Boolooroo and tried to find out what he had done with the umbrella, but the old Boolooroo said:

"I had it brought from the Treasure Chamber and tried to make it work, but there was no magic about the thing. So I threw it away. I haven't any idea what became of it."

The six former Princesses were sitting upon a rude bench, looking quite bedraggled and untidy. Said Indigo:

"If you will make Ghip-Ghisizzle marry me, I'll find your old umbrella."

"Where is it?" asked Button-Bright, eagerly.

"Make Ghip-Ghisizzle marry me, and I'll tell you," repeated Indigo. "But I won't say another word about it until after I am married."

So they went back to the palace and proposed to the new Boolooroo to marry Indigo, so they could get their Magic Umbrella. But Ghip-Ghisizzle positively refused.

"I'd like to help you," said he, "but nothing will ever induce me to marry one of those snubnoses."

"They're very pretty — for Blueskins," said Trot.

"But when you marry a girl, you marry the inside as well as the outside," declared Ghip-Ghisizzle, "and inside these Princesses there are wicked hearts and evil thoughts. I'd rather be patched than marry the best of them."

“Which *is* the best?” asked Button-Bright.

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” was the reply. “Judging from their actions in the past, there is no best.”

Rosalie the Witch now went to the cabin and put Indigo into a deep sleep, by means of a powerful charm. Then, while the Princess slept, the Witch made her tell all she knew, which wasn’t a great deal, to be sure; but it was soon discovered that Indigo had been deceiving them and knew nothing at all about the umbrella. She had hoped to marry Ghip-Ghisizzle and become Queen, after which she could afford to laugh at their reproaches. So the Witch woke her up and went back to the palace to tell Trot of her failure.

The girl and Button-Bright and Cap’n Bill were all rather discouraged by this time, for they had searched high and low and had not found a trace of the all-important umbrella. That night none of them slept much, for they all lay awake wondering how they could ever return to the Earth and to their homes.

In the morning of the third day after Trot’s conquest of the Blues the little girl conceived another idea. She called all the servants of the palace to her and questioned them closely. But not one could remember having seen anything that looked like an umbrella.

“Are all the servants of the old Boolooroo here?” inquired Cap’n Bill, who was sorry to see Trot looking so sad and downcast.

“All but one,” was the reply. “Tiggle used to be a servant, but he escaped and ran away.”

“Oh, yes!” exclaimed Trot; “Tiggle is in hiding, somewhere. Perhaps he don’t know there’s been a revolution and a new Boolooroo rules the country. If he did, there’s no need for him to hide any longer, for he is now in no danger.”

She now dispatched messengers all through the City and the surrounding country, who cried aloud for Tiggle, saying that the new Boolooroo wanted him. Tiggle, hiding in the cellar of a deserted house in a back street, at last heard these cries and joyfully came forth to confront the messenger.

Having heard of the old Boolooroo’s downfall and disgrace, the man consented to go to the palace again, and as soon as Trot saw him she asked about the umbrella.

Tiggle thought hard for a minute and then said he remembered sweeping the King’s rooms and finding a queer thing — that might have been an umbrella — lying beneath a cabinet. It had ropes and two wooden seats and a wicker basket all attached to the handle.

"That's it!" cried Button-Bright, excitedly; and "That's it!" "That's it!" cried both Trot and Cap'n Bill.

"But what did you do with it?" asked Ghip-Ghisizzle.

"I dragged it out and threw it on the rubbish heap, in an alley back of the palace," said Tiggle.

At once they all rushed out to the alley and began digging in the rubbish heap. By and by Cap'n Bill uncovered the lunch basket, and pulling on this he soon drew up the two seats and, finally, the Magic Umbrella.

"Hurrah!" shouted Button-Bright, grabbing the umbrella and hugging it tight in his arms.

"Hooray!" shrieked the parrot;

"Cap'n Bill's a lucky fellah,

'Cause he found the old umbrella!"

Trot's face was wreathed in smiles.

"This is jus' the best luck that could have happened to us," she exclaimed, "'cause now we can go home whenever we please."

"Let's go now — this minute — before we lose the umbrella again," said Button-Bright.

But Trot shook her head.

"Not yet," she replied. "We've got to straighten out things in Sky Island, first of all. A Queen has some duties, you know, and as long as I'm Queen here I've got to live up to the part."

"What has to be did, mate?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

"Well, we've fixed the Blue Country pretty well, by makin' 'Sizzle the Boolooroo of it; but the Pinkies mus' be looked after, too, 'cause they've

stood by us an' helped us to win. We must take 'em home again, safe an' sound, and get a new Queen to rule over 'em. When that's done we can go home any time we want to."

"Quite right, Trot," said the sailor, approvingly. "When do we march?"

"Right away," she replied. "I've had enough of the Blue Country. Haven't you?"

"We have, mate."

"We've had plenty of it," observed Button-Bright.

"And the Pinkies are anxious to get home," added Rosalie, who was present.

So Cap'n Bill unhooked the seats from the handle of the umbrella and wound the ropes around the two boards and made a package of them, which he carried under his arm. Trot took the empty lunch-basket and Button-Bright held fast to the precious umbrella. Then they returned to the palace to bid good-bye to Ghip-Ghisizzle and the Blues.

The new Boolooroo seemed rather sorry to lose his friends, but the people were secretly glad to get rid of the strangers, especially of the Pinkies. They maintained a sullen silence while Coralie and Captain Tintint formed their ranks in marching order, and they did not even cheer when Trot said to them in a final speech:

"I'm the Queen of Sky Island, you know, and the new Boolooroo has got to carry out my orders and treat you all nicely while I'm away. I don't know when I'll come back, but you'd better watch out an' not make any trouble, or I'll find a way to make you sorry for it. So now, good-bye!"

"And good riddance!" screamed the Six Snubnosed Girls who had once been Princesses, and who were now in the crowd that watched the departure.

But Trot paid no attention to them. She made a signal to the Pinkie Band, which struck up a fine Pink March, and then the Army stepped out with the left foot first, and away went the conquerors down the streets of the Blue City, out of the blue-barred gateway and across the country toward the Fog Bank.

The Elephant's Head Comes to Life

WHEN they reached the edge of the Fog Bank the Pinkies all halted to put on their raincoats and Button-Bright put up his umbrella and held it over himself and Trot. Then, when everybody was ready, they entered the Fog and Rosalie the Witch made a signal to call the Frog King and his subjects to aid them, as they had done before.

Pretty soon the great frogs appeared, a long line of them facing Trot and her Pink Army and sitting upon their haunches close together.

"Turn around, so we can get upon your backs," said Rosalie.

"Not yet," answered the Frog King, in a gruff, deep voice. "You must first take that insulting umbrella out of my dominions."

"Why, what is there about my umbrella that seems insulting?" asked Button-Bright, in surprise.

"It is an insinuation that you don't like our glorious climate, and object to our delightful fog, and are trying to ward off its soulful, clinging kisses," replied the Frog King, in an agitated voice. "There has never been an umbrella in my kingdom before, and I'll not allow one in it now. Take it away at once!"

"But we can't," explained Trot. "We've got to take the umbrella with us to the Pink Country. We'll put it down, if you like, an' cross the bank in this drizzle — which may be clingin' an' soulful, but is too wet to be comfort'ble. But the umbrella's got to go with us."

"It can't go another inch," cried the obstinate frog, with an angry croak, "nor shall any of your people advance another step while that insulting

umbrella is with you."

Trot turned to Rosalie.

"What shall we do?" she asked.

"I really do not know," replied the Witch, greatly perplexed.

"Can't you *make* the frogs let us through?" inquired the boy.

"No; I have no power over the frogs," Rosalie answered. "They carried us before as a favor, but if the king now insists that we cannot pass with the umbrella we must go back to the Blue Country or leave your umbrella behind us."

"We won't do that!" said Button-Bright, indignantly. "Can't we fight the frogs?"

"Fight!" cried Trot; "why, see how big they are. They could eat up our whole army, if they wanted to."

But just then, while they stood dismayed at this unfortunate position, a queer thing happened. The umbrella in Button-Bright's hand began to tremble and shake. He looked down at the handle and saw that the red eyes of the carved elephant's head were rolling fiercely and sending out red sparks of anger in all directions. The trunk swayed from side to side and the entire head began to swell and grow larger.

In his fright the boy sprang backward a step and dropped the umbrella to the ground, and as he did so it took the form of a complete elephant, growing rapidly to a monstrous size. Then, flapping its ears and wagging its tail — which was merely the covered frame of the umbrella — the huge elephant lifted its trunk and charged the line of astonished frogs.

In a twinkling the frogs all turned and made the longest leaps their

powerful legs enabled them to. The King jumped first of all and in a panic of fear the others followed his example. They were out of sight in an instant, and then the elephant turned its head and looked at Button-Bright and at once trotted into the depths of the fog.

"He wants us to follow," said the boy, gasping in amazement at this wonderful transformation. So immediately they began marching through the fog behind the elephant, and as the great beast advanced the frogs scrambled out of his way and hid themselves in the moist banks until he had passed them by.

Cap'n Bill had to mind his wooden leg carefully and the old sailor was so excited that he mumbled queer sentences about "Araby Ann Knights," and "ding-donged magic" and the "fool foolishness of fussin' with witches an' sich," until Trot wondered whether her old friend had gone crazy or was only badly scared.

It was a long journey, and all the Pinkies were dripping water from their raincoats, and their little fat legs were tired and aching, when the pink glow showing through the fog at last announced the fact that they were nearing the Pink Country.

At the very edge of the Fog Bank the elephant halted, winked at Button-Bright, lowered its head and began to shrink in size and dwindle away. By the time the boy came up to it, closely followed by Trot and Cap'n Bill, the thing was only the well-known Magic Umbrella, with the carved elephant's head for a handle, and it lay motionless upon the ground. Button-Bright cautiously picked it up and as he examined it he thought the tiny red eyes still twinkled a little, as if with triumph and pride.

Trot drew a long breath.

"That was *some* magic, I guess!" she exclaimed. "Don't you think so, Rosalie?"

"It was the most wonderful thing I ever saw," admitted the Witch. "The fairies who control Button-Bright's umbrella must be very powerful, indeed!"

Trot Regulates the Pinkies

THE Pinkies were rejoiced to find themselves again in their beloved land of sunrises and sunsets. They sang and shouted with glee and the Band uncovered its pink instruments and played the National Pink Anthem, while the parrot flew from Trot's shoulder to Cap'n Bill's shoulder and back again, screaming ecstatically:

"Hooray! we're through the wetful fogs
Where the elephant scared the fretful frogs!"

There was a magnificent sunset in the sky just then and it cheered the Pinkies and gave them renewed strength. Away they hastened across the pink fields to the Pink City, where all the Pink people who had been left behind ran out to welcome them home again.

Trot and Button-Bright, with Cap'n Bill and Rosalie the Witch, went to the humble palace, where they had a simple supper of coarse food and slept upon hard beds. In the houses of the City, however, there was much feasting and merrymaking, and it seemed to Trot that the laws of the country which forbade the Queen from enjoying all the good things the people did were decidedly wrong and needed changing.

The next morning Rosalie said to the little girl:

"Will you make Tourmaline the Queen again, when you go away?"

"I'll send for her and see about it," replied Trot.

But when Tourmaline arrived at the palace, dressed all in lovely fluffy robes and with a dainty pink plume in her pink hair, she begged most

earnestly not to be made the Queen again.

"I'm having a good time, just now, after years of worry and uncomfortable living in this uncomfortable old hut of a palace," said the poor girl, "so it would be cruel for you to make me the servant of the people again and condemn me to want and misery."

"That seems reason'ble," replied Trot, thoughtfully.

"Rosalie's skin is just as light a pink as my own," continued Tourmaline. "Why don't you make her the Queen?"

"I hadn't thought of that," said Trot. Then she turned to Rosalie and asked: "How would you like to rule the Pinkies?"

"I wouldn't like it," replied the Witch, with a smile. "The Queen is the poorest and most miserable creature in all the kingdom and I'm sure I don't deserve such a fate. I've always tried to be a good witch and to do my duty."

Trot thought this over quite seriously for a time. Then one of her quaint ideas came to her — so quaint that it was entirely sensible.

"I'm the Queen of the Pinkies just now, am I not?" she asked.

"Of course," answered Rosalie; "none can dispute that."

"Then I've the right to make new laws, haven't I?"

"I believe so."

"In that case," said the girl, "I'm goin' to make a law that the Queen shall have the same food an' the same dresses an' the same good times that her people have; and she shall live in a house jus' as good as the houses of any of her people, an' have as much money to spend as anybody. But no more. The Queen can have her share of ever'thing, 'cordin' to the new law, but if she tries to get more than her share I'll have the law say she shall be taken to the edge an' pushed off. What do you think of *that* law, Rosalie?"

"It's a good law, and a just one," replied the Witch approvingly.

So Trot sent for the Royal Scribbler, who was a very fat Pinky with large pink eyes and curly pink hair, and had him carefully write the new law in the Great Book of Laws. The Royal Scribbler wrote it very nicely in pink ink, with a big capital letter at the beginning and a fine flourish at the end. After Trot had signed her name to it as Queen she called all of the important people of the land to assemble in the Court of the Statues and ordered the Royal Declaimer to read to them the new law. The Pinkies seemed to think it was a just law and much better than the old one, and Rosalie said:

"Now no one can object to becoming the Queen, since the Ruler of the Pinkies will no longer be obliged to endure suffering and hardships."

"All right," said Trot. "In that case I'll make you the Queen, Rosalie, for you've got more sense than Tourmaline has and your powers as a witch will help you to protect the people."

At once she made the announcement, telling the assembled Pinkies that by virtue of her high office as Queen of Sky Island she would leave Rosalie the Witch to rule over the Pink Country while she returned to the Earth with her friends. As Rosalie was greatly loved and respected, the people joyfully accepted her as their Queen, and Trot ordered them to tear down the old hut and build a new palace for Rosalie — one which would be just as good as any other house in the City, but no better. She further ordered a pink statue of Tourmaline to be set up in the Court, and also a pink statue of herself, so that the record of all the rulers of the Pinkies should be complete.

The people agreed to do all this as soon as possible, and some of the leaders whispered together and then asked Coralie to be their spokesman in replying to Queen Trot's speech.

Coralie stood on a chair and made a bow, after which she thanked Trot in the name of the Pinkies for leading them safely into the Blue Country and out again, and for giving them so good a Queen as Rosalie. The Pinkies would be sorry to have their new friends, the Earth people, leave them, but asked the Queen of Sky Island to carry with her the royal band of pink gold which she now wore upon her brow, together with the glistening pink jewel set in its center. It would remind her, Coralie declared, of the Beautiful Land of Sunset and Sunrise and of the fact that the Pinkies would always be glad to welcome her back.

Trot knew she would never return to Sky Island, but she did not tell them that. She merely thanked Coralie and the Pinkies and said they might all come to the Court after dinner and see her and her comrades fly away through the sky.

The Journey Home

AFTER the Pinkies had been dismissed, their new Queen Rosalie, by means of a clever charm, conjured up a dinner table set with very nice things to eat. They all enjoyed a hearty meal and afterward sat and talked over their adventures.

"Will you take the parrot home with you, Trot?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"Guess not, Cap'n," she answered. "Mother wouldn't like to have him hangin' 'round an' screechin' bad po'try ev'ry minute. I'll give him to Rosalie, for I'm sure she'll take good care of him."

Rosalie accepted the gift with pleasure, but the parrot looked sober awhile and then said:

"This looks to me like a give-away;
But here I am, and here I'll stay.
The country's pink, but we'll all be blue
When Trot goes home, as she says she'll do."

They now packed the lunch-basket with the remains of the feast, for they knew a long journey was before them and feared they might be hungry before they landed again. Cap'n Bill straightened out the ropes and adjusted the seats, while Button-Bright examined the umbrella to see if it had been injured in any way when the elephant tramped through the Fog Bank.

The boy looked into the small red eyes of the carved elephant's-head handle with some misgivings, but as seen in the strong sunshine the eyes were merely red stones, while the handle plainly showed the marks of the tool that had carved it.

When all was ready they went into the Court of the Statues, where all the Pinkies were assembled — together with their Pink Band — and Cap'n Bill hooked the swinging seats onto the handle of the Magic Umbrella.

Trot kissed Rosalie and Coralie and Tourmaline good-bye and said to them:

"If you ever happen to come to Earth you must be sure to visit me and I'll try to give you a good time. But p'raps you'll stay here all your lives."

"I think we shall," replied Rosalie, laughing, "for in all Sky Island there will be no Magic Umbrella for us to fly with."

"And when you see Polychrome," added Trot, "jus' give her my love."

Then she and Button-Bright seated themselves in the double seat, which was flat upon the pink ground, and Cap'n Bill sat before them on his own seat, to which the lunch basket had been fastened by means of a stout cord.

"Hold fast!" said the sailorman, and they all held fast to the ropes while the boy, glancing up toward the open umbrella he held, said solemnly and distinctly:

"Take us to Trot's house on the Earth."

The umbrella obeyed, at once mounting into the air. It moved slowly at first but gradually increased its speed. First it lifted the seat of the boy and girl, then Cap'n Bill's seat and finally the lunch-basket.

"Fly high! — mind your eye!

Don't cry! — bye-bye!"

shouted the parrot from the Pink Witch's shoulder.

Trot leaned over and waved her hand. The Pink Band played as loud as it could — in order that the travelers might hear it as long as possible — and Rosalie and Coralie and Tourmaline threw kisses to their vanishing friends as long as they remained in sight.

* * * * * * * *

"Seems good to be on the way home again," remarked Trot, as the umbrella bumped into a big black cloud.

"It reely does, mate," answered the sailorman, joyously.

Fast through the cloud the umbrella swept and then suddenly it sailed into a clear blue sky, across which a great and gorgeous Rainbow spread its radiant arch. Upon the bow danced the dainty Daughters of the Rainbow, and the umbrella passed near enough to it for the passengers to observe Polychrome merrily leading her sisters, her fleecy robes waving prettily in the gentle breeze.

"Good-bye, Polly!" cried Button-Bright, and Trot and Cap'n Bill both called out: "Good-bye!"

Polychrome heard and nodded to them smilingly, never halting in her

graceful dance. Then the umbrella dropped far below the arch, which presently faded from view.

It was an exciting ride. Scenes presented themselves entirely different from those they had seen on their former voyage, for the sky changes continually and the clouds of the moment are not the clouds of an hour ago. Once they passed between two small stars as brilliant as diamonds, and once an enormous bird, whose wings spread so wide that they shadowed the sun, soared directly over them and lost itself in the vague distance of the limitless sky.

They rode quite comfortably, however, and were full of eager interest in what they saw. The rush of air past them made them hungry, so Cap'n Bill drew up the lunch-basket and held it so that Button-Bright and Trot could help themselves to the pink food, which tasted very good. And, finally, a dark rim appeared below them, which the sailor declared must be the Earth. He proved to be correct and when they came nearer they found themselves flying over the waves of the ocean. Pretty soon a small island appeared, and Trot exclaimed:

"That's the Sky Island we thought we were goin' to — only we didn't."

"Yes; an' there's the mainland, mate!" cried Cap'n Bill excitedly, pointing toward a distant coast.

On swept the Magic Umbrella. Then its speed gradually slackened; the houses and trees on the coast could be seen, and presently--almost before they realized it--they were set down gently upon the high bluff near the giant acacia. A little way off stood the white cottage where Trot lived.

It was growing dusk as Cap'n Bill unhooked the seats and Button-Bright folded up the umbrella and tucked it under his arm. Trot seized the lunch-basket and ran to the house, where she found her mother busy in the kitchen.

"Well, I'm back again," said the little girl. "Is supper ready, mama?"

Button-Bright stayed all night with them, but next morning, bright and early, he hooked one of the seats to his Magic Umbrella, said good-bye to Trot and Cap'n Bill and flew into the air to begin his journey to Philadelphia. Just before he started Trot said:

"Let me know if you get home safe, Button-Bright; an' come an' see me again as quick as you can."

"I'll try to come again," said the boy. "We've had a good time; haven't we, Trot?"

"The bes' time I *ever* had!" she replied, enthusiastically. Then she asked: "Didn't you like it, too, Cap'n Bill?"

"Parts o' it, mate," the sailor answered, as he thoughtfully made marks in the sand with the end of his wooden leg; "but seems to me the bes' part of all was gett'n' home again."

After several days Trot received a postal-card from Button-Bright. It was awkwardly scrawled, for the boy was not much of a writer, but Trot managed to make out the words. It read as follows:

"Got home safe, Trot, and the folks were so worried they forgot to scold

me. Father has taken the Magic Umbrella and locked it up in a big strong chest in the attic. He put the key in his own pocket, so I don't know as I'll ever be able to see you again. But I'll never forget the Queen of Sky Island, and I send my love to you and Cap'n Bill.

Your friend,

BUTTON-BRIGHT."

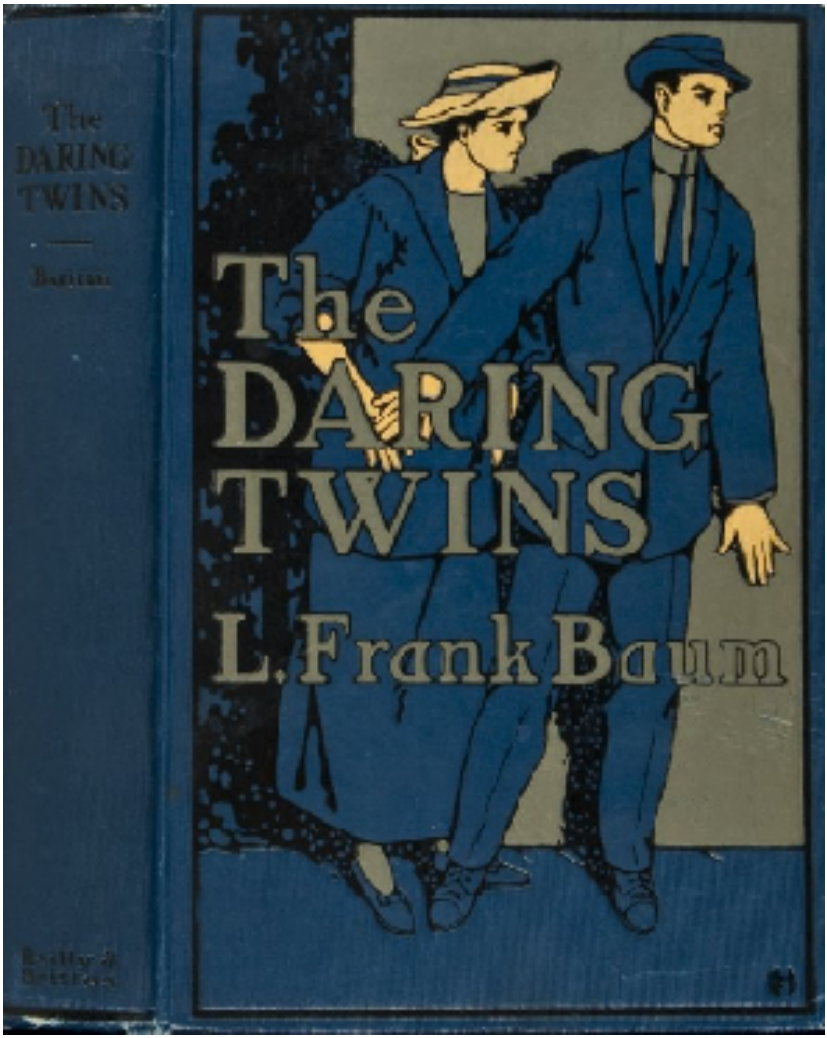
THE END

Non-Fantasy Works Under Baum's Name

"Ozcot" the house Baum built after the success of his Oz series

THE DARING TWINS

The Daring Twins, published by Reilly & Britton in 1911, was the first in a projected series of mystery novels for young people. Pauline M. Batchelder was the illustrator. The novel features five orphaned children, including twins named Phil and Phoebe. Phil works in a bank where he finds himself unjustly accused of stealing. 16-year-old Phoebe attempts to clear his name. A publisher reissued *The Daring Twins* in 2006 under the title, *The Secret of the Lost Fortune*.



A first edition copy of The Daring Twins

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE DARINGS

"Now you-all stop dat a-foolin, an' eat yo' brekfas' like sens'ble chill'ns," said Aunt Hyacinth, coming in with a plate of smoking cakes. "Ef yo' don', yo' done be late fo' school, shore 'nuff."

A ripple of laughter went around the group of live young Darings as a scramble was made for the cakes.

"I don't b'lieve I'll go to school to-day, Auntie," said Sue, a demure little miss at the lower end of the table.

"Yes yo' will, honey," retorted the black mammy, in a voice she meant to be severe. "Yo's go in' to school, all of yo', an' I don't 'tend yous'll be late, nuther."

"I'm not going, for one," declared Don, his mouth too full to speak properly.

"Get some more cakes; will you, Aunt Hy?" requested Becky, in a plaintive tone. "They snapped those up so quick I couldn't harpoon a single one."

The faithful old servant pattered back to the kitchen, slid more cakes from the griddle to her plate, poured on fresh batter and came pattering back again.

"Yo', now, Miss Sue; what's dat I heah' bout stayin 'home f'm school?" she demanded, a frown wrinkling her ebony brow.

"That's it, Auntie; no school for me," said Sue, grabbing a cake with her fork before Phoebe could reach the plate.

"But yo' mus', chile; yo' ain't sick. Yo' *mus'* go to school."

"Not to-day. I jus' won't, Auntie."

"Yes yo' will, Miss Sue! Yo'll go ef I has to lead yo' dere by de ear o' you."

Even Phil joined the laughter now, and he said in his grave yet pleasant way:

"You'll have to lead us all, then, Auntie, and there are more ears than you have hands."

Aunt Hyacinth seemed bewildered. She looked around the table, from one to another of the bright, laughing faces, and shook her head reproachfully.

Then Sue, having consumed the cake, leaned back in her chair, shook the tangled brown curls from her face and slowly raised her long curling lashes, until the mischievous eyes were unveiled and sent a challenge to Auntie's startled ones.

"We're misbehavin' *drea'fully*; ain't we? But a fact's a fact, Auntie. We're none of us goin' to school — so there, now!"

“W’y, yo’ — yo ‘ — yo’ — !”

Sue sprang upon her chair and threw both arms around old Hyacinth’s neck, giving the black cheek a smacking kiss.

“You big goose!” said she; “don’t you know it’s Sat’day? There *be*n’t no school.”

“Wha”s ‘at?” cried Auntie, striving to cover her humiliation at being caught in such a foolish error. “Is dat a proper speechifyin’ to say dere ‘ben’t no school’? Where’s yo’ grammeh, Miss Sue? Don’ let me heah yo’ say ‘ben’t’ agin. Say, ‘dere *hain’t* no school.’”

Phoebe led the laughter this time; but, when it had subsided she said to the indignant servant:

“She certainly does use awfully bad grammar, Auntie, and you’re quite right to correct her. But, I’mpositive that something’s burning in the kitchen.”

Aunt Hyacinth made a dive for the door and let in a strong odor of charred cakes as she passed through.

Phoebe got up from her place and walked to the latticed window. Something attracted her attention outside, for she gave a little start. Phil joined her just then and slipped his arm around her slim waist. They were twins, these two, and the eldest of the five Darings.

“What is it, dear?” he asked.

“The people are moving in, across the way,” she said, rather sadly. “I didn’t know they were expected so soon.”

There was a rush for the window, at this, but five heads were too many for the space and the outlook was hindered by a mass of climbing ivy. Don made for the porch, and the others followed him into the fresh morning air.

For a while they all gazed silently at the great mansion across the way, set in the midst of an emerald lawn. Men were carrying trunks in at the side entrance. Before the door stood a carriage from which a woman, a man, a girl and a boy had alighted. They were gazing around them with some curiosity, for the scene was all new to them.

“Isn’t it funny,” whispered Becky, softly, “to think of other folks living in our old home?”

“It isn’t ours, now,” said Don, testily; “so, what’s the odds?”

“It was sold last fall, soon after papa died,” remarked Phoebe, “and this Mr. Randolph bought it. I suppose that’s him strutting across the lawn — the stout gentleman with the cane.”

“The grounds seem more of an attraction to them than the house,” remarked Phil.

“Yes, they’re fresh from the city,” answered his twin. “I’mrather surprised

they haven't come to Riverdale before, to occupy their new home."

"Our house was sold 'cause we were poor, wasn't it?" asked Sue.

"Yes, dear. We couldn't afford to keep it, because poor papa left a lot of debts that had to be paid. So we moved over here, to Gran'pa Eliot's."

"Don't like this place," observed Don, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, as he stared across the street. "It isn't half as fine or cosy as our old home."

"It's lucky for us that Gran'pa Eliot had a house," returned Phil, gravely. "And it's lucky Mr. Ferguson induced him to let us live in it."

"Guess gran'pa couldn't help himself, being paralyzed like he is," said Becky.

"It's the first thing he ever did for us, anyhow," added Don, grumblingly. "And he sticks to his room upstairs and won't let us come near him."

"Do you want to visit gran'pa?" asked Phoebe, turning to her younger brother. "No."

"Then don't complain, dear, if he doesn't want you. He's old and helpless; and as for helping us, I'mafraid gran'pa is almost as poor as we are," she said, her eyes still regarding, with wistful earnestness, the scene across the street.

"Poor! Gran'pa Eliot poor, with this big house?" exclaimed Sue, incredulously.

"I think so; I'm sure it's so," answered Phœbe. "Old Miss Halliday asked me to keep you all from picking the fruit in the garden, when it ripens; because, she says gran'pa has to sell it to get enough money to pay taxes and his living expenses. And she gathers all the eggs from the chickens and sells them to Mr. Wyatt, the grocer. That must mean gran'pa's pretty poor, you know."

"Is old Miss Halliday any relation to us?" asked Don.

"No; she was an old servant of grandmother's, before she died — her housekeeper, I believe; and afterward, when gran'pa became paralyzed, she took care of him."

"She seems to run everything around this place as if she owned it," muttered the boy.

"She's a very faithful woman," observed Phil; "and a very disagreeable one. I don't know what gran'pa would have done without her. She gets his meals and waits on him night and day."

"Somehow," said Becky, "I sort o' hate her. She won't let us into any of the back rooms upstairs, though she and gran'pa can't use all of 'em; and she never comes near us unless she wants to jaw about something we've done. I run a clothesline through the grass yesterday, and tripped old Halliday up

when she went to feed the chickens, and she was as mad as anything."

"I think she doesn't care much for young people," admitted Phoebe; "and as none of us cares for her it's just as well that we should live apart — even if we occupy the same house. After all, my dears, we should be grateful for being allowed so much room in this comfortable old shack. We had no other place to go after our own home was sold."

There was silence in the little group for a moment. Then Becky asked, curiously:

"Where do we get the money to live on? We have to pay our own grocery bills, don't we?"

Phil started and looked upon his younger sister wonderingly, as if she had suggested a new thought to him. Then he turned to Phoebe.

"There must have been a little money left," he said. "It never occurred to me before. I must ask Mr. Ferguson about it."

Phoebe flushed a trifle, but looked down instead of meeting her twin's earnest gaze.

"I've thought of it, Phil," she replied, softly. "Whatever was left after paying papa's debts must have been little enough, and can't last forever. And then — "

Phil was regarding her with serious eyes. He glanced at the younger ones and said quickly:

"Never mind. We haven't suffered from poverty so far, have we? And we won't. We've Daring blood in our veins, and that means we can accomplish anything we set out to do." Phoebe smiled and turned to reënter the house. "Saturday is my busy day," she remarked brightly. "I suppose you' re going to practice for the baseball match, Phil?"

"Yes," he said, "I promised the boys — "Then he stopped and shook his head." I don't know yet what I'll do, Phoebe," he added. "Just now I've an errand down town."

He caught up his cap, kissed his twin and strode down the walk to the gate. Phoebe cautioned the younger ones not to raise a racket under Gran'pa Eliot's window, but to keep in the front yard if they were going to play. Then she stole softly away to her own little room upstairs and locked herself in so as not to be disturbed.

CHAPTER II

PHIL INTERVIEWS THE LAWYER

Phil Daring walked toward the village with uneasy, nervous strides. There was an anxious expression upon his usually placid face.

"Queer," he muttered to himself, "that I never thought to ask how we're able to live. It costs money to feed five hungry youngsters; and where does it come from, I wonder?"

The Eliot house was on the brow of a knoll and the street sloped downward to the little village where the "business center" clustered around the railway station. The river was just beyond, flowing sleepily on its way to the gulf, and at Riverdale a long wooden bridge spanned the murky water. It was a quiet, pretty little town, but had such a limited population that every resident knew nearly everyone else who lived there and kept fairly well posted on the private affairs of each member of the community.

Wallace Daring, the father of the twins, had been the big man of Riverdale before he died a few months ago. He had come to the town many

years before, when he was a young man, and built the great beet sugar factory that had made all the farmers around so prosperous, growing crops to supply it. Mr. Daring must have made money from the business, for he married Jonathan Eliot's daughter and established a cosy home where Phil and Phoebe, and Donald and Becky were born. Afterward he erected a splendid mansion that was the wonder and admiration of all Riverdale. But no one envied Wallace Daring his success, for the kindly, energetic man was everybody's friend and very popular with his neighbors.

Then began reverses. His well-beloved wife, the mother of his children, was taken away from him and left him a lonely and changed man. He tried to seek consolation in the society of his little ones; but in a brief four years he himself met a sudden death in a railway wreck. Then, to the amazement of all who knew him, it was discovered that his vast fortune had been swept away and he was heavily in debt.

Judge Ferguson, his lawyer, was made his executor by the court and proceeded to settle the estate as advantageously as he could; but the fine mansion had to be sold. The five orphaned children lived in their old home, cared for by honest, faithful Aunt Hyacinth, until two months before the time this story begins, when a man from the East named Randolph bought the place and the Darings moved over to their grandfather's old-fashioned but roomy and comfortable house across the way.

Phil walked more slowly as he approached the business district. The task he had set himself was an unpleasant one, but he felt that he must face it

courageously.

The boy's father had been so invariably indulgent that Phil, although now sixteen years of age, had never been obliged to think of financial matters in any way. He was full of life and healthful vitality, and his one great ambition was to prepare himself for college. His father's sudden death stunned him for a time, but he picked up the trend of his studies again, after a little, and applied himself to work harder than ever. Vaguely he realized that he must make a name and a fortune for himself after graduating from college; but so far he had not been called upon to consider the resources of the family. Mr. Ferguson had attended to the settlement of his father's estate, of which the boy knew nothing whatever, and Aunt Hyacinth had cared for the house, and got the meals and sent her five charges to school each day in ample season. The lives of the young Darings had scarcely been interrupted as yet by the loss of their father; although with him vanished every tangible means of support. A chance word this morning, however, had caused Phil to realize for the first time the fact that they were really poor and dependent; and he knew it was his duty, as the eldest of the family to find out what their exact circumstances were. In reality he was not the eldest, for his twin sister, Phoebe, was five minutes his senior; but Phil was a boy, and in his estimation that more than made up for the five minutes' difference in age and established him as the natural protector of Phoebe, as well as of the other children.

Down at "The Corners" the main residence street entered the one lying parallel with the river, and around this junction the business center of Riverdale was clustered, extending some two or more blocks either way. The hotel was on one corner and Bennett's general store on another, while the opposite corners were occupied by the druggist and the hardware store. Bennett's was a brick structure and all the others were frame, except Spaythe's Bank, a block up the street. Between them were rambling one story and two story wooden buildings, mostly old and weather-beaten, devoted to those minor businesses that make up a town and are required to supply the wants of the inhabitants, or of the farmers who "came to town" to trade.

Between the post office and the hardware store was a flight of stairs leading to offices on the second floor. These stairs Phil ascended and knocked at a door bearing a small painted sign, the letters of which were almost effaced by time, with the words: "P. Ferguson; Lawyer."

No one answered the knock, so Phil opened the door and walked softly in.

It was a bare looking room. A few maps and a print of Abraham Lincoln hung upon the cracked and discolored plaster of the walls. At one side was a

shelf of sheep-covered law books; in the center stood a big, square table; beyond that, facing the window, was an old-fashioned desk at which sat a man engaged in writing. His back was toward Phil; but from the tousled snow white locks and broad, spreading ears the boy knew he stood in the presence of his father's old friend and confidant, Judge Ferguson. His title of "Judge" was derived from his having been for some years a Justice of the Peace, and it was, therefore, more complimentary than official.

As Phil closed the door and stood hesitating, a voice said: "Sit down." The tone was quiet and evenly modulated, but it carried the effect of a command.

Phil sat down. There was a little room connected with the big office, in which sat a tow-headed clerk copying paragraphs from a law book. This boy glanced up and, seeing who his master's visitor was, rose and carefully closed the door between them. Mr. Ferguson continued writing. He had no idea who had called upon him, for he did not turn around until he had leisurely completed his task, when a deliberate whirl of his revolving office chair brought him face to face with the boy.

"Well, Phil?" said he, shooting from beneath the bushy overhanging eyebrows a keen glance of inquiry.

"I — I wanted to have a little talk with you, sir," returned Phil, a bit embarrassed. "Are you very busy?"

"No. Fire ahead, my lad."

"It's about our — our family affairs," continued the visitor, haltingly.

"What about them, Phil!"

"Why, I know nothing as to how we stand, sir. No one has told me anything and I've been too thoughtless to inquire. But, I ought to know, Mr. Ferguson — oughtn't I?"

The judge nodded.

"You ought, Phil. I've been going to speak of it, myself, but waited to see if you wouldn't come here of your own accord. You, or Phoebe. In fact, I rather expected Phoebe."

"Why, sir?"

"You're not a very practical youth, Phil. They say you' re a student, and are trying for honors at the high school graduation next month. Also, you're the pitcher of the baseball team, and stroke oar for the river crew. These things occupy all your time, it seems, as well they may."

Phil flushed red. There was an implied reproach in the old man's words.

"Now, Phoebe is different," continued the lawyer, leaning back in his chair with his elbows on the arms and joining the tips of his fingers together — a characteristic attitude. "Phoebe has a shrewd little head, full of worldly common sense and practical, if womanly, ideas. I 'd a notion Phoebe would

come to me to make these necessary inquiries."

Phil slowly rose. His face was now white with anger, yet his voice scarcely trembled, as he said:

"Then, I'll let her come to you. Good morning, sir."

Mr. Ferguson nodded again.

"Yes," he remarked, without altering his position, "my judgment of you was correct. You'll be a man some day, Phil, and a good one; but, just now, you' re merely a stubborn, unformed boy."

Phil paused with his hand on the knob of the door. To leave the office at this juncture would be humiliating and unsatisfactory. His nature was usually calm and repressed, and under excitement he had a way of growing more quiet and thinking more clearly, which is exactly the opposite of the usual formula with boys of his age His strong resentment at the frank speech of the old lawyer did not abate, but he began to reason that a quarrel would be foolish, and if he intended to satisfy the doubts that worried him he must ignore the slight cast upon his character.

He laid down his hat and resumed his chair.

"After all, sir," he said, "I'm the eldest boy and the head of the family. It is my duty to find out how we stand in the world, and what is necessary to be done to protect and care for my brother and sisters."

"True enough, my lad," rejoined the lawyer, in a hearty tone. "I'll help you all I can, Phil, for your father's sake."

"You administered the estate," said the boy, "and you are still my guardian, I believe."

"Yes. Your father left no will, and the court appointed me administrator and guardian. I've done the best I could to untangle the snarl Wallace Daring left his business in, and the affairs of the estate are now closed and the administrator discharged."

"Was — was there anything left?" inquired Phil, anxiouslv.

"Your father was a wonderful man, Phil," resumed the lawyer, with calm deliberation, "and no doubt he made a lot of money in his day. But he had one fault as a financier — he was too conscientious. I knew Wallace Daring intimately, from the time he came to this town twenty years ago, and he never was guilty of a crooked or dishonest act."

Phil's face brightened at this praise of his father and he straightened up and returned the lawyer's look with interest.

"Then there was nothing disgraceful in his failure, sir?"

"No hint of disgrace," was the positive reply. "Daring made a fortune from his sugar factory, and made it honestly. But three years ago all the beet sugar industries of the country pooled their interests — formed a trust, in

other words — and invited your father to join them. He refused, believing such a trust unjust and morally unlawful. They threatened him, but still he held out, claiming this to be a free country wherein every man has the right to conduct his business as he pleases. I told him he was a fool; but I liked his sterling honesty.

"The opposition determined to ruin him, and finally succeeded. Mind you, Phil, I don't say Wallace Daring wouldn't have won the fight had he lived, for he was in the right and had a host of friends to back him up; but his accidental death left his affairs in chaos. I had hard work, as administrator, to make the assets meet the indebtedness. By selling the sugar factory to the trust at a big figure and disposing of your old home quite advantageously, I managed to clear up the estate and get my discharge from the courts. But the surplus, I confess, was practically nothing."

Phil's heart sank. He thought earnestly over this statement for a time.

"We — we're pretty poor, then, I take it, sir?"

"Pretty poor, Phil. And it's hard to be poor, after having enjoyed plenty."

"I can't see that there's any college career ahead of me, Mr. Ferguson," said the boy, trying to keep back the tears that rushed unbidden to his eyes.

"Nor I, Phil. College is a fine thing for a young fellow, but under some circumstances work is better."

"Why didn't you tell me this before, then?" demanded the boy, indignantly.

"There was no use in discouraging you, or interrupting your work at high school. I consider it is best for you to graduate there, especially as that is liable to end your scholastic education. The time is so near — less than three months — that to continue your studies would make little difference in deciding your future, and the diploma will be valuable to you."

No one but Phil will ever know what a terrible disappointment he now faced. For years his ambition, fostered by his father, had been to attend college. All his boyish dreams had centered around making a record there. Phil was a student, but not one of the self-engrossed, namby-pamby kind. He was an athlete as well as a scholar, and led his high school class in all manly sports. At college he had determined to excel, both as a student and an athlete, and never had he dreamed, until now, that a college career would be denied him.

It took him a few minutes to crowd this intense disappointment into a far corner of his heart and resume the conversation. The lawyer silently watched him, his keen gray eyes noting every expression that flitted over the boy's mobile features. Finally, Phil asked:

"Would you mind telling me just how much money was left, Mr.

Ferguson!”

“The court costs in such cases are extremely high,” was the evasive reply. The lawyer did not seem to wish to be explicit, yet Phil felt he had the right to know.

“And there were your own fees to come out of it,” he suggested.

“My fees? I didn’t exact any, my lad. Your father was the best and truest friend I ever had. I am glad I could do something to assist his orphaned children. And, to be frank with you, Phil, I couldn’t have squared the debts and collected legal fees at the same time, if I ‘d wanted to.”

“I see,” returned Phil, sadly. “You have been very kind, Mr. Ferguson, and we are all grateful to you, I assure you. But will you please tell me how we have managed to live for the past eight months, since there was nothing left from father’s estate?”

It was the lawyer’s turn to look embarrassed then. He rubbed his hooked nose with one finger and ran the other hand through the thick mat of white hair.

“Wallace Daring’s children,” said he, “had trouble enough, poor things, without my adding to it just then. I’ve a high respect for old black Hyacinth, Phil. The faithful soul would die for any one of you, if need be. She belongs to the Daring tribe, mind you; not to the Eliots. Your father brought her here when he was first married, and I think she nursed him when he was a baby, as she has all his children. So I took Aunt Hyacinth into my confidence, and let her manage the household finances. A month ago, when the final settlement of the estate was made, I turned over to her all the surplus. That’s what you’ve been living on, I suppose.”

“How much was it?” asked the boy, bent on running down the fact.

“Forty dollars.”

“Forty dollars! For all our expenses! Why, that won’ t last us till I graduate — till I can work and earn more.”

“Perhaps not,” agreed the attorney, drily.

Phil stared at him.

“What ought I to do, sir? Quit school at once?”

“No. Don’t do that. Get your diploma. You’ll regret it in after life if you don’t.”

“But — there are five of us, sir. The youngsters are hearty eaters, you know; and the girls must have clothes and things. Forty dollars! Why, it must have all been spent long ago — and more.”

Mr. Ferguson said nothing to this. He was watching Phil’s face again.

“It’s all so — so — sudden, sir; and so unexpected. I — I — ” he choked down a sob and continued bravely: “I’mnot able to think clearly yet.”

“Take your time,” advised the lawyer. “There’s no rush. And don’t get discouraged, Phil. Remember, you’re the head of the family.

Remember, there’s no earthly battle that can’t be won by a brave and steadfast heart. Think it all over at your leisure, and consider what your father might have done, had some whim of fortune placed him in your position. Confide in Phoebe, if you like, but don’t worry the little ones. Keep a stiff upper lip with your friends and playmates, and never let them suspect you’re in trouble. The world looks with contempt on a fellow who shows he’s downed. If he doesn’t show it, he *isn’t* downed. Just bear that in mind, Phil. And now run along, for I’ve a case to try in half an hour, at the courthouse. If you need any help or advice, lad,” he added, with gentle kindliness, “come to me. I was your father’s friend, and I’m your legal guardian.”

Phil went away staggering like a man in a dream. His brain seemed in a whirl, and somehow he couldn’t control it and make it think, logically. As he reached the sidewalk Al Hayden and Eric Spaythe ran up to him.

“We’ve been waiting for you, Phil,” said one. “Saw you go up to the judge’s office.”

“Let’s hurry over to the practice field,” suggested the other, eagerly. “The rest of our nine is there by this time, and we’ve got to get in trim for the match this afternoon.”

Phil stared, first at one face and then the other, trying to understand what they were talking about.

“If we’re beaten by Exeter to-day,” continued Al, “we’ll lose the series; but we won’t let ‘em beat us, Phil. Their pitcher can’t hold a candle to you, and we’ve got Eric for shortstop.”

“How’s your arm, Phil?” demanded Eric.

They had started down the street as they talked, and Phil walked with them. Gradually, the mist began to fade from his mind and he came back to the practical things of life. “If a fellow doesn’t show it, he *isn’t* downed,” the shrewd old lawyer had said, and Phil knew it was true.

“My arm?” he replied, with a return of his usual quiet, confident manner; “it’s fit as anything, boys. We’ll beat Exeter to-day as sure as my name’s Phil Daring.”

CHAPTER III

BECKY GETS ACQUAINTED

Meantime Becky, Donald and Sue had maintained their interest in the new neighbors, and partly concealed by the vines that covered the porch were able to watch every movement across the way.

"Isn't it a shame," said Don, "to have them walk into our old home that father built, and use the pretty furniture that mother bought in the city, and have all the good things that *we* used to have?"

"Wonder who's got my room," mused Sue. "If it's that yellow haired girl yonder, I could scratch her eyes out."

"She's about my age," asserted Becky, gazing hard at the fairylike form of the new arrival. "I hope she's 'spectable an' decent, an' won't try to be bossy."

"They're from New York," added Sue. "I jus' hate New York folks."

"How do you know they're from New York?" demanded Don.

"Somebody said so. Oh, it was Lil Harrington; her father once knew' em."

The elders had entered the house by this time, and the carriage and baggage wagon had driven away. The girl and boy, about fourteen and twelve years of age, were walking with mincing steps about the grounds, examining the shrubbery and flowers and, as Don said, evidently "taking *stock" of their new* possessions.

"That fellow," Don added, "is a snob. I can see that from here. He wears a velvet suit, and it's *braided.* Think of that, girls!"

"Let's go over and talk to' em," suggested Becky. "We can show 'em the stables, an' where we kept the rabbits an' guinea pigs, an' how to climb the pear-tree."

"Not me!" exclaimed Don, scornfully.

"We've got to know' em sometime," retorted his sister, "bein' as we're next door neighbors. And it's polite for us to make the first call."

"They're usurpers," declared Don. "What right had they to buy our old house? They'll get no politeness out o' me, Beck, if they live here a thousand years."

The boy and girl opposite came down the lawn and stood at the entrance of the driveway, looking curiously down the wide village street, shaded with its avenue of spreading trees.

"Come on, Sue," said Becky. "Don't be cross to-day, anyhow. Let's go and talk to our neighbors."

But Sue drew back, shaking her curls, positively.

"I don't like 'em, Becky. They — they' re not our style, I'm' fraid. You

can go — if you dare."

One thing Becky couldn't do, was to "take a dare." She was not really anxious to make the pilgrimage alone, but having suggested it, she turned a comical look upon the others and said:

"All right. Here goes."

Don gave a snort of disdain and Sue laughed. It would be fun to watch their reckless sister and see what she did.

Becky Daring was not the beauty of the family, by any means. Her hair was a glaring, painful red; her face long, thin and freckled; her nose inclined to turn upward. But Becky's hazel eyes were splendid and sparkled so continuously with humor and mischief that they won for her more smiles and friendly words than she really deserved. Auntie had despaired long ago of trying to make Becky look neat and tidy, and at fourteen she was growing so fast that she shot out of her gowns as if by magic, and you could always see more of her slim legs and sunburned wrists than was originally intended. She was not dainty, like little Sue, nor calm and composed like beautiful Phoebe; but Becky enjoyed life, nevertheless, and had a host of friends.

One of her shoes became untied as she crossed the road to where the Randolph children stood. She placed her foot on the stone coping at the sidewalk and, as she fastened the knot, said with her slow Southern drawl:

"Good mawnin'. I s'pose you're our new neighbors."

The boy and girl, standing side by side, looked at her solemnly.

"Come to stay, I guess, haven't you?" continued Becky, inspecting them carefully at close range.

"Come away, Doris," said the boy, taking his sister's hand. "It is some common village child. I am sure mamma won't care to have us know her."

Becky threw back her head with a merry laugh.

"Don was right, you know," she said, nodding. "He sized you up in a jiffy, an' from 'way over there, too," indicating the porch from whence she had come.

"Who is Don, pray?" asked Doris, in quiet, ladylike tones; "and in what way was he right?"

"Don's my brother," was the reply; "an' he jus' gave one squint at *your* brother an' said he was a snob."

"Me — a snob!" cried the boy, indignantly.

"That's what he said. Funny how he spotted you so quick, isn't it?"

"Come, Doris. It is an insult," he said, his face growing red as he tugged at Doris' hand.

"Wait a moment, Allerton; we must return good for evil. Evidently the poor child does not know she has been rude," remarked the girl, primly.

Becky gave a gasp of astonishment.

“Child!” she echoed. “I’m as old as you are, I’ll bet a cookie.”

“In years, perhaps,” answered Doris. “But, permit me to state that your brother was wrong. Having been bred in this simple, out of the way village, he does not understand the difference between a gentleman and a snob. Nor do you realize the rudeness of accosting strangers without a proper introduction, repeating words designed to injure their feelings. I am not blaming you for what you do not know, little girl; I am merely trying to point out to you your error.”

Becky sat plump down upon the sidewalk and stared until her great eyes seemed likely to pop out of their sockets. Then, suddenly seeing the humor of the situation, she smiled her sunny, amiable smile and hugging her knees with both arms said:

“I got it that time — right in the Adam’s apple, where it belonged. My compliments to Miss Doris Randolph,” rising to drop a mock curtsy. “I’ve mislaid my cardcase somewhere, but allow me to present Miss Rebecca Daring, of Riverdale, who resides on the opposite corner. When you return my call I hope you’ll find me out.”

“Wait!” cried Doris, as Becky turned to fly. “Did you say Daring?”

“I said Daring, my child,” with great condescension.

“The Daring family that used to live here, in this place?”

“The same Darings, little girl.”

“Forgive me if I seemed supercilious,” said Doris, earnestly. “I — I mistook you for a common waif of the village, you know. But mamma says the Darings are an excellent family.”

“Score one for mamma, then. She hit the bull’s-eye,” returned Becky, lightly. But, the recognition of her social position was too flattering to be ignored.

Said Allerton, rather sourly:

“Is that fellow who called me a snob a Daring, too?”

“He is Donald Ellsworth Daring,” replied Becky, with pride. “But he may have been wrong, you know. You’ll have a chance to prove it when we know you better.”

That gracious admission mollified the boy, somewhat.

“You see,” continued Becky in a more genial tone, “I can’t stay dressed up all the time, ‘cause we’ re slightly impecunious — which means shy of money. If it hadn’t been for that we ‘d not have sold our house and moved over to Gran’pa Eliot’s. In that case, you ‘d never have had the pleasure of my acquaintance.”

Doris looked across the street to the rambling old mansion half hid by its

trees and vines. In front were great fluted pillars that reached beyond the second story, and supported a porch and an upper balcony.

"You live in a much more beautiful house than the one papa has bought," she said, rather enviously.

"What! that old shack?" cried Becky, amazed.

"Yes. Mamma and I hunted all over this part of the state to find one of those old Colonial homesteads; but none was for sale. So, we were obliged to take this modern affair," tossing a thumb over her shoulder.

"Modern affair! By cracky, I should think it was," retorted Miss Daring, indignantly. "It cost a lot more money than Gran'pa Eliot's place ever did."

"Of course," agreed Doris, with a slight smile.

"The accident of wealth will enable anyone to build a much more palatial house than this. But only the accident of birth, it seems, enables one to occupy a splendid old Southern homestead."

Becky regarded the speaker with wonder.

"You're from the No'th?" she inquired.

"Yes. Our family is old, too; perhaps as aristocratic as that of your Grandfather Eliot. We are from Boston."

"L-a-w — zee! I believe you are," declared Becky. "I knew a Boston girl once, who was even more proper an' ridic'lous in her ways than you are; but she died of a cold in the head, poor thing."

"A cold?"

"Yes. Mortification set in, 'cause she couldn't pronounce all the big words proper, on account o' the cold." Noticing a resentful look creep over Doris' face, she hastened to add: "But that don't count, you know. What really s'prises me is that you think Gran'pa Eliot's shack is finer than our beautiful old home. I guess that as soon as Noah's flood faded away Gran'pa Eliot's house was built, it's so blamed old."

"Dear me!" said Doris, in seeming distress, "I wish you wouldn't speak disrespectfully of Bible history."

"What's Bible history!" asked the astonished Becky.

"The flood God sent to punish a wicked world."

"Oh, *that* with much relief." I thought you were in earnest, at first."

"My sister," explained Allerton Randolph, with dignity, "is very religiously inclined."

"Are you?" asked Becky, curiously.

"Yes, dear. I am trying to live my daily life in conformance with the highest religious principles. So it hurts me to hear sacred things spoken of lightly."

Becky regarded this prim young lady with a sudden access of shyness.

She felt that a gulf had opened between them that never could be bridged. Allerton, studying her face, saw the effect of his sister's announcement and said in his serious way:

"Doris takes her religious ideas from our mother, who is interested in charities and foreign missions. She has exhausted her strength and undermined her health in this unselfish work, and that is why we have come to the country to live. Neither father nor I have much religious inclination."

"Oh, Allerton!"

"It's true, Doris. Father detests it with all his heart, and says our mother has ruined his home for a lot of naked niggers in Africa; but I'mmore — more — "

"Tolerant, I suppose you mean. But you must not convey a wrong impression of our father to Miss Daring. He merely regrets our mother's excessive devotion to the cause. He does not hate religion, in the abstract."

Becky had never been so astonished in her life. Here was a boy of Don's age and a girl of about her own years discussing religion with the utmost gravity, and using such "nifty" language that it positively shocked her. Again she realized that there could be nothing in common between the youthful Randolphs and the tribe of Daring; but, she had determined to be gracious to these strangers and so she stifled a sigh of regret and said:

"If you like, I'll show you over the stables, and where we played circus back of the harness room, and Phil's rabbit warren, and how to climb the pear-tree in the garden without breaking your neck, and — "

"Thank you very much," interrupted Doris; "but, we are not interested in vulgar romps of that character; are we, Allerton?"

"They — they sound rather interesting," he submitted, eyeing Becky a little wistfully.

"Perhaps, for village children," returned the girl, haughtily. "But although we are now living in the country we should remember our breeding and try to instill some of our native culture into these primitive surroundings, rather than sink our refinement to the level of the community."

"L-a-w — zee!" cried Becky, again. Then, in spite of her effort to be "good" she laughed in Doris' face, bobbing her frouzled red head up and down as peal after peal of genuine merriment burst from her slim throat.

Aller ton frowned and Doris looked grieved and sad. Positively, this country girl was laughing at their expense.

"I — I can't help it!" chuckled Becky, trying to control herself. "It's — it's too good to keep. I must go an' tell the kids before I — I bust with it all! Bye-bye, Doris. See you again soon. 'Or river,' Allerton! Guess I'll call you Al. Come over an' get acquainted."

She had backed away one step at a time, still bubbling with hysterical laughter that she could not control, and at the final words turned and dashed across the street like mad, her thin legs twinkling beneath her short skirts.

"Well," said Don, as Becky threw herself down upon the porch and shook with an abandon of glee; "tell us the joke, Beck. What's happened?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" was all the reply.

"Are they nice?" inquired Sue, squatting in a rustic chair and swinging her legs, as she calmly surveyed her sister.

"Nice? Sue, they' re the funniest kids you ever heard of," gasped Becky, her eagerness to talk stifling the spasms of merriment. "They ain't New Yorkers — not a bit — they're Bostoners! Think of that. It would kill you to hear' em talk. They're as full of culture as an egg is of meat; an' *langwidge!* — say, folks, it's something awful."

"I guessed as much," said Don, with a grin. "But, I'm glad they're not our kind. I wouldn't care to go over to our old house and play with the usurpers. Let's shut' em out, for good and all."

"Oh, they'll shut us out, I s'pect," remarked Becky, wiping her eyes on her gingham sleeve. "You ought to have seen 'em stick up their noses at me till they found out I was a Daring. Then they put on so many airs it was disgust'n'."

"Seems to me," said Sue, shaking away her troublesome curls and looking thoughtfully at her sprawling, ungainly sister, "they're' zactly the sort we ought to'sociate with. If you could rub a little culture off'n 'em, dear, it wouldn't hurt you a bit."

"Nor you, either, Sue," laughed Don. "If you pronounced English that way in Boston, they 'd jail you."

"Now who's a snob, Don?" asked Sue, indignantly. "No one's s'posed to pernounce ev'ry measley letter the dicsh 'naries chuck into a Word, is they?"

"Oh, Sue!" said Becky; "your grammar is as bad as your pernunciation. I mus' look afteh your education, myself. Those Randolph kids are a revelation to me; and, honest injun, I'm somewhat ashamed of myself. We' re going wrong, all of us, since mother died," with a sigh and a catch in her voice, "an' need to be jerked into line."

She said this in sober earnestness, remembering the sweet, gentle mother who had labored so hard to keep her flock from straying, and whose loss had permitted them to wander as their natural, untamed instincts dictated.

"Mother," said Don in tender accents, "was a lady to her finger tips, and wanted her girls and boys to grow up to be ladies and gentlemen. I try to do as she 'd like to have me, whenever I think of it; but, that isn't very often."

"You're a cross-patch," asserted Sue; "and I've heard teacher say that

you’re the worst scholar in the school. You don’t mind Phoebe any more ‘n a fly minds sugar.

“Phoebe isn’t my boss,” retorted Don, resentfully. But, the next moment his frown softened, and he added: “Anyhow, I try to be decent, and that’s more than some of the family do.”

“Meanin’ me?” asked Becky, defiantly.

“You’re fourteen, and almost a woman; yet you act like a kindergarten kid. I’ll leave it to anyone if I’m not more dignified’ n’ respectable than you are; and I won’t be thirteen ‘til next month.”

“You’ re old for your years, Don; and it’s lucky that you can find any good in yourself, for nobody else can!” remarked Becky, complacently.

CHAPTER IV

PHŒBE'S SECRET

"Let's get some pails and go to the woods for blackberries," suggested Sue, posing as peacemaker. "P'raps Auntie'll make us a pie for dinner."

"Can't," said Don. "I promised old Miss Halliday I'd make her a chicken coop. Another hen is hatching out and there's no coop to put her in."

"All right, I'll help you," exclaimed Becky, jumping up. "You saw the boards, Don, and I'll hammer the nails."

"Can't you saw?"

"Not straight; but, I'm game to try it."

A rush was made for the back yard, and Don searched the shed for some old boards to use in making the coop for the expected flock. When the saw and hammer began to be heard Miss Halliday came down from Gran'pa Eliot's room and stood watching them, her finger on her lips to caution them to be as quiet as possible.

She was old and withered, lean and bent; but

her small black eyes still twinkled brightly. Miss Halliday seldom spoke to the Daring children and had as little to do with them as possible. She was virtually the autocrat of the establishment, for old Mr. Eliot was paralyzed and almost speechless. It is true he could mumble a few words at times, but no one seemed able to understand them, except his constant nurse and attendant.

Miss Halliday had been with the Eliots since she was a young woman. She was Gran'ma Eliot's maid, at first, then the housekeeper, and after Mrs. Eliot's death and her master's paralytic stroke, the sole manager of the establishment and a most devoted servant. In person she was exceedingly neat, although she dressed very simply. She was noted in Riverdale for her thrift and shrewd bargaining. They called her miserly until it came to be generally understood that Mr. Eliot's money was gone; then the merchants respected her careful management of the old man's finances.

Why Elaine Halliday stuck to her post, under such unpleasant conditions, had puzzled more than one wise head in the village. Some said that Jonathan Eliot had willed her the homestead in return for her services; others, that the frugal stewardess was able to save more than her wages from the reputed wreck of the Eliot fortunes, which had once been considered of enormous extent. Only a very few credited her with an unselfish devotion to her old master.

After the death of his daughter, Mrs. Daring, and just before his own paralytic stroke, Mr. Eliot had had a stormy interview with his son-in-law,

Wallace Daring; but, no one except Elaine Halliday knew what it was about. Twenty-four hours later the irascible old man was helpless, and when Phoebe hurried over to assist him he refused to see her or any of his grandchildren. Mr. Daring, a kindly, warm-hearted man, had been so strongly incensed against his father-in-law that he held aloof in this crisis, knowing old Elaine would care for the stricken man's wants. All this seemed to indicate that the rupture between the two men could never be healed.

After the Daring children had been left orphans and reduced to poverty, Judge Ferguson went to Miss Halliday and pleaded with her to intercede with Jonathan Eliot to give the outcasts a home. The big house was then closed except for a few rooms on the second floor, where the invalid lay awaiting his final summons. There was more than enough room for the Darings, without disturbing the invalid in the least.

At first, the old woman declared such an arrangement impossible; but, Mr. Ferguson would not be denied. He had been Mr. Eliot's lawyer, and was the guardian of the Darings. If anyone knew the inner history of this peculiar family it was Peter Ferguson. For some reason Miss Halliday had been forced to withdraw her objections; she even gained the morose invalid's consent to "turn his house into an orphan asylum," as she bitterly expressed it. The Darings were to be allowed the entire lower floor and the two front bedrooms upstairs; but they were required to pay their own expenses. Elaine declared that it was all she could do to find money enough to feed Gran'pa Eliot his gruel and pay the taxes on the place.

A powerful antipathy, dating back many years, existed between Miss Halliday and the Darings' black servant, Aunt Hyacinth. During the two months since the Darings had found refuge in the old house not a word had been exchanged between them. But the black mammy, as much the protector of the orphans as Miss Halliday was of their grandsire, strove to avoid trouble and constantly cautioned her flock not to "raise a racket an' sturb poeh gran'pa." As for the children, they stood so much in awe of the invalid that they obeyed the injunction with great care.

It was not often that Miss Halliday asked the boys to assist her in any way; but, occasionally, Phil or Don would offer to do odd jobs about the place when they were not in school.

"It seems like helping to pay the rent," said Phil, with a laugh, "and as gran'pa quarreled with father I hate to be under obligations to him. So, let's do all we can to help old Miss Halliday. She has enough to worry her, I'msure."

That was why Don set about making the chicken coop this Saturday morning, as he had promised to do, and why Becky and Sue were eager to

assist him. The saw was dull, and that made the sawing the hard part of the work until Becky declared she could handle the tool much better than her brother — even if she couldn't manage to keep on the marked line. He let her try, and then scolded her — and jeered her attempts. A row started very promptly and a struggle began for the possession of the saw, ending by Don's snatching it away and drawing the jagged teeth across the palm of Becky's hand. She let go with a scream of pain and the blood spurted forth in a manner to frighten them all.

Don tried to tie his handkerchief over the wound, but with a wail of anguish Becky turned and fled into the house and up the front stairway to the door of Phoebe's room, leaving a red trail behind her as she went.'

"Quick, Phoebe — I'm murdered! Let me in before I die," she shouted, kicking at the door as she squeezed the wounded hand with the other.

A key turned in the lock and the door flew open.

Phoebe stared a moment at her sister's white face and noted the stream of blood. Then she drew Becky into the room without a word and led her to the washbasin. She bathed the wound freely with cold water, applied a healing lotion and bandaged the hand, neatly. It was a broad, jagged cut, but not deep. Phoebe knew that it was not a serious wound, but it would be very sore and lame for several days to come.

Becky, trembling with nervousness and weak from fright and the sight of blood, tottered to a lounge and sank down among the cushions.

"How did it happen, dear?" Phoebe now asked.

Becky related the incident with dramatic details until her eyes fell upon a table drawn before the window and covered with papers, among which rested an imposing looking machine.

"Jumpin' jooks, Phoebe!" she exclaimed; "it's a typewriter. Where on earth did it come from?"

Phoebe flushed and for a moment looked distressed.

"I rented it," she replied. "It's a great secret, Becky, and you must promise not to tell anyone."

"Can yon run it? Have you had lessons?" asked the younger girl, sitting up in her eagerness and forgetting her affliction for a time.

"I've taught myself," said Phœbe. "It is not very hard to learn. At first, you know, I made lots of mistakes; but, now I do very well. I've had it almost six months, and every Saturday I typewrite all day."

"But why? What are you copying?" demanded Becky, going to the table and looking down at the piles of manuscript.

"It is a book of sermons that Doctor Huntley is preparing for a publisher. He is too busy to do it himself, so he gave me the job. I get ten cents a page,

and I've copied nearly four hundred pages already."

"My!" cried Becky; "what a lot of money! Whatever will you do with it, dear?"

Phœbe smiled a little sadly, but put her arm around her sister and kissed her, affectionately.

"That's a part of my secret, dear, and you mustn't ask me. You'll not mention the typewriter, Becky — nor anything I've told you? I don't want Phil or the children to know."

"Trust me!" returned Becky, delighted to share so important a secret with her elder. Then, she remembered her sore hand and lay down upon the couch again, while Phœbe, having once more locked the door, resumed her work.

It was dinner time when Don finished the chicken coop and helped Miss Halliday to move the hen and her newly hatched brood into it. There had been sundry quarrels between him and Sue, who accused him of "spilling Becky's heart's blood," but now the girl was so fascinated by the fuzzy chicks that she was loth to leave them, when Auntie called her to the midday meal.

Phil came in, flushed with his exertions on the ball field, but unusually glum and serious. He found no time for his proposed talk with Phœbe then, for as soon as dinner was over he was obliged to put on his baseball uniform and hurry to the ground, where the important match game with the Exeter nine was to take place.

"Any of you coming to the game?" he inquired.

"We're all coming," declared Becky, who now posed as a heroine because of her hurt. But, Phœbe shook her head and smiled.

"I shall be too busy at home, Phil," she said; "but the others may go."

He gave her a quick, curious look, but said nothing more.

CHAPTER V

A MATCH GAME

For a long time there had been great rivalry between the ball teams of Riverdale and Exeter; the latter, a small town lying five miles inland, where there was a boys' preparatory school. This year each had won five games out of a series of ten, and the extra game to be played today was to decide the championship. The Riverdale high school captain, Al Hayden, the druggist's son, had picked his team with great care for this important occasion, and Phil had been chosen pitcher.

The ball grounds were just outside of the village, and not only were the people of Riverdale there in large numbers, but the crowd was augmented by farmers from the surrounding country who had come in for their Saturday trading and took advantage of the opportunity to see a good ball game. Several wagon loads of "fans" from Exeter also rode over in the wake of the buss that carried their ball players, to participate in the fun and excitement.

All classes of people occupied the "bleachers."

Merchants, lawyers and even two liberal minded ministers of the gospel were among them, while Judge Ferguson strolled over as the game commenced, accompanied by his pretty daughter, Janet, to see how Phil conducted himself. The Randolph children were plebeian enough to attend; the manager of the mill was there, and all the small Darings, except Phœbe, eagerly awaited the contest.

There was a stand where red lemonade was sold, and boys carried around baskets of peanuts and popcorn to refresh the audience. Nearly every high school in town had thought it her duty to be present, and their bright ribbons and dresses added a picturesque element to the scene.

Phil Daring appeared as composed as ever, when he entered the arena with his comrades; but, never for a moment, since his interview with Mr. Ferguson had his mind been free from grief, humiliation and bitter disappointment. He nodded and smiled as the throng greeted him with hearty cheers; yet all the time he was thinking to himself: "My days of fun and freedom are nearly over now. I must give up college, for good and all, and settle down somewhere to make a living and help support the children. I don't know what I can do, I'm sure, that will earn the needed money. No one in Riverdale needs any help such as I can give, and I'm not experienced enough to be of much service in a big city. It will be a hard fight, with all the chances against me; but I've got to undertake it and make a go of it."

These and similar thoughts flooded his mind to the exclusion of all else. Mechanically, he tossed the ball in practice, and when time was called he

took his position in the pitcher's box with scarcely a realization of what he was doing.

A sudden silence fell upon the throng as Phil pressed the new ball into his palm, drew back with his well-known easy swing and sent the sphere flying through the air. There followed a low murmur that sounded like a groan as the ball flew wide and smashed against the back-stop. Some of the Exeter people laughed. But Phil was unaware of either moans or laughter. He was thinking of something else more important. Getting the ball again, he made another toss and the batter caught it with a full blow and sent it flying into the field for a two-bagger. Al Hayden looked grave at this but said nothing. Phil was Riverdale's crack pitcher, as a rule; but, perhaps he hadn't his hand in yet.

As the game progressed, however, it was evident to all that Phil Daring had "fallen down" and was pitching a miserable game. The Exeters had six runs to the best of it at the end of the sixth inning and the prospects for the Riverdale nine's being able to even the score were decidedly gloomy. Phil had been equally unsuccessful at the bat, "fanning out" whenever his turn came.

It was unwise to risk the winning of the game by allowing Daring to play any longer. Al Hayden hurriedly consulted with his mates and then called Phil aside.

"I'm sorry, old man," he said; "but, you don't seem fit, to-day, and we're bound to lose unless we make a desperate effort. Take the bench, and I'll put Eric in to pitch — and Jed Hopkins in Eric's place."

Phil gave a sudden start and drew his hand across his forehead, as the full import of the words was understood. Retired? Retired and discredited at this important juncture! Why, he never would be able to hold up his head in Riverdale again, and all the honors he had formerly won on the field would be wiped away by this disgrace.

"What's wrong with me, Al?" he asked, anxiously.

"I don't know, Phil; but something's wrong. Look at that score — eight to two! — and only three more innings to play. You are usually our stand-by, old fellow; but, to-day you' re the only one of the nine who hasn't been up to scratch, and fighting to win. I've been watching you, and you seem dazed, somehow. Have the Exeter fellows scared you?"

"No," WAS THE reply. The score, now noticed for the first, time, positively startled him. Aroused from his dreams at last he begged Al to fry him for another inning.

"Just one," he pleaded. "Eric can't pitch as well as I can, I'm sure, and if I don't make good you can pull me out any time."

Al hesitated, sighed, and then consented. He really despaired now of winning the game and was so fond of Phil that he hated to humiliate him.

But the conference had been noted by the discontented Riverdale audience and people began to shout: “Take him out!” “Put Daring on the shelf!”

“Phil’s gone bad to-day!” and other similar remarks that made Phil straighten up and walk to his station with an air of resolve.

Groans and hoots greeted him, but he never wavered. The first batter to face him, one of the crack Exeter players, struck out, and the crowd ceased their jibes. The next man made a “popup” which Phil cleverly caught, and a gentle murmur of applause, mostly from the women, rewarded him. The third man also struck out, and then the crowd forgot its grievance against the young pitcher and gave a hearty cheer.

“Why didn’t he do that, before?” grumbled Judge Ferguson, who had been greatly annoyed at Phil’s poor showing.

“He hasn’t seemed himself, to-day,” replied Janet, with friendly generosity. “It occurred to me that he had heard bad news, or perhaps is not well. Really, papa, I’m not sure that Phil knew he was playing ball, till just now.”

The old lawyer nodded. He knew very well, now that Janet shrewdly called his attention to it, what had doubtless depressed his young friend, and occupied his mind.

“He seems all right now,” he remarked with a sympathetic sigh. “That last inning he played all by himself.”

Indeed, Phil’s record of three “put-outs” unassisted, inspired his fellows with renewed confidence in him. Al Hayden went to bat and made a two-bagger. Toby Clark, Mr. Ferguson’s office clerk, got first base on balls. The next batter struck out, but the one following stepped up to the plate and pounded out a clean hit that filled the bases. It was Phil’s turn now, and he realized the full importance of the crisis. Usually a pitcher is not a very good batter; yet, until today Phil had been considered an exception to this rule. So far in the game, however, his hat had never once touched a ball.

The spectators were thrilled by the excitement of the moment, but expected young Daring to strike out and let the next man, a reliable player, bring in some of the men on bases.

But Phil’s face was set and determined. He had not yet redeemed himself. Having well-nigh lost the game for his team by his poor showing, it now behooved him to save the day if he could. No thought now engaged his mind, but this; he was living in the present — not in the future. With watchful eye he followed the approaching ball on its course, and at the proper time struck shrewdly with might and main.

High in the air rose the sphere, describing a perfect arch. With one accord the spectators rose in their seats to watch the ball as it sailed over the back fence, giving the batter a home run and bringing in the three other men.

When the mighty cheer that rent the air had subsided the score was six to eight, instead of eight to two.

In the eighth and ninth innings Phil pitched so well that no runs were added by the Exeter team, while the Riverdales made one tally in each inning and tied the score.

The excitement was now intense. Each team formerly had five games to its credit, and in the present decisive game each side had scored eight runs. An extra inning must be played to determine the championship.

The boys on both sides settled down to do their level best. Phil was perfectly calm and confident. He struck out two and Al caught a long, high fly that retired Exeter with a "goose-egg." Then the Riverdale team came to bat and the first two — poor Al one of them — went out in short order. But when Phil again came to bat the opposing pitcher lost his nerve, remembering that famous home run. The result was a long drive that landed Daring on third, and the next batter, Jed Hopkins, brought him home, winning the game and the series.

The Riverdale crowd was in an ecstasy of delight and cheered until it was hoarse. Phil's wonderful playing during the final three innings had fully redeemed him in the eyes of his friends and a dozen young fellows leaped into the arena and hoisted him upon their shoulders, carrying him from the field in triumph. Even the defeated Exeters good-naturedly joined in the applause, while Becky and Sue sobbed with joy at the honors being showered upon their big brother.

"Wasn't Phil splendid?" exclaimed Janet, as she followed her father from the grand stand.

The old lawyer nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes," said he, "the lad has a wonderful amount of reserve force, which makes him a good uphill fighter. He reminded me of his father, during that last rally. If Phil Daring has only half the pluck and backbone that Wallace Daring possessed, I predict he'll some day make his mark in the world."

"Yet Mr. Daring died poor," suggested Janet.

"True, my dear; and that was because he died. Had he lived, it would have been a different story."

CHAPTER VI
HUNTING A JOB

When Phil managed to shake off his enthusiastic friends and return to his home, he found that Phoebe had gone out. Entering the kitchen to ask Aunt Hyacinth where his sister was, he found the black mammy preparing the supper.

"Don' know whar she am, Marse Phil, I'se shuah," she said. "But Miss Phoebe's sartin to be back 'fo' long."

Phil turned to go; then he paused, and after a moment's thought inquired:

"Auntie, who pays our grocery bills?"

"I do, chile," she answered, giving him an odd look.

"And where do you get the money?" he continued.

Auntie was beating eggs for a custard. She pretended not to hear him. Phil repeated the question.

"Marse Ferg'son done gi' me a lot," said she, in a matter of course way.

"Forty dollars, I believe," the boy rejoined, rather bitterly.

"Mo"n dat, honey; lots mo'."

"When?"

"'Fore we shifted oveh to dis yeah house. Den he done guv me fohty dollehs mo', an' said dat were all dere was left. But I guess it'll do, all right."

"Auntie," said Phil, taking both her hands and looking her squarely in the eyes, "tell me truly; is any of that last forty dollars left?"

A look of genuine distress crossed her honest face.

"No, honey," she admitted, in a low voice.

"Then, where does the money come from that we're living on now?"

"II — m. Miss Phœbe done guv it to me."

"Phœbe!"

"Miss Phœbe; shuah."

"Where could Phœbe get any money?" he inquired, wonderingly.

"Yo' haf to ask heh, I guess, Marse Phil."

He reflected a moment.

"Auntie, you're keeping something from me; something I ought to know; and it isn't right to treat me so," he declared.

She made no reply to this.

"Phœbe hasn't any money; or, if she's been trying to earn some, it must be mighty little. See here: I'll finish school next week, and then I'm going to take care of the family myself, and look after things. Don't you know I'm the head of the Darings, Auntie, and entitled to know all about our affairs? So tell me, where does all the money come from to pay the grocer, and the

butcher, and all the rest?”

“Miss Phoebe done guv me some,” she persisted, half frightened at his earnestness.

“And the rest, Auntie?”

She twisted her apron in her hands and cast an appealing glance into his stern face.

“Tell me, Auntie!”

“Well, yo’ see, Marse Phil,” she began, slowly, “I’ve got a little money what useter b’long to yo’ dead papa.”

“My father!”

“Dat’s a fac’, honey. Ol’ Marse alius done pay me mo’ wages ‘n I could earn, nohow. I kep’ sayin’ I did n’ want no money; but he insis’, chile; dat ol’ Marse Wallace insis’ I take all he guv me. Law sakes, I don’ neveh need no money, Marse Phil. What ‘n a world I need money fo’ — now yo ‘tell me, ef yo’ can! But I gotter take it, or make Marse Wallace mad. So, I put it in de bank fo’ safe keepin’, an’ jus’ bided mah time to git even. ‘Twan’t mine, honey, shuah ‘nuff; but I jes’ let it stay in de bank fo”mehgencies.”

Phil’s face was a study. It grew red and white, stern and dismayed by turns. It was not that he resented accepting assistance from Aunt Hy; she seemed one of the family; but that the Darings should be so miserably poor as to be dependent upon the services of their black mammy for support was so shameful that he could scarcely bear the thought.

“I’m an able-bodied young man,” said he to Phœbe a little later, when the girl had returned from her errand, “and, instead of wasting my muscles and energies on athletic games, all these months, I should have been at work for the family.”

“You didn’t know, dear.”

“I *ought* to have known, Phoebe. That’s no excuse.”

“I’msure that everything has happened for the best, Phil,” she replied, tenderly. “We’ve gone along, somehow, and I was anxious that we should both be able to complete our high school course. It’s so near the end, now, that we ‘d better stick it out.”

“Do you know that Auntie has been spending her savings to buy food for us?”

“Yes; but she doesn’t need the money just now, and we will pay her back some time.”

“She says that you have given her money, too.”

“Just a trifle, Phil,” she replied, after a brief hesitation.

“Where did it come from, Phoebe?”

“I — I earned it.”

“How?”

She unclasped her hand and showed him a bright five-dollar gold piece.

“That’s my last week’s wage — as an amateur typist. I’ve been copying manuscript for Reverend Doctor Huntley.”

Phil couldn’t help it; he gathered his twin into his arms and cried like a baby, while Phoebe sobbed on his shoulder and was glad the secret was out at last. There were not many secrets between these two.

Finally, when they had quieted down and could smile into each other’s eyes again, the girl explained how she had found the work and how the kindly clergyman had secured a typewriter for her and been very patient with her mistakes until she had thoroughly mastered it.

“He said, to-day, that it was the neatest and most correct copying he had ever seen,” she added, proudly.

The discovery that Phoebe had been working while he played added fuel to Phil’s remorse. He wanted to quit school at once and seek work, but Phoebe argued long and patiently and at last prevailed upon him to complete his course. It would only require a couple of weeks more to do this, and meantime he could be inquiring for work in the village.

“I’ll not be likely to find it, though,” he predicted. “Riverdale is a dull place, and I’m afraid I’ll have to go to the city.”

“Oh, no!” she exclaimed, for the twins had never been parted in their lives, and she could not endure the thought. “I’m sure that some position may be found here, and although the pay will not be as liberal as in the city, your expenses will be much less. And, above all, we can then remain together.”

“I’ll see what can be done,” he promised, kissing her affectionately; and then the younger ones came trooping in to end their conversation.

For several days it seemed as if Phil’s prediction would be fulfilled. No position was offered him, although the entire village was canvassed. Many of the graduating class were sons of merchants, who intended taking them into their stores. For that reason it was a bad time of the year to seek for work.

Phil went to Mr. Ferguson and asked if it would be right for him to apply at the sugar factory for a job. He did not know his father’s successor, a stern looking man who had been sent by the syndicate to manage the plant, and who was a stranger to Riverdale.

“I’ll see him myself, lad,” decided the lawyer. “I’ve met Mr. Atkins in business ways, and believe I would have more influence with him than you. Come and see me again to-morrow and I’ll report results.”

After school the next day Phil kept the appointment, trying hard to hope that Mr. Ferguson had succeeded. But the old lawyer shook his head, gravely.

“Nothing there for you, Phil,” he said. “Atkins claims it’s his dull season, but I know better. No doubt the man could give you employment, if he chose, but he doesn’t care to have a Daring in the office. An old prejudice against your father for fighting the trust so long.”

“You haven’t thought of any other opening, sir, have you?”

“Not just yet. But, I’ll keep my eye open for you, Phil, and let you know if anything offers. Keep your courage, lad. There’s something for everybody in this world.”

This bit of philosophy fell upon deaf ears. Phil was quite discouraged as he went slowly down the stairs to the street. In the doorway he paused, for Ned Thurber had halted before him. Ned was the clerk in Spaythe’s Bank.

“Congratulate me, Phil,” he said. “I’ve an offer to go to St. Louis, at a big salary.”

Phil shook his hand.

“Are you going, Ned?” he asked eagerly.

“Of course. I’ll be assistant teller in one of the biggest banks there.”

“Who will take your place at Spaythe’s?”

“I don’t know yet. Just got the offer this morning, you see; but I’ve talked with Mr. Spaythe and promised him that I’ d stay until he can get someone to take my place. That won’t be easy, though — unless he imports someone.”

“Couldn’t I fill the place, Ned?”

“You! I thought you were going to college.”

“I — I’ve decided not to,” replied Phil.

“But you’ve no experience in banking.”

“No other young fellow in town has, for that matter.”

“That’s true,” said the other, thoughtfully.

“I’ d like the job, Ned,” pleaded Phil.

“In that case I’ll speak to the old man about you. I’ve an idea you could fill Eric’s place, while Eric could climb to my position as head bookkeeper. His father ought not to object to that, and I’m sure you could do Eric’s work easily. Another thing is in your favor, Phil. The Daring name is rather popular around here, especially with the farmers, and that counts with a man like Spaythe. The more I think of it, the more I believe we’ve hit the right combination. Trust me to help work it out, for I want to get away as soon as possible.”

Phil did not leave this unexpected chance wholly to Ned’s management, however. He went back and told Judge Ferguson about it, and then he met Eric, the banker’s only son and Phil’s friend. Eric was also employed at the bank and he was astonished and delighted when Phil proposed taking Eric’s place — thus advancing him to the more important post of bookkeeper, to be

vacated by Ned Thurber.

"I'll go and talk to father about it at once," he said.

That same day Mr. Spaythe was approached by no less than four people in the interests of Phil Daring. First, came his son Eric, who told him Phil was a prince of good fellows. Then Ned Thurber pointed out the fact that the popularity of the Darings would add prestige to the bank. Presently, Judge Ferguson walked in and vouched for Phil's character and ability, offering to stand sponsor for the boy, if he was given the place. Finally, Phœbe Daring stole into the bank and timidly asked to see Mr. Spaythe.

He looked at her curiously as she entered his private room; a pretty and modest young girl, he thought.

"I met Mr. Thurber a little while ago, and he says that he is going away to St. Louis," she began. "So I thought I would come here and ask if you won't take brother Phil in his place. I'm Phœbe Daring, you know."

Mr. Spaythe nodded.

"I know. You've often been here with your father, in the old days. But you're growing fast now, Miss Phœbe."

"I need to grow, sir, for I must mother the other children. Of course you know how poor we are. Father always banked here, I remember; so you know, perhaps better than I do, our present circumstances."

"How old is Phil now!"

"Sixteen, sir."

"H — m. That is rather young."

"But he is big for his age, Mr. Spaythe. He's nearly six feet tall, and as strong as anything."

"Do you think we bank by main strength, Miss Daring?"

"Phil will graduate next week, at High. He hopes to be at the head of his class."

Mr. Spaythe drummed thoughtfully on the desk with his fingers.

"I'm going to consider your application, my dear," he said, quite genially for him. "Ask your brother to come and see me."

Phoebe hurried away, overjoyed at her success. She astonished Phil that evening by saying that she had made an appointment for him to see Mr. Spaythe. He tore up the little note that he had intended to mail to the banker, then kissed his twin sister and thanked her for her assistance. Only Mr. Spaythe knew whose influence had induced him to consider giving the position to an inexperienced, untried youth, fresh from high school. Perhaps, after all, it was the remembrance of his old friendship for the elder Daring.

Anyhow, Phil had a long interview with the old banker and came away engaged to fill the vacancy made by Ned Thurber's withdrawal. As soon as

school closed he was to begin work.

There was great rejoicing among the Darings that evening. Aunt Hyacinth made them one of her famous shortcakes for supper, to celebrate the occasion, and Phil became a hero to his younger brother and sisters, because he was about to step from youth to manhood and become a breadwinner.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF COUSIN JUDITH

Next morning while they were at breakfast, the doorbell rang and Auntie answered it. A moment later a comely young woman entered the room, gazed smilingly at the circle of young faces and advanced to kiss Phœbe, as the eldest, first of all.

"Don't you remember me?" she asked. "I'm your Cousin Judith."

"Cousin Judith Eliot!" cried Phœbe, delightedly. And then there was a rush to greet this newly found relative, all the Darings crowding around her in a mob.

"I thought you were still in Europe, Cousin Judith," said Phil. "Have you been long in America?"

"Just four days," she replied, throwing off her wrap and sitting down in the place Aunt Hyacinth had prepared for her. "I hurried here as soon after landing as possible."

"But what good fortune brought you to Riverdale?" inquired Phœbe, looking with pleasure at

the beautiful, refined face of the elder woman and noting the daintiness of her attire — dainty and fresh, although she was just out of a sleeping coach, after a long journey.

Cousin Judith, although almost the only relative which the Darings possessed, and familiar to them by name since their infancy, was nevertheless almost a stranger to them all. She was their mother's cousin and, although much younger, had always been Mrs. Daring's closest and warmest friend. For years past, however, she had resided in some small European town, studying art while she painted portraits and copies of the Madonna on porcelain. She had never married; dimly, Phoebe remembered hearing of some tragedy in Cousin Judith's life when her fiancé had died on the eve of their approaching marriage. She was now but twenty-four; although, in the eyes of her young cousins, she appeared very mature indeed.

"I came here," said Cousin Judith, smilingly, yet with a serious ring in her sweet-toned voice, "at the call of duty. I wanted to come to you the moment I heard of your dear father's death, but it takes some little time to break up an establishment even as modest as mine, when it is in faraway Italy. But here I am, at last."

"Going to stay?" asked Sue, softly.

"I think so. Is there any room for me, here?"

"Plenty, Cousin Judith!" cried five voices.

"Then, while I drink my coffee, tell me all the news about yourselves.

How is Gran'pa Eliot? — he's my uncle, you know — and who takes care of him?"

Becky began the story, but talked so excitedly that she made a sad jumble of it. Then Phil picked up the narrative, telling the simple facts that Cousin Judith might be interested in, and Phœbe concluded the recital.

"I remember Elaine Halliday," said the new arrival, musingly. "She was Aunt Eliot's maid when I was a young girl, and whenever I visited here I used to fight with the woman continually. She had a rather sour disposition, then."

"It's worse now," declared Becky. "She's a reg'lar Tartar; and a — a — an autocrat, and an anarchist and traitor, and — "

"Afterward, she was housekeeper," continued Judith. "I saw her more seldom, then, but she ran the household in an able manner while Aunt Eliot was so much of an invalid."

"She has been a faithful servant, I'm sure," said Phœbe, "and if she happens to be a bit cranky with us at times we ought to put up with it. I don't know what gran'pa would do without her. She's the only one who can understand him, and she attends to him and all his affairs — cooks the things he can eat — feeds him with a spoon, and all that."

"Don't you all live together, then?" asked Miss Eliot.

"No," replied Phœbe. "We've been given a certain part of the house, and run our own establishment, while Miss Halliday runs her part. We are ordered not to go near gran'pa's rooms, or pick the fruit or berries — or steal the hen's eggs. If we behave, she will let us stay here, rent free; but if we don't mind her, or dare to intrude on gran'pa, out we go, neck and crop."

Judith Eliot looked thoughtful. But she avoided carrying the conversation farther in the presence of the younger children. There was little time, indeed, to talk much with any of them, as they were obliged to run off to school. It was Friday, fortunately, and to-morrow would be a holiday, when they could "visit" to their hearts' content.

As they said good-by to their new cousin the drayman was carrying in two big trunks and some portmanteaus.

"By jooks! I'm glad she's come," cried Becky. "It almost seems like having mother back. Don't you think they look alike?"

"She's a dandy, all right," commented Don. "I'mglad she's going to stay."

"Isn't she *beautiful?"* chimed in little Sue, tossing her curls ecstatically. "And only to think she's lived in Europe! Won't she have some nibsy stories to tell us, though?"

Meantime, Cousin Judith was sitting face to face with Aunt Hyacinth in the kitchen, and listening to the story that the old mammy was telling of the

trials and tribulations her poor children had suffered.

First, there was the mother's death. That was indeed a serious misfortune, for Mrs. Daring had looked after her young flock with tender care and taught them to adopt the manners of ladies and gentlemen. After her death there was only the old black mammy to cope with the situation. Mr. Daring proved a loving and devoted father to his motherless ones, but he was too indulgent to correct their ways and manners and the younger ones, especially, soon lapsed into the wild and untamed ways of young savages. Mr. Daring realized this, and wrote an account of his doubts and fears for their future to Judith, asking her if she would not come back to America and make her future home with them.

The young woman refused the invitation at that time. She could not leave her studies, or her work, without ruining all her plans. She wrote him to get a governess to look after the accomplishments of the children. Aunt Hyacinth would be sure to take care of their physical requirements. And, having proffered this advice, she dismissed the subject from her mind.

Last fall, when news of Mr. Daring's death and his bankruptcy reached her, Judith had been much distressed. Duty called her to far away Riverdale, to look after Mollie Eliot's orphaned little ones. She wrote to Lawyer Ferguson for particulars and he frankly informed her of the unfortunate condition of the young Darings. So she "broke camp," as she said, and as soon as she could complete and deliver the miniatures which she had contracted to paint for a wealthy Englishman, the successful artist abandoned her brilliant career and departed, bag and baggage, for America.

"So they're pretty wild, are they?" she asked Aunt Hy.

"Wild's hawks, Miss Judy, I's sorrerful to remahk. Marse Phil an' Miss Phœbe ain't so bad, kase dey's old' nuff to 'member what ther pore deah ma done tell' em. But Miss Sue uses jus' drea'fu' grammer, an' she dat stubbo'n 'twould make a mule blush. Marse Don, he's got a good heart, but he can't 'member jus' whar it's locationed, an' he plagues ever'body mos' alarmin'. As fer dat flyaway Becky, 't ain't jus' no use triflin' wid her; she kain't be brung up proper, nohow.''

"Becky is at a difficult age, just now," mused Judith, smiling at the eloquent old servant.

"All her ages done ben diff'cult, Miss Judy — shuah's yo' bohn. Miss Becky don' seem like a Daring a' tall. She's mo' like dat Topsy in Unc' Tom's Cab'n; 'cept' she ain't black."

Then came the subject of finances, wherein Aunt Hyacinth was able to give definite and fairly lucid information. She had managed to feed her flock so far, but the future contained an alarming menace unless more money was

forthcoming. When Aunt Hyacinth's savings were gone, starvation might stare the Darings in the face. It is true both Phil and Phoebe planned to make some money, "but what's dem helpless chill'ns know 'bout de expensiveness of livin'?" inquired the old mammy, hopelessly.

Judith looked grave, but she was not greatly surprised.

"Miss Phoebe's ben workin' right 'long, ev'ry minute she's out' n school," reported Auntie; "but it ain't sech work as'll last long. An' Marse Phil's goin' take a place in de bank, when lie's got his schoolin' — 'twere all decided no more 'n yist'day. But ten dollahs a week ain't no great 'mount to fill all dem moufs. Lucky we don' haf to pay rent."

"I have always thought my uncle — their Grandfather Eliot — a rich man," remarked Judith, more to herself than to old Hyacinth. "In my girlhood days he was said to be the largest property owner in the county."

"So he were, Miss Judy. Don' I 'member when Marse Daring fus' brung me heah, how Misteh Jonat'n Eliot was de big rich man o' Rivehdale? But he done sold off de hull estate, piece by piece, 'til nuthin's lef' but dis y ere ol' house an' de gahden."

"But what became of all the money he received for the land?"

"Dunno, honey. Dat's what Marse Wallace done fight wid him about, years ago. He say ol' Marse Eliot done sell his land an' squander de money, what oughter go to Miss Molly an' her chiluns; an' ol' Marse Eliot done tell him min' his own business. Miss Molly were he on'y chile, an' she done fit wi' de ol' man, too; so we uns didn't hev no truck wi' dey uns fer a long time. When Miss Molly died, Marse Wallace try to patch up t'ings, but ol' Marse Eliot got de stroke what mumbled him, an' it turned out he's pore like Job's turkey."

"How does he live, then?" asked Judith.

"It don' take much to feed his gruel to him, an' ol' Miss Halliday's dat pars'monius she don' eat decent cookin' herself. She sell de aigs 'n' chickens, an' de fruit an' sich, an' she bargains at de groc'ry fer de cheapes' stuff dey got. So dey somehow gits along — don' ask me how, honey."

"Well," said Judith, rising with a sigh, "I see that I'm needed here, in more ways than one. Where may I locate my room, Aunt Hyacinth?"

This puzzled Mammy for a time. The old mansion had been built on a queer plan. Upstairs there were four bedrooms in the front of the house and four in the rear. Of these last the two at the back end overlooked the mountains and the valleys and were the most pleasantly situated of any in the house. Mr. Eliot had therefore chosen them for his own, and now he sat in a chair all day looking out of a window over the broad stretch of land he had always loved. It was a peaceful, quiet scene. Behind the house the streets

were merely green lanes, with a few scattered habitations here and there. A little to the right, but in plain sight of this second-floor window, stretched the old-fashioned country graveyard — not yet sufficiently dignified to be called a "cemetery" — and Mr. Eliot's eyes might clearly see a white mausoleum, which he had built years before, to contain his body when he had passed from life.

Everyone had thought this an eccentric thing for Jonathan Eliot to do; some of the neighbors shuddered at the idea of a live, healthy man preparing his own tomb. But there it was, scarcely a quarter of a mile distant from his dwelling; and, as he now sat paralyzed before the broad window, perhaps his glassy eyes rested more often upon that ghostly tomb than upon the charming landscape of hill and dale, that extended far into the distance toward Exeter.

Opening from this room was a balcony with outside stairs leading to the garden. Adjoining the two large rear rooms were a couple of small chambers opening into a hallway. The hall originally ran to the front of the house, but directly in the center of the passage had been placed a stout door, separating the upper part of the house into two distinct parts, each containing four chambers. Miss Halliday, in reserving the four rear rooms, had fitted up one of the hall chambers as a kitchen and retained the other for her own sleeping apartment. Of the two more spacious rear rooms, one was old Mr. Eliot's bedroom and the other his living room. These four rooms satisfied all the requirements of the paralytic and his nurse, and so the balance of the house was turned over, somewhat grudgingly, to the orphaned Darings.

But in this arrangement Elaine Halliday made never to be used by the Darings, for any purpose. They might occupy the front bedrooms, but under the plea that the children might disturb their invalid grandfather, the hall rooms must remain vacant.

Phoebe had accordingly taken possession of one of the I front chambers, and Phil and Don shared the other. Downstairs the house had a big parlor, or drawing-room — a ghostly, primly furnished apartment that all the Darings abhorred — a large dining room with a side porch, an ample hall with a spiral staircase, pantries and kitchen and two small chambers opening out of the dining room. Becky and Sue together occupied one of these little rooms, while the other, which had a door into the kitchen and was little more than a "cubbyhole," was Aunt Hyacinth's own room.

Unless Judith Eliot took possession of one of the forbidden hall bedrooms upstairs, there was really no place for her in all the big house. When this was explained to her she promptly started to visit her uncle and Miss Halliday. She mounted vanced and thrust the frail form from the doorway, entering the room before old Elaine was well aware of her purpose.

Before a broad window her uncle was propped up in his chair, staring listlessly across the valley to the mountains beyond. She approached him and said softly: “Uncle! Here is Judith come to see you.” There was no reply, no movement to indicate that he had even heard her. She stooped to his “Uncle! Uncle Eliot! I am Judith — your niece. I have come to see you, Uncle! Do you not know me?”

The withered, pallid countenance never changed. The expressionless gaze was fixed as ever. He might have been a dummy of a man except for the slight rise and fall of his chest as he breathed.

Judith glanced around and found Miss Halliday standing near with a sneering smile upon her face.

“He’s mighty glad to see you, isn’t he?” she asked.

The girl did not reply. It was quite evident that Gran ‘pa Eliot was entirely helpless; that he was all unaware of her presence. She looked at the old man attentively, thinking he was far more dead than alive. His cheeks were hollow and sunken, his skin like ancient parchment. The hands that lay extended upon his knees were withered and bony; the wisp of white hair upon his head was carefully brushed; he wore a neat dressing gown. Propped among his pillows he seemed to be as comfortable as was possible for one in his condition.

Letting her eyes roam around the room, Judith saw that it was neat and well cared for. Elaine, always an excellent housekeeper, could not be criticised for any undue laxness.

Judith turned to her.

“I did not realize he was so helpless,” she said. “Does he recognize no one at all?”

“Only one,” replied Elaine, grimly triumphant. “But strangers are sure to make him nervous. He’ll have a bad time, after your foolish intrusion. I can tell by his face that he knows something is wrong; that he’s been disturbed. He don’t know you’re here, perhaps; but he senses something different. I advise you to go before he is upset entirely — a shock of this sort might kill him.”

Judith looked at her uncle again. His dull, apathetic expression had not altered a particle, so far as she could discover. The idea of disturbing this half-dead man seemed absurd. Yet the old woman who attended him constantly might be right, after all, and certainly there was no prospect of being able to arouse him sufficiently to recognize his niece.

“Follow me, Elaine,” she commanded, with a trace of haughtiness due to the servant’s defiant attitude.

At the foot of the stairs stood an old garden bench. Judith seated herself

and waited until the old woman joined her. Then she said:

"How long do you expect my uncle to live?"

Elaine started to sit down beside her.

"You may stand, if you please," said Judith; and old Miss Halliday stood, although her eyes had a resentful look in them at thus being assigned to her true station. In the old days she had been considered a privileged servant, it is true; yet, even then, she would not have dared to seat herself in the presence of an Eliot.

"I don't know," she returned. "He has been like this for three years. He may live a dozen more — if I can manage to keep his body and soul together-"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, there isn't much to eat here, if you want the truth; and so it's lucky Mr. Eliot doesn't require much food. The wine is the hardest thing to get. It's mighty expensive; but he must have it, Dr. Jenkins says."

"Is the doctor attending him?"

"Not now; we can't pay the bills. But there's nothing a doctor can do more than I am doing myself."

"What has become of my uncle's money, Elaine?" she asked, regarding the woman attentively.

Elaine flushed, but shook her head.

"I don't know," she said.

"He was never a spendthrift, nor a gambler," continued Judith. "On the contrary, I knew him as a wealthy man who was so penurious that he guarded every expenditure with great care."

The woman made no reply.

"What do you suppose became of the money?" Judith pointedly inquired. "He sold off his property at fair prices. I'm sure that he didn't speculate. Then what has become of it?"

"I only know," said Elaine, "that when he was took with this stroke there wasn't a dollar to be found anywhere. He wasn't a miser, for I've ransacked every corner of this house. There wasn't anything in the bank, either, for I inquired there. I've looked over all of his papers — with Judge Ferguson to help me — and Mr. Eliot hadn't any investments or stocks. His money was gone, somehow, and we don't know where because he can't tell."

Judith thought it over. It was a perplexing thing, indeed.

"Why do you stay here?" she asked. "You are not obligated to devote your life to my bankrupt uncle — a helpless invalid who does not appreciate your services."

Elaine hesitated, clasping her thin hands and looking down as if

endeavoring to find proper words in which to express herself.

"I'm old, Miss Judith; too old to find work elsewhere. And I'm as poor as Mr. Eliot is. All I can expect at my age is a home, and the work is very little, now that the Darings have most of the house. Besides, I've been with the Eliot family so long — forty odd years — that my place seems here, now. I won't say anything about duty, or my affection for my old master. He was a hard man with others, I know; but I always understood him better than anyone else, and he liked me. When he was taken with paralysis, just after his daughter's death, there was no one in the world to care for him but me. Even Wallace Daring had quarreled with Mr. Eliot and insulted him. Not a single neighbor offered any assistance, or came near my stricken master. So I stayed."

It was a fair explanation, Judith considered, and betokened more heart in the old woman than she had been credited with.

"That reminds me, Elaine," she said, turning the subject abruptly; "I am going to live with the Darings hereafter, and take care of Cousin Molly's children. I must have one of those vacant rooms off the hall which you have reserved."

A look of anger and fear swept over old Elaine's face.

"It won't do, Miss Judith," she said positively; "it won't do at all. I can't have Mr. Eliot disturbed. I allowed the Darings to live here if they 'd promise to keep quiet, but — "

"*You* allowed!" interrupted Judith, meaningly. "Isn't that rather impertinent, Elaine?"

"There's no one to run your uncle's affairs, but me," she retorted, unabashed. "I've got to protect him in his helpless condition, and I'm going to do it, too!"

"This is nonsense," returned Judith impatiently. "Nothing that occurs in that part of the house can disturb Uncle Eliot, as you very well know. I shall occupy one of those rooms."

"I forbid it," said the woman, her eyes cold and hard, her jaws set and determined.

"Has it ever occurred to you," suggested Judith quietly, "that there is such a thing as law, and that the law will take the conduct of my uncle's affairs out of your hands, if I appeal to it? If you really wish a home in your old age, Elaine, you must give up your autocratic ideas. The Darings are the natural inheritors of this homestead, and you have no personal rights here except as a servant."

"I'm entitled to my wages, then," snapped Elaine. "They haven't been paid for years."

Judith regarded her thoughtfully. In spite of the peculiar temperament of this poor creature she was doubtless of inestimable worth to Mr. Eliot at this juncture. No one else could or would care for the helpless invalid, half so well.

And there was little to advance against that argument of unpaid wages. Perhaps, after all, it might be better to compromise with Elaine Halliday.

“I am willing to admit your responsible position here,” she said, “provided you do not attempt to dictate too far. Live your life in your own way, but do not attempt to interfere with us. I am now going to establish myself in one of those hall rooms.”

She rose.

“Take the west room, then,” suggested Elaine, eagerly. “It’s bigger, and the east room is cluttered with old furniture.”

Judith walked away without reply, content with her victory but filled with many perplexing thoughts. The interview had somewhat astonished her.

Elaine watched her go, and when Judith had turned the corner of the house the old woman stamped her foot furiously.

“Drat the law!” she muttered. “Ferguson swore he’ d turn me out if I didn’t let the Darings in, and now this girl threatens the law if I won’t let her have that room. Law! What mischief-makers invented the law, I’d like to know — to rob a poor woman and beat her out of her just dues? But there’s two kinds of law in this world — the laws others make, and the laws we make, ourselves. I guess the law of Elaine Halliday will win out in the long run, because my law’s my secret, and they’ve only got their own to go by.”

With this somewhat ambiguous tirade she turned and slowly mounted the stairs. Gran’pa Eliot sat exactly as he had before, staring vacantly through the window.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "ARTICLES OF ADOPTION."

Judith Eliot had been accustomed to act upon her judgment; and to act quickly, and with decision. Aunt Hyacinth was half frightened when the young lady returned and said that Elaine had attempted to bar her out of the vacant rooms, but she was going to occupy one of them, nevertheless. The black mammy was a Daring servant, having followed her nursling Wallace when he married and set up housekeeping at Riverdale. She had nursed, in turn, each of the Daring children and, therefore, was devoted to them and their interests. But Auntie could never understand the favored servant of the Eliots, and through all the years she had known Elaine had seldom exchanged a word with the white woman. Why a housekeeper should be called "Miss" Halliday and allowed to assume airs of superiority was far beyond old Hyacinth's comprehension. But the fact impressed her with a sense of awe of Elaine which time had never dissipated.

Since the Darings had come to this house to live

the two serving women had held aloof from one another as before, and the aggressive, dominant attitude of Miss Halliday held Auntie in sure subjection to her will. She never doubted that Elaine had the power to turn her precious flock out in the cold world, if she chose, and therefore took great care not to annoy her in any way.

It was not clear to her, at this juncture, whether she ought to applaud or deplore Miss Judith's defiance of the hitherto supreme power of "Ol Miss Hall'day," but she willingly followed the energetic young lady up the spiral staircase to show her the vacant rooms.

The east room was sunny and bright, but poorly furnished. In one corner stood several decrepit and damaged chairs, a few old pictures and some bundles of matting. A door, closed and locked, communicated with the room back of it — the room Miss Halliday herself occupied. Aunt Hyacinth, in a whisper, called Judith's attention to this door.

Perhaps that accounted for the desire of the old woman that Miss Eliot take the west room, which was not nearly so pleasantly situated; but the young lady promptly decided that the east room suited her best. She was accustomed to doing things for herself, and with Auntie's help dragged the cast-off chairs and other lumber into the west room and made a selection of the best furniture from the two.

Also, she robbed the stately parlor downstairs of a comfortable rocker and the hall of a small stand. When the east room had been swept, dusted and cleaned, it appeared to be quite livable, although Aunt Hy shook her head

gravely and declared that it was not nearly as good as the front rooms. In fact, she confided to Judith that the east room "wasn't fit fo"spectible comp'ny."

"When Phil and Don come home to lunch," said Judith, "I'll get them to help me up with the trunks and bags, and then I'll unpack and settle."

At noontime, however, when the children came home from school, Phœbe vetoed the entire carefully planned arrangement. Cousin Judith mustn't be tucked into that cheerless east room on any account, but should have Phœbe's own pretty room at the front, with its balcony overlooking the village and the river.

"I'm seldom in my room," said the girl, "while you, Cousin Judith, will often shut yourself up to paint or write. So, I'll move into the east room in a jiffy, and rid up the front room so you can take possession."

Miss Eliot protested against this change, but Phœbe had a will of her own and moreover, was right in her argument. Everyone energetically assisted in transferring Phœbe's "traps" across the hall, and before school time arrived Cousin Judith's baggage had all been carried to the big front room and deposited there.

That afternoon Phœbe "settled" her new quarters in five minutes' time, for she was not very particular about appearances and had the true Southern disposition to leave any article whereever it happened to be. Order was not one of her characteristics, but Phœbe always claimed she could find anything she wanted, just as quickly as those who put them properly away.

Cousin Judith, although an artist, had an inherent aversion to disorder. She wanted her surroundings to look pretty at all times, and a tasteful arrangement of her possessions meant a place for everything and everything in its place. Phœbe was astonished when she came home that afternoon at the transformation effected in her old room. A hundred pretty knickknacks and articles of virtu, brought from foreign parts, had been arranged most effectively. Some choice prints from Paris and Dresden were on the walls; a small bust of Psyche in pure Carrara stood on the mantel. Judith's well-worn easel was inscribed on every inch of its wooden surface with autographs of more or less famous artists and litterateurs who had visited her studio.

With all this the place looked as cosy and homelike as it was attractive, and thereafter the greatest joy of a Daring, big or little, was to pass an hour in Cousin Judith's room.

Phœbe's sleep in the east hall room was as sound and peaceful that night, as it had been before she moved from her more commodious quarters. She glanced more than once at the connecting door, as she undressed, but no sound came from old Miss Halliday's room on the other side. There was a

transom over the door, but probably the glass had long since been broken or removed, for a thin board now covered it, tacked to the frame from Phœbe's side. There was no ready communication to be had between the two sides of the house, and as far as Phœbe was concerned she was well pleased that this was so.

That Saturday was a great day for the Darings.

"We're going to have a good long talk together," announced Cousin Judith at breakfast. "Just as soon as I get my room in order and Phœbe makes your beds we will get together in the parlor and begin to get acquainted."

"Oh, not the parlor, please," protested Don. "It's so gloomy there."

"The pahlah will spoil all our fun," added Sue.

"Then you must come to my own room," decided Cousin Judith.

Becky went out on the porch while the preparations were pending and saw the Randolph children, faultlessly attired, standing hand in hand just across the street.

"Hello, Becky!" shouted Allerton. "Come on over."

Doris turned to him reprovingly. Then she raised her voice to Becky and said:

"My brother wishes to invite you to join us."

"Can't go you," returned Becky, carelessly. "My Cousin Judith's come, an' we're goin' to have some chin music."

"May I inquire what sort of an entertainment you refer to?" asked Doris, coming a little nearer.

"You may," said Becky, graciously.

Doris waited, still holding her brother's hand. To Becky it seemed absurd that such a big boy and girl should act so much like infants. So far, her acquaintance with the Randolphs had only interested her because she could "guy them" unmercifully, without their discovering it.

Allerton's patience was not equal to that of his demure sister.

"Please tell us," he pleaded.

"If you had a good chance, Al, you'd soon blossom into a boy — quite a decent boy," remarked Becky, reflectively. "The trouble is, you'll never get a chance in that stuck-up crowd you train with. Why don't you run away and be a man?"

"I am scarcely old enough, I fear," he sighed.

"Then be a bootblack, or a chimney sweep, or a robber, or — or — *anything!'*

"Oh, Rebecca!" wailed Doris, greatly shocked. "How sadly the lightness of your mind is reflected in your words!"

"By cracky, you've got *me* going," returned Becky, despondently. "What

does it, Doris; religion, or Boston kindergartens?"

"You have not yet told us what' chin music' means," suggested Allerton, with much interest. "It is a new term to us."

"It means a confab, that's all."

"You must pardon our ignorance," Doris observed, in her most proper manner. "Our vocabulary, you know, is limited to authorized words; yet with you the English language seems to have been amplified, and the grammatical construction of many sentences altered. Is it an idiom peculiar to this section of the country, or have you authority for the use of such unusual expressions?"

Somehow, Becky felt distinctly abashed. She might laugh at the proper speech of Doris Randolph and regard it in the light of a good joke; but, after all, she experienced a humiliating sense of her own crudeness and lack of refinement whenever the new neighbors engaged her in conversation.

Of course she resented this feeling, which intruded itself, unasked. The Darings were as good as the Randolphs, any day, she mentally declared, knowing all the time the thought was an admission of inferiority. Becky had had careful training once upon a time, and her dead mother's injunction never to forget her personal dignity, nor give to others an opportunity to disparage it, was not wholly forgotten by the girl. She well knew that she had cultivated the slang of the streets and their rabble because some of her village associates considered it amusing and had encouraged her by their laughter. So, although the reproaches of the carefully trained Randolph children were only implied, through their complete ignorance of such phrases, the girl felt them nevertheless, and this made her bitter and more reckless than ever.

Fortunately, Phoebe called to her just then and with a shout of "So long, bully Bostoners!" she ran in to attend the gathering in Cousin Judith's room.

Now it chanced that Miss Eliot had overheard, through her open window, the conversation exchanged across the street by Becky and her neighbors, and her sweet face flushed painfully while she listened. That a daughter of gentle, refined Molly Eliot should exhibit coarseness and vulgarity amazed and annoyed her. More than once during the brief day since her arrival she had winced at the rude sallies of Becky and Don, and even little Sue had sometimes offended her sensitive ears.

"There are many difficulties to be surmounted and plenty of hard work ahead of me, I fear," she thought, with a sigh of regret. "But my duty to these waifs is plain, and I must pray for strength and wisdom to accomplish it."

Then she turned and showed a smiling face as the Darings trooped in, an eager group. Many were their exclamations of pleasure as they examined Cousin Judith's "pretty things," and even Becky was so thoroughly delighted

and turned her clear hazel eyes so adoringly upon her cousin that her recent rudeness was almost condoned.

Judith began with a relation of her own history, including many incidents of her life abroad and the hard struggle she had faced to win recognition as an artist. Then she told them of the deep affection that had always existed between her and "Cousin Molly," the mother of the absorbed audience. She had been deeply pained at Molly's death, and when, three years later, Molly's children lost their father — their only natural protector — Judith had remembered that she was their nearest relative, next to Gran'pa Eliot, and it seemed her duty to go to them and help them to face the world and become the noble men and women their dear mother so fondly wished them to be.

The Darings were duly impressed and affected. Sue and Phœbe sobbed a little, and Phil wiped his eyes more than once. Donald was not so emotional but looked grave and thoughtful, while Becky's face was white and set as she realized how little credit she had thus far reflected on the sweet, gentle mother who had been prematurely taken from them.

"What I wish," said Judith, wistfully, "is to become a second mother to dear Molly's children; to do for them what I think Molly would have done, had she lived. But I cannot acquire such a proud position, my dears, without your full and free consent. You must talk this over among yourselves and decide if you are willing to adopt me."

Phœbe wrapped her arms around the speaker and kissed her cheek, while tears trembled on her dark lashes.

"Oh, Cousin Judith!" she said; "we're so happy, and so grateful!"

Becky knelt at Judith's feet and buried her head in her lap. Sue came like a dainty fairy to find a refuge in Judith's embrace.

"I 'd like another mamma — awful well!" she whispered; "and I couldn't find a lovelier one than you, Cousin Judith."

"You Ve given up a good deal for us," Phil remarked in a husky voice, "and I'm afraid we' re not worth it, at all. But the — the youngsters need some sort of a mother, Cousin, and Phœbe and I need some one to advise us and help us in our times of trouble and worry. So we — we haven't the courage to refuse your generous offer."

"It won't need a vote," asserted Don, scowling darkly to keep from crying. "You're elected unanimous, Little Mother; an' that settles it."

Judith smiled and kissed them all in turn, big and little. Then she said, very seriously:

"This alliance, my dears, means a good deal to all of us, and must not be undertaken lightly. We must have a fair and square agreement, on both sides, setting forth and defining what we have undertaken."

They were very attentive, at this.

"First," she continued, "I want to tell you that I am going to love each one of you, dearly, and I want you to promise you will try to love me in return."

"Why, we do already!" exclaimed Sue, and Judith felt that she answered for all.

"The duty of a mother," she explained, "is not only to love her children, but to train them properly. She must correct their faults, direct their amusements, attend to their deportment, laugh when they are glad and grieve over their sorrows. And they, in turn, must be content to be guided by her larger experience in life and willing to obey her in everything."

"Of course," said Becky, nodding. "We'll agree to all that, Cousin Judith."

"I long to have you grow up to be admired and respected by all you meet, as your father and mother were. Do you realize how proud a thing it is to be a Daring? You bear an honored name, my dears — a name that has always stood for nobility, truth, generosity and culture. You must guard that name, jealously, so as not only to reflect credit upon your parentage, but to win for yourselves the approval of the world."

The awed silence that greeted this speech was broken by Donald. Perhaps he was really more affected than any of the others; I think his very soul was stirred by a desire to be a credit to his name and to himself. But he said bluntly and with a mischievous grin:

"You girls needn't worry. You'll change your names some day — if you're lucky!"

It relieved the tense situation and they all laughed, including Judith. But she meant the lesson to be impressive and not easily forgotten, so she hailed a suggestion from Becky, which was perhaps intended to be as flippant as Donald's remark.

"Let's draw up an agreement, and all sign it," cried the girl. "Phœbe has a typewriter, and we won't need any lawyer."

"A good idea," said Miss Eliot. "Phoebe and I will go to her room and draw up the Articles of Adoption."

This was done, and the others waited restlessly enough for a full hour for them to return, although Phil took occasion to point out how fortunate they all were to secure a friend and protector in this, their hour of greatest need.

After all, the Articles of Adoption proved quite simple and brief, although they had taken so long to prepare. Most of the paper was devoted to Cousin Judith's agreement to love and watch over the five Darings, to correct their errors, promote their happiness and fill the place of a real mother to them, so far as she was able. The Darings, for their part, merely agreed to obey her as

they would have done their natural parents. But at the last was a little clause that was destined to prove very important — more important than it then seemed. It stipulated that if any of the signers revolted from the letter or spirit of the agreement, or in other words broke the contract, the culprit should submit the case to any two of the others he or she might select; and, if they decided the offender was wrong, then he or she must either accept proper punishment, or become divorced from these Articles of Adoption.

The Darings signed the papers with enthusiastic glee; Phœbe first, because she was five minutes older than her twin; then Phil and Becky, and Don and Sue. Two copies had been made, one for Phœbe to keep and one for Cousin Judith; and to make it appear more legal and binding, Aunt Hyacinth was called in as a witness and made an inky impression of her thumb on both documents by way of signature.

By this time dinner was ready, for the Darings ate their heartiest meal in the middle of the day, in good Southern fashion.

While they dined, Cousin Judith said she would devote the afternoon to long private talks with each of her adopted children. She wanted them to tell her all about themselves, their hopes and trials and longings, and then she would be able to help them, individually, to better advantage.

Sue was closeted with the Little Mother first, because she was the youngest and most impatient. She emerged from Cousin Judith's room bright-eyed and smiling, and then Don went in. One by one they had heart to heart talks with their newly adopted counsellor, the sessions of Phil and Phœbe being much the longest because they were older and had more to explain. When the conferences finally ended, Judith had gleaned much valuable information concerning the Daring household, and was prepared to assume her new duties with proper intelligence.

CHAPTER IX

PHŒBE HAS AN ADVENTURE

Perhaps no one was so greatly relieved by the advent of Cousin Judith as Phœbe Daring. The girl had keenly felt her responsibilities during the troubled months since her father's death, and her days and nights had been filled with anxieties. Now, however, she could cast all worry to the winds, for the new head of the household, albeit gentle of demeanor, low voiced and cheery, had nevertheless a reserve force and power of command that inspired confidence, being in sharp contrast to Phœbe's own inexperience and lack of self reliance.

Aunt Hyacinth also felt relief. She had not worried much, at any time; it wasn't her way. But Phœbe's girlish responsibilities were as nothing compared to those of the black mammy whose tenderly reared brood seemed, in these adverse times, to have become neglected and forsaken by all the world. She hailed Miss Eliot's coming with joy and unfeigned gratitude, and when she understood that "Miss Judy," as she called her in the old days, was to take charge of the household, she felt a great weight lifted from her brave old shoulders.

"I knows dem chill'ns ben runnin' wild, Miss Judy," she said earnestly, "but I ain't got de eddication, ner de arg'mentation to keep 'em toein' de chalk mark. It needs mo' brains ner Aunt Hy'cinth's got."

One night, when Phœbe had been asleep for some time, she was roused by a peculiar sound in the next room — the room back of her own — occupied by old Miss Halliday. It was a faint but persistent sound, as of something sliding softly over a wooden surface, and now and then it was accompanied by the crooning voice of the housekeeper. She did not speak, at these times, but droned a long, sighing "m-m-m-m-m" that denoted both ecstasy and intense excitement. The sounds were all subdued and stealthy, but in the dead of night they were clearly heard by the girl, who became half frightened, wondering if old Elaine had, gone mad.

While she lay in her bed listening, a sudden silence fell, followed by several gentle thumps which she could not explain. Then a chair was pushed back; Miss Halliday pattered softly across the floor — and perfect silence ensued.

Phœbe lay a long time afterward listening for a recurrence of the mysterious sounds, but they did not mature and presently the girl fell asleep again.

Next morning the recollection of the occurrence was rather dim in her mind. She remembered her midnight fears and considered them rather

soberly while dressing; but afterward, when she saw Miss Halliday feeding her chickens and looking after the garden in her accustomed manner, alert, composed and engrossed in her work, Phœbe dismissed any idea of the old woman's being insane and soon forgot all about the incident.

This was commencement week, and Phil and Phœbe both graduated. The twins were not on a par as far as scholarship was concerned, for the girl barely passed her examinations. Phil was at the head of his class, as he had hoped to be, but he was obliged to share that honor with one other. Janet Ferguson had pressed him hard for first place all the term, and at last she stood equal to Phil in all classes. With manly generosity he was the first to congratulate her, for he liked Janet. She was a modest, quiet girl who had a smile and a pleasant word for everyone.

Old Judge Ferguson was mightily pleased. He slapped Phil on the back and said approvingly: "If you can keep step with my Janet, Phil, you've something to be proud of, I assure you."

Phil *was* proud, and so was Phœbe. She had not expected honors, herself, but that her twin should do so well was certainly a source of pride to her. She fairly reveled in her brother's reflected glory.

Cousin Judith gave Phil a scarf pin from Paris and Phœbe an oriental bracelet of unique design. Nor did she forget the daughter of her old friend Judge Ferguson, for Janet received from her, as a graduation gift, a silver brooch brought from Venice.

That evening was a joyous one in the Daring household. The younger children realized that a long vacation was ahead of them. Phœbe was now at liberty to begin life in earnest, and Phil was about to take his place in Spaythe's Bank. Aunt Hy, well knowing this to be a festive occasion, prepared an elaborate supper, and afterward they all gathered in an end of the big parlor, which Judith's deft hand had by this time rendered more cosy, and spent the evening listening to their Little Mother's fascinating stories of Italian life.

It was late when they retired for the night, and Phœbe was tired. She was soon in bed, but the day's excitement was yet upon her and she could not readily compose herself to sleep. Thoughts of the future and her ambitious plans for it obtraded themselves persistently, and she was wide-eyed when the ormolu clock, in Cousin Judith's room opposite, chimed the hour of midnight.

Soon after her ear caught another sound — the gentle, stealthy sliding — sliding — sliding of some hard substance across a table-top. It came from Miss Halliday's room, and was exactly the same sound she had heard several nights before.

Presently the old woman began her droning again: “M-m-m-m-m!” — a croon of the most beatific joy and exaltation. She evidently desired to suppress the murmur, for fear of being overheard, so that at first it barelv reached Phœbe’s listening ears. But now and then her ecstasy led her to forget caution and raise the croon to a higher key.

It was all so uncanny, so strange and inexplicable, that the girl was more startled than she had been before. Yet she did not feel so alarmed, this time, as she was curious.

Softly throwing back the coverlet she tiptoed to the connecting door and crouched down to look through the keyhole. Only blackness rewarded the attempt. Then she placed her ear to the panel, but found she could not hear much more distinctly than when lying in bed. Shivering a little in the night air Phœbe was about to retreat when suddenly the thumps began, and between them Elaine spoke.

“Mine!” she said, muttered low but quite distinct. Then came a thump. “Mine!” she repeated. Another thump. “Mine!” she said, again; and so the word and the thump followed each other several times. Afterward, a brief silence and shuffle of the woman’s feet across the room. Then, as before, all sounds ceased.

Phœbe went back to bed thoughtful and perplexed. Surely there was some mystery about this queer performance. She remembered how unwilling Miss Halliday had been to have any of the Darings occupy the hall bedrooms, and it seemed there must be some connection between this reluctance and the strange sounds she had twice heard.

For some indefinite reason which she could not have explained Phœbe said nothing about these experiences, either to the Little Mother or to her brothers or sisters. The girl was inclined, at times, to dream wonderful daydreams when those about her thought her absorbed in humble occupations. Looking upon the world with clear, calm eyes, Phœbe found it essentially practical and commonplace, and accepted it as she found it, striving to do her duty at all times. But the fascinating dreams would not be denied, and one of her secret pleasures was to allow them full play in her mind when her hands were engaged in some unimportant matter. She never confided them even to her beloved twin; they were sacred to herself alone, and any exposure of them would have shamed her terribly.

They were healthy dreams, if inherently romantic and unreal. There was nothing morbid about Phœbe, although it must be admitted she had some queer characteristics that might be called faults. Cousin Judith thought she was more like her mother than any of the other children, yet her shrewd eyes marked the girl’s frequent abstraction and knew her thoughts were often far

away from her material surroundings.

Phœbe scented a mystery. That old Miss Halliday possessed some secret which she dreaded to have revealed was quite evident to her, judging from what she had overheard. It would be difficult to explain to others, those peculiar sounds. Perhaps, she would be laughed at if she attempted it She resolved, therefore, to keep her own counsel and watch Elaine carefully. If she discovered the secret it would then be time enough to make it known; meantime, she could enjoy the suggestion of a mystery without interference.

Practical, everyday life is apt to dispel visionary dreams. Phœbe leaned from her window the next morning and watched Cousin Judith bargaining with Miss Halliday for a dozen of fresh eggs.

"The Randolphs, across the road, pay me twenty cents a dozen," said Elaine, gruffly. "You can buy eggs from the grocer for eighteen. There's no need to waste your money on me."

"Do the Randolphs take all you have?" asked J udith.

"Yes; and cry for more."

"Then I will not urge you, "replied Miss Eliot, "although I would be willing to pay you twenty cents, myself. I know your eggs are quite fresh, which is not always the case with those obtained from the grocer."

"I don't want your money," observed the woman, in a disagreeable tone. "I won't touch your money. Mr. Eliot allows you house room out of charity, but he desires no communication, of any sort, between the two families."

"How do you know that?" inquired Judith, looking at the old servant, steadily.

"He has told me so."

"You know very well that he is incapable of speech."

"Do I? That shows your ignorance, Judith Eliot. Your uncle can speak when he wants to, and speak to some purpose. His mind isn't paralyzed, I assure you, and he is competent to direct his own affairs."

"I cannot believe it," persisted Judith.

The woman looked at her defiantly.

"Call in the law, if you want to," she said; "I 'd be glad to have you do it. Mr. Eliot can prove his mental condition in court, and his right to manage his own property. But if you put him to that trouble he'll turn out the whole tribe of you, as sure as my name's Elaine Halliday!"

Judith turned away without further remark. The shrewdness of the woman astonished and perplexed her. Possibly old Elaine was right, and could, if she chose, induce Uncle Eliot to speak. Otherwise she would scarcely have dared to thus defy all interference with her autocratic whims. It was also possible that the paralytic old man was so completely under Elaine's influence that he

would readily follow her suggestions.

Jonathan Eliot had always been a hard, stubborn man, even to his sweet, beautiful daughter Molly. As Judith remembered him, sitting stolidly in his chair that morning when she had forced herself upon his presence, he appeared a living mummy, lost to all recognition of his surroundings. Yet, if Elaine could arouse him at will, and his mind retained its natural poise, there was really danger that he might turn the Darings out of their refuge. Judith would not employ the law; she dared not; but she resolved to consult Judge Ferguson.

Acting upon this determination she at once put on her hat and started for the lawyer's office.

Phœbe, seeing Miss Halliday busy in the henhouse, left her window and turned to examine the mysterious connecting door between her room and that of the housekeeper. In broad daylight it did not appear especially interesting. It was a heavy, old-fashioned door with a big keyhole in the lock. But when Phœbe stooped down she discovered a thick cloth had been placed on the opposite side, which effectually prevented her from examining the next room. She pushed a long hatpin through the hole but failed to dislodge the cloth.

Next, she turned her attention to the transom above the door. It had once been made to swing open, but was now tightly nailed shut. Over the glass had been nailed a thin board, which fully covered it; but it was nailed to Phœbe's side of the transom and the girl at once decided that here might be a way to discover what those mysterious midnight sounds meant.

She went into Phil's room and searched in his tool chest for some instrument with which to remove the board from the transom. Just then Cousin Judith passed out of the front gate on her way down town, and Phœbe was all alone in the upper part of the house — except, of course, gran'pa, who could not interfere.

She selected a chisel and a hammer, and returned to her room. She drew her stand before the door and by means of a chair mounted to its top. From this elevation her head almost reached the ceiling, and she was able to work comfortably. Quickly prying the nails from the board with the chisel, Phœbe removed it and found a pane of clear glass behind. It was dingy with dust; but by rubbing clear one corner she found herself looking into Elaine's room.

It was much like her own room, yet even more poorly furnished. A big, broad oaken table stood in the center — a heavily constructed affair that seemed out of place in a bedchamber. It was bare of even a cloth. A small dresser stood at one side; a bed was in the opposite corner; two stiff chairs and a rag carpet completed the furniture of the room, which denoted extreme

neatness and cleanliness. Really, there was nothing here pertaining to the mysterious or unusual.

But Phœbe was not satisfied. Those sliding sounds, the old woman's ecstatic murmurings, must be explained. After a moment's thought, the girl climbed down from the table and with the chisel managed to cut a square corner out of the thin board. Then she replaced it as it had been before, putting one nail loosely into the corner she had removed, so that while the board over the transom appeared to be intact and undisturbed she could easily slide the corner from its place and so obtain a "peephole."

Observing her work critically from the floor she decided no one would ever notice that the board had been tampered with. So she returned the tools to Phil's chest, rearranged her room, and with the complacent idea that she had accomplished a clever feat awaited the moment when she might make an important discovery.

CHAPTER X

A DEPRESSING INTERVIEW

Judith found Mr. Ferguson alone in his office. With an air of much pride she produced the Articles of Adoption and asked him to read the document.

"Don't pick flaws in its legality, please," she said with twinkling eyes.

The lawyer read the agreement through very soberly. Then he reached out both his hands and took those of Judith in their firm clasp.

"My dear, you are a noble woman," he said. "I am almost as grateful to you as if the Darings were my own children. They need a mother, Judith, and the poor things couldn't have fallen into greater luck than being adopted by you."

She was a little embarrassed by this praise.

"Tell me what you know about Uncle Jonathan," she asked, to change the subject.

He gave her an amused glance from beneath his bushy eyebrows.

"Of course the old man would interest you," he

replied. "Curious situation, isn't it, Judith?

Have you seen him?"

"Yes; for a moment."

"It's a wonder his grim guardian allowed it."

"I forced myself into his room, in spite of Elaine."

"Did you? And found your uncle deaf, dumb and blind, I suppose."

"Yes," she returned. "Is he always like that?"

"Always. Unless Elaine Halliday chooses to waken him. Then he comes to life."

"I did not believe it possible!"

"Nor I," agreed the lawyer, "until I had experience with the fact. You've no idea, Judith, what a time I had to obtain a refuge for the Darings in that household. Elaine stubbornly refused to admit them, claiming that Mr. Eliot was oblivious to all the world and she had received positive instructions never to permit a Daring to enter the house while he lived. I told her frankly that in such a case it was my duty to apply to the law and have a legal guardian appointed to look after her master and his property. This threat alone prevailed upon her. She decided to grant me an interview, and in some way I cannot understand, she whispered into the old man's ear until he quickened to life far enough to speak. The words were not very distinct and were slowly muttered, for his tongue is partially paralyzed; but I found his intellect was as keen as ever. I explained the unhappy situation of his grandchildren and asked him to help them. He told me he hadn't a penny to

give them, that his money was gone and his fortunes practically ruined."

"Do you believe that?" asked Judith.

"Yes; I think it is true, my dear. I told him that I did not ask for money for the Darings; I only demanded a shelter for them in his big, unoccupied house; and, although Elaine tried to induce him not to consent, the old fellow silenced her and told me the Darings might occupy all the house, except the four rooms reserved for his own use and that of his servant. So I won the battle, after all."

Judith considered this thoughtfully.

"What became of his money!" she asked.

"Years ago," replied Mr. Ferguson, slowly, "I was employed as Jonathan Eliot's trusted advisor. That was when he owned a large estate and commanded ample means. He was not a generous man, in those days, but grudged every necessary expenditure his family made. After his wife's death and Molly's marriage, he came to me one day and said that all his money had been swept away in an unlucky speculation, and he would no longer be able to employ me. He refused to answer any questions as to the manner of his loss. Mr. Spaythe told me, about that time, that Mr. Eliot had drawn all his money from the bank, taking it in gold coin. Your uncle discharged all the servants except Elaine, shut up most of the house, and offered his estate for sale. He lived quite frugally, I learned, and was doubtless very poor. Bit by bit he sold off the lands, until only the house and its garden remained. There is no mortgage on the place, however. Wallace Daring offered to assist his father-in-law, but Eliot irritably refused. They quarrelled soon afterward, as you perhaps know."

"But I don't quite understand," said Judith. "Even if he lost all his ready money, the land must have brought a large sum. What became of that?"

"It squared his debts, I suppose. The old man confided his affairs to no one. He was suspicious of even his own daughter. Then suddenly he became paralyzed, and I went to see if I could be of any help to my old client. Elaine told me she had searched everywhere, without finding a dollar. Until then I had harbored the thought that your uncle had become a miser, for his nature inclined that way; so I examined the house myself, looking high and low in every possible place for any secreted cash or securities, or even for papers that would explain what had become of his money, or account for his impoverished condition. But there was nothing of the sort to be discovered. I am thoroughly satisfied that Jonathan Eliot is as poor as he claims to be."

Judith sighed.

"The house and lot must be worth considerable," she said, hesitatingly.

"It might bring a fair price if offered for sale," said he, "but it would not

be advisable to dispose of the place until the Darings grow to maturity. Before that time arrives it is probable old Jonathan Eliot will have passed away and be laid in that ridiculous big white mausoleum he once constructed. Then his grandchildren will inherit the property. While he lives, moreover, we could not sell the place if we desired to, unless we managed to prove Mr. Eliot mentally deficient."

"Isn't he?"

"No; not in the eye of the law. Elaine can arouse him whenever she pleases. Indeed, we must consider it fortunate, Judith, that this strange woman is content to care for him. I am sure she makes him as comfortable as is possible."

"That is true," admitted the girl.

"By the way," said the lawyer, "how are you going to manage about money?"

"I have, as you know, an income of fifty dollars a month," she replied. "With this, added to what Phil earns, we shall be rich. I have also saved, from the sales of my pictures, about two hundred dollars, a part of which I am going to expend at once for new clothing for the children. The poor things need it badly, for Sue, Donald and Becky are growing rapidly and have scarcely a decent garment to put on."

"You're a fairy godmother, Judith," he observed, regarding her with evident approval. "I feel easier about the Darings now; but there's a fight ahead, my dear, for all of you. Don't fail to come to me if you need advice or assistance, for I'm the legal guardian of the young brood, remember, and I'mwilling to do my duty by them."

Judith went away feeling much depressed in spirit. The lawyer's explanation had been so clear that it destroyed all her suspicions of both Elaine and her paralyzed uncle. The matter proved to be very simple, after all, and contained no element of mystery.

CHAPTER XI

GETTING REGULATED

Monday morning Phil went to work at the bank. As Riverdale was a small town, Spaythe's Bank might be expected to be a small institution, but it was more important than the size of the town really warranted. The beet sugar factory drew many farmers to Riverdale, who deposited the money received for their beets with Mr. Spaythe. The factory itself had large deposits in the bank and the town merchants did a thriving business. Aside from this there were many prosperous plantations and wealthy country gentlemen in the neighborhood, all of which contributed to the importance and prosperity of Spaythe's Bank.

Three assistants, or clerks, were employed, and Mr. Spaythe directed them in person. The cashier and paying teller was an elderly, quiet man named Boothe. Eric Spaythe told Phil that Boothe was a mere machine, and had not a single thought or idea beyond his duties at the bank. Ned Thurber had held the position of head bookkeeper, but on his withdrawal Eric was promoted.

to that important position and Phil became his assistant.

Eric was Mr. Spaythe's only child and it was the banker's earnest hope that the boy would, one day, succeed him. As is often the case, however, father and son were totally unlike in disposition and character, and those who knew them best were disposed to doubt Eric's ability to step into his father's shoes. He was a jolly, pleasure loving young fellow, now in his twentieth year, and Phil liked him and had always found him to be a congenial companion. Short and stout, with a round pink face and merry blue eyes, Eric Spaythe was a general favorite at Riverdale, especially with the women and girls. His one defect seemed to be that he was wholly irresponsible, and never serious. At school he had proved a bad scholar, although the boy was bright enough in other ways, and two years ago his father had taken him from High and placed him in the bank to learn the business.

The most important point of difference between Eric and his father was that the young man was a natural spendthrift, whereas Mr. Spaythe had always been frugal with his money. We may well suppose that this characteristic of Eric was a thorn in the banker's flesh; but he realized that the boy was young and so did not despair of being able to instill in him a knowledge of the importance of husbanding his means. For this reason he allowed Eric a very small salary, and wondered how the boy could purchase so many fine clothes and articles of fashionable attire with so little money. The tradesmen knew, of course, but considered the banker's son well entitled to credit.

Phil was accorded a kindly reception at the bank. Mr. Boothe turned his expressionless eyes full upon the new clerk and shook his hand automatically. Eric was delighted to have his old friend associated with him, and elated, as well, by his own promotion to be head bookkeeper. Mr. Spaythe, keenly interested in the important changes in his force of employees, left his private office to overlook the counting room and satisfy himself that the boys understood their duties. Eric protested that he was quite competent to fill Ned Thurber's place, having been his assistant for the past two years; and, indeed, the banker's son seemed adequately able in business ways, if he could be induced to keep his mind on his work. After inspecting his entries now and then Mr. Spaythe seemed satisfied with his son's ability and turned his attention to Phil, who really needed a guiding hand. His extra course in bookkeeping at the high school now stood him in good stead, and he was intelligent enough to quickly grasp his instructions.

"If at any time you are in doubt, Eric will post you," said the banker; but for several days he made it a point to frequently examine the ledgers and assure himself that the work was progressing satisfactorily. Afterward, so well did both Eric and Phil accomplish their tasks, that Mr. Spaythe left them much to their own devices and kept himself shut up in his private office, as formerly.

The mechanical cashier was not an especially companionable man. Mr. Boothe began each day with a "good morning" to his fellow employees and ended it with a brief "good night." During the day he said nothing, unless required to answer the questions of the bank's customers. His accounts were always absolutely accurate, and Mr. Spaythe knew he was justified in relying implicitly upon his cashier to do his duty.

That was a happy Saturday afternoon for Phil when he brought home his first week's wages and deposited the new ten dollar gold-piece in Cousin Judith's hand.

"That will help some, won't it?" he inquired, anxiously.

"It will help a great deal," was the reply.

About this time Marion Randolph came home from college for the long vacation. She was the eldest daughter of the house, and about the same age as Phil and Phoebe. Judith, looking from her window, saw Marion on the lawn the morning after her arrival and noted her slender, angular form, her delicate, refined face and well-bred poise. She at once decided Marion would be a valuable acquaintance for Phœbe, and decided to bring the two girls together.

"Let us call on the Randolphs this afternoon,'' she suggested to Phœbe." Since they are recent arrivals at Riverdale it is really our duty to call upon

them formally. They are likely to prove pleasant acquaintances."

"I've really nothing fit to wear, Cousin Judith," replied the girl.

The Little Mother examined Phœbe's wardrobe and selected a simple, white gown. It needed mending in places, but Judith caught up the rents with her deft needle and added some pretty ribbons of her own to the costume. A season of dressmaking had already begun in the house, but Sue and Becky were most in need of respectable raiment, and so Phœbe's turn had not yet arrived.

When, late in the afternoon, Miss Eliot and Phœbe Daring set out to make their call, there was nothing that the most critical could find fault with in their personal appearance. Phœbe had the reputation of being "the prettiest girl in Riverdale," and seemed justly entitled to it that day, while Cousin Judith's sweet face was sure to win approval anywhere.

Mrs. Randolph and her daughter Marion received their neighbors very graciously. The former was a languid, weary looking woman who had secluded herself in this little village in order to escape the demands of society and organized charities, which had nearly reduced her to a state of nervous prostration. Marion was an intelligent, active girl, with none of her younger sister's assumption of airs and graces. She seemed to Phœbe to be perfectly frank and natural in her ways, possessing ideas that were healthy, broad and progressive. During the interview, Marion developed a liking for Phœbe that pleased Miss Eliot greatly.

"Come and see me," said Phœbe, shyly, when about to depart. "We are such near neighbors that you can run in at any time."

"I will, indeed," was the ready promise, and Marion kept it faithfully.

Thereafter, there was seldom a day when the two girls were not together. Marion came most frequently to see Phœbe, for there was a certain air of conventional stiffness about the great house that both the girls felt and objected to. Sometimes, Doris came with her sister, and was turned over to the tender mercies of mischievous Becky, who teased her visitor in a shameful manner. Usually Doris was all unaware that she was being ridiculed for her primness and stilted expressions, but Cousin Judith was quick to comprehend the situation and took Becky to task for her impoliteness. With all her graceless ways the child was warm-hearted and easily influenced, for good as well as for evil, and she promised the Little Mother to treat Doris nicely and avoid offending her ears by using slangy expressions. Becky intended to keep her word thus given, but at times lapsed irrepressibly into the old ways, so that she was a source of constant anxiety to Judith.

Since Phœbe had chosen to make a friend of Marion, her twin was bound

to follow her lead. Phil found the college girl a delightful comrade. He did not care much for girls, as a rule, excepting of course his own sisters, but Marion proved as frank and as keenly intelligent as any boy. She knew all about modern athletics, although too frail of physique to indulge in such sports herself. Likewise she had a fairly practical knowledge of business methods, politics, public institutions and reform movements, and talked well and interestingly upon all subjects of the day. Aspiring to become a poet, she read bits of original verse to her new friends which they considered so remarkable that it was a marvel to them she was not already famous.

"There is only one thing lacking about Marion,"

Phil confided to his twin; "she lacks any sense of humor. Seems to me she can't appreciate anything funny, at all. The only things she laughs at are the mistakes of other people. Isn't it queer, when she's so bright in all other ways?"

"I think," returned Phoebe, musingly, "that is a characteristic of all the Randolphs. Doris and Allerton are the same way, and I've wondered if Mrs. Randolph was ever in her life amused enough to laugh aloud."

"Marion is good company, though," added Phil, "and I like her."

"She's splendid!" agreed Phoebe; "and her poetry reminds me so much of Mrs. Browning."

"Me too," he said, laughing. "I never can understand a word of it."

Others called on Marion and she soon became a popular favorite in the village. Especially, was she attracted to Janet Ferguson, and as Janet was a warm friend of the Darings, this made it pleasant for all the young people. When the famous lawn party was given at the Randolph residence the occasion was one long remembered, for no such elaborate entertainment was ever before known in Riverdale.

The festivity was designed to celebrate Marion's birthday, as well as to introduce her socially to the young folks of the town.

"Of course it cannot be very exclusive," observed her mother, when the invitation list was being prepared; "otherwise you would have but a mere handful."

"I do not wish to be exclusive here," returned Marion, gravely. "My desire is to study character and human nature, to assist me in my literary work. One cannot write of humanity without knowing something of the rank and file, you see; and there are many respectable, if humble, families in Riverdale."

Mrs. Randolph scanned the list critically.

"Is it possible that you intend to ask the entire family of Darings!" she inquired.

"Yes, dear. I am inviting Rebecca and Donald for Doris and Allerton, you

see, and I cannot well leave out that little fairy elf, Sue. So they must all come."

"Do you know, Marion, those Darings — the younger ones, I refer to — are very ill-bred children?"

"Their manners are not strictly conventional, I believe."

"And their language is that of the slums."

"But they have had no mother to guide them, poor things," explained Marion. "At times they are very winning and companionable, and I am sure they will behave nicely at my lawn fête."

"Very well, dear," sighed the lady; "invite them if you wish to. This was once their home, TOU remember. After all, it would not be quite right to exclude the Darings from your little affair."

It may have seemed a "little affair" in the eyes of the blasé society woman, but it was not so to the people of Riverdale, by any means. A brass band of fifteen pieces came from the city by the noon train, and their uniforms were so gorgeous as to create tremendous excitement. Tents had been erected upon the lawn and a force of extra servants employed to prepare and serve the refreshments. The ample grounds were crossed in every direction by strings of unique Japanese lanterns, and in the early evening there was to be dancing to the music of the band.

It was but natural that every young person in town who had received an invitation was filled with joyful anticipation. "From five until nine," the cards read, and it was hard work for Cousin Judith to control the younger Darings until the hour arrived. Sue insisted upon being dressed directly after dinner, and when arrayed in her new muslin with the cherry ribbons she found such difficulty in keeping still that Judith was fearful Sue would ruin the frock before five o'clock. Rebecca had a new gown, too, and Donald a new suit of clothes. When, finally, the children observed several arrivals at the reception tent on the lawn opposite, which they had carefully watched all afternoon from the dining room window, Miss Eliot felt that she could restrain their impatience no longer and away they trooped across the road.

Marion had asked Phœbe and Janet to assist her to receive, for she did not know personally all whom she had invited, while the other girls were of course familiar with every young person in the village. There were no "regrets" that day, you may be sure, for the unusual occasion could not well be disregarded. Eric Spaythe came early, in an elaborate costume fresh from the tailor, and he paid especial attention to Marion whenever her duties left her disengaged. Al Hayden, Toby Clarke, Jed Hopkins and, in fact, every eligible youth in the village, assembled in bashful groups and looked nervously at the bevies of girls and upon their bewildering surroundings. In

order to help Marion, Phil tried to “break the ice,” as he said, by bringing the boys and girls together, and when the band struck up a spirited twostep it relieved the strain to a wonderful degree.

Mrs. Randolph kept out of sight, indulgently viewing the scene from a window. Mr. Randolph had not appeared in Riverdale since he brought his family there and settled them in their new home. He was a busy man, with many extensive financial interests, and could not be away from Boston for very long at a time.

Donald, Becky and Sue had promptly joined Doris and Allerton, and as they were a little younger than the majority of Marion’s guests they formed a group of their own.

“It distresses me,” said Doris, plaintively, “to realize how many poor people are suffering, while we revel at this fête; and I cannot help thinking how many deserving families might be relieved from want by means of the money we are squandering to-day upon useless luxuries.”

“Aw, cut it out!” cried Becky, indignantly. “Do you want to spoil all our fun?”

“My sister is religiously inclined,” observed Allerton; “yet there is a place for everything, and this is not a funeral.”

“Oh, Allerton — how shocking!” exclaimed the girl.

“I don’t believe,” said Don, “you Randolphs would have spent a penny on the poor if you hadn’t given this party; so what’s the odds?”

It suddenly occurred to Becky that this wasn’t a proper topic of conversation under the circumstances, and might lead to a quarrel; so she turned the subject by asking:

“What’s in that red-and-white striped tent?”

“Lemonade and ices,” said Allerton. “Will you have some?”

“Sure thing!” was the reply, and away they went, to be served by a maid in a white cap and apron.

“Doesn’t it cost us anything?” inquired Sue, who found the lemonade extremely good.

“Course not,” returned Becky, helping herself again from the big bowl when the maid was not looking. “But if Doris had her way they ‘d collect a nickel a glass for charity, — the kind of charity that doesn’t help the poor a bit.”

“Let us go to the long tent, over there,” said Allerton, with eager patronage. “I’ll show you the big birthday cake and the tables all laid with favors and things. If we go in the back way no one will see us.”

Doris was not sure they were doing right to peep at the tables in advance, but as none of the others hesitated to follow her brother she decided to trail

along after them.

It was, indeed, a pretty sight, and the Darings were awe-struck.

"When do we feed?" asked Don, hungrily.

"The collation is at half past six, I believe."

"The what?"

"The collation."

"Can't you speak United States?" asked Don, indignantly; "or are you trying to poke fun at me?"

"If you are too ignorant to understand simple language," retorted Allerton angrily, "you become an object of derision."

Don glared at him.

"Take that back, you mollycoddle!" he cried, "or I'll punch your head."

"Better not," warned Becky, composedly. "It isn't polite at a party."

"Take back your own words!" shouted Allerton, white with rage. "I'm no mollycoddle, and I'll fight you now, or any time."

But Doris, startled and dismayed at this disgraceful scene, put her hand on her brother's arm and drew him away.

"Come, Allerton," she said, with such dignity as she could command. "You forget yourself."

"I won't forget him, if he does," promised Don.

"Don't," answered Allerton, moving away but still furious; "I'll settle this with you some other time, when you are not my sister's guest."

Becky laughed and followed Doris, but outside the tent Allerton broke away from the group and went to nurse his grievances alone. Don was trying to think of a way to apologize to Doris when the girl gave him such a look of mingled scorn and reproach that he turned away, thrust his hands in his pockets and walked across the lawn whistling softly to himself.

"Never mind," said Becky, with cheerfulness, "they'll get over it in a minute. It isn't any of *our* bread-and-cheese, anyhow."

The incident, however, had disturbed gentle Doris greatly, and she was so silent and reserved that Becky and Sue soon left her to her own devices and set out to amuse themselves in any manner that might offer.

The band played stirring marches and gavottes. Laughter and merriment were everywhere. All stiffness among the guests seemed to have disappeared, for there were games of archery, lawn ten-pins, quoits and various other devices for the amusement of those assembled. Some of the girls had their fortunes told in the tent of a gypsy, while others watched a big paper balloon that was being sent up.

It was nearly seven o'clock when Marion gathered her guests in the banquet tent, and nearly all had found their places and were seated when in

rushed Sue Daring, her white gown streaming all down the front with a sticky pink compound, and gasping with horror and despair she flew to her sister Phœbe, who stared in amazement.

"Keep off, Sue — keep off! Good gracious, what has happened to you?" Phœbe asked.

"I w-w-was helping myself to some l-l-l-lemonade, when the b-bowl tipped over an' ducked me," was the wailing reply, while Phœbe held her sister at arms' length to protect her own dress.

There was a shout of laughter, at this, and poor Sue broke down and began to cry.

"I'll take her home," whispered Phœbe to Marion.

"Come straight back, then," pleaded the hostess; "and have Sue come, too, as soon as she has changed her gown. There has been no harm done, except to the poor thing's own clothing."

"Yes, there has," sobbed Sue. "I b-b-broke the bowl!"

Phœbe led her away, and soon Judith was exclaiming at the child's dreadful plight. It was useless to think of her rejoining the party, however, for there was not another dress in her limited wardrobe that was proper for the occasion.

"Run back, dear," said Cousin Judith to Phœbe; "your pleasure must not be spoiled, and I'll look after Sue and comfort her."

That was not so easy, for Sue's disappointment was very poignant indeed. She knew it was her own fault, but that did not comfort her for missing the supper and the dance. However, Judith assisted her to exchange her sticky costume for a common gingham, and to wash all traces of the deluge of lemonade from her face and hands. Then she sat in the Little Mother's window and listened to the shouts of laughter and the music of the band and gazed at the myriad of twinkling lanterns — and was more miserable than she had ever been before in all her life.

Phœbe had soon rejoined the company and was now participating in the fun. Sue's accident had rather tended to increase the jollity than otherwise, and was soon forgotten. There were pretty favors for each guest, and as a finale to the delicious supper they all ate some of Marion's birthday cake and wished her many happy returns of the day. Eric made a little speech which was witty enough to set them all laughing, and Marion thanked the company very modestly for their kind expressions of good will.

Donald sat opposite Allerton at the feast, and the two glared at one another viciously, to Becky's secret delight.

"Al's getting to be quite decent," she whispered to her brother. "I wouldn't be s'prised if he'd really fight."

After the banquet came the dancing, and when the guests left the tent to indulge in this amusement they found themselves in a veritable fairyland. For the lanterns had all been lighted while they feasted, and the scene was beautiful beyond anything they had ever before witnessed.

The cards had said: “until nine,” but it was quite ten o ‘clock when the Darings returned home, eager and excited, and breathlessly recited their experiences to their smiling Little Mother. Sue had insisted on sitting up to hear all about the affair, and the glowing reports made her more miserable than ever.

“Did you have a good time, Don?” she asked, wistfully.

“Oh, so-so,” he replied. “It was a pretty fair show after I got rid of the mollycoddle.”

“That’s the biggest word Don knows,” laughed Becky; but neither she nor Sue betrayed the boy’s quarrel with Allerton.

CHAPTER XII
A BATTLE ROYAL

That night was another wakeful one for Phœbe. She had thoroughly enjoyed the lawn fête, but it left her too nervous for peaceful slumber until her pulses had calmed down and she was enabled to regain her accustomed composure. She went to bed, but not to sleep, and after the house became quiet she lay thinking over the incidents of the evening.

Gradually peace came to her. She was really tired, and the somnolent thrall of midnight was making her drowsy when she was roused by the movements of old Elaine in the next room.

It had been nearly a week since she had removed the board over the transom and prepared her peephole, but during that time the housekeeper had remained quiet, or at least Phœbe had not heard her. To-night the stealthy sounds began again, and after listening a few moments the girl softly arose, drew the table to a position before the door and mounted upon it.

She tried to be quiet, but probably she made

some sound in these preparations, for scarcely had she slid the corner of the board away, to look into the next room, when the light which faintly illumined it was suddenly extinguished.

Phœbe stood motionless, waiting. Elaine, doubtless alarmed, did not stir for a long time. The old woman may have scented danger without realizing in what manner it threatened her, but her caution was excessive. At last, Phœbe heard her breathe a low sigh and then patter softly across the room to her bed and lie down.

The seance was over for to-night, without doubt. Exercising great care, the girl noiselessly descended from her perch and, tiptoeing to bed, composed herself to slumber.

Next morning, in considering the night's occurrence, she decided to leave the table where it stood — before the door — and to place a chair beside it so she could mount noiselessly at any moment. It was several days, however, before Elaine recovered from her fright or suspicions, and during that time no unusual sounds came from her room.

It rained the morning after Marion's party, and Phœbe was curious to know if all the pretty lanterns had been wetted and destroyed. But, on looking across at the lawn she discovered that every trace of last night's festivities had been removed by the servants. Tents, lanterns, band stand, all had been taken away as soon as the quests had departed, and the Randolph grounds were as trim and orderly as before.

The children resented the rain, for it kept all of them except Phil, who was

at work, cooped up in:he house until after dinner. Judith found time, luring the dreary forenoon, to tell them some stories and to talk over with them once again the adventures of the lawn fête, which still occupied their minds.

When, at last, the rain ceased and the bright July sun came out of the clouds, they greeted it with genuine relief and joyously scattered in all directions.

Don, deserted by Becky, who had to go to Miss Gray's for her music lesson, walked out to the street and found Allerton promenading up and down the opposite sidewalk, his head bowed and his hands clasped behind his back — as an old man might have strutted. The sight awakened Don's slumbering wrath and he called out:

"Hello, mollycoddle! What are you up to?"

Allerton straightened up and glanced across the street.

"Oh, it's you," he said. "Are you ready for your thrashing?"

"Yes. I dare you to come over here," responded Don, promptly.

"If you want your punishment, come and get it!"

"You' re afraid," sneered Don.

"It isn't that," replied Allerton. "I haven't my gloves here, and I dislike to soil my hands."

Don glared at his neighbor's spick and span apparel, and the sight of the "dandy" made him still more combative. Allerton was the biggest and strongest, perhaps; but he was nearly a year younger than Don, who had no thought of his own disadvantage. In that mood he would willingly have fought a giant.

"I dare you to come half way," he challenged, and as the other boy hesitated, Don advanced along the muddy crossing at the corner until he was at about the middle of it. It was an old board crosswalk, and just beyond where Don stood it was so low that the thin mud of the street had spread a layer over it.

This it was that caused Allerton to hesitate. He had a natural regard for his polished shoes and carefully brushed clothes and, while fully as eager for the fray as Donald, he would have preferred a more suitable place to fight.

The taunts of young Daring, however, were not to be endured. It was really necessary to teach impolite Donald a lesson he would remember. So Allerton attempted the crossing.

When he came to the muddy section he halted.

"Come on, then!" he exclaimed.

"This is half way," said Don. "Come on yourself."

"You back down, do you?"

"No, I don't back down. You're the coward, Al."

“Coward!”

“That’s what I said.”

It was too great an insult for Allerton to brook. With doubled fists he advanced upon the eager, slender boy awaiting him. Don staggered under i heavy blow received full upon the chin, and then his own fist shot out and struck Allerton’s chest.

To his amazement it was “a knockdown. “Young Randolph’s feet slipped on the slimy crossing and he fell backward full length in the soft mud of the road.

With a roar of rage and chagrin he scrambled to his feet, and Don planted another blow that sent him to the mud again. It was not a hard blow, by any means. It seemed as though a mere ouch was sufficient, for Allerton’s feet were now so covered with mud that he could scarcely stand upon them. A push from Don sufficed to upset him, and observing the ease of the operation Don repeated his blow each time that Allerton arose, laughing gleefully at the result of his own prowess. In the heat of the encounter, however, he neglected to keep his own footing on the cleaner and safer portion of the boards, so that in one of Allerton’s falls his arm struck Don and sent him likewise sprawling in the sticky mud.

They sat up and looked at each other in bewilderment. Allerton had never been so astonished in his life as at his present misadventure, and now, as he saw one side of Don’s head plastered with mud, which filled an ear and an eye, he burst into a hearty laugh.

Don scraped the mud out of his eye, blinked at his antagonist, and laughed too.

“Guess honors are about even, Al,” he said. “I’ve had enough. Have you?”

“Plenty,” declared Allerton, making an effort to rise from the puddle. Don managed to find his feet after a severe struggle.

“My, but you’re a sight!” he exclaimed.

“So are you,” replied Allerton, cheerfully. “We both ought to be ashamed of ourselves.”

“I — I’mafraid Cousin Judith will scold.”

“Well, I’m certain to catch it, all right. So long, Don.”

“So long, Al. Let’s go down town, after we’ve dressed.”

“All right.”

Thus the fight resulted in amity; but Don was dreadfully humiliated when he had to face the Little Mother in all that mess. He took off his shoes on the porch and humbly made his way up stairs to knock at Judith’s door.

“I — I’ve fallen down in the mud,” he called to her. “May I put on my

best suit?”

Miss Eliot had been a witness of the entire scrimmage from her window, and had even overheard the words that had preceded and provoked the fight. She had decided not to interfere, but now she answered in a frigid voice through the closed door:

“No, Donald. I cannot have your best suit ruined.”

“But what shall I do, Cousin Judith?”

“You must go to bed until the mud on your clothes dries and they can be properly cleaned.”

Donald stood silently in the hall, his face flushed red with humiliation. He waited a long while for Cousin Judith to speak again, but she remained silent. At last he crept away to his own room, removed the disreputable garments and examined them dolefully. Coat, trousers, shirt, stockings — all were alike plastered with thick layers of fresh mud. It would take them a long time to dry, he feared.

With a sinking heart he put on his pajamas, having first washed himself clean, and then sat down to consider his dismal fate.

“It was a pretty good fight,” he mused; “but fighting don’t seem to pay, somehow. I wish I had let Al alone. He isn’t so much of a mollycoddle, after all.”

Finally, he thought of Aunt Hyacinth, and resolving to appeal to that faithful friend he crept down into the kitchen and begged her to help him. Aunty looked the clothes over in dismay, saying:

“‘T ain’t no use, Marse Don. Dat ‘ar mud won’t dry ‘fore mawnin’, nohow. I’ll do mah bes’, honey; but I neveh seen sich a mess in all mah bohn days!”

With this verdict Don was forced to be content. He had a notion to appeal to Cousin Judith again, but could not muster the courage. So he got a book, lay down upon his bed and passed the rest of the afternoon in abject misery.

CHAPTER XIII

PHIL MAKES A DISCOVERY

Eric came to the bank a little late on the morning following the party, but as soon as he had joined Phil at the high desk which they used in common he began to sing the praises of Marion Randolph.

"She isn't a raving beauty, Phil," he said, "and until now I've always hated the sight of any girl that wears glasses; but Marion's a cracker-jack in some ways. She's got a wad of money, for one thing — or her old man has, and that's just the same."

"I suppose Mr. Randolph is a very wealthy man," remarked Phil, who disliked to discuss Marion with his friend.

"Wealthy!" cried Eric; "why, Randolph's the head of the big Boston bond syndicate. He's one of the slickest financiers in this country. Look here, Phil," turning to a page in the ledger; "just notice this entry. When Mr. Randolph came here with the family, he deposited in our bank ten thousand in cold cash. He and Mrs. Randolph may

both check against the account, but you see she's only drawn a little over a thousand dollars, so far. That's the sort of a customer we like, and if Mr. Randolph can let ten thousand lie idle in a country bank he must have scads of money."

Then Eric discussed the elaborate entertainment of yesterday and dwelt perpetually upon the money the Randolphs must be possessed of, until Phil was thoroughly annoyed.

"What does it matter, Eric?" he said. "Money can' t buy everything, in this world."

"What can't it buy?" demanded Eric, astonished.

"It can't buy happiness, or health, or — " "That's rubbish, Phil. Give a fellow plenty of money and he's bound to be happy; he can't help it. And as for health, money gets the best and most skillful doctors and surgeons in the land, and they'll cure a rich man where a poor man will die. There isn't anything, old man, that money won't do."

"Then you ought to be satisfied, Eric. Your father is the richest man in Riverdale, except perhaps Mr. Randolph, and you are his only child."

"Oh, it'll come to me in time, I guess," returned Eric, carelessly; "but just now the gov'nor holds me in pretty tight lines. How in blazes can he expect a young fellow to live on my salary? Why, it's preposterous!"

Phil did not reply to this. It was none of his business.

In some ways this association with Eric was not of the most pleasant description. The two boys had grown up together in the village and had

always been friends in a way; but now that Phil was thrown more closely into Eric's companionship he discovered many traits in his nature that did not seem wholly admirable.

The older boy was a persistent cigarette smoker, and laughed at Phil for refusing to imitate him.

"I've tried it," said Phil, quietly, "but I don't like the things. To me there's no fun in smoking."

After office hours Eric often pleaded with Phil to go to the hotel and play pool with him. Mr. Daring had always had a pool and billiard table in a large room in the attic of his house, and he had taught all his children to play. None of them, however, cared especially for the amusement, and his father's wisdom was evident when Phil now revolted from a game at the hotel.

"I'm not a good player, Eric," he said, "and I can't imagine anyone loafing in that grimy, smoky room just to play a game of pool. What's the fun in it?"

Mr. Spaythe strongly objected to billiards and pool. He had even reproved Wallace Daring, at times, for having a table in bis house. Eric had been sternly forbidden to play, and for that reason those stealthy games at the hotel possessed for the young man the attraction of forbidden fruit.

"Fun!" he retorted; "why, there's lots of fun in pool. We play for the drinks, you know, and I can beat nearly every fellow in the village. When the farmers' sons come in, they're dead easy; there are always some of them around the hotel, and they' re proud to play with me because I'm the banker's son."

"Then play with them, "advised Phil." I don't drink, as you know, and I 'd be poor company for you."

Eric shook his head sadly.

"You'll never amount to much in the world, Phil, with those namby-pamby ideas of yours."

"I don't consider them namby-pamby ideas, Eric; I simply don't care for the things you do."

"The good die young."

"Oh, I'm not so good as to be in any danger," laughed Phil. "I imagine I'mpretty full of faults, Eric, and you mustn't quarrel with me because my faults are not the same as your own."

After a time young Spaythe refrained from urging Phil to join in his amusements; but he seemed not to be offended and proved genial enough as they worked together at the bank. The two young men occupied a large room at the rear of the neat, one-story brick building. They worked perched upon high stools at a big double desk, where the books were spread out. Behind

them was the grim, austere safe which was the repository of so much specie that Phil's brain sometimes whirled at sight of the heaps of gold and bank notes. Mr. Spaythe's private office was in front, and beside it was the brass-railed coop where Mr. Boothe sat all day dispensing or receiving money according to the requirements of the customers.

The cashier could not overhear their conversation, if the boys spoke moderately low, and he paid no attention to them, anyway, and seldom even glanced toward them.

"I've invited Marion to the boat race," said Eric one day, soon after the party. "Are you going to pull stroke for our crew, Phil?"

"I suppose so."

"Do your best, then, old man. I'mgoing to bet heavily on our crew."

"I wouldn't, Eric."

"Why not?"

"The least little accident decides a boat race."

"I'll risk it. We've defeated Bayport two years running, and we' re due for a third victory. As a matter of fact, I'm just forced to tie to this race, Phil, and win some necessary money. I owe about everybody in the town, and some of them are getting impatient to see the color of my money."

Phil knew this was true, and did not care to reply. After working silently for a time he said:

"Eric, didn't Samuel P. Martin deposit $380 yesterday?"

"No. It was $280."

"Where's the slip?"

"Put away, somewhere."

"But, I'm sure it was three-eighty. I heard him say he wanted four hundred for his team, and threw off twenty dollars in order to make the deal."

Eric looked a little annoyed.

"I entered two-eighty on the books, didn't I?" he asked, scowling.

"Yes; that's what surprised me."

"Well, then the entry must be correct."

"I'll ask Mr. Boothe."

"Let him alone. It's my affair."

Phil said no more, but was still puzzled. When he came back to the bank after dinner he saw that Eric had laid a deposit slip on his desk. It showed that Samuel P. Martin had deposited $280 in Spaythe's Bank. Phil thought the ink appeared to be quite fresh.

"You see I was right, after all," observed Eric, glancing at Phil a little anxiously. "After you left I hunted up the deposit slip. Old Martin may have sold his team for three-eighty, but he only put two-eighty in the bank."

A few days later Phil had occasion to ask:

"Where is the check for two hundred, drawn by Mrs. Randolph?"

"When did she draw it?" inquired Eric.

"This morning, according to the entry. And just now she has presented another check for fifty. I've just taken it from Mr. Boothe's spindle."

"Probably she didn't get enough the first time," remarked Eric, lazily puffing his cigarette, for his father was away from the office just then and he could stealthily indulge in his pet vice.

"I must have that check to file — the one for two hundred — and it isn't here," persisted Phil, who had no intention of neglecting any part of his duty.

Eric stared at him, a moment.

"Hand me that bunch of canceled checks," he said; "I'll find it."

Phil passed the bundle across the desk, and while Eric slowly turned over the paid checks and seemed to examine them carefully the other bent his eyes upon the books and continued his work. After a time, the banker's son handed back the checks.

"There it is, Phil. I've placed it on top."

Yes, there it was, sure enough, although Phil was positive it had not been in the lot before. He did not refer to the subject again, but went on with his task, feeling miserable and dispirited at the thoughts that intruded themselves upon his mind.

Eric left early that afternoon, when Phil took occasion to carefully compare the two checks issued by Mrs. Randolph. That for two hundred was not numbered and seemed to have been very hastily written.

There was a dull ache in young Daring's heart as he put away the books and papers and prepared to go home. An odd suspicion had forced itself upon him — a suspicion so cruel and deplorable that the boy reproached himself for harboring it for even a moment.

That evening he had a long talk with Phœbe, his only confidant. After relating to his twin the circumstances of Martin's deposit and Mrs. Randolph's curious check he said:

"I know I am wrong to be mistrustful, for Eric is Mr. Spaythe's only son, and would not, of course, attempt to rob his father. But when Martin pushed his money over the counter to Mr. Boothe he said in a loud voice: 'There's three hundred and eighty dollars more toward my savings '; so, in spite of that deposit slip, I am almost sure he banked the entire amount."

"Can Eric get into the safe, where the money is kept?" asked Phœbe, after some thought.

"Of course. He has to put away the books, and often we are not through with our work upon them until after Mr. Boothe has gone. They both have

the combination of the safe and the keys to the bank. Naturally, I have not been entrusted with either, as yet."

Phœbe took time to consider this.

"I suppose," she finally said, "it would be quite possible for Eric to take a hundred dollars from the safe and then make the entry of Mr. Martin's deposit a hundred dollars less than it actually was."

"Yes."

"Then no one would suspect what Eric had done."

"Why, the books would not show the theft, of course; but in time Mr. Martin will be sure to discover that he has not been credited with that hundred dollars, and that will lead to an investigation. It's the same way with Mrs. Randolph's check," added Phil, regretfully. "She has a large amount on deposit, and may not discover for a long time that her account is two hundred dollars short."

"Are you sure she did not sign that check?" asked Phœbe.

"No; I cannot be positive. Mrs. Randolph is in the habit of drawing money from the bank but once a week. She writes neatly and numbers all her checks. To-day I found an entry that Eric had made in the book showing she had drawn two hundred, and the check itself, which should have been among those Mr. Boothe had cashed and turned over to me, was missing. Almost immediately came in the usual check for fifty, made out in Mrs. Randolph's neat and careful way. Naturally, I was puzzled. When Eric finally found the two hundred dollar check, it was not like Mrs. Randolph's checks at all, although the handwriting was similar."

"Have you noticed any other suspicious things?" the girl inquired.

"Several," replied Phil, after a brief hesitation. "But, I've never even dared to suspect Eric before. I hope I'mwrong; indeed, I *must* be wrong!"

They were walking along a country lane in the twilight. Phil's arm was around his twin's waist; the scent of new mown hay came to them from the neighboring fields.

"I do not think you are justified in accusing Eric to his father," said Phœbe, musingly. "It will be better to keep your suspicions to yourself."

"That is my idea. I'm not hired as a detective; I'mmerely a bookkeeper."

"Still," she said, "you owe a certain loyalty to Mr. Spaythe. If an employee discovers the bank being robbed it is his duty to speak; unless — "

"Unless the robber is the banker's own son," added Phil; "in which case it would be a kindness to keep the knowledge from him."

Phœbe sighed.

"Eric has a good heart," she observed, "and I'm sure he 'd never think of taking money from anyone but his father. He isn't robbing the customers of

the bank by these acts, you know."

"That is true, for the false entries are certain to be discovered, when the bank will be obliged to make good the deficiencies. Eric realizes this, I suppose. He has been very extravagant lately, and his father keeps him on a very small salary. So, it seems to me, he has been tempted to take what doesn't belong to him."

"I'm awfully sorry," said the girl. "It's a dreadful thing, Phil, any way you look at it. But I do not think it is your place to interfere. Fate will take care of the problem, and Eric's final downfall is certain."

"Would you advise me to have a private talk with him, and tell him what I know!" asked Phil.

"What's the use! He cannot put back the money he has taken. Better let the thing run its course, Phil, and keep out of it yourself in every way.''

"I will," said Phil, with decision.

But Eric was not long in discovering a change in Phil's attitude toward him. The young man did not mean to alter his manner toward his old friend, but their former congenial relations were rather abruptly broken off, much to Eric's surprise. Then the latter became suspicious, and while he spoke to his colleague as cheerfully as of old, Phil frequently caught Eric watching him with a sly, searching glance that had a trace of fear in it. This mistrust gradually wore away when the banker's son found he had not been betrayed, or even questioned. If Phil found any entries in the books that did not look exactly right to him, he passed them over and said nothing. This served to restore Eric's confidence in him, and the two boys continued to work together in perfect harmony.

Phœbe was very miserable over Phil's discovery of Eric's irregularities. It was the first time any disgraceful or criminal act had been brought close to her knowledge, and she became nervous for fear her twin might, in some way, become implicated in the terrible affair. The girl was sorry for Eric, and grieved over him with all her kindly heart.

It seemed so sad that a bright young fellow with such splendid prospects should go wrong and foolishly ruin all his future life. She knew Mr. Spaythe well enough to believe he would cast off Eric without mercy when he learned the fact that his son was a thief. For this reason she sincerely hoped the banker would never make the discovery.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOLLY OF GRAN 'PA ELIOT

That night Phœbe was again aroused by the peculiar sliding noise in the next room. She had been awaiting it for so long that she was alert to the slightest sound Elaine made, and now she lost no time in silently mounting upon the table and opening the peephole she had prepared. Her own room was shrouded in gloom, but the housekeeper had placed a lighted candle upon her table, before which she was seated in her white nightrobe.

When Phœbe first observed her, old Elaine was tying the mouth of a stout canvas bag that was full of some irregular, lumpy material. Then she drew another bag toward her — there were several standing upon the broad table — and unfastened the cord that bound it while it was lying upon its side. At once a shower of gold burst forth, and with her long bony fingers the woman slid each piece of money across the table, at the same time eagerly counting it in the low, mumbling tone Phœbe had so often heard but could not before explain.

From her perch of observation the girl counted them with her. There were exactly two hundred and fifty twenty-dollar gold pieces in the bag — a sum amounting to five thousand dollars.

Elaine cautiously replaced the hoard and firmly secured the mouth of the sack. Another bag was opened. It contained smaller coins, ten-dollar pieces, and there were three hundred of them.

The woman did not hurry, although her every movement denoted fervent excitement. Bending over the table, she slowly slid piece after piece from one pile to another until all had been counted. The sacks were old and soiled. How many times, Phoebe wondered, had their contents been counted and gloated over? Five separate sacks old Elaine unfastened, counted, and tied up again, and all were filled with yellow gold. Then she twined her arms around the bulging bags and began kissing them ecstatically. "Mine!" she said in a hoarse whisper. "Mine — mine!" Then she reached down and raised a trap in the floor, disclosing a cavity between the joists into which she lowered a sack. It was a familiar "thump" to Phoebe's ears, the puzzling mystery of which was now explained. With each sack she deposited she repeated: "Mine!" in so weird a tone that it sent the chills coursing down the back of the startled and amazed girl.

Now Elaine replaced the trap, drew the rag carpet over it and stood upright. She cast an undecided glance around and walked to the old-fashioned mantel that stood against the opposite wall. It was made of some

dark wood, and had been quite cleverly carved. Nearly every bed chamber in the house had a similar mantel and fireplace.

Elaine put her hand to one corner and the entire woodwork swung outward on hinges, showing a deep cavity which was lined with narrow shelves. Except as the woman herself obstructed the view, Phœbe could clearly see the whole of this secret cupboard, which had been ingeniously built into the chimney. The shelves were covered with stacks of silver coins and thick packages of bills. The silver Elaine merely glanced at, but the packets of paper money she piled into her loose robe, gathered into a sack, and carried it to the table, where she proceeded methodically to count it. The eagerness she had displayed while counting the gold was now lacking in her manner. She was intent enough upon her task, and handled each bill with loving care; but only the hard yellow gold had seemed to enrapture her.

Phœbe's limbs were getting numb and her knees knocked together tremblingly; but she stuck obstinately to her post of observation until Elaine had finished her self imposed task and replaced the money. This accomplished, the woman swung the mantel into place and with a leer of cunning and contentment still lingering upon her wrinkled features blew out her candle and went to bed.

Phoebe closed the slide and managed to climb down and creep into her own bed, without making a noise. Then she lay shivering with nervous chills, induced by the astonishing discovery she had made.

There was no sleep for the girl that night. At first, a supreme bewilderment prevented her from thinking clearly; but, after a time, she grew more composed and began to marshall her thoughts into some sort of order.

It was not Elaine's money, this secret hoard; that was certain. Therefore it must belong to Gran'pa Eliot. Phoebe remembered that always while he was in health and able to be around he had personally occupied these rooms — the one Elaine now slept in, and the big front room opening out of it, where he now sat propped up in helpless oblivion of all earthly treasure.

There was no longer any doubt that Gran'pa Eliot had long been a miser and cunningly secreted his wealth. He had caused the trap to be made in the floor and the cupboard built behind the mantel. With years the passion for saving had grown upon him, and after his wife's death and his daughter's marriage he gave free rein to his hobby and converted all his land into ready money. To avoid suspicion he had spread the report of his financial failure and claimed he was reduced to poverty.

So much Phœbe had no difficulty in comprehending. In what way the old housekeeper had discovered her master's secret was not clear, but Elaine's resolve not to desert Mr. Eliot was obviously due to her knowledge of his

vast hoard. When he became paralyzed and helpless she realized that the fortune, unsuspected by all others, was now safely within her own grasp. Phœbe decided, shuddering the while, that the woman was a greater slave to that secret hoard than ever her grandfather had been.

When daybreak came the girl arose and quietly dressed herself. Then she softly slipped out of the house and started for a walk through the valley, hoping the morning air would cool her throbbing brain. Here, amid a silence scarcely broken by the low mooing of the cows and the crowing of the distant cocks, she began to doubt the evidence of her own senses. It was all so wonderful and unreal that she could barely admit the truth of it; and yet — and yet — . Often before she had heard the sound of the gold being slid across the table: so often, indeed, that she well knew her eyes had not deceived her when, at last, they revealed to her the explanation of the puzzling sounds.

And now the question arose, what should she do? How should she act, now that she had discovered this terrible secret? The knowledge of her grandfather's wealth in no way elated her; rather did she feel scorn and resentment at his despicable weakness. It hurt her to think that her mother's father could be guilty of such folly and pitiful sordidness. It was too soon for her to reflect that this money might easily affect the fortunes of her brothers and sisters and herself; all she thought of was the shame of the thing, that her grandfather could become a miser and gloat in secret over the dross of gold and silver — and soiled bank notes. What an abominable, inhuman passion it was — a passion shared by old Elaine Halliday, a creature Phœbe had always despised intuitively.

During an hour's brisk walk she became sorry that her curiosity had led her to discover this horrid secret. But she resolved to keep her own counsel and tell no one what she had seen. Even Phil must be spared this humiliation, for the poor boy had quite enough to worry him already.

Phœbe returned to the house with glowing cheeks and bright eyes, in spite of her sleepless night and mental perturbation. She greeted the family cheerfully and took her seat at the breakfast table with her native composure fully regained.

"When is the boat race, Phil?" asked Miss Eliot.

"A week from Saturday," he said. "I've got to practice with the boys every evening, from now on. I wanted them to let me out, this year, but they foolishly insist on my pulling stroke.".

"Why foolishly?" inquired Becky.

"Because, I'mworking for a living, now, and can't devote much time to getting into condition. Those Bayport fellows are out every day, and mean to

win if they can.”

“I must see that boat race,” said Cousin Judith. “Boating has always been one of my favorite sports. I hope you’ll do well, Phil; but, of course, you can’t neglect business for pleasure.”

CHAPTER XV

SUE GETS A DIVORCE

After breakfast Sue wandered out and found Doris upon the lawn. The youngest of the Darings was now nearly twelve years old and had associated so constantly with her elders that she considered herself quite "grown up" and in no way inferior to Doris Randolph, who, having an advantage in years, assumed toward Sue the airs of a young lady.

Since she had tipped over the punch bowl and taken a lemonade bath a good deal of fun had been poked at poor Sue, which she deeply resented. It was bad enough to have lost all the joy of the party, without being twitted afterward about her misfortune.

Doris was surely too sedate and practical minded to wish to tease Sue, so her greeting was wholly innocent when she said:

"Good morning. Is that the lemonade dress which you are wearing!"

"No," retorted Sue, flushing; "is that the hypocrite's dress which you are wearing, Miss Religion?"

Doris was provoked, and with good reason, for she was sincere enough in her religious sentiments. Also, she was still worldly minded to the extent of becoming angry. After a cold, stony look at Sue, she said:

"I have submitted to the insolence of you Darings long enough, and hereafter I forbid you to address me, for I shall not recognize you as an acquaintance."

At this instant Cousin Judith appeared upon the scene and hearing Doris'speech stopped short in surprise.

"Why, what is the trouble, my dears?" she asked.

"This child, madam," returned Doris, stiffly, "is still a barbarian, and unfit to associate with civilized beings."

"I called her a hypocrite," flashed Sue, defiantly; "and she is one." Miss Eliot was shocked.

"I am surprised, Sue dear; surprised and grieved. You have treated Doris very badly, and I want you to apologize to her for your rudeness."

"I won't!" said Sue, stamping her foot. "I'll *die* rather than beg pardon of Miss Nancy Hypocrite!"

Judith looked at her in amazement. "Go into the house, my dear," she said, rather sternly; "I'll join you there presently."

Sue raised her long lashes and swept one rebellious look at the Little Mother. Doris' face had a slight sneer upon it, and the angry child noted it. Turning squarely about she ignored Cousin Judith's command and marched down the street toward the village.

Doris gave a little laugh.

"A pleasant mannered young lady, I must say, Miss Eliot," she tittered. "But, I assure you I meant what I said. I shall never speak to her again, unless she apologizes."

"An apology is your due, I think," Miss Eliot said soberly, and then without further remark she continued on her way to the Randolph house to see Marion, with whom she had an engagement.

At noon Sue did not return to dinner. She had called upon Nannette Bennett, who was about her own age, and driven with her to a farm out on the Exeter road.

"Can you stay here to dinner?" asked Nannette.

"Of course," replied Sue, readily. "There's no one at home who has the right to give me orders."

Nannette did not understand this strange speech, but let it pass without remark. The two girls spent all day at the farm, although I am not sure Sue was enjoying herself for a single moment. She did not reach home until the family was seated at the supper table.

Phil had inquired anxiously for his sister, and Judith quietly explained that Sue had called Doris bad names and refused to apologize.

"When I asked her to return to the house, where I hoped to be able to reason with her," she added, "Sue refused to obey my request and walked down the street instead. I do not know where she is, now."

Phil was worried, and even Don looked grave.

"I had intended to practice this evening with the boat crew," said the elder brother, "but I think I ought to hunt for Sue instead. She has been bad and rebellious, I know; but she's our little sister, just the same, and I'm afraid something has happened to her."

Cousin Judith made no reply and the meal was progressing in gloomy silence when Sue walked in, threw down her hat and quietly took her seat at the table. She did not look at the Little Mother, nor at anyone else directly, but helped herself to food and with an assumption of composure began to eat.

No one spoke. The others had glanced inquiringly at Cousin Judith, whose face was pale and unrelenting. She did not ask Sue where she had been, nor chide her for disobedience; but she passed the plate of cold meat to her and asked Auntie to bring in Miss Sue's chocolate.

This condition of affairs was so unusual with the Darings that they were uncertain how to act. Even Becky looked askance at her small sister, as if she were some strange, untamed animal, and Don told himself this escapade deserved a worse punishment than fighting in the mud. He had "taken his own medicine" with frank courage, knowing he deserved the Little Mother's

rebuke and telling her he was truly sorry he had hurt her feelings. But here was little Sue developing a spirit of defiance hitherto unknown in the Daring family circle. Phil was hurt and Phœbe distressed, but both voluntarily left the matter in Miss Eliot's hands for adjustment.

After supper Cousin Judith said to the culprit in a kindly tone: "Come to my room, Sue. I wish to have a little talk with you."

"I've nothing to talk about," replied Sue, sullenly.

Phil went away to his practice on the river and Sue followed her sisters out upon the porch. Cousin Judith, perhaps hoping the girl would change her mind, had gone directly to her room.

"You' re acting like a little fool, Sue," observed Becky. "I'm surprised at you."

Sue colored, but did not reply. Presently she went to her room and shut herself in until bedtime.

At breakfast next morning Cousin Judith said, addressing all the five Darings, impartially:

"Our contract, the Articles of Adoption, states that if any one of you proves rebellious to my authority the rebel is to be tried by a committee of two, and must abide by the committee's decision. Is it not so?"

"That's a fact, Little Mother," replied Phil, seriously.

"In the case we have now to consider, Sue has disobeyed me more than once," continued Miss Eliot. "I, therefore charge her with rebellion, and it becomes proper for her to select two of you to try her case. If I am found to be wrong I will ask her pardon and try to make amends. If she is wrong she must ask my pardon and submit to any penalty I may impose."

Sue paled and then flushed. She cast a furtive glance around the table and then said, in a hard, unyielding tone:

"I'mwilling. I choose Phœbe and Don."

"Very well," returned Cousin Judith. "The trial shall take place at once."

None of them saw anything humorous in the situation. As a rule the Darings were merry hearted boys and girls, full of fun and good spirits; but, these Articles of Adoption were regarded by them all as sacred. Each realized to an extent what a blessing the Little Mother had already been to them, and was determined to uphold her authority. For her coming had virtually revolutionized the household and given them a happy home and a sympathetic, generous friend.

Sue, however, marched into the parlor with her stubborn spirit unconquered by any feeling of gratitude, and Phœbe and Donald gravely followed her.

"Tell us the beginning of the trouble, dear," urged the elder sister.

Sue related her conversation with Doris.

“I’ve put up with her slurs’ n’ sarcasms long enough,” she said. “If she’s so blessed religious as she tries to make out, why does she pick on me ev’ry minute? I’m glad I called her a hypocrite, an’ I won’t take it back — not for a second!”

“Perhaps she did not mean to offend you by speaking of the ‘lemonade dress’,” suggested Phœbe. “I’ve always found her a good-hearted girl and quite ladylike.”

“That’s what I object to,” was the answer. “I won’t stand for her ladylike airs, Phœbe, an’ that’s all there is to it.”

“Sometimes our judgment proves to be wrong,” said Phœbe. “Anyhow, Cousin Judith knows best.”

“There’s another thing that makes me mad,” cried Sue. “Cousin Judith takes Doris’ part against me. Isn’t she supposed to stand up for her own adopted children?”

“Not when they’re wrong, sis,” said Don stoutly.

“Who’s to say whether they’re wrong or not?” Sue demanded.

“She is, of course. She’s older, and knows more.”

“Cousin Judith,” added Phoebe, “tries to be always right and just. She thought you were impudent to Doris, who is our neighbor and has been kind to us all, and so she asked you to apologize.”

“I *won’t* apologize to that stuck-up thing — anyhow, not till she apologizes for speaking of my lemonade dress.”

“Now, that’s the real question before the board,” asserted Don. “You’re under trial, Sue, and if we decide you’ re in the wrong, and you don’t apologize to Doris and do as Cousin Judith says, you’ll be divorced from our Articles of Adoption.”

Sue was white and frightened, but she held her ground.

“All right,” she said. “It’s up to you. I don’t want any adoption by anyone who won’t stand by me in a fight. And I’ll never — *never* — beg Doris ‘pardon!”

They tried to argue with her, and explained the disgrace of being divorced and having no Little Mother. The divorce would separate her not only from association with Cousin Judith, but from that of her brothers and sisters, who would all hold strictly to the letter of the agreement they had signed.

Sue listened to it all and remained obstinate.

“It’s for you to say whether I’m right or wrong,” she avowed at the last, “and if I’mdivorced I don’t care a rap. I won’t stand for any adoption that makes me apologize to a silly fool like Doris Randolph.”

Donald and Phœbe withdrew from the conference and talked it over

between themselves. They decided that Sue, having defied Cousin Judith's authority and broken the signed agreement, must submit to the penalty of divorce.

Phœbe drew up the paper and made an imposing looking copy on her typewriter. It read as follows:

"Whereas Sue Daring signed, under date of June 14th, 1908, a document known as the ARTICLES OF ADOPTION, whereby she promised and covenanted to support and acknowledge the authority of Miss JUDITH ELIOT and to Adopt her as a Mother, and Whereas the said Sue Daring has broken that covenant and agreement and refuses longer to abide by it, THEREFORE the undersigned, chosen by her as a Committee to decide her case, hereby declares the said Sue Daring has been guilty of a violation of the terms of the said signed agreement and is therefore released from all its pledges and DIVORCED from any further participation in its benefits. Signed this 12th day of July, 1908.

Phœbe Daring, Donald Daring, *Committee."*

This paper was made out in duplicate and a copy given to Sue and one to Cousin Judith. Sue promptly tore up her paper and scattered the pieces over the hall floor. Then she left the house and went away to play with some of her girl friends.

Cousin Judith asked the others not to taunt or reproach the girl, but to treat her as pleasantly and cordially as before. After supper that evening, they all strolled down to the river to watch the boat crew practice; but Sue was not asked to accompany them. On their return Don told the divorced one of the jolly time they had had, and how Cousin Judith bought them each an ice cream soda at the drug store; but Sue made no reply. When she went to bed she did not, like the others, go to the Little Mother for a good night kiss. In her room she noticed that the covers of her bed had not been turned down, as usual, or her night robe laid out. Becky's bed, across the room, had been remembered with loving care by Judith, but Sue was no longer her adopted daughter.

This little lack of attention sent the first real pang to the girl's heart. Silently, she got down her gown from the closet and turned back the covers of her own bed. In the morning she was about to call to Cousin Judith to ask what dress to put on, but remembered in time that she must now choose for herself.

The dressmaker still came to the house every day to sew busily for the needy family. Judith was paying for all the new things with her own money, which she had saved from the sale of her pictures, and therefore Sue was not surprised when her pretty pink challis was laid aside and put into a drawer

unfinished, while a gown of Becky's was brought out and given the dressmaker to work upon. Sue told herself she must expect such things to happen under the new order of things; only — only she *would* have liked that pink dress; it was so soft and pretty.

The divorced one made no complaint, however she might feel the difference between her position and that of her brothers and sisters. Sue was old enough to understand that she must pay the penalty for her rebellion, and if at times she repented her stubbornness it was in secret and no word of regret passed her lips. Judith spoke to her with uniform kindliness and so did the other members of the family; yet Sue realized she was an outcast, and no longer entitled to a place in the inner circle.

This ostracism was more acutely defined when the Little Mother one morning called her flock into her room for a conference. Sue stayed away, being an outsider, and listened to the merry laughter that at times penetrated the closed doors and saluted her ears. Undoubtedly it was a trial to the younger girl to be debarred from such good fellowship, and as she sat in her lonely corner she sadly recalled the jolly times she had once had in Cousin Judith's pleasant room.

"So you's a orfin ag'in, is yo'?" remarked Aunt Hyacinth, coming upon her as Sue sat nursing her gloomy thoughts. "Ain't yo' got no sense a' tall, Miss Sue, to go a-flyin' in de face o' Prov'- dence dis a-way?"

"You mind your own business, Aunt Hy."

"Dat's what I'm doin', honey. Mah bus'ness is to see you all happy, an' here yo' goes an' makes yo'se'f a outcast an' a orfin, when yo' had a good Li'l Motheh to tek care o' yo'. Ain' dere no way to divohce dat divohce, an' git back in de sunshine ag'in"?"

Sue sulked and did not reply. That suggestion of getting back into the fold again had already occurred to her, but the Articles of Adoption had made no provision for such a thing. Much of the child's stubborn mood had vanished by this time, but there seemed no way of retreat open. She began to wonder if she must pass all her life an "outcast an' a orfin," as Aunty had tersely described it.

Judith, who had a shrewd idea of what was passing in the girl's mind, was content to let matters take their course. Often she longed to take Sue in her arms and comfort her, but dared not. Judith Eliot was only a young girl herself, loving and tender hearted, but she was rarely sagacious in her understanding of human nature and believed that Sue's divorce would tend to benefit all her charges, and finally strengthen her own position. One gains experience not only personally, but from the experiences of others, and it was noticeable that both Becky and Don had been unusually meek and

circumspect since Sue's rebellion Becky, indeed, did a queer thing. Going to the Little Mother privately she said in her earnest way:

"I 'd like to get halter-broke, Cousin Judith, and I wish you' d help me. Whenever I buck the rules of propriety and cease to be a lady, you just step on my corns an' yell 'time.' I know I'm awful slangy sometimes, but by jooks I'll cure myself of the habit if I bu'st a surcingle!" Judith smiled and kissed her. "I wonder where you pick up such expressions," she said. "But I assure you, Becky dear, it won't be at all difficult to cultivate a choicer language, if you make the attempt. Pay attention to the conversation of Phœbe and Marion, and listen to your Little Mother's mode of speech. I assure you there is nothing either winning or clever in the use of slang phrases. A street gamin is able to employ them as readily as you do, yet may never aspire to refined speech. To cast your lot with the ignorant and uncultured, rather than with those of your own class, is to abandon the advantages of birth and refined associations."

"I used to think it was smart," admitted Becky, gloomily; "but now I see I was off my base and shinning up the wrong tree. But I'll be careful, after this, Cousin Judith; see if I'm not. And I hope you'll call me down if I forget I'm a lady and talk like a female she."

It was well-nigh impossible to cure herself of vulgar expressions all at once; but Becky sincerely tried to improve," and met with a measure of success. Judith never reproached her if at times she lapsed unwittingly into slang, for Becky was quick to realize her fault and a sudden flush of shame would often suffuse her face before the unseemly words were well out of her mouth.

Don and Allerton had now become fast friends, being together much of the time. Don, as well as Becky, had softened perceptibly since the advent of Cousin Judith, and having acquired a hearty respect for Allerton, who had proved no "mollycoddle," the boys became congenial associates.

The coming boat race had by this time begun to excite the good people of Riverdale and was a general topic of conversation among the villagers. Nearly every town on the river bank had a boat crew, and a sharp rivalry had for some years been maintained between Bayport, nine miles away, and Riverdale. For many seasons Bayport had won the prize, being practically invincible, but for the last two years fortune had deserted them and their crew lost to Riverdale. Bayport was naturally eager to regain its lost prestige, and its adversary was equally anxious to retain the honors so hardily won. Therefore, an exciting race was in prospect.

CHAPTER XVI
THE BOAT RACE

Phil had pulled an oar with the winning crew the year before, and was to be stroke oar this year, a position requiring nice judgment as well as consummate skill. Although he had now been working at the bank for more than three weeks, the young fellow was in prime physical condition, and the week's practice with the crew renewed the hopes of the ardent admirers of the Riverdale boys.

Eric came down nearly every evening to see them pull the scull over the smooth stretch of water above the bridge, and he told Phil several times that he had "laid some pretty stiff wagers" on his crew.

Young Daring did not approve of this, and frankly said so.

"We've three new men in our eight," he said, "and the Bayport crew is almost entirely new blood. No one can judge our respective merits till we get together, and while I hope we shall win I would not risk a dollar on such a doubtful chance."

Eric was unconvinced, and merely laughed at him; yet Phil felt that he had done his duty and said all that was required. Thereafter he held his peace.

The race was held at Bayport this year, which was in that crew's favor, although Phil and most of his eight were nearly as familiar with the Bayport course as with their own. When Saturday arrived there was a general exodus from Riverdale to the scene of the race.

Judith had engaged a three-seated wagon to convey the Darings and herself. With all the talk about the race not a word had been said to Sue about her going to Bayport with them. Silently the "outcast" listened to the plans for the excursion, believing she was destined to remain at home. She had a great longing to go, for such diversions were few in their quiet lives, but by her own act she had withdrawn from the inner circle and with stolid resolve she determined none should guess her disappointment or remorse.

There was an early dinner this Saturday noon, and when the wagon drew up at the door and the Darings were hurrying to get their hats and wraps, Cousin Judith said to Sue, who sat soberly in a corner:

"Won't you go with us, dear? There is plenty of room."

Sue gave a gasp of amazement.

"But, I — I'm out of it, you know, Cousin Judith. I — I'mnot one of your children," she stammered.

"Come as my guest, then. Do you suppose I have ceased to love you, Sue? I'm not your Little Mother any more — more's the pity — but I shall always remain your affectionate Cousin Judith. It would please me to have you come

with us today, and enjoy yourself."

Sue's eyes were sparkling. Without a word, except a murmured "thank you, Cousin Judith!" she rushed for her hat and joined the others in the wagon.

It was a great day for the Darings and proved a delightful outing, although alas, the Riverdale crew went down to defeat.

An accident caused it, of course; otherwise, the race was surely Riverdale's.

Phil led his crew over the course with masterful generalship, starting with slow, steady strokes, without regard for the lead of Bayport, and then gradually increasing the count until near the end Riverdale overtook their opponents and shot irresistibly into the lead. They were two boat lengths ahead and still gaining when one of the new men "caught a crab" and threw the entire crew into confusion. The scull swung half around and before headway could be recovered Bayport passed them and won the race.

Riverdale people had been lustily cheering when they saw their boat surely forging to the front and a certain winner, as they thought; but now a groan of dismay went up that was drowned by the cheers of the exultant Bayporters.

Phœbe was nearly ready to cry, while Becky and Don were savage with grief.

"Never mind, my dears," said Cousin Judith, cheerfully. "There is no dishonor in such a defeat and Phil certainly did his part splendidly."

That was the general verdict, and Riverdale spectators crowded around Phil and congratulated him on the fine showing he had made.

In a shiny top-buggy Eric Spaythe had sat beside Marion Randolph, at a point overlooking the entire river. He had proved very agreeable company up to the finish of the race, laughing and joking in his cheery way and assuring Marion time and again that Riverdale was sure to win. At the final catastrophy he seemed overcome by horror. His eyes bulged; his lips trembled; he fell silent and moody.

"Come; let's get home!" he suddenly exclaimed, and without awaiting reply he whipped up the nag and dashed away at a break-neck speed that made everyone who saw him wonder what was the matter. Marion, greatly annoyed by this churlish proceeding on the part of her escort, refused to make any comment. Eric scarcely spoke a pleasant word to her all the way back to Riverdale. However, as they drove up the street to her house he suddenly seemed to remember that he had acted like a boor and said apologetically:

"Don't think me rude, please. My whole heart was set on Riverdale

winning that race, and I guess my disappointment made me forget myself. You won't bear any grudge against me, will you?" he continued, a little anxiously.

"Most certainly not," answered Marion coldly. "I thank you for the courtesy shown me — before you forgot yourself."

Then she hurried into the house, leaving Eric staring agape and wondering if he had made a fool of himself and lost more than his bets on the race.

Cousin Judith did not hurry her brood home, for it was still early. She carried the Darings to a cool little restaurant where they feasted on ice cream and cakes to their hearts 'content and soon forgot the humiliation of their brother's defeat.

Judith placed little Sue by her side and saw she was as liberally served as the others. The girl was unusually silent, however, and once Miss Eliot noticed that her dark eyes were flooded with tears.

On her way home Sue laid her head on the Little Mother's lap and began to sob, gently at first but with increasing bitterness, while her brothers and sisters regarded her with unfeigned amazement.

Judith stroked the soft hair and let the burst of grief exhaust itself.

"You — you've been *so* kind to me," whispered Sue, raising her tear-stained face to look appealingly into the gentle countenance above her,"that I — I — I'm*drea*'fully'shamed of myself! Don't you s'pose you — could — adopt me again?"

"I think so," said the Little Mother gravely.

The clouds cleared then and Sue was presently smiling again. As soon as they reached home she marched directly over to the Randolph mansion and found Doris. When she returned she said shyly, in the presence of the entire family:

"I've 'pologized to Doris an' told her she isn't a hypocrite; and I'm sorry — drea'fully sorry — I disobeyed Cousin Judith and acted so naughty."

"Good for you, Puss!" cried Phil, who had just come in. "Why, this consoles me for the loss of the race!"

Sue beamed with pleasure and Judith gathered the girl in her arms and kissed her.

"I call you all to witness," she said, "that this is the child of my adoption. We won't need to sign papers this time, because you will all know that Sue and I belong to each other hereafter and can never be divorced. Is it not so, my dear?"

"Yes, indeed, Little Mother!" replied Sue, smiling happily.

CHAPTER XVII
IN THE TOILS

When Eric and Phil met at their desks on Monday morning the banker's son was "savage as a meat-ax." He scowled and muttered over his work and slammed the big books here and there as if he owed them a grudge.

Phil paid no attention to this exhibition of temper, which he believed due to the failure of Riverdale to win the boat race. He knew that Eric had been betting heavily with his cronies and the Bayport people, and since the young man was already deeply in debt these added losses might affect him, seriously. So Phil devoted himself quietly to work and let Eric rave.

Gradually the young fellow quieted down. He was in no mood for work that day, and paid little attention to the books. But he smoked so many cigarettes, one after another, that the air was blue, and Mr. Boothe left his coop long enough to request Eric to desist from choking him with the offensive fumes.

"I am not well," added the cashier; "so I ask you to be considerate."

Eric tossed his cigarette away and Mr. Boothe returned to his coop.

"Phil," said Eric, abruptly, "do you know where I can borrow some money?"

"Perhaps your father will let you have it," was the reply.

"The gov'nor! Never. He 'd haul me over the coals if he knew I was hard up on my princely salary of eighteen a week."

Phil made no comment. Said Eric, after a period of thought:

"I'm told the loan-sharks in St. Louis will advance a fellow money on his prospects. I wonder if they 'd help me out of this hole. I'm the only son of a well-to-do banker, and will inherit a respectable lump of money, some day. Do you suppose they 'd help me, Phil?"

"I don't know, Eric. Such money lenders would be sure to demand a heavy interest."

"That's all right. It's worth something to get my fist on the money when I want it."

"What is it for?" asked Daring. "Why do you need this money?"

"To pay some of those infernal debts."

"How much better off will you be afterward, Eric? Wouldn't you contract more debts right away?"

"That's my business," growled the other.

"Don't you begin preaching to me, Phil Daring, for I won't stand for it," he added, glaring angrily at his fellow clerk.

Phil said no more, but he was sad and ill at ease. Eric was no longer the

genial, winning fellow of former days. Since he had begun to spend money so recklessly and to run into debt, his character and disposition seemed to have altered for the worse. The thing Phil dreaded more than anything else was another raid on the bank money, with more of those audacious false records to cover up the defalcations: He was helpless to interfere, but none the less was he sincerely sorry for both Eric and his father, knowing that exposure was bound to follow sooner or later.

Singularly enough, Mr. Spaythe seemed blind to his son's reckless extravagance. A thoughtful man, intent upon the intricate details of his banking business and absorbed in loans, notes and discounts, interests and important matters of a like character, the banker seemed not to notice Eric's elaborate costumes or the fact that he passed much of his spare time in association with the fast set of the village, whose rendezvous was the hotel bar. On the contrary, Mr. Spaythe seemed contented with the thought that his son and heir was connected with his business and apparently doing his work faithfully and well.

On Wednesday Mr. Boothe was suffering from a bad headache when he came to work. It soon became so much worse that Phil had to assist him to reach his home — a little cottage not far away — where the cashier lived with a maiden sister.

When Phil came back he went into the private office and reported the matter to Mr. Spaythe. The banker at once telephoned Dr. Jenkins to attend Mr. Boothe, and then in person took his cashier's place in the teller's "cage."

Next day Mr. Boothe was still too ill to appear at the bank. Dr. Jenkins said it would be lucky if he managed to break up the fever, but in any event his patient could not resume his duties before the following Monday morning.

While his father was taking the cashier's place Eric was silent and attentive to his work. But, Mr. Spaythe could ill afford to devote his entire time to the counting room, so he often called his son to assist in cashing checks and receiving deposits. Eric attended to these details so intelligently that on Friday Mr. Spaythe gave him complete charge of that important department, thus gaining for himself the liberty of devoting his attention to other pressing matters that had accumulated on his own desk.

That same afternoon, when the banker stepped into the counting room to secure a memorandum, Eric said to him:

"Wouldn't it be a good idea, sir, to give Phil the combination of the safe? We're behind with the books, and he'll have to come down nights and catch up with the work — at least until Boothe gets back into harness."

"Yes," said Mr. Spaythe; "you may give Daring the combination. Here is

an extra key to the side door, also." Then, he turned to his youthful clerk and nodded kindly. "I'm sorry to force this extra work upon you, Phil, but Mr. Boothe's illness leaves us very short-handed, and you may expect compensation for your extra hours."

Phil was not only annoyed at this, but positively frightened. He had surprised a curious look upon Eric's face when he asked his father to give Phil the secret combination of the safe. In a small establishment like Spaythe's Bank both the books and the supply of currency were kept in the one big safe. At this juncture, when many uncomfortable suspicions were rife in his brain, Phil muGh preferred not to have such responsibility thrust upon him.

"I 'd rather not know the combination, sir," he ventured to say, knowing he appeared confused and embarrassed.

Mr. Spaythe was plainly surprised and gave him a hard look.

"Why not?" he asked.

"It is a — a — great responsibility, sir," the yonng man explained.

"Nonsense, Daring. I trust you, fully. As fully as I do Eric or Mr. Boothe."

"Can't I make up the work on the books some other way — during the noon hour?"

"You're silly, Phil," declared Eric, sharply. "Better come down here quietly after supper and do the work in an easy and proper way. It isn't likely to last but a night or two."

"I think Mr. Boothe will be able to resume his duties by Monday morning," added Mr. Spaythe; and then, as if the matter was settled, he walked into his room.

Phil resumed his work with an uneasy sense of impending misfortune. After banking hours Eric made up the teller's account of receipts and disbursements and gave Phil a copy that he might enter the items on the books in detail. Then he counted the cash and put it away in the safe, explaining to his unwilling colleague the way to work the combination. After this Eric departed, leaving Phil alone in the bank, where he worked steadily until time for supper.

"When he went home he confided to Phœbe this new complication that had arisen.

"I'm almost certain that Eric has some desperate scheme in his head," said he. "He needs money badly to pay his gambling debts, and I'm afraid he will try to get it in such a way as to implicate me and divert suspicion from himself."

"Why do you imagine that!" inquired his twin.

"Because he was so anxious that I should know the combination and have

a key to the bank. What ought I to do, dear?"

"Your simple duty," said Phœbe positively. "Why, Phil, no harm can possibly come to an honest fellow who does his duty! Don't worry about Eric and his deeds. He could not injure you if he tried, and really, I don't believe he will try. Eric has a kindly heart, and his main fault is that he has become a bit wild and reckless."

"He's changed a good deal lately, Phœbe," was the quiet answer.

Phil promptly returned to the bank, let himself in by the side door, opened the safe and took out the books. For two hours he worked under the glare of the electric light, before his task was finished. No one came near to interrupt him. As he slid the big books into the compartment of the safe reserved for them he glanced at the neat piles of bills and bags of gold and an involuntary shiver of fear swept over him.

Saturday morning the bank was very busy. Eric sat in Mr. Boothe's cage and waited upon the customers in a very business-like manner. He was so quick and accurate in handling the money, with a pleasant word for each one who approached his wicket, that when Mr. Spaythe came in now and then to see that everything was progressing properly the boy won his father's gratified praise.

At one o'clock they closed the doors, as was usual on Saturdays, and it did not take Eric long to arrange his cash, pile it away in the safe and turn his statement of the day's transactions over to PhD.

"What, through already?" asked his father, coming in at that moment.

"Yes, sir. Here's the balance sheet you asked for, all made out correctly. I'm in a bit of a hurry, as I've arranged to go to St. Louis for over Sunday."

Mr. Spaythe frowned.

"I did not know of this plan," he said curtly. "Why are you making the trip, Eric?"

"To visit Ned Thurber. He has invited me to stay with him, so it will only cost me railroad fares. I'll be back in time for work on Monday, sir," he added carelessly.

Mr. Spaythe stood regarding his son silently for a moment. He reflected that the boy had behaved admirably these past few days, filling Mr. Boothe's place quite effectively. The banker was also engaged with other matters that required his immediate attention. So he said: "Very well. Go, if you wish to." Eric accompanied his father into the private office, merely bestowing upon Phil a nod of farewell. It was rather mean of him to take a vacation and throw all the work of bookkeeping upon young Daring, but Eric was not noted for his consideration to others.

Pausing before his father's desk he said in a hesitating way:

“I suppose it’s all right to leave Phil in charge of the cash?” Mr. Spaythe turned upon him, sharply. “Why not?” he said. “The Darings are honest enough. I would have trusted his father with every penny I owned, at any time.”

“Oh, I suppose Phil’s safe,” returned Eric, carelessly. “But he’s a new clerk, and there’s a lot of currency on hand to carry over Sunday. So the thought struck me — ”

He paused, for his father was paying no attention to what he said. Instead, his practiced eye was shrewdly scanning the balance sheet. It told the amount of cash on hand in bills, gold and silver, and recorded all checks, drafts and notes deposited during the day. Finding the tally correct Mr. Spaythe laid down the paper and turned again to his son.

“I’ll trust Phil,” he said.

Eric went away, smiling to himself. “Just what I wanted,” he muttered. “The gov’nor will remember this conversation afterward.”

Passing down the street he told every acquaintance he met that he was off for St. Louis by the four o’clock train. At the station he made his journey known to the group of loungers and shouted a rather boisterous good-by when the train drew in and he boarded it. He even waved his hat from the back platform until he had passed out of sight. Among those who thus watched Eric’s departure was Donald Daring, who announced the fact at supper that Eric Spaythe had gone to St. Louis by the four o’clock train.

“Must you work at those dreadful books tonight, Phil?” asked Phœbe.

“Only for an hour or so, dear. I put in such steady work this afternoon that a little more will get things in shape.”

“I’ll go down with you, then, and keep you company,” she announced.

As they walked along the street together in the cool of early evening Phil was very thoughtful. Finally, he said to the girl:

“I don’t believe Eric has gone to St. Louis, Phœbe.”

“Why, he must have gone!” she exclaimed. “Don saw him on board the train.”

“I know; but in spite of that I’ve a queer feeling — a sort of suspicion — that he’s playing us a trick.”

“Have you, Phil? But why?”

“I can’t explain it. You see, since Boothe has been away Eric has been free to do as he pleased. He’s in desperate need of money, just now; but, although I’ve been on the watch, not a single crooked transaction have I been able to discover — except one.”

“What was that?”

“I found on his desk yesterday a scrap of paper with my name scribbled

over it in many styles of handwriting. Anyone seeing it would have thought I had been trying to create a lot of different signatures. I tore the paper in two, crumpled it up, and tossed it in the waste basket. But, afterward, I decided the thing ought to be burnt, and searched for the scraps. They weren't among the other papers, for I went through the entire contents of the basket. Some one had taken them, and it could be no one but Eric."

Phoebe looked grave at this.

"What does it mean, Phil?"

"I've tried to think. I know of two or three forged deposit slips, aside from that one of Mr. Martin's. Then there was the forged check of Mrs. Randolph — I'm positive it was forged.

These things are sure to be discovered some day, and then the charge of forgery and embezzlement will lie between Eric and me."

"Oh, Phil!"

"As Eric is Mr. Spaythe's own son it will be easy for him to accuse me. If I tell Mr. Spaythe what I know he will ask why I didn't report it at the time. I'mina net, Phœbe, and Eric knows it. If he can save himself at my expense, he won't hesitate."

"I see!" she cried, clasping her hands tightly. "Isn't it dreadful, Phil?"

"That is why I now suspect that Eric is up to mischief. It surprised me that he told his father so bluntly he was going to St. Louis. It would be better policy for him to keep quiet about the trip; but he risked Mr. Spaythe's anger with unusual boldness. And he took pains to advertise his going to the whole town — even to let people see him ride away in the train."

"What could be his object?" inquired Phœbe, much perplexed.

"To be able to prove an alibi, I imagine."

The twins walked on in silence for a time and were just passing the railway station when Phil had an idea.

"Come in with me," he whispered, and followed by Phœbe he walked calmly up to the agent's window. The man was not busy, as no trains were due at this time.

"Hello, Wakefield," called Phil, genially.

"Hello, Phil. Good evening, Miss Daring," responded the agent, recognizing them.

"I came in to pay for Eric's ticket to St. Louis. He happened to be short of currency, but said you 'd let him have the ticket, and I could drop in and settle for it to-night."

Wakefield seemed surprised.

"Mr. Spaythe didn't buy a through ticket," he explained. "He only took one to Canton. Said he 'd buy his ticket and sleeper from there on. I

remember thinking that was a queer way to do. If he was short of money, Eric knew I'd help him out."

Phœbe trembled as she pressed Phil's arm.

"Why, it's all right, then, Wakefield," said Daring, calmly. "Probably he changed his mind, and in that case I don't owe you anything."

"Not a cent. Good night, Phil. Good night, Miss Daring."

"Good night," they answered and walked away.

"You see, I was right," said the boy, when they were on the street again. "Canton is only ten miles away, and Eric plans to leave the train there and come back."

"When?"

"Some time to-night. He means to rob the safe and get away with the money. That will implicate me, you see, as I'm the only one except Mr. Spaythe and Boothe that knows the combination — and the cashier is sick in bed."

"Oh, Phil! I'msure your suspicion is too horrible to be true."

"Why, it's so simple that it *must* be true. Under the circumstances it is the natural thing for Eric to do. He isn't so very clever, although perhaps he thinks he has laid a deep plot to ruin me. The queer thing about it is that it's liable to succeed."

They had reached the bank now. Phil opened the side door and ushered Phoebe into the large back room where he did his work. He turned on the electric lights, pulled down the shades to all the windows and then opened the safe and got out the books. Phoebe, perched upon Eric's vacant stool, watched him thoughtfully. Her face was pale as wax and she had nervous, trembling fits that she could not control.

"I'm glad I am with you," said she, presently. "If you are accused, I can swear you did not touch the money."

Phil bent over and kissed her, but made no reply. Putting all his mind upon the books he methodically pursued his work for an hour or so, until all the entries had been made and his task finished. Then he closed the ledgers with a sigh of relief, put them away, and locked the safe.

"Who knows," he said, turning to Phœbe with a wan smile, "but that this is the last bit of work I shall do for Spaythe's Bank? If my suspicions are correct, on Monday morning the safe will be found to have been robbed, and then I must face accusations and probable disgrace."

By this time the girl had recovered most of her composure. She was still pale, but had been busily thinking during that tedious hour, trying to find some way to save her twin brother.

"Do you know exactly how much cash is in that safe now?" she asked.

“Of course, Phœbe. It is all entered upon the books, in black and white, and Mr. Spaythe has a copy of the amounts, besides.”

She looked carefully around the room. At the very back of the building, facing the safe, was one window which opened upon an unused yard at the rear. The window was just then covered with a thick shade. Phœbe took the desk shears, walked deliberately to this window, and punched two small holes in the shade.

“What on earth are you doing?” asked her brother, in amazement.

“Phil, we’re going to play we’ re detectives, you and I. Go outside, and around to this window, and find out if you can see the safe through the holes I have made. If not, I must make them larger.”

Phil obeyed, still puzzled as to her meaning. When he returned to her, he reported that the holes were about on a level with his eyes, when he stood in the back yard, and that the safe was plainly visible through the tiny openings if one stood with an eye close to the windowpane.

“Very well,” said she, nodding with satisfaction. “What time is it now?”

“Nearly ten.”

“We shall have a long wait, but we mustn’t mind that. Let us go, now.”

Phil waited until she reached the door; then he put out the lights and joined her. As they passed out he locked the door and put the key away in his pocket.

“What now?” he asked.

“Let us take a walk up the street, for a block or two,” she replied, in a whisper; and he followed her obediently. Although it was Saturday night, this part of the town was practically deserted. There was a light in the laundry office across the way and a girl stood in the door of a candy shop and nodded to the twins vacantly.

Half a block up the street was the printing office, but the lights in it went out before they reached it, and Mr. Fellows, the editor, gave the Darings a pleasant “Good night!” as they passed by while he was locking the door.

Phoebe crossed over into the next street, which was merely a lane, and turning about began to retrace her steps. Phil clung to her arm and let her lead him. Here there was no light to guide them save the dim glow of the stars. The moon would not be up for some hours yet. They had to feel their way carefully for a time, but ere long they had reached a position in the rear of the bank and entered the unused yard. From a pile of boxes dumped behind a neighboring grocery Phil brought two to serve as seats, for now he guessed Phoebe’s purpose and fully approved the venturesome undertaking.

They sat in silence for a time, their backs against the brick wall of the bank.

“How will Eric get back from Canton!” the girl inquired, musingly.

“I don’t know. He might drive over, and return the same way. Let me see; there’s another train to St. Louis that passes here at one-thirty. It doesn’t stop at Riverdale, but it does at Canton.”

“That’s it!” she exclaimed, eagerly. “That’s his plan, Phil, I’m sure. Eric will get a livery-horse at Canton, drive over here, and return in time to catch the one-thirty flyer for St. Louis. It will he due at Canton at about two o’clock, won’t it?”

“Sooner than that. The flyer will make the ten miles in fifteen minutes, easily.”

“But it will take Eric an hour and a half to drive it, in the night. That means he must get here, do what he has to do, and leave by twelve o’clock — or soon after. Why, we won’t have long to wait, after all.”

“Not if we are figuring right, Phœbe. After all, this is only guesswork on our part.”

“I’m sure we are right, Phil. As you say, the natural thing for one in Eric’s position to do is just what we expect he will do. Let us be patient, and we will soon know the truth. If nothing happens by half-past twelve, then we may go home and go to bed.”

“And rest in peace,” he added, with a light laugh that was not mirthful. “I hope that will be our fate.”

“So do I, Phil — with all my heart.”

It was a tedious wait, however, for they were keyed up to a high pitch of excitement and the minutes seemed to drag with teazing languidness. But suddenly, as they talked together in soft whispers, Phœbe glanced around toward the window and then seized Phil’s arm in a warning grasp. The back room of the bank was lighted.

The girl put her eye to one peephole and the boy looked through the other. They saw Eric standing in the room and glancing about him with fearful, yet keenly observant eyes. The inspection seemed to satisfy him, for after tying his handkerchief over the one electric light globe which he had ventured to turn on, in order to dim the strength of its rays, he went straight to the safe and began to fumble with the combination. A few moments later the heavy door swung open.

Again Eric glanced around, but could not know that two intent eyes were regarding his slightest movement. He hastily turned over the packets of bills until he found the one he desired, which he thrust into an inner pocket. Then he took a canvas sack, filled with gold, and this filled his coat pocket completely and had to be crowded in. The next moment he closed the door and set the lock.

It was all done so quickly that Phœbe found she had held her breath during the entire scene. While she panted with excitement and her heart fluttered wildly, Eric removed his handkerchief from the globe and turned off the light.

They both listened eagerly now, but so stealthy were the young man's movements that no further sound reached their ears. He must have effected his escape from the bank a long time before the twins ventured to stir.

"Phœbe," said Phil bitterly, "it is evident that I've stolen a stack of bills and a bag of gold. The fact can easily be proven against me, anyhow."

"Not yet," returned the girl, in a firm, decided tone. "Come with me, Phil."

She began to make her way around the building to the side door.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"I'm going to block Eric's wicked conspiracy and save you," she replied. "Open that door, and let us go in."

CHAPTER XVIII
A SISTER'S LOVE

Phil looked up and down the dark, deserted street. Eric had made off so quietly that not a footfall had been heard. But no one was abroad to see him, however much noise he might have made.

The back room of Spaythe's Bank was witnessing a succession of curious scenes this eventful night. Phil had opened the safe again and was counting the money. It was a long count, and must needs be accurate; but Phœbe, now cool as ice, helped him in her methodical way and it was not necessary to inspect more of the currency than the packets of bank notes and the gold.

"Whew!" whistled Phil, when the final figures had been made. "Eric wasn't at all bashful, was he? He grabbed more than three thousand dollars!"

"Three thousand, three hundred and ninety," repeated Phœbe, jotting down the exact amount on a slip of paper. "All right, Phil; that is what we wanted to know. Now, put this dreadful stuff away."

He complied. There was a queer feeling in the young fellow's chest, as if iron fingers were gripping his heart. His worst fears had been realized and he had become the innocent victim of his former friend's diabolical scheming.

As the Daring twins walked home together through the still night, arm in arm, they exchanged few words. Phil reflected that his business career was practically ruined. Here in Riverdale, his old home, he would be scorned and reviled as a common thief, and wherever he might go in the big outside world his disgrace would be sure to follow him. And what of Eric Spaythe, the false friend who had planned his downfall and would profit by it? With means to pay his debts, and so prevent his father's knowledge of his past extravagance, Eric would doubtless be more cautious in the future. In time he might become the proprietor of the bank he had to-night so cleverly robbed. As for the false entries on the books, made to cover the minor thefts that had preceded this coup, all evidence would point conclusively to Phil Daring as the culprit. That poor and struggling youth was to become the scapegoat to shield Eric Spaythe, the rich banker's son.'

Phil groaned in spirit, but believed himself to be absolutely helpless.

Phœbe, on the contrary, had recovered her cheerfulness, and as she kissed her twin good night in the hall she whispered:

"Forget about Eric, dear. There's nothing to worry about, so try to get some sleep. Now that we know the truth, and just what to expect, it will be easy to save you from this contemptible plot."

Phil clasped the girl close in his arms. It was good to feel that Phœbe, the one person he loved most in all the world, knew his innocence and believed

in him. He must be brave and face the future calmly, for her sweet sake.

In his room he looked at his watch. Two o' clock. By this time Eric was well on his way to St. Louis. Phil sighed, went to bed, and having a clear conscience was presently sound asleep.

Phœbe pleaded a headache next morning and did not go to church with the others. Phil, solemn eyed and with careworn features, accompanied Cousin Judith and the children and did his best to keep his thoughts on the sermon.

From her window Phœbe endeavored to watch the movements of old Miss Halliday, but found the woman keeping close to the room in which Gran'pa Eliot was confined. Perhaps she was engaged in her morning's work, but strangely enough the chickens had been neglected and were plainly calling for food and water.

In order to ease the nervous strain of waiting Phœbe moved softly around the rooms occupied by the Darings and removed all the keys she found in the locks. Having carried these to her room she began trying them in the lock of the door that connected old Elaine's chamber with her own. She moved carefully and silently, but to her despair none of the keys would fit. A second time she tried them, with no better success. While engaged in replacing the borrowed keys she happened to think of a big bunch of old keys hanging in the closet of the room occupied by Sue and Becky. She readily found this bunch, and with it hurried back to her chamber. One by one the keys were tried and gradually her heart sank as they proved to be too large or too small. There were now but three left on the bunch and she was crouching on her knees before the door when suddenly she heard Elaine enter the other room.

To her astonishment the woman was sobbing and muttering in the same breath, and seemed to be laboring under great excitement.

"It can't be!" Phœbe heard her say again and again. "It can't be. No, no, no! — it can't be."

Up and down she paced, and finally the girl heard her throw herself upon the bed and give way to a violent outburst of sobbing.

Phœbe dared not move. Her limbs were cramped and numb, but she sat crouching beside the door until gradually Miss Halliday became more quiet and rose from the bed.

''One thing is certain, "muttered the woman in a firmer tone." No one shall know!"

Again she paced the floor, by degrees recovering her wonted composure. The sobs and mutterings ceased. At last she left the room, and Phœbe breathed freely once more. Then the girl glanced at the bunch of keys she held. With those three that still remained untried lay her sole chance of saving Phil's honor.

The first was rusty and too big for the lock. The second turned easily, and with a sharp click the bolt flew back. Then Phœbe dropped her head in her hands and began to cry. The transition from despair to joy had been so sharp that it unnerved her; but now she was free to carry out her plans.

Wiping the tears from her eyes she sighed deeply and rose to her feet. On turning the handle of the door, very softly, she found that it would open with perfect freedom. She put her head within the room a moment — just long enough to note that Elaine had left it in perfect order — and then she closed the door again.

Would it be wiser to act at once, or to wait?

Her own anxiety and excitement had, until now, prevented her from appreciating the evident fact that something unusual had occurred in the other part of the house which the old woman regarded as serious. The housekeeper was not prone to give way to violent outbursts of grief. "It can't be!" she had exclaimed. What couldn't be? "No one shall know!" Elaine had cried. What could have happened that must be kept a secret? The girl's first thought was that in some way Elaine had been robbed of the treasure, and Phoebe's heart stood still as she contemplated that awful suggestion. But perhaps it was some personal matter not connected with Gran'pa Eliot's hidden hoard.

Going to her window she watched in vain for the housekeeper to appear in the garden; then, unable to restrain her impatience, she ran downstairs and around the corner until she came to the lane at the back. Pausing beside the big maple she looked around at the house and from her position saw Gran'pa Eliot propped up in his chair before the window, his lusterless eyes fixedly regarding the landscape spread out before him.

The window of the next room, where he slept, was open, too. Phoebe could see the housekeeper making the bed and straightening the furniture.

Presently, Elaine came to the window and stood motionless, staring across the fields as if in deep thought. Phœbe shrank back into the shade of the maple.

Now the woman left the window, emerged from the door at the head of the outside stairs, and quietly descended to the yard. Phœbe quitted her post at once and fairly flew back to the house, never pausing until she had regained her own room. Breathless from her run, she paused to peer from the window. Elaine was mixing food for her chickens.

In a moment Phœbe was in the forbidden room. She went straight to the mantel and tried to pull it outward, as she had seen Elaine do; but it refused to move. With a growing fear at her heart she examined closely the framework and finally noticed that one part of the carving was discolored

more deeply than the rest, as if with constant handling. Pressing hard against this place, Phœbe desperately dragged the mantel toward her, and this time it swung free of the wall and disclosed the secret cupboard.

Elaine had not been robbed. There were the neat piles of money, just as she had seen them from her peephole.

Phœbe hesitated a moment. She wanted a certain sum in bills, and another in gold, but it would be dangerous to count the money there. So she took several packets of bills and ran with them to her room. Returning quickly, she pushed the mantel into place and proceeded to pull up a section of the rag carpet. A small iron ring enabled her to lift the trap, and a moment later she had carried a sack of gold through the connecting doorway and dumped it upon her bed.

A swift look through the window showed that Elaine was preparing to ascend the stairs again; so Phœbe ran into the housekeeper's chamber, let down the trap and rearranged the carpet. Then she softly retreated and closed the door after her.

She breathed more freely now, but her task was not yet accomplished and the family might return from church at any moment.

Opening the packets of bills she began carefully counting them. The first lot proved of small denominations and totalled so insignificant a sum that the girl was panic-stricken for fear there would not be enough paper money for her purpose. But the next packet proved to be all fifties and one-hundreds, and less than half its bulk sufficed to make up the amount of bills that Eric had abstracted from the safe.

She counted out the gold next, and as this sack chanced to contain only pieces of twenty dollars each there was much more than she required. At the bank, while Phil was discovering the extent of Eric's theft — when the vague idea of saving him first began to dawn in her mind — Phœbe had seen a pile of canvas bags, used to contain gold, lying upon a shelf. One of these she had quietly abstracted, for on it was printed in black letters: "Spaythe's Bank of Riverdale." It was a similarly marked sack which Eric had taken, and now the girl brought out the bag, placed the proper amount of gold in it, and neatly tied it up. Then she made a package containing both the gold and the bills and after winding it securely with cord placed it in a drawer of her bureau.

This much being accomplished she breathed easier; but it was necessary to replace the surplus gold and bills in the hiding places from whence she had taken it. She felt no hesitation in employing a portion of Gran'pa Eliot's hoarded wealth to save her brother from an unjust accusation. It seemed to her quite a proper thing to do, for the family honor was at stake. Gran'pa

could never use the money, and his granddaughter was defiant of old Elaine's self imposed watch upon the treasure. Yet Phœbe would not touch a penny more than stern necessity compelled her to.

Her heart bounded and then stopped beating as the housekeeper was heard to enter the next room and renew her nervous pacing up and down — up and down. Elaine was not likely to discover her loss, just yet; only at dead of night was she accustomed to pander to her miserly instincts by counting over the money. So Phoebe took courage.

A long time the girl sat silently awaiting an opportunity to restore the balance of the treasure. Meantime, she wondered again what had come over the usually methodical, self-possessed housekeeper to make her act in so queer a manner. No doubt some important event had occurred in her life; but what could it be?

A chorus of merry voices announced the return of Cousin Judith with her brothers and sisters. She hesitated, half expecting Elaine would now leave her room, but the woman wholly disregarded the Darings and continued her monotonous pacing. So Phœbe concealed the money under her pillows and noiselessly quitting the room went down to meet the family.

The sense of triumph now experienced by the girl made her regard Phil's gloomy looks with complacency, if not with cheerfulness. She bustled about, helping Auntie to set the table for dinner and listening to the chatter of the children, and all the time the warm glow in her heart was reflected in her sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks.

Phil looked at his sister astonished and somewhat reproachful. Her glad laughter and flippant remarks made him feel that his twin was forgetting the terrible fate that menaced him. Over the boy's devoted head hung a veritable Sword of Damocles, and it was destined to fall as soon as the bank was opened Monday morning. Yet here was Phœbe, merry and eager, joking with Becky and Don as she flitted through the rooms, and seemingly as unconscious of trouble as a dancing sunbeam.

Judith, a little surprised at the girl's high spirits, kissed her affectionately as she came in to dinner. She thought Phœbe had never looked more lovely than she did to-day. Phil remarked that fact, too. "The Belle of Riverdale," as she was often called, was really a beautiful girl; yet, those who knew Phœbe best recognized the fact that her chief charm lay not in her fascinating smile, her dainty complexion, nor her magnificent eyes, but in the kindly, sympathetic heart that had never yet failed to respond to the demands of friendship.

After dinner they were all seated on the front lawn in the shade of the big oaks, when Phœbe noticed old Elaine standing motionless in the back yard,

grimly watching the group. The girl seized the opportunity to run to her room, grab the money from beneath her pillows and replace the bills in the cupboard back of the mantel and the remainder of the gold beneath the trap in the floor. She acted with breathless haste, not knowing how much time would be allowed her; but she soon found there was no need of hurry. Returning to the lawn she saw that Cousin Judith had gone to the housekeeper and was engaging Elaine in conversation.

"My uncle is better, you say?" asked Miss Eliot.

"I did not say that," retorted the woman. "I merely stated that he suffers no pain."

"Is his mind still befogged, as when I last saw him?" continued Judith.

"His mind has never been befogged," said Elaine, with unnecessary anger. "You will find he is clear-headed enough to defend himself from annoyances, if intruded upon."

Judith sighed. This creature was absolutely impossible to conciliate. She turned away without further remark and preferred not to see the half sneering, half triumphant leer on Elaine's pinched features. Phœbe put her arms around the Little Mother and said:

"Never mind, dear. She's old and unreasonable; but she takes good care of gran'pa, so we needn't mind her uncivil ways."

"Koots! I'm half afraid of her," remarked Becky, making a face at the thin figure of the housekeeper.

"I'mnot," declared Phœbe, laughing at the recollection of her late audacity. "Miss Halliday is nothing more than a favored servant, who has forgotten her proper place. There's nothing fearsome about her, I'msure."

Toward evening the girl's high spirits began to falter and she wandered about the house in an uneasy mood. Perhaps Phil's dismal looks — for he could not force his countenance to seem pleasant while his heart was breaking — had something to do with his twin's growing depression. Even Sue accused Phœbe of being cross when she sent her small sister to bed somewhat earlier than usual.

When all the household had retired except the twins and Judith, they sat on the porch conversing until Miss Eliot noticed for the first time an air of restraint that was unusual. Fearing she might herself be responsible for this she pleaded some letters to be written as an excuse to go to her room, and bade them good night.

"Cheer up, dear," said Phœbe, when their cousin had gone in. "Didn't I promise to save you?"

"Yes; but you can't do that, little sister. No one can save me."

"There is one way," announced the girl, decidedly.

Phil sat thinking.

“Yes,” he said; “if Eric would confess, that would end it all. Do you imagine he will?”

“No, indeed.”

“Nor I. I have thought of everything; but the snare is too strong to be broken.”

Phœbe did not reply at once. She sat looking out into the night, lost in thought. Presently she roused herself and whispered:

“Phil, will you take a little walk with me?”

“I don’t mind. I’m not liable to sleep much tonight, so there’s little use in going to bed.”

“Wait for me a moment” she said.

Phil waited. She soon returned with a bulky newspaper packet partly concealed beneath her cloak.

Together they strolled down the street toward the town. It was after ten o’ clock, and on Sunday evening Riverdale was like a deserted village.

“We’re getting to be regular night owls, aren’t we?” asked Phœbe, with a nervous tremor in her voice.

“Yes, indeed. But why are we prowling around town to-night? Wouldn’t it be more pleasant to walk in the lanes?”

“We’re going to the bank,” said the girl.

Phil stopped short to look at her, but the overhanging branches of a tree hid her face. With a sigh he walked on, deciding to let her have her way. But he could think of no good reason for this absurd whim.

When they reached the bank Phœbe said:

“We will go in, Phil. Unlock the door.”

Mechanically he obeyed. Dully he wondered what she was going to do. But it did not matter, and he would soon know.

“Now,” continued the girl, when they were inside, “open the safe.”

“Why, Phœbe!” he gasped, glancing at her fearfully. “You’ re not going to — ”

“No; I’m not going to rob Mr. Spaythe. Open the safe, Phil — quick!”

He leaned over and set the combination. Then slowly the heavy door swung open.

Phœbe breathed a sigh of relief. Hastily unwrapping her bundle she placed a bag of gold on one shelf and a thick packet of bank bills on another — in just the places from whence Eric had abstracted the money the night before.

“All right, dear; you may lock the safe now.”

Phil was bewildered. His eyes roamed from his sister’s smiling face to the safe, and back again.

“Wha — what have you done?” he stammered.

“I’ve restored the missing cash. Lock the safe, Phil, before it’s robbed again.”

“Phœbe!”

“Don’t look so wild, dear. Can’t you understand you are saved — that there will be no exposure of a theft to-morrow morning? Lock the safe, and let us go home.”

He could not realize it, even yet. Still dazed and wondering he locked the safe and followed Phœbe into the street. They were halfway home before he asked:

“Where did you find Erie?”

“I haven’t seen Eric,” she replied.

“Then where did the money come from?”

“It’s my secret, Phil; you mustn’t ask.”

“But I must know, Phœbe. Why, it’s — it’s amazing!”

“Seems so, doesn’t it?”

“It’s impossible! Three thousand — ”

“ — Three hundred and ninety dollars,” she interrupted, with a laugh. “It’s all there, dear; all back in the safe.”

“It’s a fortune! Where did you get it?” he persisted.

“Now, Phil, I’ve forbidden you to ask questions, and I mean it,” she declared, very seriously. “It is a secret which I can’t reveal. Not now, anyway.”

“Did Cousin Judith — ”

“It’s no use, dear; I won’t tell.”

He strode along in silence, wondering if it were really true. They were dreadfully poor, he knew, and Cousin Judith’s money was tied up in an annuity. Where could Phœbe obtain three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars in currency? — and on Sunday, too! Suddenly a thought caused him to start.

“You haven’t borrowed it of the Randolphs?” he demanded in a horrified tone.

The suggestion made Phœbe laugh again.

“Guess away!” she said, lightly.

“We would never be able to repay such a loan — not for years and years, if at all,” he said miserably.

“That need not worry you,” she observed. “Why don’t you give it up, Phil? Be content until the time comes when I can tell you everything. It’s the best way. Can’t you trust me — Phœbe — your twin?”

He caught her in his arms and kissed her tenderly, while the first sense of

freedom he had experienced since the robbery swept over him.

“Trust you? Of course I can, my darling!” he said.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR

Phil had a restless night; but he slept a little, nevertheless. His chief source of worry had been removed by his sister's mysterious action, yet the wonderment of it all remained, carrying with it an intense excitement whenever he thought of the probable outcome of this strange adventure.

On Monday morning he was up bright and early, anxiously awaiting the time to go to work. Phœbe, looking at him with wistful eyes, kissed her brother good-by and said:

"Good luck, Phil. Whatever happens, remember that I, and all who love you, will stand by you to the end."

But nothing exceptional happened at the bank.

Mr. Boothe, looking a little more pale and worn than usual, arrived at the same time Phil did, and while he was carrying the cash from the safe to his cage, preparatory to counting it, Eric sauntered in and took his seat at the desk.

He gave his fellow clerk a brief nod and looked curiously at Mr. Boothe. Said Phil, attempting to be cordial:

"Back from St. Louis already, Eric?"

"Yes."

"How did you find Ned Thurber?"

"Oh, Ned's all right."

"When did you get home?"

"Six, this morning."

Usually talkative, Eric seemed determined to be chary of speech on this occasion; but perhaps he was absorbed in watching Boothe count the money, for he never took his eyes off the cashier.

In his usual careful, painstaking manner, Boothe first counted the checks, drafts, and other notes of exchange, checking them off on the tally sheet beside him. Then he began on the currency. As packet after packet of the bank bills was counted and laid aside Eric grew nervous and his breath came in short gasps. He pretended to be bending over his books, but Phil saw the exhibition of nervous fear and was not without a share of excitement himself.

Check!

Eric grew pale and then red. He was astounded. Mr. Boothe rapidly counted the gold contained in the four sacks — positively, there were four, Eric noted with dismay, and there should have been but three. He saw the cashier pick up his pencil, glance at the tally sheet and check the amount as correct.

Eric swayed and almost fell from his stool. Great beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

“Everything seems to check up all right,” called the cashier from his cage, speaking in a calm voice. “You Ve kept things pretty straight, Eric.”

“Good; very good!” cried a deep voice, and the two clerks were for the first time aware that Mr. Spaythe stood in the open door of his office watching the scene.

“Seems as if you could almost get on without me, sir,” said the cashier, apologetically.

“No,” answered the banker, “your absence caused us all a lot of extra work and worry — especially Phil.’’ He came around to young Daring’s side, put on his glasses and began a calm but thorough examination of the ledgers.” Feeling better this morning, Mr. Boothe?” he asked, without looking at the man.

“Quite myself again, sir.”

Phil stood aside, for it was evident Mr. Spaythe wished to carefully compare the books. Daring had been obliged to make entries in both his own set and Eric’s during the past few days; but there was little to criticise, he felt, and he welcomed the examination.

Meantime Erie sat as if turned to stone, pale and red by turns, the perspiration oozing from every pore. His eyes, as they fell upon his father, were full of terror; when he looked at Phil it was with suspicion and fear combined. For a moment’s thought had convinced Eric that his theft had been discovered. How, or in what way, he had not the faintest idea. Until now, he had confidently believed he had covered up every trace of the crime with supreme cleverness. Yet in his brief absence someone had detected the robbery and replaced the money in the safe so that Mr. Boothe would find the bank’s accounts correct.

There was only one person able to do this — his father. For it was not to be supposed for an instant that Phil Daring, or any of his friends, could raise so large a sum without recourse to the bank itself.

Then came the thought that if Mr. Spaythe was aware of his son’s embezzlement, someone had betrayed Eric to him. The traitor could be none other than Phil Daring, the one he had naturally expected would be accused of the crime.

Hardly knowing which way to turn or what to do or say, reading condemnation in every face and fearing exposure at any moment, Eric Spaythe was indeed in a pitiable plight. Why was his father inspecting the books so carefully? It could not be that he mistrusted Phil. Was he then looking for those former defalcations of which his son had been guilty? Eric

had intended to accuse Phil of those things, when the logical time came. Perhaps Phil knew that, and had saved himself by denouncing Eric.

There was nothing to be learned from Daring's face. It was grave and serene, as if he had the situation well in hand. Mr. Spaythe seemed stern and vigilant, his practised eye running up and down the entries, observing every item with intelligent care. Boothe was imperturbable as ever and paid no attention to the group in the back room.

Eric writhed on his stool and kept silent. He was fully prepared for the impending denunciation and intended to deny everything and stick to the lie to the last. But no denunciation came.

Mr. Spaythe finished his examination and then turned to Phil with a satisfied nod.

"Daring," said he, "you have done well — very well indeed, considering your brief experience. I believe you are destined to prove of considerable future value to this bank, and hereafter your salary will be fifteen dollars a week."

Without a word or a look toward his son he re-entered his office and closed the door. He was still angry with Eric for foolishly making that long and expensive trip to St. Louis for a day's stay, and moreover he resented the unkind insinuations his son had made about young Daring's honesty. But Eric attributed his father's displeasure to entirely different causes.

Phil resumed his work, paying no attention to his companion. Eric waited for a while for him to speak, and then grew savage.

"Think you've caught me at it, I suppose!" he growned, with reckless disregard of the fact that he had betrayed himself. The restoration of the money was evidence enough that the cat was out of the bag.

"You are caught, Eric," was the quiet answer. "There is no need for me to assure you of that."

Eric glared.

"Where's the proof?" he demanded, uneasily.

Phil looked up with a smile.

"Has it never occurred to you that money may be marked, and also a record kept of the numbers of bank notes?"

"Oh, that was it, was it?" returned the other, plainly discomfited by the suggestion, which had been hazarded merely to tease him. "Then you've been trying to trap me for a long time, it seems. Grateful return for my getting you the job here, isn't it?"

"I haven't trapped you at all, Eric. The fault is your own from beginning to end," said Phil, seriously.

Eric walked to the window and stood looking ont. He was trying to

understand why his father had not frankly accused him of stealing the money. The banker's reticence was vastly more terrifying to the boy than prompt exposure and denunciation would have been. Perhaps he had hesitated to let the world know that his only son was a thief. Yes; that must be the explanation. Therefore, Eric was destined to receive his scourging in the private office, and he experienced a distinct sense of relief at this thought, for he could stand any paternal tongue-lashing if his disgrace was but kept from the knowledge of his fellows. Eric's disgrace would mean to an extent his father's disgrace. Come to think of it, he had no great cause to worry, in any event. His protection lay in his father's regard for his own good name.

Following this clue, Eric decided that Phil Daring's raise of salary was merely a bribe not to expose the secret. But the culprit's momentary satisfaction in this solution of the problem was promptly dampened when he remembered another of Mr. Spaythe's characteristics — to let no fault go unpunished. He well knew his father's stern nature, and shuddered a little as he wondered what punishment would be decreed for so grave an offense.

"What's the program, Phil?" he inquired, coming back to the desk.

"I don't know."

"Not in the gov'nor's confidence, eh?"

"Not entirely, I imagine."

Eric stared at him thoughtfully. Strangely enough, Daring had not reproached him or gloated over his downfall. Daring had always been a very decent fellow. Perhaps he would prove a friend, even yet. Eric's attitude changed from one of defiance to that of entreaty.

"We've always been pretty good chums, Phil," he said, in a hesitating tone. "Tell me what to do, there's a good fellow."

Phil reflected.

"You might help yourself in one way," he suggested.

"What is it?"

"Have you any of that money left?"

Eric nodded, trying to read the other's solemn face.

"Then I advise you to fix up those little irregularities in the books."

"What irregularities?"

"That check of Mrs. Randolph's, for instance. It will be sent to her the first of the month, and she will claim it's a forgery. Then, there's that deposit of Martin's, and several other little things. It would be policy for you to straighten out those tangles at once, Eric, before you are made to do it."

Eric pondered a while, then drew a sheet of paper toward him and began to figure. He seemed pleased with the results and at once set to work to correct the books. It took him until noon to finish his task, for he had

undertaken a delicate matter, and some transactions were difficult to cover up or gloss over.

While Mr. Boothe was at dinner Eric took occasion to make the cash straight, in such a way that it would not arouse the cashier's suspicion. Phil took no part in the matter and let Eric make restitution in his own way.

"I've made good, Phil," the young culprit whispered, eagerly. "Every customer's account is now as square as a die, as far as I know, and I've charged my own account with some of the withdrawals and credited it with the money I've just turned over to the bank."

"I'm glad of that," said Phil, greatly relieved. But he spoke coldly, for he knew the banker's son had acted only from fear, and not because it was the right thing to do. Involuntarily, however, Eric had saved Phil Daring from the possibility of being accused of those dangerous defalcations.

During the afternoon Eric glanced continually at the door of his father's office, expecting any moment a summons into that stern presence. The strain upon his nerves was terrible, and Phil knew that he was already beginning to suffer punishment. At one time Eric asked anxiously:

"What ought I to do with the rest of the money, Phil?"

"I don't know,' was the reply; for Phil thought of Phœbe and her secret and was unable to advise Eric because he had no idea where the money had come from that his sister had put in the safe.

CHAPTER XX
ACCUSED

Phœbe had been watching impatiently for her brother's return and ran to meet him. He told her of the scene at the bank — of Eric's astonishment and terror, and how Mr. Spaythe had raised Phil's salary quite materially. Then he related the manner in which he had worked upon the culprit's fears and induced him to apply a part of the stolen money to replacing his former embezzlements, thus saving Phil from the possibilities of future complications.

Tears stood in Phœbe's eyes as she murmured:" I'mso glad. Oh, I'm so glad!"

"But the greatest mystery is not yet cleared up," said her brother. "I'mas much as ever in the dark concerning your own share in this puzzling affair. Phœbe, where did that money come from?"

She shook her head, smiling through her tears, and accompanied him to dinner. But afterward, when Phil had gone back to work, the girl sat in her room facing the consequences of her act. Con-

science stirred at last and gained control of her and its vivid accusations made her cringe. Her dearly beloved brother, her twin, had been saved from impending disgrace, but in saving him Phœbe had herself been guilty of a theft equal to that of Eric Spaythe. She had robbed her grandfather in exactly the same way that he had robbed his father, and if Eric had earned such bitter condemnation, Phœbe could not expect to escape censure. True, their motives were different. Eric stole for selfish reasons; Phœbe, to save her twin from unmerited obloquy.

Searching her heart with candid inquiry, she wondered if she were really guilty of a crime. Civil laws might condemn her, but would not the great moral laws of humanity uphold her for what she had done?

"I'm not wicked, I know," she told herself, positively. "I have wronged no one by my act. There is more than enough of Gran'pa Eliot's hoard remaining to last him during his brief lifetime. And what better use could a share of that idle money be put to than saving his grandson from humiliation and shame?"

But, Phœbe's obdurate conscience was not to be appeased by such sophistry as this. "What right had you to take that money? — what right had you?" the small voice constantly asked, and at last she grew distressed by the vague, yet persistent fear that she had done an evil deed that good might come of it. Was that a sufficient excuse? she asked herself, and feared it was not.

“But, I’ d do it again!” she declared, pressing her lips firmly together as she thought of Phil. “I ‘d do it again this moment, if it were necessary.”

While the girl thus fought with an accusing conscience she heard Elaine come into her room. At once the spirit of antagonism toward this dragon, who guarded Gran’pa Eliot’s treasure, hardened her into a belief that she was fully justified in what she had done.

Drawing her darning basket toward her she began mending some of the family stockings, and ‘from her seat by the window listened to the sounds made by the old housekeeper, as she moved about in the next room.

Suddenly there was a sharp cry, followed by a fall. Phœbe was startled for a moment. Then she realized it was not Elaine who had fallen, but that the trap door in the floor had been carelessly dropped into place. Her heart beat a little faster then, but she kept her seat and even attempted to thread a needle. Her alert ears heard Elaine run to the mantel. There was a long pause; then a wailing cry of distress.

Phœbe smiled grimly and went on with her work. The discovery had come a little sooner than she had expected. What curious whim could have urged Elaine to examine the treasure now, in the middle of the afternoon? She had never done this before, reflected Phœbe.

In the adjoining room a dead silence prevailed. “She’s counting,” mused the girl. “She’s trying to find out how much is gone, and who took it. Perhaps she’ll lay it to ghosts. Anyhow, she won’t have the slightest idea that I know her secret.”

Then something happened that gave her a shock. Without warning the handle of the connecting door turned and the next moment Elaine stood on the threshold confronting her.

The woman’s face was dark and contorted with rage. She clasped and unclasped her talon-like fingers spasmodically, as if longing to take the girl by the throat and strangle her then and there.

Phœbe glanced at her, frowned, and calmly bit off her thread of darning cotton.

“What are you doing in this room, Miss Halliday?” she asked, not even a tremor in her voice.

For a moment Elaine was daunted. Then she recovered, and advancing a pace toward Phœbe cried in tones of concentrated fury:

“I want my money!”

“Do I owe you anything?” was the stern demand.

The woman’s glaring eyes were fixed upon Phœbe’s upturned face, trying to read her inmost thoughts. The girl dropped her lashes a bit, examining her

work, and a slight flush stole into her cheeks in spite of her efforts to appear composed. In a flash the woman detected these signs, and her confidence was instantly restored.

"You can't fool me, Phœbe Daring!" she exclaimed harshly. "You unlocked that door — the door I had forbidden you to open."

"Miss Halliday! you forget yourself. My grandfather's servant has no right to dictate in this house," said the girl, haughtily.

Elaine gave a short laugh, full of venom and disdain.

"Servant, eh?" she retorted. "And whose house do you suppose this is?"

The challenge roused Phœbe to anger and swept away the last vestige of her composure.

"It belongs to Jonathan Eliot, my grandfather; and everything in it — money and all — belongs to him!" she asserted with pride. "As for you, Elaine Halliday, we have submitted to your insufferable insolence long enough — but only because you understood gran'pa, and were good to him, were you allowed to remain. Your temper and your airs have become unbearable, however, and we will at once secure another servant to take your place."

The housekeeper stared at her as if she could not believe the evidence of her own ears. Then she laughed — a hard, cackling laugh that was horrible to hear.

"I'll not be turned out, my girl," she said scornfully; "but you Darings will get out of here, neck and crop, or I'll call in the law to help me."

"The law, Elaine?"

"Yes; the law! This house is mine. It does not belong to Jonathan Eliot. And all its contents are mine, deeded to me in black and white as the reward of my faithful services. The money you have stolen, thief that you are, is mine, too, and unless you return every penny of it you'll go to jail, Phœbe Daring."

It was Phœbe's turn to stare. Could the woman be speaking the truth?

"Where is the proof of your statement?" she asked.

Without a word Elaine turned and reentered her room. A few minutes later she came back with a paper — a dreadful, legal-looking document — which she unfolded and held before Phœbe's face for her to read, grasping it tightly the while and prepared to snatch it away if the girl made any movement to secure it.

Phœbe, frightened and horrified, made an effort to read the writing. It was not very distinct, but seemed to state in legal jargon that Jonathan Eliot, being of sound mind and owing no person a debt of any sort, did of his own free will and accord give and transfer to Elaine Halliday all his worldly

possessions, including his residence in Riverdale and all its contents of whatsoever kind or description, in return for faithful service rendered him and duly acknowledged.

"Have you read it?" asked the woman, hoarsely.

"I — I think so!" gasped Phœbe.

"Look at the signature."

Phœbe looked. The paper was signed "Jonathan Eliot" in a crabbed, stiff hand. She could not tell whether it was her grandfather's writing or not; she was not familiar with it. But, the dreadful truth was forced upon her at last, and Elaine's scornful assurance was fully explained. She owned the house; she owned that secret hoard. Phœbe had not stolen from her grandfather, as she had supposed, but from Elaine Halliday!

The old woman noted her blanched cheeks and smiled with ruthless joy. Carefully refolding the paper she said:

"I've been robbed, and by you. There's no use denying it, for I've got proof in that unlocked door. But I don't care to send you to prison. I'd rather get my money back."

"I haven't it," murmured Phœbe, staring fearfully into the other's pitiless face.

Elaine scowled and shrugged her shoulders.

"That's all nonsense, girl! Give it up," she advised.

"I can't; I haven't it."

"You're lying. You took the money yesterday. You can't have spent it already. Give it up!"

Phœbe was silent. She sat staring helplessly at her tormentor.

"A liar and a thief! You'll spend your life in prison for this, Phœbe Daring, unless you come to your senses and return my money."

Phœbe answered not a word. There was nothing to be said. Elaine waited impatiently. Don was calling loudly for Phœbe from some of the lower rooms. Perhaps he would come here in a few minutes.

"See here," said the housekeeper, suddenly, "I'll give you till to-morrow — at noon — to bring me that money. Unless I get it — every penny, mind you — I'll send the constable for you and have you arrested and jailed."

With this threat she walked into her own room, closing and securing the door after her. Phœbe sat in a stupor. Her mind refused to dwell upon this amazing discovery. She was glad Don had ceased calling to her and vaguely wondered what he had wanted. The stockings must be darned; but really there was no hurry about it; they would not be needed for a day or two.

A sharp blow upon the door startled her out of this rambling reverie. Elaine was driving nails. Viciously she pounded them into the door with her

hammer, utterly regardless of the certainty of disturbing Gran ‘pa Eliot. She intended to assure herself that Phœbe would be unable to get at the hidden treasure again.

And now the full horror of the situation burst upon the girl’s mental vision, making her cringe and wince as if in bodily pain. Jail! Jail for helping Phil! Well, it was far better that she should suffer than her twin — a boy whose honor was all in all to him. She would try to be brave and pay the penalty for Phil’s salvation unflinchingly.

For a while the poor girl sat cowering in the depths of despair. What could she do? where could she turn for help? Then a sudden thought came to her like an inspiration. Judge Ferguson had once made her promise to come to him if she was in any trouble. Of course. Judge Ferguson was her father’s old friend. She would see him at once, and perhaps he would be able to advise her in this grave emergency.

CHAPTER XXI

SHIFTING THE BURDEN

Watching her opportunity Phœbe slipped out of the house unseen and hastened down town to Lawyer Ferguson's office. The old man was just putting on his hat to go out when the girl's anxious, pleading face confronted him.

"Are you busy, sir?" she asked, with hesitation.

"Very, my dear. I'm due at an important meeting within five minutes."

Phœbe's face fell.

"Anything wrong?" inquired the lawyer in a kindly tone. Phœbe was one of his favorites.

"Oh, a great deal is wrong, sir!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "I'm in great distress, and I've — - I've come to you — for help."

Judge Ferguson hung his hat on the peg again and went to the door of an inner room.

"Toby!" he called.

"Yes, sir."

Toby Clark appeared: a frowsy-headed, much freckled youth who served as the lawyer's clerk. He nodded to Phœbe and looked inquiringly at his master.

"Go to Mr. Wells at the insurance office and tell him I cannot attend the meeting to-day. Have it postponed until to-morrow,''said the judge.

"Yes, sir."

"And, Toby, when you return stand guard over the private room and see that I'm not disturbed."

"Yes, sir."

The youth vanished instantly and with a courteous gesture Mr. Ferguson motioned Phœbe to enter his sanctum. Evidently, he had shrewdly read her face and knew that something very unusual had happened to his ward.

"Now, then, explain yourself, my dear," he said when they were seated.

Phœbe looked earnestly into the kind old face.

"I want to make a full confession of everything," she began. "I want you to understand me, and — and know just as much as I do."

"That is a wise resolve, when you are dealing with a lawyer," he responded, smiling at her anxious look.

So she first told him of how she had discovered old Miss Halliday counting the secret hoard, and of her reasons for keeping the knowledge to herself. Next, she related Phil's experiences at the bank, his suspicions of Eric and the midnight adventure when together the twins watched the

banker's son robbing the safe. All the details of Eric's plan to implicate Phil had been carefully treasured in the girl's memory, and she now related them simply, but convincingly, to the lawyer.

It was more difficult to confess the rest, but Phœbe did not falter nor spare herself. A way to save Phil had been suggested to her by the discovery of her grandfather's hoarded money — for she naturally supposed it was his. Her description of the manner in which she had secured exactly the same amount Eric had taken was dramatic enough to hold her listener spellbound, and he even smiled when she related Eric's confusion at finding the money restored, and how he had eagerly made restitution of the minor sums he had embezzled by "fixing" the books.

Perhaps Judge Ferguson had never been so astonished and startled in all his long experience as he was by Phœbe's story. The thing that really amazed him was Jonathan Eliot's secret store of money. He had not been without suspicion that the old man had grown miserly, but so cleverly had the treasure been concealed that when Mr. Ferguson searched the house — under the cunning guidance of Elaine, of course — he had found nothing at all to justify that suspicion.

When, in conclusion, Phœbe told of her late interview with the old housekeeper and recited as well as she could remember the terms of the deed of gift from Mr. Eliot to Elaine Halliday, Judge Ferguson became visibly excited.

"Was it really your grandfather's signature?" he inquired.

"I cannot say, sir, for I have seldom seen his signature," she replied.

"Were the names of any witnesses affixed to the document?"

"I did not notice any."

"H-m. What then?"

"Then she threatened to put me in prison unless I returned the money, and of course I cannot do that," said Phœbe, plaintively. "She has given me until to-morrow noon, and then I must go to jail."

The lawyer sat for some time staring at a penholder which he tried to balance upon his middle finger. He was very intent upon this matter until a long-drawn sigh from Phœbe aroused him. Then he leaned back in his chair, thrust his hands deep in his pockets and bobbed his head at her reassuringly.

"We'll not let you go to jail, Phœbe," he asserted, in a tone that carried conviction.

"But I — I've stolen her money!" she moaned.

"I don't believe it. I know Jonathan Eliot. And I've known other misers before him. Not one of them would ever give up a dollar of their beloved accumulation as long as a spark of life remained in their bodies — your

grandfather, least of all. And to his housekeeper! Why should he resign it to her, I ‘d like to know?”

“She seems to have a powerful influence over him, “remarked Phoebe, thoughtfully.” She alone is able to communicate with him now, or make him understand. She alone cares for him while he is helpless as a baby, and he depends upon her promise to see that his body is finally laid in the queer tomb he once built. Perhaps she obliged him to give her everything, by threatening to leave him to die alone.”

“Don’t believe a word of it, my dear!” exclaimed the lawyer, pounding his fist on the table for emphasis. “If Jonathan Eliot is clear-headed enough to dictate that deed of gift, or to sign it, he is still shrewd enough not to part with his money. Deeds of gift executed under compulsion are illegal, too. But I believe this paper to be nothing more than a rank forgery.”

Phoebe stared at him with wide open eyes.

“You do, sir?”

“I certainly do. Elaine is bluffing, and the bluff might succeed if she had only a girl like you to deal with. You were quite right to come to me, Phoebe. I’ll agree to settle this controversy with Elaine.”

“How?” she asked, feeling much encouraged by his confident tone.

“H-m. I cannot say, as yet. I must have time to think. Why, it’s five o’clock,” looking at his watch. “Sit still! Don’t be in a hurry. Let’s figure a little; let’s — figure.”

He was balancing the penholder again. Phœbe watched him with dreamy curiosity. It was a distinct relief to shift the burden to other shoulders.

After a while she said softly:

“Do you think I’ve been so — so *very* wicked, Judge?”

Slowly he rose from his chair, came over to her and kissed her cheek.

“*Very* wicked, Phœbe. All good, true women may be just as wicked, to help those they love. God bless’ em!”

He turned away to face an old print of Abraham Lincoln that hung on the wall, and seemed to study it intently.

“How is your grandfather’s health, lately?” he abruptly inquired.

“I saw him through the window yesterday. He seemed the same as usual.”

“A live carcass. An active mind in a dead body. If Elaine can rouse that mind, can communicate with him, others may do the same.”

He seemed to be speaking to himself. Phœbe sat quietly and did not interrupt his thoughts.

“So you counted the gold with Elaine. Are you sure of the sums you mentioned? Could you see clearly through that peephole?”

“I may have made a mistake, of course,” she answered. “But I am almost

sure I counted right."

"You took three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars?"

"Yes, sir. Fifteen hundred in gold and eighteen hundred and ninety, in bills."

"H-m. H — m — ! We must return that money, Phoebe."

"Return it! Why, how can I, Judge?"

"You can't, my dear; but I can. Let's see. She has given you until to-morrow noon — All right."

Phœbe drew a long breath.

"Meet me here at ten o'clock in the morning," he added.

"Very well, sir."

She started to rise, but he motioned her to retain her seat.

"Can you give up your room for to-night, Phœbe — perhaps for a couple of nights?"

"Why, I think so," she said, astonished. "Perhaps I can sleep with Cousin Judith; but — "

"We're going to play a little game, Phœbe; but, in order to win we must keep our secret. Tell no one at home the story you have told me. Keep away from Elaine for to-night. Perhaps you' d better come over to our house and stay with Janet — Yes; do that. It will lull suspicion."

"Are you intending to use my room, yourself?" inquired Phœbe.

"No. I want to put a detective there. I'm almost sure there will be something to see through that peephole to-night."

"A detective!"

"A private detective; meaning Toby Clark."

Phœbe stared at him. She had never imagined Toby could be a detective.

"And now," continued the lawyer, briskly, "it's all settled, cut and dried. You may go home to supper without a single worry. I'll send Janet after you with an invitation to spend the night at our house, and Toby will take your place at home. You've given me proof that you' re not a bad conspirator, Phœbe, so I depend upon your wit to get Toby into your room unobserved."

"I'll try, sir," she said.

"Don't fret, my dear. We've got everything planned, now, and you have nothing further to fear from this strange complication."

She could not quite understand how that might be. Whatever plans Judge Ferguson had evolved he kept closely guarded in his own bosom. But Phœbe knew she might trust him, and carried away with her a much lighter heart than the one she had brought to the lawyer's office.

When she had gone Mr. Ferguson called Toby Clark into his private room and talked with the young man long and earnestly.

Toby was considered one of the Riverdale “characters.” He had been born in a shanty on the bank of the river, where his father had been a fisherman and his mother had helped to eke out their simple livelihood by washing for the ladies in the village. Both had died when Toby was a small boy, and for a time he did odd jobs for the storekeepers and managed in some way to keep body and soul together. He was a little fellow, even now, when he was nineteen years old. His unruly hair was a mop of tow color, and his form was not very sightly because his hands and feet seemed overgrown. Out of his whimsical, freckled face peered a pair of small, twinkling eyes, so good-humored in their expression that the boy was a general favorite. But he never had much to say for himself, although he was a keen observer and listened intently to the conversation of others.

Some years ago Judge Ferguson had taken Toby Clark into his employ, recognizing a shrewd wit and exceptional intelligence hidden beneath his unprepossessing exterior. At first, the boy went to school and took care of the judge’s furnace in winter, and his lawn and flower beds in summer. Then he was taken into the office, where he was now studying law. No one had really understood Toby except the old lawyer, and the youth was grateful and wholly devoted to his patron.

In this interview the judge told Toby exactly what he was expected to do after Phœbe had secretly introduced him into the Daring household. The entire situation was explained to him with such clearness that the amateur detective had no difficulty in understanding what was required of him.

He asked no questions, but nodded his head to show that he comprehended the situation.

“Above all,” was the final injunction, “do not lose sight of Miss Halliday. Stick to her like a burr, whatever happens; but do not let her know you are watching her. Is it all clear to you, Toby?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then run along, and be prepared to meet Phœbe at the house when Janet calls for her.”

CHAPTER XXII
MARION'S GHOST STORY

When Janet Ferguson arrived at the Eliot homestead that evening she was greeted by enthusiastic shouts from the younger Darings, with whom she was a great favorite. They surrounded her in a group before she could reach the house, while Phil came across the lawn to meet her and shake hands cordially.

Phœbe, glancing sharply around, saw Toby Clark leaning against a column of the dining room porch, where he was half hidden by the vines.

"Come!" she whispered, and led the way into the house. Halfway up the stairs she paused to look back, not hearing his footsteps; but he was so close behind that he startled her and soon she had ushered him into her own little room.

"Lock the door behind you," said she,"and pay no attention if anyone knocks or tries to get in."

Toby merely nodded as he shut himself in. Phœbe hurried down to join Janet, carrying a little handbag that contained the things she needed for the night.

"Why, Phœbe! where are you going?" asked Sue, seeing the bag. "To stay with Janet. Where is Cousin Judith?"

"Over at the Randolphs."

"Then let us go that way," said Phœbe to Janet. "I must tell her my plans, for otherwise the Little Mother might worry." Passing close to Phil she whispered: "Is everything all right?"

"Everything is right so far," he replied. "But how is it with you, and why are you going away to-night?"

"Just for a little excitement," she laughed. "You seem nervous and excited, now," said her brother, looking at her closely. "Anything new turned up to annoy you, Phœbe?"

"I'm quite contented to-night, Phil, dear." And then she ran away before he could question her, further.

They met Cousin Judith just leaving the Randolph's house, and Marion was with her. Miss Eliot at once approved Phœbe's plan to stay with Janet for the night. She thought the girl had seemed unnerved and ill at ease lately and believed the change of environment would do her good.

When Judith had bade them good night and started across the street to rejoin her flock, Marion said:

"I'll walk with you a little way, if you don't mind. It's such a lovely evening, and I've a mystery to disclose, besides."

“A mystery — oh, Marion!” exclaimed Janet.

“Why are you so astonished?” asked Marion, as the three girls locked arms and sauntered up the street.

“Because I cannot imagine a mystery connected with such a very practical person as yourself,” returned Janet.

“Tell us what it is,” urged Phœbe, “for then it will remain a mystery no longer.”

“Oh, yes it will,” declared Marion, rather soberly. “I’ve no solution to offer. All I can do is tell you what I saw, and allow you to solve the mystery yourselves.”

“What did you see, then?” inquired Janet, curiously.

“A ghost.”

“A ghost! Why, Marion!”

“Of course, my dears, there is no such thing as a ghost, although, as I say, I saw it plainly. Otherwise I should have called it an’ apparition’ instead of a ‘mystery’.”

“To be sure.”

“But if I saw a ghost, and ghosts are impossible, then I am in touch with a mystery,” she continued. “Do you follow my logic, girls?”

Janet gave a careless laugh.

“I thought at first you were in earnest,” she said.

But Phœbe had lived in romance during the past few days and no element of mystery now seemed absurd to her. Indeed, she began to feel slightly uneasy, without knowing why.

“Where did you see your ghost, Marion?” she asked.

“In its proper place — the graveyard.”

“Oh!” said Janet and Phœbe together, for their companion had spoken seriously and with a slight shudder. Moreover, the graveyard was at that moment a short block to their left, and twilight had already fallen. Beneath the rows of maples and chestnuts that lined the road the shadows were quite deep.

“I am troubled with insomnia,” explained Marion. “The doctors say I have studied too hard and my nerves are affected. At any rate I am very wakeful, and sometimes do not go to bed until two or three o ‘clock in the morning, knowing I could not sleep if I tried. Last evening I was especially restless. It was a beautiful starlit night, so after the family had all retired I slipped out of doors and started for a walk through the lanes. I have often done this before, since I came here, and it is not unusual for me to visit the old graveyard; not because I am morbid, but for the reason that it seems so restful and quiet there.”

“Naturally, dear,” murmured Janet.

“Last night my walk took me that way. I passed through the turnstile and wandered among the graves to the far end. It must have been long after midnight, but I had not a particle of fear, believe me, girls. I was not even thinking of such preposterous things as ghosts.

“By and by I retraced my steps and sat down on a fallen slab of stone to indulge in reverie. From my position I faced that ugly square mausoleum Phœbe’s grandfather once built. There is an iron grating around it, you remember, and a marble door to the tomb itself, with bronze hinges and a bronze catch. By the way, isn’t that tomb supposed to be vacant?”

“Yes,” answered Phœbe, strangely excited. “Gran’ma Eliot and my father and mother occupy graves just beside it, for gran’pa built the big tomb just for himself.”

“Not a very generous thing to do,” added Janet; “but Mr. Eliot has always been a queer man, and done queer things.”

“Well,” continued Marion, “I sat facing the tomb, as I said, when slowly and without sound the marble door opened and a ghostly figure emerged. I won’t assert it was a spirit from the other world, nor will I claim it was some person dressed in a sheet; but I am positive it was no vision of my imagination. So let us call it the Ghostly Mystery.”

“Was it a man or a woman?” asked Phœbe, breathlessly.

“It failed to disclose its sex, my dear. The door seemed to swing shut behind it; but the ghostly one was obliged to put out an arm to raise the latch of the iron gate. It passed through and I heard the click of the latch as it again fell into place. Then the apparition — ”

“The Ghostly Mystery, Marion!”

“Oh, yes; the Ghostly Mystery glided out of sight while I sat listlessly wondering what it could be. I was not frightened, but I failed to act promptly; so, when I arose to follow it, the thing or person — or whatever it was — had disappeared for good and all.”

The three strolled on in silence for a while. Then Phœbe asked:

“What time was it?”

“Perhaps one o’clock. It was nearly two when I got home; but I had walked quite a way before I decided to enter the house.”

“And have you no idea who it might be?” questioned Janet, who had now grown thoughtful.

“Not the slightest.”

“I wish I had seen it,” said Phœbe, softly.

“Oh, do you like ghosts? Well, then, I’ll take you with me on my next midnight ramble,” laughed Marion.

“Why not go to-night?” suggested Janet. “Phœbe is going to stay with me, and you may come too, Marion. Our house is even nearer to the graveyard than your own, and at dead of night we’ll all steal out and waylay his ghost-ship. What do you say?”

“I am willing,” declared Marion. “Are you sure you will not be frightened?”

“I may be,” admitted Janet, honestly; “but I’m willing to risk it.”

“So am I!” echoed Phœbe, eagerly.

“Then it is decided,” said Marion. “I frankly acknowledge, girls, that while we are living in an eminently practical and scientific age, these romantic adventures still prove fascinating. Let us hope we shall discover the ghost, and that the apparition will be of a quality to thrill our stagnant blood.”

“Must you go home first?” inquired Janet.

“Not if you’ll lend me a night robe. No one at home pays any attention to my wanderings, so I shall not be missed.”

They soon arrived at Judge Ferguson’s comfortable residence, which was a little beyond the outskirts of the village and delightfully situated on a slight eminence. Mrs. Ferguson, an alert, pleasant-faced little woman, welcomed the girls cordially and they passed the evening chatting together and discussing recent events in which all were alike interested. Phœbe was a bit distrait, for she could not help wondering what was happening in her room at home, where Toby Clark was keeping watch over the movements of old Elaine; but no one appeared to notice her abstraction.

Later in the evening the judge came in, and smiled cheerily upon the three young girls.

“You’ve quite a house-party to-night, Janet,” he said. “I wish you might keep this bevy with you for a month.”

Neither by glance nor word did he remind Phœbe of their conversation of the afternoon, and when they prepared to go upstairs he kissed all three impartially.

“What, to bed already?” he cried. “But run along and get your beauty sleep. Why should you wish to sit up with an old fossil like me?”

“Who has deserted us nearly the whole evening,” pouted Janet.

“True; I am to blame,” he admitted. “But a lawyer is never his own master, and to-night business kept me in the town.”

Phœbe thought she knew what had occupied him, but said nothing.

In their rooms the girls sat and discussed their plans, waiting for the judge and Mrs. Ferguson to get to bed and for the arrival of the hour when they might venture forth. It was demure little Janet who suggested they all wear sheets on their midnight stroll.

“We can carry them over our arms until we get to the graveyard,” she said, “and then wrap ourselves in the white folds. If the ghost appears we’ll show him that others are able to play the same trick.”

“But we might frighten him,” laughed Marion.

“Whoever is playing ghost must be trying to frighten others,” returned Janet; “for, as you say, actual really-truly ghosts do not exist. I think it would be fun to turn the tables on the impostor.”

“Perhaps so. What do you think, Phœbe!”

“It may be a good idea,” she said, rather reluctantly, for somehow she regarded this matter far more seriously than did the others. The ghost was using her grandfather’s tomb for its headquarters, according to Marion’s report, and that gave Phœbe a personal interest in the affair.

At last the clock warned them it was nearly twelve o’clock; so they gathered up the sheets Janet had provided and stole noiselessly from the house. The graveyard was only a short distance away and they reached it about midnight, taking their position in a dark corner near the Eliot mausoleum. They assisted one another to drape the sheets effectually and then sat down upon the ground, huddled close together, to await the advent of the ghost.

“Perhaps it won’t come to-night,” whispered Janet, with a suspicion of hopefulness in her voice.

“True; we must be prepared for that disappointment,” replied Marion, soberly.

“Do you feel at all creepy, girls?” asked Phoebe, who caught herself indulging in nervous shivers at times, despite the fact that the night was warm and sultry.

“For my part,” said Marion, “I have no silly fears when in a graveyard. I find the place serenely restful, and therefore enjoy it.”

“I wouldn’t care to be here alone,” admitted Janet; “but, as we’re all together I — I don’t — think I shall mind it — even if the Ghostly Mystery materializes.”

It was a long wait, and the three girls beguiled it at times by whispering together, more through desire to hear the sound of their own voices than because they had anything important to say. One o’clock arrived at last. Marion could read the face of her watch under the starlight. Another half hour dragged wearily away.

“I fear we shall encounter no adventure tonight,” Marion was saying, when Phœbe seized her arm and drew her back into the shadow.

“Hush!” she murmured, and pointed an arm toward the turnstile.

Two hearts, at least, were beating very fast now, for the long-expected

ghost was at last in sight, gliding silently past the turnstile. Well, not exactly "gliding," they decided, watching intently. It was not a very healthy looking ghost, and to their astonishment was entering the graveyard with shuffling, uneven steps. Of course it should have suddenly appeared from some tomb, as every well regulated ghost is supposed to do.

"The Mystery seems rather clumsy, Marion," said Janet in an excited whisper.

"Isn't it carrying something?" asked Phœbe.

"Yes; a weight of some sort in each hand," was Marion's composed reply. "The weights are as white as the ghost itself. Queer; isn't it, girls?"

Glancing neither to right nor left the apparition slowly made its way into the graveyard and advanced to the big square mausoleum erected as the future abiding place of Jonathan Eliot. The white-robed figure seemed bent and feeble.

"Come!" said Marion; "let us surround it and play ghost ourselves."

She glided swiftly out into the starlight, wrapping her sheet closely about her, and gained a position behind the tomb. Phœbe and Janet followed, spurred on by Marion's fearless action. One passed to the right and the other to the left.

Singularly enough, the bent figure did not observe their presence until the tomb was nearly reached, when Marion circled around the railing and confronted the mysterious visitant. At the same time Janet and Phœbe advanced and all three slowly raised their white-draped arms above their heads.

"Woo-oo-oo!" wailed Marion.

With a shriek that pierced the night air far and wide the ghost staggered backward and toppled to the ground, lying still as death.

Startled though she was, Phœbe sprang forward and peered into the upturned face.

"Why — it's Elaine!" she cried aloud.

"Yes," said a quiet voice beside her. "And you Ve raised the very mischief by this mad prank, Phœbe Daring."

It was Toby Clark, who gazed down at the still figure and wagged his tow head, mournfully.

"Is she dead, Toby?" asked Janet, in a hushed, frightened tone.

"I think not. Probably, she's fainted."

"And what was she carrying?" inquired Marion, seeming unmoved by the tragic occurrence.

Phœbe knew; they were two canvas bags of gold; but she said nothing.

"See here," cried Toby abruptly, "it's possible you crazy females have not

spoiled the game, after all. Make tracks — will you, girls? — get away, out of sight; run home, so she won't see you when she comes to."

"But — I don't understand," began Janet, timidly.

"You're not supposed to," retorted Toby, more gruffly than he had ever spoken to her before.

"Toby is right, girls — I know he is right. Come — *please* come!" pleaded Phœbe, anxiously.

Thoroughly bewildered, Janet and Marion suffered her to lead them away, and when they had passed the turnstile and were out of sight Toby retreated and hid behind a gravestone.

Elaine did not recover at once, for her terror had been great and her faint was proportionately deep and lasting. But finally, when Toby was about to steal out again and see if she were dead, the old woman moved uneasily and moaned. A little later she sat up, placing her hands to her head. Then she seemed to remember the cause of her fright, for she cast fearful glances around her.

Apparently reassured, she presently tried to rise, and after several attempts regained her feet. The bags of gold still lay where she had dropped them and after another suspicious look around the graveyard she stooped and picked them up.

For several moments the woman stood motionless in that silent city of the dead, pondering on the forms she had seen and trying to decide whether her imagination had played her a trick, or she had really beheld the spirits of those gone before. The fact that she had not been robbed led her to dismiss any idea that the forms were mortal. Whatever the explanation might be, she reflected that she was now alone and had a purpose to accomplish.

She carried her load to the iron grating, unlocked the gate and passed through. The marble door of the mausoleum worked with a secret spring. Toby's sharp eyes carefully marked the manner in which she released this spring and permitted the heavy marble block to swing noiselessly outward.

Elaine only lingered long enough to place the bags of gold inside. Then she closed the door of the tomb, let herself out at the iron gate and after one more shrewd inspection of the silent place made her way out of the graveyard and took the path that led back to her home.

Far behind her Toby followed like a shadow.

In half an hour she returned to the vault again, laden as before. For an old woman, and one who had just received a nervous shock, Elaine Halliday showed remarkable vitality. Her body appeared frail and weak, but an indomitable spirit urged it to perform its tasks.

CHAPTER XXIII

TWO AND TWO MAKE FOUR

When Judge Ferguson arrived at his office the next morning he found Toby Clark awaiting him.

"What! You've not let Miss Halliday escape?" he exclaimed.

"Miss Phœbe is watching her," returned Toby. "I felt it was important for me to come here to report."

"Very well; sit down and tell me what you have to say."

"Early last evening," began the youth, "I heard the woman in her room. I watched her through the peephole Miss Daring had prepared. She was gathering all the money from the hiding places. The bills and small change she made into packages; the gold she left in the bags. Then she went into another room — the room occupied by Mr. Eliot — and returned with an armful of papers."

"What sort of papers?" inquired the lawyer.

"They looked like legal documents, bonds, deeds and such things, sir. All were neatly folded and tied in packages."

"Ah! I wonder where they could have been hidden."

"No telling, sir. They've been mighty clever, haven't they? Well, sir, she made those papers into two separate parcels. Then she wrapped herself in a sheet which she took from her bed, hid the parcels under it, and left the house."

"She took only the papers?"

"Only the papers that time, sir. I tried to follow her, but the only way I could get out of the house without noise was through the window. I tied some sheets and blankets together and let myself down that way; but I was too late. The woman had disappeared, and I could not tell in what direction."

"Too bad, Toby."

"But I knew she would return, for there was the money to be lugged away. So I hid by a hedge and waited till she came back. She went into the house by the outside stair and soon brought out two bags of gold, one in each hand. This time, I followed her. She went to the graveyard, and I knew why she had draped herself in the sheet."

"Why?"

"So, if anyone chanced to see her there, they would take her for a ghost. Some one did see her there — three girls, also dressed in sheets — your daughter, Phœbe Daring and Marion Randolph."

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated the lawyer.

Toby told of the incident in the graveyard, and how Miss Halliday had

afterward made still another trip with the balance of the money.

"Did she put it all into the vault!" asked the judge.

"Yes, sir; and so I suppose she put the papers there, too. But I cannot be positive of that."

"But — good gracious, Toby! — what possessed the woman to hide all that plunder in a vault?"

"She is quite clever, sir. The other hiding place had been discovered by Phœbe; some of the money had been taken; it was best to hide it elsewhere. Who would ever think of searching a graveyard for it?"

"You're right, Toby. But what happened afterward?"

"Very little, sir. Miss Halliday went to bed and slept soundly, for I heard her snore."

"You climbed in at the window again?"

"Yes, sir; and had some sleep myself."

"What a wonderful woman Elaine is!"

"I can't help admiring her, sir."

"And what about Mr. Eliot, Toby?"

"While waiting for the woman, when she escaped me the first time, I stole up the stairs and looked in. Mr. Eliot was sitting quietly in his chair, in the dark."

"She left him there all night!" cried the judge, horrified.

"It seems so, sir."

"That is cruelty. Even his helpless body must tire with remaining in one position so long. Usually Elaine has taken better care of him than that," said Mr. Ferguson, indignantly.

"She was much excited last night; and the poor man can't complain, you know," returned Toby, with a shrug.

"What did Miss Halliday do this morning?" asked the lawyer, after a moment's thought.

"She rose early and got her breakfast. I heard her walking around the front rooms, putting them in order and waiting on Mr. Eliot. She seemed quite composed this morning, and that may be due to the thought that her money is now safe from discovery. When Miss Phœbe came home from your house, Miss Halliday met her and handed her this note."

Judge Ferguson took the paper. On it were scrawled the words: "At twelve o'clock I will keep my word."

"Miss Phœbe is very anxious, sir," continued Toby. "So I thought it best to come to you and report."

The lawyer looked at his clerk, reflectively. Old Miss Halliday's persistent threat to prosecute Phœbe impressed him strongly. For, had she not been able

to prove her right to this secret hoard, the woman would never dare to expose the affair to public notice. Mr. Ferguson was quite positive that no such paper as Elaine had displayed to Phœbe would hold good in a court of law; but the woman might have other proofs that she was entitled to the property she claimed. In any event the judge did not wish to be forced to act hastily in so important a matter. Time was necessary.

Half an hour later he entered Mr. Spaythe's private office at the bank and said:

"Spaythe, I want to borrow three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars — and I want the money now."

Mr. Spay the gave a perceptible start, passed his hand over his forehead, and cast a perplexed and annoyed glance at the lawyer.

"May I have it?" demanded the judge.

Eric had entered in time to hear this demand, and the sum mentioned sent his face white and made his knees knock together. In his hand was a paper he had intended asking his father to indorse, but it was all forgotten as the boy stared blankly at Judge Ferguson. Did the lawyer know? Then how many others knew? Eric had not yet recovered from his fright, and his great fear was of his father's anger. Why had Mr. Spaythe said nothing to his son about the stolen money, and what punishment was he planning? The son of the strict, inflexible banker well knew the fault would not be forgiven nor condoned, and the uncertainty of his position was becoming unbearable.

"Certainly you may have the money, Judge," was Mr. Spaythe's slow reply. "For how long do you require the loan?"

"Perhaps only for a few days."

"Then I'll give you my personal check, and make no other record of the transaction."

As he drew his check book toward him Eric slipped back into the bank and resumed his stool. He was trembling as with an ague.

Presently Mr. Ferguson came to the window and asked Mr. Boothe to give him currency for the check. He spoke loudly enough for both Eric and Phil to overhear him. "How will you have it, sir?" asked the cashier." Fifteen hundred in gold and eighteen hundred and ninety in bills."

Eric nearly fell off his stool, and Phil looked up with a start. The effect upon the two boys was entirely different, however, for Daring had nothing to fear. So Phoebe's secret was out, thought Phil, and Judge Ferguson was the person who had given her the money. But, in that case, why was the judge now asking for a similar sum, and in the same sort of money? The mystery was certainly beyond Phil Daring's ability to solve. He gravely continued his work, feeling certain that everything would come right in the end. It hurt

him, though, to feel he was not in his twin's confidence.

Mr. Ferguson took his money and departed. When he reached his office he said to Toby Clark:

"Go back to the Eliot house and send Phœbe to me. You must remain to watch Miss Halliday, but you can do that from the lane, or from some other point of vantage. I don't much care what the woman does while she is at home, but if she attempts to leave the place be prepared to follow her."

"All right, sir."

Phœbe came for the money and found it ready for her, tied in a neat parcel.

"Don't answer any questions during your interview with Elaine, "he advised. "And take care to ask none. Above all, don't let her suspect you were playing ghost in the graveyard last night."

Phœbe promised and went home again. At twelve o'clock she carried the package around to the rear stairs, which she was about to mount when Elaine appeared in the doorway above her.

"Stay where you are!" was the harsh command.

The girl resented the words and the tone, so with determination she mounted the stairs. Elaine barred her way.

"You must count the money and give me a receipt," said Phœbe.

"I'll count it; but you'll get no receipt, for you gave none, you miserable little thief!" snarled the woman, rudely snatching the parcel.

"Then, I'll wait here until you count it."

"No you won't. Go down — instantly! And if the money is not all here, to jail you go."

"I think I'll see my grandfather," asserted the girl, more to annoy Elaine than because she wished to visit the helpless old man.

For answer Miss Halliday slammed the door in her face and locked it. Phœbe slowly retreated and descended to the yard. There the thought occurred to her that she might watch Elaine through the rear windows, for she was curious to see how she acted when she found the money all restored. So she slipped away into the lane, which being slightly elevated enabled her to peer into the second story windows. There she bumped against Toby Clark, who was standing half hidden by a clump of bushes.

"Oh! You here?" she exclaimed.

"Yes. Anything up?" he inquired.

"I've just given Elaine the money, and she impudently locked me out. So I thought I 'd come here and watch the windows."

"That's what I've been doing. Stand back here in the shade, Miss Daring, so you won't be seen. That's it. Now look at that window. What do you see?"

“Only gran’pa sitting in his chair.”

“Oh. Is that your grandfather?”

“Of course,” said Phœbe. “He sits there all day long, looking over the country. Once, you know, he owned all the land as far as he can now see.”

“And does he sit there all night, too?”

“No, indeed; Elaine puts him to bed at night.”

“Last night,” said Toby, reflectively, “she left him in his chair, instead of putting him to bed. I saw him. The room was dark, but he was so close to the window that the stars showed his form distinctly.”

“Then Elaine is neglecting poor gran’pa!” cried Phœbe, indignantly. “And he is so dependent on her kindness, too!”

Toby gave a low, apologetic cough.

“Your eyes are good, Miss Daring?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“Then look again, and carefully. Is that indeed your grandfather — is it really Mr. Eliot in the chair?”

Phœbe was surprised at the question, but she looked carefully.

“Of course. I’ve seen him sitting that way every day, for months past.”

“Can you see his face?”

“Not very well, from here. It is muffled up in his dressing gown, you know, so he won’t take cold.”

“It’s pretty warm to-day,” observed the lawyer’s clerk.

“But Gran’pa Eliot is paralyzed, and his blood doesn’t circulate freely. He is always well wrapped up, whatever the weather.”

Toby whistled softly and looked down at the ground, where he was digging up the earth with the toe of his shoe.

“It must be dinner time,” said Phœbe, suddenly remembering the fact. “Phil will be coming home and I must go in.”

“Will you be very busy this afternoon, Miss Daring?”

“I think not. Why?”

“Can you come here for a half hour or so?”

“Yes, Toby, if I can be of any service.”

“I think you can. This is a queer affair, isn’t it?”

“It’s very queer, Toby.’’

“Then I shall expect you,” he said with a sudden change of tone.

Phœbe went in, thinking the while how odd this boy was. She wondered casually why Judge Ferguson had placed so much confidence in him. There was still a good deal of mystery about this affair and Phœbe did not yet know what the lawyer intended to do to checkmate old Elaine. However, she was content to trust her father’s friend, and greatly relieved to be able to return

that dreadful money to the covetous woman.

After dinner she walked with Phil to the gate. Said he:

"Have you anything to tell me?"

"Not yet, Phil," she answered softly. "Try to be patient, for all is well, I'm sure, and we' re going to be very happy when these troubled days are over."

He said no more, but bent and kissed her and went on his way.

After accomplishing a few household duties and bandaging a cut on Becky's arm — it seemed the girl was always hurting herself — and helping Don find his cap, which he always mislaid when he came in, Phœbe remembered her promise to Toby Clark and slipped away unobserved to his station in the lane.

She found the little clerk staring fixedly at the window where Gran'pa Eliot sat. He gave a start as the girl approached, and then his freckled face lit up with a smile.

"I want you to watch Miss Halliday for me, for half an hour," he said.

"Where is she?"

"Somewhere in those upper rooms. She has just passed the window to the left. But, although I've watched her for hours, she has never once stopped at your grandfather's side to do anything for him."

"Poor gran'pa!"

"Now, listen, Miss Phœbe. The judge told me not to lose sight of that woman. If she tries to leave the house I am to follow her. But I want to get away, for just a little while, and I 'd like you to watch in my place."

"But, what shall I do if she goes away?"

"Follow her, and I'll find you both. But she won't leave the house to-day, I'm sure."

"Very well; I'll do the best I can, Toby."

He nodded and walked away, going straight to the graveyard. When he reached there he climbed nimbly over the high iron rail, at the risk of breaking a limb, and faced the Eliot mausoleum. Pressing the spring, as he had seen Elaine do, he opened the marble door and passed into the tomb.

A few moments later he came out with a pale, startled face and closed the door. A while he stood lost in reverie; then he clambered over the railing again and went to relieve Phœbe.

"Thank you, Miss Daring," he said quietly. "You may go, now. Anything to report?"

"Why, a minute ago Elaine came to the window where gran'pa sits, and after staring out, as if she suspected I was watching her, she turned and shook up gran'pa's pillows, and moved his chair back a little. So you see we were wrong, and she is not really neglecting him."

Toby chuckled.

“She’s a slick one, is Miss Halliday!” he murmured. “But I’ll keep an eye on her now.”

“Aren’t you hungry?” asked Phœbe, remembering he had been on duty since the evening before.

He shook his head.

“Brought some bread and cheese with me, Miss Daring. Good-by.”

“Good-by, Toby.”

The afternoon passed slowly for Phœbe. She was still wrought up over the exciting events of the past few days and felt that she was almost as much in the dark concerning Judge Ferguson’s intentions as was Phil. She tried to copy some manuscript on her typewriter, for she had been neglecting the work lately, but somehow the girl had conceived an undefined horror of her room. So she went to sit with Cousin Judith, while she finished darning her stockings.

“Phœbe, dear,” said Miss Eliot, “there’s something mysterious going on in this house.”

“Is there?” asked Phœbe, with downcast eyes.

“I think so. Phil has not been himself, lately. I’msure he is worrying dreadfully over something. Is anything wrong at the bank?”

“No, Cousin Judith. Phil is all right. He’s doing splendid work, as you may know from the fact that Mr. Spaythe has raised his salary.”

“But the boy is unhappy, nevertheless,” persisted the Little Mother, musingly.

Phœbe sighed. She knew it was true.

“As for you, my dear,” continued Judith, “you are a mere bundle of nerves lately, and start and grow pale if anyone speaks to you. What has happened, Phœbe?”

The girl darned industriously for a time. Then she said earnestly:

“You trust me, Cousin Judith, do you not?”

“You know I do, Phœbe.”

“Then please do not question me to-day. I don’t want to mislead you, or deceive you, and Judge Ferguson has asked me not to confide in anyone — not even you.”

“Judge Ferguson!” exclaimed Judith, relieved. “Is it his secret, then?”

“Just now it is,” answered Phœbe.’ But there is nothing to worry about, dear. That’s what I told Phil, just after dinner.”

Miss Eliot was really puzzled, but she felt it would be unkind to press Phœbe further.

“Becky, Don and Sue know nothing of the matter, at least,” she observed,

after a moment's reflection.

"No, indeed," said Phœbe.

CHAPTER XXIV
TOBY CLARK'S HEROISM

Late that night Toby Clark heard a man pacing slowly up and down the street, passing the Eliot house each time. Peering through the shadows the boy thought he recognized the straight, erect figure. Creeping close to a hedge that bordered the highway he whispered:

"Mr. Ferguson!"

"Yes, Toby. I've been looking for you," replied the judge in a low voice, as he paused beside the hedge.

"Something's going to happen to-night, sir."

"So I suspected. What is it?"

"Miss Halliday's getting ready to flit, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"She's been packing up for the last Hour, sir."

"And intends to leave poor Mr. Eliot alone! How dreadful!"

"Would you mind going for Sam Parsons, Mr. Ferguson?"

The lawyer gave a start. Parsons was the village constable.

"Parsons! Dear me; do you think he's needed, Toby?"

"Better have everything ship-shape, sir."

The judge reflected. Had he a right to arrest Elaine? She was merely a servant, after all, and it was not a felony to throw up such a position. But, there was the money — that secret hoard which she had claimed as her own and hidden away in the tomb. She had claimed to own the property, as well, yet was voluntarily preparing to leave it — a circumstance which led the shrewd lawyer to suspect that she knew her claim to be illegal. Had she, then, any better right to the money, the bonds and papers? Judge Ferguson decided he would get the constable.

"There is no time to be lost, sir," suggested Toby Clark, uneasily.

"I'll meet you here shortly. Sam doesn't live far away, and he'll be at home now; probably in bed and asleep."

"I 'd like you to hurry, if you please. And if I'mnot here when you return, come to the graveyard."

"The graveyard!"

"She'll want to put away the money that Miss Phoebe gave her to-day, you know."

"Of course, Toby. I'll hurry."

He turned and walked swiftly away, while the clerk went back to his post of observation. A candle was burning in one of the upper rooms and it dimly lighted the form of Jonathan Eliot, seated beside his favorite window. Now

and then Miss Halliday passed one of the windows. She had on a shawl and bonnet.

The judge was prompt. He encountered the constable just coming home from town, and immediately dragged him away, explaining the case as thev walked.

Sam Parsons was a man of few words and he knew Judge Ferguson. He asked no questions, understanding he was merely to arrest old Miss Halliday if she tried to get away. The judge knew the reason for this action, and that was all that was necessary, for the time being.

Toby met them and posted them beside the path Elaine must take to get to the tomb. From their cover they gazed curiously at the muffled form of old Jonathan Eliot; but the examination was brief, for suddenly the light went out.

"She's coming!" whispered Toby. "I'll follow her first, and then you must follow me at a safe distance."

"Why not arrest her now?" asked the lawyer.

"Oh, no — not now, sir!" protested Toby in an eager voice. "Wait, sir; wait."

He could say no more, for they discerned Elaine's angular form coming down the stairway. In one hand she carried an old-fashioned satchel. Under the other arm was the package of money which Phœbe had returned to her.

Pausing at the foot of the stairs the woman cast penetrating glances in every direction. Then, evidently reassured, she stealthily traversed the back yard and passed through the gate into the lane. It was quite dark under the shadow of the trees, and Elaine had no suspicion that three silent watchers stood almost within arm's reach as she hurried along the well-known path. Presently Toby Clark glided away in her wake, and before his dim form became wholly invisible the constable and the lawyer started after him.

Thus the extraordinary procession advanced to the very borders of the graveyard. Once or twice Toby halted suddenly, and the others perforce followed suit; but that was only when Elaine paused to shift her luggage from one hand to the other; then they all resumed the silent march.

When she unlocked the gate of the iron grating surrounding the tomb she did not wait to fasten it behind her; so, as soon as she had entered the mausoleum Toby slipped inside the railing and signaled the others to follow him. The three being now within the enclosure, the young man closed the gate and turned the key in the lock just as Elaine again appeared.

The starlight rendered the three forms clearly-visible.

The woman gave a low cry and rushed to the grating, which she shook with impotent rage. Then, turning to confront her captors, she exclaimed:

“Who are you? How dare you come here?”

“A graveyard is not private property,” said the judge.

“Mr. Ferguson!”

“Yes, Miss Halliday. Let me return your question: why are you here?”

She glanced at the door of the mausoleum, which she had left ajar in her first panic at being discovered. Then her eyes fell upon the satchel she had left beside the gate. These people had surprised her, but she reflected that they could know nothing of her secret, or of her present purpose. All she needed was to gain time. Before any could prevent her she sprang to the marble door and forced it shut. It closed with a sharp click as the spring bolt shot into place. The secret of opening it had been known only to Jonathan Eliot and herself.

Toby gave a little laugh, and the lawyer roused himself and said sternly:

“I am awaiting your explanation, Miss Halliday.”

“Well, I guess You’ll wait for it awhile,” she retorted, a note of triumph in her voice. “You’ve no right to detain me here, Judge Ferguson. Open that gate, and let me go!”

“I fear, madam, you have broken the law, and we must therefore arrest you,” said the lawyer.

“I ‘d like to see you do it!” she cried, but she drew in her breath sharply and pressed one hand to her heart.

“You will be gratified, Miss Halliday. Officer, do your duty.”

As the constable advanced she shrank back against the iron gate.

“No, no!” she said. “Don’t arrest me. I’ve done nothing to be arrested for. Come to the house in the morning and I’ll explain everything.”

The lawyer hesitated.

“You may go to the house, if you wish; but Mr. Parsons will go with you, and guard the place until morning,” he said.

Toby Clark was pulling his sleeve.

“One moment, sir, before you decide,” he pleaded.

“What is it, Toby!”

“Come with me, please.”

The boy went to the door of the mausoleum, touched the secret spring, and the marble block swung out. Elaine gave a cry that was half a sob and pressed her hands to her heart again.

“Come in, please — all of you, if you will,” said the clerk.

Parsons and Mr. Ferguson followed him into the black interior of the tomb. The air was close and bore a peculiar, sickening odor.

“One moment,” said Toby.

He struck a match, holding it shielded between his hands until it flared up

and lighted the confined space. On a marble slab in the center of the tomb lay a dead body.

"Good God!" cried the judge, recoiling; "it's Jonathan Eliot!"

An echoing cry came from Toby. Dropping the match he made a bound for the door just as the heavy slab was swinging into place, urged by Elaine's most desperate efforts. There was no way to open it from the inside, and the danger was imminent. In an instant the young man had thrust his foot into the crack that was now barely large enough to receive it, while Elaine, crowding the weight of her body against the marble, crushed and mangled the heroic boy's flesh in a last vain effort to entomb her three captors and condemn them to a horrible death.

The next instant the burly form of Sam Parsons thrust back the door. Then he wrapped his arms around the struggling woman and caught her in a firm clasp. Judge Ferguson, trembling with horror, raised Toby from the ground, where he had fallen and lay writhing and moaning with the pain of his maimed and wounded foot.

Snap — snap! went the handcuffs that encircled Elaine's wrists, while she fought, scratching and biting, to resist capture.

"I'll carry Toby down to the doctor's, sir," said the constable. "You can march ahead with that tigress. There's no danger, Judge; she can't escape us now, and we'll soon land her in jail."

CHAPTER XXV
FATHER AND SON

The Darings slept soundly that night, all unaware of the tragic events taking place in their neighborhood. However, the adventure was not yet ended for Judge Ferguson, even when the Halliday woman had been securely locked up and the doctor had dressed Toby's mangled foot and he had been put to bed.

"Sam," said the lawyer, "I have work to do, and you must help me."

"Count on me, Judge," was the ready reply. "I don't mind an all-night job once in a while, though I wouldn't care for it as a steady diet. What's next?"

They awakened the undertaker, Davis, the next thing, and after the lawyer had told him the story he at once hitched up a team to drive to the tomb for Mr. Eliot's body. As the undertaker was also the liveryman, Mr. Ferguson obtained a single horse, harnessed to a roomy box-buggy, in which he and Sam Parsons followed the other rig. Arriving at the graveyard they held back

while Davis took charge of the remains and loaded the body into the wagon, and not till he had driven away did the constable and the lawyer venture into the mausoleum, the door of which they had propped open to avoid the danger of being entombed alive.

The buggy was fairly loaded when all the treasure and the papers had been placed in it, and then they drove to the lawyer's office, where they deposited the precious freight and Parsons watched beside it until morning.

Mr. Ferguson, meantime, got a couple of hours' sleep; but he was back at the office by daybreak, and while waiting for the bank to open sent Sam to get his breakfast, while he himself began a systematic examination of the papers he had seized.

It did not take him long to discover that Jonathan Eliot had been a wealthy, if miserly, man. The government bonds and cash alone constituted a fortune, but aside from these were many mortgages and investments that drew a high rate of interest. There was no paper purporting to be a will; no letters of administration or any indication that the old man had transferred his holdings to Elaine Halliday, or to any other person. The deed of gift which Phœbe had seen was doubtless secreted upon the person of the house-

While the judge was thus absorbed in the papers the day advanced and Spaythe's Bank was opened for business. Phil, arriving at his usual time, found Mr. Spaythe already in his office and the door communicating with the count-ingroom wide open.

Moreover, the banker seemed laboring under unusual excitement. He would walk the floor of his office with nervous strides, then seat himself in the chair by his desk, and a few moments later resume his pacing. At times

he glanced into the room where Phil was at work, or toward the cage where the cashier was busy. Eric had not yet arrived.

Presently in came Judge Ferguson, accompanied by Sam Parsons, and both were loaded down with gold and bank notes.

"Good morning, Spaythe," called the judge, nodding genially. "I want to make an important deposit, to be credited to the Estate of Jonathan Eliot."

"Eliot!" exclaimed the banker. "Is the old man dead, then!"

"Very dead, Spaythe; and he's left a lot of money. Here, Boothe, count it — and count it carefully, my man — for this is the biggest deposit your bank has ever received."

Phil had overheard this, and came forward with a pale and troubled face.

"Is it true, sir?" he asked, half frightened.

"Yes, Phil; it's true."

"When did my grandfather die?"

"Two or three days ago, I think. But we only discovered his body last night, lying in that tomb he built, where Elaine Halliday had carried him after propping up a dummy in the window to make us all believe he was still alive."

Then they all went into the private office, where Mr. Ferguson related the night's occurrences to Mr. Spaythe and Phil Daring, the constable being present to confirm the story.

"Had it not been for the bravery of Toby Clark," concluded the judge, "we might all three have been buried alive in that hideous tomb. No one could have come to our assistance, for no one knew where we had gone."

"The woman must be crazy," asserted the banker.

"Perhaps; but she's clever enough in some ways," sighed the lawyer, "and may cause us a lot of trouble yet. That's why I have deposited this money to the credit of the Eliot Estate. No one can touch it now until the courts decide to whom it belongs. And, by the way, Spaythe, that three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars I borrowed from you is among the lot!"

During this conversation Eric had entered the bank, and seeing the interested group gathered in his father's office came to the open door just as the judge again mentioned the fatal sum that he had stolen from the safe. His face instantly went white with terror, and he was creeping away when Mr. Spaythe sprang up, seized his son's arm and drew him into the office.

"Gentlemen," said the banker, turning to the others, "I too have a story to relate, and I beg you to seat yourselves and listen."

"May I go, sir!" asked Phil in a troubled tone.

"No, Daring; you must remain; for what I have to say concerns you closely. Sit down."

Phil sat down. Judge Ferguson glanced from Phil to Eric, who stood with hanging head; then to Mr. Spaythe, whose countenance was cold and severe and bore the marks of a secret sorrow. The constable, accustomed to strange scenes, remained impassive and silent. “On Saturday night,” began Mr. Spaythe, in a hard, resolute tone, “this bank was robbed of three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars, in gold and currency.”

Eric staggered and caught at the corner of the desk for support. Phil grew pale, for he was astonished at the banker’s knowledge. Mr. Ferguson knew the fact already, having listened to Phœbe’s confession, so he merely glanced at the

father and son in a thoughtful way and refrained from comment.

“My son had warned me,” continued the banker, speaking bitterly, “that Phil Daring would not be liable to withstand the temptation of stealing money, once he was alone in the bank and knew the combination of the safe. At first I scorned the idea; then, for my own satisfaction, I decided to watch. Here in my door is a sliding panel, through which I am able to observe, when I so desire, everything that goes on in the back room. On Saturday night I came here, letting myself in at the private entrance to this room, and found Phil Daring working on the books while his twin sister sat beside him. From their conversation I discovered that they knew the bank was about to be robbed. They arranged to watch the robbery unobserved, and I decided to do likewise. At midnight a man entered the bank, opened the safe and took away three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars. That man,” he added, pointing a merciless finger toward the culprit, “was my own son.”

No one spoke. Eric tried to answer, but a sob choked him. He had raised his head now and was reading his father’s face with a fascinated and horror-stricken gaze.

“From the conversation of the two Darings,” went on Mr. Spaythe, “I learned that Eric had so plotted that Phil was to be accused of the crime — and of other peculations that preceded it. The girl promised to save her brother, and I was curious to know how she would do it. To my amazement they brought the money to the bank on Sunday evening, and I saw them replace it in the safe — every penny that Eric had taken. The act was so astonishing, so wholly unexpected and inexplicable, that there seemed but one possible solution: that the Darings had in some way forced Eric to give up the stolen money. So I kept silent, waiting for an explanation, or for some further development; for if Eric had been shown the folly and wickedness of his crime it might be better for him not to know that I had discovered it. I may have been weak in this; but, gentlemen, he is my son.”

The banker paused, pressed his lips firmly together, and after a time

resumed his statement.

“Further developments occurred, indeed, but they served to undeceive me, and to add to my perplexity. Eric restored to the bank several hundred dollars which he had formerly embezzled; he also paid his debts around town, amounting to several hundred dollars more; I have a list of them. Therefore, he could not have returned to the Darings the money he took from the safe on Saturday night — and he had no other money.”

Eric drew a long and tremulous sigh. Then he sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. The tale was all new to him, and he found the truth vastly different from what he had imagined. Also, despair had seized him in its pitiless grasp, and as his eye by chance fell upon the constable he shuddered. His father’s intentions were clear to him now.

“Another surprising circumstance,” said Mr. Spaythe, ignoring Eric’s dejected attitude, “was Judge Ferguson’s demand upon me for the exact sum Eric had stolen — the exact sum Phœbe Daring had restored to the safe. Therefore, I have asked you to listen to me that you may understand I am entitled to some explanation. My son’s crime is known to the Darings and to Mr. Ferguson, as well as to myself; I, only, am in the dark concerning the events which followed it.”

“Those events I can explain in a few words, sir,” said the judge, his kindly voice showing how deeply he was grieved for his old friend. ‘* Phœbe Daring had discovered her grandfather’s hoard, which Miss Halliday had secreted in her own room. To save her brother from unjust accusation the girl took the sum required to make good Eric’s — eh — eh — withdrawal. Miss Halliday claimed this money was given her by Jonathan Eliot, by a deed of gift, and threatened Phœbe with jail unless she returned the entire sum. It was my purpose just then to lull old Elaine’s suspicions; so I borrowed the money from you, Mr. Spaythe, that Phœbe might return it to her grandfather’s housekeeper. So you see that after all the various conspiracies, Spaythe’s Bank is still short that identical sum of three thousand, three hundred and ninety dollars.”

“Not the bank, sir,” said the other harshly, “but my personal account is short that sum. You are relieved of all obligation to return it, Judge Ferguson.”

The lawyer bowed.

“In that case,” said he, somewhat embarrassed, “perhaps you will permit us now to withdraw.”

The banker sat silent a moment, his stern face pallid and thoughtful. Then he turned to Phil.

“Mr. Daring,” he said, “I owe to you and to your brave sister my thanks

for your discretion and consideration of me in the conduct of this unfortunate affair. Eric owes you a still greater debt. You have behaved as a man, sir; I wish to God you had been my son instead of that cowering criminal seated before me. Will you add a little to my obligation — will you do me another favor?"

"If I may, sir," said Phil, flushed and miserable despite this praise.

"Tell me what punishment to inflict upon this — thief."

Phil straightened up and looked squarely into the banker's eyes. He had longed for this question; the opportunity was now his.

"Sir," he replied, "I know Eric; I have known him for years. His fault lay in his extravagant tastes, which forced him into debt because his father would not give him as much money as he thought he needed. The debts drove him to crime, and for his crime he has already suffered such punishment as all your proposed severity could not inflict upon him. I know Eric — tenderhearted, generous and kind — not bad, sir, in spite of this offense he was so weak as to commit. If you will forgive him, Mr. Spaythe, if you will love him and take him to your heart again, I promise that never in the future will you have cause to regret it. Eric will be honest and true from this day forward. But if, on the other hand, you now cast him off, you will ruin his life and your own; for a boy condemned by his own father can hope for no mercy from the world. He is your only son, Mr. Spaythe; forgive him."

During this impassioned speech, which came straight from the young fellow's heart, the banker sat staring at him with dull, expressionless eyes. Eric had raised his head to gaze at Phil wonderingly. Then he turned to his father a pleading look that might have melted his anger had he seen it; but Mr. Spaythe still stared at Phil Daring, as if dazed by the boy's frankness.

Mr. Ferguson slowly rose and laid an arm across the banker's shoulder. The gesture was strangely caressing, as between one man and another.

"Phil is right, Duncan," he said softly. "The boy is your son, and you can make a man of him, if you will."

Slowly the banker's head drooped until it rested upon his arms, outstretched upon the flat desk before him. For a time he remained motionless, while those who watched and waited scarce dared to breathe.

Then Mr. Spaythe looked up, and the sternness had left his face.

"Eric," he said, "you are forgiven."

CHAPTER XXVI
THE WATERMARK

Phœbe found the chickens had not been fed, and they were making a plaintive outcry for attention. She went to the stair and called to Elaine, but there was no reply.

Slowly ascending to the upper floor she pushed open the door and called again. Then something about her grandfather's awkward position attracted her attention. She crept forward to peer into his face; then started back with a cry of dismay. Her grandfather was not there. A pillow and a bolster supported the dressing gown and head-shawl which had so cleverly deceived her.

Hurrying down she met Phil and Judge Ferguson coming up the walk. They told her to get Cousin Judith, and when the four were assembled in the quaint old parlor the girls heard the extraordinary story of Elaine's arrest and Eric's forgiveness.

Miss Halliday made a desperate fight for Jonathan Eliot's money. Judge Ferguson was not the

only lawyer in Riverdale. Among the others was a little, fat, bald-headed man named Abner Kellogg, whom the court allowed to defend the woman.

Kellogg was shrewd, and Elaine promised him a big fee if he won; so he challenged Mr. Ferguson to prove that the deed of gift was a forgery and had not been signed by the deceased miser.

This was a difficult thing to do. The signature was very much like Mr. Eliot's; so like it that the experts would not state positively that he had not affixed it to the deed. Moreover, Elaine's contention that she had received no regular wages for years; that she had been the only close friend and confidant of the old man, and that he had promised her his money and property, when he died, as a return for her faithful service, was all so plausible that it greatly strengthened her claim.

She testified before the court that Jonathan Eliot had executed this deed of gift just before he was stricken with paralysis.

"He would not give me the paper then," she explained in a logical, composed way, "but kept it in an iron box in his secret cupboard. He told me that when he died I could take the paper, and it would prove my claim. So I did take it, and showed it to Phœbe Daring, and she gave me back the money she had stolen from me."

When asked why she had concealed the fact of Mr. Eliot's death for three days and hidden his body and the money in the tomb, she replied that she was afraid of the Darings and their lawyer, Judge Ferguson. The Darings had

stolen from her and the judge had threatened her with the law. She was a simple, inexperienced old woman, she added, unable to oppose such bitter and powerful enemies, who had always treated her unjustly. She feared that when they knew of Mr. Eliot's death they would take away her money — as indeed they had done — and so she had tried to keep the matter secret until she could get far away from Riverdale. She had intended to let the Darings have the house, although it was clearly her own. The place had grown distasteful to her, and the money would enable her to live comfortably in some other part of the country.

She flatly denied her attempt to entomb Mr. Ferguson, the constable and Toby Clark, which had been frustrated by the boy sacrificing his foot for their lives, and they refrained from pressing this charge against her. Toby's foot was healing, but he would be a cripple as long as he lived.

Taken all together, Elaine's position was far more strong than Mr. Ferguson had anticipated. By permission of the court he examined the deed of gift closely, afterward complaining that the paper seemed too new to have been written upon three years ago. It was a heavy, thick sheet, resembling parchment, and on it the judge discovered a watermark consisting of the letters "A.R."

Lawyer Kellogg, who defended Elaine, replied that paper kept away from light and air, as this had been, would remain white and look new for years, and therefore Mr. Ferguson's contention was ridiculous. The court agreed with Mr. Kellogg in this, and poor Mr. Ferguson was at his wits' end to find some reasonable flaw in the document.

The case had been on trial for a week, and had been adjourned over Sunday. The Darings and Cousin Judith, who had at first been elated at the prospect of inheriting Gran'pa Eliot's wealth, had by degrees fallen into a state of hopeless despondency.

After his Sunday dinner Judge Ferguson came over for a talk with his clients, and although his intention was to cheer them, his own face was too serious to be very assuring.

"I am morally certain that woman is deceiving us," he said; "but I must confess my fear that we shall be unable to prove the deed a forgery."

"Never mind, sir," replied Phil, smiling at Phœbe to give her courage; "we've managed to get along so far without gran'pa's money, and I guess we can stand it hereafter."

"That isn't the point," suggested Judith. "The money is rightfully yours, and you are entitled to it. Why, the fortune left by my uncle is nearly a hundred thousand dollars, counting the money and securities alone. Surely Elaine Halliday cannot claim her services to be worth all that!"

“Not justly, my dear,” answered the judge; “but the law will not look at it from that point of view, and here is a point of law to be considered. If the deed is allowed to stand we cannot prevent Elaine from getting every penny, and the house to boot. If it is a forgery, and so proved, she is not entitled to a dollar beyond her wages as housekeeper. Even that would be forfeited by her deception.”

“Suppose,” said Phœbe, “we compromise, and agree to give her all the money if she will let us have the house. Wouldn’t that be better than getting nothing at all?” -

“I fear it is too late to compromise,” said the judge, shaking his head regretfully. “At first we might have made such an arrangement, but now that pettifogger Kellogg will insist on her getting everything. Elaine has wisely left her defence entirely in Kellogg’s hands.”

“Isn’t he a rascal?” asked Cousin Judith.

“I would not accuse him of rascality,” was the reply. “No; Kellogg is not a bad man, nor a bad lawyer; he is doing his duty by his client, that is all.”

Just then Becky came rushing across the lawn, screaming and laughing. She was closely followed by Don and Allerton Randolph, who tried to head her off. Becky was clutching and waving a paper, and she ran up to Cousin Judith, who sat beside the judge, and thrust the paper into her hand, crying:

“Don’t let ‘em have it, Little Mother — promise you won’t!”

“But what is it?” asked Judith, glancing at the paper and then smiling.

“Allerton drew it, just for us,” said Donald, flushed and angry, “and Becky grabbed it and ran away. Make her give it back, Cousin Judith — Allerton doesn’t want anyone to see it.”

“But it is quite clever,” replied Judith, still smiling. “I did not know you were so good an artist, Allerton.”

“I am not very clever, Miss Eliot,” replied Allerton, in his sedate way. “Mother thinks I am artistic, and encourages me to draw; but she does not like me to make cartoons, such as this, for she says it degrades my talent.”

“H-m. Let’s see the cartoon,” said the judge.

“May I show it to Mr. Ferguson, Allerton?”

The boy hesitated.

“If you wish to, Miss Eliot,” he said.

The judge took the paper, put on his glasses, and after a glance laughed heartily. It was a caricature of old Miss Halliday, executed with considerable humor and skill, considering the artist’s youth.

Suddenly the judge gave a start and the paper trembled in his hands.

“Bless my soul!” he cried, holding it to the light. “What’s this?”

“That?” said Allerton, leaning forward. “Oh, that is the watermark of my

initials,' A.R.' The drawing paper was especially made for me, as a Christmas present."

A silence fell upon the little group. Mr. Ferguson, Phœbe, Phil and Cousin Judith eyed one another by turns, and in every eye gleamed the certainty that Jonathan Eliot's fortune was saved to the Darings.

"When did you receive such a fine present, Allerton?" asked Phil, his voice trembling in spite of his efforts to control it.

"At the last holiday season," answered the boy readily.

The old lawyer turned a delighted face to the eager group.

"Your grandfather has been paralyzed three years!" he exclaimed.

"Tell me," said Phœbe to Allerton, "did you ever give Miss Halliday any of your paper?"

He took time to think; then his face brightened and he replied:

"Only one sheet. She begged me for it one day when she brought the eggs."

"And when was that, my lad?" inquired Mr. Ferguson.

"A month ago, perhaps."

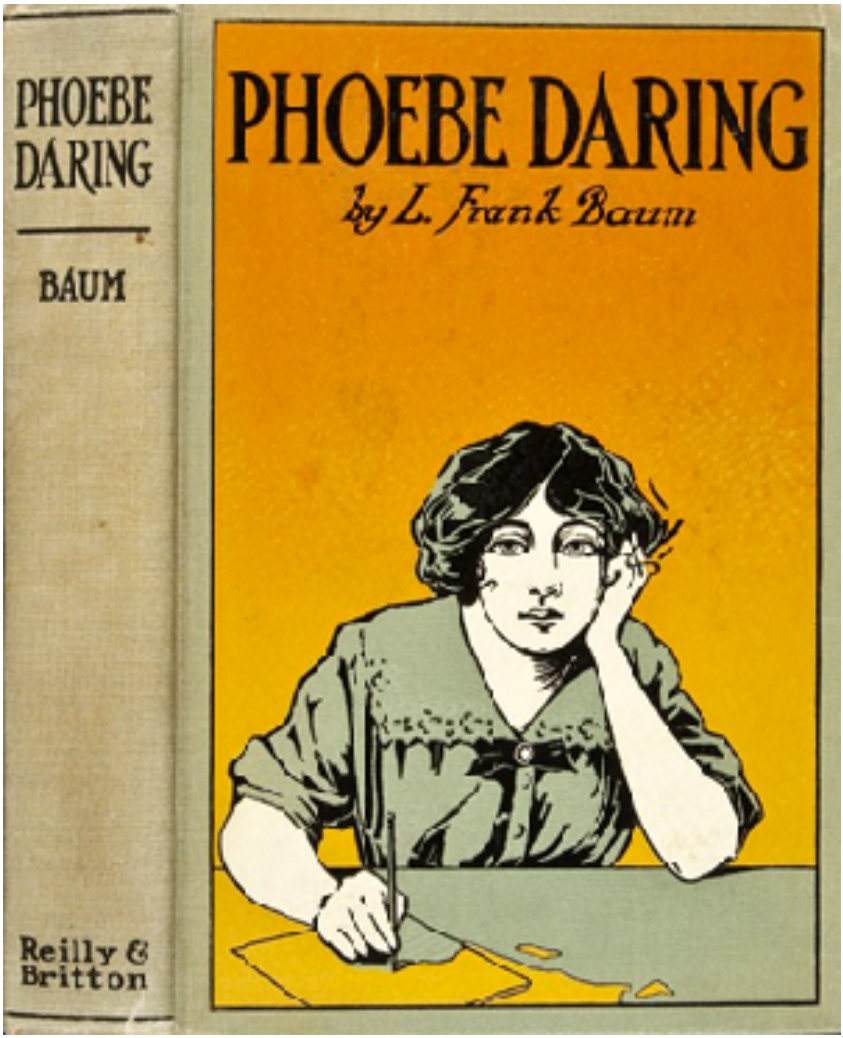
Mr. Kellogg threw up Elaine's case in disgust, and would have nothing more to do with it. When the deed of gift was proven a forgery and old Miss Halliday was told she must go to prison unless she confessed, she finally broke down and admitted the truth. Being aware of the fact that no one save herself knew of her master's hoarded treasure, she planned to get it for herself. After practising his handwriting for months she became so expert that the deed she finally executed deceived even the experts. Had it not been for the telltale watermark upon the paper she would have easily won.

The unscrupulous woman took her defeat with dogged indifference, still protesting that her wages were in arrears and that she was entitled to several hundred dollars for back pay. This, by advice of Judge Ferguson, was given her. The Darings refrained from prosecuting the poor creature, and she was allowed to take her wages and leave Riverdale forever.

No one in the little village seemed sorry to see her go.

PHOEBE DARING

Phoebe Daring, published by Reilly & Britton in 1912, was the sequel to *The Daring Twins*, published the year before, and the only other title in Baum's projected series of mystery novels for young people. Belgian-American artist, Joseph Pierre Nuyttens did the artwork. *Phoebe Daring* features a plot much like its predecessor, in which Phoebe attempts to solve the mystery surrounding the false accusations against a good man. Baum may have written a third in the series which did not survive, and correspondence indicates other planned titles.



A first edition copy of Phoebe Daring

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CHAPTER I

HOW TOBY CLARK LOST HIS JOB

"It's a shame!" cried Becky Daring, indignantly shaking her scraggly red locks for emphasis.

"So say we all of us," observed her brother Don in matter-of-fact tones. "But that won't help it, Beck."

"Wasn't it all Judge Ferguson's fault?" asked little Sue, listening with round, solemn eyes.

"Why, the poor old judge couldn't help dying, you know," said Don, judicially. "And he hadn't an idea his candle would flicker out so soon. Old Mr. Ferguson liked Toby Clark and I'm sure, if he'd thought his own end was so near, he'd have fixed it so his clerk wouldn't be left out in the cold."

"And now Toby hasn't any job, or any money, or any friends," remarked Sue, sighing deeply.

"Yes, he has!" declared Becky. "He has me for a friend, for one, and all the village to back me up. But friends ain't bread-an'-butter and I guess a poor cripple out of work is as bad off as if be hadn't a friend in the world. That's why I say it's a shame Judge Ferguson didn't leave him any money. It's worse than a common shame — it's just a *howling* shame!"

"Dear me," said Phoebe, entering the room with a smiling glance at her younger sisters and brother, "what's wrong now? What's a howling shame, Becky?"

"The way Judge Ferguson treated Toby Clark."

Phoebe's smile vanished. She went to the window and stood looking out for a moment. Then she turned and seated herself among the group.

"You've heard the news, then?" she asked.

"Yes. Doris Randolph told us the Fergusons read the will this morning, and Toby wasn't mentioned in it," replied Don.

"That is not strange," said Phoebe, thoughtfully. "Toby Clark was not a relative of the Fergusons, you know; he was just a clerk in the judge's law office."

"But he's a cripple," retorted Becky, "and he was made a cripple by saving Judge Ferguson's life."

"That is true," admitted Phoebe. "Judge Ferguson went into grandfather's vault, where he suspected all the Daring money had been hidden by old Elaine, our crazy housekeeper, and while he was in there, in company with Toby and the constable, old Elaine tried to shut the heavy door and lock them all up. Had she succeeded they would soon have suffocated; but Toby stopped the door from closing, with his foot, which was badly crushed, and

so by his quick wit and bravery saved three lives — including his own. The judge was grateful to him, of course, and had he lived Toby would have remained in his law office until in time he became a partner. That his friend and patron suddenly died and so deprived Toby of further employment, was due to the accident of circumstances. I do not think anyone can be blamed."

They were silent a moment and then Sue asked: "What's going to become of Toby now, Phoebe!"

"I don't know. He hasn't any father or mother; they both died years ago, long before Judge Ferguson took the boy to work for him. The Clarks owned a little cabin down by the river — a poor place it is — and there Toby has lived and cooked his own meals while he studied law in the judge's office. He lives there yet, and since the judge died, a week ago, he has done nothing but mourn for his friend and benefactor. But Toby will find some other work to do, I'm sure, as soon as he applies for it, for everyone in the village likes him."

"Can't we do something?" asked Becky earnestly. "We owe Toby a lot, too, for he helped the judge to save grandfather's fortune for us."

"We will do all we can," replied Phoebe, positively, "but we can't offer Toby charity, you understand. He is very proud and it would hurt him dreadfully to think we were offering him alms. I'll ask the Little Mother about it and see what she thinks."

That ended the conversation, for the time, and the younger Darings all ran out into the crisp October air while Phoebe went about her household duties with a thoughtful face. She and her twin, Phil, were the real heads of the Daring family, although the orphans had a "Little Mother" in Cousin Judith Eliot, a sweet-faced, gentle young woman who had come to live with them and see that they were not allowed to run wild. But Phil was now in college, paving the way for mighty deeds in the future, and Phoebe knew her twin would be deeply grieved over the sudden death of their father's old friend, Judge Ferguson. The judge had also been their guardian and, with Cousin Judith, a trustee of the Daring estate — a competence inherited from their grandfather, Jonas Eliot, who had been one of the big men of the county. The fine old colonial mansion in which the Darings lived was also an inheritance from Grandpa Eliot, and although it was not so showy as some of the modern residences of Riverdale — the handsome Randolph house across the way, for instance — it possessed a dignity and beauty that compelled respect.

The loss of their guardian did not worry the young Darings so much as the loss of their friend, for the shrewd old lawyer had been very kind to them, skillfully advising them in every affair, big or little, that might in any way affect their interests. Mr. Ferguson — called "Judge" merely by courtesy, for

he had always been a practicing lawyer — had doubtless been the most highly esteemed member of the community. For a score of years he had been the confidential adviser of many of the wealthiest families in that part of the state, counseling with them not only in business but in family affairs. In his dingy offices, which were located over the post office in Riverdale, many important transactions and transfers of property had been consummated, and the tall wooden cupboard in the lawyer's private room contained numerous metal boxes marked with the names of important clients and containing documents of considerable value. Yet, in spite of his large and varied practice, Mr. Ferguson attended to all his clients personally and only a young boy, Toby Clark, had been employed as a clerk during the past few years.

At first Toby swept out the office and ran errands. Then he developed an eagerness to study law, and the judge, finding the young fellow bright and capable, assisted his ambition by promoting Toby to copying deeds and law papers and laying out for him a course of practical study. In many ways Toby proved of value to his employer and Mr. Ferguson grew very fond of the boy, especially after that adventure when Toby Clark heroically sacrificed his foot to prevent them both from being hermetically sealed up in old Mr. Eliot's mausoleum, where they would soon have perished from lack of air.

Knowing ones declared that so strong was the affection between the old lawyer and his youthful clerk that Toby would surely inherit the fine law business some day. But no one realized then that the grizzled old lawyer's days were numbered. He had been so rugged and strong in appearance that it was a shock to the entire community when he was suddenly stricken by an insidious heart disease and expired without a word to even the members of his own family. Many grieved at Judge Ferguson's death, but none more sincerely than his office boy and daily companion, Toby Clark. He had no thought, at the time, of his own ruined prospects, remembering only that his one staunch friend had been taken from him.

Except that the lawyer's friendship had distinguished him, Toby was a nobody in Riverdale. The Clarks, who were not natives of the town but had strayed into it years before, had been not only poor and lowly but lacking in refinement. They had not even been considered "good citizens," for the man was surly and unsociable and the woman untidy. With such parents it was wonderful that the boy developed any ability whatever, and in his early days the barefooted, ragged urchin was regarded by the villagers with strong disapproval. Then his mother passed away and a year or so later his father, and the boy was left to buffet the world alone. It was now that he evinced intelligence and force of character. Although still considered a queer and unaccountable little fellow, his willingness to do any odd job to turn an

honest penny won the respect of the people and many gave him a day's employment just to help him along. That was how the waif came under Judge Ferguson's notice and the old lawyer, a shrewd judge of humanity, recognized the latent force and cleverness in the boy's nature and took him under his wing.

Toby wasn't very prepossessing in appearance.

At nineteen years of age he was so small in size that he seemed scarcely fifteen. His hair was unruly and of a dull tow color, his face freckled and red and his nose inclined to turn up at the point. He was awkward and shuffling in manner and extremely silent and shy of speech, seldom venturing any remark not absolutely necessary. The eyes redeemed the boy in many ways. They were not large nor beautiful, but they were so bright and twinkled in such a merry, honest fashion that they won him many friends. He had a whimsical but engaging expression of countenance, and although a bad conversationalist he was a good listener and so alert that nothing seemed to escape his quick, keen glance or his big freckled ears.

"If Toby said all he knows," once remarked Will Chandler, the postmaster and village president, "he'd jabber night an' day. It's lucky for us his tongue don't work easy."

The only thing Toby inherited from his shiftless parents was a shanty down by the river bank, on property that no one had any use for, and its contents, consisting of a few pieces of cheap, much-used furniture. His father, who had won the reputation of being too lazy to work, often fished in the river, partly because it was "a lazy man's job" and partly to secure food which he had no money to purchase. The villagers said he built his shanty on the waste ground bordering the stream — at a point south of the town — for two reasons, one, because he was unsociable and avoided his fellows, the other, because it saved him a walk to the river when he wanted to fish. The house seemed good enough for Toby's present purposes, for he never complained of it; but after entering Mr. Ferguson's office the boy grew neater in appearance and always wore decent clothes and clean linen. Living simply, he could afford such things, even on the small weekly wage he earned.

The boy was ambitious. He realized perfectly that he was now a nobody, but he determined to become a somebody. It was hard to advance much in a small town like Riverdale, where everyone knew his antecedents and remembered his parents as little better than the mud on the river bank. The villagers generally liked Toby and were willing to extend a helping hand to him; but he was odd — there was no doubt of that — and as he belonged directly to nobody he was wholly irresponsible.

It is a mystery how the waif managed to subsist before Judge Ferguson took charge of him; but he got an odd job now and then and never begged nor whined, although he must have been hungry more than once.

With his admission to the law office Toby's fortunes changed. The representative of a popular attorney was entitled to respect and Toby assumed a new dignity, a new importance and a new and greater ambition than before. He read in the law books during every leisure moment and found his mind easily grasped the dry details of jurisprudence. The boy attended court whenever he was able to and listened with absorbed interest to every debate and exposition of the law. Not infrequently, during the last few months, he had been able to call Mr. Ferguson's attention to some point of law which the learned and experienced attorney had overlooked. Toby seemed to live in every case his employer conducted and in his quiet way he noted the management of the many estates held in trust by the old judge and the care with which every separate interest was guarded. The boy could tell the contents of nearly every one of the precious metal boxes arranged on the shelves of the oak cupboard, for often the lawyer would hand him the bunch of slender steel keys and tell him to get a paper from such or such a box.

This trusteeship was the largest part of Mr. Ferguson's business, for not many legal differences came to court or were tried in so small and placid a district. There were other prominent lawyers in neighboring towns and a rival in Riverdale — one Abner Kellogg, a fat and pompous little man who had signally failed to win the confidence Judge Ferguson inspired but was so aggressive and meddlesome that he managed to make a living.

CHAPTER II

HOW MRS. RITCHIE DEMANDED HER PROPERTY

Toby Clark was inexpressibly shocked when one morning he learned that his dear friend and patron had been found dead in his bed. At once the lame boy hobbled over to the Ferguson home, a comfortable house at the far end of Riverdale, to find Mrs. Ferguson prostrated with grief, and Janet, the only daughter, weeping miserably and rejecting all attempts to comfort her. So he crept back to town, mounted the stairs to the homely law offices over the post office and sat down to try to realize that the kindly face he loved would never brighten its dingy gray walls again.

All the morning and till past noon Toby sat in the silent place, where every object reflected the personality of his departed master, bemoaning his loss and living over in memory the happy days that were past. Early in the afternoon steps sounded on the stairs. A key turned in the outer door and Will Chandler, the postmaster, entered the office, accompanied by a stranger.

Toby knew that Chandler, who owned the building, usually kept Judge Ferguson's office key. Whenever the old judge, who was absent-minded at times, changed his trousers at home he would forget to change the contents of the pockets. So, to avoid being obliged to return home for his key on such occasions, he was accustomed to leave it in Chandler's keeping, where it might be conveniently found when needed. Of late years the judge had seldom required the key to the outer door, for Toby Clark was always on hand and had the offices swept, dusted and aired long before his master arrived. Mr. Chandler was a reliable man and as fully trusted by Mr. Ferguson as was Toby.

"Oh, you're here, eh?" exclaimed the postmaster, in surprise, as his eyes fell upon the boy.

Toby nodded his reply, staring vacantly.

"The Fergusons have been inquiring for you," continued Chandler. "I believe Janet wants you at the house."

Toby slowly rose and balanced himself on his crutch. Then he cast a hesitating glance at the stranger.

"You'll lock up, sir, when you go away?" he asked.

"Of course," replied Will Chandler. "I only came to show this gentleman, Mr. Holbrook, the offices. He's a lawyer and has been in town for several days, trying to find a suitable place to locate. As poor Ferguson will not need these rooms hereafter I shall rent them to Mr. Holbrook — if they suit him."

The stranger stepped forward. He was a young man, not more than twenty-five years of age, handsome and prepossessing in appearance. He had

a dark moustache and dark, expressive eyes, and his face was cheery and pleasant to look at. In the matter of dress Mr. Holbrook was something of a dandy, but neat and immaculate as was his apparel there was little cause to criticise the young man's taste.

"The rooms need brightening a bit," he said, glancing around him, "but the fact that Judge Ferguson has occupied them for so long renders them invaluable to a young lawyer just starting in business. The 'good will' is worth a lot to me, as successor to so prominent an attorney. If you will accept the same rent the judge paid you, Mr. Chandler, we will call it a bargain."

The postmaster nodded.

"It's a fair rental," said he; but Toby waited to hear no more. The daughter of his old master wanted him and he hastened to obey her summons, leaving Chandler and Mr. Holbrook in the office.

Janet was pacing up and down the sitting room, red-eyed and extremely nervous. In an easy-chair sat an elderly woman in black, stony-faced and calm, whom Toby at once recognized as Mrs. Ritchie, who owned a large plantation between Riverdale and Bayport. She was one of Judge Ferguson's oldest clients and the lawyer had for years attended to all of the eccentric old creature's business affairs.

"This woman," said Janet, her voice trembling with indignation, "has come to annoy us about some papers."

Mrs. Ritchie turned her stolid glare upon the clerk.

"You're Toby Clark," she said. "I know you. You're the judge's office boy. I want all the papers and funds belonging to me, and I want 'em now. They're in the office, somewhere, in a tin box painted blue, with my name on the end of it. The Fergusons are responsible for my property, I know, but some of those papers are precious. The money could be replaced, but not the documents, and that's why I want 'em now. Understand? Now!"

Toby was puzzled.

"I remember the blue box marked' Ritchie,' ma'am," said he, "but I don't know what's in it."

"All my money's in it — hard cash," she retorted, "and all my valuable papers besides. I could trust the judge with 'em better than I could trust myself; but I won't trust anyone else. Now he's gone I must take charge of the stuff myself. I want that box."

"Well," said Toby reflectively, "the box is yours, of course, and you're entitled to it. But I'm not sure we have the right to remove anything from the judge's office until an inventory has been made and the will probated. I suppose an administrator or trustee will be appointed who will deliver your box to you."

“Shucks!” cried Mrs. Ritchie scornfully; “you’re a fool, Toby Clark. You can’t tie up my personal property that way.”

“The law, madam — ”

“Drat the law! The property’s mine, and I want it now.”

Toby looked helplessly at Janet.

“That’s the way she’s been annoying me all the afternoon,” declared the girl, stifling a sob. “Can’t you get rid of her, Toby? Give her anything she wants; only make her go.”

“I’ll go when I get my property,” said Mrs. Ritchie, obstinately settling herself in the chair.

Toby thought about it.

“I might ask Lawyer Kellogg’s advice,” he said. “He wasn’t Judge Ferguson’s friend, but he knows the law and could tell us what to do.”

“Kellogg! That fat pig of a pettifogger?” cried the old woman, sniffing disdainfully. “I wouldn’t believe him on oath.”

“Never mind the law; give her the box, Toby,” implored Janet.

But Toby had a high respect for the law.

“Do you know Mr. Holbrook?” he asked.

“No,” said Janet.

“Who’s Holbrook?” inquired Mrs. Ritchie. “Never heard of him.”

“He is a young lawyer who has just come to Riverdale to practice. I think Will Chandler has rented him our offices,” explained the boy.

“Is he decent?” asked the old woman.

“I — I think so, ma’am. I’ve never seen him but once, a half hour ago. But I’m sure he is competent to advise us.”

“Go get him,” commanded Mrs. Ritchie.

“It will be better for you to come with me,” replied Toby, anxious to relieve Janet of the woman’s disturbing presence. “We will go to the hotel, and I’ll leave you there while I hunt up Mr. Holbrook. He may be stopping at the hotel, you know.”

The woman rose deliberately from her chair.

“It’s getting late,” she said. “I want to get my property and drive home before dark. Come along, boy.”

“Thank you, Toby,” whispered Janet, gratefully, as the two passed out of the room.

Mrs. Ritchie’s horse was hitched to a post in front of the house. They climbed into the rickety buggy and she drove into town and to the rambling old clapboard hotel, which was located on the main street. It was beginning to grow dusk by this time.

On the hotel porch stood the man they were seeking. Mr. Holbrook was

smoking a cigarette and, with hands thrust deep in his pockets, was gazing vacantly down the street. Turning his attention to the arrivals the young lawyer seemed to recognize Toby. When the boy and the woman approached him he threw away his cigarette and bowed in deference to Mrs. Ritchie's sex.

"I am Judge Ferguson's clerk, sir," began Toby.

"Yes; I know."

"And this is Mrs. Ritchie, who employed the judge as her confidential business agent."

"I am glad to know you, madam. Step into the hotel parlor, please. There we may converse with more comfort."

When they had entered the parlor Toby explained the situation. Mrs. Ritchie wanted her box of private papers and Toby was not sure he had the right to give them up without legal authority.

"That is correct," observed Mr. Holbrook. "You must have an order from the Probate Court to dispose of any property left by Judge Ferguson."

"It's *my* property!" snapped the woman.

"Very true, madam. We regret that you should be so annoyed. But you can readily understand that your interests are being safeguarded by the law. If anyone, without authority, could deliver your box to you, he might also deliver it to others, in which case you would suffer serious loss. There will be no difficulty, however, in securing the proper order from the court; but that will require a few days' time."

"There's money in that box," said Mrs. Ritchie. "I don't trust those swindling banks, so the judge kept all my ready money for me. In that box are thousands of dollars in cold cash, an' some government bonds as good as cash. I need some money to-day. Can't this boy let me into the office so I can take what I want out of the box? I've got a key, if Toby Clark will open the cupboard for me. I drove to town to-day for money to pay off my hands with, and found the judge died las 'night, without letting me know. A pretty pickle I'll be in, if the law's to keep me from my rightful property!"

"You have no right to touch your box, Mrs.

Ritchie. The boy has no right to allow you in Mr. Ferguson's offices."

"Never mind that; no one will know, if we keep our mouths shut."

Mr. Holbrook smiled but shook his head.

"I am sorry you should be so distressed," he said gently, "but the inconvenience is but temporary, I assure you. If you employ me to get the order from the court I will see that there is no unnecessary delay."

"Humph!" said the woman, looking at him shrewdly. "Will it cost anything!"

“Merely my expenses to the city, a slight fee and the court charges.”

“Merely a job to rob me, eh? You want me to pay good money to get hold of my own property?”

“If you are in a hurry for it. Otherwise, by allowing the law to take its course, the property will be returned to you without charge.”

She considered this statement, eyeing the young man suspiciously the while.

“I’ll think it over,” was her final verdict. “Tomorrow I’ll drive into town again. Don’t you blab about what I’ve told you is in that box, Holbrook. If you’re goin’ to settle in this town you’ll have to learn to keep your mouth shut, or you’ll get run out in short order. Judge Ferguson never blabbed and you’ll do well to follow his example. Come, Toby; I’m goin’ home.”

“By the way,” remarked Mr. Holbrook, addressing the boy in meaning tones, “you’d better keep out of Mr. Ferguson’s offices until after an inventory is made by the proper authorities. If you have a key, as I suspect — for I saw you in the office — get rid of it at once; for, if anything is missing, you might be held responsible.”

Toby saw the value of this advice.

“I’ll give my key to Mr. Spaythe, at the bank, for safe keeping,” he said.

“That’s right,” returned the young man, nodding approval.

“Mr. Spaythe was the judge’s best friend and I think he’ll be the executor, under the terms of the will,” continued Toby, thoughtfully.

“In any event, get rid of the key,” counseled Mr. Holbrook.

“I will, sir.”

When they were standing alone by Mrs. Ritchie’s buggy the woman asked in a low voice:

“So you’ve got the key, have you?”

“Yes,” said Toby.

“Then we’ll go to the office and get my box, law or no law. I’ll make it worth your while, Toby Clark, and no one will ever know.”

The boy shook his head, casting a whimsical smile at the unscrupulous old woman.

“No bribery and corruption for me, ma’am, thank you. I’m somewhat inclined to be honest, in my humble way. But I couldn’t do it, anyhow, Mrs. Ritchie, because Judge Ferguson always kept the key to the cupboard himself, on the same ring that he kept the keys to all the boxes.”

“Where are his keys, then?”

“At his house, I suppose.”

“Tcha! That impudent girl of his has them, an’ there’s no use asking her to give ‘em up.”

“Not the slightest use, Mrs. Ritchie.”

“Well, I’m going home.”

She got into the buggy and drove away. Toby stood motionless a moment, thoughtfully leaning on his crutch as he considered what to do. Spaythe’s Bank was closed, of course, but the boy had an uneasy feeling that he ought not to keep the key to the office in his possession overnight. So he walked slowly to Mr. Spaythe’s house and asked to see the banker, who fortunately was at home.

“I’d like you to take the key to the office, sir, and keep it until it’s wanted,” he explained.

“Very well,” answered the banker, who knew Toby as the trusted clerk of his old friend Judge Ferguson.

“There’s another key,” remarked Toby. “It belonged to the judge, but he always left it in Will Chandler’s care.”

“I have that key also,” said Mr. Spaythe. “Mr. Chandler sent it to me early this afternoon, by the young lawyer who has rented the offices — Holbrook, I think his name is.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Spaythe.”

“I looked in at the offices a while ago and found them in good order,” continued the banker. Then he looked at Toby as if wondering if he had better say more, but evidently decided not to. Toby marked the man’s hesitation and waited.

“Good night, my boy.”

“Good night, Mr. Spaythe.”

Toby hobbled slowly to his lonely shanty on the river bank, prepared his simple supper, for he had forgotten to eat during this eventful day, and afterward went to bed. Every moment he grieved over the loss of his friend. Until after the funeral the boy, seemingly forgotten by all, kept to his isolated shanty except for a daily pilgrimage to the Ferguson house to ask Janet if there was anything he could do.

The day following the funeral the judge’s will was read and it was found that he had left his modest fortune to his wife, in trust for his only child, Janet. There were no bequests to anyone. Mr. Spaythe was named sole executor.

Toby was present during the reading of the will, but he was not surprised that he was not mentioned in it. The boy had never entertained a thought that his former master would leave him money. The judge had paid him his wages and been kind to him; that was enough. Now that the sad strain was over and the man he had known and loved was laid to rest, Toby Clark returned thoughtfully to his poor home to face a new era in his life.

The prime necessity, under the new conditions, was employment.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE DARINGS PLANNED

Phoebe Daring, who was fond of Toby Clark — as were, indeed, all of the Darings — did not forget her promise to ask the Little Mother what could be done for the boy. This "Little Mother" was Cousin Judith Eliot, scarcely more than a girl herself, who had come to live with the orphaned Darings and endeavor to train her wild and rather wayward charges in the ways they should go. The youngsters all adored Cousin Judith, yet she had no easy task, being a conscientious young woman and feeling deeply her grave responsibilities. Judith was an artist and had been studying miniature painting abroad when summoned to Riverdale by the sudden death of Mr. Daring. She painted some, still, in the seclusion of her pretty room, but was never too busy to attend to the children or to listen when they wished to consult her or to bewail their woes and tribulations.

Phoebe was no bother, for she was old enough and sufficiently mature not only to care for herself but to assist in the management of the younger ones. Phil, a frank, resourceful young fellow, was away at college and working hard. Becky was perhaps the most unruly of the lot; a tender-hearted, lovable child, but inclined to recklessness, willfulness and tomboy traits. It was hard to keep Becky "toein' de chalk-line," as old Aunt Hyacinth tersely put it, for restraint was a thing the girl abhorred. She fought constantly with Donald, the next younger, who always had a chip on his shoulder and defied everyone but Cousin Judith, while the clashes between Becky and little Sue — "who's dat obst'nit she wouldn't breave ef yo' tol' her she had to" (Aunt Hyacinth again) — were persistent and fearful. Before Judith came, the three younger Darings had grown careless, slangy and rude, and in spite of all admonitions they still lapsed at times into the old bad ways.

Judith loved them all. She knew their faults were due to dominant, aggressive natures inherited from their father, a splendid man who had been admired and respected by all who knew him, and that the lack of a mother's guiding hand had caused them to run wild for a while. But finer natures, more tender and trustful hearts, sweeter dispositions or better intentions could not be found in a multitude of similar children and their errors were never so serious that they could not be forgiven when penitence followed the fault, as it usually did.

A few days after the conversation recorded at the beginning of this story Phoebe went to Judith's room, where the Little Mother sat working on a miniature of Sue — the beauty of the family — and said:

"I'd like to do something for Toby Clark. We're all dreadfully sorry for

him.”

“What has happened to Toby?” asked Judith.

“Mr. Ferguson’s death has thrown him out of employment and it will be hard for him to find another place,” explained Phoebe. “His bad foot bars him from ordinary work, you know, and jobs are always scarce in Riverdale. Besides, Toby wants to become a lawyer, and if he cannot continue his study of the law he’ll lose all the advantages he gained through the judge’s help and sympathy. Our dear old friend’s passing was a loss to us all, but to no one more than to Toby Clark.”

“Has he any money saved up?” asked Judith thoughtfully.

“Not much, I fear. His wages were always small, you know, and — he had to live.”

“Won’t the Fergusons do anything for him?”

“They’re eager to,” replied Phoebe, “but Toby won’t accept money. He almost cried, Janet told me, when Mrs. Ferguson offered to assist him. He’s a terribly proud boy, Cousin Judith, and that’s going to make it hard for us to help him. If he thought for a moment we were offering him charity, he’d feel humiliated and indignant. Toby’s the kind of boy that would starve without letting his friends know he was hungry.”

“He won’t starve, dear,” asserted Judith, smiling. “There’s a good deal of courage in Toby’s character. If he can’t do one thing to earn an honest living, he’ll do another. This morning I bought fish of him.”

“Fish!”

“Yes; he says he has turned fisherman until something better offers. I’m sure that Riverdale people will buy all the fish he can catch, for they’re good fish — we shall have some for dinner — and his prices are reasonable.”

“Oh, dear; I’m so sorry,” wailed Phoebe, really distressed. “The idea of that poor boy — a cripple — being obliged to carry fish around to the houses; and when he has the making of a fine lawyer in him, too!”

“Toby’s foot doesn’t bother him much,” observed Judith, dabbing at her palette. “He limps, to be sure, and needs the crutch; but his foot doesn’t hurt him, however much he uses it. Yet I think I admire his manly courage the more because the boy is capable of better things than fishing. I asked him, this morning, why he didn’t apply to Lawyer Kellogg for a position; but he said the judge never liked Kellogg and so Toby considered it disloyal to his friend’s memory to have any connection with the man. The chances are that he escaped a snub, for Mr. Kellogg detests everyone who loved Judge Ferguson.”

Phoebe nodded, absently.

“Mr. Kellogg will have the law business of Riverdale all to himself, now,”

she said.

"I doubt it," replied Judith. "Toby tells me a young man named Holbrook, a perfect stranger to Riverdale, has come here to practice law, and that he has rented Mr. Ferguson's old offices."

"Oh!" exclaimed Phoebe, surprised. "Then perhaps Mr. Holbrook will take Toby for his clerk. That would be fine!"

"I thought of that, too, and mentioned it to Toby," answered Cousin Judith; "but Mr. Holbrook said he didn't need a clerk and refused Toby's application."

"Then he doesn't know how bright and intelligent Toby is. Why should he, being a stranger! If some one would go to him and tell him how valuable the boy would be to him, after his experience with Mr. Ferguson, I'm sure the new lawyer would find a place for him."

Judith worked a while reflectively.

"That might be the best way to help Toby," she said. "But who is to go to Mr. Holbrook? It's a rather delicate thing to propose, you see, and yet the argument you have advanced is a just one. A young lawyer, beginning business and unknown to our people, would find a clever, capable young fellow — who is well liked in the community — of real value to him. It seems to me that Janet Ferguson would be the best person to undertake the mission, for she has an excuse in pleading for her father's former assistant."

"I'll see Janet about it," declared Phoebe, promptly, and she was so enthusiastic over the idea and so positive of success that she went at once to the Ferguson house to interview Janet.

This girl was about Phoebe's own age and the two had been good friends from the time they were mere tots. Janet was rather more sedate and serious-minded than Phoebe Daring, and had graduated with much higher honors at the high school, but their natures were congenial and they had always been much together.

"It's an excellent idea," said Janet, when the matter was explained to her. "I will be glad to call on Mr. Holbrook in regard to the matter, if you will go with me, Phoebe."

"Any time you say, Janet."

"I think we ought to wait a few days. Mr. Spaythe is trustee of father's estate, you know, and he has arranged to sell the office furniture to Mr. Holbrook. To-morrow all the papers and securities which father held in trust for his clients will be returned to their proper owners, and on the day after Mr. Holbrook will move into the offices for the first time. He is staying at the hotel, right now, and it seems to me best to wait until he is in his offices and established in business, for this is strictly a business matter."

“Of course; strictly business,” said Phoebe. “Perhaps you are right, Janet, but we mustn’t wait too long, for then Mr. Holbrook might employ some other clerk and Toby would be out of it. Let’s go to him day after to-morrow, as soon as he has possession of the office.”

“Very well.”

“At ten o’clock, say,” continued Phoebe. “There ‘s nothing like being prompt in such things. You stop at the house for me at nine-thirty, Janet, and we’ll go down town together.”

The arrangement being successfully concluded, Phoebe went home with a light heart. At supper-time Donald came tearing into the house, tossed his cap in a corner and with scarcely enough breath to speak announced:

“There’s a big row down at Spaythe’s Bank!”

“What’s up, Don?” asked Becky, for the family was assembled around the table.

“There’s a blue box missing from Judge Ferguson’s cupboard, and it belonged to that old cat, Mrs. Ritchie. She’s been nagging Mr. Spaythe for days to give it up to her, but for some reason he wouldn’t. This afternoon, when Spaythe cleaned out the old cupboard and took all the boxes over to his bank, Mrs. Ritchie was hot on his trail and discovered her blue box was not among the others. It’s really missing, and they can’t find hide nor hair of it. I heard Mr. Spaythe tell the old cat he did not know where it is or what’s become of it, and she was just furious and swore she’d have the banker arrested for burglary. It was the jolliest scrap you could imagine and there’ll be a royal rumpus that’ll do your hearts good before this thing is settled, I can promise you!”

The news astonished them all, for sensations of any sort were rare in Riverdale.

“What do you suppose has become of the box?” asked Phoebe.

“Give it up,” said Don, delighted to find himself so important.

“Perhaps Mr. Ferguson kept it somewhere else; in the bank vault, or at his house,” suggested Judith.

“Nope. Spaythe has looked everywhere,” declared Don. “Old Ritchie says she had a lot of money in that box, and bonds an’ s’curities to no end. She’s rich as mud, you know, but hates to lose a penny.”

“Dear me,” exclaimed Phoebe; “can’t she hold the Fergusons responsible?” appealing to Cousin Judith.

“I’m not sure of that,” replied the Little Mother, seriously, for here was a matter that might cause their lately bereaved friends an added misfortune. “If the box contained so much of value it would ruin the Fergusons to replace it. The question to be determined is when the box disappeared. If it was there

when Mr. Spaythe took possession of the office, I think he will be personally responsible."

"I don't know anything about that," said Don. "I was on my way home when I heard Mrs. Ritchie screeching like a lunatic that her box was stolen. I joined the crowd and we all followed to the bank, Mr. Spaythe in his automobile with the load of boxes and Ritchie running along beside the car jawing him like a crazy woman. She called him a thief and a robber at ev'ry step, but he paid no attention. Eric Spaythe had just closed the bank when we got there, but he helped his father carry in the truck, and Mrs. Ritchie watched every box that went in and yelled: 'That ain't it! That ain't it!' while the crowd laughed an' hooted. Then Mr. Spaythe tried to explain and quiet her, but she wouldn't listen to reason. So Eric and his father both went into the bank and locked the woman out when she wanted to follow them. It was lots of fun, about that time. I thought she'd smash in the glass with her umbrella; but while she was screaming an' threatening the Spaythes, Lawyer Kellogg happened to come along and he drew her aside. He whispered to her a minute an' then they both got into her buggy an' drove away. That broke up the circus, but ev'ryone says there'll be something doing before this thing is settled, unless that lost box turns up."

The information conveyed was not entirely lucid, but sufficiently so to disturb the whole Daring family. They were not at all interested in Mrs. Ritchie, but the Fergusons were such old and close friends that there was a general impression that the lost box might cost them all the judge had left and practically ruin them.

"We know," said Phoebe, in talking it over later, "that the judge was honest. Mrs. Ritchie knew that, too, or she wouldn't have put her valuables in his keeping."

"But it seems very unbusinesslike, on his part, to beep her valuables in an old wooden cupboard," declared Judith. "Judge Ferguson was quite old-fashioned about such matters and evidently had no fear of either fires or burglars."

"They never bothered him, neither," Don reminded her. "That old cupboard's been stuffed full of valuable papers and tin boxes for years, an' not a soul ever touched 'em."

"Oak doors, strong boxes and good locks," said Phoebe; "that accounts for their past safety. Those cupboard doors are as strong as a good many safes, and as far as burglars are concerned, they manage to break in anywhere if they get the chance. I don't believe anyone but a professional burglar could steal Mrs. Ritchie's box, and no burglar would take hers and leave all the others. Still, if it wasn't stolen, where is it? That's the question."

“It’s more than a question, Phoebe,” replied Don; “it’s a mystery.”

CHAPTER IV

HOW PHOEBE BECAME WORRIED

Reflecting on the astonishing information Don had conveyed, Phoebe went to her room and sat down at a small table near the window to which was fastened a telegraph instrument, the wire leading outside through a hole bored in the lower part of the sash.

A telegraph instrument is indeed a queer thing to be found in a young girl's room, yet its existence is simple enough when explained. Riverdale was an out-of-the-way town, quite as unenterprising as many Southern towns of its class. Its inhabitants followed slowly and reluctantly in the wake of progress. They had used electric lights since only the year before, getting the current from Canton, ten miles away, where there was more enterprise and consequently more business. Canton also supplied telephone service to Bayport and Riverdale, but the cost of construction and installation was considered so high that as yet Riverdale had but three connections: one at the post office, a public toll station; one at Spaythe's bank and one at the newspaper office. The citizens thought these three provided for all needs and so they did not encourage the Canton telephone company to establish a local exchange for the residences of their village.

Some were annoyed by this lack of public interest in so convenient a utility as the telephone. The Randolphs would have liked one in their house, and so would the Darings, the Camerons, the Fergusons and a few others; but these were obliged to wait until there was sufficient demand to warrant the establishment of an exchange.

The telegraph operator of the village was a young fellow who had been a schoolmate of both Phil and Phoebe Daring, although he was some few years their elder. Dave Hunter had gone to St. Louis to study telegraphy and afterward served as an assistant in several cities until he finally managed to secure the position of operator in his home town.

The Hunters were nice people, but of humble means, and Dave was really the breadwinner for his widowed mother and his sister Lucy, a bright and pretty girl of Phoebe's age. Encouraged by her brother's success, Lucy determined to become a telegraph operator herself, as many girls are now doing; but to avoid the expense of going to a school of telegraphy Dave agreed to teach her during his leisure hours. In order to do this he stretched a wire from his office to his home, two blocks away, and placed instruments at either end so that Lucy could practice by telegraphing to her brother and receiving messages in reply.

She was getting along famously when Phoebe Daring and Nathalie

Cameron called on her one day and were delighted by her ability to telegraph to her brother.

"Why, it's as good as a telephone, and much more fun," declared Phoebe, and Nathalie asked:

"Why couldn't we have telegraphs in our own houses, and get Dave to teach us how to use them! Then we could talk to one another whenever we pleased — rain or shine."

The idea appealed to Phoebe. Lucy telegraphed the suggestion to her brother and he readily agreed to teach the girls if they provided instruments and stretched wires between the various houses. That would be quite an expense, he warned them, and they would have to get permission from the village board to run the wires through the streets.

Nothing daunted, they immediately set to work to accomplish their novel purpose. Marion Randolph, the eldest of the Randolph children, was home from college at this time and entered heartily into the scheme. They were joined by Janet Ferguson, and the four girls, representing the best families in the village, had no trouble in getting permission to put up the wires, especially when they had the judge to argue their case for them.

Dave, seeing he could turn an honest penny, undertook to put up the wires, for there was not enough business at the Riverdale telegraph office to demand his entire time and Lucy was now competent to take his place when he was away. He connected the houses of the Darings, the Randolphs, the Camerons and the Fergusons, and then he connected them with his own home. For, as Lucy was the original telegraph girl, it would never do to leave her out of the fun, although she could not be asked to share the expense.

Lucy seemed a little embarrassed because Dave accepted money for his work and for teaching the four girls how to operate. "You see," she said one day when they were all assembled in her room, "Dave has lately developed a money-making disposition. You mustn't breathe it, girls, but I've an idea he's in love!"

"Oh, Lucy! In love?"

"He's been very sweet on Hazel Chandler, the postmaster's daughter, of late, and I sometimes think they've had an understanding and will be married, some day — when they have enough money. Poor Hazel hasn't anything, you know, for there are so many in the Chandler family that the postmaster's salary and all they can make out of the little stationery store in the post office is used up in living."

"It's used up mostly by Mrs. Chandler's social stunts," declared Nathalie. "She's proud of being the leader of Riverdale society, and a D. A. R., and several other things. But doesn't Hazel get anything for tending the shop and

handing out the mail when her father is away?"

"Not a cent. She's lucky to get her board. And when she's not in the shop her mother expects her to do housework. Poor thing! It would be a relief to her to marry and have a home of her own. I hope Dave'll manage it, and I'd love to have Hazel for a sister," said Lucy. "Mind you, girls, this is a secret; I'm not even positive I'm right in my suspicions; but I wanted to explain why Dave took the money."

"He was perfectly right in doing so, under any circumstances," declared Phoebe, and the others agreed with her.

Phoebe and Marion learned telegraphy very quickly, developing surprising aptitude; Nathalie Cameron was not far behind them, but Janet Ferguson, a remarkably bright girl in her studies, found the art quite difficult to master and made so many blunders that she added materially to the delight they all found in telegraphing to one another on all possible occasions. When Marion went back to college the other four continued to amuse themselves by gossiping daily over the wire; but gradually, as the novelty of the thing wore away, they became less eager to use their lately acquired powers and so, at the period of this story, the click of an instrument was seldom heard except when there was some question to ask or some real news to communicate. By concerted arrangement they were all alert to a "call" between six and seven in the evening and from eight to nine in the mornings, but their trained ears now recognized the click-click! if they were anywhere within hearing of it.

Cousin Judith was much amused and interested in this odd diversion of Phoebe's, and she recognized the educational value of the accomplishment the girl had acquired and generously applauded her success. Indeed, Phoebe was admitted the most skillful operator of them all. But aside from the amusement and instruction it furnished, the little telegraph circuit was of no practical value and could in no way be compared with the utility of the telephone.

On this evening, after hearing the exciting news of the loss of Mrs. Ritchie's box, Phoebe went to her room with the idea of telegraphing to Janet and asking about the matter. But as she sat down before the instrument she remembered that the Ferguson household was a sad and anxious one just now and it was scarcely fitting to telegraph to her friend in regard to so personal and important an affair. She decided to run over in the morning for a quiet talk with Janet and meantime to call the other girls and ask them for further news. She got Lucy Hunter first, who said that Dave had come home full of the gossip caused by the missing box, but some one had come for him and he had suddenly gone away without telling the last half of his story.

Then Phoebe, after a long delay, got Nathalie Cameron on the wire and Nathalie had a lot to tell her. Mr. Cameron was a retired manufacturer who was considered quite wealthy. Several years ago he had discovered Riverdale and brought his family there to live, that he might "round out his life," as he said, amid quiet and peaceful scenes. He was a director in Spaythe's bank, as had been Judge Ferguson. Mr. Cameron also owned a large plantation that adjoined the property of Mrs. Ritchie, on the Bayport road. Nathalie told Phoebe that the Cameron box, containing many valuable papers but no money, had also been in the judge's cupboard, but Mr.

Spaythe had reported it safe and untampered with. Nor had any box other than Mrs. Ritchie's been taken. So far as they knew, the Ritchie box was the only one in Mr. Ferguson's care that contained money, and it seemed as if the thief, whoever he might be, was aware of this and so refrained from disturbing any of the others. This theory, reported Nathalie, was sure to limit the number of suspects to a possible few and her father was positive that the burglar would soon be caught. Mr. Cameron had been at the bank and witnessed Mrs. Ritchie's display of anger and indignation when her box could not be found. He had thought Mr. Spaythe rather too cold and unsympathetic, but the banker's nature was reserved and unemotional.

"Father says the woman was as good as a vaudeville," continued Nathalie, clicking out the words, "but not quite so circumspect — so you can imagine the scene! She is said to be rich and prosperous, but was furious over her loss and threatened Mr. Spaythe with so many horrible penalties, unless he restored her property, that he had to take refuge inside the bank and lock the door on her."

This was merely such gossip as Phoebe had heard from Don, but it was interesting to have the details from another viewpoint.

To understand the excitement caused by the disappearance of Mrs. Ritchie's box it is only necessary to remember that Riverdale is a sleepy old town where anything out of the ordinary seldom happens. In a big city such an occurrence would be a mere detail of the day's doings and the newspapers would not accord it sufficient importance to mention it in a paragraph; but in Riverdale, where a humdrum, droning life prevailed, the mysterious incident roused the entire community to a state of wonder and speculation. The theft, or loss, or whatever it was, became indeed the "talk of the town."

The principals in the scandal, moreover, were important people, or as important as any that Riverdale possessed. Mrs. Ritchie owned one of the largest plantations — or "farms" — in the neighborhood, left her long ago by her deceased husband; Mr. Spaythe was the local banker; Judge Ferguson had been known and highly respected far and wide. Therefore the weekly

newspaper in the town was sure to print several columns of comment on the affair, provided the tipsy old compositor employed by the editor could set so much type before the paper went to press.

The following morning Phoebe walked over to see Janet and found that the Fergusons were face to face with a new and serious trouble. It was true that the Ritchie box had vanished and no one could imagine where it had gone to.

"Papa was very orderly, in his way," said Janet, "and he had a book in which he kept a complete list of all papers and securities in his care and a record of whatever he delivered to the owners. Mrs. Ritchie's account shows he had received money, bonds and mortgages from her, amounting in value to several thousand dollars, and these were kept in a heavy tin box painted blue, with the name 'Ritchie' upon it in white letters. With many similar boxes it was kept in the oak cupboard at the office, and my father always carried the keys himself. We gave these keys to Mr. Spaythe because we knew he was father's executor, and he found all the boxes, with their contents undisturbed, except that of Mrs. Ritchie. It is very strange," she added, with a sigh.

"Perhaps the judge removed it from the cupboard just before his — his attack," said Phoebe. "Have you searched the house?"

"Everywhere. And it is not among father's papers at the bank. One of the most curious things about the affair," continued Janet, "is that Mrs. Ritchie came to the house the very day after father's death to demand her box, and she was so insistent that I had to send for Toby Clark to take her away. No one else bothered us at all; only this woman whose property was even then missing."

"Are you sure she didn't go to the office and get the box?" asked Phoebe, suddenly suspicious of this queer circumstance.

"Why, she hadn't the keys; nor had Toby. Mr. Spaythe found the cupboard properly locked. On the bunch of small keys which father carried is one labelled 'Ritchie,' and it proved there was a complicated lock on the box which could not have been picked."

"That's nothing," returned Phoebe. "Whoever took the box could break it open at leisure. It was merely tin; a can-opener would do the job."

"Yes; I'm sure that was why the entire box was taken away. It was the only one that contained money to tempt a thief. Mrs. Ritchie, for some reason, never trusted banks. She has some very peculiar ideas, you know. Whenever she needed money she came to father and got it out of the box, giving him a receipt for it and taking a receipt when she deposited money. The record book shows that she had about three thousand dollars in currency

in her box when it — disappeared; and there were government bonds for several thousands more, besides notes and mortgages and other securities."

"Can she hold you responsible for this property?" inquired Phoebe.

"Mr. Spaythe says that she can, but he is confident she will not attempt to collect it from us. He was here this morning and had a long talk with mother. He assured her the box will surely be found in time, and told her not to worry. We are liable to suffer our greatest annoyance from Mrs. Ritchie, who won't be patient and wait for an investigation. The woman is very nervous and excitable and seems to think we are trying to defraud her."

"I — I don't suppose there is anything I can do?" said Phoebe helplessly.

"No, dear; nothing at all. Mr. Spaythe says not to pay any attention to Mrs. Ritchie and has asked us not to talk about the affair until the mystery is solved. If anyone asks questions we must refer them to Mr. Spaythe. So you mustn't repeat what I've told you, Phoebe."

"I won't. Don says Mrs. Ritchie went away with Lawyer Kellogg last night."

"I suppose Mr. Kellogg would like to take her case and make us all the trouble he can," replied Janet bitterly.

"Why doesn't Mr. Spaythe see Mr. Holbrook?" asked Phoebe.

"I don't know. Perhaps he has seen him.

Anyhow, I'm sure Mr. Spaythe will do everything in his power to find the box. He was one of father's best friends and we know him to be an honorable man and very capable in all ways. We feel that we may trust Mr. Spaythe."

Phoebe did not reply to this. She was wondering if anyone could be trusted in such a peculiar complication.

CHAPTER V

HOW PHOEBE INTERVIEWED THE LAWYER

Phoebe Daring returned home more mystified than ever in regard to the missing box. The girl was by nature logical and inquiring and aside from the interest she felt in the Fergusons the mystery appealed to her curiosity and aroused in her a disposition to investigate it on her own account. That day, however, there was no development in the affair. Mrs. Ritchie kept out of sight and aside from the gossip indulged in by the villagers concerning the discreditable scene at the bank the night before, the excitement incident to the loss of the precious blue box seemed to have subsided. Don and Becky reported that all the school children were talking about the lost box and that many absurd statements were made concerning its disappearance.

"I had to punch one of the fellows for saying that Judge Ferguson spent Mrs. Ritchie's money and then committed suicide," announced Don. "He took it back, afterward, and said that Kellogg robbed the judge for revenge. There may be some truth in that, for Kellogg paid his board bill the other day. Another kid said he dreamed it was Will Chandler, the postmaster, who cut a hole through the ceiling of the post office and so got into the judge's cupboard. Nearly everybody in town is accused by somebody, they say, and I wouldn't be surprised to hear that I stole the box myself."

"I don't believe there *was* any box," muttered Becky. "Ol' Mam Ritchie's half crazy, an' I guess she just imagined it."

"Wake up, Beck," said Don; "you're dreaming."

"That proves I've a brain," retorted his sister. "No one can dream who hasn't a brain; which is the reason, my poor Don, you never dream."

"He snores, though," declared Sue.

"I don't!" cried Don indignantly.

"You snore like a pig; I've heard you."

"Never!"

"I'll leave it to Becky," said Sue.

"If she sides with you, I'll pinch her till she's black-an'-blue," promised Don angrily.

"I dare you," said Becky, bristling at the threat.

"Now — now!" warned Phoebe; "there'll be a fight in a minute, and some one will be sorry. Cool off, my dears, and don't get excited over nothing. Have you got your lessons for to-morrow?"

At nine thirty next morning Janet Ferguson stopped at the house, as she had promised to do, and Phoebe put on her things and joined her friend on the way to town, to interview Mr. Holbrook.

“Any news?” asked Phoebe.

Janet shook her head.

“We haven’t heard from Mr. Spaythe since I saw you. Mother’s dreadfully nervous over the thing, which followed so soon after father’s death. I hope Mrs. Ritchie’s box will be found, for it would relieve us both of much anxiety.”

“I hope so, too,” replied Phoebe.

When they arrived at the well-known stairway leading to the offices which Judge Ferguson had occupied for so many years, Janet was rather shocked to find a showy new sign suspended above the entrance. It bore the words: “JOHN HOLBROOK, Attorney at Law,” and another but smaller tin sign was tacked to the door at the head of the stairs.

Phoebe knocked and a voice bade them enter. Mr. Holbrook was seated at a table with several law books spread open before him. But he sat in an easy attitude, smoking his cigarette, and both the girls decided the array of legal lore was intended to impress any clients who might chance to stray into the office.

“I am Miss Ferguson,” said Janet in stiff and formal tones. He bowed and tossed his cigarette through the open window, looking at Janet rather curiously and then turning to Phoebe. “Miss Daring, sir.”

He bowed again, very courteously, as he placed chairs for them. Somehow, they felt relieved by his polite manner. Neither had expected to find so young a man or one so handsome and well dressed and it occurred to Phoebe to wonder why Mr. Holbrook had selected this out-of-the-way corner, where he was wholly unknown, in which to practice law. Riverdale was normally an exceedingly quiet town and possessed few attractions for strangers.

Janet began the conversation.

“We have come to see you in regard to Toby Clark,” she said. “He was in my father’s employ for several years, first as office boy and then as clerk, and Judge Ferguson thought very highly of him and trusted him fully. Toby injured his foot a year ago and limps badly, but that doesn’t interfere much with his activity, and so we thought — we hoped — ”

She hesitated, here, because Mr. Holbrook was looking at her with an amused smile. But Phoebe helped her out.

“Toby is without employment, just now,” she explained, “and we believe it will be to your advantage to secure him as an assistant.”

“The young man has already applied to me,” said the lawyer. “I was obliged to decline his application.”

“I know,” said Phoebe; “but perhaps you did not realize his value. Toby is

very popular in Riverdale and knows every one of Judge Ferguson's former clients personally."

"I do not need a clerk," returned Mr. Holbrook, rather shortly.

"But you are a stranger here and you will pardon my saying that it is evident you wish to secure business, or you would not have opened a law office. Also you are anxious to succeed to Judge Ferguson's practice, or you would not so promptly have rented the office he had occupied. Nothing will help you to succeed more than to employ Toby Clark, who was the judge's old clerk and knew a good deal about his law business. Toby is as much a part of the outfit of this office as the furniture," she added with a smile.

"I thank you for your consideration of my interests," said Mr. Holbrook.

Phoebe flushed.

"I admit that we are more interested, for the moment, in Toby Clark," she replied. "Like everyone else in Riverdale who knows the boy, we are fond of him, and so we want him to have the opportunity to continue his studies of the law. He is very poor, you know, and cannot afford to go to college just yet; so nothing would assist him more than for you to employ him, just as Judge Ferguson did."

Mr. Holbrook drummed with his fingers on the table, in an absent way. He was evidently puzzled how to answer this fair pleader. Then he suddenly straightened up, sat back in his chair and faced the two girls frankly.

"I am, as you state, an entire stranger here," said he, "and for that reason I must tell you something of myself or you will not understand my refusal to employ Toby Clark. I — "

"Excuse me," said Janet, rising; "we did not intend to force your confidence, sir." We thought that perhaps, when you were informed of the value of my father's clerk, you might be glad to employ him, and we would like to have you do so; but having presented the case to the best of our ability we can only leave you to decide as you think best."

"Sit down, please, Miss Ferguson," he replied earnestly. "It is indeed to my advantage to make friends in Riverdale, rather than enemies, and as I am unable to employ Toby Clark you are likely to become annoyed by my refusal, unless you fully understand my reasons. Therefore I beg you will allow me to explain."

Janet glanced at Phoebe, who had remained seated. Her friend nodded, so Janet sat down again. The truth was that Miss Daring was curious to hear Mr. Holbrook's explanation.

"I've had my own way to make in the world," began the young man, in a hesitating, uncertain tone, but gathering confidence as he proceeded. "There was no one to put me through college, so I worked my way — doing all sorts

of disagreeable jobs to pay expenses. After I got my degree and was admitted to the bar I was without a dollar with which to begin the practice of law. Yet I had to make a start, somehow or other, and it occurred to me that a small town would be less expensive to begin in than a city. During the past summer I worked hard. I don't mind telling you that I tended a soda-fountain in St. Louis and remained on duty twelve hours a day. I earned an excellent salary, however, and by the first of October believed I had saved enough money to start me in business. Seeking a small and desirable town, I arrived in Riverdale and liked the place. While hesitating whether or not to make it my permanent location, Judge Ferguson died, and that decided me. I imagined I might find a good opening here by trying to fill his place. I rented these offices and paid a month's rent in advance. I purchased this furniture and the law library from Mr. Spaythe, the executor, and partly paid for it in cash. My board at the hotel is paid for up to Saturday night, and I had some letterheads and cards printed and my signs painted. All this indicates me prosperous, but the cold fact, young ladies, is that I have at this moment exactly one dollar and fifteen cents in my pocket, and no idea where the next dollar is coming from. Absurd, isn't it? And amusing, too, if we consider it philosophically. I'm putting up a good front, for a pauper, and I'm not at all dismayed, because I believe myself a good lawyer. I've an idea that something will occur to furnish me with a paying client in time to save the day. But you can readily understand that under such circumstances I cannot employ a clerk, even at a minimum salary. I must be my own office-boy and errand-boy until my living expenses are assured and I can see the week's wage ahead for my assistant. And now, Miss Ferguson and Miss Daring, you have the bare facts in the case and I hope you will be able to forgive me for refusing your request."

The girls had listened in some amazement, yet there was little in Mr. Holbrook's ingenuous statement to cause surprise. Such a condition was easily understood and quite plausible in this aggressive age. But the story affected the two girls differently. Janet developed an admiration for the bold, masterful way in which this impecunious young fellow had established himself. Such a combination of audacity and courage could scarcely fail to lead him to success.

Phoebe, on the other hand, thought she detected a false note running through the smooth recital. It seemed to her that Mr. Holbrook had either invented the entire story on the spur of the moment or was holding something back — perhaps both — for reasons of his own. She did not doubt the main point of the story, that he was absolutely penniless and dependent upon the uncertainties of his law business for a living; but she felt sure he

had not confided to them his actual history, or any important details of his past life. She reflected that this young fellow wore expensive clothes and that every detail of his apparel, from the patent-leather shoes to the white silk tie with its jeweled stick-pin, denoted extravagance rather than cautious economy, such as he had claimed he had practiced. A silk-lined overcoat hung upon a peg and beside it was a hat of better quality than the young men of Riverdale wore. A taste for expensive clothes might be a weakness with the lawyer, and while Phoebe hesitated to condemn him for the endeavor to present a prosperous appearance she could not help thinking he would have saved a good deal more money as soda-water clerk had he been content with more modest attire. Imagine dapper Mr. Holbrook a soda-water clerk! Phoebe was almost sure that was one of the inventions. Yet she, as well as Janet, admitted the frank and winning personality of the young lawyer and felt she knew and appreciated him better since listening to his story.

"Of course," continued Holbrook, a little anxiously, "this confidence places me at a disadvantage in your eyes. If Riverdale knows me as you do I shall be ruined."

"We shall respect your confidence, sir," said Janet, less stiffly than before, "and we now fully understand why you cannot, at present, employ Toby Clark. Perhaps, by and by — "

"If I succeed, I shall give Toby the first job in my office," he promised earnestly.

"Thank you, sir. Come, Phoebe."

But Phoebe again refused to stir. She was pondering something in her mind and presently gave it expression.

"Toby Clark," said she, "injured his foot while endeavoring to serve the family fortunes of the Darings, so we are really under serious obligations to the boy. But he is so proud and shy, Mr. Holbrook, that were we to offer him assistance at this crisis in his affairs, he would be hurt and humiliated. And he would refuse to accept any help that savored of charity."

Mr. Holbrook nodded, smiling at her.

"I understand that disposition, Miss Daring," said he, "for I have similar qualities of independence myself."

"Yet something must be done for Toby," she continued, "or else the boy will lose all the advantages of his former association with Judge Ferguson and perhaps starve or freeze when the cold weather comes on. From your explanation, sir, and the promise you have just made to Miss Ferguson, I understand your sole reason for not employing Toby is the lack of money with which to pay his wages. Is that correct!"

"Entirely so, Miss Daring. I appreciate the advantages of having this

young fellow with me, since he is so well acquainted hereabouts and is somewhat posted in Mr. Ferguson's business affairs; but — "

"Then," said Phoebe, "we must organize a conspiracy, we three, and help Toby without his ever suspecting it." We Darings are not wealthy, Mr. Holbrook, but we have more means than we absolutely require and it will be a great pleasure to us to pay Toby Clark's salary as your clerk until you become prosperous enough to pay it yourself. Judge Ferguson was not over-liberal in the matter of wages and gave Toby but five dollars a week in money; but he also gave him a wealth of kindly sympathy and much assistance in the study of law. I want you to hire Toby at the same wages — five dollars a week — and try to assist him at odd times as the judge did. No one but we three shall ever know how the wages are supplied, and especially must the secret be guarded from Toby. What do you say to this proposition, Mr. Holbrook?"

Janet was filled with admiration of this clever idea and looked appealingly at the young man. Mr. Holbrook flushed slightly, then frowned and began drumming on the table with his fingers again. Presently he looked up and asked:

"Will this arrangement be a source of satisfaction to you young ladies?"

"It will give us great pleasure," declared Phoebe.

"And it will be splendid for Toby," added Janet.

"Do you also realize that it is an assistance to me — that it will add to the false evidences of my prosperity?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, I was not considering you at all," said Phoebe quickly, fearing he might refuse. "I was only thinking of Toby; but if you find any advantage in

the arrangement I hope it will repay you for your kindness to our friend — and to ourselves."

Mr. Holbrook smiled. Then he nodded cheerfully and replied:

"It would be very ungracious of me to say no, under such quaint conditions, and therefore we will consider the matter as settled, Miss Daring."

"I will send you a check for twenty dollars, which will be four weeks' wages for Toby, in advance," she said. "And each month I will send you twenty more, until you notify me you are able to assume the obligation yourself."

He shook his head, still smiling.

"Send me five dollars each week," said he. "Otherwise, in my present circumstances, I might be tempted to spend Toby's wages on myself."

"Very well, if you prefer it so." Then, half turning toward the door, she added: "I thank you, Mr. Holbrook. Your cooperation in this little conspiracy of mine has relieved me of a great anxiety; indeed, it will give pleasure to all who know Toby Clark and are interested in his welfare. I shall not forget that we owe you this kindness."

He bowed rather gravely in acknowledgment of this pretty speech and then they heard hasty steps mounting the stairs and the door opened abruptly to admit Mr. Spaythe.

CHAPTER VI

HOW TOBY CAME TO GRIEF

The banker of Riverdale was perhaps the most important personage in the community, not even excepting Will Chandler. A man of considerable wealth and sterling character, Mr. Spaythe was greatly respected by high and low and was deemed reliable in any emergency. In character he was somewhat stern and unyielding and his sense of justice and honor was so strong that he was uncharitably bitter and harsh toward any delinquent in such matters. As an old friend of the late Judge Ferguson he had accepted the responsibilities of administering his estate and was engaged in fulfilling his duties with businesslike celerity and exactness when the unpleasant incident of Mrs. Ritchie's missing box came up to annoy him. Mr. Ferguson's affairs were in perfect order; Mr. Spaythe knew that the box had disappeared since his demise; but the affair required rigid investigation and the banker had undertaken to solve the mystery in his own way, without confiding in or consulting anybody.

Mr. Spaythe was usually so deliberate and unexcitable in demeanor that his sudden entrance and agitated manner made both the girls, who knew him well, gasp in astonishment. He seemed to be startled to find them in young Mr. Holbrook's office and his red face took on a deeper glow as he stared first at one and then at the other.

"We were just going," said Phoebe, understanding that Mr. Spaythe had come to see the lawyer, and then both the girls bowed and turned toward the door.

"One moment, please," said the banker earnestly, as he held out an arm with a restraining gesture. "A most extraordinary thing has happened, in which you will doubtless be interested. Mrs. Ritchie has just had Toby Clark arrested for stealing her box!"

Phoebe sank into a chair, weak and trembling, and as she did so her eyes swept Mr. Holbrook's face and noticed that it flushed scarlet. But the wave of color quickly receded and he turned a look of grave inquiry upon Mr. Spaythe.

"How absurd!" exclaimed Janet indignantly.

"Yes, it is absurd," agreed the banker, in a nervous manner, "but it is quite serious, as well. I am sure Toby is innocent, but Mrs. Ritchie has employed Abner Kellogg as her counselor and Kellogg would delight in sending Toby to prison — if he can manage to do so."

"That box must be found!" cried Phoebe.

Mr. Spaythe frowned.

“It *has* been found,” he rejoined bitterly.

“Where?”

“In a rubbish-heap at the back of Toby Clark’s shanty, down by the river. It is Mrs. Ritchie’s box, beyond doubt; I have seen it; the cover had been wrenched off and — it was empty.”

The two girls stared at one another in speechless amazement. Mr. Holbrook stood by his table, watching them curiously, but he did not seem to share their astonishment. Mr. Spaythe sat down in a chair and wiped his forehead with a handkerchief.

“Who arrested Toby?” asked Janet.

“Parsons, the constable. The warrant was issued by Powell, a justice of the peace, on a sworn statement made by Mrs. Ritchie and Abner Kellogg.”

“And Sam Parsons — Toby’s friend — has put him in jail?”

“Yes; he was obliged to do that, you know.”

Phoebe was gradually recovering her composure.

“He can be bailed out, I suppose,” she suggested.

Mr. Spaythe turned to the lawyer.

“That is what I have come to see you about, Mr. Holbrook,” he said. “Since this remarkable development in the matter of the missing box, I shall be obliged to employ counsel. I would like to engage you to defend Toby Clark.”

The young man bowed.

“I am fortunate, sir, to have so important a case brought to me so early in my career,” he replied. “I will do my best for your protégé, I assure you.”

“Toby Clark is no protégé of mine,” declared the banker sternly. “But,” he added, more mildly, “he was Judge Ferguson’s protégé and I believe the boy incapable of this alleged theft. Therefore I propose he shall be properly defended. I will be personally responsible for your fee, Mr. Holbrook.”

“That is quite satisfactory to me, sir.”

“But about the bail,” cried Janet impatiently. “We cannot allow Toby to remain in that dreadful jail!”

“The county seat is at Bayport,” observed the lawyer. “We have no judge here who is authorized to accept bail for an accused criminal. Toby Clark must be taken to Bayport for a preliminary hearing, at which I will appear in his behalf, instruct him to plead not guilty and then demand his release on bail. If you will drive over with me, Mr. Spaythe, I’ve no doubt the bail can be easily arranged.”

“When will his case be tried?” asked the banker.

“The next term of court is the first week in December. The trial will of course be at Bayport.”

“What a long time to wait!” exclaimed Janet.

“Never mind; it will give us time to discover the real criminal,” said Phoebe decidedly. “In that event Toby’s case will never be tried.”

Mr. Spaythe nodded. Then he shifted uneasily in his chair a moment and asked:

“Ought we to employ a detective, Mr. Holbrook?”

“Of course!” said Phoebe. “That is the first thing to be done.”

“Pardon me, Miss Daring,” returned the lawyer seriously, “I think that should be reserved as our final resource. Riverdale is so small a place that the movements of every inhabitant may easily be traced. I believe I possess some small talent in the detective way myself — a good criminal lawyer ought to be a good detective, it is said — so if Clark is really innocent it ought not to be difficult to discover the real criminal.”

“I don’t like that ‘if,’ Mr. Holbrook,” said Phoebe resentfully.

The young man flushed again. It seemed to be one of his characteristics to change color, on occasion, and he was aware of this failing and evidently annoyed by it. At Phoebe’s remark he bit his lip and hesitated a moment. Then he replied with dignity:

“The ‘if’ was not intended to condemn your friend, Miss Daring. Even the law holds him innocent until he is proved guilty. But you must remember that Toby Clark is a perfect stranger to me and perhaps you will admit that circumstantial evidence is at present against him. The box was found on his premises, it seems, and he had the keys to this office at the time of Judge Ferguson’s death. Even before there was a rumor that anything was missing from the place I urged the boy to get rid of the key — merely as a matter of ordinary precaution.”

“I know that is true,” said Mr. Spaythe. “When Toby brought the key to me he said you had advised him to do so.”

“Still,” continued the lawyer reflectively, “the circumstantial evidence, while it might influence a jury, can have no effect upon those who know the boy’s character and believe in his honesty. The thing for me to do, if I undertake this case, is first to discover who knew of Mrs. Ritchie’s box — ”

“Why, everybody, nearly, knew of it,” said Phoebe. “She’s a queer old creature and, having used the judge for a banker, was constantly coming to him to deposit money or to get it from her box. I’ve no doubt she imagined it was a secret, but Mrs. Ritchie’s box was a matter of public gossip.”

“The next thing,” continued Mr. Holbrook quietly, “is to discover who were Toby Clark’s enemies.”

“I don’t believe he had one in Riverdale,” asserted Phoebe.

“The real criminal placed the rifled box on Toby Clark’s premises, where

if found it would implicate him in the theft. No one but an enemy would have done that," declared the young man, but he spoke argumentively and there was not an earnest ring to his words. "Then," he resumed, "we must watch and see what citizen has suddenly acquired money. There are no professional burglars in Riverdale, I imagine, so the thief will be unable to resist the temptation to use some of the stolen money. Really, Mr. Spaythe, the case is so simple that I am positive we shall have no need of a detective. Indeed, a detective in town would be quickly recognized and his very presence would defeat us by putting the criminal on guard. Let us proceed quietly to ferret out the mystery ourselves. I already feel reasonably certain of success and, when I have interviewed Toby Clark, which I shall do at once, he will perhaps be able to furnish us with a clew."

This logical reasoning appealed to Mr. Spaythe and silenced even Phoebe's objections. The girls left the office filled with horror of the cowardly charge brought against the poor boy they had so earnestly sought to aid.

On their way home Janet said:

"Of course this will prevent Mr. Holbrook from carrying out his agreement, for until Toby's innocence is proved we cannot expect anyone to give him employment."

"Why not?" asked Phoebe, who was trembling with nervous excitement. "Do you suppose anyone in Riverdale would doubt Toby's honesty, just because that miserable Abner Kellogg and old Mrs. Ritchie accuse him? I think it would be a clever thing for Mr. Holbrook to take him into his office at once. It would make the lawyer lots of friends."

"Perhaps that is true," answered Janet doubtfully; "but Mr. Holbrook can't be expected to believe in Toby as implicitly as we do. He may think it would injure his reputation to employ one accused of stealing. If he did, we could not blame him."

Phoebe made no reply. Parting from Janet at the gate she ran into the house and straight to Cousin Judith's room, where she first had a crying spell and then related the startling incidents of the morning.

The Little Mother was greatly shocked and quite as indignant as Phoebe had been. But she tried to comfort the girl by assuring her that Toby would be proved innocent.

"I think Mr. Spaythe was fortunate in securing Mr. Holbrook to defend Toby," she added. "As this is his first case, it will be an opportunity for him to make a fine reputation in Riverdale by winning it, and as he seems a young man of ability and judgment we may depend on his doing his utmost and in the end clearing Toby triumphantly."

That didn't seem to reassure Phoebe.

"I think Mr. Holbrook has both ability and judgment," she agreed. "He impressed me as being a very clever young man — too clever to be altogether trusted."

"Oh, Phoebe!"

"He looks honest, and talks honest," the girl went on, "but there's something about him — his manner or his smile; I don't know what — that makes me think he is not sincere."

Judith looked at her thoughtfully.

"Nevertheless," she rejoined, "it is to his interest to free his client, and from what you say he already believes that he can do so."

"I didn't like several things he said," remarked Phoebe. "Once he said 'if' Toby was innocent — just as if there could be any doubt about it! — and he wouldn't allow Mr. Spaythe to send to the city for a detective."

"He may be wise in that," affirmed Judith. "Doubtless he prefers to wait and see what the next few days develop. If he is able to solve the mystery himself it will be best to keep a detective out of it. The detective would be a stranger, you know, and at their best detectives are not infallible."

Phoebe sighed.

"What a cruel thing for Mrs. Ritchie to do!" she said. "And just when Janet and I had settled Toby's affairs so nicely and obtained for him just the position he would have liked best."

The Little Mother smiled.

"Was I wrong to promise that we would pay Toby 's wages?" asked Phoebe quickly.

"No, dear; I would have agreed to your plan very willingly. But it was placing Mr. Holbrook a rather delicate position, after his confession to you of his poverty, don't you think?"

"Perhaps so," said the girl. "But he took it very nicely. He seems gentlemanly and kind, Cousin Judith. I can't say why I don't wholly trust him. Janet thinks he acted splendidly and I imagine she is quite interested in her father's successor. I don't dislike him, myself, you know; only, until I've seen more of him, I can't exactly trust him."

"We cannot expect to find one able to fill Judge Ferguson's place," observed Judith regretfully.

There was great excitement among the young Darings when they came rushing home from school. The news of Toby's arrest had spread like wildfire throughout the village and the inhabitants of Riverdale were at first generally indignant and inclined to think that Toby Clark was being unjustly persecuted. When the details were learned, however, and it was known that

Mrs. Ritchie's blue box, battered and empty, had been found just back of Toby's shanty, there were some who began to believe in the boy's guilt, while others stoutly defended him.

The following morning, at the request of Lawyer Kellogg, an officer was sent over from Bayport who, in conjunction with Sam Parsons, the Riverdale constable, made a thorough search of Toby Clark's tumble-down house. It was so poor a place that the door was not even locked. There were but two rooms; that at the front, where Toby cooked and slept, and a little den at the back, which contained only a few bits of broken, cast-off furniture and some boxes and barrels. In this back room, concealed beneath a pile of old newspapers, the officers found a bundle of mortgages and other documents, the property of Mrs. Ritchie and which were of no value to anyone but their owner. The money and bonds, however, could not be found.

Armed with this fresh evidence against the prisoner the officers of the law went to the jail and urged the boy to confess.

"Tell the truth," said Jardyce, the Bayport policeman, "and the chances are you'll get a light sentence. It is foolish to continue to deny your guilt."

Toby, quite broken and despondent, for he felt deeply the disgrace of his accusation and arrest, stared at the officer in wonder.

"Are you sure you found those papers in my room?" he asked.

"There is no doubt of it."

"Then some one else put them there. Who do you suppose it could be, Sam?" inquired Toby, addressing Parsons, the constable, who had always been his friend.

"Can't imagine," was the gruff reply; then, noting Toby's appealing look, he turned to the Bayport man and added: "There's something crooked about this thing, Jardyce. I know, as well as I know anything, that Toby Clark had nothing to do with stealing that box."

"In spite of the evidence?"

"Bother the evidence! You know, an' I know, that lots of evidence is cooked up."

"Yes, that's true. I will say this," continued the policeman, thoughtfully, "that after a long experience with crooks of all sorts, this boy don't impress me as being guilty. But the evidence is mighty strong against him, you'll admit, and the chances are a jury will convict him without argument. Too bad, if he's innocent; but many an innocent man is serving time because he couldn't explain away the circumstantial evidence against him."

CHAPTER VII

HOW TOBY FOUND A FRIEND

The discovery of the incriminating papers cost Toby the confidence of many of his fellow townsmen. Popular opinion had been about evenly divided, before that, but it was hard to argue innocence in the face of such adverse evidence. Yet, even while conceding the boy's guilt, the Riverdale people were regretful and grieved rather than condemnatory.

"Ye see, it's this way," said Tom Rathbun the grocer to a crowd that had gathered in his store; "Toby's a nice little chap an' has tried to be honest. But he comes of bad stock; his father owed me seven dollars when he died an' his mother were addicted to drink, as you'll all remember. 'Tain't to be wondered at that with such parents Toby inherited some desprit bad failin's, an' when the jedge died, an' the boy's fat job was killed, he jes' natcherly yielded to the temptation to take Mrs. Ritchie's box, knowin' it were full o' money. Seems like if the jedge had lived Toby'd 'a' kep' himself honest, an' growed up to be a decent man; but when he lost his best friend he backslid an' got caught at it."

Rathbun's expression voiced the sentiment of the majority, although a few staunch friends refused to admit the evidence against Toby Clark. Perhaps the boy's most bitter condemnation came from Dave Hunter, the young telegraph operator, who seemed certain of Toby's guilt and proclaimed his conviction everywhere and on every occasion.

Lawyer Kellogg was jubilant over his success in "landing his bird at the first shot," as he proudly stated, and swaggered more pompously than ever. Mrs. Ritchie, however did not congratulate him. The woman seemed terribly nervous over the missing contents of her box and rated her lawyer for not recovering them. One important paper, especially, had disappeared, she claimed, and she laid more stress on Kellogg's finding that than on finding her money and bonds, although she was notoriously careful of her money.

"Drat the mortgages an' deeds!" she cried angrily; "no one could turn 'em into money if they tried; it's the negotiable stuff I want. An' you've got to get it, Abner Kellogg. The boy ain't had a chance to spend the money, or sell the bonds, an' there's no reason you can't make him give 'em up. Whatever else you do, though, you've got to find that other paper. I want it, an' I'm goin' to have it! We've got the thief, all right, so why don't you get back my property?"

"I can't, just yet," protested Kellogg. "The money is not on Toby's person and he won't tell where he's hid it. But be calm, Mrs. Ritchie; be calm and trust to me. When the case comes to trial I know a way to make Clark

confess, and I'll get every cent of your money and the missing paper, I promise you."

"I don't trust you," declared the old woman. "I think you're as big a villain as Toby Clark. I hired you 'cause you agreed to catch the thief and get my property back or you wouldn't charge a cent. I made you sign that agreement in black an' white."

"Quite true, Mrs. Ritchie; but give me time. I've got the thief, and I've recovered part of your property! Give me time and I'll get the money and the bonds. The boy can't spend anything while he's in jail and sooner or later he'll confess where he's hid the stuff."

"If you hadn't caught the thief," rejoined Mrs. Ritchie, savagely, "I could have held the Fergusons responsible. Now they're out of it and if you don't get the money from Toby it's gone for good. I want that paper, too."

"Don't worry; I'll get it all; give me time," repeated the lawyer.

Mr. Holbrook, on the other side of the case, was proceeding very leisurely. Orders had been received to have the prisoner brought to Bayport for a preliminary examination, and soon after Sam Parsons had left the jail with his charge, taking him in a buggy over to the county seat, the young lawyer and Mr. Spaythe started for the same place in the banker's automobile with Eric Spaythe, the banker's only son, acting as driver.

"This latest discovery looks very black for our client," remarked Holbrook, as they sped over the smooth country road.

"Do you refer to the finding of those papers?" asked Mr. Spaythe.

"Of course, sir. It's rather damning evidence."

"I cannot see that it is any worse than the finding of the box," asserted the banker.

"It fastens the accusation more firmly," Holbrook stated. "With us it can have no effect, but others will be likely to condemn our client on the strength of such conclusive proof."

"I do not care what others think," said Mr. Spaythe.

"No; I was referring solely to the jury that will try him. These jurors will be drawn from the entire county, and some will not be intimately acquainted with Toby Clark or have any confidence in his record for probity."

"Whoever placed the box in Toby's yard placed the papers in his room," asserted Eric, speaking for the first time. "The place was never locked, and as the real thief wanted to get rid of such dangerous property there was no better place in all Riverdale to hide it in than Toby's shanty."

"I shall use that argument in my defense," remarked the young lawyer in a careless tone that annoyed Eric.

"I trust this case will never come to trial," resumed Mr. Spaythe after a

pause. “What steps are you taking to discover the criminal?”

“My first idea was to prove an alibi for Clark, but that I am unable to do. He was twice seen entering Judge Ferguson’s office, the day following his death. I myself found him there when I went to look at the rooms with Chandler the postmaster. When the boy left the place the second time he carried under his arm a parcel large enough to contain Mrs. Ritchie’s box. Finding that Kellogg had unearthed this fact and would use it in evidence, I went to see Toby about it. He tells me it was a package containing his personal books and possessions, which he was removing from the office. I believe this statement, for he had the package in plain sight when he carried the key to you, at your house.”

“I remember,” said Mr. Spaythe.

“But several others saw and noticed the package, and I understand that all of these will be subpoenaed as witnesses at the trial.”

“But about the guilty one — the person who actually took the box from the office — hare you any suspicion as to his identity?”

Mr. Holbrook was lighting a cigarette and took time to answer.

“Not as yet, sir. But I shall begin a thorough investigation in the near future and try to secure a clew to guide me to success.”

“We ought to have had a detective,” grumbled Eric, but Mr. Holbrook ignored the remark.

At this moment they swung around a bend and overtook the buggy in which the constable and Toby Clark were seated. They seemed to be chatting together in a friendly manner and as the automobile passed them Eric cried out:

“Cheer up, Toby! There’s nothing to worry about.”

Toby nodded. He did not look like a thief. His eyes were still twinkling as of old and his cheeks were fresh and rosy. He had no smile for his friend’s greeting, for the accusation against him was very serious, but neither did he wear a hangdog expression nor seem confused.

“I want you to work earnestly on this case,” said Mr. Spaythe, when they had passed beyond hearing. “Toby Clark must be cleared of the unjust charge, and the only way to do it is to discover who is actually guilty. I depend upon you, Mr. Holbrook, to do that, and without any waste of time.”

Holbrook colored red and waited a moment before he replied.

“I realize,” said he, with deliberation, “that my reputation as a lawyer depends upon my success in this, my first case in Riverdale. Unless Toby Clark is actually guilty, and is proved so without question, I shall lose the confidence of the community by not fastening the guilt on the real criminal. Therefore you may rest assured that I shall do everything in my power to

vindicate my client. I cannot now confide to you the various processes I intend to employ, for that would be unwise; but I am conversant with the latest scientific methods of criminal detection, having made them a study for years, and I do not think they will fail me in the present case. If they do, I must stand the consequences, which will not be less severe for me than for my client."

Eric gave a scornful grunt, the speech was so evidently conciliatory and noncommittal, but Mr. Spaythe forbore any comment.

The preliminary hearing was brief. The judge knew Mr. Spaythe and gave him a seat beside his desk. He had heard of Mr. Holbrook, the new Riverdale lawyer, but now met him for the first time.

Lawyer Kellogg, fat and pig-eyed, presented his evidence against the prisoner with an air of triumph that was distinctly aggravating to the defense. The judge listened carefully, noting each point made on his memoranda. Then Mr. Holbrook, speaking for the prisoner, pleaded "not guilty" and asked that a reasonable amount of bail be fixed until the case came to trial. The judge frowned and considered.

"The offense, if proved, is serious," said he, "and the missing money and bonds alone amount to many thousands of dollars in value. The evidence is so strong and the accused so young and irresponsible, that I hesitate to fix bail in this case and prefer to remand the prisoner to the county jail to await his trial."

Kellogg grinned and rubbed his hands together gleefully. But Mr. Spaythe, in his quiet way, leaned over the desk and said:

"I hope, Judge, you will reconsider that decision. This boy is very dear to many in Riverdale, where he is thoroughly respected. I myself have a strong personal interest in his welfare and believe that in spite of the evidence just presented to you he will be proved innocent. To allow him to languish in jail for two months or more, only to discover that he has been falsely accused, would be a grave injustice. Therefore I am prepared to furnish his bail in whatever sum you demand."

"Ah," said the judge, "that alters the case. Five thousand dollars."

Mr. Spaythe signed the bond and then turned to Toby.

"You are to ride back with us," he said, "for I want you to come to my house and make it your home until this cloud has been removed from your good name — as it surely will be, in time."

Toby's eyes filled with tears.

"You are very kind, Mr. Spaythe," he replied brokenly, "but until I can prove my innocence to the world I have no right to go to your house. I'll go — home — and work this thing out. But I thank you, sir; I thank you with all

my heart!”

“Look here, Toby,” said Eric sharply, “you’re going to do just what the governor says, if we have to lug you home by force. Don’t be a fool; it’s a step in your redemption. Don’t you see how it will help, to have father stand up for you before all the world!”

Toby looked helplessly around the group and appealed to his lawyer.

“What do you advise, sir?” he asked.

“That you do as you suggest and, declining Mr.

Spaythe’s kind invitation, go directly to your own home,” answered Mr. Holbrook.

“All right,” said Toby, a humorous twinkle in his bright eyes; “I’ll accept your hospitality, Mr. Spaythe, and hope I won’t be too much trouble to you.”

“Bravo!” cried Eric, and danced a little jig over Holbrook’s discomfiture.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW PHOEBE CONSPIRED

Whatever happens, the sun rises and sets and the old world continues to whirl on its axis. Toby Clark's arrest was a huge sensation in Riverdale for a day, and then it lost its novelty. Now and then, during the days that followed the boy's arraignment, the people gossiped concerning the outcome of the case, but since nothing new developed to bolster public interest Toby's dilemma soon became an old story.

Young Mr. Holbrook had acquired a certain distinction through being employed by Mr. Spaythe for the defense. The banker's judgment was so reliable that the former clients of Judge Ferguson began to consult Holbrook rather than Kellogg and while he was not as yet entrusted with much important business the new lawyer found his practice steadily growing.

But Mr. Spaythe was not entirely satisfied with his attorney, although he did not express his dissatisfaction in words. Every few days he would go to Mr. Holbrook's office and say: "Well?"

"The case is progressing finely," was the invariable reply.

"What have you discovered?"

"Nothing definite as yet, sir; but I am getting at the facts and will report to you as soon as I can furnish absolute proofs."

That did not content Mr. Spaythe, but it silenced him and he went away.

Toby remained quietly at the banker's house, reading his few law books diligently and leaving his defense to his friends, as he had been urged to do. The Darings invited him to their home on many occasions, and so did Janet Ferguson; but the boy refused to go, saying that until his innocence was fully established he preferred to remain in retirement. It was a comfort to them all that the Spaythes were caring for Toby. The Darings, from little Sue up to Phoebe, were loud in their praise of the banker, who had never before been known to extend such kindly consideration to anyone. Mrs. Spaythe had died years before, when Eric was a baby, and a prim old lady, a distant relative, kept house for the father and son, who were both engaged at the bank during the day and seldom passed an evening at home. So Toby practically had the house to himself.

One evening Eric Spaythe called on Phoebe and they had a long talk about Toby Clark's affairs.

"Hasn't Mr. Holbrook done anything yet!" asked Phoebe impatiently.

"No; and I've an idea he doesn't intend to do anything," replied Eric.

"What makes you think that?"

"The way he acts. He's letting things drag terribly. I don't understand

Holbrook, and that's a fact. The time for prompt action was right after the robbery," declared Eric. "Then everything was fresh and the trails were clear. It wouldn't have been any trick at all to catch the thief then; but nearly a month has gone by and not a clew uncovered. We're as far from the truth as ever."

"Mr. Holbrook can hardly afford to make a failure of the case," said Phoebe, using the well-worn argument doubtfully.

"It appeared to me that way, at first, especially as he seemed so cocksure of himself," returned young Spaythe. "But he once made a remark to father that I've not forgotten. He said his reputation would be injured *unless Toby Clark's guilt was proved* or — he found the guilty party. I don't like that alternative, Phoebe. Do you know, I've an idea that Holbrook believes Toby is guilty?"

"I've had that idea from the first," declared Phoebe with eagerness. "I was in his office when your father came to him with the news of Toby's arrest, and I watched Mr. Holbrook carefully. Even at that time I could see he doubted Toby's innocence, or else — or else — "

"Or else what, Phoebe?"

"Or else he knows who took the box and is willing to have Toby accused."

Eric stared at her wonderingly.

"That's a good deal to accuse the fellow of," he said. "I think our first guess is right, and in that event Toby is in a bad way. If Holbrook believes him guilty he won't make any honest effort to find out who took the box. He'll just let Kellogg prove his case. Then Holbrook will say he did the best he could but that no one could clear a guilty person. Most people will accept that sort of a statement and Holbrook may be depending upon it to save himself. That's why he's putting us off and taking things easy."

"But they can't prove Toby guilty!" protested Phoebe, who knowing in her heart the boy was innocent, had clung to the belief as her best anchorage.

"I'm not sure of that," said Eric, gravely shaking his head. "It's pretty strong evidence, Phoebe, and I don't believe it's safe to let the case go to trial just as it stands."

"Then what can we do?" she asked helplessly.

Eric laughed.

"You know how to put a poser," said he. "I've wondered many times what could be done, but for my part I can't do anything. I'm tied down to the bank so closely that I haven't a minute to devote to Toby, much as I long to help him. One or two evenings I've stayed at home and talked with Toby, but he's as much bewildered by the thing as we are. The fact is, something's got to be

discovered. We can talk till we're blind, but unless we know more than we do now it won't amount to anything. Here's the situation: Toby didn't take Mrs. Ritchie's box, but who did?"

"Ah, that's the question!" said Phoebe.

"Yes, that's the question — that and nothing else — and unless we can find an answer to it poor Toby is likely to suffer for another's crime."

This conversation rendered the girl very unhappy. She had previously been content to leave Toby's salvation to the direction of Mr. Spaythe and Mr. Holbrook and she had not been especially uneasy over the outcome of the affair. But Eric had destroyed her confidence in the lawyer, and Mr. Spaythe was so silent and reserved that it appeared he was not taking any active part in Toby 's defense. In fact, nothing was being done to save Toby, and Phoebe told Cousin Judith that she was getting very anxious about the poor boy's fate.

"That is not strange, dear, for I have been anxious from the very beginning," confessed Judith. "I believe that for some reason there is a conspiracy afoot to destroy Toby Clark, and that it is likely to succeed."

"Then," retorted Phoebe, with one of her sudden decisions, "we must organize a counter-conspiracy to save him. We've been idle long enough, Cousin Judith — too long, I fear — and it's time for us to act."

"To whom do you refer when you say 'us'?" asked the Little Mother, smiling at the girl's earnestness.

"To you and to myself, of course."

"I fear I am not a good conspirator, Phoebe; though you, I admit, seem qualified to be one. But what may two weak, inexperienced girls do, where a powerful banker and a clever lawyer fail?"

"We can do lots," asserted Phoebe. "I can't say just what, until I've thought it over; but oughtn't the right to triumph, Cousin Judith?"

"It ought to, Phoebe, but I fear the right is sometimes smothered in false evidence."

"It mustn't be this time," declared the girl. "We must try to save Toby. You think it over carefully, Cousin, and so will I, and perhaps one or the other of us will evolve an idea."

Judith agreed to this, but added:

"I'll not be an active conspirator, dear, but the conspirator's assistant. I'll help all I can, but I fear my talent for penetrating mysteries is not so well developed as your own."

Phoebe went to her own room and sat down at her desk to think. She realized that she could not expect much energetic assistance from Cousin Judith and that whatever was accomplished she must undertake single-

handed.

"I wish Phil was here," she reflected, referring to her twin brother; "he'd know just how to tackle this problem."

As a matter of fact Phoebe was far more resourceful than Phil, who had always come to his sister for advice in every difficulty. But she did not realize this.

"I wonder why Mr. Holbrook refused to have a detective?" she mused. "Was he so sure of his own ability to unravel the mystery, or — was he afraid?"

She jumped up and paced the room in sudden agitation. Then she controlled herself and sat down again.

"This won't do!" she exclaimed, taking herself to task. "Unless I can consider everything calmly I shall deceive myself and start along the wrong road." She took a pencil and sheet of paper and continued, talking to herself in an argumentative way: "Let's marshal the facts. First, Mrs. Ritchie's box is stolen. That's a hard fact; you can't get around it. In that box was a lot of money, some bonds as good as cash and other papers only valuable to their owner. The box was stolen for the money and bonds; fact number two. Whoever stole it from Judge Ferguson's cupboard either had a key or picked the lock; anyhow the cupboard was found locked and the box gone. Yet no one but Judge Ferguson was supposed to have the key. Whoever it was that wanted the money, he or she had no key to the box itself and couldn't pick the lock; so he or she had to carry away the box. That's the third fact.

"Now, then, having got the box safely away, the thief broke it open, took the money and bonds, and then wondered what to do with the rest of the junk. He must get rid of all telltale evidence, somehow or other, so he took the box to the river, perhaps thinking to drown it. Perhaps he saw Toby's shanty and decided to put the blame on him; that would throw the police on a false track. That was clever. Fact number — No! that isn't really a fact; it's just a surmise. No, if Toby is innocent it *must* be a fact. I'll call it so — Fact number four."

She jotted it down.

"Now let's see where we are at," she continued. "Thief has the money safe; police on a false track arrest Toby. Well, that's as far as I can go on that line. Now, the important question is, who is the thief? First we must consider who knew about the box and that it contained money. Toby knew, of course, and Judge Ferguson. But who else? Mrs. Ritchie, but — Never mind; I'll put her on the list. Janet knew; she couldn't steal it but I'll add her to the list. If I'm going to find out anything I must be thorough. I think Mr. Spaythe knew. I must ask him. Meantime, here he goes on the list. I wonder if Mr. Holbrook

knew about the money? Not at first, but — Yes, I remember Janet told me that Toby took Mrs. Ritchie away, when she came to the house, and they went to ask Mr. Holbrook if it was lawful to give her the box. Of course the woman blabbed what was in it, and so — Mr. Holbrook knew. The theft was committed on the day or the night following the judge's death, so that lets Mr. Holbrook into the game. Down he goes on the list. Who else? There 's Will Chandler, the postmaster; but perhaps he didn't know. He owns the building and kept the judge's key to the office. Will Chandler *might* have known there was money in the Ritchie box, so I'll put the dear old boy under suspicion. Who else?"

She reflected long and deeply, but could not think of another person likely to know the location of the box and that it contained money. She considered Lawyer Kellogg, but knew that he and Judge Ferguson had been open enemies and that Kellogg had not been consulted by Mrs. Ritchie until after the loss of the box was a matter of public knowledge. So she reviewed her list: Mrs. Ritchie; Janet Ferguson; Mr. Spaythe; Mr. Holbrook; Will Chandler.

"Why, it's nonsense!" she gasped in astonishment. "They're every one impossible. I — I must start another line of discovery."

But, try as she would, she could not get away from that list of obvious innocents.

"Unless some one knew the box was there, and that it contained money — enough to make it worth stealing — he couldn't possibly have stolen it," she told herself. "The list is all right, as far as it goes; but — is it complete?"

After more thought she put on her things and walked to Mr. Spaythe's residence. Of course Toby was there, for he seldom if ever went out, and she promptly interviewed him.

"Who knew that Mrs. Ritchie's box was in the cupboard, and that there was a good deal of money in it?" she demanded.

"What's up, Phoebe?" he asked.

"I'm trying to sift this thing on my own account, and in secret, Toby," she replied. "I want you to help me — just as if I were Sherlock Holmes or Monsieur Lecoq. Don't ask questions; just answer them. Who knew?"

"I knew," said Toby, with a grin.

"But I'm going to leave you out of it," she replied. "This is an investigation to prove your innocence, so I don't want any evidence against you."

"You can't do it, Phoebe," said the boy. "Don't bother about me; I'm not worth it. Let Holbrook do as he pleases."

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded.

“He isn’t very anxious to clear me,” said Toby, looking at her with a queer expression. “I don’t know why; I only know that if I were a lawyer and had such a case I’d stir things up and find out the truth.”

“I think you would,” replied the girl. “It’s because Mr. Holbrook is so inactive that I’ve determined to take up the investigation myself.”

“It’s nice of you, Phoebe; but, say — a girl can’t do much. There’s something queer about the whole affair. I know something of law and also I ought to be able to guess who took the box; but it’s entirely beyond me. I can’t investigate it myself, and so — ”

“And so I’m going to do it for you,” she said, “My being a girl is no handicap at all, Toby What we all want is the truth, and if I can discover that, you will be saved. Now, then, who knew about the box?”

“Mr. Spaythe,” said the boy.

“Why should he know?”

“He was the closest friend Judge Ferguson had. They were together a good deal and the judge used to tell all his affairs to his friend. I once heard him say, jokingly, that he was a rival banker, for Mrs. Ritchie deposited all her money with him. Mr. Spaythe asked where he kept it, and when the judge told him he said it was foolish to trust to oak doors and a tin box when the bank vault was fire and burglar proof.”

“Very well; who else knew?” asked Phoebe.

“Will Chandler, and Griggs the carpenter.”

“Oh!” cried Phoebe, scenting a clew at last. “Griggs knew, did he? Tell me how that happened.”

“The cupboard doors stuck, a few months ago, and wouldn’t shut properly. So the judge called up Will Chandler, who was his landlord, and asked him to fix the doors. Will looked at them and said the building must have settled a little, to make the doors bind that way, and the best plan would be to plane off the tops of them. So he got Griggs the carpenter and they took the doors off the hinges and planed them. While Griggs was working and Chandler helping him, in came Mrs. Ritchie and wanted fifty dollars. The judge took down her box and put it on the table and took out the money. I noticed both the men were surprised to see the box half full of bank bills and gold, for they couldn’t help seeing it; but they said nothing and when I mentioned it to the judge, afterward, he said they were both honest as the day is long, and he could trust them.”

“Do *you* think they are honest, Toby — both of ‘em?”

“Yes.”

“Well, who else knew?”

Toby considered.

“Mr. Holbrook, of course. The night I took Mrs. Ritchie to see him she said there was currency to the amount of several thousand dollars in the box, besides a lot of bonds.”

“Was that before the box was stolen?” asked Phoebe.

“I don’t know. I haven’t seen the inside of the cupboard since a few days before Judge Ferguson died. I can’t tell when the box was stolen.”

“But the loss wasn’t discovered until after Mr. Holbrook had talked with Mrs. Ritchie?”

“No. I think Mr. Spaythe discovered that the box was missing some days afterward.”

“Tell me who else knew.”

“I can’t. Mrs. Ritchie might have told some one, of course; but she’s usually too shrewd to do that. Judge Ferguson didn’t talk about his business.”

Phoebe referred to her list. The interview with Toby had netted just one addition — Griggs the carpenter.

“There was Mrs. Miller, the woman who used to wash the office windows,” said Toby reflectively.

“But she’s deaf and dumb,” returned Phoebe.

“She isn’t blind, though. She’s washed the windows and cleaned the offices every Saturday for years, and Saturday was Mrs. Ritchie’s usual day for driving to town. I can’t remember that Mrs. Miller has ever seen the box opened, but she might have done so.”

Phoebe added Mrs. Miller’s name to the list.

“The next thing I want to know is who visited Judge Ferguson’s office the day after he died,” she said.

“I can’t help you much in that,” said Toby. “I went there in the morning, because I didn’t know where else to go; but no one came in — except Will Chandler and Mr. Holbrook.”

“Oh; they were there, then. And why?”

“They came together, because Mr. Holbrook wanted to see the offices. He rented them that very day, I understand. Will told me that Janet wanted me, so I went away and left them there. Will had the key, you know.”

“This is news,” said Phoebe, drawing a long breath.

Toby smiled. “You’re not suspecting them, I hope?” he said.

“I’m not suspecting anybody, as yet. All I want at present are the facts in the case. I suppose no one else had a key to the office?”

“No. That very day Mr. Holbrook advised Will to give his key to Mr. Spaythe, and he advised me to get rid of my key, also. Will sent his key to the bank by Mr. Holbrook, who was going that way, but I went back and got my books and traps out of the office before I brought the key here to this

house and gave it to Mr. Spaythe."

"Was it a very complicated lock?"

"The one on the office door? No. It was a common lock and that on the cupboard wasn't much better. But the boxes all had better locks, that couldn't be easily picked."

"All right. I'm going now, Toby, but I may be back for more information. Keep your courage; I'm sure we shall get at the truth in time."

But the boy, looking after her, shook his head and sighed.

"She'll never suspect the truth," he muttered. "No one will ever suspect, except those who know; and those who know will never tell."

CHAPTER IX

HOW PHOEBE PLAYED DETECTIVE

On her way home Phoebe Daring stopped at the post office and talked with Will Chandler. He was a middle-aged man, slow and deliberate in thought and action, yet a veritable potentate in local politics and all affairs of a public character in Riverdale. There had been Chandlers in the town ever since it had been established, and before it had been named Riverdale it had been called Chandler's Crossing, the original Chandler having been a ferryman on the river. This Will Chandler, the sole representative of a long and prominent line, was a steady, straightforward fellow and greatly respected by everyone. It was said that he was too honest ever to become rich, and to eke out a living for a large family he kept a little stock of stationery for sale in the post office. This was located in the front part of the room, and his daughter, a white-faced, silent girl, waited on customers and gave out the mail when her father was absent.

The postmaster was on his stool behind the wicket when Phoebe approached him.

"Who do you think could have taken Mrs. Ritchie's box!" asked the girl.

"I don't know," said Chandler. "If I did, I'd help Toby out of his trouble."

"I didn't ask who took the box," said Phoebe; "but who *could* have taken it."

The postmaster slowly revolved this in his mind.

"Possible burglar?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Sam Parsons, the constable."

"How is that?"

"I went upstairs about noon and found Sam peeking through the keyhole into the judge's office. He mumbled some and went away. That night, just before I went home to supper, I walked upstairs again, just to see if everything was all right. I hadn't any key, that time, but Parsons was standing with his back to the door, silent like, as if he was thinking."

"Rather curious, isn't it?" asked Phoebe, quite astonished by this report.

"Can't say," replied Chandler. "I'd trust Sam with all I've got — even with the United States mail. He's the squarest man that ever walked."

"I think so, too," she agreed. "What other possible burglar do you know of?"

Chandler pondered.

"I might have done it," said he; "but I guess I didn't. Toby might have done it; but I guess he didn't. Holbrook might have done it; but I guess — "

“Had Mr. Holbrook any chance to take the box?” she asked quickly.

“A chance, but a rather slim one. I took him up to see the office and while we were there Hazel called me for something. So I left him sizing up the furniture and law books, to see if they were worth buying, and came down to the office. When I got back Holbrook was sitting down, looking through the books. That was the only chance he had, as far as I know, and I’ll swear he didn’t have the box when I locked up and we went away.”

“You didn’t see Mrs. Miller around that day?”

“No.”

“Nor Griggs the carpenter?”

“Haw-haw! Phoebe; that’s funny. Griggs? Griggs steal the box? Why, the old idiot won’t take the money he earns, unless you force it on him. If there’s a soul in this world that don’t care a snap for money, it’s old Griggs.”

“Thank you, Mr. Chandler. Please don’t tell anyone I’ve been questioning you.”

He looked at her steadily.

“I suppose you’re Toby’s friend, because he once helped your people out of a scrape, as everybody knows — that time the Darings came near losing their money. I wish, Phoebe Daring, you could find out who took that box. I’ve been just miserable over Toby’s arrest; but I’m so busy here, just now, I can’t lift a finger to help him.”

The girl walked thoughtfully home, wondering if she had really accomplished anything. Sitting down at her desk she made the following memoranda, writing it neatly and carefully:

“THOSE WHO KNEW OF THE BOX.

“1. — Janet Ferguson. — Being the judge’s daughter and likely to suffer more than anyone else by the theft of the box, which the Ferguson estate was responsible for, and being a sweet and honest girl and incapable of stealing even a pin, Janet is beyond suspicion.

“2. — Mrs. Ritchie. — She knew better than anyone else the value of the box. A hard, shrewd old woman, very selfish and mean. It is said she half starves the workmen on her farm and makes her hired girl pay for the dishes she breaks. Her husband left her a good deal of money, and she has made more, so she is quite rich. Never spends anything.

“Question: Did Mrs. Ritchie steal her own box?

“Answer: She might be capable of doing it and then throwing the blame on Toby. Her eagerness to have the box given up to her as soon as she heard of the judge’s death looks suspicious. On the other hand she couldn’t pick a lock to save her neck, and it’s easy to trace her every movement from the time she drove into town until she went home again. She afterward went to

Mr. Spaythe and bothered him until he decided to give her the box a day earlier than he planned to give the other boxes up to their owners. But when they went to the office and opened the cupboard, the box was gone. She nearly had a fit and called Mr. Spaythe a thief to his face. Don't think she is clever enough to assume all that. She afterward went to Lawyer Kellogg, whom she hates, and employed him to help her find the thief. If she had stolen the box herself she wouldn't have done that. She'd have kept quiet and obliged the Fergusons to make good any loss she claimed. Considering all this, I don't believe that Mrs. Ritchie stole her own box.

"3. — Mr. Spaythe. — A rich man who likes to make more money. Gets all the interest he can and doesn't spend much. Pays his son Eric a mighty small salary; people say it's because he's so stingy. He was Judge Ferguson's best friend. Stern and severe to most people. His own son fears him.

"Question: Did Mr. Spaythe steal Mrs. Ritchie's box?

"Answer: He had the keys and could have done so. We're not sure the box was taken the day after the judge's death; it might have been several days later. It is astonishing that Mr. Spaythe at once defended Toby; was much excited over his arrest; put himself out to go to Bayport to give five thousand dollars bail, and then took Toby into his own home. Mr. Spaythe isn't usually charitable or considerate of others; he has known Toby Clark for years and has never taken any interest in him till now. Why has he changed so suddenly? Is it because he himself stole the box but doesn't want an innocent boy to suffer for it? No answer just now. Better watch Mr. Spaythe. He's the biggest man around here and considered very honorable. Always keeps his word religiously. Is trusted with everyone's money. Can I suspect such a man? Yes. Somebody stole that box. I'll put Mr. Spaythe under suspicion.

"'. — Will Chandler. — A prominent citizen, postmaster for a good many years and generally liked. Under bonds to the post-office department, so he has to be honest. No Chandler has ever done anything wrong.

"Question: Did Will Chandler steal the box?

"Answer: Not likely. He could have done so, but the same chance has existed for a long time, as far as Chandler is concerned, for the judge trusted him with his key. This key always hung on a peg just inside the post-office window, where the judge could reach it from the outside without bothering Chandler; but very few people knew that and either Will or his daughter Hazel always had the key in plain sight. Chandler had learned that there was money in Mrs. Ritchie's box. He may have been suddenly tempted. Better put him under suspicion.

"5. — John Holbrook. — Absolutely unknown here. No record of his past. Is a lawyer and has a certificate to practice in this state. Dresses

extravagantly, lives at the hotel and claims to be too poor to hire a clerk.

"Question: Did he steal Mrs. Ritchie's box?

"Answer: This man, having little or no money, was audacious enough to open a law office here — 'on his nerve,' Don would say. Boldness is therefore a trait in his character. He suddenly learned, from the woman herself, that there was considerable money in her box. He told Toby not to give it up, which was quite right and good advice. But he had all that night to work in. Had been in the office — left alone there — and if he was observing had noticed that the locks of the door and of the cupboard were not hard to pick. Says he knows a lot about criminal practices and so he might have taken a wax impression of the keyholes and made keys to fit them. I've read of such things being done. Holbrook might have hidden the box in Toby's rubbish heap and put the papers in his room without knowing who lived in the shanty. Was evidently disturbed by the news of Toby's arrest. Took his case, but hasn't done a single thing to clear up the mystery. Didn't want a detective to come here. Why? Easy to guess, if Mr. Holbrook is guilty. All his acts are strongly suspicious. Keep a sharp eye on him.

"6. — Joe Griggs, the carpenter. — Harmless old man, who doesn't care for money. Handy with tools and could pick a lock, but wouldn't have any desire to do so. Likes Toby and wouldn't have any object in hurting him; careless about money; is always poor and contented. Joe Griggs could have stolen that box but I'll bet anything he didn't.

"7. — Mrs. Miller. — A woman who bears a doubtful character. Is deaf and dumb, but quick-witted. Her husband a drunkard and she supports the family by washing and cleaning. May have known there was money in Mrs. Ritchie's box and wouldn't be above stealing it. But how could she? It would be like her to hide the box and papers on Toby's premises, to divert suspicion from herself. None can tell what an unscrupulous woman like Mrs. Miller might not do, if she set about it. Suspicious.

"8. — Sam Parsons. — Constable. That means the sole policeman and officer of the law in Riverdale. Not very well educated but quite intelligent and a terror to evil-doers. Sam is very kind hearted; is married and has a happy wife and three children. Great friend of Judge Ferguson and Toby Clark. Plays chess nearly every Monday night with Will Chandler. Everybody likes Sam except the hoodlums.

"Question: Did Sam Parsons steal Mrs. Ritchie's box?

"Answer: Seems as if one might as well suspect the law itself, or the judge and the court and the Constitution of the United States. But somebody stole that box and Sam Parsons was twice seen in a compromising position. It was underhanded to peek through the keyhole of the office door; and what

was he doing, standing with his back to it, when it was locked and no one inside? This is the strongest clew I have found in the case, and the hardest to follow. Either Sam did it, or he knows something about the theft of the box; but in either case he has kept mum. Why did he arrest Toby and put him in jail, never saying a word in protest or defense, if he knew who really took the box? Sam is fond of Toby and from the first said he was innocent. But he has never hinted that he knows the guilty party. There's a possibility that Sam stole the box himself. I take it that a constable is human, like other folks. Therefore I'll watch Sam Parsons."

Phoebe now reread what she had written and nodded approval. It occurred to her that her reasoning was very logical and entirely without personal bias.

"I've made a beginning, at least," she murmured. "I've narrowed down the possible thieves to just five people: Mr. Spaythe, Will Chandler, Mr. Holbrook, Mrs. Miller and Sam Parsons. I am positive that one of these five is guilty, but without more evidence I can't even guess which it is. I believe I'll go and report progress to the Little Mother, my fellow conspirator."

Judith greeted the girl with her usual affectionate smile.

"Well, Miss Conspirator," she said playfully, "what news?"

"I've accomplished something, I believe," returned Phoebe with an air of satisfaction. "Here are my present conclusions, all written out."

Before she read the paper, however, she related to Judith her visit to Toby Clark and to Will Chandler. Then, slowly and deliberately, she began to read.

Judith listened in some surprise, for she was astonished by the girl's shrewdness in analyzing human character. Phoebe had struggled to be perfectly unprejudiced and impersonal in jotting down her items, but more than once the Little Mother had to repress a smile at some inconsistent hypothesis. Yet there was cleverness and a degree of logic in the entire summary.

"You see," concluded the girl, folding the paper carefully for future reference, "we must seek the criminal among these five persons."

"Why, dear?"

"Because, being aware of Judge Ferguson's life and habits and of about all that goes on in this village, I find them the only ones who knew of the box, were able to get hold of it, or might for some reason or other be tempted to steal it. Don't you agree with me, Cousin Judith!"

"Not entirely, Phoebe. I do not think any stretch of the imagination could connect Mr. Spaythe with the crime, or even Will Chandler. From their very natures, their antecedents and standing in Riverdale, such a connection is impossible."

"Improbable, I admit, Cousin; but nothing is impossible."

“On the other hand,” continued Judith, “you have a strong argument in favor of suspecting Mr. Holbrook. I myself have thought of him as the possible perpetrator of the crime, but have been almost ashamed to harbor such a thought. I have never seen the man, you know; but I wish we knew something of his past history.”

“How about Mrs. Miller?”

“I agree with you that she might be capable of the theft, but do not see how she could accomplish it.”

“And Sam Parsons?”

“There, I think, you have unearthed a real clew, but not one leading to Sam’s identity with the thief. The constable is absolutely honest; but he is a clever fellow, for all he seems so slow and easy, and he is the nearest approach to a detective we have in town. My idea is that Sam was suspicious that some one intended to rob the judge’s office, and was hanging around to prevent it or to discover the thief.” We may conclude that he failed to do either, for had he known who took the box he would have denounced and arrested him. It may be that Sam has some hint of the truth and is lying in wait for the burglar. Why don’t you have a talk with him, Phoebe, and try to discover how much he knows?”

“I think I shall,” said the girl, musing over this suggestion.

“And bear in mind the fact that the box might have been taken by some person you have not yet thought of in this connection. You’ve made progress, my dear — extraordinary progress — but, after all, you may be far from the truth in your deductions.”

CHAPTER X

HOW THE MARCHING CLUB WAS ORGANIZED

"Something's got to be done," said Don Daring, with emphasis, as he addressed a circle of eager listeners.

The children had assembled on the upper floor of the Randolph barn, a big, roomy place intended for the storage of hay, when it was built, but now a bare room because the automobile which had replaced the carriage horses, did not eat hay. The Randolphs lived directly across the road from the Darings, in a handsome, modern structure of brick and stone that had cost a lot of money to build. This family was reputed the wealthiest in Riverdale, for Mr. Randolph was a clever financier who spent most of his time in far-away Boston, where his business interests were, and only came South to see his family on rare occasions and for brief visits. Mrs. Randolph was a semi-invalid whose health obliged her to live in a warmer clime than that of Boston. She was rather selfish and worldly-minded, although professing to be much interested in foreign missions, and it was said she occupied most of her time in writing articles for religious papers and magazines. There were three Randolph children: Marion, about Phoebe's age, who attended a college near Washington and was only home for vacations; Doris, a demure little girl of an age to associate with Becky, and Allerton, a boy a trifle younger than Don.

Allerton, whose mother indulged his every whim, rather than be annoyed by his pleading, had just received from the city an amateur printing press and outfit and had set it up in the barn. Don and Becky had been invited to come over and see the first "job" of printing executed, but interest in the new and expensive plaything was divided by the news of Toby Clark's misfortunes. They were all four earnest friends and admirers of Toby and having canvassed the subject in all its phases, with growing indignation and excitement, Don wound up with the statement:

"Something's got to be done!"

"What?" asked Becky curiously.

"Something to show we believe in Toby an' know he's innocent."

"That don't answer my question," insisted his sister. "Something don't mean anything, unless you say what the something is."

"He means," announced Doris, in her prim way, "that we must undertake to do something, to be decided later, that will show to the world that we believe in the honesty of Toby Clark."

"That's it!" cried Don approvingly; "an' Beck ought to know it without so much argument."

“All right; I’m game,” said Becky, complacently. “You can count on me in anything that’ll help Toby.”

“I’m afraid we four can’t do much,” remarked Allerton. “The law has Toby in its clutches and I suppose it will hang him.”

“Hang nothing!” retorted Don, scornfully. “They don’t hang folks for stealing, Al; it’s only for murder.”

“But Toby didn’t steal Mrs. Ritchie’s box,” suggested Doris.

“No; of course not. But he’s been arrested for it and is in jail, and nobody seems to be doing anything to help him. That’s why I think we ought to do something. If I was in his fix I’d like my friends to fight for me.”

“Tell us what to do, then, and we’ll do it,” said Becky. “We’ll all join hands, eyes right an’ chins up, an’ march on to victory!”

“Eh?” said Don, staring at her thoughtfully; “that isn’t a bad idea, Becky.”

“What idea?”

“The marching. When there’s an election the men all get together and form a company and parade the streets with banners and a band — and their man gets elected.”

“It is a way to win popular favor,” said Doris.

“The marching and bands and fireworks arouse excitement.”

“Well, that’s what we ought to do,” declared Don. “Those fool people in the town are all shaking their heads like billygoats and saying Toby must be guilty, just ‘cause they found the empty box in his back yard. Anyone could put the box there; it’s no proof Toby did it. Let’s get up a Toby Clark Marching Club, to defend Toby and bring folks to the right way of thinking. That’ll help him more than anything else.”

“It would make ‘em laugh,” said Beck, “to see two boys and two girls marching with a banner and a band. And where in thunder will you get that band, Don?”

“You shut up. We’ll enlist every kid in town in our marching club. It’ll be no end of fun — besides helping Toby.”

“That sounds good,” said Allerton. “I’ll be the captain.”

“I’m captain myself,” retorted Don. “It’s my idea.”

“It was Becky’s.”

“Nothing of the sort. What she said gave me the idea; and it’s a good one.”

“If you’re going to hog everything, you can get up your own marching club, and I’ll stay out of it,” said Allerton sullenly.

Don had a hot reply on his tongue’s end, but hesitated. He really wanted to help Toby Clark.

“Tell you what we’ll do, Al,” he said generously; “we’ll get up the club

together and then let all the members vote which one of us shall be captain. Then the other can be first lieutenant."

"All right," agreed Al.

"Why don't you both be generals?" asked Becky. "Then it would leave some offices for us girls."

"Why, we can't be expected to march in a parade, Becky," said Doris chidingly. "It wouldn't be ladylike."

"I'm no lady, an' I'm goin' to march," replied Becky, with decision. "This isn't politics; it's a boom for Toby Clark, the Unjustly Accused, and I'm in the game first, last an' all the time."

"That's the proper spirit," said Don.

"Tell you what," remarked Allerton; "we'll print a lot of cards, inviting all the boys and girls in Riverdale to join the Toby Clark Marching Club, and we'll distribute them at school and call the first meeting in our barn on Saturday forenoon."

"Great idea, Al! Let's print the cards right away," cried Don with enthusiasm.

They first wrote the announcement on a piece of paper, Becky doing the writing in her scrawly hand and Doris correcting the spelling, which was something startling as Becky employed it. Then they set the type, the girls eagerly helping to do that, and after locking it up in the chase they ran off the first impression. It was somewhat blurred, there being too much ink on the roller, but Becky proudly read it aloud, as follows:

TAKE NOTICE!

You are respectfully invited to become a Member of the Toby Clark marching club! Organized for the Defense of our Unjustly Accused Fellow Citizen, Toby Clark! And to Bring About his Release from Jail and to Clear his Good Name from the Taint of Cowardly Slander! There will be uniforms! bands! red fire! and banners!

All in Favor of this will Meet at Randolph's Barn (upstairs) on Saturday Morning at 9 o'clock Sharp.

ALL BOYS AND GIRLS WELCOME TO JOIN!

Don Daring, A1 Randolph, Doris Randolph, Becky Daring, Organizing Committee.

(Al Randolph, Printer)

"The composition doesn't seem to be quite clear," observed Doris, when the applause had subsided. "It reads as if all in favor of the red fire and banners were invited to join."

"Well, so they are," maintained Don. "The red fire an' banners mean the Marching Club, 'cause they're a part of it."

"Better leave the band out," advised Becky. "It's a swindle, and we want this thing on the square."

“There’s going to be a band — if we have to blow on combs covered with paper,” retorted her brother. “But this is going to be an awful big thing, girls, and we may hire the Riverdale Cornet Band.”

“That’d cost twenty dollars.”

“If they’re friends of Toby Clark they’ll play for nothing. Don’t borrow trouble. Buckle to, and make the thing a success.”

They printed off a hundred cards and laid them upon a board to dry overnight. Next morning Allerton brought them to the Darings and each of the Organizing Committee took twenty-five to distribute at school. The boys and girls of Riverdale read the announcement and became excited over the novelty of the undertaking. Therefore the Randolph barn was crowded on Saturday morning at 9 o’clock, when Allerton called the meeting to order — a necessary call — and announced that Donald Daring would explain the object of the proposed organization.

Don had carefully prepared his speech in advance and had even committed it to memory. Right after breakfast he had recited it to Becky without a skip, and his usually critical sister had declared it was “simply grand.” But Don had an attack of what is called “stage fright” and as he faced the throng of eager listeners promptly forgot the beginning of his address — and nearly all the rest of it. But he knew what he wanted to talk about and after stammering through the first sentence, progressed very well, his earnestness inspiring him to oratory.

“Friends and fellow citizens,” he began; “you all know what a measly shame the arrestin’ of Toby Clark was, which he’s innocent as I am or as any of you are. You know Toby, and he’s a good fellow, and no sneak-thief, and you can bet your oatmeal on that ev’ry time! (Applause.) Toby’s always been a friend an’ stood by us, so now’s the time for us to stand by him. The truth is, somebody’s tryin’ to make a goat of Toby, and hopes to put him in jail so he’ll escape himself.”

A Voice: “So who’ll escape? Which one of ‘em, Don?”

“So the thief that stole the box will escape, of course. That’s why the thief put the empty box in Toby’s yard, an’ stuffed the papers in his shanty. He hoped Toby would be arrested an’ proved guilty, so he — the fellow that stole the box — wouldn’t be suspected.”

Another Voice: “Who stole the box, if Toby didn’t?”

“We don’t know who stole it. I wish we did. But we’re sure it wasn’t Toby and so we’re going to stick up for him and force Sam Parsons an’ the law-bugs over at Bayport to set him free. That’s what this Club’s going to be organized for,” here Don suddenly remembered part of his speech: “to mold public opinion into the right channels and champion the cause of our

downtrodden comrade."

"Hooray!" yelled Becky, and great applause followed.

"I heard Lawyer Holbrook was stickin' up for Toby," said a boy.

"Holbrook's a stick, but he ain't stickin' up much," replied Don. "He isn't posted on things, 'cause he's just come to town and don't know the run of things. If Toby's goin' to be saved, this Marching Club, organized for his benefit, is goin' to save him, and it'll be stacks of fun besides. We'll parade all through the town, with flags an' banners flying, an' we'll have a banquet, an' perhaps a brass band, an' so help to set Toby Clark free."

"What'll we eat at the banquet?" asked a solemn-eyed girl.

"Food, of course," answered Becky. "You'd better join an' get a square meal, for once in your life, Susan Doozen."

"I guess our grocery bill is as big as yours is!" cried the girl angrily.

"It's bigger," replied Becky composedly, "for we pay ours."

"Here, cut that out!" commanded the speaker. "We're not here to squabble, but to fight for Toby Clark, and we're going to put up the biggest fight Riverdale has ever seen. The Toby Clark Marching Club will become famous, an' go down in the annals of history as a — as — as — "

"As a Marching Club," said Allerton, helping him out.

"With a record we'll all be proud of," added Don. "I can tell you kids one thing, and that is that every boy an' girl who don't belong to our marching club will be looked down on as nobodies, an' they'll deserve it. This is goin to be the biggest thing that ever happened in Riverdale and when Toby Clark is free and cleared of this wicked slander I'm going to petition Congress to give every one of us a gold medal. Now, then, the register is on that box beside the chairman, who is Al Randolph. You'll form in line and all walk up and sign it. It's a pledge to become a member of this Marching Club and to allow no one to say Toby Clark is guilty without denying it. Also to obey the rules of the Club and mind its officers."

"Who's them?" asked a small boy.

"We're going to elect the officers after you've all signed," replied Don.

It was evident that the arguments advanced had been effective. Every boy and girl present signed the roll. When Doris had counted the names she announced that the Toby Clark Marching Club now numbered sixty-seven members.

"We'll make it an even hundred in a few days," declared Don exultantly. "And now we'll have the election of officers. All in favor of me for captain say 'aye.'"

"Hold on!" cried Al, jumping up. "That isn't fair. You promised they should vote whether you or I should be captain."

“That’s all right,” said Don. “If they don’t elect me they can vote for you.”

“Can’t anyone else be it?” asked a big boy anxiously.

“No,” replied Don. “It was my idea, and Al printed the invitations on his press. One of us has got to be captain and the other lieutenant. But there’ll be lots of other officers.”

“Listen to me,” said Becky. “I know how to run an election. I’ll give each one a piece of paper, and each one must write ‘Al’ or ‘Don’ on it, whichever they want for captain. Then Doris and I will collect the papers and count ‘em, and whoever has the most will be elected.”

There being no objection to this plan it was carried out. When the papers were counted Al had twenty-six votes and Don forty-one.

“Are you sure you counted right?” asked Al in a disappointed tone.

“Count’ em yourself, if you want to” replied Becky.

“Friends and fellow citizens,” said Don, bowing to the members of the Marching Club, “I thank you for this evidence of your good judgment. I’m now the captain and I’ll drill you like a regiment of soldiers, only better. Al is first lieutenant, and I appoint Becky secretary and Doris the treasurer.”

“When do we get the gold medals?” asked a girl.

Don glared at her.

“The gold medals don’t come till after Toby is cleared. Then I said I’d ask Congress for ‘em.”

“Who’s Congress!” inquired the girl.

There was a laugh, at this, and then Don said they’d elect two standard-bearers, to carry the banners, and four corporals. He didn’t much care who filled these offices, and so allowed the members to vote for whom they pleased. By the time the election was over Doris and Becky brought up two great trays of cakes, while their brothers provided a pail of lemonade, with which the entire club was served by having recourse to constant dilutions.

Providing these refreshments had been thought by the organizers to be good policy and calculated to arouse enthusiasm in the Marching Club; and so it did. After being served they all trooped out upon the lawn, where Don and Al matched the children into pairs and arranged the order in which they should parade. The boys and girls wanted to march through the town at once, but their captain told them they were not ready for a parade yet. They must be drilled, and the banners must be made and painted. Each member was instructed to get a white sash and wear it whenever the club met.

They drilled until noon, growing more and more animated and enthusiastic, and then separated to meet again after supper on the grounds of the Daring residence.

CHAPTER XI

HOW THE CLUB RECEIVED A DONATION

"What were all those children doing at the Randolphs?" inquired Cousin Judith, as Becky and Don came in to dinner, flushed and triumphant.

"That was the Toby Clark Marching Club," announced Don, proudly. "I'm elected captain of it."

Judith seemed puzzled.

"Tell me about it," she said. "What's the idea?"

Becky at once began an excited explanation and Don broke in the assist her, so that by listening carefully to the broken sentences the Little Mother managed to get a fair idea of the object of the organization.

"You don't mind, do you?" Becky inquired anxiously.

"No, indeed. The Marching Club may not do Toby Clark much good, but it certainly will do him no harm. As you say, there will be lots of fun in parading in defense of one so unjustly accused."

"Becky and I are going to spend all our week's allowance on ribbon," said Don, "and we will make it into badges and Al will print them this afternoon in gold letters. He got some gold powder with his printing outfit."

"Can't I belong?" asked Sue, who had not been present at the meeting.

"Of course," said Becky. "Every able-bodied kid in town is welcome to join, and I'll bet a cookie they'll all come in. It's the swellest thing in Riverdale, just now, and not to belong to the Toby Clark Marching Club is to be just a nobody."

"I think I would like to contribute the ribbon for the badges," said Cousin Judith. "How much will you need?"

"Oh, thank you!" they all cried gleefully, and Becky added that they wanted enough white ribbon to make a hundred badges.

"White's going to be our color," said the girl, "'cause it's the emblem of innocence, and we'll stick to Toby's innocence till the cows come home. We're all to wear white sashes, and I wish we could get white caps to match; but I don't suppose we can."

"I'll see if I can make a white cap," remarked Phoebe, who was quite delighted with the idea of the Marching Club. "If I find I can do it, I'll make one for every member."

This encouragement delighted Becky and Don and after dinner Judith and Phoebe went down town and purchased the ribbon for the badges and white cotton cloth for the caps. Phoebe found it was not very difficult to make a round cap, which consisted merely of a band and a crown, and the first one she stitched up on the machine was pronounced a success. It was becoming

to boys and girls alike and Becky thought Al could print “T. C. M. C.” on the front of each cap, very easily.

It took Allerton, assisted by Don, all the afternoon to print the badges, but they looked very pretty with their gold letters and Doris fringed the end of each one to make it look more like a badge. Becky, meantime, was assisting Phoebe with the caps, and so was Cousin Judith. They managed to make thirty before evening, when the club was to meet, and Don was told to promise each member a cap as soon as the rest could be made.

Nearly eighty children gathered on the lawn after supper and the new additions all signed the roll of the club and became members. Doris and Becky pinned a badge upon each one and told them to wear it wherever they might go, as a mark of distinction. The thirty caps were also distributed and some had already provided and brought with them their white sashes. These preparations filled the youngsters with joy and made them very proud of belonging to the new organization. Don got them in line and marched them around the grounds awhile, but the evenings were short at this time of the year and the children were soon dismissed with instructions to assemble on Monday after school and to bring as many new members as could be induced to join.

The badges were worn even to church the next day and aroused much curiosity; but not a boy nor girl would tell what “T. C. M. C.” meant, as they had pledged themselves to keep the club and its object a deep secret until they were ready to parade.

Perhaps it was not wholly a desire to help Toby Clark that animated these children, although after they were enrolled in the Marching Club they one and all warmly defended him if his innocence was questioned. What most attracted them was the club itself, with its glamour of badges, sashes, caps, “refreshments” at meetings, its drills and parades and the promises of brass bands and gold medals.

Doris, a conscientious little girl, took Don Daring to task for making those rash promises, but the boy protested that they would get a band, somehow or other, and as for the medals he had only said he would ask “Congress” for them and he meant to keep his word. If “Congress” refused to present the medals it wouldn’t be his fault, anyhow.

They drilled every afternoon during the following week. Phoebe finished the caps and supplied sashes to those children who were unable to get them at home. Becky wheedled Aunt Hyacinth, the black mammy who had been with the Darings all their lives, into making a hundred cookies one day and a hundred fried cakes the next, and with these the girls served lemonade to the Club. Wednesday afternoon Doris again supplied the refreshments and on

Thursday Cousin Judith furnished ice cream for the whole assemblage. Janet Ferguson, whose interest had been aroused by the unique idea of the Toby Clark Marching Club, provided the refreshments for Friday, and Saturday was to be the day of the first great parade.

But before this the Marching Club received its greatest surprise, resulting in its greatest impetus. On Thursday Doris Randolph came running over to the Daring place breathless with excitement and waving a letter as she met Becky and Don.

"Oh, dear!" she gasped; "what do you suppose has happened?"

"The North Star has gone south," answered Becky, laughing.

"No; it's something great — wonderful," said Doris. "Just listen to this letter; the postman brought it a minute ago."

She opened the letter with fluttering fingers and read as follows: "Miss Doris Randolph, Treasurer of the Toby Clark Marching Club:

"We beg to inform you that one of our customers, who wishes to remain unknown, has placed to your credit in Spaythe's Bank the sum of Fifty Dollars, to be used for the promotion of the Club as its officers deem best. Very respectfully, Spaythe's Bank, by Eric Spaythe, Cashier."

"Well, for goodness sake!" exclaimed Becky. "Fifty dollars! Who do you s'pose sent it, Doris?"

"I don't know any more than the letter tells us; but what in the world will we do with all that money?"

"I know," said Don, so astonished that he had been speechless until now; "we'll hire the Riverdale Cornet Band for Saturday."

"Good idea," said Becky. "Let's go see Ed Collins, the leader of the band, right away."

"But — wait!" cried Doris; "don't let us do anything rash. We'd better wait until the Club meets this afternoon and let them all vote on it."

"Nonsense," said Don. "Don't the letter say the money's to be used as the officers think best! Well, we 're the officers. Where's Al!"

"I think he is studying his lessons just at present," said Al's sister.

"Never mind; we're the majority; so let's vote to hire the band," proposed Don.

"Better let Allerton into this," said Becky cautiously. "He's mighty sensitive and there's no use having war in our own camp. As for the others, they're all dummies; but it won't take more than a jiffy to hunt Al up and get his vote on the proposition."

"We must all start for school very soon," said Doris; "and, if you will wait for us, Allerton and I will join you. Then, on our way, we can talk it over and decide what is best to be done."

This being a sensible suggestion, it was adopted and Doris ran across to her home while Becky flew upstairs to tell Phoebe and the Little Mother the wonderful news.

"It is certainly strange," commented Phoebe thoughtfully. "I wonder who could have sent this money!"

"Never mind who sent it," cried Becky; "we've got it, and we'll hire the band, and the whole town will go crazy over the Marching Club on Saturday!"

Then off she ran to talk it over with Don again, and Cousin Judith said to Phoebe:

"There may be a clew for you in this donation, my Lady Conspirator."

"That occurred to me at once," replied the girl seriously. "No one would donate fifty dollars to the Marching Club unless greatly interested in the fate of poor Toby. And who so likely to be interested in saving him as the one who really took Mrs. Ritchie's box?"

"In that case, the thief has a conscience and does not wish an innocent person to suffer for his own fault," commented Judith. "Therefore, thinking the Marching Club may assist Toby's case, the guilty one has donated fifty dollars to the cause."

"Perhaps a part of the stolen money," suggested Phoebe.

"Very likely. The letter says he wishes to conceal his identity, but — "

"The Spaythes must know who it is!" exclaimed Phoebe.

"Of course."

"I'm going to see Eric right away. He wrote the letter, Cousin Judith, and Eric knows if anyone does."

"But will he tell you?"

"He is very much interested in Toby and greatly worried over the way his case drags. Eric told me the other day he would do anything to save Toby."

"Then I advise you to see him."

Phoebe glanced out of the window. Becky and Don and the two Randolph children were just starting for school, eagerly canvassing the joyful news as they went. So Phoebe put on her things and quietly followed them, wending her way to Spaythe's bank.

This was a neat brick building, quite the most imposing bit of architecture in town. At this early hour the doors had just been opened and no customer had as yet appeared. Eric was back of the cashier's desk and greeted the girl with a cheery "good morning."

"Who gave fifty dollars to the Marching Club, Eric?" she asked.

"Some unknown person, Miss Daring," he replied with a smile.

"Not unknown to the bank, however," she said meaningly. "You see, it's

this way," Phoebe added, as the young man shook his head positively, "whoever gave that money knows something, Eric, and we must find out who it is. Perhaps — "

"Perhaps it's the thief himself," returned Eric.

'It struck me at the time as a curious proceeding, in view of the circumstances," he continued; "but the truth is, I'm as much in the dark as you are."

"How *can* you be!" she protested.

"Yesterday afternoon the governor came in from his private office and told me to write the letter to Doris Randolph. I worded it just as I was instructed, but when I asked who was the donor my father merely frowned and said he must respect the person's wish to remain unidentified."

"Then Mr. Spaythe knows!"

"Undoubtedly. You may question him, if you like; he's in his private office now. But I'm sure you won't learn anything."

Phoebe sighed. She believed Eric was right in this assertion. Mr. Spaythe was a man who guarded all confidences with the utmost loyalty. He would be likely to resent any attempt to penetrate this secret, Phoebe well knew, and she abandoned any thought of appealing to the banker.

"The governor is Toby's friend, you know," remarked Eric, as he noted her disappointed expression. "If he has discovered anything, through this donation, you may be sure he will take advantage of it when the proper time comes."

That thought cheered Phoebe somewhat on her way home. But just as she reached the house another thought intruded itself and she sat down on the porch bench to think it out.

Mr. Spaythe, although considered far above any breath of suspicion, actually headed her list of suspects. In other words, the banker was one of those who knew of the box and that it contained money, and he might have had the opportunity to steal it. She rapidly ran over in her mind the arguments she had used for and against the probability of Mr. Spaythe's having taken the box, and shook her head doubtfully. There was much that was suspicious in the banker's actions. His astonishing defense of Toby Clark, whom before the arrest he had scarcely noticed, could not be easily explained.

"The thief — the one we're after — was a clever person," mused Phoebe. "I doubt if he would be reckless enough to go to Mr. Spaythe and ask him to give that fifty dollars to the Marching Club and to keep his name secret. Mr. Spaythe would know at once that such a person was the guilty one. No; it wasn't the criminal. Some one honestly interested in Toby's welfare gave

that money, or else — or else it was Mr. Spaythe himself!”

She tried to consider this last possibility. Mr. Spaythe was not a charitable man; he seldom or never espoused any cause through pure philanthropy. There was something beneath this sudden interest in Toby Clark, a poor and friendless boy, and that something was not mere kindliness, Phoebe felt sure. He might be politic enough to assist a wealthy and powerful man in trouble, but not one who, like Toby, could make him no return. What, then, had impelled the banker to pursue this generous course toward the accused boy?

Phoebe went in to talk it over with Cousin Judith, but found the house in a commotion. Old Aunt Hyacinth was sweeping the parlor vigorously, although this was not sweeping day. Judith, in cap and apron, was dusting and rearranging the furniture, and Phoebe looked at the extraordinary scene in amazement.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE GOVERNOR ARRIVED

"Oh; is it you?" asked Judith busily. "Come and help us, dear, for we must have the place in apple-pie order by four o'clock, and there's a lot to be done."

"Dear me; what's the excitement about?" asked Phoebe.

"I've just had a telegram from Cousin John, the Governor, and he'll be here at four o'clock," answered Judith.

"Really?"

"Honest for true, Phoebe. Isn't it fine?"

Phoebe sat down with a bewildered expression. All the Darings well knew of Judith's famous cousin, the governor of the state, whom they always called the "Great Man" in discussing him; but until now none of them had ever seen him. He was not their cousin, although he bore that relation to Cousin Judith Eliot, whose mother had been the sister of his mother. There was no doubt of his being a very great man, for he had not only been twice elected governor of the state but people declared be might some day become president of the United States, so able and clean had been his administration of affairs. The very idea of their entertaining so celebrated a personage made Phoebe gasp. She looked at Cousin Judith with big eyes, trying to conceive the situation.

"I've often invited him to come and see us," continued Judith, her voice full of glad anticipation as she worked, "but he is such a busy man he could never find time. At last, however, he has remembered me, and his telegram says he has been North on state affairs and finds he can spare me a few hours to-day on his return; so he'll be here at four o'clock, stay all night and take the morning train on to the capitol."

"All night!" cried Phoebe.

"Yes; I'm so pleased, Phoebe. You're sure to like Cousin John and I know the other children will adore him. It's his custom to dine at night, you know; so we'll just have a lunch this noon and our dinner at suppertime, as they do up North. The youngsters won't mind, for once, although it may give them indigestion."

Phoebe took off her hat and began to help Judith "rid up" the house. The rooms were always so neatly kept that the girl could not see how they might be improved, but Judith had the old-fashioned housekeeper's instinct in regard to cleanliness and knew just what touches the place needed to render it sweet and fresh.

Awe fell upon the younger Darings when they came in from school and

heard the news. Don, who had been chattering noisily of the Riverdale Cornet Band, which had been hired for Saturday, fell silent and grave, for the governor's coming was an event that overshadowed all else. Becky, serious for just a moment, suddenly began laughing.

"The Great Man will scorn Riverdale, and especially the Darings," she predicted. "We'll look like a set of gawks to him and I warn you now, Little Mother, that if he pokes fun at me I'll make faces. It's straight goods that a governor has no business here, and if he comes he'll have to shed his city airs and be human."

Judith laughed at this.

"Don't think of him as a governor, dear," she said. "Just think of him as my Cousin John, who used to be very nice to me when I was wee girl and has never been any different since I grew up. I'm sure he is giving us these few hours to rest his weary brain and bones, and hide from the politicians. Not a soul in Riverdale will know the governor is here, unless he is seen and recognized."

"Is he ashamed of us, then?" inquired little Sue.

"Why should he be?"

"Because we're not great, like he is."

"But we *are,* Sue," declared Phoebe. "The Darings are as great, in their way, as the governor himself. We are honest and respectable, and the votes of just such families as ours placed Judith's cousin in the governor's chair and made him our leader and lawgiver."

"But he's got a head on him," remarked Don emphatically.

"We all have heads," answered Phoebe; "only our brains don't lead us to delve in politics or seek public offices."

"Mine do," asserted her brother. "I'm goin' to be awful great, myself, some day. If the Little Mother's cousin can be governor, there's no reason I shouldn't become a — a — "

"A policeman," said Becky, helping him finish the sentence. "But you'll have to grow up first, Don."

This conversation did not seem to annoy Cousin Judith in the least. On the contrary she was amused by the excitement the coming of the Great Man caused in their little circle.

"I wonder if the Randolphs would lend us their automobile to bring him from the station," mused Phoebe, at luncheon.

"How absurd!" said Judith. "Cousin John has two feet, just like other men, and he'll be glad to use them."

"Will the band turn out?" asked Don.

"No. You mustn't tell anyone of this visit, for the Riverdale people would

rush to see their governor and that would spoil his quiet visit with us. Keep very quiet about it until after he has gone — all of you."

"What'll we do about the Marching Club, Don?" asked Becky. "They were to meet on our grounds after school, but now that the Great Man is coming — "

"You need not alter your plans at all," said Judith. "I want you to do just as you are accustomed to do. Be yourselves, my dears, and treat Cousin John as if he were one of the family, which he really is. You mustn't let his coming disturb you in any way, for that would embarrass and grieve him. He has no family of his own and it will delight him to be received here as a relative and a friend, rather than as a great statesman."

It was hard work for the children to keep the secret to themselves when at school that afternoon; but they did. It was only little Sue who confided to a friend the fact that "the biggest man in the whole world, 'cept the kings an' princes of fairy tales, was coming to visit them;" but this indefinite information was received with stolid indifference and quickly forgotten.

Phoebe went with Judith to the station to meet the four o'clock train, at her cousin's earnest request, and her heart beat wildly as the train drew in. The girl had pictured to herself a big, stalwart gentleman, stern-visaged and grim, wearing a Prince Albert coat and a tall silk hat, the center of a crowd of admiring observers. She was looking for this important personage among the passengers who alighted from the cars when Judith's voice said in her ear:

"Shake hands with Cousin John, Phoebe."

She started and blushed and then glanced shyly into the kind and humorous eyes that gleamed from beneath the brim of a soft felt hat. The Great Man was not great in stature; on the contrary his eyes were about on a level with Phoebe's own and she saw that his form was thin and somewhat stooping. His coat was dusty from travel, his tie somewhat carelessly arranged and his shoes were sadly in need of shining. Otherwise there was an air of easy goodfellowship about Cousin John that made Phoebe forget in a moment that he was the governor of a great state and the idol of his people.

"Bless me, what a big girl!" he cried, looking at Phoebe admiringly. "I thought all your adopted children were infants, Judy, and fully expected to find you wielding half a dozen nursing bottles."

"No, indeed," laughed the Little Mother; "the Darings are all stalwarts, I assure you; an army of able-bodied boys and girls almost ready to vote for you, Cousin John."

"Oh-ho! Suffragettes, eh?" he retorted, looking at Phoebe mischievously.

"Not yet," she said, returning his smile. "The women of Riverdale haven't organized the army militant, I'm glad to say; for I've an idea I would never

join it."

"You're wrong," he said quickly. "The women of the world will dominate politics, some day, and you mustn't be too old-fashioned in your notions to join the procession of progress. But I mustn't talk shop to-day. What's that tree, Judith; a live oak or a hickory? What a quaint old town, and how cosy and delightful it seems! Some day, little Cousin, I'm going to disappear from the world and rusticate in just such a happy, forgotten paradise as Riverdale."

They were walking up the street, now, heading directly for the Daring residence. The governor carried a small traveling bag and a light overcoat. Those who saw him looked at him curiously, wondering what guest was visiting the Darings; but not one of the gaping villagers suspected that this was their governor.

Arriving at the house the Great Man tossed his bag and coat in the hall and drew a hickory rocker to a shady spot on the lawn. Asking permission to smoke a cigar — his one bad habit, he claimed — he braced his feet against a tree, leaned back in his chair and began to gossip comfortably with Judith, who sat beside him, of their childhood days and all the queer things that had happened to them both since. When Phoebe wanted to run away and leave the cousins together they made her stay; so she got a bit of embroidery and sat on the grass sewing and listening.

The children came home from school, awkwardly greeted the Great Man, in whom they were distinctly disappointed because he did not look the part, and then rushed away to follow their own devices. By and by Cousin John glanced through the trees and was astonished to observe in the distance an army of boys and girls engaged in drilling, their white caps and sashes and their badges giving them an impressive appearance.

"What's all that?" asked the Governor curiously.

"That," replied Judith with a laugh, "is the Toby Clark Marching Club."

"Toby Clark — Toby Clark," be said musingly. "A local celebrity, Judith?"

"Yes; a lame boy who has been arrested for stealing. These children resent the unjust accusation and have organized the Marching Club to express their indignation and their unfaltering loyalty to their friend."

"Good!" he cried; and then, after a moment, he added: "Unjust accusation, Judy?"

"Absolutely unjust," she replied.

He took down his feet and sat up straight in his chair.

"Tell me about it," he said.

"Phoebe can do that better than I," was the answer. "She is one of Toby Clark's staunchest defenders."

“Now, then, Phoebe, fire away.”

She told the story, quietly and convincingly, beginning with Judge Ferguson’s sudden death and relating Mrs. Ritchie’s demand for her box, its disappearance and the finding of evidence on the premises of Toby Clark, who had been promptly arrested and held for trial on the charge of stealing. She told of Mr. Spaythe’s unaccountable defense of Toby, employing a lawyer, furnishing his bail, and then giving him an asylum in his own house, and concluded with the donation of fifty dollars by an unknown person — through Spaythe’s bank — for the benefit of the Marching Club.

The governor listened without interruption or comment to the end, but it was evident he was interested. When Phoebe had finished he rose to his feet and walked over to where the boys and girls were drilling, where he stood watching Don explain the maneuvers and direct the exercises. The Great Man noted every child’s face and marked its expression. Then he strode among them and facing the astonished assemblage held up his hand.

“How many of you believe Toby Clark is innocent?” he asked.

The yell they gave was decidedly unanimous.

“How many of you would be willing to take his chance of going free?” continued the governor in an earnest tone.

There was hesitation, this time.

“I would!” cried Don. Then he turned to the others. “All of you who would be willing to take Toby Clark’s chance of going free, step over here beside me.”

Allerton and Becky, inspired by loyalty to the cause, moved over at once. The others stood silent.

“It is this way, sir,” said Doris, who had no idea who the strange man was, but was impressed by his voice, nevertheless, for it was a voice accustomed to command respectful attention: “We all know that Toby is innocent, but we are not at all sure he will *go free.”*

‘Why not!”

“Because the law is so unjust, at times,” replied the little maid, “and a very bad man who is a lawyer is trying to prove that Toby is guilty.”

“It looks like he was, the way they’ve figured it out,” added Becky; “only of course he can’t be.”

“Sometimes,” said the governor, as if to himself, “the innocent is made to suffer for the guilty. Now, it seems to me the question is this: If Toby Clark is innocent, who, then, is guilty? Find the guilty one and Toby goes free. Otherwise — the law may be perverted and justice miscarry.”

They looked very sober at this, and Don blurted out:

“We’re not detectives, sir, and we don’t know who is guilty. Hasn’t the

state any way of protecting its people? Isn't there anyone whose business it is to see that justice don't miscarry? Our business is just to stand by Toby Clark, 'cause we know he's innocent, and we mean to show ev'rybody in Riverdale that we believe Toby Clark couldn't do anything mean if he tried. He's good stuff, all through, even if he is a poor boy, and whatever happens we'll stand by him to the last."

The governor nodded his approval.

"That's right," he said. "Stand by your friends. There's no better motto than that. I wish you success."

Then he turned and walked away.

"Where is Toby Clark now?" he asked when he had rejoined Phoebe and Judith.

"He is at Mr. Spaythe's house. He doesn't go out much, for this dreadful charge against him makes him ashamed to face people," replied Phoebe.

"I want to see him," said the governor. "Will you take me to him after dinner?"

"Gladly!" cried Phoebe, sudden hope springing up in her breast, for the governor was a power in the land.

He said nothing more on the subject until after dinner. Phoebe almost feared he had forgotten about Toby Clark, for during the afternoon he chatted with Cousin Judith and during dinner he joked with Becky and Don and even with Sue, the demure and big-eyed. Cousin John won the entire family without effort, and even Aunt Hyacinth, hopping about in the kitchen, told the teakettle that "dis yer guv'ner ain't no diff'rence f'm a plain, ever'day man. He jus' natcherly takes to de whole kit an' caboodle, seein' he's cousin to Miss Judy an' not stuck up ner refrigerated a bit — no more 'n dem blessed child'ns is."

But after dinner he walked into the hall and picked his hat from the rack, which Phoebe decided was a signal that he was ready to go to Toby Clark. So she threw on a jacket and joined him, for the evenings were getting cool of late, and together they strolled through the back streets, avoiding the business part of the town, and so reached Mr. Spaythe's house.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW TOBY SAW THE GREAT MAN

Mr. Spaythe himself opened the door and took a step backward in astonishment.

"Why, Governor — is it really you?" he stammered.

"Yes. Good evening, Spaythe. I've called to see Toby Clark."

Mr. Spaythe led the way to the library, thoroughly amazed at the suddenly apparition of the state's chief executive.

"I'll call Toby," he said briefly.

"Do not tell him who I am, please," cautioned the governor. "I am simply Judith Eliot's cousin, and am at present visiting her."

"I understand, sir."

Toby came stumping in on his crutch, with a smile for his friend Phoebe and a frank handshake for Miss Eliot's cousin.

"I am a stranger here but have become interested in this unfortunate accusation against you," began Cousin John, in his easy, conversational way. "No; don't go away, Mr. Spaythe; there's nothing private about this interview. I merely want Toby Clark to tell me his story and explain why they charge him with taking and rifling Mrs. Ritchie's box."

"The story is easy, sir, but the explanation is difficult," replied Toby, and then he told in his own way the manner in which the circumstantial evidence against him had been found. The boy's story did not differ materially from Phoebe's, except that he added a few details that she had neglected to mention.

"I can scarcely blame them for their suspicions," Toby concluded. "Being poor, they decided I longed for money and would not object to taking that which belonged to some one else. As I knew the contents of the box and had access to Judge Ferguson's office, the conclusion is natural that I helped myself to Mrs. Ritchie's money and bonds and afterward tried to hide the useless but incriminating papers and the box."

"Who discovered the box, and afterward the papers?" asked the Governor.

"Our constable here, Sam Parsons. He is one of my best friends. But they sent a policeman over from Bayport to help him."

"How did Parsons happen to search your premises for such evidence?"

Mr. Spaythe started to answer this question, but checked himself and remained silent. It was Toby who replied:

"After I was arrested, on a warrant sworn out by Mrs. Ritchie, her lawyer, a man named Kellogg, urged Parsons to search my house and yard. He did so, and found the box. Afterward Kellogg insisted on another search, and the

papers were found."

The governor looked grave.

"It is strong evidence," said he, "and of the sort that convicts. Who stole the box, Mr. Spaythe?"

The banker started at the abrupt question.

"I — I haven't an idea, sir."

"Nor you, Toby?"

"No, sir. I've racked my brain many times in the attempt to guess; but I can't suspect anyone, with justice."

"Well, I am sorry for your misfortune, young man. You seem to be in a serious dilemma. It's a peculiar case, to say the least of it, and I can only say I hope you'll come out on top and with colors flying. All ready, Phoebe?"

As they walked back to the house the girl felt sorely disappointed over the result of the interview, from which she had hoped so much. The governor talked on all sorts of subjects except that of Toby Clark and she replied as cheerfully as she could. Not until they were in sight of the Daring house did he refer to the visit, and then it was to say absently:

"Kellogg — Kellogg. What's the lawyer's other name?"

"Abner, sir."

"Fine fellow?"

"I don't like him," said Phoebe.

"Ah! Judith tells me you're investigating this case yourself; posing as a sort of female detective."

"Oh, no!" she protested. "Cousin Judith and I — merely in a laughing way and yet earnest in our desire to help Toby — organized a private conspiracy to probe the mystery in our own way and try to discover its solution. I suppose, sir, we are very foolish to think we can accomplish anything, but — "

"But you may succeed, nevertheless. I believe in girls. When they're sincere and determined they can accomplish wonders. By the way, keep an eye on Abner Kellogg."

"The lawyer?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes. Ask yourself this question: Why did Abner Kellogg direct the constable to search Toby Clark's premises? And now let us talk of something else, for here is Judith waiting for us."

The governor had a jolly, restful evening. He played dominoes with Becky, who was allowed to sit up on this important occasion, and afterward, when the youngsters were in bed, lay back in an easy chair and smoked a cigar while Phoebe played some simple old-fashioned melodies on the piano which warmed his heart. Cousin John really enjoyed his visit to Riverdale

and honestly regretted it must be so brief.

"I'm coming again, some time," he promised, as he prepared to walk to the station after breakfast. "These few hours with you have rested me wonderfully and enabled me to forget for the moment the thousand and one worries and cares incident to my office. It is no sinecure being a public servant, I assure you. The people insist that I earn my salary."

Phoebe and Judith walked down to the train with him and the secret must have leaked out in some way for, early as it was, a throng of villagers had assembled on the platform. The governor frowned slightly, but then smiled and bowed in answer to the ringing cheer that greeted his appearance. As he waited for the train to pull in he whispered to Phoebe: "If you get snagged over that Toby Clark affair, send me a telegram. The boy is innocent. I've seen and studied him, and I'll vouch for his honesty. But on his trail is a clever enemy, and you'll have to look sharp to circumvent him."

Then he kissed Judith, jumped on the platform of the car and waved his hat to the cheering crowd as the train carried him away.

"We've gained an added prestige through the governor's visit — if it's worth anything to us," laughed Judith, on the way home.

"Isn't he splendid?" cried Phoebe, enthusiastically. "He wasn't a bit stilted or self-important, as such a great man has the right to be, but acted just like an old friend."

"Exactly what Cousin John is," replied the Little Mother. "The great are always human, Phoebe; sometimes the more human they are the greater they become. And they grow to judge fame and public adulation at its proper value and are not deceived nor unduly elated at popular acclaim. When the next governor takes his seat the present governor will be speedily forgotten. Cousin John realizes that, and — "

"But he's to be president, some day; everybody says so!" exclaimed Phoebe protestingly.

"They'll forget that, too," returned Judith, "with a smile." I wouldn't care to have Cousin John become president; he is tired from long service, and deserves a rest."

"It's a great honor," sighed Phoebe.

"It's a compliment, certainly," said Judith. "Yet the highest honor a politician can win is to be known as a faithful friend to the people, and that honor is already awarded to Cousin John."

Phoebe went about her duties thoughtfully. The interest shown in Toby Clark's fate by the governor had the effect of encouraging and discouraging her at one and the same time. She considered especially his advice with regard to Lawyer Kellogg, but could not understand why he attached so

much importance to Kellogg's direction that Toby's house and yard be searched. It had seemed natural to her that the lawyer, who had disliked Toby because the boy served his rival, Judge Ferguson, had promptly suspected him of taking the box and, in Mrs. Ritchie's interests, had directed the search which was the simple outcome of Toby's arrest.

Sam Parsons would have some idea about Mr. Kellogg 's part in the affair. She had intended to see Sam and question him ever since Cousin Judith advised such a course, and now she decided to lose no more time in doing so. She had known the constable all her life and regarded him as a trusty friend; therefore the girl had no hesitation in going that evening to his humble home, which was only two short blocks from the Daring house.

"Sam'll be in in a minute," reported Mrs. Parsons, whose hand was too wet to shake, for she had left her dish-washing to open the door. "Come inside, Miss Phoebe, an' set down."

She left the girl alone in the sitting room and went back to her kitchen, and Phoebe sat down and waited. It was already more than "a minute" and she realized she might have to wait a considerable time for Sam, whose movements were uncertain.

She glanced around the room. In one corner the constable had his desk, littered with all sorts of documents, while the pigeon-holes contained a variety of rubbish. Underneath, on the floor and directly in the corner, was a heap of newspapers and illustrated periodicals, irregularly piled. Phoebe stooped and reaching underneath the desk drew out one or two papers to read while she waited. Then she gave a suppressed cry of astonishment, for even by the dim light of the one kerosene lamp she saw that she had uncovered a tin box painted blue, which had been hidden by the papers. Kneeling down she lifted the box and quickly examined it. On one end was painted the name "Ritchie" in white letters and the lock was in perfect condition, so that she could not lift the cover.

Fearful of being surprised, she hastily replaced the box and laid the papers over it, as before; then, rising to her feet, she resumed her chair and became aware that Sam Parsons was standing just inside the door, regarding her thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW THE CONSTABLE ARGUED HIS CASE

Phoebe turned first white and then red, consumed with shame at being caught prying into the affairs of others. But the constable merely nodded and sat down in a rocker, which thereafter he kept moving in a regular, deliberate manner.

"Evenin', Phoebe. Lookin' at the Ritchie box?"

"That can't be the Ritchie box, Sam," she replied.

"Why not?"

"The box — the other box — the one they found in Toby's rubbish-heap — was bent and battered out of shape, and the lock smashed. I saw it myself."

"M — m. 0' course. So did I. And here's another Ritchie box in good shape. You've seen that, too."

"I — I was going to read one of the papers, while I waited, and I — I — uncovered the box by accident."

"It's all right, little girl. No harm done. But can you tell me which is the real Ritchie box — this or the other?"

"Is one an imitation, Sam?"

"Must be. Judge Ferguson only kept one Ritchie box in his cupboard. Them boxes are kept in stock at the hardware store, an' the judge bought 'em when he needed' em. They're heavy sheet tin, over a steel frame, an' the locks are the best there is made. The boxes are all black, when they're new, but for some reason — p'raps so's to tell it easy — the judge had 'em painted different colors, with the names on' em. The Ritchie box was blue. I s'pose, Phoebe, it wouldn't be much of a trick to buy a box, an' paint it blue, an' put 'Ritchie' on the end of it; would it?"

He spoke lightly, but there was an anxiety underlying the lightness that did not escape Phoebe's notice.

"Which is the real Ritchie box, Sam?" she asked breathlessly.

"I don't know, Phoebe."

"Where did you get this one?"

"I — can't — tell — you. That's my private business, an' I'll ask you not to mention to a soul on earth that you've seen it."

She looked at him with a puzzled expression. Then she asked:

"Sam, does Lawyer Kellogg buy those boxes at the hardware store!"

"So they tell me," he replied, shifting uneasily in his chair. "Kellogg's got a few clients, you know, and he keeps his papers in a good deal the same way as the judge did — only he's got a big safe to put the boxes in."

“I suppose no one else in Riverdale ever buys such boxes?” she continued.

“I don’t know. Might, if they had any use for ‘em,” he replied.

She sat silent for a time.

“Sam, are they going to convict Toby of this crime?” she presently asked.

He hesitated.

“Looks like it, Phoebe. Looks confounded like it, to me, and I’ve had a good deal of experience in such things.”

“Won’t you save him, Sam?”

“Who? Me? How can I?”

“I thought you were Toby’s friend.”

“So I am. I’d give a year o’ my life to save Toby from prison, if I could; but — it’s out o’ the question, girl; I can’t!” he said emphatically.

“You can!”

“What do you mean, Phoebe Daring?”

“Sam Parsons, you know who stole Mrs. Ritchie’s box.”

He looked at her steadily and not a muscle of his face changed expression.

“Think so?”

“I know it. And, unless you save Toby of your own accord, I’ll make you go on the witness stand and confess the whole truth.”

“How can you do that — if I don’t know!” he asked slowly.

“You *do* know. I’ll tell the judge at the trial how you were caught twice in the hall before Judge Ferguson’s door — once looking through the keyhole; I’ll tell how I found a blue Ritchie box hidden in your home, and how you found another in Toby’s rubbish heap; and the judge will make you explain things.”

The constable gave a low whistle; then he laughed, but not merrily; next he rubbed his chin in a puzzled and thoughtful way while he studied the young girl’s face.

“Phoebe,” said he, “I used to tote you on my back when you were a wee baby. Your mother called me in to see you walk alone, for the first time in your life — it was jus’ two steps, an’ then you tumbled. You used to ride ‘round the country with me in my buggy, when I had to serve papers, an’ we’ve been chums an’ good friends ever since.”

“That’s true, Sam.”

“Am I a decent fellow, Phoebe? Am I as honest as most men, and as good a friend as many?”

“I — I think so. I could always trust you, Sam. And so could my father, and Judge Ferguson.”

“If that’s the case, why do you think I’d let my friend Toby Clark serve a term in prison for a felony he didn’t commit, when I could save him by

tellin' what I know?"

"I can't understand it, Sam. It's so unlike you. Tell me why."

He sighed at her insistence. Then he said doggedly.

"Our secret, Phoebe? You'll keep mum?"

"Unless by telling I can save Toby."

He reflected, his face very grave.

"No; you couldn't save Toby by telling, for no power on earth can make Sam Parsons speak when he's determined to keep his mouth shut. It's for you I'm goin' to speak now, an' for no one else. I'd like to explain to you, Phoebe, because we're old friends, an' we're both fond of Toby. It'll be a sort of relief to me, too. But no judge could make me tell this."

"Then I'll promise."

He rocked to and fro a while before he began.

"It worries me, Phoebe, to think that you — a mere child — have found out what I don't want found out. If my secret is so loosely guarded, it may not be a secret for long, and I can't let others know all that I know. The truth is, Phoebe, that I don't know for certain sure who took the box, not seein' it taken with my own eyes; but I've a strong suspicion, based on facts, as to who took it. In other words, I've made up my mind, firmly, as to the thief, and for that reason I don't want any detective work done — any pryin' into the secret — by you or anyone else; for I mean to let Toby Clark take the punishment and serve his term in prison for it."

"And Toby innocent!"

"And Toby as innocent as you or I."

"But that's a dreadful thing to do, Sam!"

"It is, Phoebe; it's dreadful; but not so dreadful as telling the truth. I'm only a plain man, my child, without education or what you call 'gloss'; I'm just a village constable, an' likely to be that same until I die. But I've got a heart, Phoebe, an' I can feel for others. That's the only religion I know; to do to others as I'd like 'em to do to me. So I figure it out this way: To bring the — the — person — who took Mrs. Ritchie's box to justice, to tell the whole world who the criminal is, would bring grief an' humiliation to some of the kindest and truest hearts in all Riverdale. It would bow them with shame and ruin their lives — not one, mind you, but several lives. It wouldn't reform the — the one — who did it, for the — the person — wouldn't do such a thing again; never! It was a case of sudden temptation and — a sudden fall. Prison would wreck that life beyond redemption, as well as the lives of the relations and — and friends, such as I've mentioned.

"On the other hand, evidence points to Toby Clark, and unless the real — person — who took the box is discovered, Toby will be convicted on that

evidence. That's the horror of the thing, Phoebe; but horror is sure to follow crime, and a crime has been committed that some one must suffer the penalty for. Who is Toby Clark? A poor boy without a single relative in the world to be shamed by his fate. Friends, yes; a plenty; you and I among 'em; but no friend so close that the prison taint would cling to' em; *not even a sweetheart has Toby.* So it's Hobson's choice, seems to me. I'm dead sorry for the lad; but it's better — far better — an' more Christianlike to let him suffer this fate alone, than to condemn many others to suffering — people who have done no wrong, no more'n Toby has. He's just one, an' a boy; the others are — sev'ral, and I consider it best to let Toby redeem 'em. That's all, Phoebe. Now you understand me, and I know you'll stand by me and say I'm right."

The girl had followed these arguments in wonder and perplexity. She felt that Sam Parsons might be right, in a way, but rebelled against the necessity of letting the innocent suffer.

"I know Toby," she said softly; "but the others I don't know."

"Yes; you do," he contended. "You know 'em, but you don't know who they are. What difif'rence does that make?"

"Who took the box, Sam?"

"I'll never tell."

"My friends and relations are all responsible for me, in a way, and I am responsible to them," said Phoebe reflectively. "One thing that would keep me from willfully doing wrong is the knowledge that I would grieve others — those near and dear to me."

"To be sure!" replied Sam, rubbing his hands together; "you're arguin' on my side now, Pboebe. S'pose in a moment of weakness you yielded to temptation? We're all so blamed human that we can't be sure of ourselves. S'pose you had a hankerin' for that money of Mrs. Ritchie's, an' s'pose on a sudden you got a chance to take it — an' took it before you thought? Well; there you are. Prison for you; shame and humiliation for all that are dear to you. Eh? Toby Clark? Well, it's too bad, but it won't hurt Toby so very much. He couldn't expect much in life, anyhow, with his poverty, his bad foot, an' the only man that could push him ahead dead an' gone. But what's one ruined career as compared to — say — half a dozen? Toby'll take his sentence easy, 'cause he's strong in his innocence. The others would be heartbroken. It's far better to let Toby do the penance, seems to me."

Phoebe could not answer him just then. She was too bewildered. The girl understood perfectly Sam's position and realized that in opposing it she expressed less charity and kindliness than the constable.

"I'm going to think about it," she said to him. "I'm so surprised and confused right now by what you've told me that my senses have gone

glimmering. But it strikes me, Sam, that we ought to find a way to save Toby without implicating the guilty one at all."

He shook his head negatively.

"That would be fine, but it can't be done," he replied. "We've got to produce the thief to get Toby out of the mess, for otherwise the evidence will convict him."

"Can't we destroy the evidence — upset it — prove it false?" inquired the girl.

"Not with safety to--the other party. But do as you say; go home an' think it over. The more you think the more you'll feel I'm right, an' that your best course is to lie low an' let Toby take his medicine. The life in prison ain't so bad; plenty to eat, a clean bed and work to occupy his time."

"But afterward? If he lives to come out he will be despised and avoided by everyone. No one cares to employ a jail-bird."

"I've thought of that, Phoebe. Here in Riverdale Toby couldn't hold his head up. But it's a big world and there are places where his past would never be discovered. I'll look after the lad, if I'm alive when he gets free, and try to help him begin a new life; but, anyhow, he must face this ordeal and make the best of it."

Phoebe went home discouraged and rebellious. She kept telling herself that Sam Parsons was right, all the time resenting the fact that the common, uneducated man looked at this unfortunate affair in a broader, more philanthropic light than she could, and was resolved to do his duty as his simple mind conceived it. The girl's heart, stifle it as she would, cried out against the injustice of the plan of sacrifice. Sam knew all the parties concerned, and could therefore judge more impartially than she; but even that argument did not content her.

CHAPTER XV

HOW THE BAND PLAYED

Ed Collins, the leader of the Riverdale Cornet Band, was much amused when the four children — two Darings and two Randolphs — came to him in breathless excitement and wanted to hire his band to parade with the Marching Club on Saturday afternoon. Ed kept a tailor shop and was a good-natured, easy-going fellow who was fond of children and liked to humor them, but this proposition seemed so absurd that he answered with a smile:

"Bands cost money. The boys won't tramp the streets for nothing, you know."

"We'll pay," said Don, offended that he was not taken seriously. "I said we wanted to *hire* your band. Their business is to play for money, isn't it?"

"Sometimes," said Ed; "and sometimes they play for fun."

"This'll be fun," suggested Becky.

"Not for the band, I guess. You'd want us to play every minute," said the tailor.

"Of course; that's what bands are for. When they don't play, nobody pays any attention to them," declared the girl.

"They have to get their breaths, once in awhile," suggested Ed.

"Let 'em do it when they're not parading, then. You can't expect us to pay 'em to breathe," said Becky.

"We have money," said Doris, with dignity, thinking it time to interfere. "What is your lowest price?"

The leader looked at her in surprise.

"You're in earnest?" he demanded.

"Of course!" they cried in a chorus.

"How many men do you want?"

"All you've got," said Don; "and they must wear their new uniforms."

"We've twelve men, altogether, and when we're hired for an afternoon we get three dollars apiece."

"That is thirty-six dollars," replied Doris. "Very well; do you wish the money now?"

The tailor was amazed.

"What's it all about, anyhow?" he inquired.

"We've organized the Toby Clark Marching Club — over a hundred boys and girls — the best lot in the village," explained Don. "We want to show everybody in Riverdale that we don't believe — not for a single minute — that Toby ever stole Mrs. Ritchie's box, and we're going to carry signs an' banners an' march through the streets with the band playing."

Collins stared a minute, and then he laughed.

"That's great!" he exclaimed. "I'm with you in this deal, for it's a shame the way they're treating Toby. Perhaps I can get the boys to play for two dollars apiece, on this occasion."

"We've got fifty dollars," announced Doris, the treasurer. "It was given us by some one anxious to befriend Toby Clark and we're to spend it just as we please."

"Oh. Do you want fifty dollars 'worth of music, then?" asked the tailor, with an eye to business.

"No," said Don; "that is, not all at once. If your twelve men will play for twenty-four dollars, we could hire them twice. If this first parade's a success, I want to take all the Club and the band over to Bayport, and make a parade there."

"Dear me!" said Becky, to whom this idea was new; "how'll we ever get such a mob over to Bayport?"

"It can't be done," declared Allerton.

"Yes, it can," persisted Don. "If we wake up the folks in Riverdale we must wake 'em up in Bayport. That's the county seat and the trial will be held there, so it's a good point to show the Bayporters what we think of Toby Clark."

"How'll you get us there — walking?" asked Becky.

"We'll hire carryalls, an' rigs of all sorts," said Don.

"We can't hire much if we spend all our money on bands," Allerton replied.

"We'll get more money. P'raps the Unknown will fork over another wad for the good of the cause."

"Tell you what I'll do," said Collins, catching some of the children's enthusiasm, "I'll play for nothing, myself, and perhaps some of the other men will. Those that insist on money will get two dollars apiece."

Becky took her badge from her pocket and pinned it on the tailor's coat.

"You're the right stuff, Ed," she remarked. "But don't show your badge to anyone until Saturday; and don't blab about the parade, either. We want to surprise folks."

The band appeared in force at one o'clock on Saturday afternoon, meeting the Marching Club on the Daring grounds, as had been arranged. The musicians wore their best uniforms and looked very impressive with their glittering horns and their drums. Ed whispered to Don and Allerton that seven of the twelve had agreed to donate their services, so the total cost of the band would be but ten dollars.

This was good news, indeed. The youthful officers quickly formed their

ranks, for every boy and girl was excited over the important event and very proud to be a member of the Marching Club.

Judith and Phoebe came out to see the parade start and they thought these bright and eager young folks could not fail to impress their belief in Toby Clark's innocence on all who witnessed this day's demonstration.

The children had "chipped in" whatever money they could command to pay the village sign painter for lettering in big black letters on white cloth three huge banners, which had been framed and were to be carried in the parade. The first, which the butcher's big boy carried just in front of the band, read:

"THE TOBY CLARK MARCHING CLUB."

The second, which was borne in the center of the procession, said:

"WE KNOW THAT TOBY CLARK IS INNOCENT."

The third sign, carried in the rear ranks, was as follows:

"JOIN US IN DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR TOBT.
YOU MIGHT BE FALSELY ACCUSED YOUBSBLF SOME DAY."

This last was so big that it required two to carry it, and four guy-ropes, gayly decorated with colored ribbons, were held by four of the girls to give it more steadiness. In addition to these, two big American flags were carried in the line.

Don took his place at the head of the First Division, just behind the band. Allerton commanded the Second Division. Doris and Becky walked at either side, armed with bundles of handbills which Allerton had printed, urging the public to defend Toby Clark in every possible way, because he was helpless to defend himself.

Then the band struck up a spirited march tune and started down the street with the Marching Club following in splendid order and keeping fairly good step with the music. The white sashes and caps gave the children an impressive appearance and their earnest faces were very good to behold.

To most of the Riverdale people the parade was a real surprise and all were astonished by the numbers and soldierly bearing of the youthful participants. Many a cheer greeted them in the down-town districts, where numerous farmers and their families, who had come to Riverdale for their Saturday shopping, helped to swell the crowd of spectators.

"They ought to told us 'bout this," said Tom Eat bun the grocer to the group standing outside his store. "We'd 'a' decorated the town, to give the kids a send-off. I've got a sneakin' notion, myself, as Toby is guilty, but that

don't cut no ice if it amuses the kids to think as he's inner-cent."

"Pah!" returned Griggs the carpenter, with scornful emphasis, "I'm 'shamed o' you, Tom Eat bun. Can you look in the faces o' them chidern, who all know Toby better'n we grown-ups, an' then say the boy's guilty?"

"They ain't got no sense; they're jest kids," retorted the grocer.

"Sense? They're full o' sense, 'cause they ain't prejudiced an' stubborn, like us old ones," claimed the carpenter. "Children has intuitions; they've a way of tellin' the true from the false in a second, without any argyment. You might fool one youngster, p'raps, but when you see a whole crowd like this declarin' the innercence of one who they knows through an' through, you can bet your bottom dollar they're right!"

A good many thought and argued as old Griggs did; those who had formerly condemned Toby became thoughtful and began to reconsider their judgment; even the most rabid believers in the boy's guilt were silent in the face of this impressive demonstration and forbore any remarks that might irritate the youthful champions.

The one exception was Dave Hunter, who had developed so strong an antipathy toward Toby that nothing seemed to mollify it. The telegraph office was at the railway station and as Dave stood outside with Wakefield, the station agent, watching the parade pass, he said sneeringly:

"The little fools! What good can they do? We're not the judge and jury, and if we were we wouldn't be influenced by a lot of crazy little beggars marching."

"You're 'way off, Dave," replied Wakefield. "Nothing influences one more than the pleading of children. We can't tell yet who the jury will be, but if any of them happen to see this parade to-day you can gamble that the opinion of these marchers will have a lot of weight with them."

"There's nothing sound in their opinion; it's mere sentiment," growled Dave.

"Sentiment? Well, that counts for a good deal in this world," observed Wakefield, an older and more experienced man. "These children are dear to a lot of folks, who will side with them first and last; not through cold reason, but through sentiment."

Indeed, almost every parent in Riverdale had a boy or girl in the parade and was proud to own it. Parents usually stand by their children when they evince generosity and loyalty and it is certain that the effect of this great parade helped the cause of Toby Clark more than its organizers suspected.

Don and Becky Daring and the Randolphs believed firmly in Toby's innocence, but were animated as much by the novelty and excitement of promoting the Marching Club as by the belief that they could assist their

friend by its means. Yet the fun of the undertaking did not lead them to forget the original cause and when the parade reached Mr. Spaythe's house it halted and gave three rousing cheers for Toby Clark, afterward standing at attention while the band played through an entire tune. The crowd that had assembled called loudly for Toby, but the poor boy was hidden behind the curtains of a window, trying to see his loyal army through the blinding tears that streamed from his eyes. Toby couldn't have spoken a word had he appeared, there was such a hard lump in his throat; but he kept repeating to himself, over and over again:

"It's worth it all! It's worth anything that can happen to know I am so loved and respected by all the boys and girls. I don't care, now. Let em do their worst. I'm happy!"

After more cheers the procession moved on and as the sound of the music died away in the distance, Toby Clark, in the seclusion of his room, fell on his knees and earnestly thanked God for giving him such friends.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW MRS. RITCHIE CHIDED HER LAWYER

The parade was the one topic of conversation in the village. The editor of the *Riverdale News,* Mr. Fellows, interviewed Don and Allerton, got the name of every member of the Marching Club and published the list incident to a two-column article in his paper, in which he sided with the children and strongly espoused the cause of Toby Clark. Mr. Fellows always liked to side with popular opinion and he shrewdly guessed that the children voiced the sentiment of the majority of Riverdale citizens. The editor rendered Sam Parsons very uneasy by concluding his article with a demand that the guilty person be discovered, so as to free Toby from any further suspicion, and he stated that if Mr. Holbrook, the lawyer defending Toby, and the village officers — meaning of course the constable — were unable to find the real criminal and bring him to justice, then outside aid should be summoned and detectives brought from the city.

In this demand poor Mr. Fellows found he had gone a step too far. Mr. Spaythe, angry and resentful, called on him and requested him not to publish any more such foolish ideas. Sam Parsons called on him and politely but firmly requested him to mind his own business. Mr. Holbrook called on him and sarcastically asked if he preferred to undertake the case, with its responsibilities, rather than trust to the judgment of a competent attorney. The bewildered editor tore up the article he had written for the next edition and resolved to keep silent thereafter, as a matter of policy.

Lawyer Kellogg was also keeping very quiet, relying upon the evidence he had on hand to convict the accused. He was greatly annoyed at times by Mrs. Ritchie, who drove to town every few days — usually in the evenings — and urged him to get back her money and the missing paper. This the lawyer was unable to do, even when she offered him a thousand dollars for the recovery of the paper alone.

"What was the paper?" he asked.

"That don't concern you," she retorted.

"It does, indeed, Mrs. Ritchie," protested the man. "How can I find a paper if I am totally ignorant of its character? Was it a deed, a mortgage, or what?"

She looked at him uneasily.

"I wish I could trust you," she muttered; "but you're such a lyin' scoundrel that I've no confidence in you."

"I'm honest to my clients, at all times, and as honest as most men in other ways," he assured her. "I've often observed that those who can't trust their

lawyers are not honest themselves."

"Meaning me, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're right. That paper might cause me trouble if it got into the wrong hands," she frankly stated. "Even Judge Ferguson never knew what it was, for I kept it sealed up in a long yellow envelope just marked 'private' on the outside. When the box was stolen the envelope and all disappeared."

"What was the paper?" he asked again.

"A — a will."

"Oh! Mr. Ritchie's will?"

"No. But it was a will, giving me power over property. If you run across it, and see my name, don't read the paper but bring it straight to me and the thousand dollars is yours — with the understanding you keep your mouth shut forever."

He smiled at her complacently. Here was a streak of good luck that well repaid the unscrupulous attorney for undertaking Mrs. Ritchie's case and submitting to all her abuse. She admitted she was not an honest woman. She admitted the lost will would be damaging evidence against her. Very well, she was now in his power and as she was a rich woman he could extort money from her whenever he pleased, by simply resorting to threats.

Mrs. Ritchie read the smile correctly and nodded with grim comprehension.

"I've told you this for two reasons," she said. "One is so you can identify the paper if you find it, and bring it to me. The other reason is because I can put you in jail if you try to blackmail me."

"Oh; you can?"

"Easy. It was you that put that box in Toby Clark's rubbish heap, so the police could find it there. You got a box, painted it blue, to look like mine, put my name on the end, and then smashed the lock, battered the box all up an' carried it to the rubbish heap."

"Did I?"

"Yes. I found the blue and white paints in your office closet. I've seen several such boxes in your possession when you opened your safe. The lock of the box found in Toby's yard won't fit my key, for there were two keys to my box and I carried one and Judge Ferguson the other. Last of all, I was driving home one night when I saw you sneaking along the dark road. I got out of my buggy an' followed you, an' I saw you go into Toby's yard an' hide the box."

"Why did you say nothing of this until now?"

"Because I'd like to see Toby go to prison. It's a dead sure thing he stole

my box, for no one else would have taken just that yellow envelope and hid the other papers where they might be found. So I mean to make him do time for that trick, behind prison bars, and the sort of evidence you fixed up will help send him there. But I want that paper back, and I want the money, an' you've got to get 'em for me, Abner Kellogg. If you don't, I'll tell about the box. That act of yours was conspiracy, accordin' to law, and it'll mean state's prison for you."

Mr. Kellogg, rather uneasy to find the tables turned on him so cleverly, took time to rearrange his thoughts. Then he said:

"I didn't hide your papers in the boy's room. I received an anonymous letter, telling me where to look for them. Did you write that letter?"

"Don't be a fool. If I'd known, I'd have got the papers myself. I don't accuse you of hiding the papers, but I do know you manufactured that box evidence."

"Yes, for a purpose. If I had known the papers would be found I wouldn't have bothered about the box, for the papers are really the strongest proof against young Clark. But I wonder why, when he hid the other papers, he kept out the yellow envelope containing the will."

"He wanted to keep that," she said.

"Then you think he intended the other papers to be discovered? Nonsense! You're more clever than that, Mrs. Ritchie."

She frowned.

"Well, what then, sir?" she asked.

"This case is more complicated than you dream of," he replied. "I've a notion that others besides Toby Clark are implicated. If you were not so anxious for that paper, I'd say the safest plan we can follow is to convict Toby, put him in prison, and then let the matter drop. What harm will the loss of the paper do? No one would dare use it, for it would proclaim him the accomplice of the thief. If it's a will, a legal document, it has been probated and recorded, so no one will question your right to the property it conveys. Keep quiet about the loss and you will be safe. It seems to me that the only danger is in stirring things up."

She thought this over.

"Find it if you can," she said, rising to go, "but don't mention to a soul that it's a will you're looking for. Try and get Toby to confess; that's the best plan. Promise him a light sentence; promise him anything you like if he'll give up the yellow envelope, or tell you where it is. When we've got our hands on it we can forget all our promises."

The lawyer nodded, with an admiring smile for his confederate.

"I'll try," he said, but with a doubtful accent. "A thousand dollars for you

if you succeed,” she repeated, and went away.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW PHOEBE SURPRISED A SECRET

While Phoebe freely applauded the generous efforts of the children on behalf of Toby Clark, she realized that it would require something more than, Marching Clubs to save the boy from prison.

According to Sam Parsons, Toby ought to go to prison, as a scapegoat for others; but Phoebe could not reconcile herself to the decree of so dreadful a fate for a helpless and innocent waif — just because he had no near relatives to grieve over his sacrifice.

She had promised Sam not to tell his secret, unless by telling it she could save Toby, yet after much earnest thought she decided to relate an abstract case to Cousin Judith and ask her advice. So, outlining just how much she dared say and still be true to her promise, she went one afternoon to the Little Mother's room, taking her sewing with her, and while Judith painted, Phoebe led the conversation toward Toby Clark.

"I'm afraid," she remarked, after pursuing the subject for a time, "that we're not helping Toby as energetically as we ought. No one seems so much interested as we are, for neither Mr. Spaythe nor Lawyer Holbrook appear to be doing anything to find the real criminal. If things jog along this way, December will soon arrive and Toby will be tried and convicted before we realize it."

"True," said Judith. "I can't account for the seeming inactivity of Mr. Holbrook and Mr. Spaythe; yet it may be all seeming, Phoebe. Have you conceived any idea on the subject?"

"I've speculated about it, of course. Suppose, Cousin, these men should not wish to discover the real criminal. Suppose they know who took the box, but want to shield the guilty one from disgrace, and so are willing to let Toby suffer?"

"Why, Phoebe, what a queer notion that is!"

"But it isn't impossible, is it? Suppose one with many friends and relatives — a prominent and respectable person, you know — in a moment of weakness stole Mrs. Ritchie's box. To save that person from the consequences, false evidence against Toby was manufactured. We know it is false evidence if Toby is innocent. Wouldn't those in the secret think it better to let a poor and friendless boy suffer the disgrace and the prison sentence, rather than denounce one whose disgrace Would drag down many others?"

Judith looked at her with a startled expression.

"Really, my dear, you may possibly have stumbled upon the truth," she said slowly. "That is quite a reasonable hypothesis. How did you happen to

think of it?”

Phoebe flushed at the necessity of dissimulating.

“Some one is guilty,” she replied evasively, “and there seems to be a conspiracy to defend the guilty one from discovery. But would it be right and just for them to do that, Cousin Judith? Would it be honest to let an innocent boy suffer for another’s crime?”

Judith reflected before answering.

“I think not,” she said. “Certainly not unless the innocent one willingly and voluntarily undertook to shield the guilty. There have been such instances of generous self-sacrifice, which all the world has applauded; but to condemn the innocent without his knowledge or consent seems to me as great a crime as the theft of the box — even a greater crime.”

“That is exactly how it seems to me!” cried Phoebe eagerly. “If I knew of such a thing, Cousin, and was able to foil the plot, would I be justified in doing so?”

The Little Mother looked at the girl thoughtfully.

“I suppose, Phoebe, that you have discovered something that warrants this suspicion, but are not ready to confide in me wholly at the present time,” she said.

“I’m so sorry, Cousin Judith; but — ”

“Never mind. I am not offended, Phoebe. I know your frank and true nature and can trust you to do right, as you see the right. But move cautiously in this matter, my dear. Study the arguments on both sides of the question very carefully; then boldly follow the dictates of your heart. Without knowing more than I do of the matter, I should consider two courses of action open to you — if, indeed, you prove to be right in your surmise. One is to let Toby himself decide.”

“Oh; but that would settle it at once!” exclaimed Phoebe. “Toby is generous to a fault and, although he is proud, he keenly realizes his humble position. To ask him to suffer that another might be saved would be the same as thrusting him into prison. I know he wouldn’t refuse; and you know it, too, Cousin Judith.”

“Yet under some conditions it might be best, even then,” asserted Judith. “Best, I mean, from a politic point of view. But that would depend largely on who the guilty person is. The other alternative is to obtain proof against the real criminal, of a character sufficient to clear Toby, and then let the punishment fall where it belongs, regardless of consequences. That would be strict justice, for those who err should alone pay the penalty.”

“How about the friends who would share the disgrace?”

“That should prevent one from committing a fault, but once the fault is

perpetrated it is no argument for mercy. Nor do I think that anyone is really disgraced because a friend or relative does wrong. People never condemn a woman because her husband is a drunkard; rather do they pity her. Nor is a relative properly held responsible for one's crime. It is true that the taint of crime and prison attaches — unjustly — to one's children and frequently ruins their lives, for many believe in heredity of disposition. Such belief is, in my opinion, erroneous."

"Suppose the guilty one fell in a moment of weakness and is now sincerely sorry?" suggested Phoebe.

"The more reason he should bravely bear whatever punishment the law provides. Really, Phoebe, in the abstract I can see but one way to look at this thing. There may be exceptional circumstances that would induce us to sacrifice Toby Clark to avoid a greater evil; but such an act would not be just; it could only claim policy as its excuse."

Cousin Judith's ideas coincided with those of Phoebe. The girl tried to argue on the side of Sam Parsons, but could not convince herself that he was right. Sam doubtless believed he was acting nobly and generously, and he knew more than did Phoebe about the case, but she resented injustice in any form and finally determined to sift the affair to the bottom, if possible, and save Toby at any cost. Was not his good name as precious to him as her own was to herself? What right had anyone to destroy it, that some weak offender of the law might escape?

Having once firmly decided her course of action, Phoebe resumed her careful, painstaking methods of deduction, such as she had formerly employed. In the light of her latest information many of her conclusions must be modified. Mr. Spaythe was not the guilty one, assuredly, for he had but one relation, his son Eric, and no close friends since the death of Judge Ferguson. Mr. Holbrook was such an utter stranger to Riverdale that Sam Parsons' clemency could not apply to him. Will Chandler was the next on the list; a man of large family, a postmaster by the grace of the president of the United States himself, one of the village council, a highly respected citizen, a leading churchman and a warm personal friend of the constable. Both Sam Parsons and Will Chandler were officers of the local lodge — an argument that Phoebe did not appreciate the importance of. But it was impossible to suspect Will Chandler. Had his nature been weak enough to succumb to temptation, he might have robbed the post office at any time during the past twenty years of sums far greater than that contained in Mrs. Ritchie's box. Mrs. Miller, the charwoman, was a person of so little reputation that Sam would never think of shielding her had she stolen the box.

There remained, then, of all Phoebe's list of suspects, only Sam Parsons

himself. If he had stolen the box — which she had discovered in his possession — the arguments he had advanced to induce her to keep silent would be just such as might be expected from a shrewd but uncultured man.

Yet Phoebe's knowledge of character was sufficient to induce her instantly to abandon any thought of connecting the constable with the crime. It was absolutely impossible for Sam Parsons to be guilty of the theft of money. She knew that intuitively. The man was an honest man, if honest men exist.

Phoebe soon came to realize that she must seek the guilty party outside the circle of probabilities she had formerly outlined. She knew, at least by sight and reputation, practically every inhabitant of the village. So she began to consider which one might have an object in taking the money, which one was a member of a large and respectable family, and which was weak enough in character to yield to sudden temptation. Sam had hinted at an unexpected chance to rifle the box, which chance had furnished the temptation resulting in the theft; but Phoebe knew nothing of such a sudden opportunity and, after puzzling her brain for several days over the problem, she decided to start out and attempt to secure some additional information which, in view of her recent discoveries, might guide her to the truth.

Many girls develop a native talent for unraveling mysteries and, both in modern journalism and in secret service, women have proved themselves more intelligent investigators than men. There was nothing abnormal in Phoebe Daring's desire to discover the truth underlying the complex plot of which Toby Clark seemed the innocent victim. She was sufficiently interested in the unfortunate boy to have a sincere desire to assist him, and she furthermore felt under deep obligations to Toby for his past services to her family, at a time when the Darings were in much trouble. It was her bounden duty, she considered, to save him if she could, for his interests seemed to be sadly neglected by those who should have strained every effort in his behalf. So she constituted herself his champion and the disappointments and rebuffs she met with only made her the more determined to persevere. In a little town like Riverdale she could go and come without comment and, as a matter of fact, the young girl's investigations were conducted very quietly and secretly. No one but Cousin Judith was in her secret; even the children had no idea that Phoebe was "playing detective" in Toby's interest. She might have to be a little more bold and aggressive than before, if she was to succeed, but she felt that tact and a cool head would carry her through any emergency and these qualities she believed she possessed.

It would be useless to deny the fascination inherent in the task of solving a

mystery such as this and although Phoebe Daring had sufficient reasons for undertaking it she became so intensely interested that the desire to succeed often overshadowed her primary object to help Toby Clark.

For one thing, she was anxious to know why Mr. Holbrook had shown so little interest in clearing his client of the accusation against him. The young lawyer scarcely knew Toby Clark and could not be personally inimical to his interests; so she determined to interview him again.

This time she induced Nathalie Cameron to accompany her. Nathalie was one of Toby's strongest sympathizers and without letting her suspect her real purpose Phoebe frankly told her friend that she wanted to bring Mr. Holbrook to book for not being more strenuous in the defense of his client.

The girls found the lawyer in his office and he received them with his usual polite deference.

"I'd like to know," said Phoebe, "what your plans are for destroying the evidence against Toby, at the coming trial."

The young man smiled and then looked grave. He saw that the girl was quite serious and, unwarranted as her interference might be, her position in Riverdale was sufficiently important to render it impolitic to deny her an answer.

"There is little we lawyers can do, in such a peculiar case as this, in advance of the trial," said he. "I have selected a number of witnesses whom I shall call to testify to young Clark's fine record and his good standing in the community. But I count largely on the cross-examinations of the witnesses for the prosecution, and I shall appeal to the jury not to condemn a man on circumstantial evidence, which is so often misleading."

"Then you are unable to disprove the evidence?" asked Phoebe indignantly.

"There is no way to do that, I fear. The incriminating box, for instance, was found on Toby Clark's premises."

"Are you sure of that?" she inquired.

"We can't deny it. The regular officers of the law discovered it, where it was hidden. We can, and shall, deny that the accused placed it there, and — "

"And also we shall deny that it was Mrs. Ritchie's box," she added.

He stared at her, not understanding.

"I will give you a hint, to assist you," she continued. "Ask them to prove it was Mrs. Ritchie's box they found."

"Why, it had her name painted on the end," said Holbrook.

"I know that. I believe I could myself paint a name on a tin box, such as the hardware store keeps in stock for Judge Ferguson and Mr. Kellogg to use when they required them."

“Kellogg?” he asked thoughtfully.

“Yes; he uses the same kind of boxes for valuable papers that Judge Ferguson did. But none of the locks of those boxes are ever duplicated; the keys are all different. At the trial, if you ask Mrs. Ritchie to produce her key, which must match the key kept by Judge Ferguson and now in the possession of Mr. Spaythe, you will find it will not fit the lock of the box discovered in Toby Clark’s back yard.”

Mr. Holbrook leaped from his chair and paced up and down the room, evidently excited.

“Good!” he cried. “Excellent, Miss Daring. That is exactly the kind of information I have been seeking — something that will disprove the evidence. But are you sure of your statement?”

“I have seen the genuine box,” said Phoebe quietly.

“Since it was stolen?”

“Yes.”

He sat down again and glanced into her face curiously.

“Yet you do not care to say where you have seen it?” he asked in a hesitating voice.

“No, sir.”

Mr. Holbrook drew a long sigh, as of relief.

“You are quite right to keep the secret,” he asserted firmly. Then, after a moment, he added in a low tone: “Has she told you everything, then?”

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW MR. SPAYTHE CONFESSED

It was Phoebe's turn to start and draw a long breath, but she managed to stifle her surprise and retain her self-possession. In an instant she knew that the young man, deceived by her reference to the box, had inadvertently committed himself and she determined to take advantage of his slip. Mr. Holbrook's question was so astonishing that for a moment it fairly bewildered her, yet the pause before she answered might well be mistaken for a natural hesitation.

"Not everything," she calmly replied. "But I had no idea you — knew — so much — of the truth, Mr. Holbrook," she continued, with a searching look into his face.

"I admit that I have been in a quandary how to act," he said confidently, yet in an eager tone. "But it gives me great relief to know that you, who are in the secret, can understand my motives and sympathize with my dilemma. At the very outset of my career in Riverdale I have a case thrust upon me that bids fair to ruin my prestige in the town, for unless I can disprove the evidence against young Clark, without implicating the real criminal, I shall be considered an unsuccessful lawyer. You and I realize that I can't implicate the guilty person, for that would arouse the indignation of all Riverdale; and unless I clear Clark, who has the sympathy of all, I shall be generally condemned. Just see what an impression that parade of the children made! I've puzzled over the matter continually, striving to find a solution, but until you came with your hint about a substituted box I was completely at a loss what to do. Can you tell me anything more!"

"I should not have told you so much, sir," she answered.

"I understand. We must be cautious what we say, we who know."

"How did you discover that — she — took the box!" Phoebe asked, breathing hard as she pronounced the word "she" but outwardly appearing calm.

The lawyer glanced at Nathalie, who had remained silent but amazed.

"Your friend knows?" he asked Phoebe.

"Not all," she said. "Not — the name."

"Oh. Well, I'll avoid the name," he continued, evidently eager to explain. "I was sauntering along the deserted street late at night — it was the night before the judge died, you remember — engaged in considering whether I should settle in Riverdale and undertake the practice of law, when two lawyers were already in the field, when my attention was arrested by a flash of light from the upper windows of the building opposite me — this building.

It was not a strong light; not an electric light; more like a match that flickered a moment and then went out. I stood still, but was not particularly interested, when the flash was repeated, shaded this time and not so bright. It occurred to me there was something suspicious about that. The electric lights at the street corners proved that the current was still on and if it were Judge Ferguson, visiting his office so late, there was no reason he should not turn on the incandescents. If not the judge, some one else was in his office — some one who did not want too much light, which might be noticed, but enough for a certain purpose.

"I waited and saw the third match struck, which flickered a moment, like the others, and then went out. The doorway of the drug store, just opposite here, was quite dark; so I withdrew into its recess and watched the stairway of this building. Presently — she — came down, glanced cautiously into the street, and finding it deserted began walking hastily toward the east. She carried something under her arm, hugged tightly but too large to be completely hidden. I slipped out of the doorway and followed, keeping in the shadows. As she passed under the light at the corner I saw that what she held was an oblong box painted blue. I could even discover some white letters on the end but was unable to read what they spelled. Being quite positive, by this time, that there was something wrong in the stealthy actions of the — person, I kept her in sight during her entire journey, until she reached her home and let herself into the dark house with a latchkey.

"At that time I did not know who lived in the place; indeed, it was not until the Ritchie box was reported missing that I cautiously inquired and found out who it was I had caught pilfering. Toby's arrest followed, and the discovery of the evidence against him. Then, to my regret, Mr. Spaythe engaged me to defend Clark and my worries and troubles began, as you may easily guess, Miss Daring. I had no idea, until now, that another box had been substituted; but if that was done, then the evidence that was meant to convict my young client will do much to prove a conspiracy against him and therefore his innocence."

Phoebe had listened with intense interest to every word of Mr. Holbrook's explanation, which he made under the impression that she knew the whole truth concerning the theft of the box. She regretted that in order to lead him on to talk freely she had been obliged to say that Nathalie did not know the name of the mysterious "she"; for otherwise he might inadvertently have mentioned it, and she would have been in possession of the entire truth.

But Phoebe had learned a great deal; more than she had ever dreamed of, and she left the lawyer's office greatly elated over her discovery.

Nathalie, completely bewildered by Mr. Holbrook's admissions, as well

as by Phoebe's reference to a duplicate box, began to ply her friend with questions as soon as they were on the street; but Phoebe earnestly begged her to wait patiently until she could tell her all.

"I'm as ignorant as you are, Nathalie, as to who the 'she' is whom Mr. Holbrook saw take the box," she declared. "He got an impression, somehow, that I know more than I really do, and spoke so frankly on that account that he let me into his secret — in part — unawares. I shall now be obliged to ferret out the rest of the mystery, but with my present knowledge to guide me that ought not to be very difficult."

"Why should he have such a strong desire to shield her?" asked Nathalie thoughtfully.

"I don't know. She may be some very respectable woman."

"Would a respectable woman steal?"

"Well she might yield to some extraordinary temptation to do so," replied Phoebe, thinking of Sam Parsons' plea.

"And the box was stolen before Judge Ferguson died," said Nathalie, wonderingly.

"Yes; so it seems. The general impression has been that it was taken afterward, as the result of his death. I wonder how this affair would have turned out had the dear old judge lived. He was worth any ten common lawyers and a dozen detectives."

"So he was," replied Nathalie. "Mr. Holbrook seems an honest and gentlemanly fellow, but he never can fill Judge Ferguson's place."

Phoebe, after parting from her girl friend, reflected that her feelings toward the young lawyer had changed under the light of to-day's discoveries. She could imagine his perplexity when called upon to defend Toby, and could see how his desire to shield the guilty female or his fear of denouncing her would account for his lack of activity in the case. Doubtless Mr. Holbrook agreed with Sam Parsons — of whose opinion he was wholly ignorant — that it was better to let Toby 8uffer than to accuse the guilty one. These two men, Phoebe reflected, were influenced alike by motives of gallantry or consideration for the female sex; for, had not the guilty one been a woman — or perhaps a young girl — neither man would have undertaken to shield him from the consequences of his crime.

But Phoebe was inclined to condemn one of her own sex as frankly as she would a man. She was even indignant that an honest boy was to be sacrificed for a dishonest woman. She became more firmly resolved than ever to prevent such a miscarriage of justice.

She was greatly pleased, however, with Mr. Holbrook's assertion that by proving the box found on Toby's premises a fraud, the defense would stand a

good chance of winning the trial. If that evidence fell down, all the rest might well be doubted, and for a time the girl seriously considered the advisability of abandoning any further attempt to bring the guilty party to justice, relying upon the lawyer to free his client. But the thought then occurred to her that merely to save Toby Clark from conviction would not be sufficient to restore to him his good name. Some would still claim that justice had miscarried and the suspicion would cling to him for all time. The only thing that could reinstate the accused in the eyes of the world was to prove beyond doubt that some one else had committed the crime.

Forced to reconstruct all her former theories, Phoebe abandoned her "list of suspects" and wrote a new memorandum. It outlined the facts now in her possession as follows:

"1 — The guilty one was a woman or a girl, of respectable family. 2 — Some one deliberately attempted to incriminate Toby Clark by placing a fraudulent box in the boy's rubbish heap. 3 — Sam Parsons now had the genuine box in his possession and wouldn't tell how he got it. 4 — The theft was committed on the night before Judge Ferguson's sudden death. 5 — Both Sam and Mr. Holbrook knew the identity of the criminal but would not disclose it; therefore information must be sought elsewhere."

After taking a day or two to consider these points Phoebe suddenly decided to see Mr. Spaythe and have a talk with him. The banker was now freed of any suspicion that might attach to him and he was the one person in Riverdale who had boldly defied public opinion and taken the accused boy under his personal protection. Therefore she might talk freely with Mr. Spaythe and his judgment ought to assist her materially.

She decided to go to the bank rather than to the Spaythe residence, where Toby might be in the way, so late in the afternoon she waited on the banker, who was in his private office. This was a room quite separate from the bank proper, which it adjoined and with which it was connected.

Mr. Spaythe admitted Phoebe at once and placed a chair for her with an inquiring look but no word of question. The girl knew him well, for her twin brother, Phil Daring, had once worked in Spaythe's Bank and, in common with many others in Riverdale, the Darings had cause to respect the banker very highly.

"I am trying hard, Mr. Spaythe, to solve the mysterious disappearance of Mrs. Ritchie's box," she began. "I am not posing as a detective, exactly, but as an interested investigator. My object is to bring the guilty one to justice and so clear Toby's good name. It seems like a very complicated affair and I've an idea you can assist me to untangle it."

Mr. Spaythe, leaning back in his chair with his eyes fixed full upon the

girl's face, was silent for a time, evidently in deep thought. He was thinking of the time when Phoebe had handled another difficult matter in so delicate and intelligent a way that she had saved him a vast deal of sorrow and humiliation. He was a reserved man, but Phoebe Daring was the banker's ideal of young womanhood. Finally he said quietly:

"What do you wish to know?"

"Who stole the box, for one thing," she said, smiling at him. "But in default of that information I will welcome any detail bearing on the theft."

He considered this a moment, gravely.

"I stole the box, for one," said he.

Phoebe gave a great start, staring wide-eyed.

"You, Mr. Spaythe!"

"Yes, Phoebe."

"But — Oh, it's impossible."

"It is quite true, my dear. Some of the contents of the box are still in my possession."

She tried to think what this admission meant.

"But, Mr. Spaythe, I — I — don't — understand!"

"Of course you don't, my child; nor do I. Let me explain more fully. On the afternoon following Judge Ferguson's death I wanted to see Toby Clark on a matter connected with the funeral, of which I had assumed charge because I believed I was the judge's closest friend. I did not know where to find Toby, but thinking he might be in the office I walked over there and entered, the door being unlocked. The place was vacant. Seeing the door of the smaller room ajar I walked in and found lying upon the table Mrs. Ritchie's box. It was open and the lid was thrown back. I saw it was empty except for a yellow envelope with the end torn off and a legal document. This last attracted my attention at once, because of the names written on it. I knew that Mrs. Ritchie had been accustomed to keep many valuables in her box and had often warned Judge Ferguson that it was not wise to make a safety deposit vault of his law office; therefore the circumstance of finding the practically empty box on his table made me fear something was amiss. I tried the cupboard, but found it locked; so I wrapped the box in an old newspaper and carried it away to this office, without mentioning the fact to anyone. At my leisure I examined the paper found in the box and deciding it was of great importance I put it away in the bank safe, where it is still in my keeping. I may as well add that I believe this is the missing paper which Mrs. Ritchie is so anxious to regain — and I well understand her reasons for wanting it."

His voice grew harsh as he said this and he paused, with a frown, before resuming in a more gracious tone:

“Later in the day, on my visit to the Ferguson house, Janet handed me her father’s keys. When I returned to the office I found the key that fitted Mrs. Ritchie’s box and locked it, although there was nothing then in it but the yellow envelope which once contained the paper I had seized. Soon after I was called into the bank a moment and when I returned, the box, which had been lying on this table, had disappeared.”

“Stolen!” cried Phoebe in a hushed voice.

“Evidently. Stolen for the third time, I imagine. I did not see it again until it was found hidden in Toby Clark’s rubbish heap.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the girl and then checked herself. She knew it was not the same box, but a moment’s thought warned her not to mention that fact just yet. Sam Parsons must have stolen the box from Mr. Spaythe’s office and hid it in his own home. Did Sam believe Mr. Spaythe the thief and was it the banker he was trying to protect? The bank was the repository of all the money in the village; to arrest the banker for theft would create a veritable panic and perhaps cause much suffering and loss.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW TOBY CLARK FACED RUIN

While the girl was revolving these bewildering thoughts in her brain there came a knock at the door of the private office and a boy from the bank brought in an envelope and laid it upon the table before Mr. Spaythe, retreating again immediately.

"Stop!" called the banker, after a glance at the envelope. "Who left this letter!"

"I don't know, sir; we've just found it in the mail box. Must have been pushed in from outside, sir; but it wasn't there at one o'clock, when I took in the afternoon mail."

"You may go," said Mr. Spaythe briefly. Then he sat staring at the envelope. "I'm almost afraid to open this, Phoebe," he declared in a low, uncertain voice. "Once before I received just such a missive and it said: 'Look among the newspapers in the back room of Toby Clark's house for the property stolen from Mrs. Ritchie.' It was not signed and the awkward writing was evidently disguised. I paid no attention to that note but some one else must have received the same hint, for the house was searched by the police and all the documents found except the one I took myself."

"But not the money or the bonds," said Phoebe.

"No. Now, here is another anonymous letter, for I recognize the same cramped writing. Shall we open it, Phoebe?"

"I think so, sir," she replied, for she was curious.

He opened the envelope very carefully, using a paper-cutter. Then he unfolded a sheet of common note paper and read the contents aloud:

"'Between the mattress and the straw tick on Toby Clark's bed in his old house you will find the money and bonds he stole from Mrs. Ritchie and hid there.'"

That was all. The banker lifted his eyebrows and smiled.

"Ah, they're giving up the money now," said he. "They realize there is danger in keeping it."

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?" asked Phoebe.

"The original thieves."

"Were there more than one?"

"I don't know. There was one, at least, before me, and some one stole the box from this office — with a purpose. How shall we treat this suggestion, Phoebe?"

"Let us go and get the money at once, six-, and restore it to Mrs. Ritchie."

"She will demand an explanation."

“Then we will show this letter.”

Mr. Spaythe reflected a moment.

“You are right,” he decided. “It will he best that the money is restored by me, acting on behalf of Judge Ferguson’s estate, rather than by some one else. The only thing I fear is that they will claim I induced Toby to give it up.”

“Won’t they accept your word — and mine — and the letter, sir?”

“Perhaps. We will risk it. Will you come with me now? It’s growing late.”

Phoebe rose with alacrity. Mr. Spaythe took his hat from a hook, locked the door leading into the bank and, when they were outside, locked the street door also.

“Since the disappearance of that box I am growing cautious,” he said.

The old Clark shanty stood quite beyond the village at a bend in the river, but even at that the distance was not so great that a fifteen minute walk would not cover it. Mr. Spaythe and Phoebe walked briskly along, both silent and preoccupied, and presently had left the village and turned into a narrow but well trodden path that led across the waste lands or “downs,” as they were called, to the shanty.

But before they reached it a group of men came rushing out of Toby’s house, gesticulating and talking together in an excited manner. Among them were Lawyer Kellogg and Sam Parsons, the constable.

Mr. Spaythe stopped short, an angry frown upon his face. Phoebe halted beside him, feeling so disappointed she was near to crying. They waited for the others to approach.

“Do — do you think they got a letter, too?” asked the girl.

“Of course; just as before; and they’ve lost no time in acting upon it,” was the grim response.

Lawyer Kellogg came up, triumphantly waving his hand, in which was clasped an oblong packet.

"We've got it!" he cried, his round fat face well depicting his joy. "We've found the money and bonds where Clark hid 'em."

"Clark?" replied Phoebe, coldly. "How dare you make such a statement? Toby Clark had nothing to do with hiding that money, and you know it."

"He'll get his stripes for it, just the same," declared the little lawyer. "I've got plenty of witnesses, and the finding of this property will settle Toby Clark's case for good and all. There's no power on earth can save him now."

The banker was staring fixedly at Sam Parsons, the only one of Kellogg's party who was not jubilant.

"Well?" he asked.

"The money was there, all right," growled the constable; "but Toby didn't

put it there."

"Of course not," said Phoebe; "no more than he put that blue box in the rubbish heap."

It was a chance shot but the little lawyer turned upon her with a fierce gesture, his hands clenched, his eyes ablaze with anger and fear.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all, sir," said Sam Parsons quickly, as he cast a warning look at the girl. "Miss Daring is a friend of Toby Clark, that's all, and she's annoyed over this new discovery."

"You must excuse Miss Daring," added the banker smoothly. "She is naturally agitated. Come, my dear," he added, tucking her arm beneath his own, "let us return."

They followed behind the others, who were mostly eager to get to the village and spread the news, and Sam Parsons remained with them. Phoebe was ready to bite her tongue with vexation for letting Mr. Kellogg suspect she knew about the substituted blue box. She saw that she might have destroyed all Toby's chance of acquittal by putting the lawyer on his guard. When they were alone she expected her companions to reproach her for her indiscretion, but they both remained silent.

"Kellogg came for me and I had to go," explained Sam, as they reentered the village.

Mr. Spaythe merely nodded.

"It's a hard blow for Toby," added the constable, with a sigh.

"It is merely a part of the conspiracy against him," asserted Phoebe indignantly.

"I know. But they can prove their charge, having now evidence enough to satisfy a jury, and Toby can't disprove anything. This thing spells ruin to the boy, to my notion," said the constable.

He left them at the bank and Phoebe again entered the office with Mr. Spaythe.

"Will you let me take that anonymous letter, sir?" she asked.

"If you like," said he; "but the writing is purposely disguised."

"I know; but I'd like to study it, just the same."

The banker handed her the letter. Then he said:

"Wait a moment and I'll get you the other."

He unlocked a drawer of his desk and found it, holding the two together a moment for comparison.

"Just as I thought," he said. "The same person wrote them both."

"Was it a man or a woman?" inquired Phoebe.

"That I am unable to determine. Preserve these letters, for we may need

them as evidence."

"I will, sir."

She carried them home and placed them in her desk, for as it was nearly suppertime she had no opportunity to examine them at present. That evening she related to Cousin Judith the latest evidence found against Toby Clark; "manufactured evidence" the girl called it, for she knew Toby had never touched the contents of Mrs. Ritchie's box. She also told the Little Mother of Mr. Spaythe's confession, laying stress on his assertion that at least three different persons, including himself, had stolen the box.

"But Mr. Spaythe did not really steal it, you know," she added. "When he found it open on the office table, and the cupboard locked, he merely took the box away for safe keeping."

"He took Mrs. Ritchie's document, however, and is still holding it, without her knowledge or consent," returned Judith thoughtfully. "I wonder why?"

"I am sure he had a good reason for that," declared Phoebe. "The fact that Mrs. Ritchie is making such a fuss over that one paper, and that Mr. Spaythe is carefully guarding it, makes me think it is more important than the money."

"That is probably true," said Judith; "yet I fear there is nothing in that fact to save Toby. For, if Mr. Spaythe admits all the truth — so far as he knows it — at the trial, it will not clear Toby of the accusation that he first rifled the box of its contents."

"No," answered Phoebe, "and for that reason I must continue my search for the criminal. I had hoped that we had information to upset the entire evidence, until that dreadful development of to-day. It is the strongest proof against Toby they have yet secured, and I see no hope for the boy unless we can discover the guilty one."

"Perhaps Mrs. Ritchie will refuse to prosecute Toby, now that she has recovered all her property but one paper," suggested Judith.

"That would be worse for Toby than to stand his trial," answered Phoebe, with conviction. "If he hopes again to hold up his head in the world he must prove his innocence — not be allowed to go free with the suspicion of his guilt constantly hanging over him."

"Goodness me! what a staunch champion you are, Phoebe," said Judith, smiling. "You must have thought very deeply on this subject to have mastered it so well."

"It is a very interesting subject," answered the girl, blushing at the Little Mother's praise. "I seem to love a mystery, Cousin, for it spurs me to seek the solution. But I fear I've been neglecting my household duties of late and

throwing the burden on your shoulders, Little Mother."

"No, dear; I cannot see that you are at all lax in your duties; but, if you were, I would consider it excusable under the circumstances. I hope that in some manner you may light upon the truth and manage to solve your complicated problem."

But when Phoebe went to her room to think over the discoveries of that eventful day, she was in a quandary how to act. The mystery seemed to have deepened, rather than cleared, and nothing had transpired to give her a clew of any sort. Except the anonymous letters.

CHAPTER XX

HOW PHOEBE DEFENDED THE HELPLESS

For some time Phoebe had intended to make a study of the anonymous letters which Mr. Spaythe had lent her, so one morning when she was not likely to be disturbed she went to her room, took the letters from her desk and sat down to examine them carefully.

The handwriting was purposely made to sprawl this way and that, slanting first to the right and then to the left. The grammar was good enough and the spelling correct except for one word. In the second letter received by Mr. Spaythe the word "mattress" was spelled "mattrass"; but that did not seem to her of any importance, for it was a likely error. There was nothing to indicate that a woman rather than a man had written the letters, but Phoebe had reasons for guessing it was the former. In the first place, she now knew that a woman had stolen the box. Mr. Holbrook had seen her take it from the office to her home. She must have replaced it, the next day, empty save for one paper inadvertently overlooked — the most precious paper of all to Mrs. Ritchie. In her agitation she had forgotten to lock the office door behind her, so that Mr. Spaythe was able to enter. The woman, Phoebe argued, must have observed Mr. Spaythe taking away the box and, fearing discovery through it, had stealthily followed him and as soon as he had left his office crept in and taken it again. Then Sam Parsons had discovered the box in her possession and made her give it up, after exacting a confession and promising to shield her. Or else Sam had himself taken the box from Mr. Spaythe's office, thinking he would thus protect the banker from suspicion. That part of the story was at present too involved for her to determine the exact truth.

But returning to her argument that a woman, or at least a girl, had written these letters, and also written duplicates of them for Mr. Kellogg, Phoebe felt that so rash a proceeding might only be attributed to one of her own sex. A man would have realized the danger they might evoke and so have refrained from sending them.

What was the danger? she asked herself. The irregular penmanship was so cleverly executed that there was nothing to guide one to a discovery of the writer. She laid the two sheets of notepaper side by side. They were of the same cheap quality that one may buy at any store. No watermark. Nothing distinctive about the envelopes.

She went over the words letter by letter. Although written at different periods the writing was equally well disguised. But the same person wrote them, for the capital "T" that appeared in both, in the name "Toby Clark,"

had a peculiar curl at the beginning of it. This “T” slanted one way in the first letter and the opposite way in the second, but the little curl was in both.

Suddenly the girl realized that here was a clew to the writer. That peculiarity in forming the letter “T” must be characteristic and the same curl would doubtless be found in the normal writing.

With the idea that it might be some girl whom she intimately knew Phoebe went through her desk and examined the capital T’s in every scrap of correspondence it contained, but without finding any indication of the telltale curl. It was late when she finished this task and so she went to bed feeling that she had accomplished nothing of value.

After this the days passed rapidly without any further developments. Public opinion in Riverdale was again undergoing a change and although the Marching Club paraded several times and once took the band to Bayport — with money left from the mysterious donation — people viewed the demonstrations with good-humored tolerance but were not impressed as they had been at first. There was a general feeling that Toby Clark’s case was hopeless and Phoebe was greatly annoyed by reports that Tom Eat bun and Dave Hunter, with some others, had openly denounced Toby as a thief, saying it was all nonsense to claim he was innocent when he had been “caught with the goods.”

Young Hunter, Lucy’s brother and Phoebe’s instructor in telegraphy, was the most bitter of these assailants and seemed to take pleasure in sneering at Toby on every possible occasion. This surprised Phoebe the more because she had always considered Dave a kindly, manly young fellow, usually generous in his criticism of others. Something had doubtless turned him against Toby Clark and aroused his enmity, for Dave had condemned the boy out of hand almost from the moment of his arrest.

One dismal, cloudy afternoon, when Phoebe had been down town and was hastening home to supper, she turned up a side street and saw before her a crowd of children who were jeering and hooting at the top of their voices. These were not the children of good families, such as were members of the Marching Club, but the ragged, neglected gamins that are to be found on the streets of every Southern village; both white and black; mischievous, irresponsible youngsters who delight in annoying anyone and anything they dare attack, from a stray dog to a country woman driving to market.

Phoebe well knew the tribe and, as she heard shouts of “Robber!”

“Thief!”

“Jailbird!” ring out, at once suspected the truth. With rising anger she ran toward the group and reaching the outskirts of the little crowd she hurled the mockers right and left, whereby she came face to face with Toby Clark. The

boy, leaning on his crutch, was cowering with bowed head before the jeers of his assailants.

"Shame on you all!" she cried, glaring around with righteous indignation. "How dare you attack one who is more unfortunate than yourselves — a poor, weak cripple, who needs friends more than you need soap-and-water?"

They shrank away, sullen and resenting her interference, and those who refused to run she threatened with her umbrella until they were driven off and she was left alone with their victim.

"Come, Toby," she then said, with assumed cheerfulness; "let's go home. You mustn't mind those dreadful creatures; they're ignorant of common decency."

“I — I’d no business to come out,” be replied in a sad voice. “But I’d been in the house so long, and I wanted the air, and — ”

“You’ve as much right on the streets as any other decent citizen,” Phoebe said warmly.

“Not at present,” returned Toby. “Those children think I am a thief, and so do many other people, and because I cannot prove that I am honest they consider it right to revile me.” He was hobbling along at her side as he spoke. “Isn’t it queer, Phoebe, that a mere suspicion can blot out one’s reputation, won by years of right living, and force one to defend himself and prove he is not a rascal?”

“It’s all wrong, Toby, and the law is greatly to blame for it, I think. It’s an absurd idea that anyone can swear out a warrant for another person’s arrest, charging him with any dreadful crime, just because that person has a suspicion he is guilty, and makes complaint against him. Any good, honest citizen may be thus disgraced and forced to prove his innocence before he is free again; and even then the smirch clings to him for a long time. It’s an unjust law and ought to be changed. No one should ever be arrested without proof of his crime. The one who makes the complaint should furnish such proof, and not oblige the innocent person to defend himself.”

Toby looked up at her with an admiring smile.

“I’ve studied law some, you know,” he said, “and what you propose is a revolution. It is more just than the present law, which ruins many lives and furnishes no redress, but I fear it would permit many guilty ones to escape.”

“You won’t pay any attention to what those children said?” she pleaded.

“Not more than I can help. They’ve heard others say I am a thief, so we mustn’t blame them too severely. They don’t know any better — poor little things.”

She left him at Mr. Spaythe’s house and proceeded toward home in a very depressed mood. It was dreadful to know that Toby was subjected to such insults whenever he showed himself on the streets, and yet this was nothing to the humiliation and disgrace he must endure if they fastened the theft upon him and condemned him to a prison sentence.

CHAPTER XXI

HOW PHOEBE TELEGRAPHED THE GOVERNOR

The day set for the trial was drawing so near that presently Phoebe became greatly worried. Winter had suddenly set in and the weather was so cold and disagreeable that she could not get out as frequently as before. She saw Mr. Holbrook once or twice but found him despondent.

"They've got us practically between two millstones," he said, "and since we are unable to use our knowledge of the truth for defense, we shall be obliged to take our chances of defeat. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped."

Phoebe, however, thought it could. She asked herself how far she was bound to respect the various confidences reposed in her, when they meant the ruin of an innocent young life. She knew enough, she believed, to save Toby if she were allowed to go upon the stand and tell it all; but she felt that she was so inexperienced in legal matters that if she acted on mere impulse she might make a failure.

Meantime she kept studying the anonymous letters and one day decided to find out where the notepaper had been bought, if possible, as that might put her in the way of determining who had bought it. So she went to town and made her way to the post office.

Hazel Chandler waited upon her at the little stationery shop in the office, and Phoebe thought the young girl looked pale and worn. "They're working her too hard again," she reflected, and yet Hazel's duties were no more onerous than those which many shop-girls voluntarily undertook. She also had the advantage of working for her father and running the little store as she pleased, although she was obliged to leave her counter for the post office whenever Will Chandler was out, as was often the case. Besides being one of the village council the postmaster was interested in several other things which required his attention outside, so that Hazel as assistant postmaster waited on most of those who came to the office for their mail.

There was no one but Phoebe in the place just now and she asked to look at some notepaper.

"No, not the box sort, Hazel; just the common kind," she added.

The girl laid several qualities before her and soon Phoebe recognized the kind she was looking for. She bought a few sheets and Hazel began to wrap them up.

"Have you heard much about — about Toby Clark's case — lately?" the girl asked in a hesitating way.

"No," replied Phoebe.

"It's pretty black against him, isn't it?" continued Hazel anxiously.

“It looks black, just now,” admitted Phoebe.

“I — I’m sorry for Toby,” said Hazel, with a sigh. “We — we’re all — very fond of him.”

Phoebe bristled with indignation.

“Your sweetheart, Dave Hunter, doesn’t seem very fond of him,” she retorted. “He takes every opportunity to denounce Toby and blacken his character.”

Hazel shrank back as if frightened by such vehemence. She bowed her head over the parcel she was tying, but Phoebe could see that her pale skin had flushed red.

“I — I’m not responsible for — for what Dave says, Phoebe,” she murmured pleadingly; and then, to the other girl’s astonishment she put both hands before her face and began to cry, sobbing in a miserable way that was pitiful to listen to.

At once Phoebe became penitent.

“Forgive me, Hazel,” she said. “I know you are not responsible for Dave,” and then she took her parcel and went away, to give the girl a chance to recover her composure.

“The poor thing is almost a nervous wreck,” she mused, “and Dave’s bitterness toward Toby must have annoyed her more than I suspected. She probably loves Dave devotedly and hates to have him behave so ungenerously. I must ask Lucy when they are to be married. That would relieve her of the confining work in the post office and enable her to recover her health and strength.”

At the drug store opposite she found more of that identical notepaper, and the stationery counter at Markham’s dry goods store had it also. It was a grade so common that everyone kept it and therefore Phoebe was forced to acknowledge that her quest had been a failure.

She was in the dumps next day, wondering if she had done all she could for Toby, when suddenly she remembered the governor’s parting injunction. “If you need me, send me a telegram,” he had said, and this brainy, big-hearted man was just the one she needed in her present emergency. At once she decided to telegraph Cousin John, for she believed that his advice, coupled with her knowledge — which she would frankly confide to him — might yet save the day for Toby Clark.

She would not say anything to Cousin Judith, at present, for if the busy governor found himself obliged to ignore her summons she wanted no one to be disappointed but herself.

Very carefully she worded the telegram, in order to present the case as strongly as possible without committing the secrets she guarded in advance

of his coming. She wrote and rewrote it several times, until finally she was satisfied with the following:

"Please come and help me save Toby Clark. I believe I know the truth, but without your assistance Toby will be condemned on false evidence. A woman stole Mrs. Ritchie's box and there is a conspiracy to shield her from discovery and wickedly sacrifice Toby in her stead. Will tell you all when you arrive. Come quickly, if you can, for time is precious."

She signed this "Phoebe Daring" and putting on her wraps, carried it down to the station. Dave Hunter was in the little telegraph office, on duty but not busy. He laid down a newspaper as Phoebe entered his room and nodded rather ungraciously.

"Here's a telegram, Dave, which I want you to send at once."

"Day message, or night!" he inquired, taking it from her hand and beginning to count the words.

"Oh, day, of course," she replied.

Suddenly he paused, with his pencil poised above the telegram, and a wave of red swept over his face and then receded, leaving it a chalky white. He did not lift his eyes, for a time, but seemed to study the telegram, reading it twice very slowly from beginning to end. Then he pushed the paper toward Phoebe and said in a hard, arrogant voice:

"I can't send that."

"Why not?" she asked in astonishment.

"I — it's libelous," he returned, rising from his chair before the table on which the telegraph instrument stood and facing the girl defiantly.

"It is not libelous!" she indignantly exclaimed.

"Well, I can't send it; it's against the rules of the office."

Phoebe looked into his face searchingly and he half turned away. She remembered now Dave's rabid enmity toward Toby Clark and concluded that he refused the telegram because he feared it would assist Toby's case. But she would not be balked by such a ridiculous pretext and as her anger increased she grew more quiet and determined.

"You 're talking nonsense," she said. "This is a public telegraph office and you, as the operator, are obliged to accept and send any message that is presented and paid for. It isn't your place to decide whether it is libelous or not, and I demand that you send this telegram at once."

"I won't," he said firmly. "I'm going out, Miss Daring, and must lock up the office; so I'll trouble you to go."

She regarded the young fellow questioningly as he took his hat and

stepped to the door, waiting for her with his hand on the knob. Then she slipped into his seat at the table and placed her hand on the instrument.

‘‘Here!” he called fiercely.’ ‘What are you doing, girl?”

“If you won’t telegraph the governor, I will!” she declared. “Stand back, Dave Hunter, and don’t you dare to touch me or interfere. I’ll save Toby Clark if I have to put you behind the bars in his place, and perhaps there’s where you belong.”

As she spoke she was clicking the little instrument, calling the state capitol. Dave himself had taught her how to do this. The operator now stood motionless beside her, looking down at the courageous girl with unmistakable terror in his eyes. Perhaps her threat awed him; perhaps he had other reasons for not venturing to prevent her extraordinary action.

The answer came in a moment. Fortunately the wire had been free and as soon as she got her connection she began clicking out the message — as dexterously as the regular operator himself might have done.

Dave listened, as motionless as if turned to stone. She demanded a “repeat” and from the other end came the repetition of the message, exactly as the girl had sent it. She answered: “OK,” rose from her chair and calmly asked:

“What are the charges?”

The young man drew his hand across his eyes with a despairing gesture and limply sank into the chair.

“Go away, please,” he replied.

Phoebe picked up the rate book and figured the cost of the telegram. As she did so her eyes fell on a railway order which Dave Hunter had written on a blank form and after staring at it a moment she stealthily folded it and slipped it into her pocket. Then she laid the exact change on the table and walked out of the office. As she closed the door softly behind her she noticed that the operator had dropped his head on his outstretched arms and seemed to have forgotten her existence.

A sudden horror and aversion for the young man welled up within her, but she felt elated and triumphant, as well. She had sent the message in spite of all opposition and — she had made a discovery!

The writer of the anonymous letters was none other than Dave Hunter.

Phoebe could scarcely wait to get home before examining the order she had taken from the telegraph office. Once within her own room she eagerly spread it out before her and studied it with care. It was a simple railway order addressed to the supply agent at St. Louis, and said: “Twenty beds with mattrasses and pillows for laborers at Section 9 without delay.” It was signed by the Division Superintendent but was in Dave’s handwriting and had

doubtless been dictated to him to be wired to the agent.

But within it lay the proof Phoebe had so long and vainly sought. Not only was the word “mattress” misspelled as in the anonymous letter, but the capital “T” in “Twenty” had the same preliminary curl to it that she had observed in both letters, wherever “Toby” had appeared.

This discovery positively amazed the girl. She had never suspected Dave, whom she now believed had hidden both the papers and the money in Toby’s house, on different occasions, with the evident determination to incriminate the boy. Then, by means of the anonymous letters, Dave had told where the stolen property could be found.

But Dave had not stolen the box. A woman did that. She sighed as she thought of Lucy, an ambitious girl, and of Mrs. Hunter, who was prominent in all the social affairs of Riverdale and an earnest church member. It was easy enough to understand now why Dave had denounced Toby. Cousin Judith knocked at her door. “A telegram for you, Phoebe.” She tore it open, while Judith watched her face curiously. It flushed with joy.

“The governor will be here in the morning,” she said. “You don’t mind, do you, Cousin Judith?”

CHAPTER XXII

HOW SAM PARSONS EXPLAINED

"You caught me just right, my dear," said the governor, smiling cheerily into the girl's anxious face. "I had nothing of importance on hand at this time, so I ran away from half a hundred unimportant demands and — here I am."

He came for breakfast and was as eager for Aunt Hyacinth's peerless flapjacks as any of the youngsters, laughing and chatting with the entire family like a boy just out of school. But afterward he sat with Phoebe and Judith in the cosy sitting room and listened gravely to every detail of the young girl's story.

Phoebe was very frank in her relation, concealing nothing that she had discovered or that had been confided to her. "I am supposed to keep some of these things secret," she said; "but I believe this secrecy on the part of Toby's friends, and their failure to get together, is going to send the boy to prison unless we take advantage of our knowledge and accomplish something practical.

Anyhow, I can see no harm in confiding in you, Cousin John, even if no good comes of it." The governor nodded approval. "That's right, Phoebe," he said encouragingly. "Dust all the shelves and let the grime settle where it will."

Before this man had been drawn into politics and became first a senator and then twice governor of his state, he had been a lawyer of unusual prominence. His keen intellect followed the girl's recital with comprehension and even "read between the lines." During the story he saw probabilities she had never guessed. But he said:

"You have shown admirable intelligence, Phoebe, and I see you have quickly recognized the important points of your discoveries. With the information you have given me I believe I can put my finger on the identical woman who is responsible for Toby Clark's tribulations."

"Oh; can you, sir!" she exclaimed. "Then I must have been very stupid."

He turned to Judith with his whimsical smile. "You see, she won't admit that a rival detective has any talent."

"Yes, I will," said Phoebe. "I didn't mean it that way at all. But I can see no 'identical' woman in the case, as yet. A mysterious woman stole the box, and of course it is a member of Dave Hunter's family — his mother or sister — or perhaps his sweetheart, Hazel Chandler. Which of the three do you mean, sir?"

"None of those," replied the governor, musingly. "The woman whom I think has been the cause of your friend Toby's past misfortunes and present

danger is — Mrs. Ritchie."

Both Judith and Phoebe stared at him in amazement.

"Did she steal her own box, then?" said Phoebe.

"No, indeed; but she accused Toby Clark with a purpose, and she intends to get him a long prison sentence — also with a purpose."

"What purpose, sir?"

"I don't know. That is still dark. But we shall turn the light on it. Perhaps Mr. Spaythe knows, by this time."

"Mr. Spaythe?"

"To be sure," replied Cousin John blandly. "Why do you suppose he appropriated that paper of Mrs. Ritchie's, to which he had no legal right, unless it contained something that required investigation?"

"Oh; I never thought of that."

"Mr. Spaythe knew that Mrs. Ritchie had no right to the paper, and was not acting squarely in regard to it. So he put the paper in a safe place until he could discover the truth. It doesn't take much of a detective to figure that out, Phoebe. It's the science of deduction. Let's go a little further: The paper concerns Toby Clark. That explains why this reserved banker took the boy to his own home, to safeguard his person or his interests until the truth could be learned. It's as plain as a pikestaff, Miss Conspirator. You had all the pieces of the puzzle, but could not fit them together."

"But — the woman who stole the box?" asked Judith, eagerly.

"Bother the woman who stole the box! What do we care about her?" retorted Cousin John. "It is true she stirred up this mess, but the stew may prove a savory one for Toby Clark, in the end. In that case we cannot be too thankful that the poor creature yielded to temptation. She has gained no material benefit, for the stolen property is all restored; but fate had used her to right a grievous wrong. Let us treat her with grateful consideration."

Phoebe drew a long breath, striving to reconcile the governor's view of this mysterious case with the prejudices she had so long encouraged in her own mind. She could not yet see by what process he arrived at the astonishing solution of the problem he now advanced, but the keen lawyer was quite satisfied that he had "nailed the truth." Judith was fully as perplexed as Phoebe and after a pause she inquired:

"Will Mr. Spaythe's discovery, then, clear Toby Clark of the charge against him?"

"Eh? Perhaps not. I've no idea what the discovery is and we must have more information on that subject. My idea is that Mrs. Ritchie will be forced to withdraw her charge; but the case might be taken up by the public prosecutor and young Clark condemned, unless we manage to get the case

out of court altogether."

"Even then," said Phoebe, "Toby's good name will not be cleansed. Many people will say he escaped paying the penalty of his crime, but was really guilty. The evidence they have brought against him is very strong."

"Cleverly argued, Phoebe. I see your point. We must not be content with whitewashing the young man; we must restore him to his friends as sweet and clean as before. So, after all, we can't quite ignore the woman whose folly caused all the mischief; nor even your friend Dave Hunter, who obtained possession of the contents of the box and tried to throw the blame onto Toby in order to save one whom he loved."

"That's it, sir. I think that was Dave's motive."

"Well, the sooner we begin to burrow the sooner we shall unearth the truth. I want to see Sam Parsons, first of all."

"I will send Don for him," proposed Judith.

"If you please, Cousin."

It was Saturday and Don chanced to be within hailing distance. He accepted the mission with joy and lost no time in running to the constable's house.

"Hurry up, Sam," he said: "The governor's at our place and wants to see you."

Sam sat down in his rocker.

"Now?" he inquired "Right away. He came this morning, you know. Perhaps he's goin' to promote you; make you Chief of Police or Grand Marshal. The governor can do anything, Sam."

Sam shook his head. He rocked to and fro, thinking deeply and dreading the governor with a cowardly sinking of the heart.

"Well, what are you going to do? Mutiny?" asked Don impatiently.

The constable sighed. Then he rose and picked up his hat, walking slowly in the wake of his eager conductor to face the man he most feared.

"Good morning, Parsons. I know you well," said the governor. "You're an honest man and a good officer. Who took Mrs. Ritchie's box from Judge Ferguson's office?"

"I — I — »

"Who stole the box?" more sternly.

"Sir, a — a — "

"Parsons!"

"Hazel Chandler, sir."

"Thank you. I thought so. Now, then, sit down and tell me about it."

Perspiration was oozing from the constable's forehead. He wiped it away and sat down, staring stupidly at the great man and wondering how he had

come to admit a fact that he had sworn to keep secret to his dying day.

"There is nothing to tell, sir," he said weakly.

"Begin at the beginning, stating why you spied in the hallway, outside of Judge Ferguson's door."

"The night before, sir, I had seen — seen — "

"Hazel."

"I had seen Hazel carrying the box home. She passed under a light and I was in the shadow. It was Mrs. Ritchie's blue box. The next day I watched. She brought the box down to the post office with her, wrapped in a cloak to make the bundle look round, and then covered with paper. Everyone was excited over the judge's death, that day. The girl watched her chance and in the afternoon stole upstairs with the box, put it on the office table and hurried away. I sneaked up afterward and looked through the keyhole, but I found Hazel had forgotten to lock the door behind her, although she had carried off the key. I went in and looked at the box. It was unlocked and empty, except for a paper or two, which I did not touch. I left it there and went into the post office; but Will Chandler, Hazel's father, said she had run over to the Ferguson house on an errand."

"By the way, Phoebe," said Cousin John, "can you get Janet Ferguson for me?"

"Yes; l can telegraph to her from my room."

"Thank you."

Phoebe ran up to telegraph Janet, asking her to come over at once to see the governor. Meantime Sam Parsons resumed his story.

"You still watched the office?" asked 'Cousin John.

"Yes, sir. After Hazel returned, Will Chandler took the office key to Holbrook and asked him to hand it to Mr. Spaythe, and not long afterward the banker came over and went up to the office. Will had caught me a couple of times in the hallway, so I didn't dare stay there any longer. I went up to our lodge room, over the drug store, which is just opposite, and from the window there I could see into the windows of Judge Ferguson's offices. I saw Mr. Spaythe go in and examine the box. He read a paper that was in it and then put the paper in his pocket. Afterward he wrapped up the box and took it away to his office. I was in deadly fear, sir, that Hazel's theft of the box would be discovered. I imagined Mr. Spaythe had taken it away to hold for evidence; so I followed to his office."

"Why did you fear Hazel's discovery?" asked the governor. "Is it a constable's duty to shield a criminal?"

"I wasn't a constable then, sir; I was just a man. Hazel has always been a favorite of mine, from babyhood," said Sam. "Her father, Will Chandler, is

my best friend. We play chess together and he belongs to my lodge. But aside from that the Chandlers are rated the proudest and most respectable family in Riverdale — bar none. Their ancestors came over in the Mayflower, and then founded this village. Will is the government's trusted agent. If Hazel's foolish act is discovered, the disgrace will kill Mrs. Chandler, who is a very proud woman and in delicate health, and there are six little brothers and sisters whose lives will be ruined."

"She should have thought of that," said the governor.

"And Hazel herself is engaged to be married to Dave Hunter, one of the finest young men in the village," continued Sam. "I think if Dave knew what she had done it would mar all his future life; and he has a sister and mother depending on him. That was why I shielded her, sir; it was better to let Toby Clark suffer alone than to overwhelm so many honest folks with disgrace."

"You took the box from Mr. Spaythe?" asked the governor, without commenting upon the man's excuses.

"Yes, sir. He left it on the office table and Went into the bank, and I went in and got it. I carried it home and hid it, to save Hazel, and afterward I was astonished to find another box, just like it, in Toby Clark's back yard. I decided it was put there with a purpose — to prove Toby was guilty — so I kept quiet about it."

"Wasn't that very irregular, Parsons?"

"Very, sir. I'll lose my star, and perhaps I'll be prosecuted. But I'm glad I did it."

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW A WRONG LOOKED EIGHT

Janet Ferguson came in a moment later, having promptly answered Phoebe's summons. After greeting her in his kindly way the governor said:

"I'm puzzled about your father's keys. What happened to them the day following his death? Tell me, please?"

Janet tried to remember.

"Usually he left his office key at the post office, but carried the bunch of small keys on his person," she replied. "Father was very absent-minded at times, and I think he was not feeling quite himself the evening before — before his attack. For it seems he hung his key ring, containing all the keys, on the peg inside the post office window, instead of leaving just the office key. But the next morning Hazel Chandler discovered the keys and brought them to me — all except the office key, which was left hanging upon the peg. That key Mr. Chandler afterward turned over to Mr. Spaythe, to whom Toby Clark also gave his office key."

"And the smaller keys — the ones that unlocked the cupboard and the private boxes, such as Mrs. Ritchie's?"

"When Hazel brought them to me I asked her to carry them to Mr. Spaythe, and I understand she did so. She delivered them to him on her way back to the post office."

"Of course. It is all very clear and comprehensive now, Miss Ferguson. I thank you. I am not making an official investigation of this case, you understand. Phoebe and I have concocted a little conspiracy to arrive at the truth and we are doing our best to clear up the mystery of Mrs. Ritchie's lost box — for personal reasons only."

"I know that Phoebe has been anxious to save Toby Clark," said Janet earnestly; "and I am also anxious. Can I assist you in any way?"

"Not at present. If we need you again we will let you know."

So Janet went away and the governor also dismissed Sam Parsons, telling the constable he might continue to guard his secret until otherwise instructed. Then Cousin John briskly rose and said to Phoebe:

"Let us go and call on Dave Hunter."

The girl dreaded that interview, remembering her last defiant visit to the telegraph operator; but she knew it could not be avoided. Already she was amazed at the ease with which the governor fitted together the pieces of her puzzle, and she was eager to see what link in the evidence Dave could furnish.

They found the young fellow alone in his office. He recognized the

governor at a glance, for through the exchange of telegrams the operator knew he was due to arrive in Riverdale that morning and why he had come. At once Dave's face hardened and his jaws locked together with firm obstinacy. But the governor, noting these signs of opposition, merely smiled.

"Hunter, my lad," said he, "I'd like to dance at your wedding. I'm not sure you'll invite me, and I'm not sure I could come if invited; but what I mean to assert is that I'd really like to help you celebrate that important event. Eh?"

Dave seemed confused. He had no answer ready for this form of attack.

"There appear to be certain complications, however, which at present stand in the way of your ambition," continued the governor in an amiable tone. "Hazel has a fine nature and a gentle heart, but her character isn't fully developed yet and, in a late emergency, she allowed herself to be led astray. She knew there was a great deal of money in Mrs. Ritchie's box; her father had once seen it and talked of it in the family circle; so when the judge carelessly left all his keys in the post office, one evening, Hazel was tempted and didn't stop to consider consequences. She was sick and tired of the drudgery she was enduring and knew she could not be married to you until you had acquired more money; so she foolishly yielded to the temptation and at night, when she locked up her store and the post office, she visited Judge Ferguson's office, unlocked the cupboard, took down Mrs. Ritchie's box and carried it home. In the seclusion of her room she found the key to the box, opened it and dumped the contents on the bed. The last thing to tumble out was a long yellow envelope marked 'Private,' and Hazel hastily tore this open, with the idea that it contained money. Finding it to be merely a legal document, in which she was not interested, she tossed it back into the box. Understand, Hunter, I won't vouch for the accuracy of every detail of this story; but in the main you know it is correct."

Dave's eyes were fairly bulging from their sockets as he stared at the governor and heard him lay bare a secret he thought had been faithfully guarded.

"You — you've seen Hazel?" he stammered.

"No; not yet. But let me continue. That night, perhaps fearing interruption, the girl had no chance to examine the contents of the box, which she hid somewhere in her room. Next day she took the box down town with her, wishing to get rid of it, and managed during the afternoon to return it to Judge Ferguson's office. But she had no time to put it back in the cupboard, because she had left the post office downstairs alone. So she simply placed it on the table and afterward got rid of the keys as soon as possible.

"No one suspected her. Toby Clark was suspected, but not Hazel Chandler. Yet Hazel was in a quandary. She had in her possession a great

deal of money, some valuable bonds, and a lot of useless papers belonging to Mrs. Ritchie. Naturally she confided in her sweetheart, not realizing even yet the seriousness of her offense, but rather exulting in the fact that this money would hasten her wedding day. The young man to whom she was engaged, however, listened to her story with horror and despair. He realized the enormity of the girl's crime and knew that its discovery meant prison for her, a broken heart for him, and ruined lives for them both."

Dave's stern features had gradually relaxed to an expression of abject misery. At the vivid scene conjured up by his accuser he sobbed aloud and dropped his face in his hands. But the governor quietly continued:

"The young man's plight was indeed pitiful, but his poignant sorrow blurred his reason and led him to a subterfuge so cruel and unmanly that his error was scarcely less iniquitous than Hazel's. To save the girl he loved he endeavored to throw the burden of guilt on an innocent person, a friendless boy and a cripple. He was not the first to accuse Toby Clark, but Toby's arrest gave him the idea. Forcing Hazel to give to him the entire contents of the rifled box, he selected all the papers that were of no value to anyone but the owner and hid then in the back room of the shanty. Then, to make sure they would be found, he wrote anonymous letters to two parties whom he thought would be interested in the search, telling where the papers were hidden."

The governor paused a moment.

"I am not sure," said he, "why you retained the money and bonds, Hunter. You may have had some vague idea of keeping them, at the time; but afterward I am sure you thought better of it, for you gave up the stolen money, again implicating Toby Clark."

"I — I wanted to give it all up in the beginning," groaned Dave, in broken, pleading accents; "but I was bewildered, then — I've been bewildered ever since, I think — and the thought came to me that if Hazel should be arrested I would need money to defend her. I didn't much care what I did, if only I could manage to save Hazel. But — after a time — I thought the danger had passed and no one would now connect her with the theft; so I wanted to get rid of the money, which was a horror to me. I thought the best way was to put it in Toby's house, as I did the papers."

"I follow your argument," said the governor. "Had you been more experienced in crime you would have known that the greatest danger of discovery lay in those anonymous letters. Such things are very easily traced. Do you know that Phoebe Daring was able to connect you with this crime by means of those very letters? As a matter of fact, however, they did not lead to the discovery that Hazel Chandler took Mrs. Ritchie's box. Two different

people saw her carry it home; yet I suppose she has imagined she escaped observation."

"She — she seemed quite sure of that, sir."

"No doubt. The criminal is always blind. If the time ever comes when everyone realizes that the law is more clever than the individual, that justice is rampant and will not be denied and that punishment follows an undiscovered crime as surely as if it were discovered, then indeed humanity may shrink from committing lawless acts. The more inexperienced and simple-minded the offender, the more certain he or she is of outwitting all the rest of the world. As a consequence, our prisons are crowded and our trial courts cost us millions of dollars annually. It is so much more simple and safe to obey the laws of humanity and of nations, that I wonder people do not prefer to walk uprightly."

Dave had no reply to this, although there is no doubt he frankly admitted its truth. He now knew that the governor and Phoebe, and doubtless others, were in possession of the secret he had guarded so jealously, and in this crisis his thoughts were all of the girl he loved and had sought to shield.

"Sir," he said after a moment, "is there any way in which I can assume all the punishment! Suppose that I confess that I stole Mrs. Ritchie's box; will you and Phoebe help me to carry out the deception and take Toby Clark's place!"

"Why, that is what you should have done in the beginning," said Cousin John. "Now it is too late for such vicarious atonement."

Again Dave groaned.

"Mrs. Ritchie has all her property now," he asserted. "Don't you suppose she could be induced to save Hazel!"

"No; I do not."

"It — it's going to wreck a lot of lives, sir — the publicity and disgrace. The poor girl didn't know what she was doing; indeed, sir, that is the truth. She — she's sorry enough now. We've both suffered bitterly and — and been severely punished already. But I'll take more punishment; I'll do anything, sir, to keep Hazel out of it and save her and her people from infamy."

"I can't promise you anything, Hunter," said the governor, evident sympathy in his tone. "I'm sorry for you. You were drawn into this thing merely because you are fond of the girl, and I admire you for standing by your sweetheart, through thick and thin. The faults you have committed, in striving to compel an innocent boy to suffer, are far from admirable; yet you have not a strong nature and there are many who might have acted just as you did. I will say this: if it can be arranged to clear Toby Clark in the eyes

of all the world without condemning Hazel Chandler, I shall try to do so. Our first care will be to save Toby; afterward I will do what I can for Hazel."

Dave was grateful for this promise and seized the governor's hand in both his own to press it warmly.

"At present," said Cousin John, "Phoebe and I alone are in possession of all the facts I have related. The two persons who saw Hazel take the box seem as anxious to shield her from public condemnation as you are. So I think you may hope for the best."

With this they left the telegraph office and walked up the street.

"Where next?" asked Phoebe curiously. She had, by this time, so supreme a confidence in Cousin John's ability to pick up scattered threads and smooth out all tangles that in her heart she believed the truth had now been laid bare in its entirety and thought nothing remained but to confirm the facts already gathered.

"We will see Mr. Spaythe next," the great man replied.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW THE MYSTERY CLEARED

It was only a few minutes walk to the bank and Mr. Spaythe received them in his private office, expressing little surprise at seeing the governor again in Riverdale but welcoming him with frank cordiality.

When they were seated the banker looked at his visitors with polite inquiry.

"I'm helping Phoebe get the facts in this Toby Clark case," said the governor, speaking easily and as to an equal, for he knew Mr. Spaythe's record and reputation. "In her confidences to me concerning the peculiar circumstances surrounding this affair, which seems to have worn a veil of mystery from the first, she has mentioned the paper you found in the Ritchie box."

The banker bowed but remained silent.

"There has been raised a great hue and cry for that paper, on the part of Mrs. Ritchie and her attorney," continued the speaker; "therefore we may consider the document of prime importance to the old lady. When it fell into your hands you hypothecated it and carefully locked it in your safe; further evidence of its importance. Phoebe has concluded, from your unconditional defense of the accused boy, that you believe him innocent, in the first place, and also that the document referred to is in some way connected with — Toby Clark."

Mr. Spaythe smiled.

"It's difficult to keep a secret from Phoebe," he replied.

"For my own part," the governor resumed, "I have figured from your long silence regarding the paper that you have been investigating its validity or for some reason have been seeking outside information concerning it. I hope I am not in any way forcing your hand by asking if my surmise is correct and if you have yet received the information you desire."

"Allow me to add that it is difficult to keep a secret from the governor," laughed Mr. Spaythe. "Really, sir, you and Phoebe have guessed so much that you are entitled to know more, and fortunately my first information of value concerning this paper reached me but a few hours ago, in the morning's mail."

"Through my interest in my Cousin Judith I became acquainted with Phoebe Daring," said Cousin John. "Through my interest in Phoebe I became acquainted with the sad plight of Toby Clark, and my interest in humanity at large induced me to 'play hookey' from the business of governing this exacting state, long enough to run down here and help things to a climax. So,

sir, as my time is limited, I — ”

“It will afford me pleasure to confide in you with the utmost frankness,” said the banker. “I would like you to know all that I know.”

“Thank you. I may say that we have finally run down the guilty party and are now certain that Toby Clark’s case will never come to trial.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Mr. Spaythe. “Then you have solved a very perplexing mystery.”

“Have you had no hint of the truth?” inquired the governor.

“Not the slightest, although I have several times suspected my lawyer, a man named Holbrook.”

“And a very well meaning young fellow,” added the governor. “I think, from the information I have received, that Holbrook has conducted himself in a manly way that is distinctly creditable. But may I ask how you expected to save Toby Clark from prison without knowing who committed the fault of which he stands accused, and in the face of a mass of incriminating evidence against him?”

“Yes; I expected to save him through Mrs. Ritchie.”

“You can compel her to withdraw the charge?”

“Mrs. Ritchie is completely in my power. Would you mind telling me who first took the box from the judge’s cupboard?”

“A weak and thoughtless girl — Hazel Chandler — who was tempted to steal the money that she might sooner wed the young man to whom she was engaged.”

“Dear me. Hazel Chandler! How unfortunate.”

“There is a general disposition, among those who know the facts, to shield her,” suggested the governor. “The girl has already been punished — through fear, personal remorse and the reproaches of her fiancé. I can see no benefits to the public at large nor to the interest of justice to be gained by casting this foolish girl into prison. Her redemption, if redemption is still needed, may be better accomplished in other ways.”

“I quite agree with you, sir; and I think that between us we may find a way to restore Toby Clark’s reputation to its former purity without drawing Hazel Chandler into the mire. When Mrs. Ritchie knows that her treachery and embezzlements have been discovered, I think she can be induced to sign a statement that her box was not stolen at all.”

“I see your point, Mr. Spaythe. And now please tell us about that paper.”

The banker excused himself a moment and went into the counting room, in the rear of which stood a large safe. From a drawer which he unlocked he took a paper and with it returned to his private office.

“Although this document has been for years in Judge Ferguson’s

keeping," began Mr. Spaythe, "its character and contents were unknown to him, for before she placed it in her box Mrs. Ritchie enclosed it in a heavy yellow envelope which she sealed and marked 'private.' The girl who took the box tore open the envelope, perhaps thinking it contained money, and so enabled me to make a discovery that otherwise might never have come to light. The moment I saw this paper I became interested, for it is a will, properly probated and attested, and on the outside it is docketed: 'Last Will and Testament of Alonzo Clark.'"

"Alonzo Clark?" echoed Phoebe; "why, who was he, sir?"

"The father of Toby Clark. I knew him very slightly during the years preceding his death, when he lived at Riverdale. He once attempted to borrow some money from the bank on some mining stock which I considered worthless; so I refused him. He was a relative of Mrs. Ritchie."

"I never knew that!" cried Phoebe, surprised.

"Nor I, until recently," replied the banker. "This document which I now hold bequeaths to Alonzo Clark's only child, Toby Clark, all of his interest in that mining stock, making Mrs. Ritchie the executor and providing that in case the stock becomes valuable and pays dividends it must not be sold or otherwise disposed of, but the proceeds shall be devoted to the education of Toby and the balance reserved until he is of age, when it is all to be turned over to him. During the minority of Toby, Mrs. Ritchie is to properly educate and clothe him and she is authorized to retain ten per cent of the income in payment for her services as trustee."

"You say the stock is worthless?" asked the governor.

"I thought it was, at the time Alonzo Clark brought it to me; but when first I saw this paper I found that the will had been probated and Mrs. Ritchie duly appointed executor and trustee under its terms. That fact, and the woman's eagerness to recover the paper, led me to suspect that the stock had become valuable; so I retained the will and began to investigate both the mine and the history of Alonzo Clark. As I told you, the first important report of these investigations reached me to-day. I will briefly relate to you their purport, rather than ask you to wade through the verbose mass of evidence submitted."

"That will be best, I think," agreed the governor.

"Alonzo Clark was a mining engineer of education and ability, who was employed by large corporations as an expert, to examine mines and report upon their value. He successfully pursued this vocation for several years and came to be regarded as a reliable judge of both copper and gold mines. Then he met with a misfortune. While in a rough mining camp in Arizona he fell in love with a plump, pretty girl — the daughter of one of the superintendents

— and married her. She became Toby's mother and proved far beneath her husband in both refinement and intellect. At about the same time that he married, Clark conceived what he thought a clever idea to make his fortune. Being sent to examine an outlying mine that had never been developed, he found it to contain the richest deposit of copper he had ever known of — so rich, in fact, that it was destined to become one of the greatest copper mines in America. A company of capitalists would purchase and develop this mine if Clark reported on it favorably. He forwarded them some very ordinary specimens of ore and said he believed the mine would pay a fair profit if worked economically, but be predicted no big things of it. Then he set to work to invest every dollar he had in the world in stock of this very mine, and he was able to secure a large quantity because his discouraging report had failed to inspire the promoters with any degree of enthusiasm. Then the schemer became properly punished, for the men who had formed the company got possession of another mine that promised better, but in which Clark had no interest, and devoted their exclusive attention to working that. Clark dared not argue the matter with them, for he had declared the rich mine to be unimportant, so be was obliged to wait until the company was ready to develop it, when he knew it would speedily make him rich.

"This affair ruined the engineer's life — that, and his wife's dissolute habits, for she became addicted to drink and her companionship was not pleasant. Clark had beggared himself by his large purchase of stock and his vain dreams of wealth speedily destroyed his usefulness in his profession. In a few years he lost all ambition, became discredited in mining circles and finally drifted here, perhaps being attracted to Riverdale by the fact that a distant cousin — the only relative I have been able to trace — lived near here in the person of Mrs. Ritchie, a widow with a large and prosperous farm.

"It seems that Mrs. Ritchie, however, would do nothing to assist the impoverished Clarks, who had brought their little son Toby with them. She even doubted the man's story about his rich mine, which he declared would some day bring him a fortune. She is very shrewd in business matters and knew that mining stock is dangerous to gamble on. Clark did a little work in the village, but not much, for he was incapable of steady manual labor. He fished a good deal in the river and won the name of being lazy, surly and unsocial. As a matter of fact he was a disappointed man and had fallen rapidly in the social scale. His wife soon drank herself to death and a year or so afterward Clark contracted pneumonia on the river and soon passed away, having previously made his will and given it to Mrs. Ritchie for safe keeping.

"Toby was a much neglected boy, as you may imagine," continued Mr. Spaythe, after a brief pause. "Mrs. Ritchie ignored his very existence and

after his father's death the little fellow continued to reside in the shanty by the river — a ragged, barefooted urchin whom everyone liked because he was so sunny natured and agreeable. He inherited his father's intellect but not his misanthropic ideas. Toby was not only willing, but glad to work and earned a modest living by doing odd jobs until, finally, Judge Ferguson noticed him and took charge of the boy. I think, governor, I have now given you the entire Clark history."

"But the mine?" said the governor, greatly interested in the story.

"By a queer whim of fate the mine was developed soon after Alonzo Clark's death and its enormous wealth became a seven days 'wonder. I believe it is to-day reputed one of the best paying mines on this continent, which proves that the engineer knew what he was doing when he invested his all in its stock. Mrs. Ritchie evidently heard of the great mine, for she had Clark's will probated and applied for letters of administration, which were granted her. For several years she has been receiving dividends on the stock — which is worth a fortune to Toby, by the way — and yet the woman has kept her secret and the money to herself. Never a penny has been applied to Toby's needs or to his education."

"Oh, how dreadful!" exclaimed Phoebe, who was really shocked at this recital of Mrs. Ritchie's perfidy.

"Her intention, I suppose," said the banker, "was to continue to retain these receipts for herself. Toby had no other relatives to interfere in his behalf; he was too young at the time of his father's death to know anything about the mine, and I doubt if he knew — or yet knows — that he is in any way related to Mrs. Ritchie. The deception might have continued indefinitely had not the box been stolen and so, by a chain of curious accidents, the will of Alonzo Clark discovered by those interested in Toby."

After the banker had concluded his relation all three were silent for a time, pondering on the remarkable discovery. Then Phoebe said:

"I cannot understand, in view of the fact that Mrs. Ritchie was deliberately robbing Toby, why she was so bitter against him, or why she had him arrested and is even now trying to send him to prison."

"That is a natural sequence, my dear," replied the governor. "The woman has been greatly worried over the loss of this document, which, falling into certain hands — such as those of Mr. Spaythe — would perhaps lead to the discovery of her perversion of trust funds, which is a very serious crime. Perhaps she thinks that in some way Toby Clark has himself gained possession of the will, but believes that if he is discredited and put in prison he cannot appear against her. Without Mr. Spaythe's exhaustive researches no one in Riverdale would be likely to know that the mine described in the

elder Clark's will had become valuable. The will itself would mean little or nothing to Toby unless he had opportunity to investigate his father's bequest. There was a fair chance of Mrs. Ritchie's evading detection, even with the will missing; but Toby in prison would be more safe to her interests than Toby at liberty."

"Toby mustn't go to prison," declared Phoebe, with energy.

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Spaythe. "The boy must regain the position in society to which he is fully entitled."

"Can't we do anything to Mrs. Ritchie?" she asked.

"We'll try," said the governor, looking at his watch. "Just now dinner is waiting at the Daring mansion and I promised Judith I'd not forget it. But this afternoon I'd like to drive over with you, Mr. Spaythe, to see the woman."

"I will be glad to accompany you," replied the banker. "We close at one o'clock on Saturday, you know; so at two, if you will be ready, I will call for you with my motor car."

"That will be quite satisfactory," said the governor, rising. Then he hesitated a moment. "May we take Phoebe with us?" he asked. "She has been so interested in this affair and has already accomplished so much in Toby's behalf that I think she is entitled to be present at the climax."

"I think so, too," answered Mr. Spaythe readily. "Do you care to go, Phoebe!"

"Yes, if you please."

Then she and Cousin John went home to dinner and the youngsters, who suspected something important was under way, were able to drag no information from their big sister beyond mysterious looks and sundry shakes of the bead, which of course aroused their curiosity to the highest pitch.

"I think you might tell us, Phoebe," pouted Sue, disconsolately. "I always tell you *my* secrets."

Cousin John laughed.

"Listen, then," said he. "We've discovered that Toby Clark is innocent and that we can prove it; so he is no longer in danger of prison. That's more than Toby Clark knows yet. Furthermore, we have discovered that Toby is not a mere nobody, as everyone has considered him, but the owner of considerable valuable property. I say 'we' have discovered this, but really it was Phoebe who solved the whole mystery. Now, if you can keep this secret for a few days, until the newspaper prints the complete story, I'll take you into my confidence the next time I know a secret."

Don cheered and Becky clapped her hands in delight, while Sue cried ecstatically: "Bully for Toby!" and was promptly repressed by Phoebe, who

was annoyed by such a wild demonstration in the presence of the great man. But Cousin John seemed to enjoy the outburst.

Judith has listened gravely and seemed surprised.

“Is this indeed the truth?” she asked.

“Part of it,” replied the governor. “When Phoebe and I return from a little trip this afternoon you shall have the entire story, with all the details. You see, we’re rehearsing a little show of our own. The play isn’t entirely finished yet, for the last act is on and we must corner the villain before the final curtain falls.”

This contented them for the time, for they really believed they had been taken into the great man’s confidence; but when Mr. Spaythe’s automobile drew up at the door and Phoebe and the governor entered it, they were followed by envious looks and much speculation among the Darings as to their errand.

“I hope,” said Sue, anxiously, “the villain won’t hurt Phoebe.”

“Pshaw!” returned Don, with scorn, “villains never amount to anything; they’re only put in a play to be knocked out in the last round.”

CHAPTER XXV

HOW TOBY WON HIS HERITAGE

Mrs. Ritchie was hoeing that afternoon in her vegetable garden, which adjoined the spacious farmhouse where she resided. She was attired in a faded calico dress and a weatherworn sun-bonnet, and her heavy leather shoes were rusty and clogged by constant contact with the soil.

There were several servants upon the plantation, and there were afforded an excellent example of industry by their mistress, who "worked like a hired man" herself and made everyone around her labor just as energetically.

The arrival of Lawyer Kellogg on his bicycle, which he had ridden over from Riverdale, did not interrupt Mrs. Ritchie's task. She merely gave her attorney an ungracious nod and said: "Well?"

"I've come over to see you about the trial," he announced. "It begins next Thursday, at Bayport, and I must know exactly what you want to do about Toby Clark."

"Give him a long sentence — the longer the better."

"He is sure to get that if we prove him guilty."

She looked at him suspiciously.

"Why do you say 'if'?" she asked.

Kellogg smiled.

"Any trial is uncertain, Mrs. Ritchie," said he. "Unexpected things are liable to happen to change the probable verdict. I think we have enough evidence against Toby to prove our case, but those terrible children have greatly influenced popular opinion by means of their parades and we can't tell who the jury will be, or whether we can depend on them."

"Can't the jury be fixed?" asked the woman, after some thought.

"It would cost a lot of money, and it isn't a safe thing to do," returned her lawyer, standing beside her as she hoed. "And that reminds me to speak of my own expenses and fees."

"Well, what about 'em?"

"You promised me a hundred dollars if I recovered the contents of your box. I've returned to you all your money, bonds and papers; but you haven't paid me yet."

"There's a paper missing."

"One. I do not suppose you intend to withhold my money on that account."

"Why not!"

"Because I should then sue you for it and the court would award me damages."

She gave a contemptuous snort.

“Do you want that matter of the box aired!” she asked.

“Do you want that will investigated — the paper which is missing?” he retorted.

Mrs. Ritchie laughed.

“I’ll give you fifty dollars now, and fifty when you get that last paper,” said she.

“You’ll give me a hundred now. The price of the paper was a thousand dollars.”

“Have you got track of it yet?” she asked quickly.

“No. I’m not going to undertake that trial for nothing, Mrs. Ritchie. There’ll be a lot of work and expense about it and, if you want Toby Clark imprisoned for stealing your box, you’ve got to pay handsomely for it.”

"How much?"

"I want a hundred dollars in advance and two hundred more if I win."

"You're a thief!" she snarled.

"No other lawyer would undertake the case at any price. It will make me very unpopular to prosecute Toby Clark."

"You're not much of a favorite now," said Mrs. Ritchie. "Very well, I'll give you a hundred dollars."

"I want two hundred to-day. A hundred for recovering your property and a hundred in advance for the trial."

She dropped her hoe and stared at him. Then she sighed.

"Come into the house. You're a scoundrel, Abner Kellogg, and you ain't

earned half the money; but I'll he generous."

"No; you'll be sensible," he said, following her up the path. "You've got some secret that's worth money to you, Mrs. Ritchie, and which you don't care to have discovered; and it's connected with Toby Clark."

"That's a lie."

She ushered him into the front room and left him there while she went to get the money. When she returned she placed four fifty-dollar bills in his hand.

"Oh; cash, is it?" he said in a pleased tone.

"I don't trust banks; they're tricky. That's all the ready money I've got in the house. The rest is in a new box with Miles Hubbard, over in Bayport."

"Why didn't you put it in my care?" asked Kellogg.

"Because you're a dishonest cur."

He reddened a little.

"Then why don't you employ Hubbard to prosecute Toby Clark?"

"He wouldn't take the case."

"I see. Well, I've raised my price, Mrs. Ritchie. I want a hundred more in advance."

"You can't have it."

"I think I can."

"I won't be bled, Abner Kellogg!"

"No; you prefer to bleed others."

"You insolent pettifogger! What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I want another hundred dollars — before I make a single move in this case."

While she sat glaring at him an automobile stopped in the road before the house. The woman turned her head and through the window saw Phoebe Daring, Mr. Spaythe and a stranger alight and enter the gate.

"Tell 'em I ain't at home, Kellogg," she exclaimed in a half frightened voice.

"Better face the music," said the lawyer, who had noted the arrivals. "If there's danger, as I suspect, face it boldly. You can't save the day by running away."

"You stand by me, then, Kellogg. I'll give you the other hundred when they're gone."

He smiled grimly, but there was no time for reply. The bell rang and Mrs. Ritchie went to the door.

"May we speak with you — on business — Mrs. Ritchie?" asked Mr. Spaythe.

"I'm busy with my lawyer. You'll have to come again."

“I’m glad your lawyer is here,” said the banker gravely. “I think you will need his advice.”

“What about?”

“If you will permit us to enter, I will explain.”

“Who’s this other man?” she asked curtly.

“The governor of the state.”

Mrs. Ritchie fell back and they all entered the parlor.

“Good afternoon, your Excellency,” said Kellogg, with a low bow. The governor did not know the man but he nodded to him.

“Well?” asked the woman in harsh, rasping tones.

“I have called to see you in regard to the Alonzo Clark will,” said Mr. Spaythe.

She sank into a seat, but the cold, hard look never left her face. If she was at all startled she retained her self-possession wonderfully.

“Who was Alonzo Clark?” she asked, as if to gain time.

“Toby Clark’s father; your second-cousin.”

“What about his will?”

“You are the administrator.”

“Well, that’s my business.”

“Not entirely,” remarked the governor, calmly. “Your letters of administration require you to fulfill the terms of the will — or the property will be taken out of your hands by the court. Also you are personally responsible for any — shall we say ‘irregularities’? — you have committed.”

“Well?”

“You have not fulfilled the terms of the will,” said Mr. Spaythe sternly.

“Who says so?”

“The will itself.”

“Somebody stole it.”

“That does not matter. There is a copy on file in the probate’s office. You have criminally disobeyed the injunctions of that will, Mrs. Ritchie, and applied such moneys as you have received, to your own personal use, instead of to the support and education of Toby Clark.”

“Toby Clark’s a thief, and he’ll go to prison for stealing my box,” she snapped.

“We will not discuss Toby now,” said Mr. Spaythe. “Your own case demands your first attention. The governor will tell you the legal penalty for embezzling trust funds.”

“State’s prison,” said the governor.

“Shucks! Tell him he lies, Abner Kellogg,” cried the woman.

“The governor is entirely correct, madam,” answered the wily attorney. “I trust, gentlemen,” he added, “you will acquit me of any complicity in this affair. I am merely hired by Mrs. Ritchie to prosecute the case of Toby Clark and know nothing of her past history or criminal acts.”

“Oh, you turn against me, do you!” she inquired angrily.

“I cannot defend you from so grave an offense, Mrs. Ritchie,” said Kellogg. “These gentlemen would not accuse you without proof, and the proof will send you to prison.”

She studied by turn the stern faces confronting her.

“What else have you got to say?” she asked. “If you wanted to send me to prison you would have me arrested, without taking the trouble to come here.”

“That is true,” returned Mr. Spaythe. “I will explain. By chance the will of Alonzo Clark fell into my hands and on behalf of Toby Clark I caused an investigation to be made. During the past seven years there has been paid to you, as administrator of the estate of Toby Clark, a minor, in dividends on stock, the total sum of forty-eight thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars, up to the first of last month. You were entitled to retain ten per cent of this, provided you had performed your duties according to law; but since you have failed to do this the entire amount must now be paid over to the new administrator whom the court will appoint. And this payment must be made whether you go to prison or not.”

Kellogg was amazed. He looked at Mrs. Ritchie with a glint of admiration in his eyes. Forty-eight thousand, and she still grubbing with a hoe! Phoebe was also amazed by the immensity of the sum. She had not thought it would be nearly so large. She mentally figured that it meant an income of about seven thousand a year, which would make Toby quite independent.

Mrs. Ritchie did not deny Mr. Spaythe’s assertion. She knew it would be useless.

“That will is my property,” she said sullenly. “I can have you arrested for stealing it.”

“I will return the will,” said Mr. Spaythe. “It is no longer of use to me — nor to you, madam. Unless you voluntarily resign your trusteeship it will be taken from you, after a rigid investigation which will prove you guilty of embezzlement.”

“Suppose I refuse to give up the money?” said she. “You don’t know where it is, and you can’t find it. You can take this farm away from me, if you like, but it’s only worth about fifteen thousand. If I go to jail I can keep the cash I’ve put away — and have it to use when I get free again.”

“I believe,” said the governor, “you might be able to do that, and so defeat justice. But let us consider what it would mean. My experience enables me to

state that your term of imprisonment would be no less than twenty years, and perhaps more. I doubt if, at your age, you would live for twenty years in a prison — you who are so used to the open air. So your stolen money would be of no benefit to you. On the other hand, you might effect a compromise with us and so keep the matter out of court. You have here sufficient property for all your needs and the income from your plantation gives you more than a living. It occurs to me, Mrs. Ritchie, that you will find it more comfortable to end your days in freedom."

She dropped her eyes in thought and stared at the carpet for a time. Then she asked gruffly: "What do you demand?"

"First," replied Mr. Spaythe, "you must resign as administrator and petition the probate court to appoint some one in your place. You must furnish an exact statement of the money received and turn over the entire amount to the new administrator, for the sole benefit of Toby Clark. In addition to this, we demand that you sign a statement, for publication, saying that your blue box was not stolen, but merely mislaid, and that you have recovered the entire contents. You will add that Toby Clark has been unjustly accused. I have prepared a statement to this effect which is all ready for you to sign, and the governor will witness it, so that it will never be questioned."

"But somebody stole that box," cried the woman, "and whoever it was ought to suffer for it."

"Somebody stole Toby Clark's inheritance," replied Mr. Spaythe. "I do not think it necessary for one to suffer for either crime, if amends are fully made and no lasting evil can result."

Mrs. Ritchie frowned. She looked from one to another and saw no signs of relenting in any face. Even Kellogg's fat face wore a sneer as he regarded her.

So she surrendered.

"I'll sign the papers," she said.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW PHOEBE'S CONSPIRACY TRIUMPHED

As they rode homeward Phoebe said thoughtfully:

"Who will break the news to Toby?"

Mr. Spaythe and the governor exchanged glances.

"I think that must be your task, Phoebe," said the latter. "No one has done so much for Toby Clark as you, nor has anyone been so instrumental in establishing his good fortune."

"I — I don't think I could do it!" exclaimed Phoebe. "Toby is so proud and sensitive that he — he might make a fuss, and that would break me all up."

Said Mr. Spaythe, after a moment's thought:

"I'll make it easy for you, Phoebe. I'll give a little dinner party at my house, in Toby's honor, on Wednesday evening and invite all those friends who have stood by him during his time of need. Then you can make a speech and announce the good news."

"Just the thing," commented the governor.

"Wednesday. That will give me time to accomplish something I have in mind."

And so the matter was arranged.

Toby Clark had grown more restless as the day approached when he was to be tried for stealing Mrs. Ritchie's box. He knew of the recent evidence against him — the finding of the money and bonds in his house — and fully realized that his guilt would appear conclusive to a jury. He was ashamed to go out of the house except for a brief walk after dark and whenever he met Mr. Spaythe or Eric at mealtime he would study their faces for some sign that would indicate hope. They seemed cheerful enough and laughed and talked as if no tragedy was pending; but both father and son refrained from mentioning Toby's trial in any way. The boy had not seen Phoebe since she had rescued him from the hoodlums; Sam Parsons kept out of sight; Mr. Holbrook, who used to visit him regularly, now remained absent, and so poor Toby imagined himself deserted and neglected by all his friends.

Wednesday noon the banker said at luncheon:

"Toby, I'm giving a little dinner party to-night and I want you to be present."

"Oh, sir! I — I — "

"Not a word, Toby. I won't listen to any excuses. You will find the guests old friends and must be prepared to assist me and Eric to entertain them."

The boy was astonished. He had never known Mr. Spaythe to entertain

anyone before and this dinner party, given on the eve of Toby's trial, seemed to him a cruel mockery. But he could not refuse Mr. Spaythe's request, having been a guest in the banker's house for so long and knew he must face these people as bravely as he could. He wondered, vaguely, who would come to the Spaythe dinner party, and toward evening grew very uneasy and despondent.

The first arrival was Janet Ferguson, and the sight of his old employer's daughter did much to relieve his nervousness. Then came Nathalie Cameron and Lucy Hunter and following them closely he heard the eager voices of "the Daring tribe," including Miss Eliot, Phoebe, Becky and Don. These were first greeted by Mr. Spaythe and Eric and then engaged Toby in conversation, surrounding him in a group — as if he were the hero of the occasion, he reflected bitterly, instead of an accused criminal in danger of a prison sentence!

From his seat in the long drawing-room Toby saw Mr. Holbrook arrive, and then Sam Parsons and Will Chandler — surely a mixed assemblage. Mr. Spaythe had refrained from inviting Hazel Chandler and Dave Hunter, thinking the ordeal would be too severe for them. Finally came Doris and Allerton Randolph and then Mr. Fellows, the editor, and with these the list of guests seemed complete, for they were all straightway ushered into the dining-room to partake of an elaborate feast.

Toby was in a daze. He could not understand it at all. On all sides were bright and happy faces and no one seemed to remember that on the morrow he was to be tried in open court as a thief.

With the dessert Mr. Spaythe looked up and said casually, but in a voice loud enough for all to hear:

"I believe Phoebe Daring has a few remarks to make to us, and this seems a good opportunity to hear her."

Phoebe rose from her seat, rather red and embarrassed at first, as she marked the sudden silence around the table and the earnest looks turned upon her. But she resolved not to falter in the task she had undertaken.

"This is a joyful occasion," she began, very solemnly — so solemnly that Becky giggled. "We have met, at Mr. Spaythe's kind invitation, to extend congratulations to our friend Toby Clark."

Don thought this a good time to yell "Bravo!" but the reproachful look of his sister promptly "squelched" him. Toby stared at Phoebe in wonder, but she refused to meet his pleading gaze.

"It is a joyful occasion," she resumed, "because the absurd charge trumped up against Toby has been withdrawn, as perhaps you all know." It was news to Toby, indeed! "Mrs. Ritchie has issued a signed statement,

which Mr. Fellows is going to print in the paper, saying that she was mistaken about her box being stolen, as it was merely mislaid. Her property has all been recovered and she is very sorry that poor Toby was ever accused of a crime that neither he nor anyone else ever committed."

There was something of a sensation around the table, for few had known of this statement until now. Toby was trying hard to comprehend his good fortune. He could no longer see Phoebe because his eyes were full of tears.

"Just before I came here this evening," continued the girl, "I received a telegram from our governor, dated from the state capital. I will read it to you." She unfolded a telegram and read in a clear, deliberate voice: "'Probate Judge Fordyce to-day appointed Duncan Spaythe administrator of the estate of Toby Clark, and his guardian. Congratulations to all concerned.'" An intense silence followed. A secret was here disclosed that had been unknown by any but Phoebe and the banker. Curious looks were cast upon the girl and then upon Toby. The lame boy half rose from his chair, pallid and shaking in every limb.

"I — I haven't any estate," he said. "It's all a — a — cruel — joke! I — "

"Sit down, please," said Phoebe. "I believe you were as ignorant as the others — as we all have been until recently — concerning this estate, which was bequeathed you by your father, Alonzo Clark. The preposterous charge against you led us to a rigid investigation of the Clark family history, and we — your friends — discovered that a certain mining property once owned by your father and left to you by his will, had become very valuable and for the past seven years has been paying you big dividends. So in your case trouble has led to prosperity. As you are not yet of age, it was necessary that an administrator and guardian for you be appointed by the court. The governor kindly interested himself in this matter, with the result that Mr. Spaythe is now your guardian and the custodian of all the money belonging to you."

Phoebe, quite breathless now, sat down. Mr. Spaythe rose from his chair and was greeted with cheers.

"Around this table," said he, "are gathered only loyal friends of Toby Clark — those who have supported him and watched over his interests during the past two months, the darkest period in his young life. Especially do I wish to congratulate Phoebe Daring and the energetic organizers and officers of the Toby Clark Marching Club for their good work on behalf of our young friend, who has so unjustly suffered because of a false accusation. But Toby's troubles are over, now; for all time, I hope. Once more his good name stands unsullied in the eyes of the world. He has proved his mental caliber and courage by the manly way in which be has faced the wicked charge brought against him. With ample means, such as he now possesses, to

back his highest ambitions, I predict that Toby Clark will in time become a great man and a power in our little community."

The banker stood bowing until the thunderous applause that greeted his speech subsided. Becky smashed a plate by pounding it upon the table and no one reproved her. Then she pinched Don's leg and his howl merely increased the sounds of jubilation. When, at last, comparative quiet reigned, Mr. Spaythe said:

"We will now hear from Toby Clark."

Toby, still bewildered but trying to grasp the reality of the good fortune that had befallen him, responded in a few broken words:

"You won't hear much from me," he said, "because my heart is too full for anything but gratitude for the kind friends who have done so much for me. I wasn't worth all your interest in me and trouble on my account, you know; but I'll try to be more worthy in the future. I — I'm very happy and — I — I thank you all!"

More wild applause, and then Don's voice was heard asking:

"Say, who gave the Marching Club that fifty dollars!"

"I did," replied Mr. Spaythe, "and it was the best fifty I ever invested. But," he added with a smile, "I've an idea of charging it to the account of Toby Clark."

Here Mr. Holbrook rose to his feet.

"Toby Clark once applied to me for a position in my office," he said, "and I was obliged to refuse him. But as my business is growing nicely I would now like to have him for my clerk."

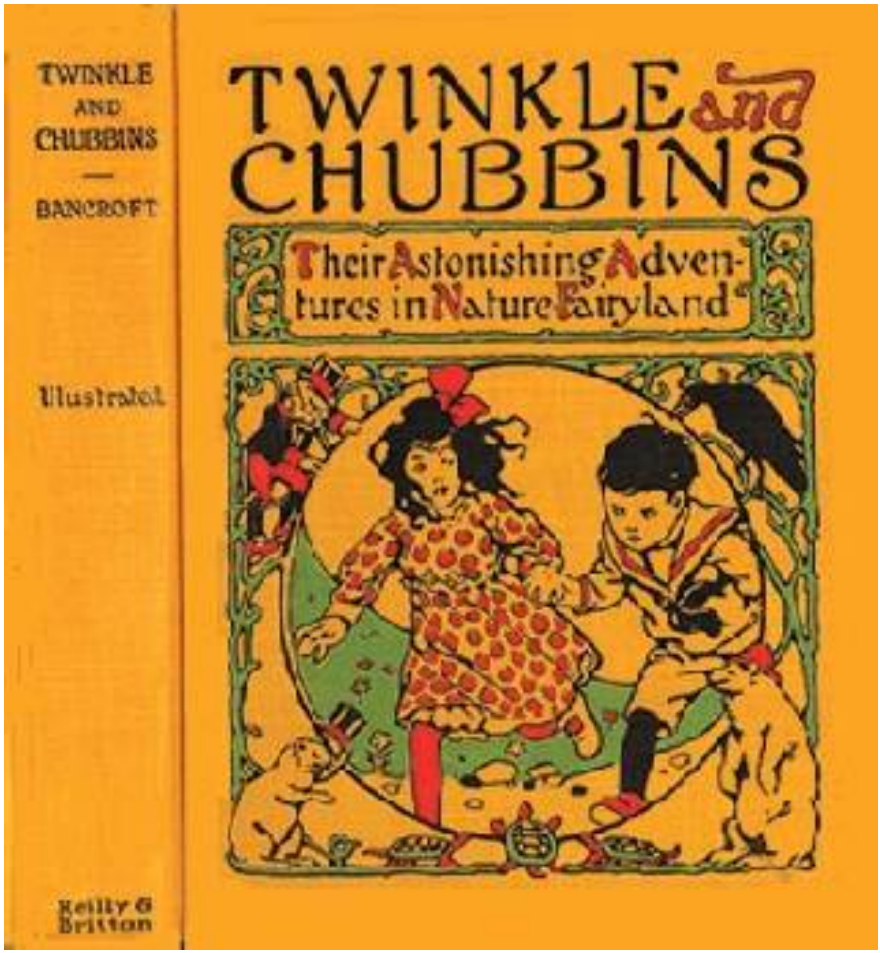
"No," said Toby, with something of his old-time whimsical humor, "I must refuse the nomination, with thanks. I'm going to college. Some day, though, I'll be a lawyer, too, Mr. Holbrook, and then — who knows? — we may go into partnership together."

THE END

The Pseudonym Works – Fantasy

TWINKLE AND CHUBBINS

Twinkle and Chubbins: Their Astonishing Adventures in Nature-Fairyland is a 1911 collection of "Twinkle Tales" first issued in 1906 by Baum's publisher, Reilly & Britton, as six separate booklets, each containing eight chapters. Maginel Wright Enright was the illustrator, later known for her illustrations of *Heidi* and *Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates*. She was the younger sister of architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and mother of well-regarded children's author, Elizabeth Enright. Baum used the pseudonym Laura Bancroft for the tales, which follow the adventures of a seven-year-old girl who lives on the North Dakota prairie. Twinkle, sometimes accompanied by her friend Chubbins, meet fairies and a variety of talking animals. The tales were popular, especially "Bandit Jim Crow." Baum cast one of its characters, Policeman Bluejay, in a novel of the same name.



A first edition copy of Twinkle and Chubbins

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MR WOODCOCK

Chapter I. The Trap

"THERE'S a woodchuck over on the side hill that is eating my clover," said Twinkle's father, who was a farmer.

"Why don't you set a trap for it?" asked Twinkle's mother.

"I believe I will," answered the man.

So, when the midday dinner was over, the farmer went to the barn and got a steel trap, and carried it over to the clover-field on the hillside.

Twinkle wanted very much to go with him, but she had to help mamma wash the dishes and put them away, and then brush up the dining-room and put it in order. But when the work was done, and she had all the rest of the afternoon to herself, she decided to go over to the woodchuck's hole and see how papa had set the trap, and also discover if the woodchuck had yet been caught.

So the little girl took her blue-and-white sun-bonnet, and climbed over the garden fence and ran across the corn-field and through the rye until she came to the red-clover patch on the hill.

She knew perfectly well where the woodchuck's hole was, for she had looked at it curiously many times; so she approached it carefully and found the trap set just in front of the hole. If the woodchuck stepped on it, when he came out, it would grab his leg and hold him fast; and there was a chain fastened to the trap, and also to a stout post driven into the ground, so that when the woodchuck was caught he couldn't run away with the trap.

But although the day was bright and sunshiny, and just the kind of day woodchucks like, the clover-eater had not yet walked out of his hole to get caught in the trap.

So Twinkle lay down in the clover-field, half hidden by a small bank in front of the woodchuck's hole, and began to watch for the little animal to come out. Her eyes could see right into the hole, which seemed to slant upward into the hill instead of downward; but of course she couldn't see very far in, because the hole wasn't straight, and grew black a little way from the opening.

It was somewhat wearisome, waiting and watching so long, and the warm sun and the soft chirp of the crickets that hopped through the clover made Twinkle drowsy. She didn't intend to go to sleep, because then she might miss the woodchuck; but there was no harm in closing her eyes just one little minute; so she allowed the long lashes to droop over her pretty pink cheeks — just because they felt so heavy, and there was no way to prop them up.

Then, with a start, she opened her eyes again, and saw the trap and the

woodchuck hole just as they were before. Not quite, though, come to look carefully. The hole seemed to be bigger than at first; yes, strange as it might seem, the hole was growing bigger every minute! She watched it with much surprise, and then looked at the trap, which remained the same size it had always been. And when she turned her eyes upon the hole once more it had not only become very big and high, but a stone arch appeared over it, and a fine, polished front door now shut it off from the outside world. She could even read a name upon the silver door-plate, and the name was this:

Chapter II. Mister Woodchuck Captures a Girl

"WELL, I declare!" whispered Twinkle to herself; "how could all that have happened?"

On each side of the door was a little green bench, big enough for two to sit upon, and between the benches was a doorstep of white marble, with a mat lying on it. On one side Twinkle saw an electric door-bell.

While she gazed at this astonishing sight a sound of rapid footsteps was heard, and a large Jack- Rabbit, almost as big as herself, and dressed in a messenger-boy's uniform, ran up to the woodchuck's front door and rang the bell.

Almost at once the door opened inward, and a curious personage stepped out.

Twinkle saw at a glance that it was the woodchuck himself, — but what a big and queer woodchuck it was!

He wore a swallow-tailed coat, with a waistcoat of white satin and fancy knee-breeches, and upon his feet were shoes with silver buckles. On his head was perched a tall silk hat that made him look just as high as Twinkle's father, and in one paw he held a gold-headed cane. Also he wore big spectacles over his eyes, which made him look more dignified than any other woodchuck Twinkle had ever seen.

When this person opened the door and saw the Jack-Rabbit messenger-boy, he cried out:

"Well, what do you mean by ringing my bell so violently? I suppose you're half an hour late, and trying to make me think you're in a hurry."

The Jack-Rabbit took a telegram from its pocket and handed it to the woodchuck without a word in reply. At once the woodchuck tore open the envelope and read the telegram carefully.

"Thank you. There's no answer," he said; and in an instant the Jack-Rabbit had whisked away and was gone.

"Well, well," said the woodchuck, as if to himself, "the foolish farmer has set a trap for me, it seems, and my friends have sent a telegram to warn me. Let's see — where is the thing?"

He soon discovered the trap, and seizing hold of the chain he pulled the peg out of the ground and threw the whole thing far away into the field.

"I must give that farmer a sound scolding," he muttered, "for he's becoming so impudent lately that soon he will think he owns the whole country."

But now his eyes fell upon Twinkle, who lay in the clover staring up at him; and the woodchuck gave a laugh and grabbed her fast by one arm.

“Oh ho!” he exclaimed; “you’re spying upon me, are you?”

“I’m just waiting to see you get caught in the trap,” said the girl, standing up because the big creature pulled upon her arm. She wasn’t much frightened, strange to say, because this woodchuck had a good-humored way about him that gave her confidence.

“You would have to wait a long time for that,” he said, with a laugh that was a sort of low chuckle. “Instead of seeing me caught, you’ve got caught yourself. That’s turning the tables, sure enough; isn’t it?”

“I suppose it is,” said Twinkle, regretfully. “Am I a prisoner?”

“You might call it that; and then, again, you mightn’t,” answered the woodchuck. “To tell you the truth, I hardly know what to do with you. But come inside, and we’ll talk it over. We musn’t be seen out here in the fields.”

Still holding fast to her arm, the woodchuck led her through the door, which he carefully closed and locked. Then they passed through a kind of hallway, into which opened several handsomely furnished rooms, and out again into a beautiful garden at the back, all filled with flowers and brightly colored plants, and with a pretty fountain playing in the middle. A high stone wall was built around the garden, shutting it off from all the rest of the world.

The woodchuck led his prisoner to a bench beside the fountain, and told her to sit down and make herself comfortable.

Chapter III. Mister Woodchuck Scolds Tinkle

TWINKLE was much pleased with her surroundings, and soon discovered several gold-fishes swimming in the water at the foot of the mountain.

"Well, how does it strike you?" asked the woodchuck, strutting up and down the gravel walk before her and swinging his gold-headed cane rather gracefully.

"It seems like a dream," said Twinkle.

"To be sure," he answered, nodding. "You'd no business to fall asleep in the clover."

"Did I?" she asked, rather startled at the suggestion.

"It stands to reason you did," he replied. "You don't for a moment think this is real, do you?"

"It *seems* real," she answered. "Aren't you the woodchuck?"

"*Mister* Woodchuck, if you please. Address me properly, young lady, or you'll make me angry."

"Well, then, aren't you Mister Woodchuck?"

"At present I am; but when you wake up, I won't be," he said.

"Then you think I'm dreaming?"

"You must figure that out for yourself," said Mister Woodchuck.

"What do you suppose made me dream?"

"I don't know."

"Do you think it's something I've eaten?" she asked anxiously.

"I hardly think so. This isn't any nightmare, you know, because there's nothing at all horrible about it so far. You've probably been reading some of those creepy, sensational story-books."

"I haven't read a book in a long time," said Twinkle.

"Dreams," remarked Mister Woodchuck, thoughtfully, "are not always to be accounted for. But this conversation is all wrong. When one is dreaming one doesn't talk about it, or even know it's a dream. So let's speak of something else."

"It's very pleasant in this garden," said Twinkle. "I don't mind being here a bit."

"But you can't stay here," replied Mister Woodchuck, "and you ought to be very uncomfortable in my presence. You see, you're one of the deadliest enemies of my race. All you human beings live for or think of is how to torture and destroy woodchucks."

"Oh, no!" she answered. "We have many more important things than that to think of. But when a woodchuck gets eating our clover and the vegetables, and spoils a lot, we just have to do something to stop it. That's why my papa

set the trap."

"You're selfish," said Mister Woodchuck, "and you're cruel to poor little animals that can't help themselves, and have to eat what they can find, or starve. There's enough for all of us growing in the broad fields."

Twinkle felt a little ashamed.

"We have to sell the clover and the vegetables to earn our living," she explained; "and if the animals eat them up we can't sell them."

"We don't eat enough to rob you," said the woodchuck, "and the land belonged to the wild creatures long before you people came here and began to farm. And really, there is no reason why you should be so cruel. It hurts dreadfully to be caught in a trap, and an animal captured in that way sometimes has to suffer for many hours before the man comes to kill it. We don't mind the killing so much. Death doesn't last but an instant. But every minute of suffering seems to be an hour."

"That's true," said Twinkle, feeling sorry and repentant. "I'll ask papa never to set another trap."

"That will be some help," returned Mister Woodchuck, more cheerfully, "and I hope you'll not forget the promise when you wake up. But that isn't enough to settle the account for all our past sufferings, I assure you; so I am trying to think of a suitable way to punish you for the past wickedness of your father, and of all other men that have set traps."

"Why, if you feel that way," said the little girl, "you're just as bad as we are!"

"How's that?" asked Mister Woodchuck, pausing in his walk to look at her.

"It's as naughty to want revenge as it is to be selfish and cruel," she said.

"I believe you are right about that," answered the animal, taking off his silk hat and rubbing the fur smooth with his elbow. "But woodchucks are not perfect, any more than men are, so you'll have to take us as you find us. And now I'll call my family, and exhibit you to them. The children, especially, will enjoy seeing the wild human girl I've had the luck to capture."

"Wild!" she cried, indignantly.

"If you're not wild now, you will be before you wake up," he said.

Chapter IV. Mrs. Woodchuck and Her Family

BUTUT Mister Woodchuck had no need to call his family, for just as he spoke a chatter of voices was heard and Mrs. Woodchuck came walking down a path of the garden with several young woodchucks following after her.

The lady animal was very fussily dressed, with puffs and ruffles and laces all over her silk gown, and perched upon her head was a broad white hat with long ostrich plumes. She was exceedingly fat, even for a woodchuck, and her head fitted close to her body, without any neck whatever to separate them. Although it was shady in the garden, she held a lace parasol over her head, and her walk was so mincing and airy that Twinkle almost laughed in her face.

The young woodchucks were of several sizes and kinds. One little woodchuck girl rolled before her a doll's baby-cab, in which lay a woodchuck doll made of cloth, in quite a perfect imitation of a real woodchuck. It was stuffed with something soft to make it round and fat, and its eyes were two glass beads sewn upon the face. A big boy woodchuck wore knickerbockers and a Tam o' Shanter cap and rolled a hoop; and there were several smaller boy and girl woodchucks, dressed quite as absurdly, who followed after their mother in a long train.

"My dear," said Mister Woodchuck to his wife, "here is a human creature that I captured just outside our front door."

"Huh!" sneered the lady woodchuck, looking at Twinkle in a very haughty way; "why will you bring such an animal into our garden, Leander? It makes me shiver just to look at the horrid thing!"

"Oh, mommer!" yelled one of the children, "see how skinny the beast is!"

"Hasn't any hair on its face at all," said another, "or on its paws!"

"And no sign of a tail!" cried the little woodchuck girl with the doll.

"Yes, it's a very strange and remarkable creature," said the mother. "Don't touch it, my precious darlings. It might bite."

"You needn't worry," said Twinkle, rather provoked at these speeches. "I wouldn't bite a dirty, greasy woodchuck on any account!"

"Whoo! did you hear what she called us, mommer? She says we're greasy and dirty!" shouted the children, and some of them grabbed pebbles from the path in their paws, as if to throw them at Twinkle.

"Tut, tut! don't be cruel," said Mister Woodchuck. "Remember the poor creature is a prisoner, and isn't used to good society; and besides that, she's dreaming."

"Really?" exclaimed Mrs. Woodchuck, looking at the girl curiously.

“To be sure,” he answered. “Otherwise she wouldn’t see us dressed in such fancy clothes, nor would we be bigger than she is. The whole thing is unnatural, my dear, as you must admit.”

“But *we*’re not dreaming; are we, Daddy?” anxiously asked the boy with the hoop.

“Certainly not,” Mister Woodchuck answered; “so this is a fine opportunity for you to study one of those human animals who have always been our worst enemies. You will notice they are very curiously made. Aside from their lack of hair in any place except the top of the head, their paws are formed in a strange manner. Those long slits in them make what are called fingers, and their claws are flat and dull — not at all sharp and strong like ours.”

“I think the beast is ugly,” said Mrs. Woodchuck. “It would give me the shivers to touch its skinny flesh.”

“I’m glad of that,” said Twinkle, indignantly. “You wouldn’t have *all* the shivers, I can tell you! And you’re a disagreeable, ign’rant creature! If you had any manners at all, you’d treat strangers more politely.”

“Just listen to the thing!” said Mrs. Woodchuck, in a horrified tone. “Isn’t it wild, though!”

Chapter V. Mr. Woodchuck Argues the Question

"REALLY," Mister Woodchuck said to his wife, "you should be more considerate of the little human's feelings. She is quite intelligent and tame, for one of her kind, and has a tender heart, I am sure."

"I don't see anything intelligent about her," said the girl woodchuck.

"I guess I've been to school as much as you have," said Twinkle.

"School! Why, what's that?"

"Don't you know what school is?" cried Twinkle, much amused.

"We don't have school here," said Mister Woodchuck, as if proud of the fact.

"Don't you know any geography?" asked the child.

"We haven't any use for it," said Mister Woodchuck; "for we never get far from home, and don't care a rap what state bounds Florida on the south. We don't travel much, and studying geography would be time wasted."

"But don't you study arithmetic?" she asked; "don't you know how to do sums?"

"Why should we?" he returned. "The thing that bothers you humans most, and that's money, is not used by us woodchucks. So we don't need to figure and do sums."

"I don't see how you get along without money," said Twinkle, wonderingly. "You must have to buy all your fine clothes."

"You know very well that woodchucks don't wear clothes, under ordinary circumstances," Mister Woodchuck replied. "It's only because you are dreaming that you see us dressed in this way."

"Perhaps that's true," said Twinkle. "But don't talk to me about not being intelligent, or not knowing things. If you haven't any schools it's certain I know more than your whole family put together!"

"About some things, perhaps," acknowledged Mister Woodchuck. "But tell me: do you know which kind of red clover is the best to eat?"

"No," she said.

"Or how to dig a hole in the ground to live in, with different rooms and passages, so that it slants up hill and the rain won't come in and drown you?"

"No," said Twinkle.

"And could you tell, on the second day of February (which is woodchuck day, you know), whether it's going to be warm weather, or cold, during the next six weeks?"

"I don't believe I could," replied the girl.

"Then," said Mister Woodchuck, "there are some things that we know that you don't; and although a woodchuck might not be of much account in one

of your schoolrooms, you must forgive me for saying that I think you ‘d make a mighty poor woodchuck.”

“I think so, too!” said Twinkle, laughing.

“And now, little human,” he resumed, after looking at his watch, “it’s nearly time for you to wake up; so if we intend to punish you for all the misery your people has inflicted on the woodchucks, we won’t have a minute to spare.”

“Don’t be in a hurry,” said Twinkle. “I can wait.”

“She’s trying to get out of it,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodchuck, scornfully. “Don’t you let her, Leander.”

“Certainly not, my dear,” he replied; “but I haven’t decided how to punish her.”

“Take her to Judge Stoneyheart,” said Mrs. Woodchuck. “He will know what to do with her.”

Chapter VI. Twinkle is Taken to the Judge

AT this the woodchuck children all hooted with joy, crying: “Take her, Daddy! Take her to old Stoneyheart! Oh, my! won’t he give it to her, though!”

“Who is Judge Stoneyheart?” asked Twinkle, a little uneasily.

“A highly respected and aged woodchuck who is cousin to my wife’s grandfather,” was the reply. “We consider him the wisest and most intelligent of our race; but, while he is very just in all things, the judge never shows any mercy to evil-doers.”

“I haven’t done anything wrong,” said the girl.

“But your father has, and much wrong is done us by the other farmers around here. They fight my people without mercy, and kill every woodchuck they can possibly catch.”

Twinkle was silent, for she knew this to be true.

“For my part,” continued Mister Woodchuck, “I’m very soft-hearted, and wouldn’t even step on an ant if I could help it. Also I am sure you have a kind disposition. But you are a human, and I am a woodchuck; so I think I will take you to old Stoneyheart and let him decide your fate.”

“Hooray!” yelled the young woodchucks, and away they ran through the paths of the garden, followed slowly by their fat mother, who held the lace parasol over her head as if she feared she would be sunstruck.

Twinkle was glad to see them go. She didn’t care much for the woodchuck children, they were so wild and ill-mannered, and their mother was even more disagreeable than they were. As for Mister Woodchuck, she did not object to him so much; in fact, she rather liked to talk to him, for his words were polite and his eyes pleasant and kindly.

“Now, my dear,” he said, “as we are about to leave this garden, where you have been quite secure, I must try to prevent your running away when we are outside the wall. I hope it won’t hurt your feelings to become a real prisoner for a few minutes.”

Then Mister Woodchuck drew from his pocket a leather collar, very much like a dog-collar, Twinkle thought, and proceeded to buckle it around the girl’s neck. To the collar was attached a fine chain about six feet long, and the other end of the chain Mister Woodchuck held in his hand.

“Now, then,” said he, “please come along quietly, and don’t make a fuss.”

He led her to the end of the garden and opened a wooden gate in the wall, through which they passed. Outside the garden the ground was nothing but hard, baked earth, without any grass or other green thing growing upon it, or any tree or shrub to shade it from the hot sun. And not far away stood a

round mound, also of baked earth, which Twinkle at once decided to be a house, because it had a door and some windows in it.

There was no living thing in sight — not even a woodchuck — and Twinkle didn't care much for the baked-clay scenery.

Mister Woodchuck, holding fast to the chain, led his prisoner across the barren space to the round mound, where he paused to rap softly upon the door.

Chapter VII. Twinkle is Condemned

"COME in!" called a voice.

Mister Woodchuck pushed open the door and entered, drawing Tinkle after him by the chain.

In the middle of the room sat a woodchuck whose hair was grizzled with old age. He wore big spectacles upon his nose, and a round knitted cap, with a tassel dangling from the top, upon his head. His only garment was an old and faded dressing-gown.

When they entered, the old woodchuck was busy playing a game with a number of baked-clay dominoes, which he shuffled and arranged upon a baked-mud table; nor did he look up for a long time, but continued to match the dominoes and to study their arrangement with intense interest.

Finally, however, he finished the game, and then he raised his head and looked sharply at his visitors.

"Good afternoon, Judge," said Mister Woodchuck, taking off his silk hat and bowing respectfully.

The judge did not answer him, but continued to stare at Twinkle.

"I have called to ask your advice," continued Mister Woodchuck. "By good chance I have been able to capture one of those fierce humans that are the greatest enemies of peaceful woodchucks."

The judge nodded his gray head wisely, but still answered nothing.

"But now that I've captured the creature, I don't know what to do with her," went on Mister Woodchuck; "although I believe, of course, she should be punished in some way, and made to feel as unhappy as her people have made us feel. Yet I realize that it's a dreadful thing to hurt any living creature, and as far as I'm concerned I'm quite willing to forgive her." With these words he wiped his face with a red silk handkerchief, as if really distressed.

"She's dreaming," said the judge, in a sharp, quick voice.

"Am I?" asked Twinkle.

"Of course. You were probably lying on the wrong side when you went to sleep."

"Oh!" she said. "I wondered what made it."

"Very disagreeable dream, isn't it?" continued the judge.

"Not so very," she answered. "It's interesting to see and hear woodchucks in their own homes, and Mister Woodchuck has shown me how cruel it is for us to set traps for you."

"Good!" said the judge. "But some dreams are easily forgotten, so I'll teach you a lesson you'll be likely to remember. You shall be caught in a trap

yourself.”

“Me!” cried Twinkle, in dismay.

“Yes, you. When you find how dreadfully it hurts you’ll bear the traps in mind forever afterward. People don’t remember dreams unless the dreams are unusually horrible. But I guess you’ll remember this one.”

He got up and opened a mud cupboard, from which he took a big steel trap. Twinkle could see that it was just like the trap papa had set to catch the woodchucks, only it seemed much bigger and stronger.

The judge got a mallet and with it pounded a stake into the mud floor. Then he fastened the chain of the trap to the stake, and afterward opened the iron jaws of the cruel-looking thing and set them with a lever, so that the slightest touch would spring the trap and make the strong jaws snap together.

“Now, little girl,” said he, “you must step in the trap and get caught.”

“Why, it would break my leg!” cried Twinkle.

“Did your father care whether a woodchuck got its leg broken or not?” asked the judge.

“No,” she answered, beginning to be greatly frightened.

“Step!” cried the judge, sternly.

“It will hurt awfully,” said Mister Woodchuck; “but that can’t be helped. Traps are cruel things, at the best.”

Twinkle was now trembling with nervousness and fear.

“Step!” called the judge, again.

“Dear me!” said Mister Woodchuck, just then, as he looked earnestly into Twinkle’s face, “I believe she’s going to wake up!”

“That’s too bad,” said the judge.

“No, I’m glad of it,” replied Mister Woodchuck.

And just then the girl gave a start and opened her eyes.

She was lying in the clover, and before her was the opening of the woodchuck’s hole, with the trap still set before it.

Chapter VIII. Twinkle Remembers

"PAPA," said Twinkle, when supper was over and she was nestled snugly in his lap, "I wish you wouldn't set any more traps for the woodchucks."

"Why not, my darling?" he asked in surprise.

"They're cruel," she answered. "It must hurt the poor animals dreadfully to be caught in them."

"I suppose it does," said her father, thoughtfully. "But if I don't trap the woodchucks they eat our clover and vegetables."

"Never mind that," said Twinkle, earnestly. "Let's divide with them. God made the woodchucks, you know, just as He made us, and they can't plant and grow things as we do; so they have to take what they can get, or starve to death. And surely, papa, there's enough to eat in this big and beautiful world, for all of God's creatures."

Papa whistled softly, although his face was grave; and then he bent down and kissed his little girl's forehead.

"I won't set any more traps, dear," he said.

And that evening, after Twinkle had been tucked snugly away in bed, her father walked slowly through the sweet-smelling fields to the woodchuck's hole; there lay the trap, showing plainly in the bright moonlight. He picked it up and carried it back to the barn. It was never used again.

THE END

BANDIT JIM CROW

Chapter I. Jim Crow Becomes a Pet

ONE day, when Twinkle's father was in the corn-field, he shot his gun at a flock of crows that were busy digging up, with their long bills, the kernels of corn he had planted. But Twinkle's father didn't aim very straight, for the birds screamed at the bang of the gun and quickly flew away — all except one young crow that fluttered its wings, but couldn't rise into the air, and so began to run along the ground in an effort to escape.

The man chased the young crow, and caught it; and then he found that one of the little lead bullets had broken the right wing, although the bird seemed not to be hurt in any other way.

It struggled hard, and tried to peck the hands that held it; but it was too young to hurt any one, so Twinkle's father decided he would carry it home to his little girl.

"Here's a pet for you, Twinkle," he said, as he came into the house. "It can't fly, because its wing is broken; but don't let it get too near your eyes, or it may peck at them. It's very wild and fierce, you know."

Twinkle was delighted with her pet, and at once got her mother to bandage the broken wing, so that it would heal quickly.

The crow had jet black feathers, but there was a pretty purplish and violet gloss, or sheen, on its back and wings, and its eyes were bright and had a knowing look in them. They were hazel-brown in color, and the bird had a queer way of turning his head on one side to look at Twinkle with his right eye, and then twisting it the other side that he might see her with his left eye. She often wondered if she looked the same to both eyes, or if each one made her seem different.

She named her pet "Jim Crow" because papa said that all crows were called Jim, although he never could find out the reason. But the name seemed to fit her pet as well as any, so Twinkle never bothered about the reason.

Having no cage to keep him in, and fearing he would run away, the girl tied a strong cord around one of Jim Crow's legs, and the other end of the cord she fastened to the round of a chair — or to the table-leg — when they were in the house. The crow would run all around, as far as the string would let him go; but he couldn't get away. And when they went out of doors Twinkle held the end of the cord in her hand, as one leads a dog, and Jim Crow would run along in front of her, and then stop and wait. And when she came near he'd run on again, screaming "Caw! Caw!" at the top of his shrill little voice.

He soon came to know he belonged to Twinkle, and would often lie in her

lap or perch upon her shoulder. And whenever she entered the room where he was he would say, “Caw — caw!” to her, in pleading tones, until she picked him up or took some notice of him.

It was wonderful how quickly a bird that had always lived wild and free seemed to become tame and gentle. Twinkle’s father said that was because he was so young, and because his broken wing kept him from flying in the air and rejoining his fellows. But Jim Crow wasn’t as tame as he seemed, and he had a very wicked and ungrateful disposition, as you will presently learn.

For a few weeks, however, he was as nice a pet as any little girl could wish for. He got into mischief occasionally, and caused mamma some annoyance when he waded into a pan of milk or jumped upon the dinner table and ate up papa’s pumpkin pie before Twinkle could stop him. But all pets are more or less trouble, at times, so Jim Crow escaped with a few severe scoldings from mamma, which never seemed to worry him in the least or make him a bit unhappy.

Chapter II. Jim Crow Runs Away

AT last Jim got so tame that Twinkle took the cord off his leg and let him go free, wherever he pleased. So he wandered all over the house and out into the yard, where he chased the ducks and bothered the pigs and made himself generally disliked. He had a way of perching upon the back of old Tom, papa's favorite horse, and chattering away in Tom's ear until the horse plunged and pranced in his stall to get rid of his unwelcome visitor.

Twinkle always kept the bandage on the wounded wing, for she didn't know whether it was well yet, or not, and she thought it was better to be on the safe side. But the truth was, that Jim Crow's wing had healed long ago, and was now as strong as ever; and, as the weeks passed by, and he grew big and fat, a great longing came into his wild heart to fly again — far, far up into the air and away to the lands where there were forests of trees and brooks of running water.

He didn't ever expect to rejoin his family again. They were far enough away by this time. And he didn't care much to associate with other crows. All he wanted was to be free, and do exactly as he pleased, and not have some one cuffing him a dozen times a day because he was doing wrong.

So one morning, before Twinkle was up, or even awake, Jim Crow pecked at the bandage on his wing until he got the end unfastened, and then it wasn't long before the entire strip of cloth was loosened and fell to the ground.

Now Jim fluttered his feathers, and pruned them with his long bill where they had been pressed together, and presently he knew that the wing which had been injured was exactly as strong and well as the other one. He could fly away whenever he pleased.

The crow had been well fed by Twinkle and her mamma, and was in splendid health. But he was not at all grateful. With the knowledge of his freedom a fierce, cruel joy crept into his heart, and he resumed the wild nature that crows are born with and never lay aside as long as they live.

Having forgotten in an instant that he had ever been tame, and the pet of a gentle little girl, Jim Crow had no thought of saying good-bye to Twinkle. Instead, he decided he would do something that would make these foolish humans remember him for a long time. So he dashed into a group of young chickens that had only been hatched a day or two before, and killed seven of them with his strong, curved claws and his wicked black beak. When the mother hen flew at him he pecked at her eyes; and then, screaming a defiance to all the world, Jim Crow flew into the air and sailed away to a new life in another part of the world.

Chapter III. Jim Crow Finds a New Home

I'LL not try to tell you of all the awful things this bad crow did during the next few days, on his long journey toward the South.

Twinkle almost cried when she found her pet gone; and she really did cry when she saw the poor murdered chickens. But mamma said she was very glad to have Jim Crow run away, and papa scowled angrily and declared he was sorry he had not killed the cruel bird when he shot at it in the corn-field.

In the mean time the runaway crow flew through the country, and when he was hungry he would stop at a farm-house and rob a hen's nest and eat the eggs. It was his knowledge of farm- houses that made him so bold; but the farmers shot at the thieving bird once or twice, and this frightened Jim Crow so badly that he decided to keep away from the farms and find a living in some less dangerous way.

And one day he came to a fine forest, where there were big and little trees of all kinds, with several streams of water running through the woods.

"Here," said Jim Crow, "I will make my home; for surely this is the finest place I am ever likely to find."

There were plenty of birds in this forest, for Jim could hear them singing and twittering everywhere among the trees; and their nests hung suspended from branches, or nestled in a fork made by two limbs, in almost every direction he might look. And the birds were of many kinds, too: robins, thrushes, bullfinches, mocking-birds, wrens, yellowtails and skylarks. Even tiny humming-birds fluttered around the wild flowers that grew in the glades; and in the waters of the brooks waded long-legged herons, while kingfishers sat upon overhanging branches and waited patiently to seize any careless fish that might swim too near them. Jim Crow decided this must be a real paradise for birds, because it was far away from the houses of men. So he made up his mind to get acquainted with the inhabitants of the forest as soon as possible, and let them know who he was, and that he must be treated with proper respect.

In a big fir-tree, whose branches reached nearly to the ground, he saw a large gathering of the birds, who sat chattering and gossiping pleasantly together. So he flew down and joined them.

"Good morning, folks," he said; and his voice sounded to them like a harsh croak, because it had become much deeper in tone since he had grown to his full size.

The birds looked at him curiously, and one or two fluttered their wings in a timid and nervous way; but none of them, little or big, thought best to make any reply.

“Well,” said Jim Crow, gruffly, “what’s the matter with you fellows? Haven’t you got tongues? You seemed to talk fast enough a minute ago.”

“Excuse me,” replied a bullfinch, in a dignified voice; “we haven’t the honor of your acquaintance. You are a stranger.”

“My name’s Jim Crow,” he answered, “and I won’t be a stranger long, because I’m going to live here.”

They all looked grave at this speech, and a little thrush hopped from one branch to another, and remarked:

“We haven’t any crows here at all. If you want to find your own folks you must go to some other place.”

“What do I care about my own folks?” asked Jim, with a laugh that made the little thrush shudder. “I prefer to live alone.”

“Haven’t you a mate?” asked a robin, speaking in a very polite tone.

“No; and I don’t want any,” said Jim Crow. “I’m going to live all by myself. There’s plenty of room in this forest, I guess.”

“Certainly,” replied the bullfinch. “There is plenty of room for you here if you behave yourself and obey the laws.”

“Who’s going to make me?” he asked, angrily.

“Any decent person, even if he’s a crow, is bound to respect the law,” answered the bullfinch, calmly.

Jim Crow was a little ashamed, for he didn’t wish to acknowledge he wasn’t decent. So he said:

“What are your laws?”

“The same as those in all other forests. You must respect the nests and the property of all other birds, and not interfere with them when they’re hunting for food. And you must warn your fellow- birds whenever there is danger, and assist them to protect their young from prowling beasts. If you obey these laws, and do not steal from or interfere with your neighbors, you have a right to a nest in our forest.”

“To be quite frank with you, though,” said the robin, “we prefer your room to your company.”

“I’m going to stay,” said the crow. “I guess I’m as good as the rest of you; so you fellows just mind your own business and I’ll mind mine.”

With these words he left them, and when he had mounted to a position above the trees he saw that one tall, slim pine was higher than all the rest, and that at its very top was a big deserted nest.

Chapter IV. Jim Crow Becomes a Robber

IT looked like a crow's nest to Jim, so he flew toward the pine tree and lit upon a branch close by. One glance told him that at some time it really must have been the home of birds of his kind, who for some reason had abandoned it long ago. The nest was large and bulky, being made of strong sticks woven together with fine roots and grasses. It was rough outside, but smooth inside, and when Jim Crow had kicked out the dead leaves and twigs that had fallen into it, he decided it was nearly as good as new, and plenty good enough for a solitary crow like him to live in. So with his bill he made a mark on the nest, that every bird might know it belonged to him, and felt that at last he had found a home.

During the next few days he made several attempts to get acquainted with the other birds, but they were cold and distant, though very polite to him; and none of them seemed to care for his society.

No bird ever came near his nest, but he often flew down to the lower trees and perched upon one or another of them, so gradually the birds of the forest got used to seeing him around, and paid very little attention to his actions.

One day Mrs. Wren missed two brown eggs from her nest, and her little heart was nearly broken with grief. It took the mocking bird and the bullfinch a whole afternoon to comfort her, while Mr. Wren hopped around in nearly as much distress as his wife. No animals had been seen in the forest who would do this evil thing, so no one could imagine who the thief might be.

Such an outrage was almost unknown in this pleasant forest, and it made all the birds nervous and fearful. A few days later a still greater horror came upon them, for the helpless young children of Mrs. Linnet were seized one morning from their nest, while their parents were absent in search of food, and were carried away bodily. Mr. Linnet declared that on his way back to his nest he had seen a big black monster leaving it, but had been too frightened to notice just what the creature looked like. But the lark, who had been up very early that morning, stated that he had seen no one near that part of the forest except Jim Crow, who had flown swiftly to his nest in the tall pine- tree.

This was enough to make all the birds look upon Jim Crow with grave suspicion, and Robin Redbreast called a secret meeting of all the birds to discuss the question and decide what must be done to preserve their nests from the robber. Jim Crow was so much bigger and fiercer than any of the others that none dared accuse him openly or venture to quarrel with him; but they had a good friend living not far away who was not afraid of Jim Crow or any one else, so they finally decided to send for him and ask his assistance.

The starling undertook to be the messenger, and as soon as the meeting was over he flew away upon his errand.

“What were all you folks talking about?” asked the crow, flying down and alighting upon a limb near to those who had not yet left the place of meeting.

“We were talking about you,” said the thrush, boldly; “and you wouldn’t care at all to know what we said, Mister Jim Crow.”

Jim looked a trifle guilty and ashamed at hearing this, but knowing they were all afraid of him he burst out into a rude laugh.

“Caw! caw! caw!” he chuckled hoarsely; “what do I care what you say about me? But don’t you get saucy, my pretty thrush, or your friends will miss you some fine morning, and never see you again.”

This awful threat made them all silent, for they remembered the fate of poor Mrs. Linnet’s children, and very few of the birds now had any doubt but that Jim Crow knew more about the death of those helpless little ones than he cared to tell.

Finding they would not talk with him, the crow flew back to his tree, where he sat sullenly perched upon a branch near his nest. And they were very glad to get rid of him so easily.

Chapter V. Jim Crow Meets Policeman Blue Jay

NEXT morning Jim Crow woke up hungry, and as he sat lazily in his big nest, he remembered that he had seen four pretty brown eggs, speckled with white, in the nest of the oriole that lived at the edge of the forest.

"Those eggs will taste very good for breakfast," he thought. "I'll go at once and get them; and if old Mammy Oriole makes a fuss, I'll eat her, too."

He hopped out of his nest and on to a branch, and the first thing his sharp eye saw was a big and strange bird sitting upon the tree just opposite him and looking steadily in his direction.

Never having lived among other birds until now, the crow did not know what kind of bird this was, but as he faced the new-comer he had a sort of shiver in his heart that warned him to beware an enemy. Indeed, it was none other than the Blue Jay that had appeared so suddenly, and he had arrived that morning because the starling had told him of the thefts that had taken place, and the Blue Jay is well known as the policeman of the forest and a terror to all evil-doers.

In size he was nearly as big as Jim Crow himself, and he had a large crest of feathers on the top of his head that made him look even more fierce — especially when he ruffled them up. His body was purplish blue color on the back and purplish gray below, and there was a collar of black feathers running all around his neck. But his wings and tail were a beautiful rich blue, as delightful in color as the sky on a fine May morning; so in personal appearance Policeman Blue Jay was much handsomer than Jim Crow. But it was the sharp, stout beak that most alarmed the crow, and had Jim been wiser he would have known that before him was the most deadly foe of his race, and that the greatest pleasure a Blue Jay finds in life is to fight with and punish a crow.

But Jim was not very wise; and so he imagined, after his first terror had passed away, that he could bully this bird as he had the others, and make it fear him.

"Well, what are you doing here?" he called out, in his crossest voice, for he was anxious to get away and rob the oriole's nest.

The Blue Jay gave a scornful, chattering laugh as he answered:

"That's none of your business, Jim Crow."

"Take care!" warned the crow; "you'll be sorry if you don't treat me with proper respect."

The Blue Jay winked solemnly, in a way that would have been very comical to any observer other than the angry crow.

"Don't hurt me — please don't!" he said, fluttering on the branch as if

greatly frightened. “My mother would feel dreadful bad if anything happened to me.”

“Well, then, behave yourself,” returned the crow, strutting proudly along a limb and flopping his broad wings in an impressive manner. For he was foolish enough to think he had made the other afraid.

But no sooner had he taken flight and soared into the air than the Blue Jay darted at him like an arrow from a bow, and before Jim Crow could turn to defend himself the bill of his enemy struck him full in the breast. Then, with a shriek of shrill laughter, the policeman darted away and disappeared in the forest, leaving the crow to whirl around in the air once or twice and then sink slowly down, with some of his own torn feathers floating near him as witnesses to his defeat.

The attack had dazed and astonished him beyond measure; but he found he was not much hurt, after all. Crows are tougher than most birds. Jim managed to reach one of the brooks, where he bathed his breast in the cool water, and soon he felt much refreshed and more like his old self again.

But he decided not to go to the oriole’s nest that morning, but to search for grabs and beetles amongst the mosses beneath the oak-trees.

Chapter VI. Jim Crow Fools the Policeman

FROM that time on Policeman Blue Jay made his home in the forest, keeping a sharp eye upon the actions of Jim Crow. And one day he flew away to the southward and returned with Mrs. Blue Jay, who was even more beautiful than her mate. Together they built a fine nest in a tree that stood near to the crow's tall pine, and soon after they had settled down to housekeeping Mrs. Blue Jay began to lay eggs of a pretty brown color mottled with darker brown specks.

Had Jim Crow known what was best for him he would have flown away from this forest and found himself a new home. Within a short flight were many bits of woodland where a crow might get a good living and not be bothered by blue jays. But Jim was obstinate and foolish, and had made up his mind that he never would again be happy until he had been revenged upon his enemy.

He dared no longer rob the nests so boldly as he had before, so he became sly and cunning. He soon found out that the Blue Jay could not fly as high as he could, nor as fast; so, if he kept a sharp lookout for the approach of his foe, he had no trouble in escaping. But if he went near to the nests of the smaller birds, there was the blue policeman standing guard, and ready and anxious to fight at a moment's notice. It was really no place for a robber at all, unless the robber was clever.

One day Jim Crow discovered a chalkpit among the rocks at the north of the forest, just beyond the edge of trees. The chalk was soft and in some places crumbled to a fine powder, so that when he had rolled himself for a few minutes in the dust all his feathers became as white as snow. This fact gave to Jim Crow a bright idea. No longer black, but white as a dove, he flew away to the forest and passed right by Policeman Blue Jay, who only noticed that a big white bird had flown amongst the trees, and did not suspect it was the thieving crow in a clever disguise.

Jim found a robin's nest that was not protected, both the robin and his wife being away in search of food. So he ate up the eggs and kicked the nest to pieces and then flew away again, passing the Blue Jay a second time all unnoticed.

When he reached a brook he washed all the chalk away from his feathers and then returned to his nest as black as ever.

All the birds were angry and dismayed when they found what had happened, but none could imagine who had robbed the robins. Mrs. Robin, who was not easily discouraged, built another nest and laid more eggs in it; but the next day a second nest in the forest was robbed, and then another and

another, until the birds complained that Policeman Blue Jay did not protect them at all.

“I can’t understand it in the least,” said the policeman, “for I have watched carefully, and I know Jim Crow has never dared to come near to your trees.”

“Then some one else is the robber,” declared the thrush fussily.

“The only stranger I have noticed around here is a big white bird,” replied the Blue Jay, “and white birds never rob nests or eat eggs, as you all know very well.”

So they were no nearer the truth than before, and the thefts continued; for each day Jim Crow would make himself white in the chalk-pit, fly into the forest and destroy the precious eggs of some innocent little bird, and afterward wash himself in some far-away brook, and return to his nest chuckling with glee to think he had fooled the Blue Jay so nicely.

But the Blue Jay, although stupid and unsuspecting at first, presently began to get a little wisdom. He remembered that all this trouble had commenced when the strange white bird first arrived in the forest; and although it was doubtless true that white birds never eat eggs and have honest reputations, he decided to watch this stranger and make sure that it was innocent of the frightful crimes that had so aroused the dwellers in the forest.

Chapter VII. Jim Crow is Punished

SO one day Policeman Blue Jay hid himself in some thick bushes until he saw the big white bird fly by, and then he followed quietly after it, flitting from tree to tree and keeping out of sight as much as possible, until at last he saw the white bird alight near a bullfinch's nest and eat up all the eggs it contained.

Then, ruffling his crest angrily, Policeman Blue Jay flew to attack the big white robber, and was astonished to find he could not catch it. For the white bird flew higher into the air than he could, and also flew much faster, so that it soon escaped and passed out of sight.

"It must be a white crow," thought the Blue Jay; "for only a crow can beat me at flying, and some of that race are said to be white, although I have never seen one."

So he called together all the birds, and told them what he had seen, and they all agreed to hide themselves the next day and lie in wait for the thief.

By this time Jim Crow thought himself perfectly safe, and success had made him as bold as he was wicked. Therefore he suspected nothing when, after rolling himself in the chalk, he flew down the next day into the forest to feast upon birds' eggs. He soon came to a pretty nest, and was just about to rob it, when a chorus of shrill cries arose on every side of him and hundreds of birds — so many that they quite filled the air — flew straight at the white one, pecking him with their bills and striking him with their wings; for anger had made even the most timid of the little birds fierce, and there were so many of them that they gave each other courage.

Jim Crow tried to escape, but whichever way he might fly his foes clustered all around him, getting in his way so that he could not use his big wings properly. And all the time they were pecking at him and fighting him as hard as they could. Also, the chalk was brushed from his feathers, by degrees, and soon the birds were able to recognize their old enemy the crow, and then, indeed, they became more furious than ever.

Policeman Blue Jay was especially angry at the deception practiced upon him, and if he could have got at the crow just then he would have killed it instantly. But the little birds were all in his way, so he was forced to hold aloof.

Filled with terror and smarting with pain, Jim Crow had only one thought: to get to the shelter of his nest in the pine-tree. In some way he managed to do this, and to sink exhausted into the hollow of his nest. But many of his enemies followed him, and although the thick feathers of his back and wings protected his body, Jim's head and eyes were at the mercy of the sharp bills

of the vengeful birds.

When at last they left him, thinking he had been sufficiently punished, Jim Crow was as nearly dead as a bird could be. But crows are tough, and this one was unlucky enough to remain alive. For when his wounds had healed he had become totally blind, and day after day he sat in his nest, helpless and alone, and dared not leave it.

Chapter VIII. Jim Crow Has Time to Repent His Sins

"WHERE are you going, my dear?" asked the Blue Jay of his wife.

"I'm going to carry some grubs to Jim Crow," she answered. "I'll be back in a minute."

"Jim Crow is a robber and a murderer!" said the policeman, harshly.

"I know," she replied, in a sweet voice; "but he is blind."

"Well, fly along," said her husband; "but hurry back again."

And the robin-redbreast and his wife filled a cup-shaped flower with water from the brook, and then carried it in their bills to the pine-tree, without spilling a drop.

"Where are you going?" asked the oriole, as they passed.

"We're just taking some water to Jim Crow," replied Mrs. Robin.

"He's a thief and a scoundrel!" cried the oriole, indignantly.

"That is true." said Mrs. Robin, in a soft, pitiful voice; "but he is blind."

"Let me help you." exclaimed the oriole. "I'll carry this side of the cup, so it can't tip."

So Jim Crow, blind and helpless, sat in his nest day after day and week after week, while the little birds he had so cruelly wronged brought him food and water and cared for him as generously as they could.

And I wonder what his thoughts were — don't you?

PRARIE-DOG TOWN

Chapter I. The Picnic

ON the great western prairies of Dakota is a little town called Edgeley, because it is on the edge of civilization — a very big word which means some folks have found a better way to live than other folks. The Edgeley people have a good way to live, for there are almost seventeen wooden houses there, and among them is a school- house, a church, a store and a blacksmith-shop. If people walked out their front doors they were upon the little street; if they walked out the back doors they were on the broad prairies. That was why Twinkle, who was a farmer's little girl, lived so near the town that she could easily walk to school.

She was a pretty, rosy-cheeked little thing, with long, fluffy hair, and big round eyes that everybody smiled into when they saw them. It was hard to keep that fluffy hair from getting tangled; so mamma used to tie it in the back with a big, broad ribbon. And Twinkle wore calico slips for school days and gingham dresses when she wanted to "dress up" or look especially nice. And to keep the sun from spotting her face with freckles, she wore sunbonnets made of the same goods as her dresses.

Twinkle's best chum was a little boy called Chubbins, who was the only child of the tired-faced school-teacher. Chubbins was about as old as Twinkle; but he wasn't so tall and slender for his age as she was, being short and rather fat. The hair on his little round head was cut close, and he usually wore a shirt-waist and "knickers," with a wide straw hat on the back of his head. Chubbins's face was very solemn. He never said many words when grown folks were around, but he could talk fast enough when he and Twinkle were playing together alone.

Well, one Saturday the school had a picnic, and Twinkle and Chubbins both went. On the Dakota prairies there are no shade-trees at all, and very little water except what they they get by boring deep holes in the ground; so you may wonder where the people could possibly have a picnic. But about three miles from the town a little stream of water (which they called a "river," but we would call only a brook) ran slow and muddy across the prairie; and where the road crossed it a flat bridge had been built. If you climbed down the banks of the river you would find a nice shady place under the wooden bridge; and so here it was that the picnics were held.

All the village went to the picnic, and they started bright and early in the morning, with horses and farm-wagons, and baskets full of good things to eat, and soon arrived at the bridge.

There was room enough in its shade for all to be comfortable; so they

unhitched the horses and carried the baskets to the river bank, and began to laugh and be as merry as they could.

Twinkle and Chubbins, however, didn't care much for the shade of the bridge. This was a strange place to them, so they decided to explore it and see if it was any different from any other part of the prairie. Without telling anybody where they were going, they took hold of hands and trotted across the bridge and away into the plains on the other side.

The ground here wasn't flat, but had long rolls to it, like big waves on the ocean, so that as soon as the little girl and boy had climbed over the top of the first wave, or hill, those by the river lost sight of them.

They saw nothing but grass in the first hollow, but there was another hill just beyond, so they kept going, and climbed over that too. And now they found, lying in the second hollow, one of the most curious sights that the western prairies afford.

"What is it?" asked Chubbins, wonderingly.

"Why, it's a Prairie-Dog Town," said Twinkle.

Chapter II. Prarie-Dog Town

LYING in every direction, and quite filling the little hollow, were round mounds of earth, each one having a hole in the center. The mounds were about two feet high and as big around as a wash-tub, and the edges of the holes were pounded hard and smooth by the pattering feet of the little creatures that lived within.

"Isn't it funny!" said Chubbins, staring at the mounds.

"Awful," replied Twinkle, staring too. "Do you know, Chub, there are an'mals living in every single one of those holes?"

"What kind?" asked Chubbins.

"Well, they're something like squirrels, only they *aren't* squirrels," she explained. "They're prairie-dogs."

"Don't like dogs," said the boy, looking a bit uneasy.

"Oh, they're not dogs at all," said Twinkle; "they're soft and fluffy, and gentle."

"Do they bark?" he asked.

"Yes; but they don't bite."

"How d' you know, Twink?"

"Papa has told me about them, lots of times. He says they're so shy that they run into their holes when anybody's around; but if you keep quiet and watch, they'll stick their heads out in a few minutes."

"Let's watch," said Chubbins.

"All right," she agreed.

Very near to some of the mounds was a raised bank, covered with soft grass; so the children stole softly up to this bank and lay down upon it in such a way that their heads just stuck over the top of it, while their bodies were hidden from the eyes of any of the folks of Prairie-Dog Town.

"Are you comferble, Chub?" asked the little girl.

"Yes."

"Then lie still and don't talk, and keep your eyes open, and perhaps the an'mals will stick their heads up."

"All right," says Chubbins.

So they kept quiet and waited, and it seemed a long time to both the boy and the girl before a soft, furry head popped out of a near-by hole, and two big, gentle brown eyes looked at them curiously.

Chapter III. Mr. Bowko, the Mayor

"DEAR me!" said the prairie-dog, speaking almost in a whisper; "here are some of those queer humans from the village."

"Let me see! Let me see!" cried two shrill little voices, and the wee heads of two small creatures popped out of the hole and fixed their bright eyes upon the heads of Twinkle and Chubbins.

"Go down at once!" said the mother prairie-dog. "Do you want to get hurt, you naughty little things?"

"Oh, they won't get hurt," said another deeper voice, and the children turned their eyes toward a second mound, on top of which sat a plump prairie-dog whose reddish fur was tipped with white on the end of each hair. He seemed to be quite old, or at least well along in years, and he had a wise and thoughtful look on his face.

"They're humans," said the mother.

"True enough; but they're only human children, and wouldn't hurt your little ones for the world," the old one said.

"That's so!" called Twinkle. "All we want, is to get acquainted."

"Why, in that case," replied the old prairie-dog, "you are very welcome in our town, and we're glad to see you."

"Thank you," said Twinkle, gratefully. It didn't occur to her just then that it was wonderful to be talking to the little prairie-dogs just as if they were people. It seemed very natural they should speak with each other and be friendly.

As if attracted by the sound of voices, little heads began to pop out of the other mounds — one here and one there — until the town was alive with the pretty creatures, all squatting near the edges of their holes and eyeing Chubbins and Twinkle with grave and curious looks.

"Let me introduce myself," said the old one that had first proved friendly. "My name is Bowko, and I'm the Mayor and High Chief of Prairie-Dog Town."

"Don't you have a king?" asked Twinkle.

"Not in this town," he answered. "There seems to be no place for kings in this free United States. And a Mayor and High Chief is just as good as a king, any day."

"I think so, too," answered the girl.

"Better!" declared Chubbins.

The Mayor smiled, as if pleased.

"I see you've been properly brought up," he continued; "and now let me introduce to you some of my fellow-citizens. This," pointing with one little

paw to the hole where the mother and her two children were sitting, “is Mrs. Puff-Pudgy and her family — Teenty and Weenty. Mr. Puff- Pudgy, I regret to say, was recently chased out of town for saying his prayers backwards.”

“How could he?” asked Chubbins, much surprised.

“He was always contrary,” answered the Mayor, with a sigh, “and wouldn’t do things the same way that others did. His good wife, Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, had to scold him all day long; so we finally made him leave the town, and I don’t know where he’s gone to.”

“Won’t he be sorry not to have his little children any more?” asked Twinkle, regretfully.

“I suppose so; but if people are contrary, and won’t behave, they must take the consequences. This is Mr. Chuckledorf,” continued the Mayor, and a very fat prairie-dog bowed to them most politely; “and here is Mrs. Fuzcum; and Mrs. Chatterby; and Mr. Sneezeley, and Doctor Dosem.”

All these folks bowed gravely and politely, and Chubbins and Twinkle bobbed their heads in return until their necks ached, for it seemed as if the Mayor would never get through introducing the hundreds of prairie-dogs that were squatting around.

“I’ll never be able to tell one from the other,” whispered the girl; “‘cause they all look exactly alike.”

“Some of ‘em’s fatter,” observed Chubbins; “but I don’t know which.”

Chapter IV. Presto Digi, the Magician

"AND now, if you like, we will be pleased to have you visit some of our houses," said Mr. Bowko, the Mayor, in a friendly tone.

"But we can't!" exclaimed Twinkle. "We're too big," and she got up and sat down upon the bank, to show him how big she really was when compared with the prairie-dogs.

"Oh, that doesn't matter in the least," the Mayor replied. "I'll have Presto Digi, our magician, reduce you to our size."

"Can he?" asked Twinkle, doubtfully.

"Our magician can do anything," declared the Mayor. Then he sat up and put both his front paws to his mouth and made a curious sound that was something like a bark and something like a whistle, but not exactly like either one.

Then everybody waited in silence until a queer old prairie-dog slowly put his head out of a big mound near the center of the village.

"Good morning, Mr. Presto Digi," said the Mayor.

"Morning!" answered the magician, blinking his eyes as if he had just awakened from sleep.

Twinkle nearly laughed at this scrawny, skinny personage; but by good fortune, for she didn't wish to offend him, she kept her face straight and did not even smile.

"We have two guests here, this morning," continued the Mayor, addressing the magician, "who are a little too large to get into our houses. So, as they are invited to stay to luncheon, it would please us all if you would kindly reduce them to fit our underground rooms."

"Is *that* all you want?" asked Mr. Presto Digi, bobbing his head at the children.

"It seems to me a great deal," answered Twinkle. "I'm afraid you never could do it."

"Wow!" said the magician, in a scornful voice that was almost a bark. "I can do that with one paw. Come here to me, and don't step on any of our mounds while you're so big and clumsy."

So Twinkle and Chubbins got up and walked slowly toward the magician, taking great care where they stepped. Teenty and Weenty were frightened, and ducked their heads with little squeals as the big children passed their mound; but they bobbed up again the next moment, being curious to see what would happen.

When the boy and girl stopped before Mr. Presto Digi's mound, he began waving one of his thin, scraggy paws and at the same time made a gurgling

noise that was deep down in his throat. And his eyes rolled and twisted around in a very odd way.

Neither Twinkle nor Chubbins felt any effect from the magic, nor any different from ordinary; but they knew they were growing smaller, because their eyes were getting closer to the magician.

“Is that enough?” asked Mr. Presto, after a while.

“Just a little more, please,” replied the Mayor; “I don’t want them to bump their heads against the doorways.”

So the magician again waved his paw and chuckled and gurgled and blinked, until Twinkle suddenly found she had to look up at him as he squatted on his mound.

“Stop!” she screamed; “if you keep on, we won’t be anything at all!”

“You’re just about the right size,” said the Mayor, looking them over with much pleasure, and when the girl turned around she found Mr. Bowko and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy standing beside her, and she could easily see that Chubbins was no bigger than they, and she was no bigger than Chubbins.

“Kindly follow me,” said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, “for my little darlings are anxious to make your acquaintance, and as I was the first to discover you, you are to be my guests first of all, and afterward go to the Mayor’s to luncheon.”

Chapter V. The Home of the Puff-Pudgys

SO Twinkle and Chubbins, still holding hands, trotted along to the Puff-Pudgy mound, and it was strange how rough the ground now seemed to their tiny feet. They climbed up the slope of the mound rather clumsily, and when they came to the hole it seemed to them as big as a well. Then they saw that it wasn't a deep hole, but a sort of tunnel leading down hill into the mound, and Twinkle knew if they were careful they were not likely to slip or tumble down.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy popped into the hole like a flash, for she was used to it, and waited just below the opening to guide them. So, Twinkle slipped down to the floor of the tunnel and Chubbins followed close after her, and then they began to go downward.

"It's a little dark right here," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy; "but I've ordered the maid to light the candles for you, so you'll see well enough when you're in the rooms."

"Thank you," said Twinkle, walking along the hall and feeling her way by keeping her hand upon the smooth sides of the passage. "I hope you won't go to any trouble, or put on airs, just because we've come to visit you."

"If I do," replied Mrs. Puffy-Pudgy, "it's because I know the right way to treat company. We've always belonged to the 'four hundred,' you know. Some folks never know what to do, or how to do it, but that isn't the way with the Puff-Pudgys. Hi! you, Teenty and Weenty — get out of here and behave yourselves! You'll soon have a good look at our visitors."

And now they came into a room so comfortable and even splendid that Twinkle's eyes opened wide with amazement.

It was big, and of a round shape, and on the walls were painted very handsome portraits of different prairie-dogs of the Puff-Pudgy family. The furniture was made of white clay, baked hard in the sun and decorated with paints made from blue clay and red clay and yellow clay. This gave it a gorgeous appearance. There was a round table in the middle of the room, and several comfortable chairs and sofas. Around the walls were little brackets with candles in them, lighting the place very pleasantly.

"Sit down, please," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. "You'll want to rest a minute before I show you around."

So Twinkle and Chubbins sat upon the pretty clay chairs, and Teenty and Weenty sat opposite them and stared with their mischievous round eyes as hard as they could.

"What nice furniture," exclaimed the girl.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, looking up at the picture of a sad-faced

prairie-dog; “Mr. Puff- Pudgy made it all himself. He was very handy at such things. It’s a shame he turned out so obstinate.”

“Did he build the house too?”

“Why, he dug it out, if that’s what you mean. But I advised him how to do it, so I deserve some credit for it myself. Next to the Mayor’s, it’s the best house in town, which accounts for our high social standing. Weenty! take your paw out of your mouth. You’re biting your claws again.”

“I’m not!” said Weenty.

“And now,” continued Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, “if you are rested, I’ll show you through the rest of our house.”

So, they got up and followed her, and she led the children through an archway into the dining- room. Here was a cupboard full of the cunningest little dishes Twinkle had ever seen. They were all made of clay, baked hard in the sun, and were of graceful shapes, and nearly as smooth and perfect as our own dishes.

Chapter VI. Teenty and Weenty

ALL around the sides of the dining-room were pockets, or bins, in the wall; and these were full of those things the prairie-dogs are most fond of eating. Clover-seeds filled one bin, and sweet roots another; dried mulberry leaves — that must have come from a long distance — were in another bin, and even kernels of yellow field corn were heaped in one place. The Puff-Pudgys were surely in no danger of starving for some time to come.

"Teenty! Put back that grain of wheat," commanded the mother, in a severe voice.

Instead of obeying, Teenty put the wheat in his mouth and ate it as quickly as possible.

"The little dears are *so* restless," Mrs. Puff-Pudgy said to Twinkle, "that it's hard to manage them."

"They don't behave," remarked Chubbins, staring hard at the children.

"No, they have a share of their father's obstinate nature," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. "Excuse me a minute and I'll cuff them; It'll do them good."

But before their mother could reach them, the children found trouble of their own. Teenty sprang at Weenty and began to fight, because his brother had pinched him, and Weenty fought back with all his might and main. They scratched with their claws and bit with their teeth, and rolled over and over upon the floor, bumping into the wall and upsetting the chairs, and snarling and growling all the while like two puppies.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy sat down and watched them, but did not interfere.

"Won't they hurt themselves?" asked Twinkle, anxiously.

"Perhaps so," said the mother; "but if they do, it will punish them for being so naughty. I always let them fight it out, because they are so sore for a day or two afterward that they have to keep quiet, and then I get a little rest."

Weenty set up a great howling, just then, and Teenty drew away from his defeated brother and looked at him closely. The fur on both of them was badly mussed up, and Weenty had a long scratch on his nose, that must have hurt him, or he wouldn't have howled so. Teenty's left eye was closed tight, but if it hurt him he bore the pain in silence.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy now pushed them both into a little room and shut them up, saying they must stay there until bedtime; and then she led Twinkle and Chubbins into the kitchen and showed them a pool of clear water, in a big clay basin, that had been caught during the last rain and saved for drinking purposes. The children drank of it, and found it cool and refreshing.

Then they saw the bedrooms, and learned that the beds of prairie-dogs were nothing more than round hollows made in heaps of clay. These animals

always curl themselves up when they sleep, and the round hollows just fitted their bodies; so, no doubt, they found them very comfortable.

There were several bedrooms, for the Puff-Pudgy house was really very large. It was also very cool and pleasant, being all underground and not a bit damp.

After they had admired everything in a way that made Mrs. Puff-Pudgy very proud and happy, their hostess took one of the lighted candles from a bracket and said she would now escort them to the house of the Honorable Mr. Bowko, the Mayor.

Chapter VII. The Mayor Gives a Luncheon

"DON'T we have to go upstairs and out of doors?" asked Twinkle.

"Oh, no," replied the prairie-dog, "we have halls connecting all the different houses of importance. Just follow me, and you can't get lost."

They might easily have been lost without their guide, the little girl thought, after they had gone through several winding passages. They turned this way and that, in quite a bewildering manner, and there were so many underground tunnels going in every direction that it was a wonder Mrs. Puff-Pudgy knew which way to go.

"You ought to have sign-posts," said Chubbins, who had once been in a city.

"Why, as for that, every one in the town knows which way to go," answered their guide; "and it isn't often we have visitors. Last week a gray owl stopped with us for a couple of days, and we had a fine ball in her honor. But you are the first humans that have ever been entertained in our town, so it's quite an event with us." A few minutes later she said: "Here we are, at the Mayor's house," and as they passed under a broad archway she blew out her candle, because the Mayor's house was so brilliantly lighted.

"Welcome!" said Mr. Bowko, greeting the children with polite bows. "You are just in time, for luncheon is about ready and my guests are waiting for you."

He led them at once into a big dining-room that was so magnificently painted with colored clays that the walls were as bright as a June rainbow.

"How pretty!" cried Twinkle, clapping her hands together in delight.

"I'm glad you like it," said the Mayor, much pleased. "Some people, who are lacking in good taste, think it's a little overdone, but a Mayor's house should be gorgeous, I think, so as to be a credit to the community. My grandfather, who designed and painted this house, was a very fine artist. But luncheon is ready, so pray be seated."

They sat down on little clay chairs that were placed at the round table. The Mayor sat on one side of Twinkle and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy on the other, and Chubbins was between the skinny old magician and Mr. Sneezeley. Also, in other chairs sat Dr. Dosem, and Mrs. Chatterby, and Mrs. Fuzcum, and several others. It was a large company, indeed, which showed that the Mayor considered this a very important occasion.

They were waited upon by several sleek prairie-dog maids in white aprons and white caps, who looked neat and respectable, and were very graceful in their motions.

Neither Twinkle nor Chubbins was very hungry, but they were curious to

know what kind of food the prairie-dogs ate, so they watched carefully when the different dishes were passed around. Only grains and vegetables were used, for prairie-dogs do not eat meat. There was a milk-weed soup at first; and then yellow corn, boiled and sliced thin. Afterward they had a salad of thistle leaves, and some bread made of barley. The dessert was a dish of the sweet, dark honey made by prairie-bees, and some cakes flavored with sweet and spicy roots that only prairie-dogs know how to find.

The children tasted of several dishes, just to show their politeness; but they couldn't eat much. Chubbins spent most of his time watching Mr. Presto Digi, who ate up everything that was near him and seemed to be as hungry after the luncheon as he had been before.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy talked so much about the social standing and dignity of the Puff-Pudgys that she couldn't find time to eat much, although she asked for the recipe of the milk-weed soup. But most of the others present paid strict attention to the meal and ate with very good appetites.

Chapter VIII. On Top of the Earth Again

AFTERWARD they all went into the big drawing-room, where Mrs. Fuzcum sang a song for them in a very shrill voice, and Mr. Sneezeley and Mrs. Chatterby danced a graceful minuet that was much admired by all present.

"We ought to be going home," said Twinkle, after this entertainment was over. "I'm afraid our folks will worry about us."

"We regret to part with you," replied the Mayor; "but, if you really think you ought to go, we will not be so impolite as to urge you to stay."

"You'll find we have excellent manners," added Mrs. Puff-Pudgy.

"I want to get big again," said Chubbins.

"Very well; please step this way," said the Mayor.

So they all followed him through a long passage until they began to go upward, as if climbing a hill. And then a gleam of daylight showed just ahead of them, and a few more steps brought them to the hole in the middle of the mound.

The Mayor and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy jumped up first, and then they helped Twinkle and Chubbins to scramble out. The strong sunlight made them blink their eyes for a time, but when they were able to look around they found one or more heads of prairie-dogs sticking from every mound.

"Now, Mr. Presto Digi," said the Mayor, when all the party were standing on the ground, "please enlarge our friends to their natural sizes again."

"That is very easy," said the magician, with a sigh. "I really wish, Mr. Mayor, that you would find something for me to do that is difficult."

"I will, some time," promised the Mayor. "Just now, this is all I can require of you."

So the magician waved his paw and gurgled, much in the same way he had done before, and Twinkle and Chubbins began to grow, and swell out until they were as large as ever, and the prairie- dogs again seemed very small beside them.

"Good-bye," said the little girl, "and thank you all, very much, for your kindness to us."

"Good-bye!" answered a chorus of small voices, and then all the prairie-dogs popped into their holes and quickly disappeared.

Twinkle and Chubbins found they were sitting on the green bank again, at the edge of Prairie- Dog Town.

"Do you think we've been asleep, Chub?" asked the girl.

"'Course not," replied Chubbins, with a big yawn. "It's easy 'nough to know that, Twink, 'cause I'm sleepy now!"

THE END

PRINCE MUD-TURTLE

Chapter I. Twinkle Captures the Turtle

ONE hot summer day Twinkle went down into the meadow to where the brook ran tinkling over its stones or rushed and whirled around the curves of the banks or floated lazily through the more wide and shallow parts. It wasn't much of a brook, to tell the facts, for there were many places where an active child could leap across it. But it was the only brook for miles around, and to Twinkle it was a never-ending source of delight. Nothing amused or refreshed the little girl more than to go wading on the pebbly bottom and let the little waves wash around her slim ankles.

There was one place, just below the pasture lot, where it was deeper; and here there were real fishes swimming about, such as "horned aces" and "chubs" and "shiners"; and once in a while you could catch a mud-turtle under the edges of the flat stones or in hollows beneath the banks. The deep part was not very big, being merely a pool, but Twinkle never waded in it, because the water would come quite up to her waist, and then she would be sure to get her skirts wet, which would mean a good scolding from mamma.

To-day she climbed the fence in the lane, just where the rickety wooden bridge crossed the brook, and at once sat down upon the grassy bank and took off her shoes and stockings. Then, wearing her sun-bonnet to shield her face from the sun, she stepped softly into the brook and stood watching the cool water rush by her legs.

It was very nice and pleasant; but Twinkle never could stand still for very long, so she began to wade slowly down the stream, keeping in the middle of the brook, and being able to see through the clear water all the best places to put her feet.

Pretty soon she had to duck her head to pass under the fence that separated the meadow from the pasture lot; but she got through all right, and then kept on down the stream, until she came close to the deep pool. She couldn't wade through this, as I have explained; so she got on dry land and crept on her hands and knees up to the edge of the bank, so as not to scare the fishes, if any were swimming in the pool.

By good luck there were several fishes in the pool to-day, and they didn't seem to notice that Twinkle was looking at them, so quiet had she been. One little fellow shone like silver when the sunshine caught his glossy sides, and the little girl watched him wiggling here and there with much delight. There was also a big, mud-colored fish that lay a long time upon the bottom without moving anything except his fins and the tip of his tail, and Twinkle also discovered a group of several small fishes not over an inch long, that always

swam together in a bunch, as if they belonged to one family.

The girl watched these little creatures long and earnestly. The pool was all of the world these simple fishes would ever know. They were born here, and would die here, without ever getting away from the place, or even knowing there was a much bigger world outside of it.

After a time the child noticed that the water had become a little muddy near the edge of the bank where she lay, and as it slowly grew clear again she saw a beautiful turtle lying just under her head and against the side of the bank. It was a little bigger around than a silver dollar, and instead of its shell being of a dull brown color, like that of all other mud-turtles she had seen, this one's back was streaked with brilliant patches of yellow and red.

"I must get that lovely turtle!" thought Twinkle; and as the water was shallow where it lay she suddenly plunged in her hand, grabbed the turtle, and flung it out of the water on to the bank, where it fell upon its back, wiggling its four fat legs desperately in an attempt to turn over.

Chapter II. Twinkle Discovers the Turtle Can Talk

AT this sudden commotion in their water, the fishes darted away and disappeared in a flash. But Twinkle didn't mind that, for all her interest was now centered in the struggling turtle.

She knelt upon the grass and bent over to watch it, and just then she thought she heard a small voice say:

"It's no use; I can't do it!" and then the turtle drew its head and legs between the shells and remained still.

"Good gracious!" said Twinkle, much astonished. Then, addressing the turtle, she asked:

"Did you say anything, a minute ago?"

There was no reply. The turtle lay as quiet as if it were dead. Twinkle thought she must have been mistaken; so she picked up the turtle and held it in the palm of her hand while she got into the water again and waded slowly back to where she had left her shoes and stockings.

When she got home she put the mud-turtle in a tub which her papa had made by sawing a barrel in two. Then she put a little water into the tub and blocked it up by putting a brick under one side, so that the turtle could either stay in the water or crawl up the inclined bottom of the tub to where it was dry, whichever he pleased. She did this because mamma said that turtles sometimes liked to stay in the water and sometimes on land, and Twinkle's turtle could now take his choice. He couldn't climb up the steep sides of the tub and so get away, and the little girl thoughtfully placed crumbs of bread and fine bits of meat, where the turtle could get them whenever he felt hungry.

After that, Twinkle often sat for hours watching the turtle, which would crawl around the bottom of the tub, and swim in the little pool of water and eat the food placed before him in an eager and amusing way.

At times she took him in her hand and examined him closely, and then the mud-turtle would put out its little head and look at her with its bright eyes as curiously as the girl looked at him.

She had owned her turtle just a week, when she came to the tub one afternoon and held him in her hand, intending to feed her pet some scraps of meat she had brought with her. But as soon as the turtle put out its head it said to her, in a small but distinct voice:

"Good morning, Twinkle."

She was so surprised that the meat dropped from her hand, and she nearly dropped the turtle, too. But she managed to control her astonishment, and asked, in a voice that trembled a little:

“Can you talk?”

“To be sure,” replied the turtle; “but only on every seventh day — which of course is every Saturday. On other days I cannot talk at all.”

“Then I really must have heard you speak when I caught you; didn’t I?”

“I believe you did. I was so startled at being captured that I spoke before I thought, which is a bad habit to get into. But afterward I resolved not to answer when you questioned me, for I didn’t know you then, and feared it would be unwise to trust you with my secret. Even now I must ask you not to tell any one that you have a turtle that knows how to talk.”

Chapter III. The Turtle Tells of the Corrugated Giant

"WHY, it's wonderful!" said Twinkle, who had listened eagerly to the turtle's speech.

"It would be wonderful, indeed, if I were but a simple turtle," was the reply.

"But aren't you a turtle?"

"Of course, so far as my outward appearance goes, I'm a common little mud-turtle," it answered; "and I think you will agree with me that it was rather clever in the Corrugated Giant to transform me into such a creature."

"What's a Corrulated Giant?" asked Twinkle, with breathless interest.

"The Corrugated Giant is a monster that is full of deep wrinkles, because he has no bones inside him to hold his flesh up properly," said the turtle. "I hated this giant, who is both wicked and cruel, I assure you; and this giant hated me in return. So, when one day I tried to destroy him, the monster transformed me into the helpless little being you see before you."

"But who were you before you were transformed?" asked the girl.

"A fairy prince named Melga, the seventh son of the fairy Queen Flutterlight, who rules all the fairies in the north part of this land."

"And how long have you been a turtle?"

"Fourteen years," replied the creature, with a deep sigh. "At least, I think it is fourteen years; but of course when one is swimming around in brooks and grubbing in the mud for food, one is apt to lose all track of time."

"I should think so, indeed," said Twinkle. "But, according to that, you're older than I am."

"Much older," declared the turtle. "I had lived about four hundred years before the Corrugated Giant turned me into a turtle."

"Was your head gray?" she asked; "and did you have white whiskers?"

"No, indeed!" said the turtle. "Fairies are always young and beautiful in appearance, no matter how many years they have lived. And, as they never die, they're bound to get pretty old sometimes, as a matter of course."

"Of course!" agreed Twinkle. "Mama has told me about the fairies. But must you always be a mud-turtle?"

"That will depend on whether you are willing to help me or not," was the answer.

"Why, it sounds just like a fairy tale in a book!" cried the little girl.

"Yes," replied the turtle, "these things have been happening ever since there were fairies, and you might expect some of our adventures would get into books. But are you willing to help me? That is the important thing just now."

“I’ll do anything I can,” said Twinkle.

“Then,” said the turtle, “I may expect to get back to my own form again in a reasonably short time. But you must be brave, and not shrink from such a little thing as danger.”

That made Twinkle look solemn.

“Of course I don’t want to get hurt,” she said. “My mama and papa would go di*struc*ted if anything happened to me.”

“Something will happen, *sure,*” declared the turtle; “but nothing that happens will hurt you in the least if you do exactly as I tell you.”

“I won’t have to fight that Carbolated Giant, will I?” Twinkle asked doubtfully.

“He isn’t carbolated; he’s corrugated. No, you won’t have to fight at all. When the proper time comes I’ll do the fighting myself. But you may have to come with me to the Black Mountains, in order to set me free.”

“Is it far?” she asked.

“Yes; but it won’t take us long to go there,” answered the turtle. “Now, I’ll tell you what to do and, if you follow my advice no one will ever know you’re been mixed up with fairies and strange adventures.”

“And Collerated Giants,” she added.

“Corrugated,” he corrected. “It is too late, this Saturday, to start upon our journey, so we must wait another week. But next Saturday morning do you come to me bright and early, as soon as you’ve had breakfast, and then I’ll tell you what to do.”

“All right,” said Twinkle; “I won’t forget.”

“In the mean time, do give me a little clean water now and then. I’m a mud-turtle, sure enough; but I’m also a fairy prince, and I must say I prefer clean water.”

“I’ll attend to it,” promised the girl.

“Now put me down and run away,” continued the turtle. “It will take me all the week to think over my plans, and decide exactly what we are to do.”

Chapter IV. Prince Turtle Remembers His Magic

TWINKLE was as nervous as she could be during all the week that followed this strange conversation with Prince Turtle. Every day, as soon as school was out, she would run to the tub to see if the turtle was still safe — for she worried lest it should run away or disappear in some strange manner. And during school hours it was such hard work to keep her mind on her lessons that teacher scolded her more than once.

The fairy imprisoned in the turtle's form had nothing to say to her during this week, because he would not be allowed to talk again until Saturday; so the most that Twinkle could do to show her interest in the Prince was to give him the choicest food she could get and supply him with plenty of fresh, clean water.

At last the day of her adventure arrived, and as soon as she could get away from the breakfast table Twinkle ran out to the tub. There was her fairy turtle, safe as could be, and as she leaned over the tub he put out his head and called "Good morning!" in his small, shrill voice.

"Good morning," she replied.

"Are you still willing and ready to assist me?" asked the turtle.

"To be sure," said Twinkle.

"Then take me in your hand," said he.

So she picked him out of the tub and placed him upon her hand. And the turtle said:

"Now pay strict attention, and do exactly as I tell you, and all will be well. In the first place, we want to get to the Black Mountains; so you must repeat after me these words: '*Uller; aller; iller; oller!*'"

"Uller; aller; iller; oller!" said Twinkle.

The next minute it seemed as though a gale of wind had struck her. It blew so strongly against her eyes that she could not see; so she covered her face with one arm while with the other hand she held fast to the turtle. Her skirts fluttered so wildly that it seemed as if they would tear themselves from her body, and her sun-bonnet, not being properly fastened, was gone in a minute.

But it didn't last long, fortunately. After a few moments the wind stopped, and she found she could breathe again. Then she looked around her and drew another long breath, for instead of being in the back yard at home she stood on the side of a beautiful mountain, and spread before her were the loveliest green valleys she had ever beheld.

"Well, we're here," said the turtle, in a voice that sounded as if he were well pleased. "I thought I hadn't forgotten my fairy wisdom."

“Where are we?” asked the child.

“In the Black Mountains, of course,” was the reply. “We’ve come a good way, but it didn’t take us long to arrive, did it?”

“No, indeed,” she answered, still gazing down the mountain side at the flower-strewn grass-land of the valleys.

“This,” said the turtle, sticking his little head out of the shell as far as it would go, “is the realm of the fairies, where I used to dwell. Those beautiful palaces you see yonder are inhabited by Queen Flutterlight and my people, and that grim castle at your left, standing on the side of the mountain, is where the Corrugated Giant lives.”

“I don’t see anything!” exclaimed Twinkle; “that is, nothing but the valleys and the flowers and grass.”

“True; I had forgotten that these things are invisible to your mortal eyes. But it is necessary that you should see all clearly, if you are going to rescue me from this terrible form and restore me to my natural shape. Now, put me down upon the ground, for I must search for a particular plant whose leaf has a magic virtue.”

So Twinkle put him down, and the little turtle began running around here and there, looking carefully at the different plants that grew amongst the grass on the mountain side. But his legs were so short and his shell-covered body so heavy, that he couldn’t move very fast; so presently he called for her to pick him up again, and hold him close to the ground while she walked among the plants. She did this, and after what seemed a long search the turtle suddenly cried out:

“Stop! Here it is! This is the plant I want.”

“Which — this?” asked the girl, touching a broad green leaf.

“Yes. Pluck the leaf from the stem and rub your eyelids with it.”

She obeyed, and having rubbed her lids well with the leaf, she again opened her eyes and beheld the real Fairyland.

Chapter V. Twinkle Promises to Be Brave

IN the center of the valley was a great cluster of palaces that appeared to be built of crystal and silver and mother-of-pearl, and golden filigree- work. So dainty and beautiful were these fairy dwellings that Twinkle had no doubt for an instant but that she gazed upon fairyland. She could almost see, from the far mountain upon which she stood, the airy, gauze-winged forms of the fairies themselves, floating gently amidst their pretty palaces and moving gracefully along the jeweled streets.

But another sight now attracted her attention — a big, gray, ugly looking castle standing frowning on the mountain side at her left. It overlooked the lovely city of palaces like a dark cloud on the edge of a blue sky, and the girl could not help giving a shudder as she saw it. All around the castle was a high fence of iron spikes.

"That fence is enchanted," said the turtle, as if he knew she was looking at it; "and no fairy can pass it, because the power to prevent it has been given to the giant. But a mortal has never been forbidden to pass the fence, for no one ever supposed that a mortal would come here or be able to see it. That is the reason I have brought you to this place, and the reason why you alone are able to help me."

"Gracious!" cried Twinkle; "must I meet the Carbonated Giant?"

"He's corrugated," said the turtle.

"I know he's something dreadful," she wailed, "because he's so hard to pronounce."

"You will surely have to meet him," declared the turtle; "but do not fear, I will protect you from all harm."

"Well, a Corralated Giant's a mighty big person," said the girl, doubtfully, "and a mud-turtle isn't much of a fighter. I guess I'll go home."

"That is impossible," declared the turtle. "You are too far from home ever to get back without my help, so you may as well be good and obedient."

"What must I do?" she asked.

"We will wait until it is nearly noon, when the giant will put his pot on the fire to boil his dinner. We can tell the right time by watching the smoke come out of his chimney. Then you must march straight up to the castle and into the kitchen where the giant is at work, and throw me quickly into the boiling kettle. That is all that you will be required to do."

"I never could do it!" declared Twinkle.

"Why not?"

"You'd be scalded to death, and then I'd be a murderer!"

"Nonsense!" said the turtle, peevishly. "I know what I'm doing, and if

you obey me I'll not be scalded but an instant; for then I'll resume my own form. Remember that I'm a fairy, and fairies can't be killed so easily as you seem to think."

"Won't it hurt you?" she inquired.

"Only for a moment; but the reward will be so great that I won't mind an instant's pain. Will you do this favor for me?"

"I'll try," replied Twinkle, gravely.

"Then I will be very grateful," said Prince Turtle, "and agree to afterward send you home safe and sound, and as quickly as you came."

Chapter VI. Twinkle Meets the Corrugated Giants

"AND now, while we are waiting," continued the fairy turtle, "I want to find a certain flower that has wonderful powers to protect mortals from any injury. Not that I fear I shall be unable to take care of you, but it's just as well to be on the safe side."

"Better," said Twinkle, earnestly. "Where's the flower?"

"We'll hunt for it," replied the turtle.

So holding him in her hand in such a way that he could see all the flowers that grew, the girl began wandering over the mountain side, and everything was so beautiful around her that she would have been quite contented and happy had not the gray castle been before her to remind her constantly that she must face the terrible giant who lived within it.

They found the flower at last — a pretty pink blossom that looked like a double daisy, but must have been something else, because a daisy has no magic power that I ever heard of. And when it was found, the turtle told her to pick the flower and pin it fast to the front of her dress; which she did.

By that time the smoke began to roll out of the giant's chimney in big black clouds; so the fairy turtle said the giant must be getting dinner, and the pot would surely be boiling by the time they got to the castle.

Twinkle couldn't help being a little afraid to approach the giant's stronghold, but she tried to be brave, and so stepped along briskly until she came to the fence of iron spikes.

"You must squeeze through between two of the spikes," said the turtle.

She didn't think it could possibly be done; but to her surprise it was quite easy, and she managed to squeeze through the fence without even tearing her dress. Then she walked up a great driveway, which was lined with white skulls of many sheep which the giant had eaten, to the front door of the castle, which stood ajar.

"Go in," said the turtle; so she boldly entered and passed down a high arched hall toward a room in the rear.

"This is the kitchen," said the turtle, "Enter quickly, go straight to the kettle, and throw me into the boiling water."

Twinkle entered quickly enough, but then she stopped short with a cry of amazement; for there before her stood the ugly giant, blowing the fire with an immense pair of bellows.

Chapter VII. Prince Mud-Turtle Becomes Prince Melga

THE giant was as big around as ten men, and as tall as two; but, having no bones, he seemed pushed together, so that his skin wrinkled up like the sides of an accordeon, or a photograph camera, even his face being so wrinkled that his nose stuck out between two folds of flesh and his eyes from between two more. In one end of the kitchen was the great fireplace, above which hung an iron kettle with a big iron spoon in it. And at the other end was a table set for dinner.

As the giant was standing between the kettle and Twinkle, she could not do as the turtle had commanded, and throw him into the pot. So she hesitated, wondering how to obey the fairy. Just then the giant happened to turn around and see her.

"By the whiskers of Gammarog — who was one of my ancestors that was killed by Jack the Giant-Killer!" he cried, but in a very mild voice for so big a person. "Whom have we here?"

"I'm Twinkle," said the girl, drawing a long breath.

"Then, to pay you for your folly in entering my castle, I will make you my slave, and some day, if you're not good, I'll feed you to my seventeen-headed dog. I never eat little girls myself. I prefer mutton."

Twinkle's heart almost stopped beating when she heard these awful words. All she could do was to stand still and look imploringly at the giant. But she held the fairy mud-turtle clasped tight in her hand, so that the monster couldn't see it.

"Well, what are you staring at?" shouted the Corrugated Giant, angrily. "Blow up that fire this instant, slave!"

He stood aside for her to pass, and Twinkle ran at once to the fireplace. The pot was now before her, and within easy reach, and it was bubbling hot.

In an instant she reached out her hand and tossed the turtle into the boiling water; and then, with a cry of horror at her own action, she drew back to see what would happen.

The turtle was a fairy, all right; and he had known very well the best way to break the enchantment his enemy had put upon him. For no sooner had Twinkle tossed him into the boiling pot than a great hissing was heard, and a cloud of steam hid for an instant the fireplace. Then, as it cleared away, a handsome young prince stepped forward, fully armed; for the turtle was again a fairy, and the kettle had changed into a strong shield which he bore upon his left arm, and the iron spoon was now a long and glittering sword.

Chapter VIII. Twinkle Receives a Medal

THE giant gave a roar like that of a baby bull when he saw Prince Melga standing before him, and in a twinkling he had caught up a big club that stood near and began whirling it over his head. But before it could descend, the prince ran at him and stuck his sword as far as it would go into the corrugated body of the giant. Again the monster roared and tried to fight; but the sword had hurt him badly, and the prince pushed it into the evil creature again and again, until the end came, and his corrugated enemy rolled over upon the floor quite dead.

Then the fairy turned to Twinkle, and kneeling before her he kissed her hand.

"Thank you very much," he said, in a sweet voice, "for setting me free. You are a very brave little girl!"

"I'm not so sure about that," she answered. "I was dreadfully scared!"

Now he took her hand and led her from the castle; and she didn't have to squeeze through the fence again, because the fairy had only to utter a magic word and the gate flew open. And when they turned to look back, the castle of the Corrugated Giant, with all that it had contained, had vanished from sight, never to be seen again by either mortal or fairy eyes. For that was sure to happen whenever the giant was dead.

The prince led Twinkle into the valley where the fairy palaces stood, and told all his people, when they crowded around to welcome him, how kind the little girl had been to him, and how her courage had enabled him to defeat the giant and to regain his proper form. And all the fairies praised Twinkle with kind words, and the lovely Queen Flutterlight, who seemed altogether too young to be the mother of the handsome prince, gave to the child a golden medal with a tiny mud- turtle engraved upon one side of it.

Then, after a fine feast had been prepared, and the little girl had eaten all she could of the fairy sweetmeats, she told Prince Melga she would like to go home again.

"Very well," said he. "Don't forget me, Twinkle, although we probably shall never meet again. I'll send you home quite as safely as you came; but as your eyes have been rubbed with the magic maita-leaf, you will doubtless always see many strange sights that are hidden from other mortals."

"I don't mind," said Twinkle.

Then she bade good-bye to the fairies, and the prince spoke a magic word. There was another rush of wind, and when it had passed Twinkle found herself once more in the back yard at home.

As she sat upon the grass rubbing her eyes and wondering at the strange

adventure that had befallen her, mamma came out upon the back porch and said:

"Your turtle has crawled out of the tub and run away."

"Yes," said Twinkle, "I know; and I'm glad of it!"

But she kept her secret to herself.

THE END

TWINKLE'S ENCHANTMENT

Chapter I. Twinkle Enters the Big Gulch

ONE afternoon Twinkle decided to go into the big gulch and pick some blueberries for papa's supper. She had on her blue gingham dress and her blue sun-bonnet, and there were stout shoes upon her feet. So she took her tin pail and started out.

"Be back in time for supper," called mamma from the kitchen porch.

"'Course," said Twinkle, as she trotted away. "I'm not hungry now, but I'll be hungry 'nough when supper-time comes. 'Course I'll be back!"

The side of the gulch was but a little way from the house. It was like a big ditch, only the sides were not too steep to crawl down; and in the middle of the gulch were rolling hills and deep gullies, all covered with wild bushes and vines and a few flowering plants — very rare in this part of the country.

Twinkle hadn't lived very long in this section of Dakota, for her father had just bought the new farm that lay beside the gulch. So the big ditch was a great delight to her, and she loved to wander through it and pick the berries and flowers that never grew on the plains above.

To-day she crept carefully down the path back of the house and soon reached the bottom of the gulch. Then she began to search for the berries; but all were gone in the places where she had picked them before; so she found she must go further along.

She sat down to rest for a time, and by and by she happened to look up at the other side and saw a big cluster of bushes hanging full of ripe blueberries — just about half way up the opposite bank.

She had never gone so far before, but if she wanted the berries for papa's supper she knew she must climb up the slope and get them; so she rose to her feet and began to walk in that direction. It was all new to the little girl, and seemed to her like a beautiful fairyland; but she had no idea that the gulch was enchanted. Soon a beetle crawled across her path, and as she stopped to let it go by, she heard it say:

"Look out for the line of enchantment! You'll soon cross it, if you don't watch out."

"What line of enchantment?" asked Twinkle.

"It's almost under your nose," replied the little creature.

"I don't see anything at all," she said, after looking closely.

"Of course you don't," said the beetle. "It isn't a mark, you know, that any one can see with their eyes; but it's a line of enchantment, just the same, and whoever steps over it is sure to see strange things and have strange adventures."

“I don’t mind that,” said Twinkle.

“Well, I don’t mind if you don’t,” returned the beetle, and by that time he had crept across the path and disappeared underneath a big rock.

Twinkle went on, without being at all afraid. If the beetle spoke truly, and there really was an invisible line that divided the common, real world from an enchanted country, she was very eager to cross it, as any little girl might well be. And then it occurred to her that she must have crossed the enchanted line before she met the beetle, for otherwise she wouldn’t have understood his language, or known what he was talking about. Children don’t talk with beetles in the real world, as Twinkle knew very well, and she was walking along soberly, thinking this over, when suddenly a voice cried out to her:

“Be careful!”

Chapter II. The Rolling Stone

OF course Twinkle stopped then, and looked around to see who had spoken. But no one was anywhere in sight. So she started on again.

"Look out, or you'll step on me!" cried the voice a second time.

She looked at her feet very carefully. There was nothing near them but a big round stone that was about the size of her head, and a prickly thistle that she never would step on if she could possibly help it.

"Who's talking?" she asked.

"Why, *I'm* talking," answered the voice. "Who do you suppose it is?"

"I don't know," said Twinkle. "I just can't see anybody at all."

"Then you must be blind," said the voice. "I'm the Rolling Stone, and I'm about two inches from your left toes."

"The Rolling Stone!"

"That's it. That's me. I'm the Rolling Stone that gathers no moss."

"You can't be," said Twinkle, sitting down in the path and looking carefully at the stone.

"Why not?"

"Because you don't roll," she said. "You're a stone, of course; I can see that, all right. But you're not rolling."

How silly!" replied the Stone. "I don't have to roll every minute to be a Rolling Stone, do I?"

"Of course you do," answered Twinkle. "If you don't roll you're just a common, *still* stone."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the Stone; "you don't seem to understand anything. You're a Talking Girl, are you not?"

"To be sure I am," said Twinkle.

"But you don't talk every minute, do you?"

"Mama says I do," she answered.

"But you don't. You're sometimes quiet, aren't you?"

"'Course I am."

"That's the way with me. Sometimes I roll, and so I'm called the Rolling Stone. Sometimes you talk, and so you're the Talking Girl."

"No; I'm Twinkle," she said.

"That doesn't sound like a name," remarked the Stone.

"It's what papa calls me, anyway," explained the girl. Then, thinking she had lingered long enough, she added:

"I'm going up the hill to pick those berries. Since you can roll, suppose you go with me."

"What! Up hill?" exclaimed the Stone.

“Why not?” asked Twinkle.

“Who ever heard of a stone rolling up hill? It’s unnatural!”

“Any stone can roll down hill,” said the child. “If you can’t roll up hill, you’re no better than a common cobble-stone.”

“Oh, I can roll up hill if I have to,” declared the Stone, peevishly. “But it’s hard work, and nearly breaks my back.”

“I can’t see that you have any back,” said Twinkle.

“Why, I’m all back,” replied the Stone. “When *your* back aches, it’s only a part of you. But when *my* back aches, it’s all of me except the middle.”

“The middle ache is the worst of all,” said Twinkle, solemnly. “Well, if you don’t want to go,” she added, jumping up, “I’ll say good-bye.”

“Anything to be sociable,” said the Stone, sighing deeply. “I’ll go along and keep you company. But it’s lots easier to roll down than it is to roll up, I assure you!”

“Why, you’re a reg’lar grumbler!” exclaimed Twinkle.

“That’s because I lead a hard life,” returned the Stone, dismally. “But don’t let us quarrel; it is so seldom I get a chance to talk with one of my own standing in society.”

“You can’t have any standing, without feet,” declared Twinkle, shaking her head at the Stone.

“One can have *under*standing, at least,” was the answer; “and understanding is the best standing any person can have.”

“Perhaps that is true,” said the child, thoughtfully; “but I’m glad I have legs, just the same.”

Chapter III. Some Queer Acquaintances

"WAIT a minute!" implored a small voice, and the girl noticed a yellow butterfly that had just settled down upon the stone. "Aren't you the child from the farm?"

"To be sure," she answered, much amused to hear the butterfly speak.

"Then can you tell me if your mother expects to churn to-day," said the pretty creature, slowly folding and unfolding its dainty wings.

"Why do you want to know?"

"If she churns to-day, I'll fly over to the house and try to steal some butter. But if your mother isn't going to churn, I'll fly down into the gulch and rob a bees' nest I know of."

"Why do you rob and steal?" inquired Twinkle.

"It's the only way I can get my living," said the butterfly. "Nobody ever gives me anything, and so I have to take what I want."

"Do you like butter?"

"Of course I do! That's why we are called butterflies, you know. I prefer butter to anything else, and I have heard that in some countries the children always leave a little dish of butter on the window-sill, so that we may help ourselves whenever we are hungry. I wish I had been born in such a country."

"Mother won't churn until Saturday," said Twinkle. "I know, 'cause I've got to help her, and I just hate butter-making!"

"Then I won't go to the farm to-day," replied the butterfly. "Good-bye, little girl. If you think of it, leave a dish of butter around where I can get at it."

"All right," said Twinkle, and the butterfly waved its wings and fluttered through the air into the gulch below.

Then the girl started up the hill and the Stone rolled slowly beside her, groaning and grumbling because the ground was so rough.

Presently she noticed running across the path a tiny Book, not much bigger than a postage- stamp. It had two slender legs, like those of a bumble-bee, and upon these it ran so fast that all the leaves fluttered wildly, the covers being half open.

"What's that?" asked Twinkle, looking after the book in surprise.

"That is a little Learning," answered the Stone. "Look out for it, for they say it's a dangerous thing."

"It's gone already," said Twinkle.

"Let it go. Nobody wants it, that I know of. Just help me over this bump, will you?"

So she rolled the Stone over the little hillock, and just as she did so her attention was attracted by a curious noise that sounded like “Pop! pop! pop!”

“What’s that?” she inquired, hesitating to advance.

“Only a weasel,” answered the Stone. “Stand still a minute, and you’ll see him. Whenever he thinks he’s alone, and there’s no one to hear, ‘pop’ goes the weasel.”

Sure enough, a little animal soon crossed their path, making the funny noise at every step. But as soon as he saw that Twinkle was staring at him he stopped popping and rushed into a bunch of tall grass and hid himself.

And now they were almost at the berry-bushes, and Twinkle trotted so fast that the Rolling Stone had hard work to keep up with her. But when she got to the bushes she found a flock of strange birds sitting upon them and eating up the berries as fast as they could. The birds were not much bigger than robins, and were covered with a soft, velvety skin instead of with feathers, and they had merry black eyes and long, slender beaks curving downward from their noses, which gave to their faces a saucy expression. The lack of usual feathers might not have surprised Twinkle so much had she not noticed upon the tail of each bird one single, solitary feather of great length, which was certainly a remarkable thing.

“I know what they are,” she said, nodding her head wisely; “they’re birds of a feather.”

At this the birds burst into a chorus of laughter, and one of them said:

“Perhaps you think that’s why we flock together.”

“Well, isn’t that the reason?” she asked.

“Not a bit of it,” declared the bird. “The reason we flock together is because we’re too proud to mix with common birds, who have feathers all over them.”

“I should think you’d be ashamed, ‘cause you’re so naked,” she returned.

“The fact is, Twinkle,” said another bird, as he pecked at a blueberry and swallowed it, “the common things in this world don’t amount to much. There are millions of birds on earth, but only a few of us that have but one feather. In my opinion, if you had but one hair upon your head you’d be much prettier.”

“I’d be more ‘strord’nary, I’m sure,” said Twinkle, using the biggest word she could think of.

“There’s no accounting for tastes,” remarked the Rolling Stone, which had just arrived at Twinkle’s side after a hard roll up the path. “For my part, I haven’t either hair or feathers, and I’m glad of it.”

The birds laughed again, at this, and as they had eaten all the berries they cared for, they now flew into the air and disappeared.

Chapter IV. The Dancing Bear

"REALLY," said Twinkle, as she began picking the berries and putting them into her pail, "I didn't know so many things could talk."

"It's because you are in the part of the gulch that's enchanted," answered the Rolling Stone. "When you get home again, you'll think this is all a dream."

"I wonder if it isn't!" she suddenly cried, stopping to look around, and then feeling of herself carefully. "It's usually the way in all the fairy stories that papa reads to me. I don't remember going to sleep any time; but perhaps I did, after all."

"Don't let it worry you," said the Stone, making a queer noise that Twinkle thought was meant for a laugh. "If you wake up, you'll be sorry you didn't dream longer; and if you find you haven't been asleep, this will be a wonderful adventure."

"That's true enough," the girl answered, and again began filling her pail with the berries. "When I tell mama all this, she won't believe a word of it. And papa will laugh and pinch my cheek, and say I'm like Alice in Wonderland, or Dorothy in the Land of Oz."

Just then she noticed something big and black coming around the bushes from the other side, and her heart beat a good deal faster when she saw before her a great bear standing upon his rear legs beside her.

He had a little red cap on his head that was kept in place by a band of rubber elastic. His eyes were small, but round and sparkling, and there seemed to be a smile upon his face, for his white teeth showed in two long rows.

"Don't be afraid," called out the Rolling Stone; "it's only the Dancing Bear."

"Why should the child be afraid?" asked the bear, speaking in a low, soft tone that reminded her of the purring of a kitten. "No one ever heard of a Dancing Bear hurting anybody. We're about the most harmless things in the world."

"Are you really a Dancing Bear?" asked Twinkle, curiously.

"I am, my dear," he replied, bowing low and then folding his arms proudly as he leaned against a big rock that was near. "I wish there was some one here who could tell you what a fine dancer I am. It wouldn't be modest for me to praise myself, you know."

"I s'pose not," said Twinkle. "But if you're a Dancing Bear, why don't you dance?"

"There it is again!" cried the Rolling Stone. "This girl Twinkle wants to

keep every body moving. She wouldn't believe, at first, that I was a Rolling Stone, because I was lying quiet just then. And now she won't believe you're a Dancing Bear, because you don't eternally keep dancing."

"Well, there's some sense in that, after all," declared the Bear. "I'm only a Dancing Bear while I'm dancing, to speak the exact truth; and you're only a Rolling Stone while you're rolling."

"I beg to disagree with you," returned the Stone, in a cold voice.

"Well, don't let us quarrel, on any account," said the Bear. "I invite you both to come to my cave and see me dance. Then Twinkle will be sure I'm a Dancing Bear."

"I haven't filled my pail yet," said the little girl, "and I've got to get enough berries for papa's supper."

"I'll help you," replied the Bear, politely; and at once he began to pick berries and to put them into Twinkle's pail. His big paws looked very clumsy and awkward, but it was astonishing how many blueberries the bear could pick with them. Twinkle had hard work to keep up with him, and almost before she realized how fast they had worked, the little pail was full and overflowing with fine, plump berries.

"And now," said the Bear, "I will show you the way to my cave."

He took her hand in his soft paw and began leading her along the side of the steep hill, while the Stone rolled busily along just behind them. But they had not gone far before Twinkle's foot slipped, and in trying to save herself from falling she pushed hard against the Stone and tumbled it from the pathway.

"Now you've done it!" growled the Stone, excitedly, as it whirled around. "Here I go, for I've lost my balance and I can't help myself!"

Even as he spoke the big round stone was flying down the side of the gulch, bumping against the hillocks and bits of rock — sometimes leaping into the air and then clinging close to the ground, but going faster and faster every minute.

"Dear me," said Twinkle, looking after it; "I'm afraid the Rolling Stone will get hurt."

"No danger of that," replied the Bear. "It's as hard as a rock, and not a thing in the gulch could hurt it a bit. But our friend would have to roll a long time to get back here again, so we won't wait. Come along, my dear."

He held out his paw again, and Twinkle took it with one of her hands while she carried the pail with the other, and so managed to get over the rough ground very easily.

Chapter V. The Cave of the Waterfall

BEFORE long they came to the entrance to the cave, and as it looked dark and gloomy from without Twinkle drew back and said she guessed she wouldn't go in.

"But it's quite light inside," said the bear, "and there's a pretty waterfall there, too. Don't be afraid, Twinkle; I'll take good care of you."

So the girl plucked up courage and permitted him to lead her into the cave; and then she was glad she had come, instead of being a 'fraid-cat. For the place was big and roomy, and there were many cracks in the roof, that admitted plenty of light and air. Around the side walls were several pairs of big ears, which seemed to have been carved out of the rock. These astonished the little girl.

"What are the ears for?" she asked.

"Don't walls have ears where you live?" returned the Bear, as if surprised.

"I've heard they do," she answered, "but I've never seen any before."

At the back of the cave was a little, tinkling waterfall, that splashed into a pool beneath with a sound that was very like music. Near this was a square slab of rock, a little raised above the level of the floor.

"Kindly take a seat, my dear," said the bear, "and I'll try to amuse you, and at the same time prove that I can dance."

So to the music of the waterfall the bear began dancing. He climbed upon the flat stone, made a graceful bow to Twinkle, and then balanced himself first upon one foot and then upon the other, and swung slowly around in a circle, and then back again.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

"I don't care much for it," said Twinkle. "I believe I could do better myself."

"But you are not a bear," he answered. "Girls ought to dance better than bears, you know. But not every bear can dance. If I had a hand-organ to make the music, instead of this waterfall, I might do better."

"Then I wish you had one," said the girl.

The Bear began dancing again, and this time he moved more rapidly and shuffled his feet in quite a funny manner. He almost fell off the slab once or twice, so anxious was he to prove he could dance. And once he tripped over his own foot, which made Twinkle laugh.

Just as he was finishing his dance a strange voice cried out:

"For bear!" and a green monkey sprang into the cave and threw a big rock at the performer. It knocked the bear off the slab, and he fell into the pool of water at the foot of the waterfall, and was dripping wet when he scrambled

out again.

The Dancing Bear gave a big growl and ran as fast as he could after the monkey, finally chasing him out of the cave. Twinkle picked up her pail of berries and followed, and when she got into the sunshine again on the side of the hill she saw the monkey and the bear hugging each other tight, and growling and chattering in a way that showed they were angry with each other and not on pleasant terms.

"You *will* throw rocks at me, will you?" shouted the Bear.

"I will if I get the chance," replied the monkey. "Wasn't that a fine, straight shot? and didn't you go plump into the water, though?" and he shrieked with laughter.

Just then they fell over in a heap, and began rolling down the hill.

"Let go!" yelled the Bear.

"Let go, yourself!" screamed the monkey.

But neither of them did let go, so they rolled faster and faster down the hill, and the last that Twinkle saw of them they were bounding among the bushes at the very bottom of the big gulch.

Chapter VI. Prince Nimble

"GOOD gracious!" said the little girl, looking around her; "I'm as good as lost in this strange place, and I don't know in what direction to go to get home again."

So she sat down on the grass and tried to think which way she had come, and which way she ought to return in order to get across the gulch to the farm-house.

"If the Rolling Stone was here, he might tell me," she said aloud. "But I'm all alone."

"Oh, no, you're not," piped a small, sweet voice. "I'm here, and I know much more than the Rolling Stone does."

Twinkle looked this way and then that, very carefully, in order to see who had spoken, and at last she discovered a pretty grasshopper perched upon a long blade of grass nearby.

"Did I hear you speak?" she inquired.

"Yes," replied the grasshopper. "I'm Prince Nimble, the hoppiest hopper in Hoptown."

"Where is that?" asked the child.

"Why, Hoptown is near the bottom of the gulch, in that thick patch of grass you see yonder. It's on your way home, so I'd be pleased to have you visit it."

"Won't I step on some of you?" she asked.

"Not if you are careful," replied Prince Nimble. "Grasshoppers don't often get stepped on. We're pretty active, you know."

"All right," said Twinkle. "I'd like to see a grasshopper village."

"Then follow me, and I'll guide you," said Nimble, and at once he leaped from the blade of grass and landed at least six feet away.

Twinkle got up and followed, keeping her eye on the pretty Prince, who leaped so fast that she had to trot to keep up with him. Nimble would wait on some clump of grass or bit of rock until the girl came up, and then away he'd go again.

"How far is it?" Twinkle once asked him.

"About a mile and a half," was the answer; "we'll soon be there, for you are as good as a mile, and I'm good for the half-mile."

"How do you figure that out?" asked Twinkle.

"Why, I've always heard that a miss is as good as a mile, and you're a miss, are you not?"

"Not yet," she answered; "I'm only a little girl. But papa will be sure to miss me if I don't get home to supper."

Chapter VII. The Grasshoppers' Hop

TWINKLE now began to fear she wouldn't get home to supper, for the sun started to sink into the big prairie, and in the golden glow it left behind, the girl beheld most beautiful palaces and castles suspended in the air just above the hollow in which she stood. Splendid banners floated from the peaks and spires of these magnificent buildings, and all the windows seemed of silver and all the roofs of gold.

"What city is that?" she asked, standing still, in amazement.

"That isn't any city," replied the grasshopper. "They are only Castles in the Air — very pretty to look at, but out of everybody's reach. Come along, my little friend; we're almost at Hoptown."

So Twinkle walked on, and before long Prince Nimble paused on the stem of a hollyhock and said:

"Now, sit down carefully, right where you are, and you will be able to watch my people. It is the night of our regular hop — if you listen you can hear the orchestra tuning up."

She sat down, as he bade her, and tried to listen, but only heard a low whirr and rattle like the noise of a beetle's wings.

"That's the drummer," said Prince Nimble. "He is very clever, indeed."

"Good gracious! It's night," said Twinkle, with a start. "I ought to be at home and in bed this very minute!"

"Never mind," said the grasshopper; "you can sleep any time, but this is our annual ball, and it's a great privilege to witness it."

Suddenly the grass all around them became brilliantly lighted, as if from a thousand tiny electric lamps. Twinkle looked closely, and saw that a vast number of fireflies had formed a circle around them, and were illuminating the scene of the ball.

In the center of the circle were assembled hundreds of grasshoppers, of all sizes. The small ones were of a delicate green color, and the middle-sized ones of a deeper green, while the biggest ones were a yellowish brown.

But the members of the orchestra interested Twinkle more than anything else. They were seated upon the broad top of a big toadstool at one side, and the musicians were all beetles and big-bugs. A fat water-beetle played a bass fiddle as big and fat as himself, and two pretty ladybugs played the violins. A scarab, brightly colored with scarlet and black, tooted upon a long horn, and a sand- beetle made the sound of a drum with its wings. Then there was a coleopto, making shrill sounds like a flute — only of course Twinkle didn't know the names of these beetles, and thought they were all just "bugs."

When the orchestra began to play, the music was more pleasing than you

might suppose; anyway, the grasshoppers liked it, for they commenced at once to dance.

The antics of the grasshoppers made Twinkle laugh more than once, for the way they danced was to hop around in a circle, and jump over each other, and then a lady grasshopper and a gentleman grasshopper would take hold of hands and stand on their long rear legs and swing partners until it made the girl dizzy just to watch them.

Sometimes two of them would leap at once, and knock against each other in the air, and then go tumbling to the ground, where the other dancers tripped over them. She saw Prince Nimble dancing away with the others, and his partner was a lovely green grasshopper with sparkling black eyes and wings that were like velvet. They didn't bump into as many of the others as some did, and Twinkle thought they danced very gracefully indeed.

And now, while the merriment was at its height, and waiter-grasshoppers were passing around refreshments that looked like grass seeds covered with thick molasses, a big cat suddenly jumped into the circle.

At once all the lights went out, for the fire-flies fled in every direction; but in the darkness Twinkle thought she could still hear the drone of the big bass fiddle and the flute-like trill of the ladybugs.

The next thing Twinkle knew, some one was shaking her shoulder.

"Wake up, dear," said her mother's voice. "It's nearly supper-time, and papa's waiting for you. And I see you haven't picked a single blueberry."

"Why, I picked 'em, all right," replied Twinkle, sitting up and first rubbing her eyes and then looking gravely at her empty tin pail. "They were all in the pail a few minutes ago. I wonder whatever became of them!"

THE END

SUGAR-LOAF MOUNTAIN

Chapter I. The Golden Key

TWINKLE had come to visit her old friend Chubbins, whose mother was now teaching school in a little town at the foot of the Ozark Mountains, in Arkansas. Twinkle's own home was in Dakota, so the mountains that now towered around her made her open her eyes in wonder.

Near by — so near, in fact, that she thought she might almost reach out her arm and touch it — was Sugar-Loaf Mountain, round and high and big. And a little to the south was Backbone Mountain, and still farther along a peak called Crystal Mountain.

The very next day after her arrival Twinkle asked Chubbins to take her to see the mountain; and so the boy, who was about her own age, got his mother to fill for them a basket of good things to eat, and away they started, hand in hand, to explore the mountain-side.

It was farther to Sugar-Loaf Mountain than Twinkle had thought, and by the time they reached the foot of the great mound, the rocky sides of which were covered with bushes and small trees, they were both rather tired by the walk.

"Let's eat something," suggested Chubbins.

"I'm willing," said Twinkle.

So they climbed up a little way, to where some big rocks lay flat upon the mountain, and sat themselves down upon a slab of rock while they rested and ate some of the sandwiches and cake.

"Why do they call it 'Sugar-Loaf'?" asked the girl, looking far up to the top of the mountain.

"I don't know," replied Chubbins.

"It's a queer name," said Twinkle, thoughtfully.

"That's so," agreed the boy. "They might as well have called it 'gingerbread' or 'rock-salt,' or 'tea-biscuit.' They call mountains funny names, don't they?"

"Seems as if they do," said Twinkle.

They had been sitting upon the edge of one big flat rock, with their feet resting against another that was almost as large. These rocks appeared to have been there for ages, — as if some big giants in olden days had tossed them carelessly down and then gone away and left them. Yet as the children pushed their feet against this one, the heavy mass suddenly began to tremble and then slide downward.

"Look out!" cried the girl, frightened to see the slab of rock move. "We'll fall and get hurt!"

But they clung to the rock upon which they sat and met with no harm whatever. Nor did the big slab of stone below them move very far from its original position.

It merely slid downward a few feet, and when they looked at the place where it had been they discovered what seemed to be a small iron door, built into the solid stone underneath, and now shown to their view by the moving of the upper rock.

"Why, it's a door!" exclaimed Twinkle.

Chubbins got down upon his knees and examined the door carefully. There was a ring in it that seemed to be a handle, and he caught hold of it and pulled as hard as he could. But it wouldn't move.

"It's locked, Twink," he said.

"What do you'spose is under it?" she asked.

"Maybe it's a treasure!" answered Chubbins, his eyes big with interest.

"Well, Chub, we can't get it, anyway," said the practical Twinkle; "so let's climb the mountain."

She got down from her seat and approached the door, and as she did so she struck a small bit of rock with her foot and sent it tumbling down the hill. Then she stopped short with a cry of wonder, for under the stone she had kicked away was a little hole in the rock, and within this they saw a small golden key.

"Perhaps," she said, eagerly, as she stooped to pick up the key, "this will unlock the iron door."

"Let's try it!" cried the boy.

Chapter II. Through the Tunnel

THEY examined the door carefully, and at last found near the center of it a small hole. Twinkle put the golden key into this and found that it fitted exactly. But it took all of Chubbins's strength to turn the key in the rusty lock. Yet finally it did turn, and they heard the noise of bolts shooting back, so they both took hold of the ring, and pulling hard together, managed to raise the iron door on its hinges.

All they saw was a dark tunnel, with stone steps leading down into the mountain.

"No treasure here," said the little girl.

"P'raps it's farther in," replied Chub-bins. "Shall we go down?"

"Won't it be dangerous?" she asked.

"Don't know," said Chubbins, honestly. "It's been years and years since this door was opened. You can see for yourself. That rock must have covered it up a long time."

"There must be *something* inside," she declared, "or there wouldn't be any door, or any steps."

"That's so," answered Chubbins. "I'll go down and see. You wait."

"No; I'll go too," said Twinkle. "I'd be just as scared waiting outside as I would be in. And I 'in bigger than you are, Chub."

"You're taller, but you're only a month older, Twink; so don't you put on airs. And I'm the strongest."

"We'll both go," she decided; "and then if we find the treasure we'll divide."

"All right; come on!"

Forgetting their basket, which they left upon the rocks, they crept through the little doorway and down the steps. There were only seven steps in all, and then came a narrow but level tunnel that led straight into the mountain-side. It was dark a few feet from the door, but the children resolved to go on. Taking hold of hands, so as not to get separated, and feeling the sides of the passage to guide them, they walked a long way into the black tunnel.

Twinkle was just about to say they'd better go back, when the passage suddenly turned, and far ahead of them shone a faint light. This encouraged them, and they went on faster, hoping they would soon come to the treasure.

"Keep it up, Twink," said the boy. "It's no use going home yet."

"We must be almost in the middle of Sugar-Loaf Mountain," she answered.

"Oh, no; it's an awful big mountain," said he. "But we've come quite a way, haven't we?"

“I guess mama’d scold, if she knew where we are.”

“Mamas,” said Chubbins, “shouldn’t know everything, ‘cause they’d only worry. And if we don’t get hurt I can’t see as there’s any harm done.”

“But we mustn’t be naughty, Chub.”

“The only thing that’s naughty,” he replied, “is doing what you’re told not to do. And no one told us not to go into the middle of Sugar-Loaf Mountain.”

Just then they came to another curve in their path, and saw a bright light ahead. It looked to the children just like daylight; so they ran along and soon passed through a low arch and came out into —

Well! the scene before them was so strange that it nearly took away their breath, and they stood perfectly still and stared as hard as their big eyes could possibly stare.

Chapter III. Sugar-Loaf City

SUGAR-LOAF Mountain was hollow inside, for the children stood facing a great dome that rose so far above their heads that it seemed almost as high as the sky. And underneath this dome lay spread out the loveliest city imaginable. There were streets of houses, and buildings with round domes, and slender, delicate spires reaching far up into the air, and turrets beautifully ornamented with carvings. And all these were white as the driven snow and sparkling in every part like millions of diamonds — for all were built of pure loaf- sugar! The pavements of the streets were also loaf-sugar, and the trees and bushes and flowers were likewise sugar; but these last were not all white, because all sugar is not white, and they showed many bright colors of red sugar and blue sugar and yellow, purple and green sugar, all contrasting most prettily with the sparkling white buildings and the great white dome overhead.

This alone might well astonish the eyes of children from the outside world, but it was by no means all that Twinkle and Chubbins beheld in that first curious look at Sugar-Loaf City. For the city was inhabited by many people — men, women and children — who walked along the streets just as briskly as we do; only all were made of sugar. There were several different kinds of these sugar people. Some, who strutted proudly along, were evidently of pure loaf-sugar, and these were of a most respectable appearance. Others seemed to be made of a light brown sugar, and were more humble in their manners and seemed to hurry along as if they had business to attend to. Then there were some of sugar so dark in color that Twinkle suspected it was maple-sugar, and these folks seemed of less account than any of the others, being servants, drivers of carriages, and beggars and idlers.

Carts and carriages moved along the streets, and were mostly made of brown sugar. The horses that drew them were either pressed sugar or maple-sugar. In fact, everything that existed in this wonderful city was made of some kind of sugar.

Where the light, which made all this place so bright and beautiful, came from, Twinkle could not imagine. There was no sun, nor were there any electric lights that could be seen; but it was fully as bright as day and everything showed with great plainness.

While the children, who stood just inside the archway through which they had entered, were looking at the wonders of Sugar-Loaf City, a file of sugar soldiers suddenly came around a corner at a swift trot.

“Halt!” cried the Captain. He wore a red sugar jacket and a red sugar cap,

and the soldiers were dressed in the same manner as their Captain, but without the officer's yellow sugar shoulder-straps. At the command, the sugar soldiers came to a stop, and all pointed their sugar muskets at Twinkle and Chubbins.

"Surrender!" said the Captain to them. "Surrender, or I'll — I'll — "

He hesitated.

"What will you do?" said Twinkle.

"I don't know what, but something very dreadful," replied the Captain. "But of course you'll surrender."

"I suppose we'll have to," answered the girl.

"That's right. I'll just take you to the king, and let him decide what to do," he added pleasantly.

So the soldiers surrounded the two children, shouldered arms, and marched away down the street, Twinkle and Chubbins walking slowly, so the candy folks would not have to run; for the tallest soldiers were only as high as their shoulders.

"This is a great event," remarked the Captain, as he walked beside them with as much dignity as he could muster. "It was really good of you to come and be arrested, for I haven't had any excitement in a long time. The people here are such good sugar that they seldom do anything wrong."

Chapter IV. To the King's Palace

"WHAT, allow me to ask, is your grade of sugar?" inquired the Captain, with much politeness. "You do not seem to be the best loaf, but I suppose that of course you are solid."

"Solid what?" asked Chubbins.

"Solid sugar," replied the Captain.

"We're not sugar at all," explained Twinkle. "We're just meat."

"Meat! And what is that?"

"Haven't you any meat in your city?"

"No," he replied, shaking his head. "Well, I can't explain exactly what meat is," she said; "but it isn't sugar, anyway."

At this the Captain looked solemn.

"It isn't any of my business, after all," he told them. "The king must decide about you, for that's *his* business. But since you are not made of sugar you must excuse me if I decline to converse with you any longer. It is beneath my dignity."

"Oh, that's all right," said Twinkle.

"Where we came from," said Chubbins, "meat costs more a pound than sugar does; so I guess we're just as good as you are."

But the Captain made no reply to this statement, and before long they stopped in front of a big sugar building, while a crowd of sugar people quickly gathered.

"Stand back!" cried the Captain, and the sugar soldiers formed a row between the children and the sugar citizens, and kept the crowd from getting too near. Then the Captain led Twinkle and Chubbins through a high sugar gateway and up a broad sugar walk to the entrance of the building.

"Must be the king's castle," said Chubbins.

"The king's palace," corrected the Captain, stiffly.

"What's the difference?" asked Twinkle.

But the sugar officer did not care to explain.

Brown sugar servants in plum-colored sugar coats stood at the entrance to the palace, and their eyes stuck out like lozenges from their sugar faces when they saw the strangers the Captain was escorting.

But every one bowed low, and stood aside for them to pass, and they walked through beautiful halls and reception rooms where the sugar was cut into panels and scrolls and carved to represent all kinds of fruit and flowers.

"Isn't it sweet!" said Twinkle.

"Sure it is," answered Chubbins.

And now they were ushered into a magnificent room, where a stout little

sugar man was sitting near the window playing upon a fiddle, while a group of sugar men and women stood before him in respectful attitudes and listened to the music.

Twinkle knew at once that the fiddler was the king, because he had a sugar crown upon his head. His Majesty was made of very white and sparkling cut loaf-sugar, and his clothing was formed of the same pure material. The only color about him was the pink sugar in his cheeks and the brown sugar in his eyes. His fiddle was also of white sugar, and the strings were of spun sugar and had an excellent tone.

When the king saw the strange children enter the room he jumped up and exclaimed:

"Bless my beets! What have we here?"

"Mortals, Most Granular and Solidified Majesty," answered the Captain, bowing so low that his forehead touched the floor. "They came in by the ancient tunnel."

"Well, I declare," said the king. "I thought that tunnel had been stopped up for good and all."

"The stone above the door slipped," said Twinkle, "so we came down to see what we could find."

"You must never do it again," said his Majesty, sternly. "This is our own kingdom, a peaceful and retired nation of extra refined and substantial citizens, and we don't wish to mix with mortals, or any other folks."

"We'll go back, pretty soon," said Twinkle.

"Now, that's very nice of you," declared the king, "and I appreciate your kindness. Are you extra refined, my dear?"

"I hope so," said the girl, a little doubtfully.

"Then there's no harm in our being friendly while you're here. And as you've promised to go back to your own world soon, I have no objection to showing you around the town. You'd like to see how we live, wouldn't you?"

"Very much," said Twinkle.

"Order my chariot, Captain Brittle," said his Majesty; and the Captain again made one of his lowly bows and strutted from the room to execute the command.

The king now introduced Chubbins and Twinkle to the sugar ladies and gentlemen who were present, and all of them treated the children very respectfully.

Chapter V. Princess Sakareen

"SAY, play us a tune," said Chubbins to the king. His Majesty didn't seem to like being addressed so bluntly, but he was very fond of playing the fiddle, so he graciously obeyed the request and played a pretty and pathetic ballad upon the spun sugar strings. Then, begging to be excused for a few minutes while the chariot was being made ready, the king left them and went into another room.

This gave the children a chance to talk freely with the sugar people, and Chubbins said to one man, who looked very smooth on the outside:

"I s'pose you're one of the big men of this place, aren't you?"

The man looked frightened for a moment, and then took the boy's arm and led him into a corner of the room.

"You ask me an embarrassing question," he whispered, looking around to make sure that no one overheard. "Although I pose as one of the nobility, I am, as a matter of fact, a great fraud!"

"How's that?" asked Chubbins.

"Have you noticed how smooth I am?" inquired the sugar man.

"Yes," replied the boy. "Why is it?"

"Why, I'm frosted, that's the reason. No one here suspects it, and I'm considered very respectable; but the truth is, I'm just coated over with frosting, and not solid sugar at all."

"What's inside you?" asked Chubbins.

"That," answered the man, "I do not know. I've never dared to find out. For if I broke my frosting to see what I'm stuffed with, every one else would see too, and I would be disgraced and ruined."

"Perhaps you're cake," suggested the boy.

"Perhaps so," answered the man, sadly. "Please keep my secret, for only those who are solid loaf-sugar are of any account in this country, and at present I am received in the best society, as you see."

"Oh, I won't tell," said Chubbins.

During this time Twinkle had been talking with a sugar lady, in another part of the room. This lady seemed to be of the purest loaf-sugar, for she sparkled most beautifully, and Twinkle thought she was quite the prettiest person to look at that she had yet seen.

"Are you related to the king?" she asked.

"No, indeed," answered the sugar lady, "although I'm considered one of the very highest quality. But I'll tell you a secret, my dear." She took Twinkle's hand and led her across to a sugar sofa, where they both sat down.

"No one," resumed the sugar lady, "has ever suspected the truth; but I'm

only a sham, and it worries me dreadfully."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Twinkle. "Your sugar seems as pure and sparkling as that of the king."

"Things are not always what they seem," sighed the sugar lady. "What you see of me, on the outside, is all right; but the fact is, *I'm hollow!*"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Twinkle, in surprise. "How do you know it?"

"I can feel it," answered the lady, impressively. "If you weighed me you'd find I'm not as heavy as the solid ones, and for a long time I've realized the bitter truth that I'm hollow. It makes me very unhappy, but I don't dare confide my secret to any one here, because it would disgrace me forever."

"I wouldn't worry," said the child. "They'll never know the difference."

"Not unless I should break," replied the sugar lady. "But if that happened, all the world could see that I'm hollow, and instead of being welcomed in good society I'd become an outcast. It's even more respectable to be made of brown sugar, than to be hollow; don't you think so?"

"I'm a stranger here," said Twinkle; "so I can't judge. But if I were you, I wouldn't worry unless I got broke; and you may be wrong, after all, and as sound as a brick!"

Chapter VI. The Royal Chariot

JUST then the king came back to the room and said:

"The chariot is at the door; and, as there are three seats, I'll take Lord Cloy and Princess Sakareen with us."

So the children followed the king to the door of the palace, where stood a beautiful white and yellow sugar chariot, drawn by six handsome sugar horses with spun sugar tails and manes, and driven by a brown sugar coachman in a blue sugar livery.

The king got in first, and the others followed. Then the children discovered that Lord Cloy was the frosted man and Princess Sakareen was the sugar lady who had told Twinkle that she was hollow.

There was quite a crowd of sugar people at the gates to watch the departure of the royal party, and a few soldiers and policemen were also present to keep order. Twinkle sat beside the king, and Chubbins sat on the same seat with the Princess Sakareen, while Lord Cloy was obliged to sit with the coachman. When all were ready the driver cracked a sugar whip (but didn't break it), and away the chariot dashed over a road paved with blocks of cut loaf-sugar.

The air was cool and pleasant, but there was a sweet smell to the breeze that was peculiar to this strange country. Sugar birds flew here and there, singing sweet songs, and a few sugar dogs ran out to bark at the king's chariot as it whirled along.

"Haven't you any automobiles in your country?" asked the girl.

"No," answered the king. "Anything that requires heat to make it go is avoided here, because heat would melt us and ruin our bodies in a few minutes. Automobiles would be dangerous in Sugar-Loaf City."

"They're dangerous enough anywhere," she said. "What do you feed to your horses?"

"They eat a fine quality of barley-sugar that grows in our fields," answered the king. "You'll see it presently, for we will drive out to my country villa, which is near the edge of the dome, opposite to where you came in."

First, however, they rode all about the city, and the king pointed out the public buildings, and the theaters, and the churches, and a number of small but pretty public parks. And there was a high tower near the center that rose half-way to the dome, it was so tall.

"Aren't you afraid the roof will cave in some time, and ruin your city?" Twinkle asked the king.

"Oh, no," he answered. "We never think of such a thing. Isn't there a

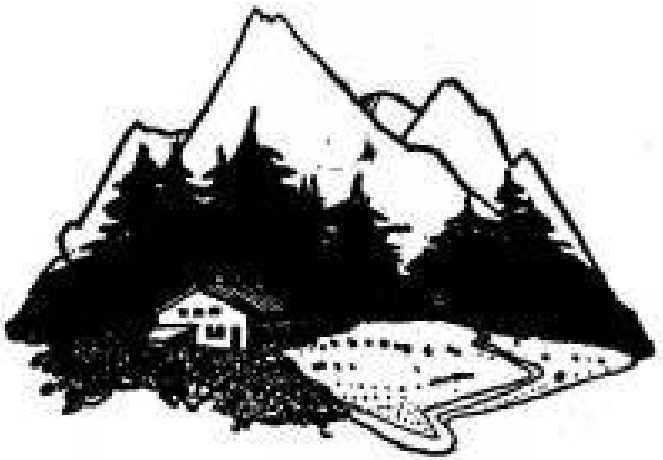
dome over the place where you live?”

“Yes,” said Twinkle; “but it’s the sky.”

“Do you ever fear it will cave in?” inquired the king.

“No, indeed!” she replied, with a laugh at the idea.

“Well, it’s the same way with us,” returned his Majesty. “Domes are the strongest things in all the world.”



Chapter VII. Twinkle Gets Thirsty

AFTER they had seen the sights of the city the carriage turned into a broad highway that led into the country, and soon they began to pass fields of sugar corn and gardens of sugar cabbages and sugar beets and sugar potatoes. There were also orchards of sugar plums and sugar apples and vineyards of sugar grapes. All the trees were sugar, and even the grass was sugar, while sugar grasshoppers hopped about in it. Indeed, Chubbins decided that not a speck of anything beneath the dome of Sugar-Loaf Mountain was anything but pure sugar — unless the inside of the frosted man proved to be of a different material.

By and by they reached a pretty villa, where they all left the carriage and followed the sugar king into the sugar house. Refreshments had been ordered in advance, over the sugar telephone, so that the dining table was already laid and all they had to do was to sit in the pretty sugar chairs and be waited upon by maple-sugar attendants.

There were sandwiches and salads and fruits and many other sugar things to eat, served on sugar plates; and the children found that some were flavored with winter-green and raspberry and lemon, so that they were almost as good as candies. At each plate was a glass made of crystal sugar and filled with thick sugar syrup, and this seemed to be the only thing to drink. After eating so much sugar the children naturally became thirsty, and when the king asked Twinkle if she would like anything else she answered promptly:

"Yes, I'd like a drink of water."

At once a murmur of horror arose from the sugar people present, and the king pushed back his chair as if greatly disturbed.

"Water!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Sure," replied Chubbins. "I want some, too. We're thirsty."

The king shuddered.

"Nothing in the world," said he gravely, "is so dangerous as water. It melts sugar in no time, and to drink it would destroy you instantly."

"We're not made of sugar," said Twinkle. "In our country we drink all the water we want."

"It may be true," returned the king; "but I am thankful to say there is no drop of water in all this favored country. But we have syrup, which is much better for your health. It fills up the spaces inside you, and hardens and makes you solid."

"It makes me thirstier than ever," said the girl. "But if you have no water we must try to get along until we get home again."

When the luncheon was over, they entered the carriage again and were

driven back towards the city. On the way the six sugar horses became restless, and pranced around in so lively a manner that the sugar coachman could scarcely hold them in. And when they had nearly reached the palace a part of the harness broke, and without warning all six horses dashed madly away. The chariot smashed against a high wall of sugar and broke into many pieces, the sugar people, as well as Twinkle and Chubbins, being thrown out and scattered in all directions.

The little girl was not at all hurt, nor was Chubbins, who landed on top the wall and had to climb down again. But the king had broken one of the points off his crown, and sat upon the ground gazing sorrowfully at his wrecked chariot. And Lord Cloy, the frosted man, had smashed one of his feet, and everybody could now see that underneath the frosting was a material very like marshmallow — a discovery that was sure to condemn him as unfit for the society of the solid sugar-loaf aristocracy of the country.

But perhaps the most serious accident of all had befallen Princess Sakareen, whose left leg had broken short off at the knee. Twinkle ran up to her as soon as she could, and found the Princess smiling happily and gazing at the part of the broken leg which she had picked up.

"See here, Twinkle," she cried; "it's as solid as the king himself! I'm not hollow at all. It was only my imagination."

"I'm glad of that," answered Twinkle; "but what will you do with a broken leg?"

"Oh, that's easily mended," said the Princess, "All I must do is to put a little syrup on the broken parts, and stick them together, and then sit in the breeze until it hardens. I'll be all right in an hour from now."

It pleased Twinkle to hear this, for she liked the pretty sugar princess.

Chapter VIII. After the Runaway

NOW the king came up to them, saying: “I hope you are not injured.”

“We are all right,” said Twinkle; “but I’m getting dreadful thirsty, so if your Majesty has no objection I guess we’ll go home.”

“No objection at all,” answered the king.

Chubbins had been calmly filling his pockets with broken spokes and other bits of the wrecked chariot; but feeling nearly as thirsty as Twinkle, he was glad to learn they were about to start for home.

They exchanged good-byes with all their sugar friends, and thanked the sugar king for his royal entertainment. Then Captain Brittle and his soldiers escorted the children to the archway through which they had entered Sugar-Loaf City.

They had little trouble in going back, although the tunnel was so dark in places that they had to feel their way. But finally daylight could be seen ahead, and a few minutes later they scrambled up the stone steps and squeezed through the little doorway.

There was their basket, just as they had left it, and the afternoon sun was shining softly over the familiar worldly landscape, which they were both rejoiced to see again.

Chubbins closed the iron door, and as soon as he did so the bolts shot into place, locking it securely.

“Where’s the key?” asked Twinkle.

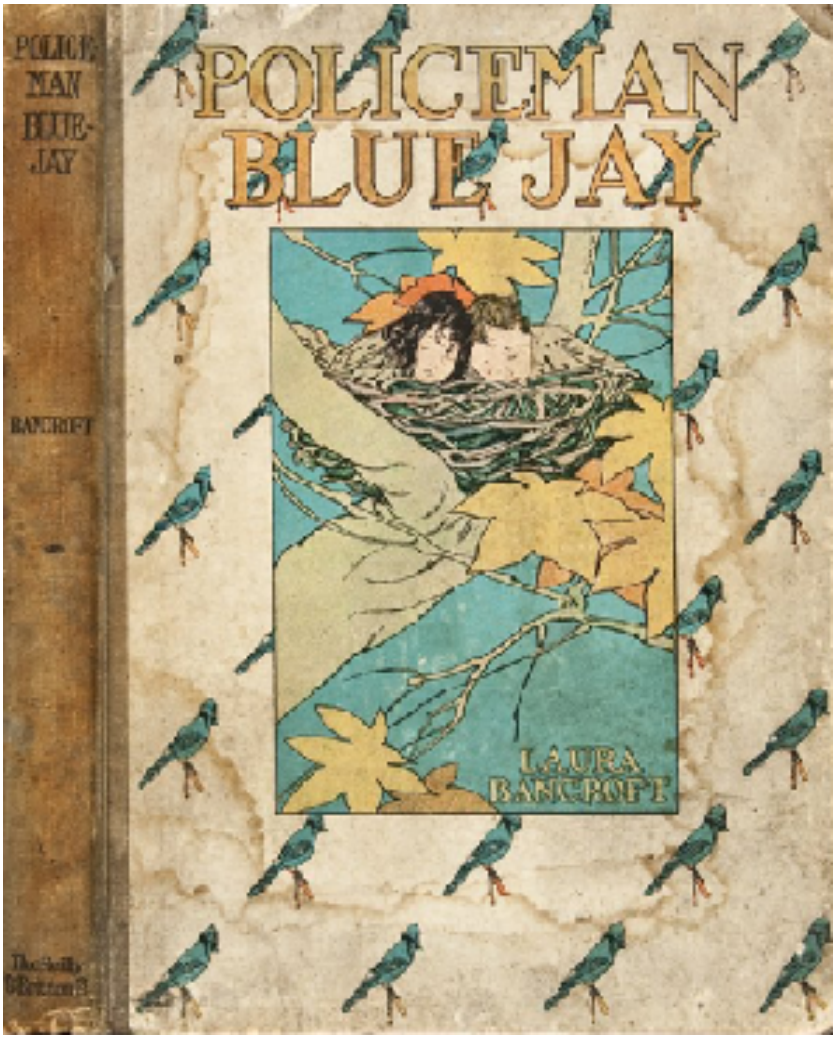
“I put it into my pocket,” said Chubbins, “but it must have dropped out when I tumbled from the king’s chariot.”

“That’s too bad,” said Twinkle; “for now no one can ever get to the sugar city again. The door is locked, and the key is on the other side.”

“Never mind,” said the boy. “We’ve seen the inside of Sugar-Loaf Mountain once, and that’ll do us all our lives. Come on, Twink. Let’s go home and get a drink!”

POLICEMAN BLUEJAY

Some critics consider *Policeman Bluejay* to be one of Baum's finest fantasies. The main character first appeared in one of Baum's "Twinkle" stories, "Bandit Jim Crow." Reilly & Britton published *Policeman Bluejay* in 1907 under Baum's pseudonym, Laura Bancroft. Maginel Wright Enright provided the illustrations, as she had for *Twinkle and Chubbins*. The novel appeared again in 1911 under the title *Babes in Birdland*, and the 1917 edition replaced the pseudonym with Baum's name. Kindness to animals was Baum's theme in all of his "Twinkle" tales and especially in this novel. Lost in a great forest, Twinkle and Chubbins meet a "tuxix," an evil magician in the shape of a spiny turtle. The tuxix transforms the children into skylarks, though they retain their heads. Policeman Bluejay assists the children in their new lives and adventures follow as they learn about their fellow creatures and deal with their rivalries and even violence, while absorbing some of the splendors of the natural world. They also seek a way to return to human form.



A first edition copy of 'Policeman Bluejay'

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I MUST admit that the great success of the “TWINKLE TALES” has astonished me as much as it has delighted the solemn-eyed, hard working publishers. Therefore I have been encouraged to write a new “TWINKLE BOOK,” hoping with all my heart that my little friends will find it worthy to occupy a place beside the others on their pet bookshelves. And because the children seem to especially love the story of “Bandit Jim Crow,” and bird-life is sure to appeal alike to their hearts and their imaginations, I have again written about birds.

The tale is fantastical, and intended to amuse rather than instruct; yet many of the traits of the feathered folk, herein described, are in strict accordance with natural history teachings and will serve to acquaint my readers with the habits of birds in their wildwood homes. At the same time my birds do unexpected things, because I have written a fairy tale and not a natural history.

The question is often asked me whether Twinkle and Chubbins were asleep or awake when they encountered these wonderful adventures; and it grieves me to reflect that the modern child has been deprived of fairy tales to such an extent that it does not know--as I did when a girl--that in a fairy story it does not matter whether one is awake or not. You must accept it as you would a fragrant breeze that cools your brow, a draught of sweet water, or the delicious flavor of a strawberry, and be grateful for the pleasure it brings you, without stopping to question too closely its source.

For my part I am glad if my stories serve to while away a pleasant hour before bedtime or keep one contented on a rainy day. In this way they are sure to be useful, and if a little tenderness for the helpless animals and birds is acquired with the amusement, the value of the tales will be doubled.

LAURA BANCROFT.

CHAPTER I

Little Ones in Trouble

"SEEMS to me, Chub," said Twinkle, "that we're lost."

"Seems to me, Twink," said Chubbins, "that it isn't *we* that's lost. It's the path."

"It was here a minute ago," declared Twinkle.

"But it isn't here now," replied the boy.

"That's true," said the girl.

It really *was* queer. They had followed the straight path into the great forest, and had only stopped for a moment to sit down and rest, with the basket between them and their backs to a big tree. Twinkle winked just twice, because she usually took a nap in the afternoon, and Chubbins merely closed his eyes a second to find out if he could see that long streak of sunshine through his pink eyelids. Yet during this second, which happened while Twinkle was winking, the path had run away and left them without any guide or any notion which way they ought to go.

Another strange thing was that when they jumped up to look around them the nearest trees began sliding away, in a circle, leaving the little girl and boy in a clear space. And the trees continued moving back and back, farther and farther, until all their trunks were jammed tight together, and not even a mouse could have crept between them. They made a solid ring around Twinkle and Chubbins, who stood looking at this transformation with wondering eyes.

"It's a trap," said Chubbins; "and we're in it."

"It looks that way," replied Twinkle, thoughtfully. "Isn't it lucky, Chub, we have the basket with us? If it wasn't for that, we might starve to death in our prison."

"Oh, well," replied the little fellow, "the basket won't last long. There's plenty of starve in the bottom of it, Twinkle, any way you can fix it."

"That's so; unless we can get out. Whatever do you suppose made the trees behave that way, Chubbins?

"Don't know," said the boy.

Just then a queer creature dropped from a tree into the ring and began moving slowly toward them. It was flat in shape, like a big turtle; only it hadn't a turtle's hard shell. Instead, its body was covered with sharp prickers, like rose thorns, and it had two small red eyes that looked cruel and wicked. The children could not see how many legs it had, but they must have been very short, because the creature moved so slowly over the ground.

When it had drawn near to them it said, in a pleading tone that sounded

soft and rather musical:

"Little girl, pick me up in your arms, and pet me!"

Twinkle shrank back.

"My! I couldn't *think* of doing such a thing," she answered.

Then the creature said:

"Little boy, please pick me up in your arms, and pet me!"

"Go 'way!" shouted Chubbins. "I wouldn't touch you for anything."

The creature turned its red eyes first upon one and then upon the other.

"Listen, my dears," it continued; "I was once a beautiful maiden, but a cruel tuxix transformed me into this awful shape, and so must I remain until some child willingly takes me in its arms and pets me. Then, and not till then, will I be restored to my proper form."

"Don't believe it! Don't believe it!" cried a high, clear voice, and both the boy and the girl looked quickly around to see who had spoken. But no one besides themselves was in sight, and they only noticed a thick branch of one of the trees slightly swaying its leaves.

"What is a tuxix?" asked Twinkle, who was beginning to feel sorry for the poor creature.

"It is a magician, a sorcerer, a wizard, and a witch all rolled into one," was the answer; "and you can imagine what a dreadful thing that would be."

"Be careful!" cried the clear voice, again. "It is the tuxix herself who is talking to you. Don't believe a word you hear!"

At this the red eyes of the creature flashed fire with anger, and it tried to turn its clumsy body around to find the speaker. Twinkle and Chubbins looked too, but only heard a flutter and a mocking laugh coming from the trees.

"If I get my eye on that bird, it will never speak again," exclaimed the creature, in a voice of fury very different from the sweet tones it had at first used; and perhaps it was this fact that induced the children to believe the warning was from a friend, and they would do well to heed it.

"Whether you are the tuxix or not," said Twinkle, "I never will touch you. You may be sure of that."

"Nor I," declared Chubbins, stoutly, as he came closer to the girl and grasped her hand in his own.

At this the horrid thing bristled all its sharp prickers in anger, and said:

"Then, if I cannot conquer you in one way, I will in another. Go, both of you, and join the bird that warned you, and live in the air and the trees until you repent your stubbornness and promise to become my slaves. The tuxix has spoken, and her magical powers are at work. Go!"

In an instant Twinkle saw Chubbins shoot through the air and disappear

among the leaves of one of the tall trees. As he went he seemed to grow very small, and to change in shape.

"Wait!" she cried. "I'm coming, too!"

She was afraid of losing Chubbins, so she flew after him, feeling rather queer herself, and a moment after was safe in the tall tree, clinging with her toes to a branch and looking in amazement at the boy who sat beside her.

Chubbins had been transformed into a pretty little bird — all, that is, except his head, which was Chubbins' own head reduced in size to fit the bird body. It still had upon it the straw hat, which had also grown small in size, and the sight that met Twinkle's eyes was so funny that she laughed merrily, and her laugh was like the sweet warbling of a skylark.

Chubbins looked at her and saw almost what she saw; for Twinkle was a bird too, except for her head, with its checked sunbonnet, which had grown small enough to fit the pretty, glossy-feathered body of a lark.

Both of them had to cling fast to the branch with their toes, for their arms and hands were now wings. The toes were long and sharp pointed, so that they could be used in the place of fingers.

"My!" exclaimed Twinkle; "you're a queer sight, Chubbins!"

"So are you," answered the boy. "That mean old thing must have 'witched us."

"Yes, we're 'chanted," said Twinkle. "And now, what are we going to do about it? We can't go home, for our folks would be scared nearly into fits. And we don't know the way home, either."

"That's so," said Chubbins, fluttering his little wings to keep from falling, for he had nearly lost his balance.

"What shall we do?" she continued.

"Why, fly around and be gay and happy," said a clear and merry voice beside them. "That's what birds are expected to do!"

CHAPTER II

The Forest Guardian

Twinkle and Chubbins twisted their heads around on their little feathered necks and saw perched beside them a big bird of a most beautiful blue color. At first they were a bit frightened, for the newcomer seemed of giant size beside their little lark bodies, and he was, moreover, quite fierce in appearance, having a crest of feathers that came to a point above his head, and a strong beak and sharp talons. But Twinkle looked full into the shrewd, bright eye, and found it good humored and twinkling; so she plucked up courage and asked:

"Were you speaking to us?"

"Very likely," replied the blue bird, in a cheerful tone. "There's no one else around to speak to."

"And was it you who warned us against that dreadful creature below in the forest?" she continued.

"It was."

"Then," said Twinkle, "we are very much obliged to you."

"Don't mention it," said the other. "I'm the forest policeman — Policeman Bluejay, you know — and it's my duty to look after everyone who is in trouble."

"We're in trouble, all right," said Chubbins, sorrowfully.

"Well, it might have been worse," remarked Policeman Bluejay, making a chuckling sound in his throat that Twinkle thought was meant for a laugh. "If you had ever touched the old tuxix she would have transformed you into toads or lizards. That is an old trick of hers, to get children into her power and then change them into things as loathsome as herself."

"I wouldn't have touched her, anyhow," said Twinkle.

"Nor I!" cried Chubbins, in his shrill, bird-like voice. "She wasn't nice."

"Still, it was good of you to warn us," Twinkle added, sweetly.

The Bluejay looked upon the fluttering little things with kind approval. Then he laughed outright.

"What has happened to your heads?" he asked.

"Nothing, 'cept they're smaller," replied Chubbins.

"But birds shouldn't have human heads," retorted the bluejay. "I suppose the old tuxix did that so the birds would not admit you into their society, for you are neither all bird nor all human. But never mind; I'll explain your case, and you may be sure all the birds of the forest will be kind to you."

"Must we stay like this always?" asked Twinkle, anxiously.

"I really can't say," answered the policeman. "There is said to be a way to

break every enchantment, if one knows what it is. The trouble in these cases is to discover what the charm may be that will restore you to your natural shapes. But just now you must make up your minds to live in our forest for a time, and to be as happy as you can under the circumstances."

"Well, we'll try," said Chubbins, with a sigh.

"That's right," exclaimed Policeman Bluejay, nodding his crest in approval. "The first thing you must have is a house; so, if you will fly with me, I will try to find you one."

"I — I'm afraid!" said Twinkle, nervously.

"The larks," declared the bluejay, "are almost the strongest and best flyers we have. You two children have now become skylarks, and may soar so high in the air that you can scarcely see the earth below you. For that reason you need have no fear whatever. Be bold and brave, and all will be well."

He spoke in such a kindly and confident voice that both Twinkle and Chubbins gained courage; and when the policeman added: "Come on!" and flew straight as an arrow into the air above the tree-tops, the two little skylarks with their girl and boy heads followed swiftly after him, and had no trouble in going just as fast as their conductor.

It was quite a pleasant and interesting experience, to dart through the air and be in no danger of falling. When they rested on their outstretched wings they floated as lightly as bubbles, and soon a joyous thrill took possession of them and they began to understand why it is that the free, wild birds are always so happy in their native state.

The forest was everywhere under them, for it was of vast extent. Presently the bluejay swooped downward and alighted near the top of a tall maple tree that had many thick branches.

In a second Twinkle and Chubbins were beside him, their little hearts beating fast in their glossy bosoms from the excitement of their rapid flight. Just in front of them, firmly fastened to a crotch of a limb, was a neatly built nest of a gray color, lined inside with some soft substance that was as smooth as satin.

"Here," said their thoughtful friend, "is the nest that Niddie Thrush and Daisy Thrush built for themselves a year ago. They have now gone to live in a wood across the big river, so you are welcome to their old home. It is almost as good as new, and there is no rent to pay."

"It's awfully small!" said Chubbins.

"Chut-chut!" twittered Policeman Bluejay. "Remember you are not children now, but skylarks, and that this is a thrush's nest. Try it, and you are sure to find it will fit you exactly."

So Twinkle and Chubbins flew into the "house" and nestled their bodies

against its soft lining and found that their friend was right. When they were cuddled together, with their slender legs tucked into the feathers of their breasts, they just filled the nest to the brim, and no more room was necessary.

"Now, I'll mark the nest for you, so that everyone will know you claim it," said the policeman; and with his bill he pecked a row of small dots in the bark of the limb, just beside the nest. "I hope you will be very happy here, and this afternoon I will bring some friends to meet you. So now good-bye until I see you again."

"Wait!" cried Chubbins. "What are we going to eat?"

"Eat!" answered the bluejay, as if surprised. "Why, you may feast upon all the good things the forest offers — grubs, beetles, worms, and butterfly-eggs."

"Ugh!" gasped Chubbins. "It makes me sick to just think of it."

"What!"

"You see," said Twinkle, "we are not *all* birds, Mr. Bluejay, as you are; and that makes a big difference. We have no bills to pick up the things that birds like to eat, and we do not care for the same sort of food, either."

"What *do* you care for?" asked the policeman, in a puzzled voice.

"Why, cake and sandwitches, and pickles, and cheese, such as we had in our basket. We couldn't *eat* any live things, you see, because we are not used to it."

The bluejay became thoughtful.

"I understand your objection," he said, "and perhaps you are right, not having good bird sense because the brains in your heads are still human brains. Let me see: what can I do to help you?"

The children did not speak, but watched him anxiously.

"Where did you leave your basket?" he finally asked.

"In the place where the old witch 'chanted us."

"Then," said the officer of the forest, "I must try to get it for you."

"It is too big and heavy for a bird to carry," suggested Twinkle.

"Sure enough. Of course. That's a fact." He turned his crested head upward, trying to think of a way, and saw a black speck moving across the sky.

"Wait a minute! I'll be back," he called, and darted upward like a flash.

The children watched him mount into the sky toward the black speck, and heard his voice crying out in sharp, quick notes. And before long Policeman Bluejay attracted the other bird's attention, causing it to pause in its flight and sink slowly downward until the two drew close together.

Then it was seen that the other bird was a great eagle, strong and sharp-eyed, and with broad wings that spread at least six feet from tip to tip.

“Good day, friend eagle,” said the bluejay; “I hope you are in no hurry, for I want to ask you to do me a great favor.”

“What is it?” asked the eagle, in a big, deep voice.

“Please go to a part of the forest with me and carry a basket to some friends of mine. I’ll show you the way. It is too heavy for me to lift, but with your great strength you can do it easily.”

“It will give me pleasure to so favor you,” replied the eagle, politely; so Policeman Bluejay led the way and the eagle followed with such mighty strokes of its wings that the air was sent whirling in little eddies behind him, as the water is churned by a steamer’s paddles.

It was not very long before they reached the clearing in the forest. The horrid tuxix had wriggled her evil body away, to soothe her disappointment by some other wicked act; but the basket stood as the children had left it.

The eagle seized the handle in his stout beak and found it was no trouble at all for him to fly into the air and carry the basket with him.

“This way, please — this way!” chirped the bluejay; and the eagle bore the precious burden safely to the maple tree, and hung it upon a limb just above the nest.

As he approached he made such a fierce fluttering that Twinkle and Chubbins were dreadfully scared and flew out of their nest, hopping from limb to limb until they were well out of the monstrous bird’s way. But when they saw the basket, and realized the eagle’s kindly act, they flew toward him and thanked him very earnestly for his assistance.

“Goodness me!” exclaimed the eagle, turning his head first on one side and then on the other, that both his bright eyes might observe the child-larks; “what curious creatures have you here, my good policeman?”

“Why, it is another trick of old Hautau, the tuxix. She found two children in the forest and enchanted them. She wanted to make them toads, but they wouldn’t touch her, so she couldn’t. Then she got herself into a fine rage and made the little dears half birds and half children, as you see them. I was in a tree near by, and saw the whole thing. Because I was sorry for the innocent victims I befriended them, and as this basket belongs to them I have asked you to fetch it to their nest.”

“I am glad to be of service,” replied the eagle. “If ever you need me, and I am anywhere around,” he continued, addressing the larks, “just call me, and I will come at once.”

“Thank you,” said Twinkle, gratefully.

“We’re much obliged,” added Chubbins.

Then the eagle flew away, and when he was gone Policeman Bluejay also bade them good-bye.

“I’ll be back this afternoon, without fail,” he said. “Just now I must go and look over the forest, and make sure none of the birds have been in mischief during my absence. Do not go very far from your nest, for a time, or you may get lost. The forest is a big place; but when you are more used to it and to your new condition you can be more bold in venturing abroad.”

“We won’t leave this tree,” promised Twinkle, in an earnest voice.

And Chubbins chimed in with, “That’s right; we won’t leave this tree until you come back.”

“Good-bye,” said the policeman.

“Good-bye,” responded Twinkle and Chubbins.

So the bluejay darted away and was soon lost to sight, and Twinkle and Chubbins were left alone to seriously consider the great misfortune that had overtaken them.

CHAPTER III

The Child-Larks

"Folks will be worried about us, Twink," said Chubbins.

"'Course they will," Twinkle replied. "They'll wonder what has become of us, and try to find us."

"But they won't look in the tree-tops."

"No."

"Nor think to ask the birds where we are."

"Why should they?" enquired Twinkle. "They can't talk to the birds, Chub."

"Why not? We talk to them, don't we? And they talk to us. At least, the p'liceman and the eagle did."

"That's true," answered Twinkle, "and I don't understand it a bit. I must ask Mr. Bluejay to 'splain it to us."

"What's the use of a p'liceman in the forest?" asked Chubbins, after a moment's thought.

"I suppose," she replied, "that he has to keep the birds from being naughty. Some birds are just awful mischiefs, Chub. There's the magpies, you know, that steal; and the crows that fight; and the jackdaws that are saucy, and lots of others that get into trouble. Seems to me P'liceman Bluejay's a pretty busy bird, if he looks after things as he ought."

"Prob'ly he's got his hands full," said Chubbins.

"Not that; for he hasn't any hands, any more than we have. Perhaps you ought to say he's got his wings full," suggested Twinkle.

"That reminds me I'm hungry," chirped the boy-lark.

"Well, we've got the basket," she replied.

"But how can we eat cake and things, witched up as we are?"

"Haven't we mouths and teeth, just the same as ever?"

"Yes, but we haven't any hands, and there's a cloth tied over the top of the basket."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Twinkle; "I hadn't thought of that."

They flew together to the basket and perched upon the edge of it. It seemed astonishingly big to them, now that they were so small; but Chubbins remarked that this fact was a pleasant one, for instead of eating all the good things the basket contained at one meal, as they had at first intended, it would furnish them with food for many days to come.

But how to get into the basket was the thing to be considered just now. They fluttered around on every side of it, and finally found a small place where the cloth was loose. In a minute Chubbins began clawing at it with his

little feet, and Twinkle helped him; so that gradually they managed to pull the cloth away far enough for one of them to crawl through the opening. Then the other followed, and because the big basket was not quite full there was exactly room for them to stand underneath the cloth and walk around on top of a row of cookies that lay next to a row of sandwiches.

The cookies seemed enormous. One was lying flat, and Chubbins declared it seemed as big around as the dining-table at home.

"All the better for us," said Twinkle, bending her head down to nibble at the edge of the cookie.

"If we're going to be birds," said Chubbins, who was also busily eating as best he could, "we ought to be reg'lar birds, and have bills to peck with. This being half one thing and half another doesn't suit me at all."

"The witch wasn't trying to suit us," replied Twinkle; "she was trying to get us into trouble."

"Well, she did it, all right," he said.

It was not so hard to eat as they had feared, for their slender necks enabled them to bend their heads low. Chubbins' hat fell off, a minute later, and he wondered how he was going to get it on his head again.

"Can't you stand on one foot, and use the other foot like a hand?" asked Twinkle.

"I don't know," said he.

"The storks stand on one leg," continued the girl. "I've seen 'em in pictures."

So Chubbins tried it, and found he could balance his little body on one leg very nicely. For if he toppled either way he had but to spread his wings and tail feathers and so keep himself from falling. He picked up his hat with the claws of his other foot and managed to put it on by ducking his head.

This gave the boy-lark a new idea. He broke off a piece of the cookie and held it in his claw while he ate it; and seeing his success Twinkle followed his example, and after a few attempts found she could eat very comfortably in that way.

Having had their luncheon — and it amazed Chubbins to see how very little was required to satisfy their hunger — the bird-children crept out of the basket and flew down to the twig beside their nest.

"Hello!" cried a strange voice. "Newcomers, eh?"

They were so startled that they fluttered a moment to keep from tumbling off the limb. Then Twinkle saw a furry red head sticking out of a small hollow in the trunk of the tree. The head had two round black eyes, an inquisitive nose, a wide mouth with sharp teeth and whiskers like those of a cat. It seemed as big as the moon to the shy little child-larks, until it occurred

to the girl that the strange creature must be a squirrel.

"You — you scared us!" she said, timidly.

"You scared *me,* at first," returned the squirrel, in a comic tone. "Dear me! how came you birds to have children's heads?"

"That isn't the way to put it," remarked Chubbins, staring back into the eyes of the squirrel. "You should ask how we children happened to have birds' bodies."

"Very well; put the conundrum that way, if you like," said the squirrel. "What is the answer?"

"We are enchanted," replied Twinkle.

"Ah. The tuxix?"

"Yes. We were caught in the forest, and she bewitched us."

"That is too bad," said their new acquaintance. "She is a very wicked old creature, for a fact, and loves to get folks into trouble. Are you going to live here?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "Policeman Bluejay gave us this nest."

"Then it's all right; for Policeman Bluejay rules the feathered tribes of this forest about as he likes. Have you seen him in full uniform yet?"

"No," they replied, "unless his feathers are his uniform."

"Well, he's too proud of his office to be satisfied with feathers, I can tell you. When some folks get a little authority they want all the world to know about it, and a bold uniform covers many a faint heart. But as I'm your nearest neighbor I'll introduce myself. My name's Wisk."

"My name is Twinkle."

"And mine's Chubbins."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance," said the squirrel, nodding. "I live in the second flat."

"How's that?" asked the boy.

"Why, the second hollow, you know. There's a 'possum living in the hollow down below, who is carrying four babies around in her pocket; and Mrs. Hootaway, the gray owl, lives in the hollow above — the one you can see far over your heads. So I'm the second flat tenant."

"I see," said Twinkle.

"Early in the morning the 'possum comes growling home to go to bed; late at night the owl hoots and keeps folks awake; but I'm very quiet and well behaved, and you'll find me a good neighbor," continued Wisk.

"I'm sure of that," said Chubbins.

As if to prove his friendship the squirrel now darted out of the hollow and sat upon a limb beside the children, holding his bushy tail straight up so that it stood above his head like a big plume in a soldier's helmet.

“Are you hungry?” asked the girl.

“Not very. I cannot get much food until the nuts are ripe, you know, and my last winter’s supply was gone long ago. But I manage to find some bits to eat, here and there.”

“Do you like cookies?” she asked.

“I really do not know,” answered Wisk. “Where do they grow?”

“In baskets. I’ll get you a piece, and you can try it.” So Twinkle flew up and crept into her basket again, quickly returning with a bit of cookie in her claw. It was not much more than a crumb, but nevertheless it was all that she could carry.

The squirrel seized the morsel in his paws, examined it gravely, and then took a nibble. An instant later it was gone.

“That is very good, indeed!” he declared. “Where do these baskets of cookies grow?”

“They don’t grow anywhere,” replied Twinkle, with a laugh. “The baskets come from the grocery store, and my mama makes the cookies.”

“Oh; they’re human food, then.”

“Yes; would you like some more?”

“Not just now,” said Wisk. “I don’t want to rob you, and it is foolish to eat more than one needs, just because the food tastes good. But if I get very hungry, perhaps I’ll ask you for another bite.”

“Do,” said the girl. “You are welcome to what we have, as long as it lasts.”

“That is very kind of you,” returned the squirrel.

They sat and talked for an hour, and Wisk told them stories of the forest, and of the many queer animals and birds that lived there. It was all very interesting to the children, and they listened eagerly until they heard a rushing sound in the air that sent Wisk scurrying back into his hole.

CHAPTER IV

An Afternoon Reception

Twinkle and Chubbins stretched their little necks to see what was coming, and a moment later beheld one of the most gorgeous sights the forest affords — a procession of all the bright-hued birds that live among the trees or seek them for shelter.

They flew in pairs, one after the other, and at the head of the procession was their good friend Policeman Bluejay, wearing a policeman's helmet upon his head and having a policeman's club tucked underneath his left wing. The helmet was black and glossy and had a big number "1" on the front of it, and a strap that passed under the wearer's bill and held it firmly in place. The club was fastened around the policeman's wing with a cord, so that it could not get away when he was flying.

The birds were of many sizes and of various colorings. Some were much larger than the bluejay, but none seemed so proud or masterful, and all deferred meekly to the commands of the acknowledged guardian of the forest.

One by one the pretty creatures alighted upon the limbs of the tree, and the first thing they all did was to arrange their feathers properly after their rapid flight. Then the bluejay, who sat next to the child-larks, proceeded to introduce the guests he had brought to call upon the newest inhabitants of his domain.

"This is Mr. and Mrs. Robin Redbreast, one of our most aristocratic families," said he, swinging his club around in a circle until Chubbins ducked his head for fear it might hit him.

"You are welcome to our forest," chirped Robin, in a sedate and dignified tone.

"And here is Mr. Goldfinch and his charming bride," continued the policeman.

"Ah, it is a pleasure to meet you," the goldfinch murmured, eyeing the child-larks curiously, but trying to be so polite that they would not notice his staring.

"Henny Wren and Jenny Wren," proceeded the policeman.

Twinkle and Chubbins both bowed politely.

"Well, well!" croaked a raven, in a hoarse voice, "am I to wait all day while you introduce those miserable little insignificant grub-eaters?"

"Be quiet!" cried Policeman Bluejay, sternly.

"I won't," snapped the raven.

It happened so quickly that the children saw nothing before they heard the

thump of the club against the raven's head.

"Caw — waw — waw — waw! Murder! Help!" screamed the big bird, and flew away from the tree as swiftly as his ragged wings would carry him.

"Let him go," said a sweet brown mocking-bird. "The rowdy is always disturbing our social gatherings, and no one will miss him if he doesn't come back."

"He is not fit for polite society," added a nuthatcher, pruning her scarlet wings complacently.

So the policeman tucked the club under his wing again and proceeded with the introductions, the pewees and the linnets being next presented to the strangers, and then the comical little chicadees, the orioles, bobolinks, thrushes, starlings and whippoorwills, the latter appearing sleepy because, they explained, they had been out late the night before.

These smaller birds all sat in rows on the limbs beside Twinkle and Chubbins; but seated upon the stouter limbs facing them were rows of bigger birds who made the child-larks nervous by the sharp glances from their round, bright eyes. Here were blackbirds, cuckoos, magpies, grosbeaks and wood-pigeons, all nearly as big and fierce-looking as Policeman Bluejay himself, and some so rugged and strong that it seemed strange they would submit to the orders of the officer of the law. But the policeman kept a sharp watch upon these birds, to see that they attempted no mischievous pranks, and they must have been afraid of him because they behaved very well after the saucy raven had left them. Even the chattering magpies tried to restrain their busy tongues, and the blackbirds indulged in no worse pranks than to suddenly spread their wings and try to push the pigeons off the branch.

Several beautiful humming-birds were poised in the air above this gathering, their bodies being motionless but their tiny wings fluttering so swiftly that neither Twinkle nor Chubbins could see them at all.

Policeman Bluejay, having finally introduced all the company to the child-larks, began to relate the story of their adventures, telling the birds how the wicked tuxix had transformed them into the remarkable shapes they now possessed.

"For the honor of our race," he said, "we must each and every one guard these little strangers carefully, and see that they come to no harm in our forest. You must all pledge yourselves to befriend them on all occasions, and if any one dares to break his promise he must fight with me to the death — and you know very well what that means."

"We do," said a magpie, with a shrill laugh. "You'll treat us as you did Jim Crow. Eh?"

The policeman did not notice this remark, but the other birds all looked

grave and thoughtful, and began in turn to promise that they would take care to befriend the child-larks at all times. This ceremony having been completed, the birds began to converse in a more friendly and easy tone, so that Twinkle and Chubbins soon ceased to be afraid of them, and enjoyed very much their society and friendly chatter.

CHAPTER V

The Oriole's Story

"We are really very happy in this forest," said an oriole that sat next to Twinkle, "and we would have no fears at all did not the men with guns, who are called hunters, come here now and then to murder us. They are terribly wild and ferocious creatures, who have no hearts at all."

"Oh, they *must* have hearts," said Twinkle, "else they couldn't live. For one's heart has to beat to keep a person alive, you know."

"Perhaps it's their gizzards that beat," replied the oriole, reflectively, "for they are certainly heartless and very wicked. A cousin of mine, Susie Oriole, had a very brave and handsome husband. They built a pretty nest together and Susie laid four eggs in it that were so perfect that she was very proud of them.

"The eggs were nearly ready to hatch when a great man appeared in the forest and discovered Susie's nest. Her brave husband fought desperately to protect their home, but the cruel man shot him, and he fell to the ground dead. Even then Susie would not leave her pretty eggs, and when the man climbed the tree to get them she screamed and tried to peck out his eyes. Usually we orioles are very timid, you know; so you can well understand how terrified Susie was to fight against this giant foe. But he had a club in his hand, with which he dealt my poor cousin such a dreadful blow that she was sent whirling through the air and sank half unconscious into a bush a few yards away.

"After this the man stole the eggs from the nest, and also picked up the dead body of Susie's husband and carried it away with him. Susie recovered somewhat from the blow she had received, and when she saw her eggs and her poor dead husband being taken away, she managed to flutter along after the man and followed him until he came to the edge of the forest. There he had a horse tied to a tree, and he mounted upon the beast's back and rode away through the open country. Susie followed him, just far enough away to keep the man in sight, without being noticed herself.

"By and bye he came to a big house, which he entered, closing the door behind him. Susie flew into a tree beside the house and waited sorrowfully but in patience for a chance to find her precious ones again.

"The days passed drearily away, one after another, but in about a week my cousin noticed that one of the windows of the house had been left open. So she boldly left her tree and flew in at the window, and luckily none of the people who lived in the house happened to be in the room.

"Imagine Susie's surprise when she saw around the sides of the room

many birds sitting silently upon limbs cut from trees, and among them her own husband, as proud and beautiful as he had ever been before the cruel man had killed him! She quickly flew to the limb and perched beside her loved one.

"'Oh, my darling!' she cried, 'how glad I am to have found you again, and to see you alive and well when I had mourned you as dead. Come with me at once, and we will return to our old home in the forest.'

"But the bird remained motionless and made no reply to her loving words. She thrust her bill beside his and tried to kiss him, but he did not respond to the caress and his body was stiff and cold.

"Then Susie uttered a cry of grief, and understood the truth. Her husband was indeed dead, but had been stuffed and mounted upon the limb to appear as he had in life. Small wires had been pushed through his legs to make his poor body stand up straight, and to Susie's horror she discovered that his eyes were only bits of glass! All the other birds in the room were stuffed in the same way. They looked as if they were alive, at the first glance; but each body was cold and every voice mute. They were mere mockeries of the beautiful birds that this heartless and cruel man had deprived of their joyous lives.

"Susie's loving heart was nearly bursting with pain as she slowly fluttered toward the open window by which she had entered. But on her way a new anguish overtook her, for she noticed a big glass case against the wall in which were arranged clusters of eggs stolen from birds of almost every kind. Yes; there were her own lovely eggs, scarcely an inch from her face, but separated from her by a stout glass that could not be broken, although she madly dashed her body against it again and again.

"Finally, realizing her helplessness, poor Susie left the room by the open window and flew back to the forest, where she told us all the terrible thing she had seen. No one was able to comfort her, for her loving heart was broken; and after that she would often fly away to the house to peer through the window at her eggs and her beautiful husband.

"One day she did not return, and after waiting for her nearly two weeks we sent the bluejay to see what had become of her. Our policeman found the house, and also found the window of the room open.

"He boldly entered, and discovered Susie and her husband sitting side by side upon the dried limb, their bodies both stiff and dead. The man had caught the poor wife at last, and the lovers were reunited in death.

"Also Policeman Bluejay found his grandfather's mummy in this room, and the stuffed mummies of many other friends he had known in the forest. So he was very sorrowful when he returned to us, and from that time we have

feared the heartless men more than ever."

"It's a sad story," sighed Twinkle, "and I've no doubt it is a true one. But all men are not so bad, I'm sure."

"All men who enter the forest are," answered the oriole, positively. "For they only come here to murder and destroy those who are helpless before their power, but have never harmed them in the least. If God loves the birds, as I am sure He does, why do you suppose He made their ferocious enemies, the men?"

Twinkle did not reply, but she felt a little ashamed.

CHAPTER VI

A Merry Adventure

"Talking about men," said the cuckoo, in a harsh but not very unpleasant voice, "reminds me of a funny adventure I once had myself. I was sitting in my nest one day, at the time when I was quite young, when suddenly a man appeared before me. You must know that this nest, which was rather carelessly built by my mother, was in a thick evergreen tree, and not very high from the ground; so that I found the man's eyes staring squarely into my own.

"Most of you, my dears, have seen men; but this was the strangest sort of man you can imagine. There was white hair upon his face, so long that it hung down to his middle, and over his eyes were round plates of glass that glittered very curiously. I was so astonished at seeing the queer creature that I sat still and Stared, and this was my undoing. For suddenly there came a rapid 'whish!' through the air, and a network of cords fell all around and over me. Then, indeed, I spread my wings and attempted to fly; but it was too late. I struggled in the net without avail, and soon gave up the conflict in breathless despair.

"My captor did not intend to kill me, however. Instead, he tried to soothe my fright, and carried me very gently for many, many miles, until we came to a village of houses. Here, at the very top of a high house, the man lived in one little room. It was all littered with tools and bits of wood, and on a broad shelf were several queer things that went 'tick-tock! tick-tock!' every minute. I was thrust, gently enough, into a wooden cage, where I lay upon the bottom more dead than alive because the ticking things at first scared me dreadfully and I was in constant terror lest I should be tortured or killed. But the glass-eyed old man brought me dainty things to eat, and plenty of fresh water to relieve my thirst, and by the next day my heart had stopped going pitty-pat and I was calm enough to stand up in my cage and look around me.

"My white-whiskered captor sat at a bench with his coat off and his bald head bare, while he worked away busily putting little wheels and springs together, and fitting them into a case of wood. When one of them was finished it would sing 'tick-tock! tick-tock!' just like the other queer things on the shelf, and this constant ticking so interested me that I raised my head and called:

"'Cuck-oo! cuck-oo!'"

"'That's it!' cried the old man, delightedly. 'That's what I wanted to hear. It's the real cuckoo at last, and not a bit like those cheap imitations.'

"I didn't understand at first what he meant, but he worked at his bench all

day, and finally brought to my cage a bird made out of wood, that was carved and painted to look just as I was. It seemed so natural that I flapped my wings and called ‘cuck-oo’ to it, and the man pressed a little bellows at the bottom of the bird and made it say ‘cuck-oo!’ in return. But that cry was so false and unreal that I just shouted with laughter, and the glass-eyed old man shook his head sadly and said: ‘That will never do. That will never do in the world.’

“So all the next day he worked hard trying to make his wooden bird say ‘cuck-oo!’ in the proper way; and at last it really spoke quite naturally, so that it startled even me when I heard it. This seemed to please my captor very much; so he put it inside one of the ticking things on the shelf, and by-and-by a door opened and the wooden bird jumped out and cried ‘Cuck-oo! Cuck-oo! Cuck-oo!’ and then jumped back again and the door closed with a snap.

“‘Bravo!’ cried old white-hair; but I was rather annoyed, for I thought the wooden bird was impudent in trying to ape the ways of live cuckoos. I shouted back a challenge to it, but there was no reply. An hour later, and every hour, it repeated the performance, but jumped behind the door when I offered to fight it.

“The next day the man was absent from the room, and I had nothing to eat. So I became angry and uneasy. I scratched away at the wooden bars of my cage and tried to twist them with my beak, and at last one of them, to my great joy, came loose, and I was able to squeeze myself out of the cage.

“But then I was no better off than before, because the windows and the door of the room were fast shut. I grew more cross and ill-tempered than before, when I discovered this, and to add to my annoyance that miserable wooden bird would every once in awhile jump out and yell ‘Cuck-oo!’ and then bounce back into its house again, without daring to argue with me.

“This at last made me frantic with rage, and I resolved to be revenged. The next time the wooden bird made its appearance I new upon it in a flash and knocked it off the little platform before it had uttered its cry more than twice. It fell upon the floor and broke one of its wings; but in an instant I dashed myself upon it and bit and scratched the impudent thing until there was not a bit of paint left upon it. Its head came off, too, and so did its legs and the other wing, and before I was done with it no one ever would have known it was once a clever imitation of myself. Finding that I was victorious I cried ‘Cuck-oo!’ in triumph, and just then the little door of the ticking thing opened and the platform where the wooden bird had stood came out of it and remained for a time motionless. I quickly flew up and perched upon it, and shouted ‘Cuck-oo!’ again, in great glee. As I did so, to my amazement the platform on which I stood leaped backward, carrying me with it, and the next

instant the door closed with a snap and I found myself in darkness.

"Wildly I fluttered my wings; but it was of no use. I was in a prison much worse than the cage, and so small that I could hardly turn around in it. I was about to die of terror and despair when I chanced to remember that at certain times the door would open to push out the bird and allow it to say 'Cuck-oo!' before it shut again. So, the next time it opened in this way, I would be able to make my escape.

"Very patiently I waited in the dark little hole, listening to the steady 'tick-tock!' of the machinery behind me and trying not to be nervous. After awhile I heard the old man come into the room and exclaim sorrowfully because his captive cuckoo had escaped from its cage. He could not imagine what had become of me, and I kept still and laughed to myself to think how I would presently surprise him.

"It seemed an age before I finally heard the click that opened the door in front of me. Then the platform on which I sat sprang out, and I fluttered my wings and yelled 'Cuck-oo! Cuck-oo!' as loud as I could. The old man was standing right in front of me, his mouth wide open with astonishment at the wonderfully natural performance of his wooden bird, as he thought me. He shouted 'Bravo!' again, and clapped his hands; and at that I flew straight into his face, and clawed his white hair with all my might, and screamed as loud as I could.

"He screamed, too, being taken by surprise, and tumbled over backward so that he sat down upon the floor with a loud bump. I flew to the work-bench, and then the truth dawned upon him that I was not the wooden bird but the real one.

"'Good gracious!' said he, 'I've left the window open. The rascal will escape!'

"I glanced at the window and saw that it was indeed wide open. The sight filled me with triumphant joy. Before the old man could get upon his feet and reach the window I had perched upon the sill, and with one parting cry of 'Cuck-oo!' I spread my wings and flew straight into the air.

"Well, I never went back to enquire if he enjoyed the trick I had played upon him, but I've laughed many a time when I thought of the old fellow's comic expression when a real cuckoo instead of a painted one flew out of his ticking machine."

As the cuckoo ended his tale the other birds joined in a chorus of shrill laughter; but Chubbins said to them, gravely:

"He was a smart man, though, to make a cuckoo-clock. I saw one myself, one time, and it was a wonderful thing. The cuckoo told what time it was every hour."

“Was it made of wood?” asked the bluejay.

“I don’t know that,” replied the boy-lark; “but of course it wasn’t a real bird.”

“It only shows,” remarked the bobolink, “how greatly those humans admire us birds. They make pictures of us, and love to keep us in cages so they can hear us sing, and they even wear us in their bonnets after we are dead.”

“I think that is a dreadful thing,” said the goldfinch, with a shudder. “But it only proves that men are our greatest enemies.”

“Don’t forget the women,” said Twinkle. “It’s the women that wear birds in their hats.”

“Mankind,” said Robin Redbreast, gravely, “is the most destructive and bloodthirsty of all the brute creation. They not only kill for food, but through vanity and a desire for personal adornment. I have even heard it said that they kill for amusement, being unable to restrain their murderous desires. In this they are more cruel than the serpents.”

“There is some excuse for the poor things,” observed the Bluejay, “for nature created them dependent upon the animals and birds and fishes. Having neither fur nor feathers to protect their poor skinny bodies, they wear clothing made of the fleece of sheep, and skins of seals and beavers and otters and even the humble muskrats. They cover their feet and their hands with skins of beasts; they sleep upon the feathers of birds; their food is the flesh of beasts and birds and fishes. No created thing is so dependent upon others as man; therefore he is the greatest destroyer in the world. But he is not alone in his murderous, despoiling instinct. While you rail at man, my friends, do not forget that birds are themselves the greatest enemies of birds.”

“Nonsense!” cried the magpie, indignantly.

“Perhaps the less you say about this matter the better,” declared the bluejay, swinging his club in a suggestive manner, and looking sharply at the magpie.

“It’s a slander,” said the blackbird. “I’m sure you can’t accuse *me* of injuring birds in any way.”

“If you are all innocent, why are we obliged to have a policeman?” enquired the little wren, in a nervous voice.

“Tell me,” said Twinkle, appealing to the bluejay; “are the big birds really naughty to the little ones?”

“Why, it is the same with us as it is with men,” replied the policeman. “There are good ones and bad ones among us, and the bad ones have to be watched. Men destroy us wantonly; other animals and the sly serpents prey upon us and our eggs for food; but these are open enemies, and we know

how we may best avoid them. Our most dangerous foes are those bandits of our own race who, instead of protecting their brethren, steal our eggs and murder our young. They are not always the biggest birds, by any means, that do these things. The crow family is known to be treacherous, and the shrike is rightly called the 'butcher-bird,' but there are many others that we have reason to suspect feed upon their own race."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed the girl-lark.

The birds all seemed restless and uneasy at this conversation, and looked upon one another with suspicious glances. But the bluejay soothed them by saying:

"After all, I suppose we imagine more evil than really exists, and sometimes accuse our neighbors wrongfully. But the mother birds know how often their nests have been robbed in their absence, and if they suspect some neighbor of the crime instead of a prowling animal it is but natural, since many birds cannot be trusted. There are laws in the forest, of course; but the guilty ones are often able to escape. I'll tell you of a little tragedy that happened only last week, which will prove how apt we are to be mistaken."

CHAPTER VII

The Bluejay's Story

"There is no more faithful mother in the forest than the blue titmouse, which is a cousin to the chickadee," continued the policeman, "and this spring Tom Titmouse and his wife Nancy set up housekeeping in a little hollow in an elm-tree about half a mile north of this spot. Of course, the first thing Nancy did was to lay six beautiful eggs — white with brown spots all over them — in the nest. Tom was as proud of these eggs as was Nancy, and as the nest was hidden in a safe place they flew away together to hunt for caterpillars, and had no thought of danger. But on their return an hour later what was their sorrow to find the nest empty, and every pretty egg gone. On the ground underneath the tree were scattered a few bits of shell; but the robber was nowhere to be seen.

"Tom Titmouse was very indignant at this dreadful crime, and came to me at once to complain of the matter; but of course I had no idea who had done the deed. I questioned all the birds who have ever been known to slyly steal eggs, and every one denied the robbery. So Nancy Titmouse saw she must lay more eggs, and before long had another six speckled beauties in the bottom of her nest.

"They were more careful now about leaving home; but the danger seemed past. One bright, sunny morning they ventured to fly to the brook to drink and bathe themselves, and on their return found their home despoiled for a second time. Not an egg was left to them out of the six, and while Nancy wept and wailed Tom looked sharply around him and saw a solitary shrike sitting on a limb not far away."

"What's a shrike?" asked Chubbins.

"It is a bird that looks a good deal like that mocking-bird sitting next you; but it bears a bad character in the forest and has earned the vile name of 'butcher-bird.' I admit that I am always obliged to keep an eye upon the shrike, for I expect it to get into mischief at any time. Well, Tom Titmouse naturally thought the shrike had eaten Nancy's eggs, so he came to me and ordered me to arrest the robber. But the shrike pleaded his innocence, and I had no proof against him.

"Again Nancy, with true motherly courage and perseverance, laid her eggs in the nest; and now they were never left alone for a single minute. Either she or Tom was always at home, and for my part I watched the shrike carefully and found he did not fly near the nest of the titmice at all.

"The result of our care was that one fine day the eggs hatched out, and six skinny little titmice, with big heads and small bodies, were nestling against

Nancy's breast. The mother thought they were beautiful, you may be sure, and many birds gathered around to congratulate her and Tom, and the brown thrush sang a splendid song of welcome to the little ones.

"When the children got a little stronger it did not seem necessary to guard the nest so closely, and the six appetites required a good many insects and butterfly-eggs to satisfy them. So Tom and Nancy both flew away to search for food, and when they came back they found, to their horror, that their six little ones had been stolen, and the nest was bare and cold. Nancy nearly fainted with sorrow, and her cries were pitiful and heart-rending; but Tom Titmouse was dreadfully angry, and came to me demanding vengeance.

"'If you are any good at all as a policeman,' said he, 'you will discover and punish the murderer of my babies.'

"So I looked all around and finally discovered, not far from the nest of the titmice, four of their children, all dead and each one impaled upon the thorn of a bush that grew close to the ground. Then I decided it was indeed the shrike, for he has a habit of doing just this thing; killing more than he can eat and sticking the rest of his murdered victims on thorns until he finds time to come back and devour them.

"I was also angry, by that time; so I flew to the shrike's nest and found him all scratched and torn and his feathers plucked in many places.

"'What has happened to you?' I asked.

"'I had a fight with a weasel last night,' answered the shrike, 'and both of us are rather used up, today.'

"'Still,' said I, sternly, 'you had strength enough to kill the six little titmice, and to eat two of them.'

"'I never did,' said he, earnestly; 'my wings are too stiff to fly.'

"'Do not lie about it, I beg of you,' said I; 'for we have found four of the dead titmice stuck on the thorns of a bush, and your people have been known to do such things before.'

"At this the shrike looked worried.

"'Really,' said he, 'I cannot understand it. But I assure you I am innocent.'

"Nevertheless, I arrested him, and made him fly with me to the Judgment Tree, where all the birds had congregated. He was really stiff and sore, and I could see it hurt him to fly; but my duty was plain. We selected a jury of twelve birds, and Judge Bullfinch took his seat on a bough, and then the trial began.

"Tom Titmouse accused the shrike of murder, and so did Nancy, who had nearly cried her eyes out. I also gave my evidence. But the prisoner insisted strongly that he was innocent, and claimed he had not left his nest since his

fight with the weasel, and so was guiltless of the crime.

"But no one had any sympathy for him, or believed what he said; for it is often the case that when one has earned a bad character he is thought capable of any wickedness. So the jury declared him guilty, and the judge condemned him to die at sundown. We were all to fall upon the prisoner together, and tear him into bits with bill and claw; but while we waited for the sun to sink Will Sparrow flew up to the Judgment Tree and said:

"'Hello! What's going on here?'

"'We are just about to execute a criminal,' replied the judge.

"'What has he been doing?' asked Will, eyeing the shrike curiously.

"'He killed the titmice children this morning, and ate two of them, and stuck the other four upon a thorn bush,' explained the judge.

"'Oh, no; the shrike did not do that!' cried Will Sparrow. 'I saw the crime committed with my own eyes, and it was the cunning weasel — the one that lives in the pine stump — that did the dreadful murder.'

"At this all the birds set up an excited chatter, and the shrike again screamed that he was innocent. So the judge said, gravely: 'Will Sparrow always speaks the truth. Release the prisoner, for we have misjudged him. We must exact our vengeance upon the weasel.'

"So we all flew swiftly to the pine stump, which we knew well, and when we arrived we found the weasel sitting at the edge of his hole and laughing at us.

"'That is the very weasel I fought with,' said the shrike. 'You can see where I tore the fur from his head and back with my sharp beak.'

"'So you did,' answered the weasel; 'and in return I killed the little tomtits.'

"'Did you stick them on the thorns?' asked Judge Bullfinch.

"'Yes,' said the weasel. 'I hoped you would accuse the shrike of the murder, and kill him to satisfy my vengeance.'

"'We nearly fell into the trap,' returned the judge; 'but Will Sparrow saw your act and reported it just in time to save the shrike's life. But tell me, did you also eat Nancy Titmouse's eggs?'

"'Of course,' confessed the weasel, 'and they were very good, indeed.'

"Hearing this, Tom Titmouse became so excited that he made a furious dash at the weasel, who slipped within his hole and escaped.

"'I condemn you to death!' cried the judge.

"'That's all right,' answered the weasel, sticking just the tip of his nose out of the hole. 'But you've got to catch me before you can kill me. Run home, my pretty birds. You're no match for a weasel!'

"Then he was gone from sight, and we knew he was hidden safely in the

stump, where we could not follow him, for the weasel's body is slim and slender. But I have not lived in the forest all my life without learning something, and I whispered a plan to Judge Bullfinch that met with his approval. He sent messengers at once for the ivory-billed woodpeckers, and soon four of those big birds appeared and agreed to help us. They began tearing away at the stump with their strong beaks, and the splinters flew in every direction. It was not yet dark when the cunning weasel was dragged from his hole and was at the mercy of the birds he had so cruelly offended. We fell upon him in a flash, and he was dead almost instantly."

"What became of the shrike?" asked Twinkle.

"He left the forest the next day," answered Policeman Bluejay. "For although he was innocent of this crime, he was still a butcher-bird, and he knew our people had no confidence in him."

"It was lucky Will Sparrow came in time," said the girl-lark. "But all these stories must have made you hungry, so I'd like to invite my guests to have some refreshments."

The birds seemed much surprised by this invitation, and even Policeman Bluejay wondered what she was going to do. But Twinkle whispered to Chubbins, and both the bird-children flew into their basket and returned with their claws full of cookie. They repeated the journey many times, distributing bits of the rare food to all of the birds who had visited them, and each one ate the morsel eagerly and declared that it was very good.

"Now," said the policeman, when the feast was over, "let us all go to the brook and have a drink of its clear, sweet water."

So they flew away, a large and merry band of all sizes and colors; and the child-larks joined them, skimming the air as lightly and joyously as any of their new friends. It did not take them long to reach a sparkling brook that wound its way through the forest, and all the feathered people drank their fill standing upon the low bank or upon stones that rose above the level of the water.

At first the children were afraid they might fall into the brook; but presently they gained courage, and when they saw the thrush and bullfinch plunge in and bathe themselves in the cool water Chubbins decided to follow their example, and afterward Twinkle also joined them.

The birds now bade the child-larks good-bye and promised to call upon them again, and soon all had flown away except the bluejay, who said he would see Twinkle and Chubbins safe home again, so that they would not get lost.

They thanked him for this kindness, and when they had once more settled upon the limb beside their nest the bluejay also bade them good night and

darted away for one last look through the forest to see that all was orderly for the night.

CHAPTER VIII

Mrs. Hootaway

As the child-larks sat side by side upon their limb, with the soft gray nest near at hand, the twilight fell and a shadow began to grow and deepen throughout the forest.

"Twink," said Chubbins, gravely, "how do you like it?"

"Well," replied the girl, "it isn't so bad in the daytime, but it's worse at night. That bunch of grass mixed up with the stems of leaves, that they call a nest, isn't much like my pretty white bed at home, Chubbins."

"Nor mine," he agreed. "And, Twink, how ever can we say our prayers when we haven't any hands to hold up together?"

"Prayers, Chub," said the girl, "are more in our hearts than in our hands. It isn't what we *do* that counts; it's what we feel. But the most that bothers me is what the folks at home will think, when we don't come back."

"They'll hunt for us," Chubbins suggested; "and they may come under this tree, and call to us."

"If they do," said Twinkle, "we'll fly right down to them."

"I advise you not to fly much, in the night," said a cheery voice beside them, and Wisk the squirrel stuck his head out of the hollow where he lived. "You've had quite a party here today," he continued, "and they behaved pretty well while the policeman was around. But some of them might not be so friendly if you met them alone."

"Would any bird hurt us?" asked the girl, in surprise.

"Why, I've seen a magpie meet a thrush, and fly away alone," replied Wisk. "And the wrens and chickadees avoid the cuckoo as much as possible, because they are fond of being alive. But the policeman keeps the big birds all in order when he is around, and he makes them all afraid to disobey the laws. He's a wonderful fellow, that Policeman Bluejay, and even we squirrels are glad he is in the forest."

"Why?" asked Chubbins.

"Well, we also fear some of the birds," answered Wisk. "The lady in the third flat, for instance, Mrs. Hootaway, is said to like a squirrel for a midnight meal now and then, when mice and beetles are scarce. It is almost her hour for wakening, so I must be careful to keep near home."

"Tut — tut — tut!" cried a harsh voice from above. "What scandal is this you are talking, Mr. Wisk?"

The squirrel was gone in a flash; but a moment later he put out his head again and turned one bright eye toward the upper part of the tree. There, on a perch outside her hollow, sat the gray owl, pruning her feathers. It was nearly

dark by this time, and through the dusk Mrs. Hootaway's yellow eyes could be seen gleaming bright and wide open.

"What nonsense are you putting into the heads of these little innocents?" continued the owl, in a scolding tone.

"No nonsense at all," said Wisk, in reply. "The child-larks are safe enough from you, because they are under the protection of Policeman Bluejay, and he would have a fine revenge if you dared to hurt them. But my case is different. The laws of the birds do not protect squirrels, and when you're abroad, my dear Mrs. Hootaway, I prefer to remain snugly at home."

"To be sure," remarked the owl, with a laugh. "You are timid and suspicious by nature, my dear Wisk, and you forget that although I have known you for a long time I have never yet eaten you."

"That is my fault, and not yours," retorted the squirrel.

"Well, I'm not after you tonight, neighbor, nor after birds, either. I know where there are seven fat mice to be had, and until they are all gone you may cease to worry."

"I'm glad to hear that," replied Wisk. "I wish there were seven hundred mice to feed your appetite. But I'm not going to run into danger recklessly, nevertheless, and it is my bed-time. So good night, Mrs. Hootaway; and good night, little child-larks." The owl did not reply, but Twinkle and Chubbins called good night to the friendly squirrel, and then they hopped into their nest and cuddled down close together.

The moon was now rising over the trees and flooding the gloom of the forest with its subdued silver radiance. The children were not sleepy; their new life was too strange and wonderful for them to be able to close their eyes at once. So they were rather pleased when the gray owl settled on the branch beside their nest and began to talk to them.

"I'm used to slanders, my dears," she said, in a pleasanter tone than she had used before, "so I don't mind much what neighbor Wisk says to me. But I do not wish you to think ill of the owl family, and so I must assure you that we are as gentle and kindly as any feathered creatures in the forest — not excepting the Birds of Paradise."

"I am sure of that," replied Twinkle, earnestly. "You are too soft and fluffy and pretty to be bad."

"It isn't the prettiness," said the gray owl, evidently pleased by the compliment. "It is the nature of owls to be kind and sympathetic. Those who do not know us very well say harsh things about us, because we fly in the night, when most other birds are asleep, and sleep in the daytime when most other birds are awake."

"Why do you do that?" asked Chubbins.

“Because the strong light hurts our eyes. But, although we are abroad in the night, we seek only our natural prey, and obey the Great Law of the forest more than some others do.”

“What is the Great Law?” enquired Twinkle, curiously.

“Love. It is the moral law that is above all laws made by living creatures. The whole forest is ruled by love more than it is by fear. You may think this is strange when you remember that some animals eat birds, and some birds eat animals, and the dreadful creeping things eat us both; but nevertheless we are so close to Nature here that love and tenderness for our kind influences us even more than it does mankind — the careless and unthinking race from which you came. The residents of the forest are good parents, helpful neighbors, and faithful friends. What better than this could be said of us?”

“Nothing, I’m sure, if it is true,” replied the girl.

“Over in the Land of Paradise,” continued the owl, thoughtfully, “the birds are not obliged to take life in order to live themselves; so they call us savage and fierce. But I believe our natures are as kindly as those of the Birds of Paradise.”

“Where is this Land of Paradise you speak of?” asked Twinkle.

“Directly in the center of our forest. It is a magical spot, protected from intrusion not by any wall or barred gates, but by a strong wind that blows all birds away from that magnificent country except the Birds of Paradise themselves. There is a legend that man once lived there, but for some unknown crime was driven away. But the birds have always been allowed to inhabit the place because they did no harm.”

“I’d like to see it,” said Chubbins.

“So would I,” confessed the gray owl, with a sigh; “but there is no use of my attempting to get into the Paradise of Birds, because the wind would blow me back. But now it is getting quite dark, and I must be off to seek my food. Mrs. ‘Possum and I have agreed to hunt together, tonight.”

“Who is Mrs. ‘Possum?” the girl asked.

“An animal living in the lowest hollow of this tree,” answered the owl. “She is a good-natured creature, and hunts by night, as I do. She is slow, but, being near the ground, she can spy a mouse much quicker than I can, and then she calls to me to catch it. So between us we get plenty of game and are helpful to each other. The only drawback is that Mrs. ‘Possum has four children, which she carries in her pouch wherever she goes, and they have to be fed as well as their mother. So the ‘possums have five mouths to my one, and it keeps us busy to supply them all.”

“It’s very kind of you to help her,” remarked Twinkle.

“Oh, she helps me, too,” returned the owl, cheerfully. “But now good

night, my dears. You will probably be sound asleep when I get home again.”

Off flew Mrs. Hootaway with these words, and her wings moved so noiselessly that she seemed to fade away into the darkness like a ghost.

The child-larks sat looking at the silver moon for a time; but presently Twinkle’s eyelids drooped and she fell fast asleep, and Chubbins was not long in following her example.

CHAPTER IX

The Destroyers

A loud shouting and a bang that echoed like a clap of thunder through the forest awoke the bird-children from their dreams.

Opening their eyes with a start they saw that the gray dawn was breaking and a sort of morning twilight made all objects in the forest distinct, yet not so brilliant as the approaching daylight would. Shadows still lay among the bushes and the thickest branches; but between the trees the spaces were clearly visible.

The children, rudely awakened by the riot of noise in their ears, could distinguish the barking of dogs, the shouts of men calling to the brutes, and the scream of an animal in deep distress. Immediately after, there was a whirl overhead and the gray owl settled on the limb beside their nest.

"They've got her!" she exclaimed, in a trembling, terrified voice. "The men have shot Mrs. 'Possum dead, and the dogs are now tearing her four babies limb from limb!"

"Where are they?" whispered Twinkle, her little heart beating as violently as if the dread destroyers had always been her mortal enemies.

"Just below us. Isn't it dreadful? We had such a nice night together, and Mrs. 'Possum was so sweet and loving in caring for her little ones and feeding them! And, just as we were nearly home again, the dogs sprang upon my friend and the men shot her dead. We had not even suspected, until then, that our foes were in the forest."

Twinkle and Chubbins craned their necks over the edge of the nest and looked down. On the ground stood a man and a boy, and two great dogs were growling fiercely and tearing some bloody, revolting object with their cruel jaws.

"Look out!" cried the voice of Wisk, the squirrel. "He's aiming at you — look out!"

They ducked their heads again, just as the gun roared and flamed fire beneath them.

"Oh-h-h!" wailed Mrs. Hootaway, fluttering violently beside them. "They struck me that time — the bullet is in my heart. Good-bye, my dears. Remember that — all — is love; all is — love!"

Her voice died away to a whisper, and she toppled from the limb. Twinkle and Chubbins tried to save their dying friend from falling, but the gray owl was so much bigger than they that they could not support the weight of her body. Slowly she sank to the ground and fell upon the earth with a dull sound that was dreadful to hear.

Instantly Twinkle darted from the nest and swooped downward, alighting on the ground beside the owl's quivering body. A big dog came bounding toward her. The man was reloading his gun, a few paces away.

"Call off your dog!" shouted Twinkle, wildly excited. "How dare you shoot the poor, harmless birds? Call off your dog, I say!"

But, even as she spoke, the words sounded in her own ears strange and unnatural, and more like the chirping of a bird than the language of men. The hunter either did not hear her or he did not understand her, and the dog snarled and bared its wicked teeth as it sprang greedily upon the child-lark.

Twinkle was too terrified to move. She glared upon the approaching monster helplessly, and it had almost reached her when a black object fell from the skies with the swiftness of a lightning streak and struck the dog's back, tearing the flesh with its powerful talons and driving a stout, merciless beak straight through the skull of the savage brute.

The dog, already dead, straightened out and twitched convulsively. The man shouted angrily and sprang upon the huge bird that had slain his pet, at the same time swinging his gun like a club.

"Quick!" said the eagle to Twinkle, "mount with me as swiftly as you can."

With the words he rose into the air and Twinkle darted after him, while Chubbins, seeing their flight from his nest, joined them just in time to escape a shot from the boy's deadly gun.

The inquisitive squirrel, however, had stuck his head out to see what was happening, and one of the leaden bullets buried itself in his breast. Chubbins saw him fall back into his hollow and heard his agonized scream; but he could not stay to help his poor friend. An instant later he had joined the eagle and Twinkle, and was flying as hard and swift as his wonderful lark wings could carry him up, up into the blue sky.

The sunshine touched them now, while below the tragic forest still lay buried in gloom.

"We are quite safe here, for I am sure no shot from a gun could reach us," said the eagle. "So let us rest upon our wings for a while. How lucky it was that I happened to be around in time to rescue you, my little friends."

"I am very grateful, indeed," answered Twinkle, holding her wings outstretched so that she floated lightly in the air beside her rescuer. "If you had been an instant later, the dog would have killed me."

"Very true," returned the eagle. "I saw your danger while I was in the air, and determined to act quickly, although I might myself have been shot by the man had his gun been loaded. But I have noticed that a bold action is often successful because it causes surprise, and the foe does not know what to do."

“I’m ‘shamed of those people,” said Chubbins, indignantly. “What right had they to come to the forest and kill the pretty owl, and the dear little squirrel, and the poor mama ‘possum and her babies?”

“They had the right of power,” said the eagle, calmly. “It would be a beautiful world were there no destroyers of life in it; but the earth and air and water would then soon become so crowded that there would not be room for them all to exist. Don’t blame the men.”

“But they are cruel,” said Twinkle, “and kill innocent, harmless birds and animals, instead of the wicked ones that could be better spared.”

“Cruelty is man’s nature,” answered the eagle. “Of all created things, men, tigers and snakes are known to be the most cruel. From them we expect no mercy. But now, what shall be our next movement? I suppose it will be best for you to keep away from the forest until the men are gone. Would you like to visit my home, and meet my wife and children?”

“Yes, indeed!” cried Twinkle; “if you will be kind enough to let us.”

“It will be a great pleasure to me,” said the eagle. “Follow me closely, please.”

He began flying again, and they kept at his side. By and by they noticed a bright, rosy glow coming from a portion of the forest beneath them.

“What is that?” asked Chubbins.

“It is the place called the Paradise of Birds,” answered their conductor. “It is said to be the most beautiful place in all the world, but no one except the Birds of Paradise are allowed to live there. Those favored birds sometimes enter our part of the forest, but we are never allowed to enter theirs.”

“I’d like to see that place,” said Twinkle.

“Well, you two child-larks are different from all other birds,” remarked the eagle, “and for that reason perhaps you would be allowed to visit the paradise that is forbidden the rest of us. If ever I meet one of the beautiful birds that live there, I will ask it to grant you the privilege.”

“Do!” said Twinkle and Chubbins, in one eager breath. They flew for a long time, high in the air, but neither of the bird-children seemed to tire in the least. They could not go quite as fast as the eagle, however, who moderated his speed so that they could keep up with him.

CHAPTER X

In the Eagle's Nest

Gradually the forest passed out of sight and only bleak, rugged mountains were below them. One peak rose higher than the others, and faced the sea, and to this point the great eagle directed their flight.

On a crag that jutted out from the mountain was the eagle's nest, made of rude sticks of wood gathered from the forest. Sitting beside the nest was Mrs. Eagle, larger and more pompous even than her husband, while squatting upon the edge of the nest were two half-grown eaglets with enormous claws and heads, but rather skinny bodies that were covered with loose and ragged feathers. Neither the nest nor the eaglets appeared to be very clean, and a disagreeable smell hung over the place.

"This is funny," said Mrs. Eagle, looking at the child-larks with surprise. "Usually you kill your game before you bring it home, Jonathan; but today it seems our dinner has flown to us willingly."

"They're for us!" cried one of the eaglets, making a quick dash to seize Twinkle, who darted out of his reach.

"One for each of us!" screamed the other eaglet, rushing at Chubbins.

"Peace — be quiet!" said the eagle, sternly. "Cannot you tell friends from food, you foolish youngsters? These are two little friends of mine whom I have invited to visit us; so you must treat them in a civil manner."

"Why not eat them?" asked one of the eaglets, looking at the child-larks with hungry eyes.

"Because I forbid you. They are my guests, and must be protected and well treated. And even if this were not so, the larks are too small to satisfy your hunger, you little gluttons."

"Jonathan," said Mrs. Eagle, coldly, "do not reproach our offspring for their hunger. We sent you out this morning to procure a supply of food, and we expected you to bring us home something good to eat, instead of these useless little creatures."

The eagle seemed annoyed at being scolded in this manner.

"I had an adventure in the forest," he said, "and came near being shot and killed by a man. That is the reason I came home so soon."

Twinkle and Chubbins were standing together at the edge of the crag when one of the eaglets suddenly spread out his wide, stiff wings and pushed them over the precipice. They recovered themselves before they had fallen far, and flew to the ledge again just in time to see the father eagle cuff his naughty son very soundly. But the mother only laughed in her harsh voice and said:

“It is so early in the day, Jonathan, that I advise you to go again in search of food. Our sweet darlings will not be comforted until they have eaten.”

“Very well,” answered the eagle. “I am sorry you cannot treat my guests more politely, for they are all unaccustomed to such rudeness. But I see that it will be better for me to take them away with me at once.”

“Do,” said Mrs. Eagle; and the eaglets cried: “Better let us eat ‘em, daddy. They are not very big, but they’re better than no breakfast at all.”

“You’re dis’greeable things!” said Twinkle, indignantly; “and I don’t like you a bit. So *there!”*

“Come on, Twink,” said Chubbins. “Let’s go away.”

“I will take you back to the forest,” the eagle declared, and at once rose into the air. Twinkle and Chubbins followed him, and soon the nest on the crag was left far behind and they could no longer hear the hoot of the savage young ones.

For a time the eagle flew in silence. Then he said:

“You must forgive my family for not being more hospitable. You must know that they live a very lonely life, and have no society because every living thing fears them. But I go abroad more and see more of the world, so I know very well how guests ought to be treated.”

“You have been very kind to us, Mr. Eagle,” replied the girl-lark, “and you saved my life when the dog would have killed me. I don’t blame you any for what your family did. My mama says lots of people show off better abroad than they do at home, and that’s your case exactly. If I were you I wouldn’t take any more visitors to my nest.”

“I do not intend to,” answered the eagle. “But I am glad that you think well of me personally, if you do not of my family, and I assure you it has been a real pleasure to me to assist you. Were you like ordinary birds, you would be beneath my notice; but I am wise enough to understand that you are very unusual and wonderful little creatures, and if at any time I can serve you further, you have but to call me, and I will do what I can for you.”

“Thank you very much,” replied Twinkle, who realized that the great bird had acted more gently toward them than it is the nature of his wild race to do.

They had just reached the edge of the forest again when they saw a bird approaching them at a great speed, and soon it came near enough for them to see that it was Policeman Bluejay. He wore his official helmet and carried his club, and as soon as he came beside them he said:

“Thank goodness I’ve found you at last. I’ve been hunting for you an hour, and began to fear you had met with some misfortune.”

“We’ve been with the eagle,” said the girl. “He saved our lives and carried us away from where the dreadful men were.”

“We have had sad doings in the forest today — very sad, indeed,” declared the bluejay, in a grave voice. “The hunters did even more damage than usual. They killed Jolly Joe, the brown bear, and Sam Fox, and Mrs. ‘Possum and her babies, and Wisk the squirrel; so that the animals are all in mourning for their friends. But our birds suffered greatly, also. Mrs. Hootaway is dead, and three pigeons belonging to a highly respected family; but the saddest of all is the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Goldfinch, both of whom were killed by the same shot. You may remember, my dears, that they were at your reception yesterday, and as gay and happy as any of the company present. In their nest are now five little children, too young and weak to fly, and there is no one to feed them or look after them.”

“Oh, that is dreadful!” exclaimed Twinkle. “Can’t Chubbins and I do something for the little goldfinches?”

“Why, that is why I was so anxious to find you,” answered Policeman Bluejay. “You haven’t laid any eggs yet, and have no one to depend upon you. So I hoped you would adopt the goldfinch babies.”

“We will,” said Chubbins, promptly. “We can feed them out of our basket.”

“Oh, yes,” chimed in the girl. “We couldn’t catch grubs for them, you know.”

“It won’t be necessary,” observed the policeman, with a sly wink at the eagle. “They’re too young yet to know grubs from grub.”

CHAPTER XI

The Orphans

The eagle now bade them good-bye and flew away in search of prey, while the bluejay and the child-larks directed their flight toward that part of the great forest where they lived.

"Are you sure the men have gone?" asked Chubbins.

"Yes," replied the policeman; "they left the forest as soon as they had shot Jolly Joe, for the brown bear was so heavy that they had to carry him on a pole resting across their shoulders. I hope they won't come again very soon."

"Did they take Mrs. Hootaway with them?" asked Twinkle.

"Yes; she will probably be stuffed, poor thing!"

Presently they passed near the rosy glow that lighted up the center of the forest with its soft radiance, and the girl said:

"That is the Paradise Land, where the Birds of Paradise live. The eagle has promised to ask one of those birds to let us visit their country."

"Oh, I can do better than that, if you wish to visit the Paradise," responded the bluejay; "for the Guardian of the Entrance is a special friend of mine, and will do whatever I ask him to."

"Will he, really?" asked the girl, in delight.

"To be sure. Some day I will take you over there, and then you will see what powerful friends Policeman Bluejay has."

"I'd like that," declared Twinkle.

Their swift flight enabled them to cover the remaining distance very rapidly, and soon they were at home again.

They first flew to the nest of the goldfinches, which was in a tree not far from the maple where the lark-children lived. There they found the tiny birds, who were yet so new that they were helpless indeed. Mrs. Redbreast was sitting by the nest when they arrived, and she said:

"The poor orphans are still hungry, although I have fed them all the insects I could find near. But I am glad that you have come, for it is time I was at home looking after my own little ones."

"Chubbins and I have 'dopted the goldfinches," said Twinkle, "so we will look after them now. But it was very nice of you, Mrs. Redbreast, to take take care of them until we arrived."

"Well, I like to be neighborly," returned the pretty bird; "and as long as cruel men enter our forest no mother can tell how soon her own little ones will be orphaned and left helpless."

"That is true," said the policeman, nodding gravely.

So Mrs. Redbreast flew away and now Chubbins looked curiously into the

nest, where several fluffy heads were eagerly lifted with their bills as wide open as they could possibly stretch.

"They must be just *awful* hungry, Twink," said the boy.

"Oh, they're always like that," observed Policeman Bluejay, calmly. "When anyone is around they open their mouths to be fed, whether they are hungry or not. It's the way with birdlets."

"What shall we feed them?" asked Twinkle.

"Oh, anything at all; they are not particular," said the bluejay, and then he flew away and left the child-larks to their new and interesting task.

"I'll be the father, and you be the mother," said Chubbins.

"All right," answered Twinkle.

"Peep! peep! peep!" said the tiny goldfinches.

"I wonder if the luncheon in our basket would agree with them," remarked the girl, looking at the open mouths reflectively as she perched her own brown body upon the edge of the deep nest.

"Might try it," suggested the boy. "The cop says they're not particular, and what's good enough for us ought to be good enough for them."

So they flew to where the basket hung among the thick leaves of the tree, which had served to prevent the men from discovering it, and crept underneath the cloth that covered it.

"Which do you think they'd like best," asked Chubbins, "the pickles or the cheese?"

"Neither one," Twinkle replied. "The sandwiches will be best for them. Wait; I'll pick out some of the meat that is between the slices of bread. They'll be sure to like that."

"Of course," agreed Chubbins, promptly. "They'll think it's bugs."

So each one dragged out a big piece of meat from a sandwich, and by holding it fast in one claw they managed to fly with the burden to the nest of the goldfinch babies.

"Don't give it to 'em all at once," cautioned the girl. "It would choke 'em."

"I know," said Chubbins.

He tore off a tiny bit of the meat and dropped it into one of the wide-open bills. Instantly it was gone and the mouth was open again for more. They tried to divide the dinner equally among them, but they all looked so alike and were so ravenous to eat everything that was dropped into their bills that it was hard work to keep track of which had been fed and which had not. But the child-larks were positive that each one had had enough to keep it from starving, because there was a big bunch in front of each little breast that was a certain proof of a full crop.

The next task of the guardians was to give the birdlets drink; so Twinkle and Chubbins flew to the brook and by hunting around a while they found an acorn-cup that had fallen from one of the oak trees. This they filled with water, and then Twinkle, who was a trifle larger than the boy-lark, clutched the cup firmly with her toes and flew back to the orphans without spilling more than a few drops. They managed to pour some of the water into each open mouth, and then Twinkle said:

"There! they won't die of either hunger or thirst in a hurry, Chub. So now we can feed ourselves."

"Their mouths are still open," returned the boy, doubtfully.

"It must be a habit they have," she answered. "Wouldn't you think they'd get tired stretching their bills that way?"

"Peep! peep! peep!" cried the baby goldfinches.

"You see," said the boy, with a wise look, "they don't know any better. I had a dog once that howled every time we shut him up. But if we let him alone he stopped howling. We'll go and get something to eat and let these beggars alone a while. Perhaps they'll shut their mouths by the time we get back again."

"Maybe," replied Twinkle.

They got their own luncheon from the basket, and afterward perched on the tree near the nest of the little goldfinches. They did not feel at all comfortable in their old nest in the maple, because they could not forget the tragic deaths of the inhabitants of the three hollows in the tree — the three "flats" as poor Wisk had merrily called them.

During the afternoon several of the birds came to call upon the orphans, and they all nodded approval when they found the child-larks watching over the little ones. Twinkle questioned some of the mothers anxiously about that trick the babies had of keeping their bills open and crying for food, but she was told to pay no attention to such actions.

Nevertheless, the pleadings of the orphans, who were really stuffed full of food, made the child-larks so nervous that they hailed with delight the arrival of Policeman Bluejay in the early evening. The busy officer had brought with him Mrs. Chaffinch, a widow whose husband had been killed a few days before by a savage wildcat.

Mrs. Chaffinch declared she would be delighted to become a mother to the little goldfinches, and rear them properly. She had always had good success in bringing up her own children, she claimed, and the goldfinches were first cousins to the chaffinches, so she was sure to understand their ways perfectly.

Twinkle did not want to give up her charges at first, as she had become interested in them; but Chubbins heaved a sigh of relief and declared he was

glad the “restless little beggars” had a mother that knew more about them than he did. The bluejay hinted that he considered the widow’s experience would enable her to do more for the baby goldfinches than could a child-lark who had never yet laid an egg, and so Twinkle was forced to yield to his superior judgment.

Mrs. Chaffinch settled herself in a motherly manner upon the nest, and the two bird-children bade her good-night and returned to their own maple tree, where they had a rather wakeful night, because Chubbins thoughtlessly suggested that the place might be haunted by the ghosts of the gray owl, Wisk, and Mrs. ‘Possum.

But either the poor things had no ghosts or they were too polite to bother the little child-larks.

CHAPTER XII

The Guardian

The next morning ushered in a glorious day, sunny and bright. The sky was a clear blue, and only a slight breeze ruffled the leaves of the trees. Even before Twinkle and Chubbins were awake the birds were calling merrily to one another throughout the forest, and the chipmonks chirped in their own brisk, businesslike way as they scuttled from tree to tree.

While the child-larks were finishing their breakfast Policeman Bluejay came to them, his feathers looking fresh and glossy and all his gorgeous colorings appearing especially beautiful in the sunshine.

"Today will be a rare day to visit the Paradise," he said; "so I have come to escort you to the Guardian of the Entrance, who I am sure will arrange for you to enter that wonderful country."

"It is very kind of you to remember our wish," said Twinkle. "We are all ready."

So they flew above the tree-tops and began their journey toward the center of the forest.

"Where's your p'liceman's hat and club?" Chubbins asked the bluejay.

"Why, I left them at home," was the reply. "I'm not on official duty today, you know, and the Guardian does not like to see anything that looks like a weapon. In his country there are no such things as quarrels or fighting, or naughtiness of any sort; for as they have everything they want there is nothing to quarrel over or fight for. The Birds of Paradise have laws, I understand; but they obey them because they are told to, and not because they are forced to. It would be a bad country for a policeman to live in."

"But a good place for everyone else," said Twinkle.

"Perhaps so," agreed the policeman, reluctantly. "But I sometimes think the goody-goody places would get awful tiresome to live in, after a time. Here in our part of the forest there is a little excitement, for the biggest birds only obey our laws through fear of punishment, and I understand it is just the same in the world of men. But in the Birds' Paradise there lives but one race, every member of which is quite particular not to annoy any of his fellows in any way. That is why they will admit no disturbing element into their country. If you are admitted, my dears, you must be very careful not to offend any one that you meet."

"We'll try to be good," promised Chubbins.

"I would not dare to take any of my own people there," continued the bluejay, flying swiftly along as they talked together; "but you two are different, and more like the fairy Birds of Paradise themselves than like our

forest birds. That is the reason I feel sure the Guardian will admit you."

"I'm naughty sometimes, and so is Chubbins," said Twinkle, honestly. "But we try not to be any naughtier than we can help."

"I am sure you will behave very nicely," replied the bluejay.

After a time the rosy glow appeared reflected in the blue sky, and as they flew toward it the soft and delightful radiance seemed to grow and deepen in intensity. It did not dazzle their eyes in the least, but as the light penetrated the forest and its furthest rays fell upon the group, they experienced a queer sense of elation and light-hearted joy.

But now the breeze freshened and grew more strong, pressing against their feathered breasts so gently yet powerfully that they soon discovered they were not advancing at all, but simply fluttering in the air.

"Drop down to the ground," whispered the bluejay; and they obeyed his injunction and found that close to the earth the wind was not so strong.

"That is a secret I learned some time ago," said their friend. "Most birds who seek to enter the Paradise try to beat against the wind, and are therefore always driven back; but there is just one way to approach the Guardian near enough to converse with him. After that it depends entirely upon his good-will whether you get any farther."

The wind still blew so strongly that it nearly took their breath away, but by creeping steadily over the ground they were able to proceed slowly, and after a time the pressure of the wind grew less and less, until it suddenly ceased altogether.

Then they stopped to rest and to catch their breaths, but before this happened Twinkle and Chubbins both uttered exclamations of amazement at the sight that met their eyes.

Before them was a grove composed of stately trees not made of wood, but having trunks of polished gold and silver and leaves of exquisite metallic colorings. Beneath the trees was a mass of brilliant flowers, exceedingly rare and curious in form, and as our little friends looked upon them these flowers suddenly began a chant of greeting and then sang a song so sweet and musical that the lark-children were entranced and listened in rapt delight.

When the song ended the flowers all nodded their heads in a pretty way, and Twinkle drew a long breath and murmured:

"Isn't it odd to hear flowers sing? I'm sure the birds themselves cannot beat that music."

"They won't try," replied the policeman, "for Birds of Paradise do not sing."

"How strange!" exclaimed the girl.

"The land they live in is so full of music that they do not need to,"

continued the bluejay. “But before us is the entrance, leading through the limbs of that great golden tree you see at the left. Fly swiftly with me, and perch upon the middle branch.”

With these words he darted toward the tree, and Twinkle and Chubbins followed. In a few seconds they alighted upon the branch and found themselves face to face with the first Bird of Paradise they had yet seen.

He possessed a graceful carriage and a most attractive form, being in size about as large as a common pigeon. His eyes were shrewd but gentle in expression and his pose as he stood regarding the newcomers was dignified and impressive. But the children had little time to note these things because their wondering eyes were riveted upon the bird’s magnificent plumage. The feathers lay so smoothly against his body that they seemed to present a solid surface, and in color they were a glistening emerald green upon the neck and wings, shading down on the breast to a softer green and then to a pure white. The main wing-feathers were white, tipped with vivid scarlet, and the white feathers of his crest were also tipped with specks of flame. But his tail feathers were the most beautiful of all his gay uniform. They spread out in the shape of a fan, and every other feather was brilliant green and its alternate feather snow white.

“How lovely!” cried Twinkle, and the bird bowed its head and with a merry glance from its eyes responded:

“Your admiration highly honors me, little stranger.”

“This,” said Policeman Bluejay, “is the important official called the Guardian of the Entrance of Paradise. Sir Guardian, permit me to introduce to you two children of men who have been magically transformed into skylarks against their will. They are not quite birds, because their heads retain the human shape; but whatever form they may bear, their natures are sweet and innocent and I deem them worthy to associate for a brief time with your splendid and regal race. Therefore I have brought them here to commend them to your hospitality and good-will, and I hope you will receive them as your guests.”

“What are your names, little strangers?” asked the Guardian.

“Mama calls me Twinkle,” said the girl.

“I’m Chubbins,” said the boy.

The Guardian looked attentively at the bluejay.

“You know our regulations,” said he; “no birds of the forest are admitted to our Paradise.”

“I know,” replied the policeman. “I will await my little friends here. It is pleasure enough for me to have just this glimpse of your beautiful fairyland.”

The Guardian nodded his approval of this speech.

“Very well,” he answered, “you shall remain and visit with me. If all forest birds were like you, my friend, there would be little danger in admitting them into our society. But they are not, and the laws must be regarded. As for the child-larks, I will send them first to the King, in charge of the Royal Messenger, whom I will now summon.”

He tossed his head upward with an abrupt motion, and in the tree-top a chime of golden bells rang musically in the air. The flowers beneath them caught up the refrain, and sang it softly until another bird came darting through the air and alighted on the golden limb beside the Guardian.

The newcomer was differently garbed from the other. His plumage was orange and white, the crest and wing-feathers being tipped with bright blue. Nor was he so large as the Guardian, nor so dignified in demeanor. Indeed, his expression was rather merry and roguish, and as he saw the strangers he gave a short, sharp whistle of surprise.

“My dear Ephel,” said the Guardian, “oblige me by escorting these child-larks to the presence of his Majesty the King.”

“I am delighted to obey your request,” answered Ephel the Messenger, brightly. Then, turning to Twinkle and Chubbins, he added: “I trust you will find my society agreeable during our flight to the royal monarch of Paradise.”

Twinkle was too much embarrassed by this politeness to answer at once, but Chubbins said “Sure thing!” in a matter-of-fact voice, and the Messenger nodded gaily and continued:

“Then we will go, if it pleases you.”

He spread his wings in a flash of color and sped away into the Paradise, and the children eagerly followed him.

CHAPTER XIII

The King Bird

More and more magnificence was unfolded as they advanced into this veritable fairyland of the birds. Vines of silver climbed up the golden trunks of trees and mingled their twining threads with the brilliant leaves. And now upon the trees appeared jewelled blossoms that sparkled most exquisitely in the rosy-hued radiance that, in this favored spot, had taken the place of sunshine. There were beds of plants with wide-spreading leaves that changed color constantly, one hue slowly melting into another and no two leaves on the same plant having the same color at the same time. Yet in spite of the vivid coloring that prevailed everywhere, each combination seemed in perfect harmony and served to delight the senses.

Bushes that emitted a grateful fragrance bore upon slender branches little bells that at times tinkled in the perfumed breeze and played sweet melodies, while here and there were clusters of fountain-lilies that shot sprays of crystal water high into the air. When the water fell back again and the drops struck against the broad leaves of the plants, they produced a melodious sound that was so delightful that Twinkle thought she could listen to it for hours.

Their guide flew silently on, and the two children were so much amazed by their surroundings that they had no words for questions or even remarks.

The scene was ever shifting and becoming more and more lovely and fascinating, and the paradise was more extensive than they had thought it.

By and bye Ephel the Messenger approached the central part, where was a great arbor thickly covered with masses of pure white flowers. Some of these were large, like chrysanthemums and mammoth white double roses, while among them were twined smaller and more delicate blossoms, like the bells of lilies-of-the-valley.

Ephel entered the arch of the arbor and flew on, for it was of great extent and continually enlarged from the point of entrance, so that at last the child-larks found themselves in a lofty circular chamber banked on sides and roof with solid masses of the snow-white flowers, which filled the air with a sweet and agreeable perfume. The floor was also a mass of white blossoms, so that the place resembled the inside of a huge cornucopia.

But the eyes of the little strangers were not directed so much to the arbor itself as to the group of splendid birds that occupied the flower-chamber and perched upon a wide-spreading bush of filigree gold that rose from the middle of the floor and spread its dainty branches in every direction.

On the lower branches sat many birds of marvellous colorings, some having blue the predominant tint in their feathers, and others green, or

scarlet, or brilliant yellows. In strong contrast with these were a few modest-looking birds with soft brown feathers covering their graceful forms, that sat silently upon the lowest and most retired branch of the golden bush; but still greater was the contrast of all present with the magnificence of the one occupying the topmost branch.

This gorgeous creature, whose splendor dominated the white bower, at once won the children's attention, and they had no doubt they were gazing upon the King Bird of Paradise.

The feathers of his head and neck were so fine that they looked like a covering of velvet. These seemed to be, at first, of a delicate lavender color, but the children observed that they shone with a different tint at every movement the King made. The body feathers, also as glossy as velvet, were of a rich royal purple, shading to lavender and then to white upon his breast. His wing plumes were white, tipped with specks of lustrous gold.

But by far the most astonishing part of the King's plumage was that which consisted of the dainty, fern-like plumes that rose from his body and tail and spread in graceful and bewildering curves both right and left, until his form seemed to be standing in a feathery bower of resplendent beauty. All the colors of the rainbow were seen in these delicate feathers, and against the white background of the arch this monarch of the feathered world appeared more royally magnificent than any words can describe.

Both Twinkle and Chubbins gasped with amazement and delight as, at the command of Ephel, they alighted upon a lowly branch of the golden bush and bowed their heads before the ruler of the birds' fairyland.

"Ah, whom have we here?" asked the King, in a soft voice, as he strutted and proudly turned himself upon his perch.

"Strangers, your Majesty," answered the Messenger. "They are sent to you by the Guardian of the Entrance because they are gentle and innocent, and are neither birds nor mortals, but a part of both."

"They are certainly very curious," remarked the King, staring at the human heads upon the lark bodies. "May I ask you, little strangers, how you happen to exist in your present form?"

Twinkle, tossing her head to throw back a straggling lock of hair that had fallen across her eyes, began in her sweet voice to tell the story of their enchantment, and not only the King but all the Birds of Paradise present listened intently to her words.

When she had finished the King exclaimed:

"Indeed, my dear child-larks, you are worthy to be our guests in fairyland. So it will please me if you will be as happy and comfortable as possible, and enjoy your stay with us as much as you can. My people will delight to honor

and amuse you, and Ephel shall continue to guide you wherever you go."

"Thank you," returned Twinkle, earnestly; and Chubbins added, in his blunt way: "Much obliged."

"But, before you go," continued his Majesty, "tell me what you think of my royal person. Am I not beautiful?"

"You are, indeed," replied Twinkle; "only — "

"Only what?" asked the King, as she hesitated.

"Only I'm sorry you are so vain, and strut around so, and want everyone to see how beautiful you are."

"Why should I not? Is not vanity one of the great virtues?" asked the King, in a surprised voice.

"My mama says people ought not to think themselves nice, or pretty," said the child. "With us, to be vain is a fault, and we are taught to be modest and unassuming."

"How remarkable!" exclaimed the King. "And how very thoughtless your mother must be. Here we think that if God creates us beautiful it is a sin not to glory in His work, and make everyone acknowledge the kindly skill of the Supreme Maker's hand. Should I try to make others think, or should I myself think, that I am not most gracefully formed and most gorgeously clothed, I would be guilty of the sin of not appreciating the favor of God, and deserve to be punished."

Twinkle was amazed, but could find no words to contradict this astonishing idea.

"I had not thought of it in that way," she answered. "Perhaps I am wrong, your Majesty; and certainly you are very beautiful."

"Think it over," said the King, graciously. "Learn to be grateful for every good thing that is yours, and proud that you have been selected by Nature for adornment. Only in this way may such rare favors be deserved. And now the royal Messenger will show you the sights of our Paradise, and try to entertain you pleasantly while you are our guests."

He turned aside, with these words, and fluttered his waving feathers so that their changing tints might dazzle the eyes of all observers. But immediately afterward he paused and cried out:

"Dear me! One of my wing plumes is disarranged. Help me, you ladies!"

At once the small brown birds on the lower branches, who had been modestly quiet because they had no gay plumage, flew up to the King and with their bills skillfully dressed his feathers, putting the wing plume into its place again and arranging it properly, while the other birds looked on with evident interest.

As the lark-children turned away to follow the Messenger Chubbins

remarked:

“I’m glad *I* haven’t got all those giddy feathers.”

“Why?” asked Twinkle, who had been rather awed by the King’s splendor.

“Because it would take all my time to keep ‘em smooth,” answered the boy. “The poor King can’t do much more than admire himself, so he don’t get time to have fun.”

CHAPTER XIV

A Real Fairyland

As they left the royal arbor of white flowers the Messenger turned to the left and guided his guests through several bright and charming avenues to a grove of trees that had bright blue bark and yellow leaves. Scattered about among the branches were blossoms of a delicate pink color, shaped like a cup and resembling somewhat the flower of the morning-glory.

"Are you hungry?" asked Ephel.

"Oh, I could eat something, I guess," said Chubbins.

The Messenger flew to one of the trees and alighted upon a branch where three of the pink, cup-shaped flowers grew in a row. The children followed him, and sitting one before each blossom they looked within the cups and found them filled with an unknown substance that both looked and smelled delicious and appetizing.

"It is royal amal," said their guide, busily pecking at his cup with his bill. "Help yourselves, little ones. You will find it very nice indeed."

"Well," said Twinkle, "I'd be glad to eat it if I could. But it wouldn't do Chubbins and me a bit of good to stick our noses into these cups."

Ephel turned to look at them.

"True," he remarked; "it was very careless of me to forget that you have no bills. How are you accustomed to eat?"

"Why, with spoons, and knives and forks," said the girl.

"You have but to ask for what you need," declared the royal Messenger.

Twinkle hesitated, scarcely knowing what to say. At last she spoke boldly: "I wish Chub and I had spoons."

Hardly had the words left her lips when two tiny golden spoons appeared in the flower-cups. Twinkle seized the spoon before her in one claw and dipped up a portion of the strange food, which resembled charlotte russe in appearance. When she tasted it she found it delicious; so she eagerly ate all that the blossom contained.

When she looked around for Chubbins she found he was gone. He had emptied his cup and carried the golden spoon to another blossom on a higher limb, where the girl discovered him eating as fast as he could dip up the food.

"Let us go to another tree," said Ephel. "There are many excellent things to eat, and a variety of food is much more agreeable than feasting upon one kind."

"All right," called Chubbins, who had succeeded in emptying the second cup.

As they flew on Twinkle said to the guide:

"I should think the blossoms would all be emptied in a little while."

"Oh, they fill up again in a few moments," replied Ephel. "Should we go back even now, I think we would find them all ready to eat again. But here are the conona bushes. Let us taste these favorite morsels."

The bushes on which they now rested had willow-green branches with silver balls growing thickly upon them. Ephel tapped lightly upon one of the balls with his bill and at once it opened by means of a hinge in the center, the two halves of the ball lying flat, like plates. On one side Twinkle found tiny round pellets of cake, each one just big enough to make a mouthful for a bird. On the other side was a thick substance that looked like jelly.

"The proper thing to do," said their guide, "is to roll one of the pellets in the jelly, and then eat it."

He showed Twinkle how to do this, and as she had brought her golden spoon with her it was easy enough. Ephel opened a ball for Chubbins and then one for himself, and the children thought this food even nicer than the first they had eaten.

"Now we will have some fruit," declared the Messenger. He escorted his charges to an orchard where grew many strange and beautiful trees hanging full of fruits that were all unknown to the lark-children. They were of many odd shapes and all superbly colored, some gleaming like silver and gold and others being cherry-red or vivid blue or royal purple in shade. A few resembled grapes and peaches and cherries; but they had flavors not only varied and delicious but altogether different from the fruits that grow outside of the Birds' Paradise.

Another queer thing was, that as fast as the children ate one fruit, another appeared in its place, and they hopped from branch to branch and tree to tree, trying this one and that, until Chubbins exclaimed:

"Really, Twink, I can't eat another mouthful."

"I'm afraid we've both been stuffing ourselves, Chub," the girl replied. "But these things taste so good it is hard to stop at the right time."

"Would you like to drink?" asked Ephel.

"If you please," Twinkle answered.

"Then follow me," said the guide.

He led them through lovely vistas of wonderful trees, down beautiful winding avenues that excited their admiration, and past clusters of flowering plants with leaves as big as umbrellas and as bright as a painter's palette. The Paradise seemed to have been laid out according to one exquisite, symmetrical plan, and although the avenues or paths between the trees and plants led in every direction, the ground beneath them was everywhere

thickly covered with a carpet of magnificent flowers or richly tinted ferns and grasses. This was because the birds never walked upon the ground, but always flew through the air.

Often, as they passed by, the flowers would greet them with sweet songs or choruses and the plants would play delightful music by rubbing or striking their leaves against one another, so that the children's ears were constantly filled with harmony, while their eyes were feasted on the bewildering masses of rich color, and each breath they drew was fragrant with the delicious odors of the blossoms that abounded on every side.

"Of all the fairylands I've ever heard of or read about," said Twinkle, "this certainly is the best."

"It's just a peach of a fairyland," commented Chubbins, approvingly.

"Here is the nectar tree," presently remarked the royal Messenger, and he paused to allow them to observe it.

The tree was all of silver — silver trunk and branches and leaves — and from the end of each leaf or branch dripped sparkling drops of a pink-tinted liquid. These glistened brightly as they fell through the air and lost themselves in a bed of silver moss that covered all the ground beneath the tree.

Ephel flew to a branch and held his mouth open so that a drop from above fell into it. Twinkle and Chubbins followed his example, and found the pink liquid very delightful to drink. It seemed to quench their thirst and refresh them at the same time, and when they flew from the queer dripping tree they were as light-hearted and gay as any two children so highly favored could possibly have felt.

"Haven't you any water in your paradise?" asked the little girl-lark.

"Yes, of course," Ephel answered. "The fountain-lilies supply what water we wish to drink, and the Lustrous Lake is large enough for us all to bathe in. Besides these, we have also the Lake of Dry Water, for you must know that the Lustrous Lake is composed of wet water."

"I thought all water was wet," said Chubbins.

"It may be so in your country," replied the Royal Messenger, "but in our Paradise we have both dry and wet water. Would you like to visit these lakes?"

"If you please," said Twinkle.

CHAPTER XV

The Lake of Dry Water

They flew through the jewelled gardens for quite a way, emerging at last from among the trees to find before them a pretty sheet of water of a greenish hue. Upon the shore were rushes that when swayed by the breeze sang soft strains of music.

"This," announced their guide, "is the Lake of Dry Water."

"It *looks* wet, all right," said Chubbins, in a tone of doubt.

"But it isn't," declared Ephel. "Watch me, if you please."

He hovered over the lake a moment and then dove downward and disappeared beneath the surface. When he came up again he shook the drops of water from his plumage and then flew back to rejoin his guests.

"Look at me," he said. "My feathers are not even damp." They looked, and saw that he spoke truly. Then Chubbins decided to try a bath in the dry water, and also plunged into the lake. When he came to the surface he floated there for a time, and ducked his head again and again; but when he came back to the others not a hair of his head nor a feather of his little brown body was in the least moist.

"That's fine water," said the boy-lark. "I suppose you Birds of Paradise bathe here all the time."

"No," answered Ephel; "for only wet water is cleansing and refreshing. We always take our daily baths in the Lustrous Lake. But here we usually sail and disport ourselves, for it is a comfort not to get wet when you want to play in the water."

"How do you sail?" asked Twinkle, with interest.

"I will show you," replied their guide.

He flew to a tall tree near, that had broad, curling leaves, and plucked a leaf with his bill. The breeze caught it at once and wafted it to the lake, so that it fell gently upon the water.

"Get aboard, please," called Ephel, and alighted upon the broad surface of the floating leaf. Twinkle and Chubbins followed, one sitting in front of their guide and one behind him. Then Ephel spread out his wings of white and orange, and the breeze pushed gently against them and sent the queer boat gliding over the surface of the dry water.

"Sometimes, when the wind is strong," said the Royal Messenger, "these frail craft upset, and then we are dumped into the water. But we never mind that, because the water is dry and we are not obliged to dress our feathers again."

"It is very convenient," observed Twinkle, who was enjoying the sail.

“Could one be drowned in this lake?”

“I suppose an animal, like man, could, for it is as impossible to breathe beneath dry water as it is beneath wet. But only birds live here, and they cannot drown, because as soon as they come to the surface they fly into the air.”

“I see,” said Twinkle, musingly.

They sailed way across the lake, and because the wind was gentle they did not upset once. On reaching the farther shore they abandoned the leaf-boat and again took wing and resumed their flight through the avenues.

There was a great variety of scenery in the Paradise, and wherever they went something new and different was sure to meet their view.

At one place the avenue was carpeted with big pansies of every color one could imagine, some of them, indeed, having several colors blended together upon their petals. As they passed over the pansies Twinkle heard a chorus of joyous laughter, and looking downward, she perceived that the pansies all had faces, and the faces resembled those of happy children.

“Wait a minute,” she cried to Chubbins and the guide, and then she flew downward until she could see the faces more plainly. They smiled and nodded to the girl-lark, and laughed their merry laughter; but when she spoke to them Twinkle found they were unable to answer a single word.

Many of the faces were exceedingly beautiful; but others were bold and saucy, and a few looked at her with eyes twinkling with mischief. They seemed very gay and contented in their paradise, so Twinkle merely kissed one lovely face that smiled upon her and then flew away to rejoin her companions.

CHAPTER XVI

The Beauty Dance

Before long they came to another and larger sheet of water, and this Twinkle decided was the most beautiful lake she had ever seen. Its waters were mostly deep blue in color, although they had a changeable effect and constantly shifted from one hue to another. Little waves rippled all over its surface, and the edges of the waves were glistening jewels which, as they scattered in spray and fell into the bosom of the lake, glinted and sparkled with a thousand flashing lights. Here were no rushes upon the shore, but instead of them banks of gorgeous flowers grew far down to the water's edge, so that the last ones dipped their petals into the lake itself.

Nestling upon this bank of flowers the Royal Messenger turned to his companions and said:

"Here let us rest for a time, while I call the friendly fishes to entertain you."

He ended his speech with a peculiar warble, and at its sound a score of fishes thrust their heads above the surface of the water. Some of them were gold-fish and some silver-fish, but others had opal tints that were very pretty. Their faces were jolly in expression and their eyes, Chubbins thought, must be diamonds, because they sparkled so brightly.

Swimming softly here and there in the lovely waters of the Lustrous Lake, the fishes sang this song:

"We are the fishes of the lake;
Our lives are very deep;
We're always active when awake
And quiet when asleep.
"We get our fins from Finland,
From books we get out tales;
Our eyes they come from Eyerland
And weighty are our scales.
"We love to flop and twist and turn
Whenever 'tis our whim.
Yet social etiquette we learn
Because we're in the swim.
"Our beds, though damp, are always made;
We need no fires to warm us;
When we swim out we're not afraid,
For autos cannot harm us.
"We're independent little fish

And never use umbrellas.
We do exactly as we wish
And live like jolly fellows."

As the fishes concluded their song they leaped high into the air and then plunged under the water and disappeared, and it was hard to tell which sparkled most brilliantly, their gold and silver bodies or the spray of jewels they scattered about them as they leaped.

"If you should dive into this lake," said Ephel the Messenger, "your feathers would be dripping wet when you came out again. It is here we Birds of Paradise bathe each morning, after which we visit the Gleaming Glade to perform our Beauty Dance."

"I should like to see that glade," said Twinkle, who was determined to let nothing escape her that she could possibly see.

"You shall," answered Ephel, promptly. "We will fly there at once."

So he led the way and presently they entered a thicker grove of trees than any they had before noticed. The trunks were so close together that the birds could only pass between then in single file, but as they proceeded in this fashion it was not long before they came to a circular space which the child-lark knew at once must be the Gleaming Glade.

The floor was of polished gold, and so bright that as they stood upon it they saw their forms reflected as in a mirror. The trees surrounding them were also of gold, being beautifully engraved with many attractive designs and set with rows of brilliant diamonds. The leaves of the trees, however, were of burnished silver, and bore so high a gloss that each one served as a looking-glass, reproducing the images of those standing in the glade thousands of times, whichever way they chanced to turn.

The gleam of these mirror-like leaves was exceedingly brilliant, but Ephel said this radiance was much stronger in the morning, when the rosy glow of the atmosphere was not so powerful.

"Then," said he, "the King Bird and all the Nobility of Paradise, who rejoice in the most brilliant plumage, come here from their bath and dance upon the golden floor the Beauty Dance, which keeps their blood warm until the feathers have all dried. While they dance they can admire their reflections in the mirrors, which adds greatly to their pleasure."

"Don't they have music to dance by?" asked Chubbins.

"Of course," the Messenger replied. "There is a regular orchestra that plays exquisite music for the dance; but the musicians are the female Birds of Paradise, who, because their plumage is a modest brown, are not allowed to take part in the Beauty Dance."

"I think the brown birds with the soft gray breasts are just as pretty as the

gaily clothed ones," said Twinkle. "The male birds are too bright, and tire my eyes."

Ephel did not like this speech, for he was very proud of his own gorgeous coloring; but he was too polite to argue with his guest, so he let the remark pass.

"You have now witnessed the most attractive scenes in our favored land," he said; "but there are some curious sights in the suburbs that might serve to interest you."

"Oh! have you suburbs, too?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed. We do not like to come into too close contact with the coarse, outer world, so we have placed the flying things that are not birds midway between our Paradise and the great forest. They serve us when we need them, and are under our laws and regulations; but they are so highly favored by being permitted to occupy the outer edge of our glorious Paradise that they willingly obey their masters. After all, they live happy lives, and their habits, as I have said, may amuse you.

"Who are they?" enquired Chubbins.

"Come with me, and you shall see for yourselves."

They flew away from the grove of the Gleaming Glade and Ephel led them by pleasant routes into a large garden with many pretty flowers in it. Mostly it was filled with hollyhocks — yellow, white, scarlet and purple.

CHAPTER XVII

The Queen Bee

As they approached they heard a low, humming sound, which grew louder as they advanced and aroused their curiosity.

"What is it?" asked Twinkle, at last.

Ephel answered: "It is the suburb devoted to the bees."

"But bees are not birds!" exclaimed Twinkle.

"No; as I have told you, the suburbs contain flying things that cannot be called birds, and so are unable to live in our part of the Paradise. But because they have wings, and love all the flowers and fruits as we do ourselves, we have taken them under our protection."

Ephel perched upon a low bush, and when the child-larks had settled beside him he uttered a peculiar, shrill whistle. The humming sound grew louder, then, and presently hundreds of great bees rose above the flower tops and hovered in the air. But none of them approached the bush except one monstrous bumble-bee that had a body striped with black and gold, and this one sailed slowly toward the visitors and alighted gracefully upon a branch in front of them.

The bee was all bristling with fine hairs and was nearly half as big as Twinkle herself; so the girl shrank back in alarm, and cried:

"Oh-h-h! I'm afraid it will sting me!"

"How ridiculous!" answered the bee, laughing in a small but merry voice. "Our stings are only for our enemies, and we have no enemies in this Paradise; so we do not use our stingers at all. In fact, I'd almost forgotten I had one, until you spoke."

The words were a little mumbled, as if the insect had something in its mouth, but otherwise they were quite easy to understand.

"Permit me to introduce her Majesty the Queen Bee," said their guide. "These, your highness, are some little child-larks who are guests of our King. I have brought them to visit you."

"They are very welcome," returned the Queen Bee. "Are you fond of honey?" she asked, turning to the children.

"Sometimes," replied Chubbins; "but we've just eaten, and we're chock full now."

"You see," the Queen remarked, "my people are all as busy as bees gathering the honey from every flower."

"What do you do with it?" asked Twinkle.

"Oh, we eat part of it, and store up the rest for a rainy day."

"Does it ever rain here?" enquired Chubbins.

“Sometimes, at night, when we are all asleep, so as to refresh and moisten the flowers, and help them to grow.”

“But if it rains at night, there can’t be any rainy days,” remarked Twinkle; “so I can’t see the use of saving your honey.”

“Nor can I,” responded the Queen, laughing again in her pleasant way. “Out in the world people usually rob us of our stores, and so keep us busy getting more. But here there are not even robbers, so that the honey has been accumulating until we hardly know what to do with it. We have built a village of honeycombs, and I have just had my people make me a splendid palace of honey. But it is our way to gather the sweet stuff, whether we need it or not, so we have to act according to our natures. I think of building a mountain of honey next.”

“I’d like to see that honey palace,” said Twinkle.

“Then come with me,” answered the Queen Bee, “for it will give me pleasure to show it to you.”

“Shall we go?” asked the girl-lark, turning to Ephel.

“Of course,” he returned. “It is quite a wonderful sight, and may interest you.”

So they all flew away, the Queen Bee taking the lead, and passed directly over the bed of flowers with its swarm of buzzing, busy bees.

“They remind me of a verse from ‘Father Goose,’“ said Twinkle, looking curiously but half fearfully at the hundreds of big insects.

“What is the verse?” asked the Queen.

“Why, it goes this way,” answered the girl:

“‘A bumble-bee was buzzing on a yellow hollyhock
When came along a turtle, who at the bee did mock,
Saying “Prithee, Mr. Bumble, why make that horrid noise?
It’s really distracting, and every one annoys.”
“““I’m sorry,” said, quite humble, the busy droning bee,
“The noise is just my bumble, and natural, you see.
And if I didn’t buzz so I’m sure that you’ll agree
I’d only be a big fly, and not a bumble-bee.”““

“That is quite true,” said the bee, “and describes our case exactly. But you should know that we are not named ‘bumblebees’ by rights, but ‘Humble Bees.’ The latter is our proper name.”

“But why ‘humble?’“ asked Twinkle.

“Because we are common, work-a-day people, I suppose, and not very aristocratic,” was the reply. “I’ve never heard why they changed our name to ‘bumble,’ but since you recited that verse I imagine it is on account of the noise our wings make.”

They had now passed over the flower beds and approached a remarkable village, where the houses were all formed of golden-yellow honey-combs. There were many pretty shapes among these houses, and some were large and many stories in height while others were small and had but one story. Some had spires and minarets reaching up into the air, and all were laid out into streets just like a real village.

But in the center stood a great honey-comb building with so many gables and roofs and peaks and towers that it was easy to guess it was the Queen Bee's palace, of which she had spoken.

They flew in at a second-story window and found themselves in a big room with a floor as smooth as glass. Yet it was composed of many six-sided cells filled with honey, which could be seen through the transparent covering. The walls and roof were of the same material, and at the end of the room was a throne shaped likewise of the honey cells, like everything else. On a bench along the wall sat several fat and sleepy-looking bumble-bees, who scarcely woke up when their queen entered.

"Those are the drones," she said to her visitors. "It is useless to chide them for their laziness, because they are too stupid to pay attention to even a good scolding. Don't mind them in any way."

After examining the beautiful throne-room, they visited the sleeping chambers, of which there were many, and afterward the parlors and dining-room and the work-rooms.

In these last were many bees building the six-sided pockets or cells for storing the honey in, or piling them up in readiness for the return of those who were gathering honey from the flowers.

"We are not really honey-bees," remarked the Queen; "but gathering honey is our chief business, after all, and we manage to find a lot of it."

"Won't your houses melt when it rains?" asked Twinkle.

"No, for the comb of the honey is pure wax," the Queen Bee replied. "Water does not melt it at all."

"Where do you get all the wax?" Chubbins enquired.

"From the flowers, of course. It grows on the stamens, and is a fine dust called pollen, until we manufacture it into wax. Each of my bees carries two sacks, one in front of him, to put the honey in, and one behind to put the wax in."

"That's funny," said the boy-lark.

"I suppose it may be, to you," answered the Queen, "but to us it is a very natural thing."

CHAPTER XVIII

Good News

Ephel and the children now bade the good-natured Queen Bee good-bye, and thanked her for her kindness. The Messenger led them far away to another place that he called a "suburb," and as they emerged from a thick cluster of trees into a second flower garden they found the air filled with a great assemblage of butterflies, they being both large and small in size and colored in almost every conceivable manner.

Twinkle and Chubbins had seen many beautiful butterflies, but never such magnificent ones as these, nor so many together at one time. Some of them had wings fully as large as those of the Royal Messenger himself, even when he spread them to their limit, and the markings of these big butterfly wings were more exquisite than those found upon the tail-feathers of the proudest peacocks.

The butterflies paid no attention to their visitors, but continued to flutter aimlessly from flower to flower. Chubbins asked one of them a question, but got no reply.

"Can't they talk?" he enquired of Ephel.

"Yes," said the Messenger, "they all know how to talk, but when they speak they say nothing that is important. They are brainless, silly creatures, for the most part, and are only interesting because they are beautiful to look at. The King likes to watch the flashes of color as they fly about, and so he permits them to live in this place. They are very happy here, in their way, for there is no one to chase them or to stick pins through them when they are caught."

Just then a chime of bells tinkled far away in the distance, and the Royal Messenger listened intently and then said:

"It is my summons to his Majesty the King. We must return at once to the palace."

So they flew into the air again and proceeded to cross the lovely gardens and pass through the avenues of jewelled trees and the fragrant orchards and groves until they came at last to the royal bower of white flowers.

The child-larks entered with their guide and found the gorgeous King Bird of Paradise still strutting on his perch on the golden bush and enjoying the admiring glances of his courtiers and the ladies of his family. He turned as the children entered and addressed his Messenger, saying:

"Well, my dear Ephel, have you shown the strangers all the sights of our lovely land?"

"Most of them, your Majesty," replied Ephel.

“What do you think of us now?” asked the King, turning his eyes upon the lark-children.

“It must be the prettiest place in all the world!” cried Twinkle, with real enthusiasm.

His Majesty seemed much pleased. “I am very sorry you cannot live here always,” he said.

“I’m not,” declared Chubbins. “It’s too pretty. I’d get tired of it soon.”

“He means,” said Twinkle, hastily, for she feared the blunt remark would displease the kindly King, “that he isn’t really a bird, but a boy who has been forced to wear a bird’s body. And your Majesty is wise enough to understand that the sort of life you lead in your fairy paradise would be very different from the life that boys generally lead.”

“Of course,” replied the King. “A boy’s life must be a dreadful one.”

“It suits me, all right,” said Chubbins.

The King looked at him attentively.

“Would you really prefer to resume your old shape, and cease to be a bird?” he asked.

“Yes, if I could,” Chubbins replied.

“Then I will tell you how to do it,” said the King. “Since you told me your strange story I have talked with my Royal Necromancer, who knows a good deal about magic, and especially about that same tuxix who wickedly transformed you in the forest. And the Royal Necromancer tells me that if you can find a tingle-berry, and eat it, you will resume your natural form again. For it is the one antidote in all the world for the charm the tuxix worked upon you.”

“What *is* a tingle-berry?” asked Twinkle, anxiously, for this information interested her as much as it did Chubbins.

“I do not know,” said the King, “for it is a common forest berry, and never grows in our paradise. But doubtless you will have little trouble in finding the bush of the tingle-berry when you return to the outside world.”

The children were both eager to go at once and seek the tingle-berry; but they could not be so impolite as to run away just then, for the King announced that he had prepared an entertainment in their honor.

So they sat on a branch of the golden bush beside their friend Ephel, while at a nod from the King a flock of the beautiful Birds of Paradise flew into the bower and proceeded to execute a most delightful and bewildering set of aerial evolutions. They flew swiftly in circles, spirals, triangles, and solid squares, and all the time that they performed sweet music was played by some unseen band. It almost dazzled the eyes of the child-larks to watch this brilliant flashing of the colored wings of the birds, but the evolutions only

lasted for a few minutes, and then the birds flew out again in regular ranks.

Then the little brown lady-birds danced gracefully upon the carpet, their dainty feet merely touching the tips of the lovely flowers. Afterward the flowers themselves took part, and sang a delightful chorus, and when this was finished the King said they would now indulge in some refreshment.

Instantly a row of bell-shaped blossoms appeared upon the golden bush, one for each bird present, and all were filled with a delicious ice that was as cold and refreshing as if it had just been taken from a freezer. Twinkle and Chubbins asked for spoons, and received them quickly; but the others all ate the ices with their bills.

The King seemed to enjoy his as much as any one, and Twinkle noticed that as fast as a blossom was emptied of its contents it disappeared from the branch.

The child-larks now thanked the beautiful but vain King very earnestly for all his kindness to them, and especially for telling them about the tingle-berries; and when all the good-byes had been exchanged Ephel flew with them back to the tree where they had left the Guardian of the Entrance and their faithful comrade, Policeman Bluejay.

CHAPTER XIX

The Rebels

They were warmly greeted by the bluejay, who asked:

"Did you enjoy the wonderful Paradise?"

"Very much, indeed," cried Twinkle. "But we were sorry you could not be with us."

"Never mind that," returned the policeman, cheerfully. "I have feasted my eyes upon all the beauties visible from this tree, and my good friend the Guardian has talked to me and given me much good advice that will surely be useful to me in the future. So I have been quite contented while you were gone."

The children now gave their thanks to Ephel for his care of them and polite attention, and the Royal Messenger said he was pleased that the King had permitted him to serve them. They also thanked the green-robed Guardian of the Entrance, and then, accompanied by Policeman Bluejay, they quitted the golden tree and began their journey back to the forest.

It was no trouble at all to return. The wind caught their wings and blew against them strongly, so that they had but to sail before the breeze and speed along until they were deep in the forest again. Then the wind moderated, and presently died away altogether, so that they were forced to begin flying in order to continue their journey home.

It was now the middle of the afternoon, and the policeman said:

"I hope all has been quiet and orderly during my absence. There are so many disturbing elements among the forest birds that I always worry when they are left alone for many hours at a time."

"I'm sure they have behaved themselves," returned Twinkle. "They fear your power so much that the evil-minded birds do not dare to offend you by being naughty."

"That is true," said the policeman. "They know very well that I will not stand any nonsense, and will always insist that the laws be obeyed."

They were now approaching that part of the forest where they lived, and as the policeman concluded his speech they were surprised to hear a great flutter of wings among the trees, and presently a flock of big black rooks flew toward them.

At the head of the band was a saucy-looking fellow who wore upon his head a policeman's helmet, and carried under his wing a club.

Policeman Bluejay gave a cry of anger as he saw this, and dashed forward to meet the rooks.

"What does this mean, you rascal?" he demanded, in a fierce voice.

“Easy there, my fine dandy,” replied the rook, with a hoarse laugh. “Don’t get saucy, or I’ll give you a rap on the head!”

The rooks behind him shrieked with delight at this impudent speech, and that made the mock policeman strut more absurdly than ever.

The bluejay was not only astonished at this rebellion but he was terribly angry as well.

“That is my policeman’s helmet and club,” he said sternly. “Where did you get them?”

“At your nest, of course,” retorted the other. “We made up our minds that we have had a miserable bluejay for a policeman long enough; so the rooks elected me in your place, and I’m going to make you birds stand around and obey orders, I can tell you! If you do as I command, you’ll get along all right; if you don’t, I’ll pound you with your own club until you obey.”

Again the rooks screamed in an admiring chorus of delight, and when the bluejay observed their great numbers, and that they were all as large as he was, and some even larger and stronger, he decided not to risk an open fight with them just then, but to take time to think over what had best be done.

“I will call the other birds to a meeting,” he said to the rook, “and let them decide between us.”

“That won’t do any good,” was the reply. “We rooks have decided the matter already. We mean to rule the forest, after this, and if any one, or all of the birds, dare to oppose us, we’ll fight until we force them to serve us. Now, then, what do you intend to do about it?”

“I’ll think it over,” said Policeman Bluejay.

“Oho! oho! He’s afraid! He’s a coward!” yelled the rooks; and one of them added:

“Stand up and fight, if you dare!”

“I’ll fight your false policeman, or any one of you at a time,” replied the bluejay.

“No, you won’t; you’ll fight us all together, or not at all,” they answered.

The bluejay knew it would be foolish to do that, so he turned away and whispered to the lark-children:

“Follow me, and fly as swiftly as you can.”

Like a flash he darted high into the air, with Twinkle and Chubbins right behind him, and before the rooks could recover from their surprise the three were far away.

Then the big black birds gave chase, uttering screams of rage; but they could not fly so swiftly as the bluejay and the larks, and were soon obliged to abandon the pursuit.

When at last he knew that they had escaped the rooks, Policeman Bluejay

entered the forest again and went among the birds to call them all to a meeting. They obeyed the summons without delay, and were very indignant when they heard of the rebellion of the rooks and the insults that had been heaped upon their regularly elected officer. Judge Bullfinch arrived with his head bandaged with soft feathers, for he had met the rook policeman and, when he remonstrated, had been severely pounded by the wicked bird's club.

"But what can we do?" he asked. "The rooks are a very powerful tribe, and the magpies and cuckoos and blackbirds are liable to side with them, if they seem to be stronger than we are."

"We might get all our people together and fall upon them in a great army, and so defeat them," suggested an oriole.

"The trouble with that plan," decided the judge, "is that we can only depend upon the smaller birds. The big birds might desert us, and in that case we would be badly beaten."

"Perhaps it will be better to submit to the rooks," said a little chickadee, anxiously. "We are neither warriors nor prizefighters, and if we obey our new rulers they may leave us in peace."

"No, indeed!" cried a linnet. "If we submit to them they will think we are afraid, and will treat us cruelly. I know the nature of these rooks, and believe they can only be kept from wickedness by a power stronger than their own."

"Hear me, good friends," said the bluejay, who had been silent because he was seriously thinking; "I have a plan for subduing these rebels, and it is one that I am sure will succeed. But I must make a long journey to accomplish my purpose. Go now quietly to your nests; but meet me at the Judgment Tree at daybreak to-morrow morning. Also be sure to ask every friendly bird of the forest to be present, for we must insist upon preserving our liberty, or else be forever slaves to these rooks."

With these words he rose into the air and sped swiftly upon his errand.

The other birds looked after him earnestly.

"I think it will be well for us to follow his advice," said Judge Bullfinch, after a pause. "The bluejay is an able bird, and has had much experience. Besides, we have ever found him just and honorable since the time we made him our policeman, so I feel that we may depend upon him in this emergency."

"Why, it is all we can do," replied a robin; and this remark was so true that the birds quietly dispersed and returned to their nests to await the important meeting the next morning.

CHAPTER XX

The Battle

Twinkle and Chubbins flew slowly home to their nests in the maple tree, pausing to ask every bird they met where tingle-berries grew. But none of them could tell.

"I'm sorry we did not ask Policeman Bluejay," said Chubbins.

"I intended to ask him, but we hadn't time," replied Twinkle. "But he will be back to-morrow morning."

"I wonder what he's going to do," remarked the boy.

"Don't know, Chub; but it'll be the right thing, whatever it is. You may be sure of that."

They visited the nest of the baby goldfinches, and found the Widow Chaffinch still caring for the orphans in her motherly way. The little ones seemed to be as hungry as ever, but the widow assured the lark-children that all five had just been fed.

"Did you ever hear of a tingle-berry?" asked Twinkle.

"Yes; it seems to me I have heard of that berry," was the reply. "If I remember rightly my grandmother once told me of the tingle-berries, and warned me never to eat one. But I am quite certain the things do not grow in our forest, for I have never seen one that I can recollect."

"Where do they grow, then?" enquired Chubbins.

"I can't say exactly where; but if they are not in the forest, they must grow in the open country."

The child-larks now returned to their own nest, and sat snuggled up in it during the evening, talking over the day's experiences and the wonderful things they had seen in the fairy-like Paradise of the Birds. So much sight-seeing had made them tired, so when it grew dark they fell fast asleep, and did not waken until the sun was peeping over the edge of the trees.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the girl, "we shall be late at the meeting at the Judgment Tree. Let's hurry, Chub."

They ate a hasty breakfast from the contents of their basket, and after flying to the brook for a drink and a dip in the cool water they hurried toward the Judgment Tree.

There they found a vast assemblage of birds. They were so numerous, indeed, that Twinkle was surprised to find that so many of them inhabited the forest.

But a still greater surprise was in store for her, for immediately she discovered sitting upon the biggest branch of the tree twenty-two bluejays, all in a row. They were large, splendidly plumaged birds, with keen eyes and

sharp bills, and at their head was the children's old friend, the policeman.

"These are my cousins," he said to the child-larks, proudly, "and I have brought them from another forest, where they live, to assist me. I am not afraid of the foolish rooks now, and in a moment we shall fly away to give them battle."

The forest birds were all in a flutter of delight at the prompt arrival of the powerful bluejays, and when the word of command was given they all left the tree and flew swiftly to meet the rooks.

First came the ranks of the twenty-two bluejays, with the policeman at their head. Then followed many magpies and cuckoos, who were too clever to side with the naughty rooks when they saw the powerful birds the bluejay had summoned to his assistance. After these flew the smaller birds, of all descriptions, and they were so many and at the same time so angry that they were likely to prove stubborn foes in a fight.

This vast army came upon the rooks in an open space in the forest. Without waiting for any words or explanations from the rebels, the soldierly bluejays fell upon their enemies instantly, fighting fiercely with bill and claw, while the other birds fluttered in the rear, awaiting their time to join in the affray.

Policeman Bluejay singled out the rook which had stolen his helmet and club, and dashed upon him so furiously that the black rebel was amazed, and proved an easy victim to the other's superior powers. He threw down the club and helmet at once; but the bluejay was not satisfied with that, and attacked the thief again and again, until the air was full of black feathers torn from the rook's body.

After all, the battle did not last long; for the rooks soon screamed for mercy, and found themselves badly plucked and torn by the time their assailants finally decided they had been punished enough.

Like all blustering, evil-disposed people, when they found themselves conquered they whined and humbled themselves before the victors and declared they would never again rebel against Policeman Bluejay, the regularly appointed guardian of the Law of the Forest. And I am told that after this day the rooks, who are not rightly forest birds, betook themselves to the nearest villages and farm houses, and contented themselves with plaguing mankind, who could not revenge themselves as easily as the birds did.

After the fight Policeman Bluejay thanked his cousins and sent them home again, and then the birds all surrounded the policeman and cheered him gratefully for his cleverness and bravery, so that he was the hero of the hour.

Judge Bullfinch tried to make a fine speech, but the birds were too excited to listen to his words, and he soon found himself without an audience.

Of course, Twinkle and Chubbins took no part in the fight, but they had hovered in the background to watch it, and were therefore as proud of their friend as any of the forest birds could be.

CHAPTER XXI

The Tingle-Berries

When the excitement of the morning had subsided and the forest was quiet again, Policeman Bluejay came to the nest of the child-larks, wearing his official helmet and club. You may be sure that one of the first things Twinkle asked him was if he knew where tingle-berries grew.

"Of course," he replied, promptly. "They grow over at the north edge of the forest, in the open country. But you must never eat them, my dear friend, because they are very bad for birds."

"But the Royal Necromancer of the King Bird of Paradise says the tingle-berries will restore us to our proper forms," explained the girl.

"Oh; did he say that? Then he probably knows," said the bluejay, "and I will help you to find the berries. We birds always avoid them, for they give us severe pains in our stomachs."

"That's bad," observed Chubbins, uneasily.

"Well," said Twinkle, "I'd be willing to have a pain or two, just to be myself again."

"So would I, if it comes to that," agreed the boy. "But I'd rather have found a way to be myself without getting the pain."

"There is usually but one thing that will overcome an enchantment," remarked the bluejay, seriously; "and if it is a tingle-berry that will destroy the charm which the old tuxix put upon you, then nothing else will answer the same purpose. The Royal Necromancer is very wise, and you may depend upon what he says. But it is late, at this season, for tingle-berries. They do not grow at all times of the year, and we may not be able to find any upon the bushes."

"Cannot we go at once and find out?" asked Twinkle, anxiously.

"To be sure. It will grieve me to lose you, my little friends, but I want to do what will give you the most happiness. Come with me, please."

They flew away through the forest, and by and by came upon the open country to the north, leaving all the trees behind them.

"Why, this is the place we entered the forest, that day we got 'chanted!" cried Twinkle.

"So it is," said Chubbins. "I believe we could find our way home from here, Twink."

"But we can't go home like we are," replied the girl-lark. "What would our folks say, to find us with birds' bodies?"

"They'd yell and run," declared the boy.

"Then," said she, "we must find the tingle-berries."

The bluejay flew with them to some bushes which he said were the kind the tingle-berries grew upon, but they were all bare and not a single berry could be found.

“There must be more not far away,” said the policeman, encouragingly. “Let us look about us.”

They found several clumps of the bushes, to be sure; but unfortunately no berries were now growing upon them, and at each failure the children grew more and more sad and despondent.

“If we have to wait until the bushes bear again,” Twinkle remarked, “it will be nearly a year, and I’m sure we can’t live in the forest all winter.”

“Why not?” asked the policeman.

“The food in our basket would all be gone, and then we would starve to death,” was the reply. “We can’t eat bugs and worms, you know.”

“I’d rather die!” declared Chubbins, mournfully.

The bluejay became very thoughtful.

“If we could find some of the tingle bushes growing near the shade of the forest,” he said at last, “there might still be some berries remaining on them. Out here in the bright sunshine the berries soon wither and drop off and disappear.”

“Then let us look near the trees,” suggested Twinkle.

They searched for a long time unsuccessfully. It was growing late, and they were almost in despair, when a sharp cry from Policeman Bluejay drew the child-larks to his side.

“What is it?” enquired the girl, trembling with nervous excitement.

“Why,” said the policeman, “here is a bush at last, and on it are exactly two ripe tingle-berries!”

CHAPTER XXII

The Transformation

They looked earnestly at the bush, and saw that their friend spoke truly. Upon a high limb was one plump, red berry, looking much like a cranberry, while lower down grew another but smaller berry, which appeared to be partially withered.

"Good!" the lark-children cried, joyfully; and the next moment Chubbins added: "You eat the big berry, Twink."

"Why?" she asked, hesitating.

"It looks as if it had more stomach-ache in it," he replied.

"I'm not afraid of that," said she. "But do you suppose the little berry will be enough for you? One side of it is withered, you see."

"That won't matter," returned the boy-lark. "The Royal Necromancer said to eat one berry. He didn't say a little or a big one, you know, or whether it should be plump or withered."

"That is true," said the girl-lark. "Shall I eat mine now?"

"The sooner the better," Chubbins replied.

"Don't forget me, little friend, when you are a human again," said Policeman Bluejay, sadly.

"I shall never forget you," Twinkle answered, "nor any part of all your kindness to us. We shall be friends forever."

That seemed to please the handsome blue bird, and Twinkle was so eager that she could not wait to say more. She plucked the big, plump berry, put it in her mouth with her little claw, and ate it as soon as possible.

In a moment she said: "Ouch! Oo-oo-oo!" But it did not hurt so badly, after all. Her form quickly changed and grew larger; and while Chubbins and Policeman Bluejay watched her anxiously she became a girl again, and the bird's body with its soft gray feathers completely disappeared.

As she felt herself changing she called: "Good-bye!" to the bluejay; but even then he could hardly understand her words.

"Good-bye!" he answered, and to Twinkle's ears it sounded like "Chir-r-rip-chee-wee!"

"How did it feel?" asked Chubbins; but she looked at him queerly, as if his language was strange to her, and seemed to be half frightened.

"Guess I'll have to eat my berry," he said, with a laugh, and proceeded to pluck and eat it, as Twinkle had done. He yelled once or twice at the cramp the fruit gave him, but as soon as the pain ceased he began to grow and change in the same way his little comrade had.

But not entirely. For although he got his human body and legs back again,

all in their natural size, his wings remained as they were, and it startled him to find that the magic power had passed and he was still partly a bird.

"What's the matter?" asked Twinkle.

"Is anything wrong?" enquired the bluejay.

The boy understood them both, although they could not now understand each other. He said to Twinkle:

"I guess the berry wasn't quite big enough." Then he repeated the same thing in the bird language to Policeman Bluejay, and it sounded to Twinkle like:

"Pir-r-r-r — eep — cheep — tweet!"

"What in the world can you do?" asked the girl, quite distressed. "It will be just dreadful if you have to stay like that."

The tears came to Chubbins' eyes. He tried to restrain them, but could not. He flapped his little wings dolefully and said:

"I wish I was either one thing or the other! I'd rather be a child-lark again, and nest in a tree, than to go home to the folks in this way."

Policeman Bluejay had seen his dilemma at the first, and his sharp eyes had been roving over all the bushes that were within the range of his vision. Suddenly he uttered a chirp of delight and dashed away, speedily returning with another tingle-berry in his bill.

"It's the very last one there is!" said he to Chubbins.

"But it is all that I want," cried the boy, brightening at once; and then, regardless of any pain, he ate the berry as greedily as if he was fond of a stomache-ache.

The second berry had a good effect in one way, for Chubbins' wings quickly became arms, and he was now as perfectly formed as he had been before he met with the cruel tuxix. But he gave a groan, every once in a while, and Twinkle suspected that two berries were twice as powerful as one, and made a pain that lasted twice as long.

As the boy and girl looked around they were astonished to find their basket standing on the ground beside them. On a limb of the first tree of the forest sat silently regarding them a big blue bird that they knew must be Policeman Bluejay, although somehow or other he had lost his glossy black helmet and the club he had carried underneath his wing.

"It's almost dark," said Twinkle, yawning. "Let's go home, Chub."

"All right."

He picked up the basket, and for a few minutes they walked along in silence.

Then the boy asked:

"Don't your legs feel heavy, Twink?"

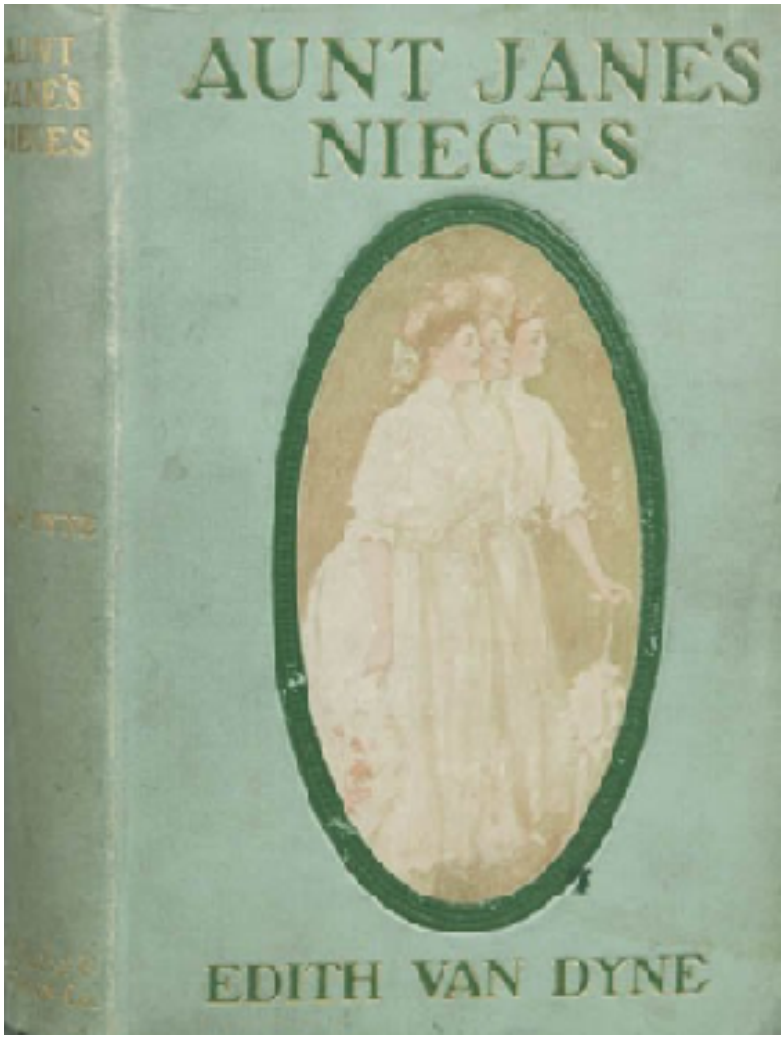
“Yes,” said she; “do yours?”
“Awful,” said he.

The Pseudonym Works – Non-Fantasy

Peekskill Military Academy, where Baum went to school for two years

AUNT JANE'S NIECES

Aunt Jane's Nieces was the first book in what proved to be a very popular series written by Baum under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. Published by Reilly & Britton in 1906, the novel for adolescent girls featured artwork by Emile A. Nelson, a prolific illustrator of the period, who also illustrated Baum's *Boy Fortune Hunters* series. The publisher's contract called for Baum to create a series in the style of Louisa May Alcott's, *Little Women*. The title character, Jane Merrick, is a rich, elderly woman with no children of her own, and she wants to decide who shall inherit her estate after her death. She calls for a visit from three of her teenage nieces, each cousin very different in personality from the other. Their contrasting temperaments, their differing reactions to Aunt Jane, coupled with an intriguing plot surrounding valid and invalid wills and a visit from a long lost uncle, provide tension and excitement.



A first edition copy of 'Aunt Jane's Nieces'

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CHAPTER I.

BETH RECEIVES AN INVITATION.

Professor De Graf was sorting the mail at the breakfast table.

"Here's a letter for you, Beth," said he, and tossed it across the cloth to where his daughter sat.

The girl raised her eyebrows, expressing surprise. It was something unusual for her to receive a letter. She picked up the square envelope between a finger and thumb and carefully read the inscription, "Miss Elizabeth De Graf, Cloverton, Ohio." Turning the envelope she found on the reverse flap a curious armorial emblem, with the word "Elmhurst."

Then she glanced at her father, her eyes big and somewhat startled in expression. The Professor was deeply engrossed in a letter from Benjamin Lowenstein which declared that a certain note must be paid at maturity. His weak, watery blue eyes stared rather blankly from behind the gold-rimmed spectacles. His flat nostrils extended and compressed like those of a frightened horse; and the indecisive mouth was tremulous. At the best the Professor was not an imposing personage. He wore a dressing-gown of soiled quilted silk and linen not too immaculate; but his little sandy moustache and the goatee that decorated his receding chin were both carefully waxed into sharp points — an indication that he possessed at least one vanity. Three days in the week he taught vocal and instrumental music to the ambitious young ladies of Cloverton. The other three days he rode to Pelham's Grove, ten miles away, and taught music to all who wished to acquire that desirable accomplishment. But the towns were small and the fees not large, so that Professor De Graf had much difficulty in securing an income sufficient for the needs of his family.

The stout, sour-visaged lady who was half-hidden by her newspaper at the other end of the table was also a bread-winner, for she taught embroidery to the women of her acquaintance and made various articles of fancy-work that were sold at Biggar's Emporium, the largest store in Cloverton. So, between them, the Professor and Mrs. DeGraf managed to defray ordinary expenses and keep Elizabeth at school; but there were one or two dreadful "notes" that were constantly hanging over their heads like the sword of Damocles, threatening to ruin them at any moment their creditors proved obdurate.

Finding her father and mother both occupied, the girl ventured to open her letter. It was written in a sharp, angular, feminine hand and read as follows:

"My Dear Niece: It will please me to have you spend the months of July and August as my guest at Elmhurst. I am in miserable health, and wish to become better acquainted with you before I die. A check for necessary

expenses is enclosed and I shall expect you to arrive promptly on the first of July.

"Your Aunt,

"JANE MERRICK."

A low exclamation from Elizabeth caused her father to look in her direction. He saw the bank check lying beside her plate and the sight lent an eager thrill to his voice.

"What is it, Beth?"

"A letter from Aunt Jane."

Mrs. De Graf gave a jump and crushed the newspaper into her lap.

"What!" she screamed.

"Aunt Jane has invited me to spend two months at Elmhurst" said Elizabeth, and passed the letter to her mother, who grabbed it excitedly.

"How big is the check, Beth?" enquired the Professor, in a low tone.

"A hundred dollars. She says it's for my expenses.

"Huh! Of course you won't go near that dreadful old cat, so we can use the money to better advantage."

"Adolph!"

The harsh, cutting voice was that of his wife, and the Professor shrank back in his chair.

"Your sister Jane is a mean, selfish, despicable old female," he muttered. "You've said so a thousand times yourself, Julia."

"My sister Jane is a very wealthy woman, and she's a Merrick," returned the lady, severely. "How dare you — a common De Graf — asperse her character?"

"The De Grafs are a very good family," he retorted.

"Show me one who is wealthy! Show me one who is famous!"

"I can't," said the Professor. "But they're decent, and they're generous, which is more than can be said for your tribe."

"Elizabeth must go to Elmhurst," said Mrs. De Graf, ignoring her husband's taunt.

"She shan't. Your sister refused to loan me fifty dollars last year, when I was in great trouble. She hasn't given you a single cent since I married you. No daughter of mine shall go In Elmhurst to be bullied and insulted by Jane Merrick."

"Adolph, try to conceal the fact that you're a fool," said his wife. "Jane is in a desperate state of health, and can't live very long at the best. I believe she's decided to leave her money to Elizabeth, or she never would have invited the child to visit her. Do you want to fly in the face of Providence, you doddering old imbecile?"

“No,” said the Professor, accepting the doubtful appellation without a blush. “How much do you suppose Jane is worth?”

“A half million, at the very least. When she was a girl she inherited from Thomas Bradley, the man she was engaged to marry, and who was suddenly killed in a railway accident, more than a quarter of a million dollars, besides that beautiful estate of Elmhurst. I don’t believe Jane has even spent a quarter of her income, and the fortune must have increased enormously. Elizabeth will be one of the wealthiest heiresses in the country!”

“If she gets the money, which I doubt,” returned the Professor, gloomily.

“Why should you doubt it, after this letter?”

“You had another sister and a brother, and they both had children,” said he.

“They each left a girl. I admit. But Jane has never favored them any more than she has me. And this invitation, coming; when Jane is practically on her death bed, is a warrant that Beth will get the money.”

“I hope she will,” sighed the music teacher. “We all need it bad enough, I’m sure.”

During this conversation Elizabeth, who might be supposed the one most interested in her Aunt’s invitation, sat silently at her place, eating her breakfast with her accustomed calmness of demeanor and scarcely glancing at her parents.

She had pleasant and quite regular features, for a girl of fifteen, with dark hair and eyes — the “Merrick eyes,” her mother proudly declared — and a complexion denoting perfect health and colored with the rosy tints of youth. Her figure was a bit slim and unformed, and her shoulders stooped a little more than was desirable; but in Cloverton Elizabeth had the reputation of being “a pretty girl,” and a sullen and unresponsive one as well.

Presently she rose from her seat, glanced at the clock, and then went into the hall to get her hat and school-books. The prospect of being an heiress some day had no present bearing on the fact that it was time to start for school.

Her father came to the door with the check in his hand.

“Just sign your name on the back of this, Beth,” said he, “and I’ll get it cashed for you.”

The girl shook her head.

“No, father,” she answered. “If I decide to go to Aunt Jane’s I must buy some clothes; and if you get the money I’ll never see a cent of it.”

“When will you decide?” he asked.

“There’s no hurry. I’ll take time to think it over,” she replied. “I hate Aunt Jane, of course; so if I go to her I must be a hypocrite, and pretend to like

her, or she never will leave me her property.

“Well, Beth?”

“Perhaps it will be worth while; but if I go into that woman’s house I’ll be acting a living lie.”

“But think of the money!” said her mother.

“I do think of it. That’s why I didn’t tell you at once to send the check back to Aunt Jane. I’m going to think of everything before I decide. But if I go — if I allow this money to make me a hypocrite — I won’t stop at trifles, I assure you. It’s in my nature to be dreadfully wicked and cruel and selfish, and perhaps the money isn’t worth the risk I run of becoming depraved.”

“Elizabeth!”

“Good-bye; I’m late now,” she continued, in the same quiet tone, and walked slowly down the walk.

The Professor twisted his moustache and looked into his wife’s eyes with a half frightened glance.

“Beth’s a mighty queer girl,” he muttered.

“She’s very like her Aunt Jane,” returned Mrs. De Graf, thoughtfully gazing after her daughter. “But she’s defiant and wilful enough for all the Merricks put together. I do hope she’ll decide to go to Elmhurst.”

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

In the cosy chamber of an apartment located in a fashionable quarter of New York Louise Merrick reclined upon a couch, dressed in a dainty morning gown and propped and supported by a dozen embroidered cushions.

Upon a taboret beside her stood a box of bonbons, the contents of which she occasionally nibbled as she turned the pages of her novel.

The girl had a pleasant and attractive face, although its listless expression was singular in one so young. It led you to suspect that the short seventeen years of her life had robbed her of all the anticipation and eagerness that is accustomed to pulse in strong young blood, and filled her with experiences that compelled her to accept existence in a half bored and wholly matter-of-fact way.

The room was tastefully though somewhat elaborately furnished; yet everything in it seemed as fresh and new as if it had just come from the shop — which was not far from the truth. The apartment itself was new, with highly polished floors and woodwork, and decorations undimmed by time. Even the girl's robe, which she wore so gracefully, was new, and the books upon the center-table were of the latest editions.

The portiere was thrust aside and an elderly lady entered the room, seating herself quietly at the window, and, after a single glance at the form upon the couch, beginning to embroider patiently upon some work she took from a silken bag. She moved so noiselessly that the girl did not hear her and for several minutes absolute silence pervaded the room.

Then, however, Louise in turning a leaf glanced up and saw the head bent over the embroidery. She laid down her book and drew an open letter from between the cushions beside her, which she languidly tossed into the other's lap.

"Who is this woman, mamma?" she asked.

Mrs. Merrick glanced at the letter and then read it carefully through, before replying.

"Jane Merrick is your father's sister," she said, at last, as she thoughtfully folded the letter and placed it upon the table.

"Why have I never heard of her before?" enquired the girl, with a slight accession of interest in her tones.

"That I cannot well explain. I had supposed you knew of your poor father's sister Jane, although you were so young when he died that it is possible he never mentioned her name in your presence."

"They were not on friendly terms, you know. Jane was rich, having

inherited a fortune and a handsome country place from a young man whom she was engaged to marry, but who died on the eve of his wedding day."

"How romantic!" exclaimed Louise.

"It does seem romantic, related in this way," replied her mother. "But with the inheritance all romance disappeared from your aunt's life. She became a crabbed, disagreeable woman, old before her time and friendless because she suspected everyone of trying to rob her of her money. Your poor father applied to her in vain for assistance, and I believe her refusal positively shortened his life. When he died, after struggling bravely to succeed in his business, he left nothing but his life-insurance."

"Thank heaven he left that!" sighed Louise.

"Yes; we would have been beggared, indeed, without it," agreed Mrs. Merrick. "Yet I often wonder, Louise, how we managed to live upon the interest of that money for so many years."

"We didn't live — we existed," corrected the girl, yawning. "We scrimped and pinched, and denied ourselves everything but bare necessities. And had it not been for your brilliant idea, mater dear, we would still be struggling in the depths of poverty."

Mrs. Merrick frowned, and leaned back in her chair.

"I sometimes doubt if the idea was so brilliant, after all," she returned, with a certain grimness of expression. "We're plunging, Louise; and it may be into a bottomless pit."

"Don't worry, dear," said the girl, biting into a bonbon. "We are only on the verge of our great adventure, and there's no reason to be discouraged yet, I assure you. Brilliant! Of course the idea was brilliant, mamma. The income of that insurance money was insignificant, but the capital is a very respectable sum. I am just seventeen years of age — although I feel that I ought to be thirty, at the least — and in three years I shall be twenty, and a married woman. You decided to divide our capital into three equal parts, and spend a third of it each year, this plan enabling us to live in good style and to acquire a certain social standing that will allow me to select a wealthy husband. It's a very brilliant idea, my dear! Three years is a long time. I'll find my Croesus long before that, never fear."

"You ought to," returned the mother, thoughtfully. "But if you fail, we shall be entirely ruined."

"A strong incentive to succeed." said Louise, smiling. "An ordinary girl might not win out; but I've had my taste of poverty, and I don't like it. No one will suspect us of being adventurers, for as long as we live in this luxurious fashion we shall pay our bills promptly and be proper and respectable in every way. The only chance we run lies in the danger that

eligible young men may prove shy, and refuse to take our bait; but are we not diplomats, mother dear? We won't despise a millionaire, but will be content with a man who can support us in good style, or even in comfort, and in return for his money I'll be a very good wife to him. That seems sensible and wise, I'm sure, and not at all difficult of accomplishment."

Mrs. Merrick stared silently out of the window, and for a few moments seemed lost in thought.

"I think, Louise," she said at last, "you will do well to cultivate your rich aunt, and so have two strings to your bow."

"You mean that I should accept her queer invitation to visit her?"

"Yes."

"She has sent me a check for a hundred dollars. Isn't it funny?"

"Jane was always a whimsical woman. Perhaps she thinks we are quite destitute, and fears you would not be able to present a respectable appearance at Elmhurst without this assistance. But it is an evidence of her good intentions. Finding death near at hand she is obliged to select an heir, and so invites you to visit her that she may study your character and determine whether you are worthy to inherit her fortune."

The girl laughed, lightly.

"It will be easy to cajole the old lady," she said. "In two days I can so win her heart that she will regret she has neglected me so long."

"Exactly."

"If I get her money we will change our plans, and abandon the adventure we were forced to undertake. But if, for any reason, that plan goes awry, we can fall back upon this prettily conceived scheme which we have undertaken. As you say, it is well to have two strings to one's bow; and during July and August everyone will be out of town, and so we shall lose no valuable time."

Mrs. Merrick did not reply. She stitched away in a methodical manner, as if abstracted, and Louise crossed her delicate hands behind her head and gazed at her mother reflectively. Presently she said:

"Tell me more of my father's family. Is this rich aunt of mine the only relative he had?"

"No, indeed. There were two other sisters and a brother — a very uninteresting lot, with the exception, of your poor father. The eldest was John Merrick, a common tinsmith, if I remember rightly, who went into the far west many years ago and probably died there, for he was never heard from. Then came Jane, who in her young days had some slight claim to beauty. Anyway, she won the heart of Thomas Bradley, the wealthy young man I referred to, and she must have been clever to have induced him to leave her his money. Your father was a year or so younger than Jane, and

after him came Julia, a coarse and disagreeable creature who married a music-teacher and settled in some out-of-the-way country town. Once, while your father was alive, she visited us for a few days, with her baby daughter, and nearly drove us all crazy. Perhaps she did not find us very hospitable, for we were too poor to entertain lavishly. Anyway, she went away suddenly after you had a fight with her child and nearly pulled its hair out by the roots, and I have never heard of her since."

"A daughter, eh," said Louise, musingly. "Then this rich Aunt Jane has another niece besides myself."

"Perhaps two," returned Mrs. Merrick; "for her youngest sister, who was named Violet, married a vagabond Irishman and had a daughter about a year younger than you. The mother died, but whether the child survived her or not I have never learned."

"What was her name?" asked Louise.

"I cannot remember. But it is unimportant. You are the only Merrick of them all, and that is doubtless the reason Jane has sent for you."

The girl shook her blonde head.

"I don't like it," she observed.

"Don't like what?"

"All this string of relations. It complicates matters."

Mrs. Merrick seemed annoyed.

"If you fear your own persuasive powers," she said, with almost a sneer in her tones, "you'd better not go to Elmhurst. One or the other of your country cousins might supplant you in your dear aunt's affections."

The girl yawned and took up her neglected novel.

"Nevertheless, mater dear," she said briefly, "I shall go."

CHAPTER III.

PATSY.

"Now, Major, stand up straight and behave yourself! How do you expect me to sponge your vest when you're wriggling around in that way?"

"Patsy, dear, you're so sweet this evening, I just had to kiss your lips."

"Don't do it again, sir," replied Patricia, severely, as she scrubbed the big man's waistcoat with a damp cloth. "And tell me, Major, how you ever happened to get into such a disgraceful condition."

"The soup just shpilled," said the Major, meekly.

Patricia laughed merrily. She was a tiny thing, appearing to be no more than twelve years old, although in reality she was sixteen. Her hair was a decided red — not a beautiful "auburn," but really red — and her round face was badly freckled. Her nose was too small and her mouth too wide to be beautiful, but the girl's wonderful blue eyes fully redeemed these faults and led the observer to forget all else but their fascinations. They could really dance, these eyes, and send out magnetic, scintillating sparks of joy and laughter that were potent to draw a smile from the sourest visage they smiled upon. Patricia was a favorite with all who knew her, but the big, white-moustached Major Doyle, her father, positively worshipped her, and let the girl rule him as her fancy dictated.

"Now, sir, you're fairly decent again," she said, after a few vigorous scrubs. "So put on your hat and we'll go out to dinner."

They occupied two small rooms at the top of a respectable but middle-class tenement building, and had to descend innumerable flights of bare wooden stairs before they emerged upon a narrow street thronged with people of all sorts and descriptions except those who were too far removed from the atmosphere of Duggan street to know that it existed.

The big major walked stiffly and pompously along, swinging his silver-trimmed cane in one hand while Patricia clung to his other arm. The child wore a plain grey cloak, for the evening was chill. She had a knack of making her own clothes, all of simple material and fashion, but fitting neatly and giving her an air of quiet refinement that made more than one passer-by turn to look back at her curiously.

After threading their way for several blocks they turned in at the open door of an unobtrusive restaurant where many of the round white tables were occupied by busy and silent patrons.

The proprietor nodded to the major and gave Patricia a smile. There was no need to seat them, for they found the little table in the corner where they were accustomed to eat, and sat down.

“Did you get paid tonight?” asked the girl.

“To be sure, my Patsy.”

“Then hand over the coin,” she commanded.

The major obeyed. She counted it carefully and placed it in her pocketbook, afterwards passing a half-dollar back to her father.

“Remember, Major, no riotous living! Make that go as far as you can, and take care not to invite anyone to drink with you.”

“Yes, Patsy.”

“And now I’ll order the dinner.”

The waiter was bowing and smiling beside her. Everyone smiled at Patsy, it seemed.

They gave the usual order, and then, after a moment’s hesitation, she added:

“And a bottle of claret for the Major.”

Her father fairly gasped with amazement.

“Patsy!”

People at the near-by tables looked up as her gay laugh rang out, and beamed upon her in sympathy.

“I’m not crazy a bit. Major,” said she, patting the hand he had stretched toward her, partly in delight and partly in protest. “I’ve just had a raise, that’s all, and we’ll celebrate the occasion.”

Her father tucked the napkin under his chin then looked at her questioningly.

“Tell me, Patsy.”

“Madam Borne sent me to a swell house on Madison Avenue this morning, because all her women were engaged. I dressed the lady’s hair in my best style, Major, and she said it was much more becoming than Juliette ever made it. Indeed, she wrote a note to Madam, asking her to send me, hereafter, instead of Juliette, and Madam patted my head and said I would be a credit to her, and my wages would be ten dollars a week, from now on. Ten dollars. Major! As much as you earn yourself at that miserable bookkeeping!”

“Sufferin’ Moses!” ejaculated the astonished major, staring back into her twinkling eyes, “if this kapes on, we’ll be millionaires, Patsy.”

“We’re millionaires, now.” responded Patsy, promptly, “because we’ve health, and love, and contentment — and enough money to keep us from worrying. Do you know what I’ve decided, Major, dear? You shall go to make that visit to your colonel that you’ve so long wanted to have. The vacation will do you good, and you can get away all during July, because you haven’t rested for five years. I went to see Mr. Conover this noon, and he

said he'd give you the month willingly, and keep the position for you when you returned."

"What! You spoke to old Conover about me?"

"This noon. It's all arranged, daddy, and you'll just have a glorious time with the old colonel. Bless his dear heart, he'll be overjoyed to have you with him, at last."

The major pulled out his handkerchief, blew his nose vigorously, and then surreptitiously wiped his eyes.

"Ah, Patsy, Patsy; it's an angel you are, and nothing less at all, at all."

"Rubbish, Major. Try your claret, and see if it's right. And eat your fish before it gets cold. I'll not treat you again, sir, unless you try to look happy. Why, you seem as glum as old Conover himself!"

The major was positively beaming.

"Would it look bad for me to kiss you, Patsy?"

"Now?"

"Now and right here in this very room!"

"Of course it would. Try and behave, like the gentleman you are, and pay attention to your dinner!"

It was a glorious meal. The cost was twenty-five cents a plate, but the gods never feasted more grandly in Olympus than these two simple, loving souls in that grimy Duggan street restaurant.

Over his coffee the major gave a sudden start and looked guiltily into Patricia's eyes.

"Now, then," she said, quickly catching the expression, "out with it."

"It's a letter," said the major. "It came yesterday, or mayhap the day before. I don't just remember."

"A letter! And who from?" she cried, surprised.

"An ould vixen."

"And who may that be?"

"Your mother's sister Jane. I can tell by the emblem on the flap of the envelope," said he, drawing a crumpled paper from his breast pocket.

"Oh, *that* person," said Patsy, with scorn. "Whatever induced her to write to *me?*" "You might read it and find out," suggested the major.

Patricia tore open the envelope and scanned the letter. Her eyes blazed.

"What is it, Mavoureen?"

"An insult!" she answered, crushing the paper in her hand and then stuffing it into the pocket of her dress. "Light your pipe, daddy, dear. Here — I'll strike the match."

CHAPTER IV.

LOUISE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"How did you enjoy the reception, Louise?"

"Very well, mamma. But I made the discovery that my escort. Harry Wyndham, is only a poor cousin of the rich Wyndham family, and will never have a penny he doesn't earn himself."

"I knew that," said Mrs. Merrick. "But Harry has the entree into some very exclusive social circles. I hope you treated him nicely, Louise. He can be of use to us."

"Oh, yes, I think I interested him; but he's a very stupid boy. By the way, mamma, I had an adventure last evening, which I have had no time to tell you of before."

"Yes?"

"It has given me quite a shock. You noticed the maid you ordered to come from Madam Borne to dress my hair for the reception?"

"I merely saw her. Was she unsatisfactory?"

"She was very clever. I never looked prettier, I am sure. The maid is a little, demure thing, very young for such a position, and positively homely and common in appearance. But I hardly noticed her until she dropped a letter from her clothing. It fell just beside me, and I saw that it was addressed to no less a personage than my rich aunt, Miss Jane Merrick, at Elmhurst. Curious to know why a hair-dresser should be in correspondence with Aunt Jane, I managed to conceal the letter under my skirts until the maid was gone. Then I put it away until after the reception. It was sealed and stamped, all ready for the post, but I moistened the flap and easily opened it. Guess what I read?"

"I've no idea," replied Mrs. Merrick.

"Here it is," continued Louise, producing a letter and carefully unfolding it. "Listen to this, if you please: 'Aunt Jane.' She doesn't even say 'dear' or 'respected,' you observe."

'Your letter to me, asking me to visit you, is almost an insult after your years of silence and neglect and your refusals to assist my poor mother when she was in need. Thank God we can do without your friendship and assistance now, for my honored father, Major Gregory Doyle, is very prosperous and earns all we need. I return your check with my compliments. If you are really ill, I am sorry for you, and would go to nurse you were you not able to hire twenty nurses, each of whom would have fully as much love and far more respect for you than could ever

'Your indignant niece,

‘Patricia Doyle.’

“What do you think of that, mamma?’“

“It’s very strange, Louise. This hair-dresser is your own cousin.”

“So it seems. And she must be poor, or she wouldn’t go out as a sort of lady’s maid. I remember scolding her severely for pulling my hair at one time, and she was as meek as Moses, and never answered a word.”

“She has a temper though, as this letter proves,” said Mrs. Merrick; “and I admire her for the stand she has taken.”

“So do I,” rejoined Louise with a laugh, “for it removes a rival from my path. You will notice that Aunt Jane has sent her a check for the same amount she sent me. Here it is, folded in the letter. Probably my other cousin, the De Graf girl, is likewise invited to Elmhurst? Aunt Jane wanted us all, to see what we were like, and perhaps to choose between us.”

“Quite likely,” said Mrs. Merrick, uneasily watching her daughter’s face.

“That being the case,” continued Louise, “I intend to enter the competition. With this child Patricia out of the way, it will be a simple duel with my unknown De Graf cousin for my aunt’s favor, and the excitement will be agreeable even if I am worsted.”

“There’s no danger of that,” said her mother, calmly. “And the stakes are high, Louise. I’ve learned that your Aunt Jane is rated as worth a half million dollars.”

“They shall be mine,” said the daughter, with assurance. “Unless, indeed, the De Graf girl is most wonderfully clever. What is her name?”

“Elizabeth, if I remember rightly. But I am not sure she is yet alive, my dear. I haven’t heard of the De Grafs for a dozen years.’“

“Anyway I shall accept my Aunt Jane’s invitation, and make the acceptance as sweet as Patricia Doyle’s refusal is sour. Aunt Jane will be simply furious when she gets the little hair-dresser’s note.”

“Will you send it on?”

“Why not? It’s only a question of resealing the envelope and mailing it. And it will be sure to settle Miss Doyle’s chances of sharing the inheritance, for good and all.”

“And the check?”

“Oh, I shall leave the check inside the envelope. It wouldn’t be at all safe to cash it, you know.”

“But if you took it out Jane would think the girl had kept tit money, after all, and would be even more incensed against her.”

“No,” said Louise, after a moment’s thought, “I’ll not do a single act of dishonesty that could ever by any chance be traced to my door. To be cunning, to be diplomatic, to play the game of life with the best cards we can

draw, is every woman's privilege. But if I can't win honestly, mater dear, I'll quit the game, for even money can't compensate a girl for the loss of her self-respect."

Mrs. Merrick cast a fleeting glance at her daughter and smiled.

Perhaps the heroics of Louise did not greatly impress her.

CHAPTER V.

AUNT JANE.

"Lift me up, Phibbs — no, not that way! Confound your awkwardness — do you want to break my back? There! That's better. Now the pillow at my head. Oh — h. What are you blinking at, you old owl?"

"Are you better this morning, Miss Jane?" asked the attendant, with grave deference.

"No; I'm worse."

"You look brighter, Miss Jane."

"Don't be stupid, Martha Phibbs. I know how I am, better than any doctor, and I tell you I'm on my last legs."

"Anything unusual, Miss?"

"Of course. I can't be on my last legs regularly, can I?"

"I hope not, Miss."

"What do you mean by that? Are you trying to insult me, now that I'm weak and helpless? Answer me, you gibbering idiot!"

"I'm sure you'll feel better soon, Miss. Can't I wheel you into the garden? It's a beautiful day, and quite sunny and warm already."

"Be quick about it, then; and don't tire me out with your eternal doddering. When a thing has to be done, do it. That's my motto."

"Yes, Miss Jane."

Slowly and with care the old attendant wheeled her mistress's invalid chair through the doorway of the room, along a stately passage, and out upon a broad piazza at the back of the mansion. Here were extensive and carefully tended gardens, and the balmy morning air was redolent with the odor of flowers.

Jane Merrick sniffed the fragrance with evident enjoyment, and her sharp grey eyes sparkled as she allowed them to roam over the gorgeous expanse of colors spread out before her.

"I'll go down, I guess, Phibbs. This may be my last day on earth, and I'll spend an hour with my flowers before I bid them good-bye forever."

Phibbs pulled a bell-cord, and a soft faraway jingle was heard. Then an old man came slowly around the corner of the house. His bare head was quite bald. He wore a short canvas apron and carried pruning-shears in one hand. Without a word of greeting to his mistress or scarce a glance at her half recumbent form, he mounted the steps of the piazza and assisted Phibbs to lift the chair to the ground.

"How are the roses coming on, James?"

"Poorly, Miss," he answered, and turning his back returned to his work

around the corner. If he was surly, Miss Jane seemed not to mind it. Her glance even softened a moment as she followed his retreating form.

But now she was revelling amongst the flowers, which she seemed to love passionately. Phibbs wheeled her slowly along the narrow paths between the beds, and she stopped frequently to fondle a blossom or pull away a dead leaf or twig from a bush. The roses were magnificent, in spite of the old gardener's croaking, and the sun was warm and grateful and the hum of the bees musical and sweet.

"It's hard to die and leave all this, Phibbs," said the old woman, a catch in her voice. "But it's got to be done."

"Not for a while yet, I hope, Miss Jane."

"It won't be long, Phibbs. But I must try to live until my nieces come, and I can decide which of them is most worthy to care for the old place when I am gone."

"Yes, Miss."

"I've heard from two of them, already. They jumped at the bait I held out quickly enough; but that's only natural. And the letters are very sensible ones, too. Elizabeth DeGraf says she will be glad to come, and thanks me for inviting her. Louise Merrick is glad to come, also, but hopes I am deceived about my health and that she will make me more than one visit after we become friends. A very proper feeling; but I'm not deceived, Phibbs. My end's in plain sight."

"Yes, Miss Jane."

"And somebody's got to have my money and dear Elmhurst when I'm through with them. Who will it be, Phibbs?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss."

"Nor do I. The money's mine, and I can do what I please with it; and I'm under no obligation to anyone."

"Except Kenneth," said a soft voice behind her.

Jane Merrick gave a start at the interruption and turned red and angry as, without looking around, she answered:

"Stuff and nonsense! I know my duties and my business, Silas Watson."

"To be sure," said a little, withered man, passing around the chair and facing the old woman with an humble, deprecating air. He was clothed in black, and his smooth-shaven, deeply lined face was pleasant of expression and not without power and shrewd intelligence. The eyes, however, were concealed by heavy-rimmed spectacles, and his manner was somewhat shy and reserved. However, he did not hesitate to speak frankly to his old friend, nor minded in the least if he aroused her ire.

"No one knows better than you, dear Miss Jane, her duties and

obligations; and no one performs them more religiously. But your recent acts, I confess, puzzle me. Why should you choose from a lot of inexperienced, incompetent girls a successor to Thomas Bradley's fortune, when he especially requested you in his will to look after any of his relatives, should they need assistance? Kenneth Forbes, his own nephew, was born after Tom's death, to be sure; but he is alone in the world now, an orphan, and has had no advantages to help him along in life since his mother's death eight years ago. I think Tom Bradley must have had a premonition of what was to come even though his sister was not married at the time of his death, and I am sure he would want you to help Kenneth now."

"He placed me under no obligations to leave the boy any money," snapped the old woman, white with suppressed wrath, "you know that well enough, Silas Watson, for you drew up the will."

The old gentleman slowly drew a pattern upon the gravelled walk with the end of his walking-stick.

"Yes, I drew up the will," he said, deliberately, "and I remember that he gave to you, his betrothed bride, all that he possessed — gave it gladly and lovingly, and without reserve. He was very fond of you, Miss Jane. But perhaps his conscience pricked him a bit, after all, for he added the words: 'I shall expect you to look after the welfare of my only relative, my sister. Katherine Bradley — or any of her heirs.' It appears to me, Miss Jane, that that is a distinct obligation. The boy is now sixteen and as fine a fellow as one often meets."

"Bah! An imbecile — an awkward, ill-mannered brat who is only fit for a stable-boy! I know him, Silas, and I know he'll never amount to a hill of beans. Leave *him* my money? Not if I hadn't a relative on earth!"

"You misjudge him, Jane. Kenneth is all right if you'll treat him decently. But he won't stand your abuse and I don't think the less of him for that."

"Why abuse? Haven't I given him a home and an education, all because Thomas asked me to look after his relatives? And he's been rebellious and pig-headed and sullen in return for my kindness, so naturally there's little love lost between us."

"You resented your one obligation, Jane; and although you fulfilled it to the letter you did not in the spirit of Tom Bradley's request. I don't blame the boy for not liking you."

"Sir!"

"All right, Jane; fly at me if you will," said the little man, with a smile; "but I intend to tell you frankly what I think of your actions, just as long as we remain friends."

Her stern brows unbent a trifle.

“That’s why we are friends, Silas; and it’s useless to quarrel with you now that I’m on my last legs. A few days more will end me, I’m positive; so bear with me a little longer, my friend.”

He took her withered hand in his and kissed it gently.

“You’re not so very bad, Jane,” said he, “and I’m almost sure you will be with us for a long time to come. But you’re more nervous and irritable than usual, I’ll admit, and I fear this invasion of your nieces won’t be good for you. Are they really coming?”

“Two of them are, I’m sure, for they’ve accepted my invitation,” she replied.

“Here’s a letter that just arrived,” he said, taking it from his pocket. “Perhaps it contains news from the third niece.”

“My glasses, Phibbs!” cried Miss Jane, eagerly, and the attendant started briskly for the house to get them.

“What do you know about these girls?” asked the old lawyer curiously.

“Nothing whatever. I scarcely knew of their existence until you hunted them out for me and found they were alive. But I’m going to know them, and study them, and the one that’s most capable and deserving shall have my property.”

Mr. Watson sighed.

“And Kenneth?” he asked.

“I’ll provide an annuity for the boy, although it’s more than he deserves. When I realized that death was creeping upon me I felt a strange desire to bequeath my fortune to one of my own flesh and blood. Perhaps I didn’t treat my brothers and sisters generously in the old days, Silas.”

“Perhaps not,” he answered.

“So I’ll make amends to one of their children. That is, if any one of the three nieces should prove worthy.”

“I see. But if neither of the three is worthy?”

“Then I’ll leave every cent to charity — except Kenneth’s annuity.”

The lawyer smiled.

“Let us hope,” said he, “that they will prove all you desire. It would break my heart, Jane, to see Elmhurst turned into a hospital.”

Phibbs arrived with the spectacles, and Jane Merrick read her letter, her face growing harder with every line she mastered. Then she crumpled the paper fiercely in both hands, and a moment later smoothed it out carefully and replaced it in the envelope.

Silas Watson had watched her silently.

“Well,” said he, at last, “another acceptance?”

“No, a refusal,” said she. “A refusal from the Irishman’s daughter,

Patricia Doyle."

"That's bad," he remarked, but in a tone of relief.

"I don't see it in that light at all," replied Miss Jane. "The girl is right. It's the sort of letter I'd have written myself, under the circumstances. I'll write again, Silas, and humble myself, and try to get her to come."

"You surprise me!" said the lawyer.

"I surprise myself," retorted the old woman, "but I mean to know more of this Patricia Doyle. Perhaps I've found a gold mine, Silas Watson!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY.

Leaving the mistress of Elmhurst among her flowers, Silas Watson walked slowly and thoughtfully along the paths until he reached the extreme left wing of the rambling old mansion. Here, half hidden by tangled vines of climbing roses, he came to a flight of steps leading to an iron-railed balcony, and beyond this was a narrow stairway to the rooms in the upper part of the wing.

Miss Merrick, however ungenerous she might have been to others, had always maintained Elmhurst in a fairly lavish manner. There were plenty of servants to look after the house and gardens, and there were good horses in the stables. Whenever her health permitted she dined in state each evening in the great dining-room, solitary and dignified, unless on rare occasions her one familiar, Silas Watson, occupied the seat opposite her. "The boy," as he was contemptuously called, was never permitted to enter this room. Indeed, it would be difficult to define exactly Kenneth Forbes' position at Elmhurst. He had lived there ever since his mother's death, when, a silent and unattractive lad of eight, Mr. Watson had brought him to Jane Merrick and insisted upon her providing a home for Tom Bradley's orphaned nephew.

She accepted the obligation reluctantly enough, giving the child a small room in the left wing, as far removed from her own apartments as possible, and transferring all details of his care to Misery Agnew, the old housekeeper. Misery endeavored to "do her duty" by the boy, but appreciating the scant courtesy with which he was treated by her mistress, it is not surprising the old woman regarded him merely as a dependent and left him mostly to his own devices.

Kenneth, even in his first days at Elmhurst, knew that his presence was disagreeable to Miss Jane, and as the years dragged on he grew shy and retiring, longing to break away from his unpleasant surroundings, but knowing of no other place where he would be more welcome. His only real friend was the lawyer, who neglected no opportunity to visit the boy and chat with him, in his cheery manner. Mr. Watson also arranged with the son of the village curate to tutor Kenneth and prepare him for college; but either the tutor was incompetent or the pupil did not apply himself, for at twenty Kenneth Forbes was very ignorant, indeed, and seemed not to apply himself properly to his books.

He was short of stature and thin, with a sad drawn face and manners that even his staunch friend, Silas Watson, admitted were awkward and unprepossessing. What he might have been under different conditions or with

different treatment, could only be imagined. Slowly climbing the stairs to the little room Kenneth inhabited, Mr. Watson was forced to conclude, with a sigh of regret, that he could not blame Miss Jane for wishing to find a more desirable heir to her estate than this graceless, sullen youth who had been thrust upon her by a thoughtless request contained in the will of her dead lover — a request that she seemed determined to fulfil literally, as it only required her to "look after" Tom's relatives and did not oblige her to leave Kenneth her property.

Yet, strange as it may seem, the old lawyer was exceedingly fond of the boy, and longed to see him the master of Elmhurst. Sometimes, when they were alone, Kenneth forgot his sense of injury and dependence, and spoke so well and with such animation that Mr. Watson was astonished, and believed that hidden underneath the mask of reserve was another entirely different personality, that in the years to come might change the entire nature of the neglected youth and win for him the respect and admiration of the world. But these fits of brightness and geniality were rare. Only the lawyer had as yet discovered them.

Today he found the boy lying listlessly upon the window-seat, an open book in his hand, but his eyes fixed dreamily upon the grove of huge elm trees that covered the distant hills.

"Morning, Ken," said he, briefly, sitting beside his young friend and taking the book in his own hand. The margins of the printed pages were fairly covered with drawings of every description. The far away trees were there and the near-by rose gardens. There was a cat spitting at an angry dog, caricatures of old Misery and James, the gardener, and of Aunt Jane and even Silas Watson himself — all so clearly depicted that the lawyer suddenly wondered if they were not clever, and an evidence of genius. But the boy turned to look at him, and the next moment seized the book from his grasp and sent it flying through the open window, uttering at the same time a rude exclamation of impatience.

The lawyer quietly lighted his pipe.

"Why did you do that, Kenneth?" he asked. "The pictures are clever enough to be preserved. I did not know you have a talent for drawing."

The boy glanced at him, but answered nothing, and the lawyer thought best not to pursue the subject After smoking a moment in silence he remarked:

"Your aunt is failing fast." Although no relative, Kenneth had been accustomed to speak of Jane Merrick as his aunt.

Getting neither word nor look in reply the lawyer presently continued:

"I do not think she will live much longer."

The boy stared from the window and drummed on the sill with his fingers.

“When she dies,” said Mr. Watson, in a musing tone, “there will be a new mistress at Elmhurst and you will have to move out.”

The boy now turned to look at him, enquiringly.

“You are twenty, and you are not ready for college. You would be of no use in the commercial world. You have not even the capacity to become a clerk. What will you do, Kenneth? Where will you go?”

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

“When will Aunt Jane die?” he asked.

“I hope she will live many days yet. She may die tomorrow.”

“When she does, I’ll answer your question.” said the boy, roughly. “When I’m turned out of this place — which is part prison and part paradise — I’ll do something. I don’t know what, and I won’t bother about it till the time comes. But I’ll do something.”

“Could you earn a living?” asked the old lawyer.

“Perhaps not; but I’ll get one. Will I be a beggar?”

“I don’t know. It depends on whether Aunt Jane leaves you anything in her will.”

“I hope she won’t leave me a cent!” cried the boy, with sudden fierceness. “I hate her, and will be glad when she is dead and out of my way!”

“Kenneth — Kenneth, lad!”

“I hate her!” he persisted, with blazing eyes. “She has insulted me, scorned me, humiliated me every moment since I have known her. I’ll be glad to have her die, and I don’t want a cent of her miserable money.”

“Money,” remarked the old man, knocking the ashes from his pipe, “is very necessary to one who is incompetent to earn his salt. And the money she leaves you — if she really does leave you any — won’t be her’s, remember, but your Uncle Tom’s.”

“Uncle Tom was good to my father,” said the boy, softening.

“Well, Uncle Tom gave his money to Aunt Jane, whom he had expected to marry; but he asked her to care for his relatives, and she’ll doubtless give you enough to live on. But the place will go to some one else, and that means you must move on.”

“Who will have Elmhurst?” asked the boy.

“One of your aunt’s nieces, probably. She has three, it seems, all of them young girls, and she has invited them to come here to visit her.”

“Girls! Girls at Elmhurst?” cried the boy, shrinking back with a look of terror in his eyes.

“To be sure. One of the nieces, it seems, refuses to come; but there will be two of them to scramble for your aunt’s affection.”

“She has none,” declared the boy.

“Or her money, which is the same thing. The one she likes the best will get the estate.”

Kenneth smiled, and with the change of expression his face lighted wonderfully.

“Poor Aunt!” he said. “Almost I am tempted to be sorry for her. Two girls — fighting one against the other for Elmhurst — and both fawning before a cruel and malicious old woman who could never love anyone but herself.”

“And her flowers,” suggested the lawyer.

“Oh, yes; and perhaps James. Tell me, why should she love James, who is a mere gardener, and hate me?”

“James tends the flowers, and the flowers are Jane Merrick’s very life. Isn’t that the explanation?”

“I don’t know.”

“The girls need not worry you, Kenneth. It will be easy for you to keep out of their way.”

“When will they come?”

“Next week, I believe.”

The boy looked around helplessly, with the air of a caged tiger.

“Perhaps they won’t know I’m here,” he said.

“Perhaps not. I’ll tell Misery to bring all your meals to this room, and no one ever comes to this end of the garden. But if they find you, Kenneth, and scare you out of your den, run over to me, and I’ll keep you safe until the girls are gone.”

“Thank you, Mr. Watson,” more graciously than was his wont. “It isn’t that I’m afraid of girls, you know; but they may want to insult me, just as their aunt does, and I couldn’t bear any more cruelty.”

“I know nothing about them,” said the lawyer, “so I can’t vouch in any way for Aunt Jane’s nieces. But they are young, and it is probable they’ll be as shy and uncomfortable here at Elmhurst as you are yourself. And after all, Kenneth boy, the most important thing just now is your own future. What in the world is to become of you?”

“Oh, *that*,” answered the boy, relapsing into his sullen mood; “I can’t see that it matters much one way or another. Anyhow, I’ll not bother my head about it until the time comes and as far as you’re concerned, it’s none of your business.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST WARNING.

For a day or two Jane Merrick seemed to improve in health. Indeed, Martha Phibbs declared her mistress was better than she had been for weeks. Then, one night, the old attendant was awakened by a scream, and rushed to her mistress' side.

"What is it, ma'am?" she asked, tremblingly.

"My leg! I can't move my leg," gasped the mistress of Elmhurst. "Rub it, you old fool! Rub it till you drop, and see if you can bring back the life to it."

Martha rubbed, of course, but the task was useless. Oscar the groom was sent on horseback for the nearest doctor, who came just as day was breaking. He gave the old woman a brief examination and shook his head.

"It's the first warning," said he; "but nothing to be frightened about. That is, for the present."

"Is it paralysis?" asked Jane Merrick.

"Yes; a slight stroke."

"But I'll have another?"

"Perhaps, in time."

"How long?"

"It may be a week — or a month — or a year. Sometimes there is never another stroke. Don't worry, ma'am. Just lie still and be comfortable."

"Huh!" grunted the old woman. But she became more composed and obeyed the doctor's instructions with unwonted meekness. Silas Watson arrived during the forenoon, and pressed her thin hand with real sympathy, for these two were friends despite the great difference in their temperaments.

"Shall I draw your will, Jane?" he asked. "No!" she snapped. "I'm not going to die just yet, I assure you. I shall live to carry out my plans, Silas."

She did live, and grew better as the days wore on, although she never recovered the use of the paralyzed limb.

Each day Phibbs drew the invalid chair to the porch and old James lifted it to the garden walk, where his mistress might enjoy the flowers he so carefully and skillfully tended. They seldom spoke together, these two; yet there seemed a strange bond of sympathy between them.

At last the first of July arrived, and Oscar was dispatched to the railway station, four miles distant, to meet Miss Elizabeth De Graf, the first of the nieces to appear in answer to Jane Merrick's invitation.

Beth looked very charming and fresh in her new gown, and she greeted her aunt with a calm graciousness that would have amazed the professor to behold. She had observed carefully the grandeur and beauty of Elmhurst, as

she drove through the grounds, and instantly decided the place was worth an effort to win.

"So, this is Elizabeth, is it?" asked Aunt June, as the girl stood before her for inspection. "You may kiss me, child."

Elizabeth advanced, striving to quell the antipathy she felt to kiss the stern featured, old woman, and touched her lips to the wrinkled forehead.

Jane Merrick laughed, a bit sneeringly, while Beth drew back, still composed, and looked at her relative enquiringly.

"Well, what do you think of me?" demanded Aunt Jane, as if embarrassed at the scrutiny she received.

"Surely, it is too early to ask me that," replied Beth, gently. "I am going to try to like you, and my first sight of my new aunt leads me to hope I shall succeed."

"Why shouldn't you like me?" cried the old woman. "Why must you try to like your mother's sister?"

Beth flushed. She had promised herself not to become angry or discomposed, whatever her aunt might say or do; but before she could control herself an indignant expression flashed across her face and Jane Merrick saw it.

"There are reasons," said Beth, slowly, "why your name is seldom mentioned in my father's family. Until your letter came I scarcely knew I possessed an aunt. It was your desire we should become better acquainted, and I am here for that purpose. I hope we shall become friends, Aunt Jane, but until then, it is better we should not discuss the past."

The woman frowned. It was not difficult for her to read the character of the child before her, and she knew intuitively that Beth was strongly prejudiced against her, but was honestly trying not to allow that prejudice to influence her. She decided to postpone further interrogations until another time.

"Your journey has tired you," she said abruptly. "I'll have Misery show you to your room."

She touched a bell beside her.

"I'm not tired, but I'll go to my room, if you please," answered Beth, who realized that she had in some way failed to make as favorable an impression as she had hoped. "When may I see you again?"

"When I send for you," snapped Aunt Jane, as the housekeeper entered.

"I suppose you know I am a paralytic, and liable to die at any time?"

"I am very sorry," said Beth, hesitatingly. "You do not seem very ill."

"I'm on my last legs. I may not live an hour. But that's none of your business, I suppose. By the way, I expect your cousin on the afternoon train."

Beth gave a start of surprise.

“My cousin?” she asked.

“Yes, Louise Merrick.”

“Oh!” said Beth, and stopped short.

“What do you mean by that?” enquired Aunt Jane, with a smile that was rather malicious.

“I did not know I had a cousin,” said the girl. “That is,” correcting herself, “I did not know whether Louise Merrick was alive or not. Mother has mentioned her name once or twice in my presence; but not lately.”

“Well, she’s alive. Very much alive, I believe. And she’s coming to visit me, while you are here. I expect you to be friends.”

“To be sure,” said Beth, nevertheless discomfited at the news.

“We dine at seven,” said Aunt Jane. “I always lunch in my own room, and you may do the same,” and with a wave of her thin hand she dismissed the girl, who thoughtfully followed the old housekeeper through the halls.

It was not going to be an easy task to win this old woman’s affection. Already she rebelled at the necessity of undertaking so distasteful a venture and wondered if she had not made a mistake in trying to curb her natural frankness, and to conciliate a creature whose very nature seemed antagonistic to her own. And this new cousin, Louise Merrick, why was she coming to Elmhurst? To compete for the prize Beth had already determined to win? In that case she must consider carefully her line of action, that no rival might deprive her of this great estate. Beth felt that she could fight savagely for an object she so much desired. Her very muscles hardened and grew tense at the thought of conflict as she walked down the corridor in the wake of old Misery the housekeeper. She had always resented the sordid life at Cloverton. She had been discontented with her lot since her earliest girlhood, and longed to escape the constant bickerings of her parents and their vain struggles to obtain enough money to “keep up appearances” and drive the wolf from the door. And here was an opportunity to win a fortune and a home beautiful enough for a royal princess. All that was necessary was to gain the esteem of a crabbed, garrulous old woman, who had doubtless but a few more weeks to live. It must be done, in one way or another; but how? How could she out-wit this unknown cousin, and inspire the love of Aunt Jane?

“If there’s any stuff of the right sort in my nature,” decided the girl, as she entered her pretty bedchamber and threw herself into a chair, “I’ll find a way to win out. One thing is certain — I’ll never again have another chance at so fine a fortune, and if I fail to get it I shall deserve to live in poverty forever afterward.”

Suddenly she noticed the old housekeeper standing before her and regarding her with a kindly interest. In an instant she sprang up, threw her arms around Misery and kissed her furrowed cheek.

“Thank you for being so kind,” said she. “I’ve never been away from home before and you must be a mother to me while I’m at Elmhurst.”

Old Misery smiled and stroked the girl’s glossy head.

“Bless the child!” she said, delightedly; “of course I’ll be a mother to you. You’ll need a bit of comforting now and then, my dear, if you’re going to live with Jane Merrick.”

“Is she cross?” asked Beth, softly.

“At times she’s a fiend,” confided the old housekeeper, in almost a whisper. “But don’t you mind her tantrums, or lay ‘em to heart, and you’ll get along with her all right.”

“Thank you,” said the girl. “I’ll try not to mind.”

“Do you need anything else, deary?” asked Misery, with a glance around the room.

“Nothing at all, thank you.”

The housekeeper nodded and softly withdrew.

“That was one brilliant move, at any rate,” said Beth to herself, as she laid aside her hat and prepared to unstrap her small trunk. “I’ve made a friend at Elmhurst who will be of use to me; and I shall make more before long. Come as soon as you like, Cousin Louise! You’ll have to be more clever than I am, if you hope to win Elmhurst.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIPLOMAT.

Aunt Jane was in her garden, enjoying the flowers. This was her especial garden, surrounded by a high-box hedge, and quite distinct from the vast expanse of shrubbery and flower-beds which lent so much to the beauty of the grounds at Elmhurst. Aunt Jane knew and loved every inch of her property. She had watched the shrubs personally for many years, and planned all the alterations and the construction of the flower-beds which James had so successfully attended to. Each morning, when her health permitted, she had inspected the greenhouses and issued her brief orders — brief because her slightest word to the old gardener incurred the fulfillment of her wishes. But this bit of garden adjoining her own rooms was her especial pride, and contained the choicest plants she had been able to secure. So, since she had been confined to her chair, the place had almost attained to the dignity of a private drawing-room, and on bright days she spent many hours here, delighting to feast her eyes with the rich coloring of the flowers and to inhale their fragrance. For however gruff Jane Merrick might be to the people with whom she came in contact, she was always tender to her beloved flowers, and her nature invariably softened when in their presence.

By and by Oscar, the groom, stepped through an opening in the hedge and touched his hat.

"Has my niece arrived?" asked his mistress, sharply.

"She's on the way, mum," the man answered, grinning. "She stopped outside the grounds to pick wild flowers, an' said I was to tell you she'd walk the rest o' the way."

"To pick wild flowers?"

"That's what she said, mum. She's that fond of 'em she couldn't resist it. I was to come an' tell you this, mum; an' she'll follow me directly."

Aunt Jane stared at the man sternly, and he turned toward her an unmoved countenance. Oscar had been sent to the station to meet Louise Merrick, and drive her to Elmhurst; but this strange freak on the part of her guest set the old woman thinking what her object could be. Wild flowers were well enough in their way; but those adjoining the grounds of Elmhurst were very ordinary and unattractive, and Miss Merrick's aunt was expecting her. Perhaps —

A sudden light illumined the mystery.

"See here, Oscar; has this girl been questioning you?"

"She asked a few questions, mum."

"About me?"

“Some of ‘em, if I remember right, mum, was about you.”

“And you told her I was fond of flowers?”

“I may have just mentioned that you liked ‘em, mum.”

Aunt Jane gave a scornful snort, and the man responded in a curious way. He winked slowly and laboriously, still retaining the solemn expression on his face.

“You may go, Oscar. Have the girl’s luggage placed in her room.”

“Yes, mum.”

He touched his hat and then withdrew, leaving Jane Merrick with a frown upon her brow that was not caused by his seeming impertinence.

Presently a slight and graceful form darted through the opening in the hedge and approached the chair wherein Jane Merrick reclined.

“Oh, my dear, dear aunt!” cried Louise. “How glad I am to see you at last, and how good of you to let me come here!” and she bent over and kissed the stern, unresponsive face with an enthusiasm delightful to behold.

“This is Louise, I suppose,” said Aunt Jane, stiffly. “You are welcome to Elmhurst.”

“Tell me how you are,” continued the girl, kneeling beside the chair and taking the withered hands gently in her own. “Do you suffer any? And are you getting better, dear aunt, in this beautiful garden with the birds and the sunshine?”

“Get up,” said the elder woman, roughly. “You’re spoiling your gown.”

Louise laughed gaily.

“Never mind the gown,” she answered. “Tell me about yourself. I’ve been so anxious since your last letter.”

Aunt Jane’s countenance relaxed a trifle. To speak of her broken health always gave her a sort of grim satisfaction.

“I’m dying, as you can plainly see,” she announced. “My days are numbered, Louise. If you stay long enough you can gather wild flowers for my coffin.”

Louise flushed a trifle. A bunch of butter-cups and forget-me-nots was fastened to her girdle, and she had placed a few marguerites in her hair.

“Don’t laugh at these poor things!” she said, deprecatingly. “I’m so fond of flowers, and we find none growing wild in the cities, you know.”

Jane Merrick looked at her reflectively.

“How old are you, Louise,” she asked.

“Just seventeen, Aunt.”

“I had forgotten you are so old as that. Let me see; Elizabeth cannot be more than fifteen.”

“Elizabeth?”

“Elizabeth De Graf, your cousin. She arrived at Elmhurst this morning, and will be your companion while you are here.”

“That is nice,” said Louise.

“I hope you will be friends.”

“Why not, Aunt? I haven’t known much of my relations in the past, you know, so it pleases me to find an aunt and a cousin at the same time. I am sure I shall love you both. Let me fix your pillow — you do not seem comfortable. There! Isn’t that better?” patting the pillow deftly. “I’m afraid you have needed more loving care than a paid attendant can give you,” glancing at old Martha Phibbs, who stood some paces away, and lowering her voice that she might not be overheard. “But for a time, at least, I mean to be your nurse, and look after your wants. You should have sent for me before, Aunt Jane.”

“Don’t trouble yourself; Phibbs knows my ways, and does all that is required,” said the invalid, rather testily. “Run away, now, Louise. The housekeeper will show you to your room. It’s opposite Elizabeth’s, and you will do well to make her acquaintance at once. I shall expect you both to dine with me at seven.”

“Can’t I stay here a little longer?” pleaded Louise. “We haven’t spoken two words together, as yet, and I’m not a bit tired or anxious to go to my room. What a superb oleander this is! Is it one of your favorites, Aunt Jane?”

“Run away,” repeated the woman. “I want to be alone.”

The girl sighed and kissed her again, stroking the gray hair softly with her white hand.

“Very well; I’ll go,” she said. “But I don’t intend to be treated as a strange guest, dear Aunt, for that would drive me to return home at once. You are my father’s eldest sister, and I mean to make you love me, if you will give me the least chance to do so.”

She looked around her, enquiringly, and Aunt Jane pointed a bony finger at the porch.

“That is the way. Phibbs will take you to Misery, the housekeeper, and then return to me. Remember, I dine promptly at seven.”

“I shall count the minutes,” said Louise, and with a laugh and a graceful gesture of adieu, turned to follow Martha into the house.

Jane Merrick looked after her with a puzzled expression upon her face.

“Were she in the least sincere,” she muttered, “Louise might prove a very pleasant companion. But she’s not sincere; she’s coddling me to win my money, and if I don’t watch out she’ll succeed. The girl’s a born diplomat, and weighed in the balance against sincerity, diplomacy will often tip the scales. I might do worse than to leave Elmhurst to a clever woman. But I

don’t know Beth yet. I’ll wait and see which girl is the most desirable, and give them each an equal chance.”

CHAPTER IX.

COUSINS.

"Come in," called Beth, answering a knock at her door.

Louise entered, and with a little cry ran forward and caught Beth in her arms, kissing her in greeting.

"You must be my new cousin — Cousin Elizabeth — and I'm awfully glad to see you at last!" she said, holding the younger girl a little away, that she might examine her carefully.

Beth did not respond to the caress. She eyed her opponent sharply, for she knew well enough, even in that first moment, that they were engaged in a struggle for supremacy in Aunt Jane's affections, and that in the battles to come no quarter could be asked or expected.

So they stood at arm's length, facing one another and secretly forming an estimate each of the other's advantages and accomplishments.

"She's pretty enough, but has no style whatever," was Louise's conclusion. "Neither has she tact nor self-possession, or even a prepossessing manner. She wears her new gown in a dowdy manner and one can read her face easily. There's little danger in this quarter, I'm sure, so I may as well be friends with the poor child."

As for Beth, she saw at once that her "new cousin" was older and more experienced in the ways of the world, and therefore liable to prove a dangerous antagonist. Slender and graceful of form, attractive of feature and dainty in manner, Louise must be credited with many advantages; but against these might be weighed her evident insincerity — the volubility and gush that are so often affected to hide one's real nature, and which so shrewd and suspicious a woman as Aunt Jane could not fail to readily detect. Altogether, Beth was not greatly disturbed by her cousin's appearance, and suddenly realizing that they had been staring at one another rather rudely, she said, pleasantly enough:

"Won't you sit down?"

"Of course; we must get acquainted," replied Louise, gaily, and perched herself cross-legged upon the window-seat, surrounded by a mass of cushions.

"I didn't know you were here, until an hour ago," she continued. "But as soon as Aunt Jane told me I ran to my room, unpacked and settled the few traps I brought with me, and here I am — prepared for a good long chat and to love you just as dearly as you will let me."

"I knew you were coming, but not until this morning," answered Beth, slowly. "Perhaps had I known, I would not have accepted our Aunt's

invitation."

"Ah! Why not?" enquired the other, as if in wonder.

Beth hesitated.

"Have you known Aunt Jane before today?" she asked.

"No."

"Nor I. The letter asking me to visit her was the first I have ever received from her. Even my mother, her own sister, does not correspond with her. I was brought up to hate her very name, as a selfish, miserly old woman. But, since she asked me to visit her, we judged she had softened and might wish to become friendly, and so I accepted the invitation. I had no idea you were also invited."

"But why should you resent my being here?" Louise asked, smiling.

"Surely, two girls will have a better time in this lonely old place than one could have alone. For my part, I am delighted to find you at Elmhurst."

"Thank you," said Beth. "That's a nice thing to say, but I doubt if it's true. Don't let's beat around the bush. I hate hypocrisy, and if we're going to be friends let's be honest with one another from the start."

"Well?" queried Louise, evidently amused.

"It's plain to me that Aunt Jane has invited us here to choose which one of us shall inherit her money — and Elmhurst. She's old and feeble, and she hasn't any other relations."

"Oh, yes, she has" corrected Louise.

"You mean Patricia Doyle?"

"Yes."

"What do you know of her?"

"Nothing at all."

"Where does she live?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

Louise spoke as calmly as if she had not mailed Patricia's defiant letter to Aunt Jane, or discovered her cousin's identity in the little hair-dresser from Madame Borne's establishment.

"Has Aunt Jane mentioned her?" continued Beth.

"Not in my presence."

"Then we may conclude she's left out of the arrangement," said Beth, calmly. "And, as I said, Aunt Jane is likely to choose one of us to succeed her at Elmhurst. I hoped I had it all my own way, but it's evident I was mistaken. You'll fight for your chance and fight mighty hard!"

Louise laughed merrily.

"How funny!" she exclaimed, after a moment during which Beth frowned

at her darkly. “Why, my dear cousin, I don’t want Aunt Jane’s money.”

“You don’t?”

“Not a penny of it; nor Elmhurst; nor anything you can possibly lay claim to, my dear. My mother and I are amply provided for, and I am only here to find rest from my social duties and to get acquainted with my dead father’s sister. That is all.”

“Oh!” said Beth, lying back in her chair with a sigh of relief.

“So it was really a splendid idea of yours to be frank with me at our first meeting,” continued Louise, cheerfully; “for it has led to your learning the truth, and I am sure you will never again grieve me by suggesting that I wish to supplant you in Aunt Jane’s favor. Now tell me something about yourself and your people. Are you poor?”

“Poor as poverty,” said Beth, gloomily. “My father teaches music, and mother scolds him continually for not being able to earn enough money to keep out of debt.”

“Hasn’t Aunt Jane helped you?”

“We’ve never seen a cent of her money, although father has tried at times to borrow enough to help him out of his difficulties.”

“That’s strange. She seems like such a dear kindly old lady,” said Louise, musingly.

“I think she’s horrid,” answered Beth, angrily; “but I mustn’t let her know it. I even kissed her, when she asked me to, and it sent a shiver all down my back.”

Louise laughed with genuine amusement.

“You must dissemble, Cousin Elizabeth,” she advised, “and teach our aunt to love you. For my part, I am fond of everyone, and it delights me to fuss around invalids and assist them. I ought to have been a trained nurse, you know; but of course there’s no necessity of my earning a living.”

“I suppose not,” said Beth. Then, after a thoughtful silence, she resumed abruptly; “What’s to prevent Aunt Jane leaving you her property, even if you are rich, and don’t need it? You say you like to care for invalids, and I don’t. Suppose Aunt Jane prefers you to me, and wills you all her money?”

“Why, that would be beyond my power to prevent,” answered Louise, with a little yawn.

Beth’s face grew hard again.

“You’re deceiving me,” she declared, angrily. “You’re trying to make me think you don’t want Elmhurst, when you’re as anxious to get it as I am.”

“My dear Elizabeth — by the way, that’s an awfully long name; what do they call you, Lizzie, or Bessie, or — ”

“They call me Beth,” sullenly.

“Then, my dear Beth, let me beg you not to borrow trouble, or to doubt one who wishes to be your friend. Elmhurst would be a perfect bore to me. I wouldn’t know what to do with it. I couldn’t live in this out-of-the-way corner of the world, you know.”

“But suppose she leaves it to you?” persisted Beth. “You wouldn’t refuse it, I imagine.”

Louise seemed to meditate.

“Cousin,” she said, at length, “I’ll make a bargain with you. I can’t refuse to love and pet Aunt Jane, just because she has money and my sweet cousin Beth is anxious to inherit it. But I’ll not interfere in any way with your chances, and I’ll promise to sing your praises to our aunt persistently. Furthermore, in case she selects me as her heir, I will agree to transfer half of the estate to you — the half that consists of Elmhurst.”

“Is there much more?” asked Beth.

“I haven’t any list of Aunt Jane’s possessions, so I don’t know. But you shall have Elmhurst, if I get it, because the place would be of no use to me.”

“It’s a magnificent estate,” said Beth, looking at her cousin doubtfully.

“It shall be yours, dear, whatever Aunt Jane decides. See, this is a compact, and I’ll seal it with a kiss.”

She sprang up and, kneeling beside Beth, kissed her fervently.

“Now shall we be friends?” she asked, lightly. “Now will you abandon all those naughty suspicions and let me love you?”

Beth hesitated. The suggestion seemed preposterous. Such generosity savored of play acting, and Louise’s manner was too airy to be genuine. Somehow she felt that she was being laughed at by this slender, graceful girl, who was scarcely older than herself; but she was too unsophisticated to know how to resent it. Louise insisted upon warding off her enmity, or at least establishing a truce, and Beth, however suspicious and ungracious, could find no way of rejecting the overtures.

“Were I in your place,” she said, “I would never promise to give up a penny of the inheritance. If I win it, I shall keep it all.”

“To be sure. I should want you to, my dear.”

“Then, since we have no cause to quarrel, we may as well become friends,” continued Beth, her features relaxing a little their set expression.

Louise laughed again, ignoring the other’s brusqueness, and was soon chatting away pleasantly upon other subjects and striving to draw Beth out of her natural reserve.

The younger girl had no power to resist such fascinations. Louise knew the big world, and talked of it with charming naivete, and Beth listened rapturously. Such a girl friend it had never been her privilege to have before,

and when her suspicions were forgotten she became fairly responsive, and brightened wonderfully.

They dressed in time for dinner, and met Aunt Jane and Silas Watson, the lawyer, in the great drawing-room. The old gentleman was very attentive and courteous during the stately dinner, and did much to relieve the girls' embarrassment. Louise, indeed, seemed quite at home in her new surroundings, and chatted most vivaciously during the meal; but Aunt Jane was strangely silent, and Beth had little to say and seemed awkward and ill at ease.

The old lady retired to her own room shortly after dinner, and presently sent a servant to request Mr. Watson to join her.

"Silas," she said, when he entered, "what do you think of my nieces?"

"They are very charming girls," he answered, "although they are at an age when few girls show to good advantage. Why did you not invite Kenneth to dinner, Jane?"

"The boy?"

"Yes. They would be more at ease in the society of a young gentleman more nearly their own age."

"Kenneth is a bear. He is constantly saying disagreeable things. In other words, he is not gentlemanly, and the girls shall have nothing to do with him."

"Very well," said the lawyer, quietly.

"Which of my nieces do you prefer?" asked the old lady, after a pause.

"I cannot say, on so short an acquaintance," he answered, with gravity. "Which do you prefer, Jane?"

"They are equally unsatisfactory," she answered. "I cannot imagine Elmhurst belonging to either, Silas." Then she added, with an abrupt change of manner: "You must go to New York for me, at once."

"Tonight?"

"No; tomorrow morning. I must see that other niece — the one who defies me and refuses to answer my second letter."

"Patricia Doyle?"

"Yes. Find her and argue with her. Tell her I am a crabbed old woman with a whim to know her, and that I shall not die happy unless she comes to Elmhurst. Bribe her, threaten her — kidnap her if necessary, Silas; but get her to Elmhurst as quickly as possible."

"I'll do my best, Jane. But why are you so anxious?"

"My time is drawing near, old friend," she replied, less harshly than usual, "and this matter of my will lies heavily on my conscience. What if I should die tonight?"

He did not answer.

“There would be a dozen heirs to fight for my money, and dear old Elmhurst would be sold to strangers,” she resumed, with bitterness. “But I don’t mean to cross over just yet, Silas, even if one limb is dead already. I shall hang on until I get this matter settled, and I can’t settle it properly without seeing all three of my nieces. One of these is too hard, and the other too soft. I’ll see what Patricia is like.”

“She may prove even more undesirable,” said the lawyer.

“In that case, I’ll pack her back again and choose between these two.
But you must fetch her, Silas, that I may know just what I am doing.
And you must fetch her at once!”

“I’ll do the best I can, Jane,” repeated the old lawyer.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN WITH THE BUNDLE.

In the harness-room above the stable sat Duncan Muir, the coachman and most important servant, with the exception of the head gardener, in Miss Merrick's establishment. Duncan, bald-headed but with white and bushy side-whiskers, was engaged in the serious business of oiling and polishing the state harness, which had not been used for many months past. But that did not matter. Thursday was the day for oiling the harness, and so on Thursday he performed the task, never daring to entrust a work so important to a subordinate.

In one corner of the little room Kenneth Forbes squatted upon a bench, with an empty pine box held carelessly in his lap. While Duncan worked the boy was busy with his pencil, but neither had spoken for at least a half hour.

Finally the aged coachman, without looking up, enquired:

"What do ye think o' 'em, Kenneth lad?"

"Think o' whom, Don?"

"The young leddies."

"What young ladies?"

"Miss Jane's nieces, as Oscar brought from the station yesterday."

The boy looked astonished, and leaned over the box in his lap eagerly.

"Tell me, Don," he said. "I was away with my gun all yesterday, and heard nothing of it."

"Why, it seems Miss Jane's invited 'em to make her a visit."

"But not yet, Don! Not so soon."

"Na'theless, they're here."

"How many, Don?"

"Two, lad. A bonny young thing came on the morning train, an' a nice, wide-awake one by the two o'clock."

"Girls?" with an accent of horror.

"Young females, anyhow," said Donald, polishing a buckle briskly.

The boy glared at him fixedly.

"Will they be running about the place, Don?"

"Most likely, 'Twould be a shame to shut them up with the poor missus this glad weather. But why not? They'll be company for ye, Kenneth lad."

"How long will they stay?"

"Mabbe for aye. Oscar forbys one or the ither o' 'em will own the place when Miss Jane gi'es up the ghost."

The boy sat silent a moment, thinking upon this speech. Then, with a cry that was almost a scream, he dashed the box upon the floor and flew out the

door as if crazed, and Donald paused to listen to his footsteps clattering down the stairs.

Then the old man groaned dismally, shaking his side-whiskers with a negative expression that might have conveyed worlds of meaning to one able to interpret it. But his eye fell upon the pine box, which had rolled to his feet, and he stooped to pick it up. Upon the smoothly planed side was his own picture, most deftly drawn, showing him engaged in polishing the harness. Every strap and buckle was depicted with rare fidelity; there was no doubt at all of the sponge and bottle on the stool beside him, or the cloth in his hand. Even his bow spectacles rested upon the bridge of his nose at exactly the right angle, and his under lip protruded just as it had done since he was a lad.

Donald was not only deeply impressed by such an exhibition of art; he was highly gratified at being pictured, and full of wonder that the boy could do such a thing; "wi' a wee pencil an' a bit o' board!" He turned the box this way and that to admire the sketch, and finally arose and brought a hatchet, with which he carefully pried the board away from the box. Then he carried his treasure to a cupboard, where he hid it safely behind a row of tall bottles.

Meantime Kenneth had reached the stable, thrown a bridle over the head of a fine sorrel mare, and scorning to use a saddle leaped upon her back and dashed down the lane and out at the rear gate upon the old turnpike road.

His head was whirling with amazement, his heart full of indignation. Girls! Girls at Elmhurst — nieces and guests of the fierce old woman he so bitterly hated! Then, indeed, his days of peace and quiet were ended. These dreadful creatures would prowl around everywhere; they might even penetrate the shrubbery to the foot of the stairs leading to his own retired room; they would destroy his happiness and drive him mad.

For this moody, silent youth had been strangely happy in his life at Elmhurst, despite the neglect of the grim old woman who was its mistress and the fact that no one aside from Lawyer Watson seemed to care whether he lived or died.

Perhaps Donald did. Good old Don was friendly and seldom bothered him by talking. Perhaps old Misery liked him a bit, also. But these were only servants, and almost as helpless and dependent as himself.

Still, he had been happy. He began to realize it, now that these awful girls had come to disturb his peace. The thought filled him with grief and rebellion and resentment; yet there was nothing he could do to alter the fact that Donald's "young females" were already here, and prepared, doubtless, to stay.

The sorrel was dashing down the road at a great pace, but the boy clung firmly to his seat and gloried in the breeze that fanned his hot cheeks. Away

and away he raced until he reached the crossroads, miles away, and down this he turned and galloped as recklessly as before. The sun was hot, today, and the sorrel's flanks begun to steam and show flecks of white upon their glossy surface. He turned again to the left, entering upon a broad highway that would lead him straight home at last; but he had almost reached the little village of Elmwood, which was the railway station, before he realized his cruelty to the splendid mare he bestrode. Then indeed, he fell to a walk, patting Nora's neck affectionately and begging her to forgive him for his thoughtlessness. The mare tossed her head in derision. However she might sweat and pant, she liked the glorious pace even better than her rider.

Through the village he paced moodily, the bridle dangling loosely on the mare's neck. The people paused to look at him curiously, but he had neither word nor look for any.

He did not know one of them by name, and cared little how much they might speculate upon his peculiar position at "the big house."

Then, riding slowly up the hedge bordered road, his troubles once more assailed him, and he wondered if there was not some spot upon the broad earth to which he could fly for retirement until the girls had left Elmhurst for good.

Nora shied, and he looked up to discover that he had nearly run down a pedestrian — a stout little man with a bundle under his arm, who held up one hand as if to arrest him.

Involuntarily he drew rein, and stopped beside the traveler with a look of inquiry.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," remarked the little man, in a cheery voice, "but I ain't just certain about my way."

"Where do you want to go?" asked the boy.

"To Jane Merrick's place. They call it Elmhurst, I guess."

"It's straight ahead," said Kenneth, as the mare walked on. His questioner also started and paced beside him.

"Far from here?"

"A mile, perhaps."

"They said it was three from the village, but I guess I've come a dozen a'ready."

The boy did not reply to this. There was nothing offensive in the man's manner. He spoke with an easy familiarity that made it difficult not to respond with equal frank cordiality, and there was a shrewd expression upon his wrinkled, smooth-shaven face that stamped him a man who had seen life in many of its phases.

Kenneth, who resented the companionship of most people, seemed

attracted by the man, and hesitated to gallop on and leave him.

“Know Jane Merrick?” asked the stranger.

The boy nodded.

“Like her?”

“I hate her,” he said, savagely.

The man laughed, a bit uneasily.

“Then it’s the same Jane as ever,” he responded, with a shake of his grizzled head. “Do you know, I sort o’ hoped she’d reformed, and I’d be glad to see her again. They tell me she’s got money.”

The boy looked at him in surprise.

“She owns Elmhurst, and has mortgages on a dozen farms around here, and property in New York, and thousands of dollars in the bank,” he said. “Aunt Jane’s rich.”

“Aunt Jane?” echoed the man, quickly. “What’s your name, lad?”

“Kenneth Forbes.”

A shake of the head.

“Don’t recollect any Forbeses in the family.”

“She isn’t really my aunt,” said the boy, “and she doesn’t treat me as an aunt, either; but she’s my guardian, and I’ve always called her Aunt, rather than say Miss Merrick.”

“She’s never married, has she?”

“No. She was engaged to my Uncle Tom, who owned Elmhurst. He was killed in a railway accident, and then it was found he’d left her all he had.”

“I see.”

“So, when my parents died, Aunt Jane took me for Uncle Tom’s sake, and keeps me out of charity.”

“I see.” Quite soberly, this time.

The boy slid off the mare and walked beside the little man, holding the bridle over his arm. They did not speak again for some moments.

Finally the stranger asked:

“Are Jane’s sisters living — Julia and Violet?”

“I don’t know. But there are two of her nieces at Elmhurst.”

“Ha! Who are they?”

“Girls,” with bitterness. “I haven’t seen them.”

The stranger whistled.

“Don’t like girls, I take it?”

“No; I hate them.”

Another long pause. Then the boy suddenly turned questioner.

“You know Aunt — Miss Merrick, sir?”

“I used to, when we were both younger.”

“Any relation, sir?”

“Just a brother, that’s all.”

Kenneth stopped short, and the mare stopped, and the little man, with a whimsical smile at the boy’s astonishment, also stopped.

“I didn’t know she had a brother, sir — that is, living.”

“She had two; but Will’s dead, years ago, I’m told. I’m the other.”

“John Merrick?”

“That’s me. I went west a long time ago; before you were born, I guess. We don’t get much news on the coast, so I sort of lost track of the folks back east, and I reckon they lost track of me, for the same reason.”

“You were the tinsmith?”

“The same. Bad pennies always return, they say. I’ve come back to look up the family and find how many are left. Curious sort of a job, isn’t it.”

“I don’t know. Perhaps it’s natural,” replied the boy, reflectively.

“But I’m sorry you came to Aunt Jane first.”

“Why?”

“She’s in bad health — quite ill, you know — and her temper’s dreadful. Perhaps she — she — ”

“I know. But I haven’t seen her in years; and, after all, she’s my sister. And back at the old home, where I went first, no one knew anything about what had become of the family except Jane. They kept track of her because she suddenly became rich, and a great lady, and that was a surprising thing to happen to a Merrick. We’ve always been a poor lot, you know.”

The boy glanced at the bundle, pityingly, and the little man caught the look and smiled his sweet, cheery smile.

“My valise was too heavy to carry,” he said; “so I wrapped up a few things in case Jane wanted me to stay over night. And that’s why I didn’t get a horse at the livery, you know. Somebody’d have to take it back again.”

“I’m sure she’ll ask you to stay, sir. And if she doesn’t, you come out to the stable and let me know, and I’ll drive you to town again. Donald — that’s the coachman — is my friend, and he’ll let me have the horse if I ask him.”

“Thank you, lad,” returned the man, gratefully. “I thought a little exercise would do me good, but this three miles has seemed like thirty to me!”

“We’re here at last,” said the boy, turning: into the drive-way. “Seeing that you’re her brother, sir, I advise you to go right up to the front door and ring the bell.”

“I will,” said the man.

“I always go around the back way, myself.”

“I see.”

The boy turned away, but in a moment halted again. His interest in

Miss Jane's brother John was extraordinary.

"Another thing," he said, hesitating.

"Well?"

"You'd better not say you met me, you know. It wouldn't be a good introduction. She hates me as much as I hate her."

"Very good, my lad. I'll keep mum."

The boy nodded, and turned away to lead Nora to the stable. The man looked after him a moment, and shook his head, sadly.

"Poor boy!" he whispered.

Then he walked up to the front door and rang the bell.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAD GARDENER.

"This seems to be a lazy place," said Louise, as she stood in the doorway of Beth's room to bid her good night. "I shall sleep until late in the morning, for I don't believe Aunt Jane will be on exhibition before noon."

"At home I always get up at six o'clock," answered Beth.

"Six o'clock! Good gracious! What for?"

"To study my lessons and help get the breakfast."

"Don't you keep a maid?"

"No," said Beth, rather surlily; "we have hard work to keep ourselves."

"But you must be nearly through with school by this time. I finished my education ages ago."

"Did you graduate?" asked Beth.

"No; it wasn't worth while," declared Louise, complacently. "I'm sure I know as much as most girls do, and there are more useful lessons to be learned from real life than from books."

"Good night," said Beth.

"Good night," answered the older girl, and shut the door behind her.

Beth sat for a time moodily thinking. She did not like the way in which her cousin assumed superiority over her. The difference in their ages did not account for the greater worldly wisdom Louise had acquired, and in much that she said and did Beth recognized a shrewdness and experience that made her feel humbled and, in a way, inferior to her cousin. Nor did she trust the friendship Louise expressed for her.

Somehow, nothing that the girl said seemed to ring true, and Beth already, in her mind, accused her of treachery and insincerity.

As a matter of fact, however, she failed to understand her cousin. Louise really loved to be nice to people, and to say nice thing's. It is true she schemed and intrigued to advance her personal welfare and position in life; but even her schemes were undertaken lightly and carelessly, and if they failed the girl would be the first to laugh at her disappointment and try to mend her fortunes. If others stood in her way she might not consider them at all; if she pledged her word, it might not always be profitable to keep it; but she liked to be on pleasant terms with everyone, and would be amiable to the last, no matter what happened. Comedy was her forte, rather than tragedy. If tragedy entered her life she would probably turn it into ridicule. Wholly without care, whimsical and generous to a degree, if it suited her mood, Louise Merrick possessed a nature capable of great things, either for good or ill.

It was no wonder her unsophisticated country cousin failed to comprehend her, although Beth's intuition was not greatly at fault.

Six o'clock found Beth wide awake, as usual; so she quietly dressed and, taking her book under her arm, started to make her way into the gardens. Despite Louise's cynicism she had no intention of abandoning her studies. She had decided to fit herself for a teacher before Aunt Jane's invitation had come to her, and this ambition would render it necessary for her to study hard during vacations.

If she became an heiress she would not need to teach, but she was not at all confident of her prospects, and the girl's practical nature prompted her to carry out her plans until she was sure of the future.

In the hall she met Phibbs, shuffling along as if in pain.

"Good morning, miss," said the old servant.

Beth looked at her thoughtfully. This was Aunt Jane's special and confidential attendant.

"Do your feet hurt you?" she asked.

"Yes, miss; in the mornin' they's awful bad. It's being on 'em all the day, 'tendin' to Miss Jane, you know. But after a time I gets more used to the pain, and don't feel it. The mornin's always the worst."

She was passing on, but Beth stopped her.

"Come into my room," she said, and led the way.

Martha Phibbs followed reluctantly. Miss Jane might already be awake and demanding her services, and she could not imagine what the young lady wanted her for.

But she entered the room, and Beth went to a box and brought out a bottle of lotion.

"Mother has the same trouble that you complain of," she said, practically, "and here is a remedy that always gives her relief. I brought it with me in case I should take long tramps, and get sore feet."

She gently pushed the old woman into a chair, and then, to Phibbs' utter amazement, knelt down and unfastened her shoes and drew off her stockings. A moment later she was rubbing the lotion upon the poor creature's swollen feet, paying no attention to Martha's horrified protests.

"There. Now they're sure to feel better," said Beth, pulling the worn and darned stockings upon the woman's feet again. "And you must take this bottle to your room, and use it every night and morning."

"Bless your dear heart!" cried Phibbs, while tears of gratitude stood in her faded eyes. "I'm sure I feel twenty years younger, a'ready. But you shouldn't 'a' done it, miss; indeed you shouldn't."

"I'm glad to help you," said Beth, rinsing her hands at the wash stand and

drying them upon a towel. “It would be cruel to let you suffer when I can ease your pain.”

“But what would Miss Jane say?” wailed old Martha, throwing up her hands in dismay.

“She’ll never know a thing about it. It’s our secret, Martha, and I’m sure if I ever need a friend you’ll do as much for me.”

“I’ll do anything for you, Miss Elizabeth,” was the reply, as the woman took the bottle of lotion and departed.

Beth smiled.

“That was not a bad thought,” she said to herself, again starting for the gardens. “I have made a firm friend and done a kindly action at the same time — and all while Cousin Louise is fast asleep.”

The housekeeper let her out at the side door, after Beth had pressed her hand and kissed her good morning.

“You’re looking quite bonny, my dear,” said the old woman. “Do you feel at home, at all, in this strange place?”

“Not quite, as yet,” answered Beth. “But I know I have one good friend here, and that comforts me.”

She found a path between high hedges, that wandered away through the grounds, and along this she strolled until she reached a rose arbor with a comfortable bench.

Here she seated herself, looking around her curiously. The place seemed little frequented, but was kept with scrupulous care. Even at this hour, a little way off could be heard the “click-click!” of hedge-shears, and Beth noted how neatly the paths were swept, and how carefully every rose on the arbor was protected.

Elmhurst was a beautiful place. Beth sighed as she wondered if it would ever be hers. Then she opened her book and began to work.

During the next hour the click of the hedge-shears drew nearer, but the girl did not notice this. In another half hour James himself came into view, intent upon his monotonous task. Gradually the motionless form of the girl and the plodding figure of the gardener drew together, until he stood but two yards distant. Then he paused, looked toward the arbor, and uttered an exclamation.

Beth looked up.

“Good morning,” she said, pleasantly.

James stared at her, but made no reply save a slight inclination of his head.

“Am I in your way?” she asked.

He turned his back to her, then, and began clipping away as before. Beth

sprang up and laid a hand upon his arm, arresting him. Again he turned to stare at her, and in his eyes was a look almost of fear.

She drew back.

"Why won't you speak to me?" enquired the girl, gently. "I'm a stranger at Elmhurst, but I want to be your friend. Won't you let me?"

To her amazement James threw up his hands, letting the shears clatter to the ground, and with a hoarse cry turned and fled up the path as swiftly as he could go.

Beth was really puzzled, but as she stood silently looking after the gardener she heard a soft laugh, and found old Misery beside her.

"It's just his way, Miss; don't you be scared by anything that James does," said the woman. "Why, at times he won't even speak to Miss Jane."

"He isn't dumb, is he?" asked Beth.

"Lor', no! But he's that odd an' contrary he won't talk to a soul. Never did, since the day Master Tom was killed. James was travellin' with Master Tom, you know, and there was an accident, an' the train run off'n the track an' tipped over. James wasn't hurt at all, but he dragged Master Tom out'n the wreck and sat by him until he died. Then James brought Master Tom's body back home again; but his mind seemed to have got a shock, in some way, and he never was the same afterwards. He was powerful fond of young Master Tom. But then, we all was."

"Poor man!" said Beth.

"After that," resumed Misery, "all that James would do was to look after the flowers. Miss Jane, after she came, made him the head gardener, and he's proved a rare good one, too. But James he won't even talk to Miss Jane, nor even to his old friend Lawyer Watson, who used to be Master Tom's special chum an' comrade. He does his duty, and obeys all Miss Jane's orders as faithful as can be; but he won't talk, an' we've all give up tryin' to make him."

"But why should I frighten him?" asked the girl.

"You tried to make him talk, and you're a stranger. Strangers always affect James that way. I remember when Miss Jane first came to Elmhurst he screamed at the sight of her; but when he found out that Master Tom loved her and had given her Elmhurst, James followed her around like a dog, and did everything she told him to. But breakfast is ready, Miss. I came to call you."

"Thank you," said Beth, turning to walk beside the housekeeper.

According to Aunt Jane's instructions the breakfast was served in her own room, and presently Louise, dressed in a light silk kimona, came in bearing her tray "to keep her cousin company," she laughingly announced.

“I should have slept an hour longer,” she yawned, over her chocolate, “but old Misery — who seems rightly named — insisted on waking me, just that I might eat. Isn’t this a funny establishment?”

“It’s different from everything I’m used to,” answered Beth, gravely; “but it seems very pleasant here, and everyone is most kind and attentive.”

“Now I’ll dress,” said Louise, “and we’ll take a long walk together, and see the place.”

So it happened that Kenneth clattered down the road on the sorrel mare just a moment before the girls emerged from the house, and while he was riding off his indignation at their presence at Elmhurst, they were doing just what his horrified imagination had depicted — that is, penetrating to all parts of the grounds, to every nook in the spacious old gardens and even to the stables, where Beth endeavored to make a friend of old Donald the coachman.

However, the gray-whiskered Scotsman was not to be taken by storm, even by a pretty face. His loyalty to “the boy” induced him to be wary in associating with these strange “young females” and although he welcomed them to the stable with glum civility he withheld his opinion of them until he should know them better.

In their rambles the girls found Kenneth’s own stair, and were sitting upon it when Phibbs came to summon Louise to attend upon Aunt Jane.

She obeyed with alacrity, for she wished to know more of the queer relative whose guest she had become.

“Sit down,” said Aunt Jane, very graciously, as the girl entered.

Louise leaned over the chair, kissed her and patted her cheek affectionately, and then shook up the pillows to make them more comfortable.

“I want you to talk to me,” announced Aunt Jane, “and to tell me something of the city and the society in which you live. I’ve been so long dead to the world that I’ve lost track of people and things.”

“Let me dress your hair at the same time,” said Louise, pleadingly.

“It looks really frowsy, and I can talk while I work.”

“I can’t lift my left hand,” said the invalid, flushing, “and Phibbs is a stupid ass.”

“Never mind, I can make it look beautiful in half a jiffy,” said the girl, standing behind the chair and drawing deftly the hairpins from Aunt Jane’s scanty grey locks, “and you can’t imagine how it pleases me to fuss over anyone.”

It was surprising how meekly Aunt Jane submitted to this ordeal, but she plied the girl with many shrewd questions and Louise, busily working in a

position where the old woman could not see her face, never hesitated for an answer. She knew all the recent gossip of fashionable society, and retailed it glibly. She had met this celebrity at a ball and that one at a reception, and she described them minutely, realizing that Aunt Jane would never be in a position to contradict any assertion she might choose to make.

Indeed, Aunt Jane was really startled.

"However did your mother manage to gain an entree into society?" she asked. "Your father was a poor man and of little account. I know, for he was my own brother."

"He left us a very respectable life insurance," said Louise, demurely, "and my mother had many friends who were glad to introduce us to good society when we were able to afford such a luxury. Father died twelve years ago, you know, and for several years, while I was at school, mother lived very quietly. Then she decided it was time I made my debut, but for the last season we have been rather gay, I admit."

"Are you rich?" asked Aunt Jane, sharply.

"Mercy, no!" laughed Louise, who had finished her work and now sat her aunt's feet. "But we have enough for our requirements, and that makes us feel quite independent. By the way, auntie, I want to return that check you sent me. It was awfully good and generous of you, but I didn't need it, you know, and so I want you to take it back."

She drew the slip of paper from her pocket and pressed it into Aunt Jane's hand.

"It's quite enough for you to give me this nice treat in the country," resumed the girl, calmly. "The change from the city will do me a world of good, and as I wanted to be quiet, and rest I declined all my other invitations for the summer to accept yours. Isn't it glorious that we can get acquainted at last? And I quite love Elmhurst, already!"

Aunt Jane was equally surprised and gratified. The return of the check for a hundred dollars was very pleasant. She had drawn a similar check for each of her three nieces, believing that it would be necessary for her to meet their expenses, and she had considered the expenditure in the nature of a business transaction. But Patricia had flung one check in her face, practically, and now Louise had voluntarily returned another, because she did not need the money. Really, Jane Merrick was accomplishing her purpose for less money than she had expected, and she had hoarded her wealth for so many years that she disliked to spend any of it foolishly.

Louise had read her nature correctly. It had been a little hard to return so large a check, but the girl's policy was not to appear before Aunt Jane as a poor relation, but rather as a young lady fitted by social education and

position to become a gracious mistress of Elmhurst. This she believed would give her a powerful advantage over all competitors.

Whether she was right or not in this surmise it is certain that she rose several points in Aunt Jane's estimation during this interview, and when she was dismissed it was so graciously that she told herself the money her little plot had cost had been well expended.

Afterward Elizabeth was summoned to attend her aunt.

"I want to be amused. Can you read aloud?" said the invalid.

"Not very well, I'm afraid. But I'll be glad to try," answered Beth.

"What do you like?"

"Select your own book," said Aunt Jane, pointing to a heap of volumes beside her.

The girl hesitated. Louise would doubtless have chosen a romance, or some light tale sure to interest for the hour, and so amuse the old lady. But Beth erroneously judged that the aged and infirm love sober and scholarly books, and picked out a treatise that proved ineffably dull and tedious.

Aunt Jane sniffed, and then smiled slyly and proceeded to settle herself for a nap. If the girl was a fool, let her be properly punished.

Beth read for an hour, uncertain whether her aunt were intensely interested or really asleep. At the end of that dreadful period old Misery entered and aroused the sleeper without ceremony.

"What's the matter?" asked Aunt Jane, querrulously, for she resented being disturbed.

"There's a man to see you, Miss."

"Send him about his business!"

"But — "

"I won't see him, I tell you!"

"But he says he's your brother, Miss."

"Who?"

"Your brother."

Miss Jane stared as if bewildered.

"Your brother John, Miss."

The invalid sank back upon her cushions with a sigh of resignation.

"I thought he was dead, long ago; but if he's alive I suppose I'll have to see him," she said. "Elizabeth, leave the room. Misery, send the man here!"

CHAPTER XII.

UNCLE JOHN GETS ACQUAINTED.

Beth went out to find Louise, and discovered her standing near the stables, where a boy was rubbing down the sides of a sorrel mare with wisps of straw.

"Something has happened," she said to Louise in a troubled voice.

"What?"

"A man has arrived who says he is Aunt Jane's brother."

"Impossible! Have you seen him?"

"No; he says he's Aunt Jane's brother John."

"Oh; I know. The peddler, or tinker, or something or other who disappeared years ago. But it doesn't matter."

"It may matter a good deal," said practical Beth. "Aunt Jane may leave him her money."

"Why, he's older than she is. I've heard mother say he was the eldest of the family. Aunt Jane wont leave her money to an old man, you may be sure."

Beth felt a little reassured at this, and stood for a moment beside Louise watching the boy. Presently Oscar came to him, and after touching his hat respectfully took the mare and led her into the stable. The boy turned away, with his hands in his pockets, and strolled up a path, unaware that the two dreaded girls had been observing him.

"I wonder who that is," said Beth.

"We'll find out," returned Louise. "I took him for a stable boy, at first. But Oscar seemed to treat him as a superior."

She walked into the stable, followed by her cousin, and found the groom tying the mare.

"Who was the young man?" she asked.

"Which young man, Miss?"

"The one who has just arrived with the horse."

"Oh; that's Master Kenneth, Miss," answered Oscar, with a grin.

"Where did he come from?"

"Master Kenneth? Why, he lives here."

"At the house?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Who is he?"

"Master Tom's nephew — he as used to own Elmhurst, you know."

"Mr. Thomas Bradley?"

"The same, Miss."

“Ah. How long has Master Kenneth lived here?”

“A good many years. I can’t just remember how long.”

“Thank you, Oscar.”

The girls walked away, and when they were alone Louise remarked:

“Here is a more surprising discovery than Uncle John, Beth. The boy has a better right than any of us to inherit Elmhurst.”

“Then why did Aunt Jane send for us?”

“It’s a mystery, dear. Let us try to solve it.”

“Come; we’ll ask the housekeeper,” said Beth. “I’m sure old Misery will tell us all we want to know.”

So they returned to the house and, with little difficulty, found the old housekeeper.

“Master Kenneth?” she exclaimed. “Why, he’s just Master Tom’s nephew, that’s all.”

“Is this his home?” asked Beth.

“All the home he’s got, my dear. His father and mother are both dead, and Miss Jane took him to care for just because she thought Master Tom would ‘a’ liked it.”

“Is she fond of him?” enquired Louise.

“Fond of the boy? Why, Miss Jane just hates him, for a fact. She won’t even see him, or have him near her. So he keeps to his little room in the left wing, and eats and sleeps there.”

“It’s strange,” remarked Beth, thoughtfully. “Isn’t he a nice boy?”

“We’re all very fond of Master Kenneth,” replied the housekeeper, simply. “But I’ll admit he’s a queer lad, and has a bad temper. It may be due to his lack of bringin’ up, you know; for he just runs wild, and old Mr. Chase, who comes from the village to tutor him, is a poor lot, and lets the boy do as he pleases. For that reason he won’t study, and he won’t work, and I’m sure I don’t know whatever will become of him, when Miss Jane dies.”

“Thank you,” said Beth, much relieved, and the girls walked away with lighter hearts.

“There’s no danger in that quarter, after all,” said Louise, gaily.

“The boy is a mere hanger-on. You see, Aunt Jane’s old sweetheart, Thomas Bradley, left everything to her when he died, and she can do as she likes with it.”

After luncheon, which they ate alone and unattended save by the maid Susan, who was old Misery’s daughter, the girls walked away to the rose arbor, where Beth declared they could read or sew quite undisturbed.

But sitting upon the bench they found a little old man, his legs extended, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a look of calm meditation upon

his round and placid face. Between his teeth was a black brier pipe, which he puffed lazily.

Beth was for drawing back, but Louise took her arm and drew her forward.

"Isn't this Uncle John?" she asked.

The little man turned his eyes upon them, withdrew his hands from his pockets and his pipe from his mouth, and then bowed profoundly.

"If you are my nieces, then I am Uncle John," he said, affably. "Sit down, my dears, and let us get acquainted."

Louise smiled, and her rapid survey took in the man's crumpled and somewhat soiled shirt-front, the frayed black necktie that seemed to have done years of faithful service, and the thick and dusty cow-hide boots. His clothing was old and much worn, and the thought crossed her mind that Oscar the groom was far neater in appearance than this newly-found relative.

Beth merely noticed that Uncle John was neither dignified nor imposing in appearance. She sat down beside him — leaving a wide space between them — with a feeling of disappointment that he was "like all the rest of the Merricks."

"You have just arrived, we hear," remarked Louise.

"Yes. Walked up from the station this forenoon," said Uncle John.

"Come to see Jane, you know, but hadn't any idea I'd find two nieces.

Hadn't any idea I possessed two nieces, to be honest about it."

"I believe you have three," said Louise, in an, amused tone.

"Three? Who's the other?"

"Why, Patricia Doyle."

"Doyle? Doyle? Don't remember the name."

"I believe your sister Violet married a man named Doyle."

"So she did. Captain Doyle — or Major Doyle — or some such fellow. But what is your name?"

"I am Louise Merrick, your brother Will's daughter."

"Oh! And you?" turning to Beth.

"My mother was Julia Merrick," said Beth, not very graciously. "She married Professor DeGraf. I am Elizabeth DeGraf."

"Yes, yes," observed Uncle John, nodding his head. "I remember Julia very well, as a girl. She used to put on a lot of airs, and jaw father because he wouldn't have the old top-buggy painted every spring. Same now as ever, I s'pose?"

Beth did not reply.

"And Will's dead, and out of his troubles, I hope," continued Uncle John, reflectively. "He wrote me once that his wife had nearly driven him crazy.

Perhaps she murdered him in his sleep — eh, Louise?"

"Sir," said Louise, much offended, "you are speaking of my mother."

"Ah, yes. It's the same one your father spoke of," he answered, unmoved. "But that's neither here nor there. The fact is, I've found two nieces," looking shrewdly from one face into the other, "and I seem to be in luck, for you're quite pretty and ladylike, my dears."

"Thank you," said Louise, rather coldly. "You're a competent judge, sir, I suppose."

"Tolerable," he responded, with a chuckle. "So good a judge that I've kep' single all my life."

"Where did you come from?" asked the girl.

"From out on the coast," tossing his grizzled head toward the west.

"What brought you back here, after all these years?"

"Family affection, I guess. Wanted to find out what folks yet belonged to me."

An awkward silence followed this, during which Uncle John relighted his pipe and Beth sat in moody silence. Louise drew a pattern in the gravel with the end of her parasol. This new uncle, she reflected, might become an intolerable bore, if she encouraged his frank familiarity.

"Now that you are here," she said, presently, "what are you going to do?"

"Nothing, my dear."

"Have you any money?"

He looked at her with a droll expression.

"Might have expected that question, my dear," said he; "but it's rather hard to answer. If I say no, you'll be afraid I'll want to borrow a little spendin' money, now an' then; and if I say yes, you'll take me for a Rockyfeller."

"Not exactly," smiled Louise.

"Well, then, if I figure close I won't have to borrow," he responded, gravely. "And here's Jane, my sister, just rolling in wealth that she don't know what to do with. And she's invited me to stay a while. So let's call the money question settled, my dear."

Another silence ensued. Louise had satisfied her curiosity concerning her new uncle, and Beth had never had any. There was nothing more to say, and as Uncle John showed no intention of abandoning the arbored seat, it was evident they must go themselves. Louise was about to rise when the man remarked:

"Jane won't last long".

"You think not?" she asked.

"She says she's half dead a'ready, and I believe it. It's about time, you

know. She's let her temper and restless disposition wear her out. Pretty soon she'll blow out, like a candle. All that worries her is to keep alive until she can decide who to leave her money to. That's why you're here, I s'pose, my dears. How do you like being on exhibition, an' goin' through your paces, like a bunch o' trotting hosses, to see which is worth the most?"

"Uncle John," said Beth, "I had hoped I would like you. But if you are going to be so very disagreeable, I'll have nothing more to do with you!"

With this she arose and marched up the path, vastly indignant, and Louise marched beside her. At the bend in the walk they glanced back, and saw Uncle John sitting upon the bench all doubled up and shaking with silent laughter.

"He's a queer old man," said Beth, flushing; "but he's impudent and half a fool."

"Don't judge hastily, Beth," replied Louise, reflectively. "I can't make up my mind, just yet, whether Uncle John is a fool or not."

"Anyhow," snapped Beth, "he's laughing at us."

"And that," said her cousin, softly, "is the strongest evidence of his sanity. Beth, my love, Aunt Jane has placed us in a most ridiculous position."

That evening at dinner they met Uncle John again, seated opposite Aunt Jane in the great dining hall. The mistress of Elmhurst always dressed for this meal and tonight she wore a rich black silk and had her invalid chair wheeled to her place at the head of the table. Uncle John had simply changed his old black necktie for a soiled white one. Otherwise his apparel was the same as before, and his stubby gray hair was in a sad state of disarray. But his round face wore a cheerful smile, nevertheless, and Aunt Jane seemed not to observe anything *outre* in her brother's appearance. And so the meal passed pleasantly enough.

After it was finished Uncle John strolled into the garden to smoke his pipe under the stars and Louise sang a few songs for Aunt Jane in the dimly-lit drawing room. Beth, who was a music teacher's daughter, could not sing at all.

It was some time later when John Merrick came to his sister's room to bid her good night.

"Well," she asked him, "what do you think of the girls?"

"My nieces?"

"Yes."

"During my lifetime," said the old man, "I've always noticed that girls are just girls — and nothing more. Jane, your sex is a puzzle that ain't worth the trouble solving. You're all alike, and what little I've seen of my nieces convinces me they're regulation females — no better nor worse than their

kind.”

“Louise seems a capable girl,” declared Aunt Jane, musingly. “I didn’t care much for her, at first; but she improves on acquaintance. She has been well trained by her mother, and is very ladylike and agreeable.”

“She’s smarter than the other one, but not so honest,” said Uncle John.

“Beth has no tact at all,” replied Aunt Jane. “But then, she’s younger than Louise.”

“If you’re trying to figure out what they are, and what they are not,” returned the man, “you’ve got a hard job on your hands, Jane, and like as not you’ll make a mistake in the end. Where’s the other niece? Aren’t there three of them?”

“Yes. The other’s coming. Silas Watson, my lawyer, has just telegraphed from New York that he’s bringing Patricia back with him.”

“Had to send for her, eh?”

“Yes. She’s Irish, and if I remember rightly her father is a disgraceful old reprobate, who caused poor Violet no end of worry. The girl may be like him, for she wrote me a dreadful letter, scolding me because I hadn’t kept her parents supplied with money, and refusing to become my guest.”

“But she’s changed her mind?”

“I sent Watson after her, and he’s bringing her. I wanted to see what the girl is like.”

Uncle John whistled a few bars of an ancient tune.

“My advice is,” he said, finally, “to let ‘em draw cuts for Elmhurst. If you want to leave your money to the best o’ the lot, you’re as sure of striking it right that way as any other.”

“Nonsense!” said Jane Merrick, sharply. “I don’t want to leave my money to the best of the lot.”

“No?”

“By no means. I want to leave it to the one I prefer — whether she’s the best or not.”

“I see. Jane, I’ll repeat my former observation. Your sex is a puzzle that isn’t worth solving. Good night, old girl.”

“Good night, John.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OTHER NIECE.

Patricia sat down opposite her Aunt Jane. She still wore her hat and the gray wrap.

"Well, here I am," she exclaimed, with a laugh; "but whether I ought to be here or not I have my doubts."

Aunt Jane surveyed her critically.

"You're a queer little thing," she said, bluntly. "I wonder why I took so much trouble to get you."

"So do I," returned Patsy, her eyes twinkling. "You'll probably be sorry for it."

Lawyer Watson, who had remained standing, now broke in nervously.

"I explained to Miss Doyle," said he, "that you were ill, and wanted to see her. And she kindly consented to come to Elmhurst for a few days."

"You see," said Patsy, "I'd just got Daddy away on his vacation, to visit his old colonel. I've wanted him to go this three years back, but he couldn't afford it until I got a raise this Spring. He'll have a glorious old time with the colonel, and they'll fish and hunt and drink whiskey all day, and fight the war all over again every evening. So I was quite by myself when Mr. Watson came to me and wouldn't take no for his answer."

"Why did you object to come here?" asked Aunt Jane.

"Well, I didn't know you; and I didn't especially want to know you. Not that I bear grudges, understand, although you've been little of a friend to my folks these past years. But you are rich and proud — and I suspect you're a little cross, Aunt Jane — while we are poor and proud and like to live our lives in our own way."

"Are you a working girl?" enquired Miss Merrick.

"Surely," said Patsy, "and drawing a big lump of salary every Saturday night. I'm a hair-dresser, you know — and by the way, Aunt Jane, it puzzles me to find a certain kink in your hair that I thought I'd invented myself."

"Louise dressed my hair this way," said Miss Merrick, a bit stiffly.

"Your maid?"

"My niece, Louise Merrick."

Patsy whistled, and then clapped her hand over her mouth and looked grave.

"Is she here?" she asked, a moment later.

"Yes, and your other cousin, Elizabeth De Graf, is here also."

"That's just the trouble," cried Patsy, energetically. "That's why I didn't want to come, you know."

“I don’t understand you, Patricia.”

“Why, it’s as plain as the nose on your face, even if I hadn’t pumped Mr. Watson until I got the truth out of him. You want us girls here just to compare us with each other, and pick out the one you like best.”

“Well?”

“The others you’ll throw over, and the favorite will get your money.”

“Haven’t I a right to do that?” asked the invalid, in an amazed tone.

“Perhaps you have. But we may as well understand each other right now, Aunt Jane. I won’t touch a penny of your money, under any circumstances.”

“I don’t think you will, Patricia.”

The girl laughed, with a joyous, infectious merriment that was hard to resist.

“Stick to that, aunt, and there’s no reason we shouldn’t be friends,” she said, pleasantly. “I don’t mind coming to see you, for it will give me a bit of a rest and the country is beautiful just now. More than that, I believe I shall like you. You’ve had your own way a long time, and you’ve grown crochetty and harsh and disagreeable; but there are good lines around your mouth and eyes, and your nature’s liable to soften and get sunny again. I’m sure I hope so. So, if you’d like me to stay a few days, I’ll take off my things and make myself at home. But I’m out of the race for your money, and I’ll pay my way from now on just as I have always done.”

Silas Watson watched Aunt Jane’s face during this speech with an anxious and half-frightened expression upon his own. No one but himself had ever dared to talk to Jane Merrick as plainly as this before, and he wondered how she would accept such frankness from a young girl.

But Patricia’s manner was not at all offensive. Her big eyes were as frank as her words, but they glistened with kindliness and good nature, and it was evident the girl had no doubt at all of her aunt’s reply, for she straightway begun to take off her hat.

The invalid had kept her eyes sternly fastened upon her young niece ever since the beginning of the interview. Now she reached out a hand and touched her bell.

“Misery,” she said to the old housekeeper, “show my niece, Miss Patricia, to the rose chamber. And see that she is made comfortable.”

“Thank you,” said Patsy, jumping up to go.

“Make yourself perfectly free of the place,” continued Aunt Jane, in an even tone, turning to Patricia, “and have as good a time as you can. I’m afraid it’s rather stupid here for girls, but that can’t be helped. Stay as long as you please, and go home whenever you like; but while you are here, if you ever feel like chatting with a harsh and disagreeable old woman, come to me

at any time and you will be welcome."

Patsy, standing before her, looked down into her worn face with a pitying expression.

"Ah! I've been cruel to you," she exclaimed, impulsively, "and I didn't mean to hurt you at all, Aunt Jane. You must forgive me. It's just my blunt Irish way, you see; but if I hadn't been drawn to you from the first I wouldn't have said a word — good or bad!"

"Go now," replied Aunt Jane, turning in her chair rather wearily. "But come to me again whenever you like."

Patsy nodded, and followed the housekeeper to the rose chamber — the prettiest room old Elmhurst possessed, with broad windows opening directly upon the finest part of the garden.

Lawyer Watson sat opposite his old friend for some moments in thoughtful silence. "The child is impossible." he said, at last.

"You think so?" she enquired, moodily.

"Absolutely. Either of the others would make a better Lady of Elmhurst. Yet I like the little thing, I confess. She quite won my old heart after I had known her for five minutes. But money would ruin her. She's a child of the people, and ought not to be raised from her proper level. Jane, Jane — you're making a grave mistake in all this. Why don't you do the only right thing in your power, and leave Elmhurst to Kenneth?"

"You bore me, Silas," she answered, coldly. "The boy is the most impossible of all."

It was the old protest and the old reply. He had hardly expected anything different.

After a period of thought he asked;

"What is this I hear about John Merrick having returned from the West?"

"He came yesterday. It was a great surprise to me."

"I never knew this brother, I believe."

"No; he had gone away before I became acquainted with either you or Tom."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Honest and simple, hard-headed and experienced."

"Is he independent?"

"I believe so; he has never mentioned his affairs to me. But he has worked hard all his life, he says, and now means to end his days peacefully. John is not especially refined in his manner, nor did he have much of an education; but he seems to be a good deal of a man, for all that. I am very glad he appeared at Elmhurst just at this time."

“You had believed him dead?”

“Yes. He had passed out of my life completely, and I never knew what became of him.”

“He must be an eccentric person,” said Mr. Watson, with a smile.

“He is.” she acknowledged. “But blood is thicker than water, Silas, and I’m glad brother John is here at last.”

A little later the lawyer left her and picked his way through the gardens until he came to Kenneth’s wing and the stair that led to his room. Here he paused a moment, finding himself surrounded by a profound stillness, broken only by the chirping of the birds in the shrubbery. Perhaps Kenneth was not in. He half decided to retrace his steps, but finally mounted the stair softly and stood within the doorway of the room.

The boy and a little stout man were playing chess at a table, and both were in a deep study of the game. The boy’s back was toward him, but the man observed the newcomer and gave a nod. Then he dropped his eyes again to the table.

Kenneth was frowning sullenly.

“You’re bound to lose the pawn, whichever way you play,” said the little man quietly.

The boy gave an angry cry, and thrust the table from him, sending the chess-men clattering into a corner. Instantly the little man leaned over and grasped the boy by the collar, and with a sudden jerk landed him across his own fat knees. Then, while the prisoner screamed and struggled, the man brought his hand down with a slap that echoed throughout the room, and continued the operation until Master Kenneth had received a sound spanking.

Then he let the boy slip to the floor, from whence he arose slowly and backed toward the door, scowling and muttering angrily.

“You broke the bargain, and I kept my word,” said Uncle John, calmly taking his pipe from his pocket and filling it. “The compact was that if you raised a rough-house, like you did yesterday, and got unruly, that I’d give you a good thrashing. Now, wasn’t it?”

“Yes,” acknowledged the boy.

“Well, that blamed temper o’ your’n got away with you again, and you’re well spanked for not heading it off. Pick up the board. Ken, my lad, and let’s try it again.”

The boy hesitated. Then he looked around and saw Lawyer Watson, who had stood motionless by the doorway, and with a cry that was half a sob Kenneth threw himself into his old friend’s arms and burst into a flood of tears.

Uncle John struck a match, and lighted his pipe.

“A bargain’s a bargain,” he observed, composedly.

“He whipped me!” sobbed the boy. “He whipped me like a child.”

“Your own fault,” said Uncle John. “You wanted me to play a game with you, and I agreed, providin’ you behaved yourself. And you didn’t. Now, look here. Do you blame me any?”

“No,” said the boy.

“No harm’s done, is there?”

“No.”

“Then stop blubberin’, and introduce me to your friend,” continued Uncle John. “Name’s Watson, ain’t it.”

“Silas Watson, sir, at your service,” said the lawyer, smiling. “And this must be John Merrick, who I understand has arrived at Elmhurst during my absence.”

“Exactly,” said Uncle John, and the two men shook hands cordially.

“Glad to welcome you to Elmhurst, sir,” continued the lawyer. “I’ve known it ever since I was a boy, when it belonged to my dear friend Thomas Bradley. And I hope you’ll love it as much as I do, when you know it better.”

“Bradley must have been a fool to give this place to Jane,” said Uncle John, reflectively.

“He was in love, sir,” observed the other, and they both smiled. Then the lawyer turned to Kenneth. “How are things going?” he asked. “Have the girls bothered you much, as yet?”

“No,” said the boy. “I keep out of their way.”

“That’s a good idea. By the bye, sir,” turning to John Merrick. “I’ve just brought you a new niece.”

“Patricia?”

“She prefers to be called Patsy. A queer little thing; half Irish, you know.”

“And half Merrick. That’s an odd combination, but the Irish may be able to stand it,” said Uncle John. “These nieces are more than I bargained for. I came to see one relative, and find three more — and all women!”

“I think you’ll like Patsy, anyhow. And so will you, Kenneth.”

The boy gave an indignant roar.

“I hate all girls!” he said.

“You won’t hate this one. She’s as wild and impulsive as you are, but better natured. She’ll make a good comrade, although she may box your ears once in a while.”

The boy turned away sulkily, and began picking up the scattered chessmen. The two men walked down the stair and strolled together through the garden.

“A strange boy,” said Uncle John, presently.

“I’m glad to see you’ve made friends with him,” replied the lawyer, earnestly. “Until now he has had no one to befriend him but me, and at times he’s so unmanageable that it worries me dreadfully.”

“There’s considerable character about the lad,” said John Merrick; “but he’s been spoiled and allowed to grow up wild, like a weed. He’s got it in him to make a criminal or a gentleman, whichever way his nature happens to develop.”

“He ought to go to a military school,” replied Lawyer Watson. “Proper training would make a man of Kenneth; but I can’t induce Jane to spend the money on him. She gives him food and clothing and lodging — all of the simplest description — but there her generosity ends. With thousands of dollars lying idle, she won’t assist the only nephew of Tom Bradley to secure a proper education.”

“Jane’s queer, too,” said that lady’s brother, with a sigh. “In fact, Mr. Watson, it’s a queer world, and the longer I live in it the queerer I find it. Once I thought it would be a good idea to regulate things myself and run the world as it ought to be run; but I gave it up long ago. The world’s a stage, they say; but the show ain’t always amusing, by a long chalk, and sometimes I wish I didn’t have a reserved seat.”

CHAPTER XIV.

KENNETH IS FRIGHTENED.

Lawyer Watson, unable to direct events at Elmhurst, became a silent spectator of the little comedy being enacted there, and never regretted that, as Uncle John expressed it, he "had a reserved seat at the show."

Jane Merrick, formerly the most imperious and irrascible of women, had become wonderfully reserved since the arrival of her nieces, and was evidently making a sincere effort to study their diverse characters. Day by day the invalid's health was failing visibly. She had no more strokes of paralysis, but her left limb did not recover, and the numbness was gradually creeping upward toward her heart.

Perhaps the old woman appreciated this more fully than anyone else. At any event, she became more gentle toward Phibbs and Misery, who mostly attended her, and showed as much consideration as possible for her nieces and her brother. Silas Watson she kept constantly by her side. He was her oldest and most trusted friend, and the only differences they had ever had were over the boy Kenneth, whom she stubbornly refused to favor.

Uncle John speedily became an established fixture at the place. The servants grew accustomed to seeing him wander aimlessly about the grounds, his pipe always in his mouth, his hands usually in his pockets. He had a pleasant word always for Donald or Oscar or James, but was not prone to long conversations. Every evening, when he appeared at dinner, he wore his soiled white tie; at other times the black one was always in evidence; but other than this his dress underwent no change. Even Kenneth came to wonder what the bundle had contained that Uncle John brought under his arm to Elmhurst.

The little man seemed from the first much attracted by his three nieces. Notwithstanding Louise's constant snubs and Beth's haughty silence he was sure to meet them when they strolled out and try to engage them in conversation. It was hard to resist his simple good nature, and the girls came in time to accept him as an inevitable companion, and Louise mischievously poked fun at him while Beth conscientiously corrected him in his speech and endeavored to improve his manners. All this seemed very gratifying to Uncle John. He thanked Beth very humbly for her kind attention, and laughed with Louise when she ridiculed his pudgy, round form and wondered if his bristly gray hair wouldn't make a good scrubbing brush.

Patsy didn't get along very well with her cousins. From the first, when Louise recognized her, with well assumed surprise, as "the girl who had been sent to dress her hair," Patricia declared that their stations in life were

entirely different.

"There's no use of our getting mixed up, just because we're cousins and all visiting Aunt Jane," she said. "One of you will get her money, for I've told her I wouldn't touch a penny of it, and she has told me I wouldn't get the chance. So one of you will be a great lady, while I shall always earn my own living. I'll not stay long, anyhow; so just forget I'm here, and I'll amuse myself and try not to bother you."

Both Beth and Louise considered this very sensible, and took Patricia at her word. Moreover, Phibbs had related to Beth, whose devoted adherent she was, all of the conversation between Aunt Jane and Patricia, from which the girls learned they had nothing to fear from their cousin's interference. So they let her go her way, and the three only met at the state dinners, which Aunt Jane still attended, in spite of her growing weakness.

Old Silas Watson, interested as he was in the result, found it hard to decide, after ten days, which of her nieces Jane Merrick most favored. Personally he preferred that Beth should inherit, and frankly told his old friend that the girl would make the best mistress of Elmhurst. Moreover, all the servants sang Beth's praises, from Misery and Phibbs down to Oscar and Susan. Of course James the gardener favored no one, as the numerous strangers at Elmhurst kept him in a constant state of irritation, and his malady seemed even worse than usual. He avoided everyone but his mistress, and although his work was now often neglected Miss Merrick made no complaint. James' peculiarities were well understood and aroused nothing but sympathy.

Louise, however, had played her cards so well that all Beth's friends were powerless to eject the elder girl from Aunt Jane's esteem. Louise had not only returned the check to her aunt, but she came often to sit beside her and cheer her with a budget of new social gossip, and no one could arrange the pillows so comfortably or stroke the tired head so gently as Louise. And then, she was observing, and called Aunt Jane's attention to several ways of curtailing the household expenditures, which the woman's illness had forced her to neglect.

So Miss Merrick asked Louise to look over the weekly accounts, and in this way came to depend upon her almost as much as she did upon Lawyer Watson.

As for Patsy, she made no attempt whatever to conciliate her aunt, who seldom mentioned her name to the others but always brightened visibly when the girl came into her presence with her cheery speeches and merry laughter. She never stayed long, but came and went, like a streak of sunshine, whenever the fancy seized her; and Silas Watson, shrewdly looking on, saw a

new light in Jane's eyes as she looked after her wayward, irresponsible niece, and wondered if the bargain between them, regarding the money, would really hold good.

It was all an incomprehensible problem, this matter of the inheritance, and although the lawyer expected daily to be asked to draw up Jane Merrick's will, and had, indeed, prepared several forms, to be used in case of emergency, no word had yet passed her lips regarding her intentions.

Kenneth's life, during this period, was one of genuine misery. It seemed to his morbid fancy that whatever path he might take, he was sure of running upon one or more of those detestable girls who were visiting at Elmhurst. Even in Donald's harness-room he was not secure from interruption, for little Patsy was frequently perched upon the bench there, watching with serious eyes old Donald's motions, and laughing joyously when in his embarrassment he overturned a can of oil or buckled the wrong straps together.

Worse than all, this trying creature would saddle Nora, the sorrel mare, and dash away through the lanes like a tom-boy, leaving him only old Sam to ride — for Donald would allow no one to use the coach horses. Sam was tall and boney, and had an unpleasant gait, so that the boy felt he was thoroughly justified in hating the girl who so frequently interfered with his whims.

Louise was at first quite interested in Kenneth, and resolved to force him to talk and become more sociable.

She caught him in a little summer-house one morning, from whence, there being but one entrance, he could not escape, and at once entered into conversation.

"Ah, you are Kenneth Forbes, I suppose," she began, pleasantly. "I am very glad to make your acquaintance. I am Louise Merrick, Miss Merrick's niece, and have come to visit her."

The boy shrank back as fur as possible, staring her full in the face, but made no reply.

"You needn't be afraid of me," continued Louise. "I'm very fond of boys, and you must be nearly my own age."

Still no reply.

"I suppose you don't know much of girls and are rather shy," she persisted. "But I want to be friendly and I hope you'll let me. There's so much about this interesting old place that you can tell me, having lived here so many years. Come, I'll sit beside you on this bench, and we'll have a good talk together."

"Go away!" cried the boy, hoarsely, raising his hands as if to ward off her approach.

Louise looked surprised and pained.

"Why, we are almost cousins," she said. "Cannot we become friends and comrades?"

With a sudden bound he dashed her aside, so rudely that she almost fell, and an instant later he had left the summer house and disappear among the hedges.

Louise laughed at her own discomfiture and gave up the attempt to make the boy's acquaintance.

"He's a regular savage," she told Beth, afterward, "and a little crazy, too, I suspect."

"Never mind," said Beth, philosophically. "He's only a boy, and doesn't amount to anything, anyway. After Aunt Jane dies he will probably go somewhere else to live. Don't let us bother about him."

Kenneth's one persistent friend was Uncle John. He came every day to the boy's room to play chess with him, and after that one day's punishment, which, singularly enough, Kenneth in no way resented, they got along very nicely together. Uncle John was a shrewd player of the difficult game, but the boy was quick as a flash to see an advantage and use it against his opponent; so neither was ever sure of winning and the interest in the game was constantly maintained. At evening also the little man often came to sit on the stair outside the boy's room and smoke his pipe, and frequently they would sit beneath the stars, absorbed in thought and without exchanging a single word.

Unfortunately, Louise and Beth soon discovered the boy's secluded retreat, and loved to torment him by entering his own bit of garden and even ascending the stairs to his little room. He could easily escape them by running through the numerous upper halls of the mansion; but here he was liable to meet others, and his especial dread was encountering old Miss Merrick. So he conceived a plan for avoiding the girls in another way.

In the hallway of the left wing, near his door, was a small ladder leading to the second story roof, and a dozen feet from the edge of the roof stood an old oak tree, on the further side of a tall hedge. Kenneth managed to carry a plank to the roof, where, after several attempts, he succeeded in dropping one end into a crotch of the oak, thus connecting the edge of the roof with the tree by means of the narrow plank. After this, at first sight of the girls in his end of the garden, he fled to the roof, ran across the improvised bridge, "shinned" down the tree and, hidden by the hedge, made good his escape.

The girls discovered this plan, and were wicked enough to surprise the boy often and force him to cross the dizzy plank to the tree. Having frightened him away they would laugh and stroll on, highly amused at the

evident fear they aroused in the only boy about the place.

Patricia, who was not in the other girls' secret, knew nothing of this little comedy and really disturbed Kenneth least of the three. But he seemed to avoid her as much as he did the others.

She sooned learned from Oscar that the boy loved to ride as well as she did, and once or twice she met him on a lonely road perched on top of big Sam. This led her to suspect she had thoughtlessly deprived him of his regular mount. So one morning she said to the groom:

"Doesn't Kenneth usually ride Nora?"

"Yes, Miss," answered the man.

"Then I'd better take Sam this morning," she decided.

But the groom demurred.

"You won't like Sam, Miss," he said, "and he gets ugly at times and acts bad. Master Kenneth won't use Nora today, I'm sure."

She hesitated.

"I think I'll ask him," said she, after a moment, and turned away into the garden, anxious to have this plausible opportunity to speak to the lonely boy.

CHAPTER XV.

PATSY MEETS WITH AN ACCIDENT.

"Get out of here!" shouted the boy, angrily, as Patsy appeared at the foot of his stair.

"I won't!" she answered indignantly. "I've come to speak to you about the mare, and you'll just treat me decently or I'll know the reason why!"

But he didn't wait to hear this explanation. He saw her advancing up the stairs, and fled in his usual hasty manner to the hall and up the ladder to the roof.

Patsy stepped back into the garden, vexed at his flight, and the next instant she saw him appear, upon the sloping roof and start to run down the plank.

Even as she looked the boy slipped, fell headlong, and slid swiftly downward. In a moment he was over the edge, clutching wildly at the plank, which was a foot or more beyond his reach. Headforemost he dove into space, but the clutching hand found something at last — the projecting hook of an old eaves-trough that had long since been removed — and to this he clung fast in spite of the jerk of his arrested body, which threatened to tear away his grip.

But his plight was desperate, nevertheless. He was dangling in space, the hard pavement thirty feet below him, with no possible way of pulling himself up to the roof again. And the hook was so small that there was no place for his other hand. The only way he could cling to it at all was to grasp his wrist with the free hand as a partial relief from the strain upon his arm.

"Hold fast!" called Patsy. "I'm coming."

She sprang up the steps, through the boy's room and into the hallway. There she quickly perceived the ladder, and mounted it to the roof. Taking in the situation at a glance she ran with steady steps down the sloping roof to where the plank lay, and stepped out upon it far enough to see the boy dangling beside her. Then she decided instantly what to do.

"Hang on!" she called, and returning to the roof dragged the end of the plank to a position directly over the hook. Then she lay flat upon it, an arm on either side of the plank, and reaching down seized one of the boy's wrists firmly in each hand.

"Now, then," said she, "let go the hook."

"If I do," answered the boy, his white face upturned to hers, "I'll drag you down with me."

"No you won't. I'm very strong, and I'm sure I can save you. Let go," she said, imperatively.

"I'm not afraid to die," replied the boy, his voice full of bitterness. "Take

away your hands, and I'll drop."

But Patsy gripped him more firmly than ever.

"Don't be a fool!" she cried. "There's no danger whatever, if you do just what I tell you."

His eyes met hers in a mute appeal; but suddenly he gained confidence, and resolved to trust her. In any event, he could not cling to the hook much longer.

He released his hold, and swung in mid-air just beneath the plank, where the girl lay holding him by his wrists.

"Now, then," she said, quietly, "when I lift you up, grab the edges of the plank."

Patricia's strength was equal to her courage, and under the excitement of that desperate moment she did what few other girls of her size could ever have accomplished. She drew the boy up until his eager hands caught the edges of the plank, and gripped it firmly. Then she released him and crept a little back toward the roof.

"Now swing your legs up and you're safe!" she cried.

He tried to obey, but his strength was failing him, and he could do no more than touch the plank with his toes.

"Once more," called the girl.

This time she caught his feet as they swung upward, and drew his legs around the plank.

"Can you climb up, now?" she asked, anxiously.

"I'll try," he panted.

The plank upon which this little tragedy was being enacted was in full view of the small garden where Aunt Jane loved to sit in her chair and enjoy the flowers and the sunshine. She could not see Kenneth's wing at all, but she could see the elevated plank leading from the roof to the oak tree, and for several days had been puzzled by its appearance and wondered for what purpose it was there.

Today, as she sat talking with John Merrick and Silas Watson, she suddenly gave a cry of surprise, and following her eyes the two men saw Kenneth step out upon the roof, fall, and slide over the edge. For a moment all three remained motionless, seized with fear and consternation, and then they saw Patsy appear and run down to the plank.

This they watched her move, and saw her lie down upon it.

"She's trying to save him — he must be caught somewhere!" cried the lawyer, and both men started at full speed to reach the spot by the round-about paths through the garden.

Aunt Jane sat still and watched. Suddenly the form of the boy swung into

view beneath the plank, dangling from the girl's outstretched arms. The woman caught her breath, wondering what would happen next. Patricia drew him up, until he seized the plank with his hands. Then the girl crept back a little, and as the boy swung his feet upward she caught them and twined his legs over the plank.

And now came the supreme struggle. The girl could do little more to help him. He must manage to clamber upon the top of the plank himself.

Ordinarily Kenneth might have done this easily; but now his nerves were all unstrung, and he was half exhausted by the strain of the past few minutes. Almost he did it; but not quite. The next effort would be even weaker. But now Patricia walked out upon the plank and Aunt Jane saw her lean down, grasp the boy's collar and drag him into a position of safety.

"Bravely done!" she murmured, but even as the sound came from her lips the girl upon the bridge seemed in the exertion of the struggle to lose her balance. She threw out her arms, leaned sidewise, and then fell headlong into the chasm and disappeared from view.

Aunt Jane's agonized scream brought Phibbs running to her side. At a glance she saw that her mistress had fainted, and looking hastily around to discover the cause she observed the boy crawl slowly across the plank, reach the tree, and slide down its trunk to pass out of view behind the high hedge.

"Drat the boy!" growled the old servant, angrily, "he'll be the death of Miss Jane, yet."

CHAPTER XVI.

GOOD RESULTS.

Uncle John could not run so swiftly as the lawyer, but he broke through a gap in the hedge and arrived at a point just beneath the plank at the same time that Silas Watson did.

One glance showed them the boy safely perched on top of the plank, but the girl was bending backward. She threw out her arms in a vain endeavor to save herself, and with a low cry toppled and plunged swiftly toward the ground.

There was little time for the men to consider their actions. Involuntarily they tried to catch Patricia, whose body struck them sharply, felling them to the ground, and then bounded against the hedge and back to the pavement.

When, half dazed, they scrambled to their feet, the girl lay motionless before them, a stream of red blood welling from a deep cut in her forhead, her eyes closed as if in sleep.

A moment more and the boy was kneeling beside her, striving to stay the bleeding with his handkerchief.

"Do something! For God's sake try to do something," he wailed, piteously. "Can't you see she's killed herself to save me?"

Uncle John knelt down and took the still form in his arms.

"Quiet, my lad," he said. "She isn't dead. Get Nora, and fetch the doctor as soon as you can."

The boy was gone instantly, his agony relieved by the chance of action, and followed by the lawyer, Uncle John carried his niece to the rose chamber and laid her upon her white bed.

Misery met them, then, and following her came Louise and Beth, full of horror and pity for the victim of the dreadful accident.

Jane Merrick had promptly recovered consciousness, for fainting spells were foreign to her nature. Her first words to Phibbs, who was bending over her, were:

"Is she dead?"

"Who, Miss Jane?"

"Patricia."

"I don't know, Miss Jane. Why should she be dead?"

"Run, you idiot! Run at once and find out. Ask my brother — ask anyone — if Patricia is dead!"

And so Phibbs came to the rose chamber and found the little group bending over the girl's unconscious form.

"Is she dead, sir? Miss Jane wants to know," said the old servant, in awe-

struck tones.

"No," answered Uncle John, gravely. "She isn't dead, I'm sure; but I can't tell how badly she is hurt. One of her legs — the right one — is broken, I know, for I felt it as I carried the child in my arms; but we must wait until the doctor comes before I can tell more."

Misery was something of a nurse, it seemed, and with the assistance of Louise, who proved most helpful in the emergency, she bathed the wound in the girl's forehead and bandaged it as well as she was able. Between them the women also removed Patricia's clothing and got her into bed, where she lay white and still unconscious, but breathing so softly that they knew she was yet alive.

The doctor was not long in arriving, for Kenneth forced him to leap upon Nora's back and race away to Elmhurst, while the boy followed as swiftly as he could on the doctor's sober cob.

Dr. Eliel was only a country practitioner, but his varied experiences through many years had given him a practical knowledge of surgery, and after a careful examination of Patricia's injuries he was able to declare that she would make a fine recovery.

"Her leg is fractured, and she's badly bruised," he reported to Aunt Jane, who sent for him as soon as he could leave the sick room. "But I do not think she has suffered any internal injuries, and the wound on her forehead is a mere nothing. So, with good care, I expect the young lady to get along nicely."

"Do everything you can for her," said the woman, earnestly. "You shall be well paid, Dr. Eliel."

Before Patricia recovered her senses the doctor had sewn up her forehead and set the fractured limb, so that she suffered little pain from the first.

Louise and Beth hovered over her constantly, ministering to every possible want and filled with tenderest sympathy for their injured cousin. The accident seemed to draw them out of their selfishness and petty intrigues and discovered in them the true womanly qualities that had lurked beneath the surface.

Patsy was not allowed to talk, but she smiled gratefully at her cousins, and the three girls seemed suddenly drawn nearer together than any of them would have thought possible a few hours before.

The boy paced constantly up and down outside Patricia's door, begging everyone who left the room, for news of the girl's condition. All his reserve and fear of women seemed to have melted away as if by magic. Even Beth and Louise were questioned eagerly, and they, having learned the story of Patricia's brave rescue of the boy, were very gentle with him and took pains

not to frighten or offend him.

Toward evening Louise asked Patricia if she would see Kenneth for a moment, and the girl nodded a ready assent.

He came in awkward and trembling, glancing fearfully at the bandaged forehead and the still white face. But Patricia managed to smile reassuringly, and held out a little hand for him to take. The boy grasped it in both his own, and held it for several minutes while he stood motionless beside her, his wide eyes fixed intently upon her own.

Then Louise sent him away, and he went to his room and wept profusely, and then quieted down into a sort of dull stupor.

The next morning Uncle John dragged him away from Patricia's door and forced him to play chess. The boy lost every game, being inattentive and absorbed in thought, until finally Uncle John gave up the attempt to amuse him and settled himself on the top stair for a quiet smoke. The boy turned to the table, and took a sheet of paper from the drawer. For an hour, perhaps, neither of these curious friends spoke a word, but at the end of that time Uncle John arose and knocked the ashes from his pipe. Kenneth did not notice him. The man approached the table and looked over the boy's shoulder, uttering an exclamation of surprise. Upon the paper appeared a cleverly drawn pencil sketch of Patricia lying in her bed, a faint smile upon her face and her big blue eyes turned pleasantly upon a shadowy form that stood beside her holding her hand. The likeness was admirable, and if there were faults in the perspective and composition Uncle John did not recognize them.

He gave a low whistle and turned thoughtfully away, and the young artist was so absorbed that he did not even look up.

Strolling away to the stables, Uncle John met old Donald, who enquired:

"How is Miss Patsy this morning, sir?" It was the name she had given, and preferred to be called by.

"She's doing finely," said Uncle John.

"A brave girl, sir!"

"Yes, Donald."

"And the boy?"

"Why, he seems changed, in some way, Donald. Not so nervous and wild as usual, you know. I've just left him drawing a picture. Curious. A good picture, too."

"Ah, he can do that, sir, as well as a real artist."

"Have you known him to draw, before this?"

"Why, he's always at it, sir, in his quieter moods. I've got a rare good likeness o' myself, as he did long ago, in the harness-room."

“May I see it?”

“With pleasure, sir.”

Donald led the way to the harness-room, and took from the cupboard the precious board he had so carefully preserved.

Uncle John glanced at it and laughed aloud. He could well appreciate the humor of the sketch, which Donald never had understood, and the caricature was as clever as it was amusing. He handed the treasure back to Donald and went away even more thoughtful than before.

A few days later a large package arrived at Elmhurst addressed to Kenneth Forbes, and Oscar carried it at once to the boy’s room, who sat for an hour looking at it in silent amazement. Then he carefully unwrapped it, and found it to contain a portable easel, a quantity of canvas and drawing-paper, paints and oils of every description (mostly all unknown to him) and pencils, brushes and water colors in profusion.

Kenneth’s heart bounded with joy. Here was wealth, indeed, greater than he had ever hoped for. He puzzled his brain for weeks to discover how this fairy gift had ever come to him, but he was happier in its possession than he had ever been before in all his life.

Patricia improved rapidly. Had it not been for the broken leg she would have been out of the house in a week, as good as ever; but broken limbs take time to heal, and Dr. Eliel would not permit the girl to leave her bed until ten days had passed.

Meantime everyone delighted to attend her. Louise and Beth sat with her for hours, reading or working, for the rose chamber was cheery and pleasant, and its big windows opened upon the prettiest part of the gardens. The two girls were even yet suspicious of one another, each striving to win an advantage with Aunt Jane; but neither had the slightest fear that Patricia would ever interfere with their plans. So they allowed their natural inclinations to pet and admire the heroine of the hour full sway, and Patsy responded so sweetly and frankly to their advances that they came to love her dearly, and wondered why they had not discovered from the first how lovable their Irish cousin could be.

Kenneth, also came daily to the sick room for a visit, and Patsy had a way of drawing the boy out and making him talk that was really irresistible. After his fairy gift arrived he could not help telling the girls all about it and then he brought the things down and displayed them, and promised Patsy he would make a picture of the garden for her.

Then, after the girl got better, he brought his easel down to her room, where she could watch him work, and began upon the picture, while the cousins joined him in speculations as to who the mysterious donor could he.

“At first,” said Kenneth, “I thought it was Mr. Watson, for he’s alway been very good to me; but he says he knows nothing about it. Then I though it might be Uncle John; but Uncle John is too poor to afford such an expensive present.”

“I don’t believe he has a penny in the world,” said Louise, who sat by with some needle-work.

“All he owns,” remarked Beth, with a laugh, “is an extra necktie, slightly damaged.”

“But he’s a dear old man,” said Patsy, loyally, “and I’m sure he would have given all those things to Kenneth had he been able.”

“Then who was it?” asked the boy.

“Why, Aunt Jane, to be sure,” declared Patsy.

The boy scowled, and shook his head.

“She wouldn’t do anything to please me, even to save her life,” he growled. “She hates me, I know that well enough.”

“Oh, no; I’m sure she doesn’t,” said Patsy. “Aunt Jane has a heap of good in her; but you’ve got to dig for it, like you do for gold. ‘Twould be just like her to make you this present and keep it a secret.”

“If she really did it,” replied the boy, slowly, “and it seems as if she is the only one. I know who could afford such a gift, it stands to reason that either Uncle John or Mr. Watson asked her to, and she did it to please them. I’ve lived here for years, and she has never spoken a kindly word to me or done me a kindly act. It isn’t likely she’d begin now, is it?”

Unable to make a reassuring reply, Patsy remained silent, and the boy went on with his work. He first outlined the picture in pencil, and then filled it in with water color. They all expressed admiration for the drawing; but the color effect was so horrible that even Patsy found no words to praise it, and the boy in a fit of sudden anger tore the thing to shreds and so destroyed it.

“But I must have my picture, anyhow,” said the girl. “Make it in pen and ink or pencil, Ken. and I’m sure it will be beautiful.”

“You need instruction, to do water color properly,” suggested Louise.

“Then I can never do it,” he replied, bitterly. But he adopted Patsy’s suggestion and sketched the garden very prettily in pen and ink. By the time the second picture was completed Patsy had received permission to leave her room, which she did in Aunt Jane’s second-best wheel chair.

Her first trip was to Aunt Jane’s own private garden, where the invalid, who had not seen her niece since the accident, had asked her to come.

Patsy wanted Kenneth to wheel her, but the boy, with a touch of his old surly demeanor, promptly refused to meet Jane Merrick face to face. So Beth wheeled the chair and Louise walked by Patsy’s side, and soon the three

nieces reached their aunt's retreat.

Aunt Jane was not in an especially amiable mood.

"Well, girl, how do you like being a fool?" she demanded, as Patsy's chair came to a stand just opposite her own.

"It feels so natural that I don't mind it," replied Patsy, laughing.

"You might have killed yourself, and all for nothing," continued the old woman, querulously.

Patsy looked at her pityingly. Her aunt's face had aged greatly in the two weeks, and the thin gray hair seemed now almost white.

"Are you feeling better, dear?" asked the girl.

"I shall never be better," said Jane Merrick, sternly. "The end is not far off now."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear you say that!" said Patsy; "but I hope it is not true. Why, here are we four newly found relations all beginning to get acquainted, and to love one another, and we can't have our little party broken up, auntie dear."

"Five of us — five relations," cried Uncle John, coming around the corner of the hedge. "Don't I count, Patsy, you rogue? Why you're looking as bright and as bonny as can be. I wouldn't be surprised if you could toddle."

"Not yet," she answered, cheerfully. "But I'm doing finely, Uncle John, and it won't be long before I can get about as well as ever."

"And to think," said Aunt Jane, bitterly, "that all this trouble was caused by that miserable boy! If I knew where to send him he'd not stay at Elmhurst a day longer."

"Why, he's my best friend, aunt," announced Patsy, quietly. "I don't think I could be happy at Elmhurst without Kenneth."

"He has quite reformed," said Louise, "and seems like a very nice boy."

"He's a little queer, yet, at times," added Beth, "but not a bit rude, as he used to be."

Aunt Jane looked from one to the other in amazement. No one had spoken so kindly of the boy before in years. And Uncle John, with a thoughtful look on his face, said slowly:

"The fact is, Jane, you've never given the boy a chance. On the contrary, you nearly ruined him by making a hermit of him and giving him no schooling to speak of and no society except that of servants. He was as wild as a hawk when I first came, but these girls are just the sort of companions he needs, to soften him and make him a man. I've no doubt he'll come out all right, in the end."

"Perhaps you'd like to adopt him yourself, John," sneered the woman, furious at this praise of the one person she so greatly disliked.

Her brother drew his hands from his pockets, looked around in a helpless and embarrassed way, and then tried fumblingly to fill his pipe.

"I ain't in the adopting business, Jane," he answered meekly. "And if I was," with a quaint smile, "I'd adopt one or two of these nieces o' mine, instead of Tom Bradley's nephew. If Bradley hadn't seen you, Jane, and loved your pretty face when you were young, Kenneth Forbes would now be the owner of Elmhurst. Did you ever think of that?"

Did she ever think of it? Why, it was this very fact that made the boy odious to her. The woman grew white with rage.

"John Merrick, leave my presence."

"All right, Jane."

He stopped to light his pipe, and then slowly walked away, leaving an embarrassed group behind him.

Patsy, however, was equal to the occasion. She began at once to chatter about Dr. Eliel, and the scar that would always show on her forehead; and how surprised the Major, her father, would be when he returned from the visit to his colonel and found his daughter had been through the wars herself, and bore the evidence of honorable wounds. Louise gracefully assisted her cousin to draw Aunt Jane into a more genial mood, and between them they presently succeeded. The interview that had begun so unfortunately ended quite pleasantly, and when Patricia returned to her room her aunt bade her adieu almost tenderly.

"In fact," said Louise to Beth, in the privacy of the latter's chamber, "I'm getting rather worried over Aunt Jane's evident weakness for our Cousin Patsy. Once or twice today I caught a look in her eye when she looked at Patsy that she has never given either you or me. The Irish girl may get the money yet."

"Nonsense," said Beth. "She has said she wouldn't accept a penny of it, and I'm positive she'll keep her word."

CHAPTER XVII.

AUNT JANE'S HEIRESS.

"Silas," said Aunt Jane to her lawyer, the next morning after her interview with Patsy, "I'm ready to have you draw up my will."

Mr. Watson gave a start of astonishment. In his own mind he had arrived at the conclusion that the will would never be executed, and to have Miss Merrick thus suddenly declare her decision was enough to startle even the lawyer's natural reserve.

"Very well, Jane," he said, briefly.

They were alone in the invalid's morning room, Phibbs having been asked to retire.

"There is no use disguising the fact, Silas, that I grow weaker every day, and the numbness is creeping nearer and nearer to my heart," said Miss Merrick, in her usual even tones. "It is folly for me to trifle with these few days of grace yet allowed me, and I have fully made up my mind as to the disposition of my property."

"Yes?" he said, enquiringly, and drew from his pocket a pencil and paper.

"I shall leave to my niece Louise five thousand dollars."

"Yes, Jane," jotting down the memorandum.

"And to Elizabeth a like sum."

The lawyer seemed disappointed. He tapped the pencil against his teeth, musingly, for a moment, and then wrote down the amount.

"Also to my brother, John Merrick, the sum of five thousand dollars," she resumed.

"To your brother?"

"Yes. That should be enough to take care of him as long as he lives.
He seems quite simple in his tastes, and he is an old man."

The lawyer wrote it down.

"All my other remaining property, both real and personal, I shall leave to my niece, Patricia Doyle."

"Jane!"

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Then do as I bid you, Silas Watson."

He leaned back in his chair and looked at her thoughtfully.

"I am not only your lawyer, Jane; I am also your friend and counsellor. Do you realize what this bequest means?" he asked, gently.

"It means that Patricia will inherit Elmhurst — and a fortune besides. Why not, Silas? I liked the child from the first. She's frank and open and

brave, and will do credit to my judgment."

"She is very young and unsophisticated," said the lawyer, "and of all your nieces she will least appreciate your generosity."

"You are to be my executor, and manage the estate until the girl comes of age. You will see that she is properly educated and fitted for her station in life. As for appreciation, or gratitude, I don't care a snap of my finger for such fol-de-rol."

The lawyer sighed.

"But the boy, Jane? You seem to have forgotten him," he said.

"Drat the boy! I've done enough for him already."

"Wouldn't Tom like you to provide for Kenneth in some way, however humbly?"

She glared at him angrily.

"How do you know what Tom would like, after all these years?" she asked, sternly. "And how should I know, either? The money is mine, and the boy is nothing to me. Let him shift for himself."

"There is a great deal of money, Jane," declared the lawyer, impressively. "We have been fortunate in our investments, and you have used but little of your ample income. To spare fifty thousand dollars to Kenneth, who is Tom's sole remaining relative, would be no hardship to Patricia. Indeed, she would scarcely miss it."

"You remind me of something, Silas," she said, looking at him with friendly eyes. "Make a memorandum of twenty thousand dollars to Silas Watson. You have been very faithful to my interests and have helped materially to increase my fortune."

"Thank you, Jane."

He wrote down the amount as calmly as he had done the others.

"And the boy?" he asked, persistently.

Aunt Jane sighed wearily, and leaned against her pillows.

"Give the boy two thousand," she said.

"Make it ten, Jane."

"I'll make it five, and not a penny more," she rejoined. "Now leave me, and prepare the paper at once. I want to sign it today, if possible."

He bowed gravely, and left the room.

Toward evening the lawyer came again, bringing with him a notary from the village. Dr. Eliel, who had come to visit Patricia, was also called into Jane Merrick's room, and after she had carefully read the paper in their presence the mistress of Elmhurst affixed her signature to the document which transferred the great estate to the little Irish girl, and the notary and the doctor solemnly witnessed it and retired.

“Now, Silas,” said the old woman, with a sigh of intense relief, “I can die in peace.”

Singularly enough, the signing of the will seemed not to be the end for Jane Merrick, but the beginning of an era of unusual comfort. On the following morning she awakened brighter than usual, having passed a good night, freed from the worries and anxieties that had beset her for weeks. She felt more like her old self than at any time since the paralysis had overtaken her, and passed the morning most enjoyably in her sunshiney garden. Here Patricia was also brought in her wheel chair by Beth, who then left the two invalids together.

They conversed genially enough, for a time, until an unfortunate remark of Aunt Jane’s which seemed to asperse her father’s character aroused Patricia’s ire. Then she loosened her tongue, and in her voluable Irish way berated her aunt until poor Phibbs stood aghast at such temerity, and even Mr. Watson, who arrived to enquire after his client and friend, was filled with amazement.

He cast a significant look at Miss Merrick, who answered it in her usual emphatic way.

“Patricia is quite right, Silas,” she declared, “and I deserve all that she has said. If the girl were fond enough of me to defend me as heartily as she does her father, I would be very proud, indeed.”

Patricia cooled at once, and regarded her aunt with a sunny smile.

“Forgive me!” she begged. “I know you did not mean it, and I was wrong to talk to you in such a way.”

So harmony was restored, and Mr. Watson wondered more and more at this strange perversion of the old woman’s character. Heretofore any opposition had aroused in her intense rage and a fierce antagonism, but now she seemed delighted to have Patsy fly at her, and excused the girl’s temper instead of resenting it.

But Patsy was a little ashamed of herself this morning, realizing perhaps that Aunt Jane had been trying to vex her, just to enjoy her indignant speeches; and she also realized the fact that her aunt was old and suffering, and not wholly responsible for her aggravating and somewhat malicious observations. So she firmly resolved not to be so readily entrapped again, and was so bright and cheery during the next hour that Aunt Jane smiled more than once, and at one time actually laughed at her niece’s witty repartee.

After that it became the daily program for Patsy to spend her mornings in Aunt Jane’s little garden, and although they sometimes clashed, and, as Phibbs told Beth, “had dreadful fights,” they both enjoyed these hours very much.

The two girls became rather uneasy during the days their cousin spent in the society of Aunt Jane. Even the dreadful accounts they received from Phibbs failed wholly to reassure them, and Louise redoubled her solicitious attentions to her aunt in order to offset the influence Patricia seemed to be gaining over her.

Louise had also become, by this time, the managing housekeeper of the establishment, and it was certain that Aunt Jane looked upon her eldest and most competent niece with much favor.

Beth, with all her friends to sing her praises, seemed to make less headway with her aunt than either of the others, and gradually she sank into a state of real despondency.

"I've done the best I could," she wrote her mother, "but I'm not as clever as Louise nor as amusing as Patricia; so Aunt Jane pays little attention to me. She's a dreadful old woman, and I can't bring myself to appear to like her. That probably accounts for my failure; but I may as well stay on here until something happens."

In a fortnight more Patricia abandoned her chair and took to crutches, on which she hobbled everywhere as actively as the others walked. She affected her cousins' society more, from this time, and Aunt Jane's society less, for she had come to be fond of the two girls who had nursed her so tenderly, and it was natural that a young girl would prefer to be with those of her own age rather than a crabbed old woman like Aunt Jane.

Kenneth also now became Patsy's faithful companion, for the boy had lost his former bashfulness and fear of girls, and had grown to feel at ease even in the society of Beth and Louise. The four had many excursions and picnics into the country together; but Kenneth and Patsy were recognized as especial chums, and the other girls did not interfere in their friendship except to tease them, occasionally, in a good natured way.

The boy's old acquaintances could hardly recognize him as the same person they had known before Patricia's adventure on the plank. His fits of gloomy abstraction and violent bursts of temper had alike vanished, or only prevailed at brief intervals. Nor was he longer rude and unmannerly to those with whom he came in contact. Awkward he still was, and lacking in many graces that education and good society can alone confer; but he was trying hard to be, as he confided to old Uncle John, "like other people," and succeeded in adapting himself very well to his new circumstances.

Although he had no teacher, as yet, he had begun to understand color a little, and succeeded in finishing one or two water-color sketches which Patsy, who knew nothing at all of such things, pronounced "wonderfully fine." Of course the boy blushed with pleasure and was encouraged to still

greater effort.

The girl was also responsible for Kenneth's sudden advancement in the household at Elmhurst.

One day she said calmly to Aunt Jane:

"I've invited Kenneth to dinner this evening."

The woman flew angry in an instant.

"Who gave you such authority?" she demanded.

"No one. I just took it," said Patsy, saucily.

"He shall not come," declared Aunt Jane, sternly. "I'll have no interference from you, Miss, with my household arrangements. Phibbs, call Louise!"

Patsy's brow grew dark. Presently Louise appeared.

"Instruct the servants to forbid that boy to enter my dining room this evening," she said to Louise.

"Also, Louise," said Patsy, "tell them not to lay a plate for me, and ask Oscar to be ready with the wagon at five o'clock. I'm going home."

Louise hesitated, and looked from Miss Jane to Patsy, and back again.

They were glaring upon each other like two gorgons.

Then she burst into laughter; she could not help it, the sight was too ridiculous. A moment later Patsy was laughing, too, and then Aunt Jane allowed a grim smile to cross her features.

"Never mind, Louise," she said, with remarkable cheerfulness; "We'll compromise matters."

"How?" asked Patsy.

"By putting a plate for Kenneth," said her aunt, cooly. "I imagine I can stand his society for one evening."

So the matter was arranged to Patricia's satisfaction, and the boy came to dinner, trembling and unhappy at first, but soon placed at ease by the encouragements of the three girls. Indeed, he behaved so well, in the main, and was so gentle and unobstrusive, that Aunt Jane looked at him with surprise, and favored him with one or two speeches which he answered modestly and well.

Patsy was radiant with delight, and the next day Aunt Jane remarked casually that she did not object to the boy's presence at dinner, at all, and he could come whenever he liked.

This arrangement gave great pleasure to both Uncle John and Mr. Watson, the latter of whom was often present at the "state dinner," and both men congratulated Patsy upon the distinct victory she had won. No more was said about her leaving Elmhurst. The Major wrote that he was having a splendid time with the colonel, and begged for an extension of his vacation, to which

Patsy readily agreed, she being still unable on account of her limb to return to her work at Madam Borne's.

And so the days glided pleasantly by, and August came to find a happy company of young folks at old Elmhurst, with Aunt Jane wonderfully improved in health and Uncle John beaming complacently upon everyone he chanced to meet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PATRICIA SPEAKS FRANKLY.

It was Lawyer Watson's suggestion that she was being unjust to Beth and Louise, in encouraging them to hope they might inherit Elmhurst, that finally decided Aunt Jane to end all misunderstandings and inform her nieces of the fact that she had made a final disposition of her property.

So one morning she sent word asking them all into her room, and when the nieces appeared they found Uncle John and the lawyer already in their aunt's presence. There was an air of impressive formality pervading the room, although Miss Merrick's brother, at least, was as ignorant as her nieces of the reason why they had been summoned.

Patsy came in last, hobbling actively on her crutches, although the leg was now nearly recovered, and seated herself somewhat in the rear of the apartment.

Aunt Jane looked into one expectant face after another with curious interest, and then broke the silence by saying, gravely, but in more gentle tones than she was accustomed to use:

"I believe, young ladies, that you have understood from the first my strongest reason for inviting you to visit Elmhurst this summer. I am old, and must soon pass away, and instead of leaving you and your parents, who would be my legitimate heirs, to squabble over my property when I am gone, I decided to excute a will bequeathing my estate to some one who would take proper care of it and maintain it in a creditable manner. I had no personal acquaintance with any of you, but judged that one out of the three might serve my purpose, and therefore invited you all here."

By this time the hearts of Louise and Beth were fluttering with excitement, and even Patsy looked interested. Uncle John sat a little apart, watching them with an amused smile upon his face, and the lawyer sat silent with his eyes fixed upon a pattern in the rug.

"In arriving at a decision, which I may say I have succeeded in doing," continued Aunt Jane, calmly, "I do not claim to have acted with either wisdom or discernment. I have simply followed my own whim, as I have the right to do, and selected the niece I prefer to become my heiress. You cannot accuse of injustice, because none of you had a right to expect anything of me; but I will say this, that I am well pleased with all three of you, and now wish that I had taken pains to form your acquaintance earlier in life. You might have cheered my old age and rendered it less lonely and dull."

"Well said, Jane," remarked Uncle John, nodding his head approvingly.

She did not notice the interruption, but presently continued:

“Some days ago I asked my lawyer, Mr. Watson, to draw up my will. It was at once prepared and signed, and now stands as my last will and testament. I have given to you, Louise, the sum of five thousand dollars.”

Louise laughed nervously, and threw out her hands with an indifferent gesture.

“Many thanks, Aunt,” she said, lightly.

“To you, Beth,” continued Miss Merrick, “I have given the same sum.”

Beth’s heart sank, and tears forced themselves into her eyes in spite of her efforts to restrain them. She said nothing.

Aunt Jane turned to her brother.

“I have also provided for you, John, in the sum of five thousand dollars.”

“Me!” he exclaimed, astounded. “Why, suguration, Jane, I don’t — ”

“Silence!” she cried, sternly. “I expect neither thanks nor protests. If you take care of the money, John, it will last you as long as you live.”

Uncle John laughed. He doubled up in his chair and rocked back and forth, shaking his little round body as if he had met with the most amusing thing that had ever happened in his life. Aunt Jane stared at him, while Louise and Beth looked their astonishment, but Patsy’s clear laughter rang above Uncle John’s gasping chuckles.

“I hope, dear Uncle,” said she, mischievously, “that when poor Aunt Jane is gone you’ll be able to buy a new necktie.”

He looked at her whimsically, and wiped the tears from his eyes.

“Thank you, Jane,” said the little man to his sister. “It’s a lot of money, and I’ll be proud to own it.”

“Why did you laugh.” demanded Aunt Jane.

“I just happened to think that our old Dad once said I’d never be worth a dollar in all my life. What would he say now, Jane, if he knew I stood good to have five thousand — if I can manage to outlive you?”

She turned from him with an expression of scorn.

“In addition to these bequests,” said she, “I have left five thousand to the boy and twenty thousand to Mr. Watson. The remainder of the property will go to Patricia.”

For a moment the room was intensely still. Then Patricia said, with quiet determination:

“You may as well make another will, Aunt. I’ll not touch a penny of your money.”

“Why not?” asked the woman, almost fiercely.

“You have been kind to me, and you mean well,” said Patricia. “I would rather not tell you my reasons.”

“I demand to know them!”

“Ah, aunt; can’t you understand, without my speaking?”

“No,” said the other; but a flush crossed her pale cheek, nevertheless.

Patsy arose and stumped to a position directly in front of Jane Merrick, where she rested on her crutches. Her eyes were bright and full of indignation, and her plain little face was so white that every freckle showed distinctly.

“There was a time, years ago,” she began in a low voice, “when you were very rich and your sister Violet, my mother, was very poor. Her health was bad, and she had me to care for, while my father was very ill with a fever. She was proud, too, and for herself she would never have begged a penny of anyone; but for my sake she asked her rich sister to loan her a little money to tide her over her period of want. What did you do, Jane Merrick, you who lived in a beautiful mansion, and had more money than you could use? You insulted her, telling her she belonged to a family of beggars, and that none of them could wheedle your money away from you!”

“It was true,” retorted the elder woman, stubbornly. “They were after me like a drove of wolves — every Merrick of them all — and they would have ruined me if I had let them bleed me as they wished.”

“So far as my mother is concerned, that’s a lie,” said Patsy, quietly. “She never appealed to you but that once, but worked as bravely as she could to earn money in her own poor way. The result was that she died, and I was left to the care of strangers until my father was well enough to support me.”

She paused, and again the room seemed unnaturally still.

“I’m sorry, girl,” said Aunt Jane, at last, in trembling tones. “I was wrong. I see it now, and I am sorry I refused Violet.”

“Then I forgive you!” said Patsy, impulsively. “I forgive you all, Aunt Jane; for through your own selfishness you cut yourself off from all your family — from all who might have loved you — and you have lived all these years a solitary and loveless life. There’ll be no grudge of mine to follow you to the grave, Aunt Jane. But,” her voice hardening, “I’ll never touch a penny of the money that was denied my poor dead mother. Thank God the old Dad and I are independent, and can earn our own living.”

Uncle John came to where Patsy stood and put both arms around her, pressing her — crutches and all — close to his breast. Then he released her, and without a word stalked from the room.

“Leave me, now,” said Aunt Jane, in a husky voice. “I want time to think.”

Patricia hobbled forward, placed one hand caressingly upon the gray head, and then bent and kissed Aunt Jane’s withered cheek.

“That’s right,” she whispered. “Think it over, dear. It’s all past and done,

now, and I'm sorry I had to hurt you. But — not a penny, aunt — remember, not a penny will I take!"

Then she left the room, followed by Louise and Beth, both of whom were glad to be alone that they might conquer their bitter disappointment.

Louise, however, managed to accept the matter philosophically, as the following extract from her letter to her mother will prove:

"After all, it isn't so bad as it might be, mater, dear," she wrote. "I'll get five thousand, at the very worst, and that will help us on our way considerably. But I am quite sure that Patsy means just what she says, and that she will yet induce Aunt Jane to alter her will. In that case I believe the estate will either be divided between Beth and me, or I will get it all. Anyway, I shall stay here and play my best cards until the game is finished."

CHAPTER XIX.

DUPLICITY.

Aunt Jane had a bad night, as might have been expected after her trials of the previous day.

She sent for Patricia early in the forenoon, and when the girl arrived she was almost shocked by the change in her aunt's appearance. The invalid's face seemed drawn and gray, and she lay upon her cushions breathing heavily and without any appearance of vitality or strength. Even the sharpness and piercing quality of her hard gray eyes was lacking and the glance she cast at her niece was rather pleading than defiant.

"I want you to reconsider your decision of yesterday, Patricia," she begun.

"Don't ask me to do that, aunt," replied the girl, firmly. "My mind is fully made up."

"I have made mistakes, I know," continued the woman feebly; "but I want to do the right thing, at last."

"Then I will show you how," said Patricia, quickly. "You mustn't think me impertinent, aunt, for I don't mean to be so at all. But tell me; why did you wish to leave me your money?"

"Because your nature is quite like my own, child, and I admire your independence and spirit."

"But my cousins are much more deserving," said she, thoughtfully.

"Louise is very sweet and amiable, and loves you more than I do, while Beth is the most sensible and practical girl I have ever known."

"It may be so," returned Aunt Jane, impatiently; "but I have left each a legacy, Patricia, and you alone are my choice for the mistress of Elmhurst. I told you yesterday I should not try to be just. I mean to leave my property according to my personal desire, and no one shall hinder me." This last with a spark of her old vigor.

"But that is quite wrong, aunt, and if you desire me to inherit your wealth you will be disappointed. A moment ago you said you wished to do the right thing, at last. Don't you know what that is?"

"Perhaps you will tell me," said Aunt Jane, curiously.

"With pleasure," returned Patsy. "Mr. Bradley left you this property because he loved you, and love blinded him to all sense of justice. Such an estate should not have passed into the hands of aliens because of a lover's whim. He should have considered his own flesh and blood."

"There was no one but his sister, who at that time was not married and had no son," explained Aunt Jane, calmly. "But he did not forget her and asked me to look after Katherine Bradley in case she or her heirs ever needed

help. I have done so. When his mother died, I had the boy brought here, and he has lived here ever since."

"But the property ought to be his," said Patricia, earnestly. "It would please me beyond measure to have you make your will in his favor, and you would be doing the right thing at last."

"I won't," said Aunt Jane, angrily.

"It would also be considerate and just to the memory of Mr. Bradley," continued the girl. "What's going to became of Kenneth?"

"I have left him five thousand," said the woman.

"Not enough to educate him properly," replied Patsy, with a shake of her head. "Why, the boy might become a famous artist, if he had good masters; and a person with an artistic temperament, such as his, should have enough money to be independent of his art."

Aunt Jane coughed, unsympathetically.

"The boy is nothing to me," she said.

"But he ought to have Elmhurst, at least," pleaded the girl. "Won't you leave it to him, Aunt Jane?"

"No."

"Then do as you please," cried Patsy, flying angry in her turn. "As a matter of justice, the place should never have been yours, and I won't accept a dollar of the money if I starve to death!"

"Think of your father," suggested Aunt Jane, cunningly.

"Ah, I've done that," said the girl, "and I know how many comforts I could buy for the dear Major. Also I'd like to go to a girl's college, like Smith or Wellesley, and get a proper education. But not with your money, Aunt Jane. It would burn my fingers. Always I would think that if you had not been hard and miserly this same money would have saved my mother's life. No! I loathe your money. Keep it or throw it to the dogs, if you won't give it to the boy it belongs to. But don't you dare to will your selfish hoard to me."

"Let us change the subject, Patricia."

"Will you change your will?"

"No.".

"Then I won't talk to you. I'm angry and hurt, and if I stay here I'll say things I shall be sorry for."

With these words she marched out of the room, her cheeks flaming, and Aunt Jane looked after her with admiring eyes.

"She's right," she whispered to herself. "It's just as I'd do under the same circumstances!"

This interview was but the beginning of a series that lasted during the next

fortnight, during which time the invalid persisted in sending for Patricia and fighting the same fight over and over again. Always the girl pleaded for Kenneth to inherit, and declared she would not accept the money and Elmhurst; and always Aunt Jane stubbornly refused to consider the boy and tried to tempt the girl with pictures of the luxury and pleasure that riches would bring her.

The interviews were generally short and spirited, however, and during the intervals Patsy associated more than ever with her cousins, both of whom grew really fond of her.

They fully believed Patricia when she declared she would never accept the inheritance, and although neither Beth nor Louise could understand such foolish sentimentality they were equally overjoyed at the girl's stand and the firmness with which she maintained it. With Patsy out of the field it was quite possible the estate would be divided between her cousins, or even go entire to one or the other of them; and this hope constantly buoyed their spirits and filled their days with interest as they watched the fight between their aunt and their cousin.

Patricia never told them she was pleading so hard for the boy. It would only pain her cousins and make them think she was disloyal to their interests; but she lost no opportunity when with her Aunt Jane of praising Kenneth and proving his ability, and finally she seemed to win her point.

Aunt Jane was really worn out with the constant squabbling with her favorite niece. She had taken a turn for the worse, too, and began to decline rapidly. So, her natural cunning and determination to have her own way enhanced by her illness, the woman decided to deceive Patricia and enjoy her few remaining days in peace.

"Suppose," she said to Mr. Watson, "my present will stands, and after my death the estate becomes the property of Patricia. Can she refuse it?"

"Not legally," returned the lawyer. "It would remain in her name, but under my control, during her minority. When she became of age, however, she could transfer it as she might choose."

"By that time she will have gained more sense," declared Aunt Jane, much pleased with this aspect of the case, "and it isn't reasonable that having enjoyed a fortune for a time any girl would throw it away. I'll stick to my point, Silas, but I'll try to make Patricia believe she has won me over."

Therefore, the very next time that the girl pleaded with her to make Kenneth her heir, she said, with a clever assumption of resignation:

"Very well, Patricia; you shall have your way. My only desire, child, is to please you, as you well know, and if you long to see Kenneth the owner of Elmhurst I will have a new will drawn in his favor."

Patricia could scarcely believe her ears.

“Do you really mean it, aunt?” she asked, flushing red with pleasure.

“I mean exactly what I say, and now let us cease all bickerings, my dear, and my few remaining days will be peaceful and happy.”

Patricia thanked her aunt with eager words, and said, as indeed she felt, that she could almost love Aunt Jane for her final, if dilatory, act of justice.

Mr. Watson chanced to enter the room at that moment, and the girl cried out:

“Tell him, aunt! Let him get the paper ready at once.”

“There is no reason for haste,” said Aunt Jane, meeting; the lawyer’s questioning gaze with some embarrassment.

Silas Watson was an honorable and upright man, and his client’s frequent doubtful methods had in past years met his severe censure. Yet he had once promised his dead friend, Tom Bradley, that he would serve Jane Merrick faithfully. He had striven to do so, bearing with her faults of character when he found that he could not correct them. His influence over her had never been very strong, however, and he had learned that it was the most easy as well as satisfactory method to bow to her iron will.

Her recent questionings had prepared him for some act of duplicity, but he had by no means understood her present object, nor did she mean that he should. So she answered his questioning look by saying:

“I have promised Patricia that you shall draw a new will, leaving all my estate to Kenneth Forbes, except for the bequests that are mentioned in the present paper.”

The lawyer regarded her with amazement. Then his brow darkened, for he thought she was playing with the girl, and was not sincere.

“Tell him to draw up the paper right away, aunt!” begged Patricia, with sparkling eyes.

“As soon as you can, Silas,” said the invalid.

“And, aunt, can’t you spare a little more to Louise and Beth? It would make them so happy.”

“Double the amount I had allowed to each of them,” the woman commanded her lawyer.

“Can it all be ready to sign tonight?” asked Patsy, excitedly.

“I’ll try, my dear,” replied the old lawyer, gravely. Then he turned to Jane Merrick.

“Are you in earnest?” he asked.

Patsy’s heart suddenly sank.

“Yes,” was the reply. “I am tired of opposing this child’s wishes. What do I care what becomes of my money, when I am gone? All that I desire is to

have my remaining days peaceful.”

The girl spring forward and kissed her rapturously.

“They shall be, aunt!” she cried. “I promise it.”

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE GARDEN.

From this hour Patsy devoted herself untiringly to Aunt Jane, and filled her days with as much sunshine as her merry ways and happy nature could confer. Yet there was one thing that rendered her uneasy: the paper that Lawyer Watson had so promptly drawn had never yet been signed and witnessed. Her aunt had allowed her to read it, saying she wished the girl to know she had acted in good faith, and Patsy had no fault at all to find with the document. But Aunt Jane was tired, and deferred signing it that evening. The next day no witnesses could be secured, and so another postponement followed, and upon one pretext or another the matter was put off until Patricia became suspicious.

Noting this, Aunt Jane decided to complete her act of deception. She signed the will in the girl's presence, with Oscar and Susan to witness her signature. Lawyer Watson was not present on this occasion, and as soon as Patsy had left her Miss Merrick tore off the signatures and burned them, wrote "void" in bold letters across the face of the paper, and then, it being rendered of no value, she enclosed it in a large yellow envelope, sealed it, and that evening handed the envelope to Mr. Watson with the request that it be not opened until after her death.

Patricia, in her delight, whispered to the lawyer that the paper was really signed, and he was well pleased and guarded the supposed treasure carefully. The girl also took occasion to inform both Beth and Louise that a new will had been made in which they both profited largely, but she kept the secret of who the real heir was, and both her cousins grew to believe they would share equally in the entire property.

So now an air of harmony settled upon Elmhurst, and Uncle John joined the others in admiration of the girl who had conquered the stubbornness of her stern old aunt and proved herself so unselfish and true.

One morning Aunt Jane had Phibbs wheel her into her little garden, as usual, and busied herself examining the flowers and plants of which she had always been so fond.

"James has been neglecting his work, lately," she said, sharply, to her attendant.

"He's very queer, ma'am," replied old Martha, "ever since the young ladies an' Master John came to Elmhurst. Strangers he never could abide, as you know, and he runs and hides himself as soon as he sees any of 'em about."

"Poor James!" said Miss Merrick, recalling her old gardener's infirmity.

“But he must not neglect my flowers in this way, or they will be ruined.”

“He isn’t so afraid of Master John,” went on Phibbs, reflectively, “as he is of the young ladies. Sometimes Master John talks to James, in his quiet way, and I’ve noticed he listens to him quite respectively — like he always does to you, Miss Jane.”

“Go and find James, and ask him to step here,” commanded the mistress, “and then guard the opening in the hedge, and see that none of my nieces appear to bother him.”

Phibbs obediently started upon her errand, and came upon James in the tool-house, at the end of the big garden. He was working among his flower pots and seemed in a quieter mood than usual.

Phibbs delivered her message, and the gardener at once started to obey. He crossed the garden unobserved and entered the little enclosure where Miss Jane’s chair stood. The invalid was leaning back on her cushions, but her eyes were wide open and staring.

“I’ve come, Miss,” said James; and then, getting; no reply, he looked into her face. A gleam of sunlight filtered through the bushes and fell aslant Jane Merrick’s eyes; but not a lash quivered.

James gave a scream that rang through the air and silenced even the birds. Then, shrieking like the madman he was, he bounded away through the hedge, sending old Martha whirling into a rose-bush, and fled as if a thousand fiends were at his heels.

John Merrick and Mr. Watson, who were not far off, aroused by the bloodcurdling screams, ran toward Aunt Jane’s garden, and saw in a glance what had happened.

“Poor Jane,” whispered the brother, bending over to tenderly close the staring eyes, “her fate has overtaken her unawares.”

“Better so,” said the lawyer, gently. “She has found Peace at last.”

Together they wheeled her back into her chamber, and called the women to care for their dead mistress.

CHAPTER XXI.

READING THE WILL.

Aunt Jane's funeral was extremely simple and quiet. The woman had made no friends during her long residence in the neighborhood, having isolated herself at "the big house" and refused to communicate in any way with the families living near by. Therefore, although her death undoubtedly aroused much interest and comment, no one cared to be present at the obsequies.

So the minister came from Elmwood, and being unable to say much that was good or bad of "the woman who had departed from this vale of tears," he confined his remarks to generalities and made them as brief as possible. Then the body was borne to the little graveyard a mile away, followed by the state carriage, containing the three nieces and Kenneth; the drag with Silas Watson and Uncle John, the former driving; and then came the Elmhurst carryall with the servants. James did not join these last; nor did he appear at the house after that dreadful scene in the garden. He had a little room over the tool-house, which Jane Merrick had had prepared for him years ago, and here he locked himself in day and night, stealthily emerging but to secure the food Susan carried and placed before his door.

No one minded James much, for all the inmates of Elhurst were under severe and exciting strain in the days preceding the funeral.

The girls wept a little, but it was more on account of the solemnity following the shadow of death than for any great affection they bore their aunt. Patsy, indeed, tried to deliver a tribute to Aunt Jane's memory; but it was not an emphatic success.

"I'm sure she had a good heart," said the girl, "and if she had lived more with her own family and cultivated her friends she would have been much less hard and selfish. At the last, you know, she was quite gentle."

"I hadn't noticed it," remarked Beth.

"Oh, I did. And she made a new will, after that awful one she told us of, and tried to be just and fair to all"

"I'm glad to hear that" said Louise. "Tell us, Patsy, what does the will say? You must know all about it."

"Mr. Watson is going to read it, after the funeral," replied the girl, "and then you will know as much about it as I do. I mustn't tell secrets, my dear."

So Louise and Beth waited in much nervous excitement for the final realization of their hopes or fears, and during the drive to the cemetery there was little conversation in the state carriage. Kenneth's sensitive nature was greatly affected by the death of the woman who had played so important a part in the brief story of his life, and the awe it inspired rendered him gloomy

and silent. Lawyer Watson had once warned him that Miss Merrick's death might make him an outcast, and he felt the insecurity of his present position.

But Patsy, believing he would soon know of his good fortune, watched him curiously during the ride, and beamed upon him as frequently as her own low spirits would permit.

"You know, Ken," she reminded him, "that whatever happens we are always to remain friends."

"Of course," replied the boy, briefly.

The girl had thrown aside her crutches, by this time, and planned to return to her work immediately after the funeral.

The brief services at the cemetery being concluded, the little cavalcade returned to Elmhurst, where luncheon was awaiting them.

Then Mr. Watson brought into the drawing room the tin box containing the important Elmhurst papers in his possession, and having requested all present to be seated he said:

"In order to clear up the uncertainty that at present exists concerning Miss Merrick's last will and testament, I will now proceed to read to you the document, which will afterward be properly probated according to law."

There was no need to request their attention. An intense stillness pervaded the room.

The lawyer calmly unlocked the tin box and drew out the sealed yellow envelope which Miss Merrick had recently given him. Patsy's heart was beating with eager expectancy. She watched the lawyer break the seal, draw out the paper and then turn red and angry. He hesitated a moment, and then thrust the useless document into its enclosure and cast it aside.

"Is anything wrong?" asked the girl in a low whisper, which was yet distinctly heard by all.

Mr. Watson seemed amazed. Jane Merrick's deceitful trickery, discovered so soon after her death, was almost horrible for him to contemplate. He had borne much from this erratic woman, but had never believed her capable of such an act.

So he said, in irritable tones:

"Miss Merrick gave me this document a few days ago, leading me to believe it was her last will. I had prepared it under her instruction and understood that it was properly signed. But she has herself torn off and destroyed the signature and marked the paper 'void,' so that the will previously made is the only one that is valid."

"What do you mean?" cried Patsy, in amazement. "Isn't Kenneth to inherit Elmhurst, after all?"

"Me! Me inherit?" exclaimed the boy.

“That is what she promised me,” declared Patsy, while tears of indignation stood in her eyes, “I saw her sign it, myself, and if she has fooled me and destroyed the signature she’s nothing but an old fraud — and I’m glad she’s dead!”

With this she threw herself, sobbing, upon a sofa, and Louise and Beth, shocked to learn that after all their cousin had conspired against them, forebore any attempt to comfort her.

But Uncle John, fully as indignant as Patricia, came to her side and laid a hand tenderly on the girl’s head.

“Never mind, little one.” he said. “Jane was always cruel and treacherous by nature, and we might have expected she’d deceive her friends even in death. But you did the best you could, Patsy, dear, and it can’t be helped now.”

Meantime the lawyer had been fumbling in the box, and now drew out the genuine will.

“Give me your attention, please,” said he.

Patsy sat up and glared at him.

“I won’t take a cent of it!” she exclaimed.

“Be silent!” demanded the lawyer, sternly. “You have all, I believe, been told by Miss Merrick of the terms of this will, which is properly signed and attested. But it is my duty to read it again, from beginning to end, and I will do so.”

Uncle John smiled when his bequest was mentioned, and Beth frowned. Louise, however, showed no sign of disappointment. There had been a miserable scramble for this inheritance, she reflected, and she was glad the struggle was over. The five thousand dollars would come in handy, after all, and it was that much more than she had expected to have before she received Aunt Jane’s invitation. Perhaps she and her mother would use part of it for a European trip, if their future plans seemed to warrant it.

“As far as I am concerned,” said Patsy, defiantly, “you may as well tear up this will, too. I won’t have that shameful old woman’s money.”

“That is a matter the law does not allow you to decide,” returned the lawyer, calmly. “You will note the fact that I am the sole executor of the estate, and must care for it in your interests until you are of age. Then it will he turned over to you to do as you please with.”

“Can I give it away, if I want to?”

“Certainly. It is now yours without recourse, and although you cannot dispose of it until you are of legal age, there will be nothing then to prevent your transfering it to whomsoever you please. I called Miss Merrick’s attention to this fact when you refused to accept the legacy.”

“What did she say?”

“That you would be more wise then, and would probably decide to keep it.”

Patsy turned impulsively to the boy.

“Kenneth,” she said, “I faithfully promise, in the presence of these witnesses, to give you Elmhurst and all Aunt Jane’s money as soon as I am of age.”

“Good for you, Patsy,” said Uncle John.

The boy seemed bewildered.

“I don’t want the money — really I don’t!” he protested. “The five thousand she left me will be enough. But I’d like to live here at Elmhurst for a time, until it’s sold or some one else comes to live in the house!”

“It’s yours,” said Patsy, with a grand air. “You can live here forever.”

Mr. Watson seemed puzzled.

“If that is your wish, Miss Patricia,” bowing gravely in her direction, “I will see that it is carried out. Although I am, in this matter, your executor, I shall defer to your wishes as much as possible.”

“Thank you,” she said and then, after a moment’s reflection, she added: “Can’t you give to Louise and Beth the ten thousand dollars they were to have under the other will, instead of the five thousand each that this one gives them?”

“I will consider that matter,” he replied; “perhaps it can be arranged.”

Patsy’s cousins opened their eyes at this, and began to regard her with more friendly glances. To have ten thousand each instead of five would be a very nice thing, indeed, and Miss Patricia Doyle had evidently become a young lady whose friendship it would pay to cultivate. If she intended to throw away the inheritance, a portion of it might fall to their share.

They were expressing to Patsy their gratitude when old Donald suddenly appeared in the doorway and beckoned to Uncle John.

“Will you please come to see James, sir?” he asked. “The poor fellow’s dying.”

CHAPTER XXII.

JAMES TELLS A STRANGE STORY.

Uncle John followed the coachman up the stairs to the little room above the tool-house, where the old man had managed to crawl after old Sam had given him a vicious kick in the chest.

"Is he dead?" he asked.

"No, sir; but mortally hurt, I'm thinkin'. It must have happened while we were at the funeral."

He opened the door, outside which Susan and Oscar watched with frightened faces, and led John Merrick into the room.

James lay upon his bed with closed eyes. His shirt, above the breast, was reeking with blood.

"The doctor should be sent for," said Uncle John.

"He'll be here soon, for one of the stable boys rode to fetch him. But I thought you ought to know at once, sir."

"Quite right, Donald."

As they stood there the wounded man moved and opened his eyes, looking from one to the other of them wonderingly. Finally he smiled.

"Ah, it's Donald," he said.

"Yes, old friend," answered the coachman. "And this is Mr. John."

"Mr. John? Mr. John? I don't quite remember you, sir," with a slight shake of the gray head. "And Donald, lad, you've grown wonderful old, somehow."

"It's the years, Jeemes," was the reply. "The years make us all old, sooner or later."

The gardener seemed puzzled, and examined his companions more carefully. He did not seem to be suffering any pain. Finally he sighed.

"The dreams confuse me," he said, as if to explain something. "I can't always separate them, the dreams from the real. Have I been sick, Donald?"

"Yes, lad. You're sick now."

The gardener closed his eyes, and lay silent.

"Do you think he's sane?" whispered Uncle John.

"I do, sir. He's sane for the first time in years."

James looked at them again, and slowly raised his hand to wipe the damp from his forehead.

"About Master Tom," he said, falteringly. "Master Tom's dead, ain't he?"

"Yes, Jeemes."

"That was real, then, an' no dream. I mind it all, now — the shriek of the whistle, the crash, and the screams of the dying. Have I told you about it,

Donald?”

“No, lad.”

“It all happened before we knew it. I was on one side the car and Master Tom on the other. My side was on top, when I came to myself, and Master Tom was buried in the rubbish. God knows how I got him out, but I did. Donald, the poor master’s side was crushed in, and both legs splintered. I knew at once he was dying, when I carried him to the grass and laid him down; and he knew it, too. Yes, the master knew he was done; and him so young and happy, and just about to be married to — to — the name escapes me, lad!”

His voice sank to a low mumble, and he closed his eyes wearily.

The watchers at his side stood still and waited. It might be that death had overtaken the poor fellow. But no; he moved again, and opened his eyes, continuing his speech in a stronger tone.

“It was hard work to get the paper for Master Tom,” he said; “but he swore he must have it before he died. I ran all the way to the station house and back — a mile or more — and brought the paper and a pen and ink, besides. It was but a telegraph blank — all I could find. Naught but a telegraph blank, lad.”

Again his voice trailed away into a mumbling whisper, but now Uncle John and Donald looked into one another’s eyes with sudden interest.

“He mustn’t die yet!” said the little man; and the coachman leaned over the wounded form and said, distinctly:

“Yes, lad; I’m listening.”

“To be sure,” said James, brightening a bit. “So I held the paper for him, and the brakeman supported Master Tom’s poor body, and he wrote out the will as clear as may be.”

“The will!”

“Sure enough; Master Tom’s last will. Isn’t my name on it, too, where I signed it? And the conductor’s beside it, for the poor brakeman didn’t dare let him go? Of course. Who should sign the will with Master Tom but me — his old servant and friend? Am I right, Donald?”

“Yes, lad.”

“‘Now,’ says Master Tom, ‘take it to Lawyer Watson, James, and bid him care for it. And give my love to Jane — that’s the name, Donald; the one I thought I’d forgot — ’and now lay me back and let me die.’ His very words, Donald. And we laid him back and he died. And he died. Poor Master Tom. Poor, poor young Master. And him to — be married — in a — ”

“The paper, James!” cried Uncle John, recalling the dying man to the present. “What became of it?”

“Sir, I do not know you,” answered James, suspiciously. “The paper’s for Lawyer Watson. It’s he alone shall have it.”

“Here I am, James,” cried the lawyer, thrusting the others aside and advancing to the bed. “Give me the paper. Where is it? I am Lawyer Watson!”

The gardener laughed — a horrible, croaking laugh that ended with a gasp of pain.

“*You* Lawyer Watson?” he cried, a moment later, in taunting tones. “Why, you old fool, Si Watson’s as young as Master Tom — as young as I am! You — *you* Lawyer Watson! Ha, ha, ha!”

“Where is the paper?” demanded the lawyer fiercely.

James stared at him an instant, and then suddenly collapsed and fell back inert upon the bed.

“Have you heard all?” asked John Merrick, laying his hand on the lawyer’s shoulder.

“Yes; I followed you here as soon as I could. Tom Bradley made another will, as he lay dying. I must have it, Mr. Merrick.”

“Then you must find it yourself,” said Donald gravely, “for James is dead.”

The doctor, arriving a few minutes later, verified the statement. It was evident that the old gardener, for years insane, had been so influenced by Miss Merrick’s death that he had wandered into the stables where he received his death blow. When he regained consciousness the mania had vanished, and in a shadowy way he could remember and repeat that last scene of the tragedy that had deprived him of his reason. The story was logical enough, and both Mr. Watson and John Merrick believed it.

“Tom Bradley was a level-headed fellow until he fell in love with your sister,” said the lawyer to his companion. “But after that he would not listen to reason, and perhaps he had a premonition of his own sudden death, for he made a will bequeathing all he possessed to his sweetheart. I drew up the will myself, and argued against the folly of it; but he had his own way. Afterward, in the face of death, I believe he became more sensible, and altered his will.”

“Yet James’ story may all be the effect of a disordered mind,” said Uncle John.

“I do not think, so; but unless he has destroyed the paper in his madness, we shall he able to find it among his possessions.”

With this idea in mind, Mr. Watson ordered the servants to remove the gardener’s body to a room in the carriage-house, and as soon as this was done he set to work to search for the paper, assisted by John Merrick.

“It was a telegraph blank, he said.”

“Yes.”

“Then we cannot mistake it, if we find any papers at all,” declared the lawyer.

The most likely places in James’ room for anything to be hidden were a small closet, in which were shelves loaded with odds and ends, and an old clothes-chest that was concealed underneath the bed.

This last was first examined, but found to contain merely an assortment of old clothing. Having tossed these in a heap upon the floor the lawyer begun an examination of the closet, the shelves promising well because of several bundles of papers they contained.

While busy over these, he heard Uncle John say, quietly:

“I’ve got it.”

The lawyer bounded from the closet. The little man had been searching the pockets of the clothing taken from the chest, and from a faded velvet coat he drew out the telegraph blank.

“Is it the will?” asked the lawyer, eagerly.

“Read it yourself,” said Uncle John.

Mr. Watson put on his glasses.

“Yes; this is Tom Bradley’s handwriting, sure enough. The will is brief, but it will hold good in law. Listen: I bequeath to Jane Merrick, my affianced bride, the possession and use of my estate during the term of her life. On her death all such possessions, with their accrument, shall be transferred to my sister, Katherine Bradley, if she then survives, to have and to hold by her heirs and assignees forever. But should she die without issue previous to the death of Jane Merrick, I then appoint my friend and attorney, Silas Watson, to distribute the property among such organized and worthy charities as he may select.’ That is all.”

“Quite enough,” said Uncle John, nodding approval.

“And it is properly signed and witnessed. The estate is Kenneth’s, sir, after all, for he is the sole heir of his mother. Katherine Bradley Forbes. Hurrah!” ended the lawyer, waving the yellow paper above his head.

“Hurrah!” echoed Uncle John, gleefully; and the two men shook hands.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PATSY ADOPTS AN UNCLE.

Uncle John and Mr. Watson did not appear at dinner, being closeted in the former's room. This meal, however, was no longer a state function, being served by the old servants as a mere matter of routine. Indeed, the arrangements of the household had been considerably changed by the death of its mistress, and without any real head to direct them the servants were patiently awaiting the advent of a new master or mistress. It did not seem clear to them yet whether Miss Patricia or Lawyer Watson was to take charge of Elmhurst: but there were few tears shed for Jane Merrick, and the new regime could not fail to be an improvement over the last.

At dinner the young folks chatted together in a friendly and eager manner concerning the events of the day. They knew of old James' unfortunate end, but being unaware of its import gave it but passing attention. The main subject of conversation was Aunt Jane's surprising act in annulling her last will and forcing Patricia to accept the inheritance when she did not want it. Kenneth, being at his ease when alone with the three cousins, protested that it would not be right for Patsy to give him all the estate. But, as she was so generous, he would accept enough of his Uncle Tom's money to educate him as an artist and provide for himself an humble home. Louise and Beth, having at last full knowledge of their cousin's desire to increase their bequests, were openly very grateful for her good will; although secretly they could not fail to resent Patsy's choice of the boy as the proper heir of his uncle's fortune. The balance of power seemed to be in Patricia's hands, however; so it would be folly at this juncture to offend her.

Altogether, they were all better provided for than they had feared would be the case; so the little party spent a pleasant evening and separated early, Beth and Louise to go to their rooms and canvass quietly the events of the day, and the boy to take a long stroll through the country lanes to cool his bewildered brain. Patsy wrote a long letter to the major, telling him she would be home in three days, and then she went to bed and slept peacefully.

After breakfast they were all again summoned to the drawing-room, to their great surprise. Lawyer Watson and Uncle John were there, looking as grave as the important occasion demanded, and the former at once proceeded to relate the scene in James' room, his story of the death of Thomas Bradley, and the subsequent finding of the will.

"This will, which has just been recovered," continued the lawyer, impressively, "was made subsequent to the one under which Jane Merrick inherited, and therefore supercedes it. Miss Jane had, as you perceive, a

perfect right to the use of the estate during her lifetime, but no right whatever to will a penny of it to anyone. Mr. Bradley having provided for that most fully. For this reason the will I read to you yesterday is of no effect, and Kenneth Forbes inherits from his uncle, through his mother, all of the estate."

Blank looks followed Mr. Watson's statement.

"Good-by to my five thousand," said Uncle John, with his chuckling laugh. "But I'm much obliged to Jane, nevertheless."

"Don't we get anything at all?" asked Beth, with quivering lip.

"No, my dear," answered the lawyer, gently. "Your aunt owned nothing to give you."

Patsy laughed. She felt wonderfully relieved.

"Wasn't I the grand lady, though, with all the fortune I never had?" she cried merrily. "But 'twas really fine to be rich for a day, and toss the money around as if I didn't have to dress ten heads of hair in ten hours to earn my bread and butter."

Louise smiled.

"It was all a great farce," she said. "I shall take the afternoon train to the city. What an old fraud our dear Aunt Jane was! And how foolish of me to return her hundred dollar check."

"I used mine," said Beth, bitterly. "It's all I'll ever get, it seems." And then the thought of the Professor and his debts overcame her and she burst, into tears.

The boy sat doubled within his chair, so overcome by the extraordinary fortune that had overtaken him that he could not speak, nor think even clearly as yet.

Patsy tried to comfort Beth.

"Never mind, dear," said she. "We're no worse off than before we came, are we? And we've had a nice vacation. Let's forget all disappointments and be grateful to Aunt Jane's memory. As far as she knew, she tried to be good to us."

"I'm going home today," said Beth, angrily drying her eyes.

"We'll all go home," said Patsy, cheerfully.

"For my part," remarked Uncle John, in a grave voice, "I have no home."

Patsy ran up and put her arm around his neck.

"Poor Uncle John!" she cried. "Why, you're worse off than any of us. What's going to become of you, I wonder?"

"I'm wondering that myself," said the little man, meekly.

"Ah! You can stay here," said the boy, suddenly arousing from his apathy.

"No," replied Uncle John, "the Merricks are out of Elmhurst now, and it returns to its rightful owners. You owe me nothing, my lad."

“But I like you,” said Kenneth, “and you’re old and homeless. Stay at Elmhurst, and you shall always be welcome.”

Uncle John seemed greatly affected, and wrung the boy’s hand earnestly. But he shook his head.

“I’ve wandered all my life,” he said. “I can wander yet.”

“See here,” exclaimed Patsy. “We’re all three your nieces, and we’ll take care of you between us. Won’t we, girls?”

Louise smiled rather scornfully, and Beth scowled.

“My mother and I live so simply in our little flat,” said one, “that we really haven’t extra room to keep a cat. But we shall be glad to assist Uncle John as far as we are able.”

“Father can hardly support his own family,” said the other; “but I will talk to my mother about Uncle John when I get home, and see what she says.”

“Oh, you don’t need to, indeed!” cried Patsy, in great indignation. “Uncle John is my dear mother’s brother, and he’s to come and live with the Major and me, as long as he cares to. There’s room and to spare, Uncle,” turning to him and clasping his hand, “and a joyful welcome into the bargain. No, no! say nothing at all, sir! Come you shall, if I have to drag you; and if you act naughty I’ll send for the Major to punish you!”

Uncle John’s eyes were moist. He looked on Patsy most affectionately and cast a wink at Lawyer Watson, who stood silently by.

“Thank you, my dear,” said he; “but where’s the money to come from?”

“Money? Bah!” she said. “Doesn’t the Major earn a heap with his bookkeeping, and haven’t I had a raise lately? Why, we’ll be as snug and contented as pigs in clover. Can you get ready to come with me today, Uncle John?”

“Yes,” he said slowly. “I’ll be ready, Patsy.”

So the exodus from Elmhurst took place that very day, and Beth travelled in one direction, while Louise, Patsy and Uncle John took the train for New York. Louise had a seat in the parlor car, but Patsy laughed at such extravagance.

“It’s so much easier than walking,” she said to Uncle John, “that the common car is good enough,” and the old man readily agreed with her.

Kenneth and Mr. Watson came to the station to see them off, and they parted with many mutual expressions of friendship and good will. Louise, especially, pressed an urgent invitation upon the new master of Elmhurst to visit her mother in New York, and he said he hoped to see all the girls again. They were really like cousins to him, by this time. And after they were all gone he rode home on Nora’s back quite disconsolate, in spite of his wonderful fortune.

The lawyer, who had consented to stay at the mansion for a time, that the boy might not be lonely, had already mapped put a plan for the young heir's advancement. As he rode beside Kenneth he said:

"You ought to travel, and visit the art centers of Europe, and I shall try to find a competent tutor to go with you."

"Can't you go yourself?" asked the boy.

The lawyer hesitated.

"I'm getting old, and my clients are few and unimportant, aside from the Elmhurst interests," he said. "Perhaps I can manage to go abroad with you."

"I'd like that," declared the boy. "And we'd stop in New York, wouldn't we, for a time?"

"Of course. Do you want to visit New York especially?"

"Yes."

"It's rather a stupid city," said the lawyer, doubtfully.

"That may be," answered the boy. "But Patsy will be there, you know."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME AGAIN.

The Major was at the station to meet them. Uncle John had shyly suggested a telegram, and Patsy had decided they could stand the expense for the pleasure of seeing the old Dad an hour sooner.

The girl caught sight of him outside the gates, his face red and beaming as a poppy in bloom and his snowy moustache bristling with eagerness. At once she dropped her bundles and flew to the Major's arms, leaving the little man in her wake to rescue her belongings and follow after.

He could hardly see Patsy at all, the Major wrapped her in such an ample embrace; but bye and bye she escaped to get her breath, and then her eyes fell upon the meek form holding her bundles.

"Oh, Dad," she cried, "here's Uncle John, who has come to live with us; and if you don't love him as much as I do I'll make your life miserable!"

"On which account," said the Major, grasping the little man's hand most cordially, "I'll love Uncle John like my own brother. And surely," he added, his voice falling tenderly, "my dear Violet's brother must be my own. Welcome, sir, now and always, to our little home. It's modest, sir; but wherever Patsy is the sun is sure to shine."

"I can believe that," said Uncle John, with a nod and smile.

They boarded a car for the long ride up town, and as soon as they were seated Patsy demanded the story of the Major's adventures with his colonel, and the old fellow rattled away with the eagerness of a boy, telling every detail in the most whimsical manner, and finding something humorous in every incident.

"Oh, but it was grand, Patsy!" he exclaimed, "and the Colonel wept on my neck when we parted and stained the collar of me best coat, and he give me a bottle of whiskey that would make a teetotaler roll his eyes in ecstacy. 'Twas the time of my life."

"And you're a dozen years younger, Major!" she cried, laughing, "and fit to dig into work like a pig in clover."

His face grew grave.

"But how about the money, Patsy dear?" he asked. "Did you get nothing out of Jane Merrick's estate?"

"Not a nickle, Dad. 'Twas the best joke you ever knew. I fought with Aunt Jane like a pirate and it quite won her heart. When she died she left me all she had in the world."

"Look at that, now!" said the Major, wonderingly.

"Which turned out to be nothing at all," continued Patsy. "For another

will was found, made by Mr. Thomas Bradley, which gave the money to his own nephew after Aunt Jane died. Did you ever?"

"Wonderful!" said the Major, with a sigh.

"So I was rich for half a day, and then poor as ever."

"It didn't hurt you, did it?" asked the Major. "You weren't vexed with disappointment, were you, Patsy?"

"Not at all, Daddy."

"Then don't mind it, child. Like as not the money would be the ruination of us all. Eh, sir?" appealing to Uncle John.

"To be sure," said the little man. "Jane left five thousand to me, also, which I didn't get. But I'm not sorry at all."

"Quite right, sir," approved the Major, sympathetically, "although it's easier not to expect anything at all, than to set your heart on a thing and then not get it. In your case, it won't matter. Our house is yours, and there's plenty and to spare."

"Thank you," said Uncle John, his face grave but his eyes merry.

"Oh, Major!" cried Patsy, suddenly. "There's Danny Reeves's restaurant. Let's get off and have our dinner now; I'm as hungry as a bear."

So they stopped the car and descended, lugging all the parcels into the little restaurant, where they were piled into a chair while the proprietor and the waiters all gathered around Patsy to welcome her home.

My, how her eyes sparkled! She fairly danced for joy, and ordered the dinner with reckless disregard of the bill.

"Ah, but it's good to be back," said the little Bohemian, gleefully. "The big house at Elmhurst was grand and stately, Major, but there wasn't an ounce of love in the cupboard."

"Wasn't I there. Patsy?" asked Uncle John, reproachfully.

"True, but now you're here; and our love, Uncle, has nothing to do with Elmhurst. I'll bet a penny you liked it as little as I did."

"You'd win," admitted the little man.

"And now," said the girl to the smiling waiter, "a bottle of red California wine for Uncle John and the Major, and two real cigars. We'll be merry tonight if it bankrupts the Doyle family entirely."

But, after a merry meal and a good one, there was no bill at all when it was called for.

Danny Reeves himself came instead, and made a nice little speech, saying that Patsy had always brought good luck to the place, and this dinner was his treat to welcome her home.

So the Major thanked him with gracious dignity and Patsy kissed Danny on his right cheek, and then they went away happy and content to find the

little rooms up the second flight of the old tenement.

"It's no palace," said Patsy, entering to throw down the bundles as soon as the Major unlocked the door, "but there's a cricket in the hearth, and it's your home, Uncle John, as well as ours."

Uncle John looked around curiously. The place was so plain after the comparative luxury of Elmhurst, and especially of the rose chamber Patsy had occupied, that the old man could not fail to marvel at the girl's ecstatic joy to find herself in the old tenement again. There was one good sized living-room, with an ancient rag-carpet partially covering the floor, a sheet-iron stove, a sofa, a table and three or four old-fashioned chairs that had probably come from a second-hand dealer.

Opening from this were two closet-like rooms containing each a bed and a chair, with a wash-basin on a bracket shelf. On the wails were a few colored prints from the Sunday newspapers and one large and fine photograph of a grizzled old soldier that Uncle John at once decided must represent "the Colonel."

Having noted these details, Patsy's uncle smoothed back his stubby gray hair with a reflective and half puzzled gesture.

"It's cozy enough, my child; and I thank you for my welcome," said he. "But may I enquire where on earth you expect to stow me in this rather limited establishment?"

"Where? Have you no eyes, then?" she asked, in astonishment. "It's the finest sofa in the world, Uncle John, and you'll sleep there like a top, with the dear Colonel's own picture looking down at you to keep you safe and give you happy dreams. Where, indeed!"

"Ah; I see," said Uncle John.

"And you can wash in my chamber," added the Major, with a grand air, "and hang your clothes on the spare hooks behind my door."

"I haven't many," said Uncle John, looking thoughtfully at his red bundle.

The Major coughed and turned the lamp a little higher.

"You'll find the air fine, and the neighborhood respectable," he said, to turn the subject. "Our modest apartments are cool in summer and warm in winter, and remarkably reasonable in price. Patsy gets our breakfast on the stove yonder, and we buy our lunches down town, where we work, and then dine at Danny Reeves's place. A model home, sir, and a happy one, as I hope you'll find it."

"I'm sure to be happy here," said Uncle John, taking out his pipe.

"May I smoke?"

"Of course; but don't spoil the lace curtains, dear," answered Patsy, mischievously. And then, turning to her father, she exclaimed: "Oh, daddy!

What will the Uncle do all the day while we're at work?"

"That's as he may choose," said the Major, courteously.

"Couldn't we get him a job?" asked Patsy, wistfully. "Not where there'll be much work, you know, for the Uncle is old. But just to keep him out of mischief, and busy. He can't hang around all day and be happy, I suppose."

"I'll look around," answered the Major, briskly, as if such a "job" was the easiest thing in the world to procure. "And meantime — "

"Meantime," said Uncle John, smiling at them, "I'll look around myself."

"To be sure," agreed the Major. "Between the two of us and Patsy, we ought to have no trouble at all."

There was a moment of thoughtful silence after this, and then Patsy said:

"You know it won't matter, Uncle John, if you don't work. There'll easy be enough for all, with the Major's wages and my own."

"By the bye," added the Major, "if you have any money about you, which is just possible, sir, of course, you'd better turn it over to Patsy to keep, and let her make you an allowance. That's the way I do — it's very satisfactory."

"The Major's extravagant," exclaimed Patsy; "and if he has money he wants to treat every man he meets."

Uncle John shook his head, reproachfully, at the Major.

"A very bad habit, sir," he said.

"I acknowledge it, Mr. Merrick," responded the Major. "But Patsy is fast curing me. And, after all, it's a wicked city to be carrying a fat pocketbook around in, as I've often observed."

"My pocketbook is not exactly fat," remarked Uncle John.

"But you've money, sir, for I marked you squandering it on the train," said Patsy, severely. "So out with it, and we'll count up, and see how much of an allowance I can make you 'till you get the job."

Uncle John laughed and drew his chair up to the table. Then he emptied his trousers' pockets upon the cloth, and Patsy gravely separated the keys and jackknife from the coins and proceeded to count the money.

"Seven dollars and forty-two cents," she announced. "Any more?"

Uncle John hesitated a moment, and then drew from an inner pocket of his coat a thin wallet. From this, when she had received it from his hand, the girl abstracted two ten and one five dollar bills, all crisp and new.

"Good gracious!" she cried, delightedly. "All this wealth, and you pleading poverty?"

"I never said I was a pauper," returned Uncle John, complacently.

"You couldn't, and be truthful, sir," declared the girl. "Why, this will last for ages, and I'll put it away safe and be liberal with your allowance. Let me see," pushing the coins about with her slender fingers, "you just keep the

forty-two cents, Uncle John. It'll do for car-fare and a bit of lunch now and then, and when you get broke you can come to me."

"He smokes," observed the Major, significantly.

"Bah! a pipe," said Patsy. "And Bull Durham is only five cents a bag, and a bag ought to last a week. And every Saturday night, sir, you shall have a cigar after dinner, with the Major. It's it our regular practice."

"Thank you, Patsy," said Uncle John, meekly, and gathered up his forty-two cents.

"You've now a home, and a manager, sir, with money in the bank of Patsy & Company, Limited," announced the Major. "You ought to be very contented, sir."

"I am," replied Uncle John.

CHAPTER XXV

UNCLE JOHN ACTS QUEERLY.

When Patsy and the Major had both departed for work on Monday morning Uncle John boarded a car and rode downtown also. He might have accompanied them part of the way, but feared Patsey might think him extravagant if she found him so soon breaking into the working fund of forty-two cents, which she charged him to be careful of.

He seemed to be in no hurry, for it was early yet, and few of the lower Broadway establishments were open. To pass the time he turned into a small restaurant and had coffee and a plate of cakes, in spite of the fact that Patsy had so recently prepared coffee over the sheet-iron stove and brought some hot buns from a near-by bakery. He was not especially hungry; but in sipping the coffee and nibbling the cakes he passed the best part of an hour.

He smiled when he paid out twenty-five cents of his slender store for the refreshment. With five cents for car-fare he had now but twelve cents left of the forty-two Patsy had given him! Talk about the Major's extravagance: it could not be compared to Uncle John's.

Another hour was spent in looking in at the shop windows. Then, suddenly noting the time. Uncle John started down the street at a swinging pace, and presently paused before a building upon which was a sign, reading: "Isham, Marvin & Co., Bankers and Brokers." A prosperous looking place, it seemed, with a host of clerks busily working in the various departments. Uncle John walked in, although the uniformed official at the door eyed him suspiciously.

"Mr. Marvin in?" he inquired, pleasantly.

"Not arrived yet," said the official, who wore a big star upon his breast.

"I'll wait," announced Uncle John, and sat down upon a leather-covered bench.

The official strutted up and down, watching the customers who entered the bank or departed, and keeping a sharp watch on the little man upon the bench.

Another hour passed.

Presently Uncle John jumped up and approached the official.

"Hasn't Mr. Marvin arrived yet?" he enquired, sharply.

"An hour ago," was the reply.

"Then why didn't you let me know? I want to see him."

"He's busy mornings. Has to look over the mail. He can't see you yet."

"Well, he will see me, and right away. Tell him John Merrick is here."

"Your card, sir."

“I haven’t any. My name will do.”

The official hesitated, and glanced at the little man’s seedy garb and countryfied air. But something in the angry glance of the shrewd eye made him fear he had made a mistake. He opened a small door and disappeared.

In a moment the door burst open to allow egress to a big, red-bearded man in his shirtsleeves, who glanced around briefly and then rushed at Uncle John and shook both his hands cordially.

“My dear Mr. Merrick!” he exclaimed, “I’m delighted and honored to see you here. Come to my room at once. A great surprise and pleasure, sir! Thomas, I’m engaged!”

This last was directed at the head of the amazed porter, who, as the door slammed in his face, nodded solemnly and remarked:

“Fooled ag’in, and I might ‘a’ known it. Drat these ‘ere billionaires!
Why don’t they dress like decent people?”

Uncle John had been advised by Patsy where to go for a good cheap luncheon; but he did not heed her admonition. Instead, he rode in a carriage beside the banker to a splendid club, where he was served with the finest dishes the chef could provide on short notice. Moreover, Mr. Marvin introduced him to several substantial gentlemen as “Mr. John Merrick, of Portland”; and each one bowed profoundly and declared he was “highly honored.”

Yet Uncle John seemed in no way elated by this reception. He retained his simple manner, although his face was more grave than Patsy had often seen it; and he talked with easy familiarity of preferred stocks and amalgamated interests and invested, securities and many other queer things that the banker seemed to understand fully and to listen to with respectful deference.

Then they returned to the bank for another long session together, and there was quite an eager bustle among the clerks as they stretched their necks to get a glimpse of Mr. Marvin’s companion.

“It’s John Merrick” passed from mouth to mouth, and the uniformed official strutted from one window to another, saying:

“I showed him in myself. And he came into the bank as quiet like as anyone else would.”

But he didn’t go away quietly, you may be sure. Mr. Marvin and Mr. Isham both escorted their famous client to the door, where the Marvin carriage had been ordered to be in readiness for Mr. Merrick’s service.

But Uncle John waived it aside disdainfully.

“I’ll walk,” he said. “There are some other errands to attend to.”

So they shook his hand and reminded him of a future appointment and let him go his way. In a moment the great Broadway crowd had swallowed up

John Merrick, and five minutes later he was thoughtfully gazing into a shop window again.

By and bye he bethought himself of the time, and took a cab uptown. He had more than the twelve cents in his pocket, now, besides the check book which was carefully hidden away in an inside pocket; so the cost of the cab did not worry him. He dismissed the vehicle near an uptown corner and started to walk hastily toward Danny Reeves's restaurant, a block away, Patsy was standing in the doorway, anxiously watching for him.

"Oh, Uncle John," she cried, as he strolled "I've been really worried about you; it's such a big city, and you a stranger. Do you know you're ten minutes late?"

"I'm sorry," he said, humbly; "but it's a long way here from downtown."

"Didn't you take a car?"

"No, my dear."

"Why, you foolish old Uncle! Come in at once. The Major has been terribly excited over you, and swore you should not be allowed to wander through the streets without someone to look after you. But what could we do?"

"I'm all right," declared Uncle John, cordially shaking hands with Patsy's father. "Have you had a good day?"

"Fine," said the Major. "They'd missed me at the office, and were glad to have me back. And what do you think? I've got a raise."

"Really?" said Uncle John, seeing it was expected of him.

"For a fact. It's Patsy's doing, I've no doubt. She wheedled the firm into giving me a vacation, and now they're to pay me twelve a week instead of ten."

"Is that enough?" asked Uncle John, doubtfully.

"More than enough, sir. I'm getting old, and can't earn as much as a younger man. But I'm pretty tough, and mean to hold onto that twelve a week as long as possible."

"What pay do you get, Patsy?" asked Uncle John.

"Almost as much as Daddy. We're dreadfully rich, Uncle John; so you needn't worry if you don't strike a job yourself all at once."

"Any luck today, sir," asked the Major, tucking a napkin under his chin and beginning on the soup.

Uncle John shook his head.

"Of course not," said Patsy, quickly. "It's too early, as yet. Don't hurry, Uncle John. Except that it'll keep you busy, there's no need for you to work at all."

"You're older than I am," suggested the Major, "and that makes it harder

to break in. But there's no hurry, as Patsy says."

Uncle John did not seem to be worrying over his idleness. He kept on questioning his brother-in-law and his niece about their labors, and afterward related to them the sights he had seen in the shop windows. Of course he could not eat much after the feast he had had at luncheon, and this disturbed Patsy a little. She insisted he was tired, and carried her men away to the tenement rooms as soon as possible, where she installed them at the table to play cribbage until bed-time.

The next day Uncle John seemed to be busy enough, although of course Patsy could not know what he was doing. He visited a real-estate office, for one thing, and then telephoned Isham, Marvin & Co. and issued a string of orders in a voice not nearly so meek and mild as it was when he was in Patsy's presence. Whatever he had undertaken required time, for all during the week he left the tenement directly the Major and his daughter had gone to the city, and bustled about until it was time to meet them for dinner at the restaurant. But he was happy and in good spirits and enjoyed his evening game of cribbage with the Major exceedingly.

"You must be nearly bankrupt, by this time," said Patsy on Tuesday evening.

"It's an expensive city to live in," sighed Uncle John.

She gave him fifty cents of his money, then, and on Friday fifty cents more.

"After a time," she said, "you'll manage to get along with less. It's always harder to economize at first."

"How about the bills?" he inquired. "Don't I pay my share of them?"

"Your expenses are nothing at all," declared the Major, with a wave of his hand.

"But my dinners at Danny Reeves' place must cost a lot," protested Uncle John.

"Surely not; Patsy has managed all that for a trifle, and the pleasure of your company more than repays us for the bit of expense."

On Saturday night there was a pint of red wine for the two men, and then the weekly cigars were brought — very inexpensive ones, to be sure. The first whiff he took made Uncle John cough; but the Major smoked so gracefully and with such evident pleasure that his brother-in-law clung manfully to the cigar, and succeeded in consuming it to the end.

"Tomorrow is the day of rest," announced Patsy, "so we'll all go for a nice walk in the parks after breakfast."

"And we sleep 'till eight o'clock, don't we, Patsy?" asked the Major.

"Of course."

“And the eggs for breakfast?”

“I’ve bought them already, three for a nickle. You don’t care for more than one, do you, Uncle John?”

“No, my dear.”

“It’s our Sunday morning extra — an egg apiece. The Major is so fond of them.”

“And so am I, Patsy.”

“And now we’ll have our cribbage and get to bed early. Heigho! but Sunday’s a great day for folks that work.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

A BUNCH OF KEYS.

Uncle John did not sleep well. Perhaps he had a guilty conscience. Anyway, he tossed about a good deal on the sofa-bed in the living-room, and wore himself out to such an extent that when Patsy got up at eight o'clock her uncle had fallen into his first sound sleep.

She never disturbed him until she had made the fire and cooked the coffee and boiled the three white eggs. By this time the Major was dressed and shaved, and he aroused Uncle John and bade him hurry into the closet and make his toilet, "so that Patsy could put the house to rights."

Uncle John obeyed eagerly, and was ready as soon as the Major had brought the smoking rolls from the bakery. Ah, but it was a merry breakfast; and a delicious one into the bargain. Uncle John seemed hungry, and looked at the empty egg-shells regretfully.

"Next time, Patsy," he said, "you must buy six eggs."

"Look at his recklessness!" cried Patsy, laughing. "You're just as bad as the Major, every bit. If you men hadn't me for a guardian you'd be in the poorhouse in a month."

"But we have you, my dear," said Uncle John, smiling into her dancing eyes; "so we won't complain at one egg instead of two."

Just then someone pounded on the door, and the girl ran to open it. There was a messenger boy outside, looking smart and neat in his blue-and-gold uniform, and he touched his cap politely to the girl.

"Miss Patricia Doyle?"

"That's me."

"A parcel for you. Sign here, please."

Patsy signed, bothering her head the while to know what the little package contained and who could have sent it. Then the boy was gone, and she came back slowly to the breakfast table, with the thing in her hand.

"What is it, Patsy?" asked the Major, curiously.

"I'm dying to know, myself," said the girl.

Uncle John finished his coffee, looking unconcerned.

"A good way is to open it," remarked the Major.

It was a very neat package, wrapped in fine paper and sealed with red wax. Patsy turned it over once or twice, and then broke the wax and untied the cord.

A bunch of keys fell out first — seven of them, strung on a purple ribbon — and then a flat, impressive looking letter was discovered.

The Major stared open-mouthed. Uncle John leaned back in his chair and

watched the girl's face.

"There's a mistake," said Patsy, quite bewildered. Then she read her name upon the wrapper, quite plainly written, and shook her head. "It's for me, all right. But what does it mean?"

"Why not read the letter?" suggested the Major.

So she opened the big envelope and unfolded the stiff paper and read as follows:

"Miss Patricia Doyle, Becker's Flats, Duggan Street, New York. Dear Miss Doyle: An esteemed client of our house, who desires to remain unknown, has placed at your disposal the furnished apartments 'D,' at 3708 Willing Square, for the period of three years, or as long thereafter as you may care to retain them. Our client begs you to consider everything the apartments contain as your own, and to use it freely as it may please you. All rentals and rates are paid in advance, and you are expected to take possession at once. Moreover, our firm is commanded to serve you in any and every way you may require, and it will be our greatest pleasure to be of use to you. The keys to the apartments are enclosed herewith.

"Most respectfully,

"Isham, Marvin & Co."

Having read this to the end, in a weak voice and with many pauses, Miss Patricia Doyle sat down in her chair with strange abruptness and stared blankly at her father. The Major stared back. So did Uncle John, when her eyes roved toward his face.

Patricia turned the keys over, and jingled them. Then she referred to the letter again.

"Apartments D, at 3708 Willing Square. Where's that?"

The Major shook his head. So did Uncle John.

"Might look in a directory" suggested the latter, uncertainly.

"Of course," added the Major.

"But what does it all mean?" demanded Patsy, with sudden fierceness. "Is it a joke? Isham, Marvin & Co., the great bankers! What do I know of them, or they of me?"

"That isn't the point," observed the Major, reflectively. "Who's their unknown and mysterious client? That's the question."

"To be sure," said Uncle John. "They're only the agents. You must have a fairy godmother, Patsy."

She laughed at the idea, and shook her head.

"They don't exist in these days, Uncle John. But the whole thing must be a joke, and nothing more."

"We'll discover that," asserted the Major, shrewdly scrutinizing the letter,

which he had taken from Patsy's hands. "It surely looks genuine enough, on the face of it. I've seen the bank letter-head before, and this is no forgery, you can take my word. Get your things on, Patsy. Instead of walking in the park we'll hunt up Willing Square, and we'll take the keys with us."

"A very good idea," said Uncle John. "I'd like to go with you, if I may."

"Of course you may," answered the girl. "You're one of the family now, Uncle John, and you must help us to unravel the mystery."

The Major took off his carpet slippers and pulled on his boots, while Patricia was getting ready for the walk. Uncle John wandered around the room aimlessly for a time, and then took off his black tie and put on the white one.

Patsy noticed this, when she came out of her closet, and laughed merrily.

"You mustn't be getting excited, Uncle John, until we see how this wonderful adventure turns out." she said. "But I really must wash and iron that necktie for you, if you're going to wear it on Sundays."

"Not a bad idea," said the Major. "But come, are we all ready?"

They walked down the rickety steps very gravely and sedately, Patsy jingling the keys as they went, and made their way to the corner drug store, where the Major searched in the directory for Willing Square.

To his surprise it proved to be only a few blocks away.

"But it's in the dead swell neighborhood," he explained, "where I have no occasion to visit. We can walk it in five minutes."

Patsy hesitated.

"Really, it's no use going, Dad," she protested. "It isn't in reason that I'd have a place presented me in a dead swell neighborhood. Now, is it?"

"We'll have to go, just the same," said Uncle John. "I couldn't sleep a wink tonight if we didn't find out what this all means."

"True enough," agreed the Major. "Come along, Patsy; it's this way."

Willing Square was not very big, but it was beautiful with flowers and well tended and 3708 proved to be a handsome building with a white marble front, situated directly on a corner. The Major examined it critically from the sidewalk, and decided it contained six suites of apartments, three on each side.

"D must be the second floor to the right." he said, "and that's a fine location, sure enough."

A porter appeared at the front door, which stood open, and examined the group upon the sidewalk with evident curiosity.

Patsy walked up to him, and ignoring the big gold figures over the entrance she enquired:

"Is this 3708 Willing Square?"

“Yes, Miss,” answered the porter; “are you Miss Doyle?”

“I am,” she answered, surprised.

“One flight up, Miss, and turn to the right,” he continued, promptly; and then he winked over the girl’s head at Uncle John, who frowned so terribly that the man drew aside and disappeared abruptly. The Major and Patsy were staring at one another, however, and did not see this by-play.

“Let’s go up,” said the Major, in a husky voice, and proceeded to mount the stairs.

Patsy followed close behind, and then came Uncle John. One flight up they paused at a door marked “D”, upon the panel of which was a rack bearing a card printed with the word “Doyle.”

“Well, well!” gasped the Major. “Who’d have thought it, at all at all!”

Patsy, with trembling fingers, put a key in the lock, and after one or two efforts opened the door.

The sun was shining brilliantly into a tiny reception hall, furnished most luxuriously.

The Major placed his hat on the rack, and Uncle John followed suit.

No one spoke a word as they marched in humble procession into the living-room, their feet pressing without sound into the thick rugs. Everything here was fresh and new, but selected with excellent taste and careful attention to detail. Not a thing; was lacking, from the pretty upright piano to the enameled clock ticking upon the mantel. The dining-room was a picture, indeed, with stained-glass windows casting their soft lights through the draperies and the side-board shining with silver and glass. There was a cellarette in one corner, the Major noticed, and it was well stocked.

Beyond was a pantry with well filled shelves and then the kitchen — this last filled with every article that could possibly be needed. In a store-room were enough provisions to stock a grocery-store and Patsy noted with amazement that there was ice in the refrigerator, with cream and milk and butter cooling beside it.

They felt now as if they were intruding in some fairy domain. It was all exquisite, though rather tiny; but such luxury was as far removed from the dingy rooms they had occupied as could well be imagined. The Major coughed and ahemmed continually; Patsy ah’d and oh’d and seemed half frightened; Uncle John walked after them silently, but with a pleased smile that was almost childish upon his round and rugged face.

Across the hall were three chambers, each with a separate bath, while one had a pretty dressing-room added.

“This will be Patsy’s room,” said the Major, with a vast amount of dignity.

“Of course,” said Uncle John. “The pins on the cushion spell ‘Patricia,’ don’t they?”

“So they do!” cried Patsy, greatly delighted.

“And this room,” continued the Major, passing into the next, “will be mine. There are fine battle-scenes on the wall; and I declare, there’s just the place for the colonel’s photograph over the dresser!”

“Cigars, too,” said Patsy, opening a little cabinet; “but ‘twill be a shame to smoke in this palace.”

“Then I won’t live here!” declared the Major, stoutly, but no one heeded him.

“Here is Uncle John’s room,” exclaimed the girl, entering the third chamber.

“Mine?” enquired Uncle John in mild surprise.

“Sure, sir; you’re one of the family, and I’m glad it’s as good as the Major’s, every bit.”

Uncle John’s eyes twinkled.

“I hope the bed is soft,” he remarked, pressing it critically.

“It’s as good as the old sofa, any day,” said Patsy, indignantly.

Just then a bell tinkled, and after looking at one another in silent consternation for a moment, the Major tiptoed stealthily to the front door, followed by the others.

“What’ll we do?” asked Patsy, in distress.

“Better open it,” suggested Uncle John, calmly.

The Major did so, and there was a little maid bowing and smiling outside. She entered at once, closing the door behind her, and bowed again.

“This is my new mistress, I suppose,” she said, looking at Patsy. “I am your servant, Miss Patricia.”

Patsy gasped and stared at her. The maid was not much older than she was, but she looked pleasant and intelligent and in keeping with the rooms. She wore a gray dress with white collar and white apron and cap, and seemed so dainty and sweet that the Major and Uncle John approved her at once.

Patsy sat down, from sheer lack of strength to stand up.

“Who hired you, then?” she asked.

“A gentleman from the bank,” was the reply. “I’m Mary, if you please, Miss. And my wages are all arranged for in advance, so there will be nothing for you to pay,” said the little maid.

“Can you cook?” asked Patsy, curiously.

“Yes, Miss,” with a smile. “The dinner will be ready at one o’clock.”

“Oh; you’ve been here before, then?”

“Two days, Miss, getting ready for you.”

“And where will you sleep?”

“I’ve a little room beyond the kitchen. Didn’t you see it, Miss Patricia?”

“No, Mary.”

“Anything more at present, Miss Patricia?”

“No, Mary.”

The maid bowed again, and disappeared toward the kitchen, leaving an awe-struck group behind her.

The Major whistled softly. Uncle John seemed quite unconcerned. Patsy took out her handkerchief. The tears *would* come in spite of her efforts.

“I — I — I’m going to have a good cry,” she sobbed, and rushed into the living-room to throw herself flat upon the divan.

“It’s all right,” said the Major, answering Uncle John’s startled look; “the cry will do her good. I’ve half a mind to join her myself.”

But he didn’t. He followed Uncle John into the tatter’s room and smoked one of the newly-discovered cigars while the elder man lay back in an easy chair and silently puffed his pipe.

By and bye Patsy joined them, no longer crying but radiant with glee.

“Tell me, Daddy,” said she, perching on the arm of the Major’s chair, “who gave me all this, do you think?”

“Not me,” answered the Major, positively. “I couldn’t do it on twelve a week, anyhow at all.”

“And you robbed me of all my money when I came to town,” said Uncle John.

“Stop joking,” said the girl. “There’s no doubt this place is intended for us, is there?”

“None at all,” declared the Major. “It’s ours for three years, and not a penny to pay.”

“Well, then, do you think it’s Kenneth?”

The Major shook his head.

“I don’t know the lad.” he said, “and he might be equal to it, although I doubt it. But he can’t touch his money till he comes of age, and it isn’t likely his lawyer guardian would allow such extravagances.”

“Then who can it be?”

“I can’t imagine.”

“It doesn’t seem to matter,” remarked Uncle John, lighting a fresh pipe. “You’re not supposed to ask questions, I take it, but to enjoy your new home as much as you can.”

“Ex — actly!” agreed the Major.

“I’ve been thinking,” continued Uncle John, “that I’m not exactly fit for

all this style, Patsy. I'll have to get a new suit of clothes to match my new quarters. Will you give me back ten dollars of that money to buy 'em with?"

"I suppose I'll have to," she answered, thoughtfully.

"We'll have to go back to Becker's flats to pack up our traps," said the Major, "so we might as well go now."

"I hate to leave here for a single moment," replied the girl.

"Why?"

"I'm afraid it will all disappear again."

"Nonsense!" said Uncle John. "For my part, I haven't any traps, so I'll stay here and guard the treasure till you return."

"Dinner is served, Miss Patricia," said the small maid, appearing in the doorway.

"Then let's dine!" cried Patsy, clapping her hands gleefully; "and afterward the Major and I will make our last visit to Becker's flats."

CHAPTER XXVII.

LOUISE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Uncle John did not stay to guard the treasure, after all, for he knew very well it would not disappear.

As soon as Patsy and the Major had departed for Becker's flats, he took his own hat from the rack and walked away to hunt up another niece, Miss Louise Merrick, whose address he had casually obtained from Patsy a day or two before.

It was near by, and he soon found the place — a pretty flat in a fashionable building, although not so exclusive a residence district as Willing Square.

Up three flights he rode in the elevator, and then rang softly at the door which here the card of Mrs. Merrick.

A maid opened it and looked at him enquiringly.

"Are the ladies in?" he asked.

"I'll see. Your card, sir?"

"I haven't any."

She half closed the door.

"Any name, then?"

"Yes, John Merrick."

She closed the door entirely, and was gone several minutes. Then she came back and ushered him through the parlor into a small rear room.

Mrs. Merrick arose from her chair by the window and advanced to meet him.

"You are John Merrick?" she enquired.

"Your husband's brother, ma'am," he replied.

"How do you do, Uncle John?" called Louise, from the sofa. "Excuse my getting up, won't you? And where in the world have you come from?"

Mrs. Merrick sat down again.

"Won't you take a chair?" she said, stiffly.

"I believe I will," returned Uncle John. "I just came to make a call, you know."

"Louise has told me of you," said the lady. "It was very unfortunate that your sister's death deprived you of a home. An absurd thing, altogether, that fiasco of Jane Merrick's."

"True," he agreed.

"But I might have expected it, knowing the woman's character as I did."

Uncle John wondered what Jane's character had to do with the finding of Tom Bradley's last will; but he said nothing.

“Where are you living?” asked Louise.

“Not anywhere, exactly,” he answered, “although Patsy has offered me a home and I’ve been sleeping on a sofa in her living-room, the past week.”

“I advise you to stay with the Doyles,” said Mrs. Merrick, quickly. “We haven’t even a sofa to offer you here, our flat is so small; otherwise we would be glad to be of some help to you. Have you found work?”

“I haven’t tried to, yet, ma’am.”

“It will be hard to get, at your age, of course. But that is a matter in which we cannot assist you.”

“Oh, I’m not looking for help, ma’am.”

She glanced at his worn clothing and soiled white necktie, and smiled.

“But we want to do something for you,” said Louise. “Now,” sitting up and regarding him gravely, “I’m going to tell you a state secret. We are living, in this luxurious way, on the principal of my father’s life insurance. At our present rate of expenditure we figure that the money will last us two years and nine months longer. By that time I shall be comfortably married or we will go bankrupt — as the fates decide. Do you understand the situation?”

“Perfectly. It’s very simple,” said the old man.

“And rather uncertain, isn’t it? But in spite of this, we are better able to help you than any of your other relatives. The Doyles are hard-working folks, and very poor. Beth says that Professor De Graf is over head and ears in debt and earns less every year, so he can’t be counted upon. In all the Merrick tribe the only tangible thing is my father’s life insurance, which I believe you once helped him to pay a premium on.”

“I’d forgotten that,” said Uncle John.

“Well, we haven’t. We don’t want to appear ungenerous in your eyes. Some day we may need help ourselves. But just now we can’t offer you a home, and, as mother says, you’d better stay with the Doyles. We have talked of making you a small allowance; but that may not be necessary. When you need assistance you must come to us, and we’ll do whatever we can, as long as our money lasts. Won’t that be the better way?”

Uncle John was silent for a moment. Then he asked:

“Why have you thought it necessary to assist me?”

Louise seemed surprised.

“You are old and seemed to be without means,” she answered, “and that five thousand Aunt Jane left to you turned out to be a myth. But tell me, have you money, Uncle John?”

“Enough for my present needs,” he said, smiling.

Mrs. Merrick seemed greatly relieved.

“Then there is no need of our trying to be generous,” she said, “and I am

glad of that on all accounts."

"I just called for a little visit," said Uncle John. "It seemed unfriendly not to hunt you up, when I was in town."

"I'm glad you did," replied Mrs. Merrick, glancing at the clock. "But Louise expects a young gentleman to call upon her in a few minutes, and perhaps you can drop in again; another Sunday, for instance."

"Perhaps so," said Uncle John, rising with a red face. "I'll see."

"Good bye, Uncle," exclaimed Louise, rising to take his hand. "Don't feel that we've hurried you away, but come in again, whenever you feel like it."

"Thank you, my dear," he said, and went away.

Louise approached the open window, that led to a broad balcony. The people in the next flat — young Mr. Isham, the son of the great banker, and his wife — were sitting on the balcony, overlooking the street, but Louise decided to glance over the rail to discover if the young gentleman she so eagerly awaited chanced to be in sight.

As she did so Mr. Isham cried in great excitement:

"There he is, Myra — that's him!" and pointed toward the sidewalk.

"Whom?" enquired Mrs. Isham, calmly.

"Why John Merrick! John Merrick, of Portland, Oregon."

"And who is John Merrick?" asked the lady.

"One of the richest men in the world, and the best client our house has. Isn't he a queer looking fellow? And dresses like a tramp. But he's worth from eighty to ninety millions, at least, and controls most of the canning and tin-plate industries of America. I wonder what brought him into this neighborhood?"

Louise drew back from the window, pale and trembling. Then she caught up a shawl and rushed from the room. Uncle John must be overtaken and brought back, at all hazards.

The elevator was coming down, fortunately, and she descended quickly and reached the street, where she peered eagerly up and down for the round, plump figure of the little millionaire. But by some strange chance he had already turned a corner and disappeared.

While she hesitated the young man came briskly up, swinging his cane.

"Why, Miss Louise," he said in some surprise, "were you, by good chance, waiting for me?"

"No, indeed," she answered, with a laugh; "I've been saying good-bye to my rich uncle, John Merrick, of Portland, who has just called."

"John Merrick, the tin-plate magnate? Is he your uncle?"

"My father's own brother," she answered, gaily. "Come upstairs, please. Mother will be glad to see you!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PATSY LOSES HER JOB.

Uncle John reached Willing Square before Patsy and her father returned, but soon afterward they arrived in an antiquated carriage surrounded by innumerable bundles.

"The driver's a friend of mine," explained the Major, "and he moved us for fifty cents, which is less than half price. We didn't bring a bit of the furniture or beds, for there's no place here to put them; but as the rent at Becker's flat is paid to the first of next month, we'll have plenty of time to auction 'em all off."

The rest of the day was spent most delightfully in establishing themselves in the new home. It didn't take the girl long to put her few belongings into the closets and drawers, but there were a thousand little things to examine in the rooms and she made some important discovery at every turn.

"Daddy," she said, impressively, "it must have cost a big fortune to furnish these little rooms. They're full of very expensive things, and none of the grand houses Madam Borne has sent me to is any finer than ours. I'm sure the place is too good for us, who are working people. Do you think we ought to stay here?"

"The Doyles," answered the Major, very seriously, "are one of the greatest and most aristocratic families in all Ireland, which is the most aristocratic country in the world. If I only had our pedigree I could prove it to you easily. There's nothing too good for an Irish gentleman, even if he condescends to bookkeeping to supply the immediate necessities of life; and as you're me own daughter, Patricia, though a Merrick on your poor sainted mother's side, you're entitled to all you can get honestly. Am I right, Uncle John, or do I flatter myself?"

Uncle John stroked the girl's head softly.

"You are quite right," he said. "There is nothing too good for a brave, honest girl who's heart is in the right place."

"And that's Patsy," declared the Major, as if the question were finally settled.

On Monday morning Mary had a dainty breakfast all ready for them at seven o'clock, and Patsy and her father departed with light hearts for their work. Uncle John rode part way down town with them.

"I'm going to buy my new suit, today, and a new necktie," he said.

"Don't let them rob you," was Patsy's parting injunction. "Is your money all safe? And if you buy a ten dollar suit of clothes the dealer ought to throw in the necktie to bind the bargain. And see that they're all wool, Uncle John."

“What, the neckties?”

“No, the clothes. Good-bye, and don’t be late to dinner. Mary might scold.”

“I’ll remember. Good-bye, my dear.”

Patsy was almost singing for joy when she walked into Madam Borne’s hair-dressing establishment.

“Don’t take off your things,” said the Madam, sharply, “Your services are no longer required.”

Patsy looked at her in amazement. Doubtless she hadn’t heard aright.

“I have another girl in your place,” continued Madam Borne, “so I’ll bid you good morning.”

Patsy’s heart was beating fast.

“Do you mean I’m discharged?” she asked, with a catch in her voice.

“That’s it precisely.”

“Have I done anything wrong, Madam?”

“It isn’t that,” said Madam, pettishly. “I simply do not require your services. You are paid up to Saturday night, and I owe you nothing. Now, run along.”

Patsy stood looking at her and wondering what to do. To lose this place was certainly a great calamity.

“You’ll give me a testimonial, won’t you, Madam?” she asked, falteringly.

“I don’t give testimonials,” was the reply.

“Do run away, child; I’m very busy this morning.”

Patsy went away, all her happiness turned to bitter grief. What would the Major say, and what were they to do without her wages? Then she remembered Willing Square, and was a little comforted. Money was not as necessary now as it had been before.

Nevertheless, she applied to one or two hair-dressers for employment, and met with abrupt refusals. They had all the help they needed. So she decided to go back home and think it over, before taking further action.

It was nearly ten o’clock when she fitted her pass-key into the carved door of Apartment D, and when she entered the pretty living-room she found an elderly lady seated there, who arose to greet her.

“Miss Doyle?” enquired the lady.

“Yes, ma’am,” said Patsy.

“I am Mrs. Wilson, and I have been engaged to give you private instruction from ten to twelve every morning.”

Patsy plumped down upon a chair and looked her amazement.

“May I ask who engaged you?” she ventured to enquire.

“A gentleman from the bank of Isham, Marvin & Co. made the arrangement. May I take off my things?”

“If you please,” said the girl, quietly. Evidently this explained why Madam Borne had discharged her so heartlessly. The gentleman from Isham, Marvin & Co. had doubtless interviewed the Madam and told her what to do. And then, knowing she would be at liberty, he had sent her this private instructor.

The girl felt that the conduct of her life had been taken out of her own hands entirely, and that she was now being guided and cared for by her unknown friend and benefactor. And although she was inclined to resent the loss of her independence, at first, her judgment told her it would not only be wise but to her great advantage to submit.

She found Mrs. Wilson a charming and cultivated lady, who proved so gracious and kindly that the girl felt quite at ease in her presence. She soon discovered how woefully ignorant Patsy was, and arranged a course of instruction that would be of most benefit to her.

“I have been asked to prepare you to enter a girls’ college,” she said, “and if you are attentive and studious I shall easily accomplish the task.”

Patsy invited her to stay to luncheon, which Mary served in the cosy dining-room, and then Mrs. Wilson departed and left her alone to think over this new example of her unknown friend’s thoughtful care.

At three o’clock the door-bell rang and Mary ushered in another strange person — a pretty, fair-haired young lady, this time, who said she was to give Miss Doyle lessons on the piano.

Patsy was delighted. It was the one accomplishment she most longed to acquire, and she entered into the first lesson with an eagerness that made her teacher smile approvingly.

Meantime the Major was having his own surprises. At the office the manager met him on his arrival and called him into his private room.

“Major Doyle,” said he, “it is with great regret that we part with you, for you have served our house most faithfully.”

The Major was nonplussed.

“But,” continued the manager, “our bankers, Messers. Isham, Marvin & Co., have asked us to spare you for them, as they have a place requiring a man of your abilities where you can do much better than with us. Take this card, sir, and step over to the bankers and enquire for Mr. Marvin. I congratulate you, Major Doyle, on your advancement, which I admit is fully deserved.”

The Major seemed dazed. Like a man walking in a dream he made his way to the great banking house, and sent in the card to Mr. Marvin.

That gentleman greeted him most cordially.

“We want you to act as special auditor of accounts,” said he. “It is a place of much responsibility, but your duties will not be arduous. You will occupy Private Office No. 11, and your hours are only from 10 to 12 each morning. After that you will be at liberty. The salary, I regret to say, is not commensurate with your value, being merely twenty-four hundred a year; but as you will have part of the day to yourself you will doubtless be able to supplement that sum in other ways. Is this satisfactory, sir?”

“Quite so,” answered the Major. Twenty-four hundred a year! And only two hours’ work! Quite satisfactory, indeed!

His little office was very cosy, too; and the work of auditing the accounts of the most important customers of the house required accuracy but no amount of labor. It was an ideal occupation for a man of his years and limited training.

He stayed in the office until two o’clock that day, in order to get fully acquainted with the details of his work. Then he closed his desk, went to luncheon, which he enjoyed amazingly, and then decided to return to Willing Square and await Patsy’s return from Madam Borne’s.

As he let himself in he heard an awkward drumming and strumming on the piano, and peering slyly through the opening in the portierre he was startled to find Patsy herself making the dreadful noise, while a pretty girl sat beside her directing the movements of her fingers.

The Major watched for several minutes, in silent but amazed exultation; then he tiptoed softly to his room to smoke a cigar and wait until his daughter was at liberty to hear his great news and explain her own adventures.

When Uncle John came home to dinner he found father and daughter seated happily together in a loving embrace, their faces wreathed with ecstatic smiles that were wonderful to behold.

Uncle John was radiant in a brand new pepper-and-salt suit of clothes that fitted his little round form perfectly. Patsy marvelled that he could get such a handsome outfit for the money, for Uncle John had on new linen and a new hat and even a red-bordered handkerchief for the coat pocket — besides the necktie, and the necktie was of fine silk and in the latest fashion.

The transformation was complete, and Uncle John had suddenly become an eminently respectable old gentleman, with very little to criticise in his appearance.

“Do I match the flat, now?” he asked.

“To a dot!” declared Patsy. “So come to dinner, for it’s ready and waiting, and the Major and I have some wonderful fairy tales to tell you.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MAJOR DEMANDS AN EXPLANATION.

That was a happy week, indeed. Patsy devoted all her spare time to her lessons, but the house itself demanded no little attention. She would not let Mary dust the ornaments or arrange the rooms at all, but lovingly performed those duties herself, and soon became an ideal housekeeper, as Uncle John approvingly remarked.

And as she flitted from room to room she sang such merry songs that it was a delight to hear her, and the Major was sure to get home from the city in time to listen to the strumming of the piano at three o'clock, from the recess of his own snug chamber.

Uncle John went to the city every morning, and at first this occasioned no remark. Patsy was too occupied to pay much attention to her uncle's coming and going, and the Major was indifferent, being busy admiring Patsy's happiness and congratulating himself on his own good fortune.

The position at the bank had raised the good man's importance several notches. The clerks treated him with fine consideration and the heads of the firm were cordial and most pleasant. His fine, soldierly figure and kindly, white-moustached face, conferred a certain dignity upon his employers, which they seemed to respect and appreciate.

It was on Wednesday that the Major encountered the name of John Merrick on the books. The account was an enormous one, running into millions in stocks and securities. The Major smiled.

"That's Uncle John's name," he reflected. "It would please him to know he had a namesake so rich as this one."

The next day he noted that John Merrick's holdings were mostly in western canning industries and tin-plate factories, and again he recollected that Uncle John had once been a tinsmith. The connection was rather curious.

But it was not until Saturday morning that the truth dawned upon him, and struck him like a blow from a sledge-hammer.

He had occasion to visit Mr. Marvin's private office, but being told that the gentleman was engaged with an important customer, he lingered outside the door, waiting.

Presently the door was partly opened.

"Don't forget to sell two thousand of the Continental stock tomorrow," he heard a familiar voice say.

"I'll not forget, Mr. Merrick," answered the banker.

"And buy that property on Bleeker street at the price offered. It's a fair proposition, and I need the land."

“Very well, Mr. Merrick. Would it not be better for me to send these papers by a messenger to your house?”

“No; I’ll take them myself. No one will rob me.” And then the door swung open and, chuckling in his usual whimsical fashion, Uncle John came out, wearing his salt-and-pepper suit and stuffing; a bundle of papers into his inside pocket.

The Major stared at him haughtily, but made no attempt to openly recognize the man. Uncle John gave a start, laughed, and then walked away briskly, throwing a hasty “good-bye” to the obsequious banker, who followed him out, bowing low.

The Major returned to his office with a grave face, and sat for the best part of three hours in a brown study. Then he took his hat and went home.

Patsy asked anxiously if anything had happened, when she saw his face; but the Major shook his head.

Uncle John arrived just in time for dinner, in a very genial mood, and he and Patsy kept up a lively conversation at the table while the Major looked stern every time he caught the little man’s eye.

But Uncle John never minded. He was not even as meek and humble as usual, but laughed and chatted with the freedom of a boy just out of school, which made Patsy think the new clothes had improved him in more ways than one.

When dinner was over the Major led them into the sitting-room, turned up the lights, and then confronted the little man with a determined and majestic air.

“Sir,” said he, “give an account of yourself.”

“Eh?”

“John Merrick, millionaire and impostor, who came into my family under false pretenses and won our love and friendship when we didn’t know it, give an account of yourself!”

Patsy laughed.

“What are you up to, Daddy?” she demanded. “What has Uncle John been doing?”

“Deceiving us, my dear.”

“Nonsense,” said Uncle John, lighting his old briar pipe, “you’ve been deceiving yourselves.”

“Didn’t you convey the impression that you were poor?” demanded the Major, sternly.

“No.”

“Didn’t you let Patsy take away your thirty-two dollars and forty-two cents, thinking it was all you had?”

“Yes.”

“Aren’t you worth millions and millions of dollars — so many that you can’t count them yourself?”

“Perhaps.”

“Then, sir,” concluded the Major, mopping the perspiration from his forehead and sitting down limply in his chair, “what do you mean by it?”

Patsy stood pale and trembling, her round eyes fixed upon her uncle’s composed face.

“Uncle John!” she faltered.

“Yes, my dear.”

“Is it all true? Are you so very rich?”

“Yes, my dear.”

“And it’s you that gave me this house, and — and everything else — and got the Major his fine job, and me discharged, and — and — ”

“Of course, Patsy. Why not?”

“Oh, Uncle John!”

She threw herself into his arms, sobbing happily as he clasped her little form to his bosom. And the Major coughed and blew his nose, and muttered unintelligible words into his handkerchief. Then Patsy sprang up and rushed upon her father, crying;

“Oh, Daddy! Aren’t you glad it’s Uncle John?”

“I have still to hear his explanation,” said the Major.

Uncle John beamed upon them. Perhaps he had never been so happy before in all his life.

“I’m willing to explain,” he said, lighting his pipe again and settling himself in his chair. “But my story is a simple one, dear friends, and not nearly so wonderful as you may imagine. My father had a big family that kept him poor, and I was a tinsmith with little work to be had in the village where we lived. So I started west, working my way from town to town, until I got to Portland, Oregon.

“There was work in plenty there, making the tin cans in which salmon and other fish is packed, and as I was industrious I soon had a shop of my own, and supplied cans to the packers. The shop grew to be a great factory, employing hundreds of men. Then I bought up the factories of my competitors, so as to control the market, and as I used so much tin-plate I became interested in the manufacture of this product, and invested a good deal of money in the production and perfection of American tin. My factories were now scattered all along the coast, even to California, where I made the cans for the great quantities of canned fruits they ship from that section every year. Of course the business made me rich, and I bought real estate with my

extra money, and doubled my fortune again and again.

"I never married, for all my heart was in the business, and I thought of nothing else. But a while ago a big consolidation of the canning industries was effected, and the active management I resigned to other hands, because I had grown old, and had too much money already.

"It was then that I remembered the family, and went back quietly to the village where I was born. They were all dead or scattered, I found; but because Jane had inherited a fortune in some way I discovered where she lived and went to see her. I suppose it was because my clothes were old and shabby that Jane concluded I was a poor man and needed assistance; and I didn't take the trouble to undeceive her.

"I also found my three nieces at Elmhurst, and it struck me it would be a good time to study their characters; for like Jane I had a fortune to leave behind me, and I was curious to find out which girl was the most deserving. No one suspected my disguise. I don't usually wear such poor clothes, you know; but I have grown to be careless of dress in the west, and finding that I was supposed to be a poor man I clung to that old suit like grim death to a grasshopper."

"It was very wicked of you," said Patsy, soberly, from her father's lap.

"As it turned out," continued the little man, "Jane's desire to leave her money to her nieces amounted to nothing, for the money wasn't hers. But I must say it was kind of her to put me down for five thousand dollars — now, wasn't it?"

The Major grinned.

"And that's the whole story, my friends. After Jane's death you offered me a home — the best you had to give — and I accepted it. I had to come to New York anyway, you know, for Isham, Marvin & Co. have been my bankers for years, and there was considerable business to transact with them. I think that's all, isn't it?"

"Then this house is yours?" said Patsy, wonderingly.

"No, my dear; the whole block belongs to you and here's the deed for it," drawing a package of papers from his pocket. "It's a very good property, Patsy, and the rents you get from the other five flats will be a fortune in themselves."

For a time the three sat in silence. Then the girl whispered, softly:

"Why are you so good to me, Uncle John?"

"Just because I like you, Patsy, and you are my niece."

"And the other nieces?"

"Well, I don't mean they shall wait for my death to be made happy," answered Uncle John. "Here's a paper that gives to Louise's mother the use

of a hundred thousand dollars, as long as she lives. After that Louise will have the money to do as she pleases with."

"How fine!" cried Patsy, clapping her hands joyfully.

"And here's another paper that gives Professor De Graf the use of another hundred thousand. Beth is to have it when he dies. She's a sensible girl, and will take good care of it."

"Indeed she will!" said Patsy.

"And now," said Uncle John, "I want to know if I can keep my little room in your apartments, Patsy; or if you'd prefer me to find another boarding place."

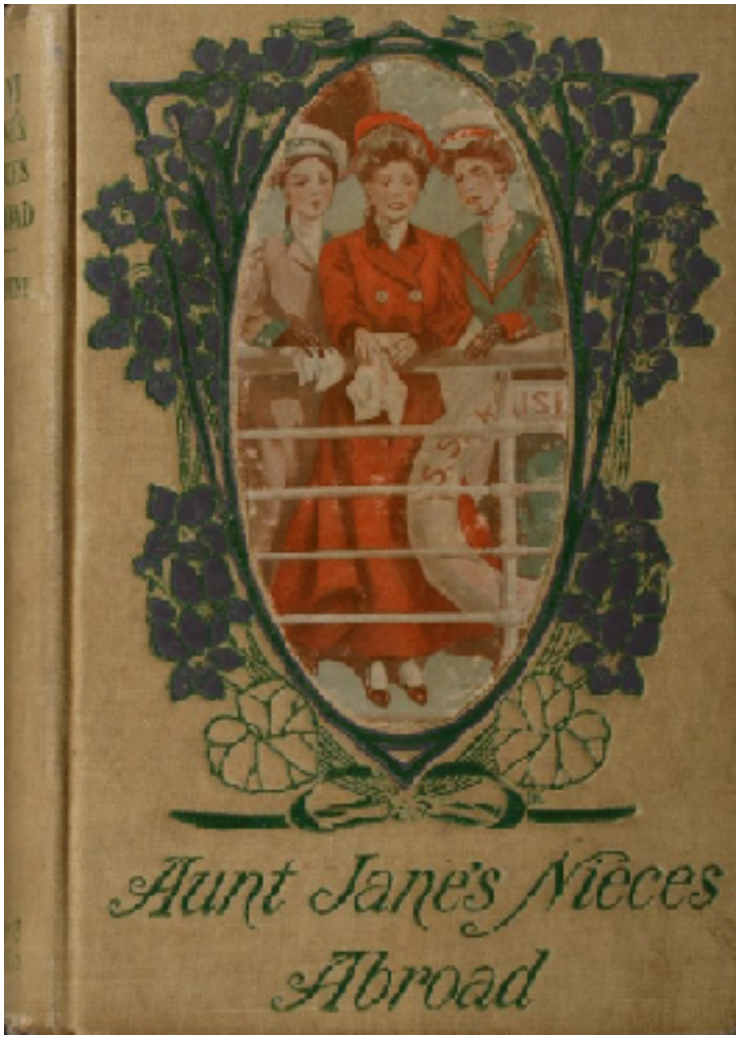
"Your home is here as long as you live, Uncle John. I never meant to part with you, when I thought you poor, and I'll not desert you now that I know you're rich."

"Well said, Patsy!" cried the Major.

And Uncle John smiled and kissed the girl and then lighted his pipe again, for it had gone out.

AUNT JANE'S NIECES ABROAD

Baum donned his Edith Van Dyne disguise for *Aunt Jane's Nieces Abroad*, the second in the long running series. Reilly & Britton published the novel in 1907, illustrated by Emile A. Nelson. Baum used his own recent travel experiences to give color and drama to the novel, as the girls and their eccentric Uncle John travel through Europe, manage to be on hand for the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, meet a counterfeit nobleman and a dastardly villain. The exciting plot includes a kidnapping, ransom money and disguises.



First edition copy of Aunt Jane's Nieces Abroad

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PREFATORY:

The author is pleased to be able to present a sequel to “Aunt Jane’s Nieces,” the book which was received with so much favor last year. Yet it is not necessary one should have read the first book to fully understand the present volume, the characters being taken to entirely new scenes.

The various foreign localities are accurately described, so that those who have visited them will recognize them at once, while those who have not been so fortunate may acquire a clear conception of them. It was my good fortune to be an eye witness of the recent great eruption of Vesuvius.

Lest I be accused of undue sensationalism in relating the somewhat dramatic Sicilian incident, I will assure my reader that the story does not exaggerate present conditions in various parts of the island. In fact, Il Duca and Tato are drawn from life, although they did not have their mountain lair so near to Taormina as I have ventured to locate it. Except that I have adapted their clever system of brigandage to the exigencies of this story, their history is truly related. Many who have travelled somewhat outside the beaten tracks in Sicily will frankly vouch for this statement.

Italy is doing its best to suppress the Mafia and to eliminate brigandage from the beautiful islands it controls, but so few of the inhabitants are Italians or in sympathy with the government that the work of reformation is necessarily slow. Americans, especially, must exercise caution in travelling in any part of Sicily; yet with proper care not to tempt the irresponsible natives, they are as safe in Sicily as they are at home.

Aunt Jane’s nieces are shown to be as frankly adventurous as the average clear headed American girl, but their experiences amid the environments of an ancient and still primitive civilization are in no wise extraordinary.

Edith Van Dyne.

CHAPTER I

THE DOYLES ARE ASTONISHED

It was Sunday afternoon in Miss Patricia Doyle's pretty flat at 3708 Willing Square. In the small drawing room Patricia — or Patsy, as she preferred to be called — was seated at the piano softly playing the one "piece" the music teacher had succeeded in drilling into her flighty head by virtue of much patience and perseverance. In a thick cushioned morris-chair reclined the motionless form of Uncle John, a chubby little man in a gray suit, whose features were temporarily eclipsed by the newspaper that was spread carefully over them. Occasionally a gasp or a snore from beneath the paper suggested that the little man was "snoozing" as he sometimes gravely called it, instead of listening to the music.

Major Doyle sat opposite, stiffly erect, with his admiring eyes full upon Patsy. At times he drummed upon the arms of his chair in unison with the music, nodding his grizzled head to mark the time as well as to emphasize his evident approbation. Patsy had played this same piece from start to finish seven times since dinner, because it was the only one she knew; but the Major could have listened to it seven hundred times without the flicker of an eyelash. It was not that he admired so much the "piece" the girl was playing as the girl who was playing the "piece." His pride in Patsy was unbounded. That she should have succeeded at all in mastering that imposing looking instrument — making it actually "play chunes" — was surely a thing to wonder at. But then, Patsy could do anything, if she but tried.

Suddenly Uncle John gave a dreadful snort and sat bolt upright, gazing at his companions with a startled look that melted into one of benign complacency as he observed his surroundings and realized where he was. The interruption gave Patsy an opportunity to stop playing the tune. She swung around on the stool and looked with amusement at her newly awakened uncle.

"You've been asleep," she said.

"No, indeed; quite a mistake," replied the little man, seriously. "I've only been thinking."

"An' such *beaut*chiful thoughts," observed the Major, testily, for he resented the interruption of his Sunday afternoon treat. "You thought 'em aloud, sir, and the sound of it was a bad imithation of a bullfrog in a marsh. You'll have to give up eating the salad, sir."

"Bah! don't I know?" asked Uncle John, indignantly.

"Well, if your knowledge is better than our hearing, I suppose you do," retorted the Major. "But to an ignorant individual like meself the impression

conveyed was that you snored like a man that has forgotten his manners an' gone to sleep in the prisence of a lady."

"Then no one has a better right to do that," declared Patsy, soothingly; "and I'm sure our dear Uncle John's thoughts were just the most beautiful dreams in the world. Tell us of them, sir, and we'll prove the Major utterly wrong."

Even her father smiled at the girl's diplomacy, and Uncle John, who was on the verge of unreasonable anger, beamed upon her gratefully.

"I'm going to Europe," he said.

The Major gave an involuntary start, and then turned to look at him curiously.

"And I'm going to take Patsy along," he continued, with a mischievous grin.

The Major frowned.

"Conthrol yourself, sir, until you are fully awake," said he. "You're dreaming again."

Patsy swung her feet from side to side, for she was such a little thing that the stool raised her entirely off the floor. There was a thoughtful look on her round, freckled face, and a wistful one in her great blue eyes as the full meaning of Uncle John's abrupt avowal became apparent.

The Major was still frowning, but a half frightened expression had replaced the one of scornful raillery. For he, too, knew that his eccentric brother-in-law was likely to propose any preposterous thing, and then carry it out in spite of all opposition. But to take Patsy to Europe would be like pulling the Major's eye teeth or amputating his good right arm. Worse; far worse! It would mean taking the sunshine out of her old father's sky altogether, and painting it a grim, despairing gray.

But he resolved not to submit without a struggle.

"Sir," said he, sternly — he always called his brother-in-law "sir" when he was in a sarcastic or reproachful mood — "I've had an idea for some time that you were plotting mischief. You haven't looked me straight in the eye for a week, and you've twice been late to dinner. I will ask you to explain to us, sir, the brutal suggestion you have just advanced."

Uncle John laughed. In the days when Major Doyle had thought him a poor man and in need of a helping hand, the grizzled old Irishman had been as tender toward him as a woman and studiously avoided any speech or epithet that by chance might injure the feelings of his dead wife's only brother. But the Major's invariable courtesy to the poor or unfortunate was no longer in evidence when he found that John Merrick was a multi-millionaire with a strongly defined habit of doing good to others and striving

in obscure and unconventional ways to make everybody around him happy. His affection for the little man increased mightily, but his respectful attitude promptly changed, and a chance to reprove or discomfit his absurdly rich brother-in-law was one of his most satisfactory diversions. Uncle John appreciated this, and holding the dignified Major in loving regard was glad to cross swords with him now and then to add variety to their pleasant relations.

"It's this way, Major Doyle," he now remarked, coolly. "I've been worried to death, lately, over business matters; and I need a change."

"Phoo! All your business is attended to by Isham, Marvin & Co. You've no worry at all. Why, we've just made you a quarter of a million in C.H. & D's."

The "we" is explained by stating that the Major held an important position in the great banking house — a position Mr. Merrick had secured for him some months previously.

"That's it!" said Uncle John. "You've made me a quarter of a million that I don't want. The C.H. & D. stocks were going to pieces when I bought them, and I had reason to hope I'd lose a good round sum on them. But the confounded luck turned, and the result is an accumulation of all this dreadful money. So, my dear Major, before I'm tempted to do some-other foolish thing I've determined to run away, where business can't follow me, and where by industry and perseverance I can scatter some of my ill-gotten gains."

The Major smiled grimly.

"That's Europe, right enough," he said. "And I don't object, John, to your going there whenever you please. You're disgracefully countryfied and uninformed for a man of means, and Europe'll open your eyes and prove to you how insignificant you really are. I advise you to visit Ireland, sor, which I'm reliably informed is the centhral jewel in Europe's crown of beauty. Go; and go whinever you please, sor; but forbear the wickedness of putting foolish thoughts into our Patsy's sweet head. She can't go a step, and you know it. It's positive cruelty to her, sir, to suggest such a thing!"

The Major's speech had a touch of the brogue when he became excited, but recovered when he calmed down.

"Why, you selfish old humbug!" cried Uncle John, indignantly. "Why can't she go, when there's money and time to spare? Would you keep her here to cuddle and spoil a vigorous man like yourself, when she can run away and see the world and be happy?"

"It's a great happiness to cuddle the Major," said Patsy, softly; "and the poor man needs it as much as he does his slippers or his oatmeal for breakfast."

“And Patsy has the house to look after,” added the Major, complacently.

Uncle John gave a snort of contempt.

“For an unreasonable man, show me an Irishman,” he remarked. “Here you’ve been telling me how Europe is an education and a delight, and in the next breath you deliberately deprive your little daughter, whom you pretend to love, of the advantages she might gain by a trip abroad! And why? Just because you want her yourself, and might be a bit lonesome without her. But I’ll settle that foolishness, sir, in short order. You shall go with us.”

“Impossible!” ejaculated the Major. “It’s the time of year I’m most needed in the office, and Mr. Marvin has been so kind and considerate that I won’t play him a dirty trick by leaving him in the lurch.”

Patsy nodded approval.

“That’s right, daddy,” she said.

Uncle John lay back in the chair and put the newspaper over his face again. Patsy and her father stared at one another with grave intentness. Then the Major drew out his handkerchief and mopped his brow.

“You’d like to go, mavourneen?” he asked, softly.

“Yes, daddy; but I won’t, of course.”

“Tut-tut! don’t you go putting yourself against your old father’s will, Patsy. It’s not so far to Europe,” he continued, thoughtfully, “and you won’t be away much longer than you were when you went to Elmhurst after Aunt Jane’s money — which you didn’t get. Mary takes fine care of our little rooms, and doubtless I shall be so busy that I won’t miss you at all, at all.”

“Daddy!”

She was in his lap, now, her chubby arms clasped around his neck and her soft cheek laid close beside his rough and ruddy one.

“And when ye get back, Patsy darlin’,” he whispered, tenderly stroking her hair, “the joy of the meeting will make up for all that we’ve suffered. It’s the way of life, mavourneen. Unless a couple happens to be Siamese twins, they’re bound to get separated in the course of events, more or less, if not frequently.”

“I won’t go, daddy.”

“Oh, yes you will. It’s not like you to be breakin’ my heart by stayin’ home. Next week, said that wicked old uncle — he remoinds me of the one that tried to desthroy the Babes in the Woods, Patsy dear. You must try to reclaim him to humanity, for I’m hopin’ there’s a bit of good in the old rascal yet.” And he looked affectionately at the round little man under the newspaper.

Uncle John emerged again. It was wonderful how well he understood the Doyle family. His face was now smiling and wore a look of supreme

satisfaction.

“Your selfishness, my dear Major,” said he, “is like the husk on a cocoanut. When you crack it there’s plenty of milk within — and in your case it’s the milk of human kindness. Come! let’s talk over the trip.”

CHAPTER II

UNCLE JOHN MAKES PLANS

"The thought came to me a long time ago," Uncle John resumed; "but it was only yesterday that I got all the details fixed and settled in my mind. I've been a rough old duffer, Patsy, and in all my hard working life never thought of such a thing as travelling or enjoying myself until I fell in with you, and you taught me how pleasant it is to scatter sunshine in the hearts of others. For to make others happy means a lot of joy for yourself — a secret you were trying to keep from me, you crafty young woman, until I discovered it by accident. Now, here I am with three nieces on my hands — "

"You may say two, sir," interrupted the Major. "Patsy can take care of herself."

"Hold your tongue," said Uncle John. "I say I've got three nieces — as fine a trio of intelligent, sweet and attractive young women as you'll run across in a month of Sundays. I dare you to deny it, sir. And they are all at an age when an European trip will do them a world of good. So off we go, a week from Tuesday, in the first-class steamer 'Princess Irene,' bound from New York for the Bay of Naples!"

Patsy's eyes showed her delight. They fairly danced.

"Have you told Beth and Louise?" she asked.

His face fell.

"Not yet," he said. "I'd forgotten to mention it to them."

"For my part," continued the girl, "I can get ready in a week, easily. But Beth is way out in Ohio, and we don't know whether she can go or not."

"I'll telegraph her, and find out," said Uncle John.

"Do it to-day," suggested the Major.

"I will."

"And to-morrow you must see Louise," added Patsy. "I'm not sure she'll want to go, dear. She's such a social butterfly, you know, that her engagements may keep her at home."

"Do you mean to say she's engaged?" asked Mr. Merrick, aghast.

"Only for the parties and receptions, Uncle. But it wouldn't surprise me if she was married soon. She's older than Beth or me, and has a host of admirers."

"Perhaps she's old enough to be sensible," suggested the Major.

"Well, I'll see her and her mother to-morrow morning," decided Uncle John, "and if she can't find time for a trip to Europe at my expense, you and Beth shall go anyhow — and we'll bring Louise a wedding present."

With this declaration he took his hat and walking stick and started for the

telegraph station, leaving Patsy and her father to canvass the unexpected situation.

John Merrick was sixty years old, but as hale and rugged as a boy of twenty. He had made his vast fortune on the Pacific Coast and during his years of busy activity had been practically forgotten by the Eastern members of his family, who never had credited him with sufficient ability to earn more than a precarious livelihood. But the man was shrewd enough in a business way, although simple almost to childishness in many other matters. When he returned, quite unheralded, to end his days "at home" and employ his ample wealth to the best advantage, he for a time kept his success a secret, and so learned much of the dispositions and personal characteristics of his three nieces.

They were at that time visiting his unmarried sister, Jane, at her estate at Elmhurst, whither they had been invited for the first time; and in the race for Aunt Jane's fortune he watched the three girls carefully and found much to admire in each one of them. Patsy Doyle, however, proved exceptionally frank and genuine, and when Aunt Jane at last died and it was found she had no estate to bequeath, Patsy proved the one bright star in the firmament of disappointment. Supposing Uncle John to be poor, she insisted upon carrying him to New York with her and sharing with him the humble tenement room in which she lived with her father — a retired veteran who helped pay the family expenses by keeping books for a mercantile firm, while Patsy worked in a hair-dresser's shop.

It was now that Uncle John proved a modern fairy godfather to Aunt Jane's nieces — who were likewise his own nieces. The three girls had little in common except their poverty, Elizabeth De Graf being the daughter of a music teacher, in Cloverton, Ohio, while Louise Merrick lived with her widowed mother in a social atmosphere of the second class in New York, where the two women frankly intrigued to ensnare for Louise a husband who had sufficient means to ensure both mother and daughter a comfortable home. In spite of this worldly and unlovely ambition, which their circumstances might partially excuse, Louise, who was but seventeen, had many good and womanly qualities, could they have been developed in an atmosphere uninfluenced by the schemes of her vain and selfish mother.

Uncle John, casting aside the mask of poverty, came to the relief of all three girls. He settled the incomes of substantial sums of money upon both Beth and Louise, making them practically independent. For Patsy he bought a handsome modern flat building located at 3708 Willing Square, and installed her and the Major in its cosiest apartment, the rents of the remaining flats giving the Doyles an adequate income for all time to come. Here Uncle

John, believing himself cordially welcome, as indeed he was, made his own home, and it required no shrewd guessing to arrive at the conclusion that little Patsy was destined to inherit some day all his millions.

The great banking and brokerage firm of Isham, Marvin & Co. had long managed successfully John Merrick's vast fortune, and at his solicitation it gave Major Doyle a responsible position in its main office, with a salary that rendered him independent of his daughter's suddenly acquired wealth and made him proud and self-respecting.

Money had no power to change the nature of the Doyles. The Major remained the same simple, honest, courteous yet brusque old warrior who had won Uncle John's love as a hard working book-keeper; and Patsy's bright and sunny disposition had certain power to cheer any home, whether located in a palace or a hovel.

Never before in his life had Uncle John been so supremely happy, and never before had Aunt Jane's three nieces had so many advantages and pleasures. It was to confer still further benefits upon these girls that their eccentric uncle had planned this unexpected European trip.

His telegram to Elizabeth was characteristic:

"Patsy, Louise and I sail for Europe next Tuesday. Will you join us as my guest? If so, take first train to New York, where I will look after your outfit. Answer immediately."

That was a message likely to surprise a country girl, but it did not strike John Merrick as in any way extraordinary. He thought he could depend upon Beth. She would be as eager to go as he was to have her, and when he had paid for the telegram he dismissed the matter from further thought.

Next morning Patsy reminded him that instead of going down town he must personally notify Louise Merrick of the proposed trip; so he took a cross-town line and arrived at the Merrick's home at nine o'clock.

Mrs. Merrick was in a morning wrapper, sipping her coffee in an upper room. But she could not deny herself to Uncle John, her dead husband's brother and her only daughter's benefactor (which meant indirectly her own benefactor), so she ordered the maid to show him up at once.

"Louise is still sweetly sleeping," she said, "and won't waken for hours yet."

"Is anything wrong with her?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh, dear, no! but everyone does not get up with the milkman, as you do, John; and the dear child was at the opera last night, which made her late in getting home."

"Doesn't the opera let out before midnight, the same as the theatres?" he asked.

“I believe so; but there is the supper, afterward, you know.”

“Ah, yes,” he returned, thoughtfully. “I’ve always noticed that the opera makes folks desperately hungry, for they flock to the restaurants as soon as they can get away. Singular, isn’t it?”

“Why, I never thought of it in that light.”

“But Louise is well?”

“Quite well, thank you.”

“That’s a great relief, for I’m going to take her to Europe with me next week,” he said.

Mrs. Merrick was so astonished that she nearly dropped her coffee-cup and could make no better reply than to stare blankly at her brother-in-law.

“We sail Tuesday,” continued Uncle John, “and you must have my niece ready in time and deliver her on board the ‘Princess Irene’ at Hoboken at nine o’clock, sharp.”

“But John — John!” gasped Mrs. Merrick, feebly, “it will take a month, at least, to make her gowns, and — ”

“Stuff and rubbish!” he growled. “That shows, Martha, how little you know about European trips. No one makes gowns to go abroad with; you buy ‘em in Paris to bring home.”

“Ah, yes; to be sure,” she muttered. “Perhaps, then, it can be done, if Louise, has no other engagements.”

“Just what Patsy said. See here, Martha, do you imagine that any girl who is half human could have engagements that would keep her from Europe?”

“But the requirements of society — ”

“You’ll get me riled, pretty soon, Martha; and if you do you’ll wish you hadn’t.”

This speech frightened the woman. It wouldn’t do to provoke Uncle John, however unreasonable he happened to be. So she said, meekly:

“I’ve no doubt Louise will be delighted to go, and so will I.”

“You!”

“Why — why — whom do you intend taking?”

“Just the three girls — Aunt Jane’s three nieces. Also mine.”

“But you’ll want a chaperone for them.”

“Why so?”

“Propriety requires it; and so does ordinary prudence. Louise, I know, will be discreet, for it is her nature; but Patsy is such a little flyaway and Beth so deep and demure, that without a chaperone they might cause you a lot of trouble.”

Uncle John grew red and his eyes flashed.

“A chaperone!” he cried, contemptuously; “not any in mine, Martha

Merrick. Either we young folks go alone, without any death's head to perpetually glower at us, or we don't go at all! Three better girls never lived, and I'll trust 'em anywhere. Besides that, we aren't going to any of your confounded social functions; we're going on a reg'lar picnic, and if I don't give those girls the time of their lives my name ain't John Merrick. A chaperone, indeed!"

Mrs. Merrick held up her hands in horror.

"I'm not sure, John," she gasped, "that I ought to trust my dear child with an uncle who disregards so openly the proprieties."

"Well, I'm sure; and the thing's settled," he said, more calmly. "Don't worry, ma'am. I'll look after Patsy and Beth, and Louise will look after all of us — just as she does after you — because she's so discreet. Talk about your being a chaperone! Why, you don't dare say your soul's your own when Louise is awake. That chaperone business is all humbuggery — unless an old uncle like me can be a chaperone. Anyhow, I'm the only one that's going to be appointed. I won't wait for Louise to wake up. Just tell her the news and help her to get ready on time. And now, I'm off. Good morning, Martha."

She really had no words of protest ready at hand, and it was long after queer old John Merrick had gone away that she remembered a dozen effective speeches that she might have delivered.

"After all," she sighed, taking up her cup again, "it may be the best thing in the world for Louise. We don't know whether that young Weldon, who is paying her attentions just now, is going to inherit his father's money or not. He's been a bit wild, I've heard, and it is just as well to postpone any engagement until we find out the facts. I can do that nicely while my sweet child is in Europe with Uncle John, and away from all danger of entanglements. Really, it's an ill wind that blows no good! I'll go talk with Louise."

CHAPTER III

"ALL ASHORE"

Beth De Graf was a puzzle to all who knew her. She was a puzzle even to herself, and was wont to say, indifferently, that the problem was not worth a solution. For this beautiful girl of fifteen was somewhat bitter and misanthropic, a condition perhaps due to the uncongenial atmosphere in which she had been reared. She was of dark complexion and her big brown eyes held a sombre and unfathomable expression. Once she had secretly studied their reflection in a mirror, and the eyes awed and frightened her, and made her uneasy. She had analyzed them much as if they belonged to someone else, and wondered what lay behind their mask, and what their capabilities might be.

But this morbid condition mostly affected her when she was at home, listening to the unpleasant bickerings of her father and mother, who quarrelled constantly over trifles that Beth completely ignored. Her parents seemed like two ill tempered animals confined in the same cage, she thought, and their snarls had long since ceased to interest her.

This condition had, of course, been infinitely worse in all those dreadful years when they were poverty stricken. Since Uncle John had settled a comfortable income on his niece the grocer was paid promptly and Mrs. De Graf wore a silk dress on Sundays and held her chin a little higher than any other of the Cloverton ladies dared do. The Professor, no longer harrassed by debts, devoted less time to the drudgery of teaching and began the composition of an oratorio that he firmly believed would render his name famous. So, there being less to quarrel about, Beth's parents indulged more moderately in that pastime; but their natures were discordant, and harmony in the De Graf household was impossible.

When away from home Beth's disposition softened. Some of her school-friends had seen her smile — a wonderful and charming phenomenon, during which her expression grew sweet and bewitchingly animated and her brown eyes radiant with mirthful light. It was not the same Beth at all.

Sometimes, when the nieces were all at Aunt Jane's, Beth had snuggled in the arms of her cousin Louise, who had a way of rendering herself agreeable to all with whom she came in contact, and tried hard to win the affection of the frankly antagonistic girl. At such times the gentleness of Elizabeth, her almost passionate desire to be loved and fondled, completely transformed her for the moment. Louise, shrewd at reading others, told herself that Beth possessed a reserve force of tenderness, amiability and fond devotion that would render her adorable if she ever allowed those qualities full expression.

But she did not tell Beth that. The girl was so accustomed to despise herself and so suspicious of any creditable impulses that at times unexpectedly obtruded themselves, that she would have dismissed such a suggestion as arrant flattery, and Louise was clever enough not to wish to arouse her cousin to a full consciousness of her own possibilities.

The trained if not native indifference of this strange girl of fifteen was demonstrated by her reception of Uncle John's telegram. She quietly handed it to her mother and said, as calmly as if it were an invitation to a church picnic:

"I think I shall go."

"Nothing like that ever happened to me," remarked Mrs. De Graf, enviously. "If John Merrick had an atom of common sense he'd have taken me to Europe instead of a troop of stupid school girls. But John always was a fool, and always will be. When will you start, Beth?"

"To-morrow morning. There's nothing to keep me. I'll go to Patsy and stay with her until we sail."

"Are you glad?" asked her mother, looking into the expressionless face half curiously.

"Yes," returned Beth, as if considering her reply; "a change is always interesting, and I have never travelled except to visit Aunt Jane at Elmhurst. So I think I am pleased to go to Europe."

Mrs. De Graf sighed. There was little in common between mother and daughter; but that, to a grave extent, was the woman's fault. She had never tried to understand her child's complex nature, and somewhat resented Beth's youth and good looks, which she considered contrasted unfavorably with her own deepening wrinkles and graying hair. For Mrs. De Graf was vain and self-important, and still thought herself attractive and even girlish. It would really be a relief to have Beth out of the way for a few months.

The girl packed her own trunk and arranged for it to be taken to the station. In the morning she entered the music room to bid the Professor good-bye. He frowned at the interruption, for the oratorio was especially engrossing at the time. Mrs. De Graf kissed her daughter lightly upon the lips and said in a perfunctory way that she hoped Beth would have a good time.

The girl had no thought of resenting the lack of affection displayed by her parents. It was what she had always been accustomed to, and she had no reason to expect anything different.

Patsy met her at the train in New York and embraced her rapturously. Patsy was really fond of Beth; but it was her nature to be fond of everyone, and her cousin, escaping from her smacking and enthusiastic kisses, told herself that Patsy would have embraced a cat with the same spontaneous

ecstacy. That was not strictly true, but there was nothing half hearted or halfway about Miss Doyle. If she loved you, there would never be an occasion for you to doubt the fact. It was Patsy's way.

Uncle John also was cordial in his greetings. He was very proud of his pretty niece, and discerning enough to realize there was a broad strata of womanliness somewhere in Elizabeth's undemonstrative character. He had promised himself to "dig it out" some day, and perhaps the European trip would give him his opportunity.

Patsy and Elizabeth shopped for the next few days most strenuously and delightfully. Sometimes their dainty cousin Louise joined them, and the three girls canvassed gravely their requirements for a trip that was as new to them as a flight to the moon. Naturally, they bought much that was unnecessary and forgot many things that would have been useful. You have to go twice to Europe to know what to take along.

Louise needed less than the others, for her wardrobe was more extensive and she already possessed all that a young girl could possibly make use of. This niece, the eldest of Uncle John's trio, was vastly more experienced in the ways of the world than the others, although as a traveller she had no advantage of them. Urged thereto by her worldly mother, she led a sort of trivial, butterfly existence, and her character was decidedly superficial to any close observer. Indeed, her very suavity and sweetness of manner was assumed, because it was so much more comfortable and effective to be agreeable than otherwise. She was now past seventeen years of age, tall and well formed, with a delicate and attractive face which, without being beautiful, was considered pleasant and winning. Her eyes were good, though a bit too shrewd, and her light brown hair was fluffy as spun silk. Graceful of carriage, gracious of manner, yet affecting a languor unsuited to her years, Louise Merrick was a girl calculated to draw from the passing throng glances of admiration and approval, and to convey the impression of good breeding and feminine cleverness.

All this, however, was outward. Neither Patsy nor Beth displayed any undue affection for their cousin, although all of the girls exhibited a fair amount of cousinly friendship for one another. They had once been thrown together under trying circumstances, when various qualities of temperament not altogether admirable were liable to assert themselves. Those events were too recent to be already forgotten, yet the girls were generous enough to be considerate of each others' failings, and had resolved to entertain no sentiment other than good will on the eve of their departure for such a charming outing as Uncle John had planned for them.

Mr. Merrick being a man, saw nothing radically wrong in the dispositions

of any of his nieces. Their youth and girlishness appealed to him strongly, and he loved to have them by his side. It is true that he secretly regretted Louise was not more genuine, that Beth was so cynical and frank, and that Patsy was not more diplomatic. But he reflected that he had had no hand in molding their characters, although he might be instrumental in improving them; so he accepted the girls as they were, thankful that their faults were not glaring, and happy to have found three such interesting nieces to cheer his old age.

At last the preparations were complete. Tuesday arrived, and Uncle John "corralled his females," as he expressed it, and delivered them safely on board the staunch and comfortable ocean greyhound known as the "Princess Irene," together with their bags and baggage, their flowers and fruits and candy boxes and all those other useless accessories to a voyage so eagerly thrust upon the departing travellers by their affectionate but ill-advised friends.

Mrs. Merrick undertook the exertion of going to Hoboken to see her daughter off, and whispered in the ear of Louise many worldly admonitions and such bits of practical advice as she could call to mind on the spur of the moment.

Major Gregory Doyle was there, pompous and straight of form and wearing an assumed smile that was meant to assure Patsy he was delighted at her going, but which had the effect of scaring the girl because she at first thought the dreadful expression was due to convulsions.

The Major had no admonitions for Patsy, but she had plenty for him, and gave him a long list of directions that would, as he said, cause him to "walk mighty sthraight" if by good luck he managed to remember them all.

Having made up his mind to let the child go to Europe, the old fellow allowed no wails or bemoanings to reach Patsy's ears to deprive her of a moment's joyful anticipation of the delights in store for her. He laughed and joked perpetually during that last day, and promised the girl that he would take a vacation while she was gone and visit his old colonel in Virginia, which she knew was the rarest pleasure he could enjoy. And now he stood upon the deck amusing them all with his quaint sayings and appearing so outwardly jolly and unaffected that only Patsy herself suspected the deep grief that was gripping his kindly old heart.

Uncle John guessed, perhaps, for he hugged the Major in a tight embrace, whispering that Patsy should be now, as ever, the apple of his eye and the subject of his most loving care.

"An' don't be forgetting to bring me the meerschaum pipe from Sicily an' the leathern pocket-book from Florence," the Major said to Patsy,

impressively. “It’s little enough for ye to remember if ye go that way, an’ to tell the truth I’m sending ye abroad just for to get them. An’ don’t be gettin’ off the boat till it stops at a station; an’ remember that Uncle John is full of rheumatics an’ can’t walk more n’ thirty mile an hour, an’ — ”

“It’s a slander,” said Uncle John, stoutly. “I never had rheumatics in my life.”

“Major,” observed Patsy, her blue eyes full of tears but her lips trying to smile, “do have the tailor sponge your vest every Saturday. It’s full of spots even now, and I’ve been too busy lately to look after you properly. You’re — you’re — just disgraceful, Major!”

“All ashore!” called a loud voice.

The Major gathered Patsy into an embrace that threatened to crush her, and then tossed her into Uncle John’s arms and hurried away. Mrs. Merrick followed, with good wishes for all for a pleasant journey; and then the four voyagers pressed to the rail and waved their handkerchiefs frantically to those upon the dock while the band played vociferously and the sailors ran here and there in sudden excitement and the great ship left her moorings and moved with proud deliberation down the bay to begin her long voyage to Gibraltar and the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER IV

SOME NEW ACQUAINTANCES, AND A WARNING

For an inexperienced tourist Uncle John managed their arrangements most admirably. He knew nothing at all about ocean travel or what was the proper method to secure comfortable accommodations; but while most of the passengers were writing hurried letters in the second deck gallery, which were to be sent back by the pilot, Mr. Merrick took occasion to interview the chief steward and the deck steward and whatever other official he could find, and purchased their good will so liberally that the effect of his astute diplomacy was immediately apparent.

His nieces found that the sunniest deck chairs bore their names; the most desirable seats in the dining hall were theirs when, half famished because breakfast had been disregarded, they trooped in to luncheon; the best waiters on the ship attended to their wants, and afterward their cabins were found to be cosily arranged with every comfort the heart of maid could wish for.

At luncheon it was found that the steward had placed a letter before Uncle John's plate. The handwriting of the address Louise, who sat next her uncle, at once recognized as that of her mother; but she said nothing.

Mr. Merrick was amazed at the contents of the communication, especially as he had so recently parted with the lady who had written it.

It said: "I must warn you, John, that my daughter has just escaped a serious entanglement, and I am therefore more grateful than I can express that you are taking her far from home for a few weeks. A young man named Arthur Weldon — a son of the big railroad president, you know — has been paying Louise marked attentions lately; but I cautioned her not to encourage him because a rumor had reached me that he has quarrelled with his father and been disinherited. My informant also asserted that the young man is wild and headstrong and cannot be controlled by his parent; but he always seemed gentlemanly enough at our house, and my greatest objection to him is that he is not likely to inherit a dollar of his father's money. Louise and I decided to keep him dangling until we could learn the truth of this matter, for you can easily understand that with her exceptional attractions there is no object in Louise throwing herself away upon a poor man, or one who cannot give her a prominent position in society. Imagine my horror, John, when I discovered last evening that my only child, whom I have so fondly cherished, has ungratefully deceived me. Carried away by the impetuous avowals of this young scapegrace, whom his own father disowns, she has confessed her love for him — love for a pauper! — and only by the most stringent exercise of my authority have I been able to exact from Louise a promise that she will

not become formally engaged to Arthur Weldon, or even correspond with him, until she has returned home. By that time I shall have learned more of his history and prospects, when I can better decide whether to allow the affair to go on. Of course I have hopes that in case my fears are proven to have been well founded, I can arouse Louise to a proper spirit and induce her to throw the fellow over. Meantime, I implore you, as my daughter's temporary guardian, not to allow Louise to speak of or dwell upon this young man, but try to interest her in other gentlemen whom you may meet and lead her to forget, if possible, her miserable entanglement. Consider a loving mother's feelings, John. Try to help me in this emergency, and I shall be forever deeply grateful."

"It's from mother, isn't it?" asked Louise, when he had finished reading the letter.

"Yes," he answered gruffly, as he crumpled the missive and stuffed it into his pocket.

"What does she say, Uncle?"

"Nothing but rubbish and nonsense. Eat your soup, my dear; it's getting cold."

The girl's sweet, low laughter sounded very pleasant, and served to calm his irritation. From her demure yet amused expression Uncle John guessed that Louise knew the tenor of her mother's letter as well as if she had read it over his shoulder, and it comforted him that she could take the matter so lightly. Perhaps the poor child was not so deeply in love as her mother had declared.

He was greatly annoyed at the confidence Mrs. Merrick had seen fit to repose in him, and felt she had no right to burden him with any knowledge of such an absurd condition of affairs just as he was starting for a holiday. Whatever might be the truth of the girl's "entanglement," — and he judged that it was not all conveyed in Martha Merrick's subtle letter — Louise would surely be free and unhampered by either love or maternal diplomacy for some time to come. When she returned home her mother might conduct the affair to suit herself. He would have nothing to do with it in any way.

As soon as luncheon was finished they rushed for the deck, and you may imagine that chubby little Uncle John, with his rosy, smiling face and kindly eyes, surrounded by three eager and attractive girls of from fifteen to seventeen years of age, was a sight to compel the attention of every passenger aboard the ship.

It was found easy to make the acquaintance of the interesting group, and many took advantage of that fact; for Uncle John chatted brightly with every man and Patsy required no excuse of a formal introduction to confide to

every woman that John Merrick was taking his three nieces to Europe to "see the sights and have the time of their lives."

Many of the business men knew well the millionaire's name, and accorded him great respect because he was so enormously wealthy and successful. But the little man was so genuinely human and unaffected and so openly scorned all toadyism that they soon forgot his greatness in the financial world and accepted him simply as a good fellow and an invariably cheerful comrade.

The weather was somewhat rough for the latter part of March — they had sailed the twenty-seventh — but the "Irene" was so staunch and rode the waves so gracefully that none of the party except Louise was at all affected by the motion. The eldest cousin, however, claimed to be indisposed for the first few days out, and so Beth and Patsy and Uncle John sat in a row in their steamer chairs, with the rugs tucked up to their waists, and kept themselves and everyone around them merry and light hearted.

Next to Patsy reclined a dark complexioned man of about thirty-five, with a long, thin face and intensely black, grave eyes. He was carelessly dressed and wore a flannel shirt, but there was an odd look of mingled refinement and barbarity about him that arrested the girl's attention. He sat very quietly in his chair, reserved both in speech and in manner; but when she forced him to talk he spoke impetuously and with almost savage emphasis, in a broken dialect that amused her immensely.

"You can't be American," she said.

"I am Sicilian," was the proud answer.

"That's what I thought; Sicilian or Italian or Spanish; but I'm glad it's Sicilian, which is the same as Italian. I can't speak your lingo myself," she continued, "although I am studying it hard; but you manage the English pretty well, so we shall get along famously together."

He did not answer for a moment, but searched her unconscious face with his keen eyes. Then he demanded, brusquely:

"Where do you go?"

"Why, to Europe," she replied, as if surprised.

"Europe? Pah! It is no answer at all," he responded, angrily. "Europe is big. To what part do you journey?"

Patsy hesitated. The magic word "Europe" had seemed to sum up their destination very effectively, and she had heretofore accepted it as sufficient, for the time being, at least. Uncle John had bought an armful of guide books and Baedeckers, but in the hurry of departure she had never glanced inside them. To go to Europe had been enough to satisfy her so far, but perhaps she should have more definite knowledge concerning their trip. So she turned to

Uncle John and said:

"Uncle, dear, to what part of Europe are we going?"

"What part?" he answered. "Why, it tells on the ticket, Patsy. I can't remember the name just now. It's where the ship stops, of course."

"That is Napoli," said the thin faced man, with a scarcely veiled sneer. "And then?"

"And then?" repeated Patsy, turning to her Uncle.

"Then? Oh, some confounded place or other that I can't think of. I'm not a time-table, Patsy; but the trip is all arranged, in beautiful style, by a friend of mine who has always wanted to go abroad, and so has the whole programme mapped out in his head."

"Is it in his head yet?" enquired Patsy, anxiously.

"No, dear; it's in the left hand pocket of my blue coat, all written down clearly. So what's the use of bothering? We aren't there yet. By and bye we'll get to Eu-rope an' do it up brown. Whatever happens, and wherever we go, it's got to be a spree and a jolly good time; so take it easy, Patsy dear, and don't worry."

"That's all right, Uncle," she rejoined, with a laugh. "I'm not worrying the least mite. But when folks ask us where we're going, what shall we say?"

"Eu-rope."

"And then?" mischievously.

"And then home again, of course. It's as plain as the nose on your face, Patsy Doyle, and a good bit straighter."

That made her laugh again, and the strange Italian, who was listening, growled a word in his native language. He wasn't at all a pleasant companion, but for that very reason Patsy determined to make him talk and "be sociable." By degrees he seemed to appreciate her attention, and always brightened when she came to sit beside him.

"You'll have to tell me your name, you know," she said to him; "because I can't be calling you 'Sir' every minute."

He glanced nervously around. Then he answered, slowly:

"I am called Valdi — Victor Valdi."

"Oh, that's a pretty name, Mr. Valdi — or should I say Signor?"

"You should."

"Do I pronounce it right?"

"No."

"Well, never mind if I don't; you'll know what I mean, and that I intend to be proper and polite," she responded, sweetly.

Beth, while she made fewer acquaintances than Patsy, seemed to have cast off her sullen reserve when she boarded the ship. In truth, the girl was really

happy for the first time in her life, and it softened her so wonderfully and made her so attractive that she soon formed a select circle around her. A young lady from Cleveland, who had two big brothers, was impelled to introduce herself to Beth because of the young men's intense admiration for the girl's beautiful face. When it was found that they were all from Ohio, they formed a friendly alliance at once. Marion Horton was so frank and agreeable that she managed to draw out all that was best in Beth's nature, and the stalwart young Hortons were so shyly enthusiastic over this, their first trip abroad, that they inspired the girl with a like ardor, which resulted in the most cordial relations between them.

And it so happened that several other young men who chanced to be aboard the "Princess Irene" marked the Hortons' intimacy with Beth and insisted on being introduced by them, so that by the time Louise had conquered her *mal-de-mer* and appeared on deck, she found an admiring group around her cousin that included most of the desirable young fellows on the ship. Beth sat enthroned like a queen, listening to her courtiers and smiling encouragement now and then, but taking little part in the conversation herself because of her inexperience. Such adoration was new to the little country girl, and she really enjoyed it. Nor did the young men resent her silence. All that they wanted her to do, as Tom Horton tersely expressed it, was to "sit still and look pretty."

As for Uncle John, he was so delighted with Beth's social success that he adopted all the boys on the spot, and made them a part of what he called his family circle.

Louise, discovering this state of affairs, gave an amused laugh and joined the group. She was a little provoked that she had isolated herself so long in her cabin when there was interesting sport on deck; but having lost some valuable time she straightway applied herself to redeem the situation.

In the brilliance of her conversation, in her studied glances, in a thousand pretty ways that were skillfully rendered effective, she had a decided advantage over her more beautiful cousin. When Louise really desired to please she was indeed a charming companion, and young men are not likely to detect insincerity in a girl who tries to captivate them.

The result was astonishing to Uncle John and somewhat humiliating to Beth; for a new queen was presently crowned, and Louise by some magnetic power assembled the court around herself. Only the youngest Horton boy, in whose susceptible heart Beth's image was firmly enshrined, refused to change his allegiance; but in truth the girl enjoyed herself more genuinely in the society of one loyal cavalier than when so many were clamoring for her favors. The two would walk the deck together for hours without exchanging

a single word, or sit together silently listening to the band or watching the waves, without the need, as Tom expressed it, of "jabbering every blessed minute" in order to be happy.

Patsy was indignant at the artfulness of Louise until she noticed that Beth was quite content; then she laughed softly and watched matters take their course, feeling a little sorry for the boys because she knew Louise was only playing with them.

The trip across the Atlantic was all too short. On the fifth of April they passed the Azores, running close to the islands of Fayal and San Jorge so that the passengers might admire the zigzag rows of white houses that reached from the shore far up the steep hillsides. On the sixth day they sighted Gibraltar and passed between the Moorish and Spanish lighthouses into the lovely waters of the Mediterranean. The world-famed rock was now disclosed to their eyes, and when the ship anchored opposite it Uncle John assisted his nieces aboard the lighter and took them for a brief excursion ashore.

Of course they rode to the fortress and wandered through its gloomy, impressive galleries, seeing little of the armament because visitors are barred from the real fortifications. The fortress did not seem especially impregnable and was, taken altogether, a distinct disappointment to them; but the ride through the town in the low basket phaetons was wholly delightful. The quaint, narrow streets and stone arches, the beautiful vistas of sea and mountain, the swarthy, dark-eyed Moors whose presence lent to the town an oriental atmosphere, and the queer market-places crowded with Spaniards, Frenchmen, Jews and red-coated English soldiers, altogether made up a panorama that was fascinating in the extreme.

But their stay was short, and after a rush of sightseeing that almost bewildered them they returned to the ship breathless but elated at having "seen an' done," as Uncle John declared, their first foreign port.

And now through waters so brightly blue and transparent that they aroused the girls' wonder and admiration, the good ship plowed her way toward the port of Naples, passing to the east of Sardinia and Corsica, which they viewed with eager interest because these places had always seemed so far away to them, and had now suddenly appeared as if by magic directly before their eyes.

Patsy and the big whiskered captain had become such good friends that he always welcomed the girl on his own exclusive deck, and this afternoon she sat beside him and watched the rugged panorama slip by.

"When will we get to Naples?" she asked.

"To-morrow evening, probably," answered the captain. "See, it is over in

that direction, where the gray cloud appears in the sky."

"And what is the gray cloud, Captain?"

"I do not know," said he, gravely. "Perhaps smoke from Vesuvius. At Gibraltar we heard that the volcano is in an ugly mood, I hope it will cause you no inconvenience."

"Wouldn't it be fine if we could see an eruption!" exclaimed the girl.

The captain shook his head.

"Interesting, perhaps," he admitted; "but no great calamity that causes thousands of people to suffer can be called 'fine.'"

"Ah, that is true!" she said, quickly. "I had forgotten the suffering."

Next morning all the sky was thick with smoke, and the sun was hidden. The waters turned gray, too, and as they approached the Italian coast the gloom perceptibly increased. A feeling of uneasiness seemed to pervade the ship, and even the captain had so many things to consider that he had no time to converse with his little friend.

Signor Valdi forsook his deck chair for the first time and stood at the rail which overlooked the steerage with his eyes glued to the grim skies ahead. When Uncle John asked him what he saw he answered, eagerly:

"Death and destruction, and a loss of millions of lira to the bankrupt government. I know; for I have studied Etna for years, and Vesuvio is a second cousin to Etna."

"Hm," said Uncle John. "You seem pleased with the idea of an eruption."

The thin faced man threw a shrewd look from his dark eyes and smiled. Uncle John frowned at the look and stumped away. He was not at all easy in his own mind. He had brought three nieces for a holiday to this foreign shore, and here at the outset they were confronted by an intangible danger that was more fearful because it was not understood. It was enough to make his round face serious, although he had so strong an objection to unnecessary worry.

Afternoon tea was served on deck amidst an unusual quiet. People soberly canvassed the situation and remarked upon the fact that the darkness increased visibly as they neared the Bay of Naples. Beth couldn't drink her tea, for tiny black atoms fell through the air and floated upon the surface of the liquid. Louise retired to her stateroom with a headache, and found her white serge gown peppered with particles of lava dust which had fallen from the skies.

The pilot guided the ship cautiously past Capri and into the bay. The air was now black with volcanic dross and a gloom as of midnight surrounded them on every side. The shore, the mountain and the water of the bay itself were alike invisible.

CHAPTER V

VESUVIUS RAMPANT

It was Saturday night, the seventh day of April, nineteen hundred and six — a night never to be forgotten by those aboard the ship; a night which has its place in history.

At dinner the captain announced that he had dropped anchor at the Immacollatella Nuova, but at a safe distance from the shore, and that no passengers would be landed under any circumstances until the fall of ashes ceased and he could put his people ashore in a proper manner.

A spirit of unrest fell upon them all. Big Tom Horton whispered to Beth that he did not intend to leave her side until all danger was over. The deck was deserted, all the passengers crowding into the smoking room and saloons to escape the lava dust.

Few kept their rooms or ventured to sleep. At intervals a loud detonation from the volcano shook the air, and the mystery and awe of the enveloping gloom were so palpable as almost to be felt.

Toward midnight the wind changed, driving the cloud of ashes to the southward and sufficiently clearing the atmosphere to allow the angry glow of the crater to be distinctly seen. Now it shot a pillar of fire thousands of feet straight into the heavens; then it would darken and roll skyward great clouds that were illumined by the showers of sparks accompanying them.

The windows of every cabin facing the volcano were filled with eager faces, and in the smoking room Uncle John clasped Beth around the waist with one arm and Patsy with the other and watched the wonderful exhibition through the window with a grave and anxious face. Tom Horton had taken a position at one side of them and the dark Italian at the other. The latter assured Patsy they were in no danger whatever. Tom secretly hoped they were, and laid brave plans for rescuing Beth or perishing at her side. Louise chose to lie in her berth and await events with calm resignation. If they escaped she would not look haggard and hollow-eyed when morning came. If a catastrophy was pending she would have no power to prevent it.

It was four o'clock on Sunday morning when Vesuvius finally reached the climax of her travail. With a deep groan of anguish the mountain burst asunder, and from its side rolled a great stream of molten lava that slowly spread down the slope, consuming trees, vineyards and dwellings in its path and overwhelming the fated city of Bosco-Trecase.

Our friends marked the course of destruction by watching the thread of fire slowly wander down the mountain slope. They did not know of the desolation it was causing, but the sight was terrible enough to inspire awe in

every breast.

The volcano was easier after that final outburst, but the black clouds formed thicker than ever, and soon obscured the sky again.

CHAPTER VI
UNDER A CLOUD

"After all," said Uncle John, next morning, "we may consider ourselves very lucky. Your parents might have come to Naples a hundred times, my dears, and your children may come a hundred times more, and yet never see the sights that have greeted us on our arrival. If the confounded old hill was bound to spout, it did the fair thing by spouting when we were around. Eh, Patsy?"

"I quite agree with you," said the girl. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything — if it really had to behave so."

"But you'll pay for it!" growled Signor Valdi, who had overheard these remarks. "You will pay for it with a thousand discomforts — and I'm glad that is so. Vesuvio is hell let loose; and it amuses you. Hundreds are lying dead and crushed; and you are lucky to be here. Listen," he dropped his voice to a whisper: "if these Neapolitans could see the rejoicing in my heart, they would kill me. And you? Pah! you are no better. You also rejoice — and they will welcome you to Naples. I have advice. Do not go on shore. It is useless."

They were all startled by this strange speech, and the reproof it conveyed made them a trifle uncomfortable; but Uncle John whispered that the man was mad, and to pay no attention to him.

Although ashes still fell softly upon the ship the day had somewhat lightened the gloom and they could see from deck the dim outlines of the shore. A crowd of boats presently swarmed around them, their occupants eagerly clamoring for passengers to go ashore, or offering fruits, flowers and souvenirs to any who might be induced to purchase. Their indifference to their own and their city's danger was astonishing. It was their custom to greet arriving steamers in this way, for by this means they gained a livelihood. Nothing short of absolute destruction seemed able to interfere with their established occupations.

A steam tender also came alongside, and after a cordial farewell to the ship's officers and their travelling acquaintances, Uncle John placed his nieces and their baggage aboard the tender, which shortly deposited them safely upon the dock.

Perhaps a lot of passengers more dismal looking never before landed on the beautiful shores of Naples — beautiful no longer, but presenting an appearance gray and grewsome. Ashes were ankle deep in the streets — a fine, flour-like dust that clung to your clothing, filled your eyes and lungs and seemed to penetrate everywhere. The foliage of the trees and shrubbery drooped under its load and had turned from green to the all-pervading gray.

The grass was covered; the cornices and balconies of the houses were banked with ashes.

"Bless me!" said Uncle John. "It's as bad as Pompey, or whatever that city was called that was buried in the Bible days."

"Oh, not quite, Uncle," answered Patsy, in her cheery voice; "but it may be, before Vesuvius is satisfied."

"It is certainly bad enough," observed Louise, pouting as she marked the destruction of her pretty cloak by the grimy deposit that was fast changing its color and texture.

"Well, let us get under shelter as soon as possible," said Uncle John.

The outlines of a carriage were visible a short distance away. He walked up to the driver and said:

"We want to go to a hotel."

The man paid no attention.

"Ask him how much he charges, Uncle. You know you mustn't take a cab in Naples without bargaining."

"Why not?"

"The driver will swindle you."

"I'll risk that," he answered. "Just now we're lucky if we get a carriage at all." He reached up and prodded the jehu in the ribs with his cane. "How much to the Hotel Vesuvius?" he demanded, loudly.

The man woke up and flourished his whip, at the same time bursting into a flood of Italian.

The girls listened carefully. They had been trying to study Italian from a small book Beth had bought entitled "Italian in Three Weeks without a Master," but not a word the driver of the carriage said seemed to have occurred in the vocabulary of the book. He repeated "Vesuvio" many times, however, with scornful, angry or imploring intonations, and Louise finally said:

"He thinks you want to go to the volcano, Uncle. The hotel is the Vesuve, not the Vesuvius."

"What's the difference?"

"I don't know."

"All right; you girls just hop in, and leave the rest to me."

He tumbled them all into the vehicle, bag and baggage, and then said sternly to the driver:

"Ho-tel Ve-suve — Ve-suve — ho-tel Ve-suve! Drive there darned quick, or I'll break your confounded neck."

The carriage started. It plowed its way jerkily through the dust-laden streets and finally stopped at an imposing looking structure. The day was

growing darker, and an electric lamp burned before the entrance. But no one came out to receive them.

Uncle John climbed out and read the sign. “Hotel du Vesuve.” It was the establishment he had been advised to stop at while in Naples. He compared the sign with a card which he drew from his pocket, and knew that he had made no mistake.

Entering the spacious lobby, he found it deserted. In the office a man was hastily making a package of some books and papers and did not respond or even look up when spoken to. At the concierge’s desk a big, whiskered man sat staring straight ahead of him with a look of abject terror in his eyes.

“Good morning,” said Uncle John. “Fine day, isn’t it?”

“Did you hear it?” whispered the concierge, as a dull boom, like that of a distant cannon, made the windows rattle in their casements.

“Of course,” replied Mr. Merrick, carelessly. “Old Vesuve seems on a rampage. But never mind that now. We’ve just come from America, where the mountains are more polite, and we’re going to stop at your hotel.”

The concierge’s eyes wandered from the man to the three girls who had entered and grouped themselves behind him. Then they fell upon the driver of the carriage, who burst into a torrent of vociferous but wholly unintelligible exclamations which Uncle John declared “must be an excuse — and a mighty poor one — for talking.”

The whiskered man, whose cap was elaborately embroidered in gold with the words “Hotel du Vesuve,” seemed to understand the driver. He sighed drearily and said to Mr. Merrick:

“You must pay him thirty lira.”

“How much is that?”

“Six dollars.”

“Not by a jugfull!”

“You made no bargain.”

“I couldn’t. He can’t talk.”

“He claims it is you who cannot talk.”

“What!”

“And prices are advanced during these awful days. What does it matter? Your money will do you no good when we are all buried deep in ash and scoria.”

The big man shuddered at this gloomy picture, and added, listlessly: “You’ll have to pay.”

Uncle John paid, but the driver wouldn’t accept American money. The disconsolate concierge would, though. He unlocked a drawer, put the six dollars into one section and drew from another two ten-lira notes. The driver

took them, bowed respectfully to the whiskered man, shot a broadside of invective Italian at the unconscious Americans, and left the hotel.

"How about rooms?" asked Uncle John.

"Take any you please," answered the concierge. "All our guests are gone but two — two mad Americans like yourselves. The servants are also gone; the chef has gone; the elevator conductors are gone. If you stay you'll have to walk up."

"Where have they all gone?" asked Uncle John, wonderingly.

"Fled, sir; fled to escape destruction. They remember Pompeii. Only Signor Floriano, the proprietor, and myself are left. We stick to the last. We are brave."

"So I see. Now, look here, my manly hero. It's possible we shall all live through it; I'll bet you a thousand to ten that we do. And then you'll be glad to realize you've pocketed a little more American money. Come out of that box and show us some rooms, and I'll help to build up your fortune."

The concierge obeyed. Even the horrors of the situation could not eliminate from his carefully trained nature that desire to accumulate which is the prime qualification of his profession. The Americans walked up one flight and found spacious rooms on the first floor, of which they immediately took possession.

"Send for our trunks," said Mr. Merrick; and the man consented to do so provided he could secure a proper vehicle.

"You will be obliged to pay high for it," he warned; "but that will not matter. To witness the destruction of our beautiful Naples is an unusual sight. It will be worth your money."

"We'll settle that in the dim hereafter," replied Uncle John. "You get the trunks, and I'll take care of the finances."

When the concierge had retired the girls began to stuff newspapers into the cracks of the windows of their sitting room, where the fine ash was sifting in and forming little drifts several inches in thickness. Also the atmosphere of the room was filled with impalpable particles of dust, which rendered breathing oppressive and unpleasant.

Uncle John watched them for a time, and his brow clouded.

"See here, girls," he exclaimed; "let's hold a council of war. Do you suppose we are in any real danger?"

They grouped around him with eager interest.

"It's something new to be in danger, and rather exciting, don't you think?" said Beth. "But perhaps we're as safe as we would be at home."

"Once," said Louise, slowly, "there was a great eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Many of the

inhabitants were buried alive. Perhaps they thought there was no real danger."

Uncle John scratched his head reflectively.

"I take it," he observed, "that the moral of your story is to light out while we have the chance."

"Not necessarily," observed the girl, smiling at his perplexity. "It is likewise true that many other eruptions have occurred, when little damage was done."

"Forewarned is forearmed," declared Patsy. "Naples isn't buried more than six inches in ashes, as yet, and it will take days for them to reach to our windows, provided they're falling at the same rate they do now. I don't see any use of getting scared before to-morrow, anyhow."

"It's a big hill," said Uncle John, gravely, "and I've no right to take foolish chances with three girls on my hands."

"I'm not frightened, Uncle John."

"Nor I."

"Nor I, the least bit."

"Everyone has left the hotel but ourselves," said he.

"How sorry they will be, afterward," remarked Beth.

He looked at them admiringly, and kissed each one.

"You stay in this room and don't move a peg till I get back," he enjoined them; "I'm going out to look over the situation."

CHAPTER VII
A FRIEND IN NEED

Some of Mr. Merrick's business friends in New York, hearing of his proposed trip, had given him letters of introduction to people in various European cities. He had accepted them — quite a bunch, altogether — but had firmly resolved not to use them. Neither he nor the nieces cared to make superficial acquaintances during their wanderings. Yet Uncle John chanced to remember that one of these letters was to a certain Colonel Angeli of the Twelfth Italian Regiment, occupying the barracks on the Pizzofalcone hill at Naples. This introduction, tendered by a relative of the Colonel's American wife, was now reposing in Mr. Merrick's pocket, and he promptly decided to make use of it in order to obtain expert advice as to the wisdom of remaining in the stricken city.

Enquiring his way from the still dazed concierge, he found that the Pizzofalcone barracks were just behind the hotel but several hundred feet above it; so he turned up the Strada St. Lucia and soon came upon the narrow lane that wound upward to the fortifications. It was a long and tedious climb in the semi-darkness caused by the steady fall of ashes, and at intervals the detonations from Vesuvius shook the huge rock and made its massive bulk seem insecure. But the little man persevered, and finally with sweating brow arrived at the barracks.

A soldier carried in the letter to his colonel and presently returned to usher Uncle John through the vast building, up a flight of steps, and so to a large covered balcony suspended many hundred feet above the Via Partenope, where the hotel was situated.

Here was seated a group of officers, watching intently the cloud that marked the location of the volcano. Colonel Angeli, big and bluff, his uniform gorgeous, his dark, heavy moustaches carefully waxed, his handsome face as ingenuous and merry as a schoolboy's, greeted the American with a gracious courtesy that made Uncle John feel quite at his ease. When he heard of the nieces the Italian made a grimace and then laughed.

"I am despairing, signore," said he, in English sufficiently strangulated to be amusing but nevertheless quite comprehensible, "that you and the sweet signorini are to see our lovely Naples under tribulations so very great. But yesterday, in all the world is no city so enchanting, so brilliant, so gay. To-day — look! is it not horrible? Vesuvio is sick, and Naples mourns until the tyrant is well again."

"But the danger," said Uncle John. "What do you think of the wisdom of

our staying here? Is it safe to keep my girls in Naples during this eruption?"

"Ah! Why not? This very morning the mountain asunder burst, and we who love our people dread the news of devastation we shall hear. From the observatory, where His Majesty's faithful servant still remains, come telegrams that the great pebbles — what we call scoria — have ruined Ottajano and San Guiseppe. Perhaps they are overwhelmed. But the beast has vomited; he will feel better now, and ever become more quiet."

"I suppose," remarked Mr. Merrick, thoughtfully, "that no one knows exactly what the blamed hill may do next. I don't like to take chances with three girls on my hands. They are a valuable lot, Colonel, and worth saving."

The boyish Italian instantly looked grave. Then he led Uncle John away from the others, although doubtless he was the only officer present able to speak or understand English, and said to him:

"Where are you living?"

"At the hotel named after your sick mountain — the Vesuve."

"Very good. In the bay, not distant from your hotel, lies a government launch that is under my command. At my home in the Viala Elena are a wife and two children, who, should danger that is serious arise, will be put by my soldiers on the launch, to carry them to safety. Admirable, is it not?"

"Very good arrangement," said Uncle John.

"It renders me content to know that in any difficulty they cannot be hurt. I am not scare, myself, but it is pleasant to know I have what you call the side that is safe. From my American wife I have many of your excellent speech figures. But now! The launch is big. Remain happy in Naples — happy as Vesuvio will let you — and watch his vast, his gigantic exhibition. If danger come, you all enter my launch and be saved. If no danger, you have a marvelous experience." The serious look glided from his face, and was replaced by a smile as bright as before.

"Thank you very much," responded Uncle John, gratefully. "I shall go back to the girls well satisfied."

"Make the signorini stay in to-day," warned the colonel. "It is bad, just now, and so black one can nothing at all observe. To-morrow it will be better, and all can go without. I will see you myself, then, and tell you what to do."

Then he insisted that Uncle John clear his parched throat with a glass of vermouth — a harmless drink of which all Italians are very fond — and sent him away much refreshed in body and mind.

He made his way through the ashy rain back to the hotel. People were holding umbrellas over their heads and plodding through the dust with seeming unconcern. At one corner a street singer was warbling, stopping

frequently to cough the lava dust from his throat or shake it from his beloved mandolin. A procession of peasants passed, chanting slowly and solemnly a religious hymn. At the head of the column was borne aloft a gilded statuette of the Virgin, and although Uncle John did not know it, these simple folks were trusting in the sacred image to avert further disaster from the angry mountain.

On arriving home Mr. Merrick told the girls with great elation of his new friend, and how they were to be taken aboard the launch in case of emergency.

"But how will we know when danger threatens?" asked Louise.

While Uncle John tried to think of an answer to this puzzling query someone knocked upon the door. The concierge was standing in the passage and beside him was a soldier in uniform, a natty cock's plume upon his beaver hat and a short carbine over his arm.

"A guard from Colonel Angeli, Signor," said the concierge, respectfully — the first respectful tone he had yet employed.

The soldier took off his hat with a flourish, and bowed low.

"He is to remain in the hotel, sir, yet will not disturb you in any way," continued the whiskered one. "But should he approach you at any time and beckon you to follow him, do so at once, and without hesitation. It is Colonel Angeli's wish. You are in the charge of this brave man, who will watch over your welfare."

"That settles it, my dears," said Uncle John, cheerfully, when the soldier and the concierge had withdrawn. "This Italian friend doesn't do things by halves, and I take it we are perfectly safe from this time on."

CHAPTER VIII
ACROSS THE BAY

Tom Horton called an hour later. He was in despair because his party had decided to leave Naples for Rome, and he feared Beth would be engulfed by the volcano unless he was present to protect her.

"Mr. Merrick," said the boy, earnestly, "you'll take good care of Miss De Graf, sir, won't you? We both live in Ohio, you know, and we've just got acquainted; and — and I'd like to see her again, some time, if she escapes."

Uncle John's eyes twinkled, but he drew a long face.

"My dear Tom," he said, "don't ask me to take care of anyone — please don't! I brought these girls along to take care of *me* — three of 'em, sir — and they've got to do their duty. Don't you worry about the girls; just you worry about *me*."

That was not much consolation for the poor fellow, but he could do nothing more than wring their hands — Beth's twice, by mistake — and wish them good luck before he hurried away to rejoin his family.

"I'm sorry to see him go," said Beth, honestly. "Tom is a nice boy."

"Quite right," agreed Uncle John. "I hope we shall meet no worse fellows than Tom Horton."

At noon they were served a modest luncheon in their rooms, for Signor Floriano, having sent his important papers to a place of safety, had resolved to stick to his hotel and do his duty by any guests that chose to remain with him in defiance of the existent conditions. He had succeeded in retaining a few servants who had more courage than those that had stampeded at the first alarm, and while the hotel service for the next few days was very inadequate, no one was liable to suffer any great privation.

During the afternoon the gloom grew denser than before, while thicker than ever fell the rain of ashes. This was the worst day Naples experienced during the great eruption, and Uncle John and his nieces were content to keep their rooms and live in the glare of electric lights. Owing to their wise precautions to keep out the heavily laden air they breathed as little lava dust into their lungs as any people, perhaps, in the city; but to escape all was impossible. Their eyes and throats became more or less inflamed by the floating atoms, and the girls declared they felt as if they were sealed up in a tomb.

"Well, my chickens, how do you like being abroad, and actually in Europe?" enquired Uncle John, cheerfully.

Beth and Patsy smiled at him, but Louise looked up from the Baedecker she was studying and replied:

“It’s simply delightful, Uncle, and I’m glad we happened here during this splendid eruption of Vesuvius. Only — only — ”

“Only what, my dear?”

“Only it is such hard work to keep clean,” answered his dainty niece. “Even the water is full of lava, and I’m sure my face looks like a chimney-sweep’s.”

“And you, Beth?”

“I don’t like it, Uncle. I’m sure I’d prefer Naples in sunshine, although this is an experience we can brag about when we get home.”

“That is the idea, exactly,” said Louise, “and the only thing that reconciles me to the discomforts. Thousands see Naples in sunshine, but few can boast seeing Vesuvius in eruption. It will give us considerable prestige when we return home.”

“Ah, that is why I selected this time to bring you here,” declared Uncle John, with a comical wink. “I ordered the eruption before I left home, and I must say they’ve been very prompt about it, and done the thing up brown. Eh, Patsy?”

“Right you are, Uncle. But you might tell ‘em to turn off the eruption now, because we’ve had enough.”

“Don’t like Eu-rope, eh?”

“Why, if I thought all Europe was surrounded by volcanoes, I’d go home at once, if I had to walk. But the geographies don’t mention many of these spouters, so we may as well stick out our present experience and hope the rest of the continent will behave better. The Major’ll be worried to death when he hears of this.”

“I’ve sent him a cable,” said Uncle John.

“What did you say?” asked Patsy, eagerly.

“‘All safe and well and enjoying the fireworks.’“

“I’m glad you did that,” replied the girl, deeply grateful at this evidence of thoughtfulness. “It’s bad enough for the Major to have me away, without making him worry, into the bargain.”

“Well, no one is likely to worry about me,” said Beth, philosophically.

“Mother seldom reads the papers, except to get the society news,” remarked Louise. “I doubt if she’ll hear of the eruption, unless the Major happens to tell her.”

“I’ve cabled them all,” said Uncle John. “They’re entitled to know that their kidiwinkles are in good shape.”

The evening was a tedious one, although they tried to enliven it with a game of bridge, in which Uncle John and Louise were quite proficient and the others dreadfully incompetent. Once in a while the volcano thundered a

deep detonation that caused the windows to shiver, but the Americans were getting used to the sound and paid little heed to it.

In the morning the wind had shifted, and although the air was still full of dust all near-by objects were clearly visible and even the outline of Vesuvius could be seen sending skyward its pillar of black smoke.

Colonel Angeli appeared soon after breakfast, his uniform fresh and bright and his boyish face beaming as pleasantly as ever.

"Vesuvio is better," said he, "but the rascal has badly acted and done much harm to our poor people. Like Herculaneum, our Boscatrecase is covered with lava; like Pompeii our Ottajano is buried in ashes. Let me advise you. To-day go to Sorrento, and there stay for a time, until we can the dust brush from our streets and prepare to welcome you with the comfort more serene. I must myself ride to the villages that are suffering. My men are already gone, with the Red-Cross corps, to succor whom they can. I will send to you word when you may return. Just now, should you stay, you will be able to see nothing at all."

"I believe that is wise counsel," replied Uncle John.

"Sorrento has no ashes," continued the Colonel, "and from there you may watch the volcano better than from Naples. To-day come the Duke and Duchess d'Aosta to render assistance to the homeless and hungry; to-morrow His Majesty the King will be here to discover what damage has been caused. Alas! we have no sackcloth, but we are in ashes. I trust you will pardon my poor Naples for her present inhospitality."

"Sure thing," said Uncle John. "The city may be under a cloud, but her people are the right stuff, and we are greatly obliged to you for all your kindness to us."

"But that is so little!" said the colonel, deprecatingly.

They decided to leave their heavy baggage at the Hotel du Vesuve, and carried only their suit-cases and light luggage aboard the little steamer that was bound across the bay for Sorrento. The decks were thronged with people as eager to get away from the stricken city as were our friends, and Uncle John was only enabled to secure seats for his girls by bribing a steward so heavily that even that modern brigand was amazed at his good fortune.

The ride was short but very interesting, for they passed under the shadow of the smoking mountain and came into a fresh, sweet atmosphere that was guiltless of a speck of the disagreeable lava dust that had so long annoyed them. The high bluffs of Sorrento, with their picturesque villas and big hotels, seemed traced in burnished silver by the strong sunshine, and every member of Uncle John's party was glad that Colonel Angeli had suggested this pleasant change of condition.

Small boats took them ashore and an elevator carried them swiftly to the top of the cliff and deposited them on the terrace of the Victoria, a beautiful inn that nestled in a garden brilliant with splendid flowers and shrubbery. Here they speedily established themselves, preparing to enjoy their first real experience of “Sunny Italy.”

CHAPTER IX
COUNT FERRALTI

At dinner it was announced that the famous Tarantella would be danced in the lower hall of the hotel at nine o'clock, and the girls told Uncle John that they must not miss this famous sight, which is one of the most unique in Sorrento, or indeed in all Italy.

As they entered the pretty, circular hall devoted to the dance Louise gave a start of surprise. A goodly audience had already assembled in the room, and among them the girl seemed to recognize an acquaintance, for after a brief hesitation she advanced and placed her hand in that of a gentleman who had risen on her entrance and hastened toward her.

He was a nice looking young fellow, Beth thought, and had a foreign and quite distinguished air.

Presently Louise turned with cheeks somewhat flushed and brought the gentleman to her party, introducing him to Uncle John and her cousins as Count Ferralti, whom she had once met in New York while he was on a visit to America.

The Count twirled his small and slender moustaches in a way that Patsy thought affected, and said in excellent English:

"It delights me to meet Mr. Merrick and the young ladies. May I express a hope that you are pleased with my beautiful country?"

"Are you Italian?" asked Uncle John, regarding the young man critically.

"Surely, Mr. Merrick. But I have resided much in New York, and may well claim to be an adopted son of your great city."

"New York adopts a good many," said Uncle John, drily. "It has even been thoughtless enough to adopt me."

The dancers entered at that moment and the Americans were forced to seat themselves hastily so as not to obstruct the view of others. Count Ferralti found a place beside Louise, but seemed to have little to say to her during the course of the entertainment.

The dances were unique and graceful, being executed by a troup of laughing peasants dressed in native costume, who seemed very proud of their accomplishment and anxious to please the throng of tourists present. The Tarantella originated in Ischia, but Sorrento and Capri have the best dancers.

Afterward Uncle John and his nieces stood upon the terrace and watched the volcano rolling its dense clouds, mingled with sparks of red-hot scoria, toward the sky. The Count clung to Louise's side, but also tried to make himself agreeable to her cousins. In their rooms that night Patsy told Beth that the young foreigner was "too highfalutin' to suit her," and Beth replied

that his manners were so like those of their Cousin Louise that the two ought to get along nicely together.

Uncle John liked his nieces to make friends, and encouraged young men generally to meet them; but there was something in the appearance of this callow Italian nobleman that stamped his character as artificial and insincere. He resolved to find out something about his antecedents before he permitted the young fellow to establish friendly relations with his girls.

Next morning after breakfast he wandered through the lobby and paused at the little office, where he discovered that the proprietor of this hotel was a brother of that Floriano who managed the Hotel du Vesuve. That gave him an excuse to talk with the man, who spoke very good English and was exceedingly courteous to his guests — especially when they were American.

"I see you have Count Ferralti with you," remarked Uncle John.

"Whom, sir?"

"Ferralti — Count Ferralti. The young man standing by the window, yonder."

"I — I did not know," he said, hesitatingly. "The gentleman arrived last evening, and I had not yet learned his name. Let me see," he turned to his list of guests, who register by card and not in a book, and continued: "Ah, yes; he has given his name as Ferralti, but added no title. A count, did you say?"

"Yes," replied Uncle John.

The proprietor looked curiously toward the young man, whose back only was visible. Then he remarked that the eruption of Vesuvius was waning and the trouble nearly over for this time.

"Are the Ferraltis a good family?" asked Uncle John, abruptly.

"That I cannot tell you, Signor Merrick."

"Oh. Perhaps you know little about the nobility of your country."

"I! I know little of the nobility!" answered Floriano, indignantly. "My dear signor, there is no man better posted as to our nobility in all Italy."

"Yet you say you don't know the Ferralti family."

The proprietor reached for a book that lay above his desk.

"Observe, signor. Here is our record of nobility. It is the same as the 'Blue Book' or the 'Peerage' of England. Either fortunately or unfortunately — I cannot say — you have no need of such a book in America."

He turned the pages and ran his finger down the line of "Fs."

"Find me, if you can, a Count Ferralti in the list."

Uncle John looked. He put on his glasses and looked again. The name of Ferralti was no place in the record.

"Then there is no such count, Signor Floriano."

"And no such noble family, Signor Merrick."

Uncle John whistled softly and walked away to the window. The young man greeted him with a smile and a bow.

"I misunderstood your name last evening," he said. "I thought you were Count Ferralti."

"And that is right, sir," was the prompt reply. "Allow me to offer you my card."

Uncle John took the card and read:

"CONTE LEONARDI FERRALTI,
Milano, Italia."

He carefully placed the card in his pocket-book.

"Thank you," said he. "It's a fine morning, Count."

"Charming, Mr. Merrick."

Uncle John walked away. He was glad that he had not suspected the young man unjustly. When an imposture is unmasked it is no longer dangerous.

He joined his nieces, who were all busily engaged in writing letters home, and remarked, casually:

"You've been deceived in your Italian friend, Louise. He is neither a count nor of noble family, although I suppose when you met him in New York he had an object in posing as a titled aristocrat."

The girl paused, examining the point of her pen thoughtfully.

"Are you sure, Uncle John?"

"Quite sure, my dear. I've just been through the list of Italian counts, and his name is not there. Floriano, the proprietor, who knows every aristocrat in Italy, has never before heard of him."

"How singular!" exclaimed Louise. "I wonder why he has tried to deceive us."

"Oh, the world is full of impostors; but when you are on to their game they are quite harmless. Of course we won't encourage this young man in any way. It will be better to avoid him."

"He — he seems very nice and gentlemanly," said Louise with hesitation.

The other girls exchanged glances, but made no remark. Uncle John hardly knew what to say further. He felt he was in an awkward position, for Louise was the most experienced in worldly ways of his three nieces and he had no desire to pose as a stern guardian or to deprive his girls of any passing pleasure they might enjoy. Moreover, Louise being in love with that young Weldon her mother so strongly objected to, she would not be likely to care much for this Italian fellow, and Mrs. Merrick had enjoined him to keep her daughter's mind from dwelling on her "entanglement."

"Oh, well, my dear," he said to her, "you must act as you see fit. I do not

imagine we shall see much of this young man, in any event, and now that you are well aware of the fact that he is sailing under false colors, you will know how to handle him better than I can advise you."

"I shall be very careful," said Louise slowly, as she resumed her writing.

"Well then, girls, what do you say to a stroll around the village?" asked their uncle. "I'm told it's a proper place to buy silk stockings and inlaid wood-work. They come assorted, I suppose."

Beth and Patsy jumped up with alacrity, but Louise pleaded that she had several more letters to write; so the others left her and passed the rest of the forenoon in rummaging among the quaint shops of Sorrento, staring at the statue of Tasso, and enjoying the street scenes so vividly opposed to those of America. It was almost their first glimpse of foreign manners and customs. In Naples they had as yet seen nothing but darkness and falling ashes.

CHAPTER X

THE ROAD TO AMALFI

The Hotel Victoria faces the bay of Naples. Back of it are the famous gardens, and as you emerge from these you find yourself upon the narrow main street of Sorrento, not far from the Square of Tasso.

As our little party entered this street they were immediately espied by the vetturini, or cabmen, who rushed toward them with loud cries while they waved their whips frantically to attract attention. One tall fellow was dressed in a most imposing uniform of blue and gold, with a high hat bearing a cockade *a la Inglese* and shiny top boots. His long legs enabled him to outstrip the others, and in an almost breathless voice he begged Uncle John to choose his carriage: "the besta carrozza ina town!"

"We don't want to ride," was the answer.

The cabman implored. Certainly they must make the Amalfi drive, or to Massa Lubrense or Saint' Agata or at least Il Deserto! The others stood by to listen silently to the discussion, yielding first place to the victor in the race.

Uncle John was obdurate.

"All we want to-day is to see the town," he declared, "We're not going to ride, but walk."

"Ah, but the Amalfi road, signore! Surely you will see that."

"To-morrow, perhaps; not now."

"To-morrow, signore! It is good. At what hour, to-morrow, illustrissimo?"

"Oh, don't bother me."

"We may as well drive to Amalfi to-morrow," suggested Beth. "It is the proper thing to do, Uncle."

"All right; we'll go, then."

"You take my carrozza, signore?" begged the cabman. "It is besta ina town."

"Let us see it."

Instantly the crowd scampered back to the square, followed more leisurely by Uncle John and the girls. There the uniformed vetturio stood beside the one modern carriage in the group. It was new; it was glossy; it had beautiful, carefully brushed cushions; it was drawn by a pair of splendid looking horses.

"Is not bellissima, signore?" asked the man, proudly.

"All right," announced Uncle John, nodding approval. "Be ready to start at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

The man promised, whereat his confreres lost all interest in the matter and the strangers were allowed to proceed without further interruption.

They found out all about the Amalfi drive that evening, and were glad indeed they had decided to go. Even Louise was pleased at the arrangement and as eager as the others to make the trip. It is one of the most famous drives in the world, along a road built upon the rocky cliff that overhangs the sea and continually winds in and out as it follows the outlines of the crags.

They had an early breakfast and were ready at nine o'clock; but when they came to the gate of the garden they found only a dilapidated carriage standing before it.

"Do you know where my rig is?" Uncle John asked the driver, at the same time peering up and down the road.

"It is me, sir signore. I am engage by you. Is it not so?"

Mr. Merrick looked at the driver carefully. It was long-legs, sure enough, but shorn of his beautiful regalia.

"Where's your uniform?" he asked.

"Ah, I have leave it home. The road is dusty, very; I must not ruin a nice dress when I work," answered the man, smiling unabashed.

"But the carriage. What has become of the fine carriage and the good horses, sir?"

"Ah, it is dreadful; it is horrible, signore. I find me the carrozza is not easy; it is not perfect; it do not remain good for a long ride. So I leave him home, for I am kind. I do not wish the signorini bella to tire and weep. But see the fine vetture you now have! Is he not easy like feathers, an' strong, an' molto buena?"

"It may be a bird, but it don't look it," said Uncle John, doubtfully. "I rented the best looking rig in town, and you bring me the worst."

"Only try, signore! Others may look; it is only you who must ride. You will be much please when we return."

"Well, I suppose we may as well take it," said the little man, in a resigned tone. "Hop in, my dears."

They entered the crazy looking vehicle and found the seats ample and comfortable despite the appearance of dilapidation everywhere prevalent. The driver mounted the box, cracked his whip, and the lean nags ambled away at a fair pace.

They passed near to the square, where the first thing that attracted Uncle John's attention was the beautiful turnout he had hired yesterday. It was standing just as it had before, and beside it was another man dressed in the splendid uniform his driver had claimed that he had left at home.

"Here — stop! Stop, I say!" he yelled at the man, angrily. But the fellow seemed suddenly deaf, and paid no heed. He cracked his whip and rattled away through the streets without a glance behind him. The girls laughed and

Uncle John stopped waving his arms and settled into his seat with a groan.

"We've been swindled, my dears," he said; "swindled most beautifully. But I suppose we may as well make the best of it."

"Better," agreed Patsy. "This rig is all right, Uncle. It may not be as pretty as the other, but I expect that one is only kept to make engagements with. When it comes to actual use, we don't get it."

"That's true enough," he returned. "But I'll get even with this rascal before I've done with him, never fear."

It was a cold, raw morning, but the portiere at the Victoria had told them the sun would be out presently and the day become more genial. Indeed, the sun did come out, but only to give a discouraged look at the landscape and retire again. During this one day in which they rode to Amalfi and back, Uncle John afterward declared that they experienced seven different kinds of weather. They had sunshine, rain, hail, snow and a tornado; and then rain again and more sunshine. "Sunny Italy" seemed a misnomer that day, as indeed it does many days in winter and spring, when the climate is little better than that prevailing in the eastern and central portions of the United States. And perhaps one suffers more in Italy than in America, owing to the general lack of means to keep warm on cold days. The Italian, shivering and blue, will tell you it is not cold at all, for he will permit no reproach to lie on his beloved land; but the traveller frequently becomes discouraged, and the American contingent, especially, blames those misleading English writers who, finding relief from their own bleak island in Italian climes, exaggerated the conditions by apostrophizing the country as "Sunny Italy" and for more than a century uttered such rhapsodies in its praise that the whole world credited them — until it acquired personal experience of the matter.

Italy is beautiful; it is charming and delightful; but seldom is this true in winter or early spring.

The horses went along at a spanking pace that was astonishing. They passed through the picturesque lanes of Sorrento, climbed the further slope, and brought the carriage to the other side of the peninsula, where the girls obtained their first view of the Gulf of Salerno, with the lovely Isles of the Sirens lying just beneath them.

And now they were on the great road that skirts the coast as far as Salerno, and has no duplicate in all the known world. For it is cut from the solid rock of precipitous cliffs rising straight from the sea, which the highway overhangs at an average height of five hundred feet, the traveller being protected only by a low stone parapet from the vast gulf that yawns beneath. And on the other side of the road the cliffs continue to ascend a like distance toward the sky, their irregular surfaces dotted with wonderful

houses that cling to the slopes, and vineyards that look as though they might slip down at any moment upon the heads of timorous pilgrims.

When it rained they put up the carriage top, which afforded but partial shelter. The shower was brief, but was shortly followed by hail as big as peas, which threatened to dash in the frail roof of their *carrozza*. While they shrank huddled beneath the blankets, the sun came out suddenly, and the driver shed his leathern apron, cracked his whip, and began singing merrily as the vehicle rolled over the smooth road.

Our travellers breathed again, and prepared to enjoy once more the wonderful vistas that were unfolded at every turn of the winding way. Sometimes they skirted a little cove where, hundreds of feet below, the fishermen sat before their tiny huts busily mending their nets. From that distance the boats drawn upon the sheltered beach seemed like mere toys. Then they would span a chasm on a narrow stone bridge, or plunge through an arch dividing the solid mountain. But ever the road returned in a brief space to the edge of the sea-cliff, and everywhere it was solid as the hills themselves, and seemingly as secure.

They had just sighted the ancient town of Positano and were circling a gigantic point of rock, when the great adventure of the day overtook them. Without warning the wind came whistling around them in a great gale, which speedily increased in fury until it drove the blinded horses reeling against the low parapet and pushed upon the carriage as if determined to dash it over the precipice.

As it collided against the stone wall the vehicle tipped dangerously, hurling the driver from his seat to dive headforemost into the space beneath. But the man clung to the reins desperately, and they arrested his fall, leaving him dangling at the end of them while the maddened horses, jerked at the bits by the weight of the man, reared and plunged as if they would in any instant tumble themselves and the carriage over the cliff.

At this critical moment a mounted horseman, who unobserved had been following the party, dashed to their rescue. The rider caught the plunging steeds by their heads and tried to restrain their terror, at his own eminent peril, while the carriage lay wedged against the wall and the driver screamed pitifully from his dangerous position midway between sea and sky.

Then Beth slipped from her seat to the flat top of the parapet, stepped boldly to where the reins were pulling upon the terrified horses, and seized them in her strong grasp.

“Hold fast,” she called calmly to the driver, and began dragging him upward, inch by inch.

He understood instantly the task she had undertaken, and in a moment his

courage returned and he managed to get his foot in a crack of the rock and assist her by relieving her of part of his weight. Just above was a slight ledge; he could reach it now; and then she had him by the arm, so that another instant found him clinging to the parapet and drawing himself into a position of safety.

The wind had died away as suddenly as it came upon them. The horses, as soon as the strain upon their bits was relaxed, were easily quieted. Before those in the carriage had quite realized what had occurred the adventure was accomplished, the peril was past, and all was well again.

Uncle John leaped from the carriage, followed by Louise and Patsy. The young horseman who had come to their assistance so opportunely was none other than Count Ferralti, whom they had such good reason to distrust. He was sitting upon his horse and staring with amazement at Beth, at whose feet the driver was grovelling while tears flowed down his bronzed cheeks and he protested in an absurd mixture of English and Italian, by every saint in the calendar, that the girl had saved him from a frightful death and he would devote his future life to her service.

"It is wonderful!" murmured Ferralti. "However could such a slip of a girl do so great a deed?"

"Why, it's nothing at all," returned Beth, flushing; "we're trained to do such things in the gymnasium at Cloverton, and I'm much stronger than I appear to be."

"'Twas her head, mostly," said Patsy, giving her cousin an admiring hug; "she kept her wits while the rest of us were scared to death."

Uncle John had been observing the Count. One of the young man's hands hung limp and helpless.

"Are you hurt, sir?" he asked.

Ferralti smiled, and his eyes rested upon Louise.

"A little, perhaps, Mr. Merrick; but it is unimportant. The horses were frantic at the time and wrenched my wrist viciously as I tried to hold them. I felt something snap; a small bone, perhaps. But I am sure it is nothing of moment."

"We'd better get back to Sorrento," said Uncle John, abruptly.

"Not on my account, I beg of you," returned Ferralti, quickly. "We are half way to Amalfi now, and you may as well go on. For my part, if the wrist troubles me, I will see a surgeon at Amalfi — that is, if you permit me to accompany you."

He said this with a defferent bow and a glance of inquiry.

Uncle John could not well refuse. The young fellow might be a sham count, but the manliness and courage he had displayed in their grave

emergency surely entitled him to their grateful consideration.

"You are quite welcome to join us," said Uncle John.

The driver had by now repaired a broken strap and found his equippage otherwise uninjured.

The horses stood meekly quiescent, as if they had never known a moment's fear in their lives. So the girls and their uncle climbed into the vehicle again and the driver mounted the box and cracked his whip with his usual vigor.

The wind had subsided as suddenly as it had arisen, and as they passed through Positano — which is four hundred feet high, the houses all up and down the side of a cliff like swallows' nests — big flakes of snow were gently falling around them.

Count Ferralti rode at the side of the carriage but did not attempt much conversation. His lips were tight set and the girls, slyly observing his face, were sure his wrist was hurting him much more than he cared to acknowledge.

Circling around the cliff beyond Positano the sun greeted them, shining from out a blue sky, and they wondered what had become of the bad weather they had so lately experienced.

From now on, past Prajano and into Amalfi, the day was brilliant and the temperature delightful. It was full noon by the time they alighted at the little gate-house of the ancient Cappuccini-Convento, now a hotel much favored by the tourist. Count Ferralti promised to join them later and rode on to the town to find a surgeon to look after his injured hand, while the others slowly mounted the long inclines leading in a zigzag fashion up to the old monastery, which was founded in the year 1212.

From the arbored veranda of this charming retreat is obtained one of the finest views in Europe, and while the girls sat enjoying it Uncle John arranged with a pleasant faced woman (who had once lived in America) for their luncheon.

An hour later, and just as they were sitting down to the meal, Count Ferralti rejoined them. His hand was bandaged and supported by a sling, and in answer to Louise's gentle inquiries he said, simply:

"It was as I had feared: a small bone snapped. But my surgeon is skillful, and says time will mend the wrist as good as new."

In spite of his courage he could eat no luncheon, but merely sipped a glass of wine; so Uncle John, alarmed at his pallor, insisted that he take a seat in the carriage on the return journey. Beth wanted to ride the Count's horse home, but there was no side saddle to be had, so they led the animal by a halter fastened behind the ricketty carriage, and Beth mounted the box and

rode beside her friend the driver.

The pleasant weather lasted until they neared Sorrento, when another shower of rain came up. They reached their hotel damp and bedraggled, but enthusiastic over their wonderful trip and the interesting adventure it had incidentally developed.

CHAPTER XI

THE EAGLE SCREAMS

Despite the glories of the Amalfi road our tourists decided it was more pleasant to loiter around Sorrento for a time than to undertake further excursions. The mornings and evenings were chill, but during the middle of the day the air was warm and delicious; so the girls carried their books and fancy-work into the beautiful gardens or wandered lazily through the high-walled lanes that shut in the villas and orange groves. Sometimes they found a gate open, and were welcomed to the orchards and permitted to pluck freely the fragrant and rich flavored fruit, which is excelled in no other section of the south country. Also Uncle John, with Beth and Patsy, frequented the shops of the wood-workers and watched their delicate and busy fingers inlaying the various colored woods; but Louise mostly kept to the garden, where Count Ferralti, being a semi-invalid, was content to sit by her side and amuse her.

In spite of her uncle's discovery of the false position assumed by this young man, Louise seemed to like his attentions and to approve his evident admiration for her. His ways might be affected and effeminate and his conversational powers indifferent; but his bandaged wrist was a constant reminder to all the nieces that he possessed courage and ready wit, and it was but natural that he became more interesting to them because just now he was to an extent helpless, and his crippled hand had been acquired in their service.

Uncle John watched the young fellow shrewdly, but could discover little harm in him except his attempt to deceive them in regard to his name and position. Yet in his mature eyes there was not much about Ferralti to arouse admiration, and the little man considered his girls too sensible to be greatly impressed by this youthful Italian's personality. So he allowed him to sit with his nieces in the gardens as much as he pleased, believing it would be ungrateful to deprive the count of that harmless recreation.

"A reg'lar chaperone might think differently," he reflected; "but thank goodness there are no dragons swimming in our cup of happiness."

One day they devoted to Capri and the Blue Grotto, and afterward they lunched at the Quisisana and passed the afternoon in the town. But the charms of Sorrento were too great for Capri to win their allegiance, and they were glad to get back to their quaint town and delightful gardens again.

The week passed all too swiftly, and then came a letter from Colonel Angeli telling them to return to Naples and witness the results of the eruption. This they decided to do, and bidding good-bye to Signor Floriano

and his excellent hotel they steamed across the bay and found the “Vesuve” a vastly different hostelry from the dismal place they had left in their flight from Naples. It was now teeming with life, for, all danger being past, the tourists had flocked to the city in droves. The town was still covered with ashes, but under the brilliant sunshine it did not look as gloomy as one might imagine, and already thousands of carts were busily gathering the dust from the streets and dumping it in the waters of the bay. It would require months of hard work, though, before Naples could regain a semblance of its former beauty.

Their friend the Colonel personally accompanied them to the towns that had suffered the most from the eruption. At Boscatrecasa they walked over the great beds of lava that had demolished the town — banks of cinders looking like lumps of pumice stone and massed from twenty to thirty feet in thickness throughout the valley. The lava was still so hot that it was liable to blister the soles of their feet unless they kept constantly moving. It would be many more days before the interior of the mass became cold.

Through the forlorn, dust-covered vineyards they drove to San Guiseppe, where a church roof had fallen in and killed one hundred and forty people, maiming many more. The Red-Cross tents were pitched in the streets and the whole town was one vast hospital. Ottajano, a little nearer to the volcano, had been buried in scoria, and nine-tenths of the roofs had fallen in, rendering the dwellings untenable.

From here a clear view of Mt. Vesuvius could be obtained. The shape of the mountain had greatly altered and the cone had lost sixty-five feet of its altitude. But when one gazed upon the enormous bulk of volcanic deposit that littered the country for miles around, it seemed to equal a dozen mountains the size of Vesuvius. The marvel was that so much ashes and cinders could come from a single crater in so short a period.

Naples was cleaning house, but slowly and listlessly. The people seemed as cheerful and light-hearted as ever. The volcano was one of their crosses, and they bore it patiently. The theatres would remain closed for some weeks to come, but the great Museo Nationale was open, and Uncle John and his nieces were much interested in the bronze and marble statuary that here form the greatest single collection in all the world.

It was at the Museum that Mr. Merrick was arrested for the first time in his life, an experience he never afterward forgot.

Bad money is so common in Naples that Uncle John never accepted any change from anyone, but obtained all his silver coins and notes directly from the Banca Commerciale Italiana, a government institution. One morning he drove with the girls to the museum and paid the cabman a lira, but before he

could ascend the steps the man was after him and holding out a leaden coin, claiming that his fare had given him bad money and must exchange it for good. This is so common a method of swindling that Uncle John paid no heed to the demands of the cabman until one of the Guard Municipale, in his uniform of dark blue with yellow buttons and cap, placed a restraining hand upon the American's shoulder.

Uncle John angrily shook him off, but the man persisted, and an interpreter employed by the museum stepped forward and explained that unless the cabman was given a good coin in exchange for the bad one the guarde would be obliged to take him before a commissionaire, or magistrate.

"But I gave him a good coin — a lira direct from the bank," declared Uncle John.

"He exhibits a bad one," returned the interpreter, calmly.

"He's a swindler!"

"He is a citizen of Naples, and entitled to a just payment," said the other, shrugging his shoulders.

"You are all leagued together," said Uncle John, indignantly. "But you will get no more money out of me, I promise you."

The result was that the stubborn American was placed under arrest. Leaving the girls at the museum in charge of Ferralti, who had made no attempt to interfere in the dispute but implored Uncle John to pay and avoid trouble, the angry prisoner was placed in the same cab he had arrived in and, with the officer seated beside him, was publicly driven to the office of the magistrate.

This official understood no English, but he glowered and frowned fiercely when the American was brought before him. The guarde and the cabman stood with bared bowed heads and in low tones preferred the charge against the prisoner; but Uncle John swaggered up to the desk and pounded his clinched fist upon it while he roared a defiance of Italian injustice and threatened to "bring over a few war-ships and blow Naples into kingdom come!"

The magistrate was startled, and ordered the prisoner searched for concealed weapons. Uncle John doubled his fists and dared the guarde to touch him.

Then the cabman was dispatched for someone who could speak English, and when an interpreter arrived the American told him to send for the United States consul and also to inform the magistrate that nothing but war between America and Italy could wipe out the affront that had been thrust upon him.

The magistrate was disturbed, and preferred not to send for the consul. He offered to release Uncle John if he would give the cabman a good lira in

exchange for the bad one. The official fee would be five lira — or say three lira — or even two. Uncle John flatly refused to pay anything to anybody. Only war could settle this international complication — bloody and bitter war. The consul must cable at once for war-ships and troops. He would insist upon it. All compromise was now impossible!

The magistrate was frightened. The guarde's eyes bulged with horror and he trembled visibly. It was evident they had made a grave mistake in arresting this mad American, who was evidently a personage of great importance and able to declare war at a moment's notice. The cabman, the magistrate, the guarde and the interpreter put their heads together and chattered voluble Italian — all speaking at once in excited tones — while Uncle John continued to warn them at the top of his lungs that their country was doomed to sudden annihilation and they were the culprits responsible for the coming calamity.

As a result they bundled the irate American into the carriage again and drove him poste haste back to the museum, where they deposited him upon the steps. Then in a flash the guarde and the cabman disappeared from sight and were seen no more.

The victor smiled proudly as his nieces rushed toward him.

"Did you have to pay another lira, Uncle?" asked Patsy, anxiously.

"Not on your life, my dear," mopping his brow vigorously. "They're a lot of cutthroats and assassins — policemen, magistrates and all — but when the eagle screams they're wise enough to duck."

The girls laughed.

"And did the eagle scream, then?" Patsy enquired.

"Just a little, my dear; but if it whispered it would sound mighty loud in this mummified old world. But we've lost enough time for one day. Come; let's go see 'Narcissus' and the 'Dancing Faun.'"

CHAPTER XII
MOVING ON

"Here's a letter from my dear old friend Silas Watson," said Uncle John, delightedly. "It's from Palermo, where he has been staying with his ward — and your friend, girls — Kenneth Forbes, and he wants me to lug you all over to Sicily at once."

"That's jolly," said Patsy, with a bright smile. "I'd like to see Kenneth again."

"I suppose he is a great artist, by this time," said Beth, musingly.

"How singular!" exclaimed Louise. "Count Ferralti told me only this morning that he had decided to go to Palermo."

"Really?" said Uncle John.

"Yes, Uncle. Isn't it a coincidence?"

"Why, as for that," he answered, slowly, "I'm afraid it will prevent our seeing the dear count — or whatever he is — again, at least for some time. For Mr. Watson and Kenneth are just leaving Palermo, and he asks us to meet him in another place altogether, a town called — called — let me see; Tormenti, or Terminal, or something."

"Give me the letter, dear," said Patsy. "I don't believe it's Terminal at all. Of course not," consulting the pages, "it's Taormina."

"Is that in Sicily?" he asked.

"Yes. Listen to what Mr. Watson says: 'I'm told it is the most beautiful spot in the world, which is the same thing you hear about most beautiful places. It is eight hundred feet above the Mediterranean and nestles peacefully in the shadow of Mount Etna.'"

"Etna!" cried Uncle John, with a start. "Isn't that another volcano?"

"To be sure," said Beth, the geographer. "Etna is the biggest volcano in the world."

"Does it spout?" he asked, anxiously.

"All the time, they say. But it is not usually dangerous."

"The proper thing, when you go to Eu-rope," declared Uncle John, positively, "is to do Venice, where the turpentine comes from, and Switzerland, where they make chocolate and goat's milk, and Paris and Monte Carlo, where they kick high and melt pearls in champagne. Everybody knows that. That's what goin' to Eu-rope really means. But Sicily isn't on the programme, that I ever heard of. So we'll just tell Silas Watson that we'll see him later — which means when we get home again."

"But Sicily is beautiful," protested Patsy. "I'd as soon go there as anywhere."

“It’s a very romantic place,” added Louise, reflectively.

“Everybody goes to France and Switzerland,” remarked Beth. “But it’s because they don’t know any better. Let’s be original, Uncle, and keep out of the beaten track of travel.”

“But the volcano!” exclaimed Mr. Merrick. “Is it necessary to stick to volcanoes to be original?”

“Etna won’t hurt us, I’m sure,” said Patsy.

“Isn’t there a Greek theatre at Taormina?” asked Louise.

“I’ve never heard of it; but I suppose the Greeks have, if it’s there,” he replied. “But why not wait till we get home, and then go to Kieth’s or Hammerstein’s?”

“You don’t understand, dear. This theatre is very ancient.”

“Playing minstrel shows in it yet, I suppose. Well, girls, if you say Sicily, Sicily it is. All I’m after is to give you a good time, and if you get the volcano habit it isn’t my fault.”

“It is possible the Count said Taormina, instead of Palermo,” remarked Louise, plaintively. “I wasn’t paying much attention at the time. I’ll ask him.”

The others ignored this suggestion. Said Patsy to her uncle:

“When do we go, sir?”

“Whenever you like, my dears.”

“Then I vote to move on at once,” decided the girl. “We’ve got the best out of Naples, and it’s pretty grimey here yet.”

The other nieces agreed with her, so Uncle John went out to enquire the best way to get to Sicily, and to make their arrangements.

The steamer “Victor Emmanuel” of the Navigazione General Italiana line was due to leave Naples for Messina the next evening, arriving at its destination the following morning. Uncle John promptly booked places. The intervening day was spent in packing and preparing for the journey, and like all travellers the girls were full of eager excitement at the prospect of seeing something new.

“I’m told Sicily is an island,” grumbled Uncle John. “Here we are, on a trip to Eu-rope, and emigrating to an island the first thing we do.”

“Sicily is Europe, all right, Uncle,” answered Patsy. “At least, it isn’t Asia or Africa.”

That assertion seemed to console him a little, and he grew cheerful again.

The evening was beautiful as they embarked, but soon after leaving the bay the little, tub-shaped steamer began to tumble and toss vigorously, so that all the passengers aboard speedily sought their berths.

Uncle John found himself in a stuffy little cabin that smelled of tar and

various other flavors that were too mixed to be recognizable. As a result he passed one of the most miserable nights of his life.

Toward morning he rolled out and dressed himself, preferring the deck to his bed, and the first breath of salt air did much to restore him. Day was just breaking, and to the right he could see a tongue of fire flaming against the dark sky.

"What is that, sir?" he enquired of an officer who passed.

"That is Stromboli, signor, the great volcano of Lipari. It is always in eruption."

Uncle John groaned.

"Volcanoes to right of us, volcanoes to left of us volleyed and thundered," he muttered dismally, as he fell back in his chair.

The sky brightened, and the breath of the breeze changed and came to him laden with delicious fragrance.

"See, signore!" called the officer, passing again; "before us is mighty Etna — you can see it clearly from the bow."

"Volcanoes in front of us, volcanoes behind us!" wailed the little man. But he walked to the bow and saw the shores of Sicily looming in advance, with the outline of the stately mountain rising above and dominating it.

Then the sun burst forth, flooding all with a golden radiance that was magical in its gorgeous effects. Patsy came on deck and stood beside her uncle, lost in rapturous admiration. Beth soon followed her.

Before long they entered the Straits of Messina and passed between the classic rock of Scylla on the Calabrian coast, and the whirlpool of Charybdis at the point of the promontory of Faro, which forms the end of the famous "Golden Sickle" enclosing the Bay of Messina.

"If this is really Eu-rope, I'm glad we came," said Uncle John, drawing a long breath as the ship came to anchor opposite the Palazzo Municipale. "I don't remember seeing anything prettier since we left New York."

Presently they had loaded their trunks and hand baggage, and incidentally themselves, into the boat of the Hotel Trinacria which came alongside in charge of a sleepy porter. After a brief examination at the custom-house, where Uncle John denied having either sugar, tobacco or perfumery, they followed on foot the truck laden with their worldly possessions, and soon reached the hotel.

A pleasant breakfast followed, which they ate before a window overlooking the busy marina, and then they drove about the town for a time to see in a casual way the "sights." In the afternoon they took the train for Taormina. Messina seemed a delightful place, but if they were going to settle in Taormina for a time it would not pay them to unpack or linger on the way.

So they rolled along the coast for a couple of hours in a quaint, old-fashioned railway carriage, and were then deposited upon the platform of the little station at Giardini.

“I’m afraid there has been a mistake,” said the little man, gazing around him anxiously. “There’s no town here, and I told the guard to put us off at Taormina — not this forlorn place.”

Just then Beth discovered a line of carriages drawn up back of the station. The drivers were mostly asleep inside them, although several stood in a group arguing in fluent Italian the grave question as to whether Signora Gani’s cow had a black patch over its left shoulder, or not.

Some of the carriages bore signs: “Hotel Timeo;” “Grand Hotel San Domenico;” “Hotel Castello-a-Mare;” “Grand Hotel Metropole,” and so forth. In that of the Castello-a-Mare the man was awakening and rubbing his eyes. Uncle John said to him:

“Good morning. Had a nice rest?”

“I thank you, signore, I am well refreshed,” was the reply.

“By the way, can you tell us where the town of Taormina is? I hate to trouble you; but we’d like to know.”

The man waved an arm upward, and following the motion with their eyes they saw a line of precipitous cliffs that seemed impossible to scale.

“Do you desire to go to the Grand Hotel Castello-a-Mare?” enquired the driver, politely.

“Is it in Taormina?”

“Most certainly, signore.”

“And you will take us?”

“With pleasure, signore.”

“Oh; I didn’t know. I supposed you were going to sleep again.”

The man looked at him reproachfully.

“It is my business, signore. I am very attentive to my duties. If you permit me to drive you to our splendide — our magnifico hotel — you will confer a favor.”

“How about the baggage?”

“The trunks, signor, we will send for later. There is really no hurry about them. The small baggage will accompany us. You will remark how excellent is my English. I am Frascatti Vietri; perhaps you have heard of me in America?”

“If I have it has escaped my memory,” said Uncle John, gravely.

“Have you been to America?” asked Beth.

“Surely, signorina. I lived in Chicago, which, as you are aware, is America. My uncle had a fruit shop in South Water, a via which is Chicago.

Is it not so? You will find few in Taormina who can the English speak, and none at all who can so perfectly speak it as Frascatti Vietri."

"You are wonderful," said Patsy, delighted with him. But Uncle John grew impatient to be off.

"I hate to interrupt you, Mr. Vietri," he hinted; "but if you can spare the time we may as well make a start."

The driver consented. He gracefully swung the suit-cases and travelling bags to the top of the vehicle and held the door open while his fares entered. Then he mounted to his seat, took the reins, and spoke to the horses. Some of the other drivers nodded at him cheerfully, but more as if they were sorry he must exert himself than with any resentment at his success in getting the only tourists who had alighted from the train.

As they moved away Uncle John said: "Observe the difference between the cab-drivers here and those at home. In America they fight like beasts to get a job; here they seem anxious to avoid earning an honest penny. If there could be a happy medium somewhere, I'd like it."

"Are we going to the best hotel?" asked Louise, who had seemed a trifle disconsolate because she had not seen Count Ferralti since leaving Naples.

"I don't know, my dear. It wasn't a question of choice, but of necessity. No other hotel seemed willing to receive us."

They were now winding upward over a wonderful road cut in the solid rock. It was broad and smooth and protected by a parapet of dressed limestone. Now and then they passed pleasant villas set in orchards of golden oranges or groves of olives and almonds; but there was no sign of life on any side.

The road was zigzag, making a long ascent across the face of the cape, then turning abruptly to wind back again, but always creeping upward until an open space showed the station far below and a rambling stone building at the edge of the cliff far above.

"Behold!" cried Frascatti, pointing up, "the Grand Hotel Castello-a-Mare; is it not the excellenza location?"

"Has it a roof?" asked Uncle John, critically.

"Of a certainty, signore! But it does not show from below," was the grave reply.

At times Frascatti stopped his horses to allow them to rest, and then he would turn in his seat to address his passengers in the open victoria and descant upon the beauties of the panorama each turn unfolded.

"This road is new," said he, "because we are very progressive and the old road was most difficulty. Then it was three hours from the bottom to the top. Now it is but a short hour, for our energy climbs the three miles in that brief

time. Shall I stop here for the sunset, or will your excellenzi hasten on?"

"If your energy approves, we will hasten," returned Uncle John. "We love a sunset, because it's bound to set anyway, and we may as well make the best of it; but we have likewise an objection to being out after dark. Any brigands around here?"

"Brigands! Ah; the signor is merry. Never, since the days of Naxos, have brigands infested our fair country."

"When were the days of Naxos?"

"Some centuries before Christ, signor," bowing his head and making the sign of the cross.

"Very good. The brigands of those days must, of course, be dead by this time. Now, sir, when you have leisure, let us hasten."

The horses started and crept slowly upward again. None of the party was in a hurry. Such beautiful glimpses of scenery were constantly visible from the bends of the road that the girls were enraptured, and could have ridden for hours in this glorious fairyland.

But suddenly the horses broke into a trot and dragged the carriage rapidly forward over the last incline. A moment later they dashed into the court of the hotel and the driver with a loud cry of "Oo-ah!" and a crack of his whip drew up before the entrance.

The portiere and the padrone, or landlord — the latter being also the proprietaire — came out to greet them, extending to their guests a courteous welcome. The house was very full. All of the cheaper rooms were taken; but of course the Signor Americain would wish only the best and be glad to pay.

Uncle John requested them to rob him as modestly as possible without conflicting with their sense of duty, and they assured him they would do so.

The rooms were adorable. They faced the sea and had little balconies that gave one a view of the blue Mediterranean far beneath, with lovely Isola Bella and the Capo San Andrea nestling on its bosom. To the right towered the majestic peak of Etna, its crest just now golden red in the dying sunset.

The girls drew in deep breaths and stood silent in a very ecstacy of delight. At their feet was a terraced garden, running downward two hundred feet to where the crag fell sheer to the sea. It was glorious with blooming flowers of every sort that grows, and the people on the balconies imagined at the moment they had been transferred to an earthly paradise too fair and sweet for ordinary mortals. And then the glow of the sun faded softly and twilight took its place. Far down the winding road could be seen the train of carriages returning from the station, the vetturini singing their native songs as the horses slowly ascended the slope. An unseen organ somewhere in the distance ground out a Neapolitan folk song, and fresh and youthful voices

sang a clear, high toned accompaniment.

Even practical Uncle John stood absorbed and admiring until the soft voice of the facchino called to ask if he wanted hot water in which to bathe before dinner.

“It’s no use,” said Patsy, smiling at him from the next balcony with tears in her eyes; “There’s not another Taormina on earth. Here we are, and here we stay until we have to go home again.”

“But, my dear, think of Paris, of Venice, of — ”

“I’ll think of nothing but this, Uncle John. Unless you settle down with us here I’ll turn milkmaid and live all my days in Sicily!”

Beth laughed, and drew her into their room.

“Don’t be silly, Patsy dear,” she said, calmly, although almost as greatly affected as her cousin. “There are no cows here, so you can’t be a milkmaid.”

“Can’t I milk the goats, then?”

“Why, the men seem to do that, dear. But cheer up. We’ve only seen the romance of Taormina yet; doubtless it will be commonplace enough to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XIII

IL DUCA

Beth's prediction, however, did not come true. The morning discovered nothing commonplace about Taormina. Their hotel was outside the walls, but a brief walk took them to the Messina Gate, a quaint archway through which they passed into the narrow streets of one of the oldest towns in Sicily. Doorways and windows of Saracen or Norman construction faced them on every side, and every inch of the ancient buildings was picturesque and charming.

Some of the houses had been turned into shops, mostly for the sale of curios. Uncle John and his nieces had scarcely passed a hundred yards into the town when one of these shops arrested their attention. It was full of antique jewelry, antique furniture, antique laces and antique pottery — all of the most fascinating description. The jewelry was tarnished and broken, the lace had holes in it and the furniture was decrepit and unsteady; but the proprietor cared nothing for such defects. All was very old, and he knew the tourist was eager to buy. So he scattered his wares inside and outside his salesroom, much as the spider spreads his web for the unwary, and waited for the inevitable tourist with a desire to acquire something ancient and useless.

The girls could not be induced to pass the shop. They entered the square, low room and flooded the shopman with eager questions. Notwithstanding Frascatti's assertion that few in Taormina could speak English, this man was quite intelligible and fixed his prices according to the impression his wares made upon the artistic sense of the young American ladies.

It was while they were intently inspecting some laces that the proprietor suddenly paused in his chatter, removed his hat and bowed almost to the floor, his face assuming at the same time a serious and most humble expression.

Turning around they saw standing outside the door a man whom they recognized at once as their fellow passenger aboard the "Princess Irene."

"Oh, Signor Valdi!" cried Patsy, running toward him, "how strange to find you again in this out-of-the-way place."

The Italian frowned, but in a dignified manner took the hand of all three girls in turn and then bowed a greeting to Mr. Merrick.

Uncle John thought the fellow had improved in appearance. Instead of the flannel shirt and Prince Albert coat he had affected on shipboard he now wore a native costume of faded velvet, while a cloak of thin but voluminous cloth swung from his shoulders, and a soft felt hat shaded his dark eyes.

His appearance was entirely in keeping with the place, and the American

noticed that the villagers who passed doffed their hats most respectfully to this seemingly well-known individual. But mingled with their polite deference was a shyness half fearful, and none stopped to speak but hurried silently on.

"And how do we happen to find you here, Signor Valdi?" Patsy was saying. "Do you live in Taormina?"

"I am of this district, but not of Taormina," he replied. "It is chance that you see me here. Eh, Signor Bruggi, is it not so?" casting one of his characteristic fierce glances at the shopkeeper.

"It is so, your excellency."

"But I am glad you have come to the shadow of Etna," he continued, addressing the Americans with slow deliberation. "Here the grandeur of the world centers, and life keeps time with Nature. You will like it? You will stay?"

"Oh, for a time, anyway," said Patsy.

"We expect to meet some friends here," explained Uncle John. "They are coming down from Palermo, but must have been delayed somewhere on the way."

"Who are they?" asked Valdi, brusquely.

"Americans, of course; Silas Watson and Kenneth Forbes. Do you know of them?"

"No," said the other. He cast an uneasy glance up and down the street. "I will meet you again, signorini," he added. "Which is your hotel?"

"The Castello-a-Mare. It is delightful," said Beth.

He nodded, as if pleased. Then, folding his cloak about him, he murmured "adios!" and stalked away without another word or look.

"Queer fellow," remarked Uncle John.

The shopkeeper drew a long breath and seemed relieved.

"Il Duca is unusual, signore," he replied.

"Duke!" cried the girls, in one voice.

The man seemed startled.

"I — I thought you knew him; you seemed friends," he stammered.

"We met Signor Valdi on shipboard," said Uncle John.

"Valdi? Ah, yes; of course; the duke has been to America."

"Isn't his name Valdi?" asked Beth, looking the man straight in the eyes. "Has he another name here, where he lives?"

The shopman hesitated.

"Who knows?" was the evasive reply. "Il Duca has many names, but we do not speak them. When it is necessary to mention him we use his title — the duke."

“Why?” asked the girl.

“Why, signorina? Why? Perhaps because he does not like to be talked about. Yes; that is it, I am sure.”

“Where does he live?” asked Patsy.

The man seemed uneasy under so much questioning.

“Somewhere in the mountains,” he said, briefly. “His estates are there. He is said to be very rich and powerful. I know nothing more, signorini.”

Realizing that little additional information could be gleaned from this source they soon left the shop and wandered into the Piazzo Vittorio Emanuele, and from thence by the narrow lane to the famous Teatro Greco.

For a time they admired this fascinating ruin, which has the best preserved stage of any Greek theatre now in existence. From the top of the hill is one of the most magnificent views in Sicily, and here our travellers sat in contemplative awe until Uncle John declared it was time to return to their hotel for luncheon.

As they passed the portiere’s desk Mr. Merrick paused to ask that important official:

“Tell me, if you please, who is Signor Victor Valdi?”

“Valdi, signore?”

“Yes; the Duke di Valdi, I suppose you call him.”

“I have never heard of him,” replied the man.

“But every one seems to know him in Taormina.”

“Is it so? We have but one duke near to us, and he — . But never mind. I do not know this Valdi.”

“A thin faced man, with black eyes. We met him on the steamer coming from America.”

The portiere dropped his eyes and turned toward his desk.

“Luncheon is served, signore,” he remarked. “Also, here is a letter for you, which arrived this morning.”

Uncle John took the letter and walked on to rejoin the girls.

“It seems hard work to find out anything about this Valdi,” he said. “Either the folks here do not know him, or they won’t acknowledge his acquaintance. We may as well follow suit, and avoid him.”

“I don’t like his looks a bit,” observed Beth. “He seems afraid and defiant at the same time, and his temper is dreadful. It was only with great difficulty he could bring himself to be polite to us.”

“Oh, I always got along with him all right,” said Patsy. “I’m sure Signor Valdi isn’t as bad as he appears. And he’s a duke, too, girls — a real duke!”

“So it seems,” Uncle John rejoined; “yet there is something queer about the fellow, I agree with Beth; I don’t like him.”

“Did Mr. Watson say when he would join us here?” enquired Louise, when they were seated at the little round table.

“No; but here’s a letter from him. I’d quite forgotten it.”

He tore open the envelope and carefully read the enclosure.

“Too bad,” said he. “We might have stayed a few days in Messina. Watson says he and Kenneth have stopped at Girgenti — wherever that is — to study the temples. Wonder if they’re Solomon’s? They won’t get to Taormina before Saturday.”

“It won’t matter,” declared Patsy, “so long as they arrive then. And I’d a good deal rather be here than in Messina, or any other place. Of course we’ll all be glad to see Kenneth.”

“Mr. Watson wants us to be very careful while we are in Sicily,” continued Uncle John, referring to the letter. “Listen to this: ‘Don’t let the girls wear jewelry in public places, or display their watches openly; and take care, all of you, not to show much money. If you buy anything, have it sent to your hotel to be paid for by the hall porter. And it is wise not to let anyone know who you are or how long you intend to remain in any one place. This may strike you as an absurd precaution; but you must remember that you are not in America, but in an isolated Italian province, where government control is inefficient. The truth is that the terrible Mafia is still all powerful on this island, and brigandage is by no means confined to the neighborhood of Castrogiovanni, as the guide books would have you believe. The people seem simple and harmless enough, but Kenneth and I always keep our revolvers handy, and believe it is a reasonable precaution. I don’t want to frighten you, John; merely to warn you. Sicily is full of tourists, and few are ever molested; but if you are aware of the conditions underlying the public serenity you are not so liable to run yourself and your nieces into needless dangers.’ How’s that for a hair-curler, girls?”

“It sounds very romantic,” said Louise, smiling. “Mr. Watson is such a cautious man!”

“But it’s all rubbish about there being danger in Taormina,” declared Patsy, indignantly. “Mr. Watson has been in the wilds of the interior, which Baedecker admits is infested with brigands. Here everyone smiles at us in the friendliest way possible.”

“Except the duke,” added Beth, with a laugh.

“Oh, the duke is sour by nature,” Patsy answered; “but if there really was danger, I’m sure he’d protect us, for he lives here and knows the country.”

“You are sure of a lot of things, dear,” said her cousin, smiling. “But it will do no harm to heed the advice, and be careful.”

They all agreed to that, and Uncle John was glad to remember he had two

brand new revolvers in the bottom of his trunk, which he could use in an emergency if he could manage to find the cartridges to load them with.

He got them out next morning, and warned his nieces not to touch the dangerous things when they entered his room. But Patsy laughed at him, saying:

"You are behind the times, Uncle. Beth has carried a revolver ever since we started."

"Beth!" he cried, horrified.

"Just as a precaution," said that young lady, demurely.

"But you're only a child!"

"Even so, Uncle, I have been taught to shoot in Cloverton, as a part of my education. Once I won a medal — think of that! So I brought my pet revolver along, although I may never have need to use it."

Uncle John looked thoughtful.

"It doesn't seem like a girlish accomplishment, exactly," he mused. "When I was young and went into the West, the times were a bit unsettled, and I used to carry a popgun myself. But I never shot at a human being in my life. There were women in the camps that could shoot, too; but the safest place was always in front of them. If Beth has won a medal, though, she might hit something."

"Don't try, Beth," said Louise; "you ought to make a hit without shooting."

"Thank you, dear."

As they left their hotel for a walk they came upon Count Ferralti, who was standing in the court calmly smoking a cigarette. His right hand was still in a sling.

No one was greatly surprised at his appearance, but Uncle John uttered an exclamation of impatience. It annoyed him that this fellow, whose antecedents were decidedly cloudy, should be "chasing around" after one of his nieces, Beth and Patsy smiled at each other significantly as the young man was discovered, but Louise, with a slight blush, advanced to greet Ferralti in her usual pleasant and cordial way.

There was no use resenting the intrusion. They owed a certain consideration to this boyish Italian for his assistance on the Amalfi road. But Uncle John almost wished he had left them to escape as best they might, for the obligation was getting to be decidedly onerous.

While Ferralti was expressing his astonishment at so "unexpectedly" meeting again his American friends, Uncle John discovered their English speaking cocchiere, Frascatti Vietri, lolling half asleep on the box of his victoria.

“Would your energy like to drive us this morning?” he asked.

“It is my duty, signore, if you wish to go,” was the reply.

“Then you are engaged. Come, girls; hop in, if you want to ride.”

The three nieces and Uncle John just filled the victoria. The count was disconsolate at being so cleverly dropped from the party, but could only flourish his hat and wish them a pleasant drive.

They descended the winding road to the coast, where Frascatti took the highway to Sant’ Alessio, a charming drive leading to the Taormina Pass.

“By the way,” Uncle John asked the driver, “do you know of a duke that lives in this neighborhood?”

The laughing face of the Sicilian suddenly turned grave.

“No, signore. There is the Prince di Scaletta; but no duke on this side the town.”

“But on the other side?”

“Oh; in the mountains? To be sure there are noblemen there; old estates almost forgotten in our great civilization of to-day. We are very progressive in Taormina, signore. There will be a fountain of the ice cream soda established next summer. Quite metropolitan, *ne c’e*?”

“Quite. But, tell me, Frascatti, have you a duke in the mountains back of Taormina?”

“Signore, I beg you to pay no attention to the foolish stories you may hear from our peasants. There has been no brigandage here for centuries. I assure you the country is perfectionly safe — especial if you stay within the town or take me on your drives. They know me, signore, and even Il Duca dares not trifle with my friends.”

“Why should he, Frascatti, if there is no brigandage? Is it the Mafia?”

“Ah, I have heard that Mafia spoken of, but mostly when I lived in America, which is Chicago. Here we do not know of the Mafia.”

“But you advise us to be careful?”

“Everywhere, illustrissimo signore, it is well to be what you call the circumspection. I remember that in the State street of Chicago, which is America, peaceful citizens were often killed by bandits. Eh, is it not so?”

“Quite probable,” said Uncle John, soberly.

“Then, what will you? Are we worse than Americans, that you fear us? Never mind Il Duca, or the tales they foolishly whisper of him. Here you may be as safe and happy as in Chicago — which is America.”

He turned to his horses and urged them up a slope. The girls and Uncle John eyed one another enquiringly.

“Our duke seems to bear no good reputation,” said Beth, in a tone so low that Frascatti could not overhear. “Everyone fears to speak of him.”

“Singular,” said Uncle John, “that Patsy’s friend turns out to be a mystery, even in his own home. I wonder if he is a leader of the Mafia, or just a common brigand?”

“In either case,” said Patsy, “he will not care to injure us, I am sure. We all treated him very nicely, and I just made him talk and be sociable, whether he wanted to or not. That ought to count for something in our favor. But my opinion is that he’s just a gruff old nobleman who lives in the hills and makes few friends.”

“And hasn’t a name, any more than Louise’s count has. Is it customary, my dear, for all Italian noblemen to conceal their identity?”

“I do not know, Uncle,” answered Louise, casting down her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV
UNCLE JOHN DISAPPEARS

Uncle John grew to love Taormina. Its wildness and ruggedness somehow reminded him of the Rockies in the old pioneer days, and he wandered through all the lanes of the quaint old town until he knew every cornice and cobblestone familiarly, and the women who sat weaving or mending before their squalid but picturesque hovels all nodded a greeting to the cheery little American as he passed by.

He climbed Malo, too, a high peak crowned by a ruined castle; and also Mt. Venere, on the plateau of which an ancient city had once stood. His walking tours did him good, and frequently while the girls lay stretched upon the grass that lined the theatre enclosure, to idle the time or read or write enthusiastic letters home, Uncle John, scorning such laziness, would take his stick and climb mountains, or follow the rough paths that diverged from the highway just beyond the Catania Gate.

The tax gatherer whose tiny office was just inside the gate came to know the little gentleman very well, and although he could speak no English he would bob his grizzled head and murmur: "*Buon giorno, signore!*" as the stranger passed out on his daily stroll.

One afternoon Mr. Merrick went down the hill path leading from the Castello-a-Mare to Capo di San Andrea, and as he passed around a narrow ledge of rock came full upon two men seated upon a flat stone. One was Valdi and the other Ferralti, and they seemed engaged in earnest conversation when he interrupted them. The Count smiled frankly and doffed his hat; the Duke frowned grimly, but also nodded.

Uncle John passed on. The path was wild and little frequented. He felt in his side pocket and grasped the handle of his revolver; but there was no attempt to follow or molest him. Nevertheless, when he returned from the beach he came up the longer winding roadway and was glad of the company of a ragged goatherd who, having no English, entertained "Il Signore" by singing ditties as he drove his goats before him.

The misgivings Uncle John had originally conceived concerning Count Ferralti returned in full force with this incident; but he resolved to say nothing of it to his nieces. Silas Watson would be with them in a couple of days more and he would consult the shrewd lawyer before he took any decisive action.

Next morning after breakfast he left his nieces in the garden and said he would take a walk through the town and along the highway west, toward Kaggi.

“I’ll be back in an hour or so,” he remarked, “for I have some letters to write and I want them to catch the noon mail.”

So the girls sat on the terrace overlooking the sea and Etna, and breathed the sweet air and enjoyed the caressing sunshine, until they noticed the portiere coming hastily toward them.

“Pardon, signorini,” he said, breathlessly, “but it will be to oblige me greatly if you will tell me where Signor Ferralti is.”

“He is not of our party,” answered Patsy, promptly; but Louise looked up as if startled, and said: “I have been expecting him to join us here.”

“Then you do not know?” exclaimed the portiere, in an anxious tone.

“Know what, sir?” asked the girl.

“That Signor Ferralti is gone. He has not been seen by any after last evening. He did not occupy his room. But worse, far worse, will I break you the news gently — his baggage is gone with him!”

“His baggage gone!” echoed Louise, greatly disturbed. “And he did not tell you? You did not see him go?”

“Alas, no, signorina. His bill is still unsettled. He possessed two large travelling cases, which must have been carried out at the side entrance with stealth most deplorable. The padrone is worried. Signor Ferralti is American, and Americans seldom treat us wrongfully.”

“Signor Ferralti is Italian,” answered Louise, stiffly.

“The name is Italian, perhaps; but he speaks only the English,” declared the portiere.

“He is not a rogue, however. Assure your master of that fact. When Mr. Merrick returns he will settle Count Ferralti’s bill.”

“Oh, Louise!” gasped Patsy.

“I don’t understand it in the least,” continued Louise, looking at her cousins as if she were really bewildered. “I left him in the courtyard last evening to finish his cigar, and he said he would meet us in the garden after breakfast. I am sure he had no intention of going away. And for the honor of American travellers his account here must be taken care of.”

“One thing is singular,” observed Beth, calmly. “There has been no train since last you saw him. If Count Ferralti has left the hotel, where could he be?”

The portiere brightened.

“*Gia s’intende!*” he exclaimed, “he must still be in Taormina — doubtless at some other hotel.”

“Will you send and find out?” asked Louise.

“I will go myself, and at once,” he answered. “And thank you, signorina, for the kind assurance regarding the account. It will relieve the padrone very

much."

He hurried away again, and an uneasy silence fell upon the nieces.

"Do you care for this young man. Louise?" asked Beth, pointedly, after the pause had become awkward.

"He is very attentive and gentlemanly, and I feel you have all wronged him by your unjust suspicions," she replied, with spirit.

"That does not answer my question, dear," persisted her cousin. "Are you especially fond of him?"

"What right have you to question me in this way, Beth?"

"No right at all, dear. I am only trying to figure out our doubtful position in regard to this young man — a stranger to all of us but you."

"It is really none of our business," observed Patsy, quickly. "We're just a lot of gossips to be figuring on Count Ferralti at all. And although this sudden disappearance looks queer, on the face of it, the gentleman may simply have changed his boarding place."

"I do not think so," said Louise. "He liked this hotel very much."

"And he may have liked some of its guests," added Patsy, smiling. "Well, Uncle John will soon be back, and then we will talk it over with him."

Uncle John was late. The portiere returned first. He had been to every hotel in the little town, but none of them had received a guest since the afternoon train of yesterday. Count Ferralti had disappeared as if by magic, and no one could account for it.

Noon arrived, but no Uncle John. The girls became dispirited and anxious, for the little man was usually very prompt in keeping his engagements, and always had returned at the set time.

They waited until the last moment and then entered the *salle a manger* and ate their luncheon in gloomy silence, hoping every moment to hear the sound of their uncle's familiar tread.

After luncheon they held a hurried consultation and decided to go into town and search for him. So away they trooped, asking eager questions in their uncertain Italian but receiving no satisfactory reply until they reached the little office of the tax gatherer at the Catania Gate.

"*Ah, si, signorini mia*," he answered, cheerfully, "*il poco signore passato da stamattini*."

But he had not returned?

Not yet.

They looked at one another blankly.

"See here," said Patsy; "Uncle John must have lost his way or met with an accident. You go back to the hotel, Louise, and wait there in case he returns home another way. Beth and I will follow some of these paths and see if we

can find him."

"He may have sprained an ankle, and be unable to walk," suggested Beth. "I think Patsy's advice is good."

So Louise returned through the town and the other girls began exploring the paths that led into the mountains from every turn of the highway. But although they searched eagerly and followed each path a mile or more of its length, no sign of life did they encounter — much less a sight of their missing uncle. The paths were wild and unfrequented, only on the Catania road itself a peasant now and then being found patiently trudging along or driving before him a donkey laden with panniers of oranges or lemons for the markets of Taormina.

On some of the solitary rocky paths they called to Uncle John by name, hoping that their voices might reach him; but only the echoes replied. Finally they grew discouraged.

"It will be sunset before we get back, even if we start this minute," said Beth, finally. "Let us return, and get some one to help us."

Patsy burst into tears.

"Oh, I'm sure he's lost, or murdered, or kidnapped!" she wailed. "Dear, dear Uncle John! Whatever shall we do, Beth?"

"Why, he may be at home, waiting for us to get back. Don't give way, Patsy; it will do no good, you know."

They were thoroughly tired when, just at sunset, they reached the hotel. Louise came to meet them, and by the question in her eyes they knew their uncle had not returned.

"Something must be done, and at once," said Beth, decidedly. She was the younger of the three girls, but in this emergency took the lead because of her calm and unruffled disposition and native good sense. "Is Frascatti in the courtyard?"

Patsy ran to see, and soon brought the vetturino into their sitting room. He could speak English and knew the neighborhood thoroughly. He ought to be able to advise them.

Frascatti listened intently to their story. He was very evidently impressed.

"Tell me, then, signorini," he said, thoughtfully; "is Senor Merreek very rich?"

"Why do you ask?" returned Beth, suspiciously. She remembered the warning conveyed in Mr. Watson's letter.

"Of course, I know that all the Americans who travel are rich," continued Frascatti. "I have myself been in Chicago, which is America. But is Signor Merreek a very rich and well acquainted man in his own country? Believe me, it is well that you answer truly."

“I think he is.”

The man looked cautiously around, and then came nearer and dropped his voice to a whisper.

“Are you aware that Il Duca knows this?” he asked.

Beth thought a moment.

“We met the man you call Il Duca, but who told us he was Signor Victor Valdi, on board the ship, where many of the passengers knew my uncle well. If he listened to their conversation he would soon know all about John Merrick, of course.”

Frascatti wagged his head solemnly.

“Then, signorina,” he said, still speaking very softly, “I assure you there is no need to worry over your uncle’s safety.”

“What do you mean?” demanded Beth.

“People do not lose their way in our mountains,” he replied. “The paths are straight, and lead all to the highways. And there is little danger of falling or of being injured. But — I regret to say it, signorini — it is a reflection upon our advanced civilization and the good name of our people — but sometimes a man who is rich disappears for a time, and no one knows how it is, or where he may be. He always returns; but then he is not so rich.”

“I understand. My uncle is captured by brigands, you think.”

“There are no brigands, signorina.”

“Or the Mafia, then.”

“I do not know the Mafia. All I know is that the very rich should keep their riches secret when they travel. In Chicago, which is America, they will knock you upon the head for a few miserable dollars; here my countrymen scorn to attack or to rob the common people. But when a man is so very rich that he does not need all of his money, there are, I regret to say, some lawless ones in Sicily who insist that he divide with them. But the prisoner is always well treated, and when he pays he is sent away very happy.”

“Suppose he does not pay?”

“Ah, signorina, will not a drowning man clutch the raft that floats by? And the lawless ones do not take his all — merely a part.”

The girls looked at one another helplessly.

“What must we do, Frascatti?” asked Patsy.

“Wait. In a day — two days, perhaps — you will hear from your uncle. He will tell you how to send money to the lawless ones. You will follow his instructions, and he will come home with smiles and singing. I know. It is very regrettable, but it is so.”

“It will not be so in this case,” said Beth, indignantly. “I will see the American consul — ”

“I am sorry, but there is none here.”

“I will telegraph to Messina for the military. They will search the mountains, and bring your brigands to justice.”

Frascatti smiled sadly.

“Oh, yes; perhaps they will come. But the military is Italian — not Sicilian — and has no experience in these parts. The search will find nothing, except perhaps a dead body thrown upon the rocks to defy justice. It is very regrettable, signorina; but it is so.”

Patsy was wringing her hands, frantic with terror. Louise was white and staring. Beth puckered her pretty brow in a frown and tried to think.

“Ferralti is also gone,” murmured Louise, in a hoarse voice. “They will rob or murder him with Uncle John!”

“I am quite convinced,” said Beth, coldly, “that your false count is a fellow conspirator of the brigand called Il Duca. He has been following us around to get a chance to ensnare Uncle John.”

“Oh, no, no, Beth! It is not so! I know better than that.”

“He would lie to you, of course,” returned the girl bitterly. “As soon as the trap was set he disappeared, bag and baggage, and left the simple girl he had fooled to her own devices.”

“You do not know what you are saying,” retorted Louise, turning her back to Beth and walking to a window. From where they stood they could hear her sobbing miserably.

“Whether Frascatti is right or not,” said Patsy, drying her eyes and trying to be brave, “we ought to search for Uncle John at once.”

“I think so, too,” agreed Beth. Then, turning to the Sicilian, she said: “Will you get together as many men as possible and search the hills, with lanterns, for my uncle? You shall be well paid for all you do.”

“Most certainly, signorina, if it will please you,” he replied. “How long do you wish us to search?”

“Until you find him.”

“Then must we grow old in your service. *Non fa niente!* It is regrettable, but — ”

“Will you go at once?” stamping her foot angrily.

“Most certainly, signorina.”

“Then lose no time. I will go with you and see you start.”

She followed the man out, and kept at his side until he had secured several servants with lanterns for the search. The promise of high *caparra* or earnest money made all eager to join the band, but the padrone could only allow a half dozen to leave their stations at the hotel. In the town, however, whither Beth accompanied them, a score of sleepy looking fellows were speedily

secured, and under the command of Frascatti, who had resolved to earn his money by energy and good will because there was no chance of success, they marched out of the Catania Gate and scattered along the mountain paths.

"If you find Uncle John before morning I will give you a thousand lira additional," promised Beth.

"We will search faithfully," replied her captain, "but the signorina must not be disappointed if the lawless ones evade us. They have a way of hiding close in the caves, where none may find them. It is regrettable, very; but it is so."

Then he followed his men to the mountains, and as the last glimmer from his lantern died away the girl sighed heavily and returned alone through the deserted streets to the hotel.

Clouds hid the moon and the night was black and forbidding; but it did not occur to her to be afraid.

CHAPTER XV
DAYS OF ANXIETY

Uncle John's nieces passed a miserable night. Patsy stole into his room and prayed fervently beside his bed that her dear uncle might be preserved and restored to them in health and safety. Beth, meantime, paced the room she shared with Patsy with knitted brows and flashing eyes, the flush in her cheeks growing deeper as her anger increased. An ungovernable temper was the girl's worst failing; the abductors of her uncle were arousing in her the most violent passions of which she was capable, and might lead her to adopt desperate measures. She was only a country girl, and little experienced in life, yet Beth might be expected to undertake extraordinary things if, as she expressed it, if she "got good and mad!"

No sound was heard during the night from the room occupied by Louise, but the morning disclosed a white, drawn face and reddened eyelids as proof that she had rested as little as her cousins.

Yet, singularly enough, Louise was the most composed of the three when they gathered in the little sitting room at daybreak, and tried earnestly to cheer the spirits of her cousins. Louise never conveyed the impression of being especially sincere, but the pleasant words and manners she habitually assumed rendered her an agreeable companion, and this faculty of masking her real feelings now stood her in good stead and served to relieve the weight of anxiety that oppressed them all.

Frascatti came limping back with his tired followers in the early dawn, and reported that no trace of the missing man had been observed. There were no brigands and no Mafia; on that point all his fellow townsmen agreed with him fully. But it was barely possible some lawless ones who were all unknown to the honest Taorminians had made the rich American a prisoner.

Il Duca? Oh, no, signorini! A thousand times, no. Il Duca was queer and unsociable, but not lawless. He was of noble family and a native of the district. It would be very wrong and foolish to question Il Duca's integrity.

With this assertion Frascatti went to bed. He had not shirked the search, because he was paid for it, and he and his men had tramped the mountains faithfully all night, well knowing it would result in nothing but earning their money.

On the morning train from Catania arrived Silas Watson and his young ward Kenneth Forbes, the boy who had so unexpectedly inherited Aunt Jane's fine estate of Elmhurst on her death. The discovery of a will which gave to Kenneth all the property their aunt had intended for her nieces had not caused the slightest estrangement between the young folks, then or

afterward. On the contrary, the girls were all glad that the gloomy, neglected boy, with his artistic, high-strung temperament, would be so well provided for. Without the inheritance he would have been an outcast; now he was able to travel with his guardian, the kindly old Elmhurst lawyer, and fit himself for his future important position in the world. More than all this, however, Kenneth had resolved to be a great landscape painter, and Italy and Sicily had done much, in the past year, to prepare him for this career.

The boy greeted his old friends with eager delight, not noticing for the moment their anxious faces and perturbed demeanor. But the lawyer's sharp eyes saw at once that something was wrong.

"Where is John Merrick?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come!" cried Patsy, clinging to his hand.

"We are in sore straits, indeed, Mr. Watson," said Louise.

"Uncle John is lost," explained Beth, "and we're afraid he is in the hands of brigands."

Then she related as calmly as she could all that had happened. The relation was clear and concise. She told of their meeting with Valdi on the ship, of Count Ferralti's persistence in attaching himself to their party, and of Uncle John's discovery that the young man was posing under an assumed name. She did not fail to mention Ferralti's timely assistance on the Amalfi drive, or his subsequent devoted attentions to Louise; but the latter Beth considered merely as an excuse for following them around.

"In my opinion," said she, "we have been watched ever since we left America, by these two spies, who had resolved to get Uncle John into some unfrequented place and then rob him. If they succeed in their vile plot, Mr. Watson, we shall be humiliated and disgraced forever."

"Tut-tut," said he; "don't think of that. Let us consider John Merrick, and nothing else."

Louise protested that Beth had not been fair in her conclusions. The Count was an honorable man; she would vouch for his character herself.

But Mr. Watson did not heed this defense. The matter was very serious — how serious he alone realized — and his face was grave indeed as he listened to the descriptions of that terrible Il Duca whom the natives all shrank from and refused to discuss.

When he had learned all the nieces had to tell he hastened into the town and telegraphed the American consul at Messina. Then he found the questura, or police office, and was assured by the officer in attendance that the disappearance of Mr. Merrick was already known to the authorities and every effort was being made to find him.

"Do you think he has been abducted by brigands?" asked the lawyer.

“Brigands, signore?” was the astonished reply. “There are no brigands in this district at all. We drove them out many years ago.”

“How about Il Duca?”

“And who is that, signore?”

“Don’t you know?”

“I assure you we have no official knowledge of such a person. There are dukes in Sicily, to be sure; but ‘Il Duca’ means nothing. Perhaps you can tell me to whom you refer?”

“See here,” said the lawyer, brusquely; “I know your methods, *questore mia*, but they won’t prove effective in this case. If you think an American is helpless in this country you are very much mistaken. But, to save time, I am willing to submit to your official requirements. I will pay you well for the rescue of my friend.”

“All shall be done that is possible.”

“But if you do not find him at once, and return him to us unharmed, I will have a regiment of soldiers in Taormina to search your mountains and break up the bands of brigands that infest them. When I prove that brigands are here and that you were not aware of them, you will be disgraced and deposed from your office.”

The official shrugged his shoulders, a gesture in which the Sicilian is as expert as the Frenchman.

“I will welcome the soldiery,” said he; “but you will be able to prove nothing. The offer of a reward may accomplish more — if it is great enough to be interesting.”

“How great is that?”

“Can I value your friend? You must name the reward yourself. But even then I can promise nothing. In the course of our duty every effort is now being made to find the missing American. But we work in the dark, as you know. Your friend may be a suicide; he may have lost his mind and wandered into the wilderness; he may have committed some crime and absconded. How do I know? You say he is missing, but that is no reason the brigands have him, even did brigands exist, which I doubt. Rest assured, signore, that rigid search will be made. It is my boast that I leave no duty unfulfilled.”

Mr. Watson walked back to the telegraph office and found an answer to his message. The American consul was ill and had gone to Naples for treatment. When he returned, his clerk stated, the matter of the disappearance of John Merrick would immediately be investigated.

Feeling extremely helpless and more fearful for his friend than before, the lawyer returned to the hotel for a conference with the nieces.

“How much of a reward shall I offer?” he asked. “That seems to be the only thing that can be depended upon to secure results.”

“Give them a million — Uncle John won’t mind,” cried Patsy, earnestly.

“Don’t give them a penny, sir,” said Beth. “If they are holding him for a ransom Uncle is in no personal danger, and we have no right to assist in robbing him.”

“But you don’t understand, my dear,” asserted the lawyer. “These brigands never let a victim go free unless they are well paid. That is why they are so often successful. If John Merrick is not ransomed he will never again be heard of.”

“But this is not a ransom, sir. You propose to offer a reward to the police.”

“Let me explain. The ways of the Italian police are very intricate. They know of no brigandage here, and cannot find a brigand. But if the reward is great enough to divide, they know where to offer a share of it, in lieu of a ransom, and will force the brigands to accept it. In that way the police gets the glory of a rescue and a share of the spoils. If we offer no reward, or an insignificant one, the brigands will be allowed to act as they please.”

“That is outrageous!” exclaimed Beth.

“Yes. The Italian government deplores it. It is trying hard to break up a system that has existed for centuries, but has not yet succeeded.”

“Then I’d prefer to deal directly with the brigands.”

“So would I, if — ”

“If what, sir?”

“If we were sure your uncle is in their hands. Do you think the party you sent out last night searched thoroughly?”

“I hope so.”

“I will send out more men at once. They shall search the hills in every direction. Should they find nothing our worst fears will be confirmed, and then — ”

“Well, Mr. Watson?”

“Then we must wait for the brigands to dictate the terms of a ransom, and make the best bargain we can.”

“That seems sensible,” said Kenneth, and both Patsy and Louise agreed with him, although it would be tedious waiting.

But Beth only bit her lip and frowned.

Mr. Watson’s searching party was maintained all day — for two days, and three; but without result. Then they waited for the brigands to act. But a week dragged painfully by and no word of John Merrick’s whereabouts reached the ears of the weary watchers.

CHAPTER XVI

TATO

When Uncle John passed through the west gate for a tramp along the mountain paths he was feeling in an especially happy and contented mood. The day was bright and balmy, the air bracing, the scenery unfolded step by step magnificent and appealing. To be in this little corner of the old world, amid ruins antedating the Christian era, and able to wholly forget those awful stock and market reports of Wall street, was a privilege the old gentleman greatly appreciated.

So away he trudged, exploring this path or that leading amongst the rugged cliffs, until finally he began to take note of his erratic wanderings and wonder where he was. Climbing an elevated rock near the path he poised himself upon its peak and studied the landscape spread out beneath him.

There was a patch of sea, with the dim Calabrian coast standing sentry behind it. The nearer coast was hidden from view, but away at the left was a dull white streak marking the old wall of Taormina, and above this the ruined citadel and the ancient castle of Mola — each on its separate peak.

"I must be getting back," he thought, and sliding down the surface of the rock he presently returned to the path from whence he had climbed.

To his surprise he found a boy standing there and looking at him with soft brown eyes that were both beautiful and intelligent. Uncle John was as short as he was stout, but the boy scarcely reached to his shoulder. He was slender and agile, and clothed in a grey corduroy suit that was better in texture than the American had seen other Sicilian youths wear. As a rule the apparel of the children in this country seemed sadly neglected.

Yet the most attractive thing about this child was his face, which was delicate of contour, richly tinted to harmonize with his magnificent brown eyes, and so sensitive and expressive that it seemed able to convey the most subtle shades of emotion. He seemed ten or twelve years of age, but might have been much older.

As soon as the American had returned to the path the boy came toward him in an eager, excited way, and exclaimed:

"Is it not Signor Merrick?"

The English was fluent, and only rendered softer by the foreign intonation.

"It is," said Uncle John, cheerfully. "Where did you drop from, my lad? I thought these hills were deserted, until now."

"I am sent by a friend," answered the boy, speaking rapidly and regarding the man with appealing glances. "He is in much trouble, signore, and asks your aid."

“A friend? Who is it?”

“The name he gave me is Ferralti, signore. He is near to this place, in the hills yonder, and unable to return to the town without assistance.”

“Ferralti. H-m-m. Is he hurt?”

“Badly, signore; from a fall on the rocks.”

“And he sent for me?”

“Yes, signore. I know you by sight — who does not? — and as I hurried along I saw you standing on the rock. It is most fortunate. Will you hasten to your friend, then? I will lead you to him.”

Uncle John hesitated. He ought to be getting home, instead of penetrating still farther into these rocky fastnesses. And Ferralti was no especial friend, to claim his assistance. But then the thought occurred that this young Italian had befriended both him and his nieces in an extremity, and was therefore entitled to consideration when trouble in turn overtook himself. The natural impulse of this thought was to go to his assistance.

“All right, my lad,” said he. “Lead on, and I’ll see what can be done for Ferralti. Is it far?”

“Not far, signore.”

With nervous, impatient steps the child started up the narrow path and Uncle John followed — not slowly, but scarcely fast enough to satisfy his zealous guide.

“What is your name, little one?”

“Tato, signore.”

“Where do you live?”

“Near by, signore.”

“And how did you happen to find Ferralti?”

“By chance, signore.”

Uncle John saved his remaining breath for the climb. He could ask questions afterward.

The path was in a crevasse where the rocks seemed once to have split. It was narrow and steep, and before long ended in a *cul de sac*. The little man thought they had reached their destination, then; but without hesitation the boy climbed over a boulder and dropped into another path on the opposite side, holding out a hand to assist the American.

Uncle John laughed at the necessity, but promptly slid his stout body over the boulder and then paused to mop his brow.

“Much farther, Tato?”

“Just a step, signore.”

“It is lucky you found Ferralti, or he might have died in these wilds without a soul knowing he was here.”

“That is true, signore.”

“Well, is this the path?”

“Yes, signore. Follow me, please.”

The cliffs were precipitous on both sides of them. It was another crevasse, but not a long one. Presently the child came to a halt because the way ended and they could proceed no farther. He leaned against the rock and in a high-pitched, sweet voice sang part of a Sicilian ditty, neither starting the verse nor ending it, but merely trilling out a fragment.

Uncle John regarded him wonderingly; and then, with a sudden suspicion, he demanded:

“You are not playing me false, Tato?”

“I, signore?” smiling frankly into the man’s eyes; “you need never fear Tato, signore. To be your friend, and Signor Ferralti’s friend, makes me very proud.”

The rock he leaned against fell inward, noiselessly, and disclosed a passage. It was short, for there was light at the other end.

The strange child darted in at once.

“This way, signore. He is here!”

Uncle John drew back. He had forgotten until now that these mountains are dangerous. And something strange in the present proceedings, the loneliness of the place and the elfish character of his guide, suddenly warned him to be cautious.

“See here, my lad,” he called: “I’ll go no farther.”

Instantly Tato was at his side again, grasping the man’s hand in his tiny brown one and searching his face with pleading eyes.

“Ah, signore, you will not fail your friend, when he is so near you and in such great trouble? See! I who am a stranger and not even his countryman, even I weep for the poor young man, and long to comfort him. Do you, his friend, refuse him aid because you have fear of the wild mountains and a poor peasant boy?”

Tears really stood in the beautiful brown eyes. They rolled down his cheeks, as with both hands he pressed that of Uncle John and urged him gently forward.

“Oh, well; lead on, Tato. I’ll see the other side of your tunnel, anyhow. But if you play me tricks, my lad — ”

He paused, for a wonderful vision had opened before him. Coming through the short passage hewn in the rocks the American stood upon a ledge facing a most beautiful valley, that was hemmed in by precipitous cliffs on every side. From these stern barriers of the outside world the ground sloped gradually toward the center, where a pretty brook flowed, its waters sparkling

like diamonds in the sunlight as it tumbled over its rocky bed. Groves of oranges and of olive, lemon and almond trees occupied much of the vale, and on a higher point at the right, its back to the wall of rock that towered behind it, stood a substantial yet picturesque mansion of stone, with several outbuildings scattered on either side.

The valley seemed, indeed, a toy kingdom sequestered from the great outside world, yet so rich and productive within itself that it was independent of all else.

Uncle John gazed with amazement. Who could have guessed this delightful spot was hidden safe within the heart of the bleak, bare mountain surrounding it? But suddenly he bethought himself.

“What place is this, Tato?” he asked; “and where is our friend Ferralti, who needs me?”

There was no reply.

He turned around to find the boy had disappeared. Moreover, the passage had disappeared. Only a wall of rock was behind him, and although his eyes anxiously searched the rifts and cracks of its rough surface, no indication of the opening through which he had passed could be discovered.

CHAPTER XVII
THE HIDDEN VALLEY

Uncle John's first inspiration was to sit down upon a stone to think. He drew out his pipe and lighted it, to assist his meditations.

These were none too pleasant. That he had been cleverly entrapped, and that by a child scarcely in its teens, was too evident to need reflection. And what a secure trap it was! The mountains ranged all around the valley were impossible to scale, even by an Alpine climber, and to one who was not informed of its location the existence of the valley itself was unimaginable.

"I had not believed Ferralti was so shrewd," he muttered, wonderingly. "That something was wrong about the fellow I knew, of course; but I had not suspected such a thing as this. Now, then, first of all let me mark this spot, so that I will remember it. Just back of where I now stand is the entrance or outlet to the tunnel through the wall. It is closed, I suppose, by a swinging stone, like the one on the opposite side. I saw that one opened — opened by some person concealed from view, as soon as the boy sang his bit of song which was the signal agreed upon. And I was fool enough, after that warning, to walk straight through the tunnel! You're getting old, John Merrick; that's the only way I can account for your folly. But Ferralti hasn't won the odd trick yet, and if I keep my wits about me he isn't likely to win."

Thus ruminating, Uncle John searched the rocky wall carefully and believed he would know the place again, although which of the rough stones of its surface formed the doorway to the tunnel he could not guess.

A ledge of rock served as a path leading to right and left around this end of the valley, or "pocket" in the mountain, as it could more properly be called. Uncle John turned to the right, striding along with his usual deliberation, smoking his pipe and swinging his cane as he approached the stone dwelling that formed the center of the little settlement. As yet no sign of human life had he observed since Tato had disappeared, although a few cows were standing in a green meadow and some goats scrambled among the loose rocks at the further end of the enclosure.

Around the house the grounds had been laid out in gardens, with flowers and shrubbery, hedges and shade trees scattered about. Chickens clucked and strutted along the paths and an air of restfulness and peace brooded over all.

Uncle John was plainly mystified until he drew quite close to the dwelling, which had many verandas and balconies and bore every evidence of habitation. Then, to his astonishment, he beheld the form of a man stretched lazily in a wicker chair beside the entrance, and while he paused, hesitating, the man sat up and bowed politely to him.

“Good morning, Signor Merreek.”

It was Victor Valdi, or, ignoring the fictitious name, the mysterious personage known as “Il Duca.”

“Behold my delight, Signor Merreek, to receive you in my poor home,” continued the man. “Will you not be seated, *caro amico*?”

The words were soft and fair, but the dark eyes gleamed with triumph and a sneer curled the thin lips.

“Thank you,” said Uncle John; “I believe I will.”

He stepped upon the veranda and sat down opposite his host.

“I came to see Count Ferralti, who is hurt, I understand,” he continued.

“It is true, signore, but not badly. The poor count is injured mostly in his mind. Presently you shall see him.”

“No hurry,” observed Uncle John. “Pleasant place you have here, Duke.”

“It is very good of you to praise it, signore. It is my most ancient patrimony, and quite retired and exclusive.”

“So I see.”

“The house you have honored by your presence, signore, was erected some three hundred and thirty years ago, by an ancestor who loved retirement. It has been in my family ever since. We all love retirement.”

“Very desirable spot for a brigand, I’m sure,” remarked the American, puffing his pipe composedly.

“Brigand? Ah, it pleases you to have humor, signore, mia. Brigand! But I will be frank. It is no dishonor to admit that my great ancestors of past centuries were truly brigands, and from this quiet haven sallied forth to do mighty deeds. They were quite famous, I am told, those olden Dukes d’Alcanta.”

“I do not question it.”

“Our legends tell of how my great ancestors demanded tribute of the rich who passed through their domain — for all this end of Sicily was given to us by Peter of Aragon, and remained in our possession until the second Ferdinand robbed us of it. Those times were somewhat wild and barbarous, signore, and a gentleman who protected his estates and asked tribute of strangers was termed a brigand, and became highly respected. But now it is different. We are civilized and meek, and ruled most lovingly by Italy. They will tell you there is no brigandage in all Sicily.”

“So I understand.”

“To-day I am nobody. My very name is forgotten. Those around this mountain know nothing of my little estate, and I am content. I desire not glory: I desire not prominence; to live my life in seclusion, with the occasional visit of a friend like yourself, is enough to satisfy me.”

“You seem well known in Taormina.”

“Quite a mistake, signore.”

“And the natives must have climbed these peaks at times and looked down into your secluded kingdom.”

“If so, they have forgotten it.”

“I see.”

“I give to the churches and the poor, but in secret. If I have an enemy, he disappears — I do not know how; no one knows.”

“Of course not. You are an improvement on your ancestors, Duke. Instead of being a brigand you belong to the Mafia, and perform your robberies and murders in security. Very clever, indeed.”

“But again you are wrong, signore,” replied the Duke, with a frown. “I have never known of this Mafia, of which you speak, nor do I believe it exists. For myself, I am no robber, but a peaceful merchant.”

“A merchant?” returned Uncle John, surprised by the statement.

“To be sure. I have some ancient and very valuable relics in my possession, treasured most carefully from the mediæval days. These I sell to my friends — who are fortunately all foreigners like yourself and can appreciate such treasures — and so obtain for myself and my family a modest livelihood.”

“And you expect to sell something to me?” asked Uncle John, understanding very well the Sicilian’s meaning.

“It is my earnest hope, signore.”

The American fell silent, thinking upon the situation. The fierce looking brigand beside him was absurd enough, in his way, but doubtless a dangerous man to deal with. Uncle John was greatly interested in the adventure. It was such a sharp contrast to the hum-drum, unromantic American life he had latterly known that he derived a certain enjoyment from the novel experience. If the girls did not worry over his absence he would not much regret his visit to Il Duca’s secluded valley.

It was already midday, and his nieces would be expecting him to luncheon. When he did not appear they would make enquiries, and try to find him. It occurred to him how futile all such attempts must prove. Even to one acquainted with the mountain paths the entrance to the duke’s domain was doubtless a secret, and the brigand had plainly hinted that the native Sicilians were too cautious to spy upon him or molest him in any way.

So far, the only person he had seen was Il Duca himself. The child who had decoyed him was, of course, somewhere about, and so also was Ferralti. How many servants or followers the brigand might have was as yet a mystery to the new arrival.

In the side pocket of Uncle John's loose coat lay a loaded revolver, which he had carried ever since he had received Mr. Watson's warning letter. He had never imagined a condition of danger where he could not use this weapon to defend himself, and as long as it remained by him he had feared nothing. But he had been made a prisoner in so deft a manner that he had no opportunity to expostulate or offer any sort of resistance. Later there might be a chance to fight for his liberty, and the only sensible action was to wait and bide his time.

"For example," the Duke was saying, in his labored, broken English, "I have here a priceless treasure — very antique, very beautiful. It was in one time owned by Robert the Norman, who presented it to my greatest ancestor."

He drew an odd-shaped ring from his pocket and handed it to the American. It was of dull gold and set with a half dozen flat-cut garnets. Perhaps antique; perhaps not; but of little intrinsic value.

"This ring I have decided to sell, and it shall be yours, Signor Merreek, at a price far less than is represented by its historic worth. I am sure you will be glad to buy it."

"For how much?" asked Uncle John, curiously.

"A trifle; a mere hundred thousand lira."

"Twenty thousand dollars!"

"The ring of King Roger. How cheap! But, nevertheless, you shall have it for that sum."

Uncle John smiled.

"My dear Duke," he replied, "you have made a sad mistake. I am a comparatively poor man. My fortune is very modest."

The brigand lay back in his chair and lighted a fresh cigarette.

"I fear you undervalue yourself, my dear guest," he said. "Recently have I returned from America, where I was told much of the wealth of Signor John Merreek, who is many times a millionaire. See," drawing a paper from his pocket, "here is a list of the stocks and securities you own. Also of government and railway bonds, of real estate and of manufactures controlled by your money. I will read, and you will correct me if an error occurs."

Uncle John listened and was amazed. The schedule was complete, and its total was many millions. It was a better list of holdings than Uncle John possessed himself.

"You foreigners make queer mistakes, Duke," said he, taking another tack. "This property belongs to another John Merrick. It is a common name, and that is doubtless why you mistook me for the rich John Merrick."

"I have noticed," returned the Duke, coldly, "that this strange delusion of

mind is apt to overtake my guests. But do not be alarmed; it will pass away presently, and then you will realize that you are yourself. Remember that I crossed the Atlantic on your steamship, signore. Many people there on board spoke of you and pointed you out to me as the great man of finance. Your own niece that is called Patsy, she also told me much about you, and of your kindness to her and the other young signorini. Before I left New York a banker of much dignity informed me you would sail on the ship 'Princess Irene.' If a mistake has been made, signore, it is yours, and not mine. Is your memory clearer now?"

Uncle John laughed frankly. The rascal was too clever for him to dispute with.

"Whoever I am," said he, "I will not buy your ring."

"I am pained," replied the brigand, lightly. "But there is ample time for you to reflect upon the matter. Do not decide hastily, I implore you. I may have been too liberal in making my offer, and time may assist me in fixing a just price for the relic. But we have had enough of business just now. It is time for our midday collation. Oblige me by joining us, signore."

He blew a shrill whistle, and a man stepped out of a doorway. He was an enormous Sicilian, tall, sinewy and with a countenance as dark and fierce as his master's. In his belt was a long knife, such as is known as a stilleto.

"Tommaso," said the Duke, "kindly show Signor Merreek to his room, and ask Guido if luncheon is ready to be served."

"*Va bene, padrone*," growled the man, and turned obediently to escort the American.

Uncle John entered the house, traversed a broad and cool passage, mounted to the second floor and found himself in a pleasant room with a balcony overlooking the valley. It was comfortably furnished, and with a bow that was not without a certain grim respect the man left him alone and tramped down the stairs again. There had been no attempt to restrain his liberty or molest him in any way, yet he was not slow to recognize the fact that he was a prisoner. Not in the house, perhaps, but in the valley. There was no need to confine him more closely. He could not escape.

He bathed his hands and face, dried them on a fresh towel, and found his toilet table well supplied with conveniences. In the next room some one was pacing the floor like a caged beast, growling and muttering angrily at every step.

Uncle John listened. "The brigand seems to have more than one guest," he thought, and smiled at the other's foolish outbursts.

Then he caught a word or two of English that made him start. He went to the door between the two rooms and threw it open, finding himself face to

face with Count Ferralti.

CHAPTER XVIII
GUESTS OF THE BRIGAND

"Good morning, Count," said Uncle John, cheerfully.

The other stared at him astonished.

"Good heavens! Have they got you, too?" he exclaimed.

"Why, I'm visiting his excellency, Il Duca, if that's what you mean," replied Mr. Merrick. "But whether he's got me, or I've got him, I haven't yet decided."

The young man's jaw was tied in a bandage and one of his eyes was black and discolored. He looked agitated and miserable.

"Sir, you are in grave danger; we are both in grave danger," he announced, "unless we choose to submit to being robbed by this rascally brigand."

"Then," observed Uncle John, "let's submit."

"Never! Not in a thousand years!" cried Ferralti, wildly. And then this singular young man sank into a chair and burst into tears.

Uncle John was puzzled. The slender youth — for he was but a youth in spite of his thin moustaches — exhibited a queer combination of courage and weakness; but somehow Uncle John liked him better at that moment than he ever had before. Perhaps because he now realized he had unjustly suspected him.

"You seem to have been hurt, Count," he remarked.

"Why, I was foolish enough to struggle, and that brute Tommaso pounded me," was the reply. "You were wise to offer no resistance, sir."

"As for that, I hadn't a choice," said Uncle John, smiling. "When did they get you, Ferralti?"

"Last evening. I walked in the garden of the hotel and they threw a sack over my head. I resisted and tried to cry out. They beat me until I was insensible and then brought me here, together with my travelling cases, which they removed from my room to convey the impression that I had gone away voluntarily. When I awakened from my swoon I was in this room, with the doctor bending over me."

"The doctor?"

"Oh, they have a doctor in this accursed den, as well as a priest and a lawyer. The Duke entreated my pardon. He will punish his men for abusing me. But he holds me a safe prisoner, just the same."

"Why?"

"He wants a ransom. He will force me to purchase an ancient brass candlestick for fifty thousand lira."

Uncle John looked at his companion thoughtfully.

"Tell me, Count Ferralti," he said, "who you really are. I had believed you were Il Duca's accomplice, until now. But if he has trapped you, and demands a ransom, it is because you are a person of some consequence, and able to pay. May I not know as much about your position in life as does this brigand duke?"

The young man hesitated. Then he spread out his hands with an appealing gesture and said:

"Not yet, Mr. Merrick! Do not press me now, I implore you. Perhaps I have done wrong to try to deceive you, but in good time I will explain everything, and then you will understand me better."

"You are no count."

"That is true, Mr. Merrick."

"You are not even an Italian."

"That is but partly true, sir."

"You have seen fit to deceive us by — "

Tommaso threw wide the door.

"*Il dejuné é servito*," he said gruffly.

"What does that mean?" asked Uncle John.

"Luncheon is ready. Shall we go down?"

"Yes; I'm hungry."

They followed the man to the lower floor, where he ushered them into a low, cool room where a long table was set. The walls were whitewashed and bore some religious prints, gaudily colored. A white cloth covered the table, which was well furnished with modern crockery and glass, and antique silverware.

At the head of the table were two throne-like chairs, one slightly larger and more elevated than the other. In the more important seat was a withered old woman with a face like that of a mummy, except that it was supplied with two small but piercing jet eyes that seemed very much alive as they turned shrewdly upon the strangers. She was the only one of the company they found seated. The Duke stood behind the smaller chair beside her, and motioned the Americans to occupy two places at the side of the table next him. Opposite them, in the places adjoining the elevated dais, were two remarkable individuals whom Uncle John saw for the first time. One was a Cappuccin monk, with shaven crown and coarse cassock fastened at the waist by a cord. He was blind in one eye and the lid of the other drooped so as to expose only a thin slit. Fat, awkward and unkempt, he stood holding to the back of his chair and swaying slightly from side to side. Next tohim was a dandified appearing man who was very slight and thin of form but affected

the dress and manners of extreme youth. Ferralti whispered to Uncle John that this was the doctor.

The table dropped a step in heighth from these places, and the balance of its length was occupied by several stalwart Sicilians, clothed in ordinary peasant costume, and a few silent, heavy-featured women. Tato was not present.

"Signori," said the Duke to the Americans, "allow me to present you to my mother, the head of our illustrious family; one who is known, admired and feared throughout Sicily as her Excellenza la Duchessa d'Alcanta."

With the words the Duke bowed low to the old woman. Uncle John and Ferralti also bowed low. The lines of servitors humbly bent themselves double. But the Duchessa made no acknowledgment. Her bead like eyes searched the faces of the "guests" with disconcerting boldness, and then dropped to her plate.

At this signal the fat priest mumbled a blessing upon the food, the Duke waved his hand, and all the company became seated.

Uncle John felt as if he were taking part in a comic opera, and enjoyed the scene immensely. But now his attention was distracted by the stewards bringing in steaming platters of macaroni and stewed mutton, from which they first served the Duchessa, and then the Duke, and afterward the guests. The servants waited hungry-eyed until these formalities were completed, and then swept the platters clean and ate ravenously.

Uncle John plied his knife and fork busily and found the food excellently prepared. Ferralti seemed to have little appetite. Some of his teeth had been knocked out and his broken wrist, which had but partially healed, had been wrenched in the scrimmage of the night before so that it caused him considerable pain.

The Duke attempted little conversation, doubtless through deference to the aged Duchessa, who remained absolutely silent and unresponsive to her surroundings. He praised his wine, however, which he said was from their own vineyards, and pressed the Americans to drink freely.

When she had finished her meal the Duchessa raised a hand, and at the signal the whole company arose and stood at their places while two of the women assisted her to retire. She leaned upon their shoulders, being taller than her son, but displayed surprising vigor for one so advanced in years.

When she had gone the others finished at their leisure, and the conversation became general, the servants babbling in their voluble Italian without any restraint whatever.

Then the Duke led his prisoners to the veranda and offered them cigars. These were brought by Tato, who then sat in the duke's lap and curled up

affectionately in his embrace, while the brigand's expression softened and he stroked the boy's head with a tender motion.

Uncle John watched the little scene approvingly. It was the first time he had seen Tato since the child had lured him through the tunnel.

"Your son, Duke?" he asked.

"Yes, signore; my only child. The heir to my modest estate."

"And a very good brigand, already, for his years," added Mr. Merrick. "Ah, Tato, Tato," shaking his head at the child, "how could you be so cruel as to fool an innocent old chap like me?"

Tato laughed.

"I did not deceive you, signore. You but misunderstood me. I said Signor Ferralti was hurt, and so he was."

"But you said he needed my assistance."

"Does he not, signore?"

"How do you speak such good English?"

"Father Antoine taught me."

"The monk?"

"Yes, signore."

"My child is a linguist," remarked the Duke, complacently. "Sh — he has been taught English, German and French, even from the days of infancy. It is very good for me, for now Tato can entertain my guests."

"Have you no Italian guests, then?" asked Uncle John.

"No, since Italy owns Sicily, and I am a loyal subject. Neither have I many Germans or Frenchmen, although a few wander my way, now and then. But the Americans I love, and often they visit me. There were three last year, and now here are two more to honor me with their presence."

"The Americans make easier victims, I suppose."

"Oh, the Americans are very rich, and they purchase my wares liberally. By the way, Signor Ferralti," turning to the young man, "have you decided yet the little matter of your own purchase?"

"I will not buy your candlestick, if that is what you refer to," was the response.

"No?"

"By no means. Fifty thousand lira, for a miserable bit of brass!"

"But I forgot to tell you, signore; the candlestick is no longer for sale," observed the Duke, with an evil smile. "Instead, I offer you a magnificent bracelet which is a hundred years old."

"Thank you. What's the price?"

"A hundred thousand lira, signore."

Ferralti started. Then in turn he smiled at his captor.

“That is absurd,” said he. “I have no wealth at all, sir, but live on a small allowance that barely supplies my needs. I cannot pay.”

“I will take that risk, signore,” said the brigand, coolly. “You have but to draw me an order on Mr. Edward Leighton, of New York, for one hundred thousand lira — or say twenty thousand dollars — and the bracelet is yours.”

“Edward Leighton! My father’s attorney! How did you know of him, sir?”

“I have an agent in New York,” answered the Duke, “and lately I have been in your city myself.”

“Then, if you know so much, you scoundrelly thief, you know that my father will not honor a draft for such a sum as you demand. I doubt if my father would pay a single dollar to save me from assassination.”

“We will not discuss that, signore, for I regret to say that your father is no longer able to honor drafts. However, your attorney can do so, and will, without question.”

Ferralti stared at him blankly.

“What do you mean by that?” he demanded.

The Duke shook the ashes from his cigar and examined the glowing end with interest.

“Your father,” was the deliberate reply, “was killed in a railway accident, four days ago. I have just been notified of the fact by a cable from America.”

Ferralti sat trembling and regarding the man with silent horror.

“Is this true, sir?” asked Uncle John, quickly; “or is it only a part of your cursed game?”

“It is quite true, signore, I regret being obliged to break the ill news so abruptly; but this gentleman thought himself too poor to purchase my little bracelet, and it was necessary to inform him that he is suddenly made wealthy — not yet so great a Croesus as yourself, Signor Merreek, but still a very rich man.”

Ferralti ceased trembling, but the horror still clung to his eyes.

“A railway wreck!” he muttered, hoarsely. “Where was it, sir? Tell me, I beseech you! And are you sure my father is dead?”

“Very sure, signore. My informant is absolutely reliable. But the details of the wreck I do not know. I am only informed of the fact of your father’s death, and that his will leaves you his entire fortune.”

Ferralti arose and staggered away to his room, and Uncle John watched him go pityingly, but knew no way to comfort him. When he had gone he asked gently:

“His father was an American, Duke?”

“Yes, signore.”

“And wealthy, you say?”

“Exceedingly wealthy, signore.”

“What was his name?”

“Ah; about that ring, my dear guest. Do you think a hundred and fifty thousand lira too much for it?”

“You said a hundred thousand.”

“That was this morning, signore. The ring has increased in value since. To-morrow, without doubt, it will be worth two hundred thousand.”

Tato laughed at the rueful expression on the victim’s face, and, a moment after, Uncle John joined in his laughter.

“Very good, duke,” he said. “I don’t wish to rob you. Let us wait until to-morrow.”

The brigand seemed puzzled.

“May I ask why, Signor Merreek — since you are warned?” he enquired.

“Why, it’s this way, Duke. I’m just a simple, common-place American, and have lived a rather stupid existence for some time. We have no brigands at home, nor any hidden valleys or protected criminals like yourself. The romance of my surroundings interests me; your methods are unique and worth studying; if I am so rich as you think me a few extra hundred thousand lira will be a cheap price to pay for this experience. Is it not so?”

The Duke frowned.

“Do you play with me?” he asked, menacingly.

“By no means. I’m just the spectator. I expect you to make the entertainment. I’m sure it will be a good show, although the price is rather high.”

Il Duca glared, but made no reply at the moment. Instead, he sat stroking Tato’s hair and glowering evilly at the American.

The child whispered something in Italian, and the man nodded.

“Very well, signore,” he said, more quietly. “To-morrow, then, if it so pleases you.”

Then, taking Tato’s hand, he slowly arose and left the veranda.

For a moment the American looked after them with a puzzled expression. Then he said to himself, with a smile: “Ah, I have solved one mystery, at any rate. Tato is a girl!”

CHAPTER XIX
A DIFFICULT POSITION

And now Uncle John, finding himself left alone, took his walkingstick and started out to explore the valley.

He felt very sorry for young Ferralti, but believed his sympathy could in no way lighten the blow caused by the abrupt news of his parent's death. He would wish to be alone with his grief for a time. By and by Mr. Merrick intended to question his fellow prisoner and try to find out something of his history.

The dale was very beautiful as it lay basking in the afternoon sun. Near the house was a large vegetable garden, which, being now shaded by the overhanging cliffs, was being tended by a sour-visaged Sicilian. Uncle John watched him for a time, but the fellow paid no heed to him. Every servant connected with the duke's establishment seemed surly and morose, and this was the more remarkable because the country folk and villagers Uncle John had met were usually merry and light-hearted.

Down by the brook were green meadows and groves of fruit trees. The little gentleman followed the stream for some distance, and finally came upon a man seated on the bank above a broad pool, intently engaged in fishing. It proved to be the dandified old doctor, who wore gloves to protect his hands and a broad-rimmed straw hat to shade his face.

Uncle John stood beside the motionless figure for a moment, watching the line. Then, forgetting he was in a foreign country, he asked carelessly:

"Any luck?"

"Not yet," was the quiet reply, in clear English. "It is too early to interest the fishes. An hour later they will bite."

"Then why did you come so soon?"

"To escape that hell-hole yonder," nodding his head toward the house.

Uncle John was surprised.

"But you are not a prisoner, doctor," he ventured to say.

"Except through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Il Duca pays well — or rather the Duchessa does, for she is the head of this household. I am skillful, and worth my price, and they know it."

"You say the Duchessa is the head of the house?"

"Assuredly, signore. Il Duca is her slave. She plans and directs everything, and her son but obeys her will."

"Did she send him to America?"

"I think so. But do not misunderstand me. The Duke is clever on his own account, and almost as wicked as his old mother. And between them they are

training the child to be as bad as they are. It is dreadful."

"Have you been here long?"

"For seven years, signore."

"But you can resign whenever you please?"

"Why not? But the doubt makes me uneasy, sometimes. In another year I would like to go to Venice, and retire from professional life. I am a Venetian, you observe; no dastardly brigand of a Sicilian. And in another year I shall have sufficient means to retire and end my days in peace. Here I save every centessimo I make, for I can spend nothing."

Uncle John sat down upon the bank beside the confiding Venetian.

"Doctor," said he, "I am somewhat puzzled by this man you call Il Duca, as well as by my audacious capture and the methods employed to rob me. I'd like your advice. What shall I do?"

"The only possible thing, signore. Submit."

"Why is it the only possible thing?"

"Have you not yet discovered? Unless you pay, your friends will never hear from you again. Il Duca, by his mother's favor, is king here. He will murder you if you oppose his demands."

"Really?"

"It is quite certain, signore. He has murdered several obstinate people since I have been here, and the outside world will never know their fate. It is folly to oppose the king. Were you not rich you would not be here. Il Duca knows the exact wealth of every American who travels abroad and is likely to visit Sicily. Many escape him, but a few wander into his toils, for he is wonderfully sagacious. Mark you: he does not demand your all; he merely takes tribute, leaving his victims sufficient to render life desirable to them. If he required their all, many would as soon forfeit life as make the payment; but a tithe they will spare for the privilege of living. That is why he is so successful. And that is why he remains undisturbed. For an American, being robbed so simply, never tells of his humiliating experience. He goes home, and avoids Sicily ever after."

"H-m-m. I understand."

"But if you do not pay, you are not permitted to leave this place. You are killed at once, and the incident is over. Il Duca does not love to murder, but he takes no chances."

"I see. But suppose I pay, and then make complaint to the Italian government?"

"It has been done, signore. But the government is very blind. It does not know Il Duca d' Alcanta. Its officials are convinced he does not exist. They investigate carefully, and declare the tale is all a myth."

“Then there is no way of escape?”

“Absolutely none. Such a condition is almost inconceivable, is it not? and in this enlightened age? But it exists, and is only harmful when its victims are stubborn and rebellious. To be cheerful and pay promptly is the only sensible way out of your difficulty.”

“Thank you,” said Uncle John. “I shall probably pay promptly. But tell me, to satisfy my curiosity, how does your duke murder his victims?”

“He does not call it murder, as I do; he says they are suicides, or the victims of accident. They walk along a path and fall into a pit. It is deep, and they are killed. The pit is also their tomb. They are forgotten, and the trap is already set for their successors.”

“Rather a gloomy picture, doctor.”

“Yes. I tell you this because my nature is kind. I abhor all crime, and much prefer that you should live. But, if you die, my *salario* continues. I am employed to guard the health of the Duke’s family — especially the old Duchessa — and have no part in this detestable business.”

“Isn’t that a bite?”

“No, signore. It is the current. It is not time for the fish to bite.”

Uncle John arose.

“Good afternoon, doctor.”

“Good afternoon, signore.”

He left the old fellow sitting there and walked on. The valley was about a half mile long and from a quarter to a third of a mile in width. It resembled a huge amphitheatre in shape.

The American tramped the length of the brook, which disappeared into the rocky wall at the far end. Then he returned through the orchards to the house.

The place was silent and seemed deserted. There was a languor in the atmosphere that invited sleep. Uncle John sought his room and lay down for an afternoon nap, soon falling into a sound slumber.

When he awoke he found Ferralti seated beside his bed. The young man was pale, but composed.

“Mr. Merrick,” said he, “what have you decided to do?”

Uncle John rubbed his eyes and sat up.

“I’m going to purchase that ring,” he answered, “at the best price the Duke will make me.”

“I am disappointed,” returned Ferralti, stiffly. “I do not intend to allow myself to be robbed in this way.”

“Then write a farewell letter, and I’ll take it to your friends.”

“It may not be necessary, sir.”

Uncle John regarded him thoughtfully.

"What can you do?" he asked.

Ferralti leaned forward and whispered, softly: "I have a stout pocket-knife, with a very long blade. I shall try to kill the Duke. Once he is dead his people will not dare to oppose us, but will fly in terror. It is only Il Duca's audacity and genius that enables this robber's den to exist."

"You would rather attempt this than pay?"

"Sir, I could not bear the infamy of letting this scoundrel triumph over me."

"Well, Ferralti, you are attempting a delicate and dangerous task, but so far as I can, I will help you."

He took the revolver from his pocket and handed it to his companion.

"It's loaded in every chamber," he whispered. "Perhaps it will serve your purpose better than a knife."

Ferralti's eyes sparkled.

"Good!" he exclaimed, concealing the weapon. "I shall watch for my opportunity, so as to make no mistake. Meantime, do you bargain with the Duke, but postpone any agreement to pay."

"All right, my lad. I'll wait to see what happens. It may add a good deal to the cost of that ring, if you fail; but I'll take the chances of that for the sake of the game."

He paused a moment, and then added:

"Is your father really dead, Count?"

"Yes; the Duke has sent me the cablegram he received from his agent. I cannot doubt his authority. My father and I have not been friendly, of late years. He was a severe man, cold and unsympathetic, but I am sorry we could not have been reconciled before this awful fate overtook him. However, it is now too late for vain regrets. I tried not to disobey or antagonize my one parent, but he did not understand my nature, and perhaps I failed to understand his."

He sighed, and rising from his chair walked to the window to conceal his emotion.

Uncle John remained silent, and presently Tommaso entered to notify them that dinner would be served in a half hour, and the Duke expected them to join him at the table.

The next morning Mr. Merrick bargained pleasantly with his jailer, who seemed not averse to discussing the matter at length; but no conclusion was reached. Ferralti took no part in the conversation, but remained sullen and silent, and the Duke did not press him.

The day after, however, he insisted that he had dallied long enough,

although after much argument on the part of his enforced guests he agreed to give them three days to decide, with the understanding that each day they delayed would add a goodly sum to their ransom. If at the end of the three days the Americans remained obdurate, he would invite them to take a little walk, and the affair would be terminated.

Ferralti hugged his revolver and awaited his opportunity. It seemed to Uncle John that he might have had a hundred chances to shoot the brigand, who merited no better fate than assassination at their hands; but although Ferralti was resolved upon the deed he constantly hesitated to accomplish it in cold blood, and the fact that he had three days grace induced him to put off the matter as long as possible.

He came to regret most bitterly his indecision; for something in the young man's eyes must have put the brigand on his guard. When they awoke on the third morning, which was the fifth since their imprisonment, some one had searched their rooms thoroughly. The revolver and the knife were both gone, and the loss rendered them absolutely helpless.

CHAPTER XX

UNCLE JOHN PLAYS EAVESDROPPER

It now seemed to Uncle John that further resistance to the demands of Il Duca was as useless as it was dangerous. He resented the necessity of paying a ransom as much as any man could; but imprisoned as he was in a veritable "robbers' den," without means of communicating with the authorities or the outside world, and powerless to protect his life from the vengeance of the unprincipled scoundrel who held him, the only safe and sane mode of procedure was to give in as gracefully as possible.

He formed this conclusion during a long walk around the valley, during which he once more noted the absolute seclusion of the place and the impossibility of escape by scaling the cliffs. The doctor was fishing again by the brook, but paid no heed when Uncle John tramped by. The sight of the dapper little man gave Mr. Merrick a thought, and presently he turned back and sat down beside the fisherman.

"I want to get out of this," he said, bluntly. "It was fun, at first, and rather interesting; but I've had enough of it."

The physician kept his eye on the line and made no reply.

"I want you to tell me how to escape," continued Uncle John. "It's no use saying that it can't be done, for nothing is impossible to a clever man, such as I believe you to be."

Still no reply.

"You spoke, the other day, of earning enough money to go home and live in peace for the rest of your days. Here, sir, is your opportunity to improve upon that ambition. The brigand is trying to exact a large ransom from me; I'll give it to you willingly — every penny — if you'll show me how to escape."

"Why should you do that?" enquired the doctor, still intent upon his line. "Does it matter to you who gets your money?"

"Of course," was the prompt reply. "In one case I pay it for a service rendered, and do it gladly. On the other hand, I am robbed, and that goes against the grain. Il Duca has finally decided to demand fifty thousand dollars. It shall be yours, instead, if you give me your assistance."

"Signore," said the other, calmly, "I would like this money, and I regret that it is impossible for me to earn it. But there is no means of escape from this place except by the passage through the rocks, which passage only three people know the secret of opening — Il Duca himself, the child Tato, and the old Duchessa. Perhaps Tommaso also knows; I am not certain; but he will not admit he has such knowledge. You see, signore, I am as much a prisoner

as yourself.”

“There ought to be some way to climb these cliffs; some secret path or underground tunnel,” remarked Uncle John, musingly.

“It is more than a hundred years since this valley was made secure by a brigand ancestor of our Duchessa,” was the reply. “It may be two or three centuries ago, for all I know. And ever since it has been used for just this purpose: to hold a prisoner until he was ransomed — and no such man has ever left the place alive unless he paid the price.”

“Then you cannot help me?” asked Uncle John, who was weary of hearing these pessimistic declarations.

“I cannot even help myself; for I may not resign my position here unless the Duke is willing I should go.”

“Good morning, doctor.”

The prisoner returned slowly toward the dwelling, with its group of outhouses. By chance he found a path leading to the rear of these which he had not traversed before, and followed it until he came to a hedge of thickly set trees of some variety of cactus, which seemed to have been planted to form an enclosure. Cautiously pushing aside the branches bordering a small gap in this hedge, Uncle John discovered a charming garden lying beyond, so he quickly squeezed himself through the opening and entered.

The garden was rudely but not badly kept. There was even some attempt at ornamentation, and many of the shrubs and flowers were rare and beautiful. Narrow walks traversed the masses of foliage, and several leafy bowers invited one to escape the heat of the midday sun in their shelter. It was not a large place, and struck one as being overcrowded because so many of the plants were taller than a man’s head.

Uncle John turned down one path which, after several curves and turns, came to an abrupt ending beneath the spreading branches of an acacia tree which had been converted into a bower by a thick, climbing vine, whose matted leaves and purple blossoms effectually screened off the garden beyond.

While he stood gazing around him to find a way out without retracing his steps, a clear voice within a few feet of him caused him to start. The voice spoke in vehement Italian, and came from the other side of the screen of vines. It was sharp and garrulous in tone, and although Uncle John did not understand the words he recognized their dominating accent.

The Duke replied, slowly and sullenly, and whatever he said had the effect of rousing the first speaker to fierce anger.

The American became curious. He found a place where the leaves were thinner than elsewhere, and carefully pressing them apart looked through the

opening. Beyond was a clear space, well shaded and furnished with comfortable settles, tables and chairs. It adjoined a wing of the dwelling, which stood but a few paces away and was evidently occupied by the women of the household. The old Duchessa, her face still like a death mask but her eyes glittering with the brightness of a serpent's, sat enthroned within a large chair in the center of a family group. It was her sharp voice that had first aroused the American's attention. Opposite her sat the Duke, his thin face wearing an expression of gloom and dissatisfaction. The child Tato occupied a stool at her father's feet, and in the background were three serving women, sewing or embroidering. Near the Duke stood the tall brigand known as Pietro.

Answering the old woman's fierce tirade, Tato said:

"It is foolish to quarrel in Italian. The servants are listening."

"Let us then speak in English," returned the Duchessa. "These are matters the servants should not gossip about."

The Duke nodded assent. Both Tato and her grandmother spoke easily the foreign tongue; the Duke was more uncertain in his English, but understood it perfectly.

"I am still the head of this family," resumed the Duchessa, in a more moderate tone. "I insist that my will be obeyed."

"Your dignity I have the respect for," replied the Duke, laboredly; "but you grow old and foolish."

"Foolish! I?"

"Yes; you are absurd. You live in past centuries. You think to-day we must do all that your ancestors did."

"Can you do better?"

"Yes; the world has change. It has progress. With it I advance, but you do not. You would murder, rob, torture to-day as the great Duke, your grandfather, did. You think we still are of the world independent. You think we are powerful and great. Bah! we are nothing — we are as a speck of dust. But still we are the outlaws and the outcasts of Sicily, and some day Italy will crush us and we will be forgotten."

"I dare them to molest us!"

"Because you are imbecile. The world you do not know. I have travel; I see many countries; and I am wise."

"But you are still my vassal, my slave; and I alone rule here. Always have you rebelled and wanted to escape. Only my iron will has kept you here and made you do your duty."

"Since you my brother Ridolfo killed, I have little stomach for the trade of brigand. It is true. But no longer is this trade necessary. We are rich. Had I a

son to inherit your business, a different thought might prevail; but I have only Tato, and a girl cannot be a successful brigand."

"Why not?" cried the old Duchessa, contemptuously. "It is the girl — always the girl — you make excuses for. But have I not ruled our domain — I, who am a woman?"

Tato herself answered, in a quiet voice.

"And what have you become, nonna, more than an outcast?" she enquired. "What use to you is money, or a power that the world would sneer at, did the world even suspect that you exist? You are a failure in life, my nonna, and I will not be like you."

The Duchessa screamed an epithet and glared at the child as if she would annihilate her; but no fitting words to reply could she find.

Uncle John smiled delightedly. He felt no sense of humiliation or revolt at eavesdropping in this den of thieves, and to be able to gain so fair a revelation of the inner life of this remarkable family was a diversion not lightly to be foregone.

"So far, we have managed to escape the law," resumed the Duke. "But always it may not be our fortune to do this, if we continue this life. It is now a good time to stop. Of one American we will gain a quarter of a million lira — a fortune — and of the other one hundred and fifty thousand lira. With what we already have it is enough and more. Quietly we will disband our men and go away. In another land we live the respectable life, in peace with all, and Tato shall be the fine lady, and forget she once was a brigand's daughter."

The child sprang up in glee, and clasping her father's neck with both arms kissed him with passionate earnestness.

Silently the Duchessa watched the scene. Her face was as pallid and immobile as ever; even the eyes seemed to have lost expression. But the next words showed that she was still unconquered.

"You shall take the money of the fat pig of an American; it is well to do so. But the youth who boldly calls himself Ferralti shall make no tribute to this family. He shall die as I have declared."

"I will not take the risk," asserted the Duke, sourly.

"Have the others who lie in the pit told tales?" she demanded.

"No; but they died alone. Here are two Americans our prisoners, and they have many and powerful friends, both at Taormina and at Naples. The man Merrick, when he goes, will tell that Ferralti is here. To obtain his person, alive or dead, the soldiers will come here and destroy us all. It is folly, and shows you are old and imbecile."

"Then go!" she cried, fiercely. "Go, you and Tato; take your money and

escape. And leave me my valley, and the youth Ferralti, and my revenge. Then, if I die, if the soldiers destroy me, it is my own doing."

"In this new world, of which you know nothing, escape is not possible," replied the duke, after a moment's thought. "Ferralti must be accounted for, and because I captured him they would accuse me of his death, and even Tato might be made to suffer. No, madame. Both the Americans must be killed, or both set free for ransom."

Uncle John gave a start of dismay. Here was a development he had not expected.

"Then," said the old woman, positively, "let them both die."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Tato. "Not that, grandmother!"

"Certainly not so," agreed the Duke. "We want their money."

"You are already rich," said the Duchessa. "You have yourself said so, and I know it is truth."

"This new world," explained the Duke, "contains of luxuries many that you have no understanding of. To be rich to-day requires more money than in your days, madre mia. With these ransoms, which already we have won, we shall have enough. Without this money my Tato would lack much that I desire for her. So of new murders I will take no risk, for the bambina's sake."

"And my revenge?"

"Bah, of what use is it? Because the boy's father married my sister Bianca, and ill-treated her, must we kill their offspring?"

"He is his father's son. The father, you say, is dead, and so also is my child Bianca. Then my hatred falls upon the son Arturo, and he must die to avenge the wrong to our race."

"More proof that you are imbecile," said the Duke, calmly. "He shall not die. He is nothing to us except a mine from whence to get gold."

"He is my grandson. I have a right to kill him."

"He is my nephew. He shall live."

"Do you defy me?"

"With certainty. I defy you. The new world permits no crazy nonna to rule a family. That is my privilege. If you persist, it is you who shall go to the pit. If you have reason, you shall remain in your garden in peace. Come, Tato; we will retire."

He arose and took the child's hand. The old woman sat staring at them in silence, but with an evil glint in her glistening eyes.

Uncle John turned around and softly made his retreat from the garden. His face wore a startled and horrified expression and on his forehead stood great beads of sweat that the sultriness of the day did not account for.

But he thought better of Il Duca.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PIT

They met an hour later at luncheon, all but the Duchessa, who sulked in her garden. Tato was bright and smiling, filled with a suppressed joy which bubbled up in spite of the little one's effort to be dignified and sedate. When her hand stole under the table to find and press that of her father, Uncle John beamed upon her approvingly; for he knew what had occurred and could sympathize with her delight.

The Duke, however, was more sombre than usual. He had defied his mother, successfully, so far; but he feared the terrible old woman more than did Tato, because he knew more of her history and of the bold and wicked deeds she had perpetrated in years gone by. Only once had a proposed victim escaped her, and that was when her own daughter Bianca had fallen in love with an American held for ransom and spirited him away from the valley through knowledge of the secret passage. It was well Bianca had fled with her lover; otherwise her mother would surely have killed her. But afterward, when the girl returned to die in the old home, all was forgiven, and only the hatred of her foreign husband, whose cruelty had driven her back to Sicily, remained to rankle in the old Duchessa's wicked heart.

No one knew her evil nature better than her son. He entertained a suspicion that he had not conquered her by his recent opposition to her will. Indeed, he would never have dared to brave her anger except for Tato's sake. Tato was his idol, and in her defense the cowardly brigand had for the moment become bold.

Tato laughed and chatted with Uncle John all through the meal, even trying at times to cheer the doleful Ferralti, who was nearly as glum and unsociable as her father. The servants and brigands at the lower end of the table looked upon the little one admiringly. It was evident she was a general favorite.

On the porch, after luncheon, the Duke broached the subject of the ransoms again, still maintaining the fable of selling his antique jewelry.

"Sir," said Uncle John, "I'm going to submit gracefully, but upon one condition."

The Duke scowled.

"I allow no conditions," he said.

"You'd better allow this one," Uncle John replied, "because it will make it easier for all of us. Of my own free will and accord I will make a present to Tato of fifty thousand dollars, and she shall have it for her dowry when she marries."

Tato clapped her hands.

“How did you know I am a girl, when I wear boys’ clothes?” she asked.

Even the duke smiled, at that, but the next moment he shook his head solemnly.

“It will not do, signore,” he declared, answering Uncle John’s proposition. “This is a business affair altogether. You must purchase the ring, and at once.”

The little American sighed. It had been his last hope.

“Very well,” he said; “have your own way.”

“You will send to your friends for the money?”

“Whenever you say, Duke. You’ve got me in a hole, and I must wiggle out the best way I can.”

The brigand turned to Ferralti.

“And you, signore?” he asked.

“I do not know whether I can get the money you demand.”

“But you will make the attempt, as I shall direct?”

“Yes.”

“Then, signori, it is all finished. In a brief time you will leave my hospitable roof.”

“The sooner the better,” declared Ferralti.

They sat for a time in silence, each busy with his thoughts.

“Go to your grandmother, Tato,” said the Duke, “and try to make your peace with her. If she is too angry, do not remain. To-morrow you must go into town with letters from these gentlemen to their friends.”

The child kissed him and went obediently to do his will. Then the brigand spoke to Tommaso, who brought writing material from the house and placed it upon a small table.

Uncle John, without further demur, sat down to write. The Duke dictated what he should say, although he was allowed to express the words in his own characteristic style, and he followed his instructions implicitly, secretly admiring the shrewdness of the brigand’s methods.

It was now Ferralti’s turn. He had just seated himself at the table and taken the pen when they were startled by a shrill scream from the rear of the house. It was followed by another, and another, in quick succession.

It was Tato’s voice, and the duke gave an answering cry and sprang from the veranda to dart quickly around the corner of the house. Uncle John followed him, nearly as fearful as the child’s father.

Tommaso seized a short rifle that stood near and ran around the house in the other direction, when Ferralti, who for a moment had seemed dazed by the interruption, followed Tommaso rather than the others.

As they came to the rear they were amazed to see the old Duchessa, whom they had known to be feeble and dependent upon her women, rush through the garden hedge with the agility of a man, bearing in her arms the struggling form of little Tato.

The child screamed pitifully, but the woman glared upon Tommaso and Ferralti, as she passed them, with the ferocity of a tiger.

"She is mad!" cried Ferralti. "Quick, Tommaso; let us follow her."

The brigand bounded forward, with the young man scarce a pace behind him. The woman, running with wonderful speed in spite of her burden, began to ascend a narrow path leading up the face of a rugged cliff.

A yell of anguish from behind for a moment arrested Ferralti's rapid pursuit. Glancing back he saw the Duke running frantically toward them, at the same time waving his arms high above his head.

"The pit!" he shouted. "She is making for the pit. Stop her, for the love of God!"

Ferralti understood, and dashed forward again at full speed. Tommaso also understood, for his face was white and he muttered terrible oaths as he pressed on. Yet run as they might, the mad duchessa was inspired with a strength so superhuman that she kept well in advance.

But the narrow path ended half way up the cliff. It ended at a deep chasm in the rocks, the edge of which was protected by a large flat stone, like the curb of a well.

With a final leap the old woman gained this stone, and while the dreadful pit yawned at her feet she turned, and with a demoniacal laugh faced her pursuers, hugging the child close to her breast.

Tommaso and Ferralti, who were nearest, paused instinctively. It was now impossible for them to prevent the tragedy about to be enacted. The Duke, spurred on by fear, was yet twenty paces in their rear, and in a moment he also stopped, clasping his hands in a gesture of vain entreaty.

"Listen, Lugui!" his mother called to him, in a dear, high voice. "This is the child that has come between us and turned you from a man into a coward. Here alone is the cause of our troubles. Behold! I will remove it forever from our path."

With the words she lifted Tato high above her head and turned toward the pit — that terrible cleft in the rocks which was believed to have no bottom.

At her first movement Tommaso had raised his gun, and the Duke, perceiving this, called to him in an agonized voice to fire. But either the brigand wavered between his loyalty to the Duke or the Duchessa, or he feared to injure Tato, for he hesitated to obey and the moments were precious.

The child's fate hung in the balance when Ferralti snatched the weapon from the brigand's hands and fired it so hastily that he scarcely seemed to take aim.

A wild cry echoed the shot. The woman collapsed and fell, dropping Tato at her feet, where they both tottered at the edge of the pit. The child, however, clung desperately to the outer edge of the flat stone, while the Duchessa's inert form seemed to hesitate for an instant and then disappeared from view.

Tommaso ran forward and caught up the child, returning slowly along the path to place it in the father's arms. Ferralti was looking vaguely from the weapon he held to the pit, and then back again, as if not fully understanding what he had done.

"Thank you, signore," said the Duke, brokenly, "for saving my precious child."

"But I have slain your mother!" cried the young man, horrified.

"The obligation is even," replied the duke. "She was also your grandmother."

Ferralti stood motionless, his face working convulsively, his tongue refusing to utter a sound.

"But he did not shoot my grandmother at all," said Tato, who was sobbing against her father's breast; "for I heard the bullet strike the rock beside us. My grandmother's strength gave way, and she fainted. It was that that saved me, padre mia."

CHAPTER XXII
NEWS AT LAST

Kenneth Forbes had always been an unusual boy. He had grown up in an unfriendly atmosphere, unloved and uncared for, and resented this neglect with all the force of his impetuous nature. He had hated Aunt Jane, and regarded her as cruel and selfish — a fair estimate of her character — until Aunt Jane's nieces taught him to be more considerate and forgiving. Patricia, especially, had exercised a gentler influence upon the arbitrary youth, and as a consequence they had become staunch friends.

When the unexpected inheritance of a fortune changed the boy's condition from one of dependence to one of importance he found he had no longer any wrongs to resent; therefore his surly and brusque moods gradually disappeared, and he became a pleasant companion to those he cared for. With strangers he still remained reserved and suspicious, and occasionally the old sullen fits would seize him and it was well to avoid his society while they lasted.

On his arrival at Taormina, Kenneth had entered earnestly into the search for Uncle John, whom he regarded most affectionately; and, having passed the day tramping over the mountains, he would fill the evening with discussions and arguments with the nieces concerning the fate of their missing uncle.

But as the days dragged wearily away the search slackened and was finally abandoned. Kenneth set up his easel in the garden and began to paint old Etna, with its wreath of snow and the soft gray cloud of vapor that perpetually hovered over it.

"Anyone with half a soul could paint that!" said Patsy; and as a proof of her assertion the boy did very well indeed, except that his uneasiness on Mr. Merrick's account served to distract him more or less.

Nor was Kenneth the only uneasy one. Mr. Watson, hard-headed man of resource as he was, grew more and more dejected as he realized the impossibility of interesting the authorities in the case. The Sicilian officials were silent and uncommunicative; the Italians wholly indifferent. If strangers came to Taormina and got into difficulties, the government was in no way to blame. It was their duty to tolerate tourists, but those all too energetic foreigners must take care of themselves.

Probably Mr. Watson would have cabled the State Department at Washington for assistance had he not expected each day to put him in communication with his friend, and in the end he congratulated himself upon his patience. The close of the week brought a sudden and startling change in

the situation.

The girls sat on the shaded terrace one afternoon, watching the picture of Etna grow under Kenneth's deft touches, when they observed a child approaching them with shy diffidence. It was a beautiful Sicilian boy, with wonderful brown eyes and a delicate profile. After assuring himself that the party of young Americans was quite separate from any straggling guest of the hotel, the child came near enough to say, in a low tone:

"I have a message from Signor Merrick."

They crowded around him eagerly then, raining questions from every side; but the boy shrank away and said, warningly:

"If we are overheard, signorini mia, it will be very bad. No one must suspect that I am here."

"Is my uncle well?" asked Patsy, imploringly.

"Quite well, mees."

"And have you also news of Count Ferralti?" anxiously enquired Louise.

"Oh, Ferralti? He is better. Some teeth are knocked out, but he eats very well without them," replied the child, with an amused laugh.

"Where are our friends, my lad?" Kenneth asked.

"I cannot describe the place, signore; but here are letters to explain all." The child produced a bulky package, and after a glance at each, in turn, placed it in Patsy's hands. "Read very secretly, signorini, and decide your course of action. To-morrow I will come for your answer. In the meantime, confide in no one but yourselves. If you are indiscreet, you alone will become the murderers of Signor Merrick and the sad young Ferralti."

"Who are you?" asked Beth, examining the child closely.

"I am called Tato, signorina mia."

"Where do you live?"

"It is all explained in the letters, believe me."

Beth glanced at Patricia, who was examining the package, and now all crowded around for a glimpse of Uncle John's well-known handwriting. The wrapper was inscribed:

"To Miss Doyle, Miss De Graf and Miss Merrick,
Hotel Castello-a-Mare, Taormina.
By the safe hands of Tato."

Inside were two letters, one addressed to Louise personally. She seized this and ran a little distance away, while Beth took Uncle John's letter from Patsy's trembling hands, and having opened it read aloud in a clear and composed voice the following:

"My dear Nieces: (and also my dear friends, Silas Watson and Kenneth Forbes, if they are with you) Greeting! You have perhaps been wondering at

my absence, which I will explain by saying that I am visiting a noble acquaintance in a very cozy and comfortable retreat which I am sure would look better from a distance. My spirits and health are A No. 1 and it is my intention to return to you as soon as you have executed a little commission for me, which I want you to do exactly as I hereby instruct you. In other words, if you don't execute the commission you will probably execute me.

"I have decided to purchase a valuable antique ring from my host, at a price of fifty thousand dollars, which trifling sum I must have at once to complete the transaction, for until full payment is made I cannot rejoin you. Therefore you must hasten to raise the dough. Here's the programme, my dear girls: One of you must go by first train to Messina and cable Isham, Marvin & Co. to deposit with the New York correspondents of the Banca Commerciale Italiana fifty thousand dollars, and have instructions cabled to the Messina branch of that bank to pay the sum to the written order of John Merrick. This should all be accomplished within twenty-four hours. Present the enclosed order, together with my letter of credit and passport, which will identify my signature, and draw the money in cash. Return with it to Taormina and give it secretly to the boy Tato, who will bring it to me. I will rejoin you within three hours after I have paid for the ring.

"This may seem a strange proceeding to you, my dears, but you must not hesitate to accomplish it — if you love me. Should my old friend Silas Watson be now with you, as I expect him to be, he will assist you to do my bidding, for he will be able to realize, better than I can now explain, how important it is to me.

"Also I beg you to do a like service for Count Ferralti, who is entrusting his personal commission, to Louise. He also must conclude an important purchase before he can return to Taormina.

"More than this I am not permitted to say in this letter. Confide in no stranger, or official of any sort, and act as secretly and quietly as possible. I hope soon to be with you.

"Very affectionately, Uncle John."

"What does it all mean?" asked Patsy, bewildered, when Beth had finished reading.

"Why, it is clear enough, I'm sure," said Kenneth. "Uncle John is imprisoned by brigands, and the money he requires is his ransom. We must get it as soon as possible, you know, and luckily he is so rich that he won't miss this little draft at all."

Beth sat silent, angrily staring at the letter.

"I suppose," said Patsy, hesitating, "the robbers will do the dear uncle some mischief, if he doesn't pay."

“Just knock him on the head, that’s all,” said the boy. “But there’s no need to worry. We can get the money easily.”

Suddenly Beth jumped up.

“Where’s that girl?” she demanded, sharply.

“What girl?”

“Tato.”

“Tato, my dear coz, is a boy,” answered Kenneth; “and he disappeared ages ago.”

“You must be blind,” said Beth, scornfully, “not to recognize a girl when you see one. A boy, indeed!”

“Why, he dressed like a boy,” replied Kenneth, hesitatingly.

“So much the more disgraceful,” sniffed Beth. “She belongs to those brigands, I suppose.”

“Looks something like Victor Valdi,” said Patsy, thoughtfully.

“Il Duca? Of course! I see it myself, now. Patricia, it is that wicked duke who has captured Uncle John.”

“I had guessed that,” declared Patsy, smiling.

“He must be a handsome rascal,” observed Kenneth, “for the child is pretty as a picture.”

“He isn’t handsome at all,” replied Beth; “but there is a look about the child’s eyes that reminds me of him.”

“That’s it, exactly,” agreed Patsy.

Louise now approached them with a white, frightened face.

“Isn’t it dreadful!” she moaned. “They are going to kill Ferralti unless he gives them thirty thousand dollars.”

“And I don’t believe he can raise thirty cents,” said Patsy, calmly.

“Oh, yes, he can,” answered Louise, beginning to cry. “Hi — his — father is d — dead, and has left him — a — fortune.”

“Don’t blubber, Lou,” said the boy, chidingly; “in that case your dago friend is as well off as need be. But I suppose you’re afraid the no-account Count won’t figure his life is worth thirty thousand dollars. It does seem like an awful price to pay for a foreigner.”

“It isn’t that,” said Louise, striving to control her emotion. “He says he hates to be robbed. He wouldn’t pay a penny if he could help it.”

“Good for the Count! I don’t blame him a bit,” exclaimed Beth. “It is a beastly shame that free born Americans should be enslaved by a crew of thieving Sicilians, and obliged to purchase their freedom!”

“True for you,” said Kenneth, nodding. “But what are we going to do about it?”

“Pay, of course,” decided Patsy, promptly. “Our Uncle John is too

precious to be sacrificed for all the money in the world. Come; let's go and find Mr. Watson. We ought not to lose a moment's time."

The lawyer read Uncle John's letter carefully, as well as the one from Count Ferralti, which Louise confided to him with the request that he keep the young man's identity a secret for a time, until he could reveal it to her cousins in person.

"The only thing to be done," announced Mr. Watson, "is to carry out these instructions faithfully. We can send the cable messages from here, and in the morning Louise and I will take the train for Messina and remain there until we get the money."

"It's an outrage!" cried Beth.

"Of course, my dear. But it can't be helped. And your uncle is wise to take the matter so cheerfully. After all, it is little enough to pay for one's life and liberty, and our friend is so wealthy that he will never feel the loss at all."

"It isn't that; it's the principle of the thing that I object to," said the girl. "It's downright disgraceful to be robbed so easily."

"To be sure; but the disgrace is Italy's, not ours. Object all you want to, Beth, dear," continued the old lawyer, smiling at her; "but nevertheless we'll pay as soon as possible, and have done with it. What we want now is your Uncle John, and we want him mighty badly."

"Really, the pirates didn't charge enough for him," added Patsy.

So Mr. Watson sent the cables to John Merrick's bankers and Count Ferralti's attorney, and the next morning went with Louise to Messina.

Frascatti drove all the party down the road to the station at Giardini, and as the train pulled out, Beth, who had remained seated in the victoria with Patricia and Kenneth, suddenly stood up to pull the *vetturino's* sleeve.

"Tell me, Frascatti," she whispered, "isn't that Il Duca's child? Look — that little one standing in the corner?"

"Why, yes; it is really Tato," answered the man, before he thought to deny it.

"Very well; you may now drive us home," returned Beth, a shade of triumph in her voice.

CHAPTER XXIII

BETH BEGINS TO PLOT

Once back in their sitting-room behind closed doors, Beth, Patsy and Kenneth got their three heads together and began eagerly to discuss a plot which Beth had hinted of on the way home and now unfolded in detail. And while they still whispered together a knock at the door startled them and made them look rather guilty until the boy answered the call and admitted little Tato.

The child's beautiful face wore a smile of demure satisfaction as Tato bowed respectfully to the young Americans.

Kenneth winked at Beth from behind the visitor's back.

"As you have a guest," he remarked, with a yawn that was somewhat rude, "I shall now go and take my nap."

"What, do you sleep so early in the day, you lazy-bones?" asked Patsy, brightly.

"Any time, my dear, is good enough for an overworked artist," he replied. "Au revoir, my cousins. See you at luncheon."

With this he strolled away, and when he had gone Beth said to Tato:

"Won't you sit down, signorina?"

"Do you mean me?" asked the child, as if surprised.

"Yes; I can see plainly that you are a girl."

"And a pretty one, too, my dear," added Patsy.

Tato blushed as if embarrassed, but in a moment smiled upon the American girls.

"Do you think me immodest, then?" she asked, anxiously.

"By no means, my dear," Beth assured her. "I suppose you have an excellent reason for wearing boys' clothes."

"So I have, signorina. I live in the mountains, where dresses catch in the crags, and bother a girl. And my father has always been heart-broken because he had no son, and likes to see me in this attire. He has many errands for me, too, where a boy may go unnoticed, yet a girl would attract too much attention. This is one of the errands, signorini. But now tell me, if you please, how have you decided to answer the letters of Signor Merrick and Signor Ferralti?"

"Oh, there was but one way to answer them, Tato," replied Beth, composedly. "We have sent Mr. Watson and our cousin Louise Merrick to Messina to get the money. If our friends in America act promptly Mr. Watson and Louise will return by to-morrow afternoon's train, and be prepared to make the payment."

“That is well, signorina,” responded Tato.

“We are to give the money to you, I suppose?” said Patsy.

“Yes; I will return for it to-morrow afternoon,” answered the child, with business-like gravity. Then she looked earnestly from one to the other of the two girls. “You must act discreetly, in the meantime, you know. You must not talk to anyone, or do anything to imperil your uncle’s safety.”

“Of course not, Tato.”

“I beg you not, signorini. The uncle is a good man, and brave. I do not wish him to be injured.”

“Nor do we, Tato.”

“And the young man is not a coward, either. He has been kind to me. But he is sad, and not so pleasant to talk with as the uncle.”

“True enough, Tato,” said Beth.

Patsy had been examining the child with curious intentness. The little one was so lovely and graceful, and her voice sounded so soft and womanly, that Patsy longed to take her in her arms and hug her.

“How old are you, dear?” she asked.

Tato saw the friendly look, and answered with a smile.

“Perhaps as old as you, signorina, although I am so much smaller. I shall be fifteen in a month.”

“So old!”

Tato laughed merrily.

“Ah, you might well say ‘so young,’ amico mia! To be grown up is much nicer; do you not think so? And then I shall not look such a baby as now, and have people scold me when I get in the way, as they do little bambini.”

“But when you are grown you cannot wear boys’ clothing, either.”

Tato sighed.

“We have a saying in Sicily that ‘each year has its sunshine and rain,’ which means its sorrow and its joy,” she answered. “Perhaps I sometimes think more of the tears than of the laughter, although I know that is wrong. Not always shall I be a mountaineer, and then the soft dresses of the young girls shall be my portion. Will I like them better? I do not know. But I must go now, instead of chattering here. Farewell, signorini, until to-morrow.”

“Will you not remain with us?”

“Oh, no; although you are kind. I am expected home. But to-morrow I will come for the money. You will be silent?”

“Surely, Tato.”

The child smiled upon them pleasantly. It was a relief to deal with two tender girls instead of cold and resentful men, such as she had sometimes met. At the door she blew a kiss to them, and darted away.

In the courtyard Frascatti saw her gliding out and discreetly turned his head the other way.

Tato took the old road, circling around the theatre and through the narrow, winding streets of the lower town to the Catania Gate. She looked back one or twice, but no one noticed her. If any of the villagers saw her approaching they slipped out of her path.

Once on the highway, however, Tato became lost in reflection. Her mission being successfully accomplished, it required no further thought; but the sweet young American girls had made a strong impression upon the lonely Sicilian maid, and she dreamed of their pretty gowns and ribbons, their fresh and comely faces, and the gentleness of their demeanor.

Tato was not gentle. She was wild and free and boyish, and had no pretty gowns whatever. But what then? She must help her father to get his fortune, and then he had promised her that some day they would go to Paris or Cairo and live in the world, and be brigands no longer.

She would like that, she thought, as she clambered up the steep paths; and perhaps she would meet these American girls again, or others like them, and make them her friends. She had never known a girl friend, as yet.

These ambitions would yesterday have seemed far in the dim future; but now that her stern old grandmother was gone it was possible her father would soon fulfill his promises. While the Duchessa lived she ruled them all, and she was a brigand to the backbone. Now her father's will prevailed, and he could refuse his child nothing.

Kenneth was not an expert detective, but he had managed to keep Tato in sight without being suspected by her. He had concealed himself near the Catania Gate, through which he knew she must pass, and by good luck she had never looked around once, so intent were her musings.

When she came to the end of the path and leaned against the rock to sing the broken refrain which was the "open sesame" to the valley, the boy was hidden snug behind a boulder where he could watch her every movement.

Then the rock opened; Tato passed in, and the opening closed behind her.

Kenneth found a foothold and climbed up the wall of rock, higher and higher, until at last he crept upon a high ridge and looked over.

The hidden valley lay spread before him in all its beauty, but the precipice at his feet formed a sheer drop of a hundred feet or more, and he drew back with a shudder.

Then he took courage to look again, and observed the house, on the porch of which stood Tato engaged in earnest conversation with a tall, dark Sicilian. Uncle John was nowhere to be seen, but the boy understood that he was there, nevertheless, and realized that his prison was so secure that escape

was impossible.

And now he climbed down again, a much more difficult feat than getting up. But although he was forced to risk his life several times, he was agile and clear-headed, and finally dropped to the path that led to the secret door of the passage.

His next thought was to mark the exact location of the place, so that he could find it again; and as he returned slowly along the paths through the rocky fissures he took mental note of every curve and communication, and believed he could now find his way to the retreat of the brigands at any time he chose.

CHAPTER XXIV

PATSY'S NEW FRIEND

"I must say that I don't like the job," said Patsy, the next morning, as she stood by the window and faced Beth and Kenneth. "Suppose we fail?"

"In the bright lexicon of youth — "

"Shut up, Ken. If we fail," said Beth, "we will be no worse off than before."

"And if we win," added the boy, "they'll think twice before they try to rob Americans again."

"Well, I'm with you, anyhow," declared Patricia. "I can see it's risky, all right; but as you say, no great harm will be done if we slip up."

"You," announced Beth, gravely, "must be the captain."

"It isn't in me, dear. You figured the thing out, and Ken and I will follow your lead."

"No," said Beth, decidedly; "I'm not quick enough, either in thought or action, to be a leader, Patsy. And there's a bit of deception required that I couldn't manage. That clever little thing, Tato, would know at once I was up to some mischief; but she would never suspect you."

"I like that compliment," replied Patricia. "I may deserve it, of course; but it strikes me Louise is the one best fitted for such work."

"We can't let Louise into this plot," said the boy, positively; "she'd spoil it all."

"Don't be silly, Patsy," said Beth. "You're genuine and frank, and the child likes you. I could see that yesterday. All you have to do is to be nice to her and win her confidence; and then, when the climax comes, you must be the spokesman and talk straight out from the shoulder. You can do that all right."

"I'll bet on her," cried Kenneth, with an admiring look at the girl.

"Then," said Patsy, "it is all arranged, and I'm the captain. And is it agreed that we won't lisp a word to Mr. Watson or Louise?"

"Not a word."

"Here," said Kenneth, drawing a revolver from his pocket, "is Uncle John's pop-gun. It's the only one I could find in his room, so he must have taken the other with him. Be careful of it, Patsy, for it's loaded all 'round. Can you shoot?"

"No; but I suppose the pistol can. I know enough to pull the trigger."

"And when you do, remember to point it away from your friends. Now hide it, my dear, and be careful of it."

Patsy concealed the weapon in the bosom of her dress, not without

making a wry face and shivering a bit.

"Have you got your revolver, Beth?" asked the boy.

"Yes."

"And she can shoot just wonderfully!" exclaimed Patsy. "Yesterday she picked an orange off a tree with a bullet. You should have seen her."

"I know," said Ken, nodding. "I've seen Beth shoot before, and she's our main reliance in this conspiracy. For my part, I can hit a mark sometimes, and sometimes I can't. See here." He exhibited a beautiful pearl and silver-mounted weapon which he drew from his pocket. "Mr. Watson and I have carried revolvers ever since we came to Sicily, but we've never had occasion to use them. I can hardly believe, even now, that this beautiful place harbors brigands. It's such a romantic incident in our prosaic world of to-day. And now, young ladies, we are armed to the teeth and can defy an army. Eh, Captain Pat?"

"If you're not more respectful," said the girl, "I'll have you court-marshalled and drummed out of camp."

On the afternoon train came Louise and Mr. Watson from Messina. The American agents had responded promptly, and the bank had honored the orders and delivered the money without delay.

"It is all safe in my satchel," said the lawyer, as they rode together to the hotel; "and our dear friends are as good as rescued already. It's pretty bulky, Kenneth — four hundred thousand lira — but it is all in notes on the Banca d'Italia, for we couldn't manage gold."

"Quite a haul for the brigand," observed Kenneth, thoughtfully.

"True; but little enough for the lives of two men. That is the way I look at the transaction. And, since our friends can afford the loss, we must be as cheerful over the thing as possible. It might have been a tragedy, you know."

Louise shivered.

"I'm glad it is all over," she said, gratefully.

The conspirators looked at one another and smiled, but held their peace.

Arriving at the hotel, Beth and Kenneth at once disappeared, saying they were going to town, as they would not be needed longer. Patsy accompanied their cousin and the lawyer to the sitting-room, where presently Tato came to them.

"Well, little one," said the lawyer, pleasantly, "We have secured the money required to enable Mr. Merrick to purchase the ring, and Mr. — er — Count Ferralti to buy his bracelet. Will you count it?"

"Yes, signore, if you please," replied Tato, with a sober face.

Mr. Watson drew out two packages of bank notes and placed them upon the table. The child, realizing the importance of the occasion, carefully

counted each bundle, and then replaced the wrappers.

"The amounts are correct, signore," she said. "I thank you for making my task so easy. And now I will go."

The lawyer brought a newspaper and wrapped the money in it once again.

"It is always dangerous to carry so much money," said he; "but now no one will be likely to suspect the contents of your package."

Tato smiled.

"No one would care to molest me," she said; "for they fear those that protect me. Good afternoon, signore. Your friends will be with you in time to dine in your company. Good afternoon, signorini," turning to Patsy and Louise.

"I'll walk a little way with you; may I?" asked Patsy, smiling into Tato's splendid eyes.

"To be sure, signorina," was the quick response.

Patricia caught up a sunshade and followed the child out at the side entrance, which was little used. Tato took the way along the old road, and Patsy walked beside her, chatting brightly of the catacombs, the Norman villa that showed its checkered tower above the trees and the ancient wall that still hemmed in the little village.

"I love Taormina," she said, earnestly, "and shall be sorry to leave it. You must be very happy, Tato, to be able to live here always."

"It is my birthplace," she said; "but I long to get away from it and see other countries. The view is fine, they say; but it tires me. The air is sweet and pure; but it oppresses me. The climate is glorious; but I have had enough of it. In other places there is novelty, and many things that Sicily knows nothing of."

"That is true," replied Patsy, tucking the little one's arm underneath her own, with a sympathetic gesture. "I know just how you feel, Tato. You must come to America some day, and visit me. I will make you very welcome, dear, and you shall be my friend."

The child looked into her face earnestly.

"You do not hate me, signorina, because — because — "

"Because why?"

"Because my errand to you has been so lawless and — and — unfriendly?"

"Ah, Tato, you do not choose this life, do you?"

"No, signorina."

"It is forced on you by circumstances, is it not?"

"Truly, signorina."

"I know. You would not long so wistfully to change your condition if you

enjoyed being a little brigand. But nothing that has passed must interfere with our friendship, dear. If I were in your place, you see, I would do just as you have done. It is not a very honest life, Tato, nor one to be proud of; but I'm not going to blame you one bit."

They had passed the Catania Gate and reached the foot of one of the mountain paths. Tato paused, hesitatingly.

"Oh, I'll go a little farther," said Patsy, promptly. "No one will notice two girls, you know. Shall I carry your parcel for a time?"

"No," replied the child, hugging it close with her disengaged arm. But she offered no objection when Patsy continued to walk by her side.

"Have you any brothers or sisters, Tato?"

"No, signorina."

"Have you a mother?"

"No, signorina. My father and I are alone."

"I know him well, Tato. We were on the ship together, crossing the ocean. He was gruff and disagreeable, but I made him talk to me and smile."

"I know; he has told me of the Signorina Patsy. He is fond of you."

"Yet he robbed my uncle."

The child flushed, and drew away her arm.

"That is it. That is why you should hate me," she replied, bitterly. "I know it is robbery, and brigandage, although my father masks it by saying he sells antiques. Until now I have seen nothing wrong in this life, signorina; but you have made me ashamed."

"Why, dear?"

"Because you are so good and gentle, and so forgiving."

Patsy laughed.

"In reality, Tato, I am resentful and unforgiving. You will find out, soon, that I am a very human girl, and then I will not make you ashamed. But your father's business is shameful, nevertheless."

Tato was plainly puzzled, and knew not what to reply. But just then they reached the end of the crevasse, and the child said:

"You must return now, Signorina Patsy."

"But why cannot I go on with you, and come back with my uncle?"

Tato hesitated. Accustomed as she was to duplicity and acting, in her capacity as lure for her thieving father, the child was just now softened by Patsy's kindly manner and the successful accomplishment of her mission. She had no thought of any treachery or deception on the part of the American girl, and the request seemed to her natural enough.

"If you like," she decided, "you may come as far as the barrier, and there wait for your uncle. It will not be long."

“Very well, dear.”

Tato clambered over the dividing rock and dropped into the path beyond. Patsy sprang lightly after her. A short distance farther and they reached the barrier.

“This is the place, signorina. You will sit upon that stone, and wait until your uncle appears.” She hesitated, and then added, softly: “I may not see you again. But you will not forget me?”

“Never, Tato. And if you come to America you must not forget to visit me. Remember, whatever happens, that we are friends, and must always remain so.”

The child nodded, gratefully. Then, leaning against the face of the cliff, she raised her voice and warbled clearly the bit of song that served as the signal to her father.

CHAPTER XXV

TURNING THE TABLES

No sooner had the notes ceased than Kenneth sprang from behind a rock that had concealed him and grasped the child in his strong arms, trying to cover her mouth at the same time to prevent her from crying out.

Tato developed surprising strength. The adventure of yesterday had so thoroughly frightened her that when she found herself again seized she struggled madly. The boy found that he could scarcely hold her, so he enfolded her in both his arms and, letting her scream as she might, picked up her tiny form and mounted the slope of the hill, leaping from rock to rock until he came to a broad boulder twenty feet or more above the path. Here he paused, panting, and awaited results.

The rock doors had opened promptly. Even while Kenneth struggled with the brigand's daughter Patsy could see straight through the tunnel and into the valley beyond. The child had dropped her bundle in the effort to escape, and while Kenneth was leaping with her up the crags Patsy ran forward and secured the money, returning quickly to her position facing the tunnel.

And now they heard shouts and the sound of hastening feet as Il Duca ran from the tunnel, followed closely by two of his brigands. They paused a moment at the entrance, as if bewildered, but when the father saw his child in the grasp of a stranger and heard her screams he answered with a roar of fury and prepared to scramble up the rock to rescue her.

That was where Patsy showed her mettle. She hastily covered the brigand with her revolver and shouted warningly:

"Stop, or you are a dead man!"

It was wonderfully dramatic and effective.

Il Duca shrank back, scowling, for he had no weapon at hand. Leaning against the entrance to his valley he glared around to determine the number of his foes and the probable chance of defeating them.

Kenneth laughed boyishly at his discomfiture. Kneeling down, the youth grasped Tato by both wrists and lowered her body over the edge of the rock so that her feet just touched a little ledge beneath. He continued to hold fast to her wrists, though, and there she remained, stretched against the face of the rock fronting the path, in full view of all, but still unable to move.

From this exasperating sight Il Duca glanced at Patsy. She was holding the revolver rigidly extended, and her blue eyes blazed with the excitement of the moment. It was a wonder she did not pull the trigger inadvertently, and the thought that she might do so caused the brigand to shudder.

Turning half around he beheld a third enemy quietly seated upon the rocks

directly across the path from Kenneth, her pose unconcerned as she rested her chin lightly upon her left hand. It was Beth, who held her revolver nonchalantly and gazed upon the scene below her with calm interest.

The Duke gave a cough to clear his throat. His men hung back of him, silent and motionless, for they did not like this absolute and dangerous defiance of their chief.

"Tell me, then, Tato," he called in English, "what is the cause of this trouble?"

"I do not know, my father, except that these are friends of Signor Merrick who have secretly followed me here."

The carefully arranged programme gave Patsy a speech at this point, but she had entirely forgotten it.

"Let me explain," said Beth, coldly. "You have dared to detain in your robbers' den the persons of Mr. Merrick and Count Ferralti. You have also demanded a ransom for their release. That is brigandage, which is denounced by the laws of Sicily. We have appealed to the authorities, but they are helpless to assist us. Therefore, being Americans, we have decided to assist ourselves. We command you to deliver to us on this spot, safe and uninjured, the persons of our friends, and that without any unnecessary delay."

The Duke listened with a sneer.

"And if we refuse, signorina?"

"If you refuse — if you do not obey at once — I swear that I will shoot your child, Tato, whose body yonder awaits my bullet. And afterward I shall kill you."

As she spoke she levelled the revolver and aimed it carefully at the exposed body of the child.

The brigand paled, and grasped the rock to steady himself.

"Bah! No girl can shoot from that distance," he exclaimed, scornfully.

"Indeed! Take care of your finger," called Beth, and a shot echoed sharply along the mountain side.

The brigand jumped and uttered a yell, at the same time whipping his right hand underneath his left arm; for Beth's bullet had struck one of his fingers and then flattened itself against the cliff.

That settled all argument, as far as Il Duca was concerned; for he now had ample evidence that the stern-eyed girl above him could shoot, and was not to be trifled with. All his life he had ruled by the terror of his threats; to-day he was suddenly vanquished by a determination he dared not withstand.

"Enough!" he cried. "Have your way."

He spoke to his men in Italian, and they hastened through the tunnel, glad to escape.

Following their departure there was a brief silence, during which all stood alert. Then, Tato, still half suspended against the cliff, said in a clear, soft voice:

"Father, if you think you can escape, let them shoot me, and keep your prisoners. The money for their ransom I brought to this place, and they will pay it even yet to save their friends from your vengeance. Do not let these wild Americans defeat us, I beg of you. I am not afraid. Save yourself, and let them shoot me, if they will!"

Kenneth afterward declared that he thought "the jig was up" then, for they had no intention whatever of harming Tato. It was all merely a bit of American "bluff," and it succeeded because the brigand was a coward, and dared not emulate his daughter's courage.

"No, no, Tato!" cried the Duke, brokenly, as he wrung his hands in anguish. "There is more money to be had, but I have only one child. They shall not harm a hair of your head, my pretty one!"

Patsy wanted to yell "bravo!" but wisely refrained. Her eyes were full of tears, though, and her resolution at ebb tide.

Fortunately the men had made haste. They returned with surprising promptness, pushing the amazed prisoners before them.

Uncle John, as he emerged from the tunnel, looked around upon the tragic scene and gasped:

"Well, I declare!"

Count Ferralti was more composed, if equally surprised. He lifted his hat politely to Beth and Patsy, and smiled with great satisfaction.

"You are free," said Il Duca, harshly. "Go!"

They lost no time in getting the brigands between themselves and the mouth of the tunnel, and then Kenneth gently drew Tato to a place beside him and assisted her to clamber down the path.

"Good bye, little one," he said, pleasantly; "you're what we call a 'brick' in our country. I like you, and I'm proud of you."

Tato did not reply. With streaming eyes she was examining her father's shattered hand, and sobbing at sight of the blood that dripped upon the rocks at his feet.

"Get inside!" called Beth, sharply; "and close up that rock. Lively, now!"

The "girl who could shoot" still sat toying with her revolver, and the mountaineers obeyed her injunction. The rock promptly closed, and the group of Americans was left alone.

Then Beth came slowly down to where Patsy was hugging Uncle John in a wild frenzy of delight, and Count Ferralti was shaking Kenneth's hand with a face eloquent of emotion.

“Come,” said she, her voice sounding faint and weary, “let us get away from here. It was a pretty game, while it lasted, but I’ll feel safer when we are home again. Where’s the money?”

“I’ve got it,” said Kenneth, holding up the package.

“What! didn’t you pay?” demanded Uncle John, astounded.

“Of course not, dear,” said Patsy, gleefully. “Did you think your nieces would let you be robbed by a bunch of dagoes?”

Ferralti caught hold of Beth’s swaying form.

“Look after your cousin,” he said, sharply. “I think she has fainted!”

CHAPTER XXVI
THE COUNT UNMASKS

"And now," said Uncle John, as he sat in their cosy sitting-room, propped in an easy chair with his feet upon a stool, "it's about time for you to give an account of yourselves, you young rascals."

They had eaten a late but very satisfactory dinner at the Castello-a-Mare, where the return of the missing ones was hailed with joy by the proprietor and his assistants. Even the little bewhiskered head-waiter, who resembled a jack-in-the-box more than he did a man, strove to celebrate the occasion by putting every good thing the house afforded before the returned guests. For, although they dared not interfere to protect the victims of the terrible Il Duca, the hotel people fully recognized the fact that brigandage was not a good advertisement for Taormina, and hoped the "little incident" would not become generally known.

Old Silas Watson, dignified lawyer as he was, actually danced a hornpipe when he beheld his old friend safe and sound. But he shook his head reproachfully when he learned of the adventure his ward and the two girls had undertaken with such temerity but marvelous success.

Beth had quickly recovered from her weakness, although Kenneth had insisted on keeping her arm all the way home. But the girl had been silent and thoughtful, and would eat nothing at dinner.

When they had gathered in their room to talk it all over the lawyer thought his young friends deserved a reproof.

"The money wasn't worth the risk, you crazy lunatics!" he said.

"It wasn't the money at all," replied Patsy, demurely.

"No?"

"It was the principle of the thing. And wasn't Beth just wonderful, though?"

"Shucks!" said Kenneth. "She had to go and faint, like a ninny, and she cried all the way home, because she had hurt the brigand's finger."

The girl's eyes were still red, but she answered the boy's scornful remark by saying, gravely:

"I am sorry it had to be done. I'll never touch a revolver again as long as I live."

Uncle John gathered his brave niece into an ample embrace.

"I'm very proud of you, my dear," he said, stroking her hair lovingly, "and you mustn't pay any attention to that silly boy. I've always known you were true blue, Beth, and now you have proved it to everyone. It may have been a reckless thing to do, as Mr. Watson says, but you did it like a major,

and saved our self-esteem as well as our money."

"Hurrah for Beth!" yelled the boy, changing his colors without a blush.

"If you don't shut up, I'll box your ears," said his guardian, sternly.

Uncle John and young Ferralti were the heroes of the evening. The little old gentleman smoked a big cigar and beamed upon his nieces and friends with intense satisfaction, while Ferralti sat glum and silent beside Louise until an abrupt challenge from Mr. Merrick effectually aroused him.

"I've only one fault to find with this young man," was the observation referred to: "that he made our acquaintance under false pretenses. When a fairly decent fellow becomes an impostor there is usually reason for it, and I would like Count Ferralti — or whatever his name is — to give us that reason and make a clean breast of his deception."

Ferralti bowed, with a serious face, but looked significantly toward the other members of the company.

"Whatever you have to say should be heard by all," declared Uncle John, answering the look.

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Merrick, and all present are entitled to an explanation," answered the young man, slowly. "I may have been foolish, but I believe I have done nothing that I need be ashamed of. Fortunately, there is now no further reason for concealment on my part, and in listening to my explanation I hope you will be as considerate as possible."

They were attentive enough, by this time, and every eye was turned, not unkindly, upon the youth who had so long been an enigma to them all — except, perhaps, to Louise.

"I am an American by birth, and my name is Arthur Weldon."

In the pause that followed Uncle John gave a soft whistle and Patsy laughed outright, to the undisguised indignation of Louise.

"Years ago," resumed the youth, "my father, who was a rich man, made a trip to Sicily and, although I did not know this until recently, was seized by brigands and imprisoned in the hidden valley we have just left. There he fell in love with a beautiful girl who was the daughter of the female brigand known as the Duchess of Alcanta, and who assisted him to escape and then married him. It was a pretty romance at the time, but when my father had taken his bride home to New York and became immersed in the details of his business, his love grew cold and he began to neglect his wife cruelly. He became a railway president and amassed a great fortune, but was not so successful a husband as he was a financier. The result was that the Sicilian girl, after some years of unhappiness and suffering, deserted him and returned to her own country, leaving her child, then three years old, behind her. To be frank with you, it was said at the time that my mother's mind had

become unbalanced, or she would not have abandoned me to the care of a loveless father, but I prefer to think that she had come to hate her husband so bitterly that she could have no love for his child or else she feared that her terrible mother would kill me if I came into her power. Her flight mattered little to my father, except that it made him more stern and tyrannical toward me. He saw me very seldom and confided my education to servants. So I grew up practically unloved and uncared for, and when the proper time arrived I was sent to college. My father now gave me an ample allowance, and at the close of my college career called me into his office and ordered me to enter the employ of the railway company. I objected to this. I did not like the business and had other plans for my future. But he was stubborn and dictatorial, and when I continued unsubmissive he threatened to cast me off entirely and leave his fortune to charity, since he had no other near relatives. He must have thought better of this decision afterward, for he gave me a year to decide whether or not I would obey him. At the end of that time, he declared, I would become either a pauper or his heir, at my option.

"It was during this year that I formed the acquaintance of your niece, Miss Merrick, and grew to love her devotedly. Louise returned my affection, but her mother, learning of my quarrel with my father, refused to sanction our engagement until I was acknowledged his heir. I was forbidden her house, but naturally we met elsewhere, and when I knew she was going to Europe with you, sir, who had never seen me, we hit upon what we thought was a happy and innocent plan to avoid the long separation. I decided to go to Europe also, and without you or your other nieces suspecting, my identity, attach myself to your party and enjoy the society of Louise while she remained abroad. So I followed you on the next ship and met you at Sorrento, where I introduced myself as Count Ferralti — a name we had agreed I should assume before we parted in America.

"The rest of my story you know. My father was killed in an accident on his own railroad, and I received the news while we were prisoners of the brigand, whom I discovered to be my uncle, but who had no mercy upon me because of the relationship. To-night, on my return here, I found a letter from my father's attorney, forwarded from my bankers in Paris. Through my father's sudden death I have inherited all his wealth, as he had no time to alter his will. Therefore Mrs. Merrick's objection to me is now removed, and Louise has never cared whether I had a penny or not."

He halted, as if not knowing what more to say, and the little group of listeners remained quiet because it seemed that no remark from them was necessary. Young Weldon, however, was ill at ease, and after hitching nervously in his chair he addressed Uncle John in these words:

“Sir, you are the young lady’s guardian for the present, as she is in your charge. I therefore ask your consent to our formal engagement.”

“Not any,” said Uncle John, decidedly. “I’ll sanction no engagement of any children on this trip. You are wrong in supposing I am Louise’s guardian — I’m just her chum and uncle. It’s like cradle-snatching to want to marry a girl of sixteen, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, for you can’t be much more than twenty-one yourself. While Louise is in my care I won’t have any entanglements of any sort, so you’ll have to wait till you get home and settle the business with her mother.”

“Very wise and proper, sir,” said Mr. Watson, nodding gravely.

Louise’s cheeks were flaming.

“Do you intend to drive Arthur away, Uncle?” she asked.

“Why should I, my dear? except that you’ve both taken me for a blind old idiot and tried to deceive me. Let the boy stay with us, if he wants to, but he’ll have to cut out all love-making and double-dealing from this time on — or I’ll take you home in double-quick time.”

The young man seemed to resent the indictment.

“The deception seemed necessary at the time, sir,” he said, “and you must not forget the old adage that ‘all’s fair in love and war.’ But I beg that you will forgive us both and overlook our fault, if fault it was. Hereafter it is our desire to be perfectly frank with you in all things.”

That was a good way to disarm Uncle John’s anger, and the result was immediately apparent.

“Very good,” said the old gentleman; “if you are proper and obedient children I’ve no objection to your being together. I rather like you, Arthur Weldon, and most of your failings are due to the foolishness of youth. But you’ve got to acquire dignity now, for you have suddenly become a man of consequence in the world. Don’t think you’ve got to marry every girl that attracts you by her pretty face. This devotion to Louise may be ‘puppy-love,’ after all, and — ”

“Oh, Uncle!” came a chorus of protest.

“What, you rascals! are you encouraging this desperate fol-de-rol?”

“You are too severe, Uncle John,” said Patsy, smiling. “The trouble with you is that you’ve never been in love yourself.”

“Never been in love!” He beamed upon the three girls with devotion written all over his round, jolly face.

“Then you’re jealous,” said Kenneth. “Give the poor kids a fair show, Uncle John.”

“All right, I will. Arthur, my lad, join our happy family as one of my kidlets, and love us all — but no one in particular. Eh? Until we get home

again, you know. We've started out to have the time of our lives, and we're getting it in chunks — eh, girls?"

"We certainly are, Uncle John!" Another chorus.

"Well, what do you say, Arthur Weldon?"

"Perhaps you are right, sir," answered the young man. "And, anyway, I am deeply grateful for your kindness. I fear I must return home in a couple of weeks, to look after business matters; but while I remain with you I shall try to conduct myself as you wish."

"That sounds proper. Is it satisfactory to you, Louise?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"Then we've settled Cupid — for a time, anyway. And now, my dears, I think we have all had enough of Taormina. Where shall we go next?"

CHAPTER XXVII
TATO IS ADOPTED

They canvassed the subject of their future travels with considerable earnestness. Uncle John was bent upon getting to Rome and Venice, and from there to Paris, and the nieces were willing to go anywhere he preferred, as they were sure to enjoy every day of their trip in the old world. But Mr. Watson urged them strongly to visit Syracuse, since they were not likely to return to Sicily again and the most famous of all the ancient historic capitals was only a few hours' journey from Taormina. So it was finally decided to pass a week in Syracuse before returning to the continent, and preparations were at once begun for their departure.

Kenneth pleaded for one more day in which to finish his picture of Etna, and this was allowed him. Uncle John nevertheless confessed to being uneasy as long as they remained on the scene of his recent exciting experiences. Mr. Watson advised them all not to stray far from the hotel, as there was no certainty that Il Duca would not make another attempt to entrap them, or at least to be revenged for their escape from his clutches.

On the afternoon of the next day, however, they were startled by a call from the Duke in person. He was dressed in his usual faded velvet costume and came to them leading by the hand a beautiful little girl.

The nieces gazed at the child in astonishment.

Tato wore a gray cloth gown, ill-fitting and of coarse material; but no costume could destroy the fairy-like perfection of her form or the daintiness of her exquisite features. With downcast eyes and a troubled expression she stood modestly before them until Patsy caught her rapturously in her arms and covered her face with kisses.

"You lovely, lovely thing!" she cried. "I'm *so* glad to see you again, Tato darling!"

The Duke's stern features softened. He sighed heavily and accepted Uncle John's polite invitation to be seated.

The little party of Americans was fairly astounded by this unexpected visit. Kenneth regretted that he had left his revolver upstairs, but the others remembered that the brigand would not dare to molest them in the security of the hotel grounds, and were more curious than afraid.

Il Duca's hand was wrapped in a bandage, but the damaged finger did not seem to affect him seriously. Beth could not take her eyes off this dreadful evidence of her late conflict, and stared at it as if the bandage fascinated her.

"Signore," said the Duke, addressing Uncle John especially, "I owe to you my apologies and my excuses for the annoyance I have caused to you and

your friends. I have the explanation, if you will so kindly permit me."

"Fire away, Duke," was the response.

"Signore, I unfortunately come of a race of brigands. For centuries my family has been lawless and it was natural that by education I, too, should become a brigand. In my youth my father was killed in an affray and my mother took his place, seizing many prisoners and exacting from them ransom. My mother you have seen, and you know of her sudden madness and of her death. She was always mad, I think, and by nature a fiend. She urged my elder brother to wicked crimes, and when he rebelled she herself cast him, in a fit of anger, into the pit. I became duke in his place, and did my mother's bidding because I feared to oppose her. But for years I have longed to abandon the life and have done with crime.

"With me our race ends, for I have no sons. But my one child, whom you know as Tato, I love dearly. My greatest wish is to see her happy. The last few days have changed the fortunes of us both. The Duchessa is gone, and at last I am the master of my own fate. As for Tato, she has been charmed by the young American signorini, and longs to be like them. So we come to ask that you forgive the wrong we did you, and that you will now allow us to be your friends."

Uncle John was amazed.

"You have decided to reform, Duke?" he asked.

"Yes, signore. Not alone for Tato's sake, but because I loathe the life of brigandage. See; here is my thought. At once I will disband my men and send them away. My household effects I will sell, and then abandon the valley forever. Tato and I have some money, enough to live in quiet in some other land, where we shall be unknown."

"A very good idea, Duke."

"But from my respect for you, Signer Merreek, and from my daughter's love for your nieces — the brave and beautiful signorini — I shall dare to ask from you a favor. But already I am aware that we do not deserve it."

"What is it, sir?"

"That you take my Tato to keep for a few weeks, until I can send away my men and arrange my affairs here. It would be unpleasant for the child here, and with you she will be so happy. I would like the sweet signorini to buy nice dresses, like those they themselves wear, for my little girl, and to teach her the good manners she could not gain as the brigand's daughter. Tato has the money to pay for everything but the kindness, if you will let her stay in your society until I can claim her. I am aware that I ask too much; but the Signorina Patsy has said to my child that they would always be friends, whatever might happen, and as I know you to be generous I have dared to

come to you with this request. I only ask your friendship for my Tato, who is innocent. For myself, after I have become a good man, then perhaps you will forgive me, too."

Uncle John looked thoughtful; the old lawyer was grave and listened silently. Patsy, her arms still around the shrinking form of the child, looked pleadingly at her uncle. Beth's eyes were moist and Louise smiled encouragingly.

"Well, my dears? The Duke is certainly not entitled to our friendship, as he truly says; but I have nothing against little Tato. What do you advise?"

"Let us keep her, and dress her like the beautiful doll she is, and love her!" cried Patsy.

"She shall be our adopted cousin," said Louise.

"Tato is good stuff!" declared Kenneth.

"Well, Beth?"

"It seems to me, Uncle," said the girl, seriously, "that if the Duke really wishes to reform, we should give him a helping hand. The little girl has led a bad life only because her father forced her to lure his victims and then procure the money for their ransoms; but I am sure her nature is sweet and pure, and she is so young that she will soon forget the evil things she has learned. So I vote with my cousins. Let us adopt Tato, and care for her until her father can introduce her into a new and more proper life."

"Well argued, Beth," said Uncle John, approvingly. "I couldn't have put the case better myself. What do you say, Silas Watson?"

"That you are all quite right," answered the old lawyer. "And the best part of the whole thing, to me, is the fact that this nest of brigands will be wiped out of existence, and Taormina be hereafter as safe for tourists as old Elmhurst itself. I wish I could say as much for the rest of Sicily."

Uncle John extended his hand to the Duke, who took it gratefully, although with a shamefaced expression that was perhaps natural under the circumstances.

"Look up, dear," said Patsy to the girl, softly; "look up and kiss me. You've been adopted, Tato! Are you glad?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

DREAMS AND DRESS-MAKING

Tato was now one of the family. They left Taormina the next day, and Frascatti drove all the girls in his victoria to the station.

"You must come again, signorini," said he, looking regretful at their departure. "Next year the fountain of the ice cream soda will be in operation, like those you have in Chicago, which is America. Our culture increases with our civilization. It is even hinted that Il Duca is to abandon our island forever. He has been interesting to us, but not popular, and you will not miss him when you come again to find he is not here. If this time he has caused you an inconvenience, I am sorry. It is regrettable, but, — "

"But it is so!" said Patsy, laughing.

Tato was again transformed. Patricia, who was the smallest of the three nieces, though not especially slim, had quickly altered one of her own pretty white gowns to fit the child, and as she was deft with her needle and the others had enthusiastically assisted her, Tato now looked more like a fairy than ever.

It was really wonderful what a suitable dress could do for the tiny Sicilian maid. She had lost her free and boyish manner and become shy and retiring with strangers, although when in the society of the three nieces she was as sweet and frank as ever. She wore her new gown gracefully, too, as if well accustomed to feminine attire all her life. The only thing now needed, as Patsy said, was time in which to grow her hair, which had always been cut short, in boyish fashion.

They were a merry party when they boarded the train for Syracuse, and Uncle John arranged with the guard to secure two adjoining compartments all to themselves, that they might have plenty of room.

"Where did you put the money, Uncle John?" Beth whispered, when at last they were whirling along and skirting the base of Mt. Etna toward the Catania side.

"I've hidden it in my trunk," he replied, in the same confidential tone. "There is no bank in this neighborhood to receive it, so I decided to carry it with us."

"But will it be safe in the trunk?" she enquired.

"Of course, my dear. Who would think of looking there for fifty thousand dollars? And no one knows we happen to have so much money with us."

"What did the Count — I mean, Mr. Weldon — do with his ransom?"

"Carries it in his satchel, so he can keep it with him and have an eye on it. It's a great mistake, Beth, to do such a thing as that. It'll make him uneasy

every minute, and he won't dare to let a *facchino* handle his grip. But in my case, on the other hand, I know it's somewhere in the baggage car, so I don't have to worry."

The journey was a delightful one. The road skirted the coast through the oldest and most picturesque part of Sicily, and it amazed them to observe that however far they travelled Etna was always apparently next door, and within reaching distance.

At Aci Castello they were pointed out the seven Isles of the Cyclops, which the blind Polyphemus once hurled after the crafty Ulysses. Then they came to Catania, which is the second largest city in Sicily, but has little of historic interest. Here they were really at the nearest point to the mighty volcano, but did not realize it because it always seemed to be near them. Eighteen miles farther they passed Leontinoi, which in ancient days dared to rival Siracusa itself, and an hour later the train skirted the bay and Capo Santa Panagia and slowly came to a halt in that city which for centuries dominated all the known world and was more powerful and magnificent in its prime than Athens itself — Syracuse.

The day had become cloudy and gray and the wind whistled around them with a chill sweep as they left their coach at the station and waited for Kenneth to find carriages. Afterward they had a mile to drive to their hotel; for instead of stopping in the modern town Uncle John had telegraphed for rooms at the Villa Politi, which is located in the ancient Achradina, at the edge of the Latomia de Cappuccini. By the time they arrived there they were blue with cold, and were glad to seek the warm rooms prepared for them and pass the remainder of the afternoon unpacking and "getting settled."

"I'm afraid," said Patsy, dolefully, "that we shall miss the bright sunshine and warmth of Taormina, Tato."

"Oh, it is not always warm there, nor is it always cold here," replied the child. "Indeed, signorina, I have heard that the climate of Siracusa is very delightful."

"It doesn't look it," returned Patsy; "but it may improve."

The interior of the hotel was comfortable, though, however bleak the weather might be outside. A good dinner put them all in a better humor and they passed the evening watching the strangers assembled in the parlors and wondering where they had come from and who they were.

"That money," whispered Uncle John to Beth, as he kissed her good night, "is still as safe as can be. I've lost the key to my trunk, and now I can't even get at it myself."

"Lost it!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; but that won't matter. It's the big trunk that holds the things I don't

often use, and if I can't unlock it no one else can, that's certain. So I shall rest easy until I need something out of it, and then I'll get a locksmith to pick the lock."

"But I wish you hadn't lost the key," said the girl, thoughtfully.

"Strikes me it's good luck. Pleasant dreams, my dear. I can fancy Arthur Weldon lying awake all night with his dreadful thirty thousand tucked under his pillow. It's a great mistake to carry so much money with you, Beth, for you're sure to worry about it."

The next morning when they came down to breakfast they were all amazed at the gorgeous sunshine and the genial temperature that had followed the dreary afternoon of their arrival. Syracuse was transformed, and from every window of the hotel the brilliant glow of countless flowers invited one to wander in the gardens, which are surpassed by few if any in the known world.

The Villa Politi stood so near the edge of a monstrous quarry that it seemed as if it might topple into the abyss at any moment. Our friends were on historic ground, indeed, for these quarries — or latomia, as they are called — supplied all the stone of which the five cities of ancient Syracuse were built — cities which in our age have nearly, if not quite, passed out of existence. The walls of the quarry are a hundred feet in depth, and at the bottom are now acres upon acres of the most delightful gardens, whose luxuriance is attributable to the fact that they are shielded from the winds while the sun reaches them nearly all the day. There are gardens on the level above, and beautiful ones, too; but these in the deep latomia are the most fascinating.

The girls could scarcely wait to finish breakfast before rushing out to descend the flights of iron steps that lead to the bottom of the vast excavation. And presently they were standing on the ground below and looking up at the vine covered cliffs that shut out all of the upper world.

It was peaceful here, and soothing to tired nerves. Through blooming shrubbery and along quiet paths they might wander for hours, and at every step find something new to marvel at and to delight the senses.

Here were ancient tombs cut from the solid rock — one of them that of an American midshipman who died in Syracuse and selected this impressive and lovely vault for his burial place. And there stood the famous statue of Archimedes, who used in life to wander in this very latomia.

"Once," said Mr. Watson, musingly, "there were seven thousand Athenian prisoners confined in this very place, and allowed to perish through starvation and disease. The citizens of Syracuse — even the fine ladies and the little children — used to stand on the heights above and mock at the

victims of their king's cruelty."

"Couldn't they climb out?" asked Patsy, shuddering at the thought that some of the poor prisoners might have died on the very spot her feet now trod.

"No, dear. And it is said the guards constantly patrolled the edge to slay any who might venture to make the attempt."

"Wasn't it dreadful!" she exclaimed. "But I'm glad they have made a flower garden of it now. Somehow, it reminds me of a cemetery."

But there were other interesting sights to be seen at Syracuse, and they laid out a systematic programme of the places they would visit each morning while they remained there. The afternoons were supposed to be reserved for rest, but the girls were so eager to supply Tato with a fitting wardrobe that they at once began to devote the afternoons to shopping and dress-making.

The child had placed in Uncle John's keeping a liberally supplied purse, which the Duke wished to be applied to the purchase of whatever his daughter might need or desire.

"He wants me to dress as you do," said Tato, simply; "and because you will know what is fitting my station and will be required in my future life, he has burdened you with my society. It was selfish in my father, was it not? But but — I wanted so much to be with you — because you are good to me!"

"And we're mighty glad to have you with us," answered Patsy. "It's no end of fun getting a girl a whole new outfit, from top to toe; and, aside from that, we already love you as if you were our little sister."

Beth and Louise equally endorsed this statement; and indeed the child was so sweet and pretty and so grateful for the least kindness bestowed upon her that it was a pleasure to assist and counsel her.

Tato looked even smaller in girls' clothing than in boys', and she improved so rapidly in her manners by constantly watching the nieces that it was hard to imagine she had until now been all unused to polite society. Already they began to dread the day when her father would come to claim her, and the girls and Uncle John had conceived a clever plan to induce the Duke to let his daughter travel with them on the continent and then go for a brief visit to them in America.

"By that time," declared Louise, "Tato's education will be accomplished, and she will be as refined and ladylike as any girl of her age we know. Blood will tell, they say, and the monk who taught her must have been an intelligent and careful man."

"She knows more of history and languages than all the rest of us put together," added Beth.

"And, having adopted her, we mustn't do the thing by halves," concluded

Patsy; “so our darling little brigandess must tease her papa to let her stay with us as long as possible.”

Tato smiled and blushed with pleasure. It was very delightful to know she had such enthusiastic friends. But she was afraid the Duke would not like to spare her for so long a time as a visit to America would require.

“You leave him to me,” said Uncle John. “I’ll argue the case clearly and logically, and after that he will have to cave in gracefully.”

Meantime the dainty gowns and pretty costumes were one by one finished and sent to the hotel, and the girls ransacked the rather inadequate shops of Syracuse for the smartest things in lingerie that could be procured. As they were determined to “try everything on” and see how their protégé looked in her finery, Tato was now obliged to dress for dinner and on every other possible occasion, and she not only astonished her friends by her loveliness but drew the eye of every stranger as surely as the magnet attracts the needle.

Even in Sicily, where the Greek type of beauty to-day exists more perfectly than in Helene, there were few to compare with Tato, and it was only natural that the Americans should be very proud of her.

Kenneth was sketching a bit of the quarry and the old monastery beyond it, with the blue sea glimmering in the distance. Sometimes he would join the others in their morning trips to the catacombs, the cathedrals or the museum; but the afternoons he devoted to his picture, and the others came to the gardens with him and sat themselves down to sew or read beside his easel.

Arthur Weldon was behaving very well indeed; and although a good deal of the credit belonged to Louise, who managed him with rare diplomatic ability, Uncle John grew to like the young man better each day, and had no fault whatever to find with him.

He was still rather silent and reserved; but that seemed a part of his nature, inherited doubtless from his father, and when he chose to talk his conversation was interesting and agreeable.

Kenneth claimed that Arthur had a bad habit of “making goo-goo eyes” at Louise; but the young man’s manner was always courteous and judicious when addressing her, and he managed to conceal his love with admirable discretion — at least when others were present.

Uncle John’s private opinion, confided in secret to his friend Mr. Watson, was that Louise “really might do worse; that is, if they were both of the same mind when they grew up.”

And so the days passed pleasantly away, and the time for their departure from Syracuse drew near.

On the last morning all of them — with the exception of Tato, who pleaded a headache — drove to the Latomia del Paradiso to see the

celebrated “Ear of Dionysius” — that vast cavern through which the tyrant is said to have overheard every whisper uttered by the prisoners who were confined in that quarry. There is a little room at the top of the cliff, also built from the rock, where it is claimed Dionysius sat and played eavesdropper; and it is true that one in that place can hear the slightest sound uttered in the chamber below.

Afterward the amphitheatre and the ancient street of the tombs were paid a final visit, with a stop at San Giovanni, where St. Paul once preached. And at noon the tourists returned to the hotel hungry but enthusiastic, in time for the table-d’-hote luncheon.

CHAPTER XXIX

TATO WINS

"This is funny!" cried Patsy, appearing before Uncle John with a white and startled face. "I can't find Tato anywhere."

"And her new trunk is gone from her room, as well as her gowns and everything she owns," continued Beth's clear voice, over her cousin's shoulder.

Uncle John stared at them bewildered. Then an expression of anxiety crept over his kindly face.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"There can't be a mistake, Uncle. She's just *gone*."

"None of you has offended, or annoyed the child, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, Uncle. She kissed us all very sweetly when we left her this morning."

"I can't understand it."

"Nor can we."

"Could her father have come for her, do you think?" suggested Mr. Merrick, after a moment's thought.

"I can't imagine her so ungrateful as to leave us without a word," said Patsy. "I know Tato well, Uncle, and the dear child would not hurt our feelings for the world. She loves us dearly."

"But she's a queer thing," added Louise, "and I don't trust her altogether. Sometimes I've surprised a look in her eyes that wasn't as innocent and demure as she would have us imagine her."

"Oh, Louise!"

"And there's another reason."

"What is it?"

"She reformed too suddenly."

Uncle John slapped his forehead a mighty blow as a suspicious and dreadful thought flashed across his mind. But next instant he drew a long breath and smiled again.

"It was lucky I lost that key to the trunk," he observed, still a little ashamed of his temporary lack of confidence in Tato. "It's been locked ever since we left Taormina, so the child couldn't be tempted by that."

"She wouldn't touch your money for the world!" said Patsy, indignantly. "Tato is no thief!"

"She comes of a race of thieves, though," Beth reminded her.

"I wonder if Arthur's money is still safe," remarked Louise, following the line of thought suggested.

As if with one accord they moved down the hall to the door of the young man's room.

"Are you in, Arthur?" asked Uncle John, knocking briskly.

"Yes, sir."

He opened his door at once, and saw with surprise the little group of anxious faces outside.

"Is your money safe?" asked Uncle John.

Weldon gave them a startled glance and then ran to his dresser and pulled open a drawer. After a moment's fumbling he turned with a smile.

"All safe, sir."

Uncle John and his nieces were visibly relieved.

"You see," continued Arthur, "I've invented a clever hiding-place, because the satchel could not be left alone and I didn't wish to lug it with me every step I took. So I placed the packages of bills inside the leg of a pair of trousers, and put them in a drawer with some other clothing at top and bottom. A dozen people might rummage in that drawer without suspecting the fact that money is hidden there. I've come to believe the place is as good as a bank; but you startled me for a minute, with your question. What's wrong?"

"Tato's gone."

"Gone!"

"Departed bag and baggage."

"But your fifty thousand, sir. Is it safe?"

"It has to be," answered Uncle John. "It is in a steel-bound, double-locked trunk, to which I've lost the key. No bank can beat that, my boy."

"Then why did the child run away?"

They could not answer that.

"It's a mystery," said Patsy, almost ready to weep. "But I'll bet it's that cruel, wicked father of hers. Perhaps he came while we were out and wouldn't wait a minute."

"What does the hall porter say?" asked Kenneth, who had joined the group in time to overhear the last speech and guess what had happened.

"Stupid!" cried Uncle John. "We never thought of the hall-porter. Come back to our sitting room, and we'll have him up in a jiffy."

The portiere answered his hell with alacrity. The Americans were liberal guests.

The young lady? Ah, she had driven away soon after they had themselves gone. A thin-faced, dark-eyed man had called for her and taken her away, placing her baggage on the box of the carriage. Yes, she had paid her bill and tipped the servants liberally.

“Just as I suspected!” cried Patsy. “That horrid duke has forced her to leave us. Perhaps he was jealous, and feared we would want to keep her always. Was she weeping and miserable, porter?”

“No, signorina. She laughed and was very merry. And — but I had forgotten! There is a letter which she left for the Signorina D’Oyle.”

“Where?”

“In the office. I will bring it at once.”

He ran away and quickly returned, placing a rather bulky parcel in the girl’s hands.

“You read it, Uncle John,” she said. “There can’t be anything private in Tato’s letter, and perhaps she has explained everything.”

He put on his glasses and then took the missive and deliberately opened it. Tato wrote a fine, delicate hand, and although the English words were badly spelled she expressed herself quite well in the foreign tongue. With the spelling and lack of punctuation corrected, her letter was as follows:

“Dear, innocent, foolish Patsy: How astonished you will be to find I have vanished from your life forever; and what angry and indignant words you will hurl after poor Tato! But they will not reach me, because you will not know in which direction to send them, and I will not care whether you are angry or not.

“You have been good to me, Patsy, and I really love you — fully as much as I have fear of that shrewd and pretty cousin of yours, whose cold eyes have made me tremble more than once. But tell Beth I forgive her, because she is the only clever one of the lot of you. Louise thinks she is clever, but her actions remind me of the juggler who explained his tricks before he did them, so that the audience would know how skillful he was.”

“But oh, Patsy, what simpletons you all are! And because you have been too stupid to guess the truth I must bother to write it all down. For it would spoil much of my satisfaction and enjoyment if you did not know how completely I have fooled you.

“You tricked us that day in the mountain glen, and for the first time an Alcanta brigand lost his prisoners and his ransom money through being outwitted. But did you think that was the end? If so you failed to appreciate us.

“Look you, my dear, we could have done without the money, for our family has been robbing and accumulating for ages, with little need to expend much from year to year. It is all in the Bank of Italy, too, and drawing the interest, for my father is a wise man of business. That four hundred thousand lira was to have been our last ransom, and after we had fairly earned it you tricked us and did not pay.

“So my father and I determined to get even with you, as much through revenge as cupidity. We were obliged to desert the valley at once, because we were getting so rich that the government officials became uneasy and warned us to go or be arrested. So we consulted together and decided upon our little plot, which was so simple that it has worked perfectly. We came to you with our sad story, and you thought we had reformed, and kindly adopted me as one of your party. It was so easy that I almost laughed in your foolish faces. But I didn’t, for I can act. I played the child very nicely, I think, and you quite forgot I was a brigand’s daughter, with the wild, free blood of many brave outlaws coursing in my veins. Ah, I am more proud of that than of my acting.

“Innocent as I seemed, I watched you all carefully, and knew from almost the first hour where the money had been put. I stole the key to Uncle John’s trunk on the train, while we were going from Taormina to Syracuse; but I did not take the money from it because I had no better place to keep it, and the only danger was that he would force the lock some day. But Ferralti’s money — I call him Ferralti because it is a prettier name than Weldon — bothered me for a long time. At the first he would not let that little satchel out of his sight, and when he finally did he had removed the money to some other place. I searched his room many times, but could not find his hiding place until last night. While he was at dinner I discovered the bills in one of the drawers of his dresser.

“But for this difficulty I should have left your charming society before, as my father has been secretly waiting for me for three days. Having located Ferralti’s money I waited until this morning and when you had all left me I signalled to my father from my window and prepared to disappear. It took but a few minutes to get the money from Uncle John’s trunk and Arthur’s trouser-leg. Much obliged for it, I’m sure. Then I packed up all my pretty dresses in my new trunk — for part of our plot was to use your good taste in fitting me out properly — and now I am writing this loving epistle before I leave.

“We shall go to Paris or Vienna or Cairo or London — guess which! We shall have other names — very beautiful ones — and be rich and dignified and respected. When I grow older I think I shall marry a prince and become a princess; but that will not interest you much, for you will not know that the great princess is your own little Tato.

“Tell Uncle John I have left the key to his trunk on the mantel, behind the picture of the madonna. I stuffed papers into Arthur’s trouser leg to deceive him if he came back before I had a chance to escape. But I hoped you would discover nothing until you read this letter, for I wanted to surprise you. Have

I? Then I am content. You tricked me once; but I have tricked you at the last, and the final triumph is mine.

"In spite of all, Patsy dear, I love you; for you are sweet and good, and although I would not be like you for the world I can appreciate your excellent qualities. Remember this when your anger is gone. I won't be able to visit you in America, but I shall always think of you in a more kindly way than I fear you will think of the Sicilian tomboy, Tato."

CHAPTER XXX
A WAY TO FORGET

The faces of the group, as Uncle John finished reading, were worth studying. Arthur Weldon was white with anger, and his eyes blazed. Silas Watson stared blankly at his old friend, wondering if it was because he was growing old that he had been so easily hoodwinked by this saucy child. Beth was biting her lip to keep back the tears of humiliation that longed to trickle down her cheeks. Louise frowned because she remembered the hard things Tato had said of her. Patsy was softly crying at the loss of her friend.

Then Kenneth laughed, and the sound sent a nervous shiver through the group.

"Tato's a brick!" announced the boy, audaciously. "Can't you see, you stupids, that the thing is a good joke on us all? Or are you too thin skinned to laugh at your own expense?"

"Oh, we can laugh," responded Uncle John, gravely. "But if Tato's a brick it's because she is hard and insensible. The loss of the money doesn't hurt me, but to think the wicked little lass made me love her when she didn't deserve it is the hardest blow I have ever received."

That made Patsy sob outright, while Louise ejaculated, with scorn: "The little wretch!"

"It serves us right for having confidence in a child reared to crime and murder from the cradle," said Arthur, rather savagely. "I don't know how much money I am worth, but I'd gladly spend another thirty thousand to bring this wretched creature to justice."

"Money won't do it," declared the lawyer, shaking his head regretfully. "The rascals are too clever to be caught in Europe. It would be different at home."

"Well, the best thing to do is to grin and bear it, and forget the unpleasant incident as soon as possible," said Uncle John. "I feel as if I'd had my pocket picked by my best friend, but it isn't nearly as disgraceful as being obliged to assist the thief by paying ransom money. The loss amounts to nothing to either of us, and such treachery, thank goodness, is rare in the world. We can't afford to let the thing make us unhappy, my friends; so cheer up, all of you, and don't dwell upon it any more than you can help."

They left Syracuse a rather solemn group, in spite of this wise advice, and journeyed back to Naples and thence to Rome. There was much to see here, and they saw it so energetically that when they boarded the train for Florence they were all fagged out and could remember nothing clearly except the Coliseum and the Baths of Carracalla.

Florence was just now a bower of roses and very beautiful. But Kenneth lugged them to the galleries day after day until Uncle John declared he hated to look an "old master" in the face.

"After all, they're only daubs," he declared. "Any ten-year-old boy in America can paint better pictures."

"Don't let anyone hear you say that, dear," cautioned Patsy. "They'd think you don't know good art."

"But I do," he protested. "If any of those pictures by old masters was used in a street-car 'ad' at home it would be money wasted, for no one would look at them. The people wouldn't stand for it a minute."

"They are wonderful for the age in which they were painted," said Kenneth, soberly. "You must remember that we have had centuries in which to improve our art, since then."

"Oh, I've a proper respect for old age, I hope," replied Uncle John; "but to fall down and worship a thing because it's gray-haired and out-of-date isn't just my style. All of these 'Oh!'s' and 'Ahs!' over the old masters are rank humbug, and I'm ashamed of the people that don't know better."

And now Arthur Weldon was obliged to bid good-bye to Louise and her friends and take a train directly to Paris to catch the steamer for home. His attorney advised him that business demanded his immediate presence, and he was obliged to return, however reluctantly.

Kenneth and Mr. Watson also left the party at Florence, as the boy artist wished to remain there for a time to study the pictures that Uncle John so bitterly denounced. The others went on to Venice, which naturally proved to the nieces one of the most delightful places they had yet seen. Mr. Merrick loved it because he could ride in a gondola and rest his stubby legs, which had become weary with tramping through galleries and cathedrals. These last monuments, by the way, had grown to become a sort of nightmare to the little gentleman. The girls were enthusiastic over cathedrals, and allowed none to escape a visit. For a time Uncle John had borne up bravely, but the day of rebellion was soon coming.

"No cathedrals in Venice, I hope?" he had said on their arrival.

"Oh, yes, dear; the loveliest one in the world! St. Mark's is here, you know."

"But no St. Paul's or St. Peter's?"

"No, Uncle. There's the Saluta, and the — "

"Never mind. We'll do that first one, and then quit. What they build so many churches for I can't imagine. Nobody goes to 'em but tourists, that I can see."

He developed a streak of extravagance in Venice, and purchased Venetian

lace and Venetian glassware to such an extent that the nieces had to assure him they were all supplied with enough to last them and their friends for all time to come. Major Doyle had asked for a meerschaum pipe and a Florentine leather pocket book; so Uncle John made a collection of thirty-seven pipes of all shapes and sizes, and bought so many pocketbooks that Patsy declared her father could use a different one every day in the month.

"But they're handy things to have," said her uncle, "and we may not get to Europe again in a hurry."

This was his excuse for purchasing many things, and it was only by reminding him of the duty he would have to pay in New York that the girls could induce him to desist.

This customs tax worried the old gentleman at times. Before this trip he had always believed in a protective tariff, but now he referred to the United States customs as a species of brigandage worse than that of Il Duca himself.

They stopped at Milan to visit the great cathedral, and then raced through Switzerland and made a dash from Luzerne to Paris.

"Thank heaven," said Uncle John, "there are no cathedrals in gay Paree, at any rate."

"Oh, yes there are," they assured him. "We must see Notre Dame, anyway; and there are a dozen other famous cathedrals."

Here is where Uncle John balked.

"See here, my dears," he announced, "Not a cathedral will I visit from this time on! You can take a guide and go by yourselves if you feel you can't let any get away from you. Go and find another of Mike Angelo's last work; every church has got one. For my part, I've always been religiously inclined, but I've been to church enough lately to last me the rest of my natural life, and I've fully determined not to darken the doors of another cathedral again. They're like circuses, anyhow; when you've seen one, you've seen 'em all."

No argument would induce him to abandon this position; so the girls accepted his proposal and visited their beloved cathedrals in charge of a guide, whose well of information was practically inexhaustible if not remarkable for its clarity.

The opera suited Uncle John better, and he freely revelled in the shops, purchasing the most useless and preposterous things in spite of that growing bugbear of the customs duties.

But finally this joyous holiday came to an end, as all good things will, and they sailed from Cherbourg for New York.

Uncle John had six extra trunks, Patsy carried a French poodle that was as much trouble as an infant in arms, and Louise engineered several hat-boxes that could not be packed at the last minute. But the girls embarked gay and

rosy-cheeked and animated, and in spite of all the excitement and pleasure that had attended their trip, not one of the party was really sorry when the return voyage began.

CHAPTER XXXI

SAFE HOME

"To me," said Uncle John, as he stood on the deck and pointed proudly to the statue of Liberty in New York harbor, "that is the prettiest sight I've seen since I left home."

"Prettier than the old masters, Uncle?" asked Patsy, mischievously.

"Yes, or the cathedrals!" he retorted.

When they reached the dock there was the Major waiting to receive Patsy in a new checked suit with a big flower in his button-hole and a broad smile on his jolly face.

And there was Mrs. Merrick, too, with Arthur Weldon beside her, which proved to Louise that he had succeeded in making his peace with her mother. Also there were the stern-featured custom-house officials in their uniforms, and the sight of them sent the cold chills flying down Uncle John's spine.

There was no one present to receive Beth, but her uncle tucked her arm underneath his own with a proud gesture and kept her close beside him. For the girl had quite won his loving old heart on this trip, and she seemed to him more mature and far sweeter than when they had left home.

But the greetings and the "brigandage" were soon over, and in good time they were all assembled in the Doyle flat, where the joyous Major had prepared an elaborate dinner to celebrate the return of the wanderers.

"We've a million pipes and pocket-books for you, daddy," whispered Patsy, hugging him for the twentieth time; "and I've got a thousand things to tell you about our adventures in strange lands."

"Save 'em till we're alone," said the Major; "they're too good to waste on a crowd."

Mr. Merrick was placed at the head of the table to make a speech. It was brief and to the point.

"I promised these young ladies to give them time of their lives," he said, "Did I do it, girls?"

And in a lively chorus they answered:

"You did, Uncle John!"

AUNT JANE'S NIECES AT MILLVILLE

Aunt Jane's Nieces in Millville, published in 1908 by Reilly & Britton, was Baum's third in the series under the name, Edith Van Dyne and illustrated by Emile A. Nelson. In this tale, Uncle John takes his nieces to a farm in upstate New York, determined to escape summer's heat in the city. They quickly immerse themselves in local doings and get to know some of the quirky citizens. While living on the farm, the girls become fascinated by tales of the mysterious lost fortune of its previous owner. Their efforts at solving the mystery result in Baum's earliest attempt at detective fiction, although with a humorous bent this time.

First edition copy of Aunt Jane's Nieces at Millville

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CHAPTER I.

UNCLE JOHN'S FARM.

"How did I happen to own a farm?" asked Uncle John, interrupting his soup long enough to fix an inquiring glance upon Major Doyle, who sat opposite.

"By virtue of circumstance, my dear sir," replied the Major, composedly. "It's a part of my duty, in attending to those affairs you won't look afther yourself, to lend certain sums of your money to needy and ambitious young men who want a start in life."

"Oh, Uncle! Do you do that?" exclaimed Miss Patricia Doyle, who sat between her uncle and father and kept an active eye upon both.

"So the Major says," answered Uncle John, dryly.

"And it's true," asserted the other. "He's assisted three or four score young men to start in business in the last year, to my certain knowledge, by lending them sums ranging from one to three thousand dollars. And it's the most wasteful and extravagant charity I ever heard of."

"But I'm so glad!" cried Patsy, clapping her hands with a delighted gesture. "It's a splendid way to do good — to help young men to get a start in life. Without capital, you know, many a young fellow would never get his foot on the first round of the ladder."

"And many will never get it there in any event," declared the Major, with a shake of his grizzled head. "More than half the rascals that John helps go to the dogs entirely, and hang us up for all they've borrowed."

"I told you to help *deserving* young men," remarked Uncle John, with a scowl at his brother-in-law.

"And how can I tell whether they're desarving or not?" retorted Major Doyle, fiercely. "Do ye want me to become a sleuth, or engage detectives to track the objects of your erroneous philanthropy? I just have to form a judgment an' take me chances; and whin a poor devil goes wrong I charge your account with the loss."

"But some of them must succeed," ventured Patsy, in a conciliatory tone.

"Some do," said John Merrick; "and that repays me for all my trouble."

"All *your* throuble, sir?" queried the Major; "you mane all *my* throuble — well, and your money. And a heap of throuble that confounded farm has cost me, with one thing and another."

"What of it?" retorted the little round faced millionaire, leaning back in his chair and staring fixedly at the other. "That's what I employ you for."

"Now, now, gentlemen!" cried Patsy, earnestly. "I'll have no business conversation at the table. You know my rules well enough."

"This isn't business," asserted the Major.

“Of course not,” agreed Uncle John, mildly. “No one has any business owning a farm. How did it happen. Major?”

The old soldier had already forgotten his grievance. He quarreled persistently with his wealthy employer and brother-in-law — whom he fairly adored — to prevent the possibility (as he often confided to Patsy) of his falling down and worshiping him. John Merrick was a multi-millionaire, to be sure; but there were palliating circumstances that almost excused him. He had been so busily occupied in industry that he never noticed how his wealth was piling up until he discovered it by accident. Then he promptly retired, “to give the other fellows a chance,” and he now devoted his life to simple acts of charity and the welfare and entertainment of his three nieces. He had rescued Major Doyle and his daughter from a lowly condition and placed the former in the great banking house of Isham, Marvin & Company, where John Merrick’s vast interests were protected and his income wisely managed. He had given Patsy this cosy little apartment house at 3708 Willing Square and made his home with her, from which circumstance she had come to be recognized as his favorite niece.

John Merrick was sixty years old. He was short, stout and chubby-faced, with snow-white hair, mild blue eyes and an invariably cheery smile. Simple in his tastes, modest and retiring, lacking the education and refinements of polite society, but shrewd and experienced in the affairs of the world, the little man found his greatest enjoyment in the family circle that he had been instrumental in founding. Being no longer absorbed in business, he had come to detest its every detail, and so allowed his bankers to care for his fortune and his brother-in-law to disburse his income, while he himself strove to enjoy life in a shy and boyish fashion that was as unusual in a man of his wealth as it was admirable. He had never married.

Patricia was the apple of Uncle John’s eye, and the one goddess enshrined in her doting father’s heart. Glancing at her, as she sat here at table in her plain muslin gown, a stranger would be tempted to wonder why. She was red-haired, freckled as a robin’s egg, pug-nosed and wide-mouthed. But her blue eyes were beautiful, and they sparkled with a combination of saucy mischief and kindly consideration for others that lent her face an indescribable charm.

Everyone loved Patsy Doyle, and people would gaze longer at her smiling-lips and dancing eyes than upon many a more handsome but less attractive face. She was nearly seventeen years old, not very tall, and her form, to speak charitably, was more neat than slender.

“A while ago,” said the Major, resuming the conversation as he carved the roast, “a young fellow came to me who had invented a new sort of pump to

inflate rubber tires. He wanted capital to patent the pump and put it on the market. The thing looked pretty good, John; so I lent him a thousand of your money."

"Quite right," returned Uncle John, nodding.

"But pretty soon he came back with a sad tale. He was in a bad fix. Another fellow was contesting his patent and fighting hard to head him off. It would take a lot of money to fight back — three thousand, at least. But he was decent about it, after all. His father had left him a little farm at Millville. He couldn't say what it was worth, but there were sixty acres and some good buildings, and he would deed it to you as security if you would let him have three thousand more."

"So you took the farm and gave him the money?"

"I did, sir. Perhaps I am to blame; but I liked the young fellow's looks. He was clean-cut and frank, and believed in his pump. I did more. At the climax of the struggle I gave another thousand, making five thousand in all."

"Well?"

"It's gone, John; and you've got the farm. The other fellows were too clever for my young friend, Joseph Wegg, and knocked out his patent."

"I'm so sorry!" said Patsy, sympathetically.

The Major coughed.

"It's not an unusual tale, my dear; especially when John advances the money," he replied.

"What became of the young man?" asked the girl.

"He's a competent chauffeur, and so he went to work driving an automobile."

"Where is Millville?" inquired Uncle John, thoughtfully.

"Somewhere at the north of the State, I believe."

"Have you investigated the farm at all?"

"I looked up a real estate dealer living at Millville, and wrote him about the Wegg farm. He said if any one wanted the place very badly it might sell for three thousand dollars."

"Humph!"

"But his best information was to the effect that no one wanted it at all."

Patsy laughed.

"Poor Uncle John!" she said.

The little man, however, was serious. For a time he ate with great deliberation and revolved an interesting thought in his mind.

"Years ago." said he, "I lived in a country town; and I love the smell of the meadows and the hum of the bees in the orchards. Any orchards at my farm, Major?"

“Don’t know, sir.”

“Pretty soon,” continued Uncle John, “it’s going to be dreadfully hot in New York, and we’ll have to get away.”

“Seashore’s the place,” remarked the Major. “Atlantic City, or Swampscott, or — ”

“Rubbish!” growled the other man, impatiently. “The girls and I have just come from Europe. We’ve had enough sea to last us all *this* season, at least. What we pine for is country life — pure milk, apple trees and new mown hay.”

“We, Uncle?” said Patsy.

“Yes, my dear. A couple of months on the farm will do all of my nieces good. Beth is still with Louise, you know, and they must find the city deadly dull, just now. The farm’s the thing. And the Major can run up to see us for a couple of weeks in the hot weather, and we’ll all have a glorious, lazy time.”

“And we can take Mary along to do the cooking,” suggested Patsy, entering into the idea enthusiastically.

“And eat in our shirt-sleeves!” said Uncle John, with a glowing face.

“And have a cow and some pigs!” cried the girl.

“Pah!” said the Major, scornfully. “You talk as if it were a real farm, instead of a place no one would have as a gift.”

Uncle John looked sober again.

“Anyone live on the place, Major?” he inquired.

“I believe not. It’s gone to ruin and decay the last few years.”

“But it could be put into shape?”

“Perhaps so; at an expense that will add to your loss.”

“Never mind that.”

“If you want farm life, why don’t you rent a respectable farm?” demanded the Major.

“No; this is my farm. I own it, and it’s my bounded duty to live on it,” said Uncle John, stubbornly. “Write to that real estate fellow at Millville tomorrow and tell him to have the place fixed up and put into ship-shape order as quickly as possible. Tell him to buy some cows and pigs and chickens, and hire a man to look after them. Also a horse and buggy, some saddle horses — — ”

“Go slow, John. Don’t leave such a job to a country real estate dealer. If I remember right the fellow wrote like a blacksmith. If you want horses and rigs, let Hutchinson send you down the right sort, with an experienced groom and stable hands. But I’m not sure there will be a place to put them.”

“Oh, Uncle!” exclaimed Patsy; “don’t let us have all those luxuries. Let us live a simple life on the farm, and not degrade its charms by adding city

fixin's. The cow and the chickens are all right, but let's cut out the horses until we get there. Don't you know, dear, that a big establishment means lots of servants, and servants mean worry and strife? I want to let down the bars for the cow when she moos, and milk her myself."

"It takes a skilled mechanic to milk a cow," objected the Major.

"But Patsy's right!" cried her uncle, with conviction. "We don't want any frills at all. Just tell your man, Major, to put the place into good living condition."

"Patrichia," softly remarked the Major, with an admiring glance at his small daughter, "has more sinse in her frizzled head than both of us put together."

"If she hadn't more than you," retorted Uncle John, with a grin, "I'd put a candle inside her noodle and call her a Jack-Lantern."

CHAPTER II.

THE AGENT.

The Major hunted up the real estate dealer's former letter as soon as he reached his office next morning. The printed letter-head, somewhat blurred, because too much ink had been used, read as follows:

Marshall McMahon McNutt,
Real Estate Dealer & Horses to Pasture
by the week or month.
Also Plymouth Rock Hens & Road Commissioner
Agent for Radley's Lives of the Saints
Insurance and Watermelons My Specialty
Millville, Mount County, N.Y.

The Major shook his head doubtfully as he read the above announcement; but Mr. McNutt was the only known person to whom he could appeal to carry out John Merrick's orders. So he dictated the following letter:

Dear Sir:

Mr. John Merrick, the present owner of the Wegg farm at Millville, desires to spend his summer vacation on the premises, and therefore requests you to have the house and grounds put in first-class shape as soon as possible, and to notify me directly the work is done. Have the house thoroughly cleaned, the grass mowed around it and the barns and outbuildings repaired wherever it may be necessary. You are also instructed to procure for Mr. Merrick's use a good Jersey cow, some pigs and a dozen or so barnyard fowls. As several ladies will accompany the owner and reside with him on the place, he would like you to report what necessary furniture, if any, will be required for their comfort. Send your bill to me and it will receive prompt attention.

After several days this reply came:

Mister Doyle you must be crazy as a loon. Send me fifty cold dollars as an evvidence of good fayth and I wull see what can be done. Old Hucks is livin on the place yit do you want him to git out or what? Yours fer a square deal Marshall McMahon McNutt.

"John," said the Major, exhibiting this letter, "you're on the wrong tack. The man is justified in thinking we're crazy. Give up this idea and think of something else to bother me."

But the new proprietor of the Wegg farm was obdurate. During the past week he had indulged in sundry sly purchases, which had been shipped, in his name to Chazy Junction, the nearest railway station to Millville. Therefore, the "die had been cast," as far as Mr. Merrick was concerned, for

the purchases were by this time at the farm, awaiting him, and he could not back out without sacrificing them. They included a set of gardening tools, several hammocks, croquet and tennis sets, and a remarkable collection of fishing tackle, which the sporting-goods man had declared fitted to catch anything that swam, from a whale to a minnow. Also, Uncle John decided to dress the part of a rural gentleman, and ordered his tailor to prepare a corduroy fishing costume, a suit of white flannel, one of khaki, and some old-fashioned blue jean overalls, with apron front, which, when made to order by the obliging tailor, cost about eighteen dollars a suit. To forego the farm meant to forego all these luxuries, and Mr. Merrick was unequal to the sacrifice. Why, only that same morning he had bought a charming cottage piano and shipped it to the Junction for Patsy's use. That seemed to settle the matter definitely. To be balked of his summer vacation on his own farm was a thing Mr. Merrick would not countenance for a moment.

"Give me that letter, Major," he said; "I'll run this enterprise myself."

The Major resigned with a sigh of relief.

Uncle John promptly sent the real estate agent a draft for five hundred dollars, with instructions to get the farm in shape for occupancy at the earliest possible day.

"If Old Hucks is a farm hand and a bachelor," he wrote, "let him stay till I come and look him over. If he's a married man and has a family, chuck him out at once. I'm sure you are a man of good taste and judgment. Look over the furniture in the house and telegraph me what condition it is in. Everything about the place must be made cozy and comfortable, but I wish to avoid an appearance of vulgarity or extravagance."

The answer to this was a characteristic telegram:

Furniture on the bum, like everything else. Will do the best I can. McNutt.

Uncle John did not display this discouraging report to Patsy or her father. A little thought on the matter decided him to rectify the deficiencies, in so far as it lay in his power. He visited a large establishment making a specialty of "furnishing homes complete," and ordered a new kitchen outfit, including a modern range, a mission style outfit for a dining-room, dainty summer furniture for the five chambers to be occupied by his three nieces, the Major and himself, and a variety of lawn benches, chairs, etc.

"Look after the details," he said to the dealer. "Don't neglect anything that is pretty or useful."

"I won't, sir," replied the man, who knew his customer was "the great John Merrick," who could furnish a city "complete," if he wished to, and not count the cost.

Everything was to be shipped in haste to the Junction, and Uncle John

wrote McNutt to have it delivered promptly to the farm and put in order.

"As soon as things are in shape," he wrote, "wire me to that effect and I'll come down. But don't let any grass grow under your feet. I'm a man who requires prompt service."

The days were already getting uncomfortably warm, and the little man was nervously anxious to see his farm. So were the nieces, for that matter, who were always interested in the things that interested their eccentric uncle. Besides Patricia Doyle, whom we have already introduced, these nieces were Miss Louise Merrick, who had just celebrated her eighteenth birthday, and Miss Elizabeth — or "Beth" — De Graf, now well past fifteen. Beth lived in a small town in Ohio, but was then visiting her city cousin Louise, so that both girls were not only available but eager to accompany Uncle John to his new domain and assist him to enjoy his summer outing.

CHAPTER III.

MILLVILLE HEARS EXCITING NEWS.

Millville is rather difficult to locate on the map, for the railroads found it impossible to run a line there, *Chazy* Junction, the nearest station, is several miles away, and the wagon road ascends the foothills every step of the distance. Finally you pass between Mount Parnassus (whoever named it that?) and Little Bill Hill and find yourself on an almost level plateau some four miles in diameter, with a placid lake in the center and a fringe of tall pines around the edge. At the South, where tower the northern sentries of the Adirondacks, a stream called Little Bill Creek comes splashing and dashing over the rocks to force its way noisily into the lake. When it emerges again it is humble and sedate, and flows smoothly to Hooker's Falls, from whence it soon joins a tributary that leads it to far away Champlain.

Millville is built where the Little Bill rushes into the lake. The old mill, with its race and sluice-gates, still grinds wearily the scanty dole of grain fed into its hoppers and Silas Caldwell takes his toll and earns his modest living just as his father did before him and "Little Bill" Thompson did before him.

Above the mill a rickety wooden bridge spans the stream, for here the highway from Chary Junction reaches the village of Millville and passes the wooden structures grouped on either side its main street on the way to Thompson's Crossing, nine miles farther along. The town boasts exactly eleven buildings, not counting the mill, which, being on the other side of the Little Bill, can hardly be called a part of Millville proper. Cotting's Store contains the postoffice and telephone booth, and is naturally the central point of interest. Seth Davis' blacksmith shop comes next; Widow Clark's Emporium for the sale of candy, stationery and cigars adjoins that; McNutt's office and dwelling combined is next, and then Thorne's Livery and Feed Stables. You must understand they are not set close together, but each has a little ground of its own. On the other side of the street is the hardware store, with farm machinery occupying the broad platform before it, and then the Millville House, a two-storied "hotel" with a shed-like wing for the billiard-room and card tables. Nib Corkins' drug store, jewelry store and music store combined (with sewing machines for a "side line"), is the last of the "business establishments," and the other three buildings are dwellings occupied by Sam Cotting, Seth Davis and Nick Thorne.

Dick Pearson's farm house is scarcely a quarter of a mile up the highway, but it isn't in Millville, for all that. There's a cross lane just beyond Pearson's, leading east and west, and a mile to westward is the Wegg Farm, in the wildest part of the foothills.

It is a poor farming country around Millville. Strangers often wonder how the little shops of the town earn a living for their proprietors; but it doesn't require a great deal to enable these simple folk to live. The tourist seldom penetrates these inaccessible foothills; the roads are too rough and primitive for automobiles; so Millville is shamefully neglected, and civilization halted there some half a century ago.

However, there was a genuine sensation in store for this isolated hamlet, and it was the more welcome because anything in the way of a sensation had for many years avoided the neighborhood.

Marshall McMahon McNutt, or, as he was more familiarly called by those few who respected him most highly, "Marsh" McNutt (and sundry other appellations by those who respected him not at all), became the recipient of a letter from New York announcing the intention of a certain John Merrick, the new owner of the Wegg Farm, to spend the summer on the place. McNutt was an undersized man of about forty, with a beardless face, scraggly buff-colored hair, and eyes that were big, light blue and remarkably protruding. The stare of those eyes was impenetrable, because observers found it embarrassing to look at them. "Mac's" friends had a trick of looking away when they spoke to him, but children gazed fascinated at the expressionless blue eyeballs and regarded their owner with awe.

The "real estate agent" was considered an enterprising man by his neighbors and a "poor stick" by his wife. He had gone to school at Thompson's Crossing in his younger days; had a call to preach, but failed because he "couldn't get religion"; inherited a farm from his uncle and married Sam Cotting's sister, whose tongue and temper were so sharp that everyone marveled at the man's temerity in acquiring them. Finally he had lost one foot in a mowing machine, and the accident destroyed his further usefulness to the extent of inducing him to abandon the farm and move into town. Here he endeavored to find something to do to eke out his meagre income; so he raised "thoroughbred Plymouth Rocks," selling eggs for hatching to the farmers; doctored sick horses and pastured them in the lot back of his barn, the rear end of which was devoted to "watermelons in season"; sold subscription books to farmers who came to the mill or the village store; was elected "road commissioner" and bossed the neighbors when they had to work out their poll-tax, and turned his hand to any other affairs that offered a penny's recompense. The "real estate business" was what Seth Davis labeled "a blobbering bluff," for no property had changed hands in the neighborhood in a score of years, except the lot back of the mill, which was traded for a yoke of oxen, and the Wegg farm, which had been sold without the agent's knowledge or consent.

The only surprising thing about the sale of the Wegg farm was that anyone would buy it. Captain Wegg had died three years before, and his son Joe wandered south to Albany, worked his way through a technical school and then disappeared in the mazes of New York. So the homestead seemed abandoned altogether, except for the Huckses.

When Captain Wegg died Old Hucks, his hired man, and Hucks' blind wife Nora were the only dependents on the place, and the ancient couple had naturally remained there when Joe scorned his inheritance and ran away. After the sale they had no authority to remain but were under no compulsion to move out, so they clung to their old quarters.

When McNutt was handed his letter by the postmaster and storekeeper he stared at its contents in a bewildered way that roused the loungers to amused laughter.

"What's up, Peggy?" called Nick Thorne from his seat on the counter. "Somebody gone off'n me hooks an' left ye a fortun'?"

"Peggy" was one of McNutt's most popular nicknames, acquired because he wore a short length of pine where his absent foot should have been.

"Not quite," was the agent's slow reply; "but here's the blamedest funniest communicate a man ever got! It's from some critter that knows the man what bought the Wegg farm."

"Let's hear it," remarked Cotting, the store-keeper, a fat individual with a bald head, who was counting matches from a shelf into the public match-box. He allowed "the boys" just twenty free matches a day.

So the agent read the letter in an uncertain halting voice, and when he had finished it the little group stared at one another for a time in thoughtful silence.

"Wall, I'll be plunked," finally exclaimed the blacksmith. "Looks like the feller's rich, don't it?"

"Ef he's rich, what the tarnation blazes is he comin' here for?" demanded Nib Corkins, the dandy of the town. "I was over t' Huntingdon las' year, 'n' seen how the rich folks live. Boys, this h'ain't no place for a man with money."

"That depends," responded Cotting, gravely. "I'm sure we'd all be better off if we had a few real bloods here to squander their substance."

"Well, here's a perposal to squander, all right," said McNutt. "But the question is, Does he know what he's runnin' up agin', and what it'll cost to do all the idiotic things as he says?"

"Prob'ly not," answered the storekeeper.

"It's the best built farm house 'round thest parts," announced the miller, who had been silent until now. "Old Wegg were a sea-cap'n once, an' rich.

He dumped a lot o' money inter that place, an' never got it out agin', nuther."

"'Course not. Sixty acres o' cobble-stone don't pay much divvydends, that I ever hearn tell on," replied Seth.

"There's some good fruit, though," continued Caldwell, "an' the berries allus paid the taxes an' left a little besides. Ol' Hucks gits along all right."

"Jest lives, 'n' that's all."

"Well, thet's enough," said the miller. "It's about all any of us do, ain't it?"

"Do ye take it this 'ere Merrick's goin' to farm, er what?" asked Nib, speculatively.

"I take it he's plumb crazy," retorted the agent, rubbing the fringe of hair behind his ears. "One thing's certain boys, I don't do nuthin' foolish till I see the color of his money."

"Make him send you ten dollars in advance," suggested Seth.

"Make him send fifty," amended the store-keeper. "You can't buy a cow, an' pigs, an' chickens, an' make repairs on much less."

"By jinks, I will!" cried McNutt, slapping his leg for emphasis. "I'll strike him fer a cool fifty, an' if the feller don't pay he kin go to blazes. Them's my sentiments, boys, an' I'll stand by 'em!"

The others regarded him admiringly, so the energetic little man stumped away to indite his characteristic letter to Major Doyle.

If the first communication had startled the little village, the second fairly plunged it into a panic of excitement. Peggy's hand trembled as he held out the five hundred dollar draft and glared from it to his cronies with a white face.

"Suff'rin' Jehu!" gasped Nick Thorne. "Is it good?"

The paper was passed reverently around, and examined with a succession of dubious head-shakes.

"Send for Bob West," suggested Cotting. "He's seen more o' that sort o' money than any of us."

The widow Clarke's boy, who was present, ran breathlessly to fetch the hardware dealer, who answered the summons when he learned that Peggy McNutt had received a "check" for five hundred dollars.

West was a tall, lean man with shrewd eyes covered by horn spectacles and a stubby gray mustache. He was the potentate of the town and reputed to be worth, at a conservative estimate, in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars — "er more, fer that matter; fer Bob ain't tellin' his business to nobody." Hardware and implements were acknowledged to be paying merchandise, and West lent money on farm mortgages, besides. He was a quiet man, had a good library in his comfortable rooms over the store, and

took the only New York paper that found its way into Millville. After a glance at the remittance he said:

"It's a draft on Isham, Marvin & Company, the New York bankers. Good as gold, McNutt. Where did you get it?"

"A lunitic named John Merrick, him that's bought the Cap'n Wegg farm, sent it on. Here's his letter, Bob."

The hardware dealer read it carefully and gave a low whistle.

"There may be more than one John Merrick," he said, thoughtfully. "But I've heard of one who is many times a millionaire and a power in the financial world. What will you do for him, McNutt, to expend this money properly?"

"Bless't if I know!" answered the man, his eyes bulging with a helpless look. "What 'n thunder *kin* I do, Bob?"

West smiled.

"I don't wish to interfere in business matters," said he, "but it is plainly evident that the new owner wishes the farm house put into such shape that it will be comfortable for a man accustomed to modern luxuries. You don't know much about such things, Mac, and Mr. Merrick has made a blunder in employing your services in such a delicate matter. But do the best you can. Ride across to the Wegg place and look it over. Then get Taft, the carpenter, to fix up whatever is necessary. I'll sell you the lumber and nails, and you've got more money than you can probably use. Telegraph Mr. Merrick frankly how you find things; but remember the report must not be based upon your own mode of life but upon that of a man of wealth and refinement. Especially he must be posted about the condition of the furniture, which I can guess is ill-suited to his needs."

"How 'bout Hucks?" asked the agent.

They all hung eagerly on West's reply, for Old Hucks was a general favorite. The fact that the old retainer of the Weggs had a blind wife to whom he was tenderly devoted made the proposition of his leaving the farm one of intense interest. Old Hucks and his patient wife had not been so much "hired help" as a part of the Wegg establishment, and it was doubtful if they had ever received any wages. It was certain that Hucks had not a dollar in the world at the present time, and if turned out of their old home the ancient couple must either starve or go to the poorhouse.

"Say nothing further about Old Hucks or his wife to Mr. Merrick," advised West, gravely. "When the owner comes he will need servants, and Hucks is a very capable old fellow. Let that problem rest until the time comes for solution. If the old folks are to be turned out, make John Merrick do it; it will put the responsibility on his shoulders."

“By dum, yer right, Bob!” exclaimed McNutt. slapping the counter with his usual impulsiveness. “I’ll do the best I kin for the rich man, an’ let the poor man alone.”

After an examination of the farm house and other buildings (which seemed in his eyes almost palatial), and a conference with Alonzo Taft, the carpenter, the agent began to feel that his task was going to prove an easy one. He purchased a fine Jersey cow of Will Johnson, sold his own flock of Plymouth Rocks at a high price to Mr. Merrick, and hired Ned Long to work around the yard and help Hucks mow the grass and “clean up” generally.

But now his real trouble and bewilderment began. A carload of new furniture and “fixin’s” was sidetracked at the junction, and McNutt was ordered to get it unloaded and carted to the farm without delay. There were four hay-rack loads of the “truck,” altogether, and when it was all dumped into the big empty barn at the Wegg farm the poor agent had no idea what to do with it.

“See here,” said Nick Thorne, who had done the hauling, “you’ve got to let a woman inter this deal, Peggy.”

“That’s what my wife says, gum-twist her.”

“Keep yer ol’ woman out’n it. She’d spile a rotten apple.”

“Who then, Nick?”

“Why, school-teacher’s the right one, I guess. They’ve got a vacation now, an’ likely she’ll come over here an’ put things to rights. Peggy, that air new furniture’s the rambunctionest stuff thet ever come inter these parts, an’ it’ll make the ol’ house bloom like a rose in Spring. But folks like us hain’t got no call to tech it. You fetch school-teacher.”

Peggy sighed. He was keeping track of his time and charging John Merrick at the rate of two dollars a day, being firmly resolved to “make hay while the sun was shining” and absorb as much of the money placed in his hands as possible. To let “school-teacher” into this deal and be obliged to pay her wages was an undesirable thing to do; yet he reflected that it might be wise to adopt Nick Thorne’s suggestion.

So next morning he drove the liveryman’s sorrel mare out to Thompson’s Crossing, where the brick school-house stood on one corner and Will Thompson’s residence on another. A mile away could be seen the spires of the little church at Hooker’s Falls.

McNutt hitched his horse to Thompson’s post, walked up the neat pebbled path and knocked at the door.

“Ethel in?” he asked of the sad-faced woman who, after some delay, answered his summons.

“She’s in the garden, weedin’.”

“I’ll go ‘round,” said the agent.

The garden was a bower of roses. Among them stood a slender girl in a checked gingham, tying vines to a trellis.

“Morn’n’, Ethel,” said the visitor.

The girl smiled at him. She was not very pretty, because her face was long and wan, and her nose a bit one-sided. But her golden hair sparkled in the sun like a mass of spun gold, and the smile was winning in its unconscious sweetness. Surely, such attractions were enough for a mere country girl.

Ethel Thompson had, however, another claim to distinction. She had been “eddicated,” as her neighbors acknowledged in awed tones, and “took a diploma from a college school at Troy.” Young as she was, Ethel had taught school for two years, and might have a life tenure if she cared to retain the position. As he looked at her neat gown and noted the grace and ease of her movements the agent acknowledged that he had really “come to the right shop” to untangle his perplexing difficulties.

“New folks is comin’ to the Cap’n Wegg farm,” he announced, as a beginning.

She turned and looked at him queerly.

“Has Joe sold the place?” she asked.

“Near a year ago. Some fool rich man has bought it and is comin’ down here to spend his summer vacation, he says. Here, read his letters. They’ll explain it better ‘n I can.”

Her hand trembled a little as she took the letters McNutt pulled from his pocket. Then she sat upon a bench and read them all through. By that time she had regained her composure.

“The gentleman is somewhat eccentric,” she remarked; “but he will make no mistake in coming to this delightful place, if he wishes quiet and rest.”

“Don’t know what he’s after, I’m sure,” replied the man. “But he’s sent down enough furniture an’ truck to stock a hotel, an’ I want to know ef you’ll go over an’ put it in the rooms, an’ straighten things out.”

“Me!”

“Why, yes. You’ve lived in cities some, an’ know how citified things go. Con-twist it, Ethel, there’s things in the bunch that neither I ner Nick Thorne ever hearn tell of, much less knowin’ what they’re used for.”

The girl laughed.

“When are the folks coming?” she asked.

“When I git things in shape. They’ve sent some money down to pay fer what’s done, so you won’t have to work fer nuthin’.”

“I will, though,” responded the girl, in a cheery tone. “It will delight me to handle pretty things. Are Nora and Tom still there?”

“Oh, yes. I had orders to turn the Huckses out, ye see; but I didn’t do it.”

“I’m glad of that,” she returned, brightly “Perhaps we may arrange it so they can stay. Old Nora’s a dear.”

“But she’s blind.”

“She knows every inch of the Wegg house, and does her work more thoroughly than many who can see. When do you want me, Peggy?”

“Soon’s you kin come.”

“Then I’ll be over tomorrow morning.”

At that moment a wild roar, like that of a beast, came from the house. The sad faced woman ran down a passage; a door slammed, and then all was quiet again.

McNutt hitched uneasily from the wooden foot to the good one.

“How’s ol’ Will?” he enquired, in a low voice.

“Grandfather’s about as usual,” replied the girl, with trained composure.

“Still crazy as a bedbug?”

“At times he becomes a bit violent; but those attacks never last long.”

“Don’t s’pose I could see him?” ventured the agent, still in hesitating tones.

“Oh, no; he has seen no visitor since Captain Wegg died.”

“Well, good-bye, Ethel. See you at the farm in the mornin’.”

The girl sat for a long time after McNutt had driven away, seemingly lost in revery.

“Poor Joe!” she sighed, at last. “Poor, foolish Joe. I wonder what has become of him?”

CHAPTER IV.

ETHEL MAKES PREPARATION.

The Wegg homestead stood near the edge of a thin forest of pines through which Little Bill Creek wound noisily on its way to the lake. At the left was a slope on which grew a neglected orchard of apple and pear trees, their trunks rough and gnarled by the struggle to outlive many severe winters. There was a rude, rocky lane in front, separated from the yard by a fence of split pine rails, but the ground surrounding the house was rich enough to grow a profusion of June grass.

The farm was of very little value. Back of the yard was a fairly good berry patch, but aside from that some two acres of corn and a small strip of timothy represented all that was fertile of the sixty acres the place contained.

But the house itself was the most imposing dwelling for many miles around. Just why that silent old sea-dog, Jonas Wegg, had come into this secluded wilderness to locate was a problem the Millville people had never yet solved. Certainly it was with no idea of successfully farming the land he had acquired, for half of it was stony and half covered by pine forest. But the house he constructed was the wonder of the country-side in its day. It was a big, two-story building, the lower half being "jest cobblestones," as the neighbors sneeringly remarked, while the upper half was "decent pine lumber." The lower floor of this main building consisted of a single room with a great cobble-stone fireplace in the center of the rear wall and narrow, prison-like windows at the front and sides. There was a small porch in front, with a great entrance door of carved dark wood of a foreign look, which the Captain had brought from some port in Massachusetts. A stair in one corner of the big living room led to the second story, where four large bed-chambers were arranged. These had once been plastered and papered, but the wall-paper had all faded into dull, neutral tints and in one of the rooms a big patch of plaster had fallen away from the ceiling, showing the bare lath. Only one of the upstairs rooms had ever been furnished, and it now contained a corded wooden bedstead, a cheap pine table and one broken-legged chair. Indeed, the main building, which I have briefly described, had not been in use for many years. Sometimes, when Captain Wegg was alive, he would build a log fire in the great fireplace on a winter's evening and sit before it in silent mood until far into the night. And once, when his young wife had first occupied the new house, the big room had acquired a fairly cosy and comfortable appearance. But it had always been sparsely furnished, and most of the decadent furniture that now littered it was useless and unlovely.

The big wooden lean-to at the back, and the right wing, were at this time

the only really habitable parts of the mansion. The lean-to had an entrance from the living room, but Old Hucks and Nora his wife used the back door entirely. It consisted of a large and cheerful kitchen and two rooms off it, one used as a store room and the other as a sleeping chamber for the aged couple.

The right wing was also constructed of cobble-stone, and had formerly been Captain Wegg's own chamber. After his death his only child, Joe, then a boy of sixteen, had taken possession of his father's room; but after a day or two he had suddenly quitted the house where he was born and plunged into the great outside world — to seek his fortune, it was said. Decidedly there was no future for the boy here; in the cities lurks opportunity.

When Ethel Thompson arrived in the early morning that followed her interview with McNutt she rode her pony through the gap in the rail fence, across the June grass, and around to the back door. On a bench beside the pump an old woman sat shelling peas. Her form was thin but erect and her hair snowy white. She moved with alertness, and as the girl dismounted and approached her she raised her head and turned a pleasant face with deep-set, sightless gray eyes upon her visitor.

"Good morning, Ethel, dear," she said. "I knew the pony's whinney. You're up early today."

"Good morning, Nora," responded the schoolteacher, advancing to kiss the withered cheek. "Are you pretty well?"

"In body, dear. In mind both Tom 'n' me's pretty bad. I s'pose we couldn't 'a 'spected to stay here in peace forever; but the blow's come suddin-like, an' it hurts us."

"Where is Tom?"

"In the barn, lookin' over all the won'erful things the rich nabob has sent here. He says most things has strips o' wood nailed over 'em; but some hasn't; an' Tom looks 'em over keerful an' then tells me 'bout 'em. He's gone to take another look at a won'erful new cook-stove, so's he kin describe it to me right pertickler."

"Is he worried, Nora?"

"We's both worried, Ethel. Our time's come, an' no mistake. Peggy McNutt says as he had real orders to turn Hucks out if he was a married man; an' there's no disclaimin' he's married, is there? Peggy's a kind man, an' tol' us to keep stayin' 'til the nabobs arrove. Then I guess we'll git our walkin'-papers, mighty quick."

"I'm not sure of that," said the girl, thoughtfully. "They must be hard-hearted, indeed, to turn you out into the world; and you are both capable people, and would serve the city folks faithfully and well."

"It's my eyes," replied the other, in a simple, matter-of-fact tone. "Hucks

might wait on the nabobs all right, but they won't tol'rate a blind woman a minute, I'm sure. An' Hucks 'd ruther be with me in the poor-house than to let me go alone."

"Right y' air, Nora girl!" cried a merry voice, and as the blind woman looked up with a smile Ethel turned around to face "Old Hucks."

A tall man, but much bent at the shoulders and limping in one leg from an old hurt aggravated by rheumatism. His form was as gnarled as the tree-trunks in the apple-orchard, and twisted almost as fantastically. But the head, uplifted from the stooped shoulders and held a little to one side, was remarkable enough to attract attention. It had scanty white locks and a fringe of white whiskers under the chin, and these framed a smiling face and features that were extremely winning in expression. No one could remember ever seeing Old Hucks when he was not smiling, and the expression was neither set nor inane, but so cheery and bright that you were tempted to smile with him, without knowing why. For dress he wore a much patched pair of woolen trousers and a "hickory" shirt of faded blue, with rough top boots and a dilapidated straw hat that looked as if it might have outlived several generations.

As Ethel greeted the man she looked him over carefully and sighed at the result; for certainly, as far as personal appearances went, he seemed as unlikely a person to serve a "nabob" as could well be imagined. But the girl knew Thomas' good points, and remembering them, took courage.

"If the worst comes," she said, brightly, "you are both to come to us to live. I've arranged all that with grandmother, you know. But I'm not much afraid of your being obliged to leave here. From all accounts this Mr. Merrick is a generous and free-hearted man, and I've discovered that strangers are not likely to be fearsome when you come to know them. The unknown always makes us childishly nervous, you see, and then we forget it's wrong to borrow trouble."

"True's gospil," said Old Hucks. "To know my Nora is to love her. Ev'body loves Nora. An' the good Lord He's took'n care o' us so long, it seems like a sort o' sacrelidge to feel that all thet pretty furn'ture in the barn spells on'y poor-house to us. Eh, Ethel?"

McNutt arrived just then, with big Ned Long, Lon Taft the carpenter, and Widow Clark, that lady having agreed to "help with the cleanin'." She didn't usually "work out," but was impelled to this task as much through curiosity to see the new furniture as from desire to secure the wages.

At once the crowd invaded the living room, and after a glance around Ethel ordered every bit of the furniture, with the exception of two antique but comfortable horse-hair sofas, carried away to the barn and stored in the loft.

It did not take long to clear the big room, and then the Widow Clark swept out and began to scrub the floor and woodwork, while school-teacher took her men into the right wing and made another clearing of its traps.

This room interested the girl very much. In it Joe was born and frail Mrs. Wegg and her silent husband had both passed away. It had two broad French windows with sash doors opening on to a little porch of its own which was covered thickly with honeysuckle vines. A cupboard was built into a niche of the thick cobble-stone wall, but it was locked and the key was missing.

Upstairs the girl had the rubbish removed for the first time in a generation. The corded bedstead in the north room was sent to join its fellows in the barn loft, and Ned Long swept everything clean in readiness for the scrubbers.

Then, while Widow Clark and Nora cleaned industriously — for the blind woman insisted on helping and did almost as much work as her companion — the "men folks" proceeded to the barn and under the school-teacher's directions uncrated the new furniture and opened the bales of rugs and matting. Lon Taft was building new steps to the front porch, but Old Hucks and Ned and McNutt reverently unpacked the "truck" and set each piece carefully aside. How they marveled at the enameled beds and colored wicker furniture, the easy chairs for lounging, the dainty dressers and all the innumerable pretty things discovered in boxes, bales and barrels, you may well imagine. Even Ethel was amazed and delighted at the thoughtfulness of the dealer in including everything that might be useful or ornamental in a summer home.

The next few days were indeed busy ones, for the girl entered enthusiastically upon her task to transform the old house, and with the material John Merrick had so amply provided she succeeded admirably. The little maid was country bred, but having seen glimpses of city life and possessing much native good taste, she arranged the rooms so charmingly that they would admit of scant improvement. The big living room must serve as a dining room as well as parlor; but so spacious was it that such an arrangement proved easy. No especial furniture for the living room had been provided, but by stealing a few chairs and odd pieces from the ample supply provided for the bedrooms, adding the two quaint sofas and the upright piano and spreading the rugs in an artistic fashion, Ethel managed to make the "parlor part" of the room appear very cosy. The dining corner had a round table and high-backed chairs finished in weathered oak, and when all was in order the effect was not inharmonious. Some inspiration had induced Mr. Merrick to send down a batch of eighteen framed pictures, procured at a bargain but from a reliable dealer. He thought they might "help out," and Ethel knew they would, for the walls of the old house were quite bare of

ornament. She made them go as far as possible, and Old Hucks, by this time thoroughly bewildered, hung them where she dictated and made laughable attempts to describe the subjects to blind Nora.

A telegram, telephoned over from the junction, announced the proposed arrival of the party on Thursday morning, and the school-teacher was sure that everything would be in readiness at that time. The paint on Lon's repairs would be dry, the grass in the front yard was closely cropped, and the little bed of flowers between the corn-crib and the wood-shed was blooming finely. The cow was in the stable, the pigs in the shed, and the Plymouth Rocks strutted over the yard with an absurd assumption of pride.

Wednesday Ethel took Old Hucks over to Millville and bought for him from Sam Cotting a new suit of dark gray "store clothes," together with shirts, shoes and underwear. She made McNutt pay the bill with John Merrick's money, agreeing to explain the case to "the nabob" herself, and back up the agent in the unauthorized expenditure. Nora had a new gingham dress, too, which the girl had herself provided, and on Thursday morning Ethel was at the Wegg farm bright and early to see the old couple properly attired to receive their new master. She also put a last touch to the pretty furniture and placed vases of her own roses and sweet peas here and there, to render the place homelike and to welcome the expected arrivals.

"If they don't like it," said the girl, smiling, "they're rather hard to please."

"They're sure to like it, dear," answered old Nora, touching with sensitive fingers the flowers, the books and the opened piano. "If they don't, they're heretics an' sinners, an' there's no good in 'em whatever."

Then the little school-teacher bade good-bye to Hucks and his wife, told them to keep brave hearts, and rode her pony cross-lots to Thompson's Crossing.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE NABOBS.

"Well," said Uncle John, looking out of the car window, "we're nearly there."

He didn't look the millionaire, or nabob, or anything else but a modest little man full of joy at getting into the country. His clothing was not distinctive of wealth, his hands were hard and roughened by years of toil, and his necktie had a plebeian trick of sliding under his left ear. Uncle John was just a plain, simple, good-hearted fellow before he acquired riches, and the possession of millions had in no way altered his nature.

The three nieces and himself were the only passengers in the coach, aside from rosy-cheeked Mary, Patricia's cook. Finding that the road did not run a sleeper to Chazy Junction, Mr. Merrick had ordered one attached to the train for his especial use; but he did not allow even Patsy to suspect this extravagance.

"It seems to me," observed Beth, as she peered out while the train puffed up the steep grade, "as if we'd arrived at the heart of a wilderness, where farms are likely to be as scarce as Egyptian temples."

"The truth is," replied her uncle, with a cheerful smile, "that none of us has an idea where we're going, or what that farm of mine looks like. We're explorers, like Stanley in mid-Africa. That's the beauty of this excursion."

"I'm glad I didn't bring any party dresses," said dainty Louise, shaking her blonde head with a doubting expression toward the rock covered hills.

"Why, you might need them for hay-rides," remarked Patsy, with a laugh; "that is, if any hay grows in this land of quarries."

The train stopped with a jerk, started with another jerk, and stopped again with a third that made them catch their breaths and hold fast to the seats.

"Chazy Junction, seh," said the colored porter, entering in haste to seize their bags.

They alighted on a small wooden platform and their hand baggage was deposited beside them. Their trunks were being tumbled off a car far ahead.

Then the whistle screamed, the train gave a jerk and proceeded on its way, and Uncle John, his nieces and their maid, found themselves confronting a solitary man in shirtsleeves, who yawned languidly, thrust his hands in his pockets and stared at the strangers unmoved.

It was six o'clock. The July sun was set in a clear sky, but the air was cool and pleasant. Uncle John glanced around with the eye of a practiced traveler. Back of the station was a huddle of frame buildings set in a hollow. The station-tender was the only person in sight.

“Isn’t there a carriage to meet us?” asked Louise, in a slightly frigid tone.

“Seems not,” replied her uncle. Then he addressed the native. “Can you tell us, sir, where Millville is?” he asked.

“Sev’n mile up the road.”

“Thank you kindly. Is there any carriage to be had?”

The man smiled sardonically.

“Kerridges,” he said, “don’t grow in these parts. I take it you be the party fer the Wegg farm.”

“You’re right,” said Mr. Merrick. “I’m glad we are getting acquainted. Folks all well?”

“Pretty fair.”

“Now, sir, we want some breakfast, to begin with, and then some way to get to my farm.”

“Peggy orter ‘a’ looked after you,” remarked the man, eyeing the dainty gowns of the young ladies reflectively.

“Who’s Peggy?”

“That’s McNutt, the man you hired to do things.”

“Ah, yes; he surely ought to have sent some sort of a team to meet us,” agreed Uncle John. “What’s that group of houses yonder?”

“Thet’s the Junction.”

“Any hotel?”

“Sure.”

“And a livery stable?”

“‘Course there is.”

“Then we’ll get along,” said Uncle John, assuming a sudden brisk manner.
“Just keep your eye on our baggage till we get back, my good fellow. There are no people to interfere with it, but some bears or tigers might come out of the hills and eat it up. Now, girls, away we go!”

Uncle John’s nieces were not so greatly dismayed at this experience as might have been expected. They had recently accompanied their erratic relative on a European trip and had learned to be patient under difficulties.

A quarter of a mile down the dusty road they came to the hotel, a dismal, unclean looking place that smelled of stale beer. Uncle John routed out the proprietor.

“Folks up?” he inquired.

“Long ago,” said the man.

“Get us some boiled eggs, bread and butter and plenty of fresh milk — right away,” ordered Mr. Merrick. “The quicker it comes the more I’ll pay you. Bring a table out here on the porch and we’ll eat in the open air.

Where's the livery stable — eh? Oh, I see. Now, step lively, my man, and your fortune's made. I'll add a quarter of a dollar for every five minutes you save us in time."

The fellow stared, then woke up with a start and disappeared within.

"By gum, I'll bet a hen it's thet air nabob!" he muttered.

Leaving his girls and Mary to sit on the wooden benches of the porch Uncle John crossed the road to the livery stable, where he discovered a man and a boy engaged in cleaning the half dozen sorry looking nags the establishment contained. A three-seated democrat wagon was engaged to carry the party to the Wegg farm at Millville, and a rickety lumber wagon would take the baggage. The liveryman recognized his customer as soon as the Wegg farm was mentioned, and determined to "do the city guy up brown."

"Road's bad an' up hill, an' my time's vallyble," he said in a surly voice. "I'll hev to charge ye three dollars."

"For what?" asked Uncle John, quietly.

"Fer the two teams to Millville."

"Get them harnessed right away, load up the baggage, and have the democrat at the hotel in twenty minutes. Here's five dollars, and if you'll look pleasant you may keep the change."

"Blame my thick skull!" muttered the livery-man, as he watched the little man depart. "What a cussed fool I were not to say four dollars instead o' three!"

But he called to his boy to hurry up, and in the stipulated time the teams were ready.

Uncle John and his nieces were just finishing their eggs, which were fresh and delicious. The milk was also a revelation. Through the windows of the hotel several frowsy looking women and an open mouthed boy were staring hard at the unconscious city folk.

Even Louise was in a mood for laughter as they mounted to the high seats of the democrat. The glorious air, the clear sunshine and a satisfactory if simple breakfast had put them all in a good humor with the world.

They stopped at the station for their hand baggage, and saw that the trunks were properly loaded on the lumber wagon. Then, slowly, they started to mount the long hill that began its incline just across the tracks.

"Sure this is the way?" inquired Uncle John, perched beside the driver.

"I were horned here," answered the man, conclusively.

"That seems to settle it. Pretty big hill, that one ahead of us."

"It's the Little Bill. When we cross it, we're at Millville."

Seven miles of desolate country could not dampen the spirits of the girls.

Secretly each one was confident that Uncle John's unknown farm would prove to be impossible, and that in a day or so at the latest they would retrace their steps. But in the meantime the adventure was novel and interesting, and they were prepared to accept the inevitable with all graciousness.

When, after the long climb up the hill, they saw the quaint mill and the town lying just across rushing Little Bill Creek; when from their elevation they beheld the placid lake half hidden by its stately pines and gazed up the rugged and picturesque foot-hills to the great mountains beyond, then indeed they drew in deep breaths and began, as Patsy exclaimed, to be "glad they came."

"That Millville?" asked Uncle John, eagerly.

"Yes, sir."

"And which of those houses belongs to the Wegg farm?"

"Ye can't see the Wegg house from here; the pines hide it," said the man, urging his horses into a trot as they approached the bridge.

"Pretty good farm?" inquired Uncle John, hopefully.

"Worst in the county," was the disconcerting reply. "Half rocks an' half trees. Ol' Cap'n Wegg wasn't no farmer. He were a sea-cap'n; so it's no wonder he got took in when he bought the place."

Uncle John sighed.

"I've just bought it myself," he observed.

"There's a ol' addige," said the man, grinning, "'bout a fool an' his money. The house is a hunker; but w'at's the use of a house without a farm?"

"What is a 'hunker,' please?" inquired Louise, curiously.

The liveryman ventured no reply, perhaps because he was guiding his horses over the rickety bridge.

"Want to stop at the village?" he asked.

"No; drive on to the farm."

The scene was so rude and at the same time so picturesque that it impressed them all very agreeably. Perhaps they were the more delighted because they had expected nothing admirable in this all but forsaken spot. They did not notice the people who stared after them as they rattled through the village, or they would have seen Uncle John's "agent" in front of his office, his round eyes fairly bulging from his head.

It had never occurred to McNutt to be at the Junction to welcome his patron. He had followed his instructions and set Mr. Merrick's house in order, and there he considered that his duty ended. He would, of course, call on the nabob, presently, and render an account of the money he had received.

Sam Cotting, the store-keeper, gazed after the livery team with a sour countenance, he resented the fact that five big-boxes of groceries had been

forwarded from the city to the Wegg farm. “What’n thunder’s the use havin’ city folks here, ef they don’t buy nothin’?” he asked the boys; and they agreed it was no use at all.

Proceeding at a smart trot the horses came to the Pearson farm, where they turned into the Jane at the left and straightway subsided to a slow walk, the wheels bumping and jolting over the stony way.

“What’s this?” exclaimed Uncle John, who had narrowly escaped biting his tongue through and through. “Why did you turn down here?”

“It’s the road,” returned the driver, with a chuckle; “it’s the cobble-stone lane to yer farm, an’ the farm’s ‘bout the same sort o’ land as the lane.”

For a few moments the passengers maintained a dismal silence.

“The country’s lovely,” said Patsy, glancing at the panorama as they mounted a slight elevation.

“Are you sure, Uncle, that there is a house, or any place of refuge, on your farm?” asked Louise, in a mischievous tone.

“Why, there’s a rumor of a house, and the rumor says it’s a hunker,” replied Mr. Merrick, in a voice that betrayed a slight uneasiness.

“Doubtless the house matches the farm,” said Beth, calmly. “I imagine it has two rooms and a leaky roof. But never mind, girls. This has been a pleasant trip, and we can seek shelter elsewhere if the worst comes to the worst.”

“I guess the worst has come a’ready,” observed the driver; “for the house is by odds the best part o’ the Wegg farm. It’s big enough fer a hotel, an’ cost a lot o’ money in its day. Seems like the lunatics all crowd to thet place — fust ol’ Cap’n Wegg wasted of his substance on it, an’ now — — ”

He paused, perhaps fearing he might become personal in his remarks, and Uncle John coughed while the girls shrieked with laughter.

Expecting nothing, they were amazed when they passed the orchard and the group of pines that had concealed the house and suddenly drew up beside the old-fashioned stile built into the rail fence. Every eye was instantly upon the quaint, roomy mansion, the grassy sward extending between it and the road, and the cosy and home-like setting of the outbuildings.

“Here’s Wegg’s,” said the liveryman.

“Oh, Uncle,” cried Beth; “how lovely!”

Louise’s pretty face was wreathed with smiles. Patsy drew in a long breath and scrambled out of the high seat.

On the corner of the front porch stood Nora, arrayed in her neat gray gown and a cap. Her face was composed, but she felt herself trembling a little.

Old Hucks came slowly down the steps to greet the company. Never in his

memory had his dress been so immaculate. The queer old fellow seemed to appreciate this as he raised his smiling face from the stooped shoulders and poised it on one side like a sparrow.

"Welcome home, sir," he said to Uncle John. "I'm Hucks, sir; Thomas Hucks," and without more words he proceeded to remove the satchels from the wagon.

"Ah, yes," returned Mr. Merrick, cheered by the welcome and the smile of the old man. "I'd forgotten about you, but I'm glad you're here."

"And that is my wife Nora, on the porch. She's the housekeeper, sir." And then, lowering his voice so that only the girls and Uncle John could hear, he added simply: "She's blind."

Patsy walked straight up to the eager, pathetic figure of the woman and took her hand in a warm clasp.

"I'm Patricia, Nora," she said, "and I'm sure we shall be friends."

Beth followed her cousin's lead.

"And I am Beth, Nora. Will you remember me?"

"Surely, miss; by your voice," returned the old woman, beaming delightedly at these evidences of kindliness.

"Here is another, Nora," said their cousin, in gentle tones. "I am Louise."

"Three young and pretty girls, Nora; and as good as they are pretty," announced Uncle John, proudly. "Will you show us in, Thomas, or will your wife?"

"Nora will take the young ladies to their rooms, sir."

"Not now, Uncle!" they all protested, in nearly identical words; and Louise added: "Let us drink in the delights of this pretty picture before we shut ourselves up in the stuffy rooms. I hope they've been aired."

Patsy ran to a chicken-coop on the side lawn, where a fussy hen was calling to her children that strangers had arrived. Beth exclaimed at the honeysuckle vines and Louise sank into a rustic chair with a sigh of content.

"I'm so glad you brought us here. Uncle," she said. "What a surprise it is to find the place so pretty!"

They could hear the rush of the Little Bill in the wood behind them and a soft breeze stirred the pines and wafted their fragrance to the nostrils of the new arrivals. Uncle John squatted on the shady steps and fairly beamed upon the rustic scene spread out before him. Patsy had now thrown aside her hat and jacket and lay outstretched upon the cool grass, while the chickens eyed her with evident suspicion. Beth was picking a bouquet of honeysuckles, just because they were so sweet and homely.

"I'm almost sure I sent some hammocks and a croquet set," remarked

Uncle
John.

“They’re here, sir,” said Old Hucks, who had watched each one with his persistent smile and now stood awaiting his new master’s commands. “But we didn’t know jest where ye wanted ‘em put.”

Mary came out. She had taken off her things and donned her white apron.

“The house is quite wonderful, Mr. Merrick,” she said. “There is everything we can possibly need, and all as neat as wax.”

The report stirred the girls to explore. They all trooped into the big living room and were at once captivated by its charm. Nora led them upstairs to their chambers, finding the way as unerringly as if she possessed perfect vision, and here a new chorus of delight was evoked.

“The blue room is mine!” cried Louise.

“Mine is the pink room,” said Beth.

“And I choose the white room,” declared Patsy. “The Major’s is just next, and it will please him because it is all green and gold. But where will Uncle John room?”

“The master will use the right wing,” said old Nora, who had listened with real pleasure to the exclamations of delight. “It were Cap’n Wegg’s room, ye know, an’ we’ve fitted it all new.”

Indeed, Uncle John was at that moment inspecting his apartment, and he sighed contentedly as he congratulated himself upon his foresight in sending down the furnishings on the chance of their being needed. They had effected a complete transformation of the old house.

But who had arranged everything? Surely the perfect taste and dainty touch evidenced everywhere was not to be attributed to blind Nora. The little man was thoughtful as he turned to Old Hucks.

“Who did it, Thomas?” he asked.

“Miss Ethel, sir; the school-ma’am.”

“Oh. A city girl?”

“No, sir. Crazy Will Thompson’s granddaughter. She lives ‘bout nine mile away.”

“Is she here now?”

“Went home this mornin’, sir. It were a great pleasure to her, she said, an’ she hoped as how you’d like everything, an’ be happy here.”

Undo John nodded.

“We must call on that girl,” he remarked. “We owe her a good deal, I imagine, and she’s entitled to our grateful thanks.”

CHAPTER VI.

PEGGY PRESENTS HIS BILL.

Millville waited in agonized suspense for three days for tangible evidence that "the nabob was in their midst," as Nib Corkins poetically expressed it; but the city folks seemed glued to the farm and no one of them had yet appeared in the village. As a matter of fact, Patsy and Uncle John were enthusiastically fishing in the Little Bill, far up in the pine woods, and having "the time of their lives" in spite of their scant success in capturing trout. Old Hucks could go out before breakfast and bring in an ample supply of speckled beauties for Mary to fry; but Uncle John's splendid outfit seemed scorned by the finny folk, and after getting her dress torn in sundry places and a hook in the fleshy part of her arm Patsy learned to seek shelter behind a tree whenever her uncle cast his fly. But they reveled in the woods, and would lie on the bank for hours listening to the murmur of the brook and the songs of the birds.

The temper of the other two girls was different. Beth De Graf had brought along an archery outfit, and she set up her target on the ample green the day following her arrival. Here she practiced persistently, shooting at sixty yards with much skill. But occasionally, when Louise tired of her novel and her cushions in the hammock, the two girls would play tennis or croquet together — Beth invariably winning.

Such delightful laziness could brook no interference for the first days of their arrival, and it was not until Peggy McNutt ventured over on Monday morning for a settlement with Mr. Merrick that any from the little world around them dared intrude upon the dwellers at the Wegg farm.

Although the agent had been late in starting from Millville and Nick Thorne's sorrel mare had walked every step of the way, Peggy was obliged to wait in the yard a good half hour for the "nabob" to finish his breakfast. During that time he tried to decide which of the two statements of accounts that he had prepared he was most justified in presenting. He had learned from the liveryman at the Junction that Mr. Merrick had paid five dollars for a trip that was usually made for two, and also that the extravagant man had paid seventy-five cents more to Lucky Todd, the hotel keeper, than his bill came to. The knowledge of such reckless expenditures had fortified little McNutt in "marking up" the account of the money he had received, and instead of charging two dollars a day for his own services, as he had at first intended, he put them down at three dollars a day — and made the days stretch as much as possible. Also he charged a round commission on the wages of Lon Taft and Ned Long, and doubled the liveryman's bill for hauling the goods over from

the Junction. Ethel Thompson had refused to accept any payment for what she had done, but Peggy bravely charged it up at good round figures. When the bill was made out and figured up it left him a magnificent surplus for his private account; but at the last his heart failed him, and he made out another bill more modest in its extortions. He had brought them both along, though, one in each pocket, vacillating between them as he thought first of the Merrick millions and then of the righteous anger he might incur. By the time Uncle John came out to him, smiling and cordial, he had not thoroughly made up his mind which account to present.

"I must thank you for carrying out my orders so intelligently," began the millionaire. "Without your assistance I might have found things in bad shape, I fear."

McNutt was reassured. The nabob would stand for bill No. 1, without a doubt.

"I tried fer to do my best, sir," he said.

"And you did very well," was the reply. "I hope you kept your expenditures well within bounds?"

The agent's heart sank at the question and the shrewd, alert look that accompanied it. Even millionaires do not allow themselves to be swindled, if they can help it. Bill No. 2 would be stiff enough; he might even have to knock a few dollars off from that.

"Most things is high in Millville," he faltered, "an' wages has gone up jest terr'ble. The boys don't seem to wanter do nuthin' without big pay."

"That is the case everywhere," responded Mr. Merrick, thoughtfully; "and between us, McNutt, I'm glad wages are better in these prosperous times. The man who works by the day should be well paid, for he has to pay well for his living. Adequately paid labor is the foundation of all prosperity."

Peggy smiled cheerfully. He was glad he had had the forethought to bring Bill No. 1 along with him.

"Hosses is high, too," he remarked, complacently, "an' lumber an' nails is up. As fer the live-stock I bought fer ye, I found I had to pay like sixty for it."

"I suppose they overcharged you because a city man wanted the animals. But of course you would not allow me to be robbed."

"Oh, 'course not, Mr. Merrick!"

"And that nag in the stable is a sorry old beast."

Peggy was in despair. Why in the world hadn't he charged for "the beast"? As it was now too late to add it to the bill he replied, grudgingly:

"The hoss you mention belongs to the place, sir. It went with the farm, 'long o' Old Hucks an' Nora."

“I’m glad you reminded me of those people,” said Uncle John, seriously. “Tell me their history.”

Louise sauntered from the house, at this juncture, and sank gracefully upon the grass at her uncle’s feet. She carried a book, but did not open it.

“Ain’t much to tell, sir, ‘bout them folks,” replied the agent. “Cap’n Wegg brung the Huckses with him when he settled here. Wegg were a sea-cap’n, ye see, an’ when he retired he Wanted to git as far from the sea’s he could.”

“That was strange. A sailor usually loves to be near salt water all his days,” observed Uncle John.

“Wall, Wegg he were diff’rent. He come here when I were a boy, bringin’ a sad-faced young woman an’ Ol’ Hucks an’ Nora. I s’pose Hucks were a sailor, too, though he never says nuthin’ ‘bout that. The Cap’n bought this no’count farm an’ had this house built on it — a proceedin’ that, ef I do say it, struck ev’rybody as cur’ous.”

“It *was* curious,” agreed Mr. Merrick.

“But the cur’ous’est thing was thet he didn’t make no ‘tempt at farmin’. Folks said he had money to burn, fer he loaded it into this fool house an’ then sot down an’ smoked all day an’ looked glum. Ol’ Hucks planted the berry patch an’ looked arter the orchard an’ the stock; but Cap’n Wegg on’y smoked an’ sulked. People at Millville was glad to leave him alone, an’ the on’y friend he ever had were crazy Will Thompson.”

“Crazy?”

“As a loon.” The agent hitched uneasily on the lawn bench, where he was seated, and then continued, hastily: “But thet ain’t neither here ner there. A baby was born arter a time, an’ while he was young the sad-faced mother sickened an’ died. Cap’n Wegg give her a decent fun’ral an’ went right on smokin’ his pipe an’ sulkin’, same as ever. Then he — he — died,” rather lamely, “an’ Joe — thet’s the boy — bein’ then about sixteen, dug out ‘n’ run away. We hain’t seen him sense.”

“Nice boy?” asked Uncle John.

“Joe were pretty well liked here, though he had a bit o’ his dad’s sulkiness. He ‘n’ Ethel Thompson — crazy Will’s gran’daughter — seemed like to make up together; but even she don’t know what drav him off — ’nless it were the Cap’n’s suddint death — ner where he went to.”

Uncle John seemed thoughtful, but asked no more questions, and McNutt appeared to be relieved that he refrained. But the bill ought to be forthcoming now, and the agent gave a guilty start as his patron remarked:

“I want to settle with you for what you have done. I’m willing to pay a liberal price, you understand, but I won’t submit to being robbed outrageously by you or any of your Millville people.”

This was said so sternly that it sent McNutt into an ague of terror. He fumbled for the smallest bill, tremblingly placed it in Mr. Merrick's hand, and then with a thrill of despair realized he had presented the dreadful No. 1!

"It's — it's — a — 'count of what I spent out," he stammered.

Uncle John ran his eye over the bill.

"What are Plymouth Rocks?" he demanded.

"He — hens, sir."

"Hens at a dollar apiece?"

"Thoroughbreds, sir. Extry fine stock. I raised 'em myself."

"H-m. You've charged them twice."

"Eh?"

"Here's an item: 'Twelve Plymouth Rocks, twelve dollars;' and farther down: 'Twelve Plymouth Rocks, eighteen dollars.'"

"Oh, yes; o' course. Ye see, I sold you a dozen first, of the dollar kind. Then I thought as how, bein' fine young birds, you'd be tempted fer to eat 'em, an' a dozen don't go fur on the table. So I up an' sold ye another dozen, extry ol' stock an' remarkable high-bred, fer a dollar-an'-a-half each. Which is dirt cheap because they's too old to eat an' jest right fer layers."

"Are they here?"

"Every one of 'em."

"Very good. I'm glad to have them. The cow seems reasonably priced, for a Jersey."

"It is. Jest extror'nary!" exclaimed Peggy, reassured.

"And your people have all done work of an unusual character in a painstaking manner. I am very much pleased. There seems to be a hundred and forty dollars my due, remaining from the five hundred I sent you."

"Here it is, sir," responded McNutt, taking the money from his pocket-book. In another place he had more money, which he had intended to pay if the smaller bill had been presented.

Uncle John took the money.

"You are an honest fellow, McNutt," said he. "I hadn't expected a dollar back, for folks usually take advantage of a stranger if he gives them half a chance. So I thank you for your honesty as well as for your services. Good morning."

The agent was thoroughly ashamed of himself. To be "sech a duffer" as to return that money, when by means of a little strategy he might have kept it, made him feel both humiliated and indignant. A hundred and forty dollars; When would he have a chance to get such a windfall again? Pah! he was a fool — to copy his identical thoughts: "a gol dum blithering idjit!"

All the way home he reflected dismally upon his lack of business

foresight, and strove to plan ways to get money “out’n thet easy mark.”

“Didn’t the man rob you, Uncle?” asked Louise, when the agent had disappeared.

“Yes, dear; but I wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of knowing I realized it.”

“That was what I thought. By the way, that Wegg history seems both romantic and unusual,” she said, musingly. “Don’t you scent some mystery in what the man said of it?”

“Mystery!” cried Uncle John. “Lordy, no, Louise. You’ve been readin’ too many novels. Romances don’t grow in parts like these.”

“But I think this is where they are most likely to grow, Uncle,” persisted the girl, “just consider. A retired sea captain hides inland, with no companions but a grinning sailor and his blind housekeeper — except his pale wife, of course; and she is described as sad and unhappy. Who was she, do you think?”

“I don’t think,” said Uncle John, smiling and patting the fair check of his niece. “And it don’t matter who she was.”

“I’m sure it does. It is the key to the whole mystery. Even her baby could not cheer the poor thing’s broken heart. Even the fine house the Captain built failed to interest her. She pined away and died, and — — ”

“And that finished the romance, Louise.”

“Oh, no; that added to its interest. The boy grew up in this dismal place and brooded on his mother’s wrongs. His stern, sulky old father died suddenly. Was he murdered?” in a low voice; “did the son revenge his mother’s wrongs?”

“Figglepiff, Louise! You’re getting theatric — and so early in the morning, too! Want to saddle my new farm with a murder, do you? Well, it’s rubbish. Joe Wegg ran away from here to get busy in the world. Major Doyle helped him with my money, in exchange for this farm, which the boy was sensible to get rid of — although I’m glad it’s now mine. The Major liked Joe Wegg, and says he’s a clean-cut, fine young feller. He’s an inventor, too, even if an unlucky one, and I’ve no doubt he’ll make his way in the world and become a good citizen.”

With these words Uncle John arose and sauntered around to the barn, to look at the litter of new pigs that just then served to interest and amuse him. The girl remained seated upon the grass, her hands clasped over her knee and a look of deep retrospection upon her face.

CHAPTER VII.

LOUISE SCENTS A MYSTERY.

Louise Merrick was the eldest of Uncle John's nieces, having just passed her eighteenth birthday. In the city she was devoted to the requirements of fashionable society and — urged thereto by her worldly-minded mother — led a mere butterfly existence. Her two cousins frankly agreed that Louise was shallow, insincere and inclined to be affected; but of the three girls she displayed the most equable and pleasant disposition and under the most trying circumstances was composed and charming in manner. For this reason she was an agreeable companion, and men usually admired her graceful figure and her piquant, pretty face with its crown of fluffy blonde hair and winning expression. There was a rumor that she was engaged to be married to Arthur Weldon, a young man of position in the city; but Uncle John ignored the possibility of losing one of his cherished nieces and declared that Louise was still too young to think of marriage.

When away from her frivolous mother and the inconsequent home environments the girl was more unaffected and natural in her ways, and her faults were doubtless more the result of education than of natural tendency.

One thing was indisputable, however: Louise Merrick was a clever girl, possessing a quick intellect and a keen insight into the character of others. Her apparent shallowness was a blind of the same character as her assumed graciousness, and while she would have been more lovable without any pretence or sham she could not have been Louise Merrick and allow others to read her as she actually was. Patsy and Beth thought they knew her, and admired or liked rather than loved their cousin. Uncle John thought he knew her, too, and was very proud of his eldest niece in spite of some discovered qualities that were not wholly admirable.

An extensive course of light literature, not void of "detective stories," had at this moment primed Louise with its influence to the extent of inducing her to scent a mystery in the history of Captain Wegg. The plain folks around Millville might speculate listlessly upon the "queer doin's" at the farm, and never get anywhere near the truth. Indeed, the strange occurrences she had just heard were nearly forgotten in the community, and soon would be forgotten altogether — unless the quick ear of a young girl had caught the clue so long ignored.

At first she scarcely appreciated the importance of the undertaking. It occurred to her that an effort to read to the bottom of the sea captain's romance would be a charming diversion while she resided at Millville, and in undertaking the task she laughingly accused herself of becoming an amateur

detective — an occupation that promised to be thrilling and delightful.

Warned, however, by the rebuff she had met with from Uncle John, the girl decided not to confide either her suspicions or her proposed investigation to anyone for the present, but to keep her own counsel until she could surprise them all with the denouement or required assistance to complete her work.

Inspired by the cleverness and fascination of this idea, Louise set to work to tabulate the information she had received thus far, noting the; element of mystery each fact evolved. First, Captain Wegg must have been a rich man in order to build this house, maintain two servants and live for years in comfort without any income from his barren farm lands. What became of his money after his death? Why was his only son obliged to fly to the cities in order to obtain a livelihood? Secondly, the Captain, a surly and silent man, had brought hither — perhaps by force — a young woman as his wife who was so unhappy that she pined away and died. Who was this woman? What had rendered her so unhappy and despairing?

Thirdly, the Captain's only friend had been a crazy man named Will Thompson. Was he crazy before the Captain's death, or had he become crazed at that time, some terrible tragedy unhinging his mind?

Fourthly, the granddaughter of Thompson, Ethel, and the son of Captain Wegg had been in love with each other, and people expected they would marry in time. But at his father's sudden death the boy fled and left his sweetheart without a word. Why — unless something had occurred that rendered their marriage impossible?

In the fifth place there was Old Hucks and his blind wife to be considered. What did they know about their old master's secret history? What tragic memories lurked beneath the man's perpetual smile and the woman's composed and sightless face?

Surely there was enough here to excite the curiosity and warrant an effort to untangle the mystery. And as instruments to the end there were several people available who could be of use to her; McNutt, the agent, who evidently knew more than he had cared to tell; Old Hucks and his wife and Ethel Thompson, the school-teacher. There might be others, but one or another of these four must know the truth, and it would be her pleasant duty to obtain a full disclosure. So she was anxious to begin her investigations at once.

When her uncle returned from his visit to the pigs Louise said to him:

"I've been thinking, dear, that we ought to call upon that young lady who arranged our rooms, and thank her for her kindness."

"That's true," he replied.

“Can’t we drive over to Thompson’s this morning, Uncle?”

“Beth and Patsy have planned a tramp to the lake, and a row after water-lilies.”

“Then let us make our call together. We can invite the girl to come here and spend a day with us, when Patsy and Beth will be able to meet her.”

“That’s a good idea, Louise. I was wondering what I’d do this morning. Tell Old Hucks to get the nag harnessed.”

The girl ran eagerly upon her errand. Old Hucks seemed surprised, and a curious expression showed for an instant through his smile. But he turned without a word to harness the horse.

Louise stood watching him.

“Your fingers are quite nimble, Thomas, considering the fact that you were once a sailor,” she said.

“But sailors have to be nimble, miss,” he returned, buckling a strap unmoved. “Who tol’ ye I were once a sea-farin’ man?”

“I guessed it.”

As he appeared indisposed to say more on the subject she asked: “Did you sail with Captain Wegg?”

“Partly, miss. Dan’s already now. Don’t jerk the bit, fer his mouth’s tender an’ it makes him balky. Ef he balks jest let him rest a time, an’ then speak to him. Dan ain’t vicious; he’s jest ornery.”

She climbed into the dilapidated old buggy and took the reins. Dan groaned and ambled slowly around to where Uncle John stood awaiting his niece.

“Let me drive, Uncle,” she said; “I understand Dan.”

“Well, I don’t,” returned Uncle John, in his whimsical way, as he mounted to the seat beside her. “I don’t understand how he’s happened to live since the landing of Columbus, or what he’s good for, or why someone don’t knock him on the head.”

Dan turned his long, lean face as if to give the speaker a reproachful look; then he groaned again, leaned forward, and drew the buggy slowly into the stony lane.

“Do you know where the Thompsons live?” inquired Uncle John.

“No. Whoa, Dan!”

That was the best thing the nag did. He knew how to whoa.

“Thomas!” called Uncle John, turning in his seat; and at the summons Old Hucks came from the barn and approached them. “How do you get to Miss Thompson’s place?”

“Miss Ethel’s?” Another fleeting expression of surprise.

“Yes; we’re going over to thank her for her kindness to us.”

“I — I’m ‘most sure as she’ll be here soon to call, sir. And — perhaps you oughtn’t to — to go to — Thompson’s,” stammered Hucks, glancing up at them with his bright, elusive smile.

“Well, we’re going, anyhow,” growled Mr. Merrick.

“Then turn left at the main road an’ keep straight ahead to Thompson’s. Ye can’t miss it, sir. Brick schoolhouse on the other corner.”

“Thank you, Thomas. Drive on, Louise.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LITTLE SCHOOL-MA'AM.

Dan balked only twice on the journey, but even this moderate rebellion so annoyed Uncle John that he declared he would walk back rather than ride behind this "mulish antiquity" again.

When they came to the Thompson dwelling it at first sight seemed deserted. A knock on the front door failed to produce any response.

"Perhaps they're away from home," suggested Louise.

"There's a path around to the back," said Uncle John. "Let's explore in that direction."

They made their way leisurely toward the rear and had almost passed the house, when a deep roar broke the stillness. It was succeeded by another, and another, like the bellowing of a mad bull, and the intruders stopped short and Louise clung to her uncle in sudden panic.

"Be still, Will! Stop, I say — stop!"

A sharp crack, as of a lash, accompanied the words, and a moan or two was followed by absolute silence.

Uncle John and Louise looked at one another with startled eyes.

"He must be worse," said the old gentleman, mopping his forehead with a handkerchief.

With one accord they started softly to retrace their steps when a new sound halted them again. It was a clear, fresh young voice singing a plaintive ditty in a nonchalant, careless tone.

"That's Ethel, I'm sure," exclaimed Louise, grasping her uncle's arm.

"Well, what shall we do?" he demanded.

"Mr. — the crazy man seems quiet now," she whispered. "Let us find the girl, if we can."

So again they traversed the path and this time came to the pretty garden behind the house. Ethel was tending a flower bed. She wore her gingham dress and a sunbonnet, and, kneeling in the path, stretched out her slim brown arm to uproot the weeds. But the crunching of the gravel aroused her attention, and, observing her visitors, she sprang up and hastened toward them.

Louise introduced her uncle and herself in her most pleasant and gracious way, and the school teacher led them to a garden bench and begged them to be seated.

"The day is lovely," she said, "and I always find my garden more cheerful than the house. Grandfather's illness makes the house unpleasant for strangers, too."

Louise was surprised at this frank reference, and Uncle John coughed to hide his embarrassment.

"I — I hope the invalid is — is improving," he said, doubtful whether he should say anything on the delicate subject or not.

"He is always the same, sir," was the quiet response. "I suppose they have told you that grandfather is a madman? Our great trouble is well known in this neighborhood."

"He is not dangerous. I suppose?" hazarded Uncle John, remembering the brutal bellowing.

"Oh, not at all. He is fully paralyzed from his waist down, poor grandfather, and can do no harm to anyone. But often his outbreaks are unpleasant to listen to," continued the girl, deprecatingly, as if suddenly conscious that they had overheard the recent uproar.

"Has he been — this way — for long?" inquired Louise.

"His mind has been erratic and unbalanced since I can remember," answered Ethel, calmly, "but he first became violent at the time Captain Wegg died, some three years ago. Grandfather was very fond of the Captain, and happened to be with him at the time of his sudden death. The shock drove him mad."

"Was he paralyzed before that time?" asked Louise, earnestly.

"No; but the paralysis followed almost immediately. The doctor says that a blood vessel which burst in the brain is responsible for both afflictions."

The pause that followed was growing awkward when Uncle John said, with an evident effort to change the subject:

"This is a fine old homestead."

"It is, indeed," responded Ethel, brightly, "and it enjoys the distinction of being one of the first houses built in the foothills. My great-grandfather was really the first settler in these parts and originally located his cabin where the mill now stands. 'Little Bill Thompson,' he was called, for he was a small, wiry man — very different from grandfather, who in his prime was a powerful man of over six feet. Little Bill Hill and Little Bill Creek were named after this pioneer great-grandsire, who was quite successful raising flocks of sheep on the plateau. Before he died he built this house, preferring the location to his first one."

"The garden is beautiful," said Louise, enthusiastically. "And do you teach in the little brick school-house across the way?"

"Yes. Grandfather built it years ago, without dreaming I would ever teach there. Now the county supports the school and pays me my salary."

"How long have you taught?"

"For two years. It is necessary, now that grandfather is disabled. He has a

small income remaining, however, and with what I earn we get along very nicely."

"It was very good of you to assist in getting our house ready for us," said Louise. "We might have found things in sorry condition but for your kindness."

"Oh, I enjoyed the work, I assure you," replied Ethel. "As it is my vacation, it was a real pleasure to me to have something to do. But I fear my arrangement of your pretty furniture was very ungraceful."

"We haven't altered a single thing," declared Louise. "You must have found it a tedious task, unpacking and getting everything in shape."

"Tom and Nora were good help, because they are fond of me and seem to understand my wishes; and Peggy McNutt brought me some men to do the lifting and rough work," explained Ethel.

"Have you known Hucks and his wife long?" asked Uncle John.

"Since I can remember, sir. They came here many years ago, with Captain Wegg."

"And has Thomas always smiled?" Louise inquired.

"Always," was the laughing reply. "It's an odd expression — isn't it? — to dwell forever on a man's face. But Tom is never angry, or hurt or excited by anything, so there is no reason he should not smile. At the time of Captain Wegg's death and poor grandfather's terrible affliction, Old Hucks kept right on smiling, the same as ever; and perhaps his pleasant face helped to cheer us all."

Louise drew a long breath.

"Then the smile is a mask," she said, "and is assumed to conceal the man's real feelings."

"I do not think so," Ethel answered, thoughtfully. "The smile is habitual, and dominates any other expression his features might be capable of; but that it is assumed I do not believe. Thomas is a simple-minded, honest-hearted old fellow, and to face the world smilingly is a part of his religion. I am sure he has nothing to conceal, and his devotion to his blind wife is very beautiful."

"But Nora — how long has she been blind?"

"Perhaps all her life; I cannot tell how long. Yet it is wonderful how perfectly she finds her way without the aid of sight. Captain Wegg used to say she was the best housekeeper he ever knew."

"Did not his wife keep house for him, when she was alive?"

"I do not remember her."

"They say she was most unhappy."

Ethel dropped her eyes and did not reply.

“How about Cap’n Wegg?” asked Uncle John. “Did you like him? You see, we’re mighty curious about the family, because we’ve acquired their old home, and are bound to be interested in the people that used to live there.”

“That is natural,” remarked the little school teacher, with a sigh. “Captain Wegg was always kind to me; but the neighbors as a rule thought him moody and bad-tempered.” After a pause she added: “He was not as kind to his son as to me. But I think his life was an unhappy one, and we have no right to reprove his memory too severely for his faults.”

“What made him unhappy?” asked Louise, quickly.

Ethel smiled into her eager face.

“No one has solved that problem, they say. The Captain was as silent as he was morose.”

The detective instinct was alive in Louise. She hazarded a startling query:

“Who killed Captain Wegg?” she demanded, suddenly.

Another smile preceded the reply.

“A dreadful foe called heart disease. But come; let me show you my garden. There are no such roses as these for miles around.”

Louise was confident she had made progress. Ethel had admitted several things that lent countenance to the suspicions already aroused; but perhaps this simple country girl had never imagined the tragedy that had been enacted at her very door.

She cordially urged Ethel Thompson to spend a day with them at the farm, and Uncle John, who was pleased with the modesty and frankness of the fair-haired little school teacher, earnestly seconded the invitation.

Then he thought of going home, and the thought reminded him of Dan.

“Do you know,” he inquired, “where I could buy a decent horse?”

The girl looked thoughtful a moment; then glanced up with a bright smile.

“Will you buy one off me?” she asked.

“Willingly, my dear, if you’ve an animal to sell.”

“It’s — it’s our Joe. He was grandfather’s favorite colt when his trouble came upon him. We have no use for him now, for I always ride or drive my pony. And grandmother says he’s eating his head off to no purpose; so we’d like to sell him. If you will come to the barn I’ll introduce you to him.”

Joe proved on inspection to be an excellent horse, if appearances were to be trusted, and Ethel assured Mr. Merrick that the steed was both gentle and intelligent.

“Do you use that surrey?” inquired Uncle John, pointing to a neat vehicle that seemed to be nearly new.

“Very seldom, sir. Grandmother would like to sell it with the horse.”

“It’s exactly what I need,” declared Mr. Merrick. “How much for Joe and

his harness, and the surrey?"

"I'll go and ask what grandmother wants."

She returned after a few minutes, stating a figure that made Uncle John lift his brows with a comical expression.

"A hundred dollars! Do you take me for a brigand, little girl? I know what horses are worth, for I've bought plenty of 'em. Your Joe seems sound as a dollar, and he's just in his prime. A hundred and fifty is dirt cheap for him, and the surrey will be worth at least seventy-five. Put in the harness at twenty-five, and I'll give you two-fifty for the outfit, and not a cent more or less. Eh?"

"No, indeed," said Ethel. "We could not get more than a hundred dollars from anyone else around here."

"Because your neighbors are countrymen, and can't afford a proper investment. So when they buy at all they only give about half what a thing is actually worth. But I'll be honest with you. The price I offer is a good deal less than I'd have to pay in the city — Hutchinson would charge me five hundred, at least — and I need just what you've got to sell. What do you say, Miss Ethel?"

"The price is one hundred dollars, Mr. Merrick."

"I won't pay it. Let me talk with your grandmother."

"She does not see anyone, sir."

Louise looked up sharply, scenting another clue.

"Isn't she well, dear?" she asked in smooth tones.

"She looks after grandfather, and helps Aunt Lucy with the housework."

"Well, come, Louise; we'll go home," said Uncle John, sadly. "I'd hoped to be able to drive this fine fellow back, but Dan'll have to groan an' balk all the way to the farm."

Ethel smiled.

"Better buy at my price, Mr. Merrick," she suggested.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said, pausing. "I'll split the difference. Take two hundred and well call it a bargain."

"But I cannot do that, sir."

"It will help pay you for the hard work of fixing up the house," he rejoined, pleadingly. "Your bill wasn't half enough."

"My bill?" wonderingly.

"The one I paid McNutt for your services."

"I made no charge, sir. I could not accept anything for a bit of assistance to a neighbor."

"Oh! Then McNutt got it, did he?"

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Merrick. I told Peggy I would not accept

payment.”

“H-m. Never mind. We’re not going to quarrel, little neighbor. May I hitch Joe to the surrey?”

“If you like. I’ll help you.”

Uncle John led Joe from his stall and together they harnessed the horse to the surrey. The girl knew better than the man how to buckle the straps properly, while Louise stood by helplessly and watched the performance.

Then Uncle John went for old Dan, whom he led, rickety buggy and all, into the Thompson stable.

“I’ll send Hucks over to get him, although we might as well knock him in the head,” he said as he unharnessed the ancient steed. “Now then, Louise, hop in.”

“You’ll be sure to come over Thursday, for the day, Miss Thompson?” asked Louise, taking Joe’s reins from her uncle’s hands.

“I’ll not forget such a delightful engagement, be sure.”

Uncle John had his pocketbook out, and now he wadded up some bills and thrust them into the little school teacher’s hand.

“Drive ahead, Louise,” he called. “Good morning, my dear. See you on Thursday.”

As the vehicle rolled out of the yard and turned into the highway, Ethel unrolled the bills with trembling fingers.

“If he has dared — !” she began, but paused abruptly with a smile of content.

The rich man had given her exactly one hundred dollars.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

On Wednesday afternoon McNutt drove the sad-eyed sorrel mare over to the Wegg farm again. He had been racking his brain for a way to get more money out of the nabob, for the idea had become a veritable passion with him and now occupied all his thoughts.

That very morning an inspiration had come to him. Among other occupations he had at one time adopted that of a book-agent, and by dint of persistent energy had sold numerous copies of "Radford's Lives of the Saints" to the surrounding farmers. They had cost him ninety cents a copy and he had sold them at three dollars each, netting a fine profit in return for his labor. The books were printed upon cheap paper, fearfully illustrated with blurred cuts, but the covers were bound in bright red with gold lettering. Through misunderstandings three of these copies had come back to him, the subscribers refusing to accept them; and so thorough had been his canvassing that there remained no other available customers for the saintly works. So Peggy had kept them on a shelf in his "office" for several years, and now, when his eye chanced to light upon them, he gave a snort of triumph and pounced upon them eagerly. Mr. Merrick was a newcomer. Without doubt he could be induced to buy a copy of Radford's Lives.

An hour later McNutt was on his mission, the three copies, which had been carefully dusted, reclining on the buggy seat beside him. Arrived at the Wegg farm, he drove up to the stile and alighted.

Louise was reading in the hammock, and merely glanced at the little man, who solemnly stumped around to the back door with the three red volumes tucked underneath his arm. He had brought them all along to make his errand "look like business."

"Where's the nabob?" he asked blind Nora.

"What's that, Mr. McNutt?" she inquired, as if puzzled. She knew his voice, as she did that of nearly everyone with whom she had ever been brought in contact.

"Why, the nabob; the boss; Mr. Merrick."

"Oh. He's in the barn with Tom, I guess."

McNutt entered the barn. Uncle John was seated upon an overturned pail watching Old Hucks oil Joe's harness. The agent approached him with a deferential bow.

"Sir," said he, "you'll 'scuse my comin' agin so soon to be a-botherin'; but I hev here three copies of Radford's famis wucks on the Lives o' the Saints, in a edishun dee looks — — "

“A what?”

“A edishun dee looks, which means extry fine. It’s a great book an’ they’s all out’n print ‘cept these three, which I hain’t no doubt many folks would be glad to give their weight in gold fer, an’ some over.”

“Stand out of the light, McNutt.”

The agent shifted his position.

“Them books, sir — — ”

“Oh, take ‘em away.”

“What!”

“I don’t read novels.”

McNutt scratched his head, perplexed at the rebuff. His “dee looks” speech had usually resulted in a sale. An idea flashed across his brain — perhaps evolved by the scratching.

“The young lady, sir — ”

“Oh, the girls are loaded with books,” growled the nabob.

The agent became desperate.

“But the young lady in the hammick, sir, as I jest now left, says to tell ye she wants one o’ these books mighty bad, an’ hopes you’ll buy it for her eddificationing.”

“Oh; she does, eh?”

“Mighty bad, sir.”

Uncle John watched Thomas polish a buckle.

“Is it a moral work?” he asked.

“Nuthin’ could be moraler, sir. All ‘bout the lives o’ — ”

“How much is it?”

“Comes pretty high, sir. Three dollars. But it’s — ”

“Here. Take your money and get out. You’re interrupting me.”

“Very sorry, sir. Much obleeged, sir. Where’ll I leave the book?”

“Throw it in the manger.”

McNutt selected a volume that had a broken corner and laid it carefully on the edge of the oat-bin. Then he put his money in his pocket and turned away.

“Morn’n’ to ye, Mr. Merrick.”

“Stop a bit,” said Uncle John, suddenly.

The agent stopped.

“I believe I paid you ten dollars for Miss Ethel Thompson’s services. Is that correct?”

“Ye — yes, Mr. Merrick.”

McNutt’s heart was in his shoes and he looked guiltily at his accuser, the pale blue eyes bulging fearfully.

“Very well; see that she gets it.”

“Of course, Mr. Merrick.”

“And at once. You may go.”

McNutt stumped from the barn. He felt that a dreadful catastrophe had overtaken him. Scarcely could he restrain the impulse to sob aloud. Ten dollars! — Ten dollars gone to the dogs as the result of his visit to the nabob that morning! To lose ten dollars in order to gain three was very bad business policy. McNutt reflected bitterly that he would have been better off had he stayed at home. He ought to have been contented with what he had already made, and the severe manner the nabob had used in addressing him told the agent plainly that he need not expect further pickings from this source.

In the midst of his despair the comforting thought that Ethel would surely refuse the money came to sustain him; so he recovered somewhat his former spirits. As he turned the corner of the house he observed Louise still reading in the hammock.

In some ways McNutt was a genius. He did not neglect opportunities.

“Here’s my las’ chance at these idjits,” he muttered, “an’ I’ll learn thet nabob what it costs, to make Marsh McNutt stand out’n his light.”

Then he hastened over to the hammock.

“‘Scuse me, miss,” said he, in his most ingratiating voice. “Is yer uncle ‘round anywheres?”

“Isn’t he in the barn?” asked the girl, looking up.

“Can’t find him, high ner low. But he ordered a book of me t’other day — ’Radford’s Lives o’ the Saints’ — an’ perhaps you’ll take it an’ pay me the money, so’s I kin go home.”

Louise gazed at the man musingly. He was one of the people she intended to pump for information concerning the mystery of Captain Wegg, and she must be gracious to him in order to win his good-will and induce him to speak freely. With this thought in mind she drew out her purse and asked:

“How much were you to be paid for the book?”

“Three dollars, miss.”

“Here is the money, then. Tell me — your name is McNutt, isn’t it? — how long have you lived in this place?”

“All my life, miss. Thank ‘e, miss. Good day to ye, miss.”

He placed the book in the hammock beside her.

“Don’t go, please.” said the girl. “I’d like you to tell me something about Captain Wegg, and of his poor wife who died, and — ”

“Nuther time, miss, I’ll be glad to. Ye’ll find me in my orfice, any time. Jest now I’m in the dumdest hurry ye ever knew. Good day to ye, miss,” he repeated, and stumped quickly to the buggy awaiting him. Next moment he

had seized the reins and was urging the sorrel mare along the stony lane at her best pace.

Louise was both astonished and disappointed, but after a little thought she looked after the departing agent with a shrewd smile.

“He’s afraid to talk,” she murmured, “and that only confirms my suspicions that he knows more than he cares to tell.”

Meantime McNutt was doing his best to get away from the premises before the discovery was made that he had sold two “Lives of the Saints” to one family. That there might be future consequences to follow his deception never occurred to him; only the immediate necessity for escape occupied his mind.

Nor were his fears altogether groundless. Turning his head from time to time for a glance behind, he had seen Mr. Merrick come from the barn with a red book in his hand and approach the hammock, whereupon the young lady arose and exhibited a second book. Then they both dropped the books and ran into the lane and began shouting for him to stop — the man’s voice sounding especially indignant and imperative.

But McNutt chose to be deaf. He did not look around again, and was congratulating himself that he would soon be out of earshot when a sudden apparition ahead caused the mare to halt abruptly. It also caused the cold chills to run down the agent’s back. Beth and Patsy had stepped into the lane from a field, being on their way home from their daily walk.

“They’re calling to you, sir,” said Patsy to the agent. “Didn’t you hear them?”

“I — I’m a little deaf, miss,” stammered McNutt, who recognized the young ladies as Mr. Merrick’s nieces.

“I think they wish you to go back,” remarked Beth, thoughtfully watching the frantic waves of Uncle John’s chubby arms and Louise’s energetic beckonings. They were too far off to be heard plainly, but their actions might surely be understood.

McNutt with reluctance looked over his shoulder, and a second shudder went through him.

“I hain’t got time to go back,” he said, as an inspiration came to him; “but I guess you kin do jest as well. This book here,” picking up the last of the three from the seat, “I offered to sell yer uncle fer five dollars; but he wanted it fer four. I ain’t no haggler, you understan’, so I jest driv away. Now Mr. Merrick has changed his mind an’ is willin’ to give five fer it; but there ain’t nuthin’ small about me. Ef you gals’ll jest give me the four dollars ye kin take the book to yer uncle, with my compliments; an’ I won’t hev t’ go back. I’m in a drea’ful hurry.”

Patsy laughed at the little man's excited manner.

"Fortunately I have some money with me," she said; "but you may as well take the five dollars, for unless Uncle had been willing to pay it he would not have called you back."

"I think so, myself, miss," he rejoined, taking the money and handing her the volume.

Uncle John and Louise, glaring at the distant group, saw the third red book change hands, and in answer to their renewed cries and gestures Patsy waved the "Lives of the Saints" at them reassuringly and came on at a brisk walk, followed by Beth.

McNutt slapped the sorrel with the ends of the reins so energetically that the mare broke into a trot, and before the girls had come within speaking distance of their uncle, the agent was well out of sight and exulting in the possession of eleven dollars to pay for his morning's work. Even if Ethel accepted that ten, he reflected, he would still be a dollar ahead. But he was sure she would tell him to keep it; and he'd "jest like to see thet air nabob git a penny back agin."

Meantime Uncle John's wrath, which was always an effervescent quality with the little gentleman, had changed to wonder when he saw his nieces approaching with the third red-and-gold book. Louise was leaning against the rail fence and laughing hysterically, and suddenly a merry smile appeared and spread over her uncle's round face as he said:

"Did you ever hear of such an audacious swindle in all your born days?"

"What will you do, Uncle?" asked the girl, wiping the tears of merriment from her eyes. "Have the man arrested?"

"Of course not, my dear. It's worth the money just to learn what talents the fellow possesses. Tell me, Patsy," he continued, as the other nieces joined them, "what did you pay for your book?"

"Five dollars. Uncle. He said — "

"Never mind what he said, my dear. It's all right. I wanted it to add to my collection. So far I've got three 'Lives of the Saints' — and I'm thankful they're not cats, or there'd be nine lives for me to accumulate."

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

Ethel Thompson came over the next day, as she had promised, and the sweet-faced, gentle school-mistress won the hearts of Uncle John's three nieces without an effort. She was the eldest of them all, but her retired country life had kept her fresh and natural, and Ethel seemed no more mature than the younger girls except in a certain gravity that early responsibility had thrust upon her.

Together the four laughing, light-hearted maids wandered through the pines, where the little school-ma'am showed them many pretty nooks and mossy banks that the others had not yet discovered. By following an unsuspected path, they cut across the wooded hills to the waterfall, where Little Bill Creek made a plunge of twenty feet into a rocky basin below. In spite of the bubbles, the water here showed clear as crystal, and the girls admiringly christened it the "Champagne Cup." They shed their shoes and stockings and waded in the pool, enjoying the sport with shrieks of merry laughter — more because they were happy than that there was anything to laugh at.

Afterward they traced the stream down to a lovely glade a half mile above Millville, where Ethel informed them the annual Sunday-school picnic was always held, and then trailed across the rocky plateau to the farm. By the time they reached home their appetites were well sharpened for Mary's excellent luncheon, and the afternoon was devoted to rest under the shady pines that grew beside the house.

It was now, when they felt thoroughly acquainted and at ease in one another's society, that the girls indulged in talks concerning events in their past, and Ethel was greatly interested in the nieces' recital of their recent trip abroad with Uncle John. They also spoke frankly of their old life together at Elmhurst, where Aunt Jane, who was Uncle John's sister, had congregated her three nieces for the purpose of choosing from among them one to inherit her vast estates. It seemed no source of regret to any of them that a boy, Kenneth Forbes, had finally succeeded to Aunt Jane's property, and this may be explained by the fact that Uncle John had at that interesting juncture appeared to take charge of the nieces. It was quite evident that the eccentric but kindly old fellow had succeeded in making these three girls as happy as their dispositions would allow them to be.

After the most interesting phases of their personal history had been discussed, the nieces began, perhaps unconsciously, to draw from Ethel her own story. It was simple enough, and derived its interest mainly from the fact

that it concerned their new friend. Her parents had both passed away while she was young, and Ethel had always lived with her father's father, big Will Thompson, a man reputed very well-to-do for this section, and an energetic farmer from his youth.

Old Will had always been accused of being unsociable and considering himself above the neighboring farmers; and it was true that Bob West, the implement dealer, was his only associate before Captain Wegg arrived. A casual acquaintance with the Millville people might easily explain this.

With the advent of the Weggs, however, a strong friendship seemed to spring up between the retired sea captain and the bluff, erratic old farmer, which lasted until the fatal day when one died and the other became a paralytic and a maniac.

"We have always thought," said Ethel, "that the shock of the Captain's death unsettled my grandfather's mind. They had been sitting quietly in Captain Wegg's room one evening, as they were accustomed to do, when there was a sudden fall and a cry. Thomas ran in at once, and found grandfather raving over the Captain's dead body. The old seaman had heart disease, it seems, and had often declared he would die suddenly. It was a great blow to us all, but especially to Joe."

Her voice softened at this last remark, and Patsy exclaimed, impulsively:

"Tell us about Joe Wegg. Did you like him?"

"Yes," said Ethel, simply; "we were naturally thrown much together in our childhood, and became staunch friends. Grandpa often took me with him on his visits to the Weggs, and sometimes, but not often, the Captain would bring Joe to see us. He was a quiet, thoughtful boy; much like his mother, I imagine; but for some reason he had conceived an intense dislike for his father and an open hatred for this part of the country, where he was born. Aside from these morbid notions, Joe was healthy-minded and frank and genuine. Had he been educated in any other atmosphere than the gloomy one of the Wegg household I am sure Joe's character would have been wholly admirable, and I have never blamed the boy much for his peculiarities. Captain Wegg would not permit him to go to school, but himself attended to such instructions as Joe could acquire at home, and this was so meager and the boy so ambitious that I think it was one cause of his discontent. I remember, when I was sent to school at Troy, that Joe sobbed for days because he could not have the same advantages. He used to tell me wonderful stories of what he would accomplish if he could only get out into the world.

"When he implored his father to let him go away, Captain Wegg used to assure Joe that he would some day be rich, and there was no need of his

preparing himself for either a business or a profession; but that did not satisfy Joe's ambition, as you may imagine. And, when the end came, scarcely a dollar of money could be found among the Captain's possessions, and no other property than this farm; so it is evident he deceived his son for some selfish purpose.

"Joe was at last free, and the only thing I reproach him for is going away without a word to me or any of his friends. I heard, indirectly, of his working his way through a technical school, for he was always crazy about mechanics, and then he went to New York and I lost all further trace of him."

"What do you suppose became of Captain Wegg's money?" asked Louise.

"I've no idea. It is a singular thing that most of my grandfather's savings disappeared at the same time. On account of his mental condition he can never tell us what became of his little fortune; but luckily the returns from the farm, which we rent on shares, and my own salary as teacher of the district school, enable us to live quite comfortably, although we must be economical."

"Why, it's really a romance!" cried Patsy, who had listened eagerly.

"There are many romances in real life," added Beth, in her undemonstrative way.

Louise said nothing, but her heart was throbbing with excitement engendered by the tale, which so strongly corroborated the suspicions she had begun to entertain. When Ethel had gone home Louise still deliberated upon this fascinating mystery, and her resolve grew to force some sort of an explanation from the smiling lips of Old Hucks. For the sole available witness of that fatal night's tragedy, when one strong man died and another was driven mad, was Thomas Hucks. The old servitor was also in a position to know much of the causes leading up to the catastrophe, he having been the confidential retainer of Captain Wegg for many years. Hucks must speak; but the girl was wise enough to realize that he would not do so unless urged by coaxing or forced by strategy. There was doubtless good reason why the old man had remained silent for three years. Her plan was to win his confidence. Interest him in Joe's welfare, and then the truth must come out.

The frankly related story of Ethel had supplied Louise with the motive for the crime, for that a crime had been committed she was now doubly sure. Captain Wegg had money; old Will Thompson had money; both were well-to-do men. In a retired country district, where there were no banks, it was reasonable to suppose they kept large sums of money on hand, and the knowledge of this fact had tempted some one to a dreadful deed. Captain Wegg had been killed and old Thompson perhaps injured by a blow upon the head from which he had never recovered. Any suspicion the fair young

detective may have entertained that Thompson himself had killed his friend was eradicated by the fact that he had been robbed at the same time.

Louise had originally undertaken her investigation through curiosity and a desire to amuse herself by unveiling the mystery. Now she began to reflect that she was an instrument of justice, for a discovery of the truth might restore a fortune to poor Joe Wegg, now struggling with the world, and put sweet Ethel Thompson in a position where the necessity for her to teach school would be abolished. This thought added a strong impulse to her determination to succeed.

Sunday afternoon the girl took blind Nora for a long drive through the country, taking pains to explain to her all the points of interest they came to, and delighting the old woman with her bright chatter. Louise had been kind to Nora from the beginning, and her soft, sympathetic voice had quite won the poor creature's heart.

On the way home, in the delightful summer twilight, the girl dexterously led the conversation toward Nora's past history.

"Was Thomas a sailor when you married him?" she asked.

"Yes, miss. He were bos'n on Cap'n Wegg's schooner the 'Lively Kate,' an' I were livin' with Miss Mary, as come to be Mrs. Wegg arterward."

"Oh, I see. And were you blind then, Nora?"

"No, miss. I went blind arter our great trouble come to us."

"Trouble? Oh, I'm so sorry, dear. What was it?"

The old woman was silent for a time. Then she said:

"I'd better not mention it, I guess. Thomas likes to forgit, an' when I gets cryin' an' nervous he knows I've been thinkin' 'bout the old trouble."

Louise was disappointed, but changed the subject adroitly.

"And Miss Mary, who was afterward Mrs. Wegg. Did you love her, Nora?"

"Indeed I did, child."

"What was she like?"

"She were gentle, an' sweet, an' the mos' beautiful creetur in all — in — in the place where we lived. An' her fambily was that proud an' aristocratic thet no one could tech 'em with a ten-foot pole."

"I see. Did she love Captain Wegg?"

"Nat'rally, sense she married of him, an' fit all her fambily to do it. An' the Cap'n were thet proud o' her thet he thought the world lay in her sweet eyes."

"Oh. I had an idea he didn't treat her well," remarked the girl, soberly.

"That's wrong," declared Nora, promptly. "Arter the trouble come — fer it come to the Weggs as well as to Tom an' me — the Cap'n sort o' lost heart

to see his Mary cry day arter day an' never be comforted. He were hard hit himself, ye see, an' that made it a gloomy house, an' no mistake."

"Do you mean after you moved here, to the farm?"

"Yes, deary."

"I hear Captain Wegg was very fond of Ethel's grandfather," continued Louise, trying to find an opening to penetrate old Nora's reserve.

"They was good friends always," was the brief reply.

"Did they ever quarrel, Nora?"

"Never that I knows of."

"And what do you suppose became of their money?" asked the girl.

"I don't know, child. Air we gettin' near home?"

"We are quite near, now. I wish you would open your heart to me, and tell me about that great trouble, Nora. I might be able to comfort you in some way."

The blind woman shook her head.

"There's no comfort but in forgettin'," she said; "an' the way to forgit ain't to talk about it."

The unsatisfactory result of this conversation did not discourage Louise, although she was sorry to meet with no better success. Gradually she was learning the inside history of the Weggs. When she discovered what that "great trouble" had been she would secure an important clue in the mystery, she was sure. Nora might some time be induced to speak more freely, and it was possible she might get the desired information from Old Hucks. She would try, anyway.

A dozen theories might be constructed to account for this "great trouble." The one that Louise finally favored was that Captain Wegg had been guilty of some crime on the high seas in which his boatswain, Old Hucks, was likewise implicated. They were obliged to abandon the sea and fly to some out-of-the-way corner inland, where they could be safely hidden and their whereabouts never discovered. It was the knowledge of this crime, she conjectured, that had ruined sweet Mrs. Wegg's life and made her weep day after day until her guilty husband became surly and silent and unsociable.

Louise now began to cultivate Thomas, but her progress was slow. Patsy seemed to be the old man's favorite, and for some reason he became glum and uncommunicative whenever Louise was around. The girl suspected that Nora had told her husband of the recent conversation, in spite of her assertion that she wished to avoid all reference to their great trouble.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE AMATEUR DETECTIVES.

Puzzling her brain what to do next, Louise suddenly decided to confide her secret to her two cousins. Not that she considered them capable of a greater success than she could herself accomplish, but they might prove valuable assistants in the capacity of lieutenants. She had great respect for Beth's calm judgment and keen intuitions, and Patsy had a way of accomplishing difficult things with ease.

The two girls listened to Louise with expressions of mingled wonder and amusement while she confided to them her first suspicions that Captain Wegg had been murdered, and then the bits of information she had gathered to strengthen the surmise and assure her she was justified in her efforts to untangle the web of mystery.

"You see, my dears," she explained, impressively, as the three lounged upon the grass in the shade of the right wing of the house, "there is a very interesting story about these people that ought to guide us directly to a solution of the puzzle. A roving sea captain marries a girl of good family in spite of the opposition of her relatives. His boatswain, a confidential servant, marries the girl's maid. The next thing we know is that a 'great trouble' causes them to flee — doubtless some crime committed by the captain. It may have been robbery, or perhaps piracy on the high seas; who knows? Anyhow, he steals away to this forsaken spot, far from the sea or the railroads, and builds a fine house on a worthless farm, showing that he has money, but that retirement is his main object. Here the Weggs make no friends: but the wife cries her eyes out until she dies miserably, leaving a son to the tender mercies of a wicked father. So fearful is he of discovery that he will not allow the boy to go to school, but tries to educate him himself."

"Probably the captain's real name was not Wegg, at all," suggested Patsy, entering into the spirit of the relation.

"Probably not, dear. He would assume some name, of course, so that it might be more difficult to trace him," answered Louise. "But now — mark me well, girls! — a Nemesis was on the track of this wicked sinner. After many years the man Captain Wegg had wronged, or stolen from, or something, discovered his enemy's hiding place. He promptly killed the Captain, and probably recovered the money, for it's gone. Old Thompson, Ethel's grandfather, happened to be present. The murderer also took his money, and — "

"Oh, Louise! That isn't reasonable," objected Beth, who had been following the story carefully.

“Why not?”

“Because you are making the wronged party as wicked as the man who wronged him. When the avenger found his enemy he might force him to give up his ill-gotten gains; I agree with you there; but he wouldn’t be liable to rob old Thompson, I’m sure.”

“Beth is right,” said Patsy, stoutly.

“But old Thompson lost his money at the same time, you know; at least his money could never be found afterward. And I’m sure he was dealt some blow on the head that made him crazy,” answered Louise, positively.

They thought that over.

“I believe I can explain it, girls,” said Beth, presently. “The avenger found Captain Wegg, all right — just as Louise has said — and when he found him he demanded a restitution of his money, threatening to send the criminal to jail. That would be very natural, wouldn’t it? Well, Captain Wegg had spent a good deal of the money, and couldn’t pay it all back; so Ethel’s grandfather, being his friend, offered to makeup the balance himself rather than see his friend go to prison. That accounts for the disappearance of all the money.”

“If that is so,” observed Patsy, “I don’t see why the man, having got his money back, should murder one and knock the other on the head.”

It way a puzzle, they all acknowledged, and after discussing the matter from every conceivable standpoint they were no nearer an explanation. That’s the way with mysteries; they’re often hard to understand.

“The only thing that occurs to me as being sensible,” said Louise, finally, “is that after the money was paid over they got into a quarrel. Then the avenger lost his temper and committed the murders.”

“This talk about an avenger is all guess work,” asserted Beth, calmly. “I don’t believe the facts point to an avenger at all.”

“But the old crime — the great trouble — ”

“Oh, we’ll allow all that,” returned Beth; “and I don’t say that an avenger wouldn’t be the nicest person to exact retribution from the wicked captain. But avengers don’t always turn up, in real life, when they ought to, girls; so we mustn’t be too sure that one turned up in this case.”

“But now else can you account for the captain’s murder?” objected Louise.

“Well, some one else might know he had money, and that Ethel’s grandfather had money, too,” was the reply. “Suppose the robbery and murder had nothing to do with the old crime at all, but that the murderer knew this to be a deserted place where he could make a good haul without being discovered. The two old men sat in the right wing, quite unsuspicious,

when — — ”

“When in walks Mr. Murderer, chokes the captain, knocks his friend on the brain-box, and makes off with the money!” continued Patsy, gleefully. “Oh, girls, I’m sure we’ve got it right this time.”

Louise reflected a moment.

“This country is almost a wilderness,” she mused, aloud, “and few strangers ever come here. Besides, a stranger would not know positively that these two men had money. If we abandon the idea of an avenger, and follow Beth’s clue, then the murderer is still right here in Millville, and unsuspected by any of his neighbors.”

“Oh, Louise!” with startled glances over their shoulders.

“Let us be sensible, reasoning girls; not silly things trying to figure out possible romances,” continued Louise, with a pretty and impressive assumption of dignity. “Do you know, I feel that some angel of retribution has guided us to this lonely farmhouse and put the idea into my head to discover and expose a dreadful crime.”

“Succotash!” cried Patsy, irrelevantly. “You’re romancing this minute, Louise. The way you figure things out I wouldn’t be surprised if you accused me, or Uncle John, any time during the next half hour. Adopting your last supposition, for the sake of argument, I’m interested to know what inhabitant of sleepy old Millville you suspect.”

“Don’t get flighty, Patricia,” admonished Beth. “This is a serious matter, and Louise is in earnest. If we’re going to help her we mustn’t talk rubbish. Now, it isn’t a bad suggestion that we ought to look nearer home for the key to this mystery. There’s old Hucks.”

“Hucks!”

“To be sure. No one knew so well as he the money affairs of the two men who were robbed.”

“I’m ashamed of you,” said Patsy.

“And the man’s smile is a mask!” exclaimed Louise.

“Oh, no!” protested Patsy.

“My dear, no person who ever lived could smile every minute, winter and summer, rain or shine, day and night, and always have a reason for the smile.”

“Of course not,” agreed Beth. “Old Hucks is a curious character. I realized that when I had known him five minutes.”

“But he’s poor,” urged Patsy, in defense of the old man. “He hasn’t a penny in the world, and McNutt told me if we turned Thomas and Nora away they’d have to go to the poorhouse.”

“That is no argument at all,” said Louise, calmly. “If we consider the fact

that Old Hucks may be a miser, and have a craving for money without any desire to spend it, then we are pretty close to a reason why he should bide his time and then murder his old master to obtain the riches he coveted. Mind you, I don't say Hucks is guilty, but it is our duty to consider this phase of the question."

"And then," added Beth, "if Hucks should prove to be a miser, it is easy to guess he would hide his wealth where he could secretly gloat over it, and still continue to pose as a pauper."

"I don't believe it," said Patsy, stoutly.

"You'll never make a successful detective if you allow your personal feelings to influence you," returned Louise. "I, too, sincerely hope that Thomas is innocent; but we are not justified in acquitting him until we have made a careful investigation and watched his actions."

"I'm quite sure he's connected with the mystery in some way," said Beth. "It will do no harm to watch Old Hucks, as Louise suggests."

"And you might try to pump him, Patsy, and see if you can get him to talk of the murder. Some careless remark might give us just the clue we need and guide us to the real criminal. That would free Thomas from all suspicion, you see."

"But why do you ask me to do this?" demanded Patsy. "Thomas and I are good friends, and I'd feel like a traitor to try to get him to confess a murder."

"If he is innocent, you have done no harm," said her eldest cousin; "and if he is guilty you don't want him for your friend."

"He likes you, dear," added Beth, "and perhaps he will tell you frankly all we want to know. There's another person, though, Louise, who might tell us something."

"Who is that?"

"The little man with the golf-ball eyes; McNutt."

"Now, there's some sense in suspecting him," exclaimed Patsy. "We know he's a robber, already, and a man who is clever enough to sell Uncle John three 'Lives of the Saints' would stick at nothing, I'm sure."

"He hasn't enough courage to commit a great crime," observed Beth.

"But he may be able to give us some information," Louise asserted; "so I propose we walk over to the town tomorrow morning and interview him."

This was promptly agreed to, for even Patsy, the least enthusiastic detective of the three, was eager to find some sort of a solution of the Wegg mystery. Meantime they decided to watch Old Hucks very carefully.

Beth happened to be present when Uncle John paid Thomas his weekly wage that evening, and was interested to notice how the old man's hand trembled with eagerness as he took the money.

“How much are you accustomed to receive?” Uncle John had asked.

“Nothing ‘tall, sir, since Cap’n Wegg died,” was the reply. “We was glad enough to have a home, Nora an’ me, ‘thout ‘spectin’ wages.”

“And there was no one here for you to serve,” mused Uncle John. “But in Captain Wegg’s day, how much did he give you?”

Thomas hesitated, and his smile wavered an instant.

“My old master was also my old friend,” said he, in a low voice; “an’ I ast him fer little money because my needs were little.”

“Well, the conditions are now different,” remarked Uncle John, carelessly; “and while you are in my employ you shall have your wages regularly. Will ten dollars a week be satisfactory?”

“Oh, sir!”

“And five for Nora.”

“You are too good, sir. I — I — ”

“Never mind, Thomas. If you want more at any time let me know.”

It was then, as the old man took the fifteen dollars extended to him, that Beth noted a flash in the mild blue eyes and a trembling of the horny hands. Hucks was very glad to get the money; there was little doubt of that.

She spoke of this incident to Louise, and the following morning they tested the man again. All three girls being present, Beth tendered Old Hucks two dollars, saying it was intended as a slight mark of her appreciation of his attention. Thomas demurred at first, but on being urged took the money with the same eager gesture he had before displayed. Louise followed with a donation of a like sum, and Patsy gave the old man still another two dollar bill. This generosity so amazed him that tears stood in his eyes as he tried to thank them all. It was noticed that the smile did not give way even to the tears, although it was tinged with a pathetic expression that proved wonderfully affecting. He concealed the offerings with a stealthy motion, as if ashamed of his weakness in accepting them, and then hurried away to his work.

“Well,” said Louise, when they were alone, “is Thomas a miser or not?”

“He clutched the money almost as if he loved it,” observed Beth, in a musing and slightly regretful tone.

“But think how poor he has been,” pleaded Patsy, “and how destitute both he and Nora are yet. Can we blame him for being glad to earn something substantial at last?”

Somehow that did not seem to explain fully the old man’s behavior, and the girl who had championed him sighed and then gave a sudden shiver as she remembered the awful suspicion that had fallen upon this strange individual. If the proof must be accepted that Hucks had miserly instincts,

had not Beth accidentally stumbled upon a solution of the whole mystery?

But Patsy would not believe it. If Thomas' open countenance lied, it was hard to put faith in any one.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BAITING OF PEGGY M'NUTT.

By this time the three nieces were so thoroughly impressed with the importance of the task they had undertaken that more ordinary things failed to interest them. Louise longed to solve the mystery. Beth wanted to punish the wrongdoers. Patsy yearned to exonerate the friends whom she imagined unjustly accused. Therefore the triple alliance for detective purposes was a strong one.

By mutual agreement they kept the matter secret from Uncle John, for they realized what a triumph it would be to surprise the old gentleman with proofs of their cleverness. To confide in him now would mean to invite no end of ridicule or good natured raillery, for Uncle John had not a grain of imagination or romance in his nature and would be unable to comprehend the delights of this secret investigation.

Because he was in the dark the significant looks and unnatural gravity of his nieces in the succeeding days puzzled the poor man greatly.

"What's wrong, girls?" he would ask. "Aren't you happy here? Do you miss anything you'd like? Is it too quiet and dull at Millville to suit you?"

"Oh, no!" they would exclaim. "We are having a splendid time, and would not leave the farm for anything."

And he often noticed them grouped in isolated places and conversing in low, eager tones that proved "something was up." He felt somewhat grieved that he was not their confidant, since these girls and their loyal affection for him constituted the chief joy of his life. When he put on his regulation fishing costume and carried his expensive rod and reel, his landing net and creel to the brook for a day's sport, he could no longer induce one of his girls to accompany him. Even Patsy pleaded laughingly that she had certain "fish to fry" that were not to be found in the brook.

Soon the three nieces made their proposed visit to McNutt, their idea being to pump that individual until he was dry of any information he might possess concerning the Wegg mystery. They tramped over to the village after breakfast one morning and found the agent seated on the porch before his little "office," by which name the front room of his cottage was dignified. He was dressed in faded overalls, a checked shirt and a broad-brimmed cheap straw hat. His "off foot," as he called it with grim humor, was painted green and his other foot was bare and might have been improved in color. Both these extremities rested on the rail of the porch, while McNutt smoked a corncob pipe and stared at his approaching visitors with his disconcerting, protruding eyes.

“Good morning, Mr. McNutt,” said Louise, pleasantly. “We’ve come to see if you have any books to sell.”

The agent drew a long breath. He had at first believed they had come to reproach him for his cruel deception; for although his conscience was wholly dormant, he had at times been a bit uneasy concerning his remarkable book trade.

“Uncle is making a collection of the ‘Lives of the Saints.’“ announced Patsy, demurely. “At present he has but three varieties of this work, one with several pages missing, another printed partly upside down, and a third with a broken corner. He is anxious to secure some further variations of the ‘dee looks’ Lives, if you can supply them.”

Peggy’s eyes couldn’t stare any harder, so they just stared.

“I — I hain’t got no more on hand,” he stammered, fairly nonplussed by the remarkable statement.

“No more? Oh, how sad. How disappointed we are,” said Beth.

“We were depending so much on you. Mr. McNutt,” added Louise, in a tone of gentle reproach.

McNutt wiggled the toes of his good foot and regarded them reflectively. These city folks were surely the “easiest marks” he had ever come across.

“Ef ye could wait a few days,” he began, hopefully, “I might — — ”

“Oh, no; we can’t possibly wait a single minute,” declared Patsy. “Unless Uncle can get the Saints right away he will lose interest in the collection, and then he won’t care for them at all.”

McNutt sighed dismally. Here was a chance to make good money by fleecing the lambs, yet he was absolutely unable to take advantage of it.

“Ye — ye couldn’t use any duck eggs, could ye?” he said, a sudden thought seeming to furnish him with a brilliant idea.

“Duck eggs?”

“I got the dum-twistedest, extry fine lot o’ duck eggs ye ever seen.”

“But what can we do with duck eggs?” inquired Beth, wonderingly, while Patsy and Louise tried hard not to shriek with laughter.

“W’y, set ‘em under a hen, an’ hatch ‘em out.”

“Sir,” said Beth, “I strongly disapprove of such deceptions. It seems to me that making a poor hen hatch out ducks, under the delusion that they are chickens, is one of the most cruel and treacherous acts that humanity can be guilty of. Imagine the poor thing’s feelings when her children take to water! I’m surprised you could suggest such a wicked use for duck eggs.”

McNutt wiggled his toes again, desperately.

“Can’t use any sas’frass roots, can ye?”

“No, indeed; all we crave is the ‘Lives of the Saints.’“

“Don’t want to buy no land?”

“What have you got to sell?”

“Nuth’n, jest now. But ef ye’ll buy I kin git ‘most anything.”

“Don’t go to any trouble on our account, sir; we are quite content with our splendid farm.”

“Shoo! Thet ain’t no good.”

“Captain Wegg thought it was,” answered Louise, quickly seizing this opening. “Otherwise he would not have built so good a house upon it.”

“The Cap’n were plumb crazy,” declared the agent, emphatically. “He didn’t want ter farm when he come here; he jest wanted to hide.”

The girls exchanged quick glances of intelligence.

“Why?”

“Why?” repeated McNutt. “Thet’s a thing what’s puzzled us fer years, miss. Some thinks Wegg were a piret; some thinks he kidnaped thet pretty wife o’ his’n an’ took her money; some thinks he tried to rob ol’ Will Thompson, an’ Will killed him an’ then went crazy hisself. There’s all sorts o’ thinks goin’ ‘round; but who *knows*?”

“Don’t you, Mr. McNutt?”

The agent was flattered by the question. As he had said, the Weggs had formed the chief topic of conversation in Millville for years, and no one had a more vivid interest in their history than Marshall McMahon McNutt. He enjoyed gossiping about the Weggs almost as much as he did selling books.

“I never thought I had no call to stick my nose inter other folkses privit doin’s,” he said, after a few puffs at the corncob pipe. “But they kain’t hide much from Marsh McNutt, when he has his eyes open.”

Patsy wondered if he could possibly close them. The eyelids seemed to be shy and retiring.

“I seen what I seen,” continued the little man, glancing impressively at his attentive audience. “I seen Cap’n Wegg livin’ without workin’, fer he never lifted a hand to do even a chore. I seen him jest settin’ ‘round an’ smokin’ his pipe an’ a glowerin’ like a devil on ev’ryone thet come near. Say, once he ordered me off’n his premises — me!”

“What a dreadful man,” said Patsy. “Did he buy any ‘Lives of the Saints?’“

“Not a Life. He made poor Ol’ Hucks fetch an’ carry fer him ev’ry blessid minnit, an’ never paid him no wages.”

“Are you sure?” asked Louise.

“Sure as shootin’. Hucks hain’t never been seen to spend a cent in all the years he’s been here.”

“Hasn’t he sold berries and fruit since the Captain’s death?”

“Jest ‘nough to pay the taxes, which ain’t much. Ye see, young Joe were away an’ couldn’t raise the tax money, so Ol’ Hucks had to. But how they got enough ter live on, him an’ Nora, beats me.”

“Perhaps Captain Wegg left some money,” suggested Patsy.

“No; when Joe an’ Hucks ransacked the house arter the Cap’n’s death they couldn’t find a dollar. Cur’ous. Plenty o’ money till he died, ‘n’ then not a red cent. Curiouser yet. Ol’ Will Thompson’s savin’s dis’peared, too, an’ never could be located to this day.”

“Were they robbed, do you suppose?” asked Louise.

“Nat’rally. But who done it? Not Ol’ Hucks, fer he’s too honest, an’ hasn’t showed the color of a nickel sense. Not Joe; ‘cause he had to borrer five dollars of Bob West to git to the city with. Who then?”

“Perhaps,” said Louise, slowly, “some burglar did it.”

“Ain’t no burglers ‘round these parts.”

“I suppose not. Only book agents,” remarked Beth.

McNutt flushed.

“Do ye mean as I did it?” he demanded, angrily. “Do ye mean as I killed Cap’n Wegg an’ druv 01’ Will crazy, an’ robbed the house?”

His features were fairly contorted, and his colorless eyes rolled fearfully.

“If you did,” said Beth, coolly, “you would be sure to deny it.”

“I kin prove a alybi,” answered the little man, calming down somewhat. “I kin prove my ol’ woman had me locked up in the chicken-coop thet night ‘cause I wouldn’t split a lot o’ cordwood thet were full o’ knots.” He cast a half fearful glance over his shoulder toward the interior of the cottage. “Next day I split ‘em,” he added, mildly.

“Perhaps,” said Louise, again, “someone who knew Captain Wegg in the days before he came here followed him to his retreat and robbed and murdered him.”

“Now ye’ve hit the nail on the head!” cried the agent, slapping his fat thigh energetically. “Thet’s what I allus claimed, even when Bob West jest shook his head an’ smiled sort o’ superior like.”

“Who is Bob West?” asked Louise, with interest.

“He’s our implement man, an’ hardware dealer. Bob were the on’y one o’ the Millville folks thet could git along with Cap’n Wegg, an’ even he didn’t manage to be any special friend. Bob’s rich, ye know. Rich as blazes. Folks do say he’s wuth ten thousan’ dollars; but it don’t set Bob up any. He jest minds his business an’ goes on sellin’ plows an’ harvesters to the farmers an’ takin’ notes fer ‘em.”

“And you say he knew Captain Wegg well?” inquired Patsy.

“Better ‘n’ most folks ‘round here did. Once er twicet a year the Cap’n ‘d

go to Bob's office an' set around an' smoke his pipe. Sometimes Bob would go to the farm an' spend an' ev'nin'; but not often. Ol' Will Thompson might be said to be the on'y friend the Cap'n really hankered fer."

"I'd like to meet Mr. West," said Louise, casting a shrewd look at her cousins. For here was another clue unearthed.

"He's in his store now." remarked McNutt, "Last buildin' on the left. Ye can't miss it."

"Thank you. Good morning, sir."

"Can't use any buttermilk er Dutch cheese?"

"No, thank you."

McNutt stared after them disconsolately. These girls represented so much money that ought to be in his pockets, and they were, moreover, "innercent as turtle doves"; but he could think of no way to pluck their golden quills or even to arrest their flight.

"Well, let 'em go," he muttered. "This thing ain't ended yit."

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB WEST, HARDWARE DEALER.

A few steps down the little street brought the girls to the hardware store, quite the most imposing building in town. They crossed the broad platform on which stood samples of heavy farm machinery and entered a well-stocked room where many articles of hardware and house furnishings were neatly and systematically arranged.

The place seemed deserted, for at that time of day no country people were at Millville; but on passing down the aisle the visitor approached a little office built at the rear of the store. Behind the desk Bob West sat upon his high stool, gravely regarding his unusual customers over the rims of his spectacles.

"Good morning," said Louise, taking the lead. "Have you a stew pan?"

The merchant left the office and silently walked behind the counter.

"Large or small, miss?" he then asked.

The girls became interested in stew pans, which they were scarcely able to recognize by their official name. Mr. West offered no comment as they made their selection.

"Can you send this to the Wegg farm?" asked Louise, opening her purse to make payment.

West smiled.

"I have no means of delivering goods," said he; "but if you can wait a day or two I may catch some farmer going that way who will consent to take it."

"Oh. Didn't Captain Wegg purchase his supplies in the village?" asked the girl.

"Some of them. But it is our custom here to take goods that we purchase home with us. As yet Millville is scarcely large enough to require a delivery wagon."

The nieces laughed pleasantly, and Beth said:

"Are you an old inhabitant, Mr. West?"

"I have been here thirty-five years."

"Then you knew Captain Wegg?" Louise ventured.

"Very well."

The answer was so frank and free from embarrassment that his questioner hesitated. Here was a man distinctly superior to the others they had interviewed, a man of keen intellect and worldly knowledge, who would be instantly on his guard if he suspected they were cross-examining him. So Louise, with her usual tact, decided to speak plainly.

"We have been much interested in the history of the Wegg family," she

remarked, easily; “and perhaps it is natural for us to speculate concerning the characters of our predecessors. It was so odd that Captain Wegg should build so good a house on such a poor farm.”

“Yes.”

“And he was a sea captain, who retired far from the sea, which he must have loved.”

“To be sure.”

“It made him dissatisfied, they say, as well as surly and unsociable; but he stuck it out even after his poor wife died, and until the day of the murder.”

“Murder?” in a tone of mild surprise.

“Was it not murder?” she asked, quickly.

He gave his shoulders a quiet shrug.

“The physician pronounced it heart disease, I believe.”

“What physician?”

“Eh? Why, one who was fishing in the neighborhood for trout, and staying at the hotel. Old Dr. Jackson was in Huntington at the time, I remember.”

The girls exchanged significant glances, and West noted them and smiled again.

“That murder theory is a new one to me,” he said; “but I see now why it originated. The employment of a strolling physician would give color to the suspicion.”

“What do you think, sir?” asked Patsy, who had been watching the man’s expression closely.

“I? What do I think? Why, that Captain Wegg died from heart disease, as he had often told me he was sure to do in time.”

“Then what made old Mr. Thompson go mad?” inquired Beth.

“The shock of his friend’s sudden death. He had been mentally unbalanced for some time previous — not quite mad, you understand, but showing by his actions at times that his brain was affected.”

“Can you explain what became of their money?” asked Louise, abruptly.

West gave a start, but collected himself in an instant and covered the action with another shrug.

“I cannot say what become of their money,” he answered.

It struck both Beth and Louise that his tone indicated he would not, rather than that he could not say. Before they had time to ask another questioned he continued:

“Will you take the saucepan with you, then, or shall I try to send it in a day or so?”

“We will take it, if you please,” answered Louise. But as he wrapped it into a neat parcel she made one more effort.

“What sort of a young man was Joseph Wegg?”

“Joe? A mere boy, untried and unsettled. A bright boy, in his way, and ambitious to have a part in the big world. He’s there now, I believe.”

He spoke with an air of relief, and handed Louise the parcel.

“Thank you, young ladies. Pray call again if I can be of service to you,” he added, in a brisker tone.

They had no recourse but to walk out, which they did without further words. Indeed, they were all three silent until they had left the village far behind and were half way to the farm.

Then Patsy said, inquiringly:

“Well, girls?”

“We have progressed,” announced Louise, seriously.

“In what way?”

“Several things are impressed upon my mind,” replied the girl. “One is McNutt’s absurd indignation when he thought we hinted that he was the murderer.”

“What do you make of that?” queried Patsy.

“It suggests that he knows something of the murder, even if he is himself wholly innocent. His alibi is another absurdity.”

“Then that exonerated Old Hucks,” said Patsy, relieved.

“Oh, not at all. Hucks may have committed the deed and McNutt knows about it. Or they might have been partners in the crime.”

“What else have you learned, Louise?” asked Beth.

“That the man West knows what became of the money.”

“He seems like a very respectable man,” asserted Patsy.

“Outwardly, yes; but I don’t like the cold, calculating expression in his eyes. He is the rich man of this neighborhood. Do you suppose he acquired a fortune honestly in this forsaken district, where everyone else is poor as a church mouse?”

“Seems to me,” said Patsy, discontentedly, “that the plot thickens, as they say in novels. If we interview many more people we shall find ourselves suspecting an army.”

“Not at all, my dear,” replied Louise, coldly. “From our present knowledge the murder lies between the unknown avenger and Hucks, with the possibility that McNutt is implicated. This avenger may be the stranger who posed as a physician and said Captain Wegg died of heart disease, in order to prevent the simple people from suspecting a murder. His fishing was all a blind. Perhaps McNutt was his accomplice. That staring scarecrow would do anything for money. And then we come to the robbery. If Hucks did the murder he took the money, and perhaps West, the hardware dealer,

knows this. Or West may have arrived at the house after the mysterious stranger committed the deed, and robbed the two men himself."

"And perhaps he didn't," said Patsy, skeptically. "Do you know, girls, I'd like to find Joe Wegg. He could put us right, I'm sure."

"Joe!"

"Yes. Why don't we suspect him of something? Or Ethel; or old Nora?"

"Do be sensible, Patsy," said Beth, impatiently.

But Louise walked on a way in silence. Presently she remarked:

"I'm glad you mentioned Joe Wegg. The boy gives me an idea that may reconcile many conflicting suspicions."

"In what way, Louise?"

"I'll tell you when I've thought it out," she replied.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAJOR IS PUZZLED.

Ethel came frequently to visit the girls at the Wegg farm, and at such times Uncle John treated her with the same affectionate consideration he bestowed upon his nieces, and made her so cordially welcome that the little school teacher felt entirely at her ease. The girls did not confide to Ethel their investigation of the Wegg mystery, but in all other matters gave her their full confidence. Together they made excursions to the Falls, to the natural caves on the rocky hill called Mount Parnassus, or rowed on the lake, or walked or drove, as the mood seized them. But mostly they loved the shade of the pines and the broad green beside the quaint mansion Captain Wegg had built, and which now contained all the elements of a modern summer home.

Once Louise asked Ethel, casually, if she knew what "great trouble" had come to Hucks and his wife in their early life, but the girl frankly answered that the old people had never referred to anything of the kind in her presence.

Finally a telegram announced the arrival of Major Doyle to join the party at the farm. Patsy was in the seventh heaven of delight, and drove Joe over to the Junction to meet her father on the arrival of the morning train.

The Major was a prime favorite with all the party and his coming infused new life into the household. He was the type of educated, polished, open-hearted Irish gentleman it is always a delight to meet, and Uncle John beamed upon his brother-in-law in a way that betokened a hearty welcome. It was a source of much satisfaction to lug the Major over the farm and prove to him how wise Mr. Merrick had been in deciding to spend the summer on his own property; and the Major freely acknowledged that he had been in error and the place was as charming as anyone could wish. It was a great treat to the grizzled old warrior to find himself in the country, away from every responsibility of work, and he promised himself a fortnight of absolute rest, with the recreation of beholding his beloved Patsy as often as he pleased.

Of course, the girl would tell her father about the Wegg mystery, for Patsy had a habit of telling him everything; therefore the cousins decided to take the Major freely into their confidence, so as to obtain the benefit of his opinion. That could not be done the first day, of course, for on that day Uncle John insisted on displaying the farm and afterward carrying the Major a willing prisoner to watch him fish in the brook. But on the following morning the girls surrounded Patsy's father and with solemn faces recounted their suspicions, the important clues they had unearthed, and their earnest desire to right the great wrong that had been done by apprehending the criminal.

The Major smoked his after breakfast cigar and listened attentively. The story, told consecutively, was quite impressive. In spite of his long experience in buffeting the world, the old soldier's heart was still as simple as that of a child, and the recital awakened his sympathies at once.

"'Tis evident, me children," said he, in his quaint way, "that you've shtumbled on the inside of a crime that doesn't show on the outside. Many of the things you mention are so plain that he who runs may read; but I've remarked that it's just the things ye don't suspect in real life that prove to be the most important."

"That is true, Major," commented Louise. "At first it was just to amuse ourselves that we became amateur detectives, but the developments are so startling and serious that we now consider it our duty to uncover the whole dreadful crime, in the interests of justice."

"Just so," he said, nodding.

"But I'm sure Old Hucks is innocent!" declared Patsy, emphatically.

"Then he is," asserted the Major; "for Patsy's always right, even when she's wrong. I've had me eye on that man Hucks already, for he's the merriest faced villain I ever encountered. Do you say he's shy with you girls?"

"He seems afraid of us, or suspicious, and won't let us talk to him," answered Beth.

"Leave him to me," proposed the Major, turning a stern face but twinkling eyes upon the group. "'Twill be my task to detect him. Leave him to me, young women, an' I'll put the thumb-screws on him in short order."

Here was the sort of energetic confederate they had longed for. The Major's assurance of co-operation was welcome indeed, and while he entered heartily into their campaign he agreed that no mention of the affair ought to reach Uncle John's ears until the case was complete and they could call upon the authorities to arrest the criminal.

"It's me humble opinion," he remarked, "that the interesting individual you call the 'avenger' was put on the trail by someone here — either Thomas Hucks, or the timber-toed book agent, or the respectable hardware man. Being invited to come and do his worst, he passed himself as a docther on a fishing excursion, and having with deliberate intent murthered Captain Wegg, got himself called by the coroner to testify that the victim died of heart disease. A very pretty bit of scoundrelism; eh, me dears?"

"But the robber — who do you think he was?" asked Louise.

"That I've still to discover. You inform me that Hucks is eager for money and acts like a miser. I've seen the time I was eager for money meself, and there's not a miserly hair on me bald head. But exceptions prove the rule. I'll

watch our smiling Thomas and make a report later."

Within half an hour he was telling Hucks a funny story and slapping the old man upon the back as familiarly as if he had known him for years. He found an opportunity that same day to give Thomas a dollar in return for a slight service, and was amazed at the eagerness with which the coin was clutched and the earnestness of the thanks expressed. It really did seem as if the man was fond of money. But when the Major tried to draw Hucks into speaking of his past history and of Captain Wegg's singular life and death, the old fellow became reserved at once and evaded the inquiries most skillfully.

That night, as the Major strolled in the orchard to smoke his last cigar after all the others had retired to bed, he noticed Hucks leave the back door of the lean-to with a parcel under his arm and pass hurriedly around the barn. After a little hesitation he decided to follow the man, and crept stealthily along in the shadow of the trees and buildings until he found himself at the edge of the berry-patch that was in the rear of the outbuildings. But there he paused irresolutely, for Thomas had completely disappeared.

The Major was puzzled, but decided to watch for the man's return. So he took a position where he could watch the rear door of the house and smoked patiently for nearly an hour before Hucks returned and let himself quietly in.

He said nothing to the girls next day of this mysterious proceeding, but on the following night again took his station in the orchard to watch.

Sure enough, as soon as the house was quiet the old servant came out with a bundle underneath his arm; but this time he led his blind wife by the other hand.

The Major gave a low whistle and threw away his cigar. The night was so dark that he had little difficulty in following the aged pair closely enough to keep their shadowy forms in sight, without the risk of being discovered. They passed around the barn and along a path that led through the raspberry bushes back of the yard. There were several acres of these bushes, and just now they were full-leaved and almost shoulder high. The path wound this way and that, and branched in several directions. Twice the Major thought he had lost his quarry, but was guided aright by their soft footfalls. The ground dipped here and there, and as they entered one of the hollows Major Doyle was startled to observe the twinkle of a dim light ahead. A minute later he saw the outlines of a little frame building, and within this Old Hucks and Nora presently disappeared.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAN IN HIDING.

Cautiously the Major approached the cabin, which seemed to have been built as a place for the berry pickers to assemble and pack their fruit. It was constructed of rough boards and had a little window in the side nearest the dwelling house and a door on the opposite side.

Creeping near to the window the Major obtained a clear view of the interior. Upon a dilapidated wicker settee, which had one end propped with a box, partially reclined the form of a man whose right arm was in splints and supported by a sling, while his head was covered with plasters and bandages. The man's back was toward the window, but from his slender form and its graceful poise the Major imagined him young.

Old Nora held the left hand of this mysterious person in a warm clasp, bending now and then to press a kiss upon it, while Hucks busied himself opening the parcel he had brought and arranging various articles of food on a rickety stand at the head of the couch. The old man's smile was more benevolent and cheery than ever, and his actions denoted that strange, suppressed eagerness the Major had marked when he had taken the money.

The three spoke little, and in tones so low that the spy outside the window failed to catch them. Soon the injured man began to eat, feeding himself laboriously with his left hand. But his hunger was quickly satisfied, and then he lay back wearily upon his pillows, while Nora tenderly spread a coverlet over him.

After this the old couple did not linger long. Hucks poured some water from a jug into a tumbler, glanced around the little room to see that everything was in order, and then — after he and Nora had both kissed the bandaged forehead — blew out the candle and retired.

The Major crouched low in the berry bushes until the couple had passed by; then he rose and thoughtfully followed after them.

Whatever Patsy's father might have thought of the Wegg farm mystery before, this adventure convinced him that the girls were not altogether foolish in imagining a romance connected with the place. And, notwithstanding Patsy's loyal defense of Old Hucks, he was evidently tangled up in the affair to a large extent, and could explain if he chose much that was now puzzling the girl detectives.

After careful thought the Major decided to confide in Uncle John, at this juncture, rather than in the nieces; since the latest developments were more fitted for a man's interference.

By good fortune the girls had an engagement the next day, and set out

together in the surrey to visit Ethel Thompson and lunch with her in the rose bower, which was the pride of the little school teacher's garden. As soon as they were gone the Major hunted up Uncle John and said:

"Come with me, sir."

"I won't," was the brisk reply; "I'm going fishing, and whoever wishes my society must come with me."

"You'll not catch anything fishing, but you're very liable to catch something if you follow my lead," said the Major, meaningly.

"What's up, Gregory?"

"I'm not sure what it is, John." And then he carefully explained his discovery that an injured man was occupying the cabin in the berry patch, and seemed to be the object of the Hucks' tender care.

"It's the secrecy of the thing that astounds me most, sir," he added. "If all was open and above board, I'd think little enough of it."

Uncle John's kindly interest was at once aroused, and he proposed that they go directly to the cabin and interview the man in hiding. Hucks being at the time busy in the barn, the two men sauntered into the berry patch without being observed, and then walked briskly along the winding paths until they sighted the building.

Pausing at the window, they saw the man still reclining upon his cot, and holding in his left hand a book — one of Patsy's, the Major observed — which he was quietly engaged in reading. Then they moved around to the door, which Uncle John pushed open.

Without hesitation, the two men entered and stood gazing down upon the strange occupant of the place.

"Good morning," said Mr. Merrick, while the Major nodded a greeting.

The man half arose, moving stiffly.

"Pardon me, sirs," he said, rather startled at the interruption; "I regret that I am physically unable to receive you with more courtesy."

The Major gazed into the partially bandaged face with a glimmer of awakening recognition.

"H-m! Ha! If I'm not mistaken," said he, "it's Joseph Wegg."

"Oh; is it?" asked Uncle John, looking upon the young man curiously. "What's happened to you, Joseph?"

"Just an automobile accident, sir. The steering gear broke, and we went over an embankment."

"I see."

"Are you Mr. Merrick, sir."

"Yes."

"I owe you an apology for intruding upon your premises in this way, and

beg you to forgive the seeming impertinence. But I've been rather unlucky of late, sir, and without this refuge I don't know what would have become of me. I will explain, if you will permit me."

Uncle John nodded.

"After I had squandered the money you paid me, through Major Doyle, for this farm, in a vain endeavor to protect a patent I had secured, I was forced to become a chauffeur to earn my livelihood. I understand automobiles, you know, and obtained employment with a wealthy man who considered me a mere part of his machine. When the accident occurred, through no fault of mine, I was, fortunately, the only person injured; but my employer was so incensed over the damage to his automobile that he never even sent to inquire whether I lived or died. At a charity hospital they tried to mend my breaks and tinker up my anatomy. My shoulder-blade was shattered, my arm broken in three places, and four ribs were crashed in. The wounds in my head are mere abrasions of the scalp, and not serious. But it has taken me a long time to mend, and the crowded, stuffy hospital got on my nerves and worried me. Being penniless and friendless, I wrote to Thomas and asked him if he could find a way to get me to the old farm, for I never imagined you would yourself take possession of the deserted place you had bought.

"Thomas and Nora have cared for me since I was born, you know, and the old man was greatly distressed by the knowledge of my sad condition. He did not tell me you were here, for fear I would hesitate to come, but he sent me the money you had given him and Nora for wages, together with all that the young ladies had kindly given him. I was thus enabled to leave the hospital, which I had come to detest, and journey to my old home. I arrived at the Junction on a night train, and Thomas met me with your surrey, drove me here under cover of darkness, and concealed me in this out-of-the-way place, hoping you would not discover me.

"I regret that I was thus foisted upon you, believe me, sir; but, being here, I have no means of getting away again. Thomas Hucks has had little worldly experience, and cannot realize the full extent of the imposition he has practiced. He feeds me from your table, and is hoarding up his money for me against the time I shall have recovered sufficiently to leave. I think that is the full explanation, Mr. Merrick."

Again Uncle John nodded.

"How are you?" he asked.

"Doing finely, sir. I can walk a little, and my appetite is improving. The doctors said my shoulder would never be very strong again, but I'm beginning to hope they were mistaken. My ribs seem all right, and in another

ten days I shall remove the splints from my arm."

"You have no medical attendance?"

"Not since I left the hospital. But I imagine this pure, bracing air is better for me than a dozen doctors," was the cheerful reply.

"And what are your future plans?"

The young man smiled. He was little more than a boy, but his questioner noticed that he had a fine manly face and his eye was clear and steadfast.

"Nothing further than to get to work again as soon as I am able to undertake it," he said.

Uncle John looked thoughtfully, and drummed with his finger upon the little table.

"Joseph," he remarked, presently, "I bought this farm at a price altogether too small, considering its value."

The boy flushed.

"Please do not say that!" he exclaimed, hastily. "I am well aware that I virtually robbed you, and my only excuse is that I believed I would win my fight and be able to redeem the place. But that is over now, and you must not think that because I am ill and helpless I am an object of charity."

"Phoo!" said the little man; "aren't you accepting charity from Old Hucks?"

"But he stands as a second father to me. He is an old retainer of my family, and one of my ambitions is to secure a home for him and Nora in their old age. No; I do not feel at all embarrassed in accepting money or assistance from Thomas."

"Young man," said Uncle John, sternly, "one of the follies of youth is the idea of being independent of the good-will of your fellow-creatures. Every person who lives is dependent on some other person for something or other, and I'll not allow you to make a fool of yourself by refusing to let me take you in hand. Your brain is affected — "

"It is not!"

"You are mentally unbalanced, and need a guardian. That's me. You are helpless and cannot resist, so you're my prisoner. Dare to defy me, dare to oppose my wishes in any way, and I'll have you put in a straight-jacket and confined in a padded cell. Understand me, sir?"

Joseph Wegg looked into the little man's round face until the tears filled his own eyes and blurred his vision.

"Won't you protect me, Major Doyle?" he asked, weakly.

"Not I," said the Major, stoutly. "This brother-in-law of mine, who connected himself with me without asking permission, is a perfect demon when 'roused, and I'll not meddle with any opposition to his desires. If you

value your life and happiness, Joseph Wegg, you'll accept Mr. Merrick as a guardian until he resigns of his own accord, and then it's likely you'll wish he hadn't."

"I don't deserve — — " began the young man, brokenly; but Uncle John quickly interrupted him.

"No one deserves anything," said he; "but everyone gets something or other, nevertheless, in this vale of tears. If you'll kindly remember that you've no right to express an opinion in the presence of your guardian, we'll get along better together. Now, then, you're going to leave here, because the place is not comfortable. My guests fill every room in my house, so you can't go there. But the hotel in Millville is a cheerful-looking place, and I've noticed some vine-covered windows that indicate pleasant and sunny rooms. Major, go and tell Hucks to hitch that groaning, balky Daniel to the ancient buggy, and then to drive this young man over to the hotel. We'll walk."

The Major started at once, and Uncle John continued: "I don't know whether this arrangement suits you or not, Joseph, but it suits me; and, as a matter of fact, it's none of your business. Feel able to take a ride?"

The boy smiled, gratefully.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Merrick," said he, and was shrewd enough not to venture a word of thanks.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MATTER OF SPECULATION.

Old Hucks, still smiling, but dreadfully nervous over the discovery of Joe, and Mr. Merrick's sudden activity in the boy's behalf, speedily harnessed Daniel and induced the reluctant steed to amble down the path to the cabin. Leaning on Uncle John's arm, the invalid walked to the buggy and was assisted to mount to the seat beside Thomas. Then away they started, and, although Dan obeyed Hucks more willingly than any other driver, the Major and Uncle John walked 'cross-lots and reached the hotel a good fifteen minutes in advance of the equipage.

The Millville Hotel depended almost entirely for patronage upon the commercial travelers who visited the place periodically to sell goods to the merchants, and these did not come too often, because trade was never very energetic and orders never very large. Bob West boarded at the hotel, and so did Ned Long, a "farm hand," who did sundry odd jobs for anyone who needed him, and helped pay his "keep" by working for Mrs. Kebble when not otherwise engaged.

Mrs. Kebble was the landlady, and a famous cook. Kate Kebble, a slatternly girl of sixteen, helped her mother do the work and waited on the table. Chet Kebble, the landlord, was a silent old man, with billy-goat whiskers and one stray eye, which, being constructed of glass, usually assumed a slanting gaze and refused to follow the direction of its fellow. Chet minded the billiard-room, which was mostly patronized Saturday nights, and did a meager business in fire insurance; but he was "so eternal lazy an' shifless," as Mrs. Kebble sharply asserted, that he was considered more a "hanger-on" of the establishment than its recognized head.

The little rooms of the hotel were plainly furnished but maintained with exceptional neatness.

The one in the east corner of the second floor met with the approval of Uncle John and the Major, and was promptly engaged. It was cheerful and sunny, with outlooks on the lake and the village, and contained a lounge as well as the bed.

When the invalid arrived, he was assisted to this apartment and installed as its permanent occupant.

"Any baggage?" asked Mr. Merrick.

"There's a small trunk lying at the Junction," said Joe; "but it contains little of importance."

"Well, make yourself at home, my boy, and get well at your leisure," remarked Uncle John. "Mrs. Kebble has promised to look after you, and the

Major and I will stop in now and then and see how you progress."

Then he went out, engaged Nick Thorne to go to the Junction for the boy's trunk, and selected several things at the store that he thought might be useful to the invalid. Afterward he marched home again beside the Major, feeling very well pleased with his morning's work.

When the girls reached home late in the afternoon, they were thrown into a state of great excitement by the news, briefly related by their uncle, that Joseph Wegg had returned to Millville "considerably smashed" by an automobile accident, and was now stopping at the village hotel for repairs.

They refrained from making remarks upon the incident until they were alone, when the secret council of three decided to make Joe Wegg's acquaintance as soon as possible, to discover what light the young man might be able to throw upon the great mystery.

"Do you know, girls," said Louise, impressively, "it almost seems as if fate had sent Joe Wegg here to be an instrument in the detection of the murderer and robber of his poor father."

"If Joe knew about it, why didn't he track the villain down himself?" inquired Patsy.

"Perhaps he hasn't suspected the truth," said Beth. "Often those who are closely concerned with such tragedies do not observe the evidences of crime as clearly as outsiders."

"Where did you get that information?" demanded Patsy.

"From one of Anna Doyle Oppenheim's detective stories," answered Beth, seriously. "I've been reading up on such things, lately."

"Detective stories," said Louise, reflectively, "are only useful in teaching us to observe the evidences of crime. This case, for example, is so intricate and unusual that only by careful thought, and following each thread of evidence to its end, can we hope to bring the criminal to justice."

"That seems to me conceited," observed Miss Doyle, composedly. "Detective stories don't have to stick to facts; or, rather, they can make the facts to be whatever they please. So I don't consider them as useful as they are ornamental. And this isn't a novel, girls; it's mostly suspicion and slander."

"You don't seem able to be in earnest about anything," objected Beth, turning a little red.

"But I try to be." said Patricia.

"We are straying from the subject now under discussion," remarked Louise. "I must say that I feel greatly encouraged by the sudden appearance of the Wegg boy. He may know something of his father's former associates that will enable us to determine the object of the murder and who

accomplished it."

"Captain Wegg was killed over three years ago," suggested Miss Doyle, recovering easily from her rebuff. "By this time the murderer may have died or moved to Madagascar."

"He is probably living within our reach, never suspecting that justice is about to overtake him," asserted Louise. "We must certainly go to call upon this Wegg boy, and draw from him such information as we can. I am almost certain that the end is in sight."

"We haven't any positive proof at all, yet," observed Patsy, musingly.

"We have plenty of circumstantial evidence," returned Beth. "There is only one way to explain the facts we have already learned, and the theory we have built up will be a hard one to overthrow. The flight of Captain Wegg to this place, his unhappy wife, the great trouble that old Nora has hinted at, the — "

"The great trouble ought to come first," declared Louise. "It is the foundation upon which rest all the mysterious occurrences following, and once we have learned what the great trouble was, the rest will be plain sailing."

"I agree with you," said Beth; "and perhaps Joseph Wegg will be able to tell us what the trouble was that ruined the lives of his parents, as well as of Old Hucks and his wife, and caused them all to flee here to hide themselves."

It was not until the following morning that the Major found an opportunity to give the confederates a solemn wink to indicate he had news to confide to them. They gathered eagerly on the lawn, and he told them of the finding of Joe Wegg in the isolated cabin, and how old Thomas and Nora, loving the boy as well as if he had been their own child, had sacrificed everything to assist him in his extremity.

"So ye see, my avenging angels, that ye run off the track in the Hucks matter," he added, smiling at their bewildered faces.

Patsy was delighted at this refutation of the slanderous suspicions that Thomas was a miser and his smiling face a mask to hide his innate villainy. The other girls were somewhat depressed by the overthrow of one of their pet theories, and reluctantly admitted that if Hucks had been the robber of his master and old Will Thompson, he would not have striven so eagerly to get enough money to send to Joe Wegg. But they pointed out that the old servant was surely hiding his knowledge of Captain Wegg's past, and could not be induced to clear up that portion of the mystery which he had full knowledge of. So, while he might be personally innocent of the murder or robbery, both Beth and Louise were confident he was attempting to shield the real criminal.

"But who is the real criminal?" inquired Patsy.

“Let us consider,” answer Louise, with the calm, businesslike tone she adopted in these matters. “There is the strolling physician, whom we call the Unknown Avenger, for one. A second suspect is the man McNutt, whose nature is so perverted that he would stick at nothing. The third suspicious individual is Mr. Bob West.”

“Oh, Louise! Mr. West is so respectable, and so prosperous,” exclaimed Patsy.

“It’s a far jump from McNutt to West,” added Beth.

“Leaving out Hucks,” continued Louise, her eyes sparkling with the delightful excitement of maintaining her theories against odds, “here are three people who might have been concerned in the robbery or murder. Two of them are under our hands; perhaps Joseph Wegg may be able to tell us where to find the third.”

They pleaded so hard with the Major to take them to call upon the injured youth that very day, that the old gentleman consented, and, without telling Uncle John of their plans, they drove to Millville in the afternoon and alighted at the hotel.

The Major went first to the boy’s room, and found him not only very comfortable, but bright and cheerful in mood.

“At this rate, sir,” he said, smilingly, “I shall be able to discharge my guardian in quick time. I’m twice the man I was yesterday.”

“I’ve brought some young ladies to call upon you,” announced the Major. “Will you see them?”

Joe flushed at first, remembering his plastered skull and maimed condition. But he could not well refuse to receive his callers, whom he guessed to be the three girls Old Hucks had praised to him so highly.

“It will give me great pleasure, sir,” he replied.

An invalid is usually of interest to women, so it is no wonder that the three young ladies were at once attracted by the bright-faced boy, who reclined upon his couch before the vine-covered windows. They thought of Ethel, too, and did not marvel that the girl grieved over the loss of this friend of her childhood.

Joe had to recount the adventure with the automobile, which led to his injuries, and afterward give an account of his life at the hospital. That led, naturally, to the timely assistance rendered him by the faithful Thomas, so that Louise was able to broach the subject nearest her heart.

“We have been greatly interested in your old servants — whom we acquired with the farm, it seems — and all of us admire their simplicity and sincerity,” she began.

“Nora is a dear,” added Beth.

“And Thomas is so cheerful that his smile is enough to vanquish any attack of the blues,” said Patsy.

“The Hucks are the right sort, and no mistake,” declared the Major, taking his cue from the others.

This praise evidently delighted the boy. They could have found no more direct way to win his confidence.

“Nora was my mother’s maid from the time she was a mere girl,” said he; “and Thomas sailed with my father many years before I was born.”

They were a little surprised to hear him speak so frankly. But Louise decided to take advantage of the opening afforded her.

“Nora has told us that some great trouble came to them years ago — a trouble that also affected your own parents. But they do not wish to talk about it to us.”

His face clouded.

“No, indeed,” said he. “Their loving old hearts have never recovered from the blow. Would you like to know their history? It is a sad story, and pitiful; but I am sure you would understand and appreciate my old friends better after hearing it.”

Their hearts fairly jumped with joy. Would they like to hear the story? Was it not this very clue which they had been blindly groping for to enable them to solve the mystery of the Wegg crime? The boy marked their interest, and began his story at once, while the hearts of the three girls sang-gladly: “At last — at last!”

CHAPTER XVII.

JOE TELLS OF "THE GREAT TROUBLE."

"As a young man, my father was a successful sea captain," said the boy, "and, before he was thirty, owned a considerable interest in the ship he sailed. Thomas Hucks was his boatswain, — an honest and able seaman in whom my father became much interested. Hucks was married, and his wife was an attendant in the employ of Hugh Carter, a wealthy ship chandler of Edmunton, the port from which my fathers ship sailed. Thomas had some difficulty in enjoying his wife's society when on shore, because old Carter did not want him hanging around the house; so Captain Wegg good-naturedly offered to intercede for him.

"Carter was a gruff and disagreeable man, and, although my father had been a good customer, he refused his request and threatened to discharge Nora, which he did. This made Captain Wegg angry, and he called upon Mary Carter, whose especial attendant Nora had been, to ask her to take the girl back. Mary was a mild young lady, who dared not oppose her father; but the result of the interview was that the sea captain and Mary Carter fell mutually in love. During the next two or three years, whenever the ship was in port, the lovers frequently met by stealth at the cottage of Mrs. Hucks, a little place Thomas had rented. Here my father and mother were finally married.

"Meantime Nora had a son, a fine young chap, I've heard; and presently my mother, who had a little fortune of her own, plucked up enough courage to leave her father's roof, and took up her abode in a pretty villa on the edge of a bluff overlooking the sea. Nora came to live with her again, bringing her child, and the two women were company for one another while their husbands were at sea.

"In course of time my mother had two children, a girl and a boy, and because the Hucks boy was considerably older than they, he took care of them, to a great extent, and the three youngsters were always together. Their favorite playground was on the beach, at the foot of the bluff, and before young Tom was ten years old he could swim like a duck, and manage a boat remarkably well. The Wegg children, having something of their mother's timid nature, perhaps, were not so adventurous, but they seldom hesitated to go wherever Tom led them.

"One day, while my mother was slightly ill and Nora was attending to her, Tom disobeyed the commands that had been given him, and took his younger companions out on the ocean for a ride in his boat. No one knows how far they went, or exactly what happened to them; but a sudden squall sprang up,

and the children being missed, my mother insisted, ill as she was, in running down to the shore to search for her darlings. Braving the wind and drenched by rain, the two mothers stood side by side, peering into the gloom, while brave men dared the waves to search for the missing ones. The body of the girl was first washed ashore, and my mother rocked the lifeless form in her arms until her dead son was laid beside her. Then young Tom's body was recovered, and the horror was complete.

"When my father arrived, three days later, he not only found himself bereaved of the two children he had loved so tenderly, but his young wife was raving with brain fever, and likely to follow her babies to the grave. During that terrible time, Nora, who could not forget that it was her own adventurous son who had led all three children to their death, went suddenly blind — from grief, the doctors said.

"My father pulled his wife back to life by dint of careful nursing; but whenever she looked at the sea she would scream with horror; so it became necessary to take her where the cruel sound of the breakers could never reach her ears. I think the grief of Thomas and Nora was scarcely less than that of my own parents, and both men had suffered so severely that they were willing to abandon the sea and devote their lives to comforting their poor wives. Captain Wegg sold all his interests and his wife's villa, and brought the money here, where he established a home amid entirely different surroundings. He was devoted to my mother, I have heard, and when she died, soon after my birth, the Captain seemed to lose all further interest in life, and grew morose and unsociable with all his fellow-creatures.

"That, young ladies, is the story of what Thomas and Nora call their 'great trouble'; and I think it is rightly named, because it destroyed the happiness of two families. I was born long after the tragedy, but its shadow has saddened even my own life."

When the boy had finished, his voice trembling with emotion as he uttered the last words, his auditors were much affected by the sad tale. Patsy was positively weeping, and the Major blew his nose vigorously and advised his daughter to "dry up an' be sinsible." Beth's great eyes stared compassionately at the young fellow, and even Louise for the moment allowed her sympathy to outweigh the disappointment and chagrin of seeing her carefully constructed theory of crime topple over like the house of cards it was. There was now no avenger to be discovered, because there had been nothing to avenge. The simple yet pathetic story accounted for all the mystery that, in her imagination, enveloped the life and death of Captain Wegg. But — stay!

"How did your father die?" she asked, softly.

“Through a heart trouble, from which he had suffered for years, and which had obliged him to lead a very quiet life,” was the reply. “That was one of the things which, after my mother’s death, helped to sour his disposition. He could not return to the sea again, because he was told that any sudden excitement was likely to carry him off; and, indeed, that was exactly what happened.”

“How is that, sir?” asked the Major.

“It is more difficult to explain than the first of the story,” replied the boy, thoughtfully gazing through the window; “perhaps because I do not understand it so well. Our simple life here never made much of an inroad into my father’s modest fortune; for our wants were few; but Captain Wegg was a poor man of business, having been a sailor during all his active life. His only intimate friend — an honest, bluff old farmer named Will Thompson — was as childish regarding money matters as my father, but had a passion for investments, and induced my father to join some of his schemes. Mr. Thompson’s mind was somewhat erratic at times, but keen in some ways, nevertheless. Fearing to trust his judgment entirely, my father chose to lean upon the wisdom and experience of a shrewd merchant of Millville, named Robert West.”

“The hardware dealer?” asked Louise, impulsively.

“Yes; I see you have met him,” replied Joseph Wegg, with a smile at the eager, pretty face of his visitor. “Bob West was a prosperous man and very careful about his own investments; so he became a sort of business adviser to my father and Mr. Thompson, and arbitrated any differences of opinion they might have. For several years, due to West’s good offices, the two oddly mated friends were successful in their ventures, and added to their capital. Finally West came to them himself with a proposition. He had discovered a chance to make a good deal of money by purchasing an extensive pine forest near Almaquo, just across the border in Canada. West had taken an option on the property, when he found by accident that the Pierce-Lane Lumber Company was anxious to get hold of the tract and cut the timber on a royalty that would enable the owners to double their investment.”

“Howld on a jiffy!” cried the Major, excitedly. “Did I understand you to say the Pierce-Lane Lumber Company?”

“That was the firm, sir. I used to overhear my father and Will Thompson talking about this matter; but I must admit my knowledge is somewhat imperfect, because I never was allowed to ask questions. I remember learning the fact that West had not enough money to swing his option, and so urged his friends to join him. Relying upon West’s judgment, they put all their little fortunes into the deal, although Thompson grumbled at doing so,

because he claimed he had another investment that was better, and this matter of West's would prevent him from undertaking it. The Almaquo tract was purchased, and a contract made with the lumber company to cut the timber and pay them a royalty of so much a thousand feet. Yet, although the prospects for profit seemed so good, I know that for some reason both my father and Thompson were dissatisfied with the deal, and this may be accounted for by the fact that every penny of their money was tied up in one investment. West used to come to the house and argue with them that the property was safe as the Bank of England, and then old Will would tell him how much more he could have made out of another investment he had in mind; so that a coolness grew up between West and the others that gradually led to their estrangement.

"I can well remember the evening when Bob West's pretty financial bubble burst. Thompson and my father were sitting together in the right wing, smoking solemnly, and exchanging a few words, as was their custom, when West arrived with a while face, and a newspaper under his arm. I was in the next room, lying half asleep upon the sofa, when I heard West cry despairingly: 'Ruined — ruined — ruined!' I crept to the half-opened door, then, and looked in. Both men were staring, open-mouthed and half-dazed, at West, who was explaining in a trembling voice that a terrible forest fire had swept through the Almaquo section and wiped out every tree upon the property. He had the full account in the newspaper, and had begun reading it, when my father uttered a low moan and tumbled off his chair to the floor.

"Will Thompson gave a wild cry and knelt beside him.

"'My God! he's dead, Bob, — he's dead! — and you've killed him with your good news!' he screamed, already raving; and then Old Hucks ran in just in time to prevent the madman from throttling West, for his fingers were even then twined around Bob's throat. There was a desperate struggle, and I remember that, scared as I was, I joined Thomas in trying to pull Thompson off his prey. But suddenly old Will threw up his arms and toppled backward, still raving like a demon, but unable to move his body from the waist downward. West helped us to put him in bed, and said he was paralyzed, which afterward proved to be the truth. Also, his mind was forever gone; and I think it was father's death that did that, rather than the loss of his money."

They were all staring, white-faced, at the speaker. Most of the mystery was being cleared away; indeed, there was now little of mystery remaining at all.

"West hurried after a doctor," continued Joe, who was almost as much absorbed in his story as were his listeners, and spoke in a reflective, musing way, "and he succeeded in finding one who was stopping for a few days at

the hotel. Poor Bob was very kind to us in our trouble, and I never heard him mention a word about his own losses, which must have been severe. After the funeral was over, and I found I had nothing to inherit but the farm, I decided to go to the city and make my way there, as I had long wished to do. West gave me a little money to start me on my way, and the rest of my story is not very interesting to anybody. Major Doyle knows something of it, after the time when I got through my technical school by working as a servant to pay for my instruction. I'm a failure in life, so far, young ladies; but if you'll not bear that against me I'll try to do better in the future."

"Good!" cried the Major, approvingly, as he took the boy's left hand in both his own and pressed it. "You're developing the right spirit, Joseph, me lad, and we'll think no more about the sadness of the past, but look forward to the joy of your future."

"Of course," said Patsy, nodding gravely; "Joe Wegg is bound to be a great man, some day."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOCKED CUPBOARD.

Louise and Beth returned to the farm in dismal silence. Every prop had been knocked from beneath their carefully erected temple of mystery. Now there was no mystery at all.

In a few words, Joe Wegg had explained everything, and explained all so simply and naturally that Louise felt like sobbing with the bitterness of a child deprived of its pet plaything. The band of self-constituted girl detectives had been "put out of business," as Patsy said, because the plain fact had developed that there was nothing to detect, and never had been. There had been no murder, no robbery, no flight or hiding on the part of the Weggs to escape an injured enemy; nothing even mysterious, in the light of the story they had just heard. It was dreadfully humiliating and thoroughly disheartening, after all their earnest endeavor to investigate a crime that had never been committed.

Uncle John rallied his nieces on their somber faces at the dinner table, and was greatly amused when the Major, despite the appealing looks directed at him, gave Mr. Merrick a brief resume of the afternoon's developments.

"Well, I declare!" said the little man, merrily; "didn't I warn you, Louise, not to try to saddle a murder onto my new farm? How you foolish girls could ever have imagined such a carnival of crime in connection with the Weggs is certainly remarkable."

"I don't know about that, sir," returned the Major, seriously. "I was meself inoculated with the idea, and for a while I considered meself and the girls the equals of all the Pinkertons in the country. And when ye come to think of it, the history of poor Captain Wegg and his wife, and of Nora and Thomas as well, is out of the ordinary entirely, and, without the explanation, contained all the elements of a first-class mystery."

"How did you say the Weggs lost their money?" inquired Uncle John, turning the subject because he saw that it embarrassed his nieces.

"Why, forest fires at Almaquo, in Canada, burned down the timber they had bought," replied the Major. "And, by the way, John, you're interested in that matter yourself, for the Pierce-Lane Lumber Company, in which you own a lot of stock, had contracted to cut the timber on a royalty."

"How long ago?"

"Three years, sir."

"Well, we've been cutting timber at Almaquo ever since," said Mr. Merrick.

Louise dropped her fork with a clatter, disclosing, in this well-bred young

lady, an unusual degree of excitement.

"Then there *is* something to detect!" she cried.

"Eh? What do you mean?" inquired her uncle.

"If you've been cutting timber at Almaquo for three years, the trees couldn't have burned down," Louise declared, triumphantly.

"That is evident," said the Major, dryly. "I've had it in me mind, Louise, to take that matter up for investigation; but you are so imbued with the detective spirit that there's no heading you off a trail."

"Before the dessert comes on," announced Uncle John, impressively, "I want to make a statement. You folks have tried your hands at the detective business and made a mess of it. Now it's my turn. I'll be a detective for three days, and if I don't succeed better than you did, young women, we'll mingle our tears in all humility. Eh, Major?"

"Put me in the bunch, sir," said the old soldier, "I was as bad as any of them. And go ahead in your own way, if ye like. It's me humble opinion, John, that you're no Sherlock Holmes; but ye won't believe it 'til ye satisfy yourself of the fact."

Next morning the loungers around Sam Cotting's store were thrown into a state of great excitement when "the nabob" came over from the Wegg farm and held the long-distance telephone for more than an hour, while he talked with people in New York. The natives knew that their telephone, which was built into a small booth at one end of the store — next the post-office boxes — was part of a system that made it possible for one to talk to those in far away cities. Often the country people would eye the mysterious-looking instrument with awe and whisper to each other of its mighty powers; but no one had ever before used it to telephone farther than the Junction, and then only on rare occasions.

"It'll cost a heap o' money, Sam," said McNutt, uneasily, while Uncle John was engaged in his remarkable conversation. They could see him in the booth, through the little window.

"It will, Mac," was the solemn reply. "But the fool nabob may as well spend it thet way as any other. It's mighty little of his capital er surplus gits inter *my* cash-drawer; 'n' thet's a fact."

Uncle John came from the booth, perspiring, but smiling and happy. He walked across the street to see Joe Wegg, and found the youth seated in a rocking-chair and looking quite convalescent. But he had company. In a chair opposite sat a man neatly dressed, with a thin, intelligent face, a stubby gray moustache, and shrewd eyes covered by horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Good morning, Mr. Merrick," said Joe, cheerily; "this is Mr. Robert West, one of the Millville merchants, who is an old friend of our family."

“I’ve heard of Mr. West, and I’m glad to meet him,” replied Uncle John, looking at the other calmly, but not offering to shake hands. “I believe you are the president and treasurer of the Almaquo Timber Tract Company, are you not?”

Joseph looked startled, and then embarrassed, as he overheard the question. West, without altering his position of careless ease, glanced over the rims of his glasses at the speaker.

“I am the humble individual you refer to, Mr. Merrick,” he said, briefly.

“But the Almaquo timber all burned down.” remarked Joe, thinking an explanation was needed.

“That’s a mistake,” returned Mr. Merrick. “My company has paid Mr. West, as treasurer of his company, more than fifty thousand dollars during the last three years.”

West’s jaw dropped.

“Your company!” he exclaimed, as if mystified.

“Yes; I own the controlling interest in the Pierce-Lane Lumber Company, which has the contract to cut your timber,” answered Mr. Merrick.

The hardware dealer slowly arose and glanced at his watch.

“I must get back to my store,” he said. “You are somewhat in error about your company, Mr. Merrick; but I suppose your interests are so large and varied that you cannot well keep track of them. Good morning, sir. I’ll see you again soon, Joe. Glad you’re improving so rapidly. Let me know if I can do anything to help you.”

With these quiet words, he bowed and left the room, and when he had gone, Joe said, in a deprecating tone:

“Poor Bob must be very unhappy about having lost my father’s money in that speculation, for he advocated the plan very strongly, believing it was a good investment. I’m afraid your mistake about paying him all that money upset him. Don’t mind if he was a little brusque, sir. Bob West is a simple, kindly man, whom my father fully trusted. It was he that loaned me the money to get away from here with.”

“Tell me,” said Uncle John, thoughtfully, “did your father receive stock in the Almaquo Timber Tract Company in exchange for his money?”

“Oh, yes; I have seen it in the steel cupboard,” replied Joe.

“Where is that?”

“Why, it is the cupboard in the right wing of our house, which was the Captain’s own room. It was one of his whims, when he built, to provide what he called his ‘bank.’ You may have noticed the wooden doors of a cupboard built into the stone wall, sir?”

“Yes; I occupy the room.”

“Behind the wooden doors are others of steel. The entire cupboard is steel-lined. Near the bottom is a sliding-plate, which, when pushed aside, discovers a hidden drawer — a secret my father never confided to anyone but me. He once told me that if his heart trouble earned him off suddenly I ought to know of the existence of this drawer; so he showed me how to find it. On the day after his death I took the keys, which he always carried on a small chain around his neck and concealed underneath his clothing, and opened the cupboard to see if I could find anything of value. It is needless to say, I could not discover anything that could be converted into a dollar. The Captain had filled the cupboard with old letters and papers of no value, and with relics he had brought from foreign lands during his many voyages. These last are mere rubbish, but I suppose he loved them for their association. In the secret drawer I found his stock in the timber company, and also that of old Will Thompson, who had doubtless left it with my father for safekeeping. Knowing it was now worthless, I left it in the drawer.”

“I’d like to see it,” announced Uncle John.

Joe laughed.

“I’ve lost the keys,” he said.

“How’s that, my lad?”

“Why, on the day of the funeral the keys disappeared. I could never imagine what became of them. But I did not care to look in the cupboard a second time, so the loss did not matter.”

Mr. Merrick seemed thoughtful.

“I suppose I own that cupboard now,” he remarked.

“Of course,” said Joe. “But without the keys it is not serviceable. If you drill through the steel doors you destroy their security.”

“True; but I may decide to do that.”

“If you do, sir, I’d like you to clear out the rubbish and papers and send them to me. They are family matters, and I did not intend to sell them with the place.”

“You shall have them, Joe.”

“Just underneath the left end of the lower shelf you will find the sliding steel plate. It slides toward the front. In the drawer you will find the worthless stock and a picture of my mother. I’d like to keep the picture.”

“You shall, Joseph. How are you getting on?”

“Why, I’m a new man, Mr. Merrick, and today I’m feeling as strong as a buffalo — thanks to your kind guardianship.”

“Don’t overdo, sir. Take it easy. There’s a young lady coming to see you today.”

“Ethel!” the boy exclaimed, his face turning crimson.

“Yes,” returned Uncle John, tersely. “You’ve treated that girl shamefully, Joseph Wegg. Try to make proper amends.”

“I never could understand,” said Joe, slowly, “why Ethel refused to answer the letter I wrote her when I went away. It explained everything, yet — ”

“I’ll bet the farm against your lame shoulder she never got your letter,” declared Uncle John. “She thought you left her without a word.”

“I gave it to McNutt to deliver after I was gone. But you say she’s coming today?”

“That is her intention, sir.”

Joe said nothing more, but his expressive face was smiling and eager. Uncle John pressed the boy’s hand and left him, promising to call again soon.

“Now, then,” muttered the little millionaire, as he walked down the street, “to beard the lion in his den.”

The den proved to be the hardware store, and the lion none other than Robert West. Mr. Merrick found the merchant seated at his desk in the otherwise deserted store, and, with a nod, helped himself to the only other chair the little office contained.

“Sir,” said he, “I am here to demand an explanation.”

“Of what?” asked West, coldly.

“Of your action in the matter of the Almaquo Timber Tract Company. I believe that you falsely asserted to Captain Wegg and Mr. Thompson that the timber had burned and their investment was therefore worthless. The news of the disaster killed one of your confiding friends and drove the other mad; but that was a consequence that I am sure you did not intend when you planned the fraud. The most serious thing I can accuse you of is holding the earnings of the Wegg and Thompson stock — and big earnings they are, too — for your own benefit, and defrauding the heirs of your associates of their money.”

West carefully balanced a penholder across his fingers, and eyed it with close attention.

“You are a queer man, Mr. Merrick,” he said, quietly. “I can only excuse your insults on the grounds of ignorance, or the fact that you have been misinformed. Here is the newspaper report of the Almaquo fire, which I showed my friends the night of Captain Wegg’s sudden death.” He took a clipping from a drawer of the desk and handed it to Uncle John, who read it carefully.

“As a matter of fact,” continued West, “you are not cutting that portion of the Almaquo tract which this fire refers to, and which Thompson and Wegg

were interested in, but the north half of the tract, which they had never acquired any title to."

"I suppose the stock will show that," suggested Mr. Merrick.

"Of course, sir."

"I will look it up."

West smiled.

"You will have some trouble doing that," he said.

"Why?"

"Wegg and Thompson had transferred their entire stock to me before one died and the other went mad," was the quiet reply.

"Oh, I see." The lie was so evident that Uncle John did not try to refute it.

"I am rather busy, Mr. Merrick. Anything more, sir?"

"Not today. Bye and bye, Mr. West."

He marched out again and climbed into his buggy to drive home. The interview with Bob West had made him uneasy, for the merchant's cold, crafty nature rendered him an opponent who would stick at nothing to protect his ill-gotten gains. Uncle John had thought it an easy matter to force him to disgorge, but West was the one inhabitant of Millville who had no simplicity in his character. He was as thoroughly imbued with worldly subtlety and cunning as if he had lived amid the grille of a city all his life; and Mr. Merrick was by no means sure of his own ability to unmask the man and force him to make restitution.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COURT'N OF SKIM CLARK.

By this time the summer was well advanced, and the rich people at the Wegg farm had ceased to be objects of wonder to the Millville folk. The girls were still regarded with curious looks when they wandered into the village on an errand, and Mr. Merrick and Major Doyle inspired a certain amount of awe; but time had dulled the edge of marvelous invasion and the city people were now accepted as a matter of course.

Peggy McNutt was still bothering his head over schemes to fleece the strangers, in blissful ignorance of the fact that one of his neighbors was planning to get ahead of him.

The Widow Clark was a shrewd woman. She had proven this by becoming one of the merchants of Millville after her husband's death. The poor man had left an insurance of five hundred dollars and the little frame building wherein he had conducted a harness shop. Mrs. Clark couldn't make and repair harness; so she cleared the straps and scraps and wax-ends out of the place, painted the interior of the shop bright yellow, with a blue ceiling, erected some shelves and a counter and turned part of the insurance money into candy, cigars, stationery, and a meager stock of paper-covered novels.

Skim, her small son, helped her as far as he was able, and between them they managed things so frugally that at the end of eight years the widow still had her five hundred dollars capital, and the little store had paid her living expenses.

Skim was named after his uncle, Peter Skimbley, who owned a farm near Watertown. The widow's hopeful was now a lank, pale-faced youth of eighteen, whose most imposing features were his big hands and a long nose that ended in a sharp point. The shop had ruined him for manual labor, for he sat hunched up by the stove in winter, and in summer hung around Cotting's store and listened to the gossip of the loungers. He was a boy of small conversational powers, but his mother declared that Skim "done a heap o' thinkin' that nobody suspected."

The widow was a good gossip herself, and knew all the happenings in the little town. She had a habit of reading all her stock of paper-covered novels before she sold them, and her mind was stocked with the mass of romance and adventure she had thus absorbed. "What I loves more'n eat'n' or sleep'n'," she often said, "is a rattlin' good love story. There don't seem to be much love in real life, so a poor lone crittur like me has to calm her hankerin's by a-readin' novels."

No one had been more interested in the advent of the millionaire at the

Wegg farm than the widow Clark. She had helped “fix up” the house for the new owner and her appreciative soul had been duly impressed by the display of wealth demonstrated by the fine furniture sent down from the city. She had watched the arrival of the party and noticed with eager eyes the group of three pretty and stylishly dressed nieces who accompanied their rich uncle. Once or twice since the young ladies had entered her establishment to purchase pens or stationery, and on such occasions the widow was quite overcome by their condescension.

All this set her thinking to some purpose. One day she walked over to the farm and made her way quietly to the back door. By good fortune she found blind Nora hemming napkins and in a mood to converse. Nora was an especially neat seamstress, but required some one to thread her needles. Mary the cook had been doing this, but now Mrs. Clark sat down beside Nora to “hev a little talk” and keep the needles supplied with thread.

She learned a good deal about the nieces, for old Nora could not praise them enough. They were always sweet and kind to her and she loved to talk about them. They were all rich, too, or would be; for their uncle had no children of his own and could leave several millions to each one when he died.

“An’ they’re so simple, too,” said the old woman; “nothin’ cityfied ner stuck-up about any on ‘em, I kin tell ye. They dresses as fine as the Queen o’ Sheba, Tom says; but they romp ‘round just like they was borned in the country. Miss Patsy she’s learnin’ to milk the cow, an’ Miss Beth takes care o’ the chickens all by herself. They’re reg’lar girls, Marthy Clark, an’ money hain’t spiled ‘em a bit.”

This report tended to waken a great ambition in the widow’s heart. Or perhaps the ambition had already taken form and this gossip confirmed and established it. Before she left the farm she had a chance to secretly observe the girls, and they met with her full approval.

At supper that evening she said to her hopeful:

“Skim, I want ye to go courtin’.”

Skim looked up in amazement.

“Me, ma?” he asked.

“Yes, you. It’s time you was thinkin’ of gittin’ married.”

Skim held his knife in his mouth a moment while he thought over this startling proposition. Then he removed the cutlery, heaved a deep sigh, and enquired:

“Who at, ma?”

“What’s that?”

“Who’ll I go courtin’ at?”

“Skim, you ‘member in thet las’ book we read, ‘The Angel Maniac’s Revenge,’ there was a sayin’ that fate knocks wunst on ev’ry man’s door. Well, fate’s knockin’ on your door.”

Skim listened, with a nervous glance toward the doorway. Then he shook his head.

“All fool fancy, ma,” he remarked. “Don’t ye go an’ git no rumantic notions out’n books inter yer head.”

“Skim, am I a fool, er ain’t I?”

“‘Tain’t fer me ter say, ma.”

“Fate’s knockin’, an’ if you don’t open to it, Skim, I’ll wash my hands o’ ye, an’ ye kin jest starve to death.”

The boy looked disturbed.

“What’s aggrivatin’ of ye, then?” he enquired, anxiously.

“A millionaire is come right under yer nose. He’s here in Millville, with three gals fer nieces thet’s all got money to squander an’s bound to hev more.”

Skim gave a low whistle.

“Ye don’t mean fer me to be courtin’ at them gals, do ye?” he demanded.

“Why not? Yer fambly’s jest as respectible as any, ‘cept thet yer Uncle Mell backslided after the last revival, an’ went to a hoss race. Yer young, an’ yer han’some; an’ there’s three gals waitin’ ready to be won by a bold wooer. Be bold, Skim; take fate by the fetlock, an’ yer fortun’s made easy!”

Skim did not reply at once. He gulped down his tea and stared at the opposite wall in deep thought. It wasn’t such a “tarnal bad notion,” after all, and so thoroughly impressed was he with his own importance and merit that it never occurred to him he would meet with any difficulties if he chose to undertake the conquest.

“Peggy says marri’ge is the mark of a fool; an’ Peggy married money, too,” he remarked slowly.

“Pah! money! Mary Ann Cotting didn’t hev but a hundred an’ forty dollars, all told, an’ she were an old maid an’ soured an’ squint-eyed when Peggy hitched up with her.”

“I hain’t seen nuthin’ o’ the world, yit,” continued Skim, evasively.

“Ner ye won’t nuther, onless ye marry money. Any one o’ them gals could take ye to Europe an’ back a dozen times.”

Skim reflected still farther.

“Courtin’ ought to hev some decent clothes,” he said. “I kain’t set in the nabob’s parlor, with all thet slick furnitur’, in Nick Thorne’s cast-off Sunday suit.”

“The cloth’s as good as ever was made, an’ I cut ‘em down myself, an’

stitched ‘em all over.”

“They don’t look like store clothes, though,” objected Skim.

The widow sighed.

“Tain’t the coat that makes the man, Skim.”

“It’s the coat thet makes decent courtin’, though,” he maintained, stubbornly. “Gals like to see a feller dressed up. It shows he means business an’ ‘mounts to somethin’.”

“I give Nick Thorne two dollars an’ a packidge o’ terbacker fer them clotlies, which the on’y thing wrong about was they’d got too snug fer comfert. Nick said so himself. But I’ll make a bargain with ye, Skim. Ef you’ll agree to give me fifty dollars after yer married, I’ll buy ye some store clothes o’ Sam Cotting, to do courtin’ in.”

“Fifty dollars!”

“Well, I’ve brung ye up, hain’t I?” “I’ve worked like a nigger, mindin’ shop.” “Say forty dollars. I ain’t small, an’ ef ye git one o’ them city gals, Skim, forty dollars won’t mean no more’n a wink of an eye to ye.”

Skim frowned. Then he smiled, and the smile disclosed a front tooth missing.

“I’ll dream on’t,” he said. “Let ye know in the mornin’, ma. But I won’t court a minite, mind ye, ‘nless I git store clothes.”

CHAPTER XX.

A LOST CAUSE.

The boy's musings confirmed him in the idea that his mother's scheme was entirely practical. He didn't hanker much to marry, being young and fairly satisfied with his present lot; but opportunities like this did not often occur, and it seemed his bounden duty to take advantage of it.

He got the "store clothes" next day, together with a scarlet necktie that was "all made up in the latest style," as Sam Cotting assured him, and a pair of yellow kid gloves "fit fer a howlin' swell." Skim wasn't sure, at first, about the gloves, but capitulated when Sam declared they were "real cityfied."

In the evening he "togged up," with his mother's help, and then walked over to the Wegg farm.

Beth answered the knock at the door. The living room was brightly lighted; Uncle John and the Major were playing checkers in a corner and Patsy was softly drumming on the piano. Louise had a book and Beth had been engaged upon some fancy-work.

When the door opened Skim bobbed his head and said:

"Evenin', mom. I've come a-visitin'."

Beth conquered an inclination to smile.

"Won't you come in?" she said, sweetly.

"Thankee; I will. I'm Skimbley Clark, ye know; down t' the village. Ma keeps a store there."

"I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Clark. Allow me to introduce to you my uncle and cousins," said the girl, her eyes dancing with amusement.

Skim acknowledged the introductions with intense gravity, and then sat down upon a straight-backed chair near the piano, this being the end of the room where the three girls were grouped. Uncle John gave a chuckle and resumed his game with the Major, who whispered that he would give a dollar for an oil painting of Mr. Clark — if it couldn't be had for less.

Louise laid down her book and regarded the visitor wonderingly. Patsy scented fun and drew a chair nearer the group. Beth resumed her embroidery with a demure smile that made Skim decide at once that "he picked the pretty one."

Indeed, the decision did justice to his discretion. Beth De Graf was a rarely beautiful girl and quite outshone her cousins in this respect. Louise might be attractive and Patsy fascinating; but Beth was the real beauty of the trio, and the most charming trait in her character was her unconsciousness that she excelled in good looks.

So Skim stared hard at Beth, and answered the preliminary remarks addressed to him by Patsy and Louise in a perfunctory manner.

"Won't you take off your gloves?" asked Louise, soberly. "It's so warm this evening, you know."

The boy looked at his hands.

"It's sech a tarnal job to git 'em on agin," he replied.

"Don't put them on, then," advised Patsy. "Here in the country we are allowed to dispense with much unnecessary social etiquette."

"Air ye? Then off they come. I ain't much stuck on gloves, myself; but ma she 'lowed that a feller goin' courtin' orter look like a sport."

A chorus of wild laughter, which greeted this speech, had the effect of making Skim stare at the girls indignantly. He couldn't find anything funny in his remark; but there they sat facing him and uttering hysterical peals of merriment, until the tears ran down their cheeks.

Silently and with caution he removed the yellow gloves from his hands, and so gave the foolish creatures a chance "to laugh out their blamed giggle."

But they were watching him, and saw that he was disconcerted. They had no mind to ruin the enjoyment in store for them by offending their guest, so they soon resumed a fitting gravity and began to assist the youth to forget their rudeness.

"May I ask," said Patsy, very graciously, "which one of us you intend to favor with your attentions?"

"I ain't much used to sech things," he replied, looking down at his big hands and growing a little red-faced. "P'raps I hadn't orter tell, before the rest o' ye."

"Oh, yes; do tell!" pleaded Louise. "We're so anxious to know."

"I don't s'pose it's right clever to pick an' choose when ye're all by," said Skim, regaining confidence. "But ma, she 'lowed thet with three gals handy I orter git one on 'em, to say the least."

"If you got more than one," remarked Beth, calmly, "it would be illegal."

"Oh, one's enough," said Skim, with a grin. "Peggy says it's too many, an' a feller oughtn't to take his gal out'n a grab-bag."

"I should think not, indeed," returned Patsy. "But here are three of us openly displayed, and unless you turn us all down as unworthy, it will be necessary for you to make a choice."

"What foolishness are you girls up to now?" demanded Uncle John, catching a stray word from the other corner while engaged in a desperate struggle with the Major.

"This is a time for you to keep quiet, Uncle," retorted Patsy, merrily. "We've got important things to consider that are none of your affairs,

whatever."

Skim reflected that he didn't want this one, except as a last resort. She was "too bossy."

"When I started out," he said, "I jest come a-courtin', as any feller might do thet wasn't much acquainted. But ef I've got to settle down to one o' ye — "

He hesitated.

"Oh, you must really take one at a time, you know," asserted Louise. "It's the only proper way."

"Then I'll start on thet dark-eyed one thet's a sewin'," he said, slowly.

Beth looked up from her work and smiled.

"Go ahead, Mr. Clark," she said, encouragingly. "My name is Beth. Had you forgotten it?"

"Call me Skim," he said, gently.

"Very well, Skim, — Now look here, Patsy Doyle, if you're going to sit there and giggle you'll spoil everything. Mr. Clark wants to court, and it's getting late."

"P'raps I've went fur enough fer tonight," remarked Skim, uneasily. "Next time they'll leave us alone, an' then — — "

"Oh, don't postpone it, please!" begged Beth, giving the boy a demure glance from her soft brown eyes. "And don't mind my cousins. I don't."

"These things kain't be hurried," he said. "Si Merkle courted three weeks afore he popped. He tol' me so."

"Then he was a very foolish man," declared Patsy, positively. "Just look at Beth! She's dying to have you speak out. What's the use of waiting, when she knows why you are here?"

By this time Skim had been flattered to the extent of destroying any stray sense he might ever have possessed. His utter ignorance of girls and their ways may have been partly responsible for his idiocy, or his mother's conviction that all that was necessary was for him to declare himself in order to be accepted had misled him and induced him to abandon any native diffidence he might have had. Anyway, the boy fell into the snare set by the mischievous young ladies without a suspicion of his impending fate.

"Miss Beth," said he, "ef yer willin', I'll marry ye; any time ye say. I agreed t' help Dick Pearson with the harvestin', but I'll try to' git Ned Long to take my place, an' it don't matter much, nohow."

"But I couldn't have you break an engagement," cried Beth, hastily.

"Why not?"

"Oh, it wouldn't be right, at all. Mr. Pearson would never forgive me," she asserted.

“Can’t ye — ”

“No; not before harvest, Skim. I couldn’t think of it.”

“But arterward — ”

“No; I’ve resolved never to marry after harvest. So, as you’re engaged, and I don’t approve of breaking engagements, I must refuse your proposition entirely.”

Skim looked surprised; then perplexed; then annoyed.

“P’raps I didn’t pop jest right,” he murmured, growing red again.

“You popped beautifully,” declared Patsy. “But Beth is very peculiar, and set in her ways. I’m afraid she wouldn’t make you a good wife, anyhow.”

“Then p’raps the gal in blue — — ”

“No;” said Louise. “I have the same prejudices as my cousin. If you hadn’t been engaged for the harvest I might have listened to you; but that settles the matter definitely, as far as I am concerned.”

Skim sighed.

“Ma’ll be mad as a hornet ef I don’t get any of ye,” he remarked, sadly. “She’s paid Sam Cotting fer this courtin’ suit, an’ he won’t take back the gloves on no ‘count arter they’ve been wore; an’ thet’ll set ma crazy. Miss Patsy, ef yo’ think ye could — — ”

“I’m sure I couldn’t,” said Patsy, promptly. “I’m awfully sorry to break your heart, Skim, dear, and ruin your future life, and make you misanthropic and cynical, and spoil your mother’s investment and make her mad as a hornet. All this grieves me terribly; but I’ll recover from it, if you’ll only give me time. And I hope you’ll find a wife that will be more congenial than I could ever be.”

Skim didn’t understand all these words, but the general tenor of the speech was convincing, and filled him with dismay.

“Rich gals is tarnal skeerce in these parts,” he said, regretfully.

Then they gave way again, and so lusty was the merriment that Uncle John and the Major abandoned their game and came across the room to discover the source of all this amusement.

“What’s up, young women?” asked their Uncle, glancing from their laughing faces to the lowering, sullen one of the boy, who had only now begun to suspect that he was being “poked fun at.”

“Oh, Uncle!” cried Patsy; “you’ve no idea how near you have been to losing us. We have each had an offer of marriage within the last half hour!”

“Dear me!” ejaculated Uncle John.

“It shows the young man’s intelligence and good taste,” said the Major, much amused. “But is it a Mormon ye are, sir, to want all three?” directing a keen glance at Skim.

“Naw, ‘tain’t,” he returned, wholly disgusted with the outcome of his suit. “All three got as’t ‘cause none of ‘em’s got sense enough t’ know a good thing when they seen it.”

“But I do,” said the Major, stoutly; “and I maintain that you’re a good thing, and always will be. I hope, sir, you’ll call ‘round and see me in Baltimore next year. I’ll not be there, but ye can leave your card, just the same.”

“Please call again, sir,” added Uncle John; “about October — just before snow flies.”

The boy got up.

“I don’t keer none,” he said, defiantly. “It’s all ma’s fault, gittin’ me laughed at, an’ she won’t hear the last of it in a hurry, nuther.”

“Be gentle with her, Skim,” suggested Beth, softly. “Remember she has to face the world with you by her side.”

Having no retort for this raillery, which he felt rather than understood, Skim seized his hat and fled. Then Patsy wiped the tears from her eyes and said:

“Wasn’t it grand, girls? I haven’t had so much fun since I was born.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRAP IS SET.

Uncle John was forced to acknowledge to his nieces that his boast to unmask Bob West within three days was mere blustering. If he accomplished anything in three weeks he would consider himself fortunate. But he had no wish to conceal anything from the girls, so he told them frankly of his interview with the hardware merchant, and also what Joe Wegg had said about the stock in the locked cupboard. They were, of course, greatly interested in this new phase of the matter and canvassed it long and eagerly.

"The man is lying, of course," said Patsy, "for Captain Wegg and poor Mr. Thompson could not transfer their stock to West after that fatal night when he brought to them the news of the fire."

"I believe the stock is still in this cupboard," declared Uncle John.

"Unless West stole the keys and has taken it away," suggested Louise.

"I'm sure he did not know about the secret drawer," said her uncle. "Probably he stole the keys and searched the cupboard; if he had found the stock he would have left the keys, which would then be of no further use to him. As he did not find the stock certificates, he carried the keys away, that he might search again at his leisure. And they've never yet been returned."

"Why, John, ye're possessed of the true detective instinct," the Major remarked, admiringly. "Your reasoning is at once clever and unassailable."

"I wonder," mused Beth, "if we could tempt Mr. West to come again to search the cupboard."

"He will scarcely venture to do that while we are here," replied Uncle John.

"I said 'tempt him,' Uncle."

"And what did you mean by that expression, Beth?"

"I'll think it over and tell you later," she returned, quietly.

* * * * *

Ethel Thompson would have shown Joe Wegg how much she resented his leaving Millville without a word to her, had she not learned from Mr. Merrick the boy's sad condition. Knowing her old friend was ill, she determined to ignore the past and go to him at once, and Uncle John knew very well there would be explanations to smooth away all the former misunderstandings.

Joe was now aware of the fact that his letter to Ethel had never reached its destination, so, as soon as the girl had arrived and the first rather formal greetings were over, he sent Kate Kebble to McNutt's to ask the agent to come over to the hotel at once.

The girl returned alone.

“Peggy says as he can’t come,” she announced.

“Why not?” asked Joe.

“Says he’s jest painted his off foot blue an’ striped it with red, an’ it hain’t dried yit.”

“Go back,” said Joe, firmly. “Tell Peggy he’s in trouble, and it’s likely to cost him more than a new coat of paint for his foot if he doesn’t come here at once.”

Kate went back, and in due time the stump of McNutt’s foot was heard on the stairs. He entered the room looking worried and suspicious, and the stern faces of Ethel and Joe did not reassure him, by any means. But he tried to disarm the pending accusation with his usual brazen impertinence.

“Nice time ter send fer me, this is, Joe,” he grumbled. “It’s gittin’ so a feller can’t even paint his foot in peace an’ quiet.”

“Peggy,” said Joe, “when I went away, three years ago, I gave you a letter for Miss Ethel. What did you do with it?”

Peggy’s bulging eyes stared at his blue foot, which he turned first one side and then the other to examine the red stripes.

“It’s this way, Joe,” he replied; “there wa’n’t no postige stamp on the letter, an’ Sam Cotting said it couldn’t be posted no way ‘thout a stamp.”

“It wasn’t to be sent through the post-office,” said the boy. “I gave you a quarter to deliver it in person to Miss Ethel.”

“Did ye, Joe? did ye?”

“Of course I did.”

“Cur’ous,” said McNutt, leaning over to touch the foot cautiously with one finger, to see if the paint was dry.

“Well, sir!”

“Well, Joe, there’s no use gittin’ mad ‘bout it. Thet blamed quarter ye giv me rolled down a crack in the stoop, an’ got lost. Sure. Got lost as easy as anything.”

“Well, what was that to me?”

“Oh, I ain’t blamin’ you,” said Peggy; “but ‘twere a good deal to me, I kin tell ye. A whole quarter lost!”

“Why didn’t you take up a board, and get it again?”

“Oh, I did,” said McNutt. cheerfully. “I did, Joe. But the money was all black an’ tarnished like, by thet time, an’ didn’t look at all like silver. Sam he wouldn’t take it at the store, so my ol’ woman she ‘lowed she’d polish it up a bit. Ye know how sort o’ vig’rous she is, Joe. She polished that blamed quarter the same way she jaws an’ sweeps; she polished it ‘til she rubbed both sides smooth as glass, an’ then Sam wouldn’t take it, nuther, ‘n’ said it

wasn't money any more. So I drilled two holes in it an' sewed it on my pants fer a 'spender butt'n."

"But why didn't you deliver the letter?"

"Did ye 'spect I'd tramp way t' Thompson's Crossing fer nuthin'?"

"I gave you a quarter."

"An' it turned out to be on'y a 'spender butt'n. Be reason'ble, Joe."

"Where is the letter?"

"'Tain't a letter no more. It's on'y ol' fambly papers by this time. Three years is — — "

"Where is it? By thunder, Peggy, if you don't answer me I'll put you in jail for breach of trust!"

"Ye've changed, Joe," sadly. "Ye ain't no more like — — "

"Where is it?"

"Behind the lookin'-glass in my sett'n-room."

"Go and get it immediately, sir!"

"Ef I hev to cross thet dusty road twic't more, I'll hev to paint all over agin, an' thet's a fact."

"Ethel," said Joe, with the calmness of despair, "you'll have to telephone over to the Junction and ask them to send a constable here at once."

"Never mind," cried McNutt, jumping up hastily; "I'll go. Paint don't cost much, nohow."

He stumped away, but on his return preferred to let Kate carry the soiled, torn envelope up to the young folks. The letter had palpably been tampered with. It had been opened and doubtless read, and the flap clumsily glued down again.

But Ethel had it now, and even after three years her sweet eyes dimmed as she read the tender words that Joe had written because he lacked the courage to speak them. "My one great ambition is to win a home for us, dear," he had declared, and with this before her eyes Ethel reproached herself for ever doubting his love or loyalty.

When she rode her pony over to the Wegg farm next day Ethel's bright face was wreathed with smiles. She told her girl friends that she and Joe had had a "good talk" together, and understood each other better than ever before. The nieces did not tell her of their newly conceived hopes that the young couple would presently possess enough money to render their future comfortable, because there were so many chances that Bob West might win the little game being played. But at this moment Ethel did not need worldly wealth to make her heart light and happy, for she had regained her childhood's friend, and his injuries only rendered the boy the more interesting and companionable.

Meantime Uncle John had been busily thinking. It annoyed him to be so composedly defied by a rascally country merchant, and he resolved, if he must fight, to fight with all his might.

So he wired to his agent in New York the following words:

"What part of the Almaquo timber tract burned in forest fire three years ago?"

The answer he received made him give a satisfied grunt.

"No forest fires near Almaquo three years ago. Almadona, seventy miles north, burned at that time, and newspaper reports confounded the names."

"Very good!" exclaimed Uncle John. "I've got the rascal now."

He issued instructions to the lumber company to make no further payments of royalties to Robert West until otherwise advised, and this had the effect of bringing West to the farm white with rage.

"What do you mean by this action, Mr. Merrick?" he demanded.

"We've been paying you money that does not belong to you for three years, sir," was the reply. "In a few days, when my investigations are complete, I will give you the option of being arrested for embezzlement of funds belonging to Joseph Wegg and the Thompsons, or restoring to them every penny of their money."

West stared.

"You are carrying matters with a high hand, sir," he sneered.

"Oh, no; I am acting very leniently," said Uncle John.

"Neither Joe nor the Thompsons own a dollar's interest in the Almaquo property. It is all mine, and mine alone."

"Then produce the stock and prove it!" retorted Mr. Merrick, triumphantly.

At that moment Louise interrupted the interview by entering the room suddenly.

"Oh, Uncle," said she, "will you join us in a picnic to the Falls tomorrow afternoon? We are all going."

"Then I won't be left behind," he replied, smiling upon her.

"We shall take even Thomas and Nora, and come home late in the evening, by moonlight."

"That suits me, my dear," said he.

West stood silent and scowling, but as the girl tripped away she saw him raise his eyes and glance slyly toward the cupboard, for they were in the right wing room.

"Mr. Merrick," he resumed, in a harsh voice; "I warn you that if your company holds up the payment of my royalties it will break the contract, and I will forbid them to cut another tree. You are doubtless aware that there are

a dozen firms willing to take your place and pay me higher royalties."

"Act as you please, sir," said Uncle John, indifferently. "I believe you are face to face with ruin, and it won't matter much what you do."

West went away more quietly than he had come, and the girls exclaimed, delightedly:

"The trap is set, Uncle!"

"I think so, myself," he rejoined. "That picnic was a happy thought, Louise."

Early the next afternoon they started out with hammocks and baskets and all the paraphernalia of a picnic party. The three girls, Nora and Uncle John squeezed themselves into the surrey, while the Major and Old Hucks rode after them in the ancient buggy, with Dan moaning and groaning every step he took. But the old horse moved more briskly when following Joe, and Hucks could get more speed out of him than anyone else; so he did not lag much behind.

The procession entered Millville, where a brief stop was made at the store, and then made its exit by the north road. West was standing in the door of his hardware store, quietly observing them. When they disappeared in the grove he locked the door of his establishment and sauntered in the direction of the Pearson farm, no one noticing him except Peggy McNutt, who was disappointed because he had intended to go over presently and buy a paper of tacks.

When the village was left behind, Uncle John drove swiftly along, following the curve of the lake until he reached a primitive lane that he had discovered formed a short cut directly back to the Wegg farm. Old Thomas was amazed by this queer action on the part of the picnic party, but aside from blind Nora, who had no idea where they were, the others seemed full of repressed eagerness, and in no way surprised.

The lane proved very rocky though, and they were obliged to jolt slowly over the big cobble stones. So Beth and Patsy leaped out of the surrey and the former called out:

"We will run through the forest, Uncle, and get home as soon as you do."

"Be careful not to show yourselves, then," he replied. "Remember our plans."

"We will. And don't forget to tie the horses in the thicket, and warn Thomas and Nora to keep quiet until we come for them," said Patsy.

"I'll attend to all that, dear," remarked Louise, composedly. "But if you girls are determined to walk, you must hurry along, or you will keep us waiting."

The nieces had explored every path in the neighborhood by this time, so

Beth and Patsy were quite at home in the pine forest. The horses started up again, and after struggling along another quarter of a mile a wheel of the surrey dished between two stones, and with a bump the axle struck the ground and the journey was promptly arrested.

"What shall we do now?" asked Uncle John, much annoyed, as the party alighted to examine the wreck.

"Send Thomas back to the village for another wheel" suggested the Major.

"Not today!" cried Louise. "We mustn't appear in the village again this afternoon, on any account. It is absolutely necessary we should keep out of sight."

"True," agreed Uncle John, promptly. "Thomas and Nora must picnic here all by themselves, until nearly midnight. Then they may drive the buggy home, leading Daniel behind them. It will be time enough tomorrow to get a new buggy wheel, and the broken surrey won't be in anybody's way until we send for it."

If Old Hucks thought they had all gone crazy that day he was seemingly justified in the suspicion, for his master left the baskets of good things to be consumed by himself and Nora and started to walk to the farm, the Major and Louise accompanying him.

"We mustn't loiter," said the girl, "for while West may wait until darkness falls to visit the farm, he is equally liable to arrive at any time this afternoon. He has seen us all depart, and believes the house deserted."

But they were obliged to keep to the lane, where walking was difficult, and meantime Patsy and Beth were tripping easily along their woodland paths and making much better progress.

CHAPTER XXII.

CAUGHT.

"We're early," said Beth, as they came to the edge of the woods and sighted the farm house; "but that is better than being late."

Then she stopped suddenly with a low cry and pointed to the right wing, which directly faced them. Bob West turned the corner of the house, tried the door of Uncle John's room, and then walked to one of the French windows. The sash was not fastened, so he deliberately opened it and stepped inside.

"What shall we do?" gasped Patsy, clasping her hands excitedly.

Beth was always cool in an emergency.

"You creep up to the window, dear, and wait till you hear me open the inside door," said she. "I'll run through the house and enter from the living-room. The key is under the mat, you know."

"But what can we do? Oughtn't we to wait until Uncle John and father come?" Patsy asked, in a trembling voice.

"Of course not. West might rob the cupboard and be gone by that time. We've got to act promptly, Patsy; so don't be afraid."

Without further words Beth ran around the back of the house and disappeared, while Patsy, trying to control the beating of her heart, stole softly over the lawn to the open window of Uncle John's room.

She could not help looking in, at the risk of discovery. Bob West — tall, lean and composed as ever — was standing beside the cupboard, the doors of which were wide open. The outer doors were of wood, panelled and carved; the inner ones were plates of heavy steel, and in the lock that secured these latter doors were the keys that had so long been missing. Both were attached to a slender silver chain.

As Patsy peered in at the man West was engaged in deliberately examining packet after packet of papers, evidently striving to find the missing stock certificates. He was in no hurry, believing he would have the house to himself for several hours; so he tumbled Captain Wegg's souvenirs of foreign lands in a heap on the floor beside him, thrusting his hand into every corner of the cupboard in order that the search might be thorough. He had once before examined the place in vain; this time he intended to succeed.

Presently West drew a cigar from his pocket, lighted it, and was about to throw the match upon the floor when the thought that it might later betray his presence made him pause and then walk to the open window. As he approached, Patsy became panic-stricken and, well knowing that she ought to run or hide, stood rooted to the spot, gazing half appealingly and half defiantly into the startled eyes of the man who suddenly confronted her.

So for a moment they stood motionless. West was thinking rapidly. By some error be had miscounted the picnic party and this girl had been left at home. She had discovered his intrusion, had seen him at the cupboard, and would report the matter to John Merrick. This being the case, it would do him no good to retreat without accomplishing his purpose. If once he secured the stock certificates he could afford to laugh at his accusers, and secure them he must while he had the opportunity.

So clearly did these thoughts follow one another that West's hesitation seemed only momentary. Without a word to the girl he tossed the match upon the grass, calmly turned his back, and started for the cupboard again.

But here a new surprise awaited him. Brief as had been his absence, another girl had entered the room. Beth opened the door even as West turned toward the window, and, taking in the situation at a glance, she tiptoed swiftly to the cupboard, withdrew the keys from the lock and dropped them noiselessly into a wide-mouthed vase that stood on the table and was partially filled with flowers. The next instant West turned and saw her, but she smiled at him triumphantly. "Good afternoon, sir," said the girl, sweetly; "can I do anything to assist you?"

West uttered an impatient exclamation and regarded Beth savagely.

"Is the house full of girls?" he demanded.

"Oh, no; Patsy and I are quite alone," she replied, with a laugh. "Come in, Patsy dear, and help me to entertain our guest," she added.

Patsy came through the window and stood beside her cousin. The man stared at them, bit his lip, and then turned again to the cupboard. If he noted the absence of the keys he did not remark upon the fact, but with hurried yet thorough examination began anew to turn over the bundles of papers.

Beth sat down and watched him, but Patsy remained standing behind her chair. West emptied all the shelves, and then after a pause took out his pocket knife and began tapping with its end the steel sides of the cupboard. There was no doubt he suspected the existence of a secret aperture, and Beth began to feel uneasy.

Slowly the man worked his way downward, from shelf to shelf, and began to sound the bottom plates, wholly oblivious of the fascinated gaze of the two young girls. Then a sudden gruff ejaculation startled them all, and West swung around to find a new group of watchers outside the window. In the foreground appeared the stern face of John Merrick.

The scene was intensely dramatic to all but the singular man who had been battling to retain a fortune. West knew in an instant that his attempt to secure the certificates was a failure. He turned from the cupboard, dusted his hands, and nodded gravely to the last arrivals.

“Come in, Mr. Merrick,” said he, seating himself in a chair and removing his hat, which he had been wearing. “I owe you an apology for intruding upon your premises in your absence.”

Uncle John strode into the room angry and indignant at the fellow’s cool impertinence. The Major and Louise followed, and all eyes centered upon the face of Bob West.

“The contents of this cupboard,” remarked the hardware merchant, calmly, “belong to the estate of Captain Wegg, and can scarcely be claimed by you because you have purchased the house. You falsely accused me the other day, sir, and I have been searching for proof that the Almaquo Timber Tract stock is entirely my property.”

“Have you found such proof?” inquired Mr. Merrick.

“Not yet.”

“And you say the stock was all issued to you?”

West hesitated.

“It was all transferred to me by Captain Wegg and Will Thompson.”

“Does the transfer appear upon the stock itself?”

“Of course, sir.”

“In that case,” said Uncle John, “I shall be obliged to ask your pardon. But the fact can be easily proved.”

He walked to the open cupboard, felt for the slide Joe had described to him, and drew it forward. A small drawer was behind the orifice, and from this Mr. Merrick drew a packet of papers.

West gave a start and half arose. Then he settled back into his chair again.

“H-m. This appears to be the stock in question,” said Uncle John. He drew a chair to the table, unfolded the documents and examined them with deliberate care.

The nieces watched his face curiously. Mr. Merrick first frowned, then turned red, and finally a stern, determined look settled upon his rugged features.

“Take your stock, Mr. West,” he said, tossing it toward the man; “and try to forgive us for making fools of ourselves!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. WEST EXPLAINS.

A cry of amazed protest burst from the girls. The Major whistled softly and walked to the window.

"I find the stock properly transferred," continued Uncle John, grimly conscious that he was as thoroughly disappointed as the girls. "It is signed by both Wegg and Thompson, and witnessed in the presence of a notary. I congratulate you, Mr. West. You have acquired a fortune."

"But not recently," replied the hardware dealer, enjoying the confusion of his recent opponents. "I have owned this stock for more than three years, and you will see by the amount endorsed upon it that I paid a liberal price for it, under the circumstances."

Uncle John gave a start and a shrewd look.

"Of course you did," said he. "On paper."

"I have records to prove that both Captain Wegg and Will Thompson received their money," said West, quietly. "I see it is hard for you to abandon the idea that I am a rogue."

There could be no adequate reply to this, so for a time all sat in moody silence. But the thoughts of some were busy.

"I would like Mr. West to explain what became of the money he paid for this stock," said Louise; adding: "That is, if he will be so courteous."

West did not answer for a moment. Then he said, with a gesture of indifference:

"I am willing to tell all I know. But you people must admit that the annoyances you have caused me during the past fortnight, to say nothing of the gratuitous insults heaped upon my head, render me little inclined to favor you."

"You are quite justified in feeling as you do," replied Uncle John, meekly. "I have been an ass, West; but circumstances warranted me in suspecting you, and even Joseph Wegg did not know that the Almaquo stock had been transferred to you. He merely glanced at it at the time of his father's death, without noticing the endorsement, and thought the fire had rendered it worthless. But if you then owned the stock, why was it not in your possession?"

"That was due to my carelessness," was the reply. "The only notary around here is at Hooker's Falls, and Mr. Thompson offered to have him come to Captain Wegg's residence and witness the transfer. As my presence was not necessary for this, and I had full confidence in my friends' integrity, I paid them their money, which they were eager to secure at once, and said I

would call in a few days for the stock. I did call, and was told the notary had been here and the transfer had been legally made. Wegg said he would get the stock from the cupboard and hand it to me; but we both forgot it at that time. After his death I could not find it, for it was in the secret drawer."

"Another thing, sir," said Uncle John. "If neither Wegg nor Thompson was then interested in the Almaquo property, why did the news of its destruction by fire shock them so greatly that the result was Captain Wegg's death?"

"I see it will be necessary for me to explain to you more fully," returned West, with a thoughtful look. "It is evident, Mr. Merrick, from your questions, that some of these occurrences seem suspicious to a stranger, and perhaps you are not so much to be blamed as, in my annoyance and indignation, I have imagined."

"I would like the matter cleared up for the sake of Ethel and Joe," said Mr. Merrick, simply.

"And so would I," declared the hardware dealer. "You must know, sir, that Will Thompson was the one who first led Captain Wegg into investing his money. I think the Captain did it merely to please Will, for at that time he had become so indifferent to worldly affairs that he took no interest in anything beyond a mild wish to provide for his son's future. But Thompson was erratic in judgment, so Wegg used to bring their matters to me to decide upon. I always advised them as honestly as I was able. At the time I secured an option on the Almaquo tract, and wanted them to join me, Will Thompson had found another lot of timber, but located in an out-of-the-way corner, which he urged the Captain to join him in buying. Wegg brought the matter to me, as usual, and I pointed out that my proposed contract with the Pierce-Lane Lumber Company would assure our making a handsome profit at Almaquo, while Thompson had no one in view to cut the other tract. Indeed, it was far away from any railroad. Wegg saw the force of my argument, and insisted that Thompson abandon his idea and accept my proposition. Together we bought the property, having formed a stock company, and the contract for cutting the timber was also secured. Things were looking bright for us and royalty payments would soon be coming in.

"Then, to my amazement, Wegg came to me and wanted to sell out their interests. He said Thompson had always been dissatisfied because they had not bought the other tract of timber, and that the worry and disappointment was affecting his friend's mind. He was personally satisfied that my investment was the best, but, in order to sooth old Will and prevent his mind from giving way, Wegg wanted to withdraw and purchase the other tract.

"I knew there was a fortune in Almaquo, so I went to New York and

mortgaged all I possessed, discounting a lot of notes given me by farmers in payment for machinery, and finally borrowing at a high rate of interest the rest of the money I needed. In other words I risked all my fortune on Almaquo, and brought the money home to pay Wegg and Thompson for their interest. The moment they received the payment they invested it in the Bogue tract — ”

“Hold on!” cried Uncle John. “What tract did you say?”

“The Bogue timber tract, sir. It lies — ”

“I know where it lies. Our company has been a whole year trying to find out who owned it.”

“Wegg and Thompson bought it. I was angry at the time, because their withdrawal had driven me into a tight corner to protect my investment, and I told them they would bitterly regret their action. I think Wegg agreed with me, but Will Thompson was still stubborn.

“Then came the news of the fire at Almaquo. It was a false report, I afterward learned, but at that time I believed the newspapers, and the blow almost deprived me of reason. In my excitement I rushed over to Wegg’s farm and found the two men together, whereupon I told them I was ruined.

“The news affected them powerfully because they had just saved themselves from a like ruin, they thought. Wegg was also a sympathetic man, in spite of his reserve. His old heart trouble suddenly came upon him, aggravated by the excitement of the hour, and he died with scarcely a moan. Thompson, whose reason was tottering long before this, became violently insane at witnessing his friend’s death, and has never since recovered. That is all I am able to tell you, sir.”

“The Bogue tract,” said Uncle John, slowly, “is worth far more than the Almaquo. Old Will Thompson was sane enough when insisting on that investment. But where is the stock, or deed, to show they bought that property?”

“I do not know, sir. I only know they told me they had effected the purchase.”

“Pardon me,” said the Major. “Have you not been through this cupboard before?”

West looked at him with a frown.

“Yes; in a search for my own stock,” he said. “But I found neither that nor any deed to the Bogue property. I am not a thief, Major Doyle.”

“You stole the keys, though,” said Louise, pointedly.

“I did not even do that,” said West. “On the day of the funeral Joe carelessly left them lying upon a table, so I slipped them into my pocket. When I thought of them again Joe had gone away and I did not know his

address. I came over and searched the cupboard unsuccessfully. But it was not a matter of great importance at that time if the stock was mislaid, since there was no one to contest my ownership of it. It was only after Mr. Merrick accused me of robbing my old friends and ordered my payments stopped that I realized it was important to me to prove my ownership. That is why I came here today."

Again a silence fell upon the group. Said Uncle John, finally:

"If the deed to the Bogue tract can be found, Joe and Ethel will be rich. I wonder what became of the paper."

No one answered, for here was another mystery.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PEGGY HAS REVENGE.

Joe Wegg made a rapid recovery, his strength returning under the influence of pleasant surroundings and frequent visits from Ethel and Uncle John's three nieces. Not a word was hinted to either the invalid or the school teacher regarding the inquiries Mr. Merrick was making about the deed to the Bogue timber lands, which, if found, would make the young couple independent. Joe was planning to exploit a new patent as soon as he could earn enough to get it introduced, and Ethel exhibited a sublime confidence in the boy's ability that rendered all question of money insignificant.

Joe's sudden appearance in the land of his birth and his generally smashed up condition were a nine days' wonder in Millville. The gossips wanted to know all the whys and wherefores, but the boy kept his room in the hotel, or only walked out when accompanied by Ethel or one of the three nieces. Sometimes they took him to ride, as he grew better, and the fact that Joe "were hand an' glove wi' the nabobs" lent him a distinction he had never before possessed.

McNutt, always busy over somebody else's affairs, was very curious to know what had caused the accident Joe had suffered. Notwithstanding the little affair of the letter, in which he had not appeared with especial credit, Peggy made an effort to interview the young man that resulted in his complete discomfiture. But that did not deter him from indulging in various vivid speculations about Joe Wegg, which the simple villagers listened to with attention. For one thing, he confided to "the boys" at the store that, in his opinion, the man who had murdered Cap'n Wegg had tried to murder his son also, and it wasn't likely Joe could manage to escape him a second time. Another tale evolved from Peggy's fertile imagination was that Joe, being about to starve to death in the city, had turned burglar and been shot in the arm in an attempt at housebreaking.

"Wouldn't be s'prised," said the agent, in an awed voice, "ef the p'lice was on his track now. P'raps there's a reward offered, boys; let's keep an eye on him!"

He waylaid the nieces once or twice, and tried to secure from them a verification of his somber suspicions, which they mischievously fostered.

The girls found him a source of much amusement, and relieved their own disappointment at finding the "Wegg Mystery" a pricked bubble by getting McNutt excited over many sly suggestions of hidden crimes. They knew he was harmless, for even his neighbors needed proof of any assertion he made; moreover, the investigation Uncle John was making would soon set matters

right; so the young ladies did not hesitate to “have fun” at the little agent’s expense.

One of McNutt’s numerous occupations was raising a “patch” of watermelons each year on the lot back of the house. These he had fostered with great care since the plants had first sprouted through the soil, and in these late August days two or three hundreds of fine, big melons were just getting ripe. He showed the patch with much pride one day to the nieces, saying:

“Here’s the most extry-fine melling-patch in this county, ef I do say it myself. Dan Brayley he thinks he kin raise mellings, but the ol’ fool ain’t got a circumstance to this. Ain’t they beauties?”

“It seems to me,” observed Patsy, gravely, “that Brayley’s are just as good. We passed his place this morning and wondered how he could raise such enormous melons.”

“‘Normous! Brayley’s!”

“I’m sure they are finer than these,” said Beth.

“Well, I’ll be jiggered!” Peggy’s eyes stared as they had never stared before. “Dan Brayley, he’s a miser’ble ol’ skinflint. Thet man couldn’t raise decent mellings ef he tried.”

“What do you charge for melons, Mr. McNutt?” inquired Louise.

“Charge? Why — er — fifty cents a piece is my price to nabobs; an’ dirt cheap at that!”

“That is too much,” declared Patsy. “Mr. Brayley says he will sell his melons for fifteen cents each.”

“Him! Fifteen cents!” gasped Peggy, greatly disappointed. “Say, Brayley’s a disturbin’ element in these parts. He oughter go to jail fer asking fifteen cents fer them mean little mellings o’ his’n.”

“They seem as large as yours,” murmured Louise.

“But they ain’t. An’ Brayley’s a cheat an’ a rascal, while a honester man ner me don’t breathe. Nobody likes Brayley ‘round Millville. Why, on’y las’ winter he called me a meddler — in public! — an’ said as I shot off my mouth too much. Me!”

“How impolite.”

“But that’s Dan Brayley. My mellings at fifty cents is better ‘n his’n at fifteen.”

“Tell me,” said Patsy, with a smile, “did you ever rob a melon-patch, Mr. McNutt?”

“Me? I don’t hev to. I grow ‘em.”

“But the ones you grow are worth fifty cents each, are they not?”

“Sure; mine is.”

“Then every time you eat one of your own melons you eat fifty cents. If you were eating one of Mr. Brayley’s melons you would only eat fifteen cents.”

“And it would be Brayley’s fifteen cents, too,” added Beth, quickly.

Peggy turned his protruding eyes from one to the other, and a smile slowly spread over his features.

“By jinks, let’s rob Brayley’s melling-patch!” he cried.

“All right; we’ll help you,” answered Patsy, readily.

“Oh, my dear!” remonstrated Louise, not understanding.

“It will be such fun,” replied her cousin, with eyes dancing merrily. “Boys always rob melon-patches, so I don’t see why girls shouldn’t. When shall we do it, Mr. McNutt?”

“There ain’t any moon jest now, an’ the nights is dark as blazes. Let’s go ternight.”

“It’s a bargain,” declared Patsy. “We will come for you in the surrey at ten o’clock, and all drive together to the back of Brayley’s yard and take all the melons we want.”

“It’ll serve him right,” said Peggy, delightedly. “Ol’ Dan called me a meddler onc’t — in public — an’ I’m bound t’ git even with him.”

“Don’t betray us, sir,” pleaded Beth.

“I can’t,” replied McNutt, frankly; “I’m in it myself, an’ we’ll jest find out what his blame-twisted ol’ fifteen-cent mellings is like.”

Patsy was overjoyed at the success of her plot, which she had conceived on the spur of the moment, as most clever plots are conceived. On the way home she confided to her cousins a method of securing revenge upon the agent for selling them the three copies of the “Lives of the Saints.”

“McNutt wants to get even with Brayley, he says, and we want to get even with McNutt. I think our chances are best, don’t you?” she asked.

And they decided to join the conspiracy.

There was some difficulty escaping from Uncle John and the Major that night, but Patsy got them interested in a game of chess that was likely to last some hours, while Beth stole to the barn and harnessed Joe to the surrey. Soon the others slipped out and joined her, and with Patsy and Beth on the front seat and Louise Inside the canopy they drove slowly away until the sound of the horse’s feet on the stones was no longer likely to betray them.

McNutt was waiting for them when they quietly drew up before his house. The village was dark and silent, for its inhabitants retired early to bed. By good fortune the sky was overcast with heavy clouds and not even the glimmer of a star relieved the gloom.

They put McNutt on the back seat with Louise, cautioned him to be quiet,

and then drove away. Dan Brayley's place was two miles distant, but in answer to Peggy's earnest inquiry if she knew the way Beth declared she could find it blind-folded. In a few moments Louise had engaged the agent in a spirited discussion of the absorbing "mystery" and so occupied his attention that he paid no heed to the direction they had taken. The back seat was hemmed in by side curtains and the canopy, so it would be no wonder if he lost all sense of direction, even had not the remarks of the girl at his side completely absorbed him.

Beth drove slowly down the main street, up a lane, back by the lake road and along the street again; and this programme was repeated several times, until she thought a sufficient distance had been covered to convince the agent they had arrived at Brayley's. They way was pitch dark, but the horse was sensible enough to keep in the middle of the road, so they met with no accident more than to jolt over a stone now and then.

But now the most difficult part of the enterprise lay before them. The girls turned down the lane back of the main street and bumped over the ruts until they thought they had arrived at a spot opposite McNutt's own melon patch.

"What's wrong?" asked the agent, as they suddenly stopped with a jerk.

"This ought to be Brayley's," said Beth; "but it's so dark I'm not certain just where we are."

McNutt thrust his head out and peered into the blackness.

"Drive along a little," he whispered.

The girl obeyed.

"Stop — stop!" said he, a moment later. "I think that's them contwisted fifteen-cent mellings — over there!"

They all got out and Beth tied the horse to the fence. Peggy climbed over and at once whispered:

"Come on! It's them, all right."

Through the drifting clouds there was just enough light to enable them to perceive the dark forms of the melons lying side by side upon their vines. The agent took out his big clasp knife and recklessly slashed one of them open.

"Green's grass!" he grumbled, and slashed another.

Patsy giggled, and the others felt a sudden irresistible impulse to join her.

"Keep still!" cautioned McNutt. "Wouldn't ol' Dan be jest ravin' ef he knew this? Say — here's a ripe one. Hev a slice."

They all felt for the slices he offered and ate the fruit without being able to see it. But it really tasted delicious.

As the girls feasted they heard a crunching sound and inquired in low voices what it was.

McNutt was stumping over the patch and plumping his wooden foot into every melon he could find, smashing them wantonly against the ground. The discovery filled them with horror. They had thought inducing the agent to rob his own patch of a few melons, while under the delusion that they belonged to his enemy Brayley, a bit of harmless fun; but here was the vindictive fellow actually destroying his own property by the wholesale.

"Oh, don't! Please don't, Mr. McNutt!" pleaded Patsy, in frightened accents.

"Yes, I will," declared the agent, stubbornly. "I'll git even with Dan Brayley fer once in my life, ef I never do another thing, by gum!"

"But it's wrong — it's wicked!" protested Beth.

"Can't help it; this is my chance, an' I'll make them bum fifteen-cent mellings look like a penny a piece afore I gits done with 'em."

"Never mind, girls," whispered Louise. "It's the law of retribution. Poor Peggy will be sorry for this tomorrow."

The man had not the faintest suspicion where he was. He knew his own melon patch well enough, having worked in it at times all the summer; but he had never climbed over the fence and approached it from the rear before, so it took on a new aspect to him from this point of view, and moreover the night was dark enough to deceive anybody.

If he came across an especially big melon McNutt would lug it to the carriage and dump it in. And so angry and energetic was the little man that in a brief space the melon patch was a scene of awful devastation, and the surrey contained all the fruit that survived the massacre.

Beth unhitched the horse and they all took their places in the carriage again, having some difficulty to find places for their feet on account of the cargo of melons. McNutt was stowed away inside, with Louise, and they drove away up the lane. The agent was jubilant and triumphant, and chuckled in gleeful tones that thrilled the girls with remorse as they remembered the annihilation of McNutt's cherished melons.

"Ol' Dan usu'lly has a dorg," said Peggy, between his fits of laughter; "but I guess he had him chained up ternight."

"I'm not positively sure that was Brayley's place," remarked Beth; "it's so very dark."

"Oh, it were Brayley's, all right," McNutt retorted. "I could tell by the second-class taste o' them mellings, an' their measley little size. Them things ain't a circumstance to the kind I raise."

"Are you sure?" asked Louise.

"Sure's shootln'. Guess I'm a jedge o' mellings, when I sees 'em."

"No one could see tonight," said Beth.

“Feelin’s jest the same,” declared the little man, confidently.

After wandering around a sufficient length of time to allay suspicion, Beth finally drew up before McNutt’s house again.

“I’ll jest take my share o’ them mellings,” said Peggy, as he alighted. “They ain’t much ‘count, bein’ Brayley’s; but it’ll save me an’ the ol’ woman from eatin’ our own, or perhaps I kin sell ‘em to Sam Cotting.”

He took rather more than his share of the spoils, but the girls had no voice to object. They were by this time so convulsed with suppressed merriment that they had hard work not to shriek aloud their laughter. For, in spite of the tragic revelations the morrow would bring forth, the situation was so undeniably ridiculous that they could not resist its humor.

“I’ve had a heap o’ fun,” whispered McNutt. “Good night, gals. Ef ye didn’t belong to thet gum-twisted nabob, ye’d be some pun’kins.”

“Thank you, Mr. McNutt. Good night.”

And it was not until well on their journey to the farm that the girls finally dared to abandon further restraint. Then, indeed, they made the grim, black hills of the plateau resound to the peals of their merry laughter.

CHAPTER XXV.

GOOD NEWS AT LAST.

It was on the morning following this adventure that Uncle John received a bulky envelope from the city containing the result of the investigation he had ordered regarding the ownership of the Bogue tract of pine forest. It appeared that the company in which he was so largely interested had found the tract very valuable, and had been seeking for the owners in order to purchase it or lease the right to cut the timber. But although they had traced it through the hands of several successive owners the present holders were all unknown to them until Mr. Merrick's information had furnished them with a clue. A year ago the company had paid up the back taxes — two years overdue — in order to establish a claim to the property, and now they easily succeeded in finding the record of the deed from a certain Charles Walton to Jonas Wegg and William Thompson. The deed itself could not be found, but Uncle John considered the county record a sufficient claim to entitle the young folks to the property unless the ownership should be contested by others, which was not likely.

Uncle John invited Ethel and Joe to dine with him that evening, and Mary was told the occasion merited the best menu she could provide. The young folks arrived without any idea of receiving more than a good dinner and the pleasure of mingling with the cordial, kindly household at the farm; but the general air of hilarity and good fellowship pervading the family circle this evening inspired the guests with like enthusiasm, and no party could be merrier than the one that did full justice to Mary's superior cookery.

One of the last courses consisted of iced watermelon, and when it appeared the three girls eyed one another guiltily and then made frantic attempts to suppress their laughter, which was unseemly because no one but themselves understood the joke. But all else was speedily forgotten in the interest of the coming ceremony, which Mr. Merrick had carefully planned and prepared.

The company was invited to assemble in the room comprising the spacious right wing, and when all were seated the little gentleman coughed to clear his throat and straightway began his preamble.

He recited the manner in which Captain Wegg and Will Thompson, having money to invest, were led into an enterprise which Bob West had proposed, but finally preferred another venture and so withdrew their money altogether from the Almaquo tract.

This statement caused both Joe and Ethel to stare hard, but they said nothing.

“Your grandfather, Ethel,” continued the narrator, “was much impressed by the value of another timber tract, although where he got his information concerning it I have been unable to discover. This piece of property, called the Bogue tract, was purchased by Wegg and Thompson with the money they withdrew from Almaquo, and still stands in their name.”

Then he recounted, quite frankly, his unjust suspicions of the hardware dealer, and told of the interview in which the full details of this transaction were disclosed by West, as well as the truth relating to the death of Captain Wegg and the sudden insanity and paralysis of old Will Thompson.

Joe could corroborate this last, and now understood why Thompson had cried out that West’s “good news” had killed his father. He meant, of course, their narrow escape from being involved in West’s supposed ruin, for at that time no one knew the report of the fire was false.

Finally, these matters being cleared up, Uncle John declared that the Pierce-Lane Lumber Company was willing to contract to cut the timber on the Bogue property, or would pay a lump sum of two hundred thousand dollars for such title to the tract as could be given. He did not add that he had personally offered to guarantee the title. That was an unnecessary bit of information.

You may perhaps imagine the happiness this announcement gave Joe and Ethel. They could scarcely believe the good news was true, even when the kindly old gentleman, with tears in his eyes, congratulated the young couple on the fortune in store for them. The Major followed with a happy speech of felicitation, and then the three girls hugged the little school teacher rapturously and told her how glad they were.

“I think, sir,” said Joe, striving to curb his elation, “that it will be better in the end for us to accept the royalty. Don’t you?”

“I do, indeed, my boy,” was the reply. “For if our people make an offer for the land of two hundred thousand you may rest assured it is worth much more. The manager has confided to me in his letter that if we are obliged to pay royalties the timber will cost us nearly double what it would by an outright purchase of the tract.”

“In that case, sir,” began Joe, eagerly, “we will — ”

“Nonsense. The company can afford the royalty, Joe, for it is making a heap of money — more than I wish it were. One of my greatest trials is to take care of the money I’ve already made, and — ”

“And he couldn’t do it at all without my help,” broke in the Major. “Don’t ye hesitate to take an advantage of him, Joseph, if ye can get it — which I doubt — for Mr. Merrick is most disgracefully rich already.”

“That’s true,” sighed the little millionaire. “So it will be a royalty, Joe. We

are paying the same percentage to Bob West for the Almaquo tract, but yours is so much better that I am sure your earnings will furnish you and Ethel with all the income you need."

They sat discoursing upon the happy event for some time longer, but Joe had to return to the hotel early because he was not yet strong enough to be out late.

"Before I go, Mr. Merrick," he said, "I'd like you to give me my mother's picture, which is in the secret drawer of the cupboard. You have the keys, now, and Ethel is curious to see how my mother looked."

Uncle John went at once to the cupboard and unlocked the doors. Joe himself pushed the slide and took out of the drawer the picture, which had lain just beneath the Almaquo stock certificates.

The picture was passed reverently around. A sweet-faced, sad little woman it showed, with appealing eyes and lips that seemed to quiver even in the photograph.

As Louise held it in her hand something induced her to turn it over.

"Here is some writing upon the back," she said.

Joe bent over and read it aloud. It was in his father's handwriting.

"'Press the spring in the left hand lower corner of the secret drawer.'"

"Hah!" cried Uncle John, while the others stared stupidly. "That's it! That's the information we've been wanting so long, Joseph!"

He ran to the cupboard, even as he spoke, and while they all thronged about him thrust in his hand, felt for the spring, and pressed it.

The bottom of the drawer lifted, showing another cavity beneath. From this the searcher withdrew a long envelope, tied with red tape.

"At last, Joseph!" he shouted, triumphantly waving the envelope over his head. And then he read aloud the words docketed upon the outside: "'Warranty Deed and Conveyance from Charles Walton to Jonas Wegg and William Thompson.' Our troubles are over, my boy, for here is the key to your fortune."

"Also," whispered Louise to her cousins, rather disconsolately, "it explains the last shred of mystery about the Wegg case. Heigh-ho! what a chase we've had for nothing!"

"Not for nothing, dear," replied Patsy, softly, "for we've helped make two people happy, and that ought to repay us for all our anxiety and labor."

* * * * *

A knock was heard at the door, and Old Hucks entered and handed Mr. Merrick a paper.

"He's waiting, sir," said he, ambiguously.

"Oh, Tom — Tom!" cried Joe Wegg, rising to throw his arms around the

old man's neck, "I'm rich, Tom — all my troubles are over — and Mr. Merrick has done it all — for Ethel and me!"

The ever smiling face of the ancient retainer did not change, but his eyes softened and filled with tears as he hugged the boy close to his breast.

"God be praised. Joe!" he said in a low voice. "I allus knew the Merricks 'd bring us luck."

"What the devil does this mean?" demanded Uncle John at this juncture, as he fluttered the paper and glared angrily around.

"What is it, dear?" inquired Louise.

"See for yourself," he returned.

She took the paper and read it, while Patsy and Beth peered over her shoulder. The following was scrawled upon a sheet of soiled stationery:

"John Merrak, esquare, to
Marshall McMahon McNutt, detter.

"To yur gals Smashin' 162 mellings at 50 cents a one
……$81.00

Pleas remitt & save trouble."

The nieces screamed, laughing until they cried, while Uncle John spluttered, smiled, beamed, and then requested an explanation.

Patsy told the story of the watermelon raid with rare humor, and it served to amuse everybody and relieve the strain that had preceded the arrival of McNutt's bill.

"Did you say the man is waiting, Thomas?" asked Uncle John.

"Yes, sir."

"Here — give him five dollars and tell him to receipt the bill. If he refuses, I'll carry the matter to the courts. McNutt's a rascal, and a fool in the bargain; but we've had some of his melons and the girls have had five dollars' worth of fun in getting them. But assure him that this squares accounts, Thomas."

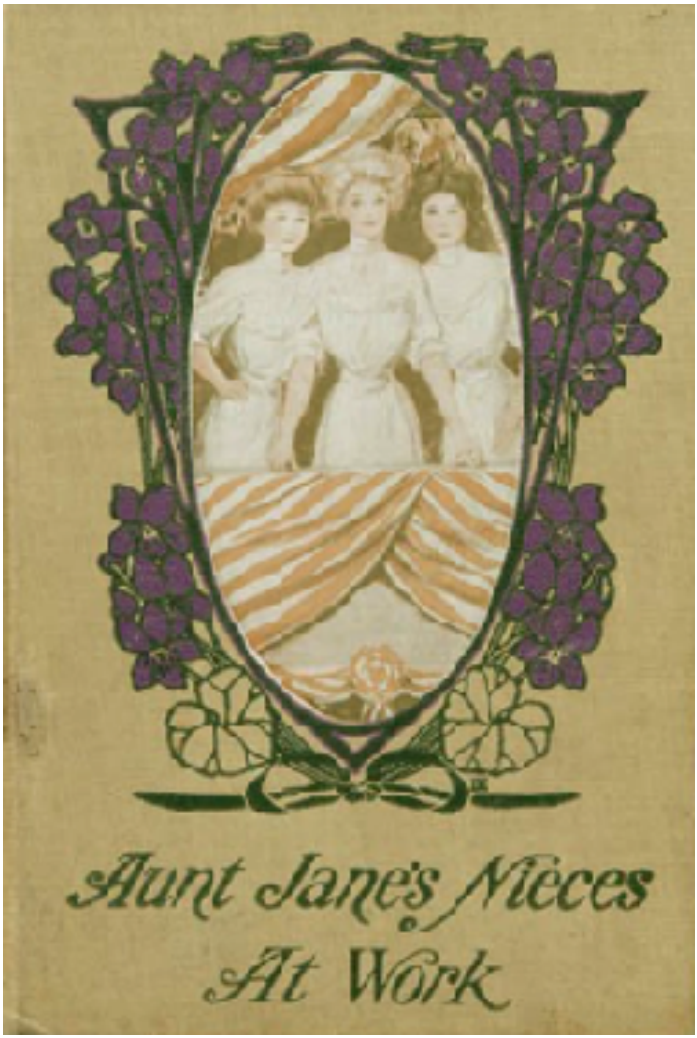
Thomas performed his mission.

McNutt rolled his eyes, pounded the floor with his stump to emphasize his mingled anger and satisfaction, and then receipted the bill.

"It's jest five more'n I 'spected to git, Hucks," he said with a grin. "But what's the use o' havin' nabobs around, ef ye don't bleed 'em?"

AUNT JANE'S NIECES AT WORK

Baum's fourth in a series published under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne, *Aunt Jane's Nieces at Work*, appeared in 1909, published by Reilly & Britton, illustrated by Emile A. Nelson. The plot revolves around politics, as the three girls and their rich Uncle John help their "cousin," Kenneth Forbes, campaign as a Republican for a seat in the New York State Legislature. Baum also makes use of a sentimental subplot involving a troubled local girl unjustly accused of theft.



First edition copy of Aunt Jane's Nieces at Work

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CHAPTER I

MISS DOYLE INTERFERES

"Daddy," said Patricia Doyle at the breakfast table in her cosy New York apartment, "here is something that will make you sit up and take notice."

"My dear Patsy," was the reply, "it's already sitting up I am, an' taking waffles. If anything at all would make me take notice it's your own pretty phiz."

"Major," remarked Uncle John, helping himself to waffles from a fresh plate Nora brought in, "you Irish are such confirmed flatterers that you flatter your own daughters. Patsy isn't at all pretty this morning. She's too red and freckled."

Patsy laughed and her blue eyes danced.

"That comes from living on your old farm at Millville," she retorted. "We've only been back three days, and the sunburn sticks to me like a burr to a kitten."

"Pay no attention to the ould rascal, Patsy," advised the Major, composedly. "An' stop wavin' that letter like a white flag of surrender. Who's it from?"

"Kenneth."

"Aha! An' how is our lad?"

"Why, he's got himself into a peck of trouble. That's what I want to talk to you and Uncle John about," she replied, her happy face growing as serious as it could ever become.

"Can't he wiggle out?" asked Uncle John.

"Out of what?"

"His trouble."

"It seems not. Listen — "

"Oh, tell us about it, lassie," said the Major. "If I judge right there's some sixty pages in that epistle. Don't bother to read it again."

"But every word is important," declared Patsy, turning the letter over, " — except the last page," with a swift flush.

Uncle John laughed. His shrewd old eyes saw everything.

"Then read us the last page, my dear."

"I'll tell you about it," said Patsy, quickly. "It's this way, you see. Kenneth has gone into politics!"

"More power to his elbow!" exclaimed the Major.

"I can't imagine it in Kenneth," said Uncle John, soberly. "What's he in for?"

"For — for — let's see. Oh, here it is. For member of the House of

Representatives from the Eighth District."

"He's flying high, for a fledgling," observed the Major. "But Kenneth's a bright lad and a big gun in his county. He'll win, hands down."

Patsy shook her head.

"He's afraid not," she said, "and it's worrying him to death. He doesn't like to be beaten, and that's what's troubling him."

Uncle John pushed back his chair.

"Poor boy!" he said. "What ever induced him to attempt such a thing?"

"He wanted to defeat a bad man who now represents Kenneth's district," explained Patsy, whose wise little head was full of her friend's difficulties; "and — "

"And the bad man objects to the idea and won't be defeated," added the Major. "It's a way these bad men have."

Uncle John was looking very serious indeed, and Patsy regarded him gratefully. Her father never would be serious where Kenneth was concerned. Perhaps in his heart the grizzled old Major was a bit jealous of the boy.

"I think," said the girl, "that Mr. Watson got Ken into politics, for he surely wouldn't have undertaken such a thing himself. And, now he's in, he finds he's doomed to defeat; and it's breaking his heart, Uncle John."

The little man nodded silently. His chubby face was for once destitute of a smile. That meant a good deal with Uncle John, and Patsy knew she had interested him in Kenneth's troubles.

"Once," said the Major, from behind the morning paper, "I was in politics, meself. I ran for coroner an' got two whole votes — me own an' the undertaker's. It's because the public's so indiscriminating that I've not run for anything since — except th' street-car."

"But it's a big game," said Uncle John, standing at the window with his hands deep in his pockets; "and an important game. Every good American should take an interest in politics; and Kenneth, especially, who has such large landed interests, ought to direct the political affairs of his district."

"I'm much interested in politics, too, Uncle," declared the girl. "If I were a man I'd — I'd — be President!"

"An' I'd vote fer ye twenty times a day, mavourneen!" cried the Major. "But luckily ye'll be no president — unless it's of a woman's club."

"There's the bell!" cried Patsy. "It must be the girls. No one else would call so early."

"It's Beth's voice, talking to Nora," added her father, listening; and then the door flew open and in came two girls whose bright and eager faces might well warrant the warm welcome they received.

"Oh, Louise," cried Patsy, "however did you get up so early?"

“I’ve got a letter from Kenneth,” was the answer, “and I’m so excited I couldn’t wait a minute!”

“Imagine Louise being excited,” said Beth, calmly, as she kissed Uncle John and sat down by Patsy’s side. “She read her letter in bed and bounced out of bed like a cannon-ball. We dressed like the ‘lightning change’ artist at the vaudeville, and I’m sure our hats are not on straight.”

“This bids fair to be a strenuous day,” observed the Major. “Patsy’s had a letter from the boy, herself.”

“Oh, did you?” inquired Louise; “and do you know all about it, dear?”

“She knows sixty pages about it,” replied Major Doyle.

“Well, then, what’s to be done?”

The question was addressed to Patsy, who was not prepared to reply. The three cousins first exchanged inquiring glances and then turned their eager eyes upon the broad chubby back of Uncle John, who maintained his position at the window as if determined to shut out the morning sunlight.

Louise Merrick lived with her mother a few blocks away from Patsy’s apartment, and her cousin Beth DeGraf was staying with her for a time. They had all spent the summer with Uncle John at Millville, and had only returned to New York a few days before. Beth’s home was in Ohio, but there was so little sympathy between the girl and her parents that she was happy only when away from them. Her mother was Uncle John’s sister, but as selfish and cold as Uncle John was generous and genial. Beth’s father was a “genius” and a professor of music — one of those geniuses who live only in their own atmosphere and forget there is a world around them. So Beth had a loveless and disappointed childhood, and only after Uncle John arrived from the far west and took his three nieces “under his wing,” as he said, did her life assume any brightness or interest.

Her new surroundings, however, had developed Beth’s character wonderfully, and although she still had her periods of sullen depression she was generally as gay and lovable as her two cousins, but in a quieter and more self-possessed way.

Louise was the eldest — a fair, dainty creature with that indescribable “air” which invariably wins the admiring regard of all beholders. Whatever gown the girl wore looked appropriate and becoming, and her manner was as delightful as her appearance. She was somewhat frivolous and designing in character, but warm-hearted and staunch in her friendships. Indeed, Louise was one of those girls who are so complex as to be a puzzle to everyone, including themselves.

Beth DeGraf was the beauty of the group of three, and she also possessed great depth of character. Beth did not like herself very well, and was always

afraid others would fail to like her, so she did not win friends as easily as did Louise. But those who knew the beautiful girl intimately could read much to admire in the depth of her great dark eyes, and she was not the least interesting of the three nieces whose fortunes had been so greatly influenced by Aunt Jane and Uncle John Merrick.

But Patricia Doyle — usually called "Patsy" by her friends — was after all the general favorite with strangers and friends alike. There was a subtle magnetism about the girl's laughing, freckled face and dancing blue eyes that could not well be resisted. Patsy was not beautiful; she was not accomplished; she had no especial air of distinction. But she was winning from the top of her red hair to the tips of her toes, and so absolutely unaffected that she won all hearts.

"And for wisdom she's got Solomon beat to a frazzle," declared the Major to Uncle John, in discussing his daughter's character. But it is possible that Major Doyle was prejudiced.

"Well, what's to be done?" demanded Louise, for the second time.

"We don't vote in Ken's district," remarked the Major, "or there would be six votes to his credit, and that would beat my own record by four!"

"Ken is so impressionable that I'm afraid this defeat will ruin his life," said Beth, softly. "I wish we could get him away. Couldn't we get him to withdraw?"

"He might be suddenly called to Europe," suggested Louise. "That would take him away from the place and give him a change of scene."

Patsy shook her head.

"Kenneth isn't a coward," she said. "He won't run away. He must accept his defeat like a man, and some time try again. Eh, Uncle John?"

Uncle John turned around and regarded his three nieces critically.

"What makes you think he will be defeated?" he asked.

"He says so himself," answered Patsy.

"He writes me he can see no hope, for the people are all against him," added Louise.

"Pah!" said Uncle John, contemptuously. "What else does the idiot say?"

"That he's lonely and discouraged, and had to pour out his heart to some one or go wild," said Patsy, the tears of sympathy filling her eyes.

"And you girls propose to sit down and allow all this?" inquired their uncle sternly.

"We?" answered Louise, lifting her brows and making a pretty gesture. "What can we do?"

"Go to work!" said Uncle John.

"How?" asked Patsy, eagerly.

“Politics is a game,” declared Mr. Merrick. “It’s never won until the last card is played. And success doesn’t lie so much in the cards as the way you play ‘em. Here are three girls with plenty of shrewdness and energy. Why don’t you take a hand in the game and win it?”

“Oh, Uncle John!”

The proposition was certainly disconcerting at first.

“Yes, yes!” laughed the Major, derisively. “Put on some blue stockings, read the history of woman’s suffrage, cultivate a liking for depraved eggs, and then face Kenneth’s enraged constituents!”

“I shouldn’t mind, daddy, if it would help Kenneth any,” declared Patsy, stoutly.

“Go on, Uncle John,” said Beth, encouragingly.

“Women in politics,” observed their uncle, “have often been a tremendous power. You won’t need to humiliate yourselves, my dears. All you’ll need to do is to exercise your wits and work earnestly for the cause. There are a hundred ways to do that.”

“Mention a few,” proposed the Major.

“I will when I get to Elmhurst and look over the ground,” answered Uncle John.

“You’re going on, then?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll go with you,” said Patsy promptly.

“So will I,” said Beth. “Kenneth needs moral encouragement and support as much as anything else, just now.”

“He’s imagining all sorts of horrors and making himself miserable,” said Louise. “Let’s all go, Uncle, and try to cheer him up.”

By this time Uncle John was smiling genially.

“Why, I was sure of you, my dears, from the first,” he said. “The Major’s an old croaker, but he’d go, too, if it were not necessary for him to stay in New York and attend to business. But we mustn’t lose any time, if we’re going to direct the politics of the Eighth District Election the eighth of November.”

“I can go any time, and so can Beth,” said Louise.

“All I need is the blue stockings,” laughed Patsy.

“It won’t be play. This means work,” said Uncle John seriously.

“Well, I believe we’re capable of a certain amount of work,” replied Beth. “Aren’t we, girls?”

“We are!”

“All right,” said Mr. Merrick. “I’ll go and look up the next train. Go home, Louise, and pack up. I’ll telephone you.”

“That bad man ‘d better look out,” chuckled the Major. “He doesn’t suspect that an army of invasion is coming.”

“Daddy,” cried Patsy, “you hush up. We mean business.”

“If you win,” said the Major, “I’ll run for alderman on a petticoat platform, and hire your services.”

CHAPTER II

THE ARTIST

To most people the great rambling mansion at Elmhurst, with its ample grounds and profusion of flowers and shrubbery, would afford endless delight. But Kenneth Forbes, the youthful proprietor, was at times dreadfully bored by the loneliness of it all, though no one could better have appreciated the beauties of his fine estate.

The town, an insignificant village, was five miles distant, and surrounding the mansion were many broad acres which rather isolated it from its neighbors. Moreover, Elmhurst was the one important estate in the county, and the simple, hard-working farmers in its vicinity considered, justly enough, that the owner was wholly out of their class.

This was not the owner's fault, and Kenneth had brooded upon the matter until he had come to regard it as a distinct misfortune. For it isolated him and deprived him of any social intercourse with his neighbors.

The boy had come to live at Elmhurst when he was a mere child, but only as a dependent upon the charities of Aunt Jane, who had accepted the charge of the orphan because he was a nephew of her dead lover, who had bequeathed her his estate of Elmhurst. Aunt Jane was Kenneth's aunt merely in name, since she had never even married the uncle to whom she had been betrothed, and who had been killed in an accident before the boy was born.

She was an irritable old woman, as Kenneth knew her, and had never shown him any love or consideration. He grew up in a secluded corner of the great house, tended merely by servants and suffered to play in those quarters of the ample grounds which Aunt Jane did not herself visit. The neglect which Kenneth had suffered and his lonely life had influenced the youth's temperament, and he was far from being an agreeable companion at the time Aunt Jane summoned her three nieces to Elmhurst in order to choose one of them as her heiress. These girls, bright, cheery and wholesome as they were, penetrated the boy's reserve and drew him out of his misanthropic moods. They discovered that he had remarkable talent as an artist, and encouraged him to draw and paint, something he had long loved to do in secret.

Then came the great surprise of the boy's life, which changed his condition from one of dependency into affluence. Aunt Jane died and it was discovered that she had no right to transfer the estate to one of her nieces, because by the terms of his uncle's deed to her the property reverted on her death to Kenneth himself. Louise Merrick, Beth DeGraf and Patsy Doyle, the three nieces, were really glad that the boy inherited Elmhurst, and returned to their eastern homes with the most cordial friendship existing between them

all.

Kenneth was left the master of Elmhurst and possessor of considerable wealth besides, and at first he could scarcely realize his good fortune or decide how to take advantage of it. He had one good and helpful friend, an old lawyer named Watson, who had not only been a friend of his uncle, and the confidant of Aunt Jane for years, but had taken an interest in the lonely boy and had done his best to make his life brighter and happier.

When Kenneth became a landed proprietor Mr. Watson was appointed his guardian, and the genial old lawyer abandoned the practice of law and henceforth devoted himself to his ward's welfare and service.

They made a trip to Europe together, where Kenneth studied the pictures of the old masters and obtained instruction from some of the foremost living artists of the old world.

It was while they were abroad, a year before the time of this story, that the boy met Aunt Jane's three nieces again. They were "doing" Europe in company with a wealthy bachelor uncle, John Merrick, a generous, kind-hearted and simple-minded old gentleman who had taken the girls "under his wing," as he expressed it, and had really provided for their worldly welfare better than Aunt Jane, his sister, could have done.

This "Uncle John" was indeed a whimsical character, as the reader will presently perceive. Becoming a millionaire "against his will," as he declared, he had learned to know his nieces late in life, and found in their society so much to enjoy that he was now wholly devoted to their interests. His one friend was Major Doyle, Patsy's father, a dignified but agreeable old Irish gentleman who amused Uncle John nearly as much as the girls delighted him. The Major managed John Merrick's financial affairs, leaving the old millionaire free to do as he pleased.

So he took the girls to Europe, and the four had a fine, adventurous trip, as may be imagined. Kenneth and Mr. Watson met them in Sicily, and afterward in the Italian cities, and the friendship already existing between the young people was more firmly cemented than before.

In the spring Kenneth returned with his guardian to Elmhurst, where he devoted himself largely to painting from the sketches he had made abroad, while Mr. Watson sat beside him comfortably smoking his pipe and reading his favorite authors. The elder man was contented enough in his condition, but the boy grew restless and impatient, and longed for social intercourse. His nature was moody and he had a tendency to brood if left much to himself.

Uncle John had carried his nieces to a farm at Millville, in the Adirondack region, for the summer, so that Kenneth heard but seldom from his friends.

Such was the disposition of the characters when our story opens.

Kenneth Forbes, although I have called him a boy, had attained his majority on the fifteenth day of May. At this time Mr. Watson rendered his accounts and turned over the estate to its owner. He would then have retired, but Kenneth would not let him go. Twenty-one years of age sounds mature, but the owner of Elmhurst was as boyish and inexperienced as it is possible for one twenty-one years old to be. He had grown accustomed, moreover, to depend much on Mr. Watson's legal acumen in the management of his affairs, and would have been embarrassed and bewildered if obliged to shoulder the burden all at once.

The lawyer, who had always had an affection for the young man, perceived this clearly; so an arrangement was made that he should remain with his young friend indefinitely and strive to teach him such elements of business as would enable him in time to attend to his extensive interests understandingly and wisely.

The country around Elmhurst is thickly settled with agriculturists, for the farms are rich and productive in that part of the state. But it is not a flat country, and Nature has given it many pretty woodland glades and rocky glens to add to its charm.

From the hill country at the west came several rushing streams which tumbled along rocky paths to the river nine miles below Elmhurst, and there are scenes along these routes that might well delight the eye of an artist. Kenneth had often wandered into these out-of-the-way places when a half-forgotten, neglected lad, but had not visited them for years. Now, however, with the spirit of loneliness upon him, he suddenly thought of a glen that would make an interesting study for a picture; so one morning he mounted his horse and rode away to pay the place a preliminary visit.

The farmers along the road nodded at the young fellow good-naturedly as he passed them. Everyone knew him well by sight, yet Kenneth could not have named many of his neighbors, having held little intercourse with them. It struck him, this morning, that they had little cause to be interested in him. He had been an unsociable lad, and since he had become master of Elmhurst had done little to cultivate acquaintance with the people who lived around him.

One reason for this was that they held little in common with him. The neighboring farmers were honest, thrifty souls, and among them were many both shrewd and thoughtful; but they naturally would not force themselves upon the society of the one really rich man in their community, especially as that man had shown no desire to know them.

Kenneth was the subject of much speculation among them, and opinions

widely differed concerning his character. Some called him a “prig” and declared that he was “stuck up” and conceited. Others said he was a “namby-pamby” without brains or wit. But there were a few who had occasionally talked with the boy, who understood him better, and hinted that he might develop into “quite a man” in time.

Kenneth surprised himself this morning by greeting several of his neighbors with unusual cordiality. He even stopped a man who was driving along the highway to inquire about his horse, which he perceived was very lame. The boy knew something about horses and suggested a method of treatment that he thought would help the nag; a suggestion the farmer received with real gratitude.

This simple incident cheered Kenneth more than you might suppose, and he was actually whistling as he rode through the glen, where the country road wound its way beside the noisy, rushing stream.

Pausing in front of the picturesque “table rock” that he had come to inspect, the boy uttered an exclamation of chagrin and disappointment. Painted broadly upon the face of the rock, in great white letters, was the advertisement of a patent medicine. The beauty of the scene was ruined — only the glaring advertisement caught and held the eye of the observer.

At first Kenneth’s mind held only a feeling of disgust that such a desecration of Nature’s gifts to humanity should be allowed. Then he remembered another place further along the glen which was almost as pretty as this had been before the defiling brush of the advertiser had ruined it. So he spurred his horse and rode up the winding way to the spot. There a red-lettered announcement of “Simpson’s Soap” stared him in the face.

This was too much for his temper, and his disappointment quickly turned to resentment. While he sat on his mare, considering the matter, the man with the lame horse, whom he had passed, overtook him.

“Can you tell me,” Kenneth asked, “who owns this property?”

“Why, I do,” replied the man, reining up.

“And you permitted these vile signs to be painted on the rocks?” demanded the boy angrily.

“O’ course,” replied the man, with a grin of amusement. “I can’t farm the rocks, can I? An’ these ‘ere signs pays me ten dollars a year, each.”

Kenneth groaned.

“I’ll give you fifteen dollars a year each if you’ll let me wash off the letters and restore the scene to its original beauty,” he declared.

“I’m willin’,” was the response. “But ye see they’re contracted. I’d git into trouble with the sign-painter.”

“Who is he?”

“Lives in Cleveland. I’ve got his name up t’ th’ house, if you’ll come along. He comes up here every spring and paints fences an’ rocks, payin’ spot cash fer th’ privilege.”

“Oh, I see.”

“Then he contracts with the soap man an’ the medicine man to paint up their ads. You’re the young ‘un from Elmhurst, ain’t ye?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I’d like to earn that extra five, well enough. My name’s Parsons. I’ve got three signs let on my property in the glen. Ef ye’ll jest ride up t’ the house I’ll giv’ ye the feller’s name.”

“All right. Come along,” said Kenneth, with sudden resolve.

The farmer rode a time in silent thought. He could not go fast, for the beast was very lame. Finally he remarked:

“Ef ye buy up the sign painters, so’s ye can wash off the letters, like enough ye’ll hev to pay him fer th’ paint an’ paintin’, too.”

“I don’t mind,” was the response.

The farmer chuckled. Here was an interesting adventure, for a fact. What on earth could possess the “young ‘un” from Elmhurst to object to signs, and be willing to pay for having them erased?

“Like enough ye’ll hev to pay back the money the soap an’ medicine men guv th’ painter, too,” he hazarded.

“Like enough,” said Kenneth, grimly.

One of his stubborn moods had seized him. At all hazards he was resolved to eliminate those ugly signs.

He got the name of the sign painter, accepted a glass of buttermilk at the farm house, and then rode slowly home by another route, so that he might not have to face the signs again.

But on this route he saw even more. They were painted on the fences and barns as he passed along. He scowled at each one, but they did not appear to him quite so inharmonious as those which marred the more picturesque and retired spots which were his favorite haunts.

CHAPTER III
DON QUIXOTE

When Kenneth got home he told Mr. Watson of his discovery and asked the old gentleman to write to the sign painter and find out what could be done. The lawyer laughed heartily at his young friend's whim, but agreed to help him.

"If you are going to try to prevent rural advertising," he remarked, "you'll find your hands full."

Kenneth looked up smiling.

"Thank you," he said.

"For what?"

"For finding me something to do. I'm sick of this inaction."

Again the lawyer laughed.

"What is your idea?" he asked.

"To remove such eyesores as advertising signs from the neighborhood of Elmhurst."

"It's a Titan's task, Ken."

"So much the better."

The lawyer grew thoughtful.

"I believe it's impossible," he ventured.

"Better yet. I don't say I'll succeed, but I promise to try. I want something to occupy myself — something really difficult, so that I may test my own powers."

"But, my dear boy! This foolish proposition isn't worthy your effort. If you want to be up and doing we'll find something else to occupy your mind."

"No, Mr. Watson; I'm set on this. It's a crime to allow these signs to flaunt themselves in our prettiest scenes. My instinct revolts at the desecration. Besides, no one else seems to have undertaken the task of exterminating them."

"True enough. If you're serious, Ken, I'll frankly say the thing can't be done. You may, perhaps, buy the privilege of maintaining the rocks of the glen free from advertising; but the advertisers will paint more signs on all the approaches, and you won't have gained much."

"I'll drive every advertising sign out of this country."

"Impossible. The great corporations who control these industries make their fortunes by this style of advertising. The rural districts are their strongholds. And they must advertise or they can't sell their products."

"Let them advertise in decent ways, then. What right has any soap maker to flaunt his wares in my face, whether I'm interested in them or not?"

“The right of custom. People have submitted to these things so long that the manufacturers consider themselves justified in covering every barn, rock and fence with their signs. I see no way to stop them.”

“Nor I, at present. But there must be a way.”

“Drive out one, and another will take his place. They pay liberally for locations — ”

“Pshaw! Ten dollars a year for a rock as big as a barn!”

“But they rent thousands of such positions, and in the aggregate our farmers get large sums from them.”

“And ruin the appearance of their homes and farms.”

Mr. Watson smiled.

“They’re not artists, Ken. They can’t realize on appearances, but they can use the money the signs bring them.”

“They need to be educated, that’s all. These farmers seem very honest, decent fellows.”

“They are, Ken. I wish you knew them better.”

“So do I, Mr. Watson. This campaign ought to bring us closer together, for I mean to get them to help me.”

“You’ll have to buy them, I’m afraid.”

“Not all of them. There must be some refinement among them.”

But the lawyer was not convinced. However, it was not his desire to stifle this new-born enthusiasm of Kenneth’s, even though he believed it misdirected. He wanted the young man to rouse himself and take an interest in life, and if his antagonism to advertising signs would effect this, the futile fight against them was to be welcomed. It would cost the boy something, but he would gain his money’s worth in experience.

After a few days the sign painter answered the letter. He would relinquish the three signs in the glen for a payment of fifty dollars each, with the understanding that no other competing signs were to take their place. Kenneth promptly mailed a check for the amount demanded and early next morning started for the glen with what he called his “eliminators.”

These “eliminators” consisted of two men with cans of turpentine and gasoline and an equipment of scrubbing brushes. Parsons, the farmer, came over to watch this novel proceeding, happy in the possession of three crisp five-dollar notes given in accordance with the agreement made with him. All day the two men scrubbed the rocks faithfully, assisted at odd times by their impatient employer; but the thick splashes of paint clung desperately to the rugged surface of the rock, and the task was a hard one. When evening came the letters had almost disappeared when viewed closely; but when Kenneth rode to the mouth of the glen on his way home and paused to look back, he

could see the injunction “Take Smith’s Liver Pills” staring at him, in grim defiance of the scrubbing brushes.

But his energy was not exhausted. No one ever knew what it cost in labor and material to erase those three signs; but after ten days they had vanished completely, and the boy heaved a sigh of satisfaction and turned his attention to extending the campaign.

On the farm nearest to Elmhurst at the north, which belonged to a man named Webb, was a barn, facing the road, that displayed on its side a tobacco sign. Kenneth interviewed Mr. Webb and found that he received no money for the sign; but the man contended that the paint preserved his barn from the weather on that side. So Kenneth agreed to repaint the entire barn for him, and actually had the work done. As it took many coats of paint to blot out the sign it was rather a expensive operation.

By this time the campaign of the youthful proprietor of Elmhurst against advertising signs began to be talked of throughout the county, and was the subject of much merriment among the farmers. Some of them were intelligent enough to admire the young Quixote, and acknowledged frankly that it was a pity to decorate their premises with signs of patent medicines and questionable soaps.

But the majority of them sneered at the champion, and many refused point-blank to consider any proposition to discard the advertisements. Indeed, some were proud of them, and believed it a mark of distinction to have their fences and sheds announce an eye-remedy or several varieties of pickles.

Mr. Watson, at first an amused observer of the campaign, soon became indignant at the way that Kenneth was ridiculed and reviled; and he took a hand in the fight himself. He decided to call a meeting of the neighboring farmers at the district school-house on Saturday night, where Kenneth could address them with logical arguments and endeavor to win them over to his way of thinking.

The invitation was promptly accepted by the rural population; not so much because they were interested in the novel ideas of the young artist as because they expected to be amused by hearing the boyish master of Elmhurst “lecture at ‘em.” So they filled the little room to overflowing, and to add to the dignity of the proceedings the Hon. Erastus Hopkins, State Representative for the district, lent his presence to the assemblage.

Not that the Honorable Erastus cared a fig about this foolish talk of exterminating advertising signs. He was himself a large stockholder in a breakfast-food factory, which painted signs wherever it could secure space. These signs were not works of art, but they were distinctly helpful to

business, and only a fool, in the opinion of the Honorable Erastus, would protest against the inevitable.

What brought the legislator to the meeting was the fact that he was coming forward for re-election in November, and believed that this afforded a good chance to meet some of his constituents and make a favorable impression. So he came early and shook hands with everyone that arrived, and afterward took as prominent a seat as possible.

Indeed, the gathering had at first the appearance of being a political one, so entirely did the Representative dominate it. But Mr. Watson took the platform and shyly introduced the speaker of the evening.

The farmers all knew Mr. Watson, and liked him; so when Kenneth rose they prepared to listen in respectful silence.

Usually a young man making his maiden speech is somewhat diffident; but young Forbes was so thoroughly in earnest and so indignant at the opposition that his plans had encountered that he forgot that it was his first public speech and thought only of impressing his hearers with his views, exulting in the fact that on this occasion they could not "talk back," as they usually did in private when he tried to argue with them. So he exhorted them earnestly to keep their homes beautiful and free from the degradation of advertising, and never to permit glaring commercialism to mar the scenery around them. He told them what he had been able to accomplish by himself, in a short time; how he had redeemed the glen from its disgraceful condition and restored it to its former beauty. He asked them to observe Webb's pretty homestead, no longer marred by the unsightly sign upon the barn. And then he appealed to them to help him in driving all the advertising signs out of the community.

When he ended they applauded his speech mildly; but it was chiefly for the reason that he had spoken so forcibly and well.

Then the Honorable Erastus Hopkins, quick to catch the lack of sympathy in the audience, stood up and begged leave to reply to young Forbes.

He said the objection to advertising signs was only a rich man's aristocratic hobby, and that it could not be indulged in a democratic community of honest people. His own firm, he said, bought thousands of bushels of oats from the farmers and converted them into the celebrated Eagle-Eye Breakfast Food, three packages for a quarter. They sold this breakfast food to thousands of farmers, to give them health and strength to harvest another crop of oats. Thus he "benefited the community going and coming." What! Should he not advertise this mutual-benefit commodity wherever he pleased, and especially among the farmers? What aristocratic notion could prevent him? It was a mighty good thing for the farmers to be

reminded, by means of the signs on their barns and fences, of the things they needed in daily life.

If the young man at Elmhurst would like to be of public service he might find some better way to do so than by advancing such crazy ideas. But this, continued the Representative, was a subject of small importance. What he wished especially to call their attention to was the fact that he had served the district faithfully as Representative, and deserved their suffrages for renomination. And then he began to discuss political questions in general and his own merits in particular, so that Kenneth and Mr. Watson, disgusted at the way in which the Honorable Erastus had captured the meeting, left the school-house and indignantly returned to Elmhurst.

"This man Hopkins," said Mr. Watson, angrily, "is not a gentleman. He's an impertinent meddler."

"He ruined any good effect my speech might have created," said Kenneth, gloomily.

"Give it up, my boy," advised the elder man, laying a kindly hand on the youth's shoulder. "It really isn't worth the struggle."

"But I can't give it up and acknowledge myself beaten," protested Kenneth, almost ready to weep with disappointment.

"Well, well, let's think it over, Ken, and see what can be done. Perhaps that rascally Hopkins was right when he advised you to find some other way to serve the community."

"I can't do better than to make it clean — to do away with these disreputable signs," said the boy, stubbornly.

"You made a fine speech," declared Mr. Watson, gravely puffing his pipe. "I am very proud of you, my lad."

Kenneth flushed red. He was by nature shy and retiring to a degree. Only his pent-up enthusiasm had carried him through the ordeal, and now that it was over he was chagrined to think that the speech had been so ineffective. He was modest enough to believe that another speaker might have done better.

CHAPTER IV

KENNETH TAKES A BOLD STEP

"This man Hopkins gets on my nerves," said Mr. Watson, a week or two after the eventful meeting in the school-house. He was at the breakfast table opposite Kenneth, and held up a big, glaring post-card which was in his mail.

"What is it now?" asked the boy, rousing himself from a fit of abstraction.

"An announcement offering himself for renomination at the primaries. It's like a circus advertisement. Isn't it a shame to think that modern politics has descended to such a level in our free and enlightened republic?"

Kenneth nodded, stirring his coffee thoughtfully. He had lost his spirit and enthusiasm since the meeting, and was fast relapsing into his old state of apathy and boredom. It grieved Mr. Watson to note this.

"Hopkins isn't fit to be the Representative for this district," observed the old gentleman, with sudden energy.

The boy looked at him.

"Who is Hopkins?" he asked.

"His mother once kept a stationery shop in town, and he was stable boy at the hotel. But he was shrewd and prospered, and when he grew up became a county-clerk or tax-collector; then an assessor, and finally he ran last term for State Representative from this district and was elected by a mighty small majority."

"Why small?" asked Kenneth.

"Because he's a Democrat, and the district is strongly Republican. But Thompson ran against him on the Republican ticket and couldn't win his party vote."

"Who's Thompson?"

"The general store keeper. He has a reputation for short weights and measures."

The boy sipped his coffee thoughtfully.

"Tell me, sir; how did you happen to know all this?" he asked.

"I've been looking up Hopkins's record. I have disliked the man ever since he treated us so shabbily on the night of the meeting."

"Never mind him. We've done with him."

Mr. Watson shifted uneasily in his chair.

"I wonder if we have?" he said.

"Why not, sir?"

"Well, Kenneth, we have to reside at Elmhurst, which is Hopkins's district. Also I believe Elmhurst to be the most important estate in the district, and you to be the largest taxpayer. This man wishes to go to the State

Legislature and make laws for you to obey."

"Well?"

"Well, it's our duty to watch him. If he isn't a fit man it's our duty to prevent him from representing us."

The young man nodded somewhat dreamily.

"Some of these country yokels must represent us," he observed. "It doesn't matter much whether it's Hopkins or someone else."

"Except that you, being a prominent man, owe it to the community to protect its interests," added the lawyer.

"Do you want me to mix in these petty politics?" asked the boy, irritably.

"Oh, do as you like, my boy. If you can shirk your duties with a clear conscience, I've nothing to say."

For a time the young man was silent. Finally he asked:

"Why isn't Hopkins a good Representative?"

"He's what is called a 'grafter'; a term signifying that he is willing to vote for any measure that he is paid to vote for, whether it benefits his constituents or not."

"Oh. Is he singular in this?"

"By no means. The 'grafter' is all too common in politics."

Again the boy fell into a thoughtful mood.

"Mr. Watson, am I a Democrat or a Republican?"

The old gentleman laughed outright.

"Don't you know, Ken?"

"No, sir, I haven't asked myself before."

"Then I advise you to be a Republican."

"Why?"

"Because Hopkins is a Democrat, and we may then fight him openly."

"What is the difference, sir, between the two parties?"

"There is no difference of importance. All Americans are loyal citizens, whichever side they adopt in politics. But the two parties are the positive and negative poles that provide the current of electricity for our nation, and keep it going properly. Also they safeguard our interests by watching one another."

"What is your preference, sir?"

"I've always been a Republican, whenever I dabbled in politics, which hasn't been often."

"Then I will be a Republican."

"Very good."

"I am sorry to say that I know nothing about politics and have no convictions on the subject. Who is to oppose the Honorable Erastus on the —

on *our* side?”

“I don’t know yet. The primaries for the nomination are not to be held for two weeks, and the Republican candidates seem shy about coming forward.”

“Didn’t you say the district was Republican?”

“Yes; but since Hopkins defeated them last term they seem to be terrified, and no one likes to offer himself as a possible sacrifice.”

“That feeling will probably elect Mr. Hopkins,” declared Kenneth, with conviction.

“Unless — ”

“Unless what, sir?”

“Unless we come to the rescue of the Republicans and take a hand in local politics ourselves, my lad.”

Kenneth pushed back his chair and rose from the table. He walked to the window and stood there whistling for a few moments, and then left the room without a word.

For a time Mr. Watson sat silently musing.

“Perhaps I’m inviting trouble,” he murmured; “but I am sure I am doing right. The boy needs a good shaking up and more knowledge of his fellow-men. If I can get Kenneth interested, this plan of mine will be of great benefit to him.”

Then he, too, left the breakfast table, and wandering into the garden saw Kenneth busy at his easel in a shady corner.

For a day or so the, subject was not resumed, and then Mr. Watson casually introduced it.

“A law could be passed in the State Legislature forbidding the display of all advertising signs in public places in this county,” he suggested.

The boy looked at him eagerly.

“Are you sure?” he asked.

“I am positive,” was the answer. “It is merely a question of privilege.”

“And you think we might hire Hopkins to pass such a law?”

“No; we couldn’t trust him.”

“Then what do you propose?”

“I’ll think it over, my lad, and let you know.”

Then he walked away, leaving Kenneth much pleased with the idea he had advanced. Indeed, he was so much interested in the suggestion that he himself referred to the subject at the first opportunity.

“I don’t like to be beaten, sir, once I’ve undertaken to do a thing,” he said. “So if such a law can be passed I’ll do all I can to elect the man who will pass it.”

“I thought as much,” the old lawyer replied, smiling. “But there’s only

one man who could go to the legislature with enough influence to win the votes to carry such a unique measure through."

"And who is that, sir?"

"Kenneth Forbes, the owner of Elmhurst, and the largest taxpayer in the county."

"Me, sir?"

"You're the man."

"A State Representative?"

"It's an honorable office. It's an important office, properly filled. You might not only beautify your district by having those objectionable signs prohibited, but do many other things to better the condition of the farmers. And that isn't all."

"What's the rest, Mr. Watson?"

"You owe something to yourself, lad. All your young life you've been too self-contained and exclusive in your habits. 'The noblest study of mankind is man.' It would broaden you to go into politics for a time, and do much to develop your character and relieve the monotony of your existence."

Kenneth frowned.

"It won't be easy, you know. It'll be a fight, and a hard one, for Hopkins won't give up his job if he can help it."

The boy brightened again.

"I like a good fight," he said, wistfully. "If I thought — if I believed I could fill the position with credit — I might undertake it."

"I'll answer for that," retorted the old man, highly pleased with his easy victory. "You win the fight, Ken, and I'll guarantee you'll outclass the majority of your fellow Representatives. It's a good state, too."

So the thing was undertaken, and both the young man and the old threw themselves into the contest with energy and determination.

Mr. Watson rode in his buggy all over their district during the next fortnight, and interviewed the farmers and townsmen of the legislative district. When it became noised about that the young owner of Elmhurst, now barely twenty-one, had determined to enter politics, and asked for the nomination of Representative, no other Republican ventured to oppose him.

It was understood to mean a hard fight, and even the most sturdy Republican was inclined to fear that the present incumbent of the office would be elected to succeed himself.

So the primaries were held and Kenneth attended and made a speech, and was warmly applauded. His nomination was a matter of course, and he went home the unanimous choice of his party, because none of the older and more discreet politicians ventured to risk defeat.

The Hon. Erastus Hopkins well knew this feeling, and smiled in his pompous and most sardonic manner when he learned who was his opponent. Having conquered an old and tried Republican warrior in the last campaign, he had no fears in regard to this mere boy, who could know little of political intrigue.

"He won't put up enough of a fight to make it interesting, I'm afraid," Mr. Hopkins confided to his cronies.

But he didn't intend to take chances, so he began the campaign with his usual vigor.

It was now the middle of September, and the election was to be early in November.

CHAPTER V

PLANNING THE WORK

The Honorable Erastus Hopkins was thoroughly enjoying his campaign.

He was not an especially popular man in his district, and he knew it. Physically he was big and stout, with a florid face and small eyes that blinked continually. His head was bald, his hands fat and red and his feet enormous.

To offset this Mr. Hopkins wore a silk hat and a "Prince Albert" coat morning, noon and night. His gold watch-chain was huge and imposing; he had a big diamond shirt-stud, and upon his puffy fingers several rings. He conveyed, nevertheless, the impression that he was more prosperous than refined, and the farmers and townsmen were as quick to recognize this as was Mr. Watson himself.

Moreover, the Honorable Erastus was dubbed "close-fisted" by his neighbors. He never spent a penny on anyone but himself, and being unscrupulous in politics he was naturally unscrupulous in smaller things of a business nature. But since he had risen from a stable-boy to his present affluent position he had never been unwise or careless enough to be caught in any crooked action; and while his acquaintances had an indefinite fear of dealing with him they could not accuse him openly.

It seems strange that such a man should have been chosen to represent a wealthy and important district in the State Legislature, but politics can show many a similar case. In the first place, Mr. Hopkins was aggressive, and knew political methods thoroughly. He had usurped the position of Democratic leader in his community and the others were afraid to antagonize him openly. When he was nominated for Representative he managed to dictate, by shrewd methods, the nomination of Thompson, the store-keeper, on the Republican ticket. Thompson owed Hopkins a large sum of money and Hopkins held a mortgage on the stock. Therefore Thompson dared not make a fight, and although the Republican vote was normally the largest in the district, Hopkins had managed to win enough of them to his side to win.

He had been a little anxious about his renomination, because he knew that he had not represented his district very satisfactorily; but when Kenneth Forbes received the nomination on the Republican ticket he felt that "all was over but the shouting" and that he would "win in a walk." Had it been an issue between the personality of the two men, Hopkins would have had little chance of success; but young Forbes had already raised another issue by his anti-sign speech at the school-house, and Hopkins intended to force that issue and so defeat Kenneth because of the ridicule the latter's position had already brought upon him.

He began to circulate humorous stories about Kenneth's antipathy to sign-boards, saying that the young man demanded that the signs be taken off the Zodiac, and that he wouldn't buy goods of the village grocer because the man had a sign out.

Mr. Hopkins also printed thousands of large hand-bills reading "The Signs of the Times vs. Aristocratic Snobbery. Vote for the Hon. Erastus Hopkins, the man who believes in advertising."

These things had their effect upon all classes of people. There were many good-natured laughs at young Forbes's expense. All this was soon realized at Elmhurst, and had the effect of plunging the youthful aspirant for political honors into the depths of despair. The campaign was hot against him, but Kenneth made no defense.

At this juncture, with election but three weeks away, he received a telegram asking him to send the drag and baggage wagon to the noon train. It was signed by John Merrick, and the boy was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his jolly old friend again. And the girls? Well, some of them surely must be coming, or Uncle John wouldn't have asked for the drag.

"Now then, the election can go to blazes," said Kenneth, cheerfully, to Mr. Watson. "The sight of some friendly faces will be a great relief."

The old lawyer sighed. His attempt to "wake up" Kenneth had resulted in failure, mainly because the boy had become discouraged so early in the game. Kenneth felt keenly the humiliating experiences he had passed through, and had sunk back into his old moody reserve.

But here was a welcome diversion. The visitors, whoever they might prove to be, would afford relief to the situation and brighten the dullness of life at the big house. So both Kenneth and Mr. Watson were with the drag at the station when the noon train drew in.

And there were Patsy Doyle, Beth DeGraf, and Louise Merrick, a bevy of dainty and sprightly girls, alighting eagerly from the coaches, with Uncle John handing out the grips and packages and giving the checks for the baggage, with business-like celerity, to Thomas the groom.

"We've come for a visit, Ken!" cried Palsy, laughing at his eager delight. "Are you glad to see us, boy? And do you suppose old Martha has our rooms aired?"

"And it's a long visit, too," added Uncle John, "as you'll believe when you see the pile of baggage. You'd think these minxes were prepared for a tour of the world. Each one of 'em brought a carload of clothes."

But they couldn't phase Kenneth in that way. His sensitive face had not beamed with so much animation for months.

The guests were helped into the tall drag and merrily they drove the five

miles to Elmhurst, not a word of politics being spoken on the way.

The girls had not been to the house since Aunt Jane's death, two years ago, and after a hasty luncheon they began an inspection of every room, as well as the garden, grounds and stables. The horses, cows, pig and chickens were alike inspected, the roses and dahlias visited and admired, and after all this they returned to their rooms with old Martha, the housekeeper, and proceeded to unpack their trunks and get settled. Kenneth had been their guide and companion in these various explorations, but when the girls went to their rooms he wandered into the library where Uncle John and Mr. Watson had been having a quiet talk over their pipes of tobacco. They welcomed the young man, but adroitly turned the topic of conversation, and again the subject of was rejoined.

It was a merry dinner party that graced the table during dinner that evening, and the boy forgot his troubles and was as jolly and sociable as he had ever been in his life.

But when they were all assembled in the long living room where they grouped themselves around the fireplace, a sudden change took place in the demeanor of the young ladies. Patsy, the delegated leader, looked gravely at the boy and asked:

"How goes the campaign, Ken?"

"Wh — what campaign?" he stammered, to gain time.

"Why, this election business. Tell us about it," said Patsy.

"Some other time, girls," answered the boy, red and distressed. "It — it wouldn't interest you a bit."

"Why not?" asked Louise, softly.

"Because it doesn't interest me," he replied.

"Are you so sure of election?" inquired Beth.

"I'm sure of defeat, if you must know," he declared, scowling at the recollection of his predicament.

"You haven't been cowardly enough to give up?" asked Patricia, boldly.

"What do you mean by that, Patsy Doyle?" he asked, the scowl deepening.

"Just what I say, Ken. A brave man doesn't know when he's beaten, much less beforehand."

He looked at her fixedly.

"I'm not brave, my dear," he replied, more gently than they had expected. "The people here don't understand me, nor I them. I'm laughed at and reviled, a subject for contemptuous jeers, and — and it hurts me. I don't like to be beaten. I'd fight to the last gasp, if I had any show to win. But these conditions, which I foolishly but honestly brought about myself, have

defeated me so far in advance that I have absolutely no hope to redeem myself. That's all. Don't speak of it again, girls. Play me that nocturne that I like, Beth."

"We've got to speak of this, Kenneth, and speak of it often. For we girls have come down here to electioneer, and for no other reason on earth," declared Patsy.

"*What! You* electioneer?" — a slight smile curled his lips.

"Exactly. We're here to brace up and get to work."

"And to win," added Beth, quietly.

"And to put you in the Legislature where you belong," declared Louise.

Kenneth turned to Mr. Merrick.

"Talk to them, Uncle John," he begged.

"I have," said the little man, smiling, "and they've convinced me that they mean business. It's all up with you, my boy, as a private citizen. You're as good as elected."

Ken's eyes filled.

"You're all very kind, sir," he said, "as you were bound to be. And — and I appreciate it all — very much. But Mr. Watson will tell you that the case is hopeless, and there's nothing to be done."

"How about it, Watson?" inquired Uncle John, turning to the lawyer.

"I'll explain the proposition, sir, so you will all understand it," he replied, and drew his chair into the circle. "To begin with, Kenneth visited the glen one day, to make a sketch, and found his old table-rock covered with an advertising sign."

"How preposterous!" exclaimed Louise.

"There were three of these huge signs in different parts of the glen, and they ruined its natural beauty. Kenneth managed to buy up the spaces and then he scrubbed away the signs. By that time he had come to detest the unsightly advertisements that confronted him every time he rode out, and he began a war of extermination against them."

"Quite right," said Patsy, nodding energetically.

"But our friend made little headway because the sympathies of the people were not with him."

"Why not, sir?" inquired Beth, while Kenneth sat inwardly groaning at this baring of his terrible experiences.

"Because through custom they had come to tolerate such things, and could see no harm in them," replied the lawyer. "They permit their buildings which face the roads to be covered with big advertisements, and the fences are decorated in the same way. In some places a sign-board has been built in their yards or fields, advertising medicines or groceries or tobacco. In other

words, our country roads and country homes have become mere advertising mediums to proclaim the goods of more or less unscrupulous manufacturers, and so all their attractiveness is destroyed. Kenneth, being a man of artistic instincts and loving country scenes, resented this invasion of commercialism and tried to fight it."

"And so ran my head against a stone wall," added the young man, with a bitter laugh.

"But you were quite right," said Patsy, decidedly. "Such things ought not to be permitted."

"The people think differently," he replied.

"Then we must educate the people to a different way of thinking," announced Louise.

"In three weeks?"

"That is long enough, if we get to work. Isn't it, girls?" said Beth.

"Kenneth accepted the nomination with the idea of having a law passed prohibiting such signs," explained the lawyer. "But Mr. Hopkins, his opponent, has used this very thing to arouse public sentiment against him. Farmers around here are thrifty people, and they fear to lose the trifling sums paid them for the privilege of painting signs on their premises."

Patsy nodded gravely.

"We will change all that," she said. "The thing is really more serious than we expected, and more difficult. But we came here to work and win, and we're going to do it. Aren't we, Uncle John?"

"I'll bet on your trio, Patsy," replied her uncle. "But I won't bet all I'm worth."

"It's all foolishness," declared Kenneth.

"I do not think so," said the lawyer, gravely. "The girls have a fine show to win. I know our country people, and they are more intelligent than you suppose. Once they are brought to a proper way of thinking they will support Kenneth loyally."

"Then we must bring them to a proper way of thinking," said Patsy, with decision. "From this time on, Ken, we become your campaign managers. Don't worry any more about the matter. Go on with your painting and be happy. We may require you to make a few speeches, but all the details will be arranged for you."

"Do you intend to permit this, Uncle John?" asked Kenneth.

"I'm wholly in sympathy with the girls, Ken, and I believe in them."

"But consider the humiliation to which they will subject themselves! I've had a taste of that medicine, myself."

"We're going to be the most popular young ladies in this district!"

exclaimed Patsy. “Don’t you worry about us, Ken. But tell me, how big is your district?”

“It includes parts of three counties — Monroe, Washington and Jackson Counties.”

“What county is this?”

“Monroe.”

“Any cities?”

“No; only a few towns. It’s mostly a rural district. Fairview, just across the border in Washington County, is the biggest village.”

“Have you an automobile?”

“No; I don’t like the things. I’ve always loved horses and prefer them to machines.”

“How much money are you prepared to spend?”

“How much — what’s that?” he asked, bewildered.

“You can’t win a political election without spending money,” declared Patsy, wisely. “I’ll bet the bad man is scattering money in every direction. It will cost something on our side to run this campaign in a way to win.”

The young man frowned.

“I don’t mind spending money, Patsy,” he said, “but I don’t approve of buying votes, and I won’t allow it, either!”

“Tut-tut! Who said anything about buying votes? But we’re going to work on a broad and liberal basis, I assure you, and we need money.”

“Spend all you like, then, so long as you don’t try to corrupt the voters.”

“Very good. Now, then, how much land do you own at Elmhurst?”

Kenneth looked inquiringly at the lawyer.

“About twelve hundred acres,” said Mr. Watson. “It is divided into small farms which are let out on shares.”

“How many votes do you control among your servants and tenants?” proceeded Patsy, in a business-like tone.

“Perhaps thirty or forty.”

“And what is the total vote of the district?”

“Thirty-five hundred.”

Patsy gasped.

“So many?”

“Fully that many,” said Mr. Watson, smiling.

“Then we’ve got to have over seventeen hundred and fifty votes to elect Kenneth?”

“Exactly.”

The girl drew a long breath and looked at Beth and Louise. Then they all laughed.

“Suppose you resign as campaign managers,” said Kenneth, beginning to be amused.

“Oh, no! It’s — it’s easier than we expected. Isn’t it, girls?”

“It’s child’s play,” observed Louise, languidly.

The boy was astonished.

“Very well,” said he. “Try it and see.”

“Of course,” said Patsy, cheerfully. “Tomorrow morning we begin work.”

CHAPTER VI
A GOOD START

At an early breakfast next morning Patsy announced the program for the day. "Uncle John and I will drive over to the village," she said, "and perhaps we'll be gone all day. Don't worry if we're not back for luncheon. Louise and Mr. Watson are going in the phaeton to visit some of the near-by farmers. Take one road, dear, and follow it straight along, as far as it keeps within our legislative district, and visit every farm-house on the way."

"The farmers will all be busy in the fields," said Kenneth.

"Louise doesn't care about the farmers," retorted Patsy. "She's going to talk to their wives."

"Wives don't vote, Patsy."

"They tell their husbands how to vote, though," declared Louise, with a laugh. "Let me win the women and I'll win the men."

"What am I to do?" asked Beth.

"You're to stay at home and write several articles for the newspapers. There are seven important papers in our district, and five of them are Republican. Make a strong argument, Beth. You're our publicity department. Also get up copy for some hand-hills and circular letters. I want to get a circular letter to every voter in the district."

"All right," said Beth. "I know what you want."

There was an inspiring air of business about these preparations, and the girls were all eager to begin work. Scarcely was breakfast finished when the two equipages were at the door. Louise and Mr. Watson at once entered the phaeton and drove away, the girl delighted at the prospect of visiting the farmers' wives and winning them by her plausible speeches. Conversation was Louise's strong point. She loved to talk and argue, and her manner was so confiding and gracious that she seldom failed to interest her listeners.

Patsy and Uncle John drove away. In Kenneth's buggy to the town, and during the five-mile drive Patsy counseled gravely with her shrewd uncle in regard to "ways and means."

"This thing requires prompt action, Patsy," he said, "and if we're going to do things that count they've got to be done on a big scale."

"True," she admitted. "But oughtn't we to be a little careful about spending Kenneth's money?"

"I'll be your temporary banker," said the old gentleman, "and keep track of the accounts. If we win we'll present Kenneth our bill, and if we fail I'll have the satisfaction of getting rid of some of that dreadful income that is swamping me."

This was always Uncle John's cry. His enormous fortune was a constant bugbear to him. He had been so interested in his business enterprises for many years that he had failed to realize how his fortune was growing, and it astounded him to wake up one day and find himself possessed of many millions. He had at once retired from active business and invested his millions in ways that would cause him the least annoyance; but the income on so large a sum was more than he could take care of, and even Major Doyle, who managed these affairs for his brother-in-law, was often puzzled to know what to do with the money that accumulated.

Doubtless no one will ever know how much good these two kindly men accomplished between them in their quiet, secretive way. Dozens of deserving young men were furnished capital to start them in business; dozens more were being educated at universities at Uncle John's expense. Managers of worthy charities were familiar with John Merrick's signature on checks, and yet the vast fortune grew with leaps and bounds. Mr. Merrick's life was so simple and unostentatious that his personal expenses, however erratic some of his actions, could not make much headway against his interest account, and nothing delighted him more than to find a way to "get even with fate by reckless squandering," as he quaintly expressed it. He was far too shrewd to become the prey of designing people, but welcomed any legitimate channel in which to unload his surplus.

So Mr. Merrick had been revolving the possibilities of this unique political campaign in his mind, and had decided to do some things that would open the bucolic eyes of Kenneth's constituents in wonder. He did not confide all his schemes to Patsy, but having urged his nieces to attempt this conquest he had no intention of allowing them to suffer defeat if he could help it.

The little town of Elmwood was quiet and practically deserted when they drove into it. The farmers were too busy with the harvest to "come to town for trading" except on Saturdays, and the arrival and departure of the two daily trains did not cause more than a ripple of excitement in the village.

Patsy decided she would shop at each and every store in the place, and engage the store-keepers in conversation about the election.

"It's important to win these people," she declared, "because they are close to every farmer who comes to town to trade; and their own votes count, too."

"I'll run over to the bank," said Uncle John, "and get acquainted there."

So he tied the horses to a post and let Patsy proceed alone upon her mission, while he wandered over to a little brick building of neat appearance which bore the inscription "Bank" in gold letters on its plate-glass window.

"Mr. Warren in?" he asked the clerk at the window.

The banker, a dignified old gentleman of considerable ability, came out of his private office and greeted his visitor very cordially. He had known Uncle John when the millionaire visited Elmhurst two years before, and since then had learned more particulars concerning him. So there was no need of an introduction, and Mr. Warren was delighted at the prospect of business relations with this famous personage.

The bank, although small and only one story high, was the most modern and imposing building in the village; and it was fitted with modern conveniences, for Mr. Warren had been successful and prosperous. In his private office were local and long distance telephones, a direct connection with the telegraph operator at the station, and other facilities for accomplishing business promptly. Uncle John had remembered this fact, and it had a prominent place in his plans.

He followed the banker into his private office and told him briefly his intention to forward the interests of his young friend Kenneth Forbes for Member of the Legislature.

The old gentleman shook his head, at first, predicting failure. Young Forbes was his most important customer, and he respected him highly; but this anti-sign issue bade fair to ruin all his chances.

"The idea is too progressive and advanced to be considered at this time," he stated, positively. "The encroachments of advertisers on personal property may lead to a revolt in the future, but it is still too early to direct popular opinion against them."

"Isn't Forbes a better man for the place than Hopkins?" asked Uncle John.

"Undoubtedly, sir. And I think Forbes would have won, had not Hopkins forced this unfortunate issue upon him. As it is, our young friend cannot avoid the consequences of his quixotic action."

"He doesn't wish to avoid them," was the quiet reply. "We're going to win on that issue or not at all."

"I'm afraid it's hopeless, sir."

"May I count on your assistance?"

"In every way."

"Thank you, Mr. Warren, I'm going to spend a lot of money. Put this draft for fifty thousand to my credit as a starter."

"Ah, I begin to understand. But — "

"You don't understand at all, yet. May I use your long distance telephone?"

"Of course, sir."

Uncle John had secured considerable information from Mr. Watson, and this enabled him to act comprehensively. The advertising sign business in

this part of the state was controlled by two firms, who contracted directly with the advertisers and then had the signs painted upon spaces secured from the farmers by their wide-awake agents. These signs were contracted for by the year, but the firms controlling the spaces always inserted protective clauses that provided for the removal of any sign when certain conditions required such removal. In such cases a rebate was allowed to the advertiser. This protective clause was absolutely necessary in case of fire, alteration or removal of buildings or destruction of fences and sign-boards by weather or the requirements of the owners. It was this saving clause in the contracts of which Uncle John had decided to take advantage. The contracting sign painters were merely in the business to make money.

Mr. Merrick got the head of the concern in Cleveland over the telephone within half an hour. He talked with the man at length, and talked with the convincing effect that the mention of money has. When he hung up the receiver Uncle John was smiling. Then he called for the Chicago firm. With this second advertising company he met with more difficulties, and Mr. Warren had to come to the telephone and assure the man that Mr. Merrick was able to pay all he agreed to, and that the money was on deposit in his bank. That enabled Mr. Merrick to conclude his arrangements. He knew that he was being robbed, but the co-operation of the big Chicago firm was necessary to his plans.

Then, the telephone having served its purpose, Mr. Warren took Uncle John across the street to the newspaper office and introduced him to Charley Briggs, the editor.

Briggs was a man with one eye, a sallow complexion and sandy hair that stuck straight up from his head. He set type for his paper, besides editing it, and Uncle John found him wearing a much soiled apron, with his bare arms and fingers smeared with printer's ink.

"Mr. Merrick wants to see you on business, Charley," said the banker. "Whatever he agrees to I will guarantee, to the full resources of my bank."

The editor pricked up his ears and dusted a chair for his visitor with his apron. It wasn't easy to make a living running a paper in Elmwood, and if there was any business pending he was anxious to secure it.

Uncle John waited until Mr. Warren had left him alone with the newspaper man. Then he said:

"I understand your paper is Democratic, Mr. Briggs."

"That's a mistake, sir," replied the editor, evasively. "The *Herald* is really independent, but in political campaigns we adopt the side we consider the most deserving of support."

"You're supporting Hopkins just now."

“Only mildly; only mildly, sir.”

“What is he paying you?”

“Why, ‘Rast and I haven’t come to a definite settlement yet. I ought to get a hundred dollars out of this campaign, but ‘Rast thinks fifty is enough. You see, he plans on my support anyhow, and don’t like to spend more than he’s obliged to.”

“Why does he plan on your support?”

“He’s the only live one in the game, Mr. Merrick. ‘Rast is one of us — he’s one of the people — and it’s policy for me to support him instead of the icicle up at Elmhurst, who don’t need the job and don’t care whether he gets it or not.”

“Is that true?”

“I think so. And there’s another thing. Young Forbes is dead against advertising, and advertising is the life of a newspaper. Why, there isn’t a paper in the district that’s supporting Forbes this year.”

“You’ve a wrong idea of the campaign, Mr. Briggs,” said Uncle John. “It is because Mr. Forbes believes in newspaper advertising, and wants to protect it, that he’s against these signs. That’s one reason, anyhow. Can’t you understand that every dollar spent for painting signs takes that much away from your newspapers?”

“Why, perhaps there’s something in that, Mr. Merrick. I’d never looked at it that way before.”

“Now, see here, Mr. Briggs. I’ll make you a proposition. I’ll give you two hundred and fifty to support Mr. Forbes in this campaign, and if he’s elected I’ll give you five hundred extra.”

“Do you mean that, sir?” asked the editor, scarcely able to believe the evidence of his ears.

“I do. Draw up a contract and I’ll sign it. And here’s a check for your two-fifty in advance.”

The editor drew up the agreement with a pen that trembled a little.

“And now,” said Uncle John, “get busy and hustle for Kenneth Forbes.”

“I will, sir,” said Briggs, with unexpected energy. “I mean to win that extra five hundred!”

CHAPTER VII

PATSY MAKES PROGRESS

Meantime Patsy was in the thick of the fray. The druggist was a deep-dyed Democrat, and sniffed when she asked him what he thought of Forbes for Representative.

"He's no politician at all — just an aristocrat," declared Latham, a dapper little man with his hair slicked down to his ears and a waxed moustache. "And he's got fool notions, too. If he stopped the advertising signs I wouldn't sell half as many pain-killers and liver-pills."

"He's my cousin," said Patsy, mendaciously; for although they called themselves cousins there was no relationship even of marriage, as Patsy's Aunt Jane had merely been betrothed to Kenneth's uncle when he died.

"I'm sorry for that, miss," replied the druggist. "He's going to be badly beaten."

"I think I'll take two ounces of this perfumery. It is really delightful. Some druggists have so little taste in selecting such things."

"Yes, miss, I do rather pride myself on my perfumes," replied Latham, graciously. "Now here's a sachet powder that gives fine satisfaction."

"I'll take a couple of packets of that, too, since you recommend it."

Latham began doing up the purchases. There was no other customer in the store.

"You know, miss, I haven't anything against Mr. Forbes myself. His people are good customers. It's his ideas I object to, and he's a Republican."

"Haven't you ever voted for a Republican?" asked the girl. "Don't you think it better to vote for the best man, rather than the best party, in a case like this?"

"Why, perhaps it is. But in what way is Mr. Forbes the best man?"

"He's honest. He doesn't want to make any money out of the office. On the contrary, he's willing and able to spend a good deal in passing laws that will benefit his district."

"And Hopkins?"

"Don't you know Mr. Hopkins?" she asked, pointedly.

"Yes, miss; I do." And Latham frowned a little.

"As regards the advertising signs," continued the girl, "I've heard you spoken of as a man of excellent taste, and I can believe it since I've examined the class of goods you keep. And your store is as neat and attractive as can be. The fight is not against the signs themselves, but against putting them on fences and barns, and so making great glaring spots in a landscape where all should be beautiful and harmonious. I suppose a man of

your refinement and good taste has often thought of that, and said the same thing."

"Why — ahem! — yes; of course, miss. I agree with you that the signs are often out of place, and — and inharmonious."

"To be sure; and so you must sympathize with Mr. Forbes's campaign."

"In that way, yes; of course," said Mr. Latham, puzzled to find himself changing front so suddenly.

"Mr. Hopkins has taken a lot of money out of this town," remarked Patsy, examining a new kind of tooth wash. "But I can't find that he's ever given much of it back."

"That's true. He buys his cigars of Thompson, the general store man, and I keep the finest line ever brought to this town."

"Oh, that reminds me!" exclaimed Patsy. "Mr. Forbes wanted me to purchase a box of your choicest brand, and have you just hand them out to your customers with his compliments. He thinks he ought to show a little cordiality to the men who vote for him, and he said you would know just the people to give them to."

Latham gasped, but he assumed an air of much importance.

"I know every man that comes to this town, miss, as well as any you'll find," he said.

"The best brand, mind you, Mr. Latham," said the girl. "How much will they be?"

"Why, the very best — these imported perfectos, you know — are worth six dollars a box of fifty. Perhaps for election purposes something a little cheaper — "

"Oh, no; the best is none too good for the friends of Mr. Forbes, you know. And fifty — why fifty will scarcely go around. I'll pay for a hundred, Mr. Latham, and you'll see they go to the right persons."

"Of course; of course, miss. And much obliged. You see, young Forbes is well liked, and he's quite a decent fellow. I wouldn't be surprised if he gave Hopkins a hard fight."

"I'll tell you a secret," said Patsy, sweetly. "Mr. Forbes is bound to be elected. Why, it's all arranged in advance, Mr. Latham, and the better element, like yourself, is sure to support him. By the way, you won't forget to tell people about those signs, I hope? That the fight is not against advertising, but for beautiful rural homes and scenes."

"Oh, I'll fix that, Miss — "

"Doyle. I'm Miss Doyle, Mr. Forbes's cousin."

"I'll see that the people understand this campaign, Miss Doyle. You can depend on me."

“And if the cigars give out, don’t hesitate to open more boxes. I’ll call in, now and then, and settle for them.”

I really think this young lady might have been ashamed of herself; but she wasn’t. She smiled sweetly upon the druggist when he bowed her out, and Mr. Latham from that moment began to seek for friends of Mr. Forbes to give cigars to. If they were not friends, he argued with them until they were, for he was an honest little man, in his way, and tried to act in good faith.

So the girl went from one shop to another, making liberal purchases and seeking for every opening that would enable her to make a convert. And her shrewd Irish wit made her quick to take advantage of any weakness she discovered in the characters of the people she interviewed.

When noon came Uncle John hunted her up, which was not difficult, in Elmwood, and together they went to the village “hotel” to get something to eat. The mid-day dinner was not very inviting, but Patsy praised the cooking to the landlord’s wife, who waited upon the table, and Uncle John bought one of the landlord’s cigars after the meal and talked politics with him while he smoked it.

Then Patsy went over to the general store, and there she met her first rebuff. Thompson, the proprietor, was a sour-visaged man, tall and lanky and evidently a dyspeptic. Having been beaten by Hopkins at the last election, when he ran against him on the Republican ticket, Thompson had no desire to see Forbes more successful than he had been himself. And there were other reasons that made it necessary for him to support Hopkins.

So he was both gruff and disagreeable when Patsy, after buying a lot of ribbons of him, broached the subject of politics. He told her plainly that her cousin hadn’t a “ghost of a show,” and that he was glad of it.

“The young fool had no business to monkey with politics,” he added, “and this will teach him to keep his fingers out of someone else’s pie.”

“It isn’t Mr. Hopkins’s pie,” declared Patsy, stoutly. “It belongs to whoever gets the votes.”

“Well, that’s Hopkins. He knows the game, and Forbes don’t.”

“Can’t he learn?” asked the girl.

“No. He’s an idiot. Always was a crank and an unsociable cuss when a boy, and he’s worse now he’s grown up. Oh, I know Forbes, all right; and I haven’t got no use for him, neither.”

Argument was useless in this case. The girl sighed, gathered up her purchases, and went into the hardware store.

Immediately her spirits rose. Here was a man who knew Kenneth, believed in him and was going to vote for him. She had a nice talk with the hardware man, and he gave her much useful information about the most

important people in the neighborhood — those it would be desirable to win for their candidate. When he mentioned Thompson, she said:

"Oh, he's impossible. I've talked with him."

"Thompson is really a good Republican," replied Mr. Andrews, the hardware man. "But he's under Hopkins's thumb and doesn't dare defy him."

"Doesn't he like Mr. Hopkins?" asked Patsy, in surprise.

"No; he really hates him. You see, Thompson isn't a very successful merchant. He has needed money at times, and borrowed it of Hopkins at a high rate of interest. It's a pretty big sum now, and Hopkins holds a mortgage on the stock. If he ever forecloses, as he will do some day, Thompson will be ruined. So he's obliged to shout for Hopkins, whether he believes in him or not."

"I think I understand him now," said Patsy, smiling. "But he needn't have been so disagreeable."

"He's a disagreeable man at any time," returned Mr. Andrews.

"Has he any political influence?" asked the girl.

"Yes, considerable. Otherwise he couldn't have secured the nomination when he pretended to run against Hopkins — for it was only a pretense. You see, he's a well known Republican, and when he sides for Hopkins he's bound to carry many Republicans with him."

But there were other important people whom Mr. Andrews thought might be influenced, and he gave Patsy a list of their names. He seemed much amused at the earnestness of this girlish champion of the Republican candidate.

"I do not think we can win," he said, as she left him; "but we ought to make a good showing for your cousin, and I'll do my very best to help you."

As she rode home with Uncle John in the afternoon, after a day of really hard work, Patsy sized up the situation and declared that she was satisfied that she had made progress. She told Mr. Merrick of the mortgage held over Thompson by Mr. Hopkins, and the little man made a mental note of the fact. He also was satisfied with his day's work, and agreed to ride over to Fairview the next day with her and carry the war into this, the largest village in Kenneth's district.

Meantime Louise and Mr. Watson were having some interesting interviews with the farmers' wives along the Marville road. The old lawyer knew nearly everyone in this part of the country, for he had lived here all his life. But he let Louise do the talking and was much pleased at the tact and good nature she displayed in dealing with the widely different types of character she encountered.

Her method was quite simple, and for that reason doubly effective. She sat down in Mrs. Simmons's kitchen, where the good woman was ironing, and said:

"I'm a cousin of Mr. Forbes, up at Elmhurst, you know. He's running for a political office, so as to do some good for his county and district, and I've come to see if you'll help me get votes for him."

"Law sakes, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Simmons, "I ain't got nuthin' to do with politics."

"No; but you've got a lot to do with Mr. Simmons, and that's where we need your help. You see, Mr. Forbes thinks Mr. Simmons is one of the most important men in this district, and he's very anxious to win his vote."

"Why don't you see Dan, then? He's out'n the rye field," replied the woman.

"It's because I'm only a girl, and he wouldn't listen to me," replied Louise, sweetly. "But he takes your advice about everything, I hear — "

"He don't take it as often as he orter, don't Dan," interrupted Mrs. Simmons, pausing to feel whether her iron was hot.

"Perhaps not," agreed Louise; "but in important things, such as this, he's sure to listen to you; and we women must stick together if we want to win this election."

"But I don't know nothin' about it," protested Mrs. Simmons; "an' I don't believe Dan does."

"You don't need to know much, Mrs. Simmons," replied the girl. "What a pretty baby that is! All you need do is to tell Dan he must vote for Mr. Forbes, and see that he agrees to do so."

"Why?" was the pointed query.

"Well, there are several reasons. One is that Mr. Hopkins — Mr. Erastus Hopkins, you know, is the other candidate, and a person must vote for either one or the other of them."

"Dan's a friend o' 'Rastus," said the woman, thoughtfully. "I seen 'em talkin' together the other day."

"But this isn't a matter of friendship; it's business, and Mr. Forbes is very anxious to have your husband with him. If Mr. Forbes is elected it means lighter taxes, better roads and good schools. If Mr. Hopkins is elected it does not mean anything good except for Mr. Hopkins."

"I guess you're right about that," laughed the woman. "'Rast don't let much get away from him."

"You're very clever, Mrs. Simmons. You have discovered the fact without being told."

"Oh, I know 'Rast Hopkins, an' so does Dan."

“Then I can depend on you to help us?” asked the girl, patting the tousled head of a little girl who stood by staring at “the pretty lady.”

“I’ll talk to him, but I dunno what good it’ll do,” said Mrs. Simmons, thoughtfully.

“I know. He won’t refuse to do what you ask him, for a man always listens to his wife when he knows she’s right. You’ll win, Mrs. Simmons, and I want to thank you for saving the election for us. If we get Mr. Simmons on our side I believe we’ll be sure to defeat Hopkins.”

“Oh, I’ll do what I kin,” was the ready promise, and after a few more remarks about the children and the neatness of the house, Louise took her leave.

“Will she win him over?” asked the girl of Mr. Watson, when they were jogging on to the next homestead.

“I really can’t say, my dear,” replied the old lawyer, thoughtfully; “but I imagine she’ll try to, and if Dan doesn’t give in Mrs. Simmons will probably make his life miserable for a time. You flattered them both outrageously; but that will do no harm.”

And so it went on throughout the day. Sometimes the farmer himself was around the house, and then they held a sort of conference; Louise asked his advice about the best way to win votes, and said she depended a great deal upon his judgment. She never asked a man which side he favored, but took it for granted that he was anxious to support Mr. Forbes; and this subtle flattery was so acceptable that not one declared outright that he was for Hopkins, whatever his private views might have been.

When evening came and they had arrived at Elmhurst again, Louise was enthusiastic over her work of the day, and had many amusing tales to tell of her experiences.

“How many votes did you win?” asked Uncle John, smiling at her.

“I can’t say,” she replied; “but I didn’t lose any. If one sows plenty of seed, some of it is bound to sprout.”

“We can tell better after election,” said Mr. Watson. “But I’m satisfied that this is the right sort of work, Mr. Merrick, to get results.”

“So am I,” returned Uncle John heartily. “Are you willing to keep it up, Louise?”

“Of course!” she exclaimed. “We start again bright and early tomorrow morning.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE HONORABLE ERASTUS IS ASTONISHED

The Honorable Erastus Hopkins had been absent at the state capital for several days, looking after various matters of business; for he was a thrifty man, and watched his investments carefully.

Whenever his acquaintances asked about his chances for re-election, the Honorable Erastus Hopkins winked, laughed and declared, "it's a regular walk-over."

"Who is opposing you?" once asked a gray-haired Senator of much political experience, who had met Mr. Hopkins at luncheon.

"Young feller named Forbes — a boy, sir — with no notion about the game at all. He was pledged to an unpopular issue, so I was mighty glad to have him run against me."

"What issue is he pledged to?" asked the Senator.

"Oh, he's agin putting advertising signs on fences and barns, and wants to have them prohibited, like the infernal fool he is."

"Indeed. Then he's a progressive fellow. And you say his issue is unpopular?"

"That's what it is. It'll kill his chances — if he ever had any."

"Strange," mused the Senator. "That issue has been a winning one usually."

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished Hopkins.

"Why, the anti-sign fight has won in several places throughout the country, and local laws have been passed prohibiting them. Didn't you know that?"

"No!" said Hopkins.

"Well, it's true. Of course I do not know the temper of your people, but in a country district such as yours I would think an issue of that sort very hard to combat."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Honorable Erastus. "Ev'ry man Jack's agin the fool notion."

"Then perhaps the people don't understand it."

"Forbes has given up already," continued Hopkins, laughing at the recollection. "He's gone back into his shell like a turtle, an' won't come out to fight. I tell you, Senator, he's the worst licked candidate that ever ran for office."

Nevertheless, the suggestion that the anti-sign issue had been successful in other localities made Mr. Hopkins a trifle uneasy, and he decided to return home and keep the fight going until after election, whether young Forbes

came out of his shell or not.

He arrived at Hilldale on the early morning train and went to his house for breakfast. To his amazement he found two great banners strung across the village streets bearing the words: "*Vote for Forbes — the People's Champion!*"

"Who in thunder could 'a' done that?" murmured Mr. Hopkins, staring open-mouthed at the great banners. Then he scratched his head with a puzzled air and went home.

Mrs. Hopkins, a tired-looking woman in a bedraggled morning wrapper, was getting the breakfast. She did not participate largely in the prosperity of her husband, and often declared she was "worked to death," although there were no children to care for.

"When did those Forbes banners go up?" asked Mr. Hopkins, irritably.

"I dunno, 'Rast. I don't keep track o' such things. But all the town was out to the girls' meetin' last night, an' I went along to watch the fun."

"What girls' meeting?"

"The girls thet air workin' fer to elect Mr. Forbes. It was in the town hall, an' all three of the girls made speeches."

"What about?"

"About Mr. Forbes, and how he orter be elected. He wants to beautify the farm places by doin' away with signs, an' he wants better roads, an' three new school-houses, 'cause the ones we've got now ain't big enough. An — "

"You blamed idiot! What are you talking about?" roared the exasperated Hopkins.

"Oh, you needn't rave at me, 'Rast Hopkins, just 'cause you're gettin' licked. I thought your goose was cooked the minnit these girls got to work."

Mr. Hopkins stared at her with a dazed expression.

"Be sensible, Mary, and tell me who these girls are. I haven't heard of 'em."

"Why, they're cousins o' Kenneth Forbes, it seems, an' come from New York to git him elected."

"What are they like?"

"They're swell dressers, 'Rast, an' nice appearin' girls, and mighty sharp with their tongues. They had a good meetin' last night and there'll be another at the town hall next week."

"Pah! Girls! Forbes oughter be ashamed of himself, to send a bunch o' girls out electioneerin'. I never heard of such an irregular thing. What do the boys say?"

"Folks don't say much to me, 'Rast. They wouldn't, you know. But I guess your game is up."

He made no reply. Here, indeed, was information of a startling character. And it came upon him like thunder out of a clear sky. Yet the thing might not be so important as Mrs. Hopkins feared.

Very thoughtfully he unfolded the morning paper, and the next moment uttered a roar of wrath and vexation. Briggs was one of his stand-bys, and the *Herald* heretofore had always supported him; yet here across the first page were big black letters saying: *"Vote for Forbes!"* And the columns were full of articles and paragraphs praising Forbes and declaring that he could and would do more for the district than Hopkins.

"I must see Briggs," muttered the Honorable Erastus. "He's tryin' to make me put up that hundred — an' I guess I'll have to do it."

He looked over the other newspapers which were heaped upon his desk in the sitting-room, and was disgusted to find all but one of the seven papers in the district supporting Forbes. Really, the thing began to look serious. And he had only been absent a week!

He had not much appetite for breakfast when Mrs. Hopkins set it before him. But the Honorable Erastus was a born fighter, and his discovery had only dismayed him for a brief time. Already he was revolving ways of contesting this new activity in the enemy's camp, and decided that he must talk with "the boys" at once.

So he hurried away from the breakfast table and walked down-town. Latham was first on his route and he entered the drug store.

"Hullo, Jim."

"Good morning, Mr. Hopkins. Anything I can do for you?" asked the polite druggist.

"Yes, a lot. Tell me what these fool girls are up to, that are plugging for Forbes. I've been away for a week, you know."

"Can't say, Mr. Hopkins, I'm sure. Business is pretty lively these days, and it keeps me hustling. I've no time for politics."

"But we've got to wake up, Jim, we Democrats, or they'll give us a run for our money."

"Oh, this is a Republican district, sir. We can't hope to win it often, and especially in a case like this."

"Why not?"

"Looks to me as if you'd bungled things, Hopkins. But I'm not interested in this campaign. Excuse me; if there's nothing you want, I've got a prescription to fill."

Mr. Hopkins walked out moodily. It was very evident that Latham had changed front. But they had never been very staunch friends; and he could find a way to even scores with the little druggist later.

Thompson was behind his desk at the general store when Hopkins walked in.

"Look here," said the Honorable Representative, angrily, "what's been going on in Elmwood? What's all this plugging for Forbes mean?"

Thompson gave him a sour look over the top of his desk.

"Addressin' them remarks to me, 'Rast?"

"Yes — to you! You've been loafing on your job, old man, and it won't do — it won't do at all. You should have put a stop to these things. What right have these girls to interfere in a game like this?"

"Oh, shut up, 'Rast."

"Thompson! By crickey, I won't stand this from you. Goin' back on me, eh?"

"I'm a Republication, 'Rast."

"So you are," said Mr. Hopkins slowly, his temper at white heat "And that mortgage is two months overdue."

"Go over to the bank and get your money, then. It's waiting for you, Hopkins — interest and all. Go and get it and let me alone. I'm busy."

Perhaps the politician had never been so surprised in his life. Anger gave way to sudden fear, and he scrutinized the averted countenance of Thompson carefully.

"Where'd you raise the money, Thompson?"

"None of your business. I raised it."

"Forbes, eh? Forbes has bought you up, I see. Grateful fellow, ain't you — when I loaned you money to keep you from bankruptcy!"

"You did, Hopkins. You made me your slave, and threatened me every minute, unless I did all your dirty work. Grateful? You've led me a dog's life. But I'm through with you now — for good and all."

Hopkins turned and walked out without another word. In the dentist's office Dr. Squiers was sharpening and polishing his instruments.

"Hello, Archie."

"Hello, 'Rast. 'Bout time you was getting back, old man. We're having a big fight on our hands, I can tell you."

"Tell me more," said Mr. Hopkins, taking a chair with a sigh of relief at finding one faithful friend. "What's up, Archie?"

"An invasion of girls, mostly. They took us by surprise, the other day, and started a campaign worthy of old political war-horses. There's some shrewd politician behind them, I know, or they wouldn't have nailed us up in our coffins with such business-like celerity."

"Talk sense, Archie. What have they done? What *can* they do? Pah! Girls!"

“Don’t make a mistake, ‘Rast. That’s what I did, before I understood. When I heard that three girls were electioneering for Forbes I just laughed. Then I made a discovery. They’re young and rich, and evidently ladies. They’re pretty, too, and the men give in at the first attack. They don’t try to roast you. That’s their cleverness. They tell what Forbes can do, with all his money, if he’s Representative, and they swear he’ll do it.”

“Never mind,” said Hopkins, easily. “We’ll win the men back again.”

“But these girls are riding all over the country, talking to farmers’ wives, and they’re organizing a woman’s political club. The club is to meet at Elmhurst and to be fed on the fat of the land; so every woman wants to belong. They’ve got two expensive automobiles down from the city, with men to make them go, and they’re spending money right and left.”

“That’s bad,” said Hopkins, shifting uneasily, “for I haven’t much to spend, myself. But most money is fooled away in politics. When I spend a cent it counts, I can tell you.”

“You’ll have to spend some, ‘Rast, to keep your end up. I’m glad you’re back, for we Democrats have been getting demoralized. Some of the boys are out for Forbes already.”

Hopkins nodded, busy with his thoughts.

“I’ve talked with Latham. But he didn’t count. And they’ve bought up Thompson. What else they’ve done I can’t tell yet. But one thing’s certain, Doc; we’ll win out in a canter. I’m too old a rat to be caught in a trap like this. I’ve got resources they don’t suspect.”

“I believe you, ‘Rast. They’ve caught on to the outside fakes to win votes; but they don’t know the inside deals yet.”

“You’re right. But I must make a bluff to offset their daylight campaign, so as not to lose ground with the farmers. They’re the ones that count, after all; not the town people. See here, Doc, I had an idea something might happen, and so I arranged with my breakfast food company to let me paint a hundred signs in this neighborhood. A hundred, mind you! and that means a big laugh on Forbes, and the good will of the farmers who sell their spaces, and not a cent out of my pocket. How’s that for a checkmate?”

“That’s fine,” replied Dr. Squiers. “There’s been considerable talk about this sign business, and I’m told that at the meeting last night one of the girls made a speech about it, and said the farmers were being converted, and were now standing out for clean fences and barns.”

“That’s all humbug!”

“I think so, myself. These people are like a flock of sheep. Get them started a certain way and you can’t head them off,” observed the dentist.

“Then we must start them our way,” declared Hopkins. “I’ve got the order

for these signs in my pocket, and I'll have 'em painted all over the district in a week. Keep your eyes open, Doc. If we've got to fight we won't shirk it; but I don't look for much trouble from a parcel of girls."

Mr. Hopkins was quite cheerful by this time, for he had thought out the situation and his "fighting blood was up," as he expressed it.

He walked away whistling softly to himself and decided that he would go over to the livery stable, get a horse and buggy, drive out into the country, and spend the day talking with the farmers.

But when he turned the corner into the side street where the livery was located he was astonished to find a row of horses and wagons lining each side of the street, and in each vehicle two men in white jumpers and overalls. The men were in charge of huge cans of paints, assorted brushes, ladders, scaffolds and other paraphernalia.

There must have been twenty vehicles, altogether, and some of the rigs were already starting out and driving briskly away in different directions.

Mr. Hopkins was puzzled. He approached one of the white-overalled men who was loading cans of paint into a wagon and inquired:

"Who are you fellows?"

"Sign painters," answered the man, with an amused look.

"Who do you work for?"

"The Carson Advertising Sign Company of Cleveland."

"Oh, I see," replied Hopkins. "Got a big job in this neighborhood?"

"Pretty big, sir."

"Who's your foreman?"

"Smith. He's in the livery office."

Then the man climbed into his wagon and drove away, and Hopkins turned into the livery office. A thin-faced man with sharp eyes was Talking with the proprietor.

"Is this Mr. Smith?" asked Hopkins.

"Yes."

"Of the Carson Advertising Sign Company?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've got a big job for you. My name's Hopkins. I want a hundred big signs painted mighty quick."

"Sorry, sir; we've got all we can handle here for two or three weeks."

"It's got to be done quick or not at all. Can't you send for more men?"

"We've got thirty-eight on this job, and can't get any more for love or money. Had to send to Chicago for some of these."

"Rush job?"

"Yes, sir. You'll have to excuse me. I've got to get started. This is only

our second day and we're pretty busy."

"Wait a minute," called the bewildered Hopkins, following Smith to his buggy. "What concern is your firm doing all this painting for?"

"A man named Merrick."

Then the foreman drove away, and Mr. Hopkins was left greatly puzzled.

"Merrick — Merrick!" he repeated. "I don't remember any big advertiser by that name. It must be some new concern. Anyhow, it all helps in my fight against Forbes."

He again returned to the livery office and asked for a rig.

"Everything out, Mr. Hopkins. I've hired everything to be had in town for this sign-painting gang."

But Mr. Hopkins was not to be balked. As long as these sign-painters were doing missionary work for his cause among the farmers, he decided to drive over to Fairview and see the party leaders in that important town. So he went back to Dr. Squiers's house and borrowed the Doctor's horse and buggy.

He drove along the turnpike for a time in silence. Then it struck him that there was a peculiar air of neatness about the places he passed. The barns and fences all seemed newly painted, and he remembered that he hadn't seen an advertising sign since he left town.

A mile farther on he came upon a gang of the sign painters, who with their huge brushes were rapidly painting the entire length of a weather-worn fence with white paint.

Mr. Hopkins reined in and watched them for a few moments.

"You sign-painters don't seem to be getting any signs started," he observed.

"No," replied one of the men, laughing. "This is a peculiar job for our firm to tackle. We've made a contract to paint out every sign in the district."

"Paint 'em out!"

"Yes, cover them up with new paint, and get rid of them."

"But how about the advertisers? Don't they own the spaces now?"

"They did; but they've all been bought up. John Merrick owns the spaces now, and we're working for John Merrick."

"Who's he?"

"Some friend of Mr. Forbes, up at Elmhurst."

Mr. Hopkins was not a profane man, but he said a naughty word. And then he cut his horse so fiercely with the whip that the poor beast gave a neigh of terror, and started down the road at a gallop.

CHAPTER IX
OL' WILL ROGERS

Beth had her folding table out in the rose garden where Kenneth was working at his easel, and while the boy painted she wrote her campaign letters and "editorials."

At first Ken had resented the management of his campaign by his three girl friends; but soon he was grateful for their assistance and proud of their talents. It was at their own request that he refrained from any active work himself, merely appearing at the meetings they planned, where he made his speeches and impressed his hearers with his earnestness. He was really an excellent speaker, and his youth and enthusiasm counted much in his favor.

He protested mildly when Louise invited the Women's Political Club to meet at Elmhurst on Thursday afternoon, but Mr. Watson assured him that this was an important play for popularity, so he promised to meet them. Tables were to be spread upon the lawn, for the late October weather was mild and delightful, and Louise planned to feed the women in a way that they would long remember.

Patsy had charge of the towns and Louise of the country districts, but Beth often aided Louise, who had a great deal of territory to cover.

The automobiles Uncle John had ordered sent down were a great assistance to the girls, and enabled them to cover twice as much territory in a day as would have been done with horses.

But, although they worked so tirelessly and earnestly, it was not all plain sailing with the girl campaigners. Yet though they met with many rebuffs, they met very little downright impertinence. Twice Louise was asked to leave a house where she had attempted to make a proselyte, and once a dog was set upon Beth by an irate farmer, who resented her automobile as much as he did her mission. As for Patsy, she was often told in the towns that "a young girl ought to be in better business than mixing up in politics," and she was sensitive enough once or twice to cry over these reproaches when alone in her chamber. But she maintained a cheerful front; and, in truth, all the girls enjoyed their work immensely.

While Beth and Kenneth were in the garden this sunny afternoon James came to say that a man wanted to see "one of the politics young ladies."

"Shall we send him about his business, Beth?" asked the boy.

"Oh, no; we can't afford to lose a single vote. Bring him here, James, please," said the girl.

So presently a wizened little man in worn and threadbare garments, his hat in his hand, came slowly into the garden. His sunken cheeks were covered

with stubby gray whiskers, his shoulders were stooped and bent from hard work, and his hands bore evidences of a life of toil. Yet the eyes he turned upon Beth, as she faced him had a wistful and pleading look that affected her strangely.

"Afternoon, miss," he said, in a hesitating voice. "I — I'm Rogers, miss; ol' Will Rogers. I — I s'pose you hain't heerd o' me before."

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Rogers," replied the girl in her pleasant voice. "Have you come to see me about the election?"

"It's — it's sump'n 'bout the 'lection, an' then agin it ain't. But I run the chanct o' seein' ye, because we're in desprit straits, an' Nell advised that I hev a talk with ye. 'Frank an' outright,' says Nell. 'Don't beat about the bush,' says she. 'Go right to th' point an' they'll say yes or no."

Beth laughed merrily, and the boy smiled as he wielded his brush with delicate strokes.

"Ye mustn't mind me, miss," said Will Rogers, in a deprecating tone. "I'm — I'm sommut broke up an' discouraged, an' ain't th' man I used to be. Nell knows that, an' she orter came herself; but it jes' made her cry to think o' it, an' so I says I'll come an' do the best I kin."

Beth was really interested now.

"Sit down on this bench, Mr. Rogers," she said, "and I'll listen to whatever you have to say."

He sat down willingly, bent forward as he rested upon the garden bench, and twirled his hat slowly in his hands.

"'Taint easy, ye know, miss, to say some things, an' this is one o' the hardest," he began.

"Go on," said Beth, encouragingly, for old Will had suddenly stopped short and seemed unable to proceed.

"They say, miss, as you folks is a-spendin' uv a lot o' money on this election, a-gittin' votes, an' sich like," he said, in an altered tone.

"It costs a little to run a political campaign," acknowledged Beth.

"They say money's bein' poured out liken water — to git votes," he persisted.

"Well, Mr. Rogers?"

"Well, thet's how it started, ye see. We're so agonizin' poor, Nell thought we orter git some o' the money while it's goin'."

The girl was much amused. Such frankness was both unusual and refreshing.

"Have you a vote to sell?" she asked.

He did not answer at once, but sat slowly twirling his hat.

"That's jet' what Nell thought ye'd ask," he said, finally, "an' she knew if

ye did it was all up with our plan. Guess I'll be goin', miss."

He rose slowly from his seat, but the girl did not intend to lose any of the fun this queer individual might yet furnish.

"Sit down, Mr. Rogers," she said, "and tell me why you can't answer my questions?"

"I guess I'll hev to speak out an' tell all," said he, his voice trembling a little, "although I thought fer a minnit I could see my way without. I can't sell my vote, miss, 'cause I've been plannin' t'vote fer Mr. Forbes anyhow. But we wanted some uv th' money that's being wasted, an' we wanted it mighty bad."

"Why?"

"Thet's the hard part uv it, miss; but I'm goin' to tell you. Did ye ever hear o' Lucy?"

"No, Mr. Rogers."

"Lucy's our girl — the on'y chick er child we ever had. She's a pretty girl, is Lucy; a good deal liken her mother; wi' the same high spirits my Nell had afore she broke down. Mostly Nell cries, nowadays."

"Yes. Go on."

"Lucy had a schoolin', an' we worked hard to give it her, fer my land ain't much account, nohow. An' when she grew up she had more boys comin' to see her than any gal this side o' Fairview, an' one o' 'em caught Lucy's fancy. But she was too young to marry, an' she wanted to be earnin' money; so she got a job workin' fer Doc Squiers, over to Elmwood. He's the dentist there, an' Lucy helped with the housework an' kept the office slicked up, an' earned ev'ry penny she got."

He stopped here, and looked vacantly around.

Beth tried to help the old man.

"And then?" she asked, softly.

"Then come the trouble, miss. One day ol' Mis' Squiers, the Doc's mother, missed a di'mon' ring. She laid it on the mantel an' it was gone, an' she said as Lucy took it. Lucy didn't take it, an' after they'd tried to make my gal confess as she was a thief they give 'er three days to hand up the ring or the money it was worth, or else they'd hev her arrested and sent t' jail. Lucy didn't take it, ye know. She jes' *couldn't* do sech a thing, natcherly."

"I know," said Beth, sympathetically.

"So she comes home, heartbroken, an' told us about it, an' we didn't hev th' money nuther. It were sixty dollars they wanted, or th' ring; an' we didn't hev neither of 'em."

"Of course not."

"Well, Tom come over thet night to see Lucy, hearin' she was home, an'

— ”

“Who is Tom?”

“Thet’s Tom Gates, him thet — but I’m comin’ to thet, miss. Tom always loved Lucy, an’ wanted to marry her; but his folks is as poor as we are, so the young ‘uns had to wait. Tom worked at the mill over t’ Fairview — the big saw-mill where they make the lumber an’ things.”

“I know.”

“He was the bookkeeper, fer Tom had schoolin’, too; an’ he took private lessons in bookkeepin’ from ol’ Cheeseman. So he had got hired at the mill, an’ had a likely job, an’ was doin’ well. An’ when Tom heerd about Lucy’s trouble, an’ thet she had only two days left before goin’ to jail, he up an’ says: ‘I’ll get the money, Lucy: don’ you worry a bit.’ ‘Oh, Tom!’ says she, ‘hev you got sixty dollars saved already?’ ‘I’ve got it, Lucy,’ says he, ‘an’ I’ll go over tomorrow an’ pay Doc Squiers. Don’ you worry any more. Forget all about it.’ Well o’ course, miss, that helped a lot. Nell an’ Lucy both felt the disgrace of the thing, but it wouldn’t be a public disgrace, like goin’ to jail; so we was all mighty glad Tom had that sixty dollars.”

“It was very fortunate,” said Beth, filling in another pause.

“The nex’ day Tom were as good as his word. He paid Doc Squiers an’ got a receipt an’ giv it to Lucy. Then we thought th’ trouble was over, but it had on’y just begun. Monday mornin’ Tom was arrested over t’ the mill fer passin’ a forged check an’ gettin’ sixty dollars on it. Lucy was near frantic with grief. She walked all the way to Fairview, an’ they let her see Tom in the jail. He tol’ her it was true he forged th’ check, but he did it to save her. He was a man an’ it wouldn’t hurt fer him to go to jail so much as it would a girl. He said he was glad he did it, an’ didn’t mind servin’ a sentence in prison. I think, miss, as Tom meant thet — ev’ry word uv it. But Lucy broke down under the thing an’ raved an’ cried, an’ nuther Nell ner I could do anything with her. She said she’d ruined Tom’s life an’ all thet, an’ she didn’t want to live herself. Then she took sick, an’ Nell an’ I nursed her as careful as we could. How’n the wurld she ever got away we can’t make out, nohow.”

“Did she get away?” asked the girl, noting that the old man’s eyes were full of tears and his lips trembling.

“Yes, miss. She’s bin gone over ten days, now, an’ we don’t even know where to look fer her; our girl — our poor Lucy. She ain’t right in her head, ye know, or she’d never a done it. She’d never a left us like this in th’ world. ‘Taint like our Lucy.”

Kenneth had turned around on his stool and was regarding old Will Rogers earnestly, brush and pallet alike forgotten. Beth was trying to keep

the tears out of her own eyes, for the old man's voice was even more pathetic than his words.

"Ten days ago!" said Kenneth. "And she hasn't been found yet?"

"We can't trace her anywhere, an' Nell has broke down at las', an' don't do much but cry. It's hard, sir — I can't bear to see Nell cry. She'd sich high sperrits, onct."

"Where's the boy Tom?" asked Kenneth, somewhat gruffly.

"He's in the jail yet, waitin' to be tried. Court don't set till next week, they say."

"And where do you live, Rogers?"

"Five miles up the Fairview road. 'Taint much of a place — Nell says I've always bin a shif'les lot, an' I guess it's true. Yesterday your hired men painted all the front o' my fence — painted it white — not only where th' signs was, but th' whole length of it. We didn't ask it done, but they jes' done it. I watched 'em, an' Nell says if we on'y had th' money thet was wasted on thet paint an' labor, we might find our Lucy. 'It's a shame,' says Nell, 'all thet 'lection money bein' thrown away on paint when it might save our poor crazy child.' I hope it ain't wrong, sir; but thet's what I thought, too. So we laid plans fer me to come here today. Ef I kin get a-hold o' any o' thet money honest, I want to do it."

"Have you got a horse?" asked Kenneth.

"Not now. I owned one las' year, but he died on me an' I can't get another nohow."

"Did you walk here?" asked Beth.

"Yes, miss; o' course. I've walked the hull county over a-tryin' to find Lucy. I don' mind the walking much."

There was another pause, while old Will Rogers looked anxiously at the boy and the girl, and they looked at each other. Then Beth took out her purse.

"I want to hire your services to help us in the election," she said, briskly. "I'll furnish you a horse and buggy and you can drive around and talk with people and try to find Lucy at the same time. This twenty dollars is to help you pay expenses. You needn't account for it; just help us as much as you can."

The old man straightened up and his eyes filled again.

"Nell said if it was a matter o' charity I mustn't take a cent," he observed, in a low voice.

'"It isn't charity. It's business. And now that we know your story we mean to help you find your girl. Anyone would do that, you know. Tell me, what is Lucy like?"

"She's like Nell used to be."

“But we don’t know your wife. Describe Lucy as well as you can. Is she tall?”

“Middlin’, miss.”

“Light or dark?”

“Heh?”

“Is her hair light or dark colored?”

“Middlin’; jes’ middlin’, miss.”

“Well, is she stout or thin?”

“I should say sorter betwixt an’ between, miss.”

“How old is Lucy?”

“Jes’ turned eighteen, miss.”

“Never mind, Beth,” interrupted the boy; “you won’t learn much from old Will’s description. But we’ll see what can be done tomorrow. Call James and have him sent home in the rig he’s going to use. It seems to me you’re disposing rather freely of my horses and carts.”

“Yes, Ken. You’ve nothing to say about your belongings just now. But if you object to this plan — ”

“I don’t. The girl must be found, and her father is more likely to find her than a dozen other searchers. He shall have the rig and welcome.”

So it was that Will Rogers drove back to his heartbroken wife in a smart top-buggy, with twenty dollars in his pocket and a heart full of wonder and thanksgiving.

CHAPTER X

The Forged Check

Kenneth and Beth refrained from telling the other girls or Uncle John of old Will Rogers's visit, but they got Mr. Watson in the library and questioned him closely about the penalty for forging a check.

It was a serious crime indeed, Mr. Watson told them, and Tom Gates bade fair to serve a lengthy term in state's prison as a consequence of his rash act.

"But it was a generous act, too," said Beth.

"I can't see it in that light," said the old lawyer. "It was a deliberate theft from his employers to protect a girl he loved. I do not doubt the girl was unjustly accused. The Squierses are a selfish, hard-fisted lot, and the old lady, especially, is a well known virago. But they could not have proven a case against Lucy, if she was innocent, and all their threats of arresting her were probably mere bluff. So this boy was doubly foolish in ruining himself to get sixty dollars to pay an unjust demand."

"He was soft-hearted and impetuous," said Beth; "and, being in love, he didn't stop to count the cost."

"That is no excuse, my dear," declared Mr. Watson. "Indeed there is never an excuse for crime. The young man is guilty, and he must suffer the penalty."

"Is there no way to save him?" asked Kenneth.

"If the prosecution were withdrawn and the case settled with the victim of the forged check, then the young man would be allowed his freedom. But under the circumstances I doubt if such an arrangement could be made."

"We're going to try it, anyhow," was the prompt decision.

So as soon as breakfast was over the next morning Beth and Kenneth took one of the automobiles, the boy consenting unwillingly to this sort of locomotion because it would save much time. Fairview was twelve miles away, but by ten o'clock they drew up at the county jail.

They were received in the little office by a man named Markham, who was the jailer. He was a round-faced, respectable appearing fellow, but his mood was distinctly unsociable.

"Want to see Tom Gates, eh? Well! what for?" he demanded.

"We wish to talk with him," answered Kenneth.

"Talk! what's the good? You're no friend of Tom Gates. I can't be bothered this way, anyhow."

"I am Kenneth Forbes, of Elmhurst. I'm running for Representative on the Republican ticket," said Kenneth, quietly.

"Oh, say! that's different," observed Markham, altering his demeanor.

“You mustn’t mind my being gruff and grumpy, Mr. Forbes. I’ve just stopped smoking a few days ago, and it’s got on my nerves something awful!”

“May we see Gates at once?” asked Kenneth.

“Sure-ly! I’ll take you to his cell, myself. It’s just shocking how such a little thing as stoppin’ smoking will rile up a fellow. Come this way, please.”

They followed the jailer along a succession of passages.

“Smoked ever sence I was a boy, you know, an’ had to stop last week because Doc said it would kill me if I didn’t,” remarked the jailer, leading the way. “Sometimes I’m that yearning for a smoke I’m nearly crazy, an’ I dunno which is worst, dyin’ one way or another. This is Gates’ cell — the best in the shop.”

He unlocked the door, and called:

“Here’s visitors, Tom.”

“Thank you, Mr. Markham,” replied a quiet voice, as a young man came forward from the dim interior of the cell. “How are you feeling, today?”

“Worse, Tom; worse ‘n ever,” replied the jailer, gloomily.

“Well, stick it out, old man; don’t give in.”

“I won’t, Tom. Smokin’ ‘ll kill me sure, an’ there’s a faint hope o’ livin’ through this struggle to give it up. This visitor is Mr. Forbes of Elmhurst, an’ the young lady is — ”

“Miss DeGraf,” said Kenneth, noticing the boy’s face critically, as he stood where the light from the passage fell upon it. “Will you leave us alone, please, Mr. Markham?”

“Sure-ly, Mr. Forbes. You’ve got twenty minutes according to regulations. I’ll come and get you then. Sorry we haven’t any reception room in the jail. All visits has to be made in the cells.”

Then he deliberately locked Kenneth and Beth in with the forger, and retreated along the passage.

“Sit down, please,” said Gates, in a cheerful and pleasant voice. “There’s a bench here.”

“We’ve come to inquire about your case, Gates,” said Kenneth. “It seems you have forged a check.”

“Yes, sir, I plead guilty, although I’ve been told I ought not to confess. But the fact is that I forged the check and got the money, and I’m willing to stand the consequences.”

“Why did you do it?” asked Beth.

He was silent and turned his face away.

A fresh, wholesome looking boy, was Tom Gates, with steady gray eyes, an intelligent forehead, but a sensitive, rather weak mouth. He was of sturdy,

athletic build and dressed neatly in a suit that was of coarse material but well brushed and cared for.

Beth thought his appearance pleasing and manly. Kenneth decided that he was ill at ease and in a state of dogged self-repression.

“We have heard something of your story,” said Kenneth, “and are interested in it. But there is no doubt you have acted very foolishly.”

“Do you know Lucy, sir?” asked the young man.

“No.”

“Lucy is very proud. The thing was killing her, and I couldn’t bear it. I didn’t stop to think whether it was foolish or not. I did it; and I’m glad I did.”

“You have made her still more unhappy,” said Beth, gently.

“Yes; she’ll worry about me, I know. I’m disgraced for life; but I’ve saved Lucy from any disgrace, and she’s young. She’ll forget me before I’ve served my term, and — and take up with some other young fellow.”

“Would you like that?” asked Beth.

“No, indeed,” he replied, frankly. “But it will be best that way. I had to stand by Lucy — she’s so sweet and gentle, and so sensitive. I don’t say I did right. I only say I’d do the same thing again.”

“Couldn’t her parents have helped her?” inquired Kenneth.

“No. Old Will is a fine fellow, but poor and helpless since Mrs. Rogers had her accident.”

“Oh, did she have an accident?” asked Beth.

“Yes. Didn’t you know? She’s blind.”

“Her husband didn’t tell us that,” said the girl.

“He was fairly prosperous before that, for Mrs. Rogers was an energetic and sensible woman, and kept old Will hard at work. One morning she tried to light the fire with kerosene, and lost her sight. Then Rogers wouldn’t do anything but lead her around, and wait upon her, and the place went to rack and ruin.”

“I understand now,” said Beth.

“Lucy could have looked after her mother,” said young Bates, “but old Will was stubborn and wouldn’t let her. So the girl saw something must be done and went to work. That’s how all the trouble came about.”

He spoke simply, but paced up and down the narrow cell in front of them. It was evident that his feelings were deeper than he cared to make evident.

“Whose name did you sign to the check?” asked Kenneth.

“That of John E. Marshall, the manager of the mill. He is supposed to sign all the checks of the concern. It’s a stock company, and rich. I was bookkeeper, so it was easy to get a blank check and forge the signature. As regards my robbing the company, I’ll say that I saved them a heavy loss one

day. I discovered and put out a fire that would have destroyed the whole plant. But Marshall never even thanked me. He only discharged the man who was responsible for the fire."

"How long ago were you arrested?" asked Beth.

"It's nearly two weeks now. But I'll have a trial in a few days, they say. My crime is so serious that the circuit judge has to sit on the case."

"Do you know where Lucy is?"

"She's at home, I suppose. I haven't heard from her since the day she came here to see me — right after my arrest."

They did not think best to enlighten him at that time. It was better for him to think the girl unfeeling than to know the truth.

"I'm going to see Mr. Marshall," said Kenneth, "and discover what I can do to assist you."

"Thank you, sir. It won't be much, but I'm grateful to find a friend. I'm guilty, you know, and there's no one to blame but myself."

They left him then, for the jailer arrived to unlock the door, and escort them to the office.

"Tom's a very decent lad," remarked the jailer, on the way. "He ain't a natural criminal, you know; just one o' them that gives in to temptation and is foolish enough to get caught. I've seen lots of that kind in my day. You don't smoke, do you, Mr. Forbes?"

"No, Mr. Markham."

"Then don't begin it; or, if you do, never try to quit. It's — it's *awful*, it is. And it ruins a man's disposition."

The mill was at the outskirts of the town. It was a busy place, perhaps the busiest in the whole of the Eighth District, and in it were employed a large number of men. The office was a small brick edifice, separated from the main buildings, in which the noise of machinery was so great that one speaking could scarcely be heard. The manager was in, Kenneth and Beth learned, but could not see them until he had signed the letters he had dictated for the noon mail.

So they sat on a bench until a summons came to admit them to Mr. Marshall's private office.

He looked up rather ungraciously, but motioned them to be seated.

"Mr. Forbes, of Elmhurst?" he asked, glancing at the card Kenneth had sent in.

"Yes, sir."

"I've been bothered already over your election campaign," resumed the manager, arranging his papers in a bored manner. "Some girl has been here twice to interview my men and I have refused to admit her. You may as well

understand, sir, that I stand for the Democratic candidate, and have no sympathy with your side."

"That doesn't interest me, especially, sir," answered Kenneth, smiling. "I'm not electioneering just now. I've come to talk with you about young Gates."

"Oh. Well, sir, what about him?"

"I'm interested in the boy, and want to save him from prosecution."

"He's a forger, Mr. Forbes; a deliberate criminal."

"I admit that. But he's very young, and his youth is largely responsible for his folly."

"He stole my money."

"It is true, Mr. Marshall."

"And he deserves a term in state's prison."

"I agree to all that. Nevertheless, I should like to save him," said Kenneth. "His trial has not yet taken place, and instead of your devoting considerable of your valuable time appearing against him it would be much simpler to settle the matter right here and now."

"In what way, Mr. Forbes?"

"I'll make your money loss good."

"It has cost me twice sixty dollars in annoyance."

"I can well believe it, sir. I'll pay twice sixty dollars for the delivery to me of the forged check, and the withdrawal of the prosecution."

"And the costs?"

"I'll pay all the costs besides."

"You're foolish. Why should you do all this?"

"I have my own reasons, Mr. Marshall. Please look at the matter from a business standpoint. If you send the boy to prison you will still suffer the loss of the money. By compromising with me you can recover your loss and are paid for your annoyance."

"You're right. Give me a check for a hundred and fifty, and I'll turn over to you the forged check and quash further proceedings."

Kenneth hesitated a moment. He detested the grasping disposition that would endeavor to take advantage of his evident desire to help young Gates. He had hoped to find Mr. Marshall a man of sympathy; but the manager was as cold as an icicle.

Beth, uneasy at his silence, nudged him.

"Pay it, Ken," she whispered.

"Very well, Mr. Marshall," said he, "I accept your terms."

The check was written and handed over, and Marshall took the forged check from his safe and delivered it, with the other papers in the case, to Mr.

Forbes. He also wrote a note to his lawyer directing him to withdraw the prosecution.

Kenneth and Beth went away quite happy with their success, and the manager stood in his little window and watched them depart. There was a grim smile of amusement on his shrewd face.

“Of all the easy marks I ever encountered,” muttered Mr. Marshall, “this young Forbes is the easiest. Why, he’s a fool, that’s what he is. He might have had that forged check for the face of it, if he’d been sharp. You wouldn’t catch ‘Rast Hopkins doing such a fool stunt. Not in a thousand years!”

Meantime Beth was pressing Kenneth’s arm as she sat beside him and saying happily:

“I’m so glad, Ken — so glad! And to think we can save all that misery and despair by the payment of a hundred and fifty dollars! And now we must find the girl.”

“Yes,” replied the boy, cheerfully, “we must find Lucy.”

CHAPTER XI

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

A woman was sitting in a low room, engaged in knitting. Her feet were stretched out toward a small fire that smouldered in an open hearth. She wore a simple calico gown, neat and well-fitting, and her face bore traces of much beauty that time and care had been unable wholly to efface.

Suddenly she paused in her work, her head turned slightly to one side to listen.

"Come in, sir," she called in a soft but distinct voice; "come in, miss."

So Kenneth and Beth entered at the half-open porch door and advanced into the room.

"Is this Mrs. Rogers?" asked Beth, looking at the woman curiously. The woman's eyes were closed, but the lashes fell in graceful dark curves over her withered cheeks. The girl wondered how she had been able to know her visitors' sex so accurately.

"Yes, I am Mrs. Rogers," said the sweet, sad voice. "And I think you are one of the young ladies from Elmhurst — perhaps the one Will talked to."

"You are right, Mrs. Rogers. I am Elizabeth DeGraf."

"And your companion — is it Mr. Forbes?" the woman asked.

"Yes, madam," replied Kenneth, astonished to find Will's wife speaking with so much refinement and gracious ease.

"You are very welcome. Will you please find seats? My affliction renders me helpless, as you may see."

"We are very comfortable, I assure you, Mrs. Rogers," said Beth. "We have come to ask if you have heard anything of your daughter."

"Not a word as yet, Miss DeGraf, Will is out with the horse and buggy doing his best to get information. But Lucy has been gone so long now that I realize it will be difficult to find her, if, indeed, the poor girl has not — is not — "

Her voice broke.

"Oh, you don't fear *that*, do you, Mrs. Rogers?" asked Beth, quickly.

"I fear anything — everything!" wailed the poor creature, the tears streaming from between her closed lids. "My darling was frantic with grief, and she couldn't bear the humiliation and disgrace of her position. Will told you, didn't he?"

"Yes, of course. But it wasn't so bad, Mrs. Rogers; it wasn't a desperate condition, by any means."

"With poor Tom in prison for years — and just for trying to help her."

"Tom isn't in prison, you know, any more," said Beth quietly. "He has

been released."

"Released! When?"

"Last evening. His fault has been forgiven, and he is now free."

The woman sat silent for a time. Then she asked:

"You have done this, Mr. Forbes?"

"Why, Miss DeGraf and I assisted, perhaps. The young man is not really bad, and — "

"Tom's a fine boy!" she cried, with eagerness. "He's honest and true, Mr. Forbes — he is, indeed!"

"I think so," said Kenneth.

"If he wasn't my Lucy would never have loved him. He had a bright future before him, sir, and that's why my child went mad when he ruined his life for her sake."

"Was she mad, do you think?" asked Beth, softly.

"She must have been," said the mother, sadly. "Lucy was a sensible girl, and until this thing happened she was as bright and cheerful as the day is long. But she is very sensitive — she inherited that from me, I think — and Tom's action drove her distracted. At first she raved and rambled incoherently, and Will and I feared brain fever would set in. Then she disappeared in the night, without leaving a word or message for us, which was unlike her — and we've never heard a word of her since. The — the river has a strange fascination for people in that condition. At times in my life it has almost drawn *me* into its depths — and I am not mad. I have never been mad."

"Let us hope for the best, Mrs. Rogers," said Beth. "Somehow, I have an idea this trouble will all turn out well in the end."

"Have you?" asked the woman, earnestly.

"Yes. It all came about through such a little thing — merely an unjust accusation."

"The little things are the ones that ruin lives," she said. "Will you let me tell you something of myself? You have been so kind to us, my dear, that I feel you ought to know."

"I shall be glad to know whatever you care to tell me," said Beth, simply.

"I am the wife of a poor farmer," began the woman, speaking softly and with some hesitation, but gaining strength as she proceeded. "As a girl I was considered attractive, and my father was a man of great wealth and social standing. We lived in Baltimore. Then I fell in love with a young man who, after obtaining my promise to marry him, found some one he loved better and carelessly discarded me. As I have said, I have a sensitive nature. In my girlhood I was especially susceptible to any slight, and this young man's

heartless action made it impossible for me to remain at home and face the humiliation he had thrust upon me. My father was a hard man, and demanded that I marry the man he had himself chosen; but I resented this command and ran away. My mother had passed on long before, and there was nothing to keep me at home. I came west and secured a position to teach school in this county, and for a time I was quite contented and succeeded in living down my disappointment. I heard but once from my father. He had married again and disinherited me. He forbade me to ever communicate with him again.

"At that time Will Rogers was one of the most promising and manly of the country lads around here. He was desperately in love with me, and at this period, when I seemed completely cut off from my old life and the future contained no promise, I thought it best to wear out the remainder of my existence in the seclusion of a farm-house. I put all the past behind me, and told Will Rogers I would marry him and be a faithful wife; but that my heart was dead. He accepted me on that condition, and it was not until after we were married some time that my husband realized how impossible it would ever be to arouse my affection. Then he lost courage, and became careless and reckless. When our child came — our Lucy — Will was devoted to her, and the baby wakened in me all the old passionate capacity to love. Lucy drew Will and me a little closer together, but he never recovered his youthful ambition. He was a disappointed man, and went from bad to worse. I don't say Will hasn't always been tender and true to me, and absolutely devoted to Lucy. But he lost all hope of being loved as he loved me, and the disappointment broke him down. He became an old man early in life, and his lack of energy kept us very poor. I used to take in sewing before the accident to my eyes, and that helped a good deal to pay expenses. But now I am helpless, and my husband devotes all his time to me, although I beg him to work the farm and try to earn some money.

"I wouldn't have minded the poverty; I wouldn't mind being blind, even, if Lucy had been spared to me. I have had to bear so much in my life that I could even bear my child's death. But to have her disappear and not know what has become of her — whether she is living miserably or lying at the bottom of the river — it is this that is driving me distracted."

Kenneth and Beth remained silent for a time after Mrs. Rogers had finished her tragic story, for their hearts were full of sympathy for the poor woman. It was hard to realize that a refined, beautiful and educated girl had made so sad a mistake of her life and suffered so many afflictions as a consequence. That old Will had never been a fitting mate for his wife could readily be understood, and yet the man was still devoted to his helpless, unresponsive spouse. The fault was not his.

The boy and the girl both perceived that there was but one way they could assist Mrs. Rogers, and that was to discover what had become of her child.

"Was Lucy like you, or did she resemble her father?" asked Beth.

"She is — she was very like me when I was young," replied the woman. "There is a photograph of her on the wall there between the windows; but it was taken five years ago, when she was a child. Now she is — she was eighteen, and a well-developed young woman."

"I've been looking at the picture," said Kenneth.

"And you mustn't think of her as dead, Mrs. Rogers," said Beth, pleadingly. "I'm sure she is alive, and that we shall find her. We're going right to work, and everything possible shall be done to trace your daughter. Don't worry, please. Be as cheerful as you can, and leave the search to us."

The woman sighed.

"Will believes she is alive, too," she said. "He can't sleep or rest till he finds her, for my husband loves her as well as I do. But sometimes I feel it's wicked to hope she is alive. I know what she suffers, for I suffered, myself; and life isn't worth living when despair and disappointment fills it."

"I cannot see why Lucy shouldn't yet be happy," protested Beth. "Tom Gates is now free, and can begin life anew."

"His trouble will follow him everywhere," said Mrs. Rogers, with conviction. "Who will employ a bookkeeper, or even a clerk who has been guilty of forgery?"

"I think I shall give him employment," replied Kenneth.

"You, Mr. Forbes!"

"Yes. I'm not afraid of a boy who became a criminal to save the girl he loved."

"But all the world knows of his crime!" she exclaimed.

"The world forgets these things sooner than you suppose," he answered. "I need a secretary, and in that position Tom Gates will quickly be able to live down this unfortunate affair. And if he turns out as well as I expect, he will soon be able to marry Lucy and give her a comfortable home. So now nothing remains but to find your girl, and we'll try to do that, I assure you."

Mrs. Rogers was crying softly by this time, but it was from joy and relief. When they left her she promised to be as cheerful as possible and to look on the bright side of life.

"I can't thank you," she said, "so I won't try. You must know how grateful we are to you."

As Beth and Kenneth drove back to Elmhurst they were both rather silent, for they had been strongly affected by the scene at the farm-house.

"It's so good of you, Ken, to take Tom Gates into your employ," said the

girl, pressing her cousin's arm. "And I'm sure he'll be true and grateful."

"I really need him, Beth," said the boy. "There is getting to be too much correspondence for Mr. Watson to attend to, and I ought to relieve him of many other details. It's a good arrangement, and I'm glad I thought of it."

They had almost reached Elmhurst when they met the Honorable Erastus Hopkins driving along the road. On the seat beside him was a young girl, and as the vehicles passed each other Beth gave a start and clung to the boy's arm.

"Oh, Ken!" she cried, "did you see? Did you see that?"

"Yes; it's my respected adversary."

"But the girl! It's Lucy — I'm sure it's Lucy! She's the living image of Mrs. Rogers! Stop — stop — and let's go back!"

"Nonsense, Beth," said the boy. "It can't be."

"But it is. I'm sure it is!"

"I saw the girl," he said. "She was laughing gaily and talking with the Honorable Erastus. Is that your idea of the mad, broken-hearted Lucy Rogers?"

"N-no. She *was* laughing, Ken, I noticed it."

"And she wasn't unhappy a bit. You mustn't think that every pretty girl with dark eyes you meet is Lucy Rogers, you know. And there's another thing."

"What, Ken?"

"Any companion of Mr. Hopkins can be easily traced."

"That's true," answered the girl, thoughtfully. "I must have been mistaken," she added, with a sigh.

CHAPTER XII

BETH MEETS A REBUFF

The campaign was now growing warm. Mr. Hopkins had come to realize that he had "the fight of his life" on his hands, and that defeat meant his political ruin. Close-fisted and miserly as he was, no one knew so well as the Honorable Erastus how valuable this position of Representative was to him in a financial way, and that by winning re-election he could find means to reimburse himself for all he had expended in the fight. So, to the surprise of the Democratic Committee and all his friends, Mr. Hopkins announced that he would oppose Forbes's aggressive campaign with an equal aggressiveness, and spend as many dollars in doing so as might be necessary.

He did not laugh at his opponents any longer. To himself he admitted their shrewdness and activity and acknowledged that an experienced head was managing their affairs.

One of Mr. Hopkins's first tasks after calling his faithful henchmen around him was to make a careful canvass of the voters of his district, to see what was still to be accomplished.

This canvass was quite satisfactory, for final report showed only about a hundred majority for Forbes. The district was naturally Republican by six hundred majority, and Hopkins had previously been elected by a plurality of eighty-three; so that all the electioneering of the girl politicians, and the expenditure of vast sums of money in painting fences and barns, buying newspapers and flaunting Forbes banners in the breezes, had not cut into the Hopkins following to any serious extent.

But, to offset this cheering condition, the Democratic agents who made the canvass reported that there was an air of uncertainty throughout the district, and that many of those who declared for Hopkins were lukewarm and faint-hearted, and might easily be induced to change their votes. This was what must be prevented. The "weak-kneed" contingency must be strengthened and fortified, and a couple of hundred votes in one way or another secured from the opposition.

The Democratic Committee figured out a way to do this. Monroe County, where both Forbes and Hopkins resided, was one of the Democratic strongholds of the State. The portions of Washington and Jefferson Counties included in the Eighth District were as strongly Republican, and being more populous gave to the district its natural Republican majority. On the same ticket that was to elect a Representative to the State Legislature was the candidate for Sheriff of Monroe County. A man named Cummings was the Republican and Seth Reynolds, the liveryman, the Democratic nominee.

Under ordinary conditions Reynolds was sure to be elected, but the Committee proposed to sacrifice him in order to elect Hopkins. The Democrats would bargain with the Republicans to vote for the Republican Sheriff if the Republicans would vote for the Democratic Representative. This "trading votes," which was often done, was considered by the politicians quite legitimate. The only thing necessary was to "fix" Seth Reynolds, and this Hopkins arranged personally. The office of Sheriff would pay about two thousand a year, and this sum Hopkins agreed to pay the liveryman and so relieve him of all the annoyance of earning it.

Reynolds saw the political necessity of this sacrifice, and consented readily to the arrangement. Mr. Cummings, who was to profit by the deal, was called to a private consultation and agreed to slaughter Kenneth Forbes to secure votes for himself. It was thought that this clever arrangement would easily win the fight for Hopkins.

But the Honorable Erastus had no intention of "taking chances," or "monkeying with fate," as he tersely expressed it. Every scheme known to politicians must be worked, and none knew the intricate game better than Hopkins. This was why he held several long conferences with his friend Marshall, the manager at the mill. And this was why Kenneth and Beth discovered him conversing with the young woman in the buggy. Mr. Hopkins had picked her up from the path leading from the rear gate of the Elmhurst grounds, and she had given him accurate information concerning the movements of the girl campaigners. The description she gave of the coming reception to the Woman's Political League was so humorous and diverting that they were both laughing heartily over the thing when the young people passed them, and thus Mr. Hopkins failed to notice who the occupants of the other vehicle were.

He talked for an hour with the girl, gave her explicit instructions, thrust some money into her hand, and then drove her back to the bend in the path whence she quickly made her way up to the great house.

Louise was making great preparations to entertain the Woman's Political League, an organization she had herself founded, the members of which were wives of farmers in the district. These women were flattered by the attention of the young lady and had promised to assist in electing Mr. Forbes. Louise hoped for excellent results from this organization and wished the entertainment to be so effective in winning their good-will that they would work earnestly for the cause in which they were enlisted.

Patsy and Beth supported their cousin loyally and assisted in the preparations. The Fairview band was engaged to discourse as much harmony as it could produce, and the resources of the great house were taxed to

entertain the guests. Tables were spread on the lawn and a dainty but substantial repast was to be served.

The day of the entertainment was as sunny and mild as heart could desire.

By ten o'clock the farm wagons began to drive up, loaded with women and children, for all were invited except the grown men. This was the first occasion within a generation when such an entertainment had been given at Elmhurst, and the only one within the memory of man where the neighbors and country people had been invited guests. So all were eager to attend and enjoy the novel event.

The gardens and grounds were gaily decorated with Chinese and Japanese lanterns, streamers and Forbes banners. There were great tanks of lemonade, and tables covered with candies and fruits for the children, and maids and other servants distributed the things and looked after the comfort of the guests. The band played briskly, and before noon the scene was one of great animation. A speakers' stand, profusely decorated, had been erected on the lawn, and hundreds of folding chairs provided for seats. The attendance was unexpectedly large, and the girls were delighted, foreseeing great success for their fjte.

"We ought to have more attendants, Beth," said Louise, approaching her cousin. "Won't you run into the house and see if Martha can't spare one or two more maids?"

Beth went at once, and found the housekeeper in her little room. Martha was old and somewhat feeble in body, but her mind was still active and her long years of experience in directing the household at Elmhurst made her a very useful and important personage. She was very fond of the young ladies, whom she had known when Aunt Jane was the mistress here, and Beth was her especial favorite.

So she greeted the girl cordially, and said:

"Maids? My dear, I haven't another one to give you, and my legs are too tottering to be of any use. I counted on Eliza Parsons, the new girl I hired for the linen room and to do mending; but Eliza said she had a headache this morning and couldn't stand the sun, So I let her off. But she didn't seem very sick to me."

"Perhaps she is better and will help us until after the luncheon is served," said Beth. "Where is she, Martha? I'll go and ask her."

"I'd better show you the way, miss. She's in her own room."

The housekeeper led the way and Beth followed. When she rapped upon the door, a sweet, quiet voice said:

"Come in."

The girl entered, and gave an involuntary cry of surprise. Standing before

her was the young girl she had seen riding with Mr. Hopkins — the girl she had declared to be the missing daughter of Mrs. Rogers.

For a moment Beth stood staring, while the new maid regarded her with composure and a slight smile upon her beautiful face. She was dressed in the regulation costume of the maids at Elmhurst, a plain black gown with white apron and cap.

"I — I beg your pardon," said Beth, with a slight gasp; for the likeness to Mrs. Rogers was something amazing. "Aren't you Lucy Rogers?"

The maid raised her eyebrows with a gesture of genuine surprise. Then she gave a little laugh, and replied:

"No, Miss Beth. I'm Elizabeth Parsons."

"But it can't be," protested the girl. "How do you know my name, and why haven't I seen you here before?"

"I'm not a very important person at Elmhurst," replied Eliza, in a pleasant, even tone. "I obtained the situation only a few days ago. I attend to the household mending, you know, and care for the linen. But one can't be here without knowing the names of the young ladies, so I recognize you as Miss Beth, one of Mr. Forbes's cousins."

"You speak like an educated person," said Beth, wonderingly. "Where is your home?"

For the first time the maid seemed a little confused, and her gaze wandered from the face of her visitor.

"Will you excuse my answering that question?" she asked.

"It is very simple and natural," persisted Beth. "Why cannot you answer it?"

"Excuse me, please. I — I am not well today. I have a headache."

She sat down in a rocking chair, and clasping her hands in her lap, rocked slowly back and forth.

"I'm sorry," said Beth. "I hoped you would be able to assist me on the lawn. There are so many people that we can't give them proper attention."

Eliza Parsons shook her head.

"I am not able," she declared. "I abhor crowds. They — they excite me, in some way, and I — I can't bear them. You must excuse me."

Beth looked at the strange girl without taking the hint to retire. Somehow, she could not rid herself of the impression that whether or not she was mistaken in supposing Eliza to be the missing Lucy, she had stumbled upon a sphinx whose riddle was well worth solving.

But Eliza bore the scrutiny with quiet unconcern. She even seemed mildly amused at the attention she attracted. Beth was a beautiful girl — the handsomest of the three cousins, by far; yet Eliza surpassed her in natural

charm, and seemed well aware of the fact. Her manner was neither independent nor assertive, but rather one of well-bred composure and calm reliance. Beth felt that she was intruding and knew that she ought to go; yet some fascination held her to the spot. Her eyes wandered to the maid's hands. However her features and form might repress any evidence of nervousness, these hands told a different story. The thin fingers clasped and unclasped in little spasmodic jerks and belied the quiet smile upon the face above them.

"I wish," said Beth, slowly, "I knew you."

A sudden wave of scarlet swept over Eliza's face. She rose quickly to her feet, with an impetuous gesture that made her visitor catch her breath.

"I wish I knew myself," she cried, fiercely. "Why do you annoy me in this manner? What am I to you? Will you leave me alone in my own room, or must I go away to escape you?"

"I will go," said Beth, a little frightened at the passionate appeal.

Eliza closed the door behind her with a decided slam, and a key clicked in the lock. The sound made Beth indignant, and she hurried back to where her cousins were busy with the laughing, chattering throng of visitors.

CHAPTER XIII
THE BOOMERANG

The lawn fjte was a tremendous success, and every farmer's wife was proud of her satin badge bearing the monogram: "W. P. L.," and the words: "FORBES FOR REPRESENTATIVE."

Certain edibles, such as charlotte-russe, Spanish cream, wine jellies and mousses, to say nothing of the caviars and anchovies, were wholly unknown to them; but they ate the dainties with a wise disregard of their inexperience and enjoyed them immensely.

The old butler was a general in his way, and in view of the fact that the staff of servants at Elmhurst was insufficient to cope with such a throng, he allowed Louise to impress several farmers' daughters into service, and was able to feed everyone without delay and in an abundant and satisfactory manner.

After luncheon began the speech-making, interspersed with music by the band.

Louise made the preliminary address, and, although her voice was not very strong, the silent attention of her hearers permitted her to be generally understood.

She called attention to the fact that this campaign was important because it promised more beautiful and attractive houses for the farmers and townsmen alike.

"We had all grown so accustomed to advertising signs," she said, "that we failed to notice how thick they were becoming or how bold and overpowering. From a few scattered announcements on fence boards, they had crowded themselves into more prominent places until the barns and sheds and the very rocks were daubed with glaring letters asking us to buy the medicines, soaps, tobaccos, and other wares the manufacturers were anxious to sell. Every country road became an advertising avenue. Scarcely a country house was free from signs of some sort. Yet the people tamely submitted to this imposition because they knew no way to avoid it. When Mr. Forbes began his campaign to restore the homesteads to their former beauty and dignity, a cry was raised against him. But this was because the farmers did not understand how much this reform meant to them. So we gave them an object lesson. We painted out all the signs in this section at our own expense, that you might see how much more beautiful your homes are without them. We believe that none of you will ever care to allow advertising signs on your property again, and that the quiet refinement of this part of the country will induce many other places to follow our example, until

advertisers are forced to confine themselves to newspapers, magazines and circulars, their only legitimate channels. This much Mr. Forbes has already done for you, and he will now tell you what else, if he is elected, he proposes to do."

Kenneth then took the platform and was welcomed with a hearty cheer. He modestly assured them that a Representative in the State Legislature could accomplish much good for his district if he honestly desired to do so. That was what a Representative was for — to represent his people. It was folly to elect any man who would forget that duty and promote only his own interests through the position of power to which the people had appointed him. Mr. Forbes admitted that he had undertaken this campaign because he was opposed to offensive advertising signs; but now he had become interested in other issues, and was anxious to be elected so that he could carry on the work of reform. They needed more school-houses for their children, and many other things which he hoped to provide as their Representative.

During this oration Beth happened to glance up at the house, and her sharp eyes detected the maid, Eliza, standing shielded behind the half-closed blind of an upper window and listening to, as well as watching, the proceedings below. Then she remembered how the girl had been laughing and talking with Mr. Hopkins, when she first saw her, and with sudden dismay realized that Eliza was a spy in the service of the enemy.

Her first impulse was to denounce the maid at once, and have her discharged; but the time was not opportune, so she waited until the festivities were ended.

It had been a great day for the families of the neighboring farmers, and they drove homeward in the late afternoon full of enthusiasm over the royal manner in which they had been entertained and admiration for the girls who had provided the fun and feasting. Indeed, there were more kindly thoughts expressed for the inhabitants of Elmhurst than had ever before been heard in a single day in the history of the county, and the great and the humble seemed more closely drawn together.

When the last guest had departed Beth got her cousins and Kenneth together and told them of her discovery of the spy.

Kenneth was at first greatly annoyed, and proposed to call Martha and have the false maid ejected from the premises; but Patsy's wise little head counselled caution in handling the matter.

"Now that we know her secret," she said, "the girl cannot cause us more real harm, and there may be a way to circumvent this unscrupulous Hopkins and turn the incident to our own advantage. Let's think it over carefully

before we act."

"There's another thing," said Beth, supporting her cousin. "I'm interested in the mystery surrounding the girl. I now think I was wrong in suspecting her to be the lost Lucy Rogers; but there is surely some romance connected with her, and she is not what she seems to be. I'd like to study her a little."

"It was absurd to connect her with Lucy Rogers," observed Kenneth, "for there is nothing in her character to remind one of the unhappy girl."

"Except her looks," added Beth. "She's the living image of Mrs. Rogers."

"That isn't important," replied Louise. "It is probably a mere coincidence. None of us have ever seen the real Lucy, and she may not resemble her mother at all."

"Mrs. Rogers claims she does," said Beth. "But anyhow, I have a wish to keep this girl at the house, where I can study her character."

"Then keep her, my dear," decided Kenneth. "I'll set a couple of men to watch the gates, and if she goes out we'll know whom she meets. The most she can do is to report our movements to Mr. Hopkins, and there's no great harm in that."

So the matter was left, for the time; and as if to verify Beth's suspicions Eliza was seen to leave the grounds after dusk and meet Mr. Hopkins in the lane. They conversed together a few moments, and then the maid calmly returned and went to her room.

The next day Mr. Hopkins scattered flaring hand-bills over the district which were worded in a way designed to offset any advantage his opponent had gained from the lawn fjte of the previous day. They read: "Hopkins, the Man of the Times, is the Champion of the Signs of the Times. Forbes, who never earned a dollar in his life, but inherited his money, is trying to take the dollars out of the pockets of the farmers by depriving them of the income derived by selling spaces for advertising signs. He is robbing the farmers while claiming he wants to beautify their homes. The farmers can't eat beauty; they want money. Therefore they are going to vote for the Honorable Erastus Hopkins for Representative." Then followed an estimate of the money paid the farmers of the district by the advertisers during the past five years, amounting to several thousands of dollars in the aggregate. The circular ended in this way: "Hopkins challenges Forbes to deny these facts. Hopkins is willing to meet Forbes before the public at any time and place he may select, to settle this argument in joint debate."

The girls accepted the challenge at once. Within two days every farmer had received a notice that Mr. Forbes would meet Mr. Hopkins at the Fairview Opera House on Saturday afternoon to debate the question as to whether advertising signs brought good or evil to the community.

The campaign was now getting hot. Because of the activity of the opposing candidates every voter in the district had become more or less interested in the fight, and people were taking one side or the other with unusual earnestness.

Mr. Hopkins was not greatly pleased that his challenge had been accepted. He had imagined that the Forbes party would ignore it and leave him the prestige of crowing over his opponent's timidity. But he remembered how easily he had subdued Kenneth at the school-house meeting before the nominations, and had no doubt of his ability to repeat the operation.

He was much incensed against the girls who were working for Kenneth Forbes, for he realized that they were proving an important factor in the campaign. He even attributed to them more than they deserved, for Uncle John's telling activities were so quietly conducted that he was personally lost sight of entirely by Mr. Hopkins.

Mr. Hopkins had therefore become so enraged that, against the advice of his friends, he issued a circular sneering at "Women in Politics." The newspapers having been subsidized by the opposition so early in the game, Mr. Hopkins had driven to employ the circular method of communicating with the voters. Scarcely a day passed now that his corps of distributors did not leave some of his literature at every dwelling in the district.

His tirade against the girls was neither convincing nor in good taste. He asked the voters if they were willing to submit to "petticoat government," and permit a "lot of boarding-school girls, with more boldness than modesty" to dictate the policies of the community. "These frizzle-headed females," continued the circular, "are trying to make your wives and daughters as rebellious and unreasonable as they are themselves; but no man of sense will permit a woman to influence his vote. It is a disgrace to this district that Mr. Forbes allows his girlish campaign to be run by a lot of misses who should be at home darning stockings; or, if they were not able to do that, practicing their music-lessons."

"Good!" exclaimed shrewd Miss Patsy, when she read this circular. "If I'm not much mistaken, Mr. Hopkins has thrown a boomerang. Every woman who attended the fjte is now linked with us as an ally, and every one of them will resent this foolish circular."

"I'm sorry," said Kenneth, "that you girls should be forced to endure this. I feared something like it when you insisted on taking a hand in the game."

But they laughed at him and at Mr. Hopkins, and declared they were not at all offended.

"One cannot touch pitch without being defiled," said Mr. Watson, gravely, "and politics, as Mr. Hopkins knows it, is little more than pitch."

“I cannot see that there is anything my girls have done to forfeit respect and admiration,” asserted Uncle John, stoutly. “To accuse them of boldness or immodesty is absurd. They have merely gone to work in a business-like manner and used their wits and common-sense in educating the voters. Really, my dears, I’m more proud of you today than I’ve ever been before,” he concluded.

And Uncle John was right. There had been no loss of dignity by any one of the three, and their evident refinement, as well as their gentleness and good humor, had until now protected them from any reproach. It had remained for Mr. Hopkins to accuse them, and his circular had a wide influence in determining the issue of the campaign.

CHAPTER XIV
LUCY'S GHOST

Kenneth had sent word to Tom Gates, asking the young man to come to Elmhurst, but it was not until two days after the lawn party that Tom appeared and asked permission to see Mr. Forbes.

Beth and Louise were with Kenneth at the time, and were eager to remain during the interview, so the young man was shown into the library.

Beth could scarcely recognize in him the calm and cheerful Tom Gates they had visited in the county jail; for his face was drawn with care and anxiety, eyes were bloodshot, and his former neat appearance was changed to one careless and untidy.

Kenneth scrutinized him closely.

"What have you been up to, Tom?" he asked.

"I've been searching for Lucy, sir, night and day. I haven't slept a wink since I heard the awful news of her sickness and escape. Where do you think she can be, sir?"

His question was full of agonized entreaty, and his manner pitifully appealing.

"I don't know," answered Kenneth. "Where have you searched?"

"Everywhere, sir, that she might be likely to go. I've inquired in every town, and along every road leading out of the county. She didn't take a train, because poor Lucy hadn't any money — and I've asked at all the stations. And — and — along the river they say no girl answering her description has been seen."

"It's strange," remarked Kenneth, thoughtfully, while the girls regarded the youth with silent sympathy.

"If you knew Lucy, sir, you'd realize how strange it is," went on young Gates, earnestly. "She was such a gentle, shrinking girl, as shy and retiring as a child. And she never did a thing that would cause anyone the least worry or unhappiness. But she was out of her head, sir, and didn't know what she was about. That was the reason she went away. And from the moment she left her home all trace of her was lost."

"One would think," observed Kenneth, "that a poor, demented girl, wandering about the country, would be noticed by scores of people. Did she take any clothing with her?"

"Only the dress she had on, sir, and not even a hat or a shawl."

"What was her dress like?" asked Beth, quickly.

"It was a light grey in color, and plainly made. She wore a white collar, but that is all we can be certain she had on. You see her mother is blind, and

old Will doesn't observe very closely."

"Does Lucy resemble her mother?" inquired Beth.

"Very much, miss. She was a beautiful girl, everyone acknowledged. And it's all my fault — all my fault. I thought to save her, and drove her mad, instead!"

"You might have known that," declared Kenneth. "A girl of her character, sensitive to a fault, would be greatly shocked to find the man she loved a criminal."

"It was for her sake."

"That is a poor excuse. If you had waited Lucy would have proved her innocence."

"They threatened to arrest her, sir. It would have killed her."

"They wouldn't dare arrest her on suspicion."

"The Squierses would dare do anything. You don't know old Mrs. Squiers."

"I know the law, sir, and in any event it was a foolish thing, as well as criminal, to forge a check to get the money they demanded."

"You are right, sir," replied Tom Gates, despondently. "It was foolish and criminal. I wouldn't mind my own punishment, but it drove my Lucy mad."

"See here," said Kenneth, sternly, "you are getting morbid, young man, and pretty soon you'll be mad yourself. If Lucy is found do you want her to see you in this condition?"

"Can she be found, sir, do you think?"

"We are trying to find her," replied Kenneth. "You have failed, it seems, and Will Rogers had failed. I've had one of the cleverest detectives of Chicago trying to find her for the last three days."

"Oh, Kenneth!" exclaimed Beth. "I didn't know that. How good of you!"

"It must have been the detective that came to see Mrs. Rogers," said Tom, musingly. "She told me a strange man had been there from Mr. Forbes, to inquire all about Lucy."

"Yes; he makes a report to me every evening," remarked Kenneth; "and Mr. Burke says this is the most mystifying case he has ever encountered. So far there isn't a clew to follow. But you may rest assured that what any man can do, Burke will do."

"I'm so grateful, sir!" said Tom.

"Then you must show it by being a man, and not by giving way to your trouble in this foolish manner."

"I'll try, sir, now that there's something to hope for."

"There's a good deal to hope for. Despair won't help you. You must go to work."

“I will. It won’t be very easy to get work, for I’ve disgraced myself in this neighborhood, and I can’t leave here till something is known of Lucy’s fate. But I’ll do something — any kind of work — if I can get it.”

“I need someone to assist me in my correspondence,” said Kenneth. “Would you like to be my secretary?”

“Me, Mr. Forbes — me!”

“Yes, Tom. I’ll pay you twenty dollars a week to start with, and more if you serve me faithfully. And you’ll board here, of course.”

Then Tom Gates broke down and began to cry like a child, although he tried hard to control himself.

“You — you must forgive me, Mr. Forbes,” he said, penitently; “I — I’ve been without sleep for so long that I haven’t any nerves left.”

“Then you must go to sleep now, and get a good rest.” He turned to Beth. “Will you see Martha,” he asked, “and have her give Tom Gates a room?”

She went on her errand at once, and gradually the young man recovered his composure.

“I can do typewriting and stenography, Mr. Forbes,” he said, “and I can keep accounts. I’ll serve you faithfully, sir.”

“We’ll talk of all this by and by, Tom,” replied Kenneth, kindly. “Just now you must have some sleep and get your strength back. And don’t worry about Lucy. Burke will do everything that can be done, and I am confident he will be able to trace the girl in time.”

“Thank you, sir.”

Then he followed the butler away to his room, and after the girls had discussed him and expressed their sympathy for the unfortunate fellow, they all turned their attention to the important matter of the campaign. The debate with Hopkins was the thing that occupied them just now, and when Patsy joined the group of workers they began to discuss some means of scoring a decisive victory at the Fairview Opera House. The Honorable Erastus still insisted upon making the anti-sign fight the prominent issue of the campaign, and they must reply forcibly to the misleading statements made in his last hand-bill.

Meantime Tom Gates was sunk in the deep sleep of physical exhaustion, and the day wore away before he wakened. When at last he regained consciousness he found the sun sinking in the west and feared he had been guilty of indiscretion. He remembered that he was Mr. Forbes’s secretary now, and that Mr. Forbes might want him. He was not yet thoroughly rested, but night was approaching and he reflected that he could obtain all the sleep that he needed then.

So, greatly refreshed, and in a quieter mood than he had been for days, the

young man dressed and entered the hall to find his way downstairs.

It happened that Beth, whose room was near this rear corridor, had just gone there to dress for dinner, and as she was closing her door she heard a wild, impassioned cry:

"Lucy!"

Quickly she sprang out into the hall and turned the corner in time to see a strange tableau.

Young Gates was standing with his arms outstretched toward Eliza Parsons, who, a few paces away, had her back to the door of her own chamber, from which she had evidently just stepped. She stood motionless, looking curiously at the youth who confronted her.

"Lucy! don't you know me?" he asked, his voice trembling with emotion.

"To begin with," said the girl, composedly, "my name happens to be Eliza. And as we've not been properly introduced I really don't see why I should know you," she added, with a light laugh.

Tom Gates shrank away from her as if he had been struck.

"You can't be Lucy!" he murmured. "And yet — and yet — oh, you *must* be Lucy! You must know me! Look at me, dear — I'm Tom. I'm your own Tom, Lucy!"

"It's very gratifying, I'm sure, young man," said the girl, a touch of scorn in her tones. "If you're my own Tom you'll perhaps stand out of my way and let me go to my work."

Without another word he backed up again; the wall and permitted her to sweep by him, which she did with a gesture of disdain.

When Eliza Parsons had disappeared down the back stairs Beth drew a long breath and approached Tom Gates, who still stood by the wall staring at the place where the girl had disappeared.

"I overheard," said Beth. "Tell me, Tom, is she really like Lucy?"

He looked at her with a dazed expression, as if he scarcely comprehended her words.

"Could you have been mistaken?" persisted the questioner.

He passed his hand over his eyes and gave a shudder.

"Either it was Lucy or her ghost," he muttered.

"Eliza Parsons is no ghost," declared Beth. "She's one of the maids here at Elmhurst, and you're quite likely to see her again."

"Has she been here long?" he asked, eagerly.

"No; only a few days."

"Oh!"

"When I first saw her I was struck by her resemblance to Mrs. Rogers," continued the girl.

“But she’s so different,” said Tom, choking back a sob. “Lucy couldn’t be so — so airy, so heartless. She isn’t at all that style of a girl, miss.”

“She may be acting,” suggested Beth.

But he shook his head gloomily.

“No; Lucy couldn’t act that way. She’s quick and impulsive, but she — she couldn’t act. And she wouldn’t treat me that way, either, Miss Beth. Lucy and I have been sweethearts for years, and I know every expression of her dear face. But the look that this girl gave me was one that my Lucy never could assume. I must have been mistaken. I — I’m sure I was mistaken.”

Beth sighed. She was disappointed.

“I suppose,” continued Tom, “that I’ve thought of Lucy so long and so much, lately, and worried so over her disappearance, that I’m not quite myself, and imagined this girl was more like her than she really is. What did you say her name was?”

“Eliza Parsons.”

“Thank you. Can you tell me where I’ll find Mr. Forbes?”

“He’s getting ready for dinner, now, and won’t need you at present.”

“Then I’ll go back to my room. It — it was a great shock to me, that likeness, Miss DeGraf.”

“I can well believe it,” said Beth; and then she went to her own apartment, greatly puzzled at a resemblance so strong that it had even deceived Lucy Rogers’s own sweetheart.

CHAPTER XV
SIGNS OF THE TIMES

"If she is really Lucy Rogers, she'll be missing tomorrow morning," said Beth when she had told her cousins of the encounter in the corridor.

But Eliza Parsons was still at Elmhurst the next day, calmly pursuing her duties, and evidently having forgotten or decided to ignore the young man who had so curiously mistaken her for another. Beth took occasion to watch her movements, so far as she could, and came to the conclusion that the girl was not acting a part. She laughed naturally and was too light-hearted and gay to harbor a care of any sort in her frivolous mind.

But there was a mystery about her; that could not be denied. Even if she were but a paid spy of Erastus Hopkins there was a story in this girl's life, brief as it had been.

Beth was full of curiosity to know this story.

As for Tom Gates, he had been so horrified by his mistake that he tried to avoid meeting Eliza again. This was not difficult because the girl kept pretty closely to the linen room, and Tom was chiefly occupied in the library.

Kenneth had little chance to test his secretary's abilities just then, because the girls pounced upon the new recruit and used his services in a variety of ways. Tom Gates's anxiety to give satisfaction made him willing to do anything, but they refrained from sending him often to town because he was sensitive to the averted looks and evident repulsion of those who knew he had recently been a "jail-bird." But there was plenty for him to do at Elmhurst, where they were all as busy as bees; and whatever the young man undertook he accomplished in a satisfactory manner.

Saturday forenoon the three girls, with Kenneth, Mr. Watson and Uncle John, rode over to Fairview to prepare for the debate that was to take place in the afternoon, leaving only Tom Gates at home. As Mr. Hopkins had thrust upon his opponent the task of naming the place and time, the Republican candidate was obliged to make all the arrangements, and pay all the costs. But whatever the girl managers undertook they did well. So the Opera House had been in the hands of a special committee for two days, the orchestra had been hired, and the news of the joint debate had spread far and wide.

The party from Elmhurst lunched at the Fairview Hotel, and then the girls hurried to the Opera House while Kenneth remained to attend a conference of the Republican Committee. These gentlemen were much worried over the discovery of a scheme to trade votes that had been sprung, and that Forbes and Reynolds were being sacrificed for Hopkins and Cummings. Mr. Cummings was called into the meeting, and he denied that the trading was

being done with his consent, but defiantly refused to make a public announcement to that effect.

The matter was really serious, because every vote lost in that way counted as two for the other side, and Hopkins's rabid hand-bills had influenced many of the more ignorant voters and created endless disputes that were not of benefit to the Republican party.

"As nearly as we can figure from our recent canvass," said Mr. Cunningham, the chairman, "we are fast losing ground, and our chances of success are smaller than if no interest in the election had been aroused. Hopkins has cut our majority down to nothing, and it will be a hard struggle to carry our ticket through to success. This is the more discouraging because Mr. Forbes has spent so much money, while Hopkins's expenses have been very little."

"I do not mind that," said Kenneth, quietly. "It was my desire that the voters should fully understand the issues of the campaign. Then, if they vote against me, it is because they are not worthy of honest representation in the Legislature, and I shall in the future leave them to their own devices."

The committee adjourned a little before two o'clock with rather grave faces, and prepared to attend the debate at the Opera House. Mr. Cunningham feared this debate would prove a mistake, as it would give Hopkins a chance to ridicule and brow-beat his opponent in public, and his greatest talent as a speaker lay in that direction.

As Kenneth and his supporters approached the Opera House they heard loud cheering, and from a band-wagon covered with bunting and banners, in which he had driven to the meeting, descended the Honorable Erastus. He met Kenneth face to face, and the latter said pleasantly:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Hopkins."

"Ah, it's Forbes, isn't it?" replied Hopkins, slightingly. "I've met you before, somewheres, haven't I?"

"You have, sir."

"Glad you're here, Forbes; glad you're here," continued the Representative, airily, as he made his way through the crowd that blocked the entrance. "These meetings are educational to young men. Girls all well, I hope?"

There was a boisterous laugh at this sally, and Mr. Hopkins smiled and entered the Opera House, while Kenneth followed with the feeling that he would take great delight in punching the Honorable Erastus's nose at the first opportunity.

The house was packed full of eager spectators who had come to see "the fun." Although the girls had taken charge of all the arrangements they had

devoted the left side of the ample stage to the use of the Hopkins party, where a speaker's table and chairs for important guests had been placed. The right side was similarly arranged for the Forbes party, and between the two the entire center of the stage was occupied by a group of fifty young girls. Above this group a great banner was suspended, reading: "The Signs of the Times," a catchword Mr. Hopkins had employed throughout the campaign. But the most astonishing thing was the appearance of the group of girls. They all wore plain white slips, upon which a variety of signs had been painted in prominent letters. Some costumes advertised baking-powders, others patent medicines, others soaps, chewing tobacco, breakfast foods, etc. From where they were seated in full view of the vast audience the girls appeared as a mass of advertising signs, and the banner above them indicated quite plainly that these were the "Signs of the Times."

Mr. Hopkins, as he observed this scene, smiled with satisfaction. He believed some of his friends had prepared this display to assist him and to disconcert the opposition, for nothing could have clinched his arguments better than the pretty young girls covered with advertisements of well known products. Even the Eagle Eye Breakfast Food was well represented.

After the orchestra had finished a selection, Mr. Hopkins rose to make the first argument and was greeted with cheers.

"We are having a jolly campaign, my dear friends," he began; "but you musn't take it altogether as a joke; because, while Mr. Forbes's erratic views and actions have done little real harm, we have been educated to an appreciation of certain benefits we enjoy which otherwise might have escaped our attention.

"This is a progressive, strenuous age, and no section of the country has progressed more rapidly than this, the Eighth District of our great and glorious State. I may say without danger of contradiction that the people I have the honor to represent in the State Legislature, and expect to have the honor of representing the next term, are the most intelligent, the most thoughtful and the most prosperous to be found in any like district in the United States. (Cheers.) Who, then, dares to denounce them as fools? Who dares interfere with these liberties, who dares intrude uninvited into their premises and paint out the signs they have permitted to occupy their fences and barns and sheds? Who would do these things but an impertinent meddler who is so inexperienced in life that he sets his own flimsy judgment against that of the people?"

The orator paused impressively to wait for more cheers, but the audience was silent. In the outskirts of the crowd a faint hissing began to be heard. It reached the speaker's ear and he hurriedly resumed the oration.

“I do not say Mr. Forbes is not a good citizen,” said he, “but that he is misguided and unreasonable. A certain degree of deference is due the young man because he inherited considerable wealth from his uncle, and — ”

Again the hisses began, and Mr. Hopkins knew he must abandon personal attacks or he would himself be discredited before his hearers. Kenneth and his supporters sat silent in their places, the three girls, who were now well known in the district, forming part of the Republican group; and none of them displayed the least annoyance at the vituperation Mr. Hopkins had employed.

“I have already called your attention in my circulars,” resumed the speaker, “to the fact that advertising signs are the source of large income to the farmers of this district. I find that three thousand, seven hundred and eighty-three dollars have been paid the farmers in the last five years, without the least trouble or expense on their part; and this handsome sum of money belongs to them and should not be taken away. Stop and think for a moment. Advertising is the life of every business, and to fight successfully the great army of advertisers whose business is the life-blood of our institutions is as impossible as it is absurd. Suppose every farmer in this district refused to permit signs upon his property; what would be the result? Why, the farmers of other sections would get that much more money for letting privileges, and you would be that much out of pocket without suppressing the evil — if evil can attach to an industry that pays you good money without requiring either investment or labor in return.”

After continuing in this strain for some time, Mr. Hopkins announced that “he would now give way to his youthful and inexperienced opponent,” and asked the audience to be patient with Mr. Forbes and considerate of “his extraordinary prejudices.”

Hopkins’s policy of discrediting his opponent in advance was not very effective, for when Kenneth arose he was more enthusiastically cheered than Hopkins had been. The meeting was disposed to be fair-minded and quite willing to give Mr. Forbes a chance to explain his position.

“The arguments of our distinguished Representative are well worthy of your consideration,” he began, quietly. “It is only by understanding fully both sides of an argument that you can hope to arrive at a just and impartial decision. Mr. Hopkins has advocated advertising signs on the ground that your financial gain warrants permitting them to be placed upon your premises. I will not deny his statement that three thousand, seven hundred and eighty-three dollars have been paid the farmers of this district by advertisers in the last five years. It is quite likely to be true. I have here the report of the Department of Agriculture showing that the total amount paid to

farmers of the eighth district in the last five years, for produce of all kinds, is eleven millions, five-hundred thousand dollars."

A murmur of amazement rose from the audience. Kenneth waited until it had subsided.

"This seems surprising, at first," he said, "and proves how startling aggregate figures are. You must remember I have covered five years in this estimate, as did Mr. Hopkins in his, and if you will figure it out you will see that the yearly average of earnings is about six hundred dollars to each farmer. That is a good showing, for we have a wealthy district; but it is not surprising when reduced to that basis. Mr. Hopkins slates that the farmers of this district received three thousand, seven hundred and eighty-three dollars during the last five years for advertising signs. Let us examine these figures. One-fifth of that sum is seven hundred and fifty-six dollars and sixty cents as the income to you per year. We have, in this district, twenty-five hundred farmers according to the latest reports of the Bureau of Statistics, and dividing seven hundred and fifty-six dollars and sixty cents by twenty-five hundred, we find that each farmer receives an average of thirty and one-quarter cents per year for allowing his fences and buildings to be smothered in lurid advertising signs. So we find that the money received by the farmers from the advertising amounts to about one-quarter of one per cent of their income, a matter so insignificant that it cannot affect them materially, one way or another.

"But, Mr. Hopkins states that you give nothing in return for this one-quarter of one per cent, while I claim you pay tremendously for it. For you sacrifice the privacy of your homes and lands, and lend yourselves to the selfish desire of advertisers to use your property to promote their sales. You have been given an example of clean barns and fences, and I cannot tell you how proud I am of this district when I ride through it and see neatly painted barns and fences replacing the flaring and obtrusive advertising signs that formerly disfigured the highways. Why should you paint advertising signs upon your barns any more than upon your houses? Carry the thing a step farther, and you may as well paint signs upon your children's dresses, in the manner you see illustrated before you."

At this, Louise made a signal and the fifty children so grotesquely covered with signs rose and stepped forward upon the stage. The orchestra struck up an air and the little girls sang the following ditty:

"Teas and soaps,
Pills and dopes,
We all must advertise.
Copper cents,

Not common sense.
Are the things we prize.
We confess
Such a dress
Isn't quite becoming,
But we suppose
Hopkins knows
This keeps business humming."

As the girls ceased singing, Kenneth said:

"To the encroaching advertiser these signs of the times are considered legitimate. There is no respect for personal privacy on the advertiser's part. Once they used only the newspapers, the legitimate channels for advertising. Then they began painting their advertising on your fences. When the farmers protested against this the advertisers gave them a few pennies as a sop to quiet them. After this they gave you small sums to paint the broad sides of your barns, your board fences, and to place signs in your field. If you allowed them to do so they would paint signs on the dresses of your children and wives, so callous are they to all decency and so regardless of private rights. Look on this picture, my friends, and tell me, would you prefer to see this — or this?"

At the word each child pulled away the sign-painted slip and stood arrayed in a pretty gown of spotless white.

The surprise was so complete that the audience cheered, shouted and laughed for several minutes before silence was restored. Then the children sang another verse, as follows:

"Now it is clear
That we appear
Just as we should be;
We are seen
Sweet and clean
From corruption free:
We're the signs
Of the times —
Fair as heaven's orbs.
If we look good,
Then all men should
Vote for Kenneth Forbes!"

The cheering was renewed at this, and Mr. Hopkins became angry. He tried to make himself heard, but the popular fancy had been caught by the object lesson so cleverly placed before them, and they shouted: "Forbes!

Forbes! Forbes!" until the Honorable Erastus became so furious that he left the meeting in disgust.

This was the most impolite thing he could have done, but he vowed that the meeting had been "packed" with Forbes partisans and that he was wasting his time in addressing them.

After he was gone Kenneth resumed his speech and created more enthusiasm. The victory was certainly with the Republican candidate, and the Elmhurst people returned home thoroughly satisfied with the result of the "joint debate."

CHAPTER XVI
A CLEW AT LAST

The servants at Elmhurst all ate in a pleasant dining room with windows facing a garden of geraniums. Tom Gates had been at the house two days before he encountered Eliza Parsons at the table, for the servants were not all able to take their meals at the same time.

It was at luncheon, the day of the joint debate at Fairview, that the young man first met Eliza, who sat opposite him. The only other person present was old Donald, the coachman, who was rather deaf and never paid any attention to the chatter around him.

As he took his seat Tom gave a half-frightened glance into Eliza's face and then turned red as she smiled coquettishly and said:

"Dear me! It's the young man who called me his dear Lucy."

"You — you're very like her," stammered Tom, unable to take his eyes from her face. "Even now I — I can't believe I'm mistaken."

She laughed merrily in a sweet, musical voice, and then suddenly stopped with her hand on her heart and cast at him a startled look that was in such sharp contrast to her former demeanor that he rose from his chair.

"Sit down, please," she said, slowly. And then she studied his face with sober earnestness — with almost wistful longing. But she shook her head presently, and sighed; and a moment later had regained her lightness of manner.

"It's a relief to have a quiet house for a day, isn't it?" she asked, eating her soup calmly. "I'll be glad when the election's over."

"Have you been here long?" he asked, although Beth had told him of Eliza's coming to Elmhurst.

"Only a short time. And you?"

"Two days," said he. "But where did you live before you came here?"

She shook her head.

"I wish you would answer me," he begged. "I have a reason for asking."

"What reason?" she demanded, suddenly serious again.

"Two people have never lived that were so near alike as you and Lucy Rogers."

"Indeed?"

"Will you show me your left arm?"

"No."

She was again studying his face.

"If you are Lucy Rogers you have a scar there — a scar where you burned yourself years ago."

She seemed frightened for a moment. Then she said:

"I have no scar on my left arm."

"Will you prove it?"

"No. You are annoying me. What did you say your name is?"

"Tom Gates."

She was thoughtful for a moment and then shook her head.

"I have never heard of you," she declared, positively, and resumed her eating.

Tom was nonplussed. One moment he believed she was Lucy, and the next told himself that it was impossible. This girl possessed mannerisms that Lucy had never exhibited in all the years he had known her. She was bold and unabashed where Lucy was shy and unassuming. This girl's eyes laughed, while Lucy's were grave and serious; yet they were the same eyes.

"Let me tell you about my lost Lucy," he said, with a glance at the unconscious Donald.

"Go ahead, if it will relieve you," she answered, demurely.

"She lived on a farm five miles from here, and she was my sweetheart. Her mother is blind and her father old and feeble. She worked for a dentist in the town and was accused of stealing a ring, and it nearly broke her heart to be so unjustly suspected. In order to make good the loss of the ring, a valuable diamond — I — I got into trouble, and Lucy was so shocked and distressed that she — she lost her head — became mad, you know — and left home during the night without a word to any one. We haven't been able to find her since."

"That's too bad," remarked Eliza Parsons, buttering her bread.

"About the time that Lucy went away, you appeared at Elmhurst," continued Tom. "And in face and form you're the image of my Lucy. That is why I asked you to tell me where you came from and how you came here."

"Ah, you think I'm mad, do you?" asked the girl, with a quizzical smile. "Well, I'm not going to satisfy your curiosity, even to prove my sanity; and I'm not anxious to pose as your lost Lucy. So please pass the sugar and try to be sociable, instead of staring at me as if I scared you."

Tom passed the sugar, but he could not eat, nor could he tear himself away from this strange girl's presence. He tried again to draw her into conversation, but she showed annoyance and resented his persistence. Presently she went away, giving him an amused smile as she left the room — a smile that made him feel that this was indeed a case of mistaken identity.

In fact, Tom Gates, on sober reflection, knew that the girl could not be Lucy, yet he could not still the yearning in his heart whenever he saw her. His heart declared that she was Lucy, and his head realized that she could not

be.

While he waited in the library for Mr. Forbes to return from Fairview a man was shown into the room and sat down quietly in a corner.

He was a small, lean man, of unassuming appearance, with a thin face and gray eyes set close together. When he looked at Tom Gates he scarcely seemed to see him, and his manner conveyed the impression that he disliked to attract notice.

“Waiting for Mr. Forbes, sir?” asked Tom.

“Yes,” was the quiet reply.

Suddenly it struck the young man that this might be the detective who called every evening to give his report, and if so Tom was anxious to talk with him. So he ventured to say:

“It’s Mr. Burke, isn’t it?”

The man nodded, and looked out of the window.

“I’m Tom Gates, sir.”

“Yes; I know.”

“You’ve seen me before?” asked the youth, astonished.

“No; I’ve heard of you. That’s all.”

Tom flushed, remembering his recent crime. But he was eager to question the detective.

“Have you heard anything of Lucy Rogers, Mr. Burke?”

“Not yet.”

“Is there no trace of her at all?”

“A slight trace — nothing worth mentioning,” said Mr. Burke.

For a few moments Tom sat in silence. Then he said:

“I thought I’d found her, day before yesterday.”

“Yes?” There was little interest in the tone.

“There’s a girl in the house, sir, one of the maids, who is the living image of Lucy Rogers.”

“You ought to be able to identify her,” suggested the detective, his gaze still out of the window.

“But they are not alike except in looks. Her form and face are identical with Lucy’s. I was so sure that I begged her to let me see if there was a scar on her left arm; but she refused.”

“Was there a scar on Lucy Rogers’s left arm?”

“Yes, sir. Several years ago, when we were children, we were making candy in the kitchen and Lucy burned herself badly. It left a broad scar on her left forearm, which she will bear as long as she lives.”

“It is well to know that,” said Mr. Burke.

“This girl,” continued Tom, musingly, “says her name is Eliza Parsons,

and she says it in Lucy's voice. But her manner is not the same at all. Eliza laughs at me and quizzes me; she is forward and scornful, and — and perfectly self-possessed, which Lucy could not be, under the circumstances."

"Have you seen her closely?" asked the detective.

"Yes, sir."

"And are still unable to decide who she is?"

"That's it, sir; I'm unable to decide. It's Lucy: and yet it isn't Lucy."

"Who is Eliza Parsons?"

"She refuses to say where she came from. But it seems she arrived at Elmhurst only a day or two after Lucy disappeared from home. It's that coincidence that makes me doubt the evidence of my own senses."

"Who hires the servants here?"

"I don't know, sir."

Mr. Burke abandoned the conversation, then, and confined his gaze to the landscape as it showed through the window. Tom busied himself addressing circulars of instruction to the Republicans who were to work at the polling places. This was Saturday, and the election was to be on the following Tuesday. The meeting at Fairview was therefore the last important rally of the campaign.

At dusk the party arrived from Fairview in the automobiles, the girls greatly delighted with the success of the meeting. They all followed Kenneth into the library, where the butler had just lighted the lamps. The evenings were getting cool, now, and a grate fire was burning.

Kenneth greeted Mr. Burke and introduced him to the young ladies, who begged to remain during the interview.

"We are all alike interested in Lucy Rogers, Mr. Burke," said the boy; "so you may speak freely. Is there any news?"

"Nothing of importance, sir, unless a clew has been found in your own house," replied the detective.

"Here at Elmhurst?" asked the astonished Kenneth.

"Yes. Tom Gates has seen a girl — one of your maids — who so strongly resembles Lucy Rogers that he at first believed she was the missing girl."

"I know," said Beth, quickly. "It's Eliza Parsons. But Tom was mistaken. He saw her in the dim light of a corridor, and the resemblance confused him."

"I've seen her since," remarked Tom, "and the likeness is really bewildering. It's only her manner that is different."

"When I first saw her, before Tom came, I was astonished at her resemblance to Mrs. Rogers," announced Beth. "I have never seen Lucy, but I know Mrs. Rogers, and it seemed to me that Eliza was exactly like her in

features. Mr. Forbes and I first saw her riding in a buggy with Mr. Hopkins. That was before either of us knew she was employed at Elmhurst. You see she isn't one of the servants who come much in contact with the family; she does the mending and takes charge of the linen room."

Beth then related the manner in which they first noticed Eliza, and how they had discovered her to be a spy in the service of Mr. Hopkins.

The detective was much interested in the recital and seemed surprised that he had not been informed of this before.

"Of course," said Kenneth, "the girl is not Lucy Rogers. It is not possible they could be the same."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Burke.

"Well, Lucy was a gentle, sweet country girl, of little experience in life. Her nature was so susceptible, so very sensitive, that when she discovered Tom Gates, whom she loved, to be guilty of a forgery, she worried herself into an attack of brain-fever; or at least she became insane, reproaching herself for having driven the boy to this dreadful deed. Under the influence of her mania she wandered away from her home, and has not been seen since. That's the story of Lucy Rogers. Now look at Eliza Parsons. She appeared the very day after Lucy's disappearance, to be sure; but that proves they are not the same person. For Eliza is not demented. She is a cold, hard woman of the world, in spite of her tender years. She is doing the work of an experienced spy, while any deceit was foreign to Lucy's nature. Instead of being plunged in grief Eliza is happy and gay, reckless of consequences and fully self-possessed. She is also well and healthy, to all appearances. Taking all these things into consideration, it is impossible to connect the two girls in any way — save the coincidence of personal resemblance."

Mr. Burke listened to this quietly, and then shook his head.

"Your arguments all tend to make me suspect that she is Lucy Rogers," he said, quietly.

For a moment there was an impressive silence, while everyone eagerly, inquiringly or doubtfully looked at the detective, according to their diverse acceptance of his statement.

"In pursuance of the task set me," began Mr. Burke, "I had met with such absolute failure to trace the missing girl that I began to suspect no ordinary conditions were attached to this case. In my experience, which covers many years, I have had occasion to study sudden dementia, caused by shocks of grief or horror, and I have come to comprehend the fact that the human mind, once unbalanced, is liable to accomplish many surprising feats. Usually the victim is absolutely transformed, and becomes the very opposite, in many ways, of the normal personality. I imagine this is what happened to Lucy

Rogers."

"Do you imagine that Lucy would try to deceive *me*, sir?" asked Tom, reproachfully.

"I am sure she doesn't know who you are," answered the detective, positively. "She doesn't even know herself. I have known instances where every recollection of the past was wiped out of the patient's mind."

There was another thoughtful pause, for the detective's assertions were so astonishing that they fairly overwhelmed his hearers.

Then Louise asked:

"Is such a case of dementia hopeless, Mr. Burke?"

"Not at all hopeless. Often, I admit, it develops into permanent insanity, but there are many examples of complete recovery. Our first business must be to assure ourselves that we are right in this conjecture. I may be entirely wrong, for the unexpected is what I have been taught to look for in every case of mystery that has come under my observation. But I believe I have the material at hand to prove the personality of this Eliza Parsons, and after that I shall know what to do. Who employs your servants, Mr. Forbes?"

"Martha, my housekeeper, usually employs the maids."

"Will you send for her, please?"

Kenneth at once obeyed the request, and presently Martha entered the library.

She was a little, withered old woman, but with a pleasant face and shrewd but kindly eyes.

"Martha," said Kenneth, "did you employ the new linen maid, Eliza Parsons?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, apparently surprised at the question.

"This is Mr. Burke, Martha. Please answer any questions he may ask you."

"Yes, Master Kenneth."

"Did the girl bring any recommendations?" asked the detective.

Martha reflected.

"I do not think she did, sir."

"Are you accustomed to hiring maids without recommendations?" asked Mr. Burke.

"Oh, Eliza had a letter from my cousin, Mrs. Hopkins, who lives in Elmwood."

"Is Mrs. Hopkins your cousin?" asked Kenneth.

"Yes, sir. She were a Phibbs before she married Erastus, and my name is Phibbs."

"What did the letter from Mrs. Hopkins say?"

“It said she knew Eliza to be a clever and worthy girl, and if I had a place for her I couldn’t do better than take her on. So I needed a linen maid and Eliza went right to work. Isn’t she satisfactory, sir? Has she been doing anything wrong?”

“No. Please do not mention this interview to her at present, Miss Phibbs,” said the detective. “That is all, I believe.”

“Would you like to see Eliza?” asked Kenneth, when the housekeeper had retired.

“Not at present. I want to interview Mrs. Hopkins first.”

“Tonight?” asked Tom, eagerly.

“I will go at once, with Mr. Forbes’s permission.”

“Certainly, sir,” said Kenneth. “Shall we see you tomorrow?”

“Just as soon as I have accomplished anything.”

“Would you like a horse or an automobile?”

“Your man may drive me to the town, sir, if it is convenient.”

Kenneth gave the required order, and then Mr. Burke asked:

“How far are you prepared to go in this matter, sir?”

“In what way?”

“In expending money.”

“Will any large expenditure be required?”

“I cannot say. But we may require the services and advice of an expert physician — a specialist in brain diseases.”

“Do you know of one?” asked Kenneth.

“Yes; but he must be brought from Buffalo. It will be expensive, sir. That is why I ask if your interest in the girl warrants our going to the limit to save her.”

Kenneth was thoughtful, while the girls looked at him expectantly and Tom Gates with visible anxiety.

“My original idea was merely to find the missing girl in order to relieve the anxiety of her blind mother,” said young Forbes. “To accomplish that I was willing to employ your services. But, as a matter of fact, I have never seen the girl Lucy Rogers, nor am I particularly interested in her.”

“I am,” declared Beth.

“And I!”

“And I!” repeated Patsy and Louise.

“I think,” said Uncle John, who had been a quiet listener until now, “that Kenneth has assumed enough expense in this matter.”

“Oh, Uncle!” The remonstrance was from all three of the girls.

“Therefore,” continued Mr. Merrick, “I propose that I undertake any further expense that may be incurred, so as to divide the burden.”

“That’s better!” declared Patsy. “But I might have known Uncle John would do that.”

“You have my authority to wire the physician, if necessary, or to go to any expense you deem advisable,” continued Mr. Merrick, turning to the detective. “We seem to have undertaken to unravel an interesting mystery, and we’ll see it through to the end.”

“Very good, sir,” said Mr. Burke, and left them with a brief nod of farewell.

“Somehow,” said Beth, “I’ve a lot of confidence in that little man.”

“Why, he’s a detective,” replied Uncle John, with a smile, “and the chief business of detectives is to make mistakes.”

CHAPTER XVII

MRS. HOPKINS GOSSIPS

The home of Representative Hopkins was not a very imposing edifice. It was a modest frame building standing well back in a little yard at the outskirts of the village, and Mrs. Hopkins did the housework, unaided, to save the expense of a maid. It never occurred to the politician, who had risen from the position of a poor stable-boy to one of affluence, to save his wife from this drudgery. To him poor Mary was merely one of his possessions, and it would have astonished him to know that her sharp tongue and irritable temper were due to overwork and neglect. The Honorable Erastus was not averse to champagne dinners and other costly excesses while at the state capital, and his fellow legislators considered him a good fellow, although rather lax in "keeping his end up." Moreover, he employed a good tailor and was careful to keep up an appearance of sound financial standing. But his home, which he avoided as much as possible, had little share in his personal prosperity. Mary Hopkins's requests for new and decent gowns were more often refused than acceded to, and he constantly cautioned her to keep down expenses or she would drive them both to the poor-house.

The woman well knew that Erastus could afford to keep her in luxury, if he would, but some women are so constituted that they accept their fate rather than rebel, and Mary Hopkins lived the life of a slave, contenting herself with petty scoldings and bickerings that did nothing to relieve her hard lot.

She had little interest in politics and resented the intrusion of the many who came to the house to see and consult with her husband during the tiresome political campaigns. On these occasions Mr. Hopkins used the sitting-room as his office and committee headquarters, but this did not materially interfere with his wife's comfort, as she was usually busy in the kitchen.

On this Saturday evening, however, they had an early supper and she finished her dishes betimes and sat down to darn stockings in the sitting-room. Erastus had hurried away to a meeting of his henchmen in the town, and would not be home until after his wife was in bed.

So she was rather surprised when a timid knock sounded upon the door. She opened it to find a little, lean man standing upon the porch.

"Mrs. Hopkins?" he asked, quietly.

"Yes. What do you want?"

"Your husband asked me to come here and wait for him. It's important or I wouldn't disturb you."

“Well, then; come in,” she replied, tartly. “Thank the Lord this thing is nearly over, and we’ll have a few weeks of peace.”

“It is rather imposing on you,” remarked the man, following her to the sitting-room, where he sat down with his hat in his hands. “A political campaign is trying to everybody. I’m tired out and sick of the whole thing myself.”

“Then why don’t you chuck it,” she retorted, scornfully, “and go to work makin’ an honest living?”

“Oh, this is honest enough,” he said, mildly.

“I don’t believe it. All them secret confabs an’ trickery to win votes can’t be on the square. Don’t talk to me! Politics is another name for rascality!”

“Perhaps you’re right, ma’am; perhaps you’re right,” he said, with a sigh.

She looked at him sharply.

“You don’t belong in Elmwood.”

“No, ma’am; I’m from beyond Fairview. I’ve come to see your husband on business.”

She sniffed, at that, but picked up her darning and relapsed into silence. The little man was patient. He sat quietly in his chair and watched her work.

His mildness disarmed Mary Hopkins. She was not especially averse to having him sit there. It relieved the loneliness of her occupation. On occasions she loved to talk, as Erastus had long ago discovered; and this visitor would not try to shut her up the way Erastus did.

“You don’t often get out, ma’am; into society, and such like,” ventured the caller, presently.

“What makes you think that?” she demanded.

“A woman can’t keep a house neat and trim like this, and be a social gadder,” he observed.

“You’re right about that,” she returned, somewhat mollified. “If I was like them girls up at Elmhurst, fussin’ round over politics all the time, this house would go to rack an’ ruin.”

“Oh, them!” he said, with mild scorn. “Them girls ‘ll never be housekeepers.”

“Not for a minute,” she affirmed.

There was another pause, then; but the ice was broken. A subtle sympathy seemed established between the two.

“What do you think of ‘Rast’s chances?” she asked, presently, as she threaded new cotton into her needle.

“I guess he’ll win. He’s worked hard enough, anyhow.”

“Has he?”

“Yes; ‘Rast’s a good worker. He don’t leave any stone unturned. He’s up

to all the tricks o' the trade, is 'Rast Hopkins!"

Here he began shaking with silent laughter, and Mrs. Hopkins looked at him curiously.

"What are you laughing at?" she inquired, with a sniff of disdain.

"At — at the way he come it over the gals up at Elmhurst. 'Rast's a pretty slick one, he is!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, settin' that 'Liza to watch 'em, and tell all they does. Who'd a thought of it but 'Rast Hopkins?"

"I don't see anything mighty funny about that," declared Mrs. Hopkins, contemptuously. "The girl's too pert and forward for anything. I told 'Rast not to fool with her, or she'd make him trouble."

"Did you, now!" exclaimed the man, wonderingly.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Hopkins, pleased to have made an impression. "I suspected there was something wrong about her the morning she came to the house here. And she changed her name, too, as brassy as you please."

"Well, I declare!" said the visitor. "Did you know her before that, Mrs. Hopkins?"

"Why, I didn't exactly know her, but I seen her workin' around Miss Squiers's place many a time, and she didn't seem to 'mount to much, even then. One day she stole a di'mond ring off'n old Miss Squiers and dug out, and I told Nancy then — Nancy's young Miss Squiers — that I'd always had my suspicions of the hussy. She hid the ring in a vase on the mantle and they found it after she was gone."

"Well, well! I didn't know that about her," said the man, looking with admiration at Mrs. Hopkins.

"That's why I told 'Rast not to have any truck with her, when she came here bright and early one morning and asked for work."

"Oh, she came here, did she?"

"While I was gettin' breakfast. She said her name was Eliza Parsons, an' she was looking fer a job. I told her I knew her record an' to get out, and while we was arguin' 'Rast come out and took a hand in the talk. She laughed and flirted with him outrageous, and said she was a stranger in these parts, when I'd seen her many a time at Miss Squiers's."

"What was her name then?" asked the man.

"I think it was Rosie — or Lucy, or something — . Anyhow, it wasn't Eliza, and that I'll swear to. But the girl laughed at me and made such silly smiles at 'Rast that he told me to shut up, 'cause he had a use for her in politics."

"Well, well!" repeated the visitor. "Just see how stories get twisted. I

heard you gave the girl a letter to your cousin Martha."

"Well, I did. 'Rast wanted to get her in at Elmhurst, to watch what Forbes was doing to defeat him, so he made me write the letter. But how'd you know so much about this girl?" she inquired, with sudden suspicion.

"Me? I only know what Mr. Hopkins told me. I'm one of his confidential men. But he never said how he happened to find the girl, or what he knew about her."

"He didn't know nothing. He'd never seen her 'till that morning when she came here. But he said she was clever, and she is, if pertness and a ready tongue counts for cleverness. I suppose he pays her for what she tells him about Forbes, but he'd better save his money and fight on the square. I don't like this tricky politics, an' never did."

"I don't either," declared the man. "But I'm in it, and can't get out."

"That's what 'Rast says. But some day they'll put him out, neck and crop, if he ain't careful."

"Is the girl Eliza much use to him?"

"I can't say. He drove her over to Elmhurst that morning, and he drives over two or three evenings a week to meet her on the sly and get her report. That may be politics, but it ain't very respectable, to my notion."

"Well, the campaign is nearly over, Mrs. Hopkins."

"Thank goodness for that!" she replied.

The visitor sat silent after this, for he had learned all that the poor gossiping woman could tell him. Finally he said:

"I guess your husband's going to be late."

"Yes; if he ain't more prompt than usual you'll have a long spell of waiting."

"Perhaps I'd better go over to the hotel and look him up. I have to get back to Fairview tonight, you know."

"Do as you please," she answered carelessly.

So Mr. Burke, for it was the detective, bade her good-night and took his leave, and it was not until after he had gone that Mary Hopkins remembered she had forgotten to ask him his name.

"But it don't matter," she decided. "He's just one o' 'Rast's politicians, and I probably treated the fellow better than he deserved."

CHAPTER XVIII
ELIZA PARSONS

On Sunday morning Mr. Burke again appeared at Elmhurst, and told Kenneth he wanted an interview with Eliza Parsons.

"I don't want you to send for her, or anything like that, for it would make her suspicious," he said. "I'd like to meet her in some way that would seem accidental, and not startle her."

"That is rather a hard thing to arrange, Mr. Burke," said the boy, with a smile.

"Why, I think not," declared Louise. "It seems to me quite easy."

"That's the woman of it, sir," laughed Kenneth; "if it's a question of wits her sex has the advantage of us."

"What do you propose, miss?" asked the detective, turning to Louise.

"I'll have Martha send the girl into the garden to gather flowers," she replied; "and you can wander around there and engage her in conversation."

"Excellent!" he exclaimed. "Can this be arranged now?"

"I'll see, sir."

She found Martha and asked her to send Eliza Parsons for some roses and chrysanthemums, which were in a retired place shut in by evergreen hedges.

"One of the other maids will know the garden better," suggested the housekeeper.

"But I wish Eliza to go."

"Very well, Miss Louise."

From an upper window the girl watched until she saw Eliza Parsons leave the house with a basket and go into the retired garden she had chosen. Then she returned to the library for Mr. Burke and led him toward the same place.

"Eliza is just beyond that gap in the hedge," she said, and turned away.

"Wait a moment, please," he said, detaining her. "On second thought I would like you to come with me, for your tact may be of great assistance. Have you spoken much with Eliza?"

"Not at all, I think. Beth has talked with her, but I have scarcely been near her since she came here."

"You are willing to come?"

"I shall be glad to."

"The poet Saxe," said Mr. Burke, walking through the gap beside Louise, "has never been properly appreciated by his countrymen, although since his death his verses are in greater demand than while he lived. Do you care for them?"

"I don't know Saxe very well," she answered, observing that they were

approaching a place where Eliza was bending over a rose-bush. “But one or two of his poems are so amusing that they linger in my memory.”

Eliza turned at the sound of their voices and gave them a quick glance. But the next moment she resumed her occupation of cutting roses.

“The man’s greatest fault was his habit of punning,” remarked the detective, watching the girl’s form as he drew nearer. “It is that which blinded his contemporaries to his real talents. What exquisite roses, Miss Merrick! May I ask for one for my button-hole?”

“Yes, indeed!” she replied, pausing with him just beside Eliza. “Will you cut that bud yonder, for Mr. Burke, my dear?”

The maid silently obeyed and as the detective took the flower from her hand he said:

“Why, isn’t this Eliza Parsons?”

“Yes, sir,” she replied, carelessly.

“Don’t you remember me, Eliza?”

She seemed a little surprised, but answered promptly:

“No, sir.”

“I’m William Burke, your mother’s cousin. How did you leave your brother Harry, and have you heard from Josephine lately?”

The girl gave him a startled look and shrank back.

“Why, how nice!” cried Louise. “I did not know you knew Eliza’s family, Mr. Burke.”

“Yes, she is one of my relatives, and came from Roanoke, Virginia. Isn’t that correct, Eliza?”

“Yes, sir — no! I — I don’t remember!” she said, in a low tone.

“Don’t remember, Eliza? That is strange.”

The girl stared at him half frightened, and drew her hand over her eyes with a gesture of bewilderment.

“I hope, my dear, you are not going to be like your mother,” said Mr. Burke, gently. “My poor cousin Nora was subject to a strange lapse of memory at times,” he remarked to Louise. “She always recovered in time, but for days she could remember nothing of her former life — not even her own name. Are you ever affected that way Eliza?”

She looked up at him pleadingly, and murmured in a low voice:

“Let me go! Please let me go!”

“In a moment, Eliza.”

Her hands were clasped together nervously and she had dropped her basket and scissors on the path before her. The man looked intently into her eyes, in a shrewd yet kindly way, and she seemed as if fascinated by his gaze.

“Tell me, my dear, have you forgotten your old life?” he asked.

“Yes,” she whispered.

“Poor girl! And you are trying to keep this a secret and not let anyone know of your trouble?”

Suddenly she started and sprang away, uttering a cry of terror.

“You’re trying to trap me,” she panted. “You know my name is not Eliza Parsons. You — you want to ruin me!”

From the position in which they stood in the corner of the garden, with high hedges behind the maid, and Mr. Burke and Louise blocking the path in front, there was little chance of escape. But she looked around wildly, as if about to make the attempt, when Louise stepped forward and gently took Eliza’s hand in her own.

“Mr. Burke is a good man, my dear, and means well by you,” she said in her sweet, sympathetic tones. “He shall not bother you if you are afraid of him.”

“I — I’m not afraid,” said Eliza, with a resumption of her old manner and a toss of her head.

The detective gave Louise a look which she thought she understood.

“Will you finish cutting these roses, Mr. Burke?” she asked, with a smile. “Eliza and I are going to my room. Come, my dear,” and without waiting for a reply she led the girl, whose hand was still clasped in her own, along the path.

Eliza came willingly. Her manner was a little defiant at first, but when Louise drew her unobserved to the side entrance and up the staircase she grew gentle and permitted the other girl to take her arm.

Once in her room with the strange maid, Louise locked the door quietly and said to her companion with a cheerful smile:

“Now we are quite alone, and can talk at our ease. Take that low chair, dear, and I’ll sit here.”

Eliza obeyed, looking wistfully into the fair face of her new friend.

“You are very pretty, Eliza; and I’m sure you are as good as you’re pretty,” announced Louise. “So you must tell me about yourself, and whether you are happy here or not. From this time on I’m going to be your friend, you know, and keep all your secrets; and I’ll help you all I can.”

This rambling speech seemed to impress Eliza favorably. She relaxed somewhat from the tense alertness that was habitual with her, and looked at the other girl with a softened expression.

“I’m afraid you won’t be much interested in me,” she replied, “but I need a friend — indeed I need a friend, Miss Louise!”

“I’m sure you do.”

“At first I thought I could do without one. I felt I must stand alone, and let no one suspect. But — I’m getting puzzled and bewildered, and I don’t know what to do next.”

“Of course not. Tell me about it, dear.”

“I can’t; for I don’t know, myself.” She leaned forward in her chair and added, in a whisper: “I don’t even know who I am! But that man,” with a shudder, “tried to trap me. He said he knew Eliza Parsons, and there is no Eliza Parsons. It’s a name I — I invented.”

“I think I understand,” said Louise, with a little nod. “You had to have a name, so you took that one.”

“Yes. I don’t know why I am telling you this. I’ve tried to hide it all so carefully. And perhaps I’m wrong in letting this thing worry me. In the main, I’ve been very happy and content, lately; and — I have a feeling I was not happy before — before — ”

“Before what, dear?”

The girl looked at her steadily and her face grew red.

“Before I lost my memory.”

For a few moments they sat silently regarding one another, the expressive features of Louise showing a silent sympathy.

“Have you really lost your memory?” she asked.

“Absolutely. Think of it! I wakened one morning lying by the roadside, and shivering with cold. I had on a simple gray dress, with no hat. The sun was just rising, and no one was near. I examined myself with wonder, for I had no idea who I was, or how I came there. There was no money in my pocket, and I had no jewels. To keep warm I began walking along the road. The scenery was all new to me; so far as I knew I had never been in the place before.

“The birds were singing and the cows mooed in the meadow. I tried to sing, too, for my heart was light and gay and I was happy. By and bye I came to a town; but no one seemed to be awakened because it was yet so early. As I walked down the street I saw smoke coming from one of the chimneys, and it suddenly occurred to me that I was hungry. I entered the yard and went around to the back door. A woman was working in the kitchen and I laughed joyfully and wished her a good morning. She was not very pleasant, but it did me good to talk with her; I liked to hear my own voice and it pleased me to be able to talk easily and well. She grudgingly gave me something to eat and then bade me begone, calling me by some strange name and saying I was a thief. It was then that I invented the name of Eliza Parsons. I don’t know why, but it popped into my head and I claimed it for my name and have clung to it ever since.”

“Have you no idea what your real name is?” asked Louise, greatly interested in this terse relation.

“I have no idea of anything that dates beyond that morning,” replied Eliza. “The first time I looked in the mirror I saw a strange face reflected there. I had to make my own acquaintance,” she added, with one of her bright laughs. “I suppose I am between seventeen and twenty years of age, but what my life was during past years is to me a sealed book. I cannot remember a person I knew or associated with, yet things outside of my personal life seem to have clung to me. I remembered books I must have read; I can write, sing and sew — I sew remarkably well, and must have once been trained to it. I know all about my country’s history, yet I cannot recollect where I lived, and this part of the country is unknown to me. When I came to Elmhurst I knew all about it and about Mr. Forbes, but could not connect them with my former life.”

“How did you happen to come here?” asked Louise.

“I forgot to tell you that. While I was arguing with the woman, who was a Mrs. Hopkins, her husband heard us and came out into the kitchen. He began to question me about myself and I gave any answer that came into my head, for I could not tell him the truth. It pleased me to hear my voice, I seemed to have a keen sense of the humorous, and if I said anything at all clever, I laughed as heartily as anyone. My heart was light and free from all care. I had no worries or responsibilities at all. I was like the birds who see the sunshine and feel the breeze and are content to sing and be happy.

“Mr. Hopkins saw I was wholly irresponsible and reckless, and he decided to use me to spy upon the people here at Elmhurst and report to him what they said and did. I agreed to this readily, prompted by a spirit of mischief, for I cared nothing for Hopkins and had nothing against Mr. Forbes. Also Hopkins paid me money, which I had sufficient knowledge to realize was necessary to me.

“Oh, how happy and gay I was in those first few days! There was not a thought of the past, not an ambition or desire of any sort to bother me. Just to live seemed pleasure enough. I enjoyed eating and sleeping; I loved to talk and laugh; I was glad to have work to occupy me — and that was all! Then things began to happen that puzzled me. The man Hopkins declared he could not trust me because I had once been a thief, and I wondered if he could speak truly. I resented the thought that I may once have been a thief, although I wouldn’t mind stealing, even now, if I wanted anything and could take it.”

“Oh, Eliza!” gasped Louise.

“It sounds wicked, doesn’t it? But it is true. Nothing seems to influence

me so strongly as my own whims. I know what is good and what is bad. I must have been taught these things once. But I am as likely to do evil as good, and this recklessness has begun, in the last few days, to worry me.

"Then I met a young man here — he says his name is Tom Gates — who called me his dear Lucy, and said I used to love him. I laughed at him at first, for it seemed very absurd and I do not want him to love me. But then he proved to me there was some truth in his statement. He said his Lucy had a scar on her left arm, and that made me afraid, because I had discovered a scar on my own arm. I don't know how it got there. I don't know anything about this old Lucy. And I'm afraid to find out. I'm afraid of Lucy."

"Why, dear?"

"I cannot tell. I only know I have a horror of her, a sudden shrinking whenever her name is mentioned. Who was she, do you suppose?"

"Shall I tell you?" asked Louise.

"No — no! Don't, I beg of you!" cried Eliza, starting up. "I — I can't bear it! I don't want to know her."

The protest was passionate and sincere, and Louise marvelled at the workings of this evidently unbalanced intellect.

"What would you like to do, dear?" she inquired.

"I'd like to remain Eliza Parsons — always. I'd like to get away from *her* — far away from anyone who ever heard of that dreadful Lucy who frightens me so. Will you help me to get away, to escape to some place where no one will ever be able to trace me?"

"Do you think you would be happy then?"

"I am sure of it. The only thing that makes me unhappy now is the horror that this past life will be thrust upon me. I must have had a past, of course, or I shouldn't be a grown woman now. But I'm afraid of it; I don't want to know anything about it! Will you help me to escape?"

She looked eagerly at Louise as she asked this pitiful question, and the other girl replied, softly: "I will be your friend, Eliza. I'll think all this over, and we will see what can be done. Be patient a little while and as soon as I find a way to free you from all this trouble I'll send for you, and we'll talk it over together."

"Will you keep my secret?" demanded Eliza, uneasily.

Louise glanced at the door that communicated with Beth's room. It stood open, but Eliza had not noticed that, as it was behind her. Just now a shadow cast from the other room wavered an instant over the rug, and Louise's quick eyes caught it.

"I promise to keep your secret, dear," she said earnestly.

The two girls rose and stood facing each other. Louise kissed the beautiful

Eliza and whispered:

“Here is one thing for you to remember — that we are always to be true friends, from this time forward. If anyone annoys you, come to me, and I will protect you.”

“Thank you, Miss Louise,” said Eliza, and then she went away to her own room in a quieter and more thoughtful mood than usual.

When she had gone Louise ran to the door communicating with Beth’s room, and to her satisfaction found both her cousins, with Kenneth, Uncle John and Mr. Burke, seated in a group where they must have overheard all that had been said.

“Well!” she cried, eagerly, “did you hear? And what do you think of it all?”

“It’s Lucy Rogers, sure enough,” said Kenneth.

Louise looked at Mr. Burke.

“It is the most singular case that has ever come under my observation,” stated that gentleman. “The girl is perfectly sane, but she has suffered a strange lapse of memory. I have two alternatives to advise. One is to telegraph at once for a specialist. The other is to permit the girl to go away, as she suggests. She will be happier to do so, I am sure.”

“Oh, no!” cried the girls.

“She owes a duty to her parents and friends, as well as to herself,” said Kenneth, “and I see no reason why she should be unhappy in the future as Lucy Rogers.”

Mr. Burke merely shrugged his shoulders.

“Please wire for the specialist at once,” said Uncle John.

CHAPTER XIX

PATSY INDULGES IN EAVESDROPPING

Miss Patricia Doyle awakened at daybreak next morning with a throbbing toothache. She wasn't accustomed to such pains and found it hard to bear. She tried the application of a hot-water bag, and the tooth ached harder; she tried a cold compress, and it jumped with renewed activity. So she dressed herself and walked the floor, with the persistent ache as an intimate companion.

She tried to find a cavity in the tooth, but it seemed perfectly sound. Evidently she had caught cold and the wicked molar was signaling the fact.

To be patient under the torture of a toothache was a virtue Patsy did not possess. Louise and Beth, to whom she appealed, were sorry for her, but could not relieve the pain. After breakfast Uncle John ordered her to drive to town and see a dentist.

"Have it pulled, or filled, or something," he said. "The dentist will know what to do."

So James drove Patsy to town, where they arrived about nine o'clock this Monday morning. The only dentist at Elmwood was Dr. Squiers, so the girl ran up the flight of stairs to his office, which was located over the hardware store.

The pain had eased on the journey, and now the thought of having the offending tooth pulled was weighing heavily upon Patsy's mind. The door of Dr. Squiers's office stood ajar, and she hesitated whether to enter or not.

The dentist's reception room was divided from his operating room by a thin wooden partition, and as Patsy was deciding whether to employ Dr. Squiers's services or not she heard high words coming from behind the partition, and the voice was that of the Honorable Erastus Hopkins.

Softly she slid into the outer room and sank into a chair.

"But you're the clerk of the election, Squiers; you can't deny that," Hopkins was saying in a blustering, imperious voice.

"That's true enough," answered the dentist, more calmly.

"Then you've got the registration books in your possession."

"I admit that," was the reply. "But you're asking me to incriminate myself, 'Rast. If the thing was discovered it would mean prison for both of us."

"Fiddlesticks!" cried the irascible Hopkins. "These things are done every day, and no one's the wiser for it. It's merely a part of the political game."

"I'm afraid, 'Rast," said Dr. Squiers. "Honest Injun, I'm afraid."

"What are you 'fraid of? I've got the other clerks all fixed, and they'll

stand by us. All you need do is to add these sixty-six names to the registration list, and then we'll vote 'em without opposition and win out."

Patsy gave a gasp, which she tried to stifle. The toothache was all forgotten.

"Where are these men?" inquired Dr. Squiers, thoughtfully.

"They're over at the mill. Marshall got 'em from all over the country, and they'll be set to work today, so everything will seem reg'lar."

"Where do they sleep and eat?" inquired the doctor.

"Forty sleep in Hayes's barn, and the other twenty-six in the stock loft over the planing mill. Marshall's got a commissary department and feeds 'em regular rations, like so many soldiers. Of course I'm paying for all this expense," acknowledged Mr. Hopkins, somewhat regretfully.

"And do you suppose these sixty-six votes will turn the scale?" asked Dr. Squiers.

"They're sure to. We finished the last canvass yesterday, and according to our figures Forbes has about eighteen votes the best of us. That's getting it down pretty close, but we may as well make up our minds we're beaten if we don't vote the men over at the mill. Marshall could have got me a hundred if necessary, but sixty-six is more than enough. Say Forbes has twice eighteen for his plurality, instead of eighteen; these sixty-six for me would wipe that out and let us win in a walk."

When Hopkins ceased there was a brief silence. Perhaps Dr. Squiers was thinking.

"I simply *must* have those votes, Doc," resumed the Representative. "It's the only way I can win."

"You've made a bungle of the whole campaign," said Squiers, bitterly.

"That's a lie. I've done a lot of clever work. But these infernal city girls came down here and stirred up all the trouble."

"You made a mistake pushing that sign issue. The girls beat you on that."

"If it hadn't been signs it might have been something worse. But I ain't beaten yet, Doc. Squiers. This deal is going to win. It's a trick the boarding-school misses won't understand until after they've cut their eye-teeth in politics."

"There's a pretty heavy penalty against false registration," observed the dentist, gloomily.

"There's no penalty unless we're found out, and there ain't the ghost of a chance of that. The books are in your hands; I got all the clerks fixed. Not a question will even be raised. I know it. Do you suppose I'd risk state's prison myself, if I wasn't sure?"

"Look here, 'Rast," said Squiers, doggedly, "you're making a tool of me

in this campaign. Why should I be used and abused just to elect Erastus Hopkins, I'd like to know. You sacrificed me when I might have been Sheriff."

"You're well paid for that, Doc."

"And now you want me to put my neck in a noose for your advantage. I won't do it, 'Rast, and that's a fact."

Mr. Hopkins coughed.

"How much, Doc?" he inquired.

The dentist was silent.

"State the figure. But for mercy's sake don't bleed me any more than you can help. This fight has cost me a pretty penny already."

"I don't want your money," growled Squiers.

"Yes you do, Doc. I know you better than you know yourself. The trouble with you is, you'll want too much."

Squiers laughed bitterly.

"Is Marshall to be trusted?" he asked.

"Of course. If he said a word he'd lose his job as manager. Marshall's all right. There's nothing to worry about, Doc."

Patsy's tooth wasn't aching a bit. But her heart was throbbing as madly as the tooth ever did, and fortunately there was no pain connected with the throbbing — only joy.

"It ought to be worth two thousand dollars, 'Rast," said the dentist.

"What! In addition to all other expenses?"

"Why, man; it means the election. It means your whole future. If you're defeated now, you're a back number in this district, and you know it."

"It's too much, Doc. On my word it is."

"It's too little, come to think of it. I'll make it three thousand."

"Doc!"

"If you don't close with me, 'Rast, by the jumping Jupiter, I'll make it four thousand," cried the dentist, with exasperation.

"Say twenty-five hundred, Doc."

"Right on the nail. Give me your check here — this minute."

"And you'll enter the names in the books?"

"Before you leave the office. Have you got the list?"

"Yes; in my pocket," said Mr. Hopkins.

"Then make out your check and I'll get the books."

There was a stir behind the partition and a sound of chairs scraping the floor. Patsy slid out the door and flew down the stairs at the imminent danger of breaking her neck. James was seated in the buggy outside, engaged in rumination.

Patsy bounded in beside him and startled him.

“Drive for your life!” she cried. “Drive for home!”

He whipped up the spirited horse and they dashed away. Presently the man asked, with a grin:

“Did it hurt much, Miss Patsy?”

“Did what hurt, James?”

“The tooth pullin’, Miss Patsy.”

“The tooth wasn’t pulled,” answered the girl, sweetly. “It didn’t need it, James. The only thing that was pulled was the Honorable Erastus’s leg.”

CHAPTER XX

PRICKING A BUBBLE.

When Patsy arrived home she called a council of war and related the conversation she had overheard in the dentist's office.

"It isn't a very nice thing to do — listening to a private conversation," said the girl, "but when I discovered they were going to play such a trick on Kenneth I couldn't help eavesdropping."

"I think you were justified," declared Mr. Watson, with a grave face; "for this matter is very serious indeed. Tomorrow is election day, and if a toothache hadn't carried you to the dentist's office Kenneth would surely have been defeated."

"And we'd never have known how it happened," declared Uncle John.

"But can the plot be foiled at this late date?" inquired Louise, anxiously.

"I think so," said Mr. Watson. "Dr. Squiers was correct in saying that such a crime was a state's prison offense. Our discovery of it will send both Erastus Hopkins and Dr. Squiers to prison. Probably Mr. Marshall, the manager of the mill, will go with them."

"Oh, I don't like that!" exclaimed Patsy.

"Nor do I," added Kenneth. "It would be a sad beginning to my political career to send three such men to prison. I'd like to avoid it, if I can."

"Perhaps it may be quietly arranged," said the lawyer. "If they knew you had discovered the false registration of these men, they would never dare vote them."

"How would it be to send Mr. Burke, the detective, over to the mill to talk with Mr. Marshall?" suggested Beth.

"That is an excellent plan, and would be very effective in determining the manager to abandon the plot."

"I'll go and see Hopkins myself," announced Uncle John. "I know how to manage men of his sort."

"Very good," approved the lawyer, "and I'll see Squiers."

"If you do," said Patsy, "just ask him to sign a paper saying that Lucy Rogers was falsely accused of stealing the ring, and that his mother found it in a vase, where she had forgotten she put it."

"I'll do that," replied Mr. Watson. "And I'll get the sixty dollars back that Tom Gates paid him. I'll make it a condition of our agreeing not to prosecute the man."

"It looks as if we were going to win the election," said Uncle John in a pleased voice. "If Hopkins was driven to such methods as stuffing ballot-boxes, he must know very well he's defeated."

“He acknowledged it to Dr. Squiers.” said Patsy, gaily. “We have eighteen sure majority, and perhaps more.”

“It’s likely to be more,” predicted Uncle John.

“I suppose congratulations are in order, Ken,” said Louise.

“Not yet, cousin,” he replied. “Wait until tomorrow night; and then don’t congratulate me, but the campaign managers — three of the nicest and cleverest girls in existence!”

“You’re right, my boy,” declared Uncle John. “If you pull through and take your seat in the Legislature, you’ll owe it all to these girls.”

“That is true,” smiled the lawyer. “Kenneth was badly beaten when you arrived.”

Of course our girls were very happy at receiving this praise, but more pleased to realize they had actually been of service to their boy friend. They believed that Kenneth would prove a good Representative and carry out his promises to the voters; and if he did, that his political career was assured.

Mr. Burke appeared in the afternoon with a telegram from Dr. Hoyt, the specialist, saying that he would be at Elmwood on the noon train Wednesday. His engagements prevented him from coming any sooner, and in the meantime Mr. Burke advised keeping a close watch on Eliza Parsons, to see that she did not run away.

“I’ll attend to that,” said Louise, quickly. “Eliza and I are friends, and I’ll take care of her.”

“Aren’t you going to the polls?” asked Patsy.

“No, dear; why should I go? Our work is done now, isn’t it?”

“Well, I’m going to the polls and work for every vote,” declared Patsy. “I shan’t be happy unless Kenneth gets more than eighteen majority.”

When the Hopkins plot was explained to Mr. Burke, the detective readily agreed to go to Fairview and see Mr. Marshall. As no time was to be lost he was sent over in an automobile, and arrived at the mill just before the hour for closing.

The next day being election day the mill was to be closed, and the manager was very busy in his office when Mr. Burke requested to see him.

“You will have to come around Wednesday,” said Marshall, fussily. “I can’t attend to you now.”

“I’m sorry to disturb you, sir,” replied the detective, “but my business won’t wait until Wednesday.”

“What is it about, sir?”

“About the election.”

“Then I won’t be bothered. The election doesn’t interest me,” said Mr. Marshall, turning away.

“Very well, I’ll call Wednesday, sir, at the jail.”

Marshall gave him a quick look.

“Who are you, sir?” he asked.

“John Burke, a detective.”

The manager hesitated a moment.

“Come in, Mr. Burke,” he said.

“I represent the Forbes interests,” said the detective, seating himself in the private office, “and it has come to our notice that Dr. Squiers has permitted sixty-six fraudulent registrations to be entered on the books. These sixty-six men are supposed to have been imported by you and are now working at this mill.”

“This is all nonsense!” protested the manager, growing pale.

“Forty men are sleeping in a near-by barn, and twenty-six in the stock-room of the mill,” added Mr. Burke.

“That isn’t criminal, sir.”

“No, indeed. The criminal act is their false registration, so far,” said the detective, blandly.

“But mark you, sir; if an attempt is made to vote those men tomorrow, I shall arrest you, as well as Mr. Hopkins and Dr. Squiers.”

“This is preposterous, sir!” blustered the manager. “There will be no attempt made to vote them.”

“I am quite sure of it,” was the reply. “You may thank Mr. Forbes for warning you in time. He wished to save you, and so sent me here.”

“Oh, he did!” Mr. Marshall was evidently surprised. “May I ask how you discovered all this?” he added.

“I am not at liberty to give you the details. But I may say the exposure of the plot occurred through Mr. Hopkins’s own carelessness. I’ve seen lots of crooked politicians, Mr. Marshall, but this man is too reckless and foolish ever to be a success. He deserves to be defeated and he will be.”

The manager was thoughtful.

“This is all news to me,” he declared. “I needed these extra men to help me fill a contract on time, and so employed them. I had no idea Hopkins and Squiers would try to vote them tomorrow.”

This was a palpable falsehood, but Mr. Burke accepted the lame excuse without question.

“You are a valuable man in this community, Mr. Marshall, and Mr. Forbes seemed to think the Hopkins people were trying to get you into trouble. Of course it would have caused trouble had these men voted.”

“Of course, Mr. Burke. I’m much obliged to Mr. Forbes for warning me.”

“You’ll find the next Representative a very agreeable man to get along

with, Mr. Marshall. Good day, sir."

"Good day, Mr. Burke."

When the detective had gone Mr. Marshall sat in a brown study for a few moments. Then he summoned his superintendent and said:

"Please ask the men to assemble in the yard before they go home. I want to have a word with them."

The request came just in time, for the men were already beginning to stream out of the mill. They waited good-naturedly, however, grouping themselves in the big yard.

Then Marshall mounted a lumber pile and addressed them briefly.

"Boys," he said, "I told you all, a week or so ago, I'd like you to vote for Hopkins for Representative, as I believed his election would result in more work for the mill and better wages for the employees. But I've been watching matters pretty closely, and I've changed my mind. Forbes is a coming man, and he'll do more for us all than Hopkins could. So every man who is entitled to vote will please me best by voting for Kenneth Forbes."

There was a cheer at this, and when it subsided, the manager continued:

"Of course none of the new men, who were not properly registered, have a right to vote at this election, and I command them to keep away from the polls. Anyone who attempts to vote illegally will be promptly arrested."

This caused more cheering, for the workmen had suspected that the new hands would be voted illegally, and they were relieved to find that it was a "square deal all 'round," as one of them remarked with satisfaction.

Meantime, Uncle John was having a "barrel of fun" with Mr. Hopkins.

The little millionaire, although a man of simple and unobtrusive ways, was a shrewd judge of human nature. Moreover he had acquired a fund of experience in dealing with all sorts of people, and was delighted to meet Mr. Hopkins under the present circumstances.

So he drove over to Elmwood and was fortunate to find Mr. Hopkins in his "office" at home where he was busily engaged instructing his "workers" in their duties at the polls.

At sight of Mr. Merrick, whom he knew by this time to be a friend of Kenneth Forbes, staying at Elmhurst, the politician scented some pending difficulty, or at least an argument, and was sufficiently interested to dismiss his men without delay.

"Ah, this is Mr. Merrick, I believe," began Mr. Hopkins, suavely. "What can I do for you, sir?"

"Considerable, if you're disposed," answered the other. "For one thing I'd like to hire Eliza Parsons away from you."

"Eliza Parsons!" gasped the Representative.

“Yes, your spy. Election’s about over and you won’t need her any longer, will you?”

“Sir, do you mean to insult me?” asked the Honorable Erastus, indignantly.

“By no means. I thought you were through with the girl,” said Uncle John with a chuckle.

Mr. Hopkins was distinctly relieved. With a full recollection of his wicked schemes in his mind, he had feared some more important attack than this; so he assumed a virtuous look, and replied:

“Sir, you wrong me. Eliza Parsons was no spy of mine. I was merely trying to encourage her to a higher spiritual life. She is rather flighty and irresponsible, sir, and I was sorry for the poor girl. That is all. If she has been telling tales, they are untrue. I have found her, I regret to say, inclined at times to be — ah — inventive.”

“Perhaps that’s so,” remarked Uncle John, carelessly. “You’re said to be a good man, Mr. Hopkins; a leetle too honest and straightforward for a politician; but that’s an excusable fault.”

“I hope I deserve my reputation, Mr. Merrick,” said Erastus, straightening up at this praise. “I do, indeed, try to live an upright life.”

“I guess so, Mr. Hopkins, I guess so. You wouldn’t try, for instance, to encourage false registration.”

“Sir!”

“Anything wrong, Mr. Hopkins?” asked Uncle John, innocently.

Erastus looked at his visitor tremblingly, although he tried to control his nerves. Of course Mr. Merrick couldn’t mean anything by this chance shot, so he must be thrown off the scent.

“You have a disagreeable way of making remarks, sir, and I have no time to listen to foolish speeches. Tomorrow is election day and I’ve a good many details yet to arrange.”

“No chance of you’re getting in jail, is there?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I only thought that if you’d done anything liable to make trouble, you’d have to arrange your affairs for a long spell in jail. Politicians sometimes make mistakes. But you’re such an honest man, Mr. Hopkins, you couldn’t possibly go crooked.”

Mr. Hopkins felt shaky again, and looked at his tormentor earnestly, trying to discern whether there was any real knowledge beneath this innuendo. But Uncle John met his gaze with a cheerful smile and continued:

“I guess you’ve got a hard fight ahead of you. My young friend Forbes is trying to get elected himself, and you can’t both win.”

“Oh, yes; Forbes,” said Erastus, trying to regain his accustomed ease. “A worthy young man, sir; but I’m afraid his chances are slim.”

“Are they, now?” asked Uncle John, pretending a mild interest.

“Pretty thin, Mr. Merrick. Our majority is too great to overcome.”

“What do you think your majority will be? About sixty-six?”

Mr. Hopkins gave a start and turned red.

“About sixty-six,” he repeated, vacantly, trying to decide if this was another chance shot.

“Yes; about sixty-six mill hands.”

The cat was out of the bag now. Hopkins realized that Merrick had some knowledge or at least suspicion of this plot. He tried to think what to do, and it occurred to him that if his visitor positively knew anything he would not act in this absurd manner, but come straight to the point. So he ignored the speech, merely saying:

“Anything else, sir?”

“No,” replied Uncle John; “I’ll go home, I guess. Folks’ll be expecting me. Sorry Forbes hasn’t got that sixty-six mill hands; but Doc. Squiers probably registered ‘em all right, and they’ll probably vote for Hopkins.”

“Wait a moment, sir!” cried Erastus, as Uncle John was turning away. “That speech demands an explanation, and I mean to have it.”

“Oh, you do? Well, I don’t object. You may not know it, but Squiers has registered sixty-six non-voters, and I want to know whether you’re prepared to give half of them to Forbes, or mean to keep them all for yourself.”

“If Squiers has made false registrations he must stand the consequences. I want you to understand, sir, that I do not countenance any underhand dealing.”

“Then it’s all off? You won’t vote the mill hands?”

“Not a man shall vote who is not properly registered.”

“I’m glad to hear it, Mr. Hopkins. Perhaps you can get that twenty-five hundred back. I don’t think Squiers has cashed the check yet.”

The Honorable Erastus gave a roar like a wild bull, but Uncle John had walked quietly out and climbed into his buggy. He looked back, and seeing Mr. Hopkins’s scowling face at the window returned a pleasant smile as he drove away.

Mr. Watson had just finished his interview with the dentist when Uncle John picked him up at the corner. The lawyer had accomplished more than the other two, for he had secured a paper exonerating Lucy Rogers and another incriminating the Honorable Erastus Hopkins, as well as the sixty dollars paid by Tom Gates. The dentist was thoroughly frightened, but determined, now that the conspiracy was defeated, that the man who had led

him to the crime should not escape in case he was himself arrested. So he made a plain statement of the whole matter and signed it, and Mr. Watson assured Squiers immunity from arrest, pending good behavior. The man had already cashed Hopkins's check, and he knew the Representative could not get the money away from him, so after all the dentist lost nothing by the exposure.

It was a jolly party that assembled at the dinner-table in Elmhurst that evening.

"You see," explained Uncle John, "the thing looked as big as a balloon to us at first; but it was only a bubble, after all, and as soon as we pricked it — it disappeared."

CHAPTER XXI

THE "RETURNS" FROM FAIRVIEW

Election day dawned sunny and bright; but there was a chill in the air that betokened the approach of winter.

Uncle John had suggested serving coffee to the voters at the different polling places, and Kenneth had therefore arranged for a booth at each place, where excellent coffee was served free all day long. These booths were decorated with Forbes banners and attracted a great deal of comment, as the idea was a distinct innovation in this district.

"You wouldn't catch Hopkins giving anything away," remarked one farmer to another. "'Rast is too close-fisted."

"Why, as fer that," was the reply, "the thing is done to catch votes. You know that as well as I do."

"S'pose it is," said the first speaker. "I'd ruther my vote was caught by a cup of hot coffee on a cold day, than by nothin' at all. If we've got to bite anyhow, why not take a hook that's baited?"

Patsy and Beth made the rounds of the polling places in an automobile covered with flags and bunting, and wherever they appeared they were greeted with cordial cheers.

Mr. Hopkins was noticeable by his absence, and this was due not so much to his cowardice as to an unfortunate accident.

Neither Squiers nor Hopkins knew just how their secret had leaked out, for Patsy's presence in the dentist's office had not been disclosed; so each one suspected the other of culpable foolishness if not downright rascality. After Uncle John's visit Erastus stormed over to Squiers's office and found his accomplice boiling with indignation at having been trapped in a criminal undertaking.

As the two men angrily faced each other they could not think of any gentle words to say, and Dr. Squiers became so excited by the other's reproaches that he indulged in careless gestures. One of these gestures bumped against the Honorable Erastus's right eye with such force that the eye was badly injured.

The candidate for re-election, therefore, wakened on election morning with the damaged optic swollen shut and sadly discolored. Realizing that this unfortunate condition would not win votes, Mr. Hopkins remained at home all day and nagged his long-suffering spouse, whose tongue was her only defence.

The Representative had promptly telephoned to Marshall at Fairview telling him not to vote the men as arranged. He was not especially charmed

with the manager's brief reply:

"Don't be alarmed. We're not *all* fools!"

"I guess, 'Rast," remarked Mary Hopkins, looking at her damaged and irritable husband with a blending of curiosity and contempt, "that you're 'bout at the end of your rope."

"You wait," said Erastus, grimly. "This thing ain't over yet."

The day passed very quietly and without any especial incident. A full vote was polled, and by sundown the fate of the candidates had been decided. But the counting seemed to progress slowly and the group assembled around the telephone in Kenneth's library thought the returns would never arrive.

The Republican Committee had given Mr. Forbes a table showing what the vote of each precinct should be, according to their canvass.

The first report was from Elmwood, and showed a gain of seventeen over the estimate. Patsy was delighted, for she had worked hard in Elmwood, and this proved that her efforts had been successful. Then came a report from Longville, in Jefferson County. It showed a gain of forty-three votes for Hopkins, and a consequent loss for Forbes. This was a startling surprise, and the next advice from a country precinct in Washington County showed another gain of twelve for Hopkins.

The little group of workers looked at one another with inquiring eyes, and Patsy could hardly refrain from crying.

The butler announced dinner, but only Louise and Mr. Watson could eat anything. The others were too intent on learning their fate and could not leave the telephone.

It seemed queer that the precincts furthest away should be first to respond, but so it was. Jefferson County returns began to come in rapidly, and were received in dismal silence. Hopkins gained four here, seven there, and twenty-two in another precinct.

"It looks," said Kenneth, quietly, "like a landslide for Hopkins, and I wonder how our Committee was so badly informed."

"You see," said Uncle John, "voters won't usually tell the truth about how they've decided to vote. Lots of them tell both sides they're going to vote their way. And people change their minds at the last minute, too. You can't do much more than average the thing by means of a canvass."

By nine o'clock, complete returns from the part of Jefferson County included in the Eighth District showed a net gain of one hundred and eight for Hopkins — a lead that it seemed impossible to overcome. Washington County was not so bad. Incomplete returns indicated a slight gain for Hopkins, but not more than a dozen votes altogether.

"Everything now depends upon Dupree and Fairview," announced

Kenneth, “but I can’t get any connection with them yet. We won in Elmwood, anyhow, and Hopkins isn’t ahead more than a hundred and sixty as the thing stands now. Cheer up, girls. A defeat won’t hurt us much, for we’ve all made a good fight. Better get to bed and sleep, for you’re tired out. We’ll know all about everything in the morning.”

But they would not move. Disappointment unnerved them more than victory would have done. They resolved to wait until the last returns were in.

“Telephone, sir,” said Tom Gates.

Kenneth picked up the receiver.

“Here’s Dupree,” he said. “Our majority over Hopkins is two hundred and eleven. Let’s see, that’s a gain of seventy-four votes, my dears.”

“Hooray!” cried Patsy, delightedly. “I don’t care a rap now, what happens. Old Hopkins won’t have much to crow over if — ”

“Wait a minute,” said Kenneth. “Here’s Fairview, at last!”

They held their breaths and watched his face. Kenneth flushed red as he held the receiver to his ear, and then grew white. He turned around to the expectant group and Beth knew from the sparkle in his eyes what had happened.

“Fairview’s six precincts give us six hundred and forty-one majority,” announced the boy, in an awed tone. “That’s a gain of nearly four hundred!”

They gazed at him in silent wonder. Then Uncle John rose slowly and took the boy’s hand.

“That means we’ve won — and won in a walk,” said the little man. “Kenneth, we congratulate you.”

Patsy’s face was buried in her handkerchief, and Beth’s great eyes were bright with unshed tears. But Louise laughed her soft, musical laugh and remarked:

“Why, I knew all the time we would win. We had the better candidate, you see.”

“And the best campaign managers,” added Uncle John, with a proud smile.

“That may be true,” admitted Beth. “But the thing that really won the fight was Patsy’s sore tooth.”

CHAPTER XXII
THE AWAKENING

James and Mr. Burke met the great specialist in brain diseases at the noon train on Wednesday and drove him to Elmhurst.

Dr. Hoyt was a handsome, gray-haired man, with kindly eyes and a distinguished manner. When he was ushered into the library the young ladies were attracted by the physician at once, and from the first glance were inspired by confidence in his powers. Yet Dr. Hoyt spoke rather doubtfully of the case in hand.

"These cases are not so rare as you might suppose," he said; "yet no two of them are exactly alike. Usually the recovery is slow and tedious; but recovery is not always assured. In some instances, however, the memory is absolutely restored, and from what Mr. Burke has explained to me of Lucy Rogers's history this is what we may expect now. Or else, we must trust to time or an accident to awaken her dormant mental faculties. The case is so interesting that I should like, with your permission, to make an experiment which can result in no harm if it does not succeed."

"We put the matter entirely in your hands, sir," said Uncle John. "Act as you think best."

"I thank you," replied Dr. Hoyt, bowing. Then he turned to the girls. "Which of you young ladies has won the friendship of Lucy Rogers?" he asked.

Louise answered that she and Eliza Parsons had become good friends.

"Will you assist me?" asked the physician.

"Willingly, sir."

"I wish to send the girl into a deep sleep, to render her unconscious without her suspecting my intention, or realizing the fact. Can you suggest a way to do this?"

Louise tried to think.

"What means will you employ, sir?" she asked.

"There are many ways to accomplish this. I prefer to administer a powerful sleeping potion. Have you any confectionery or bon-bons at hand?"

"Yes, indeed. I have just received a fresh box of bon-bons from New York. But I'm not sure I can induce Eliza to eat candy."

"Then let us prepare the potion in various ways. But you must be careful, Miss Merrick, not to make a mistake and take the dose yourself."

Louise laughed.

"I'll be careful, sir," she promised.

The two then retired to perfect their plan, and in an hour every

arrangement was complete.

Louise went to her room, donned a wrapper, and bandaged her head. Then she summoned Martha and asked the housekeeper to send Eliza Parsons to sit with her in the darkened room, as she was suffering from a headache.

The maid came at once, to all appearances, as happy and careless as ever. After expressing her sympathy she asked what she could do.

"Just sit down and keep me company, dear," replied Louise. "I'm not very bad, but I'm restless and can't sleep, and I want you to talk to me and amuse me."

Eliza laughed.

"That is easy, as far as talking is concerned," she said. "But to amuse you, Miss Louise, may be more difficult."

But the girls found a topic of conversation in the election, in which Eliza was much interested, and they chatted together for an hour or so before Louise made any move to consummate her plot.

"I hope my foolish reports to Mr. Hopkins did no harm to Mr. Forbes," Eliza was saying. "I really had little to tell him of your conversation or movements."

"You did no harm at all, for Mr. Forbes was elected," replied Louise. Then she said, carelessly:

"Martha has sent me this pitcher of lemonade, and I don't care for it. Won't you drink a glass, Eliza?"

"No, thank you," she replied, shaking her head. "I never drink lemonade."

"Then have one of these sandwiches?"

"I'm not hungry, Miss Louise."

Louise sighed. Both the lemonade and the sandwiches had been "dosed" by Dr. Hoyt. Then she picked up the box of bon-bons that was beside her.

"But you will eat some candy, dear. Every girl likes candy."

"I don't seem to care for it," said Eliza carelessly.

"Just one piece, to please me," coaxed Louise, and selected a piece from the box with dainty care. "Here, my dear; you'll find this sort very nice."

Eliza hesitated, but finally reached out her hand and took the bon-bon. Louise lay back in her chair and closed her eyes, fearing their eagerness might betray her. When after a time she opened them again Eliza was slowly rocking back and forth and chewing the confection.

Dr. Hoyt's first suggestion had been best. The potion had been prepared in several ways to tempt Eliza, but the candy had been the effectual bait.

Louise felt a glow of triumph, but managed to continue the conversation, relating in an amusing way the anxiety of the Elmhurst folks when the first returns seemed to indicate the election of Hopkins.

Eliza laughed once or twice, her head resting upon the back of her chair. Then the words of Louise began to sound dreamy and indistinct in her ears. The chair rocked with less regularity; soon it came to a stop, and Eliza was peacefully sleeping in its ample depths.

Louise now rose softly and rang her bell. Footsteps approached, and a knock came upon the door. She admitted Dr. Hoyt, Mr. Burke, and two servants.

The physician approached the sleeping girl and gently lifted the lids of her eyes. Then he nodded with satisfaction.

"There was no suspicion on her part? She made no struggle — no attempt to evade unconsciousness?" he asked.

"None at all, sir," replied Louise. "She ate the bon-bon, and was asleep before she realized it."

"Excellent!" said the doctor. "We will now place her in her own room, upon her bed, while Mr. Burke and I drive over to her former home to complete our arrangements."

"Won't she waken?" asked Louise.

"Not until tomorrow morning, and when she does I hope for a complete restoration of her memory."

Beth went with Dr. Hoyt to the Rogers farm, because she knew Mrs. Rogers. It was necessary to break the news to the poor, blind woman gently, but Beth's natural tact stood her in good stead. She related the story of the search for Lucy, the discovery that one of the maids at Elmhurst resembled the missing girl, and the detective's conclusion that Eliza Parsons was none other than Lucy Rogers, who was suffering from a peculiar mental aberration and had forgotten every detail of her former life.

Mrs. Rogers followed the tale with intelligent understanding, and her joy at the discovery of her wandering child was only tempered by the fear that Lucy would never know her mother again or be content to remain in her humble home.

Then Dr. Hoyt took up the conversation and related the many instances of complete recovery that had come under his observation.

"I am adopting heroic methods in this case," said he, "but I have reasonable hopes of their success. Your child doubtless became mentally confused while under this roof. How many hours she wandered, we do not know, but it could not have been long before she lay down by the roadside and fell asleep. When she awakened her mind was a blank as regards her identity and former history. Now, in order to effect a recovery, I have reversed these experiences with her. She is at present plunged into a deep sleep, under the influence of narcotics that have rendered her brain absolutely

inactive. It is really a state of coma, and I wish her to waken in this house, amid the scenes with which she was formerly familiar. By this means I hope to induce her mental faculties to resume their normal functions."

Mrs. Rogers accepted this proposal with calmness and a confidence in the physician that was admirable. Old Will trembled with nervous excitement, and was so "flustered" by the importance of the experiment that Dr. Hoyt decided to give him a quieting potion.

Lucy's room was prepared in the exact manner in which she had left it, and presently the visitors drove back to Elmhurst.

In the evening the doctor made the journey a second time, accompanying the unconscious form of Lucy, which was attended by a maid Louise had sent with her.

The girl was undressed and put to bed in her own room, and then everyone except Dr. Hoyt returned to Elmhurst.

The physician sat late in conversation with the blind woman and old Will, and when they retired for the night he lay down upon a lounge in the little living-room. The question of fees or of comfort was wholly ignored by the specialist at the moment. His sole interest was in his remarkable case.

Mrs. Rogers rose at daylight and with old Will's assistance prepared the breakfast. The little table was set in the humble living-room, and the fragrant odor of coffee pervaded the house. Dr. Hoyt drank a cup and then stepped out upon the little porch, taking a position of observation by the window.

"All right, Nell," muttered old Will, his knees knocking together, in spite of himself.

Mrs. Rogers rose quietly and walked to the foot of the stairs.

"Lucy! Lucy!" she called.

"Yes!" came a faint reply.

"Breakfast is ready!"

Then the two old people sat in suppressed excitement for what seemed to them an age. But the physician, calmly stationed at the window, knew it was not very long.

Presently a light step sounded upon the stairs and Lucy came into the room.

"Good morning, mother dear!" she said, a new, sweet tenderness in her voice. And then she knelt and kissed the woman upon her brow.

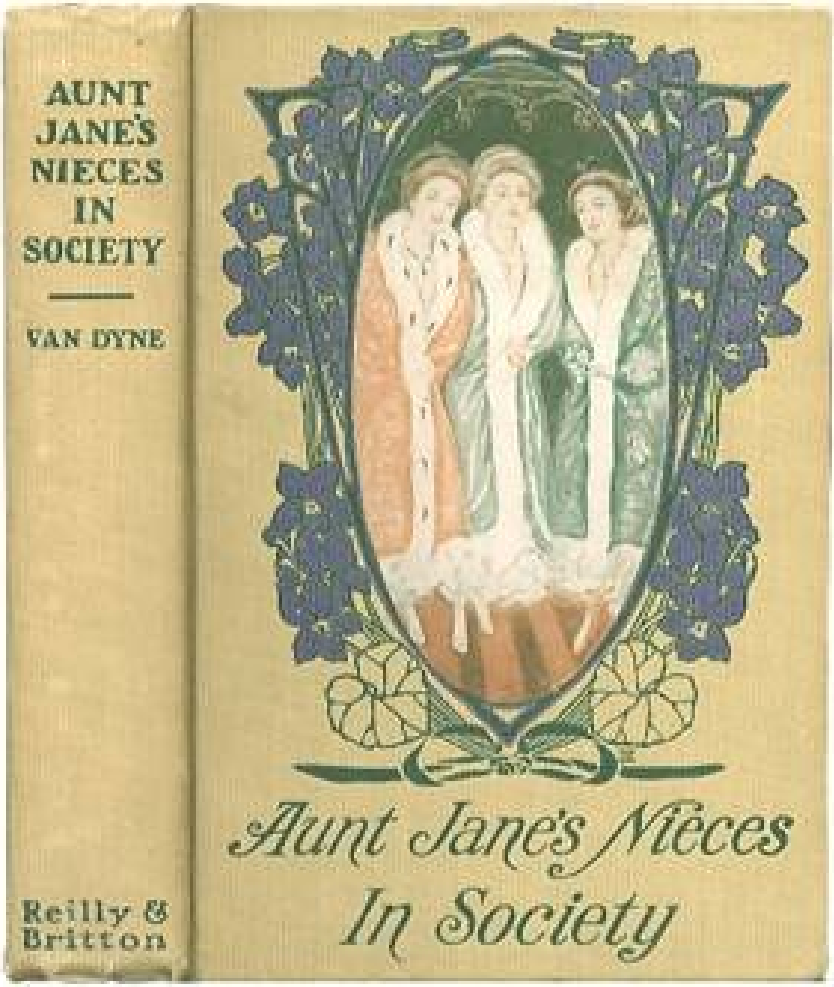
The doctor looked at his watch.

"I must be going," he muttered, turning away. "There's time for me to catch the early train."

THE END

AUNT JANE'S NIECES IN SOCIETY

Aunt Jane's Nieces in Society, published in 1910 by Reilly & Britton, was Baum's fifth in the series under the name, Edith Van Dyne, and illustrated once again by Emile A. Nelson. Persuaded that his nieces need to experience more of society, Uncle John arranges for their debut. Once accepted, they will manage the flower booth at the year's most important charity ball. Complications ensue with star-crossed love, jealousy, and abduction. This novel marks the first appearance of the detective, Quintus Fogerty, who appears in later books in the series.



A first edition copy of 'Aunt Jane's Nieces in Society'

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CHAPTER I

UNCLE JOHN'S DUTY

"You're not doing your duty by those girls, John Merrick!"

The gentleman at whom this assertion was flung in a rather angry tone did not answer his sister-in-law. He sat gazing reflectively at the pattern in the rug and seemed neither startled nor annoyed. Mrs. Merrick, a pink-cheeked middle-aged lady attired in an elaborate morning gown, knitted her brows severely as she regarded the chubby little man opposite; then, suddenly remembering that the wrinkles might leave their dreadful mark on her carefully rolled and massaged features, she banished them with a pass of her ringed hand and sighed dismally.

"It would not have mattered especially had the poor children been left in their original condition of friendless poverty," she said. "They were then like a million other girls, content to struggle for a respectable livelihood and a doubtful position in the lower stratas of social communion. But you interfered. You came into their lives abruptly, appearing from those horrid Western wilds with an amazing accumulation of money and a demand that your three nieces become your special *protégées*. And what is the result?"

The little man looked up with a charming smile of good humored raillery. His keen gray eyes sparkled as mischievously as a schoolboy's. Softly he rubbed the palms of his hands together, as if enjoying the situation.

"What is it, Martha, my dear? What is the result?" he asked.

"You've raised them from their lowly condition to a sphere in which they reign as queens, the envy of all who know them. You've lavished your millions upon them unsparingly; they are not only presumptive heiresses but already possessed of independent fortunes. Ah, you think you've been generous to these girls; don't you, John Merrick?"

"Go on, Martha; go on."

"You've taken them abroad — you took my own daughter, John Merrick, and left *me* at home! — you've lugged your three nieces to the mountains and carried them to the seashore. You even encouraged them to enlist in an unseemly campaign to elect that young imbecile, Kenneth Forbes, and — "

"Oh, Martha, Martha! Get to the point, if you can. I'm going, presently."

"Not until you've heard me out. You've given your nieces every advantage in your power save one, and the neglect of that one thing renders futile all else you have accomplished."

Now, indeed, her listener seemed perplexed. He passed a hand over his shiny bald head as if to stimulate thought and exorcise bewilderment.

"What is it, then? What have I neglected?" was his mild enquiry.

“To give those girls their proper standing in society.”

He started; smiled; then looked grave.

“You’re talking foolishly,” he said. “Why, confound it, Martha, they’re as good girls as ever lived! They’re highly respected, and — ”

“Sir, I refer to Fashionable Society.” The capitals indicate the impressive manner in which Mrs. Merrick pronounced those words.

“I guess money makes folks fashionable; don’t it, Martha?”

“No, indeed. How ignorant you are, John. Can you not understand that there is a cultured, aristocratic and exclusive Society in New York that millions will not enable one to gain *entrée* to?”

“Oh, is there? Then I’m helpless.”

“You are not, sir.”

“Eh? I thought you said — ”

“Listen, John; and for heaven’s sake try for once to be receptive. I am speaking not only for the welfare of my daughter Louise but for Beth and Patricia. Your nieces are charming girls, all three. With the advantages you have given them they may well become social celebrities.”

“H-m-m. Would they be happier so?”

“Of course. Every true woman longs for social distinction, especially if it seems difficult to acquire. Nothing is dearer to a girl’s heart than to win acceptance by the right social set. And New York society is the most exclusive in America.”

“I’m afraid it will continue to exclude our girls, Martha.”

“Not if you do your duty, John.”

“That reminds me. What is your idea of my duty, Martha? You’ve been talking in riddles, so far,” he protested, shifting uneasily in his chair.

“Let me explain more concisely, then. Your millions, John Merrick, have made you really famous, even in this wealthy metropolis. In the city and at your club you must meet with men who have the *entrée* to the most desirable social circles: men who might be induced to introduce your nieces to their families, whose endorsement would effect their proper presentation.”

“Nonsense.”

“It isn’t nonsense at all.”

“Then blamed if I know what you’re driving at.”

“You’re very obtuse.”

“I won’t agree to that till I know what ‘obtuse’ means. See here, Martha; you say this social position, that the girls are so crazy for — but they’ve never said anything to *me* about it — can’t be bought. In the next breath you urge me to buy it. Phoo! You’re a thoughtless, silly woman, Martha, and let your wild ambitions run away with your common sense.”

Mrs. Merrick sighed, but stubbornly maintained her position.

"I don't suggest 'buying' such people; not at all, John. It's what is called — ah — ah — 'influence'; or, or — "

"Or 'pull.' 'Pull' is a better word, Martha. Do you imagine there's any value in social position that can be acquired by 'pull'?"

"Of course. It has to be acquired some way — if one is not born to it. As a matter of fact, Louise is entitled, through her connection with *my* family — "

"Pshaw, I knew *your* family, Martha," he interrupted. "An arrant lot of humbugs."

"John Merrick!"

"Don't get riled. It's the truth. I *knew* 'em. On her father's side Louise has just as much to brag about — an' no more. We Merricks never amounted to much, an' didn't hanker to trip the light fantastic in swell society. Once, though, when I was a boy, I had a cousin who spelled down the whole crowd at a spellin'-bee. We were quite proud of him then; but he went wrong after his triumph, poor fellow! and became a book agent. Now, Martha, I imagine this talk of yours is all hot air, and worked off on me not because the girls want society, but because you want it for 'em. It's all *your* ambition, I'll bet a peanut."

"You misjudge me, as usual, John. I am urging a matter of simple justice. Your nieces are lovely girls, fitted to shine in any sphere of life," she continued, knowing his weak point and diplomatically fostering it. "Our girls have youth, accomplishments, money — everything to fit them for social triumphs. The winter season is now approaching; the people are flocking back to town from their country homes; fashionable gaieties and notable events will soon hold full sway. The dear girls are surely entitled to enjoy these things, don't you think? Aren't they *worthy* the best that life has to offer? And why shouldn't they enter society, if you do your full duty? Once get them properly introduced and they will be able to hold their own with perfect ease. Give me the credit for knowing these things, John, and try to help your nieces to attain their ambition."

"But *is* it their ambition?" he asked, doubtfully.

"They have not said so in words; but I can assure you it *is* their ambition, because all three are sensible, spirited, young women, who live in this age and not the one you yourself knew a half century or so ago."

Mr. Merrick sighed and rubbed his head again. Then he slowly rose.

"Mornin', Martha," he said, with a somewhat abstracted nod at his sister-in-law. "This is a new idea to me. I'll think it over."

CHAPTER II

A QUESTION OF "PULL"

John Merrick's face was not so cheery as usual as he made his way into the city. This suggestion of Martha Merrick's regarding his inattention to duty to his beloved nieces was no easy nut to crack.

He knew his sister-in-law to be a wordly-minded, frivolous woman, with many trivial ambitions; but in this instance he had misgivings that she might be right. What did he, John Merrick, know of select society? A poor man, of humble origin, he had wandered into the infantile, embryo West years ago and there amassed a fortune. When he retired and returned to "civilization" he found his greatest reward In the discovery of three charming nieces, all "as poor as Job's turkey" but struggling along bravely, each in her individual characteristic way, and well worthy their doting uncle's affectionate admiration. Mrs. Merrick had recited some of the advantages they had derived from the advent of this rich relative; but even she could not guess how devoted the man was to the welfare of these three fortunate girls, nor how his kindly, simple heart resented the insinuation that he was neglecting anything that might contribute to their happiness.

Possession of money had never altered John Merrick's native simplicity. He had no extravagant tastes, dressed quietly and lived the life of the people. On this eventful morning the man of millions took a cross-town car to the elevated station and climbed the stairs to his train. Once seated and headed cityward he took out his memorandum book to see what engagements he had for the day. There were three for the afternoon. At twelve o'clock he had promised to meet Von Taer.

"H-m-m. Von Taer."

Gazing reflectively from the window he remembered a conversation with a prominent banker some month or so before. "Von Taer," the banker had said, "is an aristocrat with an independent fortune, who clings to the brokerage business because he inherited it from his father and grandfather. I hold that such a man has no moral right to continue in business. He should retire and give the other fellow a chance."

"Why do you call him an aristocrat?" Mr. Merrick had enquired.

"Because his family is so ancient that it shames the ark itself. I imagine his ancestors might have furnished Noah the lumber to build his ship. In New York the '400' all kowtow to Von Taer."

"Seems to me he has the right to be a broker if he wants to," asserted Mr. Merrick.

"The right; yes. But, between us, Mr. Merrick, this society swell has no

mental capacity to handle such an uncertain business. He's noted for doing unwarranted things. To me it's a marvel that Von Taer hasn't shipwrecked the family fortunes long ago. Luck has saved him, not foresight."

That speech of a few weeks ago now seemed prophetic to John Merrick. Within a few days the aristocratic broker had encountered financial difficulties and been forced to appeal to Mr. Merrick, to whom he obtained an introduction through a mutual friend. Von Taer was doubtless solvent, for he controlled large means; but unless a saving hand was extended at this juncture his losses were sure to be severe, and might even cripple him seriously.

All this Mr. Merrick shrewdly considered in the space of a few moments. As he left the train he looked at his watch and found it was barely eleven. He decided not to await the hour of appointment. With his usual brisk stride he walked to Von Taer's offices and was promptly admitted to the broker's sanctum.

Hedrik Von Taer was a fine looking man, tall, grave, of dignified demeanor and courteous manners. He stood until his visitor was seated and with a gesture of deference invited him to open the conversation.

"I've decided to make you the loan, Von Taer," began Mr. Merrick, in his practical, matter-of-fact way. "Three hundred thousand, wasn't it? Call on Major Doyle at my office this afternoon and he'll arrange it for you."

An expression of relief crossed the broker's face.

"You are very kind, sir," he answered. "I assure you I fully appreciate the accommodation."

"Glad to help you," responded the millionaire, briskly. Then he paused with marked abruptness. It occurred to him he had a difficult proposition to make to this man. To avoid the cold, enquiring eyes now fixed upon him he pulled out a cigar and deliberately cut the end. Von Taer furnished him a match. He smoked a while in silence.

"This loan, sir," he finally began, "is freely made. There are no strings tied to it. I don't want you to feel I'm demanding any sort of return. But the truth is, you have it in your power to grant me a favor."

Von Taer bowed.

"Mr. Merrick has generously placed me under an obligation it will afford me pleasure to repay," said he. But his eyes held an uneasy look, nevertheless.

"It's this way," explained the other: "I've three nieces — fine girls, Von Taer — who will some day inherit my money. They are already independent, financially, and they're educated, well-bred and amiable young women. Take my word for it."

“I am sure your statements are justified, Mr. Merrick.” Yet Hedrik Von Taer’s face, usually unexpressive, denoted blank mystification. What connection could these girls have with the favor to be demanded?

“Got any girls yourself, Von Taer?”

“A daughter, sir. My only child.

“Grown up?”

“A young lady now, sir.”

“Then you’ll understand. I’m a plain uneducated man myself. Never been any nearer swell society than a Fifth Avenue stage. My money has given me commercial position, but no social one worth mentioning. Your ‘400’s’ a bunch I can’t break into, nohow.”

A slight smile hovered over the other’s lips, but he quickly controlled it.

“They tell me, though,” continued the speaker, “that *your* family has long ago climbed into the top notch of society. You’re one o’ the big guns in the battery, an’ hold the fort against all comers.”

Von Taer merely bowed. It was scarcely necessary to either admit or contradict the statement. Uncle John was a little indignant that his companion showed no disposition to assist him in his explanation, which a clear head might now easily comprehend. So, with his usual frankness, he went directly to the point.

“I’d like my girls to get into the best — the most select — circles,” he announced. “They’re good and pretty and well-mannered, so it strikes me they’re entitled to the best there is a-going. I don’t want to mix with your swell crowd myself, because I ain’t fit; likewise the outfit ain’t much to my taste, askin’ your pardon; but with women it’s different. They need to stand high an’ shine bright to make ‘em really happy, and if any special lot is particularly ex-clusive an’ high-falutin’, that’s the crowd they long to swarm with. It’s human nature — female human nature, anyhow. You catch my idea, Von Taer, don’t you?”

“I think so, Mr. Merrick. Yet I fail to see how I can be of service to you in gratifying the ambition of your charming nieces.”

“Then I’ll go, and you may forget what I’ve said.” The visitor arose and took his hat from the table. “It was only a fool notion, anyway; just a thought, badly expressed, to help my girls to a toy that money can’t buy.”

Hedrik Von Taer gazed steadily into the man’s face. There was something in the simple, honest self-abnegation of this wealthy and important person that won the respect of all he met. The broker’s stern eyes softened a bit as he gazed and he allowed a fugitive smile, due to his own change of attitude, to wreathe his thin lips again — just for an instant.

“Sit down, please, Mr. Merrick,” he requested, and rather reluctantly

Uncle John resumed his seat. “You may not have an especially clear idea of New York society, and I want to explain my recent remark so that you will understand it. What is called ‘the 400’ may or may not exist; but certainly it is no distinct league or association. It may perhaps be regarded as a figure of speech, to indicate how few are really admitted to the most exclusive circles. Moreover, there can be no dominant ‘leader of society’ here, for the reason that not all grades of society would recognize the supremacy of any one set, or clique. These cliques exist for various reasons. They fraternize generally, but keep well within their own circles. Kindred tastes attract some; ancient lineage others. There is an ultra-fashionable set, a sporting set, a literary set, an aristocratic set, a rather ‘fast’ set, a theatrical set — and so on. These may all lay claim with certain justice to membership in good society. Their circles are to an extent exclusive, because some distinction must mark the eligibility of members. And outside each luminous sphere hovers a multitude eager to pass the charmed circle and so acquire recognition. Often it is hard to separate the initiate from the uninitiate, even by those most expert. Is it difficult to comprehend such a condition as I have described, Mr. Merrick?”

“Somewhat, Mr. Von Taer. The wonder to me is why people waste time in such foolishness.”

“It is the legitimate occupation of many; the folly of unwise ambition impels others. There is a fascination about social life that appeals to the majority of natures. Let us compare society to a mountain whose sides are a steep incline, difficult to mount. To stand upon the summit, to become the cynosure of all eyes, is a desire inherent, seemingly, in all humanity; for humanity loves distinction. In the scramble toward the peak many fall by the wayside; others deceive themselves by imagining they have attained the apex when they are far from it. It is a game, Mr. Merrick, just as business is a game, politics a game, and war a game. You know how few really win.”

“Here,” said Uncle John, musingly, “is a philosophy I did not expect from you, Von Taer. They tell me you’re one who stands on top the peak. And you were born that way, and didn’t have to climb. Seems to me you rather scorn the crowd that’s trying to climb to an eminence you never had to win. That wouldn’t be my way. And I suspect that if the crowd wasn’t trying to climb to you, your own position wouldn’t be worth a cotton hat.”

Von Taer had no answer to this criticism. Perhaps he scarcely heard it, for he appeared lost in a brown study. Finally he said:

“Will you permit my daughter to call upon your nieces, Mr. Merrick?”

“Of course, sir.”

“Then kindly give me their addresses.”

Uncle John wrote them on a slip of paper.

“You may now dismiss the subject from your mind, sir, as you lately advised me to do. Whatever may be accomplished in the direction you have suggested I will gladly undertake. If I succeed it will be exceedingly gratifying to us all, I am sure.”

Mr. Merrick left the office in a rather humbled and testy mood. He disliked to ask favors at any time and now felt that he had confided himself to the mercy of this callous aristocrat and met with a distinct rebuff.

But he had done it for the sake of his beloved nieces — and they would never know what humiliation this unsatisfactory interview had cost him.

CHAPTER III

DIANA

Diana Von Taer can not be called a type. She was individual. Aristocratic to her finger tips, she was unlike all other aristocrats. An admitted queen of society, her subjects were few and indifferent. She possessed ancient lineage, was highly accomplished, had been born to the purple, as the saying is; but none of these things conspired to make her the curious creature she was.

As we make her acquaintance she is twenty-three years of age — and looks eighteen. She is tall and slender and carries her handsome form with exquisite grace. Diana is never abrupt; her voice is ever modulated to soft, even tones; she rises from a chair or couch with the lithe, sinuous motion of a serpent uncoiling.

Her face, critically regarded, is not so admirable as her form. The features are a trifle too elongated, and their delicacy is marred by a nose a bit broad and unshapely and a mouth with thin lips primly set. Her dark eyes might be magnificent if wide open: but through the narrow slits of their lids, half hidden by long curling lashes, the eyes peer at you with a cold, watchful, intent gaze that carries a certain uncanny and disconcerting fascination.

Yet the girl is essentially feminine. If you refrain from meeting that discomfiting gaze — and her familiars have learned to avoid it — Diana impresses you as being graceful, dainty and possessed of charming manners. Her taste in dress is perfect. She converses fluently on many topics. It is her custom to rise at ten o'clock, whatever time she may have retired the night before; to read until luncheon; to devote the remainder of her day to the requirements of society.

Eligible young men of admitted social standing call upon Diana at such intervals as the proprieties require. They chatter "small talk" and are careful to address her with deference. With an exception to be referred to later these young men have no more thought of "flirting" with Miss Von Taer than they would with the statue of the goddess, her namesake. Her dinner parties and entertainments are very successful. She is greatly admired, *per se*, but has no intimate friends.

When her mother died, some years before, an aunt had come to live with Diana, and now posed as her chaperon. Mrs. Cameron was a stolid, corpulent lady, with a countenance perpetually placid and an habitual aversion to displaying intellect. Her presence in the establishment, although necessary, was frankly ignored. Fortunately she never obtruded herself.

Hedrik Von Taer was passionately devoted to his daughter. He alone, perhaps, of all the world, thoroughly understood her and appreciated her

talents. She may have frightened him at times, but that only added to his admiration. In return Diana displayed a calm, but affectionate regard for her father.

Often after dinner these two would pass an hour together in a corner of the drawing-room, where the cold gray eyes of the man met the intent, half-veiled glance of the girl with perfect understanding. They talked of many things, including business. Hedrik had no secrets from his daughter.

The desperate condition of his finances, when he had been caught in a "corner" on wheat and nearly crushed, had not dismayed her in the least. It was she who had counseled him to appeal to John Merrick, since the name and fame of the eccentric millionaire were familiar to her as to him.

He related to Diana his interview with Mr. Merrick on his return home. He was saved. The three hundred thousand were now in the bank to his credit and he could weather the coming storm easily — perhaps with profit. In a tone half amused, half serious, he told her of the little millionaire's desire to secure *entrée* into good society for his three nieces.

Diana laughed with her lips; her eyes never laughed. Then she took in her hand the paper containing the addresses of the three girls and regarded it thoughtfully.

"It is a curious request, *mon pere*," she said, In her soft, even tones; "but one we cannot diplomatically disregard. Provided, however — "

"Yes, Diana;" as she paused.

"Provided these prospective *debutantes* are not wholly impossible."

"I realize that," returned her father. "John Merrick is a great power in the city. He has been useful to me, and may be again. I have this chance to win him. But the man is very common clay, despite his wealth, and his three nieces are likely to be made of the same material. Should they prove impossible you cannot well descend to introducing them to our set."

"I am not certain of that, sir," said the girl, with a pretty shrug. "My position is too secure to be jeopardized by any error of this sort. I believe I may introduce these girls without risk. I shall not vouch for them too strongly, and after their debut they must stand or fall on their own merits."

"It is something a Von Taer has never yet done," remarked the man, gravely.

"To commercialize his social position? But, father dear, the age is fast commercializing everything. I think our especial set is as yet comparatively free from contamination by the 'lately rich'; but even among us money has glossed many offenses that a generation ago would have meant social ostracism."

He nodded.

“That is true, Diana.”

“Life with me is a bit dull, as well. Everlasting routine, however admirable, is tiresome. I scent amusement in this adventure, which I have decided to undertake. With your permission I will see these girls and quickly decide their fate. Should they prove not too dreadfully *outré* you may look to see them my especial *protégés*.”

“I leave all to your discretion, Diana,” returned Von Taer, with a sigh. “If, in the end, some of the more particular venture to reproach them.”

“It will not matter,” interrupted the daughter, lightly, as her dark eyes narrowed to a hair’s breadth. “Any who dares reproach Diana Von Taer will afford her interesting occupation. And to offset that remote contingency we shall permanently enslave the powerful John Merrick. I understand he is hard as nails in financial matters; but to us the man has disclosed his one weakness — ambition to promote his three nieces. Since we have discovered this vulnerable point, let us take advantage of it. I am satisfied the loan of three hundred thousand was but a lure — and how cleverly the man gauged us!”

Von Taer scowled.

“Get your wraps, Diana. The carriage is waiting, and we are due at Mrs. Doldringham’s crush.”

CHAPTER IV

THE THREE NIECES

The Von Taers did not affect motor cars. In some circles the carriage and pair is still considered the more aristocratic mode of conveyance. Established customs do not readily give way to fads and freaks.

Consulting her memoranda as she rode along; in her handsome, tastefully appointed equipage, Diana found that Louise Merrick, one of the three girls she had set out to discover, was the nearest on her route. Presently she rang the bell at the Merrick residence, an eminently respectable dwelling; in a desirable neighborhood.

Diana could not resist a sigh of relief as her observant glance noted this detail. A dignified butler ushered her into a reception room and departed with her card.

It was now that the visitor's nose took an upward tendency as she critically examined her surroundings. The furnishings were abominable, a mixture of distressingly new articles with those evidently procured from dealers in "antiquities." Money had been lavished here, but good taste was absent. To understand this — for Miss Von Taer gauged the condition truly — it is necessary to know something of Mrs. Martha Merrick.

This lady, the relict of John Merrick's only brother, was endowed with a mediocre mind and a towering ambition. When left a widow with an only daughter she had schemed and contrived in endless ways to maintain an appearance of competency on a meager income. Finally she divided her capital, derived from her husband's life insurance, into three equal parts, which she determined to squander in three years in an attempt to hoodwink the world with the belief that she was wealthy. Before the three years were ended her daughter Louise would be twenty, and by that time she must have secured a rich *parti* and been safely married. In return for this "sacrifice" the girl was to see that her mother was made comfortable thereafter.

This worldly and foolish design was confided to Louise when she was only seventeen, and her unformed mind easily absorbed her mother's silly ambition. It was a pity, for Louise Merrick possessed a nature sweet and lovable, as well as instinctively refined — a nature derived from her dead father and with little true sympathy with Mrs. Merrick's unscrupulous schemes. But at that age a girl is easily influenced, so it is little wonder that under such tuition Louise became calculating, sly and deceitful, to a most deplorable degree.

Such acquired traits bade fair in the end to defeat Mrs. Merrick's carefully planned *coup*, for the daughter had a premature love affair with a youth

outside the pale of eligibility. Louise ignored the fact that he had been disinherited by his father, and in her reckless infatuation would have sacrificed her mother without thought or remorse. The dreadful finale had only been averted by the advent of Uncle John Merrick, who had changed the life plans of the widow and her heedless daughter and promptly saved the situation.

John Merrick did not like his sister-in-law, but he was charmed by his lovely niece and took her at once to his affectionate old heart. He saw the faults of Louise clearly, but also appreciated her sweeter qualities. Under his skillful guidance she soon redeemed herself and regained control of her better nature. The girl was not yet perfect, by any means; she was to an extent artificial and secretive, and her thoughtless flirtations were far from wise; but her two cousins and her uncle had come to know and understand her good points. They not only bore patiently with her volatile nature but strove to influence her to demonstrate her inherent good qualities.

In one way her mother's calculating training had been most effective. Louise was not only a dainty, lovely maid to the eye, but her manners were gracious and winning and she had that admirable self-possession which quickly endears one even to casual acquaintances. She did not impress more intimate friends as being wholly sincere, yet there was nothing in her acts, since that one escapade referred to, that merited severe disapproval.

Of course the brilliant idea of foisting her precious daughter upon the "select" society of the metropolis was original with Mrs. Merrick. Louise was well content with things as they were; but not so the mother. The rise from poverty to affluence, the removal of all cares and burdens from her mind, had merely fostered still greater ambitions. Uncle John's generosity had endowed each of his three nieces with an ample fortune. "I want 'em to enjoy the good things of life while they're at an age to enjoy 'em," he said; "for the older one gets the fewer things are found to be enjoyable. That's my experience, anyhow." He also told the girls frankly that they were to inherit jointly — although not equally — his entire fortune. Yet even this glowing prospect did not satisfy Mrs. Merrick. Since all her plans for Louise, from the very beginning, had been founded on personal selfishness, she now proposed to have her daughter gain admission to recognized fashionable society in order that she might herself bask in the reflection of the glory so obtained and take her place with the proud matrons who formed the keystone of such society.

After carefully considering ways and means to gain her object she had finally conceived the idea of utilizing Mr. Merrick. She well knew Uncle John would not consider one niece to the exclusion of the others, and had

therefore used his influence to get all three girls properly "introduced." Therefore her delight and excitement were intense when the butler brought up Diana's card and she realized that "the perfectly swell Miss Von Taer" was seated in her reception room. She rushed to Louise, who, wholly innocent of any knowledge of the intrigue which had led to this climax, opened her blue eyes in astonishment and said with a gasp:

"Oh, mother! what shall I do?"

"Do? Why, go down and make yourself agreeable, of course. It's your chance, my dear, your great chance in life! Go — go! Don't, for heaven's sake, keep her waiting."

Louise went down. In her most affable and gracious way she approached the visitor and said:

"It is very nice of you to call upon me. I am *so* glad to meet Miss Von Taer."

Diana, passing conversational nothings with the young girl, was pleased by her appearance and self-possession. This aspirant for social honors was fresh, fair and attractive, with a flow of small talk at her tongue's end.

"Really," thought the fastidious visitor, "this one, at least, will do me no discredit. If she is a fair sample of the others we shall get along very nicely In this enterprise."

To Louise she said, before going:

"I'm to have an evening, the nineteenth. Will you assist me to receive? Now that we are acquainted I wish to see more of you, my dear, and I predict we shall get along famously together."

The girl's head swam. Help Miss Von Taer to receive! Such an honor had been undreamed of an hour ago. But she held her natural agitation under good control and only a round red spot Upon each cheek betrayed her inward excitement as she prettily accepted the invitation. Beneath their drooping lashes Diana's sagacious eyes read the thoughts of the girl quite accurately. Miss Von Taer enjoyed disconcerting anyone in any way, and Louise was so simple and unsophisticated that she promised to afford considerable amusement in the future.

By the time Diana had finished her brief call this singular creature had taken the measure of Louise Merrick in every detail, including her assumption of lightness and her various frivolities. She understood that in the girl were capabilities for good or for evil, as she might be led by a stronger will. And, musingly, Diana wondered who would lead her.

As for Louise, she was enraptured by her distinguished visitor's condescension and patronage, and her heart bounded at the thought of being admitted to the envied social coterie in which Diana Von Taer shone a bright,

particular star.

The second name in the list of John Merrick's nieces was that of Elizabeth De Graf. She lived at a good private hotel located in an exclusive residence district.

It was true that Elizabeth — or "Beth," as she was more familiarly called — was not a permanent guest at this hotel. When in New York she was accustomed to live with one or the other of her cousins, who welcomed her eagerly. But just now her mother had journeyed from the old Ohio home to visit Beth, and the girl had no intention of inflicting her parent upon the other girls. Therefore she had taken rooms at the hotel temporarily, and the plan suited her mother excellently. For one thing, Mrs. De Graf could go home and tell her Cloverton gossips that she had stopped at the most "fashionable" hotel in New York; a second point was that she loved to feast with epicurean avidity upon the products of a clever *chef*, being one of those women who live to eat, rather than eat to live.

Mrs. De Graf was John Merrick's only surviving sister, but she differed as widely from the simple, kindly man in disposition as did her ingenious daughter from her in mental attainments. The father, Professor De Graf, was supposed to be a "musical genius." Before Beth came into her money, through Uncle John, the Professor taught the piano and singing; now, however, the daughter allowed her parents a liberal income, and the self-engrossed musician devoted himself to composing oratorios and concertas which no one but himself would ever play.

To be quite frank, the girl cared little for her gross and selfish parents, and they in turn cared little for her beyond the value she afforded them in the way of dollars and cents. So she had not lived at home, where constant quarrels and bickerings nearly drove her frantic, since Uncle John had adopted her. In catering to this present whim of her mother, who longed to spend a few luxurious weeks in New York, Beth sacrificed more than might be imagined by one unacquainted with her sad family history.

Whimsical Major Doyle often called Uncle John's nieces "the Three Graces"; but Beth was by odds the beauty of them all. Splendid brown eyes, added to an exquisite complexion, almost faultless features and a superb carriage, rendered this fair young girl distinguished in any throng. Fortunately she was as yet quite unspoiled, being saved from vanity by a morbid consciousness of her inborn failings and a sincere loathing for the moral weakness that prevented her from correcting those faults. Judging Beth by the common standard of girls of her age, both failings and faults were more imaginary than real; yet it was her characteristic to suspect and despise in herself such weaknesses as others would condone, or at least regard

leniently. For here was a girl true and staunch, incapable of intrigue or deceit, frank and outspoken, all these qualities having been proven more than once. Everyone loved Beth De Graf save herself, and at this stage of her development the influence of her cousins and of Uncle John had conspired to make the supersensitive girl more tolerant of herself and less morbid than formerly.

I think Beth knew of Diana Von Taer, for the latter's portrait frequently graced the society columns of the New York press and at times the three nieces, in confidential mood, would canvass Diana and her social exploits as they did the acts of other famous semi-public personages. But the girl had never dreamed of meeting such a celebrity, and Miss Von Taer's card filled her with curious wonder as to the errand that had brought her.

The De Grafs lived *en suite* at the hotel, for Beth had determined to surround her Sybaritic mother with all attainable luxury, since the child frequently reproached herself with feeling a distinct repulsion for the poor woman. So to-day Diana was ushered into a pretty parlor where Beth stood calmly awaiting her.

The two regarded one another in silence a moment, Miss De Graf's frank eyes covering the other with a comprehensive sweep while Miss Von Taer's narrowed gaze, profoundly observant, studied the beautiful girl before her with that impenetrable, half-hidden gleam that precluded any solution.

"Miss Von Taer, I believe," said Beth, quietly glancing at the card she held. "Will you be seated?"

Diana sank gracefully into a chair. The sinuous motion attracted Beth's attention and gave her a slight shiver.

"I am so glad to meet you, my dear," began the visitor, in soft, purring accents. "I have long promised myself the pleasure of a call, and in spite of many procrastinations at last have accomplished my ambition."

Beth resented the affectation of this prelude, and slightly frowned. Diana was watching; she always watched.

"Why should you wish to call upon me?" was the frank demand. "Do not think me rude, please; but I am scarcely in a position to become a desirable acquaintance of Miss Von Taer." The tone was a trifle bitter, and Diana noted it. A subtile antagonism seemed springing up between them and the more experienced girl scented in this danger to her plans. She must handle this young lady more cautiously than she had Louise Merrick.

"Your position is unimpeachable, my dear," was the sweet-toned response. "You are John Merrick's niece."

Beth was really angry now. She scowled, and it spoiled her beauty. Diana took warning and began to think quickly.

“I referred to my social position, Miss Von Taer. Our family is honest enough, thank God; but it has never been accepted in what is termed select society.”

Diana laughed; a quiet, rippling laugh as icy as a brook in November, but as near gaiety as she could at the moment accomplish. When she laughed this way her eyes nearly closed and became inscrutable. Beth had a feeling of repulsion for her caller, but strove to shake it off. Miss Von Taer was nothing to her; could be nothing to her.

“Your uncle is a very wealthy man,” said Diana, with easy composure. “He has made you an heiress, placing you in a class much sought after in these mercenary days. But aside from that, my dear, your personal accomplishments have not escaped notice, and gossip declares you to be a very fascinating young woman, as well as beautiful and good. I do not imagine society claims to be of divine origin, but were it so no one is more qualified to grace it.”

The blandishments of this speech had less effect upon Beth than the evident desire to please. She began to feel she had been ungracious, and straightway adopted a more cordial tone.

“I am sure you mean well, Miss Von Taer,” she hastened to say, “and I assure you I am not ungrateful. But it occurred to me we could have nothing in common.”

“Oh, my dear! You wrong us both.”

“Do you know my uncle?” enquired Beth.

“He is the friend of my father, Mr. Hedrik Von Taer. Our family owes Mr. John Merrick much consideration. Therefore I decided to seek pleasure in the acquaintance of his nieces.”

The words and tone seemed alike candid. Beth began to relent. She sat down for the first time, taking a chair opposite Diana.

“You see,” she said, artlessly, “I have no personal inclination for society, which is doubtless so large a part of your own amusement. It seems to me artificial and insipid.”

“Those who view from a distance the husk of a cocoanut, have little idea of the milk within,” declared Diana, softly.

“True,” answered Beth. “But I’ve cracked cocoanuts, and sometimes found the milk sour and tainted.”

“The difference you observe in cocoanuts is to be found in the various grades of society. These are not all insipid and artificial, I assure you.”

“They may be worse,” remarked Beth. “I’ve heard strange tales of your orgies.”

Diana was really amused. This girl was proving more interesting than the

first niece she had interviewed. Unaccustomed to seeking acquaintances outside her own exclusive circle, and under such circumstances, these meetings were to her in the nature of an adventure. A creature of powerful likes and dislikes, she already hated Beth most heartily; but for that very reason she insisted on cultivating her further acquaintance.

"You must not judge society by the mad pranks of a few of its members," she responded, in her most agreeable manner. "If we are not to set an example in decorum to the rest of the world we are surely unfitted to occupy the high place accorded us. But you must see and decide for yourself."

"I? No, indeed!"

"Ah, do not decide hastily, my dear. Let me become your sponsor for a short time, until you really discover what society is like. Then you may act upon more mature judgment."

"I do not understand you, Miss Von Taer."

"Then I will be more explicit. I am to receive a few friends at my home on the evening of the nineteenth; will you be my guest?"

Beth was puzzled how to answer. The thought crossed her mind that perhaps Uncle John would like her to be courteous to his friend's daughter, and that argument decided her. She accepted the invitation.

"I want you to receive with me," continued Diana, rising. "In that way I shall be able to introduce you to my friends."

Beth wondered at this condescension, but consented to receive. She was annoyed to think how completely she had surrendered to the will of Miss Von Taer, for whom she had conceived the same aversion she had for a snake. She estimated Diana, society belle though she was, to be sly, calculating and deceitful. Worse than all, she was decidedly clever, and therefore dangerous. Nothing good could come of an acquaintance with her, Beth was sure; yet she had pledged herself to meet her and her friends the nineteenth, lit a formal society function. How much Beth De Graf misjudged Diana Von Taer the future will determine.

The interview had tired Diana. As she reentered her carriage she was undecided whether to go home or hunt up the third niece. But Willing Square was not five minutes' drive from here, so she ordered the coachman to proceed there.

"I am positively out of my element in this affair," she told herself, "for it is more difficult to cultivate these inexperienced girls than I had thought. They are not exactly impossible, as I at first feared, but they are so wholly unconventional as to be somewhat embarrassing as *protégées*. Analyzing the two I have met — the majority — one strikes me as being transparently affected and the other a stubborn, attractive fool. They are equally untrained

in diplomacy and unable to cover their real feelings. Here am I, practically dragging them into the limelight, when it would be far better for themselves — perhaps for me — that they remained in oblivion. Ah, well: I called it an adventure: let me hope some tangible plot will develop to compensate me for my trouble. Life seems deadly dull; I need excitement. Is it to be furnished by John Merrick's nieces, I wonder?"

Willing Square is a new district, crowded with fashionable apartment houses. That is, they are called fashionable by their builders and owners and accepted as such by their would-be fashionable occupants. Diana knew at least two good families resident in Willing Square, and though she smiled grimly at the rows of "oppressively new and vulgar" buildings, she still was not ashamed to have her equipage seen waiting there.

Number 3708 Willing Square is a very substantial and cozy appearing apartment building owned in fee by Miss Patricia Doyle. Diana was unaware of this fact, but rang the Doyle bell and ascended to the second floor.

A maid received her with the announcement that Miss Doyle had "just stepped out," but was somewhere in the building. Would the visitor care to wait a few minutes?

Yes; Diana decided she would wait. She took a seat in the snug front parlor and from her position noted the series of rooms that opened one into another throughout the suite, all richly but tastefully furnished in homely, unassuming manner.

"This is better," she mused. "There is no attempt at foolish display in this establishment, at any rate. I hope to find Miss Doyle a sensible, refined person. The name is Irish."

A door slammed somewhere down the line of rooms and a high-pitched voice cried in excited tones:

"I've found a baby! Hi, there, Nunkie, dear — I've found a baby!"

Thereupon came the sound of a chair being pushed back as a man's voice answered in equal glee:

"Why, Patsy, Patsy! it's the little rogue from upstairs. Here, Bobby; come to your own old Uncle!"

"He won't. He belongs to me; don't you, Bobby darlin'?"

A babyish voice babbled merrily, but the sounds were all "goos" and "ahs" without any resemblance to words. Bobby may have imagined he was talking, but he was not very intelligible.

"See here, Patsy Doyle; you gimme that baby." cried the man, pleadingly.

"I found him myself, and he's mine. I've dragged him here all the way from his home upstairs, an' don't you dare lay a finger on him. Uncle John!"

"Fair play, Patsy! Bobby's my chum, and — "

“Well, I’ll let you have half of him, Nunkie. Down on your hands and knees, sir, and be a horse. That’s it — Now, Bobby, straddle Uncle John and drive him by his necktie — here it is. S-t-e-a-d-y, Uncle; and neigh — neigh like a horse!”

“How does a horse neigh, Patsy?” asked a muffled voice, choking and chuckling at the same time.

“‘Nee, hee-hee — hee; hee!’“

Uncle John tried to neigh, and made a sorry mess of it, although Bobby shrieked with delight.

Then came a sudden hush. Diana caught the maid’s voice, perhaps announcing the presence of a visitor, for Patsy cried in subdued accents:

“Goodness me, Mary! why didn’t you say so? Listen, Uncle John — ”

“Leggo that ear, Bobby — leggo!”

“ — You watch the baby, Uncle John, and don’t let anything happen to him. I’ve got a caller.”

Diana smiled, a bit scornfully, and then composed her features as a young girl bustled into the room and came toward her with frank cordiality indicated in the wide smile and out-stretched hand.

“Pardon my keeping you waiting,” said Patsy, dropping into a chair opposite her visitor, “Uncle John and I were romping with the baby from upstarts — Bobby’s such a dear! I didn’t quite catch the name Mary gave me and forgot to look at your card.”

“I am Miss Von Taer.”

“Not Diana Von Taer, the swell society girl?” cried Patsy eagerly.

Diana couldn’t remember when she had been so completely nonplused before. After an involuntary gasp she answered quietly:

“I am Diana Von Taer.”

“Well, I’m glad to meet you, just the same,” said Patsy, cheerfully. “We outsiders are liable to look on society folk as we would on a cage of monkeys — because we’re so very ignorant, you know, and the bars are really between us.”

This frank disdain verged on rudeness, although the girl had no intention of being rude. Diana was annoyed in spite of her desire to be tolerant.

“Perhaps the bars are imaginary,” she rejoined, carelessly, “and it may be you’ve been looking at the side-show and not at the entertainment in the main tent. Will you admit that possibility, Miss Doyle?”

Patsy laughed gleefully.

“I think you have me there, Miss Von Taer. And what do *I* know about society? Just nothing at all. It’s out of my line entirely.”

“Perhaps it is,” was the slow response. “Society appeals to only those

whose tastes seem to require it."

"And aren't we drawing distinctions?" enquired Miss Doyle. "Society at large is the main evidence of civilization, and all decent folk are members of it."

"Isn't that communism?" asked Diana.

"Perhaps so. It's society at large. But certain classes have leagued together and excluded themselves from their fellows, admitting only those of their own ilk. The people didn't put them on their pedestals — they put themselves there. Yet the people bow down and worship these social gods and seem glad to have them. The newspapers print their pictures and the color of their gowns and how they do their hair and what they eat and what they do, and the poor washwomen and shop-girls and their like read these accounts more religiously than they do their bibles. My maid Mary's a good girl, but she grabs the society sheet of the Sunday paper and reads it from top to bottom. I never look at it myself."

Diana's cheeks were burning. She naturally resented such ridicule, having been born to regard social distinction with awe and reverence. Inwardly resolving to make Miss Patricia Doyle regret the speech she hid all annoyance under her admirable self-control and answered with smooth complacency:

"Your estimate of society, my dear Miss Doyle, is superficial."

"Don't I know it, then?" exclaimed Patsy. "Culture and breeding, similarity of taste and intellectual pursuits will always attract certain people and band them together in those cliques which are called 'social sets,' They are not secret societies; they have no rules of exclusion; congenial minds are ever welcome to their ranks. This is a natural coalition, in no way artificial. Can you not appreciate that, Miss Doyle?"

"Yes, indeed," admitted Patsy, promptly. "You're quite right, and I'm just one of those stupid creatures who criticise the sun because there's a cloud before it. Probably there are all grades of society, because there are all grades of people."

"I thought you would agree with me when you understood," murmured Diana, and her expression was so smug and satisfied that Patsy was seized with an irresistible spirit of mischief.

"And haven't I seen your own pictures in the Sunday papers?" she asked.

"Perhaps; if you robbed your maid of her pleasure."

"And very pretty pictures they were, too. They showed culture and breeding all right, and the latest style in gowns. Of course those intellectual high-brows in your set didn't need an introduction to you; you were advertised as an example of ultra-fashionable perfection, to spur the ambition

of those lower down in the social scale. Perhaps it's a good thing."

"Are you trying to annoy me?" demanded Diana, her eyes glaring under their curling lashes.

"Dear me — dear me!" cried Patsy, distressed, "see how saucy and impudent I've been — and I didn't mean a bit of it! Won't you forgive me, please, Miss Von Taer? There! we'll begin all over again, and I'll be on my good behavior. I'm so very ignorant, you know!"

Diana smiled at this; it would be folly to show resentment to such a childish creature.

"Unfortunately," she said, "I have been unable to escape the vulgar publicity thrust upon me by the newspapers. The reporters are preying vultures, rapacious for sensation, and have small respect for anyone. I am sure we discourage them as much as we can. I used to weep with mortification when I found myself 'written up'; now, however, I have learned to bear such trials with fortitude — if not with resignation."

"Forgive me!" said Patsy, contritely. "Somehow I've had a false idea of these things. If I knew you better, Miss Von Taer, you'd soon convert me to be an admirer of society."

"I'd like to do that, Miss Doyle, for you interest me. Will you return my call?"

"Indeed I will," promised the girl, readily. "I'm flattered that you called on me at all, Miss Von Taer, for you might easily have amused yourself better. You must be very busy, with all the demands society makes on one. When shall I come? Make it some off time, when we won't be disturbed."

Diana smiled at her eagerness. How nescient the poor little thing was!

"Your cousins, Miss Merrick and Miss De Graf, have consented to receive with me on the evening of the nineteenth. Will you not join us?"

"Louise and Beth!" cried Patsy, astounded.

"Isn't it nice of them? And may I count upon you, also?"

Patsy smiled dubiously into the other's face.

"Let me out of it!" she said. "Can't you see I'm no butterfly?"

Diana saw many things, having taken a shrewd account of the girl long before this. Miss Patricia Doyle was short and plump, with a round, merry face covered with freckles, hair indisputably red and a *retroussé* nose. Also she possessed a pair of wonderful blue eyes — eyes that danced and scintillated with joyous good humor — eyes so captivating that few ever looked beyond them or noted the plain face they glorified. But the critic admitted that the face was charmingly expressive, the sweet and sensitive mouth always in sympathy with the twinkling, candid eyes. Life and energy radiated from her small person, which Miss Von Taer grudgingly conceded

to possess unusual fascination. Here was a creature quite imperfect in detail, yet destined to allure and enchant whomsoever she might meet. All this was quite the reverse of Diana's own frigid personality. Patsy would make an excellent foil for her.

"As you please, my dear," she said graciously; "but do you not think it would amuse you to make your debut in society — unimpeachable society — and be properly introduced to the occupants of the 'pedestals,' as your cousins will be?"

Patsy reflected. If Beth and Louise had determined to undertake this venture why should she hold back? Moreover, she experienced a girlish and wholly natural curiosity to witness a fashionable gathering and "size up" the lions for herself. So she said:

"I'll come, if you really want me; and I'll try my best to behave nicely. But I can't imagine why you have chosen to take us three girls under your wing; unless — " with sudden intuition, "it's for Uncle John's sake."

"That was it, at first," replied Diana, rising to go; "but now that I've seen you I'm delighted to have you on your own account. Come early, dear; we must be ready to receive our guests by nine."

"Nine o'clock!" reflected Patsy, when her visitor had gone; "why, I'm often in bed by that time."

CHAPTER V

PREPARING FOR THE PLUNGE

John Merrick lived with the Doyles at their Willing Square apartments. There were but two of the Doyles — Patricia and her father, Major Doyle, a tall, handsome, soldierly man with white moustache and hair. The Major was noted as a "character," a keen wit and a most agreeable type of the "old Irish gentleman." He fairly worshipped his daughter, and no one blamed him for it. His business, as special agent and manager for his brother-in-law's millions, kept the Major closely occupied and afforded John Merrick opportunity to spend his days as be pleased. The rich man was supposed to be "retired," yet the care of his investments and income was no light task, as the Major found.

We are accustomed to regard extreme wealth as the result of hard-headed shrewdness, not wholly divorced from unscrupulous methods, yet no one could accuse John Merrick or his representative with being other than kindly, simple-hearted and honest. Uncle John says that he never intended to "get rich"; it was all the result of carelessness. He had been so immersed in business that he failed to notice how fast his fortune was growing. When he awoke to a realization of his immense accumulation he promptly retired, appointing Major Doyle to look after his investments and seeking personal leisure after many years of hard work. He instructed his agent to keep his income from growing into more capital by rendering wise assistance to all worthy charities and individuals, and this, as you may suppose, the Major found a herculean task. Often he denounced Uncle John for refusing to advise him, claiming that the millionaire had selfishly thrust the burden of his wealth on the Major's broad shoulders. While there was an element of truth in this the burden it was not so heavy as to make the old soldier unhappy, and the two men loved and respected one another with manly cordiality.

Patricia was recognized as Uncle John's favorite niece and it was understood she was to inherit the bulk of his property, although some millions might be divided between Beth and Louise "if they married wisely." Neither Uncle John nor the Major ever seemed to consider Patsy's marrying; she was such a child that wedlock for her seemed a remote possibility.

The Sunday afternoon following Diana Von Taer's visit to the three nieces found the girls all congregated in Patsy's own room, where an earnest discussion was being conducted. That left Uncle John to take his after-dinner nap in the big Morris chair in the living room, where Major Doyle sat smoking-sulkily while he gazed from the window and begrudged the moments Patsy was being kept from him.

Finally the door opened and the three girls trooped out.

"Huh! Is the conspiracy all cut-an'-dried?" growled the Major.

Uncle John woke up with a final snort, removed the newspaper from his face and sat up. He smiled benignantly upon his nieces.

"It's all your fault, sor!" declared Major Doyle, selecting the little millionaire as the safest recipient of his displeasure. "Your foolishness has involved us all in this dreadful complication. Why on earth couldn't you leave well-enough alone?"

Uncle John received the broadside with tolerant equanimity.

"What's wrong; my dears?" he enquired, directing his mild glance toward the bevy of young girls.

"I am unaware that anything is wrong, Uncle," replied Louise gravely. "But since we are about to make our debut in society it is natural we should have many things to discuss that would prove quite uninteresting to men. Really, Uncle John, this is a great event — perhaps the most important event of our lives."

"Shucks an' shoestrings!" grunted the Major. "What's in this paper-shelled, painted, hollow thing ye call 'society' to interest three healthy, wide-awake girls? Tell me that!"

"You don't understand, dear," said Patsy, soothing him with a kiss.

"I think he does," remarked Beth, with meditative brows. "Modern society is a man-made — or woman-made — condition, to a large extent artificial, selfish and unwholesome."

"Oh, Beth!" protested Louise. "You're talking like a rank socialist. I can understand common people sneering at society, which is so far out of their reach; but a girl about to be accepted in the best circles has no right to rail at her own caste."

"There can be no caste in America," declared Beth, stubbornly.

"But there *is* caste in America, and will be so long as the exclusiveness of society is recognized by the people at large," continued Louise. "If it is a 'man-made condition' isn't it the most respected, most refined, most desirable condition that one may attain to?"

"There are plenty of honest and happy people in the world who ignore society altogether," answered Beth. "It strikes me that your social stars are mighty few in the broad firmament of humanity."

"But they're stars, for all that, dear," said Uncle John, smiling at her with a hint of approval in his glance, yet picking up the argument; "and they look mighty big and bright to the crowd below. It's quite natural. You can't keep individuals from gaining distinction, even in America. There are few generals in an army, for instance; and they're 'man-made'; but that's no

reason the generals ain't entitled to our admiration."

"Let's admire 'em, then — from a distance," retorted the Major, realizing the military simile was employed to win his sympathy.

"Certain things, my dear Major, are naturally dear to a girl's heart," continued Uncle John, musingly; "and we who are not girls have no right to condemn their natural longings. Girls love dancing, pink teas and fudge-parties, and where can they find 'em in all their perfection but in high society? Girls love admiration and flirtations — you do, my dears; you can't deny it--and the male society swells have the most time to devote to such things. Girls love pretty dresses — "

"Oh, Uncle! you've hit the nail on the head now," exclaimed Patsy, laughing. "We must all have new gowns for this reception, and as we're to assist Miss Von Taer the dresses must harmonize, so to speak, and — and — "

"And be quite suited to the occasion," broke in Louise; "and — "

"And wear our lives out with innumerable fittings," concluded Beth, gloomily.

"But why new dresses?" demanded the Major. "You've plenty of old ones that are clean and pretty, I'm sure; and our Patsy had one from the dressmaker only last week that's fit for a queen."

"Oh, Daddy! you don't understand," laughed Patsy.

"This time, Major, I fear you don't," agreed Beth. "Your convictions regarding society may be admirable, but you're weak on the gown question."

"If the women would only listen to me," began the Major, dictatorially; but Uncle John cut him short.

"They won't, sir; they'll listen to no man when it comes to dressmaking."

"Don't they dress to captivate the men, then?" asked the Major, with fine sarcasm.

"Not at all," answered Louise, loftily. "Men seldom know what a woman has on, if she looks nice; but women take in every detail of dress and criticise it severely if anything happens to be out of date, ill fitting or in bad taste."

"Then they're in bad taste themselves!" retorted the Major, hotly.

"Tut-tut, sir; who are you to criticise woman's ways?" asked Uncle John, much amused. The Major was silenced, but he glared as if unconvinced.

"Dressmaking is a nuisance," remarked Beth, placidly; "but it's the penalty we pay for being women."

"You're nothing but slips o' girls, not out of your teens," grumbled the Major. And no one paid any attention to him.

"We want to do you credit, Uncle John," said Patsy, brightly. "Perhaps our names will be in the papers."

“They’re there already,” announced Mr. Merrick, picking up the Sunday paper that lay beside him.

A chorus of exclamations was followed by a dive for the paper, and even the Major smiled grimly as he observed the three girlish heads close together and three pair of eager eyes scanning swiftly the society columns.

“Here it is!” cried Patsy, dancing up and down like a school-girl; and Louise read in a dignified voice — which trembled slightly with excitement and pleasure — the following item:

“Miss Von Taer will receive next Thursday evening at the family mansion in honor of Miss Merrick, Miss Doyle and Miss De Graf. These three charming *debutantes* are nieces of John Merrick, the famous tin-plate magnate.”

“Phoo!” growled the Major, during the impressive hush that followed; “that’s it, exactly. Your names are printed because you’re John Merrick’s nieces. If it hadn’t been for tin-plate, my dears, society never would ‘a’ known ye at all, at all!”

CHAPTER VI

THE FLY IN THE BROTH

Diana was an experienced entertainer and under her skillful supervision the reception proved eminently successful. Nor had she cause to be ashamed of the three *protégées* she presented to society, since capable *modistes* had supplemented their girlish charms and freshness with costumes pertinent to the occasion. Perhaps Patsy's chubby form looked a little "dumpish" in her party gown, for some of Diana's female guests regarded her with quiet amusement and bored tolerance, while the same critical posse was amazed and envious at Beth's superb beauty and stately bearing. After all, it was Louise who captured the woman contingency and scored the greatest success; for her appearance was not only dainty and attractive but she was so perfectly self-possessed and responsive and bore herself so admirably under the somewhat trying; circumstances of a debut that she won the cordial goodwill of all whom she encountered. The hostess was elaborately gowned in white pompadour satin, trimmed with white chiffon and embroidered in pink roses and pearls. The Von Taer home was handsomely decorated for the occasion, since Diana never did anything by halves and for her own credit insisted on attention to those details of display that society recognizes and loves. Hundreds of long-stemmed American Beauties and Kentia palms were combined in beautifying the spacious hall, while orchids in marvelous variety nodded their blossoms in the great drawing-room, where the young-ladies received. These rare and precious flowers were arranged in bronze baskets with sprays of maidenhair. In the music room adjoining, great clusters of Madam Chantenay roses embellished the charming scene. Branches of cherry-blossoms, supplied by hot-houses, were banked in the lofty dining-room, where a Japanese pergola made of bamboo and lighted with red lanterns was erected at the upper end. The attendants here were Japanese girls in native costume, and the long table was laid with a lace cloth over pink satin, with butterfly bows of pink tulle. The table itself was decorated with cut-glass baskets of Cecil Brunner roses mingled with lilies of the valley and refreshments were distributed to the standing guests as they entered.

The affair was in the nature of a typical "crush," for Diana's list of eligibles included most of the prominent society folk then in town, and she was too important a personage to have her invitations disregarded. Beth and Patsy were fairly bewildered by the numerous introductions, until names became meaningless in their ears; but Louise, perfectly composed and in no wise distracted by her surroundings or the music of the orchestra and the

perpetual buzz of conversation in the crowded rooms, impressed each individual upon her memory clearly, and was not likely to blunder in regard to names or individuality in the future. This is a rare talent, indeed, and scores, largely in one's favor; for no one likes to think himself so unimportant as to be forgotten, under any circumstances.

It was during the thick of the reception that one of Miss Von Taer's intimates, a graceful blond girl, suddenly seized her arm and whispered: "Oh, Diana! Guess who's here — guess, my dear!"

Diana knew. Her eyes, always narrowed until the lashes shielded their sharp watchfulness, seldom missed observing anything of importance. She pressed her friend's hand and turned again to the line of guests, while Louise, who had overheard the excited whisper, wondered casually what it might mean.

Soon after she knew. A tall, handsome young fellow was bowing before Diana, who — wonder of wonders! — for an instant unclosed her great eyes and shot an electric glance into his smiling face. The glance was brief as unexpected, yet it must have told the young man something, for he flushed and bowed again as if to hide his embarrassment. It also told Louise something, and her heart, which had given a quick bound at sight of the man's face, began to cry out against Diana Von Taer's artifices.

"Mr. Arthur Weldon," said the hostess, in her soft voice; and now, as the young man turned an eager gaze on Louise and half extended his hand, the girl's face grew pale and she imitated Diana to the extent of dropping her eyes and bowing with frigid indifference.

Standing close he whispered "Louise!" in a pleading tone that made Diana frown wickedly. But the girl was unresponsive and another instant forced him to turn to Beth.

"Why, Arthur! are you here, then?" said the girl, in a surprised but cordial tone.

"That is not astonishing, Miss Beth," he replied. "The puzzling fact is that *you* are here — and under such auspices," he added, in a lower tone.

Patsy now claimed him, with a frank greeting, and Arthur Weldon could do little more than press her hand when the line forced him to move on and give place to others.

But this especial young fellow occupied the minds of all four girls long after the crowd had swallowed him up. Diana was uneasy and obviously disturbed by the discovery that he was known to the three cousins, as well as by the memory of his tone as he addressed Louise Merrick. Louise, who had read Diana's quick glance with the accuracy of an intuitionist, felt a sudden suspicion and dislike for Diana now dominating her. Behind all this was a

mystery, which shall be explained here because the reader deserves to be more enlightened than the characters themselves.

Arthur Weldon's nature was a queer combination of weakness and strength. He was physically brave but a moral coward. The motherless son of a man wholly immersed in business, he had been much neglected in his youth and his unstable character was largely the result of this neglect. On leaving college he refused a business career planned for him by his father, who cast him off with scornful indifference, and save for a slim temporary allowance promised to disinherit him. It was during this period that Arthur met Louise and fell desperately in love with her. The girl appeared to return the young fellow's devotion, but shrewd, worldly Mrs. Merrick, discovering that the boy was practically disinherited and had no prospects whatever, forbade him the house. Louise, until now but mildly interested in the young-man, resented her mother's interference and refused to give him up. She found ways to meet Arthur Weldon outside her home, so that the situation had become complicated and dangerous when Uncle John seized his three nieces and whisked them off to Europe. Young Weldon, under an assumed name, followed and attached himself to the party; but John Merrick's suspicions were presently aroused and on discovering the identity of the youth he forbade him or Louise to "make love" or even speak of such a thing during the remainder of the trip.

The young fellow, by manly acts on some occasions and grave weaknesses on others, won Uncle John's kindly interest. The old gentleman knew human nature, and saw much to admire as well as condemn in Louise's friend. Beth and Patsy found him a pleasant comrade, and after all love-making was tabooed they were quite a harmonious party. Finally the sudden death of Weldon's father left him the possessor of a fortune. He returned to America to look after his newly-acquired business and became so immersed in it that Louise felt herself neglected when she came home expecting him to dance attendance upon her as before. She treated him coldly and he ceased calling, his volatile and sensitive nature resenting such treatment.

It is curious what little things influence the trend of human lives. Many estrangements are caused by trifles so intangible that we can scarcely locate them at all.

At first the girl was very unhappy at the alienation, but soon schooled herself to forget her former admirer. Arthur Weldon, for his part, consoled himself by plunging into social distractions and devoting himself to Diana Von Taer, whose strange personality for a time fascinated him.

The business could not hold young Weldon's vacillant temperament for long; neither could Diana. As a matter of fact his heart, more staunch than he

himself suspected, had never wavered much from Louise. Yet pride forbade his attempting to renew their former relations. It was now some months since he had seen the girl, and his eager exclamation was wrested from him by surprise and a sudden awakening to the fact that his love for her had merely slumbered.

Diana, worldly, cold and calculating as was her nature, had been profoundly touched by Arthur's devotion to her. Usually young men were soon repulsed by her unfortunate personality, which was not easily understood. Therefore her intense nature responded freely to this admirer's attentions, and if Diana could really love she loved Arthur Weldon. He had never proposed to her or even intimated it was his intention to do so, but she conceived a powerful desire to win him and had never abandoned this motive when he grew cold and appeared to desert her. Just now he was recently back from Italy, where he had passed several months, and Diana's reception was his first reappearance in society. The girl had planned to bring him to her side this evening and intended to exert her strongest fascinations to lure him back to his former allegiance; so her annoyance may be guessed when she found her three *protégées* seemingly more familiar with the young man than was she herself.

At last the line ended and the introductions were complete. The *debutantes* were at once the center of interested groups composed of those who felt it a duty or pleasure to show them attention. Diana wandered to the music room and waylaid Arthur Weldon, who was just about to make his escape from the house, having decided it was impossible to find an opportunity to converse with Louise that evening.

"I'm so glad you came, Arthur," she said, a quick glance assuring her they were not overheard. "You landed from the steamer but yesterday, I hear."

"And came straightway to pay my respects to my old friend," he answered lightly. "Isn't it unusual for you to present *debutantes*, Diana?"

"You know these girls, don't you, Arthur?"

"Yes; I met them in Europe."

"And flirted with Miss Merrick? Be honest, Arthur, I know your secret."

"Do you? Then you know we were merely good friends," said he, annoyed at her accusation.

"Of course. You called her 'Louise,' didn't you?"

"To be sure. And Patsy called me 'Arthur. You may have heard her."

"Patsy?"

"That's Miss Patricia Doyle — our dear little Patsy."

"Oh. I'm sure you didn't fall in love with *her*, at any rate."

"I'm not so sure. Everybody loves Patsy. But I had no time for love-

making. I was doing Europe."

"Wasn't that a year or so ago?" she asked, realizing he was trying to evade further reference to Louise.

"Yes."

"And since then?"

"I've been away the last six or seven months, as you know, on my second trip abroad."

"But before that — when you first returned?"

"If I remember rightly I was then much in the society of Miss Von Taer. Is the catechism ended at last?"

"Yes," she replied, laughing. "Don't think me inquisitive, Arthur; I was surprised to find you knew these girls, with whom I am myself but lightly acquainted."

"Yet you introduce them to your very select set?"

"To please my father, who wishes to please Mr. Merrick."

"I understand," said he, nodding. "But they're nice girls, Diana. You're not running chances, I assure you."

"That relieves me," she replied rather scornfully. "If Arthur Weldon will vouch for them — "

"But I don't. I'll vouch for no one — not even myself," he declared hastily. She was calmly reading his face, and did not seem to approve the text.

"Are you as fickle as ever, then, *mon cher*?" she asked, softly.

"I'm not fickle, Diana. My fault is that I'm never serious."

"Never?"

"I cannot remember ever being serious; at least, where a girl was concerned."

Diana bit her lips to restrain a frown, but her eyes, which he was avoiding, flashed wickedly.

"That is surely a fault, my Arthur," was her tender reply. "Were you never serious during our quiet evenings together; our dances, theatre parties and romps?"

"That was merely fun. And you, Diana?"

"Oh, I enjoyed the fun, too. It meant so much to me. I began to live, then, and found life very sweet. But when you suddenly left me and went abroad — ah, *that* was indeed serious."

Her tone was full of passionate yearning. He laughed, trying to appear at ease. Some sort of an understanding must be had with Diana sooner or later, and she might as well realize at this present interview that the old relations could not be restored. His nature was not brutal and he disliked to hurt her;

moreover, the boy had an uneasy feeling that he had been a far more ardent admirer of this peculiar girl than any fellow should be who had had no serious intentions; yet it would be folly to allow Diana to think she could win him back to his former allegiance. No compromising word had ever left his lips; he had never spoken of love to her. Yet the girl's attitude seemed to infer a certain possession of him which was far from agreeable.

Having gone so far, he should have said more; but here again his lack of moral courage proved his stumbling-block, and he weakly evaded a frank expression of his true feelings.

"Life," he began somewhat haltingly, to break the embarrassing pause, "is only serious when we make it so; and as soon as we make it serious it makes us unhappy. So I've adopted one invariable rule: to laugh and be gay."

"Then I too will be gay, and together we'll enjoy life," responded Diana, with an effort to speak lightly. "I shall let your moods be my moods, Arthur, as a good friend should. Are we not affinities?"

Again he knew not what to say. Her persistence in clinging to her intangible hold upon him was extremely irritating, and he realized the girl was far too clever for him to cope with and was liable to cause him future trouble. Instead of seizing the opportunity to frankly undeceive her he foolishly evaded the subject.

"You've been tempting fate to-night," he remarked with assumed carelessness. "Don't you remember that to stand four girls in a row is a bad omen?"

"Only for the one who first winks. Isn't that the way the saying goes? I seldom wink, myself," she continued, smilingly. "But I have no faith in ill omens. Their power is entirely due to mental fear."

"I think not," said Arthur, glad the conversation had taken this turn. "Once I knew a fellow with thirteen letters in his name. He had no mental fear. But he proposed to a girl — and was accepted."

She gave him one of those sudden, swift glances that were so disconcerting.

"If you had a middle initial, there would be thirteen letters in your own name, Arthur Weldon."

"But I haven't, Diana; I haven't," he protested, eagerly. "And if ever I propose to a girl I'm sure she'll refuse me. But I've no intention of doing such a crazy thing, so I'm perfectly safe."

"You cannot be sure until you try, Arthur," she replied pointedly, and with a start he became conscious that he was again treading upon dangerous ground.

“Come; let us rejoin your guests,” said he, offering her his arm. “They would all hate me if they knew I was keeping the fair Diana from them so long.”

“Arthur, I must have a good long; talk with you — one of our old, delightful confabs,” she said, earnestly. “Will you call Sunday afternoon? Then we shall be quite undisturbed.”

He hesitated.

“Sunday afternoon?” he answered.

“Yes.”

“All right; I’ll come, Diana.”

She gave him a grateful look and taking his arm allowed him to lead her back to the drawing-room. The crush was over, many having already departed. Some of the young people were dancing in the open spaces to the music of a string orchestra hidden behind a bank of ferns in the hall.

Louise and Beth were the centers of attentive circles; Patsy conversed with merry freedom with a group of ancient dowagers, who delighted in her freshness and healthy vigor and were flattered by her consideration. Mrs. Merrick — for she had been invited — sat in a corner gorgeously robed and stiff as a poker, her eyes devouring the scene. Noting the triumph of Louise she failed to realize she was herself neglected.

A single glance sufficed to acquaint Diana with all this, and after a gracious word to her guests here and there she asked Arthur to dance with her. He could not well refuse, but felt irritated and annoyed when he observed Louise’s eyes fastened upon him in amused disdain. After a few turns he discovered some departing ones waiting to bid their hostess *adieu*, and escaped from his unpleasant predicament by halting his partner before them. Then he slipped away and quietly left the house before Diana had time to miss him.

CHAPTER VII

THE HERO ENTERS AND TROUBLE BEGINS

The Von Taer reception fully launched the three nieces in society. Endorsed by Diana and backed by John Merrick's millions and their own winsome charms, they were sure to become favorites in that admirable set to which they had fortunately gained admittance.

Cards poured in upon them during; the succeeding days and they found themselves busy returning calls and attending dinners, fetes, bridge parties and similar diversions. The great Mrs. Sandringham took a decided fancy to Louise, and when the committee was appointed to arrange for the social Kermess to be held in December, this dictatorial leader had the girl's name included in the list. Naturally the favor led to all three cousins taking active part in the most famous social event of the season, and as an especial mark of favoritism they were appointed to conduct the "flower booth," one of the important features of the Kermess.

Mrs. Merrick was in the seventh heaven of ecstatic delight; Uncle John declared his three girls were sure to become shining lights, if not actual constellations, wherever they might be placed; Major Doyle growled and protested; but was secretly pleased to have "our Patsy the captain of the dress parade," where he fondly imagined she outclassed all others. All former denunciations of society at large were now ignored, even by unimpressive Beth, and the girls soon became deeply interested in their novel experiences.

Arthur Weldon sulked at home, unhappy and undecided, for a day or two after the reception. Sunday noon he dispatched a messenger to Diana with a note saying he would be unable to keep his appointment with her that afternoon. Then he went straight to the Merrick home and sent his card to Louise. The girl flushed, smiled, frowned, and decided to go down.

No one had ever interested her so much as Arthur Weldon. There had been a spice of romance about their former relations that made her still regard him as exceptional among mankind. She had been asking herself, since the night of the reception, if she still loved him, but could not come to a positive conclusion. The boy was no longer "ineligible," as he had been at first; even Uncle John could now have no serious objection to him. He was handsome, agreeable, occupied a good social position and was fairly well off in the way of worldly goods — the last point removing Mrs. Merrick's former rejection of Arthur as a desirable son-in-law.

But girls are wayward and peculiar in such an *affaire du coeur*, and none of these things might have weighed with Louise had she not discovered that Diana Von Taer was in love with Arthur and intended to win him. That

aroused the girl's fighting instincts, rendered the young man doubly important, and easily caused Louise to forget her resentment at his temporary desertion of her. Perhaps, she reflected, it had partially been her own fault. Now that Arthur showed a disposition to renew their friendship, and she might promise herself the satisfaction of defeating Diana's ambitions, it would be diplomatic, at least, to receive the youth with cordial frankness.

Therefore she greeted him smilingly and with outstretched hand, saying:

"This is quite a surprise, Mr. Weldon. I'd a notion you had forgotten me."

"No, indeed, Louise! How could you imagine such a thing?" he answered, reproachfully.

"There was some evidence of the fact," she asserted archly. "At one time you gave me no peace; then you became retiring. At last you disappeared wholly. What could I think, sir, under such circumstances?"

He stood looking down at her thoughtfully. How pretty she had grown; and how mature and womanly.

"Louise," said he, gently, "don't let us indulge in mutual reproaches. Some one must have been at fault and I'll willingly take all the blame if you will forgive me. Once we were — were good friends. We — we intended to be still more to one another, Louise, but something occurred, I don't know what, to — to separate us."

"Why, you went away," said the girl, laughing; "and that of course separated us."

"You treated me like a beggar; don't forget that part of it, dear. Of course I went away."

"And consoled yourself with a certain Miss Diana Von Taer. It has lately been rumored you are engaged to her."

"Me? What nonsense?" But he hushed guiltily, and Louise noted everything and determined he should not escape punishment.

"Diana, at least, is in earnest," she remarked, with assumed indifference. "You may not care to deny that you have been very attentive to her."

"Not especially so," he declared, stoutly.

"People gossip, you know. And Diana is charming."

"She's an iceberg!"

"Oh, you have discovered that? Was she wholly unresponsive, then?"

"No," he said, with a touch of anger. "I have never cared for Diana, except in a friendly way. She amused me for a while when — when I was wretched. But I never made love to her; not for a moment. Afterward, why — then----"

"Well; what then?" as he hesitated, growing red again.

"I found she had taken my careless attentions in earnest, and the play was

getting dangerous. So I went abroad."

Louise considered this explanation seriously. She believed he was speaking the truth, so far as he knew. But at the same time she realized from her own experience that Arthur might as easily deceive himself as Diana in his estimate as to the warmth of the devotion he displayed. His nature was impetuous and ardent. That Diana should have taken his attentions seriously and become infatuated with the handsome young fellow was not a matter to cause surprise.

Gradually Louise felt her resentment disappearing. In Arthur's presence the charm of his personality influenced her to be lenient with his shortcomings. And his evident desire for a reconciliation found an echo in her own heart.

Mutual explanations are excellent to clear a murky atmosphere, and an hour's earnest conversation did much to restore these two congenial spirits to their former affectionate relations. Of course Louise did not succumb too fully to his pleadings, for her feminine instinct warned her to keep the boy on "the anxious seat" long enough to enable him to appreciate her value and the honor of winning her good graces. Moreover, she made some severe conditions and put him on his good behavior. If he proved worthy, and was steadfast and true, why then the future might reward him freely.

Diana had been making careful plans for her interview with Arthur that Sunday afternoon. With no futile attempt to deceive herself as to existent conditions she coldly weighed the chances in her mental scale and concluded she had sufficient power to win this unstable youth to her side and induce him to forget that such a person as Louise Merrick ever existed.

Diana was little experienced in such affairs, it is true. Arthur Weldon had been her first and only declared admirer, and no one living had studied his peculiar nature more critically than this observant girl. Also she knew well her own physical failings. She realized that her personality was to many repulsive, rather than attractive, and this in spite of her exquisite form, her perfect breeding and many undeniable accomplishments. Men, as a rule, seldom remained at her side save through politeness, and even seemed to fear her; but never until now had she cared for any man sufficiently to wish to retain or interest him. There were unsuspected fascinations lying dormant in her nature, and Miss Von Taer calmly reflected that the exercise of these qualities, backed by her native wit and capacity for intrigue, could easily accomplish the object she desired.

Thus she had planned her campaign and carefully dressed herself in anticipation of Arthur's call when his note came canceling the engagement. After rereading his lame excuse she sat down in a quiet corner and began to

think. The first gun had been fired, the battle was on, and like a wise general she carefully marshaled her forces for combat.

An hour or two later she turned to her telephone book and called up the Merrick establishment. A voice, that of a maid, evidently, answered her.

"I wish to speak with Miss Merrick," said Diana.

Louise, annoyed at being disturbed, left Arthur's side to respond to the call.

"Who is it, please?" she asked.

"Is Mr. Weldon still there, or has he gone?" enquired Diana, disguising her voice and speaking imperatively..

"Why, he's still here," answered bewildered Louise; "but who is talking, please?"

No answer.

"Do you wish to speak with Mr. Weldon?" continued the girl, mystified at such an odd procedure.

Diana hung up her receiver, severing the connection. The click of the instrument assured Louise there was no use in waiting longer, so she returned to Arthur. She could not even guess who had called her. Arthur could, though, when he had heard her story, and Diana's impudent meddling made him distinctly uneasy. He took care not to enlighten Louise, and the incident was soon forgotten by her.

"It proved just as I expected," mused Diana, huddled in her reclining' chair. "The fool has thrown me over to go to her. But this is not important. With the situation so clearly defined I shall know exactly what I must do to protect my own interests."

Mr. Von Taer was away from home that Sunday afternoon, and would not return until a late hour. Diana went to the telephone again and after several unsuccessful attempts located her cousin, Mr. Charles Connoldy Mershone, at a club.

"It's Diana," she said, when at last communication was established. "I want you to come over and see me; at once."

"You'll have to excuse me, Di," was the answer. "I was unceremoniously kicked out the last time, you know."

"Father's away. It's all right, Charlie. Come along."

"Can't see it, my fair cousin. You've all treated me like a bull-pup, and I'm not anxious to mix up with that sort of a relationship. Anything more? I'm going to play pool to win my dinner."

"Funds running low, Charlie?"

"Worse than that; they're invisible."

"Then pay attention. Call a taxi at once, and get here as soon as you can.

I'll foot the bill — and any others that happen to be bothering you."

A low, surprised whistle came over the wire.

"What's up, Di?" he asked, with new interest.

"Come and find out."

"Can I be useful?"

"Assuredly; to yourself."

"All right; I'm on the way."

He hung up, and Diana gave a sigh of content as she slowly returned to her den and the easy chair, where Mr. Mershone found her "coiled" some half hour later.

"This is a queer go," said the young man, taking a seat and glancing around with knitted brows. "It isn't so long since dear Uncle Hedrik tumbled me out of here neck and crop; and now Cousin Diana invites me to return."

At first glance young Mershone seemed an attractive young fellow, tall, finely formed and well groomed. But his eyes were too close together and his handsome features bore unmistakable marks of dissipation.

"You disgraced us a year or so ago, Charlie," said Diana, in her soft, quiet accents, "and under such circumstances we could not tolerate you. You can scarcely blame us for cutting your acquaintance. But now — "

"Well, now?" he enquired coolly, trying to read her impassive face.

"I need the services of just such an unscrupulous and clever individual as you have proven yourself to be. I'm willing to pay liberally for those services, and you doubtless need the money. Are we allies, then?"

Mershone laughed, with little genuine mirth.

"Of course, my dear cousin," he responded; "provided you propose any legal villainy. I'm not partial to the police; but I really need the money, as you suggest."

"And you will be faithful?" she asked, regarding him doubtfully.

"To the cause, you may be sure. But understand me: I balk at murder and burglary. Somehow, the police seem to know me. I'll not do anything that might lead to a jail sentence, because there are easier ways to get money. However, I don't imagine your proposed plan is very desperate, Diana; it's more liable to be dirty work. Never mind; you may command me, my dear cousin — if the pay is ample."

"The pay will be ample if you succeed," she began.

"I don't like that. I may not succeed."

"Listen to me, Charlie. Do you know Arthur Weldon?"

"Slightly; not very well."

"I intend to marry him. He has paid me marked attentions in the past; but now — he — "

“Wants to slip the leash. Quite natural, my dear.”

“He has become infatuated with another girl; a light-headed, inexperienced little thing who is likely to marry the first man who asks her. She is very rich — in her own right, too — and her husband will be a fortunate man.”

Mershone stared at her. Then he whistled, took a few turns up and down the room, and reseated himself.

“Evidently!” he ejaculated, lighting a cigarette without permission and then leaning back thoughtfully in his chair.

“Charlie,” continued Diana, “you may as well marry Louise Merrick and settle down to a life of respectability. You’ve a dashing, masterful way which no girl of her sort can long resist. I propose that you make desperate love to Louise Merrick and so cut Arthur Weldon out of the deal entirely. My part of the comedy will be to attract him to my side again. Now you have the entire proposition in a nutshell.”

He smoked for a time in reflective silence.

“What’s the girl like?” he enquired, presently. “Is she attractive?”

“Sufficiently so to fascinate Arthur Weldon. Moreover, she has just been introduced in our set, and knows nothing of your shady past history. Even if rumors came to her ears, young creatures of her sort often find a subtle charm in a man accused of being ‘naughty.’“

“Humph!”

“If you win her, you get a wife easily managed and a splendid fortune to squander as you please.”

“Sounds interesting, Di, doesn’t it? But — ”

“In regard to preliminary expenses,” she interrupted, calmly, “I have said that your reward will be ample when you have won the game. But meantime I am willing to invest the necessary funds in the enterprise. I will allow you a thousand a month.”

“Bah! that’s nothing at all!” said he, contemptuously, as he flicked the ashes from his cigarette.

“What do you demand, then?”

“Five hundred a week, in advance. It’s an expensive job, Di.”

“Very well; I will give you five hundred a week; but only as long as you work earnestly to carry out the plot. I shall watch you, Charlie. And you must not lose sight of the ultimate reward.”

“I won’t, my sweet cousin. It’s a bargain,” he said, readily enough. “When do I begin, and what’s the program?”

“Draw your chair nearer,” said Diana, restraining her triumphant joy. “I’ll explain everything to you in detail. It will be my part to plan, and yours to

execute.”

“Good!” he exclaimed, with a cheerful grin. “I feel like an executioner already!”

CHAPTER VIII

OPENING THE CAMPAIGN

Louise's little romance, which now began to thrive vigorously, was regarded with calmness by her cousins and her mother, who knew of the former episode between her and Arthur and attached little importance to the renewed flirtation in which they indulged. That they were deceived in their estimate was due to the girl's reputation for frivolity where young men were concerned. She had been dubbed a "flirt" ever since she first began to wear long dresses, and her nature was not considered deep enough for her heart to be ever seriously affected. Therefore the young girl was gravely misjudged.

Louise was not one to bare her heart, even to her most intimate friends, and no one now suspected that at last her deepest, truest womanly affections were seriously involved. The love for Arthur that had lain dormant in her heart was aroused at a time when she was more mature and capable of recognizing truly her feelings, so that it was not long before she surrendered her reserve and admitted to him that life would mean little for her unless they might pass the years together. For his part, young Weldon sincerely loved Louise, and had never wavered from his firm devotion during all the past months of misunderstanding.

The general impression that they were "merely flirting" afforded the lovers ample opportunity to have their walks and drives together undisturbed, and during these soulful communions they arrived at such a perfect understanding that both were confident nothing could ever disturb their trust and confidence.

It was at a theatre party that the three *debutantes* first met Charlie Mershone, but they saw little of him that first evening and scarcely noticed his presence. Louise, indeed, noted that his eyes were fixed upon her more than once with thinly veiled admiration, and without a thought of disloyalty to Arthur, but acting upon the impulse of her coquettish nature, she responded with a demure smile of encouragement.

Charlie Mershone was an adept at playing parts. He at first regarded Louise much as a hunter does the game he is stalking. Patsy Doyle was more jolly and Beth De Graf more beautiful than Miss Merrick; but the young man would in any event have preferred the latter's dainty personality. When he found her responsive to his admiring glances he was astounded to note his heart beating rapidly — a thing quite foreign to his usual temperament. Yes, this girl would do very nicely, both as a wife and as a banker. Assuredly the game was well worth playing, as Diana had asserted. He must make it his business to discover what difficulties must be overcome in winning her. Of

course Arthur Weldon was the main stumbling-block; but Weldon was a ninny; he must be thrust aside; Diana had promised to attend to that.

Never in his life had Charles Connoldy Mershone been in earnest before. After his first interview with Louise Merrick he became in deadly earnest. His second meeting with her was at Marie Delmar's bridge whist party, where they had opportunity for an extended conversation. Arthur was present this evening, but by some chance Mershone drew Louise for his partner at cards, and being a skillful player he carried her in progression from table to table, leaving poor Arthur far behind and indulging in merry repartee and mild flirtation until they felt they were quite well acquainted.

Louise found the young man a charming conversationalist. He had a dashing, confidential way of addressing the girl which impressed her as flattering and agreeable, while his spirits were so exuberant and sparkling with humor that she was thoroughly amused every moment while in his society. Indeed, Mr. Mershone was really talented, and had he possessed any manly attributes, or even the ordinary honorable instincts of mankind, there is little doubt he would have been a popular favorite. But he had made his mark, and it was a rather grimy one. From earliest youth he had been guilty of discreditable acts that had won for him the contempt of all right-minded people. That he was still accepted with lax tolerance by some of the more thoughtless matrons of the fashionable set was due to his family name. They could not forget that in spite of his numerous lapses from respectability he was still a Mershone. Not one of the careless mothers who admitted him to her house would have allowed her daughter to wed him, and the degree of tolerance extended to him was fully appreciated by Mershone himself. He knew he was practically barred from the most desirable circles and seldom imposed himself upon his former acquaintances; but now, with a distinct object in view, he callously disregarded the doubtful looks he encountered and showed himself in every drawing-room where he could secure an invitation or impudently intrude himself. He made frank avowals that he had "reformed" and abandoned his evil ways forever. Some there were who accepted this statement seriously, and Diana furthered his cause by treating him graciously whenever they met, whereas she had formerly refused to recognize her cousin.

Louise knew nothing at all of Charlie Mershone's history and permitted him to call when he eagerly requested the favor; but on the way home from the Delmars Arthur, who had glowered at the usurper all the evening, took pains to hint to Louise that Mershone was an undesirable acquaintance and had a bad record. Of course she laughed at him and teased him, thinking he was jealous and rejoicing that in Mershone she had a tool to "keep Arthur

toeing the mark." As a matter of truth she had really missed her lover's companionship that evening, but forbore to apprise him of the fact.

And now the great Kermess began to occupy the minds of the three cousins, who were to share the important "Flower Booth" between them. The Kermess was to be the holiday sensation of the season and bade fair to eclipse the horse show in popularity. It was primarily a charitable entertainment, as the net receipts were to be divided among several deserving hospitals; nevertheless it was classed as a high society function and only the elect were to take active part in the affair.

The ball room at the Waldorf had been secured and many splendid booths were to be erected for the sale of novelties, notions and refreshments. There were to be lotteries and auctions, national dances given by groups of society belles, and other novel entertainments calculated to empty the pockets of the unwary.

Beth was somewhat indignant to find that she and her cousins, having been assigned to the flower booth, were expected to erect a pavilion and decorate it at their own expense, as well as to provide the stock of flowers to be sold. "There is no fund for preliminary expenses, you know," remarked Mrs. Sandringham, "and of course all the receipts are to go to charity; so there is nothing to do but stand these little bills ourselves. We all do it willingly. The papers make a good deal of the Kermess, and the advertisement we get is worth all it costs us."

Beth did not see the force of this argument. She thought it was dreadful for society — really good society — to wish to advertise itself; but gradually she was learning that this was merely a part of the game. To be talked about, to have her goings and comings heralded in the society columns and her gowns described on every possible occasion, seemed the desire of every society woman, and she who could show the biggest scrap-book of clippings was considered of highest importance..

Uncle John laughed joyously when told that the expenses of the flower booth would fall on the shoulders of his girls and there was no later recompense.

"Why not?" he cried. "Mustn't we pay the fiddler if we dance?"

"It's a hold-up game," declared Beth, angrily. "I'll have nothing to do with it."

"Yes, you will, my dear," replied her uncle; "and to avoid separating you chicks from your pin-money I'm going to stand every cent of the expense myself. Why, it's for charity, isn't it? Charity covers a multitude of sins, and I'm just a miserable sinner that needs a bath-robe to snuggle in. How can the poor be better served than by robbing the rich? Go ahead, girls, and rig up

the swellest booth that money will build. I'll furnish as many flowers as you can sell, and Charity ought to get a neat little nest-egg out of the deal."

"That's nice of you," said Patsy, kissing him; "but it's an imposition, all the same."

"It's a blessing, my dear. It will help a bit to ease off that dreadful income that threatens to crush me," he rejoined, smiling at them. And the nieces made no further protest, well knowing the kindly old gentleman would derive untold pleasure in carrying out his generous plans.

The flower booth, designed by a famous architect, proved a splendid and most imposing structure. It was capped by a monster bouquet of artificial orchids in *papier-maché,* which reached twenty feet into the air. The three cousins had their gowns especially designed for the occasion. Beth represented a lily, Louise a Gold-of-Ophir rose, and Patricia a pansy.

The big ball room had been turned over to the society people several days in advance, that the elaborate preparations might be completed in time, and during this period groups of busy, energetic young folks gathered by day and in the evenings, decorating, flirting, rehearsing the fancy dances, and amusing themselves generally.

Arthur Weldon was there to assist Uncle John's nieces; but his pleasure was somewhat marred by the persistent presence of Charlie Mershone, who, having called once or twice upon Louise, felt at liberty to attach himself to her party. The ferocious looks of his rival were ignored by this designing young man and he had no hesitation in interrupting a *tête-à-tête* to monopolize the girl for himself.

Louise was amused, thinking it fun to worry Arthur by flirting mildly with Mr. Mershone, for whom she cared not a jot. Both Patsy and Beth took occasion to remonstrate with her for this folly, for having known Weldon for a long time and journeyed with him through a part of Europe, they naturally espoused his cause, liking him as much as they intuitively disliked Mershone.

One evening Arthur, his patience well-nigh exhausted, talked seriously with Louise.

"This fellow Mershone," said he, "is a bad egg, a despicable son of a decadent family. His mother was Hedrik Von Taer's sister, but the poor thing has been dead many years. Not long ago Charlie was tabooed by even the rather fast set he belonged to, and the Von Taers, especially, refused to recognize their relative. Now he seems to go everywhere again. I don't know what has caused the change, I'm sure."

"Why, he has reformed," declared Louise; "Diana told me so. She said he had been a bit wild, as all young men are; but now his behavior is

irreproachable."

"I don't believe a word of it," insisted Arthur. "Mershone is a natural cad; he's been guilty of all sorts of dirty tricks, and is capable of many more. If you'll watch out, Louise, you'll see that all the girls are shy of being found in his society, and all the chaperons cluck to their fledglings the moment the hawk appears. You're a novice in society just yet, my dear, and it won't do you any good to encourage Charlie Mershone, whom everyone else avoids."

"He's very nice," returned Louise, lightly.

"Yes; he must be nicer than I am," admitted the young man, glumly, and thereupon he became silent and morose and Louise found her evening spoiled.

The warning did not fall on barren ground, however. In the seclusion of her own room the girl thought it all over and decided she had teased her true lover enough. Arthur had not scolded or reproached her, despite his annoyance, and she had a feeling that his judgment of Charlie Mershone was quite right. Although the latter was evidently madly in love with her the girl had the discretion to see how selfish and unrestrained was his nature, and once or twice he had already frightened her by his impetuosity. She decided to retreat cautiously but positively from further association with him, and at once began to show the young man coolness.

Mershone must have been chagrined, but he did not allow Louise to see there was any change in their relations as far as he was concerned. He merely redoubled his attentions, sending her flowers and bonbons daily, accompanied by ardently worded but respectful notes. Really, Louise was in a quandary, and she frankly admitted to Arthur that she had brought this embarrassment upon herself. Yet Arthur could do or say little to comfort her. He longed secretly to "punch Mershone's head," but could find no occasion for such decided action.

Diana, during this time, treated both Arthur and Louise with marked cordiality. Believing her time would come to take part in the comedy she refrained from interfering prematurely with the progress of events. She managed to meet her accomplice at frequent intervals and was pleased that there was no necessity to urge Charlie to do his utmost in separating the lovers.

"I'm bound to win, Di," he said grimly, "for I love the girl even better than I do her fortune. And of one thing you may rest assured; Weldon shall never marry her."

"What will you do?" asked Diana, curiously.

"Anything! Everything that is necessary to accomplish my purpose."

"Be careful," said she warningly. "Keep a cool head, Charlie, and don't

do anything foolish. Still — ”

“Well?”

“If it is necessary to take a few chances, do it. Arthur Weldon must not marry Louise Merrick!”

CHAPTER IX

THE VON TAER PEARLS

Uncle John really had more fun out of the famous Kermess than anyone else. The preparations gave him something to do, and he enjoyed doing — openly, as well as in secret ways. Having declared that he would stock the flower booth at his own expense, he confided to no one his plans. The girls may have thought he would merely leave orders with a florist; but that was not the Merrick way of doing things. Instead, he visited the most famous greenhouses within a radius of many miles, contracting for all the floral blooms that art and skill could produce. The Kermess was to be a three days' affair, and each day the floral treasures of the cast were delivered in reckless profusion at the flower booth, which thus became the center of attraction and the marvel of the public. The girls were delighted to be able to dispense such blooms, and their success as saleswomen was assured at once.

Of course the fair vendors were ignorant of the value of their wares, for Uncle John refused to tell them how extravagant he had been; so they were obliged to guess at the sums to be demanded and in consequence sold priceless orchids and rare hothouse flora at such ridiculous rates that Mr. Merrick chuckled with amusement until he nearly choked.

The public being "cordially invited" Uncle John was present on that first important evening, and — wonder of wonders — was arrayed in an immaculate full-dress suit that fitted his chubby form like the skin of a banana. Mayor Doyle, likewise disguised, locked arms with his brother-in-law and stalked gravely among the throng; but neither ever got to a point in the big room where the flower booth was not in plain sight. The Major's pride in "our Patsy" was something superb; Uncle John was proud of all three of his nieces. As the sale of wares was for the benefit of charity these old fellows purchased liberally — mostly flowers and had enough parcels sent home to fill a delivery wagon.

One disagreeable incident, only, marred this otherwise successful evening — successful especially for the three cousins, whose beauty and grace won the hearts of all.

Diana Von Taer was stationed in the "Hindoo Booth," and the oriental costume she wore exactly fitted her sensuous style of beauty. To enhance its effect she had worn around her neck the famous string of Von Taer pearls, a collection said to be unmatched in beauty and unequaled in value in all New York.

The "Hindoo Booth" was near enough to the "Flower Booth" for Diana to watch the cousins, and the triumph of her late *protégées* was very bitter for

her to endure. Especially annoying was it to find Arthur Weldon devoting himself assiduously to Louise, who looked charming in her rose gown and favored Arthur in a marked way, although Charlie Mershone, refusing to be ignored, also leaned over the counter of the booth and chatted continually, striving to draw Miss Merrick's attention to himself.

Forced to observe all this, Diana soon lost her accustomed coolness. The sight of the happy faces of Arthur and Louise aroused all the rancor and subtile wit that she possessed, and she resolved upon an act that she would not before have believed herself capable of. Leaning down, she released the catch of the famous pearls and unobserved concealed them in a handkerchief. Then, leaving her booth, she sauntered slowly over to the floral display, which was surrounded for the moment by a crowd of eager customers. Many of the vases and pottery jars which had contained flowers now stood empty, and just before the station of Louise Merrick the stock was sadly depleted. This was, of course, offset by the store of money in the little drawer beside the fair sales-lady, and Louise, having greeted Diana with a smile and nod, turned to renew her conversation with the young men besieging her.

Diana leaned gracefully over the counter, resting the hand containing the handkerchief over the mouth of an empty Doulton vase — empty save for the water which had nourished the flowers. At the same time she caught Louise's eye and with a gesture brought the girl to her side.

"Those young men are wealthy," she said, carelessly, her head close to that of Louise. "Make them pay well for their purchases, my dear."

"I can't rob them, Diana," was the laughing rejoinder.

"But it is your duty to rob, at a Kermess, and in the interests of charity," persisted Diana, maintaining her voice at a whisper.

Louise was annoyed.

"Thank you," she said, and went back to the group awaiting her.

The floral booth was triangular, Beth officiated at one of the three sides, Patsy at another, and Louise at the third. Diana now passed softly around the booth, interchanging a word with the other two girls, after which she returned to her own station.

Presently, while chatting with a group of acquaintances, she suddenly clasped her throat and assuming an expression of horror exclaimed:

"My pearls!"

"What, the Von Taer pearls?" cried one.

"The Von Taer pearls," said Diana, as if dazed by her misfortune.

"And you've lost them, dear?"

"They're lost!" she echoed.

Well, there was excitement then, you may be sure. One man hurried to

notify the door-keeper and the private detective employed oh all such occasions, while others hastily searched the booth — of course in vain. Diana seemed distracted and the news spread quickly through the assemblage.

“Have you left this booth at all?” asked a quiet voice, that of the official whose business it was to investigate.

“I — I merely walked over to the floral booth opposite, and exchanged a word with Miss Merrick, and the others there,” she explained.

The search was resumed, and Charlie Mershone sauntered over.

“What’s this, Di? Lost the big pearls, I hear,” he said.

She took him aside and whispered something to him. He nodded and returned at once to the flower booth, around which a crowd of searchers now gathered, much to the annoyance of Louise and her cousins.

“It’s all foolishness, you know,” said Uncle John, to the Major, confidentially. “If the girl really dropped her pearls some one has picked them up, long ago.”

Young Mershone seemed searching the floral booth as earnestly as the others, and awkwardly knocked the Doulton vase from the shelf with his elbow. It smashed to fragments and in the pool of water on the floor appeared the missing pearls.

There was an awkward silence for a moment, while all eyes turned curiously upon Louise, who served this side of the triangle. The girl appeared turned to stone as she gazed down at the gems. Mershone laughed disagreeably and picked up the recovered treasure, which Diana ran forward and seized.

“H-m-m!” said the detective, with a shrug; “this is a strange occurrence — a very strange occurrence, indeed. Miss Von Taer, do you wish — ”

“No!” exclaimed Diana, haughtily. “I accuse no one. It is enough that an accident has restored to me the heirloom.”

Stiffly she marched back to her own booth, and the crowd quietly dispersed, leaving only Arthur, Uncle John and the Major standing to support Louise and her astonished cousins.

“Why, confound it!” cried the little millionaire, with a red face, “does the jade mean to insinuate — ”

“Not at all, sor,” interrupted the Major, sternly; “her early education has been neglected, that’s all.”

“Come dear,” pleaded Arthur to Louise; “let us go home.”

“By no means!” announced Beth, positively; “let us stay where we belong. Why, we’re not half sold out yet!”

CHAPTER X

MISLED

Arthur Weldon met Mershone at a club next afternoon. “You low scoundrel!” he exclaimed. “It was *your* trick to accuse Miss Merrick of a theft last night.”

“Was she accused?” enquired the other, blandly. “I hadn’t heard, really.”

“You did it yourself!”

“Dear me!” said Mershone, deliberately lighting a cigarette.

“You or your precious cousin — you’re both alike,” declared Arthur, bitterly. “But you have given us wisdom, Mershone. We’ll see you don’t trick us again.”

The young man stared at him, between puffs of smoke.

“It occurs to me, Weldon, that you’re becoming insolent. It won’t do, my boy. Unless you guard your tongue — ”

“Bah! Resent it, if you dare; you coward.”

“Coward?”

“Yes. A man who attacks an innocent girl is a coward. And you’ve been a coward all your life, Mershone, for one reason or another. No one believes in your pretended reform. But I want to warn you to keep away from Miss Merrick, hereafter, or I’ll take a hand in your punishment myself.”

For a moment the two eyed one another savagely. They were equally matched in physique; but Arthur was right, there was no fight in Mershone; that is, of the knock-down order. He would fight in his own way, doubtless, and this made him more dangerous than his antagonist supposed.

“What right have you, sir, to speak for Miss Merrick?” he demanded.

“The best right in the world,” replied Arthur. “She is my promised wife.”

“Indeed! Since when?”

“That is none of your affair, Mershone. As a matter of fact, however, that little excitement you created last night resulted in a perfect understanding between us.”

“*I* created!”

“You, of course. Miss Merrick does not care to meet you again. You will do well to avoid her in the future.”

“I don’t believe you, Weldon. You’re bluffing.”

“Am I? Then dare to annoy Miss Merrick again and I’ll soon convince you of my sincerity.”

With this parting shot he walked away, leaving Mershone really at a loss to know whether he was in earnest or not. To solve the question he called a taxicab and in a few minutes gave his card to the Merrick butler with a

request to see Miss Louise.

The man returned with a message that Miss Merrick was engaged.

“Please tell her it is important,” insisted Mershone.

Again the butler departed, and soon returned.

“Any message for Miss Merrick must be conveyed in writing, sir,” he said, “She declines to see you.”

Mershone went away white with anger. We may credit him with loving Louise as intensely as a man of his caliber can love anyone. His sudden dismissal astounded him and made him frantic with disappointment. Louise’s treatment of the past few days might have warned him, but he had no intuition of the immediate catastrophe that had overtaken him. It wasn’t his self-pride that was injured; that had become so battered there was little of it left; but he had set his whole heart on winning this girl and felt that he could not give her up.

Anger toward Weldon was prominent amongst his emotion. He declared between his set teeth that if Louise was lost to him she should never marry Weldon. Not on Diana’s account, but for his own vengeful satisfaction was this resolve made.

He rode straight to his cousin and told her the news. The statement that Arthur was engaged to marry Louise Merrick drove her to a wild anger no less powerful because she restrained any appearance of it. Surveying her cousin steadily through her veiled lashes she asked:

“Is there no way we can prevent this thing?”

Mershone stalked up and down before her like a caged beast. His eyes were red and wicked; his lips were pressed tightly together.

“Diana,” said he, “I’ve never wanted anything in this world as I want that girl. I can’t let that mollycoddle marry her!”

She flushed, and then frowned. It was not pleasant to hear the man of her choice spoken of with such contempt, but after all their disappointment and desires were alike mutual and she could not break with Charlie at this juncture.

Suddenly he paused and asked:

“Do you still own that country home near East Orange?”

“Yes; but we never occupy it now. Father does not care for the place.”

“Is it deserted?”

“Practically so. Madame Cerise is there in charge.”

“Old Cerise? I was going to ask you what had become of that clever female.”

“She was too clever, Charlie. She knew too much of our affairs, and was always prying into things that did not concern her. So father took an

antipathy to the poor creature, and because she has served our family for so long sent her to care for the house at East Orange."

"Pensioned her, eh? Well, this is good news, Di; perhaps the best news in the world. I believe it will help clear up the situation. Old Cerise and I always understood each other."

"Will you explain?" asked Diana, coldly.

"I think not, my fair cousin. I prefer to keep my own counsel. You made a bad mess of that little deal last night, and are responsible for the climax that faces us. Besides, a woman is never a good conspirator. I know what you want; and I know what I want. So I'll work this plan alone, if you please. And I'll win, Di; I'll win as sure as fate — if you'll help me."

"You ask me to help you and remain in the dark?"

"Yes; it's better so. Write me a note to Cerise and tell her to place the house and herself unreservedly at my disposal."

She stared at him fixedly, and he returned the look with an evil smile. So they sat in silence a moment. Then slowly she arose and moved to her escritoire, drawing a sheet of paper toward her and beginning to write.

"Is there a telephone at the place?" enquired Mershone abruptly.

"Yes."

"Then telephone Cerise after I'm gone. That will make it doubly sure. And give me the number, too, so I can jot it down. I may need it."

Diana quietly tore up the note.

"The telephone is better," she said. "Being in the dark, sir, I prefer not to commit myself in writing."

"You're quite right, Di," he exclaimed, admiringly. "But for heaven's sake don't forget to telephone Madame Cerise."

"I won't Charlie. And, see here, keep your precious plans to yourself, now and always. I intend to know nothing of what you do."

"I'm merely the cats-paw, eh? Well, never mind. Is old Cerise to be depended upon, do you think?"

"Why not?" replied the girl. "Cerise belongs to the Von Taers — body and soul!"

CHAPTER XI

THE BROWN LIMOUSINE

The second evening of the society Kermess passed without unusual event and proved very successful in attracting throngs of fashionable people to participate in its pleasures.

Louise and her cousins were at their stations early, and the second installment of Uncle John's flowers was even more splendid and profuse than the first. It was not at all difficult to make sales, and the little money drawer began to bulge with its generous receipts.

Many a gracious smile or nod or word was bestowed upon Miss Merrick by the society folk; for these people had had time to consider the accusation against her implied by Diana Von Taer's manner when the pearls were discovered in the empty flower vase. Being rather impartial judges — for Diana was not a popular favorite with her set — they decided it was absurd to suppose a niece of wealthy old John Merrick would descend to stealing any one's jewelry. Miss Merrick might have anything her heart desired without pausing to count the cost, and moreover she was credited with sufficient common sense to realize that the Von Taer heirlooms might easily be recognized anywhere. So a little gossip concerning the queer incident had turned the tide of opinion in Louise's favor, and as she was a recent *debutante* with a charming personality all vied to assure her she was held blameless.

A vast coterie of the select hovered about the flower booth all the evening, and the cousins joyously realized they had scored one of the distinct successes of the Kermess. Arthur could not get very close to Louise this evening; but he enjoyed her popularity and from his modest retirement was able to exchange glances with her at intervals, and these glances assured him he was seldom absent from her thoughts.

Aside from this, he had the pleasure of glowering ferociously upon Charlie Mershone, who, failing to obtain recognition from Miss Merrick, devoted himself to his cousin Diana, or at least lounged nonchalantly in the neighborhood of the Hindoo Booth. Mershone was very quiet. There was a speculative look upon his features that denoted an undercurrent of thought.

Diana's face was as expressionless as ever. She well knew her action of the previous evening had severed the cordial relations formerly existing between her and Mr. Merrick's nieces, and determined to avoid the possibility of a snub by keeping aloof from them. She greeted whoever approached her station in her usual gracious and cultured manner, and refrained from even glancing toward Louise.

Hedrik Von Taer appeared for an hour this evening. He quietly expressed his satisfaction at the complete arrangements of the Kermess, chatted a moment with his daughter, and then innocently marched over to the flower booth and made a liberal purchase from each of the three girls. Evidently the old gentleman had no inkling of the incident of the previous evening, or that Diana was not still on good terms with the young ladies she had personally introduced to society. His action amused many who noted it, and Louise blushing but thoroughly self-possessed, exchanged her greetings with Diana's father and thanked him heartily for his purchase. Mr. Von Taer stared stonily at Charlie Mershone, but did not speak to him.

Going out he met John Merrick, and the two men engaged in conversation most cordially.

"You did the trick all right, Von Taer," said the little millionaire, "and I'm much obliged, as you may suppose. You're not ashamed of my three nieces, I take it?"

"Your nieces, Mr. Merrick, are very charming young women," was the dignified reply. "They will grace any station in life to which they may be called."

When the evening's entertainment came to an end Arthur Weldon took Louise home in his new brown limousine, leaving Patsy and her father, Uncle John and Beth to comfortably fill the Doyle motor car. Now that the engagement of the young people had been announced and accepted by their friends, it seemed very natural for them to prefer their own society.

"What do you think of it, Uncle John, anyhow?" asked Patsy, as they rode home.

"It's all right, dear," he announced, with a sigh. "I hate to see my girls take the matrimonial dive, but I guess they've got to come to it, sooner or later."

"Later, for me," laughed Patsy.

"As for young Weldon," continued Mr. Merrick, reflectively, "he has some mighty good points, as I found out long ago. Also he has some points that need filing down. But I guess he'll average up with most young men, and Louise seems to like him. So let's try to encourage 'em to be happy; eh, my dears?"

"Louise," said Beth, slowly, "is no more perfect than Arthur. They both have faults which time may eradicate, and as at present they are not disposed to be hypercritical they ought to get along nicely together."

"If 't was me," said the Major, oracularly, "I'd never marry Weldon."

"He won't propose to you, Daddy dear," returned Patsy, mischievously; "he prefers Louise."

“I decided long ago,” said Uncle John, “that”

I’d never be allowed to pick out the husbands for my three girls. Husbands are a matter of taste, I guess, and a girl ought to know what sort she wants. If she don’t, and makes a mistake, that’s *her* look-out. So you can all choose for yourselves, when the time comes, and I’ll stand by you, my dears, through thick and thin. If the husband won’t play fair, you can always bet your Uncle John will.”

“Oh, we know, that,” said Patsy, simply; and Beth added: “Of course, Uncle, dear.”

Thursday evening, the third and last of the series, was after all the banner night of the great Kermess. All the world of society was present and such wares as remained unsold in the booths were quickly auctioned off by several fashionable gentlemen with a talent for such brigandage. Then, the national dances and songs having been given and received enthusiastically, a grand ball wound up the occasion in the merriest possible way.

Charlie Mershone was much in evidence this evening, as he had been before; but he took no active part in the proceedings and refrained from dancing, his pet amusement. Diana observed that he made frequent trips downstairs, perhaps to the hotel offices. No one paid any attention to his movements, except his cousin, and Miss Von Taer, watching him intently, decided that underneath his calm exterior lurked a great deal of suppressed excitement.

At last the crowd began to disperse. Uncle John and the Major took Beth and Patsy away early, as soon as their booth was closed; but Louise stayed for a final waltz or two with Arthur. She soon found, however, that the evening’s work and excitement had tired her, and asked to be taken home.

“I’ll go and get the limousine around,” said Arthur. “That new chauffeur is a stupid fellow. By the time you’ve managed in this jam to get your wraps I shall be ready. Come down in the elevator and I’ll meet you at the Thirty-second street entrance.”

As he reached the street a man — an ordinary servant, to judge from his appearance — ran into him full tilt, and when they recoiled from the impact the fellow with a muttered curse raised his fist and struck young Weldon a powerful blow. Reeling backward, a natural anger seized Arthur, who was inclined to be hot-headed, and he also struck out with his fists, never pausing to consider that the more dignified act would be to call the police.

The little spurt of fistcuffs was brief, but it gave Mershone, who stood in the shadow of the door-way near by, time to whisper to a police officer, who promptly seized the disputants and held them both in a firm grip.

“What’s all this?” he demanded, sternly.

“That drunken loafer assaulted me without cause” gasped Arthur, panting.

“It’s a lie!” retorted the man, calmly; “he struck me first.”

“Well, I arrest you both,” said the officer.

“Arrest!” cried Arthur, indignantly; “why, confound it, man, I’m — ”

“No talk!” was the stern command. “Come along and keep quiet.”

As if the whole affair had been premeditated and prearranged a patrol wagon at that instant backed to the curb and in spite of Arthur Weldon’s loud protests he was thrust inside with his assailant and at once driven away at a rapid gait.

At the same moment a brown limousine drew up quietly before the entrance.

Louise, appearing in the doorway in her opera cloak, stood hesitating on the steps, peering into the street for Arthur. A man in livery approached her.

“This way, please, Miss Merrick,” he said. “Mr. Weldon begs you to be seated in the limousine. He will join you in a moment.”

With this he led the way to the car and held the door open, while the girl, having no suspicion, entered and sank back wearily upon the seat. Then the door abruptly slammed, and the man in livery leaped to the seat beside the chauffeur and with a jerk the car darted away.

So sudden and astounding was this *denouement* that Louise did not even scream. Indeed, for the moment her wits were dazed.

And now Charlie Mershone stepped from his hiding place and with a satirical smile entered the vestibule and looked at his watch. He found he had time to show himself again at the Kermess, for a few moments, before driving to the ferry to catch the train for East Orange.

Some one touched him on the arm.

“Very pretty, sir, and quite cleverly done,” remarked a quiet voice.

Mershone started and glared at the speaker, a slender, unassuming man in dark clothes.

“What do you mean, fellow?”

“I’ve been watching the comedy, sir, and I saw you were the star actor, although you took care to keep hidden in the wings. That bruiser who raised the row took his arrest very easily; I suppose you’ve arranged to pay his fine, and he isn’t worried. But the gentleman surely was in hard luck pounded one minute and pinched the next. You arranged it very cleverly, indeed.”

Charlie was relieved that no mention was made of the abduction of Louise. Had that incident escaped notice? He gave the man another sharp look and turned away; but the gentle touch again restrained him.

“Not yet, please, Mr. Mershone.”

“Who are you?” asked the other, scowling.

“The house detective. It’s my business to watch things. So I noticed you talking to the police officer; I also noticed the patrol wagon standing on the opposite side of the street for nearly an hour — my report on that will amuse them at headquarters, won’t it? And I noticed you nod to the bruiser, just as your victim came out.”

“Let go of my arm, sir!”

“Do you prefer handcuffs? I arrest you. We’ll run over to the station and explain things.”

“Do you know who I am?”

“Perfectly, Mr. Mershone. I believe I ran you in for less than this, some two years ago. You gave the name of Ryder, then. Better take another, to-night.”

“If you’re the house detective, why do you mix up in this affair?” enquired Mershone, his anxiety showing in his tone.

“Your victim was a guest of the house.”

“Not at all. He was merely attending the Kermess.”

“That makes him our guest, sir. Are you ready?”

Mershone glanced around and then lowered his voice.

“It’s all a little joke, my dear fellow,” said he, “and you are liable to spoil everything with your bungling. Here,” drawing; a roll of bills from his pocket, “don’t let us waste any more time. I’m busy.”

The man chuckled and waved aside the bribe.

“You certainly are, sir; you’re *very* busy, just now! But I think the sergeant over at the station will give you some leisure. And listen, Mr. Mershone: I’ve got it in for that policeman you fixed; he’s a cheeky individual and a new man. I’m inclined to think this night’s work will cost him his position. And the patrol, which I never can get when I want it, seems under your direct management. These things have got to be explained, and I need your help. Ready, sir?”

Mershone looked grave, but he was not wholly checkmated. Thank heaven the bungling detective had missed the departure of Louise altogether. Charlie’s arrest at this critical juncture was most unfortunate, but need not prove disastrous to his cleverly-laid plot. He decided it would be best to go quietly with the “plain-clothes man.”

Weldon had become nearly frantic in his demands to be released when Mershone was ushered into the station. He started at seeing his enemy and began to fear a thousand terrible, indefinite things, knowing how unscrupulous Mershone was. But the Waldorf detective, who seemed friendly with the police sergeant, made a clear, brief statement of the facts he had observed. Mershone denied the accusation; the bruiser denied it; the

policeman and the driver of the patrol wagon likewise stolidly denied it. Indeed, they had quite another story to tell.

But the sergeant acted on his own judgment. He locked up Mershone, refusing bail. He suspended the policeman and the driver, pending investigation. Then he released Arthur Weldon on his own recognisance, the young man promising to call and testify when required.

The house detective and Arthur started back to the Waldorf together.

“Did you notice a young lady come to the entrance, soon after I was driven away?” he asked, anxiously.

“A lady in a rose-colored opera cloak, sir?”

“Yes! yes!”

“Why, she got into a brown limousine and rode away.”

Arthur gave a sigh of relief.

“Thank goodness that chauffeur had a grain of sense,” said he. “I wouldn’t have given him credit for it. Anyway, I’m glad Miss Merrick is safe.”

“Huh!” grunted the detective, stopping short. “I begin to see this thing in its true light. How stupid we’ve been!”

“In what way?” enquired Arthur, uneasily.

“Why did Mershone get you arrested, just at that moment?”

“Because he hated me, I suppose.”

“Tell me, could he have any object in spiriting away that young lady — in abducting her?” asked the detective.

“Could he?” cried Arthur, terrified and trembling. “He had every object known to villainy. Come to the hotel! Let’s hurry, man — let’s fly!”

CHAPTER XII
FOGERTY

At the Waldorf Arthur's own limousine was standing by the curb. The street was nearly deserted. The last of the Kermess people had gone home.

Weldon ran to his chauffeur.

"Did you take Miss Merrick home?" he eagerly enquired.

"Miss Merrick? Why, I haven't seen her, sir, I thought you'd all forgotten me."

The young man's heart sank. Despair seized him. The detective was carefully examining the car.

"They're pretty nearly mates, Mr. Weldon. as far as the brown color and general appearances go," he said. "But I'm almost positive the car that carried the young lady away was of another make."

"What make was it?"

The man shook his head.

"Can't say, sir. I was mighty stupid, and that's a fact. But my mind was so full of that assault and battery case, and the trickery of that fellow Mershone, that I wasn't looking for anything else."

"Can you get away?" asked Arthur. "Can you help me on this case?"

"No, sir; I must remain on duty at the hotel. But perhaps the young lady is now safe at home, and we've been borrowing trouble. In case she's been stolen, however, you'd better see Fogerty."

"Who's Fogerty?"

"Here's his card, sir. He's a private detective, and may be busy just now, for all I know. But if you can get Fogerty you've got the best man in all New York."

Arthur sprang into the seat beside his driver and hurried post-haste to the Merrick residence. In a few minutes Mrs. Merrick was in violent hysterics at the disappearance of her daughter. Arthur stopped long enough to telephone for a doctor and then drove to the Doyles. He routed up Uncle John and the Major, who appeared in pajamas and bath-robes, and told them the startling news.

A council of war was straightway held. Uncle John trembled with nervousness; Arthur was mentally stupefied; the Major alone was calm.

"In the first place," said he, "what object could the man have in carrying off Louise?"

Arthur hesitated.

"To prevent our marriage, I suppose," he answered. "Mershone has an idea he loves Louise. He made wild love to her until she cut his

acquaintance."

"But it won't help him any to separate her from her friends, or her promised husband," declared the Major. "Don't worry. We're sure to find her, sooner or later."

"How? How shall we find her?" cried Uncle John. "Will he murder her, or what?"

"Why, as for that, John, he's safe locked up in jail for the present, and unable to murder anyone," retorted the Major. "It's probable he meant to follow Louise, and induce her by fair means or foul to marry him. But he's harmless enough for the time being."

"It's not for long, though," said Arthur, fearfully. "They're liable to let him out in the morning, for he has powerful friends, scoundrel though he is. And when he is free — "

"Then he must be shadowed, of course," returned the Major, nodding wisely. "If it's true the fellow loves Louise, then he's no intention of hurting her. So make your minds easy. Wherever the poor lass has been taken to, she's probably safe enough."

"But think of her terror — her suffering!" cried Uncle John, wringing his chubby hands. "Poor child! It may be his idea to compromise her, and break her heart!"

"We'll stop all that, John, never fear," promised the Major. "The first thing to do is to find a good detective."

"Fogerty!" exclaimed Arthur, searching for the card.

"Who's Fogerty?"

"I don't know."

"Get the best man possible!" commanded Mr. Merrick. "Spare no expense; hire a regiment of detectives, if necessary; I'll — "

"Of course you will," interrupted the Major, smiling. "But we won't need a regiment. I'm pretty sure the game is in our hands, from the very start."

"Fogerty is highly recommended," explained Arthur, and related what the house detective of the Waldorf had said.

"Better go at once and hunt him up," suggested Uncle John. "What time is it?"

"After two o'clock. But I'll go at once." "Do; and let us hear from you whenever you've anything to tell us," said the Major.

"Where's Patsy?" asked Arthur.

"Sound asleep. Mind ye, not a word of this to Patsy till she *has* to be told. Remember that, John."

"Well, I'll go," said the young man, and hurried away.

Q. Fogerty lived on Eleventh street, according to his card. Arthur drove

down town, making good time. The chauffeur asked surlily if this was to be "an all-night job," and Arthur savagely replied that it might take a week. "Can't you see, Jones, that I'm in great trouble?" he added. "But you shall be well paid for your extra time."

"All right, sir. That's no more than just," said the man. "It's none of my affair, you know, if a young lady gets stolen."

Arthur was wise enough to restrain his temper and the temptation to kick Jones out of the limousine. Five minutes later they paused before a block of ancient brick dwellings and found Fogerty's number. A card over the bell bore his name, and Arthur lit a match and read it. Then he rang impatiently.

Only silence.

Arthur rang a second time; waited, and rang again. A panic of fear took possession of him. At this hour of night it would be well-nigh impossible to hunt up another detective if Fogerty failed him. He determined to persist as long as there was hope. Again he rang.

"Look above, sir," called Jones from his station in the car.

Arthur stepped back on the stone landing and looked up. A round spark, as from a cigarette, was visible at the open window. While he gazed the spark glowered brighter and illumined a pale, haggard boy's face, surmounted by tousled locks of brick colored hair.

"Hi, there!" said Arthur. "Does Mr. Fogerty live here?"

"He pays the rent," answered a boyish voice, with a tinge of irony. "What's wanted?"

"Mr. Fogerty is wanted. Is he at home?"

"He is," responded the boy.

"I must see him at once — on important business. Wake him up, my lad; will you?"

"Wait a minute," said the youth, and left the window. Presently he opened the front door, slipped gently out and closed the door behind him.

"Let's sit in your car," he said, in soft, quiet tones. "We can talk more freely there."

"But I must see Fogerty at once!" protested Arthur.

"I'm Fogerty."

"Q. Fogerty?"

"Quintus Fogerty — the first and last and only individual of that name."

Arthur hesitated; he was terribly disappointed.

"Are you a detective?" he enquired.

"By profession."

"But you can't be very old."

The boy laughed.

“I’m no antiquity, sir,” said he, “but I’ve shed the knickerbockers long ago. Who sent you to me?”

“Why do you ask?”

“I’m tired. I’ve been busy twenty-three weeks. Just finished my case yesterday and need a rest — a good long rest. But if you want a man I’ll refer you to a friend.”

“Gorman, of the Waldorf, sent me to you — and said you’d help me.”

“Oh; that’s different. Case urgent, sir?”

“Very. The young lady I’m engaged to marry was abducted less than three hours ago.”

Fogerty lighted another cigarette and the match showed Arthur that the young face was deeply lined, while two cold gray eyes stared blankly into his own.

“Let’s sit in your limousine, sir,” he repeated.

When they had taken their places behind the closed doors the boy asked Arthur to tell him “all about it, and don’t forget any details, please.” So Weldon hastily told the events of the evening and gave a history of Mershone and his relations with Miss Merrick. The story was not half told when Fogerty said:

“Tell your man to drive to the police station.”

On the way Arthur resumed his rapid recital and strove to post the young detective as well as he was able. Fogerty made no remarks, nor did he ask a single question until Weldon had told him everything he could think of. Then he made a few pointed enquiries and presently they had arrived at the station.

The desk sergeant bowed with great respect to the youthful detective. By the dim light Arthur was now able to examine Fogerty for the first time.

He was small, slim and lean. His face attested to but eighteen or nineteen years, in spite of its deep lines and serious expression. Although his hair was tangled and unkempt Fogerty’s clothing and linen were neat and of good quality. He wore a Scotch cap and a horseshoe pin in his cravat.

One might have imagined him to be an errand boy, a clerk, a chauffeur, a salesman or a house man. You might have placed him in almost any middle-class walk in life. Perhaps, thought Arthur, he might even be a good detective! yet his personality scarcely indicated it.

“Mershone in, Billy?” the detective asked the desk sergeant.

“Room 24. Want him?”

“Not now. When is he likely to go?”

“When Parker relieves me. There’s been a reg’lar mob here to get Mershone off. I couldn’t prevent his using the telephone; but I’m a stubborn duck; eh, Quintus? And now the gentleman has gone to bed, vowing

vengeance."

"You're all right, Billy. We both know Mershone. Gentleman scoundrel."

"Exactly. Swell society blackleg."

"What name's he docked under?"

"Smith."

"Will Parker let him off with a fine?"

"Yes, or without it. Parker comes on at six."

"Good. I'll take a nap on that bench. Got to keep the fellow in sight, Billy."

"Go into my room. There's a cot there."

"Thanks, old man; I will. I'm dead tired."

Then Fogerty took Arthur aside.

"Go home and try to sleep," he advised. "Don't worry. The young lady's safe enough till Mershone goes to her hiding place. When he does, I'll be there, too, and I'll try to have you with me."

"Do you think you can arrange it alone, Mr. Fogerty?" asked Arthur, doubtfully. The boy seemed so very young.

"Better than if I had a hundred to assist me. Why, this is an easy job, Mr. Weldon. It 'll give me a fine chance to rest up."

"And you won't lose Mershone?"

"Never. He's mine."

"This is very important to me, sir," continued Arthur, nervously.

"Yes; and to others. Most of all it's important to Fogerty. Don't worry, sir."

The young man was forced to go away with this assurance. He returned home, but not to sleep. He wondered vaguely if he had been wise to lean upon so frail a reed as Fogerty seemed to be; and above all he wondered where poor Louise was, and if terror and alarm were breaking her heart.

CHAPTER XIII
DIANA REVOLTS

Charlie Mershone had no difficulty in securing his release when Parker came on duty at six o'clock. He called up a cab and went at once to his rooms at the Bruxtelle; and Fogerty followed him.

While he discarded his dress-coat, took a bath and donned his walking suit Mershone was in a brown study. Hours ago Louise had been safely landed at the East Orange house and placed in the care of old Madame Cerise, who would guard her like an ogre. There was no immediate need of his hastening after her, and his arrest and the discovery of half his plot had seriously disturbed him. This young man was no novice in intrigue, nor even in crime. Arguing from his own stand-point he realized that the friends of Louise were by this time using every endeavor to locate her. They would not succeed in this, he was positive. His plot had been so audacious and all clews so cleverly destroyed or covered up that the most skillful detective, knowing he had abducted the girl; would be completely baffled in an attempt to find her.

The thought of detectives, in this connection, led him to decide that he was likely to be shadowed. That was the most natural thing for his opponents to do. They could not prove Mershone's complicity in the disappearance of Louise Merrick, but they might easily suspect him, after that little affair of Weldon's arrest. Therefore if he went to the girl now he was likely to lead others to her. Better be cautious and wait until he had thrown the sleuths off his track.

Having considered this matter thoroughly, Mershone decided to remain quiet. By eight o'clock he was breakfasting in the grill room, and Fogerty occupied a table just behind him.

During the meal it occurred to Charlie to telephone to Madame Cerise for assurance that Louise had arrived safely and without a scene to attract the attention of strangers. Having finished breakfast he walked into the telephone booth and was about to call his number when a thought struck him. He glanced out of the glass door. In the hotel lobby were many loungers. He saw a dozen pairs of eyes fixed upon him idly or curiously; one pair might belong to the suspected detective. If he used the telephone there would be a way of discovering the number he had asked for. That would not do — not at all! He concluded not to telephone, at present, and left the booth.

His next act was to purchase a morning paper, and seating himself carelessly in a chair he controlled the impulse to search for a "scare head" on the abduction of Miss Merrick. If he came across the item, very well; he would satisfy no critical eye that might be scanning him by hunting for it

with a show of eagerness. The game was in his hands, he believed, and he intended to keep it there.

Fogerty was annoyed by the man's evident caution. It would not be easy to surprise Mershone in any self-incriminating action. But, after all, reflected the boy, resting comfortably in the soft-padded cushions of a big leather chair, all this really made the case the more interesting. He was rather glad Mershone was in no hurry to precipitate a climax. A long stern chase was never a bad chase.

By and bye another idea occurred to Charlie. He would call upon his cousin Diana, and get her to telephone Madame Cerise for information about Louise. It would do no harm to enlighten Diana as to what he had done. She must suspect it already; and was she not a co-conspirator?

But he could not wisely make this call until the afternoon. So meantime he took a stroll into Broadway and walked leisurely up and down that thoroughfare, pausing occasionally to make a trifling purchase and turning abruptly again and again in the attempt to discover who might be following him. No one liable to be a detective of any sort could he discern; yet he was too shrewd to be lulled into a false belief that his each and every act was unobserved.

Mershone returned to his hotel, went to his room, and slept until after one o'clock, as he had secured but little rest the night before in his primitive quarters at the police station. It was nearly two when he reappeared in the hotel restaurant for luncheon, and he took his seat and ate with excellent appetite.

During this meal Mr. Fogerty also took occasion to refresh himself, eating modestly at a retired table in a corner. Mershone's sharp eyes noted him. He remembered seeing this youth at breakfast, and thoughtfully reflected that the boy's appearance was not such as might be expected from the guest of a fashionable and high-priced hotel. Silently he marked this individual as the possible detective. He had two or three others in his mind, by this time; the boy was merely added to the list of possibilities.

Mershone was a capital actor. After luncheon he sauntered about the hotel, stared from the window for a time, looked at his watch once or twice with an undecided air, and finally stepped to the porter and asked him to call a cab. He started for Central Park; then changed his mind and ordered the man to drive him to the Von Taer residence, where on arrival Diana at once ordered him shown into her private parlor.

The young man found his cousin stalking up and down in an extremely nervous manner. She wrung her delicate fingers with a swift, spasmodic motion. Her eyes, nearly closed, shot red rays through their slits.

“What’s wrong, Di?” demanded Mershone, considerably surprised by this intense display of emotion on the part of his usually self-suppressed and collected cousin.

“Wrong!” she echoed; “everything is wrong. You’ve ruined yourself, Charlie; and you’re going to draw me into this dreadful crime, also, in spite of all I can do!”

“Bah! don’t be a fool,” he observed, calmly taking a chair.

“Am *I* the fool?” she exclaimed, turning upon him fiercely. “Did *I* calmly perpetrate a deed that was sure to result in disgrace and defeat?”

“What on earth has happened to upset you?” he asked, wonderingly. “It strikes me everything is progressing beautifully.”

“Does it, indeed?” was her sarcastic rejoinder. “Then your information is better than mine. They called me up at three o’clock this morning to enquire after Louise Merrick — as if *I* should know her whereabouts. Why did they come to *me* for such information? Why?” she stamped her foot for emphasis.

“I suppose,” said Charlie Mershone, “they called up everyone who knows the girl. It would be natural in case of her disappearance.”

“Come here!” cried Diana, seizing his arm and dragging him to a window. “Be careful; try to look out without showing yourself. Do you see that man on the corner?”

“Well?”

“He has been patrolling this house since day-break. He’s a detective!”

Charlie whistled.

“What makes you think so, Di? Why on earth should they suspect you?”

“Why? Because my disreputable cousin planned the abduction, without consulting me, and — ”

“Oh, come, Di; that’s a little too — ”

“Because the girl has been carried to the Von Taer house — *my* house — in East Orange; because my own servant is at this moment her jailor, and — ”

“How should they know all this?” interrupted Mershone, impatiently. “And how do you happen to know it yourself, Diana?”

“Madame Cerise called me up at five o’clock, just after Louise’s uncle had been here for the second time, with a crew of officers. Cerise is in an ugly mood. She said a young girl had been brought to her a prisoner, and Mr. Mershone’s orders were to keep her safely until he came. She is greatly provoked at our using her in this way, but promised to follow instructions if I accepted all responsibility.”

“What did you tell her?”

“That I knew nothing of the affair, but had put the house and her services

at your disposal. I said I would accept no responsibility whatever for anything you might do."

Mershone looked grave, and scowled.

"The old hag won't betray us, will she?" he asked, uneasily.

"She cannot betray me, for I have done nothing. Charlie," she said, suddenly facing him, "I won't be mixed in this horrid affair. You must carry out your infamous plan in your own way. I know nothing, sir, of what you have done; I know nothing of what you intend to do. Do you understand me?"

He smiled rather grimly.

"I hardly expected, my fair cousin, that you would be frightened into retreat at this stage of the game, when the cards are all in our hands. Do you suppose I decided to carry away Louise without fully considering what I was doing, and the immediate consequences of my act? And wherein have I failed? All has gone beautifully up to this minute. Diana, your fears are absolutely foolish, and against your personal interests. All that I am doing for myself benefits you doubly. Just consider, if you will, what has been accomplished for our mutual benefit: The girl has disappeared under suspicious circumstances; before she again rejoins her family and friends she will either be my wife or Arthur Weldon will prefer not to marry her. That leaves him open to appreciate the charms of Diana Von Taer, does it not? Already, my dear cousin, your wishes are accomplished. My own task, I admit, is a harder one, because it is more delicate."

The cold-blooded brutality of this argument caused even Diana to shudder. She looked at the young man half fearfully as she asked:

"What is your task?"

"Why, first to quiet Louise's fears; then to turn her by specious arguments — lies, if you will — against Weldon; next to induce her to give me her hand in honest wedlock. I shall tell her of my love, which is sincere; I shall argue — threaten, if necessary; use every reasonable means to gain her consent."

"You'll never succeed!" cried Diana, with conviction.

"Then I'll try other tactics," said he blandly.

"If you do, you monster, I'll expose you," warned the girl.

"Having dissolved partnership, you won't be taken into my confidence, my fair cousin. You have promised to know nothing of my acts, and I'll see you don't." Then he sprang from his chair and came to her with a hard, determined look upon his face. "Look here, Di; I've gone too far in this game to back out now, I'm going to carry it through if it costs me my life and liberty — and yours into the bargain! I love Louise Merrick! I love her so well that without her the world and its mockeries can go to the devil! There's

nothing worth living for but Louise — Louise. She's going to be my wife, Diana — by fair means or foul I swear to make her my wife."

He had worked himself up to a pitch of excitement surpassing that of Diana. Now he passed his hand over his forehead, collected himself with a slight shudder, and resumed his seat.

Diana was astonished. His fierce mood served to subdue her own. Regarding him curiously for a time she finally asked:

"You speak as if you were to be allowed to have your own way — as if all society was not arrayed against you. Have you counted the cost of your action? Have you considered the consequences of this crime?"

"I have committed no crime," he said stubbornly. "All's fair in love and war."

"The courts will refuse to consider that argument, I imagine," she retorted. "Moreover, the friends of this kidnaped girl are powerful and active. They will show you no mercy if you are discovered."

"If I fail," answered Mershone, slowly, "I do not care a continental what they do to me, for my life will be a blank without Louise. But I really see no reason to despair, despite your womanish croakings. All seems to be going nicely and just as I had anticipated."

"I am glad that you are satisfied," Diana returned, with scornful emphasis. "But understand me, sir; this is none of my affair in any way — except that I shall surely expose you if a hair of the girl's head is injured. You must not come here again. I shall refuse to see you. You ought not to have come to-day."

"Is there anything suspicious in my calling upon my cousin — as usual?"

"Under such circumstances, yes. You have not been received at this house of late years, and my father still despises you. There is another danger you have brought upon me. My father seemed suspicious this morning, and asked me quite pointedly what I knew of this strange affair."

"But of course you lied to him. All right, Diana; perhaps there is nothing to be gained from your alliance, and I'll let you out of the deal from this moment. The battle's mine, after all, and I'll fight it alone. But — I need more money. You ought to be willing to pay, for so far the developments are all in your favor."

She brought a handful of notes from her desk.

"This ends our partnership, Charlie," she said.

"Very well. A woman makes a poor conspirator, but is invaluable as a banker."

"There will be no more money. This ends everything between us."

"I thought you were game, Di. But you're as weak as the ordinary

feminine creation.”

She did not answer, but stood motionless, a defiant expression upon her face. He laughed a little, bowed mockingly, and went away.

CHAPTER XIV
A COOL ENCOUNTER

On leaving the house Mershone buttoned his overcoat tightly up to his chin, for the weather was cold and raw, and then shot a quick glance around him. Diana's suspect was still lounging on the corner. Charlie had little doubt he was watching the house and the movements of its in-mates — a bad sign, he reflected, with a frown. Otherwise the street seemed deserted.

He had dismissed the cab on his arrival, so now he stepped out and walked briskly around the corner, swinging his cane jauntily and looking very unlike a fugitive. In the next block he passed a youth who stood earnestly examining the conventional display in a druggist's window.

Mershone, observing this individual, gave a start, but did not alter his pace. It was the same pale, red-haired boy he had noticed twice before at the hotel. In his alert, calculating mind there was no coincidence in this meeting. Before he had taken six more steps Mershone realized the exact situation.

At the next crossing he stopped and waited patiently for a car. Up the street he still saw the youth profoundly interested in drugs — a class of merchandise that seldom calls for such close inspection. The car arrived and carried Mershone away. It also left the red-haired youth at his post before the window. Yet on arriving at the Bruxtelle some twenty minutes later Charlie found this same queer personage occupying a hotel chair in the lobby and apparently reading a newspaper with serious attention.

He hesitated a moment, then quietly walked over to a vacant chair beside the red-haired one and sat down. The youth turned the paper, glanced casually at his neighbor, and continued reading.

"A detective, I believe," said Mershone, in a low, matter of fact tone.

"Who? me?" asked Fogerty, lowering the paper.

"Yes. Your age deceived me for a time. I imagined you were a newsboy or a sporting kid from the country; but now I observe you are older than you appear. All sorts of people seem to drift into the detective business. I suppose your present occupation is shadowing me."

Fogerty smiled. The smile was genuine.

"I might even be a lawyer, sir," he replied, "and in that case I should undertake to cross-examine you, and ask your reasons for so queer a charge."

"Or you might be a transient guest at this hotel," the other returned, in the same bantering tone, "for I saw you at breakfast and luncheon. Pretty fair *chef* here, isn't he? But you didn't stick to that part, you know. You followed me up-town, where I made a call on a relative, and you studied the colored globes in a druggist's window when I went away. I wonder why people

employ inexperienced boys in such important matters. In your case, my lad, it was easy enough to detect the detective. You even took the foolish chance of heading me off, and returned to this hotel before I did. Now, then, is my charge unfounded?"

"Why should you be under the surveillance of a detective?" asked Fogerty, slowly.

"Really, my boy, I cannot say. There was an unpleasant little affair last night at the Waldorf, in which I was not personally concerned, but suffered, nevertheless. An officious deputy caused my arrest and I spent an unpleasant night in jail. There being nothing in the way of evidence against me I was released this morning, and now I find a detective shadowing me. What can it all mean, I wonder? These stupid blunders are very annoying to the plain citizen, who, however innocent, feels himself the victim of a conspiracy."

"I understand you, sir," said Fogerty, drily.

For some moments Mershone now remained silent. Then he asked; "What are your instructions concerning me?"

To his surprise the boy made a simple, frank admission.

"I'm to see you don't get into more mischief, sir."

"And how long is this nonsense to continue?" demanded Mershone, showing a touch of anger for the first time.

"Depends on yourself, Mr. Mershone; I'm no judge, myself. I'm so young — and inexperienced."

"Who is your employer?"

"Oh, I'm just sent out by an agency."

"Is it a big paying proposition?" asked Charlie, eyeing the diffident youth beside him critically, as if to judge his true caliber.

"Not very big. You see, if I'd been a better detective you'd never have spotted me so quickly."

"I suppose money counts with you, though, as it does with everyone else in the world?"

"Of course, sir. Every business is undertaken to make money."

Mershone drew his chair a little nearer.

"I need a clever detective myself," he announced, confidentially. "I'm anxious to discover what enemy is persecuting me in this way. Would it — er — be impossible for me to employ *you* to — er — look after my interests?"

Fogerty was very serious.

"You see, sir," he responded, "if I quit this job they may not give me another. In order to be a successful detective one must keep in the good graces of the agencies."

“That’s easy enough,” asserted Mershone. “You may pretend to keep this job, but go home and take life easy. I’ll send you a daily statement of what I’ve been doing, and you can fix up a report to your superior from that. In addition to this you can put in a few hours each day trying to find out who is annoying me in this rascally manner, and for this service I’ll pay you five times the agency price. How does that proposition strike you, Mr. — ”

“Riordan. Me name’s Riordan,” said Fogerty, with a smile. “No, Mr. Mershone,” shaking his head gravely, “I can’t see my way to favor you. It’s an easy job now, and I’m afraid to take chances with a harder one.”

Something in the tone nettled Mershone.

“But the pay,” he suggested.

“Oh, the pay. If I’m a detective fifty years, I’ll make an easy two thousand a year. That’s a round hundred thousand. Can you pay me that much to risk my future career as a detective?”

Mershone bit his lip. This fellow was not so simple, after all, boyish as he seemed. And, worse than all, he had a suspicion the youngster was baiting him, and secretly laughing at his offers of bribery.

“They will take you off the job, now that I have discovered your identity,” he asserted, with malicious satisfaction.

“Oh, no,” answered Fogerty; “they won’t do that. This little interview merely simplifies matters. You see, sir, I’m an expert at disguises. That’s my one great talent, as many will testify. But you will notice that in undertaking this job I resorted to no disguise at all. You see me as nature made me — and ‘t was a poor job, I’m thinking.”

“Why were you so careless?”

“It wasn’t carelessness; it was premeditated. There’s not the slightest objection to your knowing me. My only business is to keep you in sight, and I can do that exactly as well as Riordan as I could by disguising myself.”

Mershone had it on his tongue’s end to ask what they expected to discover by shadowing him, but decided it was as well not to open an avenue for the discussion of Miss Merrick’s disappearance. So, finding he could not bribe the youthful detective or use him in any way to his advantage, he closed the interview by rising.

“I’m going to my room to write some letters,” said he, with a yawn. “Would you like to read them before they are mailed?”

Again Fogerty laughed in his cheerful, boyish way.

“You’d make a fine detective yourself, Mr. Mershone,” he declared, “and I advise you to consider the occupation. I’ve a notion it’s safer, and better pay, than your present line.”

Charlie scowled at the insinuation, but walked away without reply.

Fogerty eyed his retreating figure a moment, gave a slight shrug and resumed his newspaper.

Day followed day without further event, and gradually Mershone came to feel himself trapped. Wherever he might go he found Fogerty on duty, unobtrusive, silent and watchful. It was very evident that he was waiting for the young man to lead him to the secret hiding place of Louise Merrick.

In one way this constant surveillance was a distinct comfort to Charlie Mershone, for it assured him that the retreat of Louise was still undiscovered. But he must find some way to get rid of his "shadow," in order that he might proceed to carry out his plans concerning the girl. During his enforced leisure he invented a dozen apparently clever schemes, only to abandon them again as unpractical.

One afternoon, while on a stroll, he chanced to meet the bruiser who had attacked Arthur Weldon at the Waldorf, and been liberally paid by Mershone for his excellent work. He stopped the man, and glancing hastily around found that Fogerty was a block in the rear.

"Listen," he said; "I want your assistance, and if you're quick and sure there is a pot of money, waiting for you."

"I need it, Mr. Mershone," replied the man, grinning.

"There's a detective following me; he's down the street there — a mere boy--just in front of that tobacco store. See him?"

"Sure I see him. It's Fogerty."

"His name is Riordan."

"No; it's Fogerty. He's no boy, sir, but the slickest 'tec' in the city, an' that's goin' some, I can tell you."

"Well, you must get him, whoever he is. Drag him away and hold him for three hours — two — one. Give me a chance to slip him; that's all. Can you do it? I'll pay you a hundred for the job."

"It's worth two hundred, Mr. Mershone. It isn't safe to fool with Fogerty."

"I'll make it two hundred."

"Then rest easy," said the man. "I know the guy, and how to handle him. You just watch him like he's watching you, Mr. Mershone, and if anything happens you skip as lively as a flea. I can use that two hundred in my business."

Then the fellow passed on, and Fogerty was still so far distant up the street that neither of them could see the amused smile upon his thin face.

CHAPTER XV

A BEWILDERING EXPERIENCE

When Louise Merrick entered the brown limousine, which she naturally supposed to belong to Arthur Weldon, she had not the faintest suspicion of any evil in her mind. Indeed, the girl was very happy this especial evening, although tired with her duties at the Kermess. A climax in her young life had arrived, and she greeted it joyously, believing she loved Arthur well enough to become his wife.

Now that the engagement had been announced to their immediate circle of friends she felt as proud and elated as any young girl has a right to be under the circumstances.

Added to this pleasant event was the social triumph she and her cousins had enjoyed at the Kermess, where Louise especially had met with rare favor. The fashionable world had united in being most kind and considerate to the dainty, attractive young *debutante*, and only Diana had seemed to slight her. This was not surprising in view of the fact that Diana evidently wanted Arthur for herself, and there was some satisfaction in winning a lover who was elsewhere in prime demand. In addition to all this the little dance that concluded the evening's entertainment had been quite delightful, and all things conspired to put Louise in a very contented frame of mind.

Still fluttering with the innocent excitements of the hour the girl went to join Arthur without a fear of impending misfortune. She did not think of Charlie Mershone at all. He had been annoying and impertinent, and she had rebuked him and sent him away, cutting him out of her life altogether. Perhaps she ought to have remembered that she had mildly flirted with Diana's cousin and given him opportunity for the impassioned speeches she resented; but Louise had a girlish idea that there was no harm in flirting, considering it a feminine license. She saw young Mershone at the Kermess that evening paying indifferent attentions to other women and ignoring her, and was sincerely glad to have done with him for good and all.

She obeyed readily the man who asked her to be seated in the limousine. Arthur would be with her in a minute, he said. When the door closed and the car started she had an impulse to cry out but next moment controlled it and imagined they were to pick up Mr. Weldon on some corner.

On and on they rolled, and still no evidence of the owner of the limousine. What could it mean, Louise began to wonder. Had something happened to Arthur, so that he had been forced to send her home alone? As the disquieting thought came she tried to speak with the chauffeur, but could not find the tube. The car was whirling along rapidly; the night seemed very

dark, only a few lights twinkled here and there outside.

Suddenly the speed slackened. There was a momentary pause, and then the machine slowly rolled upon a wooden platform. A bell clanged, there was a whistle and the sound of revolving water-wheels. Louise decided they must be upon a ferry-boat, and became alarmed for the first time.

The man in livery now opened the door, as if to reassure her.

"Where are we? Where is Mr. Weldon?" enquired the girl, almost hysterically.

"He is on the boat, miss, and will be with you shortly now," replied the man, very respectfully. "Mr. Weldon is very sorry to have annoyed you, Miss Merrick, but says he will soon explain everything, so that you will understand why he left you."

With this he quietly closed the door again, although Louise was eager to ask a dozen more questions. Prominent was the query why they should be on a ferry-boat instead of going directly home. She knew the hour must be late.

But while these questions were revolving in her mind she still suspected no plot against her liberty. She must perforce wait for Arthur to explain his queer conduct; so she sat quietly enough in her place awaiting his coming, while the ferry puffed steadily across the river to the Jersey shore.

The stopping of the boat aroused Louise from her reflections. Arthur not here yet? Voices were calling outside; vehicles were noisily leaving their positions on the boat to clatter across the platforms. But there was no sign of Arthur.

Again Louise tried to find the speaking tube. Then she made an endeavor to open the door, although just then the car started with a jerk that flung her back against the cushions.

The knowledge that she had been grossly deceived by her conductor at last had the effect of arousing the girl to a sense of her danger. Something must be wrong. Something *was* decidedly wrong, and fear crept into her heart. She pounded on the glass windows with all her strength, and shouted as loudly as she could, but all to no avail.

Swiftly the limousine whirled over the dusky road and either her voice could not be heard through the glass cage in which she was confined or there was no one near who was willing to hear or to rescue her.

She now realized how wrong she had been to sit idly during the trip across the ferry, where a score of passengers would gladly have assisted her. How cunning her captors had been to lull her fears during that critical period! Now, alas, it was too late to cry out, and she had no idea where she was being taken or the reason of her going.

Presently it occurred to her that this was not Arthur's limousine at all.

There was no speaking tube for one thing. She leaned forward and felt for the leathern pocket in which she kept a veil and her street gloves. No pocket of any sort was to be found.

An unreasoning terror now possessed her. She knew not what to fear, yet feared everything. She made another attempt to cry aloud for help and then fell back unconscious on the cushions.

How long she lay in the faint she did not know. When she recovered the limousine was still rattling forward at a brisk gait but bumping over ruts in a manner that indicated a country road.

Through the curtains she could see little but the black night, although there was a glow ahead cast by the searchlights of the car. Louise was weak and unnerved. She had no energy to find a way to combat her fate, if such a way were possible. A dim thought of smashing a window and hurling herself through it gave her only a shudder of repulsion. She lacked strength for such a desperate attempt.

On, on, on. Would the dreary journey never end? How long must she sit and suffer before she could know her fate, or at least find some explanation of the dreadful mystery of this wild midnight ride?

At last, when she had settled down to dull despair, the car came to a paved road and began to move more slowly. It even stopped once or twice, as if the driver was not sure of his way. But they kept moving, nevertheless, and before long entered a driveway. There was another stop now, and a long wait.

Louise lay dismally back upon the cushions, sobbing hysterically into her dripping handkerchief. The door of her prison at last opened and a light shone in upon her.

“Here we are, miss,” said the man in uniform, still in quiet, respectful tones. “Shall I assist you to alight?”

She started up eagerly, her courage returning with a bound. Stepping unassisted to the ground she looked around her in bewilderment.

The car stood before the entrance to a modest country house. There was a light in the hall and another upon the broad porch. Around the house a mass of trees and shrubbery loomed dark and forbidding.

“Where am I?” demanded Louise, drawing back haughtily as the man extended a hand toward her.

“At your destination, miss,” was the answer. “Will you please enter?”

“No! Not until I have an explanation of this — this — singular, high-handed proceeding,” she replied, firmly.

Then she glanced at the house. The hall door had opened and a woman stood peering anxiously at the scene outside.

With sudden resolve Louise sprang up the steps and approached her. Any woman, she felt, in this emergency, was a welcome refuge.

"Who are you?" she asked eagerly, "and why have I been brought here?"

"*Mademoiselle* will come inside, please," said the woman, with a foreign accent. "It is cold in the night air, *N'est-ce-pas*?"

She turned to lead the way inside. While Louise hesitated to follow the limousine started with a roar from its cylinders and disappeared down the driveway, the two men going with it. The absence of the lamps rendered the darkness around the solitary house rather uncanny. An intense stillness prevailed except for the diminishing rattle of the receding motor car. In the hall was a light and a woman.

Louise went in.

CHAPTER XVI

MADAME CERISE, CUSTODIAN

The woman closed the hall door and locked it. Then she led the way to a long, dim drawing-room in which a grate fire was smouldering. A stand lamp of antique pattern but dimly illuminated the place, which seemed well furnished in an old fashioned way.

"Will not you remove your wraps, Mees — Mees — I do not know ma'm'selle's name."

"What is your own name?" asked Louise, coming closer to gaze earnestly into the other's face.

"I am called Madame Cerise, if it please you."

Her voice, while softened to an extent by the French accent, was nevertheless harsh and emotionless. She spoke as an automaton, slowly, and pausing to choose her words. The woman was of medium size, slim and straight in spite of many years. Her skin resembled brown parchment; her eyes were small, black and beady; her nose somewhat fleshy and her lips red and full as those of a young girl. The age of Madame Cerise might be anywhere between fifty and seventy; assuredly she had long been a stranger to youth, although her dark hair was but slightly streaked with gray. She wore a somber-hued gown and a maid's jaunty apron and cap.

Louise inspected her closely, longing to find a friend and protector in this curious and strange woman. Her eyes were moist and pleading — an appeal hard to resist. But Madame Cerise returned her scrutiny with a wholly impassive expression.

"You are a French maid?" asked Louise, softly.

"A housekeeper, ma'm'selle. For a time, a caretaker."

"Ah, I understand. Are your employers asleep?"

"I cannot say, ma'm'seile. They are not here."

"You are alone in this house?"

"Alone with you, ma'm'seile."

Louise had a sudden access of alarm.

"And why am I here?" she cried, wringing her hands pitifully.

"Ah, who can tell that?" returned the woman, composedly. "Not Cerise, indeed. Cerise is told nothing — except what is required of her. I but obey my orders."

Louise turned quickly, at this.

"What are your orders, then?" she asked.

"To attend ma'm'selle with my best skill, to give her every comfort and care, to — "

“Yes — yes!”

“To keep her safely until she is called for. That is all.”

The girl drew a long breath.

“Who will call for me, then?”

“I am not inform, ma’m’selle.”

“And I am a prisoner in this house?”

“Ma’m’selle may call it so, if it please her. But reflect; there is no place else to go. It is bleak weather, the winter soon comes. And here I can make you the comforts you need.”

Louise pondered this speech, which did not deceive her. While still perplexed as to her abduction, with no comprehension why she should have been seized in such a summary manner and spirited to this lonely, out-of-the-way place, she realized she was in no immediate danger. Her weariness returned tenfold, and she staggered and caught the back of a chair for support.

The old woman observed this.

“Ma’m’selle is tired,” said she. “See; it is past four by the clock, and you must be much fatigue by the ride and the nervous strain.”

“I — I’m completely exhausted,” murmured Louise, drooping her head wearily. The next moment she ran and placed her hands on Madame Cerise’s shoulders, peering into the round, beady eyes with tender pleading as she continued: “I don’t know why I have been stolen away from my home and friends; I don’t know why this dreadful thing has happened to me; I only know that I am worn out and need rest. Will you take care of me, Madame Cerise? Will you watch over me while I sleep and guard me from all harm? I — I haven’t any mother to lean on now, you know; I haven’t any friend at all — but *you!*”

The grim features never relaxed a muscle; but a softer look came into the dark eyes and the woman’s voice took on a faint tinge of compassion as she answered:

“Nothing can harm ma’m’selle. Have no fear, *ma chere*. I will take care of you; I will watch. *Allons*! it is my duty; it is also my pleasure.”

“Are there no — no men in the house — none at all?” enquired the girl, peering into the surrounding gloom nervously.

“There is no person at all in the house, but you and I.”

“And you will admit no one?”

The woman hesitated.

“Not to your apartment,” she said firmly. “I promise it.”

Louise gave a long, fluttering sigh. Somehow, she felt that she could rely upon this promise.

“Then, if you please, Madame Cerise, I’d like to go to bed,” she said.

The woman took the lamp and led the way upstairs, entering a large, airy chamber in which a fire burned brightly in the grate. The furniture here was dainty and feminine. In an alcove stood a snowy bed, the covers invitingly turned down.

Madame Cerise set the lamp upon a table and without a word turned to assist Louise. The beautiful Kermess costume, elaborately embroidered with roses, which the girl still wore, evidently won the Frenchwoman’s approval. She unhooked and removed it carefully and hung it in a closet. Very dextrous were her motions as she took down the girl’s pretty hair and braided it for the night. A dainty *robe de nuit* was provided.

“It is my own,” she said simply. “Ma’m’selle is not prepared.”

“But there must be young ladies in your family,” remarked Louise, thoughtfully, for in spite of the stupor she felt from want of sleep the novelty of her position kept her alert in a way. It is true she was too tired and bewildered to think clearly, but slight details were impressing themselves upon her dimly. “This room, for instance — ”

“Of course, *ma chere*, a young lady has lived here. She has left some odd pieces of wardrobe behind her, at times, in going away. When you waken we will try to find a house-dress to replace your evening-gown. Will ma’m’selle indulge in the bath before retiring?”

“Not to-night, Madame Cerise. I’m too tired for anything but — sleep!”

Indeed, she had no sooner crawled into the enticing bed than she sank into unconscious forgetfulness. This was to an extent fortunate. Louise possessed one of those dispositions cheery and equable under ordinary circumstances, but easily crushed into apathy by any sudden adversity. She would not suffer so much as a more excitable and nervous girl might do under similar circumstances.

Her sleep, following the severe strain of the night’s adventure, did little to refresh her. She awoke in broad daylight to hear a cold wind whistling shrilly outside and raindrops beating against the panes.

Madame Cerise had not slept much during the night. For an hour after Louise retired she sat in her room in deep thought. Then she went to the telephone and notwithstanding the late hour called up Diana, who had a branch telephone on a table at her bedside.

Miss Von Taer was not asleep. She had had an exciting night herself. She answered the old caretaker readily and it did not surprise her to learn that the missing girl had been taken to the East Orange house by the orders of Charlie Mershone. She enquired how Louise had accepted the situation forced upon her, and was shocked and rendered uncomfortable by the too plainly worded

protest of the old Frenchwoman. Madame Cerise did not hesitate to denounce the abduction as a heartless crime, and in her communication with Diana swore she would protect the innocent girl from harm at the hands of Mershone or anyone else.

"I have ever to your family been loyal and true, Ma'm'selle Diana," said she, "but I will not become the instrument of an abominable crime at your command or that of your wicked cousin. I will keep the girl here in safety, if it is your wish; but she will be safe, indeed, as long as Cerise guards her."

"That's right, Madame," stammered Diana, hardly knowing at the moment what to say. "Be discreet and silent until you hear from me again; guard the girl carefully and see that she is not too unhappy; but for heaven's sake keep Charlie's secret until he sees fit to restore Miss Merrick to her friends. No crime is contemplated; I would not allow such a thing, as you know. Yet it is none of my affair whatever. My cousin has compromised me by taking the girl to my house, and no knowledge of the abduction must get abroad if we can help it. Do you understand me?"

"No," was the reply. "The safest way for us all is to send Miss Merrick away."

"That will be done as soon as possible."

With this the old Frenchwoman was forced to be content, and she did not suspect that her report had made Miss Von Taer nearly frantic with fear — not for Louise but for her own precious reputation. Accustomed to obey the family she had served for so many years, Madame Cerise hesitated to follow her natural impulse to set the poor young lady free and assist her to return to her friends. So she compromised with her conscience — a thing she was not credited with possessing — by resolving to make the imprisonment of the "*pauvre fille*" as happy as possible.

Scarcely had Louise opened her eyes the following morning when the old woman entered her chamber, unlocking the door from the outside to secure admission.

She first rebuilt the fire, and when it was crackling cheerfully she prepared a bath and brought an armful of clothing which she laid out for inspection over the back of a sofa. She produced lingerie, too, and Louise lay cuddled up in the bedclothes and watched her keeper thoughtfully until the atmosphere of the room was sufficiently warmed.

"I'll get up, now," she said, quietly.

Madame Cerise was assuredly a skilled lady's maid. She bathed the girl, wrapped her in an ample kimono and then seated her before the dresser and arranged her *coiffure* with dextrous skill.

During this time Louise talked. She had decided her only chance of escape

lay in conciliating this stern-faced woman, and she began by relating her entire history, including her love affair with Arthur Weldon, Diana Von Taer's attempt to rob her of her lover, and the part that Charlie Mershone had taken in the affair.

Madame Cerise listened, but said nothing.

"And now," continued the girl, "tell me who you think could be so wicked and cruel as to carry me away from my home and friends? I cannot decide myself. You have more experience and more shrewdness, can't you tell me, Madame Cerise?"

The woman muttered inaudibly.

"Mr. Mershone might be an enemy, because I laughed at his love-making," continued Louise, musingly. "Would a man who loved a girl try to injure her? But perhaps his love has turned to hate. Anyhow, I can think of no one else who would do such a thing, or of any reason why Charlie Mershone should do it."

Madame Cerise merely grunted. She was brushing the soft hair with gentle care.

"What could a man gain by stealing a girl? If it was Mr. Mershone, does he imagine I could ever forget Arthur? Or cease to love him? Or that Arthur would forget me while I am away? Perhaps it's Diana, and she wants to get rid of me so she can coax Arthur back to her side. But that's nonsense; isn't it, Madame Cerise? No girl — not even Diana Von Taer — would dare to act in such a high-handed manner toward her rival. Did you ever hear of Miss Von Taer? She's quite a society belle. Have you ever seen her, Madame Cerise?"

The woman vouchsafed no reply to this direct enquiry, but busied herself dressing the girl's hair. Louise casually turned over the silver-mounted hand mirror she was holding and gave a sudden start. A monogram was engraved upon the metal: "D.v.T." She gazed at the mark fixedly and then picked up a brush that the Frenchwoman laid down. Yes, the same monogram appeared upon the brush.

The sharp eyes of Cerise had noted these movements. She was a little dismayed but not startled when Louise said, slowly: "'D.v.T.' stands for Diana Von Taer. And it isn't likely to stand for anything else. I think the mystery is explained, now, and my worst fears are realized. Tell me, Madame, is this Diana Von Taer's house?"

Her eyes shone with anger and round red patches suddenly appeared upon her pallid cheeks. Madame Cerise drew a long breath.

"It used to be," was her quiet answer. "It was left her by her grandmother; but Mr. Von Taer did not like the place and they have not been here lately —

not for years. Miss Von Taer informed me, some time ago, that she had transferred the property to another."

"To her cousin — Mr. Mershone?" asked Louise quickly.

"That may be the name; I cannot remember," was the evasive reply.

"But you must know him, as he is Diana's cousin," retorted Louise. "Why will you try to deceive me? Am I not helpless enough already, and do you wish to make me still more miserable?"

"I have seen Mr. Mershone when he was a boy, many times. He was not the favorite with Ma'm'selle Diana, nor with Monsieur Von Taer. For myself, I hated him."

There was decided emphasis to the last sentence. Louise believed her and felt a little relieved.

From the *mélange* of apparel a modest outfit was obtained to clothe the girl with decency and comfort, if not in the prevailing style. The fit left much to be desired, yet Louise did not complain, as weightier matters were now occupying her mind.

The toilet completed, Madame Cerise disappeared to get a tray containing a good breakfast. She seemed exceedingly attentive.

"If you will give me the proper directions I will start for home at once," announced Louise, with firm resolve, while eating her egg and toast.

"I am unable to give you directions, and I cannot let you go, ma'm'selle," was the equally firm reply. "The day is much too disagreeable to venture out in, unless one has proper conveyance. Here, alas, no conveyance may be had."

Louise tried other tactics.

"I have no money, but several valuable jewels," she said, meaningly. "I am quite sure they will obtain for me a conveyance."

"You are wrong, ma'm'selle; there is no conveyance to be had!" persisted the old woman, more sternly.

"Then I shall walk."

"It is impossible."

"Where is this place situated? How far is it from New York? How near am I to a street-car, or to a train?"

"I cannot tell you."

"But this is absurd!" cried Louise. "You cannot deceive me for long. I know this is Diana Von Taer's house, and I shall hold Diana Von Taer responsible for this enforced imprisonment."

"That," said Madame Cerise, coldly, "is a matter of indifference to me. But ma'm'selle must understand one thing, she must not leave this house."

"Oh, indeed!"

“At least, until the weather moderates,” added the woman, more mildly.

She picked up the tray, went to the door and passed out. Louise heard the key click in the lock.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

Uncle John was both astounded and indignant that so bold and unlawful an act as the abduction of his own niece could have been perpetrated in the heart of New York and directly under the eyes of the police. Urged by the Major, Mr. Merrick was at first inclined to allow Arthur Weldon to prosecute the affair and undertake the recovery of the girl, being assured this would easily be accomplished and conceding the fact that no one had a stronger interest in solving the mystery of Louise's disappearance than young Weldon. But when midday arrived and no trace of the young girl had yet been obtained the little millionaire assumed an important and decisive air and hurried down town to "take a hand in the game" himself.

After a long interview with the Chief of Detectives, Mr. Merrick said impressively:

"Now, understand, sir; not a hint of this to the newspaper folks. I won't have any scandal attached to the poor child if I can help it. Set your whole force to work — at once! — but impress them with the need of secrecy. My offer is fair and square. I'll give a reward of ten thousand dollars if Miss Merrick is discovered within twenty-four hours; nine thousand if she's found during the next twenty-four hours; and so on, deducting a thousand for each day of delay. That's for the officer who finds her. For yourself, sir, I intend to express my gratitude as liberally as the service will allow me to. Is this all clear and above-board?"

"It is perfectly clear, Mr. Merrick."

"The child must be found — and found blamed quick, too! Great Caesar! Can a simple affair like this baffle your splendid metropolitan force?"

"Not for long, Mr. Merrick, believe me."

But this assurance proved optimistic. Day by day crept by without a clew to the missing girl being discovered; without development of any sort. The Inspector informed Mr. Merrick that "it began to look like a mystery."

Arthur, even after several sleepless nights, still retained his courage.

"I'm on the right track, sir," he told Uncle John. "The delay is annoying, but not at all dangerous. So long as Fogerty holds fast to Mershone Louise is safe, wherever she may be."

"Mershone may have nothing to do with the case."

"I'm positive he has."

"And Louise can't be safe while she's a prisoner, and in the hands of strangers. I want the girl home! Then I'll know she's safe."

"I want her home, too, sir. But all your men are unable to find her, it

seems. They can't even discover in what direction she was taken, or how. The brown limousine seems to be no due at all."

"Of course not. There are a thousand brown limousines in New York."

"Do you imagine she's still somewhere in the city, sir?" enquired Arthur.

"That's my theory," replied Uncle John. "She must be somewhere in the city. You see it would be almost impossible to get her out of town without discovery. But I'll admit this detective force is the finest aggregation of incompetents I've ever known — and I don't believe your precious Fogerty is any better, either."

Of course Beth and Patsy had to be told of their cousin's disappearance as soon as the first endeavor to trace her proved a failure. Patsy went at once to Mrs. Merrick and devoted herself to comforting the poor woman as well as she could.

Beth frowned at the news and then sat down to carefully think out the problem. In an hour she had logically concluded that Diana Von Taer was the proper person to appeal to. If anyone knew where Louise was, it was Diana. That same afternoon she drove to the Von Taer residence and demanded an interview.

Diana was at that moment in a highly nervous state. She had at times during her career been calculating and unscrupulous, but never before had she deserved the accusation of being malicious and wicked. She had come to reproach herself bitterly for having weakly connived at the desperate act of Charlie Mershone, and her good sense assured her the result would be disastrous to all concerned in it. Contempt for herself and contempt for her cousin mingled with well-defined fears for her cherished reputation, and so it was that Miss Von Taer had almost decided to telephone Madame Cerise and order her to escort Louise Merrick to her own home when Beth's card came up with a curt demand for a personal interview.

The natures of these two girls had never harmonized in the slightest degree. Beth's presence nerved Diana to a spirit of antagonism that quickly destroyed her repentant mood. As she confronted her visitor her demeanor was cold and suspicious. There was a challenge and an accusation in Beth's eyes that conveyed a distinct warning, which Miss Von Taer quickly noted and angrily resented — perhaps because she knew it was deserved.

It would have been easy to tell Beth De Graf where her cousin Louise was, and at the same time to assure her that Diana was blameless in the affair; but she could not endure to give her antagonist this satisfaction.

Beth began the interview by saying: "What have you done with Louise Merrick?" That was, of course, equal to a declaration of war.

Diana was sneering and scornful. Thoroughly on guard, she permitted no

compromising word or admission to escape her. Really, she knew nothing of Louise Merrick, having unfortunately neglected to examine her antecedents and personal characteristics before undertaking her acquaintance. One is so likely to blunder through excess of good nature. She had supposed a niece of Mr. John Merrick would be of the right sort; but the age is peculiar, and one cannot be too cautious in choosing associates. If Miss Merrick had run away from her home and friends, Miss Von Taer was in no way responsible for the escapade. And now, if Miss De Graf had nothing further to say, more important matters demanded Diana's time.

Beth was furious with anger at this baiting. Without abandoning a jot her suspicions she realized she was powerless to prove her case at this time. With a few bitter and cutting remarks — made, she afterward said, in "self-defense" — she retreated as gracefully as possible and drove home.

An hour later she suggested to Uncle John that he have a detective placed where Diana's movements could be watched; but that had already been attended to by both Mr. Merrick and Mr. Fogerty. Uncle John could hardly credit Diana's complicity in this affair. The young lady's social position was so high, her family so eminently respectable, her motive in harming Louise so inconceivable, that he hesitated to believe her guilty, even indirectly. As for her cousin, he did not know what to think, as Arthur accused him unreservedly. It did not seem possible that any man of birth, breeding and social position could be so contemptible as to perpetrate an act of this character. Yet some one had done it, and who had a greater incentive than Charlie Mershone?

Poor Mrs. Merrick was inconsolable as the days dragged by. She clung to Patsy with pitiful entreaties not to be left alone; so Miss Doyle brought her to her own apartments, where the bereft woman was shown every consideration. Vain and selfish though Mrs. Merrick might be, she was passionately devoted to her only child, and her fears for the life and safety of Louise were naturally greatly exaggerated.

The group of anxious relatives and friends canvassed the subject morning, noon and night, and the longer the mystery remained unsolved the more uneasy they all became.

"This, ma'am," said Uncle John, sternly, as he sat one evening facing Mrs. Merrick, "is the final result of your foolish ambition to get our girls into society."

"I can't see it that way, John," wailed the poor woman. "I've never heard of such a thing happening in society before, have you?"

"I don't keep posted," he growled. "But everything was moving smoothly with us before this confounded social stunt began, as you must admit."

“I can’t understand why the papers are not full of it,” sighed Mrs. Merrick, musingly. “Louise is so prominent now in the best circles.”

“Of course,” said the Major, drily; “she’s so prominent, ma’am, that no one can discover her at all! And it’s lucky for us the newspapers know nothing of the calamity. They’d twist the thing into so many shapes that not one of us would ever again dare to look a friend in the eye.”

“I’m sure my darling has been murdered!” declared Mrs. Merrick, weeping miserably. She made the statement on an average of once to every five minutes. “Or, if she hasn’t been killed yet, she’s sure to be soon. Can’t *something* be done?”

That last appeal was hard to answer. They had done everything that could be thought of. And here it was Tuesday. Louise had been missing for five days.

CHAPTER XVIII
A RIFT IN THE CLOUDS

The Tuesday morning just referred to dawned cold and wintry. A chill wind blew and for a time carried isolated snowflakes whirling here and there. Gradually, as the morning advanced, the flakes became more numerous, until by nine o'clock an old fashioned snowstorm had set in that threatened to last for some time. The frozen ground was soon covered with a thin white mantle and the landscape in city and country seemed especially forbidding.

In spite of these adverse conditions Charlie Mershone decided to go out for a walk. He felt much like a prisoner, and his only recreation was in getting out of the hotel for a daily stroll. Moreover, he had an object in going abroad to-day.

So he buttoned his overcoat up to his chin and fearlessly braved the storm. He had come to wholly disregard the presence of the detective who shadowed him, and if the youthful Fogerty by chance addressed him he was rewarded with a direct snub. This did not seem to disconcert the boy in the least, and to-day, as usual, when Mershone walked out Fogerty followed at a respectful distance. He never appeared to be watching his man closely, yet never for an instant did Mershone feel that he had shaken the fellow off.

On this especial morning the detective was nearly a block in the rear, with the snow driving furiously into his face, when an automobile suddenly rolled up to the curb beside him and two men leaped out and pinioned Fogerty in their arms. There was no struggle, because there was no resistance. The captors quickly tossed the detective into the car, an open one, which again started and turned into a side street.

Fogerty, seated securely between the two burly fellows, managed to straighten up and rearrange his clothing.

"Will you kindly explain this unlawful act, gentlemen?" he enquired.

The man on the left laughed aloud. He was the same individual who had attacked Arthur Weldon, the one who had encountered Mershone in the street the day before.

"Cold day, ain't it, Fogerty?" he remarked. "But that makes it all the better for a little auto ride. We like you, kid, we're fond of you — awful fond — ain't we, Pete?"

"We surely are," admitted the other.

"So we thought we'd invite you out for a whirl — see? We'll give you a nice ride, so you can enjoy the scenery. It's fine out Harlem way, an' the cold'll make you feel good. Eh, Pete?"

"That's the idea," responded Pete, cheerfully.

“Very kind of you,” said the detective, leaning back comfortably against the cushions and pulling up his coat collar to shield him from the wind. “But are you aware that I’m on duty, and that this will allow my man to slip away from me?”

“Can’t help that; but we’re awful sorry,” was the reply. “We just wanted company, an’ you’re a good fellow, Fogerty, considerin’ your age an’ size.”

“Thank you,” said Fogerty, “You know me, and I know you. You are Bill Leesome, alias Will Dutton — usually called Big Bill. You did time a couple of years ago for knocking out a policeman.”

“I’m safe enough now, though,” responded Big Bill. “You’re not working on the reg’lar force, Fogerty, you’re only a private burr.”

“I am protected, just the same,” asserted Fogerty. “When you knabbed me I was shadowing Mershone, who has made away with a prominent society young lady.”

“Oh, he has, has he?” chuckled Big Bill, and his companion laughed so gleefully that he attracted Fogerty’s attention to himself.

“Ah, I suppose you are one of the two men who lugged the girl off,” he remarked; “and I must congratulate you on having made a good job of it. Isn’t it curious, by the way, that the fellow who stole and hid this girl should be the innocent means of revealing her biding place?”

The two men stared at him blankly. The car, during this conversation, had moved steadily on, turning this and that corner in a way that might have confused anyone not perfectly acquainted with this section of the city.

“What d’ye mean by that talk, Fogerty?” demanded Big Bill.

“Of course it was Mershone who stole the girl,” explained the detective, calmly; “we know that. But Mershone is a clever chap. He knew he was watched, and so he has never made a movement to go to his prisoner. But he grew restless in time, and when he met you, yesterday, fixed up a deal with you to carry me away, so he could escape.”

Big Bill looked uncomfortable.

“You know a lot, Fogerty,” he said, doggedly.

“Yes; I’ve found that human nature is much the same the world over,” replied the detective. “Of course I suspected you would undertake to give Mershone his chance by grabbing me, and that is exactly what you have done. But, my lads, what do you suppose I have done in the meantime?”

They both looked their curiosity but said nothing.

“I’ve simply used your clever plot to my own advantage, in order to bring things to a climax,” continued Fogerty. “While we are joy-riding here, a half dozen of my men are watching every move that Mershone makes. I believe he will lead them straight to the girl; don’t you?”

Big Bill growled some words that were not very choice and then yelled to the chauffeur to stop. The other man was pale and evidently frightened.

“See here, Fogerty; you make tracks!” was the sharp command, as the automobile came to a halt. “You’ve worked a pretty trick on us, ‘cordin’ to your own showin’, and we must find Mr. Mershone before it’s too late — if we can.”

“Good morning,” said Fogerty, alighting. “Thank you for a pleasant ride — and other things.”

They dashed away and left him standing on the curb; and after watching them disappear the detective walked over to a drug store and entered the telephone booth.

“That you, Hyde? — This is Fogerty.”

“Yes, sir. Mr. Mershone has just crossed the ferry to Jersey. Adams is with him. I’ll hear from him again in a minute: hold the wire.”

Fogerty waited. Soon he learned that Mershone had purchased a ticket for East Orange. The train would leave in fifteen minutes.

Fogerty decided quickly. After looking at his watch he rushed out and arrested a passing taxicab.

“Ready for a quick run — perhaps a long one?” he asked.

“Ready for anything,” declared the man.

The detective jumped in and gave hurried directions.

“Never mind the speed limit,” he said. “No one will interfere with us. I’m Fogerty.”

CHAPTER XIX

POLITIC REPENTANCE

Perhaps no one — not even Mrs. Merrick — was so unhappy in consequence of the lamentable crime that had been committed as Diana Von Taer. Immediately after her interview with Beth her mood changed, and she would have given worlds to be free from complicity in the abduction. Bitterly, indeed, she reproached herself for her enmity toward the unsuspecting girl, an innocent victim of Diana's own vain desires and Charles Mershone's heartless wiles. Repenting her folly and reasoning out the thing when it was too late, Diana saw clearly that she had gained no possible advantage, but had thoughtlessly conspired to ruin the reputation of an honest, ingenuous girl.

Not long ago she had said that her life was dull, a stupid round of social functions that bored her dreadfully. She had hoped by adopting John Merrick's nieces as her *protégées* and introducing them to society to find a novel and pleasurable excitement that would serve to take her out of her unfortunate *ennui* — a condition to which she had practically been born.

But Diana had never bargained for such excitement as this; she had never thought to win self abhorrence by acts of petty malice and callous cruelties.

Yet so intrenched was she in the conservatism of her class that she could not at once bring herself to the point of exposing her own guilt that she might make amends for what had been done. She told herself she would rather die than permit Louise to suffer through her connivance with her reckless, unprincipled cousin. She realized perfectly that she ought to fly, without a moment's delay, to the poor girl's assistance. Yet fear of exposure, of ridicule, of loss of caste, held her a helpless prisoner in her own home, where she paced the floor and moaned and wrung her hands until she was on the verge of nervous prostration. If at any time she seemed to acquire sufficient courage to go to Louise, a glance at the detective watching the house unnerved her and prevented her from carrying out her good intentions.

You must not believe that Diana was really bad; her lifelong training along set lines and practical seclusion from the everyday world were largely responsible for her evil impulses. Mischief is sure to crop up, in one form or another, among the idle and ambitionless. More daring wickedness is said to be accomplished by the wealthy and aimless creatures of our false society than by the poorer and uneducated classes, wherein criminals are supposed to thrive. These sins are often unpublished, although not always undiscovered, but they are no more venial because they are suppressed by wealth and power.

Diana Von Taer was a girl who, rightly led, might have been capable of developing a noble womanhood; yet the conditions of her limited environment had induced her to countenance a most dastardly and despicable act. It speaks well for the innate goodness of this girl that she at last actually rebelled and resolved to undo, insofar as she was able, the wrong that had been accomplished.

For four days she suffered tortures of remorse. On the morning of the fifth day she firmly decided to act. Regardless of who might be watching, or of any unpleasant consequences to herself, she quietly left the house, unattended, and started directly for the East Orange mansion.

CHAPTER XX

A TELEPHONE CALL

Still another laggard awoke to action on this eventful Tuesday morning.

Madame Cerise had been growing more and more morose and dissatisfied day by day. Her grievance was very tangible. A young girl had been brought forcibly to the house and placed in her care to be treated as a prisoner. From that time the perpetrators of the deed had left the woman to her own resources, never communicating with her in any way.

During a long life of servitude Madame Cerise had acquiesced in many things that her own conscience did not approve of, for she considered herself a mere instrument to be used at will by the people who employed and paid her. But her enforced solitude as caretaker of the lonely house at East Orange had given her ample time to think, and her views had lately undergone a decided change.

To become the jailer of a young, pretty and innocent girl was the most severe trial her faithfulness to her employers had ever compelled her to undergo, and the woman deeply resented the doubtful position in which she had been placed.

However, the chances were that Madame Cerise might have obeyed her orders to the letter had not so long a period of waiting ensued. During these days she was constantly thrown in the society of Louise, which had a tendency to make her still more rebellious. The girl clung to Cerise in her helplessness and despair, and constantly implored her to set her free. This, indeed, the Frenchwoman might have done long ago had she not suspected such an act might cause great embarrassment to Diana Von Taer, whom she had held on her knee as an infant and sought to protect with loyal affection.

It was hard, though, to hear the pitiful appeals of the imprisoned girl, and to realize how great was the wrong that was being done her. The old woman was forced to set her jaws firmly and turn deaf ears to the pleadings in order not to succumb to them straightway. Meantime she did her duty conscientiously. She never left Louise's room without turning the key in the lock, and she steadfastly refused the girl permission to wander in the other rooms of the house. The prison was a real prison, indeed, but the turnkey sought to alleviate the prisoner's misery by every means in her power. She was indefatigable in her service, keeping the room warm and neat, attending to the girl's every want and cooking her delicious meals.

While this all tended to Louise's comfort it had little affect in soothing her misery. Between periods of weeping she sought to cajole the old woman to release her, and at times she succumbed to blank despair. Arthur was always

in her mind, and she wondered why he did not come to rescue her. Every night she stole softly from her bed to try the door, hoping Cerise had forgotten to lock it. She examined her prison by stealth to discover any possible way of escape.

There were two small windows and one large one. The latter opened upon the roof of a small porch, but, there were no way to descend from it unless one used a frail lattice at one end, which in summer probably supported a rose or other vine. Louise shrank intuitively from such a desperate undertaking. Unless some dreadful crisis occurred she would never dare trust herself to that frail support. Yet it seemed the only possible way of escape.

Time finally wore out the patience of Madame Cerise, who was unable longer to withstand Louise's pleadings. She did not indicate by word or look that her attitude had changed, but she made a secret resolve to have done with the affair altogether.

Often in their conversations the girl had mentioned Arthur Weldon. She had given Cerise his address and telephone number, and implored her at least to communicate with him and tell him his sweetheart was safe, although unhappy. This had given the old woman the clever idea on which she finally acted.

By telephoning Mr. Weldon she could give him the information that would lead to his coming for Louise, without anyone knowing who it was that had betrayed the secret. This method commended itself strongly to her, as it would save her from any trouble or reproach.

Leaving Louise at breakfast on this Tuesday morning Madame Cerise went down to the telephone and was soon in communication with Arthur. She told him, in a quiet tone, that Miss Louise Merrick was being secluded in a suburban house near East Orange, and described the place so he could easily find it. The young man questioned her eagerly, but aside from the information that the girl was well and uninjured she vouchsafed no further comment.

It was enough, however. Arthur, in wild excitement, rushed to the rescue.

CHAPTER XXI

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

Madame Cerise, well knowing she had accelerated the march of events to a two-step, calmly sat herself down in the little housekeeper's room off the lower hall and, leaving Louise to her moody solitude upstairs, awaited the inevitable developments.

Outside the weather was cold and blustering. The wind whirled its burden of snowflakes in every direction with blinding, bewildering impartiality. It was a bad day to be out, thought the old Frenchwoman; but a snowstorm was not likely to deter an anxious lover. She calculated the time it would take Monsieur Weldon to arrive at the mansion: if he was prompt and energetic he could cover the distance in an hour and a half by train or three hours by motor car. But he must prepare for the journey, and that would consume some time; perhaps she need not expect him within two hours at the earliest.

She read, to pass away the time, selecting a book from a shelf of well-worn French novels. Somehow she did not care to face her tearful prisoner again until she could restore the unhappy girl to the arms of her true lover. There was still romance in the soul of Madame Cerise, however withered her cheeks might be. She was very glad that at last she had summoned courage to act according to the dictates of her heart.

Eh? What is this? A rumble of wheels over the frozen snow caused her to glance at the clock above the mantel. Not by any possibility could Monsieur Weldon arrive so soon. Who, then, could it be?

She sat motionless while the doorbell rang, and rang again. Nothing must interfere with the pretty *denouement* she had so fondly anticipated when Louise's faithful knight came to her.

But the one who had just now alighted was persistent. The vehicle had been sent away — she heard the sound of receding wheels — and the new arrival wanted to get in. The bell jerked and jangled unceasingly for a time and then came a crash against the door, as if a stalwart shoulder was endeavoring to break it down.

Madame Cerise laid down her book, placed her *pince-nez* in the case, and slowly proceeded down the hall. The door shook with another powerful impact, a voice cried out demanding admittance.

"Who is it, then?" she called shrilly.

"Open the door, confound you!" was the irritated reply.

The woman reflected. This was surely young Mershone's voice. And she had no excuse to deny him admittance. Quietly she unbolted the door and allowed it to open an inch while she peered at the man outside.

“Oh! it is Monsieur Mershone.”

“Of course it is,” he roared, forcing the door open and stalking in. “Who in thunder did you think it was?”

“A thousand pardons, m’sieur,” said Cerise. “I must be cautious; it is your own command. That you may be protected I deny admittance to all.”

“That’s all right,” said Mershone gruffly, while he stamped his feet upon the rug and shook the snow from his clothing. “Haven’t you any fire in this beastly old refrigerator? I’m nearly frozen. Where’s Miss Merrick?”

“She is occupying Ma’m’selle Diana’s room, in the west wing. Will monsieur please to come this way?”

She led him to her own little room, and so engrossed were they that neither remembered he had failed to rebolt the front door.

A good fire burned in the grate of Cerise’s cosy den and Mershone threw off his overcoat and warmed his hands as he showered questions upon the old caretaker.

“How is the girl behaving? Tears and hysterics?”

“At times, m’sieur.”

“Takes it hard, eh?”

“She is very unhappy.”

“Ever mention a man named Weldon?”

“Often.”

“Humph!” He did not like this report. “Has anyone been here to disturb you, or to make enquiries?”

“No one, m’sieur.”

“We’re safe enough, I guess. It was a mighty neat job, Cerise, taken altogether, although the fools have been watching me night and day. That’s the reason I did not come sooner.”

She made no comment. Mershone threw himself into a chair and stared thoughtfully at the fire.

“Has Louise — Miss Merrick, you know — mentioned my name at all?”

“At times.”

“In what way?”

“With loathing and contempt.”

He scowled at her savagely.

“Do you think she suspects that I carried her away?”

“She seems to know it absolutely.”

He stared at the fire again.

“I’ve got a queer job on my hands, Cerise, and I rely on you to help me,” said he presently, assuming a more conciliating manner. “Perhaps I’m in a box, or a hole, or whatever else you like to call it, but it’s too late too back

down now — I must push ahead and win. You see the case is this: I love the girl and had her brought here to keep her from another man. By hook or crook I'm going to make her my wife. She won't take kindly to that at first, perhaps, but I'll make her happy in the end. In one way this delay has been a good thing. It must have worn her out and broken her spirits quite a bit; eh?"

"She seems very miserable," conceded the woman.

"Do you find her hard to manage? Does she show much temper? In other words, do you suppose she'll put up a fight?"

Madame Cerise regarded him wonderingly.

"She is a good girl," was her reply. "She loves with much devotion the man from whom you have stolen her. I am quite positive she will never consent to become your wife."

"Oh, you are? Well, I intend she shall marry me, and that settles it. She's unnerved and miserable now, and I mean to grind her down till she hasn't strength to resist me. That sounds hard. I know; but it's the only way to accomplish my purpose. After she's my wife I'll be very kind to her, poor thing, and teach her to love me. A man can do anything with a woman if he sets about it the right way. I'm not taking this stand because I'm cruel, Cerise, but because I'm desperate. All's fair in love and war, you know, and this is a bit of both."

He was pacing the floor by this time, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, an anxious look upon his face that belied his bombastic words.

The Frenchwoman's expression was impassive. Her scorn for the wretch before her was tempered with the knowledge that his cowardly plan was doomed to defeat. It was she who had checkmated him, and she was glad. Now and again her eyes sought the clock, while she silently calculated the time to elapse before Arthur Weldon arrived. There would be a pretty scene then, Cerise would have much enjoyment in witnessing the encounter.

"Now, then, take me to Louise," commanded Mershone, suddenly.

She shrank back in dismay.

"Oh, not yet, m'sieur!"

"Why not?"

"The young lady is asleep. She will not waken for an hour — perhaps two."

"I can't wait. We'll waken her now, and give her an idea of the change of program."

"But no, m'sieur! It is outrageous. The poor thing has but now sobbed herself to sleep, after many bitter hours. Can you not wait a brief hour, having waited five days?"

"No. Take me to her at once."

As he came toward her the woman drew away.

“I cannot,” she said firmly.

“See here, Cerise, I intend to be obeyed. I won’t endure any nonsense at this stage of the game, believe me,” he announced fiercely. “In order to win, there’s just one way to manage this affair, and I insist upon your following my instructions. Take me to Louise!”

“I will not!” she returned, the bead-like eyes glittering as they met his angry gaze.

“Then I’ll go alone. Give me the key.”

She did not move, nor did she answer him. At her waist hung a small bunch of household keys and this he seized with a sudden movement and jerked loose from its cord.

“You miserable hag!” he muttered, inflamed with anger at her opposition. “If you propose to defend this girl and defy me, you’ll find I’m able to crush you as I will her. While I’m gone I expect you to come to your senses, and decide to obey me.”

With these words he advanced to the door of the little room and opened it. Just outside stood Fogerty, smiling genially.

“Glad to meet you again, Mr. Mershone,” he said. “May I come in? Thank you.”

While Mershone stood bewildered by this unexpected apparition the detective entered the room, closed the door carefully, and putting his back to it bowed politely to Madame Cerise.

“Pardon this seeming intrusion, ma’am,” said he. “I’m here on a little matter of business, having a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Charles Connoldy Mershone.”

CHAPTER XXII
GONE

The grim face of Madame Cerise relaxed to allow a quaint smile to flit across it. She returned Fogerty's bow with a deep curtsy.

Mershone, after one brief exclamation of dismay, wrested from him by surprise, threw himself into the chair again and stared at the fire. For a few moments there was intense stillness in the little room.

"How easy it is," said Fogerty, in soft, musing tones, "to read one's thoughts — under certain circumstances. You are thinking, Mr. Mershone, that I'm a boy, and not very strong, while you are an athlete and can easily overpower me. I have come at a disagreeable time, and all your plans depend on your ability to get rid of me. But I've four good men within call, who are just now guarding the approaches to this house. They'd like to come in, I know, because it's very cold and disagreeable outside; but suppose we allow them to freeze for a time? Ah, I thought you'd agree with me, sir — I overheard you say you were about to visit Miss Merrick, who is confined in a room upstairs, but I'd like you to postpone that while we indulge in a little confidential chat together. You see — "

The door-bell rang violently. Fogerty glanced at Madame Cerise.

"Will you see who it is?" he asked.

She arose at once and left the room. Mershone turned quickly.

"What's your price, Fogerty?" he asked, meaningly.

"For what?"

"For getting out of here — making tracks and leaving me alone. Every man has his price, and I'm trapped — I'm willing to pay anything — I'll — "

"Cut it out, sir. You've tried this once before. I'm not to be bribed."

"Have you really a warrant for my arrest?"

"I've carried it since Friday. It's no use, Mershone, the game's up and you may as well grin and bear it."

Mershone was about to reply when the door opened and Diana Von Taer came in with a swift, catlike tread and confronted him with flaming eyes.

"You coward! You low, miserable scoundrel! How dare you come here to annoy and browbeat that poor girl?" she cried in clear, cutting accents, without noticing the presence of Fogerty.

"Oh, shut up, Di, you're in it as deep as I am," he retorted, turning away with a flushed face.

"I'm not, sir! Never have I countenanced this wicked, criminal act," she declared. "I have come here to-day to save Louise from your wiles and carry her back to her friends. I dare you, or your confederates," with a scornful

look at the detective, “to interfere with me in any way.” Then she turned to Cerise and continued: “Where is Miss Merrick now?”

“In your own room, ma’m’seile.”

“Come with me, then.”

With a defiant glance at Mershone she turned haughtily and left the room. Cerise followed obediently, somewhat astonished at the queer turn of events.

Left alone with Mershone, Fogerty chuckled gleefully.

“Why, it seems I wasn’t needed, after all,” said he, “and we’ve both of us taken a lot of trouble for nothing, Mershone. The chances are Miss Von Taer would have turned the trick in any event, don’t you think so?”

“No, you don’t understand her. She wouldn’t have interfered if she hadn’t been scared out,” growled the other. “She’s sacrificed me to save herself, that’s all.”

“You may be right about that,” admitted Fogerty; and then he got up to answer the door-bell, which once more rang violently.

An automobile stood outside, and from it an excited party trooped into the hallway, disregarding the cutting wind and blinding snowflakes that assailed them as they passed in. There was Arthur Weldon and Uncle John, Patricia and Beth; and all, as they saw the detective, cried with one voice:

“Where’s Louise?”

Fogerty had just managed to close the door against the wintry blast when the answer came from the stairway just above:

“She is gone!”

The voice was shrill and despairing, and looking up they saw Diana standing dramatically posed upon the landing, her hands clasped over her heart and a look of fear upon her face. Over her shoulder the startled black eyes of old Cerise peered down upon the group below.

The newcomers were evidently bewildered by this reception. They had come to rescue Louise, whom they imagined confined in a lonely deserted villa with no companion other than the woman who guarded her. Arthur’s own detective opened the door to them and Diana Von Taer, whom they certainly did not expect to meet here, confronted them with the thrilling statement that Louise had gone.

Arthur was the first to recover his wits.

“Gone!” he repeated; “gone where?”

“She had escaped — run away!” explained Diana, in real distress.

“When?” asked Uncle John.

“Just now. Within an hour, wasn’t it, Cerise?”

“At ten o’clock I left her, now she is gone,” said the old woman, who appeared as greatly agitated as her mistress.

“Good gracious! you don’t mean to say she’s left the house in this storm?” exclaimed Patsy, aghast at the very thought.

“What shall we do? What *can* we do?” demanded Beth, eagerly.

Fogerty started up the stairs. Cerise turned to show him the way, and the others followed in an awed group.

The key was in the lock of the door to the missing girl’s room, but the door itself now stood ajar. Fogerty entered, cast a sharp look around and walked straight to the window. As the others came in, glancing curiously about them and noting the still smouldering fire and the evidences of recent occupation, the detective unlatched the French window and stepped out into the snow that covered the roof of the little porch below. Arthur sprang out beside him, leaving the rest to shiver in the cold blast that rushed in upon them from the open window.

Fogerty, on his knees, scanned the snow carefully, and although Weldon could discover no sign of a footprint the young detective nodded his head sagaciously and slowly made his way to the trellis at the end. Here it was plain that the accumulation of snow had recently been brushed away from the frail framework.

“It was strong enough to hold her, though,” declared Fogerty, looking over the edge of the roof. “I’ll descend the same way, sir. Go back by the stairs and meet me below.”

He grasped the lattice and began cautiously to lower himself to the ground, and Arthur turned to rejoin his friends in the room.

“That is the way she escaped, without doubt,” he said to them. “Poor child, she had no idea we were about to rescue her, and her long confinement had made her desperate.”

“Did she have a cloak, or any warm clothes?” asked Beth. Madame Cerise hurriedly examined the wardrobe in the closets.

“Yes, ma’m’selle; she has taken a thick coat and a knit scarf,” she answered. But I am sure she had no gloves, and her shoes were very thin.”

“How long do you think she has been gone?” Patsy enquired.

“Not more than an hour. I was talking with Mr. Mershone, and — ”

“Mershone! Is he here?” demanded Arthur.

“He is in my room downstairs — or was when you came,” said the woman.

“That accounts for her sudden flight,” declared the young man, bitterly. “She doubtless heard his voice and in a sudden panic decided to fly. Did Mershone see her?” he asked.

“No, m’sieur,” replied Cerise.

With one accord they descended to the lower hall and the caretaker led the

way to her room. To their surprise they found Mershone still seated in the chair by the fire, his hands clasped behind his head, a cigarette between his lips.

"Here is another crime for you to account for!" cried Arthur, advancing upon him angrily. "You have driven Louise to her death!"

Mershone raised one hand in mild protest.

"Don't waste time cursing me," he said. "Try to find Louise before it is too late."

The reproach seemed justified. Arthur paused and turning to Mr. Merrick said:

"He is right. I'll go help Fogerty, and you must stay here and look after the girls until we return."

As he went out he passed Diana without a look. She sat in a corner of the room sobbing miserably. Beth was thoughtful and quiet, Patsy nervous and indignant. Uncle John was apparently crushed by the disaster that had overtaken them. Mershone's suggestion that Louise might perish in the storm was no idle one; the girl was not only frail and delicate but worn out with her long imprisonment and its anxieties. They all realized this.

"I believe," said Mershone, rising abruptly, "I'll go and join the search. Fogerty has arrested me, but you needn't worry about my trying to escape. I don't care what becomes of me, now, and I'm going straight to join the detective."

They allowed him to go without protest, and he buttoned his coat and set out in the storm to find the others. Fogerty and Arthur were by this time in the lane back of the grounds, where the detective was advancing slowly with his eyes fixed on the ground.

"The tracks are faint, but easily followed," he was saying, "The high heels of her shoes leave a distinct mark."

When Mershone joined them Arthur scowled at the fellow but said nothing. Fogerty merely smiled.

From the lane the tracks, already nearly obliterated by the fast falling snow, wandered along nearly a quarter of a mile to a crossroads, where they became wholly lost.

Fogerty looked up and down the roads and shook his head with a puzzled expression.

"We've surely traced her so far," said he, "but now we must guess at her further direction. You'll notice this track of a wagon. It may have passed fifteen minutes or an hour ago. The hoof tracks of the horses are covered, so I'm not positive which way they headed; I only know there are indications of hoof tracks, which proves it a farmer's wagon. The question is, whether the

young lady met it, and caught a ride, or whether she proceeded along some of the other trails. I can't find any indication of those high-heeled shoes from this point, in any direction. Better get your car, Mr. Weldon, and run east a few miles, keeping sharp watch of the wagon tracks on the way. It was a heavy wagon, for the wheels cut deep. Mershone and I will go west. When you've driven far enough to satisfy yourself you're going the wrong direction, you may easily overtake us on your return. Then, if we've discovered nothing on this road, we'll try the other."

Arthur ran back at once to the house and in a few minutes had started on his quest. The motor car was powerful enough to plow through the deep snow with comparative ease.

Those left together in Madam Cerise's little room were more to be pitied than the ones engaged in active search, for there was nothing to relieve their fears and anxieties. Diana, unable to bear the accusing looks of Patsy and Beth, resolved to make a clean breast of her complicity in the affair and related to them every detail of her connection with her cousin's despicable plot. She ended by begging their forgiveness, and wept so miserably that Uncle John found himself stroking her hair while Patsy came close and pressed the penitent girl's hand as if to comfort and reassure her.

Beth said nothing. She could not find it in her heart as yet to forgive Diana's selfish conspiracy against her cousin's happiness. If Louise perished in this dreadful storm the proud Diana Von Taer could not escape the taint of murder. The end was not yet.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CRISIS

Mershone and Fogerty plodded through the snow together, side by side. They were facing the wind, which cut their faces cruelly, yet neither seemed to mind the bitterness of the weather.

"Keep watch along the roadside," suggested Mershone; "she may have fallen anywhere, you know. She couldn't endure this thing long. Poor Louise!"

"You were fond of her, Mr. Mershone?" asked Fogerty, not unsympathetically.

"Yes. That was why I made such a struggle to get her."

"It was a mistake, sir. Provided a woman is won by force or trickery she's never worth getting. If she doesn't care for you it's better to give her up."

"I know — now."

"You're a bright fellow, Mershone, a clever fellow. It's a pity you couldn't direct your talents the right way. They'll jug you for this."

"Never mind. The game of life isn't worth playing. I've done with it, and the sooner I go to the devil the better. If only I could be sure Louise was safe I'd toss every care — and every honest thought — to the winds, from this moment."

During the silence that followed Fogerty was thoughtful. Indeed, his mind dwelt more upon the defeated and desperate man beside him than upon the waif he was searching for.

"What's been done, Mr. Mershone," he said, after a time, "can't be helped now. The future of every man is always a bigger proposition than his past — whoever he may be. With your talents and genius you could yet make of yourself a successful and prosperous man, respected by the community — if you could get out of this miserable rut that has helped to drag you down."

"But I can't," said the other, despondently.

"You can if you try. But you'll have to strike for a place a good way from New York. Go West, forget your past, and carve out an honest future under a new name and among new associates. You're equal to it."

Mershone shook his head.

"You forget," he said. "They'll give me a jail sentence for this folly, as sure as fate, and that will be the end of me."

"Not necessarily. See here, Mershone, it won't help any of those people to prosecute you. If the girl escapes with her life no real harm has been done, although you've caused a deal of unhappiness, in one way or another. For my part, I'd like to see you escape, because I'm sure this affair will be a warning

to you that will induce you to give up all trickery in the future. Money wouldn't bribe me, as you know, but sympathy and good fellowship will. If you'll promise to skip right now, and turn over a new leaf, you are free."

"Where could I go?"

"There's a town a mile ahead of us; I can see the buildings now and then. You've money, for you offered it to me. I haven't any assistants here, I'm all alone on the job. That talk about four men was only a bluff. Push me over in the snow and make tracks. I'll tell Weldon you've escaped, and advise him not to bother you. It's very easy."

Mershone stopped short, seized the detective's hand and wrung it gratefully.

"You're a good fellow, Fogerty. I — I thank you. But I can't do it. In the first place, I can't rest in peace until Louise is found, or I know her fate. Secondly, I'm game to give an account for all my deeds, now that I've played the farce out, and lost. I — I really haven't the ambition, Fogerty, to make a new start in life, and try to reform. What's the use?"

Fogerty did not reply. Perhaps he realized the case was entirely hopeless. But he had done what he could to save the misguided fellow and give him a chance, and he was sorry he had not succeeded.

Meantime Arthur Weldon, almost dazed by the calamity that had overtaken his sweetheart, found an able assistant in his chauffeur, who, when the case was explained to him, developed an eager and intelligent interest in the chase. Fortunately they moved with the storm and the snow presently moderated in volume although the wind was still blowing a fierce gale. This gave them a better opportunity than the others to observe the road they followed.

Jones had good eyes, and although the trail of the heavy wagon was lost at times he soon picked it up again and they were enabled to make fairly good speed.

"I believe," said Arthur, presently, "that the marks are getting clearer."

"I know they are, sir," agreed Jones.

"Then we've come in the right direction, for it is proof that the wagon was headed this way."

"Quite right, sir."

This back section was thinly settled and the occasional farm-houses they passed were set well back from the road. It was evident from the closed gates and drifted snowbanks that no teams had either left these places or arrived during a recent period. Arthur was encouraged, moreover, by the wagon ruts growing still more clear as they proceeded, and his excitement was great when Jones abruptly halted and pointed to a place where the wheels had

made a turn and entered a farm yard.

“Here’s the place, sir,” announced the chauffeur.

“Can you get in?”

“It’s pretty deep, sir, but I’ll try.”

The snow was crisp and light, owing to the excessive cold, and the machine plowed through it bravely, drawing up at last to the door of an humble cottage.

As Arthur leaped out of the car a man appeared upon the steps, closing the door softly behind him.

“Looking for the young lady, sir?” he asked.

“Is she here?” cried Arthur.

The man placed his finger on his lips, although the wind prevented any sound of voices being heard within.

“Gently, sir, don’t make a noise — but come in.”

They entered what seemed to be a kitchen. The farmer, a man of advanced years, led him to a front room, and again cautioning him to be silent, motioned him to enter.

A sheet-iron stove made the place fairly comfortable. By a window sat a meek-faced woman, bent over some sewing. On a couch opposite lay Louise, covered by a heavy shawl. She was fast asleep, her hair disheveled and straying over her crimson cheeks, flushed from exposure to the weather. Her slumber seemed the result of physical exhaustion, for her lips were parted and she breathed deeply.

Arthur, after gazing at her for a moment with a beating-heart, for the mysterious actions of the old farmer had made him fear the worst, softly approached the couch and knelt beside the girl he loved, thanking; God in his inmost heart for her escape. Then he leaned over and pressed a kiss upon her cheek.

Louise slowly opened her eyes, smiled divinely, and threw her arms impulsively around his neck.

“I knew you would come for me, dear,” she whispered.

CHAPTER XXIV

A MATTER OF COURSE

All explanations were barred until the girl had been tenderly taken to her own home and under the loving care of her mother and cousins had recovered to an extent from the terrible experiences she had undergone.

Then by degrees she told them her story, and how, hearing the voice of her persecutor Mershone in the hall below she had become frantic with fear and resolved to trust herself to the mercies of the storm rather than submit to an interview with him. Before this she had decided that she could climb down the trellis, and that part of her flight she accomplished easily. Then she ran toward the rear of the premises to avoid being seen and managed to find the lane, and later the cross-roads. It was very cold, but her excitement and the fear of pursuit kept her warm until suddenly her strength failed her and she sank down in the snow without power to move. At this juncture the farmer and his wife drove by, having been on a trip to the town. The man sprang out and lifted her in, and the woman tenderly wrapped her in the robes and blankets and pillowed her head upon her motherly bosom. By the time they reached the farm-house she was quite warm again, but so exhausted that with a brief explanation that she was lost, but somebody would be sure to find her before long, she fell upon the couch and almost immediately lost consciousness.

So Arthur found her, and one look into his eyes assured her that all her troubles were over.

They did not prosecute Charlie Mershone, after all. Fogerty pleaded for him earnestly, and Uncle John pointed out that to arrest the young man would mean to give the whole affair to the newspapers, which until now had not gleaned the slightest inkling of what had happened. Publicity was to be avoided if possible, as it would set loose a thousand malicious tongues and benefit nobody. The only thing to be gained by prosecuting Mershone was revenge, and all were willing to forego that doubtful satisfaction.

However, Uncle John had an interview with the young man in the office of the prosecuting attorney, at which Mershone was given permission to leave town quietly and pursue his fortunes in other fields. If ever he returned, or in any way molested any of the Merricks or his cousin Diana, he was assured that he would be immediately arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Mershone accepted the conditions and became an exile, passing at once out of the lives of those he had so deeply wronged.

The joyful reunion of the lovers led to an early date being set for the

wedding. They met all protests by pleading their fears of another heartrending separation, and no one ventured to oppose their desire.

Mrs. Merrick quickly recovered her accustomed spirits during the excitement of those anxious weeks preceding the wedding. Cards were issued to "the very best people in town;" the *trousseau* involved anxiety by day and restless dreams by night — all eminently enjoyable; there were entertainments to be attended and congratulations to be received from every side.

Society, suspecting nothing of the tragedy so lately enacted in these young lives, was especially gracious to the betrothed. Louise was the recipient of innumerable merry "showers" from her girl associates, and her cousins, Patsy and Beth, followed in line with "glass showers" and "china showers" until the prospective bride was stocked with enough wares to establish a "house-furnishing emporium," as Uncle John proudly declared.

Mr. Merrick, by this time quite reconciled and palpably pleased at the approaching marriage of his eldest niece, was not to be outdone in "social stunts" that might add to her happiness. He gave theatre parties and banquets without number, and gave them with the marked success that invariably attended his efforts.

The evening before the wedding Uncle John and the Major claimed Arthur for their own, and after an hour's conference between the three that left the young fellow more happy and grateful than ever before, he was entertained at his last "bachelor dinner," where he made a remarkable speech and was lustily cheered.

Of course Beth and Patsy were the bridesmaids, and their cousin Kenneth Forbes came all the way from Elmhurst to be Arthur's best man. No one ever knew what it cost Uncle John for the wonderful decorations at the church and home, for the music, the banquet and all the other details which he himself eagerly arranged on a magnificent scale and claimed was a part of his "wedding present."

When it was all over, and the young people had driven away to begin the journey of life together, the little man put a loving arm around Beth and Patsy and said, between smiles and tears:

"Well, my dears, I've lost one niece, and that's a fact; but I've still two left. How long will they remain with me, I wonder?"

"Dear me, Uncle John," said practical Patsy; "your necktie's untied and dangling; like a shoestring! I hope it wasn't that way at the wedding."

"It was, though," declared the Major, chuckling. "If all three of ye get married, my dears, poor Uncle John will come to look like a scarecrow — and all that in the face of swell society!"

“Aren’t we about through with swell society now?” asked Mr. Merrick, anxiously. “Aren’t we about done with it? It caused all our troubles, you know.”

“Society,” announced Beth, complacently, “is an excellent thing in the abstract. It has its black sheep, of course; but I think no more than any other established class of humanity.”

“Dear me!” cried Uncle John; “you once denounced society.”

“That,” said she, “was before I knew anything at all about it.”

AUNT JANE'S NIECES AND UNCLE JOHN

Baum probably should have named his popular series, *Uncle John's Nieces*, as Uncle John becomes a much more prominent character than Aunt Jane. In Baum's sixth novel in the series, *Aunt Jane's Nieces and Uncle John*, he finally shares part of the title. Reilly & Britton published the novel in 1911 under Baum's pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. Emile A. Nelson handled the artwork again. Baum used his own travels throughout the Southwest as background detail. After Louise's wedding, Uncle John schemes to take the remaining two girls on a trip to California, to escape the winter. Along the way, they meet and help a poor, crippled orphan girl named Myrtle. Out west, they visit the Grand Canyon, view a Hopi snake dance, and run into a belligerent mob of cowboys. Among other things, they also solve the mystery of Myrtle's missing uncle.

A first edition copy of 'Aunt Jane's Nieces and Uncle John'

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING "MUMBLES"

Major Gregory Doyle paced nervously up and down the floor of the cosy sitting room.

"Something's surely happened to our Patsy!" he exclaimed.

A little man with a calm face and a bald head, who was seated near the fire, continued to read his newspaper and paid no attention to the outburst.

"Something has happened to Patsy!" repeated the Major, "Patsy" meaning his own and only daughter Patricia.

"Something is always happening to everyone," said the little man, turning his paper indifferently. "Something is happening to me, for I can't find the rest of this article. Something is happening to you, for you're losing your temper."

"I'm not, sir! I deny it."

"As for Patsy," continued the other, "she is sixteen years old and knows New York like a book. The girl is safe enough."

"Then where is she? Tell me that, sir. Here it is, seven o'clock, dark as pitch and raining hard, and Patsy is never out after six. Can you, John Merrick, sit there like a lump o' putty and do nothing, when your niece and my own darlin' Patsy is lost — or strayed or stolen?"

"What would you propose doing?" asked Uncle John, looking up with a smile.

"We ought to get out the police department. It's raining and cold, and — "

"Then we ought to get out the fire department. Call Mary to put on more coal and let's have it warm and cheerful when Patsy comes in."

"But, sir — "

"The trouble with you, Major, is that dinner is half an hour late. One can imagine all sorts of horrible things on an empty stomach. Now, then — "

He paused, for a pass-key rattled in the hall door and a moment later Patsy Doyle, rosy and animated, fresh from the cold and wet outside, smilingly greeted them.

She had an umbrella, but her cloak was dripping with moisture and in its ample folds was something huddled and bundled up like a baby, which she carefully protected.

"So, then," exclaimed the Major, coming forward for a kiss, "you're back at last, safe and sound. Whatever kept ye out 'til this time o' night, Patsy darlin'?" he added, letting the brogue creep into his tone, as he did when stirred by any emotion.

Uncle John started to take off her wet cloak.

“Look out!” cried Patsy; “you’ll disturb Mumbles.”

The two men looked at her bundle curiously.

“Who’s Mumbles?” asked one.

“What on earth is Mumbles?” inquired the other.

The bundle squirmed and wriggled. Patsy sat down on the floor and carefully unwound the folds of the cloak. A tiny dog, black and shaggy, put his head out, blinked sleepily at the lights, pulled his fat, shapeless body away from the bandages and trotted solemnly over to the fireplace. He didn’t travel straight ahead, as dogs ought to walk, but “cornerwise,” as Patsy described it; and when he got to the hearth he rolled himself into a ball, lay down and went to sleep.

During this performance a tense silence had pervaded the room. The Major looked at the dog rather gloomily; Uncle John with critical eyes that held a smile in them; Patsy with ecstatic delight.

“Isn’t he a dear!” she exclaimed.

“It occurs to me,” said the Major stiffly, “that this needs an explanation. Do you mean to say, Patsy Doyle, that you’ve worried the hearts out of us this past hour, and kept the dinner waiting, all because of a scurvy bit of an animal?”

“Pshaw!” said Uncle John. “Speak for yourself, Major. I wasn’t worried a bit.”

“You see,” explained Patsy, rising to take off her things and put them away, “I was coming home early when I first met Mumbles. A little boy had him, with a string tied around his neck, and when Mumbles tried to run up to me the boy jerked him back cruelly — and afterward kicked him. That made me mad.”

“Of course,” said Uncle John, nodding wisely.

“I cuffed the boy, and he said he’d take it out on Mumbles, as soon as I’d gone away. I didn’t like that. I offered to buy the dog, but the boy didn’t dare sell him. He said it belonged to his father, who’d kill him and kick up a row besides if he didn’t bring Mumbles home. So I found out where they lived and as it wasn’t far away I went home with him.”

“Crazy Patsy!” smiled Uncle John.

“And the dinner waiting!” groaned the Major, reproachfully.

“Well, I had a time, you can believe!” continued Patsy, with animation. “The man was a big brute, and half drunk. He grabbed up the little doggie and threw it into a box, and then told me to go home and mind my business.”

“Which of course you refused to do.”

“Of course. I’d made up my mind to have that dog.”

“Dogs,” said the Major, “invariably are nuisances.”

“Not invariably,” declared Patsy. “Mumbles is different. Mumbles is a good doggie, and wise and knowing, although he’s only a baby dog yet. And I just couldn’t leave him to be cuffed and kicked and thrown around by those brutes. When the man found I was determined to have Mumbles he demanded twenty-five dollars.”

“Twenty-five dollars!” It startled Uncle John.

“For that bit of rags and meat?” asked the Major, looking at the puppy with disfavor. “Twenty-five cents would be exorbitant.”

“The man misjudged me,” observed Patsy, with a merry laugh that matched her twinkling blue eyes. “In the end he got just two dollars for Mumbles, and when I came away he bade me good-bye very respectfully. The boy howled. He hasn’t any dog to kick and is broken-hearted. As for Mumbles, he’s going to lead a respectable life and be treated like a dog.”

“Do you mean to keep him?” inquired the Major.

“Why not?” said Patsy. “Don’t you like him, Daddy?”

Her father turned Mumbles over with his toe. The puppy lay upon its back, lazily, with all four paws in the air, and cast a comical glance from one beady bright eye at the man who had disturbed him.

The Major sighed.

“He can’t hunt, Patsy; he’s not even a mouser.”

“We haven’t a mouse in the house.”

“He’s neither useful nor ornamental. From the looks o’ the beast he’s only good to sleep and eat.”

“What’s the odds?” laughed Patsy, coddling Mumbles up in her arms. “We don’t expect use or ornamentation from Mumbles. All we ask is his companionship.”

Mary called them to dinner just then, and the girl hurried to her room to make a hasty toilet while the men sat down at the table and eyed their soup reflectively.

“This addition to the family,” remarked Uncle John, “need not make you at all unhappy, my dear Major. Don’t get jealous of Mumbles, for heaven’s sake, for the little brute may add a bit to Patsy’s bliss.”

“It’s the first time I’ve ever allowed a dog in the house.”

“You are not running this present establishment. It belongs exclusively to Patsy.”

“I’ve always hated the sight of a woman coddling a dog,” added the Major, frowning.

“I know. I feel the same way myself. But it isn’t the dog’s fault. It’s the woman’s. And Patsy won’t make a fool of herself over that frowsy puppy, I assure you. On the contrary, she’s likely to get a lot of joy out of her new

plaything, and if you really want to make her happy, Major, don't discourage this new whim, absurd as it seems. Let Patsy alone. And let Mumbles alone."

The girl came in just then, bringing sunshine with her. Patsy Doyle was not very big for her years, and some people unkindly described her form as "chubby." She had glorious red hair — really-truly red — and her blue eyes were the merriest, sweetest eyes any girl could possess. You seldom noticed her freckles, her saucy chin or her turned-up nose; you only saw the laughing eyes and crown of golden red, and seeing them you liked Patsy Doyle at once and imagined she was very good to look at, if not strictly beautiful. No one had friends more loyal, and these two old men — the stately Major and round little Uncle John — fairly worshiped Patsy.

No one might suspect, from the simple life of this household, which occupied the second corner flat at 3708 Willing Square, that Miss Doyle was an heiress. Not only that, but perhaps one of the very richest girls in New York. And the reason is readily explained when I state the fact that Patsy's Uncle John Merrick, the round little bald-headed man who sat contentedly eating his soup, was a man of many millions, and this girl his favorite niece. An old bachelor who had acquired an immense fortune in the far Northwest, Mr. Merrick had lately retired from active business and come East to seek any relatives that might remain to him after forty years' absence. His sister Jane had gathered around her three nieces — Louise Merrick, Elizabeth De Graf and Patricia Doyle — and when Aunt Jane died Uncle John adopted these three girls and made their happiness the one care of his jolly, unselfish life. At that time Major Doyle, Patsy's only surviving parent, was a poor bookkeeper; but Uncle John gave him charge of his vast property interests, and loving Patsy almost as devotedly as did her father, made his home with the Doyles and began to enjoy himself for the first time in his life.

At the period when this story opens the eldest niece, Louise Merrick, had just been married to Arthur Weldon, a prosperous young business man, and the remaining two nieces, as well as Uncle John, were feeling rather lonely and depressed. The bride had been gone on her honeymoon three days, and during the last two days it had rained persistently; so, until Patsy came home from a visit to Beth and brought the tiny dog with her, the two old gentlemen had been feeling dreary enough.

Patsy always livened things up. Nothing could really depress this spirited girl for long, and she was always doing some interesting thing to create a little excitement.

"If she hadn't bought a twenty-five cent pup for two dollars," remarked the Major, "she might have brought home an orphan from the gutters, or a litter of tomcats, or one of the goats that eat the tin cans at Harlem. Perhaps,

after all, we should be thankful it's only — what's his name?"

"Mumbles," said Patsy, merrily. "The boy said they called him that because he mumbled in his sleep. Listen!"

Indeed, the small waif by the fire was emitting a series of noises that seemed a queer mixture of low growls and whines — evidence unimpeachable that he had been correctly named.

At Patsy's shout of laughter, supplemented by Uncle John's chuckles and a reproachful cough from the Major, Mumbles awakened and lifted his head. It may be an eye discovered the dining-table in the next room, or an intuitive sense of smell directed him, for presently the small animal came trotting in — still traveling "cornerwise" — and sat up on his hind legs just beside Patsy's chair.

"That settles it," said the Major, as his daughter began feeding the dog. "Our happy home is broken up."

"Perhaps not," suggested Uncle John, reaching out to pat the soft head of Mumbles. "It may be the little beggar will liven us all up a bit."

CHAPTER II

UNCLE JOHN'S IDEA

Two hours later Uncle John, who had been dozing in his big chair by the fire while Patsy drummed on the piano, sat up abruptly and looked around him with a suddenly acquired air of decision.

"I have an idea," he announced.

"Did you find it in your dreams, then?" asked the Major, sharply.

"Why, Daddy, how cross you are!" cried Patsy. "Can't Uncle John have an idea if he wants to?"

"I'm afraid of his ideas," admitted the Major, suspiciously. "Every time he goes to sleep and catches a thought, it means trouble."

Patsy laughed, looking at her uncle curiously, and the little man smiled at her genially in return.

"It takes me a long time to figure a thing out," he said; "and when I've a problem to solve a bit of a snooze helps wonderfully. Patsy, dear, it occurs to me we're lonely."

"We surely are, Uncle!" she exclaimed.

"And in the dumps."

"Our spirits are at the bottom of the bottomless pit."

"So what we need is — a change."

"There it goes!" said the Major ruefully. "I knew very well any idea of John Merrick's would cause us misery. But understand this, you miserable home-wrecker, sir, my daughter Patsy steps not one foot out of New York this winter."

"Why not?" mildly inquired Uncle John.

"Because you've spirited her away from me times enough, and deprived her only parent of her society. First you gallivanted off to Europe, and then to Millville, and next to Elmhurst; so now, egad, I'm going to keep the girl with me if I have to throttle every idea in your wicked old head!"

"But I'm planning to take you along, this time. Major," observed Uncle John reflectively.

"Oh. Hum! Well, I can't go. There's too much business to be attended to — looking after your horrible money."

"Take a vacation. You know I don't care anything about the business. It can't go very wrong, anyhow. What does it matter if my income isn't invested properly, or the bond coupons cut when they're due? Drat the money!"

"That's what I say," added Patsy eagerly. "Be a man, Major Doyle, and put the business out of your mind. Let's go somewhere and have a good

romp. It will cheer us up."

The Major stared first at one and then at the other.

"What's the programme, John?" he asked stiffly.

"It's going to be a cold winter," remarked the little man, bobbing his head up and down slowly.

"It is!" cried Patsy, clasping her hands fervently. "I can feel it in my bones."

"So we're going," said Uncle John, impressively, "to California — where they grow sunshine and roses to offset our blizzards and icicles."

"Hurray!" shouted Patsy. "I've always wanted to go to California."

"California!" said the Major, amazed; "why, it's farther away than Europe. It takes a month to get there."

"Nonsense." retorted Uncle John. "It's only four days from coast to coast. I have a time-table, somewhere," and he began searching in his pockets.

There was a silence, oppressive on the Major's part, ecstatic as far as Patsy was concerned. Uncle John found the railway folder, put on his spectacles, and began to examine it.

"At my time of life," remarked Major Doyle, who was hale and hearty as a boy, "such a trip is a great undertaking."

"Twenty-four hours to Chicago," muttered Uncle John; "and then three days to Los Angeles or San Francisco. That's all there is to it."

"Four days and four nights of dreary riding. We'd be dead by that time," prophesied the Major.

Uncle John looked thoughtful. Then he lay back in his chair and spread his handkerchief over his face again.

"No, no!" cried the Major, in alarm. "For mercy's sake, John, don't go to sleep and catch any more of those terrible ideas. No one knows where the next one might carry us — to Timbuktu or Yucatan, probably. Let's stick to California and settle the question before your hothouse brain grows any more weeds."

"Yucatan," remarked Mr. Merrick, composedly, his voice muffled by the handkerchief, "isn't a bad suggestion."

"I knew it!" wailed the Major. "How would Ethiopia or Hindustan strike you?"

Patsy laughed at him. She knew something good was in store for her and like all girls was enraptured at the thought of visiting new and interesting scenes.

"Don't bother Uncle John, Daddy," she said. "You know very well he will carry out any whim that seizes him; especially if you oppose the plan, which you usually do."

“He’s the most erratic and irresponsible man that ever lived,” announced her father, staring moodily at the spread handkerchief which covered Uncle John’s cherub-like features. “New York is good enough for anybody, even in winter; and now that you’re in society, Patsy — ”

“Oh, bother society! I hate it.”

“True,” he agreed; “it’s a regular treadmill when it has enslaved one, and keeps you going on and on without progressing a bit. The object of society is to tire you out and keep you from indulging in any other occupation.”

“You know nothing about it,” observed Patsy, demurely, “and that is why you love to rail at society. The things you know, Daddy dear, are the things you never remark upon.”

“Huh!” grunted the Major, and relapsed into silence.

Mumbles had finished his after-dinner nap and was now awakening to activity. This dog’s size, according to the Major, was “about 4x6; but you can’t tell which is the 4 and which the 6.” He was distressingly shaggy. Patsy could find the stump of his tail only by careful search. Seldom were both eyes uncovered by hair at the same time. But, as his new mistress had said, he was a wise little dog for one who had only known the world for a few months, and his brain was exceedingly alert. After yawning at the fire he rubbed his back against the Major’s legs, sat up beside Patsy and looked at her from one eye pleadingly. Next he trotted over to Uncle John. The big white handkerchief attracted him and one corner hung down from the edge of the reclining chair. Mumbles sat up and reached for it, but could not quite get it in his teeth. So he sat down and thought it over, and presently made a leap so unexpectedly agile that Patsy roared with merriment and even the Major grinned. Uncle John, aroused, sat up and found the puppy rolling on the floor and fighting the handkerchief as if it had been some deadly foe.

“Thank goodness,” sighed the Major. “The little black rascal has providently prevented you from evolving another idea.”

“Not so,” responded Mr. Merrick amiably. “I’ve thought the thing all out, and completed our programme.”

“Is it still to be California?” anxiously inquired Patsy.

“Of course. I can’t give up the sunshine and roses, you know. But we won’t bore the Major by four solid days of railway travel. We’ll break the journey, and take two or three weeks to it — perhaps a month.”

“Conquering Caesar! A month!” ejaculated the old soldier, a desperate look on his face.

“Yes. Listen, both of you. We’ll get to Chicago in a night and a day. We will stop off there and visit the stockyards, and collect a few squeals for souvenirs.”

“No, we won’t!” declared Patsy, positively.

“We might sell Mumbles to some Chicago sausage factory,” remarked the Major, “but not for two whole dollars. He wouldn’t make more than half a pound at twenty cents the pound.”

“There are other sights to be seen in Chicago,” continued Uncle John. “Anyhow, we’ll stop off long enough to get rested. Then on to Denver and Pike’s Peak.”

“That sounds good,” said Patsy.

“At Denver,” said Uncle John, “we will take a touring car and cross the mountains in it. There are good roads all the way from there to California.”

“Who told you so?” demanded the Major.

“No one. It’s a logical conclusion, for I’ve lived in the West and know the prairie roads are smoother than boulevards. However, Haggerty told me the other day that he has made the trip from Denver to Los Angeles by automobile, and what others can do, we can do.”

“It will be glorious!” prophesied Patsy, delightedly.

The Major looked grave, but could find no plausible objection to offer. He really knew nothing about the West and had never had occasion to consider such a proposition before.

“We’ll talk to Haggerty,” he said. “But you must remember he’s a desperate liar, John, and can’t be trusted as a guidepost. When do you intend to start?”

“Why not to-morrow?” asked Uncle John mildly.

Even Patsy demurred at this.

“Why, we’ve got to get ready, Uncle,” she said. “And who’s going? Just we three?”

“We will take Beth along, of course.” Beth was Elizabeth De Graf, another niece. “But Beth is fortunately the sort of girl who can pull up stakes and move on at an hour’s notice.”

“Beth is always ready for anything,” agreed Patsy. “But if we are going to a warm climate we will need summer clothes.”

“You can’t lug many clothes in a motor car,” observed the Major.

“No; but we can ship them on ahead.”

“Haggerty says,” remarked Uncle John, “that you won’t need thin clothes until you get out to California. In fact, the mountain trip is rather cool. But it’s perpetual sunshine, you know, even there, with brisk, keen air; and the whole journey, Haggerty says, is one of absolute delight.”

“Who is Haggerty?” asked Patsy.

“A liar,” answered the Major, positively.

“He’s a very good fellow whom we sometimes meet in the city,” said

Uncle John. “Haggerty is on the Board, and director in a bank or two, and quite respectable. But the Major — ”

“The Major’s going to California just to prove that Haggerty can’t speak the truth,” observed that gentleman, tersely heading off any threatened criticism. “I see there is no opposing your preposterous scheme, John, so we will go with you and make the best of it. But I’m sure it’s all a sad mistake. What else did Haggerty tell you?”

“He says it’s best to pick up a motor car and a chauffeur in Denver, rather than ship them on from here. There are plenty of cars to be had, and men who know every inch of the road.”

“That seems sensible,” declared Patsy, “and we won’t lose time waiting for our own car to follow by freight. I think, Uncle John, I can be ready by next Tuesday.”

“Why, to-morrow’s Saturday!” gasped the Major. “The business — ”

“Cut the business off short,” suggested his brother-in-law. “You’ve to cut it somewhere, you know, or you’ll never get away; and, as it’s my business, I hereby authorize you to neglect it from this moment until the day of our return. When we get back you can pick up the details again and worry over it as much as you please.”

“Will we ever get back?” asked the Major, doubtingly.

“If we don’t, the business won’t matter.”

“That’s the idea,” cried Patsy, approvingly. “Daddy has worked hard all summer, Uncle John, looking after that annoying money of yours, and a vacation will do him oodles of good.”

Major Doyle sighed.

“I misdoubt the wisdom of the trip,” said he, “but I’ll go, of course, if you all insist. Over the Rocky Mountains and across the Great American Desert in an automobile doesn’t sound very enticing, but — ”

“Haggerty says — ”

“Never mind Haggerty. We’ll find out for ourselves.”

“And, after all,” said Patsy, “there are the sunshine and roses at the end of the journey, and they ought to make up for any amount of bother in getting there.”

“Girl, you’re attempting to deceive me — to deceive your old Daddy,” said the Major, shaking his head at her. “You wouldn’t have any fun riding to California in a palace car; even the sunshine and roses couldn’t excite you under such circumstances; but if there’s a chance for adventure — a chance to slide into trouble and make a mighty struggle to get out again — both you and that wicked old uncle of yours will jump at it. I know ye both. And that’s the real reason we’re going to travel in an automobile instead of progressing

comfortably as all respectable people do.”

“You’re a humbug,” retorted Mr. Merrick. “You wouldn’t go by train if I’d let you.”

“No,” admitted the Major; “I must be on hand to rescue you when you and Patsy go fighting windmills.”

CHAPTER III

MYRTLE DEAN

"We were due in Denver three hours ago, and it's an hour's run or more yet," remarked Beth De Graf, walking briskly up and down the platform of a way station where the train had stopped for orders.

"And it's beginning to snow," observed Patricia Doyle, beside her. "I'm afraid this weather isn't very propitious for an automobile trip."

"Uncle John doesn't worry," said Beth. "He believes there is perpetual sunshine west of Denver."

"Yes; a man named Haggerty told him. But you'll notice that Daddy doesn't seem to believe the tale. Anyhow, we shall soon know the truth, Beth, and the trip is somewhat on the order of a voyage of discovery, which renders it fascinating to look forward to. There is such fun in not knowing just what is going to happen next."

"When one travels with Uncle John," returned Beth, smiling, "she knows exactly — nothing. That is why I am always eager to accept if he invites me to go anywhere with him."

The passengers thronging the platform — "stretching their legs" after the confinement of the tedious railway journey — eyed these two girls admiringly. Beth was admitted a beauty, and one of the society journals had lately announced that she had few peers in all the great metropolis. Chestnut brown hair; dark, serious and steady eyes; an exquisite complexion and rarely regular features all conspired to render the young girl wonderfully attractive. Her stride was athletic, free and graceful; her slender form well poised and dignified. Patsy, the "plug-ugly," as she called herself, was so bright and animated and her blue eyes sparkled so constantly with fun and good humor, that she attracted fully as much attention as her more sedate and more beautiful cousin, and wherever she went was sure to make a host of friends.

"See!" she cried, clasping Beth's arm; "there is that lovely girl at the window again. I've noticed her ever since the train left Chicago, and she is always in the same seat in that tourist coach. I wonder why she doesn't get out for a bit of fresh air now and then."

Beth looked up at the fair, girlish face that gazed wistfully from the window. The unknown seemed very young — not more than fourteen or fifteen years of age. She wore a blue serge suit of rather coarse weave, but it was neat and becoming. Around the modest, sweet eyes were deep circles, denoting physical suffering or prolonged worry; yet the lips smiled, wanly but persistently. She had evidently noticed Uncle John's two nieces, for her

eyes followed them as they marched up and down the platform and when Patsy looked up and nodded, a soft flush suffused her features and she bowed her head in return.

At the cry of "all aboard!" a scramble was made for the coaches and Beth and Patsy, re-entering their staterooms, found their Uncle and the Major still intent upon their interminable game of cribbage.

"Let's go back and talk to the girl," suggested Patsy. "Somehow, the poor thing seems lonely, and her smile was more pathetic than cheerful."

So they made their way through the long train to the tourist coach, and there found the girl they were seeking. The surrounding seats were occupied by groups of passengers of rather coarse caliber, many being foreign laborers accompanied by their wives and children. The air in the car was close and "stuffy" and the passengers seemed none too neat in their habits and appearance. So the solitary girl appeared like a rose blooming in a barnyard and her two visitors were instantly sorry for her. She sat in her corner, leaning wearily against the back of the cane seat, with a blanket spread over her lap. Strangely enough the consideration of her fellow passengers left the girl in undisturbed possession of a double seat.

"Perhaps she is ill," thought Patsy, as she and Beth sat down opposite and entered into conversation with the child. She was frankly communicative and they soon learned that her name was Myrtle Dean, and that she was an orphan. Although scarcely fifteen years of age she had for more than two years gained a livelihood by working in a skirt factory in Chicago, paying her board regularly to a cross old aunt who was her only relative in the big city. Three months ago, however, she had met with an accident, having been knocked down by an automobile while going to her work and seriously injured.

"The doctors say," she confided to her new friends, "that I shall always be lame, although not quite helpless. Indeed, I can creep around a little now, when I am obliged to move, and I shall get better every day. One of my hips was so badly injured that it will never be quite right again, and my Aunt Martha was dreadfully worried for fear I would become a tax upon her. I cannot blame her, for she has really but little money to pay for her own support. So, when the man who ran over me paid us a hundred dollars for damages — "

"Only a hundred dollars!" cried Beth, amazed.

"Wasn't that enough?" inquired Myrtle innocently.

"By no means," said Patsy, with prompt indignation. "He should have given you five thousand, at least. Don't you realize, my dear, that this accident has probably deprived you of the means of earning a livelihood?"

“I can still sew,” returned the girl, courageously, “although of course I cannot get about easily to search for employment.”

“But why did you leave Chicago?” asked Beth.

“I was coming to that part of my story. When I got the hundred dollars Aunt Martha decided I must use it to go to Leadville, to my Uncle Anson, who is my mother’s only brother. He is a miner out there, and Aunt Martha says he is quite able to take care of me. So she bought my ticket and put me on the train and I’m now on my way to Leadville to find Uncle Anson.”

“To *find* him!” exclaimed Patsy. “Don’t you know his address?”

“No; we haven’t had a letter from him for two years. But Aunt Martha says he must be a prominent man, and everybody in Leadville will know him, as it’s a small place.”

“Does he know you are coming?” asked Beth, thoughtfully.

“My aunt wrote him a letter two days before I started, so he ought to receive it two days before I get there,” replied Myrtle, a little uneasily. “Of course I can’t help worrying some, because if I failed to find Uncle Anson I don’t know what might happen to me.”

“Have you money?” asked Beth.

“A little. About three dollars. Aunt gave me a basket of food to last until I get to Leadville, and after paying for my ticket and taking what I owed her for board there wasn’t much left from the hundred dollars.”

“What a cruel old woman!” cried Patsy, wrathfully. “She ought to be horsewhipped!”

“I am sure it was wrong for her to cast you off in this heartless way,” added Beth, more conservatively.

“She is not really bad,” returned Myrtle, the tears starting to her eyes. “But Aunt Martha has grown selfish, and does not care for me very much. I hope Uncle Anson will be different. He is my mother’s brother, you know, while Aunt Martha is only my father’s sister, and an old maid who has had rather a hard life. Perhaps,” she added, wistfully, “Uncle Anson will love me — although I’m not strong or well.”

Both Patsy and Beth felt desperately sorry for the girl.

“What is Uncle Anson’s other name?” asked the latter, for Beth was the more practical of Uncle John’s nieces and noted for her clear thinking.

“Jones. Mr. Anson Jones.”

“Rather a common name, if you have to hunt for him,” observed the questioner, musingly. “Has he been in Leadville long?”

“I do not know,” replied Myrtle. “His last letter proved that he was in Leadville two years ago, and he said he had been very successful and made money; but he has been in other mining camps, I know, and has wandered for

years all over the West."

"Suppose he should be wandering now?" suggested Patsy; but at the look of alarm on Myrtle's face she quickly changed the subject, saying: "You must come in to dinner with us, my dear, for you have had nothing but cold truck to eat since you left Chicago. They say we shall be in Denver in another hour, but I'm afraid to believe it. Anyhow, there is plenty of time for dinner."

"Oh, I can't go, really!" cried the girl. "It's — it's so hard for me to walk when the train is moving; and — and — I wouldn't feel happy in that gay, luxurious dining car."

"Well, we must go, anyway, or the Major will be very disagreeable," said Patsy. "Good-bye, Myrtle; we shall see you again before we leave the train."

As the two girls went forward to their coach Beth said to Patsy:

"I'm afraid that poor thing will be greatly disappointed when she gets to Leadville. Imagine anyone sending a child on such a wild goose chase — and an injured and almost helpless child, at that!"

"I shudder to think what would become of her, with no uncle to care for her and only three dollars to her name," added Patsy. "I have never heard of such an inhuman creature as that Aunt Martha, Beth. I hope there are not many like her in the world."

At dinner they arranged with the head waiter of the dining car to send in a substantial meal, smoking hot, to Myrtle Dean, and Patsy herself inspected the tray before it went to make sure everything was there that was ordered. They had to satisfy Uncle John's curiosity at this proceeding by relating to him Myrtle Dean's story, and the kindly little man became very thoughtful and agreed with them that it was a cruel act to send the poor girl into a strange country in search of an uncle who had not been heard of in two years.

When the train pulled into the station at Denver the first care of John Merrick's party was to look after the welfare of the lame girl. They got a porter to assist her into the depot waiting room and then Uncle John inquired about the next train for Leadville, and found it would not start until the following morning, the late overland train having missed that day's connections. This was a serious discovery for poor Myrtle, but she smiled bravely and said:

"I can pass the night in this seat very comfortably, so please don't worry about me. It is warm here, you know, and I won't mind a bit the sitting up. Thank you all very much for your kindness, and good-bye. I'll be all right, never fear."

Uncle John stood looking down at her thoughtfully.

"Did you engage a carriage, Major?" he asked.

“Yes; there’s one now waiting,” was the reply.

“All right. Now, then, my dear, let’s wrap this blanket around you tight and snug.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Myrtle with a startled look.

“Carry you outside. It’s pretty cold and snowy, so we must wrap you up. Now, Major, take hold on the other side. Here we go!”

Patsy smiled — rather pitifully — at the expression of bewilderment on Myrtle’s face. Uncle John and the Major carried her tenderly to a carriage and put her in the back seat. Patsy sprang in next, with Mumbles clasped tightly in her arms, the small dog having been forced to make the journey thus far in the baggage car. Beth and the Major entered the carriage next, while Uncle John mounted beside the driver and directed him to the Crown Palace Hotel.

It was growing dark when they reached the dingy hostelry, which might have been palatial when it was named but was now sadly faded and tawdry. It proved to be fairly comfortable, however, and the first care of the party was to see Myrtle Dean safely established in a cosy room, with a grate fire to cheer her. Patsy and Beth had adjoining rooms and kept running in for a word with their protégé, who was so astonished and confused by her sudden good fortune that she was incapable of speech and more inclined to cry than to laugh.

During the evening Uncle John was busy at the telegraph booth. He sent several messages to Leadville, to Anson Jones, to the Chief of Police and to the various hotels; but long before midnight, when the last replies were received, he knew that Anson Jones had left Leadville five months ago, and his present whereabouts were unknown. Having learned these facts the little man went to bed and slept peacefully until morning.

Myrtle had begged them to see that she was called at five o’clock, that she might have ample time to get to the depot for her train, but no one called her and the poor child was so weary and worn with her trip that the soft bed enthralled her for many hours after daybreak.

Patsy finally aroused her, opening the blinds to let in the sunshine and then sitting beside Myrtle’s bed to stroke her fair hair and tell her it was nearly noon.

“But my train!” wailed the girl, greatly distressed.

“Oh, the train has gone hours ago. But never mind that, dear. Uncle John has telegraphed to Leadville and found that Anson Jones is not there. He left months ago, and is now wandering; in fields and pastures unknown.”

Myrtle sat up in bed and glared at Patsy wild-eyed.

“Gone!” she said. “Gone! Then what am I to do?”

“I can’t imagine, dear,” said Patsy, soothingly. “What do you think you will do?”

The girl seemed dazed and for a time could not reply.

“You must have thought of this thing,” suggested her new friend, “for it was quite possible Anson Jones would not be in Leadville when you arrived there.”

“I did not dare think of it,” returned Myrtle in a low, frightened tone. “I once asked Aunt Martha what I could do in case Uncle Anson wasn’t to be found, and she said he *must* be found, for otherwise I would be obliged to earn my own living.”

“And she knew you to be so helpless!”

“She knows I can sew, if only I can get work to do,” said the girl, simply. “I’m not really a cripple, and I’m getting better of my hurt every day. Aunt Martha said I would be just as well off in Denver or Leadville as in Chicago, and made me promise, if the worst came, not to let any charitable organization send me back to her.”

“In other words,” exclaimed Patsy, indignantly, “she wanted to get rid of you, and did not care what became of you.”

“She was afraid I would cost her money,” admitted the poor child, with shamed, downcast eyes.

Patsy went to the window and stood looking out for a time. Myrtle began to dress herself. As she said, she was not utterly helpless, moving the upper part of her body freely and being able to walk slowly about a room by holding on to chairs or other furniture.

“I’m afraid I’m causing you a lot of worry over me,” said she, smiling sadly as Patsy turned toward her; “and that is ungrateful when I remember how kind you have all been. Why, these hours since I met you have seemed like fairyland. I shall treasure them as long as I live. There must be another train to Leadville soon, and I’ll take that. As soon as I am ready I will go to the depot and wait there.”

Patsy looked at her reflectively. The poor child was called upon to solve a queer problem — one which might well have bewildered the brain of a more experienced person.

“Tell me,” she said; “why should you go to Leadville at all, now that you have no friend or relative there to care for you?”

“My ticket is to Leadville, you know,” replied Myrtle. “If I did not go I would waste the money it cost.”

Patsy laughed at this.

“You’re a wonderfully impractical child,” she said, deftly assisting Myrtle to finish dressing. “What you really need is some one to order you around

and tell you what to do. So you must stop thinking about yourself, for a time, and let *us* do the thinking. Here — sit in this chair by the window. Do you want Mumbles in your lap? All right. Now gaze upon the scenery until I come back. There's a man washing windows across the street; watch and see if he does his work properly."

Then she went away to join a conference in Uncle John's sitting room. Major Doyle was speaking when she entered and his voice was coldly ironical.

"The temperature outside is six degrees above freezing," he observed. "The clerk downstairs says the snow is nine feet deep over the mountain trails and the wind would cut an iron beam in two. If you take an automobile to California, John, you must put it on snowshoes and connect it with a steam heating-plant."

Uncle John, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, paced thoughtfully up and down the room.

"Haggerty said — "

"Didn't I give you Haggerty's record, then?" asked the Major. "If you want the exact truth it's safe to go directly opposite to what Haggerty says."

"He's a very decent fellow," protested Mr. Merrick, "and is considered in the city to be strictly honest."

"But after this?"

"You can't blame him for the weather conditions here. I've been talking with Denver people myself, this morning, and they all say it's unusual to have such cold weather at this time of year. The thermometer hasn't been so low in the past twenty-six years, the natives say."

"Are they all named Haggerty?" asked the Major, scornfully.

"If you will kindly allow me to speak, and tell you what Haggerty said," remarked Uncle John tersely, "I shall be able to add to your information."

"Go ahead, then."

"Haggerty said that in case we ran into cold weather in Denver, which was possible — "

"Quite possible!"

"Then we had best go south to Santa Fe and take the route of the old Santa Fe Trail as far as Albuquerque, or even to El Paso. Either way we will be sure to find fine weather, and good roads into California."

"So Haggerty says."

"It stands to reason," continued Mr. Merrick, "that on the Southern route we will escape the severe weather. So I have decided to adopt that plan."

"I think you are quite wise in that," broke in Patsy, before her father could object.

“All those queer Spanish names sound interesting,” said Beth. “When do we start, Uncle?”

“In a day or two. I have some things here to attend to that may delay us that long. But when once we are started southward we shall bowl along right merrily.”

“Unless we run into more snowstorms.” Of course it was the Major who said that, and pointedly ignoring the remark Uncle John turned to Patsy and said:

“How did you find Myrtle Dean this morning?”

“She is rested, and seems very bright and cheerful, Uncle; but of course she is much distressed by the news that her Uncle Anson has vanished from Leadville. Yet she thinks she will continue her journey by the next train, as she has paid for her ticket and can’t afford to waste the money.”

“It would be absurd for the child to go to Leadville on that account. A mining camp is no place for such a frail thing,” returned Mr. Merrick. “What would you suggest, Patsy?”

“Really, Uncle John, I don’t know what to suggest.”

“She can never earn her living by sewing,” declared Beth. “What she ought to have is a trained nurse and careful attention.”

“I’ll have a doctor up to look her over,” said Uncle John, in his decisive way. He was a mild little man generally, but when he made up his mind to do a thing it was useless to argue with him. Even Major Doyle knew that; but the old soldier was so fond of arguing for the sake of argument, and so accustomed to oppose his wealthy brother-in-law — whom he loved dearly just the same — that he was willing to accept defeat rather than permit Mr. Merrick to act without protest.

CHAPTER IV
AN INTERESTING PROTÉGÉ

A young physician was appointed by the management to attend any guest who might require his services, and Uncle John had a talk with him and sent him to Myrtle's room to give her a thorough examination. This he did, and reported that the girl's present condition was due largely to mismanagement of her case at the time she was injured. With care she would get better and stronger rapidly, but the hip joint was out of its socket and only a skillful operation would serve to permanently relieve her of lameness.

"What she needs just now," continued the doctor, "is a pair of crutches, so she can get around better and be in the fresh air and sunshine as much as possible. She is a very frail little woman at present and must build up her health and strength before submitting to the operation I have mentioned. Then, if it is properly done, she ought to recover completely and be as good as new."

"I must inform you," said Uncle John, "that Myrtle Dean is just a little waif whom my nieces picked up on the train. I believe she is without friends or money. Such being the circumstances, what would you advise?"

The doctor shook his head gravely.

"Poor thing!" he said. "She ought to be rich, at this juncture, instead of poor, for the conditions facing her are serious. The operation I speak of is always an expensive one, and meantime the child must go to some charitable institution or wear out her feeble strength in trying to earn enough to keep the soul in her body. She seems to have a brave and beautiful nature, sir, and were she educated and cared for would some day make a splendid woman. But the world is full of these sad cases. I'm poor myself, Mr. Merrick, but this child interests me, and after you have gone I shall do all in my power to assist her."

"Thank you," said Uncle John, thoughtfully nodding his bald head.
"I'll think it over and see you again, doctor, before I leave."

An hour later Myrtle was fitted with crutches of the best sort obtainable, and was overjoyed to find how greatly they assisted her. The Major, a kindly man, decided to take Myrtle out for a drive, and while they were gone Uncle John had a long conversation with Beth and Patsy.

"Here is a case," said he, "where my dreadful money can do some good. I am anxious to help Myrtle Dean, for I believe she is deserving of my best offices. But I don't exactly know what to do. She is really *your* protégé, my dears, and I am going to put the affair in your hands for settlement. Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Spend my money as freely upon Myrtle as you

please.”

The girls faced the problem with enthusiasm.

“She’s a dear little thing,” remarked Patsy, “and seems very grateful for the least kindness shown her. I am sure she has never been treated very nicely by that stony-hearted old aunt of hers.”

“In all my experience,” said Beth, speaking as if her years were doubled, “I have never known anyone so utterly helpless. She is very young and inexperienced, with no friends, no money, and scarcely recovered from an accident. It is clearly our duty to do something for Myrtle, and aside from the humane obligation I feel that already I love the child, having known her only a day.”

“Admitting all this, Beth,” returned her uncle, “you are not answering my question. What shall we do for Myrtle? How can we best assist her?”

“Why not take her to California with us?” inquired Patsy, with sudden inspiration. “The sunshine and roses would make a new girl of her in a few weeks.”

“Could she ride so far in an automobile?” asked Beth, doubtfully.

“Why not? The fresh air would be just the thing for her. You’ll get a big touring car, won’t you, Uncle John?”

“I’ve bought one already — a seven-seated ‘Autocrat’ — and there will be plenty of room in it for Myrtle,” he said.

“Good gracious! Where did you find the thing so suddenly?” cried Patsy.

“I made the purchase this morning, bright and early, before you were up,” replied Mr. Merrick, smilingly. “It is a fine new car, and as soon as I saw it I knew it was what I wanted. It is now being fitted up for our use.”

“Fitted up?”

“Yes. I’ve an idea in my head to make it a movable hotel. If we’re going to cross the plains and the mountains and the deserts, and all that sort of thing, we must be prepared for any emergencies. I’ve also sent for a chauffeur who is highly recommended. He knows the route we’re going to take; can make all repairs necessary in case of accident, and is an experienced driver. I expect him here any minute. His name is Wampus.”

“But about Myrtle,”‘ said Beth. “Can we make her comfortable on a long ride?”

“Certainly,” asserted Uncle John. “We are not going to travel day and night, my dear, for as soon as we get away from this frozen country we can take our time and journey by short stages. My notion is that we will have more fun on the way than we will in California.”

“Myrtle hasn’t any proper clothes,” observed Patsy, reflectively. “We’ll

have to shop for her, Beth, while Uncle is getting the car ready."

"Are you sure to leave to-morrow, Uncle John?" inquired Beth.

"To-morrow or the next day. There's no use leaving before the 'Autocrat' is ready to ship."

"Oh; we're not going to ride in it, then?"

"Not just yet. We shall take the train south to Santa Fe, and perhaps to Albuquerque. I'll talk to Wampus about that. When we reach a good climate we'll begin the journey overland — and not before."

"Then," said Patsy, "I'm sure we shall have time to fit out Myrtle very nicely."

Mr. Wampus was announced just then, and while Uncle John conferred with the chauffeur his two nieces went to their room to talk over Myrtle Dean's outfit and await the return of the girl from her ride.

"They tell me," said Mr. Merrick, "that you are an experienced chauffeur."

"I am celebrate," replied Wampus. "Not as chauffeur, but as expert automobilist."

He was a little man and quite thin. His legs were short and his arms long. He had expressionless light gray eyes and sandy hair cropped close to his scalp. His mouth was wide and good-humored, his chin long and broad, his ears enormous in size and set at right angles with his head. His cheek bones were as high and prominent as those of an Indian, and after a critical examination of the man Uncle John was impelled to ask his nationality.

"I am born in Canada, at Quebec Province," he answered. "My father he trapper; my mother squaw. For me, I American, sir, and my name celebrate over all the world for knowing automobile like father knows his son." He paused, and added impressively: "I am Wampus!"

"Have you ever driven an 'Autocrat' car?" asked Mr. Merrick.

"'Autocrat?' I can take him apart blindfold, an' put him together again."

"Have you ever been overland to California?"

"Three time."

"Then you know the country?"

"In the dark. I am Wampus."

"Very good, Wampus. You seem to be the man I want, for I am going to California in an 'Autocrat' car, by way of the Santa Fe Trail and — and — "

"No matter. We find way. I am — "

"I know. Now tell me, Wampus: if I employ you will you be faithful and careful? I have two girls in my party — three girls, in fact — and from the moment you enter my service I shall expect you to watch over our welfare and guide us with skill and intelligence. Will you do this?"

The man seemed somewhat offended by the question.

"When you have Wampus, what more you want?" he inquired. "Maybe you not know Wampus. You come from far East. All right. You go out and ask automobile man about Wampus. Ask ever'body. When you have inquire you feel more happy. I come again."

He started to go, but Mr. Merrick restrained him.

"You have been highly recommended already," said he. "But you cannot expect me to have as high an opinion of you as you have of yourself; at least, until I know you better. Would you like to undertake this engagement?"

"Yes. Just now I free. My business is expert automobilist. I am Wampus. But perhaps you want cheap man. My price high."

"What is your price?"

"Fifty dollar week. You eat me an' sleep me."

"I do not object to your price. Come out with me to the garage and I will show you my car and explain what is being done to it."

Although all the automobile men seemed to defer most respectfully to Wampus, Mr. Merrick did not neglect to make proper inquiries in regard to the man. Locally he really was "celebrate" and Uncle John was assured on all sides that he was fortunate to get so intelligent and experienced a chauffeur as this same Wampus.

"He seems to have instinctive knowledge of all machinery," said one informant, "and can handle perfectly any car that is made. The only trouble with the fellow is that he is conceited."

"I've noticed that," returned Mr. Merrick.

"Another thing," said the gentleman; "don't believe implicitly all that Wampus tells you. He has a habit of imagining things. But he is a faithful, honest fellow, for all that, and will handle your car better than any other man you could get in Denver — or anywhere in the West, I imagine."

So Wampus was engaged, and putting the man's references and indorsements all together Mr. Merrick felt that he had gained a prize.

When the big Major, returning from his drive, escorted Myrtle Dean to the elevator, the girl was joyously using her new crutches. Patsy and Beth met her and said they had important news to communicate. Not until she was in her own room, seated in a comfortable chair and gazing at them anxiously, did they tell the poor waif of the good fortune in store for her.

"Uncle John," announced Patsy, "has invited you to join our party and go to California with us."

Myrtle stared a moment, as if trying to realize what that meant. The tiny Mumbles, sitting beside the chair with his head cocked to one side, suddenly made a prodigious leap and landed in Myrtle's lap, where he began licking

her chin and wagging his stumpy tail as if seconding the invitation. As the girl stroked his soft hair her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, you are all so kind to me!" she sobbed, losing her composure. "But I can't go! Of course I can't go."

"Why not?" asked Beth, smiling.

"It would be an — impersition!" Poor Myrtle sometimes stumbled over big words. "I know that. I can't let you burden your happy party with a poor cripple, just because your hearts are kind and you pity me!"

"Nonsense!" said Beth. "You're not a cripple, dear; you're just an invalid, and will soon be as strong as any of us. We have invited you, Myrtle, because we all like you, and shall soon learn to love you. We are selfish enough to want your companionship. It isn't pity, at all, you see."

"I'm mighty glad," added Patsy, "your Uncle Anson ran away from Leadville. If he hadn't done that we should have had to give you up; but now we may keep you as long as we wish, for you haven't any particular engagement to interfere with our plans."

All this was said so frankly and unaffectedly that little Myrtle was led to abandon her suspicion and grew radiant with delight. Indeed, she hugged and squeezed the squirming Mumbles until he resented such strenuous fondling and escaped to Patsy's more moderate embraces. Myrtle had never yet ridden in an automobile, and the prospect of a long journey across the country in a big touring car, with California's roses and sunshine at the end of it, was certainly alluring enough to intoxicate one far more accustomed to pleasure than this friendless, impoverished girl.

After the cousins had explained all their plans to Myrtle and assured her she was to be their cherished guest for a long time — until she was well and strong again, at the least — they broached the subject of her outfit. The poor child flushed painfully while admitting the meagerness of her wardrobe. All her possessions were contained in one small canvas "hold-all," and she lacked many necessities which her callous aunt had suggested that Uncle Anson might be induced to buy for her once she had joined him in Leadville. Uncle John's nieces grew more and more indignant as they discovered the details of this selfish woman's crime — for Patsy declared it was nothing less than a crime to send a helpless child far into the West to search for an unknown uncle whose whereabouts were only conjectural.

That very afternoon Beth and Patsy began shopping for Myrtle, and presently all sorts of parcels, big and little, began to arrive for their new protégé. Myrtle was amazed and awed by the splendor of her new apparel, and could scarcely believe her good fortune. It seemed like a fairy tale to her, and she imagined herself a Cinderella with two fairy godmothers who were

young and pretty girls possessing the purse of Fortunatus and the generosity of Glinda the Good. At night, when she was supposed to be asleep, Myrtle crept from her bed, turned on the electric light and gloated over her treasures, which she had almost feared might vanish into thin air and leave her as desolate as before.

Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, the girls took Myrtle out with them to some of the shops, fitting her to shoes and gloves and having her try on some ready-made gowns so that they might be quickly altered for her use. Patsy also bought her a set of soft and pretty furs, thinking she might need them on the journey if the weather continued cool, and this seemed to cap the climax of Myrtle's happiness.

"What 'stonishes me most," gasped the child, trying to get her breath between the surprises she experienced, "is how you can think of so many things to do for me. Of course I know you are rich; but I've never before heard of rich people being so very generous to poor ones."

"Once," said Beth, gravely, "we were poor ourselves, Patsy and I, and had to work hard for our living. That was before our Uncle John came and gave us a share of his money, together with his love and sympathy. Isn't it natural, my dear, that we should now be eager to share our good fortune with you, since we have more money than we can use otherwise, and you are to be our little friend and companion?"

"Perhaps so," replied Myrtle, smiling gaily and much comforted by the explanation. "But, oh dear! I'm so glad you found me!"

"We are glad, too," said Patsy. "But here it is, time for luncheon, and we've wasted the whole morning in shopping. I'm sure the Major will be cross if we do not hurry back to the hotel."

CHAPTER V
A WONDER ON WHEELS

But the Major was not cross when they met him in Uncle John's sitting room. He beamed upon the three girls most genially, for he liked Myrtle and fully approved all that was being done for her.

"Of course it's like Patsy," he had said to Mr. Merrick that morning. "She couldn't help being a sweet ministering angel if she tried; and Beth is growing more and more like her. It will do those girls good, John, to have some human being to coddle and care for. If Patsy could have a fault, it would be wasting so much affection on that bunch o' rags Mumbles, who audaciously chewed up one of my pet slippers while I was at dinner last evening. No dog is a fit thing to occupy a girl's time, and this imp o' mischief Mumbles must take a back seat from now on."

Uncle John laughed, for he knew his brother-in-law had never conquered his antipathy for poor Mumbles, and realized why.

"Take care that you do not get jealous of Myrtle," he replied. "You're a selfish old beast, and don't wish Patsy to love anyone but yourself."

"And why should she?" was the inquiry. "Any dutiful daughter ought to be satisfied with loving such a father as I am."

"And in that," remarked Uncle John, whimsically, "you remind me of Wampus. You should strut around and say: 'Behold me! I am Patsy's father!'"

The Major was full of news at luncheon time.

"What do you think, my dears?" he said, addressing the girls. "Your crazy uncle must have had another snooze, unbeknown to us, for he's got the wildest idea into his head that human brains — or lack of them — ever conceived."

"You are not very respectful, sir," retorted Mr. Merrick stiffly, as he ate his salad. "But we must not expect too much of a disabled soldier — and an Irishman to boot — who has not been accustomed to good society."

Major Doyle looked at his brother-in-law with an approving smile.

"Very well put, John," he said. "You're improving in repartee. Presently you'll add that I'm unlettered and uncivilized, and no fit associate for a person who has made an egregious fortune out of tin cans in the wilds of Oregon."

"But what's the news?" asked Patsy impatiently. "What new idea has Uncle John conceived?"

"First," replied the Major, "he has bought an automobile as big as a baggage car. Next he has engaged a chauffeur who is a wild Canadian Indian

with a trace of erratic French blood in his veins — a combination liable to result in anything. Mr. Wampus, the half-breed calls himself, and from the looks of him he's murdered many a one in his day."

"Oh, Major!"

"Show me an automobile driver that hasn't. Myrtle knows. It's no trick to knock over a peaceful pedestrian or so, to say nothing of chickens, cats and dogs mangled by the roadside. I confidently expect he'll make a pancake of dear little Mumbles before he's five miles on the road. Eh, Patsy?"

"Be sensible, Daddy."

"It's my strong point. If I'm any judge of character this Wampus is a speed fiend."

"He is recommended as a very careful driver," said Mr. Merrick; "and moreover he has signed a contract to obey my orders."

"Very good," said Beth. "I'm not afraid of Mr. Wampus. What next, Major?"

"Next," continued Patsy's father, with a solemn wink at the row of curious faces, "your inventive relative has ordered the automobile rebuilt, thinking he's wiser than the makers. He's having a furnace put in it, for one thing — it's a limousine, you know, and all enclosed in glass. Also it's as big as a barn, as I said."

"You said a freight car," observed Patsy.

"True. A small barn or a big freight car. The seats are to be made convertible into sleeping berths, so if we get caught out overnight we have all the comforts of a hotel except the bell boys."

"I'll be the bell boy," promised Patsy.

"Also we're to take a portable kitchen along, like they use in the army, with a gasoline stove all complete. The thing fits under the back seat, I believe."

"All this," said Beth, "strikes me as being very sensible and a credit to Uncle John's genius. I'm a good cook, as you know, and the kitchen outfit appeals to me. But how about provisions?"

"Provisions are being provided," replied her uncle, genially smiling at her praise. However scornfully the Major might view his preparations he was himself mightily proud of them.

"Tinned stuff, I presume," remarked his brother-in-law. "John Merrick has a weakness for tin cans, having got his money out of them."

"You're wrong," protested Uncle John. "I merely made my money from the tin the cans were made of. But we won't get money out of these cans when they're opened; it will be something better, such as sardines and hominy, preserved cream and caviar, beans and boned chicken."

“Sounds fine!” cried Patsy with enthusiasm. “But how can you arrange to carry so much, Uncle?”

“The limousine body is pretty big, as the Major says, and high enough to allow me to put in a false bottom. In the space beneath it I shall stow all the bedding, the eatables and kitchen utensils, and a small tent. Then we shall be prepared for whatever happens.”

“I doubt it,” objected the Major. “There’s gasoline to be reckoned with. It’s well enough to feed ourselves, but what if we ran short of the precious feed for the engines?”

“The two tanks will hold sixty gallons. That ought to carry us any reasonable distance,” replied Mr. Merrick.

“You see, Daddy, our Uncle John is an experienced traveler, while you are not,” declared Patsy. “In all our journeys together I’ve found him full of resources and very farsighted. This trip doesn’t worry me at all.”

“Nor me,” added Beth. “We are sure to have a delightful time under Uncle’s auspices.”

“Wampus,” said Uncle John, “is so pleased with my preparations that he wants us to start in the car from here.”

“Can you put it on runners, like a sledge?” asked the Major. “That’s the only way it could travel through this snow. Or perhaps you’ll hire a snowplow to go ahead of it.”

“No; I told Wampus it was impracticable,” was the reply. “We shall load our machine on a flat car and ship it to Albuquerque, which is in New Mexico and almost directly south of Denver. We shall then be over the worst grades of the Rocky Mountains.”

“And which way do we go then?” inquired Beth.

“I have not yet decided. We can go still farther south, into Texas, or make our way down into Phoenix and across the prairies to Imperial Valley, or follow the Santa Fe route by way of the Grand Canyon.”

“Oh, let’s go that way!” exclaimed Patsy.

“And freeze to death?” asked the Major. “It’s the northernmost route.”

“When we get to Albuquerque we will be below the line of frosts and snow,” explained Mr. Merrick. “The climate is genial all through that section during winter. Haggerty says — ”

“I guessed it!” groaned the Major. “If Haggerty recommends this trip we’ll surely be in trouble.”

“Aside from Haggerty, Wampus knows that country thoroughly,” said Uncle John stoutly.

“Tell me: did Haggerty recommend Wampus?”

“No.”

“Then there’s hopes of the fellow. As you say, John, there is no need to decide until we get to Albuquerque. When do we make the start?”

“Day after to-morrow. The car will be shipped to-morrow night, but our party will follow by daylight, so as to see Colorado Springs, Pike’s Peak and Pueblo as we pass by them.”

CHAPTER VI

WAMPUS SPEEDS

"So this is Albuquerque," observed Patsy Doyle, as they alighted from the train. "Is it a big town playing peek-a-boo among those hills, Uncle John, or is this really all there is to the place?"

"It's a pretty big town, my dear. Most of the houses are back on the prairie, but fortunately our hold is just here at the depot."

It was a quaint, attractive building, made of adobe cement, in the ancient mission style; but it proved roomy and extremely comfortable.

"Seems to me," whispered Myrtle to Beth, "we're high up on the mountains, even yet."

"So we are," was the reply. "We're just between Glorietta Pass and the Great Continental Divide. But the steepest of the Rockies are behind us, and now the slopes are more gradual all the way to California. How do you like it, dear?"

"Oh, the mountains are grand!" exclaimed Myrtle. "I had never imagined anything so big and stately and beautiful." The other girls had seen mountains before, but this was their friend's first experience, and they took much pleasure in Myrtle's enthusiastic delight over all she saw.

Adjoining the hotel was a bazaar, in front of which sat squatted upon the ground two rows of Mojave Indians, mostly squaws, with their curious wares spread out for sale upon blankets. There must have been a score of them, and they exhibited odd pottery ornaments of indistinguishable shapes, strings of glass beads and beadwork bags, and a few really fine jardinieres and baskets. After the girls had been to their rooms and established themselves in the hotel they hurried out to interview the Indians, Myrtle Dean supporting herself by her crutches while Patsy and Beth walked beside her. The lame girl seemed to attract the squaws at once, and one gave her a bead necklace while another pressed upon her a small brown earthenware fowl with white spots all over it. This latter might have been meant to represent a goose, an ostrich or a guinea hen; but Myrtle was delighted with it and thanked the generous squaw, who responded merely with a grunt, not understanding English. A man in a wide sombrero who stood lazily by observed the incident and said:

"Don't thank the hag. She's selfish. The Mojaven think it brings luck to have a gift accepted by a cripple."

Myrtle flushed painfully.

"I suppose my crutches make me look more helpless than I really am," she whispered to her friends as they moved away. "But they're such a help in

getting around that I'm very grateful to have them, and as I get stronger I can lay them aside and not be taken for a cripple any more."

The air was delightfully invigorating here in the mountains, yet it was not at all cold. The snow, as Uncle John had predicted, had all been left behind them. After dinner they took a walk through the pretty town and were caught in the dark before they could get back. The twilights are very brief in Albuquerque.

"This is a very old town," remarked Uncle John. "It was founded by a Spanish adventurer named Cabrillo in the seventeenth century, long before the United States came into existence. But of course it never amounted to anything until the railroad was built."

Next day they were sitting in a group before the hotel when a man was seen approaching them with shuffling steps. Uncle John looked at him closely and Mumbles leaped from Patsy's lap and rushed at the stranger with excited barks.

"Why, it's Wampus," said Mr. Merrick. "The car must have arrived."

Wampus caught up the baby dog and held it under his arm while he took his cap off and bowed respectfully to his employer.

"He an' me, we here," he announced.

"Who is 'he,' Wampus?"

"Aut'mob'l'."

"When did you arrive?"

"Half hour ago. He on side track."

"Very good. You have made capital time, for a freight train. Let us go at once and get the car unloaded."

Wampus hesitated, looking sheepish.

"I been arrest," he said.

"Arrested! For what?"

"I make speed. They not like it. They arrest me — *Me* — Wampus!" He straightened his slim little form with an assumption of dignity.

"I knew it," sighed the Major. "I decided he was a speed fiend the first time I saw him."

"But — dear me!" said Uncle John; "how could you be arrested for speeding when the automobile was on a fiat car?"

Wampus glanced over his shoulder. Two railroad men had followed him and were now lounging against the porch railing. One had his right eye bandaged while the other carried one arm in a sling. Both scowled as they eyed the Canadian fixedly.

"Freight train make pretty slow time," began the chauffeur. "I know you in hurry, so freight train he make me nervous. I say polite to conductor I like

to go faster. He laugh. I say polite to brakeman we must go faster. He make abusing speech. I climb into engine an' say polite to engineer to turn on steam. He insult me. So I put my foot on him an' run engine myself. I am Wampus. I understan' engine — all kinds. Brakeman he swear; he swear so bad I put him off train. Conductor must have lump of coal in eye to keep quiet. Fireman he jus' smile an' whistle soft an' say nothing; so we friends. When I say 'shovel in coal,' he shovel. When we pass stations quick like, he whistle with engine loud. So now we here an' I been arrest."

Patsy tittered and stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth. Uncle John first chuckled and then looked grave. The Major advanced to Wampus and soberly shook his hand.

"You're a brave man, sir, for a chauffeur," he said. "I congratulate you,"

Wampus still looked uneasy.

"I been arrest," he repeated.

Uncle John beckoned the railroad men to come forward.

"Is this story true?" he asked.

"Most of it, sir," answered the conductor. "It's only by the mercy of Providence we're here alive. This scoundrel held up the whole crew and ran away with the engine. We might have had a dozen collisions or smash-ups, for he went around curves at sixty miles an hour. We'd cut our train in two, so as to pull half of it at a time up the grade at Lamy, and so there were only six cars on this end of it. The other half is seventy miles back, and part of what we have here ought to have been left at the way stations. I can't make out, sir, whether it's burglary, or highway robbery or arson an' murder he's guilty of, or all of 'em; but I've telegraphed for instructions and I'll hold him a prisoner until the superintendent tells me what to do with him."

Mr. Merrick was very sober now.

"The matter is serious," he said. "This man is in my employ, but I did not hire him to steal a railway train or fight its crew. Not badly hurt, I hope, sir?"

"My eye's pretty bad," growled the conductor. "Tom, here, thought his arm was broken, at first; but I guess it's only sprained."

"How about the brakeman he threw off the train?"

"Why, we were not going fast, just then, and it didn't hurt him. We saw him get up and shake his fist at the robber. If he ever meets Mr. Wampus again he'll murder him."

"Come with me to the telegraph office and I'll see what I can do to straighten this out," said Mr. Merrick briskly. On the way he remarked to the conductor: "I'm sorry I let Wampus travel alone. He's just a little bit affected in his mind, you know, and at times isn't responsible for what he does."

The conductor scratched his head doubtfully.

“I suspected he was crazy,” he replied, “and that’s why I didn’t hurt him. But if he’s crazy he’s the most deliberate loonatic I ever run acrost.”

The superintendent had just wired instructions to put the outlaw in jail when Mr. Merrick reached the telegraph office, but after an hour spent in sending messages back and forth a compromise was affected and the little millionaire had agreed to pay a goodly sum to the company by way of damages and to satisfy the crew of the freight train — which he succeeded in doing by a further outlay of money.

“You’re not worth all this bother,” said Mr. Merrick to the humbled Wampus, when the final settlement had been made, “but chauffeurs are scarce in Albuquerque and I can’t be delayed. Never, sir, while you are in my employ, must you allow yourself to be guilty of such an act again!”

Wampus sighed.

“Never,” he promised, “will I ride by freight train again. Send car by express. I am Wampus. Freight train he make me nervous.”

The automobile was quickly unloaded and at once Wampus set to work to get it in running order. He drove it to the hotel at about sundown and Mr. Merrick told the girls to be ready to start after an early breakfast the next morning.

“Which way do we go?” asked the Major.

“We’ll have a talk with Wampus this evening and decide,” said Uncle John.

“Don’t leave out the Grand Canyon!” begged Patsy.

“Nor the Petrified Forests.” added Beth. “And couldn’t we visit the Moki Indian reservation?”

“Those things may be well enough in their way,” observed the Major, “but is their way our way? That’s the question. The one thing we must take into consideration is the matter of roads. We must discover which road is the best and then take it. We’re not out of the mountains yet, and we shall have left the railroad, the last vestige of civilization, behind us.”

But the conference evolved the fact, according to Wampus, that the best and safest roads were for a time along the line of the Santa Fe, directly west; and this would enable them to visit most of the scenes the girls were eager to see.

“No boulevard in mountain anywhere,” remarked Wampus; “but road he good enough to ride on. Go slow an’ go safe. I drive ‘Autocrat’ from here to Los Angeles blindfold.”

With this assurance they were obliged to be content, and an eager and joyful party assembled next morning to begin the journey so long looked forward to. The landlord of the hotel, a man with a careworn face, shook his

head dismally and predicted their return to Albuquerque within twenty-four hours.

"Of course people *do* make the trip from here to the coast," he said; "but it's mighty seldom, and they all swear they'll never do it again. It's uncomfortable, and it's dangerous."

"Why?" asked Uncle John.

"You're headed through a wild country, settled only by Mexicans, Indians, and gangs of cowboys still worse. The roads are something awful. That man Wampus is an optimist, and will tackle anything and then be sorry for it afterward. The towns are scattered from here on, and you won't strike a decent meal except at the railway stations. Taking all these things into consideration, I advise you to make your headquarters here for the winter."

"Thank you," returned Mr. Merrick pleasantly. "It's too late for us to back out now, even if we felt nervous and afraid, which I assure you we do not."

"We are not looking for excessive comfort on this journey, you know," remarked Patsy. "But thank you for your warning, sir. It has given us great pleasure; for if there were no chance of adventure before us we should all be greatly disappointed."

Again the landlord shook his head.

"Right?" asked Wampus, at the wheel.

"Go ahead," said Mr. Merrick, and slowly the big car started upon its journey into the Golden West.

The air was keen and bracing, but not chilly. The sunshine flooded the landscape on every side. All the windows of the limousine had been lowered.

Myrtle Dean had been established in one corner of the broad back seat, where she nestled comfortably among the cushions. Uncle John sat beside her, with Beth and the Major on the seat on front. There were two folding chairs that could be used on occasion, and the back seat easily accommodated three, the "Autocrat" being a seven passenger car; but Patsy was perched in front beside Wampus, which was really the choicest seat of all, so there was ample room inside to "swing a cat," as the Major stated — if anyone had cared to attempt such a feat. Of course the wee Mumbles was in Patsy's lap, and he seemed to have overcome his first aversion of Wampus and accepted the little chauffeur into the circle of his favored acquaintances. Indeed, they soon became fast friends.

On leaving the town Wampus turned into a smooth, hard wagon road that ran in zigzag fashion near the railroad grade. The car bowled along right merrily for some twenty miles, when the driver turned to the right and skimmed along a high plateau. It was green and seemed fertile, but scarcely a farmhouse could they see, although the clear air permitted a broad view.

“He up hill now all way to Continental Divide,” said Wampus to Patsy; “then he go down hill long time.”

“It doesn’t seem to be much uphill,” returned the girl, “and the road is very good.”

“We make time here,” observed the driver. “By’m-by we find rock an’ bad road. Then we go slow.”

The Major was watching the new chauffeur carefully, and despite his dismal forebodings the man seemed not at all reckless but handled his car with rare skill. So the critic turned to his brother-in-law and asked:

“Is it fully decided which way we shall go?”

“I’ve left it to Wampus and the girls,” was the reply. “On account of our little invalid here we shall take the most direct route to California. It isn’t a short route, at that. On Beth’s account we shall visit the Moki and Navajo reservations, and on Patsy’s account we’re going by way of the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Wampus says he knows every inch of the road, so for my part I’m content to be just a passenger.”

“Which remark,” said the Major, “indicates that I’m to be just a passenger also. Very well, John; I’m willing. There may be trouble ahead of us, but to-day is so magnificent that it’s wise to forget everything but the present.”

CHAPTER VII

THE CHAUFFEUR IMPROVES

They all enjoyed that first day's ride. Wampus did not drive fast, for there were places where he couldn't; yet by one o'clock they had reached Laguna, sixty miles from their starting point. There was an excellent railway hotel here, so they decided to spend the rest of the day and the night at Laguna and proceed early the next morning.

The big car was an object of much curiosity to the natives, and during the afternoon Wampus was the center of attraction. Myrtle had stood the ride remarkably well, and Uncle John noticed that her eyes were brighter and a shade of color had already crept into her pale cheeks. Having risen early all three of the girls took a nap during the afternoon, as did Mr. Merrick. The Major gossiped with the station agent, the most important individual in town, and gleaned sundry information that made him look rather glum.

"I don't say the road's exactly dangerous, mind you," added the man, "but these greasers and Injuns get mischievous, at times, harmless as they look. All I'm advisin' is that you keep a sharp eye on 'em." Finding Wampus cleaning his car, while a circle of silent, attentive inhabitants looked on, the Major said to him in a low voice: "Have you a revolver?"

Wampus shook his head.

"Never carry him," he replied. "All gun he make trouble. Sometime he shoot wrong man. Don't like gun. Why should I? I am Wampus!"

The Major entered the hotel frowning.

"That fellow," he muttered, "is a natural-born coward, and we needn't expect help from him if trouble comes."

No trouble came that night, however, and in the early morning, while the sky was still reddened by the rising sun, they were off again, following more closely now the railroad, as rocky defiles began to loom up before them.

By the zigzag course they were obliged to take it was ninety miles to Gallup, and this they easily made, despite the growing steepness of the mountain road. Here was the famous Continental Divide, and the State of Arizona lay just beyond. The Continental Divide is the ridge that separates the streams tributary to the Atlantic ocean from those tributary to the Pacific, so that after crossing it one might well feel that at last the East was left behind and the great West with its romance now faced him.

They came to the little town in time to see the gorgeous sunset from this, the highest point of the Rockies, and especially to Myrtle, who had traveled so little, was the sight impressive and awe inspiring. There was a small but fairly good hotel in the place, and after supper Patsy and Beth went out for a

stroll, being much interested in the dark-skinned Mexicans and still darker Indians who constituted far the larger part of the population. The party had everywhere met with respect from these people, who, although curious, were silent and well-behaved; so Uncle John and the Major, deep in a political argument on the hotel porch, had no thought of danger when they saw the two girls start away arm in arm.

The sky was still aglow, although the sun had set, and in the subdued light the coarse adobe huts and rickety frame dwellings were endowed with a picturesque appearance they did not really possess. Beth and Patsy came to the end of the main street rather suddenly, and stood a moment looking at the shadows cast by the rocky cliffs near by. Some of the peaks had snow upon them, and there was a chill in the air, now that the sun had withdrawn its warmth. The girls turned presently and took another route that might bring them quicker to the hotel, but had only proceeded a short way when in passing a rather solitary adobe structure a man stepped from the shadow of the wall and confronted them. He wore a red flannel shirt and a broad sombrero, the latter scarcely covering his dark, evil features.

The cousins stopped short. Then Beth whispered: "Let's go the other way." But as they were about to turn the Mexican drew a revolver and said in harsh, uneven English: "You halt. Keep a-still, or I shoot."

"What do you want?" asked Beth, quietly.

"Money. All you got. Jew'lry — all you got. Give 'm quick, or I shoot!"

As they stood hesitating a sound of footsteps was heard and someone approached quickly from behind them. Patsy looked hurriedly around and saw Wampus. He was walking with his thin little form bent and his hands deep in his trousers pockets. Incidentally Wampus was smoking the stub of a cigar, as was his custom when off duty.

The Mexican saw him, but marking his small size and mild manner did not flinch from his position. With one revolver still leveled at the girls he drew another from a hip pocket and turned it upon Wampus.

"You stop — halt!" he exclaimed fiercely.

Wampus did not halt. His eyes fixed upon the bandit's ugly features, still puffing his cigar and with hands in his pockets he walked deliberately past Patsy and Beth and straight up to the muzzles of the revolvers.

"Stop!" cried the Mexican; and again: "Stop!"

Wampus stopped when one revolver nearly touched his nose and another covered his body. Slowly he drew one hand from his pocket and grasped the barrel of the nearest weapon.

"Let him go," he said, not raising his voice. The man stared into the little chauffeur's eyes and released his hold of the revolver. Wampus looked at it,

grunted, and put it in his pocket.

"Now the other gun," he said.

The fellow drew back and half turned, as if to escape.

"No, no!" said Wampus, as if annoyed. "You give me gun. See — I am Wampus!"

Sheepishly enough the Mexican surrendered the other weapon.

"Now turn aroun' an' go to hotel," commanded the chauffeur.

The man obeyed. Wampus turned to the girls, who were now not only relieved but on the verge of laughter and said deprecatingly:

"Do not be scare, for poor man he make no harm. He jus' try a goozle — no dare shoot here in town. Then come; I go back with you."

Silently they accompanied him along the lane, the Mexican keeping in front and looking around from time to time to see if they followed. A short distance from the hotel Wampus gave a queer whistle which brought the bandit cringing to his side. Without ado he handed the fellow his two revolvers and said calmly: "Go 'long."

The Mexican "went along" briskly and the dusk soon swallowed him up.

"Thank you, Wampus," said Patsy, gratefully; "you've saved us from a dreadful experience."

"Oh, that!" snapping his fingers scornfully. "He not a good bad-man, for he too much afraid. I have no gun, for I do not like gun. Still, if I not come, he make you give him money an' trinkets."

"You were very kind," replied Beth, "and I thank you as much as Patsy does. If you had not arrived just when you did I might have killed the man."

"You?" inquired Wampus, doubtingly.

"Yes." She showed him a small pearl-handled revolver which she carried in the pocket of her jacket. "I can shoot, Wampus."

The little chauffeur grinned; then looked grave and shook his head.

"It make funny world, these day," said he. "One time girl from city would scream to see a gun; now she carry him in pocket an' can shoot! Ver' fine; ver' fine. But I like me old style girl who make scream. Then a man not feel foolish when he try protect her."

Patsy laughed merrily; but Beth saw he was offended and hastened to say:

"I am very grateful to you, Wampus, and I know you are a brave and true man. I shall expect you to protect me at all times, for I really don't wish to shoot anyone, although I think it best to carry a revolver. Always after this, before I am tempted to fire, I shall look to see if you are not near me."

"All right," he said more cheerfully. "I am Wampus. I will be there, Miss 'Lizbeth."

CHAPTER VIII
AMONG THE INDIANS

Little Myrtle grew brighter day by day. She even grew merry and developed a fine sense of humor, showing new traits in her hitherto undeveloped character. The girl never mentioned her injury nor admitted that she suffered any pain, even when directly questioned. Indeed she was not uncomfortable during that splendid automobile ride over mountain and plain into the paradise of the glowing West. Never before in her life had Myrtle enjoyed an outing, except for an hour or two in a city park; never before had she known a friend to care for her and sympathize honestly with her griefs. Therefore this experience was so exquisitely delightful that her responsive heart nearly burst with gratitude. Pretty thoughts came to her that she had never had before; her luxurious surroundings led her to acquire dainty ways and a composed and self-poised demeanor.

"Our rosebud is unfolding, petal by petal, and beginning to bloom gloriously," said Patsy to sympathetic Uncle John. "Could anyone be more sweet or lovely?"

Perhaps almost any girl, situated as Myrtle Dean was, would have blossomed under similar influences. Certain it was that Uncle John came to have a tender affection for the poor child, while the Major's big heart had warmed from the first toward the injured girl. Beth and Patsy were devoted to their new friend and even Mumbles was never so happy as when Myrtle would hold and caress him. Naturally the former waif responded freely to all this wealth of affection and strove to be companionable and cheery, that they might forget as much as possible her physical helplessness.

Mumbles was not the least important member of the party, but proved a constant source of amusement to all. In the novel domains they now traversed the small dog's excitable nature led him to investigate everything that seemed suspicious, but he was so cowardly, in spite of this, that once when Patsy let him down to chase a gopher or prairie dog — they were not sure which — the animal turned at bay and sent Mumbles retreating with his stubby tail between his legs. His comradeship for Wampus surprised them all. The Canadian would talk seriously to the dog and tell it long stories as if the creature could understand every word — which perhaps he did. Mumbles would sit up between the driver and Patsy and listen attentively, which encouraged Wampus to talk until Patsy in self-defense turned and tossed the fuzzy animal in to Myrtle, who was always glad to receive him.

But Patsy did not always sit on the front seat. That honor was divided among them all, by turns, except the Major, who did not care for the place.

Yet I think Patsy rode there oftener than anyone else, and it came to be considered her special privilege because she had first claimed it.

The Major, after the incident at Gallup, did not scorn Wampus so openly as before; but he still reserved a suspicion that the fellow was at heart a coward and a blusterer. The chauffeur's sole demerit in the eyes of the others was his tremendous egotism. The proud remark: "I am Wampus!" was constantly on his lips and he had wonderful tales to tell to all who would listen of his past experiences, in every one of which he unblushingly figured as the hero. But he really handled the big touring car in an admirable manner, and when one afternoon a tire was punctured by a cactus spine by the roadside — their first accident — they could not fail to admire the dexterous manner in which he changed the tube for a new one.

From Gallup they took a wagon road to Fort Defiance, in the Navajo Indian reservation; but the Navajos proved uninteresting people, not even occupying themselves in weaving the famous Navajo blankets, which are now mostly made in Philadelphia. Even Patsy, who had longed to "see the Indians in their native haunts," was disgusted by their filth and laziness, and the party expected no better results when they came to the adjoining Moki reservation. Here, however, they were happily disappointed, for they arrived at the pueblo of Oraibi, one of the prettiest villages on the mesa, on the eve of one of their characteristic snake dances, and decided to remain over night and see the performance. Now I am not sure but the "Snake Dance" was so opportune because Uncle John had a private interview with the native chieftain, at which the head Snake Priest and the head Antelope Priest of the tribe were present. These Indians spoke excellent English and the chief loved the white man's money, so a ceremony that has been held during the month of August for many centuries — long before the Spanish conquistadors found this interesting tribe — was found to be on tap for that very evening. The girls were tremendously excited at the prospect and Wampus was ordered to prepare camp for the night — the first they had spent in their automobile and away from a hotel. Not only was the interior of the roomy limousine converted into sleeping quarters for the three girls, but a tent was spread, one side fastened to the car while the other was staked to the ground. Three wire folding cots came from some hidden place beneath the false bottom of the car, with bedding enough to supply them, and these were for the use of the men in the tent. The two "bedrooms" having been thus prepared, Wampus lighted the tiny gasoline stove, over which Patsy and Beth enthusiastically cooked the supper. Beth wanted to "Newburg" the tinned lobster, and succeeded in creaming it very nicely. They had potato chips, coffee and toasted Holland rusks, as well, and all thoroughly enjoyed the

improvised meal.

Their camp had been pitched just at the outskirts of the Indian village, but the snake dance was to take place in a rocky glen some distance away from the pueblo and so Uncle John instructed Wampus to remain and guard their outfit, as the Moki are notorious thieves. They left the lean little chauffeur perched upon the driver's seat, smoking one of his "stogie" cigars and with Mumbles sitting gravely beside him.

Myrtle hobbled on her crutches between Beth and Patsy, who carried little tin lanterns made with lamp chimneys that had candles inside them. They first visited the chief, who announced that the ceremonies were about to begin. At a word from this imposing leader a big Indian caught up Myrtle and easily carried her on his shoulder, as if she were light as a feather, leading the way to the rocky amphitheatre. Here were assembled all the inhabitants of the village, forming a wide circle around the performers. The snakes were in a pit dug in the center of the space, over which a few branches had been placed. This is called the "kisi."

These unique and horrifying snake dances of the Moki have been described so often that I need not speak of this performance in detail. Before it was half over the girls wished they were back in their automobile; but the Major whispered that for them to leave would cause great offense to the Indians and might result in trouble. The dance is supposedly a religious one, in honor of the Rain God, and at first the snakes were not used, but as the dancers became wrought up and excited by their antics one by one they reached within the kisi and drew out a snake, allowing the reptiles to coil around their almost naked bodies and handling them with seeming impunity. A few were harmless species, as bull snakes and arrow snakes; but mostly the Moki used rattlesnakes, which are native to the mesa and its rocky cliffs. Some travelers have claimed that the fangs of the rattlers are secretly withdrawn before the creatures are handled, but this has been proved to be untrue. The most accepted theory is that the snakes are never permitted to coil, and cannot strike unless coiled, while the weird chanting and graceful undulating motions of the dancers in some manner "charms" or intoxicates the serpents, which are not aroused to antagonism. Occasionally, however, one of the Moki priests is bitten, in which case nothing is done to aid him and he is permitted to die, it being considered a judgment of the Rain God for some sin he has committed.

The barbaric rites seemed more picturesque, as well as more revolting, in that they took place by the flickering light of torches and bonfires in a rock strewn plain usually claimed by nature. When the dancers were more frenzied they held the squirming serpents in their mouths by the middle and

allowed them to coil around their necks, dancing wildly the while. The whole affair was so nauseating and offensive that as soon as it was possible the visitors withdrew and retired to their "camp." It was now almost midnight, but the path was lighted by the little lanterns they carried.

As they approached the automobile Uncle John was disturbed not to see Wampus at his post. A light showed from the front of the car, but the chauffeur seemed to be missing. Coming nearer, however, they soon were greeted by a joyous barking from Mumbles and discovered Wampus squatting upon the ground, puffing at the small end of the cigar and seeming quite composed and tranquil.

"What are you doing there?" demanded the Major, raising his lantern the better to light the scene.

"I play jailer," grunted Wampus, without moving. "Him want to steal; Mumble he make bark noise; for me, I steal too — I steal Injun."

A dusky form, prone upon the ground, began to squirm under Wampus, who was then discovered to be sitting upon a big Indian and holding him prisoner. The chauffeur, partly an Indian himself, knew well how to manage his captive and quieted the fellow by squeezing his throat with his broad stubby fingers.

"How long have you had him there?" inquired Uncle John, looking at the discomfited "brave" curiously.

"About an hour," was the reply.

"Let him go, then. We have no prison handy, and the man has perhaps been punished enough."

"I have wait to ask permission to kill him," said Wampus solemnly. "He know English talk, an' I have told him he is to die. I have describe, sir, several torture we make on Injun who steal, which make him think he die several time. So he is now prepare for the worst."

The Indiam squirmed again, and with a sigh Wampus arose and set him free.

"See," he said; "you are save only by mercy of Great White Chief. You ver' lucky Injun. But Great White Chief will leave only one eye here when he go away. If you try to steal again the eye will see, an' then the torture I have describe will be yours. I am Wampus. I have spoke."

The Indian listened intently and then slunk away into the darkness without reply. The night had no further event and in spite of their unusual experiences all slept excellently and awoke in the morning refreshed and ready for new adventures.

CHAPTER IX

NATURE'S MASTERPIECE

From the reservation to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado was not far, but there was no "crosscut" and so they were obliged to make a wide detour nearly to Williams before striking the road that wound upward to the world's greatest wonder.

Slowly and tediously the big car climbed the miserable trail to the rim of the Grand Canyon. It was night when they arrived, for they had timed it that way, having been told of the marvelous beauty of the canyon by moonlight. But unfortunately the sky filled with clouds toward evening, and they came to Bright Angel, their destination, in a drizzling rain and total darkness. The Major was fearful Wampus might run them into the canyon, but the machine's powerful searchlights showed the way clearly and by sticking to the road they finally drew up before an imposing hotel such as you might wonder to find in so remote a spot.

Eagerly enough they escaped from the automobile where they had been shut in and entered the spacious lobby of the hotel, where a merry throng of tourists had gathered.

"Dinner and bed," said Patsy, decidedly. "I'm all tired out, and poor Myrtle is worn to a frazzle. There's no chance of seeing the canyon to-night, and as for the dancing, card playing and promiscuous gaiety, it doesn't appeal much to a weary traveler."

The girls were shown to a big room at the front of the hotel, having two beds in it. A smaller connecting-room was given to Myrtle, while Patsy and Beth shared the larger apartment. It seems the hotel, big as it was, was fairly filled with guests, the railway running three trains a day to the wonderful canyon; but Uncle John's nieces did not mind occupying the same room, which was comfortably and even luxuriously furnished.

A noise of footsteps along the corridor disturbed Patsy at an early hour. She opened her eyes to find the room dimly lighted, as by the first streaks of dawn, and sleepily arose to raise the window shade and see if day was breaking. Her hand still upraised to guide the shade the girl stood as motionless as if turned to stone. With a long drawn, gasping breath she cried: "Oh, Beth!" and then stood staring at what is undoubtedly the most entrancing, the most awe inspiring and at the same time the most magnificent spectacle that mortal eye has ever beheld — sunrise above the Grand Canyon of Arizona.

The master painters of the world have gathered in this spot in a vain attempt to transfer the wondrous coloring of the canyon to canvas. Authors

famed for their eloquent command of language have striven as vainly to tell to others what their own eyes have seen; how their senses have been thrilled and their souls uplifted by the marvel that God's hand has wrought. It can never be pictured. It can never be described. Only those who have stood as Patricia Doyle stood that morning and viewed the sublime masterpiece of Nature can realize what those homely words, "The Grand Canyon" mean. Grand? It is well named. Since no other adjective can better describe it, that much abused one may well be accepted to incompletely serve its purpose.

Beth joined her cousin at the window and was instantly as awed and absorbed as Patsy. Neither remembered Myrtle just then, but fortunately their friend had left the connecting door of their rooms ajar and hearing them stirring came in to see if anything had happened. She found the two cousins staring intently from the window and went to the second window herself, thus witnessing the spectacle in all its glory.

Even after the magnificent coloring of sunrise had faded the sight was one to rivet the attention. The hotel seemed built at the very edge of the canyon, and at their feet the ground appeared to fall away and a great gulf yawned that was tinted on all its diverse sides with hues that rivaled those of the rainbow. Across the chasm they could clearly see the trees and hills; yet these were fully thirteen miles distant, for here is one of the widest portions of the great abyss.

"I'm going to dress," said Beth, breaking the silence at last. "It seems a sin to stay cooped up in here when such a glorious panorama is at one's feet."

The others did not reply in words, but they all began to dress together with nervous haste, and then made their way down to the canyon's brink. Others were before them, standing upon the ample porches in interested groups; but such idleness would not content our girls, who trooped away for a more intimate acquaintance with the wonderful gorge.

"Oh, how small — how terribly small — I am!" cried Patsy, lost in the immensity of the canyon's extent; but this is a common cry of travelers visiting Bright Angel. You might place a baker's dozen of the huge Falls of Niagara in the Grand Canyon and scarcely notice they were there. All the vast cathedrals of Europe set upon its plateau would seem like pebbles when viewed from the brink. The thing is simply incomprehensible to those who have not seen it.

Presently Uncle John and the Major came out to join them and they all wandered along the edge until they came to a huge rock that jutted out far over the monster gulf. On the furthermost point of this rock, standing with his feet at the very brink, was a tall, thin man, his back toward them. It

seemed a fearful thing to do — to stand where the slightest slip would send him reeling into the abyss.

"It's like tempting fate," whispered Patsy, a safe distance away. "I wish he would step back a little."

As if he had overheard her the man half turned and calmly examined the group. His eyes were an almost colorless blue, his features destitute of any expression. By his dress he seemed well-to-do, if not prosperous, yet there was a hint of melancholy in his poise and about him a definite atmosphere of loneliness.

After that one deliberate look he turned again and faced the canyon, paying no attention to the interested little party that hovered far enough from the edge to avoid any possible danger.

"Oh, dear!" whispered Myrtle, clinging to Beth's arm with trembling fingers, "I'm afraid he's going to — to commit suicide!"

"Nonsense!" answered Beth, turning pale nevertheless.

The figure was motionless as before. Uncle John and the Major started along the path but as Beth attempted to follow them Myrtle broke away from her and hobbled eagerly on her crutches toward the stranger. She did not go quite to the end of the jutting rock, but stopped some feet away and called in a low, intense voice:

"Don't!"

The man turned again, with no more expression in his eyes or face than before. He looked at Myrtle steadily a moment, then turned and slowly left the edge, walking to firm ground and back toward the hotel without another glance at the girl.

"I'm so ashamed," said Myrtle, tears of vexation in her eyes as she rejoined her friends. "But somehow I felt I must warn him — it was an impulse I just couldn't resist."

"Why, no harm resulted, in any event, my dear," returned Beth. "I wouldn't think of it again."

They took so long a walk that all were nearly famished when they returned to the hotel for breakfast.

Of course Patsy and Beth wanted to go down Bright Angel Trail into the depths of the canyon, for that is the thing all adventurous spirits love to do.

"I'm too fat for such foolishness," said Uncle John, "so I'll stay up here and amuse Myrtle."

The Major decided to go, to "look after our Patsy;" so the three joined the long line of daring tourists and being mounted on docile, sure-footed burros, followed the guide down the trail.

Myrtle and Uncle John spent the morning on the porch of the hotel. At

breakfast the girl had noticed the tall man they had encountered at the canyon's edge quietly engaged in eating at a small table in a far corner of the great dining room. During the forenoon he came from the hotel to the porch and for a time stood looking far away over the canyon.

Aroused to sympathy by the loneliness of this silent person, Uncle John left his chair and stood beside him at the railing.

"It's a wonderful sight, sir," he remarked in his brisk, sociable way; "wonderful indeed!"

For a moment there was no reply.

"It seems to call one," said the man at length, as if to himself. "It calls one."

"It's a wonder to me it doesn't call more people to see it," observed Mr. Merrick, cheerfully. "Think of this magnificent thing — greater and grander than anything the Old World can show, being here right in the heart of America, almost — and so few rush to see it! Why, in time to come, sir," he added enthusiastically, "not to have seen the Grand Canyon of Arizona will be an admission of inferiority. It's — it's the biggest thing in all the world!"

The stranger made no reply. He had not even glanced at Uncle John. Now he slowly turned and stared fixedly at Myrtle for a moment, till she cast down her eyes, blushing. Then he re-entered the hotel; nor was he again seen by them.

The little man was indignant at the snub. Rejoining Myrtle he said to her:

"That fellow wasn't worth saving — if you really saved him, my dear. He says the canyon calls one, and for all I care he may go to the bottom by any route he pleases."

Which speech showed that gentle, kindly Mr. Merrick was really annoyed. But a moment later he was all smiles again and Myrtle found him a delightful companion because he knew so well how to read people's thoughts, and if they were sad had a tactful way of cheering them.

The girls and the Major returned from their trip to the plateau full of rapture at their unique experiences.

"I wouldn't have missed it for a million dollars!" cried the Major; but he added: "and you couldn't hire me to go again for two million!"

"It was great," said Patsy; "but I'm tuckered out."

"I had nineteen narrow escapes from sudden death," began Beth, but her cousin interrupted her by saying: "So had everyone in the party; and if the canyon had caved in we'd all be dead long ago. Stop your chattering now and get ready for dinner. I'm nearly starved."

Next morning they took a farewell view of the beautiful scene and then climbed into their automobile to continue their journey. Many of the tourists

had wondered at their temerity in making such a long trip through a poorly settled country in a motor car and had plied them with questions and warnings. But they were thoroughly enjoying this outing and nothing very disagreeable had happened to them so far. I am sure that on this bright, glorious morning you could not have hired any one of the party to abandon the automobile and finish the trip by train.

CHAPTER X

A COYOTE SERENADE

The roads were bad enough. They were especially bad west of Williams. Just now an association of automobile tourists has been formed to create a boulevard route through from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, but at the time of this story no attention had been given the roads of the far West and only the paths of the rancheros from town to town served as guides. On leaving Williams they turned south so as to avoid the more severe mountain roads, and a fine run through a rather uninteresting country brought them to Prescott on the eve of the second day after leaving the Canyon. Here they decided to take a day's rest, as it was Sunday and the hotel was comfortable; but Monday morning they renewed their journey and headed southwesterly across the alkali plains — called "mesa" — for Parker, on the boundary line between Arizona and California.

Towns of any sort were very scarce in this section and the country was wild and often barren of vegetation for long stretches. There were some extensive ranches, however, as this is the section favored for settlement by a class of Englishmen called "remittance men." These are mostly the "black sheep" or outcasts of titled families, who having got into trouble of some sort at home, are sent to America to isolate themselves on western ranches, where they receive monthly or quarterly remittances of money to support them. The remittance men are poor farmers, as a rule. They are idle and lazy except when it comes to riding, hunting and similar sports. Their greatest industry is cattle raising, yet these foreign born "cowboys" constitute an entirely different class from those of American extraction, found in Texas and on the plains of the Central West. They are educated and to an extent cultured, being "gentlemen born" but sad backsliders in the practise of the profession. Because other ranchers hesitate to associate with them they congregate in settlements of their own, and here in Arizona, on the banks of the Bill Williams Branch of the Colorado River, they form almost the total population.

Our friends had hoped to make the little town of Gerton for the night, but the road was so bad that Wampus was obliged to drive slowly and carefully, and so could not make very good time. Accidents began to happen, too, doubtless clue to the hard usage the machine had received. First a spring broke, and Wampus was obliged to halt long enough to clamp it together with stout steel braces. An hour later the front tire was punctured by cactus spines, which were thick upon the road. Such delays seriously interfered with their day's mileage.

Toward sunset Uncle John figured, from the information he had received at Prescott, that they were yet thirty miles from Gerton, and so he decided to halt and make camp while there was yet sufficient daylight remaining to do so conveniently.

"We might hunt for a ranch house and beg for shelter," said he, "but from the stories I've heard of the remittance men I am sure we will enjoy ourselves better if we rely entirely upon our own resources."

The girls were, of course, delighted at the prospect of such an experience, for the silent, solitary mesa made them feel they were indeed "in the wilds of the Great American Desert." The afternoon had been hot and the ride dusty, but there was now a cooler feeling in the air since the sun had fallen low in the horizon.

They carried their own drinking water, kept ice-cold in thermos bottles, and Uncle John also had a thermos tub filled with small squares of ice. This luxury, in connection with their ample supply of provisions, enabled the young women to prepare a supper not to be surpassed in any modern hotel. The soup came from one can, the curried chicken from another, while artichokes, peas, asparagus and plum pudding shed their tin coverings to complete the meal. Fruits, cheese and biscuits they had in abundance, so there was no hardship in camping out on a deserted Arizona table-land, as far as food was concerned. The Interior of the limousine, when made into berths for the three girls, was as safe and cosy as a Pullman sleeping coach. Only the men's quarters, the "lean-to" tent, was in any way open to invasion.

After the meal was ended and the things washed and put away they all sat on folding camp chairs outside the little tent and enjoyed the intense silence surrounding them. The twilight gradually deepened into darkness. Wampus kept one of the searchlights lit to add an element of cheerfulness to the scene, and Myrtle was prevailed upon to sing one or two of her simple songs. She had a clear, sweet voice, although not a strong one, and they all — especially Uncle John — loved to hear her sing.

Afterward they talked over their trip and the anticipated change from this arid region to the verdure of California, until suddenly a long, bloodcurdling howl broke the stillness and caused them one and all to start from their seats. That is, all but Wampus. The chauffeur, sitting apart with his black cigar in his mouth, merely nodded and said: "Coyote."

The Major coughed and resumed his seat. Uncle John stood looking into the darkness as if trying to discern the creature.

"Are coyotes considered dangerous?" he asked the Canadian.

"Not to us," replied Wampus. "Sometime, if one man be out on mesa alone, an' plenty coyote come, he have hard fight for life. Coyote is wild dog.

He is big coward unless pretty hungry. If I leave light burn he never come near us."

"Then let it burn — all night," said Mr. Merrick. "There he goes again — and another with him! What a horrible wail it is."

"I rather like it," said Patsy, with her accustomed calmness. "It is certainly an added experience to be surrounded by coyotes. Probably our trip wouldn't have been complete without it."

"A little of that serenade will suffice me," admitted Beth, as the howls grew nearer and redoubled in volume.

Myrtle's eyes were big and earnest. She was not afraid, but there was something uncanny in being surrounded by such savage creatures.

Nearer and nearer sounded the howls, until it was easy to see a dozen fierce eyes gleaming in the darkness, not a stone's throw away from the camp.

"I guess you girls had better go to bed," remarked Uncle John, a bit nervously. "There's no danger, you know — none at all. Let the brutes howl, if they want to — especially as we can't stop them. But you are tired, my dears, and I'd like to see you settled for the night."

Somewhat reluctantly they entered the limousine, drew the curtains and prepared for bed. Certainly they were having a novel experience, and if Uncle John would feel easier to have them listen to the howling coyotes from inside the limousine instead of outside, they could not well object to his request.

Presently Wampus asked the Major for his revolver, and on obtaining the weapon he walked a few paces toward the coyotes and fired a shot into their group. They instantly scattered and made off, only to return in a few moments to their former position.

"Will they continue this Grand Opera chorus all night?" asked Uncle John.

"Perhap," said Wampus. "They hungry, an' smell food. Coyote can no reason. If he could, he know ver' well we never feed him."

"The next time we come this way let us fetch along a ton or so of coyote feed," suggested the Major. "I wonder what the poor brutes would think if they were stuffed full for once in their lives?"

"It have never happen, sir," observed Wampus, shaking his head gravely. "Coyote all born hungry; he live hungry; he die hungry. If ever coyote was not hungry he would not be coyote."

"In that case, Major," said Uncle John, "let us go to bed and try to sleep. Perhaps in slumber we may forget these howling fiends."

"Very well," agreed Major Doyle, rising to enter the little tent.

Wampus unexpectedly interposed. “Wait,” called the little chauffeur. “Jus’ a minute, if you please.”

While the Major and Mr. Merrick stood wondering at the request, the Canadian, who was still holding the revolver in one hand, picked a steel rod from the rumble of the automobile and pushing aside the flap of the little tent entered. The tail-lamp of the car burned inside, dimly lighting the place.

The Major was about to follow Wampus when a revolver shot arrested him. This sound was followed by a quick thumping against the ground of the steel bar, and then Wampus emerged from the tent holding a dark, squirming object on the end of the rod extended before him.

“What is it?” asked Mr. Merrick, somewhat startled.

“Rattlesnake,” said Wampus, tossing the thing into the sagebrush. “I see him crawl in tent while you eat supper.”

“Why did you not tell us?” cried the Major excitedly.

“I thought him perhaps crawl out again. Him sometime do that. But no. Mister snake he go sleep in tent which is reserve for his superior. I say nothing, for I do not wish to alarm the young ladies. That is why I hold the dog Mumble so tight, for he small eye see snake too, an’ fool dog wish to go fight him. Rattlesnake soon eat Mumble up — eh? But never mind; there is no worry. I am Wampus, an’ I am here. You go to bed now, an’ sleep an’ be safe.”

He said this rather ostentatiously, and for that reason neither of the others praised his watchful care or his really brave act. That Wampus was proving himself a capable and faithful servant even the Major was forced to admit, yet the man’s bombast and self-praise robbed him of any word of commendation he justly earned.

“I think,” said Uncle John, “I’ll bunk on the front seat to-night. I’m short, you see, and will just about curl up in the space. I believe snakes do not climb up wheels. Make my bed on the front seat, Wampus.”

The man grinned but readily obeyed. The Major watched him thoughtfully.

“For my part,” he said, “I’ll have a bed made on top the roof.”

“Pshaw!” said Uncle John; “you’ll scratch the paint.”

“That is a matter of indifference to me,” returned the Major.

“You’ll roll off, in your sleep, and hurt yourself.”

“I’ll risk that, sir.”

“Are you afraid, Major?”

“Afraid! Me? Not when I’m awake, John. But what’s to prevent more of those vermin from crawling into the tent during the night?”

“Such thing very unusual.” remarked Wampus, placing the last blanket on

Mr. Merrick's improvised bed. "Perhaps you sleep in tent a week an' never see another rattler."

"Just the same," concluded the Major, "I'll have my bed on top the limousine."

He did, Wampus placing blankets and a pillow for him without a word of protest. The Major climbed over Uncle John and mounted to the roof of the car, which sloped to either side but was broad and long enough to accommodate more than one sleeper. Being an old campaigner and a shrewd tactician, Major Doyle made two blankets into rolls, which he placed on either side of him, to "anchor" his body in position. Then he settled himself to rest beneath the brilliant stars while the coyotes maintained their dismal howling. But a tired man soon becomes insensible to even such annoyances.

The girls, having entered the limousine from the door opposite the tent, were all unaware of the rattlesnake episode and supposed the shot had been directed against the coyotes. They heard the Major climbing upon the roof, but did not demand any explanation, being deep in those bedtime confidences so dear to all girls. Even they came to disregard the persistent howls of the coyotes, and in time fell asleep.

Wampus did not seem afraid of snakes. The little chauffeur went to bed in the tent and slept soundly upon his cot until daybreak, when the coyotes withdrew and the Canadian got up to make the coffee.

The Major peered over the edge of the roof to watch him. He had a sleepy look about his eyes, as if he had not rested well. Uncle John was snoring with gentle regularity and the girls were still asleep.

"Wampus," said the Major, "do you know the proper definition of a fool?"

Wampus reflected, stirring the coffee carefully.

"I am not — what you call him? — a dictionairre; no. But I am Wampus. I have live much in very few year. I would say a fool is man who think he is wise. For what is wise? Nothing!"

The Major felt comforted.

"It occurred to me," he said, beginning to climb down from the roof, "that a fool was a man who left a good home for this uncomfortable life on a barren desert. This country wasn't made for humans; it belongs to the coyotes and the rattlesnakes. What right have we to intrude upon them, then?"

Wampus did not reply. It was not his business to criticise his employers.

CHAPTER XI

A REAL ADVENTURE AT LAST

Uncle John woke up when the Major inadvertently placed a heel upon his round stomach on the way to the ground. The chubby little millionaire had slept excellently and was in a genial humor this morning. He helped Wampus fry the bacon and scramble the eggs, while the Major called the girls.

It proved a glorious sunrise and the air was full of pure ozone. They had suffered little from cold during the trip, although it was in the dead of winter and the altitude considerable. Just now they were getting closer to California every hour, and when they descended from the mesa it would gradually grow warmer.

They were all becoming expert at "breaking camp," and preparing for the road. Beth and Patsy put away the bedding and "made up" the interior of the limousine for traveling. The Major and Uncle John folded the tent and packed it away, while Wampus attended to the dishes and tinware and then looked over his car. In a surprisingly short time they were all aboard and the big machine was gliding over the faint trail.

The mesa was not a flat or level country, for they were still near to the mountain ranges. The way was up hill and down, in gentle slopes, and soon after starting they breasted the brow of a hill and were confronted by half a dozen mounted men, who seemed as much astonished at the encounter as they were.

It being an event to meet anyone in this desolate place Wampus involuntarily brought the car to a halt, while the riders lined up beside it and stared rather rudely at the party. They were dressed as cowboys usually are, with flannel shirts, chapelets and sombrero hats; but their faces were not rugged nor healthy, as is the case with most Western cowboys, but bore marks of dissipation and hard living.

"Remittance men," whispered Wampus.

Uncle John nodded. He had heard of this curious class. Especially were the men staring at the three pretty, feminine faces that peered from the interior of the limousine. They had remained silent thus far, but now one of them, a fellow with dark eyes and a sallow complexion, reined his horse nearer the car and removed his hat with a sweeping gesture that was not ungraceful.

"A merry morning to you, fair ladies — or angels — I much misdoubt which we have chanced upon. Anyhow, welcome to Hades!"

Uncle John frowned. He did not like the bantering, impudent tone. Beth flushed and turned aside her head; Myrtle shrank back in her corner out of

sight; but Patsy glared fixedly at the speaker with an expression that was far from gracious. The remittance man did not seem daunted by this decided aversion. A sneering laugh broke from his companions, and one of them cried:

"Back up, Algy, and give your betters a chance. You're out of it, old man."

"I have no betters," he retorted. Then, turning to the girls again and ignoring the presence of the men accompanying them, he continued:

"Beauteous visions, since you have wilfully invaded the territory of Hades Ranch, of which diabolical domain I, Algernon Tobey, am by grace of his Satanic majesty the master, I invite you to become my guests and participate in a grand ball which I shall give this evening in your honor."

His comrades laughed again, and one of them shouted:

"Good for you, Algy. A dance — that's the thing!"

"Why, we haven't had the chance of a dance for ages," said another approvingly.

"Because we have had no ladies to dance with," explained Algy. "But here are three come to our rescue — perhaps more, if I could see inside that barricade — and they cannot refuse us the pleasure of their society."

"Sir," said Major Doyle, stiffly, "you are pleased to be impertinent. Ride on, you rascals, and spare us further sight of you."

The man turned upon him a scowling face.

"Don't interfere," he said warningly. "This isn't your party, you old duffer!"

"Drive ahead, Wampus," commanded Uncle John.

Wampus had to get out and crank the engines, which he calmly proceeded to do. The man who had called himself Algernon Tobey perceived his intention and urged his pony to the front of the car.

"Let that thing alone. Keep your hands off!" he said.

Wampus paid no attention. The fellow brought his riding whip down sharply on the chauffeur's shoulders, inflicting a stinging blow. Instantly little Wampus straightened up, grasped Tobey by the leg and with a swift, skillful motion jerked him from his horse. The man started to draw his revolver, but in an instant he and Wampus were rolling together upon the ground and the Canadian presently came uppermost and held his antagonist firmly between his knees. Then with deliberation he raised his clinched fist and thrust it forcibly against Mr. Tobey's eye, repeating the impact upon his nose, his chin and his cheek in a succession of jarring thumps that were delivered with scientific precision. Algy fairly howled, kicking and struggling to be free. None of his comrades offered to interfere and it seemed

they were grimly enjoying the punishment that was being; inflicted upon their leader.

When Wampus had quite finished his work he arose, adjusted his disarranged collar and tie and proceeded to crank the engines. Then he climbed into his seat and started the car with a sudden bound. As he did so a revolver shot rang out and one of the front tires, pierced by the bullet, ripped itself nearly in two as it crumpled up. A shout of derisive laughter came from the cowboys. Algy was astride his pony again, and as Wampus brought the damaged car to a stop the remittance men dashed by and along the path, taking the same direction Uncle John's party was following". Tobey held back a little, calling out:

"Au revoir! I shall expect you all at my party. I'm going now to get the fiddler."

He rejoined his comrades then, and they all clattered away until a roll of the mesa hid them from sight.

Uncle John got down from his seat to assist his chauffeur.

"Thank you, Wampus," he said. "Perhaps you should have killed him while you had the opportunity; but you did very well."

Wampus was wrestling with the tire.

"I have never start a private graveyard," he replied, "for reason I am afraid to hurt anyone. But I am Wampus. If Mister Algy he dance to-night, somebody mus' lead him, for he will be blind."

"I never met such a lawless brood in my life," prowled the Major, indignantly. "If they were in New York they'd be put behind the bars in two minutes."

"But they are in Arizona — in the wilderness," said Uncle John gravely. "If there are laws here such people do not respect them."

It took a long time to set the new tire and inflate it, for the outer tube was torn so badly that an extra one had to be substituted. But finally the task was accomplished and once more they renewed their journey.

Now that they were alone with their friends the girls were excitedly gossiping over the encounter.

"Do you really suppose we are on that man's ground — his ranch, as he calls it?" asked Myrtle, half fearfully.

"Why, I suppose someone owns all this ground, barren as it is," replied Patsy. "But we are following a regular road — not a very good one, nor much traveled; but a road, nevertheless — and any road is public property and open for the use of travelers."

"Perhaps we shall pass by their ranch house," suggested Beth.

"If we do," Uncle John answered, "I'll have Wampus put on full speed.

Even their wild ponies can't follow us then, and if they try shooting up the tires again they are quite likely to miss as we spin by."

"Isn't there any other road?" the Major asked.

Wampus shook his head.

"I have never come jus' this same route before," he admitted; "but I make good friend in Prescott, who know all Arizona blindfold. Him say this is nice, easy road and we cannot get lost for a good reason — the reason there is no other road at all — only this one."

"Did your friend say anything about Hades Ranch?" continued the questioner.

"He say remittance man make much mischief if he can; but he one foreign coward, drunk most time an' when sober weak like my aunt's tea. He say don't let remittance man make bluff. No matter how many come, if you hit one they all run."

"H-m," murmured Uncle John, "I'm not so sure of that, Wampus. There seems to be a good many of those insolent rascals, and I hope we shall not meet them again. They may give us trouble yet."

"Never be afraid," advised the chauffeur. "I am Wampus, an' I am here!"

Admitting that evident truth, our tourists were not greatly reassured. Wampus could not tell where the road might lead them, for he did not know, save that it led by devious winds to Parker, on the border between Arizona and California; but what lay between them and that destination was a sealed book to them all.

The car was heavy and the road soft; so in spite of their powerful engines the car was not making more than fifteen miles an hour. A short ride brought them to a ridge, from the top of which they saw a huddle of buildings not far distant, with a near-by paddock containing a number of ponies and cattle. The buildings were not palatial, being composed mostly of adobe and slab wood; but the central one, probably the dwelling or ranch house, was a low, rambling pile covering considerable ground.

The road led directly toward this group of buildings, which our travelers at once guessed to be "Hades Ranch." Wampus slowed down and cast a sharp glance around, but the land on either side of the trail was thick with cactus and sagebrush and to leave the beaten path meant a puncture almost instantly. There was but one thing to be done.

"Pretty good road here," said Wampus. "Hold tight an' don't get scare. We make a race of it."

"Go ahead," returned Uncle John, grimly. "If any of those scoundrels get in your way, run them down."

"I never like to hurt peoples; but if that is your command, sir, I will obey,"

said Wampus, setting his jaws tightly together.

The car gathered speed and shot over the road at the rate of twenty miles an hour; then twenty-five — then thirty — and finally forty. The girls sat straight and looked eagerly ahead. Forms were darting here and there among the buildings of the ranch, quickly congregating in groups on either side of the roadway. A red flag fluttered in the center of the road, some four feet from the ground.

“Look out!” shouted Uncle John. “Stop, Wampus; stop her, I say!”

Wampus saw why, and applied his brakes. The big car trembled, slowed down, and came to a stop less than a foot away from three ugly bars of barbed wire which had been placed across the road. They were now just beside the buildings, and a triumphant shout greeted them from their captors, the remittance men.

CHAPTER XII
CAPTURED

"Welcome to Hades!" cried a stout little man in a red blouse, sticking his leering countenance through the door of the limousine.

"Shut up, Stubby," commanded a hoarse voice from the group. "Haven't you any manners? You haven't been introduced yet."

"I've engaged the dark eyed one for the first dance," persisted Stubby, as a dozen hands dragged him away from the door.

The Major sprang out and confronted the band.

"What are we to understand by this outrage?" he demanded fiercely.

"It means you are all invited to a party, and we won't accept any regrets," replied a laughing voice.

Patsy put her head out of the window and looked at the speaker. It was Mr. Algernon Tobey. He had two strips of sticking plaster over his nose. One of his eyes was swollen shut and the other was almost closed. Yet he spoke in a voice more cheerful than it was when they first met him.

"Don't be afraid," he added. "No one has the slightest intention of injuring any of you in any way, I assure you."

"We have not the same intention in regard to you, sir," replied Major Doyle, fuming with rage, for his "Irish was up," as he afterward admitted. "Unless you at once remove that barricade and allow us to proceed we will not be responsible for what happens. You are warned, sir!"

Uncle John, by this time standing beside the Major upon the ground, had been quietly "sizing up the situation," as he would have expressed it. He found they had been captured by a party of fourteen men, most of whom were young, although three or four, including Tobey, were of middle age. The atmosphere of the place, with its disorderly surroundings and ill kept buildings, indicated that Hades Ranch was bachelor quarters exclusively. Half a dozen Mexicans and one or two Chinamen were in the background, curious onlookers.

Mr. Merrick noted the fact that the remittance men were an unkempt, dissipated looking crew, but that their faces betokened reckless good humor rather than desperate evil. There was no doubt but most of them were considering this episode in the light of a joke, and were determined to enjoy the experience at the expense of their enforced guests.

Uncle John had lived many years in the West and knew something of these peculiar English exiles. Therefore he was neither frightened nor unduly angry, but rather annoyed by the provoking audacity of the fellows. He had three young girls to protect and knew these men could not be fit

acquaintances for them. But he adopted a tone different from the Major's and addressed himself to Tobey as the apparent leader of the band.

"Sir," he said calmly but with pointed emphasis, "I believe you were born a gentleman, as were your comrades here."

"You are right," answered Tobey. "And each and every one you see before you has fallen from his former high estate — through no fault of his own." This may have been a sarcasm, for the others laughed in boisterous approval. "In some respects we are still gentlemen," Tobey went on, "but in others we are not to be trusted. Be reasonable, sir — I haven't the faintest idea who you are or what your name is — and consider calmly our proposition. Here we are, a number of young fellows who have seen better and happier days, living alone in the midst of an alkali desert. Most of us haven't seen a female for months, nor a lady for years. Why, last fall Stubby there rode eighty miles to Buxton, just to stand on a corner and see a lot of greasy Mexican women go by. We tire of exclusive male society, you see. We get to bore one another terribly. So here, like a visitation from heaven, three attractive young ladies descend upon us, traveling through our domain, and having discovered their presence we instantly decided to take advantage of the opportunity and invite them to an impromptu ball. There's no use refusing us, for we insist on carrying out our plan. If you men, perhaps the fathers of the young ladies, behave reasonably, we will entertain you royally and send you on your way rejoicing. Won't we, boys?"

They shouted approval.

"But if you oppose us and act ugly about this fête, gentlemen, we shall be obliged to put a few bullets into you, and decide afterward what disposition to make of the girls. About the best stunt we do is shooting. We can't work; we're too poor to gamble much; but we hunt a good bit and we can shoot straight. I assure you we wouldn't mind losing and taking a few lives if a scrimmage is necessary. Eh, boys?"

"That's right, Algy," said one, answering for the others; "we'll have that dance if we die for it — ev'ry man Jack of us."

Myrtle was trembling in her corner of the limousine. Beth sat still with a curl on her lips. But Patsy was much interested in the proceedings and had listened attentively to the above conversation. Now the girl suddenly swung open the door and sprang out beside her father, facing the group of cowboys.

"I am Patricia Doyle," she said in a clear voice, "and these gentlemen," indicating the Major and Mr. Merrick, "are my father and my uncle. You understand perfectly why they object to the arrangement you suggest, as any one of you would object, had you a daughter in a like position. But you are arbitrary and not inclined to respect womanhood. Therefore but one course is

open to us — to submit under protest to the unwelcome attentions you desire to thrust upon us."

They listened silently to this frank speech, and some of their faces wore crestfallen expressions by the time she had finished. Indeed, one of the older men turned on his heel and walked away, disappearing among the buildings. After a brief hesitation a delicate young fellow — almost a boy — followed this man, his face flaming red with shame. But the others stood their ground.

"Very good, Miss Doyle," remarked Tobey, with forced cheerfulness. "You are quite sensible to submit to the inevitable. Bring out your friends and introduce them, and then we'll all go in to luncheon and prepare for the dance."

"I won't submit to this!" cried the Major, stamping his foot angrily.

"Yes, you will," said Uncle John, with a motion preventing his irate brother-in-law from drawing a revolver, "Patsy is quite right, and we will submit with as much dignity as we can muster, being overpowered by numbers."

He beckoned to Beth, who stepped out of the car and assisted Myrtle to follow her. A little cheer of bravado had arisen from the group, inspired by their apparent victory; but when Myrtle's crutches appeared and they saw the fair, innocent face of the young girl who rested upon them, the shout died away in a hush of surprise.

"This is my cousin, Elizabeth De Graf," announced Patsy, with cold deliberation, determined that the proprieties should be observed in all intercourse with these people. "And I present our friend, Myrtle Dean. Under ordinary circumstances I believe Myrtle would be excused from dancing, but I suppose no brute in the form of a man would have consideration for her infirmity."

This time even Tobey flushed.

"You've a sharp tongue, Miss Doyle, and it's liable to lead you into trouble," he retorted, losing for the moment his suave demeanor. "We may be brutes — and I imagine we are — but we're not dangerous unless provoked."

It was savagely said, and Uncle John took warning and motioned Patsy to be silent.

"Lead the way, sir," he said. "Our chauffeur will of course remain with the car."

Wampus had kept his seat, motionless and silent. He only nodded in answer to Mr. Merrick's instructions and was entirely disregarded by the remittance men.

The man called "Stubby," who had a round, good-humored face, stepped

eagerly to Myrtle's side and exclaimed: "Let me assist you, please."

"No," she said, shaking her head with a wan smile; "I am quite able to walk alone."

He followed her, though, full of interest and with an air of deep respect that belied his former actions. Tobey, content with his present success, walked beside Mr. Merrick and led the procession toward the ranch house. The Major followed, his tall form upright, his manner bellicose and resentful, with Beth and Patsy on either side of him. The remittance men followed in a straggling crowd, laughing and boisterously talking among themselves. Just as they reached the house a horseman came clattering down the road and all paused involuntarily to mark the new arrival. The rider was a handsome, slim young fellow, dressed as were the other cowboys present, and he came on at a breakneck speed that seemed only warranted by an errand of life and death.

In front of him, tied to the saddle, appeared a huge bundle, and as the horse dashed up to the group standing by the ranch house the rider gracefully threw himself off and removed his hat with a sweeping gesture as he observed the young ladies.

"I've got him, Algy!" he cried merrily.

"Dan'l?" asked Tobey.

"Dan'l himself." He pointed to the bundle, which heaved and wriggled to show it was alive. "He refused to come willingly, of course; so I brought him anyhow. Never yet was there a fiddler willing to be accommodating."

"Good for you, Tim!" shouted a dozen voices. And Stubby added in his earnest way; "Dan'l was never more needed in his life."

Tobey was busy unwinding a long lariat that bent the captive nearly double and secured him firmly to the panting horse. When the bonds were removed Dan'l would have tumbled prone to the ground had not willing hands caught him and supported him upon his feet. Our friends then observed that he was an aged man with a face thickly furrowed with wrinkles. He had but one eye, small and gray and very shrewd in expression, which he turned contemptuously upon the crowd surrounding him. Numb and trembling from his cramped position upon the horse and the terrible jouncing he had endured, the fiddler could scarcely stand at first and shook as with a palsy; but he made a brave effort to control his weakness and turned smilingly at the murmur of pity and indignation that came from the lips of the girls.

"Where's the fiddle?" demanded Tobey, and Tim unhooked a calico bag from the saddlebow and held it out. A laugh greeted the gesture.

"Dan'l said he be hanged if he'd come," announced Tim, with a grim appreciation of the humorous side of the situation; "so I hung him and

brought him along — and his fiddle to boot. But don't boot it until after the dance."

"What do you mean, sir, by this rebellious attitude?" questioned Tobey, sticking his damaged face close to that of the fiddler.

Dan'l blinked with his one eye but refused to answer.

"I've a good mind to skin you alive," continued the leader, in a savage tone. "You'll either obey my orders or I'll throw you into the snake pit."

"Let him alone, Algy," said Tim, carelessly. "The old scoundrel has been tortured enough already. But I see we have partners for the dance," looking critically at the girls, "and I claim first choice because I've brought the fiddler."

At this a roar of protest arose and Tobey turned and said sullenly:

"Come in, all of you. We'll settle the order of dancing later on."

The interior of the ranch house was certainly picturesque. A great living room ran all across the front, with an immense fireplace built of irregular adobe bricks. The floor was strewn with skins of animals — mostly coyotes, a few deer and one or two mountain lions — and the walls were thickly hung with weapons and trophies of the chase. A big table in one corner was loaded with bottles and glasses, indicating the intemperate habits of the inmates, while on the chimney shelf were rows of pipes and jars of tobacco. An odor similar to that of a barroom hung over the place which the air from the open windows seemed unable to dissipate.

There were plenty of benches and chairs, with a long mess table occupying the center of the room. In a corner was an old square piano, which a Mexican was trying to dust as the party entered.

"Welcome to Hades!" exclaimed Tobey, with an absurd gesture. "Be good enough to make yourselves at home and I'll see if those devils of Chinamen are getting luncheon ready."

Silently the prisoners sat down. The crowd poured in after them and disposed themselves in various attitudes about the big room, all staring with more or less boldness at the three girls. Dan'l the fiddler was pushed in with the others and given a seat, while two or three of the imitation cowboys kept guard over him to prevent any possible escape. So far the old man had not addressed a word to anyone.

With the absence of the leader the feeling of restraint seemed to relax. The cowboys began whispering among themselves and chuckling with glee, as if they were enjoying some huge joke. Stubby had placed himself near the three young ladies, whom he eyed with adoring glances, and somehow none of the prisoners regarded this childish young fellow in exactly the same light as they did his comrades. Tim, his attitude full of grace as he lounged against a

settle, was also near the group. He seemed a bit thoughtful since his dramatic arrival and had little to say to anyone.

Mr. Merrick engaged Stubby in conversation.

"Does Mr. Tobey own this place?" he asked.

"By proxy, yes," was the reply. "It isn't in his name, you know, although that doesn't matter, for he couldn't sell his desert ranch if he had a title to it. I suppose that is what his folks were afraid of. Algy is the fourth son of old Lord Featherbone, and got into a disgraceful mess in London some years ago. So Featherbone shipped him over here, in charge of a family solicitor who hunted out this sequestered spot, bought a couple of thousand acres and built this hut. Then he went home and left Algy here to keep up the place on a paltry ten pounds — fifty dollars — a month."

"Can he manage to do that?" asked Uncle John.

"Why, he has to, you see. He's got together a few cattle, mostly stolen I imagine; but he doesn't try to work the land. Moreover he's established this community, composed of his suffering fellow exiles, the secret of which lies in the fact that we work the cooperative plan, and all chip in our remittances to boil the common pot. We can keep more servants and buy more food and drink, that way, than if each one of us lived separately."

"Up in Oregon," said Mr. Merrick, "I've known of some very successful and prosperous ranchmen among the remittance men."

"Oh, we're all kinds, I suppose, good and bad," admitted Stubby. "This crew's mostly bad, and they're moderately proud of it. It's a devil of a life, sir, and Hades Ranch is well named. I've only been here a month. Had a little property up North; but the sheriff took it for debt, and that forced me to Algy, whom I detest. I think I'll move on, before long. But you see I'm limited. Can't leave Arizona or I'll get my remittance cut off."

"Why were you sent here into exile?" asked Myrtle artlessly.

He turned red and refused to meet her eyes.

"Went wrong, Miss," he said, "and my folks wouldn't stand for it. We're all in the same boat," sweeping his arm around, "doing punishment for our misdeeds."

"Do none of you ever reform?" inquired Patsy.

"What's the use? We're so far away from home no one there would ever believe in our reformation. Once we become outcasts, that's the end of our careers. We're buried in these Western wilds and allowed just enough to keep alive."

"I would think," said Uncle John musingly, "that the manly way would be to cut yourself off entirely from your people at home and go to some city in the United States where honesty and industry would win a new name for you.

Then you could be respected and happy and become of use to the world."

Stubby laughed.

"That has been tried," he replied; "but few ever made a success of it. We're generally the kind that prefers idleness to work. My family is wealthy, and I don't mind taking from them what little they give me willingly and all that I can screw out of them besides. I'm in for life, as the saying is, and I've no especial ambition except to drink myself to death as soon as possible."

Patsy shuddered. It seemed a horrible thing to be so utterly hopeless. Could this young fellow have really merited his fate?

CHAPTER XIII
THE FIDDLER

Tim had listened carelessly to the conversation until now, when he said listlessly:

"Don't think us all criminals, for we're not. In my own case I did nothing to deserve exile except that I annoyed my elder brother by becoming more popular with our social set than he was. He had all the property and I was penniless, so he got rid of me by threatening to cut off my allowance unless I went to America and stayed there."

"And you accepted such a condition?" cried Patsy, scornfully. "Why were you not independent enough to earn your own living?"

He shrugged his shoulders, yet seemed amused.

"I simply couldn't," said he. "I was not educated to work, you know, and to do so at home would be to disgrace my noble family. I've too much respect for my lineage to labor with my hands or head."

"But here in America no one would know you," suggested Beth.

"I would only humiliate myself by undertaking such a task. And why should I do so? While I am in America my affectionate brother, the head of the family, supports me, as is his duty. Your philosophy is pretty enough, but it is not practical. The whole fault lies in our old-fashioned system of inheritance, the elder male of a family getting all the estate and the younger ones nothing at all. Here, in this crude and plebeian country, I believe it is the custom to provide for all one's children, and a father is at liberty to do so because his estate is not entailed."

"And he earns it himself and can do what he likes with it," added Uncle John, impatiently. "Your system of inheritance and entail may be somewhat to blame, but your worst fault is in rearing a class of mollycoddles and social drones who are never of benefit to themselves or the world at large. You, sir, I consider something less than a man."

"I agree with you," replied Tim, readily. "I'm only good to cumber the earth, and if I get little pleasure out of life I must admit that it's all I'm entitled to."

"And you can't break your bonds and escape?" asked Patsy.

"I don't care to. People who are ambitious to do things merely bore me. I don't admire them or care to imitate them."

From that moment they took no further interest in the handsome outcast. His world was not their world.

And now Tobey came in, driving before him a lot of Mexicans bearing trays of food. The long table was laid in a moment, for everything was

dumped upon it without any attempt at order. Each of the cowboys seized a plate from a pile at one end and helped himself to whatever he wanted.

Two or three of the men, however, were courteous enough to attend to their unwilling guests and see they were served as well as conditions would permit The food was plentiful and of good quality, but although none of Uncle John's party was squeamish or a stickler for form, all more or less revolted from the utter disregard of all the proprieties.

"I'm sorry we have no wine; but there's plenty of whiskey, if you like it," remarked Tobey.

The girls were silent and ate little, although they could not help being interested in observing the bohemianism of these gently reared but decadent sons of respectable English families. As soon as they could they left the table, and Tobey, observing their uneasiness in spite of his damaged and nearly useless optics, decided to send them to another room where they could pass the afternoon without further annoyance. Stubby escorted the party and ushered them into a good sized room which he said was "Algy's study," although no one ever studied there.

"Algy's afraid you'll balk at the dance; so he wants to please you however he can," remarked the round faced youth. "You won't mind being left alone, will you?"

"We prefer it, sir," answered the Major, stiffly.

"You see, we're going to have a rare lark this afternoon," continued Stubby, confidentially. "Usually it's pretty dull here, and all we can do is ride and hunt — play cards and quarrel. But your coming has created no end of excitement and this dance will be our red-letter day for a long time to come. The deuce of if is, however, that there are only two girls to dance with thirteen men. We limit our community to fifteen, you know; but little Ford and old Rutledge have backed down and won't have anything to do with this enterprise. I don't know why," he continued, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps they still have some gentlemanly instincts," suggested Patsy.

"That must be it," he replied in a relieved tone. "Well, anyhow, to avoid quarrels and bloodshed we've agreed to throw dice for the dances. Every one is to have an equal chance, you see, and when you young ladies open the dance the entire programme will be arranged for you."

"Are we to have no choice in the matter of partners?" inquired Beth curiously.

"None whatever. There would surely be a row, in that case, and we intend to have everything; pass off pleasantly if we have to kill a few to keep the peace."

With this Stubby bowed low and retreated toward the door, which

suddenly opened to admit old Dan'l the fiddler, who was thrust in so violently that his body collided with that of Stubby and nearly knocked him over.

"That's all right," laughed the remittance man, recovering from the shock. "You mustn't escape, you know, Dan'l, for we depend on you for the music."

He closed the door as he went out and they all heard a bolt shoot into place. Yet the broad window, scarcely six feet from the ground, stood wide open to admit the air.

Dan'l stood in the middle of the room, motionless for a moment. Then he raised his wrinkled face and clinched his fists, shaking them in the direction of the living-room.

"Me!" he muttered; "me play for dese monkeys to dance — me! a maestro — a composer — a artiste! No; I vill nod! I vill die before I condescention to such badness, such mockery!"

They were the first words he had spoken since his arrival, and they seemed to hold all his pentup indignation. The girls pitied the old man and, recognizing in him a fellow prisoner, sought to comfort him.

"If the dance depends upon us, there will be no dance," said Patsy, firmly.

"I thought you advised submitting to the whim of these ruffians," said Uncle John in surprise.

"Only to gain time, Uncle. And the scheme has succeeded. Now is our time to plot and plan how to outwit our enemies."

"Goot!" cried Dan'l approvingly. "I help you. Dey are vermin — pah! I vould kill dem all mitout mercifulness, unt be glad!"

"It won't be necessary to kill them, I hope," said Beth, smiling. "All we wish is to secure our escape."

"Vot a time dey make me!" said Dan'l, more calmly. "You see, I am living peacefulness in mine bungalow by der river — ten mile away. Dot brute Tim, he come unt ask me to fiddle for a dance. I — fiddle! Ven I refuse me to do it, he tie me up unt by forcibleness elope mit me. Iss id nod a crime — a vickedness — eh?"

"It certainly is, sir," said Uncle John. "But do not worry. These girls have some plan in their heads, I'm sure, and if we manage to escape we will carry you home in safety. Now, my dears, what is it?"

"Oh, we've only begun to think yet," said Patsy, and walked to the window. All but Myrtle and Dan'l followed her.

Below the window was a jungle of cactus, with hundreds of spines as slender and sharp as stilettos sticking in every direction.

"H-m; this room is burglar proof," muttered Uncle John, with marked

disappointment.

"It also makes an excellent prison," added Patsy. "But I suspected something of this sort when I saw they had left the window open. We can't figure on getting out that way, you see."

"Id vould be suiciding," Dan'l said, mournfully shaking his head. "If dese fiends were as goot as dey are clefer, dey vould be angels."

"No argument seems to prevail with them," remarked Beth. "They are lawless and merciless, and in this far-away country believe they may do as they please."

"They're as bad as the bandits of Taormina," observed Patsy, smiling at the recollection of an adventure they had abroad; "but we must find some way to evade them."

Dan'l had gone over to Myrtle's corner and stood staring at her with his one shrewd eye. Uncle John looked thoughtfully out of the window and saw Wampus busy in the road before the house. He had his coat off and was cutting the bars of barbed wire and rolling them out of the way, while Mumbles, who had been left with him, ran here and there at his heels as if desiring to assist him.

From the big hall, or living room, at the right came a dull roar of voices, subdued shouts and laughter, mingled with the clinking of glasses. All the remittance men were gathered there deep in the game of dice which was to determine the order in which they were to dance with Beth and Patsy. The servants were out of sight. Wampus had the field to himself.

"Come here," said Uncle John to the girls, and when they stood beside him pointed to the car. "Wampus is making ready for the escape," he continued. "He has cleared the road and the way is now open if we can manage to get to the machine. Has your plan matured yet?"

Patsy shook her head.

"Not yet, Uncle," she replied.

"Couldn't Wampus throw us a rope?" inquired the Major.

"He could," said Uncle John; "but we would be unable to use it. Those terrible cactus spines are near enough to spear anyone who dared try to slide down a rope. Think of something else."

They all tried to do that, but no practical idea seemed forthcoming.

"Oh, no," Dan'l was saying to Myrtle; "dey are nod afraid to shoot; bud dey vill nod shoot ladies, belief me. Always dey carry refolfers in deir belts — or deir holsterses. Dey eat mit refolfers; dey schleep mit refolfers; dey hunt, dey quarrel, unt sometimes dey shoot each odder — de best enactionment vot dey do. Bud dey do nod shoot at ladies — nefer."

"Will they wear their revolvers at the dance?" asked Beth, overhearing

this speech.

"I belief id," said Dan'l, wagging his ancient head. "Dey like to be ready to draw quick like, if anybody shteps on anybody's toes. Yes; of course."

"What a horrible idea!" exclaimed Patsy.

"They're quite liable to dance and murder in the same breath," the Major observed, gloomily.

"I don't like it," said Beth. "It's something awful just to think of. Haven't they any gallantry?"

"No," answered Patsy. "But I wouldn't dance with a lot of half drunken men wearing revolvers, if they burned me at the stake for refusing."

"Ah! shtick to dat fine expressionment," cried Dan'l, eagerly. "Shtick to id! Say you won't dance if dey wear de refolfers — unt den we win de schweepstakes!"

Patsy looked at him critically, in the instant catching a part of his idea.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

Dan'l explained, while they all listened carefully, absorbed in following in thought his unique suggestions.

"Let's do it!" exclaimed Beth. "I'm sure the plan will succeed."

"It's leaving a good deal to chance," objected Uncle John, with a touch of nervousness.

"There is an element of chance in everything," declared Patsy. "But I'm sure we shall escape, Uncle. Why it's a regular coup!"

"We take them by surprise, you know," explained the Major, who heartily favored the idea.

They talked it over for a time, perfecting the details, and then became as calm and composed as a group of prisoners might. Uncle John waved his handkerchief to attract the attention of Wampus, who stole softly around the corner of the house and approached the window, taking care to keep at a respectful distance from the dangerous cactus.

"Is everything ready?" inquired Uncle John in a subdued voice.

"To be sure all is ready. Why not? I am Wampus!" was the reply, in cautious tones.

"Go back to the machine and guard it carefully, Wampus," commanded Mr. Merrick. "We expect to escape soon after dark, so have the headlights going, for we shall make a rush for it and there mustn't be a moment's delay."

"All right," said the chauffeur. "You may depend on me. I am Wampus, an' not 'fraid of a hundred coward like these. Is not Mister Algy his eye mos' beautiful blacked?"

"It is," agreed Uncle John. "Go back to the car now, and wait for us.

Don’t get impatient. We don’t know just when we will join you, but it will be as soon as we can manage it. What is Mumbles doing?”

“Mumble he learn to be good automobilist. Jus’ now he sit on seat an’ watch wheel to see nobody touch. If anybody touch, Mumble he eat him up.”

They all laughed at this whimsical notion and it served to relieve the strain of waiting. Wampus, grinning at the success of his joke, went back to the limousine to inspect it carefully and adjust it in every part until it was in perfect order.

Now that a definite plan of action had been decided upon their spirits rose considerably, and they passed the afternoon in eager anticipation of the crisis.

Rather earlier than expected Stubby and Tim came to say “they had been appointed a committee to escort their guests to the banquet hall, where dinner would at once be served.”

“We shall have to clear away for the dance,” added Stubby, “so we want to get the feast over with as quickly as possible. I hope you are all hungry, for Algy has spread himself on this dinner and we are to have every delicacy the ranch affords, regardless of expense. We can economize afterward to make up for it.”

Elaborate preparations were not greatly in evidence, however. The Mexican servants had washed themselves and the floor of the big room had been swept and cleared of some of its rubbish; but that was all. The remittance men were in their usual rough costumes and the air was redolent with the fumes of liquor.

CHAPTER XIV
THE ESCAPE

As the prisoners quietly took their places at the table Tobey, who had been drinking hard, decided to make a speech. His face was badly swollen and he could only see through a slit in one eye, so severe had been the beating administered by Wampus earlier in the day; but the fellow had grit, in spite of his other unmanly qualities, and his imperturbable good humor had scarcely been disturbed by the punishment the Canadian had inflicted upon him.

"Ladies," said he, "and gentlemen — which of course includes our respected male guests — I am happy to inform you that the programme for the First Annual Hades Ranch Ball has finally been arranged, and the dances apportioned in a fair and impartial manner. The Grand March will take place promptly at seven o'clock, led by Miss Doyle and Knuckles, who has won the privilege by throwing four sixes. I am to follow with Miss De Graf, and the rest will troop on behind with the privilege of looking at the ladies. If anyone dares to create disorder his dances with the young ladies will be forfeited. Dan'l will play the latest dance music on his fiddle, and if it isn't spirited and up-to-date we'll shoot his toes off. We insist upon plenty of two-steps and waltzes and will wind up with a monney-musk in the gray light of dawn. This being fully understood, I beg you, my good friends, to fall to and eat and be merry; but don't linger unduly over the dainties, for we are all anxious, like good soldiers, to get into action."

The remittance men applauded this oratory, and incidentally attacked the eatables with evident determination to obey their leader's injunction.

"We can eat any time," remarked Stubby, with his mouth full; "but his Satanic majesty only knows when Hades Ranch will see another dance — with real ladies for partners."

The Chinese cooks and the Mexican servants had a lively time during this meal, for the demands made upon them were incessant. Uncle John, whose even disposition was seldom ruffled, ate with a good appetite, while even the Major, glum and scowling, did not disdain the numerous well-prepared dishes. As for Dan'l, he took full advantage of the occasion and was the last one to leave the table. Our girls, however, were too excited to eat much and little Myrtle, especially, was pallid and uneasy and had a startled look in her eyes whenever anyone made a sudden motion.

As soon as the repast was concluded the servants cleared the long table in a twinkling and pushed it back against the wall at one end of the long room. A chair was placed for Dan'l on top of this expansive board, which thus

became a stage from whence he could overlook the room and the dancers, and then two of the remittance men tossed the old fiddler to his elevated place and commanded him to make ready.

Dan'l said nothing and offered no resistance. He sat plaintively sawing upon his ancient but rich-toned violin while the floor was brushed, the chairs and benches pushed against the wall and the room prepared for action. Behind the violinist was a low, broad window facing a grass plot that was free from the terrifying cactus, and the old man noted with satisfaction that it stood wide open.

Uncle John's party had pressed close to the table and stood watching the proceedings.

"Ready now!" called Tobey; "the Grand March is about to begin. Take your partners, boys. Look sharp, there, Dan'l, and give us a martial tune that will lift our feet."

Dan'l meekly set the violin underneath his chin and raised the bow as if in readiness. "Knuckles," a brawny fellow with a florid face and a peculiar squint, approached Patsy and bowed.

"You're to lead with me, Miss," he said. "Are you ready?"

"Not quite," she returned with dignified composure; "for I perceive you are not quite ready yourself."

"Eh? Why not?" he inquired, surprised.

"You are still wearing your firearms," she replied. "I cannot and will not dance with a man who carries a revolver."

"That's nothing," he retorted. "We always do."

"Always?"

"Of course. And if I shed my gun what's to prevent some one else getting the drop on me?"

"That's it," said Patsy, firmly. "The weapons must all be surrendered before we begin. We positively refuse to dance if rioting and shooting are likely to occur."

A murmur of protest arose at this speech, for all the remittance men had gathered around to listen to the argument.

"That's all tommy-rot," observed Handsome Tim, in a sulky tone. "We're not spoiling for a row; it's the dance we're after."

"Then give up the revolvers," said Beth, coming to her cousin's assistance. "If this is to be a peaceful entertainment you will not need to be armed, and it is absurd to suppose a lady will dance with a gentleman who is a walking arsenal."

They looked into one another's faces uncertainly. Dan'l sat softly tuning his violin, as if uninterested in the controversy. Uncle John and the Major

looked on with seeming indifference.

"You must decide which you prefer — the revolvers or the dance," remarked Patsy, staring coolly into the ring of faces.

"Would your English ladies at home consent to dance with armed men?" asked Beth.

"They're quite right, boys," said Stubby, nodding his bullethead. "Let's agree to deposit all the shooting irons 'til the dance is over."

"I won't!" cried Knuckles, his scowl deepening.

"By Jove, you will!" shouted Tobey, with unexpected vehemence. "You're delaying the programme, old man, and it's a nuisance to dance in this armor, anyway. Here — pile all your guns in this corner; every one of you, mind. Then we shall all stand on an equal footing."

"Put them on the table there, by the old fiddler," said Patsy; "then we will know we are perfectly safe."

Rather unwillingly they complied, each man walking up to the table and placing his revolver at Dan'l's feet. The girls watched them intently.

"That man over there is still armed," called Beth, pointing to a swarthy Mexican who squatted near the door.

"That's all right," said Tobey, easily. "He's our guard, Pedro. I've stationed him there so you won't attempt to escape till we get ready to let you go."

Patsy laughed.

"There's little danger of that," she said.

"All ready, now!" exclaimed Knuckles, impatiently. "We're all as harmless as doves. Let 'er go, Dan'l!"

The old man was just then assisting Uncle John to lift Myrtle to the top of the table, where the Major had placed a chair for her. Knuckles growled, but waited until the girl was seated near the window. Then Dan'l drew his bow and struck up a spirited march. Patsy took the arm of Knuckles and paraded down the long room. Beth followed with Tobey, and behind them tramped the remittance men in files of two. At the far end were grouped the servants, looking curiously upon the scene, which was lighted by lamps swung from the ceiling and a row of candles upon the edge of the mantelshelf.

To carry out the idea of a grand march Patsy drew her escort here and there by sharp turns and half circles, the others trailing behind like a huge snake until she had passed down the length of the room and started to return up the other side to the starting point. So engrossed had been the cowboys that they did not observe the Major and Uncle John clamber upon the table and stand beside Myrtle.

The procession was half way up the hall on its return when Patsy said

abruptly: “Now, Beth!” and darted away from her partner’s side and toward the table. Beth followed like a streak, being an excellent runner, and for a moment Knuckles and Tobey, thus deserted by their partners, stopped to watch them in amazement. Then their comrades bumped into them and recalled them to their senses.

By that time the two girls had reached the table and leaped upon it. Uncle John was waving his handkerchief from the window as a signal to Wampus; Dan’l had laid aside his fiddle and seized a revolver in either hand, and the Major had caught up two more of the discarded weapons.

As Beth and Patsy turned, panting, and from their elevation looked up the room, the cowboys gave a bellow of rage and rushed forward.

“Keep back!” shouted the Major, in stentorian tones, “I’ll shoot the first man that interferes.”

Noting the grim determination in the old soldier’s eye, they hesitated and came to a halt.

“What do you mean by this infernal nonsense?” cried Tobey, in disgust.

“Why, it’s just checkmate, and the game is up,” replied Uncle John amiably. “We’ve decided not to hold the proposed dance, but to take our departure at once.”

He turned and passed Myrtle out of the window where Wampus took her in his arms, crutches and all, and carried her to the automobile. The remittance men, unarmed and confronted by their own revolvers, stood gaping open-mouthed and seemingly dazed.

“Let’s rush ‘em, boys!” shouted Handsome Tim, defiantly.

“Rush ‘em alone, if you like,” growled Knuckles. “I’m not ready for the graveyard yet.”

“You are vot iss called cowardices,” said Dan’l, flourishing the revolvers he held. “Come on mit der courage, somebotty, so I can shoot holes in you.”

“You’re building your own coffin just now, Dan’l,” retorted Tobey, in baffled rage. “We know where to get you, old boy, and we’ll have revenge for this night’s work.”

“I vill take some popguns home mit me,” was the composed reply. “Den, ven you come, I vill make a receptioning for you. Eh?”

Uncle John, Patsy and Beth had followed Myrtle through the window and disappeared.

“Now, sir,” said the Major to the old fiddler, “make your escape while I hold them at bay.”

“Nod yet,” replied Dan’l. “Ve must gif ourselves de most protectionment ve can.”

With this he gathered up the firearms, one by one, and tossed them

through the window. Then he straightened up and a shot flashed down the hall and tumbled the big Mexican guard to the floor just as he was about to glide through the doorway.

"Dit ve say shtand still, or dit ve nod say shtand still?" asked Dan'l, sternly. "If somebody gets hurt, it iss because he don'd obey de orderations."

"Go, sir!" commanded the Major.

"I vill; bud I go last," declared the old man. "I follow you — see? Bud you take my violin, please — unt be very tender of id, like id vas your sveetheardt."

The Major took the violin and climbed through the window, proceeding to join the others, who were by now seated in the car. When he had gone Dan'l prepared to follow, first backing toward the window and then turning to make an agile leap to the ground below. And now with a shout the cowboys made their rush, only to halt as Dan'l reappeared at the window, covering them again with his revolvers.

"So, you defils — make a listen to me," he called. "I am experiencing a goot-bye to you, who are jackals unt imitation men unt haf no goot right to be alive. Also if I see any of you de next time, I vill shoot first unt apologise at der funeral. I haf no more monkey business mit you voteffer; so keep vere you are until I am gone, unt you vill be safeness."

He slowly backed away from the window, and so thoroughly cowed was the group of ruffians that the old fiddler had been lifted hastily into the automobile before the cowboys mustered courage to leap through the window and search in the darkness for their revolvers, which lay scattered widely upon the ground.

Wampus, chuckling gleefully, jerked the hoods off his glaring searchlights, sprang to his seat and started the machine down the road before the crack of a single revolver was heard in protest. The shots came thicker after that, but now the automobile was bowling merrily along the road and soon was out of range.

"De road iss exceptionalment goot," remarked Dan'l. "Dere iss no dangerousness from here to der rifer."

"Danger?" said the chauffeur, scornfully. "Who cares for danger? I am Wampus, an' I am here!"

"We are all here," said Patsy, contentedly nestling against the cushions; "and I'm free to confess that I'm mighty glad of it!"

CHAPTER XV

THE ROMANCE OF DAN'L

It did not take them very long to reach the river, a muddy little stream set below high banks. By Dan'l's direction they turned to the left and followed the wind of the river for a mile or so until suddenly out of the darkness loomed a quaint little bungalow which the old German claimed to be his home.

"I haf architectured it mineself, unt make it built as I like it. You vill come in unt shtop der night mit me," he said, as Wampus halted the machine before the door.

There was a little murmur of protest at this, for the house appeared to be scarcely bigger than the automobile. But Uncle John pointed out, sensibly enough, that they ought not to undertake an unknown road at nighttime, and that Spotville, the town for which they were headed, was still a long way off. The Major, moreover, had a vivid recollection of his last night's bed upon the roof of the limousine, where he had crept to escape rattlesnakes, and was in no mood to again camp out in the open while they traveled in Arizona. So he advocated accepting Dan'l's invitation. The girls, curious to know how so many could be accommodated in the bungalow, withdrew all further objections and stood upon the low, pergola-roofed porch while their host went inside to light the lamps.

They were really surprised at the cosy aspect of the place. Half the one-story dwelling was devoted to a living room, furnished simply but with modest taste. A big square table was littered with music, much being in manuscript — thus proving Dan'l's assertion that he was a composer. Benches were as numerous as chairs, and all were well-cushioned with tanned skins as coverings. A few good prints were on the walls and the aspect of the place was entirely agreeable to the old man's guests.

As the room was somewhat chilly he made a fire in the ample fireplace and then with an air of pride exhibited to his visitors his tiny kitchen, his own bedroom and a storeroom, which occupied the remainder of the space in the bungalow. He told them he would prepare beds in the living room for the girls, give his own room to Mr. Merrick and Major Doyle, while he and Wampus would bunk in the storeroom.

"I haf much blankets," he said; "dere vill be no troubles to keep varm."

Afterward they sat before the fire and by the dim lights of the kerosene lamps chatted together of the day's adventures.

Uncle John asked Dan'l what had brought him to this deserted, out-of-the-way spot, and the old man told his story in a manner that amused them all

greatly.

"I haf been," said he, "much famous in my time, unt had a individualness pointed out whereeffer I went. I vas orchestra leader at the Theater Royal in Stuttgart, unt our king haf complimented me many times. But I vas foolish. I vas foolish enough to think that ven a man iss great he can stay great. I married me to a clefer prima donna, unt composed a great opera, which vas finer as anything Herr Wagner has efer done. Eh? But dere vas jealousness at work to opposition me. Von day ven my fine opera vas all complete I vent to the theater to lead mine orchestra. To my surprisement der Herr Director tells me I can retire on a pension; I am too old unt he has hired a younger man, who iss Herr Gabert. I go home bewildered unt mishappy, to find that Herr Gabert has stole the score of mine opera unt run avay mit mine vife. Vot I can do? Nothing. Herr Gabert he lead my orchestra tint all der people applauds him. I am forgot. One day I see our king compliment Herr Gabert. He produces my opera unt say he compositioned it. Eferybody iss crazy aboud id, unt crown Herr Gabert mit flowers. My vife sings in der opera. The people cheer her unt she rides avay mit Herr Gabert in his carriage to a grand supper mit der nobility unt der Herr Director.

"I go home unt say: 'Who am I?' I answer: 'Nobody!' Am I now great? No; I am a speck. Vot can I do? Veil, I go avay. I haf some money — a leedle. I come to America. I do not like crowds any more. I like to be alone mit my violin. I find dis place; I build dis house; I lif here unt make happiness. My only neighbors are de remittance men, who iss more mischiefing as wicked. Dey vill nod bother me much. So after a time I die here. Vy nod? I am forgot in Stuttgart."

There was pathos in the tale and his way of telling it. The old man spoke cheerfully, but they could see before them the tragedy depicted by his simple words. His hearers were all silent when he had concluded, feeling they could say nothing to console him or lighten his burden. Only Wampus, sitting in the background, looked scornfully upon the man who had once been the idol of his townspeople.

Dan'l took a violin from a shelf and began to play, softly but with masterly execution. He caught their mood instantly. The harmony was restful and contented. Patsy turned down the lamps, to let the flicker of the firelight dominate the room, and Dan'l understood and blended the flickering light into his melody.

For a long time he continued to improvise, in a way that fairly captivated his hearers, despite their varied temperaments, and made them wonder at his skill. Then without warning he changed to a stirring, martial air that filled the room with its rich, resonant tones. There was a fugue, a wonderful finale, and

while the concluding notes rang in their ears the old man laid his violin in his lap, leaned back against his cushions and heaved a deep sigh.

They forebore disturbing him for a while. How strange it seemed that this really talented musician should be banished to a wilderness while still possessing power to stir the souls of men with his marvelous execution. Truly he was a "maestro," as he had said; a genius whose star had risen, flashed across the sky and suddenly faded, leaving his future a blank.

Wampus moved uneasily in his chair.

"I like to know something," he remarked.

Dan'l roused himself and turned to look at the speaker.

"You have one bad eye," continued Wampus, reflectively. "What make him so? You stick violin bow in eye some day?"

"No," grunted Dan'l.

"Bad eye he no make himself," persisted the little chauffeur. "What make him, then?"

For a moment there was an awkward silence. The girls considered this personal inquiry offensive and regretted admitting Wampus to the room. But after a time the old German answered the question, quietly and in a half amused tone.

"Can you nod guess?" he said. "Herr Gabert hurt mine eye."

"Oh!" exclaimed Wampus, nodding approvingly "You fight duel with him?
Of course. It mus' be."

"I haf one goot eye left, howefer," continued Dan'l. "It vill do me fery well. Dere iss nod much to see out here."

"I know," said Wampus. "But Herr Gabert. What happen to him?"

Again there was a pause. Then the German said slowly:

"I am nod rich; but efery year I send a leetle money to Stuttgart to put some flowers on Herr Gabert's grave."

The chauffeur's face brightened. He got up from his chair and solemnly shook Dan'l's hand.

"You are great musician," he announced. "You can believe it, for it is true. An' you have shake the hand of great chauffeur. I am Wampus."

Dan'l did not answer. He had covered his good eye with his hand.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LODGING AT SPOTVILLE

"Wake up, Patsy: I smell coffee!" called Beth, and soon the two girls were dressed and assisting Myrtle to complete her toilet. Through the open windows came the cool, fragrant breath of morning; the sky was beginning to blush at the coming of the sun.

"To think of our getting up at such unearthly hours!" cried Patsy cheerfully. "But I don't mind it in the least, Beth; do you?"

"I love the daybreak," returned Beth, softly. "We've wasted the best hours of morning abed, Patsy, these many years."

"But there's a difference," said Myrtle, earnestly. "I know the daybreak in the city very well, for nearly all my life I have had to rise in the dark in order to get my breakfast and be at work on time. It is different from this, I assure you; especially in winter, when the chill strikes through to your bones. Even in summer time the air of the city is overheated and close, and the early mornings cheerless and uncomfortable. Then I think it is best to stay in bed as long as you can — if you have nothing else to do. But here, out in the open, it seems a shame not to be up with the birds to breathe the scent of the fields and watch the sun send his heralds ahead of him to proclaim his coming and then climb from the bottomless pit into the sky and take possession of it."

"Why, Myrtle!" exclaimed Patsy, wonderingly; "what a poetic notion. How did it get into your head, little one?"

Myrtle's sweet face rivaled the sunrise for a moment. She made no reply but only smiled pathetically.

Uncle John's knock upon the door found them ready for breakfast, which old Dan'l had skilfully prepared in the tiny kitchen and now placed upon a round table set out upon the porch. By the time they had finished the simple meal Wampus had had his coffee and prepared the automobile for the day's journey. A few minutes later they said good-bye to the aged musician and took the trail that led through Spotville.

The day's trip was without event. They encountered one or two Indians on the way, jogging slowly along on their shaggy ponies; but the creatures were mild and inoffensive. The road was fairly good and they made excellent time, so that long before twilight Spotville was reached and the party had taken possession of the one small and primitive "hotel" the place afforded. It was a two-story, clapboarded building, the lower floor being devoted to the bar and dining room, while the second story was divided into box-like bedrooms none too clean and very cheaply furnished.

“I imagine we shall find this place ‘the limit’,” remarked Uncle John ruefully. “But surely we shall be able to stand it for one night,” he added, with a philosophic sigh.

“Want meat fer supper?” asked the landlord, a tall, gaunt man who considered himself dressed when he was in his shirt sleeves.

“What kind of meat?” inquired Uncle John, cautiously.

“Kin give yeh fried pork er jerked beef. Ham ‘a all out an’ the chickens is beginnin’ to lay.”

“Eggs?”

“Of course, stranger. Thet’s the on’y thing Spotville chickens lay, nowadays. I s’pose whar yeh come from they lay biscuits ‘n’ pork chops.”

“No. Door knobs, sometimes,” said Mr. Merrick, “but seldom pork chops. Let’s have eggs, and perhaps a little fried pork to go with them. Any milk?”

“Canned er fresh?”

“Fresh preferred.”

The landlord looked at him steadily.

“Yeh’ve come a long-way, stranger,” he said, “an’ yeh must ‘a’ spent a lot of money, here ‘n’ there. Air yeh prepared to pay fer thet order in solid cash?”

Uncle John seemed startled, and looked at the Major, who smiled delightedly.

“Are such things expensive, sir?” the latter asked the landlord.

“Why, we don’t eat ‘em ourselves, ‘n’ thet’s a cold fact. Eggs is eggs, an’ brings forty cents a dozen to ship. There’s seven cows in town, ‘n’ forty-one babies, so yeh kin figger what fresh milk’s worth.”

“Perhaps,” said Uncle John mildly, “we can stand the expense — if we won’t rob the babies.”

“Don’t worry ‘bout thet. The last autymobble folks as come this way got hot because I charged ‘em market prices fer the truck they et. So I’m jest inquirin’ beforehand, to save hard feelin’s. I’ve found out one thing ‘bout autymobble folks sense I’ve ben runnin’ this hoe-tel, an’ thet is thet a good many is ownin’ machines thet oughter be payin’ their bills instid o’ buyin’ gasoline.”

The Major took him aside. He did not tell the cautious landlord that Mr. Merrick was one of the wealthiest men in America, but he exhibited a roll of bills that satisfied the man his demands would be paid in full.

The touring; party feasted upon eggs and fresh milk, both very delicious but accompanied by odds and ends of food not so palatable. The landlord’s two daughters, sallow, sunken cheeked girls, waited on the guests and the landlord’s wife did the cooking.

Beth, Patsy and Myrtle retired early, as did Uncle John. The Major, smoking his "bedtime cigar," as he called it, strolled out into the yard and saw Wampus seated in the automobile, also smoking.

"We get an early start to-morrow, Wampus," said the Major. "Better get to bed."

"Here is my bed," returned the chauffeur, quietly.

"But there's a room reserved for you in the hotel."

"I know. Don't want him. I sleep me here."

The Major looked at him reflectively.

"Ever been in this town before, Wampus?" he asked.

"No, sir. But I been in other towns like him, an' know this kind of hotel. Then why do I sleep in front seat of motor car?"

"Because you are foolish, I suppose, being born that way and unable to escape your heritage. For my part, I shall sleep in a bed; like a Christian," said the Major rather testily.

"Even Christian cannot sleep sometime," returned Wampus, leaning back in his seat and puffing a cloud of smoke into the clear night air. "For me, I am good Christian; but I am not martyr."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the Major.

"Do you sometime gamble?" inquired Wampus softly.

"Not often, sir."

"But sometime? Ah! Then I make you a bet. I bet you ten dollar to one cent you not sleep in your bed to-night."

The Major coughed. Then he frowned.

"Is it so bad as that?" he asked.

"I think he is."

"I'll not believe it!" exclaimed Major Doyle. "This hotel isn't what you might call first-class, and can't rank with the Waldorf-Astoria; but I imagine the beds will be very comfortable."

"Once," said Wampus, "I have imagination, too. Now I have experience; so I sleep in automobile."

The Major walked away with an exclamation of impatience. He had never possessed much confidence in the Canadian's judgment and on this occasion he considered the fellow little wiser than a fool.

Wampus rolled himself in a rug and was about to stretch his moderate length upon the broad double seat when a pattering of footsteps was heard and Beth came up to the car. She was wrapped in a dark cloak and carried a bundle of clothing under one arm and her satchel in the unoccupied hand. There was a new moon which dimly lighted the scene, but as all the townspeople were now in bed and the hotel yard deserted there was no one to

remark upon the girl's appearance.

"Wampus," she said, "let me into the limousine, please. The night is so perfect I've decided to sleep here in the car."

The chauffeur jumped down and opened the door.

"One moment an' I make up the beds for all," he said.

"Never mind that," Beth answered. "The others are all asleep, I'm sure."

Wampus shook his head.

"They all be here pretty soon," he predicted, and proceeded to deftly prepare the interior of the limousine for the expected party. When Beth had entered the car Wampus pitched the lean-to tent and arranged the cots as he was accustomed to do when they "camped out."

Scarcely had he completed this task when Patsy and Myrtle appeared. They began to explain their presence, but Wampus interrupted them, saying:

"All right, Miss Patsy an' Miss Myrtle. Your beds he made up an' Miss 'Lizbeth already asleep in him."

So they crept inside with sighs of relief, and Wampus had just mounted to the front seat again and disposed himself to rest when Uncle John trotted up, clad in his trousers and shirt, with the balance of his apparel clasped in his arms. He looked at the tent with pleased approval.

"Good boy, Wampus!" he exclaimed. "That room they gave me is an inferno. I'm afraid our young ladies won't sleep a wink."

"Oh, yes," returned Wampus with a nod; "all three now inside car, safe an' happy."

"I'm glad of it. How was your own room, Wampus?"

"I have not seen him, sir. But I have suspect him; so I sleep here."

"You are a wise chauffeur — a rare genus, in other words. Good night, Wampus. Where's the Major?"

Wampus chuckled.

"In hotel. Sir, do the Major swear sometime?"

Uncle John crept under the tent.

"If he does," he responded, "he's swearing this blessed minute. Anyhow, I'll guarantee he's not asleep."

Wampus again mounted to his perch.

"No use my try to sleep 'til Major he come," he muttered, and settled himself to wait.

It was not long.

Presently some one approached on a run, and a broad grin overspread the chauffeur's features. The Major had not delayed his escape long enough to don his trousers even; he had grabbed his belongings in both arms and fled in his blue and white striped undergarments.

Wampus leaped down and lifted the flap of the tent. The Major paused long enough in the moonlight to stare at the chauffeur and say sternly:

“If you utter one syllable, you rascal, I’ll punch your head!”

Wampus was discreet. He said not a word.

CHAPTER XVII
YELLOW POPPIES

"So this is California!" exclaimed Patsy gleefully, as the automobile left Parker and crossed the Arizona line.

"But it doesn't look any different," said Myrtle, peering out of the window.

"Of course not," observed Uncle John. "A State boundary is a man-made thing, and doesn't affect the country a bit. We've just climbed a miniature mountain back in Arizona, and now we must climb a mate to it in California. But the fact is, we've entered at last the Land of Enchantment, and every mile now will bring us nearer and nearer to the roses and sunshine."

"There's sunshine here now," declared the Major. "We've had it right along. But I haven't seen the roses yet, and a pair of ear muffs wouldn't be uncomfortable in this cutting breeze."

"The air *is* rather crisp," admitted Uncle John. "But we're still in the mountainous district, and Haggerty says — "

The Major coughed derisively and Mumbles barked and looked at Uncle John sagaciously.

"Haggerty says — "

"Is that a rabbit or a squirrel? Something has caught the eye of our Mumbles," interrupted the Major, pointing vaguely across the mesa.

"Haggerty says — "

"I wonder if Mumbles could catch 'em," remarked the Major, with complacence.

"He says that every mile we travel brings us nearer the scent of the orange blossoms and the glare of the yellow poppies," persisted Uncle John. "You see, we've taken the Southern route, after all, for soon we shall be on the Imperial road, which leads to San Diego — in the heart of the gorgeous Southland."

"What is the Imperial road?" inquired Beth.

"The turnpike through Imperial Valley, said to be the richest bit of land in all the world, not excepting the famous Nile banks of Egypt. There is no railway there yet, but the Valley is settling very fast, and Haggerty says — "

"How remarkable!" exclaimed the Major, gazing straight ahead. And again Mumbles, curled in Patsy's lap, lifted his shaggy head and gave a wailing bark.

Uncle John frowned, but was loyal to Haggerty.

"He says that if America was now unknown to all the countries of the world, Imperial would soon make it famous. They grow wonderful crops

there — strawberries and melons the year around, as well as all the tropical and semi-tropical fruits and grains, flowers and vines known to any country yet discovered."

"Do we go to Imperial?" asked Myrtle, eagerly.

"I think not, my dear; we just skirt the edge of the Valley. It's rather wild and primitive there yet; for although many settlers are flocking to that favored district Imperial is large enough to be an empire by itself. However, we shall find an ideal climate at Coronado, by the edge of the blue Pacific, and there and at Los Angeles we shall rest from our journey and get acquainted with the wonders of the Golden State. Has the trip tired you, girls?"

"Not me," answered Beth, promptly. "I've enjoyed every mile of the way."

"And so have I," added Patsy; "except perhaps the adventure with the remittance men. But I wouldn't care to have missed even that, for it led to our acquaintance with old Dan'l."

"For my part," said Myrtle softly, "I've been in a real fairyland. It has seemed like a dream to me, all this glorious journey, and I shall hate to wake up, as I must in time."

"Don't worry just yet about the awakening, dear," returned Patsy, leaning over to kiss her little friend. "Just enjoy it while you can. If fairylands exist, they were made for just such as you, Myrtle."

"One of the greatest marvels of our trip," said the Major, with a smile, "is the improvement in our dear little invalid. It isn't the same Myrtle who started out with us, believe me. Can't you all see the change?"

"I can *feel* it," returned Myrtle, happily. "And don't you notice how well I walk, and how little use I have now for the crutches?"

"And can you feel the rosy cheeks and bright eyes, too?" asked Uncle John, regarding her with much satisfaction.

"The trip was just the thing for Myrtle," added Patsy. "She has grown stronger every day; but she is not quite well yet, you know, and I depend a good deal upon the genial climate of California to insure her complete recovery."

Uncle John did not reply. He remembered the doctor's assertion that a painful operation would be necessary to finally restore Myrtle to a normal condition, and his kindly heart disliked to reflect upon the ordeal before the poor girl.

Haggerty proved a prophet, after all. Each mile they covered opened new vistas of delight to the eager travelers. The air grew more balmy as they left the high altitudes and came upon the level country to the north, of the San

Bernardino range of mountains, nor was it long before they sighted Imperial and sped through miles of country carpeted with the splendid yellow poppies which the State has adopted as the emblems of California. And behind this golden robe loomed the cotton fields of Imperial, one of the most fascinating sights the traveler may encounter. They made a curve to the right here, and headed northerly until they came to Salton. Skirting the edge of the curious Salton Sea they now headed directly west toward Escondido, finding the roads remarkably good and for long stretches as smooth and hard as an asphalt boulevard. The three days it took them to cross the State were days of wonder and delight.

It was not long before they encountered the roses and carnations growing on every side, which the Major had persistently declared to be mythical.

"It seems all wrong," asserted Patsy's father, moodily, "for such delicate flowers to be growing out of doors in midwinter. And look at the grass! Why, the seasons are changed about. It's Springtime just now in California."

"The man at the last stop we made told me his roses bloomed the year round," said Patsy, "And just smell the orange blossoms, will you! Aren't they sweet, and don't they remind you of brides?"

From Escondido it was a short run to the sea and their first glimpse of the majestic Pacific was from a high bluff overhanging the water. From this point the road ran south to San Diego, skirting the coast along a mountain trail that is admitted to be one of the most picturesque rides in America.

Descending the hills as they neared San Diego they passed through fields of splendid wild flowers so extensive and beautiful that our girls fairly gasped in wonder. The yellow and orange poppies predominated, but there were acres of wild mustard throwing countless numbers of gorgeous saffron spikes skyward, and vistas of blue carconnes, white daisies and blood-red delandres. The yucca was in bloom, too, and added its mammoth flower to the display.

They did not halt at San Diego, the southernmost city of California, from whence the Mexican line is in plain sight, but drove to the bay, where Wampus guided the limousine on to the big ferryboat bound for Coronado. They all left the car during the brief voyage and watched the porpoises sporting in the clear water of the bay and gazed abstractedly at the waving palms on the opposite shore, where lies nestled "the Crown of the Pacific" — Coronado.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SILENT MAN

Even the Major smiled benignantly when he reached his appointed room in the magnificent Hotel del Coronado, which is famed throughout the world. "This," said he, "reminds me of New York; and it's the first thing that has, since I left home."

"Why, Daddy, it isn't like New York at all," protested Patsy, standing beside him at the broad window overlooking the ocean. "Did you ever see a palm tree waving in New York; or daisy bushes as tall as a man; or such masses of roses and flowering vines? And then just notice the mountains over there — they're in Mexico, I'm told — and this great headland in the other direction; it's called Point Loma. Oh, I never imagined any place could be so beautiful!"

The others were equally excited, and Uncle John said, smiling broadly:

"Well, we're here at last, my dears, and I'm sure we are already well paid for our trip across the continent. What pleasant rooms these are. If the hotel table is at all to be compared with the house itself we shall have a happy time here, which means we will stay as long as possible."

But the table was another surprise, for the meals were equal to any served in the great Eastern metropolis. Uncle John complimented the landlord, a cheery faced, fat little man who had at one time managed a famous New York hotel and had brought his talents and experience to far California.

"I'm sorry," said this gentle boniface, "that I could not reserve better rooms for you — for there are some choice views from some locations. I had a corner suite saved for your party, a suite I consider the most desirable in the hotel; but an eccentric individual arrived yesterday who demanded the entire suite, and I had to let him have it. He will not stay long, and as soon as he goes you shall have the rooms."

"Who is he?" asked Uncle John.

"A rich miner; a most melancholy and peculiar person, by the way," replied landlord Ross. "I believe his name is Jones."

Mr. Merrick started.

"Jones, and a miner?" he said. "What's his other name — Anson?"

"We'll look and see," replied Mr. Ross, turning to the hotel register. "No; not Anson. He is registered as C.B. Jones, of Boston."

"Oh; that's not the Jones at all," said Uncle John, disappointed.

"It's the Jones who is our guest," replied the landlord, smiling.

Meantime the three girls had gone for a walk along the coast. The beach is beautiful at Coronado. There is a high sea wall of rock, and the path runs

along its edge almost the length of the promontory. The rocks are sloping, however, and it is not very difficult to climb down them to where the waves break against the wall.

Near the hotel they met straggling groups, strolling in either direction, but half a mile away the promenade was practically deserted. It was beginning to grow dark, and Beth said, regretfully:

"We must get back, girls, and dress for dinner — an unusual luxury, isn't it? Our trunks arrived at the hotel two weeks ago, and are now in our rooms, doubtless, awaiting us to unpack them."

"Don't let's return just yet," begged Myrtle. "I want to see the sun set."

"It will be gorgeous," said Patsy, glancing at the sky; "but we can see it from our windows, and as we're a long way from the hotel now I believe Beth's suggestion is wise."

So they began to retrace their steps. Myrtle still walked with some difficulty, and they had not proceeded far when Beth exclaimed:

"Look at that man down there!"

Her companions followed her direction and saw standing upon a huge pile of rocks at the water's edge a slight, solitary figure. Something in the poise, as he leaned forward staring at the darkened waves — for the sun was low and cast shadows aslant the water — struck Myrtle as familiar.

"Oh, girls!" she exclaimed; "it's the Grand Canyon man."

"Why, I believe it is," agreed Patsy. "What is he doing?"

"Nothing," said Beth, briefly. "But he is going to do something, I think."

While they stared at him from their elevation the man straightened an instant and cast a hasty glance to either side. The place seemed to him deserted, for he failed to observe the group of three intently watching his motions from the high bank overhead. Next moment he turned back to the water and leaned over the edge of rock again.

"Don't!" cried Myrtle, her clear voice ringing over the lap of the waves; "please don't!"

He swung around and turned his gaunt features upward to where the young girl leaned upon her crutches, with clasped hands and a look of distress upon her sweet face.

"Don't!" she repeated, pleadingly.

He passed his hand over his eyes with a very weary gesture and looked at Myrtle again — this time quite steadily. She was trembling in every limb and her cheeks were white with fear.

Slowly — very slowly — the man turned and began to climb the rocks; not directly upward to where the girls stood, but diagonally, so as to reach the walk some distance ahead of them. They did not move until he had

gained the path and turned toward the hotel. Then they followed and kept him in sight until he reached the entrance to the court and disappeared within.

"I wonder," said Patsy, as they made their way to their rooms, "whether he really was thinking of plunging into the ocean; or whether that time at the Grand Canyon he had a notion of jumping into the chasm."

"If so," added Beth, "Myrtle has saved his life twice. But she can't be always near to watch the man, and if he has suicidal intentions, he'll make an end of himself, sooner or later, without a doubt."

"Perhaps," said Myrtle, hesitatingly, "I am quite wrong, and the strange man had no intention of doing himself an injury. But each time I obeyed an impulse that compelled me to cry out; and afterward I have been much ashamed of my forwardness."

They did not see the melancholy man at dinner; but afterward, in the spacious lobby, they discovered him sitting in a far corner reading a magazine. He seemed intent on this occupation and paid no attention to the life around him. The girls called Uncle John's attention to him, and Mr. Merrick at once recognized him as the same individual they had met at the Grand Canyon.

"But I am not especially pleased to encounter him again," he said with a slight frown; "for, if I remember aright, he acted very rudely to Myrtle and proved unsociable when I made overtures and spoke to him."

"I wonder who he is?" mused Patsy, watching the weary, haggard features as his eyes slowly followed the lines of his magazine.

"I'll inquire and find out," replied her uncle.

The cherubic landlord was just then pacing up and down the lobby, pausing here and there to interchange a word with his guests. Uncle John approached him and said:

"Can you tell me, Mr. Ross, who the gentleman is in the corner?"

The landlord looked around at the corner and smiled.

"That," said he, "is the gentleman we spoke of this afternoon — Mr. C.B. Jones — the man who usurped the rooms intended for you."

"Rooms?" repeated Uncle John. "Has he a large party, then?"

"He is alone; that is the queer part of it," returned the landlord. "Nor has he much baggage. But he liked the suite — a parlor with five rooms opening out of it — and insisted upon having them all, despite the fact that it is one of the most expensive suites in the hotel. I said he was eccentric, did I not?"

"You were justified," said Mr. Merrick, thought fully. "Thank you, sir, for the information."

Even as he rejoined the girls, who were seated together upon a broad

divan, the man arose, laid down his magazine and came slowly down the room, evidently headed for the elevator. But with a start he recognized the girl who had accosted him on the beach, and the others with her, and for an instant came to a full stop before the group, his sad eyes fixed intently upon Myrtle's face.

The situation was a bit awkward, and to relieve it Uncle John remarked in his cheery voice:

"Well, Mr. Jones, we meet again, you see."

The man turned slowly and faced him; then bowed in a mechanical way and proceeded to the elevator, into which he disappeared.

Naturally Uncle John was indignant.

"Confound the fellow!" he exclaimed. "He's worse than a boor. But perhaps his early education was neglected."

"Did you call him Mr. Jones, sir?" asked Myrtle in a voice that trembled with excitement.

"Yes, my dear; but it is not your Uncle Anson. I've inquired about him. The Joneses are pretty thick, wherever you go; but I hope not many are like this fellow."

"Something's wrong with him," declared Patsy. "He's had some sad bereavement — a great blow of some sort — and it has made him somber and melancholy. He doesn't seem to know he acts rudely. You can tell by the man's eyes that he is unhappy."

"His eyes have neither color nor expression," remarked Beth. "At his best, this Mr. Jones must have been an undesirable acquaintance."

"You can't be sure of that," returned Patsy; "and I'm positive my theory is correct. More and more am I inclined to agree with Myrtle that he is disgusted with life, and longs to end it."

"Let him, then," retorted Uncle John. "I'm sure such a person is of no use to the world, and if he doesn't like himself he's better out of it."

That kindly Mr. Merrick should give vent to such a heartless speech proved how much annoyed he had been by Mr. Jones' discourtesy.

"He might be reclaimed, and — and comforted," said Myrtle, softly. "When I think of the happiness you have brought into my life, sir, I long to express my gratitude by making some one else happy."

"You're doing it, little one," he answered, pinching her cheek. "If we've brought a bit of sunshine into your life we've reaped an ample reward in your companionship. But if you can find a way to comfort that man Jones, and fetch him out of his dumps, you are certainly a more wonderful fairy than I've given you credit for."

Myrtle did not reply to this, although it pleased her. She presently pleaded

weariness and asked permission to return to her room. Beth and Patsy wanted to go into the great domed ballroom and watch the dancing; so Myrtle bade them good night and ascended by the elevator to her floor.

CHAPTER XIX

"THREE TIMES"

Softly stepping over the thick carpets, which deadened the sound of the crutches — now becoming scarcely necessary to her — the young girl passed along the corridor, passing angles and turns innumerable on her way to her room. Some erratic architect certainly concocted the plan of the Hotel del Coronado. It is a very labyrinth of passages connecting; its nine hundred rooms, and one has to have a good bump of location to avoid getting lost in its mazes.

Near one of the abrupt turns a door stood ajar, and in passing Myrtle glanced in, and then paused involuntarily. It was a small parlor, prettily furnished, and in a big chair reclined a man whose hands were both pressed tight against his face, thus covering it completely. But Myrtle knew him. The thin frame, as well as the despairing attitude, marked him as the man who had come so strangely into her life and whose personality affected her so strangely. She now stood in the dimly lighted corridor looking in upon him with infinite pity, and as she looked her glance fell upon the table beside him, where something bright glittered beneath the electric lamps.

Her heart gave a sudden thump of mingled fear and dismay. She knew intuitively what that "something" was. "Let him," Uncle John had said; but Myrtle instantly determined *not* to let him.

She hesitated a moment; but seeing that the man remained motionless, his eyes still covered, as if lost to all his surroundings, she softly crept forward and entered the room. She held the crutches under her arms, but dared not use them for fear of making a noise. Step by step she stole forward until the table was within reach. Then she stretched out her hand, seized the revolver, and hid it in the folds of her blouse.

Turning for a final glance at the man she was startled to find he had removed his hands and was steadfastly regarding her.

Myrtle leaned heavily on her crutches. She felt faint and miserable, like a criminal caught in the act. As her eyes fell before the intent gaze her face turned scarlet with humiliation and chagrin. Still, she did not attempt to escape, the idea not occurring to her; so for a time the tableau was picturesque — the lame girl standing motionless with downcast eyes and the man fixedly staring at her.

"Three times!" he slowly said, in a voice finally stirred by a trace of emotion. "Three times. My child, why are you so persistent?"

Myrtle tried to be brave and meet his gaze. It was not quite so difficult now the silent man had spoken.

“Why do you force me to be persistent?” she asked, a tremor in her voice. “Why are you determined to — to — ”

Words failed her, but he nodded to show he understood.

“Because,” said he, “I am tired; very tired, my child. It’s a big world; too big, in fact; but there’s nothing in it for me any more.”

There was expression enough in his voice now; expression of utter despondency.

“Why?” asked Myrtle, somewhat frightened to find herself so bold.

He did not answer for a long time, but sat reading her mobile face until a gentler look came into his hard blue eyes.

“It is a story too sad for young ears,” he finally replied. “Perhaps, too, you would not understand it, not knowing or understanding me. I’m an odd sort of man, well along in years, and I’ve lived an odd sort of life. But my story, such as it is, has ended, and I’m too weary to begin another volume.”

“Oh, no!” exclaimed Myrtle, earnestly. “Surely this cannot be the fulfillment and end of your life. If it were, why should *I* come into your life just now?”

He stared at her with a surprised — an even startled — look.

“Have you come into my life?” he inquired, in a low, curious tone.

“Haven’t I?” she returned. “At the Grand Canyon — ”

“I know,” he interrupted hastily. “That was your mistake; and mine. You should not have interfered. I should not have let you interfere.”

“But I did,” said Myrtle.

“Yes. Somehow your voice sounded like a command, and I obeyed it; perhaps because no living person has a right to command me. You — you took me by surprise.”

He passed his hand over his eyes with that weary gesture peculiar to him, and then fell silent.

Myrtle had remained standing. She did not know what to do in this emergency, or what more to say. The conversation could not be ended in this summary fashion. The hopeless man needed her in some way; how, she did not know. Feeling weak and very incompetent to meet the important crisis properly, the girl crept to a chair opposite the man and sank into it. Then she leaned her chin upon her hand and looked pleadingly at her strange acquaintance. He met her eyes frankly. The hard look in his own seemed to have disappeared, dispelled by a sympathy that was new to him.

And so they sat, regarding one another silently yet musingly, for a long time.

“I wish,” said Myrtle once, in her softest, sweetest tones, “I could help you. Some one helped me when I was in great trouble, so I want to help

you.”

He did not reply, and another period of silence ensued. But his next speech showed he had been considering her words.

“Because you have suffered,” he said, “you have compassion for others who suffer. But your trouble is over now?”

“Almost,” she said, smiling brightly.

He sighed, but questioned her no farther.

“A while ago,” she volunteered, “I had neither friends nor relatives.” He gave her a queer look, then. “I had no money. I had been hurt in an accident and was almost helpless. But I did not despair, sir — and I am only an inexperienced girl.

“In my darkest hour I found friends — kind, loving friends — who showed me a new world that I had not suspected was in existence. I think the world is like a great mirror,” she continued, meditatively, “and reflects our lives just as we ourselves look upon it. Those who turn sad faces toward the world find only sadness reflected. But a smile is reflected in the same way, and cheers and brightens our hearts. You think there is no pleasure to be had in life. That is because you are heartsick and — and tired, as you say. With one sad story ended you are afraid to begin another — a sequel — feeling it would be equally sad. But why should it be? Isn’t the joy or sorrow equally divided in life?”

“No,” he replied.

“A few days ago,” she continued earnestly, “we were crossing the Arizona deserts. It was not pleasant, but we did not despair, for we knew the world is not all desert and that the land of roses and sunshine lay just beyond. Now that we’re in California we’ve forgotten the dreary desert. But you — Why, sir, you’ve just crossed your desert, and you believe all the world is bitter and cruel and holds no joy for you! Why don’t you step out bravely into the roses and sunshine of life, and find the joy that has been denied you?”

He looked into her eyes almost fearfully, but it seemed to her that his own held a first glimmer of hope.

“Do you believe there can be joy for me anywhere in the world?” he asked.

“Of course. I tell you there’s just as much sweet as there is bitter in life. Don’t I know it? Haven’t I proved it? But happiness doesn’t chase people who try to hide from it. It will meet you halfway, but you’ve got to do your share to deserve it. I’m not preaching; I’ve lived this all out, in my own experience, and know what I’m talking about. Now as for you, sir, I can see very plainly you haven’t been doing your duty. You’ve met sorrow and let it conquer you. You’ve taken melancholy by the hand and won’t let go of it.

You haven't tried to fight for your rights — the rights God gave to every man and expects him to hold fast to and take advantage of. No, indeed!"

"But what is the use?" he asked, timidly, yet with an eager look in his face. "You are young, my child; I am nearly old enough to have been your father. There are things you have not yet learned; things I hope you will never learn. An oak may stand alone in a field, and be lonely because it cannot touch boughs with another. A flower may bloom alone in a garden, and wither and die for want of companionship. God's wisdom grouped every living thing. He gave Adam a comrade. He created no solitary thing. But see, my child: although this world contains countless thousands, there is not one among them I may call my friend."

"Oh, yes; just one!" said Myrtle quickly. "I am your friend. Not because you want me, but because you need me. And that's a beginning, isn't it? I can find other friends for you, among *my* friends, and you will be sure to like them because I like them."

This naive suggestion did not affect him as much as the fact that this fair young girl had confessed herself his friend. He did not look at Myrtle now; he stared straight ahead, at the wall paper, and his brow was furrowed as if he was thinking deeply.

Perhaps any other man would have thanked the girl for her sympathy and her proffered friendship, or at the least have acknowledged it. But not so this queer Mr. Jones; eccentric, indeed, as the shrewd landlord had described him. Nor did Myrtle seem to expect an acknowledgment. It was enough for her that her speech had set him thinking along new lines.

He sat musing for so long that she finally remembered it was growing late, and began to fear Patsy and Beth would seek their rooms, which connected with her own, and find her absent. That would worry them. So at last she rose softly, took her crutches and turned to go.

"Good night, my — friend," she said.

"Good night, my child," he answered in a mechanical tone, without rousing from his abstraction.

Myrtle went to her room and found it was not so late as she had feared. She opened a drawer and placed the revolver in it, not without a little shudder.

"At any rate," she murmured, with satisfaction, "he will not use this to-night."

CHAPTER XX
ON POINT LOMA

Next morning a beautiful bunch of roses was brought to Myrtle's room — roses so magnificent that it seemed impossible they could be grown out of doors. But there are few hothouses in California, and the boy who brought the flowers confided to her the information that they were selected from more than five hundred blooms. She ran to show them to Patsy and Beth, who were amazed not only by the roses but by the fact that the queer Mr. Jones had sent them to Myrtle. There was no card or note accompanying the gift, but after the younger girl had related her conversation with Mr. Jones the previous evening, they could not doubt but he had sent the flowers.

"Perhaps," reflected Patsy, "we've been misjudging him. I never beheld such a stolid, unimpressive countenance in my life; but the man must have a soul of some sort, or he would not think of sending flowers to his new friend."

"It's a pretty idea," said Beth. "He wanted to assure Myrtle that he appreciated her kindness."

"I'm sure he likes me," declared Myrtle, simply. "He wasn't a bit cross when I ran in and took away his pistol, or when I preached to him. I really gave him a good talking to, and he didn't object a bit."

"What he needs," commented Beth, "is to get away from himself, and mingle with people more. I wonder if we could coax him to join us in our ride to Point Loma."

"Would we care to ask him?" said Patsy. "He's as sour and crabbed in looks as he is in disposition, and has treated Uncle John's advances shamefully. I'd like to help Myrtle bring the old fellow back to life; but perhaps we can find an easier way than to shut him up with us in an automobile."

"He wouldn't go, I'm sure," declared Myrtle. "He has mellowed a little — a very little — as these roses prove. But he treated me last night just as he does Mr. Merrick, even after our conversation. When I said 'Good night' I had to wait a long time for his answer. But I'd like you to meet him and help cheer him up; so please let me introduce him, if there's a chance, and do be nice to him."

"I declare," cried Patsy, laughing, "Myrtle has assumed an air of proprietorship over the Sad One already."

"She has a right to, for she saved his life," said Beth.

"Three times," Myrtle added proudly. "He told me so himself."

Uncle John heard the story of Myrtle's adventure with considerable

surprise, and he too expressed a wish to aid her in winning Mr. Jones from his melancholy mood.

"Every man is queer in one way or another," said he, "and I'd say the women were, too, if you females were not listening. I also imagine a very rich man has the right to be eccentric, if it pleases him."

"Is Mr. Jones rich, then?" inquired Beth.

"According to the landlord he's rich as Croesus. Made his money in mining — manipulating stocks, I suppose. But evidently his wealth hasn't been a comfort to him, or he wouldn't want to shuffle off his mortal coil and leave it behind"

They did not see the object of this conversation before leaving for the trip to Point Loma — a promontory that juts out far into the Pacific. It is reached by a superb macadamized boulevard, which passes down the north edge of the promontory, rounds the corner where stands the lighthouse, and comes back along the southern edge, all the time a hundred feet or more in elevation above the ocean.

The view from the Point is unsurpassed. Wampus stopped his car beside a handsomely appointed automobile that was just then deserted.

"Some one is here before us," remarked Patsy. "But that is not strange. The wonder is that crowds are not here perpetually."

"It is said," related the Major, who had really begun to enjoy California, "that the view from this Point includes more varied scenery than any other that is known in the world. Here we see the grand San Bernardino range of mountains; the Spanish Bight on the Mexican shore; the pretty city of San Diego climbing its hills, with the placid bay in front, where float the warships of the Pacific Squadron; the broad stretch of orange and lemon groves, hedged with towering palm trees; Santa Catalina and the Coronado Islands; the blue Pacific rolling in front and rugged Loma with its rocky cliffs behind. What more could we ask to see from any one viewpoint?"

"Don't forget the monster hotel, with its hundred towers and gables, dominating the strip of land between the bay and the ocean," added Beth. "How near it seems, and yet it is many miles away."

Some one had told them that moonstones were to be found on the beach at the base of the cliff; so they all climbed down the steep path, followed by Mumbles, who had not perceptibly grown in size during the trip but had acquired an adventurous disposition which, coupled with his native inquisitiveness, frequently led him into trouble.

Now, when they had reached the narrow beach, Mumbles ran ahead, passed around the corner of a cliff that almost touched the water, and was presently heard barking furiously.

“Sounds as if he scented game,” said Patsy.

“A turtle, perhaps, or a big fish washed ashore,” suggested the Major.

But now the small dog’s voice changed suddenly and became a succession of yelps expressing mingled pain and terror.

“Oh, he’s hurt!” cried Myrtle; and they all hurried forward, Uncle John leading them on a run, and passed around the big rock to rescue their pet.

Some one was before them, however. The foolish dog had found a huge crab in the sand and, barking loudly, had pushed his muzzle against the creature, with the result that the crab seized his black nose in a gripping claw and pinched as hard as it was able. Mumbles tried to back away, madly howling the while; but the crab, although the smaller antagonist, gripped a rock with its other claw and held on, anchoring the terrified dog to the spot.

But help was at hand. A tall, thin man hurried to the rescue, and just as Uncle John came in sight, leading his procession, a knife severed the crab’s claw and Mumbles was free. Seeing his mistress, the puppy, still whining with pain, hurried to her for comfort, while Uncle John turned to the man and said:

“Thank you, Mr. Jones, for assisting our poor beast. Mumbles is an Eastern dog, you know, and inexperienced in dealing with crabs.”

Mr. Jones was examining the claw, the despoiled owner of which had quickly slid into the water.

“It is a species of crawfish,” he observed, meditatively. Then, seeing the girls approach, he straightened up and rather awkwardly lifted his hat.

The gesture surprised them all. Heretofore, when they had met, the man had merely stared and turned away, now his attempt at courtesy was startling because unexpected.

Myrtle came close to his side.

“How nice to find you here, Mr. Jones,” she said brightly. “And oh, I must thank you for my lovely roses.”

He watched her face with evident interest and it seemed that his own countenance had become less haggard and sad than formerly.

“Let me introduce my friends,” said the girl, with sudden recollection of her duty. “This is Mr. Merrick, my good friend and benefactor; and this is Major Doyle and his daughter Miss Patricia Doyle, both of whom have the kindest hearts in the world; Miss Beth De Graf, Mr. Merrick’s niece, has watched over and cared for me like a sister, and — oh, I forgot; Miss Patsy is Mr. Merrick’s niece, too. So now you know them all.”

The man nodded briefly his acknowledgment.

“You — you are Mr. Jones, I believe, of — of Boston?”

“Once of Boston,” he repeated mechanically. Then he looked at her and

added: “Go on.”

“Why — what — I don’t understand,” she faltered. “Have I overlooked anyone?”

“Only yourself,” he said.

“Oh; but I — I met you last night.”

“You did not tell me your name,” he reminded her.

“I’m Myrtle,” she replied, smiling in her relief. “Myrtle Dean.”

“Myrtle Dean!” His voice was harsh; almost a shout.

“Myrtle Dean. And I — I’m from Chicago; but I don’t live there any more.”

He stood motionless, looking at the girl with a fixed expression that embarrassed her and caused her to glance appealingly at Patsy. Her friend understood and came to her rescue with some inconsequent remark about poor Mumbles, who was still moaning and rubbing; his pinched nose against Patsy’s chin to ease the pain.

Mr. Jones paid little heed to Miss Doyle’s observation, but as Myrtle tried to hide behind Beth Mr. Merrick took the situation in hand by drawing the man’s attention to the scenery, and afterward inquiring if he was searching for moonstones.

The conversation now became general, except that Mr. Jones remained practically silent He seemed to try to interest himself in the chatter around him, but always his eyes would stray to Myrtle’s face and hold her until she found an opportunity to turn away.

“We’ve luncheon in the car,” announced Uncle John, after a time. “Won’t you join us, Mr. Jones?”

“Yes,” was the unconventional reply. The man was undoubtedly abstracted and did not know he was rude. He quietly followed them up the rocks and when they reached the automobile remained by Myrtle’s side while Wampus brought out the lunch basket and Beth and Patsy spread the cloth upon the grass and unpacked the hamper.

Mr. Jones ate merely a mouthful, but he evidently endeavored to follow the conversation and take an interest in what was said. He finally became conscious that his continuous gaze distressed Myrtle, and thereafter strove to keep his eyes from her face. They would creep back to it, from time to time; but Beth, who was watching him curiously, concluded he was making a serious effort to deport himself agreeably and credited him with a decided improvement in manners as their acquaintance with him progressed.

After luncheon, when their return by way of Old Town and the Spanish Mission was proposed, Mr. Jones said, pointing to the car that stood beside their own:

“This is my automobile. I drive it myself. I would like Myrtle Dean to ride back with me.”

The girl hesitated, but quickly deciding she must not retreat, now she had practically begun the misanthrope’s reformation, she replied:

“I will be very glad to. But won’t you take one of my friends, also? That will divide the party more evenly.”

He looked down at his feet, thoughtfully considering the proposition.

“I’ll go with you,” said Beth, promptly. “Get into the front seat with Mr. Jones, Myrtle, and I’ll ride behind.”

The man made no protest. He merely lifted Myrtle in his arms and gently placed her in the front seat. Beth, much amused, took the seat behind, unassisted save that the Major opened the door for her. Mr. Jones evidently understood his car. Starting the engines without effort he took his place at the wheel and with a nod to Mr. Merrick said:

“Lead on, sir; I will follow.”

Wampus started away. He was displeased with the other car. It did not suit him at all. And aside from the fact that the sour-faced individual who owned it had taken away two of Wampus’ own passengers, the small shaggy Mumbles, who had been the established companion of Uncle John’s chauffeur throughout all the long journey, suddenly deserted him. He whined to go with the other car, and when Patsy lifted him aboard he curled down beside the stranger as if thoroughly satisfied. Patsy knew why, and was amused that Mumbles showed his gratitude to Mr. Jones for rescuing him from the crab; but Wampus scowled and was distinctly unhappy all the way to Old Town.

“Him mebbe fine gentleman,” muttered the Canadian to the Major; “but if so he make a disguise of it. Once I knew a dog thief who resemble him; but perhaps Mumble he safe as long as Miss Myrtle an’ Miss Beth they with him.”

“Don’t worry,” said the Major, consolingly. “I’ll keep my eye on the rascal. But he’s a fine driver, isn’t he?”

“Oh, *that*!” retorted Wampus, scornfully. “Such little cheap car like that he drive himself.”

At Old Town Mr. Jones left them, saying he had been to the Mission and did not care for it. But as he drove his car away there was a gentler and more kindly expression upon his features than any of them had ever seen there before, and Myrtle suspected her charm was working and the regeneration really begun.

CHAPTER XXI
A TALE OF WOE

That evening after dinner, as Mr. Merrick sat alone in the hotel lobby, the girls having gone to watch the Major bowl tenpins, Mr. Jones approached and sat down in the chair beside him.

Uncle John greeted the man with an attempt at cordiality. He could not yet bring himself to like his personality, but on Myrtle's account and because he was himself generous enough to wish to be of service to anyone so forlorn and unhappy, he treated Mr. Jones with more respect than he really thought he deserved.

"Tell me, Mr. Merrick," was the abrupt request, "where you found Myrtle Dean."

Uncle John told him willingly. There was no doubt but Myrtle had interested the man.

"My girls found her on the train between Chicago and Denver," he began. "She was on her way to join her uncle in Leadville."

"What is her uncle's name?"

"Anson Jones. But the child was almost helpless, ill and without friends or money. She was not at all sure her uncle was still in Leadville, in which case she would be at the mercy of a cold world. So I telegraphed and found that Anson Jones had been gone from the mining camp for several months. Do you know, sir, I at first suspected you might be the missing uncle? For I heard you were a miner and found that your name is Jones. But I soon discovered you are not Anson Jones, but C.B. Jones — which alters the case considerably."

Mr. Jones nodded absently.

"Tell me the rest," he said.

Uncle John complied. He related the manner in which Beth and Patsy had adopted Myrtle, the physician's examination and report upon her condition, and then told the main points of their long but delightful journey from Albuquerque to San Diego in the limousine.

"It was one of the most fortunate experiments we have ever tried," he concluded; "for the child has been the sweetest and most agreeable companion imaginable, and her affection and gratitude have amply repaid us for anything we have done for her. I am determined she shall not leave us, sir. When we return to New York I shall consult the best specialist to be had, and I am confident she can be fully cured and made as good as new."

The other man had listened intently, and when the story was finished he sat silent for a time, as if considering and pondering over what he had heard.

Then, without warning, he announced quietly:

"I am Anson Jones."

Uncle John fairly gasped for breath.

"*You* Anson Jones!" he exclaimed. Then, with plausible suspicion he added: "I myself saw that you are registered as C.B. Jones."

"It is the same thing," was the reply. "My name is Collanson — but my family always called me 'Anson', when I had a family — and by that name I was best known in the mining camps. That is what deceived you."

"But — dear me! — I don't believe Myrtle knows her uncle's name is Collanson."

"Probably not. Her mother, sir, my sister, was my only remaining relative, the only person on earth who cared for me — although I foolishly believed another did. I worked for success as much on Kitty's account — Kitty was Myrtle's mother — as for my own sake. I intended some day to make her comfortable and happy, for I knew her husband's death had left her poor and friendless. I did not see her for years, nor write to her often; it was not my way. But Kitty always knew I loved her."

He paused and sat silent a moment. Then he resumed, in his quiet, even tones:

"There is another part of my story that you must know to understand me fully; to know why I am now a hopeless, desperate man; or was until — until last night, perhaps. Some years ago, when in Boston, I fell in love with a beautiful girl. I am nearly fifty, and she was not quite thirty, but it never occurred to me that I was too old to win her love, and she frankly confessed she cared for me. But she said she could not marry a poor man and would therefore wait for me to make a fortune. Then I might be sure she would marry me. I believed her. I do not know why men believe women. It is an absurd thing to do. I did it; but other men have been guilty of a like folly. Ah, how I worked and planned! One cannot always make a fortune in a short time. It took me years, and all the time she renewed her promises and kept my hopes and my ambitions alive.

"At last I won the game, as I knew I should do in time. It was a big strike. I discovered the 'Blue Bonnet' mine, and sold a half interest in it for a million. Then I hurried to Boston to claim my bride…. She had been married just three months, after waiting, or pretending to wait, for me for nearly ten years! She married a poor lawyer, too, after persistently refusing me because *I* was poor. She laughed at my despair and coldly advised me to find some one else to share my fortune."

He paused again and wearily passed his hand over his eyes — a familiar gesture, as Myrtle knew. His voice had grown more and more dismal as he

proceeded, and just now he seemed as desolate and unhappy as when first they saw him at the Grand Canyon.

"I lived through it somehow," he continued; "but the blow stunned me. It stuns me yet. Like a wounded beast I slunk away to find my sister, knowing she would try to comfort me. She was dead. Her daughter Myrtle, whom I had never seen, had been killed in an automobile accident. That is what her aunt, a terrible woman named Martha Dean, told me, although now I know it was a lie, told to cover her own baseness in sending an unprotected child to the far West to seek an unknown uncle. I paid Martha Dean back the money she claimed she had spent for Myrtle's funeral; that was mere robbery, I suppose, but not to be compared with the crime of her false report. I found myself bereft of sweetheart, sister — even an unknown niece. Despair claimed me. I took the first train for the West, dazed and utterly despondent. Some impulse led me to stop off at the Grand Canyon, and there I saw the means of ending all my misery. But Myrtle interfered."

Uncle John, now thoroughly interested and sympathetic, leaned over and said solemnly:

"The hand of God was in that!"

Mr. Jones nodded.

"I am beginning to believe it," he replied. "The girl's face won me even in that despairing mood. She has Kitty's eyes."

"They are beautiful eyes," said Uncle John, earnestly. "Sir, you have found in your niece one of the sweetest and most lovely girls that ever lived. I congratulate you!"

Mr. Jones nodded again. His mood had changed again since they began to speak of Myrtle. His eyes now glowed with pleasure and pride. He clasped Mr. Merrick's hand in his own as he said with feeling:

"She has saved me, sir. Even before I knew she was my niece I began to wonder if it would not pay me to live for her sake. And now — "

"And now you are sure of it," cried Uncle John, emphatically. "But who is to break the news to Myrtle?"

"No one, just yet," was the reply. "Allow me, sir, if you please, to keep her in ignorance of the truth a little longer. I only made the discovery myself today, you see, and I need time to think it all out and determine how best to take advantage of my good fortune."

"I shall respect your wish, sir," said Mr. Merrick.

The girls came trooping back then, and instead of running away Anson Jones remained to talk with them.

Beth and Patsy were really surprised to find the "Sad One" chatting pleasantly with Uncle John. The Major looked at the man curiously, not

understanding the change in him. But Myrtle was quite proud of the progress he was making and his improved spirits rendered the girl very happy indeed. Why she should take such an interest in this man she could not have explained, except that he had been discouraged and hopeless and she had succeeded in preventing him from destroying his life and given him courage to face the world anew. But surely that was enough, quite sufficient to give her a feeling of "proprietorship," as Patsy had expressed it, in this queer personage. Aside from all this, she was growing to like the man who owed so much to her. Neither Patsy nor Beth could yet see much to interest them or to admire in his gloomy character; but Myrtle's intuition led her to see beneath the surface, and she knew there were lovable traits in Mr. Jones' nature if he could only be induced to display them.

CHAPTER XXII
THE CONFESSION

After that evening the man attached himself to the party on every possible occasion. Sometimes in their trips around Coronado he rode in their automobile, at other times he took Myrtle, and perhaps one other, in his own car. Every day he seemed brighter and more cheerful, until even Major Doyle admitted he was not a bad companion.

Three weeks later they moved up to Los Angeles, taking two days for the trip and stopping at Riverside and Redlands on the way. They established their headquarters at one of the handsome Los Angeles hotels and from there made little journeys through the surrounding country, the garden spot of Southern California. One day they went to Pasadena, which boasts more splendid residences than any city of its size in the world; at another time they visited Hollywood, famed as "the Paradise of Flowers." Both mountains and sea were within easy reach, and there was so much to do that the time passed all too swiftly.

It was on their return from such a day's outing that Myrtle met with her life's greatest surprise. Indeed, the surprise was shared by all but Uncle John, who had religiously kept the secret of Mr. Jones' identity.

As they reached the hotel this eventful evening Mr. Merrick said to the girls:

"After you have dressed for dinner meet us on the parlor floor. We dine privately to-night."

They were mildly astonished at the request, but as Uncle John was always doing some unusual thing they gave the matter little thought. However, on reaching the parlor floor an hour later they found Mr. Merrick, the Major and Mr. Jones in a group awaiting them, and all were garbed in their dress suits, with rare flowers in their buttonholes.

"What is it, then?" asked Patsy. "A treat?"

"I think so," said Uncle John, smiling. "Your arm, please, Miss Doyle."

The Major escorted Beth and Mr. Jones walked solemnly beside Myrtle, who still used crutches, but more as a matter of convenience than because they were necessary. At the end of a corridor a waiter threw open the door of a small but beautiful banquet room, where a round table, glistening with cut glass and silver, was set for six. In the center of the table was a handsome centerpiece decorated with vines of myrtle, while the entire room was filled with sprays of the dainty vines, alive with their pretty blue flowers.

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Patsy, laughing gleefully. "This seems to be

our little Myrtle's especial spread. Who is the host, Uncle John?"

"Mr. Jones, of course," announced Beth, promptly.

Myrtle blushed and glanced shyly at Mr. Jones. His face was fairly illumined with pleasure. He placed her in the seat of honor and said gravely:

"This is indeed Myrtle's entertainment, for she has found something. It is also partly my own thanksgiving banquet, my friends; for I, too, have found something."

His tone was so serious that all remained silent as they took their seats, and during the many courses served the conversation was less lively than on former occasions when there had been no ceremony. Myrtle tried hard to eat, but there was a question in her eyes — a question that occupied her all through the meal. When, finally, the dessert was served and the servants had withdrawn and left them to themselves, the girl could restrain her curiosity no longer.

"Tell me, Mr. Jones," she said, turning to him as he sat beside her; "what have you found?"

He was deliberate as ever in answering.

"You must not call me 'Mr. Jones,' hereafter," said he.

"Why not? Then, what *shall* I call you?" she returned, greatly perplexed.

"I think it would be more appropriate for you to call me 'Uncle Anson.'"

"Uncle Anson! Why, Uncle Anson is — is — "

She paused, utterly bewildered, but with a sudden suspicion that made her head whirl.

"It strikes me, Myrtle," said Uncle John, cheerfully, "that you have never been properly introduced to Mr. Jones. If I remember aright you scraped acquaintance with him and had no regular introduction. So I will now perform that agreeable office. Miss Myrtle Dean, allow me to present your uncle, Mr. Collanson B. Jones."

"Collanson!" repeated all the girls, in an astonished chorus.

"That is my name," said Mr. Jones, the first smile they had seen radiating his grim countenance. "All the folks at home, among them my sister Kitty — your mother, my dear — called me 'Anson'; and that is why, I suppose, old Martha Dean knew me only as your 'Uncle Anson.' Had she told you my name was Collanson you might have suspected earlier that 'C.B. Jones' was your lost uncle. Lost only because he was unable to find you, Myrtle. While you were journeying West in search of him he was journeying East. But I'm glad, for many reasons, that you did not know me. It gave me an opportunity to learn the sweetness of your character. Now I sincerely thank God that He led you to me, to reclaim me and give me something to live for. If you will

permit me, my dear niece, I will hereafter devote my whole life to you, and earnestly try to promote your happiness."

During this long speech Myrtle had sat wide eyed and white, watching his face and marveling at the strangeness of her fate. But she was very, very glad, and young enough to quickly recover from the shock.

There was a round of applause from Patsy, Beth, the Major and Uncle John, which served admirably to cover their little friend's embarrassment and give her time to partially collect herself. Then she turned to Mr. Jones and with eyes swimming with tears tenderly kissed his furrowed cheek.

"Oh, Uncle Anson; I'm *so* happy!" she said.

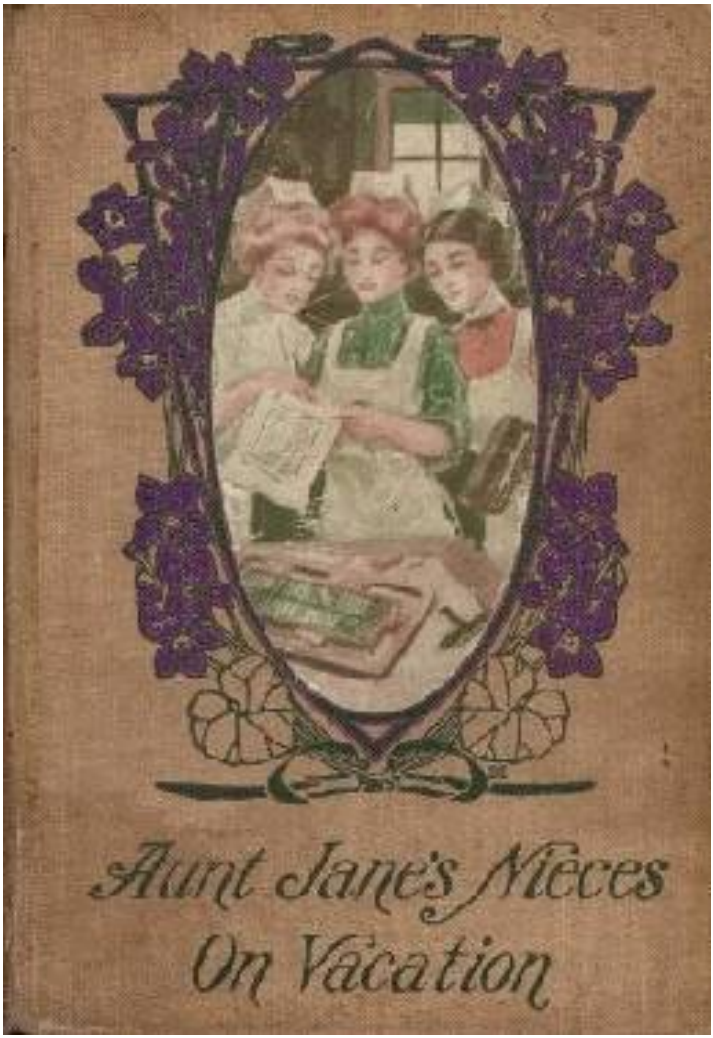
Of course Myrtle's story is told, now. But it may be well to add that Uncle Anson did for her all that Uncle John had intended doing, and even more. The consultation with a famous New York specialist, on their return a month later, assured the girl that no painful operation was necessary. The splendid outing she had enjoyed, with the fine air of the far West, had built up her health to such an extent that nature remedied the ill she had suffered. Myrtle took no crutches back to New York — a city now visited for the first time in her life — nor did she ever need them again. The slight limp she now has will disappear in time, the doctors say, and the child is so radiantly happy that neither she nor her friends notice the limp at all.

Patsy Doyle, as owner of the pretty flat building on Willing Square, has rented to Uncle Anson the apartment just opposite that of the Doyles, and Mr. Jones has furnished it cosily to make a home for his niece, to whom he is so devoted that Patsy declares her own doting and adoring father is fairly outclassed.

The Major asserts this is absurd; but he has acquired a genuine friendship for Anson Jones, who is no longer sad but has grown lovable under Myrtle's beneficent influence.

AUNT JANE'S NIECES ON VACATION

In *Aunt Jane's Nieces on Vacation*, published in 1912 by Reilly & Britton and illustrated by Emile A. Nelson, Baum sends the girls and their Uncle John back to their vacation home in Millville, New York. Bored after awhile, the girls decide to become involved in town affairs by establishing their own newspaper. In fact, Baum's original title for his seventh book in the series was *Aunt Jane's Nieces in Journalism*, but his publisher changed it without his knowledge. The plot deals with a corrupt local politician, greedy mill owners and other colorful local characters. The private detective, Quintus Fogerty, returns to the series and helps the girls resolve things tidily.



A first edition copy of 'Aunt Jane's Nieces on Vacation'

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CHAPTER I

THE HOBO AT CHAZY JUNCTION

Mr. Judkins, the station agent at Chazy Junction, came out of his little house at daybreak, shivered a bit in the chill morning air and gave an involuntary start as he saw a private car on the sidetrack. There were two private cars, to be exact — a sleeper and a baggage car — and Mr. Judkins knew the three o'clock train must have left them as it passed through.

"Ah," said he aloud; "the nabobs hev arrove."

"Who are the nabobs?" asked a quiet voice beside him.

Again Mr. Judkins started; he even stepped back a pace to get a better view of the stranger, who had approached so stealthily through the dim light that the agent was unaware of his existence until he spoke.

"Who be you?" he demanded, eyeing the man suspiciously.

"Never mind who I am," retorted the other in a grumpy tone; "the original question is 'who are the nabobs?'"

"See here, young feller; this ain't no place fer tramps," observed Mr. Judkins, frowning with evident displeasure; "Chazy Junction's got all it kin do to support its reg'lar inhabitants. You'll hev to move on."

The stranger sat down on a baggage truck and eyed the private car reflectively. He wore a rough gray suit, baggy and threadbare, a flannel shirt with an old black tie carelessly knotted at the collar, a brown felt hat with several holes in the crown, and coarse cowhide shoes that had arrived at the last stages of usefulness. You would judge him to be from twenty-five to thirty years of age; you would note that his face was browned from exposure, that it was rather set and expressionless but in no way repulsive. His eyes, dark and retrospective, were his most redeeming feature, yet betrayed little of their owner's character. Mr. Judkins could make nothing of the fellow, beyond the fact that he was doubtless a "tramp" and on that account most unwelcome in this retired neighborhood.

Even tramps were unusual at Chazy Junction. The foothills were sparsely settled and the inhabitants too humble to be attractive to gentlemen of the road, while the rocky highways, tortuous and uneven, offered no invitation to the professional pedestrian.

"You'll hev to move on!" repeated the agent, more sternly.

"I can't," replied the other with a smile. "The car I was — er — attached to has come to a halt. The engine has left us, and — here we are, I and the nabobs."

"Be'n ridin' the trucks, eh?"

"No; rear platform. Very comfortable it was, and no interruptions. The

crazy old train stopped so many times during the night that I scarcely woke up when they sidetracked us here, and the first thing I knew I was abandoned in this wilderness. As it grew light I began to examine my surroundings, and discovered you. Glad to meet you, sir."

"You needn't be."

"Don't begrudge me the pleasure, I implore you. I can't blame you for being gruff and unsociable; were you otherwise you wouldn't reside at — at — " he turned his head to read the half legible sign on the station house, "at Chazy Junction. I'm familiar with most parts of the United States, but Chazy Junction gets my flutters. Why, oh, why in the world did it happen?"

Mr. Judkins scowled but made no answer. He was wise enough to understand he was no match in conversation for this irresponsible outcast who knew the great world as perfectly as the agent knew his junction. He turned away and stared hard at the silent sleeper, the appearance of which was not wholly unexpected.

"You haven't informed me who the nabobs are, nor why they choose to be sidetracked in this forsaken stone-quarry," remarked the stranger, eyeing the bleak hills around him in the growing light of dawn.

The agent hesitated. His first gruff resentment had been in a manner disarmed and he dearly loved to talk, especially on so interesting a subject as "the nabobs." He knew he could astonish the tramp, and the temptation to do so was too strong to resist.

"It's the great John Merrick, who's got millions to burn but don't light many bonfires," he began, not very graciously at first. "Two years ago he bought the Cap'n Wegg farm, over by Millville, an' — "

"Where's Millville?" inquired the man.

"Seven mile back in the hills. The farm ain't nuthin' but cobblestone an' pine woods, but — "

"How big is Millville?"

"Quite a town. Eleven stores an' houses, 'sides the mill an' a big settlement buildin' up at Royal, where the new paper mill is jest started. Royal's four mile up the Little Bill Hill."

"But about the nabob — Mr. Merrick, I think you called him?"

"Yes; John Merrick. He bought the Cap'n Wegg place an' spent summer 'fore last on it — him an' his three gals as is his nieces."

"Oh; three girls."

"Yes. Clever gals, too. Stirred things up some at Millville, I kin tell you, stranger. Lib'ral an' good-natured, but able to hold their own with the natives. We missed 'em, last year; but t'other day I seen ol' Hucks, that keeps their house for 'em — he 'n' his wife — an' Hucks said they was

cumin' to spend this summer at the farm an' he was lookin' fer 'em any day. The way they togged up thet farmhouse is somethin' won'erful, I'm told. Hain't seen it, myself, but a whole carload o' furnitoor — an' then some more — was shipped here from New York, an' Peggy McNutt, over t' Millville, says it must 'a' cost a for-tun'."

The tramp nodded, somewhat listlessly.

"I feel quite respectable this morning, having passed the night as the guest of a millionaire," he observed. "Mr. Merrick didn't know it, of course, or he would have invited me inside."

"Like enough," answered the agent seriously. "The nabob's thet reckless an' unaccountable, he's likely to do worse ner that. That's what makes him an' his gals interestin'; nobody in quarries. How about breakfast, friend Judkins?"

"That's my business an' not yourn. My missus never feeds tramps."

"Rather ungracious to travelers, eh?"

"Ef you're a traveler, go to the hoe-tel yonder an' buy your breakfas' like a man."

"Thank you; I may follow your advice."

The agent walked up the track and put out the semaphore lights, for the sun was beginning to rise over the hills. By the time he came back a colored porter stood on the platform of the private car and nodded to him.

"Folks up yit?" asked Judkins.

"Dressing, seh."

"Goin' ter feed 'em in there?"

"Not dis mohnin'. Dey'll breakfas' at de hotel. Carriage here yit?"

"Not yit. I s'pose ol' Hucks'll drive over for 'em," said the agent.

"Dey's 'spectin' some one, seh. As fer me, I gotta live heah all day, an' it makes me sick teh think of it."

"Heh!" retorted the agent, scornfully; "you won't git sick. You're too well paid fer that."

The porter grinned, and just then a little old gentleman with a rosy, cheery face pushed him aside and trotted down the steps.

"Mornin', Judkins!" he cried, and shook the agent's hand. "What a glorious sunrise, and what crisp, delicious air! Ah, but it's good to be in old Chazy County again!"

The agent straightened up, his face wreathed with smiles, and cast an "I told you so!" glance toward the man on the truck. But the stranger had disappeared.

CHAPTER II

THE INVASION OF MILLVILLE

Over the brow of the little hill appeared a three-seated wagon, drawn by a pair of handsome sorrels, and in a moment the equipage halted beside the sleeper.

"Oh, Thomas Hucks — you dear, dear Thomas!" cried a clear, eager voice, and out from the car rushed Miss Patricia Doyle, to throw her arms about the neck of the old, stoop-shouldered and white-haired driver, whose face was illumined by a joyous smile.

"Glad to see ye, Miss Patsy; right glad 'ndeed, child," returned the old man. But others were waiting to greet him; pretty Beth De Graf and dainty Louise Merrick — not Louise "Merrick" any longer, though, but bearing a new name she had recently acquired — and demure Mary, Patsy's little maid and an old friend of Thomas Hucks', and Uncle John with his merry laugh and cordial handshake and, finally, a tall and rather dandified young man who remained an interested spectator in the background until Mr. Merrick seized and dragged him forward.

"Here's another for you to know, Thomas," said the little millionaire. "This is the other half of our Louise — Mr. Arthur Weldon — and by and by you can judge whether he's the better half or not."

The aged servant, hat in hand, made a respectful bow to Mr. Weldon. His frank eyes swept the young man from head to foot but his smile was the same as before.

"Miss Louise is wiser ner I be," said the old fellow simply; "I'm safe to trust to her jedgment, I guess."

There was a general laugh, at this, and they began to clamber aboard the wagon and to stow away beneath the seats the luggage the colored porter was bringing out.

"Stop at the Junction House, Thomas," said Mr. Merrick as they moved away.

"Nora has the breakfast all ready at home, sir," replied Thomas.

"Good for Nora! But we can't fast until we reach home — eight good miles of jolting — so we'll stop at the Junction House for a glass of Mrs. Todd's famous milk."

"Very good, sir."

"Is anyone coming for our trunks and freight? There's half a car of truck to be carted over."

"Ned's on the way, sir; and he'll get the liveryman to help if he can't carry it all."

The Junction House was hidden from the station by the tiny hill, as were the half dozen other buildings tributary to Chazy Junction. As the wagon drew up before the long piazza which extended along the front of the little frame inn they saw a man in shabby gray seated at a small table with some bread and a glass of milk before him. It was their unrecognized guest of the night — the uninvited lodger on the rear platform — but he did not raise his eyes or appear to notice the new arrivals.

"Mrs. Todd! Hey, Mrs. Todd!" called Uncle John. "Anybody milked the cow yet?"

A frowsy looking woman came out, all smiles, and nodded pleasantly at the expectant group in the wagon. Behind her loomed the tall, lean form of Lucky Todd, the "proprietor," who was serious as a goat, which animal he closely resembled in feature.

"Breakfas' all 'round, Mr. Merrick?" asked the woman.

"Not this time, Mrs. Todd. Nora has our breakfast waiting for us. But we want some of your delicious milk to last us to the farm."

"Las' night's milkin's half cream by this time," she rejoined, as she briskly reentered the house.

The man at the table held out his empty glass.

"Here; fill this up," he said to Lucky Todd.

The somber-faced proprietor turned his gaze from the Merrick group to the stranger, eyed him pensively a moment and then faced the wagon again. The man in gray got up, placed the empty glass in Todd's hand, whirled him around facing the door and said sternly:

"More milk!"

The landlord walked in like an automaton, and a suppressed giggle came from the girls in the wagon. Uncle John was likewise amused, and despite the unknown's frazzled apparel the little millionaire addressed him in the same tone he would have used toward an equal.

"Don't blame you, sir. Nobody ever tasted better milk than they have at the Junction House."

The man, who had resumed his seat, stood up, took off his hat and bowed. But he made no reply.

Out came Mrs. Todd, accompanied by another frowsy woman. Between them they bore a huge jug of milk, a number of thick glasses and a plate of crackers.

"The crackers come extry, Mr. Merrick," said the landlady, "but seein' as milk's cheap I thought you might like 'em."

The landlord now came out and placed the stranger's glass, about half filled with milk, on the table before him. The man looked at it, frowned, and

tossed off the milk in one gulp.

"More!" he said, holding out the glass.

Todd shook his head.

"Ain't no more," he declared.

His wife overheard him and pausing in her task of refilling the glasses for the rich man's party she looked over her shoulder and said:

"Give him what he wants, Lucky."

The landlord pondered.

"Not fer ten cents, Nancy," he protested. "The feller said he wanted ten cents wuth o' breakfas', an' by Joe he's had it."

"Milk's cheap," remarked Mrs. Todd. "It's crackers as is expensive these days. Fill up his glass, Lucky."

"Why is your husband called 'Lucky,' Mrs. Todd?" inquired Patsy, who was enjoying the cool, creamy milk.

"'Cause he got me to manage him, I guess," was the laughing reply. "Todd ain't much 'count 'nless I'm on the spot to order him 'round."

The landlord came out with the glass of milk but paused before he set it down.

"Let's see your money," he said suspiciously.

It seemed to the girls, who were curiously watching the scene, that the tramp flushed under his bronzed skin; but without reply he searched in a pocket and drew out four copper cents, which he laid upon the table. After further exploration he abstracted a nickel from another pocket and pushed the coins toward the landlord.

"'Nother cent," said Todd.

Continued search seemed for a time hopeless, but at last, in quite an unexpected way, the man produced the final cent and on receiving it Todd set down the milk.

"Anything more, yer honor?" he asked sarcastically.

"Yes; you might bring me the morning paper," was the reply.

Everyone except Todd laughed frankly at this retort. Uncle John put two silver dollars in Mrs. Todd's chubby hand and told Thomas to drive on.

"I dunno," remarked old Hucks, when they were out of earshot, "whether that feller's jest a common tramp or a workman goin' over to the paper mill at Royal. Jedgin' from the fact as he had money I guess he's a workman."

"Wrong, Thomas, quite wrong," said Beth, seated just behind him. "Did you notice his hands?"

"No, Miss Beth."

"They were not rough and the fingers were slender and delicate."

"That's the mark of a cracksman," said Arthur Weldon, with a laugh. "If

there are any safes out here that are worth cracking, I'd say look out for the gentleman."

"His face isn't bad at all," remarked Patsy, reflectively. "Isn't there any grade between a workman and a thief?"

"Of course," asserted Mr. Merrick, in his brisk way. "This fellow, shabby as he looked, might be anything — from a strolling artist to a gentleman down on his luck. But what's the news, Thomas? How are Ethel and Joe?"

"Mr. an' Mrs. Wegg is quite comf't'ble, sir, thank you," replied old Hucks, with a show of eagerness. "Miss Ethel's gran'ther, ol' Will Thompson, he's dead, you know, an' the young folks hev fixed up the Thompson house like a palace. Guess ye'd better speak to 'em about spendin' so much money, Mr. Merrick; I'm 'fraid they may need it some day."

"Don't worry. They've a fine income for life, Thomas, and there will be plenty to leave to their children — if they have any. But tell me about the mill at Royal. Where *is* Royal, anyhow?"

"Four mile up the Little Bill Creek, sir, where the Royal Waterfall is. A feller come an' looked the place over las' year an' said the pine forest would grind up inter paper an' the waterfall would do the grindin'. So he bought a mile o' forest an' built a mill, an' they do say things is hummin' up to the new settlement. There's more'n two hundred hands a-workin' there, a'ready."

"Goodness me!" cried Patsy; "this thing must have livened up sleepy old Millville considerably."

"Not yet," said Hucks, shaking his head. "The comp'ny what owns the mill
keeps a store there for the workmen, an' none of 'em come much to Millville. Our storekeepers is madder'n blazes about it; but fer my part I'm glad the two places is separated."

"Why?" asked Louise.

"They're a kinder tough lot, I guess. Turnin' pine trees inter paper mus' be a job thet takes more muscle than brains. I don't see how it's done, at all."

"It's simple enough," said Mr. Merrick. "First the wood is ground into pulp, and then the pulp is run through hot rollers, coming out paper. It's a mighty interesting process, so some day we will all go to Royal and see the paper made."

"But not just yet, Uncle," remarked Patsy. "Let's have time to settle down on the farm and enjoy it. Oh, how glad I am to be back in this restful, sleepy, jumping-off-place of the world again! Isn't it delightful, Arthur Weldon? Did you ever breathe such ozony, delicious mountain air? And do you get the

fragrance of the pine forests, and the — the — ”

“The bumps?” asked Arthur, as the wagon gave a jolt a bit more emphatic than usual; “yes, Patsy dear, I get them all; but I won’t pass judgment on Millville and Uncle John’s farm just yet. Are we ‘most there?”

“We’re to have four whole months of it,” sighed Beth. “That ought to enable us to renew our youth, after the strenuous winter.”

“Rubbish!” said Uncle John. “You haven’t known a strenuous moment, my dears, and you’re all too young to need renewals, anyhow. But if you can find happiness here, my girls, our old farm will become a paradise.”

These three nieces of Mr. Merrick were well worth looking at. Louise, the eldest, was now twenty — entirely too young to be a bride; but having decided to marry Arthur Weldon, the girl would brook no interference and, having a will of her own, overcame all opposition. Her tall, slender form was exceedingly graceful and willowy, her personality dainty and refined, her temperament under ordinary conditions essentially sweet and agreeable. In crises Louise developed considerable character, in strong contrast with her usual assumption of well-bred composure. That the girl was insincere in little things and cultivated a polished manner to conceal her real feelings, is undeniable; but in spite of this she might be relied upon to prove loyal and true in emergencies.

Patricia Doyle was more than two years the junior of her cousin Louise and very unlike her. Patsy’s old father, Major Gregory Doyle, said “she wore her heart on her sleeve,” and the girl was frank and outspoken to a fault. Patsy had no “figure” to speak of, being somewhat dumpy in build, nor were her piquant features at all beautiful. Her nose tipped at the end, her mouth was broad and full-lipped and her complexion badly freckled. But Patsy’s hair was of that indescribable shade that hovers between burnished gold and sunset carmine. “Fiery red” she was wont to describe it, and most people considered it, very justly, one of her two claims to distinction. Her other admirable feature was a pair of magnificent deep blue eyes — merry, mischievous and scintillating as diamonds. Few could resist those eyes, and certain it is that Patsy Doyle was a universal favorite and won friends without a particle of effort.

The younger of the three nieces, Elizabeth De Graf, was as beautiful a girl as you will often discover, one of those rarely perfect creations that excite our wonder and compel admiration — as a beautiful picture or a bit of statuary will. Dreamy and reserved in disposition, she lacked the graciousness of Louise and Patsy’s compelling good humor; yet you must not think her stupid or disagreeable. Her reserve was really diffidence; her dreamy, expressionless gaze the result of a serious nature and a thoughtful

temperament. Beth was quite practical and matter-of-fact, the reverse of Patsy's imaginative instincts or Louise's affected indifference. Those who knew Beth De Graf best loved her dearly, but strangers found her hard to approach and were often repulsed by her unresponsive manner. Underneath all, the girl was a real girl, with many splendid qualities, and Uncle John relied upon Beth's stability more than on that of his other two nieces. Her early life had been a stormy and unhappy one, so she was but now developing her real nature beneath the warmth of her uncle's protecting love.

Topping the brow of a little hill the wagon came to a smooth downward grade where the road met the quaint old bridge that spanned Little Bill Creek, beside which stood the antiquated flour and feed mill that had given Millville its name. The horses were able to maintain their brisk trot across the bridge and through the main street of the town, which was merely a cluster of unimposing frame buildings, that lined either side of the highway for the space of an ordinary city block. Then they were in the wilds again and rattling over another cobblestone trail.

"This 'ere country's nuth'n' but pine woods 'n' cobblestones," sighed old Hucks, as the horses subsided to a walk. "Lor' knows what would 'a' happened to us without the trees! They saves our grace, so's to speak."

"I think the scenery is beautiful," observed Patsy. "It's so different from other country places."

"Not much farming around here, I imagine," said Arthur Weldon.

"More than you'd think, sir," replied Thomas. "There's certain crops as thrives in stony land, an' a few miles north o' here, towards Huntingdon, the soil's mighty rich 'n' productive. Things ain't never as bad as they seem in this world, sir," he added, turning his persistently smiling face toward the young man.

Mr. Merrick sat beside the driver on the front seat. The middle seat was occupied by Patsy and Beth, between whom squeezed little Mary, the maid. Louise and Arthur had the back seat.

A quarter of a mile beyond the town they came to a sort of lane running at right angles with the turnpike, and down this lane old Hucks turned his team. It seemed like a forbidding prospect, for ahead of them loomed only a group of tall pines marking the edge of the forest, yet as they came nearer and made a little bend in the road the Wegg farm suddenly appeared in view. The house seemed so cozy and homelike, set upon its green lawn with the tall pines for a background, that the girls, who knew the place well, exclaimed with delight, and Arthur, who now saw it for the first time, nodded his head approvingly.

Uncle John was all excitement over the arrival at his country home. An

old fashioned stile was set in a rail fence which separated the grounds from the lane, and Hucks drew up the wagon so his passengers could all alight upon the step of the stile. Patsy was out at a bound. Louise followed more deliberately, assisted by her boy husband, and Beth came more sedately yet. But Uncle John rode around to the barn with Thomas, being eager to see the cows and pigs and poultry with which the establishment was liberally stocked.

The house was of two stories, the lower being built of cobblestones and the upper of pine slabs; but it had been artistically done and the effect was delightful. It was a big, rambling dwelling, and Mr. Merrick had furnished the old place in a lavish manner, so that his nieces would lack no modern comfort when they came there to spend a summer.

On the porch stood an old woman clothed in a neat gingham dress and wearing a white apron and cap. Her pleasant face was wreathed in smiles as she turned it toward the laughing, chattering group that came up the path. Patsy spied her and rushed up to give old Nora a hug and kiss, and the other two girls saluted the blind woman with equal cordiality, for long ago she had won the love and devotion of all three. Arthur, who had heard of Nora, pressed her hand and told her she must accept him as another of her children, and then she asked for Mr. Merrick and ran in to get the breakfast served. For, although blind, old Nora was far from being helpless, and the breakfast she had prepared in anticipation of their arrival was as deliciously cooked as if she had been able to use her eyes as others did.

CHAPTER III

THE DAWN OF A GREAT ENTERPRISE

The great enterprise was sprung on Mr. Merrick the very morning following his arrival at the farm. Breakfast was over and a group had formed upon the shady front lawn, where chairs, benches and hammocks were scattered in profusion.

"Well, Uncle, how do you like it?" asked Louise. "Are you perfectly comfortable and happy, now we've escaped so far from the city that its humming life is a mere memory?"

"Happy as a clam," responded Uncle John, leaning back in his chair with his feet on a foot rest. "If I only had the morning paper there would be nothing else to wish for."

"The paper? That's what that queer tramp at the Junction House asked for," remarked Beth. "The first thought of even a hobo was for a morning paper. I wonder why men are such slaves to those gossipy things."

"Phoo!" cried Patsy; "we're all slaves to them. Show me a person who doesn't read the daily journals and keep abreast of the times and I'll show you a dummy."

"Patsy's right," remarked Arthur Weldon. "The general intelligence and cosmopolitan knowledge of the people are best cultivated by the newspapers. The superiority of our newspapers has been a factor in making us the greatest nation on earth, for we are the best informed."

"My, what big words!" exclaimed Louise.

"It is quite true," said Uncle John soberly, "that I shall miss our daily paper during our four months' retirement in these fascinating wilds. It's the one luxury we can't enjoy in our country retreat."

"Why not?" asked Patsy, with startling abruptness, while a queer expression — as of an inspiration — stole over her bright face.

"Chump!" said Beth, drily; "you know very well why not, Patsy Doyle. Mooley cows and the fourth estate don't intermingle, so to speak."

"They can be made to, though," declared Patsy. "Why hasn't some one thought of it before? Uncle John — girls! — I propose we start a daily paper."

Louise laughed softly, Beth's lip curled and Arthur Weldon cast an amused glance at the girl; but Uncle John stared seriously into Patsy's questioning blue eyes.

"How?" he asked in a puzzled tone. If anything could interest this eccentric little millionaire more than the usual trend of events it was an original proposition of this sort. He loved to do things that other people had

not attempted, nor even thought of. He hated conversational platitudes and established conventions, and his nieces had endeared themselves to him more by their native originality and frank disregard of ordinary feminine limitations than in any other way. It was generally conceded that Patsy was his favorite because she could advance more odd suggestions than the other girls, and this niece had a practical aptitude for carrying out her whimsical ideas that had long since won her uncle's respect. Not that she could outdo Mr. Merrick in eccentricity: that was admitted to be his special province, in which he had no rival; but the girl was so clever a confederate that she gave her erratic uncle much happiness of the sort he most appreciated.

Therefore, this seemingly preposterous proposition to establish a daily paper on a retired country farm did not strike the old gentleman as utterly impossible, and anything within the bounds of possibility was sure to meet his earnest consideration, especially when it was proposed by one of his favorite nieces.

"How?" responded Patsy; "why, it's easy enough, Uncle. We'll buy a press, hire a printer, and Beth and Louise will help me edit the paper. I'm sure I can exhibit literary talents of a high order, once they are encouraged to sprout. Louise writes lovely poetry and 'stories of human interest,' and Beth — "

"I can't write even a good letter," asserted that young lady; "but I'd dearly love to edit a newspaper."

"Of course," agreed Louise; "we all would. And I think we could turn out a very creditable paper — for Millville. But wouldn't it cost a lot of money?"

"That isn't the present question," replied Uncle John. "The main thing is, do you girls want to be tied down to such a task? Every day in the week, all during our summer holiday — "

"Why, you've made our whole lives a holiday, Uncle John," interrupted Patsy, "and we've been so coddled and swamped with luxuries that we are just now in serious danger of being spoiled! You don't want three spoiled nieces on your hands, do you? And please make allowance for our natural impetuosity and eagerness to be up and doing. We love the farm, but our happiness here would be doubled if we had some occupation to keep us busy, and this philanthropic undertaking would furnish us with no end of fun, even while we were benefiting our fellow man."

"All jabber, dear," exclaimed Beth. "I admit the fun, but where does the philanthropy come in?"

"Don't you see?" asked Patsy. "Both Uncle John and that tramp we encountered have met on common ground to bewail the lack of a daily newspaper 'in our midst' — to speak in journalistic parlance. At the paper

mill at Royal are over two hundred workmen moaning in despair while they lose all track of the world's progress. At Huntingdon, not five miles distant, are four or five hundred people lacking all the educational advantages of an up-to-date — or is 'down-to-date' proper? — press. And Millville — good gracious! What would sleepy Millville folks think of having a bright, newsy, metropolitan newspaper left on their doorsteps every morning, or evening, as the case may be?"

"H-m," said Uncle John; "I scent a social revolution in the wilds of Chazy County."

"Let's start it right away!" cried Patsy. "The 'Millville Tribune.' What do you say, girls?"

"Why 'Tribune?'" asked Louise.

"Because we three will run it, and we're a triumvirate — the future tribunal of the people in this district."

"Very good!" said Uncle John, nodding approval. "A clever idea, Patsy."

"But it's all nonsense, sir," observed Arthur Weldon, in astonishment. "Have you any idea of the details of this thing you are proposing?"

"None whatever," said the little millionaire. "That's the beauty of the scheme, Arthur; it may lead us into a reg'lar complicated mix-up, and the joy of getting untangled ought to repay us for all our bother."

"Perhaps so — if you ever untangle," said the young man, smiling at the whimsical speech. Then he turned to his young bride. "Do you want to go into this thing, Louise?" he asked.

"Of course I do," she promptly replied. "It's the biggest thing in the way of a sensation that Patsy's crazy brain has ever evolved, and I'll stand by the *Millville Tribune* to the last. You mustn't forget, Arthur, that I shall be able to publish all my verses and stories, which the Century and Harpers' so heartlessly turned down."

"And Beth?"

"Oh, I'm in it too," declared Beth. "There's something so delightfully mysterious and bewildering in the idea of our editing and printing a daily paper here in Millville that I can hardly wait to begin the experiment."

"It's no experiment whatever," asserted Patsy boldly. "The daily newspaper is an established factor in civilization, and 'whatever man has done, man can do' — an adage that applies equally to girls."

"Have you any notion of the cost of an outfit such as is required to print a modern daily?" asked Arthur.

"Oh, two or three hundred, perhaps, but — "

"You're crazy, child! That wouldn't buy the type."

"Nevertheless," began Patsy, argumentatively, but her uncle stopped her.

“You needn’t figure on that,” he said hastily. “The outfit shall be my contribution to the enterprise. If you girls say you’re anxious and willing to run a newspaper, I’ll agree to give you a proper start.”

“Oh, thank you, Uncle!”

“Of course we’re willing!”

“It is all absolutely settled, so far as we are concerned,” said Patsy, firmly. “How long will it take to get the things here, Uncle?”

Mr. Merrick considered a moment.

“There’s a long-distance telephone over at Cotting’s General Store, in town,” he said. “I’ll drive over and get Major Doyle on the wire and have him order the stuff sent out at once.”

“Oh, no!” protested Patsy; “don’t tell daddy of this plan, please. He’d think we were all fit subjects for the lunatic asylum.”

“Major Doyle wouldn’t be far wrong in that conclusion,” suggested Arthur.

“I’d like to surprise him by sending him the first copy of the *Millville Tribune*,” added the major’s daughter.

“Then,” said Mr. Merrick, “I’ll call up Marvin, my banker. He’ll perhaps attend to the matter more understandingly and more promptly than the major would. Tell Hucks to harness Joe to the buggy, Patsy, and I’ll go at once.”

“We’ll all go!” exclaimed Beth.

“Of course,” added Louise; “we are all equally interested in this venture.”

So Patsy had old Hucks hitch Joe to the surrey, and the three girls accompanied their uncle in his drive to town, leaving Arthur Weldon shaking his head in a deprecating way but fully realizing that no protest of his would avail to prevent this amazing undertaking.

“That old man is as much a child as Beth or Patsy,” he reflected. “It puzzles me to explain how he made all those millions with so little worldly wisdom.”

CHAPTER IV

THE WAY INTO PRINT

Sam Cotting's General Store at Millville divided importance with Bob West's hardware store but was a more popular loafing place for the sparse population of the tiny town. The post office was located in one corner and the telephone booth in another, and this latter institution was regarded with much awe by the simple natives. Once in awhile some one would telephone over to the Junction on some trivial business, but the long-distance call was never employed except by the "nabobs" — the local name for John Merrick and his nieces — or by the manager of the new mill at Royal, who had extended the line to his own office in the heart of the pine forest.

So, when Uncle John and the girls entered Cotting's store and the little gentleman shut himself up in the telephone booth, a ripple of excitement spread throughout the neighborhood. Skim Clark, the youthful hope of the Widow Clark, who "run the Emporium," happened to be in the store and he rushed out to spread the news that "the nabob's talkin' to New Yoruk!"

This information demanded immediate attention. Marshall McMahon McNutt, familiarly known as "Peggy" McNutt — because he had once lost a foot in a mowing machine — and who was alleged to be a real estate agent, horse doctor, fancy poultry breeder and palmist, and who also dabbled in the sale of subscription books, life insurance, liniment and watermelons, quickly slid off his front porch across the way and sauntered into Cotting's to participate in the excitement. Seth Davis, the blacksmith, dropped his tools and hurried to the store, and the druggist three doors away — a dapper gentleman known as Nib Corkins — hurriedly locked his door and attended the meeting. Presently the curious group was enlarged by the addition of Nick Thome the liveryman, Lon Taft, a carpenter and general man-of-all-work, and Silas Caldwell the miller, the latter a serious individual who had "jest happened to come acrost from the mill in the nick o' time."

Sam Cotting, being himself of great local importance, had never regarded with favor the rivalry of the nabob, but he placed stools near the telephone booth for the three girls, who accepted the courtesy with a graciousness that ought to have disarmed the surly storekeeper. They could not fail to be amused at the interest they excited, and as they personally knew every one of the town people they pleasantly nodded to each arrival and inquired after their health and the welfare of their families. The replies were monosyllables. Millville folks were diffident in the presence of these city visitors and while they favored the girls with rather embarrassing stares, their chief interest was centered on the little man in the telephone booth, who could plainly be seen

through the glass door but might not be heard, however loudly he shouted.

"Talkin' to New Yoruk" was yet a marvelous thing to them, and much speculation was exchanged in low tones as to the probable cost of such a conversation as Mr. Merrick was now indulging in.

"Costs a dollar to connect, ye know," remarked Peggy McNutt to Ned Long. "Bet a cookie he's runnin' the blame bill up to two dollars, with all this chinnin'. Why can't th' ol' nabob write a letter, like common folks, an' give his extry cash to the poor?"

"Meanin' you, Peggy?" asked Nib Corkins, with a chuckle.

"He might do wuss ner that," retorted Peggy. "Lor' knows I'm poor enough. You don't ketch *me* a-talkin' to New York at a dollar a throw, Nib, do ye?"

Meantime Mr. Merrick had succeeded in getting Mr. Marvin, of the banking house of Isham, Marvin & Co., on the wire.

"Do me a favor, Marvin," he said. "Hunt up the best supply house and have them send me a complete outfit to print a daily newspaper. Everything must be modern, you know, and don't let them leave out anything that might come handy. Then go to Corrigan, the superintendent of the railroad, and have him send the freight up here to Chazy Junction by a special engine, for I don't want a moment's delay and the regular freight takes a week or so. Charge everything to my account and impress upon the dealer the need of haste. Understand all that, Marvin?"

"I think I do, sir," was the reply; "but that's a pretty big order, Mr. Merrick. The outfit for a modern daily will cost a small fortune."

"Never mind; send it along."

"Very well. But you'd better give me some details. How big a newspaper do you want to print?"

"Hold the wire and I'll find out," said Uncle John. Then he opened the door of the booth and said: "Patsy, how big a thing do you want to print?"

"How big? Oh, let me see. Four pages will do, won't it, Louise?"

"Plenty, I should say, for this place," answered Louise.

"And how many columns to a page?" asked Uncle John.

"Oh, six or seven. That's regular, I guess."

"Make it six," proposed Beth. "That will keep us busy enough."

"All right," said Uncle John, and closed the door again.

This conversation was of the most startling nature to the assembled villagers, who were all trying to look unconcerned and as if "they'd jest dropped in," but were unable to dissemble their curiosity successfully. Of course much of this interchange of words between the man in the booth and the girls outside was Greek to them all, but "to print" and "columns" and

“pages” could apply only to one idea, which, while not fully grasped, was tremendously startling in its suggestion. The Merrick party was noted for doing astonishing things in the past and evidently, in the words of Peggy McNutt, they were “up to some blame foolishness that’ll either kill this neighborhood or make it talked about.”

“It’s too dead a’ready to kill,” responded Nick Thorne gloomily. “Even the paper mill, four mile away, ain’t managed to make Millville wiggle its big toe. Don’t you worry over what the nabob’ll do, Peggy; he couldn’t hurt nuthin’ if he tried.”

The door opened again and Mr. Merrick protruded a puzzled countenance.

“He wants to know about a stereotype plant, Patsy. What’ll I tell him?”

Patsy stared. Louise and Beth shook their heads.

“If it belongs to the — the thing we want, Uncle, have ‘em send it along,” said Patsy in desperation.

“All right.”

A few minutes later the little man again appealed to them.

“How’ll we run the thing, girls; steam or electricity?”

Patsy’s face was a blank. Beth giggled and Louise frowned.

“Of course it’ll have to be run,” suggested Mr. Merrick; “but how? That’s the question.”

“I — I hadn’t given that matter thought,” admitted Patsy. “What do you think, Uncle?”

He considered, holding open the door while he thoughtfully regarded the silent but interested group of villagers that eagerly hung upon every word that passed.

“Cotting,” called Mr. Merrick, “how do they run the paper mill at Royal?”

“‘Lectricity! ‘Lectricity, sir!” answered half a dozen at once.

“They develops the power from the Royal Waterfall of the Little Bill,” explained Cotting, with slow and pompous deliberation. “Mr. Skeelty he tol’ me they had enough ‘lectric’ty to light up the whole dum country fer ten mile in all directions, ‘sides a-runnin’ of the mill.”

“Who’s Skeelty?”

“Manager o’ the mill, sir, an’ part owner, he says.”

“Has he a telephone?”

“Yes, Mr. Merrick.”

“Thank you.”

Mr. Merrick shut the door and called up Skeelty. Five minutes of bargaining settled the question and he then connected with Mr. Marvin again and directed him to have the presses and machinery equipped to run by

electricity. Thinking he had now given the banker all the commissions he could attend to with celerity, Uncle John next called up Major Doyle and instructed his brother-in-law to send four miles of electric cable, with fittings and transformers, and a crew of men to do the work, and not to waste a moment's time in getting them to Millville.

"What in blazes are ye up to now, John?" inquired the major, on receiving this order.

"None of your business, Gregory. Obey orders."

"Going to light the farm and turn night into day?" persisted the major.

"This is Patsy's secret, and I'm not going to give it away," said Mr. Merrick. "Attend to this matter promptly, Major, and you'll see the result when you come to us in July for your vacation."

Having attended to all the requirements of the projected *Millville Tribune*, as he thought, Mr. Merrick called the operator for the amount of his bill and paid it to Sam Cotting — three dollars and eighty cents. The sum fairly made the onlookers gasp, and as the Merrick party passed out, Silas, the miller, said solemnly:

"Don't anybody tell me talk is cheap, arter this. John Merrick may be a millionaire, but ef he keeps this thing up long he'll be a pauper. Thet's *my* prophe-sigh."

"Yer off yer base, Si," said McNutt "Joe Wegg tol' me once thet the nabob's earnin's on his money were more'n he could spend ef he lays awake nights a-doin' it. Joe says it keeps pilin' up on him, till sometimes it drives him nigh desp'rit. I hed an idee I'd ask him to shuck off some of it onter me. *I* could stan' the strain all right, an' get plenty o' sleep too."

"Ye won't hev no call to stan' it, Peggy," pre-dcted Lon Tait. "Milyunhairs may spend money foolish, but they don't never give none away. I've done sev'ral odd jobs fer Mr. Merrick, but he's never give me more'n jest wages."

"Well," said McNutt with a sigh, "while he's in easy reach there orter be *some* sort o' pickings fer us, an' it's our duty to git all we can out'n him — short o' actoo-al robbery. What do ye s'pose this new deal means, boys? Sounds like printin' somethin', don't it?"

"P'raps it's some letterheads fer the Wegg Farm," suggested Nib Corkins. "These Merricks do everything on a big scale."

"Four pages, an' six columns to a page?" asked Cotting scornfully. "Sounds to me more like a newspaper, folks!"

There was a moment's silence, during which they all stared at the speaker fearfully. Then said Skim Clark, in his drawling, halting way:

"Ef thet's the case, an' there's goin' ter be a newspaper here in Millville,

we may as well give up the struggle, fer the town'll be ruined!"

CHAPTER V

DIVIDING THE RESPONSIBILITY

The rest of that day and a good share of the night was devoted to an earnest consultation concerning the proper methods of launching the *Millville Daily Tribune*.

"We must divide the work," said Patsy, "so that all will have an equal share of responsibility. Louise is to be the literary editor and the society editor. That sounds like a good combination."

"There is no society here," objected Louise.

"Not as we understand the term, perhaps," replied Miss Doyle; "but every community, however small, believes it is a social center; and so it is — to itself. If there is a dance or a prayer meeting or a christening or illness, it must be recorded in our local columns. If Bob West sells a plow we've got to mention the name of the farmer who bought it; if there's a wedding, we'll make a double-header of it; if a baby is born, we will — will — "

"Print its picture in the paper. Eh, Uncle John?" This from Beth.

"Of course," said Mr. Merrick. "You must print all the home news, as well as the news of the world."

"How are you going to get the news of the world?" asked Arthur.

"How? How?"

"That was my question."

"Private wire from New York," said Mr. Merrick, as the girls hesitated how to meet this problem. "I'll arrange with the telegraph company to-morrow to have an extension of the wire run over from Chazy Junction. Then we'll hire an operator — a girl, of course — to receive the news in the office of the paper."

"But who will send us the news?" asked Beth.

"The Associated Press, I suppose, or some news agency in New York. I'll telegraph to-morrow to Marvin to arrange it."

Arthur whistled softly.

"This newspaper is going to cost something," he murmured. Uncle John looked at him with a half quizzical, half amused expression.

"That's what Marvin warned me yesterday, when I ordered the equipment," said he. "He told me that before I got through with this deal it would run up into the thousands. And he added that Millville wasn't worth it."

"And what did you say to that, Uncle John?" asked Beth.

"In that case, I said, I would be sure to get some pleasure and satisfaction out of your journalistic enterprise. My last financial statement showed a

frightful condition of affairs. In spite of Major Doyle's reckless investments of my money, and — and the little we manage to give to deserving charities, I'm getting richer every day. When a small leak like this newspaper project occurs, it seems that Fortune is patting me on the back. I've no idea what a respectable newspaper will cost, but I hope it will cost a lot, for every dollar it devours makes my mind just that much easier."

Arthur Weldon laughed.

"In that case, sir," said he, "I can make no further protest. But I predict you will find the bills — eh — eh — entirely satisfactory."

"You mentioned an office, just now, Uncle," observed Louise. "Must we have a business office?"

"To be sure," Mr. Merrick replied. "We must find a proper location, where we can install the presses and all the type and machinery that go to making up a newspaper. I hadn't thought of this before, but it is a serious matter, my dears. We may have to build a place."

"Oh, that would take too long, entirely," said Patsy. "Can't we put it in the barn, Uncle?"

"What would happen to the horses and cows? No; we'll take a look over Millville and see what we can find there."

"You won't find much," predicted Beth. "I can't think of a single unoccupied building in the town."

"Then we'll put it in a tent," declared Patsy.

"Don't borrow trouble," advised Uncle John. "Wait till we've gone over the ground together. Our truck will require a pretty big place, for Marvin said one freight car wouldn't hold all the outfit. He's going to send two cars, anyhow."

"Have him fill up the second with print paper," proposed Arthur.

"Ah; that's another thing I hadn't thought of," said Mr. Merrick. "How big a daily edition will you print, Patsy?"

"Let's see," pondered the girl. "There are about two hundred at Royal, say four hundred at Huntingdon, at Millville about — about — "

"Say fifteen," said Uncle John; "that's six hundred and fifteen, and — "

"And the farmers, of course. There must be at least a hundred and fifty of 'em in the county, so that makes seven hundred and seventy-five copies a day."

"Wait a moment!" cried Arthur, somewhat bewildered by this figuring. "Do you suppose every inhabitant — man, woman and child — will subscribe for your paper?"

Patsy blushed.

"Why, no, of course not," she acknowledged frankly. "How many do you

think *will* subscribe, Arthur? Remember, it's to be a great newspaper."

"Four pages of six columns each. Plenty big enough for Millville," he said, thoughtfully. "My advice, girls, is to print a first edition of about four hundred copies and distribute the papers free in every house within a radius of five or six miles from Millville. These will be samples, and after the people have had a chance to read them you can ask them to subscribe. By the way, what will you charge for subscription?"

"How much, Uncle?" asked Patsy, appealingly.

"A penny paper is the most popular," he said, regarding her with merry, twinkling eyes. "Say thirty cents a month, or three-fifty a year. That's as much as these poor people can stand."

"I think so too," replied the girl, seriously.

"But it seems to me a penny paper isn't dignified," pouted Louise. "I had intended to print all my poems in it, and I'm sure that ought to make it worth at least five cents a copy."

"That will make it worth more, my dear," commented Uncle John; "but frequently one must sell property for less than it's actually worth. You must remember these people have not been used to spending much money on literature, and I imagine you'll have to coax them to spend thirty cents a month. Many of the big New York papers are sold for a penny, and without any loss of dignity, either."

"Do you think we can make it pay on that basis, Uncle?" asked Beth.

Uncle John coughed to gain time while he thought of a suitable reply. "That, my dear," he informed his niece, "will depend upon how many subscribers you can get. Subscribers and advertisers are necessary to make any paper pay."

"Advertisers!"

"Of course," said practical Beth. "Every merchant in Millville and Huntingdon will naturally advertise in our paper, and we'll make the major get us a lot from New York."

"Oh," said Patsy; "I see. So *that* difficulty is settled."

Arthur smiled, but held his peace. Uncle John's round face was growing merrier every minute.

"Patsy, do you think we shall make any money from this venture?" asked Louise.

"We ought to, if we put our hearts and souls into the thing," was the reply. "But before we divide any profits we must pay back to Uncle John the original investment."

"We don't especially care to make any profit, do we?" inquired Beth. "It's fun for us, you know, and a — a — great educational experience, and — and

— a fine philanthropy — and all that. We don't need the money, so if the paper pays a profit at a cent a copy we'd better cut down the price."

"Don't do that yet," advised Uncle John, soberly. "There will be expenses that as yet you don't suspect, and a penny for a paper is about as low as you can go."

"What's to be my position on the staff, Patsy?" asked Beth, turning to her cousin.

"You're a good mathematician, Beth, so I propose you act as secretary and treasurer, and keep the books."

"No; that's too mechanical; no bookkeeping for me. I want something literary."

"Then you can be sporting editor."

"Goodness, Patsy! There will be no sporting news in Millville."

"There will be a ball game occasionally, and I saw some of the men pitching quoits yesterday. But this is to be a newspaper reflecting the excitement of the entire world, Beth, and all the telegraphic news of a sporting character you must edit and arrange for our reading columns. Oh, yes; and you'll take care of the religious items too. We must have a Sunday Sermon, by some famous preacher, Uncle. We'll print that every Saturday, so those who can't go to church may get as good a talk as if they did — and perhaps a better one."

"That will be fine," he agreed. "How about murders, crimes and divorces?"

"All barred. Nothing that sends a cold chill down your back will be allowed in our paper. These people are delightfully simple; we don't want to spoil them."

"Cut out the cold chills and you'll spoil your newspaper," suggested Arthur. "People like to read of other folks' horrors, for it makes them more contented with their own lot in life."

"False philosophy, sir!" cried Fatsy firmly. "You can't educate people by retailing crimes and scandals, and the *Millville Tribune* is going to be as clean as a prayer book, if I'm to be managing editor."

"Is that to be your office, dear?" asked Louise.

"I think so. I've a heap of executive ability, and I'm running over with literary — eh — eh — literary discrimination. In addition to running the thing, I'll be the general news editor, because I'm better posted on newspaper business than the other girls."

"How does that happen?" inquired Louise, wonderingly.

"Why, I — I *read* the papers more than you or Beth. And I've set myself to master every detail of the business. No more crocheting or fancy work —

no novel reading — no gossipy letter writing. From this day on we must attend strictly to business. If we're to become journalist, girls, we must be good ones — better than the ordinary — so that Uncle John may point to us with pride, and the columns of the *Millville Daily Tribune* will be quoted by the New York and Chicago press. Only in that way can we become famous throughout the world!"

"Pass me the bonbons, dear," sighed Louise. "It's a high ambition, isn't it?"

"A very laudable ambition," added Uncle John approvingly. "I hope my clever nieces will be able to accomplish it."

"How about pictures?" asked Beth. "Modern newspapers are illustrated, and have cartoons of the leading events of the day."

"Can't we buy those things somewhere?" asked Patsy, appealing to Uncle John again. "There isn't an artist among us, of any account; and we shall be too busy to draw pictures."

"We must hire an artist," said Mr. Merrick, adding the item to his memoranda. "I'll speak to Marvin about it."

All these details were beginning to bewilder the embryo journalists. It is quite possible that had not Uncle John placed his order for presses and type so promptly the girls might have withdrawn from the proposition, but the die was now cast and they were too brave — perhaps too stubborn — to "back down" at this juncture.

"I realize," said Patsy, slowly and with a shake of her flaming head, "that we have undertaken an important venture. Our new enterprise is a most serious one, girls, for there is nothing greater or grander in our advanced age than the daily newspaper; no power so tremendous as the Power of the Press."

"Yes, the press must be powerful or it wouldn't print clearly," remarked Beth.

"We are to become public mentors to the simple natives of Chazy County," continued Patsy, warming up to her subject and speaking oratorically. "We shall be the guiding star of the — er — er — the benighted citizens of Millville and Huntingdon. We must lead them in politics, counsel them in the management of their farms and educate them to the great World Movements that are constantly occurring."

"Let's put all that rot in our prospectus," said Louise, looking at her cousin admiringly. "Can you remember it, Patsy, or had I better write it down now? I like that about teaching the farmers how to run their farms; it's so practical."

"You wait," said Patsy unflinchingly. "I'll write 'em an editorial that will

make their eyes roll. But it won't do a bit of harm for you and Beth to jot down all the brilliant thoughts you run across, for the benefit of our subscribers."

"We haven't any subscribers yet," remarked Beth, placidly.

"I'll overcome that defect," said Uncle John. "I want to subscribe right now for ten copies, to be mailed to friends of mine in the city who — who need educating. I'll pay in advance and collect of my friends when I see 'em."

This was certainly encouraging and Patsy smiled benignantly.

"I'll take five more yearly subscriptions," said Arthur.

"Oh, but you're going to be on the staff!" cried Patsy.

"Am I?"

"Certainly. I've been thinking over our organization and while it is quite proper for three girls to run paper, there ought to be a man to pose as the editor in chief. That'll be you, Arthur."

"But you won't print my name?"

"Oh, yes we shall. Don't groan, sir; it's no disgrace. Wait till you see the *Millville Tribune*. Also we shall print our own names, in that case giving credit to whom credit is due. The announcement will run something like this: 'Arthur Weldon, General Manager and Editor in Chief; P. Doyle, General News Editor; L. Merrick Weldon, Society and Literary Editor; E. DeGraf, Sporting Editor, Secretary and Treasurer.' You see, by using our initials only, no one will ever suspect we are girls."

"The Millville people may," said Arthur, slyly, "and perhaps the disguise will be penetrated by outsiders. That will depend on the paper."

"I don't like that combination of sporting editor and secretary and treasurer," objected Beth. "It isn't the usual thing in journalism, I'm sure. Suppose you call me Editor of Special Features, and let it go at that?"

"Have we any special features?" asked Louise.

"Oh, yes," said Arthur; "there's Beth's eyebrows, Patsy's nose, and — "

"Do be sensible!" cried Patsy. "This isn't a joking matter, sir. Our newspaper will have plenty of special features, and Beth's suggestion is a good one. It sounds impressive. You see, Arthur, we've got to use you as a figurehead, but so you won't loaf on your job I've decided to appoint you Solicitor of Advertising and Subscriptions."

"Thank you, my dear," he said, grinning in an amused way.

"You and Louise, who still like to be together, can drive all over the county getting subscriptions, and you can write letters on our new stationery to all the big manufacturers of soaps and breakfast foods and beauty powders and to all the correspondence schools and get their advertisements for the

Tribune. If you get a good many, we may have to enlarge the paper."

"Don't worry, Miss Doyle; I'll try to keep within bounds."

And so they went on, laying plans and discussing details in such an earnest way that Uncle John became as enthusiastic as any of them and declared in no uncertain tone that the *Millville Daily Tribune* was bound to be a "howling success."

After the girls had retired for the night and the men sat smoking together in Uncle John's own room, Arthur said:

"Tell me, sir, why you have encouraged this mad project."

The little millionaire puffed his pipe in silence a moment. Then he replied:

"I'm educating my girls to be energetic and self-reliant. I want to bring out and develop every spark of latent ability there is in them. Whether the *Millville Tribune* succeeds or fails is not important; it will at least keep them busy for a time, along new lines, and tax their best resources of intellect and business ability. In other words, this experience is bound to do 'em good, and in that way I figure it will be worth all it costs — and more. I like the originality of the idea; I'm pleased with the difficulties I see looming ahead; I'm quite sure my girls will rise to every occasion and prove their grit." He paused to knock the ashes from his pipe. "I'm worth a lot of money, Arthur," he continued, meekly, "and some day these three girls will inherit immense fortunes. It is my duty to train them in all practical business ways to take care of their property."

"I follow your line of reasoning, sir," observed Arthur Weldon; "but this absurd journalistic venture is bound to result in heavy financial loss."

"I know it, my boy. I'm sure of it. But can't you see that the lesson they will learn will render them more cautious in making future investments? I'm going to supply a complete newspaper outfit — to the last detail — and give 'em a good running start. Then I shall sit back and watch results. If they lose money on running expenses, as they surely will, they'll first take it out of their allowances, then sell their jewelry, and finally come to me for help. See? The lesson will be worth while, Arthur, and aside from that — think of the fun they'll have!"

CHAPTER VI

MR. SKEELTY OF THE MILL

The next morning they drove to town again, passing slowly up the street of the little village to examine each building that might be a possible location for a newspaper office. Here is a map that Patsy drew of Millville, which gives a fair idea of its arrangement:

[Illustration: Village Street]

Counting the dwellings there were exactly twelve buildings, and they all seemed occupied.

When they reached the hardware store, opposite Cotting's, Mr. West, the proprietor, was standing on the broad platform in front of it. In many respects Bob West was the most important citizen of Millville. Tall and gaunt, with great horn spectacles covering a pair of cold gray eyes, he was usually as reserved and silent as his neighbors were confiding and talkative. A widower of long standing, without children or near relatives, he occupied a suite of well-appointed rooms over the hardware store and took his meals at the hotel. Before Mr. Merrick appeared on the scene West had been considered a very wealthy man, as it was known he had many interests outside of his store; but compared with the multi-millionaire old Bob had come to be regarded more modestly, although still admitted to be the village's "warmest" citizen. He was an authority in the town, too, and a man of real importance.

Mr. Merrick stopped his horse to speak with the hardware man, an old acquaintance.

"West," said he, "my girls are going to start a newspaper in Millville."

The merchant bowed gravely, perhaps to cover the trace of a smile he was unable to repress.

"It's to be a daily paper, you know," continued Mr. Merrick, "and it seems there's a lot of machinery in the outfit. It'll need quite a bit of room, in other words, and we're looking for a place to install it."

West glanced along the street — up one side and down the other — and then shook his head negatively.

"Plenty of land, but no buildings," said he. "You might buy the old mill and turn it into a newspaper office. Caldwell isn't making much of a living and would be glad to sell out."

"It's too dusty and floury," said Patsy. "We'd never get it clean, I'm sure."

"What's in that shed of yours?" asked Uncle John, pointing to a long, low building' that adjoined the hardware store.

West turned and looked at the shed reflectively.

“That is where I store my stock of farm machinery,” he said. “There’s very little in there now, for it’s a poor season and I didn’t lay in much of a supply. In fact, I’m pretty well cleaned out of all surplus stock. But next spring I shall need the place again.”

“Good!” cried Mr. Merrick. “That solves our problem. Has it a floor?”

“Yes; an excellent one; but only one small window.”

“We can remedy that,” declared Uncle John. “Here’s the proposition, West: Let us have the shed for six months, at the end of which time we will know whether the *Millville Tribune* is a success or not. If it is, we’ll build a fine new building for it; if it don’t seem to prosper, we’ll give you back the shed. What do you say?”

West thought it over.

“There is room on the rear platform, for all the farm machinery I now have on hand. All right, Mr. Merrick; I’ll move the truck out and give you possession. It won’t make a bad newspaper office. But of course you are to fit up the place at your own expense.”

“Thank you very much, sir!” exclaimed Uncle John. “I’ll set Lon Taft at work at once. Where can he be found?”

“Playing billiards at the hotel, usually. I suppose he is there now.”

“Very good; I’ll hunt him up. What do you think of our newspaper scheme,
West?”

The old merchant hesitated. Then he said slowly:

“Whatever your charming and energetic nieces undertake, sir, will doubtless be well accomplished. The typical country newspaper groans under a load of debt and seldom gets a fair show to succeed; but in this case there will be no lack of money, and — why, that settles the question, I think. Money is the keystone to success.”

“Mr. West,” said Louise, with dignity, “we are depending chiefly on the literary merit of our newspaper to win recognition.”

“Of course; of course!” said he hastily. “Put me down as a subscriber, please, and rely upon my support at all times. It is possible, young ladies — nay, quite probable, I should say — that your originality and genius will yet make Millville famous.”

That speech pleased Uncle John, and as the hardware merchant bowed and turned away, Mr. Merrick said in his cheeriest tones: “He’s quite right, my dears, and we’re lucky to have found such a fine, roomy place for our establishment. Before we go after the carpenter to fix it up I must telephone to Marvin about the things we still need.”

Over the long-distance telephone Mr. Marvin reported that he had bought

the required outfit and it was even then being loaded on the freight cars.

"I've arranged for a special engine," he added, "and if all goes well the freight will be on the sidetrack at Chazy Junction on Monday morning. The dealer will send down three men to set up the presses and get everything in running order. But he asks if you have arranged for your workmen. How about it, Mr. Merrick? have you plenty of competent printers and pressmen at Millville?"

"There are none at all," was the reply. "Better inquire how many we will need, Marvin, and send them down here. And, by the way, hire women or girls for every position they are competent to fill. This is going to be a girls' newspaper, so we'll have as few men around as possible."

"I understand, sir."

Uncle John ordered everything he could think of and told his agent to add whatever the supply man thought might be needed. This business being accomplished, he found Lon Taft at the hotel and instructed the carpenter to put rows of windows on both sides of the shed and to build partitions for an editorial office and a business office at the front.

This was the beginning of a busy period, especially for poor Uncle John, who had many details to attend to personally. The next morning the electricians arrived and began stringing the power cables from the paper mill to the newspaper office. This rendered it necessary for Mr. Merrick to make a trip to Royal, to complete his arrangement with Mr. Skeelty, the manager. He drove over with Arthur Weldon, in the buggy — four miles of hill climbing, over rough cobble-stones, into the pine forest.

Arriving there, the visitors were astonished at the extent of the plant so recently established in this practically unknown district. The great mill, where the wood pulp was made, was a building constructed from pine slabs and cobblestones, material gathered from the clearing in which it stood, but it was quite substantial and roomy. Adjoining the mill was the factory building where the pulp was rolled into print paper. Surrounding these huge buildings were some sixty small dwellings of the bungalow type, for the use of the workmen, built of rough boards, but neat and uniform in appearance. Almost in the center of this group stood the extensive storehouse from which all necessary supplies were furnished the mill hands, the cost being deducted from their wages. The electric power plant was a building at the edge of Royal Waterfall, the low and persistent roar of which was scarcely drowned by the rumble of machinery. Finally, at the edge of the clearing nearest the mills, stood the business office, and to this place Mr. Merrick and Arthur at once proceeded.

They found the office a busy place. Three or four typewriters were

clicking away, operated by sallow-faced girls, and behind a tall desk were two bookkeepers, in one of whom Uncle John recognized — with mild surprise — the tramp he had encountered at Chazy Junction on the morning of his arrival. The young fellow had improved in appearance, having discarded his frayed gray suit for one of plain brown khaki, such as many of the workmen wore, a supply being carried by the company's store. He was clean-shaven and trim, and a gentlemanly bearing had replaced the careless, half defiant attitude of the former hobo. It was evident he remembered meeting Mr. Merrick, for he smiled and returned the "nabob's" nod.

Mr. Skeelty had a private enclosed office in a corner of the room. Being admitted to this sanctum, the visitors found the manager to be a small, puffy individual about forty-five years of age, with shrewd, beadlike black eyes and an insolent assumption of super-importance. Skeelty interrupted his task of running up columns of impressive figures to ask his callers to be seated, and opened the interview with characteristic abruptness.

"You're Merrick, eh? I remember. You want to buy power, and we have it to sell. How much will you contract to take?"

"I don't know just how much we need," answered Uncle John. "We want enough to run a newspaper plant at Millville, and will pay for whatever we use. I've ordered a meter, as you asked me to do, and my men are now stringing the cables to make the connection."

"Pah! a newspaper. How absurd," said Mr. Skeelty with scornful emphasis. "Your name, Merrick, is not unknown to me. It stands for financial success, I understand; but I'll bet you never made your money doing such fool things as establishing newspapers in graveyards."

Uncle John looked at the man attentively.

"I shall refrain from criticising your conduct of this mill, Mr. Skeelty," he quietly observed, "nor shall I dictate what you may do with your money — provided you succeed in making any."

The manager smiled broadly, as if the retort pleased him.

"Give an' take, sir; that's my motto," he said.

"But you prefer to take?"

"I do," was the cheerful reply. "I'll take your paper, for instance — if it isn't too high priced."

"In case it is, we will present you with a subscription," said Uncle John. "But that reminds me: as a part of our bargain I want you to allow my nieces, or any representative of the *Millville Tribune*, to take subscriptions among your workmen."

Mr. Skeelty stared at him a moment. Then he laughed.

"They're mostly foreigners, Mr. Merrick, who haven't yet fully mastered

the English language. But," he added, thoughtfully, "a few among them might subscribe, if your country sheet contains any news of interest at all. This is rather a lonely place for my men and they get dissatisfied at times. All workmen seem chronically dissatisfied, and their women constantly urge them to rebellion. Already there are grumblings, and they claim they're buried alive in this forlorn forest. Don't appreciate the advantages of country life, you see, and I've an idea they'll begin to desert, pretty soon. Really, a live newspaper might do them good — especially if you print a little socialistic drivel now and then." Again he devoted a moment to thought, and then continued: "Tell you what I'll do, sir; I'll solicit the subscriptions myself, and deduct the price from the men's wages, as I do the cost of their other supplies. But the Company gets a commission for that, of course."

"It's a penny paper," said Uncle John. "The subscription is only thirty cents a month."

"Delivered?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, I'll pay you twenty cents, and keep the balance for commission. That's fair enough."

"Very well, Mr. Skeelty. We're after subscriptions more than money, just now. Get all you can, at that rate."

After signing a contract for the supply of electrical power, whereby he was outrageously robbed but the supply was guaranteed, Mr. Merrick and Arthur returned to the farm.

"That man," said Louise's young husband, referring to the manager of the paper mill, "is an unmitigated scoundrel, sir."

"I won't deny it," replied Mr. Merrick. "It occurs to me he is hiring those poor workmen at low wages and making a profit on all their living necessities, which he reserves the right of supplying from his own store. No wonder the poor fellows get dissatisfied."

CHAPTER VII
THE SKETCH ARTIST

During the next three days so many things happened at Millville that the natives were in a panic of excitement. Not only was electricity brought from the paper mill, but a telegraph wire was run from Chazy Junction to Bob West's former storage shed and a telephone gang came along and placed a private wire, with long-distance connections, in the new newspaper office. The office itself became transformed — "as full o' winders as a hothouse!" exclaimed Peggy McNutt, with bulging eyes — and neat partitions were placed for the offices. There was no longer any secret as to the plans of the "nabobs"; it was generally understood that those terribly aggressive girls were going to inflict a daily paper on the community. Some were glad, and some rebelled, but all were excited. A perpetual meeting was held at Cotting's store to discuss developments, for something startling occurred every few minutes.

"It's a outrage, this thing," commented young Skim Clark despondently. "They're tryin' to run mother out o' business — an' she a widder with me to look after! Most o' the business at the Emporium is done in newspapers an' magazines an' sich; so these gals thought they'd cut under an' take the business away from her."

"Can't the Widder Clark sell the new paper, then?" asked the blacksmith.

"I dunno. Hadn't thought o' that," said Skim. "But the price is to be jus' one cent, an' we've ben gittin' five cents fer all the outside papers. Where's the profit comin' from, on one cent, I'd like to know? Why, we make two or three cents on all the five cent papers."

"As fer that," remarked the druggist, "we'll get a cheap paper — if it's any good — an' that's somethin' to be thankful for."

"'Twon't be any good," asserted Skim. "Ma says so."

But no one except McNutt was prepared to agree with this prediction. The extensive plans in preparation seemed to indicate that the new paper would be fully equal to the requirements of the populace.

On Monday, when the news spread that two big freight cars had arrived at the Junction, and Nick Thorne began working three teams to haul the outfit to Millville, the rest of the town abandoned all business other than watching the arrival of the drays. Workmen and machinists arrived from the city and began unpacking and setting up the presses, type cases and all other paraphernalia, every motion being watched by eager faces that lined the windows. These workmen were lodged at the hotel, which had never entertained so many guests at one time in all its past history. The three girls,

even more excited and full of awe than the townspeople, were at the office early and late, taking note of everything installed and getting by degrees a fair idea of the extent of their new plaything.

"It almost takes my breath away, Uncle," said Patsy. "You've given the *Tribune* such a splendid start that we must hustle to make good and prove we are worthy your generosity."

"I sat up last night and wrote a poem for the first page of the first number," announced Louise earnestly.

"Poems don't go on the first page," observed Patsy; "but they're needed to fill in with. What's it about, dear?"

"It's called 'Ode to a Mignonette,'" answered Louise. "It begins this way:

"Wee brown blossom, humble and sweet,
Content on my bosom lying,
Who would guess from your quiet dress
The beauty there is lying
Under the rust?"

"Hm," said Patsy, "I don't see as there's any beauty under the rust, at all. There's no beauty about a mignonette, anyhow, suspected or unsuspected."

"She means 'fragrance,'" suggested Beth. "Change it to: 'The fragrance there is lying under the rust.' That'll fix it all right, Louise."

"It doesn't seem right, even then," remarked Uncle John. "If the fragrance lies under the rust, it can't be smelt, can it?"

"I did not anticipate all this criticism," said Louise, with an air of injured dignity. "None of the big publishing houses that returned my poems ever said anything mean about them; they merely said they were 'not available.' However, as this poem has not made a hit with the managing editor, I'll tear it up and write another."

"Don't do that," begged Patsy. "Save it for emergencies. We've got to fill twenty-four columns every day, remember!"

By Wednesday night the equipment was fully installed and the workmen departed, leaving only Jim McGaffey, an experienced pressman, and Lawrence Doane — familiarly called Larry — who was to attend to the electrotyping and "make-up." The press was of the best modern construction, and folded, cut and counted the papers automatically, with a capacity for printing three thousand copies an hour.

"And at that rate," observed Patsy, "It will run off our regular edition in eight minutes."

Aside from the newspaper press there were two "job" presses and an assortment of type for printing anything that might be required, from a calling card to a circus poster. A third man, who came from the city

Thursday morning, was to take charge of the job printing and assist in the newspaper work. Three girls also arrived, pale-faced, sad-eyed creatures, who were expert typesetters. Uncle John arranged with Mrs. Kebble, the landlady at the hotel, to board all the "help" at moderate charge.

It had been decided, after much consultation, to make the *Tribune* a morning paper. At first it was feared this would result in keeping the girls up nights, but it was finally arranged that all the copy they furnished would be turned in by nine o'clock, and Miss Briggs, the telegraph editor, would attend to anything further that came in over the wires. The advantages of a morning edition were obvious.

"You'll have all day to distribute a morning paper," Arthur pointed out, "whereas an evening paper couldn't get to your scattered subscribers until the next morning."

Miss Briggs, upon whom they were to rely so greatly, proved to be a woman of tremendous energy and undoubted ability. She was thirty-five years of age and had been engaged in newspaper work ever since she was eighteen. Bright and cheerful, of even temper and shrewd comprehension, Miss Briggs listened to the eager explanations of the three girls who had undertaken this queer venture, and assured them she would assist in making a newspaper that would be a credit to them all. She understood clearly the conditions; that inexperience was backed by ample capital and unpractical ideas by unlimited enthusiasm.

"This job may not last long," she told herself, "but while it does it will be mighty amusing. I shall enjoy these weeks in a quiet country town after the bustle of the big city."

So here were seven regular employees of the *Millville Daily Tribune* already secured and the eighth was shortly to appear. Preparations were well under way for a first edition on the Fourth of July and the office was beginning to hum with work, when one afternoon a girl strolled in and asked in a tired voice for the managing editor.

She was admitted to Patsy's private room, where Beth and Louise were also sitting, and they looked upon their visitor in undisguised astonishment.

She was young: perhaps not over twenty years of age. Her face bore marks of considerable dissipation and there was a broad scar underneath her right eye. Her hair was thin, straggling and tow-colored; her eyes large, deep-set and of a faded blue. The girl's dress was as queer and untidy as her personal appearance, for she wore a brown tailored coat, a short skirt and long, buttoned leggings. A round cap of the same material as her dress was set jauntily on the back of her head, and over her shoulder was slung a fiat satchel of worn leather. There was little that was feminine and less that was

attractive about the young woman, and Patsy eyed her with distinct disfavor.

"Tommy sent me here," said the newcomer, sinking wearily into a chair. "I'm hired for a month, on good behavior, with a chance to stay on if I conduct myself in a ladylike manner. I've been working on the *Herald*, you know; but there was no end of a row last week, and they fired me bodily. Any booze for sale in this town?"

"It is a temperance community," answered Patsy, stiffly.

"Hooray for me. There's a chance I'll keep sober. In that case you've acquired the best sketch artist in America."

"Oh! Are you the artist, then?" asked Patsy, with doubtful intonation.

"I don't like the word. I'm not a real artist — just a cartoonist and newspaper hack. Say, it's funny to see me in this jungle, isn't it? What joy I'll have in astonishing the natives! I s'pose a picture's a picture, to them, and Art an impenetrable mystery. What sort of stuff do you want me to turn out?"

"I — I'm not sure you'll do," said Miss Doyle, desperately. "I — we — that is — we are three quite respectable young women who have under-taken to edit the *Millville Daily Tribune*, and the people we have secured to assist us are all — all quite desirable, in their way. So — ; ahem! — so — "

"That's all right," remarked the artist composedly. "I don't know that I blame you. I can see very well the atmosphere is not my atmosphere. When is the next train back to New York?"

"At four o'clock, I believe."

"I'll engage a nice upholstered seat in the smoking car. But I've several hours to loaf, and loafing is my best stunt. Isn't this a queer start for girls like you?" looking around the "den" critically. "I wonder how you got the bug, and what'll come of it. It's so funny to see a newspaper office where everything is brand new, and — eminently respectable. Do you mind my lighting a cigarette? This sort of a deal is quite interesting to an old-timer like me; but perhaps I owe you an apology for intruding. I had a letter from Tommy and one from a big banker — Marvin, I guess his name is."

She drew two letters from her satchel and tossed them on the desk before Patsy.

"They're no good to me now," she added. "Where's your waste basket?"

The managing editor, feeling embarrassed by the presence of the artist, opened the letters. The first was from Mr. Marvin, Uncle John's banker, saying:

"After much negotiation I have secured for you the best newspaper illustrator in New York, and a girl, too, which is an added satisfaction. For months I have admired the cartoons signed 'Het' in the New York papers, for

they were essentially clever and droll. Miss Hewitt is highly recommended but like most successful artists is not always to be relied upon. I'm told if you can manage to win her confidence she will be very loyal to you."

The other letter was from the editor of a great New York journal. "In giving you Hetty," he said, "I am parting with one of our strongest attractions, but in this big city the poor girl is rapidly drifting to perdition and I want to save her, if possible, before it is too late. She has a sweet, lovable nature, a generous heart and a keen intellect, but these have been so degraded by drink and dissipation that you may not readily discover them. My idea is that in a country town, away from all disreputable companionship, the child may find herself, and come to her own again. Be patient with her and help her all you can. Her wonderful talent will well repay you, even if you are not interested in saving one of God's creatures."

Silently Patsy passed the letters to Beth and Louise. After reading them there was a new expression on the faces they turned toward Hetty Hewitt.

"Forgive me," said Patsy, abruptly. "I — I think I misjudged you. I was wrong in saying what I did."

"No; you were quite right." She sat with downcast eyes a moment, musing deeply. Then she looked up with a smile that quite glorified her wan face. "I'd like to stay, you know," she said humbly. "I'm facing a crisis, just now, and on the whole I'd rather straighten up. If you feel like giving me a chance I — I'd like to see if I've any reserve force or whether the decency in me has all evaporated."

"We'll try you; and I'm sure you have lots of reserve force, Hetty," cried Patsy, jumping up impulsively to take the artist's soiled, thin hand in her own. "Come with me to the hotel and I'll get you a room. Where is your baggage?"

"Didn't bring it. I wasn't sure I'd like the country, or that you'd care to trust me. In New York they know me for what I'm worth, and I get lots of work and good advice — mixed with curses."

"We'll send for your trunk," said Patsy, leading the girl up the street.

"No; it's in hock. But I won't need it. With no booze to buy I can invest my earnings in wearing apparel. What a picturesque place this is! Way back in the primitive; no hint of those namby-pamby green meadows and set rows of shade trees that make most country towns detestable; rocks and boulders — boulders and rocks — and the scraggly pines for background. The wee brook has gone crazy. What do you call it?"

"Little Bill Creek."

"I'm going to stab it with my pencil. Where it bumps the rocks it's obstinate and pig-headed; where it leaps the little shelves of slate it's merry

and playful; where it sweeps silently between the curving banks it is sulky and resentful. The Little Bill has moods, bless its heart! Moods betoken character."

Patsy secured for Hetty a pleasant room facing the creek.

"Where will you work, at the office or here?" she asked.

"In the open, I guess. I'll run over the telegraph news to get a subject for the day's cartoon, and then take to the woods. Let me know what other pictures you want and I'll do 'em on the run. I'm a beast to work."

Arthur Weldon, in his capacity as advertising manager, wrote to all the national advertisers asking their patronage for the *Millville Daily Tribune*. The letters were typewritten by the office stenographer on newly printed letterheads that Fitzgerald, the job printer, had prepared. Some of the advertisers were interested enough in Arthur's novel proposition to reply with questions as to the circulation of the new paper, where it was distributed, and the advertising rates. The voting man answered frankly that they had 27 subscribers already and were going to distribute 400 free copies every day, for a time, as samples, with the hope of increasing the subscription list. "I am not sure you will derive any benefit at all from advertising in our paper," he added; "but we would like to have you try it, and you can pay us whatever you consider the results warrant."

To his astonishment the advertisements arrived, a great many from very prominent firms, who accepted his proposal with amusement at his originality and a desire to help the new venture along.

"Our square statement of facts has given us a good start," he told the girls. "I'm really amazed at our success, and it's up to you to make a paper that will circulate and make trade for these trustful advertisers."

With the local merchants the results were less satisfying. Bob West put in a card advertising his hardware business and Nib Corkins cautiously invested a half dollar to promote his drug store and stock of tarnished cheap jewelry; but Sam Cotting said everybody knew what he had for sale and advertising wouldn't help him any. Arthur drove to Huntingdon with Louise and while the society editor picked up items her husband interviewed the merchants. The Huntingdon people were more interested in the new paper than the Millville folk, and Arthur quoted such low prices that several advertisements were secured. Two bright boys of this thriving village were also employed to ride over to Millville each morning, get a supply of *Tribunes* and distribute a sample copy to every house in the neighborhood.

"Fitz" set up the "ads" in impressive type and the columns of the first edition began to fill up days before the Fourth of July arrived. Louise had a story and two poems set in type and read over the proofs dozens of times

with much pride and satisfaction, while Beth prepared an article on the history of baseball and the probable future of our national game.

They did not see much of their artist during the first days following her arrival, but one afternoon she brought Patsy a sketch and asked:

"Who is this?"

Patsy glanced at it and laughed gleefully. It was Peggy McNutt, the fish-eyed pooh-bah of Millville, who was represented sitting on his front porch engaged in painting his wooden foot. This was one of McNutt's recognized amusements. He kept a supply of paints of many colors, and every few days appeared with his rudely carved wooden foot glistening with a new coat of paint and elaborately striped. Sometimes it would be blue with yellow stripes, then green with red stripes, and anon a lovely pink decorated with purple. One drawback to Peggy's delight in these transformations was the fact that it took the paint a night and a day to dry thoroughly, and during this period of waiting he would sit upon his porch with the wooden foot tenderly resting upon the rail — a helpless prisoner.

"Some folks," he would say, "likes pretty neckties; an' some wears fancy socks; but fer my part I'd ruther show a han'some foot ner anything. It don't cost as much as wearin' socks an' neckties, an' it's more artistic like."

Hetty had caught the village character in the act of striping the wooden foot, and his expression of intense interest in the operation was so original, and the likeness so perfect, from the string suspenders and flannel shirt to the antiquated straw hat and faded and patched overalls, that no one would be likely to mistake the subject. The sketch was entitled "The Village Artist," and Patsy declared they would run it on an inside page, just to make the Millville people aware of the "power of the press." Larry made an etching of it and mounted the plate for a double column picture. The original sketch Patsy decided to have framed and to hang it in her office.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MILLVILLE DAILY TRIBUNE

The first edition of the *Millville Daily Tribune* certainly proved it to be a wonderful newspaper. The telegraphic news of the world's doings, received and edited by the skillful Miss Briggs, was equal to that of any metropolitan journal; the first page cartoon, referring to the outbreak of a rebellion in China, was clever and humorous enough to delight anyone; but the local news and "literary page" were woefully amateurish and smacked of the schoolgirl editors who had prepared them. Perhaps the Chazy County people did not recognize these deficiencies, for the new paper certainly created a vast amount of excitement and won the praise of nearly all who read it.

On the eventful night of the *Tribune's* "first run" our girls were too eager to go home and await its appearance, so they remained at the office to see the birth of their enterprise, and as it was the night preceding the Fourth of July Uncle John gave an exhibition of fireworks in front of the newspaper office, to the delight of the entire population.

The girl journalists, however, were not so greatly interested in fireworks as in the birth of their fascinating enterprise. Wearing long gingham aprons they hovered over the big table where the forms were being locked up, and watched anxiously every movement of the workmen. It was exceedingly interesting to note how a column of the first page was left open until the last, so that copy "hot from the wire" of the very latest news might be added before going to press. Finally, at exactly two o'clock, the forms were locked, placed upon the bed of the press, and McGaffey, a sour-faced individual whose chief recommendation was his ability as a pressman, began to make ready for the "run."

Outside the brilliantly lighted windows, which were left open for air, congregated a wondering group of the Millville people, many of whom had never been up so late before in all their lives. But the event was too important to miss. The huge, complicated press had already inspired their awe, and they were eager to "see it work" as it printed the new paper.

The girls tolerated this native curiosity with indulgent good humor and at midnight even passed out sandwiches to the crowd, a supply having been secured for the workmen. These were accepted silently, and as they munched the food all kept their eyes fixed upon the magicians within.

There was a hitch somewhere; McGaffey muttered naughty words under his breath and plied wrenches and screwdrivers in a way that brought a thrill of anxiety, approaching fear, to every heart. The press started half a dozen times, only to be shut down abruptly before it had printed a single

impression. McGaffey counseled with Larry, who shook his head. Fitzgerald, the job printer, examined the machinery carefully and again McGaffey screwed nuts and regulated the press. Then he turned on the power; the big cylinder revolved; the white paper reeled out like a long ribbon and with a rattle and thump the first copy of the *Millville Daily Tribune* was deposited, cut and folded, upon the table placed to receive it. Patsy made a rush for it, but before she could reach the table half a dozen more papers had been piled above it, and gathering speed the great press hummed busily and the pile of *Tribunes* grew as if by magic.

Patsy grabbed the first dozen and handed them to Beth, for they were to be reserved as souvenirs. Then, running back to the table, she seized a bunch and began distributing them to the watchers outside the window. The natives accepted them eagerly enough, but could not withdraw their eyes from the marvelous press, which seemed to possess intelligence almost human.

Each of the three girl journalists now had a copy in hand, scanning it with boundless pride and satisfaction. It realized completely their fondest hopes and they had good cause to rejoice.

Then Uncle John, who ought to have been in bed and sound asleep at this uncanny hour of night, came bouncing in, accompanied by Arthur Weldon. Each made a dive for a paper and each face wore an expression of genuine delight. The roar of the press made conversation difficult, but Mr. Merrick caught his nieces in his arms, by turn, and gave each one an ecstatic hug and kiss.

Suddenly the press stopped.

"What's wrong, McGaffey?" demanded Patsy, anxiously.

"Nothing, miss. Edition off, that's all."

"What! the entire four hundred are printed?"

"Four twenty-five. I run a few extrys."

And now a shriek of laughter came from the windows as the villagers, slowly opening the papers they held, came upon the caricature of Peggy McNutt. The subject of the cartoon had, with his usual aggressiveness, secured the best "standing room" available, and his contemplative, protruding eyes were yet fixed upon the interior of the workroom. But now, his curiosity aroused, he looked at the paper to see what his neighbors were laughing at, and his expression of wonder slowly changed to a broad grin. He straightened up, looked triumphantly around the circle and exclaimed:

"By gum, folks, this 'ere paper's going to be a go! I didn't take no stock in it till now, but them fool gals seem to know their business, an' I'll back 'em to the last ditch!"

CHAPTER IX
TROUBLE

Of course the girls exhausted their store of "effusions" on the first two or three papers. A daily eats up "copy" very fast and the need to supply so much material began to bewilder the budding journalists. There was not sufficient local news to keep them going, but fortunately the New York news service supplied more general news than they could possibly use, and, besides, Mr. Marvin, foreseeing this dilemma, had sent on several long, stout boxes filled with "plate matter," which meant that a variety of stories, poems, special articles and paragraphs of every sort had been made into stereotyped plates of column width which could be placed anywhere in the paper where a space needed to be filled. This material, having been prepared by skilled writers, was of excellent character, so that the paper gained in its class of contents as the girlish contributions began to be replaced by "plates." The nieces did not abandon writing, however, and all three worked sedulously to prepare copy so that at least one column of the Tribune each day was filled with notes from their pens.

Subscriptions came in freely during those first days, for farmers and villagers alike were proud of their local daily and the price was so low that no one begrudged the investment. But Uncle John well knew that if every individual in the county subscribed, and the advertising patronage doubled, the income would fall far short of running expenses.

Saturday night, when the pay roll had to be met, the girls consulted together seriously. In spite of the new subscriptions received, a deficiency must be supplied, and they quietly advanced the money from their private purses. This was no great hardship, for each had an ample allowance from Uncle John, as well as an income from property owned in her own name.

"It's only about thirty dollars apiece," said Patsy. "I guess we can stand that until — until more money begins coming in."

On Saturday evening there was an invasion of workmen from Royal, many of whom we're rough foreigners who came to Millville in search of excitement, as a relief from their week's confinement at the pine woods settlement at the mill. Skeelty, who thought he knew how to manage these people, allowed every man, at the close of work on Saturday, to purchase a pint of whiskey from the company store, charging an exorbitant price that netted a huge profit. There was no strong drink to be had at Millville, so the workmen brought their bottles to town, carousing on the way, and thought it amusing to frighten the simple inhabitants of the village by their rude shouts and ribald songs.

This annoyance had occurred several times since the establishment of the mill, and Bob West had protested vigorously to Mr. Skeelty for giving his men whiskey and turning them loose in a respectable community; but the manager merely grinned and said he must keep “the boys” satisfied at all hazards, and it was the business of the Millville people to protect themselves if the workmen became too boisterous.

On this Saturday evening the girls were standing on the sidewalk outside the printing office, awaiting the arrival of Arthur with the surrey, when a group of the Royal workmen appeared in the dim light, swaggering three abreast and indulging in offensive language. Uncle John’s nieces withdrew to the protection of the doorway, but a big bearded fellow in a red shirt discovered them, and, lurching forward, pushed his evil countenance in Patsy’s face, calling to his fellows in harsh tones that he had “found a partner for a dance.”

An instant later he received a swinging blow above the ear that sent him sprawling at full length upon the sidewalk, and a quiet voice said:

“Pardon me, ladies; it seemed necessary.”

All three at once recognized the supposed tramp whom they had seen the morning of their arrival, but whom Uncle John had reported to be one of the bookkeepers at the paper mill. The young fellow had no time to say more, for the downfall of their comrade brought a shout of rage from the group of workmen, numbering nearly a dozen, and with one accord they rushed upon the man who had dared champion the defenseless girls.

Beth managed to open the door of the office, through which Patsy and Louise slipped instantly, but the younger girl, always cool in emergencies, held the door ajar while she cried to the young man:

“Quick, sir — come inside!”

Really, he had no time to obey, just then. With his back to the door he drove his fists at his assailants in a dogged, persistent way that felled three more of them before the others drew away from his stalwart bows. By that time Larry and Fitzgerald, who had been summoned by Louise, rushed from the office armed with iron bars caught up at random, both eager for a fight. The workmen, seeing the reinforcements, beat a retreat, carrying their sadly pommeled comrades with them, but their insulting language was not restricted until they had passed out of hearing.

Then the young man turned, bowed gravely to the girls, who had now ventured forth again, and without waiting to receive their thanks marched calmly down the street.

When Arthur reached home with the girls, Mr. Merrick was very indignant at his report of the adventure. He denounced Skeelty in

unmeasured terms and declared he would find a way to protect Millville from further invasion by these rough and drunken workmen.

There was no Sunday paper, so the girlish editors found the morrow a veritable day of rest. They all drove to Hooker's Falls to church and returned to find that old Nora had prepared a fine chicken dinner for them. Patsy had invited Hetty Hewitt, in whom she was now greatly interested, to dine with them, and to the astonishment of all the artist walked over to the farm arrayed in a new gown, having discarded the disreputable costume in which she had formerly appeared. The new dress was not in the best of taste and its loud checks made dainty Louise shudder, but somehow Hetty seemed far more feminine than before, and she had, moreover, washed herself carefully and tried to arrange her rebellious hair.

"This place is doing me good," she confided to her girl employers, after dinner, when they were seated in a group upon the lawn. "I'm getting over my nervousness, and although I haven't drank a drop stronger than water since I arrived. I feel a new sort of energy coursing through my veins. Also I eat like a trooper — not at night, as I used to, but at regular mealtime. And I'm behaving quite like a lady. Do you know, I wouldn't be surprised to find it just as amusing to be respectable as to — to be — the other thing?"

"You will find it far more satisfactory, I'm sure," replied Patsy encouragingly. "What most surprises me is that with your talent and education you ever got into such bad ways."

"Environment," said Hetty. "That's what did it. When I first went to New York I was very young. A newspaper man took me out to dinner and asked me to have a cocktail. I looked around the tables and saw other girls drinking cocktails, so I took one. That was where I turned into the rocky road. People get careless around the newspaper offices. They work under a constant nervous strain and find that drink steadies them — for a time. By and by they disappear; others take their places, and they are never heard of again except in the police courts. I knew a girl, society editor of a big paper, who drew her five thousand a year, at one time. She got the cocktail habit and a week or so ago I paid her fine for getting pinched while intoxicated. She was in rags and hadn't a red cent. That set me thinking, and when Tommy fired me from his paper and said the best he could do was to get me a job in the country, it seemed as if my chance to turn over a new leaf had arrived. I've turned it," she added, with a pathetic sigh; "but whether it'll stay turned, or not, is a question for the puzzle page."

"Haven't you a family to look after you — or for you to look after?" asked Beth.

"No. Brother and I were left orphans in a Connecticut town, and he went

out West, to Chicago, and promised to send for me. Must have forgot that promise, I guess, for I've never heard of Dan since. I could draw pictures, so I went to New York and found a job. Guess that's my biography, and it isn't as interesting as one of Hearst's editorials, either."

Hetty seemed pleased and grateful to note the frank friendliness of her girlish employers, in whom she recognized the admirable qualities she had personally sacrificed for a life of dissipation. In the privacy of her room at the hotel she had read the first copy of the Millville Tribune and shrieked with laughter at the ingenuous editorials and schoolgirl essays. Then she grew sober and thoughtful, envying in her heart the sweetness and simplicity so apparent in every line. Here were girls who possessed something infinitely higher than journalistic acumen; they were true women, with genuine womanly qualities and natures that betrayed their worth at a glance, as do ingots of refined gold. What would not this waif from the grim underworld of New York have given for such clear eyes, pure mind and unsullied heart? "I don't know as I can ever swim in their pond," Hetty reflected, with honest regret, "but there's a chance I can look folks square in the eye again — and that wouldn't be so bad."

Monday morning, when Patsy, Louise and Beth drove to their office, Miss Briggs said nonchalantly:

"McGaffey's gone."

"Gone! Gone where?" asked Patsy.

"Back to New York. Caught a freight from the Junction Saturday night."

"Isn't he coming back?" inquired Beth.

"Here's a letter he left," said Miss Briggs.

They read it together. It was very brief; "Climate don't suit me. No excitement. I've quit. McGaffey."

"I suppose," said Patsy, with indignation, "he intended to go, all the while, and only waited for his Saturday pay."

Miss Briggs nodded. She was at the telegraph instrument.

"What shall we do?" asked Louise. "Can anyone else work the press?"

"I'll find out," said Patsy, marching into the workroom.

Neither Fitz nor Larry would undertake to run the press. They said the machine was so complicated it required an expert, and unless an experienced pressman could be secured the paper must suspend publication.

Here was an unexpected dilemma; one that for a time dazed them.

"These things always happen in the newspaper business," remarked Miss Briggs, when appealed to. "Can't you telegraph to New York for another pressman?"

"Yes; but he can't get here in time," said Patsy. "There's no Monday train

to Chazy Junction, at all, and it would be Wednesday morning before a man could possibly arrive. To shut down the paper would ruin it, for everyone would think we had failed in our attempt and it might take us weeks to regain public confidence."

"I know," said Miss Briggs, composedly. "A paper never stops. Somehow or other it always keeps going — even if the world turns somersaults and stands on its head. You'll find a way, I'm sure."

But the bewildered girls had no such confidence. They drove back to the farm to consult with Uncle John and Arthur.

"Let's take a look at that press, my dears," said Mr. Merrick. "I'm something of a mechanic myself, or was in my young days, and I may be able to work this thing until we can get a new pressman."

"I'll help you," said Arthur. "Anyone who can run an automobile ought to be able to manage a printing press."

So they went to the office, took off their coats and examined the press; but the big machine defied their combined intelligence. Uncle John turned on the power. The cylinder groaned, swung half around, and then the huge wooden "nippers" came down upon the table with a force that shattered them to kindlings. At the crash Mr. Merrick involuntarily shut down the machine, and then they all stood around and looked gloomily at the smash-up and wondered if the damage was irreparable.

"Couldn't we print the paper on the job press?" asked the little millionaire, turning to Fitzgerald.

"In sections, sir," replied Fitz, grinning. "Half a page at a time is all we can manage, but we might be able to match margins so the thing could be read."

"We'll try it," said Uncle John. "Do your best, my man, and if you can help us out of this bog you shall be amply rewarded."

Fitz looked grave.

"Never knew of such a thing being done, sir," he remarked; "but that's no reason it's impossible."

"'Twill be a horror of a make-up," added Larry, who did not relish his part in the experiment.

Uncle John put on his coat and went into the front office, followed by Arthur and the girls in dismal procession.

"A man to see the manager," announced Miss Briggs, nodding toward a quiet figure seated on the "waiting bench."

The man stood up and bowed. It was the young bookkeeper from the paper mill, who had so bravely defended the girls on Saturday night. Uncle John regarded him with a frown.

“I suppose Skeelty has sent you to apologize,” he said.

“No, sir; Skeelty is not in an apologetic mood,” replied the man, smiling. “He has fired me.”

“What for?”

“Interfering with his workmen. The boys didn’t like what I did the other night and threatened to strike unless I was put in the discard.”

“And now? asked Uncle John, looking curiously at the man.

“I’m out of work and would like a job, sir.”

“What can you do?”

“Anything.”

“That means nothing at all.”

“I beg your pardon. Let me say that I’m not afraid to tackle anything.”

“Can you run a power printing press?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Ever had any experience?”

The young man hesitated.

“I’m not sure,” he replied slowly; “but I think I have.”

This statement would not have been encouraging under ordinary circumstances, but in this emergency Uncle John accepted it.

“What is your name?” he asked.

Another moment’s hesitation.

“Call me Smith, please.”

“First name?”

The man smiled.

“Thursday,” he said.

All his hearers seemed astonished at this peculiar name, but Mr. Merrick said abruptly: “Follow me, Thursday Smith.”

The man obeyed, and the girls and Arthur trotted after them back to the pressroom.

“Our pressman has deserted us without warning,” explained Mr. Merrick. “None of our other employees is able to run the thing. If you can master it so as to run off the paper tonight, the job is yours.”

Thursday Smith took off his jacket — a cheap khaki affair — and rolled up his sleeves. Then he carefully looked over the press and found the damaged nippers. Without a word he picked up a wrench, released the stub ends of the broken fingers, gathered the pieces in his hand and asked: “Where is there a carpenter shop?”

“Can you operate this press?” asked Mr. Merrick.

“Yes, sir.”

“The carpenter shop is a little shanty back of the hotel. You’ll find

Lon Taft there."

Smith walked away, and Mr. Merrick drew a long breath of relief.

"That's good luck," he said. "You may quit worrying, now, my dears."

"Are you sure he's a good pressman, Uncle?"

"No; but *he* is sure. I've an idea he wouldn't attempt the thing, otherwise."

Mr. Merrick returned to the farm, while Arthur drove Louise over to Huntingdon to gather items for the paper, and Patsy and Beth sat in the office arranging copy.

In an hour Smith came back with new nippers, which he fitted to the steel frame. Then he oiled the press, started it going a few revolutions, to test its condition, and handled the machinery so dexterously and with such evident confidence that Larry nodded to Fitz and muttered, "He'll do."

McGaffey, knowing he was about to decamp, had not kept the press very clean; but Thursday Smith put in the afternoon and evening removing grease, polishing and rubbing, until the huge machine shone resplendent. The girls went home at dinner time, but they sent Arthur to the office at midnight to see if the new pressman was proving capable. The Tuesday morning *Tribune* greeted them at the breakfast table, and the presswork was remarkably clean and distinct.

CHAPTER X

THURSDAY SMITH

In a day or so Mr. Merrick received a letter from Mr. Skeelty, the manager of the paper mill. He said: "I understand you have employed one of my discharged workmen, who is named Thursday Smith. My men don't want him in this neighborhood, and have made a strong protest. I therefore desire you to discharge the fellow at once, and in case you refuse to accede to this reasonable demand I shall shut off your power."

Mr. Merrick replied: "Shut off the power and I'll sue you for damages. My contract with you fully protects me. Permit me a request in turn: that you mind your own business. The *Millville Tribune* will employ whomsoever it chooses."

Uncle John said nothing to the girls concerning this correspondence, nor did he mention it to the new pressman.

On Wednesday Larry and Fitz sent in their "resignations," to take effect Saturday night. They told Patsy, who promptly interviewed them, that the town was altogether too slow for men accustomed to the city, but to Smith they admitted they feared trouble from the men at the mill.

"I talked with one of the mill hands last night," said Larry, "and they're up to mischief. If you stay here, my boy, you'd better watch out, for it's you they're after, in the first place, and Skeelty has told 'em he wouldn't be annoyed if they wiped out the whole newspaper plant at the same time."

Thursday nodded but said nothing. He began watching the work of the two men with comprehensive care. When Mr. Merrick came down to the office during the forenoon to consult with his nieces about replacing the two men who had resigned, Smith asked him for a private interview.

"Come into the office," said Uncle John.

When the man found the three girl journalists present he hesitated, but Mr. Merrick declared they were the ones most interested in anything an employee of the paper might have to say to his principals.

"I am told, sir," Thursday began, "that the people at the mill have boycotted this paper."

"They've cancelled all their subscriptions," replied Beth; "but as they had not paid for them it won't hurt us any."

"It seems the trouble started through your employing me," resumed the young man; "so it will be best for you to let me go."

"Never!" cried Mr. Merrick, firmly. "Do you suppose I'll allow that rascal Skeelty to dictate to us for a single minute? Not by a jug full! And the reason the men dislike you is because you pounded some of them unmercifully

when they annoyed my girls. Where did you learn to use your fists so cleverly, Smith?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Well, you have earned our gratitude, and we're going to stand by you. I don't mind a bit of a row, when I'm on the right side of an argument. Do you?"

"Not at all, sir; but the young ladies — "

"They're pretty good fighters, too; so don't worry."

Thursday was silent a moment. Then he said:

"Fitzgerald and Doane tell me they're going to quit, Saturday."

"It is true," replied Patsy. "I'm sorry, for they seem good men and we may have trouble replacing them."

"They are not needed here, Miss Doyle," said Smith. "There isn't a great deal of electrotyping to do, or much job printing. More than half the time the two men are idle. It's the same way with my own job. Three hours a day will take care of the press and make the regular run. If you will permit me, I am sure I can attend to all the work, unaided."

They looked at one another in amazement.

"How about the make-up?" asked Uncle John.

"I can manage that easily, sir. I've been watching the operation and understand it perfectly."

"And you believe you can do the work of three men?"

"Three men were unnecessary in a small plant like this, sir. Whoever sent them to you did not understand very well your requirements. I've been watching the compositors, too, and your three girls are one too many. Two are sisters, and can set all the type very easily. I recommend that you send the other back to New York."

They considered this advice seriously.

"I think Mr. Smith is right," observed Patsy. "The girls have not seemed busy, at all, and spend most of their time laughing and talking together."

"It will cut down expenses a lot," said Beth, "and I'm sure we ought to be able to run this paper more economically than we have been doing."

Uncle John looked at the man thoughtfully.

"Where did you learn the printing business?" he asked.

"I — I don't know, sir."

"What offices have you worked in?"

"I cannot tell you that, sir."

"You seem to answer all my questions with the statement that you 'don't know,'" asserted Mr. Merrick, with an annoyed frown. "Is there any reason you should refuse to tell us of your former life?"

“None whatever, sir.”

“Who are you, Smith?”

“I — I don’t know, sir.”

Mr. Merrick was getting provoked.

“This obstinacy is not likely to win our confidence,” he said. “Under the circumstances I think we ought to know something more about you, before we allow you to undertake so much responsibility. You seem a bright, able young man, and I’ve no doubt you understand the work you’re about to undertake, but if we have no knowledge of your antecedents you may cause us considerable future trouble.”

Smith bowed his head and his cheeks flamed red.

“I have no knowledge of my antecedents to confide to you, sir,” he said in a low voice.

Uncle John sighed regretfully and turned away, but Patsy looked at the man with new interest.

“Won’t you please explain that a little more fully?” she gently inquired.

“I am quite willing to tell all I know,” said he; “but that is very little, I assure you. Two years ago last May, on the morning of Thursday, the twenty-second, I awoke to find myself lying in a ditch beside a road. Of my life previous to that time I have no knowledge whatever.”

The three girls regarded him with startled eyes. Uncle John turned from the window to examine the young man with new interest.

“Were you injured?” he asked.

“My right ankle was sprained and I had a cut under my left eye — you can see the scar still.”

“You have no idea how you came there?”

“Not the slightest. I did not recognize the surrounding country; I had no clear impression as to who I was. There was a farmhouse a quarter of a mile away; I limped to it and they gave me some breakfast. I found I was fifty-six miles from New York. The farmer had heard of no accident; there was no railway nearer than six miles; the highway was little used. I told the good people my story and they suspected me of being drunk or crazy, but did not credit a single word I said.”

“That was but natural,” said Uncle John.

“After breakfast I took stock of myself. In my pockets I found a twenty-dollar bill and some silver. I wore a watch and chain and a ring set with a good-sized diamond. My clothing seemed good, but the ditch had soiled it. I had no hat, nor could the farmer find one when I sent him back to look for it. My mind was not wholly a blank; I seemed to have a fair knowledge of life, and when the farmer mentioned New York the city seemed familiar to me.

But in regard to myself, my past history — even my name — I was totally ignorant. All personal consciousness dated from the moment I woke up in the ditch."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Louise.

"And you haven't solved the mystery yet, after two years?" asked Patsy.

"No, Miss Doyle. I hired the farmer to drive me to the railway station, where I took the train to New York. I seemed to know the city, but no recollection guided me to home or friends. I went to a small hotel, took a room, and began to read all the newspapers, seeking to discover if anyone was reported missing. The sight of automobiles led me to conceive the theory that I had been riding in one of those machines along a country road when something threw me out. My head might have struck a stump or stone and the blow rendered me insensible. Something in the nature of the thing, or in my physical condition, deprived me of all knowledge of the past. Since then I have read of several similar cases. The curious thing about my own experience was that I could find no reference to my disappearance, in any way, nor could I learn of any automobile accident that might account for it. I walked the streets day after day, hoping some acquaintance would accost me. I waited patiently for some impulse to direct me to my former haunts. I searched the newspapers persistently for a clue; but nothing rewarded me.

"After spending all my money and the proceeds of my watch and diamond, I began to seek employment; but no one would employ a man without recommendations or antecedents. I did not know what work I was capable of doing. So finally I left the city and for more than two years I have been wandering from one part of the country to another, hoping that some day I would recognize a familiar spot. I have done odd jobs, at times, but my fortunes went from bad to worse until of late I have become no better than the typical tramp."

"How did you secure employment as a book-keeper for Skeelty?" asked Uncle John.

"I heard a new mill had started at Royal and walked up there to inquire for work. The manager asked if I could keep books, and I said yes."

"Have you ever kept books before?"

"Not that I know of; but I did it very well. I seemed to comprehend the work at once, and needed no instruction. Often during these two years I have encountered similar curious conditions. I sold goods in a store and seemed to know the stocks; I worked two weeks in a telegraph office and discovered I knew the code perfectly; I've shod horses for a country blacksmith, wired a house for electric lights and compounded prescriptions in a drug store. Whatever I have undertaken to do I seem able to accomplish, and so it is hard

for me to guess what profession I followed before my memory deserted me."

"You did not retain any position for long, it seems," remarked Uncle John.

"No; I was always impatient to move on, always hoping to arrive at some place so familiar that my lost memory would return to me. The work I have mentioned was nearly all secured during the first year. After I became seedy and disreputable in appearance people were more apt to suspect me and work was harder to obtain."

"Why did you come to Millville?" asked Louise.

"You brought me here," he answered, with a smile. "I caught a ride on your private car, when it left New York, not caring much where it might take me. When I woke up the next morning the car was sidetracked at Chazy Junction, and as this is a section I have never before explored I decided to stay here for a time. That is all of my story, I believe."

"Quite remarkable!" declared Mr. Merrick, emphatically. The girls, too, had been intensely interested in the strange recital.

"You seem educated," said Patsy thoughtfully; "therefore you must have come from a good family."

"That does not seem conclusive," replied Thursday Smith, deprecatingly, "although I naturally hope my family was respectable. I have been inclined to resent the fact that none of my friends or relatives has ever inquired what became of me."

"Are you sure they have not?"

"I have watched the papers carefully. In two years I have followed several clues. A bricklayer disappeared, but his drowned body was finally found; a college professor was missing, but he was sixty years of age; a young man in New York embezzled a large sum and hid himself. I followed that trail, although regretfully, but the real embezzler was caught the day I presented myself in his place. Perhaps the most curious experience was in the case of a young husband who deserted his wife and infant child. She advertised for him; he had disappeared about the time I had found myself; so I went to see her."

"What was the result?" asked Beth.

"She said I was not her husband, but if he failed to come back I might take his place, provided I would guarantee to support her."

During the laugh that followed, Thursday Smith went back to his work and an animated discussion concerning his strange story followed.

"He seems honest," said Louise, "but I blame a man of his ability for becoming a mere tramp. He ought to have asserted himself and maintained the position in which he first found himself."

“How?” inquired Patsy.

“At that time he was well dressed and had a watch and diamond ring. If he had gone to some one and frankly told his story he could surely have obtained a position to correspond with his personality. But instead of this he wasted his time and the little capital he possessed in doing nothing that was sensible.”

“It is easy for us to criticise the man,” remarked Beth, “and he may be sorry, now, that he did not act differently. But I think, in his place, I should have made the same attempt he did to unravel the mystery of his lost identity. So much depended upon that.”

“It’s all very odd and incomprehensible,” said Uncle John. “I wonder who he can be.”

“I suppose he calls himself Thursday because that was the day he first found himself,” observed Patsy.

“Yes; and Smith was the commonest name he could think of to go with it. The most surprising thing,” added their uncle, “is the fact that a man of his standing was not missed or sought for.”

“Perhaps,” suggested Louise, “he had been insane and escaped from some asylum.”

“Then how did he come to be lying in a ditch?” questioned Patsy; “and wouldn’t an escaped maniac be promptly hunted down and captured?”

“I think so,” agreed Mr. Merrick. “For my part, I’m inclined to accept the man’s theory that it was an automobile accident.”

“Then what became of the car, or of the others in it?”

“It’s no use,” said Beth, shaking her head gravely. “If Thursday Smith, who is an intelligent young man, couldn’t solve the mystery himself, it isn’t likely we can do so.”

“We know as much as he does, as far as that is concerned,” said Patsy, “and our combined intelligence ought at least to equal his. I’m sorry for the poor man, and wish we might help him to come to his own again.”

They all agreed to this sentiment and while the girls attended to their editorial duties they had the amazing story of Thursday Smith uppermost in their minds. When the last copy had been placed in the hands of Miss Briggs and they were driving to the farm — at a little after six o’clock — they renewed the interesting discussion.

Just before reaching the farm Hetty Hewitt came out of the wood just in front of them. She was clothed in her short skirt and leggings and bore a fishing rod and a creel.

“What luck?” asked Patsy, stopping the horse.

“Seven trout,” answered the artist. “I might have caught more, but the

poor little creatures squirmed and struggled so desperately that I hadn't the heart to destroy any more of them. Won't you take them home for Mr. Merrick's breakfast?"

Patsy looked at the girl musingly.

"Jump in, Hetty," she said; "I'm going to take you with us for the night. The day's fishing has tired you; there are deep circles under your eyes; and that stuffy old hotel isn't home-like. Jump in."

Hetty flushed with pleasure, but hesitated to accept the invitation.

"I — I'm not dressed for — "

"You're all right," said Beth, supporting her cousin's proposition. "We'll lend you anything you need."

"Do come, Miss Hewitt," added Louise.

Hetty sighed, then smiled and finally climbed into the surrey.

"In New York," she said, as they started on, "I've sometimes hobnobbed with editors; but this is somewhat different."

"In what way?" asked Patsy casually.

"You're not real journalists, you know, and — "

"Why aren't we journalists?" asked Louise.

For a moment Hetty was puzzled how to reply.

"You are doing very good editorial work," she said mendaciously, "but, after all, you are only playing at journalism. The real journalist — as I know him — is a Bohemian; a font of cleverness running to waste; a reckless, tender-hearted, jolly, careless ne'er-do-well who works like a Trojan and plays like a child. He is very sophisticated at his desk and very artless when he dives into the underworld for rest and recreation. He lives at high tension, scintillates, burns his red fire without discrimination and is shortly extinguished. You are not like that. You can't even sympathize with that sort of person. But I can, for I'm cut from a remnant of the same cloth."

"Scintillate all you want to, Hetty," cried Patsy with a laugh; "but you're not going to be extinguished. For we, the imitation journalists, have taken you under our wings. There's no underworld at Millville, and the only excitement we can furnish just now is a night with us at the old farm."

"That," replied Hetty, "is indeed a real excitement. You can't quite understand it, perhaps; but it's so — so very different from what I'm accustomed to."

Uncle John welcomed the girl artist cordially and under his hospitable roof the waif soon felt at ease. At dinner the conversation turned upon Thursday Smith and his peculiar experience. Beth asked Hetty if she knew the man.

"Yes," replied the girl; "I've seen him at the office and we've exchanged a

word or two. But he boards with Thorne, the liveryman, and not at the hotel."

"You have never seen him before you met him here?"

"Never."

"I wonder," said Louise musingly, "if he is quite right in his mind. All this story may be an hallucination, you know."

"He's a very clever fellow," asserted Hetty, "and such a loss of memory is by no means so uncommon as you think. Our brains are queer things — mine is, I know — and it doesn't take much to throw their machinery out of gear. Once I knew a reporter who was worried and over-worked. He came to the office one morning and said he was George Washington, the Commander of the Continental Army. In all other ways he was sane enough, and we humored him and called him 'General.' At the end of three months the idea quit him as suddenly as it had come on, and he was not only normal but greatly restored in strength of intellect through the experience. Perhaps some of the overworked brain cells had taken a rest and renewed their energy. It would not surprise me if some day Thursday Smith suddenly remembered who he was."

[Footnote: This anecdote is true. — *Author.*]

"In the meantime," said Uncle John, "I'm going to make an effort to discover his identity."

"In what way, Uncle?" asked Patsy.

"I'll set Fogerty, who is a clever detective, at work. No man can disappear from his customary haunts without leaving some sort of a record behind him, and Fogerty may be able to uncover the mystery in a short time."

"Then we'll lose our pressman," declared Beth; "for I'm positive that Thursday Smith was a person of some importance in his past life."

CHAPTER XI

THE HONER'BLE OJOY BOGLIN

One morning while Patsy was alone in her office, busied over her work, the door softly opened and a curious looking individual stood before her.

He was thin in form, leathery skinned and somewhat past the middle age of life. His clothing consisted of a rusty black Prince Albert coat, rusty trousers to match, which were carefully creased, cowhide shoes brilliant with stove polish, a tall silk hat of antiquated design, and a frayed winged collar decorated with a black tie on which sparkled a large diamond attached to a chain. He had chin whiskers of a sandy gray color and small gray eyes that were both shrewd and suspicious in expression.

He stood in the doorway a moment, attentively eyeing the girl, while she in turn examined him with an amusement she could not quite suppress. Then he said, speaking in a low, diffident voice:

"I'm lookin' for the editor."

"I am the editor," asserted Patsy.

"Really?"

"It is quite true."

He seemed disconcerted a moment, striving to regain his assurance. Then he took out a well-worn pocketbook and from its depths abstracted a soiled card which, leaning forward, he placed carefully upon the table before Patsy. She glanced at it and read: "Hon. Ojoy Boglin, Hooker's Falls, Chazy County."

"Oh," said she, rather surprised; "are you Mr. Boglin?"

"I am the Honer'ble Ojoy Boglin, miss," he replied, dwelling lovingly upon the "Honer'ble."

"I have not had the honor of your acquaintance," said she, deciding she did not like her visitor. "What is your business, please?"

The Hon. Ojoy coughed. Then he suddenly remembered he was in the presence of a lady and took off his hat. Next he slid slowly into the vacant chair at the end of the table.

"First," he began, "I want to compliment you on your new paper. It's a good thing, and I like it. It's what's been needed in these 'ere parts a long time, and it's talked about all over Chazy County."

"Thank you," said the editor briefly, for the praise was given in a perfunctory way that irritated her.

"The only other papers in this senatorial deestric', which covers three counties," continued the visitor, in impressive tones, "air weeklies, run by political mud-slingers that's bought up by the Kleppish gang."

“What is the Kleppish gang?” she asked, wonderingly.

“The supporters o’ that rascal, Colonel Kleppish, who has been occupyin’ my berth for goin’ on eight years,” he said with fierce indignation.

“I fear I do not understand,” remarked Patsy, really bewildered. “What was your berth, which Colonel Kleppish has — has usurped?”

“See that ‘Honer’ble’ on the card?”

“I do.”

“That means I were senator — state senator — which makes any common man honer’ble, accordin’ to law, which it’s useless to dispute. I were elected fer this deestric’, which covers three counties,” he said proudly, “an’ I served my country in that capacity.”

“Oh, I see. But you’re not state senator now?”

“No; Kleppish beat me for the nomination, after I’d served only one term.”

“Why?”

“Eh? Why did he git the nomination? ‘Cause he bought up the newspapers — the country weeklies — and set them to yellin’ ‘graft.’ He made ‘em say I went into office poor, and in two years made a fortune.”

“Did you?” asked the girl.

He shuffled in his seat.

“I ain’t used to talkin’ politics with a girl,” he admitted; “but seein’ as you’re the editor of this paper — a daily, by Jupe! — you’ve probably got a head on you and understand that a man don’t get into office for his health. There’s a lot of bother in servin’ your country, and a man oughter be well paid for it. I did jest like the others do — like Kleppish is doin’ right now — but the reg’lar voters don’t understand politics, and when the howl went up about graft, backed by Kleppish’s bought-up newspapers, they turned me down cold. I’ve been eight years watchin’ for a chance to get in again, an’ now I’ve got it.”

“This is very interesting, I’m sure,” remarked Patsy; “but our paper doesn’t go much into local politics, Mr. Boglin, and I’m very busy to-day.”

“Honer’ble Ojoy Boglin,” he said, correcting her; but he did not take the hint to leave.

Patsy picked up her pencil as if to resume her work, while he eyed her with a countenance baffled and uncertain. Presently he asked:

“Has Kleppish got this paper too?”

“No,” she coldly replied.

“I thought I’d likely head him off, you being so new. See here, Editor — ”

“I am Miss Doyle, sir.”

“Glad to know you, Miss Doyle. What I was about to remark is this: The election for senator comes up agin in September and I want this paper to pull for me. Bein’ as it’s a daily it’s got more power than all of Kleppish’s weeklies put together, and if you work the campaign proper I’ll win the nomination hands down. This is a strong Republican deestric’, and to git nominated on the Republican ticket is the same as an election. So what I want is the nomination. What do you say?”

Patsy glared at him and decided that as far as appearances went he was not a fit candidate for any office, however humble. But she answered diplomatically:

“I will inquire into the condition of politics in this district, Mr. Boglin, and try to determine which candidate is the most deserving. Having reached a decision, the *Millville Tribune* will espouse the cause of the best man — if it mentions local politics at all.”

The Hon. Ojoy gave a dissatisfied grunt.

“That means, in plain words,” he suggested, “that you’ll give Kleppish a chance to bid against me. But I need this paper, and I’m willin’ to pay a big price for it. Let Kleppish go, and we’ll make our dicker right now, on a lib’ral basis. It’s the only way you can make your paper pay. I’ve got money, Miss Doyle. I own six farms near Hooker’s Falls, which is in this county, and six hundred acres of good pine forest, and I’m director in the Bank of Huntingdon, with plenty of money out on interest. Also I own half the stock in the new paper mill at Royal — ”

“You do?” she exclaimed. “I thought Mr. Skeelty — ”

“Skeelty’s the head man, of course,” he said. “He came to me about the mill proposition and I went in with him. I own all the forest around Royal. Bein’ manager, and knowin’ the business, Skeelty stood out for fifty-one shares of stock, which is the controllin’ interest; but I own all the rest, and the mill’s makin’ good money. People don’t know I’m in that deal, and of course this is all confidential and not to be talked about.”

“Very well, sir. But I fear you have mistaken the character of our paper,” said Patsy quietly. “We are quite independent, Mr. Boglin, and intend to remain so — even if we can’t make the paper pay. In other words, the *Millville Daily Tribune* can’t be bought.”

He stared in amazement; then scratched his ear with a puzzled air.

“Such talk as that means somethin’,” he asserted, gropingly, “but what it means, blamed if I know! Newspapers never turn money down unless they’re a’ready bought, or have got a grouch of their own…. Say!” he suddenly cried, as an inspiration struck him, “you ain’t got anything agin the mill at Royal, or agin Skeelty, have you?”

“I have, sir!” declared Patsy, raising her head to frown discouragingly upon the Honer’ble Ojoy. “Mr. Skeelty is acting in a very disagreeable manner. He has not only boycotted our paper and refused to pay for the subscriptions he engaged, but I understand he is encouraging his workmen to annoy the Millville people, and especially this printing office.”

“Well — durn — Skeelty!” ejaculated Mr. Boglin, greatly discomposed by this statement. “But I’ll fix all that, Miss Doyle,” he added, eagerly. “Skeelty’s my partner and he’s got to do what I say or I’ll make trouble for him. You dicker with me for the support of your paper and I’ll guarantee a hundred subscriptions from Royal and get you an apology from Skeelty and a promise he’ll behave an’ keep his men to home. And all that’s outside the price I’ll agree to pay.”

Patsy’s eyes were full of scorn.

“I won’t dicker with you an instant,” she firmly declared. “I don’t know Colonel Kleppish, or what his character is, but I’m very sure he’s the better man and that the people have made no mistake in electing him in your place. No respectable candidate for office would attempt to buy the support of a newspaper, and I advise you to change the wording on your card. Instead of ‘Honorable’ it should read ‘Dishonorable’ Ojoy Boglin. Good day, sir!”

Mr. Boglin’s face turned white with rage. He half rose from his seat, but sat down again with a vicious snarl.

“I’ve coaxed, so far, young woman,” he said grimly, “but I guess it’s time I showed my hand. You’ll either run this paper in my interest or I’ll push Skeelty on to make the town too hot to hold you. I’ve got power in this county, even if I ain’t senator, and you’ll feel that power if you dare oppose me. Take your choice, girl — either to make good money out o’ this campaign, or be run out of town, neck an’ crop! It’s up to you to decide.”

“In thirty seconds,” said Patsy, her face as white as was Boglin’s, “I shall ring this bell to summon my men to throw you out.”

The Honer’ble Ojoy slowly rose and put on his hat.

“Look out!” he said warningly.

“I will,” snapped Patsy.

“This ain’t the end of it, girl!”

“There are ten seconds left,” she said.

He picked up his card, turned his back and walked out, leaving his opponent trembling betwixt agitation and righteous indignation. A few moments later Bob West came in and looked at the girl editor curiously.

“Ojoy Boglin has been here,” he said.

“The Honer’ble Ojoy, if you please,” answered Patsy, with a laugh that bordered on hysteria.

The hardware man nodded, his eyes reading her face.

“You were quite right to turn him down,” he asserted.

“It was the only thing to do,” responded the girl, wondering how he knew.

“But Boglin is a dangerous man,” resumed West. “Look out for him. Miss Doyle.”

“Yes; he told me to do that, and I will,” said she, more quietly. “He is Skeelty’s partner.”

“And you’re not afraid of him?”

“Why should I be, Mr. West?”

He smiled.

“I’m justice of the peace here. If there’s a hint of trouble from Boglin or Skeelty, come directly to me.”

“Thank you, Mr. West. I will.”

With this he nodded cheerfully and went away.

CHAPTER XII

MOLLY SIZER'S PARTY

The people of Chazy County were very proud of the *Millville Tribune*, the only daily paper in that section of the state. It was really a very good newspaper, if small in size, and related the news of the day as promptly as the great New York journals did.

Arthur Weldon had not been very enthusiastic about the paper at any time, although he humored the girls by attending in a good-natured way to the advertising, hiring some of the country folk to get subscriptions, and keeping the books. He was a young man of considerable education who had inherited a large fortune, safely invested, and therefore had no need, through financial necessity, to interest himself in business of any sort. He allowed the girls to print his name as editor in chief, but he did no editorial work at all, amusing himself these delightful summer days by wandering in the woods, where he collected botanical specimens, or sitting with Uncle John on the lawn, where they read together or played chess. Both the men were glad the girls were happy in their work and enthusiastic over the success of their audacious venture. Beth was developing decided talent as a writer of editorials and her articles were even more thoughtful and dignified than were those of Patsy. The two girls found plenty to occupy them at the office, while Louise did the reportorial work and flitted through Millville and down to Huntingdon each day in search of small items of local interest. She grew fond of this work, for it brought her close to the people and enabled her to study their characters and peculiarities. Her manner of approaching the simple country folk was so gracious and winning that they freely gave her any information they possessed, and chatted with her unreservedly.

Sometimes Louise would make her rounds alone, but often Arthur would join her for an afternoon drive to Huntingdon, and it greatly amused him to listen to his girl-wife's adroit manner of "pumping the natives."

About halfway to Huntingdon was the Sizer Farm, the largest and most important in that vicinity. Old Zeke Sizer had a large family — five boys and three girls — and they were noted as quite the most aggressive and disturbing element in the neighborhood. Old Zeke was rude and coarse and swore like a trooper, so his sons could not be expected to excel him in refinement. Bill Sizer, the eldest, was a hard drinker, and people who knew him asserted that he "never drew a sober breath." The other sons were all quarrelsome in disposition and many a free fight was indulged in among them whenever disputes arose. They were industrious farmers, though, and the three girls and their mother worked from morning till night, so the farm

prospered and the Sizers were reputed to be "well-off."

Molly, the eldest girl, had attracted Louise, who declared she was pretty enough to arrest attention in any place. Indeed, this girl was a "raving beauty" in her buxom, countrified way, and her good looks were the pride of the Sizer family and the admiration of the neighbors. The other two were bouncing, merry girls, rather coarse in manner, as might be expected from their environment; but Molly, perhaps fully conscious of her prettiness, assumed certain airs and graces and a regal deportment that brought even her big, brutal brothers to her feet in adoration.

The Sizers were among the first subscribers to the *Millville Tribune* and whenever Louise stopped at the farmhouse for news the family would crowd around her, ignoring all duties, and volunteer whatever information they possessed. For when they read their own gossip in the local column it gave them a sort of proprietary interest in the paper, and Bill had once thrashed a young clerk at Huntingdon for questioning the truth of an item the Sizers had contributed.

One day when Louise and Arthur stopped at the farm, Mollie ran out with an eager face to say that Friday was her birthday and the Sizers were to give a grand party to celebrate it.

"We want you to come over an' write it up, Mrs. Weldon," said the girl. "They're comin' from twenty mile around, fer the dance, an' we've got the orchestry from Malvern to play for us. Pop's goin' to spend a lot of money on refreshments an' it'll be the biggest blow-out Chazy County ever seen!"

"I think I can write up the party without being present, Mollie," suggested Louise.

"No; you come over. I read once, in a novel, how an editor come to a swell party an' writ about all the dresses an' things — said what everybody wore, you know. I'm goin' to have a new dress, an' if ever'thing's described right well we'll buy a lot of papers to send to folks we know in Connecticut."

"Well," said Louise, with a sigh, "I'll try to drive over for a little while. It is to be Saturday, you say?"

"Yes; the birthday's Friday and the dance Saturday night, rain or shine. An' you might bring the chief editor, your husband, an' try a dance with us. It wouldn't hurt our reputation any to have you folks mingle with us on this festive occasion," she added airily.

They had a good laugh over this invitation when it was reported at Mr. Merrick's dinner table, and Patsy insisted that Louise must write up the party.

"It will be fun to give it a 'double head' and a big send-off," she said. "Write it up as if it were a real society event, dear, and exhaust your

vocabulary on the gowns. You'll have to invent some Frenchy names to describe those, I guess, for they'll be wonders; and we'll wind up with a list of 'those present.'"

So on Saturday evening Arthur drove his wife over to the Sizer farm, and long before they reached there they heard the scraping of fiddles, mingled with shouts and boisterous laughter. It was a prohibition district, to be sure, but old Sizer had imported from somewhere outside the "dry zone" a quantity of liquors more remarkable for strength than quality, and with these the guests had been plied from the moment of their arrival. Most of them were wholly unused to such libations, so by the time Arthur and Louise arrived, the big living room of the farmhouse presented an appearance of wild revelry that was quite deplorable.

Molly welcomed them with wild enthusiasm and big Bill, her adoring brother, demanded in a loud voice if Arthur did not consider her the "Belle of Chazy County."

"They ain't a stunner in the state as kin hold a candle to our Molly," he added, and then with uncertain gait he left the "reporters" with the promise to "bring 'em a drink."

"Come, Louise," said Arthur, quietly, "let's get out of here."

He drew her to the door and as a dance was just starting they managed to escape without notice.

"What a disgraceful scene!" cried Louise, when they were on their way home; "and to think of such a shocking carousal being held in good old Chazy County, where morals are usually irreproachable! I shall not mention the affair in the *Tribune* at all."

But Patsy, who had a managing editor's respect for news of any sort, combatted this determination and begged Louise to write up Molly Sizer's party without referring to its deplorable features.

"It isn't policy to offend the Sizers," she said, "for although they are coarse and common they have shown a friendly spirit toward the paper. Moreover, the enmity of such people — which would surely result from our ignoring the birthday party — would keep us in hot water."

So Louise, though reluctantly, wrote up the party and the manuscript was sent over to Miss Briggs Sunday afternoon, so it would get a place in Monday morning's *Tribune*.

Uncle John had the paper at breakfast on Monday, and he gave an amused laugh as his eye caught the report of the Sizer party.

"This is a good one on you, Louise," he exclaimed. "You say that Miss Molly, 'looking more lovely than ever in her handsome new gown, greeted her guests with a roughish smile.'"

“A what?” demanded Louise, horrified.

“A ‘roughish’ smile.”

“Oh; that’s a mistake,” she said, glancing at the item. “What I said was a ‘roguish’ smile; but there’s been a typographical error which Miss Briggs must have overlooked in reading the proof.”

“Nevertheless,” remarked Arthur, “the statement isn’t far wrong. Everything was rough, including the smiles, as far as I noted that remarkable gathering.”

“But — see here!” cried Patsy; “that’s a dreadful mistake. That spoils all the nice things you said about the girl, Louise. I hope the Sizers won’t notice it.”

But the Sizers did, and were frantic with rage over what they deemed was a deliberate insult to Molly. Several young men who had come from distances to attend the birthday party had stayed over Sunday at the farmhouse, where the revelry still continued in a fitful way, due to vain attempts to relieve racking headaches by further libations. Monday morning found the dissipated crew still the guests of the Sizers, and when big Bill slowly spelled out the assertion made by the *Tribune* that his sister had “a roughish smile” loud cries of indignation arose. Molly first cried and then had hysterics and screamed vigorously; Bill swore vengeance on the *Millville Tribune* and all connected with it, while the guests gravely asserted it was “a low-down, measly trick” which the Sizers ought to resent. They all began drinking again, to calm their feelings, and after the midday dinner Bill Sizer grabbed a huge cowhide whip and started to Millville to “lick the editor to a standstill.” A wagonload of his guests accompanied him, and Molly pleaded with her brother not to hurt Mrs. Weldon.

“I won’t; but I’ll cowhide that fresh husband of hers,” declared Bill. “He’s the editor — the paper says so — and he’s the one I’m after!”

CHAPTER XIII

BOB WEST INTERFERES

It was unfortunate that at that time Thursday Smith had gone up the electric line toward Royal, to inspect it. In the office were Patsy, Hetty Hewitt — who was making a drawing — Arthur Weldon, engaged upon his books, and finally, seated in an easy-chair from which he silently watched them work, old Bob West, the hardware man. Louise and Beth had driven over to the Junction to write up an accident, one of the trainmen having caught his hand in a coupling, between two freight cars.

Bob West often dropped into the office, which was next door to his own place of business, but he was a silent man and had little to say on these visits. In his early days he had wandered pretty much over the whole world, and he could relate some interesting personal adventures if he chose. In this retired village West was the one inhabitant distinguished above his fellows for his knowledge of the world. In his rooms over the store, where few were ever invited, he had a fine library of unusual books and a rare collection of curios gathered from foreign lands. It was natural that such a man would be interested in so unique an experiment as the *Millville Tribune*, and he watched its conduct with curiosity but a constantly growing respect for the three girl journalists. No one ever minded when he came into the office, nodded and sat down. Sometimes he would converse with much freedom; at other times the old gentleman remained an hour without offering a remark, and went away with a brief parting nod.

It was West who first saw, through the window, the wagonload of men from the Sizer farm come dashing up the street at a gallop. Instinctively, perhaps, he knew trouble was brewing, but he never altered his expression or his attitude, even when the wagon stopped at the printing office and the passengers leaped out.

In marched Bill Sizer at the head of his following, cowhide in hand.
Patsy, her face flushing scarlet, stood up and faced the intruders.

"Stand back, girl!" cried Sizer in a fierce tone; "it's that coward editor I'm after," pointing his whip with trembling hand at Arthur. "My sister Molly may be rough, an' hev a rough smile, but I'll be dinged ef I don't skin the man thet prints it in a paper!"

"Good fer you, Bill!" murmured his friends, approvingly.

Arthur leaned back and regarded his accuser in wonder. The big table, littered with papers, was between them.

"Come out o' there, ye measly city chap, an' take yer medicine," roared Bill, swinging his whip. "I'll larn ye to come inter a decent neighborhood an'

slander its women. Come outer there!”

West had sat quietly observing the scene. Now he inquired, in composed tones:

“What’s the trouble, Bill?”

“Trouble? Trouble, West? Why, this lyin’ scroundrel said in his paper thet our Molly had a rough smile. That’s the trouble!”

“Did he really say that?” asked West.

“‘Course he did. Printed it in the paper, for all to read. That’s why I’ve come to cowhide the critter within an inch o’ his life!”

“Good fer you, Bill!” cried his friends, encouragingly.

“But — wait a moment!” commanded West, as the maddened, half drunken young farmer was about to leap over the table to grasp his victim; “you’re not going at this thing right, Bill Sizer.”

“Why ain’t I, Bob West?”

“Because,” answered West, in calm, even tones, “this insult is too great to be avenged by a mere cowhiding. Nothing but blood will wipe away the dreadful stain on your sister’s character.”

“Oh, Mr. West!” cried Patsy, horrified by such a statement.

“Eh? Blood?” said Bill, stupefied by the suggestion.

“Of course,” returned West. “You mustn’t thrash Mr. Weldon; you must kill him.”

A delighted chorus of approval came from Sizer’s supporters.

“All right, then,” said the bully, glaring around, “I — I’ll kill the scandler!”

“Hold on!” counselled West, seizing his arm. “This affair must be conducted properly — otherwise the law might cause us trouble. No murder, mind you. You must kill Weldon in a duel.”

“A — a what? A duel!” gasped Sizer.

“To be sure. That’s the way to be revenged. Hetty,” he added, turning to the artist, who alone of the observers had smiled instead of groaned at the old gentleman’s startling suggestion, “will you kindly run up to my rooms and get a red leather case that lies under the shell cabinet? Thank you, my dear.”

Hetty was off like a flash. During her absence an intense silence pervaded the office, broken only by an occasional hiccough from one of Mr. Sizer’s guests. Patsy was paralyzed with horror and had fallen back into her chair to glare alternately at Bob West and the big bully who threatened her cousin’s husband. Arthur was pale and stern as he fixed a reproachful gaze on the hardware merchant. From Miss Briggs’ little room could be heard the steady click-click of the telegraph instrument.

But the furious arrival of the Sizer party had aroused every inhabitant of

Millville and with one accord they dropped work and rushed to the printing office. By this time the windows were dark with groups of eager faces that peered wonderingly through the screens — the sashes being up — and listened to the conversation within.

While Hetty was gone not a word was spoken, but the artist was absent only a brief time. Presently she reentered and laid the red leather case on the table before Bob West. The hardware man at once opened it, displaying a pair of old-fashioned dueling pistols, with long barrels and pearl handles. There was a small can of powder, some bullets and wadding in the case, and as West took up one of the pistols and proceeded to load it he said in an unconcerned voice:

"I once got these from an officer in Vienna, and they have been used in more than a score of duels, I was told. One of the pistols — I can't tell which it is — has killed a dozen men, so you are going to fight with famous weapons."

Both Arthur and Bill Sizer, as well as the groups at the window, watched the loading of the pistols with fascinated gaze.

"Bob's a queer ol' feller," whispered Peggy McNutt to the blacksmith, who stood beside him. "This dool is just one o' his odd fancies. Much he keers ef they kills each other er not!"

"Mr. West," cried Patsy, suddenly rousing from her apathy, "I'll not allow this shameful thing! A duel is no better than murder, and I'm sure there is a law against it."

"True," returned West, ramming the bullet into the second pistol; "it is quite irregular and — er — illegal, I believe. Perhaps I shall go to jail with whichever of the duelists survives; but you see it is a point of honor with us all. Molly Sizer has seemingly been grossly maligned in your paper, and the editor is responsible. Are you a good shot, Bill?"

"I — I guess so," stammered Sizer.

"That's good. Weldon, I hear, is an expert with the pistol."

Arthur did not contradict this statement, although he was positive he could not hit a barn at twenty yards.

"Now, then, are we ready?" staid West, rising. "Come with me, gentlemen."

"What ye goin' to do, Bob?" asked Sizer, anxiously.

"I'll explain," replied the hardware man, leading the way to the street. Everyone followed him and the crowd at the windows joined the group outside. "Of course you mustn't shoot in the main street, for you might hit some one, or break windows; but back of this row of buildings is a lane that is perfectly clear. You will stand back to back in the center of the block and

then, at my word, you will each march to the end of the block and pass around the buildings to the lane. As soon as you come in sight of one another you are privileged to fire, and I suppose Bill Sizer will try to kill you, Mr. Weldon, on the spot, and therefore you will try to kill him first."

"But — look a-here, Bob!" cried Sizer; "it ain't right fer him to take a shot at me. You said fer me to kill him, but ye didn't say nuth'n about *his* shootin' at *me*."

"That's all right, Bill," returned West. "You're in the right, and the right ought to win. But you must give the man a chance for his life, you know."

"That weren't in the bargain."

"It is now, by the laws of dueling."

"He — he might shoot me," urged Bill.

"It isn't likely. Although he's a dead shot, you have right on your side, and you must be sure to fire as soon as you get within good range. It won't be considered murder; it will only be a duel, and the law will deal lightly with you."

"That's right, Bill," asserted one of Sizer's friends. "Bob West's a justice o' the peace himself, an' he orter know."

"I do know," declared West gravely.

He placed Arthur Weldon and Bill Sizer back to back in the middle of the street and handed each a pistol.

"Now, then," said he, "you both understand the rules, which I have explained, and the spectators will bear witness that, whatever happens, this affair has been conducted in a regular manner, with no favor shown to either. You are both brave men, and this duel will vindicate your honor. If you are fortunate enough to survive, you will be heroes, and all your differences will be wiped off the slate. But as one or both may fall, we, the citizens of Millville, hereby bid you a solemn and sad farewell."

Impressed by this speech, Sizer's friends began to shake hands with him.

"All ready!" called West. "One — two — three — — go!"

At the word the two, back to back, started for the opposite ends of the little street, and at once the crowd made a rush between the buildings to gain the rear, where they might witness the shooting in the lane when the duelists met. Arthur had been thinking seriously during these proceedings and had made up his mind it was in no degree his duty to be bored full of holes by a drunken countryman like Bill Sizer, just because there had been a typographical error in the *Millville Tribune*. So, when he got to the end of the street, instead of turning into the lane he made for the farm, holding the long dueling pistol gingerly in his hand and trotting at a good pace for home.

Footsteps followed him. In sudden panic he increased his run; but the

other was faster. A heavy hand grasped his shoulder and swung him around, while old Bob West, panting for Breath, exclaimed:

“Stop, you fool — stop! The other one is running.”

“The other one!” echoed Arthur, wonderingly.

“Of course. Bill Sizer was sure to run; he’s a coward, as all bullies are. Quick, Weldon, save the day and your reputation or I’ll never stand your friend again.”

Arthur understood now. He turned and ran back faster than he had come, swung into the lane where the crowd was cautiously peering from the shelter of the buildings, and waving his pistol in a reckless way that made Bob West shudder, he cried out:

“Where is he? Where’s Sizer? Why don’t he show up and be shot, like a man?”

No Sizer appeared. He was even then headed cross-lots for home, leaving his friends to bemoan his cowardice. As for Arthur, the crowd gave him a cheer and condemned his opponent’s conduct in no measured terms. They were terribly disappointed by Big Bill’s defection, for while not especially bloodthirsty they hated to see the impending tragedy turn out a farce.

In the printing office Patsy was laughing hysterically as her horror dissolved and allowed her to discover the comic phase of the duel. She literally fell on Arthur’s neck as he entered, but the next moment pushed him away to face the hardware merchant.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. West,” said she with twinkling eyes. “I suspected you of being a cold-blooded ruffian, when you proposed this duel; but I now see that you understand human nature better than the whole caboodle of us put together! Arthur, thank Mr. West for saving you from a flogging.”

“I do, indeed!” said Arthur fervently.

CHAPTER XIV
THE DANGER SIGNAL

By this time the *Tribune* had become the pride of all Millville, yet the villagers could not quite overcome their awe and wonder at it. Also the newspaper was the pride of the three girl journalists, who under the tutelage of Miss Briggs were learning to understand the complicated system of a daily journal. Their amateurish efforts were gradually giving way to more dignified and readable articles; Beth could write an editorial that interested even Uncle John, her severest critic; Louise showed exceptional talent for picking up local happenings and making news notes of them, while Patsy grabbed everything that came to her net — locals, editorials, telegraphic and telephone reports from all parts of the world — and skillfully sorted, edited and arranged them for the various departments of the paper. It was mighty interesting to them all, and they were so eager each morning to get to work that they could scarcely devote the proper time to old Nora's famous breakfasts.

"We made a mistake. Uncle," said Patsy to Mr. Merrick, "in starting the *Tribune* in the wrong place. In a few weeks we must leave it and go back to the city, whereas, had we established our paper in New York — "

"Then it never would have been heard of," interrupted practical Beth. "In New York, Patsy dear, we would become the laughing stock of the town. I shudder when I think what a countrified paper we turned out that first issue."

"But we are fast becoming educated," declared Patsy. "I'm not ashamed of the *Tribune* now, even in comparison with the best New York dailies."

Beth laughed, but Uncle John said judicially:

"For Millville, it's certainly a marvel. I get the world news more concisely and more pleasantly from its four pages than when I wade through twenty or thirty of the big pages of a metropolitan newspaper. You are doing famously, my dears. I congratulate you."

"But we are running behind dreadfully," suggested Arthur, the bookkeeper, "even since Thursday Smith enabled us to cut down expenses so greatly. The money that comes in never equals what we pay out. How long can you keep this up, girls?"

They made no reply, nor did Uncle John discuss the financial condition of the newspaper. He was himself paying some heavy expenses that did not appear on the books, such as the Associated Press franchise, the telegraph bills and the electric power; but he was quite delighted to take care of these items and regretted he had not assumed more of the paper's obligations. He knew the expenses were eating big holes in the incomes of his three nieces,

yet they never complained nor allowed their enthusiasm to flag.

Mr. Merrick, who had tested these girls in more ways than one, was watching them carefully, and fully approved their spirit and courage under such trying conditions. Major Doyle, Patsy's father, when the first copy of the *Millville Tribune* was laid on his desk in the city, was astounded at the audacity of this rash venture. When he could command his temper to write calmly he sent a letter to Mr. Merrick which read: "Taken altogether, John, you're the craziest bunch of irresponsibles outside an asylum. No wonder you kept this folly a secret from me until you had accomplished your nefarious designs. The *Millville Daily Tribune* is a corker and no mistake, for our Patsy's at the head of your lunatic gang. I'll go farther, and say the paper's a wonder. I believe it is the first daily newspaper published in a town of six inhabitants, that has ever carried the Associated Press dispatches, But, allow me to ask, why? The lonely inhabitants of the desert of Chazy County don't need a daily — or a weekly — or a monthly. A semi-annual would about hit their gait, and be more than they deserve. So I've decided it's merely a silly way to spend money — and an easy way, too, I'll be bound. Oblige me by explaining this incomprehensible eccentricity."

To this, a mild protest for the major, Uncle John replied: "Dear Major Doyle: Yours received. Have you no business of your own to attend to? Affectionately yours, John Merrick."

The major took the hint. He made no further complaint but read the paper religiously every day, gloating over Patsy's name as managing editor and preserving the files with great care. He really enjoyed, the *Millville Tribune*, and as his summer vacation was shortly due he anticipated with pleasure a visit to the farm and a peep at the workings of "our Patsy's" famous newspaper. The other girls he ignored. If Patsy was connected with the thing, her adoring parent was quite sure she was responsible for all the good there was in it.

The paper printed no mention of the famous duel. But Hetty made a cartoon of it, showing the lane, with its fringe of spectators, Arthur Weldon standing manfully to await his antagonist and big Bill Sizer, in the distance, sprinting across the fields in the direction of home. This cartoon was highly prized by those who had witnessed the adventure and Peggy McNutt pinned it on the wall of his real estate office beside the one Hetty had made of himself. Bill Sizer promptly "stopped the paper," that being the only vengeance at hand, and when Bob West sent a boy to him demanding the return of the pistol, Bill dispatched with the weapon the following characteristic note, which he had penned with much labor:

"Bob west sir you Beet me out uv my Reeveng and Made me look like a

bag uv Beens. but I will skware this Thing sum da and yu and that edyter hed better Watch out. i don't stand fer no Throwdown like that Wm. Sizer."

However, the bully received scant sympathy, even from his most intimate friends, and his prestige in the community was henceforth destroyed. Arthur did not crow, for his part. He told the girls frankly of his attempt to run away and evade the meeting, which sensible intention was only frustrated by Bob West's interference, and they all agreed he was thoroughly justified. The young man had proved to them his courage years before and none of the girls was disposed to accuse him of cowardice for not wishing to shoot or be shot by such a person as Bill Sizer.

A few days following the duel another incident occurred which was of a nature so startling that it drove the Sizer comedy from all minds. This time Thursday Smith was the hero.

Hetty Hewitt, it seems, was having a desperate struggle to quell the longings of her heart for the allurements of the great city. She had been for years a thorough Bohemienne, frequenting cafes, theatres and dance halls, smoking and drinking with men and women of her class and, by degrees, losing every womanly quality with which nature had generously endowed her. But the girl was not really bad. She was essentially nervous and craved excitement, so she had drifted into this sort of life because no counteracting influence of good had been injected into her pliable disposition. None, that is, until the friendly editor for whom she worked, anticipating her final downfall, had sought to save her by sending her to a country newspaper. He talked to the girl artist very frankly before she left for Millville, and Hetty knew he was right, and was truly grateful for the opportunity to redeem herself. The sweet girl journalists with whom she was thrown in contact were so different from any young women she had heretofore known, and proved so kindly sympathetic, that Hetty speedily became ashamed of her wasted life and formed a brave resolution to merit the friendship so generously extended her.

But it was hard work at first. She could get through the days easily enough by wandering in the woods and taking long walks along the rugged country roads; but in the evenings came the insistent call of the cafes, the cheap orchestras, vaudeville, midnight suppers and the like. She strenuously fought this yearning and found it was growing less and less powerful to influence her. But her nights were yet restless and her nerves throbbing from the effects of past dissipations. Often she would find herself unable to sleep and would go out into the moonlight when all others were in bed, and "prowl around with the cats," as she expressed it, until the wee hours of morning. Often she told Patsy she wished there was more work she could do. The drawings

required by the paper never occupied her more than a couple of hours each day. Sometimes she made one of her cleverest cartoons in fifteen or twenty minutes.

"Can't I do something else?" she begged. "Let me set type, or run the ticker — I can receive telegrams fairly well — or even write a column of local comment. I'm no journalist, so you'll not be envious."

But Patsy shook her head.

"Really, Hetty, there's nothing else you can do, and your pictures are very important to us. Rest and enjoy yourself, and get strong and well. You are improving wonderfully in health since you came here."

Often at midnight Hetty would wander into the pressroom and watch Thursday Smith run off the edition on the wonderful press, which seemed to possess an intelligence of its own, so perfectly did it perform its functions. At such times she sat listlessly by and said little, for Thursday was no voluble talker, especially when busied over his press. But a certain spirit of comradeship grew up between these two, and it was not unusual for the pressmen, after his work was finished and the papers were neatly piled for distribution to the carriers at daybreak, to walk with Hetty to the hotel before proceeding to his own lodgings in the little wing of Nick Thorne's house, which stood quite at the end of the street. To be sure, the hotel adjoined the printing office, with only a vacant lot between, but Hetty seemed to appreciate this courtesy and would exchange a brief good night with Smith before going to her own room. Afterward she not infrequently stole out again, because sleep would not come to her, and then the moon watched her wanderings until it dipped behind the hills.

On the night we speak of, Hetty had parted from Thursday Smith at one o'clock and crept into the hallway of the silent, barnlike hotel; but as soon as the man turned away she issued forth again and walked up the empty street like a shadow. Almost to Thompson's Crossing she strolled, deep in thought, and then turned and retraced her steps. But when she again reached the hotel she was wide-eyed as ever; so she passed the building, thinking she would go on to Little Bill Creek and sit by the old mill for a time.

The girl was just opposite the printing office when her attention was attracted by a queer grating noise, as if one of the windows was being pried up. She stopped short, a moment, and then crept closer to the building. Two men were at a side window of the pressroom, which they had just succeeded in opening. As Hetty gained her point of observation one of the men slipped inside, but a moment later hastily reappeared and joined his fellow. At once both turned and stole along the side of the shed directly toward the place where the girl stood. Her first impulse was to run, but recollecting that she

wore a dark gown and stood in deep shadow she merely flattened herself against the building and remained motionless. The men were chuckling as they passed her, and she recognized them as mill hands from Royal.

"Guess that'll do the job," said one, in a low tone.

"If it don't, nothin' will," was the reply.

They were gone, then, stealing across the road and beating a hasty retreat under the shadows of the houses.

Hetty stood motionless a moment, wondering what to do. Then with sudden resolve she ran to Thorne's house and rapped sharply at the window of the wing where she knew Thursday Smith slept. She heard him leap from bed and open the blind.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's me, Thursday — Hetty," she said. "Two men have just broken into the pressroom, through a window. They were men from Royal, and they didn't steal anything, but ran away in great haste. I — I'm afraid something is wrong, Thursday!"

Even while she spoke he was rapidly dressing.

"Wait!" he called to her. In a few moments he opened the door and joined her.

Without hesitation he began walking rapidly toward the office, and the girl kept step with him. He asked no questions whatever, but us soon as she had led him to the open window he leaped through it and switched on an electric light. An instant later he cried aloud, in a voice of fear:

"Get out, Hetty! Run — for your life!"

"Run yourself, Thursday, if there's danger," she coolly returned.

But he shouted "Run — run — run!" in such thrilling, compelling tones that the girl shrank away and dashed across the vacant lot to the hotel before she turned again in time to see Smith leap from the window and make a dash toward the rear. He was carrying something — something extended at arms' length before him — and he crossed the lane and ran far into the field before stooping to set down his burden.

Now he was racing back again, running as madly as if a troop of demons was after him. A flash cleft the darkness; a deep detonation thundered and echoed against the hills; the building against which Hetty leaned shook as if an earthquake had seized it, and Thursday Smith was thrown flat on his face and rolled almost to the terrified girl's feet, where he lay motionless. Only the building saved her from pitching headlong too, but as the reverberations died away, to be followed by frantic screams from the rudely wakened population of Millville, Hetty sank upon her knees and turned the man over, so that he lay face up.

He opened his eyes and put up one hand. Then he struggled to his feet, trembling weakly, and his white face smiled into the girl's anxious one.

"That was a close call, dear," he whispered; "but your timely discovery saved us from a terrible calamity. I — I don't believe there is much harm done, as it is."

Hetty made no reply. She was thinking of the moments he had held that deadly Thing in his hands, while he strove to save lives and property from destruction.

The inevitable crowd was gathering now, demanding in terrified tones what had happened. Men, women and children poured from the houses in scant attire, all unnerved and fearful, crying for an explanation of the explosion.

"Keep mum, Hetty," said Smith, warningly. "It will do no good to tell them the truth."

She nodded, realizing it was best the villagers did not suspect that an enemy of the newspaper had placed them all in dire peril.

"Dynamite?" she asked in a whisper.

"Yes; a bomb. But for heaven's sake don't mention it."

Suddenly a man with a lantern discovered a great pit in the field behind the lane and the crowd quickly surrounded it. From their limited knowledge of the facts the explosion seemed unaccountable, but there was sufficient intelligence among them to determine that dynamite had caused it and dug this gaping hole in the stony soil. Bob West glanced at the printing office, which was directly in line with the explosion; then he cast a shrewd look into the white face of Thursday Smith; but the old hardware merchant merely muttered under his breath something about Ojoy Boglin and shook his head determinedly when questioned by his fellow villagers.

Interest presently centered in the damage that had been done. Many window panes were shattered and the kitchen chimney of the hotel had toppled over; but no person had been injured and the damage could easily be repaired. While the excitement was at its height Thursday Smith returned to his room and went to bed; but long after the villagers had calmed down sufficiently to seek their homes Hetty Hewitt sat alone by the great pit, staring reflectively into its ragged depths. Quaint and curious were the thoughts that puzzled the solitary girl's weary brain, but prominent and ever-recurring was the sentence that had trembled upon Thursday Smith's lips: "It was a close call, *dear*!"

The "close call" didn't worry Hetty a particle; it was the last word of the sentence that amazed her. That, and a new and wonderful respect for the manliness of Thursday Smith, filled her heart to overflowing.

CHAPTER XV
A CLEVER IDEA

Neither Thursday nor Hetty allowed a word to escape concerning the placing of the bomb in the *Tribune* office, but the explosion was public knowledge and many were bothering their heads to explain its meaning.

John Merrick, when he heard the news, looked very grave and glanced uneasily into the unconscious faces of his three beloved nieces. A man of much worldly experience, in spite of his simple, ingenuous nature, the little man began carefully piecing together parts of the puzzle. Thursday Smith's defense of the girl journalists, whereby he had severely pounded some of the workmen who had insulted them, had caused the man to be denounced by the colony at Royal. Mr. Skeelty, the manager, had demanded that Smith be discharged by Mr. Mirrick, and being refused, had threatened to shut off the power from the newspaper plant. Skeelty dared not carry out this threat, for fear of a lawsuit, but his men, who had urged the matter of Smith's discharge upon their manager, were of the class that seeks revenge at any cost. At this juncture Ojoy Boglin, Skeelty's partner and the owner of all the pine forest around Royal, had become the enemy of the newspaper and was aware of the feeling among the workmen. A word from Boglin, backed by Skeelty's tacit consent, would induce the men to go to any length in injuring the *Millville Tribune* and all concerned in its welfare.

Considering these facts, Mr. Merrick shrewdly suspected that the dynamite explosion had been the work of the mill hands, yet why it was harmlessly exploded in a field was a factor that puzzled him exceedingly. He concluded, from what information he possessed, that they had merely intended this as a warning, which if disregarded might be followed by a more serious catastrophe.

The idea that such a danger threatened his nieces made the old gentleman distinctly nervous.

There were ways to evade further molestation from the lawless element at the mill. The Hon. Ojoy could be conciliated; Thursday Smith discharged; or the girls could abandon their journalistic enterprise altogether. Such alternatives were mortifying to consider, but his girls must be protected from harm at any cost.

While he was still considering the problem, the girls and Arthur having driven to the office, as usual, Joe Wegg rode over from Thompson's Crossing on his sorrel mare for a chat with his old friend and benefactor. It was this same young man — still a boy in years — who had once owned the Wegg Farm and disposed of it to Mr. Merrick.

Joe was something of a mechanical genius and, when his father died, longed to make his way in the great world. But after many vicissitudes and failures he returned to Chazy County to marry Ethel Thompson, his boyhood sweetheart, and to find that one of his father's apparently foolish investments had made him rich.

Ethel was the great-granddaughter of the pioneer settler of Chazy County — Little Bill Thompson — from whom the Little Bill Creek and Little Bill Mountain had been named. It was he who first established the mill at Millville; so, in marrying a descendant of Little Bill Thompson, Joe Wegg had become quite the most important resident of Chazy County, and the young man was popular and well liked by all who knew him.

After the first interchange of greetings Joe questioned Mr. Merrick about the explosion of the night before, and Uncle John frankly stated his suspicions.

"I'm sorry," said Joe, "they ever started that mill at Royal Falls. Most of the workmen are foreigners, and all of them rude and reckless. They have caused our quiet, law-abiding people no end of trouble and anxiety already. It is becoming a habit with them to haunt Millville on Saturday nights, when they are partly intoxicated, and they've even invaded some of the farmhouses and frightened the women and children. I've talked to Bob West about it and he has promised to swear in Lon Taft and Seth Davis as special constables, to preserve order; but he admits we are quite helpless to oppose such a gang of rowdies. I've also been to see Mr. Skeelty, to ask him to keep his men at home, but he answered gruffly that he had no authority over his employees except during working hours, and not much authority even then."

"Skeelty doesn't seem the right man to handle those fellows," observed Mr. Merrick thoughtfully; "but as he owns the controlling interest in his company, and Boglin is fully as unreasonable, we cannot possibly oust him from control. If the men determined to blow up all Millville with dynamite I'm sure Skeelty would not lift a finger to prevent it."

"No; he's deathly afraid of them, and that's a fact," said Joe.

They sat in silence a while.

"Your report of Skeelty's threat to cut off your electric power," said young Wegg, "reminds me of a plan I've had in mind for some time. I find I've too much time on my hands, Mr. Merrick, and I cannot be thoroughly happy unless I'm occupied. Ethel's farms are let on shares and I'm a drone in the world's busy hive. But we're anchored here at Millville, so I've been wondering what I could do to improve the place and keep myself busy. It has seemed to me that the same rush of water in Little Bill Creek that runs the dynamos at Royal is in evidence — to a lesser extent — at the old milldam.

What would you think of my putting in an electric plant at the mill, and lighting both Millville and Huntingdon, as well as all the farmhouses?"

"Not a bad idea, Joe," said Uncle John approvingly.

"Electric lights have a civilizing influence," continued the young man. "I'm quite sure all the farmers between here and Huntingdon would use them, at a reasonable price. I can also run a line to Hooker's Falls, and one to Chazy Junction. Plenty of poles can be cut from our pine forests and the wires will be the chief expense. I may not make money, at first, but I'll play pretty nearly even and have something to do."

"Do you think you could furnish enough power for our printing office?" asked Mr. Merrick.

"Yes; and a dozen factories, besides. I've an idea the thing may bring factories to Millville."

"Then get at it, Joe, and build it quick. I've a notion we shall have an open rupture with Skeelty before long."

Joe Wegg smiled.

"You're going to accuse me, sir, of asking advice after I've made up my mind," said he; "but the fact is, I have bought the mill of Silas Caldwell already. He's been wanting to dispose of the property for some time."

"Good!" exclaimed Uncle John.

"Also I — I've ordered a dynamo and machinery. It all ought to be here in a few days."

"Better yet!" cried Mr. Merrick. "You've relieved my mind of a great weight, Joe."

"Now about Thursday Smith," said the young man. "Don't you think it would be policy for you to let him go, Mr. Merrick?"

"No."

"He's a clever fellow. I can use him at my lighting plant."

"Thank you, Joe; but that wouldn't help any. As long as he's in Millville he will be an object of vengeance to those anarchistic mill hands. The only way to satisfy them in to drive Smith out of town, and — I'll be hanged if I'll do it! He hasn't done anything wrong, and I'm interested in the fellow's curious history. I've put his case in the hands of a famous New York detective — Fogerty — with instructions to discover who he is, and I can't let a lot of rowdies force me to abandon the man for no reasonable cause."

"Don't blame you, sir," said Joe. "If it wasn't this Thursday Smith, some other would incur the hatred of the Royal workmen, and as they're disposed to terrorize us we may as well fight it out on this line as any other. The whole county will stand by you, sir."

"The only thing I dread is possible danger to my girls."

“Keep ‘em away from the office evenings,” advised Joe. “During the day they are perfectly safe. If anything happens, it will be at night, and while the newspaper office may some time go flying skyward the girls will run no personal danger whatever.”

“Maybe so, Joe. How queer it is that such a condition should exist in Millville — a little forgotten spot in the very heart of civilization and the last place where one might expect excitement of this sort. But I won’t be cowed; I won’t be driven or bullied by a pack of foreign hounds, I assure you! If Skeelty can’t discipline his men, I will.”

In furtherance of which assertion, Mr. Merrick went to town and wired a message to the great Fogerty.

CHAPTER XVI
LOCAL CONTRIBUTION

We hear considerable of the "conventional people" of this world, but seldom meet with them; for, as soon as we begin to know a person, we discover peculiarities that quite remove him from the ranks of the conventional — if such ranks exist at all. The remark of the old Scotch divine to his good wife: "Everybody's queer but thee and me, Nancy, and sometimes I think *thee* a little queer," sums up human nature admirably. We seldom recognize our own queerness, but are prone to mark the erratic temperaments of others, and this is rather more comfortable than to be annoyed by a consciousness of our personal deficits.

The inhabitants of a country town are so limited in their experiences that we generally find their personal characteristics very amusing. No amount of scholastic learning could have rendered the Millville people sophisticated, for contact with the world and humanity is the only true educator; but, as a matter of fact, there was little scholastic learning among them, with one or two exceptions, and the villagers as a rule were of limited intelligence. Every one was really a "character," and Uncle John's nieces, who all possessed a keen sense of humor, enjoyed the oddities of the Millvillites immensely.

A humorous situation occurred through a seemingly innocent editorial of Beth on authorship. In the course of her remarks she said: "A prominent author is stated to have accumulated a large fortune by writing short stories for the newspapers and magazines. He is said to receive ten cents a word, and this unusual price is warranted by the eager demand for his stories, of which the reading public is very fond. However, the unknown author does not fare so badly. The sum of from thirty to fifty dollars usually remitted for a short story pays the beginner a better recompense, for the actual time he is engaged upon the work, than any other occupation he might undertake."

This was seriously considered the morning it appeared in the *Tribune* by Peggy McNutt and Skim Clark, as they sat in the sunshine on the former's little front porch. Peggy had read it aloud in his laborious, halting way, and Skim listened with growing amazement.

"Thirty dollars!" he cried; "thirty to fifty fer a short story! Great Snakes, Peggy, I'm goin' into it."

"Heh? Goin' into what?" asked Peggy, raising his eyes from the paper.

"I kin write a story," declared Skim confidently.

"Ye kin, Skim?"

"It's a cinch, Peggy. Mother keeps all the magazines an' paper novils, an' we allus reads 'em afore we sells 'em. I've read the gol-durndest lot o' truck

ye ever heard of, so I'm posted on stories in gen'ral. I'll write one an' sell it to the *Millville Tribune*. Do ye s'pose they'll give me the thirty, er the fifty, Peggy?"

"Anywheres between, they says. But one feller gits ten cents a word. Whew!"

"I know; but he's a big one, which I ain't — just now. I'll take even the thirty, if I hev to."

"I would, Skim," advised Peggy, nodding approval. "But make 'em put yer photygraf in the paper, besides. Say, it'll be a big thing fer Millville to turn out a author. I didn't think it were in you, Skim."

"Why, it hadn't struck me afore," replied the youth, modestly. "I've ben hankerin' to make money, without knowin' how to do it. I tell ye, Peggy, it pays to read the newspapers. This one's give me a hint how to carve out a future career, an' I'll write a story as'll make them girl edyturs set up an' take notice."

"Make it someth'n' 'bout Injuns," suggested Peggy. "I ain't read a Injun story fer years."

"No; they're out o' fashion," observed Skim loftily. "What folks want now is a detective story. Feller sees a hole in a fence an' says, 'Ha! there's ben a murder!' Somebody asks what makes him think so, an' the detective feller says, takin' out a magnifie-in' glass, 'Thet hole's a bullet-hole, an' the traces o' blood aroun' the edges shows the bullet went through a human body afore it went through the fence.' 'Then,' says some one, 'where's the body?' 'That,' says the detective, 'is what we mus' diskiver.' So the story goes on to show how the body were diskivered an' who did the murderin'."

"By Jupe, thet's great!" cried Peggy admiringly. "Skim, ye're a wonder!"

"Ma allus said I were good fer somethin', but she couldn't tell what."

"It's story-writin'," declared Peggy "Say, Skim, I put ye onter this deal; don't I git a rake-off on thet fifty dollars?"

"Not a cent!" said Skim indignantly. "Ye didn't tell me to write a story; I said myself as I could do it. An' I know where to use the money, Peggy, ev'ry dollar of it, whether it's thirty er fifty."

Peggy sighed.

"I writ a pome once," he said. "Wonder ef they'd pay fer a pome?"

"What were it like?" asked Skim curiously.

"It went someth'n' this way," said Peggy:

"I sigh
Ter fly
Up high
In the sky.

But my
Wings is shy,
So I mus' cry
Good-bye
Ter fly-
in'."

"Shoo!" said Skim disdainfully. "Thet ain't no real pome, Peggy."

"It makes rhymes, don't it? All but the las' line."

"Mebbe it does," replied Skim, with assumption of superior wisdom; "but it don't mean nuth'n'."

"It would ef I got paid fer it," observed Peggy.

Skim went home to his mother's tiny "Emporium," took some note paper out of stock, opened a new bottle of ink and sat down at the sitting room table to write his story. The Widow Clark looked in and asked what he meant by "squanderin' profits that way."

"Shet up, mar. Gi' me elbow room," said her dutiful son. "I'm writin' a fifty dollar story fer the *Tribune*."

"Fifty dollars!"

"Thirty, anyhow; mebbe fifty," replied Skim. "What's a good name fer a detective, mar?"

The widow sat down and wiped her damp hands on her apron, looking upon her hopeful with an expression of mingled awe and pride.

"Kin ye do it, Skim?" she asked softly.

"I s'pose I kin turn out one a day, by hard work," he said confidently. "At thirty a day, the lowes' price, thet's a hunderd 'n' eighty a week, seven hunderd 'n' twenty a month, or over eight thousan' dollars a year. I got it all figgered out. It's lucky fer me the nabobs is rich, or they couldn't stan' the strain. Now, mar, ef ye want to see yer son a nabob hisself, some day, jes' think up a good name fer a detective."

"Sherholmes Locke," she said after some reflection.

"No; this 'ere story's got ter be original. I thought o' callin' him Suspectin' Algernon. Detectives is allus suspectin' something."

"Algernon's high-toned," mused the widow. "Let it go at that, Skim."

All that day and far into the evening he sat at his task, pausing now and then for inspiration, but most of the time diligently pushing his pen over the strongly lined note paper and hopelessly straying from the lines. Meantime, Mrs. Clark walked around on tiptoe, so as not to disturb him, and was reluctant even to call him to his meals in the kitchen. When Skim went to bed his story had got into an aggravating muddle, but during the next forenoon he managed to bring it to a triumphant ending.

“When I git used to the thing, mar,” he said, “I kin do one a day, easy. I had to be pertickler over this one, it bein’ the first.”

The widow read the story carefully, guessing at the words that were hopelessly indistinct.

“My! but it’s a thriller, Skim,” she said with maternal enthusiasm; “but ye don’t say why he killed the girl.”

“That don’t matter, so long’s he did it.”

“The spellin’ don’t allus seem quite right,” she added doubtfully.

“I guess the spellin’s as good as the readin’ll be,” he retorted, with evident irritation. “I bet I spell as well as any o’ the folks thet takes the paper.”

“And some words I can’t make out.”

“Oh, the edytur’ll fix that. Say, air ye tryin’ to queer my story, mar? Do ye set up to know more’n I do about story writin’?”

“No,” she said; “I ain’t talented, Skim, an’ you be.”

“What I orter hev,” he continued, reflectively, “is a typewriter. When I git two er three hunderd ahead perhaps I’ll buy one — secondhand.”

“Kin ye buy one thet’ll spell, Skim?” she asked, as she made a neat roll of the manuscript and tied a pink hair ribbon around it.

Skim put on a collar and necktie and took his story across to the newspaper office.

“I got a conter-bution fer the paper,” he said to Patsy, who asked him his business.

“What, something original, Skim?” she asked in surprise.

“Ye’ve hit it right, Miss Doyle; it’s a story.”

“Oh!”

“A detective story.”

“Dear me! Then you’ll have to see Mrs. Weldon, who is our literary editor.”

Louise, who was sitting close by, looked up and held out her hand for the beribboned roll.

“I don’t jes’ know,” remarked Skim, as he handed it across the table, “whether it’s a thirty dollar deal, er a fifty.”

Having forgotten Beth’s editorial, Louise did not understand this remark, but she calmly unrolled Skim’s manuscript and glanced at the scrawled heading with an amused smile.

“‘Suspecting Algernon,’“ she read aloud.

“‘It were a dark and teedjus night in the erly springtime while the snow were falling soft over the moon litt lanskape.’ Why, Skim, how came you to write this?”

“It were the money,” he said boldly. “I kin do one a day like this, at thirty

dollers apiece, an' never feel the wear an' tear."

Patsy giggled, but Louise stared with a wondering, puzzled expression at the crabbed writing, the misspelled words and dreadful grammar. Indeed, she was a little embarrassed how to handle so delicate a situation.

"I'm afraid we cannot use your story, Mr. Clark," she said gently, and remembering the formula that usually accompanied her own rejected manuscripts she added: "This does not necessarily imply a lack of merit in your contribution, but is due to the fact that it is at present unavailable for our use."

Skim stared at her in utter dismay.

"Ye mean ye won't take it?" he asked with trembling lips.

"We have so much material on hand, just now, that we cannot possibly purchase more," she said firmly, but feeling intensely sorry for the boy. "It may be a good story — "

"It's the bes' story I ever heard of!" declared Skim.

"But we have no place for it in the *Millville Tribune,*" she added, handing him back the roll.

Skim was terribly disappointed. Never, for a single moment, had he expected "sech a throwdown as this."

"Seems to me like a bunco game," he muttered savagely. "First ye say in yer blamed ol' paper a story's wuth thirty to fifty dollars, an' then when I bring ye a story ye won't pay a red cent fer it!"

"Stories," suggested Louise, "are of various qualities, depending on the experience and talent of the author. An excellent story is often refused because the periodical to which it is offered is overstocked with similar material. Such conditions are often trying, Skim; I've had a good many manuscripts rejected myself."

But the boy would not be conciliated.

"I'll send it to Munsey's, thet's what I'll do; an' then you'll be durn sorry," he said, almost ready to cry.

"Do," urged Louise sweetly. "And if they print it, Mr. Clark, I'll agree to purchase your next story for fifty dollars."

"All right; the fifty's mine. I got witnesses, mind ye!" and he flounced out of the room like an angry schoolboy.

"Oh, Louise," exclaimed Patsy, reproachfully, "why didn't you let me see the thing? It would have been better than a circus."

"Poor boy!" said the literary editor, with a sigh. "I didn't want to humiliate him more than I could help. I wonder if he really will have the audacity to send it to Munsey's?"

And now the door opened to admit Peggy McNutt, who had been

watching his chance to stump across to the printing office as soon as Skim left there. For Peggy had reasoned, not unjustly, that if Skim Clark could make a fortune as an author he, Marshall McMahon McNutt, had a show to corral a few dollars in literature himself. After lying awake half the night thinking it over, he arose this morning with the firm intention of competing with Skim for the village laurels. He well knew he could not write a shuddery detective story, such as Skim had outlined, but that early poem of his, which the boy had seemed to regard so disdainfully, was considered by Peggy a rather clever production. He repeated it over and over to himself, dwelling joyously on its perfect rhyme, until he was convinced it was a good poem and that Skim had enviously slandered it. So he wrote it out in big letters on a sheet of foolscap and determined to offer it to "them newspaper gals."

"I got a pome, Miss Patsy," he said, with unusual diffidence, for he was by no means sure the "gals" would not agree with Skim's criticism.

"What! Another contributor?" she exclaimed playfully. "Has the whole town suddenly turned literary, Peggy?"

"No; jest me 'n' Skim. Skim says my pome's no good; but I sort o' like it, myself."

"Let me see it," said Patsy, ignoring this time the literary editor, who was glad to be relieved of the responsibility of disappointing another budding author.

Peggy handed over the foolscap, and Patsy eagerly read the "pome."

"Listen, Louise! Listen, Beth!" she called, delightedly. "Here is certainly a real 'pome,' and on aviation — the latest fad:

"'SKY HIGH
BY MARSHALL MCMAHON MCNUTT
of Millville
dealer in Real Estate Spring Chickens &c.

1.

I sigh
Too fly
Up high
In the sky.

2.

But my
Wings air shy
And so I cry
A sad goodby
Too fly-

Ing.'"

A chorus of hilarious laughter followed the reading, and then Patsy wiped her eyes and exclaimed:

"Peggy, you are not only a poet but a humorist. This is one of the best short poems I ever read."

"It's short 'cause I run out o' rhymes," admitted Peggy.

"But it's a gem, what there is of it."

"Don't, dear," remonstrated Louise; "don't poke fun at the poor man."

"Poke fun? Why, I'm going to print that poem in the *Tribune*, as sure as my name's Patricia Doyle! It's too good for oblivion."

"I dunno," remarked Peggy, uncertainly, "whether it's wuth fifty dollars, er about — "

"About forty-nine less," said Patsy. "A poem of that length brings about fifty cents in open market, but I'll be liberal. You shall have a whole dollar — and there it is, solid cash."

"Thank ye," returned Peggy, pocketing the silver. "It ain't what I expected, but — "

"But what, sir?"

"But it's like findin' it, for I didn't expect nuth'n'. I wish I could do more of 'em at the same price; but I did thet pome when I were young an' hed more ambition. I couldn't think of another like it to save my neck."

"I am glad of that, Peggy. One of this kind is all a paper dare print.
We mustn't get too popular, you know."

"I s'pose you'll print my name as the one what did it?" he inquired anxiously.

"I shall print it just as it's written, advertisement and all."

She did, and Peggy bought two extra copies, at a cent apiece. He framed all three and hung one in his office, one in the sitting room and a third in his bedroom, where he could see it the first thing when he wakened each morning. His fellow villagers were very proud of him, in spite of the "knocking" of the Clarks. Skim was deeply mortified that Peggy's "bum pome" had been accepted and his own masterly composition "turned down cold." The widow backed her son and told all the neighbors that "Peggy never hed the brains to write thet pome, an' the chances air he stole it from the 'Malvern Weekly Journal.' Them gal edyturs wouldn't know," she added scornfully; "they's as ignerunt as Peggy is, mostly."

A few days later McNutt entered the printing office with an air of great importance.

"Goodness me! I hope you haven't done it again, Peggy," cried Patsy, in alarm.

“No; I got fame enough. What I want is to hev the wordin’ on my business cards changed,” said he. “What’ll it cost?”

“What change do you wish made?” asked Patsy, examining the sample card.

“Instead of ‘Marshall McMahon McNutt, dealer in Real Estate an’ Spring Chickens,’ I want to make it read: ‘dealer in Real Estate, Spring Chickens an’ Poetry.’ What’ll it cost. Miss Patsy?”

“Nothing,” she said, her eyes dancing; “We’ll do that job free of charge, Peggy!”

CHAPTER XVII

THE PENALTIES OF JOURNALISM

Two strange men appeared in Millville — keen, intelligent looking fellows — and applied to Joe Wegg for jobs. Having received a hint from Mr. Merrick, Joe promptly employed the strangers to prepare the old mill for the reception of the machinery for the lighting plant, and both of them engaged board at the hold.

"Thursday," said Hetty, as she watched the pressman that night, "there's a New York detective here — two of them, I think."

"How do you know?"

"I recognized one of them, who used to prowl around the city looking for suspicious characters. They say they've come to work on the new electric plant, but I don't believe it."

Thursday worked a while in silence.

"Mr. Merrick must have sent for them," he suggested.

"Yes. I think he suspects about the bomb."

"He ought to discharge me," said Thursday.

"No; he's man enough to stand by his guns. I like Mr. Merrick. He didn't become a millionaire without having cleverness to back him and I imagine he is clever enough to thwart Skeelty and all his gang."

"Perhaps I ought to go of my own accord," said Thursday.

"Don't do that. When you've found a friend like Mr. Merrick, stick to him. I imagine those detectives are here to protect you, as well as the printing plant. It won't be so easy to set a bomb the next time."

Smith looked at her with a smile. There was a glint of admiration in his eyes.

"You're not a bad sleuth yourself, Hetty," he remarked. "No detective could have acted more wisely and promptly than you did that night."

"It was an accidental discovery, Thursday. Sometimes I sleep."

That was a good deal of conversation for these two to indulge in. Hetty was talkative enough, at times, and so was Thursday Smith, when the humor seized him; but when they were together they said very little. The artist would stroll into the pressroom after the compositors had finished their tasks and watch the man make up the forms, lock them, place them on the press and run off the edition. Then he would glance over the paper while Thursday washed up and put on his coat, after which he accompanied her to the door of her hotel and with a simple "good night" proceeded up the street to his own lodging.

There are surprises in the newspaper business, as our girl journalists were

fast discovering. It was a real calamity when Miss Briggs, who had been primarily responsible for getting the *Millville Daily Tribune* into proper working order, suddenly resigned her position. They had depended a great deal on Miss Briggs, so when the telegraph editor informed them she was going back to New York, they were positively bewildered by her loss. Questions elicited the fact that the woman was nervous over the recent explosion and looked for further trouble from the mill hands. She also suspected the two recent arrivals to be detectives, and the town was so small and so absolutely without police protection that she would not risk her personal safety by remaining longer in it.

"Perhaps I'm homesick," she added. "It's dreadfully lonely here when I'm not at work, and for that reason I've tried to keep busy most of the time. Really, I'm astonished to think I've stood this isolation so long; but now that my mind is made up, I'm going, and it is useless to ask me to remain."

They offered her higher wages, and Mr. Merrick himself had a long talk with her, but all arguments were unavailing.

"What shall we do, Thursday?" asked Patsy in despair. "None of us understands telegraphy."

"Hetty Hewitt does," he suggested.

"Hetty! I'm afraid if I asked her to assume this work she also would leave us."

"No; she'll stay," he said positively.

"But she can't edit the telegraph news. Suppose she took the messages, who would get the night news in shape for the compositors? My uncle would not like to have me remain here until midnight, but even if he would permit it I have not yet mastered the art of condensing the dispatches and selecting just such items as are suitable for the *Tribune*."

"I'll do that, Miss Doyle," promised Smith.

"I've been paying especial attention to the work of Miss Briggs, for I had an idea she was getting uneasy. And I can take all the day messages, too. If Hetty will look after the wires evenings I can do the rest of the telegraph editor's work, and my own, too."

"Good gracious, Thursday!" exclaimed Patsy; "you'll be running the whole paper, presently."

"No; I can't do the typesetting. But if the Dwyer girls stick to their job — and they seem quite contented here — I'll answer for the rest of the outfit."

"I'm glad the Dwyer girls seem contented," she answered; "but I'm afraid to depend upon anyone now — except you."

He liked that compliment, but said nothing further. After consulting with Louise and Beth, Patsy broached the subject to Hetty, and the artist jumped

at the opportunity to do something to occupy her leisure time. The work brought her in contact with Thursday Smith more than ever, and when Miss Briggs departed bag and baggage for New York, the paper suffered little through her defection.

"Newspaper folk," remarked Major Doyle, who was now at the farm enjoying his vacation and worshipping at the shrine of the managing editor in the person of his versatile daughter, "are the most unreliable of any class in the world. So I've often been told, and I believe it. They come and go, by fits and starts, and it's a wonder the erratic rascals never put a paper out of business. But they don't. You never heard of a newspaper that failed to appear just because the mechanical force deserted and left it in the lurch. By hook or crook the paper must be printed — and it always is. So don't worry, mavourneen; when your sallow-faced artist and your hobo jack-of-all-trades desert you, there'll still be a way to keep the *Millville Tribune* going, and therefore the world will continue to whirl on its axis."

"I don't believe Thursday will ever desert, and Hetty likes us too well to leave us in the lurch; but suppose those typesetters take a notion to flit?"

"Then," said matter-of-fact Beth, "we'll fill the paper with ready-made plate stuff and telegraph for more compositors."

"That's it," agreed the major, "Those people are always to be had. But don't worry till the time comes. As me grandfather, the commodore, once said: 'Never cross a bridge till ye come to it.'"

"It wasn't your grandfather who originated that remark," said Uncle John.

"It was, sir! I defy you to prove otherwise."

"I'm not certain you ever had a grandfather; and he wasn't a commodore, anyhow."

"Sir!" cried the major, glaring at his brother-in-law, "I have his commission, somewhere — laid away."

"Never mind," said Patsy, cheerfully, for these fierce arguments between her father and uncle — who were devotedly attached to one another — never disturbed her in the least, "the *Tribune's* running smoothly just now, and the work is keeping us delightfully busy. I think that never in my life have I enjoyed myself more than since I became a journalist."

"Is the thing paying dividends?" inquired the major.

Arthur laughed.

"I've just been figuring up the last month's expenditures and receipts," said he. "The first month didn't count, for we were getting started."

"And what's the result?" asked the Major.

"Every paper we send out — for one cent — costs us eighty-eight cents to

manufacture."

There was a painful silence for a time, broken by the major's suggestive cough.

"I hope," said the old soldier, solemnly, "that the paper's circulation is very small."

"The smallest of any daily paper in all the civilized word, sir," declared the bookkeeper.

"Of course," remarked Louise, with dignity; "that is what distinguishes it. We did not undertake this publication to make money, and it does not cost us more than we are willing to pay for the exceptional experiences we are gaining."

The major raised his eyebrows; Arthur whistled softly; Uncle John smiled; but with one accord they dropped the disagreeable subject.

CHAPTER XVIII
OPEN WARFARE

Joe Wegg's machinery and dynamos arrived promptly and the electric plant was speedily installed at the old mill. So energetically had the young man supervised his work that poles and wires were all in place as far up the road as Thompson's Crossing and a branch line run to the Wegg Farm, by the time the first test was made.

All Millville celebrated that first night when its streets shone resplendent under the glare of electric lights. There was a public bonfire near the mill, speeches were made, and afterward Mr. Merrick served a free supper to the villagers, in the hall over Sam Cotting's General Store, where the girls assisted in waiting upon the guests, and everybody was happy and as hilarious as the fumes of good coffee could make them.

More speeches were made in the hall, and one of these was by Peggy McNutt, who had painted his wooden foot blue with red stripes in honor of the occasion. He said, according to the report afterward printed in the Tribune:

"Feller Citizens! This 'ere town's bloomin' like a new mown rose. I'll bet anybody anything there ain't another town in Ameriky what's gone ahead like we hev in the past few months that's jest past. (Applause.) If I do say it myself, we're the mos' — eh — the mos' — eh — progressioning community in — in — this community. Our community hes put out a daily paper what's a credit to — to — our community, especially the poetry; we've got a paper mill at Royal what makes paper fer New Yoruk; an' now, to cap the climate, our community hes lighted our community with 'lectric lights fit fer Lundon, New Yoruk, Canada or — or — or — our community. (Laughter and cries of "Cut out the community, Peggy!") No! Never, feller citizens, will I cut out a community what's done so much fer our — our community. If I do say it myself, the eyes of the com — of the world is upon us, an' I'm proud of the things that's ben did by our feller citizens, with my full approval, in this 'ere — this 'ere — er — community!" (Cheers and a sandwich, which last offering was received by Mr. McNutt in his back hair as he turned to descend from the rostrum.)

Joe Wegg is reported to have said: "Neighbors, this electric plant is no plaything. It is going to give you all better light, at no more cost to you than kerosene. But it will do more than that: it will run machinery of all kinds better than steam will. You've seen electricity running the newspaper press, and the same current has operated the big paper mills at Royal. Here in this audience is a gentleman from Connecticut who has accepted my invitation to

look over our village with a view to building a factory here, using the power I shall hereafter be able to furnish. I am in correspondence with two other manufacturers, whom I hope to induce to locate in Millville. (Enthusiastic cheers.) Job Fisher, who used to live at Malvern, is planning to start a lumber mill, to cut the pine just north of here; so you see we are about to arouse from our long sleep and have a great future before us if we keep wide awake. Another item of news merits your attention. Bartlett has sold sixty acres of his farm to Dr. Adam Matthews, for many years a prominent physician of Boston, who is going to build a good house on the land and become a citizen of Millville. We've always had to go to Huntingdon for a doctor, but now Dr. Matthews has promised to look after the health of the Millville people, although he has retired from city practice. More people will come here from time to time, attracted by our enterprise and the rugged beauty of our county; real estate will become more valuable, trade will prosper and every one of the old inhabitants will find opportunities to make money." (Great applause.)

A general discussion followed concerning the "doin's of Joe Wegg" and the prophecies he had made. Opinion seemed divided as to whether the promised "boom" was desirable for Millville or not. Some of the good villagers were averse to personal activity and feared the new order of things might disturb their comfort; in others a mild ambition had been awakened. But while they feasted at Mr. Merrick's expense and gravely canvassed the situation, the newly installed electric lights suddenly failed. Darkness fell upon the assemblage and there was an awed hush until Sam Cotting lighted the old reliable kerosene lamps.

Joe Wegg was as much astonished as anyone.

"There has been an accident to the machinery," he said to Mr. Merrick. "I'll run over to the mill and see what has happened."

"I will go with you," said Arthur Weldon, and Major Doyle also decided to accompany the young man.

Uncle John and his three nieces remained in the hall, and Mr. Merrick took occasion to make a little speech in which he explained that a hitch in the working of the electric plant was liable to happen at first, but after a few days the dynamos could be fully depended upon.

He had scarcely finished this explanation when Arthur came running back into the hall in much excitement. He approached Mr. Merrick and said in a low voice:

"The machinery is all right, sir. Some one has cut the wires."

"Cut the wires!"

"Yes. Joe thinks it's the work of the mill hands. The wires are cut in all directions, and several of the men from Royal have been seen loitering

around by Cox and Booth, the detectives."

The girls overheard this assertion, and Patsy exclaimed:

"I'm going to the office, to make sure our power hasn't been tampered with."

The meeting broke up at once and the villagers trooped out to investigate. Mr. Merrick and Arthur walked with the girls to the printing office, where they found Thursday Smith and Hetty working by the light of tallow candles.

"The power is off," said Smith quietly.

"Then the wire from Royal has also been cut," said Patsy. "What shall we do? His paper must come out to-morrow morning, in spite of anything and everything!"

"Do you know who cut the wires?" inquired Thursday.

"We think the mill hands must have done it."

"Not with Skeelty's consent, I'll be bound," said Mr. Merrick. "The manager is too fearful of a damage suit to play any tricks."

"A cut wire may be repaired," suggested the pressman, and even as he spoke Joe Wegg came in, accompanied by the two detectives and the major.

"Cox has interviewed one of the workmen from Royal," said Joe, "and the fellow says there's a strike at the mill and everything is closed down. Skeelty is barricaded in his office building, wild with fear, for the men have captured the company's store and helped themselves to the stock of liquors. The man Cox spoke with, who seems to be a well disposed fellow, predicts all kinds of trouble, and perhaps rioting, before this thing is ended."

They listened to this report in amazement.

"I conjecture," said the major, "that the rascally manager has given his men too much leeway. He's encouraged them in mischief until they've taken the bit between their teeth and turned against even their master. I have no personal acquaintance with the villain, but I imagine it serves him right."

"But, dear me!" cried Patsy, wringing her hands; "what'll become of the paper? It's nearly ten o'clock now."

Thursday turned to Joe Wegg.

"Can't we connect our supply wire with your new plant, so as to use your power?" he asked.

"Easily. An hour's work will serve to make the connection. But unless we watch the wire every minute those fellows will cut it again. The town's full of the rascals, and they're not exactly sober, either."

"Watch the wire; that's the idea," said Uncle John. "It's only a short distance to the mill, and I'm sure the villagers will volunteer for this duty."

"Of course," said Joe. "Major Doyle, will you mount guard over my men at the dynamos, to see they're not interfered with, while I look after the

wire?”

“Sure enough; it’ll remind me of the old war times,” said the major readily.

“Where is Arthur?” asked Louise.

“We left him at the mill.”

They left the office at once, Joe to get his line-men at work, and the major to join Weldon in guarding the dynamos. One of the detectives went with Mr. Wegg, but the other, whose name was Booth, remained to guard the printing office. Mr. Merrick now proposed that he take the girls home. Patsy and Beth refused to leave until the emergency was past, when the major and Arthur could drive them to the farm, but Louise was tired and went with Uncle John in his buggy, the surrey being left for the rest of the party to use. Arthur ran over for a moment to say everything was quiet at the mill and he did not think there would be any further trouble, and the report considerably reassured them.

CHAPTER XIX

A MERE MATTER OF REVENGE

Hetty and Thursday continued to work on the paper.

"We'll have everything ready by the time the line is connected," said the artist. "Then it will be but a few moments' work to run off the edition."

Patsy and Beth held candles for them, for the electric lights had been cut off with the power; so, seeing them all busily engaged, Arthur Weldon decided to return to the mill to join the Major. Booth sat in the front office, near the door, and in the darkness Arthur nearly stumbled over him.

"Going away, sir?" asked the man.

"Yes; I'll see if I can be of any assistance at the mill."

"Be careful. Those workmen have been drifting into town in squads, the last few minutes, and most of them are reckless with drink."

"I'll watch out," said Arthur.

In the middle of the road a group of mill hands conversed excitedly in some foreign tongue; but they paid no attention to Weldon as he passed them. Others joined them, presently, and one began a harangue in a loud voice, to which they listened eagerly. Then Bob West slipped across from the hardware store and ran against the detective in the doorway of the printing office.

"Who's this?" he demanded, holding the man in a firm grip.

"Booth, sir."

"Good. I could not recognize you in this darkness. Are you armed?"

"Yes."

"Then you and I will defend this door. Who is inside?"

"The pressman — Thursday Smith — and three of the girls."

"The compositors?"

"No; they've gone to the hotel. Miss Doyle, Miss DeGraf, and — Hetty Hewitt."

West went into the hack room, which was faintly illumined by candles stuck here and there. The girls and Smith were all bending over the imposing stone, where the forms of the paper were being made up.

"Here," said West, taking a revolver from his pocket and laying it on the table; "I'm afraid there may be an attack on this office in a few minutes, for I understand the language of those strikers and have been listening to them. If any of the mill hands attempt to break into this room don't be afraid to shoot."

"Why should the men wish to attack us, sir?" asked Patsy wonderingly.

"There are several reasons. They're after Smith, for one thing. They've an

old grudge against him to settle. Aside from the mere matter of revenge I overheard one of them telling his friends to smash the press and keep the paper from coming out, and Mr. Boglin would pay them well for the job."

Smith carelessly thrust the revolver into his hip pocket.

"The paper will come out if Mr. Wegg gives us the power," he said.

"Can you let me have a revolver, Mr. West?" asked Hetty.

"Could you use it?"

"I think so."

He looked at her a moment and then took a second revolver from his pocket.

"I've robbed my hardware stock," he said with a smile. "But I advise you girls to keep your hands off the thing unless a crisis arises. I don't imagine the gang will get past me and Booth at the entrance, but if any stragglers come your way Smith has authority to drive them back. I'm justice of the peace, and I hereby appoint you all special officers of the law."

He said this lightly, fearing to alarm the girls unnecessarily, and then passed through the doorway and joined Booth at the front.

The telephone rang and Patsy answered it.

"How soon will the forms be ready?" asked Arthur's voice.

"In ten minutes — perhaps five," she answered.

"We'll have the power on in ten minutes more. Tell Smith not to lose an instant's time in running off the edition, for we don't know how long we can keep the line open. The strikers are threatening us, even now."

"All right," called Patsy; "just give us the power for a few minutes, and we'll be through for to-night."

She went back to Thursday and reported.

"There may be a few typographical errors, and I'm afraid it's a bad make-up," he remarked; "but I'll have the thing on the press in five minutes."

With mallet and shooting-stick he tightened the quoins, then lifted the heavy iron frames filled with type and slid them onto the bed of the press. They gave him all the light the flickering candles afforded as he adjusted the machinery, and all were bending over the press when a low, distant growl was heard, rising slowly to a frenzied shout. A revolver popped — another — followed by wild cries from the street.

The girls grew a little pale, but Thursday Smith put his hand on the lever of the press and said:

"All right. The moment they give us the current we're ready to run."

Patsy straightened up with a sigh of relief, then gave a low cry as the screens of the two windows of the pressroom were smashed in and through the openings men began to tumble into the room. At once Hetty confronted

them with leveled revolver and the sight caused them to hesitate.

"Out o' the way, you women!" called a burly fellow who wore a green sweater and an oilskin hat; "we don't want to hurt you if we can help. There's the one we're after!" He pointed a finger at Thursday Smith.

"You can't have him," retorted Beth, half shielded behind the militant Hetty. "This is private property, and you're trespassing. Unless you go away at once you will suffer the consequences."

This defense seemed to surprise them, for they fell back a little toward the windows. At that moment, with a low rumble, the press started, moving slowly at first but gradually acquiring speed. The sight aroused the resentment of the invaders.

"Stop that press!" yelled their spokesman excitedly. "Stop it, Smith, or we'll put both you and the machine out of business."

Thursday paid no attention to anything but his press. The huge cylinder of white paper was unrolling, passing under the platen and emerging at the other end as neatly folded copies of the Millville Daily Tribune.

With a roar of rage the big fellow leaped forward, but at the action a shot rang out and he fell headlong almost at the foot of the press.

Beth and Patsy turned their heads an instant to glance at Hetty. The artist's face was white and set; her eyes sparkled brilliantly; she held the still smoking weapon in readiness for another shot.

But the men were awed by the fall of their leader. They watched Beth leap to the platform beside Thursday Smith and draw his revolver from his pocket, where he had placed it. Hetty's courage had inspired her, and Beth had handled pistols before. The men read the determined eyes fixed upon them; they noted Smith's indifference to their threats. The defenders of the press and pressman were only girls, but they were girls evidently not afraid to shoot.

No advance was made and the tableau was dramatic. Smith watched his press with undivided attention and it clattered away at full speed until the frail building shook with its powerful, steady motion. Then suddenly it began to slow down. The power was off, and the machine came to an abrupt stop.

Thursday stepped from the platform and looked at the index of the counter.

"Four hundred and sixty-three. Twenty-two short, Miss Doyle," he announced.

"That'll do, Thursday."

He came to her side, then, facing the sullen, glowering group of mill hands.

"Boys," said he, "it won't do you any good to interfere with us to-night.

The paper for to-morrow morning is already printed, and Ojoy Boglin isn't a big enough man to stop it, now or ever. Better go back to Royal and settle your troubles with Skeelty, for if you stay here the citizens of Millville are in the mood to shoot you down like dogs."

They stood undecided a moment, but the argument had evidently struck home.

"What's the matter with Harris?" asked one, pointing to the motionless form of the man in the green sweater. "Is he dead?"

"I suppose so," answered Thursday coolly; but he stooped to examine Hetty's victim, rolling him over so that his face was upward. "No; he isn't hurt much, I'm sorry to say. The bullet glanced off his forehead and stunned him, that's all. Take the brute, if you want him, and go."

They obeyed in silence. Several stepped forward and raised the unconscious Harris, bearing him to the window, where they passed him to those without. Then they also retreated through the windows and the room was cleared.

Only then did Hetty and Beth venture to lower their weapons.

"Oh, dear!" cried Patsy, in a low, agitated voice; "I'm so glad you didn't kill him, Hetty."

"I'm not," returned the artist doggedly. "He deserved death, at the least, and by killing him I'd have cheated the gallows."

Then she glanced around at the horrified faces of her friends and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XX

DEFENDING THE PRESS

In the front room Bob West and the detective were having a busy time. At the first rush they each fired a shot over the heads of the mob, merely to let them know the place was guarded. In the darkness it was impossible for the strikers to tell how many armed men confronted them, so they fell back a little, but formed a cordon around the entire building. From the printing office to the old mill was a distance of only a few hundred feet, and every able-bodied inhabitant of Millville except Peggy McNutt and Sara Cotting — who had discreetly disappeared at the first sign of danger — was assisting Joe Wegg to protect the electric cable he was trying to connect. The men from Royal were scattered all along the line, peering through the dim light to discover a vulnerable point of attack but deterred from interfering by the determination of the stalwart defenders. Mobs are invariably cowardly, and this one, composed of the lowest strata of mixed American and foreign laborers, was no exception to the general rule. However, when word was finally passed along from the mill that the dynamo was running and supplying power to the printing press, a howl of rage went up and a sudden rush was made for the line, the attack concentrating at one point.

The defenders promptly grouped themselves in front of the threatened pole and Seth Davis, the blacksmith, wielding a heavy sledge hammer, did valiant service, clearing a space around him with little difficulty. Joe Wegg, Arthur Weldon, Cox the detective, Lon Taft, Nick Thome and even little Skim Clark were all in the melee, fighting desperately for time to enable Thursday Smith to work his press, using whatever cudgels they had been able to pick up to keep the assailants from the pole. Slowly, however, they were forced back by superior numbers until finally one of the mill hands clambered up the pole and cut the wire.

"Never mind," said Arthur to Joe, as they retreated fighting toward the printing office; "I think they've had time to run off the edition, provided Smith was ready with the forms."

The mob was by this time in an ugly mood and the nearer Joe and Arthur edged toward the printing office the more numerous their enemies became. The Millville people were getting rather the worst of the scrimmage when out rushed Thursday Smith, swinging a stout iron bar he had taken from the press, and with this terrible weapon he struck out so vigorously that the diversion in their favor enabled the retreating villagers to gain the office, where Booth and Bob West fired several shots that effectually checked the mob.

“Stand back, ye villains!” cried a loud voice, as Major Doyle marched calmly down the road from the mill; “how dare ye interfere with a gentleman?”

One of the leaders confronted him menacingly. The major slapped his face with the flat of his hand and then kicked the fellow in the shins.

“Didn’t I say to get out o’ my way?” he roared, and to the surprise of everyone — even the major, perhaps — they fell hack and allowed him to walk leisurely into the printing office.

Having succeeded in their primary attempt to cut the wire, and finding the determined band of defenders more dangerous than they had thought, the workmen retreated in the direction of Royal, where there was more to be gained by rioting than in Millville.

When at last the town was clear of them, Arthur, who was considerably battered and bruised but pleased with the triumphant ending of the adventure, drove the girls and the major to the farm. They urged Hetty to accompany them, but she declared she was not a bit nervous and preferred to sleep at the hotel.

“I think the trouble is over for to-night,” said West, and all agreed with him. Cox and Booth decided to sleep in the printing office, and after the girls had driven away with their escorts and the villagers had dispersed to their homes, Thursday put on his coat and walked to the hotel with Hetty.

“All that row was about me,” he remarked disconsolately.

“But they didn’t get you,” said Hetty, triumph in her voice.

“No.”

He did not mention her bravery, or the loyal support of Beth and Patsy, but after a moment he added: “I’m not worth defending.”

“How do you know?” asked Hetty. “It occurs to me, Mr. Smith, that you are as much a stranger to yourself as to us.”

“That is true.”

“And in emergencies you are not averse to defending others. Of course Miss DeGraf and her cousin wanted the paper printed, at all hazards. I don’t blame them for that; but I — ”

She hesitated.

“You simply stood by a comrade. Thank you, Hetty.”

“Good night, Thursday.”

“Will you be able to sleep to-night?”

“I’m going straight to bed. The rumpus has quieted my nerves.”

“Good night, then.”

In the early morning Mr. Merrick was awakened by a red glare that flooded his bedroom. Going to the window he found the sky at the north full

of flame. He threw on his bathrobe and went to the door of Arthur Weldon's room, arousing the young man with a rap on the panels.

"The settlement at Royal is burning," he reported.

Arthur came out, very weary and drowsy, for he had not been asleep long and the strenuous work of the night had tired him.

"Let it burn," he said, glancing through a window at the lurid light of the conflagration. "We couldn't be of any use going over there and, after all, it isn't our affair to relieve Skeelty."

Then he told Uncle John of the riot in the village, for the old gentleman had been sound asleep when the party returned to the farm.

"The blaze is the work of those crazy strikers, I suppose," said Mr. Merrick. "It looks from here as if they had set fire to their own homes, as well as to the paper mills and office and store buildings. It will be fortunate if the forest does not also burn."

"Don't worry, sir," advised Arthur. "We'll discover the extent of the fire by daylight. For my part, I'm going back to bed, and it will be well for you to follow my example."

"Another item for the paper," whispered a soft voice, and there was Patsy beside them at the window.

Mr. Merrick sighed.

"I had no idea so much excitement could possibly happen at Millville," said he. "If this keeps on we'll have to go back to New York for quiet. But let us get to bed, my dear, for to-morrow is likely to be a busy day for us all."

CHAPTER XXI

THE COMING OF FOGERTY

The homeless mill hands flocked to Chazy Junction next day, from whence a freight train distributed them over other parts of the country. The clearing at Royal Falls was now a heap of charred embers, for every one of the cheap, rough-board buildings had been consumed by the fire.

Skeelty had watched the destruction of his plant with feelings of mingled glee and disgust. He was insured against loss, and his rash workmen, who had turned upon him so unexpectedly, had accidentally settled the strike and their own future by starting the fire during their drunken orgies. There being no longer a mill to employ them they went elsewhere for work, rather glad of the change and regretting nothing. As for the manager, he stood to lose temporary profits but was not wholly displeased by the catastrophe. Transportation of his manufactured products had been so irregular and undefendable that even while he watched the blaze he determined to rebuild his plant nearer the main line of a railway, for many such locations could be found where the pine was as plentiful as here.

At dawn he entered the hotel at Millville with his arms full of books and papers which he had succeeded in saving from the fire, and securing a room went directly to bed. It was afternoon when he awoke and after obtaining a meal he strolled out into the village and entered the newspaper office.

"Here's an item for your paper," he said to Patsy, who was busy at her desk. "The mills at Royal will never be rebuilt, and Millville has lost the only chance it ever had of becoming a manufacturing center. The whole settlement, which belonged to Boglin and myself, went up in smoke, and I'm willing to let it go at that. I shall collect the insurance, make myself good, and if anything's left over, that fool Boglin is welcome to it. I admit I made a mistake in ever allowing him to induce me to build at Royal. Boglin owned the land and I used his money, so I gave up to him; but I'm through with the *honer'ble* ass now. Put it all in the paper; it'll make him feel good. You might add that I'm taking the evening train for New York, shaking the dust of your miserable village from my feet for good and all."

"Thank you, sir," said Patsy, brightly; "the Millville people will appreciate their good luck, I'm sure."

Skeelty hung around the town for awhile, sneering at the new electric light plant and insolently railing at any of the natives who would converse with him. Then he hired Nick Thorne to drive him over to Chazy Junction, and that was the last Millville ever saw of him.

During this day Joe Wegg's men succeeded in repairing all the wires

which had been tampered with and in making a proper and permanent connection of the cable to the printing office. That evening the village was again brilliantly lighted and thereafter the big dynamos whirled peacefully and without interruption.

The girls had a busy day, as Uncle John had predicted, for all the exciting incidents of the evening and night before had to be written up and the next day's paper teemed with "news" of a character to interest all its readers. Beth's editorial declared the neighborhood well rid of the paper mill, which had been of little advantage but had caused no end of annoyance because of the rough and mischievous character of the workmen employed. In this statement nearly everyone agreed with her.

Several had been wounded in the riot of the eventful evening, but none seriously injured. The workmen took away their damaged comrades and Lon Taft drove over to Huntingdon and had his head sewed up by the doctor. Other villagers suffered mere bruises, but all who engaged in the fight posed as heroes and even Peggy McNutt, who figured as "not present," told marvelous tales of how he had worsted seven mill hands in a stand-up fight, using only his invincible fists.

The following forenoon the liveryman at the Junction brought to Millville a passenger who had arrived by the morning train — a quiet, boyish-looking man with a shock of brick-red hair and a thin, freckled face. He was driven directly to the Merrick farm, where Uncle John received him cordially, but with surprise, and at once favored the new arrival with a long interview in his private room.

The girls, who had not yet gone to the office, awaited somewhat impatiently the result of this conference, for they already knew the red-headed youth to be the great Fogerty — admitted by even his would-be rivals, the king of New York detectives. Also they knew that Uncle John had employed him some time ago to ferret out the mystery of the identity of Thursday Smith, and the fact of Fogerty's presence indicated he had something to report.

However, when Mr. Merrick came out of the private room his usually cheery countenance wore a troubled expression. Fogerty was invariably placid and inscrutable, so no explanation could be gleaned from his demeanor.

"Ready for town, my dears?" asked Uncle John.

"Yes; the surrey is waiting," answered Louise.

"Then go along, and Fogerty and I will join you at the office presently. I want to confer with the major and Arthur before — before taking any steps to — "

“What’s the news, Uncle?” demanded Patsy, impatiently.

“You shall know in good time.”

“Who is Thursday Smith?”

“By and by, dear. Don’t bother me now. But that reminds me; you are to say nothing to — to — Thursday about Mr. Fogerty’s arrival. Treat him — Thursday, you know — just as you have always done, for the present, at least. Whatever we determine on in regard to this man, during our conference, we must not forget that he has acted most gallantly since he came to Millville. We really owe him a debt of gratitude.”

With this somewhat incomprehensible statement the girls were forced to content themselves. Feeling quite helpless, they drove to the office and left the men to settle the fate of Thursday Smith.

The “pressman” was now the man-of-all-work about the modest but trim little publishing plant. He attended to whatever job printing came in, made the etchings from Hetty’s drawings, cast the stereotypes, made up the forms and operated the press. But aside from this mechanical work Smith took the telegraphic news received by Hetty, edited and condensed it and wrote the black-letter headings over the various items. All this, with a general supervision over the girl compositors, kept the man busy from daybreak to midnight.

In spite of this, the Tribune was essentially a “girls’ paper,” since Thursday Smith was the only man employed on it — not counting the “dummy” editor, Arthur Weldon, who did nothing but keep the books, and found this not an arduous task. Hetty, at Miss Briggs’ desk, attended the telegraph instrument and long-distance telephone, receiving news over both wires, and still found time to draw her daily cartoons and additional humorous sketches which she “worked in” whenever the mood seized her. The typesetting was done by the Dwyer sisters — a colorless pair but quite reliable — while the reportorial and editorial work was divided between Louise, Beth and Patsy, none of whom shirked a single duty. Indeed, they had come to love this work dearly and were enthusiastic over the *Tribune*, which they fondly believed was being watched with envious admiration by all the journalistic world.

This belief was not wholly due to egotism. Their “exchanges,” both city and country, had shown considerable interest in the “Millville Experiment,” as they called it, and only a few days before the leading journal of a good-sized city had commented at length on the “girls’ newspaper” and, after indulging in some humorous remarks, concluded quite seriously with the statement that “its evident sincerity, clean contents and typographical neatness render the *Millville Daily Tribune* worthy a better setting than the

somnolent country village whose census is too low to be officially recorded."

"But that's all right," said Patsy, smiling at the praise; "we'd never have dared to start a newspaper anywhere else, because a journal that will do for Millville might not make a hit if it bumped against experienced competition."

"We were woefully ignorant when we began, a few weeks ago," commented Beth, glancing with pride at her latest editorial, which she thought had caught the oracular tone of the big city newspapers.

"And we're not expert journalists, even yet," added Louise, with a sigh. "We've improved, to be sure; but I imagine there is still lots of room for improvement."

"One trouble," said Patsy, "is that every inhabitant of Millville wants to see his or her name in print every day, whether he or she has done anything worthy of publication or not. If the name isn't printed, we've made an enemy; and, if it is, the paper is sure to suffer more or less ridicule."

"That is quite true, my dear," responded Louise, the reporter. "I've said everything, about every one of them, that has ever happened, or threatened to happen, since we started the paper, and it is driving me crazy to discover anything more about these stupid natives that will do to print."

Hetty had overheard this conversation and now looked up with a smile.

"Has your 'local happenings' column been prepared for to-morrow, Mrs. Weldon?" she inquired.

"No; I'm about to start out to unearth some items," replied Louise, wearily.

"Let me do it for you. I've an hour or so to spare and I won't need to leave my desk," suggested the artist.

"It is my duty, you know, Hetty, and I've no right to evade it."

"Evade it for to-day. Go home and rest. I'll do your column for to-morrow, and after the vacation you can tackle the thrilling situations with better courage."

"Thank you, Hetty. But I won't go home. I'll wait here to see Fogerty."

"Fogerty!" exclaimed the artist, with a start of surprise. "Do you mean the detective?"

"Yes," said Louise, regretting she had inadvertently mentioned the name.

"But what is there now to detect?" asked Hetty suspiciously. "Our troubles seem ended with the burning of the mill and the flitting of Skeelty and his workmen."

Louise hardly knew how to reply; but Patsy, who trusted the queer girl artist, said quite frankly:

"There remains the mystery of Thursday Smith to fathom, you know."

Hetty flushed and an indignant look swept over her face.

“What right has anyone to solve that mystery?” she asked defiantly. “Isn’t that Thursday Smith’s own business?”

“Perhaps,” returned Patsy, somewhat amused; “but Smith hasn’t been able to discover who he is — or was, rather — and seems really anxious to know.”

Hetty bent over her desk for a time. Then she looked up and her thin features were white and drawn with anxiety.

“When you discover who Thursday Smith is,” said she, “the Millville Tribune will lose its right bower.”

“Why?”

“Before his accident, or whatever it was that made him lose his memory, he was an unusual man, a man of exceptional ability. You know that.”

“We are all inclined to admit it,” answered Patsy. “But what then?”

“Men of ability,” declared Hetty slowly, “are of two classes: the very successful, who attain high and honorable positions, or the clever scoundrels who fasten themselves like leeches on humanity and bleed their victims with heartless unconcern. What will you gain if you unmask the past of Thursday Smith? You uncover a rogue or a man of affairs, and in either case you will lose your pressman. Better leave the curtain drawn, Miss Doyle, and accept Thursday Smith as he is.”

There was so much good sense in this reasoning that all three girls were impressed and began to regret that Uncle John had called Fogerty to untangle the skein. But it was now too late for such repentance and, after all, they were curious to discover who their remarkable employee really was.

Even while the awkward silence that had fallen upon the group of girls continued, the door opened to admit Uncle John, Fogerty, Major Doyle and Arthur Weldon. Except for the detective they were stern-faced and uncompromising.

CHAPTER XXII
UNMASKED

Quintus Fogerty was as unlike the typical detective as one could imagine. Small in size, slight and boyish, his years could not readily be determined by the ordinary observer. His face was deeply furrowed and lined, yet a few paces away it seemed the face of a boy of eighteen. His cold gray eyes were persistently staring but conveyed no inkling of his thoughts. His brick-red hair was as unkempt as if it had never known a comb, yet the attire of the great detective was as fastidiously neat as if he had dressed for an important social function. Taken altogether there was something mistrustful and uncanny about Fogerty's looks, and his habit of eternally puffing cigarettes rendered his companionship unpleasant. Yet of the man's professional ability there was no doubt; Mr. Merrick and Arthur Weldon had had occasion to employ him before, with results that justified their faith in him.

The detective greeted the young ladies with polite bows, supplemented by an aimless compliment on the neatness of their office.

"Never would have recognized it as a newspaper sanctum," said he in his thin, piping voice. "No litter, no stale pipes lying about, no cursing and quarreling, no excitement whatever. The editorial room is the index to the workshop; I'll see if the mechanical department is kept as neatly."

He opened the door to the back room, passed through and closed it softly behind him. Mr. Merrick made a dive for the door and followed Fogerty.

"What's the verdict, Arthur?" asked Louise curiously.

"Why, I — I believe the verdict isn't rendered yet," he hastily replied, and followed Mr. Merrick into the pressroom.

"Now, then," cried Patsy, grabbing the major firmly, "you'll not stir a step, sir, until you tell us the news!"

"What news, Patricia?" Inquired the old gentleman blandly.

"Who was Thursday Smith?"

"The identical individual he is now," said the Major.

"Don't prevaricate, sir! Who was he? What did he do? What is his right name?"

"Is it because you are especially interested in this man, my dear, or are ye simply consumed with feminine curiosity?"

"Be good, Daddy! Tell us all about it," said Patsy coaxingly.

"The man Thursday, then, was likely enough the brother of Robinson Crusoe's man Friday."

"Major, you're trifling!"

"Or mayhap an ex-president of the United States, or forby the senator

from Oklahoma. Belike he was once minister to Borneo, an' came home in a hurry an' forgot who he was. But John Merrick will be wanting me."

He escaped and opened the door. Then, with his hand on the knob, he turned and added:

"Why don't ye come in, me journalistic investigators, and see the fun for yerselves? I suspect there's an item in store for ye."

Then he went in, and they took the hint and entered the pressroom in a fluttering group. Fogerty stood with his hands in his pockets intently watching the Dwyer girls set type, while at his elbow Mr. Merrick was explaining in a casual voice how many "m's" were required to make a newspaper column. In another part of the long room Arthur Weldon was leaning over a table containing the half-empty forms, as if critically examining them. Smith, arrayed in overalls and jumper, was cleaning and oiling the big press.

"A daily newspaper," said the major, loudly, as he held up a warning finger to the bevy of nieces, behind whom Hetty's pale face appeared, "means a daily grind for all concerned in it. There's no vacation for the paper, no hyphens, no skipping a day or two if it has a bad cold; it's the tyrant that leads its slaves by the nose, metaphorically, and has no conscience. Just as regularly as the world rolls 'round the press rolls out the newspaper, and human life or death makes little difference to either of the revolutionists."

While he spoke the Major led the way across the room to the stereotyping plant, which brought his party to a position near the press. Smith glanced at them and went on with his work. It was not unusual to have the pressroom thus invaded.

Presently Fogerty strolled over, smoking his eternal cigarette, and stood watching the pressman, as if interested in the oiling of the complicated machine. Smith, feeling himself under observation, glanced up again in an unconcerned way, and as he faced the detective Fogerty gave a cleverly assumed start and exclaimed:

"Good God!"

Instantly Thursday Smith straightened up and looked at the man questioningly. Fogerty stretched out his hand and said, as if in wonder:

"Why, Melville, old man, what are you doing here? We wondered what had become of you, all these months. Shake hands, my boy! I'm glad I've found you."

Smith leaned against the press and stared at him with dilated eyes. Everyone in the room was regarding the scene with intense but repressed excitement.

“What’s wrong, Harold?” continued Fogerty, as if hurt by the other’s hesitation to acknowledge their acquaintance. “You haven’t forgotten me, have you? I’m McCormick, you know, and you and I have had many a good time together in the past.”

Smith passed his hand across his forehead with a dazed gesture.

“What name did you call me, sir?” he asked.

“Melville; Harold Melville, of East Sixty-sixth street. I’m sure I’m right. There can’t be two like you in the world, you know.”

Thursday Smith stepped down from the platform and with a staggering gait walked to a stool, on which he weakly sank. He wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead and looked at Fogerty with a half frightened air.

“And you — are — McCormick?” he faltered.

“Of course.”

Smith stared a moment and then shook his head.

“It’s no use,” he said despairingly; “I can’t recall a single memory of either Harold Melville or — or his friend McCormick. Pardon me, sir; I must confess my mind is absolutely blank concerning all my life previous to the last two years. Until this moment I — I could not recall my own name.”

“H’m,” muttered Fogerty; “you recall it now, don’t you?”

“No. You tell me my name is Melville, and you seem to recognize me as a man whom you once knew. I accept your statement in good faith, but I cannot corroborate it from my own knowledge.”

“That’s queer,” retorted Fogerty, his cold eyes fixed upon the man’s face.

“Let me explain, please,” said Smith, and related his curious experience in practically the same words he had employed when confiding it to Mr. Merrick. “I had hoped,” he concluded, “that if ever I met one who knew me formerly, or heard my right name mentioned, my memory would come back to me; but in this I am sorely disappointed. Did you know me well, sir?”

“Pretty well,” answered the detective, after a slight hesitation.

“Then tell me something about myself. Tell me who I was.”

“Here — in public?” asked Fogerty, with a suggestive glance at the spectators, who had involuntarily crowded nearer.

Smith flushed, but gazed firmly into the faces surrounding him.

“Why not?” he returned. “These young ladies and Mr. Merrick accepted me without knowledge of my antecedents. They are entitled to as full an explanation as — as I am.”

“You place me, Melville, in a rather embarrassing position,” declared Fogerty. “This is a queer case — the queerest in all my experience. Better let me post you in a private interview.”

Smith trembled a bit, from nervousness; but he persisted in his demand.

"These people are entitled to the truth," said he. "Tell us frankly all you know about me, and do not mince words — whatever the truth may be."

"Oh, it's not so bad," announced the detective, with a shrug; "or at least it wouldn't be in New York, among your old aristocratic haunts. But here, in a quiet country town, among these generous and simple-hearted folks who have befriended you, the thing is rather difficult to say."

"Say it!" commanded Smith.

"I will. Many New Yorkers remember the firm of Melville & Ford, the cleverest pair of confidence men who ever undertook to fleece the wealthy lambs of the metropolis."

"Confidence men!" gasped Smith, in a voice of horror.

"Yes, putting it mildly. You were both jolly good fellows and made a host of friends. You were well-groomed, rode in automobiles, frequented good clubs and had a stunning establishment on Sixty-sixth street where you entertained lavishly. You could afford to, for there was where you fleeced your victims. But it wasn't so very bad, as I said. You chose the wealthy sons of the super-rich, who were glad to know such popular men-about-town as Harold Melville and Edgar Ford. When one set of innocents had been so thoroughly trimmed that they compared notes and began to avoid you, you had only to pick up another bunch of lambs, for New York contains many distinct flocks of the species. As they could afford to lose, none of them ever complained to the police, although the Central Office had an eye on you and knew your methods perfectly.

"Finally you made a mistake — or rather Ford did, for he was not as clever as you were. He brought an imitation millionaire to your house; a fellow who was putting up a brazen front on the smallest sort of a roll. You won his money and he denounced you, getting away with a pack of marked cards for evidence. At this you both took fright and decided on a hasty retreat. Gathering together your plunder — which was a royal sum, I'm convinced — you and Ford jumped into a motor car and — vanished from New York.

"The balance of your history I base on premise. Ford has been located in Chicago, where, with an ample supply of money, he is repeating his New York operations; but Harold Melville has never been heard of until this day. I think the true explanation is easily arrived at. Goaded by cupidity — and perhaps envy of your superior talents — Ford took advantage of the situation and, finding the automobile speeding along a deserted road, knocked you on the head, tumbled you out of the car, and made off with your combined winnings. The blow had the effect — not so uncommon as you think — of

destroying your recollection of your past life, and you have for two years been wandering in total ignorance of what caused your affliction."

During this recital Smith sat with his eyes eagerly fixed upon the speaker's face, dwelling upon every word. At the conclusion of the story he dropped his face in his hands a moment, visibly shuddering. Then again he looked up, and after reading the circle of pitying faces confronting him he bravely met Mr. Merrick's eyes.

"Sir," he said in a voice that faltered in spite of his efforts to render it firm, "you now know who I am. When I first came to you I was a mere irresponsible hobo, a wandering tramp who had adopted the name of Thursday Smith because he was ignorant of his own, but who had no cause to be ashamed of his manhood. To-day I am discovered in my true guise. As Harold Melville, the disreputable trickster, I am not fit to remain in your employ — to associate with honest men and women. You will forgive my imposition, I think, because you know how thoroughly ignorant I was of the truth; but I will impose upon you no longer. I am sorry, sir, for I have been happy here; but I will go, thanking you for the kindly generosity that prompted you to accept me as I seemed to be, not as I am."

He rose, his face showing evidence of suffering, and bowed gravely. Hetty Hewitt walked over and stood by his side, laying her hand gently upon his arm.

But Thursday Smith did not know John Merrick very well. The little gentleman had silently listened, observing meanwhile the demeanor of the accused, and now he smiled in his pleasant, whimsical way and caught Smith's hand in both his own.

"Man, man!" he cried, "you're misjudging both me and yourself, I don't know this fellow Melville. You don't know him, either. But I do know Thursday Smith, who has won my confidence and by his manly acts, and I'll stand by him through thick and thin!"

"I am Harold Melville — the gambler — the confidence man."

"You're nothing of the sort, you're just Thursday Smith, and no more responsible for Harold Melville than I am."

"Hooray!" exclaimed Patsy Doyle enthusiastically. "Uncle's right, Thursday. You're our friend, and the mainstay of the *Millville Daily Tribune*. We shall not allow you to desert us just because you've discovered that your — your — ancestor — wasn't quite respectable."

"That's it, exactly," asserted Beth. "It's like hearing a tale of an ancestor, Thursday, or of some member of your family who lived before you. You cannot be responsible, in any way, for another man's wickedness."

"As I look at it," said Louise reflectively, "you are just two years old,

Thursday, and innocent of any wrongdoing before that day you first found yourself."

"There's no use our considering Melville at all," added Uncle John cheerfully. "I'm sorry we ever heard of him, except that in one way it clears up a mystery. Thursday Smith, we like you and trust you. Do not doubt yourself because of this tale. I'll vouch for your fairness and integrity. Forget Melville, who has never really existed so far as any of us are concerned; be yourself, and count on our friendship and regard, which Thursday Smith has fairly won."

Hetty was crying softly, her cheek laid against Thursday's sleeve. The man stood as if turned to stone, but his cheeks were flushed, his eyes sparkling, and his head proudly poised.

Fogerty lighted a fresh cigarette, watching the scene with an imperturbable smile.

Suddenly Smith awoke to life. He half turned, looked wonderingly at Hetty, and then folded her thin form in his arms and pressed a kiss on her forehead.

Fogerty coughed. Uncle John jerked out his handkerchief and blew his nose like a bugle call.

The major's eyes were moist, for the old soldier was sympathetic as a child. But Patsy, a little catch in her voice, impulsively put her arms around the unashamed pair and murmured: "I'm so glad, Hetty! I'm so glad, Thursday! But — dear me — aren't we going to have any paper to-morrow morning?"

That relieved the tension and everybody laughed. Thursday released Hetty and shook Uncle John's hand most gratefully. Then they all wanted to shake hands, and did until it came to Fogerty's turn. But now Smith drew back and looked askance at the detective.

"I do not know you, Mr. McCormick," he said with dignity.

"My name's not McCormick; it's Fogerty," said the other, without malice. "I was simply testing your memory by claiming to be an old friend. Personally I never knew Harold Melville, but I'm mighty glad to make Thursday Smith's acquaintance and will consider it an honor if you'll shake my hand."

Smith was too happy to refuse. He took Fogerty's hand.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE JOURNALISTS ABDICATE

Mr. Merrick told Thursday Smith, in an apologetic way, how he had hired Fogerty to unravel the mystery of his former life, and how the great detective had gone to work so intelligently and skillfully that, with the aid of a sketch Hetty had once made of the pressman, and which Mr. Merrick sent on, he had been able to identify the man and unearth the disagreeable details of his history.

Thursday was too humble, by this time, and too grateful, besides, to resent Uncle John's interference. He admitted that, after all, it was better he should know the truth.

"I've nothing to bother me now but the future," he said, "and with God's help I mean to keep the name of Thursday Smith clean and free from any reproach."

After the interview he went about his duties as before and Hetty sat down at her desk and took the telegraphic news that came clicking over the wire as if nothing important in her life had occurred. But the girl journalists were all excitement and already were beginning to plan the things they might do to Make Hetty and Thursday happier. Cox and Booth had gone away and Mr. Merrick thanked Fogerty for his skillful service and gave him a fat check.

"It's a mighty interesting case, sir," declared the detective, "and I'm as glad as any of you that it has ended so comfortably. Whatever Melville might have been — and his record is a little worse than I related it — there's no doubt of Thursday Smith's honesty. He's a mighty fine fellow, and Fate played a proper trick when she blotted out his unscrupulous mind and left him as innocent as an unborn babe. He will do well in his new life, I'm sure, and that girl of his, Hetty Hewitt — I've know of her reckless ways for years — has also redeemed herself and turned out a regular brick! All of which, Mr. Merrick is unusual in real life, more's the pity, and therefore it makes even a cold-blooded detective feel good to witness it."

Mr. Merrick smiled benignantly and Fogerty drove over to the Junction to catch his train.

After luncheon, Patsy, while arranging her galley proofs, inquired of Louise for the local column.

"Hetty said she'd attend to it," was the reply; "but we are all upset to-day and things are at sixes and sevens."

"The column is all prepared, Miss Doyle," announced Hetty.

"Where is it?"

"Thursday has made it ready for the press. It's — illustrated," she

confessed. “I’d rather you wouldn’t see it until the paper is out, if you can trust me.”

“To be sure,” said Patsy. “That’s one responsibility I’m relieved of, anyhow.”

The paper was a bit uneven in appearance next morning, but when Patsy came down to breakfast she found both Uncle John and the major roaring with laughter over Hetty’s locals.

The first item stated that “Mrs. Thorne took tea at Sam Cotting’s last evening,” (the Cottings being notoriously inhospitable) and the picture showed Mrs. Thorne, a sour-faced woman, departing from the store with a package of tea. Then came the announcement that “Eph Hildreth got shot at West’s hardware store,” and there was a picture of West weighing out a pound of buckshot for his customer. The next item said: “Our distinguished fellow citizen, Marshall Peggy McNutt, was discovered unconscious on his front porch at 3 p.m.” The drawing of McNutt was one of the best of the series. It was his habit to “snooze” in an easy chair on his porch every afternoon, and Hetty depicted the little man with both feet — meat and wood — on the rail, his mouth open and eyes shut, while lusty snores were indicated by radiating lines and exclamation points. The Widow Clark’s cow occupied the next square, being tethered to a stake while Skim approached the animal with pail and milking-stool. Below the drawing were the words: “Mr. Skimton Clark, cowward.” A few other local hits were concluded by a picture of Hon. Ojoy Boglin shaking his fist at Mr. Skeelty, who held a package of money in his grasp labeled “insurance.” Below was the simple legend: “O Joy!”

The artist’s cleverness became the subject of conversation at the breakfast table, and Arthur remarked:

“You won’t be able to hold Hetty in Millville long. Her talent enables her to draw big salaries in New York and it isn’t likely she will consent to bury herself in this little town.”

“I’m not so sure,” said Patsy. “If we can hold Thursday Smith we can hold Hetty, you know.”

“We won’t need to hold either of them for long,” observed Beth; “for in another three weeks or so we must leave here and return to the city, when of course the *Millville Daily Tribune* must suspend publication.”

“I’ve been thinking of that,” said Uncle John.

“So have I,” declared Patsy. “For a long time I was puzzled what to do, for I hated dreadfully to kill our dear *Tribune* after we’ve made it such a nice paper. Yet I knew very well we couldn’t stay here all winter and run it. But last night I had an inspiration. Thursday will marry Hetty, I suppose, and

they can both stay here and run the Tribune. They are doing most of the work now. If Uncle John agrees, we will sell out to them on 'easy terms.'"

"Good gracious, Patsy!" chuckled the major, "wherever can the poor things borrow money to keep going? Do you want to load onto an innocent bride an' groom the necessity of meeting a deficit of a couple of hundred dollars every week?"

Patsy's face fell.

"They have no money, I know," she said, "except what they earn."

"And their wages'll be cut off when they begin hiring themselves," added the major. "No; you can't decently thrust such an incubus on Hetty and Thursday — or on anyone else. You've been willing to pay the piper for the sake of the dance, but no one else would do it."

"Quite true," agreed Arthur. "The days of the *Millville Tribune* are numbered."

"Let us not settle that question just yet," proposed Mr. Merrick, who had been deep in thought. "I'll consider Patsy's proposition for awhile and then talk with Thursday. The paper belongs to the girls, but the outfit is mine, and I suppose I may do what I please with it when my nieces retire from journalism."

Even the major could not demur at this statement and so the conversation dropped. During the next few days Uncle John visited the printing office several times and looked over the complete little plant with speculative eyes. Then one day he made a trip to Malvern, thirty miles up the railway line from the Junction, where a successful weekly paper had long been published. He interviewed the editor, examined the outfit critically, and after asking numerous questions returned to Millville in excellent spirits.

Then he invited Thursday Smith and Hetty to dine at the farm on Saturday evening, which was the one evening in the week they were free, there being no Sunday morning paper. Thursday had bought a new suit of clothes since he came to the *Tribune*, and Hetty, after much urging, finally prevailed upon him to accept the invitation. When the young man appeared at the farm he wore his new suit with an air of perfect ease that disguised its cheapness, and it was noticed that he seemed quite at home in the handsome living-room, where the party assembled after dinner.

"I am in search of information, Thursday," said Uncle John in his pleasant way. "Will you permit me to question you a bit?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And you, Hetty?"

"Ask anything you like, sir."

"Thank you. To begin with, what are your future plans? I understand, of

course, you are to be married; but — afterward?"

"We haven't considered that as yet, sir," replied Thursday thoughtfully. "Of course we shall stay with the *Tribune* as long as you care to employ our services; but — "

"Well?"

"I have been given to understand the young ladies plan to return to New York at the end of September, and in that case of course the paper will suspend."

"My nieces will be obliged to abandon journalism, to be sure," said Mr. Merrick; "but I see no reason why the paper should suspend. How would you and Hetty like to remain in Millville and run it?"

Both Thursday and Hetty smiled, but it was the man who answered;

"We cannot afford such a luxury, sir."

"Would you care to make your future home in Millville?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Hetty. "I love the quaint little town dearly, and the villagers are all my friends. I'm sure Thursday doesn't care to go back to New York, where — where Harold Melville once lived. But, as he truly says, we couldn't make a living with the *Tribune*, even if you gave us the use of the plant."

"Let us see about that," said Uncle John. "I will admit, in advance, that a daily paper in such a place is absurd. None of us quite understood that when we established the *Tribune*. My nieces thought a daily the only satisfactory sort of newspaper, because they were used to such, but it did not take long to convince me — and perhaps them — that in spite of all our efforts the *Millville Daily Tribune* would never thrive. It is too expensive to pay its own way and requires too much work to be a pleasant plaything. Only unbounded enthusiasm and energy have enabled my clever nieces to avoid being swamped by the monster their ambition created."

"That," said Patsy, with a laugh, "is very clearly and concisely put, my dear Uncle."

"It was never intended to be a permanent thing, anyhow," continued Mr. Merrick; "yet I must express my admiration for the courage and talent my nieces have displayed in forcing a temporary success where failure was the logical conclusion. Shortly, however, they intend to retire gracefully from the field of journalism, leaving me with a model country newspaper plant on my hands. Therefore it is I, Thursday and Hetty, and not my nieces, who have a proposition to place before you.

"While a daily paper is not appropriate in Millville, a weekly paper, distributed throughout Chazy County, would not only be desirable but could be made to pay an excellent yearly profit. Through the enterprise of Joe

Wegg, Millville is destined to grow rapidly from this time on, and Chazy County is populous enough to support a good weekly paper, in any event. Therefore, my proposition is this: To turn the plant over to Mr. and Mrs. Thursday Smith, who will change the name to the *Millville Weekly Tribune* and run it as a permanent institution. Your only expense for labor will be one assistant to set type and do odd jobs, since you are so competent that you can attend to all else yourselves. We will cut out the expensive news service we have heretofore indulged in and dispense with the private telegraph wire. Joe Wegg says he'll furnish you with what power you need free of all charge, because the paper will boost Millville's interests, with which his own interests are identified. Now, then, tell me what you think of my proposal."

Hetty and Thursday had listened attentively and their faces proved they were enthusiastic over the idea. They said at once they would be glad to undertake the proposition.

"However," said Thursday, after a little reflection, "there are two things that might render our acceptance impossible. I suppose you will require rent for the outfit; but for a time, until we get well started, we could not afford to pay as much as you have a right to demand."

"I have settled on my demands," replied Mr. Merrick, "and hope you will agree to them. You must pay me for the use of the outfit twenty per cent of your net profits, over and above all your operating and living expenses. When this sum has reimbursed me for my investment, the outfit will belong to you."

Thursday Smith looked his amazement.

"That seems hardly business-like, sir," he protested.

"You are right; but this isn't entirely a business deal. You are saving my nieces the humiliation of suspending the paper they established and have labored on so lovingly. Moreover, I regard you and Hetty as friends whom I am glad to put in the way of a modest but — I venture to predict — a successful business career. What is your second objection?"

"I heard Mr. West say the other day that he would soon need the building we occupy to store his farm machinery in."

"True; but I have anticipated that. I have completed plans for the erection of a new building for the newspaper, which will be located on the vacant lot next to the hotel. I purchased the lot a long time ago. The new building, for which the lumber is already ordered, will be a better one than the shed we are now in, and on the second floor I intend to have a cozy suite of rooms where you and Hetty can make a home of your own. Eh? How does that strike you, my children?"

Their faces were full of wonder and delight.

“The new building goes with the outfit, on the same terms,” continued Mr. Merrick. “That is I take one-fifth of your net profits for the whole thing.”

“But, sir,” suggested Thursday, “suppose no profits materialize?”

“Then I have induced you to undertake a poor venture and must suffer the consequences, which to me will be no hardship at all. In that case I will agree to find some better business for you, but I am quite positive you will make a go of the *Millville Weekly Tribune*.”

“I think so, too, Mr. Merrick, or I would not accept your generous offer,” replied Smith.

“What do you think, Hetty?”

“The idea pleases me immensely,” she declared. “It is a splendid opportunity for us, and will enable us to live here quietly and forget the big outside world. New York has had a bad influence on both you and me, Thursday, and here we can begin a new life of absolute respectability.”

“When do you intend to be married?” asked Patsy.

“We have scarcely thought of that, as yet, for until this evening we did not know what the future held in store for us.”

“Couldn’t you arrange the wedding before we leave?” asked Beth. “It would delight us so much to be present at the ceremony.”

“I think we owe the young ladies that much, Thursday,” said Hetty, after a brief hesitation.

“Nothing could please me better,” he asserted eagerly.

So they canvassed the wedding, and Patsy proposed they transfer the paper to Thursday and Hetty — to become a weekly instead of a daily — in a week’s time, and celebrate the wedding immediately after the second issue, so as to give the bridal couple a brief vacation before getting to work again. Neither of them wished to take a wedding trip, and Mr. Merrick promised to rush the work on the new building so they could move into their new rooms in the course of a few weeks.

CHAPTER XXIV

A CHEERFUL BLUNDER

"We would like to ask your advice about one thing, sir," said Thursday Smith to Mr. Merrick, a little later that same evening. "Would it be legal for me to marry under the name of Thursday Smith, or must I use my real name — Harold Melville?"

Uncle John could not answer this question, nor could the major or Arthur. Hetty and her fiancé had both decided to cling to the name of Thursday Smith thereafter, and they disliked to be married under any other — especially the detestable one of Harold Melville.

"An act of legislature would render your new name legal, I believe," said Mr. Merrick; "but such an act could not be passed until after the date you have planned to be married."

"But if it was made legal afterward it wouldn't matter greatly," suggested the major.

"I do not think it matters at all," asserted Hetty. "It's the man I'm marrying, not his name. I don't much care what he calls himself."

"Oh, but it must be legal, you know!" exclaimed Patsy. "You don't care now, perhaps, but you might in the future. We cannot be certain, you know, that Thursday is entirely free from his former connection with Harold Melville."

"Quite true," agreed the major.

"Then," said Smith, with evident disappointment, "I must use the hateful name of Melville for the wedding, and afterward abandon it for as long as possible."

The nieces were greatly pleased with Uncle John's arrangement, which relieved them of the newspaper and also furnished Thursday and Hetty, of whom they had grown really fond, with a means of gaining a livelihood.

Millville accepted the new arrangement with little adverse comment, the villagers being quite satisfied with a weekly paper, which would cost them far less than the daily had done. Everyone was pleased to know Thursday Smith had acquired the business, for both he and Hetty had won the cordial friendship of the simple-hearted people and were a little nearer to them than "the nabob's girls" could ever be.

Preparations were speedily pushed forward for the wedding, which the nieces undertook to manage themselves, the prospective bride and groom being too busy at the newspaper office to devote much attention to the preliminaries of the great event.

The ceremony was to take place at the farmhouse of Mr. Merrick, and

every inhabitant of Millville was invited to be present. The minister would drive over from Hooker's Falls, and the ceremony was to be followed by a grand feast, for which delicacies were to be imported from New York.

The girls provided a complete trousseau for Hetty, as their wedding present, while Arthur and the major undertook to furnish the new apartments, which were already under construction. Uncle John's gift was a substantial check that would furnish the newly married couple with modest capital to promote their business or which they could use in case of emergencies.

It was the very day before the wedding that Fogerty gave them so great and agreeable a surprise that Uncle John called it "Fogerty's Wedding Present" ever afterward. In its physical form it was merely a telegram, but in its spiritual and moral aspect it proved the greatest gift Thursday and Hetty were destined to receive. The telegram was dated from New York and read as follows:

"Harold Melville just arrested here for passing a bogus check under an assumed name. Have interviewed him and find he is really Melville, so Thursday Smith must be some one else, and doubtless a more respectable character. Shall I undertake to discover his real identity?"

Uncle John let Thursday and Hetty answer this question, and their reply was a positive "no!"

"The great Fogerty made such a blunder the first time," said Hetty, who was overjoyed at the glorious news, "that he might give poor Thursday another dreadful scare if he tackled the job again. Let the mystery remain unfathomable."

"But, on the contrary, my dear, Fogerty might discover that Thursday was some eminent and good man — as I am firmly convinced is the truth," suggested Mr. Merrick.

"He's that right now," asserted Hetty. "For my part, I prefer to know nothing of his former history, and Thursday says the present situation thoroughly contents him."

"I am more than contented," said Thursday, with a happy smile. "Hetty has cured me of my desire to wander, and no matter what I might have been in the past I am satisfied to remain hereafter a country editor."

AUNT JANE'S NIECES ON THE RANCH

Aunt Jane's Nieces on the Ranch was Baum's eighth novel in the series, published in 1913 under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne, by Reilly & Britton, illustrated by Emile A. Nelson. One of the nieces, Louise, now lives on a ranch in California with her husband and baby. Her cousins and Uncle John come out for a visit, brining with them a professional nurse to replace the baby's Mexican nurse, Inez. A conflict results between the two nurses. The plot also involves a mysterious disappearance, secret chambers, and treasure.

A first edition copy of Aunt Jane's Nieces on the Ranch

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CHAPTER I — UNCLE JOHN DECIDES

"And now," said Major Doyle, rubbing his hands together as he half reclined in his big chair in a corner of the sitting room, "now we shall enjoy a nice cosy winter in dear New York."

"Cosy?" said his young daughter, Miss Patricia Doyle, raising her head from her sewing to cast a glance through the window at the whirling snowflakes.

"Ab-so-lute-ly cosy, Patsy, my dear," responded the major. "Here we are in our own steam-heated flat — seven rooms and a bath, not counting the closets — hot water any time you turn the faucet; a telephone call brings the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker; latest editions of the papers chucked into the passage! What more do you want?"

"Tcha!"

This scornful ejaculation came from a little bald-headed man seated in the opposite corner, who had been calmly smoking his pipe and dreamily eyeing the flickering gas-log in the grate. The major gave a start and turned to stare fixedly at the little man. Patsy, scenting mischief, indulged in a little laugh as she threaded her needle.

"Sir! what am I to understand from that brutal interruption?" demanded Major Doyle sternly.

"You're talking nonsense," was the reply, uttered in a tone of cheery indifference. "New York in winter is a nightmare. Blizzards, thaws, hurricanes, ice, la grippe, shivers — grouches."

"Drumsticks!" cried the major indignantly. "It's the finest climate in the world — bar none. We've the finest restaurants, the best theatres, the biggest stores and — and the stock exchange. And then, there's Broadway! What more can mortal desire, John Merrick?"

The little man laughed, but filled his pipe without reply.

"Uncle John is getting uneasy," observed Patsy. "I've noticed it for some time. This is the first snowstorm that has caught him in New York for several years."

"The blizzard came unusually early," said Mr. Merrick apologetically. "It took me by surprise. But I imagine there will be a few days more of decent weather before winter finally sets in. By that time — "

"Well, what then?" asked the major in defiant accents, as his brother-in-law hesitated.

"By that time we shall be out of it, of course," was the quiet reply.

Patsy looked at her uncle reflectively, while the major grunted and shifted uneasily in his chair. Father and daughter were alike devoted to John

Merrick, whose generosity and kindliness had rescued them from poverty and thrust upon them all the comforts they now enjoyed. Even this pretty flat building in Willing Square, close to the fashionable New York residence district, belonged in fee to Miss Doyle, it having been a gift from her wealthy uncle. And Uncle John made his home with them, quite content in a seven-room-flat when his millions might have purchased the handsomest establishment in the metropolis. Down in Wall Street and throughout the financial districts the name of the great John Merrick was mentioned with awe; here in Willing Square he smoked a pipe in his corner of the modest sitting room and cheerfully argued with his irascible brother-in-law, Major Doyle, whose business it was to look after Mr. Merrick's investments and so allow the democratic little millionaire the opportunity to come and go as he pleased.

The major's greatest objection to Uncle John's frequent absences from New York — especially during the winter months — was due to the fact that his beloved Patsy, whom he worshiped with a species of idolatry, usually accompanied her uncle. It was quite natural for the major to resent being left alone, and equally natural for Patsy to enjoy these travel experiences, which in Uncle John's company were always delightful.

Patsy Doyle was an unprepossessing little thing, at first sight. She was short of stature and a bit plump; freckled and red-haired; neat and wholesome in appearance but lacking "style" in either form or apparel. But to her friends Patricia was beautiful. Her big blue eyes, mischievous and laughing, won hearts without effort, and the girl was so genuine — so natural and unaffected — that she attracted old and young alike and boasted a host of admiring friends.

This girl was Uncle John's favorite niece, but not the only one. Beth De Graf, a year younger than her cousin Patsy, was a ward of Mr. Merrick and lived with the others in the little flat at Willing Square. Beth was not an orphan, but her father and mother, residents of an Ohio town, had treated the girl so selfishly and inconsiderately that she had passed a very unhappy life until Uncle John took her under his wing and removed Beth from her depressing environment. This niece was as beautiful in form and feature as Patsy Doyle was plain, but she did not possess Patsy's cheerful and uniform temperament and was by nature reserved and diffident in the presence of strangers.

Yet Beth had many good qualities, among them a heart-felt sympathy for young girls who were not so fortunate as herself. On this disagreeable winter's day she had set out to visit a settlement school where she had long since proved herself the good angel of a score of struggling girls. The

blizzard had developed since she left home, but no one worried about her, for Beth was very resourceful.

There was another niece, likewise dear to John Merrick's heart, who had been Louise Merrick before she married a youth named Arthur Weldon, some two years before this story begins. A few months ago Arthur had taken his young wife to California, where he had purchased a fruit ranch, and there a baby was born to them which they named "Jane Merrick Weldon" — a rather big name for what was admitted to be a very small person.

This baby, now five months old and reported to be thriving, had been from its birth of tremendous interest to every inhabitant of the Willing Square flat. It had been discussed morning, noon and night by Uncle John and the girls, while even the grizzled major was not ashamed to admit that "that Weldon infant" was an important addition to the family. Perhaps little Jane acquired an added interest by being so far away from all her relatives, as well as from the fact that Louise wrote such glowing accounts of the baby's beauty and witcheries that to believe a tithe of what she asserted was to establish the child as an infantile marvel.

Now, Patsy Doyle knew in her heart that Uncle John was eager to see Louise's baby, and long ago she had confided to Beth her belief that the winter would find Mr. Merrick at Arthur Weldon's California ranch, with all his three nieces gathered around him and the infantile marvel in his arms. The same suspicion had crept into Major Doyle's mind, and that is why he so promptly resented the suggestion that New York was not an ideal winter resort. Somehow, the old major "felt in his bones" that his beloved Patsy would be whisked away to California, leaving her father to face the tedious winter without her; for he believed his business duties would not allow him to get away to accompany her.

Yet so far Uncle John, in planning for the winter, had not mentioned California as even a remote possibility. It was understood he would go somewhere, but up to the moment when he declared "we will be out of it, of course, when the bad weather sets in," he had kept his own counsel and forborne to express a preference or a decision.

But now the major, being aroused, decided to "have it out" with his elusive brother-in-law.

"Where will ye go to find a better place?" he demanded.

"We're going to Bermuda," said Uncle John.

"For onions?" asked the major sarcastically.

"They have other things in Bermuda besides onions. A delightful climate, I'm told, is one of them."

The major sniffed. He was surprised, it is true, and rather pleased, because

Bermuda is so much nearer New York than is California; but it was his custom to object.

"Patsy can't go," he declared, as if that settled the question for good and all. "The sea voyage would kill her. I'm told by truthful persons that the voyage to Bermuda is the most terrible experience known to mortals. Those who don't die on the way over positively refuse ever to come back again, and so remain forever exiled from their homes and families — until they have the good luck to die from continually eating onions."

Mr. Merrick smiled as he glanced at the major's severe countenance.

"It can't be as bad as that," said he. "I know a man who has taken his family to Bermuda for five winters, in succession."

"And brought 'em back alive each time?"

"Certainly. Otherwise, you will admit he couldn't take them again."

"That family," asserted the major seriously, "must be made of cast-iron, with clockwork stomachs."

Patsy gave one of her low, musical laughs.

"I think I would like Bermuda," she said. "Anyhow, whatever pleases Uncle John will please me, so long as we get away from New York."

"Why, ye female traitor!" cried the major; and added, for Uncle John's benefit: "New York is admitted by men of discretion to be the modern Garden of Eden. It's the one desideratum of — "

Here the door opened abruptly and Beth came in. Her cheeks were glowing red from contact with the wind and her dark tailor-suit glistened with tiny drops left by the melted snow. In her mittened hand she waved a letter.

"From Louise, Patsy!" she exclaimed, tossing it toward her cousin; "but don't you dare read it till I've changed my things."

Then she disappeared into an inner room and Patsy, disregarding the injunction, caught up the epistle and tore open the envelope.

Uncle John refilled his pipe and looked at Patsy's tense face inquiringly. The major stiffened, but could not wholly repress his curiosity. After a moment he said:

"All well, Patsy?"

"How's the baby?" asked Uncle John.

"Dear me!" cried Patsy, with a distressed face; "and no doctor nearer than five miles!"

Both men leaped from their chairs.

"Why don't they keep a doctor in the house?" roared the major.

"Suppose we send Dr. Lawson, right away!" suggested Uncle John.

Patsy, still holding up the letter, turned her eyes upon them reproachfully.

“It’s all over,” she said with a sigh.

The major dropped into a chair, limp and inert. Uncle John paled.

“The — the baby isn’t — dead!” he gasped.

“No, indeed,” returned Patsy, again reading. “But it had colic most dreadfully, and Louise was in despair. But the nurse, a dark-skinned Mexican creature, gave it a dose of some horrid hot stuff — ”

“Chile con carne, most likely!” ejaculated the major.

“Horrible!” cried Uncle John.

“And that cured the colic but almost burned poor little Jane’s insides out.”

“Insides out!”

“However, Louise says the dear baby is now quite well again,” continued the girl.

“Perhaps so, when she wrote,” commented the major, wiping his forehead with a handkerchief; “but that’s a week ago, at least. A thousand things might have happened to that child since then. Why was Arthur Weldon such a fool as to settle in a desert place, far away from all civilization? He ought to be prosecuted for cruelty.”

“The baby’s all right,” said Patsy, soothingly. “If anything serious happened, Louise would telegraph.”

“I doubt it,” said the major, walking the floor. “I doubt if there’s such a thing as a telegraph in all that forsaken country.”

Uncle John frowned.

“You are getting imbecile, Major. They’ve a lot more comforts and conveniences on that ranch than we have here in New York.”

“Name ‘em!” shouted the Major. “I challenge ye to mention one thing we haven’t right here in this flat.”

“Chickens!” said Beth, re-entering the room in time to hear this challenge. “How’s the baby, Patsy?”

“Growing like a weed, dear, and getting more lovely and cunning every second. Here — read the letter yourself.”

While Beth devoured the news from California Uncle John replied to the major.

“At El Cajon Ranch,” said he, “there’s a fine big house where the sunshine peeps in and floods the rooms every day in the year. Hear that blizzard howl outside, and think of the roses blooming this instant on the trellis of Louise’s window. Arthur has two automobiles and can get to town in twenty minutes. They’ve a long-distance telephone and I’ve talked with ‘em over the line several times.”

“You have!” This in a surprised chorus.

“I have. Only last week I called Louise up.”

“An expensive amusement, John,” said the major grimly.

“Yes; but I figured I could afford it. I own some telephone stock, you know, so I may get part of that investment back. They have their own cows, and chickens — as Beth truly says — and any morning they can pick oranges and grapefruit from their own trees for breakfast.”

“I’d like to see that precious baby,” remarked Beth, laying the letter on her lap to glance pleadingly at her uncle.

“Uncle John is going to take us to Bermuda,” said Patsy in a serious voice.

The little man flushed and sat down abruptly. The major, noting his attitude, became disturbed.

“You’ve all made the California trip,” said he. “It doesn’t pay to see any country twice.”

“But we haven’t seen Arthur’s ranch,” Beth reminded him.

“Nor the baby,” added Patsy, regarding the back of Uncle John’s head somewhat wistfully.

The silence that followed was broken only by the major’s low growls. The poor man already knew his fate.

“That chile-con-carne nurse ought to be discharged,” mumbled Uncle John, half audibly. “Mexicans are stupid creatures to have around. I think we ought to take with us an experienced nurse, who is intelligent and up-to-date.”

“Oh, I know the very one!” exclaimed Beth. “Mildred Travers. She’s perfectly splendid. I’ve watched her with that poor girl who was hurt at the school, and she’s as gentle and skillful as she is refined. Mildred would bring up that baby to be as hearty and healthful as a young savage.”

“How soon could she go?” asked Uncle John.

“At an hour’s notice, I’m sure. Trained nurses are used to sudden calls, you know. I’ll see her to-morrow — if it’s better weather.”

“Do,” said Uncle John. “I suppose you girls can get ready by Saturday?”

“Of course!” cried Patsy and Beth in one voice.

“Then I’ll make the reservations. Major Doyle, you will arrange your business to accompany us.”

“I won’t!”

“You will, or I’ll discharge you. You’re working for me, aren’t you?”

“I am, sir.”

“Then obey orders.”

CHAPTER II — EL CAJON RANCH

Uncle John always traveled comfortably and even luxuriously, but without ostentation. Such conveniences as were offered the general public he indulged in, but no one would suspect him of being a multi-millionaire who might have ordered a special train of private cars had the inclination seized him. A modest little man, who had made an enormous fortune in the far Northwest — almost before he realized it — John Merrick had never allowed the possession of money to deprive him of his simple tastes or to alter his kindly nature. He loved to be of the people and to mingle with his fellows on an equal footing, and nothing distressed him more than to be recognized by some one as the great New York financier. It is true that he had practically retired from business, but his huge fortune was invested in so many channels that his name remained prominent among men of affairs and this notoriety he was unable wholly to escape.

The trip to California was a delight because none of his fellow passengers knew his identity. During the three days' jaunt from Chicago to Los Angeles he was recognized only as an engaging little man who was conducting a party of three charming girls, as well as a sedate, soldierly old gentleman, into the sunny Southland for a winter's recreation.

Of these three girls we already know Patsy Doyle and Beth DeGraf, but Mildred Travers remains to be introduced. The trained nurse whom Beth had secured was tall and slight, with a sweet face, a gentle expression and eyes so calm and deep that a stranger found it disconcerting to gaze within them. Beth herself had similar eyes — big and fathomless — yet they were so expressive as to allure and bewitch the beholder, while Mildred Travers' eyes repelled one as being masked — as concealing some well guarded secret. Both the major and Uncle John had felt this and it made the latter somewhat uneasy when he reflected that he was taking this girl to be the trusted nurse of Louise's precious baby. He questioned Beth closely concerning Mildred and his niece declared that no kindlier, more sympathetic or more skillful nurse was ever granted a diploma. Of Mildred's history she was ignorant, except that the girl had confided to her the story of her struggles to obtain recognition and to get remunerative work after graduating from the training school.

"Once, you know," explained Beth, "trained nurses were in such demand that none were ever idle; but the training schools have been turning them out in such vast numbers that only those with family influence are now sure of work. Mildred is by instinct helpful and sympathetic — a natural born nurse, Uncle John — but because she was practically a stranger in New York she

was forced to do charity and hospital work, and that is how I became acquainted with her."

"She seems to bear out your endorsement, except for her eyes," said Uncle John. "I — I don't like — her eyes. They're hard. At times they seem vengeful and cruel, like tigers' eyes."

"Oh, you wrong Mildred, I'm sure!" exclaimed Beth, and Uncle John reluctantly accepted her verdict. On the journey Miss Travers appeared well bred and cultured, conversing easily and intelligently on a variety of subjects, yet always exhibiting a reserve, as if she held herself to be one apart from the others. Indeed, the girl proved so agreeable a companion that Mr. Merrick's misgivings gradually subsided. Even the major, still suspicious and doubtful, admitted that Mildred was "quite a superior person."

Louise had been notified by telegraph of the coming of her relatives, but they had withheld from her the fact that they were bringing a "proper" nurse to care for the Weldon baby. The party rested a day in Los Angeles and then journeyed on to Escondido, near which town the Weldon ranch was located.

Louise and Arthur were both at the station with their big seven-passenger touring car. The young mother was promptly smothered in embraces by Patsy and Beth, but when she emerged from this ordeal to be hugged and kissed by Uncle John, that observing little gentleman decided that she looked exactly as girlish and lovely as on her wedding day.

This eldest niece was, in fact, only twenty years of age — quite too young to be a wife and mother. She was of that feminine type which matures slowly and seems to bear the mark of perpetual youth. Mrs. Weldon's slight, willowy form was still almost childlike in its lines, and the sunny, happy smile upon her face seemed that of a school-maid.

That tall, boyish figure beside her, now heartily welcoming the guests, would scarcely be recognized as belonging to a husband and father. These two were more like children playing at "keeping house" than sedate married people. Mildred Travers observed the couple with evident surprise; but the others, familiar with the love story of Arthur and Louise, were merely glad to find them unchanged and enjoying their former health and good spirits.

"The baby!"

That was naturally the first inquiry, voiced in concert by the late arrivals; and Louise, blushing prettily and with a delightful air of proprietorship, laughingly assured them that "Toodlums" was very well.

"This is such a glorious country," she added as the big car started off with its load, to be followed by a wagon with the baggage, "that every living thing flourishes here like the green bay trees — and baby is no exception. Oh, you'll love our quaint old home, Uncle John! And, Patsy, we've got such a

flock of white chickens! And there's a new baby calf, Beth! And the major shall sleep in the Haunted Room, and — "

"Haunted?" asked the major, his eyes twinkling.

"I'm sure they're rats," said the little wife, "but the Mexicans claim it's the old miser himself. And the oranges are just in their prime and the roses are simply magnificent!"

So she rambled on, enthusiastic over her ranch home one moment and the next asking eager questions about New York and her old friends there. Louise had a mother, who was just now living in Paris, much to Arthur Weldon's satisfaction. Even Louise did not miss the worldly-minded, self-centered mother with whom she had so little in common, and perhaps Uncle John and his nieces would never have ventured on this visit had Mrs. Merrick been at the ranch.

The California country roads are all "boulevards," although they are nothing more than native earth, rolled smooth and saturated with heavy oil until they resemble asphalt. The automobile was a fast one and it swept through the beautiful country, all fresh and green in spite of the fact that it was December, and fragrant with the scent of roses and carnations, which bloomed on every side, until a twenty-minute run brought them to an avenue of gigantic palms which led from the road up to the ranch house of El Cajon.

Originally El Cajon had been a Spanish grant of several thousand acres, and three generations of Spanish dons had resided there. The last of these Cristovals had erected the present mansion — a splendid, rambling dwelling built around an open court where a fountain splashed and tall palms shot their swaying crowns far above the housetop. The South Wing was the old dwelling which the builder had incorporated into the present scheme, but the newer part was the more imposing.

The walls were of great thickness and composed of adobe blocks of huge size. These were not sun-baked, as is usual in adobe dwellings, but had been burned like brick in a furnace constructed for the purpose by the first proprietor, and were therefore much stronger and harder than ordinary brick. In this climate there is no dampness clinging to such a structure and the rooms were extraordinarily cool in summer and warm in the chill winter season. Surrounding the house were many magnificent trees of tropical and semi-tropical nature, all of which had now attained their full prime. On the south and east sides were extensive rose gardens and beds of flowers in wonderful variety.

It was here that the last Señor Cristoval had brought his young bride, a lady of Madrid who was reputed to have possessed great beauty; but seclusion in this retired spot, then much isolated, rendered her so unhappy

that she became mentally unbalanced and in a fit of depression took her own life. Cristoval, until then a generous and noble man, was completely changed by this catastrophe. During the remainder of his life he was noted for parsimony and greed for money, not unmixed with cruelty. He worked his ignorant Indian and Mexican servants mercilessly, denying them proper food or wage, and his death was a relief to all. Afterward the big estate was cut up and passed into various hands. Three hundred acres of fine orange and olive groves, including the spacious mansion, were finally sold to young Arthur Weldon.

"It's an awfully big place," said Louise, as the party alighted and stood upon the broad stone veranda, "but it is so quaint and charming that I love every stick and stone of it."

"The baby!" shrieked Patsy.

"Where's that blessed baby?" cried Beth.

Then came from the house a dusky maid bearing in her arms a soft, fluffy bundle that was instantly pounced upon by the two girls, to Uncle John's horror and dismay.

"Be careful, there!" he called. "You'll smother the poor thing." But Louise laughed and regarded the scene delightedly. And little Jane seemed to appreciate the importance of the occasion, for she waved her tiny hands and cooed a welcome to her two new aunties.

CHAPTER III — THAT BLESSED BABY!

"Oh, you darling!"

"It's my turn, Patsy! Don't be selfish. Let me kiss her again."

"That's enough, Beth. Here — give me my niece!"

"She's mine, too."

"Give me that baby! There; you've made her cry."

"I haven't; she's laughing because I kissed her wee nose."

"Isn't she a dear, though?"

"Now, girls," suggested Louise, "suppose we give Uncle John and the major a peep at her."

Reluctantly the bundle was abandoned to its mother, who carried it to where Mr. Merrick was nervously standing. "Yes, yes," he said, touching one cheek gently with the tip of his finger. "It — it's a fine child, Louise; really a — a — creditable child. But — eh — isn't it rather — soft?"

"Of course, Uncle John. All babies are soft. Aren't you going to kiss little Jane?"

"It — won't — hurt it?"

"Not a bit. Haven't Beth and Patsy nearly kissed its skin off?"

"Babies," asserted Major Doyle, stiffly, "were made to be kissed. Anyhow, that's the penalty they pay for being born helpless." And with this he kissed little Jane on both cheeks with evident satisfaction.

This bravado encouraged Uncle John to do likewise, but after the operation he looked sheepish and awkward, as if he felt that he had taken an unfair advantage of the wee lady.

"She seems very red, Louise," he remarked, to cover his embarrassment.

"Oh, no, Uncle! Everyone says she's the whitest baby of her age they ever saw. She's only five months old, remember."

"Dear me; how very young."

"But she's getting older every day," said Arthur, coming in from the garage. "What do you folks think of her, anyhow?"

The rhapsodies were fairly bewildering, yet very pleasant to the young father and mother. While they continued, Mildred Travers quietly took the child from Louise and tenderly bent over it. Only the major noted the little scene that ensued.

The eyes of the dark-skinned Mexican girl flashed sudden fire. She pulled Mildred's sleeve and then fell back discomfited as the cold, fathomless eyes of the trained nurse met her own. For an instant the girl stood irresolute; then with a quick, unexpected motion she tore the infant from Mildred's arms and rushed into the house with it.

Arthur, noticing this last action, laughed lightly. The major frowned. Mildred folded her arms and stood in the background unmoved and unobtrusive. Louise was chatting volubly with her two cousins.

"Was that the same Mexican girl who fed the baby chile con carne?" inquired Uncle John anxiously.

"Mercy, no!" cried Arthur. "What ever put such an idea into your head?"

"I believe the major suggested it," replied the little man. "Anyhow, it was something hot, so Louise wrote."

"Oh, yes; when Toodlums had the colic. It was some queer Mexican remedy, but I'm confident it saved the child's life. The girl is a treasure."

Uncle John coughed and glanced uneasily at Miss Travers, who pretended not to have overheard this conversation. But the major was highly amused and decided it was a good joke on Mr. Merrick. It was so good a joke that it might serve as a basis for many cutting remarks in future discussions. His brother-in-law was so seldom guilty of an error in judgment that Major Doyle, who loved to oppose him because he was so fond of him, hailed Uncle John's present predicament with pure joy.

Louise created a welcome diversion by ushering them all into the house and through the stately rooms to the open court, where a luncheon table was set beneath the shade of the palms.

Here was the baby again, with the Mexican girl, Inez, hugging it defiantly to her bosom as she sat upon a stone bench.

Between the infant, the excitement of arrival and admiration for the Weldon establishment, so far surpassing their most ardent anticipations, Beth and Patsy had little desire for food. Uncle John and the major, however, did ample justice to an excellent repast, which was served by two more Mexican maids.

"Do you employ only Mexicans for servants?" inquired Uncle John, when finally the men were left alone to smoke while the girls, under Louise's guidance, explored the house.

"Only Mexicans, except for the Chinese cook," replied Arthur. "It is impossible to get American help and the Japs I won't have. Some of the ranch hands have been on the place for years, but the house servants I hired after I come here."

"A lazy lot, eh?" suggested the major.

"Quite right, sir. But I find them faithful and easy to manage. You will notice that I keep two or three times as many house servants as a similar establishment would require in the east; but they are content with much smaller wages. It's the same way on the ranch. Yet without the Mexicans the help problem would be a serious one out here."

“Does the ranch pay?” asked Mr. Merrick.

“I haven’t been here long enough to find out,” answered Arthur, with a smile. “So far, I’ve done all the paying. We shall harvest a big orange crop next month, and in time the olives will mature; but I’ve an idea the expenses will eat up the receipts, by the end of the year.”

“No money in a California ranch, eh?”

“Why, some of my neighbors are making fortunes, I hear; but they are experienced ranchers. On the other hand, my next neighbor at the north is nearly bankrupt, because he’s a greenhorn from the east. Some time, when I’ve learned the game, I hope to make this place something more than a plaything.”

“You’ll stay here, then?” asked the major, with astonishment. “It’s the most delightful country on earth, for a residence. You’ll admit that, sir, when you know it better.”

Meantime the baggage wagon arrived and Patsy and Beth, having picked out their rooms, began to unpack and “settle” in their new quarters.

CHAPTER IV — LITTLE JANE'S TWO NURSES

Louise had been considerably puzzled to account for the presence of the strange girl in Uncle John's party. At first she did not know whether to receive Mildred Travers as an equal or a dependent. Not until the three nieces were seated together in Louise's own room, exchanging girlish confidences, was Mildred's status clearly defined to the young mother.

"You see," explained Patsy, "Uncle John was dreadfully worried over the baby. When you wrote of that terrible time the dear little one had with the colic, and how you were dependent on a Mexican girl who fed the innocent lamb some horrid hot stuff, Uncle declared it was a shame to imperil such a precious life, and that you must have a thoroughly competent nurse."

"But," said Louise, quite bewildered, "I'm afraid you don't understand that — "

"And so," broke in Beth, "I told him I knew of a perfect jewel of a trained nurse, who knows as much as most doctors and could guard the baby from a thousand dangers. I'd watched her care for one of our poor girls who was knocked down by an automobile and badly injured, and Mildred was so skillful and sympathetic that she quite won my heart. I wasn't sure, at first, she'd come way out to California, to stay, but when I broached the subject she cried out: 'Thank heaven!' in such a heart-felt, joyous tone that I was greatly relieved. So we brought her along, and — "

"Really, Beth, I don't need her," protested Louise. "The Mexicans are considered the best nurses in the world, and Inez is perfectly devoted to baby and worships her most sinfully. I got her from a woman who formerly employed her as a nurse and she gave Inez a splendid recommendation. Both Arthur and I believe she saved baby's life by her prompt action when the colic caught her."

"But the hot stuff!" cried Patsy.

"It might have ruined baby's stomach for life," asserted Beth.

"No; it's a simple Mexican remedy that is very efficient. Perhaps, in my anxiety, I wrote more forcibly than the occasion justified," admitted Louise; "but I have every confidence in Inez."

The girls were really dismayed and frankly displayed their chagrin. Louise laughed at them.

"Never mind," she said; "it's just one of dear Uncle John's blunders in trying to be good to me; so let's endeavor to wiggle out of the hole as gracefully as possible."

"I don't see how you'll do it," confessed Patsy. "Here's Mildred, permanently engaged and all expenses paid."

“She is really a superior person, as you’ll presently discover,” added Beth. “I’ve never dared question her as to her family history, but I venture to say she is well born and with just as good antecedents as we have — perhaps better.”

“She’s very quiet and undemonstrative,” said Patsy musingly.

“Naturally, being a trained nurse. I liked her face,” said Louise, “but her eyes puzzle me.”

“They are her one unfortunate feature,” Beth agreed.

“They’re cold,” said Patsy; “that’s the trouble. You never get *into* her eyes, somehow. They repel you.”

“I never look at them,” said Beth. “Her mouth is sweet and sensitive and her facial expression pleasant. She moves as gracefully and silently as — as — ”

“As a cat,” suggested Patsy.

“And she is acquainted with all the modern methods of nursing, although she’s done a lot of hospital work, too.”

“Well,” said Louise, reflectively, “I’ll talk it over with Arthur and see what we can do. Perhaps baby needs two nurses. We can’t discharge Inez, for Toodlums is even more contented with her than with me; but I admit it will be a satisfaction to have so thoroughly competent a nurse as Miss Travers at hand in case of emergency. And, above all else, I don’t want to hurt dear Uncle John’s feelings.”

She did talk it over with Arthur, an hour later, and her boy husband declared he had “sized up the situation” the moment he laid eyes on Mildred at the depot. They owed a lot to Uncle John, he added, and the most graceful thing they could do, under the circumstances, was to instal Miss Travers as head nurse and retain Inez as her assistant.

“The chances are,” said Arthur laughingly, “that the Mexican girl will have most of the care of Toodlums, as she does now, while the superior will remain content to advise Inez and keep a general supervision over the nursery. So fix it up that way, Louise, and everybody will be happy.”

Uncle John was thanked so heartily for his thoughtfulness by the young couple that his kindly face glowed with satisfaction, and then Louise began the task of reconciling the two nurses to the proposed arrangement and defining the duties of each. Mildred Travers inclined her head graciously and said it was an admirable arrangement and quite satisfactory to her. But Inez listened sullenly and her dark eyes glowed with resentment.

“You not trust me more, then?” she added.

“Oh, yes, Inez; we trust you as much as ever,” Louise assured her.

“Then why you hire this strange woman?”

“She is a present to us, from my Uncle John, who came this morning. He didn’t know you were here, you see, or he would not have brought her.”

Inez remained unmollified.

“Miss Travers is a very skillful baby doctor,” continued Louise, “and she can mend broken bones, cure diseases and make the sick well.”

Inez nodded.

“I know. A witch-woman,” she said in a whisper. “You can trust me señora, but you cannot trust her. No witch-woman can be trusted.”

Louise smiled but thought best not to argue the point farther. Inez went back to the nursery hugging Toodlums as jealously as if she feared some one would snatch the little one from her arms.

Next morning Mildred said to Beth, in whom she confided most:

“The Mexican girl does not like me. She is devotedly attached to the baby and fears I will supplant her.”

“That is true,” admitted Beth, who had conceived the same idea; “but you mustn’t mind her, Mildred. The poor thing’s only half civilized and doesn’t understand our ways very well. What do you think of little Jane?”

“I never knew a sweeter, healthier or more contented baby. She smiles and sleeps perpetually and seems thoroughly wholesome. Were she to remain in her present robust condition there would be little need of my services, I assure you. But — ”

“But what?” asked Beth anxiously, as the nurse hesitated.

“All babies have their ills, and little Jane cannot escape them. The rainy season is approaching and dampness is trying to infants. There will be months of moisture, and then — I shall be needed.”

“Have you been in California before?” asked Beth, impressed by Mildred’s positive assertion.

The girl hesitated a moment, looking down.

“I was born here,” she said in low, tense tones.

“Indeed! Why, I thought all the white people in California came from the east. I had no idea there could be such a thing as a white native.”

Mildred smiled with her lips. Her imperturbable eyes never smiled.

“I am only nineteen, in spite of my years of training and hard work,” she said, a touch of bitterness in her voice. “My father came here nearly thirty years ago.”

“To Southern California?”

“Yes.”

“Did you live near here, then?”

Mildred looked around her.

“I have been in this house often, as a girl,” she said slowly. “Señor

Cristoval was — an acquaintance of my father."

Beth stared at her, greatly interested.

"How strange!" she exclaimed. "You cannot be far from your own family, then," she added.

Mildred shivered a little, twisting her fingers nervously together. She was indeed sensitive, despite that calm, repellent look in her eyes.

"I hope," she said, evading Beth's remark, "to be of real use to this dear baby, whom I already love. The Mexican girl, Inez, is well enough as a caretaker, but her judgment could not be trusted in emergencies. These Mexicans lose their heads easily and in crises are liable to do more harm than good. Mrs. Weldon's arrangement is an admirable one and I confess it relieves me of much drudgery and confinement. I shall keep a watchful supervision over my charge and be prepared to meet any emergency."

Beth was not wholly satisfied with this interview. Mildred had told her just enough to render her curious, but had withheld any information as to how a California girl happened to be in New York working as a trained nurse. She remembered the girl's fervent exclamation: "Thank heaven!" when asked if she would go to Southern California, to a ranch called El Cajon, to take care of a new baby. Beth judged from this that Mildred was eager to get back home again; yet she had evaded any reference to her family or former friends, and since her arrival had expressed no wish to visit them.

There was something strange and unaccountable about the affair, and for this reason Beth refrained from mentioning to her cousins that Mildred Travers was a Californian by birth and was familiar with the scenes around El Cajon ranch and even with the old house itself. Perhaps some day the girl would tell her more, when she would be able to relate the whole story to Patsy and Louise.

Of course the new arrivals were eager to inspect the orange and olive groves, so on the day following that of their arrival the entire party prepared to join Arthur Weldon in a tramp over the three hundred acre ranch.

A little way back of the grounds devoted to the residence and gardens began the orange groves, the dark green foliage just now hung thick with fruit, some green, some pale yellow and others of that deep orange hue which denotes full maturity. "They consider five acres of oranges a pretty fair ranch, out here," said the young proprietor; "but I have a hundred and ten acres of bearing trees. It will take a good many freight cars to carry my oranges to the eastern markets."

"And what a job to pick them all!" exclaimed Patsy.

"We don't pick them," said Arthur. "I sell the crop on the trees and the purchaser sends a crew of men who gather the fruit in quick order. They are

taken to big warehouses and sorted into sizes, wrapped and packed and loaded onto cars. That is a separate branch of the business with which we growers have nothing to do."

Between the orange and the olive groves, and facing a little lane, they came upon a group of adobe huts — a little village in itself. Many children were playing about the yards, while several stalwart Mexicans lounged in the shade quietly smoking their eternal cigarettes. Women appeared in the doorways, shading their eyes with their hands as they curiously examined the approaching strangers.

Only one man, a small, wiry fellow with plump brown cheeks and hair and beard of snowy whiteness, detached himself from the group and advanced to meet his master. Removing his wide sombrero he made a sweeping bow, a gesture so comical that Patsy nearly laughed aloud.

"This is Miguel Zaloa, the ranchero, who has charge of all my men," said Arthur. Then, addressing the man, he asked: "Any news, Miguel?"

"Ever'thing all right, Meest Weld," replied the ranchero, his bright eyes earnestly fixed upon his employer's face. "Some pardon, señor; but — Mees Jane is well?"

"Quite well, thank you, Miguel."

"Mees Jane," said the man, shyly twirling his hat in his hands as he cast an upward glance at the young ladies, "ees cherub young lade; much love an' beaut'ful. Ees not?"

"She's a dear," replied Patsy, with ready sympathy for the sentiment and greatly pleased to find the man so ardent an admirer of the baby.

"Ever'bod' love Mees Jane," continued old Miguel, simply. "Since she have came, sun ees more bright, air ees more good, tamale ees more sweet. Will Inez bring Mees Jane to see us to-day, Meest Weld?"

"Perhaps so," laughed Arthur; and then, as he turned to lead them to the olive trees, Louise, blushing prettily at the praise bestowed upon her darling, pressed a piece of shining silver into old Miguel's hand — which he grasped with alacrity and another low bow.

"No doubt he's right about little Jane," remarked the major, when they had passed beyond earshot, "but I've a faint suspicion the old bandit praised her in order to get the money."

"Oh, no!" cried Louise; "he's really sincere. It is quite wonderful how completely all our Mexicans are wrapped up in baby. If Inez doesn't wheel the baby-cab over to the quarters every day, they come to the house in droves to inquire if 'Mees Jane' is well. Their love for her is almost pathetic."

"Don't the fellows ever work?" inquired Uncle John.

"Yes, indeed," said Arthur. "Have you any fault to find with the condition

of this ranch? As compared with many others it is a model of perfection. At daybreak the mules are cultivating the earth around the trees; when the sun gets low the irrigating begins. We keep the harrows and the pumps busy every day. But during the hours when the sun shines brightest the Mexicans do not love to work, and it is policy — so long as they accomplish their tasks — to allow them to choose their own hours for labor."

"They seem a shiftless lot," said the major.

"They're as good as their average type. But some — old Miguel, for instance — are better than the ordinary. Miguel is really a clever and industrious fellow. He has lived here practically all his life and knows intimately every tree on the place."

"Did he serve the old Spanish don — Cristoval?" asked Beth.

"Yes; and his father before him. I've often wondered how old Miguel is. According to his own story he must be nearly a hundred; but that's absurd. Anyhow, he's a faithful, capable fellow, and rules the others with the rigor of an autocrat. I don't know what I should do without him."

"You seem to have purchased a lot of things with this ranch," observed Uncle John. "A capital old mansion, a band of trained servants, and — a ghost."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Louise. "Major, did the ghost bother you last night?"

"Not to my knowledge," said the old soldier. "I was too tired to keep awake, you know; therefore his ghostship could not have disturbed me without being unusually energetic."

"Have you ever seen the ghost, Louise?" inquired Patsy.

"No, dear, nor even heard it. But Arthur has. It's in the blue room, you know, near Arthur's study — one of the prettiest rooms in the house."

"That's why we gave it to the major," added Arthur. "Once or twice, when I've been sitting in the study, at about midnight, reading and smoking my pipe, I've heard some queer noises coming from the blue room; but I attribute them to rats. These old houses are full of the pests and we can't manage to get rid of them."

"I imagine the walls are not all solid," explained Louise, "for some of those on the outside are from six to eight feet in thickness, and it would be folly to make them of solid adobe."

"As for that, adobe costs nothing," said Arthur, "and it would be far cheaper to make a solid wall than a hollow one. But between the blocks are a lot of spaces favored as residences by our enemies the rats, and there they are safe from our reach."

"But the ghost?" demanded Patsy.

“Oh, the ghost exists merely in the minds of the simple Mexicans, over there at the quarters. Most of them were here when that rascally old Cristoval died, and no money would hire one of them to sleep in the house. You see, they feared and hated the old fellow, who doubtless treated them cruelly. That is why we had to get our house servants from a distance, and even then we had some difficulty in quieting their fears when they heard the ghost tales. Little Inez,” added Louise, “is especially superstitious, and I’m sure if she were not so devoted to baby she would have left us weeks ago.”

“Inez told me this morning,” said Beth, “that the major must be a very brave man and possessed some charm that protected him from ghosts, or he would never dare sleep in the blue room.”

“I have a charm,” declared the major, gravely, “and it’s just common sense.”

But now they were among the graceful, broad-spreading olives, at this season barren of fruit but very attractive in their gray-green foliage. Arthur had to explain all about olive culture to the ignorant Easterners and he did this with much satisfaction because he had so recently acquired the knowledge himself.

“I can see,” said Uncle John, “that your ranch is to be a great gamble. In good years, you win; a crop failure will cost you a fortune.”

“True,” admitted the young man; “but an absolute crop failure is unknown in this section. Some years are better than others, but all are good years.”

It was quite a long tramp, but a very pleasant one, and by the time they returned to the house everyone was ready for luncheon, which awaited them in the shady court, beside the splashing fountain. Patsy and Beth demanded the baby, so presently Inez came with little Jane, and Mildred Travers followed after. The two nurses did not seem on very friendly terms, for the Mexican girl glared fiercely at her rival and Mildred returned a basilisk stare that would have confounded anyone less defiant.

This evident hostility amused Patsy, annoyed Beth and worried Louise; but the baby was impartial. From her seat on Inez’ lap little Jane stretched out her tiny hands to Mildred, smiling divinely, and the nurse took the child in spite of Inez’ weak resistance, fondling the little one lovingly. There was a sharp contrast between Mildred’s expert and adroit handling of the child and Inez’ tender awkwardness, and this was so evident that all present noticed it.

Perhaps Inez herself felt this difference as, sullen and jealous, she eyed the other intently. Then little Jane transferred her favors to her former nurse and held out her hands to Inez. With a cry that was half a sob the girl caught the baby in her arms and held it so closely that Patsy had hard work to make her give it up.

By the time Uncle John had finished his lunch both Patsy and Beth had taken turns holding the fascinating "Toodlums," and now the latter plunged Jane into Mr. Merrick's lap and warned him to be very careful.

Uncle John was embarrassed but greatly delighted. He cooed and clucked to the baby until it fairly laughed aloud with glee, and then he made faces until the infant became startled and regarded him with grave suspicion.

"If you've done making an old fool of yourself, sir," said the major severely, "you'll oblige me by handing over my niece."

"*Your* niece!" was the indignant reply; "she's nothing of the sort. Jane is *my* niece."

"No more than mine," insisted the major; "and you're worrying her. Will you hand her over, you selfish man, or must I take her by force?"

Uncle John reluctantly submitted to the divorce and the major handled the baby as if she had been glass.

"Ye see," he remarked, lapsing slightly into his Irish brogue, as he was apt to do when much interested, "I've raised a daughter meself, which John Merrick hasn't, and I know the ways of the wee women. They know very well when a friend has 'em, and — Ouch! Leg-go, I say!"

Little Jane had his grizzly moustache fast in two chubby fists and the major's howls aroused peals of laughter.

Uncle John nearly rolled from his chair in an ecstacy of delight and he could have shaken Mildred Travers for releasing the grip of the baby fingers and rescuing the major from torture.

"Laugh, ye satyr!" growled the major, wiping the tears from his own eyes. "It's lucky you have no hair nor whiskers — any more than an egg — or you'd be writhing in agony before now." He turned to look wonderingly at the crowing baby in Mildred's arms. "It's a female Sandow!" he averred. "The grip of her hands is something marvelous!"

CHAPTER V — INEZ THREATENS

"Yes," said Louise, a week later, "we all make fools of ourselves over Toodlums, Really, girls, Jane is a very winning baby. I don't say that because I'm her mother, understand. If she were anyone else's baby, I'd say the same thing."

"Of course," agreed Patsy. "I don't believe such a baby was ever before born. She's so happy, and sweet, and — and — "

"And comfortable," said Beth. "Indeed, Jane is a born sorceress; she bewitches everyone who beholds her dear dimpled face. This is an impartial opinion, you know; I'd say the same thing if I were not her adoring auntie."

"It's true," Patsy declared. "Even the Mexicans worship her. And Mildred Travers — the sphinx — whose blood I am sure is ice-water, displays a devotion for baby that is absolutely amazing. I don't blame her, you know, for it must be a real delight to care for such a fairy. I'm surprised, Louise, that you can bear to have baby out of your sight so much of the time."

Louise laughed lightly.

"I'm not such an unfeeling mother as you think," she answered. "I know just where baby is every minute and she is never out of my thoughts. However, with two nurses, both very competent, to care for Toodlums, I do not think it necessary to hold her in my lap every moment."

Here Uncle John and the major approached the palm, under which the three nieces were sitting, and Mr. Merrick exclaimed:

"I'll bet a cookie you were talking of baby Jane."

"You'd win, then," replied Patsy. "There's no other topic of conversation half so delightful."

"Jane," observed the major, musingly, as he seated himself in a rustic chair. "A queer name for a baby, Louise. Whatever possessed you to burden the poor infant with it?"

"Burden? Nonsense, Major! It's a charming name," cried Patsy.

"She is named after poor Aunt Jane," said Louise.

A silence somewhat awkward followed.

"My sister Jane," remarked Uncle John gravely, "was in some respects an admirable woman."

"And in many others detestable," said Beth in frank protest. "The only good thing I can remember about Aunt Jane," she added, "is that she brought us three girls together, when we had previously been almost unaware of one anothers' existence. And she made us acquainted with Uncle John."

"Then she did us another favor," added Patsy. "She died."

"Poor Aunt Jane!" sighed Louise. "I wish I could say something to prove

that I revere her memory. Had the baby been a boy, its name would have been John; but being a girl I named her for Uncle John's sister — the highest compliment I could conceive."

Uncle John nodded gratefully. "I wasn't especially fond of Jane, myself," said he, "but it's a family name and I'm glad you gave it to baby."

"Jane Merrick," said the major, "was very cruel to Patsy and to me, and so I'm sorry you gave her name to baby."

"Always contrary, eh?" returned Uncle John, with a tolerant smile, for he was in no wise disturbed by this adverse criticism of his defunct sister — a criticism that in fact admitted little argument. "But it occurs to me that the most peculiar thing about this name is that you three girls, who were once Aunt Jane's nieces, are now Niece Jane's aunts!"

"Except me," smiled Louise. "I'm happy to claim a closer relationship. But returning to our discussion of Aunt Jane. She was really instrumental in making our fortunes as well as in promoting our happiness, so I have no regret because I made baby her namesake."

"The name of Jane," said Patsy, "is in itself beautiful, because it is simple and old-fashioned. Now that it is connected with my chubby niece it will derive a new and added luster."

"Quite true," declared Uncle John.

"Where is Arthur?" inquired the major.

"Writing his weekly batch of letters," replied Arthur's wife. "When they are ready he is to drive us all over to town in the big car, and we have planned to have lunch there and to return home in the cool of the evening. Will that program please our guests?"

All voiced their approval and presently Arthur appeared with his letters and bade them get ready for the ride, while he brought out the car. He always drove the machine himself, as no one on the place was competent to act as chauffeur; but he managed it admirably and enjoyed driving.

Louise went to the nursery to kiss little Jane. The baby lay in her crib, fast asleep. Near her sat Mildred Travers, reading a book. Crouched in the window-seat was Inez, hugging her knees and gazing moodily out into the garden.

The nursery was in the East Wing, facing the courtyard but also looking upon the rose garden, its one deep-set window being near a corner of the room. On one side it connected with a small chamber used by Inez, which occupied half the depth of the wing and faced the garden. The other half of the space was taken by a small sewing-room letting out upon the court.

At the opposite side of little Jane's nursery was a roomy chamber which had been given up to Mildred, and still beyond this were the rooms occupied

by Arthur and Louise, all upon the ground floor. By this arrangement the baby had a nurse on either side and was only one room removed from its parents.

This wing was said to be the oldest part of the mansion, a fact attested by the great thickness of the walls. Just above was the famous blue room occupied by the major, where ghosts were supposed at times to hold their revels. Yet, despite its clumsy construction, the East Wing was cheery and pleasant in all its rooms and sunlight flooded it the year round.

After the master and mistress had driven away to town with their guests, Inez sat for a time by the window, still motionless save for an occasional wicked glance over her shoulder at Mildred, who read placidly as she rocked to and fro in her chair. The presence of the American nurse seemed to oppress the girl, for not a semblance of friendship had yet developed between the two; so presently Inez rose and glided softly out into the court, leaving Mildred to watch the sleeping baby.

She took the path that led to the Mexican quarters and ten minutes later entered the hut where Bella, the skinny old hag who was the wife to Miguel Zaloa, was busy with her work.

"Ah, Inez. But where ees Mees Jane?" was the eager inquiry.

Inez glanced around to find several moustached faces in the doorway. Every dark, earnest eye repeated the old woman's question. The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"She is care for by the new nurse, Meeldred. I left her sleeping."

"Who sleeps, Inez?" demanded the aged Miguel. "Ees it the new nurse, or Mees Jane?"

"Both, perhap." She laughed scornfully and went out to the shed that connected two of the adobe dwellings and served as a shady lounging place. Here a group quickly formed around her, including those who followed from the hut.

"I shall kill her, some day," declared the girl, showing her gleaming teeth. "What right have she to come an' take our baby?"

Miguel stroked his white moustache reflectively.

"Ees this Meeldred good to Mees Jane?" he asked.

"When anyone looks, yes," replied Inez reluctantly. "She fool even baby, some time, who laugh at her. But poor baby do not know. I know. This Meeldred ees a devil!" she hissed.

The listening group displayed no emotion at this avowal. They eyed the girl attentively, as if expecting to hear more. But Inez, having vented her spite, now sulked.

"Where she came from?" asked Miguel, the recognized spokesman.

“Back there. New York,” tossing her head in an easterly direction.

“Why she come?” continued the old man.

“The little mans with no hair — Meest Merrick — he think I not know about babies. He think this girl who learns babies in school, an’ from books, know more than me who has care for many baby — but for none like our Mees Jane. Mees Jane ees angel!”

They all nodded in unison, approving her assertion.

“Eet ees not bad thought, that,” remarked old Bella. “Books an’ schools ees good to teach wisdom.”

“Pah! Not for babies,” objected her husband, shaking his head. “Book an’ school can not grow orange, either. To do a thing many time ees to know it better than a book can know.”

“Besides,” said Inez, “this Meeldred ees witch-woman.”

“Yes?”

“I know it. She come from New York. But yesterday she say to me: ‘Let us wheel leetle Jane to the live oak at Burney’s.’ How can she know there is live oak at Burney’s? Then, the first day she come, she say: ‘Take baby’s milk into vault under your room an’ put on stone shelf to keep cool.’ I, who live here, do not know of such a vault. She show me some stone steps in one corner, an’ she push against stone wall. Then wall open like door, an’ I find vault. But how she know it, unless she is witch-woman?”

There was a murmur of astonishment. Old Miguel scratched his head as if puzzled.

“I, too, know about thees vault,” said he; “but then, eet ees I know all of the old house, as no one else know. Once I live there with Señor Cristoval. But how can thees New York girl know?”

There was no answer. Merely puzzled looks.

“What name has she, Inez?” suddenly asked Miguel.

“Travers. Meeldred Travers.”

The old man thought deeply and then shook his head with a sigh.

“In seexty year there be no Travers near El Cajon,” he asserted. “I thought maybe she have been here before. But no. Even in old days there ees no Travers come here.”

“There ees a Travers Ranch over at the north,” asserted Bella.

“Eet ees a name; there be no Travers live there,” declared Miguel, still with that puzzled look upon his plump features.

Inez laughed at him.

“She is witch-woman, I tell you. I know it! Look in her eyes, an’ see.”

The group of Mexicans moved uneasily. Old Miguel deliberately rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

“Thees woman I have not yet see,” he announced, after due reflection. “But, if she ees witch-woman, eet ees bad for Mees Jane to be near her.”

“That is what *I* say!” cried Inez eagerly. She spoke better English than the others. “She will bewitch my baby; she will make it sickly, so it will die!” And she wrung her hands in piteous misery.

The Mexicans exchanged frightened looks. Old Bella alone seemed unaffected.

“Mees Weld own her baby — not us,” suggested Miguel’s wife. “If Mees Weld theenk thees girl is safe nurse, what have we to say — eh?”

“I say she shall not kill my baby!” cried Inez fiercely. “That is what *I* say, Bella. Before she do that, I kill thees Meeldred Travers.”

Miguel examined the girl’s face intently.

“You are fool, Inez,” he asserted. “It ees bad to keel anything — even thees New York witch-woman. Be compose an’ keep watch. Nothing harm Mees Jane if you watch. Where are your folks, girl?”

“Live in San Diego,” replied Inez, again sullen.

“Once I know your father. He ees good man, but drink too much. If you make quarrel about thees new nurse, you get sent home. Then you lose Mees Jane. So keep compose, an’ watch. If you see anything wrong, come to me an’ tell it. That ees best.”

Inez glanced around the group defiantly, but all nodded approval of old Miguel’s advice. She rose from the bench where she was seated, shrugged her shoulders disdainfully and walked away without a word.

CHAPTER VI — A DINNER WITH THE NEIGHBORS

Escondido, the nearest town and post office to El Cajon Ranch, is a quaint little place with a decided Mexican atmosphere. Those California inhabitants whom we call, for convenience, "Mexicans," are not all natives of Mexico, by any means. Most of them are a mixed breed derived from the early Spanish settlers and the native Indian tribes — both alike practically extinct in this locality — and have never stepped foot in Mexican territory, although the boundary line is not far distant. Because the true Mexican is generally a similar admixture of Indian and Spaniard, it is customary to call these Californians by the same appellation. The early Spaniards left a strong impress upon this state, and even in the newly settled districts the Spanish architecture appropriately prevails, as typical of a semi-tropical country which owed its first civilizing influences to old Spain.

The houses of Escondido are a queer mingling of modern bungalows and antique adobe dwellings. Even the business street shows many adobe structures. A quiet, dreamy little town, with a comfortable hotel and excellent stores, it is much frequented by the wealthy ranchers in its neighborhood.

After stopping at the post office, Arthur drove down a little side street to a weather-beaten, unprepossessing building which bore the word "Restaurant" painted in dim white letters upon its one window. Here he halted the machine.

"Oh," said Beth, drawing a long breath. "Is this one of your little jokes, Arthur?"

"A joke? Didn't we come for luncheon, then?"

"We did, and I'm ravenous," said Patsy. "But you informed us that there is a good hotel here, on the main street."

"So there is," admitted Arthur; "but it's like all hotels. Now, this is — different. If you're hungry; if you want a treat — something out of the ordinary — just follow me."

Louise was laughing at their doubting expressions and this care-free levity led them to obey their host's injunction. Then the dingy door opened and out stepped a young fellow whom the girls decided must be either a cowboy or a clever imitation of one.

He seemed very young — a mere boy — for all his stout little form. He was bareheaded and a shock of light, tow-colored hair was in picturesque disarray. A blue flannel shirt, rolled up at the sleeves, a pair of drab corduroy trousers and rough shoes completed his attire. Pausing awkwardly in the doorway, he first flushed red and then advanced boldly to shake Arthur's

hand.

"Why, Weldon, this is an unexpected pleasure," he exclaimed in a pleasant voice that belied his rude costume, for its tones were well modulated and cultured. "I've been trying to call you up for three days, but something is wrong with the line. How's baby?"

This last question was addressed to Louise, who shook the youth's hand cordially.

"Baby is thriving finely," she reported, and then introduced her friends to Mr. Rudolph Hahn, who, she explained, was one of their nearest neighbors.

"We almost crowd the Weldons," he said, "for our house is only five miles distant from theirs; so we've been getting quite chummy since they moved to El Cajon. Helen — that's my wife, you know — is an humble worshiper at the shrine of Miss Jane Weldon, as we all are, in fact."

"Your wife!" cried Patsy in surprise.

He laughed.

"You think I'm an infant, only fit to play with Jane," said he; "but I assure you I could vote, if I wanted to — which I don't. I think, sir," turning to Uncle John, "that my father knows you quite well."

"Why, surely you're not the son of Andy Hahn, the steel king?"

"I believe they do give him that royal title; but Dad is only a monarch in finance, and when he visits my ranch he's as much a boy as his son."

"It scarcely seems possible," declared Mr. Merrick, eyeing the rough costume wonderingly but also with approval. "How long have you lived out here?"

"Six years, sir. I'm an old inhabitant. Weldon, here, has only been alive for six months."

"Alive?"

"Of course. One breathes, back east, but only lives in California."

During the laughter that followed this enthusiastic epigram Arthur ushered the party into the quaint Spanish restaurant. The room was clean and neat, despite the fact that the floor was strewn with sawdust and the tables covered with white oilcloth. An anxious-eyed, dapper little man with a foreign face and manner greeted them effusively and asked in broken English their commands.

Arthur ordered the specialties of the house. "These friends, Castro, are from the far East, and I've told them of your famous cuisine. Don't disappoint them."

"May I join you?" asked Rudolph Hahn. "I wish I'd brought Nell over to-day; she'd have been delighted with this meeting. But we didn't know you were coming. That confounded telephone doesn't reach you at all."

“I’m going over to the office to see about that telephone,” said Arthur. “I believe I’ll do the errand while Castro is preparing his compounds. I’m always uneasy when the telephone is out of order.”

“You ought to be,” said Rudolph, “with that blessed baby in the house. It might save you thirty precious minutes in getting a doctor.”

“Does your line work?” asked Louise.

“Yes; it seems to get all connections but yours. So I imagine something is wrong with your phone, or near the house.”

“I’ll have them send a repair man out at once,” said Arthur, and departed for the telephone office, accompanied by his fellow rancher.

While they were gone Louise told them something of young Hahn’s history. He had eloped, at seventeen years of age, with his father’s stenographer, a charming girl of eighteen who belonged to one of the best families in Washington. Old Hahn was at first furious and threatened to disinherit the boy, but when he found the young bride’s family still more furious and preparing to annul the marriage on the grounds of the groom’s youth, the great financier’s mood changed and he whisked the pair off to California and bought for them a half-million-dollar ranch, where they had lived for six years a life of unalloyed bliss. Having no children of their own, the Hahns were devoted to little Jane and it was Rudolph who had given the baby the sobriquet of “Toodlums.” At almost any time, night or day, the Hahn automobile was liable to arrive at El Cajon for a sight of the baby.

“Rudolph — we call him ‘Dolph,’ you know — has not a particle of business instinct,” said Louise, “so he will never be able to take his father’s place in the financial world. And he runs his ranch so extravagantly that it costs the pater a small fortune every year. Yet they are agreeable neighbors, artless and unconventional as children, and surely the great Hahn fortune won’t suffer much through their inroads.”

When Arthur returned he brought with him still another neighboring ranchman, an enormous individual fully six feet tall and broad in proportion, who fairly filled the doorway as he entered. This man was about thirty years of age, stern of feature and with shaggy brows that overhung a pair of peaceful blue eyes which ought to have been set in the face of some child. This gave him a whimsical look that almost invariably evoked a smile when anyone observed him for the first time. He walked with a vigorous, aggressive stride and handled his big body with consummate grace and ease. His bow, when Arthur introduced him, was that of an old world cavalier.

“Here is another of our good friends for you to know. He’s our neighbor at the north and is considered the most enterprising orange grower in all California,” announced Weldon, with a chuckle that indicated he had said

something funny.

“Lemon,” said the man, speaking in such a shrill, high-pitched tenor voice that the sound was positively startling, coming from so massive a chest.

“I meant lemon,” Arthur hastened to say. “Permit me to introduce Mr. Bulwer Runyon, formerly of New York but now the pride of the Pacific coast, where his superb oranges — ”

“Lemons,” piped the high, childish voice.

“Whose lemons are the sourest and — and — juiciest ever grown.”

“What there are of them,” added the man in a wailing tenor.

“We are highly honored to meet Mr. Bulwer Runyon,” said the major, noticing that the girls were for once really embarrassed how to greet this new acquaintance.

“Out here,” remarked Dolph Hahn, with a grin, “we drop the handle to his name and call him ‘Bul Run’ for short. Sounds sort of patriotic, you know, and it’s not inappropriate.”

“You wrong me,” said the big rancher, squeaking the words cheerfully but at the same time frowning in a way that might well have terrified a pirate. “I’m not a bull and I don’t run. It’s enough exertion to walk. Therefore I ride. My new car is equipped with one of those remarkable — ”

“Pardon me; we will not discuss your new car, if you please,” said Arthur. “We wish to talk of agreeable things. The marvelous Castro is concocting some of his mysterious dishes and we wish you to assist us in judging their merits.”

“I shall be glad to, for I’m pitifully hungry,” said the tenor voice. “I had breakfast at seven, you know — like a working man — and the ride over here in my new six-cylinder machine, which has a wonderful — ”

“Never mind the machine, please. Forget it, and try to be sociable,” begged Dolph.

“How is the baby, Mrs. Weldon?”

“Well and hearty, Bulwer,” replied Louise. “Why haven’t you been to see little Jane lately?”

“I heard you had company,” said Mr. Runyon; “and the last time I came I stayed three days and forgot all about my ranch. I’ve made a will, Mrs. Weldon.”

“A will! You’re not going to die, I hope?”

“I join you in that hope, most fervently, for I’d hate to leave the new machine and its — ”

“Go on, Bulwer.”

“But life is fleeting, and no one knows just when it’ll get to the end of its fleet. Therefore, as I love the baby better than any other object on earth —

animate or inanimate — except — ”

“Never mind your new car.”

He sighed.

“Therefore, Mrs. Weldon, I’ve made Jane my heiress.”

“Oh, Bul! Aren’t you dreadfully in debt?”

“Yes’m.”

“Is the place worth the mortgage?” inquired Arthur.

“Just about, although the money sharks don’t think so. But all property out here is rapidly increasing in value,” declared Runyon, earnestly, “so, if I can manage to hold on a while longer, Toodlums will inherit a — a — several fine lemon trees, at least.”

Uncle John was delighted with the big fellow with the small voice. Even the major clapped Bul Run on the shoulder and said the sentiment did him credit, however big the mortgage might be.

By the time Castro brought in his first surprise — a delicious soup — a jovial and friendly party was gathered around the oilcloth board. Even the paper napkins could not dampen the joy of the occasion, or detract from the exquisite flavor of the broth.

The boyish Dolph bewailed anon the absence of his “Nell,” who loved Castro’s cookery above everything else, while every endeavor of Mr. Runyon to explain the self-starter on his new car was so adroitly headed off by his fellow ranchers that the poor fellow was in despair. The “lunch” turned out to be a seven course dinner and each course introduced such an enticing and unusual dish that every member of the party became an audacious gormandizer. None of the girls — except Louise — had ever tasted such concoctions before, or might even guess what many of them were composed of; but all agreed with Patsy when she energetically asserted that “Castro out-cheffed both Rector and Sherry.”

“If only he would have tablecloths and napkins, and decent rugs upon the floor,” added dainty Louise.

“Oh, that would ruin the charm of the place,” protested Uncle John. “Don’t suggest such a horror to Castro, Louise; at least until after we have returned to New York.”

“I’ll take you riding in my car,” piped Runyon to Beth, who sat beside him. “I don’t have to crank it, you know; I just — ”

“Have you sold your orange crop yet?” asked Arthur.

“Lemons, sir!” said the other reproachfully. And the laugh that followed again prevented his explaining the self-starter.

The porch was shady and cool when they emerged from the feast room and Arthur Weldon, as host, proposed they sit on the benches with their

coffee and cigars and have a social chat. But both Runyon and Hahn protested this delay. They suggested, instead, that all ride back to El Cajon and play with the baby, and so earnest were they in this desire that the proud young father and mother had not the grace to refuse.

Both men had their cars at the village garage and an hour later the procession started. Beth riding beside "Bul Run" and Patsy accompanying the jolly "Dolph."

"We must stop and pick up Nell," said the latter, "for she'd be mad as hops if I went to see Toodlums without her."

"I don't wonder," replied Patsy. "Isn't my niece a dear baby?"

"Never was one born like her. She's the only woman I ever knew who refuses to talk."

"She crows, though."

"To signify she agrees with everyone on every question; and her angelic smile is so genuine and constant that it gets to your heart in spite of all resistance."

"And she's so soft and mushy, as it were," continued Patsy enthusiastically; "but I suppose she'll outgrow that, in time."

Mrs. Helen Hahn, when the three automobiles drew up before her young husband's handsome residence, promptly agreed to join Rudolph in a visit to the baby. She proved to be a retiring and rather shy young woman, but she was very beautiful and her personality was most attractive. Both Patsy and Beth were delighted to find that Louise had so charming a neighbor, of nearly her own age.

Rudolph would not permit the party to proceed further until all had partaken of a refreshing glass of lemonade, and as this entailed more or less delay the sun was getting low as they traversed the five miles to El Cajon, traveling slowly that they might enjoy the exquisite tintings of the sky. Runyon, who was a bachelor, lived a few miles the other side of Arthur's ranch. All three ranches had at one time been part of the Spanish grant to the Cristovals, and while Arthur now possessed the old mansion, the greatest number of acres had been acquired by Rudolph Hahn, who had preferred to build for himself and his bride a more modern residence.

CHAPTER VII — GONE!

The Weldons and their guests were greeted at their door by a maid, for there were no men among the house servants, and as Louise ushered the party into the living room she said to the girl:

"Ask Miss Travers to bring the baby here."

The maid departed and was gone so long that Louise started out to see why her order was not obeyed. She met the woman coming back with a puzzled face.

"Mees Traver not here, señora," she said.

"Then tell Inez to fetch the baby."

"Inez not here, señora," returned the woman.

"Indeed! Then where is baby?"

"Mees Jane not here, señora."

Louise rushed to the nursery, followed by Arthur, whose quick ears had overheard the statement. The young mother bent over the crib, the covers of which were thrown back as if the infant had been quickly caught up — perhaps from a sound sleep.

"Good gracious!" cried Louise, despairingly; "she's gone — my baby's gone!"

"Gone?" echoed Arthur, in a distracted tone. "What does it mean, Louise? Where can she be?"

A gentle hand was laid on his shoulder and Uncle John, who had followed them to the room, said soothingly:

"Don't get excited, my boy; there's nothing to worry about. Your two nurses have probably taken little Jane out for a ride."

"At this time of night?" exclaimed Louise. "Impossible!"

"It is merely twilight; they may have been delayed," replied Mr. Merrick.

"But the air grows chill at this hour, and — "

"And there is the baby-cab!" added Arthur, pointing to a corner.

Louise and her husband looked into one another's eyes and their faces grew rigid and white. Uncle John, noting their terror, spoke again.

"This is absurd," said he. "Two competent nurses, both devoted to little Jane, would not allow the baby to come to harm, I assure you."

"Where is she, then?" demanded Arthur.

"Hello; what's up?" called Patsy Doyle, entering the room with Beth to see what was keeping them from their guests.

"Baby's gone!" wailed Louise, falling into a chair promptly to indulge in a flood of tears.

"Gone? Nonsense," said Beth, gazing into the empty cradle. Then she put

down her hand and felt of the bedding. It had no warmth. Evidently the child had been removed long ago.

"Before we give way to hysterics," advised Uncle John, striving to appear calm, "let us investigate this matter sensibly. Babies don't disappear mysteriously, in these days, I assure you."

"Question the servants," suggested Patsy.

"That's the idea," squeaked a high tenor voice, and there in the dim light stood big Bulwer Runyon, and with him little Rudolph and his wife Helen, all exhibiting astonished and disturbed countenances.

"I — I can't see any reason for worry, Louise, dear," remarked Mrs. Hahn, in a voice that trembled with agitation. "Not a soul on earth would harm that precious Jane."

Arthur turned to the maid.

"Send all the servants here," he commanded. "Every one of them, mind you!"

Presently they congregated in the roomy nursery, which had now been brilliantly lighted. There were five women — some old and some young, but all Mexicans — and a little withered Chinaman named Sing Fing, whose age was uncertain and whose yellow face seemed incapable of expression.

Uncle John, assisted at times by Rudolph and Arthur, did the questioning. Marcia had seen Miss Travers leave the house, alone, at about two o'clock, as if for a walk. She did not notice which way the nurse went nor whether she returned. Perhaps she wore a cloak; Marcia could not tell. The day was warm; doubtless Miss Travers had no wraps at all. A hat? Oh, no. She would have noticed a hat.

The only one who recollected seeing Inez was Eulalia, a chambermaid. She had observed Inez sitting in the court, in a despondent attitude, at about half past two. Yes; it might have been a little earlier; it was hard to remember. None of the house servants paid much attention to the nurses. They had their own duties to perform.

But the baby had not been seen at all; not since Inez had brought her in from her ride at noon. Then it was Miss Travers who had taken the child from the cab and with her disappeared into the nursery.

This report did not prove reassuring. Sing Fing announced that Miss Travers had prepared the baby's liquid food in the kitchen at half past twelve, but that neither she nor Inez had joined the other servants at luncheon. This last was not an unusual occurrence, it seemed, but taken in connection with the other circumstances it impressed the questioners as suspicious.

"Perhaps they are all at the Mexican quarters," exclaimed Patsy, with sudden inspiration.

Arthur and Rudolph immediately volunteered to investigate the quarters and started off on a run.

"It's all right, you know," consolingly panted Dolph, on the way. "The baby and her nurses can't be lost, strayed or stolen, so don't worry."

"Common sense urges me to agree with you," returned Arthur, "but there's certainly something mysterious about the disappearance."

"It won't be mysterious when we discover the reason, you know."

The men were all at work in the olive groves, but some of the women were in the huts and old Bella listened to Arthur's frantic questions with blank amazement, as did the others who hastily congregated.

"Thees morn," said Bella, "Inez bring Mees Jane here for little time — not long time. Then she takes her 'way again."

"While Inez here," said another woman, "I see that other — the American nurse — behind hedge, yonder, watching us."

"How you know that?" demanded Bella sharply, as she turned to the speaker.

"I know because she is stranger," was the calm reply. "Inez see her, too, an' that ees why Inez hurry away."

"Which way did she go?" asked Arthur, and they all pointed to the path that led to the house.

"It doesn't matter," suggested Dolph. "We know that both the nurses were in the house afterward. The main point is that the baby is not here."

As they started to return they came face to face with old Miguel. The shadow was deep beneath the trees but there was no mistaking the Mexican's snow-white hair.

"Have you seen baby?" demanded Weldon eagerly.

Miguel stared at them. He came nearer, putting his face close to his master's, and stared harder.

"Mees Jane? You ask for Mees Jane?"

"Yes. Tell me, quick, do you know where she is?"

"Mees Jane mus' be at house," said Miguel, passing a hand over his eyes as if bewildered.

"She is not," said Rudolph. "She is gone, and both her nurses are gone."

"Inez gone?" repeated the old man, stupidly. "Ah; then she have carried away Mees Jane! I was 'fraid of that."

"Carried her away! Why should she do that?" asked Arthur impatiently.

"She jealous of New York girl — Mees Travers. Inez say she kill Mees Travers; but I tell her no. I say better not. But Inez hate thees girl for taking Mees Jane away from her. Inez love baby, Meest Weld; too much to be safe nurse."

While Arthur tried to comprehend this strange information Rudolph said to Miguel:

“Then you haven’t seen the baby? You don’t know where she is?”

The old Mexican gave him a keen look.

“No, Meest Hahn.”

“You don’t know where Inez has gone?”

“No, Meest Hahn.”

“Nor the other nurse — the American girl?”

“No, Meest Hahn.”

They hurried back to the house, leaving the old Mexican standing motionless beside the path.

CHAPTER VIII — VERY MYSTERIOUS

Arthur found Louise developing hysteria, while Beth, Patsy and Helen Hahn were working over her and striving to comfort her. Uncle John, the major and big Runyon stood gazing helplessly at the dolorous scene.

"Well? Well?" cried Mr. Merrick, as Weldon and young Hahn entered. "Any news?"

Arthur shook his head and went to his wife, bending over to kiss her forehead.

"Be brave, dear!" he whispered.

It needed but this tender admonition to send the young mother into new paroxysms.

"See here; we're wasting time," protested Runyon, his voice reaching high C in his excitement. "Something must be done!"

"Of course," cried Patsy, turning from Louise. "We're a lot of ninnies. Let us think what is best to do and map out a logical program."

The others looked at her appealingly, glad to have some one assume command but feeling themselves personally unequal to the task of thinking logically.

"First," said the girl, firmly, "let us face the facts. Baby Jane has mysteriously disappeared, and with her the two nurses."

"Not necessarily with her," objected Rudolph. "Let us say the two nurses have also disappeared. Now, the question is, why?"

A shriek from Louise emphasised the query.

"Don't let's bother with the 'why?'" retorted Patsy. "We don't care why. The vital question is 'where?' All we want, just now, is to find baby and get her back home again to her loving friends. She can't have been gone more than four hours — or five, at the most. Therefore she isn't so far away that an automobile can't overtake her."

"But she can't walk, you know," squeaked Runyon. "Baby didn't go alone; some one took her."

"True enough," observed Uncle John. "You're wrong, Patsy. We must try to decide who took baby, and why. Then we might undertake the search with a chance of success."

"Whoever took baby went on foot," persisted Miss Doyle. "The only four automobiles in the neighborhood are now standing in our driveway and in the garage. This is a country of great distances, and no matter in what direction the baby has been taken an auto is sure to overhaul her, if we don't waste valuable time in getting started."

"That's right!" cried Arthur, turning from Louise. "The theory agrees with

old Miguel's suspicion about Inez, and — "

"What suspicion?" cried half a dozen.

"Never mind that," said Rudolph, with a hasty glance toward Louise; "let's be off, and talk afterward."

"We men must decide on our routes and all take the road at once," proposed Rudolph.

"It's pitch dark," said Runyon.

"Would you like to wait until morning?" demanded Rudolph, sarcastically.

"No; I want to rescue that baby," said the big fellow.

"Then take the north road, as far as Tungar's ranch. Stop at every house to inquire. When you get to Tungar's, come back by the McMillan road. That's a sixty mile jaunt, and it will cover the north and northwest. Take Mr. Merrick with you. Now, then, off you go!"

Runyon nodded and left the room, followed gladly by Uncle John, who longed to be doing something that would count. The others soon heard the roar of the motor car as it started away on its quest.

Then it was arranged for Arthur to drive back to Escondido to make inquiries and to watch the departure of the evening train, the only one to pass the station since baby had been missing. He was to carry Major Doyle with him and return by another route. Hahn promised to cover with his own car the only other two roads that remained to be searched, and he figured that they would all return to the house within two or three hours, when — if still there was no news — they might plan a further pursuit of the fugitive baby.

Helen Hahn had promised not to leave Louise until baby was found, and before starting Arthur assisted his wife to her room, where he left her weeping dismally one moment and screaming for little Jane the next.

Sing Fing had sent a maid to announce dinner, but no one paid any attention to the summons.

After the three automobiles had departed, Patsy and Beth remained in the nursery and left Helen and a maid with Louise. Once alone, Miss Doyle said to her cousin:

"Having started them upon the search, Beth, you and I must take up that pertinent suggestion made by Mr. Hahn and face the important question: 'Why?'"

"I'm dying to be of some use, dear," responded Beth in a disconsolate tone, "but I fear we two girls are quite helpless. How can *we* tell why the baby has been stolen?"

"Has she been stolen?" inquired Patsy. "We mustn't take even that for granted. Let us be sensible and try to marshal our wits. Here's the fact:

baby's gone. Here's the problem: why?"

"We don't know," said Beth. "No one knows."

"Of course some one knows. Little Jane, as our friend Bul Run reminded us, can't walk. If she went away, she was carried. By whom? And why? And where?"

"Dear me!" cried Beth, despairingly; "if we knew all that, we could find baby."

"Exactly. So let's try to acquire the knowledge."

She went into Mildred's room and made an examination of its contents. The place seemed in its usual order, but many of Mildred's trinkets and personal possessions were scattered around.

"Her absence wasn't premeditated," decided Patsy. "Her white sweater is gone, but that is all. This fact, however, may prove that she expected to be out after dark. It is always chilly in this country after sundown and doubtless Mildred knew that."

"Why, she used to live here!" cried Beth. "Of course she knew."

Patsy sat down and looked at her cousin attentively.

"That is news to me," she said in a tone that indicated she had made a discovery. "Do you mean that Mildred once lived in this neighborhood?"

"Yes; very near here. She told me she had known this old house well years ago, when she was a girl. She used to visit it in company with her father, a friend of old Señor Cristoval."

"Huh!" exclaimed Patsy. "That's queer, Why didn't she tell us this, when we first proposed bringing her out here?"

"I don't know. I remember she was overjoyed when I first suggested her coming, but I supposed that was because she had at last found a paying job."

"When did she tell you of this?"

"Just lately."

"What else did she say?"

"Nothing more. I asked if she had any relatives or friends living here now, but she did not reply."

"Beth, I'm astonished!" asserted Patsy, with a grave face. "This complicates matters."

"I don't see why."

"Because, if Mildred knows this neighborhood, and wanted to steal baby and secrete her, she could take little Jane to her unknown friends and we could never discover her hiding-place."

"Why should Mildred Travers wish to steal baby?" asked Beth.

"For a reward — a ransom. She knows that Arthur Weldon is rich, and that Uncle John is richer, and she also knows that dear little Toodlums is the

pride of all our hearts. If she demands a fortune for the return of baby, we will pay it at once."

"And prosecute her abductor, Mildred, afterward," said Beth. "No, Patsy; I don't believe she's that sort of a girl, at all."

"We know nothing of her history. She is secretive and reserved. Mildred's cold, hard eyes condemn her as one liable to do anything. And this was such an easy way for her to make a fortune."

Beth was about to protest this severe judgment, but on second thought remained silent. Appearances were certainly against Mildred Travers and Beth saw no reason to champion her, although she confessed to herself that she had liked the girl and been interested in helping her.

"We have still Inez to consider," said she. "What has become of the Mexican girl?"

"We are coming to her presently," replied Patsy. "Let us finish with Mildred first. A girl who has evidently had a past, which she guards jealously. A poor girl, whose profession scarcely earned her bread-and-butter before we engaged her. A girl whose eyes repel friendship; who has little to lose by kidnapping Jane in the attempt to secure a fortune. She was fond of baby; I could see that myself; so she won't injure our darling but will take good care of her until we pay the money, when Toodlums will be restored to us, smiling and crowing as usual. Beth, if this reasoning is correct, we needn't worry. By to-morrow morning Arthur will receive the demand for ransom, and he will lose no time in satisfying Mildred's cupidity."

"Very good reasoning," said Beth; "but I don't believe a word of it."

"I hope it is true," said Patsy, "for otherwise we are facing a still worse proposition."

"Inez?"

"Yes. Inez isn't clever; she doesn't care for money; she would not steal Jane for a ransom. But the Mexican girl worships baby in every fibre of her being. She would die for baby; she — " lowering her voice to a whisper, "she would *kill* anyone for baby."

Beth shivered involuntarily as Patsy uttered this horrible assertion.

"You mean — "

"Now, let us look at this matter calmly. Inez has, from the first, resented the employment of Mildred as chief nurse. She has hated Mildred with a deadly hatred and brooded over her fancied wrongs until she has lost all sense of reason. She feared that in the end baby Jane would be taken away from her, and this thought she could not bear. Therefore she has stolen baby and carried her away, so as to have the precious one always in her keeping."

"And Mildred?" asked Beth.

“Well, in regard to Mildred, there are two conjectures to consider. She may have discovered that Inez had stolen baby and is now following in pursuit. Or — ”

“Or what, dear?” as imaginative Patsy hesitated, appalled by her own mental suggestion.

“Or in a fit of anger Inez murdered Mildred and hid her body. Then, to escape the penalty of her crime, she ran away and took baby with her. Either one of these suppositions would account for the absence of both nurses.”

Beth looked at her cousin in amazement.

“I think,” said she, “you’d better go and get something to eat; or a cup of tea, at least. This excitement is — is — making you daffy, Patsy dear.”

“Pah! Food would disgust me. And I’m not crazy, Beth. Dreadful things happen in this world, at times, and Louise has a queer lot of people around her. Think a moment. Our baby has disappeared. Her two nurses, neither of whom are especially trustworthy, have also disappeared. There’s a reason, Beth, and you may be sure it’s not any common, ordinary reason, either. I’m trying to be logical in my deductions and to face the facts sensibly.”

“Inez would be as careful of baby’s welfare as would Mildred.”

“I realize that. If I thought for a moment that baby was in any peril I would go distracted, and scream louder than poor Louise is doing. Do you hear her? Isn’t it awful?”

“Let us tell Louise these things,” said Beth, rising from her chair. “What you call your ‘deductions’ are terribly tragic, Patsy, but they reassure us about baby. Shall we go to Louise?”

“I think it will be better,” decided Patsy, and they left the nursery and stepped out into the court. At the far end of the open space stood huddled a group of men, all of whom bore lanterns. Patsy advanced to the group and discovered them to be the Mexican laborers from the quarters. Old Miguel advanced a pace and bowed.

“We search for baby — for Mees Jane — eh?” he said, questioningly, as if desiring instructions.

“That is a happy thought, Miguel,” replied the girl. “The others are scouring the roads in their motor cars, but the country needs searching, too — away from the roads, in the fields and orchards. Send your men out at once, and scatter them in all directions.”

Miguel turned and rapidly harangued his followers in the Spanish patois. One by one they turned and vanished into the night. Only the old man remained.

“Ever’bod’ love Mees Jane,” he said simply. “They all want to find her, an’ ask me to let ‘em go. Good. They will search well.”

In spite of the words there was a tone of indifference in Miguel's voice that attracted the girl's notice. He did not seem in the least worried or agitated, nor did he appear to attach much importance to the search. Yet Patsy knew the aged foreman was one of "Mees Jane's" most devoted admirers.

"Where do you think baby is?" she asked abruptly.

"Quien sabe?" he answered, and then in English, "who knows?"

"Be sensible, Miguel! No one would hurt the dear child, I'm sure."

His dark features wrinkled in an engaging smile.

"No one would hurt Mees Jane. I believe it."

"But some one has carried her away."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Some time she come back," said he.

"Now, see here, Miguel; you know more than anyone else about this affair. Tell me the truth."

He raised his brows, shaking his head.

"I know nothing," said he. "I not worry much; but I know nothing."

"Then you suspect."

The old man regarded her curiously; almost suspiciously, Patsy thought.

"What ees suspec'?" he asked. "It ees nothing. To suspec' ees not to know. Not to know ees — nothing at all."

The girl stamped her foot impatiently, for she caught Beth smiling at her.

"What is Inez to you, Miguel?" she demanded.

Again he smiled the childlike, engaging smile.

"She ees to me nothing," said he. "Inez is Mexican, but her family ees not my family. Not all Mexicans ees — re — spec' — ble. Once I know Inez' father. He drink too much wheesky, an' the wheesky make heem bad."

"But you like Inez?"

"She ees good to Mees Jane; but — she have bad tempers."

Patsy thought a moment.

"Did you know Mildred Travers when she used to live near here?" she asked.

Old Miguel started and took a step forward.

"Where she leeve, when she ees here?" he asked eagerly.

"I don't know. Have you ever seen her?"

"No. She do not come to our quarters."

"Wait a minute," said Patsy, and ran up to her room, leaving Beth to confront the ranchero and to study him with her dark, clear eyes. But she said nothing until her cousin returned and thrust a small kodak print into Miguel's hand.

“That is Mildred Travers,” said Patsy.

Miguel held up his lantern while he examined the picture and both girls observed that his hand trembled. For a long time he remained bent over the print — an unnecessarily long time, indeed — but when he raised his head his face was impassive as a mask.

“I do not know Mees Travers,” was all he said as he handed back the picture. “Now I go an’ hunt for Mees Jane,” he quickly added.

They watched him turn and noticed that his steps, as he left the court, were tottering and feeble.

“He lied,” said Beth, softly.

“I am sure of it,” agreed Patsy; “but that does not enlighten the mystery any. I’m sorry we brought Mildred to this place. There’s just one thing you can bank on, Beth: that in some way or other Mildred is responsible for the disappearance of our precious Toodlums.”

CHAPTER IX — A FRUITLESS SEARCH

Meantime, Uncle John and big Runyon were bowling along the north road, the lights gleaming from the powerful lanterns of the car and illuminating every object on either side of the way. The road seemed deserted and it was fully twenty minutes before they came to the first ranch house beyond that owned by Runyon himself. Here Mr. Merrick got out to make inquiries.

A tall, slovenly dressed woman answered his ring. She carried an oil lamp in her hand and eyed her late visitor severely.

"Have you seen a woman with a baby pass this way to-day — this afternoon?" asked the little man.

"Yes," was the reply; "she stopped here for supper."

Uncle John's heart gave a great bound.

"Have they gone on?" he inquired.

"Yes; an hour ago."

"Which way, ma'am?"

She nodded toward the north and Mr. Merrick hastily turned away. Then, pausing as a thought occurred to him, he asked:

"Was the — the baby — quite well, ma'am?"

"Seemed so," was the gruff answer and she slammed the door.

"Of course she was provoked," mused Uncle John, as he hurried back to the car. "I forgot to thank her. Never mind; we'll stop on our way back."

"Well?" demanded Runyon.

"We've got 'em!" was the joyful response. "They stopped here for supper and went on an hour ago. Drive ahead, and keep a sharp lookout."

"Who stopped here?" asked the other, as he started the car.

"Why the woman with the baby, of course."

"Which woman?"

"Which one? Oh, I didn't bother to ask. It doesn't matter, does it, whether it's Mildred or Inez. It's the baby we want."

Runyon drove on a while in silence.

"Did she describe little Jane accurately?" he asked, in his high, piping tenor.

"She didn't describe her at all," said Uncle John, provoked by such insistence. "There isn't likely to be more than one baby missing, in this lonely section of the country."

The big rancher made no reply. Both were keenly eyeing every object that fell under the light of the lamps. Presently they caught sight of a small white house half hidden by a grove of tall eucalyptus. There was no driveway, but the car was stopped at the nearest point and Uncle John got out. To his

surprise Runyon followed him, saying:

"Two heads are better than one, sir."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" asked Mr. Merrick, sternly. "Don't you think I'm competent to ask a question?"

"You don't ask enough questions," returned Runyon frankly. "I'm not sure we're on the right trail."

"Well, I am," declared Uncle John, stiffly.

It took then some time to arouse the inhabitants of the house, who seemed to have retired for the night, although it was still early. Finally a woman thrust her head from an upper window.

"What's wanted?" she inquired in querulous tones.

"Have you seen a woman with a baby pass by here?" called Uncle John.

"No."

"Thank you, ma'am; sorry to have troubled you," said the little man, but in a very disappointed voice.

"Hold on a minute!" cried Runyon, as the woman was closing the window. "They told us at the last house that a woman with a baby stopped there for supper."

"Oh; they did, eh?"

"Yes; and she came in this direction; so we thought you might have seen her."

"Well, I might, if I'd looked in the glass," she said with grim humor. "I'm the woman."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Uncle John, feeling bewildered. "And the baby?"

"Safe asleep, if your yellin' don't wake him."

"Then — it's — *your* baby!"

"I'll swear to that. What do you want, anyhow?"

"We're looking for a lost baby," piped Bul Run.

"Then you'll hev to look somewhere else. I've walked all the way to town, an' back to-day, an' I'm dead tired. Are you goin' away, or not?"

They went away. Neither spoke as they again entered the car and started it upon the quest. Five minutes passed; ten; fifteen. Then Mr. Runyon said in a higher key than usual:

"There's nothing on a car as handy as a self-starter. All you have to do is — "

"Oh, shut up!" growled Uncle John.

They drove more slowly, after this, and maintained a sharp watch; but both men had abandoned all hope of discovering the missing baby on this route. When they reached Tungar's Ranch they crossed over to a less frequented road known as McMillan's which would lead them back to El

Cajon, but by a roundabout, devious route.

The nearer they drew to the ranch the greater vigilance they displayed, but the road was deserted and no one at any of the ranch houses had seen or heard anything of a stray baby. As they turned into Arthur's driveway they overtook Rudolph Hahn, just returning from a quest as fruitless as their own. It was now half past nine o'clock.

Arthur Weldon and Major Doyle had both realized that the route awarded them was the most promising of all. It was scarcely conceivable that anyone who had stolen baby Jane would carry her farther into the unsettled districts. Far more likely that Toodlums' abductor would make for the nearest town or the railway station.

"If we know which one of the girls had taken baby," said Arthur, "we could figure better on what she would likely do. Inez would try to reach some Mexican settlement where she had friends, while Mildred might attempt to get into Los Angeles or San Diego, where she could safely hide."

"I can't believe either of them would steal little Jane," declared the major. "They are too fond of her for that."

"But the baby has been stolen, nevertheless," returned Arthur; "we can't get around that fact. And one of the nurses did it"

"Why?"

"Because the nurses disappeared with the baby."

"Then perhaps they've entered into a conspiracy, and both are equally guilty in the abduction," suggested the major.

"No; their hatred of one another would prevent any conspiracy between them. Only one stole the baby away, I'm quite sure."

"Then where's the other nurse?"

Arthur made no reply, but the major expected none. It was one of those mysteries that baffle the imagination. By and by Major Doyle made an attempt to answer his question himself, unconsciously using the same argument that his daughter Patsy had during her conversation with Beth.

"For the sake of argument, and to try to get somewhere near the truth," said he, "let us concede that, after we had gone to town, the two nurses quarreled. That would not be surprising; I've been expecting an open rupture between them. Following the quarrel, what happened? In view of the results, as we find them, two deductions are open to us. One girl may have made away with the other, in a fit of unreasoning rage, and then taken baby and run away to escape the consequences of her crime. If that conclusion is true, Inez is the more likely to be the criminal and it is Mildred's dead body we shall find in a clump of bushes or hidden in the cellar. That Mexican girl has a fierce temper; I've seen her eyes gleam like those of a wildcat as she watched

Mildred kiss and cuddle little Jane. And she was so madly devoted to baby that she'd sooner die than part with her. Mildred is different; she's more civilized."

"To me, her eyes seem more treacherous than those of Inez," declared Arthur, who had liked the little Mexican nurse because she had been so fond of Toodlums. "They never meet your gaze frankly, those eyes, but seem always trying to cover some dark secret of which the girl is ashamed."

"Nevertheless, I maintain that she is the more civilized of the two," insisted the major. "She has a calmer, more deliberate nature. She wouldn't be likely to hurt Inez, while Inez would enjoy murdering Mildred."

"What's the other hypothesis?" asked Arthur.

"The more sensible one, by odds. After the quarrel, Inez grabs up baby and runs away, determined to escape from her hated rival and carry Jane beyond her influence. Soon after, Mildred discovers the flight of the Mexican and, impelled by her duty to you and her desire to circumvent Inez, rushes away in full chase, forgetting to leave any word. Perhaps she thought she would be able to return with baby before we arrived back from town; but Inez has led her a merry chase, which Mildred stubbornly refuses to abandon. I'm an old man, Arthur, and have seen a good deal of life, so mark my words: when the truth of this affair is known, it will be something like the story I've just outlined. I believe I've hit the nail on the head, and I'll admit it's bad enough, even that way."

"Then," said Arthur, more hopefully, "we may find Mildred and baby at home, when we return."

"Yes; and we may not. If they are home, Arthur, there are plenty there to look after the wee darling, and Louise will be comforted. On the other hand, if they don't return, it must be our business to find them. I can imagine Mildred, fagged out, in some far-away corner, resolving to stay the night and return to the ranch in the morning."

They remembered to have passed along this road before, that afternoon, on their way home from town. At that time they had seen no sign of the nurses or the baby. But to make assurance doubly sure Arthur stopped at every house to make inquiries and the road was inspected carefully. When they reached town they first visited the local police station and then the telephone office. Here they arranged to have every ranch house within a wide radius called and questioned in regard to the missing baby. Arthur also tried to get his own house, but the wire was still out of service.

Then to the telegraph office, where messages were sent to all the neighboring towns, giving descriptions of the missing baby and the nurses and offering a liberal reward for any news of their whereabouts.

By this time it was necessary to go to the depot, as the evening train was soon due. While they awaited its arrival Arthur and the major closely scanned every member of the group gathered at the station. Weldon even managed to have the train held, on its arrival, until he had passed through all the cars and assured himself that neither Mildred, Inez or baby Jane was aboard.

That automobile would have carried two despairing men away from the little town had it not been for the ray of hope suggested by the major that they would find baby safe at home on their arrival. However, that no chance might be neglected, they took another route, as originally arranged, and patiently continued their vain inquiries all the way back to the ranch. As they entered the driveway at El Cajon the clock in the brilliantly lighted hall of the mansion was striking ten.

Arthur rushed in and was met by Patsy.

"Any news?" they both cried eagerly; and then their expectant faces fell.

"How is Louise?" faltered Arthur.

"More quiet, now," answered the girl. "She became so violent, after you left, that we were all frightened; so Mrs. Hahn jumped into your little car and drove home, where she telephoned for the doctor. He happened to be at the Wilson place, so she caught him there and he came directly here. He is upstairs yet, but he gave Louise a quieting potion and I think she is now asleep."

Arthur started to mount the stairs; then hesitated.

"Are the boys back yet?" he asked.

"Yes; they are now out in the grounds, helping the Mexicans search the shrubbery."

The young man shuddered.

"I — I think I'll join them," he decided, and the major merely gave his daughter a solemn kiss and followed the bereaved father.

At the back of the mansion the lights of the lanterns were twinkling like fireflies, although the stars shone so brilliantly that all near-by objects were easily distinguished. Arthur and the major joined the men and for two hours longer the search was continued — more because they all felt they must be doing something, than through any hope of success.

Finally, at midnight, the chief searchers met in a group near the house, and Rudolph said: "Let's go in and rest a bit, and have a smoke. I'm about fagged out and, as a matter of fact, we've covered every inch of these grounds several times over."

Arthur silently turned and led the way into the house, where Patsy, Beth and Helen Hahn, all three worn and haggard, met them in the hall.

“Louise?” asked Arthur.

“Sleeping quietly,” replied Beth. “Marcia is sitting beside her.”

“Has Dr. Knox gone?”

“No; he’s in the library, smoking. Eulalia is getting him something to eat, for it seems he missed his dinner.”

“Why, so did I!” trilled big Runyon, in his clearest tenor. “I’ve just remembered it.”

“You must all eat something,” declared Patsy, “else you won’t be fit to continue the search. Go to the library — all of you — and Beth and I will see what we can find in the kitchen.”

CHAPTER X — CONJECTURES AND ABSURDITIES

In somber procession the men trailed up the stairs to the big library, where a dapper little man sat reading a book and puffing at a huge cigar. He looked up, as they entered, and nodded a head as guiltless of hair as was that of Uncle John. But his face was fresh and chubby, despite his fifty years, and the merry twinkle in his gray eyes seemed out of place, at first thought, in this house of anxiety and distress.

"Ah, Weldon; what news of little Jane?" he cheerfully inquired.

"None, Doctor."

"No trace at all?"

"None, whatever."

"That's good," declared the doctor, removing the ash from his cigar.

"Good!"

"Of course. No news is good news. I'll wager my new touring-car that our Jane is sound asleep and dreaming of the angels, this very minute."

"Has your new car a self-starter?" inquired Runyon anxiously, as if about to accept the wager.

"I wish I might share your belief, Doctor," said Arthur with a deep sigh. "It all seems a terrible mystery and I can think of no logical explanation to assure me of baby's safety."

"Yes, it's a mystery," agreed Dr. Knox. "But I've just thought of a solution."

"What is it?" cried half a dozen voices.

"Sit down and light up. I hope you all smoke? And you need refreshment, for you've been working under a strain."

"Refreshments are coming presently," said Rudolph. "What's your solution, Doc?"

"The young ladies have been telling me every detail of the disappearance, as well as the events leading up to it. Now, it seems Mildred Travers is an old resident of this section of California. Was born here, in fact."

This was news to them all and the suggestion it conveyed caused them to regard Dr. Knox attentively.

"The old Travers Ranch is near San Feliz — about thirty miles south of here. I know that ranch by reputation, but I've never been there. Now for my solution. The Travers family, hearing that Mildred is at El Cajon, drive over here in their automobile and induce the girl to go home with them. She can't leave baby, so she takes little Jane along, and also Inez to help care for her. There's the fact, in a nutshell. See? It's all as plain as a pikestaff."

For a moment there was silence. Then big Runyon voiced the sentiment of the party in his high treble.

"You may be a good doctor," said he, "but you're a thunderin' bad detective."

"If I could telephone to the Travers Ranch, I'd convince you," asserted the doctor, unmoved by adverse criticism; "but your blamed old telephone is out of order."

"As for that," remarked Rudolph, taking a cigar from a box, "I've been a visitor at the Travers Ranch many times. Charlie Benton lives there. There hasn't been a Travers on the place since they sold it, ten or twelve years ago."

"Well," said the doctor, "I'm sorry to hear that. It was such a simple solution that I thought it must be right."

"It was, indeed, simple," admitted Runyon. "Ah! here comes food at last."

Patsy, Beth and Helen bore huge trays containing the principal dishes of the untasted dinner, supplemented with sandwiches and steaming coffee. This last the thoughtful Sing Fing had kept in readiness all the evening, knowing it would be required sooner or later.

Neither Uncle John nor the major was loth to partake of the much-needed refreshment. They even persuaded Arthur to take a cup of coffee. It was noticeable that now, whenever baby Jane was mentioned, they spoke her name in hushed whispers; yet no one could get away, for long, from the one enthralling subject of the little one's mysterious disappearance.

"What can we do now?" asked Arthur pleadingly. "I feel guilty to be sitting here in comfort while my darling may be suffering privations, or — or — "

"Really, there is nothing more to be done, just now," said Patsy, interrupting him before he could mention any other harrowing fears. "You have all done everything that mortals could do, for to-night, and in the morning we will resume the search along other lines. In my opinion you all ought to get to bed and try to rest, for to-morrow there will be a lot for you to do."

"What?" asked Arthur helplessly.

"Well, I think you ought to telegraph for detectives. If ever a mystery existed, here is one, and only a clever detective could know how to tackle such a problem."

"Also," added Beth, "you ought to telegraph to every place in California, ordering the arrest of the fugitives."

"I've done that already."

"Can't anyone think of a *reason* for the disappearance of these three

persons — the baby and her two nurses?" inquired Mrs. Hahn earnestly. "It seems to me that if we knew what object they could have in disappearing, we would be able to guess where they've gone." Then the pretty little woman blushed at her temerity in making such a long speech. But the doctor supported her.

"Now that," said he, "strikes me as a sensible proposition. Give us the reason, some of you who know."

But no one knew a reason.

"Here are some facts, though," said Patsy. "Inez was baby's first nurse, and resented Mildred's coming. Somehow, I always get back to that fact when I begin to conjecture. The two nurses hated each other — everybody admits that. Mildred hated mildly; Inez venomously."

"Miguel told me that Inez has threatened to kill Mildred," said Arthur. "And there is another thing: one of the women said Inez brought the baby to the quarters, at about noon, and while there they discovered Mildred watching them from the shelter of a hedge. This incensed Inez and she hurried away to the house, followed stealthily by Mildred."

"That," said Dolph, "was perhaps the beginning of the quarrel. We don't know what happened afterward, except that both were seen in the court with baby at about two o'clock."

"Afterward," said Patsy, "one of the housemaids saw Inez go out — as if for a walk. She may have returned. I think she did, for otherwise it was Mildred who carried the baby away. I can see no reason for her doing that."

"Of course Inez returned," declared Arthur, "for nothing would induce her to run away from us and leave her beloved baby. I believe the poor girl would rather die than be separated for good from little Jane. You've no idea how passionately she worshiped the child."

"All of which," the doctor stated, "indicates a tragedy rather than some feminine whim — which last I much prefer as a solution. But if both nurses were fond of little Jane — who is the finest baby I ever knew, by the way — no quarrel or other escapade would permit them to injure the dear infant. Let us worry about the two girls, but not about little Jane."

Such advice was impossible to follow, and doubtless the shrewd doctor knew it; but it was a comforting thought, nevertheless, and had already done much to sustain the despairing father.

No one seemed willing to adopt Patsy's suggestion that they go to bed and get some much needed rest, in preparation for the morrow. Arthur left them for a time to visit Louise, but soon returned with word that she was quietly sleeping under the influence of the potion the doctor had administered. The three girls — for Mrs. Hahn was only a girl — sat huddled in one corner,

whispering at times and trying to cheer one another. The doctor read in his book. Rudolph smoked and lay back in his chair, gazing reflectively at the ceiling. Bul Run had his feet on a second chair and soon fell into a doze, when he snored in such a high falsetto that Arthur kicked his shins to abate the nuisance. The major sat stiffly, gazing straight ahead, and Uncle John tramped up and down the room untiringly. The baby had grown very dear to the hearts of these last two men in the few days they had known her and her sudden loss rendered them inconsolable.

The suspense was dreadful. Had it been day, they could have done something to further the search, but the night held them impotent and they knew they must wear out the dreary hours as best they might.

At one o'clock Patsy drew her father aside and prevailed upon him to go to his room and lie down.

"This tedious waiting is merely wearing you out," she said, "and for dear baby's sake you should be fresh and vigorous in the morning."

That seemed to the major to be very sensible, especially as he felt the need of rest, so he slipped away and went to the blue room, which was located in the old wing and just above the nursery.

Then the girl approached Uncle John, but he would not listen to her. He was too nervous to rest, he insisted, and she realized that he spoke truly. Just as she abandoned the argument they were all startled by the sound of wheels rolling up the driveway and Arthur rushed to an open window and looked out.

An automobile had just arrived.

"Who is it?" he called.

"Id's me, Meisteh Veldon — id's Peters, de constable," called a rich voice in strong German dialect. "I got your baby here, und der Mexico girls to boots!"

"What!" they all shrieked, springing up to crowd around the window.

"Bring her in, Peters!" yelled Arthur, a great gladness in his voice, and now he was half running, half tumbling down the stairs in his haste to reach the door, while the others trailed after him like the tail of a comet.

As the door was thrown open Peters — a stout German — entered with a bundle in his arms, followed by a weeping, angry Mexican woman who was fat and forty and as unlike Inez as was possible.

Even as Arthur's eyes fell on this poor creature his heart sank, and the revulsion of feeling was so severe that he tottered and almost fell. Runyon grabbed his arm and supported him while Peters fumbled with the wrappings of the baby.

"Do I gets me dot rewards — heh?" asked the constable, holding up a fat

little Mexican baby, whose full black eyes regarded the group wonderingly.

The father turned away, heartsick.

“Give him some money and get rid of him,” he moaned.

Dolph took the constable in hand.

“You blooming idiot!” he exclaimed. “Why did you drag that poor woman here?”

“Id iss a rewards for der Mexico girl unt a baby; dot iss what ef’rybody say. How do I know id iss not Herr Veldon’s baby?” demanded the indignant German. “Do his baby gots a sign on id, to say id iss de right baby, vot iss lost unt must be foundt? No, py jimminy! He yust say he hass a lost baby, unt a Mexico girl hass runned avay mit id. * * * So I finds me a Mexico girl unt a baby — unt here id iss!”

Patsy took the baby, a good little thing, and placed it in its mother’s arms.

“Who are you, and where did this man find you?” the girl asked sympathetically.

The woman first shook her head and then burst into a voluble stream of Spanish, not a word of which could be understood.

“She cannot speak de Ingliss, like me, so I cannod tell if she iss de right Mexico vomans or nod,” explained the constable. “Bud I brings her mit me, yust de same, unt id costs me four dollars to rendt me an automobubbles.”

“Take her back,” said Hahn, giving him a ten-dollar note; and then he gave the woman some money and kissed the baby, which smiled at him approvingly.

Beth ran to get some of the sandwiches for the woman, while Patsy brought milk for the baby and Uncle John offered the constable a cigar. Then the three were sent away and the automobile rolled back to town.

CHAPTER XI — THE MAJOR ENCOUNTERS THE GHOST

Ascending once more to the library the weary watchers resumed their former attitudes of waiting, as patiently as they might, for the coming of the day. Uncle John looked at his watch and found it was only a little after two o'clock. The minutes seemed hours to-night.

Suddenly a tremendous shriek rent the night, a shriek so wild and blood-curdling in its intensity that they sprang up and clung to each other in horror. While they stood motionless and terror-stricken there came a thump! — thump! — as of some heavy object tumbling down the three or four steps leading from the hall to the corridor of the old South Wing, and then the door burst open and Major Doyle — clothed in red-and-white striped pajamas — fairly fell into the library, rolled twice over and came to a stop in a sitting position, from whence he let out another yell that would have shamed a Cherokee Indian and which so startled big Runyon that he held a tenor note at high C for fully a minute — much like the whistle of a peanut roaster — the which was intended for an expression of unqualified terror.

Patsy was the first to recover and kneel beside the poor major, whose eyes were literally bulging from their sockets.

"Oh, Dad — dear Dad! — what is it?" she cried.

The major shuddered and clapped his hands to his eyes. Then he rocked back and forth, moaning dismally, while Patsy clung to his neck, sobbing and nearly distracted.

"Speak, Major!" commanded Arthur.

"A — a ghost!" was the wailing reply.

"A ghost!" echoed the amazed spectators.

"Did you *see* it?" questioned Uncle John in a trembling voice, as he bent over his brother-in-law.

"See it?" shouted the major, removing his hands to glare angrily at Mr. Merrick. "How could I see anything in the dark? The room was black as pitch."

"But you said a ghost."

"Of course I said a ghost," retorted the major, querulously, as he rubbed his bare ankle with one hand to soothe a bump. "You don't have to *see* a ghost to know it's there, do you? And this ghost — Oh, Patsy, darling, I can't say it! — it's too horrible."

Again a fit of shuddering seized him and he covered his eyes anew and rocked his body back and forth while he maintained his seat upon the floor. His legs were spread wide apart and he wiggled his big toes convulsively.

Beth asked with bated breath:

"Did you *hear* the ghost, then, Major?"

"Um! I heard it," he moaned. "And it's the end of all — the destroyer of our hopes — the harbinger of despair!"

"Look here, Major," said Uncle John desperately, "be a man, and tell us what you mean."

"It — it was baby — baby Jane!"

Arthur sobbed and dropped his head upon the table. Rudolph groaned. Runyon swore softly, but with an accent that did not seem very wicked. Uncle John stared hard at the major.

"You're an ass," he said. "You've had a nightmare."

The major could not bear such an aspersion, even under the trying circumstances. He scrambled to his feet, this time trembling with indignant anger, and roared:

"I tell you I heard baby — baby Jane — and she was crying! Don't I know? Don't I know our baby's voice?"

Arthur leaped to his feet, a resolute expression upon his face. Instantly they all turned and followed him from the room. Into the hall, up the steps and through the corridor of the South Wing they passed, and just inside the major's room Rudolph struck a match and lighted a lamp that stood upon the table.

The place was in wild disorder, for when the major leaped from the bed he had dragged the coverings with him and they lay scattered upon the floor. The chair in which he had placed his clothing had been overturned and there was no question that his flight had been a precipitous rout. The casement of the window, set far back in the thick adobe wall, was wide open and the night breeze that came through it made the flame of the lamp flicker weirdly.

Beth proved her courage by bolding crossing the room and closing the window, while the others stood huddled just inside the door. Back of them all was the white face of Major Doyle, a brave soldier who had faced the enemy unflinchingly in many a hard fought battle, but a veritable poltroon in an imaginary ghostly presence.

Scarcely daring to breathe, they stood in tense attitudes listening for a repetition of the baby's cry. Only an awesome, sustained silence rewarded them.

The major's open watch upon the table ticked out the minutes — five — ten — fifteen. Then the doctor crept back to the library and quietly resumed his book. Presently Runyon joined him.

"Between you and me, Doc," said the big fellow, "I don't take much stock in ghosts."

“Nor I,” returned Dr. Knox. “Major Doyle is overwrought. His imagination has played him a trick.”

Rudolph Hahn entered and lighted a fresh cigar.

“Curious thing, wasn’t it?” he said.

“No; mere hallucination,” declared the doctor.

“I don’t know about that,” answered the boy. “Seems to me a ghost would do about as a person in life did. The child cried — poor little baby Jane! — and the ghostly wail was heard in the one room in this house that is haunted — the blue room. Perhaps there’s something about the atmosphere of that room that enables those who have passed over to make themselves heard by us who are still in the flesh.”

He was so earnest that the doctor glanced at him thoughtfully over the top of his book.

“It’s the dead of night, and you’re agitated and unreasonable, Hahn. In the morning you’ll be ashamed of your credulity.”

Dolph sat down without reply. His wife came in and sat beside him, taking his hand in hers. In another quarter of an hour back came Uncle John, shivering with the chill of the corridor, and stood warming himself before the grate fire.

“If the major heard the baby,” he said reflectively, “it must be proof that — that something — has happened to the little dear, and — and we must face the worst.”

“Well, it was baby I heard,” asserted the major, who, having hastily donned his clothes, now made his reappearance in the library. “I was lying in a sort of dose when the cry first reached my ears. Then I sat up and listened, and heard it again distinctly, as if little Jane were only two feet away. Then — then — ”

“Then you tested your lungs and made your escape,” added the doctor drily.

“I admit it, sir!” said Major Doyle, haughtily. “Had it been anyone else who encountered the experience — even a pill peddler — he would have fainted.”

In the blue room Patsy and Beth alone remained with Arthur Weldon. Not a sound broke the stillness. When an hour had passed, Patsy said:

“Won’t you go away, Arthur? Beth and I will watch.”

He shook his head.

“You can do no good by staying in this awful place,” pleaded the girl, speaking in a whisper.

“If she — if baby — should be heard again, I — I’d like to be here,” he said pathetically.

Patsy knew he was suffering and the fact aroused her to action.

“Father isn’t a coward,” she remarked, “and either he heard the cry, or he dreamed it. In the latter case it amounts to nothing; but if Jane really cried out, that fact ought to give us an important clue.”

He started at this suggestion, which the girl had uttered without thought, merely to reassure him. Yet now she started herself, struck by the peculiar significance of her random words.

“In what way, Patsy?” asked Beth, calmly.

That was the spur she needed. She glanced around the room a moment and then asked:

“Who built this wing, Arthur?”

“Cristoval, I suppose. I’ve heard it was the original dwelling,” he replied. “The rest of the house was built at a much later date. Perhaps two generations labored in constructing the place. I do not know; but it is not important.”

“Oh, yes it is!” cried Patsy with increasing ardor. “The rest of the house is like many other houses, but — these walls are six or eight feet in thickness.”

“Adobe,” said Arthur carelessly. “They built strongly in the mission days.”

“Yet these can’t be solid blocks,” persisted the girl, rising to walk nervously back and forth before the walls. “There must be a space left inside. And see! the major’s bed stands close to the outer wall, which is the thickest of all.”

He stared at her in amazement and then, realizing the meaning of her words, sprang to his feet. Beth was equally amazed and looked at her cousin in wonder.

“Oh, Patsy!” she exclaimed, “the baby hasn’t been lost at all.”

“Of course not,” declared Patsy, her great eyes brilliant with inspiration. “*She’s imprisoned!*”

CHAPTER XII — ANOTHER DISAPPEARANCE

For a time the three stood regarding one another with startled eyes. Then Arthur gasped: “Great heaven! what fools we’ve been.”

“Come!” cried Patsy. “The nursery.”

They rushed down the corridors to the staircase and thence into the court. The door of the nursery stood ajar and Arthur first entered and lighted a lamp.

The light fell full upon the face of a man seated in a low rocking chair and holding a half smoked cigarette in his mouth. He was fast asleep. It was old Miguel, the ranchero.

Arthur shook his shoulder, savagely, and the man wakened and rubbed his eyes. Then, seeing who had disturbed him, he quickly rose and made his characteristic low, sweeping bow.

“What are you doing here?” demanded Weldon, angry and suspicious.

“I am look for Mees Jane,” returned the old man calmly.

“In your sleep? Come, get out of here.”

“Wait a minute, Arthur,” said Beth, reading Miguel’s face. “He knows something.”

Arthur looked at the man critically, reflecting that there must be a reason for his presence in the nursery. Miguel had been fond of baby Jane. Was he merely disconsolate over her loss, or — did he really “know something”?

“Miguel once told me,” said Patsy, speaking slowly, “that he used to live in this house, in Cristoval’s time, and knows it thoroughly.”

The old man bowed.

“I theenk,” said he, “perhaps we find Mees Jane here — not somewhere else.”

“Why do you think that, Miguel?”

It was Patsy who questioned him. He mused a bit before replying.

“The old señor — the father of my Señor Cristoval — was strange mans,” said he. “He make thees house a funny way. Come; I show you.”

He led the way to the little room adjoining, the one Inez had occupied. In one corner of the floor was a square hole, with steps leading down to a sort of blind pocket. Holding a lamp in one hand Miguel descended the steps and pushed against a block of adobe that formed part of the outer wall. It swung inward, disclosing a cavity about four feet in width and fully six feet high. The interior could be plainly seen from the room, by stooping close to the floor. There were shelves in the cavity and upon one of them stood a jar of milk.

“Oh,” cried Patsy, clasping her hands together. “I told you the wall was

hollow!”

Arthur followed Miguel down the steps. He took the lamp and examined the little room. All the walls that formed it seemed solid.

Miguel was holding the block that served as a door. He released his hold, when Arthur had again ascended, and the block swung back into place.

As they returned to the nursery, Weldon asked:

“Do you know of any other rooms in the wall, Miguel?”

The man shook his head, uncertainly.

“I know there be other rooms in thees wall,” said he, “for Señor Cristoval have told me so. Hees father make the places to keep things safe from robbers — perhaps to hide from others, too. But where such places are ees the secret of the Cristovals. The room I show you ees all I know about. I thought that was secret, too; but no; the New York nurse tell Inez of that room, an’ Inez she keep Mees Jane’s milk there, to be cool.”

“Mildred told of the room!” exclaimed Arthur in astonishment.

“Yes,” said Beth, “she used to visit this house as a girl, when Cristoval lived here, and she must have known some of the secret rooms.”

“Ah, that ees what I theenk,” agreed old Miguel. “There ees more room in thees wall; that I know. If thees Mildreed know one room, she may know more. So I theenk she and Inez have go into some room of the wall an’ take Mees Jane with them. Some way, they cannot get out again.”

“Exactly!” cried Patsy triumphantly. “They are somewhere in that wall, imprisoned, and the major really heard the baby cry.”

“But — Miguel, Miguel!” pleaded Arthur, earnestly, “can’t you remember how the wall opens? Think! Think carefully.”

“I do theenk, Meest Weld; I theenk till I go sleep, an’ you find me here.”

“Now, let’s do some thinking ourselves,” suggested Beth. “The opening that leads into the wall must be from this very room. Miguel thinks so, too, and that’s why he came here. Let us examine the wall.”

They undertook to do this, holding the lamps close to the adobe blocks and inspecting every crack. The cement used in joining the blocks had crumbled away at the outer edges in almost every instance, and it was impossible to tell if any block was removable or not. Miguel or Arthur pushed hard against every block in the room, from those nearest the floor to those far above their heads; but not one yielded a hair’s breadth.

“Suppose we go outside,” said Patsy. “Perhaps there is some window, or grating, that will give us a clue.”

So they took old Miguel’s lantern and went into the garden where they could view the outer side of the wall. A tangle of climbing vines grew against the wing, but there was no window or other opening on the first floor.

Above, on the second floor, were two windows, one of which admitted light and air to the blue room.

"How about the other window?" asked Beth.

"That," said Arthur, "must be in an unused room at the end of the corridor. We have never furnished it."

"I think it might be well to examine that room," suggested Patsy.

So they reentered the house and, followed by Miguel, ascended to the second floor. The door of the library was ajar and those seated there, seeing Arthur and the girls pass, came trooping out to ask what they were doing.

Patsy briefly explained the new theory they had conceived to account for the disappearance of baby and the two nurses, and the idea was so startling that all became eager to join in the investigation.

They invaded the vacant room in a body, several of the men carrying lamps. It was in size and shape a duplicate of the blue room, with its one window deeply embedded in the wall, the surface of the embrasure being covered with heavy redwood planks.

From the fact that this room lay directly over the small one occupied by Inez, in which was the wall cavity they had recently explored, they conceived the idea that the wall here might also be hollow. Pounding upon it, however, had no effect in determining this, for kiln-baked adobe is not resonant and it was impossible to discover from any surface indication whether there were eight feet of closely set blocks or less. Careful search for any sign of an opening proved futile.

Finally old Miguel said:

"Next room was room of Señor Cristoval. Eet was room hees father live in, too; the old señor who build thees part of house. If there ees way to get in wall, from upstairs, it ees there."

"To be sure," said practical Beth, catching at the suggestion; "it was there that Major Doyle heard the baby cry."

So on they all trooped into the blue room, where the wall was likewise carefully inspected. While this was being done Rudolph looked at his watch and found it was after four o'clock.

"It will soon be daylight," said he to his wife. "What a night it has been! It seems a month since we arrived here and found Toodlums gone."

Old Miguel had been silent and unobtrusive in the vacant room, but here he was as eager in testing the wall as any one of them.

"You see, it's this way," Patsy was saying; "if the major could hear baby cry, through this wall, those inside could hear us, if we called to them. Who among us has the clearest, the most penetrating voice?"

"Suppose *I* try?" squeaked Runyon, earnestly; but those who considered

the remark at all merely gave him scornful looks.

"Let Rudolph call," said Helen. "I think his voice might penetrate the pyramids of Egypt."

Rudolph went close to the wall and shouted:

"Hello, there! Baby! I-nez! — eh — eh — what's the other girl's name?"

"Mildred," said Beth.

"Mil-dred!" shouted Dolph; "Mil-dred!"

He paused between each name, which he roared so loudly that he nearly deafened those in the room, and everyone listened intently for a response.

No answer.

"Perhaps they're asleep — worn out," said Uncle John. No one now seemed to doubt that the missing ones were imprisoned in the wall.

"Let Beth try," suggested Patsy.

Beth had a clear, bell-like voice and from where she stood she called out the names of Inez and Mildred. Then, in the stillness that followed, came a muffled cry in return — a cry that set all their nerves quivering with excitement.

The mystery was solved at last.

Beth repeated the call and now the answer was clearer, though still indistinguishable. It was a voice, indeed, but whose voice they could not tell. But now, to their astonishment, came another sound, quite clear and distinct — the wail of a baby voice.

"That settles it!" cried the major, triumphantly. "Was I right, or wrong? Was it a nightmare, or was I crazy?"

"Neither one, my dear sir," replied the doctor. "You declared you heard a ghost."

Arthur was capering about in frantic joy.

"She's alive — my baby is alive!" he exclaimed.

"And probably she was sound asleep until your infernal yelling awakened her," added the major.

"It wasn't *our* yelling," said Uncle John, as delighted as even the father could be; "it was the yelling of whoever is inside, there, that frightened the baby. Thank goodness the dear child could sleep during all these weary hours, when we have been wearing our hearts out with anxiety."

"We have yet cause for anxiety," declared Patsy, "for little Jane is not rescued yet, by any means, and presently the poor thing will become very hungry and suffer for lack of food. We now know where baby is, but we can't get at her; nor can Mildred or Inez find a way to get her out, or they would have done so long ago."

"Very true," agreed Helen Hahn, gravely. "Unless we can soon find a way

to get to them, all three will starve."

"Why, we will pull down the wall!" cried Arthur.

"Dynamite it!" piped Bul Run.

"Be sensible!" counseled Uncle John sternly. "We are wasting precious time. Miguel," turning to the ranchero, "get some of your men, with picks and crowbars, and fetch them here quickly."

The Mexican, who seemed bewildered by the discovery of the missing ones, although he had himself been the first to suspect where they were, started at once to obey this order. When he had gone, Patsy said:

"Of course there is some easy way to get inside the wall, and to get out again. Are we so stupid that none of us can penetrate the secret of the cunning Spaniard who built this place?"

The challenge merely led them to regard one another with perplexed looks.

"The fact that they're alive, after all these hours," said young Hahn, "is proof that they are supplied with air, and plenty of it. Then there is an opening, somewhere or other."

"Also," added Arthur, reflectively, "they are now opposite the second story rooms, when they must have entered the hollow wall at the first floor — perhaps from the nursery. That proves there is a stairway, or at least a ladder, inside."

At this moment a maid entered to say that Mrs. Weldon had awakened and was calling hysterically for her baby. The doctor and Patsy at once hurried to Louise's bedside, where the girl said:

"Don't worry, dear. Little Jane has been found and is now in this very house. So try to be quiet and go to sleep again."

"Bring her to me; bring my darling at once!" begged Louise. But the doctor now interfered.

"I don't wish to disturb baby at present," he said positively. "I think the child is sleeping. You have been quite ill, Mrs. Weldon, and I must insist on your remaining quiet. Here; drink this, if you please."

Louise, reassured, drank the potion and presently sank into another doze. Dr. Knox remained beside her for a time but Patsy hurried back to the blue room, eager to assist in the rescue of the prisoners.

"I'm afraid we're a stupid lot," Uncle John was saying as she entered; "or else the Spanish don was remarkably clever. We know the wall is hollow, and we know there's an opening, yet we can't solve the riddle."

But here came Miguel and two strong men laden with steel bars, cold chisels and picks. For a time it was a quandary where to attack the wall, but Arthur finally chose the place just back of the bed and bade the men begin

their work.

The adobe proved harder than the hardest brick. Old Miguel knew that it must be broken away bit by bit, for he was not unacquainted with the material, yet even under his skillful direction the work progressed with aggravating slowness.

Daylight gradually crept into the room and rendered lamps unnecessary. The morning discovered a very disheveled, heavy-eyed group, not a single member of which was willing to retire from the fascinating scene of rescue.

Patsy went away to arouse Sing Fing and the servants, some of whom she found had remained awake all night. In half an hour steaming hot coffee was brought to the blue room and gratefully consumed by the weary watchers. Breakfast of a substantial character would soon be ready and it was agreed that part of them should eat at one time while the others remained to watch and to call them promptly if anything new developed.

Arthur, too nervous to stand idly by, insisted on attacking the wall in another place and Runyon assisted him, the latter's strength and muscle winning the admiration of all observers. He worked fiercely for a time, driving in the bar with stalwart blows and chipping off huge pieces of adobe. Then, dripping with perspiration, he retired in favor of Arthur and rested by taking a seat in the window, where the cool morning air could fan him.

Patsy noticed Runyon in this position, his back against the redwood planks and his legs stretched out on the window-seat; but the work on the wall drew her attention, as it did that of everyone else.

Suddenly there was a crash and a loud report — followed by a shrill cry — and as every eye turned to the window they found that Runyon's great body had absolutely disappeared. A rush was made to the window, but he did not seem to have fallen out. There was no sign of him at all. As if by magic, he was gone.

While they stood amazed and half frightened by the marvel of the thing, Patsy recovered sufficiently to say:

"Quick — let us get below! He must be under those rose vines, perhaps crushed and badly hurt."

So they made for the door and flocked downstairs and out into the garden. The vines seemed undisturbed. When the men pushed them aside there was no evidence of the big rancher to be seen. In fact, they were all convinced that Runyon had not fallen out of the window.

Slowly they returned to the blue room, where the major exclaimed, with positive emphasis:

"This room is haunted. Don't talk to me! There's no other explanation. If we don't watch out, we'll all disappear — and that'll be the end of us!"

CHAPTER XIII — THE WAY IT HAPPENED

Through consideration for the nerves and perhaps the credulity of the reader, it may be advisable at this juncture to go a little back in our story and relate the circumstances which led to the present perplexing crisis. A great detective once said that "every mystery has a simple solution" — meaning, of course, that the solution is simple when once discovered. Therefore, the puzzling mystery of the disappearance of baby Jane and her two nurses, followed later by the vanishment of Mr. Bulwer Runyon, was due to the one-time idiosyncracy of a certain Señor Cristoval, happily deceased, rather than to any supernatural agency.

Until now we have only known Mildred Travers, as she called herself, in a casual way. We know that she was considered a competent nurse and had proved her capability in the care of baby Jane. Also we know that she was silent and reserved and that her eyes bore an habitual expression that was hard and repellent. Without being able to find any especial fault with the girl, no one was attracted toward her — always excepting the baby, who could not be expected to show discrimination at her tender age.

A little of Mildred's former history had escaped her, but not enough to judge her by. She had once lived in Southern California, near this very place. She had visited this house frequently with her father, when a small child, and old Señor Cristoval had confided to her some of the secrets of the mansion. That was all. What had become of friends and family, how she went to New York and studied nursing, or what might account for that hard look in her eyes, no one now acquainted with her knew.

The Mexican girl, Inez, was nearly as peculiar and unaccountable as Mildred. There was no mystery about her, however, except that she was so capable and intelligent, considering her antecedents. Inez' people lived in a small town in another part of the county and the girl was one of a numerous brood of children whose parents were indolent, dissipated and steeped in ignorance. When fourteen years old she had left home to work for some of the neighboring ranchers, never staying in one place long but generally liked by her employers. The woman who had recommended Inez to Mrs. Weldon said she was bright and willing and more intelligent than most Mexicans of her class, but that she possessed a violent temper.

Louise had seen little evidence of that temper, however, for Inez from the first loved her new mistress and idolized the baby. It was only after Mildred came to supplant her, as she thought, that the girl developed an unreasoning, passionate hatred for the other nurse and was jealous of every attention Mildred lavished upon the little one.

The baby was impartial. She laughed and held out her chubby fists to either nurse, perhaps realizing that both were kind to her. It was this that made Inez so furious and caused Mildred to disdain the Mexican girl. The two were at sword's points from the first, although after a little Mildred made an attempt to conciliate Inez, knowing that the untutored Mexican was by nature irresponsible and jealous, but withal loving and generous.

Inez did not respond to these advances, but as the days passed she became less sullen when in the presence of Mildred, and at times, when busied over her duties, so far forgot her animosity as to converse with her in her old careless, unaffected way. Only Mildred was able to note this slight change, and it encouraged her to believe she might win Inez' confidence in the end. Inez herself did not realize that she had changed toward the "witch-woman," and when brooding over her fancied wrongs hated Mildred as cordially as ever.

On the day when the Weldons and their guests rode into town, the two nurses had indulged in a longer and more friendly conversation than usual. It began by Mildred's chiding the Mexican for taking baby to the quarters unknown to her, as she had been obliged to follow to see what had become of the child. Inez retorted by accusing Mildred of spying upon her. Their return to the house was anything but friendly, and Inez flatly refused to obey such instructions as Mildred gave her for the care of baby. She even walked out of the court in a temper and was gone for an hour. Then she stole in, a little ashamed of her revolt, but still defiant and rebellious.

They were in the nursery and Mildred pretended not to notice her assistant's mood.

"I have prepared two bottles of baby's food," said she. "Please place one in the hollow of the wall, in your room, to keep cool until we need it."

"I won't!" said Inez.

"Why not?" asked Mildred quietly.

"Because you are witch-woman," cried the Mexican; "because you use bad magic to make hollow in wall; because you try to make baby witch-woman, like yourself, by keeping her milk in the witch-place; because — because — I *hate* you!" she concluded with a passionate stamp of her foot.

Mildred looked upon the girl pityingly as she crossed herself again and again as if in defiance of the supposed witchcraft. The poor girl sought by this method to ward off any evil charm Mildred might attempt in retaliation, and the action nettled the trained nurse because the unjust accusation was so sincerely made.

She slowly rose and taking the bottle of milk carried it herself to the hollow in the wall and placed it upon a shelf. Then, returning, she stood

before the petulant, crouching Mexican and said gently:

"Were I truly a witch, Inez, I would not be working as a nurse — just as you are. Nor do I know any magic, more than you yourself know."

"Then how you know about that hole in the wall?" demanded Inez.

"I wish you would let me explain that. Indeed, I think a good talk together will do us both good. Take this chair beside me, and try to believe in my good will. I do not hate you, Inez. I wish you did not hate me."

Inez slowly rose from the floor and seated herself in the chair, turning it so that she could eye Mildred's face as she spoke.

"When I was a girl," continued Mildred, "I often came to this house to visit. Sometimes I stayed here for several days, while my father talked with his old friend, old Señor Cristoval."

"That is a lie," asserted Inez. "I have ask Miguel, who is here forty years, an' was house servant for Señor Cristoval. Miguel say there is no Señor Travers who is friend of Señor Cristoval. No Señor Travers did ever come to this house for visit. What you say to that, Witch-Woman?"

Mildred flushed and seemed embarrassed. Then she answered calmly:

"I think Miguel speaks truly, for my father did not bear the name of Travers. He was called by another name."

"Then why do you call yourself Travers?" retorted the other.

Mildred hesitated.

"I did not like my old name," she said, "and so I changed it. But this is a secret I have told you, Inez, and you must not tell anyone of it."

Inez nodded, looking at the other curiously. This confession had aroused her sympathy, for the first time, for her fellow nurse. The fact that there was a secret between them dissolved to an extent her antipathy for Mildred, and it might be a bond to eventually draw them nearer together. With more tolerance than she had yet shown she asked:

"Did Señor Cristoval show you the secrets of this house?"

"Yes. I was a little girl and he was good to me. I am not a witch-woman, Inez. Oh, if I were, I would witch a little happiness into my life!" she added miserably.

This burst of rebellious longing interested Inez even more than the secret. She could understand such a protest against fate.

"At first," continued Mildred, reverting to her former cold speech, while the hard look, which for an instant had given way to a flash of sentiment, again crept into her eyes, "I thought I had forgotten the queer recesses and secret rooms built by the elder Cristoval; but now I am beginning to remember them. In the days when this wing was built, the country was wild and lawless. Robbers often visited a house in broad daylight and took away

all that was of value; so the first Cristoval — the father of the one I knew — made the secret place to hide his treasure in, and even to hide himself and his family if the thieves threatened them."

"Is the treasure there now?" asked Inez eagerly.

Mildred frowned, as if the question displeased her.

"Of course not. That was long ago. When I was a girl they no longer needed the rooms in the wall as a hiding-place from thieves; but they kept them secret, just the same. I think I am the only person Señor Cristoval ever told. He did it to please me, I suppose, because I was a child."

Inez was much impressed. She began to regard Mildred more amicably. If she were not a witch-woman, she reflected, there was no reason to fear her. The Mexican girl thought deeply on what she had heard, during the next half hour. She watched Mildred put the baby to sleep and then take up a book to read as she sat beside the crib. Inez went out into the deserted court and squatting beside the fountain pondered upon the fascinating mysteries of the old house.

She crept back, presently, and reentered the nursery where Mildred was sitting.

"Tell me," she began, in a friendly and familiar way that was new in her relations with the other girl, "are there indeed rooms hidden in these walls — big enough for people to hide in?"

Mildred smiled and laid down her book. Inez in this mood was worth cultivating, if she hoped to win her confidence. It would be far easier to get on in her new situation if Inez would learn to like her.

Another thing influenced her: a reflection that had not been absent from her mind since the Weldons departed for the day and had left her practically in charge of the house. She had come to this house for a purpose. Could that purpose be best accomplished to-day, or at some later period?

"I believe," she answered musingly, "that this wall back of us is hollow and contains several rooms, which may be entered at various secret places — if one knows where the places are."

"They cannot be very big rooms," said Inez in a hushed, awed voice, as she glanced at the wall.

"No; they must be narrow. But they are quite long and high — some of them — and there are stairs leading from one floor to another, just like the big stairs in the hall."

Inez stared at her.

"How you know that?" she inquired.

"Why, I've seen the rooms," was the reply. "Let me think a moment."

During the pause she scrutinized the Mexican girl closely, wondering if it

would be advisable to take her into her confidence. Then she continued, speaking slowly:

"I'm almost sure it was in this very room that one of the secret entrances was built. It was not a nursery when I was here before, you know; it was Señor Cristoval's office, where he kept his books and his money-boxes."

She rose, as she spoke, and looked uncertainly up and down the wall. Then, with a nod of satisfaction, she quickly walked to the east corner and counted four blocks of adobe, starting from the floor. The fourth line of blocks she followed to the third one, and placed her hand upon it.

"I think I am right, so far," she said. "This is the door to the secret rooms, but the key that unlocks it is somewhere in the floor. Turn back the rug, please, Inez."

The girl obeyed, her brown fingers trembling with excitement. The floor was of adobe blocks similar to those which formed the wall, but smaller in size. Mildred regarded them reflectively and then placed her foot on the edge of the second block directly in a line with the place where her hand rested. The pressure of her foot made the block tip slightly, and observing this she pressed hard with her hand against the inner edge of the upper block.

The result seemed magical. Three seemingly solid blocks of the wall swung slowly outward, disclosing a dimly lighted recess beyond.

Mildred stepped in, stooping her head slightly because the opening was so small. Inez followed her, nervously seizing the other girl's hand for support. The light seemed to come from some place far above and as their eyes grew accustomed to it they could discern a passage about three feet in width and fourteen feet long, which occupied the center of the wall. At the right, a flight of steps led upward, and to their left the place was occupied by some chairs and stools. Against the walls were several narrow shelves, easily reached by one standing upright.

"Why, they have left the place furnished, just as it was when Señor Cristoval first showed it to me," said Mildred. "The mattings and upholstery must be ready to fall to pieces, by this time; but you see, Inez, I was right about the secret rooms."

Just then little Jane wakened with a lusty cry.

"See to the baby," said Mildred quickly, and the Mexican girl reluctantly turned away to obey.

Mildred remained in the recess, thoughtfully eyeing the various antique objects which had been allowed to remain there, some of which were of real value. She reflected that the last Cristoval had doubtless passed away without disclosing the secret of the wall to anyone, and his executors, in selling the mansion, had been quite unaware that anything was hidden in the adobe wall.

Without doubt the property might now be justly claimed by the new owner, Arthur Weldon, and this thought made Mildred flush with eager resolve to take full advantage of her present opportunity. For here was the consummation of her hopes; here was the realization of the important plan which had brought her to Southern California and to this house.

Inez had caught the baby from its cradle and, holding a bottle of fresh milk-food to its lips to comfort it, again advanced through the opening. Mildred had stepped a few paces along the passage and Inez, the baby in her arms, started to join her.

At that moment she heard a sound in the court, as of some one approaching, and to avoid letting others know of this fascinating secret the girl thoughtlessly grasped the adobe door with her free hand and swung it shut behind her.

It closed with a sharp “click!” and Mildred, hearing the sound, turned with a low cry of fear.

“Great heavens, what have you done?” she exclaimed in tense tones and brushing the Mexican aside she threw her whole weight against the wall. It did not yield a hair’s breadth.

Inez, with terror in her eyes, stared at her companion.

“Is it lock?” she whispered.

Mildred pushed again, straining every muscle. Then she bent and examined the wall. It was easy to see, from this side, where the series of three blocks were firmly joined together. Also the butts of three huge iron hinges protruded slightly into the passage. There could be no mistake. The closing of the door had made them prisoners.

CHAPTER XIV — PRISONERS OF THE WALL

Mildred silently turned and regarded her companion. Her eyes were not hard and cold now. They were glowing with anxiety and terror.

"Cannot we get out?" demanded Inez.

Mildred shook her head.

"Not the way we came in," she replied. "I remember now that Cristoval warned me never to close the door behind me; but I forgot to tell you that, so you are not to blame."

Inez looked down at baby, who had again fallen asleep, snuggled close to her breast. Her fear at this time was not for herself. It was dreadful to think of the danger she had placed the darling baby in — the child she would have died rather than injure.

Mildred saw the look and read its anguish. Her own cheeks blanched for a moment, but there was an inherent quality of courage in this girl that forbade her to despair. Speaking as much to herself as to Inez she said:

"We were able to open this adobe door only by pressing downward on a block of the floor outside, which released a catch which is securely hidden in the lower edge of the opening — where I cannot reach it. So, unless some one knew the secret and could press that block in the nursery, the door cannot again be opened."

Inez staggered to a stool and sat down.

"Must we stay here always?" she pleaded piteously.

"I think not. I am *sure* not, Inez. They will find some way to break through the wall and rescue us."

"But no one knows we are here!"

"True. Well, I believe there are other ways to get out of this hollow wall, besides the opening we came through. I am quite certain I was told that Señor Cristoval could enter from his room, on the second floor; and perhaps there are other entrances. Stay here and keep baby quiet and I will make an examination of our prison."

As she started to ascend the stairs Inez arose to follow her.

"Let me come, too," she begged. "I am afraid to stay alone."

"Very well; but try not to waken baby."

The stairs were built the full width of the space, completely blocking it at that end. At the top they stepped into another narrow room, which was not over the lower one but extended farther along the wall. It was, indeed, extraordinary to note how comfortable the genius of that ancient Cristoval who had planned the place, had made this originally comfortless corridor-like room, for room it was despite its narrow confines.

The ceiling was high, and light and air were admitted by gratings placed at the top, letting onto the bastion of the roof, where they could not be observed by those below. The gratings were covered by projections that kept out the rain and dew. On the floor was a thick carpet, somewhat musty and dusty now, and at the far end was placed a couch with silken curtains. This was still piled high with bedding and pillows and was boxed in, the full width of the passage, with elaborately carved woods. Upholstered seats, rather narrow but long and quite comfortable, were built against the wall and supported by richly carved frames of ebony and panels of cherry. There were pictures upon the walls; oil paintings of quite good quality. A sort of wall-cabinet and some small brackets supported numerous hooks, ornaments, and several boxes of metal and sandalwood, which last Mildred eyed expectantly but had now no leisure to examine.

The girls were both awed by this discovery, for Mildred had never been permitted to mount the stair to this room when Señor Cristoval had allowed her to peep into the lower passage. The intense silence lent a weirdness to the place that was at first quite disconcerting. A gray rat scuttled along the carpet, causing them to jump and cry out, and then disappeared somewhere beneath the couch. Inez, trembling with nervous fear, hugged the baby with one arm and clutched Mildred's arm with the other, and then they sat together on one of the cushioned seats and tried to collect their thoughts.

Mildred reflected that no person had entered this place for at least eight years, for it was eight years since the last Cristoval had passed to his fathers. Yet, aside from the dust, everything seemed in an excellent state of preservation. The secret room had been fitted up by its builder more than fifty years before and much of the furnishings must have been placed there then.

"My first task," she said to Inez, "must be to make a thorough examination of this place. Since there is no one to help us, we must help ourselves, and any weakness at this time would be fatal."

With this she rose and carefully began to inspect the walls. The heavy carpet was merely laid flat on the adobe floor and she raised it here and there and tested the blocks to see if any was movable. There was no means of reaching the ceiling but an opening there was out of the question.

Near the center of the room, on the inner wall and about two feet from the floor, was a square of wood firmly embedded in the adobe. This, she thought, might possibly be a means of egress or ingress, so she tested it eagerly, pressing not only upon the wood but on all the blocks of adobe near it, in the endeavor to discover a hidden spring or some other clever mechanical contrivance which would prove the "open sesame." But the panel and the wall defied all her efforts and she finally concluded it was solid planking

placed there to support the wall or to allow cupboards or shelves to be nailed against it.

Another similar place, where a huge panel of plank was set in the wall, she found at the very end of the passage, beyond the couch, and was only able to reach it by mounting the bed and climbing over the bedding. This panel was also immovable and she decided it could not be an opening because the wall beyond it was doubtless solid. This space beyond the bed, where the room ended, contained a huge chest of quaintly carved oak. As she saw the chest her heart gave a great bound and forgetting for the moment her desire to escape she reached down and raised the lid.

Then her face fell. Despite the dim light in this corner, which she had grown somewhat accustomed to in investigating the panel, she could see that the chest contained merely papers, with which it was half filled. This might be the accumulated correspondence of the Cristovals, of no use to any but themselves, and losing all interest in the chest she closed the lid and again crossed over the high bed to Inez.

The result of this investigation, which had consumed a full hour, so thorough had she been, convinced Mildred that there was no immediate way for them to leave their prison. So she began to plan how they might keep themselves and baby Jane comfortable until they were rescued.

The bottle of milk, which Inez still held in her hand, was a prepared food of a highly nourishing quality. The contents of the bottle had scarcely been touched by baby when, rousing from her sleep, she had been taken up and comforted by Inez until slumber again overtook her. Usually Jane consumed two bottles of such food each day, and another during each night.

Mildred looked at her watch and found it was nearly four o'clock. With a little care in its administration the baby's food might last until morning, but not longer. For themselves, they must be content without food, unless —

She decided to search the boxes and shelves while daylight lasted, and bade Inez place the sleeping infant on one of the cushioned seats and support it with a pillow brought from the couch. Then the two girls began to take down the boxes from the shelves and explore their contents. Some were of tin and square in shape; others were round, like canisters.

In one they found some tea and in another a small quantity of loaf sugar. There was no other food, except a few cracker crumbs in the bottom of a tin.

Leaving Inez to sit beside baby, Mildred next visited the room below. Here the light was more dim, but she discovered a box of wax candles — two or three dozen in number — and a quantity of matches in a small iron safe. She tried these last and after several attempts managed to light one of them and with it light a candle. The matches were at least eight years old, but there

was not a particle of dampness in the place and so they had not greatly deteriorated.

A broad slab of redwood, hinged and fastened to the wall by turn-buttons, was made to let down and serve as a table. When Mildred lowered it she found that it covered a small recess or cupboard in the wall, in which stood three tin cans. One was labeled “tomatoes” and the other two “corn.”

Here was food, of a certain sort; but the cans were tightly soldered and there seemed to be no tool that might be used to open them. Although the place was littered with many small articles there was nothing else among them that especially interested the girl. Two sabers were crossed upon the wall over the table, and below them hung a big revolver. A panama hat, yellowed with age, hung upon a peg. A broom made of palm fiber stood in a corner.

Mildred returned to the upper floor, carrying with her several candles and some matches.

“Inez,” said she, “we must make the best of our misfortune. I hope that before long we shall be rescued, both on baby’s account and on our own. There are some tins of tomatoes and corn down stairs, but nothing that baby could eat. However, we shall suffer more from thirst than from hunger, as there is not a drop of water in the place.”

Inez had been thinking during Mildred’s absence.

“Can we not scream, and so make them hear us?” she asked.

“I have thought of that and we will make the attempt. The servants are all in the opposite wing, so it is useless to try to arouse their attention; but when Mr. and Mrs. Weldon return, with the others, they may be able to hear us and so rescue us.”

“When will they be back?” Inez inquired.

Mildred considered this question.

“I heard them say they were to stay in town for luncheon, but Mrs. Weldon remarked that they would be back soon after. I think, Inez, they may already have returned and even now may be searching for us. Stay here, and I will go below, so as not to disturb baby, and call.”

She went again down the steep stairs to the lower room where, standing near to the place where they had come through the wall, she uttered a sharp, shrill cry, such as she thought might penetrate the thick blocks of adobe. The sound echoed with startling reverberations through the secret chambers and baby Jane, wakening in affright, set up a series of such lusty screams that it seemed as if they ought to be heard a mile away.

Inez did her best to soothe and quiet the baby, but succeeded only when she had given little Jane the precious bottle of milk.

CHAPTER XV — MILDRED CONFIDES IN INEZ

Mildred had hastened upstairs in alarm at the pandemonium of sound her own cry had aroused, for the baby's screams also gave back a thousand echoes and these sent the little one into fresh paroxysms of terror.

"This won't do, at all," she said anxiously, when baby Jane had sobbed herself into a doze, with the bottle to comfort her. "If we scream again it will frighten the child to death."

"Perhaps they have heard us," suggested Inez, rocking Jane to and fro in her arms.

"Perhaps. Let us hope so," sighed Mildred.

Presently she went over to the couch and examined the condition of the bedding. The linen sheets had withstood the years very well, but the blankets and coverlets had a musty smell. She spread some of these out to air and then went back and sat beside Inez.

Together they watched the light fade until the narrow space was full of creeping shadows. The air began to grow chilly, so Mildred arranged the couch and they laid baby Jane upon it, covered her snugly with a blanket and drew the silk curtain to shield her eyes from the glare of the candles. They had lighted several of these, placing them in heavy brass candlesticks which they found ranged upon the shelves. Each of the girls took a blanket and folded it about her and then they sat down together to await their fate as patiently as they could.

They both realized, by this time, that their dilemma was likely to prove serious. Not a sound from within the house penetrated the adobe walls of their prison. They were unable to tell if their whereabout had yet been discovered.

"I think it best to wait until morning before we make any further effort to be heard," said Mildred. "Our cries would only distract baby and if our screams have not already attracted notice it would be folly to continue them. Anyway, let us try to be brave and patient. Something may happen to save us, before morning."

Even by the flickering candle-light the place was awesome and uncanny. Inez crept closer to Mildred's side, quite forgetting her former aversion for her companion. Because the sound of their own voices lent them a certain degree of courage they conversed together in low tones, talking on any subject that occurred to them.

At one time Inez broke an oppressive stillness by saying:

"Tell me about yourself — when you were a girl. And why did you leave here to go to New York?"

Mildred regarded the girl musingly. She felt a strong temptation to speak, to confide in some one.

“Will you keep my secret, Inez?” she asked.

“Yes; of course. I do not tell all I know,” was the reply.

“If you told, it would drive me away from here,” said Mildred.

Inez gave a start, remembering that a few hours ago she would have done anything to drive Mildred away. But, somehow, she had come to regard her companion in misfortune more favorably. A bond of sympathy had been established between them by this terrible experience they were now undergoing. Whatever their fate might be, Inez could not hate Mildred after this.

“I do not wish to drive you away,” she asserted in a positive voice. “I will not tell your secret.”

For a time Mildred mused silently, as if considering how to begin.

“My mother died when I was a baby,” said she. “She was a Travers and lived on a ranch near here.”

“I know the Travers Ranch,” said Inez quickly. “But no Travers have live there in a long time.”

“My mother lived there,” continued Mildred, “until she married my father. Indeed, she lived there several years after, for I was born in the ranch house. But my mother’s people — the Traverses — did not like my father, and when mother died he took me away to a house in Escondido. I think he was sent away, and the family sold the ranch and went back to England, where they had originally come from.

“In Escondido an old Mexican woman kept house for us. She was named Izbel.”

“Ah!” cried Inez, nodding her head wisely; “I know.” Then, as Mildred looked at her questioningly, she added: “Go on.”

“My father was away from home much of the time. He traveled, and sometimes he took me with him into Mexico, and we went as far south as Matanzas, and once to Mexico City. That was when I was quite small, and I do not remember much about it. But often we came here to visit Señor Cristoval, with whom he had some secret business. I have seen him give my father big bags of golden coins, although everyone said he was a miser. I remember that at one time my father hid in this very wall for a day and a night, and officers came to the house and searched it, saying they were looking for a smuggler and had traced him here.

“But Señor Cristoval laughed at them and told them to examine the house thoroughly. This they did, and went away satisfied. Afterward my father came out of the wall and took me across the country to San Bernardino,

where we stayed at a friend's house for several days. Finally Señor Cristoval came there to visit us and I heard him tell my father it would not be safe for him to return home and advised him to go far away. He also gave my father much money, and one curious thing which he said to him I never forgot. 'I will keep your fortune safely until you need it,' was his remark. 'I will hide it where no one will ever find it, any more than they could find you.'"

"Ah! then he hid your father's fortune in this place?" cried Inez eagerly. Then her face fell. "But, no," she added. "We have look, and there is no fortune here."

Mildred sighed and continued her tale.

"After this Señor Cristoval shook my father's hand, and kissed me — for he was always fond of me — and went away. I never saw him again. My father and I traveled to New York and as I was then eleven years of age I became much troubled over our exile and begged to be told why it was not safe for us to stay in California. He explained to me that he had purchased laces and other goods in Mexico and brought them into the United States secretly, without paying the duty which the robbing government officials imposed. For that he said he was liable to be arrested and put in prison, and if I ever allowed the secret to escape me I would be the means of ruining him. I was a very sensitive child, and the importance of this great secret weighed upon me heavily. My father declared he had done no wrong, but I knew that the officers of the law were constantly searching for him and it so crushed me and destroyed my happiness that at twelve years of age I was as nervous, as suspicious and evasive as any old woman could be."

She paused and gave a little shudder. Said Inez, who had listened intently:

"I know now who you are. Your name is Mildred Leighton."

"You know that!" cried Mildred, amazed.

"Of course I know that, when I know your father was the great smuggler that the officers never could catch. I am told many stories about Leighton the smuggler, and old Izbel, who kept his house, is my aunt. Old Izbel say Señor Cristoval give Leighton the money to buy with, and Leighton give Señor Cristoval, who love money so much, half of all he make. But no one could ever prove that. Leighton was very clever man. No one could ever catch him."

Inez spoke admiringly, as if Mildred's father was a hero and Mildred had gained added prestige by being his daughter. But the other girl frowned and continued her story.

"In New York," she said, "we lived in a boarding house and I was sent to school. My father was not kind to me any more. He grew cross and gloomy and often would say if I told his secret he would kill me. I did not tell; I kept

the secret safe locked in my heart and suffered agonies of apprehension for his sake, for I still loved him fondly. He now bought a little ship and began to make sea voyages to and from Cuba. He would not let me go with him and he only swore when I tried to get him to give up the wicked and dangerous life he was leading. Often he denounced Cristoval, who had in his possession valuable goods and money belonging to my father but would not give them up because he knew my father dared not go to California to get them.

"For years father continued to smuggle without being suspected. Then one morning I received a note asking me to come to the prison to see him. They had caught him at last and seized his ship, and he said there had been a fight in which several of the government agents had been shot, and one killed. My father did not shoot, he told me, but they would blame him for everything.

"He stayed in the prison for a month, and every day I went to see him. Then came the trial and he was sentenced to prison for life. They — they proved that he ordered his men to shoot," she added, lowering her head as if ashamed.

"Well, that was right," maintained Inez, cheerfully. "If they try to arrest him, Leighton was right to shoot."

"No, Inez, he was very wrong," replied Mildred sadly. "I would never be allowed to see my father after he was taken away, so they let us talk for the last time. He told me they had taken away all his money and he had nothing to give me, but that if I could manage to get to California old Señor Cristoval owed him much money and — and other things, and perhaps he would give it to me, although he had refused to give it to my father. Afterward they took him away to Sing Sing prison, and that was the last I ever saw of him, for a year later he died.

"I do not suppose, Inez, any girl was ever left with such a heritage of shame and trouble. You think me hard and cold; but can you blame me? Always I think some one will discover my secret, that they will say I am the daughter of Leighton the smuggler and point the finger of shame at me.

"I was a friendless girl with no money. The people at the boarding house would not let me remain and I took my little bundle and wandered out into the street in search of home and employment. It was then that a kind lady, a Mrs. Runyon, had pity on me and put me into a school for nurses. I was fifteen years old and big and strong for my age. At seventeen I was nursing in a charity hospital, but my father's disgrace had made me an outcast and prevented my obtaining situations with good families. Mrs. Runyon tried to help me but my story was too well known. I changed my name from Leighton to Travers, but even that did not bring me better luck.

"For two years longer I worked for a bare pittance, and then suddenly a

ray of sunshine appeared. Miss De Graf came to the hospital where I was caring for an injured child and offered me a position with her cousin out here in California, where I had known the happiest days of my life. More than that, I found to my joy that I was coming directly to the old Cristoval house, for although Señor Cristoval was long since dead — as I had found out by writing him — I remembered the secret rooms and hoped I might find at least a part of my father's fortune still hidden there.

"Well," she added after a pause, "these are the rooms, and there is nothing of value left in them; this is the old Cristoval home, where my father was forced to hide from the law; this is the country where the officers hounded the hated smuggler like a dog and finally drove him away. And here is the girl, Inez, who has passed through all these scenes and to-day finds nothing in life worth living for."

Inez took her hand, shyly but tenderly.

"Meeldred," she said softly, "perhaps your life will end here. It will be strange, will it not, if that is so? But if we cannot get out, it makes a good story to die in this old den of the smuggler, your father. I will die with you; but I do not mind — much. But Mees Jane — "

She broke off with a wail of anguish and Mildred said hastily:

"Inez, we must save the baby! And, if we do, we shall also save ourselves. Come; you, at least, have much to live for. You will care for the baby after I have gone far away, and you will be glad, then, that the hated Mildred is out of your life."

"But I do not hate you any more!" cried the Mexican girl protestingly. "I like you now, Meeldred. We will be friends, an' we will be happy together, if — if — "

"If what, Inez?"

"If we live to get out of this wall."

CHAPTER XVI — AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

As the night advanced the two girls continued to talk, in low and subdued voices because of their anxiety and growing fears. They kept the candles trimmed, for the light lent them courage. They were not hungry, although they had eaten nothing since noon, but they were beginning to suffer from thirst.

The baby wakened with shrill screams and the only way to quiet her was to give her the bottle, which was now less than a third full. Mildred was in a quandary whether to withhold the remainder of the food from little Jane, so as to prolong her life as much as possible, or to allow the baby to eat what she desired, as long as any of the food remained. She finally decided on the latter course, hoping the morning would bring some one to their rescue.

After the little one was again hushed in slumber and cuddled in warm blankets on a seat beside them, the two imprisoned girls renewed their desultory conversation. They realized it must be long after midnight but Mildred avoided looking at her watch because that made the minutes drag so slowly.

Finally a dull sound from the other side of the wall reached their ears. It seemed that some one was pounding upon the adobe. Both girls sprang to their feet in excitement, their heads bent to listen. The pounding was not repeated but a voice was heard — a far-away voice — as of one calling.

Mildred answered the cry, at the top of her lungs, and immediately Inez followed with a shrill scream that roused a thousand echoes in the hidden passage. And now Toodlums joined the chorus, startled from her sleep and terrified by the riot of sound.

They tried to listen, but the baby's cries prevented anything else from being heard, so they devoted themselves to quieting little Jane. It took some time to do this, for the sobbing infant was thoroughly frightened, but finally Inez succeeded in comforting her and the bottle of precious milk was sacrificed to put baby to sleep again.

By this time the sounds on the other side of the wall had ceased; but the girls were now full of eager hope, believing they had succeeded in letting their friends know they were imprisoned in the wall.

Within the hour more dull pounding began and this continued so regularly that Mildred told Inez the rescuers were surely trying to break through the adobe. They listened alertly to each blow and for a time forgot both thirst and fatigue in the excitement of the moment. Daybreak was near, for already a gray light was creeping in through the gratings overhead.

Suddenly a crash like a thunder-clap resounded from the end of the

passage. From the gloomy recess behind the couch a man's form appeared, struck the bed, was rebounded by the springs into the air, turned a complete somersault and landed on the floor of the passage in a sitting position, facing the two startled nurses.

He did not seem to be hurt, but was evidently bewildered. He glared in amazement at the girls and they glared in amazement at him. Then, slowly, he turned his eyes to view his surroundings and blinked stupidly at the candles, the antique carved furniture, the baby bundled upon a cushioned seat and finally rested his eyes again upon the faces of the nurses.

"Why, it is Señor Bul-Run!" cried Inez, clapping her hands with joy. "He have come to save us."

"Pardon me," said the man, in a rather quavering falsetto, "I'm not sure whether I've come to save you or to share your peril. Where am I, please?"

"It is the hollow of the wall, sir," replied Mildred, who had never seen the big fellow before. "It is the secret apartment constructed by Señor Cristoval, who built this house."

"Well," said he, slowly getting upon his feet and with another curious glance around, "I can't say that I consider it a desirable place of residence. Certainly it's no place for our precious Toodlums," and he bent over the sleeping babe and tenderly kissed its forehead. Then, straightening up, he said in as determined a tone as his high voice would permit: "We must find a way to get out of here!"

"Can't you get out the same way you got in?" asked Mildred.

He looked at her in perplexed astonishment.

"How did I get in?" he inquired.

"Don't you know?"

"I've no idea. I was sitting in the window of the blue room, resting, when there was a bang, whirligig, fireworks — and here I am, your uninvited guest."

"The blue room!" cried Mildred.

"Yes. Did you happen to notice my arrival? I don't mean its lack of dignity, but the direction I came from?"

"You came from somewhere behind that bed. I saw you strike the mattress and — and bound up again."

"To be sure. I remember bounding up again. I — I didn't care to stop, you see. I was anxious to — to — see if baby Jane was all right."

Mildred could not repress a smile, while Inez giggled openly.

"However," continued the big man, good-humoredly, "the direction affords us a clew. Pardon my absence for a moment while I investigate."

He took one of the candles, cautiously made his way over the couch and

stood upon the oak chest at the end of the narrow chamber. Here he was able to examine the heavy planking set in the adobe, through which he had doubtless made his appearance but which now appeared as solid and immovable as the wall itself.

Runyon's first act was to pass the light of the candle carefully over every joint and edge, with the idea of discovering a spring or hinge. But no such thing seemed to exist. Then he took out his big jackknife and began prying. When a blade snapped he opened another, only to break it in his vain twisting and jabbing. Finally he threw the now useless knife from him and began pounding with his fists upon the planking, at the same time shouting with the best voice he could muster. Perhaps the pounding might have been heard had not his friends at that moment been seeking for his mangled form in the garden, among the rose vines.

After listening in vain for a reply, Runyon came back to the girls, saying:

"This is certainly a singular occurrence. I came in as easily as I ever did anything in my life, I assure you; but the way out is not so easy. However, we won't have to endure this confinement long, for the boys are breaking down the wall in two places."

Then, in reply to their anxious questioning, he related the incidents of the night: how the discovery was made that Toodlums and her two nurses were missing; of the search throughout the country in automobiles; how the major had heard the "ghost" of baby Jane, which had given them their first intimation of the truth, and of the desperate and vain attempts made to get into the secret chamber.

Mildred, in return, explained the accident that had led to their imprisonment and of their failure to find any means of escape.

"There must be a way out, of course," she added, "for Señor Cristoval would never invent such clever and complicated ways of getting into this hollow wall without inventing other means of getting out."

"True enough," agreed Runyon; "but I can't see why he thought it necessary to make the means of getting *out* a secret. These rooms were probably built as hiding-places, and there are at least two separate entrances. But whoever hid here should be master of the situation and have no difficulty in escaping when the danger was over."

"Unless," said Mildred, thoughtfully, "the rooms were also intended as a prison."

"Well, perhaps that is it," said the man. "Old Cristoval may have thought the occasion would arise when he would like to keep one or more prisoners here, so he concealed the exits as carefully as the entrances. Let us admit, young ladies, that it's a first-class prison. But," his tone changing to one of

kindly concern, “how have you stood this ordeal? You must be worn out with anxiety, and desperately hungry, too.”

As he gazed into Mildred’s face it occurred to him, for the first time, that Jane’s new nurse was an interesting girl. She was not exactly beautiful, but — attractive. Indeed, at that moment Mildred was at her best, despite the night’s vigil. The hard, defiant look had left her eyes for the first time in years, driven out by a train of exciting events that had led her to forget herself and her rebellion against fate, at least for the time being.

“We are not very hungry,” she said, smiling at the big, boyish rancher, “but we are thirsty. I’d give anything for a good drink of water. And baby is now devouring the last few drops of her prepared food. When it is gone there is nothing here that she can eat.”

“Well,” said he, spurred to action by this report, “I’m going to explore this place carefully, for if we can manage to find a way out it will save Weldon and his men from ruining that wall, and also save time, for the blamed adobe is so hard and thick that it will still require hours for them to make a hole big enough to get us out.”

CHAPTER XVII — THE PRODIGAL SON

With the added light that now came from the gratings in the ceiling every object in the upper room was plainly visible. Runyon began his inspection in a methodical manner, starting at one corner and eyeing the inner wall on every inch of its surface. He tested each block at its corners and edges. The girls watched him listlessly, for they expected no result, having covered the same methods themselves.

At length Runyon was obliged to abandon the wall in despair.

"The opening is there, of course," he said, "but that confounded Cristoval was too clever for us. If I had the rascal here now, I'd strangle him!"

As he stood in the center of the narrow space, looking around him, his eye fell upon the upholstered seats ranged along one side and he regarded them suspiciously. They were box-like affairs, with the surface of the covers padded and cushioned.

He reached down and lifted one of the lids. As he glanced within he uttered an exclamation of astonishment. The box was almost filled with bottles, lying regularly on their sides.

"Wine!" he cried. "Now, Miss — I don't remember to have heard your name — I shall be able to relieve your thirst."

"My name is Travers — Mildred Travers, sir; but I can't drink wine."

"Not to quench your thirst — just a few swallows?" he asked, taking a bottle and trying to remove the cork.

"Not a drop, even to save my life," she replied positively.

"But I will, Señor Runyon — I will!" cried Inez eagerly.

"Runyon!" exclaimed Mildred, stepping back in amazement and looking at the man rather wildly.

"Excuse me; haven't I introduced myself?" he asked, looking up. "Yes; my name's Runyon."

Something in her expression arrested his gaze and he regarded the girl curiously.

"Bulwer Runyon?" she said in a low voice.

He sat down on the box, holding the bottle between his knees.

"They christened me that. Very foolishly, I think. But what do you know of Bulwer Runyon?"

"Your mother — is — Martha Runyon?"

"To be sure — bless her heart! Ah, you know my mother, then, and that's how you have heard of me. But nothing good, from the dear old lady's lips, I'll be bound."

"She really loves you," replied Mildred quickly; "only — you have

disappointed her."

"Indeed I have. I've always disappointed her, ever since I can remember."

"You were very extravagant," said Mildred in a reproachful tone.

"Yes; that was my fault. Father spoiled me; then he died and left all his fortune to mother. Quite right. But mother is pretty close with her money."

"Did she not pay all your debts?"

"Yes; but that was foolish. She reproached me for owing people, which was one of my pet recreations. So she paid the bills, bought me a ranch out here, shipped me into exile and washed her hands of me, declaring that the ranch was my sole inheritance and I must never expect another cent of her fortune. She proposes, I believe, to invest her surplus in charity. Nice idea, wasn't it?"

"It was very generous in her," declared Mildred.

"Was it? Well, that's a matter of opinion. But I regard her gift of this ranch as the first step to perpetual pauperdom. She tossed the land at me, shuffled me off, and then expected me to make a living."

"Can't you do that?" asked Mildred wonderingly.

"Make a living on a California ranch!" he said, as if astonished.

"Others do," she asserted.

"There is no other just like your humble servant," he assured her, again struggling with the cork. "I can't grow enough lemons — it's a lemon ranch she handed me — to pay expenses. The first year I decorated my estate with a mortgage; had to have an automobile, you know. The second year I put another plaster on to pay the interest of the first mortgage and a few scattering debts. Third year, the third patch; fourth year, the usual thing. Fifth year — that's this one — the money sharks balked. They said the ranch is loaded to its full capacity. So, I'll have to sell some lemons."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" cried Mildred.

"So am I, thank you. Stupid thing, selling lemons. But the wolf's at the door and all I can do is shoot lemons at the brute. Lemons! Wasn't it tart of the dear mother to load me with such an acidulous estate? Perhaps she imagined it would make me assiduous — eh?"

"Your mother hoped you would turn over a new leaf and — and redeem your past," said the girl.

"Well, it's too late to do that now. I can't redeem the past without redeeming the ranch, and that's impossible," he declared with a grin. "But tell me, please, how you happen to be so deep in my mother's confidence."

Mildred hesitated, but reflected that she really owed him an explanation.

"She protected me when I was in trouble," she said softly.

"Ah; that's like the dear old girl. Do you know, I've an idea that when I'm

down and out she'll relent and come to my assistance with a fatted calf? It would be just like her. I've known of others she befriended. Her hobby is to help poor girls. There was that Leighton girl, for instance, whose smuggling, murderous father was imprisoned for life. The poor little thing hadn't a friend in the world till mother took her in hand and put her in a training school for nurses. The mother wrote me how interested she was in that case. Her protege did her credit, it seems, for the child turned out a very good nurse, who — who — "

He suddenly paused, flushed red and stared at the girl uncertainly.

"You say your name is — Travers?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, casting down her eyes.

"Not — Leighton?"

"Cannot you pull the cork, Señor Runyon? I am so thirsty!" cried Inez quickly, to save her friend from disclosing her secret. But big Runyon was bright enough, in spite of his peculiarities. He read Mildred's confusion and suspected the truth, but was too considerate to press the question.

"The cork is obstinate," said he; "so we won't argue with the thing," and he struck the neck of the bottle against a corner of the seat and broke it so neatly that not a drop of the contents was spilled. Then he took a cup from the shelf and poured out some of the wine.

"It's a native vintage," said he, "but it ought to be mellow and mild after all the years it has lain here."

Inez drank. The California Mexicans are accustomed to the native wines and consume them as freely as water. But Mildred, although again pressed to quench her thirst, steadfastly refused.

Runyon took a little of the wine, for he also was thirsty, and then he made an examination of the other seats. Some contained more wine; others were quite empty; but no water was discovered anywhere.

"Now I shall go below," said Runyon, "and see if I can unearth anything of importance there. Do you hear those dull sounds on the other side of the wall? They tell us that our friends are busy drilling the holes. It's wonderful how tough that adobe is."

Little Jane had awakened again and Inez took baby Jane in her arms and, with Mildred, followed Runyon down the stairs into the lower chamber. Here they watched his careful inspection of the room but did not hope for any favorable result.

"Here is food," he announced, as, having given up the idea of finding egress, he came upon the cans of tomatoes and corn.

"Yes; but we have no can-opener," replied Mildred; "and, unless the contents were cooked, they would not be eatable."

“I’m not thinking of the eatables,” said Runyon, taking out a small pen-knife, for he had already ruined the larger one he always carried. “Tomatoes usually have a lot of liquid in the cans, a sort of watery juice which I am sure would help to relieve your thirst.”

He began prying at the tin with a knife blade, but it was a heavy quality of plate, such as is rarely used nowadays, and resisted his attempt. Soon the blade of the frail tool snapped at the handle, and he tried the other blade. That, too, soon broke and Runyon regarded the can with a sort of wonder.

“It beats me,” he said, shaking his head. “But I don’t like to give up, and that tomato-juice would be of service if we could only get at it.”

Looking around for another implement his eye spied the revolver hanging upon its peg.

“Ah! if that weapon is loaded I’ll use a bullet as a can-opener,” he exclaimed, and reaching up he removed the revolver from its place.

“Good; six cartridges, 32 caliber,” said he. “Now, young ladies, if you can stand the noise, and the powder hasn’t spoiled, I believe I can make a hole in that can which will allow the juice to run out.”

“I don’t care,” said Inez, “but I will take Mees Jane upstairs, first.”

“The sound will echo like a regular battle,” said Mildred; “but as I am really thirsty and your suggestion of relief tempts me, I am willing to have you shoot the pistol.”

Runyon placed the can upon the edge of the low hinged table, where it stood about waist high. When Inez had gone above with little Jane, the man took a position whereby he faced obliquely the outer wall and aiming at the tomatoes said:

“Better stop up your ears, Miss — Mildred.”

She obeyed and he fired.

Even their anticipations could not prepare them for the wild riot of sound that followed the explosion. The bullet found its mark, for the can toppled and fell from the shelf and lay spilling its contents upon the floor. The bullet went farther and struck a crevice of the outer wall. A cloud of smoke for a moment obscured their view and Mildred, regarding the tomato-can, cried out:

“Oh, pick it up! Pick it up, quick! It is spilling.”

Runyon made no reply. He was staring straight ahead, in a dazed, bewildered way, and now Mildred’s eyes followed his.

The smoke was rolling out of a large aperture in the outer wall. Three huge blocks of adobe, neatly joined together, had swung outward, moved by a secret spring which the bullet had released.

Through the grim prison wall they were looking out at the sunshine that

flooded the rose garden.

Mildred sank to her knees, sobbing with joy. Big Runyon walked to the staircase.

“Hi, there, Inez!” he called. “Come down here and take Toodlums to her mother. I’ll bet a button she’ll be jolly glad to see that kid again!”

CHAPTER XVIII — LACES AND GOLD

At four o'clock in the afternoon Patsy rubbed her eyes, yawned and raised her head from her pillow.

"Dear me!" she sighed, "I'm tired yet, but this sleeping in the daytime is unnatural. I wonder if Beth is awake."

She went to the door of the adjoining room, opened it and found her cousin dressing.

"Do you suppose anyone else is up?" she inquired.

"See there," replied Beth, pointing through the window.

Patsy saw. Mr. Runyon was seated on a garden bench in earnest conversation with Mildred Travers.

"Didn't he go home this morning, after the excitement was over?" she asked.

"No," replied Beth. "Mr. and Mrs. Hahn drove their car home, but our interesting neighbor at the north, Mr. Bul Run, declared there was nothing at his own ranch half so enticing as a bed here. He's a bachelor, it seems, and leads rather a lonely life. So Arthur gave him a room and he went to bed; but it seems he has had his sleep out and is indulging in other recreations."

Patsy was eyeing the couple in the garden.

"Mr. Runyon seems to have struck up a friendship with your protégé Mildred," she observed.

"Yes," answered Beth. "You know he was shut up in the wall with her and Inez for awhile and the adventure must have made them feel well acquainted. Wasn't that imprisonment a most peculiar thing, Patsy?"

"Very peculiar. I haven't had much time to think about it, for as soon as Toodlums was safe in Louise's arms I went to bed. But it occurs to me to wonder how Mildred Travers knew so much of the secrets of this absurd old house and why she ventured to explore the hidden rooms in our absence. Put that with the fact that she lived in these parts as a girl, and with her eagerness to come out here — don't you remember her fervent 'thank heaven'? — and it seems the whole mystery isn't unraveled yet; it's only getting more tangled."

Beth was thoughtful for a time.

"I am sure Mildred will have some explanation to make," she said presently. "Don't let us judge her just yet, Patsy. And I advise you to get dressed, for there's Louise wheeling the baby, and perhaps everyone else is downstairs but us."

"Louise and baby both slept all through that awful night," remarked Patsy, again yawning. "No wonder they're up and around and looking bright and

happy.” But she took her cousin’s hint and dressed so rapidly that she descended the stairs only a few moments after Beth did.

Uncle John, the major and Arthur were in the court, smoking and sipping coffee. The events of the past night were still being earnestly discussed by them and much speculation was indulged in concerning the rooms in the hollow wall and the uses to which they had been put during the pioneer days when Cristoval constructed them, and even afterward when his son, the last owner, had occupied the premises.

“The entire ranch,” said Arthur, “as well as this house, was sold by the executors appointed by the court, for it seems that Cristoval had no heirs in this country. The money was sent over to Spain and divided among a host of relations, the executors were discharged, and that ended the matter as far as the law is concerned. But I am sure the secret of the wall was at that time unknown to any, for otherwise the furniture in those narrow rooms, some of which is expensive and valuable on account of its unique carving, and the bins of wine and other truck, would have been sold with the other ‘personal possessions.’ I bought this place of a man who had purchased it at the executors’ sale but never has lived in it. All the rooms were stripped bare, which goes to prove that the hidden recesses in the walls were unknown. Now, the question is, do I legally own the contents of that wall, or don’t I?”

“I stepped into the rooms, this morning, with the others, but merely glanced around a bit,” said Mr. Merrick. “I’ve an idea you may rightfully claim whatever is there. The value of such old, odd pieces is arbitrary and they wouldn’t total enough at an auction sale to bother about. My idea, Arthur, is that you remove whatever you care to retain, stop up the rat holes, and then seal up the place forever.”

“I suppose,” remarked the major, “those hollow places in the wall were of real value in the days of wild Indians and murdering highwaymen. But, as John Merrick says, they’re of no use to anyone now, but rather a source of danger.”

“Was that door left open?” asked Patsy.

“Yes; and I put a brace against it, so it couldn’t close and shut us out,” replied Arthur.

“That doesn’t matter; Mildred knows the way in,” said Beth. “The whole trouble was that Inez closed the door behind them and they couldn’t manage to get out again.”

Mr. Merrick sipped his coffee reflectively.

“That girl,” said he, “ought to explain how she knows so much — and so little.”

“And what she was doing in the secret rooms,” added the major.

“She’ll do that,” piped a high voice, and in sauntered Mr. Runyon and sat down to pour himself some coffee. “I’ve just left Miss — er — er — Travers, and she has decided to tell you all her whole story, frankly and without reservation, and then she wants to ask your advice.”

“Whose advice?” demanded Arthur.

“Everybody’s advice. She asked mine, a little while ago, and I told her to put it up to the crowd. The poor thing has had a sad history and there’s a bit of romance and tragedy connected with it; but she has been quite blameless. I haven’t known you people long, but I’ll bank on your generosity and fairness, and that’s what I told the poor girl.”

“Where is she now?” asked Patsy.

“In the garden with Mrs. Weldon and Toodlums. They’ll all be here presently.”

The little group remained silent and thoughtful until Louise entered wheeling the baby in her cab and followed by Mildred Travers. The nurse’s face was white and troubled but she had acquired a new attractiveness for the reason that her eyes had softened and were now pleading instead of defiant.

Inez came running from the nursery to take baby, but Louise would not let little Jane go. Although she had escaped much of the past night’s misery, thanks to Dr. Knox’s quieting powders, the young mother was still unnerved and liked to have the child where she could see it. So Inez sat on a bench and held Jane, who was the least concerned of anyone over her recent peril and fortunate escape.

The court was shady, cool and quiet. Those assembled eyed Mildred curiously and expectantly, so that she was really embarrassed at first. Beth, who felt in a measure responsible for this waif of a great city, because she had been instrumental in bringing her here, gently led Mildred to a beginning of her story by asking a few questions that afforded the girl an opening.

The entire party listened gravely to the recital, for only Inez, among those present, had ever heard any part of the strange tale before.

Mildred told practically the same story she had related to the Mexican girl the night before, but went more into details and explained more fully her girlhood acquaintance with Señor Cristoval.

“He was an unusual man,” said she; “aged and white-haired, as I remember him, and always dressed in white flannels, which threw his dark skin into sharp relief. He lived alone in the house, having but one man-servant to do all the work, cook his meals and cater to his slightest whim.”

“Miguel Zaloa,” said Inez in a low voice.

“Cristoval was not popular,” said Mildred, “for he loved money so well that he was reputed to be a miser. It was this love of money, I think, that

induced him to go into partnership with my father in his illegal smuggling enterprises. Cristoval furnished the money and when my father had slipped across the border with his bales of rare laces, they were hidden in the hollow wall until they could be forwarded to San Francisco and sold.

"And this brings me to a relation of my present interest in this house," she continued. "When we escaped from California a large lot of very valuable Mexican laces which belonged exclusively to my father was hidden in the wall. The sale of a former lot of smuggled goods had resulted in a large profit and Cristoval had received a bank draft for the amount, one half of which was due my father. When we last saw Cristoval at San Bernardino, before we left for New York, he promised my father to cash the draft and send him the proceeds. This he never did, although he advanced my father, at that time, a sum of money from other sources to pay our expenses until we could establish ourselves in the east.

"To avoid suspicion, my father always allowed Cristoval to bank the partnership money, drawing on the rich Spaniard from time to time for what he required. Father told me that altogether Cristoval owed him nine thousand dollars, besides the bale of laces, valued at ten thousand more. He wrote many times to demand this money, using a cipher they had arranged between them, but his letters were never answered. I know now that Cristoval died soon after we went to New York, so whoever got the letters, being unable to read the secret cipher, of course ignored them.

"Just as Leighton was being taken to prison, the last time I ever saw him, he told me to find some way to come here and get the money. He said that if Cristoval was dead, as he then suspected, the secret of the wall was still safe, for the old man had vowed never to disclose it. He thought I would find the laces still hidden in the wall, and perhaps the money."

"Did you look to see, while you were there?" asked Arthur Weldon.

"Yes. There is no evidence of any property that I could rightfully claim."

It was a strange recital, and a fascinating one to those who heard it.

"Who would think," said Patsy, "that in this prosaic age we would get so close to a real story of smuggling, hidden treasure and secret recesses in walls? It smacks more of the romantic days of past centuries."

"We must not forget," replied Louise, "that of all our numerous states California has the most romantic history. It wasn't so long ago that the Spanish don flourished in this section and even yet it is more Spanish than American except in the big cities."

"As for smuggling," added Runyon, "that is going on to-day — as merrily as in the days of the famous Leighton, if on a smaller scale. I've some choice cigars over at my ranch that have never paid duty, and I've an order with the

smuggler for more. So, after all, there's nothing very astonishing in Mildred Leighton's story."

"The wall we have practical evidence of," said Uncle John. "I suppose it will hold its secret rooms for many years to come, for these adobe dwellings are practically fire-proof and are built to defy time."

"But about Mildred's fortune," cried Patsy. "Don't you suppose it is hidden, after all, some place in the wall?"

"From what I have heard of Cristoval," said Arthur in a reflective tone, "he was not considered a dishonest man, but rather miserly and grasping."

"My father," explained Mildred, "trusted him fully until we went away and could get no answer to his letters. The old Spaniard was very fond of me, also, and he would hold me in his arms and say that one day I would be a rich lady, for my father and he were both making my fortune. I was very young, as you know, but I never forgot that statement."

"Suppose," suggested the major, "we make another and more thorough search of those secret rooms."

"We will do that," replied Arthur promptly. "It is too late to undertake the task to-night, but we will begin it right after breakfast to-morrow morning. Inez, I wish you would slip down to the quarters and ask Miguel to come and help us. Tell him to be here at nine o'clock."

The girl nodded, gave the baby to Mildred and stole quietly out of the court.

CHAPTER XIX — INEZ AND MIGUEL

Inez found Miguel Zaloa smoking his cigarette among the orange trees. He was quite alone and looked at the girl in an expectant way as she approached.

"Oh, Miguel!" she cried. "I tell you a secret. Of course it is no secret any more, for now they all know it, up there at the house. Meeldred Travers, the girl from New York, is not Meeldred Travers. She is the child of Leighton the smuggler — she is Meeldred Leighton!"

The old ranchero stood as if turned to stone, but he bit his cigarette in two and it fell unnoticed upon the ground. While Inez regarded him with disappointment, because he had exhibited no emotion at hearing the wonderful news, Miguel turned his back and mechanically walked away through a row of trees. A dozen paces distant he halted and again stood motionless for the space of a full minute. Then he swung around and with slow, hesitating steps returned to Inez.

"You say — she — ees Meeldred Leighton?" he asked, as if he thought he had not heard aright.

"Of course. Don't you remember, Miguel? She say, when she used to come here, a little girl, with Leighton the great smuggler, you did know her. It was then you served Señor Cristoval, at the big house."

He nodded, his dark eyes fixed upon her face but displaying no expression.

"Leighton is dead," continued Inez, delighted to be able to gossip of all she had heard. "They put him in a prison an' he died. So Meeldred was ashame of her father's bad name an' call herself Travers. She is poor, an' that is why she come here as nurse, so she can find the money that belong to her."

Miguel suddenly seized her wrist in a powerful grip.

"What money?" he demanded.

"Don't; you hurt my arm! It is the money Señor Cristoval owed her father. Take your hand away, Miguel Zaloa!"

Slowly he released her.

"Where will she find thees money?" he asked.

"She does not know. Perhaps it is not here at all. But there was a great heap of laces, worth much money, which Señor Cristoval hid in the wall to keep for Leighton."

Miguel laughed. He seemed suddenly to have regained his equanimity. He began rolling another cigarette.

"They will be old, by now, thees lace," said he.

"A lace is better when it is old," asserted the girl.

The man paused, looked at the half-made cigarette and tossed it away.

Then he glanced around to see if they were observed and taking Inez' arm — gently, this time — he led her away from the path and into a thicket of orange trees.

"Thees Meeldred," he said in soft tones, "you hate."

"No, no! I do not hate her now. I love Meeldred."

"So!" he said, drawing in his breath and regarding the girl with surprise. "You tell me once she is witch-woman."

"I am wrong," declared Inez earnestly. "She is good. She have been poor an' friendless, all because of her father, the noble smuggler Leighton. But see, Miguel; I have been all night shut up in the wall with her. We talk, an' I learn to know her better. I do not hate Meeldred any more — I love her!"

"Sit down," said the old man, pointing to a hillock beside a tree. Inez obeyed, and he squatted on the ground facing her and coolly rolled another cigarette. "Tell me more about thees girl — Leighton's girl," he said.

Inez related Mildred's story as well as she was able, exaggerating such romantic details as appealed to her fancy, but showing unbounded sympathy for her new friend. The aged ranchero listened intently, nodding his white head now and then to show his interest. When the girl had finished he smoked for a time in silence.

"What Meeldred do now?" he inquired.

"They will hunt in the wall, to-morrow, to find the lace," she replied. "Meest Weldon say for you to come to the house at nine o'clock, in morning, to help them."

"Meest Weld say that?"

"Yes. But we have search already — Meeldred an' me — an' Meest Bul-Run have search, an' no lace is there. I am sure of that. I am sure no money is there, too. So Meeldred mus' stay as nurse all her life an' help me take care of Mees Jane."

Miguel pondered this.

"B'm'by Mees Jane grow up," said he. "What can Leighton's daughter do then?"

"How can I tell that?" answered Inez, shaking her head. "Always poor people mus' work, Miguel. Is it not so?"

"Rich people mus' work, too," continued the Mexican girl dreamily, as she embraced her drawn-up legs and rested her chin upon her knees. "Was old Señor Cristoval more happy than we, with all the money he loved? No! Meest Weldon works; Meest Hahn works; even Meest Bul-Run works — sometime. If one does not work, one is not happy, Miguel; an' if one mus' work, money makes not any difference. So, when Meeldred find she is still poor, an' has no money an' no laces, like she hope for, she will work jus' the

same as ever, an' be happy."

"I, too, work," remarked the old man. "I have always work."

"If you had much money, Miguel, you would still work."

"Yes."

"You would not care for money; not you. It would not do you any good. It would not change your life."

"No."

Again they sat in silence, as if reflecting on this primitive philosophy. Finally Inez said:

"You remember Leighton, Miguel?"

"Yes. He was good man. He make much money for Señor Cristoval an' for heemself. Sometime I see them count gold — ten pieces to Señor Cristoval, ten pieces to Leighton — to divide even. Then Leighton will throw me a gold-piece an' say: 'That for you, Miguel, because you are faithful an' true.'"

"An' Señor Cristoval, did he throw the gold-piece to you, also?"

"No."

"What did you do with the gold Leighton give you, Miguel?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Tobacco. Some wine. A game of card."

"An' were you faithful an' true, as Leighton say?"

He looked at her long and steadily.

"What you theenk about that, Inez?"

"When people talk about Miguel Zaloa, they always say he is good man. I hear Meest Weldon say: 'Miguel is honest. I would trust Miguel with all I have.'"

"Meest Weld say that?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I think you are sometime honest, sometime not; like I am myself," replied the girl.

The old man rose and led the way back to the path.

"To be always honest is to be sometime foolish," he muttered on the way. "Tell Meest Weld I will be there, like he say, at nine o'clock."

CHAPTER XX — MR. RUNYON'S DISCOVERY

Sing Fing excelled himself at the dinner that evening, which was a merry meal because all dangers and worries seemed to belong to the past. Also it was, as Uncle John feelingly remarked, "the first square meal they had enjoyed since the one at Castro's restaurant." Of course Runyon stayed, because he was to help search the wall the next day, and as the telephone had been repaired Louise called up Rudolph and Helen Hahn and begged them to drive over and help them celebrate at the festive board.

So the Hahns came — although they returned home again in the late evening — and it was really a joyous and happy occasion. Inez brought in the baby, which crowed jubilantly and submitted to so many kisses that Patsy declared she was afraid they would wear the skin off Toodlum's chubby cheeks unless they desisted.

Mildred had gone to her room immediately after her confession in the court and Louise had respected her desire for privacy and had ordered her dinner sent in to her.

As they all sat in the library, after dining, in a cosy circle around the grate fire, they conversed seriously on Mildred Leighton and canvassed her past history and future prospects.

"I cannot see," said Beth, always the nurse's champion, "that we are called upon to condemn poor Mildred because her father was a criminal."

"Of course not," agreed Patsy, "the poor child wasn't to blame."

"These criminal tendencies," remarked the major gravely, "are sometimes hereditary."

"Oh, but that's nonsense!" declared Uncle John. "We can't imagine Mildred's becoming a smuggler — or smuggleress, or whatever you call it. That hard, cold look in her eyes, which we all so thoughtlessly condemned, was merely an indication of suffering, of hurt pride and shame for the disgrace that had been thrust upon her. I liked the girl better to-day, as with blazing cheeks she told of all her grief and struggles, than ever before since I knew her."

"The expression of the eye," said Arthur, "is usually considered an infallible indication of character."

"That's a foolish prejudice," asserted Patsy, whose own frank and brilliant eyes were her chief attraction.

"I do not think so, dear," objected Louise. "The eyes may not truly indicate character, but they surely indicate one's state of mind. We did not read the hard look in Mildred's eyes correctly, I admit, but it showed her to be on guard against the world's criticism, resentful of her hard fate and

hopeless in her longing for a respectable social position. She realized that were her story known she would meet with sneers and jeers on every side, and therefore she proudly held herself aloof."

"But now," said Patsy, "circumstances have changed Mildred's viewpoint. She found that our knowledge of her story only brought her sympathy and consideration, and when she left us I noticed that her eyes were soft and grateful and full of tears."

Big Runyon had listened to this conversation rather uneasily and with evident disapproval. Now he said, in as positive a tone as his unfortunate voice would permit:

"That girl's a corker, and I'm proud of her. In the first place, my mother is a shrewd judge of character. You can't fool her about a person's worth; just see how accurately she judged *my* character! When the dear old lady — whose only fault is being so close-fisted — picked up Mildred Leighton and defended her, that act vouched for the girl's worth beyond dispute. Mrs. Runyon — bless her stingy old heart! — never makes a mistake. Just think of it: she actually spent money in giving Mildred an education as a trained nurse. To my mind that settled the girl's character for all time. Now, I don't care a continental whether she finds any smuggled laces or not; she needs a friend, and now that she is away from my mother's care *I'm* going to be that friend."

"Oh, Bul!" cried Louise with lively interest, "are you in love?"

"Me? At my age? Cer-tain-ly not!"

"How old are you?"

"Thirty."

"Old enough to know better," said Uncle John.

"Old enough to need a wife to care for him," suggested Helen Hahn.

"Honest Injun, Run; aren't you a little soft on Mildred?" asked Rudolph.

"Well, perhaps a little; but it's nothing like that currant-jelly, chocolate bonbon, glucose-like feeling which I've observed is the outward demonstration of love."

"Oh, well; marry the girl and be done with it, then," laughed Arthur.

"And rob me of my nurse?" protested Louise.

"Runyon needs a nurse as much as Jane. In fact, he's a much bigger baby."

Mr. Runyon accepted all this jollying with calm indifference.

"The days of chivalry are over," he sighed. "If a fellow tries to protect a maiden in distress, they think he wants to marry her."

"Don't you?" asked Patsy, in a sympathetic tone.

"Why, I hadn't thought of it before; but it wouldn't be a half-bad idea," he

confessed. “Ranch life is a bit lonely without women around to bother one.”

“You are all talking foolishly,” observed Beth, who was not romantic. “Mildred might object to washing Mr. Runyon’s dishes.”

“Why, yes; I believe she would,” said Mr. Runyon. “I’m sure she disapproves of my character; that’s why I respect her judgment, so highly. She didn’t seem at all interested in those various mortgages, when I mentioned them; and what else have I to offer a wife?”

Even the cosy library could not hold them very late, for none had been fully restored by the sleep obtained during the day. Bed seemed more alluring than a grate fire and when the Hahns went home the party broke up, to meet again at an eight o’clock breakfast.

As soon as the meal was over Arthur Weldon announced that the first business of the day would be an examination of the secret rooms in the wall of the old East Wing.

“And this must be a thorough and final inspection of the place,” he added. “We must satisfy ourselves and Mildred Travers, without the shadow of a doubt, that we have inventoried every blessed thing in those rooms — even to the rats and beetles.”

“That’s right,” approved Mr. Merrick. “Let us do the job once and for all. We’ve plenty of time at our disposal and there are enough of us with sharp eyes to ferret out every mystery of the place. In Mildred’s interest we must be thorough.”

In the court they found old Miguel, sitting motionless and patient. He was carefully dressed in his best clothes and wore a red necktie, “just as if,” said Patsy, “he was going to a party instead of delving in dusty places.”

The ranchero arose and made his master and mistress one of his best bows. Then he waited silently for instructions.

Beth went to Mildred’s room and brought the girl to join the searchers, for this undertaking had been planned on her account. Her face wore an anxious look, for although she was not very hopeful of results it was the last chance of her securing any of her father’s personal possessions. Otherwise she greeted the party with modesty and with gentle dignity and had never seemed to them more womanly or agreeable.

Together they left the court and proceeded to the nursery. There were no laggards and everyone except the servants was determined to have a part in the fascinating investigation.

Mildred explained to them the manner in which she had first entered the wall, putting in action the secret method taught her as a girl by Cristoval and demonstrating the mechanism before their very eyes. They entered the lower chamber, one by one, and this time the adobe door was not closed behind

them, although the light of broad day now flooded the place through the opening discovered by Runyon. This opening led into the garden and was half choked with rose vines. The series of swinging blocks had been propped back against the outer wall to insure a ready exit in case of accident.

And now they eagerly set to work to pry into every crack and corner of the place. The main idea was to find some secret cavity or cupboard in the wall which might contain the missing laces or other valuables. With this in view they had brought levers and pries and all sorts of tools that might be of service.

The girls were mainly useful in taking up and turning the matting, now somewhat decayed by age, and investigating those nooks and shelves already discovered. But they found little more than Mildred had done during her first exploration, and the men who were testing the wall met with no encouragement at all. Aside from the two cleverly constructed openings — one into the nursery and one into the garden — the blocks which composed the wall seemed every one solid and immovable and resisted every attempt to wrest them from their places.

After more than two hours of industry, during which every man believed he had examined every block, they were forced to abandon the lower chamber and ascend the steep stairs to the upper one.

"This," said Arthur, looking around him, "seems far more promising. Let us give the floor our first attention, for it is not over the lower room but to one side of it. It strikes me that the builder would be quite likely to make a secret pocket in the floor."

Following this advice they attacked the blocks of the floor with pry and crowbar, but found nothing to reward them. Old Miguel worked steadily and did whatever he was told, but displayed no particle of enthusiasm, or even of interest.

After the floor, the walls were examined, one by one, from floor to ceiling. The panel on the inner wall, which had baffled both Mildred and Runyon on that eventful night of their imprisonment, suddenly disclosed its secret when accidentally pressed on opposite corners at the same time. It slipped down and discovered a similar panel beyond it, which was operated by a spring placed in plain sight. Releasing this, they found they were looking into the vacant second story room which they had once before unsuccessfully searched.

So this was one way from the house into the upper chamber of the wall. Of course there was another way — that through which Runyon had been so abruptly precipitated. In order to find this the more readily, they sent the big rancher into the blue room and asked him to take the same position in the

window he had on the night of his disappearance. This he did, pushing against the planking that boxed the window, with both elbows and with his back and shoulders, but without result. Finally, in his attempts, he inadvertently struck the opposite panel with his heel, and the response was startling. The panel, at his back, being released, fell backward without warning and for the second time Runyon tumbled unawares into the chamber of the wall. As soon as his body had fallen through, the panel slammed into place again, urged by a very powerful steel spring, but the major, who had been in the blue room to watch Runyon, had caught the trick and the mystery was solved.

As for Mr. Runyon, he again fell upon the bed and rebounded, knocking over both Mr. Merrick and Miguel as he alighted in the narrow chamber, but fortunately not injuring either of them.

A little dazed by his second precipitation, the big rancher stared a moment and then slapped his thigh a mighty stroke.

"I have it — I have it!" he cried.

"It occurs to me," said Uncle John, a little resentfully, "that you deserve all you've got, and more. It's a wonder you didn't break your neck."

"What have you, Run?" asked Arthur.

"I've found the laces."

"What? — where?" they exclaimed.

"In the blue room, or on the way down?" added Beth sarcastically.

"After I got down," he answered. "What fools we have all been!"

"Will you kindly explain, Mr. Runyon?" asked Mildred, very earnestly.

"I will. It's simple enough. Just look at that bed."

"The bed!" And now every eye was turned upon the couch.

"Of course," said Runyon. "There's something more than a mere mattress and springs. I've tumbled onto the thing twice, and I ought to know."

CHAPTER XXI — A FORTUNE IN TATTERS

Already Arthur was pulling off the bedding and piling it upon the floor. They stood back of him in an excited group, every head craned forward to watch his movements.

Off came the pillows — blankets — sheets — finally the mattress. This last, a thin cotton affair, left a trail of fuzzy, lint-like debris behind it and disclosed on removal a canvas cover that had been spread underneath. The canvas, which was about on a level with the boxed-in bed frame, was as full of holes as a Swiss cheese and especially toward the center the weave had become disintegrated and given away to a dusty pulp.

"Rats!" exclaimed Uncle John, whose head was thrust between the shoulders of the major and Runyon.

As if his cry had been a summons, out sprang a huge gray rodent and the girls pushed back with loud screams as the dreaded beast struck the floor and scurried away down the passage. Another and another followed it, and now Louise, Patsy, Beth, Mildred and Inez were all dancing on top the seats, wrapping their skirts about their ankles and whooping like a tribe of Indians.

Amid this wild hullabaloo, which struck terror to the hearts of the brave men assembled, because at the instant they were too bewildered to realize what caused it, some six or eight monstrous rats leaped from the tattered canvas which covered the bed and vanished down the stairs.

Arthur put his hand down to raise the canvas and jumped back as he unearthed a nest of smaller vermin, squirming here and there in blind endeavors to escape their disturbers. Runyon brought a deep brass bowl from a shelf and dumped the small rats into it, standing by to capture others as they appeared.

Gradually Weldon drew back the cover and as he did so the truth of Runyon's prophecy was apparent. The entire space boxed in by the carved bed-frame, from the floor to its upper edge, was packed solidly with valuable laces. That is, it had once been solidly packed, but now the rats had eaten tunnels and nests and boulevards through the costly laces in every direction. It was a scene of absolute ruin. However precious this collection might once have been, in its present state it was not worth a copper cent.

The party gazed upon the sight with mingled awe and astonishment. Regret for the destruction of the beautiful fabrics at first rendered them oblivious to the fact that the inheritance of Mildred Leighton was at last recovered — only to be proved worthless.

Arthur dragged out a few scraps and spread them upon the floor, thereby exhibiting portions of the beautiful patterns of the various pieces. Then,

hoping to find some that had escaped the ruthless teeth of the rats, he and Runyon began pulling at the heap and working downward toward the floor. Just a few small pieces were found intact, but these were of slight value. Practically the entire lot was irretrievably ruined.

Scarcely a word was spoken as the investigation proceeded. Beth had clasped one of Mildred's hands and Patsy the other, but neither dared look in the poor girl's face, for they dreaded the poignant disappointment sure to reign there.

But after the first shock, Mildred bore up bravely. She had not expected, in the beginning, any tangible result; still it was very bitter to find her long sought fortune and realize that it amounted to nothing.

They sat around upon the benches, or leaning against the wall, and stared at the ruined laces with various emotions, the keenest being regret for the loss of so much beautiful handwork and sympathy for Mildred Leighton.

Suddenly Runyon broke the silence.

"This discovery is too thundering bad for mere words," he said with feeling; "but Miss Travers — Mildred — must know we're all as sorry as she is. She was right about the laces, but the laces are all wrong. This sad exhibit reminds me of my own perverse mortgages, and my mortgages remind me of something else. Mildred," he added, turning to the girl in a dogged and rather shamefaced way, "I'm going to hold a private conversation with you right here before our good friends, for I know every one of them will back me up. Eh?" he questioned, glancing around the group.

There were some smiles, but many nods. As if encouraged, Runyon proceeded:

"This settles the question of your fortune. It's gone — vanished into scraps. You're a poor girl, now, with no glittering prospects, so what I'm going to say won't seem quite so selfish as it would otherwise. In fact, had these laces been perfect, they would have rendered me dumb. As it is, here stand two impecunious ones — you and I. Between us we haven't much more than enough to fry a fish, in solid cash, but among my encumbrances are a delightful little bungalow, nicely furnished, and a lot of lemon trees that can be coaxed to buy us groceries and ordinary comforts. I'm a lonely fellow, Mildred, and I need a companion. Will you marry me, and look after that bungalow?"

This extraordinary proposal was heard in breathless silence. The men were astounded, the girls delighted. Every eye turned curiously upon Mildred Travers, who regarded the big rancher with frank wonder, a wan smile upon her pallid features.

"You do not say you love me," she suggested, striving through mild

banter to cover her confusion.

“Well, isn’t that implied?” he answered. “No one would propose to a girl he didn’t love, would he?”

“You have only known me two days.”

“Two days and seven hours. But mother endorsed you and I’ll bank on her judgment.”

“When the mortgages come due, there won’t be any bungalow,” she continued.

“Don’t you believe it,” cried Runyon, earnestly. “With you to work for, I’ll make those tart old lemons pay the interest and a good income besides. In fact, if we live long enough, we may even manage to reduce the mortgages. You see, I’ve been extravagant and foolish, but it was because I had no aim in life. The minute you say ‘yes,’ I’m a reformed character.”

She shook her head and the smile faded from her face.

“Don’t think me ungrateful, Mr. Runyon,” she said quietly. “Unusual and — and — peculiar — as this proposal is, I believe you are sincere in what you say. But you are influenced just now by pity for me and I assure you I am quite capable of earning my own living.”

“But — oh, Mildred — -he’s so lonely,” cried Patsy, impulsively.

“I’m sorry for that,” she said, “but it is not my fault.”

“It will be, though, if you refuse,” declared Runyon.

“I fear I must.”

“I see,” he said with a sigh. “Mother endorsed you, but she didn’t endorse me. You’ve heard some tough yarns about me — all true as gospel — and you’re prejudiced. I don’t know as I blame you. If I were a girl I’d hesitate to reform such a desperate character, I’m sure. But I’ve the notion there’s the making of a decent fellow in me, if the right workman undertakes the job.”

She looked at him earnestly, now — very earnestly. In spite of the squeaky voice and the inopportune time he had chosen for such a serious proposal, there was an innate manliness and ingenuousness in his attitude, as he stood there unabashed and towering above the other men, that seemed to her admirable and impressive. Both Beth and Patsy were reflecting that a girl might do much worse than to accept Bulwer Runyon as a mate.

Said Mildred, still speaking in the same quiet and composed voice:

“I will give you a positive answer in three days, Mr. Runyon. That delay is mere justice to us both.”

“Thank you,” he said. “Shall we fuss with these tattered laces any longer? It hardly seems worth while.”

Now that the strain of the situation was removed they all began chattering volubly in order to give countenance to Mildred. Runyon seemed not to need

such consideration.

Old Miguel had witnessed and overheard this scene from the background and his bright black eyes had roamed restlessly from the girl's face to Runyon's as if trying to read their true feelings. The discovery of the laces had not drawn any exclamation from the ancient ranchero, whose stolid expression nothing seemed able to disturb. As the others filed down the stairs and out of the recess in the wall, into the roomy nursery, old Miguel followed imperturbable and serene as ever. In the court he touched his hat to his master.

"I go now, Meest Weld?" he asked.

"Yes. Thank you, Miguel, for your help."

"I thank you, too," said Mildred, stepping forward to take the Mexican's hand. "I remember you well, Miguel. In the old days you often took care of me while my father and Señor Cristoval talked. Don't you remember?"

He nodded, his eyes fixed full upon her face.

"Once a friend, always a friend, Miguel," she continued brightly. "Even to-day you have been trying to help me, and I am grateful. Some time we will have a good talk together about the old days."

Then he went away, and if one who knew old Miguel Zaloa could have followed him, his actions would have caused surprise.

First he wandered deep into the orange groves, where — when absolutely alone — he began muttering excitedly. At times he would kick his booted foot viciously against a tree-trunk, regardless of the impact that numbed his toes and sent a tingle up his legs. After a time this remarkable exhibit of passion subsided and for the period of half an hour he stood quite motionless, staring straight before him and seeing nothing. Then he started off through the groves, climbed the fence into the lane and marched away through miles and miles of the surrounding country.

It was growing dark when Miguel at last appeared at the quarters, growling at the men and ordering them to get into the groves and work. They marked his ill temper and took care not to arouse his further anger. In the morning he was up at daybreak and in more gentle mood directed the beginning of the day's labors.

CHAPTER XXII — FAITHFUL AND TRUE

Late that afternoon Arthur and Louise sat in the court, chatting with their guests, who were occupied in coddling and amusing baby Jane, when Inez approached Mr. Weldon and said that Miguel wished to speak with him.

"Send him here," said Arthur, and presently the old Mexican appeared, again arrayed in his best clothes and with the red necktie carefully arranged. He held his hat in his hand and looked uncertainly around the circle. Then his eyes wandered to the nursery and through the open door he saw Mildred sitting in a rocker, engaged in reading a book. Runyon had gone home that morning, "to see if the ranch is still there," he said.

"I have — some — private talks to make, Meest Weld," began the old ranchero.

"Speak out, Miguel," said his master encouragingly.

"Oh; but he said 'private,'" Patsy reminded him.

"I know. Miguel understands that he may speak before my friends."

"It ees — about — Señor Cristoval, Meest Weld."

"Yes? Well, what about him, Miguel?"

"I am once servant for Señor Cristoval. I stay here in house with him, long time. When he get sick, before he die, I care for him. Doctor say to me that Señor Cristoval can not get well; I say so to Señor Cristoval. He say never mind, he have live long enough."

This was interesting to them all in view of the recent happenings, and the girls bent nearer to hear the old man's story. Arthur, the major and Uncle John were equally intent.

"Señor Cristoval, he say, when he get very bad, there ees one thing he hate to leave, an' that ees — his money," continued Miguel. "He say, money ees his bes' friend, all time. But he no can take money where he will go. He ees mad that many poor fools will spend the money he have love an' cared for. So he make me take three big bag of gold an' drive to bank an' put away so the poor fools will find it. Much more money ees in bank, too. Then, when doctor come, he ask me when he will die, an' doctor say when sun next shine Señor Cristoval will not see it. Doctor want to stay all night, but Señor Cristoval pay an' tell him go. He want to die alone.

"But I am there. Some time in night Señor Cristoval he call an' say: 'Miguel, I mus' not die till I have give to Leighton what belong to him. I have keep Leighton's money for him. I will show you where it ees hid, so you can give it to Leighton.'"

Ah, they were intent enough now. Intuitively each listener seemed to know that a secret was about to be revealed and many glances were cast

toward the unconscious Mildred, who continued to read placidly. But no one interrupted the old Mexican.

"I help Senor Cristoval to stand up. He ees not strong, so I hold him. He walk from blue room to back room an' there he show me how to take block from wall. Behind block ees big place for money. Señor Cristoval he say all money what belong to Leighton ees there. He tell me count it. So I put Señor Cristoval in chair an' he watch while I take out money an' count. There ees four bag. I count three bag an' he say good, it ees right. He say count last bag. So I empty bag on floor an' count gold an' put in bag again. When thees ees done I say: 'Is eet right?' But Señor Cristoval say nothing. I look up, an' Señor Cristoval ees dead."

The old man spoke simply and quietly, but they found his relation intensely dramatic. Patsy was trembling with excitement. Beth clasped Louise's hand and found it cold from nervousness.

"And then, Miguel?" said Arthur.

"Then, Meest Weld, I put gold in wall an' fix block so no one know an' carry Señor Cristoval to his bed. That ees all, Meest Weld."

"And you told no one of Leighton's gold?"

"I tell no one. It ees belong to Leighton."

"Where is it now, Miguel?"

"In wall, Meest Weld."

"All of it?"

"All."

There was a moment's pause.

"You know now that it belongs to Mildred — to Leighton's daughter, — do you not?" he asked, an accent of sternness in his voice.

"I know, Meest Weld."

"Then why did you not tell us of this before?"

Old Miguel stood silent, shifting from one foot to another, his eyes cast down, his slender brown fingers spasmodically pressing the rim of his sombrero. But when he spoke it was in his former quiet manner.

"I am a bad man, Meest Weld. I theenk I keep gold for myself. Why not, when no one know? Long time after Señor Cristoval die no one come here. Some time I go to room an' count gold. When I see it I have bad thought. I theenk it ees nice if I keep all myself. But when I go away an' work in the grove, I tell Miguel many time that gold ees not his; it ees Leighton's gold. I say when Leighton come for it he mus' have it. But Leighton do not come. Many year the gold ees mine, an' no one know. Then come Leighton's girl, an' I know I am bad man if I keep gold. But I say nothing. I theenk no one ever know."

“But tell me,” said Arthur curiously, “what good is the money to you when it is hidden in a wall?”

“Not much, Meest Weld; but I know I am rich. I say I can buy ranch an’ be big man, an’ no one know I have steal Leighton’s gold.”

“Then why have you told us the secret?”

Miguel glanced toward the nursery.

“I am man for work,” said he. “Always I work; always I mus’ work. I am old. When I can no work, I mus’ die. Señor Cristoval mus’ leave gold when he die; it ees same with Miguel. Now I have good job. I can work an’ be happy. But — ”

“Well, Miguel?”

“Leighton’s daughter, she ees a girl. A girl can not work like a man. It ees her gold, not mine. When you say it, I will show you where Leighton’s gold ees hid.”

Uncle John sprang up and grasped the man’s hand.

“You are an honest fellow, Miguel!” he cried.

“No, Meest Mereek,” was the reply. “I have wish to steal, so I am not honest.”

“But you have given up the gold.”

“Yes, Meest Mereek; because I am afraid.”

“I don’t believe a word of it,” said Patsy. “You were tempted to do wrong, Miguel, and if you had kept silent no one would ever have known; but you told us of the gold, and so you are faithful and true.”

“Ah, that ees what Meest Leighton tell me, some time,” said he. “An’ that ees what spoil me from being bad. Because Leighton say I am faithful an’ true, I have theenk I mus’ be that way. That ees it.”

Mildred’s gold proved to be a small fortune. Perhaps Cristoval had added to his partner’s earnings, for the child’s sake, for the total amounted to more than she had ever expected.

It was all in hard cash and Arthur drove over to the bank and deposited it to the credit of Mildred Travers, as she preferred to retain that name.

Patsy and Beth were curious to know what the girl would do with her windfall, but Mildred proved noncommittal.

“How about Bul Run?” asked Patsy.

Mildred smiled but blushed deeply at the question.

“Would my money be enough to pay his mortgages?” she inquired.

“Perhaps,” said Beth, “but that would be foolish. He would soon be in debt again.”

“No, no!” protested Patsy. “I’m sure he will reform if — ”

“If Mildred marries him?”

“Yes.”

Mildred seemed troubled.

“The best way,” declared Beth, “would be to have Mildred keep her money in her own name, and help out in case of emergency.”

Mildred approved that, and being pressed by the two girls she frankly confided to them that she would accept Mr. Runyon when he came for his answer.

Runyon appeared on the third day and Arthur met him and told him the good news of the finding of Mildred’s inheritance. But the effect of this discovery on the big rancher was to overwhelm him with despair.

“She will never marry me now,” he asserted in doleful tones, “and I’d rather die than ask her. It would be beastly to take such an advantage of the poor child. When she was poor, I could offer her a home with good grace, but now that she’s rolling in gold the jig is up! If you’ll tell me, where I can find old Miguel, I’ll strangle the villain. Why in thunder couldn’t he hold his tongue?”

Arthur laughingly replied that money wouldn’t make a particle of difference with a girl like Mildred, but Runyon would not listen and remained disconsolate. He stayed at the ranch, but moped around with a woe-begone countenance and refused to speak with anyone.

Patsy and Beth skillfully contrived several opportunities for Runyon to approach Mildred, but he ignored all chances and preferred to remain miserable. The day passed without his demanding his answer. Mildred had been bright and expectant and the girls read her disappointment when her unaccountable wooer delayed putting his fortune to the test.

The next day he was no more cheerful, but rather seemed to have accumulated an added gloom. He sought a garden bench and smoked innumerable cigars in solitary grief. If anyone approached, Runyon would retreat to the shrubbery. At mealtime he was likewise silent but consumed enormous quantities of food, which made Patsy accuse him of being an impostor.

“No regulation lover,” she said to him, “ever had an appetite. The novels all say so. Therefore you can’t love Mildred a bit.”

Runyon groaned, cast her a reproachful glance and went on eating.

Several days passed without his asking Mildred for her answer, and now the absurd situation began to get on all their nerves. Mildred herself grew impatient and watched from the nursery window the garden bench on which Runyon sat gloomily in his perpetual cloud of smoke.

“He’ll make himself sick, with those black cigars, I’m sure,” observed

Patsy, on one occasion.

“And he can’t afford to smoke so many,” added Beth. “Unless this thing stops, he’ll soon have to take out a new mortgage.”

“Or sell some lemons,” added Patsy.

“I believe,” said Mildred slowly, as if summoning her courage, “I will speak to him myself. Don’t you think that would be best?”

“Of course,” approved Patsy. “Runyon is a big baby, and needs a nurse more than little Jane. I’ll hold Toodlums, Mildred, while you sally forth and take the bull by the horns.”

Mildred looked at Beth for counsel.

“Unless you speak to him,” said that young lady, “you will never get together. Moreover, the rest of us will grow mad or idiotic. So, for all our sakes, you’d better take Mr. Runyon in hand. You’ll have to manage him afterward, anyhow, so the sooner you begin the better.”

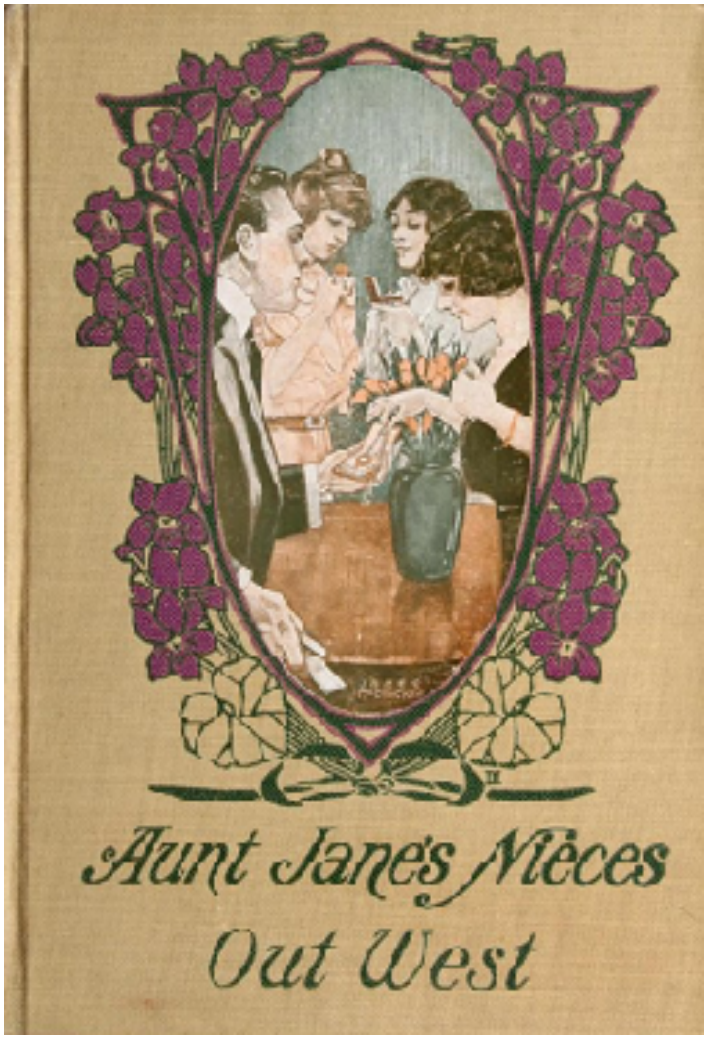
Mildred handed little Jane to Patsy and left the nursery. Through the window the other girls watched her approach Mr. Runyon and stand before him. At once he stood up and threw away his cigar, but his face was toward them and they could see that he did not speak.

Mildred, however, was talking very earnestly. Runyon shook his head. He turned half away. Then he swung sharply around and caught the girl in his arms.

“Come, Beth,” said Patsy; “let’s go and tell Louise.”

AUNT JANE'S NIECES OUT WEST

Aunt Jane's Nieces out West, Baum's ninth novel in the series under the name Edith Van Dyne, continues the western them of the previous volume. Reilly & Britton published it in 1914. James McCracken replaced Emile A. Nelson as the illustrator. Two of the cousins stay in Hollywood and become unwitting extras in a motion picture. Convinced by a Hollywood director that films may provide useful moral lessons, the cousins form a film company of their own, aimed at producing films for children. The plot encompasses friendly movie starlet sisters and a mysterious young man saved from drowning, who intends to bankroll their new business venture, but who may or may not have stolen valuable jewels.



A first edition copy of Aunt Jane's Nieces Out West

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CHAPTER I

CAUGHT BY THE CAMERA

"This is getting to be an amazing old world," said a young girl, still in her "teens," as she musingly leaned her chin on her hand.

"It has always been an amazing old world, Beth," said another girl who was sitting on the porch railing and swinging her feet in the air.

"True, Patsy," was the reply; "but the people are doing such peculiar things nowadays."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed a little man who occupied a reclining chair within hearing distance; "that is the way with you young folks — always confounding the world with its people."

"Don't the people make the world, Uncle John?" asked Patricia Doyle, looking at him quizzically.

"No, indeed; the world could get along very well without its people; but the people — "

"To be sure; they need the world," laughed Patsy, her blue eyes twinkling so that they glorified her plain, freckled face.

"Nevertheless," said Beth de Graf, soberly, "I think the people have struck a rapid pace these days and are growing bold and impudent. The law appears to allow them too much liberty. After our experience of this morning I shall not be surprised at anything that happens — especially in this cranky state of California."

"To what experience do you allude, Beth?" asked Uncle John, sitting up straight and glancing from one to another of his two nieces. He was a genial looking, round-faced man, quite bald and inclined to be a trifle stout; yet his fifty-odd years sat lightly upon him.

"Why, we had quite an adventure this morning," said Patsy, laughing again at the recollection, and answering her uncle because Beth hesitated to. "For my part, I think it was fun, and harmless fun, at that; but Beth was scared out of a year's growth. I admit feeling a little creepy at the time, myself; but it was all a joke and really we ought not to mind it at all."

"Tell me all about it, my dear!" said Mr. Merrick, earnestly, for whatever affected his beloved nieces was of prime importance to him.

"We were taking our morning stroll along the streets," began Patsy, "when on turning a corner we came upon a crowd of people who seemed to be greatly excited. Most of them were workmen in flannel shirts, their sleeves rolled up, their hands grimy with toil. These stood before a brick building that seemed like a factory, while from its doors other crowds of workmen and some shopgirls were rushing into the street and several

policemen were shaking their clubs and running here and there in a sort of panic. At first Beth and I stopped and hesitated to go on, but as the sidewalk seemed open and fairly free I pulled Beth along, thinking we might discover what the row was about. Just as we got opposite the building a big workman rushed at us and shouted: 'Go back — go back! The wall is falling.'

"Well, Uncle, you can imagine our dismay. We both screamed, for we thought our time had come, for sure. My legs were so weak that Beth had to drag me away and her face was white as a sheet and full of terror. Somehow we managed to stagger into the street, where a dozen men caught us and hurried us away. I hardly thought we were in a safe place when the big workman cried: 'There, young ladies; that will do. Your expression was simply immense and if this doesn't turn out to be the best film of the year, I'll miss my guess! Your terror-stricken features will make a regular hit, for the terror wasn't assumed, you know. Thank you very much for happening along just then.'"

Patsy stopped her recital to laugh once more, with genuine merriment, but her cousin Beth seemed annoyed and Uncle John was frankly bewildered.

"But — what — what — was it all about?" he inquired.

"Why, they were taking a moving picture, that was all, and the workmen and shopgirls and policemen were all actors. There must have been a hundred of them, all told, and when we recovered from our scare I could hear the machine beside me clicking away as it took the picture."

"Did the wall fall?" asked Uncle John.

"Not just then. They first got the picture of the rush-out and the panic, and then they stopped the camera and moved the people to a safe distance away. We watched them set up some dummy figures of girls and workmen, closer in, and then in some way they toppled over the big brick wall. It fell into the street with a thundering crash, but only the dummies were buried under the debris."

Mr. Merrick drew a long breath.

"It's wonderful!" he exclaimed. "Why, it must have cost a lot of money to ruin such a building — and all for the sake of a picture!"

"That's what I said to the manager," replied Patsy; "but he told us the building was going to be pulled down, anyhow, and a better one built in its place; so he invented a picture story to fit the falling walls and it didn't cost him so much as one might think. So you see, Uncle, we are in that picture — big as life and scared stiff — and I'd give a lot to see how we look when we're positively terror-stricken."

"It will cost you just ten cents," remarked Beth, with a shrug; "that is, if the picture proves good enough to be displayed at one of those horrid little

theatres."

"One?" said Uncle John. "One thousand little theatres, most likely, will show the picture, and perhaps millions of spectators will see you and Patsy running from the falling wall."

"Dear me!" wailed Patsy. "That's more fame than I bargained for. Do millions go to see motion pictures, Uncle?"

"I believe so. The making of these pictures is getting to be an enormous industry. I was introduced to Otis Werner, the other day, and he told me a good deal about it. Werner is with one of the big concerns here — the Continental, I think — and he's a very nice and gentlemanly fellow. I'll introduce you to him, some time, and he'll tell you all the wonders of the motion picture business."

"I haven't witnessed one of those atrocious exhibitions for months," announced Beth; "nor have I any desire to see one again."

"Not our own special picture?" asked Patsy reproachfully.

"They had no right to force us into their dreadful drama," protested Beth. "Motion pictures are dreadfully tiresome things — comedies and tragedies alike. They are wild and weird in conception, quite unreal and wholly impossible. Of course the scenic pictures, and those recording historical events, are well enough in their way, but I cannot understand how so many cheap little picture theatres thrive."

"They are the poor people's solace and recreation," declared Mr. Merrick. "The picture theatre has become the laboring man's favorite resort. It costs him but five or ten cents and it's the sort of show he can appreciate. I'm told the motion picture is considered the saloon's worst enemy, for many a man is taking his wife and children to a picture theatre evenings instead of joining a gang of his fellows before the bar, as he formerly did."

"That is the best argument in their favor I have ever heard," admitted Beth, who was strong on temperance; "but I hope, Uncle, you are not defending the insolent methods of those picture-makers."

"Not at all, my dear. I consider the trapping of innocent bystanders to be — eh — er — highly reprehensible, and perhaps worse. If I can discover what picture manager was guilty of the act, I shall — shall — "

"What, Uncle?"

"I shall hint that he owes you an apology," he concluded, rather lamely.

Beth smiled scornfully.

"Meantime," said she, "two very respectable girls, who are not actresses, will be exhibited before the critical eyes of millions of stupid workmen, reformed drunkards, sad-faced women and wiggling children — not in dignified attitudes, mind you, but scurrying from what they supposed was an

imminent danger."

"I hope it will do the poor things good to see us," retorted Patsy. "To be strictly honest, Beth, we were not trapped at all; we were the victims of circumstances. When I remember how quick-witted and alert that manager was, to catch us unawares and so add to the value of his picture, I can quite forgive the fellow his audacity."

"It wasn't audacity so much as downright impudence!" persisted Beth.

"I quite agree with you," said Mr. Merrick. "Do you wish me to buy that film and prevent the picture's being shown?"

"Oh, no!" cried Patsy in protest. "I'm dying to see how we look. I wouldn't have that picture sidetracked for anything."

"And you, Beth?"

"Really, Uncle John, the thing is not worth worrying over," replied his niece. "I am naturally indignant at being drawn into such a thing against my will, but I doubt if anyone who knows us, or whose opinion we value, will ever visit a moving picture theatre or see this film. The common people will not recognize us, of course."

You must not think Beth de Graf was snobbish or aristocratic because of this speech, which her cousin Patsy promptly denounced as "snippy." Beth was really a lovable and sunny-tempered girl, very democratic in her tastes in spite of the fact that she was the possessor of an unusual fortune. She was out of sorts to-day, resentful of the fright she had endured that morning and in the mood to say harsh things.

Even Patricia Doyle had been indignant, at first; but Patsy's judgment was clearer than her cousin's and her nature more responsive. She quickly saw the humorous side of their adventure and could enjoy the recollection of her momentary fear.

These two girls were spending the winter months in the glorious climate of Southern California, chaperoned by their uncle and guardian, John Merrick. They had recently established themselves at a cosy hotel in Hollywood, which is a typical California village, yet a suburb of the great city of Los Angeles. A third niece, older and now married — Louise Merrick Weldon — lived on a ranch between Los Angeles and San Diego, which was one reason why Uncle John and his wards had located in this pleasant neighborhood.

To observe this trio — the simple, complacent little man and his two young nieces — no stranger would suspect them to be other than ordinary tourists, bent on escaping the severe Eastern winter; but in New York the name of John Merrick was spoken with awe in financial circles, where his many millions made him an important figure. He had practically retired from

active business and his large investments were managed by his brother-in-law, Major Gregory Doyle, who was Miss Patsy's father and sole surviving parent. All of Mr. Merrick's present interest in life centered in his three nieces, and because Louise was happily married and had now an establishment of her own — including a rather new but very remarkable baby — Uncle John was drawn closer to the two younger nieces and devoted himself wholly to their welfare.

The girls had not been rich when their fairy godfather first found them. Indeed, each of them had been energetically earning, or preparing to earn, a livelihood. Now, when their uncle's generosity had made them wealthy, they almost regretted those former busy days of poverty, being obliged to discover new interests in life in order to keep themselves occupied and contented. All three were open-handed and open-hearted, sympathetic to the unfortunate and eager to assist those who needed money, as many a poor girl and worthy young fellow could testify. In all their charities they were strongly supported by Mr. Merrick, whose enormous income permitted him to indulge in many benevolences. None gave ostentatiously, for they were simple, kindly folk who gave for the pure joy of giving and begrudged all knowledge of their acts to anyone outside their own little circle.

There is no doubt that John Merrick was eccentric. It is generally conceded that a rich man may indulge in eccentricities, provided he maintains a useful position in society, and Mr. Merrick's peculiarities only served to render him the more interesting to those who knew him best. He did astonishing things in a most matter-of-fact way and acted more on impulse than on calm reflection; so it is not to be wondered at that the queer little man's nieces had imbibed some of his queerness. Being by nature lively and aggressive young women, whose eager interest in life would not permit them to be idle, they encountered many interesting experiences.

They had just come from a long visit to Louise at the ranch and after conferring gravely together had decided to hide themselves in Hollywood, where they might spend a quiet and happy winter in wandering over the hills, in boating or bathing in the ocean or motoring over the hundreds of miles of splendid boulevards of this section.

Singularly enough, their choice of a retreat was also the choice of a score or more of motion picture makers, who had discovered Hollywood before them and were utilizing the brilliant sunshine and clear atmosphere in the production of their films, which were supplied to picture theatres throughout the United States and Europe. Appreciating the value of such a monster industry, the authorities permitted the cameras to be set up on the public streets or wherever there was an appropriate scene to serve for a background

to the photo-plays. It was no unusual sight to see troops of cowboys and Indians racing through the pretty village or to find the cameraman busy before the imposing residence of a millionaire or the vine-covered bungalow of a more modest citizen. No one seemed to resent such action, for Californians admire the motion picture as enthusiastically as do the inhabitants of the Eastern states, so the girls' "adventure" was really a common incident.

CHAPTER II

AN OBJECT LESSON

It was the following afternoon when Uncle John captured his casual acquaintance, Mr. Otis Werner, in the office of the hotel and dragged the motion picture man away to his rooms to be introduced to his nieces.

"Here, my dears, is Mr. Werner," he began, as he threw open the door of their apartment and escorted his companion in. "He is one of those picture makers, you'll remember, and — and — "

He paused abruptly, for Beth was staring at Mr. Werner with a frown on her usually placid features, while Patsy was giggling hysterically. Mr. Werner, a twinkle of amusement in his eye, bowed with exaggerated deference.

"Dear me!" said Uncle John. "Is — is anything wrong!"

"No; it's all right, Uncle," declared Patsy, striving to control a fresh convulsion of laughter. "Only — this is the same dreadful manager who dragged us into his picture yesterday."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Werner; "I'm not a manager; I'm merely what is called in our profession a 'producer,' or a 'stage director.'"

"Well, you're the man, anyhow," asserted Patsy. "So what have you to say for yourself, sir?"

"If you were annoyed, I humbly apologize," he returned. "Perhaps I was unintentionally rude to frighten you in that way, but my excuse lies in our subservience to the demands of our art. We seldom hesitate at anything which tends to give our pictures the semblance of reality."

"*Art*, did you say, Mr. Werner?" It was Beth who asked this and there was a bit of a sneer in her tone.

"It is really art — art of the highest character," he replied warmly. "Do you question it, Miss — Miss — "

"Miss de Graf. I suppose, to be fair, I must admit that the photography is art; but the subjects of your pictures, I have observed, are far from artistic. Such a picture, for instance, as you made yesterday can have little value to anyone."

"Little value! Why, Miss de Graf, you astonish me," he exclaimed. "I consider that picture of the falling wall one of my greatest triumphs — and I've been making pictures for years. Aside from its realism, its emotional nature — 'thrills,' we call it — this picture conveys a vivid lesson that ought to prove of great benefit to humanity."

Beth was looking at him curiously now. Patsy was serious and very attentive. As Uncle John asked his visitor to be seated his voice betrayed the

interest he felt in the conversation.

"Of course we saw only a bit of the picture," said Patsy Doyle. "What was it all about, Mr. Werner?"

"We try," said he, slowly and impressively, as if in love with his theme, "to give to our pictures an educational value, as well as to render them entertaining. Some of them contain a high moral lesson; others, a warning; many, an incentive to live purer and nobler lives. All of our plots are conceived with far more thought than you may suppose. Underlying many of our romances and tragedies are moral injunctions which are involuntarily absorbed by the observers, yet of so subtle a nature that they are not suspected. We cannot preach except by suggestion, for people go to our picture shows to be amused. If we hurled righteousness at them they would soon desert us, and we would be obliged to close up shop."

"I must confess that this is, to me, a most novel presentation of the subject," said Beth, more graciously. "Personally, I care little for your pictures; but I can understand how travel scenes and scientific or educational subjects might be of real benefit to the people."

"I can't understand anyone's being indifferent to the charm of motion pictures," he responded, somewhat reproachfully.

"Why, at first they struck me as wonderful," said the girl. "They were such a novel invention that I went to see them from pure curiosity. But, afterward, the subjects presented in the pictures bored me. The drama pictures were cheap and common, the comedy scenes worse; so I kept away from the picture theatres."

"Educational pictures," said Mr. Werner, musingly, "have proved a failure, as I hinted, except when liberally interspersed with scenes of action and human interest. The only financial failures among the host of motion picture theatres, so far as I have observed, are those that have attempted to run travel scenes and educational films exclusively. There are so few people with your — eh — culture and — and — elevated tastes, you see, when compared with the masses."

"But tell us about *our* picture," pleaded Patsy. "What lesson can that falling wall possibly convey?"

"I'll be glad to explain that," he eagerly replied, "for I am quite proud of it, I assure you. There are many buildings throughout our larger cities that were erected as cheaply as possible and without a single thought for the safety of their tenants. So many disasters have resulted from this that of late years building inspectors have been appointed in every locality to insist on proper materials and mechanical efficiency in the erection of all classes of buildings. These inspectors, however, cannot tear the old buildings down to

see if they are safe, and paint and plaster cover a multitude of sins of unscrupulous builders. Usually the landlord or owner knows well the condition of his property and in many cases refuses to put it into such shape as to insure the safety of his tenants. Greed, false economy and heartless indifference to the welfare of others are unfortunately too prevalent among the wealthy class. No ordinary argument could induce owners to expend money in strengthening or rebuilding their income-producing properties. But I get after them in my picture with a prod that ought to rouse them to action.

"The picture opens with a scene in the interior of a factory. Men, girls and boys are employed. The foreman observes a warning crack in the wall and calls the proprietor's attention to it. In this case the manufacturer is the owner of the building, but he refuses to make repairs. His argument is that the wall has stood for many years and so is likely to stand for many more; it would be a waste of money to repair the old shell. Next day the foreman shows him that the crack has spread and extended along the wall in an alarming manner but still the owner will not act. The workmen counsel together seriously. They dare not desert their jobs, for they must have money to live. They send a petition to the owner, who becomes angry and swears he won't be driven to a useless expense by his own employees. In the next scene the manufacturer's daughter — his only child — having heard that the building was unsafe, comes to her father's office to plead with him to change his mind and make the needed repairs. Although he loves this daughter next to his money he resents her interference in a business matter, and refuses. Her words, however, impress him so strongly that he calls her back from the door to kiss her and say that he will give the matter further thought, for her sake.

"As she leaves the office there is a cry of terror from the factory and the working people come rushing out of the now tottering building. That was when you two young ladies came walking up the street and were dragged out of danger by the foreman of the shop — in other words, by myself. The owner's daughter, bewildered by the confusion, hesitates what to do or which way to turn, and as she stands upon the sidewalk she is crushed by the falling wall, together with several of her father's employees."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Patsy.

"Of course no one was actually hurt," he hastened to say; "for we used dummy figures for the wall to fall upon. In the final scene the bereaved father suddenly realizes that he has been working and accumulating only for this beloved child — the child whose life he has sacrificed by his miserly refusal to protect his workmen. His grief is so intense that no one who follows the story of this picture will ever hesitate to repair a building promptly, if he learns it is unsafe. Do you now understand the lesson taught, young ladies?"

Mr. Werner's dramatic recital had strongly impressed the two girls, while Uncle John was visibly affected.

"I'm very glad," said the little man fervently, "that none of my money is in factories or other buildings that might prove unsafe. It would make my life miserable if I thought I was in any way responsible for such a catastrophe as you have pictured."

"It seems to me," observed Patsy, "that your story is unnecessarily cruel, Mr. Werner."

"Then you do not understand human nature," he retorted; "or, at least, that phase of human nature I have aimed at. Those indifferent rich men are very hard to move and you must figuratively hit them squarely between the eyes to make them even wink."

They were silent for a time, considering this novel aspect of the picture business. Then Beth asked:

"Can you tell us, sir, when and where we shall be able to see this picture?"

"It will be released next Monday."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that we, as manufacturers, supply certain agencies in all the large cities, who in turn rent our films to the many picture theatres. When a picture is ready, we send copies to all our agencies and set a day when they may release it, or give it to their customers to use. In this way the picture will be shown in all parts of the United States on the same day — in this case, next Monday."

"Isn't that very quick?"

"Yes. The picture we took yesterday will to-night be shipped, all complete and ready to run, to forty-four different centers."

"And will any picture theatre in Hollywood or Los Angeles show it?"

"Certainly. It will be at the Globe Theatre in Los Angeles and at the Isis Theatre in Hollywood, for the entire week."

"We shall certainly see it," announced Uncle John.

When Mr. Werner had gone they conversed for some time on the subject of motion pictures, and the man's remarkable statement concerning them.

"I had no idea," Beth confessed, "that the industry of making pictures is so extensive and involves so much thought and detail."

"And money," added Uncle John. "It must be a great expense just to employ that army of actors."

"I suppose Mr. Werner, being a theatrical man, has drawn the long bow in his effort to impress us," said Patsy. "I've been thinking over some of the pictures I've seen recently and I can't imagine a moral, however intangible or illusive, in connection with any of them. But perhaps I wasn't observant

enough. The next time I go to a picture show I shall study the plays more carefully.”

CHAPTER III

AN ATTRACTIVE GIRL

On Saturday they were treated to a genuine surprise, for when the omnibus drew up before the hotel entrance it brought Arthur Weldon and his girl-wife, Louise, who was Uncle John's eldest niece. It also brought "the Cherub," a wee dimpled baby hugged closely in the arms of Inez, its Mexican nurse.

Patsy and Beth shrieked in ecstasy as they rushed forward to smother "Toodlums," as they irreverently called the Cherub, with kisses. Inez, a handsome, dark-eyed girl, relinquished her burden cheerfully to the two adoring "aunties," while Uncle John kissed Louise and warmly shook the hand of her youthful husband.

"What in the world induced you to abandon your beloved ranch?" inquired
Mr. Merrick.

"Don't ask me, sir!" replied Arthur, laughing at the elder gentleman's astonishment. He was a trim young fellow, with a clean-cut, manly face and frank, winning manners.

"It's sort of between hay and grass with us, you know," he explained. "Walnuts all marketed and oranges not ready for the pickers. All our neighbors have migrated, this way or that, for their regular winter vacations, and after you all left, Louise and I began to feel lonely. So at breakfast this morning we decided to flit. At ten o'clock we caught the express, and here we are — in time for lunch. I hope it's ready, Uncle John."

It was; but they must get their rooms and settle the baby in her new quarters before venturing to enter the dining room. So they were late for the midday meal and found themselves almost the only guests in the great dining hall.

As they sat at table, chatting merrily together, Arthur asked:

"What are you staring at, Patsy?"

"A lovely girl," said she. "One of the loveliest girls I have ever seen. Don't look around, Arthur; it might attract their attention."

"How many girls are there?"

"Two; and a lady who seems to be their mother. The other girl is pretty, too, but much younger than her sister — or friend, for they do not resemble one another much. They came in a few minutes ago and are seated at the table in the opposite corner."

"New arrivals, I suppose," remarked Uncle John, who from his position could observe the group.

"No," said Patsy; "their waitress seems to know them well. But I've never

before seen them in the hotel."

"We are always early at meal time," explained Beth, "and to-day these people are certainly late. But they *are* pretty girls, Patsy. For once I concur in your judgment."

"You arouse my curiosity," said Arthur, speaking quietly, so as not to be overheard in the far corner. "If I hear more ecstatic praises of these girls I shall turn around and stare them out of countenance."

"Don't," said Louise. "I'm glad your back is toward them, Arthur, for it preserves you from the temptation to flirt."

"Oh, as for that, I do not need to turn around in order to see pretty girls," he replied.

"Thank you, Arthur," said Patsy, making a face at him. "Look me over all you like, and flirt if you want to. I'm sure Louise won't object."

"Really, Patsy, you're not bad to look at," he retorted, eyeing her critically. "Aside from your red hair, the pug nose and the freckles, you have many excellent qualities. If you didn't squint — "

"Squint!"

"What do you call that affection of your eyes?"

"That," she said, calmly eating her dessert, "was a glance of scorn — burning, bitter scorn!"

"I maintain it was a squint," declared Arthur.

"That isn't her only expression," announced Uncle John, who loved these little exchanges of good-humored banter. "On Monday I will show you Patsy as a terror-stricken damsel in distress."

"Also Beth, still more distressful," added Patsy; and then they told Louise and Arthur about the picture.

"Fine!" he cried. "I'm deeply gratified that my own relatives — "

"By marriage."

"I am gratified that my secondhand cousins have been so highly honored. I'd rather see a good moving picture than the best play ever produced."

"You'll see a good one this time," asserted Patsy, "for we are the stars."

"I think that unscrupulous Mr. Werner deserves a reprimand," said Louise.

"Oh, he apologized," explained Beth. "But I'm sure he'd take the same liberty again if he had the chance."

"He admits that his love of art destroys his sense of propriety," said Patsy.

As they rose from the table Arthur deliberately turned to view the party in the other corner, and then to the amazement of his friends he coolly walked over and shook the elder lady's hand with evident pleasure. Next moment he was being introduced to the two girls. The three cousins and their Uncle John

walked out of the dining hall and awaited Arthur Weldon in the lobby.

"It is some old acquaintance, of course," said Louise. "Arthur knows a tremendous lot of people and remembers everyone he ever has met."

When he rejoined them he brought the lady and the two beautiful girls with him, introducing Mrs. Montrose as one of his former acquaintances in New York, where she had been a near neighbor to the Weldons. The girls, who proved to be her nieces instead of her daughters, were named Maud and Florence Stanton, Maud being about eighteen years of age and Florence perhaps fifteen. Maud's beauty was striking, as proved by Patsy's admiration at first sight; Florence was smaller and darker, yet very dainty and witching, like a Dresden shepherdess.

The sisters proved rather shy at this first meeting, being content to exchange smiles with the other girls, but their aunt was an easy conversationalist and rambled on about the delights of Hollywood and southern California until they were all in a friendly mood. Among other things Mrs. Montrose volunteered the statement that they had been at the hotel for several weeks, but aside from that remark disclosed little of their personal affairs. Presently the three left the hotel and drove away in an automobile, having expressed a wish to meet their new friends again and become better acquainted with them.

"I was almost startled at running across Mrs. Montrose out here," said Arthur. "After father's death, when I gave up the old home, I lost track of the Montroses; but I seem to remember that old Montrose went to the happy hunting grounds and left a widow, but no children. I imagine these people are wealthy, as Montrose was considered a successful banker. I'll write to Duggins and inquire about them."

"Duggins seems to know everything," remarked Louise.

"He keeps pretty good track of New York people, especially of the old families," replied her husband.

"I can't see what their history matters to us," observed Patsy. "I like to take folks as I find them, without regard to their antecedents or finances. Certainly those Stanton girls are wonderfully attractive and ladylike."

But now the baby claimed their attention and the rest of that day was passed in "visiting" and cuddling the wee Toodlums, who seemed to know her girl aunties and greeted them with friendly coos and dimpled smiles.

On Sunday they took a motor trip through the mountain boulevards and on their way home passed the extensive enclosure of the Continental Film Company. A thriving village has been built up at this place, known as Film City, for many of those employed by the firm prefer to live close to their work. Another large "plant" of the same concern is located in the heart of

Hollywood.

As they passed through Film City Uncle John remarked:

“We are invited to visit this place and witness the making of a motion picture. I believe it would prove an interesting sight.”

“Let us go, by all means,” replied Arthur. “I am greatly interested in this new industry, which seems to me to be still in its infancy. The development of the moving picture is bound to lead to some remarkable things in the future, I firmly believe.”

“So do I,” said Uncle John. “They’ll combine the phonograph with the pictures, for one thing, so that the players, instead of being silent, will speak as clearly as in real life. Then we’ll have the grand operas, by all the most famous singers, elaborately staged; and we’ll be able to see and hear them for ten cents, instead of ten dollars. It will be the same with the plays of the greatest actors.”

“That would open up a curious complication,” asserted Louise. “The operas would only be given once, before the camera and the recorder. Then what would happen to all the high-priced opera singers?”

“They would draw royalties on all their productions, instead of salaries,” replied Arthur.

“Rather easy for the great artists!” observed Patsy. “One performance — and the money rolling in for all time to come.”

“Well, they deserve it,” declared Beth. “And think of what the public would gain! Instead of having to suffer during the performances of incompetent actors and singers, as we do to-day, the whole world would be able to see and hear the best talent of the ages for an insignificant fee. I hope your prediction will come true, Uncle John.”

“It’s bound to,” he replied, with confidence. “I’ve read somewhere that Edison and others have been working on these lines for years, and although they haven’t succeeded yet, anything possible in mechanics is bound to be produced in time.”

CHAPTER IV

AUNT JANE'S NIECES

The picture, which was entitled "The Sacrifice," proved — to use Patsy's words — "a howling success." On Monday afternoons the little theatres are seldom crowded, so Mr. Merrick's party secured choice seats where they could observe every detail of the photography. The girls could not wait for a later performance, so eager were they to see themselves in a motion picture, nor were they disappointed to find they were a mere incident in the long roll of film.

The story of the photo-play was gripping in its intensity, and since Mr. Werner had clearly explained the lesson it conveyed, they followed the plot with rapt attention. In the last scene their entrance and exit was transitory, but they were obliged to admit that their features were really expressive of fear. The next instant the wall fell, burying its victims, and this rather bewildered them when they remembered that fully half an hour had elapsed while the dummies were being placed in position, the real people removed from danger and preparations made to topple over the wall from the inside of the building. But the camera had been inactive during that period and so cleverly had the parts of the picture been united that no pause whatever was observable to the spectators.

"My! what a stuffy place," exclaimed Louise, as they emerged into the light of day. "I cannot understand why it is necessary to have these moving picture theatres so gloomy and uncomfortable."

"It isn't necessary," replied Uncle John. "It's merely a habit the builders have acquired. There seemed to be a total lack of ventilation in that place."

"No one expects much for ten cents," Arthur reminded him. "If the pictures are good the public will stand for anything in the matter of discomfort."

"Did you notice," said Patsy, slowly, "how many children there were in that theatre?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Beth. "The pictures seem to be an ideal amusement for children. I do not suppose they can understand all the dramas and love stories, but the pictures entertain them, whatever the theme may be."

"They are not allowed to go unless accompanied by a parent or guardian," Arthur stated; "but I saw a group of eleven under the care of one cheery-looking old lady, so I suppose the little ones evade the law in that way."

On Tuesday forenoon they drove to the office of the Continental Film Manufacturing Company and inquired for Mr. Werner. Every approach to the

interior of the big stockade was closely guarded in order to prevent the curious from intruding, but Werner at once hurried out to greet them and escorted them into the enclosure.

"You are just in time," said he, "to witness one of the scenes in our great picture, 'Samson and Delilah.' They're getting it on now, so you must hurry if you want to see the work. It's really the biggest thing our firm has ever turned out."

They passed a group of low but extensive frame buildings, threading their way between them until finally they emerged within a large open space where huge frames covered with canvas were propped up in broad daylight and apparently in great disorder. Huddled here and there were groups of people wearing Oriental costumes of the Bible days, their skins stained brown, the make-up on their faces showing hideously in the strong light. A herd of meek donkeys, bearing burdens of faggots, was tethered near by.

"Follow me closely," cautioned their guide, "so you will not step over the 'dead line' and get yourselves in the picture."

"What is the 'dead line'?" inquired Uncle John.

"The line that marks the limit of the camera's scope. Outside of that you are quite safe. You will notice it is plainly marked in chalk."

They passed around to the front and were amazed at the picture disclosed by the reverse of the gaunt, skeleton-like framework. For now was displayed Solomon's temple in all its magnificence, with huge pillars supporting a roof that seemed as solid and substantial as stone and mortar could make it.

The perspective was wonderful, for they could follow a line of vision through the broad temple to a passage beyond, along which was approaching a procession of priests, headed by dancing girls and musicians beating tomtoms and playing upon reeds. The entire scene was barbaric in its splendor and so impressive that they watched it spellbound, awed and silent.

Yet here beside them was the motion-picture camera, clicking steadily away and operated by a man in his shirt-sleeves who watched the scene with sharp eyes, now frowning and now nodding approval. Beside him at times, but rushing from one point to another just outside the chalk-marks that indicated the "dead line," was the director of this production, who shouted commands in a nervous, excited manner and raged and tore his hair when anything went wrong.

Something went very wrong presently, for the director blew a shrill blast on his whistle and suddenly everything stopped short. The camera man threw a cloth over his lenses and calmly lighted a cigarette. The procession halted in uncertainty and became a disordered rabble; but the director sprang into the open space and shouted at his actors and actresses in evident ill temper.

“There it is again!” he cried. “Five hundred feet of good film, ruined by the stupidity of one person. Get out of that priest’s robe, Higgins, and let Jackson take your place. Where’s Jackson, anyhow?”

“Here,” answered a young man, stepping out from a group of spectators.

“Do you know the work? Can you lead that procession into the temple so they will leave room for Delilah to enter, and not crowd her off the platform?” asked the director.

Jackson merely nodded as he scrambled into the priest’s robe which the discomfited Higgins resigned to him. Evidently the bungling actor was in disgrace, for he was told to go to the office and get his pay and then “clear out.”

So now the procession was sent back into the passage and rearranged in proper order; the signal was given to begin and in an instant the camera renewed its clicking as the operator slowly revolved the handle that carried the long strip of film past the lenses. The musicians played, the girls danced, the procession slowly emerged from the passage.

This time it advanced properly and came to a halt just at the head of the staircase leading up to the entrance to the temple.

“Delilah!” shouted the director, and now appeared a beautiful girl who made a low obeisance to the chief priest.

“Why — goodness me!” cried Patsy. “It’s — it’s Maud Stanton!”

“Nonsense!” returned Arthur, sharply; and then he looked again and drew a long breath; for unless it were indeed the elder niece of Mrs. Montrose, there must be two girls in the world identically alike.

Mr. Werner settled the question by quietly remarking: “Of course it’s Maud Stanton. She’s our bright, particular star, you know, and the public would resent it if she didn’t appear as the heroine of all our best pictures.”

“An actress!” exclaimed Arthur. “I — I didn’t know that.”

“She and her sister Flo are engaged by us regularly,” replied Werner, with an air of pride. “They cost us a lot of money, as you may imagine, but we can’t afford to let any competitor have them.”

If Arthur Weldon felt any chagrin at this, discovery it was not in the least shared by the others of his party. Beth was admiring the young girl’s grace and dignity; Patsy was delighted by her loveliness in the fleecy, picturesque costume she wore; Louise felt pride in the fact that she had been introduced to “a real actress,” while Uncle John wondered what adverse fortune had driven this beautiful, refined girl to pose before a motion picture camera.

They soon discovered Florence Stanton in the picture, too, among the dancing girls; so there could be no mistake of identity. Mrs. Montrose was not visible during the performance; but afterward, when Samson had pulled

down the pillars of the temple and it had fallen in ruins, when the "show" was over and the actors trooping away to their dressing-rooms, then the visitors were ushered into the main office of the establishment to meet Mr. Goldstein, the manager, and seated by the window was the aunt of the two girls, placidly reading a book. She looked up with a smile as they entered.

"Did you see the play?" she asked. "And isn't it grand and impressive? I hope you liked Maud's 'Delilah.' The poor child has worked so hard to create the character."

They assured her the girl was perfect in her part, after which Mr. Merrick added: "I'm astonished you did not go out to see the play yourself."

She laughed at his earnestness.

"It's an old story to me," she replied, "for I have watched Maud rehearse her part many times. Also it is probable that some — if not all — of the scenes of 'Samson and Delilah' will be taken over and over, half a dozen times, before the director is satisfied."

"The performance seemed quite perfect to-day," said Uncle John. "I suppose, Mrs. Montrose, you do not — er — er — act, yourself?"

"Oh. I have helped out, sometimes, when a matronly personation is required, but my regular duties keep me busily engaged in the office."

"May we ask what those duties are?" said Louise.

"I'm the reader of scenarios."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Patsy. "I'm sure we don't know any more than we did before."

"A 'scenario,'" said the lady, "is a description of the plot for a photo-play. It is in manuscript form and hundreds of scenarios are submitted to us from every part of the country, and by people in all walks of life."

"I shouldn't think you could use so many," said Beth.

"We can't, my dear," responded the lady, laughing at her simplicity. "The majority of the scenarios we receive haven't a single idea that is worth considering. In most of the others the ideas are stolen, or duplicated from some other picture-play. Once in a while, however, we find a plot of real merit, and then we accept it and pay the author for it."

"How much?" inquired Arthur.

"So little that I am ashamed to tell you. Ideas are the foundation of our business, and without them we could not make successful films; but when Mr. Goldstein buys an idea he pays as little for it as possible, and the poor author usually accepts the pittance with gratitude."

"We were a little surprised," Uncle John ventured to say, "to find you connected with this — er — institution. I suppose it's all right; but those girls — your nieces — "

“Yes, they are motion picture actresses, and I am a play reader. It is our profession, Mr. Merrick, and we earn our living in this way. To be frank with you, I am very proud of the fact that my girls are popular favorites with the picture theatre audiences.”

“That they are, Mrs. Montrose!” said Goldstein, the manager, a lean little man, earnestly endorsing the statement; “and that makes them the highest priced stars in all our fourteen companies of players. But they’re worth every cent we pay ‘em — and I hope ev’rybody’s satisfied.”

Mrs. Montrose paid little deference to the manager. “He is only a detail man,” she explained when Goldstein had gone way, “but of course it is necessary to keep these vast and diverse interests running smoothly, and the manager has enough details on his mind to drive an ordinary mortal crazy. The successful scenario writers, who conceive our best plays, are the real heart of this business, and the next to them in importance are the directors, or producers, who exercise marvelous cleverness in staging the work of the authors.”

“I suppose,” remarked Arthur Weldon, “it is very like a theatre.”

“Not so like as you might imagine,” was the reply. “We employ scenery, costumes and actors, but not in ways theatrical, for all our work is subservient to the camera’s eye and the requirements of photography.”

While they were conversing, the two Stanton girls entered the office, having exchanged their costumes for street clothes and washed the make-up from their faces, which were now fresh and animated.

“Oh, Aunt Jane!” cried Flo, running to Mrs. Montrose, “we’re dismissed for the day. Mr. McNeil intends to develop the films before we do anything more, and Maud and I want to spend the afternoon at the beach.”

The lady smiled indulgently as Maud quietly supported her sister’s appeal, the while greeting her acquaintances of yesterday with her sweet, girlish charm of manner.

“A half-holiday is quite unusual with us,” she explained, “for it is the custom to hold us in readiness from sunrise to sunset, in case our services are required. An actress in a motion picture concern is the slave of her profession, but we don’t mind the work so much as we do waiting around for orders.”

“Suppose we all drive to the beach together,” suggested Mr. Merrick. “We will try to help you enjoy your holiday and it will be a rich treat to us to have your society.”

“Yes, indeed!” exclaimed Patsy Doyle. “I’m just crazy over this motion picture business and I want to ask you girls a thousand questions about it.”

They graciously agreed to the proposition and at once made preparations

for the drive. Mrs. Montrose had her own automobile, but the party divided, the four young girls being driven by Mr. Merrick's chauffeur in his machine, while Uncle John, Arthur and Louise rode with Mrs. Montrose.

It did not take the young people long to become acquainted, and the air of restraint that naturally obtained in the first moments gradually wore away. They were all in good spirits, anticipating a jolly afternoon at the ocean resorts, so when they discovered themselves to be congenial companions they lost no time in stilted phrases but were soon chattering away as if they had known one another for years.

CHAPTER V

A THRILLING RESCUE

"It must be fine to be an actress," said Patsy Doyle, with enthusiasm. "If I had the face or the figure or the ability — all of which I sadly lack — I'd be an actress myself."

"I suppose," replied Maud Stanton, thoughtfully, "it is as good a profession for a girl as any other. But the life is not one of play, by any means. We work very hard during the rehearsals and often I have become so weary that I feared I would drop to the ground in sheer exhaustion. Flo did faint, once or twice, during our first engagement with the Pictograph Company; but we find our present employers more considerate, and we have gained more importance than we had in the beginning."

"It is dreadfully confining, though," remarked Florence, with a sigh. "Our hours are worse than those of shopgirls, for the early morning sun is the best part of the day for our work. Often we are obliged to reach the studio at dawn. To be sure, we have the evenings to ourselves, but we are then too tired to enjoy them."

"Did you choose, this profession for amusement, or from necessity?" inquired Beth, wondering if the question sounded impertinent.

"Stern necessity," answered Maud with a smile. "We had our living to earn."

"Could not your aunt assist you?" asked Patsy.

"Aunt Jane? Why, she is as poor as we are."

"Arthur Weldon used to know the Montroses," said Beth, "and be
believed
Mr. Montrose left his widow a fortune."

"He didn't leave a penny," asserted Florence. "Uncle was a stock gambler, and when he died he was discovered to be bankrupt."

"I must explain to you," said Maud, "that our father and mother were both killed years ago in a dreadful automobile accident. Father left a small fortune to be divided between Flo and me, and appointed Uncle George our guardian. We were sent to a girls' school and nicely provided for until uncle's death, when it was found he had squandered our little inheritance as well as his own money."

"That was hard luck," said Patsy sympathetically.

"I am not so sure of that," returned the girl musingly. "Perhaps we are happier now than if we had money. Our poverty gave us dear Aunt Jane for a companion and brought us into a field of endeavor that has proved delightful."

“But how in the world did you ever decide to become actresses, when so many better occupations are open to women?” inquired Beth.

“Are other occupations so much better? A motion picture actress is quite different from the stage variety, you know. Our performances are all privately conducted, and although the camera is recording our actions it is not like being stared at by a thousand critical eyes.”

“A million eyes stare at the pictures,” asserted Patsy.

“But we are not there to be embarrassed by them,” laughed Flo.

“We have but one person to please,” continued Maud, “and that is the director. If at first the scene is not satisfactory, we play it again and again, until it is quite correct. To us this striving for perfection is an art. We actors are mere details of an artistic conception. We have now been in Hollywood for five months, yet few people who casually notice us at the hotel or on the streets have any idea that we act for the ‘movies.’ Sometimes we appear publicly in the streets, in characteristic costume, and proceed to enact our play where all may observe us; but there are so many picture companies in this neighborhood that we are no longer looked upon as a novelty and the people passing by pay little attention to us.”

“Were you in that picture of the falling wall?” asked Beth.

“No. We were rehearsing for ‘Samson and Delilah.’ But sometimes we are called upon to do curious things. One night, not long ago, a big residence burned down in the foothills back of our hotel. At the first alarm of fire one of the directors wakened us and we jumped into our clothes and were whisked in an automobile to the scene of the conflagration. The camera-man was already there and, while we had to dodge the fire-fighters and the hose men, both Flo and I managed to be ‘saved from the flames’ by some of our actors — not once, but several times.”

“It must have been thrilling!” gasped Patsy.

“It was exciting, at the moment,” confessed Maud. “One of the pictures proved very dramatic, so an author wrote a story where at the climax a girl was rescued from the flames by her lover, and we took our time to act the several scenes that led up to the fire. The completed picture was a great success, I’m told.”

“Those directors must be wonderfully enterprising fellows,” said Beth.

“They are, indeed, constantly on the lookout for effects. Every incident that occurs in real life is promptly taken advantage of. The camera-men are everywhere, waiting for their chance. Often their pictures prove of no value and are destroyed, but sometimes the scenes they catch are very useful to work into a picture play. A few weeks ago I was shipwrecked on the ocean and saved by clinging to a raft. That was not pleasant and I caught a severe

cold by being in the water too long; but I was chosen because I can swim. Such incidents are merely a part of our game — a game where personal comfort is frequently sacrificed to art. Once Flo leaped over a thirty-foot precipice and was caught in a net at the bottom. The net was, of course, necessary, but when the picture was displayed her terrible leap was followed by a view of her mangled body at the bottom of the canyon."

"How did they manage to do that?" asked Patsy.

"Stopped the camera, cut off the piece of film showing her caught by the net, and substituted a strip on which was recorded Flo's body lying among the jagged rocks, where it had been carefully and comfortably arranged. We do a lot of deceptive tricks of that sort, and sometimes I myself marvel at the natural effects obtained."

"It must be more interesting than stage acting."

"I believe it is. But we've never been on the stage," said Maud.

"How did you happen to get started in such a queer business?" inquired Patsy.

"Well, after we found ourselves poor and without resources we began wondering what we could do to earn money. A friend of Aunt Jane's knew a motion picture maker who wanted fifty young girls for a certain picture and would pay each of them five dollars a day. Flo and I applied for the job and earned thirty dollars between us; but then the manager thought he would like to employ us regularly, and with Auntie to chaperon us we accepted the engagement. The first few weeks we merely appeared among the rabble — something like chorus girls, you see — but then we were given small parts and afterward more important ones. When we discovered our own value to the film makers Auntie managed to get us better engagements, so we've acted for three different concerns during the past two years, while Aunt Jane has become noted as a clever judge of the merits of scenarios."

"Do both of you girls play star parts?" Beth inquired.

"Usually. Flo is considered the best 'child actress' in the business, but when there is no child part she makes herself useful in all sorts of ways. To-day, for instance, you saw her among the dancing girls. I do the ingenue, or young girl parts, which are very popular just now. I did not want to act 'Delilah,' for I thought I was not old enough; but Mr. McNeil wanted me in the picture and so I made myself took as mature as possible."

"You were ideal!" cried Patsy, admiringly.

The young girl blushed at this praise, but said deprecatingly:

"I doubt if I could ever be a really great actress; but then, I do not intend to act for many more years. Our salary is very liberal at present, as Goldstein grudgingly informed you, and we are saving money. As soon as we think we

have acquired enough to live on comfortably we shall abandon acting and live as other girls do."

"The fact is," added Flo, "no one will employ us when we have lost our youth. So we are taking advantage of these few fleeting years to make hay while the sun shines."

"Do many stage actresses go into the motion picture business?" asked Beth.

"A few, but all are not competent," replied Maud. "In the 'silent drama' facial expression and the art of conveying information by a gesture is of paramount importance. In other words, action must do the talking and explain everything. I am told that some comedians, like 'Bunny' and Sterling Mace, were failures on the stage, yet in motion pictures they are great favorites. On the other hand, some famous stage actors can do nothing in motion pictures."

On their arrival at Santa Monica Mr. Merrick invited the party to be his guests at luncheon, which was served in a cosy restaurant overlooking the ocean. And then, although at this season it was bleak winter back East, all but Uncle John and Aunt Jane took a bath in the surf of the blue Pacific, mingling with hundreds of other bathers who were enjoying the sport.

Mrs. Montrose and Uncle John sat on the sands to watch the merry scene, while the young people swam and splashed about, and they seemed — as Miss Patsy slyly observed — to "get on very well together."

"And that is very creditable to your aunt," she observed to Maud Stanton, who was beside her in the water, "for Uncle John is rather shy in the society of ladies and they find him hard to entertain."

"He seems like a dear old gentleman," said Maud.

"He is, indeed, the dearest in all the world. And, if he likes your Aunt Jane, that is evidence that she is all right, too; for Uncle John's intuition never fails him in the selection of friends. He — "

"Dear me!" cried Maud; "there's someone in trouble, I'm sure."

She was looking out across the waves, which were fairly high to-day, and Patsy saw her lean forward and strike out to sea with strokes of remarkable swiftness. Bathers were scattered thickly along the coast, but only a few had ventured far out beyond the life-lines, so Patsy naturally sought an explanation by gazing at those farthest out. At first she was puzzled, for all the venturesome seemed to be swimming strongly and composedly; but presently a dark form showed on the crest of a wave — a struggling form that tossed up its arms despairingly and then disappeared.

She looked for Maud Stanton and saw her swimming straight out, but still a long way from the person in distress. Then Patsy, always quick-witted in

emergencies, made a dash for the shore where a small boat was drawn up on the beach.

"Come, Arthur, quick!" she cried to the young man, who was calmly wading near the beach, and he caught the note of terror in her voice and hastened to help push the little craft into the water.

"Jump in!" she panted, "and row as hard as you ever rowed in all your life."

Young Weldon was prompt to obey. He asked no useless questions but, realizing that someone was in danger, he pulled a strong, steady oar and let Patsy steer the boat.

The laughter and merry shouts of the bathers, who were all unaware that a tragedy was developing close at hand, rang in the girl's ears as she peered eagerly ahead for a sign to guide her. Now she espied Maud Stanton, far out beyond the others, circling around and diving into this wave or that as it passed her.

"Whoever it was," she muttered, half aloud, "is surely done for by this time. Hurry, Arthur! I'm afraid Maud has exhausted all her strength."

But just then Maud dived again and when she reappeared was holding fast to something dark and inanimate. A moment later the boat swept to her side and she said:

"Get him aboard, if you can. Don't mind me; I'm all right."

Arthur reached down and drew a slight, boyish form over the gunwale, while Patsy clasped Maud's hand and helped the girl over the side. She was still strong, but panted from her exertions to support the boy.

"Who is it?" inquired Patsy, as Arthur headed the boat for the shore.

Maud shook her head, leaning forward to look at the face of the rescued one for the first time.

"I've never seen him before," she said. "Isn't it too bad that I reached him too late?"

Patsy nodded, gazing at the white, delicate profile of the young fellow as he lay lifeless at her feet. Too late, undoubtedly; and he was a mere boy, with all the interests of life just unfolding for him.

Their adventure had now been noticed by some of the bathers, who crowded forward to meet the boat as it grounded on the beach. Uncle John, always keeping an eye on his beloved nieces, had noted every detail of the rescue and as a dozen strong men pulled the boat across the sands, beyond the reach of the surf, the Merrick automobile rolled up beside it.

"Now, then!" cried the little man energetically, and with the assistance of his chauffeur he lifted the lifeless form into the car.

"The hospital?" said Patsy, nodding approval.

“Yes,” he answered. “No; you girls can’t come in your wet bathing suits. I’ll do all that can be done.”

Even as he spoke the machine whirled away, and looking after it Maud said, shaking her head mildly: “I fear he’s right. Little can be done for the poor fellow now.”

“Oh, lots can be done,” returned Patsy; “but perhaps it won’t bring him back to life. Anyhow, it’s right to make every attempt, as promptly as possible, and certainly Uncle John didn’t waste any time.”

Beth and Florence now joined them and Louise came running up to ask eager questions.

“Who was it, Patsy?”

“We don’t know. Some poor fellow who got too far out and had a cramp, perhaps. Or his strength may have given out. He didn’t seem very rugged.”

“He was struggling when first I saw him,” said Maud. “It seemed dreadful to watch the poor boy drowning when hundreds of people were laughing and playing in the water within earshot of him.”

“That was the trouble,” declared Arthur Weldon. “All those people were intent on themselves and made so much noise that his cries for help could not be heard.”

The tragedy, now generally known, had the effect of sobering the bathers and most of them left the water and trooped to the bathhouses to dress. Mrs. Montrose advised the girls to get their clothes on, as all were shivering — partly from nervousness — in their wet bathing suits.

They were ready an hour before Mr. Merrick returned, and his long absence surprised them until they saw his smiling face as he drove up in his car. It gave them a thrill of hope as in chorus they cried:

“Well — Uncle John?”

“I think he will live,” returned the little man, with an air of great satisfaction. “Anyway, he’s alive and breathing now, and the doctors say there’s every reason to expect a rapid recovery.”

“Who is he?” they asked, crowding around him.

“A. Jones.”

“A — what?” This from Patsy, in a doubtful tone.

“Jones. A. Jones.”

“Why, he must have given you an assumed name!”

“He didn’t give us any name. As soon as he recovered consciousness he fell asleep, and I left him slumbering as peacefully as a baby. But we went through his clothes, hoping to get a trace of his friends, so they could be notified. His bathing suit is his own, not rented, and the name ‘A. Jones’ is embroidered on tape and sewn to each piece. Also the key to bathhouse

number twenty-six was tied to his wrist. The superintendent sent a man for his clothing and we examined that, too. The letters 'A.J.' were stamped in gold on his pocketbook, and in his cardcase were a number of cards engraved: 'A. Jones, Sangoa.' But there were no letters, or any other papers."

"Where is Sangoa?" inquired Beth.

"No one seems to know," confessed Uncle John. "There was plenty of money in his pocket-book and he has a valuable watch, but no other jewelry. His clothes were made by a Los Angeles tailor, but when they called him up by telephone he knew nothing about his customer except that he had ordered his suit and paid for it in advance. He called for it three days ago, and carried it away with him, so we have no clue to the boy's dwelling place."

"Isn't that a little strange — perhaps a little suspicious?" asked Mrs. Montrose.

"I think not, ma'am," answered Mr. Merrick. "We made these investigations at the time we still feared he would die, so as to communicate with any friends or relatives he might have. But after he passed the crisis so well and fell asleep, the hospital people stopped worrying about him. He seems like any ordinary, well-to-do young fellow, and a couple of days in the hospital ought to put him upon his feet again."

"But Sangoa, Uncle; is that a town or a country?"

"Some out-of-the-way village, I suppose. People are here from every crack and corner of America, you know."

"It sounds a bit Spanish," commented Arthur. "Maybe he is from Mexico."

"Maybe," agreed Uncle John. "Anyhow, Maud has saved his life, and if it's worth anything to him he ought to be grateful."

"Never mind that," said Maud, flushing prettily with embarrassment as all eyes turned upon her, "I'm glad I noticed him in time; but now that he is all right he need never know who it was that rescued him. And, for that matter, sir, Patsy Doyle and Mr. Weldon did as much for him as I. Perhaps they saved us both, while your promptness in getting him to the hospital was the main factor in saving his life."

"Well, it's all marked down in the hospital books," remarked Uncle John. "I had to tell the whole story, you see, as a matter of record, and all our names are there, so none can escape the credit due her — or him."

"In truth," said Mrs. Montrose with a smile, "it really required four of you to save one slender boy."

"Yes, he needed a lot of saving," laughed Flo. "But," her pretty face growing more serious, "I believe it was all Fate, and nothing else. Had we not come to the beach this afternoon, the boy might have drowned; so, as I

suggested the trip, I'm going to take a little credit myself."

"Looking at it in that light," said Patsy, "the moving picture man saved the boy's life by giving you a half-holiday."

This caused a laugh, for their spirits were now restored to normal. To celebrate the occasion, Mr. Merrick proposed to take them all into Los Angeles to dine at a "swell restaurant" before returning to Hollywood.

This little event, in conjunction with the afternoon's adventure, made them all more intimate, so that when they finally reached home and separated for the night they felt like old friends rather than recent acquaintances.

CHAPTER VI

A. JONES

There was work for the Stanton girls at the "film factory," as they called it, next morning, so they had left the hotel before Mr. Merrick's party assembled at the breakfast table.

"I must telephone the Santa Monica hospital and find out how our patient is," remarked Uncle John, when the meal was over; but presently he returned from the telephone booth with a puzzled expression upon his face. "A. Jones has disappeared!" he announced.

"Disappeared! What do you mean, Uncle?" asked Beth.

"He woke early and declared he was himself again, paid his bill, said 'good morning' to the hospital superintendent and walked away. He wouldn't answer questions, but kept asking them. The nurse showed him the book with the record of how he was saved, but she couldn't induce him to say who he was, where he came from nor where he was going. Seems a little queer, doesn't it?"

They all confessed that it did.

"However," said Patsy Doyle, "I'm glad he recovered, and I'm sure Maud will be when she hears the news. The boy has a perfect right to keep his own counsel, but he might have had the grace to tell us what that initial 'A.' stands for, and where on earth Sangoa is."

"I've been inquiring about Sangoa," announced Arthur, just then joining the group, "and no one seems wiser than we are. There's no record of such a town or state in Mexico, or in the United States — so far as I can discover. The clerk has sent for a map of Alaska, and perhaps we'll find Sangoa there."

"What does it matter?" inquired Louise.

"Why, we don't like to be stumped," asserted Patsy, "that's all. Here is a young man from Sangoa, and — "

"Really," interrupted Beth, who was gazing through the window, "I believe here *is* the young man from Sangoa!"

"Where?" they all cried, crowding forward to look.

"Coming up the walk. See! Isn't that the same mysterious individual whose life Maud saved?"

"That's the identical mystery," declared Uncle John. "I suppose he has come here to look us up and thank us."

"Then, for heaven's sake, girls, pump him and find out where Sangoa is," said Arthur hastily, and the next moment a bell boy approached their party with a card.

They looked at the young fellow curiously as he came toward them. He

seemed not more than eighteen years of age and his thin features wore a tired expression that was not the result of his recent experience but proved to be habitual. His manner was not languid, however, but rather composed; at the same time he held himself alert, as if constantly on his guard. His dress was simple but in good taste and he displayed no embarrassment as he greeted the party with a low bow.

"Ah," said Uncle John, heartily shaking his hand, "I am delighted to find you so perfectly recovered."

A slight smile, sad and deprecating, flickered for an instant over his lips. It gave the boyish face a patient and rather sweet expression as he slowly replied:

"I am quite myself to-day, sir, and I have come to assure you of my gratitude for your rescue of me yesterday. Perhaps it wasn't worth all your bother, but since you generously took the trouble to save me, the least I can do is to tender you my thanks." Here he looked from one to another of the three girls and continued: "Please tell me which young lady swam to my assistance."

"Oh, it was none of us," said Patsy. "Miss Stanton — Maud Stanton — swam out to you, when she noticed you were struggling, and kept you afloat until we — until help came."

"And Miss Stanton is not here?"

"Not at present, although she is staying at this hotel."

He gravely considered this information for a moment. As he stood there, swaying slightly, he appeared so frail and delicate that Uncle John seized his arm and made him sit down in a big easy chair. The boy sighed, took a memorandum from his pocket and glanced at it.

"Miss Doyle and Mr. Weldon pulled out in a boat and rescued both Miss Stanton and me, just as we were about to sink," he said. "Tell me, please, if either Miss Doyle or Mr. Weldon is present."

"I am Arthur Weldon," said that young gentleman; "but I was merely the boatman, under command of Miss Doyle, whom I beg to present to you."

A. Jones looked earnestly into Patsy's face. Holding out his hand he said with his odd smile: "Thank you." Then he turned to shake Arthur's hand, after which he continued: "I also am indebted to Mr. Merrick for carrying me to the hospital. The doctor told me that only this prompt action enabled them to resuscitate me at all. And now, I believe it would be courteous for me to tell you who I am and how I came to be in such dire peril."

He paused to look around him questioningly and the interest on every face was clearly evident. Arthur took this opportunity to introduce Jones to Louise and Beth and then they all sat down again. Said Uncle John to the stranger, in

his frank and friendly way:

"Tell us as much or as little as you like, my boy. We are not unduly inquisitive, I assure you."

"Thank you, sir. I am an American, and my name is Jones. That is, I may claim American parentage, although I was born upon a scarcely known island in the Pacific which my father purchased from the government of Uruguay some thirty years ago."

"Sangoa?" asked Arthur.

He seemed surprised at the question but readily answered:

"Yes; Sangoa. My father was a grandnephew of John Paul Jones and very proud of the connection; but instead of being a sailor he was a scientist, and he chose to pass his life in retirement from the world."

"Your father is no longer living, then?" said Mr. Merrick.

"He passed away a year ago, on his beloved island. My mother died several years before him. I began to feel lonely at Sangoa and I was anxious to visit America, of which my mother had so often told me. So some months ago I reached San Francisco, since when I have been traveling over your country — my country, may I call it? — and studying your modern civilization. In New York I remained fully three months. It is only about ten days since I returned to this coast."

He stopped abruptly, as if he considered he had told enough. The brief recital had interested his auditors, but the ensuing pause was rather embarrassing.

"I suppose you have been visiting relatives of your parents," remarked Uncle John, to ease the situation.

"They — had no relatives that I know of," he returned. "I am quite alone in the world. You must not suppose I am unaccustomed to the water," he hastened to add, as if to retreat from an unpleasant subject. "At Sangoa I have bathed in the sea ever since I can remember anything; but — I am not in good health. I suffer from indigestion, a chronic condition, which is my incubus. Yesterday my strength suddenly deserted me and I became helpless."

"How fortunate it was that Maud noticed you!" exclaimed Patsy, with generous sympathy.

Again the half sad smile softened his face as he looked at her.

"I am not sure it was wholly fortunate for me," he said, "although I admit I have no wish to end my uninteresting life by drowning. I am not a misanthrope, in spite of my bad stomach. The world is more useful to me than I am to the world, but that is not my fault. Pardon me for talking so much about myself."

“Oh, we are intensely interested, I assure you,” replied Patsy. “If some of us were indeed the instruments that saved you yesterday, it is a pleasure to us to know something of the — the man — we saved.”

She had almost said “boy,” he was such a youthful person, and he knew it as well as she did.

“I would like to meet Miss Stanton and thank her personally,” he presently resumed. “So, if you have no objection, I think I shall register at this hotel and take a room. I — I am not very strong yet, but perhaps Miss Stanton will see me when I have rested a little.”

“She won’t return before five o’clock,” explained Mr. Merrick. “Miss Stanton is — er — connected with a motion picture company, you know, and is busy during the day.”

He seemed both surprised and perplexed, at first, but after a moment’s thought he said:

“She is an actress, then?”

“Yes; she and her sister. They have with them an aunt, Mrs. Montrose, for companion.”

“Thank you. Then I will try to meet them this evening.”

As he spoke he rose with some difficulty and bade them adieu. Arthur went with him to the desk and proffered his assistance, but the young man said he needed nothing but rest.

“And just think of it,” said Patsy, when he had gone. “We don’t know yet what that ‘A’ stands for!”

“Arthur,” suggested Louise.

“Albert,” said Beth.

“Or Algernon,” added Uncle John with a chuckle.

“But we haven’t seen the last of him yet,” declared Miss Doyle. “I’ve a romance all plotted, of which A. Jones is to be the hero. He will fall in love with Maud and carry her away to his island!”

“I’m not so sure of that result,” observed Uncle John thoughtfully. “It wouldn’t astonish me to have him fall in love with Maud Stanton; we’ve all done that, you know; but could Maud — could any girl — be attracted by a lean, dismal boy with a weak stomach, such as A. Jones?”

“Even with these drawbacks he is quite interesting,” asserted Beth.

“He is sure to win her sympathy,” said Louise.

“But, above all,” declared Patsy, “he has an island, inherited from his royal daddy. That island would count for a lot, with any girl!”

CHAPTER VII
THE INVALID

The girls intercepted Maud Stanton when she returned to the hotel that evening, and told her all about A. Jones. The tale was finished long before that dyspeptic youth had wakened from his slumbers. Then they all dressed for dinner and afterward met in the lobby, where Uncle John told them he had arranged to have a big round table prepared for the entire party, including a seat for A. Jones, who might like to join them.

However, the young man did not make his appearance, and as they trooped into the dining room Patsy said resentfully:

"I believe A. Jones is in a trance and needs rolling on a barrel again."

"He probably found himself too weak to appear in public," replied Flo Stanton. "I'm sure if I had been all but drowned a few hours ago, I would prefer bed to society."

"I'm astonished that he summoned energy to visit us at all," declared Mrs. Montrose. "He may be weak and ill, but at least he is grateful."

"Jones seems a vary gentlemanly young fellow," said Mr. Merrick. "He is a bit shy and retiring, which is perhaps due to his lonely life on his island; but I think he has been well brought up."

As they came out from dinner they observed the porters wheeling several big trunks up the east corridor. The end of each trunk was lettered: "A. Jones."

"Well," said Beth, with an amused smile, "he intends to stay a while, anyhow. You'll have a chance to meet him yet, Maud."

"I'm glad of that," answered Maud, "for I am anxious to calculate the worth of the life I helped to save. Your reports are ambiguous, and I am undecided whether you are taking the boy seriously or as a joke. From your description of his personal appearance, I incline to the belief that under ordinary circumstances I would not look twice at Mr. Jones, but having been partly instrumental in preserving him to the world, I naturally feel a proprietary interest in him."

"Of course," said Flo. "He's worth one look, out of pure curiosity; but it would be dreadful to have him tagging you around, expressing his everlasting gratitude."

"I don't imagine he'll do that," observed Patsy Doyle. "A. Jones strikes me as having a fair intellect in a shipwrecked body, and I'll wager a hatpin against a glove-buttoner that he won't bore you. At the same time he may not interest you — or any of us — for long, unless he develops talents we have not discovered. I wonder why he doesn't use his whole name. That mystic

‘A’ puzzles me.”

“It’s an English notion, I suppose,” said Mrs. Montrose.

“But he isn’t English; he’s American.”

“Sangoese,” corrected Beth.

“Perhaps he doesn’t like his name, or is ashamed of it,” suggested Uncle John.

“It may be ‘Absalom,’“ said Flo. “We once knew an actor named Absalom, and he always called himself ‘A. Judson Keith.’ He was a dignified chap, and when we girls one day called him ‘Ab,’ he nearly had hysterics.”

“Mr. Werner had hysterics to-day,” asserted Maud, gravely; “but I didn’t blame him. He sent out a party to ride down a steep hill on horseback, as part of a film story, and a bad accident resulted. One of the horses stepped in a gopher hole and fell, and a dozen others piled up on him, including their riders.”

“How dreadful!” was the general exclamation.

“Several of the horses broke their legs and had to be shot,” continued Maud; “but none of the riders was seriously injured except little Sadie Martin, who was riding a bronco. The poor thing was caught under one of the animals and the doctor says she won’t be able to work again for months.”

“Goodness me! And all for the sake of a picture?” cried Patsy indignantly. “I hope you don’t take such risks, Maud.”

“No; Flo and I have graduated from what is called ‘the bronco bunch,’ and now do platform work entirely. To be sure we assume some minor risks in that, but nothing to compare with the other lines of business.”

“I hope the little girl you mentioned will get well, and has enough money to tide her over this trouble,” said Uncle John anxiously.

“The manager will look after her,” returned Mrs. Montrose. “Our people are very good about that and probably Sadie Martin’s salary will continue regularly until she is able to work again.”

“Well,” said Beth, drawing a long breath, “I suppose we shall read all about it in the morning papers.”

“Oh, no!” exclaimed Maud and added: “These accidents never get into the papers. They happen quite often, around Los Angeles, where ten thousand or more people make their living from motion pictures; but the public is protected from all knowledge of such disasters, which would detract from their pleasure in pictures and perhaps render all films unpopular.”

“I thought the dear public loved the dare-devil acts,” remarked Arthur Weldon.

“Oh, it does,” agreed Mrs. Montrose; “yet those who attend the picture theatres seem not to consider the action taking place before their eyes to be

real. Here are pictures only — a sort of amplified story book — and the spectators like them exciting; but if they stopped to reflect that men and women in the flesh were required to do these dangerous feats for their entertainment, many would be too horrified to enjoy the scenes. Of course the makers of the pictures guard their actors in all possible ways; yet, even so, casualties are bound to occur."

They had retired to a cosy corner of the public drawing room and were conversing on this interesting topic when they espied A. Jones walking toward them. The youth was attired in immaculate evening dress, but his step was slow and dragging and his face pallid.

Arthur and Uncle John drew up an easy chair for him while Patsy performed the introductions to Mrs. Montrose and her nieces. Very earnestly the boy grasped the hand of the young girl who had been chiefly responsible for his rescue, thanking her more by his manner than in his few carefully chosen words.

As for Maud, she smilingly belittled her effort, saying lightly: "I know I must not claim that it didn't amount to anything, for your life is valuable, Mr. Jones, I'm sure. But I had almost nothing to do beyond calling Patsy Doyle's attention to you and then swimming out to keep you afloat until help came. I'm a good swimmer, so it was not at all difficult."

"Moreover," he added, "you would have done the same thing for anyone in distress."

"Certainly."

"I realize that. I am quite a stranger to you. Nevertheless, my gratitude is your due and I hope you will accept it as the least tribute I can pay you. Of all that throng of bathers, only you noticed my peril and came to my assistance."

"Fate!" whispered Flo impressively.

"Nonsense," retorted her sister. "I happened to be the only one looking out to sea. I think, Mr. Jones, you owe us apologies more than gratitude, for your folly was responsible for the incident. You were altogether too venturesome. Such action on this coast, where the surf rolls high and creates an undertow, is nothing less than foolhardy."

"I'm sure you are right," he admitted. "I did not know this coast, and foolishly imagined the old Pacific, in which I have sported and played since babyhood, was my friend wherever I found it."

"I hope you are feeling better and stronger this evening," said Mr. Merrick. "We expected you to join us at dinner."

"I — I seldom dine in public," he explained, flushing slightly. "My bill-of-fare is very limited, you know, owing to my — my condition; and so I

carry my food-tablets around with me, wherever I go, and eat them in my own room."

"Food-tablets!" cried Patsy, horrified.

"Yes. They are really wafers — very harmless — and I am permitted to eat nothing else."

"No wonder your stomach is bad and you're a living skeleton!" asserted the girl, with scorn.

"My dear," said Uncle John, gently chiding her, "we must give Mr. Jones the credit for knowing what is best for him."

"Not me, sir!" protested the boy, in haste. "I'm very ignorant about — about health, and medicine and the like. But in New York I consulted a famous doctor, and he told me what to do."

"That's right," nodded the old gentleman, who had never been ill in his life. "Always take the advice of a doctor, listen to the advice of a lawyer, and refuse the advise of a banker. That's worldly wisdom."

"Were you ill when you left your home?" inquired Mrs. Montrose, looking at the young man with motherly sympathy.

"Not when I left the island," he said. "I was pretty well up to that time. But during the long ocean voyage I was terribly sick, and by the time we got to San Francisco my stomach was a wreck. Then I tried to eat the rich food at your restaurants and hotels — we live very plainly in Sangoa, you know — and by the time I got to New York I was a confirmed dyspeptic and suffering tortures. Everything I ate disagreed with me. So I went to a great specialist, who has invented these food tablets for cases just like mine, and he ordered me to eat nothing else."

"And are you better?" asked Maud.

He hesitated.

"Sometimes I imagine I am. I do not suffer so much pain, but I — I seem to grow weaker all the time."

"No wonder!" cried Patsy. "If you starve yourself you can't grow strong."

He looked at her with an expression of surprise. Then he asked abruptly:

"What would you advise me to do, Miss Doyle?"

A chorus of laughter greeted this question. Patsy flushed a trifle but covered her confusion by demanding: "Would you follow my advice?"

He made a little grimace. There was humor in the boy, despite his dyspepsia.

"I understand there is a law forbidding suicide," he replied. "But I asked your advice in an attempt to discover what you thought of my absurd condition. Now that you call my attention to it, I believe I *am* starving myself. I need stronger and more nourishing food; and yet the best specialist

in your progressive country has regulated my diet."

"I don't believe much in specialists," asserted Patsy. "If *you* do, go ahead and kill yourself, in defiance of the law. According to common sense you ought to eat plenty of good, wholesome food, but you may be so disordered — in your interior — that even that would prove fatal. So I won't recommend it."

"I'm doomed, either way," he said quietly. "I know that."

"*How* do you know it?" demanded Maud in a tone of resentment.

He was silent a moment. Then he replied:

"I cannot remember how we drifted into this very personal argument. It seems wrong for me to be talking about myself to those who are practically strangers, and you will realize how unused I am to the society of ladies by considering my rudeness in this interview."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Uncle John; "we are merely considering you as a friend. You must believe that we are really interested in you," he continued, laying a kindly hand on the young fellow's shoulder. "You seem in a bad way, it's true, but your condition is far from desperate. Patsy's frankness — it's her one fault and her chief virtue — led you to talk about yourself, and I'm surprised to find you so despondent and — and — what do you call it, Beth?"

"Pessimistic?"

"That's it — pessimistic."

"But you're wrong, sir!" said the boy with a smile; "I may not be elated over my fatal disease, but neither am I despondent. I force myself to keep going when I wonder how the miserable machine responds to my urging, and I shall keep it going, after a fashion, until the final breakdown. Fate weaves the thread of our lives, I truly believe, and she didn't use very good material when she started mine. But that doesn't matter," he added quickly. "I'm trying to do a little good as I go along and not waste my opportunities. I'm obeying my doctor's orders and facing the future with all the philosophy I can summon. So now, if you — who have given me a new lease of life — think I can use it to any better advantage, I am willing to follow your counsel."

His tone was more pathetic than his words. Maud, as she looked at the boy and tried to realize that his days were numbered, felt her eyes fill with tears. Patsy sniffed scornfully, but said nothing. It was Beth who remarked with an air of unconcern that surprised those who knew her unsympathetic nature:

"It would be presumptuous for us to interfere, either with Fate or with Nature. You're probably dead wrong about your condition, for a sick person

has no judgment whatever, but I've noticed the mind has a good deal to do with one's health. If you firmly believe you're going to die, why, what can you expect?"

No one cared to contradict this and a pause followed that was growing awkward when they were all aroused by the sound of hasty footsteps approaching their corner.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAGIC OF A NAME

The newcomer proved to be Goldstein, the manager of the Continental. His face was frowning and severe as he rudely marched up to the group and, without the formality of a greeting, pointedly addressed the Stanton girls.

"What does it mean?" he demanded in evident excitement, for his voice shook and the accusing finger he held out trembled. "How does it happen that my people, under contract to work for the Continental, are working for other firms?"

Maud paled and her eyes glistened with resentment as she rose and faced her manager. Florence pulled her sister's sleeve and said with a forced laugh: "Sit down, Maud; the man has probably been drinking."

He turned on the young girl fiercely, but now it was Arthur Weldon who seized the manager's arm and whirled him around.

"Sir, you are intruding," he said sternly. "If you have business with these ladies, choose the proper time and place to address them."

"I have!" cried Goldstein, blusteringly. "They have treated me shamefully — unprofessionally! They have played me a trick, and I've the right to demand why they are working for a rival firm while in my pay."

Mrs. Montrose now arose and said with quiet dignity:

"Mr. Goldstein, you are intruding, as Mr. Weldon says. But you have said so much to defame my nieces in the eyes of our friends, here assembled, that you must explain yourself more fully."

The manager seemed astonished by his reception. He looked from one to another and said more mildly:

"It is easy enough for *me* to explain, but how can the Stantons explain their conduct? They are under contract to act exclusively for the Continental Film Company and I pay them a liberal salary. Yet only yesterday, when I was kind enough to give them a holiday, they went down to the beach and posed for a picture for our rivals, the Corona Company!"

"You are mistaken, sir!" retorted Arthur. "The young ladies were in our company the entire afternoon and they did not pose for any picture whatever."

"Don't tell me!" cried Goldstein. "I've just seen the picture down town. I was going by one of the theatres when I noticed a placard that read: 'Sensational Film by Maud Stanton, the Queen of Motion Picture Actresses, entitled "A Gallant Rescue!" First run to-night.' I went in and saw the picture — with my own eyes! — and I saw Maud Stanton in a sea scene, rescuing a

man who was drowning. Don't deny it, Miss," he added, turning upon Maud fiercely. "I saw it with my own eyes — not an hour ago!"

After a moment's amazed silence his hearers broke into a chorus of laughter, led by Flo, who was almost hysterical. Even A. Jones smiled indulgently upon the irate manager, who was now fairly bristling with indignation.

"The Corona people," remarked Arthur Weldon, "are quite enterprising. I did not know they had a camera-man at the beach yesterday, but he must have secured a very interesting picture. It was not posed, Mr. Goldstein, but taken from life."

"It was Maud Stanton!" asserted, the manager.

"Yes; she and some others. A man was really drowning and the brave girl swam to his rescue, without a thought of posing."

"I don't believe it!" cried the man rudely.

Here A. Jones struggled to his feet.

"It is true," he said. "I was the drowning man whom Miss Stanton saved."

Goldstein eyed him shrewdly.

"Perhaps you were," he admitted, "for the man in the picture was about your style of make-up. But how can you prove it was not a put-up job with the Corona people? How do I know you are not all in the employ of the Corona people?"

"I give you my word."

"Pah! I don't know you."

"I see you don't," returned the youth stiffly.

"Here is my card. Perhaps you will recognize the name."

He fumbled in his pocket, took out a card and handed it to the manager. Goldstein looked at it, started, turned red and then white and began bobbing his head with absurd deference to the youth.

"Pardon, Mr. Jones — pardon!" he gasped. "I — I heard you were in our neighborhood, but I — I did not recognize you. I — I hope you will pardon me, Mr. Jones! I was angry at what I supposed was the treachery of an employee. You will — will — understand that, I am sure. It is my duty to protect the interests of the Continental, you know, sir. But it's all right now, of course! Isn't it all right now, Mr. Jones?"

"You'd better go, Goldstein," said the boy in a weary tone, and sat down again.

The manager hesitated. Then he bowed to Maud Stanton and to the others, murmuring:

"All a mistake, you see; all a mistake. I — I beg everybody's pardon."

With this he backed away, still bowing, and finally turned and beat a hasty

retreat. But no one was noticing him especially. All eyes were regarding the boy with a new curiosity.

"That Goldstein is an ill-bred boor!" remarked Uncle John in an annoyed tone.

"I suppose," said Maud, slowly, "he thought he was right in demanding an explanation. There is great rivalry between the various film manufacturers and it was rather mean of the Corona to put my name on that placard."

"It's wonderful!" exclaimed Patsy. "How did they get the picture, do you suppose?"

"They have camera-men everywhere, looking for some picture worth while." explained Mrs. Montrose. "If there's a fire, the chances are a camera-man is on the spot before the firemen arrive. If there's an accident, it is often caught by the camera before the victim realizes what has happened. Perhaps a camera-man has been at the beach for weeks, waiting patiently for some tragedy to occur. Anyway, he was on hand yesterday and quietly ran his film during the excitement of the rescue. He was in rare luck to get Maud, because she is a favorite with the public; but it was not fair to connect her name with the picture, when they know she is employed by the Continental."

Young Jones rose from his chair with a gesture of weariness.

"If you will excuse me," he said, "I will go to my room. Our little conversation has given me much pleasure; I'm so alone in the world. Perhaps you will allow me to join you again — some other time?"

They hastened to assure him his presence would always be welcome. Patsy even added, with her cheery smile, that they felt a certain proprietorship in him since they had dragged him from a watery grave. The boy showed, as he walked away, that he was not yet very steady on his feet, but whether the weakness was the result of his malady or his recent trying experience they could not determine.

"What staggers me," said Maud, looking after him, "is the effect his name had on Goldstein, who has little respect or consideration for anyone. Who do you suppose A. Jones is?"

"Why, he has told us," replied Louise. "He is an islander, on his first visit to this country."

"He must be rather more than that," declared Arthur. "Do you remember what the manager said to him?"

"Yes," said Beth. "He had heard that A. Jones was in this neighborhood, but had never met him. A. Jones was a person of sufficient importance to make the general manager of the Continental Film Company tremble in his boots."

"He really did tremble," asserted Patsy, "and he was abject in his

apologies."

"Showing," added Flo Stanton, "that Goldstein is afraid of him."

"I wonder why," said Maud.

"It is all very easy of solution," remarked Arthur. "Goldstein believes that Jones is in the market to buy films. Perhaps he's going to open a motion picture theatre on his island. So the manager didn't want to antagonize a good customer."

"That's it," said Uncle John, nodding approval. "There's no great mystery about young Jones, I'm sure."

CHAPTER IX
DOCTOR PATSY

Next morning Uncle John and the Weldons — including the precious baby — went for a ride into the mountains, while Beth and Patsy took their embroidery into a sunny corner of the hotel lobby.

It was nearly ten o'clock when A. Jones discovered the two girls and came tottering toward them. Tottering is the right word; he fairly swayed as he made his way to the secluded corner.

"I wish he'd use a cane," muttered Beth in an undertone. "I have the feeling that he's liable to bump his nose any minute."

Patsy drew up a chair for him, although he endeavored to prevent her.

"Are you feeling better this morning?" she inquired.

"I — I think so," he answered doubtfully. "I don't seem to get back my strength, you see."

"Were you stronger before your accident?" asked Beth.

"Yes, indeed. I went swimming, you remember. But perhaps I was not strong enough to do that. I — I'm very careful of myself, yet I seem to grow weaker all the time."

There was a brief silence, during which the girls plied their needles.

"Are you going to stay in this hotel?" demanded Patsy, in her blunt way.

"For a time, I think. It is very pleasant here," he said.

"Have you had breakfast?"

"I took a food-tablet at daybreak."

"Huh!" A scornful exclamation. Then she glanced at the open door of the dining-hall and laying aside her work she rose with a determined air and said:

"Come with me!"

"Where?"

For answer she assisted him to rise. Then she took his hand and marched him across the lobby to the dining room.

He seemed astonished at this proceeding but made no resistance. Seated at a small table she called a waitress and said:

"Bring a cup of chocolate, a soft-boiled egg and some toast."

"Pardon me, Miss Doyle," he said; "I thought you had breakfasted."

"So I have," she replied. "The breakfast I've ordered is for you, and you're going to eat it if I have to ram it down your throat."

"But — Miss Doyle!"

"You've told us you are doomed. Well, you're going to die with a full stomach."

“But the doctor — ”

“Bother the doctor! I’m your doctor, now, and I won’t send in a bill, thank your stars.”

He looked at her with his sad little smile.

“Isn’t this a rather high-handed proceeding, Miss Doyle?”

“Perhaps.”

“I haven’t employed you as my physician, you know.”

“True. But you’ve deliberately put yourself in my power.”

“How?”

“In the first place, you tagged us here to this hotel.”

“You don’t mind, do you?”

“Not in the least. It’s a public hostelry. In the second place, you confided to us your disease and your treatment of it — which was really none of our business.”

“I — I was wrong to do that. But you led me on and — I’m so lonely — and you all seemed so generous and sympathetic — that I — I — ”

“That you unwittingly posted us concerning your real trouble. Do you realize what it is? You’re a hypo — hypo — what do they call it? — hypochondriac!”

“I am not!”

“And your doctor — your famous specialist — is a fool.”

“Oh, Miss Doyle!”

“Also you are a — a chump, to follow his fool advice. You don’t need sympathy, Mr. A. Jones. What you need is a slapstick.”

“A — a — ”

“A slapstick. And that’s what you’re going to get if you don’t obey orders.”

Here the maid set down the breakfast, ranging the dishes invitingly before the invalid. His face had expressed all the emotions from amazement to terror during Patsy’s tirade and now he gazed from her firm, determined features to the eggs and toast, in an uncertain, helpless way that caused the girl a severe effort to curb a burst of laughter.

“Now, then,” she said, “get busy. I’ll fix your egg. Do you want more sugar in your chocolate? Taste it and see. And if you don’t butter that toast before it gets cold it won’t be fit to eat.”

He looked at her steadily now, again smiling.

“You’re not joking, Miss Doyle?”

“I’m in dead earnest.”

“Of course you realize this is the — the end?”

“Of your foolishness? I hope so. You used to eat like a sensible boy,

didn't you?"

"When I was well."

"You're well now. Your only need is sustaining, strengthening food. I came near ordering you a beefsteak, but I'll reserve that for lunch."

He sipped the chocolate.

"Yes; it needs more sugar," he said quietly. "Will you please butter my toast? It seems to me such a breakfast is worth months of suffering. How delicious this egg is! It was the fragrance of the egg and toast that conquered me. That, and — "

"And one sensible, determined girl. Don't look at me as if I were a murderess! I'm your best friend — a friend in need. And don't choke down your food. Eat slowly. Fletcherize — chew your food, you know. I know you're nearly famished, but you must gradually accustom yourself to a proper diet."

He obeyed meekly. Patsy's face was calm, but her heart beat fast, with a thrill of fear she could not repress. Acting on impulse, as she had, the girl now began to consider that she was personally responsible for whatever result might follow this radical treatment for dyspepsia. Had she been positive it *was* dyspepsia, she would never have dared interfere with a doctor's orders; but she felt that the boy needed food and would die unless he had it. He might die from the effect of this unusual repast, in which case she would never forgive herself.

Meantime, the boy had cast aside all fear. He had protested, indeed, but his protests being overruled he accepted his food and its possible consequences with philosophic resignation and a growing satisfaction.

Patsy balked on the third slice of toast and took it away from him. She also denied him a second cup of chocolate. He leaned back in his chair with a sigh of content and said:

"Bless the hen that laid that egg! No dainty was ever more delicious. And now," he added, rising, "let us go and inquire the address of a good undertaker. I have made my will, and I'd like to be cremated — it's so much nicer than the old-fashioned burial, don't you think?"

"I'll attend to all that, if you wish," she replied, trying to repress a shudder as she followed him from the room. "Do you smoke?"

"I used to, but the doctor forbade it; so I gave it up entirely."

"Go over to that stand and buy a cigar. Then you may sit beside Beth and me and smoke it."

The girl did not wholly approve of smoking and had often chided Uncle John and her father and Arthur Weldon for indulging in the habit; but this advice to young Jones was given in desperation, because all the men of her

family stoutly affirmed that a cigar after a meal assisted digestion. She resumed her former seat beside Beth, and her cousin quickly read the anxiety on her face.

"What did you do, Patricia?"

"I fed him."

"Did he really eat?"

"Like a starved cat."

"Hm-m-m," said Beth. "What next, I wonder?"

Patsy wondered, too, the cold shivers chasing one another up and down her back. The boy was coming toward them, coolly puffing a cigar. He did not seem to totter quite so much as before, but he was glad to sink into an easy chair.

"How do you feel?" asked Beth, regarding him curiously.

"Like one of those criminals who are pampered with all the good things of life before being led to the scaffold."

"Any pains?"

He shook his head.

"Not yet. I've asked the clerk, whenever I signal him, to send someone to carry me to my room. If I'm not able to say good-bye to you, please accept now my thanks for all your kindness to a stranger. You see, I'm not sure whether I'll have a sudden seizure or the pains will come on gradually."

"What pains?" demanded Patsy.

"I can't explain them. Don't you believe something is bound to happen?" he inquired, nervously removing the ash from his cigar.

"To be sure. You're going to get well."

He made no reply, but sat watching Beth's nimble fingers. Patsy was too excited to resume her embroidery.

"I wonder if you are old enough to smoke?" remarked Beth.

"I'm over twenty-one."

"Indeed! We decided you were about eighteen."

"But we are not Spanish in Sangoa."

"What are your people?"

"Formerly all Americans. The younger generation are, like myself I suppose, Sangoans by birth. But there isn't a black or yellow or brown man on our island."

"How many inhabitants has Sangoa?"

"About six hundred, all told."

There was silence for a while.

"Any pains yet?" inquired Beth.

"Not yet. But I'm feeling drowsy. With your permission I'll lie down and

take a nap. I slept very little last night."

He threw away his cigar, which he had smoked nearly to the end, and rising without assistance, bowed and walked away.

"Will he ever waken, I wonder?" said Beth softly.

"Of course," declared Patsy. "He has crossed the Rubicon and is going to get well. I feel it in my bones!"

"Let us hope," responded Beth, "that Ajo also feels it in his bones, rather than in his stomach."

CHAPTER X

STILL A MYSTERY

The day advanced to luncheon time and Uncle John and the Weldons came back from their mountain trip. Hollywood is in the foothills and over the passes are superb automobile roads into the fruitful valleys of San Fernando and La Canada.

"Seen anything of the boy — A. Jones?" inquired Arthur.

"Yes; and perhaps we've seen the last of him," answered Beth.

"Oh. Has he gone?"

"No one knows. Patsy fed him and he went to sleep. What has happened since we cannot tell."

The girls then related the experiences of the morning, at which both Uncle John and Arthur looked solemn and uncomfortable. But Louise said calmly:

"I think Patsy was quite right. I wouldn't have dared such a thing myself, but I'm sure that boy needed a square meal more than anything. If he dies, that breakfast has merely hastened his end; but if he doesn't die it will do him good."

"There's another possibility," remarked Uncle John. "He may be suffering agonies with no one to help him."

Patsy's face was white as chalk. The last hour or two had brought her considerable anxiety and her uncle's horrible suggestion quite unnerved her. She stole away to the office and inquired the number of Mr. Jones' room. It was on the ground floor and easily reached by a passage. The girl tiptoed up to the door and putting her ear to the panel listened intently. A moment later a smile broke over her face; she chuckled delightedly and then turned and ran buck to her friends.

"He's snoring like a walrus!" she cried triumphantly.

"Are you sure they are not groans?" asked Arthur.

"Pah! Can't I recognize a snore when I hear it? And I'll bet it's the first sound sleep he's had in a month."

Mr. Merrick and Arthur went to the door of the boy's room to satisfy themselves that Patsy was not mistaken, and the regularity of the sounds quickly convinced them the girl was right. So they had a merry party at luncheon, calling Patsy "Doctor" with grave deference and telling her she had probably saved the life of A. Jones for a second time.

"And now," proposed Uncle John, when the repast was over, "let us drive down to the sea and have a look at that beautiful launch that came in yesterday. Everyone is talking about it and they say it belongs to some foreign prince."

So they motored to Santa Monica and spent the afternoon on the sands, watching the bathers and admiring the graceful outlines of the big yacht lying at anchor a half mile from the shore. The boat was something of a mystery to everybody. It was named the "Arabella" and had come from Hawaii via San Francisco; but what it was doing here and who the owner might be were questions no one seemed able to answer. Rumor had it that a Japanese prince had come in it to inspect the coast line, but newspaper reporters were forbidden to scale the side and no satisfaction was given their eager questioning by the bluff old captain who commanded the craft. So the girls snapped a few kodak pictures of the handsome yacht and then lost interest in it.

That evening they met Mrs. Montrose and the Stanton girls at dinner and told them about the boy, who still remained invisible. Uncle John had listened at his door again, but the snores had ceased and a deathlike silence seemed to pervade the apartment. This rendered them all a trifle uneasy and when they left the dining room Arthur went to the hotel clerk and asked:

"Have you seen Mr. Jones this evening?"

"No," was the reply. "Do you know him?"

"Very slightly."

"Well, he's the queerest guest we've ever had. The first day he ate nothing at all. This morning I hear he had a late breakfast. Wasn't around to lunch, but a little while ago we sent a meal to his room that would surprise you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. A strange order it was! Broiled mushrooms, pancakes with maple syrup and ice cream. How is that for a mix-up — and at dinner time, too!" said the clerk, disgustedly.

Arthur went back and reported.

"All right," said Patsy, much relieved. "We've got him started and now he can take care of himself. Come, Uncle; let's all go down town and see the picture that drove Mr. Goldstein crazy."

"He was very decent to us to-day," asserted Flo Stanton.

"Did he ask any explanation about Maud's appearing in the picture of a rival company?" inquired Arthur.

"No, not a word."

"Did he mention Mr. Jones, who conquered him so mysteriously?" asked Beth.

"Not at all. Goldstein confined himself strictly to business; but he treated us with unusual courtesy," explained Maud.

They were curious to see the films of the rescue, and the entire party rode to the down-town theatre where the Corona picture was being run. Outside

the entrance they found the audacious placard, worded just as Goldstein had reported, and they all agreed it was a mean trick to claim another firm's star as their own.

"I do not think the Corona Company is responsible for this announcement," said Uncle John. "It is probably an idea of the theatre proprietor, who hoped to attract big business in that way."

"He has succeeded," grumbled Arthur, as he took his place at the end of a long line of ticket buyers.

The picture, as it flashed on the screen, positively thrilled them. First was shown the crowd of merry bathers, with Patsy and Maud standing in the water a little apart from the others. Then the boy — far out beyond the rest — threw up his arms, struggling desperately. Maud swam swiftly toward him, Patsy making for the shore. The launching of the boat, the race to rescue, Maud's effort to keep the drowning one afloat, and the return to the shore, where an excited crowd surrounded them — all was clearly shown in the picture. Now they had the advantage of observing the expressions on the faces of the bathers when they discovered a tragedy was being enacted in their midst. The photographs were so full of action that the participants now looked upon their adventure in a new light and regarded it far more seriously than before.

The picture concluded with the scene where Uncle John lifted the body into the automobile and dashed away with it to the hospital.

Maud Stanton, used as she was to seeing herself in motion pictures, was even more impressed than the others when observing her own actions at a time when she was wholly unconscious that a camera-man had his lens focused upon her.

"It's a great picture!" whispered Flo, as they made their way out of the crowded theatre. "Why can't all our films be as natural and absorbing as this one?"

"Because," said her sister, "in this case there is no acting. The picture carries conviction with a force that no carefully rehearsed scene could ever accomplish."

"That is true," agreed her Aunt Jane. "The nature scenes are the best, after all."

"The most unsatisfactory pictures I have ever seen," remarked Uncle John, "were those of prominent men, and foreign kings, and the like, who stop before the camera and bow as awkwardly as a camel. They know they are posing, and in spite of their public experience they're as bashful as schoolboys or as arrogant as policemen, according to their personal characteristics."

“Did you notice the mob of children in that theatre?” asked Patsy, as they proceeded homeward. “I wish there were more pictures made that are suitable to their understandings.”

“They enjoy anything in the way of a picture,” said Arthur. “It isn’t necessary to cater to children; they’ll go anyhow, whatever is shown.”

“That may be, to an extent, true,” said Beth. “Children are fascinated by any sort of motion pictures, but a lot of them must be wholly incomprehensible to the child mind. I agree with Patsy that the little ones ought to have their own theatres and their own pictures.”

“That will come, in time,” prophesied Aunt Jane. “Already the film makers are recognizing the value of the children’s patronage and are trying to find subjects that especially appeal to them.”

They reached the hotel soon after ten o’clock and found “Ajo” seated in the lobby. He appeared much brighter and stronger than the day before and rose to greet Patsy with a smile that had lost much of its former sad expression.

“Congratulate me, Dr. Doyle,” said he. “I’m still alive, and — thanks to your prescription — going as well as could be expected.”

“I’m glad I did the right thing,” she replied; “but we were all a little worried for fear I’d make a mistake.”

“I have just thrown away about a thousand of those food-tablets,” he informed her with an air of pride. “I am positive there is no substitute for real food, whatever the specialists may say. In fact,” he continued more soberly, “I believe you have rescued me a second time from certain death, for now I have acquired a new hope and have made up my mind to get well.”

“Be careful not to overdo it,” cautioned Uncle John. “You ordered a queer supper, we hear.”

“But it seemed to agree with me. I’ve had a delightful sleep — the first sound sleep in a month — and already I feel like a new man. I waited up to tell you this, hoping you would be interested.”

“We are!” exclaimed Patsy, who felt both pride and pleasure. “This evening we have been to see the motion picture of your rescue from drowning.”

“Oh. How did you like it?”

“It’s a splendid picture. I’m not sure it will interest others as much as ourselves, yet the people present seemed to like it.”

“Well it was their last chance to observe my desperate peril and my heroic rescue,” said the boy. “The picture will not be shown after to-night.”

“Why not?” they asked, in surprise.

“I bought the thing this afternoon. It didn’t seem to me quite modest to

exploit our little adventure in public."

This was a new phase of the strange boy's character and the girls did not know whether to approve it or not.

"It must have cost you something!" remarked Flo, the irrepressible. "Besides, how could you do it while you were asleep?"

"Why, I wakened long enough to use the telephone," he replied with a smile. "There are more wonderful inventions in the world than motion pictures, you know."

"But you like motion pictures, don't you?" asked Maud, wondering why he had suppressed the film in question.

"Very much. In fact, I am more interested in them than in anything else, not excepting the telephone — which makes Aladdin's lamp look like a firefly in the sunshine."

"I suppose," said Flo, staring into his face with curious interest, "that you will introduce motion pictures into your island of Sangoa, when you return?"

"I suppose so," he answered, a little absently. "I had not considered that seriously, as yet, but my people would appreciate such a treat, I'm sure."

This speech seemed to destroy, in a manner, their shrewd conjecture that he was in America to purchase large quantities of films. Why, then, should Goldstein have paid such abject deference to this unknown islander?

In his own room, after the party had separated for the night, Mr. Merrick remarked to Arthur Weldon as they sat smoking their cigars:

"Young Jones is evidently possessed of some means."

"So it seems," replied Arthur. "Perhaps his father, the scientific recluse, had accumulated some money, and the boy came to America to get rid of it. He will be extravagant and wasteful for awhile, and then go back to his island with the idea that he has seen the world."

Uncle John nodded.

"He is a rather clean-cut young fellow," said he, "and the chances are he won't become dissipated, even though he loses his money through lack of worldly knowledge or business experience. A boy brought up and educated on an island can't be expected to prove very shrewd, and whatever the extent of his fortune it is liable to melt like snow in the sunshine."

"After all," returned Arthur, "this experience won't hurt him. He will still have his island to return to."

They smoked for a time in silence.

"Has it ever occurred to you, sir," said Arthur, "that the story Jones has related to us, meager though it is, bears somewhat the stamp of a fairy tale?"

Uncle John removed his cigar and looked reflectively at the ash.

"You mean that the boy is not what he seems?"

“Scarcely that, sir. He seems like a good boy, in the main. But his story is — such as one might invent if he were loath to tell the truth.”

Uncle John struck a match and relit his cigar.

“I believe in A. Jones, and I see no reason to doubt his story,” he asserted. “If real life was not full of romance and surprises, the novelists would be unable to interest us in their books.”

CHAPTER XI

A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

The day had not started auspiciously for the Stanton sisters. Soon after they arrived at the Continental Film Company's plant Maud had wrenched her ankle by stumbling over some loose planks which had been carelessly left on the open-air stage, and she was now lying upon a sofa in the manager's room with her limb bandaged and soaked with liniment.

Flo was having troubles, too. A girl who had been selected by the producer to fall from an aeroplane in mid-air had sent word she was ill and could not work to-day, and the producer had ordered Flo to prepare for the part. Indignantly she sought the manager, to file a protest, and while she waited in the anteroom for an audience, Mr. A. Jones of Sangoa came in and greeted her with a bow and a smile.

"Good gracious! Where did *you* come from?" she inquired.

"My hotel. I've just driven over to see Goldstein," he replied.

"You'll have to wait, I'm afraid," she warned him. "The manager is busy just now. I've been wiggling on this bench half an hour, and haven't seen him yet — and my business is very important."

"So is mine, Miss Flo," he rejoined, looking at her with an odd expression. Then, as a stenographer came hurrying from the inner room, he stopped the girl and said:

"Please take my card to Mr. Goldstein."

"Oh, he won't see anybody now, for he's busy talking with one of our producers. You'll have to call again," she said flippantly. But even as she spoke she glanced at the card, started and turned red. "Oh, pardon me!" she added hastily and fled back to the managerial sanctum.

"That's funny!" muttered Flo, half to herself.

"Yes," he said, laughing, "my cards are charged with electricity, and they're bound to galvanize anyone in this establishment. Come in, Miss Flo," he added, as Goldstein rushed out of his office to greet the boy effusively; "your business takes precedence to mine, you know."

The manager ushered them into his office, a big room with a busy aspect. At one end were two or three girls industriously thumping typewriters; McNeil, the producer, was sorting manuscript on Goldstein's own desk; a young man who served as the manager's private secretary was poring over a voluminous record-book, wherein were listed all the films ever made by the manufacturers of the world. On a sofa in a far corner reclined the injured "star" of the company, Maud Stanton, who — being half asleep at the moment — did not notice the entrance of her sister and young Jones.

“Sit down, Mr. Jones; pray sit down!” exclaimed Goldstein eagerly, pointing to his own chair. “Would you like me to clear the room, so that our conversation may be private?”

“Not yet,” replied the boy, refusing the seat of honor and taking a vacant chair. “Miss Stanton has precedence, and I believe she wishes to speak with you.”

Goldstein took his seat at the desk and cast an inquiring glance at Flo.

“Well?” he demanded, impatiently.

“Mr. Werner has ordered me to do the airship stunt for his picture, because Nance Holden isn’t here to-day,” began the girl.

“Well, why annoy me with such trifles? Werner knows what he wants, and you’ll do as well as the Holden girl.”

“But I don’t want to tumble out of that airship,” she protested.

“There’s no danger. Life nets will be spread underneath the aeroplane,” said the manager. “The camera merely catches you as you are falling, so the thing won’t be more than twenty or thirty feet from the ground. Now run away and don’t bother. I must speak with Mr. Jones.”

“But I’m afraid, Mr. Goldstein!” pleaded the girl. “I don’t want to go up in the aeroplane, and these stunts are not in my line, or what I was engaged to do.”

“You’ll do what I tell you!” asserted the manager, with marked irritation. “I won’t stand for any rebellion among my actors, and you’ll do as Werner orders or you’ll forfeit your week’s pay.”

Here Maud half rose from her sofa to address her employer.

“Please, Mr. Goldstein,” she said, “don’t make Flo do that fall. There are plenty of other girls to take her place, and she — ”

“Silence, Miss Stanton!” roared the manager. “You’ll disrupt all discipline if you interfere. A nice time we’d have here, if we allowed our actors to choose their own parts! I insist that your sister obey my producer’s orders.”

“Quite right, Goldstein,” remarked young Jones, in his quiet voice. “You’ve carried your point and maintained discipline. I like that. Miss Flo Stanton will do exactly what you request her to do. But you’re going to change your mind and think better of her protest. I’m almost sure, Goldstein, from the expression of your face, that you intend to issue prompt orders that another girl must take her place.”

Goldstein looked at him steadily a moment and the arrogant expression changed to one of meek subservience.

“To be sure!” he muttered. “You have read my mind accurately, Mr. Jones. Here, Judd,” to his secretary, “find Werner and tell him I don’t approve his choice of Flo Stanton as a substitute for Nance Holden. Let’s

see; tell him to put that Moore girl in her place."

The young fellow bowed and left the room. McNeil smiled slyly to himself as he bent over his manuscript. Jones had gone to Maud's side to inquire anxiously after her injury.

"I don't imagine it will amount to much," she said reassuringly. "Mr. Goldstein wants me to rest quietly until this afternoon, when our new photo-play is to be produced. I'm to do the leading part, you know, and he thinks I'll be able by that time to get through all right."

Goldstein overheard this and came toward them, rubbing his hands together nervously.

"That seems unwise, Miss Maud," objected Jones. "To use your foot so soon might make it much worse. Let us postpone the play until some other time."

Goldstein's face was a study. His body twitched spasmodically.

"Oh, Mr. Jones!" he exclaimed; "that's impossible; it wouldn't do at all! We've been rehearsing this play and preparing for its production for the last two weeks, and to-day all our actors and assistants are here and ready to make the picture. I've already postponed it four hours — until this afternoon — to favor Miss Stanton, but, really — "

"Never mind the details," interrupted the boy. "I do not consider Miss Stanton able to do her work to-day. Send her back to her hotel at once and order the play postponed until she is able to attend."

Goldstein was greatly disturbed by this order, issued quietly but in a tone of command that brooked no opposition. Again he glanced shrewdly at the young man, and in the manager's face astonishment and fear were intermingled.

"Sir," he said in repressed tones, for he was really angry and had been accustomed to wield the power of an autocrat in this establishment, "you are placing me in an embarrassing position. I am expected to make every day count, so that the Continental may pay a liberal profit to its owners. To follow your instructions would burden us with an enormous expense, quite useless, I assure you, and — "

"Very well. Incur the expense, Goldstein."

"All right, Mr. Jones. Excuse me a moment while I issue instructions for the postponement."

McNeil rose and faced the manager.

"Are you really going to postpone this important play?" he demanded, in a voice of wonder.

Goldstein was glad to vent his chagrin on the producer.

"No insolence, sir!" he roared. "Come with me, and," as he dragged

McNeil to the door and paused there, “if you dare lisp a word of what you’ve overheard, I’ll fire you like a shot!”

When they had left the room Maud said with a puzzled air:

“I can’t understand your power over Goldstein, Mr. Jones. He is a dictator — almost a tyrant — and in this place his word is law. At least, it was until you came, and — and — ”

“Don’t try to understand it, Miss Stanton,” he answered in a careless manner. “Do you think you can manage to crawl to the automobile, or shall we carry you?”

“I’ll bet Goldstein has murdered someone, and Mr. Jones knows all about it!” exclaimed Flo, who had been an interested witness of the scene.

Maud stood up, with her sister’s support, and tested her lame ankle.

“It still hurts a little,” she said, “but I can manage to hobble on it.”

“Get your sister’s wraps,” the boy said to Flo, “and we’ll send her straight home.”

“I expect Goldstein will dock my salary, as well as fine Flo,” remarked Maud musingly, as she waited for her hat and coat. “He obeyed you very meekly, Mr. Jones, but I could see a wicked glitter in his eye, nevertheless.”

“I am sure the manager will neither dock nor fine either of you,” he replied reassuringly. “On the contrary, you might sue the company for damages, for leaving that lumber where you would fall over it.”

“Oh, no,” she returned, laughing at the idea. “We have signed contracts waiving any damages for injuries sustained while at work on the premises. We all have to do that, you know, because the business is hazardous at its best. On the other hand, Mr. Goldstein has a physician and surgeon always within call, in case of accident, and the service is quite free to all the employees.”

He nodded.

“I know. But the fact that you signed such a contract, under compulsion, would not prevent the court from awarding damages, if you sustained them while on duty.”

“This hurt is nothing of importance,” she said hastily. “In a day or two I shall be able to walk as well as ever.”

Flo came running back with Maud’s things. Aunt Jane followed, saying that if Maud was to go to the hotel she would accompany her and take care of her.

“I’ve examined the ankle,” she said to young Jones, “and I assure you it is not a severe strain. But it is true that she will be better off in her own room, where she can rest quietly. So I will go with her.”

“How about Miss Flo?” asked the boy.

“Flo is very self-reliant and will get along to-day very nicely without me,” replied Mrs. Montrose.

Mr. Goldstein entered, frowning and still resenting the interference of this Mr. A. Jones of Sangoa. But he ventured no further protest nor did he speak until Maud, Flo and Aunt Jane had all left the room.

“You’re not going, Mr. Jones?” he asked.

“Only to see Miss Stanton started for home. Then I’ll come back and have a little talk with you.”

“Thank you, sir.”

CHAPTER XII

PICTURES, GIRLS AND NONSENSE

"Well, Aunt Jane," said Maud Stanton, when their car was rolling toward the hotel and the girl had related the remarkable interview in the office, "what do you think of Ajo now?"

"He is certainly an amazing young man," was the reply. "I cannot in any way figure out his connection with Goldstein, or his power over the man. The Continental Film Manufacturing Company is a great corporation, with headquarters in New York, and Mr. Goldstein is the authorized head and manager of the concern on the Pacific coast. I understand his salary is ten thousand a year. On the other hand, young Jones has only been in this country for a year, coming from an insignificant island somewhere in the South Seas, where he was born and reared. Much of the time since he arrived in America he has been an invalid. Aside from this meager information, no one seems to know anything about him."

"Putting the case that way makes it all the more remarkable," observed Maud. "A big, experienced, important man, cowed by a mere boy. When Goldstein first met this callow, sallow youth, he trembled before him. When the boy enters the office of the great film company he dictates to the manager, who meekly obeys him. Remember, too, that A. Jones, by his interference, has caused a direct loss to the company, which Goldstein will have to explain, as best he may, in his weekly report to the New York office. A more astonishing state of affairs could not be imagined, Aunt Jane!"

"The puzzle will solve itself presently," said the lady. "Abnormal conditions seldom last long."

Maud passed the day in bed, quietly reading a book. Her injury was really slight and with rest it mended rapidly. Patsy and Beth came in to see her and in the conversation that ensued the girls were told of the latest mystery surrounding A. Jones.

"It is surely queer!" admitted Miss Doyle, impressed and thoughtful. "Uncle John and Arthur were saying this noon, at lunch, that Ajo was a helpless sort of individual and easily influenced by others — as witness his caving in to me when I opposed his doctor's treatment. Arthur thinks he has come to this country to squander what little money his father left him and that his public career outside the limits of his little island will be brief. Yet according to your story the boy is no weakling but has power and knows how to use it."

"He surely laid down the law to Goldstein," said Maud.

"He is very young," remarked Beth, ignoring the fact that she was herself

no older, “and perhaps that is why we attach so much importance to his actions. A grown-up man is seldom astonishing, however eccentric he may prove to be. In a boy we expect only boyishness, and young Jones has interested us because he is unique.”

After a little the conversation drifted to motion pictures, for both Patsy and Beth were eager to learn all about the business details of film making, which Maud, by reason of her months of experience, was able to explain to them in a comprehensive manner. Flo came home toward evening, but had little more to tell them, as the day had passed very quietly at the “studio.” Jones had remained closeted with the manager for a full hour, and it was remarked that after he had gone away Goldstein was somewhat subdued and performed his duties less aggressively than usual.

Maud’s visitors now left her to dress for dinner, at which meal she was able to rejoin them, walking with a slight limp but otherwise recovered from her accident. To their surprise, young Jones appeared as they were entering the dining room and begged for a seat at their table. Uncle John at once ordered another place laid at the big round table, which accommodated the company of nine very nicely.

Ajo sat between Patsy and Maud and although he selected his dishes with some care he partook of all the courses from soup to dessert.

The morning interview with Goldstein was not mentioned. Ajo inquired about Maud’s hurt but then changed the subject and conversed upon nearly everything but motion pictures. However, after they had repaired to the hotel lobby and were seated together in a cosy, informal group, Patsy broached a project very near to her heart.

“Beth and I,” said she, “have decided to build a Children’s Picture Theatre.”

“Where?” asked Uncle John, rather startled by the proposition.

“Here, or in Los Angeles,” was the reply.

“You see,” explained Beth, “there is a crying need for a place where children may go and see pictures that appeal especially to them and are, at the same time, quite proper for them to witness. A great educational field is to be opened by this venture, and Patsy and I would enjoy the work of creating the first picture theatre, exclusively for children, ever established in America.”

“You may say, ‘in the world,’“ added Arthur. “I like this idea of yours, girls, and I hope you will carry it out.”

“Oh, they’ll carry it out, all right,” remarked Uncle John. “I’ve been expecting something of this sort, ever since we came here. My girls, Mr. Jones,” he said, turning to the young man, “are always doing some quaint

thing, or indulging in some queer enterprise, for they're a restless lot. Before Louise married, she was usually in these skirmishes with fate, but now — "

"Oh, I shall join Patsy and Beth, of course," asserted Louise. "It will make it easier for all, to divide the expense between us, and I am as much interested in pictures as they are."

"Perhaps," said Patsy musingly, "we might build two theatres, in different parts of the city. There are so many children to be amused. And we intend to make the admission price five cents."

"Have you any idea what it costs to build one of these picture theatres?" asked Arthur.

"We're not going to build one of 'these' theatres," retorted Patsy. "Many of the dens I've been in cost scarcely anything, being mere shelters. The city is strewn with a lot of miserable, stuffy theatres that no one can enjoy sitting in, even to see a good picture. We have talked this over and decided to erect a new style of building, roomy and sanitary, with cushioned seats and plenty of broad aisles. There are one or two of this class already in Los Angeles, but we want to make our children's theatres a little better than the best."

"And the expense?"

"Well, it will cost money, of course. But it will be a great delight to the children — bless their little hearts!"

"This is really a business enterprise," added Beth gravely.

Uncle John chuckled with amusement.

"Have you figured out the profits?" he inquired.

"It really ought to pay, Uncle," declared Patsy, somewhat nettled by this flaccid reception of her pet scheme. "All the children will insist on being taken to a place like that, for we shall show just the pictures they love to see. And, allowing there is no money to be made from the venture, think of the joy we shall give to innumerable little ones!"

"Go ahead, my dears," said Uncle John, smiling approval. "And, if you girls find you haven't enough money to carry out your plans, come to me."

"Oh, thank you, Uncle!" exclaimed Beth. "But I feel sure we can manage the cost ourselves. We will build one of the theatres first, and if that is a success we will build others."

"But about those films, made especially for children," remarked Arthur. "Where will you get them?"

"Why, there are lots of firms making films," replied Patsy. "We can select from all that are made the ones most suitable for our purpose."

"I fear you cannot do that," said Mrs. Montrose, who had listened with wonder to this conversation. "There are three combinations, or 'trusts,' among the film makers, which are known as the Licensed, the Mutual and the

Independents. If you purchase from one of these trusts, you cannot get films from the others, for that is their edict. Therefore you will have only about one-third of the films made to select from."

"I thought money would buy anything — in the way of merchandise," said
Louise, half laughing and half indignant.

"Not from these film dictators," was the reply.

"They all make a few children's pictures," announced Maud Stanton. "Even the Continental turns out one occasionally. But there are not nearly enough, taken all together, to supply an exclusive children's theatre."

"Then we will have some made," declared Patsy. "We will order some fairy tales, such as the children like. They would be splendid in motion pictures."

"Some have already been made and exhibited," said Mrs. Montrose. "The various manufacturers have made films of the fairy tales of Hans Andersen, Frank Baum, Lewis Carroll and other well-known writers."

"And were they successful?"

"Quite so, I believe; but such films are seldom put out except at holiday time."

"I think, Beth," said Patsy to her cousin, in a businesslike tone, "that we must organize a company and make our own films. Then we can get exactly what we want."

"Oh, yes!" replied Beth, delighted with the suggestion. "And let us get Maud and Flo to act in our pictures. Won't it be exciting?"

"Pardon me, young ladies," said A. Jones, speaking for the first time since this subject had been broached. "Would it not be wise to consider the expense of making films, before you undertake it?"

Patsy looked at him inquiringly.

"Do you know what the things cost?" she asked.

"I've some idea," said he. "Feature films of fairy tales, such as you propose, cost at least two thousand dollars each to produce. You would need about three for each performance, and you will have to change your programmes at least once a week. That would mean an outlay of not less than six thousand dollars a week, which is doubtless more money than your five-cent theatre could take in."

This argument staggered the girls for a moment. Then Beth asked: "How do the ordinary theatres manage?"

"The ordinary theatre simply rents its pictures, paying about three hundred dollars a week for the service. There is a 'middleman,' called the 'Exchange,' whose business is to buy the films from the makers and rent

them to the theatres. He pays a big price for a film, but is able to rent it to dozens of theatres, by turns, and by this method he not only gets back the money he has expended but makes a liberal profit."

"Well," said Patsy, not to be baffled, "we could sell several copies of our films to these middlemen, and so reduce the expense of making them for our use."

"The middleman won't buy them," asserted Jones. "He is the thrall of one or the other of the trusts, and buys only trust pictures."

"I see," said Uncle John, catching the idea; "it's a scheme to destroy competition."

"Exactly," replied young Jones.

"What does the Continental do, Maud?" asked Patsy.

"I don't know," answered the girl; "but perhaps Aunt Jane can tell you."

"I believe the Continental is a sort of trust within itself," explained Mrs. Montrose. "Since we have been connected with the company I have learned more or less of its methods. It employs a dozen or so producing companies and makes three or four pictures every week. The concern has its own Exchange, or middleman, who rents only Continental films to the theatres that patronize him."

"Well, we might do the same thing," proposed Patsy, who was loath to abandon her plan.

"You might, if you have the capital," assented Mrs. Montrose. "The Continental is an immense corporation, and I am told it has more than a million dollars invested."

"Two millions," said A. Jones.

The girls were silent a while, seriously considering this startling assertion. They had, between them, considerable money, but they realized they could not enter a field that required such an enormous investment as film making.

"I suppose," said Beth regretfully, "we shall have to give up making films."

"Then where are we to get the proper pictures for our theatre?" demanded Patsy.

"It is quite evident we *can't* get them," said Louise. "Therefore we may be obliged to abandon the theatre proposition."

Another silence, still more grave. Uncle John was discreet enough to say nothing. The Stantons and Mrs. Montrose felt it was not their affair.
Arthur Weldon was slyly enjoying the chagrin visible upon the faces of Mr. Merrick's three pretty nieces.

As for A. Jones, he was industriously figuring upon the back of an envelope with a stubby bit of pencil.

CHAPTER XIII
A FOOLISH BOY

It was the youthful Sangoan who first broke the silence. Glancing at the figures he had made he said:

"It is estimated that if twenty picture theatres use any one film — copies of it, of course — that film will pay for its cost of making. Therefore, if you build twenty children's theatres, instead of the one or two you originally proposed, you would be able to manufacture your own films and they would be no expense to you."

They gazed at him in bewilderment.

"That is all simple enough!" laughed Arthur. "Twenty picture theatres at twenty thousand dollars each — a low estimate, my dears, for such as you require — would mean an investment of four hundred thousand dollars. A film factory, with several producing companies to keep it busy, and all the necessary paraphernalia of costumes and properties, would mean a million or so more. Say a million and a half, all told. Why, it's a mere bagatelle!"

"Arthur!" Severely, from Louise.

"I advise you girls to economize in other ways and devote your resources to this business, which might pay you — and might not," he continued, oblivious to stony glares.

"Really, Mr. Jones," said Beth, pouting, "we were not joking, but in real earnest."

"Have I questioned it, Miss De Graf?"

"Mr. Jones was merely trying to show you how — er — er — how impractical your idea was," explained Uncle John mildly.

"No; I am in earnest, too," said the boy. "To prove it, I will agree to establish a plant and make the pictures, if the young ladies will build the twenty theatres to show them in."

Here was another suggestion of a bewildering nature. Extravagant as the offer seemed, the boy was very serious. He blushed a little as he observed Mr. Merrick eyeing him earnestly, and continued in an embarrassed, halting way: "I — I assure you, sir, that I am able to fulfill my part of the agreement. Also I would like to do it. It would serve to interest me and keep me occupied in ways that are not wholly selfish. My — my other business does not demand my personal attention, you see."

To hear this weak, sickly youth speak of investing a million dollars in a doubtful enterprise, in spite of the fact that he lived on a far-away island and was a practical stranger in America, set them all to speculating anew in regard to his history and condition in life. Seeing that the boy had himself

made an opening for a logical query, Uncle John asked:

"Do you mind telling us what this other business is, to which you refer?"

A. Jones moved uneasily in his chair. Then he glanced quickly around the circle and found every eye regarding him with eager curiosity. He blushed again, a deep red this time, but an instant later straightened up and spoke in a tone of sudden resolve.

"Most people dislike to speak of themselves," he said, "and I am no exception. But you, who have kindly received me as a friend, after having generously saved me from an untimely death, have surely the right to know something about me — if, indeed, the subject interests you."

"It is but natural that we should feel an interest in you, Mr. Jones," replied Mr. Merrick; "yet I assure you we have no desire to pry into your personal affairs. You have already volunteered a general statement of your antecedents and the object of your visit to America, and that, I assure you, will suffice us. Pardon me for asking an impertinent question."

The boy seemed perplexed, now.

"I did not consider it impertinent, sir. I made a business proposal to your nieces," he said, "and before they could accept such a proposal they would be entitled to know something of my financial standing."

For a green, inexperienced youth, he spoke with rare acumen, thought Mr. Merrick; but the old gentleman had now determined to shield the boy from a forced declaration of his finances, so he said:

"My nieces can hardly afford to accept your proposition. They are really able to build one or two theatres without inconveniencing themselves, but twenty would be beyond their means. You, of course, understand they were not seeking an investment, but trying, with all their hearts, to benefit the children. I thoroughly approve their original idea, but if it requires twenty picture theatres to render it practical, they will abandon the notion at once."

Jones nodded absently, his eyes half closed in thought. After a brief pause he replied:

"I hate to see this idea abandoned at the very moment of its birth. It's a good idea, and in no way impractical, in my opinion. So permit me to make another proposition. I will build the twenty theatres myself, and furnish the films for them, provided the young ladies will agree to assume the entire management of them when they are completed."

Dead silence followed this speech. The girls did some rapid-fire mental calculations and realized that this young man was proposing to invest something like fourteen hundred thousand dollars, in order that they might carry out their philanthropic conception. Why should he do this, even if he could afford it?

Both Mr. Merrick and Arthur Weldon were staring stolidly at the floor. Their attitudes expressed, for the first time, doubt — if not positive unbelief. As men of considerable financial experience, they regarded the young islander's proposition as an impossible one.

Jones noted this blank reception of his offer and glanced appealingly at Patsy. It was an uncomfortable moment for the girl and to avoid meeting his eyes she looked away, across the lobby. A few paces distant stood a man who leaned against a table and held a newspaper before his face. Patsy knew, however, that he was not reading. A pair of dark, glistening eyes peered over the top of the paper and were steadfastly fixed upon the unconscious features of young Jones.

Something in the attitude of the stranger, whom she had never seen before, something in the rigid pose, the intent gaze — indicating both alertness and repression — riveted the girl's attention at once and gave her a distinct shock of uneasiness.

"I wish," said the boy, in his quiet, firm way, yet with much deference in his manner and tone, "that you young ladies would consider my offer seriously, and take proper time to reach a decision. I am absolutely in earnest. I want to join you in your attempt to give pleasure to children, and I am willing and — and able — to furnish the funds required. Without your cooperation, however, I could do nothing, and my health is such that I wish to leave the management of the theatres entirely in your hands, as well as all the details of their construction."

"We will consider it, of course, Mr. Jones," answered Beth gravely. "We are a little startled just now, as you see; but when we grow accustomed to the immensity of the scheme — our baby, which you have transformed into a giant — we shall be able to consider it calmly and critically, and decide if we are competent to undertake the management of so many theatres."

"Thank you. Then, I think, I will excuse myself for this evening and return to my room. I'm improving famously, under Dr. Doyle's instructions, but am not yet a rugged example of health."

Patsy took his hand at parting, as did the others, but her attention was divided between Ajo and the strange man who had never for a moment ceased watching him. Not once did the dark eyes waver, but followed each motion of the boy as he sauntered to the desk, got his key from the clerk, and then proceeded to his room, turning up one of the corridors on the main floor.

The stranger now laid his newspaper on the table and disclosed his entire face for the first time. A middle-aged man, he seemed to be, with iron-gray hair and a smoothly shaven, rather handsome face. From his dress he appeared to be a prosperous business man and it was evident that he was a

guest of the hotel, for he wandered through the lobby — in which many other guests were grouped, some chatting and others playing "bridge" — and presently disappeared down the corridor traversed by young Jones.

Patsy drew a deep breath, but said nothing to the others, who, when relieved of the boy's presence, began to discuss volubly his singular proposal.

"The fellow is crazy," commented Arthur. "Twenty picture theatres, with a film factory to supply them, is a big order even for a multi-millionaire — and I can't imagine this boy coming under that head."

"He seemed in earnest," said Maud, musingly. "What do you think, Aunt Jane?"

"I am greatly perplexed," admitted Mrs. Montrose. "Had I not known of the conquest of Goldstein by this boy, who issued orders which the manager of the Continental meekly obeyed, I would have laughed at his proposition. As it is, I'm afraid to state that he won't carry out his plan to the letter of the agreement."

"Would it not be a rash investment, ma'am?" inquired Uncle John.

"Frankly, I do not know. While all the film makers evade any attempt to discover how prosperous — financially — they are, we know that without exception they have grown very wealthy. I am wondering if this young Jones is not one of the owners of the Continental — a large stockholder, perhaps. If so, that not only accounts for his influence with Goldstein, but it proves him able to finance this remarkable enterprise. He doubtless knows what he is undertaking, for his figures, while not accurate, were logical."

"Of course!" cried Patsy. "That explains everything."

"Still," said Uncle John cautiously, "this is merely surmise on our part, and before accepting it we must reconcile it with the incongruities in the case. It is possible that the elder Jones owned an interest in the Continental and bequeathed it to his son. But is it probable? Remember, he was an islander, and a recluse."

"More likely," said Beth, "Ajo's father left him a great fortune, which the boy invested in the Continental stock."

"I have been told," remarked Aunt Jane thoughtfully, "that Continental stock cannot be bought at any price. It pays such enormous dividends that no owner will dispose of it."

"The whole thing is perplexing in the extreme," declared Arthur. "The boy tells a story that at first seems frank and straightforward, yet his statements do not dovetail, so to speak."

"I think he is holding something back," said Beth; "something that would explain all the discrepancies in his story. You were wrong, Uncle John, not to

let him speak when he offered to tell you all."

"There was something in his manner that made me revolt from forcing his confidence," was the reply.

"There was something in his manner that made me think he was about to concoct a story that would satisfy our curiosity," said Louise with a shrug.

Uncle John looked around the circle of faces.

"You are not questioning the young fellow's sincerity, I hope?" said he.

"I don't, for a single second!" asserted Patsy, stoutly. "He may have a queer history, and he may not have told us all of it, but Ajo is honest. I'll vouch for him!"

"So will I, my dear," said Uncle John.

"That is more than I can do, just at present," Arthur frankly stated. "My opinion is that his preposterous offer is mere bluff. If you accepted it, you would find him unable to do his part."

"Then what is his object?" asked Maud.

"I can't figure it out, as yet. He might pose as a millionaire and a generous friend and philanthropist for some time, before the truth was discovered, and during that time he could carry out any secret plans he had in mind. The boy is more shrewd than he appears to be. We, by chance saved his life, and at once he attached himself to us like a barnacle, and we can't shake him off."

"We don't want to," said Patsy.

"My explanation is that he has fallen in love with one of us girls," suggested Flo, with a mischievous glance at her sister. "I wonder if it's me?"

"It is more likely," said Louise, "that he has discovered Uncle John to be a very — prosperous — man."

"Nonsense, my dear!" exclaimed that gentleman, evidently irritated by the insinuation. "Don't pick the boy to pieces. Give him a chance. So far he has asked nothing from us, but offers everything. He's a grateful fellow and is anxious to help you girls carry out your ambitious plans. That is how I read him, and I think it is absurd to prejudge him in the way you are doing."

The party broke up, the Stantons and Weldons going to their rooms. Beth also rose.

"Are you coming to bed, Patsy?" she inquired.

"Not just now," her cousin replied. "Between us, we've rubbed Uncle John's fur the wrong way and he won't get composed until he has smoked his good-night cigar. I'll sit with him in this corner and keep him company."

So the little man and his favorite niece were left together, and he did not seem in the least ruffled as he lit his cigar and settled down in a big chair, with Patsy beside him, to enjoy it.

CHAPTER XIV
ISIDORE LE DRIEUX

Perhaps the cigar was half gone when Patsy gave a sudden start and squeezed Uncle John's hand, which she had been holding in both her own.

"What is it, my dear?"

"The man I told you of. There he is, just across the lobby. The man with the gray clothes and gray hair."

"Oh, yes; the one lighting a cigar."

"Precisely."

Uncle John gazed across the lobby reflectively. The stranger's eyes roved carelessly around the big room and then he moved with deliberate steps toward their corner. He passed several vacant chairs and settees on his way and finally paused before a lounging-chair not six feet distant from the one occupied by Mr. Merrick.

"Pardon me; is this seat engaged, sir?" he asked.

"No," replied Uncle John, not very graciously, for it was a deliberate intrusion.

The stranger sat down and for a time smoked his cigar in silence. He was so near them that Patsy forbore any conversation, knowing he would overhear it.

Suddenly the man turned squarely in their direction and addressed them.

"I hope you will pardon me, Mr. Merrick, if I venture to ask a question," said he.

"Well, sir?"

"I saw you talking with Mr. Jones this evening — A. Jones, you know, who says he came from Sangoa."

"Didn't he?" demanded the old gentleman.

The stranger smiled.

"Perhaps; once on a time; allowing such a place exists. But his last journey was here from Austria."

"Indeed!"

Mr. Merrick and Patsy were both staring at the man incredulously.

"I am quite sure of that statement, sir; but I cannot prove it, as yet."

"Ah! I thought not."

Patsy had just told her uncle how she had detected this man stealthily watching Jones, and how he had followed the boy when he retired to his room. The present interview had, they both knew, something to do with this singular action. Therefore Mr. Merrick restrained his indignation at the stranger's pointed questioning. He realized quite well that the man had come

to their corner determined to catechise them and gain what information he could. Patsy realized this, too. So, being forewarned, they hoped to learn his object without granting him the satisfaction of "pumping" them.

"I suppose you are friends of this Mr. A. Jones," was his next remark.

"We are acquaintances," said Mr. Merrick.

"Has he ever mentioned his adventures in Austria to you?"

"Are *you* a friend of Mr. Jones?" demanded uncle John.

"I am not even an acquaintance," said the man, smiling. "But I am interested in him, through a friend of mine who met him abroad. Permit me to introduce myself, sir."

He handed them a card which read:

"ISADORE LE DRIEUX
Importer of Pearls and Precious Stones
36 Maiden Lane,
New York City."

"I have connections abroad, in nearly all countries," continued the man, "and it is through some of them that I have knowledge of this young fellow who has taken the name of A. Jones. In fact, I have a portrait of the lad, taken in Paris, which I will show you."

He searched in his pocket and produced an envelope from which he carefully removed a photograph, which he handed to Uncle John. Patsy examined it, too, with a start of surprise. The thin features, the large serious eyes, even the closely set lips were indeed those of A. Jones. But in the picture he wore a small mustache.

"It can't be *our* A. Jones," murmured Patsy. "This one is older."

"That is on account of the mustache," remarked Le Drieux, who was closely watching their faces. "This portrait was taken more than a year ago."

"Oh; but he was in Sangoa then," protested Patsy, who was really bewildered by the striking resemblance.

The stranger smiled indulgently.

"As a matter of fact, there is no Sangoa." said he; "so we may doubt the young man's assertion that he was ever there."

"Why are you interested in him?" inquired Mr. Merrick.

"A natural question," said Le Drieux, after a moment of hesitation. "I know you well by reputation, Mr. Merrick, and believe I am justified in speaking frankly to you and your niece, provided you regard my statements as strictly confidential. A year ago I received notice from my friend in Austria that the young man had gone to America and he was anxious I should meet him. At the time I was too busy with my own affairs to look him up, but I recently came to California for a rest, and noticed the strong resemblance

between the boy, A. Jones, and the portrait sent me. So I hunted up this picture and compared the two. In my judgment they are one and the same. What do *you* think, sir?"

"I believe there is a resemblance," answered Uncle John, turning the card over. "But here is a name on the back of the photograph: 'Jack Andrews.'"

"Yes; this is Jack Andrews," said Le Drieux, nodding. "Have you ever heard the name before?"

"Never."

"Well, Andrews is noted throughout Europe, and it is but natural he should desire to escape his notoriety by assuming another name out here. Do you note the similarity of the initials? 'J.A.' stand for Jack Andrews. Reverse them and 'A.J.' stand for A. Jones. By the way, what does he claim the 'A' means? Is it Andrew?"

"It means nothing at all," said Patsy. "He told us so."

"I see. You caught him unprepared. That isn't like Jack. He is always on guard."

Both Patsy and Uncle John were by this time sorely perplexed. They had a feeling common to both of them, that the subject of this portrait and A. Jones were two separate and distinct persons; yet the resemblance could not be denied, if they were indeed the same, young Jones had deliberately lied to them, and recalling his various statements and the manner in which they had been made, they promptly acquitted the boy of the charge of falsehood.

"For what was Jack Andrews noted throughout Europe?" inquired Mr. Merrick, after silently considering these things.

"Well, he was a highflier, for one thing." answered Le Drieux. "He was known as a thorough 'sport' and, I am told, a clever gambler. He had a faculty of making friends, even among the nobility. The gilded youth of London, Paris and Vienna cultivated his acquaintance, and through them he managed to get into very good society. He was a guest at the splendid villa of Countess Ahmberg, near Vienna, when her magnificent collection of pearls disappeared. You remember that loss, and the excitement it caused, do you not?"

"No, sir; I have never before heard of the Countess of Ahmberg or her pearls."

"Well, the story filled the newspapers for a couple of weeks. The collection embraced the rarest and most valuable pearls known to exist."

"And you accuse this man, Andrews, of stealing them?" asked Uncle John, tapping with his finger the portrait he still held.

"By no means, sir; by no means!" cried Le Drieux hastily. "In fact, he was one of the few guests at the villa to whom no suspicion attached. From the

moment the casket of pearls was last seen by the countess until their loss was discovered, every moment of Andrews' time was accounted for. His alibi was perfect and he was quite prominent in the unsuccessful quest of the thief."

"The pearls were not recovered, then?"

"No. The whole affair is still a mystery. My friend in Vienna, a pearl merchant like myself, assisted Andrews in his endeavor to discover the thief and, being much impressed by the young man's personality, sent me this photograph, asking me to meet him, as I have told you, when he reached America."

"Is his home in this country?"

"New York knows him, but knows nothing of his family or his history. He is popular there, spending money freely and bearing the reputation of an all-around good fellow. On his arrival there, a year ago, he led a gay life for a few days and then suddenly disappeared. No one knew what had become of him. When I found him here, under the name of A. Jones, the disappearance was solved."

"I think," said Uncle John, "you are laboring under a serious, if somewhat natural, mistake. The subject of this picture is like A. Jones, indeed, but he is older and his expression more — more — "

"Blase and sophisticated," said Patsy.

"Thank you, my dear; I am no dictionary, and if those are real words they may convey my meaning. I feel quite sure, Mr. Le Drieux, that the story of Andrews can not be the story of young Jones."

Le Drieux took the picture and replaced it in his pocket.

"To err is human," said he, "and I will admit the possibility of my being mistaken in my man. But you will admit the resemblance?"

"Yes. They might be brothers. But young Jones has said he has no brothers, and I believe him."

Le Drieux sat in silence for a few minutes. Then he said:

"I appealed to you, Mr. Merrick, because I was not thoroughly satisfied, in my own mind, of my conclusions. You have added to my doubts, I must confess, yet I cannot abandon the idea that the two men are one and the same. As my suspicion is only shared by you and your niece, in confidence, I shall devote myself for a few days to studying young Jones and observing his actions. In that way I may get a clue that will set all doubt at rest."

"We will introduce you to him," said Patsy. "and then you may question him as much as you like."

"Oh, no; I prefer not to make his acquaintance until I am quite sure," was the reply. "If he is not Jack Andrews he would be likely to resent the

insinuation that he is here trading under a false name. Good night, Mr. Merrick. Good night, Miss Doyle. I thank you for your courteous consideration."

He had risen, and now bowed and walked away.

"Well," said Patsy. "what was he after? And did he learn anything from us?"

"He did most of the talking himself," replied Uncle John, looking after Le Drieux with a puzzled expression. "Of course he is not a jewel merchant."

"No," said Patsy, "he's a detective, and I'll bet a toothpick to a match that he's on the wrong scent."

"He surely is. Unfortunately, we cannot warn Ajo against him."

"It isn't necessary, Uncle. Why, the whole thing is absurd. Our boy is not a gambler or roysterer, nor do I think he has ever been in Europe. Mr. Le Drieux will have to guess again!"

CHAPTER XV
A FEW PEARLS

The next morning Patsy, Beth and Louise met in earnest conference over the important proposition made them by young Jones, and although Uncle John and Arthur Weldon were both present the men took no part in the discussion.

"Some doubt has been expressed," said Beth judicially, "that Ajo is really able to finance this big venture. But he says he is, and that he will carry it through to the end, so I propose we let him do it."

"Why not?" asked Louise. "If he succeeds, it will be glorious. If he fails, we will suffer in no way except through disappointment."

"Well, shall we accept this offer, girls?"

"First," said Louise, "let us consider what we will have to do, on our part, when the twenty theatres are built and the film factory is in operation."

"We are to be the general managers," returned Patsy. "We must select the subjects, or plots, for the pictures, and order them made under our direction. Then we must see that all of our theatres present them in a proper manner, and we must invite children to come and see the shows. I guess that's all."

"That will be enough to keep us busy, I'm sure," said Beth. "But we will gladly undertake it, and I am sure we shall prove good managers, as soon as we get acquainted with the details of the business."

"It will give us the sort of employment we like," Patsy assured them. "Our first duty will be to plan these theatres for children, and make them as cosy and comfortable as possible, regardless of expense. Ajo will pay the bills, and when all the buildings are ready we will set to work in earnest."

So, when A. Jones appeared he was told that the girls would gladly accept his proposition. The young man seemed greatly pleased by this verdict. He appeared to be much better and stronger to-day and he entered eagerly into a discussion of the plans in detail. Together they made a list of a string of twenty theatres, to be built in towns reaching from Santa Barbara on the north to San Diego in the south. The film factory was to be located in the San Fernando Valley, just north of Hollywood.

This consumed the entire forenoon, and after lunch they met a prominent real estate man whom Jones had summoned to the hotel. This gentleman was given a copy of the list of locations and instructed to purchase in each town the best site that could be secured for a motion picture theatre. This big order made the real estate man open his eyes in surprise.

"Do you wish me to secure options, or to purchase the land outright?" he asked.

"Be sure of your locations and then close the deals at once," replied Jones.

“We do not wish to waste time in useless dickering, and a location in the heart of each town, perhaps on the main street, is more important than the price. You will, of course, protect me from robbery to the best of your ability; but buy, even if the price is exorbitant. I will this afternoon place a hundred thousand dollars to your credit in the bank, with which to make advance payments, and when you notify me how much more is required I will forward my checks at once.”

“That is satisfactory, sir. I will do the best I can to guard your interests,” said the man.

When he had gone the girls accompanied Ajo in a motorcar to Los Angeles, to consult an architect. They visited several offices before the boy, who seemed to estimate men at a glance, found one that satisfied him. The girls explained with care to the architect their idea of a luxurious picture theatre for children, and when he had grasped their conception, which he did with enthusiasm, he suggested several improvements on their immature plans and promised to have complete drawings ready to submit to them in a few days.

From the architect’s office they drove to the German-American Bank, where Ajo gave his check for a hundred thousand dollars, to be placed to the credit of Mr. Wilcox, the real estate agent. The deference shown him by the cashier seemed to indicate that this big check was not the extent of A. Jones’ credit there, by any means.

As they drove back to Hollywood, Patsy could not help eyeing this youthful capitalist with wonder. During this day of exciting business deals the boy had behaved admirably, and there was no longer a shadow of doubt in the minds of any of Uncle John’s nieces that he was both able and anxious to carry out his part of the agreement.

Patsy almost giggled outright as she thought of Le Drieux and his ridiculous suspicions. One would have to steal a good many pearls in order to acquire a fortune to match that of the Sangoan.

He was speaking of Sangoa now, in answer to a question of Beth’s.

“Yes, indeed,” said he, “Sangoa is very beautiful, and the climate is even more mild than that of your Southern California. The north coast is a high bluff, on which is a splendid forest of rosewood and mahogany. My father would never allow any of these magnificent trees to be cut, except a few that were used in building our house.”

“But how do your people live? What is the principal industry of your islanders?” asked Beth.

“My people are — fishermen,” he said, and then the automobile drew up before the hotel entrance and the conversation ended.

It was on the following afternoon, as they all met in the hotel lobby after lunch, that a messenger handed young Jones a neat parcel, for which a receipt was demanded. Ajo held the parcel in his hand a while, listening to the chatter of the girls, who were earnestly discussing plans for the new picture enterprise. Then very quietly and unobtrusively he unwrapped the package and laid upon the table beside him several small boxes bearing the name of a prominent jeweler.

"I hope," said he, taking advantage of a pause caused by the girls observing this action, and growing visibly confused by their involuntary stares of curiosity; "I — I hope that you, my new friends, will pardon a liberty I have taken. I wanted to — to present those who were instrumental in saving my life with — with a — a slight token of my gratitude — a sort of — of — memento of a brave and generous act that gave me back the life I had carelessly jeopardized. No," as he saw surprise and protest written on their faces, "don't refuse me this pleasure, I implore you! The little — eh — eh — mementos are from my own Island of Sangoa, with the necessary mountings by a Los Angeles jeweler, and — please accept them!"

As he spoke he handed to each of the girls a box, afterward giving one to Uncle John and another to Arthur. There remained upon the table three others. He penciled a name upon the bottom of each and then handed them to Patsy, saying:

"Will you kindly present these, with my compliments, to the Misses Stanton, and to their aunt, when they return this evening? Thank you!"

And then, before they could recover from their astonishment, he turned abruptly and fled to his room.

The girls stared at one another a moment and then began laughing. Arthur seemed crestfallen, while Uncle John handled his small box as gingerly as if he suspected it contained an explosive.

"How ridiculous!" cried Patsy, her blue eyes dancing. "And did you notice how scared poor Ajo was, and how he skipped as fearfully as though he had committed some crime? But I'm sure the poor boy meant well. Let's open our boxes, girls, and see what foolishness Ajo has been up to."

Slipping off the cover of her box, Beth uttered a low cry of amazement and admiration. Then she held up a dainty lavalliere, with a pendant containing a superb pearl. Louise had the mate to this, but the one Patsy found had a pearl of immense size, its color being an exquisite shade of pink, such as is rarely seen. Arthur displayed a ring set with a splendid white pearl, while Uncle John's box contained a stick pin set with a huge black pearl of remarkable luster. Indeed, they saw at a glance that the size and beauty of all these pearls were very uncommon, and while the others expressed their

enthusiastic delight, the faces of Mr. Merrick and Patsy Doyle were solemn and perplexed. They stared at the pearls with feelings of dismay, rather than joy, and chancing to meet one another's eyes they quickly dropped their gaze to avoid exchanging the ugly suspicion that had forced itself upon their minds.

With a sudden thought Patsy raised her head to cast a searching glance around the lobby, for although their party was seated in an alcove they were visible to all in the big room of which it formed a part. Yes, Mr. Isidore Le Drieux was standing near them, as she had feared, and the slight sneer upon his lips proved that he had observed the transfer of the pearls.

So the girl promptly clasped her lavalliere around her neck and openly displayed it, as a proud defiance, if not a direct challenge, to that detestable sneer.

Arthur, admiring his ring in spite of his chagrin at receiving such a gift from a comparative stranger, placed the token on his finger.

"It is a beauty, indeed," said he, "but I don't think we ought to accept such valuable gifts from this boy."

"I do not see why," returned his wife Louise. "I think these pretty tributes for saving Mr. Jones' life are very appropriate. Of course neither Beth nor I had anything to do with that affair, but we are included in the distribution because it would be more embarrassing to leave us out of it."

"And the pearls came from Sangoa," added Beth, "so all these precious gifts have cost Ajo nothing, except for their settings."

"If Sangoa can furnish many such pearls as these," remarked Arthur, reflectively, "the island ought to be famous, instead of unknown. Their size and beauty render the gems priceless."

"Well," said Patsy soberly, "we know now where A. Jones got his money, which is so plentiful that he can build any number of film factories and picture theatres. Sangoa must have wonderful pearl fisheries — don't you remember, girls, that he told us his people were fishermen? — for each of these specimens is worth a small fortune. Mine, especially, is the largest and finest pearl I have ever seen."

"I beg your pardon!" sternly exclaimed Uncle John, as he whirled swiftly around. "Can I do anything for you, sir?"

For Mr. Le Drieux had stealthily advanced to the alcove and was glaring at the display of pearls and making notes in a small book.

He bowed, without apparent resentment, as he answered Mr. Merrick: "Thank you, sir; you have already served me admirably. Pardon my intrusion."

Then he closed the book, slipped it into his pocket and with another low

bow walked away.

"What rank impertinence!" cried Arthur, staring after him. "Some newspaper reporter, I suppose. Do you know him, Uncle John?"

"He forced an introduction, a few evenings ago. It is a pearl merchant from New York, named Le Drieux, so I suppose his curiosity is but natural."

"Shall we keep our pearls, Uncle?" asked Beth.

"I shall keep mine," replied the little man, who never wore any ornament of jewelry. "It was generous and thoughtful in young Jones to present these things and we ought not offend him by refusing his 'mementos,' as he calls them."

Perhaps all the nieces were relieved to hear this verdict, for already they loved their beautiful gifts. That evening the Stanton girls and their Aunt Jane received their parcels, being fully as much surprised as the others had been, and their boxes also contained pearls. Flo and Maud had lavallieres, the latter receiving one as large and beautiful as that of Patsy Doyle, while Mrs. Montrose found a brooch set with numerous smaller pearls.

Patsy urged them all to wear the ornaments to dinner that evening, which they did, and although Jones was not there to observe the effect of the splendid pearls, Mr. Le Drieux was at his place in the dining room and made more notes in his little book.

That was exactly what Patsy wanted. "I can't stand the suspense of this thing," she whispered to Uncle John, "and if that man wants any information about these pearls I propose we give it to him. In that way he will soon discover he is wrong in suspecting the identity of Jack Andrews and A. Jones."

Mr. Merrick nodded absently and went to his corner for a smoke. Arthur soon after joined him, while Aunt Jane took her bevy of girls to another part of the loge.

"Le Drieux will be here presently," said Uncle John to young Weldon.

"Oh, the fellow with the book. Why, sir?"

"He's a detective, I think. Anyhow, he is shadowing Jones, whom he suspects is a thief."

He then told Arthur frankly of his former conversation with Le Drieux, and of the puzzling photograph.

"It really resembles the boy," he admitted, with a frown of perplexity, "yet at the same time I realized the whole thing was absurd. Neither Patsy nor I can believe that Jones is the man who robbed an Austrian countess. It's preposterous! And let me say right now, Arthur, that I'm going to stand by this young fellow, with all my influence, in case those hounds try to make him trouble."

Arthur did not reply at once. He puffed his cigar silently while he revolved the startling accusation in his mind.

“Both you and Patsy are staunch friends,” he observed, after a while, “and I have noticed that your intuition as regards character is seldom at fault. But I advise you, in this instance, not to be hasty, for — ”

“I know; you are going to refer to those pearls.”

“Naturally. If I don’t, Le Drieux will, as you have yourself prophesied. Pearls — especially such pearls as these — are rare and easy to recognize. The world does not contain many black-pearls, for instance, such as that you are wearing. An expert — a man with a photograph that strongly resembles young Jones — is tracing some stolen pearls of great value — a collection, I think you said. We find Jones, a man seemingly unknown here, giving away a number of wonderful pearls that are worthy a place in any collection. Admit it is curious, Uncle John. It may be all a coincidence, of course; but how do you account for it, sir?”

“Jones has an island in the South Seas, a locality where most of the world’s famous pearls have been found.”

“Sangoa?”

“Yes.”

“It is not on any map. This man, Le Drieux, positively stated that there is no such island, did he not?”

Uncle John rubbed his chin, a gesture that showed he was disturbed.

“He was not positive. He said he thought there was no such island.”

“Well, sir?”

“If Jones could lie about his island, he would be capable of the theft of those pearls,” admitted Mr. Merrick reluctantly.

“That is conclusive, sir.”

“But he isn’t capable of the theft. Le Drieux states that Jack Andrews is a society swell, an all-around confidence man, and a gambler. Jones is a diffident and retiring, but a very manly young fellow, who loves quiet and seems to have no bad habits. You can’t connect the two in any possible way.”

Again Arthur took time to consider.

“I have no desire to suspect Jones unjustly,” he said. “In fact, I have been inclined to like the fellow. And yet — his quaint stories and his foolish expenditures have made me suspicious from the first. You have scarcely done justice to his character in your description, sir. To us he appears diffident, retiring, and rather weak, in a way, while in his intercourse with Goldstein he shows a mailed fist. He can be hard as nails, on occasion, as we know, and at times he displays a surprising knowledge of the world and its

ways — for one who has been brought up on an out-of-the-way island. What do we know about him, anyway? He tells a tale no one can disprove, for the South Seas are full of small islands, some of which are probably unrecorded on the charts. All this might possibly be explained by remembering that a man like Jack Andrews is undoubtedly a clever actor."

"Exactly!" said a jubilant voice behind them, and Mr. Isidore Le Drieux stepped forward and calmly drew up a chair, in which he seated himself. "You will pardon me, gentlemen, for eavesdropping, but I was curious to know what you thought of this remarkable young man who calls himself 'A. Jones.'"

Arthur faced the intruder with a frown. He objected to being startled in this manner. "You are a detective?" he asked.

"Oh, scarcely that, sir," Le Drieux replied in a deprecating way. "My printed card indicates that I am a merchant, but in truth I am a special agent, employed by the largest pearl and gem dealers in the world, a firm with branches in every large European and American city. My name is Le Drieux, sir, at your service," and with a flourish he presented his card.

The young rancher preferred to study the man's face.

"I am a sort of messenger," he continued, placidly. "When valuable consignments of jewels are to be delivered, I am the carrier instead of the express companies. The method is safer. In twenty-six years of this work I have never lost a single jewel."

"One firm employs you exclusively, then?"

"One firm. But it has many branches."

"It is a trust?"

"Oh, no; we have many competitors; but none very important. Our closest rival, for instance, has headquarters on this very coast — in San Francisco — but spreads, as we do, over the civilized world. Yet Jephson's — that's the firm — do not claim to equal our business. They deal mostly in pearls."

"Pearls, eh?" said Arthur, musingly. "Then it was your firm that lost the valuable collection of pearls you mentioned to Mr. Merrick?"

"No. They were the property of Countess Ahmberg, of Vienna. But we had sold many of the finest specimens to the countess and have records of their weight, size, shape and color. The one you are now wearing, sir," pointing to Uncle John's scarf pin, "is one of the best black pearls ever discovered. It was found at Tremloe in 1883 and was originally purchased by our firm. In 1887 I took it to Tiffany, who sold it to Prince Godesky, of Warsaw. I carried it to him, with other valuable purchases, and after his death it was again resold to our firm. It was in October, 1904, that I again became the bearer of the pearl, delivering it safely to Countess Ahmberg at her villa.

It was stolen from her, together with 188 other rare pearls, valued at a half million dollars, a little over a year ago."

"This pearl, sir," said Uncle John stiffly, "is not the one you refer to. It was found on the shores of the island of Sangoa, and you have never seen it before."

Le Drieux smiled sweetly as he brushed the ashes from his cigar.

"I am seldom mistaken in a pearl, especially one that I have handled," said he. "Moreover, a good pearl becomes historic, and it is my business to know the history of each and every one in existence."

"Even those owned by Jephson's?" asked Arthur.

"Yes; unless they were acquired lately. I have spoken in this manner in order that you may understand the statements I am about to make, and I beg you to listen carefully: Three daring pearl robberies have taken place within the past two years. The first was a collection scarcely inferior to that of the Countess Ahmberg. A bank messenger was carrying it through the streets of London one evening, to be delivered to Lady Grandison, when he was stabbed to the heart and the gems stolen. Singularly enough, Jack Andrews was passing by and found the dying messenger. He called for the police, but when they arrived the messenger had expired. The fate of the pearls has always remained a mystery, although a large reward has been offered for their recovery."

"Oh; a reward."

"Naturally, sir. Four months later Princess Lemoine lost her wonderful pearl necklace while sitting in a box at the Grand Opera in Paris. This was one of the cleverest thefts that ever baffled the police, for the necklace was never recovered. We know, however, that Jack Andrews occupied the box next to that of the princess. A coincidence — perhaps. We now come to the robbery of the Countess Ahmberg, the third on the list. Jack Andrews was a guest at her house, as I have explained to you. No blame has ever attached to this youthful adventurer, yet my firm, always interested in the pearls they have sold, advised me to keep an eye on him when he returned to America. I did so.

"Now, Mr. Merrick, I will add to the tale I told you the other night. Andrews behaved very well for a few weeks after he landed at New York; then he disposed of seven fine pearls and — disappeared. They were not notable pearls, especially, but two of them I was able to trace to the necklace of Princess Lemoine. I cabled my firm. They called attention to the various rewards offered and urged me to follow Andrews. That was impossible; he had left no clue. But chance favored me. Coming here to Los Angeles on business, I suddenly ran across my quarry: Jack Andrews. He has changed a

bit. The mustache is gone, he is in poor health, and I am told he was nearly drowned in the ocean the other day. So at first I was not sure of my man. I registered at this hotel and watched him carefully. Sometimes I became positive he was Andrews; at other times I doubted. But when he began distributing pearls to you, his new friends, all doubt vanished. There, gentlemen, is my story in a nutshell. What do you think of it?"

Both Mr. Merrick and young Weldon had listened with rapt interest, but their interpretation of the tale, which amounted to a positive accusation of A. Jones, showed the difference in the two men's natures.

"I think you are on the wrong trail, sir," answered Mr. Merrick. "Doubtless you have been misled by a casual resemblance, coupled with the fact that Andrews is suspected of stealing pearls and Jones is known to possess pearls — the pearls being of rare worth in both cases. Still, you are wrong. For instance, if you have the weight and measurement of the Tremloe black pearl, you will find they do not fit the pearl I am now wearing."

Le Drieux smiled genially.

"It is unnecessary to make the test, sir," he replied. "The pearl Andrews gave to Miss Doyle is as unmistakable as your own. But I am curious to hear your opinion, Mr. Weldon."

"I have been suspicious of young Jones from the first," said Arthur; "but I have been studying this boy's character, and he is positively incapable of the crimes you accuse him of, such as robbery and murder. In other words, whatever Jones may be, he is not Andrews; or, if by chance he proves to be Andrews, then Andrews is innocent of crime. All your theories are based upon a desire to secure rewards, backed by a chain of circumstantial evidence."

"A chain," said Le Drieux, grimly, "that will hold Jack Andrews fast in its coils, clever though he is."

"Circumstantial evidence," retorted Mr. Merrick, "doesn't amount to shucks! It is constantly getting good people into trouble and allowing rascals to escape. Nothing but direct evidence will ever convince me that a man is guilty."

Le Drieux shrugged his shoulders.

"The pearls are evidence enough," said he.

"To be sure. Evidence enough to free the poor boy of suspicion. You may be a better messenger than you are a detective, Mr. Le Drieux, but that doesn't convince me you are a judge of pearls."

The agent rose with a frown of annoyance.

"I am going to have Jack Andrews arrested in the morning," he remarked. "If you warn him, in the meantime, I shall charge you with complicity."

Uncle John nearly choked with anger, but he maintained his dignity.

“I have no knowledge of your Jack Andrews,” he replied, and turned his back.

CHAPTER XVI
TROUBLE

Uncle John and Arthur decided not to mention to the girls this astounding charge of Isidore Le Drieux, fearing the news would make them nervous and disturb their rest, so when the men joined the merry party in the alcove they did not refer to their late interview.

Afterward, however, when all but Arthur Weldon had gone to bed and he was sitting in Uncle John's room, the two discussed the matter together with much seriousness.

"We ought to do something, sir," said Arthur. "This Jones is a mere boy, and in poor health at that. He has no friends, so far as we know, other than ourselves. Therefore it is our duty to see him through this trouble."

Mr. Merrick nodded assent.

"We cannot prevent the arrest," he replied, "for Le Drieux will not listen to reason. If we aided Jones to run away he would soon be caught. Absurd as the charge is, the youngster must face it and prove his innocence."

Arthur paced the floor in a way that indicated he was disturbed by this verdict.

"He ought to have no difficulty in proving he is not Jack Andrews," he remarked, reflectively; "and yet — those pearls are difficult to explain. Their similarity to the ones stolen in Europe fooled the expert, Le Drieux, and they are likely to fool a judge or jury. I hope Jones has some means of proving that he brought the pearls from Sangoa. That would settle the matter at once."

"As soon as he is arrested we will get him a lawyer — the best in this country," said Mr. Merrick. "More than that we cannot do, but a good lawyer will know the proper method of freeing his client."

The next morning they were up early, awaiting developments; but Le Drieux seemed in no hurry to move. He had breakfast at about nine o'clock, read his newspaper for a half hour or so, and then deliberately left the hotel. All of Mr. Merrick's party had breakfasted before this and soon after Le Drieux had gone away young Jones appeared in the lobby. He was just in time to see the Stanton girls drive away in their automobile, accompanied by their Aunt Jane.

"The motion picture stars must be late to-day," said the boy, looking after them.

"They are," answered Patsy, standing beside him at the window; "but Maud says this happens to be one of their days of leisure. No picture is to be taken and they have only to rehearse a new play. But it's a busy life, seems to

me, and it would really prove hard work if the girls didn't enjoy it so much."

"Yes," said he, "it's a fascinating profession. I understand, and nothing can be called *work* that is interesting. When we are obliged to do something that we do not like to do, it becomes 'work.' Otherwise, what is usually called 'work' is mere play, for it furnishes its quota of amusement."

He was quite unconscious of any impending misfortune and when Beth and Louise joined Patsy in thanking him for his pretty gifts of the pearls he flushed with pleasure. Evidently their expressions of delight were very grateful to his ears.

Said Uncle John, in a casual way: "Those are remarkably fine pearls, to have come from such an island as Sangoa."

"But we find much better ones there, I assure you," replied the boy. "I have many in my room of much greater value, but did not dare ask you to accept them as gifts."

"Do many pearls come from Sangoa, then?" asked Arthur.

"That is our one industry," answered the young man. "Many years ago my father discovered the pearl fisheries. It was after he had purchased the island, but he recognized the value of the pearls and brought a colony of people from America to settle at Sangoa and devote their time to pearl fishing. Once or twice every year we send a ship to market with a consignment of pearls to our agent, and — to be quite frank with you — that is why I am now able to build the picture theatres I have contracted for, as well as the film factory."

"I see," said Uncle John. "But tell me this, please: Why is Sangoa so little known, or rather, so quite unknown?"

"My father," Jones returned, "loved quiet and seclusion. He was willing to develop the pearl fisheries, but objected to the flock of adventurers sure to descend upon his island if its wealth of pearls became generally known. His colony he selected with great care and with few exceptions they are a sturdy, wholesome lot, enjoying the peaceful life of Sangoa and thoroughly satisfied with their condition there. It is only within the last two years that our American agents knew where our pearls came from, yet they could not locate the island if they tried. I do not feel the same desire my father did to keep the secret, although I would dislike to see Sangoa overrun with tourists or traders."

He spoke so quietly and at the same time so convincingly that both Arthur and Uncle John accepted his explanation unquestioningly. Nevertheless, in the embarrassing dilemma in which Jones would presently be involved, the story would be sure to bear the stamp of unreality to any uninterested hearer.

The girls had now begun to chatter over the theatre plans, and their "financial backer" — as Patsy Doyle called him — joined them with eager

interest. Arthur sat at a near-by desk writing a letter; Uncle John glanced over the morning paper; Inez, the Mexican nurse, brought baby to Louise for a kiss before it went for a ride in its perambulator.

An hour had passed when Le Drieux entered the lobby in company with a thin-faced, sharp-eyed man in plain clothes. They walked directly toward the group that was seated by the open alcove window, and Arthur Weldon, observing them and knowing what was about to happen, rose from the writing-desk and drew himself tensely together as he followed them. Uncle John lowered his paper, frowned at Le Drieux and then turned his eyes upon the face of young Jones.

It was the thin-featured man who advanced and lightly touched the boy's arm.

"Beg pardon, sir," said he, in even, unemotional tones. "You are Mr. Andrews, I believe — Mr. Jack Andrews?"

The youth turned his head to look at his questioner.

"No, sir," he answered with a smile. "A case of mistaken identity. My name is Jones." Then, continuing his speech to Patsy Doyle, he said: "There is no need to consider the acoustic properties of our theatres, for the architect — "

"Pardon me again," interrupted the man, more sternly. "I am positive this is *not* a case of mistaken identity. We have ample proof that Jack Andrews is parading here, under the alias of 'A. Jones.'"

The boy regarded him with a puzzled expression.

"What insolence!" muttered Beth in an under-tone but audible enough to be distinctly heard.

The man flushed slightly and glanced at Le Drieux, who nodded his head. Then he continued firmly:

"In any event, sir, I have a warrant for your arrest, and I hope you will come with me quietly and so avoid a scene."

The boy grew pale and then red. His eyes narrowed as he stared fixedly at the officer. But he did not change his position, nor did he betray either fear or agitation. In a voice quite unmoved he asked:

"On what charge do you arrest me?"

"You are charged with stealing a valuable collection of pearls from the Countess Ahmberg, at Vienna, about a year ago."

"But I have never been in Vienna."

"You will have an opportunity to prove that."

"And my name is not Andrews."

"You must prove that, also."

The boy thought for a moment. Then he asked:

“Who accuses me?”

“This gentleman; Mr. Le Drieux. He is an expert in pearls, knows intimately all those in the collection of the countess and has recognized several which you have recently presented to your friends, as among those you brought from Austria.”

Again Jones smiled.

“This is absurd, sir,” he remarked.

The officer returned the smile, but rather grimly.

“It is the usual protest, Mr. Andrews. I don’t blame you for the denial, but the evidence against you is very strong. Will you come? And quietly?”

“I am unable to offer physical resistance,” replied the young fellow, as he slowly rose from his chair and displayed his thin figure. “Moreover,” he added, with a touch of humor, “I believe there’s a fine for resisting an officer. I suppose you have a legal warrant. May I be permitted to see it?”

The officer produced the warrant. Jones perused it slowly and then handed it to Mr. Merrick, who read it and passed it back to the officer.

“What shall I do, sir?” asked the boy.

“Obey the law,” answered Uncle John. “This officer is only the law’s instrument and it is useless to argue with him. But I will go with you to the police station and furnish bail.”

Le Drieux shook his head.

“Quite impossible, Mr. Merrick,” he said. “This is not a bailable offense.”

“Are you sure?”

“I am positive. This is an extradition case, of international importance. Andrews, after an examination, will be taken to New York and from there to Vienna, where his crime was committed.”

“But he has committed no crime!”

Le Drieux shrugged his shoulders.

“He is accused, and he must prove his innocence,” said he.

“But that is nonsense!” interposed Arthur warmly. “There is no justice in such an assertion. If I know anything of the purpose of the law, and I think I do, you must first prove this man’s guilt before you carry him to Austria to be tried by a foreign court.”

“I don’t care a snap for the purpose of the law,” retorted Le Drieux. “Our treaty with Austria provides for extradition, and that settles it. This man is already under arrest. The judge who issued the warrant believes that Jones is Jack Andrews and that Jack Andrews stole the pearls from the Countess Ahmberg. Of course, the prisoner will have a formal examination, when he may defend himself as best he can, but we haven’t made this move without being sure of our case, and it will be rather difficult for him to escape the

penalty of his crimes, clever as he is."

"Clever?" It was Jones himself who asked this, wonderingly.

Le Drieux bowed to him with exaggerated politeness.

"I consider you the cleverest rogue in existence," said he. "But even the cleverest may be trapped, in time, and your big mistake was in disposing of those pearls so openly. See here," he added, taking from his pocket a small packet. "Here are the famous Taprobane pearls — six of them — which were found in your room a half hour ago. They, also, were a part of the countess' collection."

"Oh, you have been to my room?"

"Under the authority of the law."

"And you have seen those pearls before?"

"Several times. I am an expert in pearls and can recognize their value at a glance," said Le Drieux with much dignity.

Jones gave a little chuckle and then turned deprecatingly to Mr. Merrick.

"You need not come with me to the station, sir," said he; "but, if you wish to assist me, please send me a lawyer and then go to the Continental and tell Mr. Goldstein of my predicament."

"I will do that," promptly replied Uncle John.

Jones turned to bow to the girls.

"I hope you young ladies can forgive this disgraceful scene," he remarked in a tone of regret rather then humiliation. "I do not see how any effort of mine could have avoided it. It seems to be one of the privileges of the people's guardians, in your free country, to arrest and imprison anyone on a mere suspicion of crime. Here is a case in which someone has sadly blundered, and I imagine it is the pompous gentleman who claims to know pearls and does not," with a nod toward Le Drieux, who scowled indignantly.

"It is an outrage!" cried Beth.

"It's worse than that," said Patsy; "but of course you can easily prove your innocence."

"If I have the chance," the boy agreed. "But at present I am a prisoner and must follow my captor."

He turned to the officer and bowed to indicate that he was ready to go. Arthur shook the young fellow's hand and promised to watch his interests in every possible way.

"Go with him now, Arthur," proposed Louise. "It's a hard thing to be taken to jail and I'm sure he needs a friend at his side at this time."

"Good advice," agreed Uncle John. "Of course they'll give him a preliminary hearing before locking him up, and if you'll stick to him I'll send on a lawyer in double-quick time."

“Thank you,” said the boy. “The lawyer first, Mr. Merrick, and then Goldstein.”

CHAPTER XVII

UNCLE JOHN IS PUZZLED

Uncle John was off on his errands even before Jones and Arthur Weldon had driven away from the hotel with the officer and Le Drieux. There had been no "scene" and none of the guests of the hotel had any inkling of the arrest.

Uncle John had always detested lawyers and so he realized that he was sure to be a poor judge of the merits of any legal gentleman he might secure to defend Jones.

"I may as well leave it to chance," he grumbled, as he drove down the main boulevard. "The rascals are all alike!"

Glancing to this side and that, he encountered a sign on a building:
"Fred A. Colby, Lawyer."

"All right; I mustn't waste time," he said, and stopping his driver he ascended a stairway to a gloomy upper hall. Here the doors, all in a row, were alike forbidding, but one of them bore the lawyer's name, so Mr. Merrick turned the handle and abruptly entered.

A sallow-faced young man, in his shirt-sleeves, was seated at a table littered with newspapers and magazines, engaged in the task of putting new strings on a battered guitar. As his visitor entered he looked up in surprise and laid down the instrument.

"I want to see Colby, the lawyer," began Uncle John, regarding the disordered room with strong disapproval.

"You are seeing him," retorted the young man, with a fleeting smile, "and I'll bet you two to one that if you came here on business you will presently go away and find another lawyer."

"Why?" questioned Mr. Merrick, eyeing him more closely.

"I don't impress people," explained Colby, picking up the guitar again. "I don't inspire confidence. As for the law, I know it as well as anyone — which is begging the question — but when I'm interviewed I have to admit I've had no experience."

"No practice?"

"Just a few collections, that's all I sleep on that sofa yonder, eat at a cafeteria, and so manage to keep body and soul together. Once in a while a stranger sees my sign and needs a lawyer, so he climbs the stairs. But when he meets me face to face he beats a hasty retreat."

As he spoke, Colby tightened a string and began strumming it to get it tuned. Uncle John sat down on the one other chair in the room and thought a moment.

"You've been admitted to the bar?" he asked.

“Yes, sir. Graduate of the Penn Law School.”

“Then you know enough to defend an innocent man from an unjust accusation?”

Colby laid down the guitar.

“Ah!” said he, “this grows interesting. I really believe you have half a mind to give me your case. Sir, I know enough, I hope, to defend an innocent man; but I can’t promise, offhand, to save him, even from an unjust accusation.”

“Why not? Doesn’t law stand for justice?”

“Perhaps; in the abstract. Anyhow, there’s a pretty fable to that effect. But law in the abstract, and law as it is interpreted and applied, are not even second cousins. To be quite frank, I’d rather defend a guilty person than an innocent one. The chances are I’d win more easily. Are you sure your man is innocent?”

Uncle John scowled.

“Perhaps I’d better find another lawyer who is more optimistic,” he said.

“Oh, I’m full of optimism, sir. My fault is that I’m not well known in the courts and have no arrangement to divide my fees with the powers that be. But I’ve been observing and I know the tricks of the trade as well as any lawyer in California. My chief recommendation, however, is that I’m eager to get a case, for my rent is sadly overdue. Why not try me, just to see what I’m able to do? I’d like to find that out myself.”

“This is a very important matter,” asserted Mr. Merrick.

“Very. If I’m evicted for lack of rent-money my career is crippled.”

“I mean the case is a serious one.”

“Are you willing to pay for success?”

“Liberally.”

“Then I’ll win it for you. Don’t judge my ability by my present condition, sir. Tell me your story and I’ll get to work at once.”

Uncle John rose with sudden decision.

“Put on your coat,” he said, and while Colby obeyed with alacrity he gave him a brief outline of the accusation brought against Jones. “I want you to take my car,” he added, “and hasten to the police station, that you may be present at the preliminary examination. There will be plenty of time to talk afterward.”

Colby nodded. His coat and hat made the young lawyer quite presentable and without another word he followed Mr. Merrick down the stairs and took his seat in the motorcar. Next moment he was whirling down the street and Uncle John looked after him with a half puzzled expression, as if he wondered whether or not he had blundered in his choice of a lawyer.

A little later he secured a taxicab and drove to the office of the Continental Film Manufacturing Company. Mr. Goldstein was in his office but sent word that he was too busy to see visitors. Nevertheless, when Mr. Merrick declared he had been sent by A. Jones, he was promptly admitted to the manager's sanctum.

"Our friend, young Jones," he began, "has just been arrested by a detective."

Goldstein's nervous jump fairly raised him off his chair; but in an instant he settled back and shot an eager, interested look at his visitor.

"What for, Mr. Merrick?" he demanded.

"For stealing valuable pearls from some foreign woman. A trumped-up charge, of course."

Goldstein rubbed the palms of his hands softly together. His face wore a look of supreme content.

"Arrested! Ah, that is bad, Mr. Merrick. It is very bad indeed. And it involves us — the Continental, you know — in an embarrassing manner."

"Why so?" asked Uncle John.

"Can't you see, sir?" asked the manager, trying hard to restrain a smile. "If the papers get hold of this affair, and state that our president — our biggest owner — the man who controls the Continental stock — is a common thief, the story will — eh — eh — put a bad crimp in our business, so to speak."

Uncle John looked at the man thoughtfully.

"So Jones controls the Continental, eh?" he said. "How long since, Mr. Goldstein?"

"Why, since the January meeting, a year and more ago. It was an astonishing thing, and dramatic — believe *me*! At the annual meeting of stockholders in walks this stripling — a mere kid — proves that he holds the majority of stock, elects himself president and installs a new board of directors, turning the tired and true builders of the business out in the cold. Then, without apology, promise or argument, President Jones walks out again! In an hour he upset the old conditions, turned our business topsy-turvy and disappeared with as little regard for the Continental as if it had been a turnip. That stock must have cost him millions, and how he ever got hold of it is a mystery that has kept us all guessing ever since. The only redeeming feature of the affair was that the new board of directors proved decent and Jones kept away from us all and let us alone. I'd never seen him until he came here a few days ago and began to order me around. So, there, Mr. Merrick, you know as much about Jones as I do."

Mr. Merrick was perplexed. The more he heard of young Jones the more

amazing; the boy seemed to be.

"Has the Continental lost money since Jones took possession?" he inquired.

"I think not," replied Goldstein, cautiously. "You're a business man, Mr. Merrick, and can understand that our machinery — our business system — is so perfect that it runs smoothly, regardless of who grabs the dividends. What I object to is this young fellow's impertinence in interfering with my work here. He walks in, reverses my instructions to my people, orders me to do unbusinesslike things and raises hob with the whole organization."

"Well, it belongs to him, Goldstein," said Uncle John, in defense of the boy. "He is your employer and has the right to dictate. But just at present he needs your help. He asked me to come here and tell you of his arrest."

Goldstein shrugged his shoulders.

"His arrest is none of my business," was his reply. "If Jones stole the money to buy Continental stock he must suffer the consequences. I'm working for the stock, not for the individual."

"But surely you will go to the station and see what can be done for him?" protested Uncle John.

"Surely I will not," retorted the manager. "What's the use? There isn't even a foot of good picture film in so common a thing as the arrest of a thief — and the censors would forbid it if there were. Let Jones fight his own battles."

"It occurs to me," suggested Mr. Merrick, who was growing indignant, "that Mr. Jones will be able to satisfy the court that he is not a thief, and so secure his freedom without your assistance. What will happen then, Mr. Goldstein?"

"Then? Why, it is still none of my business. I'm the manager of a motion picture concern — one of the biggest concerns in the world — and I've nothing to do with the troubles of my stockholders."

He turned to his desk and Mr. Merrick was obliged to go away without farther parley. On his way out he caught a glimpse of Maud Stanton passing through the building. She was dressed in the costume of an Indian princess and looked radiantly beautiful. Uncle John received a nod and a smile and then she was gone, without as yet a hint of the misfortune that had overtaken A. Jones of Sangoa.

Returning to the hotel, rather worried and flustered by the morning's events, he found the girls quietly seated in the lobby, busy over their embroidery.

"Well, Uncle," said Patsy, cheerfully, "is Ajo still in limbo?"

"I suppose so," he rejoined, sinking into an easy chair beside her. "Is

Arthur back yet?"

"No," said Louise, answering for her husband, "he is probably staying to do all he can for the poor boy."

"Did you get a lawyer?" inquired Beth.

"I got a fellow who claims to be a lawyer; but I'm not sure he will be of any use."

Then he related his interview with Colby, to the amusement of his nieces, all three of whom approved the course he had taken and were already prepared to vouch for the briefless barrister's ability, on the grounds that eccentricity meant talent.

"You see," explained Miss Patsy, "he has nothing else to do but jump heart and soul into this case, so Ajo will be able to command his exclusive services, which with some big, bustling lawyer would be impossible."

Luncheon was over before Arthur finally appeared, looking somewhat grave and perturbed.

"They won't accept bail," he reported. "Jones must stay in jail until his formal examination, and if they then decide that he is really Jack Andrews he will remain in jail until his extradition papers arrive."

"When will he be examined?" asked Louise.

"Whenever the judge feels in the humor, it seems. Our lawyer demanded Jones' release at once, on the ground that a mistake of identity had been made; but the stupid judge is of the opinion that the charge against our friend is valid. At any rate he refused to let him go. He wouldn't even argue the case at present. He issues a warrant on a charge of larceny, claps a man in jail whether innocent or not, and refuses to let him explain anything or prove his innocence until a formal examination is held."

"There is some justice in that," remarked Uncle John. "Suppose Jones is guilty; it would be a mistake to let him go free until a thorough examination had been made."

"And if he is innocent, he will have spent several days in jail, been worried and disgraced, and there is no redress for the false imprisonment. The judge won't even apologize to him!"

"It's all in the interests of law and order, I suppose," said Patsy; "but the law seems dreadfully inadequate to protect the innocent. I suppose it's because the courts are run by cheap and incompetent people who couldn't earn a salary in any other way."

"Someone must run them, and it isn't an ambitious man's job," replied Uncle John. "What do you think of the lawyer I sent you, Arthur?"

The young ranchman smiled.

"He's a wonder, Uncle. He seemed to know more about the case than

Jones or I did, and more about the law than the judge did. He's an irrepressible fellow, and told that rascal Le Drieux a lot about pearls that the expert never had heard before. Where did you find him, sir?"

Uncle John explained.

"Well," said Arthur, "I think Jones is in good hands. Colby has secured him a private room at the jail, with a bath and all the comforts of home. Meals are to be sent in from a restaurant and when I left the place the jailer had gone out to buy Jones a stock of books to while away his leisure hours — which are bound to be numerous. I'd no idea a prisoner could live in such luxury."

"Money did it, I suppose," Patsy shrewdly suggested.

"Yes. Jones wrote a lot of checks. Colby got a couple of hundred for a retaining fee and gleefully informed us it was more money than he had ever owned at one time in all his previous career. I think he will earn it, however."

"Where is he now?" asked Uncle John.

"Visiting all the newspaper offices, to 'buy white space,' as he put it. In other words, Colby will bribe the press to silence, at least until the case develops."

"I'm glad of that," exclaimed Beth. "What do you think of this queer business, Arthur?"

"Why, I've no doubt of the boy's innocence, if that is what you mean. I've watched him closely and am positive he is no more Jack Andrews than I am. But I fear he will have a hard task to satisfy the judge that he is falsely accused. It would be an admission of error, you see, and so the judge will prefer to find him guilty. It is this same judge — Wilton, I think his name is — who will conduct the formal examination, and to-day he openly sneered at the mention of Sangoa. On the other hand, he evidently believed every statement made by Le Drieux about the identity of the pearls found in Jones' possession. Le Drieux has a printed list of the Ahmberg pearls, and was able to check the Jones' pearls off this list with a fair degree of accuracy. It astonished even me, and I could see that Jones was equally amazed."

"Wouldn't it be queer if they convicted him!" exclaimed Beth.

"It would be dreadful, since he is innocent," said Patsy.

"There is no need to worry about that just at present," Arthur assured them. "I am placing a great deal of confidence in the ability of Lawyer Colby."

CHAPTER XVIII

DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES

The Stanton girls and Mrs. Montrose came in early that afternoon. They had heard rumors of the arrest of Jones and were eager to learn what had occurred. Patsy and Beth followed them to their rooms to give them every known detail and canvass the situation in all its phases.

"Goldstein has been an angel all afternoon," said Flo. "He grinned and capered about like a schoolboy and some of us guessed he'd been left a fortune."

"He ought to be ashamed of himself." Patsy indignantly asserted. "The man admitted to Uncle John that Ajo is the biggest stockholder in the Continental, the president, to boot; yet Goldstein wouldn't lift a finger to help him and positively refused to obey his request to go to him after he was arrested."

"I know about that," said Aunt Jane, quietly. "Goldstein talked to me about the affair this afternoon and declared his conviction that young Jones is really a pearl thief. He has taken a violent dislike to the boy and is delighted to think his stock will be taken away from him."

Maud had silently listened to this dialogue as she dressed for dinner. But now she impetuously broke into the conversation, saying:

"Something definite ought to be done for the boy. He needs intelligent assistance. I'm afraid his situation is serious."

"That is what Arthur thinks," said Beth. "He says that unless he can furnish proof that he is not Jack Andrews, and that he came by those pearls honestly, he will be shipped to Austria for trial. No one knows what those foreigners will do to him, but he would probably fare badly in their hands."

"Such being the logical conclusion," said Maud, "we must make our fight now, at the examination."

"Uncle John has engaged a lawyer," announced Patsy, "and if he proves bright and intelligent he ought to be able to free Ajo."

"I'd like to see that lawyer, and take his measure," answered Maud, musingly, and her wish was granted soon after they had finished dinner. Colby entered the hotel, jaunty as ever, and Arthur met him and introduced him to the girls.

"You must forgive me for coming on a disagreeable mission," began the young attorney, "but I have promised the judge that I would produce all the pearls Mr. Jones gave you, not later than to-morrow morning. He wants them as evidence, and to compare privately with Le Drieux's list, although he will likely have the expert at his elbow. So I can't promise that you will ever get

your jewels back again."

"Oh. You think, then, that Mr. Jones is guilty?" said Maud coldly.

"No, indeed; I believe he is innocent. A lawyer should never suspect his client, you know. But to win I must prove my case, and opposed to me is that terrible Le Drieux, who insists he is never mistaken."

"Arthur — Mr. Weldon — says you understand pearls as well as Mr. Le Drieux does," suggested Patsy.

"I thank him; but he is in error. I chattered to the judge about pearls, it is true, because I found he couldn't tell a pearl from a glass bead; and I believe I even perplexed Le Drieux by hinting at a broad knowledge on the subject which I do not possess. It was all a bit of bluff on my part. But by to-morrow morning this knowledge will be a fact, for I've bought a lot of books on pearls and intend to sit up all night reading them."

"That was a clever idea," said Uncle John, nodding approval.

"So my mission here this evening is to get the pearls, that I may study them as I read," continued Colby. "Heretofore I've only seen the things through a plate glass window, or a show case. The success of our defense depends upon our refuting Le Drieux's assertion that the pearls found in Jones' possession are a part of the Countess Ahmberg's collection. He has a full description of the stolen gems and I must be prepared to show that none of the Jones' pearls is on the list."

"Can you do that?" asked Maud.

She was gazing seriously into the young man's eyes and this caused him to blush and stammer a little as he replied:

"I — I hope to, Miss Stanton."

"And are you following no other line of defense?" she inquired.

He sat back and regarded the girl curiously for a moment.

"I would like you to suggest some other line of defense," he replied. "I've tried to find one — and failed."

"Can't you prove he is not Jack Andrews?"

"Not if the identity of the pearls is established," said the lawyer. "If the pearls were stolen, and if Jones cannot explain how he obtained possession of them, the evidence is *prima facia* that he *is* Jack Andrews, or at least his accomplice. Moreover, his likeness to the photograph is somewhat bewildering, you must admit."

This gloomy view made them all silent for a time, each thoughtfully considering the matter. Then Maud asked:

"Do you know the cash value of Mr. Jones' stock in the Continental Film Company?"

Colby shook his head, but Uncle John replied:

“Goldstein told me it is worth millions.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the girl. “There, then, is our proof.”

The lawyer reflected, with knitted brows.

“I confess I don’t quite see your point,” said he.

“How much were those stolen pearls worth?” asked the girl.

“I don’t know.”

“You know they were not worth millions. Jack Andrews was an adventurer, by Le Drieux’s showing; he was a fellow who lived by his wits and generally earned his livelihood by gambling with the scions of wealthy families. Even had he stolen the Countess’ pearls and disposed of the collection at enormous prices — which a thief is usually unable to do — he would still have been utterly unable to purchase a controlling interest in the Continental stock.”

She spoke with quiet assurance, but her statement roused the group to sudden excitement.

“Hooray!” cried Patsy. “There’s your proof, Mr. Colby.”

“The logic of genius,” commented Uncle John.

“Why, it’s proof positive!” said Beth.

“It is certainly a strong argument in favor of the boy’s innocence,” asserted Arthur Weldon.

“Maud’s a wonder when she wakes up. She ought to have been a ‘lady detective,’“ remarked Flo, regarding her sister admiringly.

Colby, at first startled, was now also regarding Maud Stanton with open admiration; but there was an odd smile on his lips, a smile of indulgent toleration.

“Le Drieux’s statement connects Andrews with two other pearl robberies,” he reminded her. “The necklace of the Princess Lemoine is said to be priceless, and the Grandison collection stolen in London was scarcely less valuable than that of Countess Ahmberg.”

“Allowing all that,” said Mr. Merrick, “two or three hundred thousand dollars would doubtless cover the value of the entire lot. I am quite certain, Mr. Colby, that Miss Stanton’s suggestion will afford you an excellent line of defense.”

“I shall not neglect it, you may be sure,” replied the lawyer. “Tonight I’ll try to figure out, as nearly as possible, the total cash value of all the stolen pearls, and of course Jones will tell us what he paid for his stock, or how much it is worth. But I am not sure this argument will have as much weight as Miss Stanton suggests it may. A bold gambler, such as Andrews, might have obtained a huge sum at Baden Baden or Monte Carlo; and, were he indeed so clever a thief as his record indicates, he may have robbed a bank,

or stolen in some way an immense sum of money. Logically, the question has weight and I shall present it as effectively as I can; but, as I said, I rely more on my ability to disprove the identity of the pearls, on which the expert Le Drieux lays so much stress. Jones will have a thorough and formal examination within a few days — perhaps to-morrow — and if the judge considers that Andrews the pearl thief has been captured, he will be held here pending the arrival from Washington of the extradition papers — say two or three weeks longer."

"Then we shall have all that time to prove his innocence?" inquired Maud.

"Unfortunately, no. There will be no further trial of the prisoner until he gets to Vienna and is delivered to the authorities there. All our work must be done previous to the formal examination."

"You do not seem very hopeful," observed Maud, a hint of reproach in her tone.

"Then appearances are against me, Miss Stanton," replied the lawyer with a smile. "This is my first important case, and if I win it my future is assured; so I mean to win. But in order to do that I must consider the charge of the prosecution, the effect of its arguments upon the judge, and then find the right means to combat them. When I am with you, the friends of the accused, I may consider the seamy side of the fabric; but the presiding judge will find me so sure of my position that he will instinctively agree with me."

They brought him the pearls Jones had presented to them and then the lawyer bade them good night and went to his office to master the history of pearls in general and those famous ones stolen from Countess Ahmberg in particular.

When he had gone Uncle John remarked:

"Well, what do you think of him?"

They seemed in doubt.

"I think he will do all he can," said Patsy.

"And he appears quite a clever young man," added Beth, as if to encourage them.

"Allowing all that," said Maud, gravely, "he has warned us of the possibility of failure. I cannot understand how the coils of evidence have wrapped themselves so tightly around poor Ajo."

"That," asserted Flo, "is because you cannot understand Ajo himself. Nor can I; nor can any of us!"

CHAPTER XIX

MAUD MAKES A MEMORANDUM

My mother used to say to me: "Never expect to find brains in a pretty girl." Perhaps she said it because I was not a pretty girl and she wished to encourage me. In any event, that absurd notion of the ancients that when the fairies bestow the gift of beauty on a baby they withhold all other qualities has so often been disproved that we may well disregard it.

Maud Stanton was a pretty girl — indeed, a beautiful girl — but she possessed brains as well as beauty and used her intellect to advantage more often than her quiet demeanor would indicate to others than her most intimate associates. From the first she had been impressed by the notion that there was something mysterious about A. Jones and that his romantic explanation of his former life and present position was intended to hide a truth that would embarrass him, were it fully known. Therefore she had secretly observed the young man, at such times as they were together, and had treasured every careless remark he had made — every admission or assertion — and made a note of it. The boy's arrest had startled her because it was so unexpected, and her first impulse was to doubt his innocence. Later, however, she had thoroughly reviewed the notes she had made and decided he was innocent.

In the quiet of her own room, when she was supposed to be asleep, Maud got out her notebook and read therein again the review of all she had learned concerning A. Jones of Sangoa.

"For a boy, he has a good knowledge of business; for a foreigner, he has an excellent conception of modern American methods," she murmured thoughtfully. "He is simple in little things; shrewd, if not wise, in important matters. He proved this by purchasing the control of the Continental, for its shares pay enormous dividends.

"Had he stolen those pearls, I am sure he would have been too shrewd to have given a portion of them to us, knowing we would display them openly and so attract attention to them. A thief so ingenious as Andrews, for instance, would never have done so foolish a thing as that, I am positive. Therefore, Jones is not Andrews.

"Now, to account for the likeness between Andrews, an American adventurer, and Jones, reared and educated in the mysterious island of Sangoa. Ajo's father must have left some near relatives in this country when he became a recluse in his far-away island. Why did he become a recluse? That's a subject I must consider carefully, for he was a man of money, a man of science, a man of affairs. Jones has told us he has no relatives here. He

may have spoken honestly, if his father kept him in ignorance of the family history. I'm not going to jump at the conclusion that the man who calls himself Jack Andrews is a near relative of our Ajo — a cousin, perhaps — but I'll not forget that that might explain the likeness between them.

"Ajo's father must have amassed a great fortune, during many years, from his pearl fisheries. That would explain why the boy has so much money at his disposal. He didn't get it from the sale of stolen pearls, that is certain. In addition to the money he invested in the Continental, he has enough in reserve to expend another million or so in Patsy Doyle's motion picture scheme, and he says he can spare it easily and have plenty left! This, in my opinion, is a stronger proof of Jones' innocence than Lawyer Colby seems to consider it. To me, it is conclusive.

"Now, then, where is Sangoa? How can one get to the island? And, finally, how did Jones get here from Sangoa and how is he to return, if he ever wants to go back to his valuable pearl fisheries, his people and his home?"

She strove earnestly to answer these questions, but could not with her present knowledge. So she tucked the notebook into a drawer of her desk, put out her light and got into bed.

But sleep would not come to her. The interest she took in the fate of young Jones was quite impersonal. She liked the boy in the same way she had liked dozens of boys. The fact that she had been of material assistance in saving his life aroused no especial tenderness in her. On his own account, however, Jones was interesting to her because he was so unusual. The complications that now beset him added to this interest because they were so curious and difficult to explain. Maud had the feeling that she had encountered a puzzle to tax her best talents, and so she wanted to solve it.

Suddenly she bounded out of bed and turned on the electric light. The notebook was again brought into requisition and she penciled on its pages the following words:

"What was the exact date that Jack Andrews landed in America? What was the exact date that Ajo landed from Sangoa? The first question may be easily answered, for doubtless the police have the record. But — the other?"

Then she replaced the book, put out the light and went to sleep very easily.

That last thought, now jotted down in black and white, had effectually cleared her mind of its cobwebs.

CHAPTER XX

A GIRLISH NOTION

Colby came around next morning just as Mr. Merrick was entering the breakfast room, and the little man took the lawyer in to have a cup of coffee. The young attorney still maintained his jaunty air, although red-eyed from his night's vigil, and when he saw the Stanton girls and their Aunt Jane having breakfast by an open window he eagerly begged permission to join them, somewhat to Uncle John's amusement.

"Well?" demanded Maud, reading Colby's face with her clear eyes.

"I made a night of it, as I promised," said he. "This morning I know so much about pearls that I'm tempted to go into the business."

"As Jack Andrews did?" inquired Flo.

"Not exactly," he answered with a smile. "But it's an interesting subject — so interesting that I only abandoned my reading when I found I was burning my electric lamp by daylight. Listen: A pearl is nothing more or less than nacre, a fluid secretion of a certain variety of oyster — not the eatable kind. A grain of sand gets between the folds of the oyster and its shell and irritates the beast. In self-defense the oyster covers the sand with a fluid which hardens and forms a pearl."

"I've always known that," said Flo, with a toss of her head.

"Yes; but I want you all to bear it in mind, for it will explain a discovery I have made. Before I get to that, however, I want to say that at one time the island of Ceylon supplied the world with its most famous pearls. The early Egyptians discovered them there, as well as on the Persian and Indian coasts. The pearl which Cleopatra is said to have dissolved in wine and swallowed was worth about four hundred thousand dollars in our money; but of course pearls were scarce in her day. A single pearl was cut in two and used for earrings for the statue of Venus in the Pantheon at Rome, and the sum paid for it was equal to about a quarter of a million dollars. Sir Thomas Gresham, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, had a pearl valued at about seventy-five thousand dollars which he treated in the same manner Cleopatra did, dissolving it in wine and boasting he had given the most expensive dinner ever known."

"All of which — " began Maud, impatiently.

"All of which, Miss Stanton, goes to show that pearls have been of great price since the beginning of history. Nowadays we get just as valuable pearls from the South Seas, and even from Panama, St. Margarita and the Caromandel Coast, as ever came from Ceylon. But only those of rare size, shape or color are now valued at high prices. For instance, a string of

matched pearls such as that owned by Princess Lemoine is estimated as worth only eighty thousand dollars, because it could be quite easily duplicated. The collection of Countess Ahmberg was noted for its variety of shapes and colors more than for its large or costly pearls; and that leads to my great discovery."

"Thank heaven," said Flo, with a sigh.

"I have discovered that our famous expert. Le Drieux, is an arrant humbug."

"We had suspected that," remarked Maud.

"Now we know it," declared Colby. "Pearls, I have learned, change their color, their degree of luster, even their weight, according to atmospheric conditions and location. A ten-penny-weight pearl in Vienna might weigh eight or nine pennyweights here in California, or it is more likely to weigh twelve. The things absorb certain moistures and chemicals from the air and sun, and shed those absorptions when kept in darkness or from the fresh air. Pearls die, so to speak; but are often restored to life by immersions in sea-water, their native element. As for color: the pink and blue pearls often grow white, at times, especially if kept long in darkness, but sun-baths restore their former tints. In the same way a white pearl, if placed near the fumes of ammonia, changes to a pinkish hue, while certain combinations of chemicals render them black, or 'smoked.' A clever man could steal a pink pearl, bleach it white, and sell it to its former owner without its being recognized. Therefore, when our expert, Le Drieux, attempts to show that the pearls found in Jones' possession are identical with those stolen from the Austrian lady, he fails to allow for climatic or other changes and cannot be accurate enough to convince anyone who knows the versatile characteristics of these gems."

"Ah, but does the judge know that, Mr. Colby?" asked Maud.

"I shall post him. After that, the conviction of the prisoner will be impossible."

"Do you think the examination will be held to-day?" inquired Mr. Merrick.

"I cannot tell that. It will depend upon the mood of Judge Wilton. If he feels grouchy or disagreeable, he is liable to postpone the case. If he is in good spirits and wants to clear his docket he may begin the examination at ten o'clock, to-day, which is the hour set for it."

"Is your evidence ready, Mr. Colby?"

"Such as I can command, Miss Stanton," he replied. "Last evening I wired New York for information as to the exact amount of stock Jones owns in the Continental, and I got a curious reply. The stock is valued at nineteen

hundred thousand dollars, but no one believes that Jones owns it personally. It is generally thought that for politic reasons the young man was made the holder of stock for several different parties, who still own it, although it is in Jones' name. The control of stock without ownership is not unusual. It gives the real owners an opportunity to hide behind their catspaw, who simply obeys their instructions."

"I do not believe that Jones is connected with anyone in that manner," said Mr. Merrick.

"Nor do I," asserted Aunt Jane. "His interference with Goldstein's plans proves he is under no obligations to others, for he has acted arbitrarily, in accordance with his personal desires and against the financial interests of the concern."

"Why didn't you ask him about this, instead of wiring to New York?" demanded Maud.

"He might not give us exact information, under the circumstances," said Colby.

The girl frowned.

"Jones is not an ordinary client," continued the lawyer, coolly. "He won't tell me anything about himself, or give me what is known as 'inside information.' On the contrary, he contents himself with saying he is innocent and I must prove it. I'm going to save the young man, but I'm not looking to him for much assistance."

Maud still frowned. Presently she said:

"I want to see Mr. Jones. Can you arrange an interview for me, sir?"

"Of course. You'd better go into town with me this morning. If the examination is held, you will see Jones then. If it's postponed, you may visit him in the jail."

Maud reflected a moment.

"Very well," said she, "I'll go with you." Then, turning to her aunt, she continued: "You must make my excuses to Mr. Goldstein, Aunt Jane."

Mrs. Montrose eyed her niece critically.

"Who will accompany you, Maud?" she asked.

"Why, I'll go," said Patsy Doyle; and so it was settled, Uncle John agreeing to escort the young ladies and see them safely home again.

CHAPTER XXI

THE YACHT "ARABELLA"

As the party drove into town Colby said:

"It wouldn't be a bad idea for Jones to bribe that fellow Le Drieux. If Le Drieux, who holds a warrant for the arrest of Jack Andrews, issued by the Austrian government and vised in Washington, could be won to our side, the whole charge against our friend might be speedily dissolved."

"Disgraceful!" snapped Maud indignantly. "I am positive Mr. Jones would not consider such a proposition."

"Diplomatic, not disgraceful," commented the lawyer, smiling at her. "Why should Jones refuse to consider bribery?"

"To use money to defeat justice would be a crime as despicable as stealing pearls," she said.

"Dear me!" muttered Colby, with a puzzled frown. "What a queer way to look at it. Le Drieux has already been bribed, by a liberal reward, to run down a supposed criminal. If we bribe him with a larger sum to give up the pursuit of Jones, whom we believe innocent, we are merely defending ourselves from a possible injustice which may be brought about by an error of judgment."

"Isn't this judge both able and honest?" asked Uncle John.

"Wilton? Well, possibly. His ability consists in his knowledge of law, rather than of men and affairs. He believes himself honest, I suppose, but I'll venture to predict he will act upon prejudice and an assumption of personal dignity, rather than attempt to discover if his personal impressions correspond with justice. A judge, Mr. Merrick, is a mere man, with all the average man's failings; so we must expect him to be quite human."

"Never mind," said Patsy resignedly. "Perhaps we shall find him a better judge than you are lawyer."

"He has had more experience, anyhow," said Colby, much amused at the shot.

They found, on arriving at court, that the case had already been postponed. They drove to the jail and obtained permission to see the prisoner, who was incarcerated under the name of "Jack Andrews, alias A. Jones." Maud would have liked a private audience, but the lawyer was present as well as Patsy and Mr. Merrick, and she did not like to ask them to go away.

The boy greeted them with his old frank smile and did not seem in the least oppressed by the fact that he was a prisoner accused of an ugly crime. The interview was held in a parlor of the jail, a guard standing by the door but discreetly keeping out of earshot.

Colby first informed the boy of the postponement of his formal examination and then submitted to his client an outline of the defense he had planned. Jones listened quietly and shook his head.

"Is that the best you can do for me?"

"With my present knowledge, yes," returned the lawyer.

"And will it clear me from this suspicion?" was the next question.

"I hope so."

"You are not sure?"

"This is an extraordinary case, Mr. Jones. Your friends all believe you innocent, but the judge wants facts — cold, hard facts — and only these will influence him. Mr. Le Drieux, commissioned by the Austrian government, states that you are Jack Andrews, and have escaped to America after having stolen the pearls of a noble Viennese lady. He will offer, as evidence to prove his assertion, the photograph and the pearls. You must refute this charge with counter-evidence, in order to escape extradition and a journey to the country where the crime was committed. There you will be granted a regular trial, to be sure, but even if you then secure an acquittal you will have suffered many indignities and your good name will be permanently tarnished."

"Well, sir?"

"I shall work unceasingly to secure your release at the examination. But I wish I had some stronger evidence to offer in rebuttal."

"Go ahead and do your best," said the boy, nonchalantly. "I will abide by the result, whatever it may be."

"May I ask a few questions?" Maud timidly inquired.

He turned to her with an air of relief.

"Most certainly you may, Miss Stanton."

"And you will answer them?"

"I pledge myself to do so, if I am able."

"Thank you," she said. "I am not going to interfere with Mr. Colby's plans, but I'd like to help you on my own account, if I may."

He gave her a quick look, at once grateful, suspicious and amused. Then he said:

"Clear out, Colby. I'm sure you have a hundred things to attend to, and when you're gone I'll have a little talk with Miss Stanton."

The lawyer hesitated.

"If this conversation is likely to affect your case," he began, "then — "

"Then Miss Stanton will give you any information she may acquire," interrupted Jones, and that left Colby no alternative but to go away.

"Now, then, Miss Stanton, out with it!" said the boy.

"There are a lot of things we don't know, but ought to know, in order to

defend you properly," she observed, looking at him earnestly.

"Question me, then."

"I want to know the exact date when you landed in this country from Sangoa."

"Let me see. It was the twelfth day of October, of last year."

"Oh! so long ago as that? It is fifteen months. Once you told us that you had been here about a year."

"I didn't stop to count the months, you see. The twelfth of October is correct."

"Where did you land?"

"At San Francisco."

"Direct from Sangoa?"

"Direct from Sangoa."

"And what brought you from Sangoa to San Francisco?"

"A boat."

"A sailing-ship?"

"No, a large yacht. Two thousand tons burden."

"Whose yacht was it?"

"Mine."

"Then where is it now?"

He reflected a moment.

"I think Captain Carg must be anchored at San Pedro, by now. Or perhaps he is at Long Beach, or Santa Monica," he said quietly.

"On this coast!" exclaimed Maud.

"Yes."

Patsy was all excitement by now and could no longer hold her tongue.

"Is the yacht *Arabella* yours?" she demanded.

"It is, Miss Patsy."

"Then it is lying off Santa Monica Bay. I've seen it!" she cried.

"It was named for my mother," said the boy, his voice softening, "and built by my father. In the *Arabella* I made my first voyage; so you will realize I am very fond of the little craft."

Maud was busily thinking.

"Is Captain Carg a Sangoan?" she asked.

"Of course. The entire crew are Sangoans."

"Then where has the yacht been since it landed you here fifteen months ago?"

"It returned at once to the island, and at my request has now made another voyage to America."

"It has been here several days."

“Quite likely.”

“Has it brought more pearls from Sangoa?”

“Perhaps. I do not know, for I have not yet asked for the captain’s report.”

Both Uncle John and Patsy were amazed at the rapidity with which Maud was acquiring information of a really important character. Indeed, she was herself surprised and the boy’s answers were already clearing away some of the mists. She stared at him thoughtfully as she considered her next question, and Jones seemed to grow thoughtful, too.

“I have no desire to worry my friends over my peculiar difficulties,” he presently said. “Frankly, I am not in the least worried myself. The charge against me is so preposterous that I am sure to be released after the judge has examined me; and, even at the worst — if I were sent to Vienna for trial — the Austrians would know very well that I am not the man they seek.”

“That trip would cause you great inconvenience, however,” suggested Mr. Merrick.

“I am told a prisoner is treated very well, if he is willing to pay for such consideration,” said Jones.

“And your good name?” asked Maud, with a touch of impatience.

“My good name is precious only to me, and I know it is still untarnished. For your sake, my newly found friends, I would like the world to believe in me, but there is none save you to suffer through my disgrace, and you may easily ignore my acquaintance.”

“What nonsense!” cried Patsy, scornfully. “Tell me, sir, what’s to become of our grand motion picture enterprise, if you allow yourself to be shipped to Vienna as a captured thief?”

He winced a trifle at the blunt epithet but quickly recovered and smiled at her.

“I’m sorry, Miss Patsy,” said he. “I know you will be disappointed if our enterprise is abandoned. So will I. Since this latest complication arose I fear I have not given our project the consideration it deserves.”

The boy passed his hand wearily across his forehead and, rising from his seat, took a few nervous steps up and down the room. Then, pausing, he asked abruptly:

“Are you still inclined to be my champion, Miss Stanton?”

“If I can be of any help,” she replied, simply.

“Then I wish you would visit the yacht, make the acquaintance of Captain Carg and tell him of the trouble I am in. Will you?”

“With pleasure. That is — I’ll be glad to do your errand.”

“I’ll give you a letter to him,” he continued, and turning to the attendant he asked for writing material, which was promptly furnished him. At the

table he wrote a brief note and enclosed it in an envelope which he handed to Maud.

"You will find the captain a splendid old fellow," said he.

"Will he answer any questions I may ask him?" she demanded.

"That will depend upon your questions," he answered evasively. "Carg is considered a bit taciturn, I believe, but he has my best interests at heart and you will find him ready to serve me in any possible way."

"Is there any objection to my going with Maud?" asked Patsy. "I'd like to visit that yacht; it looks so beautiful from a distance."

"You may all go, if you wish," said he. "It might be well for Mr. Merrick to meet Captain Carg, who would prefer, I am sure, to discuss so delicate a matter as my arrest with a man. Not that he is ungallant, but with a man such as Mr. Merrick he would be more at his ease. Carg is a sailor, rather blunt and rugged, both in speech and demeanor, but wholly devoted to me because I am at present *the* Jones of Sangoa."

"I'll accompany the girls, of course," said Uncle John; "and I think we ought not to delay in seeing your man. Colby says you may be called for examination at any time."

"There is one more question I want to ask," announced Maud as they rose to go. "On what date did you reach New York, after landing at San Francisco?"

"Why, it must have been some time in last January. I know it was soon after Christmas, which I passed in Chicago."

"Is that as near as you can recollect the date?"

"Yes, at short notice."

"Then perhaps you can tell me the date you took possession of the Continental Film Company by entering the stockholders' meeting and ejecting yourself president?"

He seemed surprised at her information and the question drew from him an odd laugh.

"How did you learn about that incident?" he asked.

"Goldstein told Mr. Merrick. He said it was a coup d'etat."

The boy laughed again.

"It was really funny," said he. "Old Bingley, the last president, had no inkling that I controlled the stock. He was so sure of being reelected that he had a camera-man on hand to make a motion picture of the scene where all would hail him as the chief. The picture was taken, but it didn't interest Bingley any, for it showed the consternation on his face, and the faces of his favored coterie, when I rose and calmly voted him out of office with the majority of the stock."

“Oh!” exclaimed Maud. “There was a picture made of that scene, then?”

“To be sure. It was never shown but once to an audience of one. I sat and chuckled to myself while the film was being run.”

“Was it kept, or destroyed?” asked the girl, breathlessly.

“I ordered it preserved amongst our archives. Probably Goldstein now has the negative out here, stored in our Hollywood vaults.”

“And the date — when was it?” she demanded.

“Why, the annual meeting is always the last Thursday in January. Figure it out — it must have been the twenty-sixth. But is the exact date important, Miss Stanton?”

“Very,” she announced. “I don’t know yet the exact date that Andrews landed in New York on his return from Vienna, but if it happened to be later than the twenty-sixth of January — ”

“I see. In that case the picture will clear me of suspicion.”

“Precisely. I shall now go and wire New York for the information I need.”

“Can’t you get it of Le Drieux?” asked the young man.

“Perhaps so; I’ll try. But it will be better to get the date from the steamship agent direct.”

With this they shook the boy’s hand, assuring him of their sympathy and their keen desire to aid him, and then hurried away from the jail.

CHAPTER XXII

MASCULINE AND FEMININE

Uncle John and the girls, after consulting together, decided to stop at the Hollywood studio and pick up Flo and Mrs. Montrose.

"It would be a shame to visit that lovely yacht without them," said Patsy; "and we were all invited, you know."

"Yes, invited by a host who is unavoidably detained elsewhere," added Uncle John.

"Still, that yacht is very exclusive," his niece stated, "and I'm sure we are the first Americans to step foot on its decks."

They were all in a brighter mood since the interview at the jail, and after a hurried lunch at the hotel, during which Maud related to the others the morning's occurrences, they boarded the big Merrick seven-passenger automobile and drove to Santa Monica Bay. Louise couldn't leave the baby, who was cutting teeth, but Arthur and Beth joined the party and on arrival at the beach Uncle John had no difficulty in securing a launch to take them out to the *Arabella*.

"They won't let you aboard, though," declared the boatman. "A good many have tried it, an' come back disjointed. There's something queer about that craft; but the gov'ment don't seem worried, so I guess it ain't a pirate."

The beauty of the yacht grew on them as they approached it. It was painted a pure white in every part and on the stern was the one word: *Arabella*, but no name of the port from which she hailed. The ladder was hoisted and fastened to an upper rail, but as they drew up to the smooth sides a close-cropped bullet-head projected from the bulwarks and a gruff voice demanded:

"Well, what's wanted?"

"We want to see Captain Carg," called Arthur, in reply.

The head wagged sidewise.

"No one allowed aboard," said the man.

"Here's a letter to the captain, from Mr. Jones," said Maud, exhibiting it.

The word seemed magical. Immediately the head disappeared and an instant later the boarding ladder began to descend. But the man, a sub-officer dressed in a neat uniform of white and gold, came quickly down the steps and held out his hand for the letter.

"Beg pardon," said he, touching his cap to the ladies, "but the rules are very strict aboard the *Arabella*. Will you please wait until I've taken this to the captain? Thank you!"

Then he ran lightly up the steps and they remained seated in the launch

until he returned.

"The captain begs you to come aboard," he then said, speaking very respectfully but with a face that betrayed his wonder at the order of his superior. Then he escorted them up the side to the deck, which was marvelously neat and attractive. Some half a dozen sailors lounged here and there and these stared as wonderingly at the invasion of strangers as the subaltern had done. But their guide did not pause longer than to see that they had all reached the deck safely, when he led them into a spacious cabin.

Here they faced Captain Carg, whom Patsy afterward declared was the tallest, thinnest, chilliest man she had ever encountered. His hair was grizzled and hung low on his neck; his chin was very long and ended in a point; his nose was broad, with sensitive nostrils that marked every breath he drew. As for his eyes, which instantly attracted attention, they were brown and gentle as a girl's but had that retrospective expression that suggests far-away thoughts or an utter lack of interest in one's surroundings. They never looked at but through one. The effect of Carg's eyes was distinctly disconcerting.

The commander of the *Arabella* bowed with much dignity as his guests entered and with a sweep of his long arm he muttered in distant tones: "Pray be seated." They obeyed. The cabin was luxuriously furnished and there was no lack of comfortable chairs.

Somehow, despite the courteous words and attitude of Captain Carg, there was something about him that repelled confidence. Already Maud and Patsy were wondering if such a man could be loyal and true.

"My young master," he was saying, as he glanced at the letter he still held in his hand, "tells me that any questions you may ask I may answer as freely as I am permitted to."

"What does that mean, sir?" Maud inquired, for the speech was quite ambiguous.

"That I await your queries, Miss," with another perfunctory bow in her direction.

She hesitated, puzzled how to proceed.

"Mr. Jones is in a little trouble," she finally began. "He has been mistaken for some other man and — they have put him in jail until he can be examined by the federal judge of this district."

The captain's face exhibited no expression whatever. Even the eyes failed to express surprise at her startling news. He faced his visitors without emotion.

"At the examination," Maud went on, "it will be necessary for him to prove he is from Sangoa."

No reply. The captain sat like a statue.

“He must also prove that certain pearls found in his possession came from Sangoa.”

Still no reply. Maud began to falter and fidget. Beth was amused. Patsy was fast growing indignant. Flo had a queer expression on her pretty face that denoted mischief to such an extent that it alarmed her Aunt Jane.

“I’m afraid,” said Maud, “that unless you come to your master’s assistance, Captain Carg, he will be sent to Austria, a prisoner charged with a serious crime.”

She meant this assertion to be very impressive, but it did not seem to affect the man in the least. She sighed, and Flo, with a giggle, broke an awkward pause.

“Well, why don’t you get busy. Maud?” she asked.

“I — in what way, Flo?” asked her sister, catching at the suggestion implied.

“Captain Carg would make a splendid motion picture actor,” declared the younger Miss Stanton, audaciously. “He sticks close to his cues, you see, and won’t move till he gets one. He will answer your questions; yes, he has said he would; but you may prattle until doomsday without effect, so far as he is concerned, unless you finish your speech with an interrogation point.”

Mrs. Montrose gave a gasp of dismay, while Maud flushed painfully. The captain, however, allowed a gleam of admiration to soften his grim features as he stared fixedly at saucy Flo. Patsy marked this fleeting change of expression at once and said hastily:

“I think. Maud, dear, the captain is waiting to be questioned.”

At this he cast a grateful look in Miss Doyle’s direction and bowed to her. Maud began to appreciate the peculiar situation and marshalled her questions in orderly array.

“Tell me, please, where *is* Sangoa?” she began.

“In the South Seas, Miss.”

“Will you give me the latitude and longitude?”

“I cannot.”

“Oh, you mean that you *will* not?”

“I have been commanded to forget the latitude and longitude of Sangoa.”

“But this is folly!” she exclaimed, much annoyed. “Such absurd reticence may be fatal to Mr. Jones’ interests.”

He made no reply to this and after reflection she tried again.

“What is the nearest land to Sangoa?”

“Toerdal,” said he.

“What is that, an island?”

“Yes.”

“Is it on the maps? Is it charted?”

“No, Miss.”

She silenced Flo’s aggravating giggle with a frown.

“Tell me, sir,” she continued, “what is the nearest land to Sangoa that is known to the world?”

He smiled faintly as he replied: “I cannot tell.”

Uncle John had grown very uneasy by this time and he decided he ought to attempt to assist Maud. So, addressing Captain Carg, he said in a positive tone:

“We quite understand, sir, that it has been the policy of the owners of Sangoa to guard all knowledge of the island’s whereabouts from the outside world, as well as the fact that its pearl fisheries are very rich. We understand that an influx of treasure-seekers would embarrass the Sangoans. But we are close friends of young Mr. Jones and have no desire to usurp his island kingdom or seize his pearls. Our only anxiety is to free him from an unjust suspicion. A foolish man named Le Drieux accuses Jones of stealing a choice collection of pearls from a lady in Austria and fleeing with them to America. He has a photograph of the real criminal, taken abroad, which curiously resembles your young master.”

Here the captain turned a quick look upon the speaker and for the first time his eyes lost their dull expression. But he made no remark and Uncle John continued:

“This man Le Drieux found several choice pearls in the possession of Mr. Jones, which he claims are a part of the stolen collection. Hence he obtained your master’s arrest. Jones says he brought the pearls from Sangoa, his home, where they were found. No one here knows anything of Sangoa, so they regard his story with suspicion. Now, sir, we believe that through you we can prove he has told the truth, and so secure his release. Here is the important question: Will you help us?”

“Willingly, sir,” replied the captain.

“Are you forbidden to tell us where Sangoa is, or anything about the island?”

“Yes, sir; I am forbidden to do that, under any circumstances,” was the ready answer.

“Have you been to Sangoa since you landed Mr. Jones in San Francisco, some fifteen months ago?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And did you bring back with you, on this trip, any pearls?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Have you already disposed of them?”

“No, sir.”

“Why not?”

“I am awaiting orders from my master.”

“Has he been aboard since you anchored here?”

“No, sir.”

“What were your instructions?”

“To anchor on this coast and await his coming.”

“Well,” said Mr. Merrick, reflectively, “I believe you can prove our case without telling the location of Sangoa. An exhibition of the pearls you have brought ought to convince any reasonable judge. Are there many of them in this lot?”

“Not so many as usual, sir.”

“Are they very choice ones?”

“Not so choice as usual, sir.”

Uncle John was greatly disappointed, but Maud exclaimed eagerly:

“Let us see them, please!”

That was not a question, but the captain rose at once, bowed and left the cabin. It was some ten minutes before he returned, followed by two men who bore between them a heavy bronze chest which they placed upon the cabin floor. Then they left the room and the captain took a key from his pocket and unlocked a secret panel in the wainscoting of the cabin. A small compartment was disclosed, in which hung another key on an iron hook. He removed this and with it unlocked the chest, drawing-from its recesses several trays which he deposited upon the table. These trays were lined and padded with white velvet and when the covers were removed, the girls, who had crowded around the table, uttered cries of astonishment and delight.

“They may not be as numerous or as choice ‘as usual,’“ murmured Mrs. Montrose, “but they are the most amazing lot of pearls I have ever beheld.”

“And did all these come from Sangoa?” Maud asked the captain.

“They represent two months’ fishing on the coast of our island,” he replied; “but not the best two months of the year. The weather was bad; there were many storms.”

“Why, the pearls that Ajo gave us were insignificant when compared with these!” cried Beth. “This collection must be worth an enormous sum. Uncle John.”

Uncle John merely nodded. He had been thinking, as he studied the pearls, and now turned to Captain Carg.

“Will you come ashore and testify before the judge in behalf of your master?”

“Yes, if he asks me to do so.”

“And will you bring these pearls with you?”

“If my master orders it.”

“Very good. We will have him send you instructions.”

The captain bowed, after which he turned to the table and began replacing the trays in the chest. Then he locked it, again hung the key in the secret aperture and closed the panel. A whistle summoned the two seamen, who bore away the chest, accompanied by the captain in person.

When they were left alone, Maud said anxiously:

“Is there anything more we can do here?”

“I think not,” replied Mr. Merrick.

“Then let us get back. I want to complete my evidence at once, for no one knows when the judge will summon Ajo for examination.”

They thanked the captain when he rejoined them, but he remained as silent and undemonstrative as ever, so they took their departure without further ceremony and returned to the shore.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ADVANTAGE OF A DAY

That evening Le Drieux appeared in the lobby of the hotel and sat himself comfortably down, as if his sole desire in life was to read the evening paper and smoke his after-dinner cigar. He cast a self-satisfied and rather supercilious glance in the direction of the Merrick party, which on this occasion included the Stantons and their aunt, but he made no attempt to approach the corner where they were seated.

Maud, however, as soon as she saw Le Drieux, asked Arthur Weldon to interview the man and endeavor to obtain from him the exact date when Jack Andrews landed in New York. Uncle John had already wired to Major Doyle, Patsy's father, to get the steamship lists and find which boat Andrews had come on and the date of its arrival, but no answer had as yet been received.

Arthur made a pretext of buying a cigar at the counter and then strolled aimlessly about until he came, as if by chance, near to where Le Drieux was sitting. Making a pretense of suddenly observing the man, he remarked casually:

"Ah, good evening."

"Good evening, Mr. Weldon," replied Le Drieux, a note of ill-suppressed triumph in his voice.

"I suppose you are now content to rest on your laurels, pending the formal examination?" said Arthur.

"I am, sir. But the examination is a mere form, you know. I have already cabled the commissioner of police at Vienna and received a reply stating that the Austrian ambassador would make a prompt demand for extradition and the papers would be forwarded from Washington to the Austrian consul located in this city. The consul has also been instructed to render me aid in transporting the prisoner to Vienna. All this will require several days' time, so you see we are in no hurry to conclude the examination."

"I see." said Arthur. "Is it, then, your intention to accompany the prisoner to Vienna?"

"Of course. I have not mentioned the fact to you before, but I hold a commission from the Chief of Police of Vienna authorizing me to arrest Jack Andrews wherever I may find him, and deliver him up for trial. My firm procured for me this commission, as they are very anxious to recover the lost pearls."

"Why?"

"Well, to be frank, sir, the countess still owes our firm a large sum for

purchases. She had almost her entire fortune tied up in that collection, and unless it is recovered — .”

“I can well appreciate the anxiety of your firm. But aside from that, Mr. Le Drieux, I suppose a big reward has been offered?”

“Not big; just a fair amount. It will repay me, quite handsomely, for my trouble in this affair; but, of course, my firm gets half of the reward.”

“They are not too generous. You deserve it all.”

“Thank you. It has been an interesting episode, Mr. Weldon.”

“It has been more than that. I consider this escapade of Andrews quite a romance; or is it more of a tragedy, in your opinion?”

“It will be a tragedy for Andrews, before he’s through with it,” replied Le Drieux grimly. “They’re pretty severe on the long-fingered gentry, over there in Europe, and you must remember that if the fellow lives through the sentence they will undoubtedly impose upon him in Vienna, he has still to answer for the Paris robbery and the London murder. It’s all up with Andrews, I guess; and it’s a good thing, too, for he is too clever to remain at large.”

“I do not consider him so clever as his captor,” said Arthur smoothly. “It did not take you long to discover where he had hidden. Why, he has only returned to America about fifteen months ago.”

“Eleven months ago — even less than that, I think,” retorted Le Drieux, with much pride. “Let me see,” taking out a notebook, “Andrews landed from the *Princess Irene* on the twenty-seventh of January last.”

“Oh, the twenty-seventh? Are you sure of that?” said Arthur.

“Of course.”

“I was under the impression he landed on the twenty-fifth.”

“No; you are wrong. Why, I met the boat myself, but missed him, although he was on the passenger list. He disembarked very slyly, I afterward learned, being doubtless afraid he would be arrested. But at that time I had no positive evidence against him.”

Arthur asked a few more questions of no importance and then bade Le Drieux good night and rejoined the girls.

“You win, Maud,” he remarked as he sat down. “That clew of yours was an inspiration. Andrews arrived in America on January twenty-seventh, just one day after Jones had a motion picture of himself taken at the stockholders’ meeting of the Continental Film Company.”

“Then we needn’t worry over Ajo any longer!” asserted Patsy joyfully. “With this evidence and the testimony of Captain Carg and his pearls, the most stupid judge on earth would declare the boy innocent. Why, Beth, we shall get our theatres built, after all!”

CHAPTER XXIV

PICTURE NUMBER NINETEEN

"Well, where have you been?" demanded Goldstein gruffly, as Maud Stanton entered his office the next morning in response to a summons from the Continental manager. "What made you run away yesterday? Don't you know such things make us lots of trouble and cost us money?"

"I'm not worrying about that," replied Maud, as she composedly sat down opposite the manager.

Goldstein glared at her, but he was cautious.

"You're a fine actress, Miss Stanton, and you're popular on the films," he said, "but if you cannot attend to business we are paying you too much money."

"Indeed!"

"No other firm could afford to give you so much, you know that; and the only reason we are so extravagant is because you are one of our features."

"Am I to take this as a dismissal?" she asked carelessly.

"Dismissal!" he cried, holding up his hands. "Of course not. Who is talking of dismissal? But I owe a duty to my firm. Such actions as yours, in running away from rehearsals, must have a — a — reprimand. Not severe; I am not so angry as grieved; but a reprimand is your due — and that fly-away sister of yours is just as bad."

"We went to assist your president — Mr. Jones — to establish his innocence of the awful charge made against him," she explained.

"Bah. You can't do that. No one can save him," he replied, with triumph and satisfaction mingled in his tone.

She looked at him thoughtfully.

"You seem pleased with the idea that he is guilty, Mr. Goldstein."

"I am glad he is caught. What is Jones to me? An interloper! A boy who gets money, buys stock, and then interferes with a business he knows nothing about. You are a professional, Miss Stanton. You know how we, who are in the game, have won our knowledge of it by long experience, by careful study, by keeping the thousand threads of the rope of success twisted tightly together. Any fool could buy this business, but only an expert could run it successfully. You know that. So I am glad this interfering boy is wiped off the slate forever."

"But he isn't!" she protested. "You still have this boy to reckon with, Goldstein. When he is examined by the judge he will be set free, for all the evidence is in his favor and there is ample proof that he is not the man they are after. And that reminds me. There is a negative here that was made at the

directors' meeting in January, a year ago, which shows Mr. Jones taking control of the Continental."

"I have never seen it," he said, shaking his head.

"It is here, though, and I want a positive printed at once, and mounted on a reel, so it can be exhibited before the judge. Have Alfred get it out of the vault."

"Why should I do that?" he inquired, frowning.

"Because, if you refuse, Mr. Jones is quite likely to find another manager. No other firm would pay you so much as you are getting here. You know that."

He grinned with delight at the thrust, then grew solemn.

"You are sure he will go free?"

"Positive," returned Maud. "He doesn't really need that film, but it would be good policy — excellent policy — for you to produce it."

"Alfred!" called the manager. "Bring me the stock book."

He ran his finger down the pages.

"January — eh — eh — "

"January twenty-sixth," she said.

"Here it is: 'Special of Annual Meeting, C.F.M. Co. — 280 feet. — No. 19,'
Get number nineteen out of the vault, Alfred."

While the young man was gone he relapsed into thought. Maud waited patiently.

"You see," resumed the manager abruptly, "I am making more money for the Continental than I get paid for. That is because I know how. It is not good business to cut down the profits; therefore I should be paid a bigger salary. Miss Stanton, you're a friend of young Jones, who controls this company. Yon might talk to him about me."

"I will," she said.

"You might say I know every trick of the trade. Tell Jones how all the other film makers are crazy to get me. But say how I refuse more money because I believe our directors will wake up to my value and raise my salary. That sounds pretty good, eh?"

"It sounds remarkable."

"And it's no dream. Ah, here comes Alfred."

The clerk laid upon the table a round box coated with paraffin to exclude the air. A tag was attached to the box, describing its contents.

"Number nineteen. Quite right. Take it to the printing room and tell McDonald to make me a copy as quickly as possible. Tell him to let me know when it's dry and ready to run."

As the clerk disappeared Maud said:

"I needn't wait, I suppose?"

"No. Werner wants you at the rehearsal of 'The Love of a Princess.' Before you go home to-night I'll call you in to see the run of number nineteen. Then you may take the film to Jones — with my compliments."

At five o'clock, when she was dressing to go home, Maud was summoned to the little "dark room" where all films are exhibited, trimmed and tested before being sent out. She took Aunt Jane and Flo with her and they found Goldstein already waiting and the operator standing by his machine.

The scene was short and not very exciting, although of interest in the present crisis. It showed the interior of the hall where the stock-holders' meeting was held, and began with the assembling of the members. Two or three pompous individuals then seated themselves facing the others, and the proceedings began. A slim boy on a back bench arose and said something. Panic was at once written on the faces of the former officers. They gesticulated; their lips moved rapidly. The boy, easily recognized as A. Jones, advanced and displayed a lot of papers, which were carefully examined. He then took the president's chair, the former officers fled in disgust and the throng of stockholders wildly applauded. Then the light went out, the machine stopped, and Goldstein opened the door to let in light and air.

"It was the same kid, all right," he remarked. "I had never seen this film run before, but it shows how Jones called the turn on the old officers in great shape. I wonder where he got all the money?"

Maud secured his promise to send an operator to town, to exhibit the film before the judge, whenever he might be required. Then she went to her hotel fully satisfied that she had done all in her power to assist A. Jones of Sangoa.

CHAPTER XXV
JUDGMENT

A telegram from Major Doyle corroborated Le Drieux's assertion that Jack Andrews had arrived at the port of New York via the *Princess Irene* on January twenty-seventh. A report from Lawyer Colby stated that he was now so thoroughly posted on everything pertaining to pearls that he could easily confound the expert, Mr. Isidore Le Drieux. There the matter rested for three days, during which the Stanton girls continued their work at the studio and Uncle John's nieces busied themselves enjoying the charms of the ideal Hollywood climate. Then came the news that the judge would call Jones for examination at nine o'clock on Friday morning, the thirteenth.

"Friday, the thirteenth!" said Patsy with a grimace. "I hope Ajo isn't superstitious."

"That combination proves lucky for some people," replied Arthur, laughing. "Let us hope that Jones is one of them."

"Of course we shall all go to see what happens," said Beth, and to this there was no dissenting voice.

Maud obtained a letter from Jones to Captain Carg, asking him to be on hand, and this she dispatched by a safe messenger to the yacht *Arabella*. She also told Goldstein to have his operator in attendance with the film. Finally, a conference was called that evening with Mr. Colby, at which the complete program of defense was carefully rehearsed.

"Really," said the lawyer, "there's nothing to this case. It's a regular walkaway, believe me! I'm almost ashamed to take Mr. Jones' money for conducting a case that Miss Stanton has all cut and dried for me. I'll not receive one half the credit I should had the thing been complicated, or difficult. However, I've learned so much about pearls that I'm almost tempted to go into the jewelry business."

Friday morning was bright and cool — one of those perfect days for which
Southern California is famous. Judge Wilton appeared in court with a tranquil expression upon his face that proved he was in a contented mood. All conditions augured well for the prisoner.

The prosecution was represented by two well known attorneys who had brought a dozen witnesses to support their charge, among them being the Austrian consul. The case opened with the statement that the prisoner, Jackson Dowd Andrews, alias A. Jones, while a guest at the villa of the Countess Ahmberg, near Vienna, had stolen from his hostess a valuable collection of pearls, which he had secretly brought to America. Some of the

stolen booty the prisoner had disposed of, it was asserted; a part had been found in his possession at the time of his arrest; some of the pearls had been mounted by Brock & Co., the Los Angeles jewelers, at his request, and by him presented to several acquaintances he had recently made but who were innocent of any knowledge of his past history or his misdeeds. Therefore the prosecution demanded that the prisoner be kept in custody until the arrival of extradition papers, which were already on the way, and that on the arrival of these papers Andrews should be turned over to Le Drieux, a representative of the Vienna police, and by him taken to Austria, the scene of his crime, for trial and punishment.

The judge followed the charge of the prosecution rather indifferently, being already familiar with it. Then he asked if there was any defense.

Colby took the floor. He denied that the prisoner was Jackson Dowd Andrews, or that he had ever been in Vienna. It was a case of mistaken identity. His client's liberty had been outraged by the stupid blunders of the prosecution. He demanded the immediate release of the prisoner.

"Have you evidence to support this plea?" inquired Judge Wilton.

"We have, your honor. But the prosecution must first prove its charge."

The prosecution promptly responded to the challenge. The photograph of Andrews, taken abroad, was shown. Two recognized experts in physiognomy declared, after comparison, that it was undoubtedly the photograph of the prisoner. Then Le Drieux took the stand. He read a newspaper account of the robbery. He produced a list of the pearls, attested by the countess herself. Each individual pearl was described and its color, weight and value given. Then Le Drieux exhibited the pearls taken from Jones and, except for the small ones in the brooch which had been presented to Mrs. Montrose, he checked off every pearl against his list, weighing them before the judge and describing their color.

During this, Judge Wilton continually nodded approval. Such evidence was concise and indisputable, it seemed. Moreover, the defense readily admitted that the pearls exhibited had all been in Jones' possession.

Then Colby got up to refute the evidence.

"Mr. Jones," he began, "has — "

"Give the prisoner's full name," said the judge.

"His full name is A. Jones."

"What does the 'A' stand for?"

"It is only an initial, your honor. Mr. Jones has no other name."

"Puh! He ought to have taken some other name. Names are cheap," sneered the judge.

Colby ignored the point.

“Mr. Jones is a resident of Sangoa, where he was born. Until he landed at San Francisco, fifteen months ago, he had never set foot on any land but that of his native island.”

“Where is Sangoa?” demanded the judge.

“It is an island of the South Seas.”

“What nationality?”

“It is independent. It was purchased from Uruguay by Mr. Jones’ father many years ago, and now belongs exclusively to his son.”

“Your information is indefinite,” snapped the judge.

“I realize that, your honor; but my client deems it wise to keep the location of his island a secret, because he has valuable pearl fisheries on its shores. The pearls exhibited by the prosecution were all found at Sangoa.”

“How do you account, then, for their checking so accurately against the list of stolen pearls?”

“I can make almost any pearls check with that list, which represents a huge collection of almost every size, weight and color,” replied Colby. “To prove this, I will introduce in evidence Captain Carg of Sangoa, who recently arrived at Santa Monica Bay with the last proceeds of the pearl fisheries of the island.”

Captain Carg was on hand, with his two sailors guarding the chest. He now produced the trays of pearls and spread them on the desk before the amazed eyes of the judge. Le Drieux was astounded, and showed it plainly on his face.

Colby now borrowed the list, and picking up a pearl from the tray weighed it on Le Drieux’s scales and then found a parallel to it on the list. This he did with several of the pearls, chosen at random, until one of Le Drieux’s attorneys took the expert aside and whispered to him. Then Le Drieux’s expression changed from chagrin to joy and coming forward he exclaimed:

“Your honor, this is the collection — the balance of it — which was stolen from the Countess Ahmberg!”

The judge looked at him a moment, leaned back in his chair and nodded his head impressively.

“What nonsense!” protested Colby. “These trays contain twice the number of pearls included in that entire list, as your honor may plainly see.”

“Of course,” retorted Le Drieux eagerly; “here are also the pearls from the necklace of Princess Lemoine, and the London collection of Lady Grandison. Your honor, in his audacity the defense has furnished us proof positive that this prisoner can be none other than the adventurer and clever thief, Jack Andrews.”

It was in vain that Colby declared these pearls had just come from Sangoa, where they were found. The judge cut him short and asked if he had any other evidence to advance.

"These pearls," he added, indicating the trays, "I shall take possession of. They must remain in my custody until their owners claim them, or Captain Carg can prove they are the lawful property of the prisoner."

Consternation now pervaded the ranks of the defense. The girls were absolutely dismayed, while Uncle John and Arthur Weldon wore bewildered looks. Only Jones remained composed, an amused smile curling the corners of his delicate mouth as he eyed the judge who was to decide his fate.

On the side of the prosecution were looks of triumph. Le Drieux already regarded his case as won.

Colby now played his trump card, which Maud Stanton's logic and energy had supplied the defense.

"The prosecution," said he, "has stated that the alleged robbery was committed at Vienna on the evening of September fifteenth, and that Jack Andrews arrived in America on the steamship *Princess Irene* on the afternoon of the January twenty-seventh following. Am I correct in those dates?"

The judge consulted his stenographer.

"The dates mentioned are correct," he said pompously.

"Here are the papers issued by the Commander of the Port of San Francisco, proving that the yacht *Arabella* of Sangoa anchored in that harbor on October twelfth, and disembarked one passenger, namely: A. Jones of Sangoa."

"That might, or might not, have been the prisoner," declared the prosecuting attorney.

"True," said the judge. "The name 'A. Jones' is neither distinguished nor distinguishing."

"On the evening of January twenty-sixth, twenty-four hours before Jack Andrews landed in America," continued Colby, "the prisoner, Mr. A. Jones, appeared at the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Continental Film Manufacturing Company, in New York, and was formally elected president of that organization."

"What is your proof?" inquired the judge, stifling a yawn.

"I beg to submit the minutes of the meeting, attested by its secretary."

The judge glanced at the minutes.

"We object to this evidence," said the opposing attorney. "There is no proof that the A. Jones referred to is the prisoner."

"The minutes," said Colby, "state that a motion picture was taken of the

meeting. I have the film here, in this room, and beg permission to exhibit it before your honor as evidence."

The judge was a bit startled at so novel a suggestion but assented with a nod. In a twinkling the operator had suspended a roller-screen from the chandelier dependent from the ceiling, pulled down the window shades and attached his projecting machine to an electric-light socket.

Then the picture flashed upon the screen. It was not entirely distinct, because the room could not be fully darkened and the current was not strong, yet every face in the gathering of stockholders could be plainly recognized. Jones, especially, as the central figure, could not be mistaken and no one who looked upon the picture could doubt his identity.

When the exhibition was concluded and the room again lightened, Le Drieux's face was visibly perturbed and anxious, while his attorneys sat glum and disconcerted.

Colby now put Goldstein on the stand, who testified that he recognized Jones as president of his company and the owner of the majority of stock. The young man had come to him with unimpeachable credentials to that effect.

The girls were now smiling and cheerful. To them the defense was absolutely convincing. But Le Drieux's attorneys were skillful fighters and did not relish defeat. They advanced the theory that the motion picture, just shown, had been made at a later dale and substituted for the one mentioned in the minutes of the meeting. They questioned Goldstein, who admitted that he had never seen Jones until a few days previous. The manager denied, however, any substitution of the picture. He was not a very satisfactory witness for the defense and Colby was sorry he had summoned him.

As for the judge, he seemed to accept the idea of the substitution with alacrity. He had practically decided against Jones in the matter of the pearls. Now he listened carefully to the arguments of the prosecution and cut Colby short when he raised objections to their sophistry.

Finally Judge Wilton rose to state his decision.

"The evidence submitted in proof of the alleged fact that the prisoner is Jack Andrews, and that Jack Andrews may have robbed the Countess Ahmberg, of Vienna, of her valuable collection of pearls, is in the judgment of this court clear and convincing," he said. "The lawyer for the defense has further succeeded in entangling his client by exhibiting an additional assortment of pearls, which may likewise be stolen property. The attempt to impose upon this court a mythical island called Sangoa is — eh — distinctly reprehensible. This court is not so easily hoodwinked. Therefore, in consideration of the evidence advanced, I declare that the prisoner is Jack

Andrews, otherwise Jackson Dowd Andrews, otherwise parading under the alias of ‘A. Jones,’ and I recognize the claim of the Austrian police to his person, that he may be legally tried for his alleged crimes in the territory where it is alleged he committed them. Therefore I order that the prisoner be held for requisition and turned over to the proper authorities when the papers arrive. The court is adjourned.”

CHAPTER XXVI

SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN

Of course not one of our friends agreed with the judge. Indignation and resentment were written on every face — except that of Goldstein. The manager rubbed his hands softly together and, approaching Maud, he whispered:

"You needn't speak to Jones about me. It's all right. I guess he won't be interfering with me any more, eh? And come *early* to-morrow morning. We've got a lot of rehearsing to do. To-day I will call a holiday for you. And, believe me, Miss Stanton, this is nothing to worry any of us. The judge settles it, right or wrong, for the law defies us all."

As the manager hurried away Uncle John looked after him and said:

"I wonder if he realizes how true his words are? 'The law defies us all.' How helpless we are to oppose injustice and oppression when one man, with a man's limitations and prejudices, is clothed with authority to condemn us!"

Colby stood silent. The poor fellow's eyes were full of unshed tears.

"This is my first case, and my last," said he. "I won it honestly. It was the judge, not the evidence, that defeated me. I'm going to rent my office and apply for a job as a chauffeur."

Jones was the least affected of the group. "Never mind, friends," he said to them, "it will all come right in the end. If you will stand by me, Colby, I'll retain you to plead my case in the Austrian court, or at least advise my Austrian lawyers. I've an idea they will treat me fairly, over there in Vienna."

"It's outrageous!" quoth indignant Patsy Doyle. "I'd like to give that judge a piece of my mind."

"If you did," replied Arthur, "he'd fine you for contempt."

"It would be a just line, in that case," said Patsy; "so I'm sure he wouldn't do it."

The jailer had come to take the prisoner back to his cell. He smiled whimsically at Miss Doyle's speech and remarked:

"There's always one side to kick, Miss, whichever way the judge decides. It was only Solomon who could satisfy everybody."

"Clear the room!" shouted the bailiff.

Captain Carg's men took the empty chest back to the launch. The captain followed them, after pressing the hand of his young master, who said: "Wait for orders, Captain." Uncle John took his flock back to the hotel, where they gathered in his room and held an indignation meeting. Here it was safe to give full vent to their chagrin and disappointment.

“Every bit of honest evidence was on our side,” declared Maud. “I shall never be able to understand why we lost.”

“Bribery and corruption,” said Flo. “I’ll bet a cookie Le Drieux divided the reward with the judge.”

“I suppose it’s all up with Ajo now,” sighed Beth, regretfully.

“Yes,” replied Colby, who had accompanied them; “there is nothing more to be done for him at present. From the judge’s order there is no appeal, in such a case. Mr. Jones must go to Vienna for trial; but there he may secure an acquittal.”

“He is very brave, I think,” said Patsy. “This affair must have hurt his pride, but he smiles through it all. In his condition of health, the confinement and humiliation may well shorten his life, yet he has made no murmur.”

“He’s good stuff, that boy,” commented Uncle John. “Perhaps it is due to that John Paul blood his father was so proud of.”

When Arthur went into the lobby a little later he found Le Drieux seated comfortably and smoking a long cigar. The pearl expert nodded to the young ranchman with so much evident satisfaction that Arthur could not resist engaging him in conversation.

“Well, you won,” he remarked, taking a vacant chair beside Le Drieux.

“Yes, of course,” was the reply; “but I’ll admit that fellow Andrews is a smooth one. Why, at one time he had even me puzzled with his alibis and his evidence. That flash of the pearls was the cleverest trick I ever heard of; but it didn’t go, I’d warned the judge to look out for a scoop. He knew he was dealing with one of the most slippery rogues in captivity.”

“See here, Le Drieux,” said Arthur; “let us be honest with one another, now that the thing is settled and diplomacy is uncalled for. Do you really believe that Jones is Jack Andrews?”

“Me? I know it, Mr. Weldon. I don’t pose as a detective, but I’m considered to have a shrewd insight into human character, and from the first moment I set eyes on him I was positive that Jones was the famous Jack Andrews. I can understand how you people, generous and trusting, have been deceived in the fellow; I admire the grit you’ve all shown in standing by him to the last. I haven’t a particle of malice toward any one of you, I assure you — not even toward Andrews himself.”

“Then why have you bounded him so persistently?”

“For two reasons.” said Le Drieux. “As a noted pearl expert, I wanted to prove my ability to run down the thief; and, as a man in modest circumstances, I wanted the reward.”

“How much will you get?”

“All together, the rewards aggregate twenty thousand dollars. I’ll get half,

and my firm will get half."

"I think," said Arthur, to test the man, "that Jones would have paid you double that amount to let him alone."

Le Drieux shook his head; then he smiled.

"I don't mind telling you, Mr. Weldon — in strict confidence, of course — that I approached Jones on that very subject, the day he was placed in jail. He must have been sure his tricks would clear him, for he refused to give me a single penny. I imagine he is very sorry, right now; don't you, sir?"

"No," said Arthur, "I don't. I still believe in his innocence."

Le Drieux stared at him incredulously.

"What, after that examination of to-day?" he demanded.

"Before and after. There was no justice in the decision of Judge Wilton; he was unduly prejudiced."

"Be careful, sir!"

"We are talking confidentially."

"To be sure. But you astonish me. I understand the character of Andrews so thoroughly that I fail to comprehend how any sensible person can believe in him. Talk about prejudice!"

"I suppose you are to remain at this hotel?" said Arthur, evading further argument.

"Yes, until the papers arrive. They ought to be here by Monday. Then I shall take Andrews to New York and we will board the first steamer for Europe."

Arthur left him. Le Drieux puzzled him more than he puzzled Le Drieux. The expert seemed sincere in the belief that he had trapped, in Jones, a noted criminal. Weldon could not help wondering, as he walked away, if possibly he and his friends had been deceived in A. Jones of Sangoa. The doubt was but momentary, yet it had forced itself into his mind.

On Saturday afternoon they all made a visit to the prisoner and tried to cheer him. Again on Sunday they called — the Stantons and Merricks and Weldons and all. Young Jones received them with composure and begged them not to worry on his account.

"I am quite comfortable in this jail, I assure you," said he. "On my journey to Vienna I shall be able to bribe Le Drieux to let me have such comforts as I desire. There is but one experience I shrink from: the passage across the Atlantic. If it brings a return of my former malady I shall suffer terribly."

"It may not be so bad as you fear," Patsy assured him, although in her heart she realized it might be the death of the boy. "Often those who are distressed by a voyage on the Pacific endure the Atlantic very well."

“That is encouraging,” said he. “It is my dread of the water that has prevented me from returning to Sangoa, or even visiting my yacht. And this reminds me of a favor I wish to ask.”

“You may rely upon our friendship,” said Maud.

“I believe that. Here is a letter to Captain Carg, putting the *Arabella* at your disposal until my return from Vienna. I have named Mr. Merrick as the commander of the yacht, in my absence, and if you feel inclined to make the trip and can spare the time I would like you all to make a voyage to Sangoa.”

“To Sangoa!” they cried in chorus.

“Yes. I am ambitious to prove to you, who have been my staunch friends, that the island is indeed there. Incidentally you will become acquainted with the prettiest place in all the world. My house will be at your disposal while you remain and I am sure you will find it fairly comfortable.”

They were so amazed at this proposition that at first no one found words to answer the boy. It was Flo, naturally, who first collected her thoughts.

“It will be awfully jolly!” she cried, clapping her hands with delight. “I’m sure Maud and I need a vacation. Let’s stick up our noses at Goldstein and sail away to the mysterious isle. What do you say, girls? And you, Mr. Merrick?”

“I believe, my boy,” said Uncle John, laying a kindly hand on the youth’s shoulder, “that all of us are inclined to take advantage of your offer. That is, if you are sure we can be of no further use to you in your difficulties.”

“I am taking Colby abroad with me and he can do all that may be done until after my trial. Then I hope to rejoin you here and am looking forward to a jolly reunion.”

Uncle John took the letters which Ajo had written to Captain Carg, to his superintendent in Sangoa and to his housekeeper. Then they all pressed the boy’s hand and went away.

* * * * *

Monday morning the extradition papers arrived. Le Drieux exhibited them proudly to young Weldon, to Mr. Merrick, and even to the girls, who regarded the documents with shuddering awe.

“We’ll take the night train,” said the man. “That will get us to New York on Friday, in time to catch the Saturday steamer for Calais.”

As he spoke a boy approached and handed Le Drieux a telegram.

“Excuse me,” said he, and opened it with an important flourish. The next moment his face fell. He staggered and sank half fainting into a chair which Mr. Merrick pushed toward him.

Patsy ran for some water. Maud Stanton fanned the man with a folded newspaper. Arthur Weldon picked up the telegram which had *fluttered* from

Le Drieux's grasp and deliberately read it. Then he, too, sank gasping into a chair.

"Listen, girls!" he cried, his voice shrill with emotion. "What do you think of this?

"'Jack Andrews arrested here in New York to-day by Burns detectives. Countess Ahmberg's collection of pearls was found in his possession, intact. Return here first train.'

"Signed: 'Eckstrom & Co.'"

There was a moment of tense silence.

Flo clapped her hands.

"Come on," she shouted in glee, "let's go and tell Ajo!"

AUNT JANE'S NIECES IN THE RED CROSS

Aunt Jane's Nieces in the Red Cross was Baum's tenth and final novel in the series, written under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. Reilly & Britton published it in 1915, illustrated by Norman P. Hall. The novel begins in 1914, during the early stages of World War One. The cousins reunite with friends from Hollywood. The movie starlet, Maud Stanton, leaves for Europe to serve as a nurse. With the help of their Uncle John and friend Ajo, the girls travel to Europe in a yacht carrying two ambulances. While in Europe, the girls face military bureaucracy and experience the horrors of the battlefield, while striving to help the wounded. Baum's novel reflected the neutral stance of the United States and his heartfelt desire for peace. By 1918, with the United States no longer neutral and two of Baum's sons fighting in the war, Baum revised the novel with four new chapters favoring the allies and with a very different ending. He also revised its tone from anti-war to one reflecting the moral conflict between right and wrong.

A first edition copy of 'Aunt Jane's Nieces in the Red Cross'

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FOREWORD

This is the story of how three brave American girls sacrificed the comforts and luxuries of home to go abroad and nurse the wounded soldiers of a foreign war.

I wish I might have depicted more gently the scenes in hospital and on battlefield, but it is well that my girl readers should realize something of the horrors of war, that they may unite with heart and soul in earnest appeal for universal, lasting Peace and the future abolition of all deadly strife.

Except to locate the scenes of my heroines' labors, no attempt has been made to describe technically or historically any phase of the great European war.

The character of Doctor Gys is not greatly exaggerated but had its counterpart in real life. As for the little Belgian who had no room for scruples in his active brain, his story was related to me by an American war correspondent who vouched for its truth. The other persona in the story are known to those who have followed their adventures in other books of the "Aunt Jane's Nieces" series.

Edith van Dyne

CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BOY

"What's the news, Uncle?" asked Miss Patricia Doyle, as she entered the cosy breakfast room of a suite of apartments in Willing Square. Even as she spoke she pecked a little kiss on the forehead of the chubby man addressed as "Uncle" — none other, if you please, than the famous and eccentric multi-millionaire known in Wall Street as John Merrick — and sat down to pour the coffee.

There was energy in her method of doing this simple duty, an indication of suppressed vitality that conveyed the idea that here was a girl accustomed to action. And she fitted well into the homely scene: short and somewhat "squatty" of form, red-haired, freckle-faced and pug-nosed. Wholesome rather than beautiful was Patsy Doyle, but if you caught a glimpse of her dancing blue eyes you straightway forgot her lesser charms.

Quite different was the girl who entered the room a few minutes later. Hers was a dark olive complexion, face of exquisite contour, great brown eyes with a wealth of hair to match them and the flush of a rose in her rounded cheeks. The poise of her girlish figure was gracious and dignified as the bearing of a queen.

"Morning, Cousin Beth," said Patsy cheerily.

"Good morning, my dear," and then, with a trace of anxiety in her tone: "What is the news, Uncle John?"

The little man had ignored Patsy's first question, but now he answered absently, his eyes still fixed upon the newspaper:

"Why, they're going to build another huge skyscraper on Broadway, at Eleventh, and I see the political pot is beginning to bubble all through the Bronx, although — "

"Stuff and nonsense, Uncle!" exclaimed Patsy. "Beth asked for news, not for gossip."

"The news of the war, Uncle John," added Beth, buttering her toast.

"Oh; the war, of course," he said, turning over the page of the morning paper. "It ought to be the Allies' day, for the Germans won yesterday. No — by cracky, Beth — the Germans triumph again; they've captured Maubeuge. What do you think of that?"

Patsy gave a little laugh.

"Not knowing where Maubeuge is," she remarked, "my only thought is that something is wrong with the London press bureau. Perhaps the cables got crossed — or short circuited or something. They don't usually allow the Germans to win two days in succession."

“Don’t interrupt, please,” said Beth, earnestly. “This is too important a matter to be treated lightly. Read us the article, Uncle. I was afraid Maubeuge would be taken.”

Patsy accepted her cousin’s rebuke with her accustomed good nature. Indeed, she listened as intently as Beth to the thrilling account of the destruction of Maubeuge, and her blue eyes became quite as serious as the brown ones of her cousin when the tale of dead and wounded was recounted.

“Isn’t it dreadful!” cried Beth, clasping her hands together impulsively.

“Yes,” nodded her uncle, “the horror of it destroys the interest we naturally feel in any manly struggle for supremacy.”

“This great war is no manly struggle,” observed Patsy with a toss of her head. “It is merely wholesale murder by a band of selfish diplomats.”

“Tut-tut!” warned Mr. Merrick; “we Americans are supposed to be neutral, my dear. We must not criticize.”

“That does not prevent our sympathizing with the innocent sufferers, however,” said Beth quietly. “My heart goes out, Uncle, to those poor victims of the war’s cruelty, the wounded and dying. I wish I could do something to help them!”

Uncle John moved uneasily in his chair. Then he laid down his paper and applied himself to his breakfast. But his usual merry expression had faded into one of thoughtfulness.

“The wounded haunt me by day and night,” went on Beth. “There are thousands upon thousands of them, left to suffer terrible pain — perhaps to die — on the spot where they fell, and each one is dear to some poor woman who is ignorant of her loved one’s fate and can do nothing but moan and pray at home.”

“That’s the hard part of it,” said Patsy, her cousin. “I think the mothers and wives and sweethearts are as much to be pitied as the fallen soldiers. The men *know* what has happened, but the women don’t. It isn’t so bad when they’re killed outright; the family gets a medal to indicate that their hero has died for his country. But the wounded are lost sight of and must suffer in silence, with no loving hands to soothe their agony.”

“My dears!” pleaded Uncle John, plaintively, “why do you insist upon flavoring our breakfast with these horrors? I — I — there! take it away; I can’t eat.”

The conversation halted abruptly. The girls were likewise unnerved by the mental pictures evolved by their remarks and it was now too late to restore cheerfulness to the morning meal. They sat in pensive silence for a while and were glad when Mr. Merrick pushed back his chair and rose from the table.

As Beth and Patsy followed their uncle into the cosy library where he was

accustomed to smoke his morning cigar, the little man remarked:

"Let's see; this is the seventh of September."

"Quite right, Uncle," said Patsy.

"Isn't this the day Maud Stanton is due to arrive?"

"No," replied Beth; "she will come to-morrow morning. It's a good four days' trip from California to New York, you know."

"I wonder why she is coming here at this time of year," said Patsy reflectively, "and I wonder if her Aunt Jane or her sister Flo are with her."

"She did not mention them in her telegram," answered Beth. "All she said was to expect her Wednesday morning. It seems quite mysterious, that telegram, for I had no idea Maud thought of coming East."

"Well, we will know all about it when she arrives," observed Uncle John. "I will be glad to see Maud again, for she is one of my especial favorites."

"She's a very dear girl!" exclaimed Patsy, with emphasis. "It will be simply glorious to — "

The doorbell rang sharply. There was a moment's questioning pause, for it was too early for visitors. The pattering feet of the little maid, Mary, approached the door and next moment a boyish voice demanded:

"Is Mr. Merrick at home, or the young ladies, or — "

"Why, it's Ajo!" shouted Patsy, springing to her feet and making a dive for the hallway.

"Jones?" said Mr. Merrick, looking incredulous.

"It must be," declared Beth, for now Patsy's voice was blended with that of the boy in a rapid interchange of question and answer. Then in she came, dragging him joyously by the arm.

"This is certainly a surprise!" said Mr. Merrick, shaking the tall, slender youth by the hand with evident pleasure.

"When did you get to town?" asked Beth, greeting the boy cordially. "And why didn't you let us know you were on the way from far-off Los Angeles?"

"Well," said Jones, seating himself facing them and softly rubbing his lean hands together to indicate his satisfaction at this warm reception, "it's a long, long story and I may as well tell it methodically or you'll never appreciate the adventurous spirit that led me again to New York — the one place I heartily detest."

"Oh, Ajo!" protested Patsy. "Is this the way to retain the friendship of New Yorkers?"

"Isn't honesty appreciated here?" he wanted to know.

"Go ahead with your story," said Uncle John. "We left you some months ago at the harbor of Los Angeles, wondering what you were going to do with

that big ship of yours that lay anchored in the Pacific. If I remember aright, you were considering whether you dared board it to return to that mysterious island home of yours at — at — ”

“Sangoa,” said Patsy.

“Thank you for giving me a starting-point,” returned the boy, with a smile. “You may remember that when I landed in your country from Sangoa I was a miserable invalid. The voyage had ruined my stomach and wrecked my constitution. I crossed the continent to New York and consulted the best specialists — and they nearly put an end to me. I returned to the Pacific coast to die as near home as possible, and — and there I met you.”

“And Patsy saved your life,” added Beth.

“She did. First, however, Maud Stanton saved me from drowning. Then Patsy Doyle doctored me and made me well and strong. And now — ”

“And now you look like a modern Hercules,” asserted Patsy, gazing with some pride at the bronzed cheeks and clear eyes of the former invalid and ignoring his slight proportions. “Whatever have you been doing with yourself since then?”

“Taking a sea voyage,” he affirmed.

“Really?”

“An absolute fact. For months I dared not board the *Arabella*, my sea yacht, for fear of a return of my old malady; but after you deserted me and came to this — this artificial, dreary, bewildering — ”

“Never mind insulting my birthplace, sir!”

“Oh! were you born here, Patsy? Then I’ll give the town credit. So, after you deserted me at Los Angeles — ”

“You still had Mrs. Montrose and her nieces, Maud and Flo Stanton.”

“I know, and I love them all. But they became so tremendously busy that I scarcely saw them, and finally I began to feel lonely. Those Stanton girls are chock full of business energy and they hadn’t the time to devote to me that you people did. So I stood on the shore and looked at the *Arabella* until I mustered up courage to go aboard. Surviving that, I made Captain Carg steam slowly along the coast for a few miles. Nothing dreadful happened. So I made a day’s voyage, and still ate my three squares a day. That was encouraging.”

“I knew all the time it wasn’t the voyage that wrecked your stomach,” said Patsy confidently.

“What was it, then?”

“Ptomaine poisoning, or something like that.”

“Well, anyhow, I found I could stand ocean travel again, so I determined on a voyage. The Panama Canal was just opened and I passed through it,

came up the Atlantic coast, and — the *Arabella* is at this moment safely anchored in the North River!"

"And how do you feel?" inquired Uncle John.

"Glorious — magnificent! The trip has sealed my recovery for good."

"But why didn't you go home, to your Island of Sangoa?" asked Beth.

He looked at her reproachfully.

"*You* were not there, Beth; nor was Patsy, or Uncle John. On the other hand, there is no one in Sangoa who cares a rap whether I come home or not. I'm the last of the Joneses of Sangoa, and while it is still my island and the entire population is in my employ, the life there flows on just as smoothly without me as if I were present."

"But don't they need the ship — the *Arabella*?" questioned Beth.

"Not now. I sent a cargo of supplies by Captain Carg when he made his last voyage to the island, and there will not be enough pearls found in the fisheries for four or five months to come to warrant my shipping them to market. Even then, they would keep. So I'm a free lance at present and I had an idea that if I once managed to get the boat around here you folks might find a use for it."

"In what way?" inquired Patsy, with interest.

"We might all make a trip to Barbadoes, Bermuda and Cuba. Brazil is said to be an interesting country. I'd prefer Europe, were it not for the war."

"Oh, Ajo, isn't this war terrible?"

"No other word expresses it. Yet it all seems like a fairy tale to me, for I've never been in any other country than the United States since I made my first voyage here from Sangoa — the island where my eyes first opened to the world."

"It isn't a fairy tale," said Beth with a shudder. "It's more like a horrible nightmare."

"I can't bear to read about it any more," he returned, musingly. "In fact, I've only been able to catch rumors of the progress of the war in the various ports at which I've touched, and I came right here from my ship. But I've no sympathy with either side. The whole thing annoys me, somehow — the utter uselessness and folly of it all."

"Maubeuge has fallen," said Beth, and went on to give him the latest tidings. Finding that the war was the absorbing topic in this little household, the boy developed new interest in it and the morning passed quickly away.

Jones stayed to lunch and then Mr. Merrick's automobile took them all to the river to visit the beautiful yacht *Arabella*, which was already, they found, attracting a good deal of attention in the harbor, where beautiful yachts are no rarity.

The *Arabella* was intended by her builders for deep sea transit and as Patsy admiringly declared, "looked like a baby liner." While she was yacht-built in all her lines and fittings, she was far from being merely a pleasure craft, but had been designed by the elder Jones, the boy's father, to afford communication between the Island of Sangoa, in the lower South Seas, and the continent of America.

Sangoa is noted for its remarkable pearl fisheries, which were now owned and controlled entirely by this youth; but his father, an experienced man of affairs, had so thoroughly established the business of production and sale that little remained for his only son and heir to do, more than to invest the profits that steadily accrued and to care for the great fortune left him. Whether he was doing this wisely or not no one — not even his closest friends — could tell. But he was frank and friendly about everything else.

They went aboard the *Arabella* and were received by that grim and grizzled old salt, Captain Carg, with the same wooden indifference he always exhibited. But Patsy detected a slight twinkle in the shrewd gray eyes that made her feel they were welcome. Carg, a seaman of vast experience, was wholly devoted to his young master. Indeed, the girls suspected that young Jones was a veritable autocrat in his island, as well as aboard his ship. Everyone of the Sangoans seemed to accept his dictation, however imperative it might be, as a matter of course, and the gray old captain — who had seen much of the world — was not the least subservient to his young master.

On the other hand, Jones was a gentle and considerate autocrat, unconsciously imitating his lately deceased father in his kindly interest in the welfare of all his dependents. These had formerly been free-born Americans, for when the Island of Sangoa was purchased it had no inhabitants.

This fortunate — or perhaps unfortunate — youth had never been blessed with a given name, more than the simple initial "A." The failure of his mother and father to agree upon a baptismal name for their only child had resulted in a deadlock; and, as the family claimed a direct descent from the famous John Paul Jones, the proud father declared that to be "a Jones" was sufficient honor for any boy; hence he should be known merely as "A. Jones." The mother called her child by the usual endearing pet names until her death, after which the islanders dubbed the master's son — then toddling around in his first trousers — "Ajo," and the name had stuck to him ever since for want of a better one.

With the Bohemian indifference to household routine so characteristic of New Yorkers, the party decided to dine at a down-town restaurant before returning to Willing Square, and it was during this entertainment that young

Jones first learned of the expected arrival of Maud Stanton on the following morning. But he was no wiser than the others as to what mission could have brought the girl to New York so suddenly that a telegram was required to announce her coming.

"You see, I left Los Angeles weeks ago," the boy explained, "and at that time Mrs. Montrose and her nieces were busy as bees and much too occupied to pay attention to a drone like me. There was no hint then of their coming East, but of course many things may have happened in the meantime."

The young fellow was so congenial a companion and the girls were so well aware of his loneliness, through lack of acquaintances, that they carried him home with them to spend the evening. When he finally left them, at a late hour, it was with the promise to be at the station next morning to meet Maud Stanton on her arrival.

CHAPTER II

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GIRL

A sweet-faced girl, very attractive but with a sad and anxious expression, descended from the Pullman and brightened as she found her friends standing with outstretched arms to greet her.

"Oh, Maud!" cried Patsy, usurping the first hug, "how glad I am to see you again!"

Beth looked in Maud Stanton's face and forbore to speak as she embraced her friend. Then Jones shook both hands of the new arrival and Uncle John kissed her with the same tenderness he showed his own nieces.

This reception seemed to cheer Maud Stanton immensely. She even smiled during the drive to Willing Square — a winning, gracious smile that would have caused her to be instantly recognized in almost any community of our vast country; for this beautiful young girl was a famous motion picture actress, possessing qualities that had endeared her to every patron of the better class photo-dramas.

At first she had been forced to adopt this occupation by the stern necessity of earning a livelihood, and under the careful guidance of her aunt — Mrs. Jane Montrose, a widow who had at one time been a favorite in New York social circles — Maud and her sister Florence had applied themselves so intelligently to their art that their compensation had become liberal enough to enable them to save a modest competence.

One cause of surprise at Maud's sudden journey east was the fact that her services were in eager demand by the managers of the best producing companies on the Pacific Coast, where nearly all the American pictures are now made. Another cause for surprise was that she came alone, leaving her Aunt Jane and her sister Flo — usually her inseparable companion — in Los Angeles.

But they did not question her until the cosy home at Willing Square was reached, luncheon served and Maud installed in the "Guest Room." Then the three girls had "a good, long talk" and presently came trooping into the library to enlighten Uncle John and Ajo.

"Oh, Uncle! What do you think?" cried Patsy. "Maud is going to the war!"

"The war!" echoed Mr. Merrick in a bewildered voice. "What on earth can — "

"She is going to be a nurse," explained Beth, a soft glow of enthusiasm mantling her pretty face. "Isn't it splendid, Uncle!"

"H-m," said Uncle John, regarding the girl with wonder. "It is certainly a

— a — surprising venture."

"But — see here, Maud — it's mighty dangerous," protested young Jones. "It's a tremendous undertaking, and — what can one girl do in the midst of all those horrors?"

Maud seated herself quietly between them. Her face was grave and thoughtful.

"I have had to answer many such arguments before now, as you may suspect," she began in even tones, "but the fact that I am here, well on my journey, is proof that I have convinced my aunt, my sister and all my western friends that I am at least determined on my mission, whether it be wise or foolish. I do not think I shall incur danger by caring for the wounded; the Red Cross is highly respected everywhere, these days."

"The Red Cross?" quoth Uncle John.

"Yes; I shall wear the Red Cross," she continued. "You know that I am a trained nurse; it was part of my education before — before — "

"I had not known that until now," said Mr. Merrick, "but I am glad you have had that training. Beth began a course at the school here, but I took her away to Europe before she graduated. However, I wish more girls could be trained for nursing, as it is a more useful and admirable accomplishment than most of them now acquire."

"Fox-Trots and Bunny-Hugs, for instance," said Patricia with fine disdain.

"Patsy is a splendid nurse," declared Ajo, with a grateful look toward that chubby miss.

"But untrained," she answered laughingly. "It was just common sense that enabled me to cure your malady, Ajo. I couldn't bandage a cut or a bullet wound to save me."

"Fortunately," said Maud, "I have a diploma which will gain for me the endorsement of the American Red Cross Society. I am counting on that to enable me to get an appointment at the seat of war, where I can be of most use."

"Where will you go?" asked the boy. "To Germany, Austria, Russia, Belgium, or — "

"I shall go to France," she replied. "I speak French, but understand little of German, although once I studied the language."

"Are you fully resolved upon this course, Maud?" asked Mr. Merrick in a tone of regret.

"Fully decided, sir. I am going to Washington to-morrow, to get my credentials, and then I shall take the first steamer to Europe."

There was no use arguing with Maud Stanton when she assumed that tone. It was neither obstinate nor defiant, yet it conveyed a quiet resolve that was

unanswerable.

For a time they sat in silence, musing on the many phases of this curious project; then Beth came to Mr. Merrick's side and asked pleadingly:

"May I go with her, Uncle?"

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, with a nervous jump. "*You*, Beth?"

"Yes, Uncle. I so long to be of help to those poor fellows who are being so cruelly sacrificed; and I know I can soothe much suffering, if I have the opportunity."

He stared at her, not knowing what to reply. This quaint little man was so erratic himself, in his sudden resolves and eccentric actions, that he could scarcely quarrel with his niece for imitating an example he had frequently set. Still, he was shrewd enough to comprehend the reckless daring of the proposition.

"Two unprotected girls in the midst of war and carnage, surrounded by foreigners, inspired to noble sacrifice through ignorance and inexperience, and hardly old enough to travel alone from Hoboken to Brooklyn! Why, the thing's absurd," he said.

"Quite impractical," added Ajo, nodding wisely. "You're both too pretty, my dears, to undertake such an adventure. Why, the wounded men would all fall in love with their nurses and follow you back to America in a flock; and that might put a stop to the war for lack of men to fight it."

"Don't be silly, Ajo," said Patsy, severely. "I've decided to go with Maud and Beth, and you know very well that the sight of my freckled face would certainly chill any romance that might arise."

"That's nonsense, Patsy!"

"Then you consider me beautiful, Uncle John?"

"I mean it's nonsense about your going with Maud and Beth. I won't allow it."

"Oh, Uncle! You know I can twine you around my little finger, if I choose. So don't, for goodness' sake, start a rumpus by trying to set your will against mine."

"Then side with me, dear. I'm quite right, I assure you."

"You're always right, Nunkie, dear," she cried, giving him a resounding smack of a kiss on his chubby cheek as she sat on the arm of his chair, "but I'm going with the girls, just the same, and you may as well make up your mind to it."

Uncle John coughed. He left his chair and trotted up and down the room a moment. Then he carefully adjusted his spectacles, took a long look at Patsy's face, and heaved a deep sigh of resignation.

"Thank goodness, that's settled," said Patsy cheerfully.

Uncle John turned to the boy, saying dismally:

"I've done everything in my power for these girls, and now they defy me. They've declared a thousand times they love me, and yet they'd trot off to bandage a lot of unknown foreigners and leave me alone to worry my heart out."

"Why don't you go along?" asked Jones. "I'm going."

"You!"

"Of course. I've a suspicion our girls have the right instinct, sir — the tender, womanly instinct that makes us love them. At any rate, I'm going to stand by them. It strikes me as the noblest and grandest idea a girl ever conceived, and if anything could draw me closer to these three young ladies, who had me pretty well snared before, it is this very proposition."

"I don't see why," muttered Uncle John, wavering.

"I'll tell you why, sir. For themselves, they have all the good things of life at their command. They could bask in luxury to the end of their days, if they so desired. Yet their wonderful womanly sympathy goes out to the helpless and suffering — the victims of the cruellest war the world has ever known — and they promptly propose to sacrifice their ease and brave whatever dangers may befall, that they may relieve to some extent the pain and agony of those wounded and dying fellow creatures."

"Foreigners," said Uncle John weakly.

"Human beings," said the boy.

Patsy marched over to Ajo and gave him a sturdy whack upon the back that nearly knocked him over.

"The spirit of John Paul Jones still goes marching on!" she cried. "My boy, you're the right stuff, and I'm glad I doctored you."

He smiled, looking from one to another of the three girls questioningly.

"Then I'm to go along?" he asked.

"We shall be grateful," answered Maud, after a moment's hesitation. "This is all very sudden to me, for I had planned to go alone."

"That wouldn't do at all," asserted Uncle John briskly. "I'm astonished and — and grieved — that my nieces should want to go with you, but perhaps the trip will prove interesting. Tell me what steamer you want to catch, Maud, and I'll reserve rooms for our entire party."

"No," said Jones, "don't do it, sir."

"Why not?"

"There's the *Arabella*. Let's use her."

"To cross the ocean?"

"She has done that before. It will assist our enterprise, I'm sure, to have our own boat. These are troublous times on the high seas."

Patsy clapped her hands gleefully.

“That’s it; a hospital ship!” she exclaimed.

They regarded her with various expressions: startled, doubtful, admiring, approving. Presently, with added thought on the matter, the approval became unanimous.

“It’s an amazing suggestion,” said Maud, her eyes sparkling.

“Think how greatly it will extend our usefulness,” said Beth.

Uncle John was again trotting up and down the room, this time in a state of barely repressed excitement.

“The very thing!” he cried. “Clever, practical, and — eh — eh — tremendously interesting. Now, then, listen carefully — all of you! It’s up to you, Jones, to accompany Maud on the night express to Washington. Get the Red Cross Society to back our scheme and supply us with proper credentials. The *Arabella* must be rated as a hospital ship and our party endorsed as a distinct private branch of the Red Cross — what they call a ‘unit.’ I’ll give you a letter to our senator and he will look after our passports and all necessary papers. I — I helped elect him, you know. And while you’re gone it shall be my business to fit the ship with all the supplies we shall need to promote our mission of mercy.”

“I’ll share the expense,” proposed the boy.

“No, you won’t. You’ve done enough in furnishing the ship and crew. I’ll attend to the rest.”

“And Beth and I will be Uncle John’s assistants,” said Patsy. “We shall want heaps of lint and bandages, drugs and liniments and — ”

“And, above all, a doctor,” advised Ajo. “One of the mates on my yacht, Kelsey by name, is a half-way physician, having studied medicine in his youth and practiced it on the crew for the last dozen years; but what we really need on a hospital ship is a bang-up surgeon.”

“This promises to become an expensive undertaking,” remarked Maud, with a sigh. “Perhaps it will be better to let me go alone, as I originally expected to do. But, if we take along the hospital ship, do not be extravagant, Mr. Merrick, in equipping it. I feel that I have been the innocent cause of drawing you all into this venture and I do not want it to prove a hardship to my friends.”

“All right, Maud,” returned Uncle John, with a cheerful grin, “I’ll try to economize, now that you’ve warned me.”

Ajo smiled and Patsy Doyle laughed outright. They knew it would not inconvenience the little rich man, in the slightest degree, to fit out a dozen hospital ships.

CHAPTER III

THE DECISION OF DOCTOR GYS

Uncle John was up bright and early next morning, and directly after breakfast he called upon his old friend and physician, Dr. Barlow. After explaining the undertaking on which he had embarked, Mr. Merrick added:

"You see, we need a surgeon with us; a clever, keen chap who understands his business thoroughly, a sawbones with all the modern scientific discoveries saturating him to his finger-tips. Tell me where to get him."

Dr. Barlow, recovering somewhat from his astonishment, smiled deprecatingly.

"The sort of man you describe," said he, "would cost you a fortune, for you would oblige him to abandon a large and lucrative practice in order to accompany you. I doubt, indeed, if any price would tempt him to abandon his patients."

"Isn't there some young fellow with these requirements?"

"Mr. Merrick, you need a physician and surgeon combined. Wounds lead to fever and other serious ailments, which need skillful handling. You might secure a young man, fresh from his clinics, who would prove a good surgeon, but to master the science of medicine, experience and long practice are absolutely necessary."

"We've got a half-way medicine man on the ship now — a fellow who has doctored the crew for years and kept 'em pretty healthy. So I guess a surgeon will about fill our bill."

"H-m, I know these ship's doctors, Mr. Merrick, and I wouldn't care to have you and your nieces trust your lives to one, in case you become ill. Believe me, a good physician is as necessary to you as a good surgeon. Do you know that disease will kill as many of those soldiers as bullets?"

"No."

"It is true; else the history of wars has taught us nothing. We haven't heard much of plagues and epidemics yet, in the carefully censored reports from London, but it won't be long before disease will devastate whole armies."

Uncle John frowned. The thing was growing complicated.

"Do you consider this a wild goose chase, Doctor?" he asked.

"Not with your fortune, your girls and your fine ship to back it. I think Miss Stanton's idea of venturing abroad unattended, to nurse the wounded, was Quixotic in the extreme. Some American women are doing it, I know, but I don't approve of it. On the other hand, your present plan is worthy of

admiration and applause, for it is eminently practical if properly handled."

Dr. Barlow drummed upon the table with his fingers, musingly. Then he looked up.

"I wonder," said he, "if Gys would go. If you could win him over, he would fill the bill."

"Who is Gys?" inquired Uncle John.

"An eccentric; a character. But clever and competent. He has just returned from Yucatan, where he accompanied an expedition of exploration sent out by the Geographical Society — and, by the way, nearly lost his life in the venture. Before that, he made a trip to the frozen North with a rescue party. Between times, he works in the hospitals, or acts as consulting surgeon with men of greater fame than he has won; but Gys is a rolling stone, erratic and whimsical, and with all his talent can never settle down to a steady practice."

"Seems like the very man I want," said Uncle John, much interested. "Where can I find him?"

"I've no idea. But I'll call up Collins and inquire."

He took up the telephone receiver and got his number.

"Collins? Say, I'm anxious to find Gys. Have you any idea — Eh? Sitting with you now? How lucky. Ask him if he will come to my office at once; it's important."

Uncle John's face was beaming with satisfaction. The doctor waited, the receiver at his ear.

"What's that, Collins?... He won't come?... Why not?... Absurd!... I've a fine proposition for him.... Eh? He isn't interested in propositions? What in thunder *is* he interested in?... Pshaw! Hold the phone a minute."

Turning to Mr. Merrick, he said:

"Gys wants to go on a fishing trip. He plans to start to-night for the Maine woods. But I've an idea if you could get him face to face you might convince him."

"See if he'll stay where he is till I can get there."

The doctor turned to the telephone and asked the question. There was a long pause. Gys wanted to know who it was that proposed to visit him. John Merrick, the retired millionaire? All right; Gys would wait in Collins' office for twenty minutes.

Uncle John lost no time in rushing to his motor car, where he ordered the driver to hasten to the address Dr. Barlow had given him.

The offices of Dr. Collins were impressive. Mr. Merrick entered a luxurious reception room and gave his name to a businesslike young woman who advanced to meet him. He had called to see Dr. Gys.

The young woman smothered a smile that crept to her lips, and led Uncle

John through an examination room and an operating room — both vacant just now — and so into a laboratory that was calculated to give a well person the shivers. Here was but one individual, a man in his shirt-sleeves who was smoking a corncob pipe and bending over a test tube.

Uncle John coughed to announce his presence, for the woman had slipped away as she closed the door. The man's back was turned partially toward his visitor. He did not alter his position as he said:

"Sit down. There's a chair in the southwest corner."

Uncle John found the chair. He waited patiently a few moments and then his choler began to rise.

"If you're in such a blamed hurry to go fishing, why don't you get rid of me now?" he asked.

The shoulders shook gently and there was a chuckling laugh. The man laid down his test tube and swung around on his stool.

For a moment Mr. Merrick recoiled. The face was seared with livid scars, the nose crushed to one side, the mouth crooked and set in a sneering grin. One eye was nearly closed and the other round and wide open. A more forbidding and ghastly countenance Mr. Merrick had never beheld and in his surprise he muttered a low exclamation.

"Exactly," said Gys, his voice quiet and pleasant. "I don't blame you and I'm not offended. Do you wonder I hesitate to meet strangers?"

"I — I was not — prepared," stammered Uncle John.

"That was Barlow's fault. He knows me and should have told you. And now I'll tell you why I consented to see you. No! never mind your own proposition, whatever it is. Listen to mine first. I want to go fishing, and I haven't the money. None of my brother physicians will lend me another sou, for I owe them all. You are John Merrick, to whom money is of little consequence. May I venture to ask you for an advance of a couple of hundred for a few weeks? When I return I'll take up your proposition, whatever it may be, and recompense you in services."

He refilled and relighted the corncob while Mr. Merrick stared at him in thoughtful silence. As a matter of fact, Uncle John was pleased with the fellow. A whimsical, irrational, unconventional appeal of this sort went straight to his heart, for the queer little man hated the commonplace most cordially.

"I'll give you the money on one condition," he said.

"I object to the condition," said Gys firmly. "Conditions are dangerous."

"My proposition," went on Uncle John, "won't wait for weeks. When you hear it, if you are not anxious to take it up, I don't want you. Indeed, I'm not sure I want you, anyhow."

“Ah; you’re frightened by my features. Most people with propositions are. I’m an unlucky dog, sir. They say it’s good luck to touch a hunchback; to touch me is the reverse. Way up North in a frozen sea a poor fellow went overboard. I didn’t get him and he drowned; but I got caught between two cakes of floating ice that jammed my nose out of its former perfect contour. In Yucatan I tumbled into a hedge of poisoned cactus and had to operate on myself — quickly, too — to save my life. Wild with pain, I slashed my face to get the poisoned tips of thorn out of the flesh. Parts of my body are like my face, but fortunately I can cover them. It was bad surgery. On another I could have operated without leaving a scar, but I was frantic with pain. Don’t stare at that big eye, sir; it’s glass. I lost that optic in Pernambuco and couldn’t find a glass substitute to fit my face. Indeed, this was the only one in town, made for a fat Spanish lady who turned it down because it was not exactly the right color.”

“You certainly have been — eh — unfortunate,” murmured Uncle John.

“See here,” said Gys, taking a leather book from an inside pocket of the coat that hung on a peg beside him, and proceeding to open it. “Here is a photograph of me, taken before I embarked upon my adventures.”

Uncle John put on his glasses and examined the photograph curiously. It was a fine face, clean-cut, manly and expressive. The eyes were especially frank and winning.

“How old were you then?” he asked.

“Twenty-four.”

“And now?”

“Thirty-eight. A good deal happened in that fourteen years, as you may guess. And now,” reaching for the photograph and putting it carefully back in the book, “state your proposition and I’ll listen to it, because you have listened so patiently to me.”

Mr. Merrick in simple words explained the plan to take a hospital ship to Europe, relating the incidents that led up to the enterprise and urging the need of prompt action. His voice dwelt tenderly on his girls and the loyal support of young Jones.

Dr. Gys smoked and listened silently. Then he picked up the telephone and called a number.

“Tell Hawkins I’ve abandoned that fishing trip,” he said. “I’ve got another job.” Then he faced Mr. Merrick. His smile was not pretty, but it was a smile.

“That’s my answer, sir.”

“But we haven’t talked salary yet.”

“Bother the salary. I’m not mercenary.”

“And I’m not sure — ”

“Yes, you are. I’m going with you. Do you know why?”

“It’s a novel project, very appealing from a humanitarian standpoint and — ”

“I hadn’t thought of that. I’m going because you’re headed for the biggest war the world has ever known; because I foresee danger ahead, for all of us; but mainly because — ”

“Well?”

“Because I’m a coward — a natural born coward — and I can have a lot of fun forcing myself to face the shell and shrapnel. That’s the truth; I’m not a liar. And for a long time I’ve been wondering — wondering — ” His voice died away in a murmur.

“Well, sir?”

Dr. Gys roused himself.

“Oh; do you want a full confession? For a long time, then, I’ve been wondering what’s the easiest way for a man to die. No, I’m not morbid. I’m simply ruined, physically, for the practice of a profession I love, a profession I have fully mastered, and — I’ll be happier when I can shake off this horrible envelope of disfigurement.”

CHAPTER IV
THE HOSPITAL SHIP

The energy of Doctor Gys was marvelous. He knew exactly what supplies would be needed to fit the *Arabella* thoroughly for her important mission, and with unlimited funds at his command to foot the bills, he quickly converted the handsome yacht into a model hospital ship. Gys from the first developed a liking for Kelsey, the mate, whom he found a valuable assistant, and the two came to understand each other perfectly. Kelsey was a quiet man, more thoughtful than experienced in medical matters, but his common sense often guided him aright when his technical knowledge was at fault.

Captain Carg accepted the novel conditions thrust upon him, without a word of protest. He might secretly resent the uses to which his ship was being put, but his young master's commands were law and his duty was to obey. The same feeling prevailed among the other members of the crew, all of whom were Sangoans.

In three days Jones and Maud Stanton returned from Washington. They were jubilant over their success.

"We've secured everything we wanted," the boy told Uncle John, Beth and Patsy, with evident enthusiasm. "Not only have we the full sanction of the American Red Cross Society, but I have letters to the different branches in the war zone, asking for us every consideration. Not only that, but your senator proved himself a brick. What do you think? Here's a letter from our secretary of state — another from the French charge d'affairs — half a dozen from prominent ambassadors of other countries! We've a free field in all Europe, practically, that will enable us to work to the best advantage."

"It's wonderful!" cried Patsy.

"Mr. Merrick is so well known as a philanthropist that his name was a magic talisman for us," said Maud. "Moreover, our enterprise commands the sympathy of everyone. We had numerous offers of financial assistance, too."

"I hope you didn't accept them," said Uncle John nervously.

"No," answered the boy, "I claimed this expedition to be our private and individual property. We can now do as we please, being under no obligations to any but ourselves."

"That's right," said Uncle John. "We don't want to be hampered by the necessity of advising with others."

"By the way, have you found a doctor?"

"Yes."

"A good one?" asked Maud quickly.

"Highly recommended, but homely as a rail fence," continued Patsy, as

her uncle hesitated.

"That's nothing," said Ajo lightly.

"Nothing, eh? Well, wait till you see him," she replied. "You'll never look Doctor Gys in the face more than once, I assure you. After that, you'll be glad to keep your eyes on his vest buttons."

"I like him immensely, though," said Beth. "He is clever, honest and earnest. The poor man can't help his mutilations, which are the result of many unfortunate adventures."

"Sounds like just the man we wanted," declared Ajo, and afterward he had no reason to recall that assertion.

A week is a small time in which to equip a big ship, but money and energy can accomplish much and the news from the seat of war was so eventful that they felt every moment to be precious and so they worked with feverish haste. The tide of German success had turned and their great army, from Paris to Vitry, was now in full retreat, fighting every inch of the way and leaving thousands of dead and wounded in its wake.

"How long will it take us to reach Calais?" they asked Captain Carg eagerly.

"Eight or nine days," said he.

"We are not as fast as the big passenger steamers," explained young Jones, "but with good weather the *Arabella* may be depended upon to make the trip in good shape and fair time."

On the nineteenth of September, fully equipped and with her papers in order, the beautiful yacht left her anchorage and began her voyage. The weather proved exceptionally favorable. During the voyage the girls busied themselves preparing their modest uniforms and pumping Dr. Gys for all sorts of information, from scratches to amputations. He gave them much practical and therefore valuable advice to guide them in whatever emergencies might arise, and this was conveyed in the whimsical, half humorous manner that seemed characteristic of him. At first Gys had shrunk involuntarily from facing this bevy of young girls, but they had so frankly ignored his physical blemishes and exhibited so true a comradeship to all concerned in the expedition, that the doctor soon felt perfectly at ease in their society.

During the evenings he gave them practical demonstrations of the application of tourniquets, bandages and the like, while Uncle John and Ajo by turns posed as wounded soldiers. Gys was extraordinarily deft in all his manipulations and although Maud Stanton was a graduate nurse — with little experience, however — and Beth De Graf had studied the art for a year or more, it was Patsy Doyle who showed the most dexterity in assisting the

doctor on these occasions.

"I don't know whether I'll faint at the sight of real blood," she said, "but I shall know pretty well what to do if I can keep my nerve."

The application of anaesthetics was another thing fully explained by Gys, but this could not be demonstrated. Patsy, however, was taught the use of the hypodermic needle, which Maud and Beth quite understood.

"We've a big stock of morphia, in its various forms," said the doctor, "and I expect it to prove of tremendous value in comforting our patients."

"I'm not sure I approve the use of that drug," remarked Uncle John.

"But think of the suffering we can allay by its use," exclaimed Maud. "If ever morphia is justifiable, it is in war, where it can save many a life by conquering unendurable pain. I believe the discovery of morphine was the greatest blessing that humanity has ever enjoyed. Don't you, Doctor Gys?"

The one good eye of Gys had a queer way of twinkling when he was amused. It twinkled as the girl asked this question.

"Morphine," he replied, "has destroyed more people than it has saved. You play with fire when you feed it to anyone, under any circumstances. Nevertheless, I believe in its value on an expedition of this sort, and that is why I loaded up on the stuff. Let me advise you never to tell a patient that we are administering morphine. The result is all that he is concerned with and it is better he should not know what has relieved him."

On a sunny day when the sea was calm they slung a scaffold over the bow and painted a big red cross on either side of the white ship. Everyone aboard wore the Red Cross emblem on an arm band, even the sailors being so decorated. Uncle John was very proud of the insignia and loved to watch his girls moving around the deck in their sober uniforms and white caps.

Jones endured the voyage splendidly and by this time had convinced himself that he was not again to be subject to the mal-de-mer of his first ocean trip. As they drew near to their destination an atmosphere of subdued excitement pervaded the *Arabella*, for even the sailors had caught the infection of the girls' eagerness and were anxious to get into action at the earliest moment.

It was now that Uncle John began to busy himself with his especial prize, a huge motor ambulance he had purchased in New York and which had been fully equipped for the requirements of war. Indeed, an enterprising manufacturer had prepared it with the expectation that some of the belligerent governments would purchase it, and Mr. Merrick considered himself fortunate in securing it. It would accommodate six seriously wounded, on swinging beds, and twelve others, slightly wounded, who might be able to sit upon cushioned seats. The motor was very powerful and the

driver was protected from stray bullets by an armored hood.

In addition to this splendid machine, Mr. Merrick had secured a smaller ambulance that had not the advantage of the swinging beds but could be rushed more swiftly to any desired location. Both ambulances were decorated on all sides with the emblem of the Red Cross and would be invaluable in bringing the wounded to the *Arabella*. The ship carried a couple of small motor launches for connecting the shore with her anchorage.

They had purposely brought no chauffeurs with them, as Uncle John believed foreign drivers, who were thoroughly acquainted with the country, would prove more useful than the American variety, and from experience he knew that a French chauffeur is the king of his profession.

During the last days of the voyage Mr. Merrick busied himself in carefully inspecting every detail of his precious vehicles and explaining their operation to everyone on board. Even the girls would be able to run an ambulance on occasion, and the boy developed quite a mechanical talent in mastering the machines.

"I feel," said young Jones, "that I have had a rather insignificant part in preparing this expedition, for all I have furnished — aside from the boat itself — consists of two lots of luxuries that may or may not be needed."

"And what may they be?" asked Dr. Gys, who was standing in the group beside him.

"Thermos flasks and cigarettes."

"Cigarettes!" exclaimed Beth, in horror.

The doctor nodded approvingly.

"Capital!" said he. "Next to our anodynes and anaesthetics, nothing will prove so comforting to the wounded as cigarettes. They are supplied by nurses in all the hospitals in Europe. How many did you bring?"

"Ten cases of about twenty-five thousand each."

"A quarter of a million cigarettes!" gasped Beth.

"Too few," asserted the doctor in a tone of raillery, "but we'll make them go as far as possible. And the thermos cases are also valuable. Cool water to parched lips means a glimpse of heaven. Hot coffee will save many from exhaustion. You've done well, my boy."

CHAPTER V

NEARING THE FRAY

On September twenty-eighth they entered the English Channel and were promptly signalled by a British warship, so they were obliged to lay to while a party of officers came aboard. The *Arabella* was flying the American flag and the Red Cross flag, but the English officer courteously but firmly persisted in searching the ship. What he found seemed to interest him, as did the papers and credentials presented for his perusal.

"And which side have you come to assist?" he asked.

"No side at all, sir," replied Jones, as master of the *Arabella*. "The wounded, the sick and helpless, whatever uniform they chance to wear, will receive our best attention. But we are bound for Calais and intend to follow the French army."

The officer nodded gravely.

"Of course," said he, "you are aware that the channel is full of mines and that progress is dangerous unless you have our maps to guide you. I will furnish your pilot with a diagram, provided you agree to keep our secret and deliver the diagram to the English officer you will meet at Calais."

They agreed to this and after the formalities were concluded the officer prepared to depart.

"I must congratulate you," he remarked on leaving, "on having the best equipped hospital ship it has been my fortune to see. There are many in the service, as you know, but the boats are often mere tubs and the fittings of the simplest description. The wounded who come under your care will indeed be fortunate. It is wonderful to realize that you have come all the way from America, and at so great an expense, to help the victims of this sad war. For the Allies I thank you, and — good-bye!"

They remembered this kindly officer long afterward, for he proved more generous than many of the English they met.

Captain Carg now steamed ahead, watching his chart carefully to avoid the fields of mines, but within two hours he was again hailed, this time by an armored cruiser. The first officer having vised the ship's papers, they were spared the delay of another search and after a brief examination were allowed to proceed. They found the channel well patrolled by war craft and no sooner had they lost sight of one, than another quickly appeared.

At Cherbourg a French dreadnaught halted them and an officer came aboard to give them a new chart of the mine fields between there and Calais and full instructions how to proceed safely. This officer, who spoke excellent English, asked a thousand questions and seemed grateful for their charitable

assistance to his countrymen.

“You have chosen a dangerous post,” said he, “but the Red Cross is respected everywhere — even by the Germans. Have you heard the latest news? We have driven them back to the Aisne and are holding the enemy well in check. Antwerp is under siege, to be sure, but it can hold out indefinitely. The fighting will be all in Belgium soon, and then in Germany. Our watchword is ‘On to Berlin!’“

“Perhaps we ought to proceed directly to Ostend,” said Uncle John.

“The Germans still hold it, monsieur. In a few days, perhaps, when Belgium is free of the invaders, you will find work enough to occupy you at Ostend; but I advise you not to attempt to go there now.”

In spite of the friendly attitude of this officer and of the authorities at Cherbourg, they were detained at this port for several days before finally receiving permission to proceed. The delay was galling but had to be endured until the infinite maze of red tape was at an end. They reached Calais in the early evening and just managed to secure an anchorage among the fleet of warships in the harbor.

Again they were obliged to show their papers and passports, now vised by representatives of both the English and French navies, but this formality being over they were given a cordial welcome.

Uncle John and Ajo decided to go ashore for the latest news and arrived in the city between nine and ten o’clock that same evening. They found Calais in a state of intense excitement. The streets were filled with British and French soldiery, with whom were mingled groups of citizens, all eagerly discussing the war and casting uneasy glances at the black sky overhead for signs of the dreaded German Zeppelins.

“How about Antwerp?” Jones asked an Englishman they found in the lobby of one of the overcrowded hotels.

The man turned to stare at him; he looked his questioner up and down with such insolence that the boy’s fists involuntarily doubled; then he turned his back and walked away. A bystander laughed with amusement. He also was an Englishman, but wore the uniform of a subaltern.

“What can you expect, without a formal introduction?” he asked young Jones. “But I’ll answer your question, sir; Antwerp is doomed.”

“Oh; do you really think so?” inquired Uncle John uneasily.

“It’s a certainty, although I hate to admit it. We at the rear are not very well posted on what is taking place over in Belgium, but it’s said the bombardment of Antwerp began yesterday and it’s impossible for the place to hold out for long. Perhaps even now the city has fallen under the terrific bombardment.”

There was something thrilling in the suggestion.

"And then?" asked Jones, almost breathlessly.

The man gave a typical British shrug.

"Then we fellows will find work to do," he replied. "But it is better to fight than to eat our hearts out by watching and waiting. We're the reserves, you know, and we've hardly smelled powder yet."

After conversing with several of the soldiers and civilians — the latter being mostly too unnerved to talk coherently — the Americans made their way back to the quay with heavy hearts. They threaded lanes filled with sobbing women, many of whom had frightened children clinging to their skirts, passed groups of old men and boys who were visibly trembling with trepidation and stood aside for ranks of brisk soldiery who marched with an alertness that was in strong contrast with the terrified attitude of the citizens. There was war in the air — fierce, relentless war in every word and action they encountered — and it had the effect of depressing the newcomers.

That night an earnest conference was held aboard the *Arabella*.

"As I understand it, here is the gist of the situation," began Ajo. "The line of battle along the Aisne is stationary — for the present, at least. Both sides are firmly entrenched and it's going to be a long, hard fight. Antwerp is being bombarded, and although it's a powerful fortress, the general opinion is that it can't hold out for long. If it falls, there will be a rush of Germans down this coast, first to capture Dunkirk, a few miles above here, and then Calais itself."

"In other words," continued Uncle John, "this is likely to be the most important battleground for the next few weeks. Now, the question to decide is this: Shall we disembark our ambulances and run them across to Arras, beginning our work behind the French trenches, or go on to Dunkirk, where we are likely to plunge into the thickest of the war? We're not fighters, you know, but noncombatants, bent on an errand of mercy. There are wounded everywhere."

They considered this for a long time without reaching a decision, for there were some in the party to argue on either side of the question. Uncle John continued to favor the trenches, as the safest position for his girls to work; but the girls themselves, realizing little of the dangers to be encountered, preferred to follow the fortunes of the Belgians.

"They've been so brave and noble, these people of Belgium," said Beth, "that I would take more pleasure in helping them than any other branch of the allied armies."

"But, my dear, there's a mere handful of them left," protested her uncle. "I'm told that at Dunkirk there is still a remnant of the Belgian army — very

badly equipped — but most of the remaining force is with King Albert in Antwerp. If the place falls they will either be made prisoners by the Germans or they may escape into Holland, where their fighting days will be ended for the rest of the war. However, there is no need to decide this important question to-night. To-morrow I am to see the French commandant and I will get his advice."

The interview with the French commandant of Calais, which was readily accorded the Americans, proved very unsatisfactory. The general had just received reports that Antwerp was in flames and the greater part of the city already demolished by the huge forty-two-centimetre guns of the Germans. The fate of King Albert's army was worrying him exceedingly and he was therefore in little mood for conversation.

The American consul could do little to assist them. After the matter was explained to him, he said:

"I advise you to wait a few days for your decision. Perhaps a day — an hour — will change the whole angle of the war. Strange portents are in the air; no one knows what will happen next. Come to me, from time to time, and I will give you all the information I secure."

Dr. Gys had accompanied Jones and Mr. Merrick into Calais to-day, and while he had little to say during the various interviews his observations were shrewd and comprehensive. When they returned to the deck of the *Arabella*, Gys said to the girls:

"There is nothing worth while for us to do here. The only wounded I saw were a few Frenchmen parading their bandaged heads and hands for the admiration of the women. The hospitals are well organized and quite full, it is true, but I'm told that no more wounded are being sent here. The Sisters of Mercy and the regular French Red Cross force seem very competent to handle the situation, and there are two government hospital ships already anchored in this port. We would only be butting in to offer our services. But down the line, from Arras south, there is real war in the trenches and many are falling every day. Arras is less than fifty miles from here — a two or three hours' run for our ambulances — and we could bring the wounded here and care for them as we originally intended."

"Fifty miles is a long distance for a wounded man to travel," objected Maud.

"True," said the doctor, "but the roads are excellent."

"Remember those swinging cots," said Ajo.

"We might try it," said Patsy, anxious to be doing something. "Couldn't we start to-morrow for Arras, Uncle?"

"It occurs to me that we must first find a chauffeur," answered Mr.

Merrick, “and from my impressions of the inhabitants of Calais, that will prove a difficult task.”

“Why?”

“Every man jack of ‘em is scared stiff,” said Ajo, with a laugh. “But we might ask the commandant to recommend someone. The old boy seems friendly enough.”

The next day, however, brought important news from Antwerp. The city had surrendered, the Belgian army had made good its escape and was now retreating toward Ostend, closely followed by the enemy.

This news was related by a young orderly who met them as they entered the Hotel de Ville. They were also told that the commandant was very busy but would try to see them presently. This young Frenchman spoke English perfectly and was much excited by the morning’s dispatches.

“This means that the war is headed our way at last!” he cried enthusiastically. “The Germans will make a dash to capture both Dunkirk and Calais, and already large bodies of reinforcements are on the way to defend these cities.”

“English, or French?” asked Uncle John.

“This is French territory,” was the embarrassed reply, “but we are glad to have our allies, the English, to support us. Their General French is now at Dunkirk, and it is probable the English will join the French and Belgians at that point.”

“They didn’t do much good at Antwerp, it seems,” remarked Ajo.

“Ah, they were naval reserves, monsieur, and not much could be expected of them. But do not misunderstand me; I admire the English private — the fighting man — exceedingly. Were the officers as clever as their soldiers are brave, the English would be irresistible.”

As this seemed a difficult subject to discuss, Uncle John asked the orderly if he knew of a good chauffeur to drive their ambulance — an able, careful man who might be depended upon in emergencies.

The orderly reflected.

“We have already impressed the best drivers,” he said, “but it may be the general will consent to spare you one of them. Your work is so important that we must take good care of you.”

But when they were admitted to the general they found him in a more impatient mood than before. He really could not undertake to direct Red Cross workers or advise them. They were needed everywhere; everywhere they would be welcome. And now, he regretted to state that he was very busy; if they had other business with the department, Captain Meroux would act as its representative.

Before accepting this dismissal Uncle John ventured to ask about a chauffeur. Rather brusquely the general stated that they could ill afford to spare one from the service. A desperate situation now faced the Allies in Flanders. Captain Meroux must take care of the Americans; doubtless he could find a driver for their ambulance — perhaps a Belgian.

But in the outer office the orderly smiled doubtfully.

A driver? To be sure; but such as he could furnish would not be of the slightest use to them. All the good chauffeurs had been impressed and the general was not disposed to let them have one.

"He mentioned a Belgian," suggested Uncle John.

"I know; but the Belgians in Calais are all fugitives, terror-stricken and unmanned." He grew thoughtful a moment and then continued: "My advice would be to take your ship to Dunkirk. It is only a little way, through a good channel, and you will be as safe there as at Calais. For, if Dunkirk falls, Calais will fall with it. From there, moreover, the roads are better to Arras and Peronne, and it is there you stand the best chance of getting a clever Belgian chauffeur. If you wish — " he hesitated, looking at them keenly.

"Well, sir?"

"If you are really anxious to get to the firing line and do the most good, Dunkirk is your logical station. If you are merely seeking the notoriety of being charitably inclined, remain here."

They left the young man, reflecting upon his advice and gravely considering its value. They next visited one of the hospitals, where an overworked but friendly English surgeon volunteered a similar suggestion. Dunkirk, he declared, would give them better opportunities than Calais.

The remainder of the day they spent in getting whatever news had filtered into the city and vainly seeking a competent man for chauffeur. On the morning of October eleventh they left Calais and proceeded slowly along the buoyed channel that is the only means of approaching the port of Dunkirk by water. The coast line is too shallow to allow ships to enter from the open sea.

On their arrival at the Flemish city — twelve miles nearer the front than Calais — they found an entirely different atmosphere. No excitement, no terror was visible anywhere. The people quietly pursued their accustomed avocations and the city was as orderly as in normal times.

The town was full of Belgians, however, both soldiers and civilians, while French and British troops were arriving hourly in regiments and battalions. General French, the English commander in chief, had located his headquarters at a prominent hotel, and a brisk and businesslike air pervaded the place, with an entire lack of confusion. Most of the Belgians were reservists who were waiting to secure uniforms and arms. They crowded all

the hotels, cafés and inns and seemed as merry and light-hearted as if no news of their king's defeat and precipitate retreat had arrived. Not until questioned would they discuss the war at all, yet every man was on the *qui vive*, expecting hourly to hear the roar of guns announcing the arrival of the fragment of the Belgian army that had escaped from Antwerp.

To-day the girls came ashore with the men of their party, all three wearing their Red Cross uniforms and caps, and it was almost pathetic to note the deference with which all those warriors — both bronzed and fair — removed their caps until the "angels of mercy" had passed them by.

They made the rounds of the hospitals, which were already crowded with wounded, and Gys stopped at one long enough to assist the French doctor in a delicate operation. Patsy stood by to watch this surgery, her face white and drawn, for this was her first experience of the sort; but Maud and Beth volunteered their services and were so calm and deft that Doctor Gys was well pleased with them.

CHAPTER VI
LITTLE MAURIE

It was nearly evening when the Americans finally returned to the quay, close to which the *Arabella* was moored. As they neared the place a great military automobile came tearing along, scattering pedestrians right and left, made a sudden swerve, caught a man who was not agile enough to escape and sent him spinning along the dock until he fell headlong, a crumpled heap.

"Ah, here is work for us!" exclaimed Doctor Gys, running forward to raise the man and examine his condition. The military car had not paused in its career and was well out of sight, but a throng of indignant civilians gathered around.

"There are no severe injuries, but he seems unconscious," reported Gys. "Let us get him aboard the ship."

The launch was waiting for them, and with the assistance of Jones, the doctor placed the injured man in the boat and he was taken to the ship and placed in one of the hospital berths.

"Our first patient is not a soldier, after all," remarked Patsy, a little disappointed. "I shall let Beth and Maud look after him."

"Well, he is wounded, all right," answered Ajo, "and without your kind permission Beth and Maud are already below, looking after him. I'm afraid he won't require their services long, poor fellow."

"Why didn't he get out of the way?" inquired Patsy with a shudder.

"Can't say. Preoccupied, perhaps. There wasn't much time to jump, anyhow. I suppose that car carried a messenger with important news, for it isn't like those officers to be reckless of the lives of citizens."

"No; they seem in perfect sympathy with the people," she returned. "I wonder what the news can be, Ajo."

For answer a wild whistling sounded overhead; a cry came from those ashore and the next instant there was a loud explosion. Everyone rushed to the side, where Captain Carg was standing, staring at the sky.

"What was it, Captain?" gasped Patsy.

Carg stroked his grizzled beard.

"A German bomb, Miss Patsy; but I think it did no damage."

"A bomb! Then the Germans are on us?"

"Not exactly. An aeroplane dropped the thing."

"Oh. Where is it?"

"The aeroplane? Pretty high up, I reckon," answered the captain. "I had a glimpse of it, for a moment; then it disappeared in the clouds."

"We must get our ambulances ashore," said Jones.

“No hurry, sir; plenty of time,” asserted the captain. “I think I saw the airship floating north, so it isn’t likely to bother us again just now.”

“What place is north of us?” inquired the girl, trembling a little in spite of her efforts at control.

“I think it is Nieuport — or perhaps Dixmude,” answered Carg. “I visited Belgium once, when I was a young man, but I cannot remember it very well. We’re pretty close to the Belgian border, at Dunkirk.”

“There’s another!” cried Ajo, as a second whistling shriek sounded above them. This time the bomb fell into the sea and raised a small water-spout, some half mile distant. They could now see plainly a second huge aircraft circling above them; but this also took flight toward the north and presently disappeared.

Uncle John came hurrying on deck with an anxious face and together the group of Americans listened for more bombs; but that was all that came their way that night.

“Well,” said Patsy, when she had recovered her equanimity, “we’re at the front at last, Uncle. How do you like it?”

“I hadn’t thought of bombs,” he replied. “But we’re in for it, and I suppose we’ll have to take whatever comes.”

Now came the doctor, supporting the injured man on one side while Maud Stanton held his opposite arm. Gys was smiling broadly — a rather ghastly expression.

“No bones broken, sir,” he reported to Mr. Merrick. “Only a good shake-up and plenty of bruises. He can’t be induced to stay in bed.”

“Bed, when the Germans come?” exclaimed the invalid, scornfully, speaking in fair English. “It is absurd! We can sleep when we have driven them back to their dirty Faderland — we can sleep, then, and rest. Now, it is a crime to rest.”

They looked at him curiously. He was a small man — almost a tiny man — lean and sinewy and with cheeks the color of bronze and eyes the hue of the sky. His head was quite bald at the top; his face wrinkled; he had a bushy mustache and a half-grown beard. His clothing was soiled, torn and neglected; but perhaps his accident accounted for much of its condition. His age might be anywhere from thirty to forty years. He looked alert and shrewd.

“You are Belgian?” said Uncle John.

He leaned against the rail, shaking off the doctor’s support, as he replied:

“Yes, monsieur. Belgian born and American trained.” There was a touch of pride in his voice. “It was in America that I made my fortune.”

“Indeed.”

“It is true. I was waiter in a New York restaurant for five years. Then I retired. I came back to Belgium. I married my wife. I bought land. It is near Ghent. I am, as you have guessed, a person of great importance.”

“Ah; an officer, perhaps. Civil, or military?” inquired Ajo with mock deference.

“Of better rank than either. I am a citizen.”

“Now, I like that spirit,” said Uncle John approvingly. “What is your name, my good man?”

“Maurie, monsieur; Jakob Maurie. Perhaps you have met me — in New York.”

“I do not remember it. But if you live in Ghent, why are you in Dunkirk?”

He cast an indignant glance at his questioner, but Uncle John’s serene expression disarmed him.

“Monsieur is not here long?”

“We have just arrived.”

“You cannot see Belgium from here. If you are there — in my country — you will find that the German is everywhere. I have my home at Brussels crushed by a shell which killed my baby girl. My land is devastate — my crop is taken to feed German horse and German thief. There is no home left. So my wife and my boy and girl I take away; I take them to Ostend, where I hope to get ship to England. At Ostend I am arrested by Germans. Not my wife and children; only myself. I am put in prison. For three weeks they keep me, and then I am put out. They push me into the street. No one apologize. I ask for my family. They laugh and turn away. I search everywhere for my wife. A friend whom I meet thinks she has gone to Ypres, for now no Belgian can take ship from Ostend to England. So I go to Ypres. The wandering people have all been sent to Nieuport and Dunkirk. Still I search. My wife is not in Nieuport. I come here, three days ago; I cannot find her in Dunkirk; she has vanished. Perhaps — but I will not trouble you with that. This is my story, ladies and gentlemen. Behold in me — a wealthy landowner of Liege — the outcast from home and country!”

“It is dreadful!” cried Patsy.

“It is fierce,” said the man. “Only an American can understand the horror of that word.”

“Your fate is surely a cruel one, Maurie,” declared Mr. Merrick.

“Perhaps,” ventured Beth, “we may help you to find your wife and children.”

The Belgian seemed pleased with these expressions of sympathy. He straightened up, threw out his chest and bowed very low.

“That is my story,” he repeated; “but you must know it is also the story of

thousands of Belgians. Always I meet men searching for wives. Always I meet wives searching for husbands. Well! it is our fate — the fate of conquered Belgium."

Maud brought him a deck chair and made him sit down.

"You will stay here to-night," she said.

"That's right," said Dr. Gys. "He can't resume his search until morning, that's certain. Such a tumble as he had would have killed an ordinary man; but the fellow seems made of iron."

"To be a waiter — a good waiter — develops the muscles," said Maurie.

Ajo gave him a cigarette, which he accepted eagerly. After a few puffs he said:

"I heard the German bombs. That means the enemy grows insolent. First they try to frighten us with bombs, then they attack."

"How far away do you think the Germans are?" asked Beth.

"Nieuport les Bains. But they will get no nearer."

"No?"

"Surely not, mamselle. Our soldiers are there, awaiting them. Our soldiers, and the French."

"And you think the enemy cannot capture Dunkirk?" inquired Jones.

"Dunkirk! The Germans capture Dunkirk? It is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Dunkirk is fortified; it is the entrance to Calais, to Dover and London. Look you, m'sieur; we cannot afford to lose this place. We cannot afford to lose even Nieuport, which is our last stand on Belgian soil. Therefore, the Germans cannot take it, for there are still too many of us to kill before Kitchener comes to save us." He spoke thoughtfully, between puffs of his cigarette, and added: "But of course, if the great English army does not come, and they kill us all, then it will not matter in the least what becomes of our country."

Maurie's assertion did not wholly reassure them. The little Belgian was too bombastic to win their confidence in his judgment. Yet Jones declared that Maurie doubtless knew the country better than anyone they had yet met and the doctor likewise defended his patient. Indeed, Gys seemed to have taken quite a fancy to the little man and long after the others had retired for the night he sat on deck talking with the Belgian and getting his views of the war.

"You say you had land at Ghent?" he once asked.

"It is true, Doctor."

"But afterward you said Brussels."

Maurie was not at all confused.

“Ah; I may have done so. You see, I traded my property.”

“And, if I am not mistaken, you spoke of a home at Liege.”

Maurie looked at him reproachfully.

“Is there not much land in Belgium?” he demanded; “and is a rich man confined to one home? Liege was my summer home; in the winter I removed to Antwerp.”

“You said Ghent.”

“Ghent it was, Doctor. Misfortune has dulled my brain. I am not the man I was,” he added with a sigh.

“Nevertheless,” said Gys, “you still possess the qualities of a good waiter. Whatever happens here, Maurie, you can always go back to America.”

CHAPTER VII
ON THE FIRING LINE

Next morning they were all wakened at an early hour by the roar of artillery, dimly heard in the distance. The party aboard the *Arabella* quickly assembled on deck, where little Maurie was found leaning over the rail.

"They're at it," he remarked, wagging his head. "The Germans are at Nieuport, now, and some of them are over against Pervyse. I hear sounds from Dixmude, too; the rattle of machine guns. It will be a grand battle, this! I wonder if our Albert is there."

"Who is he?" asked Patsy.

"The king. They told me yesterday he had escaped."

"We must get the ambulances out at once," said Beth.

"I'll attend to that," replied Uncle John, partaking of the general excitement. "Warp up to the dock, Captain Carg, and I'll get some of those men to help us swing the cars over the side."

"How about a chauffeur?" asked Dr. Gys, who was already bringing out bandages and supplies for the ambulances.

"If we can't find a man, I'll drive you myself," declared Ajo.

"But you don't know the country."

Gys turned to the little Belgian.

"Can't you find us a driver?" he asked. "We want a steady, competent man to run our ambulance."

"Where are you going?" asked Maurie.

"To the firing line."

"Good. I will drive you myself."

"You? Do you understand a car?"

"I am an expert, monsieur."

"A waiter in a restaurant?"

"Pah! That was five years ago. I will show you. I can drive any car ever made — and I know every inch of the way."

"Then you're our man," exclaimed Mr. Merrick, much relieved.

As the yacht swung slowly alongside the dock the Belgian said:

"While you get ready, I will go ashore for news. When I come back — very quick — then I will know everything."

Before he ran down the ladder Patsy clasped around his arm a band bearing the insignia of the Red Cross. He watched her approvingly, with little amused chuckles, and then quickly disappeared in the direction of the town.

"He doesn't seem injured in the least by his accident," said the girl, looking after him as he darted along.

“No,” returned Gys; “he is one of those fellows who must be ripped to pieces before they can feel anything. But let us thank heaven he can drive a car.”

Mr. Merrick had no difficulty in getting all the assistance required to lower the two ambulances to the dock. They had already been set up and put in order, so the moment they were landed they were ready for use.

A few surgical supplies were added by Dr. Gys and then they looked around for the Belgian. Although scarce an hour had elapsed since he departed, he came running back just as he was needed, puffing a little through haste, his eyes shining with enthusiasm.

“Albert is there!” he cried. “The king and his army are at Nieuport. They will open the dykes and flood all the country but the main road, and then we can hold the enemy in check. They will fight, those Germans, but they cannot advance, for we will defend the road and the sand dunes.”

“Aren’t they fighting now?” asked Jones.

“Oh, yes, some of the big guns are spitting, but what is that? A few will fall, but we have yet thousands to face the German horde.”

“Let us start at once,” pleaded Maud.

Maurie began to examine the big ambulance. He was spry as a cat. In ten minutes he knew all that was under the hood, had tested the levers, looked at the oil and gasoline supply and started the motor.

“I’ll sit beside you to help in case of emergency,” said Ajo, taking his place. Dr. Gys, Dr. Kelsey and the three girls sat inside. Patsy had implored Uncle John not to go on this preliminary expedition and he had hesitated until the last moment; but the temptation was too strong to resist and even as the wheels started to revolve he sprang in and closed the door behind him.

“You are my girls,” he said, “and wherever you go, I’ll tag along.”

Maurie drove straight into the city and to the north gate, Jones clanging the bell as they swept along. Every vehicle gave them the right of way and now and then a cheer greeted the glittering new Red Cross ambulance, which bore above its radiator a tiny, fluttering American flag.

They were not stopped at the gate, for although strict orders had been issued to allow no one to leave Dunkirk, the officer in charge realized the sacred mission of the Americans and merely doffed his cap in salutation as the car flashed by.

The road to Furnes was fairly clear, but as they entered that town they found the streets cluttered with troops, military automobiles, supply wagons, artillery, ammunition trucks and bicycles. The boy clanged his bell continuously and as if by magic the way opened before the Red Cross and cheers followed them on their way.

The eyes of the little Belgian were sparkling like jewels; his hands on the steering wheel were steady as a rock; he drove with skill and judgment. Just now the road demanded skill, for a stream of refugees was coming toward them from Nieuport and a stream of military motors, bicycles and wagons, with now and then a horseman, flowed toward the front. A mile or two beyond Furnes they came upon a wounded soldier, one leg bandaged and stained with blood while he hobbled along leaning upon the shoulder of a comrade whose left arm hung helpless.

Maurie drew up sharply and Beth sprang out and approached the soldiers.

"Get inside," she said in French.

"No," replied one, smiling; "we are doing nicely, thank you. Hurry forward, for they need you there."

"Who dressed your wounds?" she inquired.

"The Red Cross. There are many there, hard at work; but more are needed. Hurry forward, for some of our boys did not get off as lightly as we."

She jumped into the ambulance and away it dashed, but progress became slower presently. The road was broad and high; great hillocks of sand — the Dunes — lay between it and the ocean; on the other side the water from the opened dykes was already turning the fields into an inland sea. In some places it lapped the edges of the embankment that formed the roadway.

Approaching Nieuport, they discovered the Dunes to be full of soldiers, who had dug pits behind the sandy hillocks for protection, and in them planted the dog-artillery and one or two large machine guns. These were trained on the distant line of Germans, who were also entrenching themselves. All along the edge of the village the big guns were in action and there was a constant interchange of shot and shell from both sides.

As Maurie dodged among the houses with the big car a shell descended some two hundred yards to the left of them, exploded with a crash and sent a shower of brick and splinters high into the air. A little way farther on the ruins of a house completely blocked the street and they were obliged to turn back and seek another passage. Thus partially skirting the town they at last left the houses behind them and approached the firing line, halting scarcely a quarter of a mile distant from the actual conflict.

As far as the eye could reach, from Nieuport to the sea at the left, and on toward Ypres at the right of them, the line of Belgians, French and British steadily faced the foe. Close to where they halted the ambulance stood a detachment that had lately retired from the line, their places having been taken by reserves. One of the officers told Mr. Merrick that they had been facing bullets since daybreak and the men seemed almost exhausted. Their faces were blackened by dust and powder and their uniforms torn and

disordered; many stood without caps or coats despite the chill in the air. And yet these fellows were laughing together and chatting as pleasantly as children just released from school. Even those who had wounds made light of their hurts. Clouds of smoke hovered low in the air; the firing was incessant.

Our girls were thrilled by this spectacle as they had never been thrilled before — perhaps never might be again. While they still kept their seats, Maurie started with a sudden jerk, made a sharp turn and ran the ambulance across a ridge of solid earth that seemed to be the only one of such character amongst all that waste of sand. It brought them somewhat closer to the line but their driver drew up behind a great dune that afforded them considerable protection.

Fifty yards away was another ambulance with its wheels buried to the hubs in the loose sand. Red Cross nurses and men wearing the emblem on their arms and caps were passing here and there, assisting the injured with "first aid," temporarily bandaging heads, arms and legs or carrying to the rear upon a stretcher a more seriously injured man. Most of this corps were French; a few were English; some were Belgian. Our friends were the only Americans on the field.

Uncle John's face was very grave as he alighted in the wake of his girls, who paid no attention to the fighting but at once ran to assist some of the wounded who came staggering toward the ambulance, some even creeping painfully on hands and knees. In all Mr. Merrick's conceptions of the important mission they had undertaken, nothing like the nature of this desperate conflict had even dawned upon him. He had known that the Red Cross was respected by all belligerents, and that knowledge had led him to feel that his girls would be fairly safe; but never had he counted on spent bullets, stray shells or the mad rush of a charge.

"Very good!" cried Maurie briskly. "Here we see what no one else can see. The Red Cross is a fine passport to the grand stand of war."

"Come with me — quick!" shouted Ajo, his voice sounding shrill through the din. "I saw a fellow knocked out — there — over yonder!"

As he spoke he grabbed a stretcher and ran forward, Maurie following at his heels. Uncle John saw the smoke swallow them up, saw Beth and Maud each busy with lint, plasters and bandages, saw Patsy supporting a tall, grizzled warrior who came limping toward the car. Then he turned and saw Doctor Gys, crouching low against the protecting sand, his disfigured face working convulsively and every limb trembling as with an ague.

CHAPTER VIII
THE COWARD

"Great heavens!" gasped Mr. Merrick, running toward the doctor. "Are you hit?"

Gys looked up at him appealingly and nodded.

"Where did it strike you? Was it a bullet — or what?"

The doctor wrung his hands, moaning pitifully. Uncle John bent over him.

"Tell me," he said. "Tell me, Gys!"

"I — I'm scared, sir — s-s-scared stiff. It's that yellow s-s-s-streak in me; I — I — can't help it, sir." Then he collapsed, crouching lifelessly close to the sand.

Uncle John was amazed. He drew back with such an expression of scorn that Gys, lying with face upward, rolled over to hide his own features in the sand. But his form continued to twist and shake convulsively.

Patsy came up with her soldier, whose gaudy uniform proclaimed him an officer. He had a rugged, worn face, gray hair and mustache, stern eyes. His left side was torn and bleeding where a piece of shell had raked him from shoulder to knee. No moan did he utter as Mr. Merrick and the girl assisted him to one of the swinging beds, and then Patsy, with white, set face but steady hands, began at once to cut away the clothing and get at the wound. This was her first practical experience and she meant to prove her mettle or perish in the attempt.

Uncle John skipped over to the sand bank and clutched Gys savagely by the collar.

"Get up!" he commanded. "Here's a man desperately wounded, who needs your best skill — and at once."

Gys pulled himself free and sat up, seeming dazed for the moment. Then he rubbed his head briskly with both hands, collected his nerve and slowly rose to his feet. He cast fearful glances at the firing line, but the demand for his surgical skill was a talisman that for a time enabled him to conquer his terror. With frightened backward glances he ran to the ambulance and made a dive into it as if a pack of wolves was at his heels.

Safely inside, one glance at the wounded man caused Gys to stiffen suddenly. He became steady and alert and noting that Patsy had now bared a portion of the gaping wound the doctor seized a thermos flask of hot water and in a moment was removing the clotted blood in a deft and intelligent manner.

Now came Jones and Maurie bearing the man they had picked up. As they set the stretcher down, Uncle John came over.

“Shall we put him inside?” asked Mr. Merrick.

“No use, I think,” panted the Belgian.

“Where’s the doctor?” asked Ajo.

Kelsey, who had been busy elsewhere, now approached and looked at the soldier on the stretcher.

“The man is dead,” he said. “He doesn’t need us now.”

“Off with him, then!” cried Maurie, and they laid the poor fellow upon the sand and covered him with a cloth. “Come, then,” urged the little chauffeur, excitedly, “lots more out there are still alive. We get one quick.”

They left in a run in one direction while Kelsey, who had come to the ambulance for supplies, went another way. Mr. Merrick looked around for the other two girls. Only Maud Stanton was visible through the smoky haze. Uncle John approached her just as a shell dropped into the sand not fifty feet away. It did not explode but plowed a deep furrow and sent a shower of sand in every direction.

Maud had just finished dressing a bullet wound in the arm of a young soldier who smiled as he watched her. Then, as she finished the work, he bowed low, muttered his thanks, and catching up his gun rushed back into the fray. It was a flesh wound and until it grew more painful he could still fight.

“Where are the Germans?” asked Uncle John. “I haven’t seen one yet.”

As he spoke a great cheer rose from a thousand throats. The line before them wavered an instant and then rushed forward and disappeared in the smoke of battle.

“Is it a charge, do you think?” asked Maud, as they stood peering into the haze.

“I — I don’t know,” he stammered. “This is so — so bewildering — that it all seems like a dream. Where’s Beth?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you looking for a young lady — a nurse?” asked a voice beside them. “She’s over yonder,” he swung one arm toward the distant sand dunes. The other was in a sling. “She has just given me first aid and sent me to the rear — God bless her!” Then he trailed on, a British Tommy Atkins, while with one accord Maud and Uncle John moved in the direction he had indicated.

“She mustn’t be so reckless,” said Beth’s uncle, nervously. “It’s bad enough back here, but every step nearer the firing line doubles the danger.”

“I do not agree with you, sir,” answered Maud quietly. “A man was killed not two paces from me, a little while ago.”

He shuddered and wiped the sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief,

but made no reply. They climbed another line of dunes and in the hollow beyond came upon several fallen soldiers, one of whom was moaning with pain. Maud ran to kneel beside him and in a twinkling had her hypodermic needle in his arm.

"Bear it bravely," she said in French. "The pain will stop in a few minutes and then I'll come and look after you."

He nodded gratefully, still moaning, and she hurried to rejoin Mr. Merrick.

"Beth must be in the next hollow," said Uncle John as she overtook him, and his voice betrayed his nervous tension. "I do wish you girls would not be so reckless."

Yes; they found her in the next hollow, where several men were grouped about her. She was dressing the shattered hand of a soldier, while two or three others were patiently awaiting her services. Just beside her a sweet-faced Sister of Mercy was bending over a dying man, comforting him with her prayers. Over the ridge of sand could be heard the "ping" of small arms mingled with the hoarse roar of machine guns. Another great shout — long and enthusiastic — was borne to their ears.

"That is good," said a tall man standing in the group about Beth; "I think, from the sound, we have captured their guns."

"I'm sure of it, your Majesty," replied the one whom Beth was attending. "There; that will do for the present. I thank you. And now, let us get forward."

As they ran toward the firing Uncle John exclaimed:

"His Majesty! I wonder who they are?"

"That," said a private soldier, an accent of pride in his voice, "is our Albert."

"The king?"

"Yes, monsieur; he is the tall one. The other is General Mays. I'm sure we have driven the Germans back, and that is lucky, for before our charge they had come too close for comfort."

"The king gave me a ring," said Beth, displaying it. "He seemed glad I was here to help his soldiers, but warned me to keep further away from the line. King Albert speaks English perfectly and told me he loves America better than any other country except his own."

"He has traveled in your country," explained the soldier. "But then, our Albert has traveled everywhere — before he was king."

Betwixt them Maud and Beth quickly applied first aid to the others in the group and then Uncle John said:

"Let us take the king's advice and get back to the ambulance. We left only

Patsy and Dr. Gys there and I'm sure you girls will be needed."

On their return they came upon a man sitting in a hollow and calmly leaning against a bank of sand, smoking a cigarette. He wore a gray uniform.

"Ah, a German!" exclaimed Maud. She ran up to him and asked: "Are you hurt?"

He glanced at her uniform, nodded, and pointed to his left foot. It had nearly all been torn away below the ankle. A handkerchief was twisted about the leg, forming a rude tourniquet just above the wound, and this had served to stay the flow of blood.

"Run quickly for the stretcher," said Maud to Uncle John. "I will stay with him until your return."

Without a word he hurried away, Beth following. They found, on reaching the ambulance, that Maurie and Jones had been busy. Five of the swinging beds were already occupied.

"Save the other one," said Beth. "Maud has found a German." Then she hurried to assist Patsy, as the two doctors had their hands full.

Jones and Maurie started away with the stretcher, Uncle John guiding them to the dunes where Maud was waiting, and presently they had the wounded German comfortably laid in the last bed.

"Now, then, back to the ship," said Gys. "We have in our care two lives, at least, that can only be saved by prompt operations."

Maurie got into the driver's seat.

"Careful, now!" cautioned Jones, beside him.

"Of course," replied the Belgian, starting the motor; "there are many sores inside. But if they get a jolt, now and then, it will serve to remind them that they are suffering for their country."

He began to back up, for the sand ahead was too deep for a turn, and the way he managed the huge car along that narrow ridge aroused the admiration of Ajo, who alone was able to witness the marvelous performance. Slowly, with many turns, they backed to the road, where Maurie swung the ambulance around and then stopped with a jerk that drew several groans from the interior of the car.

"What's wrong?" asked Mr. Merrick, sticking his head from a window.

"We nearly ran over a man," answered Jones, climbing down from his seat. "Our front wheels are right against him, but Maurie stopped in time."

Lying flat upon his face, diagonally across the roadway, was the form of a man in the blue-and-red uniform of the Belgian army. Maurie backed the ambulance a yard or so as Maud sprang out and knelt beside the prostrate form.

The firing, which had lulled for a few minutes, suddenly redoubled in

fury. There rose a wild, exultant shout, gradually drawing nearer.

"Quick!" shouted Gys, trembling and wringing his hands. "The Germans are charging. Drive on, man — drive on!"

But Maurie never moved.

"The Germans are charging, sure enough," he answered, as the line of retreating Belgians became visible. "But they must stop here, for we've blocked the road."

All eyes but those of Maud were now turned upon the fray, which was practically a hand to hand conflict. Nearer and nearer came the confused mass of warriors and then, scarce a hundred yards away, it halted and the Belgians stood firm.

"He isn't dead," said Maud, coming to the car. "Help me to put him inside."

"There is no room," protested Gys.

The girl looked at him scornfully.

"We will make room," she replied.

A bullet shattered a pane of glass just beside the crouching doctor, but passed on through an open window without injuring anyone. In fact, bullets were singing around them with a freedom that made others than Dr. Gys nervous. It was chubby little Uncle John who helped Jones carry the wounded man to the ambulance, where they managed to stretch him upon the floor. This arrangement sent Patsy to the front seat outside, with Maurie and Ajo, although her uncle strongly protested that she had no right to expose her precious life so wantonly.

There was little time for argument, however. Even as the girl was climbing to her seat the line of Belgians broke and came pouring toward them. Maurie was prompt in starting the car and the next moment the ambulance was rolling swiftly along the smooth highway in the direction of Dunkirk and the sounds of fray grew faint behind them.

CHAPTER IX

COURAGE, OR PHILOSOPHY?

"I never realized," said Maud, delightedly, "what a strictly modern, professional hospital ship Uncle John has made of this, until we put it to practical use. I am sure it is better than those makeshifts we observed at Calais, and more comfortable than those crowded hospitals on land. Every convenience is at our disposal and if our patients do not recover rapidly it will be because their condition is desperate."

She had just come on deck after a long and trying session in assisting Doctors Gys and Kelsey to care for the injured, a session during which Beth and Patsy had also stood nobly to their gruesome task. There were eleven wounded, altogether, in their care, and although some of these were in a critical condition the doctors had insisted that the nurses needed rest.

"It is Dr. Gys who deserves credit for fitting the ship," replied Mr. Merrick, modestly, to Maud's enthusiastic comment, "and Ajo is responsible for the ship itself, which seems admirably suited to our purpose. By the way, how is Gys behaving now? Is he still shaking with fear?"

"No, he seems to have recovered his nerve. Isn't it a terrible affliction?"

"Cowardice? Well, my dear, it is certainly an unusual affliction in this country and in these times. I have been amazed to-day at the courage I have witnessed. These Belgians are certainly a brave lot."

"But no braver than the German we brought with us," replied Maud thoughtfully. "One would almost think he had no sensation, yet he must be suffering terribly. The doctor will amputate the remnants of his foot in an hour or so, but the man positively refuses to take an anaesthetic."

"Does he speak English or French?"

"No; only German. But Captain Carg understands German and so he has been acting as our interpreter."

"How about the Belgian we picked up on the road?"

"He hasn't recovered consciousness yet. He is wounded in the back and in trying to get to the rear became insensible from loss of blood."

"From what I saw I wouldn't suppose any Belgian could be wounded in the back," remarked Uncle John doubtfully.

"It was a shell," she said, "and perhaps exploded behind him. It's a bad wound, Dr. Gys says, but if he regains strength he may recover."

During this conversation Patsy Doyle was lying in her stateroom below and crying bitterly, while her cousin Beth strove to soothe her. All unused to such horrors as she had witnessed that day, the girl had managed to retain her nerve by sheer force of will until the Red Cross party had returned to the ship

and extended first aid to the wounded; but the moment Dr. Gys dismissed her she broke down completely.

Beth was no more accustomed to bloodshed than her cousin, but she had anticipated such scenes as they had witnessed, inasmuch as her year of training as nurse had prepared her for them. She had also been a close student of the daily press and from her reading had gleaned a knowledge of the terrible havoc wrought by this great war. Had Patsy not given way, perhaps Beth might have done so herself, and really it was Maud Stanton who bore the ordeal with the most composure.

After a half hour on deck Maud returned to the hospital section quite refreshed, and proceeded to care for the patients. She alone assisted Gys and Kelsey to amputate the German's foot, an operation the man bore splendidly, quite unaware, however, that they had applied local anaesthetics to dull the pain. Dr. Gys was a remarkably skillful surgeon and he gave himself no rest until every one of the eleven had received such attention as his wounds demanded. Even Kelsey felt the strain by that time and as Maud expressed her intention of remaining to minister to the wants of the crippled soldiers, the two doctors went on deck for a smoke and a brief relaxation.

By this time Beth had quieted Patsy, mainly by letting her have her cry out, and now brought her on deck to join the others and get the fresh air. So quickly had events followed one another on this fateful day that it was now only four o'clock in the afternoon. None of them had thought of luncheon, so the ship's steward now brought tea and sandwiches to those congregated on deck.

As they sat together in a group, drinking tea and discussing the exciting events of the day, little Maurie came sauntering toward them and removed his cap.

"Your pardon," said he, "but — are the wounded all cared for?"

"As well as we are able to care for them at present," answered Beth. "And let me thank you, Jakob Maurie — let us all thank you — for the noble work you did for us to-day."

"Pah! it was nothing," said he, shifting from one foot to another. "I enjoyed it, mamselle. It was such fun to dive into the battle and pull out the wounded. It helped them, you see, and it gave us a grand excitement. Otherwise, had I not gone with you, I would be as ignorant as all in Dunkirk still are, for the poor people do not yet know what has happened at the front."

"We hardly know ourselves what has happened," said Uncle John. "We can hear the boom of guns yet, even at this distance, and we left the battle line flowing back and forth like the waves of the ocean. Have a cup of tea, Maurie?"

The man hesitated.

“I do not like to disturb anyone,” he said slowly, “but if one of the young ladies is disengaged I would be grateful if she looks at my arm.”

“Your arm!” exclaimed Beth, regarding him wonderingly as he stood before her.

Maurie smiled.

“It is hardly worth mentioning, mamselle, but a bullet — ”

“Take off your coat,” she commanded, rising from her seat to assist him.

Maurie complied. His shirt was stained with blood. Beth drew out her scissors and cut away the sleeve of his left arm. A bullet had passed directly through the flesh, but without harming bone or muscle.

“Why didn’t you tell us before?” she asked reproachfully.

“It amounted to so little, beside the other hurts you had to attend,” he answered. “I am shamed, mamselle, that I came to you at all. A little water and a cloth will make it all right.”

Patsy had already gone for the water and in a few minutes Beth was deftly cleansing the wound.

“How did it happen, Maurie?” asked Jones. “I was with you most of the time and noticed nothing wrong. Besides, you said nothing about it.”

“It was on the road, just as we picked up that fallen soldier with the hole in his back. The fight jumped toward us pretty quick, you remember, and while I sat at the wheel the bullet came. I knew when it hit me, but I also knew I could move my arm, so what did it matter? I told myself to wait till we got to the ship. Had we stayed there longer, we might all have stopped bullets — and some bullets might have stopped us.” He grinned, as if the aphorism amused him, and added: “To know when to run is the perfection of courage.”

“Does it hurt?” asked Uncle John, as Beth applied the lint and began winding the bandage.

“It reminds me it is there, monsieur; but I will be ready for another trip to-morrow. Thank you, mamselle. Instead of the tea, I would like a little brandy.”

“Give him some in the tea,” suggested Gys, noting that Maurie swayed a little. “Sit down, man, and be comfortable. That’s it. I’d give a million dollars for your nerve.”

“Have you so much money?” asked Maurie.

“No.”

“Then I cannot see that you lack nerve,” said the little Belgian thoughtfully. “I was watching you to-day, M’sieur Doctor, and I believe what you lack is courage.”

Gys stared so hard at him with the one good eye that even Maurie became embarrassed and turned away his head. Sipping his tea and brandy he presently resumed, in a casual tone:

"Never have I indulged in work of more interest than this. We go into the thick of the fight, yet are we safe from harm. We do good to both sides, because the men who do the fighting are not to blame for the war, at all. The leaders of politics say to the generals: 'We have declared war; go and fight.' The generals say to the soldiers: 'We are told to fight, so come on. We do not know why, but it is our duty, because it is our profession. So go and die, or get shot to pieces, or lose some arms and legs, as it may happen.' The business of the soldiers is to obey; they must back up the policies of their country, right or wrong. But do those who send them into danger ever get hurt? Not to the naked eye."

"Why, you're quite a philosopher, Maurie," said Patsy.

"It is true," agreed the Belgian. "But philosophy is like courage — easy to assume. We strut and talk big; we call the politicians sharks, the soldiers fools; but does it do any good? The war will go on; the enemy will destroy our homes, separate our families, take away our bread and leave us to starve; but we have the privilege to philosophize, if we like. For myself, I thank them for nothing!"

"I suppose you grieve continually for your wife," said Patsy.

"Not so much that, mamselle, but I know she is grieving for me," he replied.

"As soon as we find time," continued the girl, "we intend to search for your wife and children. I am sure we can find them for you."

Maurie moved uneasily in his chair.

"I beg you to take no trouble on my account," said he. "With the Red Cross you have great work to accomplish. What is the despair of one poor Walloon to you?"

"It is a great deal to us, Maurie," returned the girl, earnestly. "You have been a friend in need; without you we could not have made our dash to the front to-day. We shall try to repay you by finding your wife."

He was silent, but his troubled look told of busy thoughts.

"What does she look like?" inquired Beth. "Have you her photograph?"

"No; she would not make a good picture, mamselle," he answered with a sigh. "Clarette is large; she is fat; she has a way of scowling when one does not bring in more wood than the fire can eat up; and she is very religious."

"With that description I am sure we can find her," cried Patsy enthusiastically.

He seemed disturbed.

“If you please,” said he plaintively, “Clarette is quite able to take care of herself. She has a strong will.”

“But if you know she is safe it will relieve your anxiety,” suggested Beth. “You told us yesterday you had been searching everywhere for her.”

“If I said everywhere, I was wrong, for poor Clarette must be somewhere. And since yesterday I have been thinking with more deliberation, and I have decided,” he added, his tone becoming confidential, “that it is better I do not find Clarette just now. It might destroy my usefulness to the Red Cross.”

“But your children!” protested Patsy. “Surely you cannot rest at ease with your two dear children wandering about, in constant danger.”

“To be frank, mamselle,” said he, “they are not my children. I had a baby, but it was killed, as I told you. The boy and girl I have mentioned were born when Clarette was the wife of another man — a blacksmith at Dinant — who had a sad habit of beating her.”

“But you love the little ones, I am sure.”

He shook his head.

“They have somewhat the temper of their father, the blacksmith. I took them when I took Clarette — just as I took the silver spoons and the checkered tablespread she brought with her — but now that a cruel fate has separated me from the children, perhaps it is all for the best.”

The doctor gave a snort of disgust, while Ajo smiled. The girls were too astonished to pursue the conversation, but now realized that Maurie’s private affairs did not require their good offices to untangle. Uncle John was quite amused at the Belgian’s confession and was the only one to reply.

“Fate often seems cruel when she is in her happiest mood,” said he. “Perhaps, Maurie, your Clarette will come to you without your seeking her, for all Belgium seems headed toward France just now. What do you think? Will the Germans capture Dunkirk?”

The man brightened visibly at this turn in the conversation.

“Not to-day, sir; not for days to come,” he replied. “The French cannot afford to lose Dunkirk, and by to-morrow they will pour an irresistible horde against the German invader. If we stay here, we are sure to remain in the rear of the firing line.”

CHAPTER X

THE WAR'S VICTIMS

While the others were conversing on deck Maud Stanton was ministering to the maimed victims of the war's cruelty, who tossed and moaned below. The main cabin and its accompanying staterooms had been fitted with all the conveniences of a modern hospital. Twenty-two could easily be accommodated in the rooms and a dozen more in the cabin, so that the eleven now in their charge were easily cared for. Of these, only three had been seriously injured. One was the German, who, however, was now sleeping soundly under the influence of the soothing potion that followed his operation. The man's calmness and iron nerve indicated that he would make a rapid recovery. Another was the young Belgian soldier picked up in the roadway near the firing line, who had been shot in the back and had not yet recovered consciousness. Dr. Gys had removed several bits of exploded shell and dressed the wound, shaking his head discouragingly. But since the young man was still breathing, with a fairly regular respiration, no attempt was made to restore him to his senses.

The third seriously injured was a French sergeant whose body was literally riddled with shrapnel. A brief examination had convinced Gys that the case was hopeless.

"He may live until morning," was the doctor's report as he calmly looked down upon the moaning sergeant, "but no longer. Meanwhile, we must prevent his suffering."

This he accomplished by means of powerful drugs. The soldier soon lay in a stupor, awaiting the end, and nothing more could be done for him.

Of the others, two Belgians with bandaged heads were playing a quiet game of écarté in a corner of the cabin, while another with a slight wound in his leg was stretched upon a couch, reading a book. A young French officer who had lost three fingers of his hand was cheerfully conversing with a comrade whose scalp had been torn by a bullet and who declared that in two days he would return to the front. The others Maud found asleep in their berths or lying quietly to ease their pain. It was remarkable, however, how little suffering was caused these men by flesh wounds, once they were properly dressed and the patients made comfortable with food and warmth and the assurance of proper care.

So it was that Maud found her duties not at all arduous this evening. Indeed, the sympathy she felt for these brave men was so strong that it wearied her more than the actual work of nursing them. A sip of water here, a cold compress there, the administration of medicines to keep down or

prevent fever, little attentions of this character were all that were required. Speaking French fluently, she was able to converse with all those under her charge and all seemed eager to relate to their beautiful nurse their experiences, hopes and griefs. Soon she realized she was beginning to learn more of the true nature of war than she had ever gleaned from the correspondents of the newspapers.

When dinner was served in the forward cabin Beth relieved Maud and after the evening meal Dr. Gys made another inspection of his patients. All seemed doing well except the young Belgian. The condition of the French sergeant was still unchanged. Some of those with minor injuries were ordered on deck for a breath of fresh air.

Patsy relieved Beth at midnight and Maud came on duty again at six o'clock, having had several hours of refreshing sleep. She found Patsy trembling with nervousness, for the sergeant had passed away an hour previous and the horror of the event had quite upset the girl.

"Oh, it is all so unnecessary!" she wailed as she threw herself into Maud's arms.

"We must steel ourselves to such things, dear," said Maud, soothing her, "for they will be of frequent occurrence, I fear. And we must be grateful and glad that we were able to relieve the poor man's anguish and secure for him a peaceful end."

"I know," answered Patsy with a little sob, "but it's so dreadful. Oh, what a cruel, hateful thing war is!"

From papers found on the sergeant Uncle John was able to notify his relatives of his fate. His home was in a little village not fifty miles away and during the day a brother arrived to take charge of the remains and convey them to their last resting place.

The following morning Captain Carg was notified by the authorities to withdraw the *Arabella* to an anchorage farther out in the bay, and thereafter it became necessary to use the two launches for intercourse between the ship and the city. Continuous cannonading could be heard from the direction of Nieuport, Dixmude and Ypres, and it was evident that the battle had doubled in intensity at all points, owing to heavy reinforcements being added to both sides. But, as Maurie had predicted, the Allies were able to hold the foe at bay and keep them from advancing a step farther.

Uncle John had not been at all satisfied with that first day's experience at the front. He firmly believed it was unwise, to the verge of rashness, to allow the girls to place themselves in so dangerous a position. During a serious consultation with Jones, Kelsey, Captain Carg and Dr. Gys, the men agreed upon a better plan of procedure.

“The three nurses have plenty to do in attending to the patients in our hospital,” said Gys, “and when the ship has its full quota of wounded they will need assistance or they will break down under the strain. Our young ladies are different from the professional nurses; they are so keenly sensitive that they suffer from sympathy with every patient that comes under their care.”

“I do not favor their leaving the ship,” remarked Dr. Kelsey, the mate. “There seems to be plenty of field workers at the front, supplied by the governments whose troops are fighting.”

“Therefore,” added Jones, “we men must assume the duty of driving the ambulances and bringing back the wounded we are able to pick up. As Maurie is too stiff from his wound to drive to-day, I shall undertake the job myself. I know the way, now, and am confident I shall get along nicely. Who will go with me?”

“I will, of course,” replied Kelsey quietly.

“Doctor Gys will be needed on the ship,” asserted Uncle John.

“Yes, it will be best to leave me here,” said Gys. “I’m too great a coward to go near the firing line again. It destroys my usefulness, and Kelsey can administer first aid as well as I.”

“In that case, I think I shall take the small ambulance to-day,” decided Ajo. “With Dr. Kelsey and one of the sailors we shall manage very well.”

A launch took them ashore, where the ambulances stood upon the dock. Maurie had admitted his inability to drive, but asked to be allowed to go into the town. So he left the ship with the others and disappeared for the day.

Ajo took the same route he had covered before, in the direction of Nieuport, but could not get within five miles of the town, which was now held by the Germans. From Furnes to the front the roads were packed with reinforcements and wagon trains bearing ammunition and supplies, and further progress with the ambulance was impossible.

However, a constant stream of wounded flowed to the rear, some with first aid bandages covering their injuries, others as yet uncared for. Kelsey chose those whom he considered most in need of surgical care or skillful nursing, and by noon the ambulance was filled to overflowing. It was Jones who advised taking none of the fatally injured, as the army surgeons paid especial attention to these. The Americans could be of most practical use, the boy considered, by taking in charge such as had a chance to recover. So nine more patients were added to the ship’s colony on this occasion, all being delivered to the care of Dr. Gys without accident or delay — a fact that rendered Ajo quite proud of his skillful driving.

While the ambulance was away the girls quietly passed from berth to

berth, encouraging and caring for their wounded. It was surprising how interested they became in the personality of these soldiers, for each man was distinctive either in individuality or the character of his injury, and most of them were eager to chat with their nurses and anxious for news of the battle.

During the morning the young Belgian who had lain until now in a stupor, recovered consciousness. He had moaned once or twice, drawing Maud to his side, but hearing a different sound from him she approached the berth where he lay, to find his eyes wide open. Gradually he turned them upon his nurse, as if feeling her presence, and after a moment of observation he sighed and then smiled wanly.

"Still on earth?" he said in French.

"I am so glad," she replied. "You have been in dreamland a long time."

He tried to move and it brought a moan to his lips.

"Don't stir," she counseled warningly; "you are badly wounded."

He was silent for a time, staring at the ceiling. She held some water to his lips and he drank eagerly. Finally he said in a faint voice:

"I remember, now. I had turned to reload and it hit me in the back. A bullet, mademoiselle?"

"Part of a shell."

"Ah, I understand.... I tried to get to the rear. The pain was terrible. No one seemed to notice me. At last I fell, and — then I slept. I thought it was the end."

She bathed his forehead, saying:

"You must not talk any more at present. Here comes the doctor to see you."

Gys, busy in the cabin, had heard their voices and now came to look at his most interesting patient. The soldier seemed about twenty years of age; he was rather handsome, with expressive eyes and features bearing the stamp of culture. Already they knew his name, by means of an identification card found upon him, as well as a small packet of letters carefully pinned in an inner pocket of his coat. These last were all addressed in the same handwriting, which was undoubtedly feminine, to Andrew Denton. The card stated that Andrew Denton, private, was formerly an insurance agent at Antwerp.

Doctor Gys had rather impatiently awaited the young man's return to consciousness that he might complete his examination. He now devoted the next half hour to a careful diagnosis of Denton's injuries. By this time the patient was suffering intense pain and a hypodermic injection of morphine was required to relieve him. When at last he was quietly drowsing the doctor called Maud aside to give her instructions.

“Watch him carefully,” said he, “and don’t let him suffer. Keep up the morphine.”

“There is no hope, then?” she asked.

“Not the slightest. He may linger for days — even weeks, if we sustain his strength — but recovery is impossible. That bit of shell tore a horrible hole in the poor fellow and all we can do is keep him comfortable until the end. Without the morphine he would not live twelve hours.”

“Shall I let him talk?”

“If he wishes to. His lungs are not involved, so it can do him no harm.”

But Andrew Denton did not care to talk any more that day. He wanted to think, and lay quietly until Beth came on duty. To her he gave a smile and a word of thanks and again lapsed into thoughtful silence.

When Ajo brought the new consignment of wounded to the ship the doctors and nurses found themselves pretty busy for a time. With wounds to dress and one or two slight operations to perform, the afternoon passed swiftly away. The old patients must not be neglected, either, so Captain Carg said he would sit with the German and look after him, as he was able to converse with the patient in his own tongue.

The German was resting easily to-day but proved as glum and uncommunicative as ever. That did not worry the captain, who gave the man a cigarette and, when it was nonchalantly accepted, lighted his own pipe. Together they sat in silence and smoked, the German occupying an easy chair and resting his leg upon a stool, for he had refused to lie in a berth. Through the open window the dull boom of artillery could constantly be heard. After an hour or so:

“A long fight,” remarked the captain in German.

The other merely looked at him, contemplatively. Carg stared for five minutes at the bandaged foot. Finally:

“Hard luck,” said he.

This time the German nodded, looking at the foot also.

“In America,” resumed the captain, puffing slowly, “they make fine artificial feet. Walk all right. Look natural.”

“Vienna,” said the German.

“Yes, I suppose so.” Another pause.

“Name?” asked the German, with startling abruptness. But the other never winked.

“Carg. I’m a sailor. Captain of this ship. Live in Sangoa, when ashore.”

“Sangoa?”

“Island in South Seas.”

The wounded man reached for another cigarette and lighted it.

“Carg,” he repeated, musingly. “German?”

“Why, my folks were, I believe. I’ve relations in Germany, yet. Munich. Visited them once, when a boy. Mother’s name was Elbl. The Cargs lived next door to the Elbls. But they’ve lost track of me, and I of them. Nothing in common, you see.”

The German finished his cigarette, looking at the captain at times reflectively. Carg, feeling his biography had not been appreciated, had lapsed into silence. At length the wounded man began feeling in his breast pocket — an awkward operation because the least action disturbed the swathed limb — and presently drew out a leather card case. With much deliberation he abstracted a card and handed it to the captain, who put on his spectacles and read:

“Otto Elbl. 12th Uhlans”

“Oh,” he said, looking up to examine the German anew. “Otto Elbl of Munich?”

“Yes.”

“H-m. Number 121 Friedrichstrasse?”

“Yes.”

“I didn’t see you when I visited your family. They said you were at college. Your father was William Elbl, my mother’s brother.”

The German stretched out his hand and gripped the fist of the captain.

“Cousins,” he said.

Carg nodded, meditating.

“To be sure,” he presently returned; “cousins. Have another cigarette.”

CHAPTER XI

PATSY IS DEFIANT

That evening the captain joined Dr. Gys on deck.

"That German, Lieutenant Elbl," he began.

"Oh, is that his name?" asked Gys.

"Yes. Will he get well?"

"Certainly. What is a foot, to a man like him? But his soldiering days are past."

"Perhaps that's fortunate," returned the captain, ruminatively. "When I was a boy, his father was burgomaster — mayor — in Munich. People said he was well-to-do. The Germans are thrifty, so I suppose there's still money in the Elbl family."

"Money will do much to help reconcile the man to the loss of his foot," declared the doctor.

"Will he suffer much pain, while it is getting well?"

"Not if I can help it. The fellow bears pain with wonderful fortitude. When I was in Yucatan, and had to slash my face to get out the poisoned darts of the cactus, I screamed till you could have heard me a mile. And I had no anaesthetic to soothe me. Your lieutenant never whimpered or cringed with his mangled foot and he refused morphine when I operated on it. But I fooled him. I hate to see a brave man suffer. I stuck a needle just above the wound when he wasn't looking, and I've doped his medicine ever since."

"Thank you," said Carg; "he's my cousin."

In the small hours of the next morning, while Patsy was on duty in the hospital section, the young Belgian became wakeful and restless. She promptly administered a sedative and sat by his bedside. After a little his pain was eased and he became quiet, but he lay there with wide open eyes.

"Can I do anything more for you?" she asked.

"If you would be so kind," replied Andrew Denton.

"Well?"

"Please read to me some letters you will find in my pocket. I cannot read them myself, and — they will comfort me."

Patsy found the packet of letters.

"The top one first," he said eagerly. "Read them all!"

She opened the letter reluctantly. It was addressed in a dainty, female hand and the girl had the uncomfortable feeling that she was about to pry into personal relations of a delicate character.

"Your sweetheart?" she asked gently.

"Yes, indeed; my sweetheart and my wife."

“Oh, I see. And have you been married long?” He seemed a mere boy.

“Five months, but for the last two I have not seen her.”

The letters were dated at Charleroi and each one began: “My darling husband.” Patsy read the packet through, from first to last, her eyes filling with tears at times as she noted the rare devotion and passionate longing of the poor young wife and realized that the boyish husband was even now dying, a martyr to his country’s cause. The letters were signed “Elizabeth.” In one was a small photograph of a sweet, dark-eyed girl whom she instantly knew to be the bereaved wife.

“And does she still live at Charleroi?” Patsy asked.

“I hope so, mademoiselle; with her mother. The Germans now occupy the town, but you will notice the last letter states that all citizens are treated courteously and with much consideration, so I do not fear for her.”

The reading of the letters, in conjunction with the opiate, seemed to comfort him, for presently he fell asleep. With a heavy heart the girl left him to attend to her other patients and at three o’clock Ajo came in and joined her, to relieve the tedium of the next three hours. The boy knew nothing of nursing, but he could help Patsy administer potions and change compresses and his presence was a distinct relief to her.

The girl was supposed to sleep from six o’clock — at which time she was relieved from duty — until one in the afternoon, but the next morning at eight she walked into the forward salon, where her friends were at breakfast, and sat down beside Uncle John.

“I could not sleep,” said she, “because I am so worried over Andrew Denton.”

“That is foolish, my dear,” answered Mr. Merrick, affectionately patting the hand she laid in his. “The doctor says poor Denton cannot recover. If you’re going to take to heart all the sad incidents we encounter on this hospital ship, it will not only ruin your usefulness but destroy your happiness.”

“Exactly so,” agreed Gys, coming into the salon in time to overhear this remark. “A nurse should be sympathetic, but impersonally so.”

“Denton has been married but five months,” said Patsy. “I have seen his wife’s picture — she’s a dear little girl! — and her letters to him are full of love and longing. She doesn’t know, of course, of his — his accident — or that he — he — ” Her voice broke with a sob she could not repress.

“M-m,” purred Uncle John; “where does she live, this young wife?”

“At Charleroi.”

“Well; the Germans are there.”

“Yes, Uncle. But don’t you suppose they would let her come to see her

dying husband?”

“A young girl, unprotected? Would it be — safe?”

“The Germans,” remarked Captain Carg from his end of the table, “are very decent people.”

“Ahem!” said Uncle John.

“Some of them, I’ve no doubt, are quite respectable,” observed Ajo; “but from all reports the rank and file, in war time, are — rather unpleasant to meet.”

“Precisely,” agreed Uncle John. “I think, Patsy dear, it will be best to leave this Belgian girl in ignorance of her husband’s fate.”

“I, myself, have a wife,” quoth little Maurie, with smug assurance, “but she is not worrying about me, wherever she may be; nor do I feel especial anxiety for Clarette. A woman takes what comes — especially if she is obliged to.”

Patsy regarded him indignantly.

“There are many kinds of women,” she began.

“Thank heaven!” exclaimed Maurie, and then she realized how futile it was to argue with him.

A little later she walked on deck with Uncle John and pleaded her cause earnestly. It was said by those who knew him well that the kindly little gentleman was never able to refuse Patsy anything for long, and he was himself so well aware of this weakness that he made a supreme effort to resist her on this occasion.

“You and I,” said she, “would have no trouble in passing the German lines. We are strictly neutral, you know, we Americans, and our passports and the Red Cross will take us anywhere in safety.”

“It won’t do, my dear,” he replied. “You’ve already been in danger enough for one war. I shudder even now as I think of those bullets and shells at Nieuport.”

“But we can pass through at some place where they are not fighting.”

“Show me such a place!”

“And distances are very small in this part of the Continent. We could get to Charleroi in a day, and return the next day with Mrs. Denton.”

“Impossible.”

“The doctor says he may live for several days, but it may be only for hours. If you could see his face light up when he speaks of her, you would realize what a comfort her presence would be to him.”

“I understand that, Patsy. But can’t you see, my dear, that we’re not able to do everything for those poor wounded soldiers? You have twenty in your charge now, and by to-night there may be possibly a dozen more. Many of

them have wives at home, but — ”

“But all are not dying, Uncle — and after only five months of married life, three of which they passed together. Here, at least, is one brave heart we may comfort, one poor woman who will be ever grateful for our generous kindness.”

Mr. Merrick coughed. He wiped his eyes and blew his nose on his pink bordered handkerchief. But he made no promise.

Patsy left him and went to Ajo.

“See here,” she said; “I’m going to Charleroi in an hour.”

“It’s a day’s journey, Patsy.”

“I mean I’m going to start in an hour. Will you go with me?”

“What does Uncle John say?” he inquired cautiously.

“I don’t care what he says. I’m going!” she persisted, her eyes blazing with determination.

The boy whistled softly, studying her face. Then he walked across the deck to Mr. Merrick.

“Patsy is rampant, sir,” said he. “She won’t be denied. Go and argue with her, please.”

“I *have* argued,” returned Uncle John weakly.

“Well, argue again.”

The little man cast a half frightened, half reproachful glance at his niece.

“Let’s go and consult the doctor,” he exclaimed, and together Uncle John and Ajo went below.

To their surprise, Gys supported Patsy’s plea.

“He’s a fine fellow, this Denton,” said he, “and rather above the average soldier. Moreover, his case is a pitiful one. I’ll agree to keep him alive until his wife comes.”

Uncle John looked appealingly at Ajo.

“How on earth can we manage to cross the lines?” he asked.

“Take one of our launches,” said the boy.

“Skim the coast to Ostend, and you’ll avoid danger altogether.”

“That’s the idea!” exclaimed the doctor approvingly. “Why, it’s the easiest thing in the world, sir.”

Uncle John began to feel slightly reassured.

“Who will run the launch?” he inquired.

“I’ll give you the captain and one of the men,” said the boy. “Carg’s an old traveler and knows more than he appears to. Besides, he speaks German. We can’t spare very many, you understand, and the ambulances will keep Maurie and me pretty busy. Patsy will be missed, too, from the hospital ward, so you must hurry back.”

“Two days ought to accomplish our object,” said Uncle John.

“Easily,” agreed Gys. “I’ve arranged for a couple of girls from the town to come and help us to-day, for I must save the strength of my expert nurses as much as possible, and I’ll keep them with us until you return. The French girls are not experienced in nursing, but I’ll take Miss Patsy’s watch myself, so we shall get along all right.”

Mr. Merrick and Jones returned to the deck.

“Well?” demanded Patsy.

“Get ready,” said Uncle John; “we leave in an hour.”

“For Charleroi?”

“Of course; unless you’ve changed your mind.”

Patsy flew to her stateroom.

CHAPTER XII
THE OTHER SIDE

The launch in which they embarked bore the Red Cross on its sides, and an American flag floated from the bow and a Red Cross flag from the stern. Its four occupants wore the Red Cross uniforms. Yet three miles out of Dunkirk a shot came singing across their prow and they were obliged to lay to until a British man-of-war could lower a boat to investigate their errand. The coast is very shallow in this section, which permits boats of only the lightest draught to navigate in-shore, but the launch was able to skim over the surface at twelve miles an hour.

"This is pleasant!" grumbled Uncle John, as they awaited the approach of the warship's boat. "Our very appearance ought to insure us safe conduct, but I suppose that in these times every craft is regarded with suspicion."

The boat came alongside.

"Where are you going?" demanded an officer, gruffly.

"To Ostend."

"On what business?"

"Our own," replied Mr. Merrick.

"Be respectful, sir, or I'll arrest your entire outfit," warned the officer.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," declared Mr. Merrick. "You'll examine our papers, apologize for your interference and row back to your ship. We have the authority of the Red Cross to go wherever our duty calls us, and moreover we're American citizens. Permit me to add that we're in a hurry."

The officer turned first white and then red, but he appreciated the force of the argument.

"Your papers!" he commanded.

Uncle John produced them and waited patiently for their inspection, which was very deliberate. Finally the officer returned them and gave the order to his men to row back to the ship.

"One moment!" called Uncle John. "You haven't made the apology."

There was no answer. The boat moved swiftly away and at a gesture from Captain Carg the sailor started the launch again.

"I wonder why it is," mused Mr. Merrick, "that there is always this raspy feeling when the English meet Americans. On the surface we're friendly enough and our governments always express in diplomatic relations the most cordial good will; but I've always noticed in the English individual an undercurrent of antipathy for Americans that cannot be disguised. As a race the English hate us, I'm positive, and I wonder why?"

"I believe you're wrong, Uncle," remarked Patsy. "A few of the British

may individually dislike us, but I'm sure the two nations are not antagonistic. Why should they be?"

"Yorktown," muttered the captain.

"I don't believe it," declared the girl. "They're too good sportsmen to bear grudges."

"All the same," persisted Uncle John, "the English have never favored us as the French have, or even the Russians."

From Dunkirk to Ostend, by the coast line, is only some twenty-five miles, yet although they started at a little after eleven o'clock it was three in the afternoon before they finally landed at the Belgian seaport. Interruptions were numerous, and although they were treated courteously, in the main, it was only after rigid questioning and a thorough examination that they were permitted to proceed. A full hour was consumed at the harbor at Ostend before they could even land.

As they stepped upon the wharf a group of German soldiers met them and now Captain Carg became the spokesman of the party. The young officer in command removed his helmet to bow deferentially to Patsy and then turned to ask their business at Ostend.

"He says we must go before the military governor," said Carg, translating. "There, if our papers are regular, permits will be issued for us to proceed to Charleroi."

They left the sailor in charge of the launch, which was well provisioned and contained a convertible bunk, and followed the officer into the town. Ostend is a large city, fortified, and was formerly one of the most important ports on the North Sea, as well as a summer resort of prominence. The city now being occupied by the Germans, our friends found few citizens on the streets of Ostend and these hurried nervously on their way. The streets swarmed with German soldiery.

Arriving at headquarters they found that the commandant was too busy to attend to the Red Cross Americans. He ordered them taken before Colonel Grau for examination.

"But why examine us at all?" protested Mr. Merrick. "Doesn't our sacred mission protect us from such annoying details?"

The young officer regretted that it did not. They would find Colonel Grau in one of the upper rooms. It would be a formal examination, of course, and brief. But busy spies had even assumed the insignia of the Red Cross to mask their nefarious work and an examination was therefore necessary as a protective measure. So they ascended a broad staircase and proceeded along a corridor to the colonel's office.

Grau was at the head of the detective service at Ostend and invested with

the task of ferreting out the numerous spies in the service of the Allies and dealing with them in a summary manner. He was a very stout man, and not very tall. His eyes were light blue and his grizzled mustache was a poor imitation of that affected by the Kaiser. When Grau looked up, on their entrance, Patsy decided that their appearance had startled him, but presently she realized that the odd expression was permanent.

In a chair beside the colonel's desk sat, or rather lounged, another officer, encased in a uniform so brilliant that it arrested the eye before one could discover its contents. These were a wizened, weather-beaten man of advanced age, yet rugged as hickory. His eyes had a periodical squint; his brows wore a persistent frown. There was a broad scar on his left cheek and another across his forehead. A warrior who had seen service, probably, but whose surly physiognomy was somewhat disconcerting.

The two officers had been in earnest conversation, but when Mr. Merrick's party was ushered in, the elder man leaned back in his chair, squinting and scowling, and regarded them silently.

"Huh!" exclaimed the colonel, in a brusque growl. "What is it, von Holtz?"

The young officer explained that the party had just arrived from Dunkirk in a launch; the commandant had asked Colonel Grau kindly to examine them. Uncle John proceeded to state the case, Captain Carg interpreting. They operated a Red Cross hospital ship at Dunkirk, and one of their patients, a young Belgian, was dying of his wounds. They had come to find his young wife and take her back with them to Dunkirk in their launch, that she might comfort the last moments of her husband. The Americans asked for safe conduct to Charleroi, and permission to take Mrs. Denton with them to Dunkirk. Then he presented his papers, including the authority of the American Red Cross Society, the letter from the secretary of state and the recommendation of the German ambassador at Washington.

The colonel looked them all over. He uttered little guttural exclamations and tapped the desk with his finger-tips as he read, and all the time his face wore that perplexing expression of surprise. Finally he asked:

"Which is Mr. Merrick?"

Hearing his name, Uncle John bowed.

"Huh! But the description does not fit you."

Captain Carg translated this.

"Why not?" demanded Uncle John.

"It says you are short, stout, blue-eyed, bald, forty-five years of age."

"Of course."

"You are not short; I think you are as tall as I am. Your eyes are not blue;

they are olive green. You are not bald, for there is still hair over your ears. Huh! How do you explain that?"

"It's nonsense," said Uncle John scornfully.

Carg was more cautious in interpreting the remark. He assured the colonel, in German, that the description of Mr. Merrick was considered close enough for all practical purposes. But Grau was not satisfied. He went over the papers again and then turned to face the other officer.

"What do you think, General?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"Suspicious!" was the reply.

"I think so, myself," said the colonel. "Mark you: Here's a man who claims to come from Sangoa, a place no one has ever heard of; and the other has endorsements purporting to come from the highest officials in America. Huh! what does it mean?"

"Papers may be forged, or stolen from their proper owners," suggested the squinting general. "This excuse of coming here to get the wife of a hurt Belgian seems absurd. If they are really Red Cross workers, they are not attending to their proper business."

When the captain interpreted this speech Patsy said angrily:

"The general is an old fool."

"An idiot, I'll call him," added Uncle John. "I wish I could tell him so."

"You *have* told him," said the general in good English, squinting now more rapidly than ever, "and your manner of speech proves you to be impostors. I have never known a respectable Red Cross nurse, of any country, who called a distinguished officer a fool — and to his face."

"I didn't know you understood English," she said.

"That is no excuse!"

"But I *did* know," she added, "that I had judged you correctly. No one with a spark of intelligence could doubt the evidence of these papers."

"The papers are all right. Where did you get them?"

"From the proper authorities."

He turned to speak rapidly in German to Colonel Grau, who had been uneasy during the conversation in English, because he failed to understand it. His expression of piquant surprise was intensified as he now turned to the Americans.

"You may as well confess your imposture," said he. "It will make your punishment lighter. However, if on further examination you prove to be spies, your fate is beyond my power to mitigate."

"See here," said Uncle John, when this was translated to him, "if you dare to interfere with us, or cause us annoyance, I shall insist on your being courtmartialed. You are responsible to your superiors, I suppose, and they

dare not tolerate an insult to the Red Cross, nor to an American citizen. You may have the sense to consider that if these papers and letters are genuine, as I declare they are, I have friends powerful enough to bring this matter before the Kaiser himself, in which case someone will suffer a penalty, even if he is a general or a colonel."

As he spoke he glared defiantly at the older officer, who calmly proceeded to translate the speech to the colonel. Carg reported that it was translated verbatim. Then the general sat back and squinted at his companion, who seemed fairly bewildered by the threat. Patsy caught the young officer smothering a smile, but neither of them interrupted the silence that followed.

Once again the colonel picked up the papers and gave them a rigid examination, especially that of the German ambassador, which was written in his own language. "I cannot understand," he muttered, "how one insignificant American citizen could secure such powerful endorsements. It has never happened before in my experience."

"It is extraordinary," said the general.

"Mr. Merrick," said Patsy to him, "is a very important man in America. He is so important that any indignity to him will be promptly resented."

"I will investigate your case further," decided Colonel Grau, after another sotto voce conference with the general. "Spies are getting to be very clever, these days, and we cannot take chances. However, I assure you there is no disposition to worry you and until your standing is determined you will be treated with every consideration."

"Do you mean that we are prisoners?" asked Uncle John, trying to control his indignation.

"No, indeed. You will be detained, of course, but you are not prisoners — as yet. I will keep your papers and submit them to the general staff. It will be for that august body to decide."

Uncle John protested vigorously; Patsy faced the old general and told him this action was an outrage that would be condemned by the entire civilized world; Captain Carg gravely assured both officers that they were making a serious mistake. But nothing could move the stolid Germans. The general, indeed, smiled grimly and told them in English that he was in no way responsible, whatever happened. This was Colonel Grau's affair, but he believed, nevertheless, that the colonel was acting wisely.

The young officer, who had stood like a statue during the entire interview, was ordered to accompany the Americans to a hotel, where they must be kept under surveillance but might follow, to an extent, their own devices. They were not to mail letters nor send telegrams.

The officer asked who should guard the suspects.

“Why not yourself, Lieutenant? You are on detached duty, I believe?”

“At the port, Colonel.”

“There are too many officers at the port; it is a sinecure. I will appoint you to guard the Americans. You speak their language, I believe?”

The young man bowed.

“Very well; I shall hold you responsible for their safety.”

They were then dismissed and compelled to follow their guard from the room.

Patsy was now wild with rage and Uncle John speechless. Even Carg was evidently uneasy.

“Do not mind,” said the young lieutenant consolingly. “It is merely a temporary inconvenience, you know, for your release will come very soon. And since you are placed in my care I beg you to accept this delay with good grace and be happy as possible. Ostend is full of life and I am conducting you to an excellent hotel.”

CHAPTER XIII

TARDY JUSTICE

The courtesy of Lieutenant von Holtz was beyond criticism. He obtained for his charges a comfortable suite of rooms in an overcrowded hotel, obliging the landlord to turn away other guests that Mr. Merrick's party might be accommodated. The dinner that was served in their cosy sitting room proved excellent, having been ordered by von Holtz after he had requested that privilege. When the young officer appeared to see that it was properly served, Patsy invited him to join them at the table and he laughingly consented.

"You are one of our party, by force of circumstances," said the girl, "and since we've found you good-natured and polite, and believe you are not to blame for our troubles, we may as well be friendly while we are together."

The young man was evidently well pleased.

"However evil your fortune may be," said he, "I cannot fail to be impressed by my own good luck. Perhaps you may guess what a relief this pleasant commission is to one who for days has been compelled to patrol those vile smelling docks, watching for spies and enduring all sorts of weather."

"To think," said Uncle John gloomily, "that *we* are accused of being spies!"

"It is not for me," returned von Holtz, "to criticize the acts of my superiors. I may say, however, that were it my province to decide the question, you would now be free. Colonel Grau has an excellent record for efficiency and seldom makes a mistake, but I suspect his judgment was influenced by the general, whose son was once jilted by an American girl."

"We're going to get even with them both, before this affair is ended," declared Patsy, vindictively; "but although you are our actual jailer I promise that you will escape our vengeance."

"My instructions are quite elastic, as you heard," said the lieutenant. "I am merely ordered to keep you in Ostend, under my eye, until your case has been passed upon by the commandant or the general staff. Since you have money, you may enjoy every luxury save that of travel, and I ask you to command my services in all ways consistent with my duty."

"What worries me," said Patsy to Uncle John, "is the delay. If we are kept here for long, poor Denton will die before we can find his wife and take her to him."

"How long are we liable to be detained?" Uncle John asked the officer.

"I cannot say. Perhaps the council of the general staff will meet to-morrow morning; perhaps not for several days," was the indefinite reply.

Patsy wiped away the tears that began to well into her eyes. She had so fondly set her heart on reuniting the Dentons that her disappointment was very great.

Von Holtz noticed the girl's mood and became thoughtful. Captain Carg had remained glum and solemn ever since they had left the colonel's office. Uncle John sat in silent indignation, wondering what could be done to influence these stupid Germans. Presently the lieutenant remarked:

"That sailor whom you left with the launch seemed an intelligent fellow."

Patsy gave a start; Uncle John looked at the young man expectantly; the captain nodded his head as he slowly replied:

"Henderson is one of the picked men I brought from Sangoa. He is both intelligent and loyal."

"Curiously enough," said von Holtz, "I neglected to place the man under arrest. I even forgot to report him. He is free."

"Ah!" exclaimed Patsy, her eyes lighting.

"I know a civilian here — a bright young Belgian — who is my friend and will do anything I ask of him," resumed von Holtz, still musingly. "I had the good fortune to protect his mother when our troops entered the city, and he is grateful."

Patsy was thinking very fast now.

"Could Henderson get to Charleroi, do you imagine?" she asked. "He has a passport."

"We do not consider passports of much value," said the officer; "but a Red Cross appointment — "

"Oh, he has that, too; all our men carry them."

"In that case, with my friend Rondel to guide him, I believe Henderson could accomplish your errand."

"Let us send for him at once!" exclaimed Uncle John.

Carg scribbled on a card.

"He wouldn't leave the launch without orders, unless forced by the Germans," asserted the captain, and handed the card to von Holtz.

The young lieutenant took his cap, bowed profoundly and left the room. In ten minutes he returned, saying: "I am not so fortunate as I had thought. All our troops are on the move, headed for the Yser. There will be fighting, presently, and — I must remain here," he added despondently.

"It won't be your last chance, I'm sure," said Patsy. "Will that dreadful Colonel Grau go, too?"

"No; he is to remain. But all regiments quartered here are now marching out and to-morrow a fresh brigade will enter Ostend."

They were silent a time, until someone rapped upon the door. Von Holtz

admitted a slim, good-looking young Belgian who grasped his hand and said eagerly in French:

"You sent for me?"

"Yes. You may speak English here, Monsieur Rondel." Then he presented his friend to the Americans, who approved him on sight.

Henderson came a few minutes later and listened respectfully to the plan Miss Doyle unfolded. He was to go with Monsieur Rondel to Charleroi, find Mrs. Denton, explain that her husband was very ill, and bring her back with him to Ostend. He would report promptly on his return and they would tell him what to do next.

The man accepted the mission without a word of protest. Charleroi was in central Belgium, but that did not mean many miles away and Rondel assured him they would meet with no difficulties. The trains were reserved for soldiers, but the Belgian had an automobile and a German permit to drive it. The roads were excellent.

"Now, remember," said Patsy, "the lady you are going for is Mrs. Albert Denton. She lives with her mother, or did, the last we heard of her."

"And her mother's name and address?" inquired Henderson.

"We are ignorant of either," she confessed; "but it's not a very big town and I'm sure you'll easily find her."

"I know the place well," said Rondel, "and I have friends residing there who will give me information."

Uncle John supplied them liberally with money, impressed upon them the necessity of haste, and sent them away. Rondel declared the night time was best for the trip and promised to be on the way within the hour, and in Charleroi by next morning.

Notwithstanding the fact that they had succeeded in promoting by proxy the mission which had brought them to Belgium, the Americans found the next day an exceedingly irksome one. In the company of Lieutenant von Holtz they were permitted to walk about the city, but they found little pleasure in that, owing to the bustle of outgoing troops and the arrival of others to replace them. Nor did they care to stray far from their quarters, for fear the council would meet and they might be sent for.

However, no sign from Colonel Grau was received that day. Patsy went to bed with a nervous headache and left Uncle John and the captain to smoke more than was good for them. Both the men had now come to regard their situation as serious and as the American consul was at this time absent in Brussels they could think of no way to secure their freedom. No one knew when the consul would return; Mr. Merrick had been refused the privilege of using the telegraph or mails. During one of their strolls they had met the

correspondent of an American newspaper, but when the man learned they were suspects he got away from them as soon as possible. He did not know Mr. Merrick and his own liberty was too precarious for him to argue with Colonel Grau.

"I'm beginning to think," said Uncle John, "that we're up against a hard proposition. Letters and endorsements from prominent Americans seem to have no weight with these Germans. I'd no idea our identity could ever be disputed."

"We must admit, sir," returned the captain, reflectively, "that the spy system in this war is something remarkable. Spies are everywhere; clever ones, too, who adopt every sort of subterfuge to escape detection. I do not blame Grau so much for caution as for lack of judgment."

"He's a blockhead!" cried Mr. Merrick testily.

"He is. I'm astonished they should place so much power in the hands of one so slow witted."

"He has insulted us," continued Uncle John. "He has dared to arrest three free-born Americans."

"Who came into a troubled country, occupied by a conquering army, without being invited."

"Well — that's true," sighed the little millionaire, "but what are we going to do about it?"

"Wait," counseled the captain.

The next day dawned dark and rainy and the weather had a depressing effect upon the prisoners. It was too damp to stir out of doors and the confinement of the hotel rooms became especially irksome. Not only were they anxious about their own fate but it was far past the time when they should have heard from Henderson and Rondel. Patsy's nerves were getting beyond her control; Uncle John stumped around with his hands thrust deep in his pockets and a frown wrinkling his forehead; the captain smoked innumerable pipes of tobacco and said not a word. Von Holtz, noting the uneasiness of his charges, discreetly forbore conversation and retired to a far corner where he hid behind a book.

It was nearing evening when a commotion was heard on the stairs, followed by the heavy tramp of feet in the corridor. A sharp rap sounded on the door of their sitting room. Uncle John stepped forward to open it, when in stalked a group of German officers, their swords and spurs clanking and their cloaks glistening with rain-drops. At sight of the young girl off came cap and helmet and with one accord they bowed low.

The leader was a tall, thin man with a leathern face, hooked nose and piercing gray eyes. His breast glittered with orders. It was von Kargenbrut,

the military governor.

“Pardon our intrusion,” he said in English, his harsh voice having a guttural accent. “Which gentleman is Mr. John Merrick?”

“I am John Merrick.”

The eagle eyes swept over him with a swift glance.

“We owe you our apology,” continued the governor, speaking as fiercely as if he were ordering Uncle John beheaded. “I have been too busy to take up your case before to-day, when I discover that we have treated you discourteously. You will consider our fault due to these troubled times, when mistakes occur in spite of our watchfulness. Is it not so?”

“Your error has caused us great inconvenience,” responded Mr. Merrick stiffly.

The governor whirled around. “Colonel Grau!” he called, and from the rear of the group the colonel stepped forward. His face still wore the expression of comical surprise. “Return to Mr. Merrick his papers and credentials.”

The colonel drew the packet of papers from his breast pocket and handed it to Uncle John. Then he glanced hesitatingly at his superior, who glared at him.

“He cannot speak the English,” said the governor to Mr. Merrick, “but he owes you reparation.”

“Grau’s stupidity has been very annoying, to say the least,” was the ungracious reply. “We came here on important business, and presented our papers — all in proper order — on demand. We had the right to expect decent treatment, as respectable American citizens engaged in humanitarian work; yet this — this — man,” pointing an accusing finger at the colonel, “ordered us detained — arrested! — and kept our papers.”

The governor listened coldly and at the end of the speech inclined his head.

“Colonel Grau,” said he, “has been relieved of his duties here and transferred to another station. To you I have personally apologized. You will find my endorsement on your papers and, in addition, an order that will grant you safe conduct wherever you may wish to go. If that is not enough, make your demands and I will consider them.”

“Why, that is all I can expect, your Excellency, under the circumstances,” replied Mr. Merrick. “I suppose I ought to thank you for your present act of justice.”

“No; it is your due. Good evening, Mr. Merrick.”

He swung around on his heel and every officer of the group turned with him, like so many automatons, all facing the door. But Mr. Merrick touched

the governor upon the arm.

“One moment, your Excellency. This young officer, Lieutenant von Holtz, has treated us kindly and courteously. I want you to know that one of your men, at least, has performed his duty in a way to merit our thanks — and yours.”

The governor scowled at Lieutenant von Holtz, who stood like a statue, with lowered eyes.

“Lieutenant, you are commissioned to guide Mr. Merrick as long as he remains within our lines. You will guard his safety and that of his party. When he departs, come to me personally with your report.”

The young officer bowed; the governor tramped to the door and went out, followed by his staff. Grau left the room last, with hang-dog look, and Patsy slammed the door in the hope of bumping his wooden head.

“So we’re free?” she said, turning to von Holtz.

“Not only that, Fraulein, but you are highly favored,” he replied. “All German territory is now open to you.”

“It’s about time they came to their senses,” remarked Uncle John, with a return to his accustomed cheerfulness.

“And, best of all,” said Patsy exultantly, “they’ve fired that awful colonel!”

The captain thoughtfully filled and lighted his pipe.

“I wonder,” said he, “how that happened. Was it the council, do you think, Lieutenant?”

Von Holtz shook his head.

“I think it was the governor,” he replied. “He is a just man, and had you been able to see him personally on your arrival you would have been spared any annoyance.”

“Perhaps,” said Patsy doubtfully. “But your governor’s a regular bear.”

“I believe that is merely his way,” asserted Uncle John. “I didn’t mind the man’s tone when I found his words and deeds were all right. But he — ”

Another rap at the door. Patsy opened it and admitted Henderson. He saluted the captain, bowed to the others and said:

“We’ve got her, sir.”

“Mrs. Denton?” cried Patsy, delightedly.

Henderson nodded.

“Yes, Miss Doyle; Mrs. Denton and the children.”

“The children! Why, there aren’t any.”

“I beg your pardon, Miss; there are two.”

“Two children!” she exclaimed in dismay. “There must be some mistake. The young people have only been married five months.”

Henderson stood stiff as a poker, refusing to argue the point.

"A governess, maybe," suggested the captain.

"More likely," said Uncle John, "young Denton married a widow, with — eh — eh — incumbrances."

"That's it, sir," said Henderson earnestly.

"What's it?"

"The incumbrances, sir. No other word could describe 'em."

Patsy's heart sank; she was greatly disappointed.

"And she so young and pretty!" she murmured.

Henderson started to smile, but quickly suppressed it.

"Shall I show them up, Miss?" he inquired.

"Of course," answered Uncle John, as the girl hesitated. "You should have brought her to us at once. Where is that Belgian — Rondel?"

"He is guarding the woman, sir."

"Guarding her!"

"She's a little difficult to manage, sir, at times. She left Charleroi willingly enough, but she's tricky, and it is our duty to deliver her to you safely."

"Get her at once, Henderson," exclaimed Patsy, recovering her wits; "and the dear children, too."

Presently there was a sound of shuffling on the stairs and through the corridor. The door opened to admit the arrivals from Charleroi.

Henderson first pushed in a big woman dressed in a faded blue-checked gown, belted around the waist in a manner that made her look like a sack tied in the middle. Her head was bare, her hair awry, her face sullen and hard; she was undeniably "fleshy" and not altogether clean. She resisted Henderson at every step and glared around her with shrewd and shifting eyes.

Following her came Monsieur Rondel leading a boy and a girl, the latter being a small replica of the woman. The boy was viciously struggling to bite the hand of the Belgian, who held him fast.

"Ah, well," said Rondel, first sighing and then turning with a smile to face the lieutenant, "we have performed our mission. But heaven guard us from another like it!"

Patsy stared hard at the woman.

"This cannot be Mrs. Denton," she gasped, bewildered.

"Indeed?" answered Rondel in English. "She declares that is her name. Question her in French or Flemish, Miss Doyle."

Patsy addressed the woman in French but could elicit no reply. She stood impassive and silent.

"How did you make the mistake?" asked the girl, looking reproachfully first at Henderson and then at Rondel, both of whom were evidently

astonished to find themselves at fault. “I have seen a photograph of Mrs. Andrew Denton, taken recently, and she is young and pretty and — and — rather small.”

Monsieur Rondel cleared his throat to answer:

“It happened in this way, mademoiselle: We searched one whole day in Charleroi for Mrs. Denton but could not find her. My friends, on whom I had relied for assistance, had unfortunately moved away or joined the army. The townspeople were suspicious of Monsieur Henderson, who is a foreigner. We could get no information whatever. I appealed to the burgomaster and he said he would try to find Mrs. Denton for us the next day. In the morning came to us this woman, who said she was the person we sought. If we promised her safe conduct to Dunkirk, she would go with us. She had wanted to go to Dunkirk for some weeks, but the Germans would not let her pass the lines. We suspected nothing wrong, for she admitted she was aware that her husband is in Dunkirk, and she wanted to get to him. So we brought her to you.”

Patsy faced the woman resolutely and said in French:

“Why did you wish to get to Dunkirk?”

“He has said it. To find my husband,” replied the woman in a surly tone.

“What is your name?”

No reply.

“Answer me!”

The woman eyed her obstinately and remained silent.

“Very well. Release those children, Monsieur Rondel. Madam, you have imposed upon us; you have tricked us in order to get to Ostend at our expense. Now go, and take your children with you.”

She pointed dramatically at the door, but the woman retained her position, only moving to cuff the boy, who was kicking Henderson on his shins. Then, setting her hands on her hips she said defiantly:

“They promised me passage to Dunkirk, and they must take me there.”

“Who promised you?”

“Those men,” pointing to them, “and the burgomaster.”

“Yes,” admitted Henderson, “we agreed with the burgomaster to take her out of the country. We signed a paper to that effect.”

“But she is a Belgian. And she is not the person she claimed to be.”

To this neither Rondel nor Henderson had an answer.

“See here,” said Uncle John, “I’ll untangle this matter in a jiffy. Here is money; give it to the woman and tell her to get out — or we’ll eject her by force.”

The woman grabbed the money eagerly, but after placing it in an ample

pocket she said: “I will go no place but Dunkirk. I will not leave you until you take me there.”

But here the lieutenant interfered. He suddenly faced the woman, who had not noticed his presence before, and she shrank back in fear at sight of his uniform. The boy and girl both began to cry.

“I know you,” said von Holtz sternly. “You are the wife of a spy who has been condemned to death by both the Belgians and the Germans, since he betrayed them both. The last time you came to Ostend to annoy us you were driven out of the city. There is still an edict against you. Will you leave this room peaceably, or shall I order you under arrest?”

“Dog of a German!” she hissed, “the day is coming when I will help to drive you out of Belgium, even as you now drive me. Brave soldiers are you, to make war on women and children. Guh! I would kill you where you stand — if I dared.” With venomous hate she spat upon the floor, then seized her wailing children, shook them and waddled out of the room.

There was a general sigh of relief.

“You may return to the launch, Henderson,” said the captain.

“Monsieur Rondel,” said Uncle John, grasping the young Belgian’s hand, “we are grateful to you for your kindness. The failure of your mission was not your fault. We thank you. The governor has given us our liberty and permission to travel where we please, so to-morrow we will go to Charleroi ourselves to search for Mrs. Denton.”

“My motor car is at your disposal, sir, and my services.”

“To-morrow? Oh, let us go to-night, Uncle!” cried Patsy.

Mr. Merrick looked inquiringly at the Belgian.

“I am ready now,” said Rondel with a bow.

“Then,” said Patsy, “we will start in half an hour. You see, we have wasted two whole days — two precious days! I hope Dr. Gys will keep his promise, and that we shall find poor Denton alive on our return.”

CHAPTER XIV
FOUND AT LAST

The pretty city of Charleroi had suffered little damage from the German invasion, yet many of the townspeople had gone away since the occupation and those who remained kept well within their houses or huddled in anxious groups upon the streets. The civic affairs were still administered by the Belgian burgomaster, but the martial law of the Germans prevailed over all.

When Patsy Doyle, escorted by Uncle John and accompanied by Captain Carg, Lieutenant von Holtz and Monsieur Rondel, arrived in the early morning, the streets were comparatively deserted. The Hotel Royal received them hospitably and the landlord and his daughters prepared them an excellent breakfast.

While eating, Patsy chatted with the Belgian girls, who were neat, modest and intelligent. She found that Henderson and Rondel had not stopped at this hotel while in Charleroi, but at a smaller inn at the other end of the town. The girls remembered hearing of their visit and of their inquiries for a Mrs. Denton, but did not know whether they had succeeded in their quest or not.

"We have lived here all our lives," said the eldest of the landlord's three daughters, "but we have not known, during that time, any family of Dentons in Charleroi."

Patsy reflected.

"They were married only five months ago, these Dentons," said she, "and the young man may have come from some other town. Do you remember that any of your young girls were married about five months ago?"

Yes; there was Hildegarde Bentel, but she had married Anthony Mattison, who was not a soldier. Could the American mamselle remember what the girl's first name was?

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Patsy. "She signed her letters 'Elizabeth.'"

They shook their heads.

"My name is also Elizabeth," said one. "We have many Elizabeths in Charleroi, but none has lately married."

"And her husband told me that she was now living here with her mother."

"Ah, let us see, then," responded another. "Could she have been a lady of rank, think you?"

"I — I do not know."

"Is her husband an officer?"

"No; a private, I believe."

"Then we are on the wrong scent," laughed the girl. "I had in mind the daughter of the Countess Voig, whose name chances to be Elizabeth. She

was educated at a convent in Antwerp, and the countess has lived in that city for several years, in order to be nearer her daughter. There was some gossip here that the young lady had married in Antwerp, just after leaving the convent; but we know little of the life of the Voigs because they are very reserved. Two or three months ago they returned to their castle, which is four miles to the north of Charleroi, and there they are still living in retirement. Every day the old steward drives into town to visit the post office, but we have not seen the countess nor her daughter since they came back."

Patsy related this news to Uncle John, who did not understand French.

"Let us drive over to Castle Voig the first thing," she said.

"But, my dear, it's unreasonable," he objected. "Do you suppose a high-born young lady would marry a common soldier? In America, where we have no caste, it would be quite probable, but here — "

"He wasn't a soldier five months ago," said Patsy. "He's just a volunteer, who joined the army when his country needed him, as many of the wealthy and aristocratic Belgians did. He may be high-born himself, for all we know. At any rate I mean to visit that castle. Tell Rondel to bring around the automobile."

They had no trouble in passing the guards, owing to the presence of von Holtz, and in half an hour they were rolling through a charming, peaceful country that as yet had suffered no blemish through the German conquest.

At Castle Voig they were received by an aged retainer who was visibly nervous at their arrival. He eyed the uniform of young von Holtz with ill-concealed terror and hurried away to carry their cards to the countess. After a long wait they learned that the countess would receive the Americans, but it was a full half hour after that when they were ushered into a reception room where a lady sat in solitary state.

Under other circumstances Patsy could have spent a day in admiring the quaint, old-fashioned furniture and pictures and the wonderful carvings of the beamed ceiling, but now she was so excited that she looked only at the countess. The lady was not very imposing in form or dress but her features were calm and dignified and she met her guests with a grave courtesy that was impressive if rather chilly. Before Patsy had summoned courage to explain her errand a younger woman — almost a girl — hurriedly entered the room and took a position beside the other.

"Oh, it's Elizabeth — it really is!" cried Patsy, clapping her hands together joyfully.

Mother and daughter regarded the American girl wonderingly and somewhat haughtily, but Patsy was not in the least dismayed.

"Isn't this Mrs. Denton?" she asked, stepping forward to lay a hand upon

the other girl's arm.

"Yes," was the quiet reply.

Patsy's great eyes regarded her a moment with so sad and sympathetic a look that Mrs. Denton shrank away. Then she noticed for the first time the Red Cross uniform, and her hand went swiftly to her heart as she faltered:

"You — you have brought bad news of Andrew — of my husband?"

"Yes, I am sorry to admit that it is bad news," answered Patsy soberly. "He has been wounded and is now lying ill in our hospital ship at Dunkirk. We came here to find you, and to take you to him."

Mrs. Denton turned to her mother, a passionate appeal in her eyes. But it was some moments before the hard, set look on the face of the countess softened. It did soften at last, however, and she turned to Patsy and said simply:

"We will prepare for the journey at once. Pray excuse us; Niklas will serve refreshments. We will not detain you long."

As they turned to leave the room Elizabeth Denton suddenly seized Patsy's hand.

"He will live?" she whispered. "Tell me he will live!"

Patsy's heart sank, but she summoned her wits by an effort.

"I am not a surgeon, my dear, and do not know how serious the wound may be," she answered, "but I assure you it will gladden his heart to see you again. He thinks and speaks only of you."

The girl-wife studied her face a moment and then dropped her hand and hurried after her mother.

"I fibbed, Uncle," said Patsy despondently. "I fibbed willfully. But — how could I help it when she looked at me that way?"

CHAPTER XV

DR. GYS SURPRISES HIMSELF

Henderson was waiting with the launch at the Ostend docks. Lieutenant von Holtz was earnestly thanked by Patsy and Uncle John for his kindness and in return he exacted a promise from them to hunt him up in Germany some day, when the war was ended. The countess and Mrs. Denton, sad and black-robed, had been made comfortable in the stern seats of the boat and the captain was just about to order Henderson to start the engine when up to them rushed the fat Belgian woman and her two children.

Without an instant's hesitation the two youngsters leaped aboard like cats and their mother would have followed but for the restraining hand of Captain Carg.

"What does this mean?" cried Mr. Merrick angrily.

The woman jabbered volubly in French.

"She says," interpreted Patsy, "that we promised to take her to Dunkirk, so she may find her husband."

"Let her walk!" said Uncle John.

"The Germans won't allow her to cross the lines. What does it matter, Uncle? We have plenty of room. In three hours we can be rid of them, and doubtless the poor thing is really anxious to find her lost husband, who was last seen in Dunkirk."

"He is a spy, and a traitor to both sides, according to report."

"That isn't our affair, is it? And I suppose even people of that class have hearts and affections."

"Well, let her come aboard, Captain," decided Uncle John. "We can't waste time in arguing."

They stowed her away in the bow, under Henderson's care, and threatened the children with dire punishment if they moved from under her shadow. Then the launch sped out into the bay and away toward Dunkirk.

Three days had brought many changes to the hospital ship *Arabella*. Of the original batch of patients only Lieutenant Elbl, the German, and Andrew Denton now remained. All the others had been sent home, transferred to the government hospitals or gone back to the front, according to the character of their injuries. This was necessary because their places were needed by the newly wounded who were brought each day from the front. Little Maurie was driving the ambulance again and, with Ajo beside him and Dr. Kelsey and a sailor for assistants, the Belgian would make a dash to Ypres or Dixmude or Furnes and return with a full load of wounded soldiers.

These were the days of the severest fighting in Flanders, fighting so severe

that it could not keep up for long. There would come a lull presently, when the overworked nurses and surgeons could get a bit of sleep and draw a long breath again.

Gys had elected to remain aboard the ship, where with Maud and Beth he was kept busy night and day. Two French girls — young women of good birth and intelligence — had been selected by Dr. Gys from a number of applicants as assistant nurses, and although they were inexperienced, their patriotic zeal rendered them valuable. They now wore the Red Cross uniforms and it was decided to retain them as long as the ship's hospital remained crowded.

There was plenty of work for all and the worry and long hours might have broken down the health and strength of Beth and Maud had not the doctor instituted regular periods of duty for each member of the force and insisted on the schedule being carried out.

This hospital ship was by no means so gloomy a place as the reader may imagine. The soldiers were prone to regard their hurts lightly, as "a bit of hard luck," and since many had slight injuries it was customary for them to gather in groups upon the deck, where they would laugh and chat together, play cards for amusement or smoke quantities of cigarettes. They were mainly kind-hearted and grateful fellows and openly rejoiced that the misfortunes of war had cast their lot on this floating hospital.

Under the probe of the surgeon to-day, a fortnight hence back on the firing line, was not very unusual with these brave men. The ambulances had gathered in a few German soldiers, who would become prisoners of war on their recovery, and while these were inclined to be despondent and unsociable they were treated courteously by all, the Americans showing no preference for any nation. The large majority of the patients, however, came from the ranks of the Allies — French, English and Belgian — and these were men who could smile and be merry with bandaged heads, arms a-sling, legs in splints, bullet holes here and there, such afflictions being regarded by their victims with a certain degree of pride.

Dr. Gys was in his element, for now he had ample opportunity to display his skill and his patients were unable to "jump to another doctor" in case his ugly features revolted them. His main interest, however, lay in the desperately wounded Belgian private, Andrew Denton, whom he had agreed to keep alive until the return of Miss Doyle and her uncle.

In making this promise Gys had figured on a possible delay of several days, but on the second day following Patsy's departure the sudden sinking of his patient aroused a defiant streak in the surgeon and he decided to adopt drastic measures in order to prevent Denton from passing away before his

wife's arrival.

"I want you to assist me in a serious operation," he said to Maud Stanton. "By all the rules and precedents of human flesh, that fellow Denton ought to succumb to his wound within the next three hours. The shell played havoc with his interior and I have never dared, until now, to attempt to patch things up; but if we're going to keep him alive until morning, or until your cousin's return, we must accomplish the impossible."

"What is that?" she inquired.

"Remove his vital organs, tinker them up and put them back so they will work properly."

"Can that be done, doctor?"

"I think not. But I'm going to try it. I am positive that if we leave him alone he has less than three hours of life remaining; so, if we fail, Miss Stanton, as it is reasonable to expect, poor Denton will merely be spared a couple of hours of pain. Get the anaesthetics, please."

With all her training and experience as a nurse, Maud was half terrified at the ordeal before her. But she realized the logic of the doctor's conclusion and steeled her nerves to do her part.

An hour later she stood looking down upon the patient. He was still upon the operating table but breathing quietly and as strongly as at any time since he had received his wound.

"This shows," Dr. Gys said to her, his voice keen with elation, "what fools we are to take any human condition for granted. Man is a machine. Smash his mechanism and it cannot work; make the proper repairs before it is too late and — there he goes, ticking away as before. Not as good a machine as it was prior to the break, but with care and caution it will run a long time."

"He will live, then, you think?" she asked softly, marveling that after what she had witnessed the man was still able to breathe.

Gys leaned down and put his ear to the heart of the patient. For two minutes he remained motionless. Then he straightened up and a smile spread over his disfigured features.

"I confidently believe, Miss Stanton, we have turned the trick! Luck, let us call it, for no sensible surgeon would have attempted the thing. Rest assured that Andrew Denton will live for the next ten days. More than that, with no serious set-back he may fully recover and live for many years to come."

He was so pleased that tears stood in his one good eye and he wiped them away sheepishly. The girl took his hand and pressed it in both her own.

"You are wonderful — wonderful!" she said.

"Don't, please — don't look in my face," he pleaded.

"I won't," she returned, dropping her eyes; "I will think only of the clever

brain, the skillful hand and the stout heart.”

“Not even that,” he said. “Think of the girl wife — of Elizabeth. It was she who steadied my hand to-day. Indeed, Miss Stanton, it was Elizabeth’s influence that saved him. But for her we would have let him die.”

CHAPTER XVI
CLARETTE

So it was toward evening of the fourth day that the launch finally sighted the ship *Arabella*. Delays and difficulties had been encountered in spite of government credentials and *laissez-passer* and Patsy had begun to fear they would not reach the harbor of Dunkirk before dark.

All through the journey the Belgian woman and her children had sat sullenly in the bow, the youngsters kept from mischief by the stern eye of Henderson. In the stern seats, however, the original frigid silence had been thawed by Patsy Doyle's bright chatter. She began by telling the countess and Elizabeth all about herself and Beth and Maud and Uncle John, relating how they had come to embark upon this unusual mission of nursing the wounded of a foreign war, and how they had secured the services of the clever but disfigured surgeon, Dr. Gys. She gave the ladies a clear picture of the hospital ship and told how the girls had made their dash to the firing line during the battle of Nieuport and brought back an ambulance full of wounded — including Andrew Denton.

Patsy did not answer very fully Elizabeth Denton's eager questions concerning the nature of her husband's injuries, but she tried to prepare the poor young wife for the knowledge that the wound would prove fatal. This was a most delicate and difficult thing to do and Patsy blundered and floundered until her very ambiguity aroused alarm.

"Tell me the worst!" begged Elizabeth Denton, her face pale and tensely drawn.

"Why, I cannot do that, you see," replied Patsy, "because the worst hasn't happened yet; nor can I tell you the best, because a wound is such an uncertain thing. It was a shell, you know, that exploded behind him, and Dr. Gys thought it made a rather serious wound. Mr. Denton was unconscious a long time, and when he came to himself we eased his pain, so he would not suffer."

"You came to get me because you thought he would die?"

"I came because he asked me to read to him your letters, and I found they comforted him so much that your presence would, I knew, comfort him more."

There was a long silence. Presently the countess asked in her soft, even voice:

"Will he be alive when we get there?"

Patsy thought of the days that had been wasted, because of their detention at Ostend through Colonel Grau's stupidity.

“I hope so, madam,” was all she could reply.

Conversation lagged after this episode. Elizabeth was weeping quietly on her mother’s shoulder. Patsy felt relief in the knowledge that she had prepared them, as well as she could, for whatever might wait upon their arrival.

The launch made directly for the ship and as she came alongside to the ladder the rail was lined with faces curious to discover if the errand had been successful. Doctor Gys was there to receive them, smiling horribly as he greeted the two women in black. Maud, seeing that they recoiled from the doctor’s appearance, took his place and said cheerfully:

“Mr. Denton is asleep, just now, but by the time you have bathed and had a cup of tea I am quite sure he will be ready to receive you.”

“Tell me; how is he? Are you his nurse?” asked the young wife with trembling lips.

“I am his nurse, and I assure you he is doing very well,” answered Maud with her pleasant, winning smile. “When he finds you by his side I am sure his recovery will be rapid. No nurse can take the place of a wife, you know.”

Patsy looked at her reproachfully, thinking she was misleading the poor young wife, but Maud led the ladies away to a stateroom and it was Dr. Gys who explained the wonderful improvement in the patient.

“Well,” remarked Uncle John, “if we’d known he had a chance, we wouldn’t have worried so because we were held up. In fact, if we’d known he would get well, we needn’t have gone at all.”

“Oh, Uncle John!” cried Patsy reprovingly.

“It was your going that saved him,” declared the doctor. “I promised to keep him alive, for that little wife of his, and when he took a turn for the worse I had to assume desperate chances — which won out.”

Meantime the big Belgian woman and her children had been helped up the ladder by Henderson, who stood respectfully by, awaiting orders for their disposal. The mother had her eye on the shore and was scowling steadily upon it when little Maurie came on deck and strolled toward Mr. Merrick to greet him on his return. Indeed, he had approached to within a dozen feet of the group when the woman at the rail suddenly turned and saw him.

“Aha — mon Henri!” she cried and made a dash toward him with outstretched arms.

“Clarette!”

Maurie stopped short; he grew pallid; he trembled. But he did not await her coming. With a howl that would have shamed a wild Indian he leaped upon the rail and made a dive into the water below.

Even as her engulfing arms closed around the spot where he had stood,

there was a splash and splutter that drew everyone to the side to watch the little Belgian swim frantically to the docks.

The woman grabbed a child with either arm and held them up.

“See!” she cried. “There is your father — the coward — the traitor — the deserter of his loving family. He thinks to escape; but we shall capture him yet, and when we do — ”

“Hurry, father,” screamed the little girl, “or she’ll get you.”

A slap on the mouth silenced her and set the boy wailing dismally. The boy was accustomed to howl without provocation. He kicked his mother until she let him down. By this time they could discern only Maurie’s head bobbing in the distant water. Presently he clambered up the dock and ran dripping toward the city, disappearing among the buildings.

“Madam,” said Uncle John, sternly, “you have cost us the best chauffeur we ever had.”

She did not understand English, but she shook her fist in Mr. Merrick’s face and danced around in an elephantine fashion and jabbered a stream of French.

“What does she say?” he asked Patsy, who was laughing merrily at the absurd scene.

“She demands to be put ashore at once. But shall we do that, and put poor Maurie in peril of being overtaken?”

“Self preservation is the first law of nature, my dear,” replied Uncle John. “I’m sorry for Maurie, but he alone is responsible. Henderson,” he added, turning to the sailor, “put this woman ashore as soon as possible. We’ve had enough of her.”

CHAPTER XVII

PERPLEXING PROBLEMS

Although the famous battle of Nieuport had come to an end, the fighting in West Flanders was by no means over. All along the line fierce and relentless war waged without interruption and if neither side could claim victory, neither side suffered defeat. Day after day hundreds of combatants fell; hundreds of disabled limped to the rear; hundreds were made prisoners. And always a stream of reinforcements came to take the places of the missing ones. Towns were occupied to-day by the Germans, to-morrow by the Allies; from Nieuport on past Dixmude and beyond Ypres the dykes had been opened and the low country was one vast lake. The only approaches from French territory were half a dozen roads built high above the water line, which rendered them capable of stubborn defence.

Dunkirk was thronged with reserves — English, Belgian and French. The Turcos and East Indians were employed by the British in this section and were as much dreaded by the civilians as the enemy. Uncle John noticed that military discipline was not so strict in Dunkirk as at Ostend; but the Germans had but one people to control while the French town was host to many nations and races.

Strange as it may appear, the war was growing monotonous to those who were able to view it closely, perhaps because nothing important resulted from all the desperate, continuous fighting. The people were pursuing their accustomed vocations while shells burst and bullets whizzed around them. They must manage to live, whatever the outcome of this struggle of nations might be.

Aboard the American hospital ship there was as yet no sense of monotony. The three girls who had conceived and carried out this remarkable philanthropy were as busy as bees during all their waking hours and the spirit of helpful charity so strongly possessed them that all their thoughts were centered on their work. No two cases were exactly alike and it was interesting, to the verge of fascination, to watch the results of various treatments of divers wounds and afflictions.

The girls often congratulated themselves on having secured so efficient a surgeon as Doctor Gys, who gloried in his work, and whose judgment, based on practical experience, was comprehensive and unfailing. The man's horribly contorted features had now become so familiar to the girls that they seldom noticed them — unless a cry of fear from some newly arrived and unnerved patient reminded them that the doctor was exceedingly repulsive to strangers.

No one recognized this grotesque hideousness more than Doctor Gys himself. When one poor Frenchman died under the operating knife, staring with horror into the uncanny face the surgeon bent over him, Beth was almost sure the fright had hastened his end. She said to Gys that evening, when they met on deck, “Wouldn’t it be wise for you to wear a mask in the operating room?”

He considered the suggestion a moment, a deep flush spreading over his face; then he nodded gravely.

“It may be an excellent idea,” he agreed. “Once, a couple of years ago, I proposed wearing a mask wherever I went, but my friends assured me the effect would be so marked that it would attract to me an embarrassing amount of attention. I have trained myself to bear the repulsion involuntarily exhibited by all I meet and have taught myself to take a philosophic, if somewhat cynical, view of my facial blemishes; yet in this work I can see how a mask might be merciful to my patients. I will experiment a bit along this line, if you will help me, and we’ll see what we can accomplish.”

“You must not think,” she said quietly, for she detected a little bitterness in his tone, “that you are in any way repulsive to those who know you well. We all admire you as a man and are grieved at the misfortunes that marred your features. After all, Doctor, people of intelligence seldom judge one by appearances.”

“However they may judge me,” said he, “I’m a failure. You say you admire me as a man, but you don’t. It’s just a bit of diplomatic flattery. I’m a good doctor and surgeon, I’ll admit, but my face is no more repellent than my cowardly nature. Miss Beth, I hate myself for my cowardice far more than I detest my ghastly countenance. Yet I am powerless to remedy either defect.”

“I believe that what you term your cowardice is merely a physical weakness,” declared the girl. “It must have been caused by the suffering you endured at the time of your various injuries. I have noticed that suffering frequently unnerves one, and that a person who has once been badly hurt lives in nervous terror of being hurt again.”

“You are very kind to try to excuse my fault,” said he, “but the truth is I have always been a coward — from boyhood up.”

“Yet you embarked on all those dangerous expeditions.”

“Yes, just to have fun with myself; to sneer at the coward flesh, so to speak. I used to long for dangers, and when they came upon me I would jeer at and revile the quaking I could not repress. I pushed my shrinking body into peril and exulted in the punishment it received.”

Beth looked at him wonderingly.

“You are a strange man, indeed,” said she. “Really, I cannot understand your mental attitude at all.”

He chuckled and rubbed his hands together gleefully.

“I can,” he returned, “for I know what causes it.” And then he went away and left her, still seeming highly amused at her bewilderment.

In the operating room the next day Gys appeared with a rubber mask drawn across his features. The girls decided that it certainly improved his appearance, odd as the masked face might appear to strangers. It hid the dreadful nose and the scars and to an extent evened the size of the eyes, for the holes through which he peered were made alike. Gys was himself pleased with the device, for after that he wore the mask almost constantly, only laying it aside during the evenings when he sat on deck.

It was three days after the arrival of Mrs. Denton and her mother — whose advent had accomplished much toward promoting the young Belgian’s convalescence — when little Maurie suddenly reappeared on the deck of the *Arabella*.

“Oh,” said Patsy, finding him there when she came up from breakfast, “where is Clarette?”

He shook his head sadly.

“We do not live together, just now,” said he. “Clarette is by nature temperamental, you know; she is highly sensitive, and I, alas! do not always please her.”

“Did she find you in Dunkirk?” asked the girl.

“Almost, mamselle, but not quite. It was this way: I knew if I permitted her to follow me she would finally succeed in her quest, for she and the dear children have six eyes among them, while I have but two; so I reposed within an ash-barrel until they had passed on, and then I followed them, keeping well out of their sight. In that way I managed to escape. But it proved a hard task, for my Clarette is very persistent, as you may have noticed. So I decided I would be more safe upon the ship than upon the shore. She is not likely to seek me here, and in any event she floats better than she swims.”

Patsy regarded the little man curiously.

“Did you not tell us, when first we met you, that you were heart-broken over the separation from your wife and children?” she inquired in severe tones.

“Yes, of course, mamselle; it was a good way to arouse your sympathy,” he admitted with an air of pride. “I needed sympathy at that time, and my only fear was that you would find Clarette, as you threatened to do. Well,” with a deep sigh, “you did find her. It was an unfriendly act, mamselle.”

“They told us in Ostend that the husband of Clarette is a condemned spy,

one who served both sides and proved false to each. The husband of Clarette is doomed to suffer death at the hands of the Germans or the Belgians, if either is able to discover him."

Maurie removed his cap and scratched the hair over his left ear reflectively.

"Ah, yes, the blacksmith!" said he. "I suspected that blacksmith fellow was not reliable."

"How many husbands has Clarette?"

"With the blacksmith, there are two of us," answered Maurie, brightly. "Doubtless there would be more if anything happened to me, for Clarette is very fascinating. When she divorced the blacksmith he was disconsolate, and threatened vengeance; so her life is quite occupied in avoiding her first husband and keeping track of her second, who is too kind-hearted to threaten her as the blacksmith did. I really admire Clarette — at a distance. She is positively charming when her mind is free from worry — and the children are asleep."

"Then you think," said Ajo, who was standing by and listening to Maurie's labored explanations, "that it is the blacksmith who is condemned as a spy, and not yourself?"

"I am quite sure of it. Am I not here, driving your ambulance and going boldly among the officers? If it is Jakob Maurie they wish, he is at hand to be arrested."

"But you are not Jakob Maurie."

The Belgian gave a start, but instantly recovering he answered with a smile:

"Then I must have mistaken my identity, monsieur. Perhaps you will tell me who I am?"

"Your wife called you 'Henri,'" said Patsy.

"Ah, yes; a pet name. I believe the blacksmith is named Henri, and poor Clarette is so accustomed to it that she calls me Henri when she wishes to be affectionate."

Patsy realized the folly of arguing with him.

"Maurie," said she, "or whatever your name may be, you have been faithful in your duty to us and we have no cause for complaint. But I believe you do not speak the truth, and that you are shifty and artful. I fear you will come to a bad end."

"Sometimes, mamselle," he replied, "I fear so myself. But, *peste*! why should we care? If it is the end, what matter whether it is good or bad?"

Watching their faces closely, he saw frank disapproval of his sentiments written thereon. It disturbed him somewhat that they did not choose to

continue the conversation, so he said meekly:

"With your kind permission, I will now go below for a cup of coffee," and left them with a bow and a flourish of his cap. When he had gone Patsy said to Ajo:

"I don't believe there is any such person as the blacksmith."

"Nor I," was the boy's reply. "Both those children are living images of Maurie, who claims the blacksmith was their father. He's a crafty little fellow, that chauffeur of ours, and we must look out for him."

"If he is really a spy," continued the girl, after a brief period of thought, "I am amazed that he dared join our party and go directly to the front, where he is at any time likely to be recognized."

"Yes, that is certainly puzzling," returned Ajo. "And he's a brave little man, too, fearless of danger and reckless in exposing himself to shot and shell. Indeed, our Maurie is something of a mystery and the only thing I fully understand is his objection to Clarette's society."

At "le revue matin," as the girls called the first inspection of the morning, eight of their patients were found sufficiently recovered to be discharged. Some of these returned to their regiments and others were sent to their homes to await complete recovery. The hospital ship could accommodate ten more patients, so it was decided to make a trip to Dixmude, where an artillery engagement was raging, with the larger ambulance.

"I think I shall go to-day," announced Gys, who was wearing his mask. "Dr. Kelsey can look after the patients and it will do me good to get off the ship."

Uncle John looked at the doctor seriously.

"There is hard fighting, they say, in the Dixmude district. The Germans carried the British trenches yesterday, and to-day the Allies will try to retake them."

"I don't mind," returned the doctor, but he shuddered, nevertheless.

"Why don't you avoid the — the danger line?" suggested Mr. Merrick.

"A man can't run away from himself, sir; and perhaps you can understand the fascination I find in taunting the craven spirit within me."

"No, I can't understand it. But suit yourself."

"I shall drive," announced Maurie.

"You may be recognized," said Patsy warningly.

"Clarette will not be at the front, and on the way I shall be driving. Have you noticed how people scatter at the sound of our gong?"

"The authorities are watching for spies," asserted Ajo.

Maurie's face became solemn.

"Yes; of course. But — the blacksmith is not here, and," he added with

assurance, “the badge of the Red Cross protects us from false accusations.”

When they had gone Uncle John said thoughtfully to the girls:

“That remark about the Red Cross impressed me. If that fellow Maurie is really in danger of being arrested and shot, he has cleverly placed himself in the safest service in the world. He knows that none of our party is liable to be suspected of evil.”

CHAPTER XVIII
A QUESTION OF LOYALTY

During the morning they were visited by a French official who came aboard in a government boat and asked to see Mr. Merrick.

The ship had been inspected several times by the commander of the port and the civil authorities, and its fame as a model hospital had spread over all Flanders. Some attempt had been made to place with the Americans the most important of the wounded — officers of high rank or those of social prominence and wealth — but Mr. Merrick and his aids were determined to show no partiality. They received the lowly and humble as well as the high and mighty and the only requisite for admission was an injury that demanded the care of good nurses and the skill of competent surgeons.

Uncle John knew the French general and greeted him warmly, for he appreciated his generous co-operation. But Beth had to be called in to interpret because her uncle knew so little of the native language.

First they paid a visit to the hospital section, where the patients were inspected. Then the register and records were carefully gone over and notes taken by the general's secretary. Finally they returned to the after-deck to review the convalescents who were lounging there in their cushioned deck-chairs.

"Where is the German, Lieutenant Elbl?" inquired the general, looking around with sudden suspicion.

"In the captain's room," replied Beth. "Would you like to see him?"

"If you please."

The group moved forward to the room occupied by Captain Carg. The door and windows stood open and reclining upon a couch inside was the maimed German, with Carg sitting beside him. Both were solemnly smoking their pipes.

The captain rose as the general entered, while Elbl gave his visitor a military salute.

"So you are better?" asked the Frenchman.

Beth repeated this in English to Carg, who repeated it in German to Elbl. Yes, the wounded man was doing very well.

"Will you keep him here much longer?" was the next question, directed to Mr. Merrick.

"I think so," was the reply. "He is still quite weak, although the wound is healing nicely. Being a military prisoner, there is no other place open to him where the man can be as comfortable as here."

"You will be responsible for his person? You will guarantee that he will

not escape?”

Mr. Merrick hesitated.

“Must we promise that?” he inquired.

“Otherwise I shall be obliged to remove him to a government hospital.”

“I don’t like that. Not that your hospitals are not good enough for a prisoner, but Elbl happens to be a cousin of our captain, which puts a different face on the matter. What do you say, Captain Carg? Shall we guarantee that your cousin will not try to escape?”

“Why should he, sir? He can never rejoin the army, that’s certain,” replied Carg.

“True,” said the general, when this was conveyed to him by Beth. “Nevertheless, he is a prisoner of war, and must not be allowed to escape to his own people.”

Beth answered the Frenchman herself, looking him straight in the face.

“That strikes me as unfair, sir,” said she. “The German must henceforth be a noncombatant. He has been unable, since he was wounded and brought here, to learn any of your military secrets and at the best he will lie a helpless invalid for weeks to come. Therefore, instead of making him a prisoner, it would be more humane to permit him to return to his home and family in Germany.”

The general smiled indulgently.

“It might be more humane, mademoiselle, but unfortunately it is against the military code. Did I understand that your captain will guarantee the German’s safety?”

“Of course,” said Carg. “If he escapes, I will surrender myself in his place.”

“Ah; but we moderns cannot accept Pythias if Damon runs away,” laughed the general. “But, there; it will be simpler to send a parole for him to sign, when he may be left in your charge until he is sufficiently recovered to bear the confinement of a prison. Is that satisfactory?”

“Certainly, sir,” replied the captain.

Elbl had remained silent during this conversation, appearing not to understand the French and English spoken. Indeed, since his arrival he had only spoken the German language, and that mostly in his intercourse with Carg. But after the French officer had gone away Beth began to reflect upon this reticence.

“Isn’t it queer,” she remarked to Uncle John, “that an educated German — one who has been through college, as Captain Carg says Elbl has — should be unable to understand either French or English? I have always been told the German colleges are very thorough and you know that while at Ostend

we found nearly all the German officers spoke good English."

"It is rather strange, come to think of it," answered Uncle John. "I believe the study of languages is a part of the German military education. But I regret that the French are determined to keep the poor fellow a prisoner. Such a precaution is absurd, to my mind."

"I think I can understand the French position," said the girl, reflectively. "These Germans are very obstinate, and much as I admire Lieutenant Elbl I feel sure that were he able he would fight the French again to-morrow. After his recovery he might even get one of those mechanical feet and be back on the firing line."

"He's a Uhlan."

"Then he could ride a horse. I believe, Uncle, the French are justified in retaining him as a prisoner until the war is over."

Meantime, in the captain's room the two men were quietly conversing.

"He wants you to sign a parole," said Carg.

"Not I."

"You may as well. I'm responsible for your safety."

"I deny anyone's right to be responsible for me. If you have made a promise to that effect, withdraw it," said the German.

"If I do, they'll put you in prison."

"Not at present. I am still an invalid. In reality. I am weak and suffering. Yet I am already planning my escape, and that is why I insist that you withdraw any promise you have made. Otherwise — "

"Otherwise?"

"Instead of escaping by water, as I had intended, to Ostend, I must go to the prison and escape from there. It will be more difficult. The water route is best."

"Of course," agreed the captain, smiling calmly.

"One of your launches would carry me to Ostend and return here between dark and daylight."

"Easily enough," said Carg. It was five minutes before he resumed his speech. Then he said with quiet deliberation: "Cousin, I am an American, and Americans are neutral in this war."

"You are Sangoan."

"My ship is chartered by Americans, which obliges the captain of the ship to be loyal to its masters. I will do nothing to conflict with the interests of the Americans, not even to favor my cousin."

"Quite right," said Elbl.

"If you have any plan of escape in mind, do not tell me of it," continued the captain. "I shall order the launches guarded carefully. I shall do all in my

power to prevent your getting away from this ship.”

“Thank you,” said the German. “You have my respect, cousin. Pass the tobacco.”

CHAPTER XIX
THE CAPTURE

There was considerable excitement when the ambulance returned. Part of the roof had been torn away, the doors were gone, the interior wrecked and not a pane of glass remained in the sides; yet Ajo drove it to the dock, the motor working as smoothly as ever, and half a dozen wounded were helped out and put into the launch to be taken aboard the hospital ship.

When all were on deck, young Jones briefly explained what had happened. A shell had struck the ambulance, which had been left in the rear, but without injuring the motor in any way. Fortunately no one was near at the time. When they returned they cleared away the rubbish to make room for a few wounded men and then started back to the city.

Doctor Gys, hatless and coatless, his hair awry and the mask making him look more hideous than ever, returned with the party and came creeping up the ship's ladder in so nervous a condition that his trembling knees fairly knocked together.

The group around Ajo watched him silently.

"What do you think that fool did?" asked the boy, as Gys slunk away to his room.

"Tell us," pleaded Patsy, who was one of the curious group surrounding him.

"We had gone near to where a machine gun was planted, to pick up a fallen soldier, when without warning the Germans charged the gun. Maurie and I made a run for life, but Gys stood stock still, facing the enemy. A man at the gun reeled and fell, just then, and with a hail of bullets flying around him the doctor coolly walked up and bent over him. The sight so amazed the Germans that they actually stopped fighting and waited for him. Perhaps it was the Red Cross on the doctor's arm that influenced them, but imagine a body of soldiers in the heat of a charge suddenly stopping because of one man!"

"Well, what happened?" asked Mr. Merrick.

"I couldn't see very well, for a battery that supported the charge was shelling the retreating Allies and just then our ambulance was hit. But Maurie says he watched the scene and that when Gys attempted to lift the wounded man up he suddenly turned weak as water. The Germans had captured the gun, by this time, and their officer himself hoisted the injured man upon the doctor's shoulders and attended him to our ambulance. When I saw the fight was over I hastened to help Gys, who staggered so weakly that he would have dropped his man a dozen times on the way had not the

Germans held him up. They were laughing, as if the whole thing was a joke, when crack! came a volley of bullets and with a great shout back rushed the French and Belgians in a counter-charge. I admit I ducked, crawling under the ambulance, and the Germans were so surprised that they beat a quick retreat.

"And now it was that Gys made a fool of himself. He tore off his cap and coat, which bore the Red Cross emblem, and leaped right between the two lines. Here were the Germans, firing as they retreated, and the Allies firing as they charged, and right in the center of the fray stood Gys. The man ought to have been shot to pieces, but nothing touched him until a Frenchman knocked him over because he was in the way of the rush. It was the most reckless, suicidal act I ever heard of!"

Uncle John looked worried. He had never told any of them of Dr. Gys' strange remark during their first interview, but he had not forgotten it. "I'll be happier when I can shake off this horrible envelope of disfigurement," the doctor had declared, and in view of this the report of that day's adventure gave the kind-hearted gentleman a severe shock.

He walked the deck thoughtfully while the girls hurried below to look after the new patients who had been brought, not too comfortably, in the damaged ambulance. "It was a bad fight," Ajo had reported, "and the wounded were thick, but we could only bring a few of them. Before we left the field, however, an English ambulance and two French ones arrived, and that gave us an opportunity to get away. Indeed, I was so unnerved by the dangers we had miraculously escaped that I was glad to be out of it."

Uncle John tried hard to understand Doctor Gys, but the man's strange, abnormal nature was incomprehensible. When, half an hour later, Mr. Merrick went below, he found the doctor in the operating room, cool and steady of nerve and dressing wounds in his best professional manner.

Upon examination the next morning the large ambulance was found to be so badly damaged that it had to be taken to a repair shop in the city to undergo reconstruction. It would take several weeks to put it in shape, declared the French mechanics, so the Americans would be forced to get along with the smaller vehicle. Jones and Dr. Kelsey made regular trips with this, but the fighting had suddenly lulled and for several days no new patients were brought to the ship, although many were given first aid in the trenches for slight wounds.

So the colony aboard the *Arabella* grew gradually less, until on the twenty-sixth of November the girls found they had but two patients to care for — Elbl and Andrew Denton. Neither required much nursing, and Denton's young wife insisted on taking full charge of him. But while the

hospital ship was not in demand at this time there were casualties day by day in the trenches, where the armies faced each other doggedly and watchfully and shots were frequently interchanged when a soldier carelessly exposed his person to the enemy. So the girls took turns going with the ambulance, and Uncle John made no protest because so little danger attended these journeys.

Each day, while one of the American girls rode to the front, the other two would visit the city hospitals and render whatever assistance they could to the regular nurses. Gys sometimes accompanied them and sometimes went to the front with the ambulance; but he never caused his friends anxiety on these trips, because he could not endanger his life, owing to the cessation of fighting.

The only incident that enlivened this period of stagnation was the capture of Maurie. No; the authorities didn't get him, but Clarette did. Ajo and Patsy had gone into the city one afternoon and on their return to the docks, where their launch was moored, they found a street urchin awaiting them with a soiled scrap of paper clenched fast in his fist. He surrendered it for a coin and Patsy found the following words scrawled in English:

"She has me fast. Help! Be quick. I cannot save myself so you must save me. It is your Maurie who is in distress."

They laughed a little at first and then began to realize that the loss of their chauffeur would prove a hardship when fighting was resumed. Maurie might not be a good husband, and he might be afraid of a woman, but was valuable when bullets were flying. Patsy asked the boy:

"Can you lead us to the man who gave you this paper?"

"Oui, mamselle."

"Then hurry, and you shall have five centimes more."

The injunction was unnecessary, for the urchin made them hasten to keep up with him. He made many turns and twists through narrow alleys and back streets until finally he brought them to a row of cheap, plastered huts built against the old city wall. There was no mistaking the place, for in the doorway of one of the poorest dwellings stood Clarette, her ample figure fairly filling the opening, her hands planted firmly on her broad hips.

"Good evening," said Patsy pleasantly. "Is Maurie within?"

"Henri is within," answered Clarette with a fierce scowl, "and he is going to stay within."

"But we have need of his services," said Ajo sternly, "and the man is in our employ and under contract to obey us."

"I also need his services," retorted Clarette, "and I made a contract with him before you did, as my marriage papers will prove."

The little boy and girl had now crowded into the doorway on either side of

their mother, clinging to her skirts while they “made faces” at the Americans. Clarette turned to drive the children away and in the act allowed Patsy and Ajo to glance past her into the hut.

There stood little Maurie, sleeves rolled above his elbows, bending over a battered dishpan where he was washing a mess of cracked and broken pottery. He met their gaze with a despairing countenance and a gesture of appeal that scattered a spray of suds from big wet fingers. Next moment Clarette had filled the doorway again.

“You may as well go away,” said the woman harshly.

Patsy stood irresolute.

“Have you money to pay the rent and to provide food and clothing?” she presently asked.

“I have found a few francs in Henri’s pockets,” was the surly reply.

“And when they are gone?”

Clarette gave a shrug.

“When they are gone we shall not starve,” she said. “There is plenty of charity for the Belgians these days. One has but to ask, and someone gives.”

“Then you will not let us have Maurie?”

“No, mademoiselle.” Then she unbent a little and added: “If my husband goes to you, they will be sure to catch him some day, and when they catch him they will shoot him.”

“Why?”

“Don’t you know?”

“No.”

Clarette smiled grimly.

“When Henri escapes me, he always gets himself into trouble. He is not so very bad, but he is careless — and foolish. He tries to help the Germans and the French at the same time, to be accommodating, and so both have conceived a desire to shoot him. Well; when they shoot him he can no longer earn money to support me and his children.”

“Are they really his children?” inquired young Jones.

“Who else may claim them, monsieur?”

“I thought they were the children of your first husband, the blacksmith.”

Clarette glared at him, with lowering brow.

“Blacksmith? Pah! I have no husband but Henri, and heaven forsook me when I married him.”

“Come, Patsy,” said Ajo to his companion, “our errand here is hopeless. And — perhaps Clarette is right.”

They made their way back to the launch in silence. Patsy was quite disappointed in Maurie. He had so many admirable qualities that it was a

shame he could be so untruthful and unreliable.

As time passed on the monotony that followed their first exciting experiences grew upon them and became oppressive. December weather in Flanders brought cutting winds from off the North Sea and often there were flurries of snow in the air. They had steam heat inside the ship but the deck was no longer a practical lounging place.

Toward the last of the month Lieutenant Elbl was so fully recovered that he was able to hobble about on crutches. The friendship between the two cousins continued and Elbl was often found in the captain's room. No more had been said about a parole, but the French officials were evidently keeping an eye on the German, for one morning an order came to Mr. Merrick to deliver Elbl to the warden of the military prison at Dunkirk on or before ten o'clock the following day.

While the German received this notification with his accustomed stolid air of indifference, his American friends were all grieved at his transfer. They knew the prison would be very uncomfortable for the invalid and feared he was not yet sufficiently recovered to be able to bear the new conditions imposed upon him. There was no thought of protesting the order, however, for they appreciated the fact that the commandant had been especially lenient in leaving the prisoner so long in their care.

The Americans were all sitting together in the cabin that evening after dinner, when to their astonishment little Maurie came aboard in a skiff, bearing an order from the French commandant to Captain Carg, requesting him to appear at once at military headquarters.

Not only was Carg puzzled by this strange summons but none of the others could understand it. The Belgian, when questioned, merely shook his head. He was not the general's confidant, but his fee as messenger would enable him to buy bread for his family and he had been chosen because he knew the way to the hospital ship.

As there was nothing to do but obey, the captain went ashore in one of the launches, which towed the skiff in which Maurie had come.

When he had gone, Lieutenant Elbl, who had been sitting in the cabin, bade the others good night and retired to his room. Most of the others retired early, but Patsy, Uncle John and Doctor Gys decided to sit up and await the return of the captain. It was an exceptionally cool evening and the warmth of the forward cabin was very agreeable.

Midnight had arrived when the captain's launch finally drew up to the side and Carg came hastening into the cabin. His agitated manner was so unusual that the three watchers with one accord sprang to their feet with inquiring looks.

“Where’s Elbl?” asked the captain sharply.

“Gone to bed,” said Uncle John.

“When?”

“Hours ago. I think he missed your society and was rather broken up over the necessity of leaving us to-morrow.”

Without hesitation Carg turned on his heel and hastened aft. They followed him in a wondering group. Reaching the German’s stateroom the captain threw open the door and found it vacant.

“Humph!” he exclaimed. “I suspected the truth when I found our launch was gone.”

“Which launch?” asked Uncle John, bewildered.

“The one I left with the ship. On my return, just now, I discovered it was not at its moorings. Someone has stolen it.”

They stared at him in amazement.

“Wasn’t the deck patrolled?” asked Patsy, the first to recover.

“We don’t set a watch till ten-thirty. It wasn’t considered necessary. But I had no suspicion of the trick Elbl has played on me to-night,” he added with a groan. Their voices had aroused others. Ajo came out of his room, enveloped in a heavy bathrobe, and soon after Maud and Beth joined them.

“What’s up?” demanded the boy.

“The German has tricked us and made his escape,” quietly answered Dr. Gys. “For my part, I’m glad of it.”

“It was a conspiracy,” growled the captain. “That rascal, Maurie — ”

“Oh, was Maurie in it?”

“Of course. He was the decoy; perhaps he arranged the whole thing.”

“Didn’t the general want you, then?”

Carg was so enraged that he fairly snorted.

“Want me? Of course he didn’t want me! That treacherous little Belgian led me into the waiting room and said the general would see me in a minute. Then he walked away and I sat there like a bump on a log and waited. Finally I began to wonder how Maurie, who was always shy of facing the authorities, had happened to be the general’s messenger. It looked queer. Officers and civilians were passing back and forth but no one paid any attention to me; so after an hour or so I asked an officer who entered from an inner room, when I could see the general. He said the general was not there evenings but would be in his office to-morrow morning. Then I showed him my order and he glanced at it and said it was forged; wasn’t the general’s signature and wasn’t in proper form, anyhow. When I started to go he wouldn’t let me; said the affair was suspicious and needed investigation. So he took me to a room full of officers and they asked me a thousand fool

questions. Said they had no record of a Belgian named Maurie and had never heard of him before. I couldn't figure the thing out, and they couldn't; so finally they let me come back to the ship."

"Strange," mused Uncle John; "very strange!"

"I was so stupid," continued Carg, "that I never thought of Elbl being at the bottom of the affair until I got back and found our launch missing. Then I remembered that Elbl was to have been turned over to the prison authorities to-morrow and like a flash I saw through the whole thing."

"I'm blamed if *I* do," declared Mr. Merrick.

The others likewise shook their heads.

"He got me out of the way, stole the launch, and is half way to Ostend by this time."

"Alone? And wounded — still an invalid?"

"Doubtless Maurie is with him. The rascal can run an automobile; so I suppose he can run a launch."

"What puzzles me," remarked Patsy, "is how Lieutenant Elbl ever got hold of Maurie, and induced him to assist him, without our knowing anything about it."

"I used to notice them talking together a good bit," said Jones.

"But Clarette has kept Maurie a prisoner. She wouldn't let him come back to the ship."

"He was certainly at liberty to-night," answered Beth. "Isn't this escape liable to be rather embarrassing to us, Uncle John?"

"I'm afraid so," was the reply. "We agreed to keep him safely until the authorities demanded we give him up; and now, at the last minute, we've allowed him to get away."

Anxiety was written on every countenance as they considered the serious nature of this affair. Only Gys seemed composed and unworried.

"Is it too late to go in chase of the launch?" asked Ajo, breaking a long pause. "They're headed for Ostend, without a doubt, and there's a chance that they may run into a sand-bank in the dark, or break down, or meet with some other accident to delay them."

"I believe it's worth our while, sir," answered Carg. "The launch we have is the faster, and the trip will show our good faith, if nothing more."

"Then make ready to start at once," said Ajo, "and I'll dress and go along."

Carg hurried away to give orders and the boy ran to his stateroom. Five minutes later they were away, with four sailors to assist in the capture of the fugitives in case they were overtaken.

It was a fruitless journey, however. At daybreak, as they neared Ostend,

they met their stolen launch coming back, in charge of a sleepy Belgian who had been hired to return it. The man frankly stated that he had undertaken the task in order to get to Dunkirk, where he had friends, and he had been liberally paid by a German on crutches, who had one foot missing, and a little Belgian whom he had never seen before, but who, from the description given, could be none other than Maurie.

They carried the man back with them to the *Arabella*, where further questioning added nothing to their information. They now had proof, however, that Elbl was safe with his countrymen at Ostend and that Maurie had been his accomplice.

"I would not believe," said Patsy, when she heard the story, "that a Belgian could be so disloyal to his country."

"Every nation has its quota of black sheep," replied Uncle John, "and from what we have learned of Maurie's character he is not at all particular which side he serves."

CHAPTER XX

THE DUNES

The escape of a prisoner of war from the American hospital ship was made the subject of a rigid inquiry by the officials and proved extremely humiliating to all on board the *Arabella*. The commandant showed his irritation by severely reprimanding Mr. Merrick for carelessness, while Captain Carg had to endure a personal examination before a board of inquiry. He was able to prove that he had been at headquarters during the evening of the escape, but that did not wholly satisfy his inquisitors. Finally an order was issued forbidding the Americans to take any more wounded Germans or Austrians aboard their ship, and that seemed to end the unpleasant affair.

However, a certain friction was engendered that was later evidenced on both sides. The American ambulance was no longer favored on its trips to the front, pointed preference being given the English and French Red Cross Emergency Corps. This resulted in few wounded being taken to the *Arabella*, as the Americans confined their work largely to assisting the injured on the field of battle. The girls were not to be daunted in their determined efforts to aid the unfortunate and every day one of them visited the trenches to assist the two doctors in rendering first aid to the wounded.

The work was no longer arduous, for often entire days would pass without a single casualty demanding their attention. The cold weather resulted in much sickness among the soldiers, however, and Gys found during this period of military inactivity that his medicine chest was more in demand than his case of surgical instruments.

A slight diversion was created by Clarette, who came to the ship to demand her husband from the Americans. It seemed almost impossible to convince her that Maurie was not hidden somewhere aboard, but at last they made the woman understand he had escaped with the German to Ostend. They learned from her that Maurie — or Henri, as she insisted he was named — had several times escaped from her house at night, while she was asleep, and returned at daybreak in the morning, and this information led them to suspect he had managed to have several secret conferences with Lieutenant Elbl previous to their flight. Clarette announced her determination to follow her husband to Ostend, and perhaps she did so, as they did not see her again.

It was on Sunday, the twentieth of December, that the Battle of the Dunes began and the flames of war burst out afresh. The dunes lay between the North Sea and the Yser River in West Flanders and consisted of a stretch of sandy hillocks reaching from Coxyde to Nieuport les Bains. The Belgians had entrenched these dunes in an elaborate and clever manner, shoveling the

sand into a series of high lateral ridges, with alternate hollows, which reached for miles along the coast. The hollows were from six to eight feet deep, affording protection to the soldiers, who could nevertheless fire upon the enemy by creeping up the sloping embankments until their heads projected sufficiently to allow them to aim, when they could drop back to safety.

In order to connect the hollows one with another, that an advance or retreat might be made under cover, narrow trenches had been cut at intervals diagonally through the raised mounds of sand. Military experts considered this series of novel fortifications to be practically impregnable, for should the enemy defile through one of the cross passages into a hollow where the Allies were gathered, they could be picked off one by one, as they appeared, and be absolutely annihilated.

Realizing this, the Germans had not risked an attack, but after long study of the defences had decided that by means of artillery they might shell the Belgians, who held the dunes, and destroy them as they lay in the hollows. So a heavy battery had been planted along the German lines for this work, while in defence the Belgians confronted them with their own famous dog artillery, consisting of the deadly machine guns. The battle of December twentieth therefore began with an artillery duel, resulting in so many casualties that the Red Cross workers found themselves fully occupied.

Beth went with the ambulance the first day, worked in the hollows of the dunes, and returned to the ship at night completely worn out by the demands upon her services. It was Patsy's turn next, and she took with her the second day one of the French girls as assistant.

When the ambulance reached the edge of the dunes, where it was driven by Ajo, the battle was raging with even more vigor than the previous day. The Germans were dropping shells promiscuously into the various hollows, hoping to locate the hidden Belgian infantry, while the Belgian artillery strove to destroy the German gunners. Both succeeded at times, and both sides were equally persistent.

As it was impossible to take the ambulance into the dunes, it was left in the rear in charge of Jones, while the others threaded their way in and out the devious passages toward the front. They had covered fully a mile in this laborious fashion before they came upon a detachment of Belgian infantry which was lying in wait for a call to action. Beyond this trench the doctors and nurses were forbidden to go, and the officer in command warned the Americans to beware of stray shells.

Under these circumstances they contented themselves by occupying some of the rear hollows, to which the wounded would retreat to secure their

services. Dr. Kelsey and Nanette, the French girl, established themselves in one hollow at the right, while Dr. Gys and Patsy took their position in another hollow further to the left. There they opened their cases of lint, plaster and bandages, spreading them out upon the sand, and were soon engaged in administering aid to an occasional victim of the battle.

One man who came to Patsy with a slight wound on his shoulder told her that a shell had exploded in a forward hollow and killed outright fifteen of his comrades. His own escape from death was miraculous and the poor fellow was so unnerved that he cried like a baby.

They directed him to the rear, where he would find the ambulance, and awaited the appearance of more patients. Gys crawled up the mound of sand in front of them and cautiously raised his head above the ridge. Next instant he ducked to escape a rain of bullets that scattered the sand about them like a mist.

"That was foolish," said Patsy reprovingly. "You might have been killed."

"No such luck," he muttered in reply, but the girl could see that he trembled slightly with nervousness. Neither realized at the time the fatal folly of the act, for they were unaware that the Germans were seeking just such a clew to direct them where to drop their shells.

"It's getting rather lonely here, and there are a couple of vacant hollows in front of us," remarked the doctor. "Suppose we move over to one of those, a little nearer the soldiers?"

Patsy approved the proposition, so they gathered up their supplies and moved along the hollow to where a passage had been cut through. They had gone barely a hundred yards when a screech, like a buzz-saw when it strikes a nail, sounded overhead. Looking up they saw a black disk hurtling through the air, to drop almost where they had been standing a moment before. There was a terrific explosion that sent debris to their very feet.

"After this we'll be careful how we expose ourselves," said the doctor gravely. "They have got our range in a hurry. Here comes another; we'd better get away quickly."

They progressed perhaps half a mile, without coming upon any soldiers, when at the brow of a hill slightly higher than the rest, they became aware of unwonted activity. A trench had been dug along the ridge, with great pits here and there to serve as bomb-proof shelters. Every time a head projected above the ridge, a storm of bullets showed that the enemy was well within rifle range. In fact, it was to dislodge the Germans that the present intrenchments were being made; machine guns would be mounted as soon as positions had been prepared.

The German bullets had already taken their toll. In the little valley a poor

Belgian pressed his hand against a bad wound in his side, while another was nursing an arm roughly bandaged by his fellows in the trenches. First aid made the two comfortable for the time being at least and the men were directed toward the ambulance. As they left, the man with the wounded arm pointed down the narrow valley to where a deep ravine cut through. “We were driven from there,” he said. “The big guns dropped shells on us and killed many; there are many wounded beyond — but you cannot cross the ravine. We lost ten in doing it.”

Nevertheless, the doctor and Patsy strode off. Just within the shelter of the ridge they found another Belgian, desperately wounded, and the doctor stopped to ease his pain with the hypodermic needle. Patsy looked across the narrow defile; it was a bare fifty feet, and seemed safe enough. Her Red Cross uniform would protect her, she reasoned, and boldly enough she stepped out into the open. A cry from a wounded soldier ahead hastened her footsteps. Without heeding the warning shout of Doctor Gys she calmly stooped over the man who had called to her.

And then there was a sudden rending, blinding, terrifying crash that sent the world into a thousand shrieking echoes. A huge shell had fallen not fifty feet away, plowing its way through the earthworks above. Its explosion sent timbers, abandoned gun-carriages, everything, flying through the air. And one great piece of wood caught Patsy a glancing blow on the back of her head as she crouched over the wounded Belgian. With a weak cry she toppled over, not unconscious, but unable to raise herself.

Another shell crashed down a hundred yards away, and then one closer that sent the sand spouting high in a blinding cloud. She raised herself slowly and glanced back toward Doctor Gys. He stood, his face ashen with fear, hiding behind the shelter of the other hill. He looked up as she stirred; a cry of relief came to his lips.

“Wait!” he called, bracing up suddenly. “Wait and I will get you.”

Bending his head low he sprang across the unprotected space. He stopped with a sudden jerk and then came on.

“You were hit!” cried Patsy as he bent over her.

“It is nothing,” he answered brusquely. “Hold tight around my neck.” “Now — ” another shell scattered sand over them — ”we must get away from here.”

Breathing thickly, he staggered across the open, dropping her with a great groan behind the protection of the ridge.

“The man you were helping,” he gasped. “I must bring him in.”

“But you are wounded — ” Patsy cried.

He straightened up — his hand clutched his side — there came across his

disfigured features a queer twisted smile — he sighed softly and slowly sank in a crumpled heap. A clean little puncture in the breast of his coat told the whole story. Patsy felt herself slipping.... All grew dark.

It was Ajo who found her and carried her back to the ambulance, where Dr. Kelsey and Nanette were presently able to restore her to consciousness. Then they returned to the *Arabella*, grave and silent, and Patsy was put to bed. Before morning Beth and Maud were anxiously nursing her, for she had developed a high fever and was delirious.

The days that succeed were anxious ones, for Patsy's nerves had given away completely. It was many weeks later that the rest of them met on deck.

"It's the first of February," said Uncle John. "Don't you suppose Patsy could start for home pretty soon?"

"Perhaps so," answered Maud. "She is sitting up to-day, and seems brighter and more like herself. Have we decided, then, to return to America?"

"I believe so," was the reply. "We can't keep Ajo's ship forever, you know, and without Doctor Gys we could never make it useful as a hospital ship again."

"That is true," said the girl, thoughtfully. "Now that Andrew Denton, with his wife and the countess, have gone to Charleroi, our ship seems quite lonely."

"You see," said Ajo, taking part in the discussion, "we've never been able to overcome the suspicious coldness of these Frenchmen, caused by Elbl's unfortunate escape. We are not trusted fully, and never will be again, so I'm convinced our career of usefulness here is ended."

"Aside from that," returned Uncle John, "you three girls have endured a long period of hard work and nervous strain, and you need a rest. I'm awfully proud of you all; proud of your noble determination and courage as well as the ability you have demonstrated as nurses. You have unselfishly devoted your lives for three strenuous months to the injured soldiers of a foreign war, and I hope you're satisfied that you've done your full duty."

"Well," returned Maud with a smile, "I wouldn't think of retreating if I felt that our services were really needed, but there are so many women coming here for Red Cross work — English, French, Swiss, Dutch and Italian — that they seem able to cover the field thoroughly."

"True," said Beth, joining the group. "Let's go home, Uncle. The voyage will put our Patsy in fine shape again. When can we start, Ajo?"

"Ask Uncle John."

"Ask Captain Carg."

"If you really mean it," said the captain, "I'll hoist anchor to-morrow

morning.”

THE FLYING GIRL

Reilly & Britton published *The Flying Girl*, the first of two related Baum novels in 1911, under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne, illustrated by Joseph Pierre Nuyttens, who also did the artwork for the author's *Annabel* and *Phoebe Daring*. Perhaps influenced by his mother-in-law, prominent feminist and suffragette, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Baum created an adventure story about Orissa Kane, a young girl who becomes a pilot after her inventor brother's accident prevents him from proving the worth of his "flying machine."

A first edition copy of 'The Flying Girl'

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CHAPTER I

ORISSA

"May I go now, Mr. Burthon?" asked Orissa.

He looked up from his desk, stared a moment and nodded. It is doubtful if he saw the girl, for his eyes had an introspective expression.

Orissa went to a cabinet wardrobe and took down her coat and hat. Turning around to put them on she moved a chair, which squeaked on the polished floor. The sound made Mr. Burthon shudder, and aroused him as her speech had not done.

"Why, Miss Kane!" he exclaimed, regarding her with surprise, "it is only four o'clock."

"I know, sir," said Orissa uneasily, "but the mail is ready and all the deeds and transfers have been made out for you to sign. I — I wanted an extra hour, to-night, so I worked during lunch time."

"Oh; very well," he said, stiffly. "But I do not approve this irregularity, Miss Kane, and you may as well understand it. I engage your services by the week, and expect you to keep regular hours."

"I won't go, then," she replied, turning to hang up her coat.

"Yes, you will. For this afternoon I excuse you," he said, turning again to his papers.

Orissa did not wish to offend her employer. Indeed, she could not afford to. This was her first position, and because she was young and girlish in appearance she had found it difficult to secure a place. Perhaps it was because she had applied to Mr. Burthon during one of his fits of abstraction that she obtained the position at all; but she was competent to do her work and performed it so much better than any "secretary" the real estate agent had before had that he would have been as loth to lose her as she was to be dismissed. But Orissa did not know that, and hesitated what to do.

"Run along, Miss Kane," said her employer, impatiently; "I insist upon it — for to-night."

So, being very anxious to get home early, the girl accepted the permission and left the office, feeling however a little guilty for having abridged her time there.

She had a long ride before her. Leaving the office at four o'clock meant reaching home forty minutes later; so she hurried across the street and boarded a car marked "Beverly." Los Angeles is a big city, because it is spread from the Pacific Ocean to the mountains — an extreme distance of more than thirty miles. Yet it is of larger extent than that would indicate, as country villages for many miles in every direction are really suburbs of the

metropolis of Southern California and the inhabitants ride daily into the city for business or shopping.

It was toward one of these outlying districts that Orissa Kane was now bound. They have rapid transit in the Southwest, and the car, headed toward the north but ultimately destined to reach the sea by way of several villages, fairly flew along the tracks. It was August and a glaring sun held possession of a cloudless sky; but the ocean breeze, which always arrives punctually the middle of the afternoon, rendered the air balmy and invigorating.

It was seldom that this young girl appeared anywhere in public without attracting the attention of any who chanced to glance into her sweet face. Its contour was almost perfect and the coloring exquisite. In addition she had a slender form which she carried with exceeding grace and a modest, winning demeanor that was more demure and unconscious than shy.

Such a charming personality should have been clothed in handsome raiment; but, alas, poor Orissa's gown was the simplest of cheap lawns, and of the ready-made variety the department stores sell in their basements. It was not unbecoming, nor was the coarse straw hat with its yard of cotton-back ribbon; yet the case was stated to-day very succinctly by a middle-aged gentleman who sat with his wife in the car seat just behind Orissa:

"If that girl was our daughter," said he, "I'd dress her nicely if it took half my income to do it.

Great Caesar! hasn't she anyone to love her, or care for her? She seems to me like a beautiful piece of bric-a-brac; something to set on a pedestal and deck with jewels and laces, for all to admire."

"Pshaw!" returned the lady; "a girl like that will be admired, whatever she wears."

Orissa had plenty of love, bestowed by those nearest and dearest to her, but circumstances had reduced the family fortunes to a minimum and the girl was herself to blame for a share of the poverty the Kanes now endured.

The car let her off at a wayside station between two villages. It was in a depression that might properly be termed a valley, though of small extent, and as the car rushed on and left her standing beside a group of tall palms it at first appeared there were no houses at all in the neighborhood.

But that was not so; a well defined path led into a thicket of evergreens and then wound through a large orange orchard. Beyond this was a vine covered bungalow of the type so universal in California; artistic to view but quite inexpensive in construction.

High hedges of privet surrounded the place, but above this, in the space back of the house, rose the canvas covered top of a huge shed — something so unusual and inappropriate in a place of this character that it would have

caused a stranger to pause and gape with astonishment.

Orissa, however, merely glanced at the tent-like structure as she hurried along the path. She turned in at the open door of the bungalow, tossed hat and jacket into a chair and then went to where a sweet-faced woman sat in a morris chair knitting. In a moment you would guess she was Orissa's mother, for although the features were worn and thin there was a striking resemblance between them and those of the fresh young girl stooping to kiss her. Mrs. Kane's eyes were the same turquoise blue as her daughter's; but, although bright and wide open they lacked any expression, for they saw nothing at all in our big, beautiful world.

"Aren't you early, dear?" she asked.

"A whole hour," said Orissa. "But I promised Steve I'd try to get home at this time, for he wants me to help him. Can I do anything for you first, mamma?"

"No," was the reply; "I am quite comfortable. Run along, if Steve wants you." Then she added, in a playful tone: "Will there be any supper to-night?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! I'll break away in good season, never fear. Last night I got into the crush of the 'rush hour,' and the car was detained, so both Steve and I forgot all about supper. I'll run and change my dress now."

"I'm afraid the boy is working too hard," said Mrs. Kane, sighing. "The days are not half long enough for him, and he keeps in his workshop, or hangar, or whatever you call it, half the night."

"True," returned Orissa, with a laugh; "but it is not work for Steve, you know; it's play. He's like a child with a new toy."

"I hope it will not prove a toy, in the end," remarked Mrs. Kane, gravely. "So much depends upon his success."

"Don't worry, dear," said the girl, brightly. "Steve is making our fortune, I'm sure."

But as she discarded the lawn for a dark gingham in her little chamber, Orissa's face was more serious than her words and she wondered — as she had wondered hundreds of times — whether her brother's great venture would bring them ruin or fortune.

CHAPTER II

A DISCIPLE OF AVIATION

The Kanes had come to California some three years previous because of Mr. Kane's impaired health. He had been the manager of an important manufacturing company in the East, on a large salary for many years, and his family had lived royally and his children been given the best education that money could procure. Orissa attended a famous girls' school and Stephen went to college. But suddenly the father's health broke and his physicians offered no hope for his life unless he at once migrated to a sunny clime where he might be always in the open air. He came to California and invested all his savings — not a great deal — in the orange ranch. Three months later he died, leaving his blind wife and two children without any financial resources except what might be gleaned from the ranch. Fortunately the boy, Stephen, had just finished his engineering course at Cornell and was equipped — theoretically, at least — to begin a career with one of the best paying professions known to modern times. Mechanical to his finger tips, Stephen Kane had eagerly absorbed every bit of information placed before him and had been graduated so well that a fine position was offered him in New York, with opportunity for rapid advancement.

Mr. Kane's death prevented the young man from accepting this desirable offer. He was obliged to go to Los Angeles to care for his mother and sister. It was a difficult situation for an inexperienced boy to face, but he attacked the problem with the same manly courage that had enabled him to conquer Euclid and Calculus at school, and in the end arranged his father's affairs fairly well.

The oranges from the ranch would give them a net income of about two thousand dollars a year, which was far from meaning poverty, although much less than the family expenditures had previously been. There were other fruits on the place, an ample vegetable garden and a flock of chickens, so the Kanes believed they would live very comfortably on their income. In addition to this, Steve could earn a salary as a mechanical engineer, or at least he believed he could.

He found, however, after many unsuccessful attempts, that his professional field was amply covered by experienced men, and as a temporary makeshift he was finally driven to accept a position in an automobile repair shop.

"It's an awful comedown, Ris," he said to Orissa, his confidant, "but I can't afford to loaf any longer, you know, and the pay is almost as much as a young engineer gets to start with. So I'll tackle it and keep my eye open for

something better."

While Stephen was employed in this repair shop a famous aviator named Willard came to town with his aeroplane and met with an accident that badly disabled his machine. Although aviators have marked Southern California as their chosen field from the beginning, because one may fly there all winter, there was not a place in the city where a specialty was made of repairing airships. Naturally Mr. Willard sought an automobile repair shop as the one place most liable to supply his needs.

The manager shook his head.

"We know nothing about biplanes," he confessed.

"Pardon me, sir," said Stephen Kane, who was present, "I know something about airships, and I am sure I can repair Mr. Willard's, if you will take the job."

The aviator turned to him gratefully.

"Thank you," he said; "I'll put my machine in your hands. What experience have you had with biplanes of this type?"

"None at all," was the answer; "but I am sure you will not find an experienced airship man in this city. I've studied the devices, though, ever since Montgomery made his first flights, and as we have all the requisite tools and machinery here I am sure, with your assistance and direction, I can readily put your machine into perfect condition."

He did, performing the work excellently. Before long another biplane needed repairs, and Stephen was recommended by Mr. Willard. Later a Curtiss machine came under Steve's hands, and then an Antoinette monoplane. The manager raised the young fellow's salary, proud that he had a man competent to repair these newfangled inventions which were creating such a stir throughout the country.

Stephen Kane might have continued to follow the calling of an expert aeroplane doctor with marked success, had he been an ordinary young mechanic. But the air castles he had built at college were not all dissipated, as yet, and aside from possessing decided talent as a workman Steve had an inventive genius that promised great things for his future. By the time he had taken a half dozen different aeroplanes apart and repaired them he had a thorough knowledge of their construction and requirements, and the best of them seemed to him wholly inadequate for the purpose for which they were planned.

"The fact is, Ris," he said to Orissa one evening, after he had been poring over a book on air currents, "the airships of to-day are all experimental, and chock full of mistakes. No two are anywhere near alike, and each man thinks he has the only correct mechanism."

“But they fly,” answered the girl, who was keenly interested in the subject of aviation and had twice been down to the shop to examine the aeroplanes Steve was repairing.

“So they do; they fly, after a fashion,” admitted the young man, “which fully proves the thing can be accomplished. But present machines are all too complicated, and the planes seem to have been shaped by guesswork, rather than common sense. They fuss with motors and propellers and ignore the sustaining mechanism, which is the most vital principle of all. Some day we shall see the sky full of successful aviators, and flying will be as common as automobiling now is; but when that time comes we shall laugh at the crude devices they brag of to-day.”

“That may be true,” returned the girl, thoughtfully; “but isn’t it true of every great invention, that the first models are imperfect?”

“Quite true,” said he. “I can make a better biplane than any I have seen, but I admit that had I not had the advantage of seeing any I might have blundered as all the rest seem to have done.”

“Why don’t you make one, Steve?” asked Orissa impulsively. “If aviation is going to become general the man who builds the best aeroplane will make his fortune.”

Steve flushed and rose to tramp up and down the room before he answered. Then he stopped before his sister and said in low, intense accents:

“I long to make one, Orissa! The idea has taken possession of my thoughts until it has almost driven me crazy. I can make a machine that will fly better and be more safe and practical than either the Wright or Curtiss machines. But the thing is impossible. I — I haven’t the money.”

Orissa sat staring at the rug for a long time. Finally she asked:

“How much money would it take, Steve?”

He hesitated.

“I don’t know. I’ve never figured it out. What’s the use?”

“There is use in everything,” declared his sister, calmly. “Get to work and figure. Find out how much you need, and then we’ll see if we can manage it.”

He gazed at her as if bewildered. Then he turned and left the room without a word.

A few evenings later he handed her an estimate. “I think it could be done for three thousand dollars,” he remarked. “Which means, of course, it can’t be done at all.”

Orissa took the paper without replying and pondered over it for several days. She was only seventeen, but had inherited her father’s clear, business-grasping mind, and would have been an essentially practical girl had not her youth and inexperience lent her some illusions that time would dissipate.

Stephen posed as the “head of the family;” but Orissa really directed its finances, poor Mrs. Kane being so helpless that her children never depended upon her for counsel but on the contrary kept all business matters from her, lest she worry over them. The one maid employed in the bungalow served Mrs. Kane almost exclusively, while Orissa always had devoted much time to her mother, who had been stricken blind at the time of her daughter’s birth.

One evening, when brother and sister were in the garden together, the girl said:

“I believe I have discovered a plan that will permit you to build your airship. What is it to be, Steve; a biplane or a monoplane?”

“Let me hear your plan,” was the eager reply. “Well, I’ve been to see Mr. Wentworth, and he will advance us fifteen hundred on our orange crop, by discounting the price ten per cent. He came and looked at the trees and said they were safe to pay us at least twenty-three hundred dollars next February.”

“But — Orissa! — how could we live, with our income cut down that way — to a mere seven or eight hundred dollars?”

“I’m going to work,” she said quietly. “I’m tired of doing nothing but dig around the garden and cook. Mamma doesn’t need me, at least during the day, so I’m going into business.”

Steve smiled.

“You work, Orissa? What on earth could you do!”

“I’ll find something to do. And my salary, added to yours, will make up for the loss of the orange money. We must economize, of course; but when we’ve such a big deal on hand — one that will make our fortune — we can put up with a few temporary discomforts.”

“But fifteen hundred won’t build the thing, that is certain,” he said, with a sigh. “I’ve got to construct an entirely new motor — engine and all — and some original propellers and elevators, and the patterns and castings for these will be rather expensive.”

“Well, by the time the fifteen hundred are gone,” she replied, “you will know exactly how much more money is needed, and we will mortgage the place for that amount.”

“Rubbish!” cried Stephen, impatiently. “I won’t listen an instant to such a wild plan. Suppose I fail?”

“Oh, if you’re going to fail we won’t undertake it,” said his sister. “You claimed you could make a better airship than the Curtiss or the Wright — either one of which is worth a fortune — and I believed you. If you were only joking, Steve, we won’t talk of it any more.”

“I wasn’t joking; or bragging, either; you know that, Orissa. I’m pretty

sure of my idea; but it's untried. I've bought all the books on aviation I can find and I've been reading of Professor Montgomery's discovery of the laws of air currents and his theories concerning them. They're only primers, dear, for the science of aviation is as yet unwritten. That is why I cannot speak with perfect assurance; but the more I look into the thing the more positive I am that I've hit upon the right idea of aerial navigation."

"What is your idea?" she asked.

"To simplify the construction of the craft. The present devices are all too complicated and keep the aviator too busy while he's in the air."

"In other words, he's all up in the air while he's up in the air," she remarked.

"Precisely. Most of his time is required to maintain a lateral balance, so as not to tip over or lose control. I'm to have a simpler construction, an automatic balance, and a plane only large enough to support the machinery and the aviator."

"If you can manage that," said Orissa, "we're not taking any chances."

He sat with furrowed brow, thinking deeply. Finally he said in a decisive way:

"Nothing is certain until it is accomplished. I won't take the risk of making you and mother paupers. Please don't speak of the thing again, Ris."

Orissa didn't; but Steve did, about a month later. A great aviation meet had been arranged at Dominguez Field, near Los Angeles and only a few miles from their own home. The event, which was destined to be an epoch in the history of aviation, brought many famous aviators to the city with their machines, among them a Frenchman named Paulhan, with whom Stephen soon became acquainted. An examination of Paulhan's machine, a Farman of the latest type, which had already performed marvels, served to convince the boy that his own ideas were not only practical but destined soon to be discovered and applied by someone else if he himself failed to take advantage of the time and opportunity to utilize them.

With that argument to calm any misgivings that he might perhaps fail, coupled with an eagerness to build his invention that drove him to forsake caution, Steve went to Orissa one day and said:

"All right, dear; I'm going to undertake the thing. Can you still get Mr. Wentworth to advance the money?"

"I think so," she replied.

"Then get it, and I'll start work at once. The drawings are already complete," and he showed them to her, neatly traced in comprehensive detail.

Most girls would have been bewildered by the technicalities and passed the drawings with a glance; but Orissa understood how important to them all

this venture was destined to be, so she sat down and studied the designs minutely, making her brother explain anything she found the least puzzling. By this time the girl had made herself familiar with the latest modern improvements in aeroplanes and had personally examined several of the best devices, so she was able to catch the true value of Stephen's idea and immediately became as enthusiastic as he was.

The money was raised and placed by Stephen in a bank where he could draw upon it as he needed it. Mrs. Kane concurred mildly in the plans when they were explained to her, being accustomed to lean upon Orissa and Stephen and to accept their judgment without protest. Aviation was all Greek to the poor woman and she did not bother her head trying to understand why people wanted to fly, or how they might accomplish their desire.

CHAPTER III

THE KANE AIRCRAFT

Stephen set up his workshop at home, devoting his evenings to the new aeroplane. Progress was necessarily slow, as four or five hours out of each twenty-four were all he could devote to his enterprise.

The boy was still employed in this manner when the Aviation Meet was held at Dominguez Field and Paulhan accomplished the wonderful flights that made him world famous. Of course, Orissa and Stephen were present and did not miss a single event. On the grand stand beside them sat a young fellow Stephen had often met at the automobile shop, a chauffeur named Arch Hoxsey. It was the first time Hoxsey had ever seen an aeroplane, and neither he nor Stephen could guess that within one year this novice would become the greatest aviator in all the world. These are days when, comet-like, a heretofore unknown aviator appears, accomplishes marvels and disappears, eclipsed by some new master of the art of flying. It is the same way with aeroplanes; the leading one today is within a brief period destined to be surpassed by a greatly improved machine.

The enthusiasm of the Kanes rose to fever heat in witnessing this exhibition, at the time the most remarkable ever held in the annals of aviation. Afterward they counseled together very seriously and agreed that it would be better for Steve to resign his position at the shop and devote his whole time to his aeroplane, in which he had now more confidence than ever.

He applied for patents on his various devices and the complete machine, being fearful that someone else might adopt his ideas before he could finish his first aeroplane; yet at the same time he observed the utmost secrecy as to the work on which he was engaged and admitted no person except Orissa to the garden, where he had set up his hangar and shop.

The girl had been for some time persistently seeking employment, for now that Steve had ceased to be a breadwinner it was more important than ever for her to earn money. By good fortune she was engaged by Mr. Burthon as his secretary the very week following her brother's retirement.

Steve's expenses were growing greater, however, and Orissa began figuring on "ways and means." Their life in this retired place was so simple that she believed her mother could do without the maid and questioned her on the subject. Mrs. Kane declared she preferred to be alone, if Orissa felt she could prepare the breakfasts and dinners unaided. Luncheons at home were very plain affairs and Steve readily agreed to come into the house at noon and get a bite for himself and his mother. So the maid was dismissed and a considerable expense eliminated.

During the summer construction of the airship progressed more rapidly and, after the motors were completed and tested and found to be nearly perfect, Steve began to model the planes and perfect his automatic balance.

It was hard work sometimes for Orissa to sit in the office and keep her mind on her work when she knew her brother was completing or testing some important detail of the aeroplane, but she held herself in rigid restraint and succeeded in giving satisfaction to her employer.

On the August afternoon on which our story opens Stephen Kane was to begin the final assembling of the parts of his machine, after which he could test it in real flight. He needed Orissa's assistance to help him handle some of the huge ribbed planes, and so she had promised to come home early.

It was not long before she entered the hangar, arrayed in her old gingham, which allowed her to move freely. The two became so interested that Mrs. Kane almost missed her dinner in spite of the girl's promise; but Orissa did manage to tear herself away from the fascinating task long enough to prepare the meal and serve it. Steve came in and tried to eat, for he was at a point where he could do nothing without his sister's help; but neither of them was able to swallow more than a morsel, and as quickly as possible hurried back to their work.

Mrs. Kane, although totally blind, knew her way about the house perfectly and was able to take care of herself in nearly all ways; so when bedtime came she abandoned her monotonous knitting, played a few pieces on the pianoforte — one of her few amusements — and then calmly retired for the night. She never worried over the "children," believing they were competent to care for themselves.

It was long past midnight before Steve got to a point where he could continue without Orissa. "In about three days more," he said, as they washed up and prepared to adjourn to the house, "I will be able to make my first flight. Shall we wait till Sunday, Ris, or will you take a day off?"

"Oh, not Sunday," she replied. However eager her brother might be she had never yet allowed him to work a moment on a Sunday, and Steve deferred to her wishes in this regard. "We're pretty busy at the office and Mr. Burthon was inclined to be a little cranky to-day; but I'll manage it somehow, just as soon as you are ready."

"What sort of a fellow is Burthon?" asked her brother, somewhat curiously.

"Why, he stands well in the business world, I'm told, and is very successful in handling large tracts of real estate," she replied. "Also, he seems a gentleman by birth and breeding, yet a queerer man I never met. His chief peculiarity is in being very absent-minded, but he does other odd

things. Yesterday he refused to sell a piece of land to a customer because he did not like him, and he told the man so with rude frankness. One day I discovered he had cheated another man out of six hundred dollars. I called his attention to what I described as a 'mistake,' and he said he robbed the man on purpose, because he had been snobbish and overbearing. He gave the six hundred dollars to a poor woman to build her a house with, saying to me that he had once committed a serious crime for which this was in part penance, and soon after he platted a lot of swamp land down near San Pedro and advertised it as 'desirable residence property.' Really, Steve, I can't quite make out Mr. Burthon."

"He seems to have good and bad points, from what you say," observed her brother, "and I judge the two qualities are about evenly mixed. Is he nice to you, Ris?"

"He is always polite and respectful, but most of the time he doesn't know I'm in existence. When he gets one of his absorbed fits his eyes look right through me, as if I wasn't there."

"Perhaps he is thinking out some big schemes. Is he a rich man?"

"He is said to be quite wealthy. But he is an old bachelor, and the girl across the hall says he lives at a club, goes to the theater every night and drinks more than is good for him. I hardly believe that last, Steve, for Mr. Burthon doesn't look a bit like a drinking man."

"Perhaps he's a morphine fiend. That would make him absent-minded, you know."

"No; when he's aroused his head is clear as a bell and he drives a shrewd bargain. Do you know, Steve, I'm inclined to think that speech of his was in earnest, although he laughed harshly at the time, and that — that — "

"That what?"

"That at some time or other he has committed some crime that worries him."

CHAPTER IV

MR. BURTHON IS CONFIDENTIAL

Orissa was tired next day and she blundered several times in copying deeds and attending to the routine of the private office, where she alone was closeted with the proprietor. But Mr. Burthon would not have noticed had she set fire to the place, so intent was he upon a bundle of papers he had brought in with him and to which he devoted his exclusive attention.

The girl left him at his desk when she went to lunch and found him there, still occupied with the papers, when she returned. Several people wanted to see him personally, but he told Orissa to state he was engaged and could admit no one. She gave the message to the young man in charge of the outer office, where several clerks were employed, and they knew better than to allow anyone to invade Mr. Burthon's private sanctum.

At about three o'clock, while she was busy at her desk, the secretary heard her name spoken and looked up. From his chair Mr. Burthon was eyeing her observantly. His gaze was clear and intelligent; the abstracted mood had passed.

"Come here, please, Miss Kane," he said.

She brought her writing pad and sat down beside his desk, as she did when he dictated his letters; but he shook his head.

"We'll not mind the mail to-day," he said. "I want to talk with you; to advise with you. Queerly enough, Miss Kane, there isn't a soul on earth in whom I can confide when occasion arises. In other words, I haven't an intimate friend I can trust, or one who is sincerely interested in me."

That embarrassed Orissa a little. Since she had been working at the office this was the first time he had addressed a remark to her not connected with the business. Indeed, the man was now regarding her much as he would a curiosity, as if he had just discovered her. She was amazed to hear him speak so confidentially and made no reply because she had nothing to say.

After a pause he continued:

"You haven't much business experience, my child, but you have a keen intellect and decided opinions." Orissa wondered how he knew that. "Therefore I am going to ask your advice in a matter where business is blended with sentiment. Will you be good enough to give me your candid opinion?"

"If you wish me to, sir," she said, after some hesitation.

"Thank you, Miss Kane. The case is this: With four others I purchased some time ago a gold mine in Arizona known as the 'Queen of Hearts.' It cost me about all I am worth — some two hundred thousand dollars."

Orissa gasped. It seemed an enormous sum. But he continued, speaking calmly and clearly:

"I thought at the time the mine was surely worth a million. I went to see it and found the ore exceedingly rich. The others, who purchased the Queen of Hearts with me, were equally deceived, for just recently we have discovered that the rich vein was either very narrow or was placed there by those we purchased from, with the intention of defrauding us. In either case, please understand that the mine is not worth a cotton hat. We are a stock company, and our stock is listed on the exchange and commands a high premium, for no one except the owners knows the truth about it. The general idea is that the mine is still producing largely — and it is — for, to protect ourselves until we can unload it on to others, we have secretly purchased rich ore elsewhere, dumped it into the mine, and then taken it out again."

He paused, drumming absently on the desk with his fingers, and Orissa asked:

"What is the object of that deception, sir?"

"To maintain the public delusion until we can sell out. And now I come to the point of my story, Miss Kane. Gold mines, even as rich as the Queen of Hearts is reputed to be, are not easy to sell. I have exhausted all my resources in keeping up this deception and the time has come when I must sell or become bankrupt. The other stockholders have smaller interests and are wealthier men, but each one is striving hard to secure a customer. I have found one."

He looked up and smiled at her; then he frowned.

"The man is my brother-in-law," he added.

Orissa was getting nervous, but waited for him to continue.

"This brother-in-law is a man I detest. He married my only sister and did not treat her well. He is a notorious gambler and confidence man, although perhaps he would not admit that is his profession. At all events he had the assurance to sneer at me and abuse my sister, and I was powerless at the time to interfere. Fortunately the poor woman died several years ago. Since then I have not seen much of Cumberford, for he lives in the East. He came out here last month on some small business matter and has gone crazy over the Queen of Hearts mine. He hunted me up and asked if I'd sell part of my stock. I told him I would sell all or none. So he has been getting his money together and has raised two hundred and fifty thousand dollars — the sum I demanded."

Orissa was looking at him wonderingly. The story seemed incredible. Perhaps Mr. Burthon saw the dismay and reproach in her eyes, for he asked:

"What do you think of this deal, Miss Kane? Am I not fortunate?"

“But — would you *really* sell a worthless property to this man — your own brother-in-law — and — and steal a fortune from him?” she inquired.

The man flushed and shifted uneasily in his seat.

“He abused my sister,” he said, as if defending himself.

“The property is worthless,” she persisted.

“He can hustle around and sell it again, as I am doing.”

“Suppose he fails? Suppose he refuses to do such a wicked thing?”

Mr. Burthon stared at her a moment. Then he laughed harshly.

“Cumberford would delight in such a ‘wicked’ game,” he replied. “And, if he failed to sell, the scoundrel would be ruined, for I believe this two hundred and fifty thousand is about all he’s worth.”

“It’s dreadful!” exclaimed the girl, really shocked.

“It is done every day in a business way,” he rejoined.

“Then why did you ask my advice?” demanded the girl, quickly. Before answering he waited to drum on the desk with his fingers again.

“Because,” said he, speaking slowly, “I dislike this man so passionately that I have wondered if the hatred blinds my judgment. He may be dangerous, too, yet I think he is too much of a fool to be able to injure me in retaliation. I don’t know him very well. I’ve not seen him before for years.” He paused, taking note of the horror spreading over the girl’s face. Then he smiled and added in a gentler voice: “Perhaps my chief reason, however, for seeking your advice is that I find I have still a conscience. Yes, yes; a troublesome conscience. I have been suppressing it for years, yet like Banquo’s ghost it will not down. My business judgment determines me to unload this worthless stock and save myself from the loss of my entire fortune. I must do it. It is like a man taking unawares a counterfeit coin, and then, discovering it is spurious, passing it on to some innocent victim. You might do that yourself, Miss Kane.”

“I do not believe I would.”

“Well, most people would, and think it no crime. In this case I’m merely passing a counterfeit, that I received innocently, on to another innocent. If the fact is ever known my business friends will applaud me. But that obstinate conscience of mine keeps asking the question: ‘Is it safe?’ It asserts that I am filled with glee because I am selling to a man I hate — a man who has indirectly injured me. I am to get revenge as well as save my money. Safe? Of course it’s safe. Yet my — er — conscience — the still small voice — keeps digging at me to be careful. It doesn’t seem to like the idea of dealing with Cumberford, and has been annoying me for several days. So I thought I would put the case to a young, pure-minded girl who has a clear head and is honest. I imagined you would tell me to go ahead. Then I could

afford to laugh at cautious Mr. Conscience."

"No," said Orissa, gravely, "the conscience is right. But you misunderstand its warning. It doesn't mean that the act is not safe from a worldly point of view, but from a moral standpoint. You could not respect yourself, Mr. Burthon, if you did this thing."

He sighed and turned to his papers. Orissa hesitated. Then, impulsively, she asked:

"You won't do it, sir; will you?"

"Yes, Miss Kane; I think I shall."

His tone had changed. It was now hard and cold.

"Mr. Cumberford will call here to-morrow morning at nine, to consummate the deal," he continued. "See that we are not disturbed, Miss Kane."

"But, sir — "

He turned upon her almost fiercely, but at sight of her distressed, downcast-face a kindlier look came to his eyes.

"Remember that the alternative would be ruin," he said gently. "I would be obliged to give up my business — these offices — and begin life anew. You would lose your position, and — "

"Oh, I won't mind that!" she exclaimed.

"Don't you care for it, then?"

"Yes; for I need the money I earn. But to do right will not ruin either of us, sir."

"Perhaps not; but I'm not going to do right — as you see it. I shall follow my business judgment."

Orissa was indignant.

"I shall save you from yourself, then," she cried, standing before him like an accusing angel. "I warn you now, Mr. Burthon, that when Mr. Cumberford calls I shall tell him the truth about your mine, and then he will not buy it."

He looked at her curiously, reflectively, for a long time, as if he beheld for the first time some rare and admirable thing. The man was not angered. He seemed not even annoyed by her threat. But after that period of disconcerting study he turned again to his desk.

"Thank you, Miss Kane. That is all."

She went back to her post, trembling nervously from the excitement of the interview, and tried to put her mind on her work. Mr. Burthon was wholly unemotional and seemed to have forgotten her presence. But, a half hour later, when he thrust the papers into his pocket, locked his desk and took his hat to go, he paused beside his secretary, gazed earnestly into her face a

moment and then abruptly turned away.

“Good night, Miss Kane,” he said, and his voice seemed to dwell tenderly on her name.

CHAPTER V

BETWEEN MAN AND MAN — AND A GIRL

That night Orissa confided the whole story to Steve. Her brother listened thoughtfully and then inquired:

"Will you really warn Mr. Cumberford, Ris?"

"I — I ought to," she faltered.

"Then do," he returned. "To my notion Burthon is playing a mean trick on the fellow, and no good business man would either applaud or respect him for it. Your employer is shifty, Orissa; I'm sure of it; if I were you I'd put a stop to his game no matter what came of it."

"Very well, Steve; I'll do it. But I don't believe Mr. Burthon means to be a bad man. His plea about his conscience proves that. But — but — "

"It is worse for a man to realize he is doing wrong, and then do it, than if he were too hardened to have any conscience at all," asserted Steve oracularly.

"And if I let him do this wrong act I would be as guilty as he," she added.

"That's true, Ris. You'll lose your job, sure enough, but there will be another somewhere just as good."

So, when Mr. Burthon's secretary went to the office next morning she was keyed up to do the most heroic deed that had ever come to her hand. Whatever the consequences might be, the girl was determined to waylay Mr. Cumberford when he arrived and tell him the truth about the Queen of Hearts.

But he did not come to the office at nine o'clock. Neither had Mr. Burthon arrived at that time. Orissa, her heart beating with trepidation but strong in resolve, watched the clock nearing the hour, passing it, and steadily ticking on in the silence of the office. The outer room was busy this morning, and in the broker's absence his secretary was called upon to perform many minor tasks; but her mind was more upon the clock than upon her work.

Ten o'clock came. Eleven. At half past eleven the door swung open and Mr. Burthon ushered in a strange gentleman whom Orissa at once decided was Mr. Cumberford. He was extremely tall and thin and stooped somewhat as he walked. He had a long, grizzled mustache, wore gold-rimmed eyeglasses and carried a gold-headed cane. From his patent leather shoes to his chamois gloves he was as neat and sleek as if about to attend a reception.

Observing the presence of a young lady the stranger at once removed his hat, showing his head to be perfectly bald.

"Sit down, Cumberford," said Mr. Burthon, carelessly.

As he obeyed, Orissa, her face flaming red, advanced to a position before

him and exclaimed in a pleading voice:

“Oh, sir, do not buy Mr. Burthon’s mine, I beg of you!”

The man stared at her with faded gray eyes which were enlarged by the lenses of his spectacles. Mr. Burthon smiled, seemed interested, and watched the scene with evident amusement.

“Why not, my child?” asked Mr. Cumberford.

“Because it is worthless — absolutely worthless!” she declared.

He turned to the other man.

“Eh, Burthon?” he muttered, inquiringly.

“Miss Kane believes she is speaking the truth,” said the broker jauntily.

“Oh, she does. And you, Burthon?”

“I? Why, I’m of the same opinion.”

Mr. Cumberford took out his handkerchief, removed his glasses and polished the lenses with a thoughtful air. Orissa was trembling with nervousness.

“Don’t buy the Queen of Hearts, sir; it would ruin you,” she repeated earnestly.

He breathed upon the glasses and wiped them carefully.

“You interest me,” he remarked. “But, the fact is, I — er — I’ve bought it.”

“Already!”

“At nine o’clock, according to agreement. Burthon sent word he’d come to my hotel instead of meeting me at his office, as first planned.”

“Oh, I see!” cried Orissa, much disappointed. “He knew I would prevent the crime.”

“Crime, miss?”

“Is it not a crime to rob you of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?”

“It would be, of course. I should dislike to lose so much money.”

“You have lost it!” declared the girl. “That mine has no gold in it at all — except what has been bought elsewhere and placed in it to deceive a purchaser.”

Mr. Cumberford replaced his glasses, adjusting them carefully upon his nose. Then he stared at Orissa again.

“You’re an honest young woman,” he said calmly. “I’m much obliged. You interest me. But — ahem! — Burthon has my money, you see.”

Mr. Burthon’s expression had changed. He was now regarding his brother-in-law with a curious and puzzled gaze.

“You’re not angry, Cumberford?” he asked.

“No, Burthon.”

“You’re not even annoyed, I take it?” This with something of a sneer.

“No, Burthon.”

Both Orissa and her employer were amazed. Looking from one to another, Mr. Cumberford’s waxen features relaxed into a smile.

“I’ve placed my Queen of Hearts stock in a safety deposit vault,” he remarked blandly.

“I have deposited your money in my bank,” retorted Mr. Burthon, triumphantly.

“Excellent!” said the other. “The thing interests me — indeed it does. You couldn’t purchase that stock from me at this moment, Burthon, for twice the sum I paid you.”

“No? And why not?”

“I’ll tell you. I had not intended to refer to the matter just yet, but this young woman’s exposé of your attempted trickery induces me to explain matters. You have always taken me for a fool, Burthon.”

“I’ve tried to place a proper value on your intellect, Cumberford.”

“You have little talent in that line, believe me. Before I came out here I had heard such glowing reports of the Queen of Hearts that I stopped off in Arizona to see the wonderful mine. The manager was very polite and showed me about, but somehow I got a notion that all was not square and aboveboard. I’ve always been interested in mines; they fascinate me; and if this mine was as rich as reported I wanted some of the stock. But I imagined things looked a little queer, so I sent a confidential agent — fellow named Brewster, who has been with me for years — to hire out as a miner and keep his eyes open. He soon discovered the truth — that the mine was being ‘salted’ or fed with outside gold ore in precisely the way this girl has stated.”

He turned to Orissa with a profound bow, then looked toward Burthon again. “The thing interested me. I wondered why, and wired my man to stay on a little longer, till I had time to think it over. I — er — think very slowly. Very. In a few days Brewster telegraphed me the startling intelligence that the mine had actually struck a new lead, with ore far richer than the first showing, although that had made the Queen of Hearts famous. My man had been sent to the telegraph office with messages from the manager to Mr. Burthon and the four other stockholders; but poor Brewster’s memory is bad, and he forgot to send a telegram to anyone but me. Of course the great strike — er — interested me. I instructed Brewster over the telegraph wire. At a cost of five thousand dollars we bribed the manager to keep the valuable strike secret for ten days. He’s an honest man, and I shall retain him in the office. The ten days expire to-night. Meantime, I’ve purchased the stock.”

Mr. Burthon sprang to his feet, white with anger.

“You scoundrel!” he shouted.

“Don’t get excited, Burthon. This is a mere business incident, between man and man — and a girl.” Another bow toward Orissa. “You tried to rob me, sir, and sneered when you thought you had succeeded. I haven’t robbed you, for I paid your price; but I’ve made a very neat investment. My stock is worth a million at this moment. Interesting, isn’t it?”

Mr. Burthon recovered himself with an effort and sat down again.

“Very well,” he said a little thickly. “As you say, it’s all in the way of business. Good day, Cumberford.”

The other man arose and faced Orissa, who stood by wholly bewildered by this unexpected development.

“Thank you again, my child. Your name? Orissa Kane. I’ll remember it. You tried to do me a kindness. Interesting — very!”

Without another glance at Mr. Burthon he put on his hat, walked out and closed the door softly behind him.

Orissa looked up and found the broker’s eyes regarding her intently.

“I — I’m sorry, sir,” she stammered; “but I had to do it, to satisfy my conscience. I suppose I am dismissed?”

“No, indeed, Miss Kane,” he returned in kindly tones. “An honest secretary is too rare an acquisition to be dismissed without just cause. Having told you what I did, I could expect you to act in no other way.”

“And, after all, sir,” she said, brightening at the thought, “you did not rob him! Yet you saved your fortune.”

He made a slight grimace, and then laughed frankly.

“Had I taken your advice,” he rejoined, “I should now be worth a million.”

CHAPTER VI

A BUCKING BIPLANE

Stephen Kane had scarcely slept a wink for three nights. When Orissa came home Thursday evening he met her at the car with the news that his aeroplane was complete.

"I've been adjusting it and testing the working parts all the afternoon," he said, his voice tense with effort to restrain his excitement, "and I'm ready for the trial whenever you say."

"All right, Steve," she replied briskly; "it begins to be daylight at about half past four, this time of year; shall we make the trial at that hour tomorrow morning?"

"I couldn't wait longer than that," he admitted, pressing her arm as they walked along. "My idea is to take it into old Marston's pasture."

"Isn't the bull there?" she inquired.

"Not now. Marston has kept the bull shut up the past few days. And it's the best place for the trial, for there's lots of room."

"Let's take a look at it, Steve!" she said, hastening her steps.

In the big, canvas covered shed reposed the aeroplane, its spreading white sails filling the place almost to the very edges. It was neither a monoplane nor a biplane, according to accepted ideas of such machines, but was what Steve called "a story-and-a-half flyer."

"That is, I hope it's a flyer," he amended, while Orissa stared with admiring eyes, although she already knew every stick and stitch by heart.

"Of course it's a flyer!" she exclaimed. "I wouldn't be afraid to mount to the moon in that airship."

"All that witches need is a broomstick," he said playfully. "But perhaps you're not that sort of a witch, little sister."

"What shall we call it, Steve?" she asked, seriously. "Of course it's a biplane, because there are really two planes, one being above the other; but it is not in the same class with other biplanes. We must have a distinctive name for it."

"I've thought of calling it the 'Kane Aircraft,'" he answered. "How does that strike you?"

"It has an original sound," Orissa said. "Oh, Steve! couldn't we try it to-night? It's moonlight." He shook his head quickly, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"I'm afraid not. You're tired, and have the dinner to get and the day's dishes to wash and put away. As for me, I'm so dead for sleep I can hardly keep my eyes open. I must rest, so as to have a clear head for to-morrow's flight."

“Shall we say anything to mother about it?”

“Why need we? It would only worry the dear woman unnecessarily. Whether I succeed or fail in this trial, it will be time enough to break the news to her afterward.”

Orissa agreed with this. Mrs. Kane knew the airship was nearing completion but was not especially interested in the venture. It seemed wonderful to her that mankind had at last learned how to fly, and still more wonderful that her own son was inventing and building an improved appliance for this purpose; but so many marvelous things had happened since she became blind that her mind was to an extent inured to astonishment and she had learned to accept with calm complacency anything she could not comprehend.

Brother and sister at last tore themselves away from the fascinating creation and returned to the house, where Steve, thoroughly exhausted, fell asleep in his chair while Orissa was preparing dinner. He went to bed almost immediately after he had eaten and his sister also retired when her mother did, which was at an early hour.

But Orissa could not sleep. She lay and dreamed of the great triumph before them; of the plaudits of enraptured spectators; of Stephen’s name on every tongue in the civilized world; and, not least by any means, of the money that would come to them. No longer would the Kanes have to worry over debts and duebills; the good things of the world would be theirs, all won by her brother’s cleverness.

If she slept at all before the gray dawn stole into the sky the girl was not aware of it. By half past four she had smoking hot coffee ready for Steve and herself and after hastily drinking it they rushed to the hangar.

Steve was bright and alert this morning and declared he had “slept like a log.” He slid the curtains away from the front of the shed and solemnly the boy and girl wheeled the big aeroplane out into the garden. By careful manipulation they steered it between the trees and away to the fence of Marston’s pasture, which adjoined their own premises at the rear. To get it past the fence had been Steve’s problem, and he had arranged to take out a section of the fencing big enough to admit his machine. This was now but a few minutes’ work, and presently the aeroplane was on the smooth turf of the pasture.

They were all alone. There were no near neighbors, and it was early for any to be astir.

“One of the most important improvements I have made is my starting device,” said Steve, as he began a last careful examination of his aircraft. “All others have a lot of trouble in getting started. The Wright people erect a

tower and windlass, and nearly every other machine uses a track."

"I know," replied Orissa. "I have seen several men holding the thing back until the motors got well started and the propellers were whirling at full speed."

"That always struck me as a crude arrangement," observed her brother. "Now, in this machine I start the motor whirling an eccentric of the same resisting power as the propeller, yet it doesn't affect the stability of the aeroplane. When I'm ready to start I throw in a clutch that instantly transfers the power from the eccentric to the propeller — and away I go like a rocket."

As he spoke he kissed his sister and climbed to the seat.

"Are you afraid, Steve?" she whispered, her beautiful face flushed and her eyes bright with excitement.

"Afraid! Of my own machine? Of course not."

"Don't go very high, dear."

"We'll see. I want to give it a thorough test. All right, Ris; I'm off!"

The motors whirred, steadily accelerating speed while the aeroplane trembled as if eager to dart away. Steve threw in the clutch; the machine leaped forward and ran on its wheels across the pasture like a deer, but did not rise.

He managed to stop at the opposite fence and when Orissa came running up, panting, her brother sat in his place staring stupidly ahead.

"What's wrong, Steve?"

He rubbed his head and woke up.

"The forward elevator, I guess. But I'm sure I had it adjusted properly."

He got down and examined the rudder, giving it another upward tilt.

"Now I'll try again," he said cheerfully.

They turned the aircraft around and he made another start. This time Orissa was really terrified, for the thing acted just like a bucking broncho. It rose to a height of six feet, dove to the ground, rose again to plunge its nose into the turf and performed such absurd, unexpected antics that Steve had to cling on for dear life. When he finally managed to bring it to a halt the rudder was smashed and two ribs of the lower plane splintered.

They looked at the invention with dismay, both silent for a time.

"Of course," said Steve, struggling to restrain his disappointment, "we couldn't expect it to be perfect at the first trial."

"No," agreed Orissa, faintly.

"But it ought to fly, you know."

"Being a flying machine, it ought to," she said. "Can you mend it, Steve?"

"To be sure; but it will take me a little time. To-morrow morning we will try again."

With grave faces they wheeled it back into the garden and the boy replaced the fence. Then back to the hangar, where Steve put the Kane Aircraft in its old place and drew the curtains — much as one does at a funeral.

“I’m sure to discover what’s wrong,” he told Orissa, regaining courage as they walked toward the house. “And, if I’ve made a blunder, this is the time to rectify it. To-morrow it will be sure to fly. Have faith in me, Ris.”

“I have,” she replied simply. “I’ll go in and get breakfast now.”

CHAPTER VII
SOMETHING WRONG

All that day Orissa was in a state of great depression. Even Mr. Burthon noticed her woebegone face and inquired if she were ill. The girl had staked everything on Steve's success and until now had not permitted a doubt to creep into her mind. But the behavior of the aircraft was certainly not reassuring and for the first time she faced the problem of what would happen if it proved a failure. They would be ruined financially; the place would have to be sold; worst of all, her brother's chagrin and disappointment might destroy his youthful ambition and leave him a wreck.

Somehow the girl managed to accomplish her work that day and at evening, weary and despondent, returned to her home. When she left the car her step was slow and dragging until Steve came running to meet her. His face was beaming as he exclaimed:

"I've found the trouble, Ris! It was all my stupidity. I put a pin in the front elevator while I was working at it, and forgot to take it out again. No wonder it wouldn't rise — it just couldn't!"

Orissa felt as if a great weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

"Are you sure it will work now?" she asked breathlessly.

"It's bound to work. I've planned all right; that I know; and having built the aircraft to do certain things it can't fail to do them. Provided," he added, more soberly, "I haven't overlooked something else."

"Are the repairs completed, Steve?"

"All is in apple-pie order for to-morrow morning's test."

It was a dreadfully long evening for them both, but after going to bed Orissa was so tired and relieved in spirit that she fell into a deep sleep that lasted until Steve knocked at her door at early dawn.

"Saturday morning," he remarked, as together they went out to the hangar. "Do you suppose yesterday being Friday had anything to do with our hard luck?"

"No; it was only that forgotten pin," she declared.

Again they wheeled the aircraft out to Marston's pasture, and once more the girl's heart beat high with hope and excitement.

Steve took a final look at every part, although he had already inspected his work with great care. Then he sprang into the seat and said:

"All right, little sister. Wish me luck!"

The motor whirred — faster and faster — the clutch gripped the propeller, and away darted the aircraft. It rolled half way across the pasture, then lifted and began mounting into the air. Orissa stood with her hands clasped over

her bosom, straining her eyes to watch every detail of the flight.

Straight away soared the aircraft, swift as a bird, until it was a mere speck in the gray sky. The girl could not see the turn, for the circle made was scarcely noticeable at that distance, but suddenly she was aware that Steve was returning. The speck became larger, the sails visible. The young aviator passed over the pasture at a height of a hundred feet from the ground, circled over their own garden and then began to descend. As he did so the aircraft assumed a rocking motion, side to side, which increased so dangerously that Orissa screamed without knowing that she did so.

Down came the aeroplane, reaching the earth on a side tilt that crushed the light planes into kindling wood and a mass of crumpled canvas. Steve rolled out, stretched his length upon the ground, and lay still.

The sun was just beginning to rise over the orange grove. The deathly silence that succeeded the wreck of the aircraft was only broken by the irregular, spasmodic whirr of the motors, which were still going. Orissa, white and cold, crept in among the debris and shut down the engines. Then, slowly and reluctantly, she approached the motionless form of her brother.

To be alone at such a time and place was dreadful. A few steps from Steve she halted; then turned and fled toward the garden in sudden panic. Away from the horrid scene her courage and presence of mind speedily returned. She caught up a bucket of water that stood in the shed and lugged it back to the pasture.

Was Steve dead? She leaned over him, dreading to place her hand upon his heart, gazing piteously into his set, unresponsive face.

Pat — pat — patter!

A rush across the springing turf.

What was it?

Orissa straightened up, yelled like an Indian and made a run for the fence that did full credit to her athletic training.

For Mars ton's big bull was coming — a huge, tawny creature with a temper that would shame tobasco. He swerved as if to follow the fleeing girl, but then the draggled planes of the aircraft defied him and he changed his mind to charge this new and unknown enemy — perhaps with the same disposition that Don Quixote attacked the windmill.

Orissa shrieked again, for the enormous beast bounded directly over Steve's prostrate body and with bowed head and tail straight as a pointer dog's rushed at the aeroplane. The sails shivered, collapsed, rolled in billows like the waves of the ocean, and amid them the struggling bull went down, tangled himself in the wires and became a helpless prisoner.

The girl, who was sobbing hysterically, heard herself laugh aloud and was

inexpressibly shocked. The bull bellowed with rage but was so wound around with guy-wires that this was the extent of his power. Turning her eyes from the beast to Steve she gave a shout of joy, for her brother was sitting up and rubbing his leg with one hand and his head with the other, while he stared bewildered at the wreck of his aeroplane, from which the head of the bull protruded.

Orissa ran up, wringing her hands, and asked:

"Are you much hurt, dear?"

"I — I've gone crazy!" he answered, despairingly. "Seems as if the aircraft was transformed into the mummy of a — a — brute beast! Don't laugh, Ris. Wh — what's wrong with me — with my eyes? Tell me!"

She threw herself down upon the grass and laughed until she cried, Steve's reproachful glances having no particle of effect in restraining her. When at last she could control herself she sat up and wiped her eyes, saying:

"Forgive me, dear, it's — it's so funny! But," suddenly grave and anxious, "are you badly hurt? Is anything — broken?"

"Nothing but my heart," he replied dolefully.

"Oh; that!" she said, relieved.

"Just look at that mess!" he wailed, pointing to the aircraft. "What has happened to it?"

"The bull," she answered. "But don't be discouraged, dear; the thing flew beautifully."

"The bull?"

"No; the aircraft. But as for the bull, I'm bound to say he did his best. How in the world shall we get him out of there, Steve?"

"I — I think I'm dazed, Ris," he murmured, feeling his head again. "Can't you help me to understand?"

So she told him the whole story, Stephen sighing and shaking his head as he glared at the bull and the bull glared at him. Afterward the boy made an effort to rise, and Orissa leaned down and assisted him. When he got to his feet she held him until he grew stronger and could stand alone.

"I'm so grateful you were not killed," his sister whispered. "Nothing else matters since you have so miraculously escaped."

"Killed?" said Steve; "why, it was only a tumble, Ris. But the bull is a more serious complication. I suppose the aircraft was badly damaged, from what you say, before the bull got it; but now it's a hopeless mess."

"Oh, no," she returned, encouragingly. "If he hasn't smashed the motor we won't mind the rest of the damage. Do you think we can untangle him?"

They approached the animal, who by this time was fully subdued and whined apologetically to be released. Steve got his nippers and cut wire after

wire until suddenly the animal staggered to his feet, gave a terrified bellow and dashed down the field with a dozen yards of plane cloth wound around his neck.

"Good riddance!" cried Orissa. "I don't think he'll ever bother us again."

Steve was examining the wreck. He tested the motors and found that neither the fall nor the bull had damaged them in the least. But there was breakage enough, aside from this, to make him groan disconsolately.

"The flight was wonderful," commented his sister, watching his face anxiously. "Nothing could work more perfectly than the Kane Aircraft did until — until — the final descent. What caused the rocking, Steve?"

"A fault of the lateral balance. My automatic device refused to work, and before I knew it I had lost control."

She stood gazing thoughtfully down at the wreck. Her brother had really invented a flying machine, of that there was no doubt. She had seen it fly — seen it soar miles through the air — and knew that a certain degree of success had been obtained. There was something wrong, to be sure; there usually is with new inventions; but wrongs can be righted.

"I've succeeded in a lot of things," her brother was saying, reflectively. "The engines, the propeller and elevator are all good, and decided improvements on the old kinds. The starting device works beautifully and will soon be applied to every airship made. Only the automatic balance failed me, and I believe I know how to remedy that fault."

"Do you suppose the machine can be rebuilt?" she asked.

"Assuredly. And the automatic balance perfected. The trouble is, Orissa, it will take a lot more money to do it, and we've already spent the last cent we could raise. It's hard luck. Here is a certain fortune within our grasp, if we could perfect the thing, and our only stumbling block is the lack of a few dollars."

Having reviewed in her mind all the circumstances of Steve's successful flight the girl knew that he spoke truly. Comparing the aircraft with other machines she had seen and studied at the aviation meet she believed her brother's invention was many strides in advance of them all.

"The question of securing the money is something we must seriously consider," she said. "In some way it will be raised, of course. But just now our chief problem is how to get this ruin back to the hangar."

"That will be my job," declared Steve, his courage returning. "There are few very big pieces left to remove, and by taking things apart I shall be able to get it all into the shed. The day's doings are over, Ris. Get breakfast and then go to your work. After I've stored this rubbish I'll take a run into town myself, and look for a job. The aviation jig is up — for the present, at least."

“Don’t do anything hurriedly, Steve,” protested the girl. “Work on the aircraft for a day or two, just as if we had money to go ahead with. That will give me time to think. To-night, when I come home, we will talk of this again.”

CHAPTER VIII

MR. BURTHON'S PROPOSITION

Saturday was a busy day at the office. They did not close early, but rather later than on other days, and Orissa found plenty of work to occupy her. But always there remained in her thoughts the problem of how to obtain money for Steve, and she racked her brain to find some practical solution.

Mr. Burthon was in a mellow mood to-day. Since the sale of his mining stock he had been less abstracted and moody than before, and during the afternoon, having just handed Orissa several deeds of land to copy, he noticed her pale, drawn face and said:

"You look tired, Miss Kane."

She gave him one of her sweet, bright smiles in payment for the kindly tone.

"I am tired," she returned. "For two mornings I have been up at four o'clock."

"Anyone ill at home?" he asked quickly.

"No, sir."

Suddenly it occurred to her that he might assist in unraveling the problem. She turned to him and said:

"Can you spare me a few minutes, Mr. Burthon? I — I want to ask your advice."

He glanced at her curiously and sat down in a chair facing her.

"Tell me all about it," he said encouragingly. "Not long ago it was I asking for advice, and you were good enough to favor me. Now it is logically your turn."

"My brother," said she, "has invented an airship."

He gave a little start of surprise and an eager look spread over his face. Then he smiled at her tolerantly.

"All the world has gone crazy over aviation," he remarked. "I, myself, witnessed the flights at Dominguez Field and became strongly impressed with the desire to fly. I suppose your brother contracted the fever, too, and has made a model he thinks will float in the air."

"Oh, it is not a model," she gravely replied. "Stephen is an expert mechanic and has worked on many of the most famous aeroplanes in the country. He has recently built a complete airship of his own, and this morning I watched him make a very successful flight in it."

"Indeed?" he exclaimed, the eager look returning. "There is money in a good airship, Miss Kane. This is the psychological moment to forge ahead in aviation, which will soon become the world's popular mode of transit. It is

easy to build an airship; yes. Perhaps I could build one myself. But where many will try, many will fail."

"And some will succeed," she added, smiling.

He examined her expressive face with interest. "Please tell me all about it," said he.

So Orissa gave him the history of the aircraft, from its conception to the final triumph and wreckage and its conquest by the bull. Incidentally she told how they had mortgaged their home and the orange crop to get the needed money, and finally explained the condition they were now in — success within their grasp, but no means of taking advantage of it.

Mr. Burthon was very attentive throughout, his eyes fixed upon Orissa's lovely face and watching its shades of anxiety and exaltation as the story progressed. While she enthusiastically described Steve's aircraft, her eyes sparkling and a soft flush mantling her cheeks, the man scarcely heard what she said, so intent was he in admiring her. He did not permit his fair secretary to notice his mood, however, and the girl was too earnestly engaged to heed her employer's intent gaze. At the conclusion of her story she asked:

"Tell me, sir, is there any way in which we can raise the money required?"

Mr. Burthon roused himself and the hard business expression settled upon his features again.

"I think so," he returned, slowly. "What your brother needs is a backer — what is called an 'angel,' you know — who will furnish the necessary funds for the perfection of the invention and to place it upon the market and properly exhibit it."

"Would anyone do that?" she inquired.

"For a consideration, yes. Such a party would demand an interest in the invention, and a share of the profits."

"How much, sir?"

"Perhaps a half interest."

She considered this statement.

"That is too much to give away, Mr. Burthon. The aircraft is already built and tested. It is a proved success, and the best aeroplane in all the world. Why should we give a half interest in return for a little money?"

He hesitated; then replied coldly:

"Because the invention is useless without the means to publicly demonstrate it, and establish it on a paying basis. At present your airship is without the slightest commercial value. Once exploited, the half interest you retain would make your fortune."

Her brow wrinkled with a puzzled look.

“I’ll talk to Steve about it,” she said. “But, if he consents, where could I find such an — an ‘angel’?”

“In me,” he answered coolly. “If, on investigation, I find your brother’s airship to be one half as practical as you represent it, and doubtless believe it to be, I will deposit ten thousand dollars in the bank to exploit it — in return for a half interest — and agree to furnish more money whenever it is required.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Orissa, doubtfully. “I — I’ll talk with my brother.”

“Very well,” he replied. “But beware of confiding in strangers. I am your friend, and will guard your interests faithfully. Talk with your brother, but with no one else.”

Orissa did talk with Steve, that very evening, and the boy frowned at the suggestion just as his sister had done.

“I know that is the way business men do things,” he said, “and it’s a good deal like robbery. Burthon sees that we must have money, and he’s driving a shrewd bargain. Besides that, I’m not sure he’s honest.”

“I don’t see how he could defraud us, though,” mused Orissa. “There are two things for us to consider. One is, whether we can raise the money in any other way; and then, whether a half interest in a business with plenty of money behind it would not pay better than the whole thing, with a constant struggle to make both ends meet.”

“Perhaps it might,” he replied, hesitatingly. “But I’ve done all this alone, so far, and I hate to let anyone else reap the benefit of my ideas. I suppose if I had not proved the thing, but merely begun work on it, Burthon wouldn’t have invested a dollar in it.”

“I suppose not,” she agreed. “But think it over, dear. We have all day to-morrow to talk of it and consider what is best to be done. Then, when I go to the office Monday morning, I can tell Mr. Burthon our decision.”

They talked considerably more on this subject after dinner, and worried over it during a sleepless night. After breakfast on Sunday morning they went quietly to church, Mrs. Kane accompanying them, as was her custom. But Orissa had hard work to keep her mind on the service and Steve found the attempt impossible. The return home, including a long car ride, was passed in silence, and then Orissa had to busy herself over the dinner.

It was the middle of the afternoon before brother and sister found time to meet in the hangar, which was now strewn with parts of the aircraft. Steve looked around him gloomily and then seated himself beside Orissa upon a bench.

“I suppose we must settle this thing,” he said; “and there’s no doubt we must have money, or we shall face ruin. The thing has cost too much for us

to withdraw from it without a heavy loss that would mean privation and suffering for you and mother. If we go to anyone but Burthon we may not get as good an offer as he makes, for men with money are eager to take advantage of a poor fellow in need. I can't blame Burthon much. I don't suppose there's a rich man living who wouldn't hold us up in the same selfish way. And so — "

He paused, shrugging his shoulders.

"So you think we'd better accept Mr. Burthon's proposition and give him a half interest?" she asked.

"Beg pardon," said a cold voice; "am I intruding?"

CHAPTER IX
THE OTHER FELLOW

Stephen and Orissa both sprang to their feet, startled by the interruption. A tall man, having a stoop to his shoulders, had parted the entrance curtains and stood looking at them. He wore blue goggles, an automobile cap and duster, and heavy shoes; but Orissa recognized him at once.

"Mr. Cumberford!" she exclaimed.

"Dear me!" said the man; "it's the young lady from Burthon's office — and my friend." He laughed, lightly, as if amused by the recollection; then added: "I've run out of gasoline and my car is stranded a quarter of a mile off. Think you could furnish me enough of the elusive fluid to run me into town?"

Steve walked silently to his gasoline tank. He was excessively annoyed to have a stranger spy upon his workshop and resolved to get rid of the man in short order. Orissa also was silent, fearing Mr. Cumberford might linger if she entered into conversation with him. The spot was so retired that until now no one but themselves had ever entered the hangar, and the secret had been well kept.

"Here's a two-gallon can," said Stephen, surlily. "Will that do you?"

Mr. Cumberford nodded, set the can upon the ground and walked over to the bench, where he calmly seated himself beside the girl.

"What are you up to, here?" he asked.

"Our own especial business," retorted Steve. "You will pardon me, sir, if I ask you to take your gasoline and go. This is private property."

"I see," said Cumberford. "I'm intruding. Never mind that. Let's talk a bit; I'm in no hurry."

"We are very much occupied, sir," urged Orissa, earnestly.

"No doubt," said the man. "I overheard a remark as I entered. You were wondering whether to accept Burthon's offer and give him a half interest. Eh? That interests me; I'm Burthon's brother-in-law."

He glanced around him, then calmly took a cigarette from his pocket and offered one to Steve.

"I can't allow smoking here, sir; there's too much gasoline about," said the boy, almost rudely.

"True. I forgot." He put the case in his pocket. "You're building some sort of a — er — er — flying machine, I see. That interests me. I'm a crank on aviation. Is this the thing Burthon wants a half interest in?"

Steve scowled. When Cumberford turned to Orissa she slightly nodded, embarrassed how to escape this impertinent questioning.

“I thought so. Then you’ve really got something?”

Steve laughed. His annoyance was passing. The man had already seen whatever there was to see, for his eyes had been busy from the moment he entered. And Steve remembered that this was the person who had outwitted Mr. Burthon in the mine deal.

“I have something that will fly, if that is what you mean,” he replied.

“Yes; that is what I mean. Tried the thing yet?”

“Oh, yes,” said Orissa eagerly. “It flew splendidly yesterday morning, but — but Steve had an accident with his aeroplane, and a bull demolished what was left of it.”

“Ah; that interests me; it really does,” said Cumberford. He looked at Stephen more attentively. “Your brother, Miss Kane?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you need money?”

“To rebuild the machine, and perfect it; yes, sir.”

“And Burthon will furnish the money, for a half interest?”

“Yes, sir,” repeated the girl, uneasy at his tone. “Too much,” asserted Mr. Cumberford, positively. “Burthon’s a rascal, too. You know that, Miss Kane. Tried to rob me; and you tried to prevent him. I haven’t forgotten that; it was a kindness. I’ve had to fight a cold, hard, selfish world, and fight it alone. I’ve won; but it has made me as cold, as hard and selfish as the others. You’re different, Miss Kane; the world hasn’t spoiled you yet. I can’t recollect when anyone ever took the trouble to do me a kindness before. So I, your direct opposite, admire you for your originality. I’m a scoundrel and you’re a — an honest girl.”

There wasn’t a particle of emotion in his voice, but somehow both Orissa and Stephen knew he was in earnest. It was difficult to say anything fitting in reply, and after a brief pause the man continued:

“I can see that your airship is at present something of a wreck. How much money do you need?”

“I ought to have at least a thousand dollars,” answered Steve, reflectively glancing around the shop. Cumberford’s eyes followed his.

“Will two thousand do it?”

“Of course, sir.”

“I’ll lend you three,” said the man. “I don’t want a half interest. I won’t rob you.”

Both boy and girl stared at him in amazement. “What security do you require?” asked Stephen, suspiciously.

“Eh? None at all. The thing interests me. If you make a lot of money, I’ll let you pay me back some day. That’s fair. If you fail, you’ll have worries

enough without having to repay me. But I attach two conditions to my offer. One is that you have nothing to do with Burthon. The other is that I have permission to come here and watch your work; to advise with you at times; to help you map out your future career and to attend all the flying exhibitions in which you take part. Agree to that, and I'll back you through thick and thin, because I'm interested in aviation and — because your sister was good to me."

"I'll do it, sir!" cried Steve, excitedly.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you, Mr. Cumberford," added Orissa, in joyful tones.

"It's a bargain," said Cumberford, smiling at them both. He took out a fountain pen and wrote a check on a Los Angeles bank for three thousand dollars in favor of Stephen Kane. But he handed it to Orissa.

"Now then," said he, "tell me something about it."

CHAPTER X
A FRESH START

When Orissa appeared at the office Monday morning she went quietly about her work, feeling very happy indeed. The astonishing generosity of Mr. Cumberford had relieved all her worries and brought sunshine into her heart.

Mr. Burthon came at his usual time and on taking his place at the desk looked inquiringly at Orissa, but said nothing. Neither did she mention the subject of the aircraft. Her employer, watching her stealthily from behind his desk, could not fail to note the joy in her face and was undoubtedly puzzled to account for it — unless, indeed, she and her brother had decided to accept his proposition. He had an idea that they would accept; that they must accept; it was the only way they could carry on their experiment. But he waited for her to refer to the subject.

Orissa managed to escape that night while a customer was engaging Mr. Burthon's attention. She disliked, for some unexplained reason, to tell him they had decided not to take him for a partner. Arriving home she found Steve busily at work rebuilding his airship, and it pleased her to hear his cheery whistle as she approached the hangar. The young fellow was in capital spirits.

"You see, Ris," said he, "with all this money to use I shall be able to make an entirely new automatic balance. I've come to the conclusion the first one doesn't work smoothly enough to be entirely satisfactory. I shall also provide a store of extra ribs and such parts as are liable to get damaged, so that the repair work will be a matter of hours instead of days. How lucky it was Mr. Cumberford ran out of gasoline yesterday."

"He's a queer man," replied Orissa, thoughtfully. "I can't make up my mind yet whether I like him or not."

"I like his money, anyhow," laughed Steve; "and we didn't have to give him a half interest to get it, either. I imagine the man was really touched by your endeavor to save him from what you thought was a bad bargain, and certainly his magnanimous act could have been prompted by nothing but kindness."

"It saved our half interest, at least," she said, evasively. "Has he been here to-day, Steve?"

"Haven't seen even his shadow," was the reply. "I don't imagine he'll bother us much, although he has reserved the right to look around all he wants to. He must be a busy man, with all his wealth."

The next morning, however, after Orissa had gone to her work, Mr. Cumberford's car spun up the lane and he came into the hangar, nodded to

Steve and sat down quietly on the bench.

For a time he silently watched the young man shave a cypress rib into shape; then got up and carefully examined the motor, which was in good order. Steve knew, when first Mr. Cumberford began asking questions, that he understood machinery, and the man was quick to perceive the value of young Kane's improvements.

"It interests me," he drawled, after starting the engines and watching them work. "As a boy I longed to be a mechanic. Got sidetracked, though, and became a speculator. Needs almost as much ingenuity to succeed in that as in mechanics. Pays better, but ruins one's self-respect. Stick to mechanics, Kane."

"I will," promised Steve, laughing.

"This new profession," continued Cumberford, "will throw you in with a lot of 'queer' people — same sort that used to follow the races and now bet on automobile contests. Keep your sister away from them."

"I'll try to," returned Steve, more soberly. "But Orissa is crazy over aviation, and she'll have to go everywhere that I do."

"That's all right; I like the idea. But don't introduce her to every fellow you are forced to associate with. Girls are queer, and your sister is — beautiful. I've a daughter myself."

"Oh!" exclaimed Steve, not knowing just how to take this remark.

"My daughter is not — beautiful. No. And she's a demon. I'll bring her here to see you and your sister, some day."

"Thank you," said Steve, turning red. Certainly this new acquaintance was odd and unaccountable in some ways. Steve wondered why he should bring a "demon" to the hangar, and why he described his own daughter in such uncomplimentary language.

Mr. Cumberford smoked a cigarette thoughtfully.

"Your sister," he said, "interests me. She's a good girl. Must have a good mother."

"The best in the world," asserted Steve, proudly. "My daughter," resumed Cumberford, "takes after her mother. Girls usually do. Her mother was — well, she was Burthon's sister. Catch the idea? It was all my fault, and Sybil — that's my daughter — blames me for her parentage. With apparent justice. Not a joke, Kane. Don't laugh."

"I'm not laughing, sir."

"Speaking of Burthon reminds me of something. I don't like the idea of your sister working there — in his office."

"He has always treated her very nicely, I believe," said Steve, "and Orissa feels she must earn some money."

“Not necessary. You’ve a fortune in your airship. Take the girl away from Burthon. Keep her at home.”

Steve did not reply to this, but he decided it was not a bad suggestion.

“How old is she?” inquired Cumberford, presently.

“Just seventeen.”

“Too young to work in an office. Finished her education?”

“All we are able to give her, sir.”

“H-m-m. Take my advice. Burthon’s unreliable. I know him. Gorilla inside, man outside. I — I married a Burthon.”

These brief sentences were spoken between puffs of his cigarette. Sometimes there would be a very definite pause between them, while the man smoked and reflected upon his subject. Steve continued his work and answered when required to do so.

Cumberford stayed at the hangar until nearly noon, watching the boy work, bearing a hand now and then when a plane rib was awkward to handle alone, always interested in everything pertaining to the aeroplane. He made Steve explain the changes he proposed to apply to the lateral balance and offered one or two rather clever suggestions, showing his grasp of the subject. But he did not refer to Orissa again and finally slipped away without saying good-bye.

Steve thought him queerer than during their first interview, but liked him better.

CHAPTER XI
ORISSA RESIGNS

Meantime Orissa was having a hard time at the office endeavoring to avoid a personal conversation with Mr. Burthon. When he came in at nine o'clock he smiled upon her and asked:

"Anything to tell me, Miss Kane?"

She shook her head, flushing a little, and he went to his desk without another word. He seemed abstracted and moody during the forenoon — a return of his old puzzling manner — and Orissa regretted she had not been brave enough to tell him of their decision to reject his offer when he gave her the opportunity.

Nothing more passed between them until after luncheon, but when she reentered the office Mr. Burthon, who had not gone out, suddenly roused himself and said:

"Come here, please, Miss Kane."

She obeyed, meekly seating herself in the chair beside his desk.

The man looked at her a long time; not impudently, with direct gaze, but rather speculatively and with an expression that seemed to penetrate far beyond her and to consider many things beside her fair face. Finally he asked:

"What conclusion have you reached in regard to your financial matters, of which we spoke Saturday?"

"I've talked with my brother, sir, and he dislikes to give up a half interest in his invention."

"Did you tell him I would furnish all the money that might be required?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he refused?"

"This aeroplane is very dear to my brother, Mr. Burthon. He cannot bear to transfer a part ownership to another, who would have the right to dictate its future."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the broker, impatiently; "the boy's a fool. There's scarcely an inventor in the world who hasn't had to sacrifice an interest in his creation in order to raise money."

"Stephen won't do it," declared Orissa, positively, for she resented the speech.

Mr. Burthon fell silent, drumming on the desk with his fingers, as he always did when in deep thought. Orissa started to rise, thinking the interview closed.

"Wait a moment, please," he said. "How old are you, Miss Kane? — your

name is Orissa, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. I am seventeen."

"So young! Why, you ought to be in school instead of at work."

She made no reply. He watched her awhile, as she sat before him with bent head, and then continued, in the kindly tone he so often used when addressing her:

"Miss Kane — Orissa — I will give your brother all the money he needs, and he may retain the entire interest in his airship. The payment may come from you alone."

She started and became alert at once, raising her head to look at him inquiringly.

"In other words," he added, "I'm not especially interested in your brother or his invention; but am greatly interested in you."

"Mr. Burthon, I — "

"Listen to me, Orissa, and let me explain. I'm a lonely man, for I have never married — or cared to. You are the only member of the fair sex who has ever attracted me except my sister, whom I regarded with warm affection. When she married that scoundrel Cumberford we became separated forever, and in a few years she died. Since then I have thought of nothing but business. I am now thirty-eight years of age, and in my prime. I have amassed a fortune — something more than a quarter of a million, as you know — and have no one to leave it to when I pass away. I should like to leave it to you, Orissa."

"To me, sir!" she exclaimed, amazed.

"Yes. Your presence here in the office has transformed the place from a barren den to a cozy, homelike apartment. I like to see your sweet face near me, gravely bending over your work. Your personality has charmed me; your lack of affectation, your sincerity and honesty, have won my admiration. I cannot say to you, as a younger man would, that I love you, for I will not take an unfair advantage of one who is as yet a child. But you will become a woman soon, and I want to make you a splendid woman — and a happy one. This is my proposition: place yourself in my hands unreservedly, and let me direct your future. I will send you to a famous finishing school in the East and supply you with a liberal allowance. In two years you will return to me, old enough to become my wife."

"Oh, Mr. Burthon!"

"Meantime I'll finance your brother's airship proposition until it either fails or finally succeeds." Orissa was greatly distressed. She felt at the moment like giving way to a flood of tears, for she realized that this absurd, astonishing proposal would deprive her of her position. He saw her agitation

and felt intuitively she would not consider his offer. So he said, with grim insistence: “You may answer me with one word, my child; yes or no.”

“Oh, Mr. Burthon, it is impossible! I have a home, a mother and brother, and — I — I could not think of such a thing.”

“Not to save those relatives from disaster — from misery — from ruin, perhaps?”

The implied threat hardened her heart, which had begun to pity the man.

“Not even to save them from death!” she replied firmly.

“Am I so distasteful to you, then? Is my money of so little account?”

With cold dignity Orissa rose from her chair. He saw the look on her face and became a little alarmed.

“Please forget all I have said,” he added, hastily. “I — I am not myself to-day. You may get the mail ready, Miss Kane, and I will sign the letters before I go.”

She went to the wardrobe and took down her things. He sat silently watching her as she put them on, a slight frown upon his face. The girl hesitated a moment, then walked straight to his desk and said:

“Of course I cannot stay here a moment after what you have said. But I think you — you meant to be good to me — in your way. Good-bye, Mr. Burthon.”

“Good-bye, Miss Kane.”

His voice was cold and hard. She did not look at him again, but walked out of the office and quietly left the building, so she did not see that the frown had deepened to a scowl, nor hear him mutter: “Both lost — the girl and the aeroplane! But I’ll have them yet, for the Kanes are too simple to oppose me successfully.”

At three o’clock Orissa surprised Steve by coming into the hangar in her working dress.

“Why, what’s the matter, Ris?” he demanded. “I’ve left Mr. Burthon,” she said quietly.

“What’s up?”

Orissa thought it unwise to tell her brother all that had transpired.

“He was angry because we refused to give him a half interest in the aircraft,” she explained. “So I simply quit and came home.”

Steve sat down and stared at her a moment. He had been thinking of Mr. Cumberford’s warning ever since that strange individual had gone away, and Orissa’s “resignation” afforded him distinct relief.

“I’m glad of it, Ris,” he said, earnestly.

“There’s no necessity for you to work now, for we have plenty of money to see us through. Besides, I need you here to assist me.”

“Really, Steve?”

“It’s a fact. I don’t like to employ outside assistance at this stage of the game; it might be fatal. But you are nearly as well posted on aeroplanes as I am, Orissa, and you’re clever enough to be of real help to me. I don’t need brute strength, you know.”

“Why, I’m terribly strong!” she said with a gay laugh, baring her round arm and bending her elbow to show how the muscle bunched up. “I can lift as much as you can, Steve, if it is necessary.”

“It won’t be necessary,” replied her brother, delighted to find how easily she adopted his suggestion. “Just grab the end of that bow and hold it steady while I shave a point to it. That’s it. Don’t you see how awkward it is for me to handle these things alone?”

She nodded.

“You’re right, Steve. I’ll stay at home and help you finish the aircraft,” said she.

CHAPTER XII

THE SPYING OF TOT TYLER

Mr. Burthon was like many other men accustomed to modern business methods: he believed there was always an indirect way to accomplish whatever he desired. Also, like many others who have little or no use for such a contrivance, he owned a motor car. His chauffeur was a little, wizen featured man named Totham Tyler, familiarly called "Tot" by his chums, a chauffeur who knew automobiles backward and forward and might have progressed beyond his present station had he not been recognized as so "tricky" that no one had any confidence in him.

About two weeks after Orissa had left the office Mr. Burthon said to his man one morning:

"Tyler; would you like to do a little detective work?"

"Anything to oblige, sir," answered Totham, pricking up his ears.

"Have you ever met a fellow around town named Kane?"

"Steve Kane, sir? Oh, yes. He used to be foreman of Cunningham's repair shop. Quit there some time ago, I believe. Clever fellow, sir, this Kane."

"Yes; he has invented a new sort of aeroplane." Tyler whistled, reflectively. All motor car people have a penchant for flying. As Mr. Cumberford would have said: it "interests them."

"Kane is keeping the matter a secret," continued Mr. Burthon, "and I'm curious to know what he's up to. Find out, Tyler, and let me know."

"Very good, sir. Where is he working?"

"At home. He lives out Beverly way. Take a Beverly car and get off at Sandringham avenue. Walk north up the lane to the first bungalow."

"Ever been there, sir?"

"No; but Kane's sister has described the place to me. When you get there, try to hire out as an assistant, but in any case keep your eyes open and observe everything in sight. I'll pay you extra for this work, according to the value of the information you obtain."

"I understand, sir," answered Tyler, wrinkling his leathery face into a shrewd smile; "I know how to work a game of that sort, believe me."

In pursuance of this mission the little chauffeur came to the Kane residence that very afternoon. As he approached the bungalow he heard the sound of pounding upon metal coming from the canvas covered hangar; otherwise the country lay peacefully sunning itself. An automobile stood in the lane. On the front porch a woman sat knitting, but raised her head at the sound of footsteps. Tyler touched his cap, but there was no response. Looking at her closely he saw the woman was blind, so he passed her

stealthily and tiptoed up the narrow path toward the hangar. The top canvas had been drawn back on wires to admit the air, but the entrance was closed by curtains. Tyler listened to the hammering a moment, and summoning his native audacity to his aid boldly parted the curtains and entered.

"Hello, Kane!" he called; then paused and took in the scene before him at a glance.

Stephen was at the bench pounding into shape an aluminum propeller-blade; a tall man with a drooping mustache stood near, watching him. A young girl was busily sewing strips of canvas. On its rack lay a huge flying machine — its planes spread, the motors in place, the running gear complete — seemingly almost ready for action.

But Tyler was not the only one with eyes. Kane paused with uplifted hammer and regarded the intruder with a frown of annoyance; Orissa stared in startled surprise; the tall man's spectacles glittered maliciously.

"Burthon's chauffeur!" he muttered; "I remember him." Swiftly his long arm shot out, seized Tyler's shoulder and whirled him around. The square toe of a heavy shoe caught the little man unprepared and sent him flying through the entrance, where he sprawled full length upon the ground.

In an instant he was up, snarling with rage. The curtains were closed and before them stood his assailant calmly lighting a cigarette.

"Mr. Cumberford, sir," gasped Tyler, "you shall smart for this! It's actionable, sir. It's — it's — assault 'n' battery; that's what it is!"

"Want any more?" asked the man coolly.

"Not to-day, thank you. This'll cost you plenty."

"Then go back to Burthon and tell him we know his game. You're trespassing, sir. I could wring your neck — perhaps I will — and the law would uphold me. If you want to escape alive, make tracks."

Totham Tyler took the hint. He walked away with as much dignity as he could muster, considering his anatomy had so recently been jarred; but he did not take the car home. Oh, no. There was much more to discover inside that hangar. He would wait until night, and then take his time to explore the place fully.

With this end in view the chauffeur secreted himself in the outskirts of the orange grove, creeping underneath a tree with thick branches that nearly touched the ground. He could pick ripe fruit from where he lay, and was well content to rest himself until night came.

An hour later Mr. Cumberford whirled by in his motor car, headed for the city. Tyler shook his fist at his enemy and swore effectively to relieve his feelings. Then he sank into a doze.

The approaching chug of an engine aroused him. He found it was nearly

dark, so he must have slept for some hours. Here was Cumberford, back with his car and speeding up the lane so swiftly that Tot could only see a cage-like affair occupying the rear section of the automobile.

The chauffeur wondered what this could be, puzzling his brain for a solution of the problem. Even while considering the matter Cumberford passed him again, smoking his eternal cigarette and running the car more deliberately, now, toward the city.

"All right," mumbled the chauffeur; "he's out of the way for the night, anyhow. But he left the cage somewhere. What the blazes could he have had in it?"

He ate a few more oranges for his supper, smoked his pipe, snoozed again and awoke to find it was nearly midnight.

"Good!" said he; "now's my time. I don't mind a bit of a wait if I get the goods in the end; and here's where I get 'em. It takes a pretty good man to outwit Tot Tyler. They'll agree to that, by'm'by."

He crept down the lane and kept on the south side of the hedge until he came opposite the hangar, thus avoiding the house and grounds. The canvas top of the shed showed white in the moonlight, not twenty feet from where he stood, and the chauffeur was pressing aside the thick hedge to find an opening when a deep bay, followed by a growl, smote his ears. He paused, his head thrust half through the foliage, his blood chilled with terror as there bounded from the hangar a huge bloodhound, its eyes glaring red in the dim light, its teeth bared menacingly.

Tot thought he was "done for," as he afterward told Mr. Burthon, when with a jerk the great beast stopped — a yard from the hedge — and the clank of a chain showed it could come no farther.

Tyler caught his breath,. broke from the hedge and sprinted down the lane at his best gait, followed by a succession of angry bays from the hound.

"Confound Cumberford!" he muttered. "The brute was in that cage, and he went to town to get it, so's to keep me out of the hangar. That's two I owe this guy, an' I'll get even with him in time, sure's fate."

There was no car at this hour, so the discomfited chauffeur had to trudge seven miles to the city, where he arrived at early dawn.

The man was not in an amiable frame of mind when he brought Mr. Burthon's automobile to the club, where his master lived, at nine o'clock. As he drove the broker to the office he related his news.

"Cumberford!" cried Mr. Burthon. "Are you sure it was Cumberford?"

"Yes, sir; I remember him well. Took him to your office and the bank, you know, the time you had some deal with him; and he tried to tell me how to run the car. Me! I spotted him right away for a fresh guy from the East, an'

now he's kicked me out of Kane's hangar an' set a dog on me. Oh, yes; I know Cumberford."

"So do I," said Burthon, grimly.

Tyler caught the tone.

"I'll do him yet, sir. Leave it to me. I couldn't get much of a pointer on Kane's aeroplane; hadn't time, you know; but it looked like a rosebud an' I guess he's got something good. I'm going to find out. I'll take out a dose for the dog that'll put him to sleep in a wink, and then I'll go all over the thing careful."

"Never mind the airship," said Mr. Burthon. "I've found out what I wanted to know."

"What! you have, sir?" exclaimed the chauffeur, amazed.

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "That is, if you're positive the man at the Kanes' was Cumberford."

"Sure? Why, I'd stake my life on it, sir."

"Then I'll follow the clue in my own way," said Mr. Burthon, alighting from the car.

The discovery made by Tyler necessitated a change in the proposed campaign. The broker entered his office, sat down at his desk and fell into one of his fits of deep abstraction. The new "secretary," noting this, chewed her gum reflectively a moment and then began to read a novel, keeping the volume concealed behind her desk.

"If Cumberford was in the hangar," Mr. Burthon mused, "he has undertaken to back Kane's aeroplane, and I'm too late to get hold of the machine in the way I planned. I suppose the fool offered better terms than I did, to blind those simple children, and so the Kanes turned me down. Never mind. Cumberford has beaten me on two deals, but the third trick shall be mine. I must get hold of the designs of Kane's aeroplane in some way; perhaps I may find them at the patent office. Then I'll regulate things so the boy's invention will prove a failure. The result ought to satisfy me: it would cause Cumberford serious loss, ruin young Kane, and — bring Orissa to me for assistance. But Tyler can't manage the job; I must have a man more clever than he is, and direct the intrigue in person."

The secretary read and chewed most of the day. When she quit "work" at five o'clock, Mr. Burthon was still thinking.

CHAPTER XIII
SYBIL IS CRITICAL

Steve was now progressing finely with the work on the Kane Aircraft and believed he would be able to overcome all the imperfections that had disclosed themselves during the first trial. Mr. Cumberford came to the hangar nearly every day, now, and Steve and Orissa began to wonder how he found time to attend to other business — provided he had any. On the day of Tyler's visit he had announced it was his last trip to see the Kanes, as he had been summoned to Chicago to attend a directors' meeting and from there would go on to New York. But having discovered that Burthon was intent upon some secret intrigue, which could bode no good to his proteges — the Kanes — he promptly changed his mind and informed Steve on a subsequent visit that he had arranged affairs at home and was now free to spend the entire winter in Southern California.

"My daughter likes it here," he added, "and kicks up fewer rows than she does at home; so that's a strong point in favor of this location. Aviation interests me. I've joined the Aero Club out here and subscribed for the big meet to be held in January, at Dominguez Field. That's when we are to show the world the Kane invention, my lad, and I think it will be an eye opener to most of the crowd present."

"How does your mine, the Queen of Hearts, get along?" asked Orissa.

"It continues to pay big — even better than I had hoped. Burthon must be pretty sore over that deal by this time. Speaking of my sainted brother-in-law, I've just made a discovery. He owns the mortgage on your place."

"Why, we got the money from the Security Bank!" exclaimed Orissa.

"I know. I went there. Thought I'd take up the mortgage myself, but found Burthon had bought it. Now, the question is, why?"

Neither brother nor sister could imagine; but Cumberford knew.

"He hopes you won't be able to meet it, and then he'll foreclose and turn you out," he said. "But you're not the principal game he's after; he's shooting me over your heads. Burthon is miffed because I let you have the money, but believes I haven't any financial or personal interest in you beyond that. If he can prevent your aircraft from flying he'll make me lose my money and also ruin you two youngsters. That's doubtless his game. That's why he sent his man here to spy upon you."

"But that is absurd! Burthon can't prevent our success," declared Steve. "Even if some minor parts go wrong, the aircraft will fly as strongly and as well as anything now in existence."

"Don't be too sure," cautioned Mr. Cumberford. "You and your machine

may be all right, but that's no reason why Burthon can't push failure at you, or even prevent you from flying. We must watch him."

"I do not believe the man hates us," observed Orissa, thoughtfully. "Mr. Burthon is a little queer and — and unscrupulous, at times; but I don't consider him a bad man, by any means."

"I know him better than you do, and he hates me desperately," replied Cumberford.

"He says that — that you abused his sister," doubtfully remarked the girl.

"Well, I did," said Cumberford, calmly. "I pounded her two or three times. Once I choked her until it's a wonder she ever revived."

"Oh, how dreadful!" exclaimed Orissa, shrinking back.

"Isn't it?" he agreed, lighting a cigarette. "Only a brute would lift his hand against a woman. But Burthon's sister — my wife — had a fiendish temper, and her tantrums aroused all the evil in my nature — there's plenty there, I assure you. It was the time I choked her that Burthon had me arrested for cruelty. She had put poison in my coffee and I took the fluid into court with me. Burthon said I was lying and I asked him to drink the coffee to establish his sister's innocence. But he wouldn't. Pity, wasn't it? The judge begged my pardon and said I ought to have choked her a moment longer. But no; I'm glad I didn't, for she died naturally in the end. My dear daughter, whom I sincerely love, is like her lamented mother, except that I can trust her not to poison me."

"Doesn't she love you in return?" asked Orissa. "Sybil? Why, she's tremendously fond of me. My daughter," and his voice grew suddenly tender, "has been for years — is now — the only person I live for. We're chums, we two. The poor child can't help her inherited tendencies, you know, and I rather enjoy the fact that she keeps me guessing what she's going to do next. It — er — interests me, so to speak. I like Sybil."

Sybil interested Orissa, too. Her father's reports of her were so startlingly condemnatory, and his affection for her so evident, that Orissa's curiosity was aroused concerning her. Mr. Cumberford, in spite of his peculiarities and deprecating remarks concerning himself had won the friendship of both Stephen and Orissa by this time; for whatever he might be to others he had certainly proved himself a friend in need to them. It was evident he liked the Kanes and sought their companionship, for the aircraft could scarcely account for his constant attendance at the hangar.

"I would like to meet your daughter," said the girl, thoughtfully.

"Would you, really?" he asked, eagerly. "Well, I'm sure it wouldn't hurt Sybil to know you. I'll bring her out here tomorrow, if she'll come. Never can tell what she will do or won't do, you know. Interesting, isn't it?"

“Quite so,” she concurred, laughing at his whimsical tone.

Because of this conversation the Kanes awaited Mr. Cumberford’s arrival next day with keen curiosity. Steve advanced the opinion that the girl wouldn’t come, but Orissa thought she would. And she did. When the motor car stopped in front of the bungalow there was a girl in the back seat and Orissa ran down the path to welcome her.

A pale, composed face looked out from beneath a big black hat with immense black plumes. A black lace waist with black silk bolero and skirt furnished a somber costume scarcely suited to so young a girl, for Sybil Cumberford could not have been much older than Orissa, if any. Her father was right when he claimed that Sybil was not beautiful. She had high, prominent cheek bones, a square chin and a nose with a decided uplift to the point. But her brown hair was profuse and exquisitely silky; her dark eyes large, well opened and far seeing; her slight form carried with unconscious grace.

Orissa’s critical glance took in these points at once, and intuitively she decided that Sybil Cumberford was not unattractive and ought to win friends. That she had a strong personality was evident; also the girl whom her father had affectionately called a “demon” was quiet, reserved and undemonstrative — at least during this first interview.

She acknowledged the introduction to Orissa with a rather haughty bow, alighting from the car without noticing Miss Kane’s outstretched hand.

“Which way is the aeroplane, Daddy?” she asked, speaking not flippantly, but in low, quiet tones.

“I’ll lead the way; you girls may follow,” he said.

As they went up the path Orissa, anxious to be sociable and to put the stranger at her ease, said brightly:

“Don’t you think the ride out here is beautiful?”

“Yes,” responded Sybil.

“The orange groves are so attractive, just now,” continued Orissa.

There was no response.

“I hope you enjoyed it, so you will be tempted to come again,” resumed the little hostess.

Miss Cumberford said nothing. Her father, a step in advance, remarked over his shoulder: “My daughter seldom wastes words. If you wish her to speak you must address to her a direct question; then she will answer it or not, as she pleases. It’s her way, and you’ll have to overlook it.”

Orissa flushed and glanced sidewise to get a peep at Sybil’s face, that she might note how the girl received this personal criticism. But the features were as unemotional as wax and the dark, mysterious eyes were directed

toward the hangar, the roof of which now showed plainly. It was hard to continue a conversation under such adverse conditions and Orissa did not try. In silence they traversed the short distance to the shed, where Steve met them, a little abashed at receiving a young lady in his workshop.

But Mr. Cumberford's daughter never turned her eyes upon him. She gave a graceful little nod when presented to the inventor, but ignored him to stare at the aircraft, which riveted her attention at once.

"This, Sybil," said her father, enthusiastically, "is the famous aeroplane to be known in history as the Kane Aircraft. It's as far ahead of the ordinary biplane as a sewing machine is ahead of a needle and thimble. It will do things, you know. So it — er — interests me."

It seemed to interest her, also. Examining the details of construction with considerable minuteness she began asking questions that rather puzzled Mr. Cumberford, who retreated in favor of Steve. The inventor explained, and as all his heart and soul were in the aeroplane he explained so simply and comprehensively that Sybil's dark eyes suddenly flashed upon his face, and clung there until the young fellow paused, hesitated, and broke down embarrassed.

Orissa, smiling at Steve's shyness, picked up the subject and dilated upon it at length, for the girl had every detail at her tongue's end and understood the mechanism fully as well as her brother did. The visitor listened to her with interest, and when she had no more questions to ask stood in absorbed meditation before the aeroplane, as if in a dream, and wholly disregarded the others present.

CHAPTER XIV
THE FLYING FEVER

Mr. Cumberford said frankly to Steve and Orissa:

"Don't expect too much of Sybil, or you'll be disappointed. She's peculiar, and the things that interest her are often those the world cares nothing for. Anything odd or unusual is sure to strike her fancy; that's why she's so enraptured with the aircraft."

The word enraptured did not seem, to Steve, to describe Sybil's attitude at all; but Orissa, watching the girl's face, decided it was especially appropriate. They left her standing before the machine and went on with their work, while Mr. Cumberford ignored his daughter and smoked cigarettes while he watched, as usual, every movement of the young mechanic.

"Saw Burthon this morning," he remarked, presently.

"Did he say anything?" asked Steve.

"No. Just smiled. That shows he's up to something. Wonder what it is."

Steve shook his head.

"I don't see how that man can possibly injure me," he said, musingly. "I've gone straight ahead, in an honest fashion, and minded my own business. As for the machine, that's honest, too, and all my improvements are patented."

"They're what?"

"Patented, sir; registered in the patent office at Washington."

"Oho!"

Steve looked at him, surprised.

"Well, sir?"

"You're an irresponsible idiot, Stephen Kane."

"Because I patented my inventions?"

"Yes, sir; for placing full descriptions and drawings of them before the public until you've startled the aviation world and are ready to advertise what you've done."

Steve stared, a perception of Cumberford's meaning gradually coming to him.

"Why, as for that," he said a little uneasily, "no one ever takes the trouble to read up new patents, there are so many of them. And, after all, it's a protection."

"Is it? I can put another brace in that new elevator of yours and get a patent on it as an improvement. The brace won't help it any, but it will give me the right to use it. I'm not positive I couldn't prevent you from using yours, if I got mine publicly exhibited and on the market first." Steve was

bewildered, and Orissa looked very grave. But Mr. Cumberford lighted another cigarette and added:

"Nevertheless, I wouldn't worry. As you say, the patent office is a rubbish heap which few people ever care to examine. Is everything covered by patent?"

"Everything but the new automatic balance. I haven't had time to send that on."

"Then don't."

"The old one is patented, but it proved a failure and nearly killed me. The one I am now completing is entirely different."

"Good. Don't patent it until after the aviation meet. It's your strongest point. Keep that one surprise, at least, up your sleeve."

As Steve was considering this advice Sybil Cumberford came softly to her father's side and said: "Daddy, I want to fly."

"To flee or to flew?" he asked, banteringly, at the same time looking at her intently.

"To fly in the air."

Mr. Cumberford sighed.

"Kane, what will a duplicate of your aircraft cost?"

"I can't say exactly, sir," replied the boy, smiling.

"Shall we order one, Sybil?"

She stood staring straight ahead, with that impenetrable, mysterious look in her dark eyes which was so typical of the girl. Cumberford threw away his cigarette and coughed.

"We'll consider that proposition some time, Steve," he continued, rather hastily. "Meantime, perhaps my daughter could make a trial flight in your machine."

"Perhaps," said Steve, doubtfully.

"Will it carry two?"

"It would support the weight of two easily," replied the young man; "but I would be obliged to rig up a second seat."

"Do so, please," requested Miss Cumberford, in her even, subdued voice. "When will it be ready?"

"The aircraft will be complete in about ten days from now; but before I attempt to carry a passenger I must give it a thorough personal test," said Steve, with decision. "You may watch my flights, Miss Cumberford, if you wish, and after I've proved the thing to be correct and safe I'll do what I can to favor you — if you're not afraid, and still want to make the trial."

"Thank you," she said, and turned away.

"I'll go myself, some time," observed Mr. Cumberford, after a pause.

“Flying interests me.”

Orissa was much amused. She had not known many girls of her own age, but such as she had met were all commonplace creatures compared with this strange girl, who at present seemed unable to tear herself away from the airship. Sybil did not convey the impression of being ill-bred or forward, however unconventional she might be; yet it seemed to Orissa that she constantly held herself firmly repressed, yet alert and watchful, much like a tiger crouched ready to spring upon an unsuspecting prey. In spite of this uncanny attribute, Orissa found herself powerfully drawn toward the peculiar girl, and resolved to make an attempt to win her confidence and friendship.

With this thought in mind she joined Sybil, who was again examining the aeroplane with rapt attention. While she stood at her side the girl asked, without glancing up:

“Have you ever made a flight?”

“No,” replied Orissa.

“Why not?”

“I haven’t had an opportunity.”

“Don’t you like it?”

“I imagine I would enjoy a trip through the air,” answered Orissa; “that is, after I became accustomed to being suspended in such a thin element.”

“You seem to understand your brother’s invention perfectly.”

“Oh, I do, in its construction and use. You see, I’ve been with Steve from the beginning; also I’ve examined several other modern aeroplanes and watched the flights at Dominguez Field. Naturally I’m enthusiastic over aviation, but I haven’t yet considered the idea of personally attempting a flight. To manage a machine in the air requires a quick eye, a clear brain and a lot of confidence and courage.”

“Is it so dangerous?” asked Miss Cumberford quietly.

“Not if you have the qualities I mention and a bit of experience or training to help you in emergencies. I’m sure an aeroplane is as safe as a steam car, and a little safer than an automobile; but a certain amount of skill is required to manage even those.”

The girl’s lips curled scornfully, as if she impugned this statement; but she remained silent for a while before continuing her catechism. Then she asked:

“Do you mean to try flying?”

“Perhaps so, some day,” said Orissa, smiling; “when aeroplanes have become so common that my fears are dissipated. But, really, I haven’t given the matter a thought. That is Steve’s business, just now. All I’m trying to do is help him get ready.”

“You believe his device to be practical?”

“It’s the best I have ever seen, and I’ve examined all the famous aeroplanes.”

“What has my father to do with this invention?” Orissa was surprised.

“Hasn’t he told you?” she asked.

“Only that it ‘interests him;’ but many things do that.”

“We needed money to complete the aircraft, and Mr. Cumberford kindly let us have it,” explained the girl.

“What did he demand in return?”

“Nothing but our promise to repay him in case we succeed.”

Sybil shot a swift glance toward her father.

“Look out for him,” she murmured. “He’s a dangerous man — in business deals.”

“But this isn’t business,” protested Orissa earnestly; “indeed, his act was wholly irregular from a business standpoint. As a matter of fact, Mr. Cumberford has been very generous and unselfish in his attitude toward us. We like your father, Miss Cumberford, and — we trust him.”

The girl stood silent a moment; then she slowly turned her face to Orissa with a rare and lovely smile which quite redeemed its plainness. From that moment she lost her reserve, toward Orissa at least, and it was evident the praise of her father had fully won her heart.

Day by day, thereafter, Sybil came with Mr. Cumberford to the hangar, until the important time arrived when Steve was to test the reconstructed aircraft. By Cumberford’s advice the trial was made in the early morning, and in order to be present both father and daughter accepted the hospitality of the Kanes for the previous night, Sybil sharing Orissa’s bed while Steve gave up his room to Mr. Cumberford and stretched himself upon a bench in the hangar.

Mrs. Kane knew that her son was to make an attempt to fly at daybreak, but was quite undisturbed. The description of the Kane Aircraft, which Orissa had minutely given her, seemed to inspire her with full confidence, and if she had a thought of danger she never mentioned it to anyone. The Cumberfords were very nice to Mrs. Kane, while she, in return, accepted their friendship unreservedly. Orissa knew her mother to be an excellent judge of character, for while her affliction prevented her from reading a face her ear was trained to catch every inflection of a voice, and by that she judged with rare accuracy. Once she said to her daughter: “Mr. Cumberford is a man with a fine nature who has in some way become embittered; perhaps through unpleasant experiences. He does not know his real self, and mistrusts it; for which reason his actions may at times be eccentric, or even erratic. But under good influences he will be found reliable and a safe friend. His

daughter, on the contrary, knows her own character perfectly and abhors it. As circumstances direct she will become very bad or very good, for she has a strong, imperious nature and may only be influenced through her affections. I think it is good for her to have you for a friend."

This verdict coincided well with Orissa's own observations and she accepted it as veritable. Yet Sybil was a constant enigma to her and seldom could she understand the impulses that dominated her. The girl was mysterious in many ways. She saw everything and everyone without looking directly at them; she found hidden meanings in the most simple and innocent phrases; always she seemed suspecting an underlying motive in each careless action, and Orissa was often uneasy at Sybil's implied suggestion that she was not sincere. The girl would be cold and silent for days together; then suddenly become animated and voluble — a mood that suited her much better than the first. Steve said to his sister: "You may always expect the unexpected of Sybil." Which proved he had also been studying this peculiar girl.

CHAPTER XV

A FINAL TEST

It was the morning of the tenth of December that the eager little group assembled at dawn on Marston's pasture to witness the test of the Kane Aircraft.

Steve was so occupied with his final adjustments and anxiety lest he should overlook some important point, that he never thought of danger. He would not have remembered even his goggles had not Orissa handed them to him and told him to put them on.

This was the first time Mr. Cumberford had witnessed a performance of the aeroplane, yet he was much less excited than his daughter, who could not withdraw her gaze from the device and was nervously attentive to every move that the young aviator made. Orissa, confident of the result, was most composed of all.

When all was ready Steve took his seat, started the motors, and when they had acquired full speed threw in the clutch. The aeroplane ran less than fifty feet on its wheels before it began to rise, when it steadily soared into the air and mounted to an elevation of several hundred feet. By this time the aviator, who had kept a straight course, was half a dozen miles from the starting point; but now he made a wide circle and, returning, passed over Marston's pasture at the same high altitude.

The speed of the aircraft was marvelous. Mr. Cumberford declared it was making a mile a minute, which estimate was probably correct. After circling for a while Steve descended to a hundred feet in a straight dive, holding the device in perfect control and maintaining at all times an exact balance. At a hundred feet he tested the rudders thoroughly, proving be could alter his course at will, make sharp turns and circle in a remarkably small space. Then, having been in the air twenty-seven minutes by the watch, he descended to the ground, rolled a hundred feet on his running gear and came to a halt a few paces away from the silent, fascinated group of watchers.

Not a hitch had occurred. The Kane Aircraft was as perfect a creation as its inventor had planned it to be.

Orissa gave Steve a kiss when he alighted, but said not a word. Sybil impulsively seized the aviator's hands and pressed them until he flushed red. Mr. Cumberford lighted a fresh cigarette, nodded approvingly and said:

"All right, Steve. It — interests me."

"It almost seemed alive," remarked Steve, with pardonable exuberance. "Why, I believe it would fly bottom-side-up, if I asked it to!"

"Any changes necessary?" inquired Mr. Cumberford.

“Only one or two, and those unimportant. The steering-wheel is too loose and needs tightening. The left guy-wires are a bit too taut and need to be relieved. Half an hour’s tinkering and the aircraft will be as perfect as I know how to make it.”

As they were wheeling it back to the hangar, Sybil asked:

“Weren’t you frightened, Mr. Kane, when you were so high above the earth?”

“Oh, no; it is far safer a mile up than it is fifty or a hundred feet. There are no dangerous air currents to contend with and the machine glides more smoothly the more air it has underneath it. When I am near the earth I sometimes get a little nervous, but never when I’m far up.”

“But suppose you should fall from that distance?”

“Fall? Oh, but you can’t fall very easily with this sort of a biplane. At any angle it’s a kind of a parachute, you know, for the hinged ends automatically spread themselves against the air pressure. And as for a tumble, you know that a fall of fifty feet would kill one as surely as a fall of several hundred feet. If a fellow can manage to stick to his aeroplane he’s pretty safe.”

“It seems such a frail thing,” observed Sybil, musingly.

“Just wooden ribs and canvas,” laughed Steve; “but anything stronger would be unnecessary, and therefore foolish.”

“Now, then,” said Mr. Cumberford, when the aircraft rested once more upon its rack, “I’ve something to tell you, Kane. I’ve known it for several days, but refrained from speaking until you had made your trial.”

There was an ominous suggestion in the words. Steve turned and looked at him questioningly.

“Any bad news, sir?”

“Time will determine if it’s bad or good. Anyhow, it’s news. Burthon is building an aircraft.”

“An aeroplane?”

“I said an aircraft.”

“But that word designates only my own machine.”

“Burthon is building your machine.”

Steve stared at him, doubtful if he heard aright. Orissa stood motionless, growing white and red by turns. Sybil’s lips curled in a sneer as she said:

“My clever uncle! What a resourceful man he is.”

“I — I don’t believe I understand,” stammered Steve.

“It’s simple enough,” replied Cumberford. “Burthon sent to Washington for copies of your plans and specifications, has built a hangar and workshop over South Pasadena way, and employed a clever mechanic from Cleveland to superintend the construction — already well under way.”

“How do you know this, sir?” inquired Steve, breathless.

“The clever mechanic from Cleveland is my own man, who has been my confidential agent for years.”

“And you permit him to do this work!” cried the young man, indignantly.

“To be sure. If Brewster loses the job, some one will get it who is *not* my agent. It is the only way I can keep accurate account of what Burthon is up to.”

They were all silent for a time while they considered this startling information. By and by Cumberford said:

“Burthon has joined the Aero Club, has donated a handsome cup for the best endurance flight during the coming meet at Dominguez, and in some way has made himself so popular with the officials that he has been appointed a member of the committee on arrangements. I dropped in at the Club yesterday, for I’m a member, and made this discovery. My scheming brother-in-law has some dusky, deep laid plan, and is carrying it out with particular attention to detail.”

“Do you think it concerns us, sir?” asked Orissa, anxiously.

“Yes. It isn’t extraordinary that Burthon should take a fancy to aviation. He is full of fads and fancies, and such a thing is liable to interest him. It interests me. But the meat in the nut is the fact that he is building a copy of the Kane Aircraft, merely adding a few details which he will declare are improvements.”

“Can’t we issue an injunction and stop him?” asked Steve.

“I’ve seen a lawyer about that. We can’t prove infringement at this stage of the game and it would be folly to attempt it. Burthon’s plan is to exhibit his machine first, then keep yours off the field during the meet and afterward claim that you are infringing upon his rights. He has organized a stock company, keeping most of the stock himself, has entered his device in all the aviation tournaments throughout the country, and is issuing a circular offering the machines for sale. I have a hand proof, fresh from the printer, of this circular.”

“Who will be his aviator?” asked Steve, with puckered brows.

“His former chauffeur, Mr. Totham Tyler, is one. He is now looking for another, also.”

Steve drew a long breath.

“What can we do?” he asked in a bewildered tone.

“Checkmate him,” was the composed reply.

“How, sir?”

“Well, we know pretty well all Burthon’s plans. He doesn’t suspect we know a thing; believes he will be able to keep his secret until his aeroplane is

ready and he can announce it in the newspapers and create a sensation. He has concocted a very pretty trick. Until this date no one has ever heard of the Kane Aircraft. After the Burthon Improved Biplane is exploited and its praise on every tongue, you won't be able to get even a hearing with your invention, much less a chance to fly it."

Steve sat down and covered his face with his hands. His attitude was one of despair.

"When will Mr. Burthon's machine be finished?" asked Orissa, thoughtfully.

"He expects to make the first trial a week from to-morrow. He has kept a force of expert men at work, and they haven't attempted to make the Kane engines, but are using a type that has worked successfully in many biplanes. So his machine has grown into existence very quickly."

"A week from to-morrow," repeated Orissa, softly. "And Steve is ready to-day."

Steve looked up quickly. Sybil laughed at him. "You silly boy," said she. "Can't you understand what Daddy means by a checkmate?"

Steve turned to Mr. Cumberford, who was lighting a fresh cigarette.

"If you will place the matter in my hands," said that gentleman, "I will proceed to put a spoke in Burthon's wheel, so to speak. Heretofore, Steve, I have been a mere onlooker, a — an interested friend, I may say. At this juncture you'd better make me your manager."

"Would you accept the position?" asked the boy. "Yes; there isn't much else to interest me just now, and — I hate Burthon."

"Poor uncle!" sighed Sybil.

"On what terms will you undertake this, sir?" Steve inquired, with anxiety.

"Why, I may have to spend a lot of money; probably will; and my time's valuable; when I'm not here I'm moping at the Alexandria Hotel; so I propose you give me ten per cent of your profits for the first three years."

"That is absurd, sir," declared Steve. "There will be little profit at first, and ten per cent of it wouldn't amount to anything."

Mr. Cumberford smiled — a grim smile that was one of his peculiarities.

"It'll do, Steve. I'll make it pay me well, see if I don't. But you may add to the demand, if you like, by promising to present my daughter the fourth complete Kane Aircraft your factory turns out."

"The first!" cried Steve.

"No, the fourth. We want the first three to go where they'll advertise us. Is it a bargain, Mr. Kane?"

Steve grasped his hand.

“Of course, sir,” he replied gratefully. “I’m not sure we can defeat Mr. Burthon’s conspiracy, but I know you will do all that is possible. And thank you, sir,” he added, again pressing the elder man’s hand.

Orissa took Mr. Cumberford’s hand next. She did not express her gratitude in words, but the man understood her and to hide his embarrassment began to search for his cigarette case. As for Sybil, she regarded the scene with an amused smile, and there was a queer look in her dark eyes.

“Now,” said Orissa, “let us go in to breakfast. You must all be nearly famished.”

“Yes; let us eat, so that I can get back to town,” agreed Mr. Cumberford, cheerfully. “The campaign begins this very morning, and it may take a few people by surprise. Remember, Steve, you’re to stand ready to carry out any plans your manager makes.”

“I understand, sir.”

CHAPTER XVI
THE OPENING GUN

Sybil rode with her father into town. On the way she said:

"You puzzle me. One would imagine you are playing fair with the Kanes."

"Mere imagination," he returned, gruffly.

"Yes," she agreed; "your nature is to plot and intrigue. The deeper, the more stealthy and unsuspected the plot, the more characteristic is it of my subtle parent."

"True," he said.

"But here is a condition that puzzles me, as I have remarked. I understand how you won the confidence of the Kanes by posing as generous and unselfish. That was quite like you. But to-day you had them in your power. You might have demanded anything — everything — yet you accepted a mere ten per cent. Now I'm really wondering what your game is."

It was evident he did not relish his daughter's criticism, for his usually placid brow bore a heavy frown. Still, he answered lightly:

"You're stirring too deep; you're roiling the pot. Why don't you look on the surface?"

"Oh! how stupid of me," she said in a relieved voice.

"To be a diverse scoundrel," announced her father, "is the acme of diabolic art. From complication to simplicity is but a step, yet requires audacity. Most rascals fail to realize that an honest act, by way of contrast, affords more satisfaction than persistent chicanery will produce. We must have variety in our pleasures in order to get the most from them."

"To be sure," said Sybil.

"Meantime, you are forgetting your Uncle Burthon."

They rode in silence for a time. Then the girl nestled a little closer to her father's side and murmured:

"I'm mighty glad, Daddy. I like the Kanes."

"So do I," he responded.

"And isn't Stephen's aeroplane marvelous?"

"I consider it," said he, "the cleverest and most important invention of the age."

By eight o'clock a skillful photographer was on his way to Stephen Kane's hangar to get pictures of the aircraft, while Mr. Cumberford sat in the office of a noted advertising expert and bargained for an amount of publicity that fairly made the man's head swim. The city editors of all the morning papers were next interviewed and interested in the Cumberford campaign so

that half a dozen reporters who were noted for their brilliant descriptive writing attended a luncheon given by Mr. Cumberford at the Aero Club and listened to his glowing accounts of the Kane Aircraft and the wonderful flight made by its inventor that very morning.

For fear Mr. Burthon might drop into the Club during this session, the cautious "manager" of the aircraft had taken the precaution to have Brewster telephone him to come to the South Pasadena workshop, and to keep him there by some pretext till late in the day. This was done. Mr. Burthon spent the entire afternoon with his imitation aircraft, returning to Los Angeles for a late dinner at his club. Then, being very tired, he went early to bed.

At breakfast next morning he picked up a newspaper, started as his eye fell upon the lurid headlines, and nearly fainted with chagrin and anger.

Upon the first page was a large picture of the Kane Aircraft, with a vignette of its inventor in an upper corner and columns of description and enthusiastic comment regarding his creation, which was heralded as a distinct forward stride in practical aviation. Stephen's remarkable flight was referred to and promise made of an exhibition soon to be held at Dominguez Field where the public would be given an opportunity to see the aircraft in action.

Mr. Burthon, as soon as he could recover himself, read every word carefully. Then he smoked his cigar and thought it over. Half an hour later he was making the rounds of the evening papers, but found he was unable to "kill" the articles prepared to exploit the Kane Aircraft. The morning papers having devoted so much space to the subject, the afternoon papers could not possibly ignore it, and finding he was helpless in this attempt he followed another tack.

Entering the office of the secretary of the Aero Club he said:

"I believe our contract with the owners of Dominguez Field provides that the Aero Club may have the use of the grounds whenever it so desires, regardless of any other engagements by outsiders."

"Certainly," replied the secretary. "I remember you yourself insisted upon that condition, as chairman of the committee on arrangements."

"Please notify the manager that we require Dominguez Field, for Club purposes, every day for the next two weeks."

"But — Mr. Burthon! Think of the expense."

"I shall personally pay all charges."

"Very well."

The secretary telephoned, and was informed that the Field had been engaged that morning for the coming Saturday by a Mr. Cumberford, an Aero Club member. But Mr. Burthon insisted on the rights of the Club, as an

organization, and the manager agreed to cancel Cumberford's engagement.

From there Mr. Burthon went to the managers of the Motordrome, the baseball parks and Luna, engaging every open date for two weeks to come. Then having practically tied up every available place where the Kane Aircraft might be publicly exhibited, he sighed contentedly and went to his South Pasadena workshop to hasten the completion of his own aeroplane.

Mr. Cumberford was annoyed when he received notice that he could not have Dominguez Field for any day previous to the aviation meet. He was further annoyed by the discovery that Burthon had engaged every public amusement park in the vicinity of Los Angeles. But he was not the man to despair in such an emergency; the contest between him and his hated brother-in-law merely sharpened his wits and rendered him more alert.

He found a broad vacant field on the Santa Monica carline; arranged with the street railway company to carry the people there for a five cent fare, and tied up his deals with contracts so that Burthon would be unable to interfere. Then he ordered a large grand stand to be built and instead of fencing in the grounds determined to make the exhibition absolutely free to all who cared to attend.

These arrangements completed, Mr. Cumberford announced in glaring advertisements the date of the exhibition, and decided he had won the game.

Mr. Burthon tried to enjoin the exhibition claiming that Stephen Kane's aircraft was an infringement on his own device; but Stephen personally appeared before the judge and convinced him there was nothing in the assertion. Of course Mr. Cumberford saw that the newspapers had full accounts of these proceedings, and so public interest was keyed up to the highest pitch when Saturday arrived. The cars on that day were taxed to their fullest capacity to carry the crowds to Kane Park, as the new aviation field was called.

A large and attractive hangar had been constructed on the field, and Stephen, on the morning of the exhibition, flew his aeroplane from Marston's pasture to Kane Park, alighting successfully just before the hangar. Orissa, Sybil and Mr. Cumberford were there to receive him, and after placing the aircraft safely in the new hangar they all motored to town for breakfast at the Alexandria.

It was no longer possible for Steve to take entire personal charge of his invention, so Mr. Cumberford, having made a careful search, was finally able to secure two men, who until that time had been strangers to one another, as assistants. These men were skilled mechanics and recommended as honest and reliable — which perhaps they were under ordinary circumstances. Their names were Wilson and Reed. As they had already been two days in

Stephen's workshop and were now thoroughly conversant with their duties, these two men were left at the hangar in charge of the aeroplane, with instructions to watch it carefully and allow no one to enter or to examine it.

Steve needed rest, for he had worked night and day preparing for this important public test. The exhibition was to be held at two o'clock, so he reluctantly acceded to Mr. Cumberford's request that he lie down in a quiet room at the hotel and sleep until he was called to lunch.

CHAPTER XVII
A CURIOUS ACCIDENT

Orissa had not been at all nervous over the event at Kane Park until the hour when she entered the field and noted the tremendous throng assembled to witness her brother's much heralded flight. The band was playing vigorously and many gay banners waved over the grand stand and the big hangar wherein the aircraft was hidden. Then, indeed, she began to realize the importance of the occasion, and her heart throbbed with pride to think that Steve was the hero all awaited and that his name would be famous from this time forth.

This was the 17th of December, and on January first the great International Aviation Meet was to be held at Los Angeles, with such famous aviators present as the Wright Brothers, Glenn Curtiss, Hubert Latham, Arch Hoxsey, their old friend Willard, Parmalee, Ely, Brookins, Radley and many others. Mr. Cumberford had entered Stephen Kane for this important meet and the young man was booked to take part in the endurance and speed tests and to make an attempt to break the world's record for altitude — all in his own flyer, the Kane Aircraft. So swift a transition from obscurity to popularity — or at least to the attention of the civilized world — was enough to turn the head of anyone; but as yet Steve seemed all unaware of his own importance.

Disregarding the crowds, which were eagerly seeking a glimpse of the young aviator but did not know him, he quietly made his way to the hangar and was admitted by Wilson, who guarded the doorway from an insistent group demanding a peep at the aeroplane.

Steve took off his coat, made a thorough inspection of all the working parts, and then put on his close-fitting cap and goggles, buttoned a sweater over his chest and nodded to his men to throw back the entrance curtains.

Two policemen cleared the way and as the aviator drew back his lever the aircraft rolled out of the hangar into full view of the multitude. A shout went up; handkerchiefs were waved and the band played frantically. On its big wheels, which were almost large enough for a motor car, the aeroplane sped across the field, turned, passed the grand stand, and with accelerating speed dashed away to the farther end of the field.

A murmur arose, in which surprise and disappointment were intermingled. One fat gentleman, who had been patiently waiting for two hours, exclaimed: "Why, it's only a sort of automobile, with crossed airplanes set over it! I thought they claimed the thing could fly." Those who knew something of aviation, however, were the ones astonished at Steve's preliminary

performance. They realized the advantage of being able to drive an aeroplane on its own wheels, as an automobile goes, in case of emergencies, and moreover the “crossed planes” — a distinct innovation in construction — gave them considerable food for thought. Usually the two surfaces, or floats, of a biplane are exactly parallel, one above the other; but in Steve’s machine the upper plane ran fore and aft, while the lower one extended sidewise. At a glance it was possible to see the advantage of this arrangement as a duplex balance, which, with the swinging wing-ends, comprised the safety device that the inventor believed made his aeroplane superior to any other.

From the far end of the field Steve swung around and started back, straight for the grand stand. He had nearly reached it when he threw in the clutch that started the propellers and at the same time slightly elevated the front rudder. Up, like a bird taking wing, rose the aircraft, soaring above the grand stand and then describing a series of circles over the field. Gradually it ascended, as if the aviator was ascending an aerial spiral staircase, until he had mounted so far among the clouds that only a grayish speck was discernible.

The spectators held their breaths in anxious suspense. The speck grew larger. Swooping down at a sharp angle the aircraft came suddenly into view and within a hundred feet of the ground resumed its normal position and began to circle around the field again.

Now a mighty cheer went up, and Orissa, who had been pressing Sybil’s hand with a grip that made her wince, found herself sobbing with joy. Her brother’s former flights had been almost as successful as this; but only now, with the plaudits of a multitude ringing in her ears, did she realize the wonderful thing he had accomplished.

But on a sudden the shout was stilled. A startled, frightened moan ran through the assemblage. Women screamed, men paled and more than one onlooker turned sick and faint.

For the Kane Aircraft, while gracefully gliding along, in full view of all, was seen to suddenly collapse and crumple like a pricked toy balloon. Aeroplane and aviator fell together in a shapeless mass toward the earth, and the sight was enough to dismay the stoutest heart.

But Steve’s salvation lay in his altitude at the time of the accident. Fifty feet from the earth the automatic planes asserted their surfaces against the air and arrested, to an appreciable extent, the plunge. Had it been a hundred feet instead of fifty the young man might have escaped without injury, but the damaged machine had acquired so great a momentum that it landed with a shock that unseated young Kane and threw him underneath the weight of the motor and gasoline tank.

A dozen ready hands promptly released him from the wreck, but when they tried to lift him to his feet he could not stand. His leg was broken.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE ONE TO BLAME

Mr. Cumberford locked the doors of the hangar and refused to admit anyone but his own daughter. Even Reed and Wilson, having assisted to drag the wreck to its shed, were ordered peremptorily to keep out. Wilson obeyed without protest, but Reed was angry and said it was his duty to put the aircraft into shape again. Cumberford listened to him quietly; listened to his declaration that he had had nothing to do with the construction of the aeroplane and therefore could in no way be held responsible for the accident; and after the man had had his say his employer asked him to come to his hotel in the evening to consider what should be done. He also made an appointment with Wilson. Then he shut himself up in the hangar with Sybil.

Orissa had gone with Steve in the ambulance to the hospital, where she remained by his side until the leg was set and the young man felt fairly comfortable. The injury was not very painful, but Steve was in great mental distress because his accident would prevent his taking part in the aviation meet. All their carefully made plans for the successful promotion of the Kane Aircraft were rendered futile by this sudden reverse of fortune and the youthful inventor constantly bewailed the fact that Burthon would now have a clear field and his own career be ignominiously ended.

Orissa had little to say in reply, for her own heart was aching and she saw no way to comfort her brother. When he was settled in his little white room, with a skillful nurse in attendance, the girl went home to break the sad news to their blind mother.

Meantime Mr. Cumberford was busy at the hangar. In spite of his usual nonchalance and obtuse manner — both carefully assumed — the man had a thorough understanding of mechanics and by this time knew every detail of young Kane's aeroplane quite intimately. Also, he was a shrewd and logical reasoner, and well knew the accident had been due to some cause other than faulty parts or inherent weakness of the aircraft. So he took off his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeves and began a careful examination of the wreck.

It was Sybil, however, who stood staring at the aeroplane, always fascinating to her, who first discovered the cause of Steve's catastrophe.

"See here, Daddy," she exclaimed; "this guy-wire has been cut half through, in some way, and others are broken entirely."

Mr. Cumberford came to her side and inspected the guy-wire. The girl was right. It was certainly odd that several strands of the slender but strong woven-wire cable had parted. Her father took a small magnifying glass from

his pocket and examined the cut with care.

"It has been filed," he announced.

Sybil nodded, but she seemed absent-minded and to have lost interest in the discovery.

"From the first I suspected the guy-wires," she said. "When the aircraft collapsed I knew the wires had parted, and then — I thought of my clever uncle."

Mr. Cumberford rolled down his sleeves and put on his coat.

"Three of the wires gave way," he observed, "and it's a wonder young Kane wasn't killed. Come, 'Bil; we'll go back to the hotel."

They found the field deserted, their motor car being the last on the grounds. During the ride into town Sybil remarked:

"This affair will cause you serious loss, Daddy."

"Why?"

"Steve can't exhibit his device at the meet, and Uncle Burthon will be on hand to win all the laurels."

"Don't worry over that," he said grimly. "We've ten days in which to outwit Burthon, and if I can't manage to do it in that time I deserve to lose my money."

Wilson came to the hotel promptly at eight o'clock for his interview with Mr. Cumberford. Said that gentleman:

"Tell me all that happened at the hangar after we left you and Reed there this morning."

The man seemed reluctant at first, but finally decided to tell the truth. He appeared to be an honest young fellow, but knew quite well that his testimony would injure his fellow assistant.

"It was quite early, sir, when an automobile came into the field and a gentleman asked to see the aircraft. Mr. Reed was at the door, at the time, and I heard him reply that no one could be admitted. Then the gentleman said something to him in a low voice and Reed, after a little hesitation, turned to me and told me to guard the door. I did so, and the two walked away together. I saw them in close conversation for quite a while, and then Reed came back to the hangar and said: 'The gentleman is having trouble with his motor car, Wilson, and one of his engines is working badly. You understand such things; go and see if you can help him, while I guard the door.'

"I thought that was queer, sir, for Reed is as good a mechanic as I am; but I took a wrench and walked over to the automobile, which was not a hundred yards distant. A little dried-up chauffeur was in the driver's seat. The gentleman asked me to test the engines, which I did, and found there was nothing wrong with them at all. I hadn't been a bit suspicious until then, but

this set me thinking and I hurried back to the hangar. I hadn't been away ten minutes, and I found Reed standing in the doorway quietly smoking his pipe. Everything about the aircraft seemed all right, so I said nothing to Reed except that his friend was a ringer and up to some trick. He answered that the man was no friend of his; that he had never seen him before and was not likely to see him again. That is all, sir. I didn't leave the hangar again until Mr. Kane returned and took charge of it."

Mr. Cumberford had listened intently.

"Do you know the name of the man with the automobile?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Describe him, please."

Wilson described Burthon with fair accuracy.

"Thank you. You may go now, but I want you on hand to-morrow morning to assist in getting the machine back to Kane's old hangar."

"Very well, sir."

Reed came a half hour after Wilson had left. His attitude was swaggering and defiant. Mr. Cumberford said to him:

"Reed, your action in filing the guy-wires is a crime that will be classed as attempted manslaughter. You are liable to imprisonment for life."

The man grew pale, but recovering himself replied:

"I didn't file the wires. You can't prove it."

"I'm going to try, anyway," declared Cumberford. "That is, unless you confess the truth, in which case I'll prosecute Burthon instead of you."

Reed stared at him, but stubbornly made no reply.

"How much did he pay you for the work?" continued Cumberford.

No answer.

Mr. Cumberford touched a bell and a detective entered.

"Officer, I accuse this man of an attempt to murder Stephen Kane," said he. "You overheard the recent interview in this room and understand the case perfectly and the evidence on which I base my charge. You will arrest Mr. Reed, if you please."

The officer took the man in charge. Reed was nervous and evidently terrified, but maintained stubborn silence.

"Confession may save you," suggested Cumberford; but Reed was pursuing some plan previously determined on, and would not speak. So the officer led him away.

Next morning the wrecked aeroplane was transferred to the workshop in the Kane garden, where Wilson, under the supervision of Orissa and Mr.

Cumberford, began taking it apart that they might estimate the damage it had sustained. Orissa's face bore a serious but determined expression and she

directed the work as intelligently as Steve could have done. Cumberford, who had brought a pair of overalls, worked beside Wilson and in a few hours they were able to tell exactly what repairs were necessary.

"The motors are not much injured," announced Orissa, "and that is indeed fortunate. We need one new propeller blade, five bows and struts for the lower plane, new wing ends and guy-wires and almost a complete new running gear. It isn't so very bad, sir. With the extra parts we have on hand I believe the aircraft can be put in perfect condition before the meet."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Cumberford. "Then our greatest need is to secure a competent aviator."

"To operate Stephen's machine?"

"Of course. He's out of commission, poor lad; but the machine must fly, nevertheless."

Orissa's blue eyes regarded him gravely. She had been considering this proposition ever since the accident.

"Our first task," said she, "is to get my brother's invention thoroughly repaired."

"But the question of the aviator is fully as important," persisted her friend. "Wilson," turning to the mechanic, "do you think you could operate the aircraft?"

"Me, sir?" replied the man, with a startled look; "I — I'm afraid not. I understand it, of course; but I've had no experience."

"No one but Stephen Kane can claim to have had experience with this device," said Mr. Cumberford; "so someone must operate it who is, as yet, wholly inexperienced."

"Can't you find an aviator who has used other machines, sir?" asked Wilson. "The city is full of them just now."

"I'll try," was the answer.

Mr. Cumberford did try. After engaging another mechanic to assist Wilson he interviewed every aviator he could find in Los Angeles. But all with the slightest experience in aerial navigation were engaged by the various aeroplane manufacturers to operate their devices, or had foreign machines of their own which were entered for competition. He was referred to several ambitious and fearless men who would willingly undertake to fly the Kane invention, but he feared to trust them with so important a duty.

Returning one day in a rather discouraged mood to Orissa, who was busy directing her men, he said:

"I have always, until now, been able to find a man for any purpose I required; but the art of flying is in its infancy and the few bold spirits who have entered the game are all tied up and unavailable. It looks very much as

if we were going to have a winning aeroplane with no one to develop its possibilities."

Orissa was tightening a turnbuckle. She looked up and said with a smile:

"The aviator is already provided, sir."

"What! You have found him?" exclaimed Mr. Cumberford.

"I ought to have said 'aviatress,' I suppose," laughed the girl.

"My daughter? Nonsense."

"Oh, Sybil would undertake it, if I'd let her," replied Orissa. "But I dare not trust anyone but — myself. There is too much at stake."

"You!"

"Just Orissa Kane. I've been to the hospital this morning and talked with Steve, and he quite approves my idea."

Mr. Cumberford looked at the slight, delicate form with an expression of wonder. The girl seemed so dainty, so beautiful, so very feminine and youthful, that her suggestion to risk her life in an airship was positively absurd.

"You've a fine nerve, my child," he remarked, with a sigh, "and I've no doubt you would undertake the thing if I'd give my consent. But of course I can't do that."

"Why not?"

"You're not fit."

"In what way?"

"Why, er — strength, and — and experience. Girls don't fly, my dear; they simply encourage the men to risk their necks."

"Boo! there's no danger," asserted Orissa, scornfully. "One is as safe in the Kane Aircraft as in a trundle-bed."

"Yet Steve — "

"Oh, one may be murdered in bed, you know, as well as in an aeroplane. Had those guy-wires not been tampered with an accident to my brother would have been impossible. Have you stopped to consider, sir, that even when the planes separated and crumpled under the air pressure Steve's device asserted its ability to float, and dropped gently to the ground? Steve managed to get hurt because he fell under the weight of the motors; that was all. Really, sir, I can't imagine anything safer than the aircraft. And as for brawn and muscle, you know very well that little strength is required in an aviator. Skill is called for; a clear head and a quick eye; and these qualities I possess."

"H-m. You think you can manage the thing?"

"I know it — absolutely. I've talked over with Steve every detail from the very beginning, and have personally tested all the working parts time and

again, except in actual flight.”

“And you’re not afraid?”

“Not in the least.”

“You won’t faint when you find yourself among the clouds?”

“Not a faint, sir. It isn’t in me.”

Mr. Cumberford fell silent and solemn. He began to seriously consider the proposition.

CHAPTER XIX

PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

That evening the secretary of the Aero Club telephoned Mr. Cumberford to ask if he wished to withdraw his entry from contest in the coming aviation meet.

"By no means," was the reply.

"But you state that Kane is to be the aviator, and we are informed that Kane has a broken leg."

"Leave the entry as it stands: 'Kane, Aviator,'" said Cumberford, positively.

"Very well, sir," returned the secretary, evidently puzzled.

But his friend Burthon, who had suggested his telephoning, was highly pleased when he learned Mr. Cumberford's decision.

"All right," he observed, with satisfaction; "we'll leave the Kane Aircraft on the programme, for everyone is talking of the wonderful device and the announcement of its competition will be the greatest drawing card we have. But the entry of 'Kane, Aviator' will disqualify anyone but Kane from operating the aircraft, and I happen to know his leg is in a plaster cast and he cannot use it for months to come."

"Won't it hurt us to disqualify the Kane Aircraft and have it withdrawn at the last moment?" inquired the secretary, doubtfully.

"No; for I'm going to spring on the crowd the biggest surprise of the century — Burthon's Biplane."

"Are you sure of its success, sir?"

"Absolutely. Kane copied his machine from mine, as I have before explained to you, and in addition to all the good points he has exhibited I have the advantage of a perfect automatic balance. If Kane's device had been equipped with it he wouldn't have fallen the other day."

Perhaps Mr. Burthon was sincere in saying this. He had had no opportunity to examine Stephen's latest creation at close quarters, but on the day of the trial at Kane Park he had observed the fact that Stephen had abandoned the automatic balance he had first patented, and now had recourse to crossed planes. Both Burthon and his mechanics considered the original device the best and most practical, and they depended upon it for the biggest advertisement of Burthon's Improved Biplane, having of course no hint that Stephen had tested it and found it sadly lacking.

On the 26th the Burthon flyer was ready for trial, and Tot Tyler, after several attempts, got it into the air and made a short flight that filled the heart of Mr. Burthon with elation.

“Curtiss and the Wrights will do better than that, though,” observed the ex-chauffeur, “to say nothing of those daredevils Latham and Hoxsey. I’ll improve after a few more trials, but I can’t promise ever to do better than the other fellows do.”

“That isn’t to be expected,” returned Burthon. “I’m not backing you to excel the performances of the old aviators; that isn’t my point. The improvements and novelties we have to show will take the wind out of the sails of all other aeroplanes and result in a flood of orders. Comparing machine for machine, we’re years in advance of the Wrights and Curtiss — and centuries ahead of those foreign devices.”

“Perhaps,” admitted Tot. “But Kane’s aeroplane is practically the same as your own, and it is still on the programme.”

“It won’t fly, though,” declared Burthon, with a laugh. “Don’t worry about anything but your own work, Tyler. Leave all the rest to me.”

The man knew his employer was playing a hazardous game and that he had stolen outright the Kane Aircraft, and while the knowledge did not add to Tot Tyler’s nerve or assurance he was gleeful over the prospect of “doing” his enemy, Cumberford. The little fellow was bold enough — even to the point of bravery — and fully as unprincipled as his employer. His hatred of Cumberford was so acrid that he would have gone to any length, even without pay, to defeat his plans, and Burthon found him an eager and willing tool. Nevertheless, the little man scented danger ahead of them and had an idea that trouble was brewing from some unknown source.

By this time Burthon had begun a campaign of widespread publicity, and in spite of the long list of famous aviators in the city the newspapers were filled with pictures of the Burthon device and accounts of the marvelous flights of Totham Tyler. Nothing more was heard of the Kane Aircraft, but the public had not forgotten it and many were puzzled that two local aeroplane makers should be exhibiting identically the same improvements, each claiming to have originated them. As for the visiting aviators, they were interested, but held their peace. The performances at the coming competition would tell the story of supremacy, and whatever good points were displayed by the local inventors could doubtless be adapted to their own craft. They waited, therefore, for proof of the glowing claims made in the newspapers. Many promising inventions have turned out to be failures.

The public was, to an extent, in the same doubting mood. Kane’s magnificent public flight had ended with an accident, while Tyler’s preliminary exhibitions were in no way remarkable as compared with records already established. The meet would tell the story.

Meantime Orissa completed her repairs. On the day that Steve came home

from the hospital in an ambulance she wheeled him in an invalid chair to the hangar and allowed the boy to inspect a perfect aircraft. The young man suffered no pain, and although he was physically helpless his eye and brain were as keen as ever. Being wheeled around the device, so that he could observe it from all sides and at all angles, he made a thorough examination of his sister's work and declared it excellent.

"Think you can manage it, Ris?" he asked, referring to her proposed venture.

"I am sure I can," she promptly replied. "You must understand — all of you," turning to confront Mr. Cumberford and Sybil, who were present, "that I am not undertaking this flight from choice. Had Steve been able to exhibit his own aeroplane I might never have tried to fly alone; but it seems to me that our fortune, my brother's future career, and our friend Mr. Cumberford's investment, all hinge upon our making a good showing at Dominguez Field. No one but me is competent to properly exhibit the aircraft, to show all its good points and prove what it is capable of doing. Therefore I have undertaken to save our reputation and our money, and I am sure that my decision is proper and right."

"I agree with you," said Steve, eagerly. "You're a brave little girl, Ris."

"I have but one request to make, Mr. Cumberford," she added.

"What is it, Orissa?" he inquired.

"Do not advertise me as 'The Girl Aviator,' or by any other such name. I prefer people should remain ignorant of the fact that a girl is operating the Kane Aircraft. Can't you keep quiet about it?"

"I can, and will," he asserted. "Indeed, my dear, I much prefer that course. It will be all the more interesting when — when — the discovery is made."

"I do not wish to become a celebrity," she said, seriously. "One in the family is enough," glancing proudly at Steve, "and I'm afraid nice people would think me unmaidenly and bold to become a public aviator. I'm not at all freakish — indeed, I'm not! — and only stern necessity induces me to face this ordeal."

"My dear," said Mr. Cumberford, looking at her admiringly, "your feelings shall be considered in every possible way. But you must not imagine you are the first female aviator. In Europe — especially in France — a score of women have made successful flights, and not one is considered unwomanly or has forfeited any claim to the world's respect and applause."

"The most successful aviators of the future," remarked Stephen, thoughtfully, "are bound to be women. As a rule they are lighter than men, more supple and active, quick of perception and less liable to lose their heads in emergencies. The operation of an aeroplane is, it seems to me, especially

fitted to women."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sybil, with a whimsical glance at the speaker, "I have discovered my future vocation. I shall aviate parties of atmospheric tourists. When the passenger airships are introduced I'll become the original sky motoress, and so win fame and fortune."

Steve laughed, but shook his head.

"The airship of the future will not be a passenger affair," he predicted, "but an individual machine for personal use. They'll be cheaper than automobiles, and more useful, for they can go direct to their destination in a straight 'airline.' Men will use them to go to business, women to visit town on shopping expeditions or to take an airing for pleasure; but I'm sure they will be built for but one person."

"Then I'll have one and become a free lance in the sky, roaming where I will," declared Sybil.

This unconventional girl had developed a decided fancy for the inventor, and while in his presence it was noticed that she became less reserved and mysterious than at other times. Steve liked Sybil, too, although she was so strong a contrast to his own beautiful sister. When she cared to be agreeable Miss Cumberford proved interesting and was, Steve thought, "good company." Orissa observed that Sybil invariably presented the best side of her character to Steve. While he was in the hospital the girl visited him daily, and now that he had come home again she passed most of her time at the hangar.

Mr. Cumberford was greatly annoyed to learn that the Kane headquarters at Dominguez Field had been given a location in the rear of all the others, where it would be practically unnoticed. Of course this slight was attributed to Burthon's influence with the committee of arrangements, of which he was a member. Burthon's own hangar, on the contrary, had a very prominent position. From his man Brewster, as well as from others, Mr. Cumberford also learned that Burthon had hinted he would prevent the Kane Aircraft from taking any part in the contests.

All these things worried the Kane party, whose anxieties would have been sufficient had they not been forced to encounter the petty malice of Burthon. Sybil, silently listening to all that was said, assumed a more mysterious air than usual, and on the day previous to the opening of the great aviation meet she informed her father that she would not accompany him to Dominguez, where he was bound to attend to all final preparations. The decision surprised him, but being accustomed to his daughter's sudden whims he made no reply and left her in their rooms at the hotel.

CHAPTER XX

UNCLE AND NIECE

When her father had gone Sybil addressed a note to Mr. Burthon which read:

"I will call upon you, at your club, for a private interview at twelve o'clock precisely. As all your future depends upon this meeting you will not fail to keep the appointment."

She signed this message with the initials "S. C." and Mr. Burthon, receiving it as he was about to start for Dominguez in his motor car, for the messenger had had a lively chase over town to catch him, read and reread the epistle carefully, was thoughtful a moment, and then ordered his man to drive him to the club.

"'S. C.,'" he mused; "who on earth can it be? A woman's handwriting, of course, crude and unformed. When women intrigue there is usually a reason for it. Better find out what's in the wind, even at the loss of a little valuable time. That's the safest plan."

He reached his club at exactly twelve o'clock and heard a woman inquiring for him of the door-keeper. He met her, bowed, and without a word led her to his own private sitting room, on the third floor. The woman — or was it a girl? — was, he observed, heavily veiled, but as soon as they were alone she removed the veil and looked at him steadfastly from a pair of dark, luminous eyes.

Mr. Burthon shifted uneasily in his chair. He had never seen the girl before, yet there was something singularly familiar in her features.

"Be good enough to tell me who you are," he said in the gentle tone he invariably employed toward women. "I have granted this interview at your request, but I am very busy to-day and have little time to spare you."

"I am your niece," she replied, slowly and deliberately.

"Oh!" he exclaimed; then paused to observe her curiously. "So, you are my sister Marian's daughter."

"Exactly."

"I knew she had a child, for often she wrote me about it; but her early death and my estrangement with your father prevented me from seeing you, until now. Your mother, my dear, was a — a noble woman."

"You are not telling the truth," said Sybil, quietly. "She was quite the contrary."

He started and flushed. Then he replied, somewhat confused by the girl's scornful regard:

"At least, I loved her. She was my only sister."

"And your accomplice."

“Eh?” He stared, aghast. Then, quickly recovering himself, he remarked:

“You were rather too young, when she died, to judge your mother’s character correctly.”

“It is true; but I remember her with abhorrence.”

“Your father, on the other hand,” observed Mr. Burthon, his face hardening, “might well deserve your hatred and aversion. He is a scoundrel.”

“I have heard him say so,” replied Sybil, smiling, “but I do not believe it. In any event his iniquity could not equal that of the Burthons.”

“We are complimentary,” said her uncle, returning the smile with seeming amusement. “But I regret to say I have no time to further converse with you to-day. Will you call again, if you have anything especial to say to me?”

“No,” replied Sybil. “You must listen to me to-day.”

“To-morrow — ”

“To-morrow,” she interrupted, “you may be in prison. It is not easy to interview criminals in jail, is it?”

He looked at her now with more than curiosity; his gaze was searching, half fearful, inquiring.

“You speak foolishly,” said he.

“Yet you understand me perfectly,” she returned. “I confess that I do not,” he coldly persisted. “Then I must explain,” said she. “When my mother died I was but eight years of age. But I was old for my years, and on her deathbed your sister placed in my hands a sealed envelope, directing me to guard it carefully and secretly, and not to open it until I was eighteen years of age and not then unless I had in some way incurred the enmity and persecution of my uncle, George Burthon. She said it was her *confession.”*

He sat perfectly still, as if turned to stone, his eyes fixed full upon the girl’s face. With an effort he said, in a soft voice:

“Have I persecuted you?”

“Indirectly; yes.”

“But you cannot be eighteen yet!”

“No,” she admitted; “I am only seventeen.”

He breathed a sigh of relief.

“Then — ”

“But I am half a Burthon,” Sybil continued, “and therefore have little respect for the wishes of others — especially when they interfere with my own desires. I kept the letter my mother gave me, but had no interest in opening it until the other day.”

“And you read it then?”

“Two or three times — perhaps half a dozen with great care.”

“Where is that letter now?”

“Where you cannot find it, clever as you are. I may say I have great respect for your cleverness, my dear uncle, since reading the letter. How paltry the story of Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde seems after knowing you!”

He moved uneasily in his seat; but the man was on the defensive now, and eyed his accuser steadily.

“You seem much like your mother,” he suggested, reflectively.

“But you are wrong; I am more like my father.” He shrugged his shoulders.

“What matter, my child? You have a rare inheritance, on either side.”

They sat in silence a moment. Then he said:

“You have not yet confided to me your errand.”

“True. I have a request to make which I am sure you will comply with. You must stop annoying the Kanes.”

He smiled at her.

“You have marked them for your own prey — you and your precious father?”

“Yes. Your persecution must cease, and at once.” He seemed thoughtful.

“I have an end in view,” said he; “an important end.”

“I know; you want to force Orissa to marry you. But that is absurd. She is scarcely half your age, and — she despises you.”

He flushed at this.

“Nevertheless — ”

“I won’t have it!” cried Sybil, sternly. “And, another thing: you must withdraw your aeroplane from the aviation meet to-morrow.”

“Must?”

“I used the word advisedly. I have the power to compel you to obey me, and I intend to use it.”

He sat watching her with his eyes slightly narrowed. Sybil was absolutely composed.

“Your mother, my dear,” he presently remarked, “was a — charming woman, but inclined to be visionary and imaginative. I have no idea what she wrote in that letter, but if it is anything that asperses my character, my integrity or fairness, it is not true, and can only be accounted for by the fact that the poor creature was driven insane by your father, and did not know what she was doing.”

“Oh, indeed!” the girl retorted. “Is it not true, then, that you were convicted in Baltimore, twenty years ago, of a dastardly murder and robbery, and sentenced by the court to life imprisonment? Is it not true that my mother at that time contrived your escape and secreted you so cleverly that the officers of the law could never find you?”

“It is not true,” he declared, speaking with apparent effort.

“The letter states that you were arrested and convicted under the name of Harcliffe; that when active search for you was finally abandoned you went with my mother to Chicago, and there began a new life under your right name of Burthon; that there your sister met and married my father, although you opposed the match bitterly, fearing she would betray your secret to her husband. But she never did.”

“It is not true,” he repeated. “The whole story is but a tissue of lies.”

“Then,” said Sybil, “I will telegraph to the police of Baltimore that the escaped prisoner, Harcliffe, whom they have been seeking these twenty years, is here in Los Angeles, and ask them to send at once someone to identify him. You need not be afraid, for the story is false. They will come, I will point you out to them, and they will declare you are not the man. Then I will believe you — not before.”

He sat a long time, his head upon his hand, looking at her reflectively. At the same time her dark eyes were fixed upon him with equal intentness.

By and by she laughed aloud, but there was no mirth in the sound.

“Not that, dear uncle,” she said, as if he had spoken. “Am I not my mother’s daughter, and my clever uncle’s own niece? You cannot quiet me by murder, for in that case my revenge is fully provided for. I know you, and I did not venture upon this disagreeable errand unprepared. There is a plain clothes man at the street door, who, if I do not emerge from this club in — ” she looked at her watch — ”in fifteen minutes, will summon assistance, guard every exit, and then search your rooms for my body. The doorkeeper has my name and knows that I am here. Therefore, to injure me now would be to thrust your head into the hangman’s noose. Afterward you will be very considerate of my welfare, for from this day any harm that befalls me will lead to your prompt arrest and the disclosure of your secret.”

He threw out his hands with a despairing, helpless gesture.

“What a demon you are!” he cried.

“I believe I am,” said Sybil, slowly. “I hate myself for being obliged to act in this dramatic fashion — to threaten and bully like a coward — but being blessed with so unscrupulous an uncle I cannot accomplish my purpose in a more dignified way.”

“State your demands, then,” said he.

“I have stated them.”

“To withdraw my aeroplane from the aviation meet would mean my ruin. I have sold my real estate and brokerage business and invested my money in aviation; I positively cannot withdraw now.”

“You must. To whine of ruin is absurd. I know that my father paid you a

quarter of a million for your mine. You also obtained, without doubt, a good sum for your business. So far you cannot have invested more than a few thousand dollars in your attempt to steal Stephen Kane's invention. My advice, sir, is to get away from here as soon as you can. Go to London or Paris, where there is more interest in aviation than here, and make a business of flying, if you will. But the Kane device is fully protected by foreign patents, and any infringement will be promptly prosecuted."

"You are merciless," he complained.

"You will find me so."

"I am a member of the Aero Club. I cannot, without arousing suspicion, withdraw my aeroplane from the meet."

"If you do not I will telegraph to Baltimore."

The threat seemed to crush him and still any further remonstrances.

"Very well," he returned; "if you have finished your errand please leave me. I must — consider — my — position."

She rose, cast one scornful glance at him and walked out of the room, leaving him seated with bowed head, dejected and utterly defeated.

CHAPTER XXI

MR. H. CHESTERTON RADLEY-TODD

There lived in Los Angeles at that time one of those unaccountable individuals whom nature, in fashioning, endows with such contradictory qualities that their fellow creatures are unable to judge them correctly.

He was a young man, fresh from college, whose name was engraved upon his cards as H. Chesterton Radley-Todd, but whom his new acquaintances promptly dubbed "Chesty Todd." Having finished his collegiate course he had been at a loss what to do next, so he drifted to the Pacific coast and presently connected himself with the Los Angeles *Tribune* as literary critic, society reporter and general penistic roustabout.

Mr. Radley-Todd had a round, baby face; expressionless and therefore innocent blue eyes that bulged a little; charmingly perfect teeth; an awkward demeanor; a stumbling, hesitating mode of speech and the intellectual acumen of a Disraeli. He was six feet and three inches tall and dressed like a dandy. People estimated him as a mollycoddle at first acquaintance; wondered presently if he possessed hidden talents, and finally gave him up as a problem not worth solving. No one believed in his ability, even when he demonstrated it; because, as they truly said, he "did not look as if he amounted to shucks."

That such a callow youth, predoomed to adverse judgment, should be able to secure a position on a daily paper seemed remarkable. But the *Tribune* loves to employ green and budding "talent," which can be had at a nominal salary. The managing editor shrewdly contends that these young fellows work with an enthusiasm and perseverance unknown to older and more experienced journalists, because they have a notion that the world is their oyster and a newspaper job the knife that opens it. When they discover their mistake they are dismissed and other ambitious ones take their places. Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd was at present enjoying this fleeting prominence, and occasionally the editor would read his copy with genuine amazement and wonder from what source he had stolen its brilliance and power.

So, when the great aviation meet approached and every man, woman and child in Southern California was eager for details concerning it and demanded pages of description of the various participating aeroplanes and aviators, in advance of their exhibition, and when Tom Dunbar, the *Tribune's* expert on aviation, was suddenly stricken with pneumonia, "Chesty" Todd was assigned to this important department.

"Dig for every scrap of information that can possibly be unearthed," said the editor to him. "Spread it out as much as you can, for the dear public

wants a cyclone of aerial gossip and will devour every word of it. When there isn't any broth don't fear to manufacture some; any 'mistake' in the preliminaries will be forgotten as soon as the big meet is in full swing."

Chesty nodded; stumbled against a chair on his way out; stepped on the toe of the private stenographer and slammed the door to muffle her scream. Then he made his way to Dominguez Field; strolled among the hangars with his hands in his pockets and imbibed unimportant information by the column.

Two things, however, really interested the reporter. One was the popular interest in the Kane Aircraft, which was now in its hangar and invited inspection. Wilson and Brewster, the latter now openly in the employ of Mr. Cumberford, guarded the local aeroplane and explained its unique features to an eager throng. For, although the Kane hangar was in a retired location — "around the corner," in fact — a bigger crowd besieged it, on this last day preceding the official opening of the meet, than visited the older and better known devices. Stephen Kane's remarkable flight at Kane Park, which was followed by his peculiar accident, was of course responsible for much of the interest manifested in his machine; and this interest was shared by the experienced aviators present, who silently examined the novel improvements of the young inventor and forbore to discuss them or their alleged merits.

"What do you think of it?" Chesty Todd asked an aviator of national prominence.

"Looks good," was the evasive reply. "Cumberford, who is managing the Kane campaign, has been trying hard to get a man to fly it, but so far without success. Pity the thing can't be exhibited. Young Kane, who was entered as the aviator, broke his leg and is now out of it."

The reporter made a mental note of this; he would find out the plans of the Kane party and make a two column story of their hope or despair.

Later in the afternoon another thing puzzled him. Burthon, the direct competitor of Kane, suddenly and without explanation withdrew his aeroplane from the meet and actually took it from the field, closing his hangar. The officials and others interested were amazed, and the action aroused considerable comment.

Chesty Todd scented a story. He secured an automobile and followed Burthon and Tot Tyler at a distance, until they placed the aeroplane in the old workshop at South Pasadena. He crept up to the shed unobserved and found half a dozen men busily putting the parts together again and preparing the device for use. Why, since it had been withdrawn from the aviation meet?

Tyler and Burthon walked out and went to a near by restaurant, where the reporter found them seated in a corner engaged in earnest conversation. Chesty made signs to the waiter that he was deaf and dumb, secured a seat at

a table within hearing distance of Burthon and his chauffeur, and overheard enough to give him a clew to their latest conspiracy. Then he went away, regained his automobile and drove straight to the Alexandria Hotel.

Mr. Cumberford had insisted on the Kanes taking rooms at the hotel during the meet, and all three were now established there, Mrs. Kane having decided to go each day to Dominguez, where Stephen and Sybil could tell her of the events as they occurred. In a way the blind woman would thus be able to participate and avoid the anxiety and suspense of remaining at the bungalow while her daughter undertook the hazardous feat of operating Stephen's aeroplane. The Cumberford automobile was placed at the disposal of mother and son, and the young inventor could watch the flight of his machine while propped among the cushions, Sybil being at his side to attend him and his mother.

The party had just finished dinner and assembled in the Cumberford sitting room when Chesty Todd's card was brought in. It was marked "Tribune" and Mr. Cumberford decided to go down to the office and see the reporter, as it was not his purpose to snub the press at this critical juncture. However, the young man discouraged him at first sight. His appearance was, as usual, against him.

"Will the Kane Aircraft take part in the contests?" he inquired.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Cumberford.

"You have secured a man to — er — run the thing?"

"We have secured an operator."

Chesty stared at him, his comprehensive mind alert. Why did Cumberford turn his reply to evade the "man" proposition? Could a woman operate an aeroplane? Perhaps none but an inexperienced youth would have dreamed of the possibility.

"Has Stephen Kane any family?" he cautiously asked.

"A mother and sister. He is unmarried."

"How old is the sister?"

"Seventeen."

"Oh!" The age seemed to eliminate her. "And the mother?"

It was Cumberford's turn to stare.

"The mother is blind," he said.

Mr. Radley-Todd's thoughts took another turn. "Have you a family, sir?"

"I have a daughter, an only child. Mrs. Cumberford is not living."

"And your daughter's age, sir?"

"Seventeen. She is the same age as Orissa Kane."

"Are the young ladies — er — interested in airships?"

Mr. Cumberford did not like these questions. He knew that a reporter is

akin to a detective, and began to fear the youth was on the track of their secret. So he answered rather stiffly:

"Fairly so. Everyone seems interested in aviation these days. It interests me."

Chesty saw he would not confess; so he tried another tack.

"Mr. Burthon is your brother-in-law, I believe." Mr. Cumberford nodded.

"You are — eh — enemies?"

"Mr. Radley-Todd, or whatever your name is," angrily glancing at the card, "I do not object to being interviewed on the subject of the Kane Aircraft, or the coming aviation meet. But your questions are becoming personal and are wide of the mark. You will please confine yourself to legitimate topics."

The young man rose and bowed.

"Excuse me," he said in his halting way; "a reporter is often forced to appear impertinent when he does not intend to be so. At present I am — er — face to face with a curious — er — complication. I have discovered — eh — unintentionally — that your er, er — aviator will be in great danger tomorrow. If it's a man, I don't care. I don't like you, Mr. Cumberford, and I wouldn't lift a finger to save the Kane Aircraft from going to pot. Why should I — eh? It's nothing to me. But if one of those girls — your daughter or Kane's sister, is to fly the thing, I feel it my — er — duty to say: look out!"

He started to go, but Cumberford grabbed his arm.

"What do you mean?" he demanded sternly.

"Is it a girl?"

"You won't betray us? You won't publish it?"

"Not at present."

"Orissa Kane will operate the aircraft."

Chesty looked at his boots reflectively.

"Don't let her undertake it, sir," he said. "If you can't find a man, follow Burthon's example and withdraw your — eh — airship from the meet. Better withdraw it, anyhow — that's the best move — if you don't wish to court disaster."

"Explain yourself, sir!"

"I won't. I'm not going to spoil a good story for my paper — and a scoop in the bargain — to satisfy your curiosity. But Miss Kane — May I see her a moment?"

Mr. Cumberford reflected.

"If you warn her of danger you will take away her nerve. She's the only person on earth competent to operate the Kane Aircraft, and to withdraw the

aeroplane would mean the ruin of her brother's fortune and ambitions."

"I don't know her brother; I don't care a fig for him. If I see the girl I shall warn her," said the reporter.

"Then you shall not see her."

"Very good. But you will tell her to look out?"

"What for?"

"For danger."

"When?"

"At all times; especially during her flight."

"There is always danger of accident, of course."

"This won't be an accident — if it happens," said Chesty Todd, decidedly.

"But who would wish to injure Orissa?" asked Cumberford, wonderingly.

"Think it over," said the reporter. "If you've one deadly enemy — a person who will stick at nothing, being desperate — that's the man."

With this he coolly walked away, leaving Mr. Cumberford considerably disturbed. But he thought it over and decided to say nothing to Orissa. The warning might refer to Burthon, who was the only person they might expect trouble from, although to Cumberford's astonishment Burthon had quit the field at the last moment and abandoned the contest. Knowing nothing of Sybil's interview with her uncle, that action seemed to indicate, to Cumberford's mind, that Burthon had weakened.

Under no circumstances would he have permitted Orissa to face an unknown danger, but it occurred to him, after thinking over the interview, that Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd was a fair example of a fool.

CHAPTER XXII
THE FLYING GIRL

The morning of the first day of the long heralded aviation meet dawned bright and sunny, as only a Southern California January morning can. By seven o'clock vast throngs were hurrying southward to Dominguez — a broad plain midway between Los Angeles and the ocean — where much important aviation history has been made.

By nine o'clock the grand Stand was packed and "automobile row" occupied by hundreds of motor cars, filled with ladies in gay apparel, their escorts and imperturbable chauffeurs. The crowd was beginning to circle the vast field, too, and nearly every face bore an excited, eager expression.

The events scheduled might well arouse the interest of a people just awakened to the possibilities of aerial navigation. Important prizes had been offered by wealthy men and corporations for the most daring flights of the meet. Ten thousand dollars would go to the aviator showing the most skillful and adroit handling of an aeroplane; five thousand for the longest flight; another five thousand for an endurance test and a like sum to the one attaining the greatest height. In addition to these generous purses, two thousand dollars would be given for the best starting and alighting device exhibited and two thousand for the best safety device. For speed several huge purses were donated, and altogether the aviators present would compete for more than fifty thousand dollars in gold, besides various medals and cups and the priceless prestige gained by excelling in a competition where the most successful and famed airships and aviators of the world congregated.

Therefore, it is little wonder public interest was excited and every aviator determined to do his best. Many thronged the hangars, asking innumerable questions of the good-natured attendants, who recognized the popular ignorance of modern flying devices and were tolerant and communicative to a degree.

The morning events were of minor importance, although several clever exhibitions of flying were given. But at two o'clock the competition for skillful handling of an aeroplane in midair was scheduled, and at that time the appetite of each spectator was whetted for the great spectacle.

The day seemed ideal for aviation; the sky was flecked with fleecy clouds and scarcely a breath of air could be felt at the earth's surface.

Now came the first appearance of the Kane Aircraft. It had not been brought from the hangar during the forenoon and, in watching such celebrated aeroplanes as the Bleriot, Farman, Antoinette, Curtiss and Wright, manned by the greatest living aeronauts, those assembled had almost

forgotten that a local inventor was to enter the lists with them. The secretary of the Aero Club and others interested had expected Mr. Burthon to protest against allowing the Kane device to be operated, on the ground that Kane was entered to operate it and was unable to do so; but for some unaccountable reason Burthon remained silent, not even appearing at the field, and Mr. Cumberford's explanation that the "Kane" in this instance meant the young man's sister, satisfied the officials perfectly. Naturally they were surprised and even startled at the idea of a girl taking part in the great aviation meet, but hailed the innovation with keenest interest.

Suddenly, while the field was clear and half a dozen aeroplanes hovered in the air above it, the Kane Aircraft rolled into the open space, circled before the grand stand and then, gracefully and without effort, mounted into the air.

Those who had witnessed Stephen's prior performance were not astonished at this unassisted rise from earth to air, but all were delighted by the grace and beauty of the ascent and a roar of applause burst spontaneously from the crowd. The peculiar construction of the aircraft so diverted attention from its aviator that few marked the slender form of Orissa, or knew that a girl was making this daring flight.

There were some, however, whose eyes were eagerly rivetted on the indistinct figure of the flying girl and utterly disregarded the machine. Stephen, comfortably propped among the cushions of the motor car with his mother seated behind him and Sybil opposite, divided his attention between his sister and his creation. Mr. Cumberford, knowing what the machine would do, watched Orissa through a powerful glass and decided from the first that she was cool and capable. Chesty Todd also watched the girlish figure, with a more intense interest than he had ever before displayed during his brief and uneventful lifetime.

The reporter had been worried lest Mr. Cumberford neglect to warn the girlish operator of the Kane Aircraft of danger; so he pushed through the crowd about the hangar and just as Orissa passed the doorway, seated in her aeroplane, he said in a low voice: "Look out — for a collision!"

She started and cast an inquiring look at him, but there was no time to reply. The machine had been drawn by the assistants to a clear space and she must devote her attention to her work. As she threw in the lever Mr. Cumberford, who stood beside the aircraft, hurriedly whispered: "Be careful, Orissa — look out for danger!" Then she was off, facing the thousands on the field, with nerve and brain resolutely bent upon the task she had undertaken.

It was no indifferent thing this brave girl attempted. Until now her acquaintance with an aeroplane had been wholly theoretical; it was her first flight; yet so thoroughly did she understand every part of her air vehicle —

what it was for and how to use it — that she had implicit confidence in herself and in her machine. Naturally levelheaded, alert and quick to think and to act, Orissa was no more afraid of soaring in the air than of riding in an automobile. Aside from her desire to operate the aircraft so skillfully that her brother's invention would be fully appreciated she was determined to attempt the winning of the ten thousand dollar prize, which would establish the Kane fortunes on a secure basis. Enough for one untried, seventeen-year-old girl to think of, was it not? And small wonder that she absolutely forgot the impressive warnings she had received.

The air is a mighty thoroughfare, free and untrammeled. The little group of aeroplanes operating over Dominguez — darting here and there, up and down — had little chance of colliding, for there was space enough and to spare. Orissa knew all about air currents and their peculiarities and she also knew that her greatest safety lay in high altitudes. With a feeling of rapturous exhilaration she began to realize her control of the craft and her dominance of the air. A masterful desire crept over her to accomplish great deeds in aviation.

Those who were watching from below — judges, friends and spectators — saw her steadily mounting, higher and higher, until she seemed to fade out of sight like the figure in a moving picture, with nothing but a little iron-and-wood skeleton and the chugging of a tiny engine to ward off death. Then she came into sight again, a little smudge of grayish white against the shifting clouds. To see her up there, a mere speck dodging among the storm clouds, reminded the observers, as nothing in aviation has ever done before, of the awful audacity of man in building these mechanical birds. As they watched they found themselves hoping — as a child might — that in some way the brave little speck would manage to escape those gigantic sky monsters. Then one seized the aircraft, and just as the sun caught and flung back to earth a flash from one of the busy propeller-blades a huge cloud swallowed up machine and aviator and they vanished like mist.

It was odd how the terror of the spectators increased at this sudden disappearance; they knew that somewhere in that awesome, infinite firmament a frail thing made by the hand of man was battling with nature's most mysterious forces for supremacy. And man won. In less than a minute there was another flash of sunlight and the little gray speck emerged saucily from behind the cloud and made a dive for another.

Then the speck in the sky began to grow larger, and Orissa attempted an amazing dive earthward that caused the throng to fall silent, motionless, gazing with bated breaths and startled eyes at the thrilling scene. It was a long swoop out of space and into being; a series of dives half a mile long and

each nearly straight down.

The girl glided earthward until the aircraft nearly touched the ground; then she adroitly tilted it up again and tore away around the course in great circles, while the spectators, roused to life, thundered their applause.

Her control of the aeroplane was really wonderful. Again, encouraged by her success, she shot up into the air, rising to the height of half a mile and then performing the hazardous evolution known to aviators as the "spiral dip." She began by circling widely, at an even elevation, and then dipping the nose of the aircraft and narrowing the circles as she plunged swiftly downward with constantly accelerating speed. It was a bewildering and hair-raising performance, and no one but Walter Brookins had ever before undertaken it.

A dozen feet from the ground Orissa reined in her Pegasus and glided over the group of hangars on her inclined ascent — the third she had made without alighting. There were other aeroplanes doing interesting "stunts," and each aviator seemed to be exercising his ingenuity to excel all others, yet the eyes of the crowd followed the Kane Aircraft with an absorbed fascination that relegated other contestants to the rear.

CHAPTER XXIII

A BATTLE IN THE AIR

"What is she doing now?" asked Mrs. Kane, anxiously.

"Soaring in the air about half a mile high and a half mile to the northward," replied Steve.

"And performing wonders," added Sybil, with enthusiasm. "I had no idea the aircraft could be controlled so perfectly."

"Nor I," admitted the young inventor, modestly. "It really seems like a thing of life under her management, and I am sure I could not have exhibited its good points half as well as little Ris is doing."

"Are any other aeroplanes flying?" Mrs. Kane inquired.

"Oh, yes," said Sybil. "There are several in the air, doing really marvelous things; but all seem to keep away from Orissa and are more to the south of us. There's one, though!" she added suddenly. "Isn't that an aeroplane coming from the far north, Steve?"

He looked carefully through the field glasses he held.

"Why — yes! It surely *is* an aeroplane. But how did it get over there?" he exclaimed. "I've been watching the other contestants, and they're all near by. Who can it be?"

Sybil had glasses, too, and she focussed them on the approaching airship.

"It looks very much like Uncle Burthon's imitation of the aircraft," she murmured.

"By Jove! That's what it is!" cried Steve. "How dare he fly it, after it has been withdrawn?"

"Uncle Burthon will dare anything," she retorted, coldly. "But he is making the mistake of his life to-day — if that is really his aeroplane."

"Why, he's driving straight toward Orissa," said Steve, indignantly. "What is the fellow trying to do — bump the aircraft?"

Sybil laid a warning hand on his arm and glanced into the blind woman's startled face.

"Orissa is all right," she announced in calm tones.

But Orissa did not seem all right to Steve, who was growing excessively nervous; nor even to Sybil, whose face was stern and set as she watched the maneuvers of the two craft through her powerful glasses.

"It's Tyler," she said softly, meaning that the little chauffeur was operating Burthon's device. Steve nodded, and thereafter they were silent.

Swift as a dart the Burthon aeroplane approached Orissa, who was deliberately circling this way and that as she glided through the air. She saw it coming, but at first paid little heed, thinking Tyler intended to pass by. But

he altered his course to keep his machine headed directly for her and in gravely examining the approaching craft the girl noticed two slender steel blades projecting from his front elevator, like extended sword blades. They were slightly upcurved at the points, and while Orissa marveled to see such things attached to an aeroplane the thought occurred to her that if those blades struck her planes they would rend the cloth to shreds and destroy their sustaining surfaces. In that case one result was inevitable — a sudden drop to earth, and death.

Even as this thought crossed her mind the Burthon aeroplane came driving toward her at full speed. Filled with dismay she could only stare helplessly until the thing was so near that she could distinctly see the scowling face and glaring eyes of Tyler, intent on mischief. Then, without realizing her action, she caused the aircraft to duck, and the other swept over her so closely that Tyler's running gear almost scraped her planes.

Orissa's machine rolled alarmingly a moment, but she quietly regained control and then looked to see where Tyler was. He had turned and again was swooping toward her, at a slight downward angle. Orissa ascended to escape him, now realizing the man's wicked determination to destroy the aircraft, and Tyler, displaying unexpected skill, altered his course to follow her.

The girl, thoroughly alarmed, now turned to flee, scarcely realizing what she did. Tyler followed like some huge bird of prey and, curiously enough, gained upon the Kane Aircraft. The two sets of engines were chugging away steadily, all the propellers revolving like clockwork, while the two rival aeroplanes answered obediently the slightest movements of their rudders.

Finding a straight flight would not permit her to escape her enemy, the girl swerved and began circling widely. After her came Tyler, the wicked looking blades that protruded from his elevator gleaming menacingly in the sunlight, his features distorted by hate and murderously determined.

In the circles Orissa seemed able to keep her distance, but the poor child was so bewildered by this pitiless attack that her head was in a whirl and only by instinct could she handle the levers and wheel to guide her flight.

Tyler now observed several aeroplanes approaching at full speed, and realized he must end the chase quickly or be driven from his prey and prevented from carrying out his diabolical design. He made a quick turn to head off Orissa's circle and the dreadful blades almost touched her lower plane as she dodged them. Tyler swept round again, but in his eagerness forgot his balance. Perhaps the man relied too much on the automatic device that had once brought Stephen to grief; anyway his aeroplane developed a side motion that nearly shook him from his seat. He tried in vain to restore the balance. The jar caused the motors to slip; the engines stopped dead; with

a rending sound the huge planes collapsed and the wreck of Burthon's biplane began to sink downward. Tyler was pitched headlong from his seat, but caught a rail and clung to it desperately as with ever increasing speed the fall to earth continued.

Orissa had witnessed the accident and with the sudden transition from danger to safety the girl's wits returned and she regained her coolness. As she saw Tyler falling to his death, a quick conception of the situation inspired her to action. The Kane Aircraft suddenly tipped and began one of those tremendous dives through space which it had accomplished earlier in the day. Orissa's aeroplane was absolutely under control, even at this thrilling moment, while the wreck to which Tyler clung was somewhat restrained in its fall by the mass of fluttering canvas and splintered bows. Although the weight of its engines and tanks dragged it swiftly down, Orissa's aircraft dove much more rapidly. Five hundred feet above the earth she overtook Tyler, guided her aeroplane dangerously close to the man, and cried out to him to seize it. He may not have heard or understood her, but an instinct of self-preservation such as leads a drowning man to grasp at a straw induced him to clutch her footrail, and at the same moment Orissa turned the machine, so as not to become entangled in the wreck, and began a more gradual descent, the little chauffeur dangling from her foot-rail while, alert and masterful, the girl controlled her overladen craft.

Down, down they came, and thirty thousand pair of startled, wondering eyes followed them as if entranced. Orissa had not looked to see where she would land, for until this moment she had been so thoroughly occupied with the chase and the rescue of her enemy that she never once glanced toward the ground. But the hand of fate was guiding our brave young aviator. Her aircraft, maintaining a safe angle, settled directly upon Dominguez Field, where Tyler released his hold and rolled unconscious upon the ground. Orissa's machine sped forward on its running gear and came to a stop just before the crowded grand stand.

No one who witnessed that exciting event will ever forget the mad shouts that rent the air when the Kane Aircraft, safe from its battle in the clouds, came to rest just in front of the gasping throng that had watched it with a fascination akin to horror. A hundred eager onlookers surrounded the machine, plucked the aviator from her seat and held her aloft for all to see, while the discovery that a young girl was the heroine of the terrible adventure caused them to marvel anew.

The applause redoubled; men shouted until they were hoarse; women wept, laughed hysterically and waved their handkerchiefs; everyone stood up to applaud; thousands crowded the field about Orissa, who by this time was

herself softly crying, until Stephen, white as a ghost, directed his man to run the motor car through the crowd to his sister's side and assist her aboard.

Mr. Cumberford took no part in this ovation. He was rushing about the field, flinging everyone out of his way with mad excitement and asking continually "Where is he? Where is Tyler? What has become of him?"

No one heeded him for a time, as every eye was on Orissa, every individual striving to get near her, to touch her — as if she had been a goddess whose hand could confer untold blessings and remedy the ills of the world. But after a while Cumberford found a man who deigned to give him the desired information.

"The fellow who was rescued?" he said. "Oh, he fainted dead away the minute he touched solid ground."

"And what became of him?" demanded Cumberford.

"Why, the crowd wanted to mob him, it seemed, and I guess that faint was the only thing that saved him from being torn to pieces."

"Well — well! What then?"

"Then a tall young fellow grabbed him up, chucked him into an automobile and got away with him."

"Where?"

"How the blazes do *I* know, stranger? I only saw them get away, that's all."

This information was later confirmed by several others, but Orissa's manager was unable to learn who had taken Tyler away or where they had gone. Cumberford was in an ugly mood, his heart throbbing with a fierce desire for vengeance. Tyler had escaped him for the moment but he vowed he would never rest until both Burthon and his chauffeur were behind the bars.

He was still pursuing his futile inquiries when Brewster approached him and said his daughter, with Stephen, Orissa and their mother, awaited him at the hangar, which was besieged by an excited throng. Directing the man to look after the aircraft and get it safely housed, he hurried away and managed to squeeze through the mass of humanity surrounding the hangar and gain admittance.

Within he found Orissa the center of a group of aviators who were earnestly congratulating the girl on her escape and flooding her with compliments and praise for her skillful handling of the aeroplane. They were noble fellows, these professional aviators, and unselfish enough to be honestly enthusiastic over Miss Kane's performances. The girl's beauty and modesty won them at once, and adding these charming qualities to her cleverness and bravery, to-day fully proven, it is not difficult to understand

why Orissa Kane from this moment became a prime favorite with every disciple of aviation.

Just now, however, Orissa was embarrassed and a little distressed by all this laudation, following the spirited ovation tendered her by the public at large, so her nerves were beginning to fail her when by good fortune Mr. Cumberford appeared. He saw at once her condition and without stopping to add a word of praise or congratulation managed to hurry her out of the back entrance, past the surging crowd that was even here in evidence, and into their automobile. The others of the party followed with less difficulty and soon they were all headed for town and speeding swiftly along the roadway.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE CRIMINAL

As soon as Sybil reached her room at the hotel she wrote a line to her uncle, Mr. Burthon, which said: "I have wired to Baltimore." Summoning a messenger she instructed him to search for Mr. Burthon until he found him and then place the message in his hands. She delayed sending the telegram just then, but was so angry and indignant that she was fully resolved to do so during the evening.

Meantime Orissa, who to an extent had recovered from her excitement, was being petted by the family party in the sitting room that had been reserved for them. Poor Mrs. Kane, having hugged and kissed her child and wept over her terrible danger and miraculous escape, now held the girl's hand fast in her own and could not bear to let it go. Stephen was full of eager praise and, ignoring for the time the final incident of the flight, led Orissa to talk of her aerial exhibition and the admirable behavior of the aircraft, together with its perfect adjustment and obedience under all conditions.

"You've won the prize, dear," he asserted confidently. "No one else did half as much or did it as well, to say nothing of your skillful dodging of that scoundrel Tyler. But I can't let you make another flight, little sister. You are too precious to us all for us to let you risk your life in this way. The aircraft will have to stand by its record for that one flight — at least for this meet."

"Oh, no," protested Orissa; "I'll go again tomorrow, Steve. I want to. The sensation is glorious, and I'm sure that monster, Tyler — or his master, Burthon — will be unable to get another aeroplane to chase me. I shall be perfectly safe, for your aircraft was from first to last like a thing with life and intelligence. I understand it, and it understands me."

"I wonder if Burthon really sent Tyler on that murderous errand," said Steve, thoughtfully.

"Of course he did!" declared Mr. Cumberford, entering the room in time to hear the remark. "Here's a letter for you, Orissa, just left at the office, and I'm pretty sure it's Burthon's handwriting."

Orissa took the letter, opened it, and read aloud:

"Do not, I beg of you, my dear Orissa, accuse me of inciting that fool Tyler's mad attack upon your aeroplane. The man stole the machine from its hangar and, crazed by my withdrawal from the meet, which deprived him of the chance of becoming famous, and inspired by anger toward Cumberford, who had at one time maliciously assaulted him and whom he thought responsible for my withdrawal, he made a desperate attempt to wreck your

aeroplane without knowing who was operating it. As soon as I found my machine gone I hurried to Dominguez and arrived in time to see the terrible result of Tyler's madness and your noble rescue of him. I am leaving the city to-night and may never see your sweet face again, but I do not wish you to misjudge me and have, therefore, made this explanation, which is honest and sincere. I trust you will remember me only as a true and loyal friend who would willingly sacrifice his unhappy life to save you from harm. Now and always faithfully yours," GEORGE BURTHON."

During the reading Sybil had entered and quietly seated herself, listening with lip scornfully curled to her uncle's protestations of innocence. For a moment after Orissa finished the letter all were silent. Then said Orissa, gently:

"I'm so glad Mr. Burthon had no hand in it!"

"Bah!" sneered Cumberford; "Burthon is a liar. I don't believe a word of his lame excuse."

"Nor I," added Stephen, gravely. "Tyler is a hired assassin, that's all. I think Burthon is frightened, and wishes to throw us off the track and put the blame on his tool, before running away."

"I hope that is a lie, too — about his running away," said Mr. Cumberford. "If Burthon escapes scot-free I shall be greatly disappointed. But the fellow is so tricky that if he says he is going you may rest assured he means to stay."

"I think not, Daddy," remarked Sybil, in her cold, even tones. "My uncle is in earnest this time and I doubt if you ever see or hear of George Burthon again."

A knock at the door startled the little group. Mr. Cumberford stepped forward and opened it to find a tall, blue-eyed young man standing in the hall. He recognized Mr. Radley-Todd — the *Tribune* reporter — at once, and said stiffly:

"You are intruding, sir. I left word at the office that Miss Kane and I would see the newspaper men at eight o'clock, but not before."

He started to close the door, but Chesty Todd inserted one long leg into the opening, smiling pleasantly as he said:

"This isn't a newspaper errand; let me in."

Mr. Cumberford let him in, throwing wide the door, for there was an earnest ring in the young fellow's voice that could not be denied.

After Chesty Todd had entered, stumbling over the rug and bowing low to the ladies, another form shuffled silently through the doorway in his wake — a little, dried-up, withered man with tousled hair, his cap under his arm, a

woebegone and hopeless expression on his leathery face.

"Tyler!" cried a surprised chorus.

The ex-chauffeur did not acknowledge the greeting. Chesty, extending one arm toward the man as if he were exhibiting a trained animal, said sternly:

"Down on your knees!"

Tyler bumped his kneecaps upon the floor in an attitude of meek humiliation.

"Now, then!"

"M-m-m — pardon," gurgled the little chauffeur, not with contrition but rather as an enforced plea for mercy.

Chesty kicked his shins.

"Get up," he commanded.

Tyler slowly rose, surveyed the group stealthily from beneath his brows and then dropped his eyes again, standing with bowed shoulders before them and nervously twirling his cap in his hands.

"Here," announced Chesty, pointing impressively to the culprit, "stands the murderous ruffian known to infamy as Totham Tyler. He is at your mercy, prepared to endure any amount of torture or to die ignominiously at the hands of those he has wronged."

All but Mrs. Kane were staring in amazement first at Tyler, then at his captor. Said Stephen to the latter, curiously:

"You are a detective, I suppose?"

"Merely as a side line," was the cheerful rejoinder. "Primarily I'm a newspaper reporter, and whenever I strike for a higher salary they tell me I'm a mighty poor journalist. Let me introduce myself. My name is Havely Chesterton Radley-Todd, quite a burden to carry but it all belongs to me. This is my first experience as an imitator of the late lamented Sherlock Holmes, and I may point with pride to the fact that I've unraveled the supposed plot to murder Miss Orissa Kane."

Tyler growled incoherently.

"True," said Chesty, looking at the man thoughtfully; "the plot was not to murder Miss Kane, but Mr. Cumberford, whom his loving brother-in-law supposed would operate the Kane aeroplane. Incidentally it was planned to so wreck the aircraft — is that what you call it? — that it would be out of commission during the rest of the meet."

"Why?" asked Stephen.

"To satisfy his petty malice. If Burthon couldn't fly he didn't want you to fly, and he hoped to obtain revenge for being driven into exile."

There was a murmur of surprise at this.

"Who drove Burthon into exile?" asked Cumberford.

“I did,” said Sybil, indifferently.

“Have you seen him, then?” demanded her father.

“Oh, yes; but my uncle is unreliable. Before he obeyed my command to leave this country forever he decided on a final coup, which has fortunately failed.”

“Burthon,” announced Chesty Todd, “boarded an east-bound train an hour ago. I tried to head him off, but he was too slick and escaped me. That is the reason I am now here. I want you to listen to Totham Tyler’s story and then decide whether to wire ahead and have Burthon arrested or let the matter drop. It is really up to you, as the interested parties. So far the police have not had a hand in the game.”

“Please sit down, Mr. Todd,” requested Orissa, shyly. In the tall youth she had recognized the man who had tried to warn her on Dominguez Field, and was grateful to him.

Chesty bowed and sat down. Then he turned to his prisoner and said:

“Fire away, Tyler. Tell the whole story — the truth and nothing but the truth so help you.”

Tyler opened his mouth with effort, mumbled and gurgled a moment and then looked at his captor appealingly.

“Oh; very well. The criminal, ladies and gentlemen, seems to have lost, in this crisis, the power of expressing himself. So I shall relate to you the story, just as I extracted it — by slow and difficult processes — from the prisoner in my room, a short time ago. If I make any mistakes he will correct me.”

Tyler seemed much relieved.

“This creature,” began Chesty, “has previous to this eventful day been known to mankind as a good chauffeur and a bad citizen. He was employed by Burthon as an unscrupulous tool, his chief recommendation being a deadly hatred of Mr. Cumberford, who at one time indelicately applied the toe of his boot to a tender part of Mr. Tyler’s anatomy. Burthon also hated Cumberford, for robbing him of a million or so in a mine deal, and for other things of which I am not informed — or Tyler, either. Cumberford owns a controlling interest in the Kane Aircraft, and — ”

“That’s wrong,” interrupted Stephen.

“I imagine Mr. Tyler’s story is wrong in many ways,” returned Mr. Radley-Todd, composedly. “I am merely relating it as I heard it.”

“Go on, sir.”

“Cumberford had also maligned Mr. Burthon to Miss Orissa Kane, a young lady for whom Burthon entertained a fatherly interest and a — er — hum — a platonic affection. Is that right, Tyler?”

Tyler growled.

“Therefore Burthon decided to get even with Cumberford, and Tyler agreed to help him. The first plan was to steal the design of Stephen Kane’s airship and by cleverly heading him off in some aero-political manner put the firm of Cumberford & Kane out of business. This scheme was approaching successful fruition when a saucy, impudent schoolgirl — Tyler’s description, not mine — appeared on the scene and spiked Mr. Burthon’s guns. Burthon explained to Tyler that in bygone days he had saved his sister, Cumberford’s wife, from going to prison for a crime Cumberford had urged her to commit, but in doing this he had been obliged to defy the law, and the officers are unfortunately still on the generous man’s trail. Cumberford’s daughter, knowing the situation, threatened to have Burthon arrested — to betray him to the bloodhounds of the cruel law — unless he withdrew his machine from the aviation meet and made tracks for pastures new.”

The Kanes were now regarding Sybil with amazement and her father with suspicion if not distrust. The girl stared back at them haughtily; Cumberford shrugged his shoulders and stroked his drooping, grizzled mustache. Chesty Todd, observing this pantomime, laughed pleasantly.

“Tyler’s story — told to me — of Burthon’s story — told to Tyler,” he observed, his eyes twinkling. “There’s pitch somewhere, and I’ve not been favorably impressed by Mr. Burthon during my slight acquaintance with him. I make it a rule,” speaking more slowly, “to judge people by their actions; by what they do, rather than by what people say of them. Judging Burthon by his actions I should have little confidence in what he says.”

“You are quite right,” declared Stephen, eagerly. “I’ll guarantee, if necessary, that Burthon lied about both Mr. Cumberford and his daughter. No man ever had a truer friend than Mr. Cumberford has been to me.”

Cumberford scowled; Sybil gave Steve one of her rare smiles.

“Anyhow,” continued the narrator, “Tyler was in despair because the aeroplane he was booked to operate was withdrawn from the meet. Burthon told him if they wanted revenge they must act quickly. Their sources of information — erroneous, as the event proved — led them to believe their enemy Cumberford would fly the rival aeroplane, and Tyler needed little urging to induce him to undertake to wreck it. Burthon paid him a thousand dollars in advance, to make the attempt, and promised him four thousand more if he succeeded.”

“Five more,” growled Tyler.

“I stand corrected; but it won’t matter. Tyler made the attempt, as you know. He had no idea Miss Kane was in the airship he was trying to demolish until the last moment, when by a clever turn he intercepted her

aeroplane and was on the point of running it down. Just then, to his horror and dismay, he saw the girl plainly and made a desperate effort to check the speed of his machine — to avoid running her down. That was the cause of his mishap, he claims, and his desire to save Miss Kane nearly cost him his life. While he was descending a mile or so through the air, clinging to the footrail, he fiercely repented his wicked act, so that by the time he struck the ground he was a reformed criminal, and, for the first time since he cut his eye teeth, an honest man. So he says, and he expects us to believe it.

"I happened to be near the spot where Tyler rolled and picked him up unconscious — dazed by his repentance, I suppose. The mob wanted to disjoint him and remove his skin, which was not a bad idea; but I decided he could be of more use to Miss Kane alive — for the present, at least — because he might untangle some threads of the mystery. So I threw him into my car, got him to my room at Mrs. Skipp's boarding house, restored him to consciousness, applied the thumbscrews, got his deposition, lugged him here to you, and now — please have the kindness to take him off my hands, for I'm tired of him."

Orissa laughed, a little nervously. They were all regarding Chesty with unfeigned admiration and Tyler with pronounced aversion.

Mrs. Kane was the first to speak. Said the blind woman, softly:

"Orissa, you alone can judge this man. You alone can tell whether from the beginning he knew you were in the aeroplane or whether his claim is true that he discovered your identity at the last moment — and tried to save you. If he speaks truly, if he repented at the moment and risked his life to save you, it will have a great influence upon his fate. Speak, my child; you two were together in the air a mile above the earth, a mile from any other human being. Does the man speak truly?"

Orissa paled; suddenly she grew grave and a frightened look crept into her clear eyes.

CHAPTER XXV
THE REAL HEROINE

Chesty Todd had spoken so lightly, in a seriocomic vein, and had so belittled the "reformed villain" and contemptuously made him appear pitiful and weak, that he had somewhat disarmed his hearers and led them to forget the seriousness of the contemplated crime. But Mrs. Kane, listening intently to the story, found no humor in the situation, and the blind woman's gentle remark promptly recalled to every mind the full horror of the dastardly attempt.

She was quite right in declaring that Orissa alone could approve or condemn Tyler's statement. If he spoke truly he was entitled to a degree of mercy at their hands; if, knowing that a girl was operating the Kane Aircraft, he had still persisted in his frantic attempt to wreck it and send her to her death, then no punishment could be too great for such a cowardly deed.

This was instantly appreciated by all present. Even Tyler, seeing that his fate hinged on Orissa's evidence, ventured to raise his head and cast at her an imploring glance. Chesty Todd dropped his flippant air and earnestly watched the girl's face; the others with equal interest awaited her decisive statement.

As for Orissa, the gravity of the situation awed her. Recalling the dreadful moments when she battled in the air for her life she saw before her the scowling, vicious face of her enemy and remembered how his eyes had glared wickedly into her own time and again as he attacked her aeroplane, determined to destroy it at all hazards. There was no question in her mind as to the truth of Tyler's claim; she knew he had recognized her and still persisted in his purpose. She knew the accident to his machine was caused by his own carelessness and its faulty construction, and not by any desire of his to arrest its speed. Tyler had deliberately lied in order to condone his cowardly act, and she experienced a feeling of indignation that he should resort to such an infamous falsehood, knowing as he must that her evidence would render it impotent.

Orissa contemplated her erstwhile assailant with reflective deliberation. She noted his miserable appearance, his abject manner, the moods of alternate despair and hope that crossed his withered features. An enemy so contemptible and mean was scarcely worthy of her vengeance. It seemed dreadful that such a despicable creature had been made in man's image. Could he possess a soul, she wondered? Could such an one own a conscience, or have any perception, however dim, of the brutal inhumanity of his offense? Being in man's image he must have such things. Perhaps in his

nature was still some element of good, dormant and unrecognized as yet, which might develop in time and redeem him. To send him to prison, she reflected, would not be likely to correct the perversity of such a nature, while generous treatment and the forbearance of those he had wronged might tend to awaken in him remorse and a desire to retrieve his past. Without knowing it the girl was arguing on the side of the world's most expert criminologists, who hold that to destroy an offender cannot benefit society so much as to redeem him.

Whether Tyler's ultimate redemption was probable or not, Orissa did not care to assume the responsibility of crushing him in order to avenge the shameful attempt, made in a moment of frenzy, to destroy her life. While those assembled hung breathless upon her words she said with assumed composure:

"The man knows better than I whether he speaks the truth. Could one be so utterly vile as to try to murder a girl who had never injured him? I think not. It is more reasonable to suppose that in his excitement he forgot himself — his manhood and his sense of justice — and only at the last moment realized what he was doing. I believe," she added, simply, "I shall give him the credit of the doubt and accept his statement."

Tyler stared at her as if he could scarcely believe his senses, while an expression of joy slowly spread over his haggard face. Radley-Todd gave Orissa a quiet smile of comprehension and approval. Cumberford said, musingly: "Ah; this interests me; indeed it does." But Stephen exclaimed, in an impatient tone:

"That does not clear Tyler of his attempt to murder Mr. Cumberford and destroy the aircraft. He admits that such was his design and that Burthon paid him to do it. He is not less a criminal because Orissa happened to be in the aeroplane. Therefore it is Mr. Cumberford's duty to prosecute this scoundrel and put him in prison." Tyler cast a frightened look at the speaker and began to tremble again. Said Chesty Todd, leaning back in his chair with his hands thrust into his pockets:

"That's the idea. The prisoner belongs to Mr. Cumberford."

Cumberford sat in his characteristic attitude, stooping forward and thoughtfully stroking his grizzled mustache.

"Did I hurt you very much when I kicked you, Tyler?" he meekly asked.

"No, sir!" protested the man, eagerly.

"Would you have thought of such a revenge had not Burthon suggested it, and paid you to carry it out?"

"No, sir!"

"M — m. Would you like to murder me now?"

“No, sir!”

“What will you do if I set you at liberty?”

“Clear out, sir,” said Tyler earnestly.

“Ah; that interests me,” declared Mr. Cumberford.

“It doesn’t interest me, though,” Stephen said angrily. “The brute tried to wreck my aircraft.”

“But he failed,” suggested Mr. Cumberford. “The aircraft is still in apple-pie order.”

“My son,” said the boy’s mother, in her gentle voice, “can you afford to be less generous than Mr. Cumberford and — your sister?”

Stephen flushed. Then he glanced toward Sybil and found the girl eyeing him curiously, expectantly.

“Oh, well,” he said, with reluctance, “let him go. Such a fiend, at large, is a menace to society. That is why I wished to make an example of him. If aeroplanes are to be attacked in mid-air, after this, the dangers of aviation will be redoubled.”

“I wouldn’t worry about that,” carelessly remarked Todd. “This fellow is too abject a coward to continue a career of crime along those lines. He’s had his lesson, and he’ll remember it. I don’t say he’ll turn honest, for I imagine it isn’t in him; but he’ll be mighty careful hereafter how he conducts himself.”

“I — I’ll never step foot in an aeroplane again!” growled Tyler, hoarsely but with great earnestness.

“Suppose you meet Burthon again?” suggested Steve, distrustfully.

“If I do,” said the man, scowling and clinching his fists, “I — I’ll strangle him!”

“A nice, reformed character, I must say,” observed Steve, with fine contempt.

“But he interests me — he interests me greatly,” asserted Cumberford. “Let him go, Steve.”

Radley-Todd looked round the circle of faces with an amused smile, which grew tender as his eye rested upon the placid features of Mrs. Kane. The boy loved to study human nature; it had possessed a fascination for him ever since he could remember, and here was a fertile field for observation. Reading accurately the desire of those assembled to be rid of the abhorrent creature he had brought before them, the young man slowly rose and opened the door.

“Tyler,” said he, “you’ve saved your skin. Not by your whining falsehoods and misrepresentations, but because these people are too noble to be revenged upon one so ignoble and degraded. But I’m not built that way

myself. I'm longing to kick you till you can't stand, and there's a mighty power to my hamstrings, I assure you. I refrain just now, because ladies are present, but if I ever set eyes on your carcass again you'll think Cumberford's kick was a mere love-pat. Get out!"

Tyler cringed, turned without a word and shuffled through the doorway.

Orissa came forward and took the young fellow's hand in her own, impulsively.

"Thank you, Mr. Todd!" she said.

He held the hand a moment and looked admiringly into her upturned face.

"It is I who should give thanks, and I do," he answered reverently. "I thank God to-day, as I have had occasion to do before, for his noblest creation — the American girl."

"Good!" cried Cumberford, with approval. "That interests me."

CHAPTER XXVI
OF COURSE

Orissa did fly the next day, as she had declared she would. The morning papers were full of her achievement, with columns of enthusiastic praise for her beauty, her daring, her modesty and skill. The attempt of a rival aeroplane to interfere with her flight and her clever rescue of her enemy when he came to grief made a popular heroine of the girl, yet no one seemed to know the true history of the astonishing affair. The *Tribune* had glowing accounts of the day's events from the pen of Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd, but this astute correspondent refrained from making "a scoop," as he might have done had he bared his knowledge of the conspiracy that ended with Orissa Kane's aerial adventure.

One of the other papers suspected Burthon of being the instigator of the wicked plot to wreck Miss Kane's airship and, discovering the fact that he had fled from the city, openly accused him. Tyler could not be found, either, for the little ex-chauffeur had wisely "skipped the town" and his former haunts knew him no more.

The judges awarded the Kane Aircraft the ten thousand dollar prize, and singularly enough not a word of protest came from the competing aviators. Those who had attended the meet the day before, and thousands who read of Orissa Kane in the newspapers, eagerly assembled at Dominguez to witness her further exhibitions on the next day. It was estimated that fully fifty thousand people were in attendance, and when the Kane Aircraft appeared, decked with gay banners and ribbons, and made a short flight above the field, the girl aviator met with a reception such as has never before been equaled in the annals of aviation.

Later in the day Orissa took part in the contest for speed and although she did not win this event the girl aeronaut managed her biplane so gracefully and pressed the leader in the race so closely that she was accorded the admiring plaudits of the spectators.

Steve was a little disappointed in the result, but Mr. Cumberford reminded him that his employment of crossed planes was sure to sacrifice an element of speed for the sake of safety, and assured him it was not at all necessary for his invention to excel in swiftness to win universal approval.

In other events that followed during the progress of the meet Orissa captured several of the prizes, with the final result that the Kanes were eighteen thousand dollars richer than they had been before. Crowds constantly thronged the Kane hangar, inspecting the wonderful machine and questioning the attendants as to its construction and management, while so

many orders for the aircraft were booked that Mr. Cumberford assured Stephen they would be justified in at once building a factory to supply the demand.

Throughout the meet Orissa Kane remained the popular favorite and the wonderful performances of the young girl were discussed in every place where two or more people congregated. Had Stephen been able to operate his own machine he would not have won a tithe of the enthusiastic praise accorded "The Flying Girl," and this was so evident that Orissa was instantly recognized as the most important member of the firm.

Naturally she was overjoyed by her success, yet she never once lost her humble and unassuming manner or considered the applause in the light of a personal eulogy. Devoting herself seriously and with care to every detail of her work she strove to exhibit Steve's aircraft in a manner to prove its excellence, and considered that her important aim.

There was nothing reckless about Orissa's flights; her success, then and afterward, may be attributed to her coolness of head, a thorough understanding of her machine and a full appreciation of her own ability to handle it. The flattery and adulation she received did not destroy her self-poise or cause one flutter of her heart, but when anyone praised the merits of the Kane Aircraft, she flushed with pleasure and pride. For Orissa firmly believed she basked in the reflected glory of her brother's inventive genius, and considered herself no more than a showman employed to exhibit his marvelous creation.

"You see," she said to Chesty Todd, who stood beside her in the hangar on the last day of the meet while she watched Mr. Cumberford and his assistants preparing the aircraft for its final flight, "Stephen has a thorough education in aeronautics and knows the caprices and requirements of the atmosphere as well as a gardener knows his earth. The machine is adjusted to all those variations and demands, and that is why it accomplishes with ease much that other aeroplanes find difficult. A child might operate the Kane Aircraft, and I feel perfectly at ease in my seat, no matter how high I am or how conflicting the air currents; for Steve's machine will do exactly what it is built to do."

"The machine is good," observed Chesty, "but your sublime self-confidence is better. You're a conceited young lady — not over your own skill, but over that of your brother."

She laughed.

"Haven't I a right to be?" she asked. "Hasn't Steve proved his ability to the world?"

The boy nodded, a bit absently. He was thinking how good it was to find a

girl not wrapped up in herself, but unselfish enough to admire others at her own expense. A pretty girl, too, Chesty concluded with a sigh, as he watched her prepare to start. What a pity he had lived all of twenty-one years and had not known Orissa Kane before!

By some sleight-of-hand, perhaps characteristic of the fellow, Chesty had attached himself to the "Kane-Cumberford Combination," as he called it, like a barnacle. At first both Steve and Cumberford frowned upon his claim to intimacy, but the boy was so frankly attracted to their camp, "where," said he, "I can always find people of my own kind," that they soon became resigned to the situation and accepted his presence as a matter of course.

Sybil treated this new acquaintance with the same calm indifference she displayed toward all but her father and, latterly, Stephen Kane.

Chesty found in her the most puzzling character he had ever met, but liked her and studied the girl's vagaries from behind a bulwark of levity and badinage. Perhaps the reporter's most loyal friend at this time was Mrs. Kane, who had promptly endorsed the young man as a desirable acquisition to their little circle. In return Chesty was devoted to the afflicted woman and loved to pay her those little attentions she required because of her helplessness.

Mr. Cumberford celebrated the closing day of the meet by giving a little dinner to the Kanes in his private rooms at the hotel that evening, and Chesty Todd was included in the party. Stephen attended in a wheeled chair and was placed at one end of the table, while Orissa occupied the other. The central decoration was a floral model of the Kane Aircraft, and before Orissa's plate was laid a crown of laurel which her friends tried to make her wear. But the girl positively refused, declaring that Stephen ought to wear the crown, while she was entitled to no more credit than a paid aviator might be.

The next morning's developments, however, proved that she had been too modest in this assertion. A telegram arrived from the directors of the San Francisco Aviation Club asking Orissa Kane's price to attend their forthcoming meet and exhibit her aeroplane. Accounts of her daring and successful flights had been wired to newspapers all over the world and public interest in the girl aviator was so aroused that managers of aerial exhibitions throughout the country realized she would be the greatest "drawing card" they could secure.

Mr. Cumberford, as manager for Orissa as well as for Stephen and the aircraft, telegraphed his terms, demanding so large a sum that the Kanes declared it would never be considered. To their amazement the offer was promptly accepted, and while they were yet bewildered by this evidence of popularity, a representative of the New Orleans Aero Club called at the hotel

to secure Miss Kane for their forthcoming meet. Mr. Cumberford received him cordially, but said:

"Unfortunately, sir, your dates conflict with those of the San Francisco meet, where Miss Kane has already contracted to appear."

"Is there no way of securing her release?" asked the man, deeply chagrined at being too late. "Our people will be glad to pay any price to get her."

"No," replied Mr. Cumberford; "we stand by our contracts, whatever they may be. But possibly we shall be able to send you a duplicate of the Kane Aircraft, with a competent aviator to operate it." The man's face fell.

"We will, of course, be glad to have you enter the Kane machine, on the same terms other aeroplanes are entered; but we will pay no bonus unless 'The Flying Girl' is herself present to exhibit it. To be quite frank with you, the people are wild to see Orissa Kane, whose exploits are on every tongue just now, but all aeroplanes look alike to them, as you can readily understand." When the emissary had departed, keenly disappointed, Mr. Cumberford turned to Orissa and Stephen, who had both been present at the interview, and said:

"You see, Orissa should have worn the laurel crown, after all. 'The Flying Girl' has caught the popular fancy and I predict our little heroine will be in great demand wherever aviation is exploited. As a matter of truth and justice I will admit that she could not have acquired fame so readily without Steve's superb invention to back her. In coming years your principal source of income will be derived from the Kane Aircraft; but just now, while aviation is in its infancy, Orissa will be able to earn a great deal of money by giving exhibitions at aviation meets. If she undertakes it there is, we all know, much hard work ahead of her, coupled with a certain degree of danger." He turned to the girl. "It will be for you to decide, my dear."

Orissa did not hesitate in her reply.

"I will do all in my power to exhibit Steve's machine properly, until he is well enough to operate it himself," she said. "Then he will become the popular hero in my place, and I'll retire to the background, where I belong."

Even Steve smiled at this prediction.

"I'll never be able to run the thing as you can, Ris," he replied, "and you mustn't overlook the fact that your being a girl gives you as great an advantage over me, as an aeronaut, as over all other aviators. I think Mr. Cumberford is right in saying that the advertising and prestige you have already received will enable you to win a fortune for us — provided you are willing to assume the risk and exertion, and if mother will consent."

"I love the moil and toil of it, as well as the pleasure," exclaimed the girl.

“It will be joy and bliss to me to fly the aircraft on every possible occasion, and if you’ll leave me to manage mother I’ll guarantee to secure her consent.”

At this juncture Chesty Todd came in. His face was solemn and dejected.

“What’s up?” asked Steve.

“Lost my job, that’s all,” said Chesty. “Our editor thinks I didn’t run down that Burthon affair as well as the other fellows did and that I neglected some of the famous aviators to gush over Miss Kane. That’s his excuse, anyhow; but my private opinion, publicly expressed, is that I was predoomed to be fired, whatever I did.”

“Why so?” inquired Orissa.

“I’m getting too good. They’re afraid if they kept me on I’d demand more wages.”

There was a shout of laughter at this.

“Of course I didn’t expect sympathy,” observed Chesty, dolefully. “I see starvation ahead of me, and as there’s a good deal of Mr. Radley-Todd to starve it’s bound to be a tedious and trying experience.”

“This interests me,” remarked Mr. Cumberford, musingly.

“Me, also,” said Chesty.

Cumberford related the engagement made that morning for Miss Kane’s San Francisco exhibition and the demand of the New Orleans representative.

“The promoters of every aviation meet, hereafter, will want to secure Orissa,” he added, “and so we are about to organize a campaign to advertise ‘The Flying Girl’ and the Kane Aircraft throughout the United States. Possibly we may take her to Europe — ”

“Oh!” exclaimed Orissa, excitedly. “Don’t you think the people of Mars would like me to visit them?”

“I see,” said Chesty, nodding. “You need a press agent.”

“It might not be a bad idea,” admitted Mr. Cumberford.

“I’m engaged from this moment,” declared the young man. “I’ve had my breakfast, thank you, but I shall require three square meals a day from this time on. Any further emolument I leave to you. As for promoting Miss Kane, you’ll find me thoroughly capable and willing — provided the young lady proves flighty and goes up in the air occasionally, as young ladies are prone to do. This may be a soar subject to discuss just now, so I’ll end my aeroplaintive lay.”

“If you put that bosh in the papers you’ll ruin us,” said Steve.

“Trust me,” returned Chesty, earnestly. “I’ll stick to the most dignified facts, merely relating that Miss Kane is to make an ascension for the purpose of picking air currants to make jam of.”

“All right,” announced Mr. Cumberford; “you’re engaged.”

THE FLYING GIRL AND HER CHUM

The Flying Girl and Her Chum appeared in 1912, published by Reilly & Britton and illustrated by Joseph Pierre Nuyttens. Baum once again employed the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. A sequel to *Flying Girl*, published a year earlier, the heroine, young Orissa Kane is now a famous flying ace. While piloting her inventor brother's new Hydro-Aircraft, Orissa and her companion have mechanical problems and land on an uncharted island in the Pacific, where they cope with life as castaways. Rescue attempts and trouble with Mexican bandits ensue. Baum intended to create a "Flying Girl" series, but although he planned a third volume, he abandoned it when the series did not prove popular.

A first edition copy of The Flying Girl and Her Chum

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CHAPTER ONE

THE GIRL WITH THE YACHT

PERHAPS THEY CALL them "parlor" cars because they bear so little resemblance to the traditional parlor — a word and a room now sadly out of style. In reality they are ordinary cars with two rows of swivel seats down the center; seats supposed to pivot in every direction unless their action is impeded by the passenger's hand baggage, which the porter promptly piles around the chairs, leaving one barely room to place his feet and no chance at all to swing the seat. Thus imprisoned, you ride thoughtfully on your way, wondering if the exclusive "parlor car" is really worth the extra fee.

However, those going to San Diego, in the Southland of California, are obliged to choose between plebeian coaches and the so-called "parlor" outfit, and on a mild, sunny morning in February the San Diego train rolled out of the Los Angeles depot with every swivel seat in the car de luxe occupied by a passenger.

They were a mixed assemblage, mostly tourists bound for Coronado, yet quite unknown to one another; or, at least, not on speaking terms. There was a Spanish-looking gentleman in white; two prim, elderly damsels in black; a mamma with three subdued children and a maid; and a fat man who read a book and scowled at every neighbor who ventured a remark louder than a whisper. Forward in the car the first three seats were taken by a party from New York, and this little group of travelers attracted more than one curious glance.

"That," murmured one of the prim ladies to the other, "is Madeline Dentry, the famous heiress. No one knows how many millions she has just inherited, but she is said to be one of the richest girls in America. The stout lady is her chaperone; I believe — she's a distant relative — an aunt, or something — and the thin, nervous man, the stout lady's husband, is Madeline Dentry's financial manager."

"I know," replied the other, nodding; "he used to be her guardian before she came of legal age, a month or so ago. His name is Tupper — Martin J. Tupper — and I'm told he is well connected."

"He is, indeed, to have the handling of Madeline's millions."

"I mean in a family way. The Dentrys were nobodies, you know, until Madeline's father cornered the mica mines of the world and made his millions; but the Tuppers were a grand old Baltimore family in the days of Washington, always poor as poverty and eminently aristocratic."

"Do you know the Tuppers?"

"I have never met them. I strongly disapprove of their close association

with Miss Dentry — a fly-away miss who kept Bryn Mawr in a turmoil while she was a student there, and is now making an absurd use of her money."

"In what way?"

"Haven't you heard? She has purchased Lord Tweedmonk's magnificent yacht, and has had it taken to San Diego harbor. I was told by the bell boy at the Los Angeles Hotel — bell boys are singularly well-informed, I have observed — that Madeline Dentry is to take her new yacht on a cruise to Hawaii and Japan. She is probably now on her way to see her extravagant and foolish plaything."

"Dreadful!" said the other, with a shudder. "I wonder how anyone can squander a fortune on a yacht when all those poor heathens are starving in China. What a pity the girl has no mother to guide her!"

"Tell me about the beautiful girl seated next to Madeline."

"I do not know who she is. Some stranger to the rich young lady, I imagine. They're not speaking. Yes, she is really beautiful, that girl. Her eyes are wonderful, and her coloring perfect."

"And she seems so modest and diffident."

"Evidence of good breeding, whoever she may be; quite the opposite of Madeline Dentry, whose people have always been rapid and rude."

The fat gentleman was now glaring at the old ladies so ferociously that they became awed and relapsed into silence. The others in the car seemed moodily reserved. Mr. Martin J. Tupper read a newspaper. His stolid wife, seated beside him, closed her eyes and napped. Madeline Dentry, abandoning a book that was not interesting, turned a casual glance upon her neighbor in the next chair — the beautiful girl who had won the approval of the two old maids. Madeline herself had a piquant, attractive countenance, but her neighbor was gazing dreamily out of the window and seemed not to have noticed her. In this listless attitude she might be inspected at leisure, and Madeline was astonished at the perfect profile, the sheen of her magnificent hair, the rich warm tintings of a skin innocent of powders or cosmetics. Critically the rich young lady glanced at the girl's attire. It was exceedingly simple but of costly material. She wore no jewels or ornaments, nor did she need them to enhance her attractiveness.

Perhaps feeling herself under observation, the girl slowly turned her head until her eyes met those of Madeline. They were gloriously blue eyes, calm and intelligent, wide open and fearless. Yet with a faint smile she quickly withdrew them before Madeline's earnest gaze.

"Will you have a chocolate?"

"Thank you."

The strong hand with its well-shaped fingers did not fumble in Madeline's

box of bonbons. She took a chocolate, smiled again, and with a half shy glance into her neighbor's face proceeded to nibble the confection.

Madeline was charmed.

"Are you traveling alone?" she asked.

"Yes. I am to meet my brother and — some friends — in San Diego."

"I am Miss Dentry — Madeline Dentry. My home is in New York."

"And mine is in Los Angeles. I am not straying very far away, you see."

Madeline was piqued that her hint was disregarded.

"And your name?" she asked sweetly.

The girl hesitated an instant. Then she said: "I am Miss Kane."

Mr. Tupper looked up from his newspaper.

"Kane?" he repeated. "Bless me! That's the name of the Flying Girl."

"So it is," admitted Miss Kane, with a little laugh.

"But flying is not in your line, I imagine," said Madeline, admiring anew the dainty personality of her chance acquaintance.

"At present our train is dragging, rather than flying," was the merry response.

Mr. Tupper was interested. He carefully folded his paper and joined in the conversation.

"The idea of any girl attempting to do stunts in the air!" he remarked disdainfully. "Your namesake, Miss Kane, deserves to break her venturesome, unmaidenly neck — as she probably will, in the near future."

"Nonsense, Uncle!" cried Madeline; "Orissa Kane, so far as I've read of her — and I've read everything I could find — is not at all unmaidenly. She's venturesome, if you like, and manages an aeroplane better than many of the bird-men can; but I see nothing more unwomanly in flying than in running an automobile, and you know I do that to perfection. This Flying Girl, as she is called, is famous all over America for her daring, her coolness in emergencies and her exceptional skill. I want to see her fly, while I'm out here, for I understand there's to be an aviation meet of some sort in San Diego next week, and that Orissa Kane is engaged to take part in it."

"Flying is good sport, I admit," said Mr. Tupper, "but it would give me the shivers to see a girl attempt it. And, once a machine is in the air, you can't tell whether a man or woman is flying it; they all look alike to the watcher below. Don't go to this aviation meet, Madeline; you've seen girls fly. There was Miss Moisant, at Garden City — "

"She barely got off the ground," said Miss Dentry. "And there was Blanche Scott — "

"They're all imitators of Orissa Kane!" declared Madeline impatiently. "There's only one real Flying Girl, Uncle, and if she's on the program at the

San Diego meet I'm going to see her."

"You'll be disappointed," averred the gentleman. "She's a native of these parts, they say; I presume some big-boned, masculine, orange-picking female — "

"Wrong again, sir! The reporters all rave about her. They say she has a charming personality, is lovely and sweet and modest and — and — " She paused, her eyes dilating a little as she marked the red flush creeping over Miss Kane's neck and face. Then Madeline drew in her breath sharply and cast a warning glance at her uncle.

Mr. Tupper, however, was obtuse. He knew nothing of Madeline's suspicions.

"Have you ever seen this dare-devil namesake of yours, Miss Kane?" he asked indifferently.

"Yes, sir," she answered in a quiet tone.

"And what did you think of her?"

Madeline was powerless to stop him. Miss Kane, however, looked at her questioner with candid eyes, a frank smile upon her beautiful face.

"She has a fine aeroplane," was her reply. "Her brother invented it, you know. It's the Kane Aircraft, the safest and speediest yet made, and Stephen Kane has taught his sister how to handle it. That she flies his Aircraft successfully is due, I am sure, to her brother's genius; not to any especial merit of her own."

Mr. Tupper was staring now, and beginning to think. He remembered reading a similar assertion attributed to Orissa Kane, the Flying Girl, who always insisted on crediting her brother with whatever success she achieved. Perhaps this girl had read it, too; or, perhaps —

He began to "put two and two together." Southern California was the favorite haunt of the Flying Girl; there was to be an aviation meet presently at San Diego; and on this train, bound for San Diego, was riding a certain Miss Kane who answered to Madeline's description of the aerial heroine — a description he now remembered to have often read himself. Uncertain what to say, he asked haltingly:

"Do you call it aviatrix or 'aviatrice'? The feminine of 'aviator,' you know."

"I should say 'aviatress,' now that you appeal to me," was the laughing reply. "Some of the newspaper men, who love to coin new words, have tried to saddle 'aviatrice' on the girl aviator, and the French have dubbed her 'aviatrix' without rhyme or reason. It seems to me that if 'seamstress,"governess' or 'hostess' is proper, 'aviatress' is also correct and, moreover, it is thoroughly American.

But in — in the profession — on the aviation field — they call themselves 'aviators' whether men or women, just as an author is always an 'author,' regardless of sex."

Mr. Tupper had made up his mind, by this time. He reasoned that a girl who talked so professionally of aviation terms must be something more than a novice, and struggled to remember if he had inadvertently said anything to annoy or humiliate Miss Kane. For, if the little maid so demurely seated before him was indeed the famous Flying Girl, the gentleman admitted he had good reason to admire her. Madeline was watching his embarrassment with an expression of amusement, but would not help him out of his dilemma. So Mr. Tupper went straight to the heart of the misunderstanding, as perhaps was best under the circumstances.

"Your first name is Orissa?" he inquired, gently.

"It is, sir."

"Won't you have another chocolate?" asked Madeline.

Orissa took another chocolate, reflecting how impossible it seemed to hide her identity, even from utter strangers. Not that she regretted, in any way, the celebrity she had gained by flying her brother Stephen's Aircraft, but it would have been so nice to have ridden to-day with these pleasant people without listening to the perfunctory words of praise and adulation so persistently lavished upon her since she had acquired fame.

"I knew Cumberford some years ago," continued Mr. Tupper, rather aimlessly. "Cumberford's your manager, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; and my brother's partner."

"Good chap, Cumberford. Had a queer daughter, I remember; an impossible child, with the airs of a princess and the eyes of a sorceress. She's grown up, by this time, I suppose."

Miss Kane smiled.

"Sybil Cumberford is my best chum," she replied. "The description still applies, so far as the airs and eyes are concerned; but the child is a young lady now, and a very lovable young lady, her friends think."

"Doubtless, doubtless," Mr. Tupper said hastily. "If Cumberford is in San Diego I shall be glad to renew our acquaintance."

"You are bound for Coronado, I suppose," remarked Orissa, to change the subject.

"Only for a few days' stay," Madeline answered. "Then we expect to make a sea voyage to Honolulu."

"That will be delightful," said the girl. "I've lived many years on the shores of the Pacific, but have never made a voyage farther to sea than Catalina. I'm told Honolulu is a fascinating place; but it needs be to draw one

away from Coronado.”

“You like Coronado, then?”

“All this South Country is a real paradise,” declared Orissa. “I have had opportunity to compare it with other parts of America, and love it better after each comparison. But I am ignorant of foreign countries, and can only say that if they excel Southern California they are too good for humans to live in and ought to be sacred to the fairies.”

Madeline laughed gayly.

“I know you now!” she exclaimed; “you are what is called out here a ‘booster.’ But from my limited experience in your earthly paradise I cannot blame you.”

“Yes, we are all ‘boosters,’” asserted the younger girl, “and I’m positive you will join our ranks presently. I love this country especially because one can fly here winter and summer.”

“You are fond of flying?”

“Yes. At first I didn’t care very much for it, but it grows on one until its fascinations are irresistible. I have the most glorious sense of freedom when I’m in the airway up, where I love best to be — but during my recent exhibitions in the East I nearly froze making the high flights. It is a little cold even here when you are half a mile up, but it is by no means unbearable.”

“They call you a ‘dare-devil’ in the newspapers,” remarked Mr. Tupper, eyeing her reflectively; “but I can scarcely believe one so — so young and — and — girlish has ventured to do all the foolish aerial tricks you are credited with.”

Mrs. Tupper had by this time opened her eyes and was now listening in amazement.

“Yes,” she added, reprovingly, “all those spiral dips and volplaning and — and — figure-eights are more suited to a circus performer than to a young girl, it seems to me.”

This lady’s face persistently wore a bland and unmeaning smile, which had been so carefully cultivated in her youth that it had become habitual and wreathed her chubby features even when she was asleep, giving one the impression that she wore a mask. Now her stern eyes belied the smirk of her face, but Orissa merely smiled.

“I am not a ‘dare-devil/ I assure you,” she said, addressing Mr. Tupper rather than his wife. “I know the newspapers call me that, and compare me with the witch on a broomstick; but in truth I am as calculating and cold as any aviator in America. Everything I do is figured out with mathematical precision and I never take a single chance that I can foresee. I know the air currents, and all their whims and peculiarities, and how to counteract them.

What may seem to the spectators to be daring, and even desperate, is often the safest mode of flying, provided you understand your machine and the conditions of the air. To volplane from a height of five or ten thousand feet, for example, is safer than from a slight elevation, for the further you drop the better air-cushion is formed under your planes, and you ride as gently as when suspended from a parachute."

Madeline was listening eagerly.

"Are you afraid?" she asked.

"Afraid? Why should I be, with my brother's wonderful engine at my back and perfect control of every part of my machine?"

"Suppose the engine should some time fail you?"

"Then I would volplane to the ground."

"And if the planes, or braces, or fastenings break?"

"No fear of that. The Kane Aircraft is strong enough for any aerial purpose and I examine every brace and strut before I start my flight merely to satisfy myself they have not been maliciously tampered with."

Then Madeline sprung her important question:

"Do you ever take a passenger?"

Orissa regarded Miss Dentry with a whimsical smile.

"Sometimes," she said. "Do you imagine you would like to fly?"

"No — no, indeed!" cried Mr. Tupper in a horrified voice, and Mrs. Tupper echoed, "How absurd!" But Madeline answered quietly:

"If you could manage to take me I am sure I would enjoy the experience."

"I will consider it and let you know later," said the Flying Girl, thoughtfully. "My chum, Sybil Cumberford, has made several short flights with me; but Sybil's head is perfectly balanced and no altitude affects it. Often those who believe they would enjoy flying become terrified once they are in the air."

"Nothing could terrify Madeline, I am sure," asserted Mrs. Tupper, in a rasping voice; "but she is too important a personage to risk her life foolishly. I shall insist that she at once abandon the preposterous idea. Abandon it, Madeline! I thought your new yacht a venturesome thing to indulge in, but flying is far, far worse."

"Oh; have you a yacht?" inquired Orissa, turning eagerly to the other girl.

"Yes; the *Salvador.* It is now lying in San Diego harbor. I've not seen my new craft as yet, but intend it shall take us to Honolulu and perhaps to Japan."

"How delightful," cried Orissa, with enthusiasm.

"Would you like to join our party?"

"Oh, thank you; I couldn't," quite regretfully; "I am too busy just now

advancing the fortunes of my brother Stephen, who is really the most clever inventor of aeroplanes in the world. Don't smile, please; he is, indeed! The world may not admit it as yet, but it soon will. Have you heard of his latest contrivance? It is a Hydro-Aircraft, and its engines propel it equally as well on water as on land."

"Then it beats my yacht," said Madeline, smiling.

"It is more adaptable — more versatile — to be sure," said Orissa. "Stephen has just completed his first Hydro-Aircraft, and while I am in San Diego I shall test it and make a long trip over the Pacific Ocean to exploit its powers. Such a machine would not take the place of a yacht, you know, and the motor boat attachment is merely a safety device to allow one to fly over water as well as over land. Then, if you are obliged to descend, your aircraft becomes a motor boat and the engines propel it to the shore."

"Does your brother use the Gnome engines?" inquired Mr. Tupper.

"No; Stephen makes his own engines, which I think are better than any others," answered Miss Kane.

By the time the train drew into the station at San Diego, Madeline Dentry and her companions, the Tuppers, knew considerably more of aeroplanes than the average layman, for Orissa Kane enjoyed explaining the various machines and, young and unassuming as she appeared, understood every minute detail of their manufacture. She had been her brother's assistant and companion from the time of his first experiments and intelligently followed the creation and development of the now famous Kane Aircraft.

At the depot a large crowd was in waiting, not gathered to meet the great heiress, Madeline Dentry, but the quiet slip of a girl whose name was on every tongue and whose marvelous skill as a bird-maid had aroused the admiration of every person interested in aerial sports. On the billboards were glaring posters of "The Flying Girl," the chief attraction of the coming aviation meet, and the news of her expected arrival had drawn many curious inhabitants of the Sunshine City to the depot, as well as the friends congregated to greet her.

First of all a tall, fine looking fellow, who limped slightly, sprang forward to meet Orissa at the car steps and gave her a kiss and a hug. This was Stephen Kane, the airship inventor, and close behind him stood a grizzled gentleman in a long gray coat and jaunty Scotch cap. It was Mr. Cumberford, the "angel" and manager of the youthful Kanes, the man whose vast wealth had financed the Kane Aircraft and enabled the boy and girl to carry out their ambitious plans. This strange man had neither ambition to acquire more money nor to secure fame by undertaking to pilot the Aircraft to success; as he stood here, his bored expression, in sharp contrast to the shrewd gray eyes

that twinkled behind his spectacles, clearly indicated this fact; but a little kindness had won him to befriend the young people and he had rendered them staunch support.

On Mr. Cumberford's arm was a slender girl dressed all in black, the nodding sable plumes of whose broad hat nearly hid Orissa from view as the two girls exchanged a kiss. Sybil Cumberford had no claim to beauty except for her dark eyes — so fathomless and mysterious that they awed all but her most intimate friends, and puzzled even them.

And now an awkward young fellow — six feet three and built like an athlete — slouched bashfully forward and gripped Orissa Kane's outstretched hand. Here was the press agent of the Kane-Cumberford alliance, Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd; a most astonishing youth who impressed strangers as being a dummy and his friends as the possessor of a rarely keen intellect. Orissa smiled at him; there was something humorous about Radley-Todd's loose-jointed, unwieldy personality. Then she took her brother's arm and passed through the eager, admiring throng to the automobile in waiting.

Beside Mr. Cumberford's car stood a handsome equipage that had been sent for Miss Dentry's party, and as Orissa nodded to her recent acquaintances Sybil Cumberford inquired:

"Who is that girl?"

"A Miss Dentry, of New York, with whom I exchanged some remarks on the train. She has a yacht in the bay here."

"Oh, yes; I've heard all about her," returned Sybil, indifferently. "She's dreadfully rich; rather snubbed New York society, which was eager to idolize her — says she's too young for the weary, heart-breaking grind — and indulges in such remarkable fancies that she's getting herself talked about. I hope you didn't encourage her advances, Orissa?"

"I fear I did," was the laughing reply; "but she seemed very nice and agreeable — for a rich girl. Tell me, Steve," she added, turning to her brother, "what news of the Hydro-Aircraft?"

"It's great, Orissa! I put the finishing touches on it night before last, and yesterday Mr. Cumberford and I took a trial spin in it. It carries two beautifully," he exclaimed, his eyes sparkling with enthusiasm.

"Did you go over the water?" asked Orissa.

"Nearly half a mile. Then we dropped and let the engine paddle us home. Of all the hydro-aeroplanes yet invented, Ris, mine will do the most stunts and do them with greater ease."

They were rolling swiftly toward the ferry now, bound for the Hotel del Coronado, a rambling pile of Spanish architecture that dominates the other

side of San Diego Bay. Presently the car took its place in the line of vehicles on the ferry and Mr. Cumberford, who was driving, shut off the power and turned to Orissa.

"You are advertised to exhibit the new Hydro-Aircraft the first day of the meet — that's Monday," he announced. "Do you think you can master the mechanism by that time?"

"Is it the same old engine, Steve?" she inquired.

"Exactly the same, except that I've altered the controlling levers, to make them handy both in the air and on water, and balanced the weight a little differently, to allow for the boat attachment."

"How did you do that?"

"Placed the gasoline tanks in the rear. That makes the engine feed from the back, instead of from directly overhead, you see."

Orissa nodded.

"I think I can manage it, Mr. Cumberford," she decided. "Will Steve go with me on Monday?"

"Why — no" returned the manager, a trifle embarrassed. "Our fool press agent had an idea the event would be more interesting if two girls made the flight out to sea, and the trip back by boat. Sybil has been crazy to go, and so I let Chesty Todd have his own way."

"You see, Miss Kane," added Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd, who was seated beside Mr. Cumberford, while Stephen and the two girls rode behind, "the management of the meet couldn't get another aviatress to take part, because you had been engaged to fly. The other air-maids are all jealous of your reputation and popularity, I guess, so the management was in despair. The dear public is daffy, just now, to watch a female risk her precious life; it's more thrilling than when a male ventures it. So, as they're paying us pretty big money, and Miss Cumberford was anxious to go, I — er — er — I — "

"It is quite satisfactory to me," announced Orissa quietly. "I shall enjoy having Sybil with me."

"I knew you wouldn't object," said Sybil.

"The only thing I don't like about it," observed Stephen, reflectively, "is the fact that you have never yet seen my Hydro-Aircraft. It's safe enough, either on land or water; but if the thing balks — as new inventions sometimes do — there will be no one aboard to help you remedy the fault, and the invention is likely to get a black eye."

"Give me a tool bag and I'll do as well as any mechanician," responded Orissa, confidently. "And your Hy is not going to balk, Steve, for I shall know as much about it as you do by Monday."

CHAPTER TWO

THE GIRL WITH THE AEROPLANE

The MORNING FOLLOWING Orissa Kane's arrival, which was the Saturday preceding the meet, she went with her brother Stephen to his hangar, which was located near the Glenn Curtiss aviation camp on a low bluff overlooking the Pacific. There the two spent the entire forenoon in a careful inspection of the new Hydro-Aircraft.

As she had told Madeline Dentry, the Flying Girl never wittingly took chances in the dangerous profession she followed. The remarkable success of her aerial performances was due to an exact knowledge of every part of her aeroplane. She knew what each bolt and brace was for and how much strain it would stand; she knew to a feather's weight the opposition of the planes to the air, the number of revolutions to drive the engine under all conditions and the freaks of the unreliable atmospheric currents. And aside from this knowledge she had that prime quality known as "the aviator's instinct" — the intuition what to do in emergencies, and the coolness to do it promptly.

Stephen Kane, who adored his pretty little sister, had not the slightest fear for her. As she had stood at his side during the construction of his first successful aeroplane and learned such mechanical principles of flying as he himself knew, he had no doubt she could readily comprehend the adaptation he had made to convert his Aircraft into the amphibious thing that could navigate air and water alike.

"It seems to me quite perfect, Steve," was Orissa's final verdict. "There is no question but the Hydro-Aircraft will prove more useful to the world than any simple aeroplane. If we could carry gasoline enough, I would venture across the Pacific in this contrivance. By the way, what am I to do on Monday? Must I carry Sybil in any certain direction, or for any given distance?"

"I'll let Chesty explain that," said Steve, turning to the youthful press agent, who had just then entered the hangar in company with Mr. Cumberford and Sybil.

"Why, er — er — a certain program has been announced, you know," explained Chesty Todd; "but that doesn't count, of course. We'll say that owing to high winds, contrary air currents, or some other excuse, you had to alter your plans. That'll satisfy the dear public, all right."

Orissa frowned slightly.

"You mustn't compromise me in such ways, Mr. Todd," she exclaimed. "The Kane-Cumberford Camp has the reputation of fulfilling its engagements to the letter; but if you promise impossible things of course we

cannot do them."

The young man flushed. In the presence of Orissa Kane this big fellow was as diffident as a schoolboy.

"I — I didn't think I promised too much," he stammered. "There are two or three islands off this coast, known as the Coronado Islands. The big one — you can see it plainly from here — is named Sealskin. No one knows why. There are seals there, and they have skins. Perhaps that's the reason. Or they may all be related, and the seals' kin play together on the rocks."

"Be sensible, Chesty!" This from Mr. Cumberford, rather impatiently.

"I'm quite sensible of Miss Kane's annoyance," resumed Mr. Radley-Todd, "but I hope she will find her task easy. She has merely to fly to Sealskin Island, a dozen or fifteen miles — perhaps twenty — and alight on the bosom of the blue Pacific. Mighty poetical in the advertisements, eh? Then she'll ride back in motor boat fashion. When she approaches the shore she is to mount into the air again, circle around the hotel and land on the aviation field before the grand stand. If any part of this program seems difficult, we can cut it out and tell the reporters — "

"Steve," interrupted Orissa, "can I rise from the water into the air?"

"Of course. That's my pet invention. While skimming along the water you lift this lever, free the propeller, then point your elevator and — up you go!"

"Run out the machine. We will make a trial and you shall show me how it is done. The rest of Chesty's program seems easy enough, and if I master this little trick of rising from the water we will carry out our contract to the letter."

"All right. Your costume is in that little dressing room in the corner, Ris."

While his sister donned her short skirt, leggings and helmet, Stephen Kane called his mechanicians and had the Hydro-Aircraft rolled out of the hangar and headed toward the ocean. For himself, he merely put on a sweater and his cap and visor, being ready long before Orissa appeared.

The inventor seldom flew his own craft, for an accidental fall had lamed him so that he was not as expert an aviator as his sister had proved to be. He was recovering from his hurt, however, and hoped the injured leg would soon be good as new. Meantime Orissa was doing more to render the Kane Aircraft famous than any man might have done.

A wire fence encircled the Kane-Cumberford Camp for some distance, except on the ocean side, where the bluff protected it from invasion. There was an entrance gate adjoining the beach road, and while the assembled party awaited Orissa's appearance Steve noticed that a motor car stopped at the gateway and a man and woman alighted and entered the enclosure, leisurely approaching the spot where the Hydro-Aircraft stood.

“Oh!” exclaimed Sybil, whose dark eyes were far-seeing; “it’s that girl who owns the yacht, Madeline what’s-her-name.”

“Dentry,” said Steve. “I wonder if Orissa invited her here. Go and meet them, Chesty, and find out.”

Mr. Radley-Todd promptly unlimbered his long legs and advanced to meet Madeline and Mr. Tupper. The press agent had an unlimited command of language when driving his pen over paper, but was notably awkward in expressing himself conversationally. He now stopped short before the visitors, removed his hat and said:

“I — er — pardon me, but — er — was your appointment for this hour?”

“Is Miss Kane here, sir?” asked Madeline, unabashed.

“She is, Miss — er — er — ”

“Dentry.”

“Oh; thank you.”

“Then I will see her,” and she took a step forward. But Chesty Todd did not move his huge bulk out of the way. So many curious and bold people were prone to intrude on all aviators, and especially on Miss Kane, that it was really necessary to deny them in a positive manner in order to secure any privacy at all. The press agent, in his halting way, tried to explain.

“We — er — Miss Kane — is about to — er — test the powers of our new Hydro-Aircraft, and I regret to say that — er — er — the test is private, you know.”

“How fortunate that we came just now!” cried Madeline, eagerly, as she flashed her most winning smile on the young man. “Please lead us directly to Miss Kane, sir.”

“Yes; of course; please lead us to Miss Kane,” echoed Mr. Tupper pompously.

Chesty succumbed and led them to the group surrounding the machine, just as Orissa emerged from the hangar. Recognizing her recent traveling companion, the Flying Girl ran up and greeted her cordially, introducing her and Mr. Tupper to the others present.

“I’m going to try out our new Hy,” she said, with a laugh. “‘Hy,’ you must know, is my abbreviation of the Hydro-Aircraft — too long a word altogether. If you will promise not to criticise us, in case we foozle, you are welcome to watch our performance.”

“That will be glorious,” returned Madeline. “We have been to the bay to inspect the *Salvador,* my new yacht, but being anxious to see your new Aircraft and hoping to find you here, we ventured to stop for a few minutes. Forgive us if we intruded.”

She spoke so frankly and was so evidently unconscious of being

unwelcome that the entire group accepted her presence and that of her uncle without murmur.

Steve took his place in the "Hy" and Orissa sat beside him.

The motor boat attachment, which took the place of the ordinary running gear, was of sheet aluminum, as light and yet as strongly built as was possible for a thing intended to be practical. Adjustable wheels, which could be folded back when the boat was in the water, were placed on either side, to give the craft a land start. The huge engine was beautiful in appearance, while the planes — a crossed arrangement peculiar to the Kane Aircraft — were immaculately white in their graceful spread.

"This upper plane," said Steve, proud to explain the marvels of his latest mechanical pet, "is so arranged that its position may be altered by means of a lever. If you're on the water and want to save gasoline you adjust the plane as a sail and let the wind drive you."

"Clever! Very clever, indeed," observed Mr. Tupper. "I had no idea these flying machines had been improved so much since I last saw an aviation meet, some six months ago."

"The art of flying is still in its infancy, sir," replied Mr. Cumberford. "It is progressing with wonderful strides, however, and young Kane is one of those remarkable geniuses who keep a pace ahead of the procession."

Even as he spoke Steve started the engine, and as the first low rumble of the propeller increased to a roar the machine darted forward, passed the edge of the bluff and, rising slightly, sped over the placid waters of the Pacific, straight out from shore.

He did not rise very high, but half a mile or so out the aviator described a half-circle and then, as gracefully as a swan, sank to the surface of the ocean. Instantly a white wake of foam appeared at the rear of the boat, showing that the propeller was now churning the water. And now, with speed that to the observers appeared almost incredible, the Hydro-Aircraft approached the shore. A few yards from the bluff it abruptly rose from the water, sailed above the heads of the spectators, and after a circle of the field, came to a halt at almost the exact spot from which it had started.

This remarkable performance had taken place in so brief a space of time that those on the bluff had scarcely moved during the entire period. They now hastened forward to congratulate the inventor. Mr. Cumberford's grim features were for once wreathed in smiles; Chesty Todd capered like a schoolboy and flung his hat into the air as he yelled "Hooray!" while Sybil impulsively grasped Steve's hand in both of her own. As for Madeline Dentry, she eyed the young man wonderingly, asking herself if the marvel she seemed to have witnessed had actually occurred.

“Do you know,” said Mr. Tupper, his voice trembling with excitement, “I wouldn’t much mind a ride like that myself!”

Orissa was much pleased with this successful test of the new machine’s powers. As the men wheeled the Hydro-Aircraft back to its hangar she turned to Chesty and said:

“I forgive you, sir. Really, you were too modest in your promises. Sybil and I will carry out your program to the entire satisfaction of the management and the public, I am positive.”

“I can hardly wait for Monday, Ris,” exclaimed Sybil. “If father wasn’t so afraid, I would learn to navigate the Hy myself.”

“Ah, you interest me, my dear,” returned her father, blandly; “you do, really. But as your talents will never enable you to rival Orissa it will be well for you to curb your ambitions. I’ve conceded a lot, to allow you to go with her on that long jaunt Monday.”

“You have, indeed,” laughed Orissa. “But Sybil and I will have a real joy ride, and be perfectly safe in the bargain. How long a time will the trip take us, Steve?”

“Oh, a couple of hours, or so; it will depend on whether the current is favorable to your paddling back. In the air you can do forty miles an hour, easily.”

“We will take some lunch with us,” said Sybil. “Don’t forget to order it, Daddy.”

Mr. Cumberford nodded. Unimpressionable as this strange man seemed, his daughter was verily the “apple of his eye” and he was not likely to forget anything that might add to her comfort. Sybil’s desire to aviate had been a constant source of disturbance to her father. He had worried a good deal over Orissa, during her first attempts to fly, but was now convinced of the girl’s capability and, although he exhibited nervousness every time she gave one of her exhibitions, he had by degrees acquired supreme confidence in her skill. Still, being thoroughly experienced in all aviation matters, through his connection with the Kane Aircraft, Mr. Cumberford realized that flying is always accompanied by danger, and whenever an aviator met with an accident on the field he was wont to inform Sybil that on no account could she ever accompany Orissa again in a flight. He would even urge Orissa to abandon the dangerous work; but she answered him gravely: “This accident, as well as all others I ever heard of, was the result of carelessness and inexperience. The more flights I make the less liable am I to encounter accident. Perhaps I realize better than you do, Mr. Cumberford, the elements of danger, and that is the reason I am so careful to avoid every hazard.”

Flying was an intoxication to Sybil. She never had enough of it and

always complained to Orissa that their flights were of too short duration. Each time she was obliged to plead and argue with her father for days, before obtaining his consent to let her go, and even now, when he had given his reluctant permission to Chesty Todd to advertise Sybil as the companion of the Flying Girl, he was frequently impelled to forbid the adventure. His only consolation was that the new invention seemed very safe and practical, and with Orissa's guiding hands at the levers his beloved daughter would be as well guarded as possible under such conditions.

As a matter of fact, protests from Mr. Cumberford had little value, as Sybil possessed a knack of getting her own way under any and all circumstances. She had really no great desire to operate an aeroplane herself, being quite content to remain a passenger and enjoy the freedom of riding, untrammeled by the necessity of being alert every instant to control the machine.

Orissa, excusing herself, retired to the hangar to change her costume, and the young inventor was left to listen to the enthusiastic comments of his friends.

"When will your Hydro-Aircraft be on the market, Mr. Kane?" asked Madeline.

"In the course of the next three months we expect to complete two other machines," he replied.

"I want one of them," she said quickly. "Will you teach me how to operate it?"

"Of course," he answered. "That is part of the bargain. But you have not asked the price, and for all business transactions I must refer you to Mr. Cumberford."

"Madeline, my dear! My dear Madeline!" protested Mr. Tupper; "what in the world are you thinking of?"

"That I would give Mr. Cumberford a check at once," she calmly answered.

"But I — we — that is, I can't permit it; I — I really can't allow it, my dear!" asserted the gentleman, evidently alarmed by her positive attitude.

Madeline's slight form stiffened and her eyes flashed defiantly.

"Mr. Tupper," said she to her uncle, "do I employ you to advise me, or to manage my business affairs?"

That he was greatly humiliated by this attack was evident. His face grew red and he half turned away, hesitating to make reply. Then Mr. Cumberford came to Mr. Tupper's assistance.

"Your — eh — friend — is quite right, Miss Dentry; quite right to oppose your — eh — reckless impulse, if I may put it that way. Your enthusiasm

interests me; it — eh — interests me greatly; but for your own welfare and the comfort of mind of your friends, I should advise you to — eh — curb your adventurous spirit, for the present. You have what is known as the 'Flying Fever,' which attacks the most conservative people when on the aviation field. Let it alone and it will dissipate, in time; but if you nurse it you — eh — buy a flying machine and become a slave. We have machines to sell, you know; we are anxious to dispose of all we can; but kindly keep your check for three months, and if at the end of that time you are still disposed to purchase, I will deliver the machine to you promptly."

"How can you do that? The demand will be greater than your ability to build the Hydro-Aircraft, after the exhibition of next Monday," she affirmed.

Mr. Cumberford regarded her thoughtfully.

"I believe you are right," said he. "Anyhow, I hope you are right. But I'll promise to reserve a machine, pending your decision. Young ladies who are seriously determined to become aviators and who — eh — have the means to indulge the fad to any extent, are rare; very rare. Therefore, my dear Miss Dentry, you — eh — interest me, and I'll keep my promise."

Madeline could not refuse to admit the fairness of Mr. Cumberford's proposition, and Mr. Tupper was grateful to him for his efficient support, so harmony was once more restored. Sybil, indeed, smiled derisively as she exchanged a meaning glance with Madeline — a glance that said as intelligently as words: "How clever these men think themselves, and how helpless they really are to oppose us!"

Then Miss Dentry invited them all, including Chesty Todd, to dine on board her yacht the next day, which was Sunday, and the invitation being promptly accepted they all motored back to the hotel.

CHAPTER THREE
A PRODIGY IN AERONAUTICS

SAN DIEGO BAY is always interesting, with its shipping from all ports of the world, but on this gorgeous Sunday afternoon there was no prettier sight among the scattered craft than the trim yacht *Salvador,* lying at anchor just north of the ferry path. The Kane-Cumberford party found a small launch awaiting them at the pier, which quickly took them aboard the big white yacht, where Madeline, attired in appropriate sailor costume, cordially welcomed them.

"This affair is fully as great a novelty to me as it must be to you," she explained, as they cast admiring glances over the decks. "I bought the boat of an Englishman several months ago, with the understanding it should be delivered to me here; but I only arrived to claim it the day before yesterday. It has a crew of seven, besides the chef, who, I must admit, is my own selection, as I feared to trust the English taste in cookery. The English crew, however, seems capable and every man jack wants to stay with the boat; so I've agreed to keep them. I'll introduce you to the skipper presently. He rejoices in the title of 'Captain' and has quite awed me with his superior manner and splendid uniform. But I'll introduce you to the creations of my chef, first, for dinner is waiting. Forgive Monsieur Champetre, if he falls down occasionally; he is as unused to the kitchen — or is it scullery? Oh, I know; the 'galley' — as I am to the cabin."

Really the chef needed no excuses, and after the meal they made a thorough inspection of the beautiful craft, peeping into the staterooms, the men's quarters and even into the sacred galley. Everyone aboard, including the big, bluff skipper, was so proud of the boat that he delighted to have it exhibited, and when it was understood that the slim, beautiful young lady guest was the famous Flying Girl the deference shown Orissa was amusing.

"I had intended to test the *Salvador* to-morrow and make a short run to sea in it," said Madeline; "but I am so eager to witness the aerial exhibitions that I shall postpone the voyage until later. My yacht is permanent, but this Aviation Meet is temporary."

The visitors returned to their hotel early in the afternoon, for Orissa and Sybil had still a few preparations to make for the morrow's trip, while Steve and Mr. Cumberford decided to pay a visit to the aviation field, to which both the Kane Aircraft and the Kane Hydro-Aircraft had been removed by the mechanicians in charge of them. Chesty Todd's labors that Sunday evening were perhaps more onerous than those of the others of his party, for he had to meet an aggressive band of newspaper reporters and load each one to the

brim with material for a double-header next morning. Having served as a journalist — and an able one — himself, Mr. Radley-Todd understood exactly the sort of priming these publicity guns required.

The home of the Kanes was a delightful orange ranch near Los Angeles, where the blind mother of Stephen and Orissa — their only parent — lived surrounded by every comfort and devoted attendants, while her boy and girl were engaged in the novel and somewhat hazardous exhibitions of the new Kane Aircraft. Orissa had remained at home with her mother while Stephen was perfecting his latest machine at San Diego, and had not left there until it was necessary to prepare for the Meet, in which she had engaged to take part. Mrs. Kane, perhaps because of her blindness, seemed to have little anxiety on account of her daughter's ventures, although at the time of Orissa's first flights her nervousness had been poignant. Assured of her girl's skill and coolness, the mother had come to accept these occasions philosophically, as far as the danger was concerned, and she was naturally interested in Steve's inventions and overjoyed at the financial success which Mr. Cumberford's business ability had already insured the firm.

This Sunday evening Orissa wrote a long letter to her mother, telling how perfectly her brother's new machine worked, and assuring Mrs. Kane of her confidence in winning new laurels for Stephen on the morrow. "The latest engine, made for the Hy, is more powerful than were the others," she added, "but its operation is practically the same and while the combination of boat and aircraft necessitated a more complicated arrangement of the control, I have easily mastered all the details and could take the whole thing apart and put it together again, if obliged to do so."

The girl slept peacefully that night and neither she nor Sybil were in the least nervous when they went to the aviation field, over-looking the sea, after an early luncheon on Monday.

They found the Kane Hydro-Aircraft reposing majestically in its hangar, in perfect order and constantly surrounded by a group of admiring and interested spectators. The little band of professional aviators present at the Meet welcomed Orissa very cordially for every one of them knew and admired the brave girl who had so often proved her ability to manage her brother's machines.

The grand stand was packed with spectators, and long rows of automobiles lined the edge of the enclosure reserved for the exhibitors.

The "Kane Event," as it was called, was early on the program of the day, for it was understood that the flight over the ocean and the voyage back would consume much of the afternoon. Many had brought binoculars and other powerful glasses to watch the Flying Girl and her chum during their

progress.

Sealskin Island lay a little to the south of the aviation field and was one of a group of barren rocks jutting out of the sea and plainly visible from the mainland. The Coronado Islands, which have little or no value, belong to Mexico, as the Mexican boundary is only twelve miles south of San Diego, and this group, although not appearing to be so far south, is below the line claimed by the United States. Therefore Orissa's flight would be in a southwesterly direction and most of her journey made in plain view of every spectator.

As the "Hy" was run out to the center of the field Steve said to Orissa:

"I've anchored an aluminum chest just back of your seats, at the suggestion of Mr. Cumberford. In it are all the tools you could possibly need in case of emergency, a couple of warm blankets to use if your return trip proves chilly, and enough 'lunch' — which I think Sybil pleaded for — to last you both a week. The chest enables you to carry all this safely and comfortably, and it won't be at all in your way. Personally, I think such a precaution wholly unnecessary, but Mr. Cumberford is a good deal of an old woman where Sybil is concerned and it is easier to give up to him than to try to argue him out of an idea. Take the trip easy, Ris; we don't need to make time. What we want to demonstrate is the practicability of the machine, and we ourselves already know that it is thoroughly practical, and we therefore ought to be able to convince the world of the fact."

Orissa nodded.

"How about gasoline?" she asked.

"Both tanks are filled. There's enough to run you a hundred miles in air and fifty miles in water, which is far more than you will require. Be gentle with the steering gear; it is such a long connection that it doesn't respond as readily as the old one, and I guess I've made the rods a trifle too light. I mean to rig up a more substantial device as soon as I get time, but this will do you all right if you don't jerk it. Put a little more strength to the wheel and turn it gradually, that's all."

"I understand," she replied. "Are you ready, Sybil?"

"Waiting on you, Ris."

"And I think the crowd is waiting on us."

The band was at this moment playing its loudest and most stirring tune and as the two venturesome girls, dressed in appropriate aerial costume, appeared on the field, wildly enthusiastic shouts rose from ten thousand spectators. Chesty Todd had decorated the braces of the machine with bunches of fresh violets and the aluminum and nickeled parts shone gloriously in the sun.

“Be good, Sybil,” said Mr. Cumberford. “Take care of her, Orissa.”

The girls laughed, for this was the old gentleman’s customary parting warning.

“All right, Ris,” said Steve.

She applied the power and one of the mechanicians gave the propeller a preliminary whirl. Then Orissa threw in the automatic clutch that started the machine and it ran forward a few feet and promptly rose into the air. A moment later it was speeding straight out to sea, at an altitude of a hundred feet, and the wonderful voyage of Stephen Kane’s new Hydro-Aircraft was begun — a voyage destined to vary considerably from the program mapped out for it.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ALUMINUM CHEST

ORISSA REALIZED QUITE perfectly that Sealskin Island was much farther away from the mainland than it appeared, so on leaving the shore she pursued a direction straight west for several miles, intending to make a turn and proceed south to the island which was the terminus of her flight. That prolonged the trip somewhat, but she figured it would prove more interesting to the spectators, since for a part of the journey she would be flying parallel with the coast. On the return she planned to run straight back from the island.

When she decided they had reached a point about as far out as was the island, she attempted to make the turn — a mere segment of a circle — but in spite of Steve's warning Orissa was surprised at the stiffness of the steering gear. The engines were working beautifully and developing excellent speed, but the girl found she must apply all her strength to the wheel to make the turn.

She succeeded, and brought the head to bear directly upon the island, but the gear grated and stuck so persistently that Orissa's effort sent the entire craft careening at a steep angle. Sybil gave a gasp and clung to the supporting rods and both girls heard a loud "chug" that indicated something was wrong; but the Kane balancing device was so perfect that almost immediately the machine righted itself and regained its equilibrium, darting swiftly and in a straight line in the direction of the island.

"What was it?" asked Sybil, putting her head close to Orissa's to be heard above the whir of the motors behind them.

"The steering gear binds; that's all," was the quiet response. "I think it will work better when we are in the water."

"But what made that noise? Didn't something give way?" persisted Sybil.

"Glance behind us, dear, and see."

Sybil carefully turned so as to examine the parts of the aeroplane.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"Well?" said Orissa.

"That chest that Steve loaded us with. It has broken away from its fastenings and is jammed edge downward against your gear."

Orissa thought about it.

"That's unfortunate," said she. "I suppose the bolts broke when we tipped so badly. But it hasn't interfered with our engines any."

"No," answered Sybil, still examining the conditions; "but it has interfered seriously with your control, I fear. Both your levers are thrown out of position and even the front elevator bars are badly bent."

For the first time a worried expression appeared on Orissa's face.

"If that is true," she said, "our best plan is to return at once."

"Do," urged Sybil, her dark eyes very serious.

Orissa tried to turn the wheel. It resisted. She applied more strength. Something snapped and the released wheel whirled so freely that the girl nearly lost her seat. Recovering instantly she turned a pale face to her companion and said:

"We're wrecked, Sybil. But don't worry. With the boat under us and in this quiet sea we shall be quite safe."

"I'm not worrying — especially — Ris," was the reply; "but it occurs to me to wonder how you're going to get down to the ocean."

"Why?"

"You can't stop the engines, unless one of us crawls back over the planes."

"I can cut off the spark." She tried it, but the engines chugged as merrily as before. "Guess there must be a short circuit," gasped Orissa.

"And you can't depress your elevator, I'm sure."

"I'll try it," announced Orissa, grimly.

But the fatal chest balked her attempt. The elevator was steadfastly wedged into its present position; the engines were entirely beyond control and the two helpless girls faced one of the most curious conditions ever known in the history of aviation.

At an altitude of perhaps a hundred and fifty feet from the water the aeroplane sped swiftly on its way, headed a trifle to the west of south. It passed Sealskin Island even while the girls were discussing their dilemma, and stubbornly maintained its unfaltering course. The air conditions were perfect for flying; scarcely a breath of wind was felt; the sky above was blue as azure.

Suddenly Sybil laughed.

"What now?" demanded Orissa.

"I was thinking of the consternation on shore at about this moment," explained Miss Cumberford. "Won't they be amazed to see us continue this course, beyond the island? Not understanding our trouble, Daddy will think we're running away."

"So we are," replied Orissa. "I wish I knew where we are running to."

"I suppose we can't stop till the gasoline gives out," said Sybil.

Orissa shook her head.

"That's what scares me," she admitted. "Even now the Mexican shore is a mere line at the left. We're gradually diverging to a point farther out at sea, and when at last we alight, drained of the last drop of gasoline, how are we to

run the boat back?”

“We can’t. Steve’s wonderful Hy will become a mere floating buoy on the bosom of the rolling blue,” responded Sybil lightly. “Oh, I’m so glad I came, Ris! I’d no idea we were going to have such fun.”

Orissa did not return her chum’s smile.

“Sit still and balance her, Sybil,” she said. “I’m going to make an investigation.”

Exercising the necessary caution she turned and knelt upon the foot bar, clinging to the seat rail and in this position facing the Aircraft so she could examine its mechanism. Sybil had described the condition of things quite accurately. The engine control was cut off and as the gasoline tanks fed from the rear Orissa had no way of stopping the flow. The steering gear was broken and the front elevator firmly wedged in position by the chest.

“I wonder if we could manage to move this thing,” she said, and getting a hand on one corner of the aluminum chest she gave a tug and tried to raise it. It proved solid and unyielding. Not heavy in itself, or perhaps in its contents, the thing was caught between the rods in such a manner that no strength of the girls, limited in movement as they were, could budge it a particle.

Realizing this, and the folly of leaving the seats to get at the gasoline feed, Orissa resumed her place and faced the inevitable as bravely as she could.

“Steve told me,” she said to Sybil, “that the gasoline would last a hundred miles in air and fifty in water; that’s at least two hundred miles in an air line. Have you any idea where we shall be by that time?”

“Not the slightest,” responded her companion, cheerfully. “Ocean, of course; but latitude and longitude a mystery — and not important, anyhow.”

Sybil Cumberford was a reserved and silent girl on most occasions. Few were attracted toward her, on this account. Her dark eyes seemed to regard the world with critical toleration and she gave one the impression of considering herself quite independent of her fellows. Moreover, Sybil was eccentric in character and prone to do and say things that invoked the grave displeasure of her associates, seeming to delight in confusing and annoying them. But there was a brighter side to this queer girl’s nature, which developed only in the society of her trusted friends. On any occasion that demanded courage and resourcefulness she came to the front nobly, and at such times Sybil Cumberford became vivacious, helpful and inspiriting.

Here was such an occasion. Danger was the joy of Sybil’s heart and the “breath of her nostrils.” Indifferent to the ordinary details of life, any adventure that promised tribulation or disaster was fervently welcomed. Then the girl’s spirits rose, her intellect fairly bristled and she developed an animation and joyous exhilaration entirely at variance with her usual

demeanor.

So now, as Orissa Kane, a girl of proved courage and undaunted spirit, grew solemn and anxious at the perilous condition that confronted them, Sybil Cumberford became gay and animated.

"It's such an unusual thing, and so wholly unexpected!" she said blithely. "I'm sure, Ris, that no two girls who ever lived — in this world or any other — ever found themselves in a like dilemma. We're as helpless as babes, chummie dear; only no babes were ever forced to fly, willy nilly, for hundreds of miles through the air to some forlorn spot in the dank, moist ocean."

Orissa let her chatter. She was trying to realize what it might mean to them and how and when, if ever, they might be rescued from their difficulties.

"Our great mistake," continued Sybil, as they swept along, "was in not rigging the machine with a wireless outfit. To be sure, neither of us could operate it; but a wireless, in such a case — if we understood its mysteries — would solve our problem."

"How?" asked Orissa.

"We could call up the shore at San Diego and tell them what's happened, and give them the direction in which we are flying; then they could send a fast steamer for us, or perhaps Madeline Dentry would loan her yacht."

"They may follow us with a steamer, anyhow," said Orissa, thoughtfully. "If we manage to land safely, Sybil — which means if we drop to the water right-side-up — we could float for some days, until we were found and rescued."

"Thirst is a terrible thing, at sea; and hunger is almost as bad."

"But in that dreadful chest, which has caused all our trouble, Steve told me he had packed provisions. Probably there is water there, too," asserted Orissa, hopefully.

"Yes, Dad said there was lunch for two. Well, that's one good feed we shall have, anyhow, provided the chest doesn't get away from us entirely, and we can manage to open it. In its present position, neither event is at all probable."

She seemed to love to discover and point out the gloomy side of their adventure, that she might exult in the dangers that menaced them.

Meantime, swift and straight as an arrow the Aircraft continued on its course. Not a skip to the engines, not an indication of any sort that the flight would be interrupted as long as a drop of gasoline remained in the tanks. They could only be patient and await the finale as bravely as possible.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LAST DROP OF GASOLINE

HOUR AFTER HOUR they flew, while each hour seemed, to Orissa, at least, a month in duration. Sybil chatted and laughed, refusing to take their misfortune seriously.

"But," said she, "I'm getting famished. An air-trip always stimulates the appetite and that lunch of Steve's is so very near to us — and yet so far! How did he expect us to get at the repast, anyhow?"

"Why, in water," replied Orissa, "the chest and its contents would be handy enough. I do not think it would be safe for us to creep into the boat underneath us now, for we must maintain the aerial balance; but, even if we could get below, we couldn't open the chest while it is wedged cross-wise among the braces and levers."

"All true, milady," commented Sybil, her usually pale cheeks now flushed with excitement. "Our present stunt is to 'sit still and take our medicine,' as the saying goes."

By this time the Mexican coast had vanished entirely and only the placid blue waters of the Pacific remained visible, even from the altitude of the Aircraft. Once or twice they sighted a small island, bleak and bare, for this part of the ocean is filled with tiny islets, most of which are unfertile and uninhabited. Farther along, in the South Pacific, such islands have verdure and inhabitants.

At about four o'clock a change occurred in the atmospheric conditions. A brisk wind arose, blowing steadily for a time from the southwest and then suddenly developing puffs and eddies that caused the Aircraft to wobble dangerously. One powerful gust seized the helpless flying-machine and whirled it around like a toy balloon, but failed to destroy its equilibrium because the girls balanced it with their bodies as well as they might. When their craft was released, however, it pointed in a new direction — this time straight west. An hour later a similar gust swept its head to the southward, and in this direction it was still flying when the red sun dipped into the water and twilight fell.

"I don't like this, Syb," said Orissa, anxiously. "If the gasoline holds out much longer it will be dark, and when we drop our danger will be doubled."

"What will be the fashion of our dropping, anyhow?" asked Sybil. "We can't volplane, with no control of the rudder. Chances are, dear, the thing will just tip over and spill us in the damp."

"Hold fast, if it does that," cautioned Orissa. "If we become separated from the boat we will drown like rats. The engine may swamp the boat, in

any event, but it has air compartments which will keep it afloat under any favorable conditions, and we must trust to luck, Sybil — and to our own coolness."

"All right, Ris. A watery grave doesn't appeal to me just now," was the reply. "I'm too hungry to drown comfortably, and that's a fact. On a full stomach I imagine one could face perpetual soaking with more complacency."

"Hush!" cried Orissa. "Listen!"

Sybil was already listening, fully as alert as her chum. The speed of the engine was diminishing. Gradually the huge propeller slackened its rapid revolutions, while its former roar subsided to a mere moan.

"Thank goodness," said Sybil, fervently, "the gasoline is gone at last!"

"Look out, then," warned Orissa.

With a final, reluctant "chug-chug!" the engine stopped short. Like a huge gull the frail craft remained poised in the air a moment and then a sudden light breeze swept it on. It was falling, however, impelled by its own weight, and singularly enough it reversed its position and proceeded before the wind with the stern foremost.

Splash! It wasn't so bad, after all. Not a volplane, to be sure, but a gentle drop, the weight of the heavy engine sustained by the "air-cushions" formed beneath the planes.

Orissa wiped the spray from her eyes.

"That would have been a regular bump, on land," Sybil was saying affably, "but the old ocean has received us with gracious tenderness. Are we sinking, Ris, or do we float?"

How suddenly the darkness was falling! Orissa leaned from her seat and found the water had turned to a color nearly as black as ink. Beneath her the bow of the aluminum motor boat was so depressed that it was almost even with the water and as it bobbed up and down with the waves it was shipping the inky fluid by the dipperful.

She scrambled out of the seat, then, to step gingerly over the unlucky chest and crouch upon a narrow seat of the little boat, near the stern.

"Come, Sybil," she called; "and be very careful."

Sybil promptly descended to the boat, which now rode evenly upon the waves. In this position the propeller was just under water and the engine rested over the center of the light but strong little craft. But propeller and engine were alike useless to them now. Overhead the planes spread like huge awnings, but they carried so little weight that they did not affect the balance of the boat.

"Steve planned well," murmured Orissa, with a sigh. "If only he had never

thought of that dreadful chest, we would not be in this fix."

As she spoke she kicked the chest a little resentfully with her foot, and it seemed to move. Sybil leaned forward to eye it as closely as the gathering darkness would allow.

"Why, Ris," she exclaimed, "the thing has come loose. Help me to tip it up."

Between them they easily raised the chest to its former position, where it rested just before them. Steve had bolted it at either end, but one of the bolts had broken away and the other had bent at almost a right angle. Perhaps this last bolt would have broken, too, had not the chest, in falling, become wedged against the braces.

"This horrid box has heretofore been our dire enemy," remarked Sybil; "but let us be forgiving and encourage it to make amends — for it holds eatables. How does the cover open, Ris?"

Stephen had shown Orissa how to work the sliding catch and in a moment the girl had the lid open and held it upright while Sybil searched within.

"Hooray! We've discovered a regular cafeteria," said the latter, jubilantly, as she drew out a number of parcels. "I was afraid we'd have to nibble, Orissa, so as not to gorge ourselves to-night and starve to-morrow; but I reckon there's enough to last two delicate girls like us a week. What shall we tackle first?"

"Let us plan a little, dear," suggested Orissa, restraining her own eagerness, for she was hungry, too. "We cannot possibly tell to-night what this precious chest contains or how much food there really is. We must wait for daylight to take an inventory. But here are some tins, we know, which will keep, and that package of sandwiches on your lap is perishable; so I propose we confine our feast to those for to-night."

"Perishable it is, Cap'n," answered Sybil, consuming half a sandwich at a single bite. "If there's only a pickle to go with these breadspreads I shall be content. It's not only luncheon that we're indulging in, you know; it's our regular dinner, as well, and there ought to be two courses — pickles and sandwiches — at the least."

"You must feel for the pickles, then," returned Orissa, intent upon her own sandwich, "for it's too dark to use eyes just now."

Sybil found the pickles — who ever put up a lunch for two girls without including pickles? — and declared she was quite content.

"If we hadn't discovered the eats, my dear Cap'n," she remarked with cheery satisfaction, "I think I could have dined on my own shoes. That's a happy thought; we'll keep the shoes in reserve. I'd no idea one's appetite could get such an edge, after being tantalized for a few hours."

“Do you realize, Sybil,” asked Orissa in a grave tone, as she took her second sandwich, “that we must pass the night in this wiggly, insecure boat?”

“What’s insecure about it?” demanded Sybil.

“It won’t stand much of a sea, I fear. This attachment to the Aircraft was intended for pleasant weather.”

“All right; the weather’s delightful. Those long, gentle rolls will merely rock us to sleep. And — Oh, Ris! — we’ll have rolls for breakfast.”

“Do be serious, Syb! Suppose a storm catches us before morning?”

“Then please wake me up. Where do you suppose we are, anyhow?”

“I’ve no idea,” answered Orissa, soberly. “We must have traveled a couple of hundred miles, but it wasn’t in a straight line, by any means. Let’s see. Perhaps a hundred miles on our first course — over Sealskin Island and nearly south — then forty or fifty miles north — ”

“Oh, no; west.”

“Yes; so it was. Then twenty-odd miles south, ten miles or so east, a couple or three miles west again, and then — and then — ”

“Dear me! Don’t bother your head with it, Orissa. We zigzagged like a drunken man. The only fact we can positively nail is that we were getting farther away from home — or our friends, rather — every minute. That’s a bad thing, come to think of it. They’ll never know where to search for us.”

“True,” responded Orissa. “But I am sure they will search, and search diligently, so we must manage to keep afloat until they find us. What shall we do now, Sybil?”

“Sleep,” was the prompt reply. “If we lift this seat off — it seems to be removable — I think there is room enough for us both to cuddle down in the bottom of the boat.”

“Oh, Sybil!” This from Orissa, rather reproachfully.

“Well, I can’t imagine anything more sensible to do,” asserted her chum, with a yawn. “These air-rides not only encourage hunger, but sleep. Did you cork that bottle of water? I want another drink.”

“I — I think we’d better economize on the water,” suggested Orissa, “at least until morning, when we can find out if there’s any more in the chest.”

“All right. Help me bail out this overflow and then we’ll cuddle down.”

“Steve said there were two blankets in the chest,” said Orissa, presently, when the bottom of the boat was dry. “I’ll search for them.”

She found the blankets easily, by feeling through the contents of the chest. Offering no further objection to Sybil’s plan, she prepared their bed for the night. Neither of these girls had ever “roughed it” to any extent, but in spite of the peril of their situation and the liability of unforeseen dangers overtaking them, they were resourceful enough and courageous enough to

face the conditions with a degree of intrepid interest. Afloat on an unknown part of the broad Pacific, with merely a tiny aluminum boat for protection, with final escape from death uncertain and chances of rescue remote, these two carefully nurtured young girls, who had enjoyed loving protection all their lives, were so little influenced by fear that they actually exchanged pleasantries as they spread their blankets and rolled themselves in the coverings for the night.

"The lack of a pillow bothers me most," remarked Sybil. "I think I shall rest my head on one of those cans of baked beans."

"I advise you not to; you might eat them in your sleep," was Orissa's comment.

"May I rest my head upon you, chummie dear?"

"You may not. Try the engine."

"That's hard. And there are enough wheels in my head already, without pounding my ear with them. Suggest something else."

"Your own elbow, then."

"Thanks, dear. Where's that slab of aluminum that used to be a seat?"

It was a happy thought and furnished them both with a headrest. The seat was not an ideal pillow, but it answered the purpose because there was nothing better.

CHAPTER SIX
CASTAWAYS

WELL, I DECLARE!" exclaimed Orissa, sitting After a moment Sybil said, sleepily:

"Go ahead and declare it, Ris. Only, if we're drowned, please break the news to me gently!"

"How strange!" muttered Orissa, still staring.

Sybil stirred, threw off the blanket and also rose to a sitting position.

"If it's a secret," she began, then — "Oh, goodness me!"

During the night the boat with its great overhead planes had gently floated into a little bay, where the water was peaceful as a millpond. Two points of black rock projected on either side of them, outlining the bay. Between these points appeared an island — a mass of tumbled rocks guiltless of greenery. There was a broad strip of clean, smooth sand on the shore, barely covering the slaty ledge, but back of that the jumble of rocks began, forming irregular hillocks, and beyond these hillocks, which extended for some distance inland, there seemed to be a great dip in the landscape — or rockscape — far back of which arose a low mountain formed of the same unlovely material as all else.

"It's an island!" gasped Sybil, rubbing her eyes to make sure they were working properly. "Now, see here, Cap'n Ris, I want it understood right now which one of us is to be Robinson Crusoe and which the Man Friday. Seems to me, I being the passenger and you the charioteer, the prestige is on my side; so I claim the Crusoe part. I can't grow whiskers, and I'm not likely to find a parrot to perch on my shoulder, but I'll promise to enact the part as well as circumstances will permit."

"I can't see a sign of life," announced Orissa, regretfully. "There isn't even a bird hovering over the place."

"Lizards and snakes among the rocks, though, I'll bet," responded Sybil, with a grimace. "All these rocky Pacific islands are snaky, they say. I wonder if I can learn to charm 'em. You don't object to my being Crusoe, do you?"

Orissa sighed; then she turned to her cheery comrade with a smile.

"Not at all," said she. "But I'll be Columbus, the Discoverer, for I've discovered a desert island while you were peacefully dreaming."

"There's no desert about your island," stated Sybil. "A desert would be a relief. What you've discovered, Miss Ris Columbus — or what's discovered us, rather — is a rock heap."

"Desert or not, it's deserted, all right," maintained Orissa.

"And you may not have discovered it, after all," said Sybil, musingly

examining the place. “These seas have been pretty well explored, I guess, and although no nation would particularly care to pin a flag to this bunch of rocks, the maps may indicate it clearly.”

“Ah, if we only had a map!” cried Orissa eagerly.

“What good would it do us?” asked Sybil. “It couldn’t help us to find ourselves, for we don’t know what especial dot on the map we’ve arrived at. With Muggins’ Complete Atlas in hand, and a geography teacher thrown in, we wouldn’t be able to pick out this island from the ones that litter these seas.”

“That is, unfortunately, quite true,” sighed Orissa; “and anyhow it’s not worth an argument because we have no map. But we must be up and doing, Sybil. If we are to keep ourselves alive, we must take advantage of every favorable circumstance.”

“What time is it?” yawned Sybil.

Orissa looked at her watch.

“A little after six.”

“Call me at eight. I can’t get up at six o’clock; it’s too early, entirely.”

“But you went to bed at about seven.”

“Did I? Well, how about breakfast?”

“We must inspect our stores and take inventory. Then we must plan to make the provisions last as long as possible.”

“How dreadful! Why, this is a real adventure, Ris — threatened famine, and all that. We’re regular castaways, like we read about in the fifteen-cent story magazines, and I — wouldn’t be surprised if we had to endure many inconveniences; would you?”

“Sybil,” said Orissa earnestly, “we are face to face with privation, danger, and perhaps death. I’m glad you can be cheerful, but we must understand our terrible position and endeavor to survive as long as possible. We know very well that our friends will have a hard time finding us, for they cannot guess what part of the ocean we descended in. It may take days — perhaps weeks — for them to discover us in this dreary place, and meantime we must guard our safety to the best of our ability.”

“Naturally,” agreed Sybil, duly impressed by this speech. “Your head is clearer and better than mine, Orissa; so you shall take command, and I’ll gladly follow your instructions. You mean to land, don’t you? I’m tired of this cramped little boat and even a rocky island is better than no refuge at all.”

“Of course we must land,” replied Orissa; “and that, I think, must be our first task. The shore is only a stone’s throw from here, but we’re fast on a sand bar, and how to get off is a problem.”

Sybil began to take off her leggings, then her shoes and stockings.

"We'll wade," she said.

Orissa peered over the side.

"It's very shallow. I think we can wade to shore, Syb, and pull the Hy in after us. We must get the whole thing high and dry on the beach, if possible."

Sybil plumbed the water by tying a can of sardines to a cord from around one of the parcels.

"I guess we can make it all right, Cap'n," she said. "It's not very deep."

"It may be a lot deeper closer in. But I guess we'll have to take a chance on it. And if the worst comes to the worst we can dry our clothes on the beach."

The sun was showing brilliantly above the horizon as the two girls stepped into the water. Both could swim fairly well, but where the boat was grounded on the sand bar the water was scarcely knee-deep. They dragged Steve's invention over the bar with little difficulty, the wheels materially assisting their efforts. Beyond the bar the water deepened in spots, and once, as they drew the wrecked Hy after them, the waves reached perilously high. Then they struck the shelving beach and found hard sand under their feet.

By pushing and hauling energetically they managed to run the boat, with its attached planes, to the shore, where the wheels on either side enabled them to roll it up the slope until, as Orissa said, it was "high and dry."

"Seems to me," remarked Sybil, panting, "we ought to have breakfasted first, for all this exercise has made me ravenous. That'll diminish our precious store of eatables considerably, I fear."

With the machine safely landed they proceeded to dress themselves, after which Orissa arranged upon the sand the entire contents of the aluminum chest. A kit of tools, adapted for use on the Aircraft, together with some extra bolts, a strut or two and a coil of steel wire were first placed carefully on one side.

"With these," said the girl, "I can easily repair the damage to our machine."

"But what's the use, without gasoline?" asked Sybil.

Orissa had no reply to this. She proceeded to inspect the provisions. Mr. Cumberford had a way of always providing enough for a regiment when he intended to feed a few, so in ordering lunch for two girls on an aerial voyage his usual prodigality had been in evidence. Perhaps with an intuition that a delay or even an accident might occur to Sybil and Orissa, the old gentleman had even exceeded his record, in this instance. A big box of dainty sandwiches had been supplemented by three cartons of biscuits, a whole Edam cheese, a bottle of pickles, two huge packages of cakes and eighteen

tins of provisions, provided with keys for opening them. These consisted of sardines, potted ham and chicken, baked beans, chipped beef and the like. In another parcel was a whole roasted duck, in still another an apple pie, while two jars of jam completed the list of edibles. For the voyagers to drink Mr. Cumberford had added two half-gallon jars of distilled water, a bottle of grape juice, two of ginger ale and one of lemonade.

The girls examined this stock with profound gravity.

"I wish," said Orissa, "there had been more bread and biscuits, for we are going to need the substantials rather more than the delicacies."

"Thank goodness we have anything!" exclaimed Sybil. "I suppose we must breakfast on the cakes and jam, and save the other truck until later."

"That's the idea," approved Orissa. "The cakes won't keep for long; even the sandwiches will outlast them, I think."

"True, if I eat all the cake I want," added Sybil. "Cakes and jam make a queer breakfast, Orissa. In New England the pie would be appropriate."

"Let's save the pie — for lunch."

"Agreed. Breakfast isn't usually my strong point, you know."

As they ate, seated together upon the sands, they cast many curious glances at the interior of the island — a prospect forbidding enough.

"Do you know," said Orissa, "the scarcity of food doesn't worry me so much as the scarcity of water. Grape juice and ginger ale are well enough in their way, but they don't take the place of water."

"We may possibly find water on this island," replied Sybil, after a little thought.

"I don't believe it. I've an idea that, hunt as we may, we shall find nothing more than rocks, and rocks, and rocks — any where and everywhere."

"That's merely a hunch, and I distrust hunches. It will be better to explore," suggested Sybil.

"Yes; I think we ought to do that. But — the snakes."

"Ah, the exclusive rock theory is already exploded," said Sybil, with a laugh. "Yet even snakes can't exist without water, can they? Just the thought of the wrigglers makes me shudder, but if they are really our co-inhabitants here we won't be safe from them even on this shore. Have we anything in the way of clubs?"

Orissa considered the question. Then she went to the machine and with a wrench unfastened the foot-bar, which was long enough to extend across both seats and was made of solid steel. She also took the bolts out of one of the levers, which when released became an effective weapon of defense. Thus armed, and feeling somewhat more secure, the girls prepared to move inland to explore their new habitation.

They found the climb over the loose rocks adjoining the shore to be quite arduous, and aside from the difficulties of the way they had to exercise constant caution for fear of snakes. They saw none of these dreaded reptiles, however, and when they came to the hillocks, they selected a path between the two most promising and began the ascent, keeping close together. So jagged were the tumbled masses of rock and so irregular in their formation that it was not a question of walking so much as crawling, but with their leggings, stout shoes and thick cloth skirts they were fairly protected from injury.

The silence throughout the island was intense. The girls spoke in hushed tones, awed by their uncanny surroundings. From a clear sky the sun beat down upon their heads and was refracted from the rocks until the heat was oppressive. Added to this a pungent, unrecognized odor saluted their nostrils as they progressed inland. “Reminds me of the smell of a drug store,” asserted Sybil; but Orissa replied: “It’s more like the smell of a garage, I think.”

After a long and weary climb they reached the brow of the rock hills and were able to look down into the “dip” or valley which lay between them and the mountain. The center of the depression, which was three or four miles across, appeared to be quite free from rocks except in a few places where one cropped up in the form of a hummock. Elsewhere the surface seemed smooth and moist, for it was covered with an oozy, stagnant slime which was decidedly repulsive in appearance.

Looking beyond this forbidding valley they discovered the first interesting thing they had yet observed. At the right base of the far-away mountain, lying between it and the sea, was a patch of vivid green, crowning an elevation that distinctly separated it from the central depression of the island. It might be grass or underbrush, this alluring greenery, but in any event it proved a grateful sight to eyes wearied by the dull waste of rocks. From the point where the girls stood they could also see the top of a palm tree which grew around the edge of the mountain.

“Well!” said Orissa, drawing a long breath, “there is the first sign of life — animal or vegetable — we have found in this wilderness. That tree must indicate water, Sybil.”

“Whatever it indicates,” was the reply, “yonder bluff is a better place for our camp than the bay where we floated ashore. How shall we get to it, though? It will be a heart-breaking climb cross-lots over these interminable rocks.”

“An impossible climb,” Orissa agreed. “I think our best plan will be to go around the island, following the sandy beach. It seems from here as if that

bluff drops sheer down to the sea, but it will be much easier for us to climb a bluff than to navigate these rocks. Let's go back and try it."

Cautiously and laboriously they made their way back to the beach, feeling considerably cheered by what they had seen and reassured by the total absence of the dreaded "wigglers." After resting a little from their exertions they prepared for the more important journey of discovery. Sybil carried some food and the bottle of lemonade, while Orissa secured two straps from the aeroplane and the coil of wire. Then, still armed with their steel bars, they set out along the beach.

Their first task was to climb the rocks of the point which formed the bay, where it jutted out from the shore. This being accomplished they encountered another stretch of smooth beach, which gradually circled around the north end of the island. Here it was easy walking and they made good progress, but the coast line was so irregular that it wound in and out continually, and in places huge boulders interrupted their passage and obliged them either to climb or wade, whichever seemed the most desirable.

"Already," sighed Sybil, "we have tramped a thousand miles. Did you mark that place, Orissa, so we will know when we come to it?"

"Yes; I can tell it by the position of the sun. That side of the island faces the northwest."

"And we haven't passed it?"

"No; but we must be drawing near to it. I've been looking for the bluff the last half hour. The green place was quite elevated, you remember, and must be well above the sea level. Look ahead; you'll notice the rocks are gradually rising, from here on."

Sybil nodded and again they trudged on. As the rocks grew higher at their left, the girls kept to the narrow strip of beach, which was beginning to be washed by an occasional wave.

"The tide is rising," announced Orissa; "but we shall be at the bluff very soon, and can then climb above this moisture. Feet wet, Syb?"

"Pickled in brine. Wet feet signify a cold; cold signifies la grippe; la grippe signifies a doctor; the doctor signifies a depleted bank account. Science of deduction, Ris. It's only a step from wet feet to poverty."

"I prefer a doctor to an undertaker," said Orissa, "but as neither profession is represented here I advise you to forego the pleasure of taking cold."

"Right you are, Cap'n Columbus. No doctor, no cold. Banish the thought! We can't afford the luxury of illness, can we? Oh, here's the bluff."

There it was, indeed; but absolutely unclimbable. It was sixty feet high, at least, and overhanging the sea like a shelf, the waves having cut it away at the base.

“Now, then,” said Orissa, after a careful inspection, “we must either go back or go on, in order to find a way up. As we haven’t passed any steps or easy inclines, I propose we advance farther and see what the west end looks like.”

“I’ll follow the leader; but the waves are already covering the beach,” asserted Sybil, with a grimace.

“Then let us wade; and don’t lose any precious time, for the tide will come in faster every minute. Shoes off, Crusoe!”

“Aye, aye, Columbus.”

With shoes, leggings and stockings in hand they began the advance, hugging the wall of rock and proceeding as swiftly as they could. At times one or the other would cry out as she stepped on a sharp bit of rock, but this was no time to shrink from petty trials and they bore up with admirable fortitude.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TWO GIRLS AND ONE ISLAND

PLODDING ALONG THE narrow ledge of beach and constantly soused by the waves, the girls began to fear, as afterward proved to be fact — that the bluff covered the entire west end of the island. The water beneath their feet grew deeper and the undertow stronger with every step they advanced, but fortunately for their safety they finally came to a crevasse that split the bluff in twain, and down this rift trickled a rill of pure water.

They both exclaimed with delight as they crept into the shelter of the crevasse. The fissure was not level, but extended upward at an acute angle, yet there was room enough at its mouth for the girls to creep above the wash of the waves. Examining the place carefully, Orissa thought they might be able to follow the rift up to the top of the bluff, and so at once they began the ascent. The two walls were so close together that they could touch both by extending their arms, and there was room, by stepping occasionally into the shallow brook, for them to climb from shelf to shelf without much difficulty. At the very top, however, they were brought to an abrupt halt. A waterfall leaped from the edge of the bluff, dropping a good ten feet to the point they had now reached, from whence there seemed no way of gaining the top.

Orissa and Sybil looked at each other and laughed, the spray from the waterfall wetting their cheeks, which were now rosy from exercise.

"Trapped, Cap'n!" cried Sybil, merrily. "What next?"

"We can't go back, you know."

"Not unless we prefer Davy Jones's locker to this stronghold — which I, for one, don't. Therefore, let's eat."

"That seems your resource in every emergency, Sybil."

"Naturally. Feasting stimulates thought; thought develops wit; wit finds a way."

Orissa raised herself to a seat upon a projecting crag and then, swinging her feet, proceeded to think while Sybil brought out the food.

"Could you climb a wire, Syb?"

"Not without years of practice. Have you positively decided to establish a circus in these wilds, Ris?"

Orissa stood upon the crag, examined the face of the rock and then drove the end of the bar she carried into a small fissure that was nearly on a level with her head. Sybil observed the horizontal bar and laughed gleefully.

"Have a sandwich, chummie, and curb your imaginations," said she. "I catch your idea, but respectfully decline to accept the hazard."

Orissa ate her sandwich and drank from the bottle of lemonade. Then she

rinsed her fingers in the brook, dried them on her handkerchief and again mounted the crag.

"Listen, Crusoe: I'm going to make an attempt to break out of jail," she said impressively. "If I can reach to the top I'll find some way to get you up. As soon as I get my feet on that bar, you are to come up on this crag and hand me your lever. If I can find a pocket to stick that into, the deed is done."

"Bravo, Ris! What a pity you haven't any spangles on your skirt. If you fall, fall gradually, for I'll be afraid to catch you."

Orissa's fingers clutched at the rough projections of rock and with some difficulty she gained a footing on the bar. Then, still clinging to the face of the rift, she made a further examination. There seemed a small hole at the right, about breast high, and she called for the lever. This Sybil promptly passed up. Orissa thrust in the lever and the next instant nearly lost her footing, for with a bewildering hoot a white owl of monstrous size fluttered out and tumbled almost at Sybil's feet, who uttered a shriek like an Indian war whoop. The creature was blinded by the glare of day and went whirling down the incline of the crevasse until it was lost to sight.

"First sign of life," called Sybil. "Don't look so scared, Ris; there's nothing more harmless than an owl."

"Did you yell because I was scared?" inquired Orissa.

"No, I was reproving the owl, who has a voice like a steam calliope. It would take more than a blind bird to scare either of us; wouldn't it, Cap'n?"

"I — I wish it hadn't been so — so unexpected," muttered Orissa, feeling her way up to the second projection. With her feet on the lever she found her head well above the edge of the precipice and the first glance showed her a good hold for her hands.

Orissa Kane was no skilled athlete, but her experience in Steve's workshop, together with her aerial exercises and constant outdoor life, had given her well developed muscles which now stood her in good stead. She drew herself up, got her knee on the edge of the rock, and a moment later was on level ground at the top of the bluff. Then she leaned over and called to Sybil:

"Can you manage it?"

"What a question!" retorted Sybil, indignantly. "I stood below to catch you in case you slipped; but who is there to catch me, I beg to inquire?"

"The owl," said Orissa. "Will you try it?"

"Is it worth while? Tell me what you've found up there."

Orissa turned and examined the scene now spread before her.

"Better come up, Syb," she said. "But wait a moment and I'll help you."

She attached one of the straps to the coil of steel wire and passed the end

down to her chum.

"Buckle the strap around you — just under your arms," she called. "I'll hold fast the wire at this end. You can't fall, then; but be careful, just the same."

With this support Sybil gained confidence. Exercising extreme caution she followed Orissa's example in scaling the cliff and as fast as she mounted, her companion took up the slack in the wire and kept it taut. As soon as Sybil stood on the upper bar Orissa grasped her arms and drew her up beside her in safety.

"There!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "Where there's a will, there's a way. It wasn't such a difficult feat, after all."

"There isn't enough money in the world to hire me to do it again," panted Sybil, trembling a little from the giddy experience.

"That may be true, but if our safety requires it we may repeat the performance more than once," declared Orissa. "Unfortunately, we have lost our weapons of defense."

"Can't we recover the bars?"

"Not without going down for them. If you think you could lower me over the edge — "

"I just couldn't, Ris. Don't mention it."

"Very well; then we will proceed unarmed. Look, Sybil! Isn't it a glorious prospect?"

"In point of comparison, yes," admitted Sybil, speaking slowly as she gazed around her.

They were standing on a level table-land which lay between the base of the mountain and the sea. The "mountain" was really a great hill of rock, rising only a hundred and fifty feet or so from the table-land. The level space before them was clothed with a queer sort of verdure. It was not grass, but plants with broad and rather crinkly leaves, so tender that wherever the girls stepped the leaves were broken and crushed. Nor was the color an emerald green; it was rather a pale pea-green and the plants grew not in soil but sprang from tiny cracks and fissures in a sort of shale, or crushed slate, which was constantly kept moist by the seepage of the little stream.

The island here made an abrupt curve to the west and a little farther along the girls saw patches of bushes and several small groups of tall, tropical trees, resembling plantains, or palms. There were vines, too, which grew in rank profusion among the rocks and helped relieve the dismal landscape by their greenery. But nowhere appeared any earth, or natural soil; whatever grew, grew among the crushed rock, or shale, which seemed to possess a certain fertility where moisture reached it.

“This part of the island seems by far the best,” asserted Sybil. “Let us explore it thoroughly.”

They set out to skirt the edge of the bluff and on reaching the first group of trees found they were bananas. Several bunches of plump fruit hung far up among the branches, quite out of reach.

“We’ll find a way to get at them if we are detained here long enough to need them,” said Orissa.

A half mile beyond the place where they had so laboriously climbed the bluff they came upon a broad ravine which led directly down to the water’s edge. It appeared as if a huge mass of rock had at some time become detached from the mountain and, sliding downward, had cut away the bluff and hurled itself into the sea, where it now lay a few rods from the water’s edge and formed a sort of breakwater. The swirl of the waves around this mass of rock had made a small indentation in the shore, creating a tiny bay with a sandy beach.

“Ah,” said Orissa, examining this place, “here is where we must establish our camp; there is room enough to float our boat into the bay, where the water is calm, and on that smooth beach I can repair the Hy at my leisure.”

“Also, from this elevation,” added Sybil, “we can fly a flag of distress, which would be seen by any ship approaching the island.”

Orissa nodded approval.

“Here is also water and food,” said she. “If we can manage to navigate the Hy to this place we have little to fear from a temporary imprisonment.”

“We must wait for low tide before we start back,” observed Sybil. “Meantime, let’s run down to the beach and see how it looks.”

The descent to the water’s edge was easy, and they found the little bay ideal for their purpose. But they could hear the waves breaking with some force against the face of the cliff, just outside their retreat, and it would be hours before they might venture to return to the other side of the island.

So again they ascended the bluff and selected a place for their camp, beneath the spreading foliage of the tall bananas. Afterward they sought the source of the little brook, which was high up on the mountain and required a difficult climb to reach it. A spring seemed to well up, clear and refreshing, from a cleft in the rock, but even at its source there was no more water than would run from an ordinary house faucet.

“Isn’t it astonishing,” said Orissa, “how much moisture is dispersed from this tiny stream? I think it never rains here and this spring of water supplies all the island.”

“This part of it, anyhow. It’s mighty lucky for us the babbling brook is here,” declared Sybil, drinking deeply of the cool water and then bathing her

heated brow with it.

“But what stumps me, Ris, is the lack of any life on the island. With water and green stuff both animals and birds might thrive here — to say nothing of bugs and lizards and serpents galore — yet aside from that great white owl we’ve not seen a living thing.”

“It really is curious,” admitted Orissa. Then, turning her gaze seaward, she exclaimed: “See there, Sybil! Isn’t that another island?”

“It surely is,” was the reply; “and only a few miles away. It’s a big island, too, Ris — far bigger than this. Did you bring along your glasses?”

“No; they are in the boat.”

“When we get them we can inspect that island better. Perhaps we could manage to get to it, Ris.”

“We’ll see,” was the doubting answer. “I imagine, if that island is so much larger, and proves to be more fertile than this, that we have discovered the reason why the live things, such as birds and animals, prefer it as a place of residence.”

They made their way back to the bluff and waited patiently for the tide to ebb. According to Orissa’s watch it was quite four o’clock before they deemed it safe to venture on the sands, and even then they went barefooted, as an occasional wave still crossed their narrow path.

By the time they reached the bay and their boat the two girls were very tired with their long tramp and as it was nearly sundown they decided to spend the night in this location and make the attempt to shift camp next day.

CHAPTER EIGHT
AN OWL CONCERT

WHILE DAYLIGHT LASTED Orissa was busy examining the injury to the Aircraft and attempting a few preliminary repairs. Her long mechanical experience in the workshop with her brother enabled her to determine accurately what was required to put the machine into proper working order, and she thought she could accomplish the task.

"I can't see that it matters, anyhow," said Sybil, watching her chum from a seat upon the sands. "We can't fly, and the boat is our only refuge. Even that we must manage to row or sail in some way."

"All very true," returned Orissa, "but I can see no object in neglecting these repairs when I am able to make them. I can take off the bent elevator rods and straighten them, after which the elevator and rudder may assist us in sailing, as we can oppose them to the wind. The engine control is a more serious matter, for the wheel connection was broken off short. But I shall take a rod from a support and fit it in place and then replace the support with our steel wire. That is a sort of makeshift and will require time and nice adjustment, but I can do it, all right. The tools Steve supplied were quite complete; there's even a box marked 'soldering outfit.'"

"Is there?" asked Sybil, eagerly. "See if any matches are in it, Ris."

"Matches?"

"Yes. The lack of matches has disturbed me considerably."

"Why, Syb?"

"We can't cook without them."

"Cook! why, I never thought of such a thing," said Orissa, truly astonished. "What is there to cook, in this place?"

"Fish," answered Sybil.

"And what would you use for fuel?"

"Fuel?"

"Yes; what is there to make a fire with?"

"Never mind that. Just see about the matches."

Orissa opened the soldering case and found an alcohol torch, a flask of alcohol, solder, acid and a box of matches.

"Good!" cried Sybil, joyfully. "Don't you dare do any wasteful soldering, Orissa Kane. Save every drop of that alcohol to cook with."

Orissa laughed.

"I have nothing to solder, just yet," said she. "And you've nothing to fry."

"I soon shall have, though," was the confident reply. "We've assured ourselves of one thing, Miss Columbus, and that is that we can sustain life, in

case of necessity, on bananas and spring water. So I propose we have one good, luxuriant square meal this evening by way of variety. We've done nothing but lunch for two whole days and I want something hot."

"I'm willing, Sybil. Can you catch a fish?"

"If there's one in our neighborhood. I'll try it while you are tinkering."

Among the tools was a ball of stout cord, and for hook Sybil cut a short length of wire and bent it into shape with a pair of nippers, filing a sharp point to it. Then she opened a can of chipped beef and secured a couple of slices for bait. Going to the point of rock she found a place on the ocean side where a projecting shelf afforded her a seat above fairly deep water, and here she dropped her line.

Mr. Cumberford was an enthusiastic fisherman and while Sybil had never cared particularly for the sport she had accompanied her father on many a piscatorial expedition.

A tug. The girl hauled in, hand over hand, and found she had captured a large crab, which dropped from the hook to the rocks and with prodigious speed made for the water and disappeared.

"Good riddance, old ugly!" laughed Sybil.

Scarcely had she thrown her line when another tug came. A second crab floundered upon the rocks, but fell upon his back and lay struggling to turn himself.

Sybil ruefully contemplated the empty hook.

"I can't feed all our good beef to horrid crabs," she exclaimed; "but the beef seems a good bait and I'll try again."

Another crab. Orissa came clambering over the rocks to her friend's side. The sun was sinking.

"What luck, Syb?"

"Only three crabs. I'm afraid it's too shallow here for fish."

Orissa leaned over the still struggling crab — the only one that had not escaped.

"Why, we pay big money in Los Angeles for these things," said she. "They're delicious eating; but they have to be boiled, I think, and then cracked and newburged or creamed."

"Keep an eye on the rascal, then," said Sybil. "Can't he be eaten just boiled?"

"Yes; with mayonnaise."

"There's none handy. Let the high-brow go, and we'll fish for something that doesn't require royal condiments."

But Orissa weighted the crab with a heavy stone, to hold him down. Then she sat beside Sybil and watched her.

“I’m afraid our fish dinner must be postponed,” began Miss Cumberford sorrowfully; but at that moment the line jerked so fiercely that she would have been pulled from her seat had not Orissa made a grab and rescued her. Then they both clung to the line, managing to draw it in by degrees until there leaped from the water a great silvery fish which promptly dove again, exhibiting a strength that nearly won for him his freedom.

“Hold fast!” gasped Sybil, exerting all her strength. “We mustn’t let him escape.”

The fish, a twelve-pound rockcod, made a desperate fight; but unfortunately for him he had swallowed the entire hook and so his conquest was certain if the girls could hold on to the line. At last he lay flopping upon the rocks, and seeing he was unable to disgorge the hook, they dragged him to the beach, where Orissa shut her eyes and beheaded him with a hatchet from the tool chest.

In the outfit of the chest, which had evidently been intended by Steve and Mr. Cumberford for regular use in connection with the Hydro-Aircraft, they had found two aluminum plates, as well as knives and forks and spoons. Sybil cut two generous slices from the big fish and laid them upon one of the metal plates. Then they opened a can of pork and beans and secured a lump of fat to use in frying. Orissa lighted the alcohol torch and Sybil arranged some loose rocks so that they would support the plate suspended above the flame of the torch. The intense heat melted the fat and the fish was soon fried to a lovely brown. They ate it with biscuits and washed it down with ginger ale, confiding the while to one another that never had they eaten a meal so delicious.

They let the torch flicker during the repast, for night had fallen, but when from motives of economy Orissa had extinguished the flame they found a dim light suffused from a myriad of stars. Later a slender crescent moon arose, so they were able to distinguish near-by objects, even with the shadow of the bleak mountain behind them.

They had arranged their blankets in the boat and were sitting upon them, talking together in the starlight, when suddenly an unearthly cry smote their cars, followed by an answering shriek — then another, and another — until the whole island seemed echoing with a thousand terrifying whoops.

“Ku-whoo-woo-oo-oo! Ku-whoo! Ku-whoo-oo!”

The two girls clung together tremblingly as the great chorus burst upon them; but after a moment Sybil pushed her companion away with a nervous little laugh.

“Owls!” she exclaimed.

“Oh!” said Orissa, relieved as the truth dawned upon her. “I — I thought

it was savages."

"So it is. I challenge any beings to yell more savagely than those fearful hoot owls. Something must have happened to them, Ris, for they've never made a mutter all day long."

"Because they have been asleep," answered Orissa. They had to speak loudly to be heard above the turmoil of shrieks, although the owls seemed mainly congregated upon the distant mountain. The rocks everywhere were full of them, however, and hoots and answering hoots resounded from every part of the island. It was fairly deafening, as well as annoying and uncanny. They waited in vain for the noise to subside.

"There must be thousands of them," observed Sybil. "What's the row about, do you suppose?"

"Perhaps it's their nature to, Syb. I wonder why we didn't hear the pests last night. When we wakened this morning all was silent as the grave."

"I think we floated into the bay about daylight, when all the big-eyes had ducked into their holes. Do you know, Ris, the owls must be responsible for the absence of all other life on the island? They dote on snakes and lizards and beetles and such, and they'd rob the nests of any other birds, who couldn't protect themselves in the nighttime. So I suppose they've either eaten up all the other creatures or scared them to death."

"That must be so. But, oh, Sybil! if this racket keeps up every night how are we going to be able to sleep?"

"Ah. Just inquire, Cap'n, and if you find out, let me know," replied Sybil, yawning. "I got up so early this morning that I'm dead for sleep this blessed minute."

"Lie down; I'll keep watch."

"Thank you. This lullaby is too entrancing to miss."

The air grew cool presently, as it often does at night in the semi-tropics, and the two girls crouched down and covered themselves to their ears with the blankets. That deadened the pandemonium somewhat and as the owls showed no tendency to abate their shrieks, an hour or two of resigned submission to the inevitable resulted in drowsiness, and finally in sleep. As Sybil said next morning, no one would have believed that mortal girl could have slumbered under the affliction of such ear-splitting yells; but sleep they did, and when they wakened at daybreak profound silence reigned.

CHAPTER NINE

MISS COLUMBUS AND MISS CRUSOE

SYBIL COOKED MORE fish for their breakfast, although Orissa objected to the extravagant waste of alcohol. But her chum argued that they must waste either the alcohol or the fish and as they had a strenuous day before them a substantial breakfast was eminently desirable.

They now packed the aluminum chest and made arrangements for the voyage, for the sea in the bay was smooth as glass and the ocean seemed nearly as quiet outside. Orissa had straightened and repaired the elevator rods and firmly bolted the chest in its original position, but the control must be a matter of future tinkering, the rod needed for its repair being at present stuck in the side of the bluff.

It was easy to roll the machine down the beach into the water and set it afloat, but the difficult matter was to propel their queer, top-heavy craft through the water. A quiet sea meant no wind, nor could they feel the slightest breath of air stirring. Oars they had none, nor any substitute for such things; nor could they find anything to pole the boat along with.

"There's just one thing to be done," announced Orissa, gravely, "and that is for us to take turns wading behind the thing and pushing it along. By keeping close to the shore we ought to be able to accomplish our journey in that way."

"Suppose we strike deep water?" suggested Sybil.

"We'll stay close to shore. There seems to be a beach all the way."

"I'm game to try," declared Sybil, in a brisk tone, "but it seems at first sight like an impossible task. I'm glad, Miss Columbus, that under these circumstances your island is uninhabited — except by owls who can't see in the daytime."

"Were there other inhabitants," returned Orissa, "we would not be undertaking such a thing. The natives would either eat us or assist us."

"True for you, Cap'n. I'm going to keep my stockings on. They'll be some protection against those sharp rocks which we're liable to tread on."

"I shall do the same," said Orissa. "Take your seat in the boat, Syb, and I'll do the first stunt shoving. After we get around the point I will give you a chance to wade."

"Unanimously carried," said Sybil.

This undertaking did not appear nearly so preposterous to the two castaways as it may to the reader sitting quietly at home. Except that circumstances had made Orissa and Sybil aeronauts at a time when few girls have undertaken to fly through the air — as many will do in the future —

they were quite like ordinary girls in all respects. A capricious fate had driven them into a far-away, unknown sea and cast them upon an uninviting island, but in such unusual circumstances they did what any girls would do, if they're the right sort; kept their courage and exercised every resource to make the most of their discouraging surroundings and keep alive until succor arrived.

So far, these two castaways had shown admirable stamina. Had either one been placed in such a position alone, the chances are she might have despaired and succumbed to girlish terrors, but being together their native pride forbade their admitting or even showing a trace of fear. In this manner they encouraged and supported one another, outwardly calm, whatever their inward tremors might be.

Orissa Kane was habitually dainty and feminine in both appearance and deportment, yet possessed a temperament cool and self-reliant. Her natural cleverness and quickness of comprehension had been fostered by constant association with her mechanical, inventive brother, and it seemed to her quite proper to help herself when no one was by to render her aid. To wade in the warm, limpid water of the Pacific, at a place far removed from the haunts of humanity, in order to propel the precious craft, on which her life and that of her companion might depend, to a better location, seemed to this girl quite the natural thing to do. Sybil's acute sense of humor led her to recognize the laughable side of this queer undertaking; yet even Sybil, much more frail and dependent than her beloved chum, had no thought of refusing her assistance.

The aluminum boat rode lightly upon the surface of the sea, the broad, overhanging planes scarcely interfering with its balance. Indeed, the planes probably assisted in keeping the boat upright. Orissa, knee-deep in the water, was not called upon to exert herself more than to wade; but this was a slow and tedious process and required frequent rests. At such times she would sit in the back of the boat and let her feet dangle in the warm water.

Gradually the Hy was propelled around the point of rock into the open sea, and by keeping close to shore the girl seldom found herself out of her depth, and then only temporarily.

Sybil kept up a constant chatter, inducing Orissa frequently to laugh with her, and that made the task seem more an amusement than hard labor. They took turns at the wading, as had been agreed upon, but because Orissa was much the stronger her periods of playing mermaid were longer than those of her chum.

In this manner they made good progress, and though Sybil made a great deal of fun of what she called her "patent propeller," she took her turn at wading very seriously and pushed the strange craft through the water at a

good rate of speed. By midday they reached the point where the bluff began to rise and here they sat together in the boat, shaded by the planes, and ate their luncheon with hearty appetites. They found it high tide, yet the water was more quiet than on the preceding day, and when they resumed their journey their progress was much more rapid than before.

By two o'clock they had cautiously propelled the boat around the huge boulder that marked the ravine they had found and soon after had rolled it upon the sandy beach and anchored it securely beyond the reach of the tide.

"If it would fly," said Orissa, "I think we could push it to the top of the bluff; but if we use it at all, before our friends arrive, it must be as a boat, and not an aeroplane."

"Then," returned Sybil, "let's remove the canvas from the lower plane and make a tent of it."

"I've been thinking of that," said Orissa, "and I'm sure it is a wise thing to do. I know how to take the clips off, and it won't injure the cloth in the least."

"Then get busy, and I'll help you."

So, after a good rest on the beach in the sun they resumed their clothing. The wet stockings were thoroughly dried by the sun by the time they were ready for them, and presently they set to work removing the cloth from the lower plane. The task was almost completed when Sybil suddenly exclaimed:

"How about a frame for our tent?"

Orissa looked puzzled.

"Come up on the bluff," she proposed.

The incline was not at all difficult and they soon stood on top the bluff. A thorough examination of the place disclosed no means of erecting the tent. A few dead branches that had fallen from the banana trees lay scattered about and there was a quantity of anaemic shrubbery growing here and there, but there was nothing to furnish poles for the tent or to support it in any way.

"Stumped, Columbus!" laughed Sybil, as they squatted together in the shade of the trees. "We shall have to drag up the aeroplane, after all, and use the plane-frame for our ridge-pole."

Orissa demurred at this.

"There is always a way to do a thing, if one can think how," she said.

"In this case, chummie dear, magic or legerdemain seems the only modus operandi," maintained Sybil. But Orissa was thinking, and as she thought she glanced at the trees.

"Why, of course!" she exclaimed.

Sybil's eyes questioned her gravely.

"Come on!" cried Orissa, jumping up.

“Not a step, Miss Columbus, until I’m enlightened.”

“Oh, Crusoe, can’t you see? It is so extremely simple that I’m ashamed of our stupidity. We’ve but to stretch our coil of wire between these two trees, throw the canvas over it and weight the bottom with rocks to hold it in place.”

Sybil sighed.

“It was too easy,” she admitted. “I never could guess an easy conundrum; but give me a hard nut to crack and I’m a regular squirrel.”

They returned to the beach for the canvas and wire and Orissa took several of the clips, with which to fasten together the ends of their tent. Ascending once more, this time heavily loaded, to the group of bananas on the bluff, they proceeded to attach the wire to two of the trees. The plane-cover was large enough to afford a broad spread to their “A” tent and when the lower edges were secured by means of heavy stones, and the scattered rocks cleared away from the interior, their new domicile seemed roomy and inviting.

Their next task was to fetch the aluminum chest from the beach, and after they had lightened its weight by leaving in the boat all the tools except the hatchet and a small hack saw, they were able to carry the chest between them, although forced to make frequent stops to rest.

“The lack of a bedstead worries me most,” remarked Sybil. “I don’t like the idea of sleeping on the bare ground. How would it do, Ris, to build a stone bed — something like an altar, you know, with a hollow center which we could fill with sand?”

“That is a capital idea, Crusoe, and will help clear our front yard of some of those flat stones. They are mostly slate, I think, instead of rock formation. Heave-ho, my hearty, and we’ll do the job in a jiffy.”

The girls lugged into the tent a number of stones of such size as they could comfortably move, and then Orissa, who could put her hand to almost any sort of work, planned and built the extraordinary bedstead. It was laid solid, at first, but when about a foot from the ground she began to extend the sides of the pile and leave a hollow in the middle. This hollow they afterward filled with sand, carrying it in their dress-skirts from the beach. When finally the “Altar to Morpheus” — as Sybil persisted in calling it — was completed, they spread their blankets upon it and it made a very comfortable place to sleep.

They also erected a small rock stove, for there was enough firewood to be gathered, in the way of fallen branches, dead leaves and “peelings” from the tree-trunks, to last them for several days. The hatchet and hack saw helped prepare these scraps to fit the stove and by sundown the girls felt quite settled

in their new residence.

"We ought to fly a flag of distress from some place high up on those trees," observed Orissa; "but we've no flag and no way to shin up the tree."

"Couldn't any ship see our white tent from the ocean?" asked Sybil.

"Yes; I think so."

"As for climbing the tree," continued Sybil, "I wish your creative brain would evolve some way to do it. Those fat, yellow bananas look mighty tempting and they would serve to eke out our larder. Supplies are beginning to diminish with alarming rapidity, Ris. Only a box and a half of those biscuits left."

"I know," said Orissa, soberly. "To-morrow we will see what may be done to capture the bananas."

After a time Sybil said, softly: "By to-morrow we may begin to look for Daddy and Steve. Of course it will take them some time to find us, but — Don't you think, Orissa, they're quite certain to find us, in the end?"

Orissa looked at her companion with a gleam of pity in her deep blue eyes; but she had no desire to disturb Sybil's confidence in their rescue, whatever misgivings oppressed her own heart.

"I believe they will find us," she affirmed. "It may not be to-morrow, you know, nor in a week, nor — perhaps — in a month — "

"Oh, Orissa!"

"But they'll cover the entire Pacific in their search, I am positive, and sooner or later they'll come to this island and — take us away."

"Alive or dead," added Sybil, gloomily.

"Oh, as for that, we are perfectly safe, and healthy — so far — and I imagine we could live for a long time on this island, if obliged to."

Again they sat silently thinking, while twilight gave way to darkness and darkness was relieved by the pale moonlight.

Suddenly a shriek sounded in their ears. A great white bird swooped down from the mountain and passed directly between their two heads, disappearing into the night with another appalling cry. This shriek was answered by another and another, until the whole island resounded with the distracting "Ku-whoo-oo!"

"The owls are awake," said Orissa, rising resignedly. "Come into the tent, Sybil. I'm not sure they wouldn't attack us if we remained in the open."

CHAPTER TEN

MADELINE DENTRY'S PROPOSITION

AT THE AVIATION field the crowd had watched the departure of the two girls, flying the famous Kane Hydro-Aircraft, with eager interest but assured confidence in their making a successful trip. The Flying Girl never indulged in accidents, and her skill was universally admitted. To be sure, there was an added risk in flying over the water, but with a motor boat to sustain them when they alighted, the danger was reduced to a minimum and, in the minds of nearly all the spectators, a triumphant return was unquestioned. Hundreds of glasses followed the flight and although the management sent several bird-men into the air to amuse the throng the real interest remained centered on the dim speck that marked the course of the Flying Girl.

No sooner had Orissa and Sybil started on their voyage than Stephen Kane and Mr. Cumberford ran to the bluff overlooking the sea, where with powerful binoculars they could obtain an unobstructed view of the entire trip to the island and back again. Presently Madeline Dentry joined them, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Tupper, all standing silently with leveled glasses.

"She's working beautifully," muttered Steve, referring to his invention with boyish delight. "I'm sorry Ris didn't make a straight line of it, but she always likes to give the dear public the worth of their money... Ah-h!"

"By Jove! that was an awkward turn," cried Mr. Cumberford, as they saw the Aircraft keel at a dangerous angle and then slowly right itself. "I'm surprised at Orissa. She usually makes her turns so neatly."

"I've an idea that blamed steering gear stuck," said Steve, ruefully. "I've been a little afraid of it, all along. But the girls are all right now. They're headed dead for the island and if Orissa makes a neat drop to the water the rest is easy."

No one spoke again for a time, all being intent upon the flying-machine. When it had seemed to reach the island, and even to pass over it, without a halt, there was an excited hum of amazement from the grand stand.

Madeline glanced at Stephen Kane's face and found it as white as a sheet. He was staring with dilated eyes toward the Aircraft.

"What in the mischief is Orissa up to now?" questioned Mr. Cumberford, uneasily. "Wasn't she to alight this side of the island?"

"Yes," answered Steve hoarsely.

"Then — She can't be joking, or playing pranks. It isn't like her. Why, they haven't swerved a hair's breadth from the course, or even slackened speed. They — they — "

“They’re in trouble, I’m afraid,” said Steve in trembling tones. “The control has failed them and they can’t stop.”

“Can’t stop!” The little line of observers on the bluff echoed the thrilling words. From the grand stand came a roar of voices filled with tense excitement. Some thought the Flying Girl was attempting a reckless performance, with the idea of shocking the crowd; but Stephen Kane knew better, and so did Mr. Cumberford. As the two men held their glasses to their eyes with shaking hands, straining to discover a sign that Orissa had altered her course and was coming back, Madeline Dentry turned to look earnestly at the brother and father of the girls, knowing she could read the facts more truly from their faces than by focusing her own glasses on that tiny speck in the sky.

The moments dragged slowly, yet laden with tragic import. The powerful lenses lost the speck, now found it again — lost it for good — yet the men most affected by this strange occurrence still glared at the sky, hoping against hope that their fears were unfounded and that the Aircraft would come back.

Some one plucked Steve’s sleeve. It was Chesty Todd, his big body shaken like an aspen.

“It — it has run away with ‘em, Steve. It’s gone wrong, man; there’s danger ahead!”

“Eh?” said Steve, dully.

“Wake up and do something!”

Steve lowered his glasses and looked helplessly at Mr. Cumberford. Cumberford returned the stare, glowering upon the inventor.

“That’s right; it’s up to you, Kane. What are you going to do?” he asked coldly.

“There’s no other hydro-aeroplane on the grounds,” said the boy brokenly.

“Then get an aeroplane,” commanded Cumberford, sharply.

“It would mean death to anyone who ventured to follow our girls in an aeroplane — not rescue for them.”

Cumberford moaned, as if in pain; then stamped his foot impatiently, as if ashamed of his weakness.

“Well — well! What then, Stephen Kane?” he demanded.

Steve wrung his hands, realizing his helplessness.

“Gentlemen,” said Madeline Dentry, laying a gentle hand on Mr. Cumberford’s arm, “let me help you. There is no reason for despair just yet; the condition of those girls is far from desperate, it seems to me. Did I understand you to say, Mr. Kane, that your sister is unable to stop the engine, or to turn the machine?”

Steve nodded.

“That’s it,” he said. “Something has broken. I can’t imagine what it is, but there’s no other way to explain the thing.”

“Very well,” rejoined Madeline, coolly, “let us, then, try to consider intelligently what will happen to them. Will they presently descend and alight upon the surface of the water?”

“I’m — I’m afraid not,” Steve answered. “If that were possible, Orissa would have done it long ago. I think something has happened to affect the control, and therefore my sister is helpless.”

“In that case, how long will they continue flying?” persisted Madeline.

“As long as the gasoline lasts — three or four hours.”

“And how fast are they traveling, Mr. Kane?”

“I think at the rate of about forty-five miles an hour.”

Miss Dentry made a mental calculation.

“Then they will descend about a hundred and fifty miles from here, in a straight line over that island,” said she. “Having a boat under them, I suppose they will float indefinitely?”

Again Steve nodded, looking at the girl curiously and wondering at her logic.

“If — if they manage to alight upon the water in good shape,” he replied more hopefully, “they’ll be safe enough — for a time. And they have food and water with them. The only danger I fear for them, at present, is that when the gasoline is exhausted the machine will be wrecked.”

“Don’t you aviators often shut off your engine and volplane to the ground?” asked Madeline.

“Yes, with the elevator and rudder in full control. But that isn’t the case with Orissa. I’m certain her elevator control has bound in some way. Were it broken, and free, the Aircraft would have wobbled, and perhaps tumbled while we were looking at it. The elevator is wedged, you see, and my sister can’t move it at all. So, when the gasoline gives out, I — I’m not sure how the machine will act.”

“Anyway,” exclaimed Madeline, with sudden determination, “we are wasting valuable time in useless talk. Follow me at once.”

“Where to?” asked Steve, in surprise.

“To my yacht. I’m going after the girls. Please come with us, Mr. Cumberford — and you, too, Mr. Todd. Aunty,” turning to Mrs. Tupper, “if you require anything from the hotel for the journey I will send you there in the car; but you must hurry, for every moment is precious.”

Mr. Cumberford straightened up, animated and alert, while his face brightened with a ray of hope.

“We will take my car to the bay,” said he, eagerly, “and Mr. and Mrs. Tupper can use your own car to visit the hotel. Will you accompany us, or ride with your aunt?”

“With you,” decided Madeline. “I must have the captain get up steam and prepare to sail. It won’t take long; I’ve ordered them to keep a little steam all the time, in case I wish to take a party out for a ride.”

Even as they were speaking all walked rapidly toward the long line of motor cars. Mrs. Tupper, who had not ventured a remark or made any protest — quite contrary to her usual custom — now astonished her niece by saying:

“Never mind the hotel; let us all go directly to the yacht. With those two poor girls in danger I couldn’t bear to think I had caused a moment’s delay. It is very comfortable on the yacht and we’ll get along all right for a day.”

“To be sure; to be sure,” agreed Mr. Tupper, nervously. “I shall be seasick; I’m bound to be seasick; I always am; but in this emergency my place is by Madeline’s side.”

Of course no protest would have affected Madeline’s determination, and the worthy couple recognized that fact perfectly; hence they diplomatically abetted her plan.

Captain Krell had attended the exhibitions at the aviation field, but while there he kept one eye on Miss Dentry. During the panic caused by the runaway aeroplane he saw Miss Dentry in earnest conversation with Cumberford and Kane and marked their hurried departure from the field. So the gallant captain scuttled back to the yacht at his best speed, to find Miss Dentry already aboard and the engineer shoveling in coal.

Both Mr. Cumberford and Steve knew that the *Salvador* was by odds the fastest ship in the bay, and Madeline’s prompt offer to go to the rescue of their imperilled daughter and sister awakened hope in their breasts and aroused their lively gratitude.

After all it did not take the yacht long to get under way. It was so perfectly manned and in such complete readiness that steam was the only requisite to begin a trip instantly. Madeline could scarcely wait while with aggravating deliberation they hoisted anchor, but she became more composed as the yacht slowly headed out of the bay, the crew alert and the big captain as eager as any of them to rescue the daring bird-maids.

By the time the *Salvador* reached the open sea the shore was lined with thousands of spectators, and the sight of the graceful yacht headed in chase of the two girls raised a cheer so lusty and heartfelt that it reached Madeline’s ears and caused her to flush with pleasure and renewed determination.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
A GAME OF CHECKERS

NINE O'CLOCK!" cried Orissa, giving Sybil a nudge. "Are you going to sleep all day, Crusoe, like those dreadful owls?"

"I'd like to," muttered Miss Cumberford, regretfully opening her eyes. "My, what a blessed relief from that night of torture! Don't you think, Ris, that those feathered fiends only stopped the concert because they'd howled until their throats were sore?"

"I fear we made a mistake in changing our camp," returned Orissa, busy with her toilet. "The shrieks sounded much louder than they did the night before."

"Question is," said Sybil, rolling off the improvised bed, "how long we are to endure this imprisonment. If it's to be a mere day or so, don't let's move again. However, if you think we're here for life, I propose we murder every owl and have done with them."

"We can't read the future, of course," remarked Orissa thoughtfully, as she stroked her beautiful hair with her back-comb — the only toilet article she possessed. "Steve may get to us any day, or he may have a hard time finding us. He will never give up, though, nor will your father, until our retreat is located and — and — our fate determined."

"Poor Daddy!" sighed Sybil; "he'll be worried to death. I've led him a dog's life, I know; but he's just as fond and faithful as if I'd been a dutiful daughter."

"I hope they won't tell mother," said Orissa. "The anxiety would be so hard for her to bear. We know we're fairly comfortable, Syb; but they can't know that, nor have any clear idea what's become of us."

They fell quiet, after this, and exchanged few words until they were outside the tent and had made a fire of twigs and leaves in the rock stove. Sybil warmed the last of the baked beans, adding a little water to moisten them. With these they each ate a biscuit and finished their breakfast with a draught of cool water from the spring.

After the meal they wandered among the queer greenery they had before observed and Sybil called attention to the fact that many of the broad, tender leaves had been nibbled at the edges.

"The owls did that, of course," said Orissa, "and if it is good food for owls I'm sure it wouldn't hurt us."

"Doesn't it look something like lettuce?" asked Sybil.

"Yes; perhaps that is what it is — wild lettuce."

She plucked a leaf and tasted it. The flavor was agreeable and not unlike

that of lettuce.

"Well," said Sybil, after tasting the green, "here's an item to add to our bill-of-fare. If only we had dressing for it a salad would be mighty appetizing."

"There's the vinegar in the bottle of pickles," proposed Orissa. "It won't go very far, but it will help. Let us try the new dish for luncheon."

"And how about the bananas?" asked Miss Cumberford.

"I'll proceed to get them right now," promised Orissa, walking back to the group of trees.

The bare, smooth trunks extended twenty feet in the air before a branch appeared. The branches were broad, stout leaves, among which hung the bunches of fruit.

"I hate to ruin a perfectly good tree," declared Orissa, picking up the hatchet, "but self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"Goodness me! You're not thinking of chopping it down, I hope," exclaimed Sybil.

"No, that would be too great a task to undertake. I've a better way, I think."

She selected a tree that had three large bunches of bananas on it. One bunch was quite ripe, the next just showing color and the third yet an emerald green. Each bunch consisted of from sixty to eighty bananas.

First Orissa chopped notches on either side of the trunk, at such distances as would afford support for her feet. When these notches rose as high as she could reach, she brought two broad straps from the Aircraft, buckled them together around the tree-trunk, and then passed the slack around her body and beneath her arms. Thus supported she began the ascent, placing her feet in the notches she had already cut and chopping more notches as she advanced.

In this manner the girl reached the lower branches and after climbing into them removed the strap and crept along until she reached the first bunch of bananas.

"Stand from under!" she cried to Sybil and began chopping at the stem. Presently the huge bunch fell with a thud and Sybil gleefully applauded by clapping her hands.

"The lower ones are a bit mushy, I fear," she called to her chum, "but that can't be helped."

"We will eat those first," said Orissa, creeping to the second bunch.

She managed to cut it loose, and the third, after which she replaced the strap around her body and cautiously descended to the ground. The two girls then rolled over the ripest bunch and found the damage confined to a couple

of dozen bananas, the skins of which had burst from the force of the heavy fall. A moment later they were feasting on the fruit, which they found delicious.

"I've read somewhere," said Sybil, "that bananas alone will sustain life for an indefinite period. They are filling and satisfying, and they're wholesome. We needn't worry any longer for fear of starvation, Ris."

"I imagine we'd get deadly tired of the things, in time," replied Orissa; "but, as you say, they'll sustain life, and just at present they taste mighty good."

They drew the ripest bunch into the tent, but left the others lying in the bright sunshine.

"Now," announced Orissa, "we must make an expedition to that crevasse and rescue the bar and the lever, which we left sticking in the rocks. The tide is low, so we may go around by way of the shore."

A leisurely walk of fifteen minutes brought them to the crevasse, down which tumbled the tiny brook. Orissa, as the most venturesome, climbed to the bar, from whence she managed to pull the lever out of the owl's nest into which she had formerly thrust it. If the owl was hidden there now it failed to disclose its presence and on descending to the rocks Orissa easily released the bar. So now, armed once more with their primitive weapons, the girls returned to their camp.

"I can attach these to our machine at any time," said the air-maid, "so I think it may be best to keep them beside us, to use in case of emergency. I haven't felt entirely safe since we lost them."

"Nor I," returned Sybil. "We haven't encountered anything dangerous, so far, but I like to feel I've something to pound with, should occasion arise."

That afternoon Orissa worked on the Aircraft, repairing the damage caused by the sliding chest. She also took apart the steering gear, filed the bearings carefully, and afterward replaced the parts, fitting them nicely together and greasing them thoroughly. As a result of this labor the gear now worked easily and its parts were not likely again to bind.

"Steve made it altogether too light for its purpose," said the girl. "On the next machine I must see that he remedies that fault."

Sybil had been lying half asleep on the sands, shaded by the spreading plane of the Aircraft. She now aroused herself and looked at her companion with a whimsical expression while the other girl carefully gathered up the tools and put them away.

"All ready to run, Ris?" she asked.

"All ready."

"I suppose with the gasoline tanks filled we could go home?"

“Yes; I think so. With the wind in our favor, as it was when we came, we ought to cover the same distance easi-

“Very good. I hope you are now satisfied, having worked like a nailer for half a day, getting a machine in order that can’t be utilized. Gasoline doesn’t grow on this island, I imagine — unless it could be made from bananas.”

“No; it doesn’t grow here.”

“And none of the department stores keep it.”

“True.”

“But we’ve got a flying-machine, in apple-pie order, except that we’re using one of the plane coverings for a tent and a lever for a weapon of defense.”

“Absolutely correct, Crusoe.”

“Hooray. Let’s go to sleep again, dear. Those screechers will keep us awake all night, you know.”

She closed her eyes drowsily and Orissa sat beside her and looked thoughtfully over the expanse of blue ocean. There was nothing in sight; nothing save the big island at the west, which seemed from this distance to be much more desirable than the bleak rocks on which the adventurers had stranded.

Orissa got her binoculars and made a careful inspection of the place. Through the powerful glasses she could discover forests, green meadowland and the gleam of a small river. It was a flat island, yet somewhat elevated above the surface of the sea. She judged it to be at least four times bigger than the island they were now on. The distance rendered it impossible to discover whether the place was inhabited or not. No houses showed themselves, but of course she could see only one side of the island from where she sat.

Orissa did not feel sleepy, in spite of her wakeful night, so she took Sybil’s fishline and baited the hook with a scrap of beef. Going to the top of the bluff she began to fish, and as she fished she reviewed in mind all the conditions of their misfortune and strove to find a way of relief. Being unsuccessful in both occupations she finally came back to the little bay and waded out to the big rock that guarded the mouth of the inlet. On the ocean side there was good depth of water and in the course of the next half hour she landed a huge crawfish, two crabs and a two-pound flat fish resembling a sole. This last is known as “chicken-halibut” and is delicious eating.

She aroused Sybil, and the two girls built a fire, using dry twigs from the brushwood, a supply of which they had gathered and placed near their tent. In the fat taken from the crawfish they fried the halibut for supper. Then among the coals and hot stones they buried the crabs, keeping a little fire

above them until they were sure the creatures were thoroughly roasted. Next day they cracked the shells and picked out the meat, deciding they might live luxuriously even on an island of rocks, provided they exercised their wits and took advantage of all conditions Nature afforded them.

At dark thousands of great owls came from their retreats among the rocks and flew ceaselessly about the island, uttering their distracting cries. Nor was there a moment's peace again until daybreak. The birds were evidently in search of food, and found it; but what it consisted of the girls could not imagine. Singularly enough, the castaways were growing accustomed to the deafening clamor and as they felt quite safe within their enclosed tent they were able to sleep — in a fitful, restless way — a good part of the night.

The following day they began to find the hours dragging tediously, for the first time since their captivity. Arm in arm the two girls wandered around the elevated end of their island, exploring it thoroughly but making no new discoveries of importance. The barren, slimy hollow that lay inland had no temptations to lure them near it and so there remained little else to do but watch the ocean and prepare their meals.

"This is our fourth day of isolation," announced Sybil, in a tone more irritable than she was wont to use. "I wonder how long this thing will last."

"We must be patient," said Orissa, gently. "Our dear ones are making every effort to find us, I'm sure, and of course they will succeed in time. We are at some distance from the usual route of ships; that is evident; and for this reason it will be more difficult for our friends to locate us. I suppose that a few days more may easily pass by before we catch sight of a boat coming to get us. But they'll come, Syb," she repeated, confidently, "and meantime we — we must be — patient."

Sybil stared across the water.

"Do you play checkers?" she asked abruptly.

"Steve and I used to play, long ago. I suppose I could remember the game, and it might amuse us; but we have no checkerboard, nor men for it."

"Pah! and you the sister of an inventor!" cried Sybil scornfully. "I'm astonished at you, Miss Kane. Haven't you enough reflected ingenuity to manufacture a checkerboard?"

"Why, I think so," said Orissa. "The idea hadn't occurred to me. I'll see what I can do."

"You make the board, and I'll find the men," proposed Sybil, and springing to her feet she ran down to the beach, glad to have anything to occupy her and relieve the dreary dragging of the hours.

Orissa looked around her, pondering the problem. Material for a checkerboard seemed hopelessly lacking, yet after a little thought she solved

the problem fairly well. First she ripped the flounce from her black silk petticoat and with the jackknife from the tool kit she cut out thirty-two black squares, each two inches in diameter. Then she took a tube of prepared glue that was in the outfit and walked up the incline to their tent, in the center of which stood the aluminum chest. This chest, being of a dull silvery color, and quite smooth on all its sides, was to be the groundwork of the checker-board squares, as well as the board itself and the elevated table to play on. Orissa glued the squares of black silk to the cover of the chest, leaving a similar square space on the aluminum surface between each one. When this was accomplished she pasted a narrow edge of black around the entire sixty-four squares, thus marking their boundary.

She was very proud of this work and was regarding it admiringly when Sybil entered.

"How clever!" cried her chum, genuinely enthusiastic. "Really, Miss Columbus, you have done better than I. But here are the checker-men, and they'll do very nicely."

As she spoke she dumped from her handkerchief upon the board twenty-four shells which she had carefully selected from those that littered the beach. Twelve were dark in color and twelve pearly white and being of uniform size they made very practical checkers.

"Now, then," said she, squatting beside the chest and arranging her shells in order, "I'll play you a series of games for a box of bonbons, to be purchased when we return to civilization."

"How many games?" asked Orissa, seating herself opposite.

"Let us say — the best three in five. If that's too rapid we will make the next bet the best six in ten, or twelve in twenty. Agreeable, Columbus?"

"Entirely so, Crusoe."

It was really a capital diversion. Sybil played very well and it required all Orissa's cleverness to oppose her. At times they tired of the play and went for a stroll on the bluff; and always, no matter how intent they were upon the game, they kept watchful eyes on the ocean.

And in this manner the days dragged on their weary lengths and the nights resounded to the shrill cries of the owls. One morning Sybil asked:

"Isn't to-day Tuesday, Orissa?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "We've inhabited this wilderness just a week."

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE QUEST OF THE "SALVADOR"

ON THE ROOMY forward deck of the *Salvador* an earnest conference was held.

"How fast are we going?" asked Steve.

"The captain says about fifteen miles an hour. That's our best clip, it seems," replied Madeline.

"And very good speed," added Captain Krell, proudly.

"So it is, for an English yacht," agreed Mr. Cumberford.

"In that case," said Steve, "we are moving one-third as fast as the Aircraft did, and we were about two hours later in starting. Provided the girls exhaust their gasoline in flying, they will make a hundred and fifty to two hundred miles, requiring five or six hours' time. Then they will alight, bobbing upon the water and helpless to move in any direction except where the current carries them. It will take us eighteen hours to reach that same spot, and we will therefore be twelve hours behind them. Do you all follow me?"

They nodded, listening intently.

"Now, the girls left at about one thirty this afternoon. If my calculations are correct, they'll take to the water anywhere from six thirty to seven thirty this evening. We shall overtake them at about the same hour to-morrow morning. Unless they drift considerably out of their course we shall see the white planes at daybreak and have no trouble in running alongside. But there's always the chance that through some cause they may manage to drop to water sooner, and perhaps run the boat toward home. Orissa is a very clever girl, as you all know; calm and resourceful; quick-witted and brave. She will do all that anyone could do to bring the Aircraft under control. So the one danger, it appears to me, is that we may pass them during the night."

"That danger, sir," said Captain Krell, "may be reduced to a minimum. We carry a very powerful searchlight, which shall be worked by my men all night, illuminating not only the course ahead, but the sea for miles on every side. As you say, Mr. Kane, the white planes may be easily seen against the blue water, and we positively cannot miss them during the night."

"You — er — interest me," said Mr. Cumberford, looking more cheerful. "We seem to have everything in our favor, thanks to Miss Dentry's generosity."

"I'm so glad I bought this yacht!" exclaimed Madeline, fervently, "for it enabled me to go to the assistance of those poor girls. I'm sure it was all providential."

"Let us hope," said Mr. Tupper pompously, "the young women will

survive until we reach them. However, we shall learn their fate, in any event, which will afford us a certain degree of satisfaction."

That speech was like a douche of cold water, but although the gentleman received various indignant and reproachful looks he had "sized up the situation" with fair accuracy.

Mr. Cumberford, however, since those first despairing moments on the aviation field, had recovered command of his feelings and seemed hopeful, if not confident, of his daughter's ultimate escape from serious mishap. He was exceedingly fond of Orissa, too, and even had not Sybil been with her it is certain that he would have been much worried and eager to go to her assistance.

Stephen Kane, on the contrary, grew more nervous as time passed. Better than the others he knew the dangers that threatened the girls if, as he suspected, the steering gear had broken and the elevator and engine control been rendered useless. He racked his brain to think what could have caused the trouble, but never a hint of the truth dawned upon him.

The third member of the Kane-Cumberford party, Mr. H. Chesterton Radley-Todd, had maintained a discreet silence ever since Miss Dentry had invited him to join the rescue party. This she had been led to do by the look of abject misery on the boy's face, and he had merely pressed her hand to indicate his thanks. Chesty Todd was never much of a conversationalist and his appreciation of his own awkwardness rendered him diffident unless occasion demanded prompt and aggressive action, when he usually came to the front in an efficient if unexpected manner.

Madeline Dentry, seeing Chesty Todd merely as he appeared, wondered in a casual way why such a blundering, incompetent booby had been employed by the Kane-Cumberford firm, but as the big boy was a part of the "camp" and was so evidently disturbed by the accident, she was glad to relieve him to the extent of adding him to the party.

Very soon after the *Salvador* started, however, nearly every one on board began to feel the presence of the youthful press agent. It was Chesty Todd who discovered the searchlight aboard and long before the conference on the deck he had primed the captain to use it during the coming night. It was Chesty Todd who sat on a coal-bunker in the hold, swinging his long legs and inspiring the engineer, by dark insinuations concerning the *Salvador's* ability to speed, to give her engines every pound of steam she could carry. It was Chesty who pumped the steward to learn how well the boat was provisioned and supplied the deck hands with choice cigars until they were ready to swear he was a trump and imagined him quite the most important personage aboard, after Miss Dentry.

The chef served an excellent dinner in the cabin, to which no one did full justice except Mr. Tupper. All were loth to leave the deck long enough to eat, although they knew a watch was stationed in the "crow's nest" with powerful glasses. When night fell the search-light came into play and the entire party sat huddled forward, eagerly following the sweep of light across the waters. It was ten o'clock when Mr. and Mrs. Tupper retired, and midnight when Madeline went to her room, leaving orders to call her if the Aircraft was sighted.

Stephen Kane, Mr. Cumberford and Chesty Todd sat by the rail all night, wide-eyed and alert. Once the searchlight caught the sails of a ship and they all leaped up, thinking it was the Aircraft. Again, something dark — a tangled mass of wreckage — swept by them and set their hearts throbbing until they held the light steadily upon it and discovered it to be a jumble of kelp and driftwood. Daylight came and found them wan but still wakeful, for now they were getting close to the limit of flight possible to the Aircraft.

Captain Krell was a skillful navigator and, having taken his course in a direct line from Sealskin Island, following the flight of Orissa's Hydro-Aircraft, had not swerved a hair's breadth from it the entire voyage.

"You see," said Steve, peering ahead in the strengthening daylight, "the *Salvador* hasn't dodged a bit, and the Aircraft couldn't. So we're bound to strike our quarry soon."

"Wind," suggested Chesty.

"Yes; the wind might carry them a little out of their course, to be sure," admitted Steve; "but I think — I hope —

not far enough to escape our range of vision."

At about seven o'clock, at Chesty Todd's suggestion, the engines were slowed down somewhat, that the lookout aloft might have better opportunity to examine the sea on all sides of the ship. The yacht still maintained fair speed, however, and the call to breakfast finding no one willing to respond, Madeline ordered coffee and rolls served on deck, where they could all watch while refreshing themselves.

"What's your run, Captain?" asked Steve, nervously.

"Hundred and forty miles, sir."

"Indeed! Go a little slower, please."

The captain rang the bell to slow down. Presently the *Salvador* was creeping along at the rate of ten miles an hour.

"The gasoline," said Steve, "may have carried them farther than I figured on. It's a new machine and I haven't had a chance to test the exact capacity of the tanks."

The moments dragged tediously. Every person aboard was laboring under

tense excitement.

"What's the run, Captain?"

"One fifty-two, sir."

"Ah."

Nothing was in sight; only an uninterrupted stretch of blue sea. Hour after hour passed. At noon the run was two hundred and twenty miles and the aeroplane had not been sighted. Steve turned and faced those assembled.

"It's no use going farther in this direction," he said, the words trembling on his lips. "I'm very sure they couldn't have made this distance."

"Evidently their course has been altered by the wind," added Mr. Cumberford.

"Gusty, at times, last night," asserted Chesty.

Steve nodded.

"A strong wind might do what the girls couldn't," said he. "That is, it might alter the direction of their flight. How did it blow?"

"At four o'clock, from the north; at five fifteen, from the west; at six, due south," said Chesty.

There was silence for a few minutes. The engines had been shut down and the boat lay drifting upon the water.

"I think it will be well to examine the charts," suggested Mr. Todd, "and find out where we are."

"I know where we are," said Captain Krell. "Wait a moment; I'll get the chart, so you may all study it."

He brought it from his cabin and spread it upon a folding table on the deck. A penciled line ran directly from the port of San Diego to a point south by southwest.

"A few more hours on the same course and we'd sight the little island of Guadaloup, off the Mexican coast," explained Captain Krell. "But the aeroplane couldn't go so far; therefore we must search on either side the course we've come."

They all bent their heads over the map.

"What are those unmarked dots which are scattered around?" inquired Mr. Cumberford.

"Islands, sir. Mostly bits of rock jutting out of the sea. They're not important enough to name, nor do they appear on an ordinary map; but a seaman's chart indicates them, for unless we had knowledge of their whereabouts we might bump into them."

"They're mostly to the south of us, I see," remarked Mr. Tupper.

"Yes, sir."

"And it's south we must go, I think," said Steve, looking at Chesty Todd

for the youth to confirm his judgment. “There was no wind to take them to the west of this course, I — believe.”

“That’s my idea,” declared the press agent. “I would suggest our doubling back and forth, on this return trip, covering forty or fifty miles at each leg. Seems like we couldn’t miss ‘em, that way.”

After much consultation this plan was finally agreed upon. The captain outlined his course and followed it, so that during the next four days not a square yard of ocean escaped their search. But it was all in vain and at the end of the fourth day, with the California coast again in sight, there was scarcely a person aboard who entertained the slightest hope of finding the missing girls.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
CAPRICIOUS FATE

A WIRELESS WAS SENT to the shore, reporting the failure of the *Salvador* to locate the runaway aeroplane and asking if any tidings had been received of Orissa Kane and Sybil Cumberford.

There was no news.

Madeline called her passengers together again for a further consultation.

"What shall we do?" she asked.

Neither Steve nor Mr. Cumberford could well reply. Miss Dentry had generously placed her splendid yacht at their disposal and in person had conducted the search, neglecting no detail that might contribute to their success. But failure had resulted and they could not ask her to continue what appeared to be a hopeless undertaking. Steve, who had had ample time to consider this finale, tried to answer her question.

"We are very grateful to you, Miss Dentry," he said, "and both Mr. Cumberford and I fully appreciate the sacrifice you have made in so promptly trying to rescue our girls. That we face failure is no fault of yours, nor of your crew, and I realize that you have already done all that humanity or friendship might require. Of course you understand that we cannot give up until my sister's fate, and that of Miss Cumberford, is positively determined. Therefore, as soon as we reach shore we shall organize another expedition to continue the quest."

"You are doing me an injustice, sir," returned the girl gravely. "Whatever my former plans may have been I am now determined not to abandon this voyage until we have found your sister and her companion. I was greatly attracted by Orissa Kane, and grieve over her sad fate sincerely. Moreover, I do not like to put my hand to the plow without completing the furrow. Unless you believe you can charter a better boat for your purpose than the *Salvador,* or can find a crew more devoted to your interests, I shall order Captain Krell to turn about and renew the search."

That, of course, settled the matter. The *Salvador* put about and returned to a point where the see-sawing must be renewed and extended to cover more expanse of ocean.

Chesty Todd, coming to where Madeline stood beside the rail, looked into her piquant face with frank admiration.

"Excuse me, Miss Dentry," said he, "but you're what I'd call a brick. I knew, of course, you'd stick it out, but there's no harm in congratulating a girl on being true blue. I'm awfully glad you — you had the grit to tackle it again. I'll never be myself again until those girls are found."

She looked up at him reflectively.

“Which of the young ladies are you engaged to?” she asked.

“Me?” blushing like a schoolboy; “neither one, if you please. They — they’re only kids, you know.”

“Then which one do you love?”

“Both!” said Chesty Todd, earnestly. “They’re splendid girls, Miss Dentry; your sort, you know.”

She smiled.

“Then it’s the ‘sort’ you love?” she asked.

“Yes, if you’ll allow me. Not the individual as yet. When I love the individual I hope it’ll be the right sort, but I’m so humbly unlucky I’ll probably make a mistake.”

For the first time since their acquaintance Madeline found the big boy interesting. She knew very little of the history of the Kanes and Cumberfords, but found Chesty eager to speak of them and of his past relations with them, being loud in his praise for the entire “combination.” Cumberford was an eccentric fellow, according to Mr. Radley-Todd, but “straight as a die.” Steve was chock full of ability and talent, but not very practical in business ways. Mrs. Kane, Orissa’s blind mother, was the sweetest and gentlest lady in the world, Sybil Cumberford a delightful mystery that defied fathoming but constantly allured one to the attempt, while Orissa —

“Orissa Kane is a girl you’ll have to read yourself, Miss Dentry, and the more you study her the better you’ll love her. She’s girl all over, and the kind of girl one always hopes to meet but seldom does. Old-fashioned in her gentleness, simplicity, truth and candor; up-to-the-minute in the world’s latest discovery — the art of flying. Modest as Tennyson’s dairymaid; brave as a trooper; a maid with a true maid’s heart and a thorough sport when you give her an aeroplane to manage. Excuse me. I don’t often talk this way; usually I can only express myself in writing. But a fellow who wouldn’t enthuse over Orissa Kane could only have one excuse — total dumbness.”

“I see,” said Madeline, slyly. “Miss Kane is the type of the ‘sort’ of girl you love.”

“Exactly. But tell me, since you’ve started on such an indefinite cruise, is the *Salvador* well provisioned?”

“From the sublime to the ridiculous! We have stores to last our party six weeks, without scrimping.”

“Good. And coal?”

“Enough for a month’s continuous run. I had intended a trip to Honolulu — perhaps as far as Japan — and had prepared for it even before I was

privileged to lay eyes on my yacht."

"How fortunate that was, for all of us! Somehow, I've a feeling we shall find those girls, this time. Before, I had a sort of hunch we were destined to fail. Can you explain that?"

"I shall not try."

"We didn't allow enough for the wind. A sudden gust might have whirled the Aircraft in any direction, and it would jog along on that route until the next blow."

"Do you believe they are still alive?" she asked softly.

"Yes; I've never been able to think of them as — as — otherwise. They are wonderfully clever girls, and Orissa knows aeroplanes backwards and forwards. She's as much at home in the air as a bird; and why shouldn't the machine fall gently to the water, when the gasoline gave out? If it did, they can float any length of time, and the Pacific has been like a mill pond ever since they started. According to Mr. Cumberford, they have enough food with them to last for several days. I've an idea we shall run across them bobbing up and down on the water, as happy and contented as two babes in the wood." The big fellow sighed as he said this, and Madeline understood he was trying to encourage himself, as well as her.

In spite of Chesty Todd's prediction, day followed day in weary search and the lost aeroplane was not sighted. Captain and crew had now abandoned hope and performed their duties in a perfunctory way. Stephen Kane had grown thin and pale and deep lines of grief marked his boyish face. Mr. Cumberford was silent and stern. He paced the deck constantly but avoided conversation with Steve. Madeline, however, kept up bravely, and so did Chesty Todd. They were much together, these trying days, and did much to cheer one another's spirits. Had a vote been taken, on that tenth dreary day, none but these two would have declared in favor of prolonging what now appeared to be a hopeless quest.

"You see," said Chesty to Madeline, yet loud enough to be heard by both Cumberford and Steve, "there's every chance of the girls having drifted to some island, where of course they'd find food in plenty; or they may have been picked up by some ship on a long voyage, and we'll hear of 'em from some foreign port. There are lots of ways, even on this trackless waste, of their being rescued."

This suggestion was made to counteract the grim certainty that the castaways had by now succumbed to starvation, if they still remained afloat. Several small islands had already been encountered and closely scanned, with the idea that the girls might have sought refuge on one of them. The main thing that kept alive the spark of hope was the fact that no vestige of the

Aircraft had been seen. It would float indefinitely, whether wrecked or not, for the boat had enough air-tight compartments to sustain it even in a high sea.

On the evening of this tenth day the *Salvador* experienced the first rough weather of the trip. The day had been sultry and oppressive and toward sundown the sky suddenly darkened and a stiff breeze caught them. By midnight it was blowing a hurricane and even the sturdy captain began to have fears for the safety of the yacht.

There was little danger to the stout craft from wind or waves, but the sea in this neighborhood was treacherous and full of those rocky islets so much dreaded by mariners. Captain Krell studied his chart constantly and kept a sharp lookout ahead; but in such a night, on a practically unknown sea, there was bound to be a certain degree of peril.

There was as little sleep for the passengers as for the crew on this eventful night. The women had been warned not to venture on deck, where it was dangerous even for the men; but Madeline Dentry would not stay below. She seemed to delight in defying the rage of the elements. Clinging to the arm of Chesty Todd, the huge bulk of whose six-feet-three stood solid as a monument, she peered through the night and followed the glare of the searchlight, now doubly useful, for it showed the pilot a clear sea ahead.

Mr. Tupper bumped into them, embraced Chesty for support and then bounded to the rail, to which he clung desperately.

"Why are you on deck?" asked Madeline, sternly. "Go below at once!"

Just then a roll of the yacht slid him across the deck, tumbled him against the poop and then carried him sprawling into the scuppers. When he recovered his breath Mr. Tupper crawled cautiously to the companion-way and disappeared into the cabin.

Steve and Mr. Cumberford had lashed themselves to the rail and in spite of the drenching spray continued to peer into the wild night with fearful intensity. Both were sick at heart, for they knew if the girls had managed to survive till now, their tiny boat would be unable to weather the storm. Every shriek of the wind, which often resembled a human cry, set them shivering with terror.

It was toward morning when the glare of the searchlight suddenly revealed a dark peak just ahead. Stephen Kane and Mr. Cumberford saw it, even as the warning scream of the lookout rang in their ears. Captain Krell saw it, and marveling at its nearness, sprang to the wheel. Madeline and Chesty saw it, too, and instinctively the big fellow put his arms around her as if to shield her.

Wild cries resounded from the deck; the bells rang frantically; the engines

stopped short and then reversed just as a huge wave came from behind, caught the *Salvador* on its crest and swept her forward in its onward rush. Two men threw their weight upon the wheel without effect; the propeller was raised by the wave above the water line and whirred and raced madly in the air, while beneath the gleam of the searchlight a monstrous mass of rock seemed swiftly advancing to meet the fated ship.

Past the port side, where Madeline and her escort clung, swept a jagged point of rock; the yacht bumped with a force that sent everyone aboard reeling forward in a struggling heap; then it trembled, moaned despairingly and lay still, while the wave that had carried it to its doom flooded the decks with tons of water and receded to gloat over the mischief it had caused.

The searchlight was out; blackness surrounded the bruised and bewildered men and women who struggled to regain their feet, while in their ears echoed a chorus of terrifying shrieks not of the wind, but so evidently emanating from living creatures that they added materially to the panic of the moment.

Chesty Todd released Madeline, gasping and half drowned, from the tangle of humanity in the bow, and succeeded in getting her to the rail. The bow of the yacht was high and it lay over on one side, so that the deck was at a difficult angle.

"Are — are we sinking?" asked the girl, confused and unnerved by the calamity.

"No, indeed," replied Chesty, his mouth to her ear. "We can't sink, now, for we're on solid ground and lying as still as a stuffed giraffe."

"Oh, what shall we do?" she cried, wringing her hands. "If we are wrecked we can't save Orissa — perhaps we can't save ourselves! Oh, what shall we do? — what shall we do?"

The boy saw that the shock had destroyed her usual poise and he could feel her trembling as she clung to him.

"My advice," he said quietly, "is that we all get to bed and have a wink of sleep. It has been a long and exciting day for us, hasn't it?"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ON THE BLUFF

SYBIL CLAPPED HER hands gleefully and looked at Orissa in triumph.

"The rubber is mine!" she cried. "You now owe me sixteen boxes of chocolates, nine of caramels and twelve of mixed bonbons — enough to stock a candy store. Tell you what I'll do, Commodore Columbus; I'll pit my desert island and my man Friday against your fleet of galleys and the favor of Queen Isabella, and it shall be the best three out of five games. Are you game, my dear Discoverer?"

Orissa laughed.

"You ought to give me odds, Crusoe, for you are the more skillful checker player," she replied. "But I won't play any more to-day. This heat is dreadfully oppressive and from the looks of the sky I'm afraid a storm is brewing."

"What? A rain storm?" asked Sybil, jumping up to go outside the tent and examine the sky.

"Rain, hail, thunder, lightning and tornadoes; anything is likely to follow a storm in this latitude," declared Orissa, following her. "I think, Sybil, we ought to make all as safe and secure as possible, in case of emergency, while we have the time."

"What can we do?" asked Sybil. "I won't mind the storm very much, if it doesn't have lightning. That's the only thing I'm afraid of."

Orissa examined the sky critically.

"I predict high winds," she presently said, "and high winds might endanger our property. Let us get to the beach, first, and see what may be done to protect the Aircraft."

They found the flying-machine fairly well protected by the walls of the ravine in which it lay, but as the big upper plane offered a tempting surface to the wind Orissa set to work and removed it, a task that consumed two full hours. Then she wired the framework to a big rock for additional security, and carrying the canvas from the plane between them, the girls returned to their tent.

"Will our house stand much of a wind?" asked Sybil.

"It is rather exposed, on this bluff," replied Orissa, doubtfully. "I think it will be wise for us to pile more rocks upon the edges. The wire will hold, I'm sure, for it is nickel-steel, and if we close the ends of the tents securely we may escape damage."

"All right; I'm glad to have something to do," cried Sybil, picking up a rock. "We'll build a regular parapet, if you say so."

This was exactly what they did. In spite of the oppressive heat the two girls worked faithfully piling the rocks around the tent, until they had raised a parapet nearly half its height. They were inspired to take this precaution by the glowering aspect of the sky, which grew more threatening as the afternoon waned.

Finally Orissa wiped the perspiration from her brow and exclaimed: "That'll do, I'm sure, Syb. And now I'm ready for dinner. What's to eat?"

Sybil made a grimace.

"Bananas and jelly," she replied. "Could you conceive a more horrible combination?"

"Meat all gone?"

"We've part of a baked crab; that's all."

"And the lettuce. I shall have crab salad, with bananas for dessert."

"A salad without lemon or vinegar is the limit," declared Sybil. "I shall stick to bananas and jelly."

Their appetites were still good and Orissa really enjoyed her salad, which she seasoned with salt which they had obtained by evaporating sea-water. The bananas were getting to be a trifle irksome to the palate, but as food they were nourishing and satisfying. Neither of the castaways grumbled much at the lack of ordinary food, being grateful at heart that they were able to escape starvation.

The storm burst upon them just after dark and its violence increased hour by hour. There was little rain, and no lightning at all, but the wind held high revel and fluttered the canvas of the tent so powerfully that the girls, huddled anxiously in bed, feared the frail shelter would be torn to shreds.

But the plane-cloth used by Stephen Kane was wonderfully strong and had been sized with a composition that prevented the wind from penetrating it. Therefore it resisted the gale nobly, and after a time the fears of the two girls subsided to such a degree that they dozed at times and toward morning, when the wind subsided, sank into deep sleep. The hooting of the owls no longer had power to keep them awake, and on this night the owls were less in evidence than usual, perhaps deterred from leaving their nests by the storm.

Weather changes are abrupt in the semi-tropics. The morning dawned cool and delightful and the sun shone brilliantly. There was a slight breeze remaining, but not more than enough to flutter Orissa's locks as she unfastened the flap of the tent and walked out upon the bluff to discover if the Aircraft was still safe.

It lay at the bottom of the ravine, in plain sight from where she stood, and seemed quite undisturbed. Orissa turned her eyes toward the distant island, let them sweep the tumbling waves of the ocean and finally allowed them to

rest upon the bay at the east, where they had first landed. Then she uttered an involuntary cry that echoed shrilly among the crags.

A ship lay stranded upon the shelving beach — fully half its length upon dry land!

The cry aroused Sybil, who came running from the tent rubbing her eyes and with an anxious face.

“What’s up, Ris?” she demanded.

Orissa pointed a trembling finger across the rock-strewn plain to the bay, and Sybil looked and gave a gasp of delight.

“Oh, Orissa, we’re saved — we’re saved!” she murmured. Then, sinking upon the sand, she covered her face with her hands and began to cry.

But the air-maid was too interested to weep; she was looking hard at the boat.

“Isn’t it Madeline Dentry’s yacht?” she asked. “Yes; I’m sure it is. Then they’ve been searching for us and the storm has wrecked them. Sybil, your father and Steve may be on that ship, alive or — or — ”

Sybil sprang up.

“Do you see anyone?” she asked eagerly.

“No; it’s too far away, and the sun interferes. I’ll get the glasses.”

She was quite composed now and her quiet demeanor did much to restore Sibyl’s self-possession. Orissa brought the binoculars, looked through them for a time and then handed the glasses to her chum.

“Not a soul in sight, that I can see,” she remarked. “Try it yourself.”

Sybil had no better luck.

“Can they all be drowned?” she inquired in horrified tones.

“I think not. They may have abandoned the wreck, during the storm, or they may be hidden from us by the side of the boat, which lies keeled over in the opposite direction from us.”

“Can’t we go there, Orissa, and find out?”

“Yes, dear; at once. The tide is out, and although there is quite a sea left from last night’s hurricane I think we can manage the trip, by way of the sands, with perfect safety.”

Each tore a couple of bananas from the bunch and then they ran down the incline to the beach. Knowing every turn in the coast and every difficult place, they were able to scorn the waves that occasionally swept over their feet, as if longing to draw them into their moist embraces.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

BOAT AHOY!

THE FIRST INDICATION of dawn found anxious faces peering over the side of the *Salvador.* Passengers and crew gathered at the lower angle and inspected the position of the boat with absolute amazement.

"Never, in all my experience," said Captain Krell, "have I heard of so remarkable a wreck. We struck the only channel that would have floated us; a few yards to either side and we would have been crushed to kindling wood. As it is, we lie high and dry on this shelf — a natural dry dock — and not a timber is cracked."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Madeline.

"Quite sure, Miss Dentry. We have made a thorough investigation. But I do not wish to create any false hopes. Our condition is nearly as desperate as if we were a total wreck."

"You mean we can't get the yacht off again?"

"I fear not. Even a duplicate of that gigantic wave which hurled us here would be unable to float us off, for our tremendous headway carried us beyond the reach of any tide. This island is of rock formation. I know at a glance that a solid bed of rock is under us. Therefore we cannot dig a channel to relaunch the *Salvador."*

"Couldn't we blast a channel?" asked Mr. Tupper.

The captain merely gave him a reproachful glance.

"To be sure," replied Chesty Todd, seriously. "We'll have Kane invent a sort of dynamite that will blast the rocks and won't hurt the ship. Good idea, Mr. Tupper. Clever, sir; very clever."

Mr. Tupper glared at the boy resentfully, but his wife said in a mild tone of rebuke: "Really, Martin, my dear, the suggestion was idiotic."

The steward came crawling toward them with a coffeepot, followed by a man juggling a tray of cups. It was quite an acrobatic feat to navigate the incline, but they succeeded and everyone accepted the coffee gratefully.

"This place is nothing but a rock; an extinct volcano, probably," remarked Madeline, gazing thoughtfully over the island.

Chesty, having finished his coffee, climbed to the elevated side opposite.

"Here's a far better view of the place," he called. "It's quite a — " He stopped short, staring fixedly at a white speck far up on the bluff beside the low mountain.

They waited breathlessly for him to continue. Then Steve, reading the expression on Chesty's face, quickly clambered to a place beside him. As he looked he began to tremble and his face grew red and then pallid.

“Mr. Cumberford,” called the press agent, “bring your glasses, please.”

“What is it?” pleaded Madeline.

“Why, something — just — curious, Miss Dentry. We can’t say what it is, as yet, but — ”

They were all scrambling up the incline by this time and soon all eyes were directed upon the white speck. Mr. Cumberford focused his glasses upon the spot.

“Ah!” said he presently; “this interests me; it does, indeed!”

“Is it a — a — tent?” inquired Steve, a catch in his voice.

“Looks like it,” was the reply; “but not a regulation tent. Seems more like — like — Here, see for yourself, Steve.”

Steve seized the binoculars.

“I think — it’s — the — plane-cloth!” he gasped.

Mr. Tupper lost his balance and slid down the deck, landing with a thud against the opposite rail. That relieved the tension and a laugh — the first heard on the *Salvador* since she left port — greeted the gentleman’s mishap.

“Why — if it’s the plane-cloth, the girls are alive!” cried Madeline.

“To be sure,” added Chesty, with joyful intonation, “and doubtless enjoying their outing.”

The discovery changed the current of all thoughts and led them to forget their own calamity. The *Salvador* carried a small gasoline launch and two life-boats, all of which were in good condition.

“May we take the launch, Miss Dentry?” pleaded Steve.

“I was about to order it lowered,” she said. “Can you run it, Mr. Kane?”

“Certainly,” he replied.

“Then I shall go with you. It will carry six comfortably, and more uncomfortably; but as we may have passengers on our return trip only four had better go.”

Steve ran to assist in lowering the launch. It had to be unlashed from its rack, first of all, and the tank filled with gasoline, the engine oiled and the boat prepared for action. The men worked with a will, however, and within half an hour the launch was lowered to the rocks and slid safely into the water. The landing-steps being impracticable, a rope ladder was lowered and by this means Madeline easily descended to the launch. Mr. Cumberford followed, as a matter of course, but Chesty Todd modestly waited to be invited to make the fourth voyager.

“Come along, sir,” said Miss Dentry, and he eagerly obeyed.

“How about food?” he suggested.

The chef, a fat little Frenchman who was much interested in the fate of the Flying Girl and her chum, had foreseen this demand and now lowered a

hamper.

“Any water in it?” asked Chesty.

“Certainmente, monsieur.”

“All right. Let ‘er go.”

Steve started the engine and the little craft quickly shot out of the bay into the open sea and took the long swells beautifully. Rounding the point, Kane kept as close to the shore as he dared, making for the place where the bluff began to rise.

“Boat ahoy!” cried a clear voice, so suddenly that they nearly capsized the launch in their first surprise. And there were the two lost damsels prancing and dancing up and down the beach, waving their handkerchiefs and laughing and crying with joy at beholding their friends.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
AN ISLAND KINGDOM

IT WAS A merry reunion, in spite of the dangers that were past and the tribulations that threatened. Because the yacht's deck afforded precarious footing they all landed on the flat rocky shore, where the breakfast, hastily prepared by the chef, was served to the united company.

"My greatest suffering," said Sybil, nestling close to her father, "was for want of coffee. I've dreamed of coffee night after night, and hoped I would be privileged to taste it again before I was called to the happy hunting grounds."

"Ah; that interests me; it does, really," said Mr. Cumberford, filling her cup anew. "But — who knows, dear? — you might have reached the happy coffee-grounds."

They laughed at any absurd remark just now, and when Orissa related how they had subsisted of late on bananas and jelly you may be sure the castaways were plied with all the delicacies the ship's larder afforded.

Most of the day was spent in exchanging stories of the adventures both parties had encountered since the Hydro-Aircraft ran away. Everyone wanted to add an incident or tell some personal experience, and it was all so interesting that no one was denied the privilege of talking.

But afterward, when an elaborate dinner was served in the cabin — the table having been propped level to hold the plates — they began to canvass the future and to speculate upon the possibility of getting to civilization again.

"Our situation is far from hopeless," remarked Steve, who was now bright and cheery as of old. "We have the launch and the lifeboats, and Orissa says the Aircraft is in fine condition again. All the trouble was caused by that unlucky aluminum chest — and the fact that my steering gear was too frail."

"I wouldn't call the aluminum chest unlucky," said Sybil. "Without it we should have suffered many privations, for it carried our blankets and provisions as well as our tools."

"But it was unfortunate that you didn't bolt it securely," added Orissa.

"Could we venture some two hundred and eighty miles in open boats?" inquired Madeline.

"We could if obliged to," asserted young Kane. "Of course, after we got into the track of coastwise ships, we might be picked up. But I do not like to abandon this beautiful yacht, which must be worth a fortune and is not damaged to any extent. I believe the best plan will be for me to fly home in my machine and secure a boat to come here and pull the yacht off the beach.

There is a whole barrel of gasoline aboard, intended to supply the launch, so there is no longer any lack of fuel for our Aircraft."

They canvassed this plan very seriously and to all it seemed an excellent idea. But the engineer, an Irishman named O'Reilly, respectfully suggested the possibility of getting the yacht launched by means of a tackle, using her own engines for power.

Steve caught at this idea and said they would try it the following morning.

Everyone retired early, for one and all were exhausted by the trying experiences they had passed through. The girls, however, warned them that the owls would interfere seriously with their sleep. It was not an easy matter to rest, even in the comfortable berths, on account of the slanting position of the ship. Those berths on the right side tipped downward and the mattresses had to be bolstered up on the edges to prevent the occupants from rolling out. On the opposite side the sleeper was pushed to the wall and the mattress had to be padded in the corner where the wall and bunk met. But they managed it, after a fashion, and Sybil and Orissa, at least, slept soundly and peacefully, the luxury of a bed being so great a relief from their former inconvenient rock "altar."

The hoots of the owls proved very distracting to the newcomers, and Mrs. Tupper declared she would go mad, or die painfully, if obliged to endure such a screeching for many nights. Even the crew grumbled and there were many tired eyes next morning.

As soon as breakfast was over they set to work to right the yacht, Steve overseeing the work because of his mechanical experience. A pulley was attached, by means of a chain, to a peak of rock on the point opposite the high side of the yacht, and then a strong cable was run through the pulley, one end being fastened to the mainmast and the other to the anchor-windlass, which was operated by the engine. The stoker got up steam and then O'Reilly started the engines very slowly. Lying as it did on a shelf of solid rock, which had been washed smooth by centuries of waves, there was only the resistance of the yacht's weight to overcome; and, although it required all the power the cable would stand, the boat gradually came upright until it stood upon a level keel. Then the men braced it securely with rocks, on either side the bow, to hold it in position, after which Steve declared that part of the task had been accomplished to his entire satisfaction.

It was indeed a relief to all on board to be able to tread a level deck again, for, although there still remained a decided slant from bow to stern it did not materially interfere with walking, as had the sharp side slant.

The next task was to arrange the tackle so that the engines would pull the yacht off the beach into deep water. But in spite of every effort this plan

failed entirely. The boat would not budge an inch and after breaking the wire cable again and again, until it was practically useless, the undertaking had to be abandoned.

"It's up to the airship to rescue the party, I guess," sighed Steve, as they sat at dinner after the energetic and discouraging day's work was over.

"Do you know, there's a big island just west of here," said Orissa, thoughtfully. "Through our glasses we could see that it is green and fertile, and I've an idea it is inhabited. Wouldn't it be a good idea to run the launch over there before Steve undertakes his journey, and see if we can't secure help to get the yacht off the beach?"

They all became interested in the proposition at once.

"How far is the island?" asked Mr. Cumberford.

"Only a few miles; perhaps an hour's run in the launch."

"Then let us try it, by all means," proposed the captain.

"We will run over there the first thing in the morning, with Miss Dentry's consent," decided Steve.

Madeline heartily agreed and as the sea was enticingly calm the next morning a party was made up to visit the larger island in the launch.

At first Captain Krell suggested he should go with part of his crew, saying that no one could tell what sort of people might inhabit the island, if indeed any inhabitants were to be found there; but Steve scorned the notion of danger.

"We are too near the American coast to run against cannibals or hostile tribes," he argued; "and, in any event, our mission is a decidedly peaceful one. I'll take my revolver, of course, but it won't be needed. What do you say, Mr. Cumberford?"

"I quite agree with you," replied that gentleman. "I'm going along, if only for the ride."

"So am I," said Madeline.

"Really, my dear!" began Mr. Tupper; but she silenced him with a single look.

"That means I must go as chaperon," sighed Mrs. Tupper.

"I'll be chaperon," laughed Sybil; "but as we shall go and return in a couple of hours I don't believe Madeline will really need one."

"You shall stay comfortably on the yacht, Aunt Anna," said Madeline. "Who else wants to go? We can carry six, you know."

It was soon arranged to add Mr. Radley-Todd and Orissa to the four, thus completing the complement of the launch.

Just before they set off Monsieur Rissette, the alert chef, appeared with his hamper of lunch, for he had an established idea that no one should depart,

even on an hour's journey, without a proper supply of food. Then, merrily waving adieus to those on board, the explorers glided out of the bay into the open sea.

Rounding the north end of their islet they saw clearly the large island ahead, and Steve headed the launch directly toward it.

The trip consumed rather more than the hour Orissa had figured on, but it was a light-hearted, joyous party, and they beguiled the way with conversation and laughter.

"I am quite sure," said Madeline, "that I am enjoying this experience far more than I would a trip to Hawaii. Think of it! A chase, a rescue and a wreck, all included in one adventure. I'm rather sorry it's about over and we are to return to civilization."

"Sybil and I have had a glorious time," added Orissa. "Barring the fact that we were a bit worried over our fate, those days when we played Crusoe and Columbus on a forsaken island were full of interest and excitement. I know now that I enjoyed it thoroughly."

"I quite envy you that delightful experience," asserted Madeline.

"Don't," said Sybil. "The adventure wasn't all pleasant, by any means. The hoots of those dreadful birds will ring in my ears for years to come; the food was far from satisfying and I piled rocks and tramped and sweated until I was worn to a frazzle. If we had not invented our checker set I believe we would have become raving maniacs by the time you found us."

As they drew near to the island they found it even more green and beautiful than they had suspected.

"It's queer," said Steve, eyeing the place thoughtfully, "how very imperfect those seamen's charts are. The one Captain Krell has indicates nothing but barren rocks in these seas. Not one is deemed important enough to name; yet here is a good-sized island that is really inviting enough to attract inhabitants."

"And, by Jove, it has 'em!" cried Chesty Todd, pointing eagerly to a thin streak leading skyward. "See that smoke? That means human beings, or I'm a lobster."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Cumberford. "That interests me; it does, really. Head around to the right, Steve; that's where we'll find the natives."

Steve obeyed. Skirting the shore of the island he rounded the northern point and found before him a peculiar inlet. The shore was rocky and rather high, but in one place two great pillars of rock rose some fifty feet in the air, while between them lay a pretty bay which extended far inland. They afterward found this was the mouth of a small river, which broadened into a bay at its outlet.

As the launch turned into this stretch of water, moving at reduced speed, their eyes were gladdened by one of the loveliest natural vistas they had ever beheld. The slope from the table-land above to the inlet was covered upon both sides with palms, flowering shrubs and fruit trees, all of which showed evidence of care. A quarter of a mile up the little bay was a little dock to which were moored several boats. The largest of these was a sixty-foot launch, which made Madeline's little craft look like a baby. Two sailboats and a trio of rowboats, all rather crude in design, completed the flotilla. On the end of the dock two men stood, motionless, as if awaiting them.

"Why, they're not natives at all," exclaimed Sybil, in a low voice. "They — they're clothed!"

So they were, but in quite a remarkable fashion. Their feet were bare, their trousers ragged and soiled; but they wore blue vests highly embroidered in yellow silk, with velvet jackets and red sashes tied around their waists. Add to this outfit peaked Panama hats with broad, curling brims, and a revolver and knife stuck in each sash, and you will not wonder that our friends viewed this odd couple with unfeigned amazement.

One was a tall, thin man with but one good eye, which, however, was black and of piercing character. His face was sullen and reserved. The second man was short and fat, with profuse whiskers of fiery red and a perfectly bald head — a combination that gave him the appearance of a stage comedian. The skin of both was of that peculiar dingy brown color peculiar to Mexicans and some Spaniards.

The little one, with hat in hand, was bowing with exaggerated courtesy; the taller one stood frowning and immovable.

When Steve steered the launch alongside the dock a broad road-way came into sight, leading through the trees to the higher elevation beyond, where stood a white house of fair size which had a veranda in front. The architecture was of Spanish order and in its setting of vines and trees it looked very picturesque. There were climbing roses in profusion and gorgeous beds of flowers could be seen in the foreground.

Despite the appearance of the two men, who might easily be taken for brigands, the place was so pretty and peaceful and bore such undoubted evidences of civilization that the visitors had no hesitation in landing.

Chesty leaped to the dock first and assisted the three girls to alight beside him. Mr. Cumberford followed and Steve tied up to an iron ring in the dock and also stepped ashore. The tall man had not moved, so far, except that his one dark eye roved from one member of the party to another, but the little fat man continued to bow low as each one stepped ashore, and they accepted it as a sort of welcome. Neither had uttered a word, however, so Mr.

Cumberford stepped forward and said:

“Do you speak English?”

They shook their heads.

“Ah! that is unfortunate. Can you tell me, then, the name of this island, and who inhabits it?”

“Of course not, Daddy,” cried Sybil. “Try ‘em in Spanish, Steve.”

But before Stephen, who could speak a little Spanish, had time to advance, the men turned abruptly, beckoned the strangers to follow, and deliberately walked up the broad pathway toward the dwelling.

“Well?” inquired Steve, doubtfully.

“Let’s follow,” said Chesty. “I’ve an idea these are hired men, and they’re taking us to be welcomed by their master.”

“Interesting, isn’t it?” muttered Mr. Cumberford, but with one accord they moved forward in the wake of their guides.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
DON MIGUEL DEL BORGITIS

HALFWAY UP THE road they noticed on the left a large clearing, in which stood a group of thatched huts. Some women and children — all with dark skins and poorly dressed — were lounging around the doorways. These stood silently as the strangers passed by. A little farther along three men, attired in exactly the same manner as the two who were escorting them, were cultivating a garden patch. They gave no indication they were aware of the presence of strangers.

There was something uncanny — wholly unnatural — about the manner of their reception and even about the place itself, that caused some of them to harbor forebodings that all was not right. Yet they had experienced no opposition, so far — no unfriendliness whatsoever.

Up to the broad veranda they were led, and this, now viewed closely, showed signs of considerable neglect. The house, built of rough boards, needed whitewashing again; the elaborate stained-glass windows were thick with dust; the furnishings of the wide veranda, which were somewhat prodigal, seemed weather-stained and unkempt. On a small wicker table was a dirty siphon bottle and some soiled glasses with bugs and flies crawling over them. Beside these stood a tray of roughly made cheroots.

The fat man at once disappeared through the open doorway of the dwelling, but the tall man faced the strangers and, spreading out his arms as if to forbid their entrance, pointed to the chairs and benches scattered in profusion about the veranda.

"Invited to sit," interpreted Mr. Cumberford. "Interesting — very."

Suddenly a huge form filled the doorway, inspecting the newcomers with a quick, comprehensive glance. The man was nearly as tall as Chesty Todd, but not so well built. Instead of being athletic, he possessed a superabundance of avoirdupois, evidently the result of high living. He was clothed all in white flannel, but wore a blue linen shirt with a soiled collar and a glaring red necktie in which glittered a big diamond. Jewels were on his fingers, too, and even on his thumbs, and a gold chain passed around his neck fell in folds across his breast and finally ended in his watch-pocket. On his feet were red slippers and on his head a sombrero such as the others had worn. A man of perhaps thirty-five years of age, rather handsome with his large eyes and carefully curled mustache, but so wholly unconventional as to excite wonder rather than admiration.

He had merely paused in the doorway for that one rapid glance. Immediately he advanced with a brisk step, exclaiming:

“Welcome, senors and senoritas — Americanos all — most joyous welcome. You the Spanish speak? No! It cannot matter, for I speak the English. I am so pleasured that my humble home is now honored by your presence. You make me glad — happy — in rapture. You do not know to where — to whom — you have come? Imagine! I am Don Miguel del Borgitis, and this” — extending his arms with a proud gesture — ”my own Island of Borgitis — a kingdom — of individual property, however small, for it owes allegiance to no other nation on earth!”

This was spoken very impressively, while the shrewd eyes read their faces to determine the degree of awe created.

“Yes,” he went on, giving them no chance to reply, “I am really King — King of Borgitis — but with modesty I call myself Don Miguel del Borgitis. As such I welcome you. As such I take you to my arms in friendship. Observe, then, all my kingdom is yours; you shall reign in my place; you shall command me; for does not Don Miguel ever place his friends above himself?”

This seemed cordial enough, certainly, but it was rather embarrassing to find an answer to such effusiveness. Don Miguel, however, did not seem to expect an answer. With merely an impressive pause, as if to drive the words home, he continued: “May I, then, be honored by a recital of your names and station?”

“To be sure,” said Mr. Cumberford. “You — er — interest me, Don Miguel; you do, really. Quite a relief, you see, to find a gentleman, a civilized gentleman, in these wilds, and-”

“My island kingdom is very grand — very important — Senor Americano,” interrupted Don Miguel, evidently piqued at the use of the term “wilds.”

“In effect have I reign over three islands — the one from which you now come, the one to the west of here, and — the Grand Island Borgitis! Three Islands and one owner — One King — with privilege to decree life and death to his devoted subjects. But you have more to say.”

They were a bit startled to hear that he knew they came from the island of the owls. But they reflected that some of his people might have watched the progress of their launch.

Mr. Cumberford introduced his party to Don Miguel, one by one, afterward briefly relating the aerial trip of the two girls, the search for them by the yacht and the unfortunate beaching of the *Salvador* on the island during the recent storm, ending with the surprising reunion of the party and their desire to secure help to get the launch into deep water again, that they might return home.

To all this Don Miguel listened intently, his head a little to one side, his eyes turning critically to each person mentioned during the recital. Then said he, more soberly than before:

"How unfortunate that your ship is wreck!"

"Oh, it is not wrecked," returned Madeline. "It is merely stuck on those rocks — 'beached' is, I think, the proper word."

"Then, alas! it is wreck."

"It is not injured in the least, sir," declared Steve.

Don Miguel's face brightened at this statement, but he controlled his elation and responded sadly:

"But it is no longer a ship, for you cannot get it off the land."

"Not without your kind assistance, I fear," said Miss Dentry.

"Make me obliged by resuming your seats," requested Don Miguel. Then he clapped his hands, and the red-bearded man appeared. "Refreshments, Pietro!" He offered the cheroots to the men, and when they refused selected one for himself and lighted it. Then, leaning back in his arm-chair, he regarded his guests musingly and said:

"It is laughable. Really, it amuses one! But under the Spanish Grant by which I hold my islands — my kingdom — I am exclusively owner of all wrecks on my shores. In fact, were you not my dear friends, I could take your yacht, which I now own because it lies wreck on my coast."

"But it is not wrecked!" asserted Steve, frowning, for he was beginning to suspect Don Miguel.

"Perhaps not, since you tell me so; but I will see. I will see for myself. Ah, the poor refreshments — the offering of hospitality to a king's friends. Partake, is my earnest implore, and so honor your humble host — Don Miguel del Borgitis."

The tall man and the short man brought wines, liquors and glasses, with a fresh siphon of clear water. Following them came a sour-faced woman of middle age and a pretty young girl of perhaps sixteen years — pretty in the Spanish fashion, with plump cheeks, languid dark eyes and raven hair. These last carried trays of fruits and cake, which they passed to the company. The woman's face was expressionless; that of the girl evinced eager curiosity and interest; but neither spoke nor seemed to receive the notice of the royal Don Miguel.

When they had all positively refused to accept any of the strong drink, the Don helped himself liberally to a milky liquor diluted with water, which he called pulque. As he sipped this he said to them:

"The life here on Borgitis is grand — magnificent -- entrancing — as you will easily conceive. But it is also lonely. I have here no equals with whom I

may freely associate. So it delights me to receive you as guests. May you long enjoy my hospitality — it is a toast which I drink with fervency."

"We return to the yacht at once," said Steve, stiffly.

"My mansion is roomy and comforting," continued the other, as if he had not heard, "and here are no owls to annoy one. Some day I will take you to visit the third island of my kingdom. It is called Chica — after my daughter, here." He glanced at the young girl, as he spoke, and she cast down her eyes, seeming frightened.

Mr. Cumberford arose.

"Sir," said he, "we thank you for your hospitality, which we regret we are unable to further accept. Let us come to the point of our errand. We need your assistance and are willing to pay for it — liberally, if need be. You have plenty of men here, I observe, and a large launch. Send a crew with us to our island — "

"My island, senor, if you please."

"Very well. Send a crew of men to help us, and come along yourself, if you like. But whatever you do, kindly do it at once, as we have no time to waste."

He spoke positively, in a way that required an answer; but Don Miguel merely took a cake from the tray, and as he munched it said casually in Spanish, as if addressing the air: "Prepare my launch; have the men in readiness; lock the little boat securely."

Without a glance at his master, the one-eyed man deliberately left the veranda and walked down the path. Steve pricked up his ears. He understood the carefully veiled command, and it nettled him.

"What little boat do you refer to, sir?" he pointedly asked.

Don Miguel gave a start, but tossed off the contents of his glass, and rose.

"I shall prepare to go at once to visit your yacht, with my own men and in my own launch," said he. "You will be good enough to amuse yourselves here until I send you the word that I am ready to depart."

With this he lazily stretched his big body, yawned, and turned his back on his "beloved guests," to leave the veranda and proceed leisurely down the path to the inlet.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE MASK OFF

COME!" CRIED STEVE, impatiently. "The Don is either a fool or a rascal, and in either event I propose to keep an eye on him."

"Quite right," said Chesty Todd, nodding approval.

As with one accord they rose and started to leave the veranda the fat little man with the red whiskers barred their way, removing his hat to indulge in his absurd bow.

"My noble master has desire that you remain his guests," said he in bad English. "Sometime will he send word he is ready for you to depart."

"Out of the way, fellow," said Chesty, pushing him aside.

"My noble master has desire that you remain his guests," repeated the man, moodily, and there was a defiant twinkle in his pig-like eyes that indicated he had received positive orders to detain the strangers.

But Mr. Radley-Todd's ire was aroused.

"Stand back!" he cried threateningly. "Your master is not our master."

"Very true, Chesty," said Mr. Cumberford; and then they all hurried down the path toward the inlet. They were not three minutes behind Don Miguel, yet as they reached the dock the big launch left it, filled with dark-skinned men. In the stern stood Don Miguel, smoking his cheroot, and he made them an elaborate bow.

"Have patience, dear guests," said he. "I will satisfy myself if your boat is wreck or is not wreck, and soon will I return to consult with you. Kindly excuse until I have investigation made. Oblige me to use my island as if it were your own."

"The rascal!" cried Mr. Cumberford, as the boat of Don Miguel swept down the inlet. "Tumble into the launch, girls, quick! I believe we can get to the yacht before he does."

But the girls hesitated to obey, for Steve and Chesty Todd were bending over the bow of the launch, where the rope hawser had been replaced by a heavy chain, which was fastened by a huge padlock.

Steve picked up an iron bar, twisted it in the chain and endeavored to wrench the iron ring from its socket; but it was firmly embedded in the dock, being held by a powerful cement. Then he tried breaking away the launch, but the fastenings held firmly.

"No use, Steve," said Chesty, squatting down on the dock. "We must have the key. Question is, who's got it? That pirate, or — or — "

"He's a pirate, all right," said Sybil, angrily.

"What do you think he intends to do?" Madeline quietly asked.

“Take the folks on the yacht by surprise, capture the ship and then claim it is his, because it is beached upon his island,” replied Steve.

“How absurd!” exclaimed Orissa.

“Yes; but the scoundrel knows no law,” declared Mr. Cumberford. “In this lost and forgotten island he has played the tyrant with a high hand; I can see that by the humble subjection of his people; and so he thinks he can rob us with impunity.”

“He is mistaken, though,” asserted Madeline greatly annoyed. “If this is really an independent island, I shall send an armed ship here to demand reparation — and force it. If the Don lies, and he is under the domain of any recognized nation, then our government shall take the matter up.”

“To be sure,” said Mr. Cumberford. “Interesting; very. Provided, of course, we — we — ”

“Go on, sir.”

“Er — er — it is really a pretty island, and — interesting,” he mumbled.

“Daddy means,” said Sybil, “that Don Miguel has no intention of letting us get back to civilization again, provided the yacht proves to be worth taking — and keeping.”

“That’s it, exactly,” said Chesty; “only Mr. Cumberford did not like to disturb your equanimity. But he sized up the situation, as we all did. Eh, Steve?”

Steve nodded, looking gloomily at the three girls.

“How many men did he take with him?” asked Madeline.

“About fifteen. I tried to count ‘em,” said Mr. Todd. “But they did not seem to be armed.”

“There are seven on the yacht, besides Mr. Tupper, who doesn’t count; and they have no arms, either, that I know of.”

“They won’t be expecting to defend themselves, anyhow,” observed Chesty. “Therefore the yacht is as good as captured.”

“And with the noble Don in possession,” added Sybil, “our plans for a homeward voyage are knocked sky-high.”

“The yacht will be a great find for him,” remarked Mr. Cumberford; “so I imagine he will condemn it as ‘wreck’ on his shores and keep it for himself.”

“With certainty, senor,” said a soft voice beside him.

They all turned to find that the Spanish girl had quietly joined their group. Behind her came limping the Red-beard, sullen and muttering at his rebuff. The girl faced Pietro and uttered a sharp command in Spanish. He hesitated, mumbled a reply and retreated up the path.

“So you think Don Miguel will keep my yacht?” asked Madeline, approaching the pretty child and speaking in a kindly tone.

“I do, senorita. But his name is not Don Miguel del Borgitis, as he said. He is Ramon Ganza, a fugitive from Mexico, where he robbed a bank of much money and escaped. He came here in his launch with ten men, and has been hiding for many years in this island, where no people lived before he came.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed Madeline; “a criminal and a refugee! And you are his daughter?”

“No, senorita. He said so, but he lied. He lies always, when he speaks. He coaxed me away from my people in Mazatlan, when he came there to buy provisions, saying I would become a princess. But I am merely a housemaid in truth.”

“How many years has he lived on this island?” inquired Mr. Cumberford.

“I do not know, senor. But it is many. He has built the house, yonder, or rather he has forced his poor men to build it. Ramon loves to pose as a royal Don, but I do not think he is of noble birth. Once every year he goes to Mexico or the United States for supplies, and sometimes he coaxes others to come back with him, and be his slaves.”

“And do the people love their master?” asked Madeline.

“No. They hate him, but they fear him. Not one who has ever come here has gone away again, for he dares not let them return to tell where he is hiding. Now there are seventeen men and nine women here. With you, and those he will fetch from your yacht, there will be many more; but none of you will ever leave here with Ramon’s consent,” declared the girl.

“Then we will leave without it,” remarked Mr. Todd, easily.

She gave him a quick, eager look.

“Will you dare to oppose Ramon, then?” she asked.

“On occasion we are rather daring,” said Chesty, smiling at her simplicity. “The fellow ought to be arrested and given up to justice.”

“Oh, if you would do that, we could all go away!” said the child, clasping her hands ecstatically. “Please arrest him, sir; I beg you to.”

“We’ll see about it, little one. Meantime, how can we get the key to unlock this chain?”

“Would you follow Ramon?” she asked.

“That is our greatest ambition, just now.”

“Then I’ll get you the key. Pietro has it.”

“The Red-beard?”

“Yes. Pietro is my friend. He is not so bad as some of the other men.”

“They must be a sorry lot,” decided Chesty. “Come on, then, Chica; I’ll help you to interview Pietro.”

The man was sitting on a rock nursing his grievances.

“The key, Pietro,” said Chica.

“No,” he answered surlily.

“I want it, Pietro.”

“He’ll whip me. But then, he’ll whip me anyhow, for not to stop his ‘guests.’ Take the key, Chica. Pah! a few lashes. Who cares?”

He tossed the key upon the ground at her feet and Chesty promptly picked it up. The girl looked hard at Red-beard.

“You will not be whipped,” she said softly. ‘“It is all right, Pietro. The Americanos will arrest Ramon Ganza and deliver him up to justice; they have promised it; so you will be safe. Come with me. Our new friends need guns.”

“What!” The man fairly gasped in his amazement at her temerity.

“Our new friends shall take all they need of Ramon’s store of guns. They are not like the others who come here; the Americanos are not cowards. You will see them conquer Ramon very nicely, and with no trouble at all. Come, Pietro — the guns!”

The man slowly rose and led the way to the house, while Chesty called for Steve and then followed.

In ten minutes Chesty and Steve returned to the dock where the others awaited them, and both were loaded with rifles, revolvers and ammunition, ruthlessly abstracted from the private stores of the island magnate.

When these were distributed, the launch unlocked and they were ready to start, Madeline turned to Chica.

“Get in, dear,” said she. “I think it will be best for you to come with us. Provided we ourselves manage to escape, I promise to take you to Mazatlan and restore you to your own people.”

The child hesitated, looking at the little fat Red-beard.

“I — I’m afraid Pietro will suffer for helping us,” she said.

“Ah; ‘tis true,” agreed Red-beard. “Unless you please will arrest Ramon, Ramon will whip me until I faint. I know; it is his habit when he is opposed.”

“Get aboard, then,” said Steve, impatiently. “There’s room enough, and your service may come handy to us.”

Somewhat to their surprise the man came aboard without an instant’s hesitation, and at once Steve started the engine.

“Are any other men left upon this island?” asked Mr. Cumberford, as the launch gathered way and darted down the inlet.

“Two,” said Chica. “But they have no orders to interfere with you, so they will be blind. Fourteen have gone with Ramon.”

“Are they armed?” asked Orissa.

“I do not know, senorita. Francisco may be, and perhaps Tomas; but

Ramon is afraid to trust many of his men with guns."

Heading out of the inlet they rounded the pillar of rock and skirted the shore until the open sea lay between them and Owl Island. Now they were able to see plainly the big launch of Ramon Ganza plodding along in advance. It had fully half an hour's start of them, yet from the distance it had gone Steve awoke to the fact that it was not nearly so speedy as Madeline's little boat. Although the big launch had gasoline engines of comparatively modern pattern, the lines of the boat were broad and "tubby," in strong contrast with the slender, graceful waist of the *Salvador's* launch. Moreover, Ramon had neglected his machinery, as he had everything else on the island, and the engines did not work as well as they should.

"I've an idea that I can beat the pirate to the *Salvador,"* said Steve.

"By Jove!" cried Chesty; "if you could do that, old man, you'd save the day."

"What difference would it make?" inquired Madeline.

"Their plan is to take our crew by surprise, board the yacht and make prisoners of every man jack — also of Mrs. Tupper," explained Chesty. "Then, when we arrive, our capture could be easily accomplished. But if we manage to get there first, warning our men and taking them these weapons, we stand a good chance of beating off the rascally potentate and holding possession."

"They are not really pirates, I suppose," remarked Sybil.

"According to this child's story," declared Mr. Cumberford, "the man is a fugitive from justice and so has no respect for the rights or property of anyone. Mexico, his own country, has outlawed him and doubtless if the authorities could put their hands on the fellow they'd clap him in jail and keep him there."

They considered this statement gravely.

"For which reason," remarked Chesty Todd, "Ramon Ganza is desperate. He can't afford to let us get away and carry the news of where his island retreat may be located. Therefore, good people, this is going to be a lively little scrap, so let's grit our teeth and do our level best."

CHAPTER NINETEEN
AN EXCITING RACE

STEVE WAS GIVING the engine all his attention and coaxing it to develop all the speed of which it was capable. Even with eight people aboard — two more than its regular complement — it was beginning to gain on the big boat ahead. Orissa, at the steering wheel, was also intent upon her task.

Mr. Cumberford turned to Chica.

"How did Ramon manage to build that house, and make such a big settlement on the island, all in secret?" he asked.

"Pietro knows," said she.

"In Mexico," stated Red-beard, halting at times in his English, "Ramon rob bank of much money. Then he escape in boat an' find islan'. He think it fine place for hide. So he go to Unite' State — to San Pedro — an' buy much thing with his money — much lumber — much food in tin can — many thing he will need. He hire ship to take all to his islan'. It big sail-ship, but it old an' not ver' good. In San Pedro Ramon find some Mexicans who do bad things an' so are afraid to go back to Mexico. He say he make them rich, so they go with him on ship. I go, too.

"Storm come an' make ship leak, but we get to islan' an' unload everything. Captain start to go back, but ship leak so bad he run on rocks at West Islan'. Ship go wreck an' men drown. By'mby Ramon go out to wreck, take all thing he want an' let wreck go. It now on rocks at West Islan'. No good, now."

This terse recital was listened to with astonishment.

"Interesting — very," was Mr. Cumberford's comment, and they all supported his verdict.

"Then Ramon make us build house an' make garden," continued Red-beard. "When we get mad an' not mind Ramon, he whip some of us with his own hand, an' then others scare an' work hard. Two, three time, Ramon go in launch to Mexico. He land secret, in night time, and get more men to come back with him to islan'. Nobody know him in the places he goes. One time he coax Chica from her nice home, that way, an' bring her to islan', to make her help the women work in his house."

Chica nodded.

"But now I go home," she said, confidently. "When kind Americanos arrest Ramon, I go free."

But arresting Ramon was not so much in the thoughts of the Americanos just then as the result of the race to reach the *Salvador.* Madeline's launch was gaining steadily, but both boats were gradually drawing nearer to their

destination and the problem was which could arrive first? Already the little boat had been seen and its purpose understood by the wily Mexican. He could not know how it was that the Americans had managed to secure their boat and were able to follow him so soon, but the fact that they were in his wake and quickly closing the gap between the two launches was sufficient information for the time being, and it did not particularly disturb him.

Ramon Ganza reasoned that in order to beat him to the yacht the little launch must pass near him, but in doing so he would intercept it and by grappling it with boat-hooks take it and its occupants along with him. If the Americans kept out of range and gave his boat a wide berth, he would be able, in spite of their superior speed, to beat them to the yacht by maintaining his course in a straight line.

This danger was soon appreciated by the pursuers; for, whenever they altered their course, Ganza altered his, to head them off by getting directly in their way.

"Ah!" said Mr. Cumberford, grimly, "this interests me."

"It interests us all," observed Steve, dryly. "The big boat is like a rock in our path."

Orissa looked at her brother inquiringly.

"How shall I steer?" she asked.

"We shall have to circle around them, to keep out of their way. They think that they will beat us, and they may; but I'm not sure of it — as yet."

"Is it best to argue the point, Steve?" asked Chesty.

"I really think our salvation depends on our getting to the yacht first," was the reply.

For some time after this no one spoke. The engine, under Steve's skillful handling, was doing its utmost, with never a skip or protest of any sort. The man who was running the larger boat was also crowding his engines, urged thereto by his domineering master. The sea was ideal for the race and favored both boats alike.

They continued the dodging tactics some time longer, the smaller boat being forced to the outside and unable to cut in ahead.

"Confound it!" cried Steve, much chagrined, "here's the island, and they've got the inside track."

"Yes; but something's wrong with them," remarked Mr. Cumberford. "They're slowing down."

"By Jove, that's a fact!" cried Chesty, elated.

Steve stood up and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"Their engines have stopped," he said. "That's a streak of luck I hadn't banked on. Head in, Orissa. We're all right now, if they don't start again

promptly."

There was evident excitement on board the larger motor boat. Ramon kicked the new engineer away and himself took his place. The engine revolved, made a brief spurt — and stopped dead. Ramon made another attempt, while his boat bobbed placidly up and down on the waves.

Meantime the launch, still keeping to its wide circle, rounded the point of rock and headed into the bay, where the *Salvador* lay with her trim white sides glistening in the sunshine.

"Quick!" cried Steve, as soon as he could be heard by those at the rail, "let down the ladder. They're after us!"

"Who is it?" demanded Mr. Tupper, curiously; but Captain Krell marked the panic on the faces of those on board the launch and issued prompt orders. The aft davits were run down in a jiffy and Steve and Chesty hooked them to the launch, which was quickly raised with all on board and swung over the rail to the deck.

There were a few tumbles and some scrambling to get out of the boat, but at that moment Ramon Ganza's big launch swept into the bay, and the Mexican, assured by one sharp glance that his clever plan to surprise the yacht was thwarted, shut down the engines and halted his craft while he examined the situation at his leisure.

Madeline Dentry's superb yacht was indeed a prize worth winning. It was even worth running some risks to acquire. Ramon reflected that the *Salvador* and her helpless crew were really at his mercy, for they were unable to float the ship and were at present securely imprisoned. He laughed rather maliciously at their vain opposition, and said to his lieutenant, the one-eyed man:

"Very good, Francisco. Everything comes my way, you see. A little patience and the beautiful ship is ours, for it surely is wreck, and I justly claim all wrecks on my islands. There will be rum aboard, or at least plenty of liquors and wines. Champagne, perhaps. You shall have all the spirits for your drink if you back me up firmly in my demands."

"What will you do, senor?"

"Insist on taking possession of the ship, which, according to my law, is mine," he answered, with grim humor. "Perhaps they may object, in which case you will stand by your chief. But understand: you must use no knives or pistols; I can't afford to have murder added to the charges against me. If diplomacy fails, we will fight with our bare fists, in American fashion, and our numbers will suffice to conquer those insolent strangers who come here uninvited and then refuse to abide by my laws."

He took from his pocket a note-book and with a fountain pen wrote upon

one of the leaves as follows:

“To my beloved Friends, the Americanos:

“Alas, your ship is hopeless wreck. I, the lord and ruler of these islands, behold the sad condition and with grief, for I must condemn the ship as wreck, which I do by right of Spanish Grant to me, from which is no appeal. With pain for your loss, I am obligated to confiscate the ship that before was yours, with all it contains, and to declare it is now mine. I demand that you deliver my property into my hands at once, in the name of law and justice, and I believe you will do so, because otherwise you will become the enemies of the kingdom of” Don Miguel Del Borgitis, Rex.”

He tore out this leaf, folded it neatly and then boldly ran his launch to the side of the yacht. Francisco stuck the paper on the point of a boat-hook and standing on a seat thrust the epistle so far up the side that Captain Krell was able to lean over and grasp it. Then the launch returned to its former position, while the captain carried the note to Madeline.

She read it aloud and their anxiety did not prevent the Americans from laughing heartily at the preposterous claim of this audacious Mexican refugee.

“At the same time,” said Miss Dentry, resuming her gravity, “our case appears to be somewhat serious. The man has unmasked and shown us clearly his intentions. He believes we can expect no succor from outside, and in that he is quite correct. Only by our own efforts and the exercise of our wits may we hope to circumvent his intentions and retain our freedom and our property.”

CHAPTER TWENTY

BESIEGED

DISREGARDING THE LORDLY disposal of the yacht and its contents so coolly outlined by Senor Ramon Ganza, those aboard the *Salvador* began to face the probability of a siege. They all gathered aft, where, shielded by the bulwarks from the view of the Mexicans, they could converse at leisure and with safety. At Madeline's suggestion, every member of the crew, seven in number, was present while the details of their visit to the larger island were related by his principals. The character of the lordly islander, and his history as gleaned from Pietro and Chica, were likewise canvassed, and his evident intention to add the strangers to his band of cowed subjects was impressed upon the entire company in a most forcible manner.

"It would have been serious, indeed," continued Madeline, "had Ganza arrived here before us and found you unwarned and unarmed, for you could not have resisted his invasion. But his clever scheme was frustrated by an accident to the engines of his launch, and now we must bend our every energy to driving him away and making our escape from this dreadful island."

"We don't know yet, of course, how that can be done," added Mr. Radley-Todd, reflectively; "but there's no hurry about deciding it. We are pretty well provisioned for a siege, and Steve and I captured from the enemy and brought with us nine rifles, half a dozen revolvers, and some ammunition."

"We have also a small supply of arms and ammunition in the storeroom of the yacht," said Captain Krell. "The former owner was something of a sportsman, and I think you will find the guns to be shotguns."

"All the better," said Chesty. "These fellows may decide to board us, in which case the shotguns, at short range, will scatter their loads and do fearful execution. Get 'em up, Captain. Let's have on deck, where it's handy, every offensive and defensive weapon aboard."

"I don't want any shooting," protested Madeline; "I'd rather give them the yacht."

"We won't need to shoot," returned Steve. "A big bluff is all that is necessary."

The entire company now understood the importance of a successful resistance, and aside from the fact that Mrs. Tupper had violent hysterics, which lasted several hours and nearly caused her devoted husband to jump overboard, the situation was accepted by all with philosophical composure. A definite plan to guard the deck and prevent the foe from scaling the sides was adopted and each man given his position and instructed what to do.

As they were dealing with a desperate and unscrupulous man, a self-constituted autocrat in this practically unknown group of islands, they realized the wisdom of being constantly alert; so all the men, passengers and crew alike, were divided into watches during every hour of day and night, and those not on duty slept in their clothing that they might respond instantly to any call to action.

The Mexican, however, proceeded very deliberately with the siege, believing his victims were trapped and unable to escape him. He withdrew for a time around the rocky point, where he disembarked ten of his fourteen men. With the other four he ran the launch to the mouth of the bay again and dropped anchor, evidently intending to block any egress by the boats of the yacht.

That night, under cover of the darkness, for the moon was often obscured by shifting clouds, Ramon's men deployed among the rocks on both sides of the narrow channel, where they erected two miniature forts, or lookouts, by piling up the loose rocks. Behind each rock barrier some of the men were stationed, with instructions to watch every movement on the deck of the *Salvador* and report to their master. The Mexicans were well protected by the rocks from the firearms of those on board, if the defenders resorted to their use, and because of the slant of the deck from fore to aft Ramon could himself command almost the entire deck as he sat in his launch.

Realizing this disadvantage, Radley-Todd and O'Reilly, the engineer, crept down to the stern and by pushing the ends of their rifles through the hawser-holes were able to bring the launch under such direct fire that the outlaw decided that discretion was the better part of valor and withdrew his boat to a safer anchorage around the point, where he might still intercept the passage of any boat that ventured to come out.

The next morning Francisco of the one eye and a comrade took the launch back to the other island for a store of provisions. When they returned, at noon, they brought the two men who had been left behind when the first expedition set out, and also one of the rowboats, which was allowed to trail behind the launch.

With the Americans surrounded and on the defensive Ramon felt that he could safely remove his entire force from his home island and leave the place to the keeping of the women. If it came to a fight he would need every man he had.

On that first day those on the yacht were alert and excited, but the marked composure on the part of their besiegers gradually quieted their fears of immediate violence. The decks were not really dangerous, although constantly under the observation of the men in the rock fortresses, so they

ventured to use them freely. At one time, when Chesty Todd made a feint of landing on the shore, a group of Mexicans quickly gathered to prevent his leaving the ship, thus demonstrating their open enmity.

"This won't do!" declared Steve, savagely, as he faced the company assembled around the cabin table that evening. "Those infernal bandits mean to keep us here till doomsday — or until we go crazy and surrender. They'll make our lives miserable unless we dislodge them from those rocks."

"I prefer them there to having them attempt to scale the sides of our ship," returned Chesty. "A hand-to-hand fight would be far more serious."

"Interesting, isn't it?" said Mr. Cumberford.

"I don't think they care for a hand-to-hand fight," observed the captain. "Such fellows as this Ramon Ganza are always cowards."

"I don't know about that," said Madeline. "He has faced all the men he brought here and in spite of their numbers and their hatred of him has cowed them, every one, single-handed."

"Ramon is not a coward," the child Chica declared very positively. "He is bad; yes. But not a coward."

"He has sixteen men — with himself, seventeen — and we have but eleven," said Steve. "However, the advantage is with us, because the yacht is a fort."

"You spoke a moment ago of dislodging them," remarked Radley-Todd. "Can't we manage to do that, Steve?"

"How?"

"If we could make some bombs," suggested the press-agent, slowly, "and hurl them among those rocks, I've an idea we could drive them away."

Steve was thoughtful a moment.

"We'd need nitro-glycerine for that," said he. "I suppose there's none aboard, Captain Krell?"

The captain shook his head.

"Plenty nitro-glycerine at big islan'," announced Pietro. "Ramon use it to blast rock."

"Ah, but that's a good way off," declared Steve.

Chesty drummed on the table, musingly.

"If Pietro will go with me," he said presently, "I'll get you the nitro-glycerine."

"You're crazy, man!"

"Not quite," said Chesty, with a smile. "Every man belonging to Ramon's band is now here. I'm not afraid of the women he has left back there."

"But how will you get there — swim?"

"We'll take the launch, Pietro and I, and run the blockade at dead of

night."

"No," said Madeline, with decision, "I can't allow that. It would be too dangerous an undertaking. You might be captured."

"I don't think so. If we are discovered, your launch can outrun theirs and I'll lead them a merry chase and come back again. What do you say, Pietro?"

"Who? Me, Senor? Why, Ramon my enemy now. So I go with you."

"You needn't fear Ramon, Pietro," said Madeline, gently. "We shall manage in some way to get you safely back to Mexico."

The man's expression was stolid and unbelieving.

"Perhaps he doesn't dare go back to Mexico," said Sybil.

"Oh, yes;" replied Pietro. "I not 'fraid of Mexico. I smuggle, sometimes, before Ramon get me; but they forget all that by now. It is Ramon I fear. He is very bad man, as little Chica say. Always he wins, never he loses, in what he tries to do. For me, I have disobey an' defy him, so Ramon he whip me sure, when he catch me, an' when Ramon whip it is as bad as to die."

It was impossible to overcome this stubborn belief in Ramon's omnipotence and they did not argue with the man further. But Orissa, who had been thoughtfully listening to the conversation, now said:

"I do not like the plan of bringing nitro-glycerine here, even if Chesty could succeed in getting it. The stuff would be dangerous to us and to our enemies, for a slight accident would explode it or careless handling might blow us all to eternity. But, admitting you made the bombs, without accident to any of our party, what would be the result of exploding them among those little rock forts yonder? Wouldn't the rocks scatter in every direction and bombard us and the ship, perhaps causing damage that would be fatal to our hopes of escape?"

"Orissa is quite right," said Mr. Cumberford, decisively. "We must abandon the idea at once."

"I know it appears a desperate measure," admitted Radley-Todd, "but something must be done, both to drive away our enemies and get the *Salvador* afloat again. Cut the explosives, and what remains for us to do?"

"Make a sortie and drive them away from here," replied Cumberford. "I'm a little old for a pitched battle or guerrilla warfare, but this extraordinary Mexican — er — er — interests me. I'm willing to have it out with him here and now."

"One white man is worth six Mexicans," declared Captain Krell, belligerently.

"Won't do at all," asserted Steve. "We can't afford to take the chances of defeat, gentlemen, while we have these girls in our care. The ship is a fort that is almost impregnable, and we mustn't leave it for an instant — under

any circumstances.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

CAPTURING AN AEROPLANE

AS THEY SAT with downcast countenances, reflecting upon their uncomfortable position, Orissa said quietly:

"I've thought of something to relieve us. The idea came to me when Chesty insisted our launch could run the blockade."

"Speak out, Ris," exclaimed Steve. "Your ideas are pretty good ones, as a rule. What's the proposition?"

"Why, we all seem to have forgotten the Hy."

"The Hydro-Aircraft?"

"Yes. It is lying quite safe, and in apple-pie order, in the little ravine at the foot of the bluff where we camped."

"But it is minus its plane-cloths," added Sybil. "Our tent is still standing, for I saw it from deck only an hour ago."

"It won't take long to attach the plane-cloths," said Steve, "provided those brigands will let us do it. It's rather odd they haven't taken the trouble to capture the Aircraft already. It would be easy for Ramon to declare it 'wreck.'"

"What would be the use?" asked Madeline. "They could not fly it, even if they knew how to put it in order; and, as they imagine we cannot get to it, they are not worrying about the thing. Of course they are able to see that tent on the bluff as easily as we can, and by and by they will go there and capture whatever the girls left."

"True. That is why we must lose no unnecessary time," observed Orissa.

"I do not yet see what the proposition is," asserted Chesty, in a puzzled tone.

"I know what Orissa means," returned Steve quickly. "There's plenty of gasoline on board — I think nearly a barrel — intended for the use of the launch. If I could get to the Aircraft and fill its tanks with gasoline no one could prevent my flying home, where I could get a ship and men to come to our rescue."

"That interests me; it does, really!" said Mr. Cumberford. "It's so easy and practical I wonder none of us thought of it before."

"I've had the possibilities in mind for some time," declared Orissa, "but I had no idea we could get to the Aircraft until Chesty proposed running the blockade in our launch."

"It's a fine idea," said Chesty, with enthusiasm. "I mean both our ideas — the combination Orissa."

"I believe it will solve all our difficulties," added Madeline, confidently.

“But will not this journey be a hazardous one for Mr. Kane to undertake?”

“I think not,” replied Orissa. “The same amount of gasoline that brought Sybil and me to this place will carry the machine back again, and Steve can go more directly than we came, for he knows exactly how to head.”

“Then!” said Chesty Todd, “the plan is this: We’ll put enough gasoline in cans to fill the tanks of the aeroplane, load ‘em into the launch, and to-night Steve and I will sneak out of this inlet, slip past the Mexican’s launch and hie us to that ravine of yours. Is there room enough for our boat to enter the bay you described, or is that big rock too close to shore to let us pass?”

“There will be just about room for you to pass in, I think,” answered Orissa.

“But the big launch couldn’t do it?”

“Ramon’s? No, indeed.”

“Very good.”

“Who will fly with me to San Diego?” asked Steve. “The Aircraft carries two, you know. One of the women ought to go. I wish we could carry them all away from this dangerous place.”

“Let them draw cuts for it,” suggested Chesty.

“You can let me out,” said Sybil; “I won’t leave Daddy.”

“Nonsense!” cried her father.

“Then I’m nonsensical,” laughed Sybil, “for I won’t budge an inch without you. That wicked Mexican might capture you in a jiffy if I wasn’t here to look after you. Not a word, sir; the thing is settled, as far as I am concerned.”

“I cannot go, of course,” said Madeline. “This is my yacht and I must stand by it, and by my men, to the last. Nor could I with courtesy escape and leave my guests in danger.”

“Then it shall be Mrs. Tupper,” proposed Orissa.

“Me? Me? Goodness sakes, child,” cried Mrs. Tupper, in great alarm, “do you think I’d risk my life in that dreadful airship?”

“You’ll risk it by staying,” suggested her husband.

“But there’s a chance of salvation here,” asserted the lady, with nervous haste. “I’d get light-headed and tumble out of that aero-plane in two minutes. And they’d hear me yell from Japan to San Francisco, I’d be so scared. I can stand death, Mr. Tupper, with Christian fortitude; but not torture!”

“Orissa?” said Steve, inquiringly.

“Yes; I’ll go. I may be of more assistance to you all by going than by staying. And I will run the machine, Steve, and take you as a passenger. I’ve tinkered that steering-gear until I know just how to manage it.”

Steve nodded.

“As I understand it, Miss Dentry,” said he, “my mission will be to charter a fast steamship, for which Mr. Cumberford and I will pay, and bring it here to drag the *Salvador* off this beach. The crew, which I will see is well armed, will work in conjunction with yours and when we outnumber Ramon Ganza’s band of rascals he will probably run away to his den without attempting to fight.”

“Ramon never run,” protested Pietro, shaking his head. “You cannot scare Ramon. The more men you bring, the more he has to fight; that is all.”

This gloomy prophecy made them look grave for a time.

“Our Pietro is a pessimist,” said Chesty, with assumed cheerfulness. “But some day the Mexican government will find this invincible hero and send a warship to blow his island out of the water.”

“Why — yes!” exclaimed Madeline, with sudden inspiration; “the Mexican government is interested in this affair. Why not fly to the nearest point on the Mexican coast, Mr. Kane, and from there telegraph President Madero? I believe he would send a warship at once, both to capture Ramon Ganza and to rescue us from his clutches.”

“Um-m. Madero has his hands full, just now, putting down revolutions at home,” Mr. Cumberford reminded her. “And maybe he isn’t interested in Ganza, who was convicted of a felony under the regime of Diaz.”

“I can try him, anyhow,” said Steve. “The Mexican coast is about fifty miles nearer than San Diego.”

“Madero has offer one thousan’ dollar — Mexican — for capture of Ramon,” said Pietro, proudly. “So much money shows Ramon is great man.”

“In that case you’d better give Madero a chance at him, Steve,” decided Mr. Cumberford. “A man-o’-war would be more effective here than a trading ship, and in the interests of humanity we should put an end to this fellow’s cruel tyranny for good and all. He’s far better off in jail.”

After some further discussion this plan was finally decided on and preparations were begun for the adventure. During the afternoon the cans of gasoline were placed in the launch and Steve went over the machinery of the little boat with great care, to assure himself it was in perfect order.

The nights were never really dark until toward morning, when the stars seemed to dim and the moon dipped below the horizon. Sometimes there were a few drifting clouds, but they never obscured the sky long enough to be utilized as a mask. So Steve decided to make his attempt at the dark hour preceding dawn and made Orissa go to bed and get what sleep she could. She said her good-byes to the others then, so it would not be necessary to disturb them at the time of departure.

At three o’clock her brother called her and told her to get ready. Chesty

and Steve were seated in the launch when the girl arrived on deck, and she quickly took her place. While it was much darker than it had been earlier in the night, Orissa found she could see near-by objects quite distinctly. Four of the crew, headed by Captain Krell, were standing by to lower the launch over the side, and as the owls were hooting their most dismal chorus their screams drowned any noise made by the windlass.

No sooner had the launch touched the surface than Chesty dipped his scull in the water and with a dexterous motion sent the little craft forward toward the mouth of the inlet. They might have been seen from the shore had the Mexicans been alert, but at this hour many who were supposed to be watching had fallen asleep, and if any remained awake their eyes were not turned upon the waters of the tiny bay. Quite noiselessly the launch moved on and presently turned the point of rock at the right.

Orissa stifled a cry and Steve's heart gave a bound as the bow of the launch pointed straight at the big boat of Ramon, scarcely ten feet distant; but Chesty saw the danger, too, and a sharp swing of the scull sent the light craft spinning around so that it just grazed the side of the Mexican's boat, in which all the occupants were fast asleep.

Next moment they had passed it, and still Chesty continued sculling, as it was not safe as yet to start the engines. But when they had skirted the shore for such a distance that the screeching of the owls would be likely to drown the noise of their motor, Steve started the machinery and the launch darted away at full speed.

Half an hour later they crept between the big rock and the bluff and were safe in the deep hollow at the foot of the ravine, having accomplished the adventure so easily that they marvelled at their own success.

"Strikes me as a good omen," remarked Orissa, cheerfully, as they disembarked and drew the launch upon the sands. "I hope the luck will follow you on your return, Chesty."

"Me?" replied the big boy. "Why, nothing ever happens to me. Let us hope the good luck will follow you and Steve, on whom the safety of the entire party now depends. What first, Steve?"

"The tent. We must get that down before daybreak so they won't see us working on it from the bay, and interfere with our proposed flight."

Orissa led the way to the bluff and at once Steve and Chesty began tumbling the rocks from the edges of the canvas. This was no light task, for the girls had erected a solid parapet in order to defy the wind; but just as the first streaks of dawn appeared the tent came down and they hastily seized the canvas, added it to the covering of the upper plane, which had been inside the tent, and lugged it all down the incline to where the frame of the Aircraft lay.

“Very good,” said Steve. “We’ll need the daylight now, in order to attach the cloth.”

They had not long to wait, and while Steve, assisted by Radley-Todd, fastened the cloth in place with the clips provided for that purpose, which Orissa had carefully saved, the girl herself inspected the machinery and all the framework, even to the last brace, to be sure it was in condition for the long trip. She also oiled the steering gear and thoroughly tested it to see that it worked freely.

By nine o’clock the planes were tautly spread and the tanks had been filled with gasoline.

“I think we are all ready for the start,” said Steve. “But how about you, Chesty? As soon as we roll the Aircraft to the top of the bluff the Mexicans will see us and start for this place to try to intercept us. Orissa and I will be gone, when they arrive; but they may find you, unless you make tracks.”

“How do you expect to regain the ship?” asked Orissa, who had not considered this matter before.

“Don’t worry about me, I beg of you,” retorted the boy, hastily. “I shall be all right. All ready, Steve?”

Steve looked at him thoughtfully.

“I think that when they see us fly away they may give up the idea of coming here,” said he; “and, in that case, you’d better lie here in the ravine until night, when you can try to steal back in the same way we came.”

“All right, old man; never mind me.”

“But we do mind you, Chesty,” said Orissa, earnestly. “You’ve been a faithful friend ever since we got into this difficulty — and before, too — so we can’t have anything happen to you.”

He blushed like a girl, but declared he would be perfectly safe.

“Don’t take any foolish chances,” urged Orissa.

“I won’t.”

They rolled the Aircraft up to the top of the bluff and set it with the head facing the sea. Then Steve and Orissa took their places and Chesty, giving them each a hearty handclasp, spun the propeller blade as Steve started the engine.

At once the aeroplane darted forward, rose as it passed the bluff, and sailed gracefully into the air. Chesty hid his six-feet-three behind a boulder, to shield himself from observation, while he watched the splendid machine turn upon its course and speed away over the Pacific on its errand of rescue.

Then, with a sigh of relief and elation, the boy crept into the ravine and descended to where his boat lay. Seated in the launch, calmly awaiting him, were three of the Mexicans, headed by the one-eyed Francisco.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

RAMON GANZA

WHEN MADELINE CAME on deck, soon after daybreak, Captain Krell reported the successful departure of the launch.

"Are you sure they were not seen?" she asked.

"Quite sure, Miss Dentry, for we heard not a sound, either from our party or from the besiegers, although we listened intently."

Long before Steve could have prepared the aeroplane for the journey those on board the yacht were gazing expectantly at the bluff. The tent had disappeared, which was proof that the under-taking had so far been successful.

At this time there seemed to be a little stir among the Mexicans and Mr. Cumberford suggested, rather nervously, that they also had noticed the absence of the tent, without understanding what could have become of it.

At half-past eight they heard the sound of the engines of Ramon's big launch, and that made them worry more than ever until Sybil suddenly cried: "There they are!"

Upon the distant bluff appeared the Aircraft. A little cheer, which none could restrain, went up from the deck of the yacht. There was no delay. Scarcely was the machine in position when it mounted into the air and headed directly toward the east. Every eye watched it eagerly until it had become a dim speck against the blue sky and finally disappeared from view altogether, flying steadily and with a speed that raised their hopes to the highest pitch. Then, with one accord, they returned to the cabin to discuss the chances of Radley-Todd's getting back to them safely with the launch.

"I don't worry much about that young man," said Cumberford. "He's as full of resources as a pincushion is of sawdust, and I'll bet my hat we shall soon see him again, safe and sound."

The captain now entered with an anxious face.

"That confounded Mexican king is signaling us with a flag of truce," he reported.

"What, Ramon?" exclaimed Madeline.

"Yes. What shall we do?"

"Stay here, Miss Dentry," said Cumberford, rising. "I'll go and see what the fellow wants."

"I will go with you," returned Madeline, quietly.

"I wish you would not."

"Why?" she asked. "If he bears a flag of truce there is no danger."

"I do not believe he would respect a flag of truce — nor anything else,"

asserted Mr. Cumberford. “Do you, Captain?”

“No, sir. He’s tricky and unreliable. Don’t trust him for a moment.”

But Madeline would not be denied. She accompanied the captain and Mr. Cumberford to the deck.

Just beside the yacht floated the little rowboat which had been brought from Ramon’s island, and in it sat Ramon himself, all alone, holding aloft a handkerchief attached as a flag to a boat-hook.

As they peered over the side at him he bowed profoundly and removed his hat to Miss Dentry. He was still clothed in his white flannels and his fingers glittered with jewels.

“What do you want?” demanded Mr. Cumberford sharply.

“The pleasure of conversing with you, senor,” was the confident reply. “If you will kindly let down your ladder I will come on board. You see, myself I place in your power. We have, I much regret, some slight misunderstanding between us, which a few words will assuredly correct.”

“Don’t let him up, sir,” advised Captain Krell, in a low voice.

“But he is unarmed,” said Madeline. “I think it will be best to confer with him.”

“Then do it from a distance,” grumbled the captain.

“Sir,” called Mr. Cumberford, “if you have any apologies to make, you may speak from where you are.”

“Then, alas, my overtures of peace are refused?” said Ramon, not defiantly, but in a tone of deep regret.

“No; we don’t refuse any sincere overtures of peace; but you have treated us in a scoundrelly manner, and we don’t trust you.”

“Such a terrible mistake, senor; so sad! But I cannot explain it from here. With utmost trust in your honor I offer to come to you alone, and — see! — unarmed. Will not you, for the sake of the ladies who are with you, encourage my friendliness?”

“Let him come up,” said Madeline again. There seemed a veiled threat in Ramon’s appeal.

“Very well. But tell your men to watch his every movement, Captain, and if he makes a treacherous move, shoot him down without hesitation.”

The rope ladder was cast over the side and Ramon promptly seized it and climbed to the deck.

“Follow us below,” commanded Mr. Cumberford, turning toward the cabin. The man hesitated, casting a shrewd, quick glance around. Then he bowed again and said:

“I thank the senor for his courtesy.”

In the cabin were assembled Mr. and Mrs. Tupper and Sybil Cumberford.

Chica and Pietro discreetly kept out of view. Mr. Cumberford entered first, followed by Madeline. Then came Ramon Ganza and behind him the captain and little O'Reilly, the Irish engineer. This last personage was virtually "armed to the teeth," for he carried one of Ramon's own rifles and a brace of revolvers.

"Be seated," said Mr. Cumberford, pointing to a chair. "And now, sir, state your errand."

Ganza's comprehensive glance had taken in every member of the party, as well as the luxurious furnishings of the *Salvador's* cabin, which seemed to please his aesthetic taste.

"I ask to be inform, being in ignorance, if three people may ride in one flying-machine," he blandly announced, looking from one face to another as if uncertain whom to address.

"Three?" asked Cumberford, as if puzzled.

"Yes. I see that one young lady and two men are missing from your party."

"I suppose three can ride, if need be," muttered Cumberford. "Is your mission here to gain information concerning aeroplanes?"

"Only in part, senor."

The Mexican's features had hitherto been composed and smiling, despite the stern and mistrustful looks he encountered on all sides. But now, perhaps understanding that these Americans were not easily to be cajoled, his own face grew somber and lowering and he said in a sharp, incisive manner. "You prefer to discuss business only?"

"We do, sir," was the reply, Mr. Cumberford continuing to act as spokesman.

"Very nice. I have a wish to invite you all to my island, where you shall be my respected guests. My mansion shall be at your service; my servants shall obey your commands; you shall delight in the grand scenery and enjoy yourselves as you will."

"Thank you; we decline your hospitality."

"But I fear in that you make bad mistake, senor," continued Ramon Ganza, unabashed by the rebuff. "My island is a pleasant place, and where else can you find so much happiness when my ship, which you now inhabit, is destroyed?"

"Oh; that's the idea, is it?" exclaimed Mr. Cumberford. "You interest me, sir; you do, really. Perhaps you will state how you intend to destroy our ship, which is not, permit me to say, your ship as yet."

"Is it necessary to say more?" asked the Mexican, spreading out his jewelled hands with a deprecating gesture.

“I think it will enable us to understand you better.”

As if in deep thought, Ganza drummed upon the cabin table with his fingers.

“I am very sad at your refusal to be my guests,” he said after a time. “This, my ship, is in a most dangerous position. It is half out of water, on an island that is a bleak rock. I come here from the island where I reside to befriend you — to offer you my humble hospitality — when I have taken possession of the wreck — and in your blindness — do you call it fatuity? — you receive me as an enemy. Some of your people chase my boat, as if I have no right to sail the seas of my own islands! Yet I am not resentful; not at all. I enjoy some humor and I am good man, with much respectability. When your ship catches on fire, as it will probably do very soon, you must escape to these bare rocks, where you can find no assistance, no food to keep you alive. Then perhaps you will feel more kindly toward poor Don Miguel del Borgitis — your humble servant — and find willingness to accept his beautiful home as your own.

But why wait for fire to drive you to death most terrible or to my great hospitality? Is it not the best to accept my offer, and so save yourselves from — inconvenience?”

Beneath the smooth words the ugly threat was so visible that even brave Madeline paled, and Mr. Tupper shuddered vigorously. But Mr. Cumberford, gazing critically into the man’s face, replied:

“I see. Interesting; very. You want to save this yacht. You would like to drag it afloat and carry it away to your own island, where we, accepting your hospitality, would become your prisoners. But if we refuse to surrender the ship, you say you will set fire to it, in which case you would burn us up or force us to land. If we land, you will capture us and force us to become your unwilling subjects. Is that a clear understanding of your statement, Ramon Ganza?”

The outlaw gave a start as he heard his true name mentioned, but quickly recovered his assurance.

“The senor is very intelligent,” he said.

“At any rate, the senor is not demented,” retorted Cumberford, grimly. “Why did you venture to place yourself in our power, Ramon Ganza, and then threaten us as you have done?”

“I came under flag of truce.”

“And you think, on that account, we will let you go again, to carry out your cowardly designs?”

“I am certain of that. Before I came I took care to protect myself.”

“In what way?”

He looked at his watch, a huge jewelled affair.

"Underneath your ship," said he quietly, "is anchored a mine of very much power. It lies under that part which is in the water — I think just below the place where we now sit. If I do not depart from here in safety within fifty minutes from now, my men will kindly explode this mine and blow us all to — well, where we go. The poor ship, alas, will be destroyed with us."

"Would your men execute such an absurd order?" asked Cumberford sneeringly.

"'With much satisfaction. You see, it would make them free. They do not love me very much. If I die, they will have my beloved island and all my possessions — so they think."

"And you would be willing to forfeit your life as the alternative of not getting control of this yacht? Do you expect us to believe that?"

The outlaw's glittering fingers drummed upon the table again.

"The senor is not so wholly intelligent as I believed," said he. "I do not contradict his statement that he is not — eh — what you call it? — demented, or a fool; but the statement seems open to suspicion."

"Ah; that interests me."

"It ought to. You seem to know my name, senor; therefore you doubtless know my history. Pietro will have told you, or Chica, for both are now with you. My safety has depended on my keeping hidden upon my island. I must not let any who has seen me there, and recognized Ramon Ganza, depart to carry the tale to the mainland. In Mexico a price is set upon my head and they have condemned me to years in prison. But — there! I assure you all that I am good man, and honest; but my enemies have conspired to destroy me.

"As Don Miguel del Borgitis I have lived very respectable until, unfortunately for us all, you came here. I knew two girls had been wreck on this island in a flying-machine — a very strange and exciting invention, is it not? — but I did not disturb them nor allow them to become aware of my existence. Why? All I wish is safety. When some of you people, after this yacht is driven ashore in storm, intrude on me by coming to my hiding-place, I was obliged to protect myself. I started to come here to get every one on board and invite them to my island — where I meant to keep you all indefinitely, for I did not dare allow you to return to America and say where you had found Ramon Ganza. This yacht I could use to advantage, I admit; but I would be better pleased had I never seen it — nor you.

"Almost at once you are my enemies, and defy my laws. That did not change my plans except to make them harder. In this unknown island I am really king. I must conquer you, which I thought with good reason I could

easily accomplish in time. So I make siege to your boat, laughing to think you cannot escape me. But one man cannot comprehend all things, senor, and I failed to consider that devilish contrivance, your flying-machine. I thought it was wreck, and no good any more. Some time last night three of your party get away and go to flying-machine, and this morning some of them — one, two, three; it does not matter — have fly away in it. Of course they will go to the mainland. That means they send assistance to you. They float your ship, take you back to America and you all have knowledge where Ramon Ganza may be found by those that seek his capture. Now you understand me, do you not? You have make it very unpleasant for me. If I escape from my island in little boat, where can I go? If I stay I will be arrest and carried to Mexico to be put in prison. Very well; I must escape. But not in my launch, which is old and not very good. I must have this yacht, which will carry me to any far part of the world, where Mexico is not known. Perhaps in it I could be privateer, if that seemed best way to protect my liberty — which is dearer to me than life. With this yacht I could defy all enemies; without it — I face death, or at least ruin. You have driven me to this desperation, so I come to make you my proposition. Now that I have explained all with much frankness, you will understand I mean what I say, for I am talking for my liberty — the liberty of a man who would soon die in confinement, for I am used to the open and could not exist as a convicted felon, in chains and abused by dogs of jailers. For your party I have no especial enmity; neither do I care for you the snap of my fingers. But believe this: Either I will save myself in this yacht, as I have proposed, or I will die in your company."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A DESPERATE ALTERNATIVE

RAMON GANZA HAD spoken slowly and with deliberation, choosing his words with care. His story seemed plausible, except where it referred to the planting of the mine, which he claimed to be the last resort of a man so desperately situated. Some of his hearers were quite convinced of his sincerity in making this statement, but Mr. Cumberford was not among them. He remembered Chica's artless statement: "Ramon lies; he always lies," and it confirmed his skepticism.

"As I understand you," he made answer, after a little thought, "you consider your retreat no longer safe because we have discovered it. Therefore, on obtaining possession of this yacht, you propose to sail to parts unknown, leaving us stranded on this rocky island."

"From whence you will soon be rescued," added the outlaw, with a bow.

"The siege which you had planned, in order to force us to surrender through starvation, is no longer practical; for time presses and if you delay you will be surprised by the ship sent to rescue us — perhaps a Mexican man-o'-war."

The man nodded, watching the speaker's face with an eagerness he could not dissemble.

"For which reason," continued Mr. Cumberford, "you decided to force a climax by coming on board and threatening us — as you have done. Well, we intend to force your alternative, Ramon Ganza. You are our prisoner, and if your men blow up this yacht you shall go to eternity with us!"

The Mexican's face grew rigid a moment. Then he smiled in a sardonic way and shrugged his shoulders. But Mr. Tupper, white and trembling as with an ague, leaped to his feet and cried:

"In heaven's name, Cumberford, what do you mean? Would you destroy us all in this heartless fashion?"

"No. There is no mine; or, if there is, it will not explode."

"I — I differ with you. This — er — person — is desperate. He — he knows what he's talking about. I refuse to ta-ta-take the chances, sir! I must consider the safety of my wife and myself, and of our niece, Miss Dentry. This is our yacht, Cumberford, not yours, I beg to remind you, and we shall decide this important question ourselves."

Even before he ceased speaking Mrs. Tupper, whose eyes had been wild and staring, uttered a piercing shriek and tumbled to the floor of the cabin in violent hysterics. Sybil and Madeline rushed to her assistance and this confusion further unnerved Mr. Tupper. With sudden energy he pounded his

fist upon the table and cried:

"I won't allow it! I won't allow this sacrifice. Madeline is rich; what does she care for this miserable yacht? Take it, you Mexican thief, if you want it! Our lives are far too precious to be put in peril."

Ramon Ganza's face showed his satisfaction but his eyes expressed nothing but contempt for the terrified Mr. Tupper. Mr. Cumberford sat calmly regarding the contortions of the afflicted lady, as if wondering how much was involuntary and how much pure perversity. The captain twirled his thumbs and seemed absolutely unconcerned, while little O'Reilly's attention was fixed, in keen amusement, on the scene before him, as if it were a vaudeville act performed for his especial edification.

As Mrs. Tupper continued to pound the floor with her heels Madeline first emptied the water pitcher over her aunt and then slyly pinched her, which torture may have been responsible for some of the frantic screams. Mr. Tupper bowed his head despairingly on the cabin table, in an attitude so pitiable that it should have aroused the sympathy of all beholders, as he intended it to do. But meanwhile his good wife gradually recovered; her screams subsided to heart-rending wails and then to moans, after which she became quiet except for a series of nervous sobs. Madeline and Sybil now raised the poor woman and supported her to her stateroom, where she fell exhausted upon the berth.

It was not until the girls returned to the cabin that the discussion of Ramon Ganza's proposition was renewed. Miss Dentry gave him a searching look as she entered and noted the outlaw's smirk of satisfaction and the triumphant glitter of the dark eyes beneath their half closed lids. Then her own expression hardened and she turned to Mr. Cumberford, as if inviting him to proceed.

"Madeline," implored Mr. Tupper, "be good enough to assure this man — Mr. — Mr. — eh — Ganza — that the yacht, which is your property, is at his disposal in return for our — safety."

"The yacht is really Miss Dentry's property," added Mr. Cumberford coolly. "She will dispose of it as she thinks fit."

Madeline, seated at the table, studied the faces before her curiously, while an amused smile played around her lips. She knew she was enjoying the scene, and also knew the moment was critical, but no fear of consequences caused her courageous heart to falter an instant.

"We cannot accept our enemy's proposition," she announced. "Ramon Ganza is not the man to abide by any promises he makes, and if once we left the protection of this yacht we would probably be treated with little mercy. It would not save a single life, Uncle Martin, to agree to Ganza's proposal.

Threatening and browbeating those weaker than himself seems to be the man's pet recreation and before he left the island he would leave us to our fate, virtual prisoners. It might be years before any ship chanced to sail this way."

"I give you my pledge of honor to send word to your friends where you are," protested Ganza, eagerly.

"As you have no honor, sir, your word has no value. But I have a counter-proposition to suggest which will, I think, satisfy all concerned. Order your men, Ramon Ganza, to lay down their arms and surrender themselves to our keeping and to obey us unreservedly. Then, under command of Captain Krell, all hands must attempt to get the yacht afloat in deep water. When that is accomplished we will take you with us back to the United States and secretly land you in any port you select. Afterward we will not betray you nor attempt to hunt you down. If you need money, I will even supply you with a small sum that will enable you to flee to Europe or South America. That is fair. It is more fair than you deserve. But, if you accept our terms, we will abide by them faithfully."

The Mexican was intensely annoyed.

"No!" he exclaimed, abruptly. "If you cannot trust me, why should I trust you?"

"Because my plan is by far the better way," she rejoined. "If you seek liberty, if you desire to avoid arrest, this plan will surely accomplish your purpose. You cannot prefer prison to assured freedom, and the alternative, if you reject my plan, is simply to explode your mine."

He drummed on the table again, rather nervously.

"Pardon me, Miss Dentry," said Cumberford, "but you are proposing to aid and abet the escape of a condemned criminal. You will render yourself, and us, liable to punishment."

"I know," she answered. "I despise myself for treating with this scoundrel, but do it to relieve the fears of the Tuppers and perhaps others aboard who have not yet protested. If I dared follow my own counsel I would defy him, as you have done."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Tupper, looking at the Mexican beseechingly, "accept Miss Dentry's terms, I implore you. She will do exactly as she agrees; she always does!"

"Puh!" muttered Ganza, uneasily shifting in his chair; "perhaps we can arrange. But the trust shall not be all on one side. If I trust you, you must trust me — to an extent — a few more details. Instead of giving you my men, you must give me yours, and place all weapons in my control. Also I will take command of this yacht, for I am good sailor. In an hour's time I will

float the ship; then, with my men, I will sail it back to United States, to land your party on the coast near to some city which you can reach easily by walking. After that I will sail away in this yacht, which you will present to me in return for my services to you. You see, in this way you assure absolute safety to yourselves. As this wise and agreeable gentleman," indicating Mr. Tupper, "has with cleverness stated, the young lady is rich enough to afford the loss of her boat, so you can have no objection to my generous proposition."

"None whatever!" exclaimed Mr. Tupper. "Agree, Madeline, agree!"

"No," she said, shaking her head, "I will not. The man is not sincere, or he would not require us to place ourselves in his power."

"But I insist, my dear. He — he seems quite honest. I —

"Be quiet, confound you!" roared Cumberford, losing patience. "You're a doddering old idiot, Tupper, and if you don't shut up I'll gag you." He turned to Ganza. "Miss Dentry's proposition still stands, and it's the final word. You'll either accept it — right now, on the spot — or take the consequences."

"Already I have refuse," said the outlaw calmly.

"Very well. O'Reilly, march this fellow to the cage, for'ard, and lock him in. Then stand guard before the door and shoot him if he bothers you."

"Thank 'e, sor; it's proud I am to do that same," answered the engineer, gleefully.

"One moment, please," said Ganza. "You make doubt of my saying that you all face a most horrible death. You are stupid Americans, and must be convinced. Come with me on deck and I will prove to you your danger."

"No harm in that," replied Cumberford. "It's on your way to the cage."

With one accord they all accompanied O'Reilly and his prisoner to the deck.

"Now," said Ramon, standing by the rail, "I have some men hid in those rocks yonder. Their names are Paschal, Mateo, Gabrielle, Gomez, Francisco, Pedro, Gonzales, Juan and Tomas. Tell me which one I shall call — I care not which, myself — and the man will assure you my orders are positive to them, and that they will carry out the explosion of the mine as I have arranged, provided I do not return in safety."

Cumberford was curious to learn the extent of the rogue's bravado.

"Call Mateo," he suggested.

The Mexican did so, raising his voice to utter the summons.

From behind a pile of rocks nearly opposite them sprang a thin, gaunt man. He ran down to the water's edge, saluted his chief and stood at attention.

“Come here, Mateo,” commanded Ganza.

Without hesitation the man waded into the inlet and swam to the rope ladder which dangled over the side. This he seized and climbed on deck, where, dripping with water, he again faced his master and saluted him.

“Tell me, Mateo,” said Ramon Ganza, “where is it, beneath this boat, that the mine has been planted?”

“Fourteen feet from the stern, Capitan.”

“And is it powerful enough to destroy the ship?”

“To make it in small pieces, Capitan — an’ ten ship like it, if ten ship were here.”

“Very nice. You know what time the mine is to explode?”

“At eleven o’clock, Capitan, unless you come ashore to countermand the order.”

“Ah yes; so it is. You may go back to your post, Mateo.”

The man, looking neither to right nor left, descended the ladder, swam to shore and retreated behind the rocks again.

Ramon turned to Mr. Cumberford, showing the open face of his watch.

“In five minutes it will be eleven o’clock,” he quietly announced.

“Take him to the cage, O’Reilly!”

Two other armed men had joined the engineer on deck and the three now surrounded Ganza and started forward with him.

“Mercy, Cumberford! Save us — save us!” howled Mr. Tupper, frantic with fear. “I can’t die now — we ought none of us to die! Give him the launch. Give him the — ”

A cry interrupted him. Mason, the man nearest the rail, dropped his gun and staggered back with his hands clasped to his side, from which a stream of blood gushed forth. At the same moment the huge form of Ramon Ganza leaped the rail and dove headforemost into the water.

But everyone else was more interested in the wounded man, who seemed to be badly hurt. Ramon Ganza was forgotten as the girls bent over the poor fellow with anxious looks.

“Have Mason brought to my own cabin, at once,” said Madeline to Captain Krell.

They carried the wounded man below, to be placed in Madeline’s roomy cabin. Mr. Cumberford was not a surgeon, but there was no one aboard who knew more of surgery than he and so he went to Mason’s side at once.

Ganza had struck the man with a knife of the stiletto type, the narrow blade of which had penetrated his side just above the hip joint. Mr. Cumberford’s “first aid” outfit, which the captain was able to supply, enabled him to stop the bleeding, but he was unable to tell how serious the injury

might prove. The man was in considerable pain, which Cumberford partially relieved with a hypodermic injection of morphine.

During this interesting period no one gave a thought to the escaped Mexican, but when nothing more could be done for his patient, Cumberford left the girls to watch over him and walked into the cabin, where he found Mrs. Tupper sobbing as if in great grief while her husband sat in his favorite despairing attitude, his head bowed on his arms.

"What's wrong?" demanded Cumberford, in surprise.

"Wrong!" cried Tupper, lifting his head; "why, at any moment may come the crash of the explosion that will send us all to eternity. We — we can't escape it. It's inevitable!"

Cumberford looked at his watch.

"It's a quarter to twelve," he said. "The explosion was due at eleven."

"But the Mexican brigand — the pirate chief — the — "

"He has escaped, so there'll be no explosion at all. I believe he threatened to fire the ship; but he won't do that. Ganza's sole ambition is to capture this boat, so he can sail away from his countrymen, escape imprisonment, and perhaps become a really-truly pirate. Interesting, isn't it? Forget the explosion, Tupper; if you must worry, worry about our real danger."

"What is that, sir? What is our real danger?" cried Madeline's uncle, springing to his feet in a new access of terror.

"There'll be fighting, presently," predicted Mr. Cumberford. "Having failed in all else, the Mexican will find a way to board us — in the night, probably — and will try to slice us to goulash or pepper us with bullets, as opportunity decides."

"Great heavens!"

"To be sure. To avoid getting to those great heavens, where you don't belong, I advise you to arm yourself properly and be ready to repel the attack."

Then Cumberford went on deck and found the captain.

"How about Ramon Ganza?" he asked.

"I think Ganza kept swimming and reached the shore, where his men dragged him to cover. The fellow seems to bear a charmed life."

"That's bad," observed Cumberford, shaking his head regretfully. "I've an idea, Captain Krell, that unless we manage to capture Ramon Ganza during the next twenty-four hours, he will manage to capture us."

"So soon?" asked the captain.

"He won't dare to wait longer. There's help coming."

"Well, sir, in that case — " The captain hesitated.

"In that case it will be pleasanter and more satisfactory for us to capture

Ganza," said Mr. Cumberford. "Interesting; isn't it?"

"How can we do it?" asked Captain Krell.

"I don't know," replied Cumberford.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE DIPLOMACY OF CHESTY TODD

WHEN MR. H. CHESTERTON Radley-Todd discovered the one-eyed Francisco and his two comrades calmly seated in the *Salvador's* launch, engaged in nonchalantly smoking their brown-paper cigarettes, he merely raised his eyebrows and continued down the slope. They had seen him as soon as he saw them and, confident in their superior numbers, awaited his advance with serenity.

Chesty knew there was little chance of escape, and he knew the men knew he knew it. The launch was his sole resource, and the enemy had captured it. He might, perhaps, dodge behind the rocks on the mountain for an indefinite period, but they'd get him in the end, so such an undertaking was scarcely worth the exertion it required.

Therefore, on he came, walking leisurely and picking his way deliberately down the incline until he stood beside the launch, which was still beached upon the shore of the little pocket-like bay. Then he drew out a silver case and, choosing a cigarette with solicitous care, turned to Francisco and said:

"Will the senor favor me with a light?"

The men grinned. They enjoyed the humor of the situation. Francisco, with a bow of mock deference, furnished the required light from his own cigarette.

Chesty climbed into the launch, took a seat facing Francisco and remarked: "Fine day, senors."

"Good to fly in air," nodded one of the men, with a laugh and a glance skyward.

"Oh; did you see the machine fly? Pretty sight, wasn't it? And you boys saw it for nothing. In the United States we charge fifty cents to tickle the vision like that."

Francisco looked at him, meditating.

"Where they go?" he asked.

"To Mexico, to ask President Madero for a battleship."

The men exchanged significant glances.

"For why, senor?" inquired one of them.

"To come and get Ramon Ganza and clap him in prison. Perhaps hang him to one of those banana trees, on the bluff up there."

The Mexicans looked their consternation.

"If that is true," said Francisco, slowly, "then I may be capture an' put in prison, too."

"I suppose so; because you belong to Ganza's gang and have probably

broken the laws more than once."

"I not murder," protested the man. "Ramon do that, I know; but not me. I very hones' an' good. But come," he added, throwing away his cigarette and rising. "We mus' go back. You are our prisoner, senor."

Chesty did not move. He took the silver case from his pocket and offered it to the Mexicans.

"Help yourselves, boys," he said. "There's no hurry. Let us sit here and have a little talk. When you get back to Ramon he'll be sure to keep you busy enough. This is a good time to rest."

They hesitated a little, but took the cigarettes and lighted them.

"I suppose," remarked Mr. Todd, leaning back with his arms clasped around his knees, "if I asked the warship to take Ganza, and let my friends — you are my friends, I suppose?" They all nodded, watching his face eagerly.

"And let my friends escape — with me, in our yacht, the *Salvador* — they would do so without question. Madero knows me, and he usually does what I ask."

"You know Madero?" asked Francisco, his back against the boat and his elbows resting on the gunwale, in a lounging attitude.

"We are like twin brothers," asserted Chesty. "That is why he will send a warship to take Ramon Ganza and all his gang — except those who are my friends."

They smoked a while in silence and Chesty noted that they now forbore meeting one another's eyes.

"Ramon great man," said one, presently, as if to himself. "Ramon bad master; his people are dogs; but Ramon have his own way, an' nobody dare stop him."

"Wrong, my friend," rejoined Mr. Todd. "Ramon is stopped right now. His time is up; his days are numbered. He has run the length of his rope. Presently he'll be confined in a dungeon, on bread-and-water, or breaking stone on the roads — in chains and very miserable. Poor Ramon. What a fool he was to break the law — which leads to breaking stones!"

"Ramon very clever," suggested another man, but in a doubtful tone.

"Cleverness has failed him this time," said Chesty. "Your leader is caught like a rat in a trap. If he could get hold of our yacht he'd skip out and save himself; but he can't do that in a thousand years."

"An' why not, senor?"

"We're too strong for him."

They pondered this.

"Ramon have sixteen men," said Francisco, presently. "You had 'leven; but one fly away, an' one — that is you, senor — is now capture. That make

you nine. Nine to sixteen — an' Ramon to lead those sixteen!"

"You didn't remain in school long enough to complete your education, Francisco," declared the prisoner, calmly. "In other words, you can't figure. Here's the real situation, and it's worth your while to study it: The yacht has a crew of seven — all splendid warriors. Then there's General Cumberford, a terrible fighter, and Major-General Tupper, who cries every night if he can't kill a man before he goes to bed — it makes him sleep better, you know — and the invincible Captain Krell, who once cut down a whole regiment with his own saber — chopped them into mincemeat by the hundreds, and was given a gold medal with his monogram engraved on it, to commemorate the event. That's an even ten defenders. And then there's myself. I won't say much about myself, but you might look me over carefully. It is possible that if I was aroused I might crush you three in my arms until your bones cracked like walnuts."

They did look at him, and it seemed as if the big fellow might do it, exactly as he said. But Chesty continued, reassuringly:

"However, I never injure my friends. I'm noted for that. Let's see; ten in our party, so far, wasn't it? Then there's that Red-beard — Pietro — who has been given a charm by one of our witch-women which will not only preserve his life but enable him to defeat all his enemies. Pietro desires to return to civilization, a free man, and we will allow him to do so."

They were much impressed by this statement. Chesty's idea of the "witch-woman" was destined to prove his most forceful argument.

"Pietro makes eleven," he continued, "and you three bring the number up to fourteen, which leaves Ramon but thirteen followers to be arrested with him — unlucky number, thirteen. Haven't you noticed it?"

"You think we join you, then?" asked Francisco, curiously.

"I'm sure of it. You are no longer afraid of Ramon, for his jig is up. You don't want to go to prison with him, because it is very disagreeable to break stone on the roads, I'm told, and in prison they deprive a man of even his cigarettes. I know you have been bad boys, all three of you, and until now the law has threatened you. But you have reformed. Remember, senors, you have reformed and are now honest men. I will tell Madero, my friend the president, what honest men you are, and how you have helped to defy Ramon, the outlaw, and give him up to justice. Madero will then reward you, and you will live happy ever after."

It was an enticing picture. The men looked grave and undecided. In their hearts they hated Ramon; but they also feared him. For years they had lived in daily terror of the tyrant who ruled them with an iron hand, who whipped a man brutally if he incurred his anger, who dominated them so utterly that

they grovelled at his feet like the curs they were. If they could be sure of Ramon's downfall; if they could believe this big American boy, who was fully as powerful of frame as Ramon himself, then they would gladly desert the tyrant and save themselves by joining his enemies. It was only their inbred fear of Ramon and their confidence in his cleverness in defying justice, that made them hesitate.

Chesty saw this. He racked his brain to find other arguments.

"You have witch-women?" asked one of the men, in an awed tone.

"Three of them, all very bewitching."

"One has fly away."

"Yes; to cast a spell over the captain of the Mexican battleship, and make him hurry. The two most powerful are still here on this island."

"Then why they not use their witchcraft to push your ship into deep water?" inquired Francisco, his one eye flashing triumphantly. "Why the witch-women let Ramon make trouble for you? Eh? Tell me, senor."

Chesty looked at the man reproachfully.

"How stupid you are, Francisco. Must we not keep Ramon busy, to hold him here until the warship comes? Why do you suppose we came to this island at all, and ran our ship high on the beach, without hurting it in any way? Did we lay a trap for Ramon? Did we coax him to come and try to capture us, that we might prove he is a wicked lawbreaker? We do not seem much afraid of your Ramon, do we? Am I frightened? Do I grow pale, and tremble? Here — feel my pulse — does my blood beat faster in my veins because Ramon Ganza, the trapped criminal, is waiting here to be captured, and thinks he is making us worry?"

The two men exchanged a few sentences in Spanish. Francisco listened to them and nodded approvingly.

"The case is this, senor," he announced, addressing Mr. Todd. "We would like to leave Ramon. We would like to join your ship an' go back to Mexico, an' have pardon. But Ramon is not trap yet. Ramon great man. Many time he escape. If we leave him, an' he then capture your ship, Ramon flog us with whip, which make great pain in us."

"True, that might be the result if Ramon captures the ship; but he can't do that — not in a century of Sundays, which is a long time. And if you stay with Ramon you will surely be made prisoners when the warship comes, which will be in another day or two. You must make up your minds which is the most powerful — we and our witch-women, with the Mexican government and its warships to back us, or poor Ramon, who is caught in a trap. I like you, all three — but not too much. You are fine men — unless I am lying — and I would grieve to see you imprisoned with Ramon. But

otherwise I do not care what you decide to do. Come with me and I will save you, just as I intend to save myself, from Ramon's anger. But if you stick to your old master I cannot say one good word for you when you face the Mexican authorities. Now I am tired talking. Make up your minds and let me know."

He carelessly rose, lighted another cigarette and strolled down to the water's edge, where he stood with his back to them. The three rascals took advantage of the opportunity and argued among themselves for half an hour.

"Senor!" called Francisco, who, as a trusted lieutenant of Ramon Ganza, was the more important of the three.

Mr. Radley-Todd came back to the launch.

"It is this way," explained Francisco. "We desire to be save, senor, but we have caution. We believe you speak true, but not yet have you conquer Ramon; not yet has the warship come to take him to prison. So we think of a way to be safe if Ramon win, an' safe if you win. It is but just to us, as honest men, that we do that way."

Chesty smiled, really amused.

"How childlike and bland you naughty, naughty men are!" he exclaimed. "But let me hear your clever plan to play both sides and win hands down."

"When we find you escape from ship," began Francisco, "then Ramon think you have come here, for the tent is gone from the top of the bluff. So Ramon tell us to come here in big launch, to see what you do, an' he say capture you an' bring you back to him. When we get here we find this boat; but two fly away in air-machine, an' only one is left to capture. But Ramon not know if we come before the two away or not; he not know if we three, who come to capture, get capture ourselves. So that is what we mus' do. We get capture. You tie up our arms an' our legs an' put gag in our mouth. Then you put us in boat an' take us away to your ship. If Ramon stop us, we say we have been capture. If Ramon see you take us on your ship, he think we have fight hard an' been capture, an' he sorry but not mad. Then, if he take your ship, he set us free; if warship come an' capture Ramon, we safe on your ship an' be hones' men, like you say, an' get reward from Madero. Is it not good way, senor?"

Chesty's sentiments wavered between indignation and admiration. Such a combination of low cunning, cowardice and absence of all shame he had never encountered in any being of human origin. But his cue was not to quarrel with the men at this time. It was enough to realize that instead of becoming a prisoner he was to carry his three captors, bound, to the ship, and so deprive Ramon of that many assistants.

In the outlaw's big launch, which was anchored just outside the tiny bay

in the open sea, were plenty of stout ropes. Francisco waded out and got a supply, and then he proceeded deftly to bind his two comrades, trussing their arms to their bodies and their legs together, so that they were helpless. The fellows grinned with delight at this experience, thinking how cleverly they were fooling Ramon Ganza, and when they were laid side by side on the beach Chesty stuck a lighted cigarette in the mouth of each, to afford them comfort and render them patient. Then Francisco bound his own legs and turned to Mr. Radley-Todd, who at once completed the operation and fastened Francisco's arms to his body — not too tightly, but in a very secure manner.

When this was done the big boy breathed a sigh of contentment and set himself down beside his captives.

"Now," said Francisco, "you mus' put us in big boat an' go back to ship with us."

Chesty shook his head.

"Not yet, old man," said he.

"Not yet?"

"No; I shall wait for night. It will be safe in the darkness."

"Then you are 'fraid of Ramon."

"Not much. Just a little."

The prisoners wriggled uneasily.

"Listen, then, Senor American," observe Francisco. "If we not go before night, then release our bonds — make loose the ropes — so we will rest more easy. When night come you will again tie us up."

Mr. Todd was unresponsive.

"Too much trouble, Francisco," he remarked, with a yawn. "Why do the work twice?"

"But — to lie here all day! San Sebastian, it is too horrible!"

"Fortunes of war, my dear boy. Ramon might appear unexpectedly, you know. We made a bargain, to ensure your safety, and we're going to keep it."

All three turned their heads to regard him with interest. There were sparks of glowering resentment in their dark eyes. Presently one of them said in humble tones:

"With your kind permission, Senor Americano, I think I will change my mind."

"Certainly," replied Chesty; "do anything you please with your mind. It's yours, you know."

"I think, then, senor, I will not be your prisoner — until night."

"Don't think any such thing. It's wicked of you. Try to guide your thoughts into right channels. Make up your mind to be true to your bargain,

because — you have to be.”

Francisco groaned.

“All masters are cruel,” he muttered. “This Americano is as bad as Ramon!”

“But he’s going to preserve your liberty and keep you out of jail,” Chesty reminded him.

“And now, boys, try to sleep, for I’m going to take a little walk and stretch my legs.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

SCUTTLED

A MODICUM OF TRUTH had been included in Ramon Ganza's recital of falsehoods during his interview with those on board the yacht. The outlaw was really in a tight place and only by forcing, in some way, the capture of the yacht could he hope to escape in a manner at all agreeable to his requirements.

By this time he was fully aware of the situation that confronted him. The flying-machine, if it encountered no accident, would reach the mainland and secure assistance for the stranded Americans. Perhaps it was true that President Madero would send a warship to capture him. Like most fugitive criminals, he had an exaggerated idea of his own importance. In any event he must abandon his island kingdom and seek another hiding place. His first intention — to make everyone of these intruders prisoners and subjects, so they could not betray him — was frustrated by the escape of the two in the aeroplane. It would be useless to capture the others when these two had already carried the news to the authorities who were seeking him.

Two courses of procedure were open to Ganza. One was hastily to outfit his sixty-foot launch and run it to the South Pacific in search of some other island that was uninhabited, taking with him enough men and women to start a new colony. The other was to capture the yacht, put his most cherished possessions on board and then make off in it before any help could arrive from the mainland. The first was by far the most sensible course, but the beauties of the *Salvador* had so enraptured him and he was so well aware of the value a yacht would prove to him that he could not bring himself to abandon the idea of securing it until the last moment of grace had arrived.

This led him to consider how much time remained to him in which to carry out his intentions. He figured that at least thirty-six hours must elapse before any ship could possibly arrive. It was unlikely that the messengers would find a ship prepared to sail at a moment's notice, and therefore three or four days might pass before he would be disturbed by any outside foe.

Ramon had hoped to frighten the Americans into surrender and therefore had arranged the little drama so lately enacted; but the finale had disappointed him. There was no mine planted beneath the yacht, but he had instructed one of his men to answer to his call, no matter what name he cried out, and to make the statement to the Americans which he had so cleverly invented. He made a mistake in thinking the flag of truce would protect him, for these strangers were not so simple as he had believed; so he had been forced to attempt a desperate escape, which succeeded because it was so bold

and unexpected.

Recovering his breath as his white flannels dried upon the rocks, Ramon Ganza carefully considered his next move in the game. The yacht was a glorious prize. He must certainly have it for his own. The people on board seemed unequal to a successful defense. There might be half a dozen determined men among them, but the rest were women and cowards. He laughed as he recalled Mr. Tupper's terror at his threats.

The outlaw decided to carry the ship by assault. A night attack would be best. As soon as Francisco returned with the launch he would call his men together and instruct them what to do. Being informed of every movement on the part of the besieged, Ganza was aware that three people had escaped in the small launch to the bluff where the flying-machine lay. As soon as he discovered that the tent was gone he had dispatched Francisco with two men to capture the three, or as many as he could find. When the aeroplane ascended Ganza watched it carefully and decided it contained but two people; therefore Francisco would find the other and presently return.

But Francisco failed to put in an appearance, to his master's great annoyance. That old tub of a launch was precious to him, for if all else failed he must use it to make good his escape. Also he needed the three men to assist in boarding the yacht in the night attack. His men were unarmed, while the yacht's crew seemed well provided with weapons of defense.

As the day wore on he considered sending the rowboat to search for Francisco's party, but decided not to risk it. Of course Francisco would come, in time; doubtless he was delayed because he experienced difficulty in capturing his man.

Evening came, but no Francisco. Ramon Ganza was perplexed; he was even somewhat troubled. He must defer the attack until the launch arrived, for he intended to use it to carry his men to the side of the yacht. His plan was to have the launch run up to one side and make a noisy attack, to create a diversion and concentrate the attention of those on board, while he and a party of picked men stole silently to the other side in the rowboat, climbed to the deck and overcame all who opposed them. The bow was too high to scale, where it rested on the beach; the attack must be made near the stern, which sat low in the water.

Therefore the launch was quite necessary, as were the three men who were absent with it, so Ramon was angry with Francisco for not returning more promptly.

The outlaw paced up and down the rocks in the starlight and cursed his dilatory lieutenant most heartily.

But the launch was coming. In fact, two launches were coming to the bay.

As soon as night had really settled down, Mr. Radley-Todd quit loafing and suddenly became active. He carried his trussed and helpless prisoners, one by one, to the small launch and laid them gently along the bottom. He had already, during the afternoon, waded out to the larger launch of Ganza, bored a large hole in its bottom and then stopped the inrushing water with a plug. He chuckled while doing this, being greatly pleased by what he called his "foxy plan to fool the pirate."

With his prisoners aboard, the boy shoved the *Salvador's* launch into the water and cautiously paddled it between the rocks and to the side of the big launch, to which he attached it by means of a rope.

"I think I shall gag you boys, as you suggested," he said to the prisoners, who by this time had become sullen and decidedly unfriendly.

"No!" cried Francisco, partly in anger and partly in fear; "it is not necessary. We know what to do."

"Will you promise not to cry out and attract Ramon's attention?"

"We swear it!" they all cried eagerly.

"Then I think I shall gag you. Not because I doubt your word but because I've whittled out three lovely gags and I'm anxious to see how they work."

They began to protest vigorously at such unkind treatment, but Chesty gagged them, by turns, and they were effectually silenced.

"You boys are splendid actors," he told them, admiringly, "and you are performing your parts with great credit to us all. No one would guess this was your plan, would he? Ramon least of all. If we are not captured, you will make an important addition to our party on the yacht. If we are, you will lie gloriously to Ramon and say I sneaked up behind you and sandbagged all three before you saw me. Eh? Never mind answering, for you can't."

As he spoke, Chesty climbed into the big launch and started the engines. They grumbled and refused to act, at first, but finally overcame their reluctance and the boat chug-chugged on its way to the south bay, making such a racket that the owls thought it was defying them and redoubled their frantic screeches.

"Ramon will be certain to hear me coming," reflected the boy as the boat swept on. "He's a clever scoundrel, that Mexican; exceptionally clever; but if he guesses this riddle he's a wizard."

He kept the launch well out from the shore and as it approached the points of rock behind which the yacht lay hidden he set the steering wheel to carry the boat a couple of hundred yards past the entrance to the bay, lashing it firmly in place. Then, while the engines continued their monotonous "chug-chug," he pried the plug out of the bottom of the boat, crept aboard the *Salvador's* launch and unfastened the rope, cutting the two craft apart. The

big launch quickly forged ahead and Chesty sat down and let the smaller boat drift peacefully where it lay.

Ramon Ganza had heard his boat coming, as Chesty had intended he should. Greatly relieved, but still angry with Francisco, he ran as far out upon the point as the rocks would permit and peered through the starlight to catch sight of the approaching launch.

Presently it appeared, making good time, the old engines working steadily and doing their full duty. But it did not turn into the bay, for some extraordinary reason; instead, it kept straight on and headed for some indefinite point out at sea.

"Francisco!" shouted Ganza, in a rage; "Francisco — villain — fool! What are you doing? Wake up, Francisco! The idiot is asleep."

As the precious launch did not halt, the outlaw ran along the shore, following its track and shaking his fist at the perverse Francisco with vengeful energy. Most of his men, attracted by their chief's excitement, left their posts to join him on the shore; the others gazed wonderingly in the direction of the disappearing launch.

Meantime, Chesty Todd cautiously paddled his little boat into the bay, crept to the side of the yacht and uttered a low whistle — the signal agreed upon. Those on board, who had been interested in Ramon's shouts and suspected something was about to happen, lost no time in lowering the davits and Chesty promptly attached the grappling hooks. A few moments later the launch and its occupants were safely on deck and the boy stepped out to be greeted by hearty handshakes and congratulations on his safe return.

"You'll find three prisoners in the launch, Captain Krell," he said. "When you remove their gags they'll protest they are our friends; but I wouldn't trust 'em. Better lock' em in the cage until this cruel war is over."

"What has become of the Mexican's launch?" asked Mr. Cumberford. "The pirates seem to be having some trouble over it."

"It won't bother 'em for long," replied Mr. Todd, complacently. "The boat is headed out to sea, all by its lonesome; but there's a hole in the bottom and it's fast filling with salt water. I imagine that within the next fifteen minutes it will go to Davy Jones's locker, and be out of commission."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

ORISSA RETURNS

IF EVER MAN was thoroughly perplexed it was Ramon Ganza the outlaw. He heard his launch proceed for a distance out to sea, then listened while the engines hesitated and stopped, and saw the boat on which his liberty might depend whirl slowly around and disappear beneath the waves. What could it mean? Were his men on board, and had they met with some astonishing accident, or had they deliberately committed suicide? The curses died on his lips; the affair was too startling and too serious for mere raving; he must try to think of a logical solution of the problem.

The loss of the launch, his last refuge from captivity and imprisonment, left him caught like a wolf in a trap — in case he failed to get possession of the yacht. All night long he sat on a rock by the sea, smoking his black cheroots and thinking — thinking — thinking. Neither he nor his men knew that Chesty Todd had returned to the yacht; but if Ramon had known it he would not have attached especial importance to the fact. It would merely mean one more person to capture during the assault.

Morning found Ganza still deep in thought. He glanced rather uneasily at the ocean and at times swept the horizon with his glasses, which were slung by a strap to his shoulder. His men brought him food and a cup of hot coffee, but dared not speak to him in his present mood. They suspected his case was growing desperate, yet they still retained confidence in their resourceful, clever master, who had never yet failed to accomplish whatever he undertook.

In this crisis of his career the fugitive, usually irritable and quick to act, proved his strength of mind by taking time to consider his position from all points and to weigh carefully the merits of the different plans that suggested themselves. He realized that an error at this time would prove fatal.

The hours wore on until, at about the middle of the afternoon, as Ganza made one of his periodic inspections of the horizon, his glasses caught a speck in the sky — a speck that moved and grew larger. At first he thought it a gull or an eagle; later he changed his mind, for the speck rapidly increased in size and took form, and the form was that of an aeroplane.

Those on the yacht saw it now and great was the wonder and excitement it caused. Here was a messenger from the great world, bringing them hope of succor or black disappointment. Presently the broad spreading planes bore down upon the island and circled gracefully over the ship.

“It’s Orissa!” they cried in chorus and Chesty Todd added: “She wants to land on deck. Clear a space — quick!”

They did the best they could. It seemed like a tiny place for that great sweeping thing to land on and even Sybil exclaimed: “She’ll never make it in the world!” But Orissa, hovering above them in her Aircraft, observed carefully the conditions below and shutting off her engine began to volplane.

The huge machine settled quietly down and alighted fairly upon the deck. One rail caught the lower plane and tipped it, but the girl leaped lightly from her seat and was caught by Mr. Cumberford, whose gray eyes sparkled with joy from behind their spectacles.

You may be sure the brave girl received a glad welcome, but as soon as her safety was assured she was deluged with questions. The ping of a rifle ball warned them to scuttle below to the cabin, where Orissa tried to explain.

“Why on earth did you venture to come back?” demanded Madeline. “We had told ourselves that you, at least, were safe from the dangers that menace us, and it pleased us to know that. But where is your brother?”

“Did you get to land?” cried half a dozen voices, eagerly. “What did you do? Tell us!”

Orissa laughed and held up both hands, imploring silence.

“I came to bring you good news,” she began. “And now that you are assured of that, please let me tell the story my own way, or I shall bungle it.”

“Go ahead,” they answered and settled themselves to listen.

“We followed the route Captain Krell had mapped out for us,” said Orissa, “and in four hours after leaving here we sighted the Mexican coast. Fifteen minutes’ run to the north brought us to the village of San Bias, where there is a telegraph office. We landed and had some difficulty in satisfying the authorities that we were harmless Americans, but finally they agreed to escort us to the telegraph office under guard. We wired our story direct to President Madero, putting it as briefly as possible and asking him for a warship to rescue our friends and capture Ramon Ganza. There was no answer until evening, when we received a message from the Secretary of the Navy saying he had conferred with the President and Secretary of State and would be glad to accede to our request. In eight or ten days he thought he could spare a warship to go to the island for Ganza. Unfortunately, the entire navy was in use at the present time.

“That dashed our hopes, you may be sure, for we feared you couldn’t hold Ganza at bay for so long; so Steve and I determined to fly to San Diego and secure help there.

The Secretary of the Navy had wired the authorities of San Bias to afford us every consideration and hospitality, so we filled our tanks with gasoline and slept at a little inn until daybreak. Then we were off for the north, and in two hours met the United States torpedo fleet, on its way to Magdalena Bay

for target practice. We made out the flagship and dropped to the water beside it. Commodore Davis at once laid to and sent a boat to us. Steve went aboard and explained fully to the Commodore our story and the need for immediate help. As a result the *Mermaid* was signaled and its captain presently came aboard and received his orders. He was to take us directly to this island, drive off Ganza or fight him, as circumstances might require, and then assist in getting the *Salvador* afloat again. If he captures Ganza he is to carry him away a prisoner and turn him and his men over to the Mexican authorities at Magdalena.

"Captain Swanson undertook the adventure gladly and is now on his way here with the *Mermaid,* with Steve to guide him. My brother and I thought it best for me to come on ahead and tell you the good news, for we have worried about you and knew that with rescue at hand you would have courage to hold out, no matter how desperate your condition. So here I am, and the *Mermaid* will arrive either to-night or early in the morning."

They were indeed delighted with this assurance and it put new heart into the most timorous of those aboard.

"However," said Chesty Todd, "we seem to be in no danger, just now, and since our clever enemy has failed to scare us into surrender he has remained quiet and behaved himself as well as could be expected."

They told Orissa all that had transpired in her absence and the conversation continued all during the dinner — on which the chef exercised his best talents, in honor of Orissa's return — and even until bedtime, there was so much to say.

Chesty went on watch at eleven o'clock, and as he leaned silently over the rail at a point near the bow of the launch he detected a series of queer sounds coming from below. This part of the yacht was high on the shelving beach and it was here that they had arranged huge piles of rock, on either side, to hold the keel level. It sounded to Mr. Todd as if some one was at work near these rocks, for on account of the swell of the boat's side it was impossible to see, from the deck, anyone below, in case he kept close to the keel.

So Chesty crept aft, held a whispered conversation with Captain Krell, and quickly divested himself of his clothing. At the stern, which was settled quite close to the surface of the water, the boy let himself down by means of a rope, descending hand under hand, and silently dropped into the dark water. Swimming was one of Radley-Todd's principal accomplishments and he scarcely made a ripple as he crept alongside the boat until the bow came into full view. The night was somewhat darker than usual, but the American had sharp eyes and it did not take him long to discover that the besiegers were employed in removing the rocks from the right hand side of the keel.

Instantly comprehending their purpose in this, Chesty turned and quickly regained the stern, climbing to the deck. His report to Captain Krell seemed so serious, because it meant a desperate attack presently, that it was promptly decided to arouse the entire party and warn them that a crisis was at hand.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

FACING THE CRISIS

CONSTERNATION REIGNED IN the cabin when the principals assembled there with white and startled faces. On deck Captain Krell was instructing his men how to act in the threatened emergency. Pietro was among them, accepting his rifle and his instructions willingly, but shaking his head at what he considered a vain attempt to resist Ramon Ganza.

"Ramon great man!" he said to Captain Krell. "Ramon always win; nobody can conquer him. I knew Ramon would win this time, an' when he does he will capture me an' whip me hard. All right; I know I am to be whipped at the time Chica tell me to leave Ramon. Never min'. Pietro can stand it, for others have been whipped by Ramon an' lived — with marks like a zebra's on their skins."

In the cabin Chesty was trying to explain the situation.

"It's this way," he said; "when the rocks are all removed the yacht will fall over on her side, as she was at first, with the rail quite near to the water. You remember how she lay before we propped her up. Well, that means we have no secure footing on deck and that the pirates can easily climb aboard and have the best of the argument. If we slip, we fall into their arms; if we stick to the deck — like flies to a ceiling, they'll rush and get us."

"We can't fight from the deck," declared Cumberford. "Tell Captain Krell to come here."

The captain arrived and after a consultation it was decided to gather all hands in the cabin and fortify it as strongly as possible. The roof projected a few feet above the deck and there was a row of small windows on either side, but these were supplied with heavy shutters designed for use in case of storms, when the shutters were readily fixed in place. The stairway might be well guarded by one man, and above the windows were small ventilators through which several rifles could be pointed. By standing upon the cabin table the defenders could command the deck in this way. They were instructed not to shoot, however, unless absolutely obliged to. All the hatches were battened down, so that if Ganza gained the deck he could not get below and was welcome to remain aboard until the rescuers arrived.

Orissa, who had listened silently, now approached Mr. Cumberford and said:

"When the yacht tips, our Aircraft will be ruined, for the chances are it will slide overboard. Even if it doesn't, those scoundrels will wreck it completely, for it will be quite at their mercy. So I've decided, while there is yet time, to fly it across to the bluff, where I can remain until you are

rescued."

"Can you manage to get away from the deck?"

"Easily."

"Then I think it best for you to go."

"May I take Sybil with me?"

He hesitated a moment; then replied: "Yes. It will be a good thing to have you girls away from here when the attack is made. Here you could be of no service whatever, and your absence will — eh — give us more room to defend the cabin."

"You will have to act quickly, Miss Kane," suggested Chesty.

"I know. Come, Sybil."

They drew on their jackets as they went on deck, both girls realizing that no time must be lost if they hoped to get away. Once the yacht tipped on her side it would be impossible to fly the machine.

As they took their places Mr. Radley-Todd inquired: "Plenty of gasoline?"

"I think so," said Orissa. "I'm not sure how much is left in the tanks, but it ought to be enough to get us to the bluff. Whirl the propeller, Chesty."

He did so, and the engine started with a roar. Cumberford and Chesty steadied the Aircraft until the motor had acquired full speed and then Orissa threw in the clutch and the big aeroplane rose as easily as a bird takes flight and ascended into the starlit sky at a steep angle. This feat is what is called "cloud climbing" and Orissa understood it perfectly.

It seemed a bold thing to undertake such a flight in the night-time, but the Flying Girl's friends had so much confidence in her skill that they never considered the danger of the undertaking. Across the barren island to the bluff was so unimportant a flight to one of Orissa's experience that when she was once away they believed her quite safe.

While the men stood watching the Aircraft mount into the dim sky the yacht suddenly trembled and keeled over, throwing them all flat upon the deck. With one accord they scrambled up and dashed into the cabin, which they reached just as Ramon Ganza and his men swarmed over the rail.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE PRISONER

WHAT'S WRONG, RIS?" asked Sybil, as the engine skipped and wavered. "Gasoline," was the brief answer.

"Oh. Can you get to the bluff?"

"I — don't — know. There!" as the propeller ceased to whirl; "now I'll volplane. It's a long reach, Syb; but we'll land somewhere — right side up."

The dim mountain seemed far ahead of them; below was the "dip," or valley, which lay between the rock ridges and the mountain. As they had casually glanced toward it in former times, it seemed a forbidding place, slimy and moist, devoid alike of any green thing or living creature. Even the owls shunned the "dip."

To-night, when everything was obscure, they seemed gliding into a black pit. Orissa had to manipulate her levers cautiously, for she could not tell just when they would reach the ground. As it was they bumped, bounded forward, bumped again and brought up suddenly between two boulders that topped a rugged knoll.

"Any damage?" asked Sybil, catching her breath.

"Not much, I'm sure," replied her chum. "But here we are; and here we'll stay until some one comes with gasoline. Can you see anything, Syb?"

"The mountain, over there against the sky. It seems so near I could almost touch it. It wouldn't have taken but a few drops more to have landed us on the bluff, drat the luck!"

"See anything else?"

"Where?"

"Around us."

"No; but I can smell something. Smells like spoiled gasoline. Does gasoline ever spoil, Ris?"

"Not to my knowledge. But come; let's crawl into the boat and get the blankets out. Wherever we are, it's our hotel, and we must make the best of it."

Skyward, there could be distinguished the mountain at the west and the rock hills at the east; but the pocket in which they lay was black as ink. From the boat Orissa managed to open the aluminum chest and take out the blankets. They then arranged a temporary bed in the bottom of the boat and covered themselves up.

"Anyhow, I managed to save the Aircraft," sighed Orissa, contentedly. Then she sat bolt upright and cried: "Listen!"

"The battle's on," answered Sybil, as a succession of wild shouts reached

their ears. It was very aggravating to be so ignorant of what was happening to their friends. The shouts continued, at intervals, but there was no sound of firearms. Evidently the Mexicans had gained the deck but had found it a barren victory. On the mountain the owls were hooting and flying about as usual, but the shouts that had come from the bay were of such a different nature that the shrieks of the night-birds did not drown them.

Suddenly a broad streak of light shot over them, rested a moment on the mountain, swayed to right and left and then sank below the ridges of rock. Above the bay where the *Salvador* was beached thin shafts of white light radiated, illuminating the sky like an aurora borealis.

"A searchlight!"

"The torpedo boat!" the girls cried in one breath; and then they sat trembling and straining their ears to listen.

A dull, angry "boom!" rent the air and echoed from the mountain. It was a warning gun from the *Mermaid.* The shouts became screams of fear. Then silence followed, complete and enduring.

Orissa breathed heavily. "It's all over, Sybil!" she gasped.

"I — I wonder if — anyone was — hurt."

"Any of our people?"

"Of course."

"I think not. That gun was merely a signal and I imagine the Mexicans ran like rats. How fortunate it was that Captain Swanson arrived with the *Mermaid* so soon!"

"How unfortunate he didn't come sooner. We wouldn't have been in this awkward predicament. It will take them hours to get to us over those sharp rocks."

Orissa did not reply. She was trying to understand the events transpiring around the *Salvador.* Had there been a tragedy? Or had the torpedo boat merely frightened the outlaws, as she had imagined, and driven them away?

There was no sleep for the isolated girls during the brief hours preceding the dawn. As it gradually lightened they peered about them to see where they were, and by degrees made out their surroundings. There were fewer rocks in this cup-shaped hollow than in other parts of the island. On the knoll where the Aircraft rested were the two big rocks which had arrested its progress, and between these the body of the aluminum boat was tightly wedged. At intervals throughout the valley were similar rocky hummocks, but all the space between consisted of an oozy, damp soil of a greenish-brown color, with glints of red where the sun caught it prismatically. Looking at this ooze critically, as the light strengthened, it seemed to the girls to shift somewhat, showing here and there a thick bubble which slowly formed and disappeared.

Orissa put her hand over the side of the boat and withdrew it again.

"Look, Sybil," she exclaimed. "It's oil."

"Hair or salad oil, Ris?"

Orissa sniffed at her dipped finger.

"Petroleum. This is the crude article, and seeps up from some store of oil far down in the earth. There would be a fortune in this find, Syb, if it happened to be in America. Out here it is, of course, valueless."

"Don't they make kerosene and gasoline of it?"

"Yes; of course."

"Then make some gasoline and let's fly away."

Orissa laughed.

"If you will furnish the distillery, Syb, I'll make the gasoline," she said; "but I believe it's a long, slow process, and — "

"Look!" cried Sybil, with a start, as she pointed a slim finger toward the east. From a far distant ridge a man came bounding over the rocks, leaping from one to another with little hesitation in picking his way. He was a big man, but as the light was still dim they could see no more than his huge form. Presently he paused to look behind him; then on he dashed again. He had come from the direction of the bay and was at first headed toward the mountain, but in one of his pauses, whether to regain his breath or look behind, he caught sight of the aeroplane and at once turned directly toward it.

"Do you think," asked Sybil, uneasily, "it is one of our people come to look for us?"

"No," returned Orissa, positively. "That man is a fugitive. He has escaped over the rock hills and is trying to find some hiding place."

"Then I wonder he dares come in our direction."

"It is strange," agreed Orissa, with a shudder as she remembered how helpless they were.

Then, with fascinated gaze, the two girls fell silent and watched the approaching fugitive. As he neared that part of the valley where the oil seeped up he proceeded more cautiously, leaping from one point of rock — or hummock — to another. Once, when forced to step on the level ground, the oil tripped him. He slipped and fell, but was instantly up again and bounding on his way. It seemed no easy task to make speed over such a rough and trackless way, yet here it was easier to proceed than back in those almost impassable hills. It was wonderful that he had succeeded in crossing them at all.

"I think," said Orissa, as she sat cold and staring, "it is Ramon Ganza."

"The outlaw? But he wears white flannels."

"Not now. He probably changed them for the night attack; but I can see

the rings glitter on his fingers, and — none of the other Mexicans is so big."

Sybil nestled a little closer to her friend.

"Have you a revolver, Ris?"

Orissa shook her head.

"No arms at all — not even a hatpin?"

"Nothing whatever to use for defense."

The man was quite near now. Yes; it was Ramon Ganza. His clothes were torn by the rocks and hung around him in rags, and where he had fallen the thick, slimy oil clung to them. His face was smeared with dust and grime and the whole aspect of the outlaw was ghastly and repulsive — perhaps rendered more acute by the jewelled rings that loaded his fingers.

He was obliged to step with more care as he neared the aeroplane, in which crouched the two girls, and finally he came to a halt on a hummock a few paces away. The oil lay more thickly around the Aircraft than elsewhere, and Ramon Ganza eyed it suspiciously. Then he spoke, resting his hands on his hips and leering insolently at Sybil and Orissa.

"So, I have caught you, then," he cried. "Why did you try to escape?"

"For the same reason you are trying to escape, perhaps," retorted Orissa, summoning what courage she could command. "But I warn you that our friends will presently come for us, and — you may not care to meet them."

He uttered an angry snarl and cast a quick glance around the valley. In all its broad stretch not a person other than themselves was visible.

Ramon sat down on his knoll, breathing heavily from his long run.

"Yes, I have run away," he admitted, bitterness and hate in his tone. "I can fight ten — or twenty, perhaps — with my single hand; but not fifty. They have come to put me in prison, those fiends over there," jerking his thumb toward the bay, "and seeing they were too strong for me to oppose, I came away. It is what you call discreet — eh? — which is more safe, if less noble, than valor. But they have the island and they will hunt me down. And once more I shall laugh at them — once more Ramon Ganza will defy them all!"

"How?" asked Orissa, curiously.

"Have you not the flying-machine — the airship?" he asked, simply. "And are you not here alone, and in my power? It carries but two, I see, so one of you shall stay here. The other must fly with me to my own island, where I will take a sailboat and — vanish from the dogs who are hounding me."

"That," said Orissa, with forced calmness, for her heart was beating wildly, "is impossible."

He uttered a fierce growl.

"It is not impossible," he cried. "I have seen your machine fly, and know it can fly when you want it to. It must fly now, or by San Filippe I will

tumble you both out and fly it myself. It is best that you not arouse my anger, for Ramon Ganza is desperate and will not be denied. Get ready, girl! We will fly to my island, or — ” He laughed harshly. “Or you will both ruin your beautiful toilets, and — the mire is dangerous,” he added.

“We have no gasoline,” pleaded Orissa.

“Pah! a trick to deceive me.”

“No; it is true,” cried Sybil, who grew more quiet as fear possessed her.

He hesitated, a look of despair flashing across his features. Then he said with grim determination: “I will see for myself,” and stepped recklessly into the pool of oil that lay between him and the hummock where the aeroplane perched.

The slime reached to his ankle, but he kept doggedly on. The second step sent him knee-deep into the ooze and he had to struggle to wade farther in. But now he sank nearly to his waist and the sticky soil held him fast. Then suddenly the man seemed to realize his peril and uttered a shrill cry of terror.

“Help, young ladies! For the love of humanity — help! Will you see me die like this?” he screamed.

Orissa and Sybil, both horrified, had risen to their feet. The sinking outlaw was fully five yards distant and there seemed no possible way to aid him. But it was terrible to allow a human being to perish in such a way, even when it was a confessed enemy who stood in peril. Orissa caught up a blanket and hurled it toward him, and he seized it eagerly and spread it around him for support. Next moment Sybil had hastily folded the second blanket and cast it with all her strength toward Ganza. One corner he caught and in a moment had added it to the first, now becoming saturated with oil. Yet the blankets would not have availed much had not Ramon’s feet now rested upon a rock far beneath the surface, effectually preventing him from sinking any lower. Almost waist-deep in the puttylike mire he stood a fast prisoner, for no effort of his own could enable him to free himself.

He realized, presently, that he was not fated to be entombed in the mire, so part of his old assurance returned to him. As he stared at the girls and they returned his gaze with horrified looks, he remarked:

“Well, I am caught, as you see; but it was no officer of the law that did it. Ramon Ganza can defy mankind, as he has often proved, but he bows to Nature. Also, young ladies, I beg to point out that — if you have spoken truly — you are likewise caught, and alas! we cannot assist one another. What, then, shall we do for amusement?”

“I think,” said Sybil gravely, “you ought to pray.”

“I? I have forgotten how. What then? Shall we sing songs? If you will accompany the chorus I will delight your ears with my excellent tenor

voice."

This bravado, coming from a man stuck fast in the mire, was so gruesome that it made the girls shudder with aversion. But Sybil, happening to glance up, cried with sudden animation: "Look, Orissa!" and pointed with a trembling finger.

In the distance a group of men had appeared over the edge of the rock hills. They saw the stalled aeroplane and waved their arms encouragingly.

Ganza screwed his head around with some difficulty and also observed the rescue party.

"It cannot matter," he said coolly. "As well one prison as another, and no Mexican dungeon could hug me tighter than this."

He fell silent, however, and no further remarks were exchanged as the distant party drew nearer. They were forced by the treacherous nature of the valley to move cautiously and when they entered the area of oil seepage more than one slipped in the slimy pools. But gradually they approached the spot where the aeroplane rested and now Orissa and Sybil could make out Stephen Kane, Mr. Cumberford, Captain Krell, Chesty Todd and an unknown man in uniform, who were accompanied by several seamen.

The girls stood up and waved their handkerchiefs and then cried out warnings to beware the mire. Not until the rescuers were quite near to the place did they perceive the upper half of Ramon Ganza protruding from the imprisoning slime.

"Dear me," cried Mr. Cumberford; "this is interesting; very! How are you, girls? All right?"

Through the bombardment of eager questions they assured their friends that they had suffered no serious discomfort because of the accident to the Aircraft. "But," added Sybil, "we had a good fright when Ramon Ganza threatened us, unless we assisted him to escape in our aeroplane. Fortunately the mire came to our assistance, for he stepped into a soft place and it held him fast — as you see."

All eyes turned upon the helpless outlaw, who nodded his head with astonishing nonchalance.

"I bid you good morning, senors," said he. "When you are sufficiently rested from your walk, be kind enough to pull me out of this loving embrace; but gently, or you may dislocate my bones."

"Who is this?" asked the officer in uniform, a fine featured young man.

"The rascal who has so boldly annoyed us, regardless of consequences," replied Cumberford, frowning upon the Mexican. "He escaped us last night, but we have him now, sure enough, and I intend to see he is handed over to the authorities of his country, whose laws he has defied."

“What did he do?” the officer inquired, gazing at Ganza curiously.

“Permit me to explain that I robbed a bank — a bank engaged in robbing others under government sanction,” said Ganza. “To rob is a small thing, senors; but it is a crime to be discovered robbing. That was my fault. Others in my native land, who are more successful embezzlers than I, are to-day respected, rich and happy.”

“Was that your only crime?”

“So far as is known, senor. Otherwise I am very good man and quite respectable.”

“He is a tyrant and a bully, and whips his men if they disobey him,” declared Steve.

“Pah! they are curs. The whip is less than they deserve,” retorted Ganza. “But permit me to remind you of my present discomfort, senors. I will gladly exchange this bog for a Mexican prison.”

They managed to drag him out, none too gently, and the seamen scraped the oily slime from his legs and body so that he could stand erect.

Then they turned to examine the condition of the aeroplane.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

ORISSA DECIDES

ONLY BY TAKING the Aircraft entirely apart, decided Steve, might he hope to remove it to the bay, for it could not be flown from the hummock where it was wedged between the rocks. But they could not wait to do that now. The girls were very near one of those feminine crises so familiar to Mrs. Tupper, and their friends realized the nervous strain they had endured and made haste to lead them back to the yacht. The seamen looked after Ramon Ganza, who was so physically exhausted by his late experience that he made no endeavor to escape.

It was a tedious climb, by no means devoid of danger, but so anxious were Orissa and Sybil to escape from the dread valley that they energetically persevered until the last rock hill was passed and they descended the slope to the inlet.

There lay the *Salvador*; keeled over, indeed, but safe and sound. Just without the bay floated the *Mermaid,* and one of her boats was run upon the beach and another clung to the *Salvador's* side.

A hearty cheer greeted the return of the rescue party when Orissa and Sybil were observed approaching with them, and Captain Swanson himself came forward to offer his congratulations.

On their way, Steve had briefly related the events of the night attack and told how the defenders, fortified within the cabin and below decks, had been quite safe from Ganza until the arrival of the torpedo boat relieved the situation. Then the Mexicans fled and made frantic attempts to escape, hiding themselves in the wilderness of rocks that littered the island.

When Captain Swanson learned of the capture of Ramon Ganza and the rescue of the young ladies he decided to attempt no pursuit of the scattered Mexicans but to apply himself promptly to the task of floating the yacht, which he succeeded in doing before night. The *Salvador* was in no way injured and as soon as she had anchored outside the bay was again in commission and fully able to care for herself.

Madeline invited the officers of the *Mermaid* to dine aboard her yacht and Monsieur Risette prepared a repast that surprised even his employer, so elaborate and delicious it proved.

As they conversed together afterward, commenting upon the exciting experiences of the yacht and her company and the daring flights of the Kane Hydro-Aircraft, Madeline said to Captain Swanson:

"What shall we do with Ramon Ganza?"

"Where is he, Miss Dentry?"

“Locked up in our cage. But I don’t want him aboard. Won’t you take him to Magdalena and turn him over to the Mexican police?”

“I am not sure I have authority to arrest the man,” replied the captain gravely. “I will send a wireless to the fleet to-night and endeavor to get the admiral and receive his instructions concerning Ganza.”

He wrote out a message at once and dispatched it to his ship by one of his men, that the wireless operator aboard might repeat it a number of times in the attempt to reach the ship for which it was intended. A wireless message travels farther by night and is more distinct.

Madeline now urged Captain Swanson to carry Chica and Pietro to Magdalena, which would enable them to reach their homes quickly and he agreed to do this. Miss Dentry supplied the two with sufficient money for their needs and the Red-beard and the child said their goodbyes and were rowed to the *Mermaid.*

The yacht party, now reunited and safe from further molestation, thoroughly enjoyed the evening and expressed their gratitude again and again for the prompt assistance rendered them by their fellow countrymen. Madeline had already written a nice letter to the admiral, which she entrusted to Captain Swanson.

As Orissa and Sybil, as well as many others of the party, had passed a trying and sleepless night, the officers thoughtfully retired early, returning to their quarters on the *Mermaid.*

Breakfast was in progress on the *Salvador* next morning when a note was brought from the captain of the torpedo boat.

“I was fortunate in reaching the admiral,” it said, “and I — beg to enclose you a copy of the message I have received from him in reply. I further regret to state that I am ordered to rejoin the fleet without delay and must therefore bid you all adieu.”

The wireless read: “President Madero proclaimed a general amnesty to Mexican refugees some three months ago. On the list of pardons appears the name of Ramon Ganza.”

Madeline drew a long breath.

“I’m sorry for that,” she said. “Ramon Ganza has escaped the penalty of breaking his country’s laws and we are powerless to punish him ourselves — even though he struck poor Mason with a knife.”

“How is Mason getting along?” asked Orissa.

“Very nicely,” stated Mr. Cumberford. “It was a deep cut, but reached no vital organs and the man will soon be as good as new.”

“That does not alter the fact that Ganza is a wicked desperado,” said Sybil.

“It’s a shame to allow him to escape,” exclaimed Mr. Tupper, indignantly. “Can’t we arrest him for disturbing the peace, and trying to capture our yacht, and attempting to murder one of the crew?”

“No,” replied Mr. Cumberford. “This island doesn’t belong to the United States. I believe it is Mexican territory. But if we can prove damages we might be able to recover from the Mexican government — and then, again, we might not.”

“I’ll never put in a claim, for my part,” said Madeline, laughing. “But what are we to do with Ramon Ganza — and those three rascals imprisoned with him, whom Chesty captured and brought to us?”

“Let Chesty get rid of them; they’re his prisoners,” suggested Sybil.

“The chief bandit is your own prisoner — and Orissa’s,” declared Chesty. “What do you intend to do with him, Miss Cumberford?”

Sybil laughed.

“It’s a problem,” she confessed. “Can you solve it, Miss Dentry?”

“I fear not,” answered Madeline, indeed puzzled. “Our prisoners are likely to prove white elephants on our hands. To carry them to America would involve us in endless difficulties, and — I have other plans, wherein their presence is better dispensed with.”

“Then,” said Chesty, after due reflection, “let us leave them all behind us, on the island. Not this island, where they would be prisoners and perhaps starve, because I have sunk their gasoline launch and they cannot get away, but on Ramon Ganza’s own island. Then the fellow may decide his future as he deems best and we may wash our hands of the whole disagreeable affair.”

“I hope you won’t inform him that he is pardoned,” said Mr. Tupper, earnestly.

“Why not?” asked Madeline. “Let us return good for evil. Perhaps, when Ramon Ganza is no longer a refugee and can face the world a free man, he will redeem his past and become honest.”

“I doubt it,” declared Mr. Cumberford; “but I think you are right to give him the chance.”

It was so decided. There remained on Owl Island but one of Ganza’s rowboats which would be available for use by the men hidden among the rocks, but at the larger island was a small sailboat in which, during calm weather, the chief might go for his men and transport them to their former quarters.

Next morning a party accompanied Steve into the valley once more, where the Aircraft was taken apart and brought with considerable labor to the bay, from whence it was conveyed to the yacht and compactly stored away below decks.

“There’s no use putting it together until we get back home,” said the inventor; and his partner, Mr. Cumberford, agreed with him.

This task had consumed the entire day, during which Orissa and Sybil had kept to their staterooms, trying to quiet their nerves and get some much-needed sleep. Madeline, in the meantime, had ordered a store of provisions placed on the beach for the use of the band of Mexicans until they were rescued by their leader, as she did not wish them to suffer for lack of food, however mischievous and lawless they might be.

The following day Captain Krell hoisted anchor and headed for the larger island, and it was good to all to feel the water slipping along underneath the *Salvador’s* thin keel again.

Ramon Ganza accepted his liberty with the same stoical indifference that characterized all his actions. He strutted a bit when Chesty told him of his pardon, but declared he would continue to inhabit the island where he was virtually a king.

“With no fear of a prison to haunt me,” he said, “I can make the island a paradise. Many Mexicans will settle there and become my subjects.”

“You’ll have to cut out the flogging, then,” suggested Chesty.

“It will gratify me to do so. Before, I have the obligation to flog the disobedient ones because I dared not send them away; but now, if they prove obstinate, I may send them back to Mexico.”

He took off his hat with an elaborate bow as the *Salvador’s* boat left him standing with his three men on the little dock below his residence; but Francisco and the other two scowled fiercely at Mr. Todd, whom they reproached for deceiving them about Madero’s reward, although they had elected to remain with their old master rather than be taken to America.

“It’s a good thing for civilization that those villains are sequestrated on a far-away, unknown island,” remarked Chesty, when he had regained the yacht’s deck. “I suppose anyone can reform, if he tries hard, but I’ll bet a hat that Francisco and his comrades never make the attempt.”

“We are well rid of them, in any event,” asserted Mr. Cumberford.

Orissa and Sybil appeared at dinner, both considerably improved in spirits after their long rest.

“When do we sail for San Diego?” Sybil asked Madeline.

“Captain Krell is ready. I am waiting for Orissa and you to decide,” was the reply.

Orissa looked up in surprise.

“What have we to decide?” she inquired.

“Merely which way we shall proceed. My yacht hasn’t had a fair trial yet and I had in mind a trip to Honolulu before we went in chase of two runaway

girls. We still have on board enough coal and supplies for such a trip and I have resolved to invite you all to make it in my company — in which case we will head directly for Hawaii from here."

Orissa was thoughtful for a time and looked inquiringly at Steve, who smiled in return.

"I think such a trip would do us all good," he suggested.

"The Flying Girl has no important engagements, at present," added Mr. Todd, the press agent.

"If she had, I think she deserves a little recreation after her late trying experiences," said Mr. Cumberford.

"Why, Orissa, it has all been decided in advance," exclaimed Sybil. "They're merely asking our consent out of politeness."

Orissa turned to Madeline and pressed her hand gratefully.

"You've really been our guardian angel, Miss Dentry," she said. "We can never repay your great kindness and generosity, nor properly thank you for what you have done for us."

"Why should you?" asked Madeline. "Think what a splendid time I've had during this adventure, all due to the Flying Girl and her chum — and to a defect in the famous Kane Aircraft. But if you sincerely wish to please me, come with me on the trip to Honolulu."

"Of course I will," Orissa responded. "I've always longed for an ocean voyage, and in such company, and on the dear old *Salvador,* the trip will be delightful."

The others of the Kane-Cumberford party, who were every one eager to go, rapturously applauded this decision.

MARY LOUISE

Mary Louise, published by Reilly & Britton in 1916, is the first book in a series Baum created about girl detectives. He wrote the first four volumes. The fifth was based on a fragment by Baum. Emma Speed Sampson wrote five later books in the series. The entire series appeared under Baum's pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne, which he'd employed for his popular *Aunt Jane's Nieces* series. Mary Louise features a 15-year-old girl, Mary Louise Burrows, as its heroine. She is at boarding school and unusually mature for her age, which leads to some tension with other students. When her grandfather, Colonel Hathaway, is accused of treason against the Unites States, she and her friends must prove his innocence, assisted by a federal agent and his daughter. Baum named the title character after his sister, Mary Louise Baum Brewster.

Three early edition copies of 'Mary Louise'

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CHAPTER I

JUST AN ARGUMENT

"It's positively cruel!" pouted Jennie Allen, one of a group of girls occupying a garden bench in the ample grounds of Miss Stearne's School for Girls, at Beverly.

"It's worse than that; it's insulting," declared Mable Westervelt, her big dark eyes flashing indignantly.

"Doesn't it seem to reflect on our characters?" timidly asked Dorothy Knerr.

"Indeed it does!" asserted Sue Finley. "But here comes Mary Louise; let's ask her opinion."

"Phoo! Mary Louise is only a day scholar," said Jennie. "The restriction doesn't apply to her at all."

"I'd like to hear what she says, anyhow," remarked Dorothy. "Mary Louise has a way of untangling things, you know."

"She's rather too officious to suit me," Mable Westervelt retorted, "and she's younger than any of us. One would think, the way she poses as monitor at this second-rate, run-down boarding school, that Mary Louise Burrows made the world."

"Oh, Mable! I've never known her to pose at all," said Sue. "But, hush; she mustn't overhear us and, besides, if we want her to intercede with Miss Stearne we must not offend her."

The girl they were discussing came leisurely down a path, her books under one arm, the other hand holding a class paper which she examined in a cursory way as she walked. She wore a dark skirt and a simple shirtwaist, both quite modish and becoming, and her shoes were the admiration and envy of half the girls at the school. Dorothy Knerr used to say that "Mary Louise's clothes always looked as if they grew on her," but that may have been partially accounted for by the grace of her slim form and her unconscious but distinctive poise of bearing. Few people would describe Mary Louise Burrows as beautiful, while all would agree that she possessed charming manners. And she was fifteen — an age when many girls are both awkward and shy.

As she drew near to the group on the bench they ceased discussing Mary Louise but continued angrily to canvass their latest grievance.

"What do you think, Mary Louise," demanded Jennie, as the girl paused before them, "of this latest outrage?"

"What outrage, Jen?" with a whimsical smile at their indignant faces.

"This latest decree of the tyrant Stearne. Didn't you see it posted on the

blackboard this morning? 'The young ladies will hereafter refrain from leaving the school grounds after the hour of six p.m., unless written permission is first secured from the Principal. Any infraction of this rule will result in suspension or permanent dismissal.' We're determined not to stand for this rule a single minute. We intend to strike for our liberties."

"Well," said Mary Louise reflectively, "I'm not surprised. The wonder is that Miss Stearne hasn't stopped your evening parades before now. This is a small school in a small town, where everyone knows everyone else; otherwise you'd have been guarded as jealously as if you were in a convent. Did you ever know or hear of any other private boarding school where the girls were allowed to go to town evenings, or whenever they pleased out of school hours?"

"Didn't I tell you?" snapped Mable, addressing the group. "Mary Louise is always on the wrong side. Other schools are not criterions for this ramshackle establishment, anyhow. We have twelve boarders and four day scholars, and how Miss Stearne ever supports the place and herself on her income is an occult problem that the geometries can't solve. She pays little Miss Dandler, her assistant, the wages of an ordinary housemaid; the furniture is old and shabby and the classrooms gloomy; the food is more nourishing than feastful and the tablecloths are so patched and darned that it's a wonder they hold together."

Mary Louise quietly seated herself upon the bench beside them.

"You're looking on the seamy side, Mable," she said with a smile, "and you're not quite just to the school. I believe your parents sent you here because Miss Stearne is known to be a very competent teacher and her school has an excellent reputation of long standing. For twenty years this delightful old place, which was once General Barlow's residence, has been a select school for young ladies of the best families. Gran'pa Jim says it's an evidence of good breeding and respectability to have attended Miss Stearne's school."

"Well, what's that got to do with this insulting order to stay in evenings?" demanded Sue Finley. "You'd better put all that rot you're talking into a circular and mail it to the mothers of imbecile daughters. Miss Stearne has gone a step too far in her tyranny, as she'll find out. We know well enough what it means. There's no inducement for us to wander into that little tucked-up town of Beverly after dinner except to take in the picture show, which is our one innocent recreation. I'm sure we've always conducted ourselves most properly. This order simply means we must cut out the picture show and, if we permit it to stand, heaven only knows what we shall do to amuse ourselves."

“We’ll do something worse, probably,” suggested Jennie.

“What’s your idea about it, Mary Louise?” asked Dorothy.

“Don’t be a prude,” warned Mable, glaring at the young girl. “Try to be honest and sensible — if you can — and give us your advice. Shall we disregard the order, and do as we please, or be namby-pambies and submit to the outrage? You’re a day scholar and may visit the picture shows as often as you like. Consider our position, cooped up here like a lot of chickens and refused the only harmless amusement the town affords.”

“Gran’pa Jim,” observed Mary Louise, musingly, “always advises me to look on both sides of a question before making up my mind, because every question has to have two sides or it couldn’t be argued. If Miss Stearne wishes to keep you away from the pictures, she has a reason for it; so let’s discover what the reason is.”

“To spoil any little fun we might have,” asserted Mable bitterly.

“No; I can’t believe that,” answered Mary Louise. “She isn’t unkindly, we all know, nor is she too strict with her girls. I’ve heard her remark that all her boarders are young ladies who can be trusted to conduct themselves properly on all occasions; and she’s right about that. We must look for her reason somewhere else and I think it’s in the pictures themselves.”

“As for that,” said Jennie, “I’ve seen Miss Stearne herself at the picture theatre twice within the last week.”

“Then that’s it; she doesn’t like the character of the pictures shown.
I think, myself, girls, they’ve been rather rank lately.”

“What’s wrong with them?”

“I like pictures as well as you do,” said Mary Louise, “and Gran’pa Jim often takes me to see them. Tuesday night a man shot another in cold blood and the girl the murderer was in love with helped him to escape and married him. I felt like giving her a good shaking, didn’t you? She didn’t act like a real girl at all. And Thursday night the picture story told of a man with two wives and of divorces and disgraceful doings generally. Gran’pa Jim took me away before it was over and I was glad to go. Some of the pictures are fine and dandy, but as long as the man who runs the theatre mixes the horrid things with the decent ones — and we can’t know beforehand which is which — it’s really the safest plan to keep away from the place altogether. I’m sure that’s the position Miss Stearne takes, and we can’t blame her for it. If we do, it’s an evidence of laxness of morals in ourselves.”

The girls received this statement sullenly, yet they had no logical reply to controvert it. So Mary Louise, feeling that her explanation of the distasteful edict was not popular with her friends, quietly rose and sauntered to the gate, on her way home.

“Pah!” sneered Mable Westervelt, looking after the slim figure, “I’m always suspicious of those goody-goody creatures. Mark my words, girls: Mary Louise will fall from her pedestal some day. She isn’t a bit better than the rest of us, in spite of her angel baby ways, and I wouldn’t be surprised if she turned out to be a regular hypocrite!”

CHAPTER II

GRAN'PA JIM

Beverly is an old town and not especially progressive. It lies nearly two miles from a railway station and has little attractiveness for strangers. Beverly contains several beautiful old residences, however, built generations ago and still surrounded by extensive grounds where the trees and shrubbery are now generally overgrown and neglected.

One of these fine old places Miss Stearne rented for her boarding school; another, quite the most imposing residence in the town, had been leased some two years previous to the time of this story by Colonel James Weatherby, whose family consisted of his widowed daughter, Mrs. Burrows, and his grandchild, Mary Louise Burrows. Their only servants were an old negro, Uncle Eben, and his wife, Aunt Polly, who were Beverly bred and had been hired when the Colonel first came to town and took possession of the stately Vandeventer mansion.

Colonel Weatherby was a man of exceptionally distinguished appearance, tall and dignified, with courtly manners and an air of prosperity that impressed the simple villagers with awe. His snow-white hair and piercing dark eyes, his immaculate dress upon all occasions, the whispered comments on his ample deposits in the local bank, all contributed to render him remarkable among the three or four hundred ordinary inhabitants of Beverly, who, after his two years' residence among them, scarcely knew more of him than is above related. For Colonel Weatherby was an extremely reserved man and seldom deigned to exchange conversation with his neighbors. In truth, he had nothing in common with them and even when he walked out with Mary Louise he merely acknowledged the greeting of those he met by a dignified nod of his stately head.

With Mary Louise, however, he would converse fluently and with earnestness, whether at home during the long evenings or on their frequent walks through the country, which were indulged in on Saturdays and holidays during the months that school was in session and much more often during vacations. The Colonel owned a modest automobile which he kept in the stable and only drove on rare occasions, although one of Uncle Eben's duties was to keep the car in apple-pie order. Colonel Weatherby loved best to walk and Mary Louise enjoyed their tramps together because Gran'pa Jim always told her so many interesting things and was such a charming companion. He often developed a strain of humor in the girl's society and would relate anecdotes that aroused in her spontaneous laughter, for she possessed a keen sense of the ludicrous. Yes, Gran'pa Jim was really funny,

when in the mood, and as jolly a comrade as one would wish.

He was fond of poetry, too, and the most severe trial Mary Louise was forced to endure was when he carried a book of poems in his pocket and insisted on reading from it while they rested in a shady nook by the roadside or on the bank of the little river that flowed near by the town. Mary Louise had no soul for poetry, but she would have endured far greater hardships rather than forfeit the genial companionship of Gran'pa Jim.

It was only during these past two years that she had come to know her grandfather so intimately and to become as fond of him as she was proud. Her earlier life had been one of so many changes that the constant shifting had rather bewildered her. First she remembered living in a big city house where she was cared for by a nurse who was never out of sight or hearing. There it was that "Mamma Bee" — Mrs. Beatrice Burrows — appeared to the child at times as a beautiful vision and often as she bent over her little daughter for a good-night kiss the popular society woman, arrayed in evening or ball costume, would seem to Mary Louise like a radiant angel descended straight from heaven.

She knew little of her mother in those days, which were quite hazy in memory because she was so young. The first change she remembered was an abrupt flitting from the splendid city house to a humble cottage in a retired village. There was no maid now, nor other servant whatever. Mamma Bee did the cooking and sweeping, her face worn and anxious, while Gran'pa Jim walked the floor of the little sitting room day by day, only pausing at times to read to Mary Louise stories from her nursery books.

This life did not last very long — perhaps a year or so — and then they were in a big hotel in another city, reached after a long and tiresome railway journey. Here the girl saw little of her grandfather, for a governess came daily to teach Mary Louise to read and write and to do sums on a pretty slate framed in silver. Then, suddenly, in dead of night, away they whisked again, traveling by train until long after the sun was up, when they came to a pretty town where they kept house again.

There were servants, this time, and horses and carriages and pretty clothes for Mary Louise and Mamma Bee. The little girl was sent to a school just a block away from her home. She remembered Miss Jenkins well, for this teacher made much of her and was so kind and gentle that Mary Louise progressed rapidly in her studies.

But the abrupt changes did not end here. Mary Louise came home from school one afternoon and found her dear mother sobbing bitterly as she clung around the neck of Gran'pa Jim, who stood in the middle of the room as still as if he had been a marble statue. Mary Louise promptly mingled her tears

with those of her mother, without knowing why, and then there was a quick "packing-up" and a rush to the railway again.

Next they were in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Conant, very pleasant people who seemed to be old friends of Mamma Bee and Gran'pa Jim. It was a cosy house, not big and pretentious, and Mary Louise liked it. Peter Conant and Gran'pa Jim had many long talks together, and it was here that the child first heard her grandfather called "Colonel." Others might have called him that before, but she had not heard them. Mrs. Conant was very deaf and wore big spectacles, but she always had a smile on her face and her voice was soft and pleasing.

After a few days Mamma Bee told her daughter she was going to leave her in the care of the Conants for a time, while she traveled to a foreign country with Gran'pa Jim. The girl was surprised at being abandoned but accepted her fate quietly when it was explained that she was to go to school while living with the Conants, which she could not do if she was traveling with her mother and grandfather, who were making this arrangement for the girl's best good.

Three years Mary Louise lived with the Conants and had little to complain of. Mr. Conant was a lawyer and was at his office all day, while Mrs. Conant was very kind to the girl and looked after her welfare with motherly care.

At last, quite unexpectedly, Mary Louise's trunk was packed and she was taken to the station to meet a train on which were her mother and grandfather. They did not leave the cars except to shake hands with the Conants and thank them for their care of Mary Louise. A moment later the train bore away the reunited family to their new home in Beverly.

Mary Louise now found she must "get acquainted" with Mamma Bee and Gran'pa Jim all over again, for during these last three years she had developed so fast in mind and body that her previous knowledge of her relatives seemed like a hazy dream. The Colonel also discovered a new granddaughter, to whom he became passionately attached. For two years now they had grown together until they were great friends and cronies.

As for Mrs. Burrows, she seemed to have devoted her whole life to her father, the Colonel. She had lost much of her former beauty and had become a thin, pale woman with anxious eyes and an expectant and deprecating air, as if always prepared to ward off a sudden blow. Her solicitude for the old Colonel was almost pathetic and while he was in her presence she constantly hovered around him, doing little things for his comfort which he invariably acknowledged with his courtly bow and a gracious word of thanks.

It was through her association with this cultured old gentleman that Mary Louise had imbibed a certain degree of logic and philosophy unknown to

many girls of fifteen. He taught her consideration for others as the keynote of happiness, yet he himself declined to mingle with his fellow men. He abhorred sulking and was always cheerful and pleasant in his home circle, yet when others approached him familiarly he resented it with a frown. He taught his granddaughter to be generous to the poor and supplied her freely with money for charity, yet he personally refused all demands upon him by churches or charitable societies.

In their long talks together he displayed an intimate acquaintance with men and affairs, but never referred in any way to his former life.

“Are you really a colonel?” Mary Louise once asked him.

“Men call me so,” he replied, but there was a tone in his voice that warned the girl not to pursue the subject further. She knew his moods almost as well as her mother did.

The Colonel was very particular as to dress. He obtained his own clothing from a New York tailor and took a keen interest in the gowns of his daughter and of Mary Louise, his taste in female apparel being so remarkable that they were justly considered the best dressed women in Beverly. The house they were living in contained an excellent library and was furnished in a quaint, old-fashioned manner that was very appealing to them all. Mary Louise sincerely hoped there would be no more changes in their lives and that they might continue to live in Beverly for many years to come.

CHAPTER III

A SURPRISE

On the afternoon when our story begins Mary Louise walked home from school and found Colonel Weatherby waiting for her in the garden, leggings strapped to his gaunt legs, the checked walking-cap on his head, a gold-headed crop in his hand.

"Let us go for a walk, my dear," he proposed. "It is Friday, so you will have all day to-morrow in which to get your lessons."

"Oh, it won't take all day for that," she replied with a laugh. "I'll be glad of the walk. Where shall we go, Gran'pa Jim?"

"Perhaps to the mill-race. We haven't visited it for a long time."

She ran to the house to put away her books and get her stout shoes, and presently rejoined him, when together they strolled up the street and circled round the little town until they came to the river bank. Then they followed the stream toward the old mill.

Mary Louise told her grandfather of the recent edict of Miss Stearne and the indignation it had aroused in her girl boarders.

"And what do you think of it, Gran'pa Jim?" she asked in conclusion.

"What do YOU think of it, Mary Louise?"

"It is rather hard on the girls, who have enjoyed their liberty for so long; but I think it is Miss Stearne's plan to keep them away from the picture theatre."

"And so?"

"And so," she said, "it may do the girls more good than harm."

He smiled approvingly. It was his custom to draw out her ideas on all questions, rather than to assert his own in advance. If he found her wrong or misinformed he would then correct her and set her right.

"So you do not approve of the pictures, Mary Louise?"

"Not all of them, Gran'pa Jim, although they all seem to have been 'passed by the Board of Censors' — perhaps when their eyes were shut. I love the good pictures, and I know that you do, but some we have seen lately gave me the shivers. So, perhaps Miss Stearne is right."

"I am confident she is," he agreed. "Some makers of pictures may consider it beneficial to emphasize good by exhibiting evil, by way of contrast, but they are doubtless wrong. I've an old-fashioned notion that young girls should be shielded, as much as possible, from knowledge of the world's sins and worries, which is sure to be impressed upon them in later years. We cannot ignore evil, unfortunately, but we can often avoid it."

"But why, if these pictures are really harmful, does Mr. Welland exhibit

them at his theatre?" asked the girl.

"Mr. Welland is running his theatre to make money," explained the Colonel, "and the surest way to make money is to cater to the tastes of his patrons, the majority of whom demand picture plays of the more vivid sort, such as you and I complain of. So the fault lies not with the exhibitor but with the sensation-loving public. If Mr. Welland showed only such pictures as have good morals he would gain the patronage of Miss Stearne's twelve young ladies, and a few others, but the masses would refuse to support him."

"Then," said Mary Louise, "the masses ought to be educated to desire better things."

"Many philanthropists have tried to do that, and signally failed. I believe the world is gradually growing better, my dear, but ages will pass before mankind attains a really wholesome mental atmosphere. However, we should each do our humble part toward the moral uplift of our fellows and one way is not to condone what we know to be wrong."

He spoke earnestly, in a conversational tone that robbed his words of preachment. Mary Louise thought Gran'pa Jim must be an exceptionally good man and hoped she would grow, in time, to be like him. The only thing that puzzled her was why he refused to associate with his fellow men, while at heart he so warmly espoused their uplift and advancement.

They had now reached the mill-race and had seated themselves on the high embankment where they could watch the water swirl swiftly beneath them. The mill was not grinding to-day and its neighborhood seemed quite deserted. Here the old Colonel and his granddaughter sat dreamily for a long time, conversing casually on various subjects or allowing themselves to drift into thought. It was a happy hour for them both and was only interrupted when Jackson the miller passed by on his way home from the village. The man gave the Colonel a surly nod, but he smiled on Mary Louise, the girl being as popular in the district as her grandfather was unpopular.

After Jackson had passed them by Gran'pa Jim rose slowly and proposed they return home.

"If we go through the village," said he, "we shall reach home, without hurrying ourselves, in time to dress for dinner. I object to being hurried, don't you, Mary Louise?"

"Yes, indeed, if it can be avoided."

Going through the village saved them half a mile in distance, but Mary Louise would not have proposed it herself, on account of the Colonel's well-known aversion to meeting people. This afternoon, however, he made the proposal himself, so they strolled away to the main road that led through the one business street of the little town.

At this hour there was little life in Beverly's main street. The farmers who drove in to trade had now returned home; the town women were busy getting supper and most of their men were at home feeding the stock or doing the evening chores. However, they passed an occasional group of two or three and around the general store stood a few other natives, listlessly awaiting the call to the evening meal. These cast curious glances at the well-known forms of the old man and the young girl, for his two years' residence had not made the testy old Colonel any less strange to them. They knew all about him there was to know — which was nothing at all — and understood they must not venture to address him as they would have done any other citizen.

Cooper's Hotel, a modest and not very inviting frame building, stood near the center of the village and as Mary Louise and her grandfather passed it the door opened and a man stepped out and only avoided bumping into them by coming to a full stop. They stopped also, of necessity, and Mary Louise was astonished to find the stranger staring into the Colonel's face with an expression of mingled amazement and incredulity on his own.

"James Hathaway, by all the gods!" he exclaimed, adding in wondering tones: "And after all these years!"

Mary Louise, clinging to her grandfather's arm, cast an upward glance at his face. It was tensely drawn; the eyelids were half closed and through their slits the Colonel's eyes glinted fiercely.

"You are mistaken, fellow. Out of my way!" he said, and seizing the girl's arm, which she had withdrawn in affright, he marched straight ahead. The man fell back, but stared after them with his former expression of bewildered surprise. Mary Louise noted this in a glance over her shoulder and something in the stranger's attitude — was it a half veiled threat? — caused her to shudder involuntarily.

The Colonel strode on, looking neither to right nor left, saying never a word. They reached their home grounds, passed up the path in silence and entered the house. The Colonel went straight to the stairs and cried in a loud voice:

"Beatrice!"

The tone thrilled Mary Louise with a premonition of evil. A door was hastily opened and her mother appeared at the head of the stairs, looking down on them with the customary anxiety on her worn features doubly accentuated.

"Again, father?" she asked in a voice that slightly trembled.

"Yes. Come with me to the library, Beatrice."

CHAPTER IV
SHIFTING SANDS

Mary Louise hid herself in the drawing-room, where she could watch the closed door of the library opposite. At times she trembled with an unknown dread; again, she told herself that no harm could possibly befall her dear, good Gran'pa Jim or her faithful, loving mother. Yet why were they closeted in the library so long, and how could the meeting with that insolent stranger affect Colonel Weatherby so strongly?

After a long time her mother came out, looking more pallid and harassed than ever but strangely composed. She kissed Mary Louise, who came to meet her, and said:

"Get ready for dinner, dear. We are late."

The girl went to her room, dazed and uneasy. At dinner her mother appeared at the table, eating little or nothing, but Gran'pa Jim was not present. Afterward she learned that he had gone over to Miss Stearne's School for Girls, where he completed important arrangements concerning his granddaughter.

When dinner was over Mary Louise went into the library and, drawing a chair to where the light of the student lamp flooded her book, tried to read. But the words were blurred and her mind was in a sort of chaos. Mamma Bee had summoned Aunt Polly and Uncle Eben to her room, where she was now holding a conference with the faithful colored servants. A strange and subtle atmosphere of unrest pervaded the house; Mary Louise scented radical changes in their heretofore pleasant home life, but what these changes were to be or what necessitated them she could not imagine.

After a while she heard Gran'pa Jim enter the hall and hang up his hat and coat and place his cane in the rack. Then he came to the door of the library and stood a moment looking hard at Mary Louise. Her own eyes regarded her grandfather earnestly, questioning him as positively as if she had spoken.

He drew a chair before her and leaning over took both her hands in his and held them fast.

"My dear," he said gently, "I regret to say that another change has overtaken us. Have you ever heard of 'harlequin fate'? 'Tis a very buffoon of mischief and irony that is often permitted to dog our earthly footsteps and prevent us from becoming too content with our lot. For a time you and I, little maid, good comrades though we have been, must tread different paths. Your mother and I are going away, presently, and we shall leave you here in Beverly, where you may continue your studies under the supervision of Miss Stearne, as a boarder at her school. This house, although the rental is paid for

six weeks longer, we shall at once vacate, leaving Uncle Eben and Aunt Sallie to put it in shape and close it properly. Do you understand all this, Mary Louise?"

"I understand what you have told me, Gran'pa Jim. But why — "

"Miss Stearne will be supplied with ample funds to cover your tuition and to purchase any supplies you may need. You will have nothing to worry about and so may devote all your energies to your studies."

"But how long — -"

"Trust me and your mother to watch over your welfare, for you are very dear to us, believe me," he continued, disregarding her interruptions. "Do you remember the address of the Conants, at Dorfield?"

"Of course."

"Well, you may write to me, or to your mother, once a week, addressing the letter in care of Peter Conant. But if you are questioned by anyone," he added, gravely, "do not mention the address of the Conants or hint that I have gone to Dorfield. Write your letters privately and unobserved, in your own room, and post them secretly, by your own hand, so that no one will be aware of the correspondence. Your caution in this regard will be of great service to your mother and me. Do you think you can follow these instructions?"

"To be sure I can, Gran'pa Jim. But why must I — -"

"Some day," said he, "you will understand this seeming mystery and be able to smile at your present perplexities. There is nothing to fear, my dear child, and nothing that need cause you undue anxiety. Keep a brave heart and, whatever happens, have faith in Gran'pa Jim. Your mother — as good a woman as God ever made — believes in me, and she knows all. Can you accept her judgment, Mary Louise? Can you steadfastly ignore any aspersions that may be cast upon my good name?"

"Yes, Gran'pa Jim."

She had not the faintest idea what he referred to. Not until afterward was she able to piece these strange remarks together and make sense of them. Just now the girl was most impressed by the fact that her mother and grandfather were going away and would leave her as a boarder with Miss Stearne. The delightful home life, wherein she had passed the happiest two years of her existence, was to be broken up for good and all.

"Now I must go to your mother. Kiss me, my dear!"

As he rose to his feet Mary Louise also sprang from her chair and the Colonel folded his arms around her and for a moment held her tight in his embrace. Then he slowly released her, holding the girl at arms' length while he studied her troubled face with grave intensity. One kiss upon her upturned forehead and the old man swung around and left the room without another

word.

Mary Louise sank into her chair, a little sob in her throat. She felt very miserable, indeed, at that moment. “Harlequin fate!” she sighed. “I wonder why it has chosen us for its victims?”

After an hour passed in the deserted library she stole away to her own room and prepared for bed. In the night, during her fitful periods of sleep, she dreamed that her mother bent over her and kissed her lips — once, twice, a third time.

The girl woke with a start. A dim light flooded her chamber, for outside was a full moon. But the room was habited only by shadows, save for her own feverish, restless body. She turned over to find a cooler place and presently fell asleep again.

CHAPTER V

OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

"And you say they are gone?" cried Mary Louise in surprise, as she came down to breakfast the next morning and found the table laid for one and old Eben waiting to serve her.

"In de night, chile. I don' know 'zac'ly wha' der time, by de clock, but de Kun'l an' Missy Burrows did'n' sleep heah a-tall."

"There is no night train," said the girl, seating herself thoughtfully at the table. "How could they go, Uncle?"

"Jus' took deh auto'bile, chile, an' de Kun'l done druv it heself — bag an' baggage. But — see heah, Ma'y 'Ouise — we-all ain' s'pose to know nuth'n' bout dat git-away. Ef some imper'nent puss'n' ask us, we ain' gwine t' know how dey go, nohow. De Kun'l say tell Ma'y 'Ouise she ain' gwine know noth'n' a-tall, 'bout nuth'n', 'cause 'tain't nobody's business."

"I understand, Uncle Eben."

She reflected upon this seemingly unnecessary secrecy as she ate her breakfast. After a time she asked:

"What are you and Aunt Polly going to do, Uncle?"

"Fus' thing," replied the old negro, "Polly gwine git yo' traps all pack up an' I gwine take 'em ovah to Missy Stearne's place in de wheel-barrer. Den I gwine red up de house an' take de keys to Mass' Gimble, de agent. Den Polly an' me we go back to our own li'l' house in de lane yondeh. De Kun'l done 'range ev'thing propeh, an' we gwine do jus' like he say."

Mary Louise felt lonely and uncomfortable in the big house, now that her mother and grandfather had gone away. Since the move was inevitable, she would be glad to go to Miss Stearne as soon as possible. She helped Aunt Polly pack her trunk and suit case, afterwards gathering into a bundle the things she had forgotten or overlooked, all of which personal belongings Uncle Eben wheeled over to the school. Then she bade the faithful servitors good-bye, promising to call upon them at their humble home, and walked slowly over the well-known path to Miss Stearne's establishment, where she presented herself to the principal.

It being Saturday, Miss Stearne was seated at a desk in her own private room, where she received Mary Louise and bade her sit down.

Miss Stearne was a woman fifty years of age, tall and lean, with a deeply lined face and a tendency to nervousness that was increasing with her years. She was a very clever teacher and a very incompetent business woman, so that her small school, of excellent standing and repute, proved difficult to finance. In character Miss Stearne was temperamental enough to have been a

genius. She was kindly natured, fond of young girls and cared for her pupils with motherly instincts seldom possessed by those in similar positions. She was lax in many respects, severely strict in others. Not always were her rules and regulations dictated by good judgment. Therefore her girls usually found as much fault as other boarding school girls are prone to do, and with somewhat more reason. On the other hand, no one could question the principal's erudition or her skill in imparting her knowledge to others.

"Sit down, Mary Louise," she said to the girl. "This is an astonishing change in your life, is it not? Colonel Weatherby came to me last evening and said he had been suddenly called away on important matters that would brook no delay, and that your mother was to accompany him on the journey. He begged me to take you in as a regular boarder and of course I consented. You have been one of my most tractable and conscientious pupils and I have been proud of your progress. But the school is quite full, as you know; so at first I was uncertain that I could accommodate you here; but Miss Dandler, my assistant, has given up her room to you and I shall put a bed for her in my own sleeping chamber, so that difficulty is now happily arranged. I suppose your family left Beverly this morning, by the early train?"

"They have gone," replied Mary Louise, non-committally.

"You will be lonely for a time, of course, but presently you will feel quite at home in the school because you know all of my girls so well. It is not like a strange girl coming into a new school. And remember, Mary Louise, that you are to come to me for any advice and assistance you need, for I promised your grandfather that I would fill your mother's place as far as I am able to do so."

Mary Louise reflected, with a little shock of pain, that her mother had never been very near to her and that Miss Stearne might well perform such perfunctory duties as the girl had been accustomed to expect. But no one could ever take the place of Gran'pa Jim.

"Thank you, Miss Stearne," she said. "I am sure I shall be quite contented here. Is my room ready?"

"Yes; and your trunk has already been placed in it. Let me know, my dear, if there is anything you need."

Mary Louise went to her room and was promptly pounced upon by Dorothy Knerr and Sue Finley, who roomed just across the hall from her and were delighted to find she was to become a regular boarder. They asked numerous questions as they helped her to unpack and settle her room, but accepted her conservative answers without comment.

At the noon luncheon Mary Louise was accorded a warm reception by the assembled boarders and this cordial welcome by her school-mates did much

to restore the girl to her normal condition of cheerfulness. She even joined a group in a game of tennis after luncheon and it was while she was playing that little Miss Dandler came with, a message that Mary Louise was wanted in Miss Stearne's room at once.

"Take my racquet," she said to Jennie Allen; "I'll be back in a minute."

When she entered Miss Stearne's room she was surprised to find herself confronted by the same man whom she and her grandfather had encountered in front of Cooper's Hotel the previous afternoon — the man whom she secretly held responsible for this abrupt change in her life. The principal sat crouched over her desk as if overawed by her visitor, who stopped his nervous pacing up and down the room as the girl appeared.

"This is Mary Louise Burrows," said Miss Stearne, in a weak voice.

"Huh!" He glared at her with a scowl for a moment and then demanded: "Where's Hathaway?"

Mary Louise reddened.

"I do not know to whom you refer," she answered quietly.

"Aren't you his granddaughter?"

"I am the granddaughter of Colonel James Weatherby, sir."

"It's all the same; Hathaway or Weatherby, the scoundrel can't disguise his personality. Where is he?"

She did not reply. Her eyes had narrowed a little, as the Colonel's were sometimes prone to do, and her lips were pressed firmly together.

"Answer me!" he shouted, waving his arms threateningly.

"Miss Stearne," Mary Louise said, turning to the principal, "unless you request your guest to be more respectful I shall leave the room."

"Not yet you won't," said the man in a less boisterous tone. "Don't annoy me with your airs, for I'm in a hurry. Where is Hathaway — or Weatherby — or whatever he calls himself?"

"I do not know."

"You don't, eh? Didn't he leave an address?"

"No."

"I don't believe you. Where did he go?"

"If I knew," said Mary Louise with dignity, "I would not inform you."

He uttered a growl and then threw back his coat, displaying a badge attached to his vest.

"I'm a federal officer," he asserted with egotistic pride, "a member of the Government's Secret Service Department. I've been searching for James J. Hathaway for nine years, and so has every man in the service. Last night I stumbled upon him by accident, and on inquiring found he has been living quietly in this little jumping-off place. I wired the Department for

instructions and an hour ago received orders to arrest him, but found my bird had flown. He left you behind, though, and I'm wise to the fact that you're a clew that will lead me straight to him. You're going to do that very thing, and the sooner you make up your mind to it the better for all of us. No nonsense, girl! The Federal Government's not to be trifled with. Tell me where to find your grandfather."

"If you have finished your insolent remarks," she answered with spirit, "I will go away. You have interrupted my game of tennis."

He gave a bark of anger that made her smile, but as she turned away he sprang forward and seized her arm, swinging her around so that she again faced him.

"Great Caesar, girl! Don't you realize what you're up against?" he demanded.

"I do," said she. "I seem to be in the power of a brute. If a law exists that permits you to insult a girl, there must also be a law to punish you. I shall see a lawyer and try to have you properly punished for this absolute insolence."

He regarded her keenly, still frowning, but when he spoke again he had moderated both his tone and words.

"I do not intend to be insolent, Miss Burrows, but I have been greatly aggravated by your grandfather's unfortunate escape and in this emergency every moment is precious if I am to capture him before he gets out of America, as he has done once or twice before. Also, having wired the Department that I have found Hathaway, I shall be discredited if I let him slip through my fingers, so I am in a desperate fix. If I have seemed a bit gruff and nervous, forgive me. It is your duty, as a loyal subject of the United States, to assist an officer of the law by every means in your power, especially when he is engaged in running down a criminal. Therefore, whether you dislike to or not, you must tell me where to find your grandfather."

"My grandfather is not a criminal, sir."

"The jury will decide that when his case comes to trial. At present he is accused of crime and a warrant is out for his arrest. Where is he?"

"I do not know," she persisted.

"He — he left by the morning train, which goes west," stammered Miss Stearne, anxious to placate the officer and fearful of the girl's stubborn resistance.

"So the nigger servant told me," sneered the man; "but he didn't. I was at the station myself — two miles from this forsaken place — to make sure that Hathaway didn't skip while I was waiting for orders. Therefore, he is either hidden somewhere in Beverly or he has sneaked away to an adjoining town.

The old serpent is slippery as an eel; but I'm going to catch him, this time, as sure as fate, and this girl must give me all the information she can."

"Oh, that will be quite easy," retorted Mary Louise, somewhat triumphantly, "for I have no information to divulge."

He began to pace the room again, casting at her shrewd and uncertain glances.

"He didn't say where he was going?"

"No."

"Or leave any address?"

"No."

"What DID he say?"

"That he was going away and would arrange with Miss Stearne for me to board at the school."

"Huh! I see. Foxy old guy. Knew I would question you and wouldn't take chances. If he writes you, or you learn what has become of him, will you tell me?"

"No."

"I thought not." He turned toward the principal. "How about this girl's board money?" he asked. "When did he say he'd send it?"

"He paid me in advance, to the end of the present term," answered the agitated Miss Stearne.

"Foxy old boy! Seemed to think of everything. I'm going, now; but take this warning — both of you. Don't gabble about what I've said. Keep the secret. If nothing gets out, Hathaway may think the coast is clear and it's safe for him to come back. In that case I — or someone appointed by the Department — will get a chance to nab him. That's all. Good day."

He made his exit from the room without ceremony, leaving Mary Louise and Miss Stearne staring fearfully at one another.

"It — it's — dreadful!" stammered the teacher, shrinking back with a moan.

"It would be, if it were true," said the girl. "But Gran'pa Jim is no criminal, we all know. He's the best man that ever lived, and the whole trouble is that this foolish officer has mistaken him for someone else. I heard him, with my own ears, tell the man he was mistaken."

Miss Stearne reflected.

"Then why did your grandfather run away?" she asked.

It was now Mary Louise's turn to reflect, seeking an answer. Presently she realized that a logical explanation of her grandfather's action was impossible with her present knowledge.

"I cannot answer that question, Miss Stearne," she admitted, candidly,

“but Gran’pa Jim must have had some good reason.”

There was unbelief in the woman’s eyes — unbelief and a horror of the whole disgraceful affair that somehow included Mary Louise in its scope. The girl read this look and it confused her. She mumbled an excuse and fled to her room to indulge in a good cry.

CHAPTER VI
UNDER A CLOUD

The officer's injunction not to talk of the case of Colonel Weatherby was of little avail in insuring secrecy. Oscar Dowd, who owned and edited the one weekly newspaper in town, which appeared under the title of "The Beverly Beacon," was a very ferret for news. He had to be; otherwise there never would have been enough happenings in the vicinity to fill the scant columns of his little paper, which was printed in big type to make the items and editorials fill as much space as possible.

Uncle Eben met the editor and told him the Colonel had gone away suddenly and had vacated the Vandeventer mansion and put Mary Louise with Miss Stearne to board. Thereat, Oscar Dowd scented "news" and called on Miss Stearne for further information. The good lady was almost as much afraid of an editor as of an officer of the law, so under Oscar's rapid-fire questioning she disclosed more of the dreadful charge against Colonel Weatherby than she intended to. She even admitted the visit of the secret service agent, but declined to give details of it.

Oscar found the agent had departed for parts unknown — perhaps to trail the escaped Colonel — but the hotel keeper furnished him with other wisps of information and, bunching all the rumors together and sifting the wheat from the chaff, the editor evolved a most thrilling tale to print in the Wednesday paper. Some of the material his own imagination supplied; much else was obtained from irresponsible gossips who had no foundation for their assertions. Miss Stearne was horrified to find, on receiving her copy of the Wednesday "Beacon" that big headlines across the front page announced: "Beverly Harbors a Criminal in Disguise! Flight of Colonel James Weatherby when a Federal Officer Seeks to Arrest him for a Terrible Crime!"

Then followed a mangled report of the officer's visit to Beverly on government business, his recognition of Colonel Weatherby — who was none other than the noted criminal, James J. Hathaway — on the street in front of Cooper's Hotel, how the officer wired Washington for instructions and how Hathaway, alias Weatherby, escaped in the dead of night and had so far successfully eluded all pursuit. What crime Hathaway, alias Weatherby, was accused of, the officer would not divulge, and the statements of others disagreed. One report declared the Colonel had wrecked a New York bank and absconded with enormous sums he had embezzled; another stated he had been president of a swindling stock corporation which had used the mails illegally to further its nefarious schemes. A third account asserted he had insured his life for a million dollars in favor of his daughter, Mrs. Burrows,

and then established a false death and reappeared after Mrs. Burrows had collected the insurance money.

Having printed all this prominently in big type, the editor appended a brief note in small type saying he would not vouch for the truth of any statement made in the foregoing article. Nevertheless, it was a terrible arraignment and greatly shocked the good citizens of Beverly.

Miss Stearne, realizing how humiliated Mary Louise would be if the newspaper fell into her hands, carefully hid her copy away where none of the girls could see it; but one of the day scholars brought a copy to the school Thursday morning and passed it around among the girls, so that all were soon in possession of the whole scandalous screed.

Mable Westervelt, after feasting upon the awful accusations, cruelly handed the paper to Mary Louise. The girl's face blanched and then grew red, her mouth fell open as if gasping for breath and her eyes stared with a pained, hopeless expression at the printed page that branded her dearly loved Gran'pa Jim a swindler and a thief. She rose quickly and left the room, to the great relief of the other girls, who wanted to talk the matter over.

"The idea," cried Mable indignantly, "of that old villain's foisting his grandchild on this respectable school while he ran away to escape the penalty of his crimes!"

"Mary Louise is all right," asserted Jennie Allen stoutly. "She isn't to blame, at all."

"I warned you that her goody-goody airs were a cloak to hidden wickedness," said Mable, tossing her head.

"Blood will tell," drawled Lina Darrow, a very fat girl. "Mary Louise has bad blood in her veins and it's bound to crop out, sooner or later. I advise you girls to keep your trunks locked and to look after your jewelry."

"Shame — shame!" cried Dorothy Knerr, and the others echoed the reproach. Even Mable looked at fat Lina disapprovingly.

However, in spite of staunch support on the part of her few real friends, Mary Louise felt from that hour a changed atmosphere when in the presence of her school fellows. Weeks rolled by without further public attacks upon Gran'pa Jim, but among the girls at the school suspicion had crept in to ostracize Mary Louise from the general confidence. She lost her bright, cheery air of self-assurance and grew shy and fearful of reproach, avoiding her schoolmates more than they avoided her. Instead of being content in her new home, as she had hoped to be, the girl found herself more miserable and discontented than at any other period of her life. She longed continually to be comforted by Gran'pa Jim and Mamma Bee, and even lost interest in her studies, moping dismally in her room when she should have been taking an

interest in the life at the school.

Even good Miss Stearne had unconsciously changed in her attitude toward the forlorn girl. Deciding one day that she needed some new shoes, Mary Louise went to the principal to ask for the money with which to buy them.

Miss Stearne considered the matter seriously. Then she said with warning emphasis:

"My dear, I do not think it advisable for you to waste your funds on shoes, especially as those you have are in fairly good condition. Of course, your grandfather left some money with me, to be expended as I saw fit, but now that he has abscon — eh — eh — secreted himself, so to speak, we can expect no further remittances. When this term is ended any extra money should be applied toward your further board and tuition. Otherwise you would become an outcast, with no place to go and no shelter for your head. That, in common decency, must be avoided. No; I do not approve of any useless expenditures. I shall hoard this money for future emergencies."

In happier times Mary Louise would have been indignant at the thought that her grandfather would ever leave her unprovided for, but she had been so humbled of late that this aspect of her affairs, so candidly presented by Miss Stearne, troubled her exceedingly. She had written a letter every week to her grandfather, addressing it, as he had instructed her to do, in care of Mr. Peter Conant at Dorfield. And always she had stolen out, unobserved, and mailed the letter at the village post office. Of course she had never by a single word referred to the scandal regarding the Colonel or her mother, or to her own unhappy lot at school because of that scandal, knowing how such a report would grieve them; but the curious thing about this correspondence was that it was distinctly one-sided. In the three months since they had gone away, Mary Louise had never received an answer to any of her letters, either from her grandfather or her mother.

This might be explained, she reflected, by the fact that they suspected the mails would be watched; but this supposition attributed some truth to the accusation that Gran'pa Jim was a fugitive from justice, which she would not allow for an instant. Had he not told her to have faith in him, whatever happened? Should she prove disloyal just because a brutal officer and an irresponsible newspaper editor had branded her dear grandfather a criminal?

No! Whatever happened she would cling to her faith in the goodness of dear Gran'pa Jim.

There was very little money in her purse; a few pennies that she must hoard to buy postage stamps with. Two parties for young people were given in Beverly and at both of them Mary Louise was the only girl boarding at the school who was uninvited. She knew that some of the girls even resented her

presence at the school and often when she joined a group of schoolmates their hushed conversation warned her they had been discussing her.

Altogether, she felt that her presence at the school was fast becoming unbearable and when one of the boarders openly accused her of stealing a diamond ring — which was later discovered on a shelf above a washstand — the patient humility of Mary Louise turned to righteous anger and she resolved to leave the shelter of Miss Stearne's roof without delay.

There was only one possible place for her to go — to the Conant house at Dorfield, where her mother and grandfather were staying and where she had already passed three of the most pleasant years of her short life. Gran'pa Jim had not told her she could come to him, even in an emergency, but when she explained all the suffering she had endured at the school she knew quite well that he would forgive her for coming.

But she needed money for the long journey, and this must be secured in some way from her own resources. So she got together all the jewelry she possessed and placing it in her handbag started for the town.

She had an idea that a jewelry shop was the proper place to sell her jewelry, but Mr. Trumbull the jeweler shook his head and said that Watson, at the bank, often loaned money on such security. He advised the girl to see Watson.

So Mary Louise went to the "bank," which was a one-man affair situated in the rear of the hardware store, where a grating had been placed in one corner. There she found Mr. Watson, who was more a country broker than a banker, and throve by lending money to farmers.

Gran'pa Jim was almost as fond of pretty jewels as he was of good clothes and he had always been generous in presenting his grand-daughter with trinkets on her birthdays and at Christmas time. The jewelry she laid before Mr. Watson was really valuable and the banker's eye was especially attracted by a brooch of pearls that must have cost several hundred dollars.

"How much do you want to borrow on this lot?" he asked.

"As much as I can get, sir," she replied.

"Have you any idea of redeeming it?"

"I hope to do so, of course."

The banker knew perfectly well who Mary Louise was and suspected she needed money.

"This is no pawnbroker's shop," he asserted. "I'll give you a hundred dollars, outright, for this pearl brooch — as a purchase, understand — but the rest of the junk I don't want."

A little man who had entered the hardware store to purchase a tin dipper was getting so close to the "bank" that Mary Louise feared being overheard;

so she did not argue with Mr. Watson. Deciding that a hundred dollars ought to take her to Dorfield, she promptly accepted the offer, signed a bill of sale and received her money. Then she walked two miles to the railway station and discovered that a ticket to Dorfield could be bought for ninety-two dollars. That would give her eight dollars leeway, which seemed quite sufficient. Elated at the prospect of freedom she returned to the school to make her preparation for departure and arrived just in time to join the other girls at dinner.

CHAPTER VII
THE ESCAPE

As she packed her trunk behind the locked door of her room — an unnecessary precaution, since the girls generally avoided her society — Mary Louise considered whether to confide the fact of her going to Miss Stearne or to depart without a word of adieu. In the latter case she would forfeit her trunk and her pretty clothes, which she did not wish to do unless it proved absolutely necessary; and, after all, she decided, frankness was best. Gran'pa Jim had often said that what one could not do openly should not be done at all. There was nothing to be ashamed of in her resolve to leave the school where she was so unhappy. The girls did not want her there and she did not want to stay; the school would be relieved of a disturbing element and Mary Louise would be relieved of unjust persecution; no blame attached to any but those who had made public this vile slander against her grandfather. From all viewpoints she considered she was doing the right thing; so, when her preparations were complete, she went to Miss Stearne's room, although it was now after eight o'clock in the evening, and requested an interview.

"I am going away," she quietly announced to the principal.

"Going away! But where?" asked the astonished teacher.

"I cannot tell you that, Miss Stearne."

"Do you not know?"

"Yes, I know, but I prefer not to tell you."

Miss Stearne was greatly annoyed. She was also perplexed. The fact that Mary Louise was deserting her school did not seem so important, at the moment, as the danger involved by a young girl's going out into the world unprotected. The good woman had already been rendered very nervous by the dreadful accusation of Colonel Weatherby and the consequent stigma that attached to his granddaughter, a pupil at her eminently respectable school. She realized perfectly that the girl was blameless, whatever her grandsire might have done, and she deeply deplored the scornful attitude assumed by the other pupils toward poor Mary Louise; nevertheless a certain bitter resentment of the unwholesome scandal that had smirched her dignified establishment had taken possession of the woman, perhaps unconsciously, and while she might be a little ashamed of the ungenerous feeling, Miss Stearne fervently wished she had never accepted the girl as a pupil.

She HAD accepted her, however. She had received the money for Mary Louise's tuition and expenses and had promptly applied the entire sum to reducing her grocery bills and other pressing obligations; therefore she felt it

her duty to give value received. If Mary Louise was to be driven from the school by the jeers and sneers of the other girls, Miss Stearne would feel like a thief. Moreover, it would be a distinct reproach to her should she allow a fifteen-year-old girl to wander into a cruel world because her school — her sole home and refuge — had been rendered so unbearable that she could not remain there. The principal was really unable to repay the money that had been advanced to her, even if that would relieve her of obligation to shelter the girl, and therefore she decided that Mary Louise must not be permitted, under any circumstances, to leave her establishment without the authority of her natural guardians.

This argument ran hurriedly through her mind as the girl stood calmly waiting.

"Is this action approved by your mother, or — or — by your grandfather?" she asked, somewhat more harshly than was her wont in addressing her pupils.

"No, Miss Stearne."

"Then how dare you even suggest it?"

"I am not wanted here," returned the girl with calm assurance. "My presence is annoying to the other girls, as well as to yourself, and so disturbs the routine of the school. For my part, I — I am very unhappy here, as you must realize, because everyone seems to think my dear Gran'pa Jim is a wicked man — which I know he is not. I have no heart to study, and — and so — it is better for us all that I go away."

This statement was so absolutely true and the implied reproach was so justified, that Miss Stearne allowed herself to become angry as the best means of opposing the girl's design.

"This is absurd!" she exclaimed. "You imagine these grievances, Mary Louise, and I cannot permit you to attack the school and your fellow boarders in so reckless a manner. You shall not stir one step from this school! I forbid you, positively, to leave the grounds hereafter without my express permission. You have been placed in my charge and I insist that you obey me. Go to your room and study your lessons, which you have been shamefully neglecting lately. If I hear any more of this rebellious wish to leave the school, I shall be obliged to punish you by confining you to your room."

The girl listened to this speech with evident surprise; yet the tirade did not seem to impress her.

"You refuse, then, to let me go?" she returned.

"I positively refuse."

"But I cannot stay here, Miss Stearne," she protested.

“You must. I have always treated you kindly — I treat all my girls well if they deserve it — but you are developing a bad disposition, Mary Louise — a most reprehensible disposition, I regret to say — and the tendency must be corrected at once. Not another word! Go to your room.”

Mary Louise went to her room, greatly depressed by the interview. She looked at her trunk, made a mental inventory of its highly prized contents, and sighed. But as soon as she rejoined Gran’pa, Jim, she reflected, he would send an order to have the trunk forwarded and Miss Stearne would not dare refuse. For a time she must do without her pretty gowns.

Instead of studying her text books she studied the railway time-card. She had intended asking Miss Stearne to permit her to take the five-thirty train from Beverly Junction the next morning and since the recent interview she had firmly decided to board that very train. This was not entirely due to stubbornness, for she reflected that if she stayed at the school her unhappy condition would become aggravated, instead of improving, especially since Miss Stearne had developed unexpected sharpness of temper. She would endure no longer the malicious taunts of her school fellows or the scoldings of the principal, and these could be avoided in no other way than by escaping as she had planned.

At ten o’clock she lay down upon her bed, fully dressed, and put out her light; but she dared not fall asleep lest she miss her train. At times she lighted a match and looked at her watch and it surprised her to realize how long a night can be when one is watching for daybreak.

At four o’clock she softly rose, put on her hat, took her suit case in hand and stealthily crept from, the room. It was very dark in the hallway but the house was so familiar to her that she easily felt her way along the passage, down the front stairs and so to the front door.

Miss Stearne always locked this door at night but left the key in the lock. To-night the key had been withdrawn. When Mary Louise had satisfied herself of this fact she stole along the lower hallway toward the rear. The door that connected with the dining room and farther on with the servants’ quarters had also been locked and the key withdrawn. This was so unusual that it plainly told the girl that Miss Stearne was suspicious that she might try to escape, and so had taken precautions to prevent her leaving the house.

Mary Louise cautiously set down her suit case and tried to think what to do. The house had not been built for a school but was an old residence converted to school purposes. On one side of the hall was a big drawing-room; on the other side were the principal’s apartments.

Mary Louise entered the drawing-room and ran against a chair that stood in her way. Until now she had not made the slightest noise, but the suit case

banged against the chair and the concussion reverberated dully throughout the house.

The opposite door opened and a light flooded the hall. From where the girl stood in the dark drawing-room she could see Miss Stearne standing in her doorway and listening. Mary Louise held herself motionless. She scarcely dared breathe. The principal glanced up and down the hall, noted the locked doors and presently retired into her room, after a little while extinguishing the light.

Then Mary Louise felt her way to a window, drew aside the heavy draperies and carefully released the catch of the sash, which she then succeeded in raising. The wooden blinds were easily unfastened but swung back with a slight creak that made her heart leap with apprehension. She did not wait, now, to learn if the sound had been heard, for already she had wasted too much time if she intended to catch her train. She leaned through the window, let her suit case down as far as she could reach, and dropped it to the ground. Then she climbed through the opening and let herself down by clinging to the sill. It was a high window, but she was a tall girl for her age and her feet touched the ground. Now she was free to go her way.

She lost no time in getting away from the grounds, being guided by a dim starlight and a glow in the east that was a promise of morning. With rapid steps she made her way to the station, reaching it over the rough country road just as the train pulled in. She had been possessed with the idea that someone was stealthily following her and under the light of the depot lamps her first act was to swing around and stare into the darkness from which she had emerged. She almost expected to see Miss Stearne appear, but it was only a little man with a fat nose and a shabby suit of clothes, who had probably come from the village to catch the same train she wanted. He paid no attention to the girl but entered the same car she did and quietly took his seat in the rear.

CHAPTER VIII
A FRIENDLY FOE

It required two days and a night to go by rail from Beverly to Dorfield and as Mary Louise had passed a sleepless night at the school she decided to purchase a berth on the sleeper. That made a big hole in her surplus of eight dollars and she also found her meals in the dining car quite expensive, so that by the time she left the train at Dorfield her finances would be reduced to the sum of a dollar and twenty cents.

That would not have disturbed her, knowing that thereafter she would be with Gran'pa Jim, except for one circumstance. The little man with the fat nose, who had taken the train at Beverly, was still on board. All the other passengers who had been on the train at that time had one by one left it and been replaced by others, for the route lay through several large cities where many alighted and others came aboard. Only the little man from Beverly remained, quiet and unobtrusive but somehow haunting the girl's presence in an embarrassing manner.

He seldom looked at her but was found staring from the window whenever she turned her eyes toward him. At first she scarcely noticed the man, but the longer he remained aboard the train the more she speculated as to where he might be going. Whenever she entered the dining car he took a notion to eat at that time, but found a seat as far removed from her as possible. She imagined she had escaped him when she went to the sleeper, but next morning as she passed out he was standing in the vestibule and a few moments later he was in the diner where she was breakfasting.

It was now that the girl first conceived the idea that he might be following her for a purpose, dogging her footsteps to discover at what station she left the train. And, when she asked herself why the stranger should be so greatly concerned with her movements, she remembered that she was going to Gran'pa Jim and that at one time an officer had endeavored to discover, through her, her grandfather's whereabouts.

"If this little man," she mused, glancing at his blank, inexpressive features, "happens to be a detective, and knows who I am, he may think I will lead him directly to Colonel Weatherby, whom he may then arrest. Gran'pa Jim is innocent, of course, but I know he doesn't wish to be arrested, because he left Beverly suddenly to avoid it. And," she added with a sudden feinting of the heart, "if this suspicion is true I am actually falling into the trap and leading an officer to my grandfather's retreat."

This reflection rendered the girl very uneasy and caused her to watch the fat-nosed man guardedly all through that tedious day. She constantly hoped

he would leave the train at some station and thus prove her fears to be groundless, but always he remained in his seat, patiently eyeing the landscape through his window.

Late in the afternoon another suspicious circumstance aroused her alarm. The conductor of the train, as he passed through the car, paused at the rear end and gazed thoughtfully at the little man huddled in the rear seat, who seemed unconscious of his regard. After watching him a while the conductor suddenly turned his head and looked directly at Mary Louise, with a curious expression, as if connecting his two passengers. Then he went on through the train, but the girl's heart was beating high and the little man, while seeming to eye the fleeting landscape through the window, wriggled somewhat uneasily in his seat.

Mary Louise now decided he was a detective. She suspected that he had been sent to Beverly, after the other man left, to watch her movements, with the idea that sooner or later she would rejoin her grandfather. Perhaps, had any letter come for her from her mother or Gran'pa Jim, this officer would have seized it and obtained from it the address of the man he was seeking. That would account for their failure to write her; perhaps they were aware of the plot and therefore dared not send her a letter.

And now she began wondering what she should do when she got to Dorfield, if the little man also left the train at that station. Such an act on his part would prove that her suspicions were correct, in which case she would lead him straight to her grandfather, whom she would thus deliver into the power of his merciless enemies.

No; that would not do, at all. If the man followed her from the train at Dorfield she dared not go to Peter Conant's house. Where, then, COULD she go? Had she possessed sufficient money it might be best to ride past Dorfield and pay her fare to another station; but her funds were practically exhausted. Dorfield was a much bigger town than Beverly; it was quite a large city, indeed; perhaps she could escape the supervision of the detective, in some way, and by outwitting him find herself free to seek the Conant's home. She would try this and circumstances must decide her plan of action. Always there was the chance that she misjudged the little man.

As the conductor called the station the train halted and the girl passed the rear seat, where the man had his bare head half out the open window, and descended from the car to the platform. A few others also alighted, to hurry away to the omnibuses or street car or walk to their destinations.

Mary Louise stood quite still upon the platform until the train drew out after its brief stop. It was nearly six o'clock in the evening and fast growing dark, yet she distinctly observed the fat-nosed man, who had alighted on the

opposite side of the track and was now sauntering diagonally across the rails to the depot, his hands thrust deep in his pockets and his eyes turned away from Mary Louise as if the girl occupied no part of his thoughts.

But she knew better than that. Her suspicions were now fully confirmed and she sought to evade the detective in just the way any inexperienced girl might have done. Turning in the opposite direction she hastily crossed the street, putting a big building between herself and the depot, and then hurried along a cross-street. She looked back now and then and found she had not been followed; so, to insure escape, she turned another corner, giving a fearful glance over her shoulder as she did so.

This street was not so well lighted as the others had been and she had no idea where it led to. She knew Dorfield pretty well, having once resided there for three years, but in her agitated haste she had now lost all sense of direction. Feeling, however, that she was now safe from pursuit, she walked on more slowly, trying to discover her whereabouts, and presently passed a dimly-lighted bakery before which a man stood looking abstractedly into the window at the cakes and pies, his back toward her.

Instantly Mary Louise felt her heart sink. She did not need to see the man's face to recognize the detective. Nor did he stir as she passed him by and proceeded up the street. But how did he happen to be there? Had she accidentally stumbled upon him, or had he purposely placed himself in her path to assure her that escape from him was impossible?

As she reached the next corner a street car came rushing along, halted a brief moment and proceeded on its way. In that moment Mary Louise had stepped aboard and as she entered the closed section and sank into a seat she breathed a sigh of relief. The man at the bakery window had not followed her. The car made one or two more stops, turned a corner and stopped again. This time the little man with the fat nose deliberately swung himself to the rear platform, paid his fare and remained there. He didn't look at Mary Louise at all, but she looked at him and her expression was one of mingled horror and fear.

A mile farther on the car reached the end of its line and the conductor reversed the trolley-pole and prepared for the return journey. Mary Louise kept her seat. The detective watched the motorman and conductor with an assumption of stupid interest and retained his place on the platform.

On the way back to the business section of Dorfield, Mary Louise considered what to do next. She was very young and inexperienced; she was also, at this moment, very weary and despondent. It was clearly evident that she could not escape this man, whose persistence impressed her with the imminent danger that threatened her grandfather if she went to the home of

the Conants — the one thing she positively must not do. Since her arrival was wholly unexpected by her friends, with whom she could not communicate, she now found herself a forlorn wanderer, without money or shelter.

When the car stopped at Main Street she got off and walked slowly along the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare, feeling more safe among the moving throngs of people. Presently she came to a well-remembered corner where the principal hotel stood on one side and the First National Bank on the other. She now knew where she was and could find the direct route to the Conants, had she dared go there. To gain time for thought the girl stepped into the doorway of the bank, which was closed for the day, thus avoiding being jostled by pedestrians. She set down her suit case, leaned against the door-frame and tried to determine her wisest course of action.

She was hungry, tired, frightened, and the combination of sensations made her turn faint. With a white face and despair in her heart she leaned heavily back and closed her eyes.

"Pardon me," said a soft voice, and with a nervous start she opened her eyes to find the little fat-nosed man confronting her. He had removed his hat and was looking straight into her face — for the first time, she imagined — and now she noticed that his gray eyes were not at all unkindly.

"What do you want?" she asked sharply, with an involuntary shudder.

"I wish to advise you, Miss Burrows," he replied. "I believe you know who I am and it is folly for us to pursue this game of hide-and-seek any longer. You are tired and worn out with your long ride and the anxiety I have caused you."

"You are dogging me!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"I am keeping you in sight, according to orders."

"You are a detective!" she asked, a little disarmed by his frankness.

"John O'Gorman by name, Miss. At home I have a little girl much like you, but I doubt if my Josie — even though I have trained her — would prove more shrewd than you have done under such trying circumstances. Even in the train you recognized my profession — and I am thought to be rather clever at disguising my motives."

"Yes?"

"And you know quite well that because you have come to Dorfield to join your grandfather, whom you call Colonel Weatherby, I have followed you in an attempt to discover, through you, the man for whom our government has searched many years."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Therefore you are determined not to go to your destination and you are at

your wits' end to know what to do. Let me advise you, for the sake of my own little Josie."

The abrupt proposal bewildered her.

"You are my enemy!"

"Don't think that, Miss," he said gently. "I am an officer of the law, engaged in doing my duty. I am not your enemy and bear you no ill-will."

"You are trying to arrest my grandfather."

"In the course of duty. But he is quite safe from me for to-night, while you are almost exhausted through your efforts to protect him. Go into the hotel across the way and register and get some supper and a room. To-morrow you will be able to think more clearly and may then make up your mind what to do."

She hesitated. The voice seemed earnest and sincere, the eyes considerate and pitying, and the advice appealed to her as good; but —

"Just for to-night, put yourself in my care," he said. "I'm ashamed to have annoyed you to such an extent and to have interfered with your plans; but I could not help it. You have succeeded in balking the DETECTIVE, but the MAN admires you for it. I noticed, the last time you took out your purse in the dining-car, that your money is nearly gone. If you will permit me to lend you enough for your hotel expenses — "

"No."

"Well, it may not be necessary. Your friends will supply you with money whenever our little — comedy, shall we say? — is played to the end. In the meantime I'll speak to the landlord. Now, Miss Burrows, run across to the hotel and register."

She gazed at him uncertainly a moment and the little man smiled reassuringly. Somehow, she felt inclined to trust him.

"Thank you," she said and took her suit case into the hotel office.

The clerk looked at her rather curiously as she registered, but assigned her a room and told her that dinner was still being served. She followed the bellboy to her room, where she brushed her gown, bathed her hands and face and rearranged her hair. Then she went to the dining room and, although the journey and worry had left her sick and nervous, she ate some dinner and felt stronger and better after it.

CHAPTER IX

OFFICER O'GORMAN

Mary Louise returned to her room and sat down to consider the best way out of her dilemma. The detective's friendliness, so frankly expressed, pleased her, in a way, yet she realized his vigilance would not be relaxed and that he was still determined, through her, to discover where Gran'pa Jim was hidden.

An uncomfortable degree of danger had already been incurred by her unconsciously leading the officer to Dorfield. He knew now that the man he was seeking was either in this city or its immediate neighborhood. But unless she led him to the exact spot — to the dwelling of the Conants — it would take even this clever detective some time to locate the refugee. Before then Mary Louise hoped to be able to warn Gran'pa Jim of his danger. That would prevent her from rejoining him and her mother, but it would also save him from arrest.

Glancing around her comfortable room she saw a telephone on the wall. Beside it, on a hook, hung the book containing the addresses of the subscribers. She opened the book and glancing down its columns found:

"Conant, Peter; r. 1216 Oak St. Blue 147."

Why hadn't she thought of this simple method of communication before? It would be quite easy to call Mr. Conant and tell him where she was and have him warn Gran'pa Jim that a detective was searching for him.

She went to the telephone and took down the receiver.

"Office!" cried a sharp voice. "What number do you want?"

Mary Louise hesitated; then she hung up the receiver without reply. It occurred to her that the hotel office was a public place and that the telephone girl would be likely to yell out the number for all to overhear.

To satisfy herself on this point she went down stairs in the elevator and purchased a magazine at the news stand. The telephone desk was near by and Mary Louise could hear the girl calling the numbers and responding to calls, while not six feet from her desk sat a man whose person was nearly covered by a spread newspaper which he appeared to be reading. But Mary Louise knew him by his striped trousers and straightway congratulated herself on her caution. Undoubtedly the detective had figured on her telephoning and she had nearly fallen into the trap.

Back to her room she went, resolved to make no further move till morning. The day had been a hard one for the girl, mentally and physically, and at this moment she felt herself hopelessly involved in a snare from which she could see no means of escape. She read a little in her magazine, to quiet her nerves, and then went to bed and fell asleep.

At daybreak Mary Louise wakened to wonder if she had done right in running away from Miss Stearne's school. Gran'pa Jim had placed her there because he did not wish to take her with him when he left Beverly, and now she had come to him without his consent and in doing so had perhaps delivered him into the hands of his enemies. Poor Gran'pa Jim! She would never cease to reproach herself if she became responsible for his ruin.

As she lay in bed, thinking in this vein, she allowed herself to wonder for the first time why her dear grandfather was being persecuted by the officers of the law — by the Government of the United States, indeed, which should be just and merciful to all its people. Of course he was innocent of any wrong-doing; Gran'pa Jim would never do anything to injure a human being, for he was goodness itself and had taught her to honor truth and righteousness ever since she could remember. Never for a moment would she doubt him. But it was curious, when she came to reflect upon it, that he would run away from his enemies instead of facing them bravely. For many years he had hidden himself — first in one place and then in another — and at the first warning of discovery or pursuit would disappear and seek a new hiding-place. For she now realized, in the light of her recent knowledge, that for many years Gran'pa Jim had been a fugitive from the law, and that for some unknown reason he dared not face his accusers.

Some people might consider this an evidence of guilt, but Mary Louise and Gran'pa Jim had been close comrades for two years and deep in her heart was the unalterable conviction that his very nature would revolt against crime of any sort. Moreover — always a strong argument in her mind — her mother had steadfastly believed in her grandfather and had devoted herself to him to the exclusion of all else in her life, even neglecting her own daughter to serve her father. Mamma Bee loved her, she well knew, yet Mary Louise had never enjoyed the same affectionate intercourse with her mother that she had with her grandfather, for Mamma Bee's whole life seemed to center around the old Colonel. This unusual devotion was proof enough to Mary Louise that her grandfather was innocent, but it did not untangle the maze.

Looking back over her past life, she could recall the many sudden changes of residence due to Colonel Weatherby's desire to escape apprehension by the authorities. They seemed to date from the time they had left that big city house, where the child had an especial nurse and there were lots of servants, and where her beautiful mother used to bend over her with a good-night kiss while arrayed in dainty ball costumes sparkling with jewels. Mary Louise tried to remember her father, but could not, although she had been told that he died in that very house. She remembered Gran'pa Jim in those days, however, only he was too busy to pay much attention to her. Let's see; was

he called “Colonel Weatherby” in those days! She could not recollect. That name did not become familiar to her until long afterward. Always he had been just “Gran’pa Jim” to her. Yet that dreadful officer of the law who had questioned her in Beverly had called him “Hathaway — James J. Hathaway.” How absurd!

But where had she heard the name of Hathaway before? She puzzled her brain to remember. Did it belong to any of her schoolgirl friends? Or was it —

With a sudden thought she sprang from her bed and took her watch from the dresser. It was an old watch, given her by Mamma Bee on the girl’s twelfth birthday, while she was living with the Conants, and her mother had bidden her to treasure it because it had belonged to her when she was a girl of Mary Louise’s age. The watch was stem-winding and had a closed case, the back lid of which had seldom been opened because it fitted very tightly. But now Mary Louise pried it open with a hatpin and carried it to the light. On the inside of the gold case the following words were engraved:

“Beatrice Hathaway, from her loving Father.”

Mary Louise stared at this inscription for a long while. For the first time, ugly doubts began to creep into her heart. The officer was right when he said that James Hathaway was masquerading under the false name of Colonel Weatherby. Gran’pa Jim had never told even Mary Louise that his real name was Hathaway; Mamma Bee had never told her, either. With a deep sigh she snapped the case of the watch in place and then began to dress.

It was still too early for breakfast when she had finished her toilet, so she sat by the open window of her room, looking down into the street, and tried to solve the mystery of Gran’pa Jim. Better thoughts came to her, inspiring her with new courage. Her grandfather had changed his name to enable him the more easily to escape observation, for it was James Hathaway who was accused, not Colonel James Weatherby. It was difficult, however, for the girl to familiarize herself with the idea that Gran’pa Jim was really James Hathaway; still, if her mother’s name before her marriage was indeed Beatrice Hathaway, as the watch proved, then there was no question but her grandfather’s name was also Hathaway. He had changed it for a purpose and she must not question the honesty of that purpose, however black the case looked against her beloved Gran’pa Jim.

This discovery, nevertheless, only added to the mystery of the whole affair, which she realized her inability to cope with. Grouping the facts with which she was familiar into regular order, her information was limited as follows:

Once Gran’pa Jim was rich and prosperous and was named Hathaway. He

had many friends and lived in a handsome city house. Suddenly he left everything and ran away, changing his name to that of Weatherby. He was afraid, for some unknown reason, of being arrested, and whenever discovery threatened his retreat he would run away again. In this manner he had maintained his liberty for nine years, yet to-day the officers of the law seemed as anxious to find him as at first. To sum up, Gran'pa Jim was accused of a crime so important that it could not be condoned and only his cleverness in evading arrest had saved him from prison.

That would look pretty black to a stranger, and it made even Mary Louise feel very uncomfortable and oppressed, but against the accusation the girl placed these facts, better known to her than the others: Gran'pa Jim was a good man, kind and honest. Since she had known him his life had been blameless. Mamma Bee, who knew him best of all, never faltered in her devotion to him. He was incapable of doing an evil deed, he abhorred falsehood, he insisted on defending the rights of his fellow men. Therefore, in spite of any evidence against him Mary Louise believed in his innocence.

Having settled this belief firmly in mind and heart, the girl felt a distinct sense of relief. She would doubt no more. She would not try, in the future, to solve a mystery that was beyond her comprehension. Her one duty was to maintain an unfaltering faith.

At seven o'clock she went to the breakfast room, to which but two or three other guests of the hotel had preceded her, and in a few minutes Detective O'Gorman entered and seated himself at a table near her. He bowed very respectfully as he caught her eye and she returned the salutation, uneasy at the man's presence but feeling no especial antagonism toward him. As he had said, he was but doing his duty.

O'Gorman finished his breakfast before Mary Louise did, after which, rising from his chair, he came toward her table and asked quietly:

"May I sit at your table a moment, Miss Burrows?"

She neither consented nor refused, being taken by surprise, but O'Gorman sat down without requiring an answer.

"I wish to tell you," he began, "that my unpleasant espionage of you is ended. It will be needless for me to embarrass or annoy you longer."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Aren't you glad?" with a smile at her astonished expression. "You see, I've been busy investigating while you slept. I've visited the local police station and — various other places. I am satisfied that Mr. Hathaway — or Mr. Weatherby, as he calls himself — is not in Dorfield and has never located here. Once again the man has baffled the entire force of our department. I am now confident that your coming to this town was not to

meet your grandfather but to seek refuge with other friends, and so I have been causing you all this bother and vexation for nothing."

She looked at him in amazement.

"I'm going to ask you to forgive me," he went on, "and unless I misjudge your nature you're not going to bear any grudge against me. They sent me to Beverly to watch you, and for a time that was a lazy man's job. When you sold some of your jewelry for a hundred dollars, however, I knew there would be something doing. You were not very happy at your school, I knew, and my first thought was that you merely intended to run away — anywhere to escape the persecution of those heartless girls. But you bought a ticket for Dorfield, a faraway town, so I at once decided — wrongly, I admit — that you knew where Hathaway was and intended going to him. So I came with you, to find he is not here. He has never been here. Hathaway is too distinguished a personage, in appearance, to escape the eye of the local police. So I am about to set you free, my girl, and to return immediately to my headquarters in Washington."

She had followed his speech eagerly and with a feeling of keen disappointment at his report that her grandfather and her mother were not in Dorfield. Could it be true?

Officer O'Gorman took a card from his pocket-book and laid it beside her plate.

"My dear child," said he in a gentle tone, "I fear your life is destined to be one of trials and perplexities, if not of dreary heartaches. I have watched over you and studied your character for longer than you know and I have found much in your make-up that is interesting and admirable. You remind me a good deal of my own Josie — as good and clever a girl as ever lived. So I am going to ask you to consider me your friend. Keep this card and if ever you get into serious difficulty I want you to wire me to come and help you. If I should happen, at the time, to have duties to prevent my coming, I will send some other reliable person to your assistance. Will you promise to do this?"

"Thank you, Mr. O'Gorman," she said. "I — I — your kindness embarrasses me."

"Don't allow it to do that. A detective is a man, you know, much like other men, and I have always held that the better man he is the better detective he is sure to prove. I'm obliged to do disagreeable things, at times, in the fulfillment of my duty, but I try to spare even the most hardened criminal as much as possible. So why shouldn't I be kind to a helpless, unfortunate girl?"

"Am I that?" she asked.

"Perhaps not. But I fear your grandfather's fate is destined to cause you

unhappiness. You seem fond of him.”

“He is the best man in all the world!”

O’Gorman looked at the tablecloth rather than to meet her eyes.

“So I will now say good-bye, Miss Burrows, and — I wish you the happiness you deserve. You’re just as good a girl as my Josie is.”

With this he rose to his feet and bowed again. He was a little man and he had a fat nose, but Mary Louise could not help liking him.

She was still afraid of the detective, however, and when he had left the dining room she asked herself if his story could be true, if Gran’pa Jim was not in Dorfield — if he had never even come to the town, as O’Gorman had stated.

The Conants would know that, of course, and if the detective went away she would be free to go to the Conants for information. She would find shelter, at least, with these old friends.

As she passed from the dining room into the hotel lobby Mr. O’Gorman was paying his bill and bidding the clerk farewell. He had no baggage, except such as he might carry in his pocket, but he entered a bus that stood outside and was driven away with a final doff of his hat to the watching girl.

Mary Louise decided in the instant what to do. Mr. Peter Conant was a lawyer and had an office in one of the big buildings down-town. She remembered that he always made a point of being in his office at eight o’clock in the morning, and it was nearly eight now. She would visit Mr. Conant in his office, for this could not possibly endanger the safety of Gran’pa Jim in case the detective’s story proved false, or if an attempt had been made to deceive her. The man had seemed sincere and for the time being he had actually gone away; but she was suspicious of detectives.

She ran upstairs for her coat and hat and at once left the hotel. She knew the way to Peter Conant’s office and walked rapidly toward it.

CHAPTER X

RATHER QUEER INDEED

Mary Louise found the door of the office, which was located on the third floor of the Chambers Building, locked. However, the sign: "Peter Conant, Attorney at Law," was painted on the glass panel in big, distinct letters, so she was sure she had made no mistake. She slowly paced the hall, waiting, until the elevator stopped and Mr. Conant stepped out and approached the door, his morning paper in one hand, a key in the other. Running to him, the girl exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Conant!"

He stopped short and turned to face her. Then he stepped a pace backward and said:

"Great heavens, it's Mary Louise!"

"Didn't you recognize me?" she asked.

"Not at first," he answered slowly. "You have grown tall and — and — older, in two years."

"Where is Gran'pa J-"

"Hush!" with a startled glance up and down the hall. Then he unlocked the door and added: "Come in."

Mary Louise followed him through the outer office and into a smaller room beyond, the door of which Mr. Conant carefully closed after them. Then he turned to look steadily at the girl, who thought he did not seem especially delighted at her appearance in Dorfield. Indeed, his first words proved this, for he asked sternly:

"Why are you here?"

"I left the school at Beverly because the girls made it so uncomfortable for me there that I could not bear it longer," she explained.

"In what way did they make it uncomfortable for you?"

"They jeered at me because — because — Gran'pa Jim is being hunted by the officers of the law, who accuse him, of doing something wicked."

Mr. Conant frowned.

"Perhaps their attitude was only natural," he remarked; "but there was no accusation against you, my child. Why didn't you stick it out? The scandal would soon have died away and left you in peace."

"I was unhappy there," she said simply, "and so I thought I would come here to mother and Gran'pa Jim."

"Here?" as if surprised.

"Yes. Aren't they here, with you?"

"No."

“Then where are they?”

“I’ve no idea.”

She sat still and stared at him, while he regarded her with a thoughtful and perplexed look on his face.

Mr. Conant is difficult to describe because he was like dozens of men one meets every day, at least in outward appearance. He was neither tall nor short, lean nor fat, handsome nor ugly, attractive nor repulsive. Yet Peter Conant must not be considered a nonentity because he was commonplace in person, for he possessed mannerisms that were peculiar. He would open his eyes very wide and stare at one steadily until the person became confused and turned away. The gaze was not especially shrewd, but it was disconcerting because steadfast. When he talked he would chop off his words, one by one, with a distinct pause between each, and that often made it hard to tell whether he had ended his speech or still had more to say. When very earnest or interested he would play with a locket that dangled from his watch chain; otherwise he usually stood with his hands clasped behind his back.

Mary Louise well knew these peculiarities, having previously lived in his house, and also she knew he was a kind-hearted man, devotedly attached to his deaf wife and thoroughly trusted by Gran’pa Jim.

“I was told,” said the girl presently, “to direct all my letters to my grandfather in your care.”

“I am aware that you have done so,” he replied.

“So I thought, of course, that he and my mother were with you.”

“No; they did not come here. Colonel Weatherby arranged for me to forward your letters, which I did as soon as they arrived.”

“Oh; then you know his address?”

“I do not. There are six different points to which I forward letters, in rotation, both those from you and from others on various matters of business, and these points are widely scattered. My impression is that Colonel Weatherby is in none of these places and that the letters are again forwarded to him to — wherever he may be.”

Mary Louise felt quite discouraged. With hesitation she asked:

“Do you suppose you could find him for me?”

“It is impossible.”

“What am I to do, Mr. Conant?”

“I advise you to go back to your school.”

“Can’t I stay here, with you?”

He stared at her with his round eyes, playing with his locket.

“I haven’t the money for the return trip,” she went on falteringly. “I had to

sell some of my jewelry to get here. I won't be much trouble, if you will let me live with you until I can find Gran'pa Jim."

Mr. Conant still stared.

"I'm sure," said Mary Louise, "that my grandfather will gladly repay you any money it costs you to keep me."

"You — don't — un-der-stand," he retorted, chopping off his words rather viciously. "Moreover, you can't understand. Go to the house and talk to Hannah. Have you any baggage!"

"I've a suit case at the hotel," she said, and went on to tell him the experiences of her journey and of her encounter with Detective O'Gorman.

During this relation, which he did not interrupt, Mr. Conant toyed persistently with his watch charm. His features were noncommittal but he was thoroughly interested.

"You see," he remarked when she had finished, "Colonel Weatherby's elaborate system of evading discovery is quite necessary."

"But why should he wish to hide?" asked the girl.

"Don't you know?"

"No, sir."

"Then your grandfather doesn't wish you to know. I am his lawyer — at least I am one of his lawyers — and a lawyer must respect the confidences of his clients."

Mary Louise looked at him wonderingly, for here was someone who evidently knew the entire truth.

"Do you believe my grandfather is a bad man?" she asked.

"No. I have the highest respect for Colonel Weatherby."

"Do you know his name to be Weatherby — or is it Hathaway?"

"I am his lawyer," reiterated Mr. Conant.

"Is it possible that an innocent man would change his name and hide, rather than face an unjust accusation?"

"Yes."

Mary Louise sighed.

"I will go with you to the hotel and pay your bill," said the lawyer. "Then you may go to the house and talk to Hannah. When I have talked with her myself, we will determine what to do with you."

So they went to the hotel and the girl packed her suit case and brought it downstairs.

"Queer!" said Mr. Conant to her, fingering his locket. "Your bill has been paid by that man O'Gorman."

"How impertinent!" she exclaimed.

"There is also a note for you in your box."

The clerk handed her an envelope, which she opened. “I hope to be able to send you your grandfather’s address very soon,” wrote O’Gorman. “You will probably stay in Dorfield; perhaps with the Conants, with whom you lived before. You might try sending Colonel Weatherby a letter in care of Oscar Lawler, at Los Angeles, California. In any event, don’t forget my card or neglect to wire me in case of emergency.”

Having read this with considerable surprise the girl handed the note to Mr. Conant, who slowly read it and gave a bark like that of an angry dog when he came to the name of the California attorney. Without remark he put the detective’s letter in his pocket and picking up Mary Louise’s suit case led the girl outside to the street corner.

“This car will take you to within two blocks of my house,” he said. “Can you manage your grip alone?”

“Easily,” she assured him.

“You have carfare!”

“Yes, thank you.”

“Then good-bye. I’ll see you this evening.”

He turned away and she boarded the street car.

CHAPTER XI

MARY LOUISE MEETS IRENE

As Mary Louise approached the home of the Conants, which was a pretty little house set far back in a garden filled with trees and shrubs, she was surprised to hear a joyous ragtime tune being drummed upon the piano — an instrument she remembered Mrs. Conant kept in the house exclusively as an ornament, being unable to play it. Then, as the girl reached the porch, the melody suddenly stopped, a merry laugh rang out and a fresh, sweet voice was heard through the open window talking rapidly and with eager inflection.

"I wonder who that can be?" thought Mary Louise. Everyone had to speak loudly to poor Mrs. Conant, who might be entertaining a visitor. She rang the bell and soon her old friend appeared in the doorway.

"My dear, dear child!" cried the good lady, recognizing the girl instantly and embracing her after a welcoming kiss. "Where on earth have you come from?"

"From Beverly," said Mary Louise with a smile, for in her depressed state of mind this warm greeting cheered her wonderfully.

"Come right in," said Mrs. Conant, seizing the suit case. "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, indeed; hours ago. And I've seen Mr. Conant at his office. He — he wanted me to talk to you."

She spoke loudly, as she had been accustomed to do, but now Mrs. Conant wore on her ear an instrument similar in appearance to a small telephone receiver, and she seemed to hear quite distinctly through its mechanism. Indeed, she pointed to it with an air of pride and said: "I can hear a whisper, my dear!"

As Mary Louise was ushered into the cosy sitting room she looked for the piano-player and the owner of the merry laugh and cheery voice. Near the center of the room was a wheeled chair in which sat a young girl of about her own age — a rather pretty girl in spite of her thin frame and pallid countenance. She was neatly dressed in figured dimity, with a bright ribbon at her throat. A pair of expressive brown eyes regarded Mary Louise with questioning earnestness. Over her lap lay a coverlet; her slender white fingers rested upon the broad arms of her chair.

"This," said Mrs. Conant, "is my niece, Irene Macfarlane, who is living with us just now and is the life and joy of our formerly dull household. You'll have to love her, Mary Louise, because no one can help doing so."

Mary Louise advanced to the chair and took one of the wan hands in her own. A thrill of pity flooded her heart for the unfortunate girl, who instantly

noted her expression and met it with a charmingly spontaneous smile.

"Don't you dare think of me as a cripple!" she said warningly. "I am not at all helpless and my really-truly friends quickly forget this ugly wheeled chair. We're to be friends, are we not? And you're going to stay, because I see your baggage. Also I know all about you, Mary Louise Burrows, for Aunt Hannah never tires of singing your praises."

This was said so naturally and with such absence of affectation that Mary Louise could not fail to respond to the words and smile.

"I'm glad to find you here, Irene," she said, "and I don't know yet whether I'm to stay or not. That will depend on Mrs. Conant's decision."

"Then you're to stay," promptly decided the hospitable lady, who by turning her mechanical ear toward the speaker seemed able to hear her words clearly.

"But you don't know all the complications yet," confessed the girl. "I've run away from school and — and there are other things you must know before you decide. Mr. Conant wasn't at all enthusiastic over my coming here, I assure you, so I must tell you frankly the whole story of my adventures."

"Very good," returned Mrs. Conant. "I think I can guess at most of the story, but you shall tell it in your own way. Presently Irene is going out to inspect the roses; she does that every morning; so when she is out of the way we'll have a nice talk together."

"I'm going now," said Irene, with a bright laugh at her dismissal. "Mary Louise won't be happy till everything is properly settled; nor will I, for I'm anxious to get acquainted with my new friend. So here I go and when you've had your talk out just whistle for me, Mary Louise."

She could propel the chair by means of rims attached to the wheels and, even as she spoke, began to roll herself out of the room. Mary Louise sprang to assist her, but the girl waved her away with a little laugh.

"I'm an expert traveler," she said, "and everyone lets me go and come as I please. Indeed, I'm very independent, Mary Louise, as you will presently discover."

Away she went, through the hall, out at the front door and along the broad porch, and when she had gone Mary Louise whispered softly into Mrs. Conant's mechanical eardrum:

"What is wrong with her?"

"A good many things," was the reply, "although the brave child makes light of them all. One leg is badly withered and the foot of the other is twisted out of shape. She can stand on that foot to dress herself — which she insists on doing unaided — but she cannot walk a step. Irene has suffered a

great deal, I think, and she's a frail little body; but she has the sweetest temperament in the world and seems happy and content from morn till night."

"It's wonderful!" exclaimed Mary Louise. "What caused her affliction?"

"It is the result of an illness she had when a baby. Irene is sixteen and has never known what it is to be well and strong, yet she never resents her fate, but says she is grateful for the blessings she enjoys. Her father died long ago and her mother about a year since; so, the child being an orphan, Peter and I have taken her to live with us."

"That is very kind of you," asserted Mary Louise with conviction.

"No; I fear it is pure selfishness," returned the good woman, "for until she came to us the old home had been dreadfully dull — the result, my dear, of your going away. And now tell me your story, and all about yourself, for I'm anxious to hear what brought you to Dorfield."

Mary Louise drew a chair close to that of Aunt Hannah Conant and confided to her all the worries and tribulations that had induced her to quit Miss Stearne's school and seek shelter with her old friends the Conants. Also, she related the episode of Detective O'Gorman and how she had first learned through him that her grandfather and her mother were not living in Dorfield.

"I'm dreadfully worried over Gran'pa Jim," said she, "for those terrible agents of the Secret Service seem bent on catching him. And he doesn't wish to be caught. If they arrested him, do you think they would put him in jail, Aunt Hannah?"

"I fear so," was the reply.

"What do they imagine he has done that is wrong?"

"I do not know," said Mrs. Conant. "Peter never tells me anything about the private affairs of his clients, and I never ask him. But of one thing I am sure, my dear, and that is that Peter Conant would not act as Colonel Weatherby's lawyer, and try to shield him, unless he believed him innocent of any crime. Peter is a little odd, in some ways, but he's honest to the backbone."

"I know it," declared Mary Louise. "Also I know that Gran'pa Jim is a good man. Cannot the law make a mistake, Aunt Hannah?"

"It surely can, or there would be no use for lawyers. But do not worry over your grandfather, my child, for he seems quite able to take care of himself. It is nine or ten years since he became a fugitive — also making a fugitive of your poor mother, who would not desert him — and to this day the officers of the law have been unable to apprehend him. Be patient, dear girl, and accept the situation as you find it. You shall live with us until your

people again send for you. We have excellent schools in Dorfield, where you will not be taunted with your grandfather's misfortunes because no one here knows anything about them."

"Doesn't Irene know?" asked Mary Louise.

"She only knows that your people are great travelers and frequently leave you behind them as they flit from place to place. She knows that you lived with us for three years and that we love you."

The girl became thoughtful for a time. "I can't understand," she finally said, "why Gran'pa Jim acts the way he does. Often he has told me, when I deserved censure, to 'face the music' and have it over with. Once he said that those who sin must suffer the penalty, because it is the law of both God and man, and he who seeks to escape a just penalty is a coward. Gran'pa knows he is innocent, but the government thinks he is guilty; so why doesn't he face the music and prove his innocence, instead of running away as a coward might do and so allow his good name to suffer reproach?"

Mrs. Conant shook her head as if perplexed.

"That very question has often puzzled me, as it has you," she confessed. "Once I asked Peter about it and he scowled and said it might be just as well to allow Colonel Weatherby to mind his own business. The Colonel seems to have a good deal of money, and perhaps he fears that if he surrendered to the law it would be taken away from him, leaving you and your mother destitute."

"We wouldn't mind that," said the girl, "if Gran'pa's name could be cleared."

"After all," continued Mrs. Conant reflectively, "I don't believe the Colonel is accused of stealing money, for Peter says his family is one of the oldest and richest in New York. Your grandfather inherited a vast fortune and added largely to it. Peter says he was an important man of affairs before this misfortune — whatever it was — overtook him."

"I can just remember our home in New York," said Mary Louise, also musingly, "for I was very young at the time. It was a beautiful big place, with a good many servants. I wonder what drove us from it?"

"Do you remember your father?" asked Mrs. Conant.

"Not at all."

"Peter once told me he was a foreigner who fell desperately in love with your mother and married her without your grandfather's full approval. I believe Mr. Burrows was a man of much political influence, for he served in the Department of State and had a good many admirers. Peter never knew why your grandfather opposed the marriage, for afterward he took Mr. and Mrs. Burrows to live with him and they were all good friends up to the day

of your father's death. But this is ancient history and speculation on subjects we do not understand is sure to prove unsatisfactory. I wouldn't worry over your grandfather's troubles, my dear. Try to forget them."

"Grandfather's real name isn't Weatherby," said the girl. "It is Hathaway."

Mrs. Conant gave a start of surprise.

"How did you learn that?" she asked sharply.

The girl took out her watch, pried open the back ease with a penknife and allowed Mrs. Conant to read the inscription. Also she curiously watched the woman's face and noted its quick flush and its uneasy expression. Did the lawyer's wife know more than she had admitted?

If so, why was everyone trying to keep her in the dark?

"I cannot see that this helps to solve the mystery," said Mrs. Conant in a brisk tone as she recovered from her surprise. "Let us put the whole thing out of mind, Mary Louise, or it will keep us all stirred up and in a muddle of doubt. I shall tell Peter you are to live with us, and your old little room at the back of the hall is all ready for you. Irene has the next room, so you will be quite neighborly. Go and put away your things and then we'll whistle for Irene."

Mary Louise went to the well-remembered room and slowly and thoughtfully unpacked her suit case. She was glad to find a home again among congenial people, but she was growing more and more perplexed over the astonishing case of Gran'pa Jim. It worried her to find that an occasional doubt would cross her mind in spite of her intense loyalty to her dearly loved grandparent. She would promptly drive out the doubt, but it would insist on intruding again.

"Something is wrong somewhere," she sighed. "There must be some snarl that even Gran'pa Jim can't untangle; and, if he can't, I'm sure no one else can. I wish I could find him and that he would tell me all about it. I suppose he thinks I'm too young to confide in, but I'm almost sixteen now and surely that's old enough to understand things. There were girls at school twenty years old that I'm sure couldn't reason as well as I can."

After a while she went down stairs and joined Irene in the garden, where the chair-girl was trimming rose bushes with a pair of stout scissors. She greeted Mary Louise with her bright smile, saying:

"I suppose everything is fixed up, now, and we can begin to get acquainted."

"Why, we ARE acquainted," declared Mary Louise. "Until to-day I had never heard of you, yet it seems as if I had known you always."

"Thank you," laughed Irene; "that is a very pretty compliment, I well

realize. You have decided to stay, then?”

“Aunt Hannah has decided so, but Mr. Conant may object.”

“He won’t do that,” was the quick reply. “Uncle Peter may be an autocrat in his office, but I’ve noticed that Aunt Hannah is the ruler of this household.”

Mr. Conant may have noticed that, also, for he seemed not at all surprised when his wife said she had decided to keep Mary Louise with them. But after the girls had gone to bed that night the lawyer had a long talk with his better half, and thereafter Mary Louise’s presence was accepted as a matter of course. But Mr. Conant said to her the next morning:

“I have notified your grandfather, at his six different addresses, of your coming to us, so I ought to receive his instructions within the next few days. Also, to-day I will write Miss Stearne that you are here and why you came away from the school.”

“Will you ask her to send my trunk?”

“Not now. We will first await advices from Colonel Weatherby.”

These “advices” were received three days later in the form of a brief telegram from a Los Angeles attorney. The message read: “Colonel Weatherby requests you to keep M. L. in Dorfield until further instructions. Money forwarded. Hot. Caution.” It was signed “O. L.” and when Mr. Conant showed Mary Louise the message she exclaimed:

“Then Mr. O’Gorman was right!”

“In what way?” questioned the lawyer.

“In the note he left for me at the hotel he said I might find my grandfather by writing to Oscar Lawler at Los Angeles, California. This telegram is from Los Angeles and it is signed ‘O. L.’ which must mean ‘Oscar Lawler.’“

“How clever!” said Mr. Conant sarcastically.

“That proves, of course, that Gran’pa Jim and mother are in California, But how did the detective know that?” she asked wonderingly.

“He didn’t know it,” answered Peter Conant. “On the contrary, this message proves to me that they are not there at all.”

“But the telegram says — ”

“Otherwise,” continued the lawyer, “the telegram would not have come from that far-away point on the Pacific coast. There now remain five other places where Colonel Weatherby might be located. The chances are, however, that he is not in any of them.”

Mary Louise was puzzled. It was altogether too bewildering for her comprehension.

“Here are two strange words,” said she, eyeing the telegram she still held. “What does ‘hot’ mean, Mr. Conant?”

“It means,” he replied, “that the government spies are again seeking Colonel Weatherby. The word ‘caution’ means that we must all take care not to let any information escape us that might lead to his arrest. Don’t talk to strangers, Mary Louise; don’t talk to anyone outside our family of your grandfather’s affairs, or even of your own affairs. The safety of Colonel Weatherby depends, to a great extent, on our all being silent and discreet.”

CHAPTER XII
A CHEERFUL COMRADE

The more Mary Louise saw of Irene Macfarlane the more she learned to love her. No one could be miserable or despondent for long in the chair-girl's society, because she was always so bright and cheery herself. One forgot to pity her or even to deplore her misfortunes while listening to her merry chatter and frank laughter, for she seemed to find genuine joy and merriment in the simplest incidents of the life about her.

"God has been so good to me, Mary Louise!" she once exclaimed as they were sitting together in the garden. "He has given me sight, that I may revel in bookland and in the beauties of flowers and trees and shifting skies and the faces of my friends. He has given me the blessing of hearing, that I may enjoy the strains of sweet music and the songs of the birds and the voices of those I love. And I can scent the fragrance of the morning air, the perfume of the roses and — yes! even the beefsteak Aunt Hannah is frying for supper. The beefsteak tastes as good to me as it does to you. I can feel the softness of your cheek; I can sing melodies, in my own way, whenever my heart swells with joy. I can move about, by means of this wonderful chair, without the bother of walking. You don't envy me, Mary Louise, because you enjoy almost equal blessings; but you must admit I have reason for being happy."

Irene read a good many books and magazines and through the daily papers kept well posted on the world's affairs. Indeed, she was much better posted than Mary Louise, who, being more active, had less leisure to think and thus absorb the full meaning of all that came to her notice. Irene would play the piano for hours at a time, though obliged to lean forward in her chair to reach the keys, and her moods ran the gamut from severely classical themes to ragtime, seeming to enjoy all equally. She also sewed and mended with such consummate skill that Mary Louise, who was rather awkward with her needle, marveled at her talent.

Nor was this the end of the chair-girl's accomplishments, for Irene had a fancy for sketching and made numerous caricatures of those persons with whom she came in contact. These contained so much humor that Mary Louise was delighted with them — especially one of "Uncle Peter" toying with his watch fob and staring straight ahead of him with round, expressionless eyes.

"Really, Irene, I believe you could paint," she once said.

"No," answered her friend, "I would not be so wicked as to do that. All imitations of Nature seem to me a mock of God's handiwork, which no mortal brush can hope to equal. I shall never be so audacious, I hope. But a

photograph is a pure reflex of Nature, and my caricatures, which are merely bits of harmless fun, furnish us now and then a spark of humor to make us laugh, and laughter is good for the soul. I often laugh at my own sketches, as you know. Sometimes I laugh at their whimsical conception, before ever I put pencil to paper. Lots of caricatures I make secretly, laughing over and then destroying them for fear they might be seen and hurt the feelings of their innocent subjects. Why, Mary Louise, I drew your doleful face only yesterday, and it was so funny I shrieked with glee. You heard me and looked over at me with a smile that made the caricature lie, so I promptly tore it up. It had served its purpose, you see."

So many of these quaint notions filled the head of the crippled girl that Mary Louise's wondering interest in her never flagged. It was easy to understand why Mrs. Conant had declared that Irene was the joy and life of the household, for it was impossible to remain morbid or blue in her presence.

For this reason, as well as through the warm and sincere affection inspired by Irene, Mary Louise came by degrees to confide to her the entire story of the mystery that surrounded her grandfather and influenced the lives of her mother and herself. Of her personal anxieties and fears she told her new friend far more than she had ever confessed to anyone else and her disclosures were met by ready sympathy.

"Phoo!" cried Irene. "This isn't a REAL trouble; it will pass away. Everything passes away in time, Mary Louise, for life is a succession of changes — one thing after another. Remember the quotation: 'Whate'er may be thy fate to-day, remember — this will pass away.' I love that little saying and it has comforted me and given me courage many a time."

"Life will also pass away," observed Mary Louise pessimistically.

"To be sure. Isn't that a glad prospect? To pass to a new life, to new adventures, planned for us by the wisdom of God, is the most glorious promise we mortals possess. In good time that joy will be ours, but now we must make the most of our present blessings. I take it, Mary Louise, that there is a purpose in everything — a Divine Purpose, you know — and that those who most patiently accept their trials will have the better future recompense. What's a twisted ankle or a shriveled leg to do with happiness? Or even a persecuted grandfather? We're made of better stuff, you and I, than to cry at such babyish bumps. My! what a lot of things we both have to be thankful for."

Somehow these conversations cheered Mary Louise considerably and her face soon lost its drawn, worried look and became almost as placid as in the days when she had Gran'pa Jim beside her and suspected no approaching

calamity. Gran'pa Jim would surely have loved Irene, had he known her, because their ideas of life and duty were so similar.

As it was now less than a month to the long summer vacation, Mary Louise did not enter the Dorfield High School but studied a little at home, so as not to get "rusty," and passed most of her days in the society of Irene Macfarlane. It was a week or so after her arrival that Peter Conant said to her one evening:

"I have now received ample funds for all your needs, Mary Louise, so I have sent to Miss Stearne to have your trunk and books forwarded."

"Oh; then you have heard from Gran'pa Jim?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"I do not know," chopping the words apart with emphasis. "The Colonel has been very liberal. I am to put twenty dollars in cash in your pocketbook and you are to come to me for any further sums you may require, which I am ordered to supply without question. I would have favored making you an allowance, had I been consulted, but the Colonel is — eh — eh — the Colonel is the Colonel."

"Didn't Gran'pa Jim send me any letter, or — any information at all?" she asked wistfully.

"Not a word."

"In my last letter, which you promised me to forward, I begged him to write me," she said, with disappointment.

Peter Conant made no reply. He merely stared at her. But afterward, when the two girls were alone, Irene said to her:

"I do not think you should beg your grandfather to write you. A letter might be traced by his enemies, you know, and that would mean his undoing. He surely loves you and bears you in mind, for he has provided for your comfort in every possible way. Even your letters to him may be dangerous, although they reach him in such roundabout ways. If I were you, Mary Louise, I'd accept the situation as I found it and not demand more than your grandfather and your mother are able to give you."

This frank advice Mary Louise accepted in good part and through the influence of the chair-girl she gradually developed a more contented frame of mind.

Irene was a persistent reader of books and one of Mary Louise's self-imposed duties was to go to the public library and select such volumes as her friend was likely to be interested in. These covered a wide range of subjects, although historical works and tales of the age of chivalry seemed to appeal to Irene more than any others. Sometimes she would read aloud, in her sweet,

sympathetic voice, to Mary Louise and Mrs. Conant, and under these conditions they frequently found themselves interested in books which, if read by themselves, they would be sure to find intolerably dry and uninteresting. The crippled girl had a way of giving more than she received and, instead of demanding attention, would often entertain the sound-limbed ones of her immediate circle.

CHAPTER XIII

BUB SUCCUMBS TO FORCE

One day Peter Conant abruptly left his office, came home and packed his grip and then hurried down town and caught the five o'clock train for New York. He was glum and uncommunicative, as usual, merely telling Aunt Hannah that business called him away and he did not know when he would be back.

A week later Peter appeared at the family breakfast table, having arrived on the early morning express, and he seemed in a more gracious mood than usual. Indeed, he was really talkative.

"I met Will Morrison in New York, Hannah," he said to his wife. "He was just sailing for London with his family and will remain abroad all summer. He wanted us to occupy his mountain place, Hillcrest Lodge, during July and August, and although I told him we couldn't use the place he insisted on my taking an order on his man to turn the shack over to us."

"The shack!" cried Aunt Hannah indignantly.

"Why, Peter, Hillcrest Lodge is a little palace. It is the cosiest, most delightful place I have ever visited. Why shouldn't we accept Will Morrison's proposition to occupy it?"

"I can't leave my business."

"You could run up every Friday afternoon, taking the train to Millbank and the stage to Hillcrest, and stay with us till Monday morning."

He stared at her reflectively.

"Would you be safe in that out-of-the-way place?" he asked.

"Of course. Didn't you say Will had a man for caretaker? And only a few scattered cottages are located near by, so we shall be quite by ourselves and wholly unmolested. I mean to go, and take the girls. The change will do us all good, so you may as well begin to make arrangements for the trip."

Peter Conant stared awhile and then resumed his breakfast without comment. Mary Louise thought she saw a smile flicker over his stolid features for a moment, but could not be positive. Aunt Hannah had spoken in a practical, matter-of-fact way that did not admit of argument.

"Let me see," she resumed; "we will plan to leave on Thursday morning, over the branch road, which will get us to Millbank by noon. If you telegraph the stage-driver to meet us we can reach Hillcrest Lodge by three o'clock — perhaps earlier — and that will enable us to get settled before dark. That is far better than taking the afternoon train. Will you make the proper arrangements, Peter?"

"Yes," he briefly replied.

As he was leaving the house after breakfast he fixed his stare on Irene and

said to her:

"In New York I ran across a lot of second-hand books at an auction sale — old novels and romances which you will probably like. I bought the lot and shipped them home. If they arrive in time you can take them to Hillcrest and they will keep you reading all summer."

"Oh, thank you, Uncle Peter!" exclaimed the chair-girl gratefully.

"Have you any — any — news of Gran'pa Jim?" asked Mary Louise diffidently.

"No," he said and walked away.

During the few days that remained before their exodus they were busy preparing for the anticipated vacation. Summer gowns had to be looked over and such things gathered together as might be useful during their two months' stay at Hillcrest.

"Of course no one will see us," remarked Aunt Hannah; "it's really the jumping-off place of the world; but Will Morrison has made it as cosy as possible and we three, with just Peter at the week-ends, can amuse one another without getting lonely. Peter will fish in the mountain streams, of course, and that's the reason he is allowing us to go. We've visited the Morrisons two or three times at the Lodge and Peter has fished for trout every minute he was there."

"Who are the Morrisons?" asked Mary Louise.

"Will Morrison is a rich banker and his wife Sallie was an old schoolmate of mine. The Lodge is only a little resort of theirs, you know, for in the city they live in grand style. I know you girls will enjoy the place, for the scenery is delightful and the clear mountain air mighty invigorating."

All girls delight in change of location and although Irene was a little worried over the difficulties of getting to Hillcrest Lodge in her crippled condition, she was as eager to go as was Mary Louise. And she made the trip more comfortably than she had feared.

At Millbank the stage-driver fixed a comfortable seat for her in his carryall and loaded the boxes and baggage and the wheeled chair and the box of books — which had arrived from New York — on the railed top of his bus, and then they drove away through a rough but picturesque country that drew from the girls many exclamations of delight.

Presently they came to a small group of dwellings called the "Huddle," which lay at the foot of the mountain. Then up a winding path the four horses labored patiently, halting often to rest and get their breaths. At such times the passengers gloried in the superb views of the valley and its farms and were never impatient to proceed. They passed one or two modest villas, for this splendid location had long ago been discovered by a few others besides Will

Morrison who loved to come here for their vacations and so escape the maddening crowds of the cities.

Aunt Hannah had planned the trip with remarkable accuracy, for at about three o'clock the lumbering stage stopped at a pretty chalet half hidden among the tall pines and overlooking a steep bluff. Here the baggage and boxes were speedily unloaded.

"I gotta git back ter meet the aft'noon train," said Bill Coombs, their driver. "They won't be any more passingers in this direction, tain't likely, 'cause the houses 'roun' here is mighty scattered an' no one's expectin' nobody, as I know of. But in the other direction from Millbank — Sodd Corners way — I may catch a load, if I'm lucky."

So back he drove, leaving the Conants' traps by the roadside, and Peter began looking around for Morrison's man. The doors of the house were fast locked, front and rear. There was no one in the barn or the shed-like garage, where a rusty looking automobile stood. Peter looked around the grounds in vain. Then he whistled. Afterward he began bawling out "Hi, there!" in a voice that echoed lonesomely throughout the mountain side.

And, at last, when they were all beginning to despair, a boy came slouching around a corner of the house, from whence no one could guess. He was whittling a stick and he continued to whittle while he stared at the unexpected arrivals and slowly advanced. When about fifteen paces away he halted, with feet planted well apart, and bent his gaze sturdily on his stick and knife. He was barefooted, dressed in faded blue-jeans overalls and a rusty gingham shirt — the two united by a strap over one shoulder — and his head was covered by a broad Scotch golf cap much too big for him and considerably too warm for the season.

"Come here!" commanded Mr. Conant.

The boy did not move, therefore the lawyer advanced angrily toward him.

"Why didn't you obey me?" he asked.

"They's gals there. I hates gals," said the boy in a confidential tone. "Any sort o' men critters I kin stand, but gals gits my goat."

"Who are you?" inquired Mr. Conant.

"Me? I'm jus' Bub."

"Where is Mr. Morrison's man?"

"Meanin' Talbot? Gone up to Mark's Peak, to guide a gang o' hunters f'm the city."

"When did he go?" asked the lawyer.

"I guess a Tuesday. No — a Wednesday."

"And when will he be back?"

The boy whittled, abstractedly.

“Answer me!”

“How kin I? D’ye know where Mark’s Peak is?”

“No.”

“It takes a week ter git thar; they’ll likely hunt two er three weeks; mebbe more; ye kin tell that as well as I kin. Mister Will’s gone ter You-RUPP with Miss’ Morrison, so Talbot he won’t be in no hurry ter come back.”

“Great Caesar! Here’s a pretty mess. Are you Talbot’s boy?”

“Nope. I’m a Grigger, an’ live over in the holler, yonder.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Earnin’ two bits a week.”

“How?”

“Lookin’ after the place.”

“Very well. Mr. Morrison has given us permission to use the Lodge while he is away, so unlock the doors and help get the baggage in.”

The boy notched the stick with his knife, using great care.

“Talbot didn’t say nuth’n’ ‘bout that,” he remarked composedly.

Mr. Conant uttered an impatient ejaculation. It was one of his peculiarities to give a bark similar to that of a dog when greatly annoyed. After staring at the boy a while he took out Will Morrison’s letter to Talbot, opened it and held it before Bub’s face.

“Read that!” he cried.

Bub grinned and shook his head.

“*I* kain’t read,” he said.

Mr. Conant, in a loud and severe voice, read Mr. Morrison’s instruction to his man Talbot to do everything in his power to make the Conants comfortable and to serve them as faithfully as he did his own master. The boy listened, whittling slowly. Then he said:

“Mebbe that’s all right; an’ ag’in, mebbe tain’t. Seein’ as I kain’t read I ain’t goin’ ter take no one’s word fer it.”

“You insolent brat!” exclaimed Peter Conant, highly incensed. Then he turned and called: “Come here, Mary Louise.”

Mary Louise promptly advanced and with every step she made the boy retreated a like distance, until the lawyer seized his arm and held it in a firm grip.

“What do you mean by running away?” he demanded.

“I hates gals,” retorted Bub sullenly.

“Don’t be a fool. Come here, Mary Louise, and read this letter to the boy, word for word.”

Mary Louise, marking the boy’s bashfulness and trying to restrain a smile, read Mr. Morrison’s letter.

“You see,” said the lawyer sharply, giving Bub a little shake, “those are the exact words of the letter. We’re going to enter the Lodge and take possession of it, as Mr. Morrison has told us to do, and if you don’t obey my orders I shall give you a good flogging. Do you understand that?”

Bub nodded, more cheerfully.

“If ye do it by force,” said he, “that lets me out. Nobody kin blame me if I’m forced.”

Mary Louise laughed so heartily that the boy cast an upward, half-approving glance at her face. Even Mr. Conant’s stern visage relaxed.

“See here, Bub,” he said, “obey my orders and no harm can come to you. This letter is genuine and if you serve us faithfully while we are here I’ll — I’ll give you four bits a week.”

“Heh? Four bits!”

“Exactly. Four bits every week.”

“Gee, that’ll make six bits a week, with the two Talbot’s goin’ ter give me. I’m hanged ef I don’t buy a sweater fer next winter, afore the cold weather comes!”

“Very good,” said Mr. Conant. “Now get busy and let us in.”

Bub deliberately closed the knife and put it in his pocket, tossing away the stick.

“Gals,” he remarked, with another half glance at Mary Louise, “ain’t ter my likin’; but FOUR BITS — ”

He turned and walked away to where a wild rosebush clambered over one corner of the Lodge. Pushing away the thick, thorny branches with care, he thrust in his hand and drew out a bunch of keys.

“If it’s jus’ the same t’ you, sir, I’d ruther ye’d snatch ‘em from my hand,” he suggested. “Then, if I’m blamed, I kin prove a alibi.”

Mr. Conant was so irritated that he literally obeyed the boy’s request and snatched the keys. Then he led the way to the front door.

“It’s that thin, brass one,” Bub hinted.

Mr. Conant opened the front door. The place was apparently in perfect order.

“Go and get Hannah and Irene, please,” said Peter to Mary Louise, and soon they had all taken possession of the cosy Lodge, had opened the windows and aired it and selected their various bedrooms.

“It is simply delightful!” exclaimed Irene, who was again seated in her wheeled chair, “and, if Uncle Peter will build a little runway from the porch to the ground, as he did at home, I shall be able to go and come as I please.”

Meantime Aunt Hannah — as even Mary Louise now called Mrs. Conant — ransacked the kitchen and cupboards to discover what supplies were in the

house. There was a huge stock of canned goods, which Will Morrison had begged them to use freely, and the Conants had brought a big box of other groceries with them, which was speedily unpacked.

While the others were thus engaged in settling and arranging the house, Irene wheeled her chair to the porch, on the steps of which sat Bub, again whittling. He had shown much interest in the crippled girl, whose misfortune seemed instantly to dispel his aversion for her sex, at least so far as she was concerned. He was not reluctant even to look at her face and he watched with astonishment the ease with which she managed her chair. Having overheard, although at a distance, most of the boy's former conversation with Uncle Peter, Irene now began questioning him.

"Have you been eating and sleeping here?"

"Of course," answered Bub.

"In the Lodge?"

"No; over in Talbot's house. That's over the ridge, yonder; it's only a step, but ye kain't see it f'm here. My home's in the South Holler, four mile away."

"Do you cook your own meals?"

"Nobudy else ter do it."

"And don't you get dreadfully lonesome at night?"

"Who? Me? Guess not. What the Sam Hill is they to be lonesome over?"

"There are no near neighbors, are there?"

"Plenty. The Barker house is two mile one way an' the Bigbee house is jus' half a mile down the slope; guess ye passed it, comin' up; but they ain't no one in the Bigbee house jus' now, 'cause Bigbee got shot on the mount'n las' year, a deer hunt'n', an' Bigbee's wife's married another man what says he's delicate like an' can't leave the city. But neighbors is plenty. Six mile along the canyon lives Doolittle."

Irene was delighted with Bub's quaint language and ways and before Mrs. Conant called her family to the simple improvised dinner the chair-girl had won the boy's heart and already they were firm friends.

CHAPTER XIV

A CALL FROM AGATHA LORD

Hillcrest Lodge was perched upon a broad shelf of the wooded mountain, considerably nearer to the bottom than to the top, yet a stiff climb from the plain below. Behind it was a steep cliff; in front there was a gradual descent covered with scrub but affording a splendid view of the lowlands. At one side was the rocky canyon with its brook struggling among the boulders, and on the other side the roadway that wound up the mountain in zigzag fashion, selecting the course of least resistance.

Will Morrison was doubtless a mighty hunter and an expert fisherman, for the "den" at the rear of the Lodge was a regular museum of trophies of the chase. Stag and doe heads, enormous trout mounted on boards, antlers of wild mountain sheep, rods, guns, revolvers and hunting-knives fairly lined the wails, while a cabinet contained reels, books of flies, cartridge belts, creels and many similar articles. On the floor were rugs of bear, deer and beaver. A shelf was filled with books on sporting subjects. There was a glass door that led onto a little porch at the rear of the Lodge and a big window that faced the cliff.

This sanctum of the owner rather awed the girls when first they examined it, but they found it the most fascinating place in all the house and Irene was delighted to be awarded the bedroom that adjoined it. The other bedrooms were on the upper floor.

"However," said Mr. Conant to Irene, "I shall reserve the privilege of smoking my evening pipe in this den, for here is a student lamp, a low table and the easiest chairs in all the place. If you keep your bedroom door shut you won't mind the fumes of tobacco."

"I don't mind them anyhow, Uncle Peter," she replied.

Bub Grigger helped get in the trunks and boxes. He also filled the woodbox in the big living room and carried water from the brook for Aunt Hannah, but otherwise he was of little use to them. His favorite occupation was whittling and he would sit for hours on one of the broad benches overlooking the valley, aimlessly cutting chips from a stick without forming it into any object whatsoever.

"I suppose all this time he is deeply thinking," said Mary Louise as the girls sat on the porch watching him, the day after their arrival, "but it would be interesting to know what direction Bub's thoughts take."

"He must be figuring up his earnings and deciding how long it will take to buy that winter sweater," laughed Irene. "I've had a bit of conversation with the boy already and his ideas struck me as rather crude and undeveloped."

“One idea, however, is firmly fixed in his mind,” declared Mary Louise. “He ‘hates gals.’“

“We must try to dispel that notion. Perhaps he has a big sister at home who pounds him, and therefore he believes all girls are alike.”

“Then let us go to him and make friends,” suggested Mary Louise. “If we are gentle with the boy we may win him over.”

Mr. Conant had already made a runway for the chair, so they left the porch and approached Bub, who saw them coming and slipped into the scrub, where he speedily disappeared from view. At other times, also, he shyly avoided the girls, until they began to fear it would be more difficult to “make friends” than they had supposed.

Monday morning Mr. Conant went down the mountain road, valise in hand, and met Bill Coombs the stage-driver at the foot of the descent, having made this arrangement to save time and expense. Peter had passed most of his two days’ vacation in fishing and had been so successful that he promised Aunt Hannah he would surely return the following Friday. He had instructed Bub to “take good care of the womenfolks” during his absence, but no thought of danger occurred to any of them. The Morrisons had occupied the Lodge for years and had never been molested in any way. It was a somewhat isolated place but the country people in the neighborhood were thoroughly honest and trustworthy.

“There isn’t much for us to do here,” said Mary Louise when the three were left alone, “except to read, to eat and to sleep — lazy occupations all. I climbed the mountain a little way yesterday, but the view from the Lodge is the best of all and if you leave the road you tear your dress to shreds in the scrub.”

“Well, to read, to eat and to sleep is the very best way to enjoy a vacation,” asserted Aunt Hannah. “Let us all take it easy and have a good time.”

Irene’s box of books which Mr. Conant had purchased for her in New York had been placed in the den, where she could select the volumes as she chose, and the chair-girl found the titles so alluring that she promised herself many hours of enjoyment while delving among them. They were all old and secondhand — perhaps fourth-hand or fifth-hand — as the lawyer had stated, and the covers were many of them worn to tatters; but “books is books,” said Irene cheerily, and she believed they would not prove the less interesting in contents because of their condition. Mostly they were old romances, historical essays and novels, with a sprinkling of fairy tales and books of verse — just the subjects Irene most loved.

“Being exiles, if not regular hermits,” observed the crippled girl, sunning

herself on the small porch outside the den, book in hand, “we may loaf and dream to our hearts’ content, and without danger of reproach.”

But not for long were they to remain wholly secluded. On Thursday afternoon they were surprised by a visitor, who suddenly appeared from among the trees that lined the roadway and approached the two girls who were occupying a bench at the edge of the bluff.

The new arrival was a lady of singularly striking appearance, beautiful and in the full flush of womanhood, being perhaps thirty years of age. She wore a smart walking-suit that fitted her rounded form perfectly, and a small hat with a single feather was jauntily perched upon her well-set head. Hair and eyes, almost black, contrasted finely with the bloom on her cheeks. In her ungloved hand she held a small walking-stick.

Advancing with grace and perfect self-possession, she smiled and nodded to the two young girls and then, as Mary Louise rose to greet her, she said:

“I am your nearest neighbor, and so I have climbed up here to get acquainted. I am Agatha Lord, but of course you do not know me, because I came from Boston, whereas you came from — from — ”

“Dorfield,” said Mary Louise. “Pray be seated. Let me present Irene Macfarlane; and I am Mary Louise Burrows. You are welcome, Miss Lord — or should I say Mrs. Lord?”

“Miss is correct,” replied their visitor with a pleasant laugh, which brought an answering smile to the other faces; “but you must not address me except as ‘Agatha.’ For here in the wilderness formalities seem ridiculous. Now let us have a cosy chat together.”

“Won’t you come into the Lodge and meet Mrs. Conant?”

“Not just yet. You may imagine how that climb winded me, although they say it is only half a mile. I’ve taken the Bigbee house, just below you, you know, and I arrived there last night to get a good rest after a rather strenuous social career at home. Ever since Easter I’ve been on the ‘go’ every minute and I’m really worn to a frazzle.”

She did not look it, thought Mary Louise. Indeed, she seemed the very picture of health.

“Ah,” said she, fixing her eyes on Irene’s book, “you are very fortunate. The one thing I forgot to bring with me was a supply of books, and there is not a volume — not even a prayer-book — in the Bigbee house. I shall go mad in these solitudes if I cannot read.”

“You may use my library,” promised Irene, sympathizing with Miss Lord’s desire. “Uncle Peter brought a great box of books for me to read and you are welcome to share their delights with me, I believe there are fifty of them, at the least; but many were published ages ago and perhaps,” with a

glance at the dainty hands, “you won’t care to handle secondhand books.”

“This ozonic air will fumigate them,” said Agatha Lord carelessly. “We don’t absorb bindings, Irene, but merely the thoughts of the authors. Books are the one banquet-table whereat we may feast without destroying the delicacy or flavor of the dishes presented. As long as the pages hold together and the type is legible a book is as good as when new.”

“I like pretty bindings, though,” declared Irene, “for they dress pretty thoughts in fitting attire. An ill-looking book, whatever its contents, resembles the ugly girl whose only redeeming feature is her good heart. To be beautiful without and within must have been the desire of God in all things.”

Agatha gave her a quick look of comprehension. There was an unconsciously wistful tone in the girl’s voice. Her face, though pallid, was lovely to view; her dress was dainty and arranged with care; she earnestly sought to be as beautiful “without and within” as was possible, yet the twisted limbs forbade her attaining the perfection she craved.

They sat together for an hour in desultory conversation and Agatha Lord certainly interested the two younger girls very much. She was decidedly worldly in much of her gossip but quick to perceive when she infringed the susceptibilities of her less sophisticated companions and was able to turn the subject cleverly to more agreeable channels.

“I’ve brought my automobile with me,” she said, “and, unless you have a car of your own, we will take some rides through the valley together. I mean to drive to Millbank every day for mail.”

“There’s a car here, which belongs to Mr. Morrison,” replied Mary Louise, “but as none of us understands driving it we will gladly accept your invitations to ride. Do you drive your own car?”

“Yes, indeed; that is the joy of motoring; and I care for my car, too, because the hired chauffeurs are so stupid. I didn’t wish the bother of servants while taking my ‘rest cure,’ and so my maid and I are all alone at the Bigbee place.”

After a time they went into the house, where Miss Lord was presented to Aunt Hannah, who welcomed their neighbor with her accustomed cordiality. In the den Agatha pounced upon the books and quickly selected two which she begged permission to take home with her.

“This is really a well selected collection,” she remarked, eyeing the titles critically. “Where did Mr. Conant find it?”

“At an auction of second-hand junk in New York,” explained Irene. “Uncle Peter knows that I love the old-fashioned books best but I’m sure he didn’t realize what a good collection this is.”

As she spoke, Irene was listlessly running through the leaves of two or three volumes she had not before examined, when in one of them her eye was caught by a yellowed sheet of correspondence paper, tucked among the pages at about midway between the covers. Without removing the sheet she leaned over to examine the fine characters written upon it and presently exclaimed in wondering tones:

"Why, Mary Louise! Here is an old letter about your mother — yes, and here's something about your grandfather, too. How strange that it should be — "

"Let me see it!" cried Mary Louise, eagerly stretching out her hands.

But over her friend's shoulder Irene caught the expression of Agatha Lord — tense, startled, with a gleam of triumph in the dark eyes. It frightened her, that look on the face of one she had deemed a stranger, and it warned her. She closed the book with a little slam of decision and tucked it beside her in her chair.

"No," she said positively, "no one shall see the letter until I've had time to read it myself."

"But what was it about?" asked Mary Louise.

"I don't know, yet; and you're not to ask questions until I DO know," retorted Irene, calmly returning Miss Lord's curious gaze while addressing Mary Louise. "These are my books, you must admit, and so whatever I find in them belongs to me."

"Quite right, my dear," approved Agatha Lord, with her light, easy laugh. She knew that Irene had surprised her unguarded expression and wished to counteract the impression it had caused.

Irene returned the laugh with one equally insincere, saying to her guest:

"Help yourself to whatever books you like, neighbor. Carry them home, read them and return them at your convenience."

"You are exceedingly kind," answered Agatha and resumed her examination of the titles. Mary Louise had not observed the tell-tale expression on Miss Lord's face but she was shrewd enough to detect an undercurrent of ice in the polite phrases passing between her companions. She was consumed with curiosity to know more of the letter which Irene had found in the book but did not again refer to it in the presence of their visitor.

It was not long before Agatha rose to go, a couple of books tucked beneath her arm.

"Will you ride with me to Millbank to-morrow?" she asked, glancing from one face to another.

Mary Louise looked at Irene and Irene hesitated.

"I am not very comfortable without my chair," she said.

“You shall have the rear seat all to yourself, and it is big and broad and comfortable. Mary Louise will ride with me in front. I can easily drive the car up here and load you in at this very porch. Please come!”

“Very well, since you are so kind,” Irene decided, and after a few more kindly remarks the beautiful Miss Lord left them and walked with graceful, swinging stride down the path to the road and down the road toward the Bigbee house.

CHAPTER XV

BUB'S HOBBY

When their visitor had departed Mary Louise turned to her friend.

"Now, Irene, tell me about that queer letter," she begged.

"Not yet, dear. I'm sure it isn't important, though it's curious to find such an old letter tucked away in a book Uncle Peter bought at an auction in New York — a letter that refers to your own people, in days long gone by. In fact, Mary Louise, it was written so long ago that it cannot possibly interest us except as proof of the saying that the world's a mighty small place. When I have nothing else to do I mean to read that old epistle from start to finish; then, if it contains anything you'd care to see, I'll let you have a look at it."

With this promise Mary Louise was forced to be content, for she did not wish to annoy Irene by further pleadings. It really seemed, on reflection, that the letter could be of little consequence to anyone. So she put it out of mind, especially as just now they spied Bub sitting on the bench and whittling as industriously as ever.

"Let me go to him first," suggested Irene, with a mischievous smile. "He doesn't seem at all afraid of me, for some reason, and after I've led him into conversation you can join us."

So she wheeled her chair over to where the boy sat. He glanced toward her as she approached the bench but made no movement to flee.

"We've had a visitor," said the girl, confidentially; "a lady who has taken the Bigbee house for the summer."

Bub nodded, still whittling.

"I know; I seen her drive her car up the grade on high," he remarked, feeling the edge of his knife-blade reflectively. "Seems like a real sport — fer a gal — don't she?"

"She isn't a girl; she's a grown woman."

"To me," said Bub, "ev'rything in skirts is gals. The older they gits, the more ornery, to my mind. Never seen a gal yit what's wuth havin' 'round."

"Some day," said Irene with a smile, "you may change your mind about girls."

"An' ag'in," said Bub, "I mayn't. Dad says he were soft in the head when he took up with marm, an' Talbot owned a wife once what tried ter pizen him; so he giv 'er the shake an' come here to live in peace; but Dad's so used to scoldin's thet he can't sleep sound in the open any more onless he lays down beside the brook where it's noisiest. Then it reminds him o' marm an' he feels like he's to home. Gals think they got the men scared, an' sometimes they guess right. Even Miss' Morrison makes Will toe the mark, an' Miss'

Morrison ain't no slouch, fer a gal."

This somewhat voluble screed was delivered slowly, interspersed with periods of aimless whittling, and when Irene had patiently heard it through she decided it wise to change the subject.

"To-morrow we are going to ride in Miss Lord's automobile," she remarked.

Bub grunted.

"She says she can easily run it up to our door. Do you believe that!"

"Why not?" he inquired. "Don't Will Morrison have a car? It's over there in the shed now."

"Could it be used?" quietly asked Mary Louise, who had now strolled up behind the bench unperceived.

Bub turned a scowling face to her, but she was looking out across the bluff. And she had broached a subject in which the boy was intensely interested.

"Thet thar car in there is a reg'lar hummer," he asserted, waving the knife in one hand and the stick in the other by way of emphasis. "Tain't much fer looks, ye know, but looks cuts no figger with machinery, s'long's it's well greased. On a hill, thet car's a cat; on a level stretch, she's a jack-rabbit. I've seen Will Morrison take 'er ter Millbank an' back in a hour — jus' one lonesome hour!"

"That must have been in its good days," observed Mary Louise. "The thing hasn't any tires on it now."

"Will takes the tires off ev'ry year, when he goes away, an' puts 'em in the cellar," explained Bub. "They's seven good tires down cellar now; I counted 'em the day afore ye come here."

"In that case," said Mary Louise, "if any of us knew how to drive we could use the car."

"Drive?" said Bub scornfully. "That's nuth'n'."

"Oh. Do you know how?"

"Me? I kin drive any car thet's on wheels. Two years ago, afore Talbot come, I used ter drive Will Morrison over t' Millbank ev'ry week t' catch the train; an' brung the car home ag'in; an' went fer Will when he come back."

"You must have been very young, two years ago," said Irene.

"Shucks. I'm goin' on fifteen this very minnit. When I were 'leven I druv the Higgins car fer 'em an' never hit the ditch once. Young! Wha'd'ye think I am — a KID?"

So indignant had he become that he suddenly rose and slouched away, nor could they persuade him to return.

"We're going to have a lot of fun with that boy, once we learn how to

handle him," predicted Irene, when the two girls had enjoyed a good laugh at Bub's expense. "He seems a queer mixture of simplicity and shrewdness."

The next day Agatha Lord appeared in her big touring car and after lifting Irene in and making her quite comfortable on the back seat they rolled gayly away to Millbank, where they had lunch at the primitive restaurant, visited the post-office in the grocery store and amused themselves until the train came in and brought Peter Conant, who was loaded down with various parcels of merchandise Aunt Hannah had ordered.

The lawyer was greatly pleased to find a car waiting to carry him to the Lodge and after being introduced to Miss Lord, whose loveliness he could not fail to admire, he rode back with her in the front seat and left Mary Louise to sit inside with Irene and the packages. Bill Coombs didn't approve of this method of ruining his stage business and scowled at the glittering auto as it sped away across the plain to the mountain.

On this day Miss Lord proved an exceedingly agreeable companion to them all, even Irene forgetting for the time the strange expression she had surprised on Agatha's face at the time she found the letter. Mary Louise seemed to have quite forgotten that letter, for she did not again refer to it; but Irene, who had studied it closely in the seclusion of her own room that very night, had it rather persistently in mind and her eyes took on an added expression of grave and gentle commiseration whenever she looked at Mary Louise's unconscious face.

"It is much more fun," observed Peter Conant at breakfast the nest morning, "to ride to and from the station in a motor car than to patronize Bill Coombs' rickety, slow-going omnibus. But I can't expect our fair neighbor to run a stage line for my express accommodation."

"Will Morrison's motor car is here in the shed," said Mary Louise, and then she told of their conversation with Bub concerning it. "He says he has driven a car ever since he was eleven years old," she added.

"I wondered what that boy was good for," asserted the lawyer, "yet the very last thing I would have accused him of is being a chauffeur."

"Why don't you put on the tires and use the car?" asked Aunt Hannah.

"H-m. Morrison didn't mention the car to me. I suppose he forgot it. But I'm sure he'd be glad to have us use it. I'll talk with the boy."

Bub was found near the Talbot cottage in the gully. When Mr. Conant and Mary Louise approached him, soon after finishing their breakfast, he was — as usual — diligently whittling.

"They tell me you understand running Mr. Morrison's car," began the lawyer.

Bub raised his eyes a moment to the speaker's face but deemed an answer

unnecessary.

"Is that true?" with an impatient inflection.

"Kin run any car," said Bub.

"Very well. Show me where the tires are and we will put them on. I want you to drive me to and from Millbank, hereafter."

Bub retained his seat and whittled.

"Hev ye got a order from Will Morrison, in writin'?" he demanded.

"No, but he will be glad to have me use the machine. He said everything at the Lodge was at my disposal."

"Cars," said Bub, "ain't like other things. A feller'll lend his huntin'-dog, er his knife, er his overcoat; but he's all-fired shy o' lendin' his car. Ef I runned it for ye, Will might blame ME."

Mr. Conant fixed his dull stare on the boy's face, but Bub went on whittling. However, in the boy's inmost heart was a keen desire to run that motor car, as had been proposed. So he casually remarked:

"Ef ye forced me, ye know, I'd jus' hev to do it. Even Will couldn't blame me ef I were forced."

Mr. Conant was so exasperated that the hint was enough. He seized the boy's collar, lifted him off the stump and kicked him repeatedly as he propelled his victim toward the house.

"Oh, Uncle Peter!" cried Mary Louise, distressed; but Peter was obdurate and Bub never whimpered. He even managed to close his knife, between kicks, and slip it into his trousers pocket.

When they came to the garage the lawyer halted, more winded than Bub, and demanded sharply:

"What is needed to put the car in shape to run?"

"Tires, gas'line, oil 'n' water."

"The tires are in the cellar, you say? Get them out or I'll skin you alive."

Bub nodded, grinning.

"Forcin' of me, afore a witness, lets me out," he remarked, cheerfully, and straightway went for the tires.

Irene wheeled herself out and joined Uncle Peter and Mary Louise in watching the boy attach the tires, which were on demountable rims and soon put in place. All were surprised at Bub's sudden exhibition of energy and his deft movements, for he worked with the assurance of a skilled mechanic.

"Now, we need gasoline," said Mr. Conant. "I must order that from Millbank, I suppose."

"Onless ye want to rob Will Morrison's tank," agreed Bub.

"Oh; has he a tank of gasoline here?"

Bub nodded.

“A undergroun’ steel tank. I dunno how much gas is in it, but ef ye forced me I’d hev to measure it.”

Peter picked up a stick and shook it threateningly, whereat Bub smiled and walked to the rear of the garage where an iron plug appeared just above the surface of the ground. This he unscrewed with a wrench, thrust in a rod and drew it out again.

“‘Bout forty gallon,” he announced. “Thet’s ‘nough fer a starter, I guess.”

“Then put some of it into the machine. Is there any oil?”

“Plenty oil.”

Half an hour later Bub started the engine and rolled the car slowly out of its shed to the graveled drive in the back yard.

“All right, mister,” he announced with satisfaction. “I dunno what Will’ll say to this, but I kin prove I were forced. Want to take a ride now?”

“No,” replied Mr. Conant, “I merely wanted to get the car in shape. You are to take me to the station on Monday morning. Under the circumstances we will not use Morrison’s car for pleasure rides, but only for convenience in getting from here to the trains and back. He surely cannot object to that.”

Bub seemed disappointed by this decision. He ran the car around the yard two or three times, testing its condition, and then returned it to its shed. Mr. Conant got his rod and reel and departed on a fishing excursion.

CHAPTER XVI
THE STOLEN BOOK

Miss Lord came up to the Lodge that Saturday forenoon and proved so agreeable to Aunt Hannah and the girls that she was invited to stay to lunch. Mr. Conant was not present, for he had put a couple of sandwiches in his pocket and would not return home until dinner-time.

After luncheon they were all seated together on the benches at the edge of the bluff, which had become their favorite resort because the view was so wonderful. Mary Louise was doing a bit of fancy work, Irene was reading and Aunt Hannah, as she mended stockings, conversed in a desultory way with her guest.

"If you don't mind," said Agatha, after a time, "I'll run in and get me a book. This seems the place and the hour for dreaming, rather than gossip, and as we are all in a dreamy mood a good old-fashioned romance seems to me quite fitting for the occasion."

Taking permission for granted, she rose and sauntered toward the house. There was a serious and questioning look in Irene's eyes as they followed the graceful form of Miss Lord, but Mary Louise and Aunt Hannah paid no heed to their visitor's going in to select a book, it seemed so natural a thing for her to do.

It was fully fifteen minutes before Agatha returned, book in hand. Irene glanced at the title and gave a sigh of relief. Without comment their guest resumed her seat and soon appeared to be immersed in her volume. Gradually the sun crossed the mountain and cast a black shadow over the plain below, a shadow which lengthened and advanced inch by inch until it shrouded the landscape spread beneath them.

"That is my sun-dial," remarked Mary Louise, dropping her needlework to watch the shifting scene. "When the shadow passes the Huddle, it's four o'clock; by the time it reaches that group of oaks, it is four-thirty; at five o'clock it touches the creek, and then I know it's time to help Aunt Hannah with the dinner."

Agatha laughed.

"Is it really so late?" she asked. "I see the shadow has nearly reached the brook."

"Oh! I didn't mean — "

"Of course not; but it's time I ran home, just the same. My maid Susan is a perfect tyrant and scolds me dreadfully if I'm late. May I take this book home, Irene? I'll return the others I have borrowed to-morrow."

"To be sure," answered Irene. "I'm rich in books, you know."

When Miss Lord went away the party broke up, for Aunt Hannah was already thinking of dinner and Mary Louise wanted to make one of Uncle Peter's favorite desserts. So Irene wheeled her chair into the house and entering the den began a sharp inspection of the place, having in mind exactly the way it had looked when last she left it. But presently she breathed a sigh of relief and went into her own room, for the den had not been disturbed. She wheeled herself to a small table in a corner of her chamber and one glance confirmed her suspicions.

For half an hour she sat quietly thinking, considering many things that might prove very important in the near future. The chair-girl knew little of life save what she had gleaned from books, but in some ways that was quite equal to personal experiences. At dinner she asked:

"Did you take a book from my room to-day, Mary Louise?"

"No," was the reply; "I have not been in your room since yesterday."

"Nor you, Aunt Hannah?"

"No, my dear. What book is missing?"

"It was entitled 'The Siberian Exile.'"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mary Louise. "Wasn't that the book you found the letter in?"

"Yes."

"And you say it is missing?"

"It has mysteriously disappeared."

"Nonsense," said Uncle Peter, who had returned with a fine string of trout. "No one would care to steal an old book, and the thing hasn't legs, you know."

"Nevertheless," said Irene gravely, "it is gone."

"And the letter with it!" added Mary Louise regretfully. "You ought to have let me read it while I could, Irene."

"What letter are you talking about?" asked the lawyer.

"It is nothing important, Uncle Peter," Irene assured him. "The loss of the book does not worry me at all."

Nor did it, for she knew the letter was not in it. And, to avoid further questioning on the part of Mr. Conant, she managed to turn the conversation to less dangerous subjects.

CHAPTER XVII
THE HIRED GIRL

Mr. Conant had just put on a comfortable smoking-jacket and slippers and seated himself in the den, pipe in mouth, when the old-fashioned knocker on the front door of the Lodge began to bang. It banged three times, so Mr. Conant rose and made for the door.

Mrs. Conant and Mary Louise were in the kitchen and Irene was in her own room. The lawyer reflected, with a deprecating glance at his unconventional costume, that their evening caller could be none other than their neighbor, the beautiful Miss Lord, so as he opened the door he regretted that his appearance was not more presentable.

But it was not Miss Lord who stood upon the porch awaiting admittance. It was a strange girl, who asked in a meek voice:

"Is this Hillcrest Lodge?"

"It is," replied the lawyer.

The girl came in without an invitation, bringing a carpet-bag in one hand and a bundle tied in a newspaper tucked under the other arm. As she stood in the lighted room she looked around inquiringly and said:

"I am Sarah Judd. Where is Mrs. Morrison, please?"

Mr. Conant stood and stared at her, his hands clasped behind his back in characteristic attitude. He could not remember ever having heard of Sarah Judd.

"Mrs. Morrison," he said in his choppy voice, "is in Europe."

The girl stared at him in return, as if stupified. Then she sat down in the nearest chair and continued to stare. Finding her determined on silence, Mr. Conant spoke again.

"The Morrisons are spending the summer abroad. I and my family are occupying the Lodge in their absence. I — eh — eh — I am Mr. Conant, of Dorfield."

The girl sighed drearily. She was quite small, about seventeen years of age and dressed in a faded gingham over which she wore a black cloth coat that was rusty and frayed. A black straw hat, fearfully decorated with red velvet and mussed artificial flowers, was tipped over her forehead. Her features were not bad, but her nose was blotched, her face strongly freckled and her red hair very untidy. Only the mild blue eyes redeemed the unattractive face — eyes very like those of Mary Louise in expression, mused Mr. Conant, as he critically eyed the girl.

"I have come here to work," she said after a long pause, during which she seemed trying to collect her thoughts. "I am Sarah Judd. Mrs. Morrison said I

must come here on Saturday, the tenth day of July, to go to work. This is the tenth day of July."

"H-m — h-m; I see. When did Mrs. Morrison tell you that?"

"It was last September."

"Oh; so she hired you a year in advance and didn't tell you, afterward, that she was going abroad?"

"I didn't see her since, sir."

Mr. Conant was perplexed. He went into the kitchen and told Aunt Hannah about it and the good woman came at once to interview Sarah Judd, followed by Mary Louise, who had just finished wiping the dishes.

"This seems very unfortunate for you," began Mrs. Conant, regarding the strange girl with mild interest. "I suppose, when Mrs. Morrison engaged you, she expected to pass the summer at the Lodge, and afterward she forgot to notify you."

Sarah Judd considered this soberly; then nodded her head.

"I've walked all the way from Millbank," she said with another sigh.

"Then you've had nothing to eat!" exclaimed Mary Louise, with ready sympathy. "May I get her something, Aunt Hannah?"

"Of course, my dear."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Conant felt rather embarrassed.

"I regret," said the latter, "that we do not need a maid at present. We do our own housework, you see."

"I have left a good place in Albany to come here," said Sarah, plaintively.

"You should have written to Mrs. Morrison," declared the lawyer, "asking if she still required your services. Many unforeseen things may happen during a period of ten months."

"Mrs. Morrison, she have paid me a month in advance," asserted the girl, in justification. "And she paid me my expenses to come here, too. She said I must not fail her; I should come to the Lodge on the tenth of July and do the work at the Lodge. She did not say she would be here. She did not say you would be here. She told me to come and work, and she paid me a month in advance, so I could give the money to my sister, who needed it then. And I must do as Mrs. Morrison says. I am paid to work at the Lodge and so I must work at the Lodge. I cannot help that, can I?"

The lawyer was a man of experience, but this queer complication astonished him. He exchanged a questioning glance with his wife.

"In any event," said Mrs. Conant, "the girl must stay here to-night, for it would be cruel to ask her to find her way down the mountain in the dark. We will put her in the maid's room, Peter, and to-morrow we can decide what to do with her."

“Very well,” agreed Mr. Conant and retreated to the den to have his smoke.

Mary Louise arranged some food on the kitchen table for Sarah Judd and after the girl had eaten, Mrs. Conant took her to the maid’s room, which was a very pleasant and well furnished apartment quite in keeping with all the comfortable appointments at Hillcrest Lodge, although it was built behind the kitchen and formed a little wing of its own.

Sarah Judd accepted these favors with meek resignation. Since her one long speech of explanation she had maintained silence. Leaving her in her room, the family congregated in the den, where Mr. Conant was telling Irene about the queer arrival and the unfortunate misunderstanding that had occasioned it.

“The girl is not to blame,” said Mary Louise. “She seems an honest little thing, resolved to do her duty. It is all Mrs. Morrison’s fault.”

“Doesn’t look like a very competent servant, either,” observed Mr. Conant, comfortably puffing his pipe.

“You can’t tell that from appearances, Peter,” replied Mrs. Conant. “She can at least wash dishes and sweep and do the drudgery. Why not keep her?”

“Oh, my dear!”

“Mrs. Morrison has paid her a month’s wages, and Molly Morrison wouldn’t have done that had not the girl been competent. It won’t cost us anything to keep her — except her food — and it seems a shame to cast her adrift just because the Morrisons forgot to notify her they had changed their plans.”

“Also,” added Mary Louise, “Sarah Judd will be useful to us. This is Aunt Hannah’s vacation, as well as a vacation for the rest of us, and a rest from cooking and housework would do her a heap of good.”

“Looking at it from that viewpoint,” said Peter, after puffing his pipe reflectively, “I approve of our keeping Sarah Judd. I believe it will please the Morrisons better than for us to send her away, and — it surely won’t hurt Hannah to be a lady of leisure for a month or so.”

CHAPTER XVIII

MARY LOUISE GROWS SUSPICIOUS

And so Sarah Judd's fate was decided. She prepared their Sunday morning breakfast and cooked it quite skillfully. Her appearance was now more tidy and she displayed greater energy than on the previous evening, when doubtless she was weary from her long walk. Mrs. Conant was well pleased with the girl and found the relief from clearing the table and "doing" the dishes very grateful. Their Sunday dinner, which Sarah prepared unaided and served promptly at one o'clock, their usual hour, was a pleasant surprise to them all.

"The girl is a treasure," commented Mrs. Conant, contentedly.

Sarah Judd was not talkative. When told she might stay she merely nodded her red head, displaying neither surprise nor satisfaction. Her eyes had a habit of roving continually from face to face and from object to object, yet they seemed to observe nothing clearly, so stolid was, their expression. Mary Louise tried to remember where she had noted a similar expression before, but could not locate it.

Miss Lord came over that afternoon and when told about the new maid and the manner of her appearance seemed a little startled and uneasy.

"I must see what she looks like," said she, "for she may prove a congenial companion for my own maid, who is already sulking because the place is so lonely."

And presently Sarah Judd came out upon the lawn to ask Mrs. Conant's further instructions and this gave Agatha the desired opportunity to examine her closely. The inspection must have been satisfactory, for an expression of distinct relief crossed the lovely face.

That Sunday evening they all went down to the Bigbee place in Miss Lord's motor car, where the lady entertained her guests at a charming luncheon. The Bigbee place was more extensive than Hillcrest Lodge, as it consisted of a big, rambling residence and numerous outbuildings; but it was not nearly so cosy or homelike, nor so pleasantly situated.

Miss Lord's maid, Susan, was somewhat a mystery to the Hillcrest people. She dressed almost as elaborately as her mistress and performed her duties grudgingly and with a scowl that seemed to resent Miss Lord's entertaining company. Stranger still, when they went home that night it was the maid who brought out the big touring car and drove them all back to Hillcrest Lodge in it, handling the machine as expertly as Agatha could do. Miss Lord pleaded a headache as an excuse for not driving them herself.

Sarah Judd opened the door for them. As she stood under the full light of

the hall lamp Mary Louise noticed that the maid Susan leaned from her seat in the car and fixed a shrewd glance on Sarah's unconscious face. Then she gave a little shake of her head and drove away.

"There's something queer about the folks at Bigbee's," Mary Louise confided to Irene, as she went to her friend's room to assist her in preparing for bed. "Agatha Lord kept looking at that velvet ribbon around your neck, to-night, as if she couldn't keep her eyes off it, and this afternoon she seemed scared by the news of Sarah Judd's arrival and wasn't happy until she had seen her. Then, again, that queer maid of Agatha's, Susan, drove us home so she could see Sarah Judd for herself. How do you account for all that, Irene?"

"I don't account for it, my dear. You've been mixed up with so many mysteries that you attach suspicion to the most commonplace events. What should there be about Sarah Judd to frighten anyone?"

"She's a stranger here, that's all, and our neighbors seem suspicious of strangers. I'm not questioning poor, innocent Sarah, understand; but if Agatha and her maid are uneasy about strangers coming here it seems likely there's a reason for it."

"You're getting morbid, Mary Louise. I think I must forbid you to read any more of my romances," said Irene lightly, but at heart she questioned the folks at Bigbee's as seriously as her friend did.

"Don't you think Agatha Lord stole that missing book?" asked Mary Louise, after a little reflection.

"Why should she?" Irene was disturbed by the question but was resolved not to show it.

"To get the letter that was in it — the letter you would not let me read."

"What are your affairs to Agatha Lord?"

"I wish I knew," said Mary Louise, musingly. "Irene, I've an idea she came to Bigbee's just to be near us. There's something stealthy and underhanded about our neighbors, I'm positive. Miss Lord is a very delightful woman, on the surface, but — "

Irene laughed softly, as if amused.

"There can be no reason in the world, Mary Louise," she averred, "why your private affairs are of any interest to outsiders, except — "

"Well, Irene?"

"Except that you are connected, in a way, with your grandfather."

"Exactly! That is my idea, Irene. Ever since that affair with O'Gorman, I've had a feeling that I was being spied upon."

"But that would be useless. You never hear from Colonel Weatherby, except in the most roundabout ways."

"They don't know that; they think I MIGHT hear, and there's no other

way to find where he is. Do you think," she added, "that the Secret Service employs female detectives?"

"Perhaps so. There must be occasions when a woman can discover more than a man."

"Then I believe Miss Lord is working for the Secret Service — the enemies of Gran'pa Jim."

"I can't believe it."

"What is on that black ribbon around your neck?"

"A miniature of my mother."

"Oh. To-night it got above your dress — the ribbon, I mean — and Agatha kept looking at it."

"A good detective wouldn't be caught doing such a clumsy thing, Mary Louise. And, even if detectives were placed here to watch your actions, they wouldn't be interested in spying upon ME, would they?"

"I suppose not."

"I've never even seen your grandfather and so I must be exempt from suspicion. I advise you, my dear, to forget these apprehensions, which must be purely imaginary. If a thousand spies surrounded you, they could do you no harm, nor even trap you into betraying your grandfather, whose present location is a complete mystery to you."

Mary Louise could not help admitting this was true, so she kissed her friend good night and went to her own room.

Left alone, Irene put her hand to the ribbon around her neck and drew from her bosom an old-fashioned oval gold locket, as big as any ordinary watch but thinner. She opened the front of the ease and kissed her mother's picture, as was her nightly custom. Then she opened the back and drew out a tightly folded wad of paper. This she carefully spread out before her, when it proved to be the old letter she had found in the book.

Once again she read the letter carefully, poring over the words in deep thought.

"This letter," she murmured, "might indeed be of use to the Government, but it is of far more value to Mary Louise and — to her grandfather. I ought not to lose it; nor ought I to allow anyone to read it, at present. Perhaps, if Agatha Lord has noticed the ribbon I wear, it will be best to find a new hiding place for the letter."

She was in bed now, and lay looking around the room with speculative gaze. Beside her stood her wheeled chair, with its cushion of dark Spanish leather. The girl smiled and, reaching for her work-basket, which was on a stand at the head of the bed, she drew out a pair of scissors and cut some of the stitches of the leathern cushion. Then she tucked the letter carefully

inside and with a needle and some black linen thread sewed up the place she had ripped open.

She had just completed this task when she glanced up and saw a face at her window — indistinctly, for even as she raised her head it drew back and faded into the outer gloom.

For a moment Irene sat motionless, looking at the window. Then she turned to the stand, where the lamp was, and extinguished the light.

An hour, perhaps, she sat upright in bed, considering what she should do. Then again she reached out in the darkness and felt for her scissors. Securing them, she drew the chair cushion upon the bed and felt along its edge for the place she had sewn. She could not determine for some time which was the right edge but at last she found where the stitches seemed a little tighter drawn than elsewhere and this place she managed to rip open. To her joy she found the letter and drew it out with a sigh of relief.

But now what to do with it was a question of vital importance. She dared not relight her lamp and she was helpless when out of her chair. So she put back the cushion, slid from the bed into the chair and wheeled herself in the dark to her dresser, which had a chenille cover. Underneath this cover she spread the letter, deeming that so simple a hiding-place was likely to be overlooked in a hasty search and feeling that the letter would be safe there for the night, at least.

She now returned to her bed. There was no use trying to resew the cushion in the dark. She lay awake for a long time, feeling a certain thrill of delight in the belief that she was a conspirator despite her crippled condition and that she was conspiring for the benefit of her dear friend Mary Louise. Finally she sank into a deep slumber and did not waken till the sun was streaming in at the window and Mary Louise knocked upon her door to call her.

“You’re lazy this morning,” laughed Mary Louise, entering. “Let me help you dress for breakfast.”

Irene thanked her. No one but this girl friend was ever permitted to assist her in dressing, as she felt proud of her ability to serve herself. Her toilet was almost complete when Mary Louise suddenly exclaimed:

“Why, what has become of your chair cushion?”

Irene looked toward the chair. The cushion was gone.

“Never mind,” she said, although her face wore a troubled expression. “I must have left it somewhere. Here; I’ll put a pillow in its place until I find it.”

CHAPTER XIX

AN ARTFUL CONFESSION

This Monday morning Bub appeared at the Lodge and had the car ready before Mr. Conant had finished his breakfast. Mary Louise decided to drive to Millbank with them, just for the pleasure of the trip, and although the boy evidently regarded her presence with distinct disapproval he made no verbal objection.

As Irene wheeled herself out upon the porch to see them start, Mary Louise called to her:

"Here's your chair cushion, Irene, lying on the steps and quite wet with dew. I never supposed you could be so careless. And you'd better sew up that rip before it gets bigger," she added, handing the cushion to her friend.

"I will," Irene quietly returned.

Bub proved himself a good driver before they had gone a mile and it pleased Mr. Conant to observe that the boy made the trip down the treacherous mountain road with admirable caution. Once on the level, however, he "stepped on it," as he expressed it, and dashed past the Huddle and over the plain as if training for the Grand Prix.

It amused Mary Louise to watch their quaint little driver, barefooted and in blue-jeans and hickory shirt, with the heavy Scotch golf cap pulled over his eyes, taking his task of handling the car as seriously as might any city chauffeur and executing it fully as well.

During the trip the girl conversed with Mr. Conant.

"Do you remember our referring to an old letter, the other day?" she asked.

"Yes," said he.

"Irene found it in one of those secondhand books you bought in New York, and she said it spoke of both my mother and my grandfather."

"The deuce it did!" he exclaimed, evidently startled by the information.

"It must have been quite an old letter," continued Mary Louise, musingly.

"What did it say?" he demanded, rather eagerly for the unemotional lawyer.

"I don't know. Irene wouldn't let me read it."

"Wouldn't, eh? That's odd. Why didn't you tell me of this before I left the Lodge?"

"I didn't think to tell you, until now. And, Uncle Peter, what, do you think of Miss Lord?"

"A very charming lady. What did Irene do with the letter?"

"I think she left it in the book; and — the book was stolen the very next

day.”

“Great Caesar! Who knew about that letter?”

“Miss Lord was present when Irene found the letter, and she heard Irene exclaim that it was all about my mother, as well as about my grandfather.”

“Miss Lord?”

“Yes.”

“And the book was taken by someone?”

“The next day. We missed it after — after Miss Lord had visited the den alone.”

“Huh!”

He rode for awhile in silence.

“Really,” he muttered, as if to himself, “I ought to go back. I ought not to take for granted the fact that this old letter is unimportant. However, Irene has read it, and if it happened to be of value I’m sure the girl would have told me about it.”

“Yes, she certainly would have told you,” agreed Mary Louise. “But she declared that even I would not be interested in reading it.”

“That’s the only point that perplexes me,” said the lawyer. “Just — that — one — point.”

“Why?” asked the girl.

But Mr. Conant did not explain. He sat bolt upright on his seat, staring at the back of Bub’s head, for the rest of the journey. Mary Louise noticed that his fingers constantly fumbled with the locket on his watch chain.

As the lawyer left the car at the station he whispered to Mary Louise:

“Tell Irene that I now know about the letter; and just say to her that I consider her a very cautious girl. Don’t say anything more. And don’t, for heaven’s sake, suspect poor Miss Lord. I’ll talk with Irene when I return on Friday.”

On their way back Bub maintained an absolute silence until after they had passed the Huddle. Before they started to climb the hill road, however, the boy suddenly slowed up, halted the car and turned deliberately in his seat to face Mary Louise.

“Bein’ as how you’re a gal,” said he, “I ain’t got much use fer ye, an’ that’s a fact. I don’t say it’s your fault, nor that ye wouldn’t ‘a’ made a pass’ble boy ef ye’d be’n borned thet way. But you’re right on one thing, an’ don’t fergit I told ye so: thet woman at Bigbee’s ain’t on the square.”

“How do you know?” asked Mary Louise, delighted to be taken into Bub’s confidence — being a girl.

“The critter’s too slick,” he explained, raising one bare foot to the cushion beside him and picking a sliver out of his toe. “Her eyes ain’t got their

shutters raised. Eyes're like winders, but hers ye kain't see through. I don't know nuth'n' 'bout that slick gal at Bigbee's an' I don't want to know nuth'n'. But I heer'd what ye said to the boss, an' what he said to you, an' I guess you're right in sizin' the critter up, an' the boss is wrong."

With this he swung round again and started the car, nor did he utter another word until he ran the machine into the garage.

During Mary Louise's absence Irene had had a strange and startling experience with their beautiful neighbor. The girl had wheeled her chair out upon the bluff to sun herself and read, Mrs. Conant being busy in the house, when Agatha Lord strolled up to her with a smile and a pleasant "good morning."

"I'm glad to find you alone," said she, seating herself beside the wheeled chair. "I saw Mr. Conant and Mary Louise pass the Bigbee place and decided this would be a good opportunity for you and me to have a nice, quiet talk together. So I came over."

Irene's face was a bit disdainful as she remarked:

"I found the cushion this morning."

"What cushion do you refer to?" asked Agatha with a puzzled expression.

Irene frowned.

"We cannot talk frankly together when we are at cross purposes," she complained.

"Very true, my dear; but you seem inclined to speak in riddles."

"Do you deny any knowledge of my chair cushion!"

"I do."

"I must accept your statement, of course. What do you wish to say to me, Miss Lord?"

"I would like to establish a more friendly understanding between us. You are an intelligent girl and cannot fail to realize that I have taken a warm interest in your friend Mary Louise Burrows. I want to know more about her, and about her people, who seem to have cast her off. You are able to give me this information, I am sure, and by doing so you may be instrumental in assisting your friend materially."

It was an odd speech; odd and insincere. Irene studied the woman's face curiously.

"Who are you, Miss Lord?" she inquired.

"Your neighbor."

"Why are you our neighbor?"

"I am glad to be able to explain that — to you, in confidence. I am trying to clear the name of Colonel Weatherby from a grave charge — the charge of high treason."

“In other words, you are trying to discover where he is,” retorted Irene impatiently.

“No, my dear; you mistake me. It is not important to my mission, at present, to know where Colonel Weatherby is staying. I am merely seeking relevant information, such information as you are in a position to give me.”

“I, Miss Lord?”

“Yes. To be perfectly frank, I want to see the letter which you found in that book.”

“Why should you attach any importance to that?”

“I was present, you will remember, when you discovered it. I marked your surprise and perplexity — your fear and uncertainty — as you glanced first at the writing and then at Mary Louise. You determined not to show your friend that letter because it would disturb her, yet you inadvertently admitted, in my hearing, that it referred to the girl’s mother and — which is vastly more important — to her grandfather.”

“Well; what then, Miss Lord?”

“Colonel Weatherby is a man of mystery. He has been hunted by Government agents for nearly ten years, during which time he has successfully eluded them. If you know anything of the Government service you know it has a thousand eyes, ten thousand ears and a myriad of long arms to seize its malefactors. It has not yet captured Colonel Weatherby.”

“Why has he been hunted all these years?”

“He is charged, as I said, with high treason. By persistently evading capture he has tacitly admitted his guilt.”

“But he is innocent!” cried Irene indignantly.

Miss Lord seemed surprised, yet not altogether ill-pleased, at the involuntary exclamation.

“Indeed!” she said softly. “Could you prove that statement?”

“I — I think so,” stammered the girl, regretting her hasty avowal.

“Then why not do so and by restoring Mary Louise to her grandfather make them both happy?”

Irene sat silent, trapped.

“This is why I have come to you,” continued Agatha, very seriously. “I am employed by those whose identity I must not disclose to sift this mystery of Colonel Weatherby to the bottom, if possible, and then to fix the guilt where it belongs. By accident you have come into possession of certain facts that would be important in unravelling the tangle, but through your unfortunate affliction you are helpless to act in your own capacity. You need an ally with more strength and experience than yourself, and I propose you accept me as that ally. Together we may be able to clear the name of James J.

Hathaway — who now calls himself Colonel James Weatherby — from all reproach and so restore him to the esteem of his fellow men."

"But we must not do that, even if we could!" cried Irene, quite distressed by the suggestion.

"Why not, my dear?"

The tone was so soft and cat-like that it alarmed Irene instantly. Before answering she took time to reflect. To her dismay she found this woman was gradually drawing from her the very information she had declared she would preserve secret. She knew well that she was no match for Agatha Lord in a trial of wits. Her only recourse must be a stubborn refusal to explain anything more.

"Colonel Weatherby," she said slowly, "has better information than I of the charge against him and his reasons for keeping hidden, yet he steadfastly refuses to proclaim his innocence or to prove he is unjustly accused, which he might very well do if he chose. You say you are working in his interests, and, allowing that, I am satisfied he would bitterly reproach anyone who succeeded in clearing his name by disclosing the truth."

This argument positively amazed Agatha Lord, as it might well amaze anyone who had not read the letter. In spite of her supreme confidence of the moment before, the woman now suddenly realized that this promising interview was destined to end disastrously to her plans.

"I am so obtuse that you will have to explain that statement," she said with assumed carelessness; but Irene was now on guard and replied:

"Then our alliance is dissolved. I do not intend, Miss Lord, to betray such information as I may have stumbled upon unwittingly. You express interest in Mary Louise and her grandfather and say you are anxious to serve them. So am I. Therefore I beg you, in their interests, to abandon any further attempt to penetrate the secret."

Agatha was disconcerted.

"Show me the letter," she urged, as a last resort. "If, on reading it, I find your position is justifiable — you must admit it is now bewildering — I will agree to abandon the investigation altogether."

"I will not show you the letter," declared the girl positively.

The woman studied her face.

"But you will consider this conversation confidential, will you not?"

"Since you request it, yes."

"I do not wish our very pleasant relations, as neighbors, disturbed. I would rather the Conants and Mary Louise did not suspect I am here on any especial mission."

"Very well."

“In truth,” continued Agatha, “I am growing fond of yon all and this is a real vacation to me, after a period of hard work in the city which racked my nerves. Before long I must return to the old strenuous life, so I wish to make the most of my present opportunities.”

“I understand.”

No further reference was made to the letter or to Colonel Weatherby. They talked of other things for a while and when Miss Lord went away there seemed to exist — at least upon the surface — the same friendly relations that had formerly prevailed between them.

Irene, reflecting upon the interview, decided that while she had admitted more than was wise she had stopped short of exposing the truth about Colonel Weatherby. The letter was safely hidden, now. She defied even Miss Lord to find it. If she could manage to control her tongue, hereafter, the secret was safe in her possession.

Thoughtfully she wheeled herself back to the den and finding the room deserted she ventured to peep into her novel hiding-place. Yes; the precious letter was still safe. But this time, in her abstraction, she failed to see the face at the window.

CHAPTER XX

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

Tuesday afternoon Miss Lord's big touring car stood at the door of Hillcrest Lodge, for Agatha had invited the Conant party to ride with her to Millbank. Irene was tucked into the back seat in a comfortable position and beside her sat Mrs. Conant, who was going to make a few purchases at the village store. Mary Louise rode on the front seat with Agatha, who loved to drive her car and understood it perfectly.

When they drove away there was no one left in the house but Sarah Judd, the servant girl, who was washing the lunch dishes. Bub was in the shed-like garage, however, washing and polishing Will Morrison's old car, on which the paint was so cracked and faded that the boy's attempt to improve its appearance was a desperate one.

Sarah, through the kitchen window, watched Bub for a time rather sharply. Then she went out on the bluff and looked down in the valley. Miss Lord's big car was just passing the Huddle on its way up the valley.

Sarah turned and reentered the house. Her meek and diffident expression of countenance had quite disappeared. Her face now wore a look of stern determination and the blue eyes deepened and grew shrewd.

She walked straight to the den and without hesitation approached the farther wall and took from its pegs Will Morrison's fine hunting rifle. In the stock was a hollow chamber for cartridges, for the rifle was of the type known as a "repeater." Sliding back the steel plate that hid this cavity, Sarah drew from it a folded paper of a yellow tint and calmly spread it on the table before her. Then she laid down the rifle, placed a chair at the table and with absorbed attention read the letter from beginning to end — the letter that Irene had found in the book.

It was closely written on both sides the thin sheet — evidently of foreign make — and although the writing was faded it was still clearly legible.

After the first perusal Sarah Judd leaned her elbows on the table and her head on her hands and proceeded to study the epistle still more closely. Then she drew from her pocket a notebook and pencil and with infinite care made a copy of the entire letter, writing it in her book in shorthand. This accomplished, she replaced the letter in the rifle stock and hung the weapon on its pegs again.

Both the window and the glass door of the den faced the back yard. Sarah opened the door and stood there in deep thought, watching Bub at his work. Then she returned to the table and opening a drawer drew out a sheet of blank paper. On this she wrote the following words:

“John Folger, 1601 F. Street, Washington, D. C.

Nothing under sterling over letter bobbing every kernel sad mother making frolic better quick. If England rumples paper Russia admires money.

Sarah Judd.”

Each word of this preposterous phrasing she wrote after consulting another book hidden cleverly among the coils of her red hair — a tiny book it — was, filled with curious characters. When the writing was finished the girl seemed well satisfied with her work. After tucking away the book in its former place she went to her room, got her purse and then proceeded to the shed and confronted Bub.

“I want you to drive this car to Millbank, to the telegraph office at the railway station,” said Sarah.

Bub gave her a scornful look.

“Ye’re crazy,” he said and went on with his polishing.

“That needn’t worry you,” retorted the girl.

“It don’t,” declared Bub.

“You can drive and you’re going to,” she continued. “I’ve got to send this telegram quick, and you’ve got to take it.” She opened her purse and placed two coins on the fender of the car. “There’s a dollar to pay for the message, and there’s a five-dollar gold-piece to pay you for your trouble.”

Bub gave a gasp. He came up beside her and stared at the money. Then he turned to look at Sarah Judd.

“What’s up?” he demanded.

“Private business. Don’t ask questions; you’d only get lies for answers. Go and earn your money.”

“Miss’ Conant, she’s gone to Millbank herself. Ef she sees me there, I’ll git fired. The boss’ll fire me himself, anyhow, fer usin’ the car when he tol’ me not to.”

“How much do you get a week!” asked Sarah.

“Four bits.”

“That’s about two dollars a month. In two months the Conants will move back to the city, and by then you’ll have earned four dollars. Why, Bub, it’s cheaper for you to take this five-dollar gold-piece and get fired, than to work for two months for four dollars.”

Bub scratched his head in perplexity.

“Ye ain’t count’n’ on the fun o’ workin’,” he suggested.

“I’m counting on that five dollars — eight bits to a dollar, forty bits altogether. Why, it’s a fortune, Bub.”

He took out his knife, looked around for a stick to whittle and, finding none, put the knife in his pocket with a sigh.

“I guess Will Morrison wouldn’t like it,” he decided. “Put up yer money, Sairy.”

Sarah withdrew the gold-piece and put a larger one in its place.

“There,” she said; “let’s make it ten dollars, and save time.”

Bub’s hesitation vanished, but he asked anxiously:

“Tain’t go’n’ to do no harm to them gals thet’s stoppin’ here, is it?”

“It is to do them a good turn that I’m sending this telegram.”

“Honor bright?”

“Hope to die, Bub.”

“All right; I’m off.”

He folded the letter, placed it inside his Scotch cap and stowed the money carefully in his pocket.

“Don’t let any of the folks see you if yon can help it,” warned Sarah; “and, whatever happens, don’t say anything about that telegram to a living soul. Only — see that it’s sent.”

“I’m wise,” answered Bub and a moment later he started the car and rolled away down the road.

Sarah Judd looked after him with a queer smile on her face. Then she went back to her kitchen and resumed her dish-washing. Presently a scarcely audible sound arrested her attention. It seemed to come from the interior of the Lodge.

Sarah avoided making a particle of noise herself as she stole softly through the dining room and entered the main hallway. One glance showed her that the front door was ajar and the door of the den closed — exactly the reverse of what they should be. She crept forward and with a sudden movement threw open the door of the den.

A woman stood in the center of the room. As the door opened she swung around and pointed a revolver at Sarah. Then for a moment they silently faced one another.

“Ah,” said the woman, with an accent of relief, “you’re the servant. Go back to your work. Mrs. Conant told me to make myself at home here.”

“Yes, I know,” replied Sarah sarcastically. “She said she was expecting you and told me it wouldn’t do any harm to keep an eye on you while you’re here. She said Miss Lord was going to get all the family away, so you could make a careful search of the house, you being Miss Lord’s maid, Susan — otherwise known as Nan Shelley, from the Washington Bureau.”

Susan’s hand shook so ridiculously that she lowered the revolver to prevent its dropping from her grasp. Her countenance expressed chagrin, surprise, anger.

“I don’t know you,” she said harshly. “Who are you?”

“New at the game,” replied Sarah Judd, with a shrug. “You don’t know me, Nan, but I know you; and I know your record, too. You’re as slick as they make ‘em, and the one who calls herself Agatha Lord is just an infantile amateur beside you. But go ahead, Nan; don’t let me interrupt your work.”

The woman sank into a chair.

“You can’t be from the home office,” she muttered, staring hard at the girl. “They wouldn’t dare interfere with my work here.”

“No; I’m not from the home office.”

“I knew,” said Susan, “as soon as I heard the story of your coming, that it was faked. I’d gamble that you never saw Mrs. Morrison in your life.”

“You’d win,” said Sarah, also taking a chair.

“Then who could have sent you here?”

“Figure it out yourself,” suggested Sarah.

“I’m trying to. Do you know what we’re after?”

“A clew to Hathaway. Incidentally, any other information concerning him that comes your way. That includes the letter.”

“Oh. So you know about the letter, do you?” asked Susan.

“To be sure. And I know that’s what you’re here for now. Don’t let me interrupt you. It’s a mighty hard job, finding that letter, and the folks’ll be back by and by.”

“You’re right,” exclaimed the woman, rising abruptly. “Go back to your work in the kitchen.”

“This is my occupation, just now,” retorted Sarah, lolling in her chair. “Go ahead with your search, Nan, and I’ll tell you when you are ‘hot’ or ‘cold.’“

“You’re an impudent little chit,” said Nan tartly. “See here,” with a sudden change of voice, “let’s pool issues. If we can discover anything important in this place, there’s reward enough for us all.”

“I am not opposing you,” protested Sarah Judd, “I’m not a particle interested in whether you trace Hathaway or not. I don’t believe you can do it, though, and that letter you’re so eager for won’t help you a bit. It was written ten years ago.”

“That makes it more important,” declared the other, “We’ve two things to accomplish; one is to locate Hathaway, and the other to secure absolute proof of his guilt.”

“I thought he was caught doing the job.”

“So he was, in a way. But the Department needs more proof.”

Sarah Judd smiled unbelievingly. Then she chuckled. Presently she laughed outright, in genuine merriment, as the thought that amused her grew and expanded.

“What fools — ” she said, “what perfect fools — we mortals be!”

All this annoyed Nan Shelley exceedingly. The successful woman detective did not relish being jeered at by a mere girl.

“You’ve read the letter, I suppose, and are now making fun of me for trying to get it? Perhaps you’ve hidden it yourself — although that isn’t likely. Why can’t you give me an honest tip? We’re both in the same line, it seems, and both trying to earn an honest living. How about that letter? Is it necessary for me to find it?”

“I’ve read it,” admitted Sarah, “and I know where it is. You might perhaps find it, if you hunted long enough, but it isn’t worth your while. It wouldn’t help in the least to convict Hathaway and of course it couldn’t tell you where he is now hiding.”

“Is this straight?”

“True as gospel.”

“Then why don’t you prove it by showing me the letter?”

“Because I don’t belong on your side of the fence. You’re working for one organization and I for another. Any little tip I let slip is just for your personal use. Don’t bother about that letter.”

Susan — or Nan Shelley — sat for a time in thought. Once in a while she would cast a furtive glance around the room and its wall covered with trophies, and then she would turn to Sarah Judd’s placid face.

“Where did the boy go?” she asked abruptly.

“What boy?”

“Bub; in the automobile.”

“To Millbank.”

“What for?”

“To send a telegram.”

“Your report?”

“Yes.”

“Important?”

“I think it’ll bring things to a climax.”

“The Hathaway case?”

“You can guess anything, Nan, if you guess long enough.”

Nan rose and put the revolver in her pocket. Then she held out her hand frankly to Sarah Judd.

“If you’ve beaten me in this affair,” she said, with no apparent resentment, “you’re clever enough to become famous some day. I’m going to take your advice about the letter and if that climax you’re predicting arrives on schedule time I’ll not be sorry to quit this dreary, dragging case and pick up a more interesting one.”

The tone was friendly and frank. Sarah stretched out her hand to meet that of Nan and in a flash a handcuff snapped over her wrist. With a cry she drew back, but a dextrous twist of her opponent's free hand prisoned her other wrist and she at once realized that she was fairly caught.

"Fine!" she cried admiringly, as she looked at her bonds, "What next, Nan?"

But Nan was too busy to talk. She deftly searched the girl's pocket and found the notebook. The shorthand writing caught her eye at once but the characters were unknown to her.

"Cipher, eh?" she muttered.

"A little code of my own invention," said Sarah. "Sometimes I can't make it out myself."

Nan restored the book and examined Sarah Judd's purse.

"They keep you well supplied with funds, it seems."

"Comes handy in emergencies," was the reply.

"Now let's go to your room."

Sarah, handcuffed, led the way. Nan Shelley made a wonderfully rapid search through every article in the maid's room. The lining of her clothes was inspected, her hair-brush tested for a sliding back, the pictures on the wall, the rug and the bed-clothing examined minutely. Yet all this consumed but a brief period of time and resulted in no important discovery.

"Feel better?" asked Sarah cheerfully.

"You know I do. I'm going to remove these handcuffs, now, and then I'm going home. Come and see me, some time when you feel lonesome. I've only that fool Agatha to talk to and I've an idea you and I might interest each other."

As she spoke she unlocked the manacles and dropped them with a slight click into a concealed pocket of her dark skirt.

"I imagine Agatha isn't REAL brilliant," returned Sarah; "but neither am I. When I'm your age, Nan, I hope to be half as clever. Just now you can twist me around your finger."

Nan regarded her seriously.

"I wish I knew what you are up to," she remarked suspiciously. "You can scarcely conceal your joy, my girl, and that proves I've overlooked something. You've puzzled me, youngster as you are, but you must remember that I'm working in the dark while some mysterious gleam of knowledge lights your way. Put us side by side, on the same track, and I wouldn't be afraid of you, Sarah Judd."

"Don't apologize, Nan; it makes me feel ashamed."

Nan's frown, as she looked into the blue eyes, turned to a smile of

appreciation. Sarah also smiled, and then she said:

"Let me make you a cup of tea before you go."

"A good idea. We're friends, then?"

"Why not? One friend is worth a thousand enemies and it's absurd to quarrel with one for doing her duty."

"That's what O'Gorman is always saying. Ever hear of O'Gorman?"

"Yes; he's one of the old stand-bys in the secret service department; but they say he's getting old. Slipped a good many cogs lately, I hear."

"He's the Chief's right hand man. O'Gorman used to have this case — the branch of it I'm now working — but he gave it up and recommended the Chief to put me on the job. Said a woman could trail Mary Louise better than any man and with less chance of discovery; and he was right, for I've lived half a block from her in Dorfield and she never saw my face once. But O'Gorman didn't suspect you were coming into the case and the thing's getting altogether too complicated to suit me."

Sarah was brewing the tea and considered an answer unnecessary. The conversation drifted away from the Hathaway case and into less personal channels. When Nan Shelley finally rose to go there was sincere friendliness in Sarah's "good-bye" and the elder woman said in parting:

"You're the right sort, Sarah. If ever you drift into Washington and need work, come to me and I'll get the Chief to take you on. I know he'd be glad to get you."

"Thank you, Nan," said Sarah meekly.

But there was a smile on her freckled face as she watched her recent acquaintance walk down the road, and it lingered there while she returned to her kitchen and finally washed and put away the long neglected lunch dishes.

Bub dashed into the yard and tooted his horn. Sarah went out to him.

"Ye kin call me lucky, ef ye don't mind," he said with a grin. "Sent yer tel'gram, found out the tenner ye guv me were good, an' got back without the folks gett'n' a single blink at me."

"You're some driver, Bub, and you've got a wise head on your shoulders. If you don't talk about this trip, and I don't, no one will ever know, except we two, that the car has been out of the garage."

CHAPTER XXI

BAD NEWS

Peter Conant had told his wife that he wouldn't be at the Lodge this week until Saturday, as business would prevent his coming earlier, yet the Thursday afternoon train brought him to Millbank and Bill Coombs' stage took him to Hillcrest.

"Why, Peter!" exclaimed Aunt Hannah, when she saw him, "what on earth brought you — "

Then she stopped short, for Peter's eyes were staring more roundly than usual and the hand that fumbled at his locket trembled visibly. He stared at Aunt Hannah, he stared at Irene; but most of all he stared at Mary Louise, who seemed to sense from his manner some impending misfortune.

"H-m," said the lawyer, growing red and then paling; "I've bad news."

He chopped the words off abruptly, as if he resented the necessity of uttering them. His eyes, which had been fixed upon the face of Mary Louise, suddenly wavered and sought the floor.

His manner said more than his words. Mary Louise grew white and pressed her hands to her heart, regarding the lawyer with eyes questioning and full of fear. Irene turned a sympathetic gaze upon her friend and Aunt Hannah came closer to the girl and slipped an arm around her waist, as if to help her to endure this unknown trial. And Mary Louise, feeling she could not bear the suspense, asked falteringly:

"Has — Gran'pa Jim — been — "

"No," said Mr. Conant. "No, my dear, no."

"Then — has anything happened to — to — mother?"

"Well, well," muttered the lawyer, with a sort or growl, "Mrs. Burrows has not been in good health for some months, it seems. She — eh — was under a — eh — under a nervous strain; a severe nervous strain, you know, and — "

"Is she dead?" asked the girl in a low, hard voice.

"The end, it seems, came unexpectedly, several days ago. She did not suffer, your grandfather writes, but — "

Again he left his sentence unfinished, for Mary Louise had buried her face in Aunt Hannah's bosom and was sobbing in a miserable, heart-breaking way that made Peter jerk a handkerchief from, his pocket and blow his nose lustily. Then he turned and marched from the room, while his wife led the hapless girl to a sofa and cuddled her in her lap as if she had been a little child.

"She's best with the women," muttered Peter to himself. "It's a sorrowful

thing — a dreadful thing, in a way — but it can't be helped and — she's best with the women."

He had wandered into the dining room, where Sarah Judd was laying the table for dinner. She must have overheard the conversation in the living room, for she came beside the lawyer and asked:

"When did Mrs. Burrows die?"

"On Monday."

"Where?"

"That's none of your business, my girl."

"Has the funeral been held?"

He regarded her curiously. The idea of a servant asking such questions! But there was a look in Sarah's blue eyes that meant more than curiosity; somehow, it drew from him an answer.

"Mrs. Burrows was cremated on Wednesday. It seems she preferred it to burial." Having said this, he turned to stare from the window again.

Sarah Judd stood silent a moment. Then she said with a sigh of relief:

"It's a queer world, isn't it, Mr. Conant? And this death isn't altogether a calamity."

"Eh? Why not?" whirling round to face her.

"Because," said Sarah, "it will enable Mr. Hathaway to face the world again — a free man."

Peter Conant was so startled that he stood motionless, forgetting his locket but not forgetting to stare. Sarah, with her hands full of forks and spoons, began placing the silver in orderly array upon the table. She paid no heed to the lawyer, who gradually recovered his poise and watched her with newly awakened interest. Once or twice he opened his mouth to speak, and then decided not to. He was bewildered, perplexed, suspicious. In thought he began to review the manner of Sarah's coming to them, and her subsequent actions. She seemed a capable servant. Mrs. Conant had never complained of her. Yet — what did she know of Hathaway?

Mary Louise did not appear at dinner. She begged to be left alone in her room. Sarah took her some toast and tea, with honest sympathy in her eyes, but the sorrowing girl shook her head and would not taste the food. Later, however, in the evening, she entered the living room where the others sat in depressed silence and said:

"Please, Mr. Conant, tell me all you know about — mother."

"It is very little, my dear" replied the lawyer in a kindly tone. "This morning I received a message from your grandfather which said: 'Poor Beatrice passed away on Monday and at her request her body was cremated to-day. Be very gentle in breaking the sad news to Mary Louise.' That was

all, my child, and I came here as quickly as I could. In a day or so we shall have further details, I feel sure. I am going back to town in the morning and will send you any information I receive."

"Thank you," said the girl, and was quietly leaving the room when Irene called to her.

"Mary Louise!"

"Yes?" half turning.

"Will you come with me to my room?"

"Now?"

"Yes. You know I cannot go up the stairs. And — I lost my own dear mother not long ago, you will remember."

Tears started to the girl's eyes, but she waited until Irene wheeled her chair beside her and then the two went through the den to Irene's room.

Mrs. Conant nodded to Peter approvingly.

"Irene will comfort her," she said, "and in a way far better than I might do. It is all very dreadful and very sad, Peter, but the poor child has never enjoyed much of her mother's society and when the first bitter grief is passed I think she will recover something of her usual cheerfulness."

"H-m," returned the lawyer; "it seems a hard thing to say, Hannah, but this demise may prove a blessing in disguise and be best for the child's future happiness. In any event, I'm sure it will relieve the strain many of us have been under for the past ten years."

"You talk in riddles, Peter."

"The whole thing is a riddle, Hannah. And, by the way, have you noticed anything suspicious about our hired girl?"

"About Sarah? No," regarding him with surprise.

"Does she — eh — snoop around much?"

"No; she's a very good girl."

"Too good to be true, perhaps," observed Peter, and lapsed into thought. Really, it wouldn't matter now how much Sarah Judd — or anyone else — knew of the Hathaway case. The mystery would solve itself, presently.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FOLKS AT BIGBEE'S

Mr. Conant decided to take the Friday morning train back to Dorfield, saying it would not be possible for him to remain at the Lodge over Sunday, because important business might require his presence in town.

"This demise of Mrs. Burrows," he said confidentially to his wife in the privacy of their room, "may have far-reaching results and turn the whole current of Colonel Weatherby's life."

"I don't see why," said Aunt Hannah.

"You're not expected to see why," he replied. "As the Colonel is my most important client, I must be at the office in case of developments or a sudden demand for my services. I will tell you one thing, however, and that is that this vacation at Hillcrest Lodge was planned by the Colonel while I was in New York, with the idea that he and Mrs. Burrows would come here secretly and enjoy a nice visit with Mary Louise."

"You planned all that, Peter!"

"Yes. That is, Weatherby planned it. He knows Will Morrison well, and Will was only too glad to assist him; so they wired me to come to New York, where all was quickly arranged. This place is so retired that we considered it quite safe for the fugitives to come here."

"Why didn't they come, then?"

"Two reasons prevented them. One was the sudden breaking of Mrs. Burrows' health; the other reason was the Colonel's discovery that in some way our carefully laid plans had become known to the detectives who are seeking him."

"Good gracious! Are you sure of that, Peter!"

"The Colonel seemed sure. He maintains a detective force on his own account and his spies discovered that Hillcrest is being watched by agents of the Secret Service."

"Dear me; what a maze of deceit!" wailed the good woman. "I wish you were well out of the whole affair, Peter; and I wish Mary Louise was out of it, too."

"So do I, with all my heart. But it's coming to a focus soon, Hannah. Be patient and it may end better than we now fear."

So Bub drove Mr. Conant to Millbank and then the boy took the car to the blacksmith shop to have a small part repaired. The blacksmith made a bungle of it and wasted all the forenoon before he finally took Bub's advice about shaping it and the new rod was attached and found to work successfully.

It was after one o'clock when the boy at last started for home and on the

way was hailed by a stranger — a little man who was trudging along the road with both hands thrust in his pockets.

"Going far?" he asked.

"Up th' mount'n to Hillcrest," said Bub.

"Oh. May I have a lift?"

"How fer?"

"Well, I can't say how far I'll go. I'm undecided. Just came out here for a little fresh air, you know, with no definite plans," explained the stranger.

"Hop in," said Bub and for a time they rode together in silence.

"This 'ere's the Huddle, as we're comin' to," announced the boy. "Ol' Miss' Parsons she sometimes takes boarders."

"That's kind of her," remarked the stranger. "But the air isn't so good as further up the hill."

"Ef ye go up," said Bub with a grin, "guess ye'll hev to camp out an' eat scrub. Nobody don't take boarders, up th' mount'n."

"I suppose not."

He made no demand to be let out at the Huddle, so Bub drove on.

"By the way," said the little man, "isn't there a place called Bigbee's, near here?"

"Comin' to it pretty soon. They's some gals livin' there now, so ye won't care to stop."

"What sort of girls are they?"

"Sort o' queer."

"Yes?"

"Ye bet ye. Come from the city a while ago an' livin' by theyselves. Someth'n' wrong 'bout them gals," added Bub reflectively.

"In what way?" asked the little man in a tone of interest.

"They ain't here fer nuth'n' special 'cept watchin' the folks at Hillcrest. Them's the folks I belongs to. For four bits a week. They's someth'n' queer 'bout them, too; but I guess all the folks is queer thet comes here from the city."

"Quite likely," agreed the little man, nodding. "Let me out at Bigbee's, please, and I'll look over those women and form my own opinion of them. They may perhaps be friends of mine."

"In thet case," asserted Bub, "I pity ye, stranger. F'r my part, I ain't got no use fer anything thet wears skirts — 'cept one er two, mebbe," he added reflectively. "Most men I kin git 'long with fust-rate; but ef a man ever gits in trouble, er begins cussin' an' acts ugly, it's 'cause some gal's rubbed him crossways the grain er stuck a knife in him an' twisted the blade — so's ter speak."

“You’re an observant lad, I see.”

“When I’m awake I kain’t help seein’ things.”

“And you’re a pastoral philosopher.”

Bub scowled and gave him a surly glance.

“What’s the use firin’ thet high-brow stuff at me?” he asked indignantly. “I s’pose ye think I’m a kid, jes’ ‘cause I don’t do no fancy talkin’.”

“I suspect you of nothing but generosity in giving me this ride,” said the stranger pleasantly. “Is that Bigbee’s, over yonder?”

“Yes.”

The little man got out at the point where the Bigbee drive met the road, and walked up the drive toward the house. Agatha Lord was standing at the gateway, as he approached it, and seemed rather startled at his appearance. But she quickly controlled her surprise and asked in a calm voice, as she faced him:

“What’s up, O’Gorman?”

“Hathaway’s coming here,” he said.

“Are you sure?”

“He’s in Dorfield to-day, waiting to see Lawyer Conant, who went in on the morning train. Where’s Nan?”

“Here, my lord!” said Nan Shelley, stepping from behind a tall shrub. “How are you, partner? I recognized you as you passed the Huddle with the boy.”

“Field glasses, eh? There isn’t much escapes you, Nan.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” asked Agatha reproachfully.

“Why don’t you make your own discoveries?” retorted her confederate. Then, turning to O’Gorman, she continued: “So Hathaway’s coming, is he? At last.”

“A little late, but according to program. How have you been getting along?”

“Bored to death,” asserted Nan. “Agatha has played the lady and I’ve done the dirty work. But tell me, why didn’t you nab Hathaway at Dorfield?”

O’Gorman smiled a little grimly as he answered:

“I’m not sure, Nan, that we shall nab Hathaway at all.”

“Isn’t he being shadowed?” with some surprise.

“No. But he’ll come here, right enough; and then — ”

“And then,” she added, as he paused, “the chase of years will come to an end.”

“Exactly. We may decide to take him to Washington, and we may not.”

She gazed at him inquiringly.

“There are some new developments, then, O’Gorman?”

“I’m inclined to suspect there are.”

“Known to the department?”

“Yes. I’m to investigate and use my judgment.”

“I see. Then Agatha and I are out of it?”

“Not yet; I’m still depending on your shrewdness to assist me. The office has only had a hint, so far, of the prospective break in the case, but — ”

“Oh, yes; I remember now,” exclaimed Nan.

“That girl up at Conant’s sent a telegram, in a desperate hurry. I suspected it meant something important. Who is she, O’Gorman, and why did the Chief cut under us by planting Sarah Judd in the Conants’ household?”

“He didn’t. The girl has nothing to do with the Department.”

“Then some of you intercepted the telegram?”

“We know what it said,” he admitted.

“Come, let’s go to the house. I’ve had no lunch. Can you feed me?”

“Certainly.” They turned and walked slowly up the path. Said Nan, musingly: “That Sarah Judd is rather clever, O’Gorman. Is she in Hathaway’s pay?”

“I think not,” he replied, with an amused chuckle.

Nan tossed her head indignantly.

“Very well; play me for a ninny, if you like,” she said resentfully. “You’ll get a heap more out of me, in that way!”

“Now, now,” said Agatha warningly, “keep your tempers and don’t quarrel. You two are like cats and dogs when you get together; yet you’re the two cleverest people in the service. According to your story, Mr. O’Gorman, there’s an important crisis approaching, and we’d all like to be able to render a good account of ourselves.”

Agatha Lord may have lacked something of Nan’s experience, but this speech proved her a fair diplomat. It dispersed the gathering storm and during the rest of that afternoon the three counseled together in perfect harmony, O’Gorman confiding to his associates such information as would enable them to act with him intelligently. Hathaway and Peter Conant could not arrive till the next day at noon; they might even come by the afternoon train. Nan’s field glasses would warn them of the arrival and meanwhile there was ample time to consider how they should act.

CHAPTER XXIII
A KISS FROM JOSIE

That evening, as Sarah Judd was sitting in her room reading a book, her work for the day being over, she heard a succession of little taps against her window-pane. She sat still, listening, until the taps were repeated, when she walked straight to the window, drew the shade and threw tip the sash. O'Gorman's face appeared in the opening and the girl put a hand on each of his cheeks and leaning over kissed him full upon his lips.

The man's face, lighted by the lamp from within the room, was radiant. Even the fat nose was beatified by the love that shone in his small gray eyes. He took one of her hands in both of his own and held it close a moment, while they regarded one another silently.

Then he gave a little beckoning signal and the girl turned to slip on a light coat, for the nights were chill on the mountain. Afterward she unfastened her outside door and joined the detective, who passed an arm around her and led her to one of the benches on the bluff.

The new moon was dim, but a sprinkling of stars lit the sky. The man and girl were far enough from the Lodge not to be overheard.

"It's good to see you again, Josie," said O'Gorman, as they seated themselves on the bench. "How do you like being a sleuth?"

"Really, Daddy," she replied, "it has been no end of a lark. I'm dead sick of washing other folks' dishes, I confess, but the fun I've had has more than made up for the hard work. Do you know, Dad, I had a session with Nan Shelley one day, and she didn't have much the best of it, either, although she's quick as a cat and had me backed off the map in every way except for the matter of wits. My thoughts didn't crumble much and Nan was good enough to congratulate me. She knew, as soon as I did, about the letter the crippled girl found in a book, but I managed to make a copy of it, while Nan is still wondering where it is hid. I'm patting myself on the back, Dad, because you trained me and I want to prove myself a credit to your training. It's no wonder, with such a master, that I could hold my own with Nan Shelley!"

He gave a little amused laugh.

"You're all right, Josie dear," he replied. "My training wouldn't have amounted to shucks if you hadn't possessed the proper gray matter to work with. But about that letter," more seriously; "your telegram told me a lot, because our code is so concise, but it also left a good deal to be guessed at. Who wrote the letter? I must know all the details in order to understand it properly."

“It’s all down in my private shorthand book,” said Josie O’Gorman, “but I’ve never dared make a clear copy while Nan was so near me. You can’t read it, Dad, and I can’t read it to you in the dark; so you’ll have to wait.”

“Have you your notebook here?”

“Always carry it.”

He drew an electric storage-lamp from his pocket and shielded the tiny circle of light with his coat.

“Now, then,” said he, “read the letter to me, Josie. It’s impossible for anyone to see the light from the house.”

The girl held her notebook behind the flap of his coat, where the lamp shed its white rays upon it, and slowly read the text of the letter. O’Gorman sat silent for some time after she had finished reading.

“In all my speculations concerning the Hathaway case,” he said to his daughter, “I never guessed this as the true solution of the man’s extraordinary actions. But now, realizing that Hathaway is a gentleman to the core, I understand he could not have acted in any other way.”

“Mrs. Burrows is dead,” remarked Josie.

“I know. It’s a pity she didn’t die long ago.”

“This thing killed her, Dad.”

“I’m sure of it. She was a weak, though kind-hearted, woman and this trouble wore her out with fear and anxiety. How did the girl — Mary Louise — take her mother’s death?”

“Rather hard, at first. She’s quieter now. But — see here, Dad — are you still working for the Department?”

“Of course.”

“Then I’m sorry I’ve told you so much. I’m on the other side. I’m here to protect Mary Louise Burrows and her interests.”

“To be sure. I sent you here myself, at my own expense, both to test your training before I let you into the regular game and for the sake of the little Burrows girl, whom I fell in love with when she was so friendless. I believed things would reach a climax in the Hathaway case, in this very spot, but I couldn’t foresee that your cleverness would ferret out that letter, which the girl Irene intended to keep silent about, nor did I know that the Chief would send me here in person to supervise Hathaway’s capture. Mighty queer things happen in this profession of ours, and circumstances lead the best of us by the nose.”

“Do you intend to arrest Mr. Hathaway?”

“After hearing that letter read and in view of the fact that Mrs. Burrows is dead, I think not. The letter, if authentic, clears up the mystery to our complete satisfaction. But I must get the story from Hathaway’s own lips,

and then compare his statement with that in the letter. If they agree, we won't prosecute the man at all, and the famous case that has caused us so much trouble for years will be filed in the office pigeonholes and pass into ancient history."

Josie O'Gorman sat silent for a long time. Then she asked:

"Do you think Mr. Hathaway will come here, now that — now that — "

"I'm quite sure he will come."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Then I must warn them and try to head him off. I'm on his side, Dad; don't forget that."

"I won't; and because you're on his side, Josie, you must let him come and be vindicated, and so clear up this matter for good and all."

"Poor Mary Louise! I was thinking of her, not of her grandfather. Have you considered how a knowledge of the truth will affect her?"

"Yes. She will be the chief sufferer when her grandfather's innocence is finally proved."

"It will break her heart," said Josie, with a sigh.

"Perhaps not. She's mighty fond of her grandfather. She'll be glad to have him freed from suspicion and she'll be sorry — about the other thing."

Sarah Judd — otherwise Josie O'Gorman — sighed again; but presently she gave a little chuckle of glee.

"Won't Nan be wild, though, when she finds I've beaten her and won the case for Hathaway?"

"Nan won't mind. She's an old hand at the game and has learned to take things as they come. She'll be at work upon some other case within a week and will have forgotten that this one ever bothered her."

"Who is Agatha Lord, and why did they send her here as principal, with Nan as her maid?"

"Agatha is an educated woman who has moved in good society. The Chief thought she would be more likely to gain the friendship of the Conants than Nan, for poor Nan hasn't much breeding to boast of. But she was really the principal, for all that, and Agatha was instructed to report to her and to take her orders."

"They were both suspicious of me," said the girl, "but as neither of them had ever set eyes on me before I was able to puzzle them. On the other hand, I knew who Nan was because I'd seen her with you, which gave me an advantage. Now, tell me, how's mother?"

"Pretty chirky, but anxious about you because this is your first case and she feared your judgment wasn't sufficiently matured. I told her you'd pull

through all right.”

For an hour they sat talking together. Then Officer O’Gorman kissed his daughter good night and walked back to the Bigbee house.

CHAPTER XXIV
FACING THE TRUTH

Irene was a great comfort to Mary Louise in this hour of trial. The chair-girl, beneath her gayety of demeanor and lightness of speech, was deeply religious. Her absolute faith sounded so cheering that death was robbed of much of its horror and her bereaved friend found solace. Mary Louise was able to talk freely of "Mamma Bee" to Irene, while with Aunt Hannah she rather avoided reference to her mother.

"I've always longed to be more with Mamma Bee and to learn to know her better," she said to her friend; "for, though she was very loving and gentle to me while I was with her, she spent most of her life caring for Gran'pa Jim, and they were away from me so much that I really didn't get to know Mamma very well. I think she worried a good deal over Gran'pa's troubles. She couldn't help that, of course, but I always hoped that some day the troubles would be over and we could all live happily together. And now — that can never be!"

Irene, knowing more of the Hathaway family history than Mary Louise did, through the letter she had found and read, was often perplexed how to console her friend and still regard honesty and truth. Any deception, even when practiced through the best of motives, was abhorrent to her nature, so she avoided speaking of the present affliction and led Mary Louise to look to a future life for the motherly companionship she had missed on earth.

"That," said she, "is the thought that has always given me the most comfort. We are both orphans, dear, and I'm sure your nature is as brave as my own and that you can bear equally well the loss of your parents."

And Mary Louise was really brave and tried hard to bear her grief with patient resignation. One thing she presently decided in her mind, although she did not mention it to Irene. She must find Gran'pa Jim and go to him, wherever he might be. Gran'pa Jim and her mother had been inseparable companions; Mary Louise knew that her own present sorrow could be nothing when compared with that of her grandfather. And so it was her duty to find him and comfort him, to devote her whole life, as her mother had done, to caring for his wants and cheering his loneliness — so far, indeed, as she was able to do. Of course, no one could quite take the place of Mamma Bee.

She was thinking in this vein as she sat in the den with Irene that Saturday afternoon. The chair-girl, who sewed beautifully, was fixing over one of Mary Louise's black dresses while Mary Louise sat opposite, listlessly watching her. The door into the hall was closed, but the glass door to the rear

porch was wide open to let in the sun and air. And this simple scene was the setting for the drama about to be enacted.

Mary Louise had her back half turned to the hall door, which Irene partially faced, and so it was that when the door opened softly and the chair-girl raised her head to gaze with startled surprise at someone who stood in the doorway, Mary Louise first curiously eyed her friend's expressive face and then, rather languidly, turned her head to glance over her shoulder.

The next moment she sprang to her feet and rushed forward.

"Gran'pa Jim — Oh, Gran'pa Jim!" she cried, and threw herself into the arms of a tall man who folded her to his breast in a close embrace.

For a while they stood there silent, while Irene dropped her eyes to her lap, deeming the reunion too sacred to be observed by another. And then a little stir at the open porch door attracted her attention and with a shock of repulsion she saw Agatha Lord standing there with a cynical smile on her lovely face. Softly the sash of the window was raised, and the maid Susan stood on the ground outside, leaned her elbows on the sill and quietly regarded the scene within the den.

The opening of the window arrested Colonel Weatherby's attention. He lifted his head and with a quick glance took in the situation. Then, still holding his granddaughter in his arms, he advanced to the center of the room and said sternly, addressing Agatha:

"Is this a deliberate intrusion, because I am here, or is it pure insolence?"

"Forgive us if we intrude, Mr. Hathaway," replied Agatha. "It was not our desire to interrupt your meeting with your granddaughter, but — it has been so difficult, in the past, to secure an interview with you, sir, that we dared not risk missing you at this time."

He regarded her with an expression of astonishment.

"That's it, exactly, Mr. Weatherby-Hathaway," remarked Susan mockingly, from her window.

"Don't pay any attention to them, Gran'pa Jim," begged Mary Louise, clinging to him. "They're just two dreadful women who live down below here, and — and — "

"I realize who they are," said the old gentleman in a calm voice, and addressing Agatha again he continued: "Since you are determined to interview me, pray step inside and be seated."

Agatha shook her head with a smile; Nan Shelley laughed outright and retorted:

"Not yet, Hathaway. We can't afford to take chances with one who has dodged the whole Department for ten years."

"Then you are Government agents?" he asked.

“That’s it, sir.”

He turned his head toward the door by which he had entered, for there was an altercation going on in the hallway and Mr. Conant’s voice could be heard angrily protesting.

A moment later the lawyer came in, followed by the little man with the fat nose, who bowed to Colonel Weatherby very respectfully yet remained planted in the doorway.

“This is — er — er — very unfortunate, sir; ve-ry un-for-tu-nate!” exclaimed Peter Conant, chopping off each word with a sort of snarl. “These con-found-ed secret service people have trailed us here.”

“It doesn’t matter, Mr. Conant,” replied the Colonel, in a voice composed but very weary. He seated himself in a chair, as he spoke, and Mary Louise sat on the arm of it, still embracing him.

“No,” said O’Gorman, “it really doesn’t matter, sir. In fact, I’m sure you will feel relieved to have this affair off your mind and be spared all further annoyance concerning it.”

The old gentleman looked at him steadily but made no answer. It was Peter Conant who faced the speaker and demanded:

“What do you mean by that statement?”

“Mr. Hathaway knows what I mean. He can, in a few words, explain why he has for years borne the accusation of a crime of which he is innocent.”

Peter Conant was so astounded he could do nothing but stare at the detective. Staring was the very best thing that Peter did and he never stared harder in his life. The tears had been coursing down Mary Louise’s cheeks, but now a glad look crossed her face.

“Do you hear that, Gran’pa Jim?” she cried. “Of course you are innocent! I’ve always known that; but now even your enemies do.”

Mr. Hathaway looked long into the girl’s eyes, which met his own hopefully, almost joyfully. Then he turned to O’Gorman.

“I cannot prove my innocence,” he said.

“Do you mean that you WILL not?”

“I will go with you and stand my trial. I will accept whatever punishment the law decrees.”

O’Gorman nodded his head.

“I know exactly how you feel about it, Mr. Hathaway,” he said, “and I sympathize with you most earnestly. Will you allow me to sit down awhile? Thank you.”

He took a chair facing that of the hunted man. Agatha, seeing this, seated herself on the door-step. Nan maintained her position, leaning through the open window.

“This,” said O’Gorman, “is a strange ease. It has always been a strange case, sir, from the very beginning. Important government secrets of the United States were stolen and turned over to the agent of a foreign government which is none too friendly to our own. It was considered, in its day, one of the most traitorous crimes in our history. And you, sir, a citizen of high standing and repute, were detected in the act of transferring many of these important papers to a spy, thus periling the safety of the nation. You were caught red-handed, so to speak, but made your escape and in a manner remarkable and even wonderful for its adroitness have for years evaded every effort on the part of our Secret Service Department to effect your capture. And yet, despite the absolute truth of this statement, you are innocent.”

None cared to reply for a time. Some who had listened to O’Gorman were too startled to speak; others refrained. Mary Louise stared at the detective with almost Peter Conant’s expression — her eyes big and round. Irene thrilled with joyous anticipation, for in the presence of this sorrowing, hunted, white-haired old man, whose years had been devoted to patient self-sacrifice, the humiliation the coming disclosure would, thrust upon Mary Louise seemed now insignificant. Until this moment Irene had been determined to suppress the knowledge gained through the old letter in order to protect the feelings of her friend, but now a crying need for the truth to prevail was borne in upon her. She had thought that she alone knew this truth. To her astonishment, as well as satisfaction, the chair-girl now discovered that O’Gorman was equally well informed.

CHAPTER XXV
SIMPLE JUSTICE

All eyes were turned upon Mr. Hathaway, who had laid a hand upon the head of his grandchild and was softly stroking her hair. At last he said brokenly, repeating his former assertion:

"I cannot prove my innocence."

"But I can," declared O'Gorman positively, "and I'm going to do it."

"No — no!" said Hathaway, startled at his tone.

"It's this way, sir," explained the little man in a matter-of-fact voice, "this chase after you has cost the government a heavy sum already, and your prosecution is likely to make public an affair which, under the circumstances, we consider it more diplomatic to hush up. Any danger to our country has passed, for information obtained ten years ago regarding our defenses, codes, and the like, is to-day worthless because all conditions are completely changed. Only the crime of treason remains; a crime that deserves the severest punishment; but the guilty persons have escaped punishment and are now facing a higher tribunal — both the principal in the crime and his weak and foolish tool. So it is best for all concerned, Mr. Hathaway, that we get at the truth of this matter and, when it is clearly on record in the government files, declare the case closed for all time. The State Department has more important matters that demand its attention."

The old man's head was bowed, his chin resting on his breast. It was now the turn of Mary Louise to smooth his thin gray locks.

"If you will make a statement, sir," continued O'Gorman, "we shall be able to verify it."

Slowly Hathaway raised his head.

"I have no statement to make," he persisted.

"This is rank folly," exclaimed O'Gorman, "but if you refuse to make the statement, I shall make it myself."

"I beg you — I implore you!" said Hathaway pleadingly.

The detective rose and stood before him, looking not at the old man but at the young girl — Mary Louise.

"Tell me, my child," he said gently, "would you not rather see your grandfather — an honorable, high-minded gentleman — acquitted of an unjust accusation, even at the expense of some abasement and perhaps heart-aches on your part, rather than allow him to continue to suffer disgrace in order to shield you from so slight an affliction?"

"Sir!" cried Hathaway indignantly, starting to his feet; "how dare you throw the burden on this poor child? Have you no mercy — no compassion?"

“Plenty,” was the quiet reply. “Sit down, sir. This girl is stronger than you think. She will not be made permanently unhappy by knowing the truth, I assure you.”

Hathaway regarded him with a look of anguish akin to fear. Then he turned and seated himself, again putting an arm around Mary Louise as if to shield her.

Said Irene, speaking very slowly:

“I am quite sure Mr. O’Gorman is right. Mary Louise is a brave girl, and she loves her grandfather.”

Then Mary Louise spoke — hesitatingly, at first, for she could not yet comprehend the full import of the officer’s words.

“If you mean,” said she, “that it will cause me sorrow and humiliation to free my grandfather from suspicion, and that he refuses to speak because he fears the truth will hurt me, then I ask you to speak out, Mr. O’Gorman.”

“Of course,” returned the little man, smiling at her approvingly; “that is just what I intend to do. All these years, my girl, your grandfather has accepted reproach and disgrace in order to shield the good name of a woman and to save her from a prison cell. And that woman was your mother.”

“Oh!” cried Mary Louise and covered her face with her hands.

“You brute!” exclaimed Hathaway, highly incensed.

“But this is not all,” continued O’Gorman, unmoved; “your mother, Mary Louise, would have been condemned and imprisoned — and deservedly so in the eyes of the law — had the truth been known; and yet I assure you she was only guilty of folly and of ignorance of the terrible consequences that might have resulted from her act. She was weak enough to be loyal to a promise wrung from her in extremity, and therein lay her only fault. Your grandfather knew all this, and she was his daughter — his only child. When the accusation for your mother’s crime fell on him, he ran away and so tacitly admitted his guilt, thus drawing suspicion from her. His reason for remaining hidden was that, had he been caught and brought to trial, he could not have lied or perjured himself under oath even to save his dearly loved daughter from punishment. Now you understand why he could not submit to arrest; why, assisted by a small but powerful band of faithful friends, he has been able to evade capture during all these years. I admire him for that; but he has sacrificed himself long enough. Your mother’s recent death renders her prosecution impossible. It is time the truth prevailed. In simple justice I will not allow this old man to embitter further his life, just to protect his grandchild from a knowledge of her mother’s sin.”

Again a deathly silence pervaded the room.

“You — you are speaking at random,” said Hathaway, in a voice choked

with emotion. “You have no proof of these dreadful statements.”

“But *I* have!” said Irene bravely, believing it her duty to support O’Gorman.

“And so have I,” asserted the quiet voice of Sarah Judd, who had entered the room unperceived.

Hathaway regarded both the girls in surprise, but said nothing.

“I think,” said Officer O’Gorman, “it will be best for us to read to Mr. Hathaway that letter.”

“The letter which I found in the book?” asked Irene eagerly.

“Yes. But do not disturb yourself,” as she started to wheel her chair close to the wall. “Josie will get it.”

To Irene’s astonishment Sarah Judd walked straight to the repeating rifle, opened the sliding plate in its stock and took out the closely folded letter. Perhaps Nan Shelley and Agatha Lord were no less surprised than Irene; also they were deeply chagrined. But O’Gorman’s slip in calling Sarah Judd “Josie” had conveyed to his associates information that somewhat modified their astonishment at the girl’s cleverness, for everyone who knew O’Gorman had often heard of his daughter Josie, of whom he was accustomed to speak with infinite pride. He always said he was training her to follow his own profession and that when the education was complete Josie O’Gorman would make a name for herself in the detective service. So Nan and Agatha exchanged meaning glances and regarded the freckled-faced girl with new interest.

“I’m not much of a reader,” said Josie, carefully unfolding the paper. “Suppose we let Miss Irene read it?”

Her father nodded assent and Josie handed the sheet to Irene.

Mr. Hathaway had been growing uneasy and now addressed Officer O’Gorman in a protesting voice:

“Is this reading necessary, sir?”

“Very necessary, Mr. Hathaway.”

“What letter is this that you have referred to?”

“A bit of information dating nearly ten years ago and written by one who perhaps knew more of the political intrigues of John and Beatrice Burrows than has ever come to your own knowledge.”

“The letter is authentic, then?”

“Quite so.”

“And your Department knows of its existence?”

“I am acting under the Department’s instructions, sir. Oblige us, Miss Macfarlane,” he added, turning to Irene, “by reading the letter in full.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LETTER

"This sheet," explained Irene, "is, in fact, but a part of a letter. The first sheets are missing, so we don't know who it was addressed to; but it is signed, at the end, by the initials 'E. de V.'"

"The ambassador!" cried Hathaway, caught off his guard by surprise.

"The same," said O'Gorman triumphantly; "and it is all in his well-known handwriting. Read the letter, my girl."

"The first sentence," said Irene, "is a continuation of something on a previous page, but I will read it just as it appears here."

And then, in a clear, distinct voice that was audible to all present, she read as follows:

"which forces me to abandon at once my post and your delightful country in order to avoid further complications. My greatest regret is in leaving Mrs. Burrows in so unfortunate a predicament. The lady was absolutely loyal to us and the calamity that has overtaken her is through no fault of her own.

"That you may understand this thoroughly I will remind you that John Burrows was in our employ. It was through our secret influence that he obtained his first government position, where he inspired confidence and became trusted implicitly. He did not acquire full control, however, until five years later, and during that time he met and married Beatrice Hathaway, the charming daughter of James J. Hathaway, a wealthy broker. That gave Burrows added importance and he was promoted to the high government position he occupied at the time of his death.

"Burrows made for us secret copies of the fortifications on both the east and west coasts, including the number and caliber of guns, amounts of munitions stored and other details. Also he obtained copies of the secret telegraph and naval codes and the complete armaments of all war vessels, both in service and in process of construction. A part of this information and some of the plans he delivered to me before he died, as you know, and he had the balance practically ready for delivery when he was taken with pneumonia and unfortunately expired very suddenly.

"It was characteristic of the man's faithfulness that on his death bed he made his wife promise to deliver the balance of the plans and an important book of codes to us as early as she could find an opportunity to do so. Mrs. Burrows had previously been in her husband's confidence and knew he was employed by us while holding his position with the government, so she readily promised to carry out his wishes, perhaps never dreaming of the difficulties that would confront her or the personal danger she assumed. But

she was faithful to her promise and afterward tried to fulfill it.

"Her father, the James J. Hathaway above mentioned, in whose mansion Mrs. Burrows lived with her only child, is a staunch patriot. Had he known of our plot he would have promptly denounced it, even sacrificing his son-in-law. I have no quarrel with him for that, you may well believe, as I value patriotism above all other personal qualities. But after the death of John Burrows it became very difficult for his wife to find a way to deliver to me the packet of plans without being detected. Through some oversight at the government office, which aroused suspicion immediately after his death, Burrows was discovered to have made duplicates of many documents intrusted to him and with a suspicion of the truth government agents were sent to interview Mrs. Burrows and find out if the duplicates were still among her husband's papers. Being a clever woman, she succeeded in secreting the precious package and so foiled the detectives. Even her own father, who was very indignant that a member of his household should be accused of treason, had no suspicion that his daughter was in any way involved. But the house was watched, after that, and Mrs. Burrows was constantly under surveillance — a fact of which she was fully aware. I also became aware of the difficulties that surrounded her and although impatient to receive the package I dared not press its delivery. Fortunately no suspicion attached to me and a year or so after her husband's death I met Mrs. Burrows at the house of a mutual friend, on the occasion of a crowded reception, and secured an interview with her where we could not be overheard. We both believed that by this time the police espionage had been greatly relaxed so I suggested that she boldly send the parcel to me, under an assumed name, at Carver's Drug Store, where I had a confederate. An ordinary messenger would not do for this errand, but Mr. Hathaway drove past the drug store every morning on his way to his office, and Mrs. Burrows thought it would be quite safe to send the parcel by his hand, the man being wholly above suspicion.

"On the morning we had agreed upon for the attempt, the woman brought the innocent looking package to her father, as he was leaving the house, and asked him to deliver it at the drug store on his way down. Thinking it was returned goods he consented, but at the moment he delivered the parcel a couple of detectives appeared and arrested him, opening the package before him to prove its important contents. I witnessed this disaster to our plot with my own eyes, but managed to escape without being arrested as a partner in the conspiracy, and thus I succeeded in protecting the good name of my beloved country, which must never be known in this connection.

"Hathaway was absolutely stupefied at the charge against him. Becoming violently indignant, he knocked down the officers and escaped with the

contents of the package. He then returned home and demanded an explanation from his daughter, who confessed all.

"It was then that Hathaway showed the stuff he was made of, to use an Americanism. He insisted on shielding his daughter, to whom he was devotedly attached, and in taking all the responsibility on his own shoulders. The penalty of this crime is imprisonment for life and he would not allow Mrs. Burrows to endure it. Being again arrested he did not deny his guilt but cheerfully suffered imprisonment. Before the day set for his trial, however, he managed to escape and since then he has so cleverly hidden himself that the authorities remain ignorant of his whereabouts. His wife and his grandchild also disappeared and it was found that his vast business interests had been legally transferred to some of his most intimate friends — doubtless for his future benefit.

"The government secret service was helpless. No one save I knew that Hathaway was shielding his daughter, whose promise to her dead husband had led her to betray her country to the representative of a foreign power such as our own. Yet Hathaway, even in sacrificing his name and reputation, revolted at suffering life-long imprisonment, nor dared he stand trial through danger of being forced to confess the truth. So he remains in hiding and I have hopes that he will be able — through his many influential friends — to save himself from capture for many months to come.

"This is the truth of the matter, dear friend, and as this explanation must never get beyond your own knowledge I charge you to destroy this letter as soon as it is read. When you are abroad next year we will meet and consider this and other matters in which we are mutually interested. I would not have ventured to put this on paper were it not for my desire to leave someone in this country posted on the Hathaway case. You will understand from the foregoing that the situation has become too delicate for me to remain here. If you can, give aid to Hathaway, whom I greatly admire, for we are in a way responsible for his troubles. As for Mrs. Burrows, I consider her a woman of character and honor. That she might keep a pledge made to her dead husband she sinned against the law without realizing the enormity of her offense. If anyone is to blame it is poor John Burrows, who was not justified in demanding so dangerous a pledge from his wife; but he was dying at the time and his judgment was impaired. Let us be just to all and so remain just to ourselves.

"Write me at the old address and believe me to be yours most faithfully

E. de V.

The 16th of September, 1905."

During Irene's reading the others maintained an intense silence. Even

when she had ended, the silence continued for a time, while all considered with various feelings the remarkable statement they had just heard.

It was O'Gorman who first spoke.

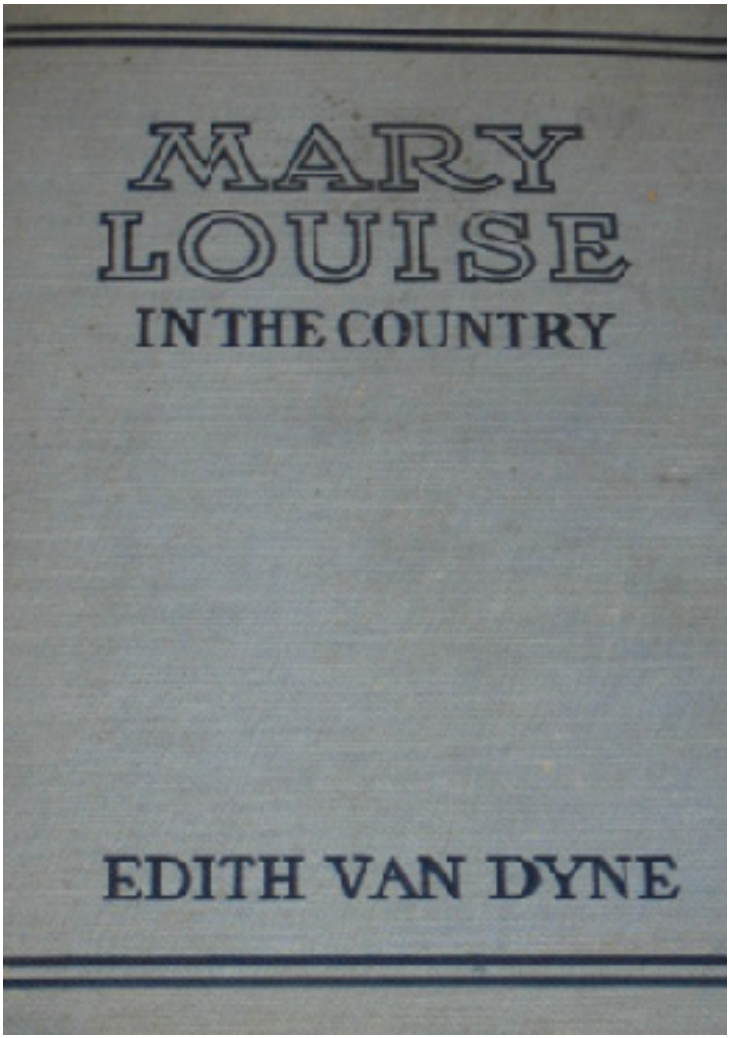
"If you will assert, Mr. Hathaway, that the ambassador's statement is correct, to the best of your knowledge and belief, I have the authority of our department to promise that the charge against you will promptly be dropped and withdrawn and that you will be adjudged innocent of any offense against the law. It is true that you assisted a guilty person to escape punishment, and are therefore liable for what is called 'misprision of treason,' but we shall not press that, for, as I said before, we prefer, since no real harm has resulted, to allow the case to be filed without further publicity. Do you admit the truth of the statements contained in this letter?"

"I believe them to be true," said Mr. Hathaway, in a low voice. Mary Louise was nestling close in his arms and now she raised her head tenderly to kiss his cheek. She was not sobbing; she did not even appear to be humbled or heart-broken. Perhaps she did not realize at the moment how gravely her father and mother had sinned against the laws of their country. That realization might come to her later, but just now she was happy in the vindication of Gran'pa Jim — a triumph that overshadowed all else.

"I'll take this letter for our files," said Officer O'Gorman, folding it carefully before placing it in his pocketbook. "And now, sir, I hope you will permit me to congratulate you and to wish you many years of happiness with your granddaughter, who first won my admiration by her steadfast faith in your innocence. She's a good girl, is Mary Louise, and almost as clever as my Josie here. Come, Nan; come, Agatha; let's go back to Bigbee's. Our business here is finished."

MARY LOUISE IN THE COUNTRY

Mary Louise in the Country, published by Reilly & Britton in 1916, is the second book in a series about girl detectives, written by Baum under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. In this novel, which deals with the struggle by Ireland for independence from Great Britain, Baum elects to feature Josie O'Gorman, the feisty daughter of a federal agent, over the less compelling Mary Louise. She became the main character late in the series, after Baum's death.



A first edition copy of 'Mary Louise in the Country'

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CHAPTER I
THE ARRIVAL

"Is this the station, Gran'pa Jim?" inquired a young girl, as the train began to slow up.

"I think so, Mary Louise," replied the handsome old gentleman addressed.

"It does look very promising, does it?" she continued, glancing eagerly out of the window.

"The station? No, my dear; but the station isn't Cragg's Crossing, you know; it is merely the nearest railway point to our new home."

The conductor opened their drawing-room door.

"The next stop is Chargrove, Colonel," he said.

"Thank you."

The porter came for their hand baggage and a moment later the long train stopped and the vestibule steps were let down.

If you will refer to the time-table of the D. R. & G. Railway you will find that the station of Chargrove is marked with a character dagger (†), meaning that trains stop there only to let off passengers or, when properly signaled, to let them on. Mary Louise, during the journey, had noted this fact with misgivings that were by no means relieved when she stepped from the sumptuous train and found before her merely a shed-like structure, open on all sides, that served as station-house.

Colonel Hathaway and his granddaughter stood silently upon the platform of this shed, their luggage beside them, and watched their trunks tumbled out of the baggage car ahead and the train start, gather speed, and go rumbling on its way. Then the girl looked around her to discover that the primitive station was really the only barren spot in the landscape.

For this was no Western prairie country, but one of the oldest settled and most prosperous sections of a great state that had been one of the original thirteen to be represented by a star on our national banner. Chargrove might not be much of a railway station, as it was only eleven miles from a big city, but the country around it was exceedingly beautiful. Great oaks and maples stood here and there, some in groups and some in stately solitude; the land was well fenced and carefully cultivated; roads — smooth or rutty — led in every direction; flocks and herds were abundant; half hidden by hills or splendid groves peeped the roofs of comfortable farmhouses that evidenced the general prosperity of the community.

"Uncle Eben is late, isn't he, Gran'pa Jim?" asked the girl, as her eyes wandered over the pretty, peaceful scene.

Colonel Hathaway consulted his watch.

“Our train was exactly on time,” he remarked, “which is more than can be said for old Eben. But I think, Mary Louise, I now see an automobile coming along the road. If I am right, we have not long to wait.”

He proved to be right, for presently a small touring car came bumping across the tracks and halted at the end of the platform on which they stood. It was driven by an old colored man whose hair was snow white but who sprang from his seat with the agility of a boy when Mary Louise rushed forward with words of greeting.

“My, Uncle Ebe, but it’s good to see you again!” she exclaimed, taking both his dusky hands in her own and shaking them cordially. “How is Aunt Polly, and how is your ‘rheum’tics’?”

“Rheum’tics done gone foh good, Ma’y Weeze,” he said, his round face all smiles. “Dis shuah am one prosterous country foh health. Nobuddy sick but de invahlids, an’ dey jus’ ‘magines dey’s sick, dat’s all.”

“Glad to see you, Uncle,” said the Colonel. “A little late, eh? — as usual. But perhaps you had a tire change.”

“No, seh, Kun’l, no tire change. I was jus’ tryin’ to hurry ‘long dat lazy Joe Brennan, who’s done comin’ foh de trunks. Niggehs is slow, Kun’l, dey ain’t no argyment ‘bout dat, but when a white man’s a reg’leh loaf eh, seh, dey ain’ no niggeh kin keep behind him.”

“Joe Brennan is coming, then?”

“Dat’s right, Kun’l; he’s comin’. Done start befoh daylight, in de lumbeh-wagin. But when I done ketch up wi’ dat Joe — a mile ‘n’ a half away — he won’t lis’n to no reason. So I dodged on ahead to tell you-uns dat Joe’s on de way.”

“How far is it from here to Cragg’s Crossing, then?” inquired Mary Louise.

“They call it ten miles,” replied her grandfather, “but I imagine it’s nearer twelve.”

“And this is the nearest railway station?”

“Yes, the nearest. But usually the Crossing folks who own motor cars drive to the city to take the trains. We alighted here because in our own case it was more convenient and pleasant than running into the city and out again, and it will save us time.”

“We be home in half’n hour, mos’ likely,” added Uncle Eben, as he placed the suit cases and satchels in the car. Colonel Hathaway and Mary Louise followed and took their seats.

“Is it safe to leave our trunks here?” asked the girl.

“Undoubtedly,” replied her grandfather. “Joe Brennan will doubtless arrive before long and, really, there is no person around to steal them.”

“I’ve an idea I shall like this part of the country,” said Mary Louise musingly, as they drove away.

“I am confident you will, my dear.”

“Is Cragg’s Crossing as beautiful as this?”

“I think it more beautiful.”

“And how did you happen to find it, Gran’pa Jim? It seems as isolated as can be.”

“A friend and I were taking a motor trip and lost our way. A farmer told us that if we went to Cragg’s Crossing we would find a good road to our destination. We went there, following the man’s directions, and encountered beastly roads but found a perfect gem of a tiny, antiquated town which seems to have been forgotten or overlooked by map-makers, automobile guides and tourists. My friend had difficulty in getting me away from the town, I was so charmed with it. Before I left I had discovered, by dint of patient inquiry, a furnished house to let, and you know, of course, that I promptly secured the place for the summer. That’s the whole story, Mary Louise.”

“It is interesting,” she remarked. “As a result of your famous discovery you sent down Uncle Eben and Aunt Polly, with our car and a lot of truck you thought we might need, and now — when all is ready — you and I have come to take possession.”

“Rather neatly arranged, I think,” declared the Colonel, with satisfaction.

“Do you know anything about the history of the place, Gran’pa, or of the people who live in your tiny, forgotten town?”

“Nothing whatever. I imagine there are folks Cragg’s Crossing who have never been a dozen miles away from it since they were born. The village boasts a ‘hotel’ — the funniest little inn you can imagine — where we had an excellent home-cooked meal; and there is one store and a blacksmith’s shop, one church and one schoolhouse. These, with half a dozen ancient and curiously assorted residences, constitute the shy and retiring town of Cragg’s Crossing. Ah, think we have found Joe Brennan.”

Uncle Eben drew up beside a rickety wagon drawn by two sorry nags who just now were engaged in cropping grass from the roadside. On the seat half reclined a young man who was industriously eating an apple. He wore a blue checked shirt open at the throat, overalls, suspenders and a straw hat that had weathered many seasons of sunshine and rain. His feet were encased in heavy boots and his bronzed face betokened an out-of-door life. There are a million countrymen in the United States just like Joe Brennan in outward appearance.

Joe did not stop munching; he merely stared as the automobile stopped beside him.

“Say, you Joe!” shouted Uncle Eben indignatly, “wha’ foh yo’ done sett’n’ heah?”

“Rest’n’,” said Joe Brennan, taking another bite from his apple.

“Ain’t yo’ gwine git dem trunks home to-day?” demanded the old darkey.

Joe seemed to consider this question carefully before he ventured to commit himself. Then he looked at Colonel Hathaway and said:

“What I want t’ know, Boss, is whether I’m hired by the hour, er by the day?”

“Didn’t Uncle Eben tell you?”

“Naw, he didn’t. He jes’ said t’ go git the trunks an’ he’d gimme a dollar fer the trip.”

“Well, that seems to settle the question, doesn’t it!”

“Not quite, Boss. I be’n thinkin’ it over, on the way, an’ a dollar’s too pesky cheap fer this trip. Sometimes I gits twenty-five cents a hour fer haulin’ things, an’ this looks to me like a day’s work.”

“If you made good time,” said Colonel Hathaway, “you might do it easily in four hours.”

Joe shook his head.

“Not me, sir,” he replied. “I hain’t got the constitution fer it. An’ them hosses won’t trot ‘less I lick ‘em, an’ ef I lick ‘em I’m guilty o’ cru’lty ter animals — includin’ myself. No, Boss, the job’s too cheap, so I guess I’ll give it up an’ go home.”

“But you’re nearly at the station now,” protested the Colonel.

“I know; but it’s half a mile fu’ther an’ the hosses is tired. I guess I’ll go home.”

“Oh, Gran’pa!” whispered Mary Louise, “it’ll never do to leave our trunks lying there by the railroad tracks.”

The Colonel eyed Joe thoughtfully.

“If you were hired by the day,” said he, “I suppose you would do a day’s work?”

“I’d hev to,” admitted Joe. “That’s why I ‘asked ye how about it. Jes’ now it looks to me like I ain’t hired at all. The black man said he’d gimme a dollar fer the trunks, that’s all.”

“How much do you charge a day?” asked the Colonel.

“Dollar ‘n’ a quarter’s my reg’lar price, an’ I won’t take no less,” asserted Joe.

Mary Louise nearly laughed outright, but the Colonel frowned and said:

“Joe Brennan, you’ve got me at your mercy. I’m going to hire you by the day, at a dollar and a quarter, and as your time now belongs to me I request you to go at once for those trunks. You will find them just beyond the

station."

The man's face brightened. He tossed away the core of his apple and jerked the reins to make the horses hold up their heads.

"A bargain's a bargain, Boss," he remarked cheerfully, "so I'll get them air trunks to yer house if it takes till midnight."

"Very good," said the Colonel. "Drive on, Uncle."

The old servant started the motor.

"Dat's what I calls downright robbery, Kun'l," he exclaimed, highly incensed. "Didn't I ask de stoahkeepeh what to pay Joe Brennen foh bringin' oveh dem trunks, an' didn't he say a dolleh is big pay foh such-like a trip? If we's gwine live in dis town, where day don' un'stand city prices an' de high cost o' livin' yit, we gotta hol' 'em down an' keep 'em from speckilatin' with us, or else we'll spile 'em fer de time when we's gone away."

"Very true, Uncle. Has Joe a competitor?"

Uncle Eben reflected.

"Ef he has, Kun'l, I ain't seen it," he presently replied; "but I guess all he's got is dat lumbeh-wagin."

Mary Louise had enjoyed the controversy immensely and was relieved by the promise of the trunks by midnight. For the first time in her life the young orphaned girl was to play housekeeper for her grandfather and surely one of her duties was to see that the baggage was safely deposited in their new home.

This unknown home in an unknown town had an intense fascination for her just now. Her grandfather had been rather reticent in his description of the house he had rented at Cragg's Crossing, merely asserting it was a "pretty place" and ought to make them a comfortable home for the summer. Nor had the girl questioned him very closely, for she loved to "discover things" and be surprised — whether pleasurably or not did not greatly interfere with the thrill.

The motor took them speedily along a winding way to Cragg's Crossing, a toy town that caused Mary Louise to draw a long breath of delight at first sight. The "crossing" of two country roads had probably resulted, at some far-back period, in farmers' building their residences on the four corners, so as to be neighborly. Farm hands or others built little dwellings adjoining — not many of them, though — and some unambitious or misdirected merchant erected a big frame "store" and sold groceries, dry goods and other necessities of life not only to the community at the Crossing but to neighboring farmers. Then someone started the little "hotel," mainly to feed the farmers who came to the store to trade or the "drummers" who visited it to sell goods. A church and a schoolhouse naturally followed, in course of

time, and then, as if its destiny were fulfilled, the sleepy little town — ten miles from the nearest railway — gradually settled into the comatose state in which Colonel Hathaway and his granddaughter now found it.

CHAPTER II

THE KENTON PLACE

The tiny town, however, was not all that belonged to the Cragg's Crossing settlement. Barely a quarter of a mile away from the village a stream with beautifully wooded banks ran diagonally through the countryside. It was called a "river" by the natives, but it was more of a creek; halfway between a small rivulet and a brook, perhaps. But its banks afforded desirable places for summer residences, several of which had been built by well-to-do families, either retired farmers or city people who wished for a cool and quiet place in which to pass the summer months.

These residences, all having ample grounds and facing the creek on either side, were sufficiently scattered to be secluded, and it was to one of the most imposing of these that Uncle Eben guided the automobile. He crossed the creek on a primitive but substantial bridge, turned to the right, and the first driveway led to the house that was to be Mary Louise's temporary home.

"This is lovely!" exclaimed the girl, as they rolled up a winding drive edged by trees and shrubbery, and finally drew up before the entrance of a low and rambling but quite modern house. There was Aunt Polly, her round black face all smiles, standing on the veranda to greet them, and Mary Louise sprang from the car first to hug the old servant — Uncle Eben's spouse — and then to run in to investigate the establishment, which seemed much finer than she had dared to imagine it.

The main building was of two stories, but the wings, several of which jutted out in various directions, were one story in height, somewhat on the bungalow plan. There was a good-sized stable in connection — now used as a garage — and down among the oaks toward the river an open pavilion had been built. All the open spaces were filled with flowers and ferns, in beds and borders, and graveled paths led here and there in a very enticing way. But the house was now the chief fascination and the other details Mary Louise gleaned by sundry glances from open windows as she rambled from room to room.

At luncheon, which Aunt Polly served as soon as her young mistress could be coaxed from her tour of inspection, the girl said:

"Gran'pa Jim, who owns this place?"

"A Mrs. Joselyn," he replied.

"A young woman?"

"I believe so. It was built by her mother, a Mrs. Kenton, some fifteen years ago, and is still called 'the Kenton Place.' Mrs. Kenton died and her daughter, who married a city man named Joselyn, has used it as a summer

home until this year. I think Mrs. Joselyn is a woman of considerable means."

"The furnishings prove that," said Mary Louise. "They're not all in the best of taste, but they are plentiful and meant to be luxurious. Why doesn't Mrs. Joselyn occupy her home this summer? And why, if she is wealthy, does she rent the place?"

"Those are problems I am unable to solve, my dear," replied the Colonel with a smile. "When old man Cragg, who is the nearest approach to a real estate agent in the village, told me the place was for rent, I inquired the price and contracted to lease it for the summer. That satisfied me, Mary Louise, but if you wish to inquire into the history and antecedents of the Kenton and Joselyn families, I have no doubt there are plenty of village gossips who can fill your ears full of it."

"Dar's one thing I foun' out, seh," remarked Uncle Eben, who always served at table and was not too diffident to join in the conversation of his betters, at times; "dis Joselyn man done dis'pear — er run away — er dig out, somehow — an' he missus is mos' plumb crazy 'bout it."

"When did that happen?" asked Mary Louise.

"'Bout Chris'mas time, de stoahkeepah say. Nobody don't like him down heah, 'cause he put on a 'strord'nary 'mount o' airs an' didn't mix wid de town people, nohow. De stoahkeepeh t'inks Marse Joselyn am crooked-like an' done squandeh a lot o' he wife's money befoh he went."

"Perhaps," said Mary Louise musingly, "that is why the poor woman is glad to rent this house. I wish, however, we had gotten it for a more pleasant reason."

"Don't pay attention to Eben's chatter, my dear," advised her grandfather. "His authority seems to be the ancient storekeeper, whom I saw but once and didn't fancy. He looks like an old owl, in those big, horn-rimmed spectacles."

"Dat stoahkeepeh ain' no owl, Kun'l," asserted Uncle Eben earnestly. "He done know all dey is to know 'roun' dese diggin's, an' a lot moah, too. An' a owl is a mighty wise bird, Kun'l, ef I do say it, an' no disrespec'; so what dat stoahkeepeh say I's boun' to take notice of."

Mary Louise spent the afternoon in examining her new possession and "getting settled." For — wonder of wonders! — Joe Brennan arrived with the trunks at three o'clock, some nine hours before the limit of midnight. The Colonel, as he paid the man, congratulated him on making such good time.

"Ya-as," drawled Joe; "I done pretty well, considerin'. But if I hadn't hired out by the day I'd sure be'n a loser. I've be'n a good ten hours goin' fer them trunks, fer I started at five this mornin'; so, if I'd tooken a doller fer the

job, I'd only made ten cents a hour, my price bein' twenty-five. But, as it is," he added with pride, "I git my reg'lar rate of a dollar 'n' a quarter a day."

"Proving that it pays to drive a bargain," commented the Colonel.

Mary Louise unpacked Gran'pa Jim's trunk first and put his room in "apple-pie order," as Aunt Polly admiringly asserted. Then she settled her own pretty room, held a conference with her servants about the meals and supplies, and found it was then time to dress for dinner. She was not yet old enough to find household duties a bore, so the afternoon had been delightfully spent.

Early after breakfast the next morning, however, Mary Louise started out to explore the grounds of her domain. The day was full of sunshine and the air laden with fragrance of flowers — a typical May morning. Gran'pa Jim would, of course, read for an hour or two and smoke his pipe; he drew a chair upon the broad veranda for this very purpose; but the girl had the true pioneer spirit of discovery and wanted to know exactly what her five acres contained.

The water was doubtless the prime attraction in such a neighborhood. Mary Louise made straight for the river bank and found the shallow stream — here scarce fifty feet in width — rippling along over its stony bed, which was a full fifty feet wider than the volume of water then required. When the spring freshets were on perhaps the stream reached its banks, but in the summer months it was usually subdued as now. The banks were four feet or more above the rabble of stones below, and close to the bank, facing the river on her side, Mrs. Kenton had built a pretty pavilion with ample seats and room for half a dozen wicker chairs and a table, where one could sit and overlook the water. Mary Louise fervently blessed the old lady for this idea and at once seated herself in the pavilion while she examined at leisure the scene spread out before her.

Trees hid all the neighboring residences but one. Just across the river and not far from its bank stood a small, weather-beaten cottage that was in sharp contrast with the rather imposing Kenton residence opposite. It was not well kept, nor even picturesque. The grounds were unattractive. A woodpile stood in the front yard; the steps leading to the little porch had rotted away and had been replaced by a plank — rather unsafe unless one climbed it carefully, Mary Louise thought. There were time-worn shades to the windows, but no curtains. A pane of glass had been broken in the dormer window and replaced by a folded newspaper tacked over it. Beside the porch door stood a washtub on edge; a few scraggly looking chickens wandered through the yard; if not an abode of poverty it was surely a place where careless indifference to either beauty or the comfort of orderly living prevailed.

So much Mary Louise had observed, wondering why Mrs. Kenton had not bought the cottage and torn it down, since it was a blot on the surrounding landscape, when she saw the door open and a man come out. She gave a little gasp of astonishment as her eyes followed this man, who slowly took the path to the bridge, from whence the road led into the village.

CHAPTER III

THE FOLKS ACROSS THE RIVER

Her first glance told the girl that here was a distinctly unusual personage. His very appearance was quaint enough to excite comment from a stranger. It must have been away back in the revolutionary days when men daily wore coats cut in this fashion, straight across the waist-line in front and with two long tails flapping behind. Modern "dress coats" were much like it, to be sure, but this was of a faded blue-bottle color and had brass buttons and a frayed velvet collar on it. His trousers were tight-fitting below the knee and he wore gaiters and a wide-brimmed silk hat that rivaled his own age and had doubtless seen happier days.

Mary Louise couldn't see all these details from her seat in the pavilion across the river, but she was near enough to observe the general effect of the old man's antiquated costume and it amazed her.

Yes, he was old, nearly as ancient as his apparel, the girl decided; but although he moved with slow deliberation his gait was not feeble, by any means. With hands clasped behind him and head slightly bowed, as if in meditation, he paced the length of the well-worn path, reached the bridge and disappeared down the road toward the village.

"That," said a voice beside her, "is the Pooh-Bah of Cragg's Crossing. It is old Cragg himself."

Gran'pa Jim was leaning against the outer breast of the pavilion, book in hand.

"You startled me," she said, "but no more than that queer old man did. Was the village named after him, Gran'pa?"

"I suppose so; or after his father, perhaps, for the place seems even older than old Cragg. He has an 'office' in a bare little room over the store, and I rented this place from him. Whatever his former fortunes may have been — and I imagine the Craggs once owned all the land about here — old Hezekiah seems reduced to a bare existence."

"Perhaps," suggested Mary Louise, "he inherited those clothes with the land, from his father. Isn't it an absurd costume, Gran'pa Jim? And in these days of advanced civilization, too! Of course old Hezekiah Cragg is not strong mentally or he would refuse to make a laughingstock of himself in that way."

Colonel Hathaway stared across the river for a time without answering. Then he said:

"I do not think the natives here laugh at him, although I remember they called him 'Old Swallowtail' when I was directed to him as the only resident

real estate agent. I found the old man quite shrewd in driving a bargain and thoroughly posted on all the affairs of the community. However, he is not a gossip, but inclined to be taciturn. There is a fathomless look in his eyes and he is cold and unresponsive. Country life breeds strange characteristics in some people. The whimsical dress and mannerisms of old Mr. Cragg would not be tolerated in the cities, while here they seem regarded with unconcern because they have become familiar. I was rather, pleased with his personality because he is the Cragg of Cragg's Crossing. How much of the original plot of land he still owns I don't know."

"Why, he lives in that hovel!" said the girl.

"So it seems, although he may have been merely calling there."

"He fits the place," she declared. "It's old and worn and neglected, just as he and his clothes are. I'd be sorry, indeed, to discover that Mr. Cragg lives anywhere else."

The Colonel, his finger between the leaves of the book he held, to mark the place where he was reading, nodded somewhat absently and started to turn away. Then he paused to ask anxiously:

"Does this place please you, my dear?"

"Ever so much, Gran'pa Jim!" she replied with enthusiasm, leaning from her seat inside the pavilion to press a kiss upon his bare gray head. "I've a sense of separation from all the world, yet it seems good to be hidden away in this forgotten nook. Perhaps I wouldn't like it for always, you know, but for a summer it is simply delightful. We can rest — and rest — and rest! — and be as cozy as can be."

Again the old gentleman nodded, smiling at the girl this time. They were good chums, these two, and what pleased one usually pleased the other.

Colonel Hathaway had endured a sad experience recently and his handsome old face still bore the marks of past mental suffering. His only daughter, Beatrice Burrows, who was the mother of Mary Louise, had been indirectly responsible for the Colonel's troubles, but her death had lifted the burden; her little orphaned girl, to whom no blame could be attached, was very dear to "Gran'pa Jim's" heart. Indeed, she was all he now had to love and care for and he continually planned to promote her happiness and to educate her to become a noble woman. Fortunately he had saved considerable money from the remains of an immense estate he had once possessed and so was able to do anything for his grandchild that he desired. In New York and elsewhere Colonel James Hathaway had a host of influential friends, but he was shy of meeting them since his late unpleasant experiences.

Mary Louise, for her part, was devotedly attached to her grandfather and

preferred his society to that of any other person. As the erect form of the old gentleman sauntered away through the trees she looked after him affectionately and wagged her little head with hearty approval.

"This is just the place for Gran'pa Jim," she mused. "There's no one to bother him with questions or sympathy and he can live as quietly as he likes and read those stuffy old books — the very name 'classics' makes me shudder — to his heart's content. He'll grow stronger and happier here, I'm sure."

Then she turned anew to revel in the constantly shifting view of river and woodland that extended panoramically from her seat in the pavilion. As her eyes fell on the old cottage opposite she was surprised to see a dishpan sail through the open window, to fall with a clatter of broken dishes on the hard ground of the yard. A couple of dish-towels followed, and then a broom and a scrubbing-brush — all tossed out in an angry, energetic way that scattered them in every direction. Then on the porch appeared the form of a small girl, poorly dressed in a shabby gingham gown, who danced up and down for a moment as if mad with rage and then, observing the washtub, gave it a kick which sent it rolling off the porch to join the other utensils on the ground.

Next, the small girl looked around her as if seeking more inanimate things upon which to vent her anger, but finding none she dashed into the cottage and soon reappeared with a much-worn straw hat which she jammed on her flaxen head and then, with a determined air, walked down the plank and marched up the path toward the bridge — the same direction that old Cragg had taken a short time before.

Mary Louise gave a gasp of amazement. The scene had been dramatic and exciting while it lasted and it needed no explanation whatever. The child had plainly rebelled at enforced drudgery and was going — where?

Mary Louise sprang lightly from her seat and ran through the grounds to their entrance. When she got to the road she sped along until she came to the bridge, reaching one end of it just as the other girl started to cross from the opposite end. Then she stopped and in a moment the two met.

"Where are you going?" asked Mary Louise, laying a hand on the child's arm as she attempted to pass her.

"None o' yer business," was the curt reply.

"Oh, it is, indeed," said Mary Louise, panting a little from her run. "I saw you throw things, a minute ago, so I guess you mean to run away."

The girl turned and stared at her.

"I don't know ye," said she. "Never saw ye before. Where'd ye come from anyway?"

"Why, my grandfather and I have taken the Kenton house for the summer,

so we're to be your neighbors. Of course, you know, we must get acquainted."

"Ye kin be neighbors to my Gran'dad, if ye like, but not to me. Not by a ginger cookie! I've done wi' this place fer good an' all, I hev, and if ye ever see me here ag'in my name ain't Ingua Scammel!"

"Here; let's sit down on the bridge and talk it over," proposed Mary Louise. "There's plenty of time for you to run away, if you think you'd better. Is Mr. Cragg your grandfather, then?"

"Yes, Ol' Swallertail is. 'Ol' Humbug' is what *I* calls him."

"Not to his face, do you?"

"I ain't so foolish. He's got a grip on him like a lobster, an' when he's mad at me he grips my arm an' twists it till I holler. When Gran'dad's aroun' you bet I hev to knuckle down, er I gits the worst of it."

"So he's cruel, is he?"

"Uh-huh. Thet is, he's cruel when I riles him, as I got a habit o' doin'. When things runs smooth, Gran'dad ain't so bad; but I ain't goin' to stand that slave life no longer, I ain't. I've quit fer good."

"Wherever you go," said Mary Louise gently, "you will have to work for someone. Someone, perhaps, who treats you worse than your grandfather does. No one else is obliged to care for you in any way, so perhaps you're not making a wise change."

"I ain't, eh?"

"Perhaps not. Have you any other relatives to go to?"

"No."

"Or any money?"

"Not a red cent."

"Then you'll have to hire out as a servant. You're not big enough or strong enough to do much, so you'll search a long time before you find work, and that means being hungry and without shelter. I know more of the world than you do, Ingua — what an odd name you have! — and I honestly think you are making a mistake to run away from your own grandfather."

The girl stared into the water in sullen silence for a time. Mary Louise got a good look at her now and saw that her freckled face might be pretty if it were not so thin and drawn. The hands lying on her lap were red and calloused with housework and the child's whole appearance indicated neglect, from the broken-down shoes to the soiled and tattered dress. She seemed to be reflecting, for after a while she gave a short, bitter laugh at the recollection of her late exhibition of temper and said:

"It's too late to back, down now. I've busted the dishes an' smashed things gen'rally."

“That *is* bad,” said Mary Louise; “but it might be worse. Mr. Cragg can buy more dishes.”

“Oh, he can, can he? Where’s the money comin’ from?”

“Is he poor?”

“He ain’t got no money, if that’s what ye mean. That’s what he says, anyhow. Says it were a godsend you folks rented that house of him, ‘cause it’ll keep us in corn bread an’ pork for six months, ef we’re keerful. Bein’ keerful means that he’ll eat the pork an’ I gits a chunk o’ corn bread now an’ then.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed Mary Louise in a distressed voice. “Don’t you get enough to eat?”

“Oh, I manages it somehow,” declared Ingua, with indifference. “I be’n swipin’ one egg a day fer weeks an’ weeks. Gran’dad says he’ll trim me good an’ plenty if he catches me eatin’ eggs, ‘cause all that our chickens lays he takes down to the store an’ sells. But he ain’t home daytimes, to count what eggs is laid, an’ so I watches out an’ grabs one a day. He’s mighty cute, I tell ye, Gran’dad is; but he ain’t cute enough to catch me at the egg-swipin’.”

Mary Louise was greatly shocked. Really, she decided, something must be done for this poor child. Looking at the matter from Ingua’s report, the smashing of the dishes might prove serious. So she said:

“Come, dear, let’s go together to your house and see if we can’t restore the damage.”

But the girl shook her head.

“Noth’n’ can’t mend them busted dishes,” she said, “an’ when Gran’dad sees ‘em he’ll hev a fit. That’s why I did it; I wanted to show him I’d had revenge afore I quit him cold. He won’t be home till night, but I gotta be a long way off, afore then, so’s he can’t ketch me.”

“Give it up,” suggested Mary Louise. “I’ve come here to live all summer, Ingua, and now that we’re friends I’m going to help you to get along more comfortably. We will have some splendid times together, you and I, and you will be a good deal better off than wandering among strangers who don’t care for you.”

The girl turned and looked into Mary Louise’s face long and earnestly. Her eyes wandered to her neatly arranged hair, to the white collar at her throat, then down to her blue serge dress and her dainty shoes. But mostly she looked straight into the eyes of her new friend and found there sincerity and evident good will. So she sighed deeply, cast a glance at her own bedraggled attire, and said:

“We ain’t much alike, us two, but I guess we kin be friends. Other girls

has come here, to the rich people's houses, but they all stuck up their noses at me. You're the first that's ever give me a word."

"All girls are not alike, you know," responded Mary Louise cheerfully. "So now, let's go to your house and see what damage has been done."

CHAPTER IV

GETTING ACQUAINTED

The two girls had been sitting on the edge of the bridge, but Mary Louise now rose and took Ingua's arm in her own, leading the reluctant child gently toward the path. It wasn't far to the old cottage and when they reached the yard Ingua laughed again at the scene of disorder.

"It's a'most a pity Gran'dad can't see it," she chuckled. "He'd be so crazy he'd hev them claws o' his'n 'round my throat in a jiffy."

Mary Louise drew back, startled.

"Did he ever do that?" she asked.

"Only once; but that time near ended me. It were a long time ago, an' he was sorry, I guess, 'cause he bought me a new dress nex' day — an' new shoes! I ain't had any since," she added disconsolately, "so the other day I asked him wasn't it about time he choked me ag'in."

"What did he say to that?"

"Jes' growled at me. Gran'dad's got a awful temper when he's good an' riled, but usual' he's still as a mouse. Don't say a word to me fer days together, sometimes. Once I saw him — "

She suddenly checked herself and cast an uneasy, sidelong glance at her companion. Mary Louise was rolling the washtub back to the stoop.

"The only thing that will bother us, Ingua," she said, "is those dishes. Let us try to count the broken ones. Do you know how many there were?"

"Sure I do," answered the girl, removing the battered dishpan from the heap of crockery. "Two plates, two cups-'n'-saucers, a oatmeal dish, a bread plate an' the pork platter. Gee! what a smash. One cup's whole — an' the oatmeal dish. The rest is gone-up."

"I'm going to dig a hole and bury the broken pieces," said Mary Louise. "Have you a spade?"

"There's an ol' shovel. But it won't do no good to bury of 'em. Gran'dad he counts ev'ry piece ev'ry day. He counts ev'ry thing, from the grains of salt to the chickens. Say, once I tried to play a trick on him. I'd got so hungry fer meat I jes' couldn't stand it, so one day I killed a chick'n, thinkin' he wouldn't miss it. My — my! Wha' d'ye s'pose? Say, ye never told me yer name yit."

"I am Mary Louise Burrows."

"Highflyin' name, ain't it? Well, I killed thet chick'n, an' cut it up an' fried it, an' et jes' a leg an' a wing, an' hid the rest under my bed in the peak up there, where Ol' Swallertail never goes. All the feathers an' the head I buried, an' I cleaned up the hatchet an' the fry-in'-pan so's there wasn't a

smitch of anything left to prove I'd murdered one o' them chicks. I was feelin' kinder chirky when Gran'dad come home, 'cause I thought he'd never find out. But what did the ol' vill'n do but begin to sniff aroun'; an' he sniffed an' he sniffed till he says: 'Ingua, what chick'n did ye kill, an' why did ye kill it?'

"'Yer crazy,' says I. 'What're ye talkin' 'bout?'

"Then he gives me one sour look an' marches out to count the chick'ns, an' when he comes back he says: 'It's the brown pullet with white on the wings. It were worth forty cents, an' forty cents'll buy ten pounds o' oatmeal. Where's the chick'n, girl?' 'Et up,' says I. 'Yer lyin',' says he. 'Go git it! Hustle!'

"Well, I saw his claws beginnin' to work an' it scared me stiff. So I goes to my room an' brings down the chick'n, an' he eyes it quiet-like fer a long time an' then eats some fer his supper. The rest he locks up in the cupboard that he allus carries the key to. Say, Mary Louise, I never got another taste o' that chick'n as long as it lasted! Ol' Swallertail et it all himself, an' took a week to do it."

During this recital the broom and mop and scrubbing-brush had been picked up and restored to their proper places. Then the two girls got out the old shovel and buried the broken dishes in a far corner of the yard, among high weeds. Mary Louise tried to get the dents out of the old dishpan, but succeeded only indifferently. It was so battered through long use, however, that Ingua thought the "jams" would not be noticed.

"Next," said Mary Louise, "we must replace the broken pieces. I suppose they sell dishes at the village store, do they not?"

"That's where these come from — long ago," replied Ingua; "but dishes cost money."

"I've a little money in my purse; enough for that, I'm sure. Will you go to town with me?"

Ingua stared at her as if bewildered. The proposition was wholly beyond her understanding. But she replied to her new friend's question, saying slowly:

"No; I won't go. Ol' Swallertail'd skin me alive if he caught me in the village."

"Then I'll go alone; and I'll soon be back, though I must run over to my own house first, to get my purse and my hat. Let me have one of the cups for a sample, Ingua."

She left the child sitting on the plank runway and looking rather solemn and thoughtful. Mary Louise was somewhat fearful that she might run away in her absence, so she hurried home and from there walked into the village, a

tramp easily accomplished in ten minutes.

The store was the biggest building in town, but not very big at that. It was "clapboarded" and two stories in height, the upper floor being used by Sol Jerrems, the storekeeper, as a residence, except for two little front rooms which he rented, one to Miss Huckins, the dressmaker and milliner, who slept and ate in her shop, and the other to Mr. Cragg. A high platform had been built in front of the store, for the convenience of farmer customers in muddy weather, and there were steps at either end of the platform for the use of pedestrians.

When Mary Louise entered the store, which was cluttered with all sorts of goods, not arranged in very orderly manner, there were several farmers present. But old Sol had his eye on her in an instant and shuffled forward to wait upon her.

"I want some crockery, please," she said.

He looked at the sample cup and led her to a corner of the room where a jumble of dishes crowded a single shelf.

"I take it you're one o' them new folks at the Kenton Place," he remarked.

"Yes," said she.

"Thought ther' was plenty o' dishes in that place," continued Mr. Jerrems, in a friendly tone. "But p'r'aps ye don't want the black folks t' eat off'n the same things ye do yerselves."

Mary Louise ignored this speech and selected the dishes she wanted. She had measured the broken platter and found another of the same size. Old Sol wouldn't sell a saucer without a cup, explaining that the two always went together: "the cup to hold the stuff an' the saucer to drink it out'n." Without argument, however, the girl purchased what she wanted. It was heavy, cheap ware of the commonest kind, but she dared not substitute anything better for it.

Then she went to the grocery counter and after considering what Ingua might safely hide and eat in secret she bought a tin of cooked corned beef, another of chipped beef, one of deviled ham and three tins of sardines. Also she bought a basket to carry her purchases in and although old Sol constantly sought to "pump" her concerning her past life, present history and future prospects, she managed to evade successfully his thirst for information. No doubt the fellow was a great gossip, as old Eben had declared, but Mary Louise knew better than to cater to this dangerous talent.

The proprietor accompanied her to the door and she drew back, hesitating, as she observed an old man in a bottle-blue swallowtail coat pace in deliberate, dignified manner along the opposite side of the street.

"Who is that?" she asked, as an excuse for not going out until Ingua's

grandfather had passed from sight.

"That? Why, that's Ol' Swallertail, otherwise Hezekiah Cragg, one o' our most interestin' citizens," replied Sol, glad of the chance to talk.

"Does he own Cragg's Crossing?" asked Mary Louise.

"Mercy, no! He owned a lot of it once, though, but that were afore my time. Sold it out an' squandered the money, I guess, for he lives like a rat in a hole. Mebbe, though, he's got some hid away; that's what some o' the folks here whispers — folks that's likely to know. But, if that's a fact, he's got a streak o' miser in him, for he don't spend more'n the law allows."

"He may have lost the money in speculations," suggested the girl.

"Say, ye've hit the nail square on the head!" he exclaimed admiringly. "Them's my own opinions to a T. I've told the boys so a hunderd times, but they can't git it. Wasn't Ol' Swal-lertail hand-in-glove wi' that slick Mister Joselyn, who they say has run away an' left his pore wife in the lurch? That's how you got a chance to rent the Kenton house. Joselyn were slick as butter, an' high-strung. Wouldn't hobnob with any o' us but Ol' Swallertail, an' that's why I think Cragg was investin' money with him. Joselyn he came down here three year ago, havin' married Annabel Kenton in the winter, an' the way he swelled aroun' were a caution to snakes. But the pore devil run his rope an' lit out. Where he skipped to, I dunno. Nobuddy seems to know, not even his wife. But they say she didn't hev enough money left to count, an' by the glum looks o' Ol' Swallertail I'm guessin' he got nipped too."

"How long ago was that?" asked Mary Louise.

"Some time 'bout last Christmas, they say. Anyhow, that's when his wife missed him an' set up a hunt that didn't do no good. She came down here with red eyes an' tramped 'round in the deep snow askin' questions. But, sakes, Ned Joselyn wouldn't 'a' come to an out-o'-the-way place like this; we didn't never suit his style, ye see; so poor Ann Kenton — whose misfortun' made her Mrs. Ned Joselyn — cried an' wailed fer a day er two an' then crep' back to the city like a whipped dog. Funny how women'll care fer a wuthless, ne'er-do-well chap that happens to be good-lookin', ain't it?"

Mary Louise nodded rather absently. However distorted the story might be, it was curious what had become of Mr. Joselyn. But her thoughts reverted to another theme and she asked:

"Hasn't Mr. Cragg a granddaughter?"

"Oh, ye've seen little Ingua Scammel, hev ye? Or mebbe just heard tell of her. She's the cussedest little coal o' fire in seven counties! Keeps Ol' Swallertail guessin' all the time, they say, jes' like her mom, Nan Cragg, did afore her. Gosh, what a woman her mom were! She didn't stay 'round here much, but whenever she run out o' cash an' didn't hev a square meal comin'

to her, she camped on Ol' Swallertail an' made him board her. Las' time she come she left her young-un — that's Ingua, ye know — an' the kid's been here ever since; sort of a thorn in the side of ol' Hezekiah, we folks think, though he don't never complain. She ain't more'n twelve or thirteen year old, thet Ingua, but she keeps house fer her gran'dad — what they is to keep, which ain't much. I won't let the kid 'round my store, nohow, 'cause she swipes ev'rything, from dried apples to peanuts, thet she kin lay her hands on."

"Perhaps she is hungry," said Mary Louise, defending her new friend.

"Like enough. But I ain't feedin' starvin' kids, 'Tain't my business. If Ol' Swallertail don't feed her enough, thet's *his* lookout. I've warned him if she sets foot in this store I'll charge him ten cents, jes' fer safety, so he keeps her out. He's slick, Ol' Swallertail is, an' silent-like an' secret in all he does an' says; but he's got to git up earlier in the mornin' to git the best o' Sol Jerrems, he er his kid, either one."

As Mr. Cragg had now vanished from sight up the street, Mary Louise ventured out and after a brisk walk deposited her basket on the stoop of the Cragg cottage, where Ingua still sat, swinging her feet pensively, as if she had not stirred since Mary Louise had left her.

CHAPTER V

MARY LOUISE BECOMES A PEACEMAKER

"Here are the dishes, exactly like the broken ones," reported Mary Louise in a jubilant tone as she set down her heavy basket. "Let us go in and wash them, Ingua, and put them away where they belong."

The child followed her into the house. All her former pent-up energy seemed to have evaporated. She moved in a dull sort of way that betokened grim resignation.

"I've be'n plannin' fer months to make a run fer it," she remarked as she washed the new dishes and Mary Louise wiped them dry, "an' just when I'd mustered up courage to do the trick, along comes *you* an' queered the whole game."

"You'll thank me for that, some day, Ingua. Aren't you glad, even now, that you have a home and shelter?"

"I ain't tickled to death about it. Home!" with a scornful glance around the room, barren of all comforts. "A graveyard's a more cheerful place, to my notion."

"We must try to make it pleasanter, dear. I'm going to get acquainted with Mr. Cragg and coax him to brighten things up some, and buy you some new clothes, and take better care of you."

Ingua fell back on a stool, fairly choking twixt amazement and derision.

"You! Coax Ol' Swallertail? Make him spend money on *me!* Say, if ye wasn't a stranger here, Mary Louise, I'd jes' laugh; but bein' as how yer a poor innercent, I'll only say ther' ain't no power on earth kin coax Gran'dad to do anything better than to scowl an' box my ears. You don't know him, but *I* do."

"Meantime," said Mary Louise, refusing to argue the point, "here are some little things for you to hide away, and to eat whenever you please," and she took from the basket the canned goods she had bought and set them in an enticing row upon the table.

Ingua stared at the groceries and then stared at Mary Louise. Her wan face flushed and then grew hard.

"Ye bought them fer *me?*" she asked.

"Yes; so you won't have to steal eggs to satisfy your natural hunger."

"Well, ye kin take the truck away ag'in. An' you'd better go with it," said the girl indignantly. "We may be poor, but we ain't no beggars, an' we don't take charity from nobody."

"But your grandfather — "

"We'll pay our own bills an' buy our own fodder. The Craggs is jus' as

good as yer folks, an' I'm a Cragg to the backbone," she cried, her eyes glinting angrily. "If we want to starve, it's none o' yer business, ner nobody else's," and springing up she seized the tins one by one and sent them flying through the window, as she had sent the dishpan and dishes earlier in the morning. "Now, then, foller yer charity an' make yerself scarce!" and she stamped her foot defiantly at Mary Louise, who was dumb with astonishment.

It was hard to understand this queer girl. She had made no objection to replacing the broken dishes, yet a present of food aroused her to violent anger. Her temper was positively something terrible in so small a person and remembering her story of how Old Swallowtail had clenched his talon-like fingers and twisted Ingua's arm till she screamed with pain, Mary Louise could well believe the statement that the child was "a Cragg to the backbone."

But Mary Louise, although only a few years older than Ingua, had had a good deal more experience and was, moreover, a born diplomat. Astonished though she was, she quickly comprehended the peculiar pride exhibited in a refusal to accept food from a stranger and knew she must soothe the girl's outraged spirit of independence if they were to remain friends.

"I guess I'll have to beg your pardon, Ingua," she said quietly. "I was grieved that you are so often hungry, while I have so much more than I need, and the money which I spent was all my own, to do what I liked with. If I were in your place, and you in mine, and we were good chums, as I know we're going to be, I'd be glad to have you help me in any little way you could. True friends, Ingua, share and share alike and don't let any foolish pride come between them."

She spoke earnestly, with a ring of sincerity in her voice that impressed the other girl. Ingua's anger had melted as quickly as it had roused and with sudden impulsiveness she seized Mary Louise's hands in her own and began to cry.

"I'm as wicked as they make 'em!" she wailed. "I know I am! But I can't help it, Mary Louise; it's borned in me. I want to be friends with ye, but I won't take your charity if I starve. Not now, anyhow. Here; I'll go git the stuff an' put it back in yer basket, an' then ye kin lug it home an' do what ye please with it."

They picked up the cans together, Ingua growing more calm and cheerful each moment. She even laughed at Mary Louise's disappointed expression and said:

"I don't always hev tantrums. This is my bad day; but the devils'll work out o' me by termorrer and I'll be sweet as sugar. I'm sorry; but it's the

Cragg blood that sets me crazy, at times."

"Won't you run over and see me?" asked Mary Louise, preparing to go home.

"When?"

"This afternoon."

Ingua shook her head.

"I dastn't," she said. "I gotta hold myself in, the rest o' the day, so's I won't fight with Ol' Swallertail when he comes home. Anyhow, I ain't fit t' show up aroun' yer swell place. That black coon o' yers'd turn me out, if he saw me comin', thinkin' I was a tramp."

Mary Louise had a bright idea.

"I'm going to have tea to-morrow afternoon in that summer-house across the creek," said she. "I will be all alone and if you will come over and join me we'll have a nice visit together. Will you, Ingua?"

"I guess so," was the careless answer. "When ye're ready, jes' wave yer han'ker'cher an if the devils ain't squeezin' my gizzard, like they is to-day, I'll be there in a jiffy."

CHAPTER VI

AFTERNOON TEA

Mary Louise, who possessed a strong sense of humor, that evening at dinner told Gran'pa Jim of her encounter with old Mr. Cragg's granddaughter and related their interview in so whimsical a manner that Colonel Hathaway laughed aloud more than once. But he also looked serious, at times, and when the recital was ended he gravely considered the situation and said:

"I believe, my dear, you have discovered a mine of human interest here that will keep you occupied all summer. It was most fortunate for the poor child that you interpreted her intent to run away from home and foiled it so cleverly. From the little girl's report, that grim and dignified grandsire of hers has another and less admirable side to his character and, unless she grossly exaggerates, has a temper so violent that he may do her a mischief some day."

"I'm afraid of that, too," declared Mary Louise, "especially as the child is so provoking. Yet I'm sure Ingua has a sweeter side to her nature, if it can be developed, and perhaps old Cragg has, too. Do you think, Gran'pa Jim, it would be advisable for me to plead with him to treat his orphaned grandchild more considerately?"

"Not at present, my dear. I'll make some inquiries concerning Cragg and when we know more about him we can better judge how best to help Ingua. Are you sure that is her name?"

"Yes; isn't it an odd name?"

"Somewhere," said the Colonel, musingly, "I have heard it before, but just now I cannot recollect where. It seems to me, however, that it was a man's name. Do you think the child's mother is dead?"

"I gathered from what Ingua and the storekeeper said that she has simply disappeared."

"An erratic sort of creature, from the vague reports you have heard," commented Gran'pa Jim. "But, whatever her antecedents may have been, there is no reason why Ingua may not be rescued from her dreadful environments and be made to become a quite proper young lady, if not a model one. But that can only result from changing the existing character of her environment, rather than taking her out of them."

"That will be a big task, Gran'pa Jim, and it may prove beyond me, but I'll do the best I can."

He smiled.

"These little attempts to help our fellows," said the Colonel, "not only afford us pleasure but render us stronger and braver in facing our own

tribulations, which none, however securely placed, seem able to evade."

Mary Louise gave him a quick, sympathetic glance. He had surely been brave and strong during his own period of tribulation and the girl felt she could rely on his aid in whatever sensible philanthropy she might undertake. She was glad, indeed, to have discovered poor Ingua, for she was too active and of too nervous a temperament to be content simply to "rest" all summer. Rest was good for Gran'pa Jim, just now, but rest pure and simple, with no compensating interest, would soon drive Mary Louise frantic.

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he conferred with Aunt Polly the next day and told the faithful black servant something of her plans. So, when the old cook lugged a huge basket to the pavilion for her in the afternoon, and set a small table with snowy linen and bright silver, with an alcohol arrangement for making tea, she said with an air of mystery:

"Don' yo' go open dat bastik, Ma'y 'Weeze, till de time comes fer eatin'. I jes' wants to s'prise yo' — yo' an' dat li'l' pooah girl what gits hungry so much."

So, when Aunt Polly had gone back to the house, Mary Louise arranged her table and then stood up and waved a handkerchief to signal that all was ready.

Soon Ingua appeared in her doorway, hesitated a moment, and then ran down the plank and advanced to the river bank instead of following the path to the bridge. Almost opposite the pavilion Mary Louise noticed that several stones protruded from the surface of the water. They were not in a line, but placed irregularly. However, Ingua knew their lie perfectly and was able to step from one to another until she had quickly passed the water. Then she ran up the dry bed of the river to the bank, where steps led to the top.

"Why, this is fine!" exclaimed Mary Louise, meeting her little friend at the steps. "I'd no idea one could cross the river in that way."

"Oh, we've known 'bout that always," was the reply. "Ned Joselyn used to come to our house ever so many times by the river stones, to talk with Ol' Swallertail, an' Gran'dad used to come over here, to this same summer-house, an' talk with Joselyn."

Mary Louise noticed that the old gingham dress had been washed, ironed and mended — all in a clumsy manner. Ingua's blond hair had also been trained in awkward imitation of the way Mary Louise dressed her own brown locks. The child, observing her critical gaze, exclaimed with a laugh:

"Yes, I've slicked up some. No one'll see me but you, will they?" she added suspiciously.

"No, indeed; we're to be all alone. How do you feel to-day, Ingua?"

“The devils are gone. Gran’dad didn’t ‘spicion anything las’ night an’ never said a word. He had one o’ his dreamy fits an’ writ letters till long after I went to bed. This mornin’ he said as ol’ Sol Jerrems has raised the price o’ flour two cents, so I’ll hev to be keerful; but that was all. No rumpus ner anything.”

“That’s nice,” said Mary Louise, leading her, arm in arm, to the pavilion. “Aren’t you glad you didn’t run away?”

Ingua did not reply. Her eyes, big and round, were taking in every detail of the table. Then they wandered to the big basket and Mary Louise smiled and said:

“The table is set, as you see, but I don’t know what we’re to have to eat. I asked Aunt Polly to put something in the basket, as I was going to have company, and I’m certain there’ll be *enough* for two, whatever it’s like. You see, this is a sort of surprise party, for we won’t know what we’ve got until we unpack the basket.”

Ingua nodded, much interested.

“Ye said ‘tea,’“ she remarked, “an’ I hain’t tasted tea sence Marm left us. But I s’pose somethin’ goes with tea?”

“Always. Tea means a lunch, you know, and I’m very hungry because I didn’t eat much luncheon at noon. I hope you are hungry, too, Ingua,” she added, opening the basket and beginning to place its contents upon the table.

Ingua may have considered a reply unnecessary, for she made none. Her eyes were growing bigger every moment, for here were dainty sandwiches, cakes, jelly, a pot of marmalade, an assortment of cold meats, olives, Saratoga chips, and last of all a chicken pie still warm from the oven — one of those chicken pies that Aunt Polly could make as no one else ever made them.

Even Mary Louise was surprised at the array of eatables. It was a veritable feast. But without comment she made the tea, the water being already boiling, and seating Ingua opposite her at the table she served the child as liberally as she dared, bearing in mind her sensitiveness to “charity.”

But Ingua considered this a “party,” where as a guest she was entitled to all the good things, and she ate with a ravenous haste that was pitiful, trying the while not to show how hungry she was or how good everything tasted to her.

Mary Louise didn’t burden her with conversation during the meal, which she prolonged until the child positively could eat no more. Then she drew their chairs to a place where they had the best view of the river and woodland — with the old Cragg cottage marring the foreground — and said:

“Now we will have a good, long talk together.”

Ingua sighed deeply.

“Don’t we hev to do the dishes?” she asked.

“No; Aunt Polly will come for them, by and by. All we have to do now is to enjoy your visit, which I hope you will repeat many times while I am living here.”

Again the child sighed contentedly.

“I wish ye was goin’ ter stay always,” she remarked. “You folks is a sight nicer’n that Joselyn tribe. They kep’ us stirred up a good deal till Ned — ”

She stopped abruptly.

“What were the Joselyns like?” inquired Mary Louise, in a casual tone that was meant to mask her curiosity.

“Well, that’s hard to say,” answered Ingua thoughtfully. “Ol’ Mis’ Kenton were a good lady, an’ ev’rybody liked her; but after she died Ann Kenton come down here with a new husban’, who were Ned Joselyn, an’ then things began to happen. Ned was slick as a ban’box an’ wouldn’t hobnob with nobody, at first; but one day he got acquainted with Ol’ Swallertail an’ they made up somethin’ wonderful. I guess other folks didn’t know ‘bout their bein’ so close, fer they was sly ‘bout it, gen’rally. They’d meet in this summer-house, or they’d meet at our house, crossin’ the river on the steppin’-stones; but when Ned came over to us Gran’dad allus sent me away an’ said he’d skin me if I listened. But one day — No, I mus’n’t tell that,” she said, checking herself quickly, as a hard look came over her face.

“Why not?” softly asked Mary Louise.

“‘Cause if I do I’ll git killed, that’s why,” answered the child, in a tone of conviction.

Something in her manner startled her hearer.

“Who would kill you, Ingua?” she asked.

“Gran’dad would.”

“Oh, I’m sure he wouldn’t do that, whatever you said.”

“Ye don’t know Gran’dad, Mary Louise. He’d as lief kill me as look at me, if I give him cause to.”

“And he has asked you not to talk about Mr. Joselyn?”

“He tol’ me ter keep my mouth shet or he’d murder me an’ stick my body in a hole in the yard. An’ he’d do it in a minute, ye kin bank on that.”

“Then,” said Mary Louise, looking troubled, “I advise you not to say anything he has forbidden you to. And, if anything ever happens to you while I’m here, I shall tell Gran’pa Jim to have Mr. Cragg arrested and put in prison.”

“Will ye? Will ye — honest?” asked the girl eagerly. “Say! that’ll help a lot. If I’m killed, I’ll know I’ll be revenged.”

So tragic was her manner that Mary Louise could have laughed outright had she not felt there was a really serious foundation for Ingua's fears. There was something about the silent, cold-featured, mysterious old man that led her to believe he might be guilty of any crime. But, after all, she reflected, she knew Mr. Cragg's character only from Ingua's description of it, and the child feared and hated him.

"What does your grandfather do in his office all day?" she inquired after a long pause.

"Writes letters an' reads the ones he gits, I guess. He don't let me go to his office."

"Does he get many letters, then?"

"Heaps an' heaps of 'em. You ask Jim Bennett, who brings the mail bag over from the station ev'ry day."

"Is Jim Bennett the postman?"

"His wife is. Jim lugs the mail 'tween the station an' his own house — that's the little white house next the church — where his wife, who's deef-'n'-dumb, runs the postoffice. I know Jim. He says there's 'bout six letters a year for the farmers 'round here, an' 'bout one a week for Sol Jerrems — which is mostly bills — an' all the rest belongs to Ol' Swallertail."

Mary Louise was puzzled.

"Has he a business, then?" she asked.

"Not as anybody knows of."

"But why does he receive and answer so many letters?"

"Ye'll hev to guess. I've guessed, myself; but what's the use? If he was as stingy of postage stamps as he is of pork an' oatmeal, he wouldn't send a letter a year."

Mary Louise scented a mystery. Mysteries are delightful things to discover, and fascinating to solve. But who would have thought this quiet, retired village harbored a mystery?

"Does your grandfather ever go away from here? Does he travel much?" was her next question.

"He ain't never been out of Cragg's Crossing sence I've knowed him."

"Really," said Mary Louise, "it is perplexing."

Ingua nodded. She was feeling quite happy after her lunch and already counted Mary Louise a warm friend. She had never had a friend before, yet here was a girl of nearly her own age who was interested in her and her history and sweetly sympathetic concerning her woes and worries. To such a friend Ingua might confide anything, almost; and, while she was not fully aware of that fact just now, she said impulsively:

“Without tellin’ what’d cost me my life, or lettin’ anybody know what’s become of Ned Joselyn, I’ll say they was money — lots o’ money! — passed atween him an’ ol’ Swallertail. Sometimes the heap went to one, an’ sometimes to the other; I seen it with my own eyes, when Gran’dad didn’t know I was spyin’. But it didn’t stick to either one, for Ned was — ” She stopped short, then continued more slowly: “When Ned dis’peared, he’d spent all his own an’ his wife’s money, an’ Ol’ Swallertail ain’t got enough t’ live decent.”

“Are you sure of that, Ingua?”

“N-o, I ain’t sure o’ noth’n. But he don’t spend no money, does he?”

“For stamps,” Mary Louise reminded her.

Then the child grew silent and thoughtful again. Mary Louise, watching the changing expressions on her face, was convinced she knew more of the mystery than she dared confide to her new friend. There was no use trying to force her confidence, however; in her childish way she was both shrewd and stubborn and any such attempt would be doomed to failure. But after quite a period of silence Mary Louise asked gently:

“Did you like Mr. Joselyn, Ingua?”

“Sometimes. Only when — ” Another self-interruption. She seemed often on the point of saying something her better judgment warned her not to. “Sometimes Ned were mighty good to me. Sometimes he brought me candy, when things was goin’ good with him. Once, Mary Louise, he kissed me, an’ never wiped off his mouth afterwards! Y-e-s, I liked Ned, ‘ceptin’ when — ” Another break. “I thought Ned was a pretty decent gink.”

“Where did you learn all your slang, dear?”

“What’s slang?”

“Calling a man a ‘gink,’ and words like that.”

“

Oh. Marm was full o’ them words,” she replied with an air of pride. “They seem to suit things better than common words; don’t you think so, Mary Louise?”

“Sometimes,” with an indulgent smile. “But ladies do not use them, Ingua, because they soil the purity of our language.”

“Well,” said the girl, “it’ll be a long time, yit, afore I’m a lady, so I guess I’ll talk like Marm did. Marm weren’t a *real* lady, to my mind, though she claimed she’d show anybody that said she wasn’t. Real ladies don’t leave the’r kids in the clutches of Ol’ Swallertails.”

Mary Louise did not think it wise to criticize the unknown Mrs. Scammel or to allow the woman’s small daughter to do so. So she changed the subject to more pleasant and interesting topics and the afternoon wore speedily

away.

Finally Ingua jumped up and said:

“I gotta go. If Gran’dad don’t find supper ready there’ll be another rumpus, an’ I’ve been so happy to-day that I want to keep things pleasant-like.”

“Won’t you take the rest of these cakes with you?” urged Mary Louise.

“Nope. I’ll eat one more, on my way home, but I ain’t one o’ them tramps that wants food pushed at ‘em in a bundle. We ain’t got much to home, but what we got’s ours.”

A queer sort of mistaken pride, Mary Louise reflected, as she watched the girl spring lightly over the stepping-stones and run up the opposite bank. Evidently Ingua considered old Mr. Cragg her natural guardian and would accept nothing from others that he failed to provide her with. Yet, to judge from her speech, she detested her grandfather and regarded him with unspeakable aversion.

CHAPTER VII

MARY LOUISE CALLS FOR HELP

All the queer hints dropped by the girl that afternoon, concerning the relations between Mr. Joselyn and Mr. Cragg, were confided by Mary Louise to her Gran'pa Jim that evening, while the old Colonel listened with grave interest.

"I'm sure there is some mystery here," declared Mary Louise, "and maybe we are going to discover some dreadful crime."

"And, on the contrary," returned Colonel Hathaway, "the two men may have been interested together in some business venture that resulted disastrously and led Mr. Joselyn to run away to escape his wife's reproaches. I consider that a more logical solution of your mystery, my dear."

"In that case," was her quick reply, "why is Mr. Cragg still writing scores of letters and getting bags full of replies? I don't believe that business deal — whatever it was — is ended, by any means. I think that Ned Joselyn and Old Swallowtail are still carrying it on, one in hiding and the other here — and to be here is to be in hiding, also. And it isn't an honest business, Gran'pa Jim, or they wouldn't be so secret about it."

The Colonel regarded his young granddaughter with surprise.

"You seem quite logical in your reasoning, my dear," he confessed, "and, should your conjectures prove correct, these men are using the mails for illegal purposes, for which crime the law imposes a severe penalty. But consider, Mary Louise, is it our duty to trail criminals and through our investigations bring them to punishment?"

Mary Louise took time to consider this question, as she had been advised to do. When she replied she had settled the matter firmly in her mind.

"We are part of the Government, Gran'pa Jim," she asserted. "If we believe the Government is being wronged — which means the whole people is being wronged — I think we ought to uphold the law and bring the wrong-doer to justice."

"Allowing that," said her grandfather, "let us next consider what grounds you have for your belief that wrong is being committed. Are they not confined to mere suspicions? Suspicions aroused by the chatter of a wild, ungoverned child? Often the amateur detective gets into trouble through accusing the innocent. Law-abiding citizens should not attempt to uncover all the wrongs that exist, or to right them. The United States Government employs special officers for such duties."

Mary Louise was a bit nettled, failing to find at the moment any argument to refute this statement. She was still convinced, however, that the mystery

was of grave importance and she believed it would be intensely exciting to try to solve it. Gran'pa Jim was not acquainted with Ingua Scammel and had not listened to the girl's unconscious exposures; so, naturally, he couldn't feel just as Mary Louise did about this matter. She tried to read, as her grandfather, considering the conversation closed, was now doing. They sat together by the lamplight in the cozy sitting room. But her thoughts constantly reverted to "Old Swallowtail" and to Ingua. At length she laid down her book and said:

"Gran'pa, would you mind if I invited Josie O'Gorman to come here and make me a visit?"

He gave her a curious look, which, soon melted into an amused smile.

"Not at all, my dear. I like Josie. But I can see by your desire to introduce a female detective on the scene that you cannot abandon your suspicion of Mr. Cragg."

"I want to save Ingua, if I can," replied the girl earnestly. "The poor little thing can't go on leading such a life without its ruining all her future, even if her grandfather's brutal threats are mere bluff. And Josie isn't a female detective, as yet; she is only training to be one, because her father has won fame in that profession."

"Josie O'Gorman," said the Colonel, meditatively, "is a wonderfully clever girl. I believe she is better, even now, than a score of average male sleuths. Perhaps it will be a desirable thing for her to come here, for she will be shrewd enough to decide, in a short time, whether or not your suspicions are justified. In the latter case, you will be relieved of your worries. Will you abide by Josie's decision?"

"Will you, Gran'pa Jim?"

"I have considerable confidence in the girl's judgment."

"Then I will write to her at once."

She went to her desk and wrote the following note:

Dear Josie:

We are at the dropping-off-place of the world, a stagnant little village of a dozen houses set in an oasis that is surrounded by the desert of civilization. And here, where life scarcely throbs, I've scented a mystery that has powerfully impressed me and surely needs untangling. It will be good practice for you, Josie, and so I want you to pack up at once and come to us on a good long visit. We're delightfully situated and, even if the mystery dissolves into thin air under the sunshine of your eyes, I know you will enjoy the change and our dreamy, happy existence in the wilds of nowhere. Gran'pa Jim wants you, too, as he thinks your coming will do me good, and his judgment is never at fault. So drop me a postal to say when you will

arrive and I will meet you at Chargrove Station with our car.

Affectionately your friend,

Mary Louise Burrows.

Gran'pa Jim read this note and approved it, so next morning Mary Louise walked to the village and deposited it in the postoffice, which located in the front room of Jim Bennett's little residence and was delightfully primitive. Jim was "jus' makin' up the mail bag," he said, so her letter was in time to catch the daily train and would be in Washington, where Josie lived, in the quickest possible time.

Josie O'Gorman was about the same age as Mary Louise and she was the only child of John O'Gorman, famed as one of the cleverest detectives in the Secret Service. Josie was supposed to have inherited some of her father's talent; at least her fond parent imagined so. After carefully training the child almost from babyhood, O'Gorman had tested Josie's ability on just one occasion, when she had amply justified her father's faith in her. This test had thrown the girl into association with Mary Louise and with Colonel Hathaway, both of whom greatly admired her cleverness, her clear head and shrewd judgment. Mary Louise, especially, had developed a friendship for the embryo girl detective and had longed to know her more intimately. So she congratulated herself on the happy thought of inviting Josie to Cragg's Crossing and was delighted that the vague mystery surrounding the Cragg family offered an adequate excuse to urge the girl to come to her. There seemed nothing in the way of such a visit, for Officer O'Gorman, however pleased he might be at his daughter's success in her first detective case, declared Josie yet too young to enter active service and insisted that she acquire further age and experience before he would allow her to enter her chosen profession in earnest. "One swallow," he said, "doesn't make a summer, and the next bird you fly might prove a buzzard, my dear. Take your time, let your wits mature, and you'll be the better for it in the end."

So Mary Louise waited impatiently for Josie's reply, meantime seeing as much of Ingua as she could and trying to cement the growing friendship between them. Ingua responded eagerly to her advances and as old Mr. Cragg was away from home the greater part of the day there was much crossing of the stepping-stones by both girls and more than one "afternoon tea" in the pavilion.

"Do you know," said Ingua one day, in confidential mood, "I haven't had the devils since that time I started to run away and you stopped me? P'r'aps it's because I'm not as hungry as I used to be; but, anyhow, I'm glad I stayed. Gran'dad's been good, too, 'though he's got the 'wakes' ag'in."

"What are the 'wakes'?" asked Mary Louise.

“Can’t sleep nights. Goes t’ bed on time, ye know, but gits up ag’in an’ dresses himself an’ walks.”

“In the house?”

“No, walks out o’ doors. Sometimes he’ll come in at jes’ daylight; sometimes not till break-fas’ is ready.”

“And doesn’t that make him cross, Ingua?”

“Not a bit. It seems to chirk him up. Yist’day mornin’, when he come in, he was feelin’ so chipper he give me a cent, an’ told me to buy somethin’ useful. I guess that’s the first cent he ever give me. I’ve *took* money o’ his’n, but he never *give* me none afore.”

“Oh, Ingua! I hope you haven’t stolen money?”

“Nope. Jes’ took it. It ain’t easy, ‘cause he knows ev’ry cent he’s got, an’ it ain’t often he leaves it where I kin git it. P’r’aps he knows it’s me, but when I lie out of it he can’t do noth’n’ but growl — an’ growlin’ don’t hurt any.”

Mary Louise was greatly distressed. This reckless disregard of property rights was of course the direct result of the child’s environment, but must be corrected. Ingua resented direct chiding and it was necessary to point out to her the wickedness of stealing in the gentlest possible manner.

“How much money have you taken from your grandfather?” she asked.

“Oh, not much. A nickel, now an’ then. He wouldn’t stan’ for losin’ any more, ye see. P’r’aps, altogether, I’ve swiped twenty-five cents. But once Ned Joselyn give me a dollar, an’ Ol’ Swallertail knowed it, an’ made me give it to him to save for me. That were the last I ever saw o’ that dollar, Mary Louise, so I ain’t even with Gran’dad yet.”

“Do you think,” remarked Mary Louise, “there is ever any excuse for stealing?”

The girl stared at her, coloring slightly.

“Do ye mean Gran’dad, er *me?*”

“I mean you. He didn’t steal your dollar, dear; he merely took it so you wouldn’t spend it foolishly.”

“An’ I merely took them nickels so’s I could, spend ‘em foolish. There’s no fun in spendin’ money, seems to me, unless you squander it reckless. That’s what I done with them nickels. Candy an’ chewin’ gum tastes better when you know it’s swiped.”

Mary Louise sighed. It was so hard to show little Ingua the error of her ways.

“As fer stealin’ — out an’ out *stealin’,”* continued the girl, with a proud toss of her head, “we Craggs ain’t never took noth’n’ that don’t belong to us from nobody. What a Cragg takes from a Cragg is a Cragg’s business, an’

when we takes someth'n' from somebody else I'll ask ye to tell me 'bout it."

"Where are you going, Ingua?"

"Home."

"You're not offended, I hope."

"No, but I got work to do. I ain't done my breakfas' dishes yet."

Mary Louise musingly watched the girl cross the river. On the opposite bank she turned to wave her hand and then ran into the cottage. Ingua's code of honor was a peculiar one. Her pride in the Craggs seemed unaccountable, considering she and her grandfather were the only two of the family in existence — except that wandering mother of hers.

But the recent conversation had uncovered a new phase of the mystery. Old Swallowtail was nervous over something; he could not sleep at night, but roamed the roads while others with clear consciences slumbered. There must be some powerful reason to account for the old man's deserting his bed in this manner. What could it be?

When she walked over to the postoffice the girl found the long-looked-for letter from Josie O'Gorman. It said:

Dear Mary Louise:

How good you are! I positively need a change of scene and a rest, so I'm coming. To-morrow — by the train to Chargrove. The mystery you hint at will help me to rest. Dad doesn't want me to grow rusty and he has some odd theories I'd like to work out. I haven't an idea what your "mystery" is, of course, but if it enables me to test any one of the O'Gorman theories (a theory is merely a stepping-stone to positive information) I shall bless you forever. And that reminds me: I'm coming as a sewing girl, to help you fix over some summer gowns. You're anxious to give me the work, because I need it, but as we're rather chummy I'm half servant and half companion. (I hate sewing and make the longest stitches you ever saw!) Moreover, I'm Josie Jessup. I'm never an O'Gorman while I'm working on a mystery; it wouldn't do at all. Explain this to dear old Gran'pa Jim.

Between the receipt of this script and to-morrow's train jot down in regular order everything you know concerning the aforesaid mystery. Make it brief; no speculations or suspicions, just facts. Then I won't waste any time getting busy.

Can you hear the rumble of my train? While you're reading this I'm on my way!

Josie

"Good!" murmured Mary Louise, as she folded the letter. "I feel better already. Whatever the mystery of Old Swallowtail may be, Josie is sure to solve it."

CHAPTER VIII

THE RED-HEADED GIRL

Sol Jerrems the storekeeper, coming in from the back room where he had been drawing molasses for Farmer Higgins, found perched on top the sugar-barrel a chunky, red-haired, freckle-faced young girl whom he had never seen before. She seemed perfectly at home in his store and sat with her knees drawn up to her chin and her arms encircling her legs, eyeing soberly the two or three farmers who had come to the Crossing to "trade."

"If the head o' thet bar'l busts in, you'll be a fine mess," remarked Sol.

The girl nodded but did not move from her position. Sol waited on his customers, at times eyeing the strange girl curiously. When the farmers had gone with their purchases he approached the barrel and examined his visitor with speculative care.

"Want anything?"

"Spool o' red cotton, number thirty."

"Ain't got no red."

"Green'll do."

"Ain't got green. Only black an' white."

"All right."

"Want black or white?"

"No."

Sol leaned against the counter. He wasn't busy; the girl seemed in no hurry; it was a good time to gossip and find out all about the strange creature perched on his sugar-barrel.

"Where'd ye come from?" he inquired.

"City," tossing her head toward the north.

"What for?"

"To do sewing for the Hathaways folks. Mary Louise, you know."

Sol pricked up his ears. The Hathaways were newcomers, about whom little was known. He wanted to know more, and here was a girl who could give him inside information.

"Knowed the Hathaways in the city?"

"Kind o'. Sewed on Mary Louise's spring dresses. How long you been here?"

"Me? Why, I come here more'n twenty years ago. What does the Colonel do in the city?"

"Never asked him. Why do they call this place Cragg's Crossing?"

"I didn't name it. S'pose 'cause ol' Cragg used to own all the land, an' the roads crossed in the middle o' his farm."

“What Cragg was that?”

“Eh? Why, father to Ol’ Swallertail. Ever seen Ol’ Swallertail?”

“No.”

“Wal, he’s a sight fer sore eyes. First time anybody sees him they either laughs er chokes. The movin’-pictur’ folks would go crazy over him. Ever seen a movin’-pictur’?”

“Yes.”

“I did, too, when I was in the city las’ year. Ol’ Swallertail ‘minds me of ‘em. Goes ‘round dressed up like George Washington when he crossed the Delaware.”

“Crazy?”

“That way, yes; other ways, not a bit. Pretty foxy gent, is Ol’ Swallertail.”

“Why?”

Sol hesitated, reflecting. These questions were natural, in a stranger, but to explain old Hezekiah Cragg’s character was not a particularly easy task.

“In the fust place, he drives a hard bargain. Don’t spend money, but allus has it. Keeps busy, but keeps his business to himself.”

“What is his business?”

“Didn’t I say he kep’ it to himself?”

“But he owns all the land around here.”

“Not now. He owns jest a half-acre, so far’s anybody knows, with a little ol’ hut on it thet a respect’ble pig wouldn’t live in. It’s jes’ acrost the river from the place where you’re workin’.”

“Then what has become of his land?”

“It’s stayed jes’ where it allus was, I guess,” with a chuckle at his own wit, “but Ol’ Swaller-tail sold it, long ago. Ol’ Nick Cragg, his father afore him, sold a lot of it, they say, and when he died he left half his ready money an’ all his land to Hezekiah — thet’s Ol’ Swallertail — an’ the other half o’ his money to his second son, Peter.”

“Where is Peter?” asked the girl quickly.

“Went back to Ireland, years ago, and never’s be’n heard of since. The Craggs was Irish afore they got to be Americans, but it seems Pete hankered fer th’ Ol’ Sod an’ quit this country cold.”

“So the Craggs are Irish, eh?” mused the girl in a casual tone. And then she yawned, as if not greatly interested. But Sol was interested, so long as he was encouraged to talk.

“I be’n told, by some o’ the ol’ settlers,” he went on, “thet ol’ Nick Cragg were born in Ireland, was a policeman in New York — where he made his first money — an’ then come here an’ bought land an’ settled down. They ain’t much difference ‘tween a policeman an’ a farmer, I guess. If the story’s

true, it proves Ol' Swallertail has Irish blood in him yit, though fer that matter he's lived here long enough to be jes' American, like the rest of us. After he come inter the property he gradual-like sold off all the land, piece by piece, till he ain't got noth'n left but thet half-acre. Sold most of it afore I come here, an' I be'n at the Crossing more'n twenty year."

"If the land brought a fair price, Old Swallowtail ought to be rich," remarked the girl.

"Then he ain't what he orter be. Folks says he specilated, years ago, an' got stung. I know him pretty well — as well as anybody knows him — an' my opinion is he ain't got more'n enough to bury him decent."

"Thought you said he drives a hard bargain?"

"Young woman," said Sol earnestly, "the man don't live as kin make money specilatin'. The game's ag'in him, fust an' last, an' the more brains he's got the harder he'll git stung."

"But I thought you said Mr. Cragg has a business."

"An' I said nobody knows what it is. When Ned Joselyn used to come here the two was thick, an' Ned were a specilater through an' through. Some thinks it was him as got Cragg's wad, an' some says he lost it all, an' his wife's money, too. Anyhow, Joselyn lit out fer good an' when he were gone Ann Kenton cried like a baby an' ol' Swallertail 's been dumb as a clam ever since."

"What makes you think Cragg has a business?" persisted the girl.

"He keeps an office, over the store here, an' he has a sign on the door thet says 'Real Estate.' But he ain't got no real estate, so that ain't why he shuts himself in the office day after day — an' even Sundays. He's got some other business. Ev'ry night, afore he goes home, he takes a bunch o' letters to Mrs. Bennett's postoffice, an' ev'ry mornin' he goes there an' gits another bunch o' letters that's come to him in the mail. If that don't mean some sort o' business, I don't know what'n thunder it *does* mean."

"Nor I," said the girl, yawning again. "What about Ned Joselyn? Was he nice?"

"Dressed like a dandy, looked like a fool, acted like the Emp'ror o' Rooshy an' pleased ev'rybody by runnin' away. That is, ev'rybody but his wife an' Ol' Swallertail."

"I see. Who else lives over your store?"

"I live there myself; me an' my fambly, in the back part. One o' the front rooms I rents to Ol' Swallertail, an' he pays the rent reg'lar. The other front room Miss Huckins, the dressmaker, lives in."

"Oh. I'm a dressmaker, too. Guess I'll go up and see her. Is she in?"

"When she's out, she leaves the key with me, an' the key ain't here. Say,

girl, what's yer name?"

"Josie."

"Josie what?"

"Jessup. Pa was a drayman. Ever hear of him?"

"No. But about the Hathaways; what has — "

"And you've got no red thread? Or green?"

"Only black an' white. Does the Colonel — "

"Can't use black or white," said the girl, deliberately getting off the barrel. "Guess I'll go up and ask Miss Huckins if she has any red."

Out she walked, and old Sol rubbed his wrinkled forehead with a bewildered look and muttered:

"Drat the gal! She's pumped me dry an' didn't tell me a word about them Hathaway folks. She worse'n ol' Eben, the nigger help. Seems like nobody wants t' talk about the Hathaways, an' that means there's somethin' queer about 'em. But this red-headed sewin'-girl is a perfec' innercent an' I'll git her talkin' yet, if she stays here long."

Meantime Josie mounted the stairs, which were boarded in at one end of the building, being built on the outside to economize space, and entered the narrow upper hallway. A chatter of children's voices in the rear proclaimed that portion to be the quarters of the Jerrems family. Toward the front was a door on which, in dim letters, was the legend: "H. Cragg. Real Estate."

Here the girl paused to listen. No sound came from the interior of H. Cragg's apartment. Farther along she found a similar door on which was a card reading: "Miss Huckins, Dressmaker and Milliner." Listening again, she heard the sound of a flatiron thumping an ironing board.

She knocked, and the door was opened by a little middle-aged woman who held a hot flatiron in one hand. She was thin; she was bright-eyed; her hair was elaborately dressed with little ringlets across the forehead and around the ears, so Josie at once decided it was a wig.

Seeing a stranger before her, Miss Huckins looked her over carefully from head to foot, while Josie smiled a vacuous, inconsequent smile and said in a perfunctory way:

"Good morning."

"Come in," returned Miss Huckins, with affable civility. "I don't think I know you."

"I'm Josie Jessup, from the city. I'm in your line, Miss Huckins — in a way, that is. I've come here to do some sewing for Mary Louise Burrows, who is the granddaughter of Colonel Hathaway, who has rented the Kenton Place. Nice weather, isn't it?"

Miss Huckins was not enthusiastic. Her face fell. She had encouraged

sundry hopes that the rich little girl would employ her to do whatever sewing she might need. So she resumed the pressing of a new dress that was spread over her ironing-board and said rather shortly:

"Anything I can do for you?"

"I want to use some red thread and the storekeeper doesn't keep it in stock. Queer old man, that storekeeper, isn't he?"

"I don't call him queer. He's honest as the day is long and makes a good landlord. Country stores don't usually keep red thread, for it is seldom used."

"He has been talking to me about old Mr. Cragg, who has an office next door to you. I'm sure you'll admit that Mr. Cragg is queer, if the storekeeper isn't."

"A man like Mr. Cragg has the right to be queer," snapped the dressmaker, who did not relish this criticism of the natives by a perfect stranger. "He is very quiet and respectable and makes a very satisfactory neighbor."

Josie, seated in a straight, wood-bottomed chair, seemed not at all chagrined by her reception. She watched the pressing for a time silently.

"That's a mighty pretty gown," she presently remarked, in a tone of admiration. "I don't suppose I shall ever be able to make anything as nice as that. I — I'm not good at planning, you know," with modest self-deprecation. "I only do plain sewing and mending."

The stern features of Miss Huckins relaxed a bit. She glanced at the girl, then at her work, and said more pleasantly than she had before spoken:

"This dress is for Mary Donovan, who lives two miles north of here. She's to be married next Saturday — if they get the haying over with by that time — and this is part of her trousseau. I've made her two other dresses and trimmed two hats for her — a straw shape and a felt Gainsboro. The Donovans are pretty well-to-do."

Josie nodded with appreciation.

"It's nice she can get such elegant things so near home, isn't it? Why, she couldn't do as well in the city — not *half* as well!"

Miss Huckins held up the gown and gazed at it with unmistakable pride.

"

It's the best Henrietta," said she, "and I'm to get six dollars for the making. I wanted seven, at first, and Mary only wanted to pay five, so we split the difference. With all the other things, I didn't do so badly on this trousseau."

"You're in luck," declared Josie, "and so is Mary Donovan. Doesn't Mr. Cragg do any business except real estate?"

"I think he must," replied the dressmaker, hanging up the gown and then

seating herself opposite her visitor. “All the real estate business he’s done in the last two years was to rent the Kenton Place to Colonel Hathaway and make a sale of Higgins’ cow pasture to Sam Marvin. But he’s so quiet, all day, in the next room, that I can’t figure out what he’s up to. No one goes near him, so I can’t overhear any talk. One time, of course, Mr. Joselyn used to go there, and then they always whispered, as if they were up to some deviltry. But after the quarrel Joselyn never came here again.”

“Oh, did they quarrel?” asked Josie, with languid interest. She knew her praise of the dress had won the dressmaker’s heart and also she was delighted to find Miss Huckins a more confirmed and eager gossip than even Sol Jerrems.

“I should say they did quarrel!” was the emphatic reply, although she sank her voice to a whisper and glanced warningly at the thin partition. “At one time I thought there’d be murder done, for Joselyn yelled: ‘Take that away — take it away!’ and Old Swallowtail — that’s the name we call Mr. Cragg, you know — roared out: ‘You deserve to die for this cowardly act.’ Well, you’d better believe my hair stood on end for a minute,” Josie smiled as she thought of the wig standing on end, “but nothing happened. There was deep silence. Then the door opened and Mr. Joselyn walked out. I never interfere with other people’s business, but attend strictly to my own, yet that day I was so flustered that I peeked through a crack of my door at Mr. Joselyn and he seemed cool as a cucumber. Then Mr. Cragg slammed the door of his room — which is z very unusual thing for him to do — and that was all.”

“When did this happen?” asked Josie.

“Last fall, just before Mrs. Joselyn and her husband went back to their city home. Some time in the winter Mr. Joselyn ran away from her, they say, but I guess old Cragg had nothing do with that. Around here, Joselyn wasn’t liked. He put on too many airs of superiority to

p

lease the country folks. Sol Jerrems thinks he made away with Mr. Cragg’s money, in unwise speculations, but I don’t believe Cragg had any money to lose. He seems as poor as I am.”

“What do you suppose drew those two men together, Miss Huckins?” inquired the girl.

“I can’t say. I’ve tried to figure it out, but the truth is that old Cragg don’t confide in anyone — not even in me, and we’re close neighbors. You couldn’t find two men in all America more different than Joselyn and Cragg, and yet they had dealings of some sort together and were friendly, for a time.”

Josie sighed regretfully.

“I like to hear about these mysterious things,” said she. “It’s almost as good as reading a story. Only, in this case, we will never know how the story ends.”

“Well, perhaps not,” admitted the dressmaker. “Joselyn is gone and no one’ll ever get the truth out of Cragg. But — I’d like to know, myself, not only how the story ends but what it was all about. Just now all we know is that there *was* a story, of some sort or other, and perhaps is yet.”

A period of silence, while both mused.

“I don’t suppose you could find a bit of red thread?” said Josie.

“No, I haven’t used it for ages. Is it to mend with?”

“Yes.”

“If it’s a red dress, use black thread. It won’t show, if you’re careful; and it won’t fade away and leave a white streak, like red sometimes does.”

“Thank you, Miss Huckins.” She rose to go. “I’d like to drop in again, sometime, for a little visit.”

“Come as often as you like,” was the cordial reply.

“Cragg’s Crossing people are rather interesting; they’re so different from city folks,” said Josie.

“Yes, they really are, and I know most of them pretty well. Come in again, Josie.”

“Thank you; I will.”

CHAPTER IX

JOSIE INVESTIGATES

"Well, what luck?" asked Mary Louise, as she came into Josie's room while her friend was dressing for dinner.

"Not much," was the reply. "I'm not at all sure, Mary Louise, that this chase will amount to anything. But it will afford me practice in judging human nature, if nothing else comes of it, so I'm not at all sorry you put me on the trail. When are we to see Ingua again?"

"To-morrow afternoon. She's coming to tea in the pavilion."

"That's good. Let me see all of her you can. She's an original, that child, and I'm going to like her. Our natures are a good deal alike."

"Oh, Josie!"

"That's a fact. We're both proud, resentful, reckless and affectionate. We hate our enemies and love our friends. We're rebellious, at times, and not afraid to defy the world."

"I'm sure you are not like that, dear," protested Mary Louise.

"I am. Ingua and I are both children of nature. The only difference is that I am older and have been taught diplomacy and self-control, which she still lacks. I mask my feelings, while Ingua frankly displays hers. That's why I am attracted to her."

Mary Louise did not know how to combat this mood. She remained silent until Josie was dressed and the two went down to dinner. Their visitor was no longer the type of a half ignorant, half shrewd sewing-girl, such as she had appeared to be while in the village. Her auburn hair was now tastefully arranged and her attire modest and neat. She talked entertainingly during dinner, enlivening her companions thereby, and afterward played a game of dominoes with the Colonel in the living-room, permitting him to beat her at this, his favorite diversion.

Both the old gentleman and his granddaughter enjoyed their evenings with Josie O'Gorman, for she proved delightful company. In the mornings, however, she would don her cheap gingham, rumple her hair, and pose throughout the day as Josie Jessup the sewing-girl.

Ingua, at first shy of the visitor, soon developed a strong liking for Josie and would talk with her more freely than with Mary Louise. Josie would skip across the stepping-stones and help Ingua wash the breakfast dishes and sweep the bare little rooms of the cottage and then together they would feed the chickens, gather the eggs and attend to such daily tasks as Ingua was obliged to fulfill. With Josie's help this was soon accomplished and then the child was free for the day and could run across to join Mary Louise, while

Josie sallied to the village to interview the natives.

When the girl detective had been at Cragg's Crossing for a week she was a familiar figure to the villagers — every one of whom was an acquaintance — and had gleaned all the information it was possible to secure from them, which was small in amount and unsatisfactory in quality. Two or three times she had passed Old Swallowtail on the street, but he had not seemed to notice her. Always the old man stared straight ahead, walking stiffly and with a certain repellent dignity that forbade his neighbors to address him. He seemed to see no one. He lived in a world known only to himself and neither demanded nor desired association with his fellows.

"An eccentric; bigoted, sullen and conceited," reflected Josie, in considering his character. "Capable of any cruelty or crime, but too cautious to render himself liable to legal punishment. The chances are that such a man would never do any great wrong, from cowardly motives. He might starve and threaten a child, indeed, but would refrain from injuring one able to resent the act. Nevertheless, he quarreled with Joselyn — and Joselyn disappeared. There was some reason for that quarrel; some reason for that disappearance; some reason why a man like Edward Joselyn made Old Swallowtail his confidential friend. A business connection, perhaps. Before daring a conjecture I must discover what business Cragg is engaged in."

She soon discovered that Ingua was as ignorant of her grandfather's business life as were all others. One day, as the two girls were crossing the stepping-stones to reach the pavilion, after "doing" the morning housework, Josie remarked:

"In winter one could cross here on the ice."

"Oh, no," replied Ingua, "the water don't freeze. It runs too fast. But sometimes it gits over the top o' the stones, an' then you has to step keerful to keep from fallin' in."

"Did you ever try to cross at such a time?"

"

Once I did, an' I was skeered, you kin bet. But I says to myself: 'If Ol' Swallertail kin make the crossin', I kin — dark or no dark — an' by cracky I tackled it brave as a lion."

"You tried to cross in the dark, on a winter's night? What for, Ingua?"

Ingua, walking beside her up the bank, paused with a startled expression and grew red. Her eyes, narrowed and shrewd, fixed themselves suspiciously on Josie's face. But the other returned the look with a bland smile that surely ought to disarm one more sophisticated than this simple child.

"I mustn't talk 'bout that," said Ingua in a low voice. "Jes' fergit as I said it, Josie."

“Why?”

“Do ye want me choked, or killed?”

“Who would do that?”

“Gran’dad would, if I blabbed.”

“Shucks!”

“Ye don’t know Gran’dad — not when he’s got the temper on him. If ye’d seen what I seen, ye’d know that he’d keep his word — ’to, kill me if I talk too much.”

Josie sat down on top the bank.

“What did you see, Ingua?”

“Ye’ll hev to guess it.”

“It looks that way,” said Josie calmly; “but you needn’t be afraid of *me,* Ingua. You and I could know a lot of things, together, and keep ‘em to ourselves. Don’t you think I’m a good enough friend not to get you choked or killed by telling any secrets you confided to me? And — look here, Ingua — this secret is worrying you a good deal.”

“Who says so?”

“I do. You’d feel a heap better if you told me about it, for then we could talk it over together when we’re alone.”

Ingua sat down beside her, gazing thoughtfully at the river.

“You’d tell Mary Louise.”

“You know better than that. A secret’s a secret, isn’t it? I guess I can keep my mouth shut when I want to, Ingua.”

Josie had a way of imitating Ingua’s mode of speech when they were together. It rendered their intercourse more free and friendly. But the girl did not reply at once. She sat dreamily reflecting upon the proposition and its possible consequences. Finally she said in a hesitating way:

“I wisht I knew what ter do. I sometimes think I orter tell somebody that knows more’n I do, Josie, if I ever blab at all.”

“Try me, Ingua. I’m pretty smart, ‘cause I’ve seen more of the big world than you have, and know what goes on in the big, busy cities, Where life is different from what it is in this little place. I’ve lived in more than one city, too, and that means a lot of experience for a girl of my age. I’m sure I could help you, dear. Perhaps, when I’ve heard your story, I will tell you never to say anything about it to anyone else; and then, on the other hand, I might think differently. Anyhow, I’d never tell, myself, any secret of yours, whatever I might think, because I’d cut off my right hand rather than get you into trouble.”

This dramatic speech was intended to appeal to the child’s imagination and win her full confidence. In a way, it succeeded. Ingua sidled closer to

Josie and finally said in a trembling whisper:

"Ye wouldn't git Gran'dad inter trouble either, would ye?"

"Do you like him, Ingua?"

"I hate him! But he's a Cragg, an' I'm a Cragg, an' the Craggs kin stand up an' spit at the world, if they wants to."

"That's right," agreed Josie, emphatically. "We've got to stick up for our own families and fight for our good name when it's necessary. Do you think I'd let anybody get the best of a Jessup? Never in a thousand years!"

Ingua nodded her head as if pleased.

"That's the way I look at it, Josie. Ev'rybody's down on Ol' Swallertail, an' I'm down on him myself, fer that matter; but I'll dare anybody to say anything ag'in him when I'm aroun'. An' yet, Josie — an' yet — I ain't sure but he's — but he's a *murderer!"*

She had dropped her voice until she scarcely breathed the last words and her little body trembled through and through with tense nervousness. Josie took her hand.

"Never mind, dear," she said gently. "Perhaps he didn't kill Ned Joselyn, after all."

Ingua sprang up with a hoarse scream and glared at Josie in absolute terror.

"How'd ye know? How'd ye know it were Ned Joselyn?" she demanded, trembling more and more.

Josie's reply was a smile. Josie's smile was essentially winning and sweet. It was reassuring, trustful, friendly.

"This isn't a very big place, Ingua," she quietly remarked. "I can count the people of Cragg's Crossing on my fingers and toes, and the only one who has ever disappeared is Ned Joselyn. Why, you've told me so yourself. Your grandfather and Joselyn were friends. Then they quarreled. Afterward Joselyn disappeared."

"Who said they quarreled?"

"Miss Huckins told me. It was in the office, next door to where she lives and works."

"Oh," with a sigh of relief. "But Ned Joselyn run away. Ev'rybody knows that."

"Everybody but you, dear. Sit down. Why do you get so nervous? Really, Ingua, after you've told me the whole story you'll feel better. It's too big a secret for one small body to hold, isn't it? And just between ourselves we will talk it all over — many times — and then it won't seem so dreadful to you. And, after all, you're not positive your grandfather killed Ned Joselyn. Perhaps he didn't. But you're afraid he did, and that keeps you unstrung and

unhappy. Who knows but I may be able to help you discover the truth? Sit down, Ingua, and let's talk it all over."

CHAPTER X

INGUA IS CONFIDENTIAL

Ingua slowly resumed her seat on the bank beside her friend. It was hard to resist Josie's appeals.

"The whole thing looks pretty black ag'in Gran'dad," she said. "I s'pose ye can't understand what I mean till I tell ye the whole story, from the beginning 'cause ye didn't live here at the time. If ye lived here," she added, "I wouldn't tell ye anything, but by-'n'-by yer goin' away. An' ye've promised to keep yer mouth shut."

"Unless you give me permission to speak."

"I ain't likely to do that. I'm tellin' ye this, Josie, so's we kin talk it over, at times. It has got hold o' my mind, somethin' terrible. Once I was goin' to tell Mary Louise, but — she couldn't understand it like you kin. She's — diff'rent. And if Gran'dad ever hears that I blabbed I'm as good as dead, an' I know it!"

"He won't hear it from me," promised Josie.

"Well, Gran'dad was allus sly. I 'member Marm tellin' him to his face he were cold as ice an' sly as sin. Mann had a way o' sayin' what she thought o' him, an' he'd jes' look at her steady an' say nuth'n back. She was allus tryin' to git money out o' him, Marm was, an' when he said he didn't hev no money she tol' him she knew he did. She ransacked the whole house — an' even tore up the floor-boards — tryin' to find where he'd hid it. Her idee was that if he'd sold his land for a lot o' money, an' hadn't spent a cent, he must hev it yit. But I guess Marm didn't find no money, an' so she lit out. The day she lit out she said to him that he was too slick for her, but she could take care o' herself. All she wanted was for him to take care o' me. Gran'dad said he would; an' so he did. He didn't take any too much care o' me, an' I'd ruther he wouldn't. If I had more to eat, I wouldn't kick, but since Mary Louise come here an' invited me to tea so often I hain't be'n hungry a bit."

"Mary Louise likes company," said Josie. "Go on, dear."

"Well, after Ann Kenton got married, her new husban' come here, which was Ned Joselyn. I never took a fancy to Ann. She wasn't 'specially uppish, but she wasn't noth'n else, either. Ned made me laugh when I first seen him. He had one spectacle in one eye, with a string to ketch it if it fell off. He had striped clothes an' shiny shoes an' he walked as keerful as if he was afraid the groun' would git the bottoms o' them nice shoes dirty. He used to set in that summer-house an' smoke cigarettes an' read books. One day he noticed Ol' Swallertail, an' looked so hard at him that his one-eyed spectacle fell off a dozen times.

“That night he sent a letter to Gran’dad an’ Gran’dad read it an’ tore it up an’ told the man that brung it there was no answer. That’s all I knew till one night they come walkin’ home together, chummy as a team o’ mules. When they come to the bridge they shook hands an’ Ol’ Swallertail come to the house with a grin on his face — the first an’ last grin I ever seen him have.”

“Doesn’t he ever laugh?” asked Josie.

“If he does, he laughs when no one is lookin’. But after that day I seen Ned Joselyn with Gran’dad a good deal. Sometimes he’d come to our house an’ wait fer Ol’ Swallertail to come home, an’ they’d send me away an’ tell me not to come back till I was called. That made me mighty curious to see what they was up to, so one day I crep’ up behind the house an’ peeked in the winder. They wasn’t in the kitchen, so I went aroun’ an’ peeked through the winder o’ Gran’dad’s room, an’ there they both sot, an’ Gran’dad was countin’ out money on the table. It must ‘a’ be’n gold money, ‘cause it was yaller an’ bigger ner cents er nickels. Ned put it all in his pocket, an’ writ somethin’ on a paper that Gran’dad put inter his big pocketbook. Then they both got up an’ I made a run fer it an’ hid behind the barn.”

“When did that happen?” asked Josie.

“The first summer Ann was married. That was three summers ago, countin’ this one. I was only a kid, then,” said Ingua, as if realizing she was now two years older.

“And after that?” said Josie.

“Las’ summer it was jes’ the same. The two was thicker’n gumdrops, only Ned didn’t go to the office no more. He allus came to our house instid. One day, when he was waitin’ fer Ol’ Swallertail, he says to me: ‘Ingua, how’d ye like to be rollin’ in money, an’ Jive in a big city, an’ hev yer own automobile to ride in, an’ dress like a queen?’

“‘I’d like it,’ says I.

“‘Well,’ says he,’ it’s boun’ to happen, if Ol’ Swallertail sticks to me an’ does what I say. He’s got the capital,’ says Ned, ‘an’ I got the brains; an’ atween the two of us, Ingua,’ says Ned, ‘we’ll corral half the money there is in America.’

“‘Will he stick?’ says I.

“‘I dunno,’ says Ned. ‘He’s got queer ideas ‘bout duty an’ honesty that ain’t pop’lar these days in business. But I’m gitt’n so now thet I kin lead him by the nose, an’ I’ll force him to waller in money afore I’ve done with him.’

“‘I don’t see how that’ll make me rollin’ in money, anyhow,’ I told him.

“‘The ol’ man’ll die, pretty soon,’ says Ned, ‘an’ then you’ll git the money I make for him. By the time yer growed up, if not afore,’ says he, ‘you may be the riches’ girl in the world. It all depends on how I kin bend

that ol' stick of a gran'dad o' yourn.'

"That was the day he gimme the dollar, an' Gran'dad come in in time to see it, an' took it away from me. It didn't set me up any, that talk o' Ned's, 'cause I didn't believe in them brains he bragged on, or his bein' able to lead Ol' Swallertail by the nose. Gran'dad begun gittin' kind o' harsh with Ned, afore the summer was over, which showed he wasn't bendin' much, and at the last — just afore Ned went away — the big quarrel come off. It wasn't the quarrel Miss Huckins knows about, but it happened right here. They'd sent me away from the house, like they always did, and I were layin' in the clover in the back yard, when there was a crash an' a yell. I jumped up an' run to the door, an' the table was tipped over an' a lot o' papers an' money scattered on the floor, an' behind the table stood Ol' Swallertail, white an' still, an' Ned point'n' a gun at him."

"What sort of a gun?" questioned Josie.

"One o' them hip-pocket sort. Same as Jim Bennett the mailman carries. Only Jim's ain't never loaded, 'cause he's afraid of it. I ain't sure Ned's was loaded, either, for when he seen me in the doorway he jes' slipped it in his pocket.

"' Very well,' says Gran'dad, 'I knows now what sort o' a man you are, Ned Joselyn.' An' Ned he answers back: 'An' I know what sort o' a man *you* are, ol' Cragg. Yer a hypercrit through an' through; ye preach squareness while yer as crooked as a snake, an' as p'isonous an' deadly, an' ye'd ruin yer bes' friend jes' to git a copper cent the best o' him.'

"Gran'dad leaned over an' set the table on its legs ag'in. An' then he says slow an' cold: 'But I hain't offered to murder you; *not yet,* Ned Joselyn!'

"Ned looked at him an' kinder shivered. An' Gran'dad said: 'Pick up them papers an' things, Ingua.'

"So I picked 'em up an' put 'em on the table an' they sent me away ag'in. I laid in the clover a whole hour, feelin' pretty nervous an' rocky, fer I didn't know what was goin' to happen. Noth'n' did happen, though, 'cept that Ned crossed the river on the steppin'-stones an' halfway over he turned an' laughed an' waved his hand at Gran'dad, who stood in the door an' watched him go. But Gran'dad didn't laugh. He says to me when I come in:

"'Ingua, if ever I'm found dead, you go to Dud Berkey, the constable, an' tell him to arrest Ned Joselyn for murder. D'ye understan'?'

"'I sure do,' says I. 'Guess he'd 'a' shot ye, Gran'dad, if I hadn't come in just when I did.'

"'An' see here,' he went on, 'unless I'm foun' dead, you keep mum 'bout what ye seen to-day. If ye blab a word to anyone, ye'll git me in trouble, an' I'll crush ye as willin' as I'd swat a fly. Me an' Ned is friends ag'in,' says he,

‘but I don’t trust him.’

“‘Does he trust you?’ I asked him; an’ at first he jus’ looked at me an’ scowled; but after a minute he answered: ‘I don’t know how wise the man is. P’r’aps he isn’t a fool; but even wise men is foolish sometimes.’

“Well, Josie, that was all, just then. Ned went with his wife Ann to the city, nex’ day, an’ things here went on as usual. Only, Gran’dad begun to git wakeful nights, an’ couldn’t sleep. He’d git up an’ dress an’ go outdoors an’ walk aroun’ till mornin’. He didn’t say noth’n’ to *me* about it, but I watched him, an’ one mornin’ when he come in I says: ‘Why don’t ye git some medicine o’ Doc Jenkins to make ye sleep?’ Then he busts out an’ grabs me by the throat an’ near choked the life out or me.

“‘Ye spy — ye dirty little spy!’ says he, ‘ye keep yer eyes shut an’ yer mouth shut, or I’ll skin-ye alive!’ says he.

“The way he looked at me, I was skeered stiff, an’ I never said noth’n’ more ‘bout his sleepin’ nights. I guess what made him mad was my sayin’ he orter hev a doctor, ‘cause doctors cost money an’ Gran’dad’s so poor he hates t’ spend money unnecessary.”

“Did he ever again try to choke you?”

“He tried once more, but I was too spry for him. It was a winter night, when it was cold in his room an’ he come inter the kitchen, where there was a fire, to write. I sot behind the stove, tryin’ to keep warm, an’ after a time I seen him look up an’ glare at the bare wall a long time. By-’n’-by he says in a low voice: ‘Fer the Cause!’ an’ starts writin’ ag’in. ‘What cause are ye talkin’ about, Gran’dad?’ says I.

“I guess he’d fergot I was there, but now he gives a yell an’ jumps up an’ comes for me with his fingers twistin’ and workin’ like I’d seen ‘em afore. I didn’t wait fer him to git near me, you kin bet; I made a dive out the back door an’ stood aroun’ in the cold tryin’ to keep warm while I give him time to cool off where the fire was. When he was writin’ ag’in I sneaked in an’ he didn’t notice me. When Marm was here she used to josh him about the ‘Cause,’ an’ once I heard her tell him she guessed the Cause was hoardin’ his money so’s to starve his family. Marm wasn’t afraid of him, but I am, so I never whisper the word ‘Cause’ while he’s around.”

Josie sat in silent reflection for a time. Then she asked softly:

“Does he still walk at night, Ingua?”

“Sometimes. Not so much as he once did, though. He seems to take streaks o’ bein’ wakeful,” explained the girl.

“Have you ever seen him come out, or go in?”

“Lots o’ times. When it’s moonlight I kin see him through my window, an’ he can’t see me ‘cause my room is dark.”

“And does he carry anything with him?”

“Not a thing. He jes’ goes out like he does daytimes, an’ comes back the same way.”

Josie nodded her tousled red head, as if the answers pleased her.

“He’s a very clever man, your grandfather,” she remarked. “He can fool not only his neighbors, but his own family. But you’ve more to tell me, Ingua.”

“How d’ye know, Josie?”

“Because all this is just the beginning. It is something else that has been worrying you, dear.”

CHAPTER XI

THE FATE OF NED JOSELYN

The child stared dreamily at the rushing water for several minutes. Then she looked earnestly into Josie's face. Finally, with a sigh, she said:

"I may as well go on an' finish it, I s'pose."

"To be sure," said Josie. "You haven't told me anything very important yet."

"The important part's comin'," asserted Ingua, her tone gradually assuming its former animation. "'Twas last winter on the Thursday between Christmas an' New Year's. It was cold an' snowin' hard, an' it gits dark early them days. Gran'dad an' me was eat'n' supper by lamplight when there come a knock at the door. I jumped up an' opened it an' there stood Ned Joselyn, in a big heavy coat that was loaded with snow, an' kid gloves on, an' his one-eyed spectacle on his face. He come in an' stood while I shut the door, an' Gran'dad glared at him like he does when the devils gits him, and said: 'What — more?'

"'Sure thing,' says Ned. 'Noth'n' lasts forever.'

"'That's true,' says Gran'dad, holdin' himself in. Then he looks at me, an' back to Ned, an' says: 'I can't see ye here. Where ye stoppin'? At the Kenton house?'

"'Jes' fer to-night,' says Ned. 'It's more private than a hotel.'

"'Go home, then,' says Gran'dad. 'I'll come over, by-'n'-by.'

"Ned opened the door an' went out, sayin' noth'n' more. Gran'dad finished his supper an' then sot by the stove an' smoked his pipe while I washed the dishes. I wondered why he didn't go over an' see Ned, but he sot there an' smoked till I went upstairs to bed. That was queer, for I never knew him to smoke more'n one pipe o' tobacco at a time, before, an' then mostly on Sundays. And I'd never seen his face so hard an' cruel-lookin' as it were that night, and his eyes, seemed like they were made of glass. I didn't undress, fer I knowed there'd be trouble if he went over to Ned's house, and I made up my mind to keep watch o' things.

"So I set still in my room in the attic, an' Gran'dad set still in the room downstairs, an' it must 'a' be'n pretty late when I heard him get up an' go out. I slipped down right after him, meanin' to foller him, an' let myself out the back door so's he wouldn't see me. It had stopped snowin' by then, but it was so cold that the air cut like a knife and the only jacket I had wasn't any too warm fer such weather.

"When I got 'round the house Ol' Swallertail was standin' on the bank, lookin' at the river. I never knew nobody to try the steppin'-stones in winter,

an' I s'posed o' course Gran'dad would take the path to the bridge; but he went down the bank, wadin' through the snow, an' started to cross over. The moon an' the snow made it light enough to see easy, after you'd be'n out a few minutes. I watched him cross over an' climb the bank an' make for the house, an' then I run down to the river myself.

"The water covered all the stones, but I knew where they were as well as Gran'dad did. I didn't like my job a bit, but I knew if I waited to go roun' by the bridge that I'd be too late to see anything that happened. So I screwed up courage an' started over. My legs ain't as long as a grown-up's and at the third step I missed the stone an' soused one leg in the water up to my knee. Gee! that was a cold one. But I wouldn't give up, an' kep' on until jus' in the middle, where the water were roarin' the worst, I slipped with both legs and went in to my waist. That settled it for me. I thought I'd drown, for a minute, but I went crazy with fear an' the next thing I knew I was standin' on the bank where I'd come from an' the cold wind was freezin' a sheet of ice on my legs an' body.

"There wasn't no time to lose. Whatever was happenin' over to the big house didn't mean as much to me as death did, an' death was on my track if I didn't get back home afore I froze stiff. I started to run. It ain't far — look there, Josie, ye could almost make it in three jumps — but I remember fallin' down half a dozen times in the snow, an' at the last I crawled to the door on my hands an' knees an' had jus' strength enough to rise up an' lift the latch.

"Gran'dad's awful stingy about burnin' wood, but I threw the chunks into the stove till the old thing roared like a furnace an' when I'd thawed out some I got off my shoes an' stockin's an' my wet dress an' put another skirt on. Then I lay in Gran'dad's chair afore the fire an' shivered an' cried like a baby whenever I thought o' that icy river.

"I guess I must 'a' went to sleep, afterwards, fer when I woke up the fire was gett'n' low an' Ol' Swallertail opened the door on a sudden an' walked in. Josie, ye orter seen him! His legs was wet an' icy, too, so he must 'a' slipped on the stones himself; an' he was shakin' all over as if he'd got the ague. His face was a dirty white an' his eyes burnt like two coals. He threw on more wood, reckless-like, an' jerked off his shoes an' socks an' set down t'other side the stove. Neither of us said noth'n' fer awhile an' then he looks at me sort o' curious an' asks:

"'Did ye git across, Ingua?'

"'No,' says I. 'I near got drowned, tryin' it.'

"Then he set silent ag'in, lookin' at the fire. By-'n'-by says he: 'Ingua, yer old enough to hev sense, an' I want ye to think keerful on what I'm goin' ter say. Folks aroun' here don't like you an' me very much, an' if they got a

chance — or even thought they had a chance — they'd crush us under heel like they would scorpions. That's 'cause we're Craggs, for Craggs ain't never be'n poplar in this neighborhood, for some reason. Now lis'n. I've done with Ned Joselyn. It ain't nay fault as I've cast him off; it's his'n. He's got a bad heart an' he's robbed me right an' left. I could fergive him fer that, because — well, ye don't need to know why I clung to the feller when I knew he was a scoundrel. But he robbed a cause dearer to my heart than myself, an' for that I couldn't fergive him. Nobody knows Ned were here to-night, Ingua, so if anybody asks ye questions ye didn't see him at all. Fix that firm in yer mind. Ye don't know noth'n' 'bout Ned sence he went away las' October. Ye hain't seen him. Stick to that, girl, an' yer all right; but if ye blab — if ye ever tell a soul as Ned were here — I'll hev to kill yer myself, to stop yer mouth. Fix that in yer mind, too.'

"I was so skeered that I jes' looked at him. Then I says in a whisper: 'What did ye do to Ned, Gran'dad?'

"He turned his eyes on me so fierce that I dropped my head.

"'I didn't kill him, if that's what ye mean,' says he. 'I orter strangled him, but I didn't want to swing fer no common thief like Ned Joselyn. Besides, he's — but that's none o' yer business. So I threatened him, an' that was jus' as good as killin'. He won't show up ag'in here, never; an' he ain't likely to show up anywheres else that he's known. P'raps he'll be hunted for, but he'll keep out a' the way. You an' I ain't got noth'n' to worry about, Ingua — unless you blab.'

"I didn't believe a word he said, Josie. They was jus' words, an' it was nat'ral he'd lie about that night's work. When I went to bed it was near mornin', but Ol' Swallertail was still sett'n' by the fire.

"Nex' day he went on jus' as usual, an' from then till now he's never spoke to me of that night. In a couple o' weeks we heard as Ned Joselyn had run away. His wife come down here askin' fer him, but nobody'd seen hide ner hair of him. That's all, Josie; that's the whole story, an' I'm glad you know it now as well as I do. Wha' d'ye think? Did Ol' Swallertail kill Ned Joselyn?"

Josie woke from her meditation with a start.

"I — I'm going to think it over," she said evasively. "It's a queer story, Ingua — mighty queer — and it's going to take a lot of thought before I make up my mind about it."

CHAPTER XII

THEORIES ARE DANGEROUS

"What were you and Ingua talking about for so long?" asked Mary Louise, when she and Josie were alone.

"She was telling me her story," was the reply.

"All of it?"

"Every bit of it, I think."

"Oh, what was it all about?" questioned Mary Louise eagerly.

"I've promised not to tell."

"Not even me, Josie?"

"Not even you. Ingua insisted; and, really, dear, it's better you should know nothing just at present."

"Am I to be left out of all this thrilling mystery?" demanded Mary Louise with an aggrieved air.

"There won't be a thrill in it, until the end, and perhaps not then. But you shall come in at the finish, if not before; I'll promise that."

"Won't this enforced promise to Ingua tie your hands?" queried the other girl, thoughtfully.

"No. I didn't promise not to act, but only to keep the child's secret. For Ingua's sake, as well as to satisfy your curiosity — and my own — I'm going to delve to the bottom of Ned Joselyn's disappearance. That will involve the attempt to discover all about Old Swallowtail, who is a mystery all by himself. I shall call on you to help me, at times, Mary Louise, but you're not to be told what is weighing so heavily on poor Ingua's mind."

"Well," said Mary Louise, "if I may help, that will serve to relieve my disappointment to an extent. But I'm surprised at Ingua. I thought she loved and trusted me."

"So she does," asserted Josie. "Since I've heard the story, I'm not surprised at Ingua at all. If you knew all, my dear, you would realize why she believes that one confidant is enough. Indeed, I'm rather surprised that Ingua ventured to confide in me."

"Is it so serious, then?"

"If her fears are justified," replied Josie gravely, "it is *very* serious."

"But *are* they justified?" urged Mary Louise.

"Ingua is a child, and very sensitive to impressions. But she is a shrewd child and, living a lonely life, has had ample time to consider the problems that confront her. Whether she is right or wrong in her conjectures, time will determine. But don't question me further, please, or you will embarrass me. To-morrow I want to go to the city, which is the county seat. Will you go

with me? And can we get Uncle Eben to drive us over in the car?"

"I'll ask Gran'pa Jim."

Colonel Hathaway was rather amused at the efforts of the two girls to fathom the mystery of Old Swallowtail, but he was willing to assist in any practical way. So Uncle Eben drove them to the county seat next day and Josie spent several hours in the county clerk's office and paid a visit to the chief of police, who knew her father, John O'Gorman, by reputation. Mary Louise shopped leisurely while her friend was busy with her investigations and at last they started for home, where they arrived in time for dinner. On the way, Mary Louise inquired if Josie had secured any information of importance.

"A little," said the girl detective. "For one thing, old Hezekiah Cragg pays taxes on just one bit of land besides that little homestead of his. It is a five-acre tract, but the assessment puts it at an astonishingly low valuation — scarcely ten per cent of the value of all surrounding property. That strikes me as queer. I've got the plat of it and to-morrow we will look it up."

They found it was not easy to locate that five acres, even with a map, when the two girls made the attempt the next forenoon. But finally, at the end of a lonely lane about a mile and a half from the village, they came upon a stony tract hemmed in by low hills, which seemed to fit the location described. The place was one mass of tumbled rocks. Little herbiage of any sort grew there and its low assessment value was easily explained. The surrounding farms, all highly cultivated, backed up to the little waste valley, which was fenced out — or rather in — by the owners of the fertile lands. One faintly trodden path led from the bars of the lane the girls were in toward Mr. Cragg's five acres of stones, but amid the jumble of rocks it would be difficult to walk at all.

"This is an odd freak of nature," remarked Josie, gazing at the waste with a puzzled expression. "It is easy to understand why Mr. Cragg hasn't sold this lot, as he did all his other land. No one would buy it."

"Haven't the stones a value, for building or something?" asked Mary Louise.

"Not in this location, so far from a railway. In my judgment the tract is absolutely worthless. I wonder that so economical a man as Mr. Cragg pays taxes on it."

They went no farther than the edge of the rock-strewn field, for there was nothing more to see. Up the slope of the hill, on the far side from where they stood, were jumbled masses of huge slabs and boulders that might be picturesque but were not especially interesting. The girls turned and retraced their steps to the neglected lane and from thence reached the main road

again.

"I have now satisfied myself on two counts," was Josie's comment. "First, that Mr. Cragg owns no property but this stone-yard and his little home, and second, that within the last forty years he has at different times disposed of seventy thousand dollars worth of land left him by his father. The county records prove that. The last sale was made about four years ago, so he has consistently turned all his real estate into ready money."

"What can he have done with so much money?" exclaimed Mary Louise.

"Ah, that is part of the mystery, my dear. If he still has it, then the man is a miser. If he has lost it, he is a gambler, which is just about as bad. Either way, Hezekiah Cragg is not entitled to our admiration, to say the least. Let us admit that in a big city a man might lose seventy thousand dollars in business ventures without exciting adverse criticism except for a lack of judgment; but Old Swallowtail has never left Cragg's Crossing, according to all reports, and I'm sure there is no way for him to squander a fortune here."

"I think he must be a miser," said Mary Louise with conviction. "Ingua once told me of seeing lots of money pass between him and Mr. Joselyn. And — tell me, Josie — what is all his voluminous correspondence about?"

"I'm going to investigate that presently," replied her friend. "It isn't quite in line yet but will come pretty soon. To-morrow I shall call upon Old Swallowtail at his office."

"Shall you, really? And may I go with, you, Josie?"

"Not this time. You'd spoil my excuse, you see, for you are going to discharge your sewing-girl, and your sewing-girl is going to apply to Hezekiah Cragg for work. His granddaughter needs some sewing done, by the looks of her wardrobe."

"Oh. Very well. But you will tell me what happens?"

"Of course."

"Once," said Mary Louise, "I proposed going myself to Mr. Cragg, to intercede for Ingua, but the girl thought I would do more harm than good. So I abandoned the idea."

"I think that was wise. I don't expect to get much out of the man except an interview, with a chance to study him at close range. Also I'm anxious to see what that mysterious office looks like."

Mary Louise regarded her friend admiringly.

"You're very brave, Josie," she said.

"Pooh! There's no danger. One of the first things father taught me about the detective business was that all men belong to one tribe, and the criminal is inevitably a coward at heart. Old Swallowtail may be afraid of *me,* before I'm through with this case, but whether he proves guilty or innocent I shall

never fear him a particle.”

“Have you any theory, as yet, Josie?”

“No. Theories are dangerous things and never should be indulged in until backed by facts.”

“But do not theories often lead to facts? And how about those ‘O’Gorman theories’ you mentioned, which you were eager to test?”

“Those are mere theories of investigation — methods to be pursued in certain situations. I believe I shall be able to test some of them in this case. My plan is to find out all I can about everyone and everything, and then marshal my facts against the question involved. If there is no answer, I’ve got to learn more. If I can’t learn more, then the whole thing becomes mere guesswork — in other words, theory — more likely to be wrong than right.”

Mary Louise seldom argued with Josie’s decisions. When, the next morning, her friend started for the village to call upon Old Swallowtail, she pressed her hand and wished her good luck. Josie departed in her plain gingham dress, shoes run over at the heels, hair untidy and uncovered by hat or hood — a general aspect of slovenly servitude.

Mr. Cragg was never an early riser. He breakfasted at eight o’clock and at half past eight stalked with stiff dignity to town and entered his office without deigning to recognize any villagers he might meet. Josie was aware of this habit. She timed her visit for half-past ten.

Unnoticed she passed through the village street and crept up the stairs at the end of the store building. Before the door marked “H. Cragg, Real Estate” she paused to listen. No sound came from within, but farther along the passage she heard the dull rumble of Miss Huckins’ sewing machine.

For once Josie hesitated, but realizing that hesitation meant weakness on such an errand she boldly thrust out a hand and attempted to turn the doorknob.

CHAPTER XIII

BLUFF AND REBUFF

The door was locked. Immediately Josie pounded upon it with her knuckles and a voice demanded:

"Who is there?"

Instead of replying, Josie knocked again, and suddenly the door was opened and Old Swallowtail stood before her.

"I — I beg your pardon," said she diffidently; "are you the real estate man?"

"Yes," he replied, standing quietly in the doorway.

"Then you're the man I want to see," she asserted and took a step forward. But he did not move an inch from his position and his eyes were fixed steadfastly on her face.

"I have nothing to sell, at present," he remarked.

"But I want to give you something to sell," she retorted impatiently, summoning her wits to meet the occasion. "Let me in, please. Or do you transact all your business in the hallway?"

Somewhat to her surprise he stepped back and held the door for her to enter. Josie promptly walked in and sat down near a round table, one comprehensive glance fixing in her mind the entire contents of the small room.

There was one window, dim and unwashed, facing the street. It had a thick shade, now raised. Originally the room had been square, and rather crudely plastered and wallpapered, but a wooden partition had afterward been erected to cut the room into two, so that the portion she had entered was long and narrow. Its sole furniture consisted of the round table, quite bare, two or three wooden-bottomed chairs, and against one wall a rack filled with books. During the interview she noted that these books were mostly directories of the inhabitants of various prominent cities in the United States, and such a collection astonished her and aroused her curiosity.

Just at present, however, the partition proved the most interesting thing she observed, for beyond it must be another room which was doubtless the particular sanctum of Old Swallowtail and to which she scarcely expected to gain admittance. The door was closed. It was stout and solid and was fitted with both an ordinary door-lock and a hasp and padlock, the latter now hanging on a nail beside the door.

This much Josie's sharp eyes saw in her first glance, but immediately her attention was demanded by Mr. Cragg, who took a seat opposite her and said in a quiet, well modulated voice: "Now, my girl, state your business." She

had planned to tell him how she had come to town to sew for Mary Louise Burrows, how she had now finished her work but was so charmed with Cragg's Crossing that she did not care to leave it during the hot weather to return to the stuffy city. Therefore, she intended to add, if he would let her make some new dresses for Ingua, she would work for half her regular wages. Her dress as a sewing-girl would carry out this deception and the bait of small wages ought to interest the old man. But this clever plan had suddenly gone glimmering, for in order to gain admittance to the office and secure an interview with Old Swallowtail she had inadvertently stated that she had some real estate to dispose of. So sudden a change of base required the girl to think quickly in order to formulate a new argument that would hold his attention.

To gain time she said, slowly:

"My name is Josie Jessup. I'm a sewing-girl by profession."

"Yes, I know," he replied.

"I've been here ten days or so, working for Miss Burrows."

"I have seen you here," said Mr. Cragg.

She wondered how he knew so much, as he had never seemed to favor her with even a glance when by chance they met in the street. But perhaps Ingua had told him.

"I like Cragg's Crossing," continued Josie, assuming a confidential tone, "and I've made up my mind I'd like to live here. There ought to be plenty of work sewing for the farmers' wives, outside of what Miss Huckins does, and it don't cost much to live in a small town. In the city I own a little house and lot left to me by my uncle on my mother's side, and I've decided to trade it for some place here. Don't you know, sir, of someone who'd like to move to the city, and will be glad to make the exchange?"

"I know of no such person," he replied coldly.

"But you will make inquiries?"

"It would be useless. I am very busy to-day, so if you will excuse me — "

He rose and bowed.

Josie was disappointed. She decided to revert to her first proposition.

"Doesn't your granddaughter need some sewing done, sir?" she asked, with a frank look from her innocent blue eyes.

He stood still, silently studying her face. With one hand he rubbed his chin gently, as if in thought. Then he said:

"We cannot afford to hire our sewing done, but I thank you for the offer. Good morning, Miss — Jessup."

Walking to the door he held it open and bowed gravely as she walked out. Next moment she heard the key click as it turned in the lock.

Josie, feeling a sense of failure, slowly went down the stairs, entered the store and perched herself upon the sugar-barrel. Old Sol was waiting on a farmer's wife and only gave the girl a glance.

Josie reflected on her interview with Mr. Cragg while it was fresh in her mind. He was no crude, uneducated country bumpkin, despite his odd ways and peculiar dress. Indeed, the man had astonished her by his courtesy, his correct method of speech, his perfect self-assurance. Her visit was calculated to annoy him and to arouse his impatience. After Ingua's report of him she expected he would become scornful or sarcastic or even exhibit violent anger; yet there had been nothing objectionable in his manner or words. Still, he had dismissed her as abruptly as possible and was not eager to grasp an opportunity to exchange real estate.

"That isn't his business at all," she told herself. "It's merely a blind, although he actually did rent the Kenton Place to Colonel Hathaway...I wonder what he does in that office all day. In the inner room, of course. That is his real workshop...He's quite gentlemanly. He has a certain amount of breeding, which Ingua wholly lacks....He must realize what a crude and uncultured little thing his granddaughter is. Then why hasn't he tried to train her differently?...Really, he quite awed me with his stately, composed manner. No one would expect that sort of man to be a murderer. But — there! haven't I been warned that the educated gentleman is the worst type of criminal, and the most difficult to detect?"

Sol's customer went away and the old man approached the barrel.

"Well," he said, "wanter buy anything to-day?"

"No," said Josie pleasantly, "this is only a social call. I've just come from Old Swallow-tail's office and thought a word with you would cheer me up."

"You! You be'n to Ol' Swallertail's office! Sakes alive, gal, I wouldn't dare do that myself."

"Why not?"

"He goes crazy when he gits mad."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Ev'rybody here knows it, from the three-year-olds up. What did ye go to him for?"

"A little matter of business."

"An' he slammed the door in yer face?"

"No, indeed."

"That's funny," said old Sol, rubbing his forehead in a perplexed way.

"He was very decent to me," continued Josie. "Acted like a gentleman. Talked as if he'd been to school, you know."

"School? Well, I should say he had!" exclaimed the storekeeper. "Ol'

Swallertail's the most eddicated man in these 'ere parts, I guess. Ol' Nick Cragg, his daddy, wanted for him to be a preacher — or a priest, most likely — an' when he was a boy his ol' man paid good money to hev him eddicated at a the — at a theo — at a collidge. But Hezekiah wa'n't over-religious, an' 'lowed he didn't hev no call to preach; so that's all the good the eddication ever done him."

"*You've* never felt the need of an education, have you?" asked the girl, artlessly.

"Me? Well, I ain't sayin' as I got no eddication, though I don't class myself in book-l'arnin' with Ol' Swallertail. Three winters I went to school, an' once I helped whip the school-teacher. Tain't ev'ry one has got *that* record. But eddication means more'n books; it means keepin' yer eyes open an' gitt'n' onter the tricks o' yer trade. Ev'ry time I git swindled, I've l'arned somethin', an' if I'd started this store in New York instid o' Cragg's Crossin', they might be runnin' me fer president by this time."

"But what could Cragg's Crossing have done without you?" inquired Josie. "It seems to me you're needed here."

"Well, that's worth thinkin' on," admitted the storekeeper. "And as for Old Swallowtail, he may have learned some tricks of his trade too. But I don't know what his trade is."

"Nobody knows that. I don't b'lieve that business o' his'n is a trade at all; I'll bet it's a steal, whatever its other name happens to be."

"But he doesn't prosper."

"No; he ain't got much t' show fer all these years. Folks used to think he'd got money saved from the sale of his land, till Ned Joselyn come here an' dallied with Ol' Swallertail's savin's an' then took to the woods. It's gener'ly b'lieved that what Cragg had once Ned's got now; but it don't matter much. Cragg hain't got long ter live an' his feed don't cost him an' his little gal much more'n it costs to feed my cat."

There was no further information to be gleaned from Sol Jerrems, so Josie walked home.

CHAPTER XIV
MIDNIGHT VIGILS

"Well, how is our girl detective progressing in her discovery of crime and criminals?" asked Colonel Hathaway that evening, as they sat in the living-room after dinner.

"Don't call me a girl detective, please," pleaded Josie O'Gorman. "I'm only an apprentice at the trade, Colonel, and I have never realized more than I do at this moment the fact that I've considerable to learn before I may claim membership with the profession."

"Then you're finding your present trail a difficult one to follow?"

"I believe my stupidity is making it difficult," admitted Josie, with a sigh. "Father would scold me soundly if he knew how foolishly I behaved to-day. There was every opportunity of my forcing a clew by calling unexpectedly on Mr. Cragg at his office, but he defeated my purpose so easily that now I'm wondering if he suspects who I am, and why I'm here. He couldn't have been more cautious."

"He could scarcely suspect that," said the Colonel, musingly. "But I've noticed that these simple country people are chary of confiding in strangers."

"Ah, if Mr. Cragg were only that — a simple, unlettered countryman, as I thought him — I should know how to win his confidence. But, do you know, sir, he is well educated and intelligent. Once he studied for the priesthood or ministry, attending a theological college."

"Indeed!"

"My informant, the village authority — who is Sol Jerrems the storekeeper — says he objected to becoming a priest at the last because he had no leaning that way. My own opinion is that he feared his ungovernable temper would lead to his undoing. I am positive that his hysterical fury, when aroused, has gotten him into trouble many times, even in this patient community."

"That's it," said Mary Louise with conviction; "his temper has often made him cruel to poor Ingua, and perhaps his temper caused unfortunate Ned Joselyn to disappear."

"Have you discovered anything more than you have told me?" she asked.

"Not a thing," replied Mary Louise. "I'm waiting for *you* to make discoveries, Josie."

"A puzzle that is readily solved," remarked the Colonel, picking up his book, "is of little interest. The obstacles you are meeting, Josie, incline me to believe you girls have unearthed a real mystery. It is not a mystery of the moment, however, so take your time to fathom it. The summer is young yet."

Josie went to her room early, saying she was tired, but as soon as she was alone and free she slipped on a jacket and stealthily left the house. Down the driveway she crept like a shadow, out through the gates, over the bridge, and then she turned down the pathway leading to Old Swallowtail's cottage.

"The stepping-stones are a nearer route," she reflected, "but I don't care to tackle them in the dark."

The cottage contained but three rooms. The larger one downstairs was a combination kitchen and dining room. A small wing, built upon one side, was used by Mr. Cragg for his private apartment, but its only outlet was through the main room. At the back was a lean-to shed, in which was built a narrow flight of stairs leading to a little room in the attic, where Ingua slept. Josie knew the plan of the house perfectly, having often visited Ingua during the day when her grandfather was absent and helped her sweep and make the beds and wash the dishes.

To-night Josie moved noiselessly around the building, satisfied herself that Ingua was asleep and that Mr. Cragg was still awake, and then strove to peer through the shuttered window to discover what the old man was doing.

She found this impossible. Although the weather was warm the window was tightly shut and a thick curtain was drawn across it.

Josie slipped over to the river bank and in the shadow of a tree sat herself down to watch and wait with such patience as she could muster. It was half past nine o'clock, and Ingua had told her that when her grandfather was wakeful, and indulged in his long walks, he usually left the house between ten o'clock and midnight — seldom earlier and never later. He would go to bed, the child said, and finding he could not sleep, would again dress and go out into the night, only to return at early morning.

Josie doubted that he ever undressed on such occasions, knowing, as he no doubt did, perfectly well what his program for the night would be. She had decided that the nocturnal excursions were not due to insomnia but were carefully planned to avoid possible observation. When all the countryside was wrapped in slumber the old gentleman stole from his cottage and went — where? Doubtless to some secret place that had an important bearing on his life and occupation. It would be worth while, Josie believed, to discover the object of these midnight excursions. Ingua claimed that her grandfather's periods of wakeful walking were irregular; sometimes he would be gone night after night, and then for weeks he would remain at home and sleep like other folks.

So Josie was not surprised when old Swallowtail's light was extinguished shortly after ten o'clock and from then until midnight he had not left the house. Evidently this was not one of his "wakeful" periods. The girl's eyes,

during this time, never left the door of the cottage. The path to the bridge passed her scarcely five yards distant. Therefore, as Hezekiah Cragg had not appeared, he was doubtless sleeping the sleep of the just — or the unjust, for all sorts and conditions of men indulge in sleep.

Josie waited until nearly one o'clock. Then she went home, let herself in by a side door to which she had taken the key, and in a few minutes was as sound asleep as Old Swallowtail ought to be.

For three nights in succession the girl maintained this vigil, with no result whatever. It was wearisome work and she began to tire of it. On the fourth day, as she was "visiting" with Ingua, she asked:

"Has your grandfather had any sleepless nights lately?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "But he ain't walked any, as he sometimes does, for I hain't heard him go out."

"Do you always hear him?"

"P'r'aps not always, but most times."

"And does he walk more than one night?" inquired Josie.

"When he takes them fits, they lasts for a week or more," asserted Ingua. "Then, for a long time, he sleeps quiet."

"Will you let me know, the next time he takes to walking?"

"Why?" asked the child, suspiciously.

"It's a curious habit," Josie explained, "and I'd like to know what he does during all those hours of the night."

"He walks," declared Ingua; "and, if he does anything else, it's his own business."

"I've wondered," said Josie impressively, "if he doesn't visit some hidden grave during those midnight rambles."

Ingua shuddered.

"I wish ye wouldn't talk like that," she whispered. "It gives me the creeps."

"Wouldn't you like to know the truth of all this mystery, Ingua?"

"Sometimes I would, an' sometimes I wouldn't. If the truth leaked out, mebbe Gran'dad would git inter a lot o' trouble. I don't want that, Josie. I ain't no cause to love Gran'dad, but he's a Cragg an' I'm a Cragg, an' no Cragg ever went back on the fambly."

It seemed unwise to urge the child further to betray her grandfather, yet for Ingua's sake, if for no other reason, Josie was determined to uncover the hidden life of Hezekiah Cragg.

The following night she watched again at her station by the river bank, and again the midnight hour struck and the old man had not left his cottage. His light was extinguished at eleven o'clock. At twelve-thirty Josie rose from

the shadow of the tree and slowly walked to the bridge. There, instead of going home, she turned in the direction of the town.

In the sky were a few stars and the slim crescent of a new moon, affording sufficient light to guide her steps. Crickets chirped and frogs in the marshes sang their hoarse love songs, but otherwise an intense stillness pervaded the countryside. You must not consider Josie O'Gorman an especially brave girl, for she had no thought of fear in such solitary wanderings. Although but seventeen years of age, she had been reared from early childhood in an atmosphere of intrigue and mystery, for her detective father had been accustomed to argue his cases and their perplexities with his only child and for hours at a time he would instruct her in all the details of his profession. It was O'Gorman's ambition that his daughter might become a highly proficient female detective.

"There are so many cases where a woman is better than a man," he would say, "and there is such a lack of competent women in this important and fascinating profession, that I am promoting the interests of both my daughter and the public safety by training Josie to become a good detective."

And the girl, having been her father's confidant since she was able to walk and talk, became saturated with detective lore and only needed practical experience and more mature judgment fully to justify O'Gorman's ambition for her.

However, the shrewd old secret service officer well knew that the girl was not yet ready to be launched into active service. The experience she needed was only to be gained in just such odd private cases as the one on which she was now engaged, so he was glad to let her come to Cragg's Crossing, and Josie was glad to be there. She was only content when "working," and however the Cragg mystery developed or resulted, her efforts to solve it were sure to sharpen her wits and add to her practical knowledge of her future craft.

When she reached the town she found it absolutely deserted. Not a light shone anywhere; no watchman was employed; the denizens of Cragg's Crossing were all in bed and reveling in dreamland.

Josie sat on the bottom stair of the flight leading to the store and removed her shoes. Upstairs the family of Sol Jerrems and Miss Huckins the dressmaker were sleeping and must not be disturbed. The girl made no sound as she mounted the stairs and softly stole to the door of H. Cragg's real estate office. Here it was dark as could be, but Josie drew some skeleton keys from her pocket and slid them, one by one, into the lock. The fourth key fitted; she opened the door silently and having entered the room drew the door shut behind her.

The thick shade was drawn over the window. It was as black here as it was in the hallway. Josie flashed a small searchlight on the door of the connecting room and saw that it was not only locked in the ordinary manner but that the padlock she had noted on her former visit to the room was now inserted in the hasp and formed an additional security against intrusion.

While her electric spotlight played upon this padlock she bent over and examined it swiftly but with care.

"A Yale lock," she muttered. "It can't be picked, but it will delay me for only a few minutes."

Then from her pocket she brought out a small steel hack-saw, and as she could not work the saw and hold the flashlight at the same time she went to the window and removed the heavy shade. The light that now came into the room was dim, but sufficient for her purpose. Returning to the door of the mysterious inner room, the contents of which she had determined to investigate, she seized the padlock firmly with one hand while with the other she began to saw through the steel loop that passed through the hasp.

The sound made by the saw was so slight that it did not worry her, but another sound, of an entirely different character and coming from the hallway, caused her to pause and glance over her shoulder.

Slowly the outer door opened and a form appeared in the doorway. It was a mere shadow, at first, but it deliberately advanced to the table, struck a match and lighted a small kerosene lamp.

She was face to face with Old Swallowtail.

CHAPTER XV

"OLD SWALLOWTAIL"

Josie was so astonished that she still bent over the lock, motionless, saw in hand. In the instant she made a mental review of her proceedings and satisfied herself that she had been guilty of no professional blunder. The inopportune appearance of Mr. Cragg must be attributed to a blind chance — to fate. So the first wave of humiliation that swept over her receded as she gathered her wits to combat this unexpected situation.

Mr. Cragg stood by the table looking at her. He was very calm. The discovery of the girl had not aroused that violence of temper for which the old man was noted. Josie straightened up, slipped the saw in her pocket and faced him unflinchingly.

"Won't you sit down?" he said, pointing to a chair beside her. "I would like to know why you have undertaken to rob me."

Josie sat down, her heart bounding with joy. If he mistook her for a thief all was not lost and she would not have to write "finis" as yet to this important case. But she made no answer to his remark; she merely stared at him in a dull, emotionless way that was cleverly assumed.

"I suppose," he continued, "you have been told I am rich — a miser — and perhaps you imagine I keep my wealth in that little room, because I have taken pains to secure it from intrusion by prying meddlers. I suspected you, my girl, when you came to see me the other day. Your errand was palpably invented. You wanted to get the lay of the room, in preparation for this night's work. But who told you I was worthy of being robbed? Was it Ingua?"

"No," came a surly reply. "She won't mention you to me."

"Very good. But the neighbors — the busy-bodies around here? Perhaps old Sol Jerrems has gossiped of my supposed hoard. Is it not so?"

Josie dropped her eyes as if confused but remained silent. The old man seemed to regard her as a curiosity, for his cold gray eyes examined her person with the same expression with which he might have regarded a caged monkey.

"Then you do not wish to confess?"

"What's the use?" she demanded with a burst of impatience. "Haven't you caught me at the job?"

He continued to eye her, reflectively.

"The cities breed felons," he remarked. "It is a pity so young a girl should have chosen so dangerous and disastrous a career. It is inevitably disastrous. How did it happen that Colonel Hathaway allowed you to impose on him?"

“I do sewing,” she said doggedly.

“In order to gain entrance to a household, I suppose. But Hathaway is wealthy. Why did you not undertake to rob him, instead of me?”

“One at a time,” said Josie, with a short laugh.

“Oh, I understand. You expected to make the small pick-ups and then land the grand coup. The answer is simple, after all. But,” he added, his voice growing stern and menacing for the first time, “I do not intend to be robbed, my girl. Fleece Hathaway if you can; it is none of my business; but you must not pry into my personal affairs or rifle my poor rooms. Do you understand me?”

“I — I think so, sir.”

“Avoid me, hereafter. Keep out of my path. The least interference from you, in any way, will oblige me to turn you over to the police.”

“You’ll let me go, now?”

He glanced at her, frowning.

“I am too much occupied to prosecute you — unless you annoy me further. Perhaps you have this night learned a lesson that will induce you to abandon such desperate, criminal ventures.”

Josie stood up.

“I wish I knew how you managed to catch me,” she said, with a sigh.

“You were watching my house to-night, waiting until I was safely in bed before coming here. I happened to leave my room for a little air, and going out my back door I passed around the house and stood at the corner, in deep shade. My eyes were good enough to distinguish a form lurking under the tree by the river bank. I went in, put out my light, and returned to my former position. You watched the house and I watched you. You are not very clever, for all your slyness. You will never be clever enough to become a good thief — meaning a successful thief. After a half hour I saw you rise and take the path to the village. I followed you. Do you understand now? God has protected the just and humbled the wicked.”

That final sentence surprised the girl. Coming from his lips, it shocked her. In his former speech he had not denounced her crime, but only her indiscretion and the folly of her attempt. Suddenly he referred to God as his protector, asserting his personal uprightness as warrant for Divine protection; and, singularly enough, his tone was sincere.

Josie hesitated whether to go or not, for Old Swallowtail seemed in a talkative mood and she had already discovered a new angle to his character. By way of diversion she began to cry.

“I — I know I’m wicked,” she sobbed; “it’s wrong to steal; I know it is. But I — I — need the money, and you’ve got lots of it; and — and — I

thought you must be just as wicked as I am!”

His expression changed to one of grim irony.

“Yes,” said he, “by common report I am guilty of every sin in the calendar. Do you know why?”

“No; of course I don’t!” she answered, softening her sobs to hear more clearly.

“Years ago, when I was a young man, I stabbed a fellow-student in the neck — a dreadful wound — because he taunted me about my mode of dress. I was wearing the only clothes my eccentric father would provide me with. I am wearing the same style of costume yet, as penance for that dastardly act — caused by an ungovernable temper with which I have been cursed from my birth. I would have entered the service of God had it not been for that temper. I am unable to control it, except by avoiding undue contact with my fellow men. That is why. I am living here, a recluse, when I should be taking an active part in the world’s work.”

He spoke musingly, as if to himself more than to the girl who hung on each word with eager interest. No one had ever told her as much of Old Swallowtail as he was now telling her of himself. She wondered why he was so confidential. Was it because she seemed dull and stupid? Because she was a stranger who was likely to decamp instantly when he let her go? Or was the retrospective mood due to the hour and the unwonted situation? She waited, scarce breathing lest she lose a word.

“The poor fellow whom I stabbed lived miserably for twenty years afterward,” he went on, “and I supported him and his family during that time, for his life had been ruined by my act. Later in life and here at the Crossing, people saw me kill a balky horse in a wild rage, and they have been afraid of me ever since. Even more recently I — ”

He suddenly paused, remembering where he was and to whom he was speaking. The girl’s face was perfectly blank when he shot a shrewd glance at it. Her look seemed to relieve his embarrassment.

“However,” said he in a different tone, “I am not so black as I’m painted.”

“I don’t think you treat poor Ingua quite right,” remarked Josie.

“Eh? Why not?”

“You neglect her; you don’t give her enough to eat; she hasn’t a dress fit for a ragamuffin to wear. And she’s your granddaughter.”

He drew in a long breath, staring hard.

“Has she been complaining?”

“Not to me,” said Josie; “but she doesn’t need to. Haven’t I eyes? Doesn’t everyone say it’s a shame to treat the poor child the way you do? My personal opinion is that you’re a poor excuse for a grandfather,” she added,

with more spirit than she had yet exhibited.

He sat silent a long time, looking at the lamp. His face was hard; his long, slim fingers twitched as if longing to throttle someone; but he positively ignored Josie's presence. She believed he was struggling to subdue what Ingua called "the devils," and would not have been surprised had-he broken all bounds and tried to do her an injury.

"Go!" he said at last, still without looking at her. "Go, and remember that I will not forgive twice."

She thought it best to obey. Very softly she left the room, and as she passed out he was still staring at the flame of the lamp and alternately clenching and unclenching his talon-like fingers.

CHAPTER XVI

INGUA'S NEW DRESS

"Well," said Mary Louise, when Josie had related to her friend the story next morning, "what do you think of Old Swallowtail now?"

"About the same as before. I'm gradually accumulating facts to account for the old man's strange actions, but I'm not ready to submit them for criticism just yet. The plot is still a bit ragged and I want to mend the holes before I spread it out before you."

"Do you think he suspects who you are?"

"No; he thinks I'm a waif from the city with a penchant for burglary. He expects me to rob you, presently, and then run away. I'm so unlikely to cross his path again that he talked with unusual frankness to me — or *at* me, if you prefer to put it that way. All I gained last night was the knowledge that he's afraid of himself, that his temper cost him a career in the world and obliged him to live in seclusion and that he has a secret which he doesn't intend any red-headed girl to stumble on accidentally."

"And you think he was angry when you accused him of neglecting Ingua?"

"I'm sure he was. It made him more furious than my attempt to saw his padlock. Come, let's run over and see Ingua now. I want to ask how her grandfather treated her this morning."

They walked through the grounds, crossed the river on the stepping-stones and found Ingua just finishing her morning's work. The child greeted them eagerly.

"I'm glad you come," she said, "for I was meanin' to run over to your place pretty soon. What d'ye think hes happened? Las' night, in the middle o' the night — or p'r'aps nearer mornin' — Gran'dad begun to slam things aroun'. The smashin' of tables an' chairs woke me up, but I didn't dare go down to see what was the matter. He tumbled ev'rything 'round in the kitchen an' then went inter his own room an' made the fur fly there. I knew he were in one o' his tantrums an' that he'd be sorry if he broke things, but it wasn't no time to interfere. When the rumpus stopped I went to sleep ag'in, but I got up early an' had his breakfas' all ready when he come from his room. I'd picked up all the stuff he'd scattered an' mended a broken chair, an' things didn't look so bad.

"Well, Ol' Swallertail jes' looked aroun' the room an' then at me an' sot down to eat. 'Ingua,' he says pretty soon,' you need a new dress.' Say, girls, I near fell over backwards! 'Go down to Sol Jerrems,' says he, 'an' pick out the goods, an' I'll pay for it. I'll stop in this mornin' an' tell Sol to let ye

have it. An',' says he, lookin' at me ruther queer, 'ye might ask that redheaded sewin'-girl that's stay in' at the Hathaways' to make it up fer ye. I don't think she'll ask ye a cent fer the work.'

"'Gran'dad,' says I, 'would ye hev a Cragg accep' charity, even to the makin' of a dress?'

"' No,' says he; 'the girl owes me somethin' an' I guess she'll be glad to square the account.'

"Then he goes away to town an' I've be'n nervous an' flustered ever since. I can't make it out, I can't. Do you owe him anything, Josie?"

"Yes," said Josie with a laugh, "I believe I do. You shall have the dress, Ingua — all made up — and I'll go down with you and help pick out the goods."

"So will I!" exclaimed Mary Louise, highly delighted.

"And we will have Miss Huckins cut and fit it," continued Josie. "I'm not much good at that thing, Ingua, so we will have a real dressmaker and I'll pay her and charge it up to what I owe your grandfather."

The little girl seemed puzzled.

"How'd ye happen to owe him anything, Josie?" she asked.

"Didn't he tell you?"

"Not a word."

"Then he expects it to remain a secret, and you mustn't urge me to tell. I'm pretty good at keeping secrets, Ingua. Aren't you glad of that?"

They trooped away to town, presently, all in high spirits, and purchased the dress and trimmings at the store. Old Sol was so astonished at this transaction that he assailed the three girls with a thousand questions, to none of which did he receive a satisfactory reply.

"He didn't put no limit on the deal," said the storekeeper. "He jus' said: 'Whatever the gal picks out, charge it to me an' I'll pay the bill.' Looks like Ol' Swallertail hed gone plumb crazy, don't it?"

Then they went upstairs to Miss Huckins, who was likewise thrilled with excitement at the startling event of Ingua's having a new dress. Mary Louise and Josie helped plan the dress, which was to be a simple and practical affair, after all, and the dressmaker measured the child carefully and promised her a fitting the very next day.

"I don't quite understan'," remarked Ingua, as they walked home after this impressive ceremony, "why you don't make the dress yourself, Josie, an' save yer money. You're a dressmaker, ye say."

"I'm a sewing-girl," replied Josie calmly, "but I've promised Mary Louise to sew for no one but her while I'm here, and I'm too lazy to sew much, anyway. I'm having a sort of vacation, you know."

“Josie is my friend,” explained Mary Louise, “and I won’t let her sew at all, if I can help it. I want her to be just my companion and have a nice visit before she goes back to the city.”

But when the two girls were alone Josie said to Mary Louise:

“Old Cragg isn’t so stony-hearted, after all. Just my suggestion last night that Ingua was being neglected has resulted in the new dress.”

“He threw things, though, before he made up his mind to be generous,” observed Mary Louise. “But this proves that the old man isn’t so very poor. He must have a little money, Josie.”

Josie nodded her head absently. She was trying hard to understand Mr. Cragg’s character, and so far it baffled her. He had frankly admitted his ungovernable temper and had deplored it. Also he had refrained from having Josie arrested for burglary because he was “too occupied to prosecute her.” Occupied? Occupied with what? Surely not the real estate business. She believed the true reason for her escape was that he dreaded prominence. Old Swallowtail did not wish to become mixed up with police courts any more than he could help. This very occurrence made her doubt him more than ever.

CHAPTER XVII
A CLEW AT LAST

That night Josie resumed her watch of Cragg's cottage. She did not trust to the shadow of the tree to conceal her but hid herself under the bank of the river, among the dry stones, allowing only her head to project above the embankment and selecting a place where she could peer through some low bushes.

She suspected that the excitement of the previous night might render the old man nervous and wakeful and send him out on one of his midnight prowls. This suspicion seemed justified when, at eleven-thirty, his light went out and a few minutes later he turned the corner of the house and appeared in the path.

He did not seem nervous, however. With hands clasped behind his back and head bowed, he leisurely paced the path to the bridge, without hesitation crossed the river and proceeded along the road in a direction opposite to the village.

Josie was following, keeping herself concealed with utmost care. She remembered that his eyes were sharp in penetrating shadows.

He kept along the main country road for a time and then turned to the right and followed an intersecting road. Half a mile in this direction brought him to a lane running between two farm tracts but which was so little used that grass and weeds had nearly obliterated all traces of wagon-wheels.

By this time Josie's eyes were so accustomed to the dim moonlight that she could see distinctly some distance ahead of her. The sky was clear; there was just enough wind to rustle the leaves of the trees. Now and then in some farmyard a cock would crow or a dog bark, but no other sounds broke the stillness of the night.

The girl knew now where Old Swallowtail was bound. At the end of this lane lay his five acres of stones, and he was about to visit it. The fact gave her a queer little thrill of the heart, for a dozen strange fancies crossed her mind in rapid succession. If he had really killed Ned Joselyn, it was probable he had buried the man in this neglected place, amongst the rubble of stones. Josie had inspected every foot of ground on the Kenton Place and satisfied herself no grave had been dug there. Indeed, at the time of Joselyn's "disappearance" the ground had been frozen so hard that the old man could not have dug a grave. Perhaps after a night or two he had dragged the corpse here and covered it with stones. It would be a safe hiding-place.

And now regret for his act drove the murderer here night after night to watch over the secret grave.

Or, granting that the supposed crime had not been committed, might not Mr. Cragg have discovered some sort of mineral wealth in his stone-yard, which would account for his paying taxes on the place and visiting it so often? Or did he simply love the solitude of the dreary waste where, safe from prying eyes, he could sit among the rocky boulders and commune with himself beneath the moonlit sky?

Such conjectures as these occupied the girl's mind while she stealthily "shadowed" the old man along the lane. Never once did he look behind him, although she was prepared to dissolve from view instantly, had he done so. And at last the end of the lane was reached and he climbed the rail fence which separated it from the valley of stones.

Josie saw him suddenly pause, motionless, as he clung to the rails. She guessed from his attitude that he was staring straight ahead of him at something that had surprised him. A full minute he remained thus before he let himself down on the other side and disappeared from view.

The girl ran lightly forward and, crouching low, peered through the bars of the fence. Half a dozen paces distant the old man stood among the stones in a silent paroxysm of rage. He waved his long arms in the air, anon clenching his fists and shaking them at some object beyond him. His frail old body fluttered back and forth, right and left, as if he were doing a weird dance among the rocks. The violence of his emotion was something terrible to witness and fairly startled the girl. Had he screamed, or sobbed, or shrieked, or moaned, the scene would have been more bearable, but such excess of silent, intense rage, made her afraid for the first time in her life.

She wanted to run away. At one time she actually turned to fly; but then common sense came to her rescue and she resolved to stay and discover what had affected Old Swallowtail so strongly. From her present position she could see nothing more than a vista of tumbled stones, but rising until her head projected above the topmost rail she presently saw, far across the valley, an automobile, standing silhouetted against the gray background.

The machine was at present vacant. It had been driven in from the other side of the valley, where doubtless there were other lanes corresponding with the one she was in. However, there was no fence on that side to separate the lane from the waste tract, so the machine had been driven as close as possible to the edge of the stones.

Although the automobile was deserted, that was evidently the object which had aroused old Cragg's fury, the object at which he was even yet shaking his clenched fists. Josie wondered and watched. Gradually the paroxysm of wrath diminished. Presently the old man stood as motionless as the stones about him. Five minutes, perhaps, he remained thus, controlling

himself by a mighty effort, regaining his capacity to think and reason. Then, to the girl's amazement, he tottered toward a large, shelf-like slab of stone and kneeling down, as before an altar, he bared his head, raised his arms on high and began to pray.

There was no mistaking this attitude. Old Swallowtail was calling on God to support him in this hour of trial. Josie felt something clutching at her heart. Nothing could be more impressive than this scene — this silent but earnest appeal to the Most High by the man whom she suspected of murder — of crimes even more terrible. She could see his eyes, pleading and sincere, turned upward; could see his gray hair flutter in the breeze; could see his lips move, though they uttered no sound. And after he had poured out his heart to his Maker he extended his arms upon the slab, rested his head upon them and again became motionless.

The girl waited. She was sorely troubled, surprised, even humiliated at being the witness of this extraordinary and varied display of emotion. She felt a sense of intrusion that was almost unjustifiable, even in a detective. What right had anyone to spy upon a communion between God and man?

He rose, at length, rose and walked uncertainly forward, stumbling among the ragged rocks. He made for the far hillside that was cluttered with huge fragments of stone, some weighing many tons and all tumbled helter-skelter as if aimlessly tossed there by some giant hand. And when he reached the place he threaded his way between several great boulders and suddenly disappeared.

Josie hesitated a moment what to do, yet instinct urged her to follow. She had a feeling that she was on the verge of an important discovery, that events were about to happen which had been wholly unforeseen even by old Cragg himself.

She was taking a serious risk by venturing on the stony ground, for under the moonlight her dark form would show distinctly against the dull gray of the stones. Yet she climbed the fence and with her eye fixed on the cluster of rocks where Old Swallowtail had disappeared she made her way as best she could toward the place. Should the old man reappear or the owner of the strange automobile emerge from the rocks Josie was sure to be discovered, and there was no telling what penalty she might be obliged to pay for spying. It was a dreary, deserted place; more than one grave might be made there without much chance of detection.

In a few minutes she had reached the hillside and was among the great boulders. She passed between the same ones where Mr. Cragg had disappeared but found so many set here and there that to follow his trail was impossible unless chance led her aright.

There were no paths, for a rubble of small stones covered the ground everywhere. Between some of the huge rocks the passage was so narrow she could scarcely squeeze through; between others there was ample space for two people to walk abreast. The girl paused frequently to listen, taking care the while to make no sound herself, but an intense silence pervaded the place.

After wandering here and there for a time without result she had started to return to the entrance of this labyrinth when her ears for the first time caught a sound — a peculiar grinding, thumping sound that came from beneath her feet seemingly, and was of so unusual a character that she was puzzled to explain its cause.

The shadows cast by the towering rocks rendered this place quite dark, so Josie crouched in the deepest shade she could find and listened carefully to the strange sound, trying to determine its origin. It was surely under ground — a little to the right of her — perhaps beneath the hillside, which slanted abruptly from this spot. She decided there must be some secret passage that led to a cave under the hill. Such a cave might be either natural or artificial; in either case she was sure old Cragg used it as a rendezvous or workshop and visited it stealthily on his "wakeful" nights.

Having located the place to the best of her ability Josie began to consider what caused that regular, thumping noise, which still continued without intermission.

"I think it must be some sort of an engine," she reflected; "a stamp for ore, or something of that sort. Still, it isn't likely there is any steam or electrical power to operate the motor of so big a machine. It might be a die stamp, though, operated by foot power, or — this is most likely — a foot-power printing-press. Well, if a die stamp or a printing press, I believe the mystery of Old Swallowtail's 'business' is readily explained."

She sat still there, crouching between the rocks, for more than two hours before the sound of the machine finally ceased. Another hour passed in absolute silence. She ventured to flash her pocket searchlight upon the dial of her watch and found it was nearly four o'clock. Dawn would come, presently, and then her situation would be more precarious than ever.

While she thus reflected the sound of footsteps reached her ears — very near to her, indeed — and a voice muttered:

"Come this way. Have you forgotten?"

"Forgotten? I found the place, didn't I?" was the surly reply.

Then there passed her, so closely that she could have touched them, three dim forms. She watched them go and promptly followed, taking the chance of discovery if they looked behind. They were wholly unconscious of her

presence, however, and soon made their way out into the open. There they paused, and Josie, hiding behind a high rock, could both see and hear them plainly.

One was old Cragg; another a tall, thin man with a monocle in his left eye; the third, she found to her surprise, was none other than Jim Bennett the postman. The tall man held in his arms a heavy bundle, securely wrapped.

"You'll surely get them off to-morrow?" said Cragg to him,

"Of course," was the answer. "You may be certain I'll not have them on my hands longer than is necessary."

"Do you mean to play square, this time?"

"Don't be a fool," said the tall man impatiently. "Your infernal suspicions have caused trouble enough, during the past year. Hidden like a crab in your shell, you think everything on the outside is going wrong. Can't you realize, Cragg, that I *must* be loyal to C. I. L.? There's no question of my playing square; I've got to."

"That's right, sir," broke in Jim Bennett. "Seems to me he's explained everything in a satisfactory manner — as far as anyone *could* explain."

"Then good night," said Cragg, gruffly, "and — good luck."

"Good night," growled the tall man in return and made off in the direction of the automobile, carrying the package with him. The other two stood silently watching him until he reached the car, took his seat and started the motor. Presently the machine passed out of sight and then Bennett said in a tone of deepest respect:

"Good night, Chief. This meeting was a great thing for C. I. L. It brings us all nearer to final success."

"I wish I could trust him," replied Cragg, doubtfully. "Good night, Jim."

The postman made off in another direction and the old man waited until he had fully disappeared before he walked away over the stones himself. Josie let him go. She did not care to follow him home. Weary though she was from her long vigil she determined to examine the rocks by daylight before she left the place.

The sun was just showing its rim over the hills when she quitted Hezekiah Cragg's five acres of stones and took the lane to the highway. But her step was elastic, her eyes bright, her face smiling.

"I've found the entrance, though I couldn't break in," she proudly murmured. "But a little dynamite — or perhaps a few blows of an axe — will soon remove the barrier. This affair, however, is now too big and too serious for me to handle alone. I must have help. I think it will amaze dear old Dad to know what I've stumbled on this night!"

CHAPTER XVIII
DOUBTS AND SUSPICIONS

Mary Louise entered her friend's room at seven o'clock and exclaimed: "Not up yet?"

Josie raised her head drowsily from the pillow.

"Let me sleep till noon," she pleaded. "I've been out all night."

"And did you learn anything?" was the eager question.

"Please let me sleep!"

"Shall I send you up some breakfast, Josie?"

"Breakfast? Bah!"

She rolled over, drawing the clothes about her, and Mary Louise softly left the darkened room and went down to breakfast.

"Gran'pa Jim," said she, thoughtfully buttering her toast, "do you think it's right for Josie to be wandering around in the dead of night?"

He gave her an odd look and smiled.

"If I remember aright, it was one Miss Mary Louise Burrows who thrust Josie into this vortex of mystery."

"You didn't answer my question, Gran'pa Jim."

"I can imagine no harm, to girl or man, in being abroad in this peaceful country at night, if one has the nerve to undertake it. You and I, dear, prefer our beds. Josie is wrapped up in the science of criminal investigation and has the enthusiasm of youth to egg her on. Moreover, she is sensible enough to know what is best for her. I do not think we need worry over her nightly wanderings, which doubtless have an object. Has she made any important discovery as yet?"

"I believe not," said Mary Louise. "She has learned enough to be positive that old Mr. Cragg is engaged in some secret occupation of an illegal character, but so far she is unable to determine what it is. He's a very queer old man, it seems, but shrewd and clever enough to keep his secret to himself."

"And how about the disappearance of Mr. Joselyn?"

"We're divided in opinion about that," said the girl. "Ingua and I both believe Mr. Cragg murdered him, but Josie isn't sure of it. If he did, however, Josie thinks we will find the poor man's grave somewhere under the stones of the river bed. There was no grave dug on our grounds, that is certain."

Colonel Hathaway regarded her seriously.

"I am sorry, Mary Louise," he remarked, "that we ever decided to mix in this affair. I did not realize, when first you proposed having Josie here, that

the thing might become so tragic."

"It has developed under investigation, you see," she replied. "But I am not very sure of Josie's ability, because she is not very sure of it herself. She dare not, even yet, advance a positive opinion. Unless she learned something last night she is still groping in the dark."

"We must give her time," said the Colonel.

"We have accomplished some good, however," continued the girl. "Ingua is much happier and more content. She is improving in her speech and manners and is growing ambitious to become a respectable and refined young lady. She doesn't often give way to temper, as she used to do on every occasion, and I am sure if she could be removed from her grandfather's evil influence she would soon develop in a way to surprise us all."

"Does her grandfather's influence seem to be evil, then?" asked the Colonel.

"He has surrounded her with privations, if not with actual want," said she. "Only the night before last he was in such a violent rage that he tried to smash everything in the house. That is surely an evil example to set before the child, who has a temper of her own, perhaps inherited from him. He has, however, bought her a new dress — the first one she has had in more than a year — so perhaps the old man at times relents toward his granddaughter and tries to atone for his shortcomings."

Gran'pa Jim was thoughtful for a time.

"Perhaps," he presently remarked, "Mr. Cragg has but little money to buy dresses with. I do not imagine that a man so well educated as you report him to be would prefer to live in a hovel, if he could afford anything better."

"If he is now poor, what has he done with all his money?" demanded Mary Louise.

"That is a part of the mystery, isn't it? Do you know, my dear, I can't help having a kindly thought for this poor man; perhaps because he is a grandfather and has a granddaughter — just as I have."

"He doesn't treat her in the same way, Gran'pa Jim," said she, with a loving look toward the handsome old Colonel.

"And there is a perceptible difference between Ingua and Mary Louise," he added with a smile.

They were to have Ingua's dress fitted by Miss Huckins that morning, and as Josie was fast asleep Mary Louise went across to the cottage to go with the girl on her errand. To her surprise she found old Mr. Cragg sitting upon his little front porch, quite motionless and with his arms folded across his chest. He stared straight ahead and was evidently in deep thought. This was odd, because he was usually at his office an hour or more before this time.

Mary Louise hesitated whether to advance or retreat. She had never as yet come into personal contact with Ingua's grandfather and, suspecting him of many crimes, she shrank from meeting him now. But she was herself in plain sight before she discovered his presence and it would be fully as embarrassing to run away as to face him boldly. Moreover, through the open doorway she could see Ingua passing back and forth in the kitchen, engaged in her customary housework. So on she came.

Mr. Cragg had not seemed to observe her, at first, but as she now approached the porch he rose from his chair and bowed with a courtly grace that astonished her. In many ways his dignified manners seemed to fit his colonial costume.

"You will find Ingua inside, I believe," he said.

"I — I am Mary Louise Burrows."

Again he bowed.

"I am glad to meet you, Miss Burrows. And I am glad that you and Ingua are getting acquainted," he rejoined, in even, well modulated tones. "She has not many friends and her association with you will be sure to benefit her."

Mary Louise was so amazed that she fairly gasped.

"I — I like Ingua," she said. "We're going into town to have her new dress tried on this morning."

He nodded and resumed his chair. His unexpected politeness gave her courage.

"It's going to be a pretty dress," she continued, "and, if only she had a new hat to go with it, Ingua would have a nice outfit. She needs new shoes, though," as an afterthought, "and perhaps a few other little things — like stockings and underwear."

He was silent, wholly unresponsive to her suggestion.

"I — I'd like to buy them for her myself," went on the girl, in a wistful tone, "only Ingua is so proud that she won't accept gifts from me."

Still he remained silent.

"I wonder," she said, with obvious hesitation, "if you would allow me to give *you* the things, sir, and then you give them to Ingua, as if they came from yourself."

"No!" It was a veritable explosion, so fierce that she started back in terror. Then he rose from his chair, abruptly quitted the porch and walked down the path toward the bridge in his accustomed deliberate, dignified manner.

Ingua, overhearing his ejaculation, came to the open window to see what had caused it.

"Oh, it's you, Mary Louise, is it?" she exclaimed. "Thank goodness, you've drove Gran'dad off to the office. I thought he'd planted himself in that

chair for the whole day."

"Are you ready to go to Miss Huckins'?" asked Mary Louise.

"I will be, in a few minutes. Gran'dad was late gett'n' up this mornin' and that put things back. He had the 'wakes' ag'in last night."

"Oh; did he walk out, then?"

"Got back at about daylight and went to bed. That's why he slep' so late."

Mary Louise reflected that in such a case Josie ought to have some news to tell her. She answered Ingua's inquiries after Josie by saying she was engaged this morning and would not go to town with them, so presently the two girls set off together. Mary Louise was much better qualified to direct the making of the new dress than was Josie, and she gave Miss Huckins some hints on modern attire that somewhat astonished the country dressmaker but were gratefully received. There was no question but that Mary Louise was stylishly, if simply, dressed on all occasions, and so Miss Huckins was glad to follow the young girl's advice.

They were in the dressmaker's shop a long time, fitting and planning, and when at length they came down the stairs they saw Sol Jerrems standing in his door and closely scrutinizing through his big horn spectacles something he held in his hand. As Mary Louise wished to make a slight purchase at the store she approached the proprietor, who said in a puzzled tone of voice:

"I dunno what t' say to you folks, 'cause I'm up in the air. This money may be genooine, but it looks to me like a counterfeit," and he held up a new ten-dollar bill.

"I want a roll of tape, please," said Mary Louise. "I hope your money is good, Mr. Jerrems, but its value cannot interest us."

"I dunno 'bout that," he replied, looking hard at Ingua, "Ol' Swallertail gimme this bill, not ten minutes ago, an' said as his gran'darter was to buy whatever she liked, as fur as the money would go. That order was so queer that it made me suspicious. See here: a few days ago ol' Cragg bought Ingua a dress — an' paid for it, by gum! — an' now he wants her t' git ten dollars' wuth o' shoes an' things! Don't that look mighty strange?"

"Why?" asked Mary Louise.

"'Cause it's the first money he's spent on the kid since I kin remember, an' he's allus talkin' poverty an' says how he'll die in the poorhouse if prices keep goin' up, as they hev durin' the furrin war that's now hummin' acrost the water. If he's *that* poor, an' on a sudden springs a ten-dollar bill on me for fixin's fer his kid, there's sure somethin' wrong somewhere. I got stuck on a bill jus' like this a year ago, an' I ain't goin' to let any goods go till I find out for sure whether it's real money or not."

"When can you find out?" inquired Mary Louise.

“To-morrer there’s a drummer due here f’m the city — a feller keen as a razor — who’ll know in a minute if the bill is a counterfeit. If he says it’s good, then Ingua kin trade it out, but I ain’t goin’ to take no chances.”

Ingua came close to the storekeeper, her face dark with passion.

“Come,” said Mary Louise, taking the child’s arm, “let us go home. I am sure Mr. Jerrems is over particular and that the money is all right. But we can wait until to-morrow, easily. Come, Ingua.”

The child went reluctantly, much preferring to vent her indignation on old Sol. Mary Louise tried to get her mind off the insult.

“We’ll have the things, all right, Ingua,” she said. “Wasn’t it splendid in your grandfather to be so generous, when he has so little money to spend? And the ten dollars will fit you up famously. I wish, though,” she added, “there was another or a better store at the Crossing at which to trade.”

“Well, there ain’t,” observed Ingua, “so we hev to put up with that Sol Jerrems. When I tell Gran’dad about this business I bet he’ll punch Sol Jerrems’ nose.”

“Don’t tell him,” advised Mary Louise.

“Why not?”

“I think he gave this money to Mr. Jerrems on a sudden impulse. Perhaps, if there is any question about its being genuine, he will take it back, and you will lose the value of it. Better wait until to-morrow, when of course the drummer will pronounce it all right. My opinion is that Mr. Jerrems is so unused to new ten dollar bills that having one makes him unjustly suspicious.”

“I guess yer right,” said Ingua more cheerfully. “It’s amazin’ that Gran’dad loosened up at all. An’ he might repent, like you say, an’ take the money back. So I’ll be like ol’ Sol — I’ll take no chances.”

CHAPTER XIX
GOOD MONEY FOR BAD

At luncheon Josie appeared at the table, fresh as ever, and Mary Louise began to relate to her and to her grandfather the occurrences of the morning. When she came to tell how Sol Jerrems had declared the money counterfeit, Josie suddenly sprang up and swung her napkin around her head, shouting gleefully:

"Glory hallelujah! I've got him. I've trapped Old Swallowtail at last."

They looked at her in amazement.

"What do you mean?" asked Mary Louise.

Josie sobered instantly.

"Forgive me," she said; "I'm ashamed of myself. Go on with the story. What became of that counterfeit bill?"

"Mr. Jerrems has it yet. He is keeping it to show to a commercial traveler, who is to visit his store to-morrow. If the man declares the money is good, then Ingua may buy her things."

"We won't bother the commercial traveler," said Josie, in a tone of relief. "I'm going straight down to the store to redeem that bill. I want it in my possession."

Colonel Hathaway regarded her gravely.

"I think our female detective, having said so much and having exhibited such remarkable elation, must now explain her discoveries to us more fully," said he.

"I'd rather not, just yet," protested Josie. "But what have I said in my madness, and what did my words imply?"

"From the little I know of this case," replied the Colonel, "I must judge that you believe Mr. Cragg to be a counterfeiter, and that his mysterious business is — to counterfeit. In this out-of-the-way place," he continued, thoughtfully, "such a venture might be carried on for a long time without detection. Yet there is one thing that to me forbids this theory."

"What is that, sir?"

"A counterfeiter must of necessity have confederates, and Mr. Cragg seems quite alone in the conduct of his mysterious business."

Josie smiled quite contentedly. Confederates? Last night's discoveries had proved that Old Swallowtail had two of these, at least.

"Please don't lisp a word of this suspicion at present," she warned her friends. "If I am right — and I have no doubt of that — we are about to uncover a far-reaching conspiracy to defraud the Government. But the slightest hint of danger would enable them to escape and I want the credit of

putting this gang of desperadoes behind the bars. Really, I'd no idea, when I began the investigation, that it would lead to anything so important. I thought, at first, it might be a simple murder case; simple, because the commonest people commit murder, and to the detective the deed is more revolting than exciting. But we may dismiss the murder suspicion entirely."

"Oh, indeed! What about Ned Joselyn's mysterious disappearance?" asked Mary Louise.

"Joselyn? He disappeared for a purpose," answered Josie. "I saw him last night — monocle and all — acting as old Cragg's confederate. Ned Joselyn is one of those I hope to land in prison."

Her hearers seemed quite bewildered by this positive statement.

"Where were you last night?" inquired Mary Louise.

"At that five acres of stones we once visited, which is Mr. Cragg's private property. Hidden somewhere in the hillside is a cavern, and in that cavern the counterfeit money is made. I have heard the printing-press turning it out in quantity; I saw Ned Joselyn come away with a package of the manufactured bills and heard Old Swallowtail implore him to 'play square' with the proceeds. There was another of the gang present, also; a man whom I had considered quite an innocent citizen of Cragg's Crossing until I discovered him with the others. I think it was he who operated the press. It has been a very pretty plot, a cleverly conducted plot; and it has been in successful operation for years. But the gang is in the toils, just now, and little redheaded Josie O'Gorman is going to score a victory that will please her detective daddy mightily." Josie was surely elated when she ventured to boast in this manner. The others were duly impressed.

"You don't mean to arrest those men alone, do you, Josie?" asked the Colonel somewhat anxiously.

"No, indeed. I'm not yet quite ready to spring my trap," she replied. "When the time comes, I must have assistance, but I want to get all my evidence shipshape before I call on the Secret Service to make the capture. I can't afford to bungle so important a thing, you know, and this ten dollar bill, so carelessly given the storekeeper, is going to put one powerful bit of evidence in my hands. That was a bad slip on old Cragg's part, for he has been very cautious in covering his tracks, until now. But I surmise that Mary Louise's pleading for Ingua, this morning, touched his pride, and having no real money at hand he ventured to give the storekeeper a counterfeit. And old Sol, having been caught by a counterfeit once before — I wonder if Old Swallowtail gave him that one, too? — became suspicious of the newness of the bill and so played directly into our hands. So now, if you'll excuse me, I'll run to town without further delay. I won't rest easy until that bill is in my

possession."

"I'll go with you," said Mary Louise eagerly.

Half an hour later the two girls entered the store and found the proprietor alone. Mary Louise made a slight purchase, as an excuse, and then Josie laid ten silver dollars on the counter and said carelessly:

"Will you give me a ten dollar bill for this silver, Mr. Jerrems? I want to send it away in a letter."

"Sure; I'd ruther hev the change than the bill," he answered, taking out his wallet. "But I wouldn't send so much money in a letter, if I was you. Better buy a post-office order."

"I know my business," she pertly replied, watching him unroll the leather wallet. "No; don't give me that old bill. I'd rather have the new one on top."

"That new one," said he, "I don't b'lieve is good. Looks like a counterfeit, to me."

"Let's see it," proposed Josie, taking the bill in her hand and scrutinizing it. "I can tell a counterfeit a mile away. No; this is all right; I'll take it," she decided.

"Yer like to git stung, if ye do," he warned her.

"I'll take my chances," said Josie, folding the bill and putting it in her purse. "You've got good money for it, anyhow, so you've no kick coming, that I can see."

"Why, that must be the bill Mr. Cragg gave you," Mary Louise said to the storekeeper, as if she had just recognized it.

"It is," admitted Sol.

"Then Ingua can now buy her outfit?"

"Any time she likes," he said. "But I want it reg'lar understood that the sewin'-girl can't bring the money back to me, if she finds it bad. I ain't sure it's bad, ye know, but I've warned her, an' now it's her look-out."

"Of course it is," agreed Josie. "But don't worry. The bill is good as gold. I wish I had a hundred like it."

On their way home Josie stopped to call on Ingua, while Mary Louise, at her friend's request, went on.

"I've two important things to tell you," Josie announced to the child. "One is that you needn't worry any more about Ned Joselyn's being dead. A girl whom I know well has lately seen him alive and in good health, so whatever your grandfather's crimes may have been he is not a murderer."

Ingua was astounded. After a moment she gasped out:

"How d'ye know? Who was the girl? Are ye sure it were Ned Joselyn?"

"Quite sure. He has probably been in hiding, for some reason. But you mustn't tell a soul about this, Ingua; especially your grandfather. It is part of

the secret between us, and that's the reason I have told you."

Ingua still stared as if bewildered.

"Who was the girl?" she whispered.

"I can't tell you her name, but you may depend upon the truth of her statement, just the same."

"And she's *sure* it were Ned Joselyn she saw?"

"Isn't he tall and thin, with a light moustache and curly hair, and doesn't he wear a glass in one eye?"

"With a string to it; yes! That's him, sure enough. Where'd she see him?"

"Don't ask me questions. It's a part of the girl's secret, you know. She let me tell you this much, so that you wouldn't worry any longer over the horror of that winter night when your grandfather went to the Kenton house and Joselyn disappeared. I think, Ingua, that the man is crooked, and mixed up with a lot of scoundrels who ought to be in jail."

Ingua nodded her head.

"Gran'dad told him he was crooked," she affirmed. "I don't say as Gran'dad is a saint, Josie, but he ain't crooked, like Ned — ye kin bank on that — 'cause he's a Cragg, an' the Craggs is square-toes even when they're chill'ins."

Josie smiled at this quaint speech. She was sorry for poor Ingua, whose stalwart belief in the Cragg honesty was doomed to utter annihilation when her grandsire was proved to have defrauded the Government by making counterfeit money. But this was no time to undeceive the child, so she said:

"The other bit of news is that Sol Jerrems has traded the bill which he thought was bad for good money, so you can buy your things any time you please."

"Then it wasn't counterfeit?"

"I saw it myself. I've lived in the city so long that no one can fool me with counterfeit money. I can tell it in two looks, Ingua. So I'd rather have a nice new bill than ten clumsy silver dollars and I made the trade myself."

"Where'd ye get so much money, Josie?"

"My wages. I don't do much work, but I get paid regularly once a week."

She didn't explain that her father made her a weekly allowance, but Ingua was satisfied.

"What do you think I orter buy with that money, Josie? I need so many things that it's hard to tell where to begin and where to leave off."

"Let's make a list, then, and figure it out."

This occupied them some time and proved a very fascinating occupation to the poor girl, who had never before had so much money to spend at one time.

“I owe it all to Mary Louise,” she said gratefully, as Josie rose to depart. “It seems like no one can refuse Mary Louise anything. When she asked me to be more careful in my speech didn’t I do better? I slips, now an’ then, but I’ms always tryin’. And she tackled Gran’dad. If you or me — or I — had asked Gran’dad for that money, Josie, we’d never ‘a’ got it in a thousan’ years. Why do you s’pose Mary Louise gits into people the way she does?”

“It’s personality, I suppose,” answered Josie, thoughtfully. And then, realizing that Ingua might not understand that remark, she added: “There’s no sham about Mary Louise; she’s so simple and sweet that she wins hearts without any effort. You and I have natures so positive, on the contrary, that we seem always on the aggressive, and that makes folks hold aloof from us, or even oppose us.”

“I wish I was like Mary Louise,” said Ingua with a sigh.

“I don’t,” declared Josie. “We can’t all be alike, you know, and I’d rather push ahead, and get a few knocks on the way, then have a clear path and no opposition.”

CHAPTER XX

AN UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE

For a week it was very quiet at Cragg's Crossing. The only ripple of excitement was caused by the purchase of Ingua's new outfit. In this the child was ably assisted by Mary Louise and Josie; indeed, finding the younger girl so ignorant of prices, and even of her own needs, the two elder ones entered into a conspiracy with old Sol and slyly added another ten dollars to Ingua's credit. The result was that she carried home not only shoes and a new hat — trimmed by Miss Huckins without cost, the material being furnished from the fund — but a liberal supply of underwear, ribbons, collars and hosiery, and even a pair of silk gloves, which delighted the child's heart more than anything else.

Miss Huckins' new dress proved very pretty and becoming, and with all her wealth of apparel Ingua was persuaded to dine with Mary Louise at the Kenton house on Saturday evening. The hour was set for seven o'clock, in order to allow the girl to prepare her grandfather's supper before going out, and the first intimation Old Swallowtail had of the arrangement was when he entered the house Saturday evening and found Ingua arrayed in all her finery.

He made no remark at first, but looked at her more than once — whether approvingly or not his stolid expression did not betray. When the girl did not sit down to the table and he observed she had set no place for herself, he suddenly said:

"Well?"

"I'm goin' to eat with the Hathaways to-night," she replied. "Their dinner ain't ready till seven o'clock, so if ye hurry a little I kin wash the dishes afore I go."

He offered no objection. Indeed, he said nothing at all until he had finished his simple meal. Then, as she cleared the table, he said:

"It might be well, while you are in the society of Mary Louise and Colonel Hathaway, to notice their method of speech and try to imitate it."

"What's wrong with my talk?" she demanded. She was annoyed at the suggestion, because she had been earnestly trying to imitate Mary Louise's speech.

"I will leave you to make the discovery yourself," he said dryly.

She tossed her dishes into the hot water rather recklessly.

"If I orter talk diff'rent," said she, "it's your fault. Ye hain't give me no schooling ner noth'n'. Ye don't even say six words a week to me. I'm just your slave, to make yer bed an' cook yer meals an' wash yer dishes. Gee! how'd ye s'pose I'd talk? Like a lady?"

“I think,” he quietly responded, “you picked up your slang from your mother, who, however, had some education. The education ruined her for the quiet life here and she plunged into the world to get the excitement she craved. Hasn’t she been sorry for it many times, Ingua?”

“I don’t know much ‘bout Marm, an’ I don’t care whether she’s sorry or not. But I do know I need an eddication. If Mary Louise hadn’t had no eddication she’d ‘a’ been just like me: a bit o’ junk on a scrap-heap, that ain’t no good to itself ner anybody else.”

He mused silently for a while, getting up finally and walking over to the door.

“Your peculiarities of expression,” he then remarked, as if more to himself than to the child, “are those we notice in Sol Jerrems and Joe Brennan and Mary Ann Hopper. They are characteristic, of the rural population, which, having no spur to improve its vocabulary, naturally grows degenerate in speech.”

She glanced at him half defiantly, not sure whether he was “pokin’ fun at her” or not.

“If you mean I talks country talk,” said she, “you’re right. Why shouldn’t I, with no one to tell me better?”

Again he mused. His mood was gentle this evening.

“I realize I have neglected you,” he presently said. “You were thrust upon me like a stray kitten, which one does not want but cannot well reject. Your mother has not supplied me with money for your education, although she has regularly paid for your keep.”

“She has?” cried Ingua, astounded. “Then you’ve swindled her an’ me both, for I pays for more’n my keep in hard work. My keep? For the love o’ Mike, what does my keep amount to? A cent a year?”

He winced a little at her sarcasm but soon collected himself. Strangely enough, he did not appear to be angry with her.

“I’ve neglected you,” he repeated, “but it has been an oversight. I have had so much on my mind that I scarcely realized you were here. I forgot you are Nan’s child and that you — you needed attention.”

Ingua put on her new hat, looking into a cracked mirror.

“Ye might ‘a’ remembered I’m a Cragg, anyhow,” said she, mollified by his tone of self reproach. “An’ ye might ‘a’ remembered as *you’re* a Cragg. The Craggs orter help each other, ‘cause all the world’s ag’in ‘em.”

He gave her an odd look, in which pride, perplexity and astonishment mingled.

“And you are going into the enemy’s camp to-night?”

“Oh, Mary Louise is all right. She ain’t like them other snippy girls that

sometimes comes here to the big houses. *She* don't care if I *am* a Cragg, or if I talks country. I like Mary Louise."

When she had gone the old man sat in deep thought for a long time. The summer evening cast shadows; twilight fell; darkness gradually shrouded the bare little room. Still he sat in his chair, staring straight ahead into the gloom and thinking.

Then the door opened. Shifting his eyes he discovered a dim shadow in the opening. Whoever it was stood motionless until a low, clear voice asked sharply:

"Anybody home?"

He got up, then, and shuffled to a shelf, where he felt for a kerosene lamp and lighted it.

"Come in, Nan," he said without turning around, as he stooped over the lamp and adjusted the wick.

The yellow light showed a young woman standing in the doorway, a woman of perhaps thirty-five. She was tall, erect, her features well formed, her eyes bright and searching. Her walking-suit was neat and modish and fitted well her graceful, rounded form. On her arm was a huge basket, which she placed upon a chair as she advanced into the room and closed the door behind her.

"So you've come back," remarked Old Swallowtail, standing before her and regarding her critically.

"A self-evident fact, Dad," she answered lightly, removing her hat. "Where's Ingua?"

"At a dinner party across the river."

"That's good. Is she well?"

"What do you care, Nan, whether she is well or not?"

"If she's at a dinner party I needn't worry. Forgive the foolish question, Dad. Brennan promised to bring my suit case over in the morning. I lugged the basket myself."

"What's in the basket?"

"Food. Unless you've changed your mode of living the cupboard's pretty bare, and this is Saturday night. I can sleep on that heartbreaking husk mattress with Ingua, but I'll be skinned if I eat your salt junk and corn pone. Forewarned is forearmed; I brought my own grub."

As she spoke she hung her hat and coat on some pegs, turned the lamp a little higher and then, pausing with hands on hips, she looked inquisitively at her father.

"You seem pretty husky, for your age," she continued, with a hard little laugh.

“You’ve been prospering, Nan.”

“Yes,” sitting in a chair and crossing her legs, “I’ve found my forte at last. For three years, nearly, I’ve been employed by the Secret Service Department at Washington.”

“Ah.”

“I’ve made good. My record as a woman sleuth is excellent. I make more money in a week — when I’m working — than you do in a year. Unless — ” She paused abruptly and gave him a queer look.

“Unless it’s true that you’re coining money in a way that’s not legal.”

He stood motionless before her, reading her face. She returned his scrutiny with interest. Neither resumed the conversation for a time. Finally the old man sank back into his chair.

“A female detective,” said he, a little bitterly, “is still — a female.”

“And likewise a detective. I know more about you, Dad, than you think,” she asserted, in an easy, composed tone that it seemed impossible to disturb. “You need looking after, just at this juncture, and as I’ve been granted a vacation I ran up here to look after you.”

“In what way, Nan?”

“We’ll talk that over later. There isn’t much love lost between us, more’s the pity. You’ve always thought more of your infernal ‘Cause’ than of your daughter. But we’re Craggs, both of us, and it’s the Cragg custom to stand by the family.”

It struck him as curious that Ingua had repeated almost those very words earlier that same evening. He had never taught them the Cragg motto, “Stand Fast,” that he could remember, yet both Nan and her child were loyal to the code. Was *he* loyal, too? Had he stood by Nan in the past, and Ingua in the present, as a Cragg should do?

His face was a bit haggard as he sat in his chair and faced his frank-spoken daughter, whose clear eyes did not waver before his questioning gaze.

“I know what you’re thinking,” said she; “that I’ve never been much of a daughter to you. Well, neither have you been much of a father to me. Ever since I was born and my unknown mother — lucky soul! — died, you’ve been obsessed by an idea which, lofty and altruistic as you may have considered it, has rendered you self-centered, cold and inconsiderate of your own flesh and blood. Then there’s that devilish temper of yours to contend with. I couldn’t stand the life here. I wandered away and goodness knows how I managed to live year after year in a struggle with the world, rather than endure your society and the hardships you thrust upon me. You’ve always had money, yet not a cent would you devote to your family. You lived like a

dog and wanted me to do the same, and I wouldn't. Finally I met a good man and married him. He wasn't rich but he was generous. When he died I was thrown on my own resources again, with a child of my own to look after. Circumstances forced me to leave Ingua with you while I hunted for work. I found it. I'm a detective, well-known and respected in my profession."

"I'm glad to know you are prosperous," he said gently, as she paused. He made no excuses. He did not contradict her accusations. He waited to hear her out.

"So," said Nan, in a careless, offhand tone, "I've come here to save you. You're in trouble."

"I am not aware of it."

"Very true. If you were, the danger would be less. I've always had to guess at most of your secret life. I knew you were sly and secretive. I didn't know until now that you've been crooked."

He frowned a little but made no retort.

"It doesn't surprise me, however," she continued. "A good many folks are crooked, at times, and the only wonder is that a clever man like you has tripped and allowed himself to fall under suspicion. Suspicion leads to investigation — when it's followed up — and investigation, in such cases, leads to — jail."

He gave a low growl that sounded like the cry of an enraged beast, and gripped the arms of his chair fiercely. Then he rose and paced the room with frantic energy. Nan watched him with a half smile on her face. When he had finally mastered his wrath and became more quiet she said:

"Don't worry, Dad. I said I have come to save you. It will be fun, after working for the Government so long, to work against it. There's a certain red-headed imp in this neighborhood who is the daughter of our assistant chief, John O'Gorman. Her name is Josie O'Gorman and she's in training for the same profession of which I'm an ornament. I won't sneer at her, for she's clever, in a way, but I'd like to show O'Gorman that Nan Shelley — that's my name in Washington — is a little more clever than his pet. This Josie O'Gorman is staying with the Hathaway family. She's been probing your secret life and business enterprises and has unearthed an important clew in which the department is bound to be interested. So she sent a code telegram to O'Gorman, who left it on his desk long enough for me to decipher and read it. I don't know what the assistant chief will do about it, for I left Washington an hour later and came straight to you. What I do know is that I'm in time to spike Miss Josie's guns, which will give me a great deal of pleasure. She doesn't know I'm your daughter, any more than O'Gorman does, so if the girl sees me here she'll imagine I'm on Government business.

But I want to keep out of her way for a time. Do you know the girl, Dad?"

"Yes," he said.

"She's rather clever."

"Yes."

"I think she'd have nabbed you, presently, if I hadn't taken hold of the case so promptly myself. With our start, and the exercise of a grain of intelligence, we can baffle any opposition the girl can bring to bear. Do you wish to run away?"

"No," he growled.

"I'm glad of that. I like the excitement of facing danger boldly. But there's ample time to talk over details. I see you've had your supper, so I'll just fry myself a beefsteak."

She opened her basket and began to prepare a meal. Old Swallowtail sat and watched her. Presently he smiled grimly and Nan never noticed the expression. Perhaps, had she done so, she would have demanded an explanation. He rarely smiled, and certainly his daughter's disclosures were not calculated to excite mirth, or even to amuse.

CHAPTER XXI
A CASE OF NERVES

The "hotel" at the Crossing was not an imposing affair. Indeed, had there not been an "office" in the front room, with a wooden desk in one corner, six chairs and two boxes of sawdust to serve as cuspidors, the building might easily have been mistaken for a private residence. But it stood on the corner opposite the store and had a worn and scarcely legible sign over the front door, calling it a hotel in capital letters.

The Hoppers, who operated the establishment, did an excellent business. On week days the farmers who came to town to trade made it a point to eat one of Silas Hopper's twenty-five cent dinners, famous for at least five miles around for profusion and good cookery. On Sundays — and sometimes on other days — an automobile party, touring the country, would stop at the hotel for a meal, and Mrs. Hopper was accustomed to have a chicken dinner prepared every Sunday in the hope of attracting a stray tourist. There were two guest rooms upstairs that were religiously reserved in case some patron wished to stay overnight, but these instances were rare unless a drummer missed his train and couldn't get away from the Crossing until the next day.

The Sunday following the arrival of Ingua's mother in town proved a dull day with the Hoppers, who had been compelled to eat their chicken dinner themselves in default of customers. The dishes had been washed and Mary Ann, the daughter of the house, was sitting on the front porch in her Sunday gown and a rocking-chair, when an automobile drove up to the door and a dapper little man alighted. He was very elaborately dressed, with silk hat, patent-leather shoes and a cane setting off his Prince Albert coat and lavender striped trousers. Across his white waistcoat was a heavy gold watch-guard with an enormous locket dangling from it; he had a sparkling pin in his checkered neck-scarf that might be set with diamonds but perhaps wasn't; on his fingers gleamed two or three elaborate rings. He had curly blond hair and a blond moustache and he wore gold-rimmed eyeglasses. Altogether the little man was quite a dandy and radiated prosperity. So, when the driver of the automobile handed out two heavy suit cases and received from the stranger a crisp bill for his services, Mary Ann Hopper realized with exultation that the hotel was to have a guest.

As the car which had brought him rolled away the little man turned, observed Mary Ann, and removing his silt hat bowed low.

"I presume," said he in precise accents, "that this town is that of Cragg's Crossing, and that this building is the hotel. Am I correct in the surmise?"

"I'll call Pa," said Mary Ann, somewhat embarrassed. Drummers she

could greet with unconcern, but this important individual was a man of a different sort. His brilliant personality dazzled her.

Mr. Hopper came out in his shirtsleeves, gave one look at his customer and put on his coat.

"Goin' to stay, sir?" he asked.

"For a time, if I like the accommodations," was the reply. "I am in need of perfect quiet. My doctor says I must court tranquility to avoid a nervous breakdown. I do not know your town; I do not know your hotel; I hired a man in the city to drive me until I came to a quiet place. He assured me, on the way, that this is a quiet place."

"I dunno him," said Hopper, "but he didn't put up no bluff. If ye can find a quieter place ner this, outside a graveyard, I'll board ye fer noth'n'."

"I thank you for your assurance, sir. Can you show me to the best room you can place at my disposal?"

"Had dinner?"

"I thank you, yes. I am weary from the long ride. I will lie down for an hour. Then I will take my usual walk. When I return I would like an omelet with mushrooms — I suppose you have no truffles? — for my evening meal."

The landlord grinned and picked up the suit cases.

"We're jest out o' truffles an' we're out o' mushrooms," he said, "but we're long on eggs an' ye can have 'em omeletted or fried or b'iled, as it suits yer fancy. Sophie's best hold is cookin' eggs. Sophie's my wife, ye know, an' there ain't no better cook in seven counties, so the drummers say."

As he spoke he entered the house and led the way up the stairs.

"Thank you; thank you," said the stranger. "I am glad your good wife is an experienced cook. Kindly ask her to spare no expense in preparing my meals. I am willing to pay liberally for what I receive."

"This room, with board," remarked Hopper, setting down the suit cases in the front corner bedchamber, "will cost you a dollar a day, or five dollars a week — if you eat our reg'lar meals. If ye keep callin' fer extrys, I'll hev to charge ye extry."

"Very reasonable; very reasonable, indeed," declared the stranger, taking a roll of bills from his pocket. "As I am at present unknown to you, I beg you to accept this five-dollar bill in advance. And now, if you will bring me a pitcher of ice-water, I will take my needed siesta. My nerves, as you may have observed, are at somewhat of a tension to-day."

"We're out o' ice," remarked the landlord, pocketing the money, "but ye'll find plenty of good cold water at the pump in the back yard. Anything else, sir?"

“I thank you, no. I am not thirsty. Ice-water is not necessary to my happiness. You will pardon me if I ask to be left alone — with my nerves.”

Hopper went away chuckling. His wife and Mary Ann were both at the foot of the stairs, lying in wait to question him.

“That feller’s as good as a circus,” he asserted, taking off his coat again and lighting his corncob pipe. “He’s got nerves an’ money, an’ he’s come here to git rid of ‘em both.”

“Who is he?” demanded Mrs. Hopper.

“By gum, I fergot to ask him. I got thanked fer ev’rything I did an’ ev’rything I couldn’t do, an’ I’ve got five dollars o’ his money in my jeans as a evidence o’ good faith. The whole performance sort o’ knocked me out.”

“No wonder,” asserted, his wife sympathetically.

“I’ll bet he’s some punkins, though,” declared Mary Ann, “an’ he’ll be a godsend to us after a dull week. Only, remember this, if he kicks on the feed he don’t git no satisfaction out o’ me.”

“I don’t think he’ll kick on anything,” said her father. “He wants eggs for his supper, in a omelet.”

“He couldn’t want anything that’s cheaper to make,” said Mrs. Hopper. “The hens are layin’ fine jus’ now.”

“When he comes down, make him register,” suggested Mary Ann. “If ye don’t, we won’t know what ter call him.”

“I’ll call him an easy mark, whatever his name is,” said the landlord, grinning at his own attempt at wit.

The stranger kept his room until five o’clock. Then he came down, spick and span, his cane under his arm, upon his hands a pair of bright yellow kid gloves.

“I will now indulge in my walk,” said he, addressing the family group in the office. “My nerves are better, but still vibrant. I shall be further restored on my return.”

“Jest sign the register,” proposed Hopper, pointing to a worn and soiled book spread upon the counter. “Hate to trouble ye, but it’s one o’ the rules o’ my hotel.”

“No trouble, thank you; no trouble at all,” responded the stranger, and drawing a fountain-pen from his pocket he approached the register and wrote upon the blank page. “I hope there is, nothing to see in your town,” he remarked, turning away. “I don’t wish to see anything. I merely desire to walk.”

“Yer wish’ll come true, I guess,” said Hopper. “I’ve lived here over twenty year an’ I hain’t seen noth’n’ yet. But the walkin’ is as good as it is anywhere.”

“Thank you. I shall return at six o’clock — for the omelet,” and he walked away with short, mincing steps that seemed to them all very comical.

Three heads at once bent over the register, on which the stranger had I written in clear, delicate characters: “Lysander Antonius Sinclair, B. N., Boston, Mass.”

“I wonder what the ‘B. N.’ stands for,” said Mary Ann Hopper, curiously.

“Bum Nerves, o’ course,” replied the landlord. “He’s got ‘em, sure enough.”

CHAPTER XXII
INGUA'S MOTHER

"And how do you like your grandfather? Is he good to you?" asked Mrs. Scammel on Sunday forenoon, as she sat on the porch beside her small daughter. Old Swallowtail did not usually go to his office on Sundays, but kept his room at the cottage and wrote letters. To-day, however, he had wandered down the path and disappeared, and Nan and Ingua were both glad to see him go.

"No," answered the child to both questions.

"You don't like him?"

"How can I, when he jes' sets an' glares at me ev'ry time he comes into the house — 'cept when he complains I ain't doin' my work proper? It were a sort o' mean trick o' yours, Marm, leavin' me here to slave fer that ol' man while you was off in the cities, havin' a good time."

"Yes," said Nan, "I was frolicking with starvation until I got a job, and it was the sort of job that wouldn't allow having a child around. But since I've been making money I've sent Dad five dollars every week, for your clothes and board."

"You have?"

"Every week."

"Ten cents a week would pay for all the grub he gives me, an' there ain't a beggar in the county that sports the rags an' tatters I does. That new dress I had on las' night was the first thing in clothes he's bought me for a year, and I guess I wouldn't have had that if Mary Louise hadn't told him he orter dress me more decent."

Nan's brow grew dark.

"I'll have it out with him for that," she promised. "What does he do with his money, Ingua?"

"Salts it, I guess. I never see him have any. It's one o' the mysteries, Marm. Mysteries is thick aroun' Gran'dad, an' folks suspicion 'most anything about him. All I know is that he ain't no spendthrift. Once, when Ned Joselyn used to come here, there was lots of money passed between 'em. I saw it myself. I helped pick it up, once, when they quarreled an' upset the table an' spilled things. But since Ned run ayray. Gran'dad's be'n more savin' than ever."

"Ingua," said Nan, thoughtfully, "I want you to tell me all you know about Ned Joselyn, from the time he first came here."

Ingua regarded her mother with serious eyes.

"All?" she inquired.

“Everything, little or big, that you can recollect.”

“You’ll stick to Gran’dad, won’t ye?”

“That’s what I’m here for. There are enemies on his trail and I mean to save him.”

“What’s he done?”

“I’ve got to find that out. When I was here before, I knew he had some secret interest to which he was devoted, but I was too indifferent to find out what it was. Now I want to know. If I’m going to save him from the penalties of his crime I must know what the crime is. I think this man Joselyn is mixed up with it in some way, so go ahead and tell me all you know about him.”

Ingua obeyed. For more than an hour she earnestly related the story of Ned Joselyn, only pausing to answer an occasional question from her mother. When she came to that final meeting at Christmas week and Joselyn’s mysterious disappearance, Nan asked:

“Do you think he killed him?”

“I was pretty sure of it till yest’day, when Josie told me a friend of hers had seen him alive an’ well.”

“Josie O’Gorman?”

“No, Josie Jessup. She’s the sewin’-girl over to Mary Louise’s.”

“I know; but that girl has more names than one. Do you know her very well, Ingua?”

“She’s my best chum,” declared the child. “Josie’s a dandy girl, an’ I like her.”

“Have you told her anything about your gran’dad?”

“A little,” Ingua admitted, hesitating.

“See here,” said Nan, scowling, “I’ll put you wise. This red-headed Josie O’Gorman is a detective. She’s the daughter of the man I work for in Washington — the assistant chief of the Department — and she is here to try to land your gran’dad in jail. What’s more, Ingua, she’s likely to do it, unless you and I find a way to head her off.”

Ingua’s face depicted astonishment, grief, disappointment. Finally she said:

“Gran’dad didn’t murder Ned, for Josie herself told me so; so I can’t see what he’s done to go to jail for.”

“He has counterfeited money,” said Nan in a low voice.

“Gran’dad has?”

“So they say, and I believe it may be true. Josie has wired her father that she’s got the goods on Old Swallowtail and has asked that somebody be sent to arrest him. I saw the telegram and made up my mind I’d get the start of the O’Gormans. Dad won’t run away. I’ve warned him they are on his trail and

he didn't make any reply. But I wouldn't be surprised if he's gone, this very day, to cover up his traces. He's bright enough to know that if he destroys all evidence they can't prove anything against him."

She spoke musingly, more to herself than the child beside her, but Ingua drew a deep sigh and remarked:

"Then it's all right. Gran'dad is slick. They'll hev to get up early in the mornin' to beat him at his own game. But I wonder what he does with the counterfeit money, or the real money he trades it for."

"I think I know," said her mother. "He's chucked a fortune into one crazy idea, in which his life has been bound up ever since I can remember, and I suppose he tried counterfeiting to get more money to chuck away in the same foolish manner."

"What crazy idea is that?" inquired Ingua.

"I'll tell you, sometime. Just now I see your friend Josie coming, and that's a bit of good luck. I'm anxious to meet her, but if she sees me first she won't come on." As she spoke she rose swiftly and disappeared into the house. "Stay where you are, Ingua," she called from within in a low voice; "I don't want her to escape."

Josie was even now making her way across the stepping-stones. Presently she ran up the bank, smiling, and plumped down beside Ingua.

"Top o' the morning to you," said she. "How did you enjoy your first evening in society?"

"They were all very good to me," replied Ingua slowly, looking at her friend with troubled eyes. "I had a nice time, but — "

"You were a little shy," said Josie, "but that was only natural. When you get better acquainted with Mary Louise and the dear old Colonel, you'll — "

She stopped abruptly, for looking up she saw standing in the doorway Nan Shelley — by which name she knew her — who was calmly regarding her. The shock of surprise, for shock it surely was, seemed brief, for almost instantly Josie completed her broken speech:

"When you know them better you'll feel quite at home in their society. Hello, Nan."

"What! Josie O'Gorman? You here?" with well-affected surprise.

"You know it. But how came *you* here, Nan? Has Daddy sent you to help me?"

"Help you! In what way?"

"Help me enjoy country life," said Josie, coloring at her slip.

"Why, I'm on a vacation. You don't seem to understand. I'm — Ingua's mother."

Josie's self-control wasn't proof against this second shock. Her blue eyes

stared amazed. With a low exclamation she stood up and faced the woman.

"Ingua's mother! You, Nan?"

"Just so," with a quiet smile.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself," declared Josie with righteous indignation. "You're one of the best paid women in the Department, and you've left your poor child here to starve and slave for a wretched old — ," she paused.

"Well, what is he?" asked Nan with tantalizing gentleness.

"An old skinflint, at the least. Shame on you, Nan! Ingua is a dear little girl, and you — you're an unnatural mother. Why, I never suspected you were even married."

"I'm a widow, Josie."

"And Old Swallowtail is your father? How strange. But — why did you come here just now?" with sudden suspicion.

"I've just finished the Hillyard case and they gave me a vacation. So I came here to see my little girl. I didn't know she was being neglected, Josie. I shall take better care of her after this. My visit to Cragg's Crossing is perfectly natural, for I was born here. But you? What are you up to, Josie?"

"I'm visiting Mary Louise Burrows."

"With what object?"

A detective must be quick-witted. Josie's brain was working with lightning-like rapidity. In a few brief seconds she comprehended that if Nan was Old Swallowtail's daughter, home on a vacation, she must not be allowed to know that Josie was conducting a case against her father. Otherwise she might interfere and spoil everything. She knew Nan of old and respected her keen intelligence. Once, when they had been pitted against each other, Josie had won; but she was not sure she could defeat Nan a second time. Therefore it was imperative that old Cragg's daughter remain in ignorance of the fact that Josie was awaiting reinforcements from Washington in order to arrest Nan's father as a counterfeiter. Also Josie realized instantly that Ingua was likely to tell her mother all she knew about Joselyn, including the story she had told Josie; so, without hesitation she answered Nan's question with apparent frankness:

"Really, Nan, I came here on a wild-goose chase. A man named Ned Joselyn had mysteriously disappeared and his wife feared he had met with foul play. I traced him to this place and as Colonel Hathaway and Mary Louise were living here — in Mrs. Joselyn's own house, by the way — I had myself invited as their guest. Well, the long and short of it is that Joselyn isn't murdered, after all. He simply skipped, and since I came here to worry my poor brain over the fellow he has been discovered, still in hiding but very

much alive."

"You suspected my father of killing him?"

"I did; and so did others; but it seems he didn't. But, even with that precious bubble burst, Mary Louise insists on my staying for a visit; so here I am, and your little girl has become my friend."

Ingua knew this story to be quite correct, as far as it regarded her grandfather and Ned Joselyn. Its straightforward relation renewed her confidence in Josie. But Nan knew more than Josie thought she did, having intercepted the girl's telegram to her father; so she said with a slight sneer which she took no pains to conceal:

"You're a clever girl, Josie O'Gorman; a mighty clever girl. You're so clever that I wouldn't be surprised if it tripped you, some day, and landed you on your pug nose."

Which proved that Nan was *not* clever, for Josie's indulgent smile masked the thought: "She knows all and is here to defend her father. I must look out for Nan, for she has a notion I'm still on the track of Hezekiah Cragg."

CHAPTER XXIII
PECULIAR PEOPLE

Old Swallowtail came home at about four o'clock in the afternoon. The day was hot, yet the old man seemed neither heated nor wearied. Without a word to his daughter or Ingua he drew a chair to the little shady porch and sat down in their company. Nan was mending her child's old frock; Ingua sat thinking.

For half an hour, perhaps, silence was maintained by all. Then Nan turned and asked:

"Have you covered your tracks?"

He turned his glassy, expressionless eyes toward her.

"My tracks, as you call them," said he, "have been laid for forty years or more. They are now ruts. I cannot obliterate them in a day."

The woman studied his face thoughtfully.

"You are not worrying over your probable arrest?"

"No."

"Then it's all right," said she, relieved. "You're a foxy old rascal, Dad, and you've held your own for a good many years. I guess you don't need more than a word of warning."

He made no reply, his eyes wandering along the path to the bridge. Mary Louise was coming their way, walking briskly. Her steps slowed a bit as she drew nearer, but she said in an eager voice:

"Oh, Mrs. Scammel, Josie has told me you are here and who you are. Isn't it queer how lives get tangled up? But I remember you with gratitude and kindliest thoughts, because you were so considerate of my dear Gran'pa Jim. And to think that you are really Ingua's mother!"

Nan rose and took the girl's hands in her own.

"I fear I've been a bad mother to my kid," she replied, "but I thought she was all right with her grandfather and happy here. I shall look after her better in the future."

Mary Louise bowed to Mr. Cragg, who nodded his head in acknowledgment. Then she sat down beside Ingua.

"Are you plannin' to take me away from here, Mama?" asked the child.

"Wouldn't you rather be with me than with your grandfather?" returned Nan with a smile.

"I dunno," said Ingua seriously. "You're a detective, an' I don't like detections. You ain't much like a mother to me, neither, ner I don't know much about you. I dunno yet whether I'm goin' to like you or not."

A wave of color swept over Nan's face; Mary Louise was shocked; the

old man turned his inscrutable gaze down the path once more.

"I like it here," continued the child, musingly: "Gran'dad makes me work, but he don't bother me none 'cept when the devils get, hold o' him. I 'member that you git the devils, too, once in awhile, Marm, an' they're about as fierce as Gran'dad's is. An' I gets 'em 'cause I'm a Cragg like the rest o' you, an' devils seem to be in the Cragg blood. I've a notion it's easier to stand the devils in the country here, than in the city where you live."

Nan didn't know whether to be amused or angry.

"Yet you tried to run away once," she reminded Ingua, "and it was Mary Louise who stopped you. You told me of this only an hour ago.

"Didn't I say the devils pick on *me* sometimes?" demanded the girl. "An' Mary Louise was right. She fought the devils for me, and I'm glad she did, 'cause I've had a good time with her ever since," and she pressed Mary Louise's hand gratefully.

Her child's frankness was indeed humiliating to Nan Scammel, who was by no means a bad woman at heart and longed to win the love and respect of her little girl. Ingua's frank speech had also disturbed Mary Louise, and made her sorry for both the child and her mother. Old Swallowtail's eyes lingered a moment on Ingua's ingenuous countenance but he exhibited no emotion whatever.

"You're a simple little innocent," remarked Nan to Ingua, after a strained pause. "You know so little of the world that your judgment is wholly unformed. I've a notion to take you to Washington and buy you a nice outfit of clothes — like those of Mary Louise, you know — and put you into a first-class girls' boarding-school. Then you'll get civilized, and perhaps amount to something."

"I'd like that," said Ingua, with a first display of enthusiasm; "but who'd look after Gran'dad?"

"Why, we must provide for Dad in some way, of course," admitted Nan after another pause. "I can afford to hire a woman to keep house for him, if I hold my present job. I suppose he has a hoard of money hidden somewhere, but that's no reason he wouldn't neglect himself and starve if left alone. And, if he's really poor, I'm the one to help him. How does that arrangement strike you, Ingua?"

"It sounds fine," replied the girl, "but any woman that'd come *here* to work, an' would stan' Gran'dad's devils, wouldn't amount to much, nohow. If we're goin' to move to the city," she added with a sigh, "let's take Gran'dad with us."

This conversation was becoming too personal for Mary Louise to endure longer. They talked of Mr. Cragg just as if he were not present, ignoring him

as he ignored them. With an embarrassed air Mary Louise rose.

"I must go now," said she. "I just ran over to welcome you, Mrs. Scammel, and to ask you and Ingua to dine with us to-morrow night. Will you come? Josie O'Gorman is with us, you know, and I believe you are old friends."

Nan hesitated a moment.

"Thank you," she replied, "we'll be glad to come. You've been mighty good to my little girl and I am grateful. Please give my regards to Colonel Hathaway."

When Mary Louise had gone the three lapsed into silence again. Ingua was considering, in her childish but practical way, the proposed changes in her life. The mother was trying to conquer her annoyance at the child's lack of filial affection, tacitly admitting that the blame was not Ingua's. The old man stared at the path. Whatever his thoughts might be he displayed no hint of their nature.

Presently there appeared at the head of the path, by the bridge, the form of a stranger, a little man who came on with nervous, mincing steps. He was dressed in dandified fashion, with tall silk hat, a gold-headed cane and yellow kid gloves. Almost had he reached the porch when suddenly he stopped short, looked around in surprise and ejaculated:

"Bless me — bless me! I — I've made a mistake. This is a private path to your house. No thoroughfare. Dear me, what an error; an unpardonable error. I hope you will excuse me — I — I hope so!"

"To be sure we will," replied Nan with a laugh, curiously eyeing the dapper little man. "The only way out, sir, is back by the bridge."

"Thank you. Thank you very much," he said earnestly. "I — I am indulging in a stroll and — and my mind wandered, as did my feet. I — I am an invalid in search of rest. Thank you. Good afternoon."

He turned around and with the same mincing, regular steps retreated along the path. At the bridge he halted as if undecided, but finally continued along the country road past the Kenton Place.

Ingua laughed delightedly at the queer man. Nan smiled. Old Swallowtail had altered neither his position nor his blank expression.

"He's a queer fish, ain't he?" remarked the girl. "He's pretty lively for an invalid what's lookin' for rest. I wonder when he landed, an' where he's stoppin'."

Something in the child's remark made Nan thoughtful. Presently she laid down her work and said:

"I believe I'll take a little walk, myself, before dark. Want to go along, Ingua?"

Ingua was ready. She had on her new dress and hoped they might meet someone whom she knew. They wandered toward the town, where most of the inhabitants were sitting outf of doors — a Sunday afternoon custom. Jim Bennett, in his shirtsleeves, was reading a newspaper in front of the postoffice; Sol Jerrems and his entire family occupied the platform before the store, which was of course locked; Nance Milliker was playing the organ in the brown house around the corner, and in front of the hotel sat Mary Ann Hopper in her rocking-chair.

Nan strolled the length of the street, startling those natives who had formerly known her, Ingua nodded and smiled at everyone. Mary Ann Hopper called, as they passed her: "Hullo, Ingua. Where'd ye git the new duds?"

"Miss Huckins made 'em," answered Ingua proudly.

"I guess I'll go and shake hands with Mrs. Hopper," said Nan. "Don't you remember me, Mary Ann? I'm Nan Cragg."

"Gee! so y'are," exclaimed Mary Ann wonderingly. "We all 'spicioned you was dead, long ago."

"I'm home for a visit. You folks seem prosperous. How's business?"

"Pretty good. We got a new boarder to-day, a feller with bum nerves who come from the city. Gee! but he's togged out t' kill. Got money, too, an' ain't afraid to spend it. He paid Dad in advance."

"That's nice," said Nan. "What's his name?"

"It's a funny name, but I can't remember it. Ye kin see it on the register."

Nan went inside, leaving Ingua with Mary Ann, and studied the name on the register long and closely.

"No," she finally decided, "Lysander isn't calculated to arouse suspicion. He wears a wig, I know, but that is doubtless due to vanity and not a disguise. I at first imagined it was someone O'Gorman had sent down here to help Josie, but none of our boys would undertake such a spectacular personation, bound to attract attention. This fellow will become the laughing-stock of the whole town and every move he makes will be observed. I'm quite sure there is nothing dangerous in the appearance here of Mr. Lysander Antonius Sinclair."

She chatted a few minutes with Mrs. Hopper, whom she found in the kitchen, and then she rejoined Ingua and started homeward. Scarcely were mother and child out of sight when Mr. Sinclair came mincing along from an opposite direction and entered the hotel. He went to his room but soon came down and in a querulous voice demanded his omelet, thanking the landlady again and again for promising it in ten minutes.

He amused them all very much, stating that an omelet for an evening meal

was “an effective corrective of tired nerves” and would enable him to sleep soundly all night.

“I sleep a great deal,” he announced after he had finished his supper and joined Mr. Hopper on the porch. “When I have smoked a cigar — in which luxury I hope you will join me, sir — I shall retire to my couch and rest in the arms of Morpheus until the brilliant sun of another day floods the countryside.”

“P’r’aps it’ll rain,” suggested the landlord.

“Then Nature’s tears will render us sweetly sympathetic.”

He offered his cigar case to Mr. Hopper, who recognized a high priced cigar and helped himself.

“Didn’t see anything to make ye nervous, durin’ yer walk, did ye?” he inquired, lighting the weed.

“Very little. It seems a nice, quiet place. Only once was I annoyed. I stumbled into a private path, just before I reached the river, and — and had to apologize.”

“Must ‘a’ struck Ol’ Swallertail’s place,” remarked the landlord.

“Old Swallowtail? Old Swallowtail? And who is he?” queried the stranger.

Hopper was a born gossip, and if there was any one person he loved to talk of and criticize and “pick to pieces” it was Old Swallowtail. So he rambled on for a half hour, relating the Cragg history in all its details, including the story of Ingua and Ingua’s mother, Nan Cragg, who had married some unknown chap named Scammel, who did not long survive the ceremony.

Mr. Sinclair listened quietly, seeming to enjoy his cigar more than he did the Cragg gossip. He asked no questions, letting the landlord ramble on as he would, and finally, when Hopper had exhausted his fund of fact and fiction, which were about evenly mixed, his guest bade him good night and retired to his private room.

“It ain’t eight o’clock, yet,” said the landlord to his wife, “but a feller with nerves is best asleep. An’ when he’s asleep he won’t waste our kerosene.”

No, Mr. Sinclair didn’t waste the Hopper kerosene. He had a little pocket arrangement which supplied him with light when, an hour before midnight, he silently rose, dressed himself and prepared to leave the hotel. He was not attired in what Mary Ann called his “glad rags” now, but in a dark gray suit of homespun that was nearly the color of the night. The blond wig was carefully locked in a suit case, a small black cap was drawn over his eyes, and thus — completely transformed — Mr. Hopper’s guest had no difficulty in gaining the street without a particle of noise betraying him to the family of

his host.

He went to the postoffice, pried open a window, unlocked the mail bag that was ready for Jim Bennett to carry to the morning train at Chargrove and from it abstracted a number of letters which he unsealed and read with great care. They had all been written and posted by Hezekiah Cragg. The man spent a couple of hours here, resealing the envelopes neatly and restoring them to the mail bag, after which, he attached the padlock and replaced the bag in exactly its former position. When he had left the little front room which was devoted by the Bennetts to the mail service, the only evidence of his visit was a bruised depression beside the window-sash which was quite likely to escape detection.

After this the stranger crept through the town and set off at a brisk pace toward the west, taking the road over the bridge and following it to the connecting branch and thence to the lane. A half hour later he was standing in old Cragg's stone lot and another hour was consumed among the huge stones by the hillside — the place where Josie had discovered the entrance to the underground cave. Mr. Sinclair did not discover the entrance, however, so finally he returned to town and mounted the stairs beside Sol Jerrem's store building to the upper hallway.

In five minutes he was inside of Cragg's outer office; in another five minutes he had entered the inner office. There he remained until the unmistakable herald of dawn warned him to be going. However, when he left the building there was no visible evidence of his visit. He was in his own room and in bed long before Mrs. Hopper gave a final snore and wakened to light the kitchen fire and prepare for the duties of the day.

CHAPTER XXIV
FACING DANGER

Nan's presence at Cragg's Crossing rendered Josie O'Gorman uneasy. She had the Cragg case so well in hand, now, and the evidence in her possession was so positively incriminating, in her judgment, that she did not like to be balked by a clever female detective from her father's own office. She had little doubt but Nan would do all in her power to save old Hezekiah Cragg from the penalty of his misdeeds, and her greatest fear was that he might utterly disappear before O'Gorman sent her assistance.

With this fear growing in her mind, on Monday she determined to send another telegram to her father, urging haste, so she obtained permission from the Colonel to have Uncle Eben drive her and Mary Louise to the city, there being no telegraph office at Chargrove Station. But she timed the trip when no trains would stop at Chargrove during her absence and at the telegraph office she sent an imperative message to John O'Gorman at Washington demanding instant help. Since all counterfeiting cases belonged distinctly to the Secret Service Department she had little doubt her father would respond as soon as the affairs at the office would permit him to do so. But the delay was exasperating, nevertheless. Indeed, Josie was so sure that the crisis of her case was imminent that she determined to watch old Cragg's house every night until his arrest could be made. If he attempted to escape she would arrest him herself, with the aid of the little revolver she carried in her dress pocket.

On their return journey they overtook Mr. Sinclair at about a mile from the Crossing. They had never seen the man before, but when he signaled them. Uncle Eben slowed up the machine and stopped beside him.

"I beg a thousand pardons," said the dapper little stranger, removing his silk hat and bowing profoundly to the two girls, "but would you mind taking me to the town? I — I — fear I have turned my ankle; not seriously, you know, but it is uncomfortable; so if I may sit beside your chauffeur the favor will be greatly appreciated."

"To be sure," said Mary Louise with ready. "Can you get in unaided, or do you wish Uncle Eben to assist you?"

"Thank you; thank you a thousand times, young lady," said he, climbing into the front seat. "I'm stopping at the hotel," he explained, as the car again started, "for rest and quiet, because of my nervous condition. My doctor said I would suffer a nervous breakdown if I did not seek rest and quiet in the seclusion of some country village. So I came here, and — it's secluded; it really is."

“I hope your ankle is not seriously injured, sir,” said Mary Louise. “Take the gentleman to the hotel, Uncle Eben.”

“Thank you,” said the little man, and fussily removing a card-case from an inner pocket he added: “My card, please,” and handed it to Mary Louise.

Josie glanced at the card, too. She had been regarding the stranger thoughtfully, with the same suspicions of him that Nan had formerly entertained. The card was not printed; it was engraved: one point in the man’s favor. His blond hair was a wig; she had a good view of the back of it and was not to be deceived. But perhaps the moustache, which matched the hair, was genuine. Carefully considering the matter, she did not think anyone would come to Cragg’s Crossing in disguise unless he were a confederate of Hezekiah Cragg, helping to circulate the counterfeit money. This odd Mr. Sinclair might be such a person and working under the direction of Ned Joselyn. Joselyn was in hiding, for some unexplained reason; Sinclair could appear openly. There might be nothing in this supposition but Josie determined to keep an eye on the nervous stranger.

He was profuse in his thanks when they let him out at Hopper’s Hotel and Uncle Eben chuckled all the way home.

“Dat man am shuah some mighty ‘stravagant punkins, in he’s own mind,” he remarked. “He oughteh git he’s pictur’ took in dat outfit, Ma’y Weeze, jes’ to show how ‘dic’lous a white man can look. He’ll have all de kids in town a-chasin’ of him, if he gits loose on de streets. All he needs is a brass ban’ to be a circus parade.”

Nan and Ingua came over to dinner that evening and Josie was very cordial to Ingua’s mother, who treated her chief’s daughter with the utmost friendliness. Both Ingua and Mary Louise were surprised by their politeness and comradeship, but neither of the principals was deceived by such a display. Each was on her guard, but realized it was wise to appear friendly.

Monday night Josie lurked in the shadows of the river bank until daybreak, never relaxing her espionage of the Cragg house for a moment. All was quiet, however.

Tuesday passed without event. Tuesday night Josie was at her post again, her eyes fixed on the dim light that shone from Mr. Cragg’s room. Had she been able to see through the walls of the cottage she would have found the old man seated in his private apartment opposite his daughter. Could she have heard their conversation — the low, continuous hum of Old Swallowtail’s voice, broken only by an occasional question from Nan — she would surely have been astonished. Nan was not much astonished, save at the fact that her father had at last voluntarily confided to her the strange story of his life, a life hitherto unknown to her. She was not easily surprised, but

she was greatly impressed, and when he finally rose from his chair and went out into the night Nan sat in meditation for some time before she followed him. Ingua had long been asleep.

Josie, lurking outside, had not expected Old Swallowtail to leave the premises unless he planned to run away. His delivery of counterfeit money to Ned Joselyn had been of too recent a date to render it necessary that he revisit his stone-yard for some time to come, she argued; yet to-night, at a little after eleven o'clock, she saw his shadow pass from the house and take the path to the bridge.

Josie followed. At the bridge Mr. Cragg turned westward and at once she surmised he was bound for his rocky five acres. The old man walked deliberately, never thinking to look behind him. He might not have observed anything suspicious had he turned, but a hundred feet behind him came Josie O'Gorman, deftly dodging from tree to bush to keep in the dark places by the wayside. And behind Josie silently moved a little man in gray homespun, whose form it would be difficult to distinguish even while he stood in the open. Josie, like the prey she stalked, was too occupied to look behind.

Old Swallowtail reached the stone-yard and climbed the fence. While he paused there Josie crept close and noticed a light which suddenly flashed from the hillside. It was a momentary flash and not very brilliant, but she knew it was a signal because the old man at once started forward. She let him lead on until he disappeared among the rocks and then she boldly followed. She knew now where the secret entrance to the cavern was located.

Threading her way cautiously through the maze of rocks the girl finally reached a slanting shelf beneath which she crept on hands and knees. At its farthest edge was a square door of solid oak, rather crudely constructed but thick and substantial. This door stood ajar.

Josie, crouching beside the secret entrance, wondered what she ought to do. The regular thumping, as of machinery, which she had heard once before, now began and continued without interruption. Here was an opportunity to catch the counterfeiters redhanded, but she was one small girl as opposed to a gang of desperate criminals.

"Oh, dear!" she whispered, half aloud, "I wish father had paid some attention to my telegram."

"He did," responded a soft voice beside her.

CHAPTER XXV
FATHER AND DAUGHTER

The girl would have screamed had not a hand been swiftly laid across her lips to stifle the sound. She tried to rise, but the shelf of rock beneath which she crouched prevented her. However, she struggled until an arm was passed firmly around her waist and a stern voice said warningly:

"Josie! Control yourself."

Instantly her form relaxed and became inert. She breathed hard and her heart still raced, but she was no longer afraid.

"Kiss me, Daddy!" she whispered, and the man obeyed with a chuckle of delight.

There was silence for a time, while she collected herself. Then she asked in a businesslike tone:

"When did you get here?"

"Sunday," said he.

"Good gracious! You must have caught the first train after getting my wire."

"I did. A certain gang of unknown counterfeiters has been puzzling me a good deal lately, and I fancied you had located the rascals."

"I have," said Josie exultantly.

"Where?" he asked.

"The rascals are down below us this very minute, Daddy. They are at our mercy."

"Old Cragg and Jim Bennett?"

"Yes; and perhaps others."

"M-m-m," mumbled O'Gorman, "you've a lot to learn yet, Josie. You're quick; you're persevering; you're courageous. But you lack judgment."

"Do you mean that you doubt my evidence?" she asked indignantly.

"I do."

"I've the counterfeit bill here in my pocket, which Cragg tried to pass on the storekeeper," she said.

"Let me see it."

Josie searched and found the bill. O'Gorman flashed a circle of light on it and studied it attentively.

"Here," he said, passing it back to her. "Don't lose it, Josie. It's worth ten dollars."

"Isn't it counterfeit?" she asked, trying to swallow a big lump that rose in her throat.

"It is one of the recent issues, good as gold."

She sat silent, rigid with disappointment. Never had she been as miserable as at this moment. She felt like crying, and a sob really did become audible in spite of her effort to suppress it. Again O'Gorman passed his arm affectionately around her waist and held her close while she tried to think what it all meant.

"Was that bill your only basis of suspicion, dear?" he presently inquired.

"No, indeed. Do you hear that noise? What are they doing down there?"

"I imagine they are running a printing press," he replied.

"Exactly!" she said triumphantly. "And why do these men operate a printing press in a secret cavern, unless they are printing counterfeit money?"

"Ah, there you have allowed your imagination to jump," returned her father. "Haven't I warned you against the danger of imagination? It leads to theory, and theory leads — nine times in ten — to failure."

"Circumstantial evidence is often valuable," declared Josie.

"It often convicts," he admitted, "but I am never sure of its justice. Whenever facts are obtainable, I prefer facts."

"Can you explain," she said somewhat coldly, for she felt she was suffering a professional rebuke, "what those men below us are printing, if not counterfeit money?"

"I can," said he.

"And you have been down there, investigating?"

"Not yet," he answered coolly.

"Then *you* must be theorizing, Daddy."

"Not at all. If you know you have two marbles in one pocket and two more in another pocket, you may be positive there are four altogether, whether you bother to count them individually or not."

She pondered this, trying to understand what he meant.

"You don't know old Cragg as well as I do," she asserted.

"Let us argue that point," he said quickly. "What do you know about him?"

"I know him to be an eccentric old man, educated and shrewd, with a cruel and murderous temper; I know that he has secluded himself in this half-forgotten town for many years, engaged in some secret occupation which he fears to have discovered. I am sure that he is capable of any crime and therefore — even if that bill is good — I am none the less positive that counterfeiting is his business. No other supposition fits the facts in the case."

"Is that all you know about old Cragg?" asked O'Gorman.

"Isn't it enough to warrant his arrest?" she retorted.

"Not quite. You've forgotten to mention one thing among his characteristics, Josie."

“What is that?”

“Cragg is an Irishman — just as I am.”

“What has that to do with it?”

“Only this: his sympathies have always been interested in behalf of his downtrodden countrymen. I won’t admit that they *are* downtrodden, Josie, even to you; but Cragg thinks they are. His father was an emigrant and Hezekiah was himself born in Dublin and came to this country while an infant. He imagines he is Irish yet. Perhaps he is.”

There was a note of bewilderment in the girl’s voice as she asked:

“What has his sympathy for the Irish to do with this case?”

“Hezekiah Cragg,” explained O’Gorman, speaking slowly, “is at the head of an organization known as the ‘Champions of Irish Liberty.’ For many years this C. I. L. fraternity has been growing in numbers and power, fed by money largely supplied by Cragg himself. I have proof, indeed, that he has devoted his entire fortune to this cause, as well as all returns from his business enterprises. He lives in comparative poverty that the Champions of Irish Liberty may finally perfect their plans to free Ireland and allow the Irish to establish a self-governing republic.”

“But — why all this secrecy, Daddy?” she asked wonderingly.

“His work here is a violation of neutrality; it is contrary to the treaty between our country and England. According to our laws Hezekiah Cragg and his followers, in seeking to deprive England of her Irish possession, are guilty of treason.”

“Could he be prosecuted for sympathizing with his own race?”

“No; for sending them arms and ammunition to fight with, yes. And that is what they have been doing.”

“Then you can arrest him for this act?”

“I can,” said O’Gorman, “but I’ll be hanged if I will, Josie. Cragg is an idealist; the cause to which he has devoted his life and fortune with a steadfast loyalty that is worthy of respect, is doomed to failure. The man’s every thought is concentrated on his futile scheme and to oppose him at this juncture would drive him mad. He isn’t doing any real harm to our country and even England won’t suffer much through his conspiracy. But, allowing for the folly of his attempt to make his people free and independent, we must admire his lofty philanthropy, his self-sacrifice, his dogged perseverence in promoting the cause so near and dear to his heart. Let some other federal officer arrest him, if he dares; it’s no work for an O’Gorman.”

Josie had encountered many surprises during her brief career as an embryo detective, but this revelation was the crowning astonishment of her life. All her carefully prepared theories concerning Hezekiah Cragg had been

shattered by her father's terse disclosure and instead of hating Old Swallowtail she suddenly found sympathy for his ideals welling in her heart. Josie O 'Gorman was Irish, too.

She pondered deeply the skilled detective's assertions and tried to fit them to her knowledge of old Cragg's character. The story seemed to account for much, but not all. After a time she said:

"But this mysterious business of his, which causes him to write so many letters and to receive so many answers to them — what connection can it have with the Champions of Irish Liberty?"

"Very little," said her father, "except that it enables Cragg to earn more money to feed into the ever-hungry maw of the Cause. Cragg's 'business' is one of the most unique things of the sort that I have ever encountered. And, while it is quite legitimate, he is obliged to keep it secret so as not to involve his many customers in adverse criticism."

"What on earth can it be?"

"It pertains to heaven, not earth, my dear," said O'Gorman dryly. "Cragg was educated for the ministry or the priesthood — I can't discover whether he was Catholic or Protestant — but it seems he wasn't fitted for the church. Perhaps he already had in mind the idea of devoting his life to the land that gave him birth. Anyhow, he was a well versed theologian, and exceptionally brilliant in theses, so when his money gave out he began writing sermons for others to preach, doing a mail-order business and selling his products to those preachers who are too busy or too lazy to write their own sermons. He has a sort of syndicate established and his books, which I have examined with admiration and wonder, prove he supplies sermons to preachers of all denominations throughout the United States. This involves a lot of correspondence. Every week he writes a new sermon, prints a large number of copies and sends one to each of his clients. Of course he furnishes but one man in a town or city with his products, but there are a good many towns and cities to supply."

"Is he printing sermons now?" asked Josie.

"Perhaps so; or it may be he is printing some circular to be distributed to the members of the C. I. L. Jim Bennett, the husband of the postmistress here, was once a practical printer, and he is a staunch member of the Irish fraternity. Cragg has known of this underground cavern for years, and at one time it was a regular meeting-place for his order of Champions. So he bought a printing press and, to avoid the prying eyes of his neighbors, established it here. That is the whole story of Cragg's 'crime,' Josie, and it is very simple when once fully explained."

"Do you mean to say you've discovered all this in the two days since

you've been here?" asked the girl, in amazement.

"Every bit of it. I came prepared to arrest a gang of counterfeiters, and stumbled on this very interesting but quite harmless plot."

"Where have you been hiding since Sunday?" she inquired.

"Why, I didn't hide at all," he asserted. "Don't you remember giving me a ride yesterday in the Hathaway automobile?"

Josie sat silent. She was glad it was so dark under that shelf of rock, for she would rather her father did not read her humiliation and self-reproach.

"Daddy," she said, with a despairing accent, "I'm going to study to be a cook or a stenographer. I'll never make a decent detective — like Nan, for instance."

O'Gorman laughed.

"Poor Nan!" he exclaimed. "She's been more befuddled than you over this mysterious case. And Cragg is her own father, too. Come, Josie, it's getting late; let's go home."

CHAPTER XXVI
THE PLOT

When they were over the stones and in the lane again, walking arm in arm toward the village, Josie's logical mind turned from her own failure to a consideration of the story her father had just told her.

"I can't understand," she remarked, "how Joselyn came into this affair, what happened to him, or why he is once more the secret associate of old Cragg."

"Joselyn," said the old detective, "is a clever grafter — in other words, an unmitigated scoundrel. Now do you understand?"

"Not quite," confessed Josie.

"He's Irish."

"Isn't his name Scotch?"

"Yes, but Joselyn isn't his name. If you're inclined to pick up his record and follow it through, you'll probably find him pursuing his various adventures under many aliases. He doesn't belong in this country, you know, has only been here a few years, so his adventures would probably cover two continents. The fellow always manages to keep just within our laws, although sometimes he gets dangerously near the edge. The world is full of men like Joselyn. They don't interest me."

"Then he belongs to the band of Champions?" asked Josie.

"Yes. In going over Cragg's books and papers in his private office the other night, I found sufficient references to Ned Joselyn to figure out his story with a fair degree of accuracy," said O'Gorman. "He was born in Ireland, got into trouble over there with the authorities, and fled to America, where he met Annabel Kenton and married her. Getting in touch with Old Swallowtail, he joined the Champions and attended to the outside business for Mr. Cragg, purchasing supplies and forwarding them, with money, to the patriots in Ireland. I suppose he made a fair rake-off in all these dealings, but that did not satisfy him. He induced Cragg to invest in some wild-cat schemes, promising him tremendous earnings which could be applied to the Cause. Whether he really invested the money turned over to him, or kept it for himself, is a subject for doubt, but it seems that the old man soon suspected him of double-dealing and they had so many quarrels that Cragg finally threatened to turn him over to the authorities for extradition. That was when our precious Ned thought it wise to disappear, but afterward another peace was patched up, owing largely to the fact that Joselyn knew so much of the workings of the secret order that it was safer to have him for a friend than an enemy."

"I'm thinking of his poor wife," said Josie. "Does she know now where

her husband is?"

"I think not. At first, in order to win the confidence of old Cragg, Ned applied considerable of his wife's money to the Cause, and while she would probably forgive his defalcations he thinks it wiser to keep aloof from her. She foolishly trusted him to 'settle' her mother's estate, and I'm sure he managed to settle most of it on himself. His value to Cragg lay in his ability to visit the different branches of the Champions, which are pretty well scattered throughout the United States, and keep them in touch one with the other. Also he purchased arms and ammunition to be forwarded secretly to Ireland. So you see it was quite impossible for the old man to break with him wholly, rascal though he knows him to be."

"I see," said Josie. "Joselyn has him in his power."

"Entirely so. A hint from him to the authorities would result in an embargo on any further shipments to the rebels in Ireland and so completely ruin the usefulness of the order of Champions. The fellow seems to be a thorn deeply embedded in the side of Old Swallowtail, who will suffer anything to promote the cause of Irish liberty."

"Ingua thinks her grandfather tried to kill Ned, at one time," remarked the girl.

"It's a wonder, with his rabid temper, that he didn't do so," said O'Gorman. "But perhaps he realized that if he was hanged for Joselyn's murder his beloved Order would be without a head and in sorry straits. Thousands of Irishmen are feeding the funds of the Champions, aside from what Cragg himself dumps into the pot. So the old fellow is in a responsible position and mustn't commit murder, however much he may long to, because it would jeopardize the fortunes of his associates. However, the end is not yet, and unless Joselyn acts square in his future dealings he may yet meet with a tragic fate."

"I wonder what was in that package he took away with him the other night?" mused Josie. "I was sure, at the time, it was counterfeit money."

"It probably contained the monthly printed circular to the various branches of the order. Jim Bennett prints them in that underground cavern and Ned Joselyn sees they are distributed."

"Well," said Josie with a sigh, "you've pricked my bubble, Daddy, and made me ashamed. With all my professed scorn of theories, and my endeavors to avoid them, I walked straight into the theoretic mire and stuck there."

O'Gorman pressed her arm affectionately.

"Never you mind, my dear," in a consoling tone; "you have learned a lesson that will be of great value to you in your future work. I dare not blame

you, indeed, for I myself, on the evidence you sent me, came rushing here on a wild-goose chase. One never knows what is on the other side of a page till he turns it, and if we detectives didn't have to turn so many pages, only to find them blank, we'd soon rid the country of its malefactors. But here we are at the Kenton gateway. Go to bed, Josie dear, and pleasant dreams to you."

"Will I see you again?" she asked.

"No; I'm off by the early train. But you must stay here and have your visit out with Mary Louise. It won't hurt you to have a free mind for awhile."

He kissed her tenderly and she went in.

CHAPTER XXVII

NAN'S TRIUMPH

The night's events were not yet ended. An automobile left the edge of the stone-yard, followed a lane and turned into the main highway, where it encountered a woman standing in the middle of the road and waving her arms. She was distinctly visible in the moonlight.

The man with the monocle slowed the car and came to a sudden stop, rather than run her down.

"What's the matter?" he demanded impatiently.

"Wait a minute; I want to talk to you."

"Can't stop," he replied in a querulous tone. "I've got fifty miles to make before daylight. Out of my way, woman."

With a dexterous motion she opened the door and sprang into the seat beside him.

"Here! Get out of this," he cried.

"Drive on," she said calmly. "It'll save time, since you're in a hurry."

"Get out!"

"I'm going to ride with you. Why bother to argue?"

He turned nervously in his seat to get a look at her, then shifted the clutch and slowly started the car. The woman sat quiet. While bumping over the uneven road at a reckless speed the driver turned at times to cast stealthy glances at the person beside him. Finally he asked in exasperation:

"Do you know where I'm going?"

"You haven't told me."

"Do you know who I am?"

"How should I?"

"Oh, very well," with a sigh of relief. "But isn't this rather — er — irregular?"

"Very."

Again he drove for a time in silence. In the direction they were following they whirled by a village every three or four miles, but the country roads were deserted and the nearest city of any size lay a good fifty miles on.

"I don't know who you are," observed the woman presently, "but I can hazard a guess. You call yourself Joselyn — Ned Joselyn — but that isn't your name. It's the name you married Annabel Kenton under, but it doesn't belong to you."

He gave a roar of anger and started to slow down the car.

"Go ahead!" she said imperatively.

"I won't. You're going to get out of here, and lively, too, or I'll throw you

out.”

“Do you feel anything against your side?” she asked coolly.

“Yes,” with a sudden start.

“It’s the muzzle of a revolver. I think it’s about opposite your heart and my finger is on the trigger. Go ahead!”

He turned the throttle and the car resumed its former speed.

“Who the deuce are you?” he demanded, in a voice that trembled slightly.

“Like yourself, I have many names,” she said. “In Washington they call me Nan Shelley; at Cragg’s Crossing I’m Mrs. Scammel, formerly Nan Cragg.”

“Oh — ho!” with a low whistle of astonishment. “Nan Cragg, eh! So you’ve returned from your wanderings, have you?” with a derisive sneer.

“For a time. But in wandering around I’ve found my place in the world and I’m now a lady detective, not an especially high-class occupation but satisfactory as a bread-winner. I find I’m quite talented; I’m said to be a pretty fair detective.”

She could feel him tremble beside her. He moved away from her as far as he could but the pressure against his side followed his movements. After a time he asked defiantly:

“Well, being a detective, what’s your business with me? I hope you’re not fool enough to think I’m a criminal.”

“I don’t think it; I know it. You’re an unusual sort of a criminal, too,” she replied. “You’re mixed up in a somewhat lawless international plot, but it isn’t my present business to bring you to book for that.”

“What *is* your present business?”

“To discover what you’ve done with my father’s money.”

He laughed, as if relieved.

“Spent it for the cause of Ireland.”

“Part of it, perhaps. But the bulk of the money you’ve taken from the Champions of Irish Liberty, most of which came out of my father’s own pocket, and practically all the money he gave you to invest for him, you have withheld for your own use.”

“You’re crazy!”

“I know the bank it’s deposited in.”

Again he growled, like a beast at bay.

“Whatever I have on deposit is to be applied to the Cause,” said he. “It’s reserved for future promotion.”

“Have you seen to-day’s papers?” she inquired.

“No.”

“The revolution in Ireland has already broken out.”

“Great Scott!” There was sincere anxiety in his voice now.

“It is premature, and will result in the annihilation of all your plans.”

“Perhaps not.”

“You know better,” said she. “Anyhow, your actions are now blocked until we see how the rebellion fares. The Irish will have no further use for American money, I’m positive, so I insist that my father receive back the funds he has advanced you, and especially his own money which he gave you to invest and you never invested.”

“Bah! If I offered him the money he wouldn’t take it.

“Then I’ll take it for him,” she asserted. “You’ll give up that money because you know I can have you arrested for — well, let us say a breach of American neutrality. You are not a citizen of the United States. You were born in Ireland and have never been naturalized here.”

“You seem well posted,” he sneered.

“I belong to the Government Secret Service, and the Bureau knows considerable,” she replied dryly.

He remained silent for a time, his eyes fixed upon the road ahead. Then he said:

“The Government didn’t send you to get Cragg’s money away from me. Nor did Cragg send you.”

“No, my father is afraid of you. He has been forced to trust you even when he knew you were a treacherous defaulter, because of your threats to betray the Cause. But you’ve been playing a dangerous game and I believe my father would have killed you, long ago, if — ”

“Well, if what?”

“If you hadn’t been his own nephew.”

He turned upon her with sudden fierceness.

“Look out!” she called. “I’ve not the same objection to killing my cousin.”

“Your cousin!”

“To be sure. You are the son of Peter Cragg, my father’s brother, who returned to Ireland many years ago, when he was a young man. Ned Joselyn is an assumed name; you are Ned Cragg, condemned by the British government for high treason. You are known to be in America, but only I knew where to find you.”

“Oh, you knew, did you?”

“Yes; all your various hiding-places are well known to me.”

“Confound you!”

“Exactly. You’d like to murder me, Cousin Ned, to stop my mouth, but I’ll not give you the chance. And, really, we ought not to kill one another, for

the Cragg motto is ‘a Cragg for a Cragg.’ That has probably influenced my poor father more than anything else in his dealings with you. He knew you are a Cragg.”

“Well, if I’m a Cragg, and you’re a Cragg, why don’t you let me alone?”

“Because the family motto was first ignored by yourself.”

For a long time he drove on without another word. Evidently he was in deep thought and the constant pressure of the revolver against his side gave him ample food for reflection. Nan was thinking, too, quietly exulting, the while. As a matter of fact she had hazarded guess after guess, during the interview, only to find she had hit the mark. She knew that Ned Cragg had been condemned by the British government and was supposed to have escaped to America, but not until now was she sure of his identity with Ned Joselyn. Her father had told her much, but not this. Her native shrewdness was alone responsible for the discovery.

“We’re almost there, aren’t we?” asked Nan at last.

“Where?”

“At the house where you’re at present hiding. We’ve entered the city, I see, and it’s almost daybreak.”

“Well?”

“I know the Chief of Police here. Am I to have that, money, Cousin Ned, or — ”

“Of course,” he said hastily.

CHAPTER XXVIII
PLANNING THE FUTURE

It was nearly a month later when Mary Louise, walking down to the river on an afternoon, discovered Ingua sitting on the opposite bank and listlessly throwing pebbles into the stream. She ran across the stepping-stones and joined her little friend.

"How is your grandfather this morning?" she asked.

"I guess he's better," said Ingua. "He don't mumble so much about the Lost Cause or the poor men who died for it in Ireland, but Ma says his broken heart will never mend. He's awful changed, Mary Louise. To-day, when I set beside him, he put out his hand an' stroked my hair an' said: 'poor child — poor child, you've been neglected. After all,' says he, 'one's duties begin at home.' He hasn't had any fits of the devils lately, either. Seems like he's all broke up, you know."

"Can he walk yet?" inquired Mary Louise.

"Yes, he's gett'n' stronger ev'ry day. This mornin' he walked to the bridge an' back, but he was ruther wobbly on his legs. Ma said she wouldn't have left him, just now, if she wasn't sure he'd pick up."

"Oh. Has your mother gone away, then?"

"Left last night," said Ingua, "for Washington."

"Is her vacation over?"

"It isn't that," replied the child. "Ma isn't going to work any more, just now. Says she's goin' to take care o' Gran'dad. She went to Washington because she got a telegram saying that Senator Ingua is dead."

"Senator Ingua?"

"Yes; he was my godfather, you see. I didn't know it myself till Ma told me last night. He was an uncle of Will Scammel, my father that died, but he wasn't very friendly to him an' didn't give him any money while he lived. Ma named me after the Senator, though, 'cause she knew which side her bread was buttered on, an' now he's left me ten thousand dollars in his will."

"Ten thousand!" exclaimed Mary Louise, delightedly, "why, you Craggs are going to be rich, Ingua. What with all the money your mother got back from Ned Joselyn and this legacy, you will never suffer poverty again."

"That's what Ma says," returned the child, simply. "But I dunno whether I'll like all the changes Ma's planned, or not. When she gets back from Washington she's goin' to take me an' Gran'dad away somewheres for the winter, an' I'm to go to a girls' school."

"Oh, that will be nice."

"Will it, Mary Louise? I ain't sure. And while we're gone they're goin' to

tear down the old shack an' build a fine new house in its place, an' fix up the grounds so's they're just as good as the Kenton Place."

"Then your mother intends to live here always?"

"Yes. She says a Cragg's place is at Cragg's Crossing, and the fambly's goin' to hold up its head ag'in, an' we're to be some punkins around here. But — I sorter hate to see the old place go, Mary Louise," turning a regretful glance at the ancient cottage from over her shoulder.

"I can understand that, dear," said the other girl, thoughtfully; "but I am sure the change will be for the best. Do you know what has, become of Ned Joselyn?"

"Yes; he an' Annabel Kenton — that's his wife — have gone away somewheres together; somewheres out West, Ma says. He didn't squander Ann's money, it seems; not all of it, anyhow; didn't hev time, I s'pose, he was so busy robbin' Gran'dad. Ned run away from Ann, that time he disappeared, 'cause English spies was on his tracks an' he didn't want to be took pris'ner. That was why he kep' in hidin' an' didn't let Ann know where he was. He was afraid she'd git rattled an' blab."

"Oh; I think I understand. But he will have to keep in hiding always, won't he?"

"I s'pose so. Ma says that'll suit *her,* all right. Am I talkin' more decent than I used to, Mary Louise?"

"You're improving every day, Ingua."

"I'm tryin' to be like you, you know. Ma says I've been a little Arab, but she means to make a lady of me. I hope she will. And then — "

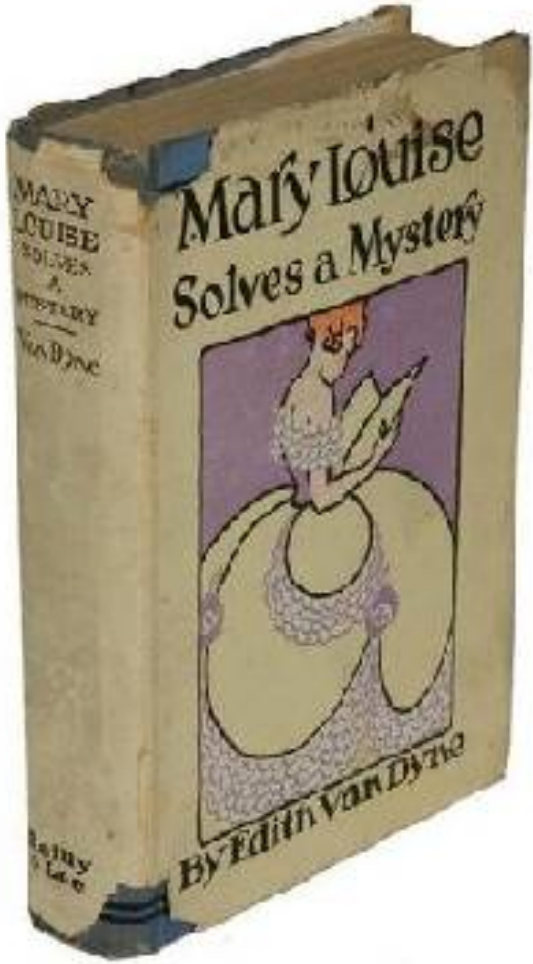
"Well, Ingua?"

"You'll come to visit me, some time, in our new house; won't you?"

"I sure will, dear," promised Mary Louise.

MARY LOUISE SOLVES A MYSTERY

Mary Louise and her grandfather return in *Mary Louise Solves a Mystery*, the third in Baum's series about girl detectives, published by Reilly & Britton in 1917. While traveling in Italy, the pair encounters Jason Jones, a failed artist and his heiress daughter, Alora. After Alora's kidnapping, Mary Louise and her detective friend, Josie O'Gorman, solve a complicated mystery.



A later printing with rare dust jacket

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CHAPTER I
DOCTOR AND PATIENT

A little girl sat shivering in a corner of a reception room in the fashionable Hotel Voltaire. It was one of a suite of rooms occupied by Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones, widely known for her wealth and beauty, and this girl — a little thing of eleven — was the only child of Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones, and was named Alora.

It was not cold that made her shiver, for across the handsomely furnished room an open window gratefully admitted the summer sunshine and the summer breeze. Near the window, where the draught came coolest, a middle-aged woman in a sober dress sat reading. Alora did not look at this person but kept her gaze fixed anxiously upon the doorway that led to the corridor, and the spasmodic shudders that at times shook her little body seemed due to nervous fear.

The room was so still that every tick of the Dresden clock could be distinctly heard. When Miss Gorham, Alora's governess, turned a page of her book, the rustle was appallingly audible. And the clock ticked on, and Miss Gorham turned page after page, and still the child sat bowed upon her chair and eagerly eyed the passageway.

It seemed ages before the outer door of the suite finally opened and a man moved softly down the passage and paused at the entrance of the reception room. The man was white-haired, dignified and distinguished in appearance. Hat in hand, he stood as if undecided while Alora bounded from her seat and came to him, her eyes, big and pleading, reading his face with dramatic intentness.

"Well, well, my dear; what is it?" he said in a kindly voice.

"May I see my mamma now, Doctor?" she asked.

He shook his head, turning to the table to place his hat and gloves upon it.

"Not just yet, little one," he gently replied, and noting her quick- drawn breath of disappointment he added: "Why, I haven't seen her myself, this morning."

"Why do you keep me from her, Doctor Anstruther? Don't you know it's — it's wicked, and cruel?" — a sob in her voice.

The old physician looked down upon the child pityingly.

"Mamma is ill — very ill, you know — and to disturb her might — it might — well, it might make her worse," he explained lamely.

"I won't disturb her. There's a nurse in there, all the time. Why should I disturb my mamma more than a nurse?" asked Alora pleadingly.

He evaded the question. The big eyes disconcerted him.

“When I have seen your mother,” said he, “I may let you go to her for a few minutes. But you must be very quiet, so as not to excite her. We must avoid anything of an exciting nature. You understand that, don’t you, Lory?”

She studied his face gravely. When he held out a hand to her she clung to it desperately and a shudder again shook her from head to foot.

“Tell me, Doctor Anstruther,” in low, passionate tones, “is my mother dying?”

He gave an involuntary start.

“Who put that notion into your head, Lory?”

“Miss Gorham.”

He frowned and glanced reprovingly at the governess, who had lowered her book to her lap and was regarding the scene with stolid unconcern.

“You mustn’t mind such idle gossip, my dear. I am the doctor, you know, and I am doing all that can be done to save your mother’s life. Don’t worry until I tell you to, Lory; and now let me go to see my patient.”

He withdrew his hand from her clasp and turned into the passage again. The girl listened to his footsteps as he approached her mother’s bedchamber, paused a moment, and then softly opened the door and entered. Silence again pervaded the reception room. The clock resumed its loud ticking. Miss Gorham raised her book. Alora went back to her chair, trembling.

The front bedchamber was bright and cheery, a big room fitted with every modern luxury. The doctor blinked his eyes as he entered from the dim passage, for here was sunlight and fresh air in plenty. Beside the bed stood a huge vase of roses, their delicate fragrance scenting the atmosphere. Upon the bed, beneath a costly lace coverlid, lay a woman thirty-five years of age, her beautiful face still fresh and unlined, the deep blue eyes turned calmly upon the physician.

“Welcome, Doctor Anstruther,” she said. “Do you realize you have kept me waiting?”

“I am sorry, Mrs. Jones,” he replied, approaching her. “There are so many demands upon my time that — — ”

“I know,” a little impatiently; “but now that you are here please tell me how I am this morning.”

“How do you feel?”

“I do not suffer, but it takes more morphine to quiet the pain. Janet has used the hypodermic four times since midnight,” with a glance at the gray-robed nurse who stood silently by the table.

The doctor nodded, thoughtfully looking down her. There was small evidence of illness in her appearance, but he knew that her hours were numbered and that the dread disease that had fastened upon her was creeping

on with ever increasing activity. She knew it, too, and smiled a grim little smile as she added: “How long can I last, at this rate?”

“Do not anticipate, my dear,” he answered gravely. “Let us do all that may be done, and — — ”

“I must know!” she retorted. “I have certain important arrangements to make that must not be needlessly delayed.”

“I can understand that, Mrs. Jones.”

“Then tell me frankly, how long have I to live?”

“Perhaps a month; possibly less; but — — ”

“You are not honest with me, Doctor Anstruther! What I wish to know — what I *must* know — is how soon this disease will be able to kill me. If we manage to defer the end somewhat, all the better; but the fiend must not take me unaware, before I am ready to resign my life.”

He seated himself beside the bed and reflected. This was his most interesting patient; he had attended her constantly for more than a year and in this time had learned to admire not only her beauty of person but her “gameness” and wholesome mentality. He knew something of her past life and history, too, as well from her own lips as from common gossip, for this was no ordinary woman and her achievements were familiar to many.

She was the daughter of Captain Bob Seaver, whose remarkable career was known to every man in the West. Captain Bob was one “forty-niners” and had made fortunes and lost them with marvelous regularity. He had a faculty for finding gold, but his speculations were invariably unwise, so his constant transitions from affluence to poverty, and vice versa, were the subject of many amusing tales, many no doubt grossly exaggerated. And the last venture of Captain Bob Seaver, before he died, was to buy the discredited “Ten-Spot” mine and start to develop it.

At that time he was a widower with one motherless child — Antoinette — a girl of eighteen who had been reared partly in mining camps and partly at exclusive girls’ schools in the East, according to her father’s varying fortunes. “Tony” Seaver, as she was generally called in those days, combined culture and refinement with a thorough knowledge of mining, and when her father passed away and left her absolute mistress of the tantalizing “Ten-Spot,” she set to work to make the mine a success, directing her men in person and displaying such shrewd judgment and intelligence, coupled with kindly consideration for her assistants, that she became the idol of the miners, all of whom were proud to be known as employees of Tony Seaver’s “Ten-Spot” would have died for their beautiful employer if need be.

And the “Ten-Spot” made good. In five years Tony had garnered a million or two of well-earned dollars, and then she sold out and retired from

business. Also, to the chagrin of an army of suitors, she married an artist named Jason Jones, whose talent, it was said, was not so great as his luck. So far, his fame rested on his being "Tony Seaver's husband." But Tony's hobby was art, and she had recognized real worth, she claimed, in Jason Jones' creations. On her honeymoon she carried her artist husband to Europe and with him studied the works of the masters in all the art centers of the Continent. Then, enthusiastic and eager for Jason's advancement, she returned with him to New York and set him up in a splendid studio where he had every convenience and incentive to work.

So much the world at large knew. It also knew that within three years Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones separated from her husband and, with her baby girl, returned West to live. The elaborate Jones studio was abandoned and broken up and the "promising young artist" disappeared from the public eye. Mrs. Jones, a thorough business woman, had retained her fortune in her own control and personally attended to her investments. She became noted as a liberal patron of the arts and a generous donor to worthy charities. In spite of her youth, wealth, and beauty, she had no desire to shine in society and lived a somewhat secluded life in luxurious family hotels, attending with much solicitude to the training and education of her daughter Alora.

At first she had made Denver her home, but afterward migrated from one middle-west city to another until she came to Chicago, where she had now lived for nearly three years, occupying the most expensive suite of rooms at the very exclusive Hotel Voltaire.

Alora fairly worshipped her beautiful mother and although Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones was considered essentially cold and unemotional by those who knew her casually, there was no doubt she prized her child as her dearest possession and lavished all the tenderness and love of which she was capable upon her.

Retrospectively, Doctor Anstruther considered this historical revue of his fair patient as he sat facing her. It seemed a most unhappy fate that she should be cut off in the flower of her womanhood, but her case was positively hopeless, and she knew it and had accepted the harsh verdict without a murmur. Bravery had always been Tony Seaver's prime characteristic. To Doctor Anstruther it seemed that she might as well know the truth which she had demanded from his lips.

"This disease is one that accelerates toward the end," he said. "Within the past few days we have noted its more virulent tendency. All we can do now is to keep you from suffering until — the end."

"And that will be — when?" she demanded.

"I think I can safely give you a week but — — "

“Then I must act at once,” she said, as he hesitated. “I must, first of all, make provision for Alora’s future, and in this I require your help.”

“You know you may depend upon me,” he said simply.

“Please telegraph at once to my husband Jason Jones, in New York.”

The request startled him, for never before had she mentioned her husband’s name in his presence. But he asked, calmly enough:

“What is his address?”

“Hand me that small memorandum-book,” pointing to the stand beside him. He obeyed, and as she turned the leaves slowly she said:

“Doctor Anstruther, you have been my good and faithful friend, and you ought to know and to understand why I am now sending for my husband, from whom I have been estranged for many years. When I first met Jason Jones he was a true artist and I fell in love with his art rather than with the man. I was ambitious that he should become a great painter, world-famous. He was very poor until he married me, and he had worked industriously to succeed, but as soon as I introduced him to a life of comfort — I might even add, of luxury — his ambition to work gradually deserted him. With his future provided for, as he thought, he failed to understand the necessity of devoting himself to his brush and palette, but preferred a life of ease — of laziness, if you will. So we quarreled. I tried to force him back to his work, but it was no use; my money had ruined his career. I therefore lost patience and decided to abandon him, hoping that when he was again thrown upon his own resources he would earnestly resume his profession and become a master, as I believed him competent to be. We were not divorced: we merely separated. Finding I had withdrawn his allowance he was glad to see me go, for my unmerciful scoldings had killed any love he may have had for me. But he loved Lory, and her loss was his hardest trial. I may have been as much to blame as he for our lack of harmony, but I have always acted on my impulses.

“I’ll give Jason Jones the credit for not whimpering,” she resumed thoughtfully, after a brief pause, “nor has he ever since appealed to me for money. I don’t know how well he has succeeded, for we do not correspond, but I have never heard his name mentioned in the art circles I have frequented. He remained in New York, I believe, and so I chose to keep away from New York. A year or two ago, however, I met a man who had known Jason Jones and who gave me his address. Here it is: 1744 East Sixty-seventh street. Will you make a copy of it, Doctor?”

He nodded.

“What shall I say in the telegram?” he asked, writing the address in his notebook.

“Tell him I am dying and seek a reconciliation before I pass away. Beg him to come to me at once.”

Dr. Anstruther jotted down the instructions underneath the address.

“You must understand,” she continued, “that Jason Jones is an honorable man and in many ways a high-minded gentleman. I have lived with him as his wife and I know that he is well fitted to care for our child and to rear her properly. I have left my entire fortune to Alora, but I have made Jason my sole executor, and he is to have control, under certain restrictions, of all the income until Alora is eighteen. I think he will be glad to accept the responsibility, both on Alora’s account and for the money.”

“Doubtless, if he has not been a success as an artist since your separation,” remarked the doctor, drily.

“The man I spoke of said Jason was living in quite modest circumstances. He said that although he had succeeded in selling a few paintings they had brought rather insignificant sums — which surprised me, as I know they must have possessed a degree of merit. However, I may be mistaken in thinking his talent exceptional. Anyhow, my experiment in leaving him to his own devices seems not to have resulted as I had hoped, and I now am willing he should handle Alora’s income and live comfortably while he is educating her. She will probably provide for her father when she comes of age, but I have not included such a request in my will and I have endeavored, in case he proves inclined to neglect her, to require the court to appoint another guardian. That is, of course, merely a precaution, for I know his nature is gentle and kind, and he adores — or at least he used to adore children.”

The doctor sat, notebook in hand, musing. The matter-of-fact, businesslike way in which she referred to her marital relations and her assumed unconcern over her own dreadful fate impressed the good man as extraordinary. But he was relieved to know that little Alora, of whom he had grown quite fond, was to have the guardianship of a parent, and glad that the character of Jason Jones was above reproach. The man’s failure to succeed as an artist, while it might have been a source of chagrin to his art-loving wife, did not lower him to any extent in Dr. Anstruther’s opinion.

“I suppose Alora does not remember her father?” he presently remarked.

“She was about two years old when we separated.”

“And you say your will is already drawn?”

“Judge Bernsted, my lawyer, has attended to it. It is now in his possession, properly signed and witnessed.”

“If Bernsted drew the will, it is doubtless legal and in accordance with your wishes. But who witnessed it?”

“My nurse, Janet.”

He glanced at the motionless figure of the attendant, who had remained so inert at her post by the window that he had quite forgotten her presence. She was a young woman, perhaps thirty years of age, and not unprepossessing in appearance, in spite of her modest uniform.

Janet's one peculiarity was her downcast eyes. They were good eyes, bright and intelligent, but she kept them veiled by their long lashes and drooping lids. Dr. Anstruther attached no significance to this trait, doubtless a habit of modest reserve acquired in her profession. He had himself recommended the woman to Mrs. Jones, having frequently employed her on other cases and found her deft, skillful and thoroughly reliable. Janet Orme's signature to the will he regarded as satisfactory, since Judge Bernsted had accepted it.

A moan from his patient suddenly aroused the doctor. Her face was beginning to twitch spasmodically with pain. In an instant Janet was at her side, hypodermic needle in hand, and the opiate was soon administered.

"Send the telegram," muttered Mrs. Jones, still breathing hard; "and, as you go out, Doctor, send Alora to me. I shall have relief in a few moments."

"To be sure," he said, rising. "Lory has been begging to see you, and I'll attend to the telegram at once."

CHAPTER II

MOTHER AND CHILD

The child crept softly to her mother's bedside, but once there she impulsively threw her arms about "Mamma Tone's" neck and embraced her so tightly that the sick woman was obliged to tear the little arms away. She did this tenderly, though, and holding the trembling hands in her own kissed both of Lory's cheeks before she said:

"I've news for you, dear."

"Are you better, mamma?" asked Lory.

"Of course not," was the calm reply. "You mustn't expect mamma ever to get well, my darling. But that shouldn't worry you — not too much, you know. One of the queer things about life is that it has an end, sooner or later, and in mamma's case it comes to an end a little sooner than you and I might wish it to."

"Oh, Mamma Tone!" An agonized cry, with the small hands clasped tightly over her throbbing heart. But Tony Seaver did not flinch.

"The news I have will surprise you, Lory dear. Your father, who loved you devotedly when you were a baby, but whom you have never known till now, is coming here to see us."

Alora's eyes grew big with wonder, but other thoughts drove even this strange news from her mind.

"I can't let you go, Mamma Tone," she wailed, sobbing; "I can't let you die and leave me all alone!"

The woman's breast heaved. She was silent a moment and then said quietly:

"Even kings and queens, sweetheart, have no command over life and death. When it is too late to help it, we realize we have been born; when it is too late to help it, we realize we must die. But why complain, when it is the fate of all humanity? To be true to our Creator, who directs all things, we must bow to His will without protest. You will love your father, Lory, because he will love you; and he is a good man, and kindly, so I believe he will make your life as happy as I could have done."

"I don't want him; I want *you,* Mamma — I want *you!"*

The mother sighed wearily and the alert nurse advanced and said to the child in grave, cold tones:

"You must control yourself, Miss Alora, if you wish to remain."

The threat quieted the little girl at once.

"I'll be good, Mamma Tone," she whispered softly. "Talk to me, and tell me what I must do."

So the dying woman talked to her, not of herself, but of Alora's father, and of how she would like her child to conduct herself while she grew in womanhood. She spoke of her will, and told Lory what it meant to her and how she had safe-guarded her interests as well as she was able. To this Lory listened intently and, although she still trembled at times, she had Tony Seaver's blood in her veins and could be brave in spite of the terrors that faced her. Dimly she realized that her mother was suffering through the knowledge of their inevitable parting, even as Alora was suffering, and felt she could comfort that beloved mother more by controlling her grief bravely than by giving way to it in her mother's presence.

Meantime, Dr. Anstruther had returned to his office and had written and dispatched the following telegram:

"Jason Jones,
1744 East 67th St.,
New York City.

"Your wife is dying at the Hotel Voltaire and wishes reconciliation before she passes away. Come quickly, as any delay may prove dangerous. Notify me by wire when to expect you.

Edward Anstruther, M. D."

He left orders that the answer be delivered to him at his office or residence, as soon as received, but the day and the night passed without a word from Jason Jones. Dr. Anstruther telephoned the telegraph office and was assured his message had been delivered to the party in New York, as otherwise they would be notified to that effect.

Knowing Mrs. Jones' dangerous condition, the good doctor was worried, but the following morning brought the delayed answer:

"If necessary for me to come, you must send money for expenses."

It was signed "Jason Jones" and its tone and its demand annoyed Dr. Anstruther exceedingly.

"Confound the fellow!" he exclaimed. "Any decent man would have borrowed the money, or even pawned his watch and jewelry, to get to a dying wife who calls for him. Either Mrs. Jones is mistaken in her husband's kindly character or — well, he may have changed since last she knew him."

He did not hesitate, however, to go to the office and send money by telegraph to Jason Jones, furnishing the required sum from his own pocket rather than allow Antoinette to see her husband's telegram. He even sent more than was necessary, muttering to himself: "The poor devil may have some bills to settle before he can get away, and in any event she must not be disappointed because her impecunious husband lacks a few dollars. I fancy

the poor artist will be amazed to find himself suddenly raised from poverty to affluence, for little Lory's income will be enormous and he will have seven years, at least, to enjoy it unrestrained. I hope," he added thoughtfully, as he drove back to his office, "that Mrs. Jones has made no error in her judgment of this man, for it is considerable power to place in anyone's hands and Alora is such a dear that I want her properly taken care of."

When he made his next visit to his patient he said in answer to her questioning look:

"Mr. Jones will be here to-morrow, I think. He will notify me of his arrival and I will be here to meet him. I believe it will be advisable for me to see him first, you know, in order to — eh — eh — to post him a bit," he added, meaningly.

"Yes," she replied, "I fear it will be something of a shock to Jason. Even though we have practically been strangers for years, he is sure to be grieved and sympathetic. But do not bore him with particulars, Doctor. Send him to me as soon as you have prepared him for the interview."

CHAPTER III

ALORA'S FATHER

A man slouched into the lofty foyer of the Hotel Voltaire and paused uncertainly, as if awed by the splendor of the place. A boy in uniform hastened to relieve him of his hand baggage, which consisted of a "roll-me-up" or "carryall" of brown canvas, strapped around the middle, such as one often sees in traveling on the Continent. It seemed a much used and abused affair and painted upon the ends were the dimmed initials: "J. J."

This man was plainly dressed. His clothing was of the cheap, ready- made variety, worn nearly to shabbiness and matched by a gray flannel shirt with a flowing black tie, knotted at the throat, and a soft gray hat that was a bit weatherstained. His shoes were shabby and unshined. His whole appearance was out of keeping with the palatial hotel he had entered.

Without relinquishing his baggage to the boy he asked sharply:

"Is Dr. Anstruther here?"

But now Dr. Anstruther, who had been impatiently waiting, espied the arrival and after a glance at the initials on the traveling-roll said in hesitating tones:

"Mr. Jason Jones?"

"Yes. You must be the doctor who telegraphed me."

"I am Doctor Anstruther."

"All right. Where's my wife?"

There was no especial anxiety in his tones, which were slow and distinct and a trifle sharp. He seemed ill at ease and looked around the foyer again, as if fearing he had entered the wrong place.

"I will lead you to her presently," replied the physician gravely; "but first, sir, I must acquaint you with her condition, which is serious. I have engaged a room for you here and if you will please register we will go there together and talk undisturbed."

"All right," said Jason Jones. He registered at the desk and then turned and announced: "I'm ready. Go ahead."

Those present in the foyer cast curious glances at the stranger as he passed them and followed Dr. Anstruther to the elevator. The boy accompanied them, now carrying the roll of baggage. The grandeur of the room they entered, which was convenient to the suite of Mrs. Jones, seemed to astonish the artist, although it was as simply furnished as any the great hotel contained. However, he made no remark but removed his hat, seated himself, and looked inquiringly at the physician.

"Mrs. Jones," began Dr. Anstruther, "is really dying. I cannot say how

long she may survive, but it is a matter of days — perhaps hours. Her greatest anxiety at present is to be reconciled with you, whom she has not seen or even communicated with for years."

"Did she say that?"

"Yes."

"And she wants to be reconciled?"

"She does."

"Rather a queer notion, that," remarked Mr. Jones, musingly.

"Very natural, I think, under the circumstances," stiffly replied the doctor. "She has every confidence in you and admires your character exceedingly, although it was her desire that you live apart."

The man's stolid countenance relaxed in a grin — a somewhat scornful and unbelieving expression — but he did not speak. He was not a very tall man; he was thin of figure and hardened of muscle; his head was bald in front, giving him the appearance of a high forehead, and the hair at the back and around the ears was beginning to gray. His eyes were light blue; his nose was shapely and his jaws prominent and tightly set in repose. His age was about forty.

"Mrs. Jones," continued the doctor, "knows that you are due to arrive at this time and is eagerly counting the minutes; not that you are so dear to her," he asserted in retaliation for the sneer upon his hearer's lips, "but because she has important business matters to arrange with you before she passes away."

"Business matters?"

"So she has told me. I believe," he said, after a brief period of hesitation, during which he considered how best to handle this peculiar artist, "that I will allow you to see your wife at once, that you may learn her plans from her own lips."

Indeed, he had already decided that Jason Jones must have changed materially, and for the worse, since Antoinette Seaver had known him. Perhaps, when she had talked with the man, she would revise her opinion of him and make other disposition of her finances and the guardianship of her child. In that case it would not be well for him to give her husband any inkling of her present plans. Having reached this conclusion, Dr. Anstruther rose abruptly and said: "Come with me, please."

Jason Jones made no demur. Without remark he followed his conductor into the hallway and to the entrance to the suite occupied by his wife. The governess had been instructed to take Alora out for a ride; there was no one in the little reception room. Here, however, the doctor halted, and pointing to the door at the further end of the passage he said:

"That is your wife's sick chamber. Please enter quietly and remember the

danger of exciting Mrs. Jones unduly. Be gentle, and — considerate."

Jason Jones nodded. A moment he regarded the door with curious intentness, savoring of reluctance. Then he slowly advanced, opened it and went in, closing the door softly behind him.

Dr. Anstruther seated himself in the reception room. The artist puzzled him greatly, although he prided himself — through long professional experience — on being able to read human nature with some accuracy. This summons to his dying-wife ought to seem the most natural thing in the world to Jason Jones, yet the man appeared dazed and even bewildered by the event, and while he had once lived in luxurious surroundings his later experiences must have been so wholly different that the splendor of his wife's mode of living quite embarrassed him. Yes, the contrast was sharp, it must be admitted; the man had formerly shared Tony Seaver's immense wealth; he had enjoyed the handsomest studio in New York; and then — back to poverty, to drudgery, to a struggle for mere food and clothing! Years of hardship were likely to have had a decided effect upon the character of a man who was doubtless weak in the beginning; it would make him hard, and bitter, and — —

A shrill scream startled him. It came from the sick chamber and was echoed by another cry — hoarse and terrified — in a man's voice.

Dr. Anstruther sprang to his feet and hurried into the patient's bedchamber.

"The woman's dead, Doctor," cried Jason Jones, standing in the middle of the room. "She's dead!"

The physician hastened to the bedside, where Janet Orme, the nurse, was bending over the still form. Pushing her away, Dr. Anstruther made a hurried examination.

It was true; the woman was dead. At the very moment of reunion with the husband from whom she had so long been parted, she had passed on to another life, leaving reconciliation in abeyance.

Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones lay beneath her lace covered with features contorted, mouth half open and eyes staring wildly. A paroxysm of pain had carried her off, the good doctor well knew; the pain, and the excitement of the moment. Very tenderly he bent down and closed the eyes and pressed the lips together. He smoothed the lines from the cheeks, so that the face became more natural in appearance. Then, with a sigh — for he had become fond of this brave, beautiful patient — he turned away to find Jason Jones and the nurse Janet confronting one another in tense attitudes. The man stared wonderingly into the nurse's face; Janet, her eyes now unveiled, returned the stare with an expression that Dr. Anstruther could not fathom.

They seemed to feel the doctor's observation, for Janet turned her back abruptly, while the man swung around and tiptoed hastily from the room.

Dr. Anstruther looked at the nurse reflectively.

"Who was it that screamed? Was it you, or Mrs. Jones?" he asked.

She hesitated a moment.

"It was I," she replied. "I saw her face and knew that — that the end had come."

It was a lie, and the nurse knew that the shrewd doctor recognized it as a lie. But he made no comment and with a last regretful look toward the bed he followed Jason Jones out.

CHAPTER IV

ALORA'S NEW LIFE

Time sears all heart wounds. The scars remain, perhaps, but as the clock ticks on the ache is stilled and the soreness finally passes away.

At first Alora was heart-broken over her mother's loss. She lived in a sort of stupor for weeks after the funeral. Her father's presence she accepted without comment or emotion, for it had been arranged by "Mamma Tone." She did not consider, in those first weeks, whether she cared for her newly found father or not. Her mother's statement that he was a "good man" and would love Alora dearly was taken by the child as a matter of fact, while her mother's injunction to love him and confide in him in her stead was for the present ignored.

Indeed, during those first weeks Lory had no fault to find with her new protector, for she saw little of him. Jason Jones retained his room at the hotel and allowed Alora and her governess to inhabit the handsome suite her mother had occupied, although they were much too small for the big apartments. However, Lory would have felt uncomfortable, just then, in any other place. Her mother's chamber was closed and the curtains drawn, but every night before she retired to her own little room the child would steal in, in the dark, and feel her way to the empty bed and kiss the pillow on which her dear mother's head had rested. Miss Gorham, the governess, was aware of these evening excursions, but offered no objection. Indeed, the woman objected to nothing that did not interfere with her own personal comfort and convenience. Under the eyes of Mrs. Jones she had been prim and dutiful, but there was no one to chide her now, however neglectful she chose to be, and it was true that during these days the little girl required no particular care. Alora resumed her morning studies with meekness a week after her mother had been laid away, and in the afternoons she rode or walked with Miss Gorham or received the callers who came to "console poor Antoinette Seaver Jones' child."

Despite her haughty reserve, Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones had accumulated a wide circle of acquaintances — if not friends — who sincerely mourned her untimely death and would have been glad to befriend her little girl were such services needed. But it was known that Alora's father had now appeared to guard her welfare and there was "so much money in the Jones family" that no financial aid was required; therefore, these acquaintances could only call to see Alora and profess their friendship.

The child listened gravely to their stilted praises of her mother and accepted their platitudes in good faith. It was indeed comforting to hear so

many nice things said of her loved one.

Her father was never present on these occasions. He was by no means a sociable man. Sometimes he came in for a few minutes, in the morning, and sat down and stared at the girl in a way half curious and half speculative, and said little, and presently went away as quietly as he had come.

The nurse, Janet Orme, left on the day that Mrs. Jones died, and Alora had almost forgotten the young woman when one afternoon she came to see her. Janet no longer wore her nurse's uniform but was dressed in ultra-fashionable apparel and to the child's amusement affected the manners of a lady. She talked more with Miss Gorham than with the little girl and was keen to know what arrangements had been made for their future. Miss Gorham admitted that she had no idea of Mr. Jones' intentions. Of course they could not remain long in this elaborate suite; a smaller one would be more satisfactory in every way; but Mr. Jones had not as yet mentioned the subject.

A few days afterward, during one of their walks, Alora was surprised to see her father and nurse Janet riding past in a hired automobile. The two seemed engaged in earnest conversation and neither noticed Alora or her governess. Miss Gorham snorted rather disdainfully but without remark, and Lory was not especially interested in the matter.

Meantime, letters of administration had been issued to Jason Jones and the control of his wife's — now Alora's — property legally placed in his hands. Judge Bernsted attended to all the necessary details and, while he did not admire the artist and secretly believed he was unfitted for the task of handling so much money, he loyally insisted that the dead woman's wishes be obeyed to the letter.

Dr. Anstruther had called on the attorney and had ventured to state his misgivings concerning Jason Jones, pleading that Alora was likely to suffer through the man's indifference and lack of culture, but Judge Bernsted declared it was not his duty to criticise character but to see that the wishes of his clients were obeyed. In this case doubtless the man's wife knew him more intimately than anyone else and if she trusted him, aware as she must be of his faults and virtues, it would be presumptuous for anyone to try to break her will or otherwise interfere with her carefully planned arrangements.

But Jason Jones was improving, in a way. He had bought new clothes and a supply of linen, and although he did not wear them with the ease of one accustomed to modish dress they certainly improved his appearance. He was quiet and unassuming; he made no friends and few acquaintances; he never mentioned himself or his personal history and never referred to his wife

except when forced to do so by some of “her meddling friends” — well meaning people who sought his acquaintance to condole with him or perhaps to attempt to “cultivate” him for Antoinette Seaver Jones’ sake. But these found him so unresponsive that they soon left him alone.

The legal business, even though it progressed smoothly, required time for consummation, so it was somewhat more than three months before all the details were complete. Alora, a sad-faced child with no especial interest in life, kept no track of time and plodded along in her morning-studies and took her afternoon drives or walks in a perfunctory manner that rendered Miss Gorham’s duties light indeed. But all this ended suddenly, and Jason Jones ended it.

He came to the rooms one morning and said to the governess in his abrupt way: “Pack up.”

“What do you mean, sir?” was the startled query.

“Just what I say. Get the child’s things and your own ready to move out of this place by Saturday. Also pack the personal belongings of Mrs. Jones. Put them in separate trunks and boxes, so I can have them stored. Do you understand me?”

“I — I shall need assistance,” gasped the bewildered Miss Gorham.

“Then get a maid — or a porter — or both — to help you.”

Alora was present and listened with awakening interest. A change of any sort would be pleasant, she reflected.

“Where are we going?” she asked, as her father turned away.

It was the one question Miss Gorham wanted to ask, too, but Mr. Jones left the room without reply.

Three days was little enough time to gather up and pack the accumulation of years. The governess knew there were many big trunks in the storeroom of the hotel belonging to Mrs. Jones, and these she ordered brought up to the rooms. Then she procured two maids, told them what and how to pack, and composedly resumed her reading.

“I am no menial,” she told Alora, with a lofty air of superiority; “these persons will do their work properly, I’m sure.”

On Saturday morning Mr. Jones appeared again.

“Is everything ready?” he demanded.

“Ask Susan and Jane,” replied Miss Gorham.

Susan and Jane declared everything was packed, even to the suit cases and traveling satchels.

“But where are we going?” inquired the governess.

“You are going wherever you please,” said Jason Jones. “I do not require your services longer.”

“You’re going to discharge me?” she said, startled.

“You are already discharged.”

“But who will look after poor Lory? Who will attend to her education, and to — to — her comforts?”

“I will. Here is your money. I have paid you a week in advance, in lieu of notice.”

“A week? Pooh! I’m hired by the year,” asserted the woman defiantly.

“Have you a written contract?”

“No; a verbal contract is just as good.”

“It won’t hold in law. Take your traps and go — at once.”

The governess looked at him. He was absolutely calm and determined. Instinctively she knew that any protest would be unavailing.

Alora regarded the dismissal of her governess with as much unconcern as her father displayed. Miss Gorham had been her companion for years, but had never won the smallest corner of the girl’s heart. Although she was not aware of the fact, the woman’s constant presence and lack of interest in her had become oppressive. The child’s first sensation, on realizing their future separation, was one of distinct relief.

When Miss Gorham had gone, seeming to begrudge the terse “good-bye” she gave her pupil, the girl’s father quietly said: “Come, Alora,” and walked away.

She followed him to a waiting taxicab, in which had been heaped her hand luggage and his own, and they drove away from the grand hotel where she had lived in luxury for so long, and where so many indelible memories had been impressed upon her childish mind, with as little ado as if they had been transient guests.

When the cab drew up at a railway station, Alora asked:

“Are we leaving town, then, father?”

“Yes,” he replied; “I am returning to New York.”

She felt a slight sinking of the heart, just then, but it was followed by a sense of elation. The old life, in which her adored mother had played so prominent a part, was being abandoned forever, and this troubled her, she knew not why.

But since Mamma Tone had gone away the old life had lost its charm and become dull and stupid. Lory was not sure she could be happier elsewhere, but her crushed and dispirited nature responded to the suggestion of change. It was interesting to have something different to look forward to.

The man beside her was no more congenial than Gorham had been, but he was her father; he was the guardian selected by her dead mother, and in obeying his wishes she might find her future life more grateful than had been

the dreadful dreary months since Mamma Tone had left her.

Somehow, Jason Jones seemed uneasy in the presence of his daughter. During the journey to New York he rode most of the time in the smoking compartment, only appearing to take Alora to the diner for her meals. The child was equally uncomfortable in her father's society and was well pleased to be left so much alone.

So, with very little questioning or conversation on either side, father and daughter came to their destination and Alora found herself deposited in a small suite of rooms on the third floor of a grimy and dingy house in East Sixty-seventh Street — one of a long row of similar houses that were neither residences nor business establishments, but hovered between the two. There were several little tin signs nailed beside the entrance and Lory noticed that one of these read: "Jason Jones. Studio. 3rd Floor." It was an old sign, scarcely legible, while others beside it seemed bright and new, and when the girl had climbed laboriously up the three flights and the artist had unlocked the door at the head of the stairs, with a key which he took from his pocket, she found everything about the rooms she entered as old and faded as the sign on the door.

CHAPTER V
IN THE STUDIO

The fact that it was beginning to grow dark prevented Alora from observing all the tawdriness of her new home and what she saw inspired her more with curiosity than dismay. The little girl had been reared from babyhood in an atmosphere of luxury; through environment she had become an aristocrat from the top of her head to the tips of her toes; this introduction to shabbiness was unique, nor could she yet understand that such surroundings were familiar to many who battle for existence in a big city. The very fact that her father's humble flat was "different" made it far more interesting to the child than new apartments such as she had been accustomed to. Therefore she had no thought, at this time, of protest. Her own little room contained a small iron bed, one straight chair with a wooden bottom and a broken- legged dresser over which hung a cracked mirror. The small rag rug was worn threadbare.

While she stood in the doorway of this room, solemnly regarding it, her father said over her shoulder:

"You won't need both those big trunks here, I'm sure. I'll store them somewhere in the studio. Covered with drapes, they won't be noticed. I can't imagine what that woman packed them with."

"My dresses," replied Alora. "Even then, I left a lot at the Voltaire, for the maids to sell or give away. Mamma used to send them to the Salvation Army."

"Two trunks of dresses ought to last for a good many years," he remarked in a reflective tone.

"Oh, no indeed," said Lory. "Miss Gorham was about to engage a dressmaker for me when — when — you said we'd go away. I'm growing fast, you know, and I was to have a dozen or fifteen summer frocks made, and a lot of lingerie."

"Then we moved just in time to save that expense," he declared, setting his stern jaws together. "There's been a terrible waste of money through that woman Gorham. We're well rid of her."

He turned away to the studio and the child followed him there. He turned on the electric lights, which were not very bright, and Alora took a look at the workroom and thought it seemed more comfortable than the other rooms of the flat.

Her father began dusting and arranging half a dozen paintings of various sizes, mounted on stretchers. None was finished; some were scarcely begun. Lory tried to see what they represented. Perhaps she had inherited from her

mother a bit of artistic instinct; if so, it was that which prompted her to shrug her small shoulders slightly and then turn away to the window.

In the dimly lighted street outside a man drove up with the baggage. Mr. Jones had purchased for himself in Chicago a new trunk — a small and inexpensive one — and there were two big trunks and a suitcase belonging to Alora. After these had been carried up and placed in the studio — the only room that would hold them — her father said:

"We will go out now and get some dinner. You won't need your coat, for the restaurant is just around the corner."

Alora marveled at the restaurant even more than at the studio furnishings. It looked a hundred years old and the atmosphere still retained the fumes of much ancient cookery. The linen was coarse, the plating worn from the forks and spoons through constant use, the dishes thick and clumsy and well nicked. Alora was hungry and she ate what her father ordered for her, although she decided it did not taste very nice.

When they sat down a man from behind the counter approached them and bending low said in a quiet tone:

"You know, Jones, it's to be a cash deal from now on."

"Of course," replied Alora's father, with a slight frown. "Also I'll pay you the old account, if you'll make out the bill."

The man smiled, patted Alora's head — a liberty she indignantly resented — and went back to his desk.

During the meal and, indeed, ever since their arrival in New York, Jason Jones cast frequent puzzled glances into the face of his little daughter, who until now had accepted her changed conditions with evident indifference. But as they ate together in silence her small features grew grave and thoughtful and her father shrank from meeting the inquiring glances of her big eyes. Yet even now she made no complaint. Neither did she ask questions. Her look was expectant, however, and that was what embarrassed him.

After the dinner they went back to the dingy studio, where the man lighted a pipe and sat opposite his small daughter, puffing uneasily. They were both reserved; there was an indefinable barrier between them which each was beginning to recognize. Presently Alora asked to go to bed and he sent her to her room with a nod of relief.

Next morning they had breakfast at the same stuffy little restaurant and afterward Alora unpacked some things from her trunks and put them in the drawers of the broken-legged dresser. It seemed odd to have no maid to wait upon her, but she was glad to have something to do. As she passed to and from the studio she noticed that her father had resumed work on a picture that represented two cows eating a broken pumpkin that lay in a cornfield. He

worked slowly and never seemed satisfied with what he did, as if lacking confidence in his ability. Lory decided he couldn't be blamed for that.

The child plodded drearily along in her new life for a full week. Then she began to grow restless, for the place was hateful and repulsive to her. But now an incident occurred that gave her new cause for wonder.

One day the door opened and a woman walked into the studio. It was Janet Orme, her mother's former nurse, but what a new and astonishing Janet it was! Her silken gown was very "fashionable," somewhat too modish for good taste, for it was elaborately trimmed and embroidered. She wore considerable jewelry, including diamonds; her shoes were elegant and her hose daintily clocked; her hat must have been a French milliner's choicest creation. If good clothes could make Janet Orme a lady, there was no question of her social standing, yet even little Alora felt that Janet was out of her element — that she fell short, in some vague way, of being what she was ambitious to appear.

"So," said the nurse, glancing around the room with frank disdain, "this is where you hang out, Jason, is it?"

Alora's father confronted the woman with a menacing frown.

"What do you mean by coming here?" he demanded.

"I had two reasons," she answered carelessly, seating herself in the only easy chair the room contained. "In the first place, I wanted to see how a rich man lives."

"Well, you see, don't you?" a muttering growl.

"I certainly do, and I realize you are quite comfortable and ought to be happy here, Jason — you and the millionaire heiress, your daughter Alora."

As she spoke she turned to glance sharply at the child, who met her look with disconcerting gravity. Alora's eyes expressed wonder, tinged with a haughty tolerance of an inferior that struck home to Janet and made her flush angrily.

"Your sneers," said Jason Jones, still frowning but now speaking with composure, "must indicate that you have graduated from servitude. I cannot admit that my mode of living is any of your business, Janet. In these retired but respectable rooms I have worked and been contented for years, until — — "

"Until you came into your money and found you didn't have to worry over your next meal," she interjected. "Well, that ought to make you still more content. And that reminds me of the second object of my visit. I want some money."

"So soon?"

"Don't try to crawfish; it was agreed you should give me a check

whenever I asked for it. I want it now, and for the full amount — every single penny of it!"

He stared at her fixedly, seeming fearful and uncertain how to answer.

"I cannot spare it all today."

"Humbug!" she snapped. "You can and will spare it. I must have the money, or — — "

Her significant pause caused him to wriggle in his seat.

"You're a miserly coward," she declared. "I'm not robbing you; you will have an abundance for your needs. Why do you quarrel with Dame Fortune? Don't you realize you can pay your rent now and eat three square meals a day, and not have to work and slave for them? You can smoke a good cigar after your dinner, instead of that eternal pipe, and go to a picture show whenever the mood strikes you. Why, man, you're independent for the first time in your life, and the finances are as sure as shooting for a good seven years to come."

He glanced uneasily at Alora.

"Owing to my dead wife's generosity," he muttered.

Janet laughed.

"Of course," said she; "and, if you play your cards skillfuly, when Alora comes of age she will provide for you an income for the rest of your life. You're in luck. And why? Just because you are Jason Jones and long ago married Antoinette Seaver and her millions and are now reaping your reward! So, for decency's sake, don't grumble about writing me that check."

All this was frankly said in the presence of Alora Jones, the heiress, of whose person and fortune, her father, Jason Jones, was now sole guardian. It was not strange that the man seemed annoyed and ill at ease. His scowl grew darker and his eyes glinted in an ugly way as he replied, after a brief pause:

"You seem to have forgotten Alora's requirements and my duty to her."

"Pooh, a child! But we've allowed liberally for her keep, I'm sure. She can't keep servants and three dressmakers, it's true, but a simple life is best for her. She'll grow up a more sensible and competent woman by waiting on herself and living; as most girls do. At her age I didn't have shoes or stockings. Alora has been spoiled, and a bit of worldly experience will do her good."

"She's going to be very rich, when she comes into her fortune," said Alora's father, "and then — — "

"And then she can do as she likes with her money. Just now her income is too big for her needs, and the best thing you can do for her is to teach her economy — a virtue you seem to possess, whether by nature or training, in a high degree. But I didn't come here to argue. Give me that check."

He walked over to his little desk, sat down and drew a check book from his pocket.

Alora, although she had listened intently to the astonishing conversation, did not quite comprehend what it meant. Janet's harsh statement bewildered her as much as did her father's subject subservience to the woman. All she realized was that Janet Orme, her dead mother's nurse, wanted money — Alora's money — and her father was reluctant to give it to her but dared not refuse. Money was an abstract quantity to the eleven year old child; she had never handled it personally and knew nothing of its value. If her father owed Janet some of her money, perhaps it was for wages, or services rendered her mother, and Alora was annoyed that he haggled about it, even though the woman evidently demanded more than was just. There was plenty of money, she believed, and it was undignified to argue with a servant.

Jason Jones wrote the check and, rising, handed it to Janet.

"There," said he, "that squares our account. It is what I agreed to give you, but I did not think you would demand it so soon. To pay it just now leaves me in an embarrassing position."

"I don't believe it," she rejoined. "You're cutting coupons every month or so, and you may thank your stars I don't demand a statement of your income. But I know you, Jason Jones, and you can't hoodwink me, try as you may. You hid yourself in this hole and thought I wouldn't know where to find you, but you'll soon learn that you can't escape my eagle eye. So take your medicine like a man, and thank your lucky stars that you're no longer a struggling, starving, unrecognized artist. Good-bye until I call again."

"You're not to call again!" he objected.

"Well, we'll see. Just for the present I'm in no mood to quarrel with you, and you'd better not quarrel with *me,* Jason Jones. Good-bye."

She tucked the check into her purse and ambled out of the room after a supercilious nod to Alora, who failed to return the salutation. Jason Jones stood in his place, still frowning, until Janet's high-heeled shoes had clattered down the two flights of stairs. Alora went to the window and looking down saw that a handsome automobile stood before the house, with a chauffeur and footman in livery. Janet entered this automobile and was driven away.

Alora turned to look at her father. He was filing his pipe and scowling more darkly than ever.

CHAPTER VI

FLITTING

Once more they moved suddenly, and the second flitting came about in this way:

Alora stood beside the easel one morning, watching her father work on his picture. Not that she was especially interested in him or the picture, but there was nothing else for her to do. She stood with her slim legs apart, her hands clasped behind her, staring rather vacantly, when he looked up and noted her presence.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked rather sharply.

"Of the picture?" said Lory.

"Of course."

"I don't like it," she asserted, with childish frankness.

"Eh? You don't like it? Why not, girl?"

"Well," she replied, her eyes narrowing critically, "that cow's horn isn't on straight — the red cow's left horn. And it's the same size, all the way up."

He laid down his palette and brush and gazed at his picture for a long time. The scowl came on his face again. Usually his face was stolid and expressionless, but Alora had begun to observe that whenever anything irritated or disturbed him he scowled, and the measure of the scowl indicated to what extent he was annoyed. When he scowled at his own unfinished picture Lory decided he was honest enough to agree with her criticism of it.

Finally the artist took a claspknife from his pocket, opened the blade and deliberately slashed the picture from top to bottom, this way and that, until it was a mere mass of shreds. Then he kicked the stretcher into a corner and brought out another picture, which he placed on the easel.

"Well, how about that?" he asked, looking hard at it himself.

Alora was somewhat frightened at having caused the destruction of the cow picture. So she hesitated before replying: "I — I'd rather not say."

"How funny!" he said musingly, "but until now I never realized how stiff and unreal the daub is. Shall I finish it, Alora?"

"I think so, sir," she answered.

Again the knife slashed through the canvas and the remains joined the scrap-heap in the corner.

Jason Jones was not scowling any more. Instead, there was a hint of a humorous expression on his usually dull features. Only pausing to light his pipe, he brought out one after another of his canvases and after a critical look destroyed each and every one.

Lory was perplexed at the mad act, for although her judgment told her

they were not worth keeping, she realized that her father must have passed many laborious hours on them. But now that it had dawned on him how utterly inartistic his work was, in humiliation and disgust he had wiped it out of existence. With this thought in mind, the girl was honestly sorry him.

But Jason Jones did not seem sorry. When the last ruined canvas had been contemptuously flung into the corner he turned to the child and said to her in a voice so cheerful that it positively startled her:

"Get your hat and let's take a walk. An artist's studio is no place for us, Lory. Doesn't it seem deadly dull in here? And outside the sun is shining!"

The rest of the day he behaved much like a human being. He took the girl to the park to see the zoo, and bought her popcorn and peanuts — a wild extravagance, for him. Later in the day they went to a picture show and finally entered a down-town restaurant, quite different from and altogether better than the one where they had always before eaten, and enjoyed a really good dinner. When they left the restaurant he was still in the restless and reckless mood that had dominated him and said:

"Suppose we go to a theatre? Won't you like that better than you would returning to our poky rooms?"

"Yes, indeed," responded Alora.

They had seats in the gallery, but could see very well. Just before the curtain rose Alora noticed a party being seated in one of the boxes. The lady nearest the rail, dressed in an elaborate evening gown, was Janet Orme. There was another lady with her, conspicuous for blonde hair and much jewelry, and the two gentlemen who accompanied them kept in the background, as if not too proud of their company.

Alora glanced at her father's face and saw the scowl there, for he, too, had noted the box-party. But neither of the two made any remark and soon the child was fully absorbed in the play.

As they left the theatre Janet's party was entering an automobile, laughing and chatting gaily. Both father and daughter silently watched them depart, and then they took a street car and went home.

"Get to bed, girl," said Jason Jones, when they had mounted the stairs. "I'll smoke another pipe, I guess."

When she came out of her room next morning she heard her father stirring in the studio. She went to him and was surprised to find him packing his trunk, which he had drawn into the middle of the room.

"Now that you're up," said he in quite a cheerful tone, "we'll go to breakfast, and then I'll help you pack your own duds. Only one trunk, though, girl, for the other must go into storage and you may see it again, some time, and you may not."

“Are we going away?” she inquired, hoping it might be true.

“We are. We’re going a long way, my girl. Do you care?”

“Of course,” said she, amazed at the question, for he had never considered her in the least. “I’m glad. I don’t like your studio.”

He laughed, and the laugh shocked her. She could not remember ever to have heard Jason Jones laugh before.

“I don’t like the place, either, girl, and that’s why I’m leaving it. For good, this time. I was a fool to return here. In trying to economise, I proved extravagant.”

Alora did not reply to that. She was eager to begin packing and hurried through her breakfast. All the things she might need on a journey she put into one trunk. She was not quite sure what she ought to take, and her father was still more ignorant concerning a little girl’s wardrobe, but finally both trunks were packed and locked and then Mr. Jones called a wagon and carted away the extra trunk of Alora’s and several boxes of his own to be deposited in a storage warehouse.

She sat in the bare studio and waited for his return. The monotony of the past weeks, which had grown oppressive, was about to end and for this she was very grateful. For from a life of luxury the child had been dumped into a gloomy studio in the heart of a big, bustling city that was all unknown to her and where she had not a single friend or acquaintance. Her only companion had been a strange man who happened to be her father but displayed no affection for her, no spark of interest in her happiness or even comforts. For the first time in her life she lacked a maid to dress her and keep her clothes in order; there was no one to attend to her education, no one to amuse her, no one with whom to counsel in any difficulty. She had been somewhat afraid of her peculiar father and her natural reserve, derived from her mother, had deepened in his society. Yesterday and this morning he had seemed more human, more companionable, yet Alora felt that it was due to a selfish elation and recognized a gulf between them that might never be bridged. Her father differed utterly from her mother in breeding, in intelligence, in sympathy. He was not of the same world; even the child could realize that. And yet, he was her father — all she had left to depend upon, to cling to. She wondered if he really possessed the good qualities her mother had attributed to him. If so, when she knew him better, she might learn to like him.

He was gone a long time, it seemed, but as soon as he returned the remaining baggage was loaded on the wagon and sent away and then they left the flat and boarded a street car for down town. On lower Broadway Mr. Jones entered a bank and seemed to transact considerable business. Lory saw him receive several papers and a lot of money. Then they went to a

steamship office near by, where her father purchased tickets.

Afterward they had lunch, and Jason Jones was still in high spirits and seemed more eager and excited than Alora had ever before known him.

“We’re going across the big water — to Europe,” he told her at luncheon, “so if there is anything you positively need for the trip, tell me what it is and I’ll buy it. No frivolities, though,” qualifying his generosity, “but just stern necessities. And you must think quick, for our boat leaves at four o’clock and we’ve no time to waste.”

But Alora shook her head. Once she had been taken by her mother to London, Paris and Rome, but all her wants had been attended to and it was so long ago — four or five years — that that voyage was now but a dim remembrance.

No one noticed them when they went aboard. There was no one to see them off or to wish them “bon voyage.” It saddened the child to hear the fervent good-byes of others, for it emphasized her own loneliness.

Yes, quite friendless was little Alora. She was going to a foreign land with no companion but a strange and uncongenial man whom fate had imposed upon her in the guise of a parent. As they steamed out to sea and Alora sat on deck and watched the receding shores of America, she turned to her father with the first question she had ventured to ask:

“Where are we going? To London?”

“Not now,” he replied. “This ship is bound for the port of Naples. I didn’t pick Naples, you know, but took the first ship sailing to-day. Having made up my mind to travel, I couldn’t wait,” he added, with a chuckle of glee. “You’re not particular as to where we go, are you?”

“No,” said Alora.

“That’s lucky,” he rejoined, “for it wouldn’t have made any difference, anyhow.”

CHAPTER VII

MARY LOUISE INTRUDES

It was four years later when on a sunny afternoon in April a carriage broke down on the Amalfi Road, between Positano and Sorrento, in Italy. A wheel crumpled up and the driver stopped his horses and explained to his passengers in a jumble of mixed Italian and English that he could go no farther. The passengers, an old gentleman of distinguished appearance and a young girl as fresh and lovely as a breath of spring, clambered out of the rickety vehicle and after examining the wheel admitted that their driver spoke truly. On one side the road was a steep descent to the sea; opposite, the hillside was masked by a trellis thick with grapevines. The road curved around the mountain, so there was no other vista.

"Here's a nice fix, Gran'pa Jim!" exclaimed the girl, with an amused laugh. "Where are we and what's going to become of us?"

"That is somewhat of a complicated problem, Mary Louise, and I can't guess it offhand, without due reflection," replied "Gran'pa Jim," whom others called Colonel Hathaway. "I imagine, however, that we are about three miles from Positano and five or six from Sorrento, and it's a stiff walk, for old legs or young, in either direction. Besides, there's our luggage, which I am loth to abandon and disinclined to carry."

The driver interposed.

"Give-a me the moment, Signore — perhaps the hour — an' I return to Positano for more carriage-wheel — some other. My Cousin L'uigi, he leeve in Positano, an' L'uigi have a-many carriage-wheel in he's shed. I sure, Signore, I getta the wheel."

"That is a sensible idea," said the old gentleman. "Make haste, my man, and we will wait here."

The driver unhitched his horses from the vehicle and after strapping a blanket on one of them for a saddle mounted it and departed.

"I take-a the two horse," he explained, "for one to ride-a me, an' one for to ride-a the wheel."

They watched him amble away down the road and Mary Louise shook her head and remarked:

"He will never make it in an hour, at that rate, Gran'pa Jim, and in two hours the sun will have set and it will be dinner time. Already I feel the pangs of hunger."

"Those who travel in Italy," said her grandfather, "should be prepared to accept any happening in a spirit of resignation. A moment ago we were jogging merrily along toward a good hotel and a savory dinner, but now —

— ”

“This entire carriage seems ready to fall apart,” declared the girl, standing in the road and viewing the ancient vehicle critically; “so it’s a wonder something didn’t break sooner. Now, if we could get to the other side of that trellis, Gran’pa Jim, we might find a shady spot to rest while our charioteer is searching for a new wheel.”

“There must be a gate, somewhere about,” he answered, eyeing the vine-clad barrier. “Come, Mary Louise, let us investigate.”

A hundred yards down the road they came to some rude stone steps and a wicket. The old gentleman lifted the wooden latch and found the gate unlocked. Followed by Mary Louise, he entered the vineyard and discovered a narrow, well-beaten path leading up the hillside.

“Perhaps there is a house near by,” said the girl. “Shall we go on, Gran’pa Jim?”

“Why not, my dear? These Italians are hospitable folk and we may get a cake and a cup of goat’s milk to stay our appetite.”

So they climbed the hill, following the little path, and presently came upon a laborer who was very deliberately but methodically cultivating the vines with a V-shaped hoe. Seeing the strangers the man straightened up and, leaning upon his hoe, eyed them with evident suspicion.

“Good afternoon,” said the old gentleman in Italian — one of the few phrases in the language he had mastered.

“Oh, I speak the English, Signore,” replied the man, doffing his hat. “I am Silvio Allegheri, you must know, and I live in America some time.”

“Why, this is like meeting an old friend!” exclaimed Mary Louise, winning the fellow instantly with her smile. “But why did you leave America, Silvio?”

“Because I have make my fortune there,” was the solemn reply. “It is easy to make the fortune in America, Signorina. I am chef in the restaurant in Sandusky — you know Sandusky? — most excellent! In a few years I save much money, then I return here an’ purchase an estate. My estate is three miles across the hill, yonder, and there is a road to it which is not much used. However, it is a fine estate, an’ I am rent it to my cousin for five hundred lira a year. Such good business habit I learn in America.”

“Why don’t you live on your estate yourself?” inquired the girl.

“It is not yet the time,” answered the man, with a shake of his head. “I am but fifty-two years alive, and while I am still so young I shall work for others, and save the money my estate brings me. When I get old and can no longer work for the others, then I will go to my estate an’ be happy.”

“Very sensible,” commented the old gentleman. “And whom do you work

for now?”

“The student Americano, Signore; the one who has rented this valuable estate. I am the Signore Student’s valet, his gardener, and at times his chef. I grease his automobile, which is a very small chug- chug, but respectable, and I clean his shoes — when I can catch him with them off. I am valuable to him and for three years he has paid me fair wages.”

“Is this a big estate?” asked Mary Louise.

“Enormous, Signorina. It comprises three acres!”

“And where is the house?”

“Just over the hill, yonder, Signore.

“Does the student Americano live here all alone?”

“With his daughter, who is the Signorina Alora.”

“Oh; there is a daughter, then? And you say they are Americans?”

“Surely, Signorina. Who else would pay the great price for this estate for three years? The land pays nothing back — a few oranges; some grapes, when they are cared for; a handful of almonds and olives. And there is a servant besides myself, my niece Leona, who is housemaid and assists the young lady.”

“This sounds promising,” said Mary Louise, turning to her grandfather. “Suppose we go up to the house? Are the people at home, Silvio? — the Signore Student and his daughter?”

The man reflected, leaning on his hoe.

“I think they are both at the mansion, Signorina, although the student Americano may not yet have returned from Sorrento. The road to the mansion is beyond the hill, on the other side of the estate, so I am not sure the Signore Student has returned. But you will find the Signorina Alora there, if you decide to venture on. But perhaps you are the friends of my employer and his daughter?”

“What is his name?” asked Colonel Hathaway.

“It is Jones. The American saying is Mister Jason Jones, but here he is only called the Signore Student Americano.”

“Why?” asked Mary Louise.

“Because his occupation is reading. He does nothing else. Always there is a book in his hand and always he is thinking of the things he reads. He does not often speak, even to his daughter; he does not have friends who visit him. If you should call at the mansion, then you will be the first people who have done so for three years.”

There was something in this report — in the manner of the man as well as his words — that caused the strangers to hesitate. The description of “the Student” led them to suspect he was a recluse who might not welcome them

cordially, but Mary Louise reflected that there was a daughter and decided that any American girl shut up on this three-acre “estate” for three years would be glad to meet another American girl. So she said abruptly:

“Come on, Gran’pa Jim. Let’s call. It is possible that Americans will have something better in the larder than cakes and goat’s milk.”

The hilltop was reached sooner than they expected, and in a little vale was the old mansion — a really attractive vine-clad villa that might have stood a century or so. It was not very big, but there were numerous outbuildings which rendered the size of the house proper unimportant. As Mary Louise and her grandfather drew nearer they discovered a charming flower garden, carefully tended, and were not surprised to find a young girl bending over a rosebush.

CHAPTER VIII

MARY LOUISE MEETS ALORA

The two stood motionless a moment, looking at the girl, and Mary Louise marked the graceful figure and attractive features with real delight. The Signorina Alora, as the man had called her, was nearly her own age — fifteen, Mary Louise judged her to be — and her golden hair and fair complexion proclaimed her an American. But now the girl's quick ears had detected presence, and she looked up with a startled expression, half fearful and half shy, and turned as if to fly. But in the next moment she had collected herself and advanced with hesitating steps to meet them.

"Pardon our intrusion," said Colonel Hathaway, raising his hat. "Our carriage broke down on the Amalfi road, a little while ago, and our driver has gone to Positano for a new wheel. Meantime we were exploring our surroundings and stumbled upon the path leading to this spot. Forgive the trespass, if you will, and allow me to present my granddaughter, Mary Louise Burrows. I am Colonel James Hathaway, of New York, although we usually reside at a little town called Dorfield."

The girl's bow was stiff and awkward. She blushed in an embarrassed way as she replied:

"I am Alora Jones, sir, and am living here for a time with my father, Jason Jones. We, also, are Americans; at least, we used to be."

"Then doubtless you are yet," responded the Colonel, with a smile. "May we pay our respects to your father?"

"He — he is not home yet," she answered more embarrassed than before. "He went to Sorrento for some books, this morning, and has not yet returned. But perhaps he will be back soon," she added, seeming to ponder the matter. "Will you not come in and — and have some refreshment? In my father's absence I — I am glad to — welcome you."

She glanced shyly at Mary Louise, as if to implore her to forgive any seeming lack of hospitality and accept her coldly worded invitation. No one could look at Mary Louise without gaining confidence and the friendly smile and warm handclasp made Alora feel instantly that here was a girl who would prove congenial under any circumstances. Really, it would not take them long to become friends, and poor Alora had no girl friends whatever.

She led them into a cool and comfortable living room and called to Leona to fetch tea and biscuits.

"We are entirely shut in, here," she explained. "It seems to me worse than a convent, for there I would see other girls while here I see no one but the servants — and my father," as an afterthought, "year in and year out."

“It’s a pretty place,” declared Mary Louise cheerfully.

“But it’s an awfully dreary place, too, and sometimes I feel that I’d like to run away — if I knew where to go,” said Alora frankly.

“You have lived here three years?” asked Colonel Hathaway.

“Yes. We left New York more than four years ago and traveled a year in different places, always stopping at the little towns, where there is not much to interest one. Then my father found this place and rented it, and here we’ve stayed — I can’t say ‘lived’ — ever since. I get along pretty well in the daytime, with my flowers and the chickens to tend, but the evenings are horribly lonely. Sometimes I feel that I shall go mad.”

Mary Louise marked her wild look and excited manner and her heart went out in sympathy to the lonely girl. Colonel Hathaway, too, intuitively recognized Alora’s plaint as a human cry for help, and did not need to guess the explanation. The man in the vineyard had called her father “the Student” and said he was a reserved man and never was seen without a book in his hand. This would mean that he was not companionable and Alora’s protest plainly indicated that her father devoted small time, if any, to the cultivation of his daughter’s society.

“I suppose,” remarked the old gentleman, “that Mr. Jones is so immersed in his studies that he forgets his daughter lacks society am amusement.”

Mary Louise caught the slight, scornful smile that for a moment curled Alora’s lips. But the girl replied very seriously:

“My father dislikes society. I believe he would be quite content to live in this little cooped-up place forever and see no one but the servants, to whom he seldom speaks. Also, he ignores me, and I am glad he does. But before my mother died,” her voice breaking a little, “I was greatly loved and petted, and I can’t get used to the change. I ought not to say this to strangers, I know, but I am very lonely and unhappy, because — because my father is so different from what my mother was.”

Mary Louise was holding her trembling hand now and stroking it sympathetically.

“Tell us about your mother,” she said softly. “Is it long since you lost her?”

“More than four years,” returned Alora. “I was her constant companion and she taught me to love art and music and such things, for art was her hobby. I did not know my father in those days, you see, for — for — they did not live together. But in her last illness mamma sent for him and made him my guardian. My mother said that my father would love me, but she must have misjudged him.”

Colonel Hathaway had listened with interest.

“Tell me your mother’s name,” said he.

“She was Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones, and — ”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the Colonel. “Why, I knew Antoinette Seaver before she married, and a more beautiful and cultured woman I never met. Her father, Captain Seaver, was my friend, and I met his daughter several times, both at his mining camp and in the city. So you see, my dear, we must be friends.”

Alora’s eyes fairly glistened with delight and Mary Louise was as pleased as she was surprised.

“Of course we’re friends!” she cried, pressing the girl’s hand, “and isn’t it queer we have come together in this singular manner? In a foreign country! And just because our carriage-wheel happened to break.”

“I thought your mother married an artist,” said Mary Louise’s grandfather, reflectively.

“She did. At least, she *thought* Jason Jones was an artist,” answered Alora with bitter emphasis. “But he was, in fact, a mere dauber. He became discouraged in his attempts to paint and soon after he took me to New York he destroyed all his work — really, it was dreadful! — and since then he has never touched a brush.”

“That is strange,” mused the Colonel. “I once saw a landscape by Jason Jones that was considered a fine conception, skillfully executed. That was the opinion of so good a judge as Captain Seaver himself. Therefore, for some reason the man’s genius must have forsaken him.”

“I think that is true,” agreed Alora, “for my mother’s estimate of art was undoubtedly correct. I have read somewhere that discouragement sometimes destroys one’s talent, though in after years, with proper impulse, it may return with added strength. In my father’s case,” she explained, “he was not able to sell his work — and no wonder. So now he does nothing at all but read, and even that doesn’t seem to amuse him much.”

The Colonel had now remembered that Antoinette Seaver Jones was a woman of great wealth, and therefore her daughter must be an heiress. What a shame to keep the girl hidden in this out-of-the-way place, when she should be preparing to assume an important position in the world.

“May I ask your age, my dear?” he said.

“I am fifteen, sir,” replied Alora.

“And your father is the guardian of your fortune?”

“Yes; by my mother’s wish.”

“I suppose you are receiving proper instruction?”

“None at all, sir. Since I have been in my father’s care I have had no instruction whatever. That isn’t right, is it?”

“What isn’t right?” demanded a gruff voice, and all three turned to find Jason Jones standing in the doorway.

CHAPTER IX

MARY LOUISE SCENTS A MYSTERY

Colonel Hathaway instantly rose.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "I am Colonel James Hathaway, an American, and this is my granddaughter, Mary Louise Burrows. Our carriage met with an accident on the main road below and we wandered in here while waiting for repairs and chanced to meet your daughter. You are Mr. Jones, I believe?"

He nodded, still standing in his place and regarding his visitors with unconcealed suspicion. Under his arm he held several books.

"Who informed you that I was living here?" he demanded.

"I was wholly unaware of the fact," said the Colonel, stiffly. "I did not know you were in Italy. I did not know such an important person existed, strange to say, although I can remember that an artist named Jason Jones once married Antoinette Seaver, the daughter of my old friend Captain Robert Seaver."

"Oh, you remember that, do you?"

"This is the first time I have had the distinguished honor of meeting you, sir, and I trust it will be the last time."

"That's all right," said Jason Jones, more cordially. "I can't see that it's any of my affair, either way."

"We have been making the acquaintance of Tony Seaver's daughter, Miss Alora Jones, in your absence. But we will not intrude farther, Mr. Jones. Come, Mary Louise."

"Oh, don't go!" pleaded Alora, catching Mary Louise's arm. And just then Leona entered with the tea and biscuits.

"Sit down, man," said Jason Jones in a less aggressive tone. "I've no objection to your coming here, under the circumstances, and you are our first visitors in three years. That's often enough, but now that you are here, make yourself at home. What's happening over in America? Have you been there lately?"

He laid his books on a table and sat down. But after that one speech, which he perhaps considered conciliatory, he remained glum and allowed the others to do the talking.

Colonel Hathaway had stayed because he noted the leading look in Mary Louise's eyes. He was himself interested in Alora and indignant over her evident neglect. For her sake he would bear the insolence of his host, an insolence he recognized as characteristic of the man.

Alora, in her father's presence, lost her fluent speech and no longer dared

mention personal matters to her guests. Both Mary Louise and her grandfather tried to lead Alora and Jason Jones to speak of themselves — of their life and future plans — but the man evaded direct answers and the girl had suddenly become silent and reserved.

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inally, however, Mary Louise had an idea.

“We are bound for Sorrento,” said she, “where we intend to stay a week at the Hotel Vittoria. Will you let Alora come to us for ever Sunday, as our guest? We will drive here and get her the day after to- morrow — that’s Saturday, you know — and fetch her home on Monday.”

“No,” said Jason Jones.

“Oh, why not, father?” pleaded the girl.

“You’ve no fit clothes. I don’t want you hanging around Sorrento,” he replied.

“It will be a nice change for your daughter and it will give us much pleasure to entertain her,” said Mary Louise.

“It’s a capital idea,” declared the Colonel positively, and looking the other man straight in the eye he added: “I am sure you will withdraw your objections, Mr. Jones.”

The man dropped his eyes, frowning. But presently he said to Alora:

“Go, if you want to. But keep out of the town. Don’t leave the hotel grounds.”

“Why not?” asked his daughter in a defiant tone.

“It’s not safe. I know Sorrento, and these rascally Italians would be glad to steal you, if they had the chance, and then blackmail me a ransom.”

Mary Louise laughed.

“What a fine adventure that would be!” she exclaimed. “But we will promise to guard Alora and keep her from the clutches of bandits. I didn’t know there were any left in Italy.”

“To get rid of them you’d have to depopulate the country,” said Jason Jones. “It is no laughing matter, young woman, and — my daughter is somewhat valuable.”

CHAPTER X

MERE SPECULATION

The driver returned with the wheel. It fitted the axle but was some two or three inches larger in diameter than the other rear wheel and, moreover, it was flat on one side, so that when they started to conclude their journey the motion of the carriage was something startling — a "rock-a-bye baby ride" Mary Louise called it.

But the wheels turned and the carriage progressed and when they were well on their way the girl said:

"What do you think of that man, Gran'pa Jim?"

"Do you mean Alora's father, Jason Jones?"

"Yes, of course."

"I am surprised at two things," said the old Colonel. "First, it is curious that Tony Seaver, a rarely cultured woman, should have married such a man, and again it is amazing that she should have confided her daughter and her fortune to his care."

"Do you know," observed Mary Louise, sliding closer to him and dropping her voice, although there was absolutely no chance of being overheard, "I scent a mystery in that family, Gran'pa Jim!"

"That seems to be one of your regular diversions — to scent mysteries," he replied. "And usually, my dear, the suspicion is unwarranted. The most commonplace people frequently impress you with the idea that they are other than what they seem, are leading double lives, or are endeavoring to conceal some irregularity of conduct. You've a faculty of reading the natures and characteristics of strangers by studying their eyes, their facial expressions and their oddities of demeanor, which is interesting psychologically but too often — — "

"You are unjust, Gran'pa!" declared Mary Louise indignantly. "Didn't you yourself say there are two curious and surprising things about this man Jones?"

"Not exactly. I said it was curious and astonishing that Antoinette Seaver should have trusted so fully a man who impresses me as a churl. His own child, little Alora, appears to dislike and even to despise him, and — — "

"There!" cried Mary Louise. "I'm vindicated. Your observations fully justify my remark that there's a mystery in that family. Did you notice the books he brought home and laid upon the table?"

"No," said Colonel Hathaway, rather bewildered.

"They were novels by Marie Correlli, H. G. Wells and O. Henry. A student? Then a student of modern novels, a man who reads and reads to

keep his mind from dwelling on past history. He is a disappointed artist, to begin with."

"That is certainly odd," rejoined the old gentleman, reflectively. "The one picture I ever saw by Jason Jones was certainly good. I remember that once when I was lunching with Bob Seaver — that was Antoinette's father, you know — he told me his daughter was interested in a young artist of exceptional talent, and he took me to a gallery to show me what this man could do. I am not an art critic, as you are aware, my dear, but this landscape of Jason Jones appealed to me as delightful. Captain Bob knew art, and so did Antoinette, so it is evident that Jones *could* paint, but for some reason became dissatisfied with his work and abandoned it. Perhaps his ambition was too lofty for human skill to realize, yet nothing less would content him."

Mary Louise sat silent for a while. Then she asked:

"Did Jason Jones impress you as a man capable of a great ambition? Would you guess him an artist who had once accomplished admirable things?"

"Artists are always peculiar," stated her grandfather. "They must be temperamental in order to be artists, and temperaments differ widely. Had I not known something of Jason Jones' history I might have felt, on making his acquaintance to-day, that he is not an ordinary man. For, gruff and churlish though he proved, it is undeniable that he has selected a charming and retired spot in which to live — — "

"Or to hide," she interrupted.

"Or that, with considerable wealth at his command, he lives simply and unostentatiously, enjoying nature's choice gifts and content with the simple life he leads, with only the society of his young daughter."

"Whom he neglects and refuses to educate properly," declared the girl. "What makes you think he is wealthy?"

"I know that Antoinette made millions, after her father died, from the mines. By current report she retired and invested her money wisely, in sound securities, which accords with her excellent business reputation. Her daughter not being of age — let me see: she must have been but eleven when her mother passed away — there would be a guardian appointed for the heiress, and Alora told us that it was her mother's wish that her father act as her guardian. So the conclusion is evident that Mr. Jones has a large income at his command."

"All the more reason he should be generous, but he isn't spending much of it," said Mary Louise.

"No; he is probably living simply in order that his daughter's fortune may increase during the years of her minority. That is a point in his favor, you

must admit.”

“Nevertheless,” asserted the young girl, “I think there is something wrong in the Jones family. It isn’t due to Alora; she’s a dear little thing, wild and untamed but very lovable, I’m sure; so the fault must lie with her boorish father. Allowing that once he was a big man, something has mysteriously soured him and rendered his life hateful not only to himself but to all around him.”

“Look, Mary Louise; we’re getting into Sorrento,” said the Colonel. “Here the road leaves the sea and crosses the plateau to the town. You’ll like Sorrento, I’m sure, for it is one of the quaintest places in old Italy — and the hotel is really comfortable.”

CHAPTER XI PART I

ALORA SPEAKS FRANKLY

On Saturday forenoon the Colonel engaged a carriage — a substantial one, this time — and with Mary Louise drove to Jason Jones' villa, so that Alora might return with them in time for lunch. They did not see the artist, who was somewhere about the grounds but kept out of view; but Alora was ready and waiting, her cheeks flushed and her eyes alight, and she slipped her foreign little straw satchel in the carriage and then quickly followed it, as if eager to be off.

"Father is rather disagreeable this morning," she asserted in a sharp voice, when they were on the highway to Sorrento. "He repented his decision to let me go with you and almost forbade me. But I rebelled, and — — " she paused; "I have found that when I assert myself I can usually win my way, for father is a coward at heart."

It pained Mary Louise to hear so unfilial a speech from the lips of a young girl. Colonel Hathaway's face showed that he, too, considered it unmannerly to criticise a parent in the presence of strangers. But both reflected that Alora's life and environments were unenviable and that she had lacked, in these later years at least, the careful training due one in her station in society. So they deftly changed the subject and led the girl to speak of Italy and its delightful scenery and romantic history. Alora knew little of the country outside of the Sorrento peninsula, but her appreciation of nature was artistic and innately true and she talked well and interestingly of the surrounding country and the quaint and amusing customs of its inhabitants.

"How long do you expect to remain here?" asked Mary Louise.

"I've no idea," was the reply. "Father seems entirely satisfied with our quarters, for he has no ambition in life beyond eating three simple meals a day, sleeping from nine at night until nine in the morning and reading all the romances he is able to procure. He corresponds with no one save his banker in America and sees no one but the servants and me. But to me the monotony of our existence is fast becoming unbearable and I often wonder if I can stand it for three years longer — until I'm eighteen. Then I shall be my own mistress and entitled to handle my own money, and you may rest assured I shall make up for lost time."

They let that remark pass, also, but later in the afternoon, when luncheon was over and the two girls were wandering in the lovely gardens of the Hotel Vittoria, while the Colonel indulged in an afternoon siesta, Mary Louise led Alora to speak freely of her past life.

"My grandfather says that your mother must have left you a good deal of

money," she remarked.

"Yes; mamma told me it was a large fortune and that I must guard it wisely and use it generously to help others less favored," replied Alora thoughtfully.

"And she left it all in your father's keeping?"

"Not the principal. That is all invested, and thank goodness my father cannot touch it in any way. But the income is paid to him regularly, and he may do as he pleases with it. I am sure mamma expected I would have every reasonable wish gratified, and be taught every womanly accomplishment; but I'm treated as a mere dependent. I'm almost destitute of proper clothing — really, Mary Louise, this is the best dress I possess! — and I've been obliged to educate myself, making a rather poor job of it, I fear. I read the best of father's books, when he is done with them, and note carefully the manner in which the characters express themselves and how they conduct themselves in society as well as in worldly contact. I do not wish to be wholly *gauché* when I come into my kingdom, you see, and the books are my only salvation. I don't care much for the stories, but some of the good writers are safe guides to follow in the matter of dialogue and deportment. Fortunately, father's books are all in English. He doesn't understand much Italian, although I have learned to speak the language like a native — like our native servants, you know."

Mary Louise reflected on this confession. "I'm afraid, Alora dear, that modern novels are not prone to teach morality, or to develop a girl's finer intuitions," she said gravely. "I think you express yourself very well — better than I do, indeed — but you need association with those who can convey to you the right principles of thought and thus encourage your mental development. Culture and refinement seem to come more from association than from books, although there is an innate tendency in all well-born people to acquire them spontaneously. But there! you'll accuse me of preaching and, after all, I think you've done just splendidly under rather trying circumstances."

"You don't know how trying they are," declared Alora, with a sigh. "Father and I are wholly uncongenial and we fight on the slightest provocation. This morning our trouble was over money. I wanted a little to take with me, for my purse hasn't a *lira* in it; but, no! not a *centisimo* would he give up. He insisted that if I was to be your guest you would pay all my expenses."

"Of course," said Mary Louise. "But what does he do with all that big income? Is he saving it for you?"

"No, indeed! he's saving it for himself. Mamma told me, the last time I

saw her before she died, that if father was good to me, and kind and loving, I could provide for him in some way after I came into my money. She said she would leave the manner of it to my judgment. But he isn't kind, or loving, or good, and knows very well that when I'm of age he'll never see another cent of my money. So now he'd hoarding my income for future use."

"Isn't it strange that your mother should have trusted him so fully?" asked Mary Louise.

"Yes, it does seem strange. I remember her saying that he loved luxury and all the comfort that money will buy, and so she wanted him to have this income to spend, because he was my father and because she felt she had ruined his career as an artist by surrounding him with luxuries during their early married life, and afterward had embittered him by depriving him of them. But the man doesn't know what luxury means, Mary Louise. His tastes are those of a peasant."

"Yet once your mother loved him, and believed in him."

"I — I think she believed in him; I'm quite sure she did."

"Then his nature must have changed. I can imagine, Alora, that when your mother first knew him he was hard-working and ambitious. He was talented, too, and that promised future fame. But when he married a wealthy woman he lost his ambition, success being no longer necessary. After a period of ease and comfort in the society of his lovely wife — for Gran'pa says your mother was very lovely — he lost both the wife and the luxuries he enjoyed. A big man, Alora, would have developed a new ambition, but it seems your father was not big. His return to poverty after your mother's desertion made him bitter and reckless; perhaps it dulled his brain, and that is why he is no longer able to do good work. He was utterly crushed, I imagine, and hadn't the stamina to recover his former poise. He must have been ten years or so in this condition, despairing and disinterested, when the wheel of fortune turned and he was again in the possession of wealth. He had now the means to live as he pleased. But those years had so changed him that he couldn't respond to the new conditions. Doubtless he was glad, in a way, but he was now content merely to exist. Doesn't that seem logical, Alora?"

Indeed, Mary Louise was delighted with her solution of the problem. It was in keeping with her talent for deducing the truth from meagre facts by logically putting them together and considering them as a whole. It was seldom she erred in these deductions. But Alora seemed unimpressed and noting her glum look Mary Louise said again: "Doesn't all this seem logical, dear?"

"No," said Alora. "Father isn't the man to be crushed by anything. He's shrewd enough, in his *bourgeois* way. Once, long ago — back in New York

— a woman made him give her money; it was money, you know; and I have often thought he ran away from America to escape her further demands."

"Who was the woman?"

"My mother's nurse."

"Oh. Was it her wages she demanded?"

"Perhaps so. I may have misjudged father in that case. But it seemed to me — I was a mere child then — that it must have been a larger sum than wages would have amounted to. Yet, perhaps not. Anyhow, he left America right afterward, and when we had wandered a year or so in various countries we settled down here."

"Won't he have to account for all the money he has spent and given away, when you come of age?" inquired Mary Louise.

"No. Mother distinctly told me I was to ask for no accounting whatever. Her will says he is to handle the income as he sees fit, just as if it were his own, so long as he provides properly for his daughter and treats her with fatherly consideration. That's the only reason he keeps me with him, guarding my person but neglecting the other injunctions. If he set me adrift, as I'm sure he'd like to do, I could appeal to the court and his income would cease and another guardian be appointed. I believe there is something of that sort in the will, and that is why he is so afraid of losing me. But he gives me no chance to appeal to anyone, although I sometimes think I shall run away and leave him in the lurch. If I could get to Chicago and tell Judge Bernsted, my mother's lawyer, how I am treated, I believe he could make the court set aside my father's guardianship. But I can't get ten miles away from here, for lack of money."

"How your dear mother would grieve, if she knew her plans for your happiness have failed!" exclaimed Mary Louise.

Alora frowned, and somehow that frown reminded Mary Louise of the girl's father.

"My mother ought to have known my father better," she declared sullenly. "I must not criticize her judgment, for her memory is my most precious possession and I know she loved me devotedly. But there is one thing in her history I can never understand."

"And that?" questioned Mary Louise curiously, as Alora paused.

"My mother was an educated woman, well-bred and refined."

"Yes; Gran'pa Jim told me that."

"Then how could she have married my father, who is not a gentleman and never could have impressed a lady with the notion he was one?"

Mary Louise hesitated, for to admit this would send her deductions, so carefully constructed, tumbling in ruins. But Alora ought to know the man.

“If that is true, dear,” said she, “it is the strangest part of your story; and, of course, we can only guess the reason, for the only one who could have explained it properly was your mother.”

CHAPTER XI PART II

JASON JONES IS FRIGHTENED

When Alora had retired to her bedroom that night Mary Louise told to her grandfather, who was her trusted confidant, all that the unhappy girl had related.

"Of course," she added, "Alora's explanations dispel my half formed suspicion that there is some mystery about Jason Jones. I now see that you were right, Gran'pa Jim, to laugh at me when I suggested such a thing, for in truth the man is easily understood once you become acquainted with his history. However, I now dislike him more than ever."

"In justice to Jason Jones," remarked the old Colonel, "we must acquit him of being a hypocrite. He doesn't attempt to mask his nature and a stranger is bound to see him at his worst. Doubtless Antoinette Seaver understood the man better than we are able to and sixteen years ago, or so, when he had youth, talent and ambition, his disagreeable characteristics were probably not so marked. As for Alora, she is strongly prejudiced against her father and we must make due allowance for her bitterness. The feeling probably arose through her sudden transfer from the care of a generous and loving mother to that of an ungracious father — a parent she had never before known. A child of eleven is likely to form strong affections and passionate dislikes."

"Do you know," said Mary Louise, "it shocks me, this hatred of her father. It seems so unnatural. I wish we could bring them to understand one another better, Gran'pa Jim."

"That might prove a difficult task, my dear," he replied with a smile, gently stroking her hair the while, "and I do not think we are justified in undertaking it. How many times during our travels, Mary Louise, has your impulsive and tender heart urged you to assume the burdens of other people? You seem to pick up a trail of sorrow or unhappiness with the eagerness of a bloodhound and I have all I can do to call you off the scent. One small girl can't regulate the world, you know, and in this case we are likely to see very little of Alora Jones and her artist father. We will be nice to them during the few days we are here, but we must soon move on or we'll never get home for your birthday, as we have planned."

Mary Louise sighed.

"You're almost always right, Gran'pa Jim," she admitted; "but in all our European travels I've not met so interesting a person as Alora, and she's an American girl, which draws us still closer together. I'm going to make her promise that when she's of age and her own mistress she will let me know,

and come to us for a visit. Wouldn't that be all right, Gran'pa?"

He assured her it would be quite proper and that he also admired Alora and was sorry for her.

On Sunday forenoon they went to the cathedral and in the afternoon took a boat to the blue grottoes. In the evening there was a concert in the hotel. All that day the two girls were arm in arm and chatting together, developing their mutual liking, while the old Colonel trudged along in their wake and was generally ignored in the conversation. On Monday they planned an excursion to Capri, "For you won't mind if we don't get you home until after dinner, will you?" asked Mary Louise.

"Not at all," said Alora. "I want to make the most of this vacation."

"Her father may mind, however," suggested the Colonel.

"I don't care whether he does or not," retorted the girl, tossing her head. "He has no consideration for me, so why should I consider him?"

"I don't like that attitude, dear," said Mary Louise frankly. "I — I don't wish to be snippy, you know, but you should not forget that he is your father."

"That," replied Alora doggedly, "is merely my misfortune, and I'm not going to allow it to ruin all my life."

On Monday morning they had scarcely finished breakfast when Jason Jones appeared at the hotel, having driven over from the villa in his little automobile — a tiny foreign contrivance that reminded one of a child's cart but could cover the ground with considerable speed. They were sitting on the big piazza when Alora's father came striding up to them with a white, fear-struck face. In his trembling hands he held the morning Naples newspaper and without a word of greeting he said abruptly:

"Have you heard the news?"

Colonel Hathaway rose and bowed.

"Good morning, Mr. Jones," said he. "I do not read the local newspapers, for my knowledge of Italian is indifferent."

"So is mine," responded the artist, "but I know enough of their lingo to make out that Italy has entered this fool war. She's going to fight the Austrians," he continued, his voice shaking nervously, "and do you know what that will mean, sir?"

"I can't imagine," replied the Colonel calmly.

"It means that presently we'll have all that horde of Germans overrunning Italy. They'll conquer this helpless land as sure as fate, and we'll all be burned out and tortured and mutilated in the fiendish German way!"

"My dear sir, you are frightened without warrant," declared Colonel Hathaway. "It will take some time to conquer Italy, and I cannot imagine the

Austrians acting as you suggest."

"Back of the Austrians are the Germans, and those Prussians are worse than wild American Indians," insisted Jones. "If they got their clutches on my daughter it would be more horrible than death and I don't propose to leave her in danger a single minute. I'm going to quit this country. I've come for Alora. We must pack up and catch the first ship from Naples for America."

There was blank silence for a moment.

"I'm not afraid," said Alora, with a laugh, "but if it means our getting out of this tiresome place and sailing for home, I'm glad that Italy's gone into the war."

Colonel Hathaway was grave and thoughtful. The agitation of the artist seemed to increase with every moment.

"When does the next boat for America leave Naples?" asked Mary Louise.

"Tuesday," said Alora's father. "We've just time to pack our possessions and leave."

"Time!" cried his daughter, "why, I can pack all my possessions in an hour. Go home, sir, and fuss around as much as you like. I'll join you some time this evening."

He gave her a queer look, hesitating.

"We are surely safe enough for the present," remarked the Colonel. "The first act of war will be to send all the soldiers to the north border. The fighting will be done in the Trentino for some time to come."

"You don't know these people," said Jones, shifting uneasily from one foot to another. "They're all brigands by nature and many of them by profession. As soon as the soldiers are sent north, all law and order will cease and brigandage will be the order of the day!"

"This is absurd!" exclaimed the Colonel, testily. "You're not talking sense."

"That's a matter of opinion, sir; but I know my own business, and I'm going to get out of here."

"Wait a week longer," suggested Mary Louise. "We are to sail ourselves on the boat that leaves Naples a week from Tuesday, and it will be nice for Alora and me to travel home together."

"No; I won't wait. Get your things, Alora, and come with me at once."

"Have you made reservations on the boat?" inquired Colonel Hathaway, refusing to be annoyed by the man's brusque words and rough demeanor.

"I'll do that at once, by telephone. That's one reason I came over. I'll telephone the steamship office while the girl is getting ready."

“I will go with you,” said the Colonel, as the artist turned away.

While Jones used the telephone booth of the hotel Colonel Hathaway conversed with the proprietor, and afterward with the hall porter, who was better posted and spoke better English.

“This is outrageous!” roared the artist, furiously bursting from the booth. “To-morrow’s boat is abandoned! The government requires it as a transport. Why? Why? Why?” and he wrung his hands despairingly.

“I do not know, sir,” returned the Colonel, smiling at his futile passion.

The smile seemed to strike Jones like a blow. He stopped abruptly and stared at the other man for a full minute — intently, suspiciously. Then he relaxed.

“You’re right,” said he coldly. “It’s folly to quarrel with fate. I’ve booked for a week from Tuesday, Hathaway, and we must stick it out till then. Do you take the same boat?”

“That is my intention.”

“Well, there’s no objection. Now I’ll go get Alora.”

But Alora, hearing of the postponed sailing, positively refused to return home with him, and Mary Louise, supporting her new friend, urged her to extend her stay with her at the hotel. Strangely enough, the more he was opposed the more quiet and composed the artist became. He even ceased to tremble and an odd apathy settled over him.

“The hall porter,” said the Colonel, “thinks this is the safest place in Italy. The troops have been on the border for months and their positions are strongly fortified. There is no brigandage outside of Sicily, where the Mafia is not yet wholly suppressed.”

Jones grinned rather sheepishly.

“All right, take his word for it,” said he. “And if you’ll be responsible for the girl you may keep her till we’re ready to sail. Perhaps that’s the best way, after all.” Then, without a word of good- bye, he entered his little motor car and started down the driveway.

“A strange man,” said the Colonel, looking after him. “I wonder if it really was the war that frightened him — or something else — or if he was actually frightened at all?”

Alora laughed.

“You can’t guess father, try as you may,” she said. “Usually he is cold as ice, but once in awhile he gets these wild fits, which I find rather amusing. You can’t understand that, of course, but if you were obliged to live under the same roof with Jason Jones you would welcome his outbursts as relief from the monotony of contemptuous silence.”

CHAPTER XII
SILVIO'S GOLD

Jason Jones urged his little car to its best speed until he gained his villa. Entering the ground, he was confronted by his factotum, the Italian, Silvio.

He sprang out and approached the man.

"Is the prisoner safe?" he whispered.

"Certainly, Signore."

"Is she still in the grape-house?"

"With the wine presses, Signore."

"And she can't get out?"

"Unless she becomes small, like a rat, Signore."

Jones glanced around suspiciously, then fixed his gaze on a little outbuilding of stone, with a tiled roof, which stood quite removed from the others of the group.

"Has she screamed, or cried out?" he asked the man.

"Not since I put her in, las' night, Signore."

"Good. You've fed her?"

"The plenty. She eat very well. It's a nice lady, Signore."

"She's dangerous. Listen, Silvio: we must keep her there a week longer."

"If I am jailer a week, I mus' double my price," he asserted, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nonsense!"

"The lady will offer me more to let her out. She say so."

"What! You'd betray me?"

"Not if I have the gold — here, in my hand — *now,* Signore."

Jones grew red and then white. He eyed the man wickedly. He scowled, and Silvio smiled pleasantly. Silvio was big for an Italian; big and brawny; as his smile faded his face assumed a look of stubborn determination.

"So you want the gold now, Silvio?"

"At once, if it please the Signore. The gendarmes are ugly if the law is broken. Their jails are not as pleasant as the grape-house. So the gold must be twice the amount we had spoken of, Signore."

"And you will promise she shall not escape; that you'll keep her safe until — until I tell you to let her go?"

"That is our bargain, Signore."

Jones sighed regretfully.

"Very well, then, Silvio," he said. "You're a robber — the son of a brigand — the spawn of a bandit! But come with me to the house, and you shall have your gold."

* * * * * * * *

Alora stayed all that week with Mary Louise, hearing nothing of her father and almost forgetting her unhappiness in the society of her delightful new friend. It was Sunday evening when the Colonel and Mary Louise drove their guest over to the villa and the two parties did not see one another again until they met on the deck of the steamer in Naples on the following Tuesday morning.

The Joneses came aboard very quietly just at the last moment and at the gang-plank Alora's father was confronted by a grimy Italian boy who handed him a letter. Without pausing to read it, Jones hurried below, and he kept his stateroom until the ship was well out in the blue Mediterranean, on its way to Gibraltar and New York. But no one missed him, for Alora and Mary Louise were happy at being reunited and Gran'pa Jim was happy in seeing them happy.

CHAPTER XIII
DORFIELD

In one of the middle-west states there is a delightful little city called Dorfield. It hasn't so many thousand inhabitants, but in all its aspects and its municipal equipment it is indeed a modern city. It has factories and a big farming community to support its streets of neat and progressive shops, and at the west side of the business district is a residence section where broad, wooded streets furnish the setting for many cozy homes. Some of the houses are old and picturesque, and some are new and imposing, but each has its flower-lit garden, its fruit and shade trees and its little garage or barn tucked away in the back yard.

When you come to Oak Street there is a rambling frame house on the corner, set well back, where Peter Conant, the lawyer, lives with his good wife and his niece Irene Macfarlane, who is seventeen. This is one of the ancient dwellings of Dorfield, for the Conants are "old inhabitants." Right next them stands a more modern and expensive, if less attractive, mansion, with grounds twice as large and a velvet lawn that puts the Conants' carelessly-cropped grass to shame. But the two families are neighbors and friends nevertheless, for in the new house lives Colonel James Hathaway and his granddaughter Mary Louise Burrows. At least, they live there when at home and, although they seem persistent ramblers, they are glad to have this refuge to return to when wearied with traveling and sight-seeing.

One morning in June Mr. Conant was just seating himself at the breakfast table when a messenger-boy delivered a telegram — a "night letter" from New York. The lawyer, a short, thick-set man of middle age, with a stern countenance but mild blue eyes, laid aside his morning paper and read the telegram with his usual deliberation. Mrs. Conant silently poured the coffee, knowing any interference would annoy him. Irene, the niece, was a cripple and sat in her wheeled chair at the table, between her uncle and aunt. She was a pleasant-faced, happy little maid, consistently ignoring her withered limbs and thankful that from her knees up she was normal and that her wheeled chair rendered her fairly independent of assistance in all ordinary activities. Everyone loved Irene Macfarlane because of her brave and cheery acceptance of her misfortune, and her merry speech and spontaneous laughter rendered her, as "Aunt Hannah" often declared, "the light of the house." Irene was, moreover, an intimate and highly valued friend of her next door neighbor, Mary Louise Burrows.

Mr. Peter Conant, sipping his coffee reflectively, read the lengthy telegram a second time. Then he said, somewhat irritably and chopping his

words into distinct syllables, as was his habit at all times:

"I wonder why people imagine a lawyer's duties cover every phase of life? My clients use me as a real-estate agent, a horse trader, a purchasing agent, a father confessor, an automobile expert, a medical adviser, and sometimes — in their simplicity — as a banker!"

"What's wrong now, Peter?" inquired Mrs. Conant with wifely sympathy.

"Colonel Hathaway wants to know — "

"Oh, is Mary Louise coming back?" cried Irene eagerly.

He frowned at her.

"What does the Colonel wish to know, Peter?"

"I object to this unwarrantable cross-examination," said he. "It is customary to first allow one to state his case."

"Forgive me, Uncle Peter!"

"Take your time," said Aunt Hannah, composedly buttering the toast. "You will, anyhow, and I'm sure Irene and I have both learned to curb our feminine curiosity."

He glanced at the telegram again.

"Do you know if the Pelton place has been rented, my dear?"

"The Pelton place? Why, it wasn't rented yesterday, for I passed by there and saw the rent sign still in the window. Mr. Harlan is the agent."

"I know. And where can we find a female house-servant, Hannah?"

"Now, see here, Peter; it's all very well for you to keep your own counsel, when there's a professional secret to be guarded, but if you want any help from me you've got to open your mouth and talk out plainly, so I can answer you in a sensible way."

"You're always sensible, Hannah," he observed, quite unruffled by her demand. And then he ate a whole slice of toast and drank his coffee and handed his cup for more before he spoke another word.

Irene devoted herself to her breakfast. She knew Uncle Peter's ways and that it was useless to attempt to hurry him or force him to explain, until he was quite ready to do so. Aunt Hannah bided her time. Peter was a thoughtful man, and he was doubtless thinking. His wife was not only a clever helpmate but was noted for her consideration of her erratic spouse.

"The Colonel," said Mr. Conant at last, "has run across a man who wants to make his home in Dorfield. A very sensible idea. The Colonel met the man in Europe. The man — — "

"What's the man's name?" inquired Mrs. Conant.

He referred to the telegram.

"Jones. Jason Jones."

"I never heard of him."

He looked at her reproachfully.

“Why should you, my dear? The Colonel found the man in Europe. We live in Dorfield. The man, it seems, has a daughter — — ”

“Oh, goody!” cried Irene.

“Who has become a friend of Mary Louise, therefore the Colonel wires to ask if there is a furnished house to rent at a modest price and if a competent female servant can be secured for the man and his daughter. He requests me to wire an answer promptly. That is the gist of the telegram, although the Colonel, in his usual extravagant way, has paid for more words than were required to express his meaning.”

“And what are you going to do about it?” demanded Mrs. Conant.

“I am endeavoring to gain information from my wife.”

“Very well. What does he mean by ‘a modest price’? The Pelton place is expensive. The rent is sixty dollars a month, while a comfortable house like that of the Widow Harrington rents for fifteen dollars, with good, solid furniture.”

“Is Mrs. Harrington’s house for rent?” he asked.

“Yes. She’ll go to live with her married daughter as soon as she can find a tenant. The poor creature needs the money, and her house is just around the corner from here and her back yard backs up to the Colonel’s back yard. Now, the Pelton place is two blocks from here, and the Peltons don’t need the money, because they’re already too rich and aristocratic to live in Dorfield any longer.”

“H-m-m!” murmured Mr. Conant. “It occurs to me that a friend of Colonel Hathaway might desire a more luxurious home than that of the Widow Harrington.”

“Doesn’t the telegram say ‘a modest price’?”

“It does. I’ll quote both places and let the man Jones take his choice. And how about the female servant, Hannah?”

“Leave that to me; I can hire plenty. But if Mr. Jason Jones takes the Pelton place he will want one kind of a servant, and if he takes Mrs. Harrington’s house he’ll want a different sort.”

He gazed at her admiringly and passed his cup again, saying:

“You’ve a logical mind, my dear. Had you been a man you might have become a fairly good lawyer.”

“No, Peter; not another drop. You’ve two cups already.”

“Are you sure, Hannah?”

“Absolutely positive!”

“Then,” said he, rising with a sigh, “I’ll go to the office.”

To Mr. Conant’s disappointment, to Mrs. Conant’s delight, to Irene’s

satisfaction and the astonishment of all, Mr. Jason Jones selected Mrs. Harrington's modest house and ordered it rented and prepared for his arrival on the following Thursday. This was conveyed in a second telegram from Colonel Hathaway, who requested the lawyer to inform old Uncle Eben and Aunt Sally, the Colonel's own faithful colored servants and caretakers, that he and Mary Louise would return home on the same day.

"You see," said Aunt Hannah, triumphantly, "I sized the Joneses up pretty well. It isn't necessary for a man to be rich to be a friend of the dear Colonel, for he considers a man, rather than a man's pocketbook."

"Yet a man who can afford to travel abroad, with his daughter," began Mr. Conant, argumentatively, "should certainly be able and willing — — "

"What do you know about him, Peter? Perhaps he has spent his ready money in Europe and is now obliged to economize. Unless that is the case, why does he come to a sleepy little town like Dorfield, which is almost forgotten by the big world, to settle down?"

"

Why, he's the Colonel's friend," retorted the lawyer, stiffly.

"And Mary Louise is his daughter's friend," said Irene. "That accounts for it, of course, and they couldn't have picked a prettier place. Dorfield may be sleepy, and quiet, and half forgotten by the rest of the big world, but it's simply delightful as a residence. Didn't Colonel Hathaway choose it for a home? And the Colonel could afford to live at the Waldorf-Astoria, if he wanted to."

"I know why you are pleased, Irene," remarked Aunt Hannah, smiling upon her niece. "You're going to have another girl friend."

"She won't be as nice as Mary Louise, though," was the reply. "There's no girl in the world as sweet and lovely as Mary Louise!"

"Or one that innocently gets into more trouble," declared Mr. Conant.

"That," said Aunt Hannah, "is because she can't let other people's troubles alone."

CHAPTER XIV
HOME AGAIN

Mr. Conant, who was Colonel Hathaway's lawyer and confidential agent, was at the train to meet his important client on his return to Dorfield. The first to alight from the coach was the Colonel, who greeted his lawyer with a cordial handclasp. Mary Louise kissed Peter Conant upon his impassive cheek and presented him to a pretty young girl who clung to her arm smiling, yet half bewildered by her arrival in a strange town. There seemed no one else with the party and Mr. Conant glanced over the crowd of passengers and said:

"Mr. Jones did not accompany you, then?"

"Why, yes; I suppose he's here," answered the Colonel carelessly. "I believe he traveled another car."

"I don't see him anywhere," added Mary Louise. "I wonder if anyone reminded him that this is the place to get off?"

"Never mind," said Alora; "if father can't keep track of himself, let him go on to another station. I can't lose him for long, that's certain."

"There he is, up ahead," announced Mara Louise. "He's quarreling with his porter about something."

"To save the tip," suggested Alora, scornfully.

Mary Louise rushed to greet an old colorful man with snow-white hair, who was picking up their hand baggage.

"Oh, Uncle Eben, I'm so glad to see again!" she exclaimed. "And how's Aunt Sallie? And is my pony well? And are the goldfish still alive? And — — "

"Bress yo' soul, Ma'y Weeze!" said the delighted old servant, "ev'body's well an' joyful to see you-all back ag'in."

The Colonel shook Uncle Eben's hands — both of them — in a kindly but dignified manner. "I suppose the automobile is still running, Uncle?"

"Not jes' dis yere minnit, Kun'l," with a glad chuckle, "but dat car's gwine ter run jes' as soon as we-all gits aboahd. What yo' think I's be'n doin' all winter, Kun'l, in dat lonesomeness house, 'cept keepin' dat car greased up?"

"Did you grease it in the house, then, Uncle?" asked Mary Louise gravely, but with twinkling eyes.

Old Eben chuckled again, for this was a happy hour for him, but while he chuckled he led them to where the automobile stood waiting. Behind the others slowly followed Jason Jones, carrying his own luggage and eyeing every detail of his surroundings in the manner of a countryman paying his

first visit to town. He was inwardly sizing up Dorfield as a place of residence. When Jones got into the car the Colonel briefly introduced him to the lawyer.

"This is Mr. Jones, Mr. Conant."

He looked at the lawyer and gave a slight nod, and Mr. Conant's bow was very stiff and formal. Already he had, with fair accuracy, grasped the relationship of the man to the others. Alora Jones seemed a fine girl — the right sort — and Mary Louise was evidently fond of her. The Colonel barely tolerated the man Jones, whom he did not like, for the daughter's sake. The girl herself lacked in respect for her father, and this unfilial attitude seemed condoned by both Mary Louise and the Colonel, which was evidence that there was something wrong about Jason Jones. With such a cue for guidance, Mr. Conant decided he had no use for Jason Jones, either.

Uncle Eben first drove the car to the Widow Harrington's cottage, where Mrs. Conant awaited the new tenants to introduce them to their servant and to assure them that everything was prepared for their convenience. Then they drove to Colonel Hathaway's home, where Irene was at the gate in her wheeled chair, a bunch of her choicest roses in her hand, ready to welcome her friend Mary Louise and to be kissed and hugged with girlish enthusiasm.

It was a happy homecoming, indeed, for Mary Louise. And Colonel Hathaway breathed a deep sigh of relief as he entered his own portals.

"From now on," he said to his granddaughter that evening, "I am under no obligation to assist that impossible person, Jones, or to even associate with him. For your sake, my darling, I have suffered the infliction of his presence with fortitude, even going to the extent of locating him in our beloved town of Dorfield, that you and Alora might enjoy one another's society. But from this time forward Jason Jones is to be a distant acquaintance rather than a companion. Congratulate me, Mary Louise!"

"I do, Gran'pa Jim," she replied soberly, "and I thank you, too. It has been a trial for both of us, but we've been really helpful to poor Alora. I want to try to bring a little happiness into her life and encourage her to become as sweet and lovable a girl as she has the nature to be, and this could never have been accomplished had we allowed her to drift in the sole companionship of her disagreeable father."

CHAPTER XV

THE PUZZLE BECOMES INTRICATE

Alora formed an immediate friendship for crippled Irene Macfarlane, first based on sympathy and afterward on genuine admiration. That one condemned to pass her entire life in a wicker wheel-chair should be so bright and cheerful, with no word of protest or even a reference to her own misfortune, was deemed wonderful by Alora, and she soon found that Irene had an excuse or explanation for every seeming annoyance her friends suffered and delighted to console them. At the same time she allowed no one to console her, because she declared she needed no consolation.

Such a disposition invited confidence, and soon Irene knew more of Alora's past history, including her trials and tribulations, than even Mary Louise had yet learned, and was shocked and grieved at the girl's vengeful defiance of her father, due to his neglect and coldness as well as to his contemptible selfishness. But Irene had an excuse ready even for the artist.

"Poor Mr. Jones!" she said one day, when the three girls were together and had been discussing Alora's troubles; "think what a trial must have been to him to be saddled with the care of a child he had not seen since babyhood and had no especial interest in. As for affection between them, it could not sprout nor grow because there was no mutual understanding to germinate it. Your father's life, my dear, had been wrecked by his separation from your mother and the money meant little to him at that period of his life when you were left to his care. But did he refuse the obligation so inconsiderately thrust upon him? No. Although a man of reserved nature — almost a recluse — self absorbed and shrinking from association others, he accepted the care of an eleven year old child and, without being able to change his disposition to suit her requirements, has guarded her health and safety ever since."

"So that he can use my money," added Alora, with a shrug.

"But you admit that he doesn't squander money on himself."

"I don't know what he does with it. If he wants books, he buys them; he bought a rickety automobile in Italy and never took me to ride in it; but his extravagance seems to end there. I've read some letters that he left around, showing that he is investing thousands in his own name — what for, I can't guess, as he is too miserly ever to have a use for it."

"Well, he may be intending to endow some deserving charity," suggested Irene. "And, as for his not loving you, Alora, I fancy you have never tried to win your father's love."

"No one could love that man."

"You have never been able to get beneath his reserve. You came to him

from a luxurious life, a petted and pampered child, and his simple tastes and unemotional nature repelled you from the first. Is it not so?"

"I'm not sure, Irene. I needed sympathy and affection. Had my father been different, had he shown love for me, or even fatherly consideration, I would have responded eagerly. But he ignored me. There has never been any companionship between us. He has guarded my personal safety because I was of financial value to him. Once, when I contracted a fever, he was really worried, and hired a skillful doctor and a trained nurse; but he never entered my sickroom. When I was well, he reproached me for costing him so much money. I told him it was my money, and he was costing me more than I could ever cost him. I reminded him he would have been a beggar, but for my income, and that shut him up at once."

"There's the whole trouble," declared Irene. "Constant friction and a lack of consideration for one another. Such remarks could not have made him more gracious toward you, Alora, and you did not appreciate his care in furnishing you with the means of recovery."

"Had I died," said the girl, "my fortune would have gone to a bunch of third-cousins whom I have never seen. That would have stopped father's right to the income, you see."

Irene sighed and Mary Louise smiled. It was almost impossible to defend Mr. Jones consistently, with Alora present to accuse him.

The artist at first took little interest in his new home. The cottage was small and not very cheerful, but it was cheap, and all that Jason Jones seemed to care for was a place to stay that was not expensive. He continued his reading and had a book in his hand from morning till night. He seldom left the cottage except for a trip to the public library or to a book-store, and never spoke to anyone unless it was necessary.

Their maid was Jane Gladys O'Donnel, stout and good-natured, an indifferent cook and rather untidy. She was twenty years old and the eldest of a large and impoverished family. Her mother was a laundress — "took in washin'" — and her earnings, with the wages of Jane Gladys, must suffice to feed many hungry mouths. That was why Mrs. Conant had hired Jane Gladys. Aunt Hannah knew the girl was not very competent, but she was cheap, so Mr. Jones accepted her without protest. Alora had lived so long abroad that she did not know what a competent American housemaid is.

One forenoon — they had now been a month at Dorfield — Mr. Jones was seated on the little front porch, reading as usual, when a queer buzzing in the air overhead aroused his attention.

"What's that?" he called sharply, and Jane Gladys, who was dusting in the little room behind him, replied:

“That, sor, is only Steve Kane’s flyin’ machine.”

“A what?”

“A flyin’-machine, sor. Kane has a facthry fer makin’ the crazy things in the town yonder — over by the South Side.”

“Indeed!” He got up and went into the yard to watch the far-away speck in the sky that was humming so persistently. “Why, there’s another! There are two of them,” he exclaimed, as if to himself.

“There might be a dozen, sor, ‘cause there’s a school for airy — airy — airy-flyin’ over by Kane’s facthry, where they teaches the folks to fly that buy the machines.”

He stood a long time, watching the sky. When the last aeroplane had disappeared he resumed his reading. But the next day he watched for the machines again, abandoning his book to follow the course of the flyers.

“Where did you say that factory is located?” he asked Jane Gladys.

“Over by the gas works, sor, be the South Side. Ye takes the Ellem street car, at the four corners. On a Sunday there be crowds a-watchin’ the air-divils.”

He started to read again, but gave it up and glanced nervously up and down the little porch. Jane Gladys noted this with surprise, for he was usually quiet and unobservant, “like th’ toad in th’ garden, what squats under a bush all day an’ fergits he’s alive till a fly lights on his nose,” as she expressed it to the family at home.

After lunch Mr. Jones went to town and after making inquiries took the car to the aviation works and field. He watched the construction of flying machines in the factory and saw one or two pupils take short flights in the air. And Jason Jones was so interested that he was late to dinner that evening.

Next day he was at the aviation field again, and from that time he haunted the place, silent and composed but watching every detail of manufacture and listening to the experts as they instructed the pupils. These were not many — three altogether — although Stephen Kane’s aeroplane was now admitted to be one of the safest and most reliable ever invented. And one day one of the instructors, noticing the silent man who had watched so long, invited him to take a flight, thinking perhaps to frighten him; but Jason Jones promptly accepted the invitation and with perfect composure endured the strange experience and returned to ground with heightened color but no other evidence of excitement. Could Alora have seen him that day she would have acquitted him of cowardice.

But Alora knew nothing of her father’s odd fancy for some time after he became interested in aeroplanes. She was not often at home during the day, frequently taking lunch with Mary Louise or Irene and passing much of her

time in their company. She had no interest whatever in her father's movements and Jane Gladys didn't think to mention the matter to her, for "flyin'-machines" had ceased to be a novelty in Dorfield and the sound of their buzzing through the air was heard many times a day. But in turning over a pile of her father's books one day in his absence, Alora found several treatises on aviation and was almost startled to find that Jason Jones cared for any reading aside from light novels.

She had been hunting, at the time, for a novel to read herself, so turning from the aviation literature to a shelf of fiction she began searching for an interesting title. Presently, as she drew out one of her father's books, it opened by accident at a place where a letter had been tucked in — a letter written on soiled and coarse paper of a foreign make. It was addressed: "Sig. Jaysn Jones, at the Steamer Hercules to sail for New York, U.S.A." Opening it, she found it signed: "Silvio Alleghero."

That was their man-servant in Italy, so with a smile of anticipated amusement she read the letter. It was brief, indeed, but the girl's expression soon changed to a puzzled look, for the scrawl said:

"Honored Signore: At your command I have this morning, three hours after your departure for Naples, allowed the prisoner to escape."

"How funny!" she exclaimed, knitting her brows. "I can't remember any prisoner at the villa. Perhaps it was the cat. It would be just like Silvio to consider the release of a cat a important event."

She replaced the letter in the book and after selecting another novel forgot Silvio's epistle entirely.

Another time, when Alora happened to be at home for their noon-day luncheon and her father did not appear, Jane Gladys quietly remarked in answer to her query that "th' ol' man was prob'ly over to the flyin'- machine works."

"Does he go there often?" she asked in surprise.

"Why, he mostly lives there," asserted the maid.

Alora laughed, and afterward told Mary Louise, as a bit of humorous gossip, that the man who had heretofore failed to find any interest in life had at last succumbed to the fascination of the aeroplane.

"Well, I'm glad of it," said Mary Louise. "I've often wondered, Lory, how your father could be so infatuated with novel-reading, absorbing stories of human interest, if they have any interest at all, with such avidity, while the real people all around him failed to interest him at all. I have thought perhaps he read to keep his mind from — from other things that it would make him unhappy to dwell upon."

"I have thought so, too," replied Alora, musingly. "And this queer fancy

of his for a new and unusual invention may serve the same purpose. But I, too, am glad he has found a diversion that will keep him away from home. That barn of a cottage will become more homelike without his eternal presence."

Peter Conant, the lawyer, had paid little heed to Jason Jones since the latter's arrival in Dorfield. He had heard his wife and Irene gossip about the girl and her father and state that Alora was an heiress and Mr. Jones merely the guardian of her fortune until she came of age, but his legal mind decided that the girl's "fortune" must be a modest one, since they lived so economically and dressed so plainly. Colonel Hathaway, who might have undeceived him in this regard, seldom spoke to the lawyer of anything but his own affairs and had forborne to mention Mr. Jones and his personal affairs in any way.

Therefore Mr. Conant was somewhat surprised when one morning Jason Jones called at his office and asked for an interview. The lawyer was busy that day, and attaching little importance to his caller he demanded brusquely:

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

The man seated himself and glanced around the room before replying. The big desk, littered with papers, the cabinet files and stiff chairs seemed to meet his approval. In the outer office a girl was busily clicking a typewriter.

"You are Colonel Hathaway's lawyer, I believe?" said Jones.

"I have that honor, sir."

"That's why I came to you. The Colonel is a prosperous man and has judgment. I want your advice about investing some money."

Peter Conant regarded him with a speculative gaze. The thought flashed through his mind that if Jones had any money to invest he might better buy himself a new necktie and have his shoes repaired, or even invest in a new dress for his daughter, who needed it. But he merely said in his peculiar way of chopping each word off short as he uttered it:

"How much have you to invest?"

"Not a great deal at this moment, but I am I constantly receiving dividends and interest on my daughter's securities and so, if I am going to live in Dorfield, I shall need a lawyer to advise me how to reinvest the money, as well as how to make out the papers properly. I don't want to make any mistakes and get robbed — even by my lawyer. But I'll pay you a fair price. Perhaps I should explain that while the income is derived from my daughter's property the investments are to be made in my name."

"Why so?"

"The income belongs to me, by my dead wife's will, as long as Alora is alive and in my keeping. When the girl is eighteen she will manage her own

affairs, and I'll be quit of her — and out of any further income, as well. So I'm investing now to secure my future."

"I see. How old is your daughter at this time?"

"Fifteen."

"So you've three years more to grab the income."

"Exactly."

"How much money do you wish to invest to-day?"

"Twelve thousand dollars."

Peter Conant sat up straight in his chair.

"And you say this is but part of the income?"

"The estate is valued at nearly two million dollars."

The lawyer gave a low whistle of amazement. Beside this enormous sum, even Colonel Hathaway's holdings shrank into insignificance.

"You surprise me," he said. "I imagine, then, that you can afford to live somewhat better than you do."

"That is none of your business."

"True. Good day, Mr. Jones."

"Eh?"

"I won't accept you as a client."

"Why not, sir?"

"Thank you for asking. In the first place, I don't like you," said Peter Conant. "Nor do I approve of your treating your daughter — a great heiress — as you do, and hoarding all her enormous income for your personal use. You're not toting fair. It is an unjust arrangement and I'll have nothing to do with it."

Jason Jones sat still and stared at him.

"Good day, sir!" repeated the lawyer, curtly.

The man did not move. Peter turned to his papers.

"See here," the artist presently remarked; "let's come to an understanding. I don't like you, either. You're insulting. But you're honest, and I think I could trust you."

"I'm not especially honest," retorted the lawyer, "but I'm particular. I don't need clients, and I don't want a client I'm ashamed of."

Still the man did not offer to go. Instead, he reflected for awhile in his stolid, unemotional way, while Peter Conant frowned and examined the papers on his desk.

"I believe you'll see the thing in a different light if you read my wife's will," said Jones. "I've brought a copy of it with me, thinking it might help you to understand my affairs."

"Is it an attested copy?" asked the lawyer, turning around again.

“Yes.”

“Let me see it.”

Mr. Conant decided to read the will, with the idea that he might find in it some way to assist Alora. When he had finished the document he was disappointed. Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones, a woman clever enough to make a fortune, had been foolish enough to give her former husband autocratic power over her money during her daughter’s minority. Had the man been a gentleman, the folly would have been mitigated, but Jason Jones, in Mr. Conant’s opinion, was a selfish, miserly, conscienceless rascal. Enjoying a yearly income that was a small fortune in itself, he had neglected to educate his daughter properly, to clothe her as befitted her station in life or to show her ordinary fatherly consideration. Affection and kindness seemed foreign to the man’s nature. He handed the will back and said:

“You have taken an unfair advantage of the confidence reposed in you by your dead wife, who doubtless loved her child. Legally your actions cannot be assailed, but morally they should ostracize you from decent society. As I said before, I do not want your business. I’ll have nothing to do with you.”

Jones remained unruffled.

“I’m a stranger in the city,” he remarked. “Perhaps you will recommend me to some good lawyer.”

“No. There are a score of lawyers in town. Make your own choice.”

The man rose and put on his hat.

“I said you were honest, and I was right,” he calmly remarked. “I’ll say now that you are a fool, and I’m right in that, also,” and with these words he walked away.

That was his only protest to the humiliating rebuff. He showed no anger. He did not seem annoyed. He simply rode down in the elevator, examined the directory, and selected another lawyer in the same building.

CHAPTER XVI

ALORA WINS HER WAY

Mary Louise decided that Alora Jones improved on acquaintance. There were many admirable traits in her character that had lain dormant until developed by association with two girls of her own age who were themselves gentle and considerate. It is true that Alora at times was still headstrong and willful and unable to bridle her tongue when irritated, but neither Mary Louise nor Irene ever reproved her by word or look, so that she grew ashamed of her outbursts and when at home her father aroused her to anger she fled to her girl friends and sought in their companionship the antidote to her vexation. The two friends had decided it was unwise to comment on Alora's unhappy family relations and soon she discovered this and refrained from burdening them with her home quarrels.

No one could witness Irene's patient resignation to misfortune without admiring her character and being touched by her bravery and gentleness, and association with this crippled girl was softening Alora's hard and defiant nature wonderfully. Had the association continued it might have redeemed the prospective heiress from many of the faults she had acquired through years of neglect and rebellion against fate, but the close triumvirate of girl friends was suddenly dissolved, early in July, by no less a person than Will Morrison — a wealthy and kindly natured gentleman who was a friend of both the Conants and Colonel Hathaway.

Will Morrison had purchased a yacht; it was anchored in the breakwater near the Chicago Yacht Club, and its owner intended making a summer trip through the Great Lakes and cordially invited the Conants and Irene, and Mary Louise and Colonel Hathaway to accompany his party.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Conant at that time was ill. She had contracted a lingering but mild form of spring fever that would keep her in bed for weeks, and Irene, who was devoted to her aunt, would not leave her to the mercies of a nurse. Mary Louise wanted to go, though, for the Morrisons were delightful people and any yacht they purchased would be sure to be safe and comfortable.

Since the Conants could not go, Mary Louise suggested to her grandfather that they ask Will Morrison to invite Alora Jones, and the Colonel approved the idea because he thought it would do Alora much good to mingle with refined people such as were sure to form the yacht party. So, when he answered Mr. Morrison's letter, he told him something of Alora and asked permission to fetch her along.

"I'm not at all sure," he said to Mary Louise, "that Mr. Jones will permit

Alora to go with us."

"Nor am I," the girl replied; "but perhaps Alora can coax him to consent. It might be a good idea for you to ask him, too, Gran'pa Jim."

"My dear!" he remonstrated, "do you think I ought to hazard that man's sneers and insults, even to favor your friend Alora?"

"No; I do not, Gran'pa Jim," she laughingly rejoined. "That was a foolish suggestion, and I withdraw it. If Alora fails, I'll speak to him myself. I'm not afraid of Jason Jones, and he doesn't growl at me as he does at poor Lory."

They did not mention the proposal to Alora until the Colonel had received a telegram from Will Morrison saying: "By all means invite Miss Jones to join us. Knew her mother, once, and will be glad to have her with us."

Alora was delighted at the prospect of a yachting trip and decided at once that she would go, especially as Colonel Hathaway said she would be Mary Louise's guest on the trip to Chicago and no money would be needed for expenses. So she attacked her father in a somewhat original manner.

Mr. Jones had conceived a passion for flying and had just purchased an aeroplane. He was to begin his lessons at once and was so thoroughly immersed in his strange fancy that he paid little heed to anything else. His books were neglected. His former quiet life — amounting almost to physical inertion — had given place to a nervous and all- consuming desire to master the rather strenuous art of aviation. Alora was quite unaware of this transformation, for as usual Jason Jones kept his own counsel and followed his inclinations without conference with anyone. The girl knew that her father haunted the aviation field, but anything that kept him amused away from home was gratefully approved by her.

Usually the two breakfasted together in silence. Lately Mr. Jones had hurried through with the meal so as to get away, and he did not return for lunch. So on this important morning Alora said casually:

"I'm going away for three or four weeks."

"Where to?" he asked sharply, suddenly rousing from his abstraction.

"I'm going on a yachting trip with Mary Louise and Colonel Hathaway. We're to be the guests of a Mr. Morrison and his wife, who own the yacht."

"Morrison? Morrison?" he repeated suspiciously. Then, as if relieved: "I don't know any Morrisons."

"Nor do I. They are old friends of the Hathaways and the Conants, however."

"Well, you can't go. It's nonsense."

"Why?"

"Yachts are dangerous. I don't want you drowned."

"I'd be as safe on a yacht as I would be in this house," she declared. "Do

you think I intend to take any chances with my life? Please remember that when I'm eighteen I shall have a fortune and be able to lead an independent life — a pleasant life — a life in sharp contrast to this one. Therefore, I'm going to live to enjoy my money."

He gave her a shrewd look of approval. The argument seemed to appeal to him. It quieted, to an extent, his fears for her safety.

"Anyhow," said Alora bluntly, "I'm going, and I dare you to stop me."

He was silent a while, considering the proposition. Just now he would be busy at the aviation field and in Colonel Hathaway's charge the girl was likely to be quite safe. He was inclined to relax his vigilance over his precious daughter, on this occasion.

"How long do the Hathaways expect to be away?" he inquired.

"Mary Louise says we will surely be home three weeks from the day we leave."

"Surely?"

"Without fail."

"H-m-m. It's a risk. Something might delay you. Do you know what would happen if you left me for sixty days or more?"

"Of course I do. That will of my mother's states that if at any time my devoted father develops any neglect of me, or lack of interest in his darling daughter, such as allowing me to become separated from him for longer than sixty days at one time, the court has the privilege, at its option, of deposing him as administrator of my estate and appointing another guardian. The other guardian, however, is to be paid a salary and the income, in that case, is to accrue to the benefit of my estate."

"How did you learn all that?" he demanded.

"You left a copy of the will lying around, and I read it and made a copy of it for myself. I now know my mother's will by heart. She suggests that if we must live together, 'in loving companionship,' you will probably have me educated by tutors, at home, and her objection to girls' schools — I wonder why? — was the principal reason she inserted the clause that we must never be separated. It would prevent you from sending me away to school. But as for the tutors, I haven't yet made their acquaintance."

"Tutors cost money," he said in a surly tone.

"I realize that; and while there is an abundance of money, the will states that it is to be entirely in your control. But we've quarreled on that subject too many times already, without your loosening your grip on the dollars. To get back to our subject, I assure you I shall not be gone longer than twenty-one days, and the trip won't cost you a single penny."

"When did you propose going?"

“We take the noon train on Monday for Chicago.”

He got his hat and left the house without another word, leaving Alora exultant. She hurried over to tell Mary Louise the good news.

“Did he really consent?” asked Mary Louise.

“Well, he didn’t forbid it,” said the girl, “and that’s the same thing.”

CHAPTER XVII
THE DISAPPEARANCE

The train was late getting into Chicago that Monday night. Colonel Hathaway took Mary Louise and Alora to the Blackington, but the hotel was so crowded that the girls could not get adjoining rooms. However, they secured rooms just across the hall from one another and the Colonel's room was but two doors removed from that of his granddaughter, so the three were not greatly separated.

"Never mind, dear," said Mary Louise, as she kissed her friend good night; "to-morrow we go aboard the yacht, and that will be our home for a long time."

"What time will you breakfast?" asked Alora.

"Well, we're up late, and Gran'pa Jim likes to sleep mornings. Can you fast until half-past eight, Alora?"

"Yes, indeed," with a laugh. "I'm used to somewhat early hours, so I shall probably be dressed by seven. But I'll find plenty to amuse me until you are up, and I'll knock on your door at eight-thirty."

But in the morning Alora failed to knock on Mary Louise's door, as she had promised. The Colonel was ready for breakfast, having enjoyed a good night's rest, and Mary Louise said to him:

"Alora probably slept later than she expected to. Shall I risk wakening her, Gran'pa Jim?"

"I think so," he replied. "She has slept long enough, for a young girl."

Mary Louise ran across the hall and knocked at the door of 216. She knocked again, for there was no answer. She did not dare call out, for fear of disturbing other guests of the hotel. The Colonel now came and rapped upon the panels, but without any better result.

"I think she must have left her room and is perhaps in the parlor, or in the hotel lobby," he said.

A chambermaid was passing through the hall and overheard the remark.

"The party in 216 has been up a long time, sir," she asserted. "I found the door ajar at six o'clock, and so I went in and made up the room."

"Poor Alora!" exclaimed Mary Louise laughingly; "she was too excited to sleep, and, as you say, we shall probably find her somewhere about the hotel, enjoying the sights."

But they could not find the girl anywhere in the hotel. After a long and careful search for her, Colonel Hathaway left word at the desk that if his room or Mary Louise's room was called, to report that they would be found in the breakfast room.

The old gentleman was distinctly annoyed as they sat down to breakfast.

"The foolish girl is wandering about the streets, somewhere," he complained, "and it was unmannerly to leave the hotel without consulting me, since she is our guest and in my care."

Mary Louise's sweet face wore a troubled expression.

"It is not like Alora, Gran'pa Jim," she asserted in defense of her friend. "Usually I have found her quite considerate." Then, after a pause: "I — I hope nothing has happened to her."

"Don't worry," he replied. "She's a wide-awake girl and has a tongue in her head, so she can't get lost. Why, Mary Louise, Alora knows the city well, for she used to live in Chicago with her mother."

"Until she was eleven. That was four years ago. But I did not think of her getting lost. The automobiles, you know, are so thick — — "

"Yes, dear; and there's the lake, and the railroad crossings, and the street cars; but the chances are against our little friend's being drowned or run over, especially so early in the day, when there isn't much traffic. Again I ask you not to worry."

But Mary Louise couldn't help worrying. They lingered over the breakfast, but Alora did not join them. Then they waited around the hotel until nearly noon, without receiving a word from her. Finally Colonel Hathaway, too, became nervous. He telephoned the central police station to inquire if a young girl of Alora's description had met with an accident. There was no record of such an accident, but in half an hour a detective came to the hotel and asked for the Colonel.

"Tell me all the particulars of the young lady's disappearance, please," he requested.

When he had received this information he said:

"Let us go to her room."

The key to No. 216 had not been turned in at the office, but was missing. With a pass-key they unlocked the door of Alora's room and found her suit case open, her toilet articles lying upon the dresser and her nightrobe neatly folded ready for packing. Her hat was missing, however, and the little jacket she wore with her tailored suit.

The detective touched nothing but examined the room and its contents with professional care.

"Let us call the chambermaid who made up the room," he suggested.

The woman was easily found and when she appeared the detective asked:

"Did you fold this nightrobe, or did you find it already folded?"

"Why, it was lyin' careless-like over the foot of the bed," said she, "so I folded it up."

“Why didn’t you hang it in the closet?”

“The clerk had notified me the room would be vacated to-day. So I knew that when the young lady came back she’d want to pack it in her grip.”

“And at what time did you find the door ajar?”

“At six-ten, sir. I come on duty at six.”

“You did not see Miss Jones?”

“No, sir — if that were the lady’s name.”

“You found no one prowling about the halls?”

“Didn’t see a soul, sir.”

“Thank you; that’s all.”

When she had gone the detective said to the Colonel in a reassuring tone:

“I wouldn’t worry, sir, although I’ll admit this prolonged absence of Miss Jones is puzzling. But perhaps she has gone to call on an old friend and will presently return and apologize. I remember her mother — a remarkable woman, sir — who used to live at the Voltaire. She had a lot of friends in Chicago, did Mrs. Antoinette Seaver Jones, so it’s likely her daughter is looking some of them up.”

“I wish you would do all you can to locate her,” pleaded Colonel Hathaway. “The young girl was placed in my care by her father and I feel personally responsible for her safety.”

“She’s safe enough, sir. No sign of a struggle in her room; no report of an accident in the city. Went out of her own volition and will probably come back the same way, when she’s ready. I’m going back to the office now, but I’ll instruct our men to keep a good lookout for Miss Jones. If we hear anything, I’ll let you know at once. In the meantime, if the girl happens to turn up, you must telephone me of the fact.”

He handed the Colonel his card and went away.

“This is dreadful, Gran’pa Jim!” exclaim Mary Louise. “That man can’t help us a bit. What do you think we ought to do?”

“Why, we’ve done all in our power, already, it seems to me,” he answered. “The police will keep a good lookout for Alora.”

“I’ve no confidence in that detective.”

“Why not, my dear? He seemed quite courteous and gentlemanly.”

“But he isn’t especially interested. He didn’t probe far enough into the case. He never asked why the key to Alora’s door was missing, yet the maid found the door ajar — half open,” said Mary Louise. “Would she take the key and leave the door open?”

“Why — no; that *is* strange, Mary Louise.”

“The detective didn’t inquire at the office whether the night clerk had seen Alora pass through and go out. But *I* inquired, Gran’pa, and the night clerk

goes off duty at six o'clock, when the relief clerk comes on, but neither saw any girl at all leave the office. No one was in the hotel lobby, at that hour."

"That is strange, too! How could Alora get out, otherwise?"

"I can't guess. Gran'pa, I'm going to telegraph Josie O'Gorman, and ask her advice," said Mary Louise.

"Do. It's a good idea, Josie might put us on the right track," approved the Colonel.

So Mary Louise went to the telegraph office in the hotel lobby and sent the following message:

"Josie O'Gorman,

1225 F Street,

Washington D.C.

"A girl friend has mysteriously disappeared from the Blackington, where we are stopping. What shall I do?

Mary Louise Burrows."

Two hours later she received this answer:

"Miss Mary Louise Burrows,

Hotel Blackington, Chicago.

"Notify police at once. Keep cool. I'm coming.

Josie O'Gorman."

Mary Louise felt tremendously relieved when she read this. Josie was a girl of her own age, but she was the daughter of one of the most celebrated secret service men in the employ of the United States government, and John O'Gorman had trained Josie from babyhood in all the occult details of his artful profession. It was his ambition that some day this daughter would become a famous female detective, but he refused to allow her to assume professional duties until she had become thoroughly qualified to excel. He did not wish her to be ordinary, but extraordinary, and Josie's talents, so far, had seemed to justify his expectations. Mary Louise knew Josie very well and admired and loved her, for in her amateur way Josie had once helped to solve a stubborn mystery that threatened the happiness of both the old Colonel and his granddaughter, and through this experience the two girls had become friends. Josie O'Gorman was devoted to Mary Louise, who knew she could rely on Josie's judgment in this emergency but had scarcely expected her to come all the way from Washington to Chicago to render her personal assistance.

In appearance the young girl — who was destined some day to become a great detective — was not especially prepossessing. She was short of form and inclined to be stout — "chubby," she called herself. She had red hair, a freckled face and a turned-up nose. But her eyes, round and blue and

innocent in expression as those of a baby, dominated her features and to an extent redeemed their plainness.

Mary Louise hurried to the Colonel.

“Gran’pa Jim,” she cried excitedly, “Josie is coming!”

“That is very good of her,” replied the Colonel, highly pleased. “Josie is very resourceful and while she may not be able to trace Alora she will at least do all in her power, and perhaps her clever little brain will be able to fathom the mystery of the girl’s disappearance.”

“She tells us to notify the police, but we did that at once. I don’t know of anything else we can do, Gran’pa, until Josie comes.”

Colonel Hathaway communicated with the police office several times that day and found the officials courteous but calm — prolific of assurances, but not especially concerned. This was but one of a number of peculiar cases that daily claimed their attention.

“I should hire a private detective, were not Josie coming,” he told Mary Louise; “but of course it is possible we shall hear of Alora, directly or indirectly, before morning.”

But they did not hear, and both passed a miserable, wakeful, anxious night.

“There is no use in our consulting Alora’a father, for the present,” remarked the old gentleman, next morning. “The news would only worry him. You remember how very particular he was in charging me to guard his daughter’s safety.”

“Yes, and I know why,” replied Mary Louise. “Alora has told me that if she is lost, strayed or stolen for sixty days, her father might be relieved of his guardianship and lose the income he enjoys. Now, I wonder, Gran’pa Jim, if Alora has purposely lost herself, with mischievous intent, so as to get rid of her father, whom she abhors?”

The Colonel considered this thoughtfully.

“I think not,” he decided. “The girl is impulsive and at times reckless, and doubtless she would like to be free from her father’s guardianship; but I am sure she is too fond of you, and has too much respect for me, to run away from us without a word. Besides, she has no money.”

“Really,” said Mary Louise despondently, “it is the strangest thing I ever knew.”

Josie O’Gorman arrived at the hotel at six o’clock in the afternoon, having caught the fast train from Washington the evening before. She came in as unconcernedly as if she had lived at the hotel and merely been out to attend a matinee and greeted the Colonel with a bright smile and Mary Louise with a kiss.

“My, but I’m hungry!” were her first words. “I hope you haven’t dined yet?”

“Oh, Josie,” began Mary Louise, on the verge of tears, “this dreadful — — ”

“I know, dear; but we must eat. And let’s not talk or think of the trouble till our stomachs are in a comfortable condition. Which way is the dining room?”

Neither the Colonel nor Mary had eaten much since Alora’s disappearance, but they took Josie in to dinner, realizing it would be impossible to get her to talk seriously or to listen to them until she was quite ready to do so. And during the meal Josie chattered away like a magpie on all sorts of subjects except that which weighed most heavily on their minds, and the little thing was so bright and entertaining that they were encouraged to dine more heartily than they otherwise would have done.

But afterward, when they had adjourned to a suite that had now been given them, and which included a cosy little sitting room, and after the Colonel had been ordered to light his cigar, which always composed his nerves, the O’Gorman girl suddenly turned serious and from the depths of an easy chair, with her hands clasped behind her red head, she said:

“Now to business. Begin at the beginning and tell me all there is to tell.”

“Haven’t I written you something about Alora, Josie?” asked Mary Louise.

“Never mind whether you have or haven’t. Imagine I’ve forgotten it. I want every detail of the girl’s history.”

So Mary Louise told it, with a few comments from her grandfather. She began with their first meeting with Alora and her eccentric father in Italy, and related not only all the details of their acquaintance but such facts as Alora had confided to her of her mother’s death and her subsequent unhappy relations with her father and guardian. Alora had often talked freely to Mary Louise, venting in her presence much bitterness and resentment over her cruel fate — as she deemed it. So, knowing Josie’s desire to obtain the most seemingly trifling detail of a case, Mary Louise told the story as connectedly and comprehensively as possible, avoiding all personal comment so as to leave Josie’s mind free from prejudice.

During the recital Josie sat very still, with closed eyes, reclining lazily in her chair and refraining from any interruption.

“Now, Colonel,” she said, “tell me all that Mary Louise has forgotten to mention.”

“She has told you more than I knew myself,” he declared. “Of course we informed the police of our friend’s disappearance and they sent a detective

here who went into the affair very carefully. Yet, so far — — ”

“I know,” said Josie, nodding. “I called at the police station before I came here, on leaving the train. The detective is Al Howard, and he’s a nice fellow but rather stupid. You mustn’t expect any results from that source. To be sure, the department might stumble on a clew, but the chances are they wouldn’t recognize it, even then.”

“I’m certainly surprised to hear that!” said the Colonel.

“Because you are ignorant of police methods. They mean well, but have so much to handle, in a big city like this, that they exist in a state of perpetual bewilderment.”

“But what are we to do?” pleaded Mary Louise. “Tell us, Josie!”

“How do *I* know?” asked the girl, with a smile. “I’m just Josie O’Gorman, a student detective, who makes as many blunders — alas! — as a full-fledged ‘tec.’ But I thought I’d be able to help, or I wouldn’t have come. I’ve a personal interest in this case, Mary Louise, because it’s your case and I love you. So let’s get to work. Have you a photograph of Alora Jones?”

“No,” was the reply.

“Then give me a word picture of her.”

Both Mary Louise and the Colonel tried to do, this, and Josie seemed satisfied.

“Now, then,” she said, rising, “let’s go to her room. I hope it hasn’t been disturbed since she left it.”

“The police have taken the key and forbidden anyone to enter the room.”

“Quite proper. But we’ll go there, just the same.”

The room was but a few steps away, in the same corridor, and when they arrived there Josie drew a bunch of slender keys from her purse and unlocked the door with no difficulty. Having entered, she turned on the electric lights and cast a curious glance around.

“Let’s read Alora’s room,” said she, while her companions stood listening. “To begin with, we see her night-dress nicely folded and her toilet articles arranged in neat order on the dresser. Chambermaid did that, for Alora is not neat. Proving that her stuff was just strewn around and the orderly maid put things straight. Which leads to the supposition that Alora was led away rather suddenly.”

“Oh, do you think so?”

“She left the door ajar, but took the key. Intended, of course, to lock her room, but was so agitated by what she saw or heard that she forgot and just walked away.”

“But no one saw her leave the hotel,” observed Mary Louise.

“Then she didn’t pass through the office, but through the less used Ladies’

Entrance at the side."

"That was not unlocked, they told me, until after seven o'clock."

"Then she left by the servants' entrance."

"The servants'!"

"Quite likely. You'll say she didn't know anything about it, or where it was; but the fact remains that Alora left the hotel. I'd like to see that chambermaid. I believe you told me she comes on duty at six o'clock in the morning. All right. I'll catch her at six a. m. to- morrow."

"The detective interviewed her," stated Colonel.

"I know, and she answered all his questions. My questions will be different. If Alora used the servants' entrance, she went out with a servant or with someone who knew the ways of the hotel intimately."

"I don't see that," objected Mary Louise.

"Nor do I, but there lies our trail. Alora didn't pass out through the office, nor did she make her exit through the less public Ladies' Entrance. There are only two other ways to get out of here: through the baggage door and by the servants' entrance at the rear, which lets into an alley. The head porter will know whether Alora went out the baggage door, but as it's usually very high — on a level with the platform of a baggage-wagon — I don't believe she jumped it. That leaves the servants' entrance as the probable exit for our missing one, and as she was a perfect stranger to the arrangements of this hotel, she couldn't have gone that way unless someone guided her. So our course is clear, Mary Louise. Find out who enticed Alora from the hotel and it won't be difficult to trace her and discover what has become of her."

"Enticed, Josie?"

"Had force been used, she would have screamed and attracted attention. Let us say she was decoyed."

"You think, then, that Alora was kidnapped?"

"Let us reason. The girl couldn't have had an enemy in Chicago, according to her history, for she was only eleven when she left here and no one hates an eleven year old child. Having no enemy, she has doubtless escaped personal harm. But Alora is an heiress, and a lot of people in Chicago know that. You suggest kidnapping. Well, perhaps that's the solution: held for ransom."

"That would be the first idea of Jason Jones!" exclaimed Mary Louise. "He has always seemed afraid of such a thing."

"In that case, however, I do not believe her father would pay a ransom," declared Colonel Hathaway.

"Oh, indeed he would!" asserted Mary Louise, emphatically; "we mustn't forget that if Alora isn't found and restored to him within a given time he

will lose all her income for the next three years."

Josie looked at her friend admiringly. Then she laughed.

"You're a better detective than any of us," she remarked. "What I've been groping for is the *object* of the abduction, and you've hit the nail squarely on the head. Now we're getting down to brass tacks, so to speak. The whole thing is explained by the one word — 'blackmail.' Girl disappears; papa is threatened with the lose of thousands. Very well, Papa! pay up. Relinquish a part of the income and you may keep the rest. Refuse, and you lose it all. Ergo, papa pays."

"That certainly seems a logical conclusion," admitted the Colonel.

"Then," said Josie, thoughtfully, "we must decide whether to put it up to Mr. Jones, and let him pay, or to go on with the search."

"We'll go on!" exclaimed Mary Louise. "We may be wrong, and poor Alora may be in danger, or suffering. We must rescue her as soon as possible."

"The girl was in my care," said the Colonel, "and I feel responsible for her safety. Moreover blackmail is a crime against society, and the plot should be foiled even were we not interested in the victim of it. I am anxious to find Alora before her father is approached."

"Then," Josie decided, "we will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to locate and recover her. If we have diagnosed the case correctly, we have to deal with a shrewd and unprincipled, if not clever person. Cleverness, too, we may encounter, and then our task will be doubly hard."

"Poor, dear Alora!" sighed Mary Louise. "It's a shame she should suffer because some cruel person wants her father's money. The fortune her mother left her has been a *mis*fortune to her daughter, instead of a blessing."

"Money," said Josie sententiously, "is a dangerous thing. Its possession, or the lack of it, leads to four-fifths of the world's crimes. The other one-fifth is charged to hatred and jealousy. But — dear me! — here I am philosophizing, when I ought to be thinking."

"Then think, Josie, and think to some purpose," pleaded Mary Louise.

"If our hastily constructed theory is correct," remarked John O'Gorman's daughter, "Papa Jones will soon hear from Alora's abductor, with a financial proposition."

"I hope we shall find her before then," returned the Colonel earnestly. "We ought not to delay an instant, with that idea in view. Indeed, our theory may be quite wrong and Alora be in desperate need of immediate assistance."

"Correct, sir," agreed Josie. "But we won't abandon our theory until we evolve a better one and in following this lead we must first discover who in

Chicago is aware of the terms of the will of Antoinette Seaver Jones. Also who is familiar enough with Papa Jones' love of money to believe he can be successfully blackmailed. What information can either of you give me along those lines?"

"Alora has talked to Irene a good deal about that dreadful will," replied Mary Louise, "Irene has repeated many of her statements to me. Also Alora has frankly spoken to me, at times, and her queer history has interested us all. But I cannot remember that any such person as you describe is in any way mixed up with the story. Judge Bernsted drew up the will for Alora's mother. He was her lawyer, and she trusted him fully."

"She was justified," declared Josie. "I know of Judge Bernsted, by reputation. He died a year ago."

"Then," continued Mary Louise, reflectively, "there was Mrs. Jones' doctor, who was very kind to Alora and who also enjoyed her mother's confidence. His name was Anstruther — Dr. Anstruther."

"He is a prominent physician in Chicago," declared Josie, who seemed to know every important person of every locality, for this had been part of her education. "It is impossible that Dr. Anstruther could have any knowledge of this plot. Moreover, it doesn't seem to me like a man's plot. I don't believe Alora would have accompanied a strange man, under any circumstances, for she's knocked around the world enough to have learned prudence. The crime is feminine. What woman knew of this will, and was an intimate friend of Mrs. Jones, or of Mr. Jones?"

"Really," said Mary Louise, "I don't know."

"Nor you, Colonel?"

"I do not recollect hearing of any woman connected with the Jones history — except Alora's former governess, a Miss Gorham, who was discharged by Mr. Jones at the time he took his daughter from Chicago to New York."

"That isn't such a bad clew!" Josie quickly returned, sitting up straight and staring reflectively at the old gentleman. "Miss Gorham, eh? Now, how long had she been Alora's governess?"

"For some years, I believe." It was Mary Louise who answered this question.

"Then she doubtless knew the family secrets. Was Alora fond of her?"

"I think not. She has told me that at the time they separated she was glad to be rid of the woman."

"Then the woman may be the kind that would resort to blackmail. Discharged from a good place, where she had drawn pay for years, she would be angry. Brooded during the last four years on her imagined wrongs and figured out a neat revenge. Had sized up Papa Jones and knew he clung

to money with a desperate grip and would pay some rather than lose all. Couldn't get another job; was poor; had no money to chase up Jones, but figured he would some time return to Chicago and give her an opportunity play her game. Discovered that Alora had arrived at this hotel, and — — See here! What would prevent the former governess, now in reduced circumstances, from being employed as a servant in this very hotel? Perhaps as a night chambermaid. May have seen Alora enter her room and recognized her former pupil. During the long night she figured and planned how to take advantage of the fortunate circumstances. Early in the morning, before she left here, went to Alora and in some way induced the girl to go out with her. Alora would accompany her old governess without suspicion. So — there's the whole story, in a nutshell, rather cleverly figured out."

"Oh, Josie, it must be true!" cried Mary Louise, who had eagerly followed this plausible reasoning.

"And it may not," laughed Josie. "It's just a theory, and good detectives distrust theories, which often befog clever brains. Still, the deduction sounds mighty logical. I'm going to my room, now, to give the suggestion some serious thought. I'll try to tear it to pieces, or at least to pick holes in it. When I came away Daddy said to me: 'Josie, beware that imagination of yours. If it asserts itself, sit on it.' Daddy was glad to have me tackle the case, and try to help you, for these little affairs give me practice; but he hates to have me make a flat failure. So, for dear old Daddy's sake, I'm not going to let any good-looking theory lead me astray. Good night. You'd both better go to bed, for I can see you had little sleep last night. But your strain must now relax, for you've pushed the responsibility onto my poor little shoulders and now it's up to me to worry."

CHAPTER XVIII
ON THE TRAIL

Josie O'Gorman loved mysteries for their own sake. She loved them because they required solutions, and to solve a mystery is not only interesting but requires a definite amount of talent. Since she was a wee thing perched on her father's knee, Officer O'Gorman had flooded her ears with the problems he daily encountered, had turned the problems inside out and canvassed them from every possible viewpoint, questioning the child if this, or that, was most probable. By this odd method he not only enjoyed the society of his beloved daughter but argued himself, through shrewd reasoning, into a lucid explanation of many puzzling cases. To his pleased surprise, as little Josie grew older she began to answer his questions, taking a part in his professional arguments with himself, and from that time her training as a detective began.

John O'Gorman had never been quite sure whether his fatherly adoration unduly influenced him or whether Josie was indeed an exceptionally talented girl; so, having firmly determined to train her to become a girl detective, he had so far held her in leash, permitting her to investigate various private cases but refusing to place her in professional work — such as the secret service — until she had gained experience and acquired confidence in herself. Confidence was the one thing Josie lacked most. She took her mistakes too much to heart.

The girl was full of enthusiasm, however, and now meant to untangle the mystery of Alora Jones if it were possible to do so, both to please Mary Louise and to enjoy the satisfaction of success. After saying good night to her friends, and before going to her own room, the girl wandered about the big hotel making casual inquiries and obtaining more or less useful information. Afterward, she sat in her room and arranged in her mind the complete history of Alora, so far as she was informed of it, and made notes of all facts which seemed to bear on the present problem.

Next morning she inquired for the housekeeper and found that lady seated in her little office on the third floor of the hotel.

"I'm trying to trace one of the servants who left you Monday night, or early Tuesday morning," she said, after informing the woman that she was engaged in tracing the missing girl, Alora Jones. "I am not sure what name you knew her by, but her real name was Gorham."

"No one has left us this week," returned the housekeeper, who seemed disposed to converse freely with her visitor.

"Are you sure of that?"

“Why, I’m positive. We treat our help well and they seldom leave us. I’m sure no woman employed in this hotel, down to the lowest kitchen scullion, has resigned or been discharged during the last few days.”

“And there is no one still in your service named Gorham?”

“No one. It’s an unusual name and I should have remembered it.”

“Do any of the guests ever use the servants’ entrance?”

“Certainly not. It is reserved exclusively for the employees. Some of our guests have private maids, who occasionally use the rear entrances, and Mrs. Tolliver’s trained nurses are allowed to pass out that way, too; but — — ”

She stopped abruptly, as if some new thought had occurred to her.

“What is it?” asked Josie, who was watching her face.

“Why, I have just recollected that Mrs. Tolliver’s night nurse did not show up Tuesday evening, for some reason, and they were obliged to telephone for another.”

“Who is Mrs. Tolliver?”

“One of our permanent guests, who is suffering just now from a severe attack of rheumatism. She employs two trained nurses, a day nurse and a night nurse.”

“And the night nurse left her post Tuesday morning and did not return in the evening, as she was expected to do?”

“That’s it, miss. Mrs. Tolliver was greatly annoyed, but fortunately she was able to secure another nurse at once.”

“What was the nurse’s name — the one who abandoned her job without notice?”

“Let me see. It wasn’t Gorham. I’ll call Alice, my assistant; I feel quite sure that she will know.”

Alice promptly answered the bell and on being questioned said:

“The nurse was Mrs. Orme. She’d been with Mrs. Tolliver ever since she was took sick, and was the best nurse she’s had.”

“Why did she leave?” asked Josie.

“I don’t know, miss, I’m sure. She were a quiet body, never sayin’ much to no one. But quite ladylike, she were, an’ most of us liked her.”

“Can you describe her?”

“Well, she isn’t tall — not so very tall, you know — an’ she’s got a good form an’ good manners. I take it she’s about thirty- five, an’ handsome for her age. Good eyes, but mostly looks down an’ don’t show ‘em. Very neat an’ tidy. Brown hair. She wore gray clothes, you know — the reg’lar nurse’s uniform.”

“Do you know where Mrs. Orme lives?”

“No, miss; haven’t the faintest idea.”

“Who is Mrs. Tolliver’s doctor?”

“The house physician, Dr. Pease. His office is No. 633, in this hotel.”

“Thank you, Alice.”

Josie hunted up Mary Louise.

“Have you ever heard that a trained nurse named Mrs. Orme is in any way connected with Alora’s history?” she asked.

“No; I’m pretty sure Alora has never mentioned such a person. What about her, Josie?

“I think Alora went away with her. Have you any description of Miss Gorham, the governess?”

“Not especially,” said Mary Louise, trying to remember. “Alora has sometimes referred to her as ‘Old Skinny,’ but that doesn’t mean anything.”

“It means she isn’t Mrs. Orme, anyhow,” answered Josie, in a disappointed tone.

Mary Louise considered this in her usual careful way. She would like to help Josie, if she could.

“Who do you suppose this Mrs. Orme could be?” she presently asked.

“Some one whom Alora knew years ago, when her mother was alive. Of course her name may not have been Orme, then, and she may not have been a trained nurse. That’s why I was inclined to connect her with Gorham.”

“Wait a minute, Josie! A nurse, do you say? Why, I remember something about a nurse, no — Alora’s mother’s nurse. When we were in Italy, where I first knew Alora, she told me that her father, at one time when they lived in New York, had been forced to give money to a woman, and Alora believed he had left America to escape this person’s further demands. When I asked who the woman was, she said it was her mother’s nurse; but I’m pretty sure she didn’t mention her name.”

Josie’s freckled face now wore a broad smile.

“How simple any enigma proves when you have the key,” she remarked, with an air of relief. “The mystery is solved, my dear! It’s all as easy as A. B. C.”

“In that case,” said Mary Louise, more mystified than ever, “kindly oblige me with the key.”

“With pleasure. You haven’t given me much time to forge a chain, so I’ll add each link as it occurs to me. Mrs. Jones, during her last illness, had a nurse; a good nurse, too, in whom she had confidence. When Mrs. Jones sent for her husband, from whom she had been estranged, the nurse was aware of the action. When the husband came — Alora’s father — without doubt the nurse remained in the sick room during the interview. Husband and wife quarreled, instead of making up — this guess is justified by the man’s

disagreeable disposition — and Mrs. Jones hastily wrote a codicil to her will and gave it into the nurse's keeping, with instructions to deliver it to her lawyer. Then the poor lady over-excited, lay back and died, and the man Jason Jones — realized that his lack of diplomacy had euchred him out of a big income for seven years. But he put up a job with the nurse who held his fate in her hands in the shape of scrap of paper. If she'd give him that codicil — no! that isn't right — if she'd keep it to herself and not let anyone know of its existence, Mr. Jones proposed to give her a share of the money. She considered this easier than working and the bargain was struck. Isn't that a logical chain of events, so far, Mary Louise?"

"But what a terrible thing to do, Josie!"

"Yes, human nature in its worst aspect selfishness, greed, unscrupulousness — and still human nature. Well, the woman followed him to New York and got some of the money, as Alora said; but the nurse wanted more, and was likely to bleed the man more liberally than he liked; so, being afraid of her, he ran away to Europe. Nurse spent her money, couldn't find Jason Jones to get more, and so returned to Chicago and practiced her profession again. Any dummy could figure that out."

"I cannot see," responded Mary Louise, "how that accounts for Alora's disappearance."

"Why, of course the woman knew all about the terms of the will. She was nursing a Mrs. Tolliver in this hotel when she discovered Alora's arrival. How she discovered it doesn't matter. In the morning, when the day nurse arrived to take her place, she left Mrs. Tolliver and went directly to Alora's room. The girl instantly recognized her and would probably have a warm place in her heart for her mother's old nurse. Decided to walk part of the way home with her so they could talk over old times — you and the Colonel being still asleep — but was enticed to the nurse's house and promptly locked up and held as a weapon to force old Jones to pay up. This completes the chain. A woman who would enter into such an ugly deal with Jason Jones as I have described would not hesitate to capture Alora, especially as it proved an easy thing to do."

Mary Louise drew a long breath. "If I could believe that theory, Josie," she said, "it would relieve me of much worry, for I'd know Alora is safe. But — what was it your father said about your imagination?"

Josie laughed. "This isn't wholly imagination, you goose, for it's based on a knowledge of human nature, as I've hinted. Also it's a scientific matching of the pieces in the puzzle. Why, Mary Louise, in this deduction we have all the necessary elements of the usual crime. A woman — always look for a woman in a mystery, my dear — money, the cause of four-fifths of all

crimes, and a guilty man who is afraid of being forced to disgorge his ill-gotten gains. Then we will add an innocent girl who suffers through the machinations of others. Some of my conclusions may not be exactly correct, but in the main the story is absolutely logical."

"That's what you said last night, Josie, when you thought the governess, Gorham, had abducted Alora."

"True, but I have later information which doesn't entirely upset the theory but changes the actors in the drama. I don't say that further investigations may not alter this present plot in some of its details, but the main facts are too lucid and undeniable to get far away from. I'm now going to interview the house physician and get Mrs. Orme's address."

When she had gone, Mary Louise went to Gran'pa Jim with the tale of Josie's latest discoveries and Colonel Hathaway was so impressed by the theory that he decided to telegraph Peter Conant to catch the noon train and come straight to Chicago.

"The complications suggested by Josie will require a lawyer's advice," he said, "and Mr. Conant knows law and can advise us how to handle the case when we have discovered where Alora is confined."

Meanwhile Josie went to the doctor's office and after waiting some time, was finally admitted to his private room.

"I came to ask for the address of a trained nurse — a Mrs. Orme — whom you recommended to Mrs. Tolliver," she began, her innocent eyes regarding the physician gravely.

Dr. Pease frowned.

"I cannot recommend her again," said he. "Although she's a good nurse, she is unreliable, and left my patient without notice when she was badly needed."

"I merely want to find her," declared Josie. "I'm a stranger in town and I've a letter of introduction to Mrs. Orme."

"I don't know her address. I got the woman through Dr. Anstruther."

"Oh. May I telephone Dr. Anstruther, then?"

"I've no objection. There's a telephone in the outer office. But you're not likely to catch him much before noon. Dr. Anstruther is a very busy man."

Josie went to her own room to telephone. She telephoned Dr. Anstruther's office at intervals all the morning, but did not succeed in getting him until nearly two o'clock. Then he answered that he did not know Mrs. Orme's address, having always secured her services through the Sisters' Hospital.

Josie tried the Sisters' Hospital and learned that Mrs. Orme lived in an apartment at 524 Morgan Avenue. She took a taxicab and drove there, determining to obtain an interview with the woman by posing as a nurse who

desired assistance in securing employment. But disappointment confronted her. Mrs. Orme had moved from the apartment ten days ago and her present address was unknown.

"She has taken considerable pains to cover her traces," said Josie to Mary Louise, when she returned from her futile trip.

"I hope you're not discouraged, dear," returned Mary Louise anxiously. "The local detectives have done nothing at all, so you are our only hope, Josie."

The embryo detective smiled sweetly.

"I'm not here on a pleasure trip," she said, "although I enjoy travel and good hotel fodder as well as anyone. This is business, but so far I'm just feeling my way and getting a start. You can't open a mystery as you do a book, Mary Louise; it has to be pried open. The very fact that this Mrs. Orme has so carefully concealed her hiding- place is assurance that she's the guilty party who abducted Alora. Being positive of that, it only remains to find her — not an impossibility, by any means — and then we shall have no difficulty in liberating her prisoner."

"But to find her; can you do that, Josie?"

"Certainly, with a little help from the police, which they will gladly furnish. They know I'm Daddy's daughter, for I have already introduced myself to them, and while they may be slow to take the initiative they are always quite willing to aid in an affair of this sort. Now, it stands to reason, Mary Louise, that the nurse didn't use the streets to promenade with. Alora. That would have been dangerous to her plans. There are so few people abroad in Chicago at six o'clock in the morning that those who met the two would have noted and remembered them. For the same reason Mrs. Orme did not take a street car, or the elevated. Therefore, she took a cab, and the cabman who drove them will know Mrs. Orme's address."

"But who was the cabman?" asked Mary Louise.

"That," said Josie, "is to be my next discovery."

CHAPTER XIX
DECOYED

The excitement of being once more in a big city rendered Alora Jones wakeful on that eventful Tuesday morning following her arrival in Chicago. At daybreak she rose and peered trough the window into a gray and unimpressive side street; then, disinclined to return to bed, she slowly began dressing.

Presently a sharp knock sounded upon her door. Somewhat surprised, she opened it far enough to see a middle-aged woman attired in nurse's uniform standing in the dim hallway.

"Miss Jones? Miss Alora Jones?" questioned the woman in a soft voice.

"Yes; what is it?"

"I've a message for you. May I come in?"

Alora, fearful that Mary Louise or the Colonel might have been taken suddenly ill, threw wide the door and allowed the woman to enter. As the nurse closed the door behind her Alora switched on the electric light and then, facing her visitor, for the first time recognized her and gave a little cry of surprise.

"Janet!"

"Yes; I am Janet Orme, your mother's nurse."

"But I thought you abandoned nursing after you made my father give you all that money," an accent of scorn in her tone.

"I did, for a time," was the quiet answer. "'All that money' was not a great sum; it was not as much as your father owed me, so I soon took up my old profession again."

The woman's voice and attitude were meek and deprecating, yet Alora's face expressed distrust. She remembered Janet's jaunty insolence at her father's studio and how she had dressed, extravagantly and attended theatre parties and fashionable restaurants, scattering recklessly the money she had exacted from Jason Jones. Janet, with an upward sweep of her half veiled eyes, read the girl's face clearly, but she continued in the same subdued tones:

"However, it is not of myself I came here to speak, but on behalf of your mother's old friend, Doctor Anstruther."

"Oh; did he send you here?"

"Yes. I am his nurse, just now. He has always used me on his important cases, and now I am attending the most important case of all — his own."

"Is Dr. Anstruther ill, then?" asked Alora.

"He is dying. His health broke weeks ago, as you may have heard, and

gradually he has grown worse. This morning he is sinking rapidly; we have no hope that he will last through the day."

"Oh, I'm sorry for that!" exclaimed Alora, who remembered the kindly old doctor with real affection. He had been not only her mother's physician but her valued friend.

"He learned, quite by accident, of your arrival here last evening," Janet went on, "and so he begged me to see you and implore you to come to his bedside. I advised him not to disturb you until morning, but the poor man is very restless and so I came here at this unusual hour. It seems he is anxious to tell you some secret which your dead mother confided to his keeping and, realizing his hours are numbered, he urges you to lose no time in going to him. That is the message entrusted to me."

There was no emotion in her utterance; the story was told calmly, as by one fulfilling a mission but indifferent as to its success. Alora did not hesitate.

"How far is it?" she quickly asked.

"A fifteen minute ride."

The girl glanced at her watch. It was not quite six o'clock. Mary Louise and the Colonel would not appear for breakfast for a good two hours yet and after breakfast they were all to go to the yacht. The hour was opportune, affording her time to visit poor Doctor Anstruther and return before her friends were up. Had Alora paused to give Janet's story more consideration she might have seen the inconsistencies in the nurse's statements, but her only thoughts were to learn her mother's secret and to show her sincere consideration for her kindly old friend.

Hastily completing her attire she added her hat and jacket and then said:

"I am ready, Janet."

"I hope we shall find him still alive," remarked the nurse, a cleverly assumed anxiety in her tone, as she took the key from inside the door and fitted it to the outer side of the lock.

Alora passed out, scarcely aware that Janet had pretended to lock the door. Halfway down the hall the woman handed her the key.

"Come this way, please," she said; "it is nearer to the carriage which is waiting for us."

At the rear of the building they descended the stairs and passed through an anteroom fitted with lockers for the use of the employees of the hotel. No one happened to be in the anteroom at that moment and they gained the alley without encountering a single person. Janet quickly led the girl through the alley and soon they came to a closed automobile which evidently awaited them. Janet opened the door for Alora and followed the girl inside the car,

which started at once and sped along the quiet streets.

"You will find Doctor Anstruther very feeble," said the nurse, "for he has suffered greatly. But I am sure it will give him pleasure to see you again. I hope he will recognize you. I scarcely recognized you, myself, you have changed so much since last we saw you at the Voltaire. Your resemblance to your mother is quite marked, however."

And so, during the ride, she kept up a flow of desultory conversation, intended to distract Alora's attention from the section of the city through which they were passing. She spoke of Dr. Anstruther, mostly, and answered such questions as Alora put to her in a calm, unemotional manner well calculated to allay suspicion. The woman kept her eyes veiled by her lashes, as of yore, but her face seemed to have aged and grown harder in its lines. There was no hint now of her former gay life in New York; she had resumed the humble tones and manners peculiar to her profession, such as Alora remembered were characteristic of her at the time she nursed her mother.

"This is the place," said Janet, as the cab came to a stop. "Let us move softly, as noise disturbs my patient."

Alora had paid no attention to the direction they had driven but on leaving the car she found herself facing a three-storied brick flat building of not very prepossessing appearance. Then were several vacant lots on either side of this building, giving it a lonely appearance, and in the lower windows were pasted placards: "To Let."

"Oh; does Doctor Anstruther live *here?"* asked Alora, somewhat astonished.

Without seeming to have heard the question Janet mounted the steps and opened the front door with a latch-key. Alora followed her inside and up two dingy flights to the third floor. Once she started to protest, for the deadly silence of the place impressed her with a vague foreboding that something was amiss, but Janet silenced her with a warning finger on her lips and on reaching the upper landing herself avoided making a noise as she cautiously unlocked the door. She stood listening a moment and then entered and nodded to the girl to follow.

They were in a short, dark passage which separated the landing from the rooms of the flat. Janet closed the outer door, startling her companion with the sharp "click" it made, and quickly opened another door which led into a shabby living room at the front of the building. Standing just within this room, Alora glanced around with the first real sensation of suspicion she had yet experienced. Janet raised her lids for a sweeping view of the girl's face and then with a light laugh began to remove her own cloak and cap, which she hung in a closet.

“Come, child, make yourself at home,” she said in a mocking, triumphant voice, as she seated herself in a chair facing the bewildered girl. “I may as well inform you that this is to be your home for some time to come — until Jason Jones decides to rescue you. You won’t object, I hope? Don’t get nervous and you’ll find your quarters very comfortable, if retired.”

Alora, understanding now, first shuddered, then grew tense and cast a hurried glance at the hall door behind her.

“Have you lied to me, Janet?” she demanded.

“Yes.”

“And this is a trap? Doctor Anstruther is not sick? He did not send for me? He is not here?”

“You have guessed correctly, Alora.”

The girl wheeled and in a quick run reached the door to the landing. It was fast locked.

“Help!” she cried, and stopped to listen; “help! help!”

“Come in and take off your things,” called Janet, undisturbed by the outcry. “This building hasn’t a soul in it but ourselves, and you may yell for help until you are hoarse without being heard. But don’t be frightened. I’m not going to hurt you. In fact, I’d like to make your confinement as cheerful as possible. Can’t you understand the truth — that I am simply holding your person in order to force Jason Jones to pay the money he owes me?”

CHAPTER XX
JANET'S TRIUMPH

Alora stood by the door, irresolute, wondering what to do. It occurred to her that she was not much afraid of Janet Orme. She had been trapped in order to bleed her father of money; it was all her father's fault — his fault and Janet's.

"Suppose you help me get our breakfast," suggested the nurse, coolly. "It will take your mind off your trouble and keep you from brooding. I admit I'm hungry, and I'm sure you'll feel better for a cup of coffee."

She passed into another room, as she spoke, and Alora, realizing the hall door could not be forced by her puny strength, advanced into the living room. There were three other doorways opening from this apartment. She could hear Janet rattling dishes and pans, so the way she had gone led into the kitchen. The other two doors she found gave entrance to small bedrooms, neither having egress other than through the living room. The furniture in all the rooms was cheap and tawdry but fairly comfortable.

Alora sat down and tried to collect her thoughts. Janet got the breakfast unaided and then came to summon her. Alora quietly walked into the kitchen and sat down at a little table spread for two. There was a dish of crisp bacon, some toast and coffee. Alora silently ate and drank, determined to maintain her strength. Having finished her meal she sat back and asked:

"Do you mind explaining what all this means?"

"No, indeed; I'm glad to explain," replied the woman, raising her eyelids an instant to flash a glance of approval at her prisoner. "I have already said that I was obliged to annoy you in order to reach your father. The dear father is an elusive person, you know, and is determined to avoid paying the money he owes me. I haven't been able to locate him, lately, but I have located you, and you are mighty precious to him because if he loses you he loses the income from your fortune. Therefore it is my intention to hold you here until Jason Jones either pays my demands or allows the probate court to deprive him of his guardianship. The proposition is really very simple, as you see."

"Still," said Alora, "I do not quite understand. How did you know of my value to my father?"

"I witnessed your mother's will," was the reply.

Alora remembered that this was true.

"But why does my father still owe you money? You were paid for nursing my mother. And, if your demands are merely blackmail, why does not my father defy you?"

"I'll tell you," answered. Janet. "It is a bit of ancient history, but it may

interest you. Your mother renounced your father when you were scarcely a year old. I met Jason Jones soon afterward, and believing, — as your own deluded mother did — that he would become a great artist, I gambled with him on his career. In other words, I supported Jason Jones with all my earnings as a nurse for a period of six years and in return he signed an agreement which states that one-half of all the money he received in the future, from whatever source, must be paid to me in return for my investment. Doubtless we both thought, at the time, that any money he got would come from the sale of his pictures; neither could have dreamed that your mother would call him to her on her death-bed and present sent him with your income until you came of age — seven years' control of a fortune, with no other obligation than to look after a child and keep her with him. But the agreement between us covered even that astonishing event. Imagine, if you can, Jason Jones' amazement when he entered your mother's sick chamber to find me — his partner — acting as her nurse. He was also annoyed, for he realized I knew the terms of the will and would demand my share of his income. Can you blame me? He hadn't made good as an artist and this was my only chance to get back some of the hard earned savings I had advanced him. But Jason Jones isn't square, Alora; he's mean and shifty, as perhaps you have discovered. He gave me some money at first, when I followed him to New York, as you know; but after that the coward ran away. That provoked me and made me determined to run him down. I traced him to Europe and followed him there, but he evaded me for a full year, until my money was gone and I was forced to return to America. For nearly three years longer I worked as a nurse and hoarded my earnings. Then, through your father's banker in New York I managed to learn his address. The banker didn't tell me, but I did a little spy work and in the bank's mail I found a letter in Jason Jones' handwriting postmarked 'Positano, Italy.' That was all the clew I needed and I went to Italy and soon located my man. I faced him in his own villa — I believe you were away at the time — and when he found he was caught he cringed and begged for mercy and promised to give me all that belonged to me. He said he had a lot of gold in his possession and he would pay me partly in gold and partly in drafts on his New York banker. Then he left the room to get the gold and returned with a husky Italian servant who seized and bound me and threw me into a stone house used to store grapes, where I was kept a prisoner for nearly ten days and treated like a dog.

"Finally the Italian released me, asserting that Jason Jones was on his way to America. I followed as soon as I could get passage in a ship, but your clever father had left New York before I arrived there and I could not

discover where he had hidden himself. Once more he had beaten me."

Her voice was hard and angry. Alora was tempted to believe the story, for many of its details she knew were true. She remembered, for one thing, that queer letter from Silvio which she had discovered tucked inside one of her father's books. It stated that, according to orders, the Italian had "released the prisoner." So the prisoner had been Janet, and Alora could well understand her determination to secure revenge.

"It seems to me," she said, "that you should have taken your contract with my father to a lawyer, and brought suit to recover the money due you. Surely that would have been the easiest way to collect it."

Janet's face grew red; her lashes dropped still further over the eyes; but she answered after an instant's pause:

"I do not wish the world to know what a fool I was to support an imitation artist for six long years. A lawsuit means publicity, and I have a little pride left, I assure you. Besides," collecting her thoughts as she spoke, "I cannot see the wisdom of dividing my share with a lawyer when I can bring your father to terms myself. I know I have executed a bold stroke in seizing you and making you my prisoner, but it's a stroke that's bound to win. It was conceived last night, on the spur of the moment. Lately I have been nursing in Chicago, where I am better known than in New York and can get better wages. Since my return from Italy I've been saving to renew the search for Jason Jones. While nursing a Mrs. Tolliver at the Hotel Blackington, fortune suddenly smiled on me. I chanced to examine the hotel register last night and found you were registered with Colonel Hathaway's party. Your room number was marked opposite your name, so I had you properly located. During the night, while on duty in Mrs. Tolliver's room, I had ample time to figure out a plan of action. I knew you were fond of old Doctor Anstruther and so used his name for a lure. I had already rented this flat; not with the idea of using it for a prison, but because it was cheap and so isolated that I could sleep during the daytime without being disturbed. I believe that's all that I need explain to you. Our little adventure of this morning you will now be able to understand perfectly. Also you will understand the fact that you must remain a prisoner until my purpose is accomplished. I'm sorry for you, but it can't be helped. Won't you have another cup of coffee, Alora?"

Alora had no answer ready. Janet's story did not satisfy her; she felt that somewhere there was a flaw in it; but she decided to bide her time.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY

Alora, being in the main a sensible girl, strove to make the best of her unpleasant predicament. She longed to notify Mary Louise that she was safe and well and in answer to her pleadings Janet agreed she might write a letter to that effect, with no hint that she was imprisoned or where she could be found, and the nurse would mail it for her. So Alora wrote the letter and showed it to Janet, who could find no fault with its wording and promised to mail it when she went out to market, which she did every morning, carefully locking her prisoner in. It is perhaps needless to state that the letter never reached Mary Louise because the nurse destroyed it instead of keeping her agreement to mail it. Letters can be traced, and Janet did not wish to be traced just then.

The days dragged by with little excitement. Alora sought many means of escape but found none practical. Once, while Janet was unlocking the hall door to go to market, the girl made a sudden dash to get by her and so secure her freedom; but the woman caught her arm and swung her back so powerfully that Alora fell against the opposite wall, bruised and half stunned. She was no match for Janet in strength.

"I'm sorry," said Janet complacently, "but you brought it on yourself. I'm not brutal, but I won't be balked. Please remember, my girl, that to me this is a very important enterprise and I've no intention of allowing you to defeat my plans."

Usually the woman was not unpleasant in her treatment of Alora, but conversed with her frankly and cheerfully, as if striving to relieve her loneliness.

"Have you written to my father about me?" the girl asked one day.

"Not yet," was the reply. "I don't even know where Jason Jones may be found, for you haven't given me his address. But there's no hurry. You have been missing only a week, so far. Jason Jones has doubtless been notified of your disappearance and is beginning to worry. Of course he will imagine I am responsible for this misfortune and his alarm will grow with the days that pass. Finally, when his state of mind becomes desperate, you will give me his address and he will hear from me. I shall have no trouble, at that crisis, in bringing my dishonest partner to terms."

"I can't see the object of waiting so long," protested Alora. "How long do you intend to keep me here?"

"I think you should remain missing about fifty days, during which time they will search for you in vain. Your father's search for you will include a

search for me, and I've figured on that and defy him to find me. The Sisters' Hospital, the only address known to the physicians who employ me, believe I've gone to some small Indiana town on a case, but I neglected to give them the name of the town. So there's a blind lead that will keep my pursuers busy without their getting anywhere. It's easy to hide in a big city. Here you are very safe, Alora, mid discovery is impossible."

Janet had abandoned her nurse's costume from the first day of the girl's imprisonment. When she went out, which was only to a near-by market and grocery, she wore an unobtrusive dress.

Every day seemed more dreary to Alora than the last. She soon became very restless under her enforced confinement and her nerves, as well as her general health, began to give way. She had been accustomed to out- of-door exercise, and these rooms were close and "stuffy" because Janet would not allow the windows open.

For twelve days and nights poor Alora constantly planned an escape, only to abandon every idea she conceived as foolish and impractical. She looked forward to fifty days of this life with horror and believed she would go mad if forced to endure her confinement so long.

CHAPTER XXII
A COMPROMISE

"If I had any money of my own," Alora said to Janet Orme on the morning of the twelfth day of imprisonment, "I would gladly pay it to free."

Janet flashed a quick glance at her. "Do you mean that?" she asked with ill-suppressed eagerness.

"I do, indeed," declared the girl, moaning dismally; "but I never have a cent to call my own."

Janet sat still, for some time, thinking.

"I, too, wish you were free," she admitted, resuming the conversation, "for my position as jailer obliges me to share your confinement, and it's wearing on me, as it is on you. But you have unconsciously given me a thought — an idea that seems likely to lead to a compromise between us. I'm going to consider it seriously, and if it still looks good to me I'll make you a proposition."

Saying this, she retired to her bedroom and closed the door after her, leaving Alora in a fit of nervous trembling through half-formed hopes that she might gain her release.

It was nearly an hour before Janet returned. When she came from her room she stood before the girl for a time and seemed to study her face. Alora was anxious and did not endeavor to conceal the fact. In her hand the woman held a paper, which she presently laid upon the center- table.

"I have decided to make you a proposition," she said, turning to seat herself near the table. "If it interests you, all right; if it doesn't, you may of course reject it. My offer is this: If you will tell me where to find your father and will promise not to mention me to him or to warn him of my intentions, and if you will sign this paper which I have prepared, I will allow you to return to your friends to- day. You are not especially fond of Jason Jones, I believe?"

"Not especially, although he is my father," returned Alora, eyeing the woman expectantly.

"Then you can have no objection to my forcing him to disgorge my share of his income, which you would not get in any event. I don't know how much of an allowance he makes you, but — — "

"I don't get any allowance," said Alora, "In fact, he gives me nothing."

"Then my demands on your father will not affect your interests. Are you willing to give me his address, and promise not to warn him?"

"Under the circumstances, yes."

"Very well. I accept your plighted word — your word of honor. Now sign

this paper and you may go."

She took the paper from the table and handed it to Alora, who read as follows:

"For value received, in services faithfully rendered and which I hereby freely and without coercion acknowledge, I hereby promise and agree to pay to Janet Orme Jones on the day that I attain my majority the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars, which sum is to be paid from my estate without recourse, equivocation or attempt to repudiate the said obligation, inasmuch as I willingly admit the said sum to be justly due the said Janet Orme Jones.

"(Signed:)....."

Alora read the paper twice, with, growing indignation. Then she glanced up at her jailer and muttered questioningly: "Jones? Janet Orme *Jones?"*

"A family name, my dear. The Joneses are so thick and so unimportant that generally I do not use the name, but this is a legal document. I hope you won't try to claim relationship," she added with a light laugh.

"I'm not going to promise you so enormous a sum as fifty thousand dollars, even to secure my liberty," said Alora. "It's out of all reason — it's — it's — outrageous!"

"Very well," returned Janet, coolly; "that's your own affair. This is merely a compromise proposition, suggested by yourself, as I told you. Let us say no more about it."

Alora was greatly disheartened. After allowing her hopes to run so high the disappointment was now doubly keen. Her defiance melted away with the thought of all the weary days of imprisonment she must endure until Janet was ready to act.

"I — I might agree to give you *five* thousand dollars," she ventured.

"Nonsense. I'm not gunning for small game, Alora. Did you but realize it, I am quite considerate in exacting only fifty thousand. Your estate is worth two millions. Your income is something like eighty thousand a year, and this payment would leave you thirty thousand to use the first year after you come into your fortune. I don't believe you could spend thirty thousand in a year, when you are eighteen years of age."

Alora turned away and going to the front window, looked through its stained and unwashed panes into the gloomy street below. The sight emphasized her isolation from the world. Her imprisonment was becoming unbearable. After all, she reflected, in reckless mood, what did so small a share of her prospective fortune weigh against her present comfort — and health — and happiness?

Janet was stealthily watching her.

"Should you decide to sign the paper," said the nurse, "you must make up

your mind not to raise a row when pay-day comes. The money will come out of your income, and instead of investing it in more bonds, you will have invested it in your liberty. You won't be inconvenienced in the slightest degree. On the other hand, this money will mean everything to *me* — a modest competence for my old age and relief from the drudgery of working. I've had a hard life, my girl, for nursing is mere slavery to the whims of sick people. Consider, also, that for six years Jason Jones squandered all my savings in trying to paint pictures that were not worth the canvas he ruined. If I had that money now I wouldn't need to descend to this disgraceful mode of recouping my bank account; but, under the circumstances, don't you think I am justly entitled to some of the Jones money?"

"You're going to get a lot from my father."

"True; but that is for his indebtedness, while this amount is for your freedom. A scrape of the pen and you secure liberty, fresh air and the privilege of rejoining your friends, who are probably getting anxious about you. If you are the sensible girl I take you to be, you won't hesitate."

Alora knew the woman was pleading her own case, but the arguments appealed to her. She was weak and nervous and her longing for liberty outweighed her natural judgment.

"I suppose I'm a fool, but — — "

Slowly she approached the table where the written promissory note still lay. Janet had placed a pen and inkstand beside it.

CHAPTER XXIII

MARY LOUISE HAS AN INTUITION

"I wish, Josie," said Mary Louise dolefully, "you'd let me help in this search for Alora."

"I'd be glad to, dear, if I could think of a single thing you can do," replied her friend. "Just now I'm on the most tedious task imaginable — visiting the army of cab-drivers — horse and taxi — here in Chicago and trying to find the one who carried a woman and a girl away from the Blackington at six o'clock that eventful Tuesday morning."

"Have you met with any success, at all?" asked Mary Louise.

"That question proves you're not fitted for detective work," Josie laughingly asserted. "A moment's reflection would assure you that when I found my man my search would be ended. Ergo, no success has yet attended my efforts. I've interviewed a couple of hundreds, however, and that leaves only a few hundreds left to question."

"But the whole thing drags terribly!" complained Mary Louise. "Days are passing, and who knows what may be happening to poor Alora while you are hanging around the cab-stands?"

Josie's face grew grave. In sober tones she said:

"I'm just as anxious as you are, Mary Louise. But this case is really puzzling, because Chicago is such a big city that criminals may securely hide themselves here for months — even for years — without being discovered. Mrs. Orme was clever enough to leave few traces behind her; as far as clews are concerned she might have evaporated into thin air, taking Alora with her — except for this matter of the cabman. That's why I am pinning my faith to this search, knowing all the time, nevertheless, that Mrs. Orme may have provided for even that contingency and rendered the discovery of the cabman impossible. To do that, however, she would have to use a private equipage, involving a confederate, and I believe she preferred to take chances with a hired cab."

"What are the police doing?" inquired Mary Louise nervously.

"Nothing. They were soon discouraged and lost interest in the matter when I took hold of the case. But *I* don't intend to get discouraged. I hate to be 'stumped,' as you know, and it seems to me, after careful consideration, that success may follow the discovery of the cab-driver. I've not been neglecting other trails, I assure you. I've obtained a pretty fair record of the history of nurse Orme. She has the habit of drudging in sick rooms until she accumulates enough capital to lead a gay life for a month or so, after which she resumes nursing in order to replenish her purse. She's a good nurse and a

wild spendthrift, but aside from the peculiarity mentioned there's nothing in her career of especial interest. The woman is pretty well known both in New York and Chicago, for she squanders in the first city and saves in the other, but of her early history there is no information available. In her wildest moods she has never done anything to warrant her arrest, yet the police have kept a suspicious eye on her for years."

"Poor Alora!" wailed Mary Louise, miserably; "I wish I could do something for her."

"You did a lot for her when you put me on her trail," declared Josie, with conviction. "I've a hunch I shall win. I've wired Daddy O'Gorman all about the case, but he says he can't advise me. In other words, he's watching to see whether I make good or cave in, and I just *dare* not fail. So keep your courage, Mary Louise, and muster all the confidence you are able to repose in me. I may not know all the tricks of the sleuths, but I know some of them. And now I'm off to interview more cabmen."

Mary Louise sighed as her friend left her. She was indeed very unhappy and restless during those days of tedious waiting. Peter Conant had come to Chicago on the Colonel's demand, but Mary Louise couldn't see how he was able to help them one bit.

"Of course," the lawyer had said in his terse, choppy manner, "whoever abducted the girl is, criminally liable. We can put the party in jail."

"When we get her," suggested Mary Louise impatiently. "The party is Mrs. Orme; we have established that fact without a doubt; and, if we could get her, we'd also get Alora."

"Just so," Peter replied; "and, between the O'Gorman girl and the police, we ought to capture the woman soon. I have a degree of confidence in Josie O'Gorman and somewhat more confidence in the police."

"Do you think we should notify Jason Jones?" inquired Colonel Hathaway.

"I have considered that, sir, in all its phases, and knowing the man's peculiar characteristics I believe such a course is not as yet desirable. Jones is so enthralled by his latest craze over aviation that he would be no fit adviser and could render no practical assistance in the search for his daughter. On the other hand, his association would be annoying, for he would merely accuse you of neglect in permitting Alora to be stolen while in your care. I have seen a copy of his wife's will and know that the girl's loss may cost him his guardianship and the perquisites that pertain to it. In that case he will probably sue you for the loss of the money, claiming Alora's abduction was due to your carelessness."

"He could not win such an absurd suit, however," declared the Colonel.

“Still, he might be awarded damages,” asserted the lawyer. “Juries are uncertain; the law is somewhat elastic; judges are peculiar.”

“Don’t worry, Gran’pa Jim,” said Mary Louise soothingly, as she sat on the arm of his chair and rubbed the wrinkles from his forehead; “there must be such a thing as justice, even in law.”

“Law *is* justice,” stated Mr. Conant, resenting the insinuation, “but justice is sometimes recognized by humans in one form, and sometimes in another. I do not say that Jason Jones could collect damages on such complaint, but he assuredly would have a case.”

Mr. Conant had desired to return home after the first conference with his client, but he admitted that his wife was recovering from her indisposition and a kindly neighbor was assisting Irene in the care of her, so he yielded to his client’s urgent request to remain. Colonel Hathaway was more alarmed by Alora’s disappearance than he allowed Mary Louise to guess, and he wanted Mr. Conant to spur the police to renewed effort. In addition to this the Colonel and his lawyer usually spent the best part of each day pursuing investigations on their own account, with the result that Mary Louise was left to mope alone in the hotel rooms.

The young girl was fond of Alora and secretly terrified over her mysterious disappearance. She tried to embroider, as she sat alone and waited for something to happen, but her nerveless fingers would not hold the needle. She bought some novels but could not keep her mind on the stories. Hour by hour she gazed from the window into the crowded street below, searching each form and face for some resemblance to Alora. She had all the newspapers sent to her room, that she might scan the advertisements and “personals” for a clew, and this led her to following the news of the Great War, in which she found a partial distraction from her worries. And one morning, after her grandfather and the lawyer had left her, she was glancing over the columns of the Tribune when an item caught her eye that drew from her a cry of astonishment. The item read as follows:

“The Grand Prize at the exhibition of American paintings being held in the Art Institute was yesterday awarded by the jury to the remarkable landscape entitled ‘Poppies and Pepper Trees’ by the California artist, Jason Jones. This picture has not only won praise from eminent critics but has delighted the thousands of visitors who have flocked to the exhibition, so the award is a popular one. The Associated Artists are tendering a banquet to-night to Jason Jones at the Congress Hotel, where he is staying. The future of this clever artist promises well and will be followed with interest by all admirers of his skillful technique and marvelous coloring.”

Mary Louise read this twice, trying to understand what it meant. Then she

read it a third time.

"How strangely we have all been deceived in Alora's father!" she murmured. "I remember that Gran'pa Jim once claimed that any man so eccentric might well possess talent, but even Mr. Jones' own daughter did not believe he was a true artist. And Alora never guessed he was still continuing to paint — alone and in secret — or that he had regained his former powers and was creating a masterpiece. We have all been sadly wrong in our judgment of Jason Jones. Only his dead wife knew he was capable of great things."

She dropped the paper, still somewhat bewildered by the remarkable discovery.

"And he is here in Chicago, too!" she mused, continuing her train of thought, "and we all thought he was stupidly learning to fly in Dorfield. Oh, now I understand why he allowed Alora to go with us. He wanted to exhibit his picture — the picture whose very existence he had so carefully guarded — and knew that with all of us out of the way, afloat upon the Great Lakes, he could come here without our knowledge and enter the picture in the exhibition. It may be he doubted its success — he is diffident in some ways — and thought if it failed none of us at home would be the wiser; but I'm sure that now he has won he will brag and bluster and be very conceited and disagreeable over his triumph. That is the man's nature — to be cowed by failure and bombastic over success. It's singular, come to think it over, how one who has the soul to create a wonderful painting can be so crude and uncultured, so morose and — and — cruel."

Suddenly she decided to go and look at the picture. The trip would help to relieve her loneliness and she was eager to see what Jason Jones had really accomplished. The Institute was not far from her hotel; she could walk the distance in a few minutes; so she put on her hat and set out for the exhibition.

On her way, disbelief assailed her. "I don't see how the man did it!" she mentally declared. "I wonder if that item is just a huge joke, because the picture was so bad that the reporter tried to be ironical."

But when she entered the exhibition and found a small crowd gathered around one picture — it was still early in the day — she dismissed at once that doubtful supposition.

"That is the Jason Jones picture," said an attendant, answering her question and nodding toward the admiring group; "that's the prizewinner — over there."

Mary Louise edged her way through the crowd until the great picture was in full view; and then she drew a long breath, awestruck, delighted, filled with a sense of all-pervading wonder.

“It’s a tremendous thing!” whispered a man beside her to his companion. “There’s nothing in the exhibit to compare with it. And how it breathes the very spirit of California!”

“California?” thought Mary Louise. Of course; those yellow poppies and lacy pepper trees with their deep red berries were typical of no other place. And the newspaper had called Jason Jones a California artist. When had he been in California, she wondered. Alora had never mentioned visiting the Pacific Coast.

Yet, sometime, surely, her father must have lived there. Was it while Alora was a small child, and after her mother had cast him off? He could have made sketches then, and preserved them for future use.

As she stood there marveling at the superb genius required to produce such a masterpiece of art, a strange notion crept stealthily into her mind. Promptly she drove it out; but it presently returned; it would not be denied; finally, it mastered her.

“Anyhow,” she reflected, setting her teeth together, “I’ll beard the wolf in his den. If my intuition has played me false, at worst the man can only sneer at me and I’ve always weathered his scornful moods. But if I am right — — ”

The suggestion was too immense to consider calmly. With quick, nervous steps she hastened to the Congress Hotel and sent up her card to Jason Jones. On it she had written in pencil: “I shall wait for you in the parlor. Please come to me.”

CHAPTER XXIV
AN INTERRUPTION

"Before you sign this promissory note," remarked Janet Orme, as Alora reluctantly seated herself at the table, "you must perform the other part of your agreement and give me the present address of your father, Jason Jones."

"He lives in Dorfield," said Alora.

"Write his street number — here, on this separate sheet."

The girl complied.

"Is it a private house, or is it a studio?"

"A cottage. Father doesn't paint any more."

"That is very sensible of him," declared the nurse; "yet I wonder how he can resist painting. He has always had a passion for the thing and in the old days was never happy without a brush in his hand. He had an idea he could do something worth while, but that was mere delusion, for he never turned out anything decent or that would sell in the market. Therefore the money he spent for paints, brushes and canvas — money I worked hard to earn — was absolutely wasted. Does your father keep any servants?"

"One maid, an Irish girl born in the town."

"Still economical, I see. Well, that's all the information I require. You have given your word of honor not to notify him that I have discovered his whereabouts. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said Alora.

"Now sign the note."

Alora, pen in hand, hesitated while she slowly read the paper again. She hated to give fifty thousand dollars to this scheming woman, even though the loss of such a sum would not seriously impair her fortune. But what could she do?

"Sign it, girl!" exclaimed Janet, impatiently.

Alora searched the note for a loophole that would enable her afterward to repudiate it. She knew nothing of legal phrases, yet the wording seemed cleverly constructed to defeat any attempt to resist payment.

"Sign!" cried the woman. With pen hovering over the place where she had been told to write her name, Alora still hesitated and seeing this the nurse's face grew dark with anger. A sudden "click" sounded from the hall door, but neither heard it.

"Sign!" she repeated, half rising with a threatening gesture.

"No, don't sign, please," said a clear voice, and a short, stumpy girl with red hair and freckled face calmly entered the room and stood smilingly before them.

Janet uttered an exclamation of surprise and annoyance and sank back in her chair, glaring at the intruder. Alora stared in speechless amazement at the smiling girl, whom she had never seen before.

"How did you get in here?" demanded Janet angrily.

"Why, I just unlocked the door and walked in," was the reply, delivered in a cheery and somewhat triumphant voice.

"This is a private apartment."

"Indeed! I thought it was a prison," said the girl. "I imagined you, Mrs. Orme, to be a jailer, and this young person — who is Miss Alora Jones, I believe — I supposed to be your prisoner. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I guess I'm right."

The nurse paled. The look she flashed from her half-veiled eyes was a dangerous look. She knew, in the instant, that the stranger had come to liberate Alora, but the next instant she reflected that all was not lost, for she had already decided to release her prisoner without compulsion. It was important to her plans, however, that she obtain the promissory note; so, instantly controlling herself, she lightly touched Alora's arm and said in her usual soft voice:

"Sign your name, my dear, and then we will talk with this person."

Alora did not move to obey, for she had caught a signal from the red-headed girl.

"I object to your signing that paper," protested the stranger, seating herself in a vacant chair. "I haven't the faintest idea what it is you're about to sign, but if I were you I wouldn't do it."

"It is the price of my liberty," explained Alora.

"Well, this is a free country and liberty doesn't cost anything. I've a carriage waiting outside, and I will drive you back to the Colonel and Mary Louise free of charge. You won't even have to whack up on the cab hire."

The nurse slowly rose and faced the girl.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"No one of importance," was the answer. "I'm just Josie O'Gorman, the daughter of John O'Gorman, of Washington, who is a lieutenant in the government's secret service."

"Then you're a detective!"

"The aforesaid John O'Gorman declares I'm not. He says I must learn a lot before I become a real detective, so at present I'm just practicing. Mary Louise is my friend, you know," she continued, now addressing Alora, "and you are a friend of Mary Louise; so, when you mysteriously disappeared, she telegraphed me and I came on to hunt you up. That wasn't an easy job for an amateur detective, I assure you, and it cost me a lot of time and some worry,

but glory be! I've now got you located and Mrs. Orme's jig is up."

The nurse moved softly to the door that led into the passage and locked it, putting the key into her pocket.

"Now," said she, with another flash of those curious eyes, "I have two prisoners."

Josie laughed.

"I could almost have sworn you'd try that trick," she remarked. "It was on the cards and you couldn't resist it. Permit me to say, Mrs. Orme, that you're a rather clever woman, and I admire cleverness even when it's misdirected. But my Daddy has taught me, in his painstaking way, not to be caught napping. A good soldier provides for a retreat as well as an advance. I've been on your trail for a long time and only this morning succeeded in winning the confidence of the cabman who drove you here. Wasn't sure, of course, that you were still here, until I saw Alora's face at the window a while ago. Then I knew I'd caught you. The cab is a closed one and holds four inside, so I invited three policeman to accompany me. One is at the back of this house, one at the front door and the third is just outside here on the landing. Probably he can hear us talking. He's a big man, that third policeman, and if I raise my voice to cry out he could easily batter down the door you have locked and come to my rescue. *Now* will you be good, Mrs. Orme?"

The nurse realized her defeat. She deliberately took the note from the table and tore it up.

"You have really foiled me, my girl," she said philosophically, "although if you knew all you would not blame me for what I have done."

"You've decided not to dig any money out of Alora, then?"

"It wouldn't matter to her, but I have abandoned the idea. However, I shall insist on making Jason Jones pay me liberally for my disappointment. Now take the girl and go. Get your things on, Alora."

Josie regarded her thoughtfully.

"I had intended to arrest you, Mrs. Orme," she remarked; "but, honestly, I can't see what good it would do, while it would cause Mary Louise and the dear Colonel a heap of trouble in prosecuting you. So, unless Miss Jones objects — — "

"All I want it to get away from here, to be out of her clutches," asserted Alora.

"Then let us go. The woman deserves punishment, but doubtless she'll get her just deserts in other ways. Get your things on, my dear; the cab and the policemen are waiting."

Janet Orme unlocked the door to the passage. Then she stood motionless,

with drooping eyelids, while the two girls passed out. Alora, greatly unnerved and still fearful, clung to the arm of her rescuer.

When they had gained the street and were about to enter the closed automobile she asked: “Where are the three policemen?”

“Invisible,” returned Josie, very cheerfully. “I had to invent that story, my dear, and the Recording Angel is said to forgive detectives for lying.”

She followed Alora into the car and closed the door.

“Drive to the Blackington, please,” she called to the driver.

And, as they whirled away, she leaned from the window and waved a parting signal to Mrs. Orme, who stood in the upper window, her face contorted and scowling with chagrin at the discovery that she had been outwitted by a mere girl.

CHAPTER XXV

JASON JONES

The Colonel and Peter Conant had just entered the drawing room of the suite at the hotel and found Mary Louise absent. This was unusual and unaccountable and they were wondering what could have become of the girl when the door suddenly burst open and Josie's clear voice cried triumphantly:

"I've got her! I've captured the missing heiress at last!"

Both men, astonished, rose to their feet as Alora entered and with a burst of tears threw her arms around the old Colonel's neck. For a few moments the tableau was dramatic, all being speechless with joy at the reunion. Colonel Hathaway patted Alora's head and comforted the sobbing girl as tenderly as if she had been his own grandchild — or Mary Louise.

Josie perched herself lightly on the center-table and swinging her legs complacently back and forth explained her discovery in a stream of chatter, for she was justly elated by her success.

"And to think," she concluded, "that I never missed a clew! That it was really the nurse, Mrs. Orme — Mrs. Jones' old nurse — who stole Alora, according to our suspicions, and that her object was just what I thought, to get money from that miser Jason Jones! Daddy will be pleased with this triumph; *I'm* pleased; Mary Louise will be pleased, and — By the way, where is Mary Louise?"

"I don't know," confessed the Colonel, who had just placed Alora, now more self-possessed, in a chair. "I was beginning to worry about her when you came in. She seldom leaves these rooms, except for a few moments, and even then she tells me, or leaves word, where she is going. I spoke to the clerk, when I returned, and he said she had left the hotel early this morning, and it's now four o'clock."

Josie's smile faded and her face became grave.

"Now, who," she said, "could have an object in stealing Mary Louise? Complications threaten us in this matter and the first thing we must do is — — "

"Oh, Alora!" exclaimed Mary Louise, who had softly opened the door and caught sight of her friend. Next moment the two girls were locked in an embrace and Josie, a shade of disappointment struggling with her sunny smile, remarked coolly:

"Very well; that beats the champion female detective out of another job. But I might have known Mary Louise wouldn't get herself stolen; no such adventure ever happens to *her.*"

Mary Louise turned to the speaker with an earnest look on her sweet face.

"An adventure *has* happened to me, Josie, and — and — I hardly know how to break the news."

She held Alora at arms' length and looked gravely into her friend's face. Alora noted the serious expression and said quickly:

"What is it? Bad news for *me?"*

"I — I think not," replied Mary Louise, hesitatingly; "but it's — it's wonderful news, and I hardly know how to break it to you."

"The best way," remarked Josie, much interested, "is to let it out in a gush. 'Wonderful' stuff never causes anyone to faint."

"Alora," said Mary Louise solemnly, "your father is here."

"Where?"

"He is just outside, in the corridor."

"Why doesn't he come in?" asked the Colonel.

"He needn't have worried about me," said Alora, in sullen tone, "but I suppose it was the danger of losing his money that — — "

"No," interrupted Mary Louise; "you mistake me. Jason Jones, the great artist — a splendid, cultured man and — — "

A sharp rap at the door made her pause. Answering the Colonel's summons a bellboy entered.

"For Mr. Conant, sir," he said, offering a telegram.

The lawyer tore open the envelope as the boy went out and after a glance at it exclaimed in shocked surprise: "Great heavens!"

Then he passed the message to Colonel Hathaway, who in turn read it and passed it to Josie O'Gorman. Blank silence followed, while Mary Louise and Alora eyed the others expectantly.

"Who did you say is outside in the corridor?" demanded Josie in a puzzled tone.

"Alora's father," replied Mary Louise.

"Jason Jones?"

"Jason Jones," repeated Mary Louise gravely.

"Well, then, listen to this telegram. It was sent to Mr. Peter Conant from Dorfield and says: 'Jason Jones killed by falling from an aeroplane at ten o'clock this morning. Notify his daughter.'"

Alora drew a quick breath and clasped her hands over her heart. Uncongenial as the two had been, Jason Jones was her father — her only remaining parent — and the suddenness of his death shocked and horrified the girl. Indeed, all present were horrified, yet Mary Louise seemed to bear the news more composedly than the others — as if it were a minor incident in a great drama. She slipped an arm around her girl friend's waist and said

soothingly:

“Never mind, dear. It is dreadful, I know. What an awful way to die! And yet — and yet, Alora — it may be all for the best.”

Josie slid down from the table. Her active brain was the first to catch a glimmering of what Mary Louise meant.

“Shall I call that man in?” she asked excitedly, “the man whom you say is Alora’s father?”

“No,” answered Mary Louise. “Let me go for him, please. I — I must tell him this strange news myself. Try to quiet yourself, Alora, and — and be prepared. I’m going to introduce to you — Jason Jones.”

She uttered the last sentence slowly and with an earnestness that bewildered all her hearers — except, perhaps, Josie O’Gorman. And then she left the room.

The little group scarcely moved or spoke.

It seemed an age to them, yet it was only a few moments, when Mary Louise came back, leading by the hand a tall, handsome gentleman who bore in every feature, in every movement, the mark of good birth, culture, and refinement, and in a voice that trembled with, nervous excitement the girl announced:

“This is Jason Jones — a California artist — the man who married Antoinette Seaver. He is Alora’s father. And the other — the other — — ”

“Why, the other was a fraud, of course,” exclaimed Josie.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHAT MARY LOUISE ACCOMPLISHED

I am quite sure it is unnecessary to relate in detail the scene that followed Mary Louise's introduction or the excited inquiries and explanations which naturally ensued. To those present the scene was intensely dramatic and never to be forgotten, but such a meeting between father and daughter is considered too sacred to be described here.

Mary Louise's intuition had not played her false. She had found at the Congress Hotel another Jason Jones, far different from the one she had known, and a few questions elicited the fact that he was indeed the father of Alora. So, as briefly as she could, she told him how another man had usurped his place and seized all of Alora's income, at the same time willfully depriving the girl of such comforts and accomplishments as one in her position should enjoy.

"And to think," she added indignantly, "that he is not Jason Jones at all!"

"I believe you are mistaken there," replied the artist thoughtfully. "Jason is a family name, derived from one of our most eminent ancestors, and in my generation it is also borne, I have learned, by one of my second cousins, a Jason Jones who is also a painter and aspires to fame as an artist. I have never met the man, but his indifferently executed canvases, offered for sale under our common name, formerly caused me considerable annoyance and perhaps interfered with my career. But of late I have not heard of this Jason Jones, for soon after my separation from my wife I went to Southern California and located in a little bungalow hidden in a wild canyon of the Santa Monica mountains. There I have secluded myself for years, determined to do some really good work before I returned East to prove my ability. Some time after Antoinette died I saw a notice to that effect in a newspaper, but there were no comments and I did not know that she had made me guardian of our child. That was like Antoinette," he continued, in gentler tones; "she was invariably generous and considerate of my shortcomings, even after we realized we were not fitted to live together. Her renunciation of me seemed harsh, at first, for I could not understand her ambitions, but in fact she drove me to success. I have won the Grand Prize, after all these years of patient labor, and from now on my future is assured."

"Have you never longed for your child?" asked Mary Louise reproachfully.

"I have, indeed. In imagination I have followed Alora's growth and development year by year, and one of my most cherished anticipations when coming here was to seek out my daughter and make myself known to her. I

knew she had been well provided for in worldly goods and I hoped to find her happy and content. If my picture received favorable comment at the exhibition I intended to seek Alora. I did not expect to win the Grand Prize."

* * * * * * * *

It was this newly discovered Jason Jones and his daughter — who already loved him and shyly clung to this responsive and congenial parent — who went to Dorfield with the Colonel and Mary Louise and Peter Conant and Josie O'Gorman to attend the obsequies of the other less fortunate Jason Jones. Mrs. Orme was there, too; Mrs. Janet Orme Jones; for she admitted she was the dead man's wife and told them, in a chastened but still defiant mood, how the substitution of her husband for the other artist had come about.

"Many years ago, when I was nursing in a New York hospital," she said, "a man was brought in with both arms broken, having been accidentally knocked down by a street-car. I was appointed to nurse him and learned from him that he was Jason Jones, a poor artist who was, however, just about to win recognition. He showed me a newspaper clipping that highly praised a painting then being exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which was signed Jason Jones. I know now that it wasn't his picture at all, but the work of his cousin, but at the time the clipping deceived me.

"I was ambitious to become something more than a nurse. I thought that to be the wife of a famous artist would bring me wealth and a position in society, so I married Jason Jones — without love — and he married me — also without love — in order to get my wages. He won where I lost, for during several years I foolishly supported him with my savings, always expecting him to become famous. At first he attributed his failures to his broken arms, although they had healed perfectly, and I ignorantly accepted the excuse. It was only after years of waiting for the man to prove his ability that I finally woke to the truth — that he had no talent — and I then left him to his own devices. In Chicago I sought to forget my unfortunate past and found regular employment there in my profession.

"It was while nursing Mrs. Jones that I overheard her give to Doctor Anstruther the supposed address of her husband, which had been furnished her by a casual acquaintance, and tell him to wire Jason Jones to come to her at once. I well knew a mistake had been made and that she had given the doctor my own husband's address — the address of an entirely different Jason Jones. My first impulse was to undeceive her, but that would involve humiliating explanations, so I hesitated and finally decided to remain silent. When the doctor had gone to telegraph and the die was cast, I reflected that my husband, whom I knew to be sunk in poverty, would ignore the request to

come to Chicago to be reconciled to his dying wife. *My* Jason wouldn't care whether I lived or died and wouldn't have spent a cent to be reconciled with me. For of course he would think it was I who asked for him, since he would know nothing of Antoinette Seaver Jones or that she was the wife of his distant relative, the other Jason Jones.

"He did, indeed, answer Doctor Anstruther by saying he would not come unless his expenses were advanced, so the good doctor launched the future deception by sending him ample funds. I knew of this action and wondered what I ought to do. There would be a terrible mix-up when my husband appeared, and I realized how disappointed the sick woman would be. Knowing her condition to be dangerous, I feared the shock would kill her, which it really did, for still I kept silent. I told myself that I had not aided in the deception in any way, that it was a trick of fate, and I could not be blamed. I thought that when Doctor Anstruther met my husband there would be explanations and the truth would come out, but somehow that did not happen. Jason Jones walked into Antoinette Seaver Jones' room expecting to find *me* dying, and saw a strange woman in the bed and his wife — in good health — standing before him. He let out an oath in his surprise and my patient, who had raised up in bed to stare at him, uttered a low moan and fell back on her pillow, dead. I saw the tragedy and involuntarily screamed, and Jason Jones saw she was dead and cried out in fear. I had just time to recover my wits and whisper to him to keep his mouth shut and I would make him rich when Doctor Anstruther hurried into the room.

"The whole thing was unpremeditated up to that time, but now I assisted fate, for I had witnessed Mrs. Jones' will and knew well its contents. No one seemed to know there were two artists named Jason Jones and everyone accepted my husband as Alora's father and the one entitled to her guardianship and to profit by the terms of the will.

"An hour after Mrs. Jones died I secured a secret interview with my husband, who until then had been thoroughly bewildered, and explained to him that the mistake in identity would, if he took prompt advantage of it, give him the control of an enormous income for seven years — until the child reached the age of eighteen. He was fearful, at first, that the other Jason Jones would appear and prosecute him for swindling, but as the husband of Antoinette Seaver had not been heard from in years, even by his own wife, I induced him to accept the risk. It was I who virtually put that income into my husband's hands, and in return he agreed to supply me with whatever money I demanded, up to a half of his receipts. But he proved that there is not always honor among thieves, for after he had been made legal executor of the estate and his fears had somewhat subsided he endeavored to keep all the

money for himself and begrudged me the one or two instalments I forced him to give me. Strangely enough, this formerly poverty-stricken artist now developed a love of accumulation — a miserly love for the money itself, and hated to spend any of it even on himself or on the girl to whom he owed his good fortune. The coward actually ran away and hid himself in Europe, and I, having spent all the money he had given me, with the idea I had an inexhaustible fund to draw upon, was forced to turn nurse again.

"After three years I had saved enough to follow him to Europe, where I located him at a lonely villa in Italy. Its very loneliness was my undoing, for he made a husky servant lock me up in an outhouse and there I was held a prisoner until Jason had again escaped to America. He thought he could hide better in the United States and that I wouldn't have the money to follow him there, but I had fortunately saved enough for my return passage. By the time I got home, however, he had completely disappeared and all my efforts failed to locate him. So I returned to Chicago and again resumed my profession.

"You will say I might have denounced him as an impostor and made the police hunt him up, but that would have ruined my chances of ever getting another penny of the money and might have involved me personally. Jason knew that, and it made him bold to defy me. I silently bided my time, believing that fate would one day put the man in my power.

"You know how I happened to find Alora in Chicago and how I lured her to my home and kept her there a prisoner."

It was found that the dead man had made large investments in his own name, and as he had left no will Janet declared that this property now belonged to her, as his widow. Lawyer Conant, however, assured her that as the money had never been legally her husband's, but was secured by him under false pretenses, all the investments and securities purchased with it must be transferred to the real Jason Jones, to whom they now belonged. The court would attend to that matter.

"And it serves you right, madam," added Peter Conant, "for concocting the plot to swindle Alora's father out of the money his dead wife intended him to have. You are not properly punished, for you should be sent to jail, but your disappointment will prove a slight punishment, at least."

"So far as I knew," answered Janet, defending her crime, "Alora's father was either dead or hidden in some corner of the world where he could never be found. To my knowledge there was no such person existent, so the substitution of my husband for him did him no injury and merely kept the income out of the clutches of paid executors. Had the right man appeared, at any time during these four years, to claim his child and the money, he might easily have secured them by proving his identity. So the fault was his as

much as mine.”

Jason Jones had personally listened to the woman’s confession, which filled him with wonder. While severely condemning her unscrupulous methods he refused to prosecute her, although Mr. Conant urged him to do so, and even carried his generosity to the extent of presenting her with one of her dead husband’s small investments, obtaining from her in return the promise to lead an honest and respectable life.

It had been the artist’s intention to return to his California bungalow, but after the probate court had acknowledged him and transferred to him the guardianship of his daughter, he decided to devote the coming years to Alora and endeavor to recompense her with fatherly devotion for the privations and unhappiness she had formerly endured.

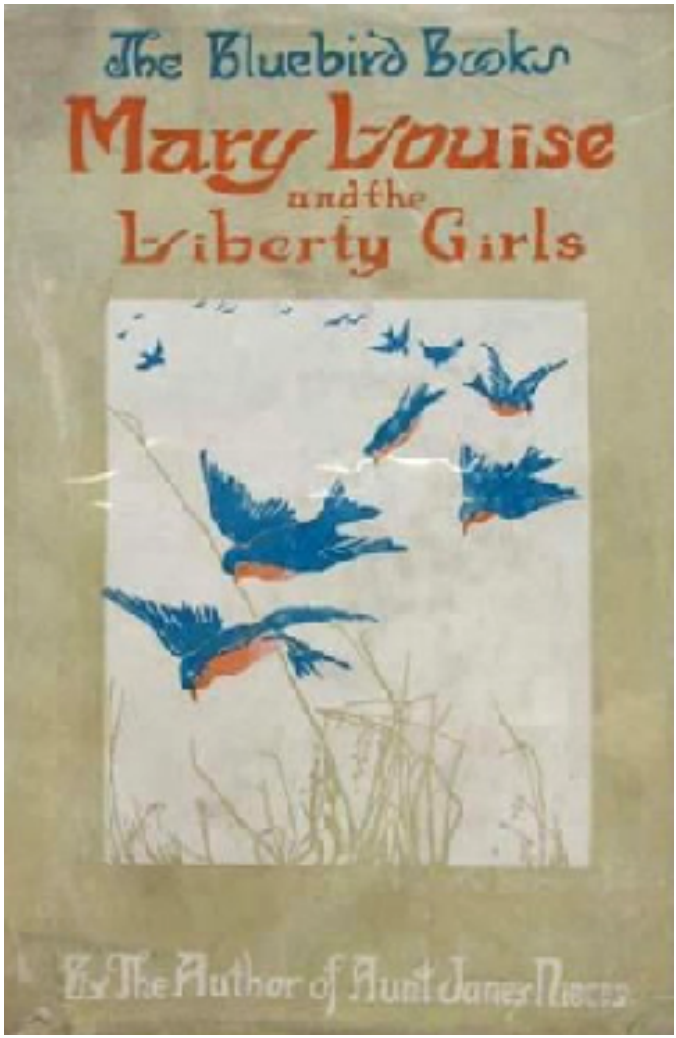
Alora did not wish to be separated from Mary Louise, so her father purchased the handsome residence of Senator Huling, which was situated directly opposite to that of Colonel Hathaway in Dorfield, and succeeded in making it a real home for his daughter.

Josie O’Gorman went back to Washington well pleased with her success, although she said with a little grimace of feigned regret:

“I did pretty well, for an amateur, for I tackled a tough case and won out; but, after all, it was Mary Louise who solved the mystery and restored Alora to her honest-for-true father.”

MARY LOUISE AND THE LIBERTY GIRLS

Reilly & Britton published *Mary Louise and the Liberty Girls* in 1918, the fourth in Baum's series about girl detectives. He once again used the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. The novel deals in part with anti-German sentiments in the United States during World War One. Mary Louise and her friends form a group supporting U.S. soldiers and her detective friend Josie O'Gorman foils a plot against the United States government.



An early edition of 'Mary Louise and the Liberty Girls'

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JUST A WORD

The object of this little story is not especially to encourage loyalty and devotion to one's country, for these are sentiments firmly enshrined in the hearts of all true American girls. It is rather intended to show what important tasks girls may accomplish when spurred on by patriotism, and that none is too humble to substantially serve her country.

Organizations of Liberty Girls are possible in every city and hamlet in America, and are effective not only in times of war but in times of peace, for always their Country needs them — always there is work for their busy hands.

One other message the story hopes to carry — the message of charity towards all and malice towards none. When shadows are darkest, those who can lighten the gloom are indeed the blessed ones.

EDITH VAN DYNE

CHAPTER I

THE MASS-MEETING

One might reasonably think that "all Dorfield" had turned out to attend the much advertised meeting. The masses completely filled the big public square. The flaring torches, placed at set intervals, lighted fitfully the faces of the people — faces sober, earnest, thoughtful — all turned in the direction of the speakers' platform.

Mr. Peter Conant, the Chairman, a prominent attorney of Dorfield, was introducing the orator of the evening, Colonel James Hathaway, whose slender, erect form and handsome features crowned with snow-white hair, arrested the attention of all.

"You have been told," began the old colonel in a clear, ringing voice, "of our Nation's imperative needs. Money must be provided to conduct the great war on which we have embarked — money for our new army, money for ship-building, money for our allies. And the people of America are permitted to show their loyalty and patriotism by subscribing for bonds — bonds of the rich and powerful United States — that all may participate in our noble struggle for the salvation of democracy and the peace of the world. These bonds, which you are asked to buy, bear interest; you will be investing in the Corporation of Right, Justice and Freedom, with the security of the Nation as your shield. As a stockholder in this noblest of corporations you risk nothing, but you gain the distinction of personally assisting to defeat Civilization's defiant and ruthless enemy."

Loud applause interrupted the speaker. On one of the rows of seats at the back of the stand sat Mary Louise Burrows, the granddaughter of Colonel Hathaway, with several of her girl friends, and her heart leaped with pride to witness the ovation accorded her dear "Gran'pa Jim."

With well chosen words the old gentleman continued his discourse, stating succinctly the necessity of the Liberty Bond issue and impressing upon his hearers the righteousness of the cause for which this money was required.

"The allotment of Dorfield," he added, "is one million dollars, seemingly a huge sum for our little city to raise and invest, but really insignificant when apportioned among those who can afford to subscribe. There is not a man among you who cannot without hardship purchase at least one fifty-dollar bond. Many of you can invest thousands. Yet we are approaching our time limit and, so far, less than two hundred thousand dollars' worth of these magnificent Liberty Bonds have been purchased in our community! But five days remain to us to subscribe the remaining eight hundred thousand dollars,

and thereby preserve the honor of our fair city. That eight hundred thousand dollars will be subscribed! We *must* subscribe it; else will the finger of scorn justly be pointed at us forever after."

Another round of applause. Mr. Conant, and Mr. Jaswell, the banker, and other prominent members of the Liberty Loan Committee began to look encouraged and to take heart.

"Of course they'll subscribe it!" whispered Mary Louise to her friend Alora Jones. "The thing has looked like a failure, lately, but I knew if Gran'pa Jim talked to the slackers, they'd see their plain duty. Gran'pa Jim knows how to stir them to action."

Gradually the applause subsided. The faces of the multitude that thronged about the stand seemed to Mary Louise stern and resolved, determined to prove their loyalty and devotion to their country.

And now Mr. Jaswell advanced and seated himself at a table, while Mr. Conant requested those present to come forward and enter their subscriptions for the bonds. He urged them to subscribe generously, in proportion to their means, and asked them not to crowd but to pass in line across the platform as swiftly as possible.

"Let us raise that entire eight hundred thousand to-night!" shouted the Colonel, in clarion tones. Then the band struck up a popular war tune, and the banker dipped a pen in ink and held it ready for the onslaught of signers.

But no one came forward. Each man looked curiously at his neighbor but stood fast in his place. The city, even to its furthermost suburbs, had already been systematically canvassed by the Committee and their efforts had resulted in a bare two hundred thousand dollars. Of this sum, Colonel Hathaway had himself subscribed twenty-five thousand. Noting the hesitation of his townsmen, the old gentleman again arose and faced them. The band had stopped playing and there was an ominous silence.

"Let me encourage you," said Colonel Hathaway, "by taking another twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of these wonderful bonds. Put me down for that amount, Mr. Jaswell. Now, then, who are the patriots eager to follow my lead!"

There was applause — somewhat more mild in character — but none came forward. Alora's father, Jason Jones, who had already signed for fifty thousand dollars, rose and added another twenty-five thousand to that sum. This act elicited another ripple of applause; more questioning looks were exchanged between those assembled, but there were no further offers to subscribe.

The hearts of the committeemen fell. Was this meeting, on which they had so greatly depended, destined to prove a failure, after all?

Jake Kasker, the owner of "Kasker's Clothing Emporium," finally made his way to the platform and mounting the steps faced his townspeople. There was a little murmur of surprise and a sudden tension. The man had been distrusted in Dorfield, of late.

"You all know what I think about this war," said Kasker in a loud voice and with a slight German accent. "I don't approve of it, whatever anyone says, and I think we were wrong to get into it, anyhow."

A storm of hisses and cries of "Shame!" saluted him, but he waited stolidly for the demonstration to subside. Then he continued:

"But, whatever I think about the war, I want to tell you that this flag that now waves over my head is as much *my* flag as it is *yours,* for I'm an American citizen. Where that flag goes, Jake Kasker will follow, no matter what fools carry the standard. If they don't think I'm too old to go to France, I'll pack up and go to-morrow. That's Jake Kasker — with a Dutch name but a Yankee heart. Some of you down there got Yankee names an' hearts that make the Kaiser laugh. I wouldn't trade with you! Now, hear this: I ain't rich; you know that; but I'll take two thousand dollars' worth of Liberty Bonds."

Some one laughed, jeeringly. Another shouted:

"Make it three thousand, Jake!"

"I will," said Kasker; "and, if there ain't enough of you war-crazy, yellow-hearted patriots in Dorfield to take what we got to take, then I'll make it five thousand. But if I have to do that — an' I can't afford it, but I'll do it! — it's me, Jake Kasker, that'll cry 'Shame!' and hiss like a goose whenever you slackers pass my door."

There was more laughter, a few angry shouts, and a movement toward the platform. The German signed the paper Mr. Jaswell placed before him and withdrew. Soon there was a line extending from the banker's table to the crowd below, and the signatures for bonds were slowly but steadily secured.

Colonel Hathaway faced the German clothier, who stood a few paces back, a cynical grin upon his features.

"Thank you, Kasker," said the old gentleman, in a cold voice. "You have really helped us, although you should have omitted those traitorous words. They poisoned a deed you might have been proud of."

"We don't agree, Colonel," replied Kasker, with a shrug. "When I talk, I'm honest; I say what I think." He turned and walked away and Colonel Hathaway looked after him with an expression of dislike.

"I wonder why he did it?" whispered Mary Louise, who had overheard the exchange of words and marked Kasker's dogged opposition.

"He bought the bonds as a matter of business," replied Laura Hilton. "It's

a safe investment, and Kasker knows it. Besides that, he may have an idea it would disarm suspicion."

"Also," added Alora Jones, "he took advantage of the opportunity to slam the war. That was worth something to a man like Kasker."

CHAPTER II

MARY LOUISE TAKES COMMAND

When Mary Louise entered the library the next morning she found her grandfather seated at the table, his head resting on his extended arms in an attitude of great depression. The young girl was startled.

"What is it, Gran'pa Jim?" she asked, going to his side and laying a hand lovingly on his shoulder.

The old gentleman looked up with a face drawn and gray.

"I'm nervous and restless, my dear," he said; "that's all. Go to breakfast, Mary Louise; I — I'll join you presently."

She sat down on the arm of his chair.

"Haven't you slept well, Gran'pa?" she asked anxiously, and then her eyes wandered through the open door to the next room and rested on the undisturbed bed. "Why, you haven't slept at all, dear!" she cried in distress. "What is wrong? Are you ill?"

"No, no, Mary Louise; don't worry. I — I shall be all right presently. But — I was terribly disappointed in last night's meeting, and — "

"I see. They didn't subscribe what they ought to. But you can't help that, Gran'pa Jim! You did all that was possible, and you mustn't take it so much to heart."

"It is so important, child; more important, I fear, than many of them guess. This will be a desperate war, and without the money to fight — "

"Oh, the money'll come, Gran'pa; I'm sure of that. If Dorfield doesn't do it's duty, the rest of the country will, so you mustn't feel badly about our failure. In fact, we haven't failed, as yet. How much did they subscribe last night?"

"In all, a hundred and thirty thousand. We have now secured barely a third of our allotment, and only five days more to get the balance!"

Mary Louise reflected, eyeing him seriously.

"Gran'pa," said she, "you've worn yourself out with work and worry. They ought not to have put you on this Liberty Bond Committee; you're too old, and you're not well or strong enough to endure all the anxiety and hard work."

"For the honor of — "

"Yes, I know, dear. Our country needs you, so you mustn't break down. Now come and drink a cup of coffee and I'll talk to you. I've a secret to tell you."

He smiled, rather wanly and hopelessly, but he permitted the girl to assist him to rise and to lead him to the breakfast room. There Mary Louise poured

his coffee and attacked her own breakfast, although with indifferent appetite.

Gran'pa Jim was the only relative she had in all the world and she loved him devotedly. Their life in the pretty little town had been peaceful and happy until recently — until the war. But the old Colonel, loyal veteran that he was, promptly made it *his* war and was roused as Mary Louise had never seen him roused before. In his mind was no question of the justice of our country's participation in the world struggle; he was proud to be an American and gloried in America's sacrifice to the cause of humanity. Too old to fight on the battlefield, he felt honored at his appointment to the membership of the Liberty Bond Committee and threw all his energies into the task assigned him. So it is easy to understand that the coldness and reluctance to subscribe for bonds on the part of his fellow townsmen had well nigh broken his heart.

This the girl, his closest companion, fully appreciated.

"Gran'pa," she said, regarding him across the table after their old black mammy, Aunt Sally, had left them together, "I love my country, as you know; but I love *you* better."

"Oh, Mary Louise!"

"It's true; and it's right that I should. If I had to choose between letting the Germans capture the United States, or losing you, I'd let the Germans come! That's honest, and it's the way I feel. Love for one's country is a fine sentiment, but my love for you is deeper. I wouldn't whisper this to anyone else, for no one else could understand it, but you will understand it, Gran'pa Jim, and you know my love for you doesn't prevent my still being as good an American as the average. However," continued the young girl, in a lighter tone, "I've no desire to lose you or allow the Germans to whip us, if I can help it, so I've got two battles to fight. The truth is, Gran'pa, that you're used up with the hard work of the last few weeks, and another five days of begging for subscriptions would wreck you entirely. So you're to stop short — this very minute — and rest up and take it easy and not worry."

"But — my dear!"

"See here, Gran'pa Jim," with assumed sternness, "you've worked hard to secure Dorfield's quota, and you've failed. Why, the biggest subscribers for bonds in the whole city are you and Jason Jones! There's plenty of wealth in Dorfield, and over at the mills and factories are thousands of workmen who can buy bonds; but you and your Committee don't know how to interest the people in your proposition. The people are loyal enough, but they don't understand, and you don't understand how to make them understand."

"No," he said, shaking his head dolefully, "they're a dense lot, and we can't *make* them understand."

“Well, *I* can,” said Mary Louise, cheerfully.

“You, child?”

“Yes. You mustn’t imagine I’ve tackled the problem this very morning; I’ve been considering it for some time, and I’ve talked and consulted with Alora and Irene and Laura and the other girls about the best way to redeem the situation. We knew the situation was desperate long before last night’s meeting. So all our plans are made, and we believe we can sell all the bonds required. It was our policy to keep silent until we knew what the big mass-meeting last night would accomplish, but we suspected it would turn out just the way it did — a fizzle. So the job’s up to us, and if you’ll sit quiet, Gran’pa Jim, and let us girls do the work, we’ll put Dorfield in the honor column by Saturday night.”

“This is nonsense!” exclaimed the Colonel, but there was an accent of hope in his voice, nevertheless.

“We girls are thoroughly organized,” said Mary Louise, “and we’ll sell the bonds.”

“Girls!”

“Why, just think of it, Gran’pa. Who would refuse a group of young girls — earnest and enthusiastic girls? The trouble with you men is that you accept all sorts of excuses. They tell you they’re hard up and can’t spare the money; there’s a mortgage to pay, or taxes or notes to meet, and they can’t afford it, anyway. But that kind of talk won’t do when we girls get after them.”

“What arguments can you use that we have disregarded?”

“First, we’ll coax; then we’ll appeal to their patriotism; then we’ll threaten them with scorn and opprobrium, which they’ll richly deserve if they hang on till it comes to that. If the threats don’t make ‘em buy, we’ll cry — and every tear will sell a bond!”

The Colonel stirred his coffee thoughtfully.

“You might try it,” he suggested. “I’ve read that in some cities the Boy Scouts have been successful in placing the bonds. It’s an honorable undertaking, in any event, but — I hope you will meet with no insults.”

“If that rank pro-German, Jake Kasker, will buy bonds, there isn’t a man in Dorfield who can give a logical excuse for not doing likewise,” declared Mary Louise. “I’m going to use Kasker to shame the rest of them. But, before I undertake this job, I shall make a condition, Gran’pa. You must stay quietly at home while we girls do the work.”

“Oh, I could not do that, Mary Louise.”

“You’re not fit to leave the house. Will you try my plan for one day — just for to-day.”

“I’ll think it over, dear,” he said, rising.

She assisted him to the library and then ran down the street to the doctor’s office.

“Dr. McGruer,” she said, “go over at once and see my grandfather. He’s completely exhausted with the work of selling Liberty Bonds. Be sure you order him to keep at home and remain quiet — at least for to-day.”

CHAPTER III

THE LIBERTY GIRLS

An hour later six girls met at the home of Alora Jones, who lived with her father in a fine mansion across the street from Colonel Hathaway's residence. These girls were prepared to work, and work diligently, under the leadership of Mary Louise, for they had been planning and discussing this event for several days, patiently awaiting the word to start their campaign.

"Some girls," said Mary Louise, "are knitting, and that's a good thing to do, in a way. Others are making pajamas and pillows for the Red Cross, and that's also an admirable thing to do. But our duty lies on a higher plane, for we're going to get money to enable Uncle Sam to take care of our soldier boys."

"Do — do you think we can make people buy bonds?" asked little Laura Hilton, with a trace of doubt in her voice.

Mary Louise gave her a severe look.

"We not only can, but we *shall* make people buy," she replied. "We shall ask them very prettily, and they cannot refuse us. We've all been loaded to the brim with arguments, if arguments are necessary, but we haven't time to gossip with folks. A whole lot of money must be raised, and there's a short time to do it in."

"Seems to me," remarked Edna Barlow, earnestly, "we're wasting time just now. Let's get busy."

"Well, get on your costumes, girls," suggested Alora Jones. "They are all here, in this big box, and the banners are standing in the hall. It's after nine, now, and by ten o'clock we must all be at work."

They proceeded to dress themselves in the striking costumes they had secretly prepared; a blue silk waist with white stars scattered over it, a red-and-white striped skirt, the stripes running from waistband to hem, a "Godess of Liberty" cap and white canvas shoes. Attired in this fashion, the "Liberty Girls," as they had dubbed themselves, presented a most attractive and patriotic appearance, and as they filed out through the hall each seized a handsome silken banner, gold fringed, which bore the words: "Buy Bonds of Dorfield's Liberty Girls."

"Now, then," said Mary Louise, "we have each been allotted a certain district in the business part of the city, for which we are individually responsible. Each one knows what she is expected to do. Let no one escape. If any man claims to have already bought bonds, make him buy more. And remember, we're all to meet at my house at one o'clock for luncheon, and to report progress."

A block away they secured seats in a streetcar and a few minutes thereafter reached the "Four Corners," the intersection of the two principal streets of Dorfield. But on the way they had sold old Jonathan Dodd, who happened to be in the car and was overawed by the display of red-white-and-blue, two hundred dollars' worth of bonds. As for old man Dodd, he realized he was trapped and bought his limit with a sigh of resignation.

As they separated at the Four Corners, each to follow her appointed route, many surprised, if not startled, citizens regarded the Liberty Girls with approving eyes. They were pretty girls, all of them, and their silken costumes were really becoming. The patriots gazed admiringly; the more selfish citizens gave a little shiver of dismay and scurried off to escape meeting these aggressive ones, whose gorgeous banners frankly proclaimed their errand.

Mary Louise entered the bank on the corner and made inquiry for Mr. Jaswell, the president.

"We're off at last, sir," she said, smiling at his bewildered looks, "and we girls are determined to make the Dorfield people do their full duty. May we depend upon your bank to fulfill your promises, and carry those bond buyers who wish to make time payments?"

"To be sure, my dear," replied the banker. "I'd no idea you young ladies were to wear uniforms. But you certainly look fascinating, if you're a fair sample of the others, and I don't see how anyone can refuse to back up our girls in their patriotic 'drive.' God bless you, Mary Louise, and help you to achieve your noble object."

There were many offices in the building, above the bank, and the girl visited every one of them. Her appearance, garbed in the national colors and bearing her banner, was a sign of conquest, for it seemed to these busy men as if Uncle Sam himself was backing this crusade and all their latent patriotism was stirred to the depths. So they surrendered at discretion and signed for the bonds.

Mary Louise was modest and sweet in demeanor; her pleas were as pleasant as they were persuasive; there was nothing virulent or dominant in her attitude. But when she said: "Really, Mr. So-and-so, you ought to take more bonds than that; you can afford it and our country needs the money," the argument was generally effective, and when she had smilingly pinned the bond button on a man's coat and passed on to interview others, she left him wondering why he had bought more bonds than he ever had intended to, or even provoked with himself that he had subscribed at all. These were the people who had generally resisted all former pleadings of the regular committee and had resolved to ignore the bond sale altogether. But perhaps

their chagrin was equalled by their satisfaction in having been won over by a pretty girl, whose manner and appearance were alike irresistible.

The men of Dorfield are a fair sample of men everywhere. At this period the full meaning of the responsibilities we had assumed in this tremendous struggle was by no means fully realized. The war was too far away, and life at home was still running in its accustomed grooves. They could not take the European war to themselves, nor realize that it might sweep away their prosperity, their liberties — even their homes. Fear had not yet been aroused; pity for our suffering and hard-pressed allies was still lightly considered; the war had not struck home to the hearts of the people as it has since. I doubt if even Mary Louise fully realized the vital importance of the work she had undertaken.

When the Liberty Girls met at Colonel Hathaway's for a light luncheon, their eyes were sparkling with enthusiasm and their cheeks rosy from successful effort. Their individual sales varied, of course, for some were more tactful and winning than others, but all had substantial results to report. "We've taken Dorfield by storm!" was their exultant cry.

"Altogether," said Mary Louise, figuring up the amounts, "we've sold thirty-two thousand dollars' worth of bonds this morning. That's encouraging for three hours' work, but it's not enough to satisfy us. We must put in a busy afternoon and try to get a total of at least one hundred thousand by to-night. To-morrow we must do better than that. Work as late as you can, girls, and at eight o'clock we will meet again at Alora's house and compare results."

The girls needed no urging to resume their work, for already they had gained confidence in their ability and were inspired to renewed effort.

Mary Louise had optimistic plans for that afternoon's work. She first visited the big flour mill, where she secured an interview with Mr. Chisholme, the president and general manager.

"We can't buy bonds," he said peevishly. "Our business is being ruined by the high price of wheat and the absurd activities of Hoover. We stand to operate at a loss or else shut down altogether. The government ought to pay us compensation, instead of asking us to contribute to the war."

"However, if we fail to win the war," Mary Louise quietly replied, "your enormous investment here will become worthless. Isn't it better to lose a little now, for the sake of future winnings, than to sacrifice the past and future and be reduced to poverty? We are asking you to save yourself from threatened danger — the national calamity that would follow our defeat in this war."

He sat back in his chair and looked at the girl in amazement. She was rather young to have conceived such ideas.

“Well, there’s time enough to consider all that,” he said, less gruffly. “You’ll have to excuse me now, Miss Burrows. I’m busy.”

But Mary Louise kept her seat and redoubled her arguments, which were logical and straight to the point. Mr. Chisholme’s attitude might have embarrassed her had she been pleading a personal favor, but she felt she was the mouthpiece of the President, of the Nation, of worldwide democracy, and would not allow herself to feel annoyed. She devoted three-quarters of an hour to Mr. Chisholme, who gradually thawed in her genial sunshine. She finally sold him fifty thousand dollars worth of Liberty Bonds and went on her way elated. The regular Bond Committee had labored for weeks with this stubborn man, who managed one of the largest enterprises in Dorfield, yet they had signally failed to convince him or to induce him to subscribe a dollar. The girl had succeeded in less than an hour, and sold him exactly the amount he should have bought.

The mill subscription was a powerful leverage with which to pry money from other reluctant ones. Stacks, Sellem & Stacks, the big department store heretofore resisting all appeals, bought from Mary Louise bonds to the amount of twenty-five thousand; the Denis Hardware Company took ten thousand. Then Mary Louise met her first serious rebuff. She went into Silas Herring’s wholesale grocery establishment and told Mr. Herring she wanted to sell him bonds.

“This is outrageous!” cried Herring indignantly. “When the men can’t rob us, or force us to back England in her selfish schemes, they set girls on us to wheedle us out of money we have honestly earned. This hold-up game won’t work, I assure you, and I advise you to get into more respectable business. My money is mine; it doesn’t belong to the Allies, and they won’t get a cent of it.” He was getting more angry as he proceeded in his harangue. “Moreover,” he continued, “our weak administration can’t use me to help it out of the hole it has foolishly stumbled into, or make America the cat’s-paw to pull British chestnuts out of the fire. You ought to be ashamed, Miss Burrows, to lend yourself to such unpatriotic methods of bulldozing honest citizens!”

Mary Louise was distressed, but undaunted. The man was monstrously wrong, and she knew it. Sitting in Mr. Herring’s private office at the time were Professor John Dyer, the superintendent of Dorfield’s schools, and the Hon. Andrew Duncan, a leading politician, a former representative and now one of the county supervisors. The girl looked at Professor Dyer, whom she knew slightly, and said pleadingly:

“Won’t you defend our administration and our country, Mr. Dyer?”

He smiled deprecatingly but did not speak. He was a tall, lean man, quite

round-shouldered and of studious appearance. He wore double eyeglasses, underneath which his eyes were somewhat watery. The smile upon his thin features was a stationary one, not as if assumed, but molded with the features and lacking geniality.

It was the Hon. Andrew Duncan who answered the Liberty Girl.

"The difference between Mr. Herring and eighty percent of the American people," said he in stilted, pompous tones, "is that our friend Herring unwisely voices his protest, while the others merely think — and consider it the part of wisdom to say nothing."

"I don't believe that!" cried Mary Louise indignantly. "The American people are loyal to their President. There may be a few traitors; we're gradually discovering them; but — "

"I am busy," Herring interrupted her, scowling, and he swung his chair so that his back was toward her.

"You won't be busy long, if you keep talking that way," predicted the girl.

"Tut-tut!" said the Hon. Andrew, warningly. "Your threats, young lady, are as unwise as Mr. Herring's speech."

"But they carry more weight," she asserted stoutly. "Do you think any grocery man in Dorfield would buy goods of Mr. Herring if he knew him to be disloyal in this, our country's greatest crisis? And they're going to know it, if I have to visit each one and tell him myself what Mr. Herring has said."

A tense, if momentary silence, followed, broken by the Professor, who now said in his smooth, unctuous way:

"Mr. Herring's blunt expression of his sentiments was not intended for other ears than ours, I am sure. In confidence, one may say many things to friends which he would prefer to withhold from an indiscriminating public. We are well assured, indeed, that Mr. Herring is a loyal American, with America's best interests at heart, but he does not regard our present national activities as leniently as we do. I have been endeavoring, in my humble way, to change his attitude of mind," here Herring swung around and looked at the speaker stolidly, "and though I admit he is a bit obstinate, I venture to assure you, Miss Burrows, that Silas Herring will stand by the Stars and Stripes as long as there is a shred of our banner to wave in the breeze of freedom, justice and democracy."

A cynical smile gradually settled on the grocer's stern face. The Hon. Andrew was smiling with undisguised cheerfulness.

"We are all loyal — thoroughly loyal," said the latter. "I've bought some Liberty Bonds already, my girl, but you can put me down for a hundred dollars more. We must support our country in every possible way, with effort, with money, with our flesh and blood. I have no children, but my two

nephews and a second cousin are now in France!"

"For my part," added Professor Dyer, "I have hesitated as to how much of my meagre salary I can afford to spend. But I think I can handle five hundred dollars' worth."

"Thank you," said Mary Louise, somewhat puzzled by these offers. "It isn't like risking the money; it's a solid investment in the best securities in the world."

"I know," returned the Professor, nodding gravely, "But I'm not thinking of that. I'm a poor man, as you probably know, but what I have is at my country's disposal, since it is evident that my country needs it."

"Doesn't that shame you, sir?" asked Mary Louise brightly, as she turned to Silas Herring. "You're a business man, and they say — although I confess I doubt it — that you're a loyal American. You can convince me of the fact by purchasing a liberal share of bonds. Then I can forget your dreadful words. Then I can carry to everyone the news that you've made a splendid investment in Liberty Bonds. Even if you honestly think the administration has been at fault, it won't do any good to grumble. We are in this war, sir, and we've got to win it, that you and every other American may enjoy prosperity and freedom. How much shall I say that you have subscribed, Mr. Herring?"

He studied her face, his expression never changing. Mary Louise wondered if he could read her suspicion and dislike of him, despite her efforts to smother those feelings in the cause of Liberty. Then Herring looked at Professor Dyer, who stood meekly, with downcast eyes. Next the grocer gazed at the supervisor, who smiled in a shrewd way and gave a brief nod.

Mr. Herring frowned. He drummed nervously with his fingers on his mahogany desk. Then he reached for his check-book and with grim deliberation wrote a check and handed it to Mary Louise.

"You've won, young lady," he admitted. "I'm too good an American to approve what has been done down at Washington, but I'll help keep our flag waving, as the Professor suggests. When we've won our war — and of course we shall win — there will be a day of reckoning for every official who is judged by our citizens to have been disloyal, however high his station. Good afternoon!"

The first impulse of Mary Louise was to crumple up the check and throw it in the man's face, to show her resentment of his base insinuations. But as she glanced at the check she saw it was for ten thousand dollars, and that meant sinews of war — help for our soldiers and our allies. She couldn't thank the man, but she bowed coldly and left the private office. Professor Dyer accompanied her and at the outer door he said to the girl:

“Silas Herring’s heart is in the right place, as you see by his generous check. Of course, he might have bought more bonds than that, as he is very wealthy, but he is an obstinate man and it is a triumph for our sacred cause that he was induced to buy at all. You are doing a noble work, my child, and I admire you for having undertaken the task. If I can be of service to you, pray command me.”

“Urge everyone you meet to buy bonds,” suggested Mary Louise. She did not care to discuss Silas Herring.

“I’ll do that, indeed,” promised the school superintendent. But as he watched her depart, there was a queer expression on his lean face that it was well Mary Louise did not see.

CHAPTER IV
THE TRAITOR

When the Liberty Girls met that evening at the home of Alora Jones, it was found that Mary Louise had sold more bonds than any of the others, although Laura Hilton had secured one subscription of fifty thousand dollars from the Dorfield National Steel Works, the manager of which industry, Mr. Colton, was a relative of the girl. Altogether, the day's work had netted them two hundred and fourteen thousand dollars, and as soon as she could escape Mary Louise rushed home to report their success to her grandfather.

"In one day, Gran'pa Jim!" she cried exultantly, and the old colonel's eyes sparkled as he replied:

"That makes our great mass-meeting look pretty small; doesn't it, my dear? I consider it wonderful! With four more such days our quota would be over-subscribed."

"That's what we shall try for," she declared, and then told him who the biggest bond buyers had been — mostly those who had refused to listen to the regular Committee or had not been influenced by their carefully prepared arguments.

"It's just because we are girls, and they are ashamed to refuse us," she acknowledged. "It seems like taking an unfair advantage of them, I know, but those who need urging and shaming, to induce them to respond loyally to the nation's needs, deserve no consideration. We're not robbing them, either," she added, "but just inducing them to make a safe investment. Isn't that true, Gran'pa Jim?"

"What surprises me most," he responded, "is how you ever managed to load your little head with so much mature wisdom. I'd no idea, Mary Louise, you were so interested in the war and our national propaganda for waging it successfully."

"Why, I read the newspapers, you know, and I've listened to you spout patriotism, and ever since we joined the Allies against Germany, my girl chums and I have been secretly organized as a band of Liberty Girls, determined to do our bit in winning the war. This is the first chance, though, that we've ever had to show what we can do, and we are very proud and happy to-night to realize that we're backing Uncle Sam to some purpose."

"This war," remarked the old soldier, thoughtfully, "is bringing the women of all nations into marked prominence, for it is undeniable that their fervid patriotism outranks that of the men. But you are mere girls, and I marvel at your sagacity and devotion, heretofore unsuspected. If you can follow to-day's success until Saturday, and secure our quota of subscriptions

to the bonds, not only Dorfield but all the nation will be proud of your achievement."

"We shall do our best," replied the girl, simply, although her cheeks glowed pink under such praise. "There are enough slackers still to be interviewed to bring the quota up to the required amount and with to-day's success to hearten us, I am sure we shall end the week triumphantly."

Next morning the Liberty Girls sallied forth early, all six aglow with enthusiasm. Mary Louise consulted her carefully prepared list and found that her first calf was to be at McGill's drug store. She found Mr. McGill looking over his morning's mail, but moments were precious, so she at once stated her errand.

The old druggist glanced up at the girl under his spectacles, noted her patriotic attire and the eager look on her pretty face, and slowly shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Miss Burrows, but I can't afford it," he said evasively.

"Oh, Mr. McGill! I'm sure you are mistaken," she replied. "You can afford insurance, you know, to protect your stock, and this money for Uncle Sam is an insurance that your home and business will be protected from the ravages of a ruthless foe."

He stared at her thoughtfully a moment. Then he selected a paper from his mail and handed it to her.

"Read that," he said briefly.

Mary Louise read it. It was a circular, printed in small, open-faced, capital type on plain white paper, and unsigned. It said:

"The Treasury Department is asking us to invest billions in what are termed Liberty Bonds. It has the 'liberty' to lend these billions to irresponsible or bankrupt nations of Europe, who are fighting an unprofitable war. Some of our dollars will equip an army of American boys to fight on Europe's battlefields. This may be good business. Our excited politicians down at Washington may think they are acting for our best good. But what becomes of the money, finally? Will our millionaire government contractors become billionaires when the money — our money — is spent? Do you think the days of graft are past and gone? Have politicians become honest now that they are handling untold sums? Let us consider these questions when we are asked to subscribe for Liberty Bonds."

"Why, this is treason!" cried Mary Louise, gasping from sheer amazement and indignation. "It's a — a — treacherous, vile, disloyal insinuation. Some German spy wrote that, and he ought to be hanged for it!"

The druggist nodded. He picked up the envelope that had contained the circular and scrutinized it closely.

“Really, it looks like foreign handwriting; doesn’t it?” he agreed, handing her the envelope. “It is postmarked ‘Dorfield’ and was posted last evening. The whole town is buzzing about the wonderful work of the Liberty Girls yesterday. Perhaps your success is responsible for this — this — opposition.”

Mary Louise’s cheeks were burning. Her eyes flashed.

“May I keep this — *thing?”* she asked, with a shudder of disgust as she thrust the circular into its envelope.

“Certainly, if you wish.”

“And will you let an enemy attack like that influence you, Mr. McGill?”

He smiled, rather grimly.

“Yes. I’ll invest five hundred in the bonds. I had already decided to put in a hundred dollars, but for a moment this veiled accusation bewildered me. You’re right; it’s treasonable. It will be hard for me to raise five hundred, just now, but I’ll do it. I want that to be my answer to the German.”

Mary Louise thanked him and hurried away. Next door was Lacey’s Shoe Store, and Mr. Lacey was reading a duplicate of that identical circular when the Liberty Girl approached him.

The man bowed low to Mary Louise, a deference she felt rendered to her red-white-and-blue uniform.

“Good morning!” he said pleasantly, recognizing the girl as one of his good customers. “Glad to see you, Mary Louise, for if I give you a good fat check it may take a nasty taste out of my mouth, acquired by reading a bit of German propaganda.”

“I know, Mr. Lacey,” she replied earnestly. “I’ve seen that circular before. Do you mind my having it — and the envelope?”

“I wouldn’t touch the filth, if I were you,” he protested.

“I’m going to run the traitor down,” she said. “No man has the right to live in Dorfield — or in America — who could be guilty of such disloyalty.”

He gave her the circular and his check for Liberty Bonds, and she passed on to the next store. During the morning Mary Louise discovered several more of the traitorous circulars. Some merchants would not admit having received the warning; others, through their arguments, convinced the girl they had not only read the screed but had been influenced by it. Perhaps it did not seriously affect her sales of bonds, but she felt that it did and her indignation grew steadily. By noon she was tingling with resentment and when she joined the other Liberty Girls at luncheon, she found them all excited over the circular and demanding vengeance on the offender — whoever he might happen to be.

“Isn’t it dreadful!” exclaimed Lucile Neal, “and what could the person hope to gain by it?”

“Why, he wanted to kill the Liberty Bond sale,” explained Alora Jones.

“A suspicion that this money is to be misapplied, or that officials will steal part of it, is likely to prevent a lot of foolish people from investing in the bonds. All this morning I could see that men were influenced by this circular, which has been pretty generally distributed.”

“Yes; one or two repeated the very words of the circular to me,” said Laura Hilton; “but I just asked them if they considered the United States able to pay its bonds and they were forced to admit it was a safe investment, however the money might be used.”

“I’d like to know who sent that circular,” exclaimed Edna Barlow.

“I’m going to find out!” asserted Mary Louise.

“How, my dear?”

“There must be ways of tracing such a bunch of circulars as were mailed last evening. I’m going to see the Chief of Police and put him on the trail.”

“Do you know,” said Edna, a thoughtful and rather quiet girl, “I already have a suspicion who the traitor is.”

“Who?” an eager chorus.

“I’m not sure I ought to speak his name, for it’s only a suspicion and I may be wrong. It would be an awful thing to accuse one unjustly of such a dastardly act, wouldn’t it? But — think, girls! — who is known to be against the war, and pro-German? Who did we consider an enemy to the cause of liberty until — until he happened to buy some bonds the other night and indulge in some peanut patriotism to disarm a criticism he knew was becoming dangerous?”

They looked at one another, half frightened at the suggestion, for all knew whom she meant.

“Perhaps,” said Alora, slowly, “Jake Kasker really believes in the bonds. He certainly set the example to others and led them to buy a lot of bonds. It doesn’t seem reasonable, after that, to credit him with trying to prevent their sale.”

“Those pro-Germans,” remarked little Jane Donovan, “are clever and sly. They work in the dark. Kasker said he hated the war but loved the flag.”

“I’m afraid of those people who think devotion to our flag can cover disloyalty to our President,” said Mary Louise earnestly.

“But the flag represents the President, and Kasker said he’d stand by the flag to the last.”

“All buncombe, my dear,” said Edna decidedly. “That flag talk didn’t take the curse off the statement that the war is all wrong.”

“He had to say something patriotic, or he’d have been mobbed,” was Lucile’s serious comment. “I hadn’t thought of Jake Kasker, before, but he

may be the culprit."

"Isn't he the only German in town who has denounced our going into the European war?" demanded Edna.

"No," said Mary Louise; "Gran'pa has told me of several others; but none has spoken so frankly as Kasker. Anyhow, there's no harm in suspecting him, for if he is really innocent he can blame his own disloyal speeches for the suspicion. But now let us check up the morning's work and get busy again as soon as possible. We mustn't lose a single minute."

"And, as we go around," suggested Alora, "let us keep our eyes and ears open for traces of the traitor. There may be more than one pro-German in the conspiracy, for the circular was printed by somebody, and there are several kinds of handwriting on the addressed envelopes we have gathered. We've no time to do detective work, just now, but we can watch out, just the same."

Mary Louise did not mention the circular to Colonel Hathaway that evening, for he was still ill and she did not wish to annoy him.

The next day she found another circular had been put in the mails, printed from the same queer open-faced type as the first. Not so many had been sent out of these, but they were even more malicious in their suggestions. The girls were able to collect several of them for evidence and were 'more angry and resentful than ever, but they did not allow such outrageous antagonism to discourage them in their work.

Of course the Liberty Girls were not the only ones in Dorfield trying to sell bonds. Mr. Jaswell and other bankers promoted the bond sale vigorously and the regular Committee did not flag in its endeavors to secure subscriptions. On account of Colonel Hathaway's illness, Professor Dyer was selected to fill his place on the Committee and proved himself exceedingly industrious. The only trouble with the Professor was his reluctance to argue. He seemed to work early and late, visiting the wealthier and more prosperous citizens, but he accepted too easily their refusals to buy. On several occasions the Liberty Girls succeeded in making important sales where Professor Dyer had signally failed. He seemed astonished at this and told Mary Louise, with a deprecating shrug, that he feared his talents did not lie in the direction of salesmanship.

Despite the natural proportion of failures — for not all will buy bonds in any community — on the fourth day following the mass-meeting Dorfield's quota of one million was fully subscribed, and on Saturday another hundred and fifty thousand was added, creating jubilation among the loyal citizens and reflecting great credit on the Liberty Girls, the Committee, and all who had labored so well for the cause.

"Really," said Professor Dyer, his voice sounding regretful when he

congratulated the girls, “our success is due principally to your patriotic organization. The figures show that you secured subscriptions for over half a million. Dear me, what a remarkable fact!”

“More than that,” added Jason Jones, Alora’s father, who was a wealthy artist and himself a member of the Committee, “our girls encouraged the faltering ones to do their duty. Many a man who coldly turned our Committee down smiled at the pretty faces and dainty costumes of our Liberty Girls and wrote their checks without a murmur.”

“All the credit is due Mary Louise,” declared Alora. “It was she who proposed the idea, and who organized us and trained us and designed our Liberty costumes. Also, Mary Louise made the most sales.”

“Nonsense!” cried Mary Louise, blushing red. “I couldn’t have done anything at all without the help of you girls. No one of us is entitled to more credit than the others, but all six of us may well feel proud of our success. We’ve done our bit to help Uncle Sam win the war.”

CHAPTER V

UNCONVINCING TESTIMONY

On Sunday "Gran'pa Jim," relieved of all worry, felt "quite himself again," as he expressed it, and the old gentleman strutted somewhat proudly as he marched to church with his lovely granddaughter beside him, although her uniform was to-day discarded for a neat tailor-suit. Mary Louise had always been a favorite in Dorfield, but the past week had made her a heroine in the eyes of all patriotic citizens. Many were the looks of admiration and approval cast at the young girl this morning as she passed along the streets beside the old colonel.

In the afternoon, as they sat in the cosy study at home, the girl for the first time showed her grandfather the disloyal circulars, relating how indignant the Liberty Girls had been at encountering such dastardly opposition.

Colonel Hathaway studied the circulars carefully. He compared the handwritings on the different envelopes, and when Mary Louise said positively: "That man must be discovered and arrested!" her grandfather nodded his head and replied:

"He is a dangerous man. Not especially on account of these mischievous utterances, which are too foolish to be considered seriously, but because such a person is sure to attempt other venomous deeds which might prove more important. German propaganda must be dealt with sternly and all opposition to the administration thoroughly crushed. It will never do to allow a man like this to go unrebuked and unpunished."

"What, then, would you suggest?" asked the girl.

"The police should be notified. Chief Farnum is a clever officer and intensely patriotic, from all I have heard. I think he will have no difficulty in discovering who is responsible for these circulars."

"I shall go to him to-morrow," decided Mary Louise. "I had the same idea, Gran'pa Jim; it's a matter for the police to handle."

But when she had obtained an interview with Chief of Police Farnum the next morning and had silently laid one of the circulars on his desk before him, an announcement of her errand, Farnum merely glanced at it, smiled and then flashed a shrewd look into the girl's face.

"Well!" said the Chief, in an interrogative tone.

"Those treasonable circulars have been mailed to a lot of our citizens," said she.

"I know."

"They are pro-German, of course. The traitor who is responsible for them ought to be arrested immediately."

“To be sure,” replied Farnum, calmly.

“Well, then do it!” she exclaimed, annoyed by his bland smile.

“I’d like to, Miss Burrows,” he rejoined, the smile changing to a sudden frown, “and only two things prevent my obeying your request. One is that the writer is unknown to me.”

“I suppose you could find him, sir. That’s what the police are for. Criminals don’t usually come here and give themselves up, I imagine, or even send you their address. But the city isn’t so big that any man, however clever, could escape your dragnet.”

“Thank you for the compliment,” said the Chief, again smiling. “I believe we could locate the fellow, were such a task not obviated by the second objection.”

“And that?”

“If you’ll read this circular — there are two others, by the way, mailed at different times — you will discover that our objectionable friend has skillfully evaded breaking our present laws. He doesn’t assert anything treasonable at all; he merely questions, or suggests.”

“He is disloyal, however,” insisted Mary Louise.

“In reality, yes; legally, no. We allow a certain amount of free speech in this country, altogether too much under present conditions. The writer of this circular makes certain statements that are true and would be harmless in themselves were they not followed by a series of questions which insinuate that our trusted officials are manipulating our funds for selfish purposes. A simple denial of these insinuations draws the fangs from every question. We know very well the intent was to rouse suspicion and resentment against the government, but if we had the author of these circulars in court we could not prove that he had infringed any of the existing statutes.”

“And you will allow such a traitor as that to escape!” cried Mary Louise, amazed and shocked.

For a moment he did not reply, but regarded the girl thoughtfully. Then he said:

“The police of a city, Miss Burrows, is a local organization with limited powers. I don’t mind telling you, however, that there are now in Dorfield certain government agents who are tracing this circular and will not be so particular as we must be to abide by established law in making arrests. Their authority is more elastic, in other words. Moreover, these circulars were mailed, and the postoffice department has special detectives to attend to those who use the mails for disloyal purposes.”

“Are any of these agents or detectives working on this case?” asked the girl, more hopefully.

“Let us suppose so,” he answered. “They do not confide their activities to the police, although if they call upon us, we must assist them. I personally saw that copies of these circulars were placed in the hands of a government agent, but have heard nothing more of the affair.”

“And you fear they will let the matter drop?” she questioned, trying to catch the drift of his cautiously expressed words.

He did not answer that question at all. Instead, he quietly arranged some papers on his desk and after a pause that grew embarrassing, again turned to Mary Louise.

“Whoever issued these circulars,” he remarked, “is doubtless clever. He is also bitterly opposed to the administration, and we may logically suppose he will not stop in his attempts to block the government’s conduct of the war. At every opportunity he will seek to poison the minds of our people and, sooner or later, he will do something that is decidedly actionable. Then we will arrest him and put an end to his career.”

“You think that, sir?”

“I’m pretty sure of it, from long experience with criminals.”

“I suppose the Kaiser is paying him,” said the girl, bitterly.

“We’ve no grounds for that belief.”

“He is helping the Kaiser; he is pro-German!”

“He is helping the Kaiser, but is not necessarily pro-German. We know he is against the government, but on the other hand he may detest the Germans. That his propaganda directly aids our enemies there is no doubt, yet his enmity may have been aroused by personal prejudice or intense opposition to the administration or to other similar cause. Such a person is an out-and-out traitor when his sentiments lead to actions which obstruct his country’s interests. The traitors are not all pro-German. Let us say they are anti-American.”

Mary Louise was sorely disappointed.

“I think I know who this traitor is, in spite of what you say,” she remarked, “and I think you ought to watch him, Mr. Farnum, and try to prevent his doing more harm.”

The Chief studied her face. He seemed to have a theory that one may glean as much from facial expression as from words.

“One ought to be absolutely certain,” said he, “before accusing anyone of disloyalty. A false accusation is unwarranted. It is a crime, in fact. You have no idea, Miss Burrows, how many people come to us to slyly accuse a neighbor, whom they hate, of disloyalty. In not a single instance have they furnished proof, and we do not encourage mere telltales. I don’t want you to tell me whom you suspect, but when you can lay before me a positive

accusation, backed by facts that can be proven, I'll take up the case and see that the lawbreaker is vigorously prosecuted."

The girl went away greatly annoyed by the Chief's reluctance to act in the matter, but when she had related the interview to Gran'pa, the old colonel said:

"I like Farnum's attitude, which I believe to be as just as it is conservative. Suspicion, based on personal dislike, should not be tolerated. Why, Mary Louise, anyone might accuse you, or me, of disloyalty and cause us untold misery and humiliation in defending ourselves and proving our innocence — and even then the stigma on our good name would be difficult to remove entirely. Thousands of people have lost their lives in the countries of Europe through false accusations. But America is an enlightened nation, and let us hope no personal animosities will influence us or no passionate adherence to our country's cause deprive us of our sense of justice."

"Our sense of justice," asserted Mary Louise, "should lead us to unmask traitors, and I know very well that somewhere in Dorfield lurks an enemy to my country."

"We will admit that, my dear. But your country is watching out for those 'enemies within,' who are more to be feared than those without; and, if I were you, Mary Louise, I'd allow the proper officials to unmask the traitor, as they are sure to do in time. This war has placed other opportunities in your path to prove your usefulness to your country, as you have already demonstrated. Is it not so?"

Mary Louise sighed.

"You are always right, Gran'pa Jim," she said, kissing him fondly. "Drat that traitor, though! How I hate a snake in the grass."

CHAPTER VI.

TO HELP WIN THE WAR

The activities of the Liberty Girls of Dorfield did not cease with their successful Liberty Bond "drive." Indeed, this success and the approbation of their fellow townspeople spurred the young girls on to further patriotic endeavor, in which they felt sure of enthusiastic encouragement.

"As long as Uncle Sam needs his soldiers," said Peter Conant, the lawyer, "he'll need his Liberty Girls, for they can help win the war."

When Mary Louise first conceived the idea of banding her closest companions to support the government in all possible ways, she was a bit doubtful if their efforts would prove of substantial value, although she realized that all her friends were earnestly determined to "do their bit," whatever the bit might chance to be. The local Red Cross chapter had already usurped many fields of feminine usefulness and with a thorough organization, which included many of the older women, was accomplishing a 'vast deal of good. Of course the Liberty Girls could not hope to rival the Red Cross.

Mary Louise was only seventeen and the ages of the other Liberty Girls ranged from fourteen to eighteen, so they had been somewhat ignored by those who were older and more competent, through experience, to undertake important measures of war relief. The sensational bond sale, however, had made the youngsters heroines — for the moment, at least — and greatly stimulated their confidence in themselves and their ambition to accomplish more.

Mary Louise Burrows was an orphan; her only relative, indeed, was Colonel James Hathaway, her mother's father, whose love for his granddaughter was thoroughly returned by the young girl. They were good comrades, these two, and held many interests in common despite the discrepancy in their ages. The old colonel was "well-to-do," and although he could scarcely be called wealthy in these days of huge fortunes, his resources were ample beyond their needs. The Hathaway home was one of the most attractive in Dorfield, and Mary Louise and her grandfather were popular and highly respected. Their servants consisted of an aged pair of negroes named "Aunt Sally" and "Uncle Eben," who considered themselves family possessions and were devoted to "de ole mar'se an' young missy."

Alora Jones, who lived in the handsomest and most imposing house in the little city, was an heiress and considered the richest girl in Dorfield, having been left several millions by her mother. Her father, Jason Jones, although he handled Alora's fortune and surrounded his motherless daughter with every

luxury, was by profession an artist — a kindly man who encouraged the girl to be generous and charitable to a degree. They did not advertise their good deeds and only the poor knew how much they owed to the practical sympathy of Alora Jones and her father. Alora, however, was rather reserved and inclined to make few friends, her worst fault being a suspicion of all strangers, due to some unfortunate experiences she had formerly encountered. The little band of Liberty Girls included all of Alora's accepted chums, for they were the chums of Mary Louise, whom Alora adored. Their companionship had done much to soften the girl's distrustful nature.

The other Liberty Girls were Laura Hilton, petite and pretty and bubbling with energy, whose father was a prominent real estate broker; Lucile Neal, whose father and three brothers owned and operated the Neal Automobile Factory, and whose intelligent zeal and knowledge of war conditions had been of great service to Mary Louise; Edna Barlow, a widowed dressmaker's only child, whose sweet disposition had made her a favorite with her girl friends, and Jane Donovan, the daughter of the Mayor of Dorfield and the youngest of the group here described.

These were the six girls who had entered the bond campaign and assisted to complete Dorfield's quota of subscriptions, but there was one other Liberty Girl who had been unable to join them in this active work. This was Irene Macfarlane, the niece of Peter Conant. She had been a cripple since childhood and was confined to the limits of a wheeled chair. Far from being gloomy or depressed, however, Irene had the sunniest nature imaginable, and was always more bright and cheerful than the average girl of her age. "From my knees down," she would say confidentially, "I'm no good; but from my knees up I'm as good as anybody." She was an excellent musician and sang very sweetly; she was especially deft with her needle; she managed her chair so admirably that little assistance was ever required. Mrs. Conant called her "the light of the house," and to hear her merry laughter and sparkling conversation, you would speedily be tempted to forget that fate had been unkind to her and decreed that for life she must be wedded to a wheeled chair.

If Irene resented this decree, she never allowed anyone to suspect it, and her glad disposition warded off the words of sympathy that might have pained her.

While unable to sally forth in the Liberty Bond drive, Irene was none the less an important member of the band of Liberty Girls. "She's our inspiration," said Mary Louise with simple conviction. Teeming with patriotism and never doubting her ability to do something helpful in defeating her country's foes, Irene had many valuable suggestions to make to

her companions and one of these she broached a few days after the bond sale ended so triumphantly. On this occasion the Liberty Girls had met with Irene at Peter Conant's cosy home, next door to the residence of Colonel Hathaway, for consultation as to their future endeavors.

"Everyone is knitting for the soldiers and sailors," said Irene, "and while that is a noble work, I believe that we ought to do something different from the others. Such an important organization ought to render unusual and individual service on behalf of our beloved country. Is it not so?"

"It's all very well, Irene, to back our beloved country," remarked Laura, "but the whole nation is doing that and I really hanker to help our soldier boys."

"So do I," spoke up Lucile. "The government is equal to the country's needs, I'm sure, but the government has never taken any too good care of its soldiers and they'll lack a lot of things besides knitted goods when they get to the front."

"Exactly," agreed Mary Louise. "Seems to me it's the girls' chief duty to look after the boys, and a lot of the drafted ones are marching away from Dorfield each day, looking pretty glum, even if loyally submitting to the inevitable. I tell you, girls, these young and green soldiers need encouraging, so they'll become enthusiastic and make the best sort of fighters, and we ought to bend our efforts to cheering them up."

Irene laughed merrily.

"Good!" she cried; "you're like a flock of sheep: all you need is a hint to trail away in the very direction I wanted to lead you. There are a lot of things we can do to add to our soldiers' comfort. They need chocolate — sweets are good for them — and 'comfort-kits' of the real sort, not those useless, dowdy ones so many well-intentioned women are wasting time and money to send them; and they'll be grateful for lots and lots of cigarettes, and — "

"Oh, Irene! Do you think that would be right?" from Edna Barlow.

"Of course it would. The government approves cigarettes and the French girls are supplying our boys across the pond with them even now. Surely we can do as much for our own brave laddies who are still learning the art of war. Not all smoke, of course, and some prefer pipes and tobacco, which we can also send them. Another thing, nearly every soldier needs a good pocket knife, and a razor, and they need games of all sorts, such as dominoes and checkers and cribbage-boards; and good honest trench mirrors, and — "

"Goodness me, Irene," interrupted Jane Donovan, "how do you think we could supply all those things? To equip a regiment with the articles you mention would cost a mint of money, and where's the money coming from, and how are we to get it?"

“There you go again, helping me out!” smiled Irene. “In your question, my dear, lies the crux of my suggestion. We Liberty Girls must raise the money.”

“How, Irene?”

“I object to begging.”

“The people are tired of subscribing to all sorts of schemes.”

“We certainly are not female Croesuses!”

“Perhaps you expect us to turn bandits and sandbag the good citizens on dark nights.”

Irene’s smile did not fade; she simply glowed with glee at these characteristic protestations.

“I can’t blame you, girls, for you haven’t thought the thing out, and I have,” she stated. “My scheme isn’t entirely original, for I read the other day of a similar plan being tried in another city, with good success. A plan similar, in some ways, but quite different in others. Yet it gave me the idea.”

“Shoot us the idea, then,” said Jane, who was inclined to favor slang.

“In order to raise money,” said Irene, slowly and more seriously than she had before spoken, “it is necessary for us to go into business. The other day, when I was riding with Alora, I noticed that the store between the post-office and the Citizens’ Bank is vacant, and a sign in the window said ‘Apply to Peter Conant, Agent.’ Peter Conant being my uncle, I applied to him that evening after dinner, on behalf of the Liberty Girls. It’s one of the best locations in town and right in the heart of the business district. The store has commanded a big rental, but in these times it is not in demand and it has been vacant for the last six months, with no prospect of its being rented. Girls, Peter Conant will allow us to use this store room without charge until someone is willing to pay the proper rent for it, and so the first big problem is solved. Three cheers for Uncle Peter!”

They stared at her rather suspiciously, not yet understanding her idea.

“So far, so good, my dear,” said Mary Louise. “We can trust dear old Peter Conant to be generous and patriotic. But what good is a store without stock, and how are we going to get a stock to sell — and sell it at a profit that will allow us to do all the things we long to do for the soldiers?”

“Explain that, and I’m with you,” announced Alora.

“Explain that, and we’re all with you!” declared Lucile Neal.

“All I need is the opportunity,” protested Irene. “You’re such chatterboxes that you won’t let me talk! Now — listen. I’m not much of an executioner, girls, but I can plan and you can execute, and in that way I get my finger in the pie. Now, I believe I’ve a practical idea that will work out beautifully. Dorfield is an ancient city and has been inhabited for generations. Almost

every house contains a lot of articles that are not in use — are put aside and forgotten — or are not in any way necessary to the comfort and happiness of the owners, yet would be highly prized by some other family which does not possess such articles. For instance, a baby-carriage or crib, stored away in some attic, could be sold at a bargain to some young woman needing such an article; or some old brass candlesticks, considered valueless by their owner, would be eagerly bought by someone who did not possess such things and had a love for antiques.

"My proposition is simply this: that you visit all the substantial homes in Dorfield and ask to be given whatever the folks care to dispense with, such items to be sold at 'The Liberty Girls' Shop' and the money applied to our War Fund to help the soldier boys. Lucile's brother, Joe Neal, will furnish us a truck to cart all the things from the houses to our store, and I'm sure we can get a whole lot of goods that will sell readily. The people will be glad to give all that they don't want to so good a cause, and what one doesn't want, another is sure to want. Whatever money we take in will be all to the good, and with it we can supply the boys with many genuine comforts. Now, then, how does my idea strike you?"

Approval — even the dawn of enthusiasm — was written on every countenance. They canvassed all the pros and cons of the proposition at length, and the more they considered it the more practical it seemed.

"The only doubtful thing," said Mary Louise, finally, "is whether the people will donate the goods they don't need or care for, but that can be easily determined by asking them. We ought to pair off, and each couple take a residence street and make a careful canvass, taking time to explain our plan. One day will show us whether we're to be successful or not, and the whole idea hinges on the success of our appeal."

"Not entirely," objected Alora. "We may secure the goods, but be unable to sell them."

"Nonsense," said little Laura Hilton; "nothing in the world sells so readily as second-hand truck. Just think how the people flock to auctions and the like. And we girls should prove good 'salesladies,' too, for we can do a lot of coaxing and get better prices than an auctioneer. All we need do is appeal to the patriotism of the prospective buyers."

"Anyhow," asserted Edna, "it seems worth a trial, and we must admit the idea is attractive and unique — at least a novelty in Dorfield."

So they planned their method of canvassing and agreed to put in the next day soliciting articles to sell at the Liberty Girls' Shop.

CHAPTER VII
THE LIBERTY SHOP

Mary Louise said to her grandfather that night, after explaining Irene's novel scheme to raise money: "We haven't been housekeeping many years in Dorfield and I'm not sure I can find among our household possessions anything to give the Liberty Shop. But I've some jewelry and knickknacks that I never wear and, if you don't mind, Gran'pa Jim, I'll donate that to our shop."

The Colonel was really enthusiastic over the plan and not only approved his granddaughter's proposition to give her surplus jewelry but went over the house with her and selected quite an imposing lot of odds and ends which were not in use and could readily be spared. Eager to assist the girls, the old colonel next morning went to town and ordered a big sign painted, to be placed over the store entrance, and he also induced the editors of the two newspapers to give the Liberty Girls' latest venture publicity in their columns, inviting the coöperation of the public.

Peter Conant turned over the keys of the big store to the girls and the first load of goods to be delivered was that from the Hathaway residence.

The Liberty Girls were astonished at the success of their solicitations. From almost every house they visited they secured donations of more or less value. It may have seemed "rubbish" to some of the donors, but the variety of goods that soon accumulated in the store room presented an interesting collection and the girls arranged their wares enticingly and polished up the brass and copper ornaments and utensils until they seemed of considerable value.

They did not open their doors to the public for ten days, and Joe Neal began to grumble because one of his trucks was kept constantly running from house to house, gathering up the articles contributed to the Liberty Girls' Shop. But the girls induced other trucks to help Joe and the enthusiasm kept growing. Curiosity was spurred by the big sign over the closed doors, and every woman who donated was anxious to know what others had given to the shop. It was evident there would be a crowd at the formal "opening," for much was expected from the unique enterprise.

Meantime, the girls were busily occupied. Each day one group solicited donations while another stayed at the store to arrange the goods. Many articles of furniture, more or less decrepit, were received, and a man was hired to varnish and patch and put the chairs, stands, tables, desks and whatnots into the best condition possible. Alora Jones thought the stock needed "brightening," so she induced her father to make purchases of several

new articles, which she presented the girls as her share of the donations. And Peter Conant, finding many small pieces of jewelry, silverware and bric-a-brac among the accumulation, rented a big showcase for the girls, in which such wares were properly displayed.

During these ten days of unflagging zeal the Liberty Girls were annoyed to discover that another traitorous circular had been issued. A large contingent of the selective draft boys had just been ordered away to the cantonment and the day before they left all their parents received a circular saying that the draft was unconstitutional and that their sons were being sacrificed by autocratic methods to further the political schemes of the administration. "Mr. Wilson," it ended, "is trying to make for himself a place in history, at the expense of the flesh and blood of his countrymen."

This vile and despicable screed was printed from the same queer type as the former circulars denouncing the Liberty Bond sale and evidently emanated from the same source. Mary Louise was the first to secure one of the papers and its envelope, mailed through the local post-office, and her indignation was only equalled by her desire to punish the offender. She realized, however, her limitations, and that she had neither the time nor the talent to unmask the traitor. She could only hope that the proper authorities would investigate the matter.

That afternoon, with the circular still in her handbag, she visited the clothing store of Jacob Kasker and asked the proprietor if he had any goods he would contribute to the Liberty Girls' Shop.

Kasker was a stolid, florid-faced man, born in America of naturalized German parents, and therefore his citizenship could not be assailed. He had been quite successful as a merchant and was reputed to be the wealthiest clothing dealer in Dorfield.

"No," said Kasker, shortly, in answer to the request. Mary Louise was annoyed by the tone.

"You mean that you *won't* help us, I suppose?" she said impatiently.

He turned from his desk and regarded her with a slight frown. Usually his expression was stupidly genial.

"Why should I give something for nothing?" he asked. "It isn't my war; I didn't make it, and I don't like it. Say, I got a boy — one son. Do you know they've drafted him — took him from his work without his consent, or mine, and marched him off to a war that there's no good excuse for?"

"Well," returned Mary Louise, "your boy is one of those we're trying to help."

"You won't help make him a free American again; you'll just help give him knickknacks so he won't rebel against his slavery."

The girl's eyes flashed.

"Mr. Kasker," she said sternly, "I consider that speech disloyal and traitorous. Men are being jailed every day for less!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I believe that is true, and it proves what a free country this is — does it not? Mr. Wilson's democracy is the kind that won't allow people to express their opinions, unless they agree with him. If I say I will stand by the American constitution, they will put me in jail."

Mary Louise fairly gasped. She devoutly wished she had never approached this dreadful man. She felt ashamed to breathe the same air with him. But she hated to retreat without a definite display of her disgust at his perfidious utterances. Drawing the circular from her bag she spread it before him on his desk and said:

"Read that!"

He just glanced at it, proving he knew well its wording. Mary Louise was watching him closely.

"Well, what about it?" he asked brusquely.

"It expresses your sentiments, I believe."

He turned upon her suspiciously.

"You think I wrote it?" he demanded.

"My thoughts are my own," retorted Mary Louise.

Kasker's frown deepened.

"Your thoughts may get you into trouble, my girl," he said slowly. "Let me tell you this: However much I hate this war, I'm not fighting it publicly. To you I have spoken in private — just a private conversation. The trouble with me is, I talk too much; I don't know enough to keep my mouth shut. I guess I'll never learn that. I ain't a hypocrite, and I ain't a pacifist. I say the United States must win this war because it has started the job, and right or wrong, must finish it. I guess we could beat the whole world, if we had to. But I ain't fool enough to say that all they do down at Washington is right, 'cause I know it ain't. But I'm standing by the flag. My boy is standing by the flag, and he'll fight as well as any in the whole army to keep the flag flying over this great republic. By and by we'll get better congressmen; the ones we got now are accidents. But in spite of all accidents — and they're mostly our own fault — I'm for America first, last and all the time. That's Jake Kasker. I don't like the Germans and I don't like the English, for Jake Kasker is a George Washington American. What are you doing, girl?" he suddenly asked with a change of tone.

"I'm putting down that speech in shorthand in my notebook," said Mary Louise, "and I think I've got every word of it." She slipped the book in her

bag and picked up the circular. “Good afternoon, Mr. Kasker!”

The German seemed bewildered; he ran his fingers through his bushy hair as if trying to remember what he had said.

“Wait!” he cried, as she turned away. “I’ve changed my mind about those goods; I’ll send some over to your shop to be sold.”

“Don’t do it,” she replied, “for we won’t accept them. Only those whose patriotism rings true are allowed to help us.”

Then she marched out of the big store, the proprietor at the desk staring at her fixedly until she had disappeared.

“That’s it, Jake,” he said to himself, turning to his papers; “you talk too much. If a man prints a thing, and nobody knows who printed it, he’s safe.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE DETECTIVE'S DAUGHTER

"I'm pretty sure, Gran'pa Jim," said Mary Louise that evening, "that I've trailed the traitor to his lair, and he's none other than — Jake Kasker!"

This was the first time she had mentioned her suspicion of Kasker to him, and her statement was received by the colonel with moderate surprise, followed by a doubtful smile.

"I know Jake," he remarked, "and while he is uneducated and his mind is unformed concerning most things outside the clothing business, I should hesitate to accuse him of downright disloyalty."

"He's a German, and sympathizes with the Kaiser," asserted Mary Louise.

"Did he say that?"

"Well, not in so many words."

"A German-American is not usually pro-German," the colonel declared, "for Germans who come to America come to escape the militarism and paternalism of the Junkers, which is proof in itself that they disapprove of what we term kaiserism. I know that Kasker talks foolishly against the war and resents the drafting of his son, but I think he is a good American at heart. He has bought Liberty Bonds more liberally than some who proclaim their patriotism from the housetops. I don't fear these outspoken objectors, my dear, as much as those who work slyly in the dark — such as the writers of those disgraceful circulars."

"I practically accused Kasker of sending out those circulars," said Mary Louise, "and his defense was very lame and unconvincing. Listen, Grand'pa, to what he said. I took the speech down in shorthand, and that worried him, I'm sure."

The colonel listened and shook his head gravely.

"Yes, Jake Kasker talks too much," he confessed, "and much that he says is disloyal to our government and calculated to do much harm, especially if widely circulated. This is no time to criticise the men who are working hard to win the war; we should render them faithful support. The task before us is difficult and it will require a united country to defeat our enemies. I must talk to Jake Kasker."

"Won't it be better to let the authorities deal with him?" suggested the girl. "They're certain to get him, in time, if he goes on this way. I believe I frightened him a bit this afternoon, but he's too dull to take warning. Anyhow, I shall relate the whole interview to Chief Farnum to-morrow morning."

This she did, but the Chief gave her little satisfaction.

“No one pays any attention to Kasker,” he said.

“He’s a German, and a traitor!” she insisted. “A woman’s intuition is seldom at fault, and I’m convinced he’s responsible for this latest and most dreadful circular,” and she laid it before him.

“A girl’s intuition is not as mature as a woman’s intuition,” the Chief answered in an impatient tone. “You force me to say, my dear young lady, that you are dabbling in affairs that do not concern you. I’ve plenty of those circulars on file and I’m attending to my duty and keeping an eye open for the rascal who wrote them. But there is no proof that Kasker is the man. The federal officers are also investigating the case, and I imagine they will not require your assistance.”

Mary Louise flushed but stood her ground.

“Isn’t it the duty of every patriotic person to denounce a traitor?” she inquired.

“Yes, if there is proof. I think you are wrong about Kasker, but if you are able to bring me proof, I’ll arrest him and turn him over to the federal agents for prosecution. But, for heaven’s sake, don’t bother me with mere suspicions.”

Mary Louise did not accept this rebuke graciously. She went away with the feeling that Chief Farnum was, for some reason, condoning a crime, and she was firmly resolved to obtain the required proof if it could be secured without subjecting herself to the annoyance of such rebuffs as the one she had just endured.

“We ought not to permit such a snake in the grass to exist in dear old Dorfield,” she told her girl associates. “Let us all try to discover absolute proof of Kasker’s treachery.”

The other Liberty Girls were as indignant as Mary Louise, but were too intent on their present duties to pay much attention to Jake Kasker. For the Liberty Girls’ Shop was now open to the public, and men, women and children crowded in to see what the girls had to offer. Sales were so brisk during the first week that the stock became depleted and once more they made a house to house canvass to obtain a new supply of material.

This kept all six of the girls busily occupied. Irene each morning rode down to the shop in the Hathaway automobile — wheel-chair and all — and acted as cashier, so as to relieve the others of this duty. She could accomplish this work very nicely and became the Liberty Girls’ treasurer and financial adviser. Each day she deposited in the bank the money received, and the amounts were so liberal that enthusiasm was easily maintained.

“The soldier boys have reason to rejoice,” said Irene complacently, “for we shall soon be able to provide them with numerous comforts and luxuries

— all of which they are surely entitled to."

So the new enterprise was progressing finely when, one evening, on reaching home from a busy day at the shop, Mary Louise found a letter that greatly pleased her. It was from an old and valued girl friend in Washington and after rambling along pleasantly on a variety of subjects the writer concluded as follows:

"But we can talk all this over at our leisure, my dear, for I'm going to accept one of your many pressing invitations (the *first* one, of course) and make you another little visit. I love Dorfield, and I love you, and the dear Colonel, and Irene and Alora, and I long to see all of you again. Moreover, Daddy is being sent abroad on a secret mission, and I should be lonely without him. So expect me at any time. In my usual erratic fashion I may follow on the heels of this letter, or I may lag behind it for a few days, but whenever I turn up at the Hathaway gate, I'll demand a kiss and a welcome for

"JOSIE O'GORMAN."

Now, this girl was in many ways so entirely unlike Mary Louise that one might wonder what link of sympathy drew them together, unless it was "the law of opposites." However, there was one quality in both their natures that might warrant the warm friendship existing between the two girls. Mary Louise was sweet and winning, with a charming, well-bred manner and a ready sympathy for all who were in trouble. She was attractive in person, particular as to dress, generous and considerate to a fault. The girl had been carefully reared and had well repaid the training of the gallant old colonel, her grandfather, who had surrounded her with competent instructors. Yet Mary Louise had a passion for mysteries and was never quite so happy as when engaged in studying a baffling personality or striving to explain a seeming enigma. Gran'pa Jim, who was usually her confidant when she "scented a mystery," often accused her of allowing her imagination to influence her judgment, but on several occasions the girl had triumphantly proven her intuitions to be correct. You must not think, from this statement, that Mary Louise was prone to suspect everyone she met; it was only on rare occasions she instinctively felt there was more beneath the surface of an occurrence than appeared to the casual observer, and then, if a wrong might be righted or a misunderstanding removed — but only in such event — she eagerly essayed to discover the truth. It was in this manner that she had once been of great service to her friend Alora Jones, and to others as well. It was this natural quality, combined with sincere loyalty, which made her long to discover and bring to justice the author of the pro-German circulars.

Josie O'Gorman was small and "pudgy" — her own expression — red-

haired and freckled-faced and snub-nosed. Her eyes redeemed much of this personal handicap, for they were big and blue as turquoises and as merry and innocent in expression as the eyes of a child. Also, the good humor which usually pervaded her sunny features led people to ignore their plainness. In dress, Josie was somewhat eccentric in her selections and careless in methods of wearing her clothes, but this might be excused by her engrossing interest in people, rather than in apparel.

The girl was the daughter — the only child, indeed — of John O'Gorman, an old and trusted lieutenant of the government's secret-service. From Josie's childhood, the clever detective had trained her in all the subtle art of his craft, and allowing for her youth, which meant a limited experience of human nature and the intricacies of crime, Josie O'Gorman was now considered by her father to be more expert than the average professional detective. While the astute secret-service agent was more than proud of his daughter's talent, he would not allow her to undertake the investigation of crime as a profession until she was older and more mature. Sometimes, however, he permitted and even encouraged her to "practise" on minor or unimportant cases of a private nature, in which the United States government was not interested.

Josie's talent drew Mary Louise to her magnetically. The detective's daughter was likewise a delightful companion. She was so well versed in all matters of national import, as well as in the foibles and peculiarities of the human race, that even conservative, old Colonel Hathaway admired the girl and enjoyed her society. Josie had visited Mary Louise more than once and was assured a warm welcome whenever she came to Dorfield. Most of the Liberty Girls knew Josie O'Gorman, and when they heard she was coming they straightway insisted she be made a member of their band.

"She'll just *have* to be one of us," said Mary Louise, "for I'm so busy with our wonderful Shop that I can't entertain Josie properly unless she takes a hand in our game, which I believe she will be glad to do."

And Josie *was* glad, and proclaimed herself a Liberty Girl the first hour of her arrival, the moment she learned what the patriotic band had already accomplished and was determined to accomplish further.

"It's just play, you know, and play of the right sort — loyal and helpful to those who deserve the best we can give them, our brave soldiers and sailors. Count me in, girls, and you'll find me at the Liberty Shop early and late, where I promise to sell anything from an old hoopskirt to a decayed piano at the highest market price. We've had some 'rummage sales' in Washington, you know, but nothing to compare with this thorough and businesslike undertaking of yours. But I won't wear your uniform; I can't afford to allow

the glorious red-white-and-blue to look dowdy, as it would on my unseemly form."

CHAPTER IX

GATHERING UP THE THREADS

Josie O'Gorman had been in Dorfield several days before Mary Louise showed her the traitorous circulars that had been issued by some unknown obstructionist. At first she had been a little ashamed to acknowledge to her friend that a citizen of her own town could be so disloyal, but the matter had weighed heavily on her mind and so she decided to unload it upon Josie's shrewder intelligence.

"I feel, dear, that the best service you can render us while here — the best you can render the nation, too — will be to try to discover this secret enemy," she said earnestly. "I'm sure he has done a lot of harm, already, and he may do much more if he is left undisturbed. Some folks are not too patriotic, even now, when we are facing the most terrible ordeal in our history, and some are often so weak as to be influenced by what I am sure is pro-German propaganda."

Josie studied the various circulars. She studied the handwriting on the envelopes and the dates of the postmarks. Her attitude was tense, as that of a pointer dog who suddenly senses a trail. Finally she asked:

"Do the police know?"

Mary Louise related her two interviews with Chief Farnum.

"How about the agents of the department of justice?"

"I don't know of any," confessed Mary Louise.

Josie put the circulars in her pocket.

"Now, then, tell me whom you suspect, and why," she said.

Until now Mary Louise had not mentioned the clothing merchant to Josie, but she related Jake Kasker's frank opposition to the war at the Liberty Bond mass-meeting and her interview with him in his store, in which he plainly showed his antagonism to the draft and to the administration generally. She read to Josie the shorthand notes she had taken and supplemented all by declaring that such a man could be guilty of any offense.

"You see," she concluded, "all evidence points to Kasker as the traitor; but Chief Farnum is stubborn and independent, and we must obtain positive proof that Kasker issued those circulars. Then we can put an end to his mischief-making. I don't know how to undertake such a job, Josie, but you do; I'm busy at the Liberty Shop, and we can spare you from there better than any one else; so, if you want to 'practise,' here's an opportunity to do some splendid work."

Josie was a good listener. She did not interrupt Mary Louise, but let her say all she had to say concerning this interesting matter. When her friend

paused for lack of words, Josie remarked:

"Every American's watchword should be: 'Swat the traitor!' War seems to breed traitors, somehow. During the Civil War they were called 'copperheads,' as the most venomous term that could be applied to the breed. We haven't yet coined an equally effective word in this war, but it will come in time. Meanwhile, every person — man or woman — who is not wholeheartedly with President Wilson and intent on helping win the war, is doing his country a vital injury. That's the flat truth, and I'd like to shake your Jake Kasker out of his suit of hand-me-down clothing. If he isn't a traitor, he's a fool, and sometimes fools are more dangerous than traitors. There! All this has got me riled, and an investigator has no business to get riled. They must be calm and collected." She slapped her forehead, settled herself in her chair and continued in a more moderate tone: "Now, tell me what other people in Dorfield have led you to suspect they are not in accord with the administration, or resent our entry into the Great War."

Mary Louise gave her a puzzled look.

"Oughtn't we to finish with Kasker, first?" she asked, hesitatingly, for she respected Josie's judgment.

The girl detective laughed.

"I've an impression we've already finished with him — unless I really give him that shaking," she replied. "I'll admit that such a person is mischievous and ought to be shut up, either by jailing him or putting a plaster over his mouth, but I can't believe Jake Kasker guilty of those circulars."

"Why not?" in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, in spite of his disloyal mutterings, his deeds are loyal. He's disgruntled over the loss of his son, and doesn't care who knows it, but he'll stand pat and spank the kid if he doesn't fight like a tartar. He hates the war — perhaps we all hate it, in a way — but he'll buy Liberty Bonds and help win a victory. I know that sort; they're not dangerous; just at war with themselves, with folly and honesty struggling for the mastery. Let him alone and in a few months you'll find Kasker making patriotic speeches."

"Oh, Josie!"

"Think of someone else."

Mary Louise shook her head.

"What, only one string to your bow of distrust? Fie, Mary Louise! When you were selling Liberty Bonds, did you meet with no objectors?"

"Well — yes; there's a wholesale grocer here, who is named Silas Herring, a very rich man, but sour and disagreeable."

"Did he kick on the bonds?"

"Yes."

“Then tell me all about him.”

“When I first entered his office, Mr. Herring made insulting remarks about the bonds and accused our government of being dominated by the English. He was very bitter in his remarks, but in his office were two other men who remonstrated with him and — ”

“What were the two men doing there?”

“Why, they were talking about something, when I entered; I didn’t hear what, for when they saw me they became silent.”

“Were they clerks, or grocers — customers?”

“No; one was our supervisor, Andrew Duncan — ”

“And the other man?” asked Josie.

“Our superintendent of schools, Professor Dyer.”

“Oh; then they were talking politics.”

“I suppose likely. I was obliged to argue with Mr. Herring and became so incensed that I threatened him with the loss of his trade. But Mr. Duncan at once subscribed for Liberty Bonds, and so did Professor Dyer, and that shamed Silas Herring into buying a big bunch of them also.”

“H-m-m,” murmured Josie contentedly. “Then neither of the three had purchased any bonds until then?”

“I think not. Gran’pa Jim had himself tried to sell Mr. Herring and had been refused.”

“I see. How much did the supervisor invest in bonds?”

“One hundred dollars.”

“Too little. And the Professor?”

“Five hundred.”

“Too much. He couldn’t afford it, could he?”

“He said it was more than his salary warranted, but he wanted to be patriotic.”

“Oh, well; the rich grocer took them off his hands, perhaps. No disloyal words from the Professor or the supervisor?”

“No, indeed; they rebuked Mr. Herring and made him stop talking.”

Josie nodded, thoughtfully.

“Well, who else did you find disloyal?”

“No one, so far as I can recollect. Everyone I know seems genuinely patriotic — except,” as an afterthought, “little Annie Boyle, and she doesn’t count.”

“Who is little Annie Boyle?”

“No one much. Her father keeps the Mansion House, one of the hotels here, but not one of the best. It’s patronized by cheap traveling men and the better class of clerks, I’m told, and Mr. Boyle is said to do a good business.

Annie knows some of our girls, and they say she hates the war and denounces Mr. Wilson and everybody concerned in the war. But Annie's a silly little thing, anyhow, and of course she couldn't get out those circulars."

Josie wrote Annie Boyle's name on her tablets — little ivory affairs which she always carried and made notes on.

"Do you know anyone else at the Mansion House?" she inquired.

"Not a soul."

"How old is Annie?"

"Fourteen or fifteen."

"She didn't conceive her unpatriotic ideas; she has heard someone else talk, and like a parrot repeats what she has heard."

"Perhaps so; but — "

"All right. I'm not going to the Liberty Girls' Shop to-morrow, Mary Louise. At your invitation I'll make myself scarce, and nose around. To be quite frank, I consider this matter serious; more serious than you perhaps suspect. And, since you've put this case in my hands, I'm sure you and the dear colonel won't mind if I'm a bit eccentric in my movements while I'm doing detective work. I know the town pretty well, from my former visits, so I won't get lost. I may not accomplish anything, but you'd like me to try, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, indeed. That's why I've told you all this. I feel something ought to be done, and I can't do it myself."

Josie slipped the tablets into her pocket.

"Mary Louise, the United States is honeycombed with German spies," she gravely announced. "They're keeping Daddy and all the Department of Justice pretty busy, so I've an inkling as to their activities. German spies are encouraged by German propagandists, who are not always German but may be Americans, or even British by birth, but are none the less deadly on that account. The paid spy has no nationality; he is true to no one but the devil, and he and his abettors fatten on treachery. His abettors are those who repeat sneering and slurring remarks about our conduct of the war. You may set it down that whoever is not pro-American is pro-German; whoever does not favor the Allies — all of them, mind you — favors the Kaiser; whoever is not loyal in this hour of our country's greatest need is a traitor."

"You're right, Josie!"

"Now," continued Josie, reflectively, "you and I must both understand that we're undertaking a case that is none of our business. It's the business of Mr. Bielaski, of the department of justice, first of all; then it's the business of Mr. Flynn, of the secret service; then it's the business of the local police. Together, they have a thousand eyes, but enemy propagandists are more

numerous and scattered throughout the nation. Your chief of police doesn't want to interfere with the federal agents here, and the federal agents are instructed not to pay attention to what is called 'spy hysteria,' and so they're letting things slide. But you believe, and I believe, that there's more treachery underlying these circulars than appears on the surface, and if we can secure evidence that is important, and present it to the proper officials, we shall be doing our country a service. So I'll start out on my own responsibility."

"Doesn't your secret service badge give you authority?" asked Mary Louise.

"No," replied Josie; "that badge is merely honorary. Daddy got it for me so that if ever I got into trouble it would help me out, but it doesn't make me a member of the secret service or give me a bit of authority. But that doesn't matter; when I get evidence, I know what authority to give it to, and that's all that is necessary."

"Anyhow," said Mary Louise, with a relieved sigh, "I'm glad you are going to investigate the author of those awful circulars. It has worried me a good deal to think that Dorfield is harboring a German spy, and I have confidence that if anyone can discover the traitor, you can."

"That's good of you," returned Josie, with a grimace, "but I lack a similar confidence in myself. Don't you remember how many times I've foozled?"

"But sometimes, Josie, you've won, and I hope you'll win now."

"Thank you," said Josie; "I hope so, myself."

CHAPTER X
THE EXPLOSION

Day was just beginning to break when a terrible detonation shook all Dorfield. Houses rocked, windows rattled, a sudden wind swept over the town and then a glare that was not a presage of the coming sun lit the sky.

A brief silence succeeded the shock, but immediately thereafter whistles shrieked, fire-bells clanged, a murmur of agitated voices crying aloud was heard on every side, and the people began pouring from the houses into the streets demanding the cause of the alarm.

Colonel Hathaway, still weak and nervous, stood trembling in his bathrobe when Mary Louise came to him.

"It's the airplane factory, Gran'pa Jim," she said. "I can see it from my windows. Something must have exploded and the buildings are on fire."

The airplane works of Dorfield had been one of the city's most unique institutions, but until we entered the World War it was not deemed of prime importance. The government's vast airplane appropriations, however, had resulted in the Dorfield works securing contracts for the manufacture of war machines that straightway raised the enterprise to an important position. The original plant had been duplicated a dozen times, until now, on the big field south of the city, the cluster of buildings required for the construction of aircraft was one of the most imposing manufacturing plants in that part of the State. Skilled government aviators had been sent to Dorfield to inspect every machine turned out. Although backed by local capital, it was, in effect, a government institution because it was now devoted exclusively to government contracts; therefore the explosion and fire filled every loyal heart with a sinister suspicion that an enemy had caused the calamity.

Splendid work on the part of the fire department subdued the flames after but two of the huge shed-like buildings had been destroyed. By noon the fire was controlled; a cordon of special police surrounded the entire plant and in one of the yards a hundred and fifty workmen were corralled under arrest until the federal officers had made an investigation and decided where to place the blame.

Reassuring reports had somewhat quieted Colonel Hathaway and Mary Louise, but although they returned to their rooms, they could not sleep. Aunt Sally, realizing the situation, had an early breakfast prepared, but when she called Josie O'Gorman the girl was not in her room or in the house. She appeared just as the others were finishing their meal and sat down with a sigh of content.

"My, but the coffee smells good!" she exclaimed. "I'm worn out with the

excitement."

"Did you go to the fire, Josie?" asked Mary Louise.

"Yes, and got there in time to help drag some of the poor fellows out. Three men in the building where the explosion occurred were killed outright, and two others seriously injured. Fortunately the night shift had just quit work or the casualties would have been much greater."

"It's dreadful, as it is," said Mary Louise with a shudder.

"What was the cause of the explosion!" inquired the colonel.

"Dynamite," replied Josie calmly.

"Then it was not an accident?"

"They don't use dynamite in making airplanes. Twenty-two machines, all complete and packed ready for shipment, were blown to smithereens. A good many others, in course of construction, were ruined. It's a pretty bad mess, I can tell you, but the machines can be replaced, and the lives can't."

"I wonder who did it," said Mary Louise, staring at her friend with frightened eyes.

"The Kaiser," declared Josie. "He must be in fine fettle this morning, since his propaganda of murder and arson has been so successful."

"I — I don't quite understand you," faltered Mary Louise.

"Josie means that this is the work of a direct emissary of the Kaiser," explained the colonel. "We know that among us are objectors and pacifists and those who from political motives are opposing the activities of our President, but these are not dynamiters, nor do they display their disloyalty except through foolish and futile protests. One who resorts to murder and arson in an attempt to block the government's plans, and so retard our victory, is doubtless a hired assassin and in close touch with the German master-spies who are known to be lurking in this country."

"That's the idea, sir," approved Josie, nodding her tousled red head, "and better expressed than any answer of mine could have been."

"Well, then, can't this demon be arrested and punished?" asked Mary Louise.

"That remains to be seen," said Josie. "An investigation is already under way. All the outgoing night shift and some of the incoming day shift have been held under suspicion, until they can be examined and carefully questioned. I heard your Chief of Police — whom I know and knows me — assert that without doubt the bomb had been placed by one of the workmen. I wonder what makes him think that. Also the police are hunting for everyone seen loitering about the airplane plant during the past twenty-four hours. They'll spend days — perhaps weeks — in investigating, and then the affair will quiet down and be forgotten."

“You fear they will not be able to apprehend the criminal?” from the colonel.

“Not the way the police are going at it. They’re virtually informing the criminal that they’re hunting for him but don’t know where to find him, and that if he isn’t careful they’ll get him. So he’s going to be careful. It is possible, of course, that the fellow has left traces — clues that will lead to his discovery and arrest. Still, I’m not banking much on that. Such explosions have been occurring for months, in various parts of the country, and the offenders have frequently escaped. The government suspects that German spies are responsible, but an indefinite suspicion is often as far as it gets. Evidence is lacking.”

“How about your boasted department of justice, and the secret service?” asked Mary Louise.

“They’re as good as the German spy system, and sometimes a bit better. Don’t think for a minute that our enemies are not clever,” said Josie earnestly. “Sometimes our agents make a grab; sometimes the German spy remains undiscovered. It’s diamond cut diamond — fifty-fifty. But when we get every alien enemy sequestered in zones removed from all factories doing government work, we’re going to have less trouble. A lot of these Germans and Austrians are liberty-loving Americans, loyal and true, but we must round up the innocent many, in order to squelch the guilty few.”

The following week was one of tense excitement for Dorfield. Federal officers poured into the city to assist in the investigation; the victims were buried with honor and ceremony, wrapped in American flags to show that these “soldiers of industry” had been slain by their country’s foe; the courtrooms were filled with eager mobs hoping that evidence would be secured against some one of the many suspects. Gradually, however, the interest decreased, as Josie had predicted it would. A half dozen suspects were held for further examination and the others released. New buildings were being erected at the airplane plant, and although somewhat crippled, the business of manufacturing these necessary engines of war was soon going on much as usual.

CHAPTER XI
A FONT OF TYPE

Mary Louise went into Josie O'Gorman's room and found the young girl bent over a table on which were spread the disloyal circulars.

"You've been studying those things for nearly two weeks, Josie," she said. "Have you made any discoveries?"

"I know a lot more about the circulars than I did," answered Josie. "For instance, there are nineteen printing offices in Dorfield, and only two of them have this kind of type."

"Oh, that's something, indeed!" cried Mary Louise. "One of the two offices must have printed the circulars."

"No; the curious fact is that neither printed them," returned Josie, regarding the circulars with a frown.

"How do you know?"

"It's an old style of type, not much in use at present," explained the youthful detective. "In one printing office the case that contains this type face hasn't been used for months and months. I found all the compartments covered with dust a quarter of an inch thick. There wasn't a trace of the type having been disturbed. I proved this by picking out a piece of type, which scattered the dust and brought to light the shining bodies of the other type in that compartment. So the circulars could never have been printed from that case of type."

"But the other printing office?"

"Well, there they had a font of the same style of type, which is occasionally used in job printing; but it's a small font and has only twenty-four small a's. I rummaged the whole shop, and found none of the type standing, out of the case. Another thing, they had only three capital G's, and one of those was jammed and damaged. In the last circular issued, no less than seven capital G's appear. In the first one sent out I find fifty-eight small a's. All this convinces me the circulars were issued from no regular printing office."

"Then how did it get printed?" asked Mary Louise.

"That's what puzzles me," confessed Josie. "Three of the four big manufacturing concerns here have outfits and do their own printing — or part of it, anyhow — and I don't mind saying I expected to find my clue in one of those places, rather than in a regular printing office. But I've made an exhaustive search, aided by the managers, and there's no type resembling that used in the circulars in any of the private print shops. In fact, I'm up a stump!"

“But why do you attach so much importance to this matter?” queried Mary Louise.

“It’s the most direct route to the traitor. Find who printed the circulars and you’ve got your hand on the man who wrote and mailed them. But the printing baffles me, and so I’ve started another line of investigation.”

“What line is that, Josie?”

“The circular envelopes were addressed by hand, with pen and ink. The ink is a sort in common use. The envelopes are an ordinary commercial kind. The circulars are printed on half a sheet of letter-size typewriting paper, sold in several stationery store in large quantities. No clue there. But the handwriting is interesting. It’s disguised, of course, and the addressing was done by two different people — that’s plain.”

“You are wonderful, Josie!”

“I’m stupid as a clam, Mary Louise. See here!” she went to a closet and brought out a large card-board box, which she placed upon the table. It was filled to the brim with envelopes, addressed to many business firms in Dorfield, but all bearing the local postmark. “Now, I’ve been days collecting these envelopes,” continued the girl, “and I’ve studied them night after night. I’m something of a handwriting expert, you know, for that is one of the things that Daddy has carefully taught me. These envelopes came from all sorts of people — folks making inquiries, paying bills, ordering goods, and the like. I’ve had an idea from the first that some prominent person — no ordinary man — is responsible for the circulars. They’re well worded, grammatical, and the malicious insinuations are cleverly contrived to disconcert the loyal but weak brethren. However, these envelopes haven’t helped me a bit. Neither of the two persons who addressed the envelopes of the circulars addressed any of these business envelopes. Of that I’m positive.”

“Dear me,” said Mary Louise, surprised, “I’d no idea you’d taken so much trouble, Josie.”

“Well, I’ve undertaken a rather puzzling case, my dear, and it will mean more trouble than you can guess, before I’ve solved it. This pro-German scoundrel is clever; he suspected that he’d be investigated and has taken every precaution to prevent discovery. Nevertheless, the cleverest criminal always leaves some trace behind him, if one can manage to find it, so I’m not going to despair at this stage of the game.”

“Do you know,” said Mary Louise thoughtfully, “I’ve had an idea that there’s some connection between the explosion at the airplane works and the sender of these circulars.”

Josie gave her a queer look.

“What connection do you suspect?” she asked quickly.

“Why, the man who wrote those circulars would not stop at any crime to harass the government and interfere with the promotion of the war.”

“Is that as far as you’ve gone?”

“Have you gone any farther, Josie?”

“A step, Mary Louise. It looks to me as if there is an organized band of traitors in Dorfield. No one person is responsible for it all. Didn’t I say two different people addressed the circulars in disguised handwriting? Now, a bomb has to be constructed, and placed, and timed, and I don’t credit any one person with handling such a job and at the same time being aware that the utmost damage to the War Department’s plans would be accomplished by blowing up the airplane works. That argues intelligent knowledge of national and local affairs. There may be but two conspirators, and there may be more, but the more there are, the easier it will be for me to discover them.”

“Naturally,” agreed Mary Louise. “But, really, Josie, I don’t see how you’re going to locate a clue that will guide you. Have you attended the trial of those suspected of the bomb outrage?”

“I’ve seen all the testimony. There isn’t a culprit in the whole bunch. The real criminal is not even suspected, as yet,” declared Josie. “The federal officers know this, and are just taking things easy and making the trials string out, to show they’re wide awake. Also I’ve met two secret service men here — Norman Addison and old Jim Crissey. I know nearly all of the boys. But they haven’t learned anything important, either.”

“Are these men experienced detectives?”

“They’ve done some pretty good work, but nothing remarkable. In these times the government is forced to employ every man with any experience at all, and Crissey and Addison are just ordinary boys, honest and hard-working, but not especially talented. Daddy would have discovered something in twenty-four hours; but Daddy has been sent abroad, for some reason, and there are many cases of espionage and sabotage fully as important as this, in this spy-infested land. That’s why poor Josie O’Gorman is trying to help the government, without assignment or authority. If I succeed, however, I’ll feel that I have done my bit.”

“Don’t you get discouraged, dear, at times?”

“Never! Why, Mary Louise, discouragement would prove me a dub. I’m puzzled, though, just now, and feeling around blindly in the dark to grab a thread that may lead me to success. If I have luck, presently I’ll find it.”

She put away the envelopes, as she spoke, and resuming her seat drew out her tablets and examined the notes she had made thereon. Josie used strange characters in her memoranda, a sort of shorthand she had herself originated

and which could be deciphered only by her father or by herself.

"Here's a list of suspects," she said. "Not that they're necessarily connected with our case, but are known to indulge in disloyal sentiments. Hal Grober, the butcher, insists on selling meat on meatless days and won't defer to the wishes of Mr. Hoover, whom he condemns as a born American but a naturalized Englishmen. He's another Jake Kasker, too noisy to be guilty of clever plotting."

"They're both un-American!" exclaimed Mary Louise. "There ought to be a law to silence such people, Josie."

"Don't worry, my dear; they'll soon be silenced," predicted her friend. "Either better judgment will come to their aid or the federal courts will get after them. We shouldn't allow anyone to throw stones at the government activities, just at this crisis. They may *think* what they please, but must keep their mouths shut."

"I'm sorry they can even think disloyalty," said Mary Louise.

"Well, even that will be remedied in time," was the cheerful response. "No war more just and righteous was ever waged than this upon which our country has embarked, and gradually that fact will take possession of those minds, which, through prejudice, obstinacy or ignorance, have not yet grasped it. I'm mighty proud of my country, Mary Louise, and I believe this war is going to give us Americans a distinction that will set us up in our own opinion and in the eyes of the world. But always there is a willful objection, on the part of some, toward any good and noble action, and we must deal charitably with these deluded ones and strive to win them to an appreciation of the truth."

"Isn't that carrying consideration too far?" asked Mary Louise.

"No. Our ministers are after the unregenerates, not after the godly. The noblest act of humanity is to uplift a fellow creature. Even in our prisons we try to reform criminals, to make honest men of them rather than condemn them to a future of crime. It would be dreadful to say: 'You're *all* yellow; go to thunder!'"

"Yes; I believe you're right," approved the other girl. "That is, your theory is correct, but the wicked sometimes refuse to reform."

"Usually the fault of the reformers, my dear. But suppose we redeem a few of them, isn't it worth while? Now, let me see. Here's a washwoman who says the Kaiser is a gentleman, and a street-car driver who says it's a rich man's war. No use bothering with such people in our present state of blind groping. And here's the list that you, yourself, gave to me: One Silas Herring, a wholesale grocer. I'm going to see him. He's a big, successful man, and being opposed to the administration is dangerous. Herring is worth

investigating, and with him is associated Professor John Dyer, superintendent of schools."

"Oh, Professor Dyer is all right," said Mary Louise hastily. "It was he who helped bring Mr. Herring to time, and afterward he took Gran'pa Jim's place on the Bond Committee and solicited subscriptions."

"Did he get any?"

"Any what?"

"Subscriptions."

" — I believe so. Really, I don't know."

"Well, *I* know," said Josie, "for I've inspected the records. Your professor — who, by the way, is only a professor by courtesy and a politician by profession — worked four days on the bond sale and didn't turn in a single subscription. He had a lot of wealthy men on his list and approached them in such a manner that they all positively declined to buy bonds. Dyer's activities kept these men from investing in bonds when, had they been properly approached, they would doubtless have responded freely."

"Good gracious! Are you sure, Josie?"

"I'm positive. I've got a cross opposite the name of Professor John Dyer, and I'm going to know more about him — presently. His bosom chum is the Honorable Andrew Duncan, a man with an honest Scotch name but only a thirty-second or so of Scotch blood in his veins. His mother was a German and his grandmother Irish and his greatgrandmother a Spanish gipsy."

"How did you learn all that, Josie?"

"By making inquiries. Duncan was born in Dorfield and his father was born in the county. He's a typical American — a product of the great national melting-pot — but no patriot because he has no sympathy for any of the European nations at war, or even with the war aims of his native land. He's a selfish, scheming, unprincipled politician; an office-holder ever since he could vote; a man who would sacrifice all America to further his own personal ends."

"Then, you think Mr. Duncan may — might be — is — "

"No," said Josie, "I don't. The man might instigate a crime and encourage it, in a subtle and elusive way, but he's too shrewd to perpetrate a crime himself. I wouldn't be surprised if Duncan could name the man — or the band of traitors — we're looking for, if he chose to, but you may rest assured he has not involved his own personality in any scheme to balk the government."

"I can't understand that sort of person," said Mary. Louise, plaintively.

"It's because you haven't studied the professional politician. He has been given too much leeway heretofore, but his days, I firmly believe, are now

numbered," Josie answered. "Now, here's my excuse for investigating Silas Herring and his two cronies, Dyer and Duncan. All three of them happen to be political bosses in this section. It is pretty generally known that they are not in sympathy with President Wilson and the administration. They are shrewd enough to know that the popularity of the war and the President's eloquent messages have carried the country by storm. So they cannot come right out into the open with their feelings. At the same time, they can feel themselves losing control of the situation. In fact, the Herring gang is fearful that at the coming elections they will be swept aside and replaced with out-and-out loyal supporters of the President. So they're going to try to arouse sentiment against the administration and against the war, in order to head off the threatened landslide. Dyer hoped to block the sale of Liberty Bonds, blinding folks to his intent by subscribing for them himself; but you girls foiled that scheme by your enthusiastic 'drive.' What the other conspirators have done, I don't know, but I imagine their energies will not be squelched by one small defeat. I don't expect to land any of the three in jail, but I think they all ought to be behind the bars, and if I shadow them successfully, one or the other may lead me to their tools or confederates — the ones directly guilty of issuing the disloyal circulars and perhaps of placing the bomb that damaged the airplane works and murdered some of its employes."

Mary Louise was pale with horror when Josie finished her earnest and convincing statement. She regarded her friend's talent with profound admiration. Nevertheless, the whole matter was becoming so deep, so involved that she could only think of it with a shudder.

"I'm almost sorry," said the girl, regretfully, "that I ever mixed up in this dreadful thing."

"I'm not sorry," returned Josie. "Chasing traitors isn't the pleasantest thing in the world, even for a regular detective, but it's a duty I owe my country and I'm sufficiently interested to probe the affair to the extent of my ability. If I fail, nothing is lost, and if I win I'll have done something worth while. Here's another name on the list of suspects you gave me — Annie Boyle, the hotel-keeper's daughter."

"Don't bother about Annie, for goodness' sake," exclaimed Mary Louise. "She hasn't the brains or an opportunity to do any harm, so you'd better class her with Kasker and the butcher."

But Josie shook her head.

"There's a cross opposite her name," said she. "I don't intend to shuffle Annie Boyle into the discard until I know more about her."

CHAPTER XII

JOSIE BUYS A DESK

The "Liberty Girls' Shop" was proving a veritable mint. Expenses were practically nothing, so all the money received could be considered clear profit. It was amusing to observe the people who frequented the shop, critically examining the jumble of wares displayed, wondering who had donated this or that and meantime searching for something that could be secured at a "bargain." Most of the shrewd women had an idea that these young girls would be quite ignorant of values and might mark the articles at prices far below their worth, but the "values" of such goods could only be conjectural, and therefore the judgment of the older women was no more reliable than that of the girls. They might think they were getting bargains, and perhaps were, but that was problematic.

The one outstanding fact was that people were buying a lot of things they had no use for, merely because they felt they were getting them cheaply and that their money would be devoted to a good cause.

Mrs. Brown, who had given the Shop a lot of discarded articles, purchased several discarded articles donated by Mrs. Smith, her neighbor, while Mrs. Smith eagerly bought the cast-off wares of Mrs. Brown. Either would have sneered at the bare idea of taking "truck" which the other had abandoned, had the medium of exchange not been the popular Liberty Girls' Shop. For it was a popular shop; the "best families" patronized it; society women met there to chat and exchange gossip; it was considered a mark of distinction and highly patriotic to say: "Oh, yes; I've given the dear girls many really valuable things to sell. They're doing such noble work, you know."

Even the eminent Mrs. Charleworth, premier aristocrat of Dorfield, condescended to visit the Shop, not once but many times. She would sit in one of the chairs in the rear of the long room and hold open court, while her sycophants grouped around her, hanging on her words. For Mrs. Charleworth's status was that of social leader; she was a middle-aged widow, very handsome, wore wonderful creations in dress, was of charming personality, was exceedingly wealthy and much traveled. When she visited New York the metropolitan journals took care to relate the interesting fact. Mrs. Charleworth was quite at home in London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna; she was visiting friends in Dresden when the European war began, and by advice of Herr Zimmerman, of the German Foreign Office, who was in some way a relative, had come straight home to avoid embarrassment. This much was generally known.

It had been a matter of public information in the little town for a

generation that Dick Charleworth had met the lady in Paris, when she was at the height of her social glory, and had won the hand of the beautiful girl and brought her to Dorfield as his wife. But the wealthy young manufacturer did not long survive his marriage. On his death, his widow inherited his fortune and continued to reside in the handsome residence he had built, although, until the war disrupted European society, she passed much time abroad.

The slight taint of German blood in Mrs. Charleworth's veins was not regarded seriously in Dorfield. Her mother had been a Russian court beauty; she spoke several languages fluently; she was discreet in speech and negative in sympathy concerning the merits of the war. This lasted, however, only while the United States preserved neutrality. As soon as we cast our fortunes with the Allies, Mrs. Charleworth organized the "Daughters of Helpfulness," an organization designed to aid our national aims, but a society cult as well. Under its auspices two private theatrical entertainments had been given at the Opera House and the proceeds turned over to the Red Cross. A grand charity ball had been announced for a future date.

It may easily be understood that when Mrs. Charleworth became a patroness of the Liberty Girls' Shop, and was known to have made sundry purchases there, the high standing of that unique enterprise was assured. Some folks perhaps frequented the place to obtain a glimpse of the great Mrs. Charleworth herself, but of course these were without the pale of her aristocratic circle.

Their social triumph, however, was but one reason for the girls' success; the youngsters were enticing in themselves, and they proved to be clever in making sales. The first stock soon melted away and was replaced by new contributions, which the girls took turns in soliciting. The best residences in Dorfield were first canvassed, then those of people in moderate circumstances. The merchants were not overlooked and Mary Louise took the regular stores personally in charge.

"Anything you have that you can't sell, we will take," was her slogan, and most of the merchants found such articles and good-naturedly contributed them to the Shop.

"Sooner or later we shall come to the end of our resources," predicted Alora Jones. "We've ransacked about every house in town for contributions."

"Let's make a second canvas then," suggested Lucile. "And especially, let us make a second appeal to those who did not give us anything on our first round. Our scheme wasn't thoroughly understood at first, you know, but now folks regard it an honor to contribute to our stock."

"Yes," said Jane Donovan, "I had to laugh when Mrs. Charleworth asked Mrs. Dyer yesterday what she had given us, and Mrs. Dyer stammered and

flushed and said that when we called on her the Dyers were only renting the house and furniture, which belonged to the Dudley-Markhams, who are in South America; but, Mrs. Dyer added, they have now bought the place — old furniture and all — and perhaps she would yet find some items she can spare."

"Very good," said Edna Barlow; "the Dyers are in my district and I'll call upon them at once."

"Have the Dyers really bought the Dudley-Markham place?" asked Mary Louise.

"So it seems," replied Jane.

"But — 'it must have cost a lot of money."

"Isn't the Professor rich?" inquired Josie O'Gorman, who was present and had listened quietly to the conversation.

"I-don't-know," answered Mary Louise, and the other girls forbore to answer more definitely.

That evening, however, Josie approached the subject when she and Mary Louise were sitting quietly at home and the conversation more confidential.

"The Dyers," explained her friend, "were not very prosperous until the Professor got the appointment as superintendent of schools. He was a teacher in a boys' school for years, on a small salary, and everyone was surprised when he secured the appointment."

"How did it happen?" asked Josie.

Mary Louise looked across at her grandfather.

"How did it happen, Gran'pa Jim?" she repeated.

The old colonel lowered his book.

"We haven't been residents of Dorfield many years," said he, "so I am not well acquainted with the town's former history. But I remember to have heard that the Herring political ring, which elected our Board of Education, proposed John Dyer for the position of school superintendent — and the Board promptly gave him the appointment."

"Was he properly qualified?" Josie asked.

"I think so. A superintendent is a sort of business manager. He doesn't teach, you know. But I understand the Professor received his education abroad — at Heidelburg — and is well versed in modern educational methods. Our schools seem to be conducted very well."

Josie was thoughtful for a time, and after the colonel had resumed his book, she asked Mary Louise:

"Who was Mrs. Dyer, before her marriage?"

"That is ancient history, as far as I am concerned, but I heard the girls talking about her, just the other day. Her family, it seems, was respectable

but unimportant; yet Mrs. Dyer is very well liked. She's not brilliant, but kindly. When we first came here, the Dyers lived in a little cottage on Juniper street, and it is only lately that they moved to the big house they've just bought. Mrs. Dyer is now trying hard for social recognition, but seems to meet with little encouragement. Mrs. Charleworth speaks to her, you know, but doesn't invite Mrs. Dyer to her affairs."

Next day Edna Barlow, after a morning's quest of contributions, returned to the Shop in triumph.

"There's almost a truck-load of stuff outside, to be unloaded," she announced, "and a good half of it is from Mrs. Dyer — a lot of the old Dudley-Markham rubbish, you know. It has class to it, girls, and when it has been freshened up, we're sure to get good prices for the lot."

"I'm surprised that Mrs. Dyer was so liberal," said Mary Louise.

"Well, at first she said the Professor had gone to Chicago on business, and so she couldn't do anything for us," replied Edna; "but I insisted that we needed goods right now, so she finally said we could go up in the attic, and rummage around, and take whatever we could find. My, what a lot of useless stuff there was! That attic has more smashed and battered and broken-legged furniture in it than would furnish six houses — provided it was in shape. The accumulation of ages. But a lot of it is antique, girls, and worth fixing up. I've made the best haul of our career, I verily believe."

Then Laura Hilton, who had accompanied Edna, added:

"When Mrs. Dyer saw our men carrying all that stuff down, she looked as if she regretted her act and would like to stop us. But she didn't — was ashamed to, probably — so we lugged it off. Never having been used to antique furniture, the poor woman couldn't realize the value of it."

"This seems to me almost like robbery," remarked Lucile, doubtfully. "Do you think it right for us to take advantage of the woman's ignorance?"

"Remember the Cause for which we fight!" admonished Irene, from her chair. "If the things people are not using, and do not want, can provide comforts for our soldier boys, we ought to secure them — if we have to take them by force."

The attic of the old house had really turned out a number of interesting articles. There were tables, stands, settees, chairs, and a quaint old desk, set on a square pedestal with a base of carved lions' feet. This last interested Josie as soon as it was carried into the shop. The top part was somewhat dilapidated, the cover of the desk being broken off and some of the "pigeonhole" compartments smashed. But there was an odd lot of tiny drawers, located in every conceivable place, all pretty well preserved, and the square pedestal and the base were in excellent condition.

Josie open drawer after drawer and looked the old cabinet-desk over thoroughly, quite unobserved because the others in the shop were admiring a Chippendale chair or waiting upon their customers. Presently Josie approached Mary Louise and asked:

"What will you take for the pedestal-desk — just as it stands?"

"Why, I'll let Irene put a price on it," was the reply. "She knows values better than the rest of us."

"If it's fixed up, it will be worth twenty dollars," said Irene, after wheeling her chair to the desk for a critical examination of it.

"Well, what will it cost to fix it up?" demanded Josie.

"Perhaps five dollars."

"Then I'll give you fifteen for it, just as it stands," proposed Josie.

"You? What could you do with the clumsy thing?"

"Ship it home to Washington," was the prompt reply. "It would tickle Daddy immensely to own such an unusual article, so I want to make him a present of it on his birthday."

"Hand over the fifteen dollars, please," decided Irene.

Josie paid the money. She caught the drayman who had unloaded the furniture and hired him to take the desk at once to the Hathaway residence. She even rode with the man, on the truck, and saw the battered piece of furniture placed in her own room. Leaving it there, she locked her door and went back to the Shop.

The girls were much amused when they learned they had made so important a sale to one of themselves.

"If we had asked Mrs. Dyer to give us fifteen dollars, cold cash," remarked Laura, "she would have snubbed us properly; but the first article from her attic which we sold has netted us that sum and I really believe we will get from fifty to seventy-five dollars more out of the rest of the stuff."

Mrs. Charleworth dropped in during the afternoon and immediately became interested in the Dudley-Markham furniture. The family to whom it had formerly belonged she knew had been one of the very oldest and most important in Dorfield. The Dudley-Markhams had large interests in Argentine and would make their future home there, but here were the possessions of their grandmothers and great-grandmothers, rescued from their ancient dust, and Mrs. Charleworth was a person who loved antiques and knew their sentimental and intrinsic values.

"The Dyers were foolish to part with these things," she asserted. "Of course, Mary Dyer isn't supposed to know antiques, but the professor has lived abroad and is well educated."

"The professor wasn't at home," explained Edna. "Perhaps that was lucky

for us. He is in Chicago, and we pleaded so hard that Mrs. Dyer let us go into the attic and help ourselves."

"Well, that proves she has a generous heart," said the grand lady, with a peculiar, sphinx-like smile. "I will buy these two chairs, at your price, when you are ready to sell them."

"We will hold them for you," replied Edna. "They're to be revarnished and properly 'restored,' you know, and we've a man in our employ who knows just how to do it."

When Mary Louise told Colonel Hathaway, jokingly, at dinner that evening, of Josie's extravagant purchase, her girl friend accepted the chaffing composedly and even with a twinkle in her baby-blue eyes. She made no comment and led Mary Louise to discourse on other subjects.

That night Josie sat up late, locked in her own room, with only the pedestal-desk for company. First she dropped to her knees, pushed up a panel in the square base, and disclosed the fact that in this inappropriate place were several cleverly constructed secret compartments, two of which were well filled with papers. The papers were not those of the Dudley-Markhams; they were not yellowed with age; they were quite fresh.

"There!" whispered the girl, triumphantly; "the traitor is in my toils. Is it just luck, I wonder, or has fate taken a hand in the game? How the Kaiser would frown, if he knew what I am doing to-night; and how Daddy would laugh! But — let's see! — perhaps this is just a wedge, and I'll need a sledge-hammer to crack open the whole conspiracy."

The reason Josie stayed up so late was because she carefully examined every paper and copied most of those she had found. But toward morning she finished her self-imposed task, replaced the papers, slid the secret panel into place and then dragged the rather heavy piece of furniture into the far end of the deep closet that opened off her bedroom. Before the desk she hung several dresses, quite masking it from observation. Then she went to bed and was asleep in two minutes.

CHAPTER XIII

JOE LANGLEY, SOLDIER

Strange as it may seem, Mary Louise and her Liberty Girls were regarded with envy by many of the earnest women of Dorfield, who were themselves working along different lines to promote the interests of the government in the Great War. Every good woman was anxious to do her duty in this national emergency, but every good woman loves to have her efforts appreciated, and since the advent of the bevy of pretty young girls in the ranks of female patriotism, they easily became the favorites in public comment and appreciation. Young men and old cheerfully backed the Liberty Girls in every activity they undertook. The Dorfield Red Cross was a branch of the wonderful national organization; the "Hoover Conservation Club" was also national in its scope; the "Navy League Knitting Knot" sent its work to Washington headquarters; all were respectfully admired and financially assisted on occasion. But the "Liberty Girls of Dorfield" were distinctly local and a credit to the city. Their pretty uniforms were gloriously emblematic, their fresh young faces glowed with enthusiasm, their specialty of "helping our soldier boys" appealed directly to the hearts of the people. Many a man, cold and unemotional heretofore in his attitude toward the war, was won to a recognition of its menace, its necessities, and his personal duty to his country, by the arguments and example of the Liberty Girls. If there was a spark of manhood in him, he would not allow a young girl to out-do him in patriotism.

Mary Louise gradually added to her ranks, as girl after girl begged to be enrolled in the organization. After consulting the others, it was decided to admit all desirable girls between the ages of 14 and 18, and six companies were formed during the following weeks, each company consisting of twenty girls. The captains were the original six — Alora, Laura, Edna, Lucile, Jane and Mary Louise. Irene Macfarlane was made adjutant and quartermaster, because she was unable to participate actively in the regimental drills.

Mary Louise wanted Josie to be their general, but Josie declined. She even resigned, temporarily, from membership, saying she had other duties to attend to that would require all her time. Then the girls wanted Mary Louise to be general of the Dorfield Liberty Girls, but she would not consent.

"We will just have the six companies and no general at all," she said. "Nor do we need a colonel, or any officers other than our captains. Each and every girl in our ranks is just as important and worthy of honor as every other girl, so the fewer officers the better."

About this time Joe Langley came back from France with one arm gone.

He was Sergeant Joe Langley, now, and wore a decoration for bravery that excited boundless admiration and pride throughout all Dorfield. Joe had driven a milk wagon before he left home and went to Canada to join the first contingent sent abroad, but no one remembered his former humble occupation. A hero has no past beyond his heroism. The young man's empty sleeve and his decoration admitted him to intercourse with the "best society" of Dorfield, which promptly placed him on a pedestal.

"You know," said Joe, rather shamefacedly deprecating the desire to lionize him, "there wasn't much credit in what I did. I'm even sorry I did it, for my foolishness sent me to the hospital an' put me out o' the war. But there was Tom McChesney, lyin' out there in No Man's Land, with a bullet in his chest an' moanin' for water. Tom was a good chum o' mine, an' I was mad when I saw him fall — jest as the Boches was drivin' us back to our trenches. I know'd the poor cuss was in misery, an' I know'd what I'd expect a chum o' mine to do if I was in Tom's place. So out I goes, with my Cap'n yellin' at me to stop, an' I got to Tom an' give him a good, honest swig. The bullets pinged around us, although I saw a German officer — a decent young fellow — try to keep his men from shootin'. But he couldn't hold 'em in, so I hoisted Tom on my back an' started for our trenches. Got there, too, you know, jest as a machine-gun over to the right started spoutin'. It didn't matter my droppin' Tom in the trench an' tumblin' after him. The boys buried him decent while the sawbones was cuttin' what was left of my arm away, an' puttin' me to sleep with dope. It was a fool trick, after all, 'though God knows I'll never forget the look in Tom's eyes as he swallered that swig o' cool water. That's all, folks. I'm out o' the game, an' I s'pose the Gen'ral jus' pinned this thing on my coat so I wouldn't take my discharge too much to heart."

That was Joe Langley. Do you wonder they forgot he was once a milk-man, or that every resident of Dorfield swelled with pride at the very sight of him? Just one of "our soldier boys," just one of the boys the Liberty Girls were trying to assist.

"They're all alike," said Mary Louise. "I believe every American soldier would be a Joe Langley if he had the chance."

Joe took a mighty interest in the Liberty Girls. He volunteered to drill and make soldiers of them, and so well did he perform this task — perhaps because they admired him and were proud of their drill-master — that when the last big lot of selected draft men marched away, the entire six companies of Liberty Girls marched with them to the train — bands playing and banners flying — and it was conceded to be one of the greatest days Dorfield had ever known, because everyone cheered until hoarse.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PROFESSOR IS ANNOYED

Josie O'Gorman, after resigning from the Liberty Girls, became — so she calmly stated — a "loafer." She wandered around the streets of Dorfield in a seemingly aimless manner, shopped at the stores without buying, visited the houses of all sorts of people, on all sorts of gossipy errands, interviewed lawyers, bankers and others in an inconsequential way that amused some and annoyed others, and conducted herself so singularly that even Mary Louise was puzzled by her actions.

But Josie said to Mary Louise: "My, what a lot I'm learning! There's nothing more interesting — or more startling — or, sometimes, more repulsive — than human nature."

"Have you learned anything about the German spy plot?" questioned Mary Louise eagerly.

"Not yet. My quest resembles a cart-wheel. I go all around the outer rim first, and mark the spokes when I come to them. Then I follow each spoke toward the center. They'll all converge to the hub, you know, and when I've reached the hub, with all my spokes of knowledge radiating from it, I'm in perfect control of the whole situation."

"Oh. How far are you from the hub, Josie?"

"I'm still marking the spokes, Mary Louise."

"Are there many of them?"

"More than I suspected."

"Well, I realize, dear, that you'll tell me nothing until you are ready to confide in me; but please remember, Josie, how impatient I am and how I long to bring the traitors to justice."

"I won't forget, Mary Louise. We're partners in this case and perhaps I shall ask your help, before long. Some of my spokes may be blinds and until I know something positive there's no use in worrying you with confidences which are merely surmises."

Soon after this conversation Mary Louise found herself, as head of the Liberty Girls, in an embarrassing position. Professor Dyer returned from Chicago on an evening train and early next morning was at the Shop even before its doors were opened, impatiently awaiting the arrival of Mary Louise.

"There has been a mistake," he said to her, hastily, as she smilingly greeted him; "in my absence Mrs. Dyer has thoughtlessly given you some old furniture, which I value highly. It was wife's blunder, of course, but I want back two of the articles and I'm willing to pay your Shop as much for

them as you could get elsewhere."

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Professor," said the girl, really distressed, as she unlocked the Shop door. "Come in, please. Mrs. Dyer told our girls to go into the attic and help themselves to anything they wanted. We've done splendidly with the old furniture, and fenders, and brassware, but I hope the two articles you prize are still unsold. If so, you shall not pay us for them, but we will deliver them to your house immediately."

He did not reply, for already he was searching through the accumulation of odds and ends with which the store-room was stocked.

"Perhaps I can help you," suggested Mary Louise.

He turned to her, seeming to hesitate.

"One was a chair; a chair with spindle legs and a high back, richly carved. It is made of black oak, I believe."

"Oh, I remember that well," said the girl. "Mrs. Charleworth bought it from us."

"Mrs. Charleworth? Well, perhaps she will return it to me. I know the lady slightly and will explain that I did not wish to part with it." Still his eyes were roving around the room, and his interest in the chair seemed somewhat perfunctory. "The other piece of furniture was a sort of escritoire, set on a square pedestal that had a carved base of lions' feet." His voice had grown eager now, although he strove to render it calm, and there was a ring of anxiety in his words.

Mary Louise felt relieved as she said assuringly:

"That, at least, I can promise you will be returned. My friend, Josie O'Gorman, bought it and had it sent to our house, where she is visiting. As soon as some of the girls come here to relieve me, I'll take you home with me and have Uncle Eben carry the desk to your house in our motor car. It isn't so very big, and Uncle Eben can manage it easily."

The tense look on the man's face relaxed. It evident that Professor Dyer was greatly relieved.

"Thank you," he said; "I'd like to get it back as soon as possible."

But when, half an hour later, they arrived at the Hathaway residence, and met Josie just preparing to go out, the latter said with a bewildered look in her blue eyes: "The old desk? Why, I sent that home to Washington days ago!"

"You did?" Mary Louise was quite surprised. "Why, you said nothing to me about that, Josie."

"I didn't mention it because I'd no idea you were interested. Daddy loves old things, and I sent it home so he would have it on his return. By freight. You are away at the Shop all day, you know, so I asked Uncle Eben to get

me a big box, which he brought to my room. The desk fitted it nicely. I nailed on the cover myself, and Uncle Eben took it to the freight office for me. See; here's the receipt, in my pocket-book."

She unfolded a paper and held it out to Professor Dyer, who read it with a queer look on his face. It was, indeed, a freight receipt for "one piece of furniture, boxed," to be shipped to John O'Gorman, Washington, D. C, The sender was described as "Miss J. O'Gorman, Dorfield." There was no questioning Josie's veracity, but she called the black servant to substantiate her story.

"Yes, Miss Josie," said Uncle Eben, "I done took de box to de freight office an' got de receipt, lak yo' tol' me. Tuesday, it were; las' Tuesday."

Professor Dyer was thoughtful.

"You say your father is away from home at present?" he asked.

"Yes; he's abroad."

"Do you suppose the freight office in Washington would deliver the box to me, on your order?"

"I'm afraid not," said Josie, "It's consigned to John O'Gorman, and only John O'Gorman can sign for its receipt."

Again the Professor reflected. He seemed considerably disturbed.

"What is the business of John O'Gorman, your father?" he presently inquired.

"He's a member of the government's secret service," Josie replied, watching his face.

The professor's eyes widened; he stood a moment as if turned to stone. Then he gave a little, forced laugh and said:

"I'm obliged to make a trip to Washington, on business, and I thought perhaps I'd pick up the — ah — -the box, there, and ship to Dorfield. The old desk isn't valuable, except — except that it's — ah — antique and — unusual. I'd like to get it back and I'll return to you the money you paid for it, and the freight charges. If you'll write a note to the railway company, saying the box was wrongly addressed and asking that it be delivered to my order, I think I can get it."

Josie agreed to this at once. She wrote the note and also gave Professor Dyer the freight receipt. But she refused to take his money.

"There might be some hitch," she explained. "If you get the box, and it reaches Dorfield safely, then I'll accept the return of my money; but railroads are unreliable affairs and have queer rules, so let's wait and see what happens."

The Professor assured her, however, that there was no doubt of his getting the box, but he Would wait to pay her, if she preferred to let the matter rest.

When he had gone away — seeming far more cheerful than when he came — Mary Louise said to Josie:

"This is a very unfortunate and embarrassing affair, all around. I'm so sorry we took that furniture from Mrs. Dyer before her husband came home and gave his consent. It is very embarrassing."

"I'm glad, for my part," was the reply. Josie's blue eyes were shining innocently and her smile was very sweet. Mary Louise regarded her suspiciously.

"What is it, Josie!" she demanded. "What has that old desk to do with — with — "

"The German spy plot? Just wait and see, Mary Louise."

"You won't tell me?"

"Not now, dear."

"But why did you ship the thing to Washington, if it is likely to prove a valuable clue?"

"Why ask questions that I can't answer? See here, Mary Louise: it isn't wise, or even safe, for me to tell you anything just yet. What I know frightens me — even *me!* Can't you wait and — trust me?"

"Oh, of course," responded Mary Louise in a disappointed voice. "But I fail to understand what Professor Dyer's old desk can possibly have to do with our quest."

Josie laughed.

"It used to belong to the Dudley-Markhams."

"The Dudley-Markhams! Great heavens, But — see here — they left Dorfield long before this war started, and so — "

"I'm going out," was Josie's inconsequent remark. "Do you think those are rain clouds, Mary Louise? I hate to drag around an umbrella if it's not needed."

CHAPTER XV

SUSPENDERS FOR SALE

The two girls parted at the Liberty Shop. Mary Louise went in "to attend to business," while Josie O'Gorman strolled up the street and paused thoughtfully before the windows of Kasker's Clothing Emporium. At first she didn't notice that it was Kasker's; she looked in the windows at the array of men's wear just so she could think quietly, without attracting attention, for she was undecided as to her next move. But presently, realizing this was Kasker's place, she gave a little laugh and said to herself: "This is the fellow poor little Mary Louise suspected of being the arch traitor. I wonder if he knows anything at all, or if I could pump it out of him if he does? Guess I'll interview old Jake, if only to satisfy myself that he's the harmless fool I take him to be."

With this in mind she walked into the store. A clerk met her; other clerks were attending to a few scattered customers.

"Is Mr. Kasker in?" she asked the young man.

"In his office, miss; to the right, half way down."

He left her to greet another who entered and Josie walked down the aisle, as directed. The office was raised a step above the main floor and was railed in, with a small swinging gate to allow entrance. This was not the main business office but the proprietor's special den and his desk was placed so he could overlook the entire establishment, with one glance. Just at present Kasker was engaged in writing, or figuring, for his bushy head was bent low.

Josie opened the gate, walked in and took a chair that stood beside the desk.

"Good morning, Mr. Kasker," she said sweetly.

He looked up, swept her with a glance and replied:

"What's the matter? Can't one of the clerks attend to you? I'm busy."

"I'll wait," was Josie's quiet reply. "I'd rather deal with you than a clerk."

He hesitated, laid down his pen and turned his chair toward her. She knew the man, by sight, but if he had ever seen the girl he did not recall the fact. His tone was now direct and businesslike.

"Very well, miss; tell me what I can do for you."

It had only taken her an instant to formulate her speech.

"I'm interested in the poor children of Dorfield," she began, "having been sent here as the agent of an organization devoted to clothing our needy little ones. I find, since I have been soliciting subscriptions in Dorfield and investigating the requirements of the poor, that there are a lot of boys, especially, in this city who are in rags, and I want to purchase for them as

many outfits as my money will allow. But on account of the war, and its demands on people formerly charitably inclined, I realize my subscription money is altogether too little to do what I wish. That's too bad, but it's true. Everywhere they talk war — war — -war and its hardships. The war demands money for taxes, bonds, mess funds, the Red Cross and all sorts of things, and in consequence our poor are being sadly neglected."

He nodded, somewhat absently, but said nothing. Josie felt her clever bait had not been taken, as she had expected, so she resolved to be more audacious in her remarks.

"It seems a shame," she said with assumed indignation, "that the poor of the country must starve and be in want, while the money is all devoted to raising an army for the Germans to shoot and mangle."

He saw the point and answered with a broad smile:

"Is that the alternative, young lady? Must one or the other happen? Well — yes; the soldiers must be killed, God help 'em! But *himmel!* We don't let our kiddies freeze for lack of clothes, do we? See here; they're taking everything away from us merchants — our profits, our goods, everything! — but the little we got left the kiddies can have. The war is a robber; it destroys; it puts its hand in an honest man's pocket without asking his consent; all wars do that. The men who make wars have no souls — no mercy. But they make wars. Wars are desperate things and require desperate methods. There is always the price to pay, and the people always pay it. The autocrats of war do not say 'Please!' to us; they say 'Hold up your hands!' and so — what is there to do but hold up our hands?"

Josie was delighted; she was exultant; Jake Kasker was falling into her trap very swiftly.

"But the little ones," he continued, suddenly checking himself in his tirade, "must not be made to suffer like the grown-up folks. They, at least, are innocent of it all. Young lady, I'd do more for the kids than I'd do for the war — and I'll do it willingly, of my own accord. Tell me, then, how much money you got and I'll give you the boys' suits at cost price. I'll do more; for every five suits you buy from me at cost, I'll throw an extra one in, free — Jake Kasker's own contribution."

This offer startled and somewhat dismayed Josie. She had not expected the interview to take such a turn, and Kasker's generosity seriously involved her, while, at the same time, it proved to her without a doubt that the man was a man. He was loud mouthed and foolish; that was all.

While she gathered her wits to escape from an unpleasant situation, a quick step sounded on the aisle and a man brusquely entered the office and exclaimed:

“Hello, Jake; I’m here again. How’s the suspender stock?”

Kasker gave him a surly look.

“You come pretty often, Abe Kauffman,” he muttered. “Suspenders? Bah! I only buy ‘em once a year, and you come around ev’ry month or so. I don’t think it pays you to keep pesterin’ merchants.”

Abe Kauffman laughed — a big laugh — and sat down in a chair.

“One time you buy, Jake, and other times I come to Dorfield somebody else buys. How do I know you don’t get a run on suspenders some time? And if I don’t visit all my customers, whether they buy or not, they think I neglect ‘em. Who’s this, Jake? Your daughter?”

He turned his bland smile on Josie. He was a short, thickset man with a German cast of countenance. He spoke with a stronger German accent than did Kasker. Though his face persistently smiled, his eyes were half closed and shrewd. When he looked at her, Josie gave a little shudder and slightly drew back.

“Ah, that’s a wrong guess,” said Mr. Kauffman quickly. “I must beg your pardon, my girl. But I meant a compliment to you both. Accept my card, please,” and he drew it from his pocket and handed it to her with a bow.

Josie glanced at it:

“KAUFFMAN SUSPENDER COMPANY,

Chicago.

Abe Kauffman, President.”

“My business does not interest ladies,” he went on in a light tone meant to be jovial. “But with the men — ah! — with the men it’s a hold-up game. Ha, ha, hee! One of our trade jokes. It’s an elastic business; Kauffman’s suspenders keep their wearers in suspense. Ha, ha; pretty good, eh?”

“Do you ever sell any?” asked Josie curiously.

“Do I? Do I, Jake? Ha, ha! But not so many now; the war has ruined the suspender business, like everything else. Kasker can tell you that, miss.”

“Kasker won’t, though,” asserted Jake in a surly tone. The girl, however, was now on another scent.

“Don’t you like the war, then?” Josie asked the salesman.

“Like it?” the eyes half opened with a flash. “Who likes war, then? Does humanity, which bears the burden? For me — myself — I’ll say war is a good thing, but I won’t tell you why or how I profit by it; I’ll only say war is a curse to humanity and if I had the power I’d stop it tomorrow — to-day — this very hour! And, at that, I’d lose by it.”

His voice shook with a passion almost uncontrollable. He half rose from his chair, with clinched fists. But, suddenly remembering himself, or reading the expression on the girl’s face, he sank back again, passed his hand over his

face and forced another bland, unmirthful smile.

"I'd hate to be the man who commits his country to war," he said in mild, regretful tones.

But here, Kasker, who had been frowning darkly on the suspender man, broke in.

"See here, Abe; I don't allow that kind of talk in my store," he growled.

"You? You're like me; you hate the war, Jake."

"I did once, Abe, but I don't now. I ain't got time to hate it. It's here, and I can't help it. We're in the war and we're going ahead to win it, 'cause there ain't no hope in backing down. Stop it? Why, man, we *can't* stop it. It's like a man who is pushed off a high bank into a river; he's got to swim to a landing on the other side, or else — sink. We Americans ain't goin' to sink, Abe Kauffman; we'll swim over, and land safe. It's got to be; so it will be."

"All right. I said, didn't I, that it won't hurt my pocket? But it hurts my heart." (Josie was amazed that he claimed a heart.) "But it's funny to hear *you* talk for the war, Jake, when you always hated it."

"Well, I've quit kickin' till we're out of the woods. I'm an American, Abe, and the American flag is flying in France. If our boys can't hold it in the face of the enemy, Jake Kasker will go do it himself!"

Kauffman stood up, casting a glance of scorn on his customer.

"You talk like a fool, Jake; you talk like you was talking for the papers — not honest, but as if someone had scared you."

"Yes; it's the fellows like you that scare me," retorted the clothing merchant. "Ev'ry time you curse the war you're keeping us from winning the war as quick as we ought to; you're tripping the soldiers, the government, the President — the whole machine. I'll admit I don't *like* the war, but I'm *for* it, just the same. Can you figure that out, Abe Kauffman? Once I had more sense than you have, but now I got a better way of thinking. It ain't for me to say whether the war's right or not; my country's honor is at stake, so I'll back my country to the last ditch."

Kauffman turned away.

"I guess you don't need any suspenders," he said, and walked out of the store.

Kasker gave a sigh of relief and sat down again.

"Now, young lady," he began, "we'll talk about — "

"Excuse me," said Josie hastily. "I'm going, now; but I'll be back. I want to see you again, Mr. Kasker."

She ran down the aisle to the door, looked up and down the street and saw the thick-set form of the suspender salesman just disappearing around the corner to the south. Instantly she stepped out. Josie was an expert in the art of

shadowing.

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. CHARLEWORTH

When Mary Louise reached home that evening she was surprised to find a note from Josie which said:

"I've decided to change my boarding place for a week or so, although I shall miss Aunt Sally's cooking and a lot of other comforts. But this is business. If you meet me in the street, don't recognize me unless I'm quite alone. We've quarrelled, if anyone asks you. Pretty soon we'll make up again and be friends. Of course, you'll realize I'm working on our case, which grows interesting. So keep mum and behave."

"I wish I knew where she's gone," was Mary Louise's anxious comment, as she showed the note to Gran'pa Jim.

"Don't worry, my dear," advised the colonel. "Josie possesses the rare faculty of being able to take care of herself under all circumstances. Had she not been so peculiarly trained by her detective father I would feel it a duty to search for her, but she is not like other girls and wouldn't thank us for interfering, I'm sure."

"I can't see the necessity of her being so mysterious about it," declared the girl. "Josie ought to know I'm worthy of her confidence. And she said, just the other day, that we're partners."

"You must be the silent partner, then," said her grandfather, smiling at her vexed expression. "Josie is also worthy of confidence. She may blunder, but if so, she'll blunder cleverly. I advise you to be patient with her."

"Well, I'll try, Gran'pa. When we see her again she will probably know something important," said Mary Louise resignedly.

As for little, red-headed Josie O'Gorman, she walked into the office of the Mansion House that afternoon, lugging a battered suit-case borrowed from Aunt Sally, and asked the clerk at the desk for weekly rates for room and board. The clerk spoke to Mr. Boyle, the proprietor, who examined the girl critically.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"New York," answered Josie. "I'm a newspaper woman, but the war cost me my job, because the papers are all obliged to cut down their forces. So I came here to get work."

"The war affects Dorfield, too, and we've only two papers," said the man. "But your business isn't my business, in any event. I suppose you can pay in advance?"

"For a week, anyhow," she returned; "perhaps two weeks: If the papers can't use me, I'll try for some other work."

“Know anybody here?”

“I know Colonel Hathaway, but I’m not on good terms with his granddaughter, Mary Louise. We had a fight over the war. Give me a quiet room, not too high up. This place looks like a fire-trap.”

As she spoke, she signed her name on the register and opened her purse.

Boyle looked over his keyboard.

“Give me 47, if you can,” said Josie carelessly. She had swiftly run her eye over the hotel register. “Forty-seven is always my lucky number.”

“It’s taken,” said the clerk.

“Well, 43 is the next best,” asserted Josie. “I made forty-three dollars the last week I was in New York. Is 43 taken, also?”

“No,” said Boyle, “but I can do better by you. Forty-three is a small room and has only one window.”

“Just the thing!” declared Josie. “I hate big rooms.”

He assigned her to room 43 and after she had paid a week in advance a bellboy showed her to the tiny apartment and carried her suitcase.

“Number 45’ll be vacant in a day or two,” remarked the boy, as he unlocked her door. “Kauffman has it now, but he won’t stay long. He’s a suspender drummer and comes about every month — sometimes oftener — and always has 45. When he goes, I’ll let you know, so you can speak for it. Forty-five is one of our best rooms.”

“Thank you,” said Josie, and tipped him a quarter.

As she opened her suitcase and settled herself in the room, she reflected on the meeting in Kasker’s store which had led her to make this queer move.

“A fool for luck, they say,” she muttered. “I wonder what intuition induced me to interview Jake Kasker. The clothing merchant isn’t a bad fellow,” she continued to herself, looking over the notes she had made on her tablets. “He didn’t make a single disloyal speech. Hates the war, and I can’t blame him for that, but wants to fight it to a finish. Now, the other man — Kauffman — hates the war, too, but he did not make any remark that was especially objectionable; but that man’s face betrayed more than his words, and some of his words puzzled me. Kauffman said, at two different times, that the war would make him money. There’s only one way a man like him can make money out of the war, and that is — by serving the Kaiser. I suppose he thought we wouldn’t catch that idea, or he’d been more careful what he said. All criminals are reckless in little ways; that’s how they betray themselves and give us a chance to catch them. However, I haven’t caught this fellow yet, and he’s tricky enough to give me a long chase unless I act boldly and get my evidence before he suspects I’m on his trail. That must be my programme — to act quickly and lose no time.”

Kauffman saw her when she entered the hotel dining room for dinner that evening, and he walked straight over to her table and sat down opposite her.

"Met again!" he said with his broad smile. "You selling something?"

"Brains," returned Josie composedly.

"Good! Did Jake Kasker buy any of you?"

"I've all my stock on hand, sir. I'm a newspaper woman — special writer or advertising expert. Quit New York last week and came on here."

"Wasn't New York good enough for you?" he asked, after ordering his dinner of the waitress.

"I'm too independent to suit the metropolitan journals. I couldn't endorse their gumshoe policies. For instance, they wanted me to eulogize President Wilson and his cabinet, rave over the beauties of the war and denounce any congressman or private individual who dares think for himself," explained Josie, eating her soup the while. "So — I'm looking for another job."

Kauffman maintained silence, studying the bill-of-fare. When he was served he busied himself eating, but between the slits of his half-closed eyes he regarded the girl furtively from, time to time. His talkative mood had curiously evaporated. He was thoughtful. Only when Josie was preparing to leave the table did he resume the conversation.

"What did you think of Jake Kasker's kind of patriotism?" he asked.

"Oh; the clothing man? I didn't pay much attention. Never met Kasker before, you know. Isn't he like most of the rabble, thinking what he's told to think and saying what he's told to say?"

She waited for a reply, but none was forthcoming. Even this clever lead did not get a rise out of Abe Kauffman. Indeed, he seemed to suspect a trap, for when she rose and walked out of the dining room she noticed that his smile had grown ironical.

On reaching her room through the dimly lighted passage, Josie refrained from turning on her own lights, but she threw open her one little window and leaned out. The window faced a narrow, unlighted alley at the rear of the hotel. One window of Room 45, next to her, opened on an iron fire-escape that reached to within a few feet of the ground. Josie smiled, withdrew her head and sat in the dark of her room for hours, with a patience possible only through long training.

At ten o'clock Kauffman entered his room. She could distinctly hear him moving about. A little later he went away, walking boldly down the corridor to the elevator.

Josie rose and slipped on her hat and coat.

Leaving the hotel, Kauffman made his way down the street to Broadway, Dorfield's main thoroughfare. He wore a soft hat and carried a cane. The few

people he passed paid no attention to him. Steadily proceeding, he left the business district and after a while turned abruptly to the right.

This was one of the principal residence sections of the city. Kauffman turned the various corners with a confidence that denoted his perfect acquaintance with the route. But presently his pace slowed and he came to a halt opposite an imposing mansion set far back in ample grounds, beautifully cared for and filled with rare shrubbery.

Only for a moment, however, did the man hesitate — just long enough to cast a glance up and down the deserted street, which was fairly well lighted. No one being in sight, he stepped from the sidewalk to the lawn, and keeping the grass under his feet, noiselessly made his way through the shrubbery to the south side of the residence. Here a conservatory formed a wing which jutted into the grounds.

The German softly approached, mounted the three steps leading to a glass door, and rapped upon the sash in a peculiar manner. Almost immediately the door was opened by a woman, who beckoned him in. The conservatory was unlighted save by a mellow drift that filtered through the plants from a doorway beyond, leading to the main house.

From behind the concealment of a thick bush Josie O'Gorman had noted the woman's form but was unable to see her face. The girl happened to know the house, however. It was the residence of Dorfield's social leader, Mrs. Charleworth.

Josie squatted behind that bush for nearly half an hour. Then the glass door opened and Kauffman stepped out.

"By the way," he said in a low voice, "it's just as well we didn't take Kasker in with us. He's a loud-mouthed fool. I've tested him and find he blats out everything he knows."

"We do not need him, since I've decided to finance the affair," returned the woman, and Josie recognized her voice. It was the great Mrs. Charleworth herself. Mrs. Charleworth, in secret conference with Abe Kauffman, the suspender salesman!

Then Josie experienced another surprise. A second man stepped through the shadowy doorway, joining Kauffman on the steps.

"It seems to me," said this last person, "that there is danger in numbers. Of course, that's your affair, Kauffman, and none of my business, but if I'm to help you pull it off, I'd rather there wouldn't be too many of us. It's a ticklish thing, at the best, and — "

"Shut up!" growled Kauffman, suspiciously peering around him into the darkness. "The less we talk in the open, the better."

"That is true. Good night," said the woman, and went in, closing the door

behind her.

“I think I will light a cigar,” said Kauffman.

“Wait until you are in the street,” cautioned the other.

They walked on the grass, avoiding the paths and keeping in the darkest places. Finally they emerged upon the sidewalk, and finding the coast clear, traveled on side by side.

At times they conversed in low tones, so low that the little red-headed girl, dodging through the parkings in their wake, could not overhear the words they spoke. But as they approached the more frequented part of the town, they separated, Kauffman turning into Broadway and the other continuing along a side street.

Josie O’Gorman followed the latter person. He was tall and thin and stooped a trifle. She had been unable, so far, to see his face. He seemed, from the turnings he made, to be skirting the business section rather than pass directly through it. So the girl took a chance, darted down one street and around the corner of another, and then slipped into a dim doorway near which hung an electric street-light.

She listened eagerly and soon was rewarded by a sound of footsteps. The man she was shadowing leisurely approached, passed under the light and continued on his way, failing to note the motionless form of the girl in the doorway.

Josie gave a little laugh.

“You’re a puzzling proposition, Professor,” she whispered to herself, “and you came near fooling me very properly. For I imagined you were on your way to Washington, and here you’ve mixed up with another important job!”

CHAPTER XVII
THE BLACK SATCHEL

When Josie reached the hotel it was nearly midnight. Half the lights in the office had been extinguished and behind the desk, reading a novel, the night clerk sprawled in an easy chair.

She hadn't seen the night clerk before. He was a sallow-faced boy, scarcely twenty years old, attired in a very striking suit of clothes and wearing a gorgeous jewelled scarf-pin in his cravat. As he read, he smoked a cigarette.

"Hello," said this brilliant individual, as Josie leaned over the counter and regarded him with a faint smile. "You're No. 43, I guess, and it's lucky old Boyle ain't here to read you a lecture — or to turn you out. He won't stand for unmarried lady guests bein' out till this hour, an' you may as well know it first as last."

"He's quite right," was Josie's calm reply. "I'll not do it again. My key, please!"

He rose reluctantly and gave her the key.

"Do you sit up all night?" she asked sweetly.

"I'm s'posed to," he answered in a tone less gruff, "but towards mornin' I snooze a little. Only way to pass the time, with noth'n' to do an' nobody to talk to. It's a beastly job, at the best, an' I'm goin' to quit it."

"Why don't you start a hotel of your own?" she suggested.

"You think you're kiddin' me, don't you? But I might even do that, if I wanted to," he asserted, glaring at her as if he challenged contradiction. "It ain't money that stops me, but hotel keepin' is a dog's life. I've made a bid for a cigar-store down the street, an' if they take me up, somebody can have this job."

"I see you're ambitious," said Josie. "Well, I hope you get the cigar-store. Good night, Mr. — "

"My name's Tom Linnet. I won't tell the ol' boy you was out so late. So long."

The elevator had stopped running, so Josie climbed the stairs and went thoughtfully to her room. Kauffman had preceded her. She heard him drop his shoes heavily upon the floor as he undressed.

She turned on the light and made some notes on her tablets, using the same queer characters that she always employed. The last note read: "Tom Linnet, night clerk at the Mansion House. New clothes; new jewelry. Has money. Recently acquired, for no one with money would be a night clerk. Wants to quit his job and buy a cigar store. Query: Who staked Tom? And

why?”

As she crawled into bed Josie reflected: “Mary Louise would be astonished if she knew what I have learned to-night. But then, I’m astonished myself. I feel like the boy who went fishing for sunfish and caught a whale.”

Next morning she was up early, alert to continue her investigations. When she heard Mr. Kauffman go down to breakfast she took a bunch of pass-keys from her bag, went boldly through the hall to the door of 45, unlocked it with ease and walked in. A hurried glance showed her a large suitcase lying open upon a table. She examined its contents. One side was filled with samples of suspenders, the other with miscellaneous articles of male apparel.

Josie was not satisfied. She peered under the bed, softly opened all the drawers in the dresser and finally entered the closet. Here, on the rear shelf, a newspaper was placed in such manner as to hide from observation anything behind it. To an ordinary person, glancing toward it, the newspaper meant nothing; to Josie’s practised eye it was plainly a shield. Being short of stature, the girl had to drag in a chair in order to reach the high shelf. She removed the newspaper, took down a black hand-satchel — it was dreadfully heavy and she almost dropped it — and then replaced the paper as it had been before.

Josie was jubilant. She removed the chair, again closed the closet door, and leaving the room practically as she had found it stole back to her own apartment, the heavy satchel concealed in the folds of her frock. But no one saw her, the hall being vacant, and she breathed a sigh of relief as she locked her own door against possible intruders.

Then she placed the black satchel on a stand and bent over it. The lock was an unusual one. She tried all the slender keys upon her bunch without effect — they were either too large or did not fit the keyhole. Next she took a thin hairpin, bent and twisted it this way and that and tried to pry the lock open. Failure. However, she was beginning to understand the mechanism of the lock by this time. From that all-containing handbag which was her inseparable companion she drew out a file, and taking one of the master-keys, began to file it to fit the lock of the black satchel.

This operation consumed more time than she was aware, so interesting was the intricate work. She was presently startled by a sound in the corridor. Mr. Kauffman was coming back to his room, whistling an aria from “Die Walküre.” Josie paused, motionless; her heart almost stopped beating.

The man unlocked his door and entered, still whistling. Sometimes the whistle was soft and low, again it was louder and more cheerful. Josie listened in suspense. As long as the whistling continued she realized that the theft of the black satchel remained undiscovered.

Kauffman remained in his room but a few moments. When he departed, carefully locking his door after him, he was still whistling. Josie ran to her own door and when he had passed it opened it just a crack, to enable her to gaze after him. Underneath his arm he carried a bundle of the sample suspenders.

"Good!" she whispered softly, retreating to bend over the satchel again. "Mr. Abe Kauffman will sell suspenders this morning as a blind to his more important industries, so I needn't hurry."

Sooner than she expected the lock clicked and sprang open. Her eyes at first fell upon some crumpled, soiled shirts, but these she hurriedly removed. The remainder of the satchel contained something enclosed in a green flannel bag. It was heavy, as she found when she tried to lift it out, and a sudden suspicion led her to handle the thing very gingerly. She put it on the table beside the satchel and cautiously untied the drawstring at the mouth of the bag. A moment later she had uncovered a round ball of polished blue steel, to which was attached a tube covered with woven white cotton.

Josie fell back on a chair, fairly gasping, and stared with big eyes at the ball. In her desire to investigate the possessions of the suspender salesman she had scarcely expected to find anything like this. The most she had hoped to discover were incriminating papers.

"It's a bomb!" she stammered, regarding the thing fearfully; "a real, honest-for-true bomb. And it is meant to carry death and destruction to loyal supporters of our government. There's no doubt of that. But — " The thoughts that followed so amazing an assertion were too bewildering to be readily classified. They involved a long string of conjectures, implicating in their wide ramifications several persons of important standing in the community. The mere suggestion of what she had uncovered sufficed to fill Josie's heart and brain with terror.

"Here! I mustn't try to think it out just yet," she told herself, trying with a little shiver of repulsion for the thing to collect her wits. "One idea at a time, Josie, my girl, or you'll go nutty and spoil everything! Now, here's a bomb — a live, death-dealing bomb — and that's the first and only thing to be considered at present."

Controlling her aversion and fear, the girl turned the bomb over and over, giving it a thorough examination. She had never seen such a thing before, but they had often been explained to her and she had an inkling as to the general method of their construction. This one before her was of beautiful workmanship, its surface as carefully turned and polished as if it had been intended for public exhibition. Grooves had been cut in the outer surface and within these grooves lay the coils of the time fuse, which was marked with

black ink into regular sections. The first section from the end of the fuse was marked “6;” the next section “5” and so on down to the section nearest the bomb, which was divided by the marks “1” — ”1/2” — ”1/4.”

“I see,” said Josie, nodding her head with intelligent perception. “Each section, when lighted, will burn for one hour, running along its groove but harmless until the end of the fuse is reached. If the entire fuse is lighted, it will require just six hours to explode the bomb, while if it is cut off to the last mark and then lighted, the bomb will explode in fifteen minutes. The operator can set it to suit himself, as circumstances require.”

The manner in which the fuse was attached to the bomb was simple. The hole made in the bomb was exactly the size of the fuse inserted into it. There were two little knobs, one on each side the hole. After pushing the fuse into the hole a fine wire was wound around it and attached to the tiny knobs, thus holding it firmly in place.

Josie took a pair of small pincers, unwound the wire and cautiously withdrew the fuse from the hole. Examining the end of the fuse she saw it was filled with a powdery substance which, when ignited, would explode the bomb. She had recourse to her hairpin again and carefully picked the powder out of the fuse for the distance of the entire first section. This proved difficult and painstaking work, but when completed not a grain of the powder remained in the woven cotton casing for the distance of six inches from the end.

Having accomplished that much, Josie sat looking at the thing in a speculative way. She could not have told you, at the moment, why her first act had been to render the bomb impotent in so queer a manner when she could have simply destroyed the entire fuse. But, of course, no one would try to use the fiendish contrivance unless it was supplied with a fuse.

After a period of thought the girl decided what to do next. She removed the bomb, fuse, green bag — even the satchel — to the big lower drawer of her bureau, and turned the lock.

“No one is likely to come in but the chambermaid, and she will be too busy to disturb anything,” Josie decided; and then she locked her room door and went down stairs to breakfast.

CHAPTER XVIII

A HINT FEOM ANNIE BOYLE

Josie was late. In the breakfast room she found but one guest besides herself, an old lady with a putty face. But there was also a young girl seated at a near-by table who was grumbling and complaining to the maid who waited upon her.

"It ain't my fault, Miss Annie," protested the maid. "The cook says you ordered your breakfast half an hour ago, an' then went away. We tried to keep it hot for you, and if it's cold it's your own fault."

"I was talking with Mr. Kauffman," pouted the girl, who seemed a mere child. "I've a good notion to order another breakfast."

"If you do, cook will tell your father."

This threat seemed effective. The girl, with a sour face, began eating, and the maid came over to take Josie's order. The tables were near enough for conversation, so when the maid had gone to the kitchen Josie said sweetly:

"That Mr. Kauffman's a nice man, isn't he? I don't wonder you forgot your breakfast. Isn't this Miss Annie Boyle?"

"Yes," was the answer. "Do you know Abe Kauffman?"

"I've met him," said Josie.

"He an' Pa used to be good friends," said Annie Boyle, who did not seem at all shy in conversing with strangers, "but Pa's soured on him lately. I don't know why. P'raps because Abe is a German, an' everybody's tryin' to fling mud at the Germans. But Abe says the German-Americans are the back-bone of this country, and as good citizens as any."

"He don't seem to like the war, though," remarked Josie carelessly.

"Well, do you know why? Abe's had two brothers and five cousins in the German army, and all of 'em's been killed. That's why he's sore on the war. Says his brothers deserved what they got for not comin' to America an' bein' American citizens, like Abe is. But I know he's dreadful sorry 'bout their bein' killed just the same. German folks seem to think a good, deal of their families, an' so jest to mention the war makes Abe rave an' swear."

"That's foolish," said Josie. "He'll get himself into trouble."

"Abe's no fool; he knows how far he can go, an' when to stop talkin'. He'll cuss the war, but you never hear him cuss'n' the United States. He told me, just a while ago, that the war'll make him rich, 'cause he's smart enough to use it for his own good. But he said I mustn't talk about that," she added, with a sudden realization that Josie was regarding her curiously. "Abe an' me's chums, an' what he says is between us. P'raps he was only jokin', 'bout gettin' rich. Abe's a great joker, anyhow."

That this was a rather lame retraction was apparent even to Annie Boyle. She gave Josie a suspicious look, but Josie's face was absolutely expressionless. The maid was placing her order before her and she calmly began her breakfast. A moment later, the old lady rose and tottered out of the room.

"Gee! I wish I had her money," remarked Annie Boyle, looking after her. "She's got a wad of stocks an' just has to cut coupons off 'em. Lives here easy an' don't worry. If I had her dough I'd — " She stopped suddenly.

"Money's a good thing to have," said Josie. "There's Tom Linnet, now; he's going to buy a cigar store."

"How'd you know?" asked Annie quickly.

"Why, he told me."

"Oh; are you an' Tom friends?"

"We're not enemies. Tom's in luck to have so much money."

"Wall," said Annie, "he's a fool to flash it all of a sudden. Pa took him for night clerk when he didn't have a cent — and it wasn't so long ago, either. He gets his board an' five dollars a week. Folks are goin' to wonder where he got all his fine clothes, an' them di'monds, an' how he can afford to buy Barker's cigar store. I asked Abe about it an' Abe says he guesses Tom got the money from an aunt that jus' died."

"Perhaps he did."

"Well, where'd he get the aunt? Tom's got two brothers that are peddlers an' a father who's a track-walker, an' he's got a mother what takes in washin'. If there's an aunt, she's some relation to the rest of the family, so why didn't she leave them some money, as well as Tom?"

"I don't know, but I'm glad Tom is so well fixed," answered Josie, rather absently, for her eye had fallen on the menu card beside her plate, and the menu card had somehow conveyed a new thought to her mind. She picked it up and examined it critically. Part of it was printed in a queer, open-faced type — all capitals — while the balance of the list of dishes had been written in with pen and ink. These printed bills would do for a good many breakfasts, for they mentioned only the staples, while the supplementary dishes were day by day added in writing.

"I wonder who prints your bills-of-fare?" she said to Annie Boyle.

"Why do you wonder that?" demanded Annie.

"I like the type, and I want to get some cards printed from it."

"We print our own bills," said the child. "There's a press an' type an' the fixings in a room in the basement, an' Tom Linnet used to print a new card every day for all the three meals. He did it at night, you know, between two an' six o'clock, when nobody's ever around the hotel. They was swell bills-

of-fare, but Tom claimed he couldn't do so much printin', although that's part o' the night clerk's duty, an' Pa thought it used up too much good cardboard at war-time prices. So now we jus' get out a new bill once a week, an' write the extry dishes on it."

"That does very well," said Josie. "Does Tom still do the printing?"

"Yes. Pa hired him as night clerk 'cause he'd worked in a printin' office an' could do printin'. But since Tom got rich he don't like to work, an the bills ain't printed as good as they used to be."

"This looks pretty good to me," said Josie, eyeing it approvingly.

"I guess, if Tom wasn't goin' to leave, Pa would fire him," asserted Annie, rising from the table. "Good mornin', miss; I'll see you again, if you're stoppin' here."

After she had gone, Josie finished her breakfast thoughtfully. Three distinct facts she had gleaned from Annie Boyle's careless remarks. First, Tom Linnet had acquired sudden riches. Second, the type used on the hotel menu cards was identically the same that the disloyal circulars had been printed from. Third, between the hours of two and five in the mornings, the night clerk's duties permitted him to be absent from the hotel office.

Josie decided that Annie Boyle had not been admitted to the inner confidences of the conspirators, and that Tom Linnet was their tool and had been richly paid for whatever services he had performed. She was now gathering "clues" so fast that it made her head swim. "That chance meeting with Kauffman, at Kasker's," she told herself, "led me directly into the nest of traitors. I'm in luck. Not that I'm especially clever, but because they're so astonishingly reckless. That's usually the way with criminals; they close every loop-hole but the easiest one to peep through — and then imagine they're safe from discovery!"

CHAPTER XIX
THE PRINTING OFFICE

After breakfast Josie sallied out upon the street and found a hardware store. There, after some exploration, she purchased an asbestos table-mat. With this she returned to her room and locked herself in.

The chambermaid had "been and gone," but Josie's drawer was still locked and its precious contents intact. The girl scraped the surface of the table-mat with her pen-knife until she had secured enough loose fibre to serve her purpose and then she proceeded to restuff the fuse with the asbestos fibre the entire length of the section from which she had removed the powder. Then she pushed the end of the fuse into the hole in the bomb, wired it as before, and replaced the long fuse in its grooves.

"Now," said Josie, surveying her work with satisfaction, "if they light that fuse, and expect it to explode the bomb in an hour or more, they'll be badly fooled. Also, I shall have prevented another catastrophe like the explosion at the airplane factory."

She replaced the bomb in its bag, placed the bag in the black satchel, tucked in the soiled shirts to cover it and with her improvised key managed to relock the satchel. Watching for a time when the corridor was vacant, she went to 45, entered the room and replaced the satchel on its shelf, taking care to arrange the newspaper before it as a mask.

She had taken the chair from the closet and was about to leave the room when she heard footsteps coming down the hallway, accompanied by a whistle which she promptly recognized.

"Caught!" she exclaimed, and gave a hurried glance around her. To hide within the room was impossible, but the window was open and the iron fire-escape within easy reach. In an instant she had mounted it and seizing the rounds of the iron ladder climbed upward until she had nearly reached the next window directly above, on the third floor. Then she paused, clinging, to get her breath.

Kauffman was annoyed to find the door of his room unlocked. He paused a moment in the middle of the room and looked around him. "Confound that chambermaid!" Josie heard him mutter, and then he opened the closet door and looked in. Apparently reassured, he approached the open window, stuck out his head and looked *down* the fire-escape. Josie's heart gave a bound; but Kauffman didn't look upward. He drew in his head, resumed his whistling and busied himself repacking the sample suspenders in his suitcase.

Josie hoped he would soon go out again, but he seemed to have no intention of doing so. So she climbed her ladder until she could look into the

window above, which was also open. The old lady she had seen at breakfast was lying upon the bed, her eyes closed. Josie wondered if she was asleep. The door leading from the room to the hallway also stood open. The weather was warm, and the old lady evidently wanted plenty of air.

While Josie hesitated what to do a boy came up the alley, noticed her on the fire-escape and paused to look at her in astonishment. The girl couldn't blame him for being interested, for her attitude was certainly extraordinary. Others were likely to discover her, too, and might suspect her of burglary and raise a hue and cry. So she deliberately entered the room, tiptoed across to the hall and escaped without arousing the old lady. But it was a desperate chance and she breathed easier when she had found the stairs and descended to her own floor. Safe in her own room she gave a little laugh at her recent predicament and then sat down to note her latest discoveries on her tablets.

Josie O'Gorman was very particular in this regard. Details seemingly of trifling moment but which may prove important are likely to escape one's memory. Her habit was to note every point of progress in a case and often review every point from the beginning, fitting them into their proper places and giving each its due importance. A digest of such information enabled her to proceed to the next logical step in her investigation.

"These items all dovetail very nicely," she decided, with a satisfied nod at the quaint characters on the tablets — which all the world might read and be no wiser. "I must, however, satisfy myself that Tom Linnet actually printed those circulars. The evidence at hand indicates that he did, but I want positive proof. Also, I'd like to know which one of the gang employed him — and paid him so liberally. However, that suggestion opens up a new line of conjecture; I don't believe Tom Linnet got all his wealth merely for printing a few circulars, helping to address them, and keeping his mouth shut. But — what else has he been paid for?"

She brooded on this for a while and then determined to take one thing at a time and follow it to a conclusion. So she once more quitted her room and descended by the elevator — openly, this time — to the office. It was now noon and the hotel office was filled with guests, and the clerks and bellboys were all busily occupied. Josie wandered carelessly around until she found the stairway leading to the basement. Watching her opportunity she slipped down the stairs.

The basement was not as barren as she expected to find it. There was an open central space, on one side of which were rooms for the barber shop, baths, and a pool room, all more or less occupied by guests and attendants. On the opposite side, at the rear, were baggage and storerooms. Just beside her she noted a boot-black's stand, where a colored boy listlessly waited for

customers.

“Shine, miss?” he inquired.

“No,” said Josie in a businesslike tone; “I’m looking for the printing office.”

“Secon’ door, miss,” indicating it with a gesture; “but dey ain’t nobody dere. De room’s mos’ly kep’ locked.”

“I know,” said Josie, and advancing to the door drew out her keys.

Her very boldness disarmed suspicion; the boy was not sufficiently interested to watch her, for a man came out of the barber-shop and seated himself in the boot-black’s chair.

This sort of lock didn’t phase Josie at all. At the second trial she opened the door, walked in and closed the door behind her.

It was a small room, dimly lighted and very disorderly. Scraps of paper were strewn around the floor. Dust had settled on the ink-rollers of the foot-press. A single case of type stood on a rack and the form of a bill-of-fare — partly “pied” — was on a marble slab which formed the top of a small table. On an upturned soap-box was a pile of unprinted menu cards. Josie noted a few cans of ink, a bottle of benzine, and a few printing tools lying carelessly about, but the room contained nothing more.

Having “sized up” Tom Linnet’s printing room with one swift glance, the girl stooped down and began searching among the scraps that littered the floor. They were mostly torn bits of cardboard or crumpled papers on which trial impressions had been made.

Josie expected momentarily to be interrupted, so she conducted her search as rapidly as was consistent with thoroughness. She paid no attention to the card scraps but all papers she smoothed out, one by one. Finally, with a little cry of triumph, she thrust one of these into her handbag. She made this discovery just back of the press, and glancing up, she noted a hook that had formerly been hidden from her view, on which were impaled a number of papers — the chef’s “copy” from which various bills had been printed. Running through these papers she suddenly paused, pulled one away from the hook and tucked it into her bag.

She was fairly satisfied, now, but still continued her search amongst the litter. It was not easy to decipher writing or printing in that dim light, but her eyes were good and the longer she remained in the room the more distinctly she saw. There was an electric globe suspended over the press, but she dared not turn on the light for fear of attracting attention. Several scraps on which writing appeared she secured without trying to read them, but presently she decided she had made as thorough an examination of the place as was necessary.

She left the room, locked the door again and boldly mounted the stairs to the office, meeting and passing several men who scarcely noticed her. Then she took the elevator to her room and washed her grimy hands and prepared for luncheon.

At the table she slipped another of the printed bills into her bag, to use for comparison, and afterward ate her lunch as calmly as if she were not inwardly elated at the success of her morning's work. Josie felt, indeed, that she had secured the proof necessary to confound the traitors and bring them to the bar of justice. But there might be other interesting developments; her trap was still set. "There's no hurry," she told herself. "Let's see this thing through — to the end."

Indeed, on reflection, she realized that several threads of evidence had not yet been followed to their source. Some points of mystification still remained to be cleared up. Her facts were mingled with theories, and she had been taught that theories are mighty uncertain things.

On leaving the dining room, Josie got on her hat and jacket, went out to the street and caught an Oak Avenue car.

"Oh, Josie!" cried a well-known voice, and there sat Mary Louise, on her way home from the Shop.

Josie gave her a haughty look, walked straight to the far end of the car and sat down in a vacant seat. The car was half filled with passengers.

Mary Louise pushed forward and sat beside her friend. Josie stared straight ahead, stolidly.

"No one here knows you," whispered Mary Louise, "won't you speak to me, Josie?"

No reply.

"Where are you stopping? What are you doing? How are you getting along on the case?" pleaded Mary Louise, so softly that no one else could overhear.

Josie maintained silence. Her features were expressionless.

"I know you told me, in case we met, not to recognize you," continued Mary Louise, "but I'm so anxious for news, dear! Can't you come home, to-night, and have a good talk with me? You owe me that much consideration. Josie."

The car stopped at a street intersection. Josie stood up.

"Not to-night," she replied, and alighted from the car just as it started to move again.

"Bother Mary Louise!" she muttered, "she has made me walk three whole blocks."

Mary Louise was human and she was provoked. There was really no need

for Josie O'Gorman to be so absurdly mysterious. Had she not known her so well, Mary Louise would have felt that Josie had deliberately insulted her. As it was, she blamed her friend for inexcusable affectation. "I'm not sure," she reflected, "that a girl can be a detective — a regular detective — without spoiling her disposition or losing to some an extent her maidenly modesty. Of course, Josie has been brought up in an atmosphere of mystery and can't be blamed for her peculiarities, but — -I'm glad *I'm* not a detective's daughter."

Josie, however, wasn't worrying over any resentment her friend might feel at the necessary snub. She was on a keen scent and already had forgotten her meeting with Mary Louise. Three blocks farther on she turned into the walk leading to an old but picturesque residence, at one time a "show place" of Dorfield and the pride of the Dudley-Markhams, but now overshadowed by modern and more imposing mansions.

Josie rang the door-bell and presently the door was opened by a young and rather untidy maid.

"I'd like to see Professor Dyer," said Josie.

"He's gone to Washington," was the reply.

"Indeed! Are you quite sure?"

"Yes," said the maid; and then Mrs. Dyer's head appeared in the opening and she gave Josie a curious if comprehensive examination. Then:

"If you're from one of the schools, I'm sorry to tell you that Professor Dyer went to Washington by the early train this morning. I don't know how soon he will be back. Professor Harrington of the High School is in charge. But perhaps it is something I can do?"

"No, thank you; I can wait," said Josie, and went away.

"So," she said to herself, as she made her way back to town in a street car, "if Dyer has really gone to Washington, he hopes to get possession of the old desk and its hidden papers. Pretty important to him, those papers are, and I wouldn't blame him for chasing them up. But — has he really gone? Mrs. Dyer thinks so; but all evidence points to the fact that she's not in her husband's confidence. Now, if Dyer is on his way to Washington, what did last night's secret meeting mean? His absence will complicate matters, I fear. Anyhow, I must revise my conclusions a bit."

CHAPTER XX
ONE GIRL'S WITS

As she entered the hotel Josie encountered Joe Langley, the one-armed soldier back from the war. She had taken a great interest in this young fellow and admired his simple, manly nature, having had several interesting conversations with him at the Liberty Girls' Shop and at the drills. Josie felt she needed an ally at this juncture, and here was one who could be trusted.

"Joe," she said earnestly, drawing him aside, "are you going to be busy this evening?"

"Yes, Miss O'Gorman, I'm busy every evening now," he replied. "I've taken a job, you know, and my loafing days and social stunts are over. There wasn't any bread-an'-butter in telling the society dames about my war experiences, so I had to go to work. I'm night watchman at the steel works, and go on duty at seven o'clock."

Josie was disappointed. Looking at him musingly, she asked:

"Are they making munitions now, at the steel works?"

"Of course; it's practically under government control, they say, but is still operated by the old company. They make shells for the big guns, you know, and they've ten car-loads on hand, just now, ready to be shipped to-morrow."

Josie drew a long breath. This was real news and her active mind jumped to a quick conclusion.

"Are the shells loaded, Joe?" she inquired.

"All ready for war," replied the soldier. "You see, a night watchman in such a place has an important position. I guard those shells by night, and another man does nothing but guard them by day."

"Where are they stored?" was Josie's next question.

"In the room just back of Mr. Colton's office — the big main building."

"So Mr. Colton is still the head of the company?"

"He's Vice-President and General Manager, and he knows the steel and ammunition business from A to Z," asserted Joe Langley. "Mr. Colton represents the government as well as the steel works. The President is Mr. Jaswell, the banker, but he doesn't do anything but attend the Board meetings."

"Joe," said Josie impressively, "you know who I am, don't you?"

"Why, you're one of the Liberty Girls, I guess."

"I'm from Washington," she said. "My father, John O'Gorman, is one of the government's secret service officers; I'm working on a case here in the interests of our government, and I may want you to help me foil a German spy plot."

“Count on me!” said Sergeant Joe, emphatically. And then he added: “I’d like to make sure, though, that you’re really what you claim to be.”

Josie opened her hand bag and from a side pocket drew a silver badge engraved “U. S. Secret Service. No. L2O1.” That was her father’s number and a complimentary badge, but Joe was satisfied. He had to glance inside the handbag to see it, for the girl dared not exhibit it more openly.

“If you want to know more about me, ask Colonel Hathaway,” continued Josie.

“No,” said Joe; “I believe you’re on the square. But I’d never have suspected it of you. Tell me what I’m to do.”

“Nothing, at present. But should a crisis arrive, stand by me and obey my instructions.”

“I’ll do that,” promised the man.

When the girl had regained her room in the hotel, she sat down with a businesslike air and wrote upon a sheet of paper, in her peculiar cypher, the story of her discoveries and the conclusions they justified up to the present hour. This was to fix all facts firmly in her mind and to enable her to judge their merits. The story was concise enough, and perhaps Josie was quite unaware how much she had drawn upon her imagination. It read this way:

“Disloyal circulars have been issued from time to time in Dorfield, designed to interfere with sales’ of Liberty Bonds, to cause resentment at conscription and to arouse antipathy for our stalwart allies, the English. These circulars were written by John Dyer, superintendent of schools, who poses as a patriot. The circulars were printed in the basement of the Mansion House by Tom Linnet, a night clerk, who was well paid for his work. Papers found secreted in an old desk from the attic of Dyer’s house prove that Dyer is in the pay of German agents in this country and has received fabulous sums for his ‘services,’ said services not being specified in the documents. In addition to these payments, there were found in the desk notes of the Imperial German Government, for large amounts, such notes to be paid ‘after the war.’

“Dyer is clearly the head of the German spy plot in Dorfield, but the person who acts as medium between Dyer and the Master Spy is an alleged suspender salesman calling himself Abe Kauffman. This Kauffman makes frequent trips to Dorfield, giving orders to Dyer, and on one occasion Kauffman, who stops at the Mansion House while in town, hired Tom Linnet to place a bomb in the Airplane Factory, causing an explosion which destroyed many government airplanes and killed several employees. The sum paid Linnet for this dastardly act has made him rich and he has bought or is about to buy a cigar store. Kauffman now has another bomb in his

possession, doubtless brought here to be placed, when opportunity arrives, to do the most possible damage. Indications are that he may attempt to blow up the steel works, where a large amount of shells are now completed and ready for shipment to-morrow — meaning that the job must be done to-night, if at all. Perhaps Linnet will place the bomb; perhaps Kauffman will do it himself. Dyer has lost his incriminating papers and notes and is on his way to Washington in an endeavor to recover them.

"Associated with Dyer in his horrible activities is Mrs. Augusta Charleworth, occupying a high social position, but of German birth and therefore a German sympathizer. She is clever, and her brains supplement those of Dyer, who seems more shrewd than initiative, being content to execute the orders of others. Dyer was educated at Heidelburg, in Germany, which accounts, perhaps, for his being pro-German, although I suspect he is pro-anything that will pay him money. Dyer and the Hon. Andrew Duncan, while political pals, are not connected in this spy plot, but I suspect that Peter Boyle, the proprietor of the Mansion House may be one of the gang. I've no evidence yet that implicates Boyle, but he harbors Kauffman as a guest and ought to know that his night clerk is printing traitorous propaganda. So far, the evidence incriminates Kauffman, Mrs. Charleworth, Dyer and Tom Linnet. I believe Mrs. Dyer to be innocent of any knowledge of her husband's crimes; otherwise, she would never have parted with that important desk — the desk that will prove his ruin and ought to cost him his life.

"My plan is this," concluded the notation, "to catch Kauffman or Linnet in the act of placing the bomb to-night, make the arrest, round up the other guilty ones and jail them, and then turn the case over to the federal officers for prosecution. A telegram to Washington will secure Professor Dyer's arrest on his arrival there."

Josie read this through twice and nodded her red head with intense satisfaction.

"All clear as crystal," she asserted gleefully. "I have proof of every statement, and the finale can't go very wrong with such knowledge in my possession. To-night, unless all signs fail, will prove a warm night — warm enough to scorch these dreadful, murderous tools of the Kaiser!"

And now Josie skipped over to the police station and had a somewhat lengthy conference with Chief Farnum, who knew her father and treated the girl detective with professional consideration. After this she hunted up the two government agents — old Jim Crissey and young Norman Addison — who knew her well as "John O'Gorman's clever kid, the pride of her doting Daddy." They listened to her with interest and genuine respect for her talent

and not only promised their assistance whenever it might be needed but congratulated her warmly on her good work.

This concluded Josie's afternoon labors, and it was with a sense of triumphant elation that she returned to her hotel to rest and prepare for the expected crisis.

CHAPTER XXI
SURPRISES

Josie went to dinner as soon as the dining room opened. When she came out she met Abe Kauffman going in. He stopped and spoke to her.

"Sell any brains yet?" in a jocular way.

"Not to-day," she replied, with her innocent, baby-like stare.

"Well, I didn't sell any suspenders, either. There are no spenders for *sus*penders. Ha, ha, ha!"

"That doesn't seem to worry you much," asserted Josie, pointedly.

He gave a shrug.

"Well, to-morrow morning I leave by the 5:30 train east, so if I don't see you any more, I hope the brains will find a market."

"Thank you."

She went on, glad to escape the man. "He told me about leaving on the 5:30, and is probably giving everyone else the same information, so he can't be connected with the explosion," she reflected. "Clever Mr. Kauffman! But not clever enough to realize he is near the end of his infamous career."

Josie's plans, perfected during that afternoon, primarily involved the shadowing of Abe Kauffman every moment, from now on. Abe Kauffman and his black satchel. For it grew dark early at this time of year, and already the brief twilight was fading. So the girl hastened to her room and exchanged her gray walking suit for a darker one that was inconspicuous and allowed free movement. Then she slipped her little pearl-mounted revolver — her father's gift — into her handbag and decided she was ready for any emergency.

Having extinguished the light in her room, she glanced from the window into the alley below, where the shadows were now gathering deeply.

"I think Kauffman will go down the fire-escape and drop into the alley," she mused; "but he must first come to his room for the black satchel, in any event, and from that instant I must never lose sight of him."

Suddenly she discovered a form pacing slowly up and down the otherwise deserted alley. Fearful that other detectives were on the watch, and might disrupt her plans, she strained her eyes to discover this person's identity. There was but one light to relieve the gloom, and that was far down the alley, a spot the prowler for some time avoided. Finally, however, he came to a point where the light touched his face and Josie instantly recognized Tom Linnet.

"He is waiting for someone," she decided, "and Kauffman is still at dinner — killing time because it's yet too early to undertake his nefarious task. Tom

Linnet may be the tool he has selected, and I ought to get in touch with the boy, somehow, before he meets the arch conspirator. Kauffman is the one I prefer to land."

With this in mind, she hurried down, passed out at the front office doorway and turned into a narrow drive at the south of the hotel, which led to the rear alley. A great business block, now dark and deserted, loomed on the other side of the driveway, which was used by the baggage and supply wagons in the daytime.

When the girl reached the corner of the alley she found herself in very deep shadow; so she ventured to protrude her head far enough to look after Tom Linnet. To her surprise the party he had been waiting for had already joined him, for she discovered two dusky forms pacing the alley.

It could not be Kauffman. While she hesitated whether to steal closer or maintain her position, the two advanced almost to her corner and paused there — in the blackest spot they could find.

"I tell you I won't do it!" said Tom, in a hard, dogged tone that was tense with excitement. "I'm through, and that's all there is to it."

"That's a mistaken notion," was the quiet reply. "You're too deep in the plot to draw back, and the pay is well worth while."

"I don't want any more money," growled Tom.

"You'll get two thousand for this night's work. Cash. And there is no risk; you know that."

"Risk? God, man! Can't you guess how I dream of those poor devils I sent to their death in the airplane job? I hate the money I got! I — I — "

"See here," said the other voice impatiently, "that was a mistake, and you know it. We didn't intend murder, but the explosion was delayed. No one will get hurt to-night."

"Not through me," declared Tom.

"If you fail us, you'll come to grief."

"If I come to grief, so will you. Peach on me, and I'll blow the whole deal." There was a moment's silence.

"Would three thousand satisfy you?" demanded the tempter.

"No," asserted Tom stoutly; "I'm goin' to quit. What's done can't be undone, but I'm through with you. It — it's too blamed terrible, that's what it is! Leave me alone an' let me turn honest. Why don't you do the job yourself?"

"I think I will," said the other calmly. "If you intend to turn down a good thing, I'll do my own work and save the money. But remember, Linnet, silence is your only salvation. Don't talk at all; if you do, you're liable to say the wrong thing — and you can't afford to do that."

“I’m no fool,” responded the night clerk, a shade of relief in his tone. “But don’t come to me again, Professor. I’m done with you.”

Professor! Josie felt a distinct shock. She had to flatten herself against the wall, too, and remain rigid, for the man abruptly turned the corner and marched down the driveway. Half way to the brilliantly lighted street he dodged behind the building opposite the hotel, threading his way through narrow back yards. Josie followed, swift and silent. Finally they reached a place where the man was forced to pass beneath the rays of a lamp and Josie was near enough to see his face. It was, in reality, Professor John Dyer.

That assurance was all the girl wanted, just now. She let him go his way and turned to regain the hotel. It was not quite eight o’clock, yet she felt it important to keep an eye on Kauffman and the bomb. The bomb, especially, for until Dyer took possession of the infernal contrivance he could do no mischief.

In the hotel lobby she entered a public telephone booth and called up Jim Crissey; then she went straight to her room. She could hear a low whistling in 45, which informed her that Kauffman had not yet gone out and that he was in a cheerful mood.

“I’m beginning to understand their method of work,” Josie reflected. “Kauffman prepares the bombs, or brings them here under the guise of a suspender salesman; Dyer arranges for their being placed, having secured information as to where an explosion will do the most damage to the government, and Tom Linnet is used as the tool to do the actual work. Mrs. Charleworth probably assists Dyer in getting special information, and advises the gang, but doesn’t take an active part in the perpetration of the crimes. Her brains and position would naturally place her at the head of the conspirators in Dorfield, although I’m pretty sure Kauffman, as the agent of the Master Spy, can dictate what they must do.”

Kauffman slammed his door and locked it. He was going out. Josie opened her own door a crack to look after him. He was walking deliberately down the corridor, openly carrying in his left hand the black satchel.

To Josie this seemed the essence of effrontery. He had no intention of using the fire-escape, after all. He trusted in bravado, as so many careless criminals do. As she stealthily followed him, she observed the man stop in the office and exchange commonplaces with one or two guests whom he knew.

In reality, this was his safest plan. The black bag did not look suspicious. Presently the bomb would be turned over to Dyer and Kauffman’s responsibility would then end. His very boldness was calculated to prevent suspicion.

Leaving the hotel, Kauffman walked leisurely up the lighted street. Only when he turned a corner did Josie momentarily lose sight of him. There were many pedestrians at this hour and they masked the girl's form and for a while enabled her to keep near to the man she was shadowing. The only thing that puzzled Josie was the fact that Kauffman was proceeding in a direction exactly opposite that taken by Dyer a short time before. Dyer went south and Kauffman was going north.

When the business section of Dorfield was passed, the streets became more deserted. They were not well lighted either, which favored Josie the more.

Kauffman kept steadily on, and as the houses along the way thinned, Josie decided he was headed directly for the steel works. That upset her calculations a bit, for she knew he had not seen Dyer since the latter's interview with Tom Linnet, nor had he seen Linnet; therefore he could not know that any arrangements he had previously made with them had fallen through. The German's present actions, however, indicated that he had decided to place the bomb himself, without the assistance of his fellow conspirators. Had he been warned of Linnet's defection? Had he means of communicating with Dyer unknown to Josie? Dyer was a mystery; even his wife believed he was now on his way to Washington.

Surprises, in Josie's line of work were not uncommon, and this was no time to consider whys and wherefores. The one thing she was sure of was that the bomb was in the black satchel and the black satchel in Kauffman's hand. No matter where the other conspirators might be or how they were implicated in tonight's plot, as long as she kept her eye on the bomb, she would be able to control the situation.

CHAPTER XXII
A SLIGHT MISTAKE

From the edge of the town to the steel works the road led through a common, overgrown with brush and weeds. There was no moon and although the distance was not great it was a lonely, dark and "creepy" place. As soon as the girl saw Kauffman take the road to the works she decided to get there before he could do so. Knowing well she could not be seen, she branched off through the brush, and finding her way by instinct rather than sight, ran swiftly in a half circle over the fields and struck the road again considerably in advance of the more deliberate Kauffman.

She now set off at her swiftest run and on reaching the manager's office, in the front of the main building, perceived that it was lighted.

Josie rapped upon the door and it was opened by one-armed Joe Langley, the night watchman.

"Quick!" she said, "let me in and hide me somewhere, where I can't be seen."

Joe pulled her in, closed the outer door and locked it, and then faced her.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"There's a man coming here with a bomb in a black satchel," she panted. "He intends to blow up this building, in which all the shells axe stored. I want to catch him in the act, Joe, and you must hide me somewhere."

Joe glanced around with a puzzled look.

"Where?" he asked helplessly.

So Josie looked around her, too. This end of the long building was partitioned off for offices, as it fronted the town. The central section was a big space containing a table, benches, etc., while on either side were little glass rooms with partitions between them reaching about seven feet in height, the ceiling being some twelve feet from the floor. The first room to the left of the entrance was marked "Manager" on its glass door; the next office "Purchasing Agent," and the third "Chief Engineer." On the right hand side, the corresponding offices were marked "Secretary," "Examiner," and "Superintendent." All the office doors were locked except that of the Purchasing Agent, which stood ajar. Josie sprang into that office and cast a hurried glance around. The glass division between that and the manager's office was "frosted" with white paint, but so carelessly done that she found places where she could see through into the office of the manager. Also she could see into the main, or reception room, even with her door closed.

While she examined this place a knock came on the outer door — a loud, imperative knock.

“This will do,” whispered Josie to Joe. “Go an let him in, but don’t let him suspect I’m here.”

Joe was not quick-witted, but on the battlefields of France he had learned prompt obedience to orders. Josie, as a government agent, was now his commander, so he merely nodded to her as he walked over to unlock the outer door.

Kauffman stepped in, satchel in hand.

“You’re the watchman, I suppose,” he said cheerfully. “Is Mr. Colton here?”

“No,” answered Joe.

“I was to meet him here at this time,” said Kauffman.

“He said he’d be back this evening,” returned Joe, just recalling that fact, “but he isn’t here yet.”

“All right,” said the man, “I’ll wait.”

He carefully placed the satchel on the table and sat down on a bench. Joe regarded him suspiciously, remembering the girl’s warning, but said nothing more. Josie was watching Kauffman from her retreat, but as her little office was dark and the German sat under a bright light it was impossible for him to know that his every movement was under observation.

The minutes dragged. A big clock on the wall ticked with an ominous sound. Kauffman drew out his watch and compared it with the clock. He appeared to grow restless.

Josie’s quick ears caught the distant sound of a motor car coming down the road. Perhaps Kauffman heard it also. He rose from his seat and going to the table unlocked the black satchel, pressed the top open and looked inside it. Still bending over the satchel he placed a cigarette in his mouth, lighted a match and applied the flame to his cigarette. His back was toward Josie but she comprehended instantly the action.

“He has lighted the fuse!” she murmured, triumphantly.

The motor car came to a sudden halt outside the door, which Joe had left unlocked; but while the German turned expectantly toward the door the maimed soldier, hearing Josie’s whisper, approached her little room and slightly opened her door.

“He has lighted the fuse of the bomb,” she said to him excitedly. “The bomb is in the satchel!”

Joe turned quickly to the table. He dived into the bag with his one good hand, drew out the heavy ball of steel and rushed with it to the door just as the manager, Mr. Colton, opened it and stepped in.

So swift were Joe’s actions that Kauffman had no time to interfere. Both he and the manager stared in amazement as Joe Langley rushed outside and

with all his might hurled the bomb far out upon the common.

"Confound you!" cried Kauffman. "What did you do that for?"

"What is it?" inquired the astonished manager.

"A bomb!" cried Josie, stepping from her retreat and confronting them. "A bomb with the fuse lighted, and timed to blow up this building after you had gone away, Mr. Colton. That man before you is a German spy, and I arrest him in the name of the law. Put up your hands, Abe Kauffman!"

The little revolver was in her hand, steadily covering him. Kauffman gave an amused laugh, but he slowly raised his arms, as commanded.

"I don't quite understand," said the puzzled manager, looking from one to the other.

"Well, I brought the new projectile, Colton, as I had agreed," answered the German, coolly, "but your quaint watchman has thrown it away. As for the girl," he added, with a broad grin, "she has fooled me. She said she had brains, and I find she was mistaken."

The manager turned to Josie.

"May I ask who you are, Miss, and how you came to be in my office?"

"I am Josie O'Gorman, an agent of the government secret service," she replied, not quite truthfully. "I've been shadowing this man for some time. I tell you, sir, he brought a bomb here, to destroy this building, and under pretense of lighting, a cigarette he has just lighted the time fuse. The bomb was in that satchel, but — " she added impressively, "as a matter of fact the thing was harmless, as I had already removed the powder from the fuse."

Kauffman gave a low whistle.

"How did you manage that?" he asked curiously.

"Never mind how," she retorted; "I did it."

Kauffman turned to the manager.

"Will you please order your man to get the projectile?" he asked. "It is lucky for us all that the thing isn't loaded, or there really would have been an explosion." He now turned to Josie, with his hands still in the air, and explained: "It is meant to explode through impact, and ordering it tossed out there was the most dangerous thing you could have done."

At the manager's command Joe took an electric searchlight and went out to find the steel ball.

"If you please, miss," said Kauffman, "may I put down my arms? They are tired, and I assure you I will not try to escape."

Josie lowered the revolver. Her face was red. She was beginning to wonder if she had bungled the case. A second thought, however — a thought of the papers she had found in the old desk — reassured her. She might have been wrong in some respects, but surely she was right in the main.

“This man,” said Mr. Colton, pointing to Kauffman, “is known to me as a munition expert. He bears the endorsement of the Secretary of War and is the inventor of the most effective shells we now manufacture. What you have mistaken for a bomb is his latest design of projectile for an eight-inch gun. He had arranged to bring it here and explain to me its mechanism to-night, and also to submit a proposition giving our company the control of its manufacture. If you are a government agent, you surely understand that these arrangements must be conducted with great secrecy. If we purchase the right to make this projectile, we must first induce the government to use it, by demonstrating its effectiveness, and then secure our contracts. So your interference, at this time, is — -ahem! — annoying.”

Josie’s face was a little more red than before. A second motor car drew up at the door and to her astonishment Mrs. Charleworth entered and greeted both the manager and Kauffman in her usual charming manner. Then she looked inquiringly at the girl.

“Pardon me, madam,” said Mr. Colton. “There has been a singular misunderstanding, it seems, and our friend here has been accused of being a German spy by this young lady, who is a government detective — or — or claims to be such. The precious projectile, in which you are so deeply interested, has just been tossed out upon the common, but Joe Langley is searching for it.”

Mrs. Charleworth’s face wore an amused smile.

“We are so beset with spies, on every hand, that such an error is quite likely to occur,” said she. “I recognize this young lady as a friend of the Hathaway family, and I have met her at the Liberty Girls’ Shop, so she is doubtless sincere — if misled. Let us hope we can convince her — Miss O’Gorman, isn’t it? — that we are wholly innocent of attempting to promote the Kaiser’s interests.”

Joe came in with the steel ball, which he deposited upon the table. Then, at a nod from the manager, the soldier took his searchlight and departed through the door leading to the big room in the rear. It was time to make his regular rounds of the works, and perhaps Mr. Colton preferred no listeners to the conversation that might follow.

CHAPTER XXIII
THE FLASHLIGHT

"Perhaps," said Josie, her voice trembling a little, "I have assumed too much, and accused this man," pointing to Kauffman, "unjustly. I was trying to serve my country. But I am somewhat confused, even yet, in regard to this affair. Will you please tell me, Mrs. Charleworth, what connection you have with Mr. Kauffman, or with his — projectile?"

"Very gladly," said the lady, graciously. "I am a stockholder in this steel company — a rather important stockholder, I believe — and while I am not a member of the board of directors, Mr. Colton represents my interests. Two years ago we bought the Kauffman shell, and paid liberally for it, but Mr. Kauffman unfortunately invested his money in a transatlantic merchant ship which was sunk, with its entire cargo, by a German submarine. Again penniless, he began the manufacture of suspenders, in a small way, with money I loaned him, but was not very successful. Then he conceived the idea of a new projectile, very effective and quite different from others. He asked our company to finance him while he was experimenting and perfecting the new projectile. The company couldn't undertake to do that, but I personally financed Mr. Kauffman, having confidence in his ability. He has been six months getting the invention made, tested and ready to submit to government experts, and up to the present it has cost a lot of money. However, it is now considered perfect and Mr. Kauffman has brought it here to-night to exhibit and explain it to Mr. Colton. If Mr. Colton approves it from a manufacturing standpoint, our company will secure an option for the sole right to manufacture it."

"Mr. Kauffman has been in Dorfield several days," said Josie. "Why did he not show you the projectile before?"

"I have been out of town," explained the manager. "I returned this afternoon, especially for this interview, and made the appointment for this evening. I am a busy man — these are war times, you know — and I must make my evenings count as well as my days."

Josie scented ignominous defeat, but she had one more shot to fire.

"Mrs. Charleworth," she stated, with a severe look, "John Dyer, the school superintendent, was at your house last night, in secret conference with Mr. Kauffman and yourself."

"Oh, so you are aware of that interview?"

"Clever!" said Kauffman, "I'd no idea I was being shadowed." Then the two exchanged glances and smiled. "It seems impossible," continued the man, "to keep any little matter of business dark, these days, although the war

office insists on secrecy in regard to all munitions affairs and publicity would surely ruin our chances of getting the new projectile accepted for government use."

"I am awaiting an explanation of that meeting," declared Josie sternly. "Perhaps you do not realize how important it may be."

"Well," answered Mrs. Charleworth, a thoughtful expression crossing her pleasant face, "I see no objection to acquainting you with the object of that mysterious meeting, although it involves confiding to you a bit of necessary diplomacy. Mr. Colton will tell you that the Dorfield Steel Works will under no circumstances purchase the right to manufacture the Kauffman projectile — or any other article of munition — until it is approved and adopted by the War Department. That approval is not easily obtained, because the officials are crowded with business and a certain amount of red tape must be encountered. Experience has proved that the inventor is not the proper person to secure government endorsement; he labors under a natural disadvantage. Neither is Mr. Colton, as the prospective manufacturer, free from suspicion of selfish interest. Therefore it seemed best to have the matter taken up with the proper authorities and experts by someone not financially interested in the projectile.

"Now, Professor Dyer has a brother-in-law who is an important member of the munitions board, under General Crozier, and we have induced the professor, after much urging, to take our projectile to Washington, have it tested, and secure contracts for its manufacture. If he succeeds, we are to pay liberally for his services. That was how he came to be at our house last evening, when arrangements were finally made."

"Was such secrecy necessary?" asked Josie suspiciously.

It was Kauffman who answered this question, speaking with apparent good humor but with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice: "My dear young lady, your own disposition to secrecy — a quality quite necessary in a detective — should show you the absurdity of your question. Can we be too careful in these days of espionage? No emissary of the Kaiser must know the construction of this wonderful projectile; none should even know that it exists. Even should our government refuse to adopt it; we must not let the Central Powers know of it. My own negotiations with Mr. Colton and Mrs. Charleworth have been camouflaged by my disguise as a suspender merchant. It was equally important that Mr. Dyer's connection with us be wholly unsuspected. When the projectile is adopted, and these works are manufacturing it in quantities to help win the war, still no information concerning it must be made public. You must realize that."

"That is all true," agreed Mr. Colton. "These frank statements, miss, have

only been made to you because of your claim to being a government agent. If you fail to substantiate that claim, we shall place you under arrest and turn you over to the authorities, for our own protection."

"To be sure," said Josie; "that will be your duty. I am the daughter of John O'Gorman, one of the high officers of the United States Secret Service, who is now in Europe in the interests of the government. I came to Dorfield to visit my friend, Mary Louise Burrows, as Mrs. Charleworth is aware, and while here my suspicions were aroused of the existence of a German spy plot. Therefore I set to work to bring the criminals to justice."

"And, like the regulation detective, you have followed a false trail," commented Kauffman, with his provoking smile.

"Not altogether," retorted Josie. "I have already secured proof that will convict two persons, at least. And I am amazed that you have intrusted your secrets to that arch-traitor, Professor Dyer. Will you tell me, Mrs. Charleworth, what you know about that man?"

Mrs. Charleworth seemed astounded.

"Professor John Dyer is one of Dorfield's old residents, I believe," she answered slowly, as if carefully considering her words. "He is also the superintendent of schools, and in that capacity seems highly respected. I have never heard anything against the man, until now. His important public position should vouch for his integrity."

"Isn't his position a political appointment?" inquired Josie.

The lady looked at Mr. Colton. "Yes," said the manager. "It is true that John Dyer was active in politics long before he was made superintendent of schools. However, he was an educator, as well as a politician, so it seems his appointment was merited."

"How well do you know him personally, madam?" asked the girl.

"Not very well," she admitted. "We do not meet socially, so our acquaintance until very recently was casual. But I have looked upon him as a man of importance in the community. On learning that he had a relative on the munitions board, I asked him to come, to my house, where I made him the proposition to take our projectile to Washington and secure its adoption. I offered liberal terms for such service, but at first the professor seemed not interested. I arranged a second meeting, last evening, at which Mr. Kauffman was present to explain technical details, and we soon persuaded Mr. Dyer to undertake the commission. We felt that we could trust him implicity."

"When did he intend to go to Washington?" was Josie's next question.

"On the 5:30, to-morrow morning. After exhibiting the projectile to Mr. Colton and securing the firm's option to manufacture it on a royalty basis, we are to take it to my house, where Mr. Dyer will receive it and obtain our final

instructions."

"One question more, if you please," said Josie. "What connection with your enterprise has Tom Linnet?"

"Linnet? I do not know such a person," declared Mrs. Charleworth.

"Who is he?" asked the manager.

"I know him," said Kauffman. "He's the night clerk at the Mansion House where I stop. Sometimes I see him when I come in late. He's not of special account; he's weak, ignorant, and — "

A sharp report interrupted him and alarmed them all.

Josie swung around quickly, for the sound — she knew it was a revolver shot — came from the rear. As Colton and Kauffman sprang to their feet and Mrs. Charleworth shrank back in a fright, the girl ran to the back door, opened it and started to make her way through the huge, dark building beyond the partition. The manager followed in her wake and as he passed through the door he turned a switch which flooded the big store-room with light.

In the center of the building were long, broad tables, used for packing. A few shells still remained grouped here and there upon the boards. On either side the walls were lined with tiers of boxes bound with steel bands and ready for shipment. No person was visible in this room, but at the farther end an outer door stood ajar and just outside it a motionless form was outlined.

Josie and Mr. Colton, approaching this outer door nearly at the same time, controlled their haste and came to an abrupt halt. The upright figure was that of Sergeant Joe Langley and the light from the room just reached a human form huddled upon the ground a few feet distant. Joe had dropped his flashlight and in his one hand held a revolver.

Josie drew a long, shuddering breath. The manager took a step forward, hesitated, and returned to his former position, his face deathly white.

"What is it? What's the matter?" called Kauffman, coming upon the scene panting for he was too short and fat to run easily.

Joe turned and looked at them as if waking from a trance. His stolid face took on a shamed expression.

"Couldn't help it, sir," he said to the manager. "I caught him in the act. It was the flashlight that saved us. When it struck him he looked up and the bullet hit him fair."

"Who is it, and what was he doing?" asked Mr. Colton hoarsely.

"It's under him, sir, and he was a-lighting of it."

As he spoke, Sergeant Joe approached the form and with a shove of his foot pushed it over. It rolled slightly, unbent, and now lay at full length, facing them. Josie picked up the flashlight and turned it upon the face.

“Oh!” she cried aloud, and shivered anew, but was not surprised.

“I guess,” said Joe slowly, “they’ll have to get another school superintendent.”

“But what’s it all about? What did he do?” demanded Kauffman excitedly.

Joe took the light from Josie’s hand and turned it upon a curious object that until now had been hidden by the dead man’s body.

“It’s a infernal machine, sir, an’ I ain’t sure, even yet, that it won’t go off an’ blow us all up. He was leanin’ down an’ bendin’ over it, twisting that dial you see, when on a sudden I spotted him. I didn’t stop to think. My Cap’n used to say ‘Act first an’ think afterwards,’ an’ that’s what I did. I didn’t know till now it was the school boss, but it wouldn’t have made any difference. I done my duty as I saw it, an’ I hope I did it right, Mr. Colton.”

Kauffman was already stooping over the machine, examining it with a skilled mechanical eye.

“It’s ticking!” he said, and began turning the dial backward to zero. The ticking stopped. Then the inventor stood, up and with his handkerchief wiped the perspiration from his face.

“Gott!” he exclaimed, “this is no joke. We’ve all been too near death to feel comfortable.”

“This is horrible!” said Mr. Colton, “I can’t yet believe that Dyer could be guilty of so fiendish an act.”

“I can,” asserted Josie grimly, “and it isn’t the first time he has planned murder, either. Dyer was responsible for the explosion at the airplane factory.”

Footsteps were heard. Out of the darkness between the group of buildings appeared two men, Crissey and Addison.

“Are we too late, Miss O’Gorman?” asked Crissey.

“Yes,” she replied. “How did you lose track of Dyer?”

“He’s a slippery fellow,” said Addison, “and threw us off the scent. But finally we traced him here and — ”

“And there he is,” concluded Josie in a reproachful tone.

Crissey caught sight of the machine.

“Great Caesar!” he exclaimed, “who saved you?”

“I did,” answered Joe, putting the revolver in his hip pocket, “but I wish you’d had the job, stranger.”

CHAPTER XXIV
AFTER THE CRISIS

Mrs. Charleworth drove Josie, who was sobbing nervously and quite bereft of her usual self-command, to Colonel Hathaway's residence. The woman was unnerved, too, and had little to say on the journey.

The old colonel had retired, but Mary Louise was still up, reading a book, and she was shocked when Josie came running in and threw herself into her friend's arms, crying and laughing by turns, hysterically.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked Mary Louise in an anxious voice.

"I've b-b-bungled that whole miserable G-Ger-man spy plot!" wailed Josie.

"Wasn't there any plot, then?"

"Of course; but I g-grabbed the wrong end of it. Oh, I'm so glad Daddy wasn't here to see my humiliation! I'm a dub, Mary Louise — a miserable, ignorant, foozle-brained dub!"

"Never mind, dear," said Mary Louise consolingly. "No one can know everything, Josie, even at our age. Now sit down and wipe that wet off your face and tell me all about it."

Josie complied. She snivelled a little as she began her story, but soon became more calm. Indeed, in her relation she tried to place the facts in such order that she might herself find excuse for her erroneous theories, as well as prove to Mary Louise that her suspicions of Abe Kauffman and Mrs. Charleworth were well founded.

"No girl is supposed to know the difference between a bomb and a cannon-ball — or projectile — or whatever it is," was her friend's comment, when Josie had reached the scene in the manager's office, "and any man who is a German and acts queerly is surely open to suspicion. Go on, Josie; what happened next?"

Even Mary Louise was startled and horrified at the terrible retribution that had overtaken Professor Dyer, although Josie's story had aroused her indignation toward him and prepared her for the man's final infamous attempt to wreck the steel plant.

"And what about Tom Linnet?" she asked.

"Chief Farnum is to arrest him to-night," said Josie. "He will confess everything, of course, and then the whole plot will be made public."

"Poor Mrs. Dyer!" sighed Mary Louise.

But fate decreed a different ending to the night's tragedy. When the police tried to arrest Tom Linnet the young man was not to be found. He had not bought the cigar store, but with what funds remained to him, he had

absconded to parts unknown.

Chief Farnum wired his description to all parts of the country. Meantime, on the morning after the affair at the steel works, an earnest conference was held between Mr. Colton, Colonel Hathaway, Josie O'Gorman, Mrs. Charleworth, the Chief of Police and the two secret service agents. At this conference it was deemed inadvisable to acquaint the public with the truth about John Dyer's villainy. The government would be fully informed, of course, but it seemed best not to tell the people of Dorfield that a supposedly respectable citizen had been in the pay of the Kaiser's agents. It would be likely to make them suspicious of one another and have a bad influence generally. The criminal had paid the penalty of his crimes. The murders he had committed and attempted to commit were avenged.

So it was announced that the school superintendent had been killed by an accidental explosion at the munition works, and the newspapers stated that Mrs. Dyer did not desire a public funeral. Indeed, she was too overwhelmed by the tragedy to express any desire regarding the funeral but left it all to Colonel Hathaway and Mr. Colton, who volunteered to attend to the arrangements. The burial was very unostentatious and the widow received much sympathy and did not suffer in the esteem of the community. Mrs. Dyer, in fact, was never told of her husband's dishonor and so mourned him sincerely.

Immediately following the conference referred to, Josie brought the Chief of Police and the secret service men to her room and in their presence dragged the old pedestal-desk from her closet. Mary Louise, who had been admitted, exclaimed in surprise:

"Why, Josie! I thought you sent the desk to Washington."

"No," answered Josie, "I merely shipped an empty box. I knew very well that Dyer would try to get back the desk, hoping I had not discovered its secret, so I deceived him and gained time by proving that I had sent a box home by freight."

"That explains his decision to take the projectile to Washington," commented Detective Crissey, "he believed he could kill two birds with one stone — get back his papers and earn a big fee from Mrs. Charleworth."

"Also," added Josie, "he would be able to give the German Master Spy full information concerning the projectile, and so reap another reward. But all his diabolical schemes were frustrated by Joe Langley's bullet."

"Well, here's the desk," said Chief Farnum, "but where are those important papers, Miss O'Gorman?"

"And what do they prove?" added Crissey.

Josie slid back the panel in the square pedestal, disclosing the two

compartments filled with papers. These she allowed the police and the detectives to read, arid they not only proved that John Dyer was in the pay of an organized band of German spies having agents in Washington, New York and Chicago, but Crissey was confident the notes, contracts and agreements would furnish clues leading to the discovery and apprehension of the entire band. So the papers were placed in his charge to take to Washington, and their importance was a further argument for secrecy concerning John Dyer's death.

"So far as I am concerned," Josie said afterward to Colonel Hathaway and Mary Louise, "the spy case is ended. When they arrest Tom Linnet they will be able to prove, from the scraps of paper I found in the printing room of the hotel, that Linnet printed the circulars from copy furnished by Dyer, and that Dyer and Linnet together directed the envelopes, probably in the still hours of the morning at the hotel desk, where they were not likely to be disturbed. The circulars may not be considered legally treasonable, but the fact that Linnet personally placed the bomb that destroyed the airplane works will surely send him to the scaffold."

"I suppose you will be called as a witness," suggested Mary Louise, "because you are the only one who overheard his verbal confession of the crime."

"It wont take much to make Linnet confess," predicted Josie. "He is yellow all through, or he wouldn't have undertaken such dastardly work for the sake of money. His refusal to undertake the second job was mere cowardice, not repentance. I understand that sort of criminal pretty well, and I assure you he will confess as soon as he is captured."

But, somewhat to the astonishment of the officers, Tom Linnet managed to evade capture. They found his trail once or twice, and lost it again. After a time they discovered he had escaped into Mexico; afterward they heard of a young man of his description in Argentine; finally he disappeared altogether.

The arms of the law are long and strong, far-reaching and mercilessly persistent. They may embrace Tom Linnet yet, but until now he has miraculously avoided them.

CHAPTER XXV
DECORATING

Colonel Hathaway and Mary Louise were walking down the street one day when they noticed that the front of Jake Kasker's Clothing Emporium was fairly covered with American flags. Even the signs were hidden by a fluttering display of the Stars and Stripes.

"I wonder what this means?" said the colonel.

"Let's go in and inquire," proposed Mary Louise. "I don't suppose the man has forgiven me yet for suspecting his loyalty, but you've always defended him, Gran'pa Jim, so he will probably tell you why he is celebrating."

They entered the store and Kasker came forward to meet them.

"What's the meaning of all the flags, Jake?" asked the colonel.

"Didn't you hear?" said Kasker. "My boy's been shot — my little Jakie!" Tears came to his eyes.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mary Louise, with ready sympathy; "I hope he — he isn't dead?"

"No," said Kasker, wiping his eyes, "not that, thank God. A shell splinter took out a piece of his leg — my little Jakie's leg! — and he's in a hospital at Soissons. His letter says in a few weeks he can go back to his company. I got a letter from his captain, too. The captain says Jakie is a good soldier and fights like wild-cats. That's what he says of Jakie!"

"Still," said Colonel Hathaway, with a puzzled look, "I do not quite understand why you should decorate so profusely on account of so sad an event."

"Sad!" exclaimed the clothing man, "not a bit. That's glory, the way *I* look at it, Colonel. If my Jakie's blood is spilled for his country, and he can go back and spill it again, it makes great honor for the name of Kasker. Say, once they called me pro-German, 'cause I said I hated the war. Don't my Jakie's blood put my name on America's honor roll? I'm pretty proud of Jakie," he wiped his eyes again; "I'll give him an interest in the business, if he comes back. And if he don't — if those cursed Germans put an end to him — then folks will say, 'See Jake Kasker over there? Well, he gave his son for his country — his only son.' Seems to me, Colonel, that evens the score. America gives us Germans protection and prosperity, and we give our blood to defend America's honor. I'm sorry I couldn't find a place for any more flags."

The colonel and Mary Louise were both a little awed, but as Kasker accompanied them to the door, they strove to express their sympathy and

approval. As they parted, however, the man leaned over and whispered: “Just the same, I hate the war. But, if it *has* to be, let’s stand together to fight and win it!”

* * * * * * * *

“Gran’pa Jim,” said Mary Louise, when they were on the street again, “I’m ashamed. I once told you I loved you better than my country, but Jake Kasker loves his country better than his son.”

CHAPTER XXVI

KEEPING BUSY

The Liberty Girls were forced to abandon their Shop when a substantial offer was made by a business firm to rent the store they had occupied. However, they were then, near the end of their resources, with depleted stock, for they had begged about all the odds and ends people would consent to part with. What goods remained to them were of inferior worth and slow to dispose of, so they concluded their enterprise with a "grand auction," Peter Conant acting as auctioneer, and cleaned up the entire stock "in a blaze of glory," as Mary Louise enthusiastically described the event.

The venture had been remarkably successful and many a soldier had cause to bless the Liberty Girls' Shop for substantial comforts provided from its funds.

"But what can we do now," inquired Mary Louise anxiously as the six captains met with Irene one afternoon following the closing of the shop. "We must keep busy, of course. Can't someone think of something?"

One and all had been thinking on that subject, it seemed. Various proposals were advanced, none of which, however, seemed entirely practical until Irene said:

"We mustn't lose our reputation for originality, you know, nor must we interfere with those who are doing war relief work as well, if not much better, than we could. I've pondered the case some, during the past few days, and in reading of the progress of events I find that quite the most important thing on the government programme, at present, is the conservation of foods. 'Food will win the war' is the latest slogan, and anyone who can help Mr. Hoover will be doing the utmost for our final victory."

"That's all very well, Irene," said Alora, "but I'm sure we are all as careful as possible to conserve food."

"Don't ask us to eat any less," pleaded Edna, "for my appetite rebels as it is."

"I don't see how we Liberty Girls can possibly help Mr. Hoover more than everyone else is doing," remarked Laura.

"Well, I've an idea we can," replied Irene. "But this is just another case where I can only plan, and you girls must execute. Now, listen to my proposition. The most necessary thing to conserve, it seems, is wheat."

"So it seems, dear."

"People are eating large quantities of wheat flour simply because they don't know what else to eat," Irene continued. "Now, corn, properly prepared, is far more delicious and equally as nourishing as wheat. The

trouble is that people don't know how to use corn-meal and corn-flour to the best advantage."

"That is true; and they're not likely to learn in time to apply the knowledge usefully," commented Mary Louise.

"Not unless you girls get busy and teach them," admitted Irene, while a smile went round the circle. "Don't laugh, girls. You are all very fair cooks, and if properly trained in the methods of preparing corn for food, you could easily teach others, and soon all Dorfield would be eating corn and conserving wheat. That would be worth while, wouldn't it?"

"But who's to train us, and how could we manage to train others?" asked Mary Louise.

"The proposition sounds interesting, Irene, and if carried through would doubtless be valuable, but is it practical?"

"Let us see," was the reply. "Some time ago I read of the wonderful success of Mrs. Manton in preparing corn for food. She's one of the most famous professional cooks in America and her name is already a household word. We use her cook-book every day. Now, Mrs. Manton has been teaching classes in Cleveland, and I wrote her and asked what she would charge to come here and teach the Liberty Girls the practical methods of preparing her numerous corn recipes. Here's her answer, girls. She wants her expenses and one hundred dollars for two weeks' work, and she will come next week if we telegraph her at once."

They considered and discussed this proposition very seriously.

"At the Masonic Temple," said Mary Louise, "there is a large and fully equipped kitchen, adjoining the lodge room, and it is not in use except on special occasions. Gran'pa Jim is a high Mason, and so is Alora's father. Perhaps they could secure permission for us to use the lodge kitchen for our class in cookery."

The colonel and Jason Jones, being consulted, promised the use of the kitchen and highly approved the plan of the Liberty Girls. Mrs. Manton was telegraphed to come to Dorfield and the cookery class was soon formed. Alora confessed she had no talent whatever for cooking, but all the other five were ready to undertake the work and a selection was made from among the other Liberty Girls — of the rank and file — which brought the total number of culinary endeavorers up to fifteen — as large a class as Mrs. Manton was able to handle efficiently.

While these fifteen were being trained, by means of practical daily demonstration, in the many appetizing preparations for the table from corn-meal and corn-flour, Alora and one or two others daily visited the homes of Dorfield and left samples of bread, buns, cookies, cakes, desserts and other

things that had come fresh from the ovens and range of the cooking-school. At the same time an offer was made to teach the family cook — whether mistress or servant — in this patriotic branch of culinary art, and such offers were usually accepted with eagerness, especially after tasting the delicious corn dainties.

When Mrs. Manton left Dorfield, after two weeks of successful work, she left fifteen Liberty Girls fully competent to teach others how to prepare every one of her famous corn recipes. And these fifteen, divided into "shifts" and with several large kitchens at their disposal, immediately found themselves besieged by applicants for instruction. Before winter set in, all Dorfield, as predicted by Irene, was eating corn, and liking it better than wheat, and in proof of their success, the Liberty Girls received a highly complimentary letter from Mr. Hoover, thanking them for their help in the time of the nation's greatest need. A fee, sufficient to cover the cost of the material used, had been exacted from all those willing and able to pay for instruction, so no expense was involved in this work aside from the charges of Mrs. Manton, which were cared for by voluntary subscription on the part of a few who were interested in the girls' patriotic project.

Another thing the Liberty Girls did was to start "Community Concerts" one evening each week, which were held in various churches and attended by throngs of men, women and children who joined lustily in the singing of patriotic and popular songs. This community singing became immensely popular and did much to promote patriotic fervor as well as to entertain those in attendance.

And so Mary Louise's Liberty Girls, at the time this story ends, are still active workers in the cause of liberty, justice and democracy, and will continue to support their country's welfare as long as they can be of use.

"We're a real part of the war," Mary Louise has often told her co-workers, "and I'm sure that in the final day of glorious victory our girls will be found to have played no unimportant part."

THE END

MARY LOUISE ADOPTS A SOLDIER

Baum apparently wrote only a fragment of *Mary Louise Adopts a Soldier*, finished by an unknown author. Reilly & Britton published the fifth volume of the series in 1919, the year of Baum's death. The series continued with five more books, written by Emma Speed Samson, all under the pseudonym, Edith Van Dyne. By the final two books, the girl agent, Josie O'Gorman, rather than Mary Louise, became the focus of the series.

A first edition copy of 'Mary Louise Adopts a Soldier'

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CHAPTER I

MARY LOUISE CONSIDERS THE SITUATION

"Grandpa Jim," said Mary Louise one May morning as they sat together at the breakfast table, "I see the Dorfield Regiment is due to arrive home to-day or to-morrow."

"So I see," replied the old Colonel, "if we may rightly call it the 'Dorfield' Regiment. The newspapers don't mention the fact, but it takes in the whole surrounding country, because there were not enough Dorfield boys to fill the ranks completely and so we took all who applied. I'm afraid you'll find many unfamiliar faces among the ranks."

"Still," said the girl, "there will be some friends anyhow, and the very fact that this is the Dorfield Regiment should arouse our loyal enthusiasm. Why, I've followed them all through the war, and somehow this practice has almost made it seem that the whole Dorfield Regiment is a sort of personal possession."

"I feel much the same way," said Colonel Hathaway, composedly turning over the Dorfield *Gazette.* "This is not a delightful country to demobilize in — if we should judge by the Civil War, in which I was somewhat more interested. The regiment may not be free to disorganize for a week, or a month, according to the whim of the War Department."

"But they'll enjoy the recreation and the freedom from long marches even if they're kept here a long time," returned Mary Louise, "and their pay is the same as when at war. The boys who live here can visit their homes every day, and there may be only a few who come from any great distance. According to the papers, the Dorfield boys saw some real fighting in France."

"Yes, but new faces in the line are likely to be few," prophesied the Colonel. "Luckily, not many Dorfield boys lie buried in the French battlefields."

"What will become of the new men, Grandpa Jim?" asked the girl.

"Well, they will either be furnished money to take them home — second class — or they may obtain positions in or near Dorfield. If there are not too many, they will all get positions here. Many of the merchants I have talked with are already grumbling because' help 'is scarce."

"Let's go down to the depot and see the trains come in," suggested Mary Louise. "We've none of our kith and kin to greet, but some we know and can shake hands with. Besides, some of those substitutes may live far away and don't know where to go. They may need friends, or a home, or may have been wounded, and have no one here to care for them. I'm sure we can be of use in some way. We are Dorfield's own people and must show our

appreciation of Dorfield's own soldiers."

The Colonel reflected for a time. "During the Civil War there wasn't another Hathaway in the whole army," he mused; "yet I had my duty to do, and did it. You know my utmost trial during the Great World War has been my inability to take part in it in any way. A soldier is a soldier always, and here I am on the back shelf unable to help my country in its day of need. Beside being outside of the age limit I haven't a relative to take my place." This had been the old gentleman's grievance for many months. He fumbled with his cane a few moments and then said, "But get your automobile out, and we'll go down and give the soldiers the welcome they deserve."

"It's too rainy and muddy for the auto today," said Mary Louise, "and I don't want to punish the dear little car by a mud bath. But we'll take our umbrellas and try to find one of those substitutes who are stranded here, without friends or regular occupation, wondering what to do with themselves."

"I hope, my dear, you have no such idea as taking one of those persons — what do you call the fellows? — 'substitutes,' into our family, even as a servant?"

By servant the precise old gentleman had no reference in any way to a house-servant, as the house was fully cared for by Aunt Sally and Uncle Eben. To introduce a stranger into their domestic affairs was indeed preposterous. But Mary Louise understood him the moment he spoke. "Haven't the soldier boys all been servants of our glorious country?" asked Mary Louise indignantly. "Yes," he replied, "but they have come from all classes and sections, some of them gentlemen, or scholars, our equals in every way, while others have scarcely enough wit to bring in an armful of wood."

"Even then," broke in the girl, addressing the aged but stalwart Colonel, "someone must bring in the wood, and it's an important matter to my mind." She laughed in her piquant, irresistible way. She continued: "You see, Grandpa Jim, we've found at least one good reason for helping the brave soldiers who have so lately fought for the country you fought for many years ago."

"You may be right," said the old gentleman, "but we are a little premature in this argument, my dear; we only know that the Dorfield Regiment is coming home again, and we only guess that there will be one or more extra men to provide for. Indeed, there may be none at all, for all those big, sturdy fellows had lives to live before they joined the colors. Perhaps half a dozen may be left to find situations and boarding houses for; perhaps two or three are so situated, perhaps one. When all are mustered out and returned to the

places from which they enlisted we may have none at all to care for, — and that is a likely probability.”

“True enough, I admit,” said the girl with a little laugh, “so let us patiently wait till the train is in and the boys are mustered out. Then we can tell what duties are required from the loyal citizens of dear old Dorfield. It isn’t a big city, nor did it have a very big regiment to send to the front, nor very many soldiers to fight European battles, so I suppose I am borrowing trouble unnecessarily. Anyhow before we start, as the saying is, let us ring the doorbell and see if anyone is at home.”

CHAPTER II
BACK HOME

They put on their raincoats, and with umbrellas started out into the soggy, showery morning, for the drizzle had kept up nearly all the night before. “Even if we still had your old rattle-trap automobile which we exchanged for mine,” observed Mary Louise, “we’d have had hard work to make it go this morning.”

“It’s a shame,” said the old Colonel, as they started along the path, “to bring our soldiers home on such a rainy day. It ought to be a bright and sunny day of welcome.”

“Still it’s their home, and they’ll be glad to get here under any circumstances,” asserted Mary Louise. “I think it’s raining harder than ever, Grandpa Jim.” They were now where they could see the station, which seemed dull and deserted and the few people that were there seemed to be coming toward them. “I don’t believe the boys are coming to-day,” said the Colonel, “don’t you remember the paper said to-day or to-morrow?”

“True,” added one of a group which had paused before them and knew the Colonel well, as all the earlier settlers did; “we’ll do better to get home where it is warm than hanging around here this miserable day. The weather would discourage any railroad train.”

“That suits me,” said Mary Louise, and they started for home, chatting about the Dorfield men and discussing their usefulness.

There were no boys in “Grandpa Jim’s” family. He had had only one daughter who grew to delightful womanhood, married Judge Burrows, a prosperous lawyer, who died a few years later, leaving his baby girl — Mary Louise — to the care of his invalid wife and the staunch old grandfather.

Combining the two estates (the handsome old home belonged to the Hathaways), made a very pretty property for the young girl to inherit, and Mary Louise Burrows was known as the heiress of it all.

Colonel Hathaway naturally idolized this granddaughter, and it was from her baby lips that he first acquired the title of “Grandpa Jim,” which was cordially and affectionately followed by his many friends in the pretty but modest little city, where he was regarded as one of the two or three “leading citizens.”

Grandpa Jim’s wealth was sufficient for him to retire from any active business, so he passed his time in cheerful gossip with the other inhabitants and made many “travel trips” with Mary Louise, both in order to educate the young girl and relieve his own ennui.

The Great War had kept him at home during recent years, but he had read

daily reports of its progress and talked them over with those of his acquaintances who were most interested in the fray.

He was also tremendously interested in the early education and career of his fascinating granddaughter, the more so after the child's mother contracted a serious disease which carried her away from them forever.

So here were these two, a big old gentleman and a small young girl, located in one of the most prominent and attractive houses in Dorfield. Here they were, beloved by many but envied by none so far as they knew.

Mary Louise had many girl friends. Indeed, you might say every girl in the town claimed her friendship, for she was generous, bright, initiative and had a glad and loving word for every girl she met. Therefore it is no wonder that a lack of boys in the Hathaway family should create an added interest in the one girl of the establishment among the soldiers now returning from their victorious campaign. But the young girl did not know that.

On her side, Mary Louise had no cousins or other relatives, with whom she might intimately hobnob; Grandpa Jim's male relatives were so remotely connected to him by blood that he could not name you one of them. But there were none in Dorfield — nor out of it — whose hearts were more overflowing with patriotic enthusiasm than this fine old war veteran and his charming granddaughter as they went down the hill the next morning toward the depot. As they passed along, the electric lamps in front of the station were still striving to penetrate the gray gloom of foggy moisture.

Grandpa Jim said in his cheery voice: "It's another one of those wholly tantalizing mornings, Mary Louise, but that won't dampen the joy of our soldiers at getting home again."

"To be sure," she replied, "so let us hope the trains will make up for lost time. Good gracious, Grandpa Jim," pausing abruptly to peer ahead, "they're in now!" for her eyes were sharper than those of the Colonel.

She ran on a few steps in excitement, but then, remembering that in the semi-darkness she was her "Grandpa Jim's cane," she abated her pace and went back to take his arm "It won't matter, child," he said, laughing lightly; "we're not specially interested in those aboard, and they've all got to march over to their old cantonment before they are disbanded. But we have the right to shake hands with them."

"We can say: 'Hello, Bill!' anyhow, if we see anyone we used to know," said Mary Louise, and even the old Colonel was interested enough to hurry forward to join the throng of soldiers who had traveled all the way to France to prove that they were real warriors.

Mary Louise had many humble acquaintances among the throng which moved in well drilled ranks from the depot to the cantonment — a matter of

half a mile or so, and she nodded briskly here and there at “the boys,” who flushed and threw out their chests proudly as they formed ranks.

A few of the young men were “calling acquaintances,” and these were especially honored by the beautiful girl’s attention.

“Take it easy, my dear,” puffed Grandpa Jim, as he clung to the arm of Mary Louise on the slippery pathway. “They’re marching faster than we can walk, and they’re still covered with the dust and grime of travel. Look down there at the cantonment! The places where they used to pitch their tents are nothing but mud holes. I doubt if our soldiers under present circumstances are as glad to see us as we are to see them. Let’s go home.”

Mary Louise in her heart knew that he was right, but her tone was somewhat peevish when she answered:

“If everyone felt as we do, it would be a nice reception for our soldier boys, wouldn’t it — with just ‘poodle-ground’ to greet them? The earnest shouts of those who are here must carry joy to the hearts of those who have braved many a storm to drive back the Germans, and we must prove we’re as loyal and brave as our men.” Thoroughly in earnest, the beautiful girl continued: “For my part, I’m really enjoying it all, Gran’pa Jim, and — Hello, Ned Clary!” waving her handkerchief and nodding smilingly as they reached the beginning of the cantonment, which was now a very busy place.

The girl gazed with interest upon the mud-stained uniforms. But the soldiers themselves received the most of her attention. Their faces were most attractive to her, and she scanned them as closely as if really looking for some relative. Those who worked, worked quietly and doggedly, having performed such duties many times. Others looked on, smoking their cigarettes indifferently. Still others sat upon the stone curbing and waited nonchalantly until something should happen that might prove more interesting.

Mingled with these were all classes of citizens of Dorfield, and suddenly Mary Louise cried out:

“Oh, Laura Hilton! Where on earth did you come from?” as if she had not known that the other girl had followed or preceded her down the hill.

“Me?” answered Laura, as if in amazement; “why, I just came down to see if Cousin Will was in this division. He said in his last letter that he would be home next week; but they may have pushed him on ahead, you know. Cousin Will is a big man — you’ll remember — wherever he happens to be. At war be is a Sergeant — or a Corporal — or some such genius, I’ve heard, yet somehow he doesn’t seem to have his own way quite as much as when at home, clerking in the corner grocery store. He says he had one boss in civilian life; in the army, he has a dozen.”

“Well,” said Mary Louise, taking her arm confidentially, “that was only Cousin Will’s banter, you know. No one ever believed in him and I doubt if he ever believed in himself. I am glad he is coming home with a whole skin anyhow, and I wish all our poor boys were as safe to-day as he is.”

“Well,” responded Laura, “neither you nor I can claim any of the Dorfield boys, and yet it’s some satisfaction to see them coming home from that long journey across the seas and know that they have fought for us and died for us — whenever such foolish sacrifice was required.”

“Oh, Laura!” exclaimed Mary Louise, reprovingly. “Do you think it was foolishness to save all our lives — to make the world safe for democracy?”

“Don’t let us argue concerning politics,” said the other girl with a shy shrug. “Iam not much posted on such things, as you very well know.”

“You belong to the Liberty Girls, though,” said Mary Louise.

“Oh, as for that,” said Laura, “I will do anything I can for my country and its warriors, and the only reason I am not more interested in the return home of the Dorfield Regiment is that none of my flesh and blood is mixed up in it.”

“Then what are you down here for?” inquired Mary Louise.

“Just to watch these men greet their own friends, who must be supremely proud of their work and anxious to see them safely home. They have had some rather severe scrapping over there, I believe, and according to all reports there has not been a shirker or a coward in the whole lot of them. No wonder everybody has turned out to give them an enthusiastic reception! Just look at the number of mothers and fathers and whole families here to welcome their own back! It’s hard to tell who is enjoying it most — the soldier boys who have come back, or their families who have awaited them so long. But why are *you* here, Mary Louise?”

“Why, for almost the same reason. There has been a hint that some soldiers from other parts of the country have been transferred to the Dorfield Regiment, to take the places of those who have fallen in the various battles. Grandpa Jim has an idea that some of these strangers may need work or a home after they are mustered out.”

“How can we tell who are the strangers and who are not?” asked Laura.

“Why — why — by watching them, I suppose,” replied Mary Louise.

CHAPTER III
DANNY DEXTER

They walked through the thronging crowds to the other side of the little city where the main activity was now located.

Here the soldiers were erecting their tents, arranging their personal belongings, preparing for their brief stay — for here they were sworn into the service, and here they hoped to be immediately mustered out. The great war was over, every man had done his duty, and now they were back again, each one determined to do better both in position and ways than when he had left home.

Dorfield was not large enough to import many workers, therefore the merchants were delighted at the return of its men and impatiently waited until they should be mustered out. All the old jobs were awaiting them, with an advance in wages which had followed the increased cost of living.

There were busy scenes at the cantonment during the next few days while the officers were dismissing the men who were no longer needed by the government.

In a short time all of the returned soldiers were hard at work at their old jobs, except those who were strangers and had no jobs to return to. The government was supposed to attend to these, but the government was lax in its duty, and though the number of such men gradually grew fewer, there were still plenty for Gran'pa Jim and Mary Louise to choose from. But although the' girl begged for this or for that one, the old gentleman was particular and suspicious.

"Why, I'd as soon have Danny Dexter as that fellow!" he would exclaim, for Danny Dexter was quite a well known individual by this time. He would sit upon a taut rope, swinging his feet and smoking his pipe all day long, and if he was called upon to do anything, he was absolutely unresponsive. Both in skin and clothing he was dirty and untidy. But he was a cheery, smiling youth, and the more Mary Louise saw of him the better she liked him.

As the encampment faded away, Danny Dexter alone remained to say good-bye, and Mary Louise remarked that none left without a shake of Danny Dexter's hand.

Finally he alone remained of the big encampment. The tents had gradually been struck and carted away to the government storehouse, but Danny's tent, with him lazily clinging to the ropes, still remained to show the place that once had sheltered the Dorfield Regiment. One day the inspector noticed this and mustered Danny out, too; but that didn't seem to make any difference to Danny. He had money, probably left from his pay, so he still occupied the

weather-beaten old tent and carted his provisions from the village stores, cooking them himself and gossiping with his old comrades when they were not busy.

"What you goin' to do, Danny?" he was asked again and again.

"Don't know yet," was always the careless reply. "Government seems to have forgot me just now, so I guess I'll jus' hang around here this summer and when winter comes, go up to New York and see what's goin' on over there. I'm in no great hurry."

"Why don't you get a job in Dorfield? It's a pretty good place and living is cheaper than in New York."

"Money don't interest me much," was the careless answer. "What a fellow needs is to see life an' make the most of it. If you're happy, money don't count."

"Are you happy now?" they asked him.

"Oh, fairly so, but I'm gettin' tired doing nothing at all; may skip out of Dorfield any day, now."

More than ever, old Mr. Hathaway had met and studied Danny Dexter and disliked him; and more and more Mary Louise had seen him in the stores and found him worthy her consideration. Often at dinner or breakfast the girl and her grandfather spoke of him and disagreed about him.

"We needn't adopt him for good, you know," said Mary Louise. "Just for a few months to see how he works in. And he needn't be one of the family or eat with us. He can work in the garden and keep the front yard cleared up, and in that way he'll get his living and fair wages."

"Well," said Gran'pa Jim, "I'll speak to Danny Dexter in the morning."

He did. Next morning he met the boy leaning over the counter at the grocery store on the corner, where Will White, back at his old job, was waiting on customers. The old gentleman noticed that Will saluted when Danny entered the store soon after Gran'pa Jim did.

"Why did you do that?" asked Mary Louise's grandfather, in a gruff voice.

"Why, he was our top-sergeant, sir, while I was only a private," replied Will, "and I can't get over the distinction. In the war I *had* to salute him, and — don't you know, sir, that Danny Dexter wears a decoration, or could wear one, if he cared to? But he keeps it buttoned up tight in his pocket-book. Medal of Distinction or something, earned by saving the lives of some of the wounded soldiers. Danny was always modest; they called him 'The Lamb' in our regiment — but, gee whiz, how that lad can fight when he gets the thrills into him!"

All this was said while Top-Sergeant Dexter was in the rear of the

grocery, examining the labels on a vinegar barrel, so he heard nothing of Will White's commendation. Shortly after, when Gran'pa Jim had given his own order, the old gentleman walked over to Dexter and said in his point-blank way:

"Dexter, do you want a job?"

Danny sat down on a box, scuffled his feet and regarded his interrogator with a smile that slowly dawned and as slowly faded away.

"I'm getting tired of hanging around here,"

he announced. "What sort of a job have you to offer?"

"'Why, I live in that big corner house facing the park. What I want is a young man to care for my garden — "

"Ah, I love a garden. Flowers are so spicy and bright and fragrant, don't you think?"

"And also to clear up the front lawn, and to rake up the leaves, and see that the living room grate is supplied with firewood, and keep up the yard generally and to clip the hedges — "

"I see," said Danny, with another smile; "a sort of Private Secretary as it were."

"And attend to any errands my granddaughter may require."

"I thank you, Mr. — "

"Hathaway is my name, sir."

"Mr. Hathaway. The job you offer does not impress me."

"You fool!" roared the old gentleman, exasperated both by the refusal and the dignity with which it was made by this uncleanly, disfigured soldier. "Why do you turn down a position without looking at it? Many a young fellow in Dorfield would be glad of the offer I have made you." He thought how Mary Louise would laugh at him when he told her how, finally, he had offered "the job" to the solitary soldier and had been ridiculed and refused. "Walk over with me to my place and inspect the premises and then you may change your mind."

"All right!" responded Danny, jumping up with a cheerful face that betrayed he felt no malice at having been labeled a fool by the irascible old gentleman. "Let's walk over and look at your ranch. I may find it better than I think it is. But I've a pretty good estimate now of an old-fashioned country villa 'facing the park.' They're very grand, magnificent, you know, and usually belong to the most prosperous men in town. Come on, Mr. Hathaway."

"That's right, Danny," whispered Will White, as his friend passed out. "It's a whale of a place; and then, too, there's Mary Louise!"

CHAPTER IV

DANNY CHANGES HIS UNIFORM

Of course, there was Mary Louise.

She was lying lazily on the couch by the front window this bright though chilly May day, reading at times a book, and occasionally hopping up to toss a stick of wood on the fire. Glancing through the window, she noticed Gran'pa Jim and Danny Dexter crossing the park toward the house.

It was early spring in Dorfield and although the numerous trees in the park and surrounding-country were leafless, the scene was far from unpleasant to the eye of a stranger. Danny Dexter walked briskly — he had to, to keep pace with Mr. Hathaway — and seemed to enjoy the prospect keenly.

Mary Louise glanced at her gown. It seemed dainty and appropriate for a spring morning, but the girl remembered one with prettier ribbons in a drawer upstairs, so she dashed the book down and flew up the stairway.

Meantime Mr. Hathaway and the soldier had reached the house and passed around the brick sidewalk that led to the rear. Danny glanced doubtfully at the brick-paved driveway.

"No horses, I hope!" said he.

"No," answered his conductor. "I love horses myself, but Mary Louise prefers an automobile; so, as she's the mistress of the establishment, as you will soon learn, the horses are gone and a shiny little car takes its place in the stable."

"Employ a chauffeur, then?"

"No; Mary Louise loves to drive the thing herself, and if anything goes wrong — something's always going wrong with an automobile — there's a garage just back of us to fix it up again." Danny sighed.

"I can run the blamed things," he remarked, "and I know how to keep them loaded with oil and water and gasoline — "

"Oh, don't worry about running jt," exclaimed the other. "Why, she won't let even *me* run the thing, so I've never learned. As for the chauffeurs, Mary Louise despises them."

"So do I," agreed Danny. "Your granddaughter, sir, must be a very sensible girl."

That won Gran'pa Jim's heart, but just then Mary Louise herself came tripping through the archway that led from the kitchen to the back porch and the garden. She was most alluringly attired, as if for a spin on a sunlit winter's morning, and paused abruptly as if surprised.

"Oh, this is the new man, I suppose," said she, a touch of haughtiness in her voice. "Your name is Dexter, I believe."

Danny smiled, slyly.

"What makes you believe that?" he inquired, doffing his little military cap.

"I have heard Will White call you Dexter at the grocery store," she responded promptly.

"Still, I'm not 'your new man,'" he said, explaining his presence. "At the invitation of Mr. Hathaway I am merely examining his charming grounds."

"Yes. What do you think, Mary Louise, this hang-around ne'er-do-well insists on seeing the place before he decides whether he'll work here!" Mary Louise gave the soldier a curious look. His wound wasn't so bad — merely a slash across the forehead, which, had it been properly attended to at the time, would scarcely have left a scar. Otherwise his features were manly enough, and might have been approved by girls more particular than Mary Louise.

"I don't blame him for wishing to see his workshop," she averred with one of her irresistible smiles. "I wouldn't take a job myself without doing that. Look around, Lexter, and if things are to your mind — we need a man very badly, I assure you. Otherwise, we hope to serve you in some practical way. I'm going over to Laura Hilton's now, Gran'pa Jim, so if you need me, I'll be there until lunch time and you can telephone me."

The old gentleman nodded. Then with Danny, he followed her to the ample stables — almost as ornate and palatial as the house.

"I preferred a five-passenger to a runabout," explained Mary Louise to Danny, "for now I can pack my girl friends in until the chariot is positively running over — and I like company."

She applied the starter, and away sped the gamey little machine, bearing the girl who was admitted to be "the prettiest girl in the county."

Mr. Hathaway showed Danny the stables. In one tower was fitted up a mighty cozy suite of rooms for the whilom "coachman." There was another suite in the opposite tower. Then they went down into the garden, and as the boy looked around him his face positively gleamed.

"It's magnificent!" he cried, "and just what I always imagined I'd like to fool with. I shall move that row of roses, though, for the place they're in is entirely too shady. Probably laid out by a competent gardener, but in all these years the climbing vines on his pergola have got the best of his general scheme."

"You accept the job, then?" asked Gran'pa, relieved.

"Accept? Of course I accept, sir — ever since I saw Mary Louise and her automobile."

When Mary Louise returned from her drive she found Danny Dexter raking up the scattered leaves in the garden and merrily whistling as he pursued his work. He came to the stable, though, as soon as she drove in, and

looked at the machine admiringly. She stood beside him, well pleased, for she liked her automobile to be praised.

"Do you drive?" asked Mary Louise.

"Fairly well, Miss," he returned; "but I'm not much of a mechanic."

"That's my bother," she insisted, laughing; "but if you like driving I'll take you on my next trip and the girls will think I'm all swelled up at having a chauffeur. Only — " she paused, looking at him critically, and Danny saw the look and understood it. He blushed slightly, and the girl blushed furiously. She had almost "put her foot in it," and quite realized the fact.

"The reason I have not kept my face washed," he said in a quiet voice, "is because our old surgeon at camp told me the wound would heal better if I allowed nature to take her course. It was a bad slash, and while this seemed a curious treatment, the fact has been proved that the wound does better when covered with mud germs than with those from water. The only objection is that it makes me look rather nasty at present, but I made up my mind I could sacrifice anything in the way of looks right now if it would improve my looks in the future."

"Who was the surgeon?" asked Mary Louise. "Oh, a crazy old Frenchman who had helped many of our boys and so won their confidence."

"I don't believe in his theory," declared the girl, after another steady look at the cut. "Seems to me that broad gap will always remain."

"Had you seen it at first," he said, "you would now realize that it has narrowed more than one-half, and is a healthy wound that is bound to heal naturally. However, this fact assures me I may now wash up and let the thing take care of itself.

With my mud face there no object in trying to keep the rest of me clean, so I've degenerated into a regular tramp."

"*I* suppose you've no clothes other than your uniform?" she said thoughtfully. "Do you apply treatment of any kind to your wound?"

"Nothing at all — Nature is the only remedy. And as for clothes, I haven't the faintest idea what became of my old 'cits.' I was told to ship them home, but can't remember whether I did so or not."

Mary Louise was dusting the car with a big square of cheesecloth. Danny helped her.

"I wish," said the girl, "you'd go down to Donovans 'and pick out two suits of clothes — one for working in." Her voice trembled a little. She did not know how this queer fellow would regard such a suggestion. "I'll telephone Donovan right away to charge the clothes to Gran'pa Jim's account," she continued.

Dexter was silent for awhile, plying his cheesecloth thoughtfully. Then he

said:

"In the days of the horse and coachman, did you clothe you men in uniform?"

"Y-e-s, a sort of uniform. When mama was with us she loved to see brightness, coupled with dignity. The Harrington uniform consists of wistaria broadcloth, with a bit of gold braid. But it's not so gorgeous as it sounds."

"Suits *me,* all right," returned Danny, carelessly. "Would you mind my getting a Hathaway uniform instead of the other clothes?" Mary Louise was astonished.

"No, indeed," was her answer. "The uniform will have to be made for you by Jed Southwick, who keeps the materials. But I'm curious to know, Dexter, why you prefer a badge of servitude to a respectable suit of clothes. Do you mind telling me?"

After a little hesitation the soldier answered:

"That's just it, Miss Hathaway — "

"My name is Burrows — Mary Louise Burrows. Mr. Hathaway is my grandfather."

"Thank you. Well, it's the badge of servitude I'm after and that's why. My home's a good way from here, Miss Burrows, and it isn't likely any of my old friends will wander this way, Dorfield being a half-hidden if attractive old city, more dead than alive. But they *might* come and — just now — I don't care to meet them and have to explain why I didn't do more toward winning the war. Every blamed fellow who set foot in France, from private to general, won the war, except me, and that's rather embarrassing, you'll admit." Mary Louise smiled mischievously, remembering the "medal for distinguished service" even now reposing in Danny Dexter's pocket-book. But she only said:

"Go to see Jed Southwick at once — the sooner the better — for he's a good tailor and good tailors are always slow. And order two suits, for something might happen to one of them.

The boy shook his head.

"I may not stay long enough to wear out two uniforms, Miss Burrows, and a good tailor is expensive, so they'll cost a lot."

"We always pay for our men's uniforms," protested the girl. "And — how much wages — salary — money — do you get here?"

"Why, I never thought to inquire."

Mary Louise hung her duster over a rail.

"Gran'pa Jim is always just, and even liberal, so don't worry," she said. "Wash your face and then go to town and order your *two* uniforms. I won't use you as my chauffeur until you're all togged out. The girls will admire

you more, then, and I’m anxious you should make a hit with them.”

CHAPTER V

DORFIELD GIRLS

It is to be expected that Mary Louise, by virtue of her own wealth and her grandfather's political and social position, as well as her own personal beauty and loveliness, was easily admitted "The Queen of Dorfield." There were many charming girls in the quaint little city, nearly all being members of the "Liberty Girls," an organization conceived by Mary Louise Burrows which had done a lot of good during the war. Indeed, many of these girls were heiresses, or with money in their own right.

Yet wealth was no latch-key to the affections of Mary Louise. Just next door to Colonel Hathaway's splendid mansion was a neat story-and-a-half dwelling that had not cost half as much as the Hathaway stables, but it was cozy and homelike, and in it lived Irene Macfarlane, the niece of Mr. Peter Conant, the most important lawyer of Dorfield, but by no means a wealthy man.

With Peter Conant lived Irene, who was treated by "Aunt Hannah" (Mrs. Peter Conant) and her husband as a daughter.

Irene had been crippled from birth and was confined to a wheel chair. She was a bright little thing, and Mary Louise, as well as the other girls, was very fond of Irene Macfarlane. Also among the "Liberty Girls" were enrolled Betsy Barnes, the shoemaker's daughter, and Alora Jones whose father — Jason Jones — was by far the richest man in Dorfield. Alora owned much of the best property in Dorfield but was waiting for her majority to obtain it, for it belonged exclusively to her dead mother. Then there was Laura Hilton, a popular favorite whose father owned some stock in the mill and worked there. The father of Phoebe Phelps was well-to-do, but not wealthy as either Colonel Hathaway or Jason Jones.

Mary Louise never gave a thought to their Avorldly possessions. If they were "nice girls" she took them to her heart at once.

All girls are prone to gossip (in Dorfield it was a distinctly harmless amusement), and usually Mary Louise and her chums gathered in Irene's sitting-room, where the surroundings were sweet and "homey." So, on the day they took their ride with Danny Dexter as chauffeur — Danny dressed in his new uniform — the four girls who had been favored by Mary Louise as passengers met at the Conant residence and began to quiz their friend. From them the news would fly throughout the city, where every little thing is of interest, and Mary Louise was quite aware of that fact.

Irene had been with them, of course, but Irene was a general favorite and her "talking machinery," as all the girls realized, had not been affected by the

trouble which made her an invalid. Then there were Alora Jones, Laura Hilton, and last of all Phoebe Phelps.

"It's really a 'five-passenger,'" declared Mary Louise, "but it will take six at a pinch, as you saw to-day. Gran'pa Jim's old gas buggy was called a seven passenger, but only six could ride in it comfortably as the extra seat was always in the way; yet you know, girls, what a time I had to induce him to sell his hayrack and buy me this beauty."

"Uncle Eben could drive the Colonel's car though," remarked Alora, "while you had to get a chauffeur." Uncle Eben and Aunt Sally, an aged black man and his wife, were the house servants. "That makes it more expensive."

"Well, we've the money to pay him, anyhow," retorted Mary Louise, "and then Eben is too old and stiff now to take care of the garden and do all the outside work. Danny does all that now."

"Oh, that alters the circumstances," agreed Phoebe Phelps. "But it seems funny to see an old black man and a young soldier boy wearing the Hathaway uniform."

"It is funny," admitted Mary Louise, laughing, "but the soldier wanted it that way. He said it made him proud to wear the Hathaway badge of respectability. He's a total stranger around here, you know — lives in some Eastern city and has conceived a remarkable admiration for little Dorfield."

"Is that all you know about him?" asked Laura, suspiciously.

"He's a soldier," said Mary Louise proudly, "and entered the service a common private and came out a top-sergeant. *That's something*" Shows he's popular with his mates and a good soldier," agreed Irene.

"He was appointed to Company C of our regiment, together with some others, after the battle of Argonne," continued Mary Louise, lauding her hero earnestly, "and was twice wounded before being sent home with the Dorfielders. He had been offered an honorable discharge when he got that terrible cut across the forehead, but in a week he was back with the boys, fighting desperately."

"Did he bring any recommendations?" asked Phoebe.

"Will" White told me his story, and so far as recommendation is concerned, every man in the Dorfield Regiment will swear by him and stand for Danny Dexter to the last gasp. Don't you like my new chauffeur, girls?"

"*I* do," responded Laura Hilton. "Father offered him a nice job at the mill, but he turned it down."

"It was the same with *my* father," announced Phoebe.

"The back yard looks neater than it has in years," commented Irene, "and he surely proved to us this afternoon that he understood driving an auto."

“Gran’pa Jim declares it was my automobile that won him,” Mary Louise stated. “He wasn’t anxious to be our hired man, either, until he caught sight of the car, when he at once hired out:”

‘Well, it is a swell car,” declared Alora Jones, “and has every modern appliance. Besides, it shines like a diamond in the sun.”

“My, she’s only had the thing a month,” said Phoebe, “and it’s the most expensive little car in the market. Several have been sold in Dorfield already.” There was envy in this speech, and all the girls sighed in unison. Mary Louise, however, smiled slyly for she knew that with the exception of Irene, any one of the girls present could afford to buy a duplicate of her car.

“Well, the Hathaway establishment is blossoming out,” said Laura lightly, “and one man. — a hard-working soldier — seems responsible for the transformation.”

“No, let’s put the auto first,” objected Irene. “First the old Colonel is cajoled into selling his ancient rattle-trap and buying Mary Louise a luxurious car, the latest model offered for sale; then comes along a soldier who falls in love with the car, and to get the fun of handling the machine hires out to the Hathaways. He proves a good man all-around and soon has the old place slicked up as if it were new.”

“That’s all an example of Mary Louise’s luck,” commented Laura. “It couldn’t possibly happen to anybody else.”

“I’m inclined to think that’s true,” added Phoebe, laughing at their earnest faces. “Mary Louise seems to get the best of what happens around Dorfield, but that’s not her fault — the dear little heart — and I’m mighty glad things come her way for she deserves it.”

“The dealer, Lou Gottschalk, had six of these cars shipped in one batch, the 1919 model,” explained Mary Louise, “and this was the last to sell — merely because it had a few fixin’s not attached to the others. The fixin’s made it some prettier, but no better running, and there’s no change in the gear.”

Day after day Mary Louise won more praise from her girl friends by taking them to ride in her new automobile, which her new man kept shining as brilliantly as varnish will shine. When perched on the driver’s seat in the Hathaway uniform — modest and inconspicuous — Danny lent an added air of dignity to the outfit, and he certainly found time, after looking after the garden, drives and lawn, to keep the car immaculate also. Night after night Mary Louise could see the light shining in his tower, which proved he did not waste an instant of his time.

One afternoon, when the soldier was at the store, Mary Louise visited this tower room and discovered there were several things that might add to his

comfort and convenience; so she purchased a cheap but comfortable lounge, several cozy chairs, a new rug and a big “high-boy” full of drawers and shelves. This was done in gratitude for Danny’s faithful work, and he showed his appreciation by means of a smile and nod, without ruining the event by a word of speech.

He kept up well, too, and was never a slacker in his work. If the work got a little ahead of him he got up earlier in the morning and accomplished his tasks in that way. Mary Louise was very proud of her hired man’s ability.

CHAPTER VI

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

One evening she said to him:

"I'm going to drive to Sherman to-morrow, Danny, so we'll get an early start. Know where Sherman is?"

He shook his head. "No, Miss Burrows."

"Well, it's a straight road after we get to Bridesville, where we went yesterday, so we can't easily get lost. My dressmaker lives at Sherman, which is fifty miles away. That's only a short journey in the car, and we'll have luncheon at Bridesville. Just you and I and Irene Macfarlane, you know."

"Seven o'clock, Miss Burrows?"

"That's about right, Danny."

"I'll be ready, Miss."

So Mary Louise dismissed the matter from her thoughts and went to bed without a single misgiving.

At a little before seven next morning Irene Macfarlane was wheeled out upon the front yard nearest the driveway, happy and full of good spirits, for a day like this was a rare treat for her. A day with Mary Louise in the splendid new car, with only Mary Louise and her chauffeur for company, luncheon at Bridesville and plenty of room on the back seat was assuredly an event to be regarded with pleasure — and that's why Mary Louise had chosen her for comrade.

But neither the car nor the uniformed chauffeur were present. The moments rolled on until 7:30 was reached and still no sign of the automobile. Mary Louise ran around to the stables, to find both the car and Danny Dexter absent. Danny had locked the door to his tower and the front door of the stables stood wide open — just as if the young man had prepared for a long day's trip, but all else seemed in order. There were two checkered robes belonging to the car, but these were gone, as was all else that might be needed on the trip — including the extra gasoline tank, always carried for emergencies. But Danny and car, with its fittings, had absolutely disappeared.

"Perhaps he's gone for gasoline or oil and been delayed," pondered Mary Louise on her way back to the side porch. "But it's quite unlike Danny Dexter to put off such an important thing until the last moment, so I'm afraid one of the parts has broken, and Danny is waiting at the garage to have it replaced. We may as well be patient, Irene, for our fate is in Danny's hands and I am sure he'll get us started as soon as possible."

“It isn’t that,” replied Irene dolefully, “but I’ve got two music lessons to give late this afternoon.”

“Oh, send them word you’re sick and have the dates changed,” suggested Mary Louise. “I’m sure that will satisfy them. And after all, Danny may be here any minute and then all our troubles will be over. As a matter of fact, Danny told me yesterday that the carburetor needed adjusting and that may be what is detaining him. So run along and have Aunt Hannah telephone your pupils.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll go and tell Aunt Hannah right away,” responded the crippled girl, “and I’ll tell her why Danny’s late, too.” She immediately wheeled her chair around and started for her home, being gone less than five minutes; but she needn’t have hurried for Danny hadn’t returned by luncheon time. Irene and Mary Louise spread their basket of lunch on the table on the side porch and had a merry time of it in spite of the missing soldier and his automobile.

“Of course, if he doesn’t come pretty soon now,” admitted Mary Louise, “we must postpone the trip to another day, but we’ll have all that fun added to this, some day when the car is running properly,” promised the owner, and they ate every bit of Aunt Sally’s delicious luncheon and had a really “good time” in spite of their disappointment. Fortunately most of their girl friends, learning of this intended trip, did not come near them the whole day, so they were left alone to their own devices.

As evening approached, nevertheless, Mary Louise began to be uneasy. Gran’pa. Tim came home from town and found the two girls playing “muggins” on the porch.

“What! Back already!” he exclaimed.

“Why, we didn’t go,” answered Mary Louise.

“Dressmaker wasn’t ready for you?”

“No. We — we’ve lost the car — and Danny.”

The old gentleman sat down on a chair and whistled slightly.

“Tell me all about it,” he suggested.

Mary Louise complied. Really, there wasn’t much to tell. Danny Dexter had been ordered to be ready with the car at seven o’clock, for a trip to Sherman and had agreed to the proposition. He hadn’t appeared all day; in fact, he and the car were both missing.

“I’ve telephoned the garage and the gasoline station,” concluded the girl, “but he hasn’t been seen at either place to-day. Seems sort of funny, doesn’t it, Gran’pa Jim?”

Grandpa Jim drummed with his fingers rather absently on the rail of the porch.

“I insured the car but not Mr. Dexter,” he remarked slowly. “Odd that a

good soldier should turn out a thief, isn't it?"

"He was absolutely in love with that automobile," added Irene, eagerly. "He would give anything to own it."

"Danny is no thief!" asserted Mary Louise, positively. "He may have gotten into trouble with the car, somehow; but *steal* it — never."

Ought — oughtn't we to do something right away?" asked Irene, diffidently.

"We've wasted the whole day already," Colonel Hathaway replied with a smile; "perhaps a night and a day, if he had already made up his mind to take the car. In that time he could get a long distance away from us. And we've no idea what direction he took. Some auto thieves go direct to the cities to hide, while others feel they are safer in the country roads. Anyhow, I think we'd best call up Chief Lonsdale and ask his advice."

"To be sure!" exclaimed Mary Louise, excitedly. "Why didn't we think of that before? We've made mistake after mistake all day long. I'll go in and telephone him at once."

The Colonel held her back. "If the Chief's to understand what we mean and what we want, I'd better talk with him myself. You grow more and more muddled the more you talk with a person over the wire."

So he rose deliberately and went into the house, and soon they heard the Colonel telling the whole story of Danny Dexter to the Chief of Police. He told it concisely and "without any frills or rigmaroles," as Irene admitted, and Chief Lonsdale ended by promising to come over at once if they'll give him some supper. "It won't be as good as I'd get at home," he added, "but Aunt Sally isn't the worst cook in Dorfield by any means."

The old Colonel chuckled and hung up the receiver, and before long, in drove Chief Lonsdale in his Ford and anchored it near the front door.

"Evenin', Charlie," was the Colonel's greeting as they shook hands.

"Evening, Colonel," responded the Chief, hanging up his overcoat and hat. "Been gettin' yourself inter trouble, eh?"

"No, 'twas Mary Louise who considered a soldier must be, perforce, an honest man."

"I know him, and I believe she's right in this case," replied Charlie Lonsdale. "If your man-of-all-work isn't honest, I'm not honest and no judge of an honest man."

Irene, who had remained to supper, although she lived next door, clapped her hands gleefully. Mary Louise walked around the table and kissed the Chief upon his grizzly chin; the Colonel alone frowned.

"Think I 'm going to eat over here and take' pot-luck' for nothing?" inquired the Chief.

“You’re an old idiot,” declared Colonel Hathaway, who was very fond of the Chief of Police and often had him over for a Sunday dinner.

“If the stranger soldier hadn’t been all right,” responded the other, “do you think I’d let you keep him and allow him to take charge of Mary Louise’s precious auto? Or risk my poor stomach on corned beef and cabbage, such as we’re going to have presently?”

“Why, how did you know that?” asked Mary Louise. “I didn’t know that myself until you told me!”

“Eyes — nose — presently, taste,” said the policeman, laughing at them. “Saw Aunt Sally lugging it home in a basket this morning — ”

“But — ”

“Smelled it when I came into the house just now.” Then he continued, laughingly:

“Have been hankering for corned beef all day, and that’s the reason I invited myself over.”

“You know you’re always welcome, Charlie,” said the Colonel, highly pleased, “and we’ll have a couple of those fine ‘Cannel’ cigars after the meal,” promised the Colonel. “I keep a few of them on hand just for guests like you.”

“This don’t seem much like finding my car — and poor Danny Dexter,” pouted Mary Louise. “That machine can easily go sixty miles an hour, so we may be fifty miles farther away from it since you arrived, Chief Lonsdale.”

“Possible,” admitted the Chief, “and it’ll take an hour more to eat supper and — I may stay with you all night. Still we didn’t fix any time limit on capturing the thief, so there’s no hurry that I can see.”

Irene and the Colonel were nervous and — to an extent — so was Mary Louise, but the latter girl was more composed than the others. As for the Chief, he seemed to have forgotten all about the task on which they had embarked — after he had telephoned to some man in his office.

CHAPTER VII
A TELEGRAM

"What do you think of telegraphing to Josie O'Gorman?" asked the Colonel, after taking his granddaughter into a corner after dinner.

"Josie?" cried the Chief, overhearing the question. "That's a clever idea, and I'm not ashamed to say I've been considering Josie for the last hour or more. What that girl can't stumble against is no work for a detective. She isn't clever, nor does she consider herself so; but she's a way of falling into traps set for others that is really remarkable. If you know where Josie is, I advise wiring her the first thing you do."

"I'll go down to the telegraph office at once and send the message in your name, Mary Louise," decided Colonel Hathaway, going into the closet to get his hat and coat. "There's nothing like promptness in such a case, and my reflections during the past two hours have led me to nothing at all, I must confess. I'll just step over to the stables a minute and then we'll start."

The two men and Mary Louise went to the stables, where the Chief unlocked the tower in a wink of an eye, and then carefully examined the contents of Danny's private room. All was in perfect order, and nothing indicated that the young ex-soldier had intended to be gone more than a day at the most. In the standing room or garage, downstairs, all was as neat as wax and ready for the automobile when it arrived home — if it ever did.

"Nothing to be gained from an inspection here," remarked the Chief, who had allowed the Colonel to light his cigar but not to smoke it while they were in the building. "You see, Hathaway, it's a hard thing to trace an automobile, especially if it's a popular make."

They stopped at the telegraph office and the girl promised to forward their message at once.

"You see," said she, "It's a dull season and a dull hour, and Washington messages supercede all other. This telegram ought to be there in ten minutes, and I'll send the answer to your house immediately, Colonel Hathaway."

"Could you send a duplicate to the Police Office at the same time, Miss Girard?" inquired the Chief.

She nodded an assent, making her pretty hair flutter in all directions.

"Very well; put everything aside and get our telegram off at once," said Colonel Hathaway, and they proceeded to the police office.

"That blamed car worries me a good deal; I can't see how we're to locate it, with no clue but a tire mark," remarked the Colonel when they were on the street again.

"Anything can be accomplished if we set our hearts on the task," returned

Chief Lonsdale, somewhat testily.

"There have been six others of this make of machine sold right here," the Colonel said, "but the one we are looking for had several unusual fittings to mark it. There's a difference in the wheels of Mary Louise's car — couldn't you tell by that; also the driver's seat is different."

"I don't remember having noticed these particular marks myself," said the Chief, "but a dozen or so of my men have done so, and at this present moment are busy trying to locate Mary Louise's car."

"You're a good fellow, Charlie," remarked the Colonel gratefully. "I feel sure we'll get our clutches on the machine sooner or later, even if the streets are crowded with automobiles of this and all other makes."

"You're skeptical, of course," replied the Chief, "regarding the power of the police, but I'm not at all, so I'll plod along and make the best of a poor beginning. So please have faith in our ability and we'll find your car."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of your ability," said Gran'pa Jim.

"Let's run down to the office," proposed the Chief. "We'll get the news as quickly there as here — perhaps a bit quicker, and I can see you 're too nervous — both of you — to get to sleep at your usual hour." So they got into the Chief's auto and started for the police office, where the man at the desk listened quietly but without astonishment to the Chief's story, referring to a sheet of notes at his side, "Guess I got it all, sir," he said.

"Is Olmstead out?" asked the Chief.

"Not just now, sir, he's just back from the telegraph office, where he listened to this message to Mary Louise coming over the wire."

"Let us see it." Without a word the desk sergeant handed over a paper with some words scrawled upon it, but neither old Mr. Hathaway nor the Chief of Police had any difficulty in reading it:

"DEAR MARY LOUISE:

Will be with you to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. Remind Aunt Sally of my insatiable appetite as that's usually your breakfast hour.

With love,
JOSIE."

"Aha! that's one thing off my mind," cried Mary Louise, crushing the paper and then spreading it out the full size of the sheet. "It's well for us that Josie is at home and willing to pick up a case of such a character. There is too much mystery about the case for us to undertake it without the help and

backing of that clever girl, and if she is unable to solve the mystery, her father will give her all the necessary help to find both the automobile and Danny Dexter." By the time they had adopted Josie O'German's leadership and decided to depend upon it, the three had left the police office and started for home. It was very annoying both to the Colonel and to Mary Louise to travel on foot after constant use of an automobile. The Chief, having urgent business in another part of the city, was unable to take them in his auto. As they slowly walked toward home, they discussed the mystery and rejoiced that Josie was going to help them solve it.

"She isn't much of a detective," remarked the old Colonel, "but she wins as often as she loses, and she's earnest and hard-working; moreover, she has her father's brains to appeal to, and there are no more skillful ones in all Washington than those of John O'Gorman."

"To be sure," said Mary Louise, as she clung to her grandfather's arm. "They first sent him to France to take charge of the Secret Service bureau there, but he was recalled because there were more important duties here. Josie wrote me there were a thousand suspects in America to one abroad. Besides, each nation has its corps and band of detectives and some are especially clever."

"It's a good thing for us," declared the old gentleman, "for it gives us Josie, and with her the advioe of the shrewdest secret service man in America."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARRIVAL OF JOSIE O'GORMAN

Josie O'Gorman did not bother to ring the doorbell next morning. She went around to Aunt Sallie's outside kitchen door, which always stood open at this hour, and after a word of greeting to the black mammy, made her way to the cosy little room which she always occupied when visiting there. Afterward she quietly unpacked the contents of her suitcase. This being accomplished Josie went downstairs to find Colonel Hathaway there alone, sipping his coffee behind his newspaper while awaiting Mary Louise.

"Good momin'," she said, and threw her arms around her old friend and heartily kissed him.

"I hope that cackle I hear from the kitchen means an egg, and the egg another kiss," remarked the old Colonel, smiling at her. "I am very glad you are here. You'll be a great comfort to Mary Louise, I can assure you, for she has already exhausted our resources, and I'm quite sure she's on the ragged edge of nothing."

"What's wrong, Colonel?" asked Josie, as Aunt Sallie brought in her coffee.

"Everything — and nothing," replied Colonel Hathaway, in a way, testily, and yet with an amusing expression. "But here she comes and you can get all the points of the terrible tragedy." Mary Louise entered the breakfast room briskly, as if fully expecting to find her old friend there, for she knew that Josie would not lose a minute in answering her summons. Indeed, her telegram of the evening before quite settled the matter as far as *she* was concerned.

"What's gone wrong?" she asked again, when they had seated themselves, after the exchange of a hearty kiss, at the table.

Mary Louise, in a despondent voice, replied: "Everything has gone wrong, dear. There was a beautiful automobile at the auto show a while ago, and as Gran'pa Jim's big old car had no one, from Uncle Sam to a grasshopper, to care for it any longer, I induced him to let me trade it in for the beauty I have referred to. *I* didn't care much for Gran'pa's rattletrap, but its wheels went round nevertheless."

"I know," nodded Josie, over her ham and eggs.

Then Mary Louise went on about her discovery of Danny Dexter, and bis quaint manners, and the methods be employed in abdication.

"We've tried every method we could think of," concluded the girl, and the result is that yesterday we wired you, at Gran'pa's suggestion."

"What!" in amazement. "Do you mean that the dear Colonel has at last

acquired sufficient confidence in my ability to entrust me with a job of this sort?"

The Colonel's eyes could be seen just above the edge of his newspaper, and both Josie and Mary Louise thought they twinkled.

"If it can be done," he muttered, "Josie is as likely to do it as anyone on earth. And she's fond of Mary Louise, so I've an idea she's better fitted than anyone else. But it's a stiff job."

"Yes, it is," said Josie, in the same monotonous voice. "To recover lost automobiles is almost impossible in small towns," added Josie. "Tourists are mighty numerous, and if one of these transients took the machine, such a person would surely drive off as soon as possible."

"But how can that be," protested Mary Louise, "when Danny Dexter had the car in his keeping, and now he is missing as well as the machine?"

Josie laughed joyously.

"But who told you it was Danny who ran away with your beauty," demanded Josie. "On the other hand, I'm growing more and more to favor this young man. If he can't 'own the dear little thing,' the next best thing is to be its chauffeur. Tell me some more about him — all you know."

Mary Louise flushed at this tribute, but she allowed the Colonel to depict Danny's character before she gave her own glowing opinion of him.

Josie slowly shook her head.

"There's something wrong about this whole affair," she reflected; "either he's suspiciously bad, or he's undeniably good — one of those perfect examples given us by the good Lord to pattern after. I'm afraid of those goody-goodies till I can make a hole in them and see what they're stuffed with."

"At present your chauffeur is as invisible as your machine," she said at last, "and so we rnust wait for a more promising clue."

"Well, what's to be done first?" inquired Mary Louise, impatiently. "While we're talking and fussing here, that car is getting farther and farther away from us."

"True," assented the girl detective, calmly, "but I need a good breakfast to fit me for a hard day's work — and I'm getting it."

"You're stuffing yourself like a cormorant!" said Mary Louise. "Why, I've seen you go for twenty-four hours without eating, Josie O'Gorman."

"Under other circumstances. My! how good this ham and these eggs taste after a foodless night. But I'm thinking while I chatter, Mary Louise, and if you don't like my methods of detection, discharge me on the spot, Miss Burrows," she said with mock dignity.

"Oh, hurry up, Josie. What's first on your program!"

“First, we must visit an old friend, Charlie Olmstead — and — ”

“Oh, we’ve been through all that yesterday — — and the evening before,” Mary Louise retorted. “What do you imagine we’ve been doing all this time?”

“Can’t imagine,” said Josie, meekly; “but anyone who would let a youth and a bran’ new auto get away from them so easily would do ‘most anything. I suppose you’ve interviewed the postmaster, also?” She asked in a tone that was meant to be casual.

“One of our first acts, of course.” Josie smiled over Mary Louise’s head, but the old Colonel caught the expression and answered, to assist his dearly beloved grand-daughter:

“We may have acted foolishly, Josie, but you may be sure we acted. The interview has, you must admit, rendered it unnecessary for you to do the same thing and so has saved you the loss of considerable time.”

Josie again smiled.

“You’ve now told me all you know about the automobile, and all you know about the queer fellow who acted as chauffeur and did other jobs around the place. You have practically ended your resources and want to put the case in my hands. I want to take it, for it’s one of those odd cases that appeal to an amateur detective. Why, even daddy has been mixed up in some of these ‘lost automobile’ cases, and has found to his embarrassment that some of them have baffled him to this day. Some of those mysteries of stolen cars proved so tame that dear old daddy fairly blushed to discover how cleverly, yet simply, they had fooled him.”

“But you say he recovered *some* of them?” asked Mary Louise.

“Why, yes; I must credit daddy with the fact that he has recovered most of the machines — and some of the thieves.”

“Is it so hard, then, to arrest the drivers?” inquired the Colonel, curiously.

“Yes, indeed,” was the answer. “For if an auto thief discovers he is being followed by one with a faster engine or more ‘gas’ in his tank, he can just hop out and take to the woods. In some unusual cases the driver is also caught but you can see how easy it is for him to dodge his pursuers.”

“Then if no one is chasing, he can get a long way in a couple of days?” questioned Mary Louise, anxiously.

“So he can,” assented the other girl, “but I’ve had the idea that the periods an auto thief may best be arrested are, — first, just after the theft; and secondly, after time enough has elapsed to create a sense of security in the mind of the thief and cause him to cease to worry.”

“Then you think our pirate has ceased to worry?” asked Colonel Hathaway, in a misbelieving tone.

“Yes, and he’s given us a chance to follow one or two clues to our advantage.”

“In what way?” questioned Mary Louise with interest.

“The ‘dear little car’ — of course, you must have named it? All automobiles belonging to girls must be named, I believe.”

“Of course. My car is called ‘Queenie.’”

‘‘Certainly; and with a monogram on each side door.”

“Another very good clue,” said Mary Louise, “concerns the driver himself. Danny Dexter is a rather conspicuous returned solder — not conspicuous because of his garb; he now wears the uniform of the Hathaways’ instead of Uncle Sam’s — but because of a bad scar across his forehead, which he cannot get rid of. So far, I admit we have only circumstantial evidence against the soldier, who won a ‘distinguished service medal’ and through modesty — or for other reasons — keeps this thing in his pocket instead of wearing it on his breast, as others seem proud to do. But that is no warrant for his taking ‘Queenie.’ But now let us visit the police headquarters and secure any further information there.”

Josie was following Mary Louise out when she turned and asked: “Coming with us, Colonel Hathaway?”

“Not this morning,” he replied. “You’ll want to get started and have the case well in hand before you need my assistance. If I remember rightly, Josie O’Gorman likes to work alone, so I predict it won’t be long before she’ll fire even Mary Louise and shoulder the whole thing.”

“This isn’t like the other cases in which Josie has come to our rescue,” protested Mary Louise. “It’s more like open warfare — get your eye on the thief, or on the car, and you can raise the hue-and-cry as much as you care to.”

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN FROM BOSTON

On their way to the police headquarters the two girls gossiped pleasantly concerning the events that had happened since they last saw each other, for there are other things in the world besides lost automobiles and strange young men. There are even winter coats, and how much fur it is good taste to trim them with this year. There were, also, round hats, three-cornered hats and four-cornered hats to discuss, as well as the broad-brimmed hats and matinee, church or street hats. And by the time they reached the police station they had scarcely touched upon shoes and stockings — 'never mentioned gowns at all!

They found Mr. Charles Lonsdale, Chief of Police, at his desk.

"Oh, here you are," said Josie. "Good morning, Chief."

"Good morning, I've been waiting for you for over an hour," was his response.

"Yes," said Josie, "I knew you'd wait, knowing I'd arrived on the morning train. You see, Chief, this is one of those peculiar cases that can begin or stop at any moment, as we may decide. I don't know what the 'dear little thing'

— — eh — eh — 'Queenie,' I believe, is her proper name — is worth, but — "

"Without a 'trade,' and with the accessories we loaded it with, our poor little Queenie is worth thirty-two hundred dollars," confessed Mary Louise.

The Chief looked astonished; Josie regarded her friend with amazement.

"Whatever its cost," commented Lonsdale, "the thing has been stolen, and it's my duty to try and find it. As for you, Josephine, you may tackle it or not, as it pleases you. Thirty-two hundred dollars is a good bit of money for a little automobile."

"It isn't entirely the money that bothers me or Gran'pa Jim," remarked Mary Louise, with another deep sigh. "We'd have paid a thousand more, gladly, if necessary. It's the thought that Danny would betray the confidence we held in him."

There as a brief silence, during which Josie took out her memorandum book.

"What's the record, so far?" she asked carelessly. "Well, I'll answer myself: not much, although the whole tpwn knows that Mary Louise's new auto has been stolen and Danny Dexter has disappeared at the same time. Meantime certain details have reached my ears that lead me to believe that Danny Dexter is but one of half a dozen assumed names used by this ex-

soldier. The fellow accepted his position with the Colonel as half-chauffeur and half-gardener so that, at the slightest warning, he could use the little auto in making a getaway. In other words, he's playing a bigger game than we've given him credit for."

"Who told you all this?" inquired Mary Louise, in amazement.

Josie O'Gorman laughed, but before she could answer, there burst into the room from a side closet a big man with the marks of smallpox scattered about his face, a broad, sensitive nose, and shrewd eyes. It was evident at once that he was interested in their discussion.

"Anyone could see that with half an eye," he made answer. "I'll buy you half a dozen better automobiles than 'Queenie' if you'll find its driver for me."

"What about him?" asked Josie staring at him.

"Well, one name's as good as another, just now, so we'll still call him Danny Dexter," responded the detective, leaning back in the chair so as to rest his feet against the wall. "For instance, I'm from Boston, and my name's Crocker. Understand?"

Josie shook her head. She'd met a lot of detectives at one time or another, and this one seemed familiar, in a way.

"Then it's a Boston case, after all," she said in a disappointed voice.

"No, it's just a Danny Dexter case, let us say," responded the big man, also in a disappointed voice. "They gave him up in Boston as a bigger crook than they had time to handle, and the Bank was unwilling to spend more money on so elusive an individual. But I had some information of a floating character that came back to me time after time from the war zone that justified me in resigning from the government deal and taking up the case personally. So I've been in Dorfield ever since its famous regiment arrived — for the truth is that the Dorfield boys put up as game a fight as any Americans in the Expeditionary Force. Your boys had no press agent, nor any motion picture concern to back them up, so the truth will never be heralded broadcast in newspaper headlines, but take it from me, Dorfield comes under the A-No. 1 class."

They regarded him a time in silence.

"How did you make your way here?" asked Josie.

"I saw you arrive in town and recognized you as John O'Gorman's daughter. Was on old John's force at one time. Josie O'Gorman is a friend of Mary Louise Burrows, whose auto was stolen by the man I'm hunting. That's simple enough."

"Have you been searching for him long in this locality?" asked Chief Lonsdale, handing him a business card.

“Oh, you’re not unknown to me, Charles Lonsdale,” he said; “I’ve hung around here for two days or more, and that’s long enough to tag any man.”

“What’s the name of your Boston fugitive?”

“Here they call him Danny Dexter — his war name. In Boston he was best known as Jim O’Hara.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Josie O’Gorman, in a low tone of surprise. “Then he’s well worth finding. Forger?”

“Yes — and more,” replied the big man, gravely.

Chief Lonsdale was staring at both of them.

“What is your real name?” he asked the man. “A business card doesn’t amount to much in our profession,” and he spun the proferred card across the table.

“Well, where I live we don’t often resort to aliases. They just call me Bill Crocker.”

“Oh!” again said John O’Gorman’s daughter, both surprised and interested in the turn events had taken. “I’ll go bond for him, Chief,” she continued. “It’ll do us both good to know Bill Crocker.”

The man with the pock-marks, who leaned back against the wall in careless attitude, his clothing wrinkled and unpressed, his whole appearance unkempt and unattractive, returned their looks with a mild smile.

“Reputation is a vague thing,” said he, “and often undeserved or exaggerated. To-day Bill Crocker of Boston might be called the John O’Gorman of his city, but what will he be to-morrow? A few failures and he is totally forgotten.” Josie gave one of her sympathetic nods.

“That’s true,” she affirmed. “If you’re pretty big you’re given a headline; perhaps your picture is printed, but in a few days no one remembers who you were. That’s a good idea, for otherwise the Book of Fate would be packed with nonsense. An author, painter or sculptor stands a chance of living in name, but no one else has a ghost of a chance.”

“Are you prepared to spend some money on this game?” asked Bill Crocker. “The Bank offers a big reward for the man, with all expenses. I’m going to try and get him,”

“Try for it,” repeated the Chief of Police.

“We’re prepared to do all the Bank would — and then some,” added Lonsdale calmly. “Eh, Miss Burrows? But we want the auto more than the man.”

“That is true,” agreed Mary Louise, “and yet I will leave the whole matter in your hands. With Charlie Lonsdale, who is regarded as an especially clever Chief, and Josie O’Gorman, whom I have evidence to prove is the brightest girl detective in America, and Bill Crocker of Boston, who is

regarded with such awe by his confreres, we certainly ought to win against one common soldier who has turned criminal because he likes a pretty automobile and thinks it safe to steal it from a country town."

"You forget yourself and your own talents, my dear," said Josie.

"Why, I seem to have a real talent for stirring up criminal cases," Mary Louise admitted, "but not for unraveling mysteries."

"The reason we're not all better detectives," commented Bill Crocker, "is that we lose too much valuable time. Let us get busy on the case before us. First, I want to see the old stables — lately used as the garage."

"This seems like doubling on our tracks," retorted Josie; "we all know this place so well. But as you insist on crowding yourself into this gang of investigators, we'll make a brief survey of the premises so you may know the exact situation as well as the rest of us."

CHAPTER X

MARY LOUISE MAKES A DISCOVERY

That night the air seemed breathless. A storm was threatening, and by eleven o'clock the wind had risen from a gentle sigh to quite a steady roar and was sending great dark clouds scudding across the full golden face of the moon.

Mary Louise felt breathless too, and was strangely unquiet. A storm was brewing in the very heart of her, and she could not understand just why. All she knew was that there was no use trying to sleep as yet She simply had to think. So, pulling a silken sweater of a soft rose color over her light dinner frock, she dragged her great wicker chair before the window and curled up therein.

All her being was crying out in rebellion at the thought that Danny, her kind, candid, cheery Danny Dexter, could be a forger. As if she were in his presence, she could see the honest, straightforward glance of his clear, blue eyes, and as she lay in her big chair in her darkened room and watched the wind play havoc in the garden, she suddenly realized that she had at times believed that there was something deeper in his eyes when they rested upon her.

This idea strangely disquieted Mary Louise. She made a remarkably lovely picture as the moon shone full upon her in one of its fleeting moments of freedom. The wind had loosened her soft dark hair and had flung it in little tendrils about her flushed young face, and her lips were parted in the eager recognition of a fact that had suddenly come to her. She knew she believed in and trusted Danny Dexter!

"Oh, what can I do?" she moaned. "Danny, I know you've done nothing wrong, but how can I make the others understand? And how can I ask Josie to hunt for someone else; she will hunt down one clue until she knows about it. Oh, dear me!"

And at this point a little sigh escaped from Mary Louise.

The wind evidently being in a mood sympathetic with her own, gave a sudden gusty sigh of despair; it fairly shook the house, and whistling about the chimney, finally expended itself in whirling through the window the tiny bit of cambric Mary Louise called a handkerchief.

She rose listlessly to catch it, her thoughts all centered on her problem, but the bit of white fluttered off in gay abandon among the rose bushes. Mary Louise watched the speck of light out there, idly leaning her rose-clad shoulder against the frame of the open window.

Suddenly she felt she could no longer breathe inside. She must, she felt, get out in the wind, under the clouds, and feel the wildness and vitality of the

night. Her rose-pink bedroom opened on a little balcony from which a few steps led directly into the garden. With a sudden sense of relief, Mary Louise threw back her dark head, breathing in the very storm about her, and ran down the steps into the dark. Straight for the group of tall pines at the rear of the grounds she went, to hear their wailing response to the wind, and to watch the hide and seek of the moonlight through the long needles.

Refreshed and almost happy again, she leaned against the dark pungent trunk of the oldest pine, and her dark eyes turned to the tower room that had been Danny's.

All at once she started quickly, for faint and dim though it was, a light was unmistakably filtering through the drawn shutters of the tower chamber.

"Oh!" gasped the girl, her voice trembling with relief. "Of course he came back; I knew he would; but he must come to the house and tell Grandpa Jim he's back."

So saying, she ran across the open space and finding the door of the old stable to be unlocked though tightly closed, she pushed it back. As she did so, the moon drifted out from behind its veil and shone full and bright upon the smart trim car which Mary Louise had named "Queenie." Yes, there it was without a scratch or mar that Mary Louise could see, and appearing as matter of fact as though it had never vanished into thin air!

Mary Louise welcomed it home with a little pat of joy, but most of that joy just now was for the Danny Dexter who had brought her automobile safely back.

Standing there by her beloved car she called shyly, "Danny."

After a brief pause, again, "Danny."

But there was no answer, and suddenly it seemed to her that everything was very, very quiet. Startled, she ran up the tower stairs calling in frightened tones, "Danny, oh, Danny! Answer me!"

Not, however, until she had reached the top step did she get her answer. Then the tower room door was flung back and by the dull glow of a candle Mary Louise could see the dim outline of a man. A frightened shriek rose to her lips but before it could be uttered, the man had leaped forward and with strength born of desperation, had lifted her bodily and carried her into the room pushing shut the door after him.

Gasping, Mary Louise sank onto the wicker couch which she had bought for Danny, to make his room more cheery. Even in her great fear, a sense of gratitude came to her that it was this stranger and not Danny Dexter who had stolen her car. And thinking so, some of the fear vanished and she dared glance up at the man.

His was not at all a criminal type of face. The mouth and the lines about

the mouth were very weak, but the eyes were kindly, and just now, as she met their gaze, they seemed filled with apology and distress. His tone, however, was firm and decided as he turned to Mary Louise.

"Keep absolutely quiet," he commanded crisply, "and no harm will come to you. But if you try to call out — "

Here he gave his shoulders a shrug and, with a bitter laugh, added: "I'm pretty desperate. I've got to get away, and if you make a sound, I may have to tie you up."

Mary Louise most decidedly did not want to be tied up. Words choked right in her throat but in some way she managed to convey the idea to this waiting man that she was and always would be more quiet than the quietest mouse. She felt she never, never could speak a word again, and she was trembling as if from cold in the dead of winter.

When the man was reassured, he returned to the task from which he had evidently been interrupted. This seemed to be page after page of accounts, and he was going over them with infinite care. As he leaned close under the candle flame, Mary Louise could see that he was a man very far from young. His hair was quite gray and the lines upon his face were heavy. As he turned the last leaf of the accounts, a deep sadness was on his face, which, when he had slipped the package into an envelope and addressed it, changed into as great a tenderness as Mary Louise had ever seen. Then and there all fear dropped from her and she wished she could aid this old man who so surely needed help.

Her presence had evidently been forgotten for the moment, but now the man straightened up with a start as the town clock boomed midnight.

"Good Lord," he muttered, "and I'm due in twenty minutes! There's nothing for it but to take the car again and the girl in it. I'm sorry for Danny's sake, but I don't dare leave her to give the alarm."

Deciding which, he muffled himself in a huge tan duster and cap, and motioned to Mary Louise to follow him. As he stooped to blow out the candle the long envelope slipped from his pocket to the floor. Mary Louise, almost without thought, glanced down at it, and there, glaring and flashing up at her from the envelope, was Danny's name!

She had no time for puzzling, for already her jailor was halfway down the stairs and calling her to hurry. In her anxiety to obey to the letter, Mary Louise fairly flew down the stairs and found the stranger climbing into her beloved place in her very own car. He ordered her to sit beside him, and Mary Louise did so feeling as if she were in a dream. Here she was at her home and in her own car and yet she was a prisoner. Her captor seemed to have some thought for her welfare, however, for as the car slipped quietly

out into the night, he tucked a robe carefully about her shoulders and then in silence the two flew off into the wildness of the night.

CHAPTER XI
THE EMPTY ROOM

There was no depression in the spirits of Josie O'Gorman as she bade Mary Louise good-night at her bedroom door, and jumping up the stairs, two at a time, she entered her own room with a rush of energy.

With a quick twist of her wrist, she flooded the room with brightness. It was a large room, furnished simply with a few splendid old pieces of mahogany, but in some way, Josie in the few hours of her stay had managed to impart an air of activity and alertness to her apartment. A typewriter was installed on the low table at the front of the bed. The telephone had been connected with her room, and files of notes and time tables cluttered up the desk. Even the wonderful old four-posted bed had caught the contagion of hurry and was quite flustered beneath a shower of skirts, hats and dresses that had been tossed upon it.

To Josie the main intent and purpose of life was her work; orderliness and pettiness were considerations that had to follow after. Even as she entered the room the telephone was buzzing.

"Hello," she called, seizing the receiver with one hand, pushing the odds and ends from the desk chair with the other.

"Yes, this is Josie O'Gorman. You say you haven't found a trace of the car? Well, you needn't have rung me up for that. I'd grasped that much already. Oh, you've found positively no strangers have left the neighborhood within the last forty-eight hours. That's something to go on at any rate. Yes, thank you. Good-bye."

As she hung up the receiver Josie's face wore a puzzled frown.

"It's a riot of a mess," quoth she, unbuttoning with quick jerks her mannish-looking dress of dark blue linen. Then, having dropped it on the floor, she kicked it with well directed aim into the corner. Her remark could have been applied most aptly to her attire then, as it lay a forlorn and crumpled heap. Evidently her thoughts were far from those four walls. That any of her garments remained within reaching distance was not due to Josie's care, for with little kicks one small pump lodged precariously on the window ledge, while its mate nestled more securely in the waste basket. But Josie was puzzling over a problem, and it was not coming out as clearly and as quickly as it might. These automobile robberies were discouraging matters to trace, when one realized how far one could drive a car in a few days and especially when such a clever crook as this forger, O'Hara, was at the wheel.

Josie jumped into her bright pink pajamas, finally produced her little bedroom slippers from her hat box, and covered herself with a warm

bathrobe of most brilliant hue. This done, she turned a further glare of light upon the desk, pulled out a box of salty crackers and proceeded to sit there and eat and think.

To all appearances, however, the crackers vanished quicker than the problems and Josie's head began to nod. Finally with a shrug she admitted, "I can't make head nor tail out of the thing to-night. I'll go to sleep and be a brighter detective in the morning."

So saying, she turned out the light, made sure her little revolver was safely under her pillow, and without a thought of the night outside, she climbed into bed and was instantly asleep.

Josie O'Gorman's slumbers were not undisturbed very long. For suddenly piercing even to her sleep-drugged ears came the quiet hum of a motor very near indeed. Instantly she was wide awake and reaching for her bathrobe.

Yes, there was the same sound only growing fainter. She rushed to the window but could see nothing whatever, the moon was completely covered by the clouds and the automobile had no lights. Josie placed the revolver in the pocket of her bathrobe and stole quickly from the room.

Her one idea was to waken Mary Louise immediately. Even as Josie entered Mary Louise's room, she felt a sense of someone quite near and very much awake. There was no time to rouse her girl friend; she was perhaps safer sound asleep. Without turning the switch, Josie made her slow, careful way toward the open window. The scent of the lilies from the garden was blown to her as she neared the balcony, her little revolver held steady and ready for action.

Suddenly some pebbles from the path below were tossed again at the window pane. Josie drew back waiting. The tiny patter came again; and then as she still waited tensely, a man's voice called "Mary Louise!"

Instantly all Josie's faculties were alert. This man was undoubtedly O'Hara, the fugitive from justice. Perhaps he intended to frighten Mary Louise into hiding him about the premises; perhaps it was the combination of the safe he wished to extort from her. Whatever it was, she realized that she — Josie O'Gorman — daughter of John O'Gorman, expert detective, was there to save her friend.

There was no thought of fear in Josie's heart, her brain was clear and her hand steady. She was living to the full this moment the life that she loved best to live.

She stepped cautiously behind the fluttering curtain of the window and reconnoitred. The moon had again struggled out from behind the clouds and, shining palely down upon the white of the balcony, had lit up with a weird glow the sun dial at the end of the garden path. The man who bad called out,

however, remained a dark shadow against the wistaria vine that clambered over the house. She could only distinguish that a man was there leaning against the wall, and from the faint gleam of white she knew he was facing toward the balcony.

As Josie remained hidden she saw the man bend again and, gathering some pebbles from the path, proceed to toss them against the pane. At the same time he called in a louder tone than before, “Mary Louise!”

With quick presence of mind Josie leaned slightly forward, keeping always in the deepest shadow, her finger on the trigger of her weapon.

Her words were whispered in order not to show the difference between her rather deep, full voice and the quiet, musical tones of Mary Louise.

The man evidently heard her question, “What do you want with me?” for he turned eagerly, though he remained standing where he was.

“This is Danny Dexter,” he said slowly and distinctly. “Don’t be frightened, Mary Louise, but I simply had to call you to the balcony. There is something I cannot leave without telling you.” Josie made a quick mental note of his immediate departure and proceeded to extract further information by a whispered “Yes” of encouragement.

“I wanted to make you understand that although you would not want me here any longer, still I am absolutely innocent of any forgery I understand this Crocker is accusing me of. And, Mary Louise, your car is safe in the garage.” Astounding facts indeed for Josie to digest!

The man’s tone carried absolute conviction. She could not help the firm belief that this man was not the forger O ‘Sara. And what was this he said, the car was safe? Had he perhaps been searching for the thief himself?

Josie found her thoughts all in a turmoil. But one thing she did, impulsively and kindly. Clutching her blanket robe more vigorously about her and dropping the revolver in its pocket, she stepped out onto the balcony.

“I’m sorry I deceived you, Danny Dexter, and I believe just what you said,” she told him simply.

Then seeing the shadow of the man start in amazement, she added quickly: “You see, I’m Mary Louise’s friend, Josie O’Gorman, and I’m here to help find the car.”

Then Josie gave a hearty, tickled laugh. “And you just saved yourself from arrest and perhaps from being murdered,” she added, brandishing the weapon she produced from her pocket.

Danny Dexter perhaps appreciated the humor of it all more fully when the revolver was restored to its resting place. At any rate he withdrew into the shadow and quietly waited until Josie, taking pity on him, said:

“You wait down there a few moments, Danny Dexter, and I’ll wake Mary

Louise and help her dress and send her out to you.”

“Thank you,” answered Danny, a slight quiver of anxiety in his voice, “but I must leave soon, and if I cannot wait to see her, will you tell her what you heard me say, and also say good-bye?”

“Of course I will!” said Josie 0 ‘Gorman, and then, turning, called briskly:’ “Mary Louise!” There was no answer; her own breathing was all that she could hear. Frightened, she hurriedly ran across the room and turned on the electric switch. Her startled cry brought Danny in one leap across the balustrade, and together in a panic they gazed about the room. It was empty!

CHAPTER XII
DANNY DISAPPEARS

Danny Dexter took a hasty glance at Mary Louise's empty room, and then with one running jump he was in the garden again, clutching his cap to save it from the wind and cursing the clouds which just then made it so dark he could not see his hand in front of him. He followed the path to the old stables as best he could, and once he paused as a soft bit of white blew into his face. It was Mary Louise's little handkerchief that was tossing about in the elements and had finally found a very welcome lodgment. Danny recognized that soft perfume as of violets, and he placed the foolish trifle carefully in the inside pocket of his coat as though it were a very precious thing. Then he hurried on, his anxious eyes straining in the darkness toward the garage.

Past the pines he hastened, never noticing their sighs and wailings, and stopped with a hurt cry of amazement at finding the garage door open and the automobile gone.

"Oh, Uncle Jim, why did you take it?" he groaned aloud — "just when we'd worked for two hours quietly pushing it back in its place. Mary Louise would have been so happy to have found it in the morning. I'd so counted on her joy!" and the lad leaned wearily against the door.

There seemed no need to search the building further, but Danny rushed up the stairs just to be sure Mary Louise had not been there.

"Of course she couldn't have come here," he argued with himself, "and yet how kind of her if she had come, thinking Uncle Jim's light meant that I was back."

The very thought that Mary Louise had utterly despised him sent Danny flying around the tower room searching for a sign of her. But no sign was given him. He saw where the man whom he called Uncle Jim had rested through the evening and where his candle had dripped tallow on the floor, but that was all.

"Good Uncle Jimsie!" thought Danny, as he quickly scraped up the candle grease and locked the door to the tower room. "It was the one place I could hide him where I felt they would not look for him again to-night. But, thank God, we are saving him!"

Danny again went down the stairs. This time with an electric torch he carefully searched the ground outside to find just where the car had gone. "It started off in the right direction," said Danny, as he still strained his eyes for one glimpse of something or someone that might turn out to be Mary Louise. Once he saw a gleam of white in the darkness and tearing madly toward it found with a sinking heart that it was only a bush of small white flowers.

His torch was playing upon every bit of ground about the garage, and suddenly it stopped in his hand as though paralyzed. The faint glow of its light had fallen directly upon a little bow from Mary Louise's slipper, evidently torn off in her scurry to reach the car.

Danny leaned over it as if trying to solve the mystery of its being there. All that he could reason was that Mary Louise must have driven off with Uncle Jim. Then the quickest and only thing for him to do was to reach the crossroads.

His head jerked up in alarm. So engrossed had he been in Mary Louise's disappearance that he had failed to recall the alarm which Josie must have given. Voices were floating down the garden paths and a glow of light illumined the whole house. The face of Danny Dexter was stern with resolve as with infinite caution he swung to the garage door and crept into the darkness.

He made his way carefully and with instant decision. It was as though by prearrangement, so steadily and yet so quietly he went, across the road and into the waste of meadow beyond it.

The wind had hushed by now, as though in deference to the distant roar of thunder, and a heavy warmth was weighing down the air. The perfume of the drying clover was oppressive as Danny unerringly made his way, his cap now in his pocket, and his thick hair damp on his bare forehead.

The sudden baying of a dog a long way distant caused him to pause, but the sound ceased and only the restless rumble of the approaching storm broke the perfect silence. Then Danny, convinced that he was not followed, stumbled on and reached the edge of the marsh land which skirted the river. It was an intensely lonely spot. Even the deep, full-throated croaking of the bullfrogs seemed subdued by the dank mist that hung low upon the water-soaked land, and the glimmer and sparkle of innumerable fireflies were dim and tremulous through the dusk.

The moon, now very pale and yellow, was wanly glowing a last farewell before succumbing to the piling clouds of the storm. It faintly outlined a small woodland to the right, where willows dipped their branches in the muddy soil and elderberry bushes ran riot undisturbed.

Danny smiled grimly as he thought of the trouble it had been to push Mary Louise's automobile from its hiding-place there and get it safely home without the engine being heard. And it had all been in vain. But the last part of his errand should succeed; of this he was assured.

Pausing not an instant, he went on as best he could, leaping and slipping from hummock to hummock in the weird green of the moon and by the glowworm's flash.

At last he was quite at the edge of the wood, and distinctly he made out the dim outline of a little Ford secluded amongst the trees which had so recently held “Queenie.” Danny Dexter felt a thrill of joy and gratitude.

“Are you there?” he called.

“Right-o!” answered a cheery voice, and from the Ford stepped Will White.

As Danny leaped over the railing and disappeared into the night Josie rushed into the hall and up the stairs. Pausing only for a quick knock, she flung open the door of Grandpa Jim’s room, awakening that worthy old gentleman with the startling announcement, “Mary Louise isn’t here!”

“What’s that? Mary Louise gone?”

The realization that his beloved grandchild was in danger waked him wide in an instant. Telling Josie to scamper, he was out of bed and dressed in three minutes by the clock. Josie was but two minutes later than he, which was very quick time for a girl detective.

They met in the library in front of the ashes of the little fire that Mary Louise had kindled so happily the evening before. Grandpa Jim was almost as gray as the ashes, and a great fear was in his eyes as Josie told of hearing the auto and meeting Danny.

“We must telephone for Lonsdale at once, and you’d better ring up Crocker, too,” he said, “for if Danny is innocent of this, our Mary Louise must be in the hands of this O’Hara. Ransom, I suppose.”

The Colonel walked restlessly up and down the room while Josie telephoned. He was still pacing about when she returned to tell him: “They’ll both be here in a jiffy, Grandpa Jim. Lonsdale is bringing his car, and we’ll all go along.. Why, they just can’t escape us!”

The old man patted the head of the young girl tenderly. He knew she was trying to give him courage, and indeed she was the picture of pluck as she stood there, her scarlet cheeks reflecting the scarlet Tam o’ Shanter she had carelessly pulled down about her hair. So they stood together as the minutes ticked away, the clock hands seeming to move with infinite weariness. Finally with a slight ring of the bell the door opened and admitted Lonsdale, the local Chief, and Crocker, the detective from Boston.

CHAPTER XIII
FACE TO FACE

When the automobile left the garage and spun quietly down the thoroughfare, Mary Louise was amazed to find that she could not possibly fear this man. The sadness of the set face that was kept steadily upon the road was such that her kind heart ached for him.

Who was he? What could he be doing? She remembered with a quiver of dismay the letter she had seen addressed to Danny. What could Danny possibly have to do with him?

"After all," thought Mary Louise, "how little Danny has ever told me of himself!" And the depression of the night seemed suddenly reflected in her spirits.

The car, being without lights, necessarily had to be driven very slowly, but at that they could not have been traveling for more than fifteen minutes when the man at the wheel turned the car into a narrow, grass-grown lane which ran along the edge of the marsh toward the river.

About half a mile down the lane be stopped the car. At the same time the wind died down and a tense quietness came over the feelings of Mary Louise as of breathless waiting. The man at the wheel stood up and carefully gazed across the low land toward a willow copse near the river's edge. He stood quiet and intent for some few moments. Finally his search must have been rewarded, for with a sigh of relaxation he sank down in the seat again.

It was a full minute before Mary Louise could make out what the man's sharp sight had detected. A dark object was bobbing and dipping over the marsh land.

She was instantly recalled from her discovery by the voice of her companion. It was a kindly voice though thick and nervous, and he spoke in jerks.

"Mary Louise," he said, "I believe you are a friend of Danny's. At least I know he is a true friend to you, as God knows he is to me! I'm Danny's uncle, raised him from a kid, but I guess I'm no good. Anyhow, when Danny found I wasn't square, he ran off and enlisted with the Canadians when the war broke out. But now that he knows they've found me out, he has done everything possible to help me — believes that blood is thicker than water, I guess. He took your car the night before your trip just to get me to the junction, for the Santa Fe Limited. I'm off for China. But Crocker came that night and we had to hide the car and ourselves."

Mary Louise was breathless with interest as the man talked. But why should he be telling it to her? The voice jerked on.

“Danny was sick about worrying you, and finally insisted that we push back the car and then meet here. Sorry I had to bring you but my freedom was in pawn, and now — ” the man’s voice grew husky — “that lad has made me give my word to hand him my accounts. He swears he’ll make up the deficit. Good Lord, what a boy!”

Mary Louise breathed a soft “Amen.” Her eyes were like twin stars from pride and happiness, and as the man pressed a large envelope into her hand, she realized that one mystery was solved.

“Will you give him that?” said the man, and added, “God bless you both,” as he jumped to the ground and left her.

The strange individual seemed to be swallowed up instantly by the darkness, and except when the flashes of lightning revealed it, the dark bobbing object in the marsh was also invisible. Mary Louise suddenly felt very much alone. She welcomed even the approach of the mysterious something, which each vivid flash of electricity revealed as coming nearer, ever nearer. It seemed to leap and dip and sidle, but at the same time constantly to advance.

The weird hoot of an owl from a tree that edged the lane caused Mary Louise to shiver and to draw the auto robe more closely about her, although the heat of the night seemed to be weighing down all nature. She felt cold and utterly deserted. The now incessant rumble of the thunder drowned any sound the approaching object might be making, and as Mary Louise sat waiting and trembling a great bat flew blindly down and beat its loathsome wings against the car. That was enough and more than enough for Mary Louise. With a gasp she sank on the floor of the auto and covered her head with the robe.

So it happened that when the Ford runabout came close to the car she neither saw nor heard it. Neither did she see one man jump out and help the stranger into his vacant seat, as the latter wrung his hand and bade him farewell in a queer, choked voice.

“My boy, God bless you,” muttered the older man, “and I promise to be on the level for your sake from this time on. ‘Thank you’ are feeble words.”

Danny’s voice was very gentle as he put his strong arm around the trembling shoulders of the older man.

“Uncle Jim,” he said, “I understand a great deal more than before I went into that Hell over there, and I can’t forget that everything you did was for me — to give me money and education. It is just that I should square up our accounts and I — want to do it.”

At this point Will White, who had been sitting quietly at the wheel, struck a match and, looking at his watch, suggested: “If my watch ain’t fast and if

that train ain't slow, we'd better hustle."

Danny stepped back after one last hand-shake, and the Ford went chugging down the lane. With a feeling of regret not unmingled with relief that his part of the escape was accomplished, he turned to Mary Louise's car standing empty in the shadow. He swung quickly into the driver's seat and quite as quickly swung out again, for with a stifled "Ouch" a small tousled head appeared above the blankets and Danny and Mary Louise were face to face!

"Oh, Danny!" cried Mary Louise, when she found breath to speak to the intruder in her automobile, "Oh, Danny, I'm so glad that you've come to me."

Had Danny been a disciple of accuracy he could quite easily have explained that he hadn't the wildest idea he was coming to her. Instead, hearing the welcome in her voice, and being so unbelievably glad to see that tousled head and tear-stained face, he simply said, "Of course I came, Mary Louise," and then he could not say another word.

He stood bare-headed there on the running board and stared and stared down at Mary Louise who was still sitting on the floor of the car and gazing up at him. Suddenly a huge drop of rain splashed full upon the upturned nose of Mary Louise. It roused her with a start and evidently filled her with a spirit of prophecy for she sagely said, "Danny, I guess it's going to rain!"

Then Danny, too, felt the great drops beating down his collar, and with a chuckle and an, "I'll be darned, I never noticed it," be was swooping out the side curtains and adjusting them to their hooks.

Mary Louise insisted on helping. It was very nice to have her, though of course it delayed matters, and they were both pretty thoroughly soaked before they finally climbed back into the car. It was dry and snug in there at least.

Outside, the storm was now lashing and howling with a fury that was terrific. It was an impossibility to start the car until the wind and rain abated, so Danny switched on the little light and turned once again to Mary Louise.

Then, strange to relate, they were both tongue-tied. Mary Louise became miserably conscious that her hair was in wild disarray, and Danny became blissfully conscious that the wild disarray of Mary Louise's hair was very lovely. It is difficult to say how long the silence would have lasted had not her hand touched the long, official envelope upon the seat beside her. Then Mary Louise remembered she was playing postman.

"Your Uncle Jim asked me to give you this, Danny," she said, placing the bulky letter on his knee.

Danny turned to her in wonder and almost in awe. "Mary Louise, you

know about me? You know about Uncle Jim, and still you speak to me?"

"Yes," said Mary Louise softly. "Maybe I speak to you partly because I know about your Uncle Jim, because I think it is so splendid of you to take the responsibility of paying the checks he forged."

"You can't know that I took your car that night just to take him to the junction. He came to me to help him and I had to. But, oh, Mary Louise, when Crocker came and I had to hide your car — at least let me tell you what I suffered at the thought of worrying you! I don't ask your forgiveness."

Mary Louise found her voice again. "You don't have to," she told Danny. "I know, too, of all the trouble you took to push it back safely," and she turned to him a face so lighted with trust and confidence that Danny gripped the idle steering wheel very hard and gazed straight ahead unseeing into the night.

If he had been observant, he would have noticed that the storm had spent its wildness and was already dying down in the distance. The cool, cleared air was creeping into the car. It was Mary Louise who first saw the new-washed moon appear a golden ball again.

"See, it's all clearing up," she said; "we'd better go."

Danny lingered though for a minute longer. Then — "Mary Louise, may I ask you — " he started to say; then changed it joyously to — "Why, no; I *know* you won't give Uncle Jim away to Crocker."

"Of course not," replied Mary Louise, and her eyes answered the steady look of his.

Then Danny started the auto slowly and drove out into the lane.

CHAPTER XIV
THE SEARCH

When Crocker and Lonsdale entered the Hathaway home Josie O'Gorman briefly outlined to them the coming of Danny and of hearing the automobile. Crocker turned instantly and went through the kitchen into the courtyard and across to the old stable.

Here it was plainly evident to his practiced eye that not only had a machine come and gone, but at least three individual pairs of feet had plodded around the doorway. Not pausing to investigate the footprints further than to assure himself that one deep imprint was of a small and high-heeled slipper, Crocker strode back to the house. The immediate thing to do was to trace the car before the lowering storm broke in all its fury and completely erased the tracks.

When he reached the house he found Aunt Sally and Uncle Ben fussily scurrying about, trying to help and managing most successfully to be in everybody's way.

"Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy," groaned Aunt Sally, as she slipped an all-enveloping slicker upon Josie's shoulders, "dat lightnin' sho' am de bad sig.. I jes' opine I ain' nevah gwine fo' to see ma lama agin!" And then the woolly head of good old Aunt Sally was hidden by her huge checked apron, which she flung over it, and her body rocked and swayed with the moans and sobs that shook her.

Uncle Eben took special charge of his beloved master, the Colonel, bringing his big sou'wester and cheering Grandpa Jim with the helpful assurance: "Massa Jim, Ah knowed they's somethin' awful gwine fo' to happen caze las' night Ah dreamt of a white mule. Ain't nevah knowed it to fail to mean death and destruction when Ah dream of a white mule."

At last they climbed into the car, Crocker and Lonsdale in the front, Josie O'Gorman and Colonel Hathaway in the tonneau. The storm seemed just about to crash in all its fury above their heads and the lightning was sharp and incessant. By the powerful searchlight of the car they could easily trace the route of the machine they were pursuing until they reached the macadam road. Here the wind in all its previous fury had blown away all traces of the wheels.

Lonsdale stopped and Crocker climbed out to investigate the ground more closely. As he did so the unmistakable chug-chug of a Ford was beard evidently coming at full speed down the road.

Instantly alert, at Crocker's command Lonsdale placed bis automobile directly across the road. The Ford came on until almost upon the obstruction

and then stopped with a jerk. As the searchlight played upon the new arrival, Josie with a sense of disappointment recognized Will White from the grocery store.

"Good heavens, man," said Lonsdale testily, "were you trying to run us down?"

Will White laughed his slow, lazy laugh. "Naw, not quite," he said, "but I was allowin' as how Uncle Will and me might hit it home afore the rain."

As Lonsdale backed the car out of the way, the Colonel's ever ready courtesy came forth.

"So this is your uncle?" he asked, kindly nodding to the quiet elderly man who sat beside Will White, his face perhaps a trifle pale.

"I'm named for him," vouchsafed Will, his drawl was most pronounced. Then: "Are you in trouble, Colonel?"

Quickly the whole auto load reached the same decision. They would say nothing of their search to this village gossip unless they found themselves powerless. Then they would wake the town. So with a curt denial and a hasty apology for blocking the traffic, the larger car sped on.

Finally, Crocker stopped at a farmhouse and roused the farmer from his sleep by many bangs against the door.

The farmer came down cross and sleepy, but at least Crocker got from him the information that they had heard no auto pass that evening. "And only a fool would be out a night like this,'' added the man as he slammed the door.

The rain was now beating down and in a minute it was falling in such torrents that the road could not be seen an inch ahead. The roar of the thunder came the moment the zigzag flash was seen gashing across the sky, and even as they gazed in helpless awe, they saw a giant oak ripped limb from limb by the lightning.

Josie O'Gorman shrank back and hid her face. Colonel Hathaway, drawn and gray at the thought of his beloved grandchild out in all the horror of the elements, breathed a prayer for her safety. The two men on the front seat tried in vain to light cigars, and vigorously cursed the luck that brought this storm which would wipe away all traces of the runaway car.

The roadway was now a veritable river, the water surging down from the hill above and whirling about the wheels of the car. It was impossible to stay where they were, so with infinite care, Lonsdale finally turned them about. Then splashing through the flood, feeling every inch of the road, they slowly made their way toward home.

Because of its fury, the storm spent itself quickly. It was with intense relief that they noticed the first signs of first abatement in the slackening of

the rainfall and the lessening of the wind. The thunder was already rumbling in the distance, and a whippoorwill sang refreshed from a tree near by. Only the roaring floods along the highway and the stripped oak standing stark and naked in the gathering moonlight remained to show the destruction of that night.

As the searchers went more quickly now, the spirits of the occupants of Lonsdale's car were more depressed than ever. Their search was absolutely fruitless.

Suddenly not far ahead of them they saw the faint gleam of the red light of an auto. Putting on speed they splashed along regardless of the smoothness or the roughness of the road. Then Grandpa Jim gave an exclamation of rejoicing.

"It's Mary Louise's car!" he cried.

Faster went the Lonsdale car, gaining, ever gaining on its object. Now they honked the horn repeatedly but the escapers evidently paid no heed. Though their speed did not seem to increase, neither did it slacken.

"Better not run a risk of their escaping again," muttered Crocker, and leaning carefully over the side of the car he fired two shots into the rear tire of the machine. The effect was instantaneous. With a loud explosion, the car swerved quickly, slowed down and then came to a dead stop.

CHAPTER XV

A JOURNEY BEGUN

When Will White and Jim O'Hara realized that Lonsdale's machine had driven on, their relief was unbounded.

O'Hara turned to Will White and said: "I know that you are doing this entirely for the sake of that boy of mine, but I trust that you will never have a moment's regret that you have aided my escape."

"It ain't nothin' a-tall," commented Will, chewing his quid with energy. "It's been my hope that some time I could do something for Dan Dexter, and when he come to me this evenin' ter tell me of his fix, why I sure was there to help with bells on."

"It was splendid," responded O'Hara, "and you were the one man of all others upon whom suspicion would fall last. All the same you ran a risk."

"All the same, Dan Dexter ran some risk when he saved my life out there in No-Man's Land,"

returned Will briefly. And seeming to feel that the final word had been said, be turned his undivided attention to the road.

O'Hara, too, all this time had been peering anxiously ahead, fearing to see through the heavy-falling rain the headlight of the approaching locomotive. It did not appear, however, and even through the wildest part of the storm the little ford plunged on.

"You'll let me off at the water tank," directed O'Hara, by this time so restless that he could hardly remain seated. "I'll climb on the train from there," and his long fingers trembled as they gripped the handbag on his knees.

Slowly and steadily, nearer to the junction came the Ford, although to the impatient man each turn of the wheel seemed an eternity.

The storm had made every landmark invisible. They had no way of gauging where they were. Still the wheels kept turning, turning; and that was at least something.

Then above the storm, above the noise of the engine, even above the loud beating of the refugee's heart, there came to him the shrill shriek of a locomotive.

"We're late — too late," he almost shrieked; for at that moment he realized as never before, all that bis liberty — the chance to start life again and to repay Danny — meant to him.

But Will White, accustomed as he was to his surroundings, had seen what the older man had failed to notice — the hulking shape of the water tower to their left.

Turning sharply, he ran the car over ditches, shying at a fence, full speed right up to the very track. Here he stopped abruptly with the emergency brake.

He was none too soon. The huge snake of the Santa Fe Limited was crawling and writhing in its slow start for the distant desert. Without a glance behind, without a second's pause, O'Hara leaped from the Ford, and in two steps he reached the handrail and swung onto the rear platform of the Limited.

His journey had begun.

As Lonsdale's slowed up beside the punctured machine, Mary Louise popped her head out of the door.

"Well, of all things," shouted the Chief of Police, as Danny Dexter's head appeared beside the girl's. "Why in thunder didn't you stop when you heard the honking? The thunder hasn't deafened you, has it?"

"Honking?" gently inquired Mary Louise. "Honking?" echoed Danny in dignified inquiry.

A grim smile twitched the corners of Lonsdale's mouth as he looked at the softened, preoccupied expressions of the two of them.

"Yes, honking," he mimicked them; then hastened to add, "but only honking loud enough to raise the dead."

At this point Colonel Hathaway managed to extricate himself from the robes and the sou'wester which engulfed him, and had come around to Mary Louise's side. At sight of him she gave a little cry of joy and concern.

"Oh, Grandpa Jim, dear Grandpa Jim, you've been out in all this storm to hunt me," she said, as she flung her arms tenderly about his neck.

The Colonel surreptitiously wiped away a couple of tears, and then patted the top of Mary Louise's head.

"There, there, lassie," he said quietly, as Mary Louise continued to burrow her head in his shoulder; "we have you safe and sound again."

Then turning sternly to Danny, who stood rather white and very much mud-bespattered, he said, "What have you to say for yourself, young man?"

Mary Louise's head came up with a jerk. All through this silent drive at Danny's side she had been revolving in her thoughts just what she would say to clear Danny and turn suspicion from his uncle. Her testing time had come sooner than she expected, but she was ready. She stepped between Danny Dexter and her grandfather as though to protect the former.

As she did so, a fleeting vision crossed her mind of the broken old man out somewhere in the night. Had he caught his west-bound train? She wished she knew the answer.

"Grandpa Jim," she said, distinctly and without effort, "let me tell you all

about it; for I'm the one that Danny saved."

As she spoke they all gathered around her in the road, regardless, in fact, unconscious, of the mud and wet. Josie drew nearest and slipped her arm through Mary Louise's, as she talked.

"I couldn't sleep when I went upstairs tonight," continued Mary Louise, "so I sat at the window and finally went into the garden. There I saw a light in the garage, and thinking that my car was safe I ran toward it. As I reached the door a very tall, dark man jumped out and told me to keep quiet. When I started to scream he put his hand over my mouth and lifted me into the car and started off.

"The next thing I knew Danny jumped out from the roadside onto the running board. The big, dark man didn't seem to want to fight, just to get away. Putting on the brake he jumped out and ran off in the dark, — that way," added Mary Louise, and waved a hand indefinitely eastward.

At this point Crocker and Lonsdale lost all interest in the tale of Mary Louise. Their man was escaping east on foot.

"Will you drive Colonel Hathaway and Miss O'Gorman home with you?" crisply ordered Crocker of Danny. "We'll continue the search for O'Hara." He and Lonsdale leaped in the Chief's car and were off.

Colonel Hathaway turned to Danny with a word of thanks. "You may have saved her life, my boy," he said. At which, let it be recorded, Danny had the grace to blush.

But as for Mary Louise, she never did have one regret for that fib she told. In fact, as Danny helped her back into the automobile and his warm fingers closed upon her little hand in a sudden quick pressure of gratitude, the conscience of Mary Louise troubled her not at all. She had done the right thing. Both her heart and her mind told her so.

CHAPTER XVI

AUNT SALLY ENTERTAINS

As the returning search party came within sight of the Hathaway home, they saw that it was brilliantly lighted and the fat, comfortable shadow of Aunt Sally could be seen waddling back and forth in front of the kitchen window.

"Hurrah!" shouted Josie. "Aunt Sally sure is on the job and we won't go hungry!"

They knew her surmise to be correct the minute they opened the door, for the smell of frying chicken and delicious coffee was wafted to their nostrils.

To Danny, who had eaten nothing all that day, and who had hastily consumed only a few hard, dry sandwiches the day before, the odor was like a breath of heaven. Hurrying back to his old tower room, he flung off the mud-stained livery with loathing, and gloried in a piping hot tub.

Then he quickly slipped into a neat, well-tailored suit of quiet brown. It was the first time Mary Louise would see him really dressed and, boyishly, we wanted very much to have her satisfied.

When he entered the dining room a few minutes later, Mary Louise was also entering from the hall, and from the soft blush with which she greeted him one would surmise that Mary Louise was satisfied. As for herself, Mary Louise had never looked so lovely. Her soft, dark curls, still a bit damp from the rain, had been caught at the top of her head and held there by a narrow band of pink. It gave her quite the look of a little woman, or perhaps it was the startled, wistful and yet happy expression of her lovely eyes, under which lay violet shadows, that caused the old Colonel to realize with a start that Mary Louise had suddenly grown up. She had slipped on a quite grown-up garment, a soft and clinging tea gown of shell pink chiffon, and she entered the room a little wearily and very shyly.

It seemed to the surprised Danny that there had never been any one so lovely in the whole wide world before.

"Bless ma soul," Aunt Sally was fussing as she placed one wonderful dish after another upon the table in true Southern style. "Bless ma soul, Aunt Sally knowed as when dev brung the little missy home dead or alive she would be hungry."

The platter of chicken, fried to a perfect brownness, was placed before the Colonel, and the voice of Aunt Sally called through the butler's pantry, "Eben, you lazy ole niggah, bring in de candied yams."

Uncle Eben did so, just as Josie came bouncing down the stairs fastening the final hook to the crumpled linen dress as she came. "Oh, dear Aunt Sally, how perfectly delicious everything does look, and I never, never before ate

dinner at two o'clock in the morning."

Just then the honk of an auto was heard outside. This time both Mary Louise and Danny were aware of the disturbance, so evidently their sense of hearing was not permanently impaired. In a moment the door opened and two tired, disgusted and discouraged men entered.

But the insidious aroma of that coffee of Aunt Sally's seeped even through their depression, and with a "God bless Aunt Sally," Lonsdale and Crocker both decided that life was probably worth living after all.

It was in fact a very happy party which gathered around the table at the places Mary Louise had assigned to them, with a new little touch of dignity that became her well.

Directly after dinner Aunt Sally insisted on taking Mary Louise off to rest, and with a sleepy little "good-night" to them all, Mary Louise was led away and tucked in bed as tenderly as when she was a little child.

With her departure the room seemed very queer and empty, and Danny suddenly realized how tired he was himself. So with a good-night to the Colonel he was off to his tower room and to the soundest of deep slumbers.

Not so with Josie O'Gorman. She was on a job and until her work was finished she would need no rest. As Crocker was pulling on his gloves preparatory to leaving she faced him squarely.

"Is there one bit of use for either you or me working on this case any longer?" she inquired. "If there is, I'm willing to stay and help, but if there isn't, I guess there're more important things for both of us in Washington."

"You're right, you are," agreed Crocker most definitely. "I hate like the devil to give up the case but the man could hide here in the dunes indefinitely, and I haven't time to wait."

"Of course," added Josie, "the auto theft solved itself; they didn't really need me."

"I'm not so sure, you gave them confidence and courage when they needed it," said Crocker, kindly, and reaching out a huge hand in friendly farewell, "you're a game youngster and I hope I run across you often." And Crocker strode down the front stairs to the waiting Lonsdale.

Josie turned back into the hall, glancing at Danny's cap that had been left on the hall tree, and at the little parasol of Mary Louise's leaning near it. A whimsical smile flashed over her face.

"Well," she soliloquized, "I've not made very much out of this case, but at least I've detected one thing — and that is the way the wind blows in that quarter."

With an all-inclusive glance at the parasol and cap she fled up the stairs.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BIRTHDAY BREAKFAST

The sun was away up in the sky and was flooding her room with a warm radiance when Mary Louise awoke. The soft twitter of the birds and the clip-clip of a lawn mower next door came in through the windows. Stretching her slender body and yawning prodigiously, she clambered out of bed. The breeze was softly fluttering the curtains, and a tiny moss rosebud which had climbed that high, tapped alluringly against the sill of the open window.

Mary Louise decided that it was a very wonderful world to be out in, and that she would hurry and get dressed. In a short time she entered the dining-room to tell Aunt Sally she would have her breakfast.

Suddenly she stopped short in sheer amazement at the table. Then the recollection came to her. To be sure, to-day was her birthday! How like Grandpa Jim to plan this surprise for her, and how like Aunt Sally to carry it out so beautifully! The huge round mahogany table was covered with a cloth of exquisite lace. In a low basket in the center of the table, dozens of pale pink rosebuds were clustered together, their graceful little heads bobbing in all directions about the handle of the basket. A tiny rosebud nestled at all of the eight plates, to give a dainty welcome to each young girl invited to Mary Louise's birthday breakfast.

Out in the garden Mary Louise caught a glimpse of her grandfather and Josie O'Gorman walking arm in arm along the garden paths, and out she rushed to them.

"What a perfectly beautiful surprise," sang Mary Louise as she caught up with them.

"Happy Birthday!" they both called out to her as in one breath.

Then the guests began to arrive. Irene came first from the house next door, her wheel chair coming easily over the gravel path. She gave Mary Louise a very tender birthday kiss, and pressed upon her a large box filled with delicious home-made candy.

"Aunty Hannah and I made it for you this morning, dear Mary Louise," she said.

"How lovely!" cried Mary Louise, her eyes asparkle with excitement and delight, and running to the gate, she met the other guests who were just arriving. Each brought a little gift to tell their love for Mary Louise. Laura Hilton brought an ingenious toy automobile with a uniformed tin driver very erect at the wheel.

Aunt Sally appeared at this moment to ask them in to breakfast, so the laughing, happy girls went in, their bright-hued gowns making a veritable

rainbow about the table.

"And now," cried Alora, leaning across the table, "we've waited just as long as we possibly can; tell us all about the automobile."

"Yes, and the thief," added Lucile Neal, eagerly.

Mary Louise most wisely held her peace. Instead of explaining she turned to Josie O'Gorman saying, "Goodness, don't ask me to tell you when we have a regular unraveler of mysteries there to spin the yarn for us."

"To be sure," exclaimed Phoebe Phelps. "Josie, be careful to tell us every single word." So Josie, nothing loth, told her own version of the missing car, that version being just what Mary Louise wished it to be. So the recounting was highly satisfactory to all.

As they talked and exclaimed, Aunt Sally served one delicious course after another, and the happy, healthy girls enjoyed it all.

As they left the dining room and strolled out on to the wide veranda, resting in the wide and roomy swing or in the lounging cretonne chairs, Josie said, with regret in her voice: "Girls, I'm sorry, hut I've got to go back to Washington on the next train."

"Oh, Josie," wailed Mary Louise; "must you really leave on my beautiful birthday?" But realizing it was useless to try to dissuade her, she added: "Well, anyway, we'll all pile into the car and take you to the station."

"Yes, luckily we've got the car to pile into," echoed Josie.

So with a great deal of laughter and much chatter the Liberty Girls adjourned to the garage.

After Mary Louise had safely deposited Josie on the train for Washington and her friends at their houses, she turned the car slowly toward her own home. Somehow she did not want to return just yet. Of a sudden her heart was strangely heavy.

She had had a perfect birthday, she told herself, so what more could she possibly want?

That she did want something more, however, was quite obvious, or why should two fat tears start from her eyes and go bouncing down the smoothness of her cheeks.

Mary Louise was not surprised to find that she was crying. It would never do for Grandpa Jim to think her unhappy when he had been so dear to-day, so she turned the corner and started quickly for a country road.

Anywhere, just any place where she could be alone and think.

"Grandpa Jim never, never has forgotten my birthday," thought Mary Louise, as her car spun along the macadam. "Oh, why couldn't Danny have remembered just this once," and two more tears were added to the collection.

This fact rather startled Mary Louise. Could that be the reason she was

crying? Because Danny had forgotten her? In her amazement Mary Louise slowly stopped the car at the entrance to a grassy lane.

Instantly she realized it was the very lane where Danny had come to her the night before and where she had been so glad to see him. Rather dazedly she climbed out of the auto and wandered slowly down the lane. Just to reach the spot where she and Danny had been together, and just to be alone and think — that was what she wanted.

Her bright pink gingham was as fresh and sweet as the wild roses it brushed in passing, and her cheeks were flushed a rose hue too. The flower-wreathed Leghorn hat she wore made deeper shadows in her eyes. But Mary Louise knew nothing of all that.

To the lad who ten minutes before had flung himself upon the ground, her slow approach down the lane was like the coming of an angel.

He jumped up quickly and went to her. Mary Louise was startled by the unexpected movement and as she glanced up quickly she saw Danny approaching.

"Mary Louise," said Danny simply, "I'm glad you came here before the day was over. Yes," he explained, as Mary Louise's eyes questioned him, "I haven't forgotten it's your birthday, and I want to wish you all the happiness in the world; you deserve every bit of joy there is."

"Oh, no," said Mary Louise, with a happy little flush, "but I'm glad you thought of me, Danny."

"Of course, I did," said Danny, and then added rather shyly as he held out a little package, "Mary Louise, I know that to-day is your birthday, and I want so much to give you what I cherish most. May If" And Mary Louise said he might. Mary Louise opened the package and found the most wonderful birthday present any girl could have, — the Distinguished Service Medal of her hero.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE MOTOR TRIP

Mary Louise flung back the wide hall door and danced into the room, tossing her hat on a nearby chair. She had had such a happy birthday, and she so loved Happiness! The tingling of the telephone in the study caused her to turn into the room and pick up the desk telephone.

"Hello," she said, her joyousness still singing through her tones. Then in breathless amazement, "Why, Josie O'Gorman, didn't you take the train!"

"No," answered Josie, "just as I was boarding the train a dispatch came saying that O 'Hara had been spotted on the westbound Santa Fe Limited. Crocker had wired the authorities to get him at Albuquerque."

"Oh," stammered Mary Louise, feeling quite lost and dizzy at the thought of this misfortune to the man who had raised Danny and eared for him. "Isn't there any hope — I mean danger, of his escaping!"

"Not a bit," came Josie's voice. "We're playing in the very best of luck. Probably right now they are arresting him."

Mary Louise choked back a great sob that rose persistently in her throat. "It'll be just fine to have you come back, Josie," she said, remembering her loving hospitality even in her distress. "I'll send the car for you," she added, as she hung up the receiver.

Then Mary Louise tumbled into a little crumpled heap on the floor by the couch and buried her curly black head in its great pillows. "Oh, it isn't fair; it isn't fair," she wailed. "Danny would have paid back the money. Danny's uncle never meant to steal! If his oil well was only out of Mexican hands, everything would have been all right anyway." And Mary Louise's small fists beat the pillows to give vent to her emotions.

Suddenly the telephone pealed out again, quite briskly this time.

"Yes," said Mary Louise, feeling with her free hand for a handkerchief as she balanced the receiver with the other. The voice that answered her was Josie's, and as Mary Louise beard her she let the tears dry upon her cheeks, for Josie was both angry and excited — an unusual thing for the clever, active girl.

"Mary Louise," she cried, "it's the very deuce! Just as the train slowed up for Albuquerque, that man O'Hara leaped from the car window and has completely disappeared! It's an outrage!" she raved on. "But we'll get him yet. Crocker and I are both taking this west bound train that comes in a few minutes, so I won't be back after all. Don't worry, Mary Louise, we'll get him yet," Josie consoled. "We've got our dander up now and we're on the job ourselves, and we're going to finish it."

Then Josie hung up the receiver and dashed to the ticket window.

Mary Louise, left alone, felt a great throb of gratitude. At least O'Hara was safe for the time being. Now she must run instantly and tell the news to Danny. However, the "instantly" extended into a moment or two, while she made sure that her brown eyes were not tear-stained, and that her little nose was powdered and quite presentable. Then she ran out into the garden to hunt for her adopted soldier.

She had not far to seek for he was visible through the open window of the garage, busily polishing the car which was in dire need of his ministrations.

"Come here, Danny," she directed, perching herself upon the bench just outside the building.

Nothing loth, Danny threw down the chamois and rolling down his sleeves, came toward her.

"Danny," continued the girl, "I've something rather hard to tell you."

The lad suddenly went white.

"Tell me. Have they caught Uncle Jim?" he demanded, gripping her arm as though to drag the information from her quickly.

"No, no," Mary Louise reassured him. "But they know he was on the train, and as it slowed down at Albuquerque he jumped off and disappeared. Josie and Crocker have both gone after him. I'm so sorry," she added, her hand touching his, which still gripped her arm with unconscious force.

Danny's fingers relaxed and he returned the warm handclasp of understanding and sympathy. "I know you are sorry, and it helps a lot." Then he jumped to his feet and squared his shoulders. "But now I must do something. I must help him."

"Sit down again," commanded Mary Louise.

"Don't you see, Danny, we can't do anything till we first think out our plans."

"You're right, of course," reluctantly admitted Danny, as he sank down on the rustic bench. Even in his confusion, that comforting little "we" penetrated his tired thought.

"Now, first," continued Mary Louise, "where is your uncle likely to go on foot?"

"Well," replied Danny, thinking out his ideas as he said them, "I imagine he'd strike out for the border. You see, he's lived down there a lot. He made his money in the oil wells there, and if the Huns in Mexico hadn't tried to stop England's oil supply, he'd have had the money to make good his deficit and all this would never have happened."

"How could he live and cross the desert alone?" inquired Mary Louise.

"That's what's driving me distracted," cried Danny, pacing up and down

the garden path. “If he once got near his old stamping ground, he could find friends to shelter him. He’s done favors for every man within a hundred miles of his place. If I could only be around the country there, I know he’d find it out and would get word to me! But how to get there when I’ve told your grandfather I’d help him through the summer.”

Utterly distressed and undecided, Danny leaned against the door and gazed off at the far horizon. All in a breath an inspiration came to Mary Louise. Her eyes glowed like stars and her little hands stretched out to Danny in joyous appeal as she ran towards him.

“Listen,” she cried, “for months we’ve so wanted to take a trip, but of course the war has cut us off from Europe, and I couldn’t drive the car so very far. Now, Danny, we have you to take us and you’re going to drive us touring through the West.”

A quick flush of hope and delight spread over Danny Dexter’s expressive face. Mary Louise noticed it and rejoiced.

“Yes, yes,” she cried, her plans growing and expanding with each moment. “Grandfather will be more than glad to get away, and we’ll take Irene McFarlane with us. Think what it would mean to her!”

“But,” argued Danny, “we might have to spend some time in the desert, if Uncle Jim should need us. It would be disagreeable for you, wouldn’t it?”

“No, no, I just love the desert,” contradicted Mary Louise; “I love the glow of the sand and the mystery of the distance. Why, Danny, I *hope* we stay in the desert! Is it a bargain?”

Mary Louise turned a sparkling face up to him and Danny Dexter could resist no longer. “If your grandfather agrees, it’s a go,” he admitted, and then and there they joyously shook hands on it.

Colonel Hathaway, turning a corner in the garden path, was greeted by a call from his lovely granddaughter as she came flying toward him.

“Grandpa,” said Mary Louise, tucking her arm cozily in his, and starting slowly to pace the walks with him. “Do you know, Grandpa Jim, I very, very much want to take a trip. We haven’t gone away together for so long!”

“I myself am ready for a journey, dear child, but have not felt it right to use our busy railroads for unnecessary travel,” replied the Colonel.

“But, dearest grandfather,” coaxed Mary Louise, “we don’t have to travel by rail or by boat either. With Danny to drive us we can go wherever we want. Had you thought of that?

Please let’s take a wonderful trip in our motor car!”

Colonel Hathaway paused in front of a huge bed of purple pansies and gazed down fixedly at them. Perhaps he was gaining inspiration from their thoughtful little faces. More than anything in life he loved to please his

charming granddaughter, and as for himself, the monotony of this quiet life had begun to pall on him. He rather liked the idea of a bracing motor trip.

"Where would you suggest our going?" he asked Mary Louise.

"Oh, Grandpa Jim, out West by all means," she answered.

Her grandfather hesitated only a few minutes longer and then said, "I think a western trip would be enjoyable, and if we're going to start, I think the sooner done the better."

"So do I, dearest," cried Mary Louise, "and don't you think it would do Irene just worlds of good if we would take her with us?"

"We might walk over and discuss the matter with the Conants," said the Colonel. "The whole plan pleases me mightily. It will do us all good, I firmly believe."

By this time Colonel Hathaway was "firmly believing" the plan to be entirely his own, and in his case, to decide was to act. So it happened that within two days a very happy and expectant little party was gathered about Mary Louise's ear. The car itself looked eager and ready for the trip, and proud to carry the trunks and tires securely strapped upon it. The Conants had been most grateful and delighted to have Irene go, and she was now comfortably settled on the back seat surrounded by pillows, with her crutches tucked out of sight beside her.

It was very early in the morning; the faint glow of the sunrise was spreading over the sky, as the car quietly slipped out of the yard and started on its adventures. Mary Louise, seated in front beside Danny Dexter, turned to smile at the Colonel and Irene and to wave a last goodbye to Uncle Eben and Aunt Sally. Then turning their faces straight to the west she and Danny started trustingly and determinedly on their errand of mercy.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ESCAPE

It was not difficult for James O'Hara to realize that his presence on the Limited was discovered. The rolling of the porter's eyes in his direction and the interested glances of the train men, as they took especial occasion to glance at him was enough to tell that fact to this man, keyed up as he was from sheer excitement. He sat very tense and stared out of the window, every faculty alert, his body straight and rigid.

When he did act it was with tiger-like agility and without an instant's forethought.

As the train neared the Albuquerque station, a woman across the aisle raised her window to lean out and see more clearly. She had no time to make a further move. O'Hara had leaped across the aisle, and brushing her aside, had flung himself through the window of the now slowly moving train.

It was done so quietly and so quickly that it was a few seconds before the occupants of the car realized what had happened. A hue and cry was then immediately raised. The whole car, which up till now had been the usual poised and indifferent gathering, turned loose into a veritable bedlam.

As the train stopped at the station the passengers piled out one after another to gaze across the sand by the tracks and watch the fleeing man. But their amazement was great when, strain their eyes as they would, they could see no trace of any man. The only sign of activity was the flying dust of a distant automobile, so they turned their attention to the officers who had been waiting for the refugee and were now hastily mounting ponies to ride in pursuit of the fleeing man, undoubtedly hidden somewhere in the sagebrush.

As the horsemen vanished in the cloud of dust, the tourists, once again their normal and conventional selves, turned their full attention to the most conventional but utterly abnormal Indians of the Harvey Eating House.

For a moment O'Hara was stunned by his fall to the ground, but shaking himself and finding no bones broken he rose and started for the narrow sand road, still too dazed to know just what he did. Subconsciously, be beard the hum of a motor and turned aside to let it pass, but a voice hailed him, speaking in the perfect accent of a cultured gentleman: "Can I give you a lift?"

Scarcely noticing the magnificent car which slowed up beside him, O'Hara swung open the door of the tonneau and leaped in. Even as he did so the car gained speed, until at fully forty miles an hour they were speeding farther and farther into the desert.

The man at the wheel did not speak a further word. His whole attention

was engrossed in keeping his powerful machine in the rut of the narrow road that stretched itself interminably out into the sand of the desert. The sun was glaring fiercely down upon them and the sand reflected its intense heat. O'Hara leaned back in the seat and closed his eyes. The rush of air, hot as it was, revived him and he felt relaxed and quite indifferent as to where he went.

The car plunged at its terrific speed and yet the little roadway, the far horizon, the gray of the sagebrush and the cactus never changed. It seemed to stretch on, gold and drab, into infinity. The sun sank gradually in the West, until it hung a great red ball of fire, just balancing above the dim silhouette of the foothills. Still 0 'Hara dozed and the driver of the car continued his unceasing and perfectly controlled speed.

Presently, however, the driver turned abruptly and addressed O'Hara.

"I saw your leap through the car window." He spoke with peculiar distinctness, a clearer English than 0 'Hara was accustomed to hear.

By this time the fugitive was fully awake and himself again, and he noticed with keen interest the splendid physique of the man addressing him. His shoulders had an erect bearing that instantly reminded one of long military training, and his face was highly intelligent, though the mouth and eyes were indefinably cold and cruel.

O'Hara waited quietly while the man continued:

"You see I knew you were escaping from something; I could at any time deliver you to the authorities. But I also know that you are quite intelligent. I have many business interests in Mexico and I need a keen, intelligent agent to attend to them for me. If you fail me, there are always the authorities, remember. If not, you'll find this work both pleasant and lucrative.

"We are staying out here on account of my wife's health. Her condition is improved, but we still fear a moist climate, and of course I remain with her. Do you accept this work? Will you keep your own counsel, or — " and the cut of a knife was the tone of the man " — shall we return to Albuquerque?"

The first impression of distrust of the man deepened into conviction with O'Hara, but no choice seemed open to him. So with a strange foreboding in his heart and with a sense of toils encircling and strangling him, he accepted the position.

CHAPTER XX

THE DESERT BUNGALOW

The sun had set and the brilliant gold and rose of a marvelous desert evening was flooding the sky. Against this flame of color appeared the outlines of a shack or bungalow surrounded by the few outlying buildings. As the automobile rapidly drew nearer, the door was flung back and a woman stepped out to meet them.

Even in the quick glance that he had of her before the automobile stopped, O'Hara realized she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. Very tall and superbly formed, she carried herself with a hauteur and coldness that instinctively reminded him of the man in the car. Her hair was of a Saxon fairness, and waved back from her forehead in exquisite undulations. As she spoke, her accent too, was more perfect than O'Hara often heard, and her tone was crisp and impatient.

"I thought you would never arrive." She addressed herself entirely to the driver of the car and showed absolutely no curiosity in, or even consciousness of the passenger in the tonneau. "Is there any mail or news whatever, Henry?" The man whom she called Henry handed her a large package of mail. Much of it, O'Hara noticed, bore a foreign postmark. The woman took it without a word and turned languidly into the shack.

O'Hara's employer stepped out of the car, and motioned him to do likewise. Instantly from the side door of the house a small Japanese slipped quietly out and, entering the car, drove off to a shanty evidently used as a garage.

"Follow Jo and he will direct you to your quarters," the stranger said, motioning toward the softly disappearing Japanese. "My name is Brown and I shall not need you further this evening."

He entered the house and in the lighted interior he could be seen bending over the beautiful woman as she sat absorbed with her mail.

O'Hara followed Jo into a large roomy kitchen which composed the entire space of one of the outbuildings. A huge Mexican woman was just taking up the dinner and she gave a low grunt as they entered. Jo motioned to a white enamel table set for two, which was placed in a corner underneath a window. 0 'Hara made mental note that this Brown was evidently expected to bring someone back with him.

He had no time for further thought, for at this point a huge, burly man, with a face like a bulldog entered and sat down at the small table. Another grunt from the Mexican woman somehow made O'Hara understand that his place was opposite the newcomer. So, having noticed a basin and towel just

outside the door, he gave himself a good cleaning up and then entered, seating himself opposite his dinner companion.

For several days life for 0 ‘Hara went along in a very humdrum way, though always under the surface he could detect the current of unrest. He had a large airy room which he shared with the burly man who was named Tom Whalen. His days were spent in small activities about the place and in caring for the car.

The Jap was in constant attendance on his master or mistress, either serving their meals or assisting at some variety of clerical work at which they seemed constantly occupied. But there was no request for O’Hara’s presence in their cabin, and he could only await their pleasure.

Neither the man called Henry Brown nor his beautiful wife had left the place for many days. She seemed content to remain within the huge living room, which, as O’Hara could see through the window, had been decorated with the soft grays and creams of Indian blankets, with here and there a splash of scarlet in a brilliant rug. All about were couches with innumerable pillows, and at every conceivable point a softly shaded lamp was placed. It was an alluring room and when the cool evenings of the desert came upon them, O’Hara often watched from a distance the flames leap and crackle in the broad stone fireplace.

The couple in front of the blaze certainly did not feel the beauty of the spot; they usually sat apart, as indifferent to one another as to their surroundings. The woman always gowned herself as exquisitely for the evening as though in a fashionable hotel. It was evidently second nature to her to always look her best.

O’Hara glanced in as he passed the living room one evening. She was leaning back idly in a reclining chair in front of the fire, her full white throat in startling contrast to the dead black of her evening gown. She had ceased her constant figuring and was listening to her companion as he leaned forward talking eagerly, with now and then a quick gasp of emphasis.

The watching man felt a strange sense of foreboding as he saw a cold, cruel smile twist the lips of the woman, and as he caught the quick nervous closing of the fists of the man who was speaking. He paused a moment longer, watching with intentness the peculiar, almost hypnotic loosening and clenching of those hands that rested upon the knees of the man.

Suddenly O’Hara felt a heavy hand on his shoulder and he was jerked away from the window. Turning quickly, he encountered the bulldog person of Tom Whalen.

CHAPTER XXI

A NEST OF CONSPIRATORS

Since his arrival O'Hara had felt that Tom Whalen was watching him. In his short walks out into the waste a few miles from the place, he knew that he was always followed by this burly giant. Even in the night watches he had been wakened by the consciousness that this man was peering at him intently and suspiciously.

Not only so, but every attempt of O'Hara's to get a note or message sent to his nephew, Danny Dexter, had been futile. The Japanese was the only one who had left the place. He had the habit of slipping quietly away in the huge motor car, especially toward evening he was wont to start, and usually his path lay in the direction of the border, far to the south. Often O'Hara lay awake into the small hours of the morning, disturbed by the steady stare of Tom Whalen and listening for the hum of the returning motor car. He was never quite sure of hearing it, but always when the morning came there was Jo, the Japanese man-of-all-work, servile and alert and quiet as ever.

There was evidently no hope of any message reaching Danny from that quarter.

As time went on, O'Hara's perplexity, instead of diminishing, became deeper and more acute than ever. True, there had been no visitors to the ranch, and as far as he could see, there was little likelihood that his presence in this remote spot would be discovered. In this respect Providence had been kind to him. What disturbed him most of all was the sepulchral silence of the place — the air of mystery that seemed to brood over the lives of the few inhabitants. Hour after hour O'Hara pondered the matter, but the mystery was still as clouded as ever. No summons had yet come to him from the bungalow occupied by Brown and his beautiful consort, nor had he been able to penetrate the reserve of the scowling Tom Whalen or the sleek, cat-footed Jap.

O'Hara's mind was still in a state of turmoil, when, a few days later, an incident happened that shook his equanimity to its very foundation. The day in question had been hot and sweltering, and in O'Hara's case, had been followed by a sleepless night. After hours of tossing about, he had risen from his conch, making his way through the darkness to the unlocked door. Flinging it open, a flood of pale moonlight poured into the room. A silvery sheen enveloped the slumbering buildings of the ranch, making them stand out in ghostly silhouette against the moon-lit background of sandy waste. As O'Hara softly closed the door behind him, a deep continuous snore from the opposite side of the room informed him that Tom Whalen had fallen into a

profound sleep, and was likely to remain dead to the world for some hours at least.

The clean, crisp night air caused the blood to tingle in O'Hara's veins. He surveyed the peaceful prospect a moment, then started on a brisk stroll among the various outbuildings, stopping now and then to fill his lungs with the glorious desert air.

Passing the odd-looking garage, he noticed that the doors were flung wide open, as though Jo, the Jap chauffeur, expected to return with the car before morning. He had retraced his steps to the door of his sleeping-room, and was about to woo sleep for a second time when the distant chugging of a motor car sounded on his ears.

"That's only Jo," he said to himself. "I wonder what the close-mouthed Oriental does on those lonesome night trips?"

But his own question caused him to smile. Jo's night excursions were certainly mysterious, to say the least, but not more so than a hundred other things about the ranch that had risen to perplex him. Indeed, he was obliged to confess to himself that he had found out next to nothing about the real life of the strange group in which he was placed.

By this time the motor car had drawn much closer to the ranch. The steady chug-chug of the escaping gas, magnified tenfold by the vast impressive silence of the night, fell on the ear of the listener like a succession of sledge-hammer blows on a blacksmith's anvil. O'Hara crept into a convenient patch of shadow, and waited for the car to pass on its way to the garage. But before coming into his angle of vision, the huge machine swerved abruptly to the right and made directly for the ranch-house.

Curious and interested now, the concealed man cautiously stepped forth from his hiding-place and peered round the comer of the building. The machine had come to a stop at the door of the Brown bungalow. Straining his eyes, O'Hara was able to make out several black shapes that descended from the tonneau and noiselessly entered the house. A fraction of a minute later the chugging recommenced as the car was driven over the quarter-mile that lay between the house and the garage.

As O'Hara stood in the shadow, reflecting on the import of what he had seen, a strange feeling came over him — a sense that important events were impending in which he was somehow involved. He was about to dismiss the thought as an idle fancy when he noticed a tiny flicker of light which came through a slit in the drawn curtains of the ranch-house. Suddenly a daring thought gave him pause. Should he attempt to carry out the hare-brained plan that had gripped him so suddenly? Dare he do so?

For several moments he stood lost in reflection. Then, James O'Hara did a

curious thing — a thing that might well have aroused a spectator's curiosity, had a spectator been there to observe it. Though already lightly clad, he noiselessly entered the room where the giant Tom Whalen still lay breathing heavily. Hastily disrobing, he garbed himself in khaki shirt and trousers, which were almost mustard-color from many washings, and left the room again as quietly as he came in. Softly but swiftly, he made his way to the rear of the building, keeping in shadow as much as possible. Then, striking out on hands and knees in a direction at right angles from the beckoning glean of light, he stopped when he had put a distance of about a hundred yards between himself and his starting-point. The moon continued to beat down on the yellow sands as the creeping figure, visible only as a dark retreating mass against an amber background, suddenly dropped flat on the ground and was lost to view. The khaki costume was now no longer distinguishable, but blended perfectly with the sand, which stretched out for miles on every side in little flats and hillocks.

Resting in this position a few moments, and raising his head now and then to ascertain whether he had been observed, O'Hara started to crawl slowly through the sand in the direction of the bungalow. Fifteen minutes later he had gained the side of the building whence the flicker of light had come.

A thrill of satisfaction gripped him for a moment as he realized that thus far his plan had been successful. And now, as he was considering what further measures to take, the sound of voices engaged in earnest conversation floated out from a window just above him.

A deep voice that quavered with suppressed emotion came to his ears, and a tremor passed down O'Hara's spine as he realized that his employer was speaking.

"Listen to me, Schwartz," the commanding voice was saying. "I tell you, this thing must be done. Understand? It *must.* The Mexican government is friendly to Germany, and would like nothing better than kicking the hated Yankees out. Villa is with us, and will do what we say. But he must be paid. It will take money — lots of it. But later on we will get it back with interest — yes, double interest, and triple interest. Germany must line her pockets, too. The time to do it is now. Later, we will not have so good a chance. Why, man," and here the voice held a confidential note, "the Fatherland is interested in our success. We are simply carrying out instructions!"

"Ach!" ejaculated the awed listener. "Ve must all help der Vaterland. Ve must all be good Chermans."

These sentiments must have fallen on grateful ears, for Brown's next words were uttered in a friendly tone that warmed the heart of his confederate:

“Schwartz, you are a true son of Deutschland. It is men like you who must again make the Fatherland great!”

The pleased Schwartz drank in the words of appreciation eagerly, emitting meantime an enthusiastic *“ja! ja!”* of assent.

“Millions of dollars are to be had in Mexico,” continued the speaker. “Mines, oil lands — everything. But the hated, money-loving Yankees have gobbled up everything they could lay their hands on. But we have found a way to beat them. Our German friends, who have suffered so much in this hated country, have given us ample funds. We have much influence with the government at Mexico City. Simply pull the wires — the thing is done! Our ambassador will see to it. But there is much work for all of us. Never shall it be said that Germans accepted the leavings of Americans. Eather will we all go down in destruction!”

As this conversation was proceeding, a tensemuscled man stood outside beneath the window, listening with bated breath to every word that fell from the plotters’ lips. James O’Hara was deeply stirred.

American rights were menaced. So much was plain from the words of the conspirators. That American lives would be endangered, if not lost, was almost certain.

Again and again, as the plot was more fully developed in his hearing, the concealed man struggled silently with himself to keep down the rising flood of anger that threatened to explode and reveal his presence to the Germans. He was a lover of his country, though, by an unlucky stroke of fate, a fugitive from his country’s justice. By every consideration of manhood he was bound to uphold the honor and dignity and safety of America. He was an American citizen, and these were the obligations that citizenship imposed.

O’Hara fought down the angry outburst. He realized that his best course of action lay in keeping cool. The thing to do was to learn all he could about their plans. Then would he be the better prepared for action when the time for action arrived.

Meanwhile, in short, rapid sentences, Brown was conveying his instructions to the other, who was plainly a subordinate figure:

“First, you must deliver these papers to Herr Schmidt, the German consul. He will supply you with the necessary funds. You will then meet Villa’s representative at the designated spot. You will convey my instructions to him, and urge immediate action. You will in turn receive his latest report. I will send for this in a week’s time. I have here on the ranch an escaped criminal named O’Hara. He knows nothing of our work. He suspects nothing. You are to deliver the sealed papers to him in Mexican Juarez, and arrange to have him sent back over the border. Now, we understand one

another. Do not fail.”

The interview was over.

A few minutes passed without any further sounds from the interior of the house.

Then a slight chugging sound informed 0 ‘Hara that the motor car with its Jap chauffeur was again on its way to the house, doubtless to carry the German emissary toward the border. The front door opened, a single dark figure glided out, the tonneau door closed, and the huge machine rolled rapidly away. Then, silence.

Quivering from the astounding adventure through which he had just passed, O’Hara made his way back to his sleeping-room. He hastily shed the few light garments that covered him and sank into bed, but the amazing events of the night were too recent to allow any hope of sleep.

In the quiet of the night, as he reviewed his experiences from the day of his arrival at the ranch, O’Hara was able to understand many things that hitherto had seemed to border on the mysterious. The remembrance of his first meeting with Henry Brown, the military bearing of the latter, the careful diction with just the merest trace of a German accent, the nightly comings and goings of the Japanese chauffeur, the aloofness and secrecy that characterized the actions of every member of the ranch from the very beginning — all these things, when analyzed in the light of the conversation he had overheard between Brown and his visitor, lost their cloak of mystery and became links in a chain of evidence that held fast at every point.

The more O’Hara thought of it, the more certain he became that he had stumbled across that long-sought-for outpost of German intrigue that was beneath so many of the Mexican troubles. For many months Uncle Sam had known of the existence of such activity, but diligent search had failed to trace it to its source. Throughout the war, reports poured, into the government concerning the operations of a crafty German band that was engaged in sowing seeds of hatred against the Americans. Though the armistice had brought a decided let-up in this activity, there was still evidence of a deeply-laid plot to injure the United States and libel its aims in the Latin republic.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CAVE

The morning of the next day O'Hara went about his chores as usual, at the same time keeping a sharp lookout for any suspicious signs that might betray the further plans of his employer.

About three-thirty in the afternoon he was just leaving the kitchen when he was surprised to hear the voices of Brown and Tom Whalen raised in rather an excited discussion.

"Yes, Jo had definite word that the officers suspected O'Hara's presence here," said the voice of Brown.

"Oh, let 'em catch him then," replied Tom Whalen gruffly, "I'm tired of watching him anyhow."

"Keep still and attend to your own part of this business. The man will be useful. I need him and desire to have you hide him. Do you understand?"

The very tone was a command, and to the great interest of O 'Hara he saw Tom Whalen straighten and salute. Then O'Hara slipped again into the kitchen and now he emerged noisily.

The men turned to him and as they did so, Brown said in a low tone, "Put him in the cave."

Then he spun on his heel and departed. He had no sooner left than the startled eyes of O'Hara made out a cloud of dust on the far horizon in the direction of Albuquerque.

"Come on," exclaimed Tom Whalen, hurrying his huge bulk toward the garage, "or the devil take you."

Wondering, O'Hara easily kept pace with him and paused beside the garage. Tom Whalen had by now removed the top of the hole where the huge gasoline tank was buried, and to O'Hara's amazement, the tank was revealed to be empty. Whalen slipped carefully into the tank and O'Hara followed as directed. Whalen then pressed some hidden spring in the metal and the sides slowly revolved, leaving an opening large enough for a man to slip through. His guide ordered O'Hara to step through the aperture, and with a shiver of apprehension, but helpless to disobey he did so. Then the man handed him a lantern somewhat resembling a miner's lamp and the wall swung back slowly.

O'Hara stood perfectly still in the darkness. The air was dank and musty but there was means for allowing fresher air to enter, for it was not breathless. Slowly he flashed his lantern about the place. The walls of the small room in which he stood seemed to be made of adobe. He searched the sides most carefully, there was nothing to break the absolute uniformity of

line until the lantern's rays reached the third side, the side through which he had entered. Here faint and far away, he could discern up through a small hole the dim light of day.

About a foot out from this wall, standing sinister and black, was the only object within the room, a huge iron safe.

The light of O'Hara's lantern passed carefully over it and then went on to the fourth wall. The lantern flickered and then beamed steadily upon the gleaming wall. With a shiver of amazement, O'Hara realized that here in this desert spot, in his beloved country, the floor of the garage reached down a full twenty feet of solid concrete emplacement!

Astounded beyond measure, he recalled the many reports he had heard about the huge concrete emplacements supposed to have been built by the Germans during the war, and even before the war, in various parts of the United States.

He had not believed these reports at the time. They had seemed too incredible. He had considered them figments of imaginations that had been fired by the fears and excitements of war. No, such things were too fantastic for sane, sensible Americans to believe. It was impossible that our country would be betrayed by those whom she had welcomed so heartily to her shores.

But here in this desert spot, for an unknown purpose, stood tangible evidence that these reports were true. They were not idle fancies. And, so, it must likewise be true that America did harbor base creatures who would sell their adopted country's honor for gold and silver, men who sought to injure her, and lower her prestige in the eyes of the world. Very well, it would be America's duty henceforth to ferret out these creatures. It would be her duty to strip them of the possessions and privileges that a generous country had showered on them with a profuse hand.

Again and again these reflections kept running through O'Hara's mind, as he explored every nook and cranny of the curious subterranean hiding-place. He wondered what criminal plan had dictated the construction of this great gun emplacement. Where did Brown intend to get the enormous gun that such a base would accommodate? These questions were too deep for solution. Perhaps the future would supply an answer.

O'Hara looked at his watch and found it had been about twenty minutes since he saw the dust of the approaching automobile. He figured that the officers were just now arriving at the place, but of course no sound could penetrate to his dark hiding place. Wishing to save the oil, he turned out his lamp and sat down on the hard sand of the floor. He placed his shoulder against the back of the safe so that he would be facing the one ray of light

which struggled in from the hole above, and settled down to wait.

Thus it happened that he was entirely invisible when the opening in the wall suddenly revolved again. Thinking merely to remain quiet until Tom Whalen called him, O'Hara made no move. He heard the sound of two voices, one undoubtedly that of Jo the Jap, the other with an Irish accent.

"Sure," the latter was saying, "I'm after helping ye turn the trick. Begore, I hate the English, but niver a cint have I seen yit, and the money will be welcome," and there squeezed through the opening a small, red-headed, freckled-face Irishman, wearing a detective's star.

"I've saved ye from suspicion time and agin," he grumbled, "and now I come with the crowd to-day fer pay, and shure, I'll be after gettin' of it."

The Japanese had been carefully covering the tank, and now he turned softly toward the safe. The combination came quickly and deftly to his fingers, and O'Hara could hear the safe swing back. Then from the comments and remarks of the Irishman, he judged that the latter was being given a portion of his ill-gotten gain.

"All right," he now said in a pronounced brogue to the quiet servant, who as yet had spoken no word; "I'll be after hurryin'." He then added: "Raise the door quick; sure and I can't be missed." Then as he evidently tucked away his money in his pockets, he added a sentence which made O'Hara's breath come quick: "It's a hen party we be after havin'; there's two gurrls joined the chase and a lad along with 'em. It's shrewd and wide-awake they be, I'm tellin' ye!"

While he was speaking, the Jap crowded quietly to the trap door of the tank and cautiously glanced around. "All right," he whispered, and the Irishman extinguished his light and followed him.

Quick as a flash O'Hara crawled around the safe and reaching in the open door took out a package from the lower shelf. Instantly he was back, and then the Japanese returned. He closed the door of the safe and leisurely turned and secured the lock. Then quietly as ever he slipped up the secret entrance.

When he was positive the man had gone, O'Hara sat for a moment almost stunned by the hope that Mary Louise and Danny had come again to save him. Then he lit his lamp and flashed it upon the package in his hand. It was just such a package as he had hoped to attain. Sheet after sheet of documents relating to the Mexican lands and oil wells, one or two translated into code. With great care he placed them, equally divided, in the two inside pockets of his coat. Then again he settled down to wait and to plan his escape. For now O'Hara realized clearly that even if he were arrested, he must hand these papers to the government he loved.

CHAPTER XXIII
THE RIDE AT NIGHT

The long, delightful days of summer stretched before the happy tourists in Mary Louise's car. Every day seemed to beckon them on to further adventure, and each evening found them further along in their journey, weary and eager for rest, but expectant of the morrow. Often Mary Louise and Danny spoke in low tones to one another of the kindly man they were hastening to help. They had much to say in these days of happy, intimate companionship — much to tell each other of their hopes and aims, their likes and dislikes. They were very young and filled with the joy and wonder of mere living, and though often they were longing to know of O'Hara's safety, still their spirits could not be dampened, and their happiness soared very high.

To Colonel Hathaway, the changing scenes and the changing personalities along the way were like a tonic.

The old gentleman was a born traveler and always took the rough places with the smooth, so that he made a splendid companion with whom to take the road. On this trip he was thoroughly enjoying the ecstacy with which Irene greeted every lovely scene they passed. Her cheeks were taking on a healthy flush that made the dear friends with her very glad, and day by day they all could see how she was gaining strength.

So on they went as day by day their car carried them across uplands and through valleys, now humming for miles through waving fields of grain, and again running through the lowlands near some river bed. One State after another they left behind as the days sped by, and always some new beauty lay before them.

Old Uncle Eben carefully forwarded all their mail, and each day Danny and Mary Louise watched eagerly for some word from O'Hara. But each day they were doomed to disappointment. The letters which came frequently from Josie, however, kept up their hopes mightily. Crocker, it seemed, had returned East disgustedly, but Josie was each day scouring the country in some new direction. One day when they had reached a spot not far from Albuquerque Mary Louise opened a letter from Josie, as she was rocking on the wide veranda of the hotel in the twilight.

Josie had scrawled on bright pink paper:

"DEAREST MARY LOUISE:

If you only knew how happy and glad and generally rejoicey I am to think that you and Grandpa Jim and Irene will be with me in two days! I've been

hot and homesick ever since I came, but now I do believe it's going to be worth while to have stayed.

"There's a small ranch out about forty miles from here. It's the mystery of the countryside, though there's nothing ever seemed wrong with it, and O'Callahan, the little Irish detective, swears there's nothing wrong. You see, they have two men besides the 'Boss' — one, a huge, criminal-looking creature, and the other, a little Jap. The other evening I motored out that way and when the boss and his wife were out in front I saw through my field glasses that *three* men entered the kitchen!

"Now that looks strange to me. O'Callahan has always scoffed at our going there as nonsense, but to-morrow, willy-nilly, Josie O'Gorman is going out to that place and ferret out that man.

Who knows when you come on the next day my work may be done, and oh, won't I jump at the chance of going on with you on your perfectly grand trip? —

Devotedly,

"JOSIE."

Mary Louise silently handed the letter to Danny who sat on the veranda steps at her feet. Danny Dexter glanced over the letter and then up at Mary Louise. Their thoughts were evidently alike for both exclaimed in unison: "We'll have to travel to-night."

"And start immediately," added Mary Louise. Then without further pause, Danny leaped down the steps and out to the automobile to prepare it for the long and sudden trip before them.

"It's seven now," thought Danny, glancing at the auto clock. "With luck we'll get there by two to-morrow morning. It won't really be so bad, and the moon is full."

In the meantime Mary Louise had hastened to her grandfather. "Grandpa Jim, don't put on those comfortable old slippers. I've received a letter from Josie. She expects to catch her forger to-morrow, and," she truthfully added, "I feel sure we will be needed."

The Colonel was instantly solicitous for Josie, of whom he was especially fond and whose activity he admired immensely.

"But," he objected, "can we possibly make it through the night; and what about Irene *!"* Mary Louise flung her arms about her grandfather's neck. "I knew just how game you would be!" she declared. "I've been thinking about Irene. The wife of the proprietor seems very kind, and I'm sure she'll start her safely on the train to Albuquerque in the morning."

Her surmise proved to be correct, and half an hour later the automobile

started off.

So it happened that next morning as she entered the dining room of the hotel, Josie's joy quite flew away with her, as she beheld the tired but victorious faces of her three friends beaming up at her.

"Why — why — you blessed people! How very dear of you to come and go with me to-day," she stammered. "With Mary Louise to help, I just can't lose that man again."

Josie clapped her hands in enthusiasm, and then dug with such unbounded energy into the grapefruit at her plate that her "dear friends" blinked and ducked with great agility.

"Grandpa Jim must go to bed this minute, but we're ready to go right away," directed Mary Louise. A few minutes later she kissed the kindly Colonel and watched him mount the stairs. Then turning, she joined Danny and Josie O'Gorman who were already climbing into the waiting auto.

O'Callahan was at the wheel with a tall policeman seated beside him, while Josie, Mary Louise and Danny were seated in the tonneau. Both Mary Louise and Danny must have dozed after their long night ride, for they woke with a start as the automobile slowed down in front of the Brown bungalow.

As Danny stepped from the car he stooped and quietly picked up a small gold pencil half buried in the sand; he knew the pencil and the monogram "J. O'H." O'Hara had dropped it as he left the automobile that first day and had failed to find it when he searched for it. Clearly then, the uncle that he loved was here and in sure danger.

All that Danny could do was to keep still and watch. And watch he did to no avail. The place was searched from top to bottom. The Browns were graciousness itself, accepting Josie's apologies for intruding with amusement.

"You are afraid some man is hidden here?" the woman had inquired of the girls, a faint sneer upon her beautiful mouth.

"I shall have to ask you to let us investigate thoroughly," returned Josie decidedly, and the woman smilingly stepped aside.

Then she shrugged her shoulders. "You see we have no secrets," she said.

CHAPTER XXIV

MARY LOUISE LOSES HER SLIPPER

When the party had about given up the search, Danny at last found an excuse to get Mary Louise by herself in the shadows of the small garage.

"Let's sit down a moment by this queer old tank," he said, "for I've something most important to show you, Mary Louise."

Danny handed her the small gold pencil with its monogram "J. O'H." Startled, Mary Louise took it from him. "Why — why — Danny, then it is certain that your uncle has been here, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Danny grimly, "and it's certain he was here yesterday if Josie saw three men!"

"Mary Louise," he added, "I don't like this place at all. I can't tell you how distressed I feel about Uncle Jim. Why, any person on this spot — that beautiful woman included — would kill as indifferently as they'd tell lies!"

Mary Louise was white with horror and her hands were clasped in despair. She was digging with the heel of her little pump into the packed sand as though to tear up the secret of O'Hara's whereabouts.

Suddenly a strange thing happened. Her toe caught in a running root and pulled the pump from off her foot, and then, wonder of wonders, the pump completely disappeared! Amazement was written wide upon the faces of the two as they stood up to hunt for it. But look as Danny might, with Mary Louise hobbling after him as best she could, there was not a single trace of the missing slipper.

"I sympathized with Cinderella," ruefully remarked Mary Louise, as she very carefully placed her stocking foot upon some twigs crossed loosely on the ground.

Then she gave a little scream of fright. Her foot had broken through the twigs and she sank to the ground caught in a good-sized hole.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" cried Danny, as he helped her to get her balance again.

Instantly, however, his attention was attracted to the opening Mary Louise's fall had uncovered. It seemed to be a carefully excavated hole and they could see no bottom to it.

"No wonder," said Mary Louise, "that my slipper completely vanished."

Just as she spoke they both leaned forward tensely as a quick flash of light came directly in their faces as they gazed down. It came again as they leaned near.

Quick as a flash Danny leaned over the opening. "Uncle Jim?" he called, his voice trembling with shock and excitement.

“Good boy, Danny!” came O’Hara’s voice, muffled by the earth, but sounding strong and hearty, to Danny’s great relief. “You saw the flash of my lantern?”

“Listen!” quickly continued the voice from the cave. “I’m safe enough, so don’t worry, but I have some important papers to deliver to the government. Danny, I must get them off to-night. Is there any way you can return and meet me?” As Danny stood in thought, Mary Louise touched his arm. “Couldn’t we take you almost here, Danny?” she asked; “Just so they wouldn’t hear the engine. It’s dark to-night, and you could hide in their big motor car perhaps.”

“It’s like you to think of it,” said Danny, admiringly, “and of course I can.”

He repeated the plan to O’Hara below.

“That’s good!” the man said eagerly. “We’ll have to run some risks of course, but it’s our best plan. Now mark me carefully.”

Danny leaned even lower to the opening.

“When they let me out, I’ll put these papers under the back seat of their car. The Jap is evidently ignorant of the fact they put me down here, and does not suspect that anything is missing, so he won’t be especially watchful. Then you hide in the back of the car. Each night he goes upon some errand southward. Ride with him a way and then roll out and wait for your own car. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” answered Danny.

“Then hurry off,” ended O’Hara.

“But,” wailed Mary Louise, “Can’t you fish me out my slipper, Danny? They’ll all wonder where it went.

Danny looked around and saw a long pole leaning against the garage.

“Uncle Jim, will you put the slipper on this stick?” he called down, and in a moment it was balanced to the surface.

Without further speech Mary Louise put it on and the two started slowly, with seeming indifference, back to the house. Almost immediately the party clambered again into their waiting auto and started back for Albuquerque.

Poor Josie O’Gorman was feeling pretty blue and discouraged, and she surreptitiously wiped away a few tears from her blue eyes. But soon she was her splendid, cheery self again, and said to Danny and Mary Louise, who sat beside her: “In my business, now and then, we have to learn to be good losers. I want to be a good sport, and I — do admit that this time I’ve been beaten.”

Then her face was lighted up with joy as she turned to Mary Louise and said — “And now I’m ready to finish up your wonderful trip with you.” For

the first time in her life Mary Louise felt that she could not tell Grandpa Jim what she was going to do, and she did not like the feeling. But to Mary Louise, as to most American girls, her love of country was the first thing in her life; so after seeing her grandfather comfortably settled at a game of rummy with Irene and Josie, she bade all three good-night and quietly slipped out of the room and down to the hotel corridor.

Danny was waiting for her with a heavy wrap and carefully bundled her up in the seat beside him. Then swiftly they started off.

The evening was cool and crisp as are all desert nights, and they were grateful that there was no moon. Danny and Mary Louise sped along uplifted by their patriotism and the thought that they were helping Uncle Jim. The miles fairly flew beneath the wheels and almost before they realized it they saw the distant lights of the Brown ranch. A mile farther on Mary Louise slowed up the car and Danny jumped out.

"Now I'll drive round about slowly to the south," said Mary Louise, "and good luck to you, Danny!"

Danny Dexter pressed the little hand she held out to him for quite a while. It was hard for him to let her vanish alone into the desert. However, it was their duty which lay before them. So, finally, he turned away, and Mary Louise proceeded southward at a brisk pace for a mile or two. Stopping the car, she settled down to her long wait, alone in the vastness of the desert night.

Danny stood straining his eyes after the departing machine, until he could no longer hear the hum of the motor. Then he turned and quietly ran toward the dark group of buildings.

CHAPTER XXV

A SUCCESSFUL RUSE

As he neared the ranch the light which had been gleaming in the kitchen was extinguished. Danny paused, and saw the Mexican cook go to her quarters and close the door. Then he crept on close to the main bungalow.

Here lights were lit in each of the rooms and he saw preparations for hasty departure. The tall, blond man was ordering the Japanese to some activity. Just what, Danny could not make out, for the man spoke in German. Sure then that he was not watched from that quarter, Danny slipped close against the bunk house. Creeping in, he saw by the faint light that was burning that O'Hara and the burly man named Whalen were the only occupants. O'Hara seemed asleep, but the other half lay upon his bunk awake and watching him.

Danny Dexter had not planned his moves but he was ready. He flung open the door, and with a quick, cat-like leap, he was upon the man. Huge and powerful as Whalen was, Danny caught him at a disadvantage. Before he could regain his balance, O'Hara roused from his feigned sleep, sprang upon him, seizing Whalen's arm, and freeing Danny so he could seize the towels which hung near by and gag the man's mouth before he could make a sound. Then as O'Hara held him still firmly, Danny bound Tom Whalen's arms together, then his legs.

Without another look at him, Danny and O'Hara slipped into the darkness.

"Have you the papers!" whispered Danny.

"I put them in their auto," answered O'Hara. "Didn't dare keep them; they search me every night."

Quietly they glided on to the garage. The door was open and they entered unobserved and crawled down in among the robes in the tonneau of the car. Here they settled down to long and tedious waiting, and now in quick, jerky sentences, old Jim O'Hara recounted the striking chain of events that led up to bis present position.

However, the two men were pleasantly disappointed in the length of their hiding. Scarcely had they concealed themselves than the Japanese appeared and climbed into the car without a backward glance toward the tonneau. Softly, they hummed out of the garage and turned to the southward.

When they had gone about a mile, Danny quietly pressed O'Hara's arm and without a sound unlatched the door of the machine. Then as it noiselessly came open, Danny Dexter slipped out onto the ground. A few feet farther O'Hara did the same. Both lay absolutely still until in the distance they heard the Jap swing to with a slam the open door, and they knew as he continued on his journey that he was entirely without suspicion.

Danny took an electric torch from the pocket of his coat and flashed it here and there. He was answered by a similar flash not very far to the west and soon Mary Louise drove up to them and reached out eager hands of welcome.

"Oh, you are safe and here so quickly," she cried, a little catch in her breath as she realized her plucky vigil was now over.

She moved over to let Danny have the wheel and O'Hara stepped into the back.

"Danny," whispered Mary Louise, as she leaned toward him confidingly on the return trip, "do you think it will be necessary for Uncle Jim to leave the United States now? After risking his life the way he did to secure those papers, don't you think the government would be lenient in his case?"

"I hope so," said Danny in a low tone. "As you know, all Uncle Jim wants is a chance to make good and rectify his old mistake, and I hardly think they will refuse him that."

"They shouldn't," said Mary Louise with conviction. "It would be mean if they did."

Danny glanced sideways at the girl, whose brow showed a few tiny furrows.

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate your interest in Uncle Jim," Danny said. "I want you to know that we have both talked the matter over, and I have persuaded Uncle Jim to remain in Albuquerque until the government has acted in the case of Henry Brown and his treasonable outfit. He will certainly be needed as a witness if the government apprehends them and they are brought to trial."

"I can be of some assistance to him, too," said Mary Louise. "After I tell Josie O'Gorman all that has happened, I know she will feel very different about your uncle. Maybe she can interest her father in the case, and no man in the department at Washington has more influence than John O'Gorman."

As the two young people sat conversing in low tones, heads close together, a soft smile played about the corners of James O'Hara's lips. Did he see in the charming tableau before him a reflection of his own lost youth? Perhaps. Out of the dim past, recollections of his own youthful romance may have arisen, luring his mind to years long gone by.

Danny and Mary Louise kept up an intermittent fire of conversation as "Queenie" sped along the sinuous roadway that led to Albuquerque. Now and then, the lovely girl, her face wreathed in smiles, would turn around and address a word or two to the quiet man in the rear.

In less than an hour's time, the little machine, under Danny's practised hand, had reached the outskirts of the busy New Mexican town, which now

lay wrapped in night. A few minutes more and the car drew up at the hotel entrance. After a final few minutes of hurried conversation and a chorus of "good-nights," Mary Louise darted into the entrance and ran straight up to her room. Ten minutes later she was in the depths of slumber.

Danny, left with Uncle Jim in the Hathaway car, met a twinkle in the older man's eye that caused him to blush profusely.

"My boy," said O'Hara, "you have been mighty fine to me. I don't know what I could have done without you. Nothing, I'm afraid. You deserve a great deal from life, Danny. I'd be the first to admit it. But the chap who wins Mary Louise will be overpaid, — even you, my boy. She is pure gold. I hope you will win."

Danny had tried to interrupt his uncle's speech several times, but it was useless. The older man laid an affectionate hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Say nothing about it," he said. "Words, after all, are but feeble things. It is life alone that counts."

There was a few minutes of silence before either of the two spoke again. Then O'Hara resumed:

"I want to say just one more thing, Danny, and that concerns my oil well, or, rather, *your* oil well, for I mean to turn it over to you. When I am free of this trouble, I expect to take personal charge of the well. A few months' production will suffice to pay all of my debts. Then the well is yours. You will find, my boy, that you will have enough, and more than enough, to live in plenty."

Tears stood in the young man's eyes as Uncle Jim made his generous offer.

Then he said:

"No, no, Unde Jim! I couldn't think of it! If you will let me take half of the work and responsibility, I'll share the proceeds with you. But on that condition only, Uncle Jim!"

"Well, well," said O'Hara. "Have it your own way. We'll draw up a partnership agreement. There'll be more than enough room for both of us, I'm sure."

"Uncle Jim, I don't think we ought to lose a minute in rousing the government authorities. Brown evidently has scented danger, though from what source, I don't know. He was making preparations to leave when I looked through his window. What do you say, uncle? Shall we chance it?"

"You are right, as usual, Danny," replied O'Hara. "Let us go at once. I need not reveal my identity to-night. There will be time enough to-morrow or the next day to tell the full story of how I happened to be on the ranch. Then we will see if there is such a thing as mercy for one who has been weak."

Danny glanced at the kindly, weather-beaten features of his uncle, and vowed that he would leave no stone unturned to help the good old fellow regain the honor and respect that had formerly been his.

Then, turning the machine in the opposite direction, he fairly flew over the deserted streets until the municipal building was reached. Rapidly ascending the steps of the building, Danny and O'Hara fairly rushed into the office of the police magistrate.

Half-sitting, half-lying, in a large, commodious, upholstered swivel chair was the single individual the office contained. This bestarred person was giving vent to a capacious yawn as the two men hurriedly entered the room. Rubbing his eyes and staggering to his feet, the officer looked at them as though uncertain of the reality of their existence.

"What's the matter?" he finally exploded.

And then, as Danny, prompted from time to time by O'Hara, recited the main outlines of their evening's experiences, and finally produced their bundle of papers as evidence, amazement and consternation was written in every feature of the man's countenance.

"Jehosaphat!" exclaimed the astounded officer.

A minute later and the three were motoring furiously through the crisp night air in the direction of the home of Mr. Southwick, the Federal officer for that district.

CHAPTER XXVI
A GOOD NIGHT'S WORK

In record time the little machine drew up before a substantial building located in one of the residential sections of town.

Alighting, the three men proceeded at once to awaken the government agent. But it was ten minutes before they succeeded in gaining entrance into the building and were ushered into the beautiful library by Mr. Southwick himself.

As chief of the local division of the Department of Justice — that great department at Washington which fought the agents and spies that Germany had placed in America — Mr. Southwick had distinguished himself during the war in his own state, and indeed his name was a familiar one throughout the whole Southwest.

A large man physically, he towered well over six feet as he stood before his three nocturnal visitors, clad in a dressing-gown of variegated pattern. A glance at the man revealed the secret of his success. Strength and determination were written in every feature of his massive leonine countenance. His piercing gray eyes were set deeply in his head, which was crowned with a shaggy mane of iron-gray hair. It was plain to the beholder that this man was to be respected as a friend, to be feared as a foe. Obviously, he was one of those mortals who seemed destined to be a power in any field in which he chose to turn his abilities.

When America was finally drawn into the Great War, it was he who was appointed by the government to fight the enemy's propaganda in the border states. The appointment was in itself a high tribute to the man, for on every side his post was recognized as one of the most difficult that the country afforded. His name had become a terror to the few enemy sympathizers who were left in the state, and his reputation sufficed to keep these few from any overt acts of destruction.

Motioning Danny and O'Hara to a seat, he turned to the policeman and went at once to the heart of the matter:

"I suppose something extremely important must have induced this midnight call. I am ready to hear you."

The policeman pointed a finger toward O'Hara and said:

"This gentleman is the one to tell you about it."

Mr. Southwick turned toward O'Hara with a look of inquiry.

O'Hara met it squarely. Then, searching a moment for words to put the matter succinctly, he said:

"Mr. Southwick, I have evidence in hand which shows that you are

harboring a traitor in your midst. You may know the man. His name is Brown — owner of a big ranch near the city. Without telling the story of how I happened to get there, I'll simply say that I finally managed to escape with these papers. I arrived in Albuquerque about an hour ago with my nephew here, and we decided to come to you immediately. Here are the papers. I think they will establish the truth of what I have just been saying."

The chief reached for the bundle of papers, but said nothing, nor indeed were the onlookers able to discern any expression of surprise on his face as he listened to O'Hara's disclosure.

He untied the papers, and spreading them out on the desk at which he sat, he glanced through them hurriedly. When he again looked up, Danny and 0 'Hara could see that he had already arrived at a decision.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this bundle of papers contains enough evidence to put a dozen men in the penitentiary if we can lay our hands on them. We must immediately gather in as many of these traitors as we can. Burns," he addressed the policeman, "go out and locate every detective and officer that you can. Have them meet at my residence in half an hour. There's not a minute to be lost. I will get in touch with several men from my own office. In thirty-five minutes exactly we will start for Brown's ranch with as much of a force as we can organize."

"Sooner if possible, Chief," suggested Danny. "We left the ranch almost two hours ago, and something was in the wind then. It looked like they were planning to leave. They may be gone now."

Burns had left to do Mr. Southwick's bidding, and the next half hour sped by in hurried preparation.

From time to time a new arrival swelled the little group of men who were waiting patiently for the minute of departure. Bums was evidently successful in rounding up his men.

Finally, five minutes before the time of departure, two big motor cars rolled around the corner and stopped in front of the house. A moment later, Bums came up the steps, puffing from bis exertions.

Mr. Southwick appeared, and after assuring himself that every man in the party was fully armed, be led the way to the waiting automobiles. The two men at the wheel, who were members of Mr. Southwick's office, appeared to have received their instructions already. Doubtless, their chief had informed them of the nature of the job to be done.

Danny and O'Hara were loath to leave Mr. Southwick and his aids, now that the expedition was about to set out. So, after a hurried word with the government official, they again boarded Mary Louise's little machine and started with the others for the distant ranch.

For a considerable distance, the three machines sped over the road that Danny and O'Hara had already traveled earlier in the night. To prevent the quarry from escaping, in case the pursuit were discovered prematurely, Mr. Southwick decided to steer a course far to the southward. About five miles from the ranch a wide detour was made, and after an hour of rapid driving over bumpy, dusty roads, the party drew up and halted at a signal from the leading machine.

Gathering the force around him, Mr. Southwick said:

"Now, men, I hardly need to tell you that this venture is a dangerous one. We are dealing with desperadoes, and they will fight for their lives.

I — have been thinking over a plan of action, and I think the best thing to do is to divide ourselves into three groups. Bums, you will command the first group, and when we get within a half mile of the ranch, you will turn to the left and approach from that direction. Maitland, I'll put you in with Mr. Dexter and Mr. O'Hara. You three will take your position on the right. I'll take the center and go straight north. If escape is attempted, you must shoot. Under no circumstances must we allow these traitors to escape. Shoot, if necessary. Take no chances, but be sure that bullets are necessary before you start in. Each man will have to take care of himself. And remember, no matter what happens, you are doing no more than any loyal American citizen is expected to do."

Approval was written on the faces of the assembled men, and when Mr. Southwick put the question, "Is everybody ready?" their response was unanimous.

A moment later and the three machines were again in motion.

The ranch was now very near. The moon shone down with crystalline clearness as the various buildings, separating themselves from the background, appeared to the spectator only as towering black objects.

"Spread apart, men!" commanded the leader of the party.

Instantly the machines in command of Burns and Maitland swerved in opposite directions.

Danny was at the wheel of Maitland's machine. Knowing the lay of the land, he put on full speed, and was soon leading the others by a comfortable margin.

As their machine bore down on the ranch, Danny and O'Hara realized that their course would bring them just to the rear of the Brown bungalow.

Closer and closer drew the raiding party.

Suddenly, as their eyes were fixed on the prospect ahead, the sleeping camp seemed roused to activity. Silhouetted figures dashed here and there. It was evident that the noise of the oncoming cars had been heard and the alarm

sounded.

The first clear indication of this came in Danny's quarter.

Before the three men had time to form a definite plan, a loud chugging announced the presence of Brown's huge car in the immediate vicinity. Evidently the occupants of the camp had determined on flight, and, even now, were prepared to dash for the open.

Suddenly the big car rounded the corner of the bungalow, and instantly picking up speed, darted away to the southward.

"Stop that car!" shouted Maitland. "Shoot low! Don't let him get away! Aim for the tires."

A fusillade of shots rang out as O'Hara and Maitland poised their rifles an instant and started to pump bullets at the dark retreating mass.

Another volley, and another.

There was a sudden snap as a bullet found its way into one of the rear tires of Brown's car. Then a baffled cry of rage rose on the air.

Swinging the little machine around at an abrupt angle, Danny started toward the other car, now arrested in its flight. As he pulled up a short distance away, a shot rang out and he heard the whistle of lead as it winged its way past his left ear.

"Down, men!" he shouted. "Crouch down!" And suiting the action to the word, the three men sought protection in the depths of the machine.

As they were preparing to return the fire, they heard the noise of Mr. Southwick's machine as it approached from the opposite side. That redoubtable official had heard the sound of the shots, and as he came up, he took in the situation at a glance.

"Surrender!" he called out. "Surrender in the name of the Government of the United States!"

What feelings that voice inspired in the hearts of Brown and his confederates may never be known. But it must have sounded to them like the voice of doom, for now their consciences must have told them that retribution was at hand. They had dared to be traitors, and had sought to betray a great free country. For gold, they had sacrificed honor and respect, and now, gold had failed them, as gold always does.

Again Mr. Southwick's voice boomed out:

"Do you surrender?"

There was no answer, but three dark figures stepped from the car, and with hands raised high in the air, moved into the open.

Instantly, Mr. Southwick, attended by the men in his car, moved forward to meet them. O'Hara and Maitland, followed by Danny, also joined the group.

His features distorted with hate and chagrin, Brown stood before the stern government official. At his side stood Tom Whalen, sullenly defiant, and Jo, the little Jap chauffeur, who, with oriental calmness and imperturbability, surveyed his captors without moving an eyelash.

In the meantime, the third machine had already reached the ranch.

Jumping from their machine, Burns and his companions quickly searched the outbuildings of the ranch, and finding nothing of consequence, sat down to await the arrivals of the others. While they were thus engaged, the sound of purring automobiles in the distance suddenly ceased, and the sound of shots, carried on the still night air, fell on their ears.

Instantly alert, and without waiting to start their car again, the four members of the party rushed across the ranch in the direction of the firing. As they swung around the corner of the bungalow, they were astonished at the spectacle that confronted them.

Three menacing revolvers were pointed at Brown and his companions, who had been marched to the side of the bungalow at Mr. Southwick's direction. There, arms in air, they stood, uneasily moving from side to side as they awaited the further commands of the government official.

With a hurried "At your service, sir," Burns and the three detectives joined their superior.

"Search these fellows!" commanded Mr. Southwick.

The men jumped forward, and while leveled revolvers continued to insure the good behavior of the three captives, Burns and his agile-fingered helpers went to work, turning their pockets inside out, and removing everything that they came across.

In a few minutes they had exposed a veritable arsenal — revolvers, a half dozen boxes of bullets, wicked-looking knives, and a considerable amount of American and Mexican money. Brown's inside pocket yielded a bulky packet of papers, and this was immediately placed in Mr. Southwick's keeping.

While this scene was being enacted, Danny and 0 'Hara, accompanied by Maitland, bad conducted a search of Brown's automobile. Nothing was found in the front part of the machine, but under the tonneau seat a heavy wooden chest was revealed, locked and bolted on three sides. After they had transferred this to Mr. Southwick's car, they returned to the group by the bungalow.

The eastern sky was now shot with faint streaks of light, which proclaimed the coming of dawn. Now, for the first time, it would be possible to make a thorough search of the premises.

As O'Hara came up, Brown glared at him as though seeing him for the

first time since the arrival of the raiding party.

"So you're the informer, are you?" he said, wrathfully. "A fine patriot you are! Tour friends must be pretty bad off to get help from criminals."

0 'Hara was about to reply, when Mr. Southwick turned to the German, and said, acidly:

"You'll have plenty of opportunity to talk later, Brown. Just now, what we want from you is information. I have evidence that your wife was here last night. Where is she now? Speak the truth. Where is she?"

A sneer passed over the cold face of the man.

"If it will do you any good to know," he said, "she is in Mexico by this time. Perhaps you'd like to catch her, too, eh? Yes, and maybe the Mexicans will help you. Suppose you try?" Doubtless the man spoke the truth.

The stately woman whose beauty had so impressed O'Hara on his arrival at the ranch, was nowhere to be found. By this time the bungalow and its adjacent buildings had already been searched by the busy men.

O'Hara turned to Danny, who was standing at his side, and said in a low voice:

"I can't say that I am sorry for that, Danny. This is a terrible situation for a woman to be mixed up in, and somehow, I hate to see a woman in trouble even when she deserves it."

Danny gave a nod of approval.

"That's right, Uncle Jim," agreed the young man. "I know exactly how you feel. I think every real man feels the same way. Somehow, we hate to think that a beautiful woman could be mixed up in anything so disagreeable as this. Well, we've got this man Brown, anyway, and he's the real power behind the throne. At least, I think so."

Meantime, Mr. Southwick was receiving reports from the detectives who were searching every nook and corner of the ranch-

"The ranch is deserted, sir," said one of the detectives who had come down in Burns's car. "We've gone over every shack on the place with a fine-tooth comb, and everything is just about cleaned out."

Mr. Southwick turned to O'Hara.

"By the way, you mentioned something in my library about being locked up in a subterranean cavern. You said something about a safe being there, filled with documents of all kinds. Do you know how to reach it?"

"Yes," replied O'Hara. "It is right under that big gasoline tank over there. There's a secret trap-door, but Brown and his tools here are the only ones who know how to work the combination."

Glancing at the three captives, Mr. Southwick's eyes fell on the little Jap chauffeur.

“Come here, Togo,” he commanded.

The Jap obeyed with alacrity.

“I want you to show these men how to open that door. Understand?”

The little yellow man instantly donned a servile maimer, as though he realized that the overlordship of Brown was over, and new masters must, now be served.

Leading the way to the tank, he descended into the huge hollow, closely followed by O’Hara and two of the other men.

After they had made their way to the farther end of the tank, the Jap suddenly stooped and touched something that seemed to be one of the rivets that held the giant steel tank together. Instantly the steel walls moved as 0 ‘Hara had seen them do earlier, and the aperture leading to the cave opened up directly in front of them. The men marvelled at the ingenuity which had devised this hidden retreat.

O’ Hara was the first to file through the opening and descend into the depths of the cave.

“You next!” said one of the detectives to the Jap, as the latter was edging to one side.

The oriental obeyed without a word, followed by the two detectives.

It was several minutes before the men were able to make out their surroundings in the dim light of the gloomy interior.

After O’Hara had ushered the men over the cave, and had shown them the huge concrete emplacement rising to a height of fully twenty feet, he led the way to the bulky safe which stood in the same position as before.

“Get to work, Jo, and open this up!” commanded 0 ‘Hara.

The Jap was at the side of the safe and turning the dial almost before the command was given. Finally, with a vigorous pull, the huge steel doors were forced out, and the interior of the safe was revealed.

Empty! Not a sheet of paper remained.

“They’ve stolen a march on us!” exclaimed one of the detectives in a disappointed tone.

“I’m not so sure of that,” said O’Hara.

He cast a look in the direction of the Jap, who stood by, as silent and inscrutable as the race from which he sprang.

“Where are all the papers that were here, Jo? You might as well tell us.”

“Papers?” he questioned, blankly.

“Yes, papers,” countered 0 ‘Hara. “The same papers that were here when you came down into the cave with that Irish detective from the city. Don’t you remember?”

Did the Jap’s eyes suddenly turn downward under O’Hara’s steady

scrutiny? It was hard to tell in the gloom of the cave, but he uttered a quick "Yes, yes!" of dismay, and said in liquid tones: "Papers! Yes, I know. Papers in Mr. Brown's automobile. You find them in box. Mr. Brown take away."

0 'Hara turned to the detectives.

"This doesn't surprise me, boys," he said. "We've already got our hands on those papers. Before you arrived on the scene, we took a whole chestful of them from Brown's machine, and put them in Mr. Southwick's car. I felt pretty sure then that there wouldn't be anything here for us when we came. What do you say about going back?"

"I'm ready!"

"Me, too!"

They filed from the cave in the order in which they entered, O'Hara opening and closing the entrance several times by pressing the neatly camouflaged button.

On reaching open air, the party rejoined Mr. Southwick's forces which were still beside the bungalow.

The big man's only comment, as O'Hara reported the result of the trip, was, "Just as I thought."

Preparations were busily under way for the return to the city. The search of the ranch had been completed, and at Mr. Southwick's order, the huge touring car of Brown had been mended and placed in readiness. In the tonneau of the car sat the crestfallen owner, and beside him was Tom Whalen. To prevent any attempt at escape, the two were handcuffed together, and an armed guard was placed over them.

The Jap was ordered into the front seat of the machine, and beside him was seated a second detective.

It was a tired group of men who raced over the long desert road to Albuquerque on the return journey. The early morning sun was beating down from the east, and the intense heat of the desert was making itself felt over the refreshing coolness of the night.

Mr. Southwick's car led off, and was followed by Brown's machine, which was carefully watched by the occupants of "Queenie," the next one in line. One of Mr. Southwick's lieutenants brought up the rear of the procession.

Early morning pedestrians on the streets of the thriving little town glanced curiously at the row of machines, and wondered at their presence at that hour. They would have been still more surprised had they seen the four machines draw up a few minutes later in front of the county jail. Luckily, the street on which this stood was still deserted.

After the captives were safely lodged behind bars, the raiding party

separated in all directions. Mr. Southwick walked over to Danny and O'Hara, and slapping them on the back, said:

"We are greatly indebted to you two men. As one loyal American to another, I want to thank the both of you from the bottom of my heart. You have done your country a great service — greater, perhaps, than you know. Good luck to you, and I hope I may call on you later when we bring Brown and his assistants to trial."

"You surely can, Mr. Southwick!" answered Danny.

As 0 'Hara shook hands with the famous official, the latter said, kindly:

"There may come a time when I can be of some help to you, Mr. O'Hara. If so, do not hesitate to call on me. You have my promise."

"Many thanks!" answered the other.

And as the towering figure entered his machine, O'Hara turned to his nephew and said:

"Danny, do you think he knows who I am?"

"I think so, Uncle Jim. I have felt that right along," replied the young man.

O 'Hara sighed, and continued:

"I wonder what Mr. Southwick meant about helping me!"

"I don't know," responded Danny, "but I do know that Mr. Southwick appreciates what you have done. He is the kind of man who doesn't say much, but I know he attaches the greatest importance to the raid we have just been through. You'll have to admit, Uncle Jim, you were responsible for that!"

"It was little that I did," answered O'Hara. "Nonsense!" exclaimed the young man. "You were behind the whole thing. We couldn't have proven anything without that bundle of papers. Mr. Southwick knows that. The capture of Brown will be a big feather in his cap when the news reaches Washington, and he's bound to give you full credit. No, Uncle Jim," continued Danny, "I don't think you need fear anything more. It looks like smooth sailing to me from now on."

"Do you really think so?" In O'Hara's voice there was a note of yearning that did not escape the younger man.

"Yes, Uncle Jim. Now, don't worry!" he encouraged. "We've made a good friend. Mr. Southwick means what he says. I am sure our troubles are just about over."

As the two men motored slowly through the streets in the direction of the hotel, a share of Danny's optimism entered the heart of the older man, and a smile of childlike happiness stole over his saddened face.

CHAPTER XXVII
ON THE BALCONY

Early the next morning Mary Louise was aroused by a tapping at her door, and Josie burst into the room, followed by Irene, who came more slowly on her crutches.

"We just had to wake you up, Mary Louise," cried Josie, "to tell you the exciting news. They sent out officers to arrest those Browns. They found his name was Heinrich Braun, and he's a German up from Mexico. Who could imagine such a thing!"

Mary Louise leaned back on her pillows, and her eyes looked very large and lovely with their violet shadows.

"Josie," she said, "I've got a confession to make to you."

"I'll bet it isn't very serious," laughed the girl.

"Irene, oh, Irene!" Mary Louise called out. "You stay and hear it, too!" The well-bred girl was almost outside the door before Mary Louise's voice halted her.

Then, as the two girls sat on the side of her bed, Mary Louise told them the story of James 0 — 'Hara — the kindly, courageous uncle of Danny Dexter. She told them of the terrible mistake he bad once made — a mistake atoned for time and again. She told how O'Hara happened to be on the Brown ranch and how he discovered its dangerous character. And lastly, she told of the amazing events of the previous evening, expatiating at length on the heroic part that O'Hara played in them.

When she had finished her recital, Josie burst out:

"Oh, Mary Louise, why didn't you let me know about O'Hara sooner? I would never have caused him so much trouble."

"Well," said Mary Louise, "he had not proven his mettle at that time, and that makes a great difference, doesn't it? But you see how everything has turned out for the best."

As Josie sat on the bed, still almost unable to comprehend the amazing turn that events had taken, Mary Louise turned to her and said softly: "Josie, dear, don't you think it would be possible for O 'Hara to arrange to repay that Boston bank in the near future, and go free in the meantime? I think he deserves the most considerate treatment.''

"I do, too!" spoke up Irene, whose admiring gaze had not shifted from Mary Louise since the latter started her narrative.

Mary Louise cast a look of gratitude on the sweet-faced girl, as Josie reflected in silence for a moment.

"Such things are done now and then," said Josie quietly, "but only in the

most extraordinary cases."

"But this case *is* extraordinary!" urged Mary Louise. "Why, Josie, just think of the heroic way he managed to escape from the ranch! Even now, he is in danger of arrest because he chose to be loyal under the most difficult conditions! Could a man be anything but worthy who thinks more of his country than his own personal safety?"

Mary Louise was about to say more in behalf of Danny's uncle when Josie placed her hand on the girl's arm.

"There's no need to argue O'Hara's case further, dear," she said. "I agree with you.

O'Hara is a real American, and I promise to help him in every way I can."

"I'm so glad!" sighed Mary Louise, and she lay back on her pillows.

"And I am, too!" added Irene, whose tender heart had been deeply touched by Mary Louise's recital of O'Hara's story.

"Then, we're unanimous!" smiled Josie, and added, good-naturedly: "Have you noticed that it's always unanimous when Mary Louise sets her heart on a thing?"

Mary Louise laughed lightly.

"Oh, Josie, how you exaggerate!" she said.

"Girls! Girls!" exclaimed Irene. "Here we are exchanging pleasantries, and we haven't yet decided how we are going to help Danny's uncle!"

Irene was the most practical-minded of all of Mary Louise's girl friends, and she was never so happy as when planning some kind deed for others.

"What would you suggest, Josie?" asked Mary Louise, after a little silence had fallen on the group.

"Well," said the girl slowly, "I think my best plan would be to get in touch with dad. He is still in Washington; at least he was there when I — left several weeks ago. I might wire him about the case, and tell him to have Crocker patch things up with the Boston bank. I am sure dad would do it for me. What do you think of the idea?"

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Mary Louise, enthusiastically. "Your father is the very man! Oh, Josie, how can I ever thank you! I know Danny would like to hear about the plan, too. Won't you see him and tell him about it? He can tell you more about his uncle than I ever could."

"That's what I'll do," said Josie, decisively. "I'll get O'Hara's whole story from Danny, and then I'll wire it to dad. Father will receive it this afternoon, and we should receive an answer from him not later than to-morrow night."

"That will be splendid!" said Mary Louise. "Yes," echoed Irene, "and just think of the happiness it will give Danny's uncle to know that he is free once more to retrieve himself in the eyes of the world!"

Mary Louise smiled a glad smile, and thought to herself that Danny, too, would be overjoyed at the news, but she did not give her thought utterance. An unaccountable shyness came over her when she thought of Danny and the delightful night ride of the evening before.

Then the tired girl fell back on her pillow. The strain of the night before had told on her, so, sending her girl friends from the room, she turned over into a wonderful slumber that lasted almost through the afternoon.

About five, Mary Louise arose, bathed and slipped into her soft pink dressing-gown. Her grandfather entered her little private sitting room as she was turning from her mirror, and on Mary Louise's assuring him that she was perfectly well and rested now, he seated himself in the one large chair the hotel room held.

Then Mary Louise threw a pillow at his feet and clasping her knees in her hands, she told him all of her adventure: the tale of O'Hara, the night ride and the lost automobile.

The Colonel tenderly smoothed her dark curls as she talked, and when she had finished, he told her of his pride in her in words which made Mary Louise's heart glow.

"Have you seen Danny?" Mary Louise asked at last.

The wistful look did not escape the Colonel.

Each day both esteem and affection had increased in him for Danny Dexter. So now he asked gently: "Shall I send him up to you after dinner?"

"Yes," said Mary Louise, and suddenly hid her head on her grandfather's shoulder.

So it happened that Mary Louise waited for Danny out on the balcony of her little sitting-room. She had flung a warm dark fur about her shoulders, and her soft and simple gown gleamed in sweet contrast to the fur's richness. She was leaning against the railing as Danny entered, looking off into the loneliness of the desert.

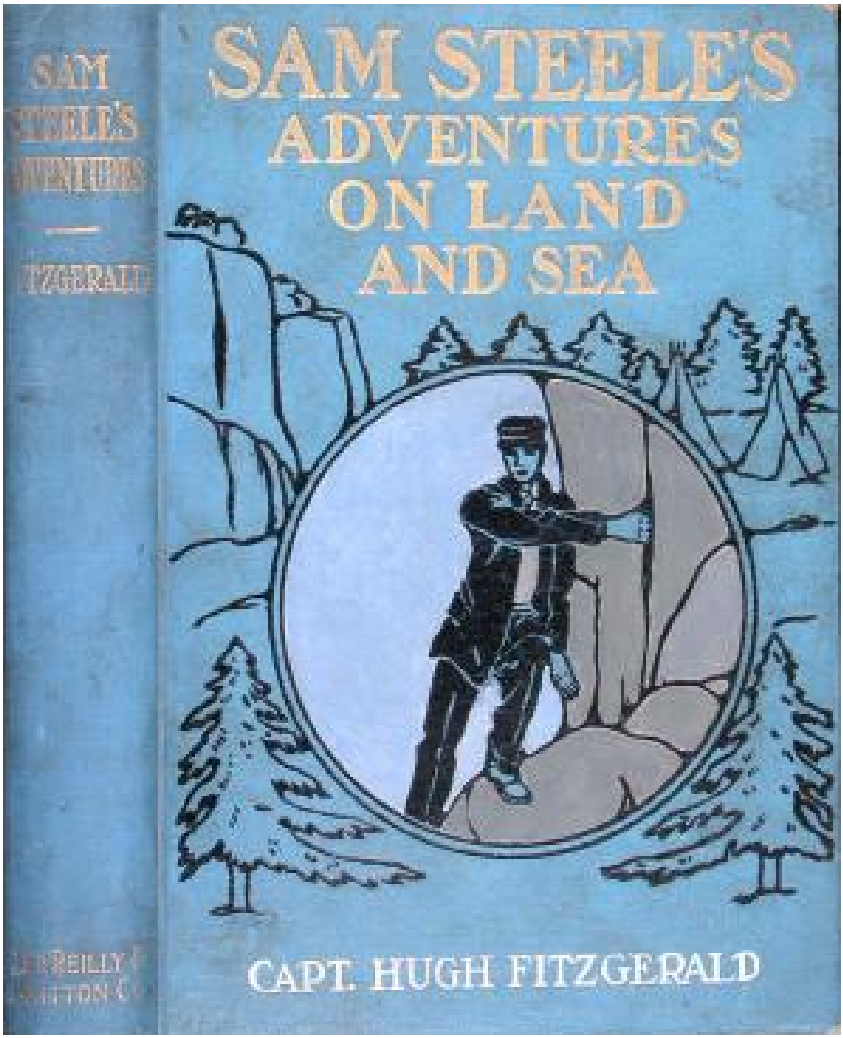
The final glory of the sun was flooding the whole world with light, and the mystery of the vast sandy distances was upon her. Mystery was in her dark eyes, too, as she turned to greet Danny.

The blaze of light turned to the soft dusk of twilight as Danny stood and gazed at her. Then simply, naturally, and with an infinite tenderness Danny Dexter stepped through the door and took Mary Louise in his arms.

THE END

THE BOY FORTUNE HUNTERS IN ALASKA

The Boy Fortune Hunters in Alaska, published by Reilly & Britton in 1908, was the first in a series for adolescent boys written under one of Baum's pseudonyms, Floyd Akers (perhaps alluding to 'Fakers'), with artwork by Howard Heath. The novel had originally appeared two years earlier under the title, *Sam Steele's Adventures on Land and Sea*, by Capt. Hugh Fitzgerald. Narrated in the first person, the tale follows the adventures of plucky orphan, Sam Steele, as he attempts to bring supplies to miners of the Alaska Gold Rush. A shipwreck, a prodigious goldmine, cutthroat thieves, and a mysterious peg-legged man provide the color. Never to let a good character go to waste, Baum several years later revived sea captain, Naboth Perkins, as Cap'n Bill in *The Sea Fairies* and other works.



A first edition, second state, copy with the original title and pseudonym

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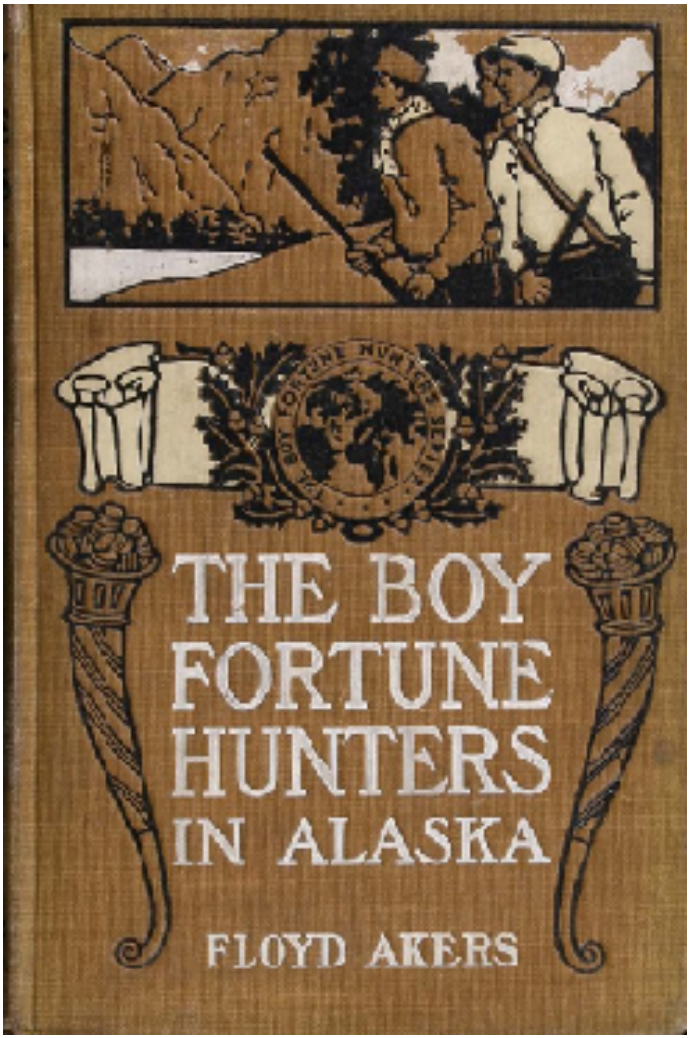


A first edition copy of The Boy Fortune Hunters in Alaska

CHAPTER 1

I HEAR BAD NEWS.

"Sam — come here!"

It was Mrs. Ranck's voice, and sounded more bitter and stringent than usual.

I can easily recall the little room in which I sat, poring over my next day's lessons. It was in one end of the attic of our modest cottage, and the only room "done off" upstairs. The sloping side walls, that followed the lines of the roof, were bare except for the numerous pictures of yachts and other sailing craft with which I had plastered them from time to time. There was a bed at one side and a small deal table at the other, and over the little window was a shelf whereon I kept my meager collection of books.

"Sam! Are you coming, or not?"

With a sigh I laid down my book, opened the door, and descended the steep uncarpeted stairs to the lower room. This was Mrs. Ranck's living-room, where she cooked our meals, laid the table, and sat in her high-backed wooden rocker to darn and mend. It was a big, square room, which took up most of the space in the lower part of the house, leaving only a place for a small store-room at one end and the Captain's room at the other. At one side was the low, broad porch, with a door and two windows opening onto it, and at the other side, which was properly the back of the cottage, a small wing had been built which was occupied by the housekeeper as her sleeping chamber.

As I entered the living-room in response to Mrs. Ranck's summons I was surprised to find a stranger there, seated stiffly upon the edge of one of the straight chairs and holding his hat in his lap, where he grasped it tightly with two big, red fists, as if afraid that it would get away. He wore an old flannel shirt, open at the neck, and a weather-beaten pea-jacket, and aside from these trade-marks of his profession it was easy enough to determine from his air and manner that he was a sea-faring man.

There was nothing remarkable about that, for every one in our little sea-coast village of Batteraft got a living from old ocean, in one way or another; but what startled me was to find Mrs. Ranck confronting the sailor with a white face and a look of mingled terror and anxiety in her small gray eyes.

"What is it, Aunt?" I asked, a sudden fear striking to my heart as I looked from one to the other in my perplexity.

The woman did not reply, at first, but continued to stare wildly at the bowed head of the sailor — bowed because he was embarrassed and ill at ease. But when he chanced to raise a rather appealing pair of eyes to her face

she nodded, and said briefly:

"Tell him."

"Yes, marm," answered the man; but he shifted uneasily in his seat, and seemed disinclined to proceed further.

All this began to make me very nervous. Perhaps the man was a messenger — a bearer of news. And if so his tale must have an evil complexion, to judge by his manner and Mrs. Ranck's stern face. I felt like shrinking back, like running away from some calamity that was about to overtake me. But I did not run. Boy though I was, and very inexperienced in the ways of life, with its troubles and tribulations, I knew that I must stay and hear all; and I braced myself for the ordeal.

"Tell me, please," I said, and my voice was so husky and low that I could scarce hear it myself. "Tell me; is — is it about — my father?"

The man nodded.

"It's about the Cap'n," he said, looking stolidly into Mrs. Ranck's cold features, as if striving to find in them some assistance. "I was one as sailed with him las' May aboard the 'Saracen.'"

"Then why are you here?" I cried, desperately, although even as I spoke there flashed across my mind a first realization of the horror the answer was bound to convey.

"'Cause the' Saracen' foundered off Lucayas," said the sailor, with blunt deliberation, "an' went to the bottom, 'th all hands — all but me, that is. I caught a spar an' floated three days an' four nights, makin' at last Andros Isle, where a fisherman pulled me ashore more dead 'n alive. That's nigh three months agone, sir. I've had fever sence — brain fever, they called it — so I couldn't bring the news afore."

I felt my body swaying slightly, and wondered if it would fall. Then I caught at a ray of hope.

"But my father, Captain Steele? Perhaps he, also, floated ashore!" I gasped.

The sailor shook his head, regretfully.

"None but me was saved alive, sir," he answered, in a solemn voice. "The tide cast up a many o' the 'Saracen' corpses, while I lay in the fever; an' the fisher folks give 'em a decent burial. But they saved the trinkets as was found on the dead men, an' among 'em was Cap'n Steele's watch an' ring. I kep"em to bring to you. Here they be," he continued simply, as he rose from his chair to place a small chamois bag reverently upon the table.

Mrs. Ranck pounced upon it and with trembling fingers untied the string. Then she drew forth my father's well-known round silver watch and the carbuncle ring he had worn upon his little finger ever since I could

remember.

For a time no one spoke. I stared stupidly at the sailor, noticing that the buttons on his pea-jacket did not match and wondering if he always sewed them on himself. Mrs. Ranck had fallen back into her tall rocking-chair, where she gyrated nervously back and forth, the left rocker creaking as if it needed greasing. Why was it that I could not burst into a flood of tears, or wail, or shriek, or do anything to prove that I realized myself suddenly bereft of the only friend I had in all the world? There was an iron band around my forehead, and another around my chest. My brain was throbbing under one, and my heart trying desperately to beat under the other. Yet outwardly I must have appeared calm enough, and the fact filled me with shame and disgust.

An orphan, now, and alone in the world. This father whom the angry seas had engulfed was the only relative I had known since my sweet little mother wearied of the world and sought refuge in Heaven, years and years ago. And while father sailed away on his stout ship the "Saracen" I was left to the care of the hard working but crabbed and cross old woman whom I had come to call, through courtesy and convenience, "Aunt," although she was no relation whatever to me. Now I was alone in the world. Father, bluff and rugged, so strong and resourceful that I had seldom entertained a fear for his safety, was lying dead in the far away island of Andros, and his boy must hereafter learn to live without him.

The sailor, obviously uneasy at the effect of his ill tidings, now rose to go, but at his motion Mrs. Ranck seemed suddenly to recover the use of her tongue, and sternly bade him resume his seat.

Then she plied him with questions concerning the storm and the catastrophe that followed it, and the man answered to the best of his ability.

Captain Steele was universally acknowledged one of the best and most successful seamen Batteraft had ever known. Through many years of trading in foreign parts he had not only become sole owner of the "Saracen," but had amassed a fortune which, it was freely stated in the town, was enough to satisfy the desires of any man. But this was merely guess-work on the part of his neighbors, for when ashore the old sailor confided his affairs to no one, unless it might have been to Mrs. Ranck. For the housekeeper was a different person when the Captain was ashore, recounting her own virtues so persistently, and seeming so solicitous for my comfort, that poor father stood somewhat in awe of her exceptional nobility of character. As soon as he had sailed she dropped the mask, and was often unkind; but I never minded this enough to worry him with complaints, so he was unconscious of her true nature.

Indeed, my dear father had been so seldom at home that I dreaded to cause him one moment's uneasiness. He was a reserved man, too, as is the case with so many sailors, and since the death of his dearly loved wife had passed but little of his time ashore. I am sure he loved me, for he always treated me with a rare tenderness; but he never would listen to my entreaties to sail with him.

"The sea's no place for a lad that has a comfortable home," he used to reply, in his slow, thoughtful way. "Keep to your studies, Sam, my boy, and you'll be a bigger man some day than any seaman of us all."

The Captain's brief visits home were the only bright spots in my existence, and because I had no one else to love I lavished upon my one parent all the affection of which I was capable. Therefore my present sudden bereavement was so colossal and far reaching in its effects upon my young life that it is no wonder the news staggered me and curiously dulled my senses.

Almost as if in a dream I heard Mrs. Ranck's fierce questions and the sailor's reluctant answers. And when he had told everything that he knew about the matter he got upon his feet and took my hands gently in both his big, calloused ones.

"I'm right sorry, lad, as ye've had this blow," he muttered, feelingly. "The Cap'n were a good man an' a kind master, an' many's a time I've heard him tell of his boy Sam. I s'pose he's left ye provided with plenty o' this world's goods, for he were a thrifty man and mostly in luck. But if ye ever run aground, lad, or find ye need a friend to cast a bowline, don't forget that Ned Britton'll stand by ye through thick an' thin!"

With this he wrung my hands until I winced under the pressure, and then he nodded briefly to Mrs. Ranck and hurried from the room.

The twilight had faded during the interview, and the housekeeper had lit a tallow candle. As Ned Britton's footsteps died away the woman bent forward to snuff the wick, and I noted a grim and determined look upon her features that was new to them. But her hands trembled somewhat, in spite of her assumed calmness, and the fact gave me a certain satisfaction. Her loss could not be compared with mine, but the Captain's death was sure to bring about a change in her fortunes, as well as my own.

She resumed her regular rocking back and forth, riveting her eyes the while upon my face. I did not sit, but leaned against the table, trying hard to think. And thus for a long time we regarded each other in silence.

Finally she cried out sharply:

"Well, what are you a-goin' to do now?"

"In what way?" I asked, drearily.

“In every way. How are you goin’ to live, fer one thing?”

“Why, much the same as I am doing now, I suppose,” said I, trying to rouse myself to attend to what she was saying. “Father owned this house, which is now mine; and I’m sure there is considerable property besides, although the ship is lost.”

“Fiddlesticks!” exclaimed Mrs. Ranck, scornfully.

I wondered what she meant by that, and looked my question.

“Your father didn’t own a stick o’ this house,” she cried, in a tone that was almost a scream. “It’s mine, an’ the deed’s in my own name!”

“I know,” I replied, “but father has often explained that you merely held the deed in trust for me, until I became of age. He turned it over to you as a protection to me in case some accident should happen to him. Many times he has told me that this plan insured my having a home, no matter what happened.”

“I guess you didn’t understand him,” she answered, an evil flash in her eye. “The facts is, this house were put into my name because the Cap’n owed me money.”

“What for?” I asked.

“I’ve kep’ ye in food an’ clothes ever sence ye was a baby. Do ye s’pose that don’t cost money?”

I stared at her bewildered.

“Didn’t father furnish the money?”

“Not a cent. He just let it run on, as he did my wages. An’ it counts up big, that a-way.”

“Then this house isn’t mine, after all?”

“Not an inch of it. Not a stick ner a stone.”

I tried to think what this would mean to me, and what reason the woman could have for claiming a right to my inheritance.

“Once,” said I, musingly, “father told me how he had brought you here to save you from the poor-house, or starvation. He was sorry for you, and gave you a home. That was while mother was living. Afterwards, he said, he trusted to your gratitude to take good care of me, and to stand my friend in place of my dead mother.”

“Fiddlesticks!” she snapped, again. It was the word she usually used to express contempt, and it sounded very disagreeable coming from her lips.

“The Cap’n must ‘a’ been a-dreamin’ when he told you that stuff an’ nonsense,” she went on. “I’ve treated ye like my own son; there’s no mistake about that. But I did it for wages, accordin’ to agreement atween me an’ the Cap’n. An’ the wages wasn’t never paid. When they got to be a big lump, he put the house in my name, to secure me. An’ it’s mine — ev’ry stick of it!”

My head was aching, and I had to press my hand to it to ease the pain. In the light of the one flickering candle Mrs. Ranck's hard face assumed the expression of a triumphant demon, and I drew back from it, shocked and repelled.

"If what you say is true," I said, listlessly, "I would rather you take the old home to wipe out the debt. Yet father surely told me it was mine, and it isn't like him to deceive me, or to owe any one money. However, take it, Aunt, if you like."

"I've got it," she answered; "an' I mean to keep it."

"I shall get along very well," said I, thinking, indeed, that nothing mattered much, now father was gone.

"How will you live?" she enquired.

"Why, there's plenty besides the house," I replied. "In father's room," and I nodded my head toward the door that was always kept locked in the Captain's absence, "there must be a great many valuable things stored. The very last time he was home he said that in case anything ever happened to him I would find a little fortune in his old sea-chest, alone."

"May be," rejoined the old woman, uneasily. "I hope *that* story o' his'n, at least, is true, for your sake, Sam. I hain't anything agin you; but right is right. An' the house don't cover all that's cornin' to me, either. The Cap'n owed me four hundred dollars, besides the house, for your keep durin' all these years; an' that'll have to be paid afore you can honestly lay claim to a cent o' his property."

"Of course," I agreed, meekly enough, for all this talk of money wearied me. "But there should be much more than that in the chest, alone, according to what father said."

"Let's hope there is," said she. "You go to bed, now, for you're clean done up, an' no wonder. In the mornin' we'll both look into the Cap'n's room, an' see what's there. I ain't a-goin' to take no mean advantage o' you, Sam, you can depend on't. So go to bed. Sleep's the best cure-all fer troubles like yours."

This last was said in a more kindly tone, and I was glad to take her at her word and creep away to my little room in the attic.

CHAPTER 2

I FIND A RELATIVE.

It may have been hours that I sat at my little table, overcome by the bitterness of my loss. And for more hours I tossed restlessly upon my hard bed, striving in vain for comfort. But suddenly, as I recalled a little affectionate gesture of my father's, I burst into a flood of tears, and, oh, what a relief it was to be able to cry — to sob away the load that had well-nigh overburdened my young heart!

After that last paroxysm of grief I fell asleep, worn out by my own emotions, and it was long past my usual hour for rising that I finally awoke.

In a moment, as I lay staring at the bright morning sunshine, the sorrow that had been forgotten in sleep swept over me like a flood, and I wept again at the thought of my utter loneliness and the dreadful fate that had overtaken my dear father. But presently, with the elasticity of youth, I was enabled to control myself, and turn my thoughts toward the future. Then I remembered that Mrs. Ranck and I were to enter the Captain's locked room, and take an inventory of his possessions, and I began hurriedly to dress myself, that this sad duty might be accomplished as soon as possible. The recollection of the woman's preposterous claims moved me to sullen anger. It seemed like a reflection on father's honesty to claim that he had been in her debt all these years, and I resolved that she should be paid every penny she demanded, that the Captain's honor might remain untarnished in death, even as it had ever been during his lifetime.

As soon as I was ready I descended the stairs to the living room, where Mrs. Ranck sat rocking in her chair, just as I had left her the night before. She was always an early riser, and I noticed that she had eaten her own breakfast and left a piece of bacon and corn-bread for me upon the hearth.

She made no reply to my "good morning, Aunt," so I took the plate from the hearth and ate my breakfast in silence. I was not at all hungry; but I was young, and felt the need of food. Not until I had finished did Mrs. Ranck speak.

"We may as well look into the Cap'n's room, an' get it done with," she said. "It's only nat'ral as I should want to know if I'm goin' to get the money back I've spent on your keepin'."

"Very well," said I.

She went to a drawer of a tall bureau and drew out a small ivory box. Within this I knew were the keys belonging to my father. Never before had Mrs. Ranck dared to meddle with them, for the Captain had always forbidden her and everyone else to enter his room during his absence. Even now, when

he was dead, it seemed like disobedience of his wishes for the woman to seize the keys and march over to the door of the sacred room. In a moment she had turned the lock and thrown open the door.

Shy and half startled at our presumption, I approached and peered over her shoulder. Occasionally, indeed, I had had a glimpse of the interior of this little place, half chamber and half office; and, once or twice, when a little child, I had entered it to seek my father. Now, as I glanced within, it seemed to be in perfect order; but it struck me as more bare and unfurnished than I had ever seen it before. Father must have secretly removed many of the boxes that used to line the walls, for they were all gone except his big sea-chest.

The sight of the chest, however, reassured me, for it was in this that he had told me to look for my fortune, in case anything should happen to him.

The old woman at once walked over to the chest, and taking a smaller key from the ivory box, fitted it to the lock and threw back the lid with a bang.

"There's your fortune!" she said, with a sneer; "see if you can find it."

I bent over the chest, gazing eagerly into its depths. There was an old Bible in one end, and a broken compass in the other. But that was all.

Standing at one side, the woman looked into my astonished face and laughed mockingly.

"This was another o' the Cap'n's lies," she said.

"He lied to you about ownin' the house; he lied to you about takin' me out o' charity; an' he lied to you about the fortune in this chest. An easy liar was Cap'n Steele, I must say!"

I shrank back, looking into her exultant eyes with horror in my own.

"How dare you say such things about my father?" I cried, in anger.

"How dare I?" she retorted; "why, because they're true, as you can see for yourself. Your father's deceived you, an' he's deceived me. I've paid out over four hundred dollars for your keep, thinkin' there was enough in this room to pay me back. An' now I stand to lose every penny of it, jest because I trusted to a lyin' sea-captain."

"You won't lose a dollar!" I cried, indignantly, while I struggled to keep back the tears of disappointment and shame that rushed to my eyes. "I'll pay you every cent of the money, if I live."

She looked at me curiously, with a hard smile upon her thin lips.

"How?" she asked.

"I'll work and earn it."

"Pish! What can a boy like you earn? An' what's goin' to happen while you're earnin' it? One thing's certain, Sam Steele; you can't stay here an' live offn a poor lone woman that's lost four hundred dollars by you already.

You'll have to find another place."

"I'll do that," I said, promptly.

"You can have three days to git out," she continued, pushing me out of the room and relocking the door, although there was little reason for that. "And you can take whatever clothes you've got along with you. Nobody can say that Jane Ranck ain't acted like a Christian to ye, even if she's beat an' defrauded out'n her just rights. But if ye should happen to earn any money, Sam, I hope you'll remember what ye owe me."

"I will," said I, coldly; and I meant it.

To my surprise Mrs. Ranck gave a strange chuckle, which was doubtless meant for a laugh — the first I had ever known her to indulge in. It fired my indignation to such a point that I cried out: "Shame!" and seizing my cap I rushed from the house.

The cottage was built upon a small hill facing the bay, and was fully a quarter of a mile distant from the edge of the village of Batteraft. From our gate the path led down hill through a little group of trees and then split in twain, one branch running down to the beach, where the shipping lay, and the other crossing the meadows to the village. Among the trees my father had built a board bench, overlooking the bay, and here I have known him to sit for hours, enjoying the beauty of the view, while the leafy trees overhead shaded him from the hot sun.

It was toward this bench, a favorite resort of mine because my father loved it, that I directed my steps on leaving Mrs. Ranck. At the moment I was dazed by the amazing discovery of my impoverished condition, and this, following so suddenly upon the loss of my father, nearly overwhelmed me with despair. But I knew that prompt action on my part was necessary, for the woman had only given me three days grace, and my pride would not suffer me to remain that long in a home where my presence was declared a burden. So I would sit beneath the trees and try to decide where to go and what to do.

But as I approached the place, I found, to my astonishment, that a man was already seated upon the bench. He was doubtless a stranger in Batteraft, for I had never seen him before, so that I moderated my pace and approached him slowly, thinking he might discover he was on private grounds and take his leave.

He paid no attention to me, being engaged in whittling a stick with a big jack-knife. In appearance he was short, thick-set, and of middle age. His round face was lined in every direction by deep wrinkles, and the scant hair that showed upon his temples was thin and gray. He wore a blue flannel shirt, with a black kerchief knotted at the throat; but, aside from this, his dress was

that of an ordinary civilian; so that at first I was unable to decide whether he was a sailor or a landsman.

The chief attraction in the stranger was the expression of his face, which was remarkably humorous. Although I was close by him, now, he paid no attention to my presence, but as he whittled away industriously he gave vent to several half audible chuckles that seemed to indicate that his thoughts were very amusing.

I was about to pass him and go down to the beach, where I might find a solitary spot for my musings, when the man turned his eyes up to mine and gave a wink that seemed both mysterious and confidential.

"It's Sam, ain't it?" he asked, with another silent chuckle.

"Yes, sir," I replied, resenting his familiarity while I wondered how he should know me.

"Cap'n Steele's son, I'm guessin'?" he continued.

"The same, sir," and I made a movement to pass on.

"Sit down, Sam; there's no hurry," and he pointed to the bench beside him.

I obeyed, wondering what he could want with me. Half turning toward me, he gave another of those curious winks and then suddenly turned grave and resumed his whittling.

"May I ask who you are, sir?" I enquired.

"No harm in that," he replied, with a smile that lighted his wrinkled face most comically. "No harm in the world. I'm Naboth Perkins."

"Oh," said I, without much interest.

"Never heard that name before, I take it?"

"No, sir."

"Do you remember your mother?"

"Not very well, sir," I answered, wondering more and more. "I was little more than a baby when she died, you know."

"I know," and he nodded, and gave an odd sort of grunt. "Did you ever hear what her name was, afore she married the Cap'n?"

"Oh, yes!" I cried, suddenly enlightened. "It was Mary Perkins."

Then, my heart fluttering wildly, I turned an intent and appealing gaze upon the little man beside me.

Naboth Perkins was seized with another of those queer fits of silent merriment, and his shoulders bobbed up and down until a cough caught him, and for a time I feared he would choke to death before he could control the convulsions. But at last he recovered and wiped the tears from his eyes with a brilliant red handkerchief.

"I'm your uncle, lad," he said, as soon as he could speak.

This was news, indeed, but news that puzzled me exceedingly.

"Why have I never heard of you before?" I asked, soberly.

"Haven't ye?" he returned, with evident surprise.

"Never."

He looked the stick over carefully, and cut another notch in it.

"Well, for one thing," he remarked, "I've never been in these parts afore sence the day I was born. Fer another thing, it stands to reason you was too young to remember, even if Mary had talked to ye about her only brother afore she died an' quit this 'ere sublunatic spear. An', fer a third an' last reason, Cap'n Steele were a man that had little to say about most things, so it's fair to s'pose he had less to say about his relations. Eh?"

"Perhaps it is as you say, sir."

"Quite likely. Yet it's mighty funny the Cap'n never let drop a word about me, good or bad."

"Were you my father's friend?" I asked, anxiously.

"That's as may be," said Mr. Perkins, evasively. "Friends is all kinds, from acquaintances to lovers. But the Cap'n an' me wasn't enemies, by a long shot, an' I've been his partner these ten year back."

"His partner!" I echoed, astonished.

The little man nodded.

"His partner," he repeated, with much complacency. "But our dealin's together was all on a strict business basis. We didn't hobnob, ner gossip, ner slap each other on the back. So as fer saying we was exactly frends — w'y, I can't honestly do it, Sam."

"I understand," said I, accepting his explanation in good faith.

"I came here at this time," continued Mr. Perkins, addressing his speech to the jack-knife, which he held upon the palm of his hand, "to see Cap'n Steele on an important business matter. He had agreed to meet me. But I saw Ned Britton at the tavern, las' night, an' heerd fer the first time that the 'Saracen' had gone to Davy Jones an' took the Cap'n with her. So I come up here to have a little talk with you, which is his son and my own nevvy."

"Why didn't you come up to the house?" I enquired.

Mr. Perkins turned upon me his peculiar wink, and his shoulders began to shake again, till I feared more convulsions. But he suddenly stopped short, and with abrupt gravity nodded his head at me several times.

"The woman!" he said, in a low voice. "I jest can't abide women. 'Specially when they's old an' given to argument, as Ned Britton says this one is."

I sympathized with him, and said so. Whereat my uncle gave me a look gentle and kindly, and said in a friendly tone:

“Sam, my boy, I want to tell you all about myself, that’s your blood uncle an’ no mistake; but first I want you to tell me all about yourself. You’re an orphan, now, an’ my dead sister’s child, an’ I take it I’m the only real friend you’ve got in the world. So now, fire away!”

There was something about the personality of Naboth Perkins that invited confidence; or perhaps it was my loneliness and need of a friend that led me to accept this astonishing uncle in good faith. Anyway, I did not hesitate to tell him my whole story, including my recent grief at the news of my dear father’s death and the startling discovery I had just made that I was penniless and in debt for my living to Mrs. Ranck.

“Father has often told me,” I concluded, “that the house was mine, and had been put in Mrs.

Ranck’s name because he felt she was honest, and would guard my interests in his absence. And he told me there was a store of valuable articles in his room, which he had been accumulating for years, and that the old sea-chest alone contained enough to make me independent. But when we examined the room this morning everything was gone, and the chest was empty. I don’t know what to think about it, I’m sure; for father never lied, in spite of what Mrs. Ranck says.”

Uncle Naboth whistled a sailor’s hornpipe in a slow, jerky, and altogether dismal fashion. When it was quite finished, even to the last quavering bar, he said:

“Sam, who kept the keys to the room, an’ the chest?”

“Mrs. Ranck.”

“M — m. Was the room dark, an’ all covered over with dust, when you went in there this mornin’?”

“I — I don’t think it was,” I answered, trying to recollect. “No! I remember, now. The blind was wide open, and the room looked clean and in good order.”

“Sailors,” remarked Mr. Perkins, impressively, “never is known to keep their rooms in good order. The Cap’n been gone five months an’ more. If all was straight the dust would be thick on everything.”

“To be sure,” said I, very gravely.

“Then, Sam, it stands to reason the ol’ woman went inter the room while you was asleep, an’ took out everything she could lay her hands on. Cap’n Steele didn’t lie to you, my boy. But he made the mistake of thinkin’ the woman honest. She took advantage of the fact that the Cap’n was dead, an’ couldn’t prove nothin’. And so she robbed you.”

The suspicion had crossed my mind before, and I was not greatly surprised to hear my uncle voice it.

“Then, can’t we make her give it up?” I asked. “If she has done such a wicked thing, it seems as though we ought to accuse her of it, and make her give me all that belongs to me.”

Uncle Naboth rose slowly from the bench, settled his felt hat firmly upon his head, pulled down his checkered vest, and assumed a most determined bearing.

“You wait here,” he said, “an’ I’ll beard the she-tiger in her den, an’ see what can be done.” Then he gave a great sigh, and turning square around, marched stiffly up the path that led to the house.

CHAPTER 3

MY FORTUNES IMPROVE.

I awaited with as much patience as I could muster the result of the venture. I was proud of Uncle Naboth's bravery, and hoped he would be successful. Surely the brief interview with my newly acquired relative had caused a great change in my future prospects, for it was not likely that my mother's brother would desert me in my extremity. I had left the house that was now no longer my home without a single friend to whom I could turn, and behold, here was a champion waiting to espouse my cause! Mr. Perkins was somewhat peculiar in his actions, it is true, but he was my uncle and my dead father's partner, and already I was beginning to have faith in him.

It was a full half hour before I saw him coming back along the path; but now he no longer strutted with proud determination. Instead, his whole stout little body drooped despondently; his hat was thrust back from his forehead, and upon his deeply wrinkled face stood big drops of perspiration.

"Sam," said he, standing before me with a rather sheepish air, "I were wrong, an' I beg your pardon. That woman ain't no she-tiger. I mis-stated the case. She's a she-devil!"

The words were laden with disgust and indignation. Uncle Naboth drew out his gorgeous handkerchief and wiped his face with it. Then he dropped upon the bench and pushed his big hands deep into his capacious pockets, with the air of a man crushed and defeated.

I sighed.

"Then she refused to give up the property?"

"Give up? She'd die first. Why, Sam, the critter tried to brain me with a gridiron! Almost, my boy, you was an orphan agin. He who fights an' runs away mayn't get much credit for it, but he's a durned sight safer ner a dead man. The Perkinses was alius a reckless crew; but sooner 'n face that female agin I'd tackle a mad bull!"

"Won't the law help us?" I asked.

"The law!" cried Mr. Perkins, in a voice of intense horror. "W'y, Sam, the law's more to be dreaded than a woman. It's an invention of the devil to keep poor mortals from becomin' too happy in this 'ere vale o' tears. My boy, if ye ever has to choose between the law an' a woman, my advice is to commit suicide at once. It's quicker an' less painful."

"But the law stands for justice," I protested.

"That's the bluff it puts up," said Uncle Naboth, "but it ain't so. An' where's your proof agin Mrs. Ranck, anyhow? Cap'n Steele foolishly put the house in her name. If she ain't honest enough to give it up, no one can take it

from her. An' he kep' secret about the fortune that was left in his room, so we can't describe the things you've been robbed of. Altogether, it's jest a hopeless case. The she-devil had made up her mind to inherit your fortune, an' you can't help yourself."

As I stared into the little man's face the tears came into my eyes and blurred my sight. He thrust the red handkerchief into my hand, and I quickly wiped away the traces of unmanly weakness. And when I could see plainly again my uncle was deeply involved in one of his fits of silent merriment, and his shoulders were shaking spasmodically. I waited for him to cough and choke, which he proceeded to do before regaining his gravity. The attack seemed to have done him good, for he smiled at my disturbed expression and laid a kindly hand on my shoulder.

"Run up to the house, my lad, an' get your bundle of clothes," he said. "I'll be here when you get back. Don't worry over what's gone. I'll take care o' you, hereafter."

I gave him a grateful glance and clasped his big, horny hands in both my own.

"Thank you, uncle," said I; "I don't know what would have become of me if you had not turned up just as you did."

"Lucky, wasn't it, Sam? But run along and get your traps."

I obeyed, walking slowly and thoughtfully back to the house. When I tried to raise the latch I found the door locked.

"Mrs. Ranck!" I called. "Mrs. Ranck, let me in, please. I've come for my clothes."

There was no answer. I rattled the latch, but all in vain. So I sat down upon the steps of the porch, wondering what I should do. It was a strange and unpleasant sensation to find myself suddenly barred from the house in which I had been born and wherein I had lived all my boyhood days. It was only my indignation against this selfish and hard old woman that prevented me from bursting into another flood of tears, for my nerves were all unstrung by the events of the past few hours. However, anger held all other passion in check for the moment, and I was about to force an entrance through the side window, as I had done on several occasions before, when the sash of the window in my own attic room was pushed up and a bundle was projected from it with such good aim that it would have struck my head, had I not instinctively dodged it.

Mrs. Ranck's head followed the bundle far enough to cast a cruel and triumphant glance into my upturned face.

"There's your duds. Take 'em an' go, you ongrateful wretch!" she yelled. "An' don't ye let me see your face again until you come to pay me the

money you owes for your keepin'."

"Please, Mrs. Ranck," I asked, meekly, "can I have my father's watch and ring?"

"No, no, no!" she screamed, in a fury. "Do ye want to rob me of everything? Ain't you satisfied to owe me four hundred dollars a'ready?"

"I — I'd like some keepsake of father's," I persisted, well knowing this would be my last chance to procure it. "You may keep the watch, if you'll give me the ring."

"I'll keep 'm both," she retorted. "You'll get nothin' more out'n me, now or never!"

Then she slammed down the window, and refused to answer by a word my further pleadings.

So finally I picked up the bundle and, feeling miserable and sick at heart, followed the path back to the little grove.

"It didn't take you very long, but that's all the better," said my uncle, shutting his clasp-knife with a click and then standing up to brush the chips from his lap. "We two'll go to the tavern, an' talk over our future plans."

Silently I walked by the side of Naboth Perkins until we came to the village. I knew everyone in the little town, and several of the fishermen and sailors met me with words of honest sympathy for my loss. Captain Steele had been the big man of Batteraft, beloved by all who knew him despite his reserved nature, and these simple villagers, rude and uneducated but kindly hearted, felt that in his death they had lost a good friend and a neighbor of whom they had always been proud. Not one of them would have refused assistance to Captain Steele's only son; but they were all very poor, and it was lucky for me that Uncle Naboth had arrived so opportunely to befriend me.

Having ordered a substantial dinner of the landlord of "The Rudder," Mr. Perkins gravely invited me to his private room for a conference, and I climbed the rickety stairs in his wake.

The chamber was very luxurious in my eyes, with its rag carpet and high-posted bed, its wash-stand and rocking-chair. I could not easily withhold my deference to the man who was able to hire it, and removing my cap I sat upon the edge of the bed while Uncle Naboth took possession of the rocking-chair and lighted a big briar pipe.

Having settled himself comfortably by putting his feet upon the sill of the open window, he remarked:

"Now, Sam, my lad, we'll talk it over."

"Very well, sir," I replied, much impressed.

"In the first place, I'm your father's partner, as I said afore. Some years

ago the Cap'n found he had more money 'n he could use in his own business, an' I'd saved up a bit myself, to match it. So we put both together an' bought a schooner called the 'Flipper,' w'ich I'm free to say is the best boat, fer its size an' kind, that ever sailed the Pacific."

"The Pacific!"

"Naterally. Cap'n Steele on the Atlantic, an' Cap'n Perkins on the Pacific. In that way we divided up the world between us." He stopped to wink, here, and began his silent chuckle; but fortunately he remembered the importance of the occasion and refrained from carrying it to the choking stage. "I s'pose your father never said naught to you about this deal o' ours, any more 'n he did to that she-bandit up at the house. An' it's lucky he didn't, or the critter 'd be claimin' the 'Flipper,' too, an' then you an' I'd be out of a job!" He winked again; solemnly, this time; and I sat still and stared at him.

"Howsomever, the 'Flipper' is still in statute ko, an' thank heaven fer that! I made sev'ral voyages in her to Australy, that turned out fairly profitable, an' brought the Cap'n an' me some good bits o' money. So last year we thought we'd tackle the Japan trade, that seemed to be lookin' up. It looked down agin as soon as I struck the pesky shores, an' a month ago I returned to 'Frisco a sadder an' wiser man. Not that the losses was so great, Sam, you understand; but the earnin's wasn't enough to buy a shoestring.

"So I sailed cross-lots to Batteraft to consult with my partner, which is Cap'n Steele, as to our next voyage, an' the rest o' the story you know as well as I do. Your father bein' out o' the firm, from no fault o' his'n, his son is his nateral successor. So I take it that hereafter we'll have to consult together."

My amazed expression amused him exceedingly, but I found it impossible just then to utter a single word. Uncle Naboth did not seem to expect me to speak, for after lighting his pipe again he continued, with an air of great complacency:

"It mought be said that, as you're a minor, I stands as your rightful guardeen, an' have a right to act for you 'til you come of age. On the other hand, you mought claim that, bein' a partner, your size an' age don't count, an' you've a right to be heard. Howsomever, we won't go to law about it, Sam. The law's onreliable. Sometimes it's right, an' mostly it's wrong; but it ain't never to be trusted by an honest man. If you insist on dictatin' what this partnership's goin' to do, you'll probably run it on a rock in two jerks of a lamb's tail, for you haven't got the experience old Cap'n Steele had; but if you're satisfied to let me take the tiller, an' steer you into harbor, why, I'll accept the job an' do the best I can at it."

"Uncle Naboth," I replied, earnestly, "had you not been an honest man I

would never have known you were my father's partner, or that he had any interest in your business. But you've been more than honest. You've been kind to me; and I am only too glad to trust you in every way."

"Well spoke, lad!" cried Mr. Perkins, slapping his knee delightedly. "It's what I had a right to expect in poor Mary's boy. We're sure to get along, Sam, and even if I don't make you rich, you'll never need a stout friend while your Uncle Nabe is alive an' kickin'!"

Then we both stood up, and shook hands with great solemnity, to seal the bargain. After which my friend and protector returned to his rocker and once more stretched his feet across the window sill.

"How much property belongs to me, Uncle?" I asked.

"We never drew up any papers. Cap'n Steele knew as he could trust me, an' so papers wa'n't necessary. He owned one-third interest in the 'Flipper', an' supplied one half the money to carry on the trade. That made it mighty hard to figure out the profits, so we gen'ly lumped it, to save brain-work. Of course your father's been paid all his earnin's after each voyage was over, so accounts is settled up to the Japan trip. Probably the money I gave him was in the sea-chest, an' that old she-pirate up to the house grabbed it with the other things. The Japan voyage was a failure, as I told you; but there's about a thousand dollars still cornin' to the Cap'n — which means it's cornin' to you, Sam — an' the ship's worth a good ten thousand besides."

I tried to think what that meant to me.

"It isn't a very big sum of money, is it, Uncle?" I asked, diffidently.

"That depends on how you look at it," he answered. "Big oaks from little acorns grow, you know. If you leave the matter to me, I'll try to make that thousand sprout considerable, before you come of age."

"Of course I'll leave it to you," said I. "And I am very grateful for your kindness, sir."

"Don't turn your gratitude loose too soon, Sam. I may land your fortunes high an' dry on the rocks, afore I've got through with 'em. But if I do it won't be on purpose, an' we'll sink or swim together. An' now, that bein' as good as settled, the next thing to argy is what you're a-goin' to do while I'm sailin' the seas an' makin' money for you."

"What would you suggest?" I asked.

"Well, some folks might think you ought to have more schoolin'. How old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"Can you read an' write, an' do figgers?"

"Oh, yes; I've finished the public school course," I replied, smiling at the simple question.

“Then I guess you’ve had study enough, my lad, and are ready to go to work. I never had much schoolin’ myself, but I’ve managed to hold my own in the world, in spite of the way letters an’ figgers mix up when I look at ‘em. Not but what eddication is a good thing; but all eddication don’t lay in schools. Rubbin’ against the world is what polishes up a man, an’ the feller that keeps his eyes open can learn somethin’ new every day. To be open with you, Sam, I need you pretty bad on the ‘Flipper,’ to keep the books an’ look after the accounts, an’ do writin’ an’ spellin’ when letters has to be writ. On the last trip I put in four days hard work, writin’ a letter that was only three lines long. An’ I’m blamed if the landsman I sent it to didn’t telegraph me for a translation. So, if you’re willin’ to ship with the firm of Perkins & Steele, I’ll make you purser an’ chief clerk.”

“I should like that!” I answered, eagerly.

“Then the second p’int’s settled. There’s only one more. The ‘Flipper’ is lyin’ in the harbor at ‘Frisco. When shall we join her, lad?”

“I’m ready now, sir.”

“Good. I’ve ordered a wagon to carry us over to the railroad station at four o’clock, so ye see I had a pretty good idea beforehand what sort o’ stuff Mary’s boy was made of. Now let’s go to dinner.”

CHAPTER 4

I SHIP ABOARD THE "FLIPPER."

When the two-seated spring wagon drew up before the tavern door quite a crowd of idle villagers assembled to see us off, and among them I noticed my father's old sailor, Ned Britton. Uncle Naboth climbed aboard at once, but I stayed to shake the hands held out to me and to thank the Batteraft people for their hearty wishes for my future prosperity. I think they were sorry to see me go, and I know I felt a sudden pang of regret at parting from the place where I had lived so long and the simple villagers who had been my friends.

When at last I mounted to the rear seat of the wagon and sat beside my uncle, I was astonished to find Ned Britton established beside the driver.

"Are you going with us?" I asked.

The sailor nodded.

"It's like this," remarked Mr. Perkins, as we rolled away from the tavern, "this man belonged to my old partner, Cap'n Steele, an' stuck to his ship 'til she went down. Also he's put himself out to come here an' tell us the news, and it ain't every sailor as'll take the trouble to do such a job. Therefore, Ned Britton bein' at present without a ship, I've asked him to take a berth aboard the 'Flipper.'"

"That was kind of you, Uncle," I said, pleased at this evidence of my relative's kindly nature.

"An honest sailor ain't to be sneezed at," continued Uncle Naboth, with one of his quaint winks. "If Ned Britton were faithful to the 'Saracen' he'll be faithful to the 'Flipper.' An' that's the sort o' man we want."

Britton doubtless overheard every word of this eulogy, but he gazed stolidly ahead and paid no attention to my uncle's words of praise.

We reached the railway station in ample time for the train, and soon were whirling away on our long journey into the golden West.

No incident worthy of note occurred on our way across the continent, although I might record a bit of diplomacy on the part of Uncle Naboth that illustrates the peculiar shrewdness I have always found coupled with his native simplicity.

Just before our train drew into Chicago, where we were to change cars and spend the best part of a day, my uncle slipped into my hand a long, fat pocket-book, saying:

"Hide that in your pocket, Sam, and button it up tight."

"What's your idea, Uncle Nabe?" I asked.

"Why, we're cornin' to the wickedest city in all the world, accordin' to the preachers; an' if it ain't that, it's bad enough, in all conscience. There's

robbers an' hold-up men by the thousands, an' if one of 'em got hold of me I'd be busted in half a second. But none of 'em would think of holdin' up a boy like you; so the money's safe in your pocket, if you don't go an' lose it."

"I'll try not to do that, sir," I returned; but all during the day the possession of the big pocket-book made me nervous and uneasy. I constantly felt of my breast to see that the money was still safe, and it is a wonder my actions did not betray to some sly thief the fact that I was concealing the combined wealth of our little party.

No attempt was made to rob us, however, either at Chicago or during the remainder of the journey to the Pacific coast, and we arrived at our destination safely and in good spirits.

Uncle Naboth seemed especially pleased to reach San Francisco again.

"This car travellin'," he said, "is good enough for landsmen that don't know of anything better; but I'd rather spend a month at sea than a night in one of them stuffy, dangerous cars, that are likely to run offn the track any minute."

Ned Britton and I accompanied Mr. Perkins to a modest but respectable lodging-house near the bay, where we secured rooms and partook of a hearty breakfast. Then we took a long walk, and I got my first sight of the famous "Golden Gate." I was surprised at the great quantity of shipping in the bay, and as I looked over the hundreds of craft at anchor I wondered curiously which was the "Flipper," of which I was part owner — the gallant ship whose praises Uncle Naboth had sung so persistently ever since we left Batteraft.

After luncheon we hired a small boat, and Ned Britton undertook to row us aboard the "Flipper," which had been hidden from our view by a point of land. I own that after my uncle's glowing descriptions of her I expected to see a most beautiful schooner, with lines even nobler than those of the grand old "Saracen," which had been my father's pride for so many years. So my disappointment may be imagined when we drew up to a grimy looking vessel of some six hundred tons, with discolored sails, weather-worn rigging and a glaring need of fresh paint.

Ned Britton, however, rested on his oars, studied the ship carefully, and then slowly nodded his head in approval.

"Well, what d'ye think o' her?" asked Uncle Naboth, relapsing into one of his silent chuckles at the expression of my face.

"She looks rather dirty, sir," I answered, honestly.

"The 'Flipper' ain't quite as fresh as a lily in bloom, that's a fact," returned my uncle, in no ways discomfited by my remark. "She wasn't no deebutantee when I bought her, an' her clothes has got old, and darned and

patched, bein' as we haven't been near to a Paris dressmaker. But I've sailed in her these ten years past, Sam, an' we're both as sound as a dollar."

"She ought to be fast, sir," remarked Britton, critically.

Mr. Perkins laughed — not aloud, but in his silent, distinctly humorous way.

"She *is* fast, my lad, w'ich is a virtue in a ship if it ain't in a woman. And in some other ways, besides, the 'Flipper' ain't to be sneezed at. As for her age, she's too shy to tell it, but I guess it entitles her to full respect."

We now drew alongside, and climbed upon the deck, where my uncle was greeted by a tall, lank man who appeared to my curious eyes to be a good example of a living skeleton. His clothes covered his bones like bags, and so thin and drawn was his face that his expression was one of constant pain.

"Mom'n', Cap'n," said Uncle Naboth, although it was afternoon.

"Morn'n', Mr. Perkins," returned the other, in a sad voice. "Glad to see you back."

"Here's my newy, Sam Steele, whose father were part owner but got lost in a storm awhile ago."

"Glad to see you, sir," said the Captain, giving my hand a melancholy shake.

"An' here's Ned Britton, who once sailed with Cap'n Steele," continued my uncle. "He'll sign with us, Cap'n Gay, and I guess you'll find him A No. 1."

"Glad to see you, Britton," repeated the Captain, in his dismal voice. If the lanky Captain was as glad to see us all as his words indicated, his expression fully contradicted the fact.

Britton saluted and walked aft, where I noticed several sailors squatting upon the deck in careless attitudes. To my glance these seemed as solemn and joyless as their captain; but I acknowledge that on this first visit everything about the ship was a disappointment to me, perhaps because I had had little experience with trading vessels and my mind was stored with recollections of the trim "Saracen."

Below, however, was a comfortable cabin, well fitted up, and Uncle Naboth showed me a berth next to his own private room which was to be my future home. The place was little more than a closet, but I decided it would do very well.

"I thought *you* were the captain of the 'Flipper,' Uncle Naboth," said I, when we were alone.

"No; I'm jest super-cargo," he replied, with his usual wink. "You see, I wasn't eddicated as a sailor, Sam, an' never cared to learn the trade. Cap'n Gay is one o' the best seamen that ever laid a course, so I hire him to take the

ship wherever I want to go. As fer the cargo, that's my 'special look-out, an' it keeps me busy enough, I can tell you. I'm a nat'ral born trader, and except fer that blamed Japan trip, I ain't much ashamed of my record."

"Will you go to Australia again?" I asked.

"Not jest now, Sam. My next venture's goin' to be a bit irregular — what you might call speculative, an' extry-hazardous. But we'll talk that over tonight, after supper."

After making a cursory examination of the ship Uncle Naboth received the Captain's report of what had transpired in his absence, and then we rowed back to town again.

We strolled through the city streets for an hour, had supper, and then my uncle took me to his room, carefully closed and locked the door, and announced that he was ready to "talk business."

"Bein' partners," he said, "we've got to consult together; but I take it you won't feel bad, Sam, if I do most of the consultin'. I went down East to Batteraft to talk my plans with your father, but he slipped his cable an' I've got to talk 'em to you. If you see I'm wrong, anywhere, jest chip in an' stop me; but otherwise the less you say the more good we'll get out'n this 'ere conference."

"Very well, sir."

"To start in with, we've got a ship, an' a crew, an' plenty o' loose money. So what'll we do with 'em? Our business is to trade, an' to invest our money so we'll make more with it. What's the best way to do that?"

He seemed to pause for an answer, so I said: "I don't know, sir."

"Nobody *knows,* of course. But we can guess, and then find out afterward if we've guessed right. All business is a gamble; and, if it wasn't, most men would quit an' go fishin'. After I got back from Japan I met a lot o' fellows that had been to Alaska huntin' gold. Seems like Alaska's full of gold, an' before long the whole country'll be flockin' there like sheep. All 'Frisco's gettin' excited about the thing, so they tell me, and if fortunes is goin' to be made in Alaska, we may as well speak for one ourselves."

"But we are not miners, Uncle; and it's bitter cold up there, they say."

"Well put. We'll let the crowds mine the gold, and then hand it over to us."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said I, weakly. "No call for you to try, Sam. I'm your guardeen, an' so I'll do the understandin' for us both. Folks has to eat, my lad, an' gold hunters is usually too excited to make proper provisions fer their stomachs. They're goin' to be mighty hungry out in Alaska, before long, an' when a man's hungry he'll pay liberal fer a square meal. Let's give it to him, Sam, an' take the consequences — which is gold

dust an' nuggets."

"How will you do it, Uncle Nabe?"

"Load the 'Flipper' with grub an' carry it to Kipnac, or up the Yukon as far as Fort Weare, or wherever the gold fields open up. Then, when the miners get hungry, they'll come to us and trade their gold for our groceries. We're sure to make big profits, Sam."

"It looks like a reasonable proposition, sir," I said. "But it seems to me rather dangerous. Suppose our ship gets frozen in the ice, and we can't get away? And suppose about that time we've sold out our provisions. We can't eat gold. And suppose — "

"S'pose the moon falls out'n the sky," interrupted Uncle Naboth, "wouldn't it be dark at night, though!"

"Well, sir?"

"If the gold-diggers can live in the ice fields, we can live in a good warm ship. And we'll keep enough grub for ourselves, you may be sure of that."

"When do we start?" I asked, feeling sure that no arguments would move my uncle to abandon the trip, once he had made up his mind to undertake it.

"As soon as we can get the cargo aboard. It's coming on warmer weather, now, and this is the best time to make the voyage. A steamer left today with three hundred prospectors, an' they'll be goin' in bunches every day, now. Already I estimate there's over a thousand in the fields, so we won't get there any too soon to do business. What do you say, Sam?"

"I've nothing to say, sir. Being my guardian, you've decided the matter for both the partners, as is right and proper. As your clerk and assistant, I'll obey whatever orders you give me."

"That's the proper spirit, lad!" he cried, with enthusiasm. "We'll go to work tomorrow morning; and if all goes well we'll be afloat in ten days, with a full cargo!"

CHAPTER 5

"NUX" AND "BRYONIA."

On the seventh day of May, 1897, the "Flipper" weighed anchor and sailed before a light breeze through the Golden Gate and away on her voyage toward Alaska and its gold fields. Stored within her hold was a vast quantity of provisions of the sort that could be kept indefinitely without danger of spoiling. Flour, hams, bacon, sugar and coffee were represented; but canned meats and vegetables, tobacco and cheap cigars comprised by far the greater part of the cargo. Uncle Naboth had been seriously advised to carry a good supply of liquors, but refused positively to traffic in such merchandise.

Indeed, my uncle rose many degrees in my respect after I had watched for a time his preparations for our voyage. Simple, rough and uneducated he might be, but a shrewder man at a bargain I have never met in all my experience. And his reputation for honesty was so well established that his credit was practically unlimited among the wholesale grocers and notion jobbers of San Francisco. Everyone seemed ready and anxious to assist him, and the amount of consideration he met with on every hand was really wonderful.

"We've bought the right stuff, Sam," he said to me, as we stood on the deck and watched the shore gradually recede, "and now we've got to sell it right. That's the secret of good tradin'."

I was glad enough to find myself at sea, where I could rest from my labors of the past two weeks. I had been upon the docks night and day, it seemed, checking off packages of goods as fast as they were loaded on the lighters, and being unaccustomed to work I tired very easily. But my books were all accurate and "ship-shape," and I had found opportunity to fit up my little stateroom with many comforts. In this I had been aided by Uncle Naboth, who was exceedingly liberal in allowing me money for whatever I required. At one time I said I would like to buy a few books, and the next day, to my surprise, he sent to my room a box containing the complete works of Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, with a miscellaneous collection of volumes by standard authors.

"I don't know much about books myself, Sam," he said; "so I got a feller that *does* know to pick 'em out for me, an' I guess you'll find 'em the right sort."

I did not tell him that I would have preferred to make my own selection, and afterward I frankly admitted to myself that the collection was an admirable one.

By this time I had come to know all the officers and crew, and found them

a pretty good lot, taken altogether. The principle "characters" aboard were the dismal Captain Gay, who was really as contented a man as I ever knew, Acker, the ship's doctor, and two queer South Sea islanders called by everybody Nux and Bryonia. Acker was a big, burly Englishman, who, besides being doctor, served as mate. He was jolly and good natured as the day was long, and had a few good stories which he told over and over again, invariably laughing at them more heartily than his auditors did. Singularly enough, Captain Gay and "Doc" Acker were close friends and cronies, and lived together in perfect harmony.

The South Sea islanders interested me greatly from the moment I first saw them. Bryonia, or "Bry," as he was more frequently called, was the cook, and gave perfect satisfaction in that capacity. "Nux" was man-of-all-work, serving the cabin mess, assisting the cook, and acting as "able seaman" whenever required. He proved competent in nearly all ways, and was a prime favorite with officers and men.

They were natives of some small island of the Sulu archipelago, and their history was a strange one. In answer to my question as to why the islanders were so queerly named, Uncle Naboth related the following:

"It were six years ago, or thereabout, as we were homeward bound from our third Australy trip, that we sighted a native canoe in the neighborhood of the Caroline Islands. It was early in the mornin', and at first the lookout thought the canoe was empty; but it happened to lay in our course, and as we overtook it we saw two men lyin' bound in the bottom of the boat. So we lay to, an' picked 'em up, an' when they was histed aboard they were considerable more dead ner alive. Bill Acker was our mate then, as he is now, an' in his early days he studied to be a hoss doctor. So he always carries a box of medicines with him, to fix up the men in case they gets the jaundice or the colic. Mostly they's pills, an' sugar coated, for Doc hates to tackle drugs as is very dangerous. An' on account of a good deal of sickness among the crew that trip, an' consequently a good deal of experimentin' by Doc on the medicine chest, the pills an' such like was nearly used up, though no one seemed much the worse for it.

"Well, after we'd cut the islanders' bonds, an' rubbed 'em good to restore the circulation, we come near decidin' they was dead an' heavin' of 'em overboard agin. But Doc wouldn't give up. He brought out the medicine box, an' found that all the stuff he had left was two bottles of pills, one of 'em Nux Vomica, an' the other Bryonia. I was workin' over one of the men, an' Doc he hands me one o' the bottles an' says: 'Nux.' So I emptied the bottle into the dead man's mouth, an' by Jinks, Sam, he come around all right, and is alive an' kickin' today. Cap'n Gay dosed the other one with the Bryonia,

an' it fetched him in no time. I won't swear it were the pills, you know; but the fact is the islanders lived.

"Afterwards we found the critters couldn't speak a word of English, ner tell us even what their names were. So we called one Nux, and the other Bryonia, accordin' to the medicine that had saved their lives, an' they've answered to those names ever since."

The islanders were gentle and good natured, and being grateful for their rescue they had refused to leave the ship at the end of the voyage, and were now permanent fixtures of the "Flipper."

'They are not slaves, are they?" I asked, when I had listened to this story.

"Mercy, no!" exclaimed Uncle Naboth. "They're as free as any of us, an' draw their wages reg'lar. Also they're as faithful as the day is long, an' never get drunk or mutinous. So it were a lucky day when we picked 'em up."

Bryonia stood fully six feet in height, and was muscular and wonderfully strong. He had a fine face, too, and large and intelligent eyes. Nux was much shorter, and inclined to be fat. But he was not a bit lazy, for all that, and accomplished an immense amount of work in so cheerful a manner that never a complaint was laid at his door. Not a sailor could climb aloft with more agility or a surer foot, and both Nux and Bryonia were absolutely fearless in the face of danger.

Although these men were dark-skinned they were not negroes, but belonged to a branch of the Malay race. Their hair was straight, their noses well formed and their eyes very expressive and intelligent. The English they had picked up from the crew, however, was spoken with an accent not unlike that peculiar to the African negroes, but with a softer and more sibilant tone.

Before I had been on the ship a week both Nux and Bry were my faithful friends and devoted followers, and in the days that were to come their friendship and faithfulness stood me in good stead.

A very interesting person to me was big Bill Acker, the mate, called by courtesy "Doc." He seemed far above his mates in the matter of intelligence, and was evidently a well bred man in his youth. A shelf above his bunk bore a well-thumbed row of volumes on the world's great religions, together with a Talmud, a Koran, a Bible, the works of Confucius and Max Muller's translation of the Vedas. One seemed to have been as thoroughly read as the others, yet never have I heard Doc Acker say one word, good or bad, about religion. Whatever the result of his studies might be, he kept his opinions strictly to himself.

A stiff breeze sprang up during the first night, and the second day at sea found me miserably ill, and regretting that I had ever trusted myself to the

mercies of cruel old ocean. Indeed, I lay in a most pitiable plight until the big Englishman came to me with doses of medicines from his chest. He might have been merely "a hoss doctor," as Uncle Naboth had said; but certain it is that his remedies helped me, and within twenty-four hours I was again able to walk the deck in comfort.

Perhaps I had inherited some of my father's fondness for salt water, for my new life soon became vastly interesting to me, and it was not long before I felt entirely at home on the dingy old "Flipper."

One morning, after standing by the bulwarks for a time watching the water slip by, I climbed upon the rail and sat with my heels dangling over the side. Suddenly I felt a strong hand grasp my shoulder and draw me to the deck, and I turned around indignantly to find Nux beside me.

"Bad place to sit, Master Sam," he said, coolly; "might tumble ov*board."

Before I could reply, Uncle Naboth, who had witnessed the incident, strolled up to us and said:

"Nux is right, my lad. You never find a sailor sitting on the rail; they know too well how onreliable the motion of a ship is. If anybody drops overboard the chances o' bein' picked up alive is mighty slim, I tell you. Only fools put 'emselves into unnecessary danger, Sam. Take it on them orful railroad cars, for instance. Old travellers always wait' til the train stops afore they gets on or off the cars. Them as don't know the danger is the ones that gets hurt. Same way handlin' a gun. An old hunter once told me he never p'inted a gun at anything he didn't want to kill; but there's a lot o' folks killed ev'ry year that don't know the blamed thing is loaded. It ain't cowardly to be keerful, lad, but only fools an' ignorant people is reckless enough to get careless."

I am glad to say I took this lecture with good humor, admitting frankly that Uncle Naboth was right. At least once in the future a recollection of this caution saved me from hopeless disaster.

On the sixth day the breeze died away and the ship lay still. There was not a breath of air, and the heat was so intense that the interior of the ship was like a furnace. At night we slept upon the deck, and by day we lay gasping beneath the shade of the tarpaulins. Bryonia let the galley fire die out and served us cold lunches, but our appetites were small.

There being no occasion to work, the crew gathered in little bunches and told a series of never-ending yarns that were very interesting to me, because most of them were of hair-breadth adventures and escapes that were positively wonderful — if one tried to believe them. One of the best of these story-tellers was Ned Britton, who had been appointed our boatswain and was already popular with his mates. As his yarns were all of the Atlantic, and

most of the “Flipper’s” crew had sailed only on the Pacific, Britton opened to them a new field of adventures, which met with universal approval.

Nux and Bry, who bore the heat better than their white brethren, added to the general amusement by giving exhibitions of the Moro war dances, ending with desperate encounters, with sticks to represent spears, that were sure to arouse the entire crew to enthusiasm. They sometimes sang their native war songs, also — a series of monotonous, guttural chants. And then Dan Donnegan, a little red-whiskered Irishman, would wind up with “Bryan O’Lynne” or some other comic ditty that set the forecastle roaring with laughter.

During this period of enforced idleness the dismal Captain Gay walked the deck with solemn patience and watched for signs of a breeze. Bill Acker, the mate, read his religious library all through — probably for the hundredth time. Uncle Naboth taught me cribbage, and we played for hours at a time, although I usually came out second best at the game. Also I learned the ropes of the ship and received many lessons in navigation from my friends the sailors, not one of whom knew anything about that abstruse problem.

“Thay ain’t a man o’ the lot as could take the ship back to ‘Frisco, in case of emergency,” said my uncle; and I believe he was right. Common sailors are singularly ignorant of navigation, although they have a way of deceiving themselves into thinking they know all about it.

After being becalmed six days, the intense heat was at last relieved by a thin breeze, which sprang up during the night. The sails were at once trimmed, and within an hour the “Flipper” was skipping the little waves to the satisfaction of all on board.

But the wind steadily increased, and by morning all hands were called to shorten the sail. By noon we encountered a stiff gale, which blew from the east, and soon lashed the waves into a mad frenzy.

As the storm gradually increased, Captain Gay began to look anxious. There was a brief lull toward evening, during which a great hail-storm descended upon us, the icy bullets pelting the sailors unmercifully and driving all to shelter. Then the wind redoubled its fury, and the Captain put the ship before it, allowing the gale to bear us considerably out of our course.

Uncle Naboth growled considerably at this necessity, but he did not interfere in the least with Captain Gay’s management of the ship. Safety was more important to us than time, and Gay was not a man to take unnecessary chances.

The three wild days that followed have always seemed to me since like a horrible dream. I had no idea a ship could be so tossed and pounded and battered about, and still live. It was a mere chip on the great, angry ocean,

and the water washed our decks almost continually. After one of these deluges, when every man strove to save himself by clinging to the life lines, two of our best sailors were missed, and we never saw them again. Uncle Nabe began to whistle, and every time he saw me he gave one of his humorous winks or fell to chuckling in his silent way; but my white face could not have been much encouragement to gaiety, and I believe he was not over merry himself, but merely trying to cheer me up.

But, although the danger was so imminent, not a man flinched or gave way to fear, and Nux and Bryonia performed their duties as calmly as if the sea were smooth. The vessel was staunch enough, so far; but it pitched and tossed so violently that even burly Doc Acker was obliged to crawl into the cabin on his hands and knees to get his meals.

damage as best they might. First they rigged up a temporary rudder and swung it astern. It was a poor makeshift, however, and only with good weather could we hope it would steer us to the nearest port.

While the men cleared the decks and rigged up a jury mast under the supervision of the mate, Captain Gay took our bearings and ascertained that we had not departed so greatly from our course as we had feared. Yet it was impossible to make the mouth of the Yukon in our present condition, or even to reach a shelter in Bering Sea. It was found, however, that the Alaska peninsula was not far away, so we decided to draw as near to that as possible, in the hope of meeting a passing vessel or finding a temporary refuge on some one of the numerous islands that lie in this part of the North Pacific.

For four days we labored along, in our crippled condition, without sighting land; but then our fortunes changed. During the night a good breeze from the southwest swept us merrily along, and when daylight came we found ourselves close to a small, wooded island. It lay in the form of a horse-shoe, with a broad, protected bay in the center, and Captain Gay, anxious to examine his ship more closely, decided at once to enter the harbor and cast anchor.

We fled before the wind until the third night, when the rudder chain broke and the helmsman was thrown, crushed and bleeding, against the lee bulwarks. The “Flipper,” released from all control, swung quickly around, and the big mainmast snapped like a pipe-stem and came tumbling with its cordage to the decks, where our brave sailors rushed upon it and cut it clear. I thought the ship would never right again, after the careening given it by the fallen mast; but, somehow, it did, and morning found us still afloat, although badly crippled and at the mercy of the waves.

As if satisfied with the havoc it had wrought, the gale now abated; but the waves ran high for another forty-eight hours, and our crew could do nothing

but cling to the remaining rigging and await calmer weather.

Fortunately our ballast and cargo held in place through all, and the hull showed no sign of a leak. When the sea grew calmer we floated upright upon the water and it was found our straits were not nearly so desperate as we had feared.

Yet our condition was serious enough to make me wonder what was to become of us. The rudder had been entirely washed away; the mainmast was gone; the mizzenmast had broken at the head and the foresail royals were in splinters. All the deck was cumbered with rigging; the starboard bulwarks had been stove in by the fallen mast, and our crew was lessened by three able seamen.

But Captain Gay, no less dismal than before, you may be sure, promptly began to issue orders, and the men fell to with a will to repair the This was by no means an easy task, for long lines of reefs extended from each point of the shore, almost enclosing the bay with jagged rocks. But the sea was calm and the position of the reefs clearly marked; so that by skillful maneuvering the “Flipper” passed between them in safety, and to the relief and satisfaction of all on board we dropped our anchor in the clear waters of the bay.

CHAPTER 6

THE LAND OF MYSTERY.

Captain Gay examined his chart with minute care, and solemnly shook his head.

The island was not there. Either the chart was imperfect, or we had reached a hitherto undiscovered land. The latter conjecture was not at all unreasonable, for so many islands lay in this neighborhood that even when sighted by chance an outlying islet was little liable to tempt one to land upon it. This was doubtless one of the numerous group lying to the south-east of the Alaska peninsula, which are of volcanic origin and as a rule barren and uninhabited.

I have said this island was well wooded, but not until we were opposite the mouth of the natural harbor did we observe this fact. From the sea only a line of rugged headlands and peaks showed plainly, and had we not been in distress we should never have thought to stop at this place. Once within the harbor, however, the scene that met our view was not unattractive.

Bordering the bay was a sandy beach a full hundred yards in width, broken only by an inlet toward the left, or south, which seemed to lead into the interior of the island, winding between high and precipitous banks and soon becoming lost to sight. Back of the beach was the clean-cut edge of a forest, not following a straight line, but rising and falling in hills and ravines until it seemed from the bay to have been scolloped into shape by a pair of huge scissors. The woods were thick and the trees of uniform size, and between them grew a mass of vines and underbrush that made them almost impenetrable. How far the forest extended we were unable to guess; nor did we know how wide the island might be, for back of the hills rose a range of wooded mountains nearly a thousand feet in height, and what might lie beyond these was of course a matter of conjecture. Uncle Naboth, however, advanced the opinion that the island ended at the mountain peaks, and dropped sheer down to the sea beyond. He had seen many formations of that sort, and supposed we had found the only possible harbor on the island.

There was no apparent indication that the island had ever before been visited by man. Even signs of native occupation were lacking. But Captain Gay decided to send a small boat ashore to explore the inlet before we could relax all vigilance and feel that we were not liable to attack or interruption.

So the gig was lowered, and four of the crew, accompanied by Bill Acker, the mate, set off upon their voyage of discovery. They rowed straight to the inlet, which proved to be navigable, and soon after entering it we lost sight of the boat as it wound between the wooded cliffs.

We waited patiently an hour; two hours; three hours; but the boat did not return. Then patience gave way to anxiety, and finally the suspense became unbearable. After the loss of our three sailors during the storm we were reduced to eleven men, besides Uncle Naboth and myself, who were not counted members of the crew. Thirteen on board was not an especially lucky number, so that some of the men had been looking for disaster of some sort ever since we sighted the island. Those now remaining on the "Flipper" were the Captain, Ned Britton and two other sailors, Nux and Bryonia, my Uncle and myself; eight, all told. To send more men after the five who were absent would be to reduce our numbers more than was wise; yet it was impossible for us to remain inactive. Finally, Ned Britton offered to attempt to make his way through the woods, along the edge of the inlet, and endeavor to find out what had become of Acker and his men. He armed himself with two revolvers and a stout cutlass, and then we rowed him to the shore and watched him start on his expedition.

Not expecting that Ned would be long absent, we did not at once return to the ship. Instead, the Captain backed the boat into deep water and lay to, that we might pick up our messenger when he reappeared.

It had been agreed that if Ned came upon the mate he was to fire two shots in quick succession, to let us know that all was well. If he encountered danger he was to fire a single shot. If he wished us to come to his assistance he would fire three shots. But the afternoon passed slowly and quietly, and no sound of any kind came from the interior to relieve our anxiety. The boat returned to the ship, and Bryonia served our supper amid an ominous and gloomy silence on the part of those few who were left.

There was something uncanny about this mysterious disappearance of our comrades. Had they been able to return or to communicate with us there was no doubt they would have done so; therefore their absence was fraught with unknown but no less certain terror. Big Bill Acker was a man of much resource, and absolutely to be depended upon; and Ned Britton, who had been fully armed and would be on his guard against all dangers, was shrewd and active and not liable to be caught napping.

What, then, had they encountered? Wild beasts, savages, or some awful natural phenomenon which had cruelly destroyed them? Our imaginations ran riot, but it was all imagination, after all, and we were no nearer the truth.

An anxious night passed, and at daybreak Uncle Naboth called a council of war, at which all on board were present. We faced a hard proposition, you may be sure, for not one of us had any information to guide him, and all were alike in the dark.

To desert our absent friends and sail away from the island was impossible,

even had we desired to do so; for our numbers were too small to permit us to work the disabled "Flipper" in safety, and the ship's carpenter, on whom we greatly depended, had gone with the mate. All repairs must be postponed until the mystery of the men's disappearance was solved; and we firmly resolved that those of us remaining must not separate, but stick together to the last, and stick to the ship, as well.

Good resolutions, indeed; but we failed to consider the demands of an aroused curiosity. After two days had dragged their hours away without a sign of our absent comrades human nature could bear the suspense no longer.

Uncle Naboth called another council, and said: "Boys, we're actin' like a pack o' cowards. Let's follow after our friends, an' find 'em, dead or alive. We oughtn't to shrink from a danger we sent 'em into; and if we can't rescue 'em, let's run the chance of dyin' with 'em."

This sentiment met with general approval. All felt that the time for action had arrived, and if there was a reluctant man among us he made no sign.

Early next morning we partook of a hasty breakfast and then tumbled into the long boat to begin our quest. Every one on the ship was to accompany the expedition, for no one cared to be left behind. Uncle Naboth at first proposed to leave me on board, in the care of Bry; but I pleaded hard to go with the rest, and it was evident that I would be in as much danger aboard as in the company of the exploring party. So it was decided to take me along, and we practically deserted the ship, taking with us a fair supply of provisions and plenty of ammunition. The men were fully armed, and my uncle even intrusted me with a revolver, for I had learned to shoot fairly well.

It was a beautiful morning, cool and fresh and sunny, as we rowed away from the ship and headed for the inlet. That unknown and perhaps terrible dangers lay ahead of us we had good reason to expect; but every man was alert and vigilant and eager to unravel the mystery of this strange island.

CHAPTER 7

THE MAJOR.

Presently we shot into the opening and passed swiftly up the smooth waters of the inlet. The hills were gradually sloping, at first, and we could look into the tangled mass of forest that lay on either hand. But soon the sides of the channel became rocky and precipitous, rising higher and higher until we found ourselves in a deep gorge that wound between gigantic overhanging cliffs. The waters of the inlet were still smooth, but it narrowed perceptibly, all the time curving sharply to the right and then to the left in a series of zig-zags; so that every few minutes we seemed to be approaching a solid rocky wall, which suddenly disclosed a continuation of the channel to right angles with it, allowing us to continue on our course.

It was indeed necessary to watch out, in such a place as this, for we were passing through the heart of the mountain, and could not tell from one moment to another what lay before us.

There was barely room on each side for the sweep of the oars, so that we had to pull straight and carefully; but after a time the deep gloom in which we were engulfed began to lighten, and we were aware that the slope of the mountain was decreasing, and we were approaching its further side.

On and on we rowed, twisting abruptly this way and that, until suddenly, as we turned a sharp corner and shot into open, shallow water, the adventure culminated in a mighty surprise.

We were surrounded by a band of men — big, brawny fellows who stood waist deep in the water and threw coils of rope about us before we were quite aware of their presence. At the same time they caught the boat and arrested its progress, jerking the oars from the hands of our rowers and making us fast prisoners.

Only Bryonia was quicker than the men who sought to entrap him. Before the noose could settle over his shoulders he leaped into the air and dove headlong beneath the water. But the brave attempt to escape was all in vain, for as he rose to the surface a dozen hands caught him and drew him to the shore, where, despite his struggles, he was bound as securely as the rest of us.

So unexpected was the attack and so cleverly were we mastered that scarcely a word was uttered by our little party as we stared in astonishment into the rough and bearded faces of our captors. Only Captain Gay muttered a string of naughty words under his breath; the rest were silent, and Uncle Naboth, bound round and round with rope so that he could not move, sat in his seat and looked across at me with one of his quaintest winks, as if he

would cheer me up in this unexpected crisis.

Nor had a word been spoken by the men who entrapped us. Wading slowly through the water, they drew our boat to a sandy shore and beached it, while we looked curiously around upon the scene that was now clearly unfolded to our view.

The cliffs had ended abruptly, and the center of the island, flat and broad, lay stretched before us. The waters of the inlet from here became shallow, and a wide beach of strangely bright sands extended for two hundred feet on either side of it. Then came the jungle, thick and seemingly impenetrable, beyond which all was unknown. Straight and without a ripple the water lay before us a full quarter of a mile, disappearing thence into the forest.

On the thick sands of the east shore, where we now were, a number of rude huts had been erected, shaped something like Indian teepees and made of intertwined branches covered with leaves from the forest. These stood in a row near to the edge of the jungle, so as to take advantage of its shade.

But more strange than all this was the appearance of the men who had bound us. They were evidently our own countrymen, and from their dress and manners seemed to be miners. But nearly all were in rags and tatters, as if they had been long away from civilization, and their faces were fierce and brutal, bearing the expression of wild beasts in search of prey.

One of them, however, who stood upon the beach regarding us silently and with folded arms, was a personage so remarkable that he instantly rivetted our attention. His height was enormous — at least six feet and three inches — and his chest was broad and deep as that of ancient Hercules. He was bearded like a gorilla with fiery red hair, which extended even to his great chest, disclosed through the open gray flannel shirt. There was no hat upon his head, and he wore no coat; but high boots were upon his feet and around his waist a leathern belt stuck full of knives and revolvers.

No stage pirate, no bandit of Southern Europe, was ever half so formidable in appearance as this terrible personage. He stood motionless as a pillar of stone, but his little red eyes, quick and shrewd, roved from one to another of our faces, as if he were making a mental estimate of each one of us — like the ogre who selected his fattest prisoner to grace his pot-pie.

I own that I shuddered as his glance fell upon me; and we were all more or less disquieted by our rough seizure and the uncertainty of the fate that awaited us.

This man — the red giant — was undoubtedly the leader of the outlaw band, for having pulled our boat upon the beach and dragged Bryonia to a position beside it, all eyes were turned enquiringly upon him.

He strode forward a few steps, fixed his eyes firmly upon Uncle Naboth,

and said:

"Did you leave anyone aboard the ship?"

I gave a start of surprise. The voice of the huge bandit was as gentle and soft as that of a woman.

"No," said my uncle.

"I guess, Major, we've got 'em all now," remarked one of the men.

The giant nodded and turned again to Uncle Naboth.

"You must pardon us, sir, for our seeming rudeness," said he, with a politeness that seemed absolutely incongruous, coming from his coarse, hairy lips. "My men and I are in desperate straights, and only desperate remedies will avail to save us. I beg you all to believe that we have no personal enmity toward you whatever." Then he turned to his men, and with a wave of his hand added: "Bring them along."

Thereat we were jerked from our seats in the boat and led away over the sands toward the edge of the jungle. I noticed that our arms and provisions, being confiscated, were carried into one of the huts, but we ourselves were dragged past these and through an opening in the trees just large enough to admit us single file.

A. few steps from the edge we entered a circular clearing, perhaps a dozen paces in diameter, hemmed in on all sides by a perfect network of tangled brushwood and vines. Here, to our great joy, we came upon our lost comrades, all seated at the base of slender trees, to which they were bound by stout ropes.

"Hurrah!" cried Bill Acker, a smile lighting his careworn face. "It's a joy to see you again, my boys, although you seem to have fallen into the same trap we did."

"Beg parding, Cap'n, for getting myself caught," said Ned Britton, quite seriously. "The brutes jumped me so quick I hadn't time to fire a shot."

"All right, Ned; you're not to blame," said Captain Gay, and while we were interchanging greetings our captors were busily engaged in securing us to trees, in the same manner the others were bound. We protested, very naturally, at such treatment, but the men, surly and rough, answered us not a word, and after making sure we could not get away they withdrew and left us alone.

As the trees to which we were fastened were at the edge of the clearing we were seated in a sort of circle, facing one another.

"Well, boys," said Uncle Naboth, "here's a pretty kettle o' fish, I must say! The whole crew o' the 'Flipper,' officers an' men an' supercargo, has been caught like so many turtles, an' turned on their backs; an' all we can do is to kick and wish we had our legs agin."

We all seemed rather ashamed of ourselves. Captain Gay heaved a most dismal sigh, and turning to Acker asked:

"Who are these people, Bill?"

"Can't say, I'm sure, Tom. We rowed up the inlet, not expecting any danger, when suddenly the whole lot jumped us and made us prisoners in the wink of an eye. They brought us before a red devil called the Major, who pumped us to find out how many men were aboard ship. When we refused to give them any information they brought us to this place, and here we've been ever since, fast bound and half starved, for I guess the fellows haven't much to eat themselves."

"How did they come here?" asked my uncle. "Really, sir," replied Acker, "they haven't told us one word about themselves."

"Fer my part," said Ned Britton, speaking in his deliberate manner, "I think these pirates has been spyin' on us ever since we anchored in the bay. They must have a path over the mountains that we don't know of, for when the mate come up the inlet in the gig they was ready an' waitin' for him, and he didn't have a chance to resist. Twerè the same with me, sir. I crep' along the edge o' the channel, goin' slow an' swingin' myself from tree to tree over the gulch — for the trees was too thick to get between 'em — until I come to this here place, where two men grabbed me an' knocked me down an' tied me up like a pig sent to market. The Major were with 'em, and swore he'd murder me if I didn't tell him how many more were aboard the ship, an' what her cargo was, an' where we are bound for, an' a dozen other things. But I kep' mum, sir, as were my duty, an' finally they brung me to this place, where I was mighty glad to find the mate and his men safe and sound."

We then related our own anxiety over the fate of those who had so mysteriously disappeared, and our final expedition in search of them.

"We've found you, all right," said Uncle Naboth, in conclusion; "but now the question is, what's goin' to become of us, an' what shall we do to escape from these blamed pirates that's captured us?"

"Before you answer that question," said a quiet voice, "it may be as well for you to listen to what I have to say."

We looked up and saw the great form of the Major standing in the clearing. How much of our conversation he had overheard we did not know; but after a lowering glance into our startled faces he calmly seated himself in the midst of the circle.

"Thirteen, all told," he said. "You seem shorthanded, for so big a schooner."

"We lost three men in the storm," said Uncle Naboth.

"What are you, the owner?" asked the Major. "Part owner."

“What is your cargo?”

“Mixed,” replied Uncle Naboth, non-commitally. The Major reflected a moment.

“We shall soon find out all we wish to know,” he said. “We have both your boats, and we can examine the ship for ourselves.”

“I s’pose you know this is a hangin’ matter?” suggested my uncle.

“It may be,” was the calm reply. “At any rate, it is illegal, and I regret that circumstances force us to act illegally with you. As a matter of fact, I wish that I might have treated you with more courtesy. But you had no business to come to this island, and having come here, and surprised our great secret by penetrating into the center of the land, you must take the consequences of your folly. We did not want you here, and we kept out of your way as long as you would let us. When you invaded our private domain we were forced to protect ourselves.”

“I don’t understand,” said my uncle, much puzzled by this speech. “We’re no robbers, ner pirates. We’re peaceful citizens of the United States.”

“So are we,” retorted the Major. “But we’re also the creatures of fate, and our condition here forces us to wage warfare upon any who intrude into our privacy.”

“We put in here for repairs, an’ it was natural we should want to explore the island,” returned my uncle, doggedly.

The Major appeared lost in thought. For several minutes he sat staring at the ground with a great frown wrinkling his brow. For our part, we watched him curiously, wondering the while what would be the outcome of the queer condition in which we found ourselves. Finally the man spoke:

“Under the circumstances,” said he, “there are but two courses open to us. One is to murder every man of you, and bury you underneath the sands. I imagine you would be safe there, and not a soul on earth would ever know what had become of you.”

I shuddered. The soft tones could not disguise the horror of the words.

“The alternative,” continued the Major, “is to swear you to secrecy, to induce you to work for us for fair wages, and finally to sail back with you in your ship to San Francisco, where we may part good friends.”

The contrast between these propositions was so great that we stared at the man in amazement.

“If we are to take our choice,” said Uncle Naboth, “it won’t be the grave under the sands, you may be sure.”

“The choice does not lie with you, but with my men,” returned the Major, coolly. “For my part, I am neither bloodthirsty nor inclined to become a murderer; so I shall use my influence in your behalf.”

With this he slowly rose to his feet and stalked from the clearing, leaving us to reflections that were not entirely comfortable.

The hours passed drearily enough. Toward evening some of the men brought us a few moldy ship's biscuits and a bucket of sweet drinking water, and after partaking of this we were left to ourselves until the next daybreak.

As it grew dusk Nux suddenly rose from his seat, and we saw that he was free. In some way he had managed to slip his bonds, and he passed quickly from one to another of us until we were all released from the dreadful ropes that had been chafing us.

Then a council of war was held. Our captors numbered about thirty, and all were fully armed. To attempt to oppose them openly would be madness; but if we could manage to slip away and regain our boats we should be able to reach our ship and so escape. Bryonia agreed to spy out our surroundings and see where the boats lay, so he fell upon all fours and silently crept from the clearing.

We awaited his return with impatience, but he was not gone long. He re-entered the clearing walking upright and indifferent to crackling twigs, and then we knew our case was hopeless.

"There's men sleepin' in the boats, an' men on watch," said he; "an' they all has swords an' pistols. Can't get away anyhow, Mister Perkins."

"How about the woods?" asked my uncle. "Can't we escape through them?"

Bry shook his head, decisively. He was an expert woodsman, and declared no man could penetrate the thick jungle that hemmed us in. Ned Britton also bore testimony to this fact; so we were obliged to sadly abandon any hope of escape, and stretched ourselves as comfortably as we might upon the ground to await the approach of morning.

With the first streaks of day the Major and a dozen of his men arrived, and without appearing to notice that we had slipped our bonds they drove us in a pack from the clearing and out upon the sands that bordered the inlet.

Here we saw others of our captors busy preparing breakfast before the entrances to the rude huts, and it was evident that they were using the provisions they had captured from us, for I scented the aroma of the coffee that Uncle Naboth was so proud of, and carried with him wherever he went.

We gathered before the hut of the Major, which was somewhat larger than the others, and then the leader said, in a tone of stern command: "Take off your clothes."

We hesitated, not quite understanding the purpose of the order.

"Strip, my boys," said another of the pirates, with a grin. "We want your togs. We drew cuts for 'em last night, and now we'll trade you our rags for

‘em.”

So we stripped and tossed our clothes upon the ground, where they were eagerly seized by the outlaws and donned with great satisfaction. The Major did not participate in this robbery; but, indeed, no garment that we wore could possibly have fitted his huge frame.

When we had put on the rags discarded by the others we were a curious looking lot, you may be sure. Uncle Naboth had a fit of silent merriment at my expense, but if he could have seen himself I am sure he would have choked and sputtered dangerously. A more disreputable appearance than that we now presented would be hard to imagine; but our enemies did not profit so greatly by the exchange, after all, for the garments fitted them as badly as theirs did us. However, they seemed very proud of their acquisition, and strutted around like so many vain peacocks.

CHAPTER 8

THE SANDS OF GOLD.

The sun had now arisen and flooded the scene with its glorious rays. We were given some of the coffee and a scant allowance of food for our breakfast, the care with which the latter was doled out being evidence that our captors did not know that the "Flipper" was loaded down with provisions.

As soon as the meal was concluded we all gathered around the Major's hut again, and he began to make us an address.

"At the conference held last evening," he began, in his smooth tone, "we decided to allow you to choose your own fate. It is death on the one hand, and life as our paid employees on the other. What do you say?"

"We'd like to know, sir," said Uncle Naboth, "what you are doing on this island?"

"Washing gold."

"Gold!"

"To be sure," said the Major. "Are you so ignorant that you cannot see that these sands upon which you are standing are wonderfully rich in gold?"

"Why, I hadn't noticed," said my uncle, and then we all curiously stared at the bright billows of sand that filled the beach on both sides of the inlet.

"It will do no harm to explain to you how we came here, and what we are doing," said the Major. "It will help you to make your decision."

"Seems like a queer place to look for gold," said Uncle Naboth, reflectively. "But even then I can't see why you've treated us like you have, or why you're so blamed secret about the thing."

"Can't you?" was the reply. "Then I must jog your reason with a few sensible suggestions. Every gold field yet discovered has been a magnet to draw men from every part of the civilized world. The result has been that the first discoverers seldom profit to any extent, while the horde they draw around them get the lion's share. That has been our experience time and time again, for every member of our band is an experienced miner. We've been crowded from Colorado to Idaho, from Idaho to California, from California to the Black Hills, and back again. Finally we got word of a rich find of gold in Alaska; so, banding together, we chartered an old ship and started for the Yukon. On the way we encountered a gale that blew us to this island. We don't know what island it is, and we don't care. While our vessel was undergoing repairs we rowed up the inlet, as you did, and discovered these sands, which are marvelously rich with grains of pure gold. Before your eyes, gentlemen, lies the greatest natural accumulation of gold the world has

ever known."

He paused, after this impressive statement, and again we looked around wonderingly.

"We can't get it all, that's true," resumed the Major; "but we have decided to stay here and defend our secret until each one of us has secured an independent fortune. Then the swarms of gold-hunters can settle here as thickly as they please. Of course we had our tools with us, and a good supply of provisions; so we were glad to let Alaska take care of itself and go to work washing out the wealth that lay at our feet. We knew the food wouldn't last till we were ready to leave here, so we decided to send the ship home for more provisions. The captain was bound to secrecy by promise of a big share for himself, but soon after he sailed away a great storm arose, and probably the old, leaky craft never weathered it, for that was over a year ago, and no ship has reached this harbor until yours appeared."

We listened to this recital with eager interest, for it explained much that had puzzled us. And Uncle Naboth remarked:

"It's a strange story, sir. But I don't see why you treated us as enemies when we came here."

"Suppose you had been prospectors, like ourselves. What would become of our secret then?"

"But we're not," was the reply.

"It was even possible our captain might have reached shore and betrayed us. In that case you might be the forerunners of an army of invaders. We couldn't take the chances, sir. We've been disappointed too many times. But it appears that you were merely the victims of the elements, and like ourselves were driven to this shore in a gale. So the only danger to be feared from you is your getting away before we're ready to go with you. That was why we hesitated between murdering you and using your services to enable us to accomplish our task sooner than we otherwise could. We are not cut-throats, believe me, nor do we care to be responsible for the death of so many decent men. But the lust for gold has made my fellows desperate, and with immense fortunes within their grasp they will stick at nothing to protect themselves and their treasure."

"That's only natural," growled Uncle Naboth. "I'm glad to find you so reasonable," said the Major. "Having discovered this field ourselves, we do not intend to share the gold with anyone; but we will make you a reasonable proposition. We will pay each one of you two dollars a day, in grains of gold, for your labor, and you must buckle to and help us to get out the gold. We will also pay you, in gold, for whatever provisions you have on your ship, or other supplies we may need. And when we have enough to satisfy ourselves,

and are ready to sail back to civilization, we will pay you a reasonable price for passage in your ship. That seems to me to be fair and square. What do you say?"

"Why," answered Uncle Naboth, with a gasp, "that's all we could look for if we got to Alaska. We're traders, sir, an' expect to make our money in trade. The only thing we object to is workin' like dogs to wash gold for somebody else."

"You'll have to put up with that objection," returned the man, dryly. "Your labor will shorten our stay here a full year, and it's the penalty you must suffer for being in our power."

My uncle turned to his crew.

"What do you say, boys?" he asked.

Some grumbled, and all looked grave; but a glance at the lowering faces of the miners assured them that discretion was the better part of valor, so they yielded a reluctant consent to the arrangement.

"There's one p'int, howsomever, as I should like to argufy," said Uncle Naboth. "This here lad's too small an' delicate to work at the washin', an' somebody's got to give out the provisions an' collect the pay for 'em. Let him out o' the deal, sir, an' make him clerk o' the supplies."

"I will agree to that," said the Major, promptly. "When we get back to the States we don't want to have anything against our record; so this bargain shall be kept faithfully on our side. I'll prepare a paper, which every man here must sign, stating that you accept the agreement freely and without compulsion, and will be satisfied with your wages and the payment for your groceries and supplies. Also you must each one take an oath not to betray to anyone the whereabouts of this island after you leave it, for it will be a valuable possession to us even after we've taken enough gold from it to make us rich. Meantime you'll be well treated, but carefully watched. To some extent you'll be, morally, our prisoners; but the only hardship you will suffer is to labor hard for a few months at a small salary."

"That's agreeable, sir," said my uncle; and the men accepted the arrangement with more or less grace.

Then the conference broke up. Our sailors, as well as Captain Gay, the mate and my uncle, were at once set to work washing gold on the banks of the inlet, their numbers being distributed among the miners, who showed them what to do and supervised the work. It appeared that all the gold gathered by our people was to go into a common pot, to be distributed equally among our captors; but each miner worked for himself alone, and was entitled to whatever he secured. In this way a premium was set upon individual industry, and they worked eagerly and persistently, at the same

time insisting that the "Flipper's" crew did not loiter.

The Major, whose influence over his rough comrades was undoubted, retired within his tent to draft the paper we were to sign, and I, left to my own devices, wandered here and there, watching the men and wondering what would be the outcome of this singular adventure.

At noon the paper was ready, and it set forth clearly and fairly the terms of the agreement. We were all required to sign it, as well as every miner in the camp, and then the Major took possession of it, there being no duplicate.

After the midday meal six of our sailors were selected to man the long boat, and then accompanied by the Major, who was fully armed, and by myself, they rowed down the inlet to the harbor, and we boarded the ship.

I selected such of the provisions as were most needed by the half-starved miners, and also carried away a number of blankets, as the nights were chill and the blankets would prevent much suffering.

Two trips we made that afternoon, and when the miners stopped work for the day I had quite a heap of groceries piled upon the sands. Instantly they surrounded me, clamoring for supplies, which I served to each man as he demanded them.

They paid me in grains of pure gold, which they drew from sacks, old stockings tied with a string, and even pockets cut from their clothing. How much to demand I did not know, and some paid me too much, I suppose, and some too little. One of them, a low browed, black bearded fellow called Larkin, obtained a quantity of goods and then said he would pay me some other time; but the Major insisted that I be paid then and there. So the man laid down a pinch of gold, saying it was enough, and I was about to accept it when the Major drew his revolver and said, quietly:

"This is a fair deal, Larkin. Shell out!"

The fellow uttered a string of angry oaths, but he added to his first offering until his leader was satisfied, and then went away vowing "to get even with the robbers."

To avoid further trouble, I brought a small pair of scales from the ship next day. They were not very accurate, I fear, but they were much better than guesswork. The Major and I figured out exactly what weight of gold should stand for a dollar, and I was allowed to put my own price on our supplies; but I took care not to be exhorbitant in my demands, and most of the men expressed themselves as well satisfied with the arrangement.

As a good share of the provisions would suffer by being left out in the night air, it was decided to build a warehouse for my use: "a reg'lar grocery store," Uncle Naboth described it; so the men all set to work, and under the direction of our ship's carpenter soon constructed a roomy and comfortable

hut for this purpose. By repeated trips to the ship in the long boat, I soon accumulated a good stock of everything our cargo represented, and by taking off the covers of the boxes and then piling them on their edges, in rows, I soon made my hut look like a prosperous mercantile establishment. Surplus and unopened boxes were utilized to form a counter in front of my stock, and here I placed my scales and weighed the gold that was offered in payment.

The men were as prodigal as all miners are, and denied themselves nothing so long as they had gold to pay for it. So my stock gradually increased in gold and diminished in merchandise, and the men were well fed and comfortable.

But the sands upon which we so carelessly trod were wonderfully rich in the precious metal, and any sort of industry was sure to be repaid enormously by the glittering grains scattered about. It was not dust, you understand, but tiny grains resembling those of granulated sugar. The richest yield was derived from the sands at the bottom of the shallow inlet, and the practice of the miners was to wade a little way into the stream, scoop up a basin off the sandy bottom and wash it until only the specks of sparkling metal remained. As it was difficult to care for this properly, I brought from the ship a quantity of sail-cloth, which I made, during my leisure moments, into stout bags, about the size of salt-sacks, sewing the seams firmly. These bags I sold readily to the miners, who, when they filled one, would usually bury it beneath the sand in their hut, so that it would be safe. I did not do this with my supply, however, but piled my sacks into an empty box in one corner of my grocery store, feeling sure there would be no theft of them in the confines of our little camp. Neither did the Major secrete his hoard, which lay plainly in sight of anyone who entered his hut; and the Major's store of gold was enormous because he took charge of all that our men washed out, until the time for final division should arrive.

There was no game of any sort, that we knew of, upon the island; but the men caught plenty of fish in the upper part of the inlet and in the bay upon the ocean frontage. The thickets surrounding our camp were considered absolutely impenetrable, on account of the underbrush and creeping vines that formed such a thick network at the foot of the trees. Yet there was a man named Daggett who, it was rumored, had found a way to traverse the forest with comparative ease.

This Daggett was quite a remarkable person, and enters now into my story.

He was a thin, withered little man, about fifty years of age, who had been an unsuccessful miner all his life until now. So eager was he, at first, to take advantage of the great opportunities here afforded to secure a fortune, that he

would work by moonlight washing gold, while his companions slept and rested from their labors. But soon he conceived an idea that these golden sands were deposited from some point in the mountains of the interior of the island, where solid gold abounded in enormous quantities. So he quit washing, and began a search for the imaginary "mountain of gold," cutting a secret path through the thicket to the more open interior, and passing day after day in his eager quest. At first he urged some of his comrades to join him, but they only laughed at his idea, being well content to obtain the coveted gold in an easy way, where it lay plainly before their eyes.

But Daggett did not desist, spending day after day in roaming through the wild hills in his fruitless search. During the time he lost in this way his mates were accumulating a vast store of golden grains, while Daggett was as yet only in possession of the result of his first eager labors; and after I opened my grocery store he was obliged to exchange pinches of his small substance for supplies, so that it gradually dwindled away to a mere nothing. He haggled so over the price of every article he secured that his fellows jeered him unmercifully, calling him "the miser" and berating him for neglecting his opportunities. Indeed, the poor fellow was well-nigh desperate, at the last, for he alone of all the camp was still poor, and his only salvation, he considered, was to find the hills of solid gold before the time came for all to abandon the island. So he was gone for days, returning to camp to secure provisions; and no one knew where he wandered or seemed to care.

CHAPTER 9
THE OUTLAWS.

There were many curious characters of the camp, as I suppose there are everywhere that a number of men are gathered together. I used to amuse myself studying the various phases of human nature that came under my observation, with the result that some men attracted me and some repelled me.

Aside from the miserly Daggett the man who caused me the most trouble was the surly, scowling Larkin, whom the Major had threatened to shoot on sight if he did not pay me for everything he obtained at my shop. He was a lazy fellow, and did not seem to get ahead as fast as his companions, for that reason. Sometimes, in the heat of the afternoon, he would strike work and come into my hut, where he threatened and bullied me and cast longing glances at the sacks of gold I had accumulated. Uncle Naboth, who, by the way, labored doggedly day after day, as he was commanded, often warned me against Larkin, but I had no fears, being assured the Major would protect me from the villain's hatred.

One or two others — Hayes and Judson, for instance — were evidently disreputable characters, and affected the society of Larkin when they were not at work. But in the main the miners were decent enough fellows, and seemed to have no thought above securing a fortune from the wealth of the golden sands. They paid me liberally, were just in their dealings, and labored industriously day by day so as to lessen the time of their captivity upon the island.

In the evenings the officers and crew of the "Flipper" were wont to gather in my hut, where they smoked their pipes and conversed more or less gloomily together. None of them, however, was greatly distressed at his fate, and it was wonderful how cheerful Uncle Naboth remained through it all. His silent merriment and sly winks were by no means lacking in these days of tribulations and hard work, and he found many opportunities to exercise his keen sense of humor. In one way his fortunes were really prospering, and each evening he weighed out the day's receipts, in golden grains, and calculated the profits to us on the sales. I suppose these must have been satisfactory, for he never complained.

I always slept in my hut, surrounded by the store of merchandise and my sacks of gold; but the rest of the crew of the ship had huts of their own, Nux and Bryonia occupying one together.

One night, after I had been asleep for some hours, I was suddenly awakened by the muzzle of a pistol pressed close to my forehead. I opened

my eyes, and saw Larkin standing beside me. A tallow candle had been lighted in the hut, and I could see his evil features distinctly.

"Now, my lad," said he, "keep quiet an' you won't get hurt. But if you raise any rumpus or make a sound, I'll blow your brains out."

So I lay quiet, but I kept my eyes open and eagerly watched what was taking place in the room. Besides Larkin, there were present Daggett, Judson and Hayes — the worst characters in the camp. While Larkin remained beside me to threaten me with his pistol, the others spread out a blanket and dumped into it every sack of gold I possessed. This they secured by tying the corners of the blanket together. Next they spread another blanket and threw into it a quantity of canned meats and other provisions, afterwards tying them up as they had the gold. Then Hayes took the pistol and stood guard over me while the others crept from the hut. They were back in a few minutes, however, bearing another blanket heavily loaded. And now Larkin resumed his place beside me and the others caught up the three parcels and after extinguishing the candle slipped out of the doorway. There was a moon outside, I knew, but it was quite dark in the hut, and the consciousness of being at the mercy of the scoundrel beside me sent cold shivers creeping up my spine.

After waiting a few moments in silence Larkin spoke.

"Look-a-here, Sam," he said gruffly, but in a low voice, "we've took some gold and other stuff, as ye know; but we ain't goin' to do murder unless we has to. If you've got sense enough to keep still for a solid hour, an' make no fuss, you'll live to get as much gold, or more, as we've just grabbed. But if you try to raise the camp, or foller us, I'll kill you before you know it. Now, I'm goin' to stand outside the door for a solid hour — you lay still an' count sixty seconds to a minute an' sixty minutes to an hour. If you move before that, you're a dead one; after the hour ye can howl all ye please, and the louder the better. I ought to stick a knife into you now; but I guess I'll wait outside the door an' see if you mind what I tell you."

Then with a threatening flourish of his pistol, he slunk away, and as soon as he was outside the door I rose up and followed.

I knew he was lying, well enough, and that his threats were merely meant to terrify me into keeping silent until he escaped. He considered me a mere boy, and believed I would be too frightened to cause him any trouble.

But where could he and his fellow thieves go? How could they penetrate the wild thicket? That was the question that puzzled me. And then I remembered that Daggett was with them, who was reputed to be able to travel at will throughout the interior of the island.

When I reached the door and looked around I could at first see no signs of

the man who had just left me. Then I discovered a dark form creeping along the edge of the jungle, and at once I sprang into the shade myself and crept after him. He was going slowly, and in my eagerness I closed up most of the distance between us, until I was dangerously near. But he did not look around, and while my eyes were fastened upon him he dropped to his knees, pushed aside a thick bush, and disappeared into the thicket.

That was all the information I wanted, just then, so I hastily marked the place by heaping a mound of sand before the bush, and then ran back to my hut as fast as I could go. I was terribly humiliated at being robbed so coolly of the gold that had been placed in my care, and rashly resolved that I would recover it by my own efforts, without disturbing the slumbers of my uncle or the Major. So, entering the hut, I secured three revolvers, of the Colt type, and several boxes of cartridges for them, all of which I had secretly smuggled from the ship and hidden among the groceries, for the Major had forbidden any of our crew having fire-arms. I had thought that an emergency might arise, some time, when these revolvers would be useful to us, and now I blessed my foresight in secreting them.

Having secured the weapons I ran quickly to the hut of Nux and Bryonia, and cautiously awakened them. At my first touch Bry sprang into the air and alighted on his feet.

"What's matter, Master Sam?" he demanded.

"I've been robbed, Bry!" I panted.

"Robbed!" echoed Nux, who was now beside us.

"Yes; Larkin and his gang have taken every bag of our dust."

Through the dim light I could see their white eyeballs glaring at me in amazement.

"What you goin' do, Master Sam?" asked Bry.

"I'm going to give chase, and make the rascals give it back. That is, if you will be my friends, and stand by me," I said. "By daybreak every bag must be in my hut again."

"Sure 'nough," murmured Nux.

"We ready, Master Sam," announced Bry, quickly.

"Then take these revolvers, and follow me."

I gave a weapon to each, having hastily loaded them; and then I turned away, followed by the dark forms of the two Sulus.

"They're thieves, you know, burglars and outlaws," I said. "So if we have to shoot them down, no one can blame us."

They made no answer to this remark, and soon we had left the camp behind and reached the bush underneath which Larkin had disappeared. In a low voice I related what I had seen, and Bryonia, who was a master of

woodcraft, at once dropped to his knees and vanished into the thicket. I followed closely after him, and Nux brought up the rear. After creeping a few paces through the underbrush Bry grasped my hand and raised me to my feet, and I discovered that we were now in a well-defined but narrow path which allowed us to stand upright.

It was dark as pitch in the grim forest, and we could only feel our way along; but it was not possible for us to get off the path, which had doubtless been cut by Daggett to afford his entrance into the interior of the island, and if our progress was slow those whom we pursued could not proceed at much greater speed themselves; so we crept along, stumbling over roots and tearing our clothes by brushing against the briars on either side, for a period of nearly an hour. Bryonia glided before us as stealthily as a panther, and often I was not certain but that he had left us far behind; but Nux made as much noise as I did, and puffed much harder to get his breath, so I did not fear being abandoned in the black wilderness.

The ground seemed to rise gradually as we penetrated into the wild interior, but the path remained as narrow as at first. Now that my first excitement and indignation had cooled, this midnight pursuit began to look doubtful of result. The robbers knew the way much better than we did, and they were so far ahead of us that we heard no sound of any sort to guide us. More than once I was tempted to abandon the chase, for my folly in undertaking it grew more and more evident; but the two islanders had no thought of turning back, and I was ashamed to call a halt.

Suddenly I ran plump into Bryonia, who grasped my arm as firmly as if it were in a vice, and held me rigid. Nux immediately ran into me, but stopped short at the moment of contact.

"What is it, Bry?" I asked, in a whisper.

"Look!" he answered, and swung me around in front of him. Then, as I peered into the darkness, a faint ray of light became visible. In a moment I perceived that it was growing bigger and brighter, and then I knew what it meant.

"They've gone into camp, and lit a fire!" said I, pleased to have overtaken them.

"They do'n' know we's coming," chuckled Nux, from behind.

But Bry stood like a statue, holding fast to my shoulders and peering over my head at the enemy. We could now see that the forest was much thinner here than at the point we had entered, and just beyond, in a little hollow where Larkin and his men were encamped, the trees grew quite scattered.

"Our best plan," said I, after a moment's thought, "will be to creep up to them and make a sudden attack."

“One, two, three, fou’,” counted Bry, in his deep voice. “No use to ‘tack, Master Sam. They got guns, an’ kill us all quick.”

“We have our revolvers,” I suggested, rather disappointed at his prediction.

“Nux an’ I *might* hit somethin’, an’ we might not,” said Bry. “If we hit somethin’ it might be a man, an’ it might not.”

This was discouraging, and it called to mind the fact that I was not much used to fire-arms myself.

“Still, I don’t mean to go back without doing something to recover our gold,” said I.

“Wait!” whispered the islander, and swung me around back of him again. How he managed this I do not know, for the path was very narrow. Next moment he disappeared, as if the earth had swallowed him up.

Nux gave a laugh, and sat down upon the ground. After a few moments I followed suit, squatting in the place I had been standing, for even from that distance I could see by the flickering firelight the dim forms of the robbers gathered around it.

And now I perceived that Bry’s decision was wise. We were too far from camp to expect assistance in case of an emergency, even if our friends succeeded in finding the entrance to the jungle that was so cleverly concealed under the bush. So whatever was to be done must be done by ourselves — a boy and two men against four desperate and well-armed villains, who would stop at no crime to retain the gold they had stolen.

Evidently they did not fear pursuit now, for we could hear the murmur of their voices as they laughed and shouted at one another.

We waited in silence for a long time, and as the gloom of the silent forest became intensified by the distant light I began to feel for the first time a thrill that was akin to fear.

Finally I noticed a black body wriggling its way toward us through the brush like some huge snake, and a moment later Bryonia stood before me.

“I creep close an’ hear what they say, Master Sam,” he reported. “They goin’ watch all night. I watch, too. Tomorrow maybe we catch ‘em. You an’ Nux go sleep.”

I protested at once that I was not sleepy; but Bry led us away from the path to a quiet place where he had found a bank of moss, and here he cautioned us to remain quietly. He himself crept once again toward the camp fire, and a moment later was wholly invisible. Nux whispered to me tales of Bryonia’s skill as a woodsman, wherein it seemed he had excelled in his native land; but they grew monotonous, in time, and before I knew it I had fallen fast asleep on the mossy bank.

CHAPTER 10

THE ROCKING STONE.

When I opened my eyes it was broad daylight, and at first I could not remember where I was. But as I sat up I saw before me Nux and Bryonia, seated calmly side by side, with the wilderness all around me and the distant voices of the robbers echoing faintly in my ears. The sun was up, for I could see it glinting through the trees; so, as a recollection of my surroundings came back to me, I asked Bry what was going on.

He said the men were breaking camp, having slept late, and that presently they were going to travel still further into the interior. I could not imagine what they had in view, or where they expected to hide from the vengeance of the men they had plundered; but Bry declared we could follow them without ourselves being seen, so I decided not to give up until we had tracked them to their hiding place — if, indeed, they had one.

Presently we could see them tramping away to the southward, carrying the gold and provisions they had tied up in the blankets. There must have been two or three hundredweight of the gold, so the packages were heavy, and they had to take turns carrying them. But men seldom feel overburdened by the weight of gold, so we heard no complaints from the bearers.

Bry went on alone, hiding behind rocks and trees but keeping the men well in sight. After him trailed Nux, keeping Bry in sight; and then, as far away as I dared, I followed Nux, trying to imitate the example of the islanders and to hide myself as well as possible.

Before noon I grew hungry, for we had brought no provisions of any sort with us. The robbers paused to lunch, and then went on; but, although I searched carefully, I could not find a morsel of food that they had cast aside. Of water there was plenty, for we crossed several small streams; but food began to be more precious than gold to me, and I vaguely wondered if I should die of starvation before I got back to camp.

At evening the men made camp again, this time in a little clearing strewn with fallen logs; and when Bry rejoined me in a clump of trees where Nux and I had halted, I told him frankly that I was faint with hunger, and that unless I could find something to eat I could not go on. I have no doubt the islanders were hungry, too; but they were more inured to hardship, and could bear it better.

But Bry volunteered to try to secure some food, and as soon as darkness had fallen he crept toward the camp, managing to approach to within five yards of the camp fire, around which the robbers sat smoking and talking. He was concealed by a huge log, behind which he hid, listening carefully to the

conversation, which he afterward retailed to me.

"So far," Larkin was saying, "we couldn't have done better. By this time I guess we're pretty safe from pursuit."

"No one could find their way here in a year," boasted Daggett, his lean face grinning with delight. "I'm the only man on the island as knows the trails."

"Are you sure you can lead us to that queer rock you tell of?" asked Judson, a little uneasily.

"Sure. And once there, we could defy an army," returned Daggett. "Then we can make our raft, row out to where the ship is, and sail away home."

Larkin gave a rude laugh, ending it with an oath.

"There'll be some tall cussin' in the camp," he said.

"Major'll be crazy," assented Daggett.

"I swiped every grain o' gold he had, while he lay a-snorin'," chuckled Hayes, a big ruffian who was called "Dandy Pete," in derision, because he was so rough and unkempt. "Pity we couldn't 'a' got all there was in camp."

"There's enough to make us all rich, my boys, anyhow," remarked Larkin. "It's nearly broke my back, luggin' of it, an' there's only four of us to divide."

At this they seemed to grow thoughtful, and all sat silently smoking for several minutes.

"What bothers me," said Judson, breaking the silence, "is how we're to get that blasted ship into some civilized port. There ain't a man here as knows anything about sailin'."

"That's all right," said Larkin, confidently. "The sun rises in the east, don't it? Well, all we've got to do is h'ist the sails and let the wind blow us towards the east. Some time or other we'll get to the American continent, and then we can run down the coast to 'Frisco. It's no trouble to sail a ship."

"We've got to get away, somehow," grumbled Judson, "or our gold won't be of any use to us. When are we going to divide?"

"When we get on the ship," said Daggett, promptly.

"When we're at sea will be better," added Larkin.

They looked at one another suspiciously.

"It's got to be a fair divvy," said Dandy Pete, with an oath, "or else there won't be so many to divide up with."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Larkin, angrily.

"I mean I'll stick a knife in your ribs, if you try any trickery with me," replied Pete, scowling. "You made the terms yourself, and you've got to live up to 'em. It's a quarter each, all around."

"That's wrong!" yelled Daggett, springing to his feet. "I'm to have a third,

for guiding you. If it hadn't been for me, you couldn't get away with the gold at all."

"Who promised you a third?" asked Hayes.

"Larkin."

"Well, let Larkin make it up to you, out of his own share. I'm going to have a quarter."

"And so am I," said Judson, fingering his revolver.

Larkin glared at them with a white face.

"We won't quarrel about it, boys," he said, after a time. "There's plenty for all, and we must hang together till we're out of danger. I'll take what you think is right, for my share."

"I'll take my third, an' no less," growled Daggett.

No one looked at him. Each seemed to be busy with his own thoughts.

Bryonia had chosen this especial log to hide behind, because the robbers had placed their sack of provisions upon it. While listening to the conversation I have recorded, the islander had stealthily reached up his hand and managed to extract from the bundle a tin of corned beef and a handful of ship's biscuits. Then he wriggled carefully away, and in a few minutes had rejoined Nux and me, where we hid among the trees.

I think no food has ever tasted quite so delicious to me as did that tinned beef and stale biscuit. When divided amongst three there was little enough in each share, but it sufficed to allay our hunger and give us fresh strength and courage.

After we had eaten, Bry decided to go back again for more, since another opportunity to purloin from the bundle of provisions might not be offered us.

As it was very dark by this time, Nux and I crept nearer, to where a big rock lay; and here, hidden by the deep shadows, we were able to distinguish clearly all that transpired around the camp fire.

Bry being between us and the light, we could follow his creeping form with our eyes until we saw him lying safely hidden behind the log, with the bundle of food just over him. By this time all the robbers had lain down to sleep except Larkin, who had taken the watch and sat moodily smoking beside the fire, on which he tossed now and then a handful of fuel.

Suddenly, as he looked toward the sack that rested upon the log, he saw it move. In an instant a pistol shot rang out, and the robbers sprang to their feet with cries of alarm.

"Somebody's behind that log!" shouted Larkin, who was himself trembling with fear.

At once Bryonia arose to his feet, stepped over the log, and calmly advanced into the light of the fire, holding out his hand in greeting and

smiling broadly into the angry faces confronting him.

"Don' shoot poor Bry," he said, pleadingly. "I've run 'way to jine you."

"Run away!" exclaimed Larkin, while the others looked at the islander suspiciously. "Why did you do that?"

"So's I won' haf to work any mo'," answered Bry. "They's jest killin' me in that camp, luggin' bags o' sand an' washin' gold all day."

"Who came with you?" asked Daggett.

"Nobody 't all," declared Bry. "I seen yo' all leave the camp, an' so I crep' along after yo'. Wouldn't have let yo' know I was here, sure 'nough, but I got so hungry. I couldn't stand it no longer, so I tried to steal somethin' to eat, an' Mister Larkin he shot the gun at me."

"How did you know we had quit the camp for good?" enquired Pete, in a surly tone.

"Saw you take the gold, sir. So I 'pects you ain't cornin' back agin', an' thought I'd jine yo'. If you'll take me 'long an' feed me, Mister Hayes, I'll help tote the gold."

Bryonia's statement was so simple that the miners were inclined to believe him. Nux and I, who had crawled nearer to the fire when the pistol shot rang out, could hear distinctly every word, and for a moment I was horrified that Bry should prove false and desert to the enemy. But Nux was chuckling gleefully, and whispered: "That Bry, he mighty clever boy, Master Sam!" So I began to comprehend that Bry was acting a part, with the idea of saving Nux and me from discovery and ultimately recovering the gold. Therefore I kept silent and listened eagerly.

Evidently the miners were not of one opinion concerning the new arrival.

"Let's kill the nigger," said Daggett. "Then we won't run any chances."

"Don't be a fool," retorted Larkin. "Bry can be useful to us. He's the cook of the 'Flipper,' I'm told, and besides helping to carry the gold, he can cook our meals when we get to sea, and help sail the ship."

"If he's run away from camp, why, he's one of us," said Judson, yawning and sitting down again. "And if it comes to a fight, he counts for one more on our side."

"But he don't get any gold," added Dandy Pete. "Not an ounce!" declared Daggett.

"Don't want any gold," said Bry, composedly. "Only want to get away."

"All right," decided Larkin. "You can come along. But you've got to obey orders, and the first time I catch you at any tricks, I'll put a bullet into you."

Bry grinned from ear to ear, as if he considered this a good joke, and then he warmed his hands over the fire while Judson brought him something to eat from the bundle.

Afterward all lay down to sleep again except Larkin, who resumed his watch. It was too soon to put any trust in Bry, so the islander, having eaten his fill, lay down beside the others.

Nux and I cautiously retreated to the rock, and consulted as to what we should do under these circumstances. The man had perfect confidence in his comrade, and proposed that we should still follow the band of robbers and wait for Bry to find a way to communicate with us and assist us. This seemed reasonable to me, also.

As we were chilled to the bones in the cold night air, Nux suggested that we go into camp until morning, and led me a long distance back into the woods, where we finally came to a deep hollow. Here there would be little danger that a fire could be seen by the robbers; so we gathered together some twigs, and as I had matches in my pocket a fire was soon started that proved very grateful to us both. We then agreed to take turns watching until daylight, and while Nux lay down to sleep I took the first watch. But in some way — perhaps because the fire was so cosy and agreeable — I gradually lost consciousness, and when morning came both Nux and I awoke with a start to find the fire out and the sun glinting brightly through the trees.

We made all haste toward the camp of the robbers, but when we arrived at the place we found it deserted. They could not have been gone long, however, for the embers of the fire were still aglow; and Nux, who was keen as a bloodhound on a trail, declared he would have no trouble in following the band.

Before we left, however, we made a search for food, and to our joy discovered behind the log a can of beans and some more biscuits, which Bry had evidently found an opportunity to hide there for our benefit. We began the chase even while we ate, for Nux picked out the trail with ease and threaded his way between the trees with absolute confidence.

It was nearly noon when he halted suddenly.

We had come to the edge of the forest. Before us lay a broad table-land, barren of any trees or brush whatever, and beyond this strip of rock the blue sea stretched away to the horizon.

“Why, we’ve crossed the island!” I exclaimed.

“Only one end of the island,” corrected Nux. “The bay where our ship lays ain’t half a mile away.”

It surprised me that the shrewd islander should know this, but I did not question his statement. Just now my attention was drawn to the robbers, who had halted upon the further edge of the table-land, which even from where we stood, could be seen to form a high bluff above the ocean. At this place it ran out into a little point, and just beyond this point, but separated from the

mainland by a wide gulf, stood an island-like peak of rock, its flat surface on a level with the bluff. It must at one time have formed a part of the mainland, but some convulsion of nature had broken it away, and now a deep fissure isolated it from the bluff.

Nature was responsible for two other curious freaks. One was a group of tall pines, three in number, which grew on the separate peak where there seemed scarcely enough soil covering the rock to hold the roots of the trees. Yet on the main bluff there were no trees at all.

The other phenomenon was a great rock, that must have weighed thousands of tons, which lay upon the edge of the bluff so nicely balanced that it almost seemed as if a good push would precipitate it into the gulf below. It was triangular in shape, and the base rested on the bluff while its outer point projected far over the gulf till it towered almost above the isolated point of rock I have described.

The robbers, when we first saw them, were engaged in earnest consultation. It appeared that Daggett was explaining something about the great rock, for he pointed toward it several times, and then at the islet. The others leaned over the edge of the gulf, looked into the chasm below, at the triangular rock, at the barren islet, and then drew back and shook their heads.

Then Daggett, whom I had always considered a coward, did what struck me as being a very brave act. He climbed upon the sloping rock, and gradually crept upward on his hands and knees. When he reached a point above the center the huge rock began to tremble. Daggett crept a little further along, and now the entire mass of rock, which was poised to a nicety, raised its vast bulk and tipped slowly outward. Daggett slid forward; the point of rock under him touched the islet and came to rest, and then he leaped off and stood safely upon the peak, while the rocking-stone, relieved of his weight, slowly returned to its former position.

A cheer went up from the men, and they hesitated no longer. Bry crept up the stone next, and was tipped gracefully upon the islet. One after another Hayes, Judson, and Larkin mounted the rocking-stone and were deposited upon the rocky point, together with their bundles of gold and provisions.

We could not see very well what became of them, after this, for the big rock hid them from our view; but as it was evident they could not get back again — at least by the same means they had employed to reach the islet — Nux and I made bold to creep out of our shelter and approach the point that jutted outward into the sea.

Then, to our surprise, we saw that the flat top of the rock was deserted. The robbers, together with Bry and the treasure, seemed to have vanished into thin air!

CHAPTER 11
THE CAVERN.

From our better position we could now see the sides of the great rock which reared itself nearly a hundred feet from the shore and stood like some gigantic, flat topped obelisk, keeping guard by the lonely sea. Some ancient convulsion of nature, such as an earthquake or a lightning bolt, had evidently split it from the main precipice of rock near which it stood; for the huge crevice that separated it, and which extended entirely down to the beach, almost followed its outlines in every particular. But what had cast up that great rocking-stone, and placed it in so finely balanced a position that it could be made a curious but effective bridge to the isolated peak? No one can tell. Another freak of nature, doubtless, for no mortal hands could ever have moved so great a weight of solid rock.

And now was solved the problem of the mysterious disappearance of the robbers; for, looking over the edge, we saw them creeping slowly down the side of the cliff. A natural ledge, varying from one to three feet in breadth, led from the top down to the bottom, circling entirely around the crag with a sort of corkscrew regularity. It was a dizzy path, almost certainly, and I did not wonder to see the men cling fast to the inner side of the rock as they crept down the tortuous ledge; but Daggett, who evidently knew the place well, led them fearlessly, and the others followed, dragging their burdens and the sacks of gold-dust as best they could. I certainly expected to see one or more of them tumble headlong at any moment; but no accident happened and presently, as they descended, the path wound around the opposite side of the rock, and they were lost to view.

I wondered if I would see them again, and if it were wise to stick to my exposed post of observation; but while I pondered the matter Daggett came into view again, having passed around the rock. He was now two thirds of the way to the sands, and as he followed the ledge on the inner side, that lay next the face of the main cliff, I saw him suddenly pause upon a broader part of the path than the rest, and then disappear into the rock itself — or so it seemed to my gaze from where I watched. One by one the men came after him, and one by one the rock swallowed them up with their burdens; and now passed a period of tedious waiting.

Both Nux and I had counted the fugitives and saw that all had safely descended to this point, including Bry. But what had become of them now was a mystery.

“What shall we do, Nux?” I asked in indecision. “There’s nothing more to be seen from here.”

The islander, whose eyes held a startled expression, made no reply; but he crept with me to a nearer and better position at the edge of the cliff beside the rocking-stone, and together we peered over into the abyss. Now, indeed, the strange disappearance of the robbers was explained, for from our present point or vantage we could see a black spot far down on the inner face of the column of rock, where the ledge passed, and this spot was evidently a cavity into which the men had penetrated.

"All we can do now," I said, with a sigh of regret, "is to wait until they come out. It would be foolish to follow them into that place."

Nux nodded an emphatic approval, and we proceeded to lie down upon our faces, so that our eyes just projected over the edge of the cliff, and in this position we watched as patiently as we could for something to happen.

It was fully an hour before the men reappeared. A distant sound of voices, raised high in angry dispute, was the first token that the desperadoes were quitting the interior of the rock. Then Larkin and Daggett came out and stood upon the ledge, the others crowding behind them on the narrow footing, while their guide pointed along the ledge that still continued to lead downward.

They were without burdens now, either of provisions or gold dust; but the two axes were carried over Bry's shoulder, and another man bore a coil of rope.

They seemed to be disputing together about something, and a few of the words reached our ears. Daggett was urging them to follow a plan he had proposed, while some of the others demurred.

"It's too hot to work," we heard one of the men declare.

"It's not too hot to hang," shouted Daggett, in reply, "and you'll hang, every mother's son of you, if we don't get to the ship!"

That seemed to be an effective argument, for after a few more words of protest the men followed Daggett along the ledge, Bry coming last of all.

The path was broader from there on, and they made rapid progress, soon being again lost to our view around the rock. Just as Bry disappeared he looked up and saw Nux and me eagerly watching from above. For an instant he paused to wave his hand and grin at us reassuringly; then he passed around the edge and vanished after the others.

"That Bry don"pear to be much scared," said Nux, in an encouraged tone.

"No," I answered, thoughtfully. "He's got some plan in his head, I'm sure, to help us. But where have the men gone now?"

Nux could not answer this problem, but after a few moments it solved itself, for the robbers and Bry appeared upon the sandy shore, close to the water, and walked briskly along the narrow strip of beach between the

lapping waves and the grim precipice of the mainland. It was not long before a bend in the coast hid them completely, and then we sat up and looked at one another inquiringly.

"What shall we do now?" asked the islander.

"Let's go down the rock," I suggested, assuming to be braver than I really was. "They've left the gold behind them, that's sure; and the gold is what we're after, Nux. Once we have recovered that, it doesn't matter so much what becomes of the thieves."

"Won' they come back?" enquired Nux, hesitatingly.

"I hope not," said I, truthfully. "At least not until after we've got back the gold. But there's no time to lose. Follow me."

Having thus assumed the leadership, I strove to banish all unmanly fear and boldly sprang on to the end of the rocking-stone that rested on the mainland. Slowly and with caution I crept up its incline until I was directly over the gulf. It was now that the stone should tip, but it seemed that my weight, being less than that of any of the men who had passed over, was not sufficient to balance the rock, so it began to look like a risky thing for me to climb further up the tapering point.

"But it's got to be done," I muttered to myself, setting my teeth firmly together; and then, summoning what courage I possessed, I lay close to the rock and crawled steadily upward, digging my toes desperately into the irregular hollows of the surface, to keep from sliding into the gulf that yawned below. Higher and higher I climbed, and at last the huge rock trembled and then gently sank beneath me. For a moment I was exultant; but I had crept so near to the slippery point of the wedge that I could find no rough projection to grasp with my fingers, and therefore as soon as my head became lower than my feet I slid headforemost to the point and tumbled off before the rocking-stone had reached a point of rest upon the peak.

Fortunately, however, I had been carried over the gulf, and although I lay, half-stunned, upon the very edge of the great precipice, I was not much hurt. In another moment I managed to drag myself to a position of greater safety, while the rocking-stone, relieved of my weight, reared its nearest point into the air again and fell slowly back into its original position.

Nux, who had watched breathlessly my adventure and hair-breadth escape, was trembling violently when he in turn mounted the stone. But I called out to reassure him, and his greater weight caused the wedge to tip more quickly, so that he effected the passage to the rocky peak with comparative ease.

Once beside me the faithful fellow began rubbing my limbs briskly to renew their circulation and ease the bruises, and it was not long before I felt

sufficiently restored to announce my resolve to continue the adventure.

"Come on, Nux," said I, scrambling to my feet, "we must get that gold before Daggett and his gang come back."

The islander was staring at the rocking-stone, now removed from our table-like refuge by a good twenty feet.

"How we get back again?" he asked, in perplexity.

"I don't know," said I. "That's a question we'll have to face afterward. The main thing is to get the gold, and it's certain that if we can find no way to escape, the robbers will be as badly off themselves."

Nux shook his head.

"That won' help us, Master Sam," he said, gravely.

But already I was engaged in eagerly peering over the edge of the peak to find the ledge by which the men had descended, and in an instant I discovered it. It started with a projection scarcely six inches wide, which lay nearly four feet from the top, and it is small wonder that I looked at it dubiously, at first. For if I let myself over, and missed my footing, I would be tumbled down the face of the cliff.

"I go first," decided Nux, who had also glanced over the cliff.

There was a crack in the rock, near the edge, which afforded him a hold for his hands, and clutching this the islander let his body slide over until his feet touched the projection.

"Now, Master Sam," he said. "You hold on me, an' come down."

This I quickly did, and found the feat much less difficult than I had feared. Just at the top where my companion's feet rested, there was sufficient incline to enable me to lean against the rock, and a few steps further on the ledge widened until the path was quite easy to follow.

I went first, followed closely by the islander, and although it was not a descent one would have chosen for a pleasure excursion there was little of danger to be encountered by those with cool heads and determined hearts, such as we strove to maintain.

Round and round the great pillar of rock we crept, nearing the foot gradually until we came at last to the side facing the main cliff and found the opening of a large cavern beside us.

Filled with eager curiosity I took a step or two inside, and found the cavern to be fully ten feet in height and about fifteen feet in depth. There was no light except that which came through the round entrance, and as this faced the side of the cliff it was so shadowed that it required a few moments for me to accustom my eyes to the gloom, so that I could see plainly the interior of the cave.

Its floor was strewn deeply with sand, an evidence that when the waves

rolled high they rebounded from the face of the cliff and deposited their sand in the cavern. The marks of numerous footprints, however, were all that could be seen in the cave, and it did not take me a moment to guess what had occupied the robbers so long.

"They've buried the sacks of gold and the provisions under the sand!" I exclaimed.

"Sure 'nough," agreed Nux.

"It will take us some time to dig for them, for we don't know exactly where to look," I continued, reflectively, "so our best plan will be to go down to the beach and discover what has become of Daggett and his crew, and whether they're liable to come back here before night."

The islander readily agreed to this, so we at once left the cave and continued along the ledge until we reached the sand.

The path became quite broad in this part, and our descent was therefore concluded very rapidly.

Once on the shore we walked briskly along until we had turned the bend in the beach, which curved to follow the lines of a little bay. Here we paused, for a long stretch of the beach was now opened to our gaze.

From this point the shore widened out, for the precipitous mainland shrank backward and decreased gradually in height until, a half mile or so further on, it reached the level plain and merged into a deep forest which grew almost down to the edge of the sea.

No human being was in sight, so we naturally concluded that the robbers had entered the forest.

Being curious to discover what they were doing, without hesitation we decided to follow them, and their path was easily traced by the footprints in the sand. These led straight to the forest, and although somewhat fearful that the enemy would discover our presence, we proceeded to walk boldly around the shore of the little bay until we came to the edge of the trees.

A sound of voices, mingled with the strokes of the axes, now guided us, and stealthily creeping among the thick underbrush we soon discovered the robbers busily at work.

Judson and Dandy Pete were trimming the branches from a fallen tree-trunk, while the others were rolling and dragging another big log toward the sea, the glistening waters being perceptible but a few yards away. Evidently the men were intending to build a raft, and after listening for a few minutes to their disjointed conversation we learned that the raft was designed to convey them and their stolen wealth to the ship.

While Daggett, Larkin and Bry tugged and dragged at the log, Nux and I crept away to the shore, where we found two big logs already lying upon the

sands. Also we could now plainly see, sheltered in another bay, the “Flipper” lying quietly at her anchorage, as Nux had wisely predicted.

The schemes of the robbers were now fully explained. Under cover of the forest by day, and hidden in their cave by night, they intended to complete the raft, and when it was ready it would not be difficult to steal away to the ship with the treasure, under cover of darkness, hoist the sails, and creep out to sea, bidding defiance to the Major and his comrades and leaving the miners and the “Flipper’s” crew to perish on the lonely island.

But the construction of the raft would require time — several days, at least — for after getting the logs to the shore they must be fastened together by cross-strips secured with wooden pegs, since there was not enough rope in their possession to bind the tree-trunks together.

Once more returning to a part of the underbrush near which the men were employed, Nux and I settled ourselves to listen attentively to their conversation.

Presently we heard Daggett say:

“At this rate we’ll have the raft ready by Saturday, and Saturday night we’ll take the ship.”

“It’s beastly hard work!” growled Dandy Pete, brushing with his sleeve the sweat from his brow.

“Yes; but it means liberty and riches to every one of us,” said Daggett, and that was an argument none cared to deny.

Just then I was startled at hearing low voices just beside me and instinctively I touched the islander’s shoulder and we crouched lower in the bushes. Nux, indeed, with a woodsman’s instinct, was quite flat upon the ground, lifeless and invisible, and I strove to imitate him.

“It’s as easy as can be,” said the voice, which I recognized as that of Larkin. “We’ll let the fools work until the raft is finished, and then we’ll put our knives in their hearts, and have the gold for ourselves.”

“How about Bry?” asked Judson, hoarsely whispering to his murderous comrade.

“Oh, he won’t interfere any,” was the reply. “And we need the nigger to help us work the ship.”

“Can three of us manage the vessel?”

“Of course, with good weather. We’ll have to take our chances of a storm, but the fewer there are to divide up, the bigger our fortunes will be. We won’t give the nigger a cent, but go halves on the whole thing. Perhaps we can sell the ship, too, for a good sum.”

“All right; I’m with you!” declared Judson, with an oath; and then the two conspirators crept away and rejoined the others, unconscious that their

diabolical plot had been overheard.

CHAPTER 12

WE RECOVER THE GOLD.

Thinking over the matter, I decided to return at once to the cave. The thieves would doubtless be occupied in the forest until sundown, and such a chance as this to secure possession of the gold might never occur again. For if Daggett or his men chanced to see our footprints in the sand, or suspected they were being spied upon, they would be liable to leave a guard in the cave thereafter.

So we softly crept from the forest and made our way back by the same route we had come, taking care to tread in the trail made by the robbers, so that our footprints could be less easily distinguished. We did not feel entirely safe from observation until we had regained the column of rock which towered into the air beside the precipitous cliff; but once our feet were on the narrow ledge both I and my faithful Sulu breathed easier, and with more deliberation accomplished the ascent to the cave.

"Now," said I, "we must work carefully, so that no spot of sand can escape us; for the thieves have taken care to disturb the surface everywhere, in order to throw any chance visitor to this hiding-place off the track. But we know the gold is buried in this cave, Nux, so it ought not to be a very hard job to find it."

Nux nodded, with his usual complaisance.

"We begin in back," he suggested, "and work front."

This seemed sensible, so I followed the islander to the far end of the cavern, and falling upon our knees we immediately began digging with our hands into the soft sand.

For nearly an hour we steadily worked, finding nothing at all. Then, as I stopped to rest, I cast a careless glance along the rocky sides of the cave and thought that I saw a white mark upon the wall, a few feet toward the front. Springing to my feet I approached this point and discovered that a small cross had been made with a piece of chalk or a bit of white limestone.

"Here we are, Nux!" I cried, joyfully and at once began digging in the sand beneath the mark. A few minutes' work proved that my sudden suspicion was correct; for Nux, who had straightway joined me, dragged one of the sacks to light, while I discovered another just beside it.

It was part of the stolen gold, sure enough, and my heart beat fast with excitement as I realized that the precious hoard was once more in my possession.

Only a part had been hidden in this place, we found; but now we had an unmistakable clew to guide us, so that we had little difficulty in finding a

second secret mark that resulted in the discovery of the balance of the treasure, as well as the sacks of provisions.

When all had been unearthed Nux asked:

"What we do now, Master Sam?"

"Why, carry it away, of course," I answered, joyous and elate.

"Where?" enquired the islander, simply.

I looked at him in surprise, and then realizing the meaning of the question, grew thoughtful again.

"You're right, Nux," said I. "It's going to be a harder task than I thought. We can't pass by the forest with it, that's certain; for Daggett and his followers would be sure to see us. On the other side, the cliff rises straight out of the sea, and there's no way to escape around it. All we can do, then, is to carry the gold to the top of this rock."

"Hm!" grunted the Sulu. "That no good, Master Sam."

"Why not?"

"No way to get off top of rock."

'True; but we can hide there, till the thieves go away to the ship. It isn't likely they'll climb up there again, for this cave is a better place to sleep in."

Nux seemed unconvinced, and I had none too much confidence in my own assertion.

"Tonight," said the islander, in a dismal tone, "they hunt for the gold. All gone. Robber very mad. They look ev'rywhere; then they find us on rock. Then they kill us."

'That's a pretty tough prophecy, Nux," I returned, as cheerfully as I could. "And it sounds likely enough, I confess. We've got the gold again, to be sure; but the robbers have got us; so we're worse off than we were before."

Nux took a lump of bread from a provision sack and began to munch it leisurely. Noticing the action, and remembering that I also was hungry, I proceeded to follow the islander's example.

While we ate, however, my Sulu was busily thinking, and so was I. As a result I presently gave my leg a delighted slap and began to laugh.

Nux looked at me with a grin of sympathy upon his features.

"What's matter, Master Sam?"

"Nux," said I, checking my amusement and trying to look grave and impressive, "there's an old saying that 'there's never a lock too strong but there's a key to fit it.' In other words, while there's life there's hope; never give up the ship; every sky has a silver lining!"

Nux looked puzzled.

"That's a lovely pair of trousers you're wearing, Nux," I continued, in a jocular strain. "They're made of the stoutest cloth Uncle Naboth could find in

San Francisco, and I gave them to you out of the ship's stores only three or four days ago, because your old ones were so ragged."

Nux glanced at his wide-legged blue trousers and nodded.

"Now, old man," said I, "you've often told me you used to go bare-legged and bare-backed in your own island, so I'm going to ask you to go bare-legged a little while now, and lend me those trousers."

"Wha' for, Master Sam?"

"To put the gold grains in, of course. The robbers may look for the sacks of gold, when they come back, but they're pretty sure not to open them. Therefore, my friend, we'll fix it so that they'll think their gold is all safe."

"How, Master Sam?"

"By filling the sacks with sand, and burying them again where we found them."

Nux looked at me admiringly, and grinned until his mouth stretched from ear to ear and displayed every one of his white teeth.

"Good, Master Sam!" he cried, and at once stripped the trousers from his legs.

I now hunted in the pockets of my jacket and brought out several small bits of cord, which I knotted firmly together. Then I tied the legs of Nux's trousers tightly at the bottoms, thus transforming them into a double sack of great capacity.

It did not take us long to transfer the gold-dust from the canvas bags to the trouser-legs, and as soon as this task was accomplished we refilled the bags with sand and tied up as before. I was obliged to tear away a part of my own shirt to get material with which to tie the upper part of the trousers, for I did not wish to deprive poor Nux of his entire apparel. The Sulu looked funny enough, dressed only in his shoes and shirt, with his legs between them, and more than once I was obliged to pause and laugh heartily at my comrade's appearance. But Nux didn't seem to mind, and soon the seriousness of our position and the necessity to hasten caused me to forget the queer costume of my follower.

We abstracted but a slender supply of provisions from the sacks, for we did not wish to arouse suspicion by taking too much. The next task was to bury the sacks of sand and the provisions exactly as they had been before, and to smooth over the surface of the sand and trample it down just as we had found it when we first entered the cave.

This being accomplished to our complete satisfaction, Nux lifted the heavy gold over his shoulder, one leg hanging behind his back and one in front, and started to mount the narrow ledge of rock with his burden, while I followed close behind to render any assistance I could.

The Sulu was a wonderfully strong man; but his task was a difficult one, although I tried to relieve him in the worst places by lifting a part of the heavy load.

Our progress was slow, for poor Nux had to stop frequently to put down his load and rest, and it was while we were on the outer surface of the rock, which faced the sea, that we were suddenly startled by hearing sounds that assured us the robbers were returning from the forest. Much time had been consumed in the cave, searching for the treasure and securing it, and now I began to fear we had delayed too long.

Just at this time the men could not see us; but as soon as they mounted the ledge and began to wind around the tower of rock, they would be sure to catch sight of our forms, and then our fate would be sealed.

"Nux," I whispered, "pick up the gold and be ready to start. As soon as the thieves get back to the ledge we must go on, and keep the rock always between us and them, or we shall be lost."

Nux nodded, and obeyed without a word. It was often hard to tell, by the sound of their voices, just how far up the ledge the men had progressed; but fortune favored us, and only once did we lag behind enough for the first of the robber band to espy us. But that first person, by good luck, proved to be Bryonia, and the clever islander at once pretended to stumble and fall, and so held the men that followed him in check until Nux and I had escaped around the crag.

Soon after this the robbers reached the cave, which they entered, thus enabling us to reach the top of the crag at our leisure.

Nux was nearly spent when at last he threw the laden trousers upon the flat top and tried to draw his tired body after them; but I gave him a hearty boost from behind, and then scrambled to the top unaided, nerved by the excitement of the moment.

For several minutes neither of us spoke. The Sulu man lay panting for breath, with the perspiration streaming from every pore of his body, and I, filled with gratitude at our escape and the successful accomplishment of our plan, sat beside my faithful friend and fanned him with my straw hat.

The sun was sinking fast, by this time, and the shadows of the three tall pine trees that grew upon this isolated peak fell upon the spot where we rested, and cooled our sun-parched bodies.

Although at times a rough laugh or a shouted curse reached our ears from the cavern below, there was no indication that Daggett or his band had yet made the discovery that the place had been visited in their absence, and the treasure for which they had risked so much abstracted from its sandy grave.

When twilight fell I arose and with some difficulty rolled the trousers to a

place nearer the center of the rock, where there was a small natural hollow; and then Nux and I sat beside it and ate again sparingly of the food we had brought.

It was while we were thus occupied that an incident occurred that filled us with sudden panic. For before our faces a man's head appeared above the edge of rock, and two dark eyes glared fixedly into our own.

At the moment I almost screamed with fright, so unnerved had my recent adventures rendered me; but Nux laid his broad hand across my mouth and arrested the outcry.

"It's Bry," he whispered, and even as he spoke the newcomer drew himself over the edge and crept on all fours to our side. I had no trouble in recognizing the friendly features then.

"Oh, Bry!" I said — softly, so as not to be heard by the robbers below — and clasped the islander's hands fervently in both my own.

Bry squatted beside us, his kindly face wreathed in smiles.

"They send me up here to see if anyone 'round," he whispered. "In a minute I go back and say' no.'"

"Can't you stay with us, Bry?" I asked, pleadingly.

"Not yet, Master Sam. They very bad mans down there. They kill you quick if they find you."

"We've got the gold, Bry!"

"I know. I see you in the wood; I follow your footprints all way home; I see you climbin' up rock. Then I see the sand been dig up, so I knew you got gold."

"Did they suspect us at all, Bry?"

"No, Master Sam. They too busy tryin' to kill each other. All want to have gold for himself, so all try to kill everyone else. Very bad mans, Master Sam."

"They're going to take you on the ship, and make you sail it," said I.

Bry laughed, silently.

"I stay with them now, so they not find you," he said. "But when right time come I steal away an' come back to you. Did you fill sack with sand, Master Sam?" glancing enquiringly at the stuffed trousers.

"Yes."

"That good," said Bry, approvingly. "They dig up one, when they come back, to see if all safe. Then they hide it again. Very good way to fool bad mans."

"But we can't leave here until they go away," I remarked.

"No. Must be careful. Tomorrow they finish raft. Tomorrow night they go to ship. You stay here and hide till then. After the bad mans go, I come back

to you, and we go to camp again."

"All right, Bry," said I, as cheerfully as possible.

Then the islander bade us good-bye and returned to the cave to report to Daggett that no one was to be seen anywhere about. And now Nux and I, wearied by the adventures of the day, but buoyed by the hope that we might finally escape with the recovered gold, lay down upon the rocky eminence and, bathed by the moon's silver rays, slept peacefully until morning.

CHAPTER 13

THE CATASTROPHE.

I was awakened by the voices of the robbers, who were leaving the cave early in order to complete their raft by nightfall. It was evident that they had not suspected our intrusion into their retreat, or the fact that their stolen treasure had been taken from them. Indeed, they seemed in high spirits, especially Larkin and Judson, who were doubtless eager to carry out their nefarious plan of murdering their comrades as soon as the work on the raft was finished. Daggett might also harbor a conspiracy to secure the bulk of the treasure, and probably all the members of the evil band were looking forward to this coming night to end their suspense and give them an advantage one over the other. "Honor among thieves" has often been quoted; but in this instance, as in many others that could be mentioned, the thieves were as lacking in honor as they were in honesty.

From my elevated perch I watched them file along the ledge to the sands, and upon reaching the level set off toward the forest. Not till they were well out of sight did Nux or I venture to rise upright and stretch our limbs.

The morning was warm and sultry. The sun gleamed hot in a cloudless sky and not a breath of air stirred the leaves of the three tall trees that stood at the edge of our towering rock.

"It's going to be a roasting day," I said to Nux, "and we won't get any shade from those trees until afternoon. Do you suppose we dare go down to the cave for a while?"

Nux shook his head.

"We all safe now, Master Sam," he replied. "Better not run no risk with this here gold dust." Thoughtfully I gazed toward the forest.

"Those fellows will be cool and comfortable enough in the shade," I remarked, rebelliously, "and I don't believe they'll come back through the hot sun until it's time to get the treasure. Let's go down to the sea and take a swim."

Nux was unable to resist the temptation; so, leaving the trousers full of golden grains resting on top of the rock, we made our way cautiously along the narrow, winding ledge until we reached the shore.

There was not a ripple on the sea. It lay as still and inert as a sheet of glass; but the water was cool, nevertheless, when compared with the stifling atmosphere, and so I and my companion paddled in it for more than an hour, feeling much refreshed by our luxurious bath.

Afterward we ate our simple breakfast and then climbed the ledge as far as the mouth of the cave, where we sat down in the shade. Even that slight

exertion quite exhausted us.

"We will be sure to hear them if they should by chance return" said I, "and we'll certainly be roasted if we get on top of this rock, where the sun can strike us. I believe it's the hottest day I ever knew."

Meantime the men in the forest were finding their work far from pleasant, as Bryonia afterward told us. They were shaded from the sun, it is true; but the air they breathed was as hot as if it came fresh from an oven, and the least exertion caused the perspiration to stream from their pores. So there was considerable grumbling among them and a general shirking of work that made their progress slow. Even Bryonia, who was fairly heat-proof, found he had little energy to swing his axe, although he made a pretense of working as industriously as ever.

"Never mind, boys," said Daggett, when noon had arrived and they were eating the luncheon they had brought in their pockets. "The raft will be big enough to carry us and the gold to the ship, I'm sure, for the sea is as still as a mill-pond. We'll just get these two logs to the shore, and fasten them to the others, and call the thing a go. What do you say?"

They agreed with him readily enough. As a matter of fact the raft might suffice to carry them all, but none of them believed that all five would embark upon it, so many murderous schemes were lurking in their minds.

Wearily they dragged the two logs toward the sea, but much time was consumed in this operation, and the day was far spent before the raft was complete and ready to launch.

Most of the men had stripped themselves naked, to work more comfortably, for the heat was well-nigh unbearable; but now, as they stood ready to push the raft into the water, the sun suddenly disappeared and a cold chill swept over them.

"We're going to have a storm," cried Daggett, looking curiously into the sky. "Better leave the raft where it is, my lads, and make for the cave." The warning was unquestionable. Already a low, moaning sound came to their ears across the sea, and the sky grew darker each moment.

With one accord the men seized their clothing in their arms and ran along the beach toward the cave, while tiny points of lightning darted here and there about them, casting weird if momentary gleams upon their naked forms.

Nux and I sitting half asleep by the mouth of the cave, were warned by the first chill blast that swept over us that the weather had changed and a storm was imminent. Springing to my feet I looked fearfully at the darkening sky.

"What'll we do, Nux?" I asked. "This will bring our enemies back here in double-quick time."

“Better climb on top the rock, Master Sam,” advised the Sulu.

“But it’ll rain — floods and torrents, probably — and thunder and lightning besides.”

“‘Spect it will, Master Sam. But rain won’t hurt us much.”

“And Daggett’s gang will, if they catch us. I guess you’re right, Nux. Come along.”

As we started along the ledge the wind came upon us in sudden gusts, and the sky grew so dark that we almost had to feel our way. It was necessary to exercise great care, both to find a secure footing and to cling fast to the face of the rock, to prevent our being blown into the abyss below; but we struggled manfully on, and presently reached the top, where Nux hoisted me over the edge and then scrambled after me.

By this time the lightning was playing all around us, and we were obliged to crawl carefully on hands and knees to the little hollow in the center of the rock, where we were to an extent shielded from the fierce gusts of wind. Even then I feared we would be blown away, but Nux shouted in my ear to hold fast to the gold, which served as a sort of anchor, and enabled us both, as we lay flat in the hollow, to maintain our positions securely.

And now the lightning began to be accompanied by sharp peals of thunder, while the wind suddenly subsided to give place to wild floods of rain. At intervals could be heard the shouts of the robbers, who had reached the rocks and were creeping along the ledge to their cave. All the elements seemed engaged in a confused turmoil, until I was nearly deafened by the uproar. I tried to ask a question of Nux, but could not hear my own voice, and gave up the attempt. The thought crossed my mind that we had been very foolish to climb to this peak of rock, where we were exposed to the full fury of the storm, and I wondered vaguely, as I clung to the sack of gold we had risked so much to secure, how long it would be before the wind swept us away, or we would be annihilated by a bolt of lightning.

Presently an arm was laid across my back, as if to protect me, and raising my head I saw by the light of a vivid flash that Bryonia had joined us and was lying in the hollow at my side.

I wondered how the daring Sulu had ever managed to reach us; but the strong arm gave me a new sense of security, and impulsively I seized the man’s hand and pressed it to express my gratitude and welcome.

An instant later a terrible crash sounded in my ears, while at the same time a blast of fire swept over the rock and seemed to bathe our three prostrate figures in its withering flame. Again came a crash, and another — and still another, while the crisp lightning darted through the air and made each nerve of our bodies tingle as if pricked by myriads of needle points.

Half bewildered, I raised my head, and saw the great rocking-stone sway from side to side and then plunge headlong into the gulf that lay between the precipice and the solitary rock whereon we reclined. And I felt the mighty column of rock shake and lean outward, as if about to topple into the sea, while the impact of the fallen mass reverberated above the shriek of the wind and the thunder's loudest roar.

Instinctively I braced myself for the end — the seemingly inevitable outcome of this terrible catastrophe; but to my surprise no violent calamity overwhelmed us. Instead, the lightning, as if satisfied with its work of destruction, gradually abated. The blinding flashes no longer pained my closed eyes with their vivid recurrence, and even the wind and rain moderated and grew less violent.

CHAPTER 14

BURIED ALIVE!

Terrified beyond measure by the awfulness of the storm, I gave little heed to the fact that the rocky hollow in which I lay with the two faithful islanders had filled with water, so that our bodies were nearly covered by the pool that had formed. My head still rested on the trousers packed with gold, and one arm was closely clasped around a leg containing the treasured metal grains. So I lay, half dazed and scarcely daring to move, while the rain pattered down upon us and the storm sobbed itself out by degrees.

I must have lost consciousness, after a time, for my first distinct recollection is of Bryonia drawing my body from the pool to lay it on a dryer portion of the rock, where the overhanging trees slightly sheltered me. The sky had grown lighter by now, and while black streaks of cloud still drifted swiftly across the face of the moon, there were times when the great disc was clear, and shed its light brilliantly over the bleak and desolate landscape.

Within an hour the rain had ceased altogether, and stars came out to join the moon; but still we lay motionless atop the peak of rock, worn out by our struggles with the elements and fitfully dozing in spite of the horrors we had passed through.

Bry was first to arouse, and found the sun shining overhead. There was no wind and the temperature of the morning air was warm and genial. The islander's legs pained him, for in his terrible climb up the rock during the storm a jagged piece of rock had cut his thigh and torn the flesh badly. He had not noticed it until now, but after examining the wound he bathed it in the water of the pool and bound it up with a rag torn from his shirt.

While he was thus occupied Nux sat up and watched him, yawning. They spoke together in low tones, using the expressive Sulu language, and had soon acquainted each other with the events that had occurred since they separated. Their murmured words aroused me to a realization of the present, and having partially collected my thoughts I began to rub my eyes and look wonderingly around me.

The top of the rock was no longer flat, but inclined toward the sea. The three tall trees also inclined that way, instead of growing upright, and the neighboring cliff of the mainland seemed further removed from us than before. Something appeared to be missing in the landscape, and then I suddenly remembered how the rocking-stone had leaped into the gulf during the storm.

"All safe?" I asked, looking at my friends gratefully.

"All safe," answered Bry, smiling.

“It was a dreadful night,” I continued, with a shudder. “Have you heard anything from the robbers yet?”

“No, Master Sam.”

“They’re probably sleeping late. Anyhow, they can’t have gone away on the raft yet.”

Bry shook his head.

“All very wicked mans, Master Sam,” he said. “Even in big storm, while we climb up to cave, Mister Daggett tell me to go behind Pete an’ push him off rock.”

“The villain!” I exclaimed, indignantly.

“He tell me if I not push Pete off, he kill me,” continued Bry, with a grin.

“What did you do?”

“When they run into cave, I run by it, an’ come here. That’s all, Master Sam.”

“You did well, Bry. If they climb up here after you, we’ll fight them to the death.”

“No climb rock any more, Master Sam,” said Bry, soberly.

“Why not?”

“See how rock tip? Only fly can climb rock now.”

“I believe you’re right, Bry!” I cried, startled at this dreadful assertion; “and, if so, we’re prisoners here. Let us see what it looks like.”

I crawled rather stiffly down the inclined surface to the edge overlooking the sea, and one glance showed me that it would now be impossible for anyone to walk along the narrow ledge.

While I looked a sharp cry of horror from Nux reached my ears, and swiftly turning I hastened with Bry toward the place where the islander was leaning over the gulf that separated the peak from the mainland.

“What is it, Nux?” I asked, anxiously.

But the Sulu only stood motionless, pointing with one finger into the abyss, while his eyes stared downward with an expression of abject fear.

We both followed his gaze, and one glance was sufficient to fully acquaint us with the awful catastrophe the vengeance of the storm had wrought.

The huge rocking-stone, weighing thousands of tons, which for ages had remained delicately balanced upon the edge of the chasm, had been struck by a bolt of lightning and torn from its base. Crashing into the gulf, a point of the great, wedge-shaped boulder had entered the mouth of the cave where the desperadoes sought shelter, and, crowded forward by its own weight, it had sealed up the robbers in a living grave, from whence no power of man could ever rescue them.

It was this mighty wedge, crowded into the space between the slender

peak and the main cliff, that had caused the former to lean outward; and in one comprehensive look we were able to read the whole story of the night's tragedy — a tragedy we had instinctively felt in the crash of the storm, but could only realize now.

"Poor fellows!" I whispered, softly, forgetting in my awe that they had been our relentless enemies. "It was a terrible fate. Perhaps they're even now sitting in that dark hole, shut off from all the world and waiting for death to overtake them. Isn't it dreadful."

The islanders glanced at one another without reply, but I noticed that they exchanged a secret sign which their pagan priests had taught them when they were boys, and which was supposed to propitiate the demon of retribution. To their simple minds Daggett and his gang of cut-throats had been properly punished for their wickedness.

But for my part I am glad to remember that at the moment I ignored the fact that these men were wicked, and grieved that four human beings had suddenly been cut off in the prime of their manhood. The recollection of their crimes might temper my regret afterward, but just now my thoughts were all of sorrow and commiseration.

Nux roused me from my reflections by asking: "What we do now, Master Sam?"

"I don't know," I answered, despairingly. "If we can't escape from this rock we are little better off than those poor fellows below us. See! the stone, as it fell, tore away the ledge completely."

"No climb down, any way at all," said Bry, squatting upon the rock and clasping his knees with his hands.

"We haven't any rope, or enough clothing to make one," I continued, striving to be calm and to force myself to think clearly. "But if we remain up here it won't take us long to die of thirst or starvation. The aggravating thing about it is that the mainland is just too far away for us to leap across to it. We're in a bad fix, boys, and no mistake."

Bry gazed reflectively at the trees.

"If we had axe," said he, "we chop down tree, and make fall across the gulf."

"Ah! that's a clever idea," I cried; but my elation quickly subsided, and I added gloomily in the next breath: "only we have no axe."

Bry made no answer, but sat thoughtfully gazing around him. Presently he began to creep around the table of rock on his hands and knees, examining every part of its surface with great care.

At one place, where the edge of the rock was jagged and of a harder character than the rest, he paused to make a more thorough examination, and

then he drew out his one-bladed jack-knife and began prying into the rock with its point.

Nux and I immediately crept to his side to see what he was doing, and soon Bry had loosened a piece of rock that weighed about five pounds. It was flat on the lower surface and of irregular circular form. This fragment the Sulu examined with great care, and struck it sharply against the rock without breaking it. It seemed to meet his approval, for he laid it carefully aside and at once attempted to pry up another portion of the hard rock. Then, when he had again succeeded, he sat down and began cautiously chipping one piece of rock against the other, until he had brought the first fragment to a wedge shape that resembled a rude axe.

"Ah! I understand now what you're about, Bry," I exclaimed, delightedly. "Do you think you can make it work?"

Bry nodded.

"That way we make axe in Jolo-Jolo," he said, proudly.

He now handed the rude implement to Nux, who seemed to comprehend without words what was required of him, for he at once began rubbing the edge of the stone axe upon a rough portion of rock to smooth and sharpen it more perfectly.

Meanwhile Bry pried up more rock and formed a second axe-head, and so for several hours the men labored patiently at their task, while I, unable to be of assistance, sat watching them with breathless interest.

When the second axe was ready for Nux to sharpen, Bry climbed up the trunk of one of the tall pines, and selecting a branch of the size he desired, with much effort cut it from the tree with his knife.

Then he descended, trimmed the branch, and began fashioning it into an axe-handle. He made no attempt to render it graceful or beautiful, you may be sure. The one requirement was service, and the wood was tough and strong enough to answer the purpose required.

By the time the handle was ready Nux had worn the edge of the first rude stone axe to a fair degree of sharpness, and with it Bry split the end of the handle far enough down to wedge the axe-head between the pieces. Then he bound the top together with strips of bark cut from a young limb, which was far stronger than any cord would have been.

A clumsy instrument it seemed to be, when it was finished; but Bry balanced it gravely in his hands, and swung it around his head, and nodded his full approval and satisfaction.

"Now we chop down tree," he announced.

Of the three trees that fortunately grew upon the column of rock, two were evidently too short to reach across the gulf from where they stood. But the

third was close to the edge, and towered well above its fellows; so this was the one Bry selected. A woodsman would probably have laughed at the strokes dealt by the Sulu; but Bry knew what he was about, for he had chopped trees in this way before. Too hard a blow would have crushed the stone edge of the weapon, and a prying motion would have broken it at once; so the islander struck straight and true, and not with too much force, and slowly but surely wore through the stalwart trunk of the tree.

When the axe got dull he unbound the bark thongs and exchanged it for the other, while Nux re-sharpened it. This consumed a good deal of time, and the day was far advanced before Bry decided that the chopping was deep enough to allow them to fell the tree. This they did in a peculiar way, for Nux climbed into the high branches and then, aided by Bry and me, who pushed from below, he began swaying the tree back and forth, his own weight adding to the strain, until suddenly it gave way at the stump and — slowly at first, but with ever accelerating speed — fell with a crash across the gulf.

It looked like a trying and dangerous position for Nux; but the islander cleverly kept on the outer side of the branches, which broke his fall so perfectly that even as the tree touched the cliff he sprang to the ground safe and uninjured.

"Hooray!" I shouted, in delight; for this bridge removed from my heart all terrors of starvation and imprisonment, affording us a means of leaving the islet of rock as soon as we pleased to go.

But the sun was even now sinking below the horizon, so we decided not to effect the crossing until morning. Nux climbed back over the swaying trunk, and after he had rejoined us we ate the last crumbs of food we possessed for our supper and then lay down to sleep.

Having passed the day in idleness I found I was not very tired or sleepy; but the Sulus were thoroughly exhausted by their labors, and they welcomed the rest as only weary men can.

Long after they were snoring I sat in the moonlight thinking of our strange adventures of the past twenty-four hours; the recovery of the gold, the destruction of the robbers, and our present means of release from the dangerous pinnacle that had threatened to hold us fast prisoners. And I realized, with a grateful heart, that I owed all of my good fortune and narrow escapes to the faithful Sulu men, and made a vow that I would never in the future forget the services they had rendered.

CHAPTER 15

THE MAJOR GIVES CHASE.

Meantime there had been much excitement and confusion in the camp when it was discovered that several of the men, including Nux and Bry, and even "the boy Sam," had disappeared during the night with most of the gold dust that had been accumulated.

I can relate fairly well what occurred, for I heard the story often enough afterward.

The Major was furious with rage, at first, and sent at once for Uncle Naboth, whom he accused of being at the bottom of the plot to rob him.

Mr. Perkins was so full of his own anxieties that he paid little attention to the red-bearded giant's ravings.

"I'm afraid Sam's in trouble," he said, nervously.

"In trouble! You bet he is," yelled the Major, "I'll skin him alive when I catch him."

"That's the point," answered Uncle Naboth. "How are we to find him again? I'll risk you hurting the boy, if we can only find out where they've taken him."

"Your niggers are gone, too," the Major reminded him.

"That's the only thing that gives me hope, sir," retorted my Uncle. "Those men are as faithful and honest as any men on earth, and I'm thinking they're gone after Sam to try to rescue him."

"Then you think he's been kidnapped, do you?"

"Of course. The men that are missing are the worst of your lot — the ones that have caused you the most trouble in every way. There's not a man from the 'Flipper's' crew among them. The way I figure it out is that Daggett, Larkin, Hayes and Judson have made a plot to steal all the gold, and escape with it. They robbed you first, and then they robbed Sam, and when the boy tried to make a fuss they just kidnapped him and took him along with them."

"How about the niggers?" asked the Major, sarcastically.

"That puzzles me, I'll admit," acknowledged my Uncle. "Bry and Nux may have seen the thieves get away with Sam, and followed after them, to try to rescue him. That's the only way I can figure it out just now. But we're losing time, Major. What's to be done?"

"Two things. Get back the gold, and shoot down the robbers like dogs. They can't get away, you know. They're somewhere on this island, and I mean to find them."

"There's the ship."

"What of it?"

“If they get aboard and sail away we’ll be in a bad box.”

“How can they get aboard? We’ve got the small boats.”

“They can make a raft, or even swim out to the ship,” returned Uncle Naboth, shrewdly. “I tell you, Major, you’re wasting time. Why don’t you do something?”

The Major glanced at him as if undecided whether to be angry with him or not. But Mr. Perkins was undoubtedly right, and the miners were gathering outside the door with curses and threats against the men who had robbed them, for the news had quickly spread throughout the camp.

So their leader sent six men, heavily armed, in the ship’s long-boat to board the “Flipper” and protect the vessel from being captured. These were all his own men, for he still suspected that the “Flipper’s” crew were in some way implicated in the theft.

Then he picked four miners and four of the sailors to form a party to search for the robbers, and decided to lead the band himself and to take Uncle Naboth with him. The rest of the men were ordered to resume their work of washing out gold.

“I’m going to trust you, Perkins,” said the Major, “for your loss is as great as ours, and you seem anxious over that boy of yours. But if I meet with any treachery I’ll shoot you on the spot; and if I find that Sam Steele is one of the thieves I’ll show him no mercy, I promise you.”

“Quite satisfactory, sir,” answered Uncle Naboth, calmly. “Only let us get started as soon as possible.”

It was a puzzle at first to know in which direction to look for the fugitives; but Ned Britton had been carefully inspecting the edge of the forest, and came upon one of the paths Daggett had made in the course of his various wanderings inland. It was not the one we had taken, but away they started through the thicket, on a false scent, and the entire day was consumed in a vain search.

As they sat over their camp fire at evening Ned proposed that they try the other side of the island the following day.

“It’s there where the ship lies anchored, sir,” he told the Major; “and it’s most likely the men are in that neighborhood. The paths we’ve been following today are old trails that lead nowhere in particular, and there’s no use going any further in this direction.”

This proposition was so sensible that the Major at once agreed to it, and daybreak saw them tramping through the tangled underbrush toward the opposite side of the island. Britton, who had a good sense of direction and knew about where the ship lay, undertook to guide them, and was fortunate enough to strike the trail of the robbers about the middle of the afternoon.

The tracks lay directly toward the beach, and they pressed on with renewed vigor; but the heat was terribly oppressive in the more open country they had now reached, and the men were all exhausted by the long tramp. When, a little later, the sky grew black and the storm burst upon them, they withdrew to a thick grove of trees and rigged up a temporary shelter with their blankets, beneath which they passed the night.

The storm raged all around them, and occasionally the crash of a fallen tree startled their nerves; but the high cliff broke the force of the wind, and the lightning was less severe than it was directly on the coast.

Uncle Naboth thought of me more than once during this rage of the elements, and hoped I was safe from harm; indeed, his anxiety was so great that he scarcely closed his eyes throughout the night.

At daybreak they left their shelter and gazed wonderingly at the scene of devastation around them. The storm had wrought fearful havoc everywhere, and when they resumed their journey their progress was necessarily slow and difficult.

Still they labored on, and in the afternoon passed through the forest and came upon the coast directly opposite the place where the "Flipper" still rode at anchor under bare masts. She seemed to have escaped all danger from the storm, and although the sea was still rolling high the good ship nodded her prow to each wave with a grace that betokened she was still in good condition.

"Well, boys, the robbers haven't got her yet!" cried Uncle Naboth, delightedly.

"No; but they've had a try for it already," said the Major, significantly, as he pointed to a half-finished raft that had been lifted high by the waves of the previous night and wedged fast between two great trees. "Evidently the scoundrels don't know we have sent a squad to guard the ship."

"We're on their trail, all right," remarked Ned Britton, after examining the crudely constructed raft carefully. "But where do you suppose they are?"

"Somewhere on the coast, of course," said Uncle Naboth. "Let's walk up the edge of the bay to the inlet, and see if they're in that direction."

So they made for the inlet, failing, of course, to find any traces of the thieves. They were seen from the deck of the "Flipper" by the men who had been sent aboard in the long boat, and the Major signaled them to remain where they were for the present.

After a brief halt the little band retraced their steps to examine the coast in the other direction, and another night overtook them within hailing distance of the rocky peak where I and the two islanders were resting beside our newly acquired bridge to await impatiently the morning. But the Major's

party was, of course, unaware of this, and went into camp in a hollow where the light of their fire was unobserved by us.

At daybreak, however, Uncle Naboth and Ned Britton were up and anxiously exploring the coast; and presently they saw, a little distance away, the tall form of Bryonia walking carefully across our tree trunk. The islander almost fell into the arms of Uncle Naboth, as he stepped off the tree and the old man's first anxious question was:

"Where's Sam?"

"Here I am, Uncle!" I called from my rock. "I'll be with you in a minute, but we've got to get the gold over first."

"The gold!" cried Uncle Naboth, in amazement. "Have you got it, then, after all?"

"To be sure," said I, with a touch of pride, "every grain of it!"

Uncle Naboth groaned.

"I didn't think as you'd do it, Sam, my boy," he said, regretfully.

"I couldn't have done it, without Nux and Bry," I answered, not understanding that I had been accused of the theft.

The old man turned reproachfully to Bry, who stood grinning beside him.

"Did I ever teach you to steal, sir?" he demanded, sternly.

"Takin' gold from robbers ain't stealin'," replied the islander, in a calm tone.

"What robbers?"

"Daggett an' Pete, an' — "

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Uncle Naboth, a light breaking in upon his confused mind. "They stole the gold from the camp, I suppose, and you and Sam have followed them up, and got it back again?"

"That's it, exactly, Uncle!" I declared from my side of the precipice, where I could hear every word spoken. "I'll tell you the whole story bye and bye."

Just then I was wondering if I dared cross the tree. It seemed very frail, and the rounded trunk was difficult to walk upon. Should I lose my balance there were only a few slender branches to cling to in order to keep from toppling over into the gulf below.

Bry saw my dilemma, however, and running lightly across the tree again he caught me up bodily and perched me upon his broad shoulders.

"Hold fast, Master Sam," he called, and the next moment stepped out fearlessly and, while Uncle Naboth held his breath in grim suspense, the islander crossed the swaying tree and dropped me safely on the other side.

The old man had barely time to grasp both my hands in a warm clasp when the big Major came up, blowing and sputtering, with the balance of the

party.

"Well, where's the rest o' the thieves?" he cried out, glaring fiercely at me and then at Bry.

"Under that rock, sir," I answered gravely, with a shudder at the recollection of their dreadful punishment; and then, in as few words as possible, I told the story of our adventures, relating how we had followed the robbers and recovered the gold, and of the great storm that had sent the rocking-stone hurling into the chasm to seal up the evil band in a living tomb.

Even the Major was impressed by the weird tale, and Uncle Naboth wiped the sweat from his brow as he leaned over the cliff and marked the immense wedge of rock that had closed forever the mouth of the cavern.

"It seems there's no one left to punish," growled the red-beard, in a low voice; "and I'm glad the fate of those scoundrels was taken out of my hands. As for you, young man," turning suddenly to me, "you've acted splendidly, an' so have the niggers. Let's shake hands all 'round!"

I felt my face turn as red as the Major's whiskers at this unexpected praise.

"Hooray!" yelled Ned Britton, and the others joined him in a mighty shout of approval.

Then Ned and Bry crossed the tree to where Nux was still standing on the peak, and hoisted the loaded trousers to Bryonia's back. Nux crossed over in front and Ned Britton behind the bearer of the precious gold, to save him if he made a misstep; but their caution was unnecessary. The big Sulu was as sure-footed as a goat, and safely deposited his burden at the Major's feet. Then we all returned to the nearby camp for breakfast, after which, the gold being taken from the trousers and distributed into several small packages, that they might be more easily carried, Nux was given his leg-coverings again, to his infinite satisfaction.

"And now," said the Major, "we'll make tracks for the camp. We've been away a long time, but we've got the gold back, and got rid of the worst characters among the lot of us; so there's nothing much to grumble over, after all."

CHAPTER 16

THE GRAVE CAPTAIN GAY.

Perhaps it was only natural that I should become the hero of the miners when the camp was at last reached and the men learned the strange story of our recovery of the gold. Nux and Bry also came in for a good share of praise, which they well deserved, and it seemed as if the adventure had established a permanent good feeling between the gold seekers and our crew of the "Flipper." There was no more suspicion on either side, and when the Major made a new division of the recovered gold he generously insisted that I should receive even more than I had been robbed of, for my share. Whatever the Major's faults might be, he was certainly liberal in his dealings with others, and Uncle Naboth was greatly pleased with the profitable result of an adventure that had at first threatened to ruin the fortunes of the firm of Perkins & Steele.

No one mourned very much over the death of the men who had stolen the gold; on the contrary, there was a feeling of general relief that the four desperadoes were unable to cause any more trouble. Therefore the camp resumed its former routine, and the miners set to work with renewed vigor to wash out the golden grains from the rich sands of the inlet.

It was about this time that the grave and reserved Captain Gay proved himself to be a genius, and by an act of real cleverness that crowned his name with glory materially shortened the stay of our entire community on the island.

The Captain had worked side by side with the common sailors, for the Major showed no favoritism, and insisted that every able-bodied man should perform his share of the work. Even Uncle Naboth had from the first day of our capture toiled from morning till night; but he accepted his tasks with rare good nature, and frequently confided to me, in his droll way, that his enforced labor had added ten years to his life.

"I was gettin' altogether too chunked and fat," he said one evening, "and likely enough I'd 'a' been troubled sooner or later with apoplexy or dropsical. But now I've lost twenty or thirty pounds weight, an' feel as lively as a cricket in a hornet's nest. Work's a good thing, Sam. I'm glad the Major made me do it. Probably he's saved my life by his cussedness."

Captain Gay had been working at the upper end of the inlet, near to the place where a slender mountain stream fell from a precipice above and mingled its fresh water with that of the inlet. This stream fell upon a rocky bottom, but in course of years it had worn a bowl-shaped hollow in the rock, which could be distinctly observed through the transparent water.

“There ought to be a lot of gold in that hollow,” Ned Britton had remarked to the Captain one day. “I’ve an idea all the gold we find in the sands of the inlet has been brought here by the mountain streams.”

“I’ve been thinking that, myself,” answered the Captain; but it was a week later that he climbed the rock and followed the bent of the stream for nearly a mile, marking carefully the lay of the land.

The next morning he went to the Major with his plan, which was nothing less than a proposal to turn the stream from its bed, several hundred yards above, and let it follow a new course and reach the inlet a hundred feet distant from its present fall.

The Major stared thoughtfully at the Captain for a time, and then followed him up the stream and made a careful examination of the territory. The result was an order for all the seamen of the “Flipper” to place themselves at the disposal of Captain Gay and obey his orders.

In three days they had built a dam of rocks and brushwood nearly across the stream, and pried away the banks in another place to allow the water to escape by the new channel.

The fourth day the opening was closed in the dam, and the stream plunged away on its new course, leaving its former bed practically dry.

Immediately the men ran down to the inlet, where the Major himself waded to the hollow caused by the previous fall of water and dipped up a pan of sand from the cavity. Upon examination it proved richer in gold than any of us had anticipated, the sands containing many small nuggets which, being heavier than the grains of metal, had been accumulating for many years in the basin.

All hands were set to work in this locality, and inspired by the rich harvest that rewarded their toil, they labored early and late, until the bags of dust and nuggets had become so numerous that even the Major was filled with amazement.

But this was not all that was gained by turning the mountain stream from its bed. In several hollows up above Captain Gay discovered rich deposits of small nuggets that were secured with ease, and two weeks later the Major called a meeting of all the members of the party on the sands before his tent.

“Boys,” said he “we’ve got enough to make every one of us rich for life. What’s the use of staying here longer? I’m getting homesick, for one, and a good many of you are longing to get back to the States and begin spending your piles.

What do you say — shall we board the ship and go home?”

“Yes!” they yelled, without a dissenting voice.

“Then,” said the Major, “tomorrow we’ll divide the spoils, so that every

man has his honest share; and then we'll pay our passage money to Mr. Perkins and sail away home."

The division was accomplished with very little dissatisfaction or friction, for the worst elements in our assorted company had been removed, and the Major was absolutely just in his decisions. One or two, to be sure, grumbled that the provisions from the "Flipper" had been purchased at too high a price, or that too much of the gold was set aside to pay for the passage back to San Francisco; but not one objected when the Major set aside three heavy bags of gold to reward Captain Gay for his clever feat in turning the mountain stream.

When Uncle Naboth and I, in the seclusion of my hut, had figured out our share of the profits, the old man was hugely delighted.

"My partner!" he exclaimed, slapping his thigh with enthusiasm, "it's paid us better than three trips to Alaska! We've nearly made our fortunes, Sam, my boy, and if we get safe home again we can thank the Major for making us his prisoners."

It did not take our party long to transfer all their possessions to the decks of the "Flipper," where the ship's carpenter and part of the crew had been sent beforehand to clear up the rigging, ship a new rudder, and make some repairs that had been rendered necessary by the storm that had driven us to this strange island.

To my own inexperienced eyes the damage had been so great that it seemed as if the sailors would require weeks in which to make the vessel fit to put to sea again; so that I was astonished, when I went aboard, to note how quickly the task had been accomplished. Indeed, the "Flipper" seemed as trim and staunch as when she last sailed out of the Golden Gate, and doubtless she was fully able to bear us all safely home again.

All our party having been put aboard, together with their property, Captain Gay ordered the anchors hoisted, and at eleven o'clock on the morning of September 16th, the "Flipper" headed out to sea before a fair breeze.

The quarters aft had been given up to the miners, most of whom were obliged to swing hammocks in the cabin. The mate offered his little room to the Major and bunked with the sailors in the forecastle; but Captain Gay and Mr. Perkins retained their own rooms, and so did I, in order to watch over the firm's gold, which was stowed carefully away in my lockers. You may be sure I was glad to get back to my books and my comfortable bed again, and overjoyed to find myself on the way to a more civilized land.

As the ship stood out to sea, the Major, who had been pacing the deck with a thoughtful brow, noticed Captain Gay taking his bearings with the aid

of the sextant, while I stood by observing him. At once the big man's countenance cleared, and he strode over to us and anxiously watched the Captain while the latter made notes of his observations. Several of the miners likewise seemed interested, but it was evident they did not understand in the least what the Captain was doing.

No sooner, however, had Captain Gay returned to his cabin, where at his request I followed him, than the Major knocked for admittance, and being invited to enter he cautiously closed the door after him and said:

"You've relieved me of a great worry, Captain. I was afraid we'd never be able to find this island again. But the sextant gives you the latitude and longitude, doesn't it?"

Captain Gay nodded, and looked thoughtfully out of his little window at the fast receding island.

"That island's mine," continued the Major, in a stem voice; "and I shall claim it until some one else proves a better right to the place."

Still the Captain made no reply.

The Major stared at him as though he had just discovered the man.

"Does any one else aboard know how to use those instruments?" he finally asked.

"No one," answered the Captain, briefly.

"Then the secret is safe with us," resumed the Major. "I'll just trouble you, my good fellow, to give me the exact latitude and longitude of the island. I'll mark them down in my note-book."

"Come to me tomorrow noon," said Captain Gay.

"Why tomorrow noon?" with a sudden frown.

"Can't you understand? Don't you know it requires hours to figure out so complicated a problem?"

"Oh, does it?"

A nod.

"Well, I'll come in tomorrow. But understand, not a word of the true reckoning to a soul on board. Not even to Perkins or the boy here, who has no business to be listening to this conversation, and had better forget it. The island is mine!"

Captain Gay sat silent, merely drumming with his fingers on the little table before him. The Major gave him another curious look and stalked away, whistling softly to himself, as if something had occurred to puzzle him. Indeed, the Captain's face was so set and stern that it made me uncomfortable, and I soon left him and returned to my own room.

The "Flipper" made good time during the afternoon, and before darkness fell those on board saw the island where they had labored so hard and

endured so much gradually sink into the sea and disappear.

The breeze held all through the night, and daybreak found the sturdy ship plowing steadily onward over the waste of gray waters. The sailors had fallen into their usual routine and performed their labors with mechanical precision, while the miners lay around the deck and watched them with the interest landsmen usually show when on a sailing ship.

At the stroke of twelve I saw the Major promptly approach the Captain's room, where I knew the seaman was busily engaged in writing.

Wishing to learn the result of this second interview I crept forward and without hesitation established myself beside the door, which the redbeard had carelessly left ajar. I even ventured to peer curiously through the opening; but neither of the men observed my intrusion.

The Major for a moment stood staring with the same wondering gaze he had bestowed on Captain Gay the day before; but suddenly his face brightened and he said:

"By Jupiter! I've struck it at last!"

"Struck what?" asked the Captain, looking up. "The resemblance that bothered me. You're the living image of that man Daggett, who caused us that trouble on the island. It's a wonder I never noticed it before."

The Captain flushed, but said nothing.

"No relation, I hope?" queried the Major, grinning.

"To Daggett?"

"Yes; the scoundrel who stole our gold."

Captain Gay had resumed his writing, but said, lightly, as if the matter was too preposterous to be treated seriously:

"Is it likely, sir?"

But already the Major's mind had turned to a more important subject.

"I've come for that little memorandum, sir."

"What memorandum?" asked the Captain, quietly.

"The location of the island."

"Oh; I can't give it to you," said the other. "When you left this room yesterday the draft from the open door caught the paper I had made my figures on, and carried it out of the window. So the record is lost."

"Lost!" The Major stared at him in amazement. "Absolutely lost, sir."

"Do you mean to tell me you don't know where that island is?" demanded the Major, fiercely.

"I haven't the slightest idea of its location. During the night the helmsman altered our course several times, steering by the stars. I think we're going in the right direction, but I can tell better when I've taken our observations for today. Unfortunately, however, that won't help us to locate the island."

The Major sat down heavily on a chest. The information he had received fairly dazed him, but his gaze remained firmly fixed on the Captain's expressionless face.

After a time he gave laugh, and said:

"I told you yesterday that island was mine. I'll take that back. It's *yours* and mine. You'll share it with me, Captain Gay, I'm sure."

"It is still yours, Major, as far as I'm concerned. If I knew its location I would tell you willingly. But I don't. You'll have to find your property yourself."

The Major sprang up with an oath.

"You infernal scoundrel!" he cried, "do you think I'll be played with like this? Give me the location of that island, or by the nine great gods, I'll kill you where you sit!"

"Leave this room, sir."

The Captain was angry too, by this time. He stood erect and pointed with dignity to the doorway, from which I dodged with alacrity.

"I command this ship, sir," he said, "and here my will is law. I'll endure no browbeating, Major, or any insolence from you or any of my passengers. On the island I obeyed you. Here you will obey me, or I'll lock you fast in your cabin. Leave this room!"

The Major stood irresolute a moment. Then sullenly and slowly, he quit the cabin and returned to the deck.

Even to my wondering but immature intellect it was evident that Captain Gay had won the battle.

CHAPTER 17

WE GIVE UP THE SHIP.

The "Flipper" made good time, and sighted the Oregon coast on the morning of the fifth day. From there she followed the dim outlines of the distant land down to the Golden Gate, and cast anchor safely and without event in the bay of San Francisco.

The Major had been sullen and ill-tempered during the entire voyage, but although he made repeated efforts to see Captain Gay privately and renew his request for the location of the golden island, that officer positively refused to hold any further communication with him.

Therefore the Major was helpless. After all, the Captain might be speaking the entire truth; and if so all argument was useless. Threats do not affect a man of his temperament, and beyond threats the Major did not care to go, even to secure the information he wished. Bribery, in such a case, was absurd. Therefore nothing could be done but bear the disappointment with a good grace. The Major's fortune was, for the present, ample, and I wondered why he should ever care to visit the island again.

As soon as the anchors were dropped the miners clamored to be set ashore, and by night they had all quitted the ship and established themselves in lodgings in the town, from whence they at once flocked to the bankers and began to turn their golden grains into cash.

Uncle Naboth and I remained on board another day. There were settlements to be made with the sailors and various other details that needed attention at the close of the voyage; so that I was kept busy with my books of accounts and Uncle Naboth stood constantly at my elbow to give me the necessary instructions.

We both longed to be on shore again, however; so as soon as the last formalities were completed, we put our heavy sacks of gold into a boat and carried them to the docks, from whence an escort of our trusty sailors accompanied us to the bank wherein Mr. Perkins was accustomed to keep his deposits.

So many ships had lately returned from Alaska bearing gold from the mines that Mr. Perkins' heavy deposit aroused no wonder except as to its extent, and the banker warmly congratulated him upon his good fortune in making so successful a voyage.

Both Uncle Naboth and I remained at the bank until every sack of gold had been carefully weighed and sealed, and the proper receipt given. Then, breathing freely for the first time since the gold had been in our possession, we repaired to my Uncle's former lodging house, where Mr. Perkins was

warmly welcomed.

"We'll have the best dinner tonight the establishment can set up, Sam, my boy," said the old man, rubbing his hands gleefully together; "for we've got to celebrate the success of the new partnership. You must 'a' brought the firm luck, my lad, for this here is the biggest haul I've heard of since I've been in the business. We're rich, newy — rich as punkins!"

"How much do you suppose we're worth, Uncle?" I enquired, rather curiously.

"I can't tell exactly, o' course, till after we've got the quality of our gold properly graded, and put it on the market; but my opinion is, we're at least fifty thousand dollars to the good."

"As much as that!" I exclaimed, greatly elated. "Full as much, I judge."

"Then," said I, drawing a sigh of relief, "I can pay Mrs. Ranck that four hundred dollars I owe her for my board."

Uncle Naboth made a wry face.

"It's a shame to throw good money away on that old termagan'," he remarked, "and I've no doubt she's been overpaid already, by stealin' the contents o' Cap'n Steele's chest. But if it'd make you feel easier in your mind, Sam, I'll fix it so you can send her the money as soon as you like."

"Thank you, Uncle," I replied, gratefully, "I'll never be happy until the debt is off my shoulders. Whether she's entitled to the money or not, I promised Mrs. Ranck I'd pay the debt, and I want to keep my word."

"An' so you shall," said Uncle Naboth, with an approving nod.

We feasted royally at dinner, and afterward Uncle Naboth took me to the theatre, where we sat in the top gallery among the crowd of laborers and sailors, but enjoyed the play very much indeed.

"Some folks who had just banked fifty thousand," remarked my Uncle, reflectively, "would want to sit down there among them nabobs, in a seat that costs a dollar apiece — or perhaps two dollars, for all I know. But what's the use, Sam? Do they hear or see any better than we do up here?"

"Probably not," I answered, with a smile.

"Then we're getting as much fun for our quarter as they get for a dollar," declared Uncle Naboth, chuckling, "an' tomorrow mornin' we'll be so much richer, an' nothin' lost by it. Sam, the secret o' spendin' money ain't in puttin' on airs; it's in gettin' all the pleasure out of a nickel that the nickel will buy. 'Live high' is my motto; but do it economical. That's the true philosophy o' life."

Next morning, as we were sitting in Uncle Naboth's little room, we were surprised by the entrance of Captain Gay. He was accompanied by two of the sailors from the "Flipper," bearing in their arms the easily recognized canvas

sacks of gold from the island.

The Captain motioned his men to place the sacks upon the rickety table, (which nearly collapsed beneath the weight), and then ordered them to leave the room. When they were gone he carefully closed the door and turning to my Uncle said, abruptly:

"There, sir, is every grain of gold I got in that accursed island. The most of it was given me for turning the bed of the mountain stream, as you will remember."

"No more than you deserved, sir," said Uncle Naboth, puffing his pipe vigorously.

"It ought to be worth a good deal of money," continued the Captain, his voice faltering slightly.

"Twenty thousand at least, in my judgment," said Uncle Naboth, eyeing the sacks.

"Well, sir," announced Captain Gay, with decision, "I want to exchange this gold for a bill of sale of the ship."

"What! The 'Flipper'?"

"Yes, sir."

Uncle Naboth winked at me gravely, as if to convey the suggestion that the man had gone crazy.

"Cap'n," said he, after a pause, "I don't mean to say as Sam and I won't sell the ship, if you'd like to buy her; but the tub is old, and has seen her best days. She's worth about six thousand dollars, all told, and not a penny more."

"You must take all that gold or nothing, sir."

"What do you mean?" asked my Uncle, in amazement.

Captain Gay sat down and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"Perhaps I must take you into my confidence," he remarked, in his slow, quiet tones, "although at first I had thought this action would be unnecessary. I've an idea I'd like to own a ship myself, and to trade in a small way between here and Portland."

"And the golden island, occasionally, eh, Cap'n?" returned Uncle Naboth, shrewdly. "I've heard from Sam here how you lost the paper containing your observations, but, I suppose you could find the place again, if you wanted to." Captain Gay flushed a deep red.

"Sir," he answered, "you wrong me with your suspicions. I shall never revisit that island under any circumstances. Nor do I wish anyone else to do so. That is the true explanation of why I lost that paper."

"Did you lose it?"

"I threw it overboard."

Uncle Naboth whistled.

“I’m free to confess, sir, that I’m all at sea,” he said.

The Captain arose and paced the room with unusual agitation.

“Mr. Perkins,” said he, “I once had an older brother, who, when a boy, robbed my father and ran away from home. I never saw him again until we reached that island, where I recognized my erring brother in the man who called himself Daggett.”

Uncle Naboth scratched a match, and relit his pipe.

“I marked the resemblance between you,” he observed, “but I thought nothing of it.”

“To my grief I saw that he had not altered his course for the better,” resumed the Captain. “Of his final theft of the gold and the awful judgment that overtook him and his fellows you are well aware. I shall never forget the horror of those days, sir. It seems to me that that isolated unknown island is my brother’s tomb, where he must lie until the call of the last judgment. I do not wish anyone ever to visit the spot again, if I can help it.”

“That’s nonsense,” declared Uncle Naboth, coldly-

“Perhaps so; but it’s the way I feel. That’s why I don’t wish to touch the gold. I’ll take the ship in exchange for it, but I won’t use the stuff in any other way, or have anything more to do with it.”

“You’re foolish,” said Uncle Naboth, with a sternness quite foreign to his nature. “But if you really want to give away a matter of twenty thousand for an old hulk that’s worth about six, I’ll let you have your way.”

“That’s my desire, sir,” announced our visitor, meekly.

“Well, then, we’ll go to a lawyer and draw up the papers. Sam, you stay here and look after the gold, till I get back.”

“Very well, sir,” I replied, full of wonder at this queer business transaction.

Together they left the room, and it was an hour before Mr. Perkins returned.

“I signed for both of us, partner,” he said, briskly, “an’ the ‘Flipper’s’ now the sole property of Cap’n Gay. With the money this gold will bring, we can buy a ship twice as good as the old one, in which, with good luck to back us, we ought to make many a prosperous voyage.”

“Why do you think he did it, sir?” I enquired musingly.

“It’s just one of two things,” replied Mr. Perkins. “Either the man’s a bit cracked, as I’ve sometimes suspected, and really feels sentimental about his brother’s death, or else he’s got a sly scheme to make trips to the island in an old ship that won’t attract attention, and bring away many cargoes of gold. That ain’t so unlikely, Sam. No one will remark on Cap’n Gay’s owning the old ship he’s commanded for years; but if he bought a new one, and started

out for the island, he might be watched and his true business suspected. Either the feller's mighty deep, or mighty innocent; but it ain't our business to decide which. We've got the money, and now we'll look for a newer and finer ship."

"New England's the best place to buy a good ship, sir. I've often heard my father say so," I suggested.

"Then let's go to New England," returned Uncle Naboth, promptly. "We'll travel together, and you can run up to Batteraft and pay the old hag that money."

"I'd like to do that," said I, greatly pleased. "It would do me good to see her surprise when she finds I've earned so much money already."

"Then it's all settled," declared Uncle Naboth. "I'll go up to the village with you, and see fair play. Twould be a fine chance to give that cankered Venus a piece of my mind, just as a parting shot."

"Would you dare, sir?" I asked, recollecting his former experience with Mrs. Ranck.

"Would I dare? Do you take me for a coward, then?" demanded the old man, indignantly.

"No, sir, but I remember — "

"Never mind that, Sam. I was worried about other things that day, and wasn't quite myself. But *now* — well, just wait till I get the old serpent face to face. That's all!"

"All right, Uncle. When shall we go?"

"Just as soon as we've paid all the bills and settled our accounts for the last voyage. A week'll do that, I reckon. An' now, partner, just run out and hire a closed carriage, and we'll get Cap'n Gay's gold to the bank as soon as possible. Sam, my boy, if this streak o' luck holds good we'll be the envy of Rockyfeller in a few years!"

CHAPTER 18

UNCLE NABOTH'S REVENGE.

Ten days later, having paid all our indebtedness and converted every ounce of our gold into ready money that was deposited to the credit of "Perkins & Steele" at the bank, we started on what Uncle Naboth called our "voyage" across the continent.

We had both taken a strong liking for Ned Britton, who had stood by us so faithfully at the island; so Mr. Perkins decided to make Ned the mate of the new ship, when she had been purchased. For this reason, and because the sailor wished to revisit some of his relatives in the East and make them happy by sharing with them his prize money, Ned also traveled on the same train with us.

"Britton's judgment will be useful in helping us to pick out a ship," said the old man. "I'm glad he's going with us."

Nux and Bryonia had promptly deserted the "Flipper" as soon as they found that Captain Gay had purchased her, and I think my hardest task was to leave the simple Sulu men behind me. They declared that they belonged to "the firm" and must be given places on the new ship, and this both Uncle Naboth and I were anxious to do, as we knew we could never again find such loyal and unselfish servants. But it would be folly to take them east until all arrangements had been made. So I found them comfortable lodgings, and supplied them with all the money they could possibly require until they were sent for. At the last moment they were at the station to see the train move away, and were so fearful of the iron monster that was to carry their friends on the journey that they cautioned me again and again to be very careful in my actions.

"'Fore all, Master Sam," said Nux, earnestly, "Don' you go skeer that injine on no 'count. When it's skeert it smashes ev'ything into mush."

"Tears gentle 'nouf now, Sam," added Bry; "but don' you trust it, no how. Tain't safe, like a great sail an' a stiff breeze."

"Right you are, lad," cried Uncle Naboth, approvingly. "Injines is an invention of the devil, Bry, but good Christians can use 'em if they only watch out. An' now, good bye, an' take care o' yourselves till we get back or send for you."

On account of our great wealth, Mr. Perkins had decided to take a tourist sleeping-car for the trip, rather than sit up in the seats of the common cars all night.

"Sleepin' cars is a genuine luxury, Sam," he said, "an' only fit for the very rich, who've got so much money they won't miss it, or the very poor, who've

got so little there's no use savin' it. I guess we can afford the treat, and the bunks in this 'ere tourist car is jest as big as the ones in the high-priced coaches ahead. So as soon as we get clear of' Frisco, let's go to bed."

"But it isn't dark yet, Uncle," I protested. "It won't be bedtime for hours."

"Sam," replied the old man, earnestly, "do you mean to say you're goin' to pay for a bed and let it lay idle? That's what I call rank extravagance! I've seen it done, on my travels, o' course. I've known a man to pay three dollars for a bed, an' then set up half the night in the smokin' cars before he turns in. But do you s'pose the railroad company pays him back half the money? Never. They just laughs at him and keeps the whole three dollars! To pay for a thing, and use it, ain't extravagance; but to buy a bed, and then set up half the night is. Why, it's like payin' for a table-day-haughty dinner an' then skippin' half the courses! Would a sensible man do that?"

"Not if he's hungry, Uncle," said I, laughing at this philosophy.

"If he ain't hungry, he buys a sandwich, an' not a table-day-haughty," cried Uncle Naboth, triumphantly.

Nevertheless, being fully conscious of my newly acquired wealth, I recklessly sat up until bedtime, while my thrifty Uncle occupied his "bunk" and snored peacefully. The journey was accomplished in safety, and from Boston we took the little railway to the seaport town of Batteraft.

During the last hours of the trip Uncle Naboth had become very thoughtful, and I frequently noticed him making laborious memoranda with his pencil on the backs of envelopes and scraps of paper which he took from his wallet. Finally I asked:

"What are you writing, Uncle?"

"I'm jest jotting down the things I mean to say to that old female shark at Batteraft," was the reply. "I tell you, Sam, she's goin' to have the talkin'-to of her life, when I get at her; and she'll deserve every word of it. I'll let you pay her first, so's the money account will be square; an' then I'll try to square the moral account."

"Will she let you?" I enquired doubtfully, for I had a vivid remembrance of Mrs. Ranck's dislike of any opposition.

"She can't help herself," replied Uncle Naboth, seriously. "If you knew the things she up an' said to me that day I tackled her before, Sam, an' the harsh an' impident tones she used to say 'em with, you'd realize how much my revenge means to me."

"Why didn't you resent it then, Uncle?"

"Why, she took me by surprise, an' I didn't have time to collect my parrergraphs, and that's the reason. Also it's the reason I'm figgerin' out my speeches aforehand this time, so's I won't be backwards when the time

comes. You can't thrash the cantankerous old termagan' like you would a man, but you can lash her with speeches that cuts like a two-edged sword. At sarcasm and ironical I'm quite a professor, Sam; but them talents would be wasted on Mrs. Ranck. With her I'll open my vials o' wrath an' empty 'em to the dregs. I'll wither her with scorn, an' — an' — an' tell her just what I think o' her," he concluded, rather lamely.

I sighed, for the mention of Mrs. Ranck always recalled to me the fate of my poor father. The landscape began to grow very familiar now, and presently the train swung into the little station where I had so often stood in my younger days to watch the passengers get on and off the cars.

Ned Britton at once walked on to the tavern, but as the afternoon was only half gone Uncle Naboth and I decided to go on up to my father's old home without delay and have our carefully planned interview with Mrs. Ranck. The banknotes I was to pay to her lay crisply in my new pocket-book, and I was eager to be free of my debt to the cruel woman who had aspersed my dead father's character and driven me from my old home.

Uncle Naboth walked very fast at first, but while we ascended the little hill his pace grew gradually slower, and as we reached the well-remembered bench beneath the trees, from whence our first view of the cottage was obtained, my uncle suddenly set himself down and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the well-remembered crimson handkerchief.

"We'll rest a minute, Sam, so's I can get my breath back," he gasped. "I'll need it all, presently, and hill-climbin' ain't my 'special accomplishment."

So I sat down beside him and waited patiently, eyeing the while rather sadly the old home where I had once been so happy.

It seemed not to have changed in any way since I left it. The blinds of my little room in the attic were closed, but those of the lower floor were thrown back, and a column of thin smoke ascended lazily from the chimney, showing that the place was still inhabited.

In spite of myself I shivered. The autumn air struck me as being chilly for the first time, and the declining sun moved slowly behind a cloud, throwing the same gloom over the landscape that was already in my heart.

"Are you ready, Uncle?" I asked, unable to bear the suspense longer.

"Jest a minute, Sam. Let's see; the opening shot was this way: There's folks, ma'am, that can be more heartless than the brute beasts, more slyer than a roarin' tiger, more fiercer than a yellow fox, an' — "

"That isn't right, Uncle Naboth," I interrupted. "The fox is sly and the tiger — "

"I know, I know. Them speeches is gettin' sorter mixed in my mind; but if that she-devil don't quail when she hears 'em, my name ain't Naboth

Perkins! Perhaps I ought to have committed ‘em more to memory — eh, Sam? What do you say to waitin’ till tomorrow?”

“No, Uncle. Let’s go to her now. You can reserve your vials of wrath, if you want to; but I shan’t sleep a wink unless I pay Mrs. Ranck that money.”

“All right,” said the old man, with assumed cheerfulness. “There’s no time like the present. ‘Never put off’ til tomorrer,’ you know. Come along, my lad!”

He sprang up and led the way with alacrity for a few steps, and then slackened his pace perceptibly.

“If I’m goin’ to forget all them speeches,” he whispered, in a voice that trembled slightly, “I might jest as well have saved my time a-composin’ of ‘em. Drat the old she-pirate! If she wasn’t a woman, I’d pitch her into the sea.”

By this time I was myself too much agitated to pay attention to my uncle’s evident fright on the eve of battle. The house was very near now; a few steps further and we were standing upon the little porch.

“You knock, Uncle,” I said, in a whisper.

Uncle Naboth glanced at me reproachfully, and then raised his knuckles. But before they touched the panel of the door he paused, drew out his handkerchief, and again wiped his brow.

I felt that my nerves would bear no further strain. With the desperation of despair or a sudden accession of courage — I never knew which — I rapped loudly upon the door.

À moment’s profound silence was followed by a peculiar sound. Thump, thump, thump! echoed from the room inside, at regular intervals, and then the door was suddenly opened and a man with a wooden leg stood before us. He was clothed in sailor fashion and a bushy beard ornamented his round, frank face.

For an instant we three stood regarding one another in mute wonder. The open door disclosed the long living-room, at the back end of which Mrs. Ranck stood by the kitchen table with a plate in one hand and a towel in the other, motionless as a marble statue and with a look of terror fixed upon her white face.

Singularly enough, I was the first to recover from my surprise.

“Dad!” I cried, in a glad voice, and threw myself joyfully into the sailor man’s arms.

“Why — Cap’n Steele, sir — what does this mean?” faltered Uncle Naboth. “I thought you was dead an’ gone, long ago, an’ safe in Davy Jones’s locker!”

CHAPTER 19

THE CONQUEST OF MRS. RANCK.

I regret to say that my father's welcome was not especially cordial. Nevertheless, he was for some reason evidently pleased by the sudden appearance of his son and his brother-in-law. Releasing himself gently from my clinging embrace, he said, in his deep, grave voice:

"Come in and sit down. I never thought to see you again, Sam; and, much less you, Naboth Perkins. But now that you're here, well have a few mutual explanations."

Mrs. Ranck, a few paces behind him, was bristling like a frightened cat.

"If them thieves an' scoundrels enters this house, I'll go out!" she fairly screamed, in her shrill voice.

"Be quiet!" commanded the Captain, sternly. "This is my house; and, although it's all that my friends have left to me," he added, bitterly, "I'm still the master under my own roof. Sit down, Perkins, sit down, Sam, my lad."

A sudden tenderness that crept into the last words seemed to rouse the woman to fury.

"That's the boy that robbed you!" she cried, pointing at me a trembling, bony finger. "That's the boy that skinned the house of all your valeybles and treasures as soon as he thought you was dead, and couldn't come back to punish him! An' stole all my savin's too; and swore he'd be a pirate and murder and steal all his life; an' that the man," turning fiercely upon my horrified uncle, "as aided an' abetted him in his wickedness, an' threatened to kill me if I interfered with Sam's carryin' away of your property! Cap'n Steele, how dare you harbor sich varmints? Drive 'em out, this instant, or I'll go myself. This house can't hold Sam Steele, the robber, and me at the same time!" Captain Steele looked toward me gravely as I stood regarding the woman with unmistakable amazement. Then he turned to Naboth Perkins, to find the little man doubled up in his chair and shaking with silent laughter. A moment later he began to gasp and choke and cough, until, just as he appeared to be on the verge of convulsions, he suddenly straightened up and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"Cap'n Steele, sir," he said, "this is the best show I ever had a reserved seat at, an' the admission's free gratis for nothin'! Why, you measly old she-tiger," turning with stern abruptness to Mrs. Ranck, "did you ever think, fer a minute, that such a lyin' tale as you've trumped up would deceive grown men?"

Mrs. Ranck turned away and caught her shawl from a peg.

"I'll go," she said, sullenly.

“No, you don’t!” exclaimed Mr. Perkins, bounding between her and the door of her room, toward which she was hastening; “you’ll stay right here till this mystery is cleared up. For, if I understand Cap’s Steele aright, he can’t find the property he left in this house, ner imagine what’s become of it; an’ you’ve been stuffing him with lies about Sam’s running away with it. Am I right, Cap’n?”

My father nodded, gazing with lowering brow upon the cowed and trembling form of the housekeeper.

“The Cap’n’s property an’ his savin’s didn’t walk away by themselves,” continued Uncle Naboth, “and no one could ‘a’ took ‘em except Sam or this woman. Very good. They’re both here, now, an’ you’re going to clear up the mystery and get your money back, Cap’n, before you takes your eye offn either one. Just flop into that chair, Mrs. Ranck, an’ if you try to wiggle away I’ll call the police!” The woman obeyed. A dull glaze had come over her eyes, and her features were white and set. In all her cunning plotting she had never imagined that I or my uncle would ever return to Batteraft to confound her. She believed that the knowledge that I was in her debt would prevent my coming back, in any event, and she fully expected me to be buffeted here and there about the world, with never a chance of my being again heard of in my old home.

What a mistake she had made! But it was all owing to this little fat man whom she had driven thoughtlessly from her door the day that I was sent away into exile. She had never heard of Naboth Perkins before; nor did she know, any more than I myself did at the time, of the partnership formerly existing between the two men, or even the fact of their relationship. She felt that she was caught in a trap, in some unexpected way, and the disaster stunned her.

Captain Steele filled and lighted his pipe before the silence of the little group was again broken. Then, turning to me, he asked:

“Why did you believe I was dead?”

“One of your sailors brought the news, sir, and told us of the wreck. He gave Mrs. Ranck your watch and ring, which he believed were taken from your dead body.”

“It’s a lie!” snapped the woman, desperately. “I never seen the watch and ring; but he said the Cap’n was dead, all right, an’ that’s why Sam run away with the property.”

“Who was the sailor?” enquired my father, thoughtfully.

“Ned Britton, sir.”

“Aye, an honest, worthy lad, who sailed with me for years. And he had the watch and ring?”

“Yes, sir. Ned was taken with a fever when he escaped from the wreck, and after he recovered they told him that several bodies had been washed ashore and buried by the villagers. On one of the bodies they found the watch and ring, so Ned naturally thought you had perished.”

“When the ship broke up,” said Captain Steele, slowly, “and I knew the end had come, I sent one of my lads to my cabin to get my trinkets while I attended to lowering the boats. I never saw him again. For my part, my leg was crushed by a falling mast, but I got entangled in the rigging and the mast floated me to a little island where a dozen fisher-folks lived. One was a bit of a doctor, and cut away my mangled leg and nursed me back to life. While I waited for a ship to touch the island I regained my strength and made myself a new leg out of cotton-wood. Then, one day, a schooner carried me to Plymouth, and the Captain, who was a kindly man, loaned me enough money to bring me to Batteraft where I thought I’d find my savings; enough to buy a new ship and start business again. But Mrs. Ranck met me with the news that my son had stripped the house of all my valuables and run away with a man that was known to be a pirate. My room was quite bare, I found, and Mrs. Ranck claimed she had hardly enough left of her savings to buy food with. So here I was, a cripple and condemned to poverty after a successful career; and it’s no wonder my thoughts were bitter towards my son, whom I never would have believed could act so ungratefully. My only comfort was that Sam had believed me dead.”

Uncle Naboth nodded approval.

“Quite proper, sir,” he said, “an’ all quite right and shipshape. Sam didn’t take a penny’s worth from this house; but I made him my partner, in your place, and we’ve had a successful voyage and come back rich as Croessuses. You’ll live in clover, from this time on, Cap’n Steele, even if you never get back the property Mrs. Ranck has robbed you of. But why not make her give it up? She can’t have squandered it on riotous living, by the looks of her.”

Captain Steele turned to the housekeeper.

“What have you to say, Mrs. Ranck?” he asked. “It’s all a pack o’ lies,” she snarled, “but there’s no call for you to believe me if you don’t want to. One thing’s certain, though. This is my house, an’ the deed of it’s in my name. You’ll have to clear out o’ here, all three of you, or I’ll have the law on you an’ put you out!”

Captain Steele arose calmly and seized the woman by her arms. In spite of her screams and struggles he carried her to his own little room and thrust her in, locking the door safely upon her.

“Now,” said he, “let’s explore the place and see what we can find. I’ve never been in Mrs. Ranck’s room, for until today I had no suspicions of her.

Come with me. If she's honest we shall find nothing, for she can't have disposed of the property."

"Right you are, sir," cried Uncle Naboth, springing up; and we all three at once proceeded to enter the room the housekeeper had for so many years reserved for her own use.

It was simply and plainly furnished, and a single glance served to convince us that it contained no evidence whatever of the missing property.

"Strange!" said my father, musingly. "There were nine cases and three chests, besides the great sea-chest that I found still in my room, although emptied of all its contents. Whatever could have become of them all?"

"Dad," I exclaimed, suddenly, "I remember there used to be a sort of cellar under this room, that could only be reached by a trap-door."

"True," replied my father; "I remember that, too. But where is the trap?"

Uncle Naboth was already making a careful inspection of the old rag carpet that covered the floor. In one corner the tacks seemed far apart and scanty. He seized the carpet and jerked it away from the fastenings, disclosing a small square trap with an iron ring in the center.

"Here's the treasure house, sir," he announced triumphantly.

"Get a candle, Sam," said my father, gravely. When it was brought, all three of us descended the narrow stairs to the underground room, where the cases and chests were speedily found, all stored in orderly fashion against the walls. The contents of the great sea-chest, which she had doubtless removed before admitting me to the Captain's room, had been placed in boxes which Mrs. Ranck had secured from the grocery store. In addition to Captain Steele's property, there was also a brass kettle almost full of gold and silver coins, which the miserly old woman had saved from the money my father had given her to clothe and care for me, as well as to defray the household expenses while the sailor was away upon his voyages.

Perhaps her own wages were added to this store, as well; anyway, Captain Steele seemed to think so. For, after assuring himself that all his missing property was safe, he carried the kettle up to the living room and proceeded to liberate Mrs. Ranck. When, scowling but subdued, she crept from the little room, my father offered to give to her the entire contents of the kettle if she would freely transfer to him the deed to the house, and quit Batteraft for good and all.

"It's more than you deserve," said he, "but I don't want to go to the police in this matter unless you force me to. Take the money and go, and never let me see your face in Batteraft again."

Of course she accepted the generous proposition. After gathering her few clothes into a bundle, she took her treasure and left the house. The first train

that left Batteraft carried her with it, and I have never seen her since.

I acknowledge that I watched her go with a lighter and happier heart than I had known for months.

“It was in this way that she once drove me from my old home, father,” I said. “But it can’t be such a bad world, after all. For, if the wicked sometimes appear to triumph, they are usually punished in the end, and now that Mrs. Ranck has passed out of our lives we ought to be very happy again.”

“We will be, Sam!” returned my father, earnestly, as he affectionately pressed my hand.

“Hooray!” yelled Uncle Naboth.

CHAPTER 20

STEELE, PERKINS AND STEELE.

Captain Steele was extremely grateful to Uncle Naboth for his care of me, and was delighted by the relation of our adventures on the golden island, as well as pardonably proud of the financial success we had attained.

A new firm was created under the title of "Steele, Perkins and Steele," and a new ship was soon found that seemed to have been especially constructed to meet our requirements. Captain Steele, declaring that his wooden leg would in no way interfere with his usefulness, decided to command the ship himself, and Ned Britton and I were appointed to look after all the finances and attend to the trading at the various ports, and Nux and Bryonia were brought from San Francisco and given posts on the new ship, to their great delight.

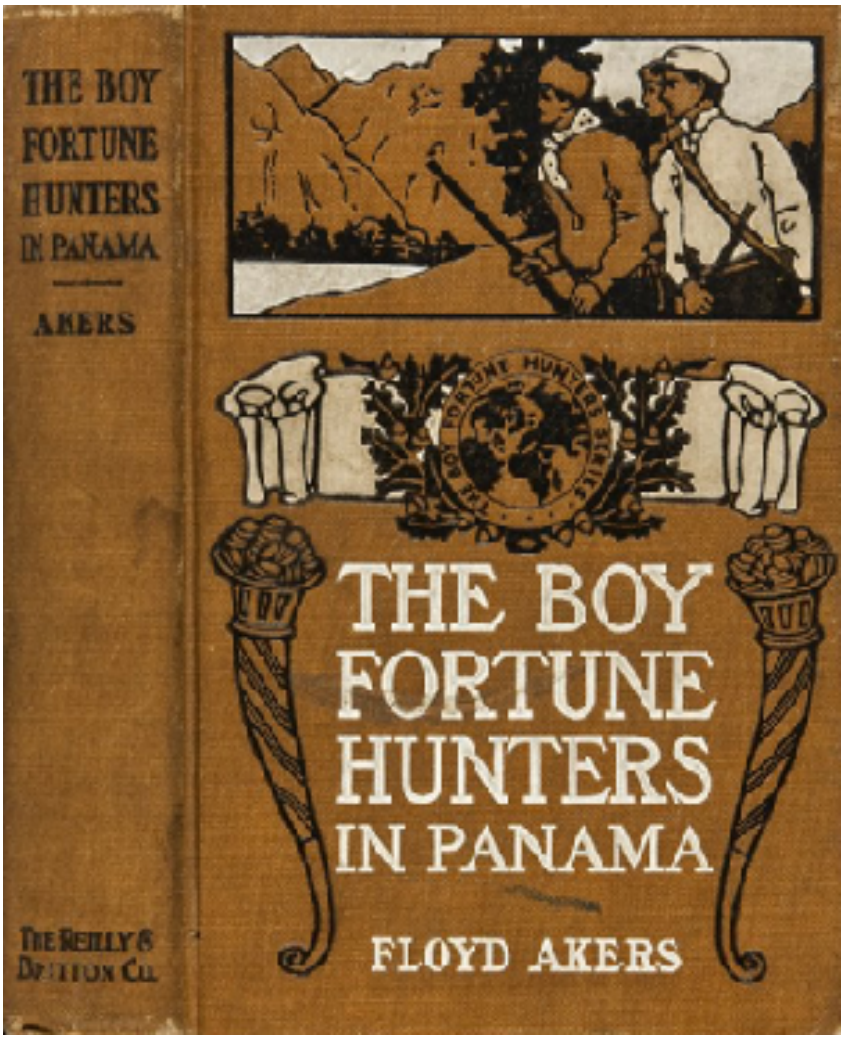
By the advice of his shrewder brother-in-law my father converted all his accumulated treasures into money, which was safely invested in Government bonds that were deposited in a Boston bank.

"Whatever happens now," observed Uncle Naboth, "nobody can't rob you again; and if our business ventures proves unsuccessful, and Sam and I go bankrupt, you've always got something to fall back on in your old age."

But success seemed to follow in the wake of the new firm, and the "Cleopatra," as our ship is named, has made voyage after voyage with unvarying good fortune.

THE BOY FORTUNE HUNTERS IN PANAMA

Reilly & Britton published *The Boy Fortune Hunters in Panama* in 1908, using one of Baum's pennames, Floyd Akers, although the novel had originally appeared a year earlier under the title, *Sam Steele's Adventures in Panama*, using another Baum pseudonym, Capt. Hugh Fitzgerald. Howard Heath provided the illustrations. This second novel in the series concerns young hero, Sam Steele, now captain of his own ship, traveling around South America with California his goal. After a storm forces them to visit the coast of Panama, Sam and his inventor companion, Duncan Moit, spend time with a "lost," but extremely wealthy tribe descended from the Aztecs. Among other things, Sam experiences travel by amphibious automobile and meets a beautiful Indian princess.



A first edition copy of 'The Boy Fortune Hunters in Panama'

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CHAPTER ONE

I UNDERTAKE A HAZARDOUS JOURNEY

The bark *Nebuchadnesar* came staggering into Chelsea harbor in a very demoralized condition. Her main and mizzen masts were both gone, the bulwarks were smashed in, the poop swept away, and she leaked so badly that all the short-handed crew were nearly ready to drop from the exhausting labor of working the pumps. For after weathering a dreadful storm in which the captain and mate were washed overboard, together with five of the men, those remaining had been forced to rig up a square-sail on the foremast and by hook or crook to work the dismantled hulk into harbor, and this they did from no love of the ship but as a matter of mere self-preservation, the small boats having all been lost or destroyed.

As soon as they dropped anchor in the harbor they fled from the crippled ship and left her to her fate.

It fortunately happened that an agent of the owners, a man named Harlan, lived at Chelsea and was able to take prompt action to save the company's property. The *Nebuchadnesar* was loaded heavily with structural steel work from Birmingham, which had been destined for San Pedro, California, which is the port of entry for the important city of Los Angeles. It was a valuable cargo, and one well worth saving; so Mr. Harlan quickly sent a lot of men aboard to calk the sprung seams and pump her dry, and within twenty-four hours they had her safe from sinking, although she still looked more like a splintered tub than a ship.

And now the agent spent a whole day exchanging telegrams with the chief agents of the Line in New York. It appeared that to unload the heavy structural beams, which were of solid steel, and ship them by rail across the continent would entail a serious loss, the freight rates being enormous for such a distance. There was at the time no other ship procurable to carry the cargo on to its destination. Either the old *Nebuchadnesar* must be made seaworthy again, and sent on its way around the Horn to San Pedro, or the company was in for a tremendous loss.

Harlan was a man of resource and energy. He promptly informed his superiors that he would undertake to fit the ship for sea, and speedily; so he was given permission to "go ahead."

New masts were stepped, the damages repaired, and the bark put in as good condition as possible. But even then it was a sad parody on a ship, and the chances of its ever getting to the port of destination were regarded by all observers as extremely doubtful.

Having done the best in his power, however, Mr. Harlan came to my

father and said:

"Captain Steele, I want you to take the *Nebuchadnesar* to San Pedro."

The Captain smiled, and answered with his usual deliberation:

"Thank you, Mr. Harlan; but I can't by any possibility get away this winter."

You see, we were just building our new vessel, the *Seagull,* which was to be our future pride and joy, and my father did not believe the work could progress properly unless he personally inspected every timber and spike that went into her. Just now the builders were getting along finely and during the coming winter all the interior fittings were to be put in. I knew very well that nothing could induce Captain Steele to leave the *Seagull* at this fascinating period of its construction.

Mr. Harlan was very grave and anxious, and spoke frankly of the difficulty he was in.

"You see, sir, my reputation is at stake in this venture," he explained, "and if anything happens to that cargo they will blame me for it. The only way to avoid a heavy loss is to get the old hull into port, and I am aware that to accomplish this task a man of experience and exceptional judgment is required. There is not another captain on the coast that I would so completely and confidently trust with this undertaking as I would you, sir; and we can afford to pay well for the voyage."

My father appreciated the compliment, but it did not alter his resolve.

"Can't be done, Mr. Harlan," he said, pressing the ashes into the bowl of his pipe and looking around the group of intent listeners with a thoughtful expression. "Time was when I'd have liked a job of that sort, because it's exciting to fight a strong ocean with a weak ship. But my whole heart is in the *Seagull,* and I can't an' won't leave her."

Just then his eyes fell upon me and brightened.

"There's no reason, howsomever," he added, "why Sam can't undertake your commission. We won't be likely to need him this winter, at all."

Mr. Harlan frowned; then looked toward me curiously.

"Would you really recommend a boy like Sam for such an important undertaking?" he asked.

"Why not, sir?" replied my father. "Sam's as good a navigator as I am, an' he's a brave lad an' cool-headed, as has been proved. All he lacks is experience in working a ship; but he can take my own mate, Ned Britton, along, and there's not a better sailing-master to be had on the two oceans."

The agent began to look interested. He revolved the matter in his mind for a time and then turned to me and asked, abruptly:

"Would you go, sir?"

I had been thinking, too, for the proposition had come with startling suddenness.

"On one condition," said I.

"What is that?"

"That in case of accident — if, in spite of all our efforts, the old tub goes to the bottom — you will hold me blameless and look as cheerful as possible."

The agent thought that over for what seemed a long time, considering the fact that he was a man of quick judgment and action. But I will acknowledge it was a grave condition I had required, and the man knew even better than I did that under the most favorable circumstances the result of the voyage was more than doubtful. Finally he nodded.

"I do not know of any one I would rather trust," said he. "You are only a boy, Sam Steele; but I've got your record, and I know Ned Britton. Next to getting Captain Steele himself, the combination is as good as I could hope to secure for my company, and I'm going to close with you at once, condition and all."

Britton, who was himself present at this conference, shifted uneasily in his chair.

"I ain't right sure as we can ship a proper crew, sir," he remarked, eyeing me with the characteristic stare of his round, light blue eyes, which were as unreadable as a bit of glass.

"Well, we can try, Ned," I answered, with some concern. "I shall take Nux and Bryonia along, of course, and we won't need over a dozen able seamen."

I must explain that the Nux and Bryonia mentioned were not homeopathic remedies, but two stout, black South Sea Islanders who bore those absurd names and had already proven their loyalty and devotion to me, although they were the especial retainers of my uncle, Naboth Perkins.

"What became of the crew that brought the ship in?" asked my father.

"Deserted, sir, an' dug out quick 's scat," answered Ned.

"Why?"

"Said as nothing but bad luck followed the ship. She were a thirteener, sir, and bound fer to get in trouble."

"How's that?"

"Why, I talked with the second mate, who brung the ship in. He said they had sailed from Liverpool on a Friday, the thirteenth o' the month. There was thirteen aboard; it were the Cap'n's thirteenth voyage; an' the *Nebuchadnesar,* which had thirteen letters in its name — bein' as how it were misspelled by its builders — was thirteen year old to a day. That was

bad enough fer a starter, as everybody can guess. Thirteen days out they struck trouble, an' it clung to 'em as desp'rit as their own barnacles. You couldn't hire one o' that crew to go aboard agin, sir, fer love or money."

This dismal revelation struck a chill to all present, except, perhaps, Mr. Harlan and myself. I am superstitious about some things, I acknowledge, but thirteen has for me always been a number luckier than otherwise. However, I knew very well that sailors are obstinate and fearful; so I turned to the agent and said:

"You must paint out that name *Nebuchadnesar* and replace it with any other you like. Do it at once, before we attempt to ship a crew. With that accomplished, Ned won't have much trouble in getting the men he wants."

"I'll do it," replied Mr. Harlan, promptly. "I'll call her the *Gladys H.,* after my own little daughter. That ought to bring her good luck."

Ned bobbed his head approvingly. It was evident the idea pleased him and removed his most serious objection to the voyage.

"And now," continued the agent, "it is only necessary to discuss terms."

These proved liberal enough, although I must say the money was no factor in deciding me to undertake the voyage. I had been quite fortunate in accumulating a fair share of worldly wealth, and a part of my own snug fortune had gone into our new *Seagull,* of which I was to be one-third owner.

So it was really a desire to be doing something and an irrepressible spirit of adventure that urged me on; for, as my father said, a struggle with old ocean was always full of surprises, and when we had such frail support as the crippled *Nebuchadnesar,* the fight was liable to prove interesting. But that preposterous name was painted out the following day, and before I trod the deck for the first time the bark had been renamed the *Gladys H.,* and was resplendent in fresh paint and new cordage. The old hulk actually looked seaworthy to a superficial observer; but Ned Britton went below and examined her seams carefully and came back shaking his head.

"If the weather holds good and the cargo steady," he said to me, "we may pull through; but if them big iron beams in the hold ever shifts their position, the whole hull'll open like a sieve."

"Don't whisper that, Ned," I cautioned him. "We've got to take chances."

He was not the man to recoil at taking chances, so he kept a close mouth and in three days secured all the sailors we needed.

They were a fairly good lot, all experienced and steady, and when I looked them over I was well pleased. One or two who were new to our parts grinned rather disrespectfully when they noted my size and youth; but I paid little attention to that. I was, in reality, a mere boy, and the only wonder is that they consented to sail under my command.

My mate, however, looked every inch the sailor, and won their immediate respect, while my father's ample reputation as a daring and skillful captain caused the men to be lenient in their judgment of his son.

It was to be a long cruise, for Mr. Harlan had instructed me to skirt the coast all the way to Cape Horn, keeping well in to land so that in an emergency I could run the ship ashore and beach her. That would allow us to save the valuable cargo, even if we lost the ship, and that structural steel work was worth a lot of bother, he assured me.

"When you get to the Cape," said the agent, "take your time and wait for good weather to round it. There's no hurry, and by the time you arrive there the conditions ought to be the most favorable of the year. Once in the Pacific, continue to hug the coast up to San Pedro, and then telegraph me for further instructions. Of course you know the consignment is to the contracting firm of Wright & Landers, and when you arrive they will attend to the unloading."

I got my things aboard and found my room very pleasant and of ample size. I took quite a library of books along, for the voyage would surely consume most of the winter. We were liberally provisioned, for the same reason, and our supplies were of excellent quality.

My two black Islanders, Nux and Bryonia, were calmly indifferent to everything except the fact that "Mars' Sam" was going somewhere and would take them along.

Bry was our cook, and a mighty good one, too. With him in charge of the galley we were sure to enjoy our meals. Nux acted as steward and looked after the officers' cabins. He was wonderfully active and a tower of strength in time of need. Both men I knew I could depend upon at all times, for they were intelligent, active, and would be faithful to the last.

We arranged to sail with the tide on a Wednesday afternoon, the date being the nineteenth of September. On that eventful morning every preparation was reported complete, and I rowed to the shore for a final conference with the agent and a last farewell to my father.

CHAPTER TWO

I SHIP A QUEER PASSENGER

The ship-yards were on this side of the harbor, and presented a busy scene; for besides our own beautiful *Seagull,* whose hull was now nearly complete and so graceful in its lines that it attracted the wondering admiration of every beholder, several other ships were then in the yards in course of construction.

It was in one of the builders' offices that I met my father and Mr. Harlan, and while we were talking a man came in and touched his cap to us, saying:

"May I speak to Captain Steele?" He was about thirty years of age, somewhat thin and lank in appearance, and would have been considered tall had he stood erect instead of stooping at the shoulders. His face was fine and sensitive in expression and his eyes were large and gray but dreamy rather than alert. Gray eyes are usually shrewd; I do not remember ever before seeing so abstracted and visionary a look except in brown or black ones. The man's hair was thick and long and of a light brown — nearly "sandy" — color. He dressed well but carelessly, and was evidently nervous and in a state of suppressed excitement when he accosted us. I noticed that his hands were large and toil-worn, and he clasped and unclasped them constantly as he looked from one to another of our group.

"I am Captain Steele," said my father, "Then, sir, I desire to ask a favor," was the reply.

"State it, my man."

"I want you to take me and my automobile with you on your voyage to Los Angeles."

Mr. Harlan laughed, and I could not repress a smile myself.

"Then I'm not the Captain Steele you want," said my father. "This is the one you must deal with," pointing his finger in my direction.

The stranger turned, but to my satisfaction seemed in no way surprised or embarrassed by being confronted with a boy.

"It will be a great favor, sir," he continued, earnestly. "I beg you will grant my request,"

"An automobile!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Your request is unusual," I said, in order to decline gracefully, for something about the fellow was strangely appealing. "We are not a passenger ship, but a slow freighter, and we are bound for a long voyage around the Horn."

"Time does not greatly matter," he murmured. "Only one thing really matters at all."

“And that?”

“The expense.”

We stared at him, somewhat perplexed.

“Permit me to explain,” he went on, still gazing at me alone with his beseeching eyes. “I have invented an automobile — not strictly an automobile, it is true; but for want of a better name I will call it that. I have been years experimenting and building it, for it is all the work of my own hands and the child of my exclusive brain. It is now just finished — complete in every part — but I find that I have exhausted nearly every available dollar of my money. In other words, sir, my machine has bankrupted me.”

He paused, and catching a wink from Mr. Harlan I said in an amused tone:

“That is an old story, sir.”

“You doubt it?”

“No; I mean, that it is quite natural.”

“Perhaps,” he replied. “You see I had not thought of money; merely of success. But now that at last I have succeeded, I find that I have need of money. My only relative is a rich uncle living at Pasadena, California, who is so eccentric in his disposition that were I to appeal to him for money he would promptly refuse.”

“Most rich men have that same eccentricity,” I observed.

“But he is quite a genius commercially, and if he saw my machine I am confident he would freely furnish the money I require to erect a manufactory and promote its sale. I assure you, gentlemen,” looking vaguely around, “that my machine is remarkable, and an original invention.”

We nodded. There was no object in disputing such a modest statement.

“So I wish to get myself and my automobile to Los Angeles, and at the least possible expense. The railroads demand a large sum for freight and fare, and I have not so much money to pay. By accident I learned that your ship is going to the very port I long to reach, and so I hastened to appeal to you to take me. I have only two hundred dollars in my possession — the last, I grieve to say, of my ample inheritance. If you will carry us for that sum to your destination, I shall indeed be grateful for the kindness.”

Really, I began to feel sorry for the poor fellow.

“But,” said I, “I cannot possibly take you. We sail this afternoon and the hatches are all closed and battened down for the voyage.”

“I do not wish the machine put in the hold,” he answered, with strange eagerness. “All I ask is a spot in which to place it on the deck — anywhere that will be out of your way. I will make it secure, myself, and take every care of it, so that it will cause you no trouble at all.”

“I’m afraid you could not get it to the ship in time.”

“It is already loaded upon a flat-boat, which will take it to the *Gladys H.* in an hour, once I have your permission.”

I looked at him in astonishment.

“You seem to have considered your request granted in advance,” I remarked, with some asperity.

“Not that, sir; I am not impertinent, believe me. But I enquired about Captain Steele and was told that he is a good man and kind. So, that I might lose no time if I obtained your consent, I had the machine loaded on the flat-boat.”

Mr. Harlan laughed outright. Acting upon a sudden impulse I turned to him and said:

“May I decide as I please in this matter?”

“Of course, Sam,” he replied. “It is your affair, not mine.”

I looked at the stranger again. He was actually trembling with anxious uncertainty.

“Very well,” I announced, “I will take you.”

“For the two hundred dollars?”

“No; I’ll carry you for nothing. You may need that extra money at your journey’s end.”

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow, upon which beads of perspiration were standing.

“Thank you, sir,” he said, simply.

“But I must warn you of one thing. The bark is not in what we call A-l condition. If she happens to go to the bottom instead of San Pedro I won’t be responsible for your precious machine.”

“Very well, sir. I will take as many chances as you do.”

“May I ask your name?”

“Moit, sir; Duncan Moit.”

“Scotch?”

“By ancestry, Captain. American by birth.”

“All right; make haste and get your traps aboard as soon as possible.”

“I will. Thank you, Captain Steele.”

He put on his cap and walked hurriedly away, and when he had gone both Mr. Harlan and my father rallied me on account of my queer “passenger.”

“He looks to me like a crank, Sam,” said the agent. “But it’s your fireworks, not mine.”

“Whatever induced you to take him?” Captain Steele enquired, wonderingly.

“The bare fact that he was so anxious to go,” I replied. “He may be a

crank on the automobile question, and certainly it is laughable to think of shipping a machine to Los Angeles on a freighter, around the Horn; but the poor fellow seemed to be a gentleman, and he's hard up. It appeared to me no more than a Christian act to help him out of his trouble."

"You may be helping him into trouble, if that confounded cargo of yours takes a notion to shift," observed my father, with a shake of his grizzled head.

"But it's not going to shift, sir," I declared, firmly. "I'm looking for good luck on this voyage, and the chances are I'll find it."

The agent slapped me on the shoulder approvingly.

"That's the way to talk!" he cried. "I'm morally certain, Sam, that you'll land that cargo at San Pedro in safety. I'm banking on you, anyhow, young man."

I thanked him for his confidence, and having bade a last good-bye to my father and my employer I walked away with good courage and made toward my boat, which was waiting for me.

Uncle Naboth was waiting, too, for I found his chubby form squatting on the gunwale.

Uncle Naboth's other name was Mr. Perkins, and he was an important member of the firm of "Steele, Perkins & Steele," being my dead mother's only brother and my own staunch friend. I had thought my uncle in New York until now, and had written him a letter of farewell to his address in that city that very morning.

But here he was, smiling serenely at me as I approached.

"What's this foolishness I hear, Sam?" he demanded, when I had shaken his hand warmly.

"I'm off on a trip around the Horn," said I, "to carry a cargo of building steel to the Pacific coast in that crippled old bark, yonder."

His sharp eye followed mine and rested on the ship.

"Anything in it, my lad?"

"Not much except adventure, Uncle. But it will keep me from growing musty until Spring and the *Seagull* is ready for launching. I'm dead tired of loafing around."

He began to chuckle and cough and choke, but finally controlled himself sufficiently to gasp:

"So'm I, Sam!"

"You?"

"Tired as blazes. New York's a frost, Sam. Nothin' doin' there that's worth mentionin'. All smug-faced men an' painted-faced women. No sassiety, more policemen than there is sailors, hair-cuts thirty-five cents an'

two five-cent drinks fer a quarter. I feel like Alladin an' the Forty Thieves — me bein' Alladin."

"But, Uncle, it wasn't Aladdin that the Forty — "

"Never mind that. Got a spare bunk aboard, Sam?"

I laughed; but there was no use in being surprised at anything Uncle Naboth did.

"I've got a whole empty cabin — second mate's."

"All right. When do we sail?"

"Three o'clock, Uncle Naboth — sharp."

"Very good."

He turned and ambled away toward the town, and, rather thoughtfully, I entered my boat and was rowed out to the *Gladys H.*

CHAPTER THREE

THE MOIT CONVERTIBLE AUTOMOBILE

The flat-boat came alongside within the hour. On it was a big object covered with soiled canvas and tied 'round and' round with cords like a package from the grocer. Beside it stood Moit, motionless until the barge made fast and Ned Britton — who at my request had ordered the windlass made ready — had the tackle lowered to hoist it aboard.

Then the inventor directed his men in a clearheaded, composed way that made the task easy enough. The big bundle appeared not so heavy as it looked, and swung up without much strain on the tackle.

I found a place for it just abaft the forecastle, where it would not interfere with the sailors in working the ship. In a brief space of time Duncan Moit had screwed hooks in the planking and lashed his bulky contrivance so firmly to the deck that no ordinary pitch or roll of the ship could possibly affect its security.

Then he carried his trunk and several packages to his cabin, which I had assigned him next my own, and after that I lost sight of him in the responsible duties of our preparations to hoist anchor.

Luncheon was served while we waited for the tide, but there was as yet no sign of Uncle Naboth. I really did not know whether to expect him or not. He might have changed his mind, I reflected; for unless it was a business matter my uncle and partner was wont to be extremely erratic in his decisions. And he had no business at all to join me on this voyage except, as he had said, that he was tired of the land and wished to relieve his restlessness by a smell of salt water.

He was no sailor at all, nor even a navigator; but he had sailed so many years as supercargo and trader that he was seldom contented for long on land, and like myself he dreaded the long wait until Spring when our beautiful new craft would be ready for her maiden trip.

So for a time I thought it probable that he would come alongside; and then I thought it probable he would not. If he ran across Captain Steele, my father was liable to discourage him from making so long and so useless a voyage when no profit was to be had from it. My case was different, for I was a boy still full of a youthful energy and enthusiasm that needed a safety-valve. Moreover, I was pardonably proud of my new position, being for the first time the captain of a ship in name and authority, although I was forced to acknowledge to myself that Ned Britton was the real captain and that without him I would be very helpless indeed.

Two o'clock came, and then three o'clock; but there was no evidence of

Uncle Naboth.

I gave a sigh of regret and unfeigned disappointment then, and nodded to Ned to weigh anchor, for the tide was beginning to turn.

My new men worked cheerily and with a will, and soon the anchor was apeak, our mainsail set and we were standing out to sea on our doubtful attempt to round the Horn and reach the blue waters of the Pacific.

We had left the bay and were standing well out from the coast, when I happened to glance over the rail and notice a small launch coming toward us from the harbor at full speed. They were unable to signal from that distance, but I brought a powerful glass and soon made out the form of Uncle Naboth standing upright in the middle of the little craft and gracefully waving a red handkerchief.

I had Ned luff and lay to, laughing to think how nearly the little uncle had missed us, and before long the launch covered the distance between us and came alongside.

Uncle Naboth was gorgeous in appearance. He was dressed in a vividly checked suit and wore a tourist cap perched jauntily atop his iron-gray locks. His shirt bosom was wonderfully pleated, his shoes of shiney patent-leather, and he wore yellow kid gloves that wrinkled dreadfully. Moreover — the greatest wonder of all, to me — my uncle was smoking a big, fat cigar instead of his accustomed corn-cob pipe, and he had a kodak slung over one shoulder and a marine-glass over the other.

First of all my uncle sent his traps up the side. Then he began a long but calm argument with the crew of the launch, who were greatly excited, and this might have continued indefinitely had not Ned become impatient and yelled a warning that he was about to tack. At this Uncle Naboth thrust some money in the hand of the skipper and leisurely ascended the ladder while a chorus of curses and threats fell upon his unheeding ears.

“Nearly missed you, Sam, didn’t I?” he said, nodding cheerfully as the sails filled and we headed into the breeze again. “Close shave, but no alum or bay-rum.”

“What made you late, Uncle?”

“Had to do a lot to git my outfit ready,” he said, puffing his cigar, smoothing out his gloves and at the same time casting a critical eye over the deck. “First time in my life, nevvy, that I’ve went to sea on a pleasure-trip. No business to look after, no worry, no figgerin’. Jest sailin’ away o’er the deep blue sea with a jolly crew is the life for me. Eh, Sam?”

“Right you are, Uncle. You’re just a passenger, and a mighty welcome one. I’m glad you caught us.”

“Stern chase, but not a long one. What do you s’pose, Sam? I had to pay

them pirates in that half-grown steamboat thirty dollars to get me aboard."

"Thirty dollars!"

"Dreadful, wasn't it? And then they wanted sixty. Took me for a tourist gent 'cause I looked the part. But I was bound to come, an' they was onto my anxiousness, so it might be expected as they'd soak me good an' plenty. Where'd you say you was bound for, Sam?"

"Down the coast, around the Horn, and up the Pacific to San Pedro."

"Sounds interestin'."

His bright little eye had been observant.

"What's aboard, my lad?"

"Steel beams for some new buildings in Los Angeles."

"Loaded rather heavy, ain't she?"

"Top heavy, Uncle."

"H-m-m. Not any too tight, either, I take it. Hull old an' rotten; plenty o' paint to cover up the worm-holes."

"Exactly, sir."

"Will you make it, Sam?"

"Can't say, Uncle Naboth. But I'll try."

"Cargo insured?"

"No; that's the worst of it. The owners insure themselves, because the tub won't pass at Lloyd's. If we sink it's a big loss. So we mustn't sink."

"Iron won't float, nevvy."

"I'm going to hug the coast, mostly. If trouble comes I'll beach her. You may be in for a long cruise, Uncle."

He nodded quite pleasantly.

"That's all right. I take it we'll manage to get home by spring, an' that's time enough fer us both. But I can see she ain't a race-hoss, Sam, my boy."

Indeed, the ship was not behaving at all to suit me. With a favorable breeze and an easy sea the miserable old hulk was sailing more like a water-logged raft than a modern merchantman.

Her sails and cordage were new and beautiful, and her paint spick and span; but I noticed my sailors wagging their heads with disappointment as the *Gladys H.* labored through the water.

Uncle Naboth chuckled to himself and glanced at me as if he thought it all a good joke, and I the only victim. But I pretended to pay no attention to him. Being, as he expressed it, a "loafin' land-lubber," I installed him in the last of the roomy cabins aft, all of which opened into the officers' mess-room. Ned Britton had the cabin opposite mine, and Mr. Perkins the one opposite to that occupied by Duncan Moit. For my part, I was pleased enough to have such good company on a voyage that promised to be unusually tedious.

Moit had kept well out of our way until everything was snug and ship-shape, and then he came on deck and stood where he could keep a tender eye on his precious machine. I introduced him to Uncle Naboth and the two "passengers" shook hands cordially and were soon conversing together in a friendly manner.

I had decided to take my sailors into my confidence in the very beginning, so I called all hands together and made them a brief speech.

"My lads," said I, "we need not look forward to a very good voyage, for you have doubtless discovered already that the *Gladys H.* is not a greyhound. To be honest with you, she's old and leaky, and none too safe. But she's got a valuable cargo aboard, that must be safe delivered if we can manage it, and we are all of us well paid to do our duty by the owners. My instructions are to hug the land and make a harbor if bad weather comes. At the worst we can run the ship on the shingle and save the cargo in that way — for the cargo is worth a dozen such tubs. It's a somewhat risky undertaking, I know, and if any of you don't like your berths I'll put you ashore at the first likely place and you can go home again. But if you are willing to stick to me, I'll take as good care of you as I can, and your money is sure because the Interocean Forwarding Company is back of us and good for every penny. What do you say, my lads?"

They were a good-natured lot, and appreciated my frankness. After a little conference together the boatswain declared they were all content to see the venture to the end and do the best they could under the circumstances. So a mutual understanding was established from the beginning, and before the end came I had cause to be proud of every man aboard.

The weather was warm and pleasant and as I sat with our passengers and Ned on the deck in the afternoon Uncle Naboth got his eye on the overgrown grocery package and said to Moit:

"What sort of an automobile have you got?"

The man had been dreaming, but he gave a start and his eyes lighted with sudden interest. The abstracted mood disappeared.

"It is one of my own invention, sir," he replied.

"What do you call it?"

"The Moit Convertible Automobile."

"Heh? Convertible?"

"Yes, sir."

"I guess," said Uncle Naboth, "I'm up agin it. 'Convertible' is a word I don't jest catch the meaning of. Latin's a little rusty, you know; so long since I went to school."

"It means," said Moit, seriously, "that the machine is equally adapted to

land and water."

My uncle stared a little, then looked away and began to whistle softly. Ned Britton sighed and walked to the rail as if to observe our motion. For my part, I had before entertained a suspicion that the poor fellow was not quite right in his mind, so I was not surprised. But he appeared gentlemanly enough, and was quite in earnest; so, fearing he might notice the rather pointed conduct of my uncle and Ned, I made haste to remark with fitting gravity:

"That is a very desirable combination, Mr. Moit, and a great improvement on the ordinary auto."

"Oh, there is nothing ordinary about the machine, in any way," he responded, quickly. "Indeed, it is so different from all the other motor vehicles in use that it cannot properly be termed an automobile. Some time I intend to provide an appropriate name for my invention, but until now the machine itself has occupied my every thought."

"To be sure," I said, rather vaguely.

"Most automobiles," began my uncle, lying back in his chair and giving me a preliminary wink, "is only built to go on land, an' balks whenever they gets near a repair shop. I was tellin' a feller the other day in New York, who was becalmed in the middle of the street, that if he'd only put a sail on his wagon and wait for a stiff breeze, he could tell all the repair men to go to thunder!"

"But this has nothing to do with Mr. Moit's invention," I said, trying not to smile. "Mr. Moit's automobile is different."

"As how?" asked my uncle.

Mr. Moit himself undertook to reply.

"In the first place," said he, his big eyes looking straight through me with an absorbed expression, as if I were invisible, "I do not use the ordinary fuel for locomotion.

Gasoline is expensive and dangerous, and needs constant replenishing. Electricity is unreliable, and its storage very bulky. Both these forces are crude and unsatisfactory. My first thought was to obtain a motive power that could be relied upon at all times, that was inexpensive and always available. I found it in compressed air."

"Oh!" ejaculated Uncle Naboth.

I am sure he knew less about automobiles than I did, for I owned a small machine at home and had driven it some while on shore. But Mr. Perkins prided himself on being familiar with all modern inventions, and what he did not know from personal experience he was apt to imagine he knew.

"Compressed air," he observed, oracularly, "is what blows the sails of a

ship.”

The inventor turned on him a look of wonder.

“This seems to me like a clever idea,” I hastened to say. “But I can’t see exactly, sir, how you manage to use compressed air for such a purpose.”

“I have a storage tank,” Moit answered, “which is constantly replenished by the pumps as fast as the air is exhausted, which of course only occurs while the machine is in action.”

“But you need something to start the engines,” I suggested. “Do you use gasoline for that purpose?”

“No, sir. I have a glycerine explosive which is so condensed that an atom is all that is required to prime the engines. In a little chamber that contains about a pint I can carry enough explosive to last me for a year. And wherever there is air I have power that is perpetual.”

“That’s great!” cried Uncle Naboth, with an enthusiasm so plainly assumed that Ned and I had much ado to keep from laughing outright.

“In other ways,” continued Duncan Moit, “I have made marked improvements upon the ordinary motor car. Will you allow me, gentlemen, to show you my machine, and to explain it to you?”

We were glad enough of this diversion, even Ned Britton, who could not have run a sewing-machine, being curious to examine our crazy passenger’s invention.

Moit at once began to untie the cords and remove the soiled canvas, which consisted of parts of worn-out sails stitched clumsily together. But when this uninviting cover was withdrawn we saw with astonishment a machine of such beauty, completeness and exquisite workmanship that our exclamations of delight were alike spontaneous and genuine.

Moit might be mad, but as a mechanic he was superb, if this was indeed a creation of his own hands.

An automobile? Well, it had four massive wheels with broad rubber tires, a steering gear (of which only the wheel was visible) and a body for the passengers to ride in; but otherwise the world-pervading auto-fiend would not have recognized the thing.

It seemed to be all of metal — a curious metal of a dull silver hue — not painted or polished in any place, but so finely constructed that every joint and fitting appeared perfect. It was graceful of design, too, although the body was shaped like the hull of a boat, with the wheels so placed that the structure was somewhat more elevated from the ground than ordinarily. This body was about a foot in thickness, having an inner and outer surface composed of beautifully rivetted plates of the strange metal.

Moit explained that part of this space was used for vacuum chambers,

which were kept exhausted by the pumps when required and made the machine wonderfully light. Also, within what corresponded with the gunwale of a boat, were concealed the parts of the adjustable top, which, when raised into position and hooked together, formed a dome-shaped cover for the entire body. These parts were almost entirely of glass, in which a fine wire netting had been imbedded, so that while the riders could see clearly on all sides, any breakage of the glass was unlikely to occur. In any event it could only crack, as the netting would still hold the broken pieces in place.

The engines were in a front-chamber of the body. There were four of them, each no bigger than a gallon jug; but Moit assured us they were capable of developing twenty-five horse-power each, or a total of one hundred horsepower, owing to the wonderful efficiency of the compressed air. All the other machinery was similarly condensed in size and so placed that the operator could reach instantly any part of it.

The entrance was at either side or at the back, as one preferred, but the seats were arranged in a circle around the body, with the exception of the driver's chair. So roomy was the car that from six to eight passengers could be carried with comfort, or even more in case of emergency.

All of these things were more easily understood by observation than I can hope to explain them with the pen. Perhaps I have omitted to describe them to you as clearly as I should; but I must plead in extenuation a lack of mechanical knowledge. That you will all ride in similar cars some day I have no doubt, and then you will understand all the details that I, a plain sailor, have been forced to ignore because of my ignorance of mechanics.

"But," said Uncle Naboth, whose eyes were fairly bulging with amazement, "I don't yet see what drives the blamed thing through water."

Moit smiled for almost the first time since I had known him, and the smile was one of triumphant pride.

He entered the automobile, touched some buttons, and with a whirring sound a dozen little scoop-shaped flanges sprang from the rim of each wheel. There was no need for farther explanation. We could see at once that in water the four wheels now became paddle-wheels, and their rapid revolution would no doubt drive the machine at a swift pace.

The paddles were cleverly shaped, being made of the same metal employed everywhere in the construction of this astonishing invention, and they stood at just the right angle to obtain the utmost power of propulsion.

"Aluminum?" questioned Mr. Perkins, pointing to the metal.

"No, sir. This is perhaps my most wonderful discovery, and you will pardon me if I say it is a secret which I am unwilling at this time to divulge. But I may tell you that I have found an alloy that is unequalled in the known

world for strength, durability and lightness. It weighs a little more than pure aluminum, but has a thousand times its tensile strength. You may test one of these blades, which seem to the eye to be quite delicate and fragile."

Uncle Naboth leaned over and gingerly tested one of the wheel blades with his thumb and finger. Then he exerted more strength. Finally he put his heel upon it and tried to bend it with the weight of his body. It resisted all efforts with amazing success.

And now the inventor pushed some other buttons, or keys, and the metal blades all receded and became once more a part of the rims of the wheels.

"When we get to San Pedro, gentlemen," said he, "it will give me pleasure to take you for a ride in my machine, both on land and water. Then you will be sure to appreciate its perfection more fully."

He began to replace the canvas cover, apologizing as much to his beloved machine as to us for its shabbiness.

"All of my money was consumed by the machine itself," he explained, "and I was forced to use this cloth to make a cover, which is needed only to protect my invention from prying eyes. The metal will never rust nor corrode."

"Is this material, this alloy, easy to work?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"It is very difficult," he returned. "Steel crumbles against it with discouraging readiness, so that my tools were all of the same metal, annealed and hardened. Even these had to be constantly replaced. You must not imagine, sir, that I obtained all of this perfection at the first trial. I have been years experimenting."

"So I imagine, Mr. Moit."

"By a fortunate coincidence," he went on, dreamily, "my money, which I had inherited from my father, lasted me until all the work was complete. I had thought of nothing but my machine, and having at last finished it and made thorough tests to assure myself that it was as nearly perfect as human skill can make it, I awoke to find myself bankrupt and in debt. By selling my tools, my workshop, and everything else I possessed except the machine itself I managed to pay my indebtedness and have two hundred dollars left. This was not enough to get myself and my car shipped to California by rail; so I was at my wits' end until you, sir," turning to me, "kindly came to my rescue."

During the pause that followed he finished covering up his machine, and then Uncle Naboth asked, bluntly:

"If you are sure the blamed thing will work, why didn't you run it overland to California? That has been done more 'n once, I'm told, and as

you use compressed air the expense wouldn't be a circumstance."

That had occurred to me too, and I awaited the man's reply with much curiosity.

"Sir," he answered, "you must not forget that I have devoted years to this work — years of secret and constant toil — and that my whole heart is involved in the success of my perfected machine. But you can readily understand that I have not dared to patent it, or any of its parts, until all was complete; for an imperfect patent not only fails to protect one, but in this case it would give other designers of automobiles the ideas I had originated. A patent is never a safeguard if it can be improved or stolen. As I have said, when at last my work was finished I had no money with which to obtain patents, of which no less than nineteen are required to protect me."

"And have you, at this time, no patents at all?" I asked, surprised at such neglect.

He shook his head.

"Not one. There, gentlemen, stands one of the most important mechanical inventions the world has ever known, and its inventor has no protection whatever — as yet. If I attempted to run the machine overland to the Pacific coast, a dozen automobile experts would see it and promptly steal my ideas. Such a risk was too great to run. I must manage to reach my rich and selfish uncle, prove to him how wonderful my invention is, offer him a half interest in it, and so procure the money to protect it and to establish a manufactory. Do you understand now why I have acted in so puzzling a way — puzzling, at least, to one not aware of my dilemma?"

"It is quite clear to me," I replied, beginning to think my passenger was not mad, after all. "But have you not been foolish to confide all this to us?"

He smiled pleasantly, and the smile made his face really attractive.

"I am not especially stupid, believe me," said he, "and I am a fair judge of human nature. You will pardon me if I say that not a man on this ship is at all dangerous to me."

"How is that?" I asked, slightly discomfited.

"No man among you is competent to steal my invention," he asserted, coolly, "even if you were disposed to do so, which I doubt. It would require a dishonest person who is a mechanical expert, and while there are many such between Chelsea and California, I am sure there is none on this ship who would wrong me, even if he possessed the power. I feel entirely secure, gentlemen, in your company."

This was diplomatic, at least, for we were naturally pleased at the tribute to our good faith, even if inclined to resent the disparagement of our mechanical genius. However, we regarded Duncan Moit in a more friendly

light and with vastly increased respect from that time forth.

It was growing dark by this time, and presently Nux announced that dinner was served. So we repaired to the mess cabin, and while testing Bryonia's superb talents as a cook beguiled the hour by canvassing the future possibilities of the Moit Convertible Automobile.

CHAPTER FOUR
WE COME TO GRIEF

Fortune seemed to favor the voyage of the *Gladys H.* All the way to Hatteras the weather was delightful and the breeze fresh and constant. There was not a moment when the sails were not bulging to some extent and in spite of the old ship's labored motion we made excellent time.

However, I followed my instructions, keeping well in toward the coast, and so crept steadily down to Key West.

Here an important proposition confronted us: whether to enter the Gulf of Mexico and follow its great circle near to the shore — a method that would require weeks — or run across to Cuba and then attempt the passage of the Caribbean by the short cut to Colon or Porto Bella. We had canvassed this alternative before I left harbor; but Mr. Harlan had maintained that I must decide the question for myself, being guided by the actions of the bark and the condition of the weather.

Both these requirements seemed favorable for the short cut. The ship had behaved so far much better than I had expected, and the good weather seemed likely to hold for some time longer.

So after a conference with Ned Britton — for Uncle Naboth refused to "mix up in the business" or even to offer an opinion — I decided to take the chances and follow the shortest route. After reaching Colon I would keep close to land way down to the Horn.

So we stood out to sea, made Cuba easily, and skirted its western point to the Isles de Pinos. Still the skies were clear and the breeze favorable, and with good courage we headed south in a bee-line for Colon.

And now we were in the Caribbean, that famous sea whose very name breathes romance. It recalls to us the earliest explorers, the gold seekers and buccaneers, the fact that scarce an inch of its rippling surface is unable to boast some tragedy or adventure in the days of the Spanish Main, when ships of all nations thronged the waters of the West Indies.

For three whole days luck was our bedfellow; then, as Uncle Naboth drily remarked, it "went a fishin'" and left us to take care of ourselves.

With gentle sighs our hitherto faithful breeze deserted us and our sails flapped idly for a time and then lay still, while the ship floated upon a sheet of brilliant blue glass, the tropic sun beat fiercely down upon us, and all signs of life and animation came to an end.

No sailor is partial to calms. A gale he fights with a sense of elation and a resolve to conquer; a favoring breeze he considers his right; but a glassy sea and listless, drooping sails are his especial horror. Nevertheless, he is

accustomed to endure this tedium and has learned by long experience how best to enliven such depressing periods.

Our men found they possessed a violinist — not an unskilled fiddler by any means — and to his accompanying strains they sang and danced like so many happy children.

Uncle Naboth and Ned Britton played endless games of penocle under the deck awning and I brought out my favorite books and stretched myself in a reclining chair to enjoy them.

Duncan Moit paced deliberately up and down for the first two days, engrossed in his own musings; then he decided to go over his machine and give it a careful examination. He removed the cover, started his engines, and let them perform for the amusement of the amazed sailors, who formed a curious but respectful group around him.

Finally they cleared a space on the deck and Moit removed the guy-ropes that anchored his invention and ran his auto slowly up and down, to the undisguised delight of the men. He would allow six or eight to enter the car and ride — sixteen feet forward, around the mainmast, and sixteen feet back again — and it was laughable to watch the gravity of their faces as they held fast to the edge, bravely resolving to endure the dangers of this wonderful mode of locomotion. Not one had ever ridden in an automobile before, and although Moit merely allowed it to crawl over its confined course, the ride was a strange and fascinating experience to them.

I must allow that the performances of this clever machine astonished me. The inventor was able to start it from his seat, by means of a simple lever, and it was always under perfect control. The engines worked so noiselessly that you had to put your ear close in order to hear them at all, and the perfection of the workmanship could not fail to arouse my intense admiration.

"If this new metal is so durable as you claim," I said to Moit, "the machine ought to last for many years."

"My claim is that it is practically indestructible," he answered, in a tone of conviction.

"But you have still the tire problem," I remarked. "A puncture will put you out of business as quickly as it would any other machine."

"A puncture!" he exclaimed. "Why, these tires cannot puncture, sir."

"Why not?"

"They are not inflated."

"What then?"

"It is another of my inventions, Mr. Steele. Inside each casing is a mass of sponge-rubber, of a peculiarly resilient and vigorous character. And within

the casing itself is embedded a net of steel wire, which will not allow the vulcanized rubber to be cut to any depth. The result is an excellent tire that cannot be punctured and has great permanency."

"You do not seem to have overlooked any important point," I observed, admiringly.

"Ah, that is the one thing that now occupies my mind," he responded, quickly. "That is why I have been testing the machine today, even in the limited way that is alone possible. I am haunted by the constant fear that I *have* overlooked some important point, which another might discover."

"And have you found such a thing?"

"No; to all appearances the device is perfect. But who can tell what may yet develop?"

"Not I," with a smile; "you have discounted my mechanical skill already. To my mind the invention seems in every way admirable, Mr. Moit."

For nine days we lay becalmed, with cloudless skies above and a tranquil sea around us. During the day we rested drowsily in the oppressive heat, but the nights were always cooler and myriads of brilliant stars made it nearly as light as day. Ned had taken in every yard of canvas except a square sail which he rigged forward, and he took the added precaution to lash every movable thing firmly to its place.

"After this, we've got to expect ugly weather," he announced; and as he knew the Caribbean well this preparation somewhat dismayed me. I began to wish we had entered the Gulf of Mexico and made the roundabout trip; but it was too late for regrets now, and we must make the best of our present outlook.

Personally I descended into the hold and examined with care the seams, finding that the calking had held securely so far and that we were as right and tight as when we had first sailed. But even this assurance was not especially encouraging, for we had met with no weather that a canoe might not have lived through without shipping more than a few drops of sea.

The ninth day was insufferably hot, and the evening brought no relief. Ned Britton's face looked grave and worried, and I overheard him advising Duncan Moit to add several more anchor ropes to those that secured his machine.

We awaited the change in the weather anxiously enough, and toward midnight the stars began to be blotted out until shortly a black pall overhung the ship. The air seemed vibrant and full of an electric feel that drew heavily upon one's nerves; but so far there had been no breath of wind.

At last, when it seemed we could wait no longer, a distant murmur was heard, drawing ever nearer and louder until its roar smote our ears like a

discharge of artillery. The ship began to roll restlessly, and then the gale and the waves broke upon us at the same instant and with full force.

Heavily weighted and lazy as the bark was, she failed to rise to the first big wave, which washed over her with such resistless power that it would have swept every living soul away had we not clung desperately to the rigging. It seemed to me that I was immersed in a wild, seething flood for several minutes; but they must have been seconds, instead, for presently the water was gone and the wind endeavoring to tear me from my hold.

The square sail held, by good luck, and the ship began to stagger onward, bowing her head deep and submitting to constant floods that washed her from end to end. There was not much that could be done to ease her, and the fervid excitement of those first hours kept us all looking after our personal safety. Along we went, scudding before the gale, which maintained its intensity unabated and fortunately drove us along the very course we had mapped out.

The morning relieved the gloom, but did not lessen the force of the storm. The waves were, rolling pretty high, and all faces were serious or fearful, according to the disposition of their owners. In our old *Saracen,* or even the *Flipper,* I would not have minded the blow or the sea, but here was a craft of a different sort, and I did not know how she might stand such dreadful weather.

I got Ned into the cabin, where we stood like a couple of drenched rats and discussed the situation. On deck our voices could not be heard.

"Are the small boats ready to launch?" I asked.

"All ready, sir; but I doubt if they'd live long," he replied. "However, this 'ere old hulk seems to be doin' pretty decent. She lies low, bein' so heavy loaded, an' lets the waves break over her. That saves her a good deal of strain, Sam. If she don't spring a leak an' the cargo holds steady, we'll get through all right."

"Tried the pumps?"

"Yes; only bilge, so far."

"Very good. How long will the gale last?"

"Days, perhaps, in these waters. There's no rule to go by, as I knows of. It'll just blow till it blows itself out."

He went on deck again, keeping an eye always on the ship and trying to carry just enough canvas to hold her steady.

Duncan Moit and Uncle Naboth kept to the cabin and were equally unconcerned. The latter was an old voyager and realized that it was best to be philosophical; the former had never been at sea before and had no idea of our danger.

On the third morning of this wild and persistent tempest the boatswain

came to where Ned and I clung to the rigging and said:

"She's leaking, sir."

"Badly?"

"Pretty bad, sir."

"Get the pumps manned, Ned," said I; "I'll go below and investigate."

I crawled into the hold through the forecastle cubby, as we dared not remove the hatches. I took along a sailor to carry the lantern, and we were not long in making the discovery that the *Gladys H.* was leaking like a sieve. Several of the seams that Mr. Harlan had caused to be calked so carefully had reopened and the water was spurting through in a dozen streams.

I got back to my cabin and made a careful examination of the chart. According to my calculations we could not be far from the coast of Panama. If I was right, another six hours would bring us to the shore; but I was not sure of my reckoning since that fearful gale had struck us. So the question whether or no the ship could live six hours longer worried me considerably, for the pumps were of limited capacity and the water was gaining on us every minute.

I told Uncle Naboth our difficulty, and Duncan Moit, who stood by, listened to my story with lively interest.

"Will you try to beach her, Sam?" enquired my uncle, with his usual calmness.

"Of course, sir, if we manage to float long enough to reach the land. That is the best I can hope for now. By good luck the coast of Panama is low and marshy, and if we can drive the tub aground there the cargo may be saved to the owners."

"Ain't much of a country to land in, Sam; is it?"

"Not a very lovely place, Uncle, I'm told."

"It's where they're diggin' the canal, ain't it?"

"I believe so."

"Well, we may get a chance to see the ditch. This 'ere travellin' is full of surprises, Mr. Moit. I never thought to 'a' brung a guide book o' Panama, or we could tell exactly where they make the hats."

The inventor appeared ill at ease. I could understand the man's disappointment and anxiety well enough. To beach his beloved machine on a semi-barbarous, tropical shore was not what he had anticipated, and I had time to feel sorry for him while thinking upon my own troubles.

He followed me on deck, presently, and I saw him take a good look at the sea and shake his head despondently. The Convertible Automobile might work in ordinary water, but it was not intended for such mammoth waves as these.

Then he watched the men at the pumps. They worked with a will, but in that cheerless way peculiar to sailors when they are forced to undertake this desperate duty. The ocean was pushing in and they were trying to keep it out; and such a pitiful struggle usually results in favor of the ocean.

Suddenly Moit conceived a brilliant idea. He asked for a length of hose, and when it was brought he threw off the covering of his machine and succeeded in attaching the hose to his engines. The other end we dropped into the hold, and presently, despite the lurching and plunging of the ship, the engines started and a stream the full size of the hose was sucked up and sent flowing into the scrup-pers. It really did better work than the ship's pumps, and I am now positive that this clever arrangement was all that enabled us to float until we made the coast.

In the afternoon, while the gale seemed to redouble its force, we sighted land — low, murky and uninteresting, but nevertheless land — and made directly for it.

Darkness came upon us swiftly, but we held our course, still pumping for dear life and awaiting with tense nerves the moment of impact.

What this shore, of which we had caught a glimpse, might be like I did not know, more than that it was reported low and sandy at the ocean's edge and marshy in the interior. There were a few rocky islands at the south of the isthmus, and there might be rocks or breakers at any point, for all we knew. If the ship struck one of these we were surely doomed.

On and on we flew, with blackness all round us, until on a sudden the bow raised and our speed slackened so abruptly that we were all thrown prostrate upon the deck. The mainmast snapped and fell with a deafening crash, and slowly the ship rolled to starboard until the deck stood at a sharp angle, and trembled a few brief moments, and then lay still.

The voyage of the *Gladys H.* was at an end.

CHAPTER FIVE
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

"Are you there, Sam?"

"Yes, Ned."

"Safe and sound?"

"I think so."

Overhead the wind still whistled, but more moderately; around me I could hear the men stirring, with an occasional groan. We had come from the tempest-tossed seas into a place of comparative quiet, which just now was darker than the pocket of Erebus.

I found the after cabin and slid down the steps, which inclined sidewise. Inside however, the hanging lamps had withstood the shock and still cast a dim light over the room. I found Uncle Naboth reclining upon a bench with his feet braced against the table, while he puffed away complacently at one of his enormous cigars.

"Stopped at a way station, Sam?" he enquired.

"So it appears, Uncle."

"Any damage?"

"Can't tell, yet. Were you hurt?"

He exhibited a great lump on his forehead, but smiled sweetly.

"You should 'a' seen me dive under the table, Sam. It were a reg'lar circus, with me the chief acrobat. Where are we?"

"I'm going to find out."

I unhooked both the lanterns and started up the companion-way with them. Rather than remain in the dark, Uncle brought himself and his cigar after me.

I gave Ned one of the lights and we began to look about us. Duncan Moit lay unconscious beside his machine, the engines of which were still running smoothly. I threw back the lever and stopped them, and then a couple of seamen carried the inventor into the cabin. Black Nux had lighted another lantern, and with my uncle's assistance undertook to do what he could to restore the injured man.

Ned and I slid aft and found the stern still washed by a succession of waves that dashed over it. Walking the deck was difficult because the ship listed from stem to stern and from port to starboard. Her bow was high and dry on a sand-bar — or such I imagined it to be — but it was only after I had swung a lantern up a halyard of the foremast, so that its dim rays would illumine the largest possible area, that I discovered we had plunged straight into a deep inlet of the coast. On one side of us appeared to be a rank growth

of tangled shrubs or underbrush; on the other was the outline of a forest. Ahead was clear water, but its shallow depth had prevented our proceeding farther inland.

Either the gale had lessened perceptibly or we did not feel it so keenly in our sheltered position. An examination of the men showed that one of them had broken an arm and several others were badly bruised; but there were no serious casualties.

The ship was now without any motion whatever, being fast on the bottom of the inlet. The breakers that curled over the stern did her no damage, and these seemed to be gradually lessening in force.

Ned sent his tired men to their bunks and with the assistance of Bryonia, who was almost as skillful in surgery as in cooking, prepared to set the broken arm and attend to those who were the most bruised.

I went to the cabin again, and found that Uncle Naboth and Nux had been successful in restoring Duncan Moit, who was sitting up and looking around him with a dazed expression. I saw he was not much hurt, the fall having merely stunned him for the time being.

"The machine — the machine!" he was muttering, anxiously.

"It's all right, sir," I assured him. "I shut down the engines, and she seems to have weathered the shock in good shape."

He seemed relieved by this report, and passed his hand across his brow as if to clear his brain.

"Where are we?" was his next query.

"No one knows, sir. But we are landed high and dry, and I'm almost sure it is some part of the coast of Panama. To-morrow morning we can determine our location more accurately. But now, Mr. Moit, I recommend that you tumble into your bunk and get all the rest you can before daybreak."

The strain of the last few days had been severe upon all of us, and now that the demand for work or vigilance was removed we found that our strength had been overtaxed. I left Ned to set a watch, and sought my own bed, on which I stretched myself to fall asleep in half a minute.

"Wake up, Mars' Sam," said Nux, shaking me. "Breakfas' ready, seh."

I rubbed my eyes and sat up. The sun was streaming through the cabin window, which was on the port side. Around me was a peculiar silence which contrasted strongly with the turmoil that had so long buffeted my ears. The gale had passed on and left us to count the mischief it had caused.

"What time is it, Nux?"

"Eight o'clock, Mars' Sam."

I sprang up, now fully conscious of the night's tragedy, which sleep had for a time driven from my mind. Nux stood with my basin and towel and his

calmness encouraged me to bathe before I went on deck.

In the mess-cabin I found that the table legs had been propped up with boxes to hold it level, and that a hot breakfast had been prepared and was now steaming on the table. Around the board were gathered Ned Britton, Uncle Naboth and Duncan Moit, all busily engaged in eating. They greeted me cheerfully and bade me sit down and join them.

"How is everything, Ned?" I enquired, anxiously.

"Bad as can be, an' right as a trivet, Sam," he replied. "The *Gladys H.*'ll never float again. Her bottom's all smashed in, an' she's fast in the mud till she goes to pieces an' makes kindlin'-wood for the Indians."

"Then the cargo is safe, for the present?"

"To be sure. It can't get lost, 'cause it's a chunk o' steel, and the ship's planks'll hold it in place for a long time. It'll get good and soaked, but I've noticed it's all painted to keep it from rustin'. This ain't San Pedro, whatever else it is, and the voyage has miscarried a bit; but them beams is a good deal better off here than at the bottom o' the sea, so I take it we've done the best we could by the owners."

I sat down and took the coffee Nux poured for me.

"How about the crew?" I asked. "Are the men all right?"

"Nobody hurt but Dick Lombard, and his arm'll mend nicely."

"Have you any idea where we are, Ned?"

"Stuck in a river, somewhere. Wild country all around us, but I guess we can find a way out. Lots o' provisions and a good climate. We may say as we're in luck, Sam."

I shook my head dismally. It did not appear to me that luck had especially favored us. To be sure, we might have gone to the bottom of the Caribbean in the gale; but it struck me we had landed the cargo in an awkward place for the owners as well as for ourselves. Mr. Harlan would have done better had he not taken the long chance of our making the voyage to San Pedro successfully.

"Well, I cannot see that we have failed in our duty, in any way," I remarked, as cheerfully as I could, "so we may as well make the best of it."

"This bein' a tourist, an' travellin' fer pleasure," said Uncle Naboth, "is more fun than a kickin' mule. Sam's got to worry, 'cause he's paid fer it; but we passengers can look on an' enjoy ourselves. Eh, Mr. Moit?"

"It is a serious situation for me," replied the inventor. "Think of it, gentlemen! The most wonderful piece of mechanism the world has yet known is stranded in a wilderness, far from civilization."

"That is your own fault," remarked Ned, bluntly.

"Not that, sir; it is fate."

“The machine is all right,” said I. “You will have no trouble to save it.”

“As for that, I must, of course, make the best of the adverse circumstances that have overtaken me,” he replied, with more composure than I had expected. “It is not my nature to be easily discouraged, else I could never have accomplished what I have in the perfection of any inventions. My greatest regret, at this moment, is that the world will be deprived, for a longer period than I had intended, of the benefits of my Convertible Automobile.”

“Having never known its excellent qualities, sir, the world can wait,” asserted Uncle Naboth, philosophically. I have noticed one can be quite philosophical over another’s difficulties.

Having hurried through my breakfast, which our faithful Bryonia had prepared most excellently in spite of the fact that his galley was at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, I went on deck to obtain for the first time a clear view of our surroundings.

The tide had changed and the wind fallen. We lay in the center of a placid river — high and dry, as Ned had said — with the current gently rippling against our bow. Not more than ten yards to the right was a low, marshy bank covered with scrub underbrush of a tropical character. On our left, however, and some fifty yards distant, lay a well defined bank marking the edge of the stately forest which I had observed the night before. The woodland gradually sloped upward from the river, and above it, far to the south, a formidable range of mountains was visible.

Between us and this left bank the water seemed a fair depth, but it was quite shallow on our right. It seemed wonderful that any gale could have sent so big a ship so far up the river; but I remembered that the billows had followed us in, and doubtless their power alone had urged us forward.

Here we were, anyway, and here the *Gladys H.* must remain until demolished by time, tide or human endeavor.

For the rest, the air was warm and pleasant, with a blue sky overhead. Aside from the loss that would follow the salvage of the valuable cargo, we had good reason to thank Providence for our fortunate escape from death.

I felt that I had done as much to promote the interests of the owners as any man could do; but the conditions had been adverse, and the responsibility was now theirs, and not mine.

The gravest part of the situation, so far as I was personally concerned, was to get my men into some civilized port where they could find an opportunity to get home again. Also I must notify Mr. Harlan, by cable, and that as soon as possible, of the location and condition of his cargo. The loss of the ship I knew would matter little to him, as he had asserted this several times.

And now to solve the problem of our location. I had reason to believe that

we had not varied to any great extent from the course my chart had indicated. Somewhere, either up or down the coast, was Colon, the Atlantic terminal of the Panama canal, and to reach that place ought not to be especially difficult, because our small boats were in fairly good condition.

The river made a bend just ahead of us, and my first thought was to get out a boat and explore the stream for a way. We might find some village, I imagined, or at least some evidence of human habitation.

So I ordered the gig lowered and took with me four men, besides Duncan Moit, who wanted to go along and begged the privilege. The current was languid and easy to breast, so we made excellent progress.

Bend after bend we made, for the stream was as crooked as a ram's horn; but always the forest towered on the one hand and the low, marshy flats prevailed upon the other.

Rowing close to the shore, under the shadow of the trees, we could hear the stealthy sound of wild beasts in the wilderness, and once we espied a sleek jaguar lying flat upon the bank to drink. But no sign of man or civilization of any sort did we encounter. Even the woodman's axe was nowhere in evidence.

We hugged the forest for several miles, finding the river easily navigable for small steamers. Then we decided to return, and followed the edge of the opposite marsh, which was much less inviting and less liable to be inhabited than the other shore.

We were scarcely a mile from the ship when Moit suddenly exclaimed:

"Isn't that a canoe?"

"Where?" I asked.

He pointed to a small inlet, and I could see plainly a craft that looked like an Indian dugout lying among the reeds.

"Let us get it and see what it looks like," said I, hailing with some satisfaction this first evidence of human handicraft.

At the word my men rowed in, and the sailor in the bow, as he grasped the gunwale of the canoe, uttered a startled cry.

"What is it?" I asked.

Without reply he drew the canoe alongside our boat, and we could all see the form of a man lying flat upon his face on the rough bottom.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DEAD MAN'S STORY

"Turn him over, Tom," said I, softly, and the sailor clambered into the canoe and obeyed — rather gingerly, though, for no one likes to touch a dead man.

The bearded face and staring eyes that confronted us were those of one of our own race, a white man who had been shot through the heart with an arrow that still projected from the wound. His clothing was threadbare and hung almost in rags, while his feet were protected by rude sandals of bark laced with thongs of some vegetable fibre. He was neither a Mexican nor a Spaniard, but I judged him a North American of German descent, if his physiognomy could be trusted.

The man had not long been dead, that was quite evident, and the arrow that had pierced his heart must have killed him instantly. I pulled out the weapon and found it of skillful construction, — a head of hammered bronze fastened to a shaft most delicately shaped and of a wood that resembled yew. It differed materially from any Indian arrow I had ever before seen.

The mystery of this man's life and death seemed impenetrable, and I ordered the canoe attached to our stern and towed it in our wake down to the ship.

A sailor's burial ground is the sea; so I decided to sew the corpse in sacking, weight it heavily, and sink it in the deepest water of the river.

Before doing this one of the men searched the pockets of the tattered clothing and drew out a small book that looked like a diary, a pocket-knife, several bits of lead-pencil and a roll of thin bark tied with wisps of the same material.

These things I took charge of, and then watched the obsequies. These were quickly performed, Ned reading a short prayer from his Bible by way of ceremony while all our company stood with bared heads. Then the men rowed the body out to the deepest part of the river, and as I watched them from the deck I noticed they were thrown into a state of sudden excitement and heard cries of anger and alarm. Lifting my glass into position I discovered the cause of this. The boat was surrounded by sharks, their dark heads and white bellies alternating as they slowly swam round and round, attracted by the scent of prey. I yelled to the men to bring the body back, but they were too excited to hear me and the next instant had dumped the weighted sack overboard and begun to row back to the wreck at racing speed.

It was just as well, however. I am quite sure the poor fellow reached bottom before a shark could seize him, and once on the bottom they would

be unable to either see him or grasp him in their jaws.

Seated on the deck with the others and shaded from the sun by a heavy awning, I glanced at the diary and found that the murdered man had not made a daily record, but had written upon the pages a sort of narrative, which seemed likely to prove interesting. So I asked Duncan Moit to read it aloud, which he did. I have it beside me now, and copy the following word for word as it was first read to us that day in the tropics with the wilderness all around us.

"My name is Maurice Kleppisch," it began, "by profession an engineer and mining expert residing at Denver, Colorado, at those times when I am at home.

"Nine years ago I was sent to the Republic of Colombia to examine a mine, and while there I joined myself to a party that was formed to visit the San Blas Country, at the south of Panama, and trade with the Indians who are the masters of a vast territory there. I am no trader, but my object was to take advantage of this opportunity to investigate the mining possibilities of the wild and unknown region of San Blas, thinking that should I fall in with traces of gold my fortune would be made.

"But, when we arrived at the border, the arrogant Indians would not allow us to enter their country at all, commanding us, with imperious scorn, to stand at a respectful distance and display our wares. The traders obeyed without demur, but I was angry and vengeful, and for a time considered my journey a failure. The Indians, however, exchanged their cocoanuts and sheep-skins — with such other things as their land produced — with great willingness and absolute honesty and fairness, and the traders learned that their given word was held inviolate.

"Nursing my disappointment at being excluded from this mysterious country, I stood sullenly watching the bartering when my attention was aroused by an object that made my heart bound with excitement. It was an immense rough diamond, set in the bronze shaft of a spear borne by Nalig-Nad, the king of the San Blas and the most stalwart, dignified and intelligent Indian I have ever seen.

"I will here explain that the strange race known as the San Blas Indians of Southern Panama is none other than that historic remnant of the Aztec nation which, when Mexico was conquered by the Spaniard, fled through morass and mountains, across plains and rivers until they came to this then unknown wilderness. Here they located and established a new nation which they call Techla. Their territory stretches south of the natural depression of the isthmus from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and contains vast stretches of forests and coastal plains, which they have ever jealously guarded from intrusion.

No more did they build beautiful cities and golden temples, for gold they had learned to abhor because the lust for it had brought the white demons upon them in Mexico. The white skinned races were cordially detested as the destroyers of their former nation. By them the Techlas had been driven from the abode bequeathed them by their ancestors.

"The creed of the new nation, therefore, contained two prime articles of faith: Never to mine or trade or employ gold in any form for use or ornament; to hate and oppose every white man that came near them.

"The San Blas people are not truly Indians, as we regard the West Indian and Central American tribes, but are well formed, intelligent and fierce. Their skin is of copper-colored hue and they have a characteristic dress that is peculiar to their nation. They have an established government centering in the king, humane and just laws for the guidance of their tribes, and many racial characteristics. It is said the weaker Aztecs remained in Mexico as slaves of the Spaniards, while the nobles and the most stalwart and powerful individuals, realizing their inability to oppose the usurpers but scorning to become their vassals, fled southward in the manner I have described.

"However true this may be, I found the San Blas — a name given them by the early Spaniards but never acknowledged by themselves — to be well worthy of admiration in all ways except their persistent hatred of the whites. They gave our party cocoanuts and cereals, tortoise-shells, skins of wild beasts that were most skillfully dressed, and a soft quality of lamb's wool, in exchange for knives, glass beads, compasses, colored crayons, mirrors and other inexpensive trinkets.

"When I got my eye upon the king's mammoth diamond I was so amazed that I trembled with eagerness. The gem must have weighed full five hundred carats, and being intent to obtain it for myself I offered my silver watch, a fountain pen, my comb and brushes and a quantity of buttons in exchange for the diamond.

"My very anxiety was the cause of my undoing. My reckless offers aroused the king's suspicions, and when my comrades also saw the diamond they became as anxious as I was, and offered so much for a bit of stone which the king had never considered of any value, that he questioned us closely and learned that the white men esteem these gems even more than they do gold.

"Then the king drew himself up proudly and spoke to his men in their own native dialect, with which we are unfamiliar. Several of the Indians brought to their ruler specimens of the same stones — rough diamonds ranging from the size of a pea upward. These they had doubtless gathered and kept because they were pretty, but Nalig-Nad took them all in his hand

and, having pried his own splendid stone from its setting in the spearshaft, he advanced to the edge of the river and cast them all into its depths.

"'I have told my men,' said he, 'never to gather these pebbles again; nor will we ever trade them to the white men. I class them with the gold, for we are determined not to own anything which will arouse the mad desires of your people.'

"A few of the San Blas, including their king, speak the English language; more of them speak in the Spanish tongue; but their own language, as I have said, is distinct from the dialects of the other Indian tribes and the white men have no opportunity to learn it.

"We were greatly disappointed by the loss of the gems, and when we returned to our camp we talked the matter over and concluded that there must be many diamonds lying exposed upon the surface of the ground in some part of the San Blas territory. Else the Indians would not have been enabled to pick up such choice and extraordinarily large specimens as we had seen.

"I did not like to go away without making an attempt to locate these diamond fields, and seven of the party, adventurous as myself, determined to join in braving the anger of the stern Nalig-Nad. So at night we stole through the north forest and by morning had come to the edge of the fertile plains whereon the San Blas mostly dwell.

"Their country may be divided into three sections: First, the North Forest, bordering on the Panama marshes and the wilderness. Second, a high and broad sweep of coastal plains, formed by eroded drift from the mountains. This section is well watered by numerous streams and the soil is extremely rich and fertile. To the east, by the Atlantic coast, are the cocoanut groves, but most of this fruit is grown upon several islands lying off the coast in the Atlantic. The third division lies south of the plains and consists of a magnificent primeval forest which covers thickly all the slope of the mountains. The climate, especially that of the uplands, is temperate and delightful, and it has been stated that these powerful Indians control the most desirable bit of land in the Western Hemisphere.

"It was in the plain that we determined to search for the diamond fields, and as the Indians had arbitrarily forbidden white men to enter their domain, we stained our faces and arms and chests with walnut juice, and dressed ourselves in imitation of the San Blas people as nearly as we were able. And thus we prowled around for several days, until in a rich valley covered with alluvial deposit I picked up one of the coveted 'pebbles,' and to our great delight we knew that we had stumbled upon the right place.

"An hour later we were surrounded by a band of the San Blas and made prisoners. We relied upon our disguises to protect us, but when they had

examined us closely the Indians stripped off our clothing and discovered our white skins. We knew, then, our fate was sealed.

"These people allow negroes to enter their country, and even employ some of them to labor upon their farms. Other Indian tribes of the mountains, who are all hostile to the whites, are permitted to pass through the San Blas territory, and sometimes these mountaineers have with them white slaves, who are treated cruelly and obliged to bear their burdens. But these whites who are the slaves of Indians are the only ones ever tolerated in the country, and a band like our own, entering by stealth to secure treasure, might expect no mercy at the hands of the San Blas.

"Being taken before Nalig-Nad at his own village, he condemned us all to death but one, who was to be sent back to Colombia to tell the fate of those who dared defy the laws of the San Blas. We cast lots, and I drew the fortunate number. My comrades, two of whom were young men of position and wealth in Bogota, were ruthlessly murdered, and I was then escorted to the border and set free.

"I reported the matter to the Colombian authorities, and a company of soldiers was promptly sent by the President to punish the impudent Indians and teach them not to molest the whites in the future. After a long period of waiting a single soldier, who had his ears cut off and was otherwise horribly mutilated, arrived at Bogota to tell of the total extinction of all his fellows and to report that King Nalig-Nad had promised to treat in the same manner any who dared to interfere with his authority. The government decided to let these fierce Indians alone. There were other troubles, nearer home, that needed attention.

"I returned to Denver, but could not get this rich diamond field out of my head. I was a poor man, yet I knew where I might obtain countless treasure — if I dared but make the attempt.

"Finally I decided that I might be able to accomplish alone what a band of white men could never succeed in doing, and having formulated my plans I sailed to Colon and prepared to enter once more the country of the San Blas.

"My idea was admirably simple. The Indians feel so secure that they seldom prowl by night, and in their climate the stars and moon are so brilliant that they illuminate the country almost as well as does the sun by day. By stealthily avoiding all habitations and villages, I had a fair chance to escape observation, and the valley I sought was in an uninhabited part of the plains.

"I took a canoe and a package of provisions, and began my journey by entering the San Maladrino river at the Atlantic mouth. I followed this until the river passed between two high hills, which may be seen in the crude map

I have drawn for the benefit of others, should I lose my life in this desperate adventure.

"A stream of which I do not know the name enters the San Maladrino just beyond the hills mentioned, and leads to the southward. It passes through the first forest and is broad and deep. Hiding in the forest the first day, I cautiously paddled my canoe up this stream the next night and passed a portion of the plain until I reached a smaller tributary entering from the left. This tributary flows through the most fertile and most thickly inhabited portion of the Indian lands. At the first junction I turned to the right and paddled along until I could go no further by boat. So, secreting my canoe in some bushes, I walked during the following night to the valley which we had before visited, and which lies in the uplands near to the edge of the great mountain forest. This tangled woodland favored me, for in it I hid securely by day, while at night I searched for diamonds in my valley.

"I found many stones, and some of extraordinary size and beauty, but was greatly retarded in my discoveries by the dimness of the light. The forest shaded the valley part of the time, and only for a brief two hours each night was the light of the moon directly upon the slight depression where I labored.

"And now I have been three weeks hidden in the heart of the San Blas district, and no one has observed me as yet. I have secured almost three quarts of superb diamonds — a fortune so enormous that I am considering a speedy return to civilization. Meantime, I have employed some of my leisure moments in writing this history in my book."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FOLLY OF THE WISE

NO ONE HAD interrupted Duncan Moit as he read clearly and slowly the above interesting story, but as he paused at the close of the last paragraph I have recorded we gave some sighs of wonder and admiration and looked at one another curiously to see what impression the "history" was making.

"Go on!" cried Uncle Naboth, eagerly. "That can't be all."

"No," answered the inventor, "it is not all. But it seems to cover the period of the first writing. The other entries are more hurried and more carelessly inscribed."

"Is the map he mentions there?" I asked.

"Yes. It is badly drawn, for an engineer, but sufficiently clear, I imagine, to enable one to follow it with ease."

"Then read on, please."

He obeyed at once.

"Last night, as I approached the forest after my work in the valley, I saw a man's face peering at me from between the trees. The moon shone on it clearly. It was an Indian's face, but in an instant it had disappeared. Greatly startled, I searched the forest with care, but could find no trace of the spy. I may have been deceived, however. Perhaps my nerves are getting unstrung."

Moit turned a leaf.

"Again I have seen a man's face," he read. "This time it was in the center of the valley, among a clump of low bushes. I ran to the forest in a state of excitement; then reproached myself for my folly and came back; but I could find nothing."

"These are all different entries," remarked the reader, turning another page. "I will read them as they appear."

"I am confident," proceeded the writer, "that I have been discovered at last by the San Blas. They have spies all around me, by day as well as by night, but to my surprise they have not yet molested me in any way. I have determined to get away at once — this very night — but as I may be seized, and perhaps murdered, I shall not take more than a part of my treasure with me. This valley of diamonds is far richer than any field ever discovered in South Africa, and if I am able to escape I shall secure assistance and come here again in spite of the San Blas, So I will leave the greater part of my treasure where it has been hidden, and take only such stones as I can comfortably carry in my pockets. I must write a description of where the diamonds are secreted, for if I am killed and any white man comes upon this book, I bequeathe to him my wealth, provided he is brave enough

to take it from the country of the San Blas. Here is my injunction: When you have reached the valley I have marked upon the map, you will find near its center a boulder of deep red granite, bare and solitary, the upper portion bearing an arm-like projection or spike that points directly toward the forest. Follow this line of direction and you will come upon a gigantic mahogany tree standing just at the edge of the forest, which is really a jungle at this point. Back of the mahogany is a large dead stump, surrounded by moss. Lift the moss at the right of the stump and you will come upon a cavity in which I have secreted my hoard of diamonds. You will have no trouble in recognizing the valley, on account of the remarkable boulder of rock, and the rest is easy.... I have reached the stream and found my canoe safe; but I must keep hidden among the bushes until another night. I do not think I have been followed, but I cannot be sure. The strange inaction of the San Blas astonishes me and makes me uneasy.

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"The worst has happened, and it is not so very bad, after all. They seized me last evening and took away my diamonds, which they cast into the river with absolute disdain of their value. But then they at once released me, and went away and left me to myself. Fortunately I had hidden ten fine stones in a roll of bark, and these they failed to discover. I am sorry to have lost the others, but these few specimens will prove the truth of my story when I get home. The adventure shows my wisdom in leaving the bulk of the treasure secreted in the forest.... There is no use in hiding myself now, for my presence is well known. Why I should have been spared, when every other white intruder has been killed, I cannot explain. But they seem to have made an exception in my favor, and I am jubilant and fearful at the same time. Somehow, I cannot help imagining that these dreadful Indians are playing with me, as a cat does with a mouse. But I shall go boldly forward, and trust to luck to escape."

"Is that all?" I asked, as Duncan Moit paused and closed the book.

"It is all."

"But the rest of the poor fellow's story is as clear as if he had written it," I commented, musingly. "The Indians waited until he had reached the last boundary of their territory, and then put an arrow into his heart. Where he fell they left him, trusting the canoe would float down the stream and warn other whites not to venture too near."

"Do you think that story is true?" enquired Uncle Naboth, with some asperity, "Why not, Uncle?"

"It sounds fishy, to my notion."

I drew the roll of bark we had taken from the pocket of the dead man and

cut with my knife the thongs which bound it together. After removing the outer wrappers I found ten crystal pebbles in the center, which I handed around so that all could examine them with care. Only Uncle Naboth had seen rough diamonds before, but the grunts of the shrewd old trader told me at once that he recognized the value of these stones.

However, I looked up the acid test in one of my books in the stateroom, and was able to apply it in a satisfactory manner. We managed to crumble a portion of one stone and with the dust thus secured Duncan polished a small surface on another. They were diamonds, sure enough, very white in color and seemingly perfect specimens.

And all the while we were thus occupied the four of us were silently thinking. Each one, moreover, took the book and read with care the story for himself. The map was crude enough, but I stared at it so intently that every pencil mark was indelibly impressed upon my brain.

At dinner we were an unsociable party. Afterward we assembled on the deck. Uncle Naboth smoked his pipe instead of the big cigar, but said nothing. Ned put his face between his hands and resting his elbows upon his knees stared fixedly at the deck in meditative silence. Duncan Moit hung over the rail and gazed at the river as it murmured by.

I looked at my comrades and smiled at their absorption. This longing for treasure and sudden wealth is natural enough, and few men are able to escape it. I knew very well that all of us were pondering on a way to get at the diamonds Maurice Kleppisch had left secreted in the forest of San Blas. I may as well acknowledge that I was fully as covetous as the others, but a hearty fear of those strange Indians did much to lessen my desire to visit them.

The evening passed with scarcely a remark, and when we went to bed we were still thinking. Not of the wrecked ship, though, or how we should save the cargo and get ourselves into some civilized port. The reading of the dead man's narrative had turned our thoughts entirely from our own mischance and inoculated us with a feverish desire to plunge into the same adventurous channels that had resulted so fatally in his own case.

At breakfast Uncle Naboth suddenly abandoned all pretense of reserve.

"This is the San Maladrino river," he asserted.

We all nodded, our faces serious and attentive.

"Of course," said I. "He returned the same way he entered the San Blas country, and we found him floating on this very stream."

No one cared to discuss a proposition so very evident, and having hurriedly finished the meal we assembled on deck to resume the conversation.

“Gentlemen,” said Moit, “you have all arrived at some conclusion, I am sure. Let us exchange ideas, and discuss their various merits.”

I asked Ned Britton to speak first.

“Well,” said he, “it wouldn’t be right or proper for us to leave them two or three quarts o’ diamon’s to rust under that stump. I notice the book says these Indians don’t have firearms; but we’ve got a plenty, so I perpose as we march in, pepper ‘em good if they show fight, an’ then march out agin with the di’monds. I believe if we put up a good front there’s enough of us to do the job.”

“Especially as a company of carefully drilled soldiers got wiped off the earth,” I remarked somewhat sarcastically.

“Colombian sodgers don’t count,” said Ned. “Our men is the right stuff ‘cause they’re all Americans.”

“I confess that I do not like the looks of this arrow,” said Moit, handling cautiously the bronze tipped weapon we had drawn from the dead man’s breast. “It is evident they can shoot straight, and there may be thousands of the San Blas to fight, for all we know. I think that open warfare would result in our total extinction.”

“If by that you mean we’d be punched full o’ holes, I quite agree with you,” observed Uncle Naboth. “Diplomacy’s the thing; diplomacy an’ caution. You can ketch more flies with sugar ‘n’ you can with vinegar.”

“Haven’t you a suggestion, Uncle?” I asked.

During several voyages in the company of Naboth Perkins I had learned to have great respect for his shrewdness and judgment, and for that reason I now awaited his reply with genuine interest.

He relighted his pipe, gave two or three energetic puffs, and then began:

“This fellow, you’ll notice, tells us a good deal about the San Blas Indians, an’ what he says is all worth careful considerin’. They ain’t like common savages, but have their laws an’ live up to ‘em. In one place he says blacks is used by them for slaves, and that white slaves of Injuns that is friendly to’ em, an’ not to the whites, is let alone whenever they’re in their country. Gentlemen — an’ Sam, too — that’s my keynote. It tells us plain what to do, an’ how to do it!”

He looked at us triumphantly, but I was too stupid to see the point of this argument.

“I’m afraid I don’t understand, Uncle,” I said.

“Well, you’re wrong, Sam. It’s a thing you can’t help now, but you’re likely to outgrow it. Hey there, Nux!” he called. “Get Bry an’ both o’ you come here.”

I started, beginning to see what he meant; but I said nothing until the two

Sulus stood before us. Bryonia was tall and slender, and very powerful. Nux was shorter and stouter, but equally strong of muscle. Their faces were intelligent and expressive and their poise exhibited a native dignity. Two more faithful followers no man ever had than this pair of South Sea Indians, and I regarded them more as brothers than servants, for I owed my life to their bravery and care.

"Gentleman," announced Uncle Naboth, "these boys is Indians, and mighty good Indians, too. They're goin' to take us four white folks into the San Blas country as their slaves. They'll be finely welcomed, for they'll pound an' kick us all around, and we'll be meek as Moses till we git our fists on them di'monds. It's jest as easy as rollin' off a log, an' a heap more fun."

I admit the suggestion filled me with admiration, and I saw Duncan Moit's face brighten as soon as he heard it.

"That's it, sir!" he exclaimed. "That is just the idea I was looking for, to connect with my own. By putting the two together I believe we shall succeed without a doubt."

"What is your idea, then?" I asked.

"To travel in my convertible automobile."

"What! Through a wilderness?"

"Along the streams as far as the water will allow, and then over the level plains. The machine will run in any farming country, for you must remember that it does not sink into soft ground as ordinary heavy automobiles do. Indeed, by turning the pumps into the vacuum chambers and exhausting them, I can render the car so light that it will almost skim over a marsh."

"But what's the use of travellin' that way?" asked Uncle Naboth.

"We gain safety, in case of attack; speed, if we are forced to fly; comfort, by carrying our hotel always with us, and, above all, I rely upon the invention to awe the simple Indians and make them look upon us as superior creatures. The machine is here and in working order; it would be folly, when it offers so many advantages, not to use it."

"Very good," said I, approvingly, for I could see the force of his arguments.

"The only thing that worried me," continued Moit, "was the fact that our being white would arouse the enmity of the San Blas, in spite of the wonders we can show them. But if Nux and Bryonia pose as the masters, and we are merely their slaves to run and care for their magic travelling machine, then we need have no special fear."

"Magic travellin' machine is good!" cried my uncle. "You've hit the nail on the head, Mr. Moit, as sure as fate!"

The inventor smiled, as if pleased with the compliment.

“If I can get a share of those diamonds,” said he, “I will be independent of my rich uncle in Los Angeles, and will have the means to secure my patents, erect my own factory, and manufacture the machines myself. It is something to work for, is it not?”

I had been carefully examining the proposition, and now said:

“There seems to be a serious flaw in your arrangement, Uncle.”

“What’s that, Sam?”

“Such a combination would excite the suspicions of the Indians at once, if they are really as clever as they are reported to be. Take your own case, for example, Uncle Naboth. You couldn’t look like a slave for a single minute.”

Indeed, Mr. Perkins’ stout little body, his cheery face and shrewd eyes, and the general air of prosperity and contentment that radiated from his benign personality, were a clear refutation of any suggestion of slavery or even dependence. Even Ned smiled at the idea, and Duncan Moit shook his head with a sigh.

“Mr. Perkins can’t go,” he said.

Uncle Naboth looked disappointed, and then puffed his pipe angrily.

“You fellers don’t allow for my actin’,” he growled. “I’m as good a play actor as ever travelled with a show.”

“That may be, Uncle; but you don’t look the part, and unfortunately you can’t disguise yourself,” I said. “But I want it clearly understood that whoever goes on this adventure, we are all to have an equal share in the spoils. For the opportunity belongs to us all alike, and all would be glad to go and do their full share.”

“I am willing to agree to that,” said Moit.

“Then I propose that you and I alone accompany Bry and Nux on the expedition,” I continued. “Two of us are as good as a dozen, for we cannot fight our way, in any event.”

“What about me?” asked Britton, anxiously.

“I want you to take a crew in the long boat and try to make Colon, by feeling your way north along the coast. From there you can report by wire our mishap to Mr. Harlan, and get his instructions what to do. Uncle Naboth must in the meantime take charge of the wrecked ship and the remaining men. This country isn’t very big, you know; so we all ought to be able to meet again in a few days, when we can decide upon our future movements.”

And so the matter was finally arranged, and it was decided that Ned and his crew in the long boat and our party in our “magic travelling machine” would leave the wreck the next morning and proceed in opposite directions upon our respective missions.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE SAN BLAS COUNTRY

As soon as he was away we began preparations for our own departure. The first thing was to arrange for launching the convertible automobile, which Moit had been examining very carefully ever since daybreak. He reported that it had sustained no damage whatever from the storm or the shock of grounding and was in perfect condition. So all we had to do was to remove the guy ropes, let it slide down the slanting deck to the bulwarks — over which we lifted it with a crane attached to the mizzenmast — and then let the machine descend gently until it rested on the bosom of the river.

I was still so skeptical concerning some of Moit's absurd claims that it would not have surprised me to see the huge car sink like a stone; but instead of that it rode the water like a duck, the wheels half submerged, the rail high above the water-line.

We now filled the ample lockers beneath the seats with provisions, put in a cask of fresh water in case the river water proved unpalatable, and took along such trinkets as we could gather together for trading purposes. We each carried a brace of revolvers, Moit and I (being slaves) concealing ours, while Nux and Bry carried theirs openly.

Finally we dressed for the excursion. The gay checked suit and tourist cap of Uncle Naboth we gave to Nux, and although they hung rather loosely he presented a most startling appearance in them. He swung a brass watch chain of gigantic size across his vest front and Uncle gave him a few of the big cigars to smoke when he wanted to "show off."

Bry wore a white duck suit belonging to Duncan Moit, and to my astonishment looked as aristocratic as any Eastern potentate on his first visit to London. These Sulus were by no means bad looking men and they took great delight in the transformations we thrust upon them.

As for Moit and myself, we hunted among the sailors' cast-off togs for the most disreputable "land clothes" we could find, and those we selected were ragged and dirty enough, in all conscience. I wore a run-down shoe upon one foot and a red leather slipper on the other, and when I had rumpled my hair and soiled my face and hands I am sure I was as disgraceful in appearance as any ragged urchin you ever came across.

I was not wholly satisfied with Duncan, however. In spite of his apparel there was so thoughtful a look in his big gray eyes and so well-bred and composed an expression on his finely molded features that he could not look a servant's part as fully as I did and the best I could hope was that the San Blas people would consider him an unfortunate gentleman in hard luck.

There was much laughter and amusement among the men we left behind on the wreck, when they beheld our queer appearance. Uncle Naboth chuckled until he coughed, and coughed until he choked, badly frightening those who were unaware that this startling exhibition was usual with him whenever he reached that climax of joy which he called being "desp'ritly pleased."

I bade him an affectionate farewell, and then we four got into the "auto-boat." Moit sprung the paddles from the rims of the wheels and started the engines, and a minute later we were waving our hands to those on the wreck and gliding at a good rate of progress up the river.

The bulky machine did not draw so much water as one would imagine, owing to its broad displacement and the lightness of the material employed in its construction. We found the current gentle, and made such good time that at eleven o'clock we passed between the two hills indicated on Maurice Kleppisch's map, a copy of which I had brought with us.

The current was swifter here because the mounds narrowed the river considerably; but Moit gave the engines a little more speed and we went through without abating our rate of progress.

Just beyond the hills we saw a group of Indians standing beneath the trees on the left bank and regarding us earnestly but calmly. Perhaps they had seen small steamers and thought our craft belonged to that class, for they exhibited neither fear nor surprise, merely turning their grave faces toward us and remaining otherwise motionless and silent as we glided by.

I whispered to Bryonia and Nux to stand up and bow a greeting, which they proceeded to do with amusing and exaggerated dignity; and then told Nux to box my ears, which he did so promptly and in so lusty a manner that they rang for several minutes afterward.

I had explained to my blacks at great length our reasons for undertaking this queer adventure, and what we expected them to do to carry out the farce and assist us in securing the treasure. I had even read to them the dead man's diary, from beginning to end, so that they would know as much about the San Blas as we did. They were, as I have said, both clever and resourceful, besides being devoted to me personally; so that I felt justified in relying to a great extent upon their judgment in case of emergency.

Should I need to give them any secret instructions, I could do so in their own language, which they had taught me during the tedium of several long voyages, and which I prided myself upon speaking fairly well. It was the language of their own island of Tayakoo, for these were not properly Sulus but natives belonging to a distinct tribe of South Sea Islanders which owed allegiance to no other ruler than their own.

Being aware that the king, and some others, of the San Blas knew English and Spanish, I could rely upon this almost unknown dialect to cover any secret instructions I wished to convey to my blacks.

Nux and Bry were not linguists, however, and knew but a few Spanish words besides the imperfect English and their native tongue; but we arranged that they were to command me to interpret in Spanish whenever it was necessary. Duncan Moit, unfortunately, knew nothing but English.

The tributary that entered the river from the left side was a farther distance beyond the hills than the map seemed to indicate; but we came to it presently and began slowly to ascend it in a southerly direction, although it made many twists and turns. We found it easily navigable, with dense forests on either side, and several times we found we were observed by silent groups of Indians on the bank, to all of whom Nux and Bry bowed greetings with tremendous condescension and mock courtesy. The bows were never returned, however, and the Indians stood like statues until we had passed by.

"There is no way of avoiding these people," said Moit, "so I think our best policy will be to go directly to the king's village, which I see marked upon the map, and make friends with him. Bryonia can explain our presence by saying he merely wishes to examine the San Blas country, and when once we have established friendly relations with these natives we can visit several different parts of their territory, to throw them off their guard, and finally reach the valley for which we are bound and secure the diamonds at our leisure."

"That seems to me a capital plan," I agreed, and we decided then and there to follow it as closely as circumstances would allow.

After an hour's cruise through the forest we came to the coastal plains, finding this a remarkably fertile country with fields under fine cultivation. As soon as we discovered a low bank on our left we turned the machine toward the shore, and when the wheels touched bottom they climbed the bank easily and we quickly found ourselves upon dry land.

More Indians were observing us, and as we left the water and glided over the land I detected a look of amazement upon their faces that all their reserve could not control. Indeed, I was myself filled with wonder at the marvelous performances of Duncan Moit's invention, so that small blame attaches to the San Blas if their stoicism could not master their astonishment.

We crossed the plain until we came upon a pretty stream, which we took to be the one indicated upon the map, and from there followed its course eastward, making excellent time over the level meadows. We saw a few huts scattered along the way, and several herds of cattle and sheep, but no horses. The sheep seemed few to supply the wool for which these Indians were

famous, but I imagined we would find larger flocks in the uplands.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when we sighted a considerable village, which at once we determined must be the place we sought. Bowling along at an increased pace we soon reached the town, but to our surprise we found our way barred by solid files of Indians, all standing with their arrows ready notched in their bowstrings.

Moit stopped the engines and we came to a halt. Hitherto we had been allowed to go where we pleased since entering this strange land, but it seemed that our license was now at an end.

Bry stood up in his seat, made a bow, and said in a loud voice:

"Any speak Englis'? — America — United States?"

In an instant we were surrounded by the stern-visaged natives, while one of them, a tall, powerful fellow and evidently a chief, stepped close to the machine and answered in a quiet voice:

"I the English speak."

"Very good," said Bry. "I am great chief of Tayakoo. My name is Honorable Bryonia. Here is my brother, also great chief of Tayakoo — he name Senator Nux. We come to visit the chiefs and great king of the San Blas. Then, say to me, oh, Chief, are we welcome? Are we all brothers?"

I thought this was a very good introduction. But the chief glanced at me and at Moit, frowning darkly, and asked:

"Who the white men? What bring them here?"

"You speak about our slaves? Bah! Have my brothers of San Blas, then, no slaves to do their work?"

The chief considered a moment.

"Where you get white slaves?" he questioned, suspiciously.

"Stan' up, Dune!" said Bry, giving the inventor a vicious kick that made him howl. "Where we get you, heh?"

He kicked him again, quite unnecessarily, I thought, and Moit stood up with a red and angry face and growled:

"Stop that, you fool!"

At this rebellion Nux promptly fetched him a blow behind the knees that sent him tumbling backward upon his seat, and when I laughed — for I could not help it — I got another ear-splitter that made me hold my head and be glad to keep silent. Moit evidently saw the force of our blacks' arguments, for he recovered his wits in time to avoid further blows.

The exhibition had one good effect, anyway; it lulled any suspicions of the chief that the Honorable Bryonia and Senator Nux might not be the masters in our little party. Although Duncan Moit and I constantly encountered looks of bitter hatred, our men were thereafter treated with ample respect and

consideration.

“You welcome,” said the chief. “I Ogo — Capitan Ogo — green chief. You come to my house.”

He turned and marched away, and Moit started the machine and made it crawl after him.

The other natives followed in a grave procession, and so we entered the village and passed up its clean looking streets between rows of simple but comfortable huts to the further end, where we halted at the domicile of the “green chief.”

CHAPTER NINE
FACING THE ENEMY

"Capitan" Ogo made an impressive bow in the direction of his mud mansion and then another bow to Nux and Bry.

"Come," he said.

They accepted the invitation and climbed out of the machine.

"Don't be long, Nux," I remarked, in the Tayakoo dialect.

Instantly the chief swung around on his heel.

"What does this mean?" he cried, speaking the same language. "Do you receive orders from your white slaves?"

I stared at him open mouthed, but to my intense admiration neither Nux nor Bryonia exhibited the least surprise.

"Orders?" asked Bry, quietly. "Do you blame us that the whites are fools, and speak like fools? My brother has surely more wisdom than that. If you knew the white dogs, you would believe that their tongues are like the tongues of parrots."

"I know them," answered Ogo, grimly. Then he asked, abruptly: "Where did you learn the language of my people — the ancient speech of the Techlas?"

"It is my own language, the speech of my people of Tayakoo, whose chief I am."

They looked upon each other with evident curiosity, and I examined the two Indians, as they stood side by side, and wondered at their similar characteristics. Bryonia might easily be mistaken for a brother of the San Blas chief, so far as appearances went, and although Nux was of a different build there were many duplicates of him in the silent crowd surrounding us.

"Where is Tayakoo?" asked Ogo.

"Far to the south, in the Pacific Ocean."

"What is the history of your people?"

"I do not know."

"Are there many of you?"

"But a few, inhabiting a small island."

The chief seemed thoughtful; then he turned again.

"Come!" he commanded; and they followed him into his house.

Duncan Moit was clearly puzzled by this conversation, carried on in a language unknown to him.

"What is it all about, Sam?" he enquired, in a low voice.

"The Sulus and the San Blas speak the same language," I replied.

"Anything wrong?"

“No; our chances are better than ever, I guess.”

Fifty pair of eyes were staring at us curiously; so we decided not to converse further at present. We stared in turn at the natives, who seemed not to object in the least.

Without question the San Blas were the best looking Indians I have ever seen. They resembled somewhat the best of the North American tribes, but among them was a larger proportion of intelligence and shrewdness. Their faces were frank and honest, their eyes large and expressive and they moved in a self-possessed and staid manner that indicated confidence in their own powers and contempt for all enemies.

Their costumes were exceedingly interesting. Men and women alike wore simple robes of finely woven wool that were shaped somewhat like Greek tunics. The arms of the men were bare; the women had short flowing sleeves; and this was the only perceptible difference in the garb of the two sexes, except that most of the men wore sandals of bark, while the women and children were bare-footed.

The tunic was their sole garment, and reached only to the knees, being belted at the waist. The women, I afterward learned, wove the cloth in their houses, as one of their daily occupations, and the body of the tunic was always white, with colored stripes worked in at the neck and around the bottom.

These colors, which must have been vegetable dyes, were very brilliant in hue, including purple, orange, red, blue and yellow. Black was never used at all, and green was the color reserved for the nobles and the king. I noticed that the chief, Ogo, had a narrow band of green on his robe, which explained his proudly proclaiming himself a “green” or royal chief. The bands of green we found varied in width according to the prominence of their wearers.

One can easily imagine that the appearance of an automobile in this country, isolated as it was from all modern civilization, would be likely to inspire the natives with awe and wonder, if not with actual terror. Yet these queer people seemed merely curious, and tried to repress even their curiosity as much as possible. They knew nothing at all of mechanics, existing in the same simple fashion that their ancestors had done, centuries before, plowing their land with sharpened sticks and using arrows and spears as their only weapons except for the long bronze knives that were so roughly fashioned as to be well-nigh ridiculous. The only way I can explain the stolid demeanor of these Indians is through their characteristic fearlessness and repression, which enabled them to accept any wonderful thing without displaying emotion.

But they were interested, nevertheless. Their eyes roved everywhere about

the machine and only we, the accursed whites, were disregarded.

After a half hour or so Nux and Bryonia came out of the house, accompanied by the chief. They had broken bread together and tasted a native liquor, so that they might now depend upon the friendship of their host unless he found that they had deceived him. This was a long stride in the right direction. But when they had asked to see the king they were told that his residence was several miles to the eastward, and that in the morning Ogo would escort them to the royal dwelling and introduce them to the mighty Nalig-Nad.

Meantime Nux and Bry were given plain instructions not to leave this village, and when they were invited to sleep in the chief's house they were able to decline by asserting that they always lived in their magic travelling machine. This excuse had been prearranged by us, for we deemed it best not to separate or to leave the machine while we were in the enemy's country.

As soon as the blacks had re-entered the machine they commanded me, in abusive language, to prepare supper. Duncan at once got out our table, which was a folding contrivance he had arranged to set up in the center of the car, and then I got the alcohol stove from its locker and proceeded to light it.

While I made coffee and set the table with the food we had brought, Nux and Bry lolled on their seats and divided the admiring glances of the surrounding villagers with the (to them) novel preparations I was making for the repast. Then the Sulus sat at the table and I waited upon them with comical deference, Moit being unable to force himself to take part in the farce. Afterward we ate our own suppers and I for one relished it more than I usually did.

In my boyish fashion I regarded it all as a great lark, and enjoyed the humor of the situation.

As it was growing dark I now lighted our lamps while the inventor drew the sections of the glass dome into place and fastened them together.

We could still be observed by those without, for although the top was provided with curtains we did not draw them. But now we were able to converse without being overheard, and Nux and Bry, appearing to be talking with each other, related all that had transpired in the chief's house, while we commented upon it and our good fortune up to the present time.

"After we have visited the king, and made friends with him, we shall be able to go wherever we please," I prophesied; "and then it won't take us long to get the diamonds and make tracks back to the wreck again."

To this all were agreed. Then Duncan remarked, musingly:

"It is strange you two Indian nations, so far removed, speak the same language."

“True ‘nough, Mars’ Moit,” replied Bry. “But I ‘spect our folks come from de same country dese San Blas did, an’ dat ‘counts fo’ it.”

“This fact ought to help us with them,” said I.

“Sure t’ing, Mars’ Sam,” Nux responded. “Dey knows now we just as good as dey is — an’ we know we’s better.”

As we were tired with our day’s excursion we soon removed the table and spread our blankets upon the roomy floor of the car. Then, with a courtesy we had not anticipated, the crowd of observers melted silently away, and by the time we were ready to put out the lights and draw the curtains we were alone in the village street, where not a sound broke the stillness.

CHAPTER TEN

NALIG-NAD

WE slept nicely in our rather confined quarters, and at daybreak Bryonia arose and prepared breakfast while the curtains were still drawn. But as soon as he and Nux had cleared away the things we let down the top and appeared in our open car again, to find that the chief had waited so long outside that he was inclined to be in a bad humor.

The rabble did not come near to us this morning, however. Perhaps the chief thought their intent observation undignified, and had ordered them to keep away. But behind Ogo stood ten tall warriors who had been selected as our escort, or body-guard.

When we signified we were ready for the journey these formed a line of march — three in front, three behind, and two on either side. All were armed with stout spears, and each bore a bow and a quiver of bronze-tipped arrows, as well as a knife stuck into his girdle. When we started, the chief brought up the rear of the procession, so that he could keep an eye on us.

Duncan Moit resented the necessity of running his machine at a slow pace, but when he started it at an ordinary walk he soon found that the Indians were accustomed to swing along at a much swifter rate. So he gradually increased our speed, and it was comical to see the solemn visaged warriors trying to keep up with us without running.

Finally, however, they broke into an easy trot, which they maintained for a long time without seeming to tire. I made Moit slow down after a while, for I did not wish to provoke the San Blas at present, and thought it wiser to show them some slight consideration.

The plains we were now crossing were remarkably rich and fertile, and we passed many farms where men were cultivating the soil by dragging sharpened sticks over the surface. In other places were fields of grain ready for the harvest, and Nux questioned the chief and learned that the climate was so uniform the year around that several crops could be grown in rapid succession. They used no beasts of burden, but performed all the labor with their own muscles, which in a measure accounted for their powerful racial physique. There were no roads leading from one place to another, merely paths over the meadows to indicate the lines of travel.

The houses were formed partly of logs and partly of clay baked in the sun. They were simple and somewhat rude in construction, but appeared to be quite clean and comfortable. So far we had seen little evidence of luxury or refinement.

It was nearly noon when we approached a circular enclosure which

proved to be a stockade of clay held together with brushwood until the sun had hardened it to brick. There was an arched opening in this wall, and Moit obeyed a signal from Ogo and headed toward it.

Entering the enclosure we found a large, rambling dwelling in the center and a row of smaller houses circling the inner side of the wall. A large space was thus left around the central building, which we naturally concluded to be the king's palace.

The doorways and windows (the latter being unglazed apertures) of the smaller huts were filled with attentive faces of women and children, but not a sound broke the silence to which these natives seemed to be trained. Except on extraordinary occasions the San Blas did not chatter; they only spoke when they were required to say something of meaning.

The chief directed us to halt before a small door of the palace.

"Get out," he commanded, in the native tongue, "and follow me to the presence of our ruler, the mighty Nalig-Nad."

Bryonia and Nux at once obeyed, but the chief motioned to us to come also. We hesitated, and Bry said:

"One of our slaves must remain in the machine, to care for it. The other may accompany us."

"Both must come!" returned the chief, sternly.

"What! do you give me orders — do you command the Honorable Bryonia, King of Tayakoo?" demanded our black, drawing himself up proudly and frowning upon Ogo.

"The king shall decide," returned the chief. "Come!"

I followed them in and Duncan remained with the machine. We passed through a hallway and came upon a central courtyard, built in the Spanish style. Here, upon a rude bench, sat an old warrior with a deeply lined face and long locks sprinkled with gray. His eyes were large and black and so piercing in their gaze that they seemed to probe one through and through, yet the expression of the man's countenance was just now gentle and unassuming.

He had neither the stern nor the fierce look we had remarked in so many of the San Blas, but one might well hesitate to deceive the owner of that square chin and eagle-like glance.

The king wore a white robe with seven broad stripes of green woven into its texture, and on his knees were seated two children, a curly-headed little maid of about ten years and a calm faced boy of five. His surroundings were exceedingly simple, and the only others present were a group of warriors squatting in a far corner.

"Well, you are here at last," said Nalig-Nad, looking at us over the heads

of the children as we ranged ourselves before him and bowed with proper deference. “Which is your leader?”

“My friend, the Senator Nux, and I, the Honorable Bryonia, are alike kings and rulers in our own country,” was the reply. “But my friend is modest, and at his request I will speak for us both.”

“Good!” ejaculated Nalig-Nad. “Sit down, my brothers; kings must not stand in my presence.”

They sat upon a bench, and Nux, thinking this the right time to be impressive, got out a big cigar and lighted it, having offered another to the king, who promptly refused it.

“Why are you here to honor me with your presence?” was the next question, quietly put.

“In our magic travelling machine we are making a trip around the world,” began Bryonia, in a bombastic tone. They were speaking in the native dialect, which I clearly understood; and I must say that my men expressed themselves much better in that than they did in English.

The king took a bit of green chalk from his pocket and made a mark upon the bench beside him.

“Where did you get your white slaves?” he enquired.

“They were shipwrecked upon the island which we rule, and we made them our slaves,” said Bry.

The king made a second chalk mark.

“And where did you get the magic machine for travelling upon both land and water?” It was evident he had been well informed of our movements.

“It was made for us by a wizard of our island,” said Bry.

“What island?”

“Tayakoo.”

A third chalk mark.

“Does it belong to you?”

“Yes.”

Another mark.

“And now,” said the king, looking at them curiously, “tell me what request you have to make.”

“A request?”

“Yes; you asked to see the King of the San Blas. Then you wish something. I am the King.”

Bryonia hesitated.

“We wish to see all things,” said he, slowly, “and so we crave permission to visit the different parts of your country, that we may observe what it is like.”

“Just as a matter of curiosity?”

“Of course, my brother.”

A chalk mark.

“Do you love gold?” asked the king, abruptly.

“No, we do not care for gold.”

“Not at all?”

“Not in the least.”

The chalk mark again.

“Nor the white pebbles?” looking at them shrewdly.

“We care for no pebbles at all, white or black,” asserted Bry, beginning to grow uneasy.

The king made another mark, and then slowly counted them.

“Seven lies!” he announced, shaking his head gravely. “My brother is not honest with me. Otherwise there would be no lies.”

Nux put the wrong end of the cigar in his mouth, and begun to splutter and make faces. Bryonia looked at the king, stern and indignant.

“Do you judge us by the whites?” he cried.

“No; I have found that the whites are quick to acknowledge their love of gold.”

“If you were in my country,” said Bry, proudly, “I would not insult my brother king.”

“What would you do if I lied to you?” asked Nalig-Nad, quickly.

“You would not lie,” declared Bry. “Kings do not lie to each other — unless they are white.”

I wanted to yell “bravo!” the retort was so cleverly put. The king seemed pleased, and became thoughtful, stroking the little boy’s hair gently while the girl rested her pretty head against his broad bosom.

“The Techlas have reason to hate the whites,” he said, with a keen glance at me. “They drove us from our old home, because they wanted to rob us of our gold, which we loved only because it was beautiful. They were cruel and unjust, and lied to us, and had no faith nor honesty. So we fled; but we swore to hate them forever, and to be cruel and unjust to them, in turn, whenever they fell into our hands.”

“I do not blame your people,” declared Bry, stoutly.

“Tell me, then, why do you of Tayakoo hate them, and make them your slaves?”

“Why?”

“Yes; had you gold?”

“No.”

“Nor white pebbles?”

“No.”

“Then why do you hate them?”

“Because they are dangerous and wicked. They come in ships to our island and try to make *us* slaves. We fight them and drive them away, but they take some of my people and lash them with whips, and make them work like beasts. Also some of the whites we capture — such as these we now have with us — and then we love to force them to do our bidding. Never has there been friendship between the white men and the men of Tayakoo.”

He spoke very earnestly, and I knew he was telling the truth, in the main, for I had heard the same thing before. It was only because Uncle Naboth had saved the lives of these two blacks and been kind to them that they came to love us and to abandon the fierce hatred for the whites that had been a part of their training from youth up.

“I will buy your white slaves,” said the king, coolly, “and then you may go where you will in my kingdom.”

“We will not part with them. They must work for us and make our machine go.”

“If it is magic, it does not need slaves to make it go,” observed the king, with a smile.

“Would you deprive your brother kings of their only followers?”

“I will give you as many negroes as you require, in place of them.”

“We cannot spare them. These white dogs know our ways, and serve us well.”

“Then I will take but one, and leave you the other.”

Bry shook his head.

“Whatever else we possess, except our wonderful travelling machine, we will freely give to our brother,” said he. “But even Nalig-Nad has no right to demand our slaves, and we shall keep them.”

The king seemed disappointed. After a moment’s pause, “Think of it,” he said; “and meantime make my home your home. We will talk of these matters again.”

He waved his hand in dismissal and turned to caress the children.

Ogo the chief said, sternly: “Come!” but Bry stood still.

“Have we the king’s permission to visit his dominions in our machine, while we are his guests?” he asked.

“Not yet,” replied Nalig-Nad, with the first touch of impatience he had shown; “we will talk again before you leave my village.”

“That does not sound friendly,” retorted Bryonia, frowning.

“Have you done anything to forfeit my friendship?” enquired the king, turning a swift glance upon the speaker. “Be content. Only in the king’s

village should the brothers and guests of the king remain in peace and comfort. My people shall be your servants, and you may command them as you will; but you must not go outside the wall."

We did not like this, and stood a moment silent.

"Seems to me, King Honorable Bryonia," said Nux, speaking for the first time during the interview and addressing his friend point blank, as if the king's presence was immaterial; "seems to me this new brother, King Nalig-Nad, is not a bad fellow. I like him because he is kind to little children, and I am sorry for him because he is not better informed. But what can you expect, when he stays in this one-horse place and knows nothing of the great world that bows at our feet? If he dares oppose your will, remember how poor and ignorant he is, and forgive him. I know what you are thinking great King Honorable Bryonia, but I beg you not to destroy Nalig-Nad yet, or to explode his people with the terrible power you possess. Let us be patient. Permit this king to live on, for a short time, anyway. What a shame to ruin this happy home! Be patient, my mighty brother, and soon this foolish Nalig-Nad will have wisdom, and willingly grant all that you desire."

Having delivered himself of this speech, Nux puffed his cigar again and looked at the king with a face expressive of great sympathy and concern.

Both Bry and I were fairly astounded. We had not expected Nux to take part in the discussion, and the pleading tone he had adopted was as good a bit of acting as Bryonia had yet exhibited. It impressed the king even more than Bryonia's dignified assurances, although at first I trembled at the folly of threatening so clever and powerful a man as Nalig-Nad. After all, he was merely a savage, and more liable to suspect us of unknown powers than of unsupported audacity.

We soon discovered that Nux had grasped the situation more clearly than we had. The ruler of the San Blas was used to trickery and cunning and had trained himself to search for hidden reasons in all his dealings with outsiders. The suggestion that the owners of the strange travelling machine, who had so boldly invaded his country, had the intention and power of "exploding" himself and all his people struck him as more reasonable than anything he had yet heard. He was visibly worried, and looked half fearfully at the stern and impassive countenance of the tall South Sea Islander who stood before him.

"We will break bread," he said, with quick decision. "Send away your slave, my brothers, and come with me."

"Go," said Bry, turning to me. "And go you, also, Chief Ogo," he added, imperatively; "we would be alone with the king."

The chief looked uneasily toward Nalig-Nad, who had set the children

down and allowed them to run into the house. Noting the look, the king bowed his head to affirm Bry's command. He might with reason fear his strange guests, but he was no coward.

I left the courtyard, followed by Ogo, and returned to where the automobile was standing.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PRINCESS ILALAH

Leaning over the side of the machine, her chin resting upon her hands at the edge of the car, was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Her form was tall and slender, her features exquisitely regular in contour and her eyes deep brown and soft as velvet. Her fleecy white tunic was without color save a broad band of green that formed a zigzag pattern around its edge, and in her dark hair was twined a wreath of white blossoms with delicate green leaves.

I noticed that her skin was almost white in the sunshine, the bronze hue being so soft as to be scarcely observable. She had not the same expression of sadness that seemed an inherited characteristic of her people, but gazed upward with a faint smile that showed her dainty white teeth, full at the face of Duncan Moit. When I appeared upon the scene the inventor was sitting on the side of the car opposite the girl and returning her frank regard with a look of wonder and admiration.

A little back stood a silent group of young women, whose demeanor indicated that they were the girl's attendants. Their eyes, I noticed, roved over the strange machine with eager curiosity.

Chief Ogo uttered an exclamation of impatience and strode quickly forward.

"This is no place for you, my Princess!" he said, addressing the girl. "You must retire at once to your rooms."

She turned her head without altering her position and said in a calm, sweet tone:

"Does my lord Ogo command Ilalah, then?"

"When the king is not present it is my duty to guard his women," he returned, brusquely.

With a contemptuous shrug as her only reply she looked toward Duncan again, and as if continuing a conversation already begun, she said to him in soft but awkward English:

"And shall it fly like a bird, too?"

"It can almost fly, but not quite, miss," he answered.

"But it swims like a fish?"

"Yes, miss."

"And runs like a deer?"

"Exactly, miss."

"It would be to please me if it did that," she remarked, very gently.

Duncan was puzzled for a moment; then his face brightened, and he said eagerly:

“If you will get in, I will take you to ride — you and three of your women.”

She did not hesitate at all, but turned and called three of the young women by name, who came at once to her side.

Ogo the chief, who could not follow very well the English words, was scowling fiercely, but had kept at a respectful distance since the girl had repulsed him. Enjoying his discomfiture, I promptly opened the door of the car and motioned the princess to enter. She ascended the steps lightly and I pushed her attendants after her, for I scented a lark and wanted to prevent Ogo from interfering.

I could see he was uncertain how to act, and the other bystanders were equally undecided. But no sooner had I jumped in after the women than Moit threw over the lever and started the engines, so promptly that the machine leaped forward with a bound.

We circled the king’s palace three times, while the dainty princess clung to the back of her seat and laughed delightedly and her women huddled together in abject terror. Every inhabitant flocked to the doors and windows to see us, nor could the natives control their amazement at our rapid flight.

Then Duncan headed for the arched opening in the wall, and ignoring Ogo’s wild shout to halt darted through and out upon the plains. The chief instantly notched an arrow, but the princess sprang to her feet and faced him from the rear of the car, so that he dared not shoot for fear of wounding her.

Another moment and we were out of range; and now Duncan, inspired by a natural desire to show his fair passenger what his invention could do, increased the speed until the wind whistled past our ears and our eyes were not quick enough to note the objects we passed.

I own that, being myself a sailor, I was a little frightened at this terrific dash; but Ilalah laughed gleefully and cast a slim brown arm around Duncan’s neck to steady herself as she gazed straight ahead and enjoyed to the full the excitement of the wild ride.

There was no real danger, however. The meadows were as smooth as any highway, and in an incredibly short period of time we were almost out of sight of the village.

The thought now came to me that it would not be wise for us to offend Nalig-Nad by carrying our prank too far, so I called to Duncan to return. Rather reluctantly, I imagined, he described a great circle and headed at last for the village, never abating his speed, however, until we had flown through the arch and narrowly escaped knocking over a dozen or so of the throng assembled in the enclosure.

Around the king’s palace we again sped, so as not to slacken our pace too

abruptly, and then the inventor brought his wonderful machine to a halt in almost the same spot from whence we had started.

We now observed Nalig-Nad standing at the entrance to his dwelling with Nux and Bryonia on either side of him. Now that he stood upright I saw that he towered far above all his people, and was moreover straight as a gun-barrel.

As soon as we halted I opened the door and assisted the frightened attendants to reach the ground. Duncan, however, sprang out and gave his hand to Ilalah, who needed no such support. Her cheeks glowed pink through their rich tinting, her eyes sparkled brightly and there could be no question of her delight in her recent novel experience.

As soon as her feet touched the ground she ran to the king and seized his arm affectionately, crying aloud in her native tongue:

"Oh, my father, it is a miracle! The white man's wagon is alive, and more fleet than an arrow."

"It is not the white man's wagon," said Bry, quickly. "It is our wagon — the wagon of kings — and the white man is a slave whose duty it is to make it go."

"A slave? Oh, I am sorry!" said Ilalah, with disappointment.

"Why?" asked her father, putting an arm around her.

"Because the white man is beautiful as a spirit, and he is good and kind," answered the princess.

I glanced at the unconscious Duncan and nearly laughed outright. That the thin-faced, stooping, dreamy-eyed inventor could by any stretch of the imagination be called beautiful was as strange as it was amusing. But the girl was doubtless in earnest, and being so rarely beautiful herself she ought to be a judge.

The king was plainly annoyed at this frank praise of a hated white. He presented his daughter, with much ceremony, to Nux and Bryonia, and she touched their foreheads lightly with her finger-tips, and then her own brow, in token of friendship.

"Will your Majesty take a ride in our magic travelling machine?" asked Bry, with proud condescension.

"Not now," said the king, drawing back thoughtfully.

Presently he walked close to the machine and eyed every part of it with great intentness. But it was clear the thing puzzled him, as well it might, and he shook his grizzled head as if he despaired of solving the problem.

Then he escorted the blacks around his village, showing them the various huts and storehouses for fruits and grain; and while they were thus occupied the princess came nearer and leaned again upon the side of the car, Moit and

I being seated within it.

"If you are slaves," she said, in a low voice, "I will befriend you. Do not fear, but call on Ilalah if you meet trouble or enemies threaten you."

"Thank you, sweet Princess," replied Duncan. "We may be slaves at present, but soon we shall be free. We fear no danger."

She nodded, brightly, as if the answer reassured her, and walked away to enter the palace, her train of attendants following at a respectful distance.

Ogo and his villagers stood several paces away, silent and motionless. When the king returned with his "noble" guests he noticed the chief and at once dismissed him, telling him to return to his village and be vigilant until the visitors had departed from their dominions.

Ogo promptly departed, but not without a final glance of hatred at the inventor and me. Then the king, with many expressions of friendship, retired into his palace, and Bry and Nux were again permitted to join us.

"Let us put up the top," said I, "so that we may talk without being overheard."

We drew up the sections of the glass dome and fastened them in place, while the natives looked on with renewed curiosity. Then, quite alone although we could see anything that happened around us, we sat at our ease and canvassed the situation.

"If you fellows had been with us," said Moit, "I would have run away with the princess and held her as hostage to secure our safe return to the ship."

"Would you have let her go then?" I enquired, mischievously.

He did not deign to reply.

"We could not abandon Bry and Nux, though," I continued, more seriously, "so there is nothing to regret."

Bry seemed very thoughtful.

"We in bad box, Mars' Sam," he said in his broken English, which contrasted so strongly with the ease with which he expressed himself in his own tongue; "dat king is old fox, sure 'nough, an' won't let us go 'way from here to get de di'monds."

"He seemed to treat you and Nux very politely, I thought."

"All seem, Mars' Sam; no be."

"But isn't he friendly? Didn't he break bread with you?"

"Dat don't 'mount to nuffin, seh. If a friend lie to him, he frien'ship is broke."

"Well, Bry; what then?"

"He know I lie to him."

"What makes you think so?"

“He make de chalk mark.”

“But how could he know you were lying?”

“His people see our wreck ship, when we not see dem. Dey see from de trees me cook de breakfas’ an’ Nux wait on de white folks. Dey see Mars’ Dune put de machine in de ribber, an’ we all ride away on it. Ev’yt’ing de king know befo’ we come an’ lie to him. He know we fin’ de body in de canoe, an’ bury dead man in ribber. He know dead man wanted di’monds, so he kill him. He think we want di’monds, too; so he kill us if he can.”

This was indeed a gloomy prophecy. I had no doubt my man had put the exact truth clearly before us. Our folly in imagining we could so easily deceive these clever Indians was all too evident.

“I noticed that Nalig-Nad seemed suspicious and unbelieving,” I remarked, after a period of silence during which we sat staring despondently into one another’s faces. “He was telling himself all the time, perhaps, that we were fools, and he had us in his power. Only once was he at all disturbed, and that was when Nux threatened to ‘explode’ him and his people. He is not quite sure that we cannot do that.”

“Nor am I,” said Duncan Moit, musingly.

“But they must know about fire-arms, and Maurice Kleppisch wrote in his book that they despised them,” I observed.

“Fire-arms do not explode people. I did not refer to them,” Moit returned. “But, tell me: if these natives are aware of our imposture, what is the use of keeping up the game? Let us get hold of the girl, make a dash for the diamonds, and then escape the best way we can.”

“The girl!” I exclaimed, as if surprised; “why should you want the girl when, as you say, we defy the natives and no hostage will be required?” Moit looked confused.

“She knows the country,” he said, after a moment, “and would make a good guide.” Then he glanced up at me and added, more honestly: “She’s very nice and pretty, Sam.”

“She’s a darling, old man; I agree with you there. But it strikes me that to capture the princess and run away with her would be to stir up no end of a rumpus. We cannot run the machine through the tangled forests, so the only way to get back is by the river — the same way we came. The king could assemble a thousand warriors to oppose us, and the chances are he’d win out.”

“Well, what shall we do?” he asked; “Fight it out?”

“Of course.”

“Got to fight, anyhow,” remarked Nux, philosophically.

“And we may as well keep up the fable of our being slaves to Nux and

Bry," I added. "They may know a good deal by observation, but the chances are they have guessed at a lot; so as long as we pretend to be two black kings and two white slaves they haven't any good excuse for attacking us."

During the afternoon several chiefs arrived at the village, coming in one by one as if from different parts of the country. All had more or less green in their robes, and they were a lot of remarkably shrewd and imposing looking fellows. We decided that they had been summoned by the king to a conference concerning us, for after pausing in the enclosure to take accurate note of our appearance and study the queer machine in which we were seated, they passed on into the royal dwelling.

Toward evening we prepared our supper, while many of the inhabitants came to watch us through our glass case. Presently some one rapped softly upon the glass, and going to the place I saw a woman standing there and holding out a basket made of rushes. I opened a window near and took in the basket.

"Ilalah sends it to the big white slave," said the woman, in her native dialect.

"The big white slave thanks Ilalah and sends her his love in return," I answered, laughing. But she nodded and turned away with a serious countenance, as if the message was no more than she had expected.

I handed the basket to Duncan and gave him the message of the princess. His face lighted up and he blushed like a school-boy, but made no comment.

In the basket were some fresh eggs and a roasted fowl that resembled a pheasant in size and flavor. We cooked the eggs over our alcohol stove and blessed the girl for her thoughtfulness, for her contribution was a grateful addition to our tinned foods.

As darkness came on we lighted our lamps and drew our curtains and after a little further discussion as to our future actions we lay down upon our blankets and prepared to pass a second peaceful night in the heart of the enemy's country.

It must have been about midnight when I was awakened by a strange crackling sound. For a moment I lay still, wondering what it could be; then I sprang up and opened one of the little windows.

Dense smoke was rising all around the automobile, and thrusting out my head I saw a mass of flames underneath us. I drew back quickly, my eyes smarting from the smoke, and closed the orifice.

The interior of the car was now dimly illumined by a dull red glow. Moit was sitting up when I reached out to touch him.

"What is it?" he asked sleepily.

"They have built a great bonfire underneath us," I answered. "Will it be

likely to do any damage?”

He shook his head.

“All the harm it could possibly do would be to melt the rubber of the tires, and as they are vulcanized I do not believe any open fire would be powerful enough,” he said. “But it may get rather close and warm for us to sleep, so we will move on a bit.”

He reached for the lever and the machine started and slowly moved over the blazing logs, bouncing us around somewhat but creating no other discomfort. By raising the curtain in front Duncan could see when we were at a safe distance from the fire, so he stopped about twenty yards away and we prepared to lie down again.

“Some one ought to stand watch,” said the inventor; “for if we are sound asleep while they are wide awake they may get into more dangerous mischief than building bonfires.”

We cheerfully agreed to so necessary a precaution, and I was glad to find myself selected for the first watch, because by that time I had become as wakeful as an owl. When the others returned to their blankets I settled myself comfortably on a seat and listened intently for the slightest sound that might indicate danger.

Presently I heard another crackling, from which it appeared that our unseen foes had dragged the blazing logs toward us and were making another effort to burn our stout metal car. So I aroused Duncan, and this time we moved around to the other side of the enclosure, halting close to a wing of the king’s house. For while the car itself could not burn, a good bed of coals under us would convert it into a frying-pan, and we had no mind to sizzle and brown for the entertainment of the San Blas.

Perhaps it was a fear of setting the royal palace on fire that deterred our enemies from annoying us further; for after this second move we were not molested and my comrades were allowed to finish their sleep in comfort.

CHAPTER TWELVE
WAR IS DECLARED

NEXT MORNING WE made an unpleasant discovery.

When we brought the automobile around to the front of the house again we found that during the night the natives had bricked up the entrance arch to a height of some four feet above the ground, using blocks of baked clay cemented together with some preparation that we were not familiar with.

This action was intended to imprison the automobile within the wall and prevent our running out on another excursion, as we had the day before.

At first sight it appeared that the device was successful. A small hut had been torn down to provide the material, and the blocks were thick and hard as rock.

Duncan frowned as he looked at the barrier, and remarked:

"Then it is to be war."

"I knew that last night," said I, "when they tried to smoke us out or burn us up."

"Let us give them a good volley from our revolvers," he suggested, angrily.

"Don' do dat, seh," said Bry, earnestly. "Wait first till dey shoot arrows. We make b'lieve we frien's as long as we can. It gives us time to think what we do."

"Evidently," said I, "the council of chiefs has advised the king to make short work of us. We have probably been condemned already, and all that now holds them in check is their uncertainty of the best way to vanquish us."

"They are a little awed by our wonderful powers, I am sure," declared Moit.

"Quite probable," I replied. "Is there any way to get over that wall, Duncan?"

He did not answer at once, but looked reflectively at the archway.

"We can leave this place tomorrow morning," said he, finally; "but I do not see how we can accomplish the feat before then. Do you imagine we can hold the natives at bay another day?"

"We can try," I said as cheerfully as I could.

But the prospect was not an enticing one, and I began to bitterly regret our folly in ever entering a place wherein we could be so easily imprisoned.

"If we get out," said Nux, "then we mus' fight our way all time. If we bold an' quick, we get away all right."

Nux didn't speak often, but his judgment was pretty good.

"I want those diamonds," I said; "and I'm going to have them. If we go

back empty-handed we have made a failure of the expedition."

"To let a lot of ignorant natives triumph over the greatest invention of the century is absurd — it's fairly criminal!" added Moit. "I'm not afraid to tackle the whole San Blas nation in this car."

"Too bad you didn't make it a man-o'-war," said I, with a laugh. "If we had a gattling gun aboard we'd have everything our own way."

We raised the curtains, and while Bry openly got the breakfast ready I took careful note of our surroundings.

Some twenty warriors, armed with spears and bows, were in sight, lounging in doorways or leaning silently against the various buildings. They were watching us closely, no doubt; but there was no open attempt to attack us as yet.

After a brief conference we decided not to put down the top again, as the San Blas might take a notion to shoot at any time, and their arrows, while they might not penetrate the netted glass of the dome, might mow us down quickly if we were exposed to them.

But I did not like to acknowledge that we were afraid, either; so I let down the steps and opened the rear door, and Bry and Nux and myself all descended to the ground and grouped ourselves carelessly near the car, leaving Moit alone in the machine.

As soon as we appeared the natives began to come nearer, in a curious observant crowd. Then one who was doubtless a chief came forward and said that the King Nalig-Nad desired his brother kings to attend him at once in his palace.

"In our country," answered Bry, gravely, "it is the custom when kings meet to honor each other in turn. Yesterday we waited upon Nalig-Nad; today he must wait upon us."

"But he is the great King of the Techlas!" protested the other, as if amazed that the command could be disregarded.

"And we are the mighty Kings of Tayakoo, which numbers more people than the leaves of the forest," replied Bry, drawing himself up proudly and frowning upon the other. "Take your master our answer, slave!"

The fellow obeyed; but the king was in no hurry to come.

His daughter arrived, though, fresh and beautiful as a rose in bloom, and the natives made way for her as she pressed through the group.

"A greeting to my friends!" she said in English, and peered into the car in search of Duncan Moit.

"Enter, Princess," said I, holding open the door.

She accepted the invitation frankly, and Duncan took her hand and pressed it to his lips as an old time courtier would have done. She was very

sweet and lovely, this Indian maiden, and I did not blame the inventor for worshipping her as he evidently did.

"You cannot today with me run away," she said, laughing and pointing a slender finger at the barricade.

"You are wrong, Ilalah," answered Moit, smiling into her fair face. "When I wish to go, the walls cannot stop me. But we would like to stay another day in your village."

She became serious at this. Thinking someone in the crowd might understand the English language as well as she did, I motioned to Nux and Bry to enter the car, and I followed them and closed the door.

"Listen, then," she said, seeming to be glad of the seclusion. "The king, who is my father, is angry because you have told lies to him. There was a council of the chiefs last night. The white men are to be captured and shot with arrows. The magic machine that is a bird and a fish will be destroyed, and the two black kings may then go free because they speak in our tongue, and are therefore brothers."

"That is pleasant news," said Duncan. "When will they do this?"

"To-day, if they can. I was with them at the council. I told them that I loved you, and would make you the mate of the Princess Ilalah. But to that my father would not agree. He says you must die."

Duncan took her hand and kissed it again, very gratefully and with a look of joy and animation upon his face that fairly transformed it.

"Did not this make you afraid?" I asked the girl, surprised that she seemed to accept her lover's cruel fate so lightly.

"Oh, no," she replied. "For the white Chief I love is greater than the San Blas. He will save himself and fly, and I will go with him."

"Will you?" cried Duncan, earnestly.

"And why not?" she asked, frankly. "Will the doe leave the stag she has chosen? Could I be happy or content without my white chief?"

"Here is a case of love at first sight, with a vengeance!" I said, greatly amused at the girl's bold declaration. But Moit frowned upon me angrily and his eyes flashed.

"Shut up, you pig!" he growled, and suddenly I felt ashamed of myself for not better appreciating the maiden's brave honesty.

"Is there no way, Ilalah, to make your father wait until tomorrow morning?" he asked, turning again toward the girl.

"Why should he wait?" she returned.

"I have summoned mighty powers to my assistance," declared Moit, after a moment's thought, "and it would please me to await their arrival. It will make me stronger; but I am not afraid if your people begin the war at any

time.”

“And to-morrow morning?”

“Then, at daybreak, you must come to me, and we will go away and leave your people.”

“That is good,” she said, joyfully. “I will try to make my father wait, and to-morrow I will give up my power to go with my white chief.”

“What is your power, Ilalah?” asked Duncan, puzzled by the expression.

“After my father, I am the ruler of the Techlas, which you call the San Blas. When the king dies, I am queen, with power of life and death over my people. But the king my father hates white men, who may not live if they enter his kingdom, so I must go with my mate to another country where the king does not hate him, or to his own country, where he will rule.”

This willing abdication of a throne for the sake of a man whom she had known only for a day aroused my wonder. But I could not fail to admire the girl’s courage, and indeed to rule the San Blas was no great privilege, in my estimation.

“If your father makes war to-day,” said Duncan, “fly here to me at once. Then, if I escape, we will never more be separated.”

She promised readily to do this, and leaving the car rejoined her women and moved away to enter the palace.

I noticed that while she had abandoned all — her life, her prejudices and her kingdom — for her white lover, Duncan Moit had promised nothing in return except that they would not be separated. The thought made me sorry for the poor maid; but it was none of my affair.

Bye and bye the king came out, followed by his chief men and counsellors, in an imposing group.

As he approached, Bry and Nux again descended from the car and stood by the steps, and I followed and took up a position just behind them. Duncan, as before, remained inside. We were all prepared to act quickly in an emergency, but our plan was to secure a truce in some way until another morning. I could not understand why Moit desired the delay so earnestly, but was willing to assist him to obtain it The king was plainly annoyed at the refusal of the black kings to come into his dwelling. His face still wore its calm expression but his eyes snapped ominously.

“My brothers,” said he, “we do not like your white slaves. Years ago the whites wronged the Techlas most cruelly, and the law of our nation is to put all white people to death who enter our country. I am sorry to take away your property, but the slaves must die.”

“My brother,” answered Bry, “see how much more we love you than you love us. We could kill you in a flash, even where you stand. We could

destroy your village and all your people. If we so desired, there would be no more a nation of Techlas on the face of the earth. But we let you live, because we have called you our friend. To break that friendship would be to destroy yourselves. I beg you will not again ask us to give up our slaves to your cruel and unjust vengeance."

It did me much good to watch Nalig-Nad's face. He did not like to risk defying the unknown power of the strangers, but if his own authority was thus ignored he would hereafter be a king only in name. Some of his chiefs were glancing at one another significantly, while others were clearly uneasy at our domineering attitude.

I stood with my hands in the pockets of my jacket and a grin of amusement on my face when the king's roving eyes suddenly observed me. I suppose his forbearance could not withstand the white boy's audacity, for he raised his hand and at the signal a coil of rope shot through the air and a loop settled over my body and clutched me firmly around the chest.

Instantly I was jerked from my feet and dragged into the group of warriors, all of whom, as if the action had been preconcerted, sprang forward with their spears levelled threateningly at Nux and Bry.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WE LOOK INTO DANGER'S EYES

THE CAPTURE WAS SO sudden that it took me a moment to collect my wits. Although bruised and bumped to some extent I had not been much hurt, and even before I was jerked to my feet I cried aloud to my men:

"Get into the car and watch out! Don't mind me. Take care of yourselves."

They obeyed promptly, but none too soon; for scarcely had they closed the door when a shower of arrows rattled against the dome. All subterfuge and arbitration was now at an end; they had at last "shot the arrow" and we might expect in the future nothing but implacable hatred.

My captors — two stalwart chiefs — having raised me to my feet now held me firmly secured by means of the thong lasso which still encircled my body. The coils pinioned my elbows so closely to my sides that I could not even withdraw my hands from the pockets of my jacket.

They had begun to hurry me toward the king's house when a roar of dismay broke from the group we had just left. I turned half around and saw that the automobile had made a short circle and was plunging straight at the king and his warriors. Some were wise enough to scatter from its path, but the more dignified hesitated and were bowled over like a company of wooden soldiers and tossed in every direction.

The lightness of the machine prevented many serious casualties, however, and while Duncan chased them here and there, managing the huge automobile with consumate skill, the warriors gathered up the stunned and maimed and, dodging the onslaught as nimbly as they could, fled into the palace and houses where the terrible monster could not follow them.

Forgetting for the moment my own unenviable plight, I laughed heartily at the exhibition until the two chiefs pushed me roughly toward a doorway and so along the narrow hall and into the big courtyard.

Here the chiefs began to gather, muttering angrily at their recent discomfiture and casting upon me glances of such malignity that they had the effect of sobering me effectually.

The king came limping in and dropped upon his bench with a brow like a thundercloud. He had not been much injured, but his royal dignity had suffered a severe blow.

While one man held the loose end of my lasso and guarded me, the others all ranged themselves back of the king, who said, with what appeared to me to be unseemly haste:

"What shall be the fate of the white stranger?"

“Death!” they cried, in a fierce chorus.

“And at once,” added Nalig-Nad. He glanced around him. “To you, Tetch-Tsa, I allow the privilege.”

A stout young fellow with considerable of the royal green in his robe stepped forward with a grim smile and drew his long knife. As I looked at him I clutched with my fingers the handles of the two self-cocking revolvers that were fortunately in my jacket pockets, and which I had been secretly holding when the coil of the lasso settled over me. I was not able to move my arms because of the thong that pressed them against my body, but I pointed the barrel of the right hand weapon as accurately as I could toward my proposed executioner. When he was but a few paces off I blazed away at him.

At the first shot he paused, as if astonished; at the second he threw up his arms and tumbled over.

Instantly I whirled and fired at the man behind, and my position was so awkward and my aim so uncertain that I emptied the chambers of the revolver in quick succession to make sure one bullet would take effect.

He staggered back and released the thong, and even while I loosed the slip-noose I ran toward the hall and made my best speed for the door.

The thong tripped me as it dropped to my feet and I fell just in time to escape a spear that was hurled after me. Another, as I jumped up, slipped past my right ear, and a third slashed my hip. But I fled for dear life and in a jiffy was free of the house and heading across the enclosure toward the automobile.

They saw me coming and opened the door for me to tumble in. A spear crashed into the netted glass just as the door swung into place again, hurled with such force that its point stuck half way into the car and taught us we were not so secure within the dome as we had imagined. But now I lay panting upon the floor while Bryonia emptied a couple of revolvers into the crowd of my pursuers and brought them to an abrupt halt.

“Getting a little warm,” remarked Duncan Moit, calmly. “I’m not sure, Sam, whether we can stick out the day or not.”

“Glad you escape, Mars’ Sam!” said Nux, bending over me. “Bad hurt?”

“I guess not,” I answered, still breathing hard.

The black unfastened my clothing, which was saturated with blood just over the left hip. The spear had cut an angry looking gash in the flesh as a passing reminder of what it might do if better aimed, but fortunately the wound was not deep and on account of its location would cause me little trouble beyond a slight stiffness. Nux began to dress it as well as he could by tearing up a shirt for bandages and applying plenty of sticking plaster from

the supply we had brought with us. I thought he made a very good job of it, being somewhat skilled in the treatment of flesh wounds myself.

I could imagine how furious the San Blas would be at my escape. They did not venture out into the open space after these two repulses, but hung around the doorways in an alert and vigilant way, being very sure that we could not get out of the enclosure and would be unable to defy them for any length of time.

Duncan rather expected the princess to appear, as she had promised in case of open warfare; but either she did not consider the emergency had yet arisen or she had been prevented from acting as she wished.

"I won't go without her, though," he muttered, decidedly.

"Tell me," said I, "what is your object in wanting to wait until to-morrow before escaping from here? I can't see that another day will bring any better condition to our captivity, and it's a settled fact that we can't get the machine out of this enclosure, in any event."

"Perhaps I ought to explain," he began, and then paused for a long time, as if absorbed in deep thought.

"Take your time, Duncan," I remarked, impatiently.

He did not notice the sarcasm, but my voice aroused him and he said:

"Perhaps you remember that I once told you I used a glycerine explosive of my own invention to prime the engines of this automobile. In starting, a tiny drop is fed into the cylinders to procure the air compression which furnishes the motive power."

"I remember; go ahead."

"The feeding chamber is supplied with enough of this explosive to run the machine a year or more," he continued; "but when I made it, in my own laboratory, the apparatus required was so complicated and expensive that I decided to manufacture an extra supply, to use in other machines which I intended to build later."

"I see."

"This reserve supply, in a powerfully concentrated form, I now have with me."

"Oh! Isn't it" dangerous, old man?" I asked, glancing around uneasily.

"Properly applied it might blow all Panama to atoms," he returned vaguely. "But it cannot be accidently exploded while it remains in the place I have provided for it."

"Where is that?"

He reached down and removed a square trap in the floor of the car. Leaning over, I discovered a small cylindrical jar, having the capacity of about a quart, which was suspended at one side of the driving shaft. The

straps that held it in place allowing it to swing in any direction with the movement of the machine, but any sudden jar was impossible.

"Is it like nitro-glycerine?" I asked, eyeing the cylinder with an involuntary shudder.

"Not at all," replied the inventor, calmly closing the trap again. "It is a much more powerful explosive, in its concentrated form, but may be diluted to any strength desired. The mechanism I have invented for its application renders it perfectly harmless when exploded in atomic quantities in the engines, although ordinary concussion would, as in the case of nitro-glycerine, explode the condensed contents of the extra cylinder."

"I think I now comprehend your idea," said I.

"Yes, it is very simple. Under cover of darkness I propose to bore a hole in that barrier and fill it with my explosive. In the morning I will blow up the wall and in the excitement that follows run the machine through the gap and escape."

"Very good!" I exclaimed, joyfully. "Then all we need do is to keep these Indians at bay until we have an opportunity to do the job."

"Otherwise," said he, musingly, "I would have to throw some of the explosive at the wall, and that attempt might prove as dangerous for us as are the fierce San Blas themselves."

The Indians seemed for some time unwilling to resume the attack. It was the middle of the afternoon before the king sent a messenger from his council chamber to say that all friendship had now ceased and we must consider ourselves completely in his power. If the Senator Nux and the Honorable Bryonia would leave the village alone and on foot, Nalig-Nad would guarantee their safe conduct to the border, and thus they would be permitted to escape. The white men and their devil-machine were alike doomed, and could in no way survive the vengeance of the Techlas. And, unless Nux and Bry abandoned us at once, they must perish with us.

This proposition enabled us to gain the desired respite. Bryonia pretended to consult with Nux and then answered the messenger that they would decide the matter at daybreak the following morning. At that time the final answer of the two kings would be given to Nalig-Nad, and they intimated that they might possibly decide to abandon the miserable whites and save their own skins.

Whether this proposition was satisfactory or not to the king and his council did not appear; but the San Blas evidently decided to wait, for they did not molest us again that day.

As night approached we were somewhat worried lest they should resume the attempts to burn us; but they must have been satisfied of the impossibility

of such a proceeding. No bonfires were lighted, which suited our plans admirably.

The moon, however, was brilliant during the first part of the night, and by its rays we could see that watchers were maintained in several places, so we were unable to do more than restrain our impatience as best we might. Moit raised the trap and carefully removed the cylinder that contained the explosive from its suspended position, placing it on the seat beside him. The very sight of the thing filled me with terror, and both Nux and Bry moved as far away from it as possible — as if that would do any good if it went off. But the inventor had handled it so often that he did not fear it as we did, and taking an empty glass bottle that was about as big around as your little finger he unscrewed the cap of the cylinder and calmly filled the bottle from its contents.

I watched him as if entranced, and thought the liquid resembled castor oil in color and consistency. When the bottle was filled Duncan corked it and put it in his inside pocket, afterward replacing the cylinder and strapping it into place.

And now he rummaged in his box of tools and took out a brace and a long bit that was about a half inch in diameter. He also picked out a piece of red chalk and placed that too in his pocket.

We were all ready, now, but had to wait, although the strain began to tell upon our nerves.

Finally the moon passed behind the king's house and sank so low that the building cast a black shadow over the enclosure, throwing both the automobile and the barricaded archway into intense darkness.

"In an hour more day will break," whispered Duncan in an anxious voice. "We must work quickly now, or we are lost."

He started the machine moving so slowly that it merely crept toward the wall. The watchers had doubtless retired, for we heard no sound of movement in the sleeping village.

When we had approached quite near to the barricade Moit softly opened the rear door, left the car, and crawled on hands and knees to the wall. We showed no light at all, and from the automobile I lost sight of our friend altogether.

But presently I could hear the faint sound of the augur as it ground its way into the clay wall. Duncan started at about the middle of the barricade, but bored his hole slanting downward, so that the explosive would run into the cavity without danger of escaping. It did not take him more than a few minutes to complete his task, and before long he was back in the car again, holding the empty bottle before our faces with a smile of satisfaction.

And now the machine crept inch by inch back to its former position, and we were ready for the day to break.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
WE ASTONISH OUR FOES

SLOWLY THE SUN arose, and as its first rays lighted the cloudless sky Ilalah came gliding from the palace and sprang lightly up the steps that Duncan had let down in order to receive her. Once she was in the car we all breathed easier, and the inventor especially showed his content and exultation.

"Now let them come!" he cried; and each of us felt that the sooner the suspense was over the better we would like it.

King Nalig-Nad gave us plenty of time, though, and we had breakfast while we waited, the princess accepting her share with gracious enjoyment of a meal quite novel in her experience. She was so unaffected and so charming in her manner that already we began to consider her one of us.

At last the king and his chiefs emerged, and we could see by their stern faces that a climax in our adventure had arrived.

Moit was ready for them. He backed the machine around until it was facing the barricade and as far removed from it as the enclosure would allow. He had made Ilalah crouch low on the floor of the car, so that her people would not discover her presence.

A spokesman advanced from the group of warriors and demanded Bryonia's promised answer.

I opened a side window and said, boldly and in a loud voice, that we had played with the San Blas people long enough.

"You annoy us with your foolish demands," I added, "and we cannot bother to remain with you longer. Had you been friendly, we would have favored you; but you are silly children, and so we leave you."

As I finished speaking Duncan opened the window in front of his steering wheel and aimed a shot from his revolver at the red chalk mark on the barricade that marked the location of the explosive. There was no result, so he fired again, and still again.

The natives, at first furious at my insults, now paused to wonder what the big white slave was shooting at, and I saw that the inventor's nervousness or lack of marksmanship was likely soon to plunge us into a deal of trouble. Leaping to his side I pushed him away and took careful aim with my own revolver.

A crash that seemed to rend the very air followed. The machine was hurled backward against the king's palace, from which a rain of mud bricks and bits of wood rattled down upon us, while all the open space of the enclosure was filled with falling debris.

Shrieks of terror and pain followed, while we, who had all been dumped in a heap on the floor of the car, scrambled up and took note of what had happened. The wall had vanished, and only a ragged depression in the earth remained to mark the place where the barricade had lately stood.

None of us was injured, fortunately, and as soon as Duncan had assured himself that Ilalah was alive and unhurt he sprang to the lever and the machine bounded forward and skimmed light as a feather over the littered ground.

I tried to look out and wave an adieu to King Nalig-Nad; but we were off like a shot across the meadows and all I could see was a mass of excited natives rushing here and there in wild confusion.

After fifteen minutes of this terrific speed Moit moderated our pace, for we were miles from the village and pursuit was impossible.

"Where now?" he asked, his voice seeming to indicate that he cared not a rap, since we had managed to escape with the beautiful princess.

"It will be well for us to find that valley of diamonds as soon as possible," said I, "and secure our plunder before the king can raise the alarm and head us off."

"All right; where is it?" he demanded.

I produced the map and pointed out the location of the valley, which appeared to lie in a fork of the river, far to the south.

"We are now somewhere to the east of the king's village," I observed. "The hilly ground ahead of us rises to small mountains between here and the sea; but if we turn south there is open country clear through to the forest-clad mountain range, and when we reach the forest we can follow its edge until we come to the diamond valley."

"That is clear enough," replied Moit, looking over my shoulder.

So we turned south, and presently came to a stream with such steep banks that we could not cross it. The map had not prepared us for this, so we kept to the eastward, endeavoring to find a crossing, until we reached a marsh, and found our wheels sinking into a soft and treacherous bog.

We backed out just in time to avoid serious trouble, and had to go north again, skirting the marsh slowly and with care until we were once more in the hills we had recently left.

This was decidedly annoying, and we appealed to Ilalah.

"Is there not a path from here to the mountains?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she said; "there must be many paths."

"Do you know them?"

"Not to go to them from here. Often I and my women cross to the great forest from our village; but we seldom come here at all."

“I don’t blame you,” growled Moit. “This part of your country isn’t worth photographing. What shall we do now, Sam?”

“I don’t like to go back,” said I, studying the map with a suspicion that its maker had never been in this section at all. “But we might try these hills. If we could find a path over them it might lead us around the marsh, and then we would be all right.”

“How do you know? There may be more marshes,” he suggested.

“It may be. This is all guess work, it seems — map and all. But if we reached the ocean we could run along the beach at low tide, and make good time.”

“It is certainly worth a trial,” he said; “and if we fail we cannot be any worse off than we are at present.”

I doubted that the automobile would be much of a hill-climber, because until then I had a notion that the heaviest machines, with the most power to move their weight, could climb the easiest. But a few minutes removed that erratic idea from my mind. We skimmed up the slopes as lightly as an ibex, and went down them much more safely than a heavy machine under the strain of brakes could do. And so, winding around this hill and over that, we kept on at an easy pace until the breath of salt air could be felt and we knew we were close to the sea.

But now the hills became rocky and more difficult. One good sized mound stood right in our way, and after a close inspection of it through our telescope (for Moit seemed to have forgotten nothing in fitting up his automobile) we saw a broad ledge running around its right side which promised a way through to the coast.

By now it was after midday, for much time had been consumed in seeking a path through this wild and unknown country. So we halted for luncheon, and as we ate I said to Ilalah:

“How did you learn to speak such fine English, Princess, when your people have always hated the whites and tried to drive them from your dominions?”

“The king my father,” she answered, “is very wise. From his captives he has learned that half of the people of the world speak English. So he thought it would be best for some of the Techlas to speak English too. One day our watchers brought to the king a man and a woman, who were of the English but could speak a little Spanish too. My father promised them life if they would teach us to speak the English tongue. So the man taught the king and his noble chiefs each day in the courtyard of the palace, while the woman taught the foreign tongue to me and my favorite attendants in our own rooms. It was a long task and a hard one, but after many moons some of us could

speak and understand the English well enough."

"Did you also learn to read?" Duncan asked.

"No. My father says written words are lies, for when you read the signs you cannot read the speaker's eyes and know that he speaks truth. The Techlas do not love the sign language, and will not have it."

"That is foolish," I said. "If you cannot read, you cannot know what is going on in the world."

"And that is what we do not wish to know," she answered, smiling. "My people say that to hear of other people is to make unhappiness. We live only our own lives; so why should we care what happens in other lives in other countries?"

It struck me there was some sense in that, if their own lives were sufficient to content them.

"What became of the white man and woman who taught you?" asked Duncan.

"After we had learned to speak their tongue my father killed them," she answered simply.

"Then he, too, lied," I said.

"Not so. He promised them life if they would teach us, and they lived. But he could not promise them life for all time, because all life is uncertain."

"So he killed them?"

"Yes; having no longer need for them. They were white, and the Techlas hate all white people."

"Because of their color?"

"Because they once robbed our people and drove them from their homes."

"Listen, Ilalah," said Duncan, earnestly; "the white race that wronged your people was the Spanish race; but there are many whites that are not Spaniards — any more than are all Indians Techlas. So you have no reason to hate us, who are not Spanish and have never wronged you."

"I do not hate you," she answered, taking his hand and pressing it fondly. "I love you."

"But your people do."

She grew serious.

"If I should come to rule my people," was the slow answer, "I would command them to hate and to kill only the Spaniards. But I will never rule them, because I shall go with you to your own country, where you are the king, and help you to rule your subjects."

I laughed at the idea, although the sentiment was so pretty. Duncan frowned at me. He did not tell the Indian maid that he was merely a bankrupt inventor, with no subjects and no wealth aside from the possession of his

really wonderful machine. Why should he?

We now moved on again, following the natural ledge of rock that wound around the hill. The precipice beside it grew deeper and more dangerous as we advanced, and the ledge narrowed until often there was barely room for the machine to pass around a projection. Also the ledge sometimes inclined toward the chasm at an awkward angle that forced us to crawl cautiously along and rely upon the rubber tires to keep us from slipping off the rock entirely.

Not knowing from one moment to another what the windings of the ledge were about to disclose, it is obvious that our journey was as interesting as it was exciting. But we kept moving with dogged perseverance until, with the end almost in sight, we were brought to an abrupt halt by the total disappearance of the ledge itself.

With a precipice in front and one at our right, while a steep wall of rock towered at our left, we had no trouble to decide that we must go back by the same nerve-racking path we had come. This was the more embarrassing that we had no room to turn around, and it was no easy task to back the machine over the dangerous places.

Duncan made us all get out and walk. The way he steered the machine along its crab-like course filled me with wonder and admiration, and I am sure Ilalah considered him little less than a god.

We had dropped the dome top to bring the weight closer to the ground, and if the automobile chanced to slip over the edge Duncan would have a good show to leap out and save himself. Yet so dear was the machine to its inventor that I feel positive that Moit, at any time before Ilalah had enslaved him with her sweet face, would have gone to his death in it without hesitation rather than live to see it demolished. But the pretty Indian princess now possessed his heart as the automobile had possessed his brain, and with such a divided allegiance I looked to see him jump in case anything went wrong. But nothing did, and so the occasion to test the strength of his affection for the girl or the machine did not transpire. Knowing so accurately the capabilities of his marvelous invention, he was able to guide it safely until we reached once more the base of the hill and came upon level ground.

Then we all breathed again, and entering the car held a council to discuss our future actions.

“Isn’t the Atlantic coast inhabited by your people?” I asked Ilalah.

“Only in the northern part, where the cocoanut groves are,” she answered.

Then, as we questioned her, she told us some interesting things about her people. Off the coast were several islands, also inhabited by the San Blas Tribes, the chiefs of which all paid tribute to Nalig-Nad. These tribes hated

the whites even more venomously than did the dwellers on the mainland, although they traded constantly with many ships that came to them for their cocoanuts, which are considered the finest grown in all the world.

She said these ships were from many countries, but their crews were never permitted to sleep a night upon the shore and merely landed to make their trades with the natives. The San Blas people built great pyramids of cocoanuts close to the landing places, and when a ship arrived the natives retired and allowed the traders to come ashore and examine and count the supply of cocoanuts. When they had estimated the worth of the offering thus made them by the Indians they placed beside the pyramids such articles as they were willing to exchange, including beads, clothing, tools and liquors. Then they all retired to their ship and allowed the Indians to advance and look over the goods. If they were satisfied it was a fair exchange they took the plunder away and permitted the traders to load the cocoanuts upon their vessel; but if the San Blas considered the offer too little, they left the goods untouched and again retired. Then the traders must add more, until the natives were content, before they undertook to remove a single cocoanut.

No other form of communication ever took place between these two inimical races, and the San Blas island tribes were so rich in cocoanut groves and so shrewd in trading, that they were the most prosperous subjects the king could boast.

Smaller groves were also on the mainland, south of the marsh country, and traders reached that district by entering a bay and the mouths of one or two rivers. But all trading was there conducted in the same manner as upon the islands, and it was only in the north, where we had entered, that the whites came occasionally to trade for skins, tortoise-shell and grains from the farm lands, and with these parties Nalig-Nad personally conducted the trading and was thus able to jealously guard his border from invasion.

I would like to say, at this point in my digression from my story, that many travellers who have had no personal experience with the San Blas Indians have been induced by the unreliable gossip of the traders to write preposterous tales concerning the manners and customs of these interesting natives. As a rule such descriptions are very misleading, and I am quite positive no white men before our visit to the Techlas have ever had the same opportunities to observe their country and their customs as we had.

So much time had been lost in our futile journeying and in discussing our plans with the princess, that the sun was now low in the horizon. It was discouraging to reflect that in all that long day we had accomplished nothing at all since our escape from the village.

To endeavor to cross an unknown country at night would be folly; so there

was nothing to do but find a convenient place to camp until morning.

"Our safest plan," I counselled, "is to return to the river the way we came, and paddle upstream as far as possible. Then we can take to the bank and still follow the stream to the valley of diamonds. Our departed friend, the German, was not a success as a map-maker; but we know that he followed the river in the way I propose, so that part of the country is probably depicted on the map with a fair degree of accuracy."

"This plan will oblige us to pass the villages again," objected Moit, "and that will mean a fight."

"Not necessarily. The country is level there, and we can dash by at full speed, before they know we are coming."

It really seemed the only practical thing to do; so we decided to get as near to the king's village as possible without danger of being observed, and then wait until daylight to regain the river.

I kept watch through the telescope as we bowled along over the smooth meadows; and when, just at dusk, I sighted the distant enclosure, we came to a halt.

While Nux and Bry cooked us a good supper the rest of us got out of the car and strolled to the brook to stretch our limbs. I felt that "three was a crowd" and let Duncan and Ilalah walk by themselves. They wandered so far and were so deeply occupied by their own interesting conversation that when the meal was ready I jumped into the machine and ran it over to where they were sitting side by side on the bank of the brook. It was easy enough to do, for I had watched Moit very carefully; but the inventor was not at all pleased with what he called my "infernal meddling," and told me to keep my hands off his property thereafter.

When darkness came on and it was time to sleep I proposed rigging up a little room in the front of the car for Ilalah by suspending blankets from the dome to the floor. In this way the princess would have all the seclusion of a private apartment. But Duncan protested that he had no intention of sleeping while we were in so dangerous a position, and Ilalah very promptly decided to sit up with him and keep him company.

So there was no need for the rest of us to do more than lie down and go to sleep, an undertaking which we accomplished with much satisfaction.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
WE SEARCH FOR THE VALLEY

AT THE FIRST sign of light we were off, making to the north until we had nearly reached the edge of the wood and then following its curves over the plains toward the west.

In this way we managed to gain a considerable distance northward from the villages, and although we passed some scattered houses and a few groups of farmers who were early in the fields, there was no attempt made to interfere with our progress.

But when we came to the bank of the main river — making the same point where we had first landed — we found a different condition of affairs confronting us. Fully a hundred warriors were gathered on the bank, armed and prepared to receive us. I saw them through our telescope before they could see us, and we halted at once for a conference.

Nalig-Nad had evidently conceived the notion that in order to leave his country we would be forced to pass down the river at this point, and therefore it was here that he had determined to assemble his forces in order to stop us. He was right in his conclusion that we needed the waterway to carry us to our ship, but he was wrong in thinking that we were ready to escape.

The approach to the river was somewhat confined, because the forest was on one side of us and the high-banked stream entered the river on the other side, narrowing the plain whereon we could travel to rather a small space. It would be impossible to proceed without coming into contact with the band of natives ahead of us.

These warriors seemed intent on watching the river, for they had no idea that we had altered our course and would come up behind them. Indeed, we afterward learned that there was a good path around the base of the hills to the eastward, and had we not been so ignorant of the country we need not have turned back at all. But here we were, confronting a grave emergency, and it puzzled us for a time to know what to do.

Duncan solved the difficulty in his own peculiar way.

"Isn't that a house over there?" he asked, pointing to a roof that showed above a small hollow.

"It is sure to be," I answered, and the princess, who was quite at home in this section, said we were right.

Without more ado Duncan ran the machine over to the house, passing a man who stood in a field staring at us. As we drew up at the door of the primitive hut and Moit leaped out of the car, a woman sprang away like a startled deer carrying a child in her arms and screaming lustily, although

Ilalah called to her not to be afraid.

Duncan entered the house and quickly returned bearing a bow and a sheaf of arrows in a leathern quiver. His face wore a smile of satisfaction, but as he rejoined us and started the car again I said to him:

"Do you imagine we can shoot better with that outfit than with our revolvers?"

"Yes; one shot will be worth a volley from a regiment," he returned.

I own I was puzzled, but he graciously allowed me to run the car, although at a moderate speed, so that I had little chance to observe his immediate actions. I heard him lift the trap in the door, though, and then, after a period of silence, he touched my arm and told me to stop. We could now observe with the naked eye the group of Indians on the river bank.

"Who can make the best shot with this contrivance?" asked Moit.

I turned around and understood his plan at once. To one of the arrows he had firmly tied the slender glass bottle, and I could see that it had again been filed with the dreadful explosive. "I shoot," said Nux, nodding his head gravely.

Both of the blacks shot splendidly with the bow, I remembered, for it was their native weapon. But Nux was the best marksman of the two.

Duncan handed the arrow and the bow to him and opened a side window.

"When we get a hundred yards away from the river," said he, "shoot the arrow among the San Blas; but try, if you can, to strike one of those trees growing by the bank. Can you shoot so far, and shoot straight?"

Nux nodded confidently, but held the arrow with great caution and was evidently afraid of it.

The machine started again and rolled over the thick turf at a great rate of speed, heading directly toward the river. Soon one of the Indians discovered us, and gave a cry that turned every face in our direction.

"Now!" shouted Moit, without slackening speed.

Nux drew the bow and the arrow sped swiftly on its mission. The aim was good, but the bottle so weighted the shaft that I feared for a moment it would miss the mark. It flew over the heads of the group, in a graceful curve, and struck a root at the very base of the tree.

The explosion was instantaneous. The tree itself flew skyward and the air was filled with earth, wood and Indians. I do not know how many of the San Blas suffered in this catastrophy, but those who were left were thrown into such dire confusion that they fled in all directions and many leaped into the river in an endeavor to escape.

Meantime the machine never abated its speed for an instant, although the ears of all on board were ringing with the shock. We knew that we must take

advantage of our opportunity and the confusion of our foes, so on we drove until we reached the low, shelving bank, and the next moment plunged unhesitatingly into the water.

Duncan sprung the paddles on the rims and turned the wheel to guide our course up stream. Before the Indians could recover we were a good distance away and had turned the first bend so that we were hidden from their view.

"Get out the revolvers and stand ready," said Moit. "They will probably follow, and we cannot tell how long the water will be of a sufficient depth to float us."

But the San Blas decided not to give chase. They had ample evidence, by this time, that we were dangerous enemies, and since we had chosen to proceed still farther into their territory instead of trying to leave it, they would have plenty of time to reorganize their forces and determine on the best method to oppose us.

We found the stream navigable for several miles. Then we reached the uplands, and the water began tumbling amongst rocky boulders in a way that made farther progress dangerous. So we took to the land, gaining the left bank with ease and then rolling along in a southerly direction.

And now we had occasion to blame the map-maker again, for instead of the single fork in the stream which he had depicted we found a dozen branches leading down from the mountains and forming a regular network on this part of the plain. Several we forded, losing more and more our sense of location, until finally we came to a high embankment that barred our way and were forced to follow its course up to the forest, which we reached about the middle of the afternoon.

The grandeur of this immense woodland, as we approached its border, both awed and amazed us. The wood we had passed at the north was nothing more than a grove of trees when compared with the grand primeval forest that covered the mountain as far as the eye could reach.

We hardly knew whether to turn to the east or west from this point, and so we asked Ilalah if she had any idea in which direction lay the valley where the "white pebbles" were found.

She had none at all. The law forbidding the Techlas to gather these pebbles was passed by the king her father years ago, when she was but a child. No one had ever mentioned in her hearing where they had been found.

Fairly bewildered as to our whereabouts, by this time, we turned to the left and, easily fording now the shallow streams we encountered, visited several valleys without having a notion whether any of them was the one we sought, or not.

Finally I said to the princess:

“The place we seek has a great rock of red granite stone in the center, and a part of the rock points like an arm directly at the forest.”

“Oh, yes!” she exclaimed; “that place I remember well, for I have visited it often as a girl.”

Here was cheering news, indeed.

“Is it near here?” asked Duncan.

“It is far to the right,” she answered, after some thought. “We should not have come in this direction at all.”

Blaming ourselves for our stupidity in not questioning the girl about this land-mark before, we turned the machine again and began to double on our tracks.

“This means spending another night in the wilderness,” said Moit; but he spoke with unusual cheerfulness, and I reflected that as long as Ilalah was by his side our inventor was not likely to complain of the length of this trip.

“But there seem to be no Indians in this neighborhood to annoy us,” I observed. “Do you know, Duncan, I believe that your invention of the glycerine explosive is almost as important as the machine itself?”

“Oh, it has helped us nicely in two emergencies, so far,” he answered soberly; “but I hope we shall not be called upon to use it again. It is so powerful that it frightens me. Every time I handle it I place all of us in as much danger as I do our enemies, for a premature explosion is not unlikely to happen. Especially is this true in so hot a climate as the one we are now travelling in. The can that contains the glyceroid was quite warm when I filled that bottle to-day, and this condition adds to its tendency to explode.”

It made me a little uneasy to hear this.

“Doesn’t it require a jar to set it off?” I asked.

“Almost always. And there is less chance of a jar to the can if we leave it alone.”

We finally reached the place where we had first arrived at the forest, and fording the stream, which was shallow as it came from the wood, continued our search to the westward. The country was very beautiful around here, and when I asked Ilalah why it was not more thickly settled she said that the forest was full of terrible beasts and serpents, which attacked men fearlessly and destroyed them. So few cared to live in the neighborhood.

We were not afraid, though, with the protection of the car, and when the princess recognized, just at dark, a familiar landmark, and assured us the valley we sought was not far distant, we decided to make our camp where we were and await the morning to complete our quest.

The temperature cooled rapidly in the shade of the forest, and we were now in the uplands, too, where the day was never as sultry as on the lower

plains; so we thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

Ilalah sang sweetly some of her native songs, and Nux and Bry favored us with a duet that they had learned in their own far away island home. So we were merry enough until bedtime, and then, the Sulus being appointed to keep watch, the rest of us turned in and slept fairly well until morning, despite the sound of an occasional wild beast prowling around our glass-covered retreat.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
THE ARROW-MAKER

WE WERE UP and stirring early, and after a good breakfast and a draught of cool water from a sparkling brook near by, we started again in search of the valley of diamonds.

An hour's swift run brought us to the slight depression in which stood the great block of red granite we had so eagerly sought. There was no mistaking it, as the German had said; curiously enough, it was the only granite boulder we had seen in this country.

A long, horizontal spike of rock near the apex pointed unerringly into the near-by forest, and I dismounted and walked from the boulder slowly in the direction indicated by the guide.

Sure enough, on reaching the forest I found myself confronting a gigantic mahogany tree, standing a little in advance of its fellows; so with a shout of joy I beckoned to my comrades and waited for them to join me. Duncan ran the automobile close up to the edge of the wood, and then stopped the engines and closed the door of the dome so that we could all take part in the discovery of the diamonds.

Entering the forest, which was quite open and clear at this one spot, we had no difficulty in finding the dead stump, and then I fell upon my knees and began to remove the thick moss that clung to the ground all around the stump.

I was scarcely more excited than the others — if I may except the princess, to whom treasure had no meaning. Moit, Nux and Bry were all bending over me, while in the background the Indian maiden watched us with a plaintive smile. To her this anxiety to secure a collection of pebbles was not quite comprehensible.

At first the moss resisted my efforts. Then, as I moved farther around, a great patch of the growth suddenly gave way to my grasp and disclosed a large cavity between two prongs of the stump.

I leaned over to look. Then I thrust in my arm to make sure.

The cavity was empty.

"Try somewhere else!" cried Moit, hoarsely. He had risked a good deal for the gems which were to enable him to become famous and wealthy, and this disappointment was sufficient to fill his heart with despair, had he not found another treasure in Ilalah which might somewhat mitigate this baffling failure.

I worked all around the stump, digging up the moss with my knife and finger-nails; but in every other place the ground was solid. There was but this

one vacant cavity, and when at last we knew the truth we stared at each other in absolute dejection.

"He must have put them there, though," I said, hopelessly. "The trouble is that someone else has taken them away."

"Oh, yes; I did it," said a strange voice at our side.

I turned and found a tiny Indian standing near us. At first I thought it was a child, but looking more closely perceived the lines of age on his thin face and streaks of gray in his hair. Yet so small was his stature that he was no taller than my breast.

He wore the ordinary San Blas tunic, striped with purple and yellow, a narrow band of green showing between the two plebeian colors. When first we saw him he had assumed a dignified pose and with folded arms was looking upon us with a calm and thoughtful countenance.

"Greetings, Tcharn!" exclaimed the princess, in a pleased and kindly tone.

The dwarf, or liliputian, or whatever he might be, advanced to her with marked but somewhat timid respect and touched the fingers of his right hand to the fair brow she bent toward him. Then he retreated a pace and laid his hand upon his heart.

"My Princess is welcome to my forest," he said in his native tongue.

"Is it near here, then, that you live, my Tcharn?" she enquired.

"Very near, my Princess."

"But tell us," I cried, unable to control myself longer, "did you find many of the white pebbles in this cavity, and did you take them all away?"

"Yes," he answered readily, with a nod of his small head; "I found them and I took them away, and they were many."

"But why did you take them?" asked the girl, who, without knowing the value to us of the stones, was able to sympathize with us in our bitter disappointment.

Tcharn was thoughtful. He sat upon the stump and for a moment studied the various faces turned toward him.

"Some time ago," said he, "a white man came to this valley, which our laws forbid the whites to enter. Perhaps he did not know that I rule the forest which is my home — that I am the Master Workman of the Techla nation. Why should he know that? But the white beast was well aware that his race is by us hated and detested" — here he cast a sinister glance at Duncan and myself — "and barred from our domain. He sneaked in like a jackal, hiding himself by day while by night he prowled around upon all fours, gathering from off the ground the pebbles which our master the king has forbidden any man to see or to touch.

"Day after day I watched the white man at his unlawful toil. I sent tidings

to Nalig-Nad, the king, who laughed at the cowardly intruder, and bade me continue to watch and to notify him if the beast tried to escape.

"Finally he saw my face among the trees, and it frightened him. He prepared to run away, and buried all the pebbles he had found under the moss beside this stump. Then he slunk from the valley and I let him go; for the king had been notified and would look after him."

This relation proved to us the honesty of the German's story. We knew well the rest of the tragic tale, and were just then more deeply interested in the loss of the diamonds.

"Why did you dig up the pebbles, when the commands of your king forbade you to touch them?" I asked, in a bitter tone.

The little Indian gave me a scornful look and said to Ilalah:

"Must I answer the white child, my Princess?"

"It will please me to have you do so," she answered. "I must tell you, Tcharn, that these white people are my friends. Those who love me will also befriend them, and treat them kindly."

For a time the dwarf stood motionless, frowning and staring stolidly upon the ground. Then he looked up and said:

"Does Nalig-Nad also love these whites?"

"He hates them, and seeks their destruction," Ilalah replied.

The dwarf smiled.

"Then they will be destroyed," he prophesied.

"Not so, my Tcharn," replied the princess, gently. "The power of these white chieftains is greater than the power of Nalig-Nad."

Tcharn grew thoughtful again.

"I saw them approach in a moving house, that seemed alive and yet was not," he remarked.

"That is but one proof of their might," said she.

"And is my Princess now opposed to her father the King?"

"Yes, Tcharn, in this one thing."

"Then," said he, "I will stand by your side, for my blood is the blood of your dead mother, and not the blood of Nalig-Nad."

"But the pebbles!" I cried, impatiently. "Tell us what you have done with them."

He turned his sombre eyes in my direction.

"I carried the pebbles to my own dwelling," he returned. "They are beautiful, and when the sun kisses them they borrow its light and glow like fireflies at dusk. I love the pebbles; so I took them, and they are mine."

This was exasperating to a degree.

"You had no right to do that," I protested. "Your king has forbidden you

to gather the pebbles."

"I did not gather them; I but took them from the place where the white jackal had placed them."

"The king will punish you for keeping them!"

"The king? Ah, the king will not know. And we are opposed to the king just now, the Princess Ilalah and myself," with a queer smile. "But you are strangers, and therefore you do not know that in my forest even Nalig-Nad dare not molest the Master Workman."

The last words were spoken confidently, and his prompt defiance of the king pleased me.

"Who is this man, Ilalah?" asked Duncan.

"Tcharn is my mother's cousin," she replied, with frankness, "and in my mother's veins flowed the most royal blood of our great ancestors. For this reason Tcharn is a person of consequence among my people. He is called the Arrow-Maker, and forges all the arrow-heads that the Techlas use. No one else is allowed to work in metals, which Tcharn brings from the mountains. In this forest — I do not know exactly where — is his secret work-shop and his dwelling place. Only one thing is forbidden him, under penalty of torture and death: to gather or use the loathsome gold which was at one time the curse of the Techlas. In all else Tcharn is master of the forest, and the people honor and avoid him."

An important individual, truly, and one who doubtless realized his own importance. Since he had secured the diamonds and loved their beauty it would be difficult to wrest them from him.

While the princess had spoken the little Techla had been regarding her with an uneasy look.

"I see trouble in Ilalah's path," he now remarked gravely.

"Am I not the princess?" she asked, proudly.

"You are the princess, and one day you will succeed your father as ruler of the Techlas — if you live. If you do not live, Nalig-Nad's children by another mother will succeed him. Will you live, Ilalah — you who defy the traditional hatred of your race for the cursed white people?"

Ilalah flushed a little, but not with fear. She wanted Tcharn to understand her, though, and began to tell him how the white people had for many ages dominated the world beyond the seas, where they had many distinct nations that warred with each other. Some of the white nations were strong, and just, and wise; others were strong, but wicked and unjust. It was one of these latter nations, she explained, whose people were known as Spaniards, that had invaded the country of her forefathers and robbed and oppressed them; therefore the Techlas, knowing no better, had hated all of the white nations

instead of that especial one that had wronged them.

"These friends," she added, pointing to us, "have never injured us, nor have their people, who have themselves warred with the Spaniards, our old and hated enemies. Why then, should I condemn and hate the innocent?"

The dwarf listened carefully to this explanation, and without answering her appeal he said, in a doubtful tone:

"The chiefs who rule the islands and the coast, all of whom trade with the whites, have told me they are all alike. They are never satisfied, but always want something that belongs to others." I laughed at his shrewd observation, for that was our case, just then. We wanted the diamonds.

"Will you not permit us to see the beautiful pebbles?" I asked. Tcharn hesitated.

"Will you let me see your moving house?" he demanded.

I nearly yelled with delight. I had been searching my brain for some way to win this strange personage to our side, and he promptly put himself in our hands by acknowledging his curiosity concerning our machine. But this proved his intelligence, too, and betrayed his mechanical instinct, so that it increased our respect for him.

"We will explain to you our moving house, which is the most wonderful thing ever made by the hands of man," I answered, seriously, "and we will also take you to ride in it, that you may know how and why it moves. But in return you must take us to your dwelling and show us the pebbles."

I was rather surprised that he consented readily.

"It is a bargain," said he, quietly, and Ilalah whispered that his word might be depended upon.

So we all walked out of the forest to where we had left the car, which Tcharn first examined from the outside with minute intentness.

"Here is a man who might steal my patents, if he lived in our world," remarked the inventor, with a smile. But as there was no danger to be apprehended Moit took pains to explain to the dwarf how the machine would float and move in the water as well as travel upon the land, and then he took the little Indian inside and showed him all the complicated mechanism and the arrangements for promoting the comfort and convenience of the passengers.

Tcharn listened with absorbed interest, and if he failed to comprehend some of the technical terms — which is very probable, as I was obliged to translate most of the description and there were no words in the native language to express mechanical terms — he allowed neither word nor look to indicate the fact.

Afterward Moit started the car and gave the arrow-maker an impressive

ride around the valley, gradually increasing the speed until we very nearly flew over the ground.

When, at last, we came to a halt at the forest's edge, it was evident we had won the dwarf completely. His face was full of animation and delight, and he proceeded to touch each of our foreheads, and then his own heart, to indicate that we were henceforth friends.

"We will ride into the forest," he said. "I will show you the way."

It suited us very well to hide the machine among the trees, for we might expect the natives to search for us and give us further annoyance. But we failed to understand how the big machine might be guided into the tangled forest.

Tcharn, however, knew intimately every tree and shrub. He directed Moit to a place where we passed between two giant mahoganies, after which a sharp turn disclosed an avenue which led in devious windings quite a distance into the wood. Sometimes we barely grazed a tree-trunk on either side or tore away a mass of clinging vines or dodged, by a hair's breadth, a jagged stump; and, after all, our journey was not a great way from the edge of the forest and we were soon compelled to halt for lack of a roadway.

"The rest of the distance we will walk," announced the dwarf. "Follow me, if you will."

I shall never forget the impressiveness of this magnificent forest. The world and its glaring sunlight were shut out. Around our feet was a rank growth of matted vines, delicate ferns and splendid mosses. We stood in shadowland, a kingdom of mystery and silence. The foliage was of such dainty tracery that only in the deep seas can its equal be found, and wonderful butterflies winged their way between the tender plants, looking like dim ghosts of their gorgeous fellows in the outer world. Here was a vast colonade, the straight, slender, gray tree-trunks supporting a massive roof of green whose outer branches alone greeted the sun. Festooned from the upright columns were tangled draperies of climbing vines which here rested in deep shadow and there glowed with a stray beam of brilliant sunshine that slyly crept through the roof. And ever, as we pressed on, new beauties and transformations were disclosed in the forest's mysterious depths, until the conviction that here must be the favorite retreat of elfins and fays was dreamily impressed upon our awed minds.

But almost before we were aware of it we came to a clearing, a circular place in the wood where great trees shot their branches into the sky and struggled to bridge the intervening space with their foliage. The vain attempt left a patch of clear sky visible, although the entire enclosure was more than half roofed with leaves.

Instead of mosses and vines, a grassy sward carpeted the place, and now we came upon visible evidence that we had reached the abode of the little arrow-maker.

On one side was a rude forge, built of clay, and supporting a bellows. In a basket beside the forge were hundreds of arrow-points most cleverly fashioned of bronze, while heaps of fagots and bars of metal showed that the dwarf's daily occupation was seldom neglected.

The tools strewn about interested me greatly, for many were evidently of American or European make; but Tcharn explained this by saying that his people often traded their cocoanuts and skins for tools and cutlery, and at these times he was allowed to select from the store such things as he required.

"But where do you live?" asked Moit; "and where are the pebbles?"

"Come," said the arrow-maker, briefly, and led us across the glade and through a little avenue where there was a well trodden path.

A moment later a mass of interwoven boughs covered with vines confronted us, and stooping our heads we passed through a low archway into wonderland.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
A WOODLAND WONDERLAND

WHAT WE SAW was a circular chamber formed of tree-trunks at the sides and roofed with masses of green leaves. The central trees had been cleared away by some means, for a large mahogany stump was used for a table and its beautifully polished surface proclaimed that it had been a live tree when sawed through. Also there were several seats formed from stumps in various parts of the room, and one or two benches and a couch had been manufactured very cleverly from polished mahogany wood.

But these were by no means the chief wonder of the place. The walls were thickly covered with climbing vines, which reached in graceful festoons to the overhanging central boughs; but these were all the creation of man rather than of nature, for they were formed from virgin gold.

Also the ornaments scattered about the place, the mountings of the furniture, swinging lamps and tabourettes, all were of gold, and never have I beheld the equal of their exquisite workmanship or unique designing. The tracery of every leaf of the golden bower imitated accurately nature itself, the veins and stems being so perfect as to cause one to marvel. Not only had a vast amount of pure gold been used in this work, but years must have been consumed in its execution.

"Oh, Tcharn!" cried Ilalah, in a shocked tone, as soon as she had recovered from the wonder of her first look; "you have broken the law!"

"It is true," answered the arrow-maker, calmly.

"Why did you do it?" she asked.

"The yellow metal is very beautiful," said he, looking upon the golden bower with loving eyes; "and it is soft, and easy to work into many pretty forms. Years ago, when I began to gather the metal for my arrows and spears, I found in our mountains much of the forbidden gold, and it cried out to me to take it and love it, and I could not resist. So I brought it here, where no white man could ever see it and where not even your father was likely to come and charge me with my crime. My princess, you and your friends are the first to know my secret, and it is safe in your care because you are yourself breaking the law and defying the king."

"In what way?" asked Ilalah.

"In seeking the pebbles that are denied our people, and in befriending the whites who have been condemned by us for centuries."

She was silent for a moment. Then she said, bravely:

"Tcharn, such laws are unjust. I will break them because they are my father's laws and not my own. When I come to rule my people I will make

other laws that are more reasonable — and then I will forgive you for your gold-work."

"Oh, Ilalah!" exclaimed Moit; "how can you rule these Indians when you have promised to come with me, and be my queen?"

She drew her hand across her eyes as if bewildered, and then smiled sweetly into her lover's face.

"How easy it is to forget," she said, "when one has always been accustomed to a certain life. I will go with you, and I will never rule my people."

"You are wrong, my princess," declared the dwarf, eagerly. "What to you is the white man's land? You will rule us indeed, and that in a brief space of time!"

"No, my friend," she said, "the house that moves will carry me away with my white chief, and in a new land I will help him to rule his own people."

The arrow-maker looked at her with a dreamy, prophetic expression upon his wizened features.

"Man knows little," said he, "but the Serpent of Wisdom knows much. In my forest the serpent dwells, and it has told me secrets of the days to come. Soon you will be the Queen of the Techlas, and the White Chief will be but your slave. I see you ruling wisely and with justice, as you have promised, but still upholding the traditions of your race. You will never leave the San Blas country, my Ilalah."

She laughed, brightly.

"Are you then a seer, my cousin?" she asked.

The dwarf started, as if suddenly awakened, and his eyes lost their speculative gaze.

"Sometimes the vision comes to me," he said; "how or why I know not. But always I see truly."

Duncan Moit did not understand this dialogue, which had been conducted in the native tongue. He had been examining, with the appreciation of a skilled workman, the beautiful creations of the Indian goldsmith. But now our uneasy looks and the significant glances of Nux and Bryonia attracted his attention, and he turned to ask an explanation.

The princess evaded the subject, saying lightly that the dwarf had been trying to excuse himself for breaking the law and employing the forbidden gold in his decorations. I turned to Tcharn and again demanded:

"Show us the pebbles."

At once he drew a basket woven of rushes from beneath a bench and turned out its contents on the top of the great table. A heap of stones was disclosed, the appearance of which at first disappointed me. They were of

many shapes and sizes and had surfaces resembling ground glass. In the semi gloom of the bower and amid the shining gold tracery of its ornamentation the “pebbles” seemed uninteresting enough.

But Moit pounced upon the treasure with exclamations of wonder, examining them eagerly. Either the German or the arrow-maker had chipped some of them in places, and then the clear, sparkling brilliancy of the diamonds was fully demonstrated.

“They are magnificent!” cried the inventor. “I have never seen gems so pure in color or of such remarkable size and perfect form.”

I compared them mentally with the stones I had found in the roll of bark taken from the dead man’s pocket, and decided that these were indeed in no way inferior.

The dwarf opened a golden cabinet and brought us three more diamonds. These had been cut into facets and polished, and were amazingly brilliant. I am sure Tcharn had never seen the usual method of diamond-cutting, and perhaps knew nothing of the esteem in which civilized nations held these superb pebbles of pure carbon; so it is remarkable that he had intuitively found the only means of exhibiting the full beauty of the stones.

“Will you give me these, my cousin?” asked the princess.

For answer he swept them all into the basket and placed it in her hands. She turned and with a pleased smile gave the treasure to Moit.

“At last,” said I, with a sigh of relief, “we have accomplished the object of our adventure.”

“At last,” said Duncan, “I have enough money to patent my inventions and to give the machine to the world in all its perfection!”

“But we mus’ get out o’ here, Mars’ Sam,” observed Bry, gravely.

“That is true,” I replied. “And I hope, now that we have no further reason for staying, that we shall have little difficulty in passing the lines of our enemies.”

We confided to the arrow-maker a portion of our adventures, and told him how Nalig-Nad had seemed determined to destroy us. When the relation was finished I asked:

“Will you advise us how we can best regain our ship without meeting the king’s warriors?”

He considered the matter with great earnestness. Then he enquired:

“Will your machine run safely in the waters of the ocean?”

I repeated the question to Moit.

“Yes,” he answered, “if the water is not too rough.”

“Then it will be best for you to go east until you come to the coast of the Atlantic,” said Tcharn. “The tribes of the south-east will not oppose you if

the Princess Ilalah and I are with you. When you get to the ocean you may travel in the water to your river, and so reach your ship."

This advice was so good that we at once adopted the suggestion.

The arrow-maker now clapped his hands, and to our surprise three tall natives entered the bower and bowed to him. He ordered them to bring refreshments, and they at once turned and disappeared.

"Who are these men?" I asked.

"They are my assistants, who help me to forge the arrows and the spears," he replied. "The king always allows me three men, and their tongues are cut out so that they cannot tell to others the secrets of my art." That explained why he was able to devote so much time to the execution of his gold-work.

The servants shortly returned bearing golden dishes of exquisite shapes, on the polished surfaces of which familiar scenes in the lives of the San Blas were cleverly engraved.

We were given fresh milk, a kind of hominy boiled and spiced, slices of cold mutton and several sorts of fruits, including cocoanut meats.

Sitting around the splendid table, which would have conferred distinction upon a king's palace, we made a hasty but satisfying meal and then prepared to return to the automobile.

I think the little arrow-maker was as eager to ride in the wonderful machine as to guide us on our way; but we were very glad to have him with us, and he sat quietly absorbed by the side of Duncan Moit and watched the inventor direct the course of his automobile over the difficult pathway between the trees.

We reached level ground without accident and then, turning to the left, increased our speed and travelled rapidly over the now familiar plains in the direction of the sea.

We followed the edge of the forest as well as we could, for here in the uplands the numerous streams were less difficult to cross; but soon after we had passed beyond the point of our first excursion in this direction we came upon a good sized river sweeping out from the wood, which Tcharn told us flowed into the Atlantic further toward the north. There were dangerous rapids in it, however, so we decided it would be safer to continue on to the coast than to trust ourselves to this treacherous current.

And now we soon began to pass the cocoanut groves, while groups of natives paused to stare at us wonderingly. But we made no halt, for the plains were smooth and easy to travel upon and the less we had to do with the natives the better we were off.

A mile inland from the ocean, the dwarf told us, were many villages. We decided to rush past these quickly to avoid being stopped, and Tcharn agreed

that it would be wise. Explanations would be sure to delay us, even if these tribes had not already been warned by messengers from Nalig-Nad to capture us if we came their way. So when we reached the villages we shot by them like a flash, and the sensation we created was laughable.

Men, women and children — even the dogs — rushed from the path of the dreadful flying monster in a panic of fear, and we heard their screams and wild cries long after the houses had been left far behind. These tribes may be just as brave as the ones farther north, but their natures are not so stolid and self-possessed.

The ocean came into view suddenly, and we found the banks so high above the beach that we were obliged to turn north until we reached a small river, the water of which was deep enough to float us out to sea.

Here we bade farewell, with much regret, to our arrow-maker, and Duncan generously presented him with such wrenches and other tools as could be spared from his outfit. These presents gave the dwarf much delight, and for my part I was so grateful for his assistance that I gave him my silver watch, and showed him how to tell the time of day by following the movements of its hands. He understood it very quickly and I knew that he would obtain much pleasure from its possession.

It was little enough, indeed, for the transfer of the diamonds, which were worth a fortune; but the gems were valueless to him, even had he been able to own them without the risk of forfeiting his life.

We left the arrow-maker earnestly watching us from the bank as we paddled swiftly down the stream; but soon our attention was directed to other matters and we forgot him.

When we reached the ocean we headed out boldly, but the long waves rolled pretty high for us, we soon found. It was not at all a rough sea, yet Moit was forced to acknowledge that his invention was not intended for ocean travel. After we had tossed about for a time we went ashore, finding to our joy that the beach was broad and sandy, and the tide was out.

This was the best luck that could possibly have happened to us, and we sped along the sands at a fine rate of speed, resolved to make the most of our opportunities.

Just before we reached the northern forest, however, we found that king Nalig-Nad had been thoughtful enough to anticipate the possibility of our coming this way and had sent a large force to oppose us. They were crowded thickly upon the beach and we were given the choice of meeting them or driving into the ocean again.

I rather favored the latter course, but Duncan's face was set and stern, and I saw that he was intent on running them down.

He increased our rate of speed until we were fairly flying, and a moment more we bumped into the solid ranks of the Indians and sent them tumbling in every direction — not so much on account of the machine's weight as its velocity.

Those who were not knocked over made haste to get out of our way, and in a few seconds they were all behind us and we could slacken our terrible pace with safety.

We had passed the mouths of several streams on our way, and circled some remarkably broad and pretty bays, so now we began to look for the river in which our wrecked ship was stranded. One broad inlet we paddled up for a way, but it led straight into the wood; so we backed out again, and the next time were more successful; for soon we were able to discern the *Gladys H.* lying on her side, and knew we were near our journey's end.

Ilalah told us that small ships sometimes came to this river to trade with her people for skins and tortoise-shell; but none had been there for several months.

At first I thought that our wreck was entirely deserted, but after a time Uncle Naboth's pudgy form appeared at the stern, waving his red handkerchief in frantic greeting; a moment later our sailors flocked to his side, and then a lusty cheer of welcome saluted our grateful ears.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
THE PRINCESS DISAPPEARS

We were given a joyful welcome by our comrades aboard the wreck, you may be sure. Ned was there, a smile mantling his rugged face as the auto came alongside and he assisted us to make fast and mount to the slanting deck of the ship.

Uncle Naboth's eyes were big and staring as our dainty Indian princess came aboard; but I could see that he was pleased with her beauty and modest demeanor.

No questions were asked us until we were all comfortably stowed on deck and the automobile had been hoisted over the side by the willing sailors and set in its old position. They were glad enough to see us safely returned without bothering us with questioning; but I knew of their eagerness to hear of our adventures and so took an early opportunity to remark:

"Well, Uncle Naboth and Ned, we've got the diamonds."

"Sure?"

"Sure enough."

I brought the basket and allowed them to inspect the treasure, which they did with wonder and a sort of awe, for they had little to say.

"How much is the bunch worth?" asked my uncle, trying to be indifferent.

"Why, we are all quite ignorant of their value," I replied; "but Moit and I both think we have secured a snug fortune for each one of us four who are interested in the division. We couldn't have done anything at all without the automobile, though, so I am going to give Duncan a part of my share."

"I won't take it," declared Moit. "We made a fair and square bargain, to share alike, and I mean to live up to it."

"But you need the money more than we do," I protested, "for you've got to build a factory to manufacture your machines and also to make a home for Ilalah. She is a prize we don't share in, but we'd like to contribute to her happiness, so I shall suggest to Ned and Uncle Naboth that you take a half of all the diamonds and we will divide the other half."

"Agreed!" cried my uncle and Ned, both together, and although Duncan objected in a rather pig-headed way I declared that we had fully made up our minds and he had nothing to say about the matter.

Then we told our story, rather briefly at first, for it would take some time to give our friends all the details of our adventures. Uncle was very proud of the way Bryonia and Nux had behaved, and told them so in his outspoken fashion. The honest fellows could have desired no higher reward.

After this Ned told me of his trip. On reaching the ocean he had rigged a

mast and sail on the long boat and before a brisk breeze had soon reached Manzanillo Bay and arrived at Colon harbor within a half day.

Colon is a primitive town built upon a low coral island, but being the Atlantic terminal of the great canal it possessed an office of the Central and South American Telegraph Company, so that Ned was able to send a cable message by way of Galveston to Mr. Harlan.

He got an answer the next day, saying that the *Carmenia,* one of the Company's ships, was due at Cristobal in a few days, and further instructions as to the disposition of the wrecked cargo would be cabled me on her arrival. Cristobal was a port adjoining Colon, and I remembered to have heard that the *Carmenia* was soon to come home from the Pacific with a light cargo; so I judged it would be Mr. Harlan's intention to have her take our structural steel on board and carry it on to San Pedro.

All we could do now was to wait, and instead of waiting in unhealthy Colon, Ned wisely decided to return to the wreck and report to me.

They had begun to worry over us and to fear the Indians had murdered us, so it was a great relief to them when we came back safe and successful from our perilous adventure.

Uncle Naboth admired Ilalah more and more as he came to know her, and he told Duncan with great seriousness that she was worth more than all the diamonds in the world, to which absurd proposition the inventor gravely agreed. But indeed we were all fond of the charming girl and vied with one another to do her honor. Even stolid Ned Britton rowed across to the marshes in the afternoon and returned with a gorgeous boquet of wild flowers to place in the Indian maid's cabin — formerly his own cabin, but gladly resigned for her use.

Ilalah accepted all the attentions showered upon her with simple, unaffected delight, and confided to us that she had altered entirely her old judgment of the whites and now liked them very much.

"They must be my people, after this," she said, with a sad smile, "because I have left the Techlas forever."

At dinner Bryonia outdid himself as a chef and provided for the menu every delicacy the ship afforded. Ilalah ate little, but enjoyed the strange foods and unusual cooking. After dinner we sat on the deck in the splendid moonlight and recited at length our adventures, until the hour grew late.

When I went to bed I carried the diamonds to my locker, putting them carefully away where no one could get at them until we left the wreck and the time came to make the division. The ship was very safe for the present. Until another severe gale occurred to bring the waves up the river there was no danger of her going to pieces, as she held firmly to her mud bank,

weighted on her open planks with the great mass of steel in the hold. Her bottom was like a crate, but her upper works seemed as firm and substantial as ever.

Ilalah's cabin was on the starboard side, but in spite of the ship's listing her window was four or five feet above the surface of the river. She bade us a sweet good-night in her pretty broken English, and an hour later everyone on board was enjoying peaceful slumbers and I, for my part, was dreaming of the fortune we had so unexpectedly secured.

Suddenly a cry aroused me. I sat up and listened but could hear no further sound. Absolute silence reigned throughout the ship. Yet the cry still rang in my ears, and the recollection of it unnerved me.

While I hesitated a knock came to my door, and I got up and lighted a candle.

Moit was standing outside in the saloon. His face was white but as undecided in expression as my own.

"Did you hear anything, Sam?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Was it a cry for help?"

"That, or a woman's scream, Duncan."

"Come with me," he said, and I followed him to the door of Ilalah's cabin.

Two or three loud knockings failed to arouse any response. I turned the handle, found the door unlocked, and threw it open.

The room was empty.

I turned my flickering candle in every direction, lighting up the smallest cranny, as if the girl could be hidden in a rat-hole. The window stood wide open, and the cool night breeze came through it.

I turned toward Duncan, who stood in the middle of the room staring at the floor. As my gaze followed his, I saw several of the blue beads Ilalah had worn scattered over the carpet.

"It is Nalig-Nad," he muttered. "The San Blas have stolen my princess!"

"What's up, boys?" asked Uncle Naboth. He was standing in the doorway clad in a suit of pajamas that were striped like a convict's, only in more gorgeous colors.

"The Indians have stolen Ilalah and carried her away," I answered.

I am afraid Uncle Naboth swore. He is a mild mannered old gentleman, but having taken a strong liking for the beautiful girl he perhaps could find no other way, on the impulse of the moment, to express his feelings.

"Well," he remarked, after we had looked blankly into one another's faces for a time, "we must get her back again, that's all."

"Of course, sir," agreed Duncan, rousing himself. "We will go at once."

“What time is it?” I asked.

“Three o’clock,” answered my uncle, promptly.

“Then let us wait until morning,” I advised. “The Indians already have a good start of us and there would be no chance to overtake them before they regain the king’s village. We must be cautious and lay our plans carefully if we hope to succeed.”

“Perhaps you are right,” returned Duncan, wearily. “But I swear to you, Sam, that I will find Ilalah and bring her back with me, or perish in the attempt.”

I smiled at his theatric manner, but Uncle Naboth said seriously:

“I don’t blame you a bit, sir. That girl is worth a heap o’ trouble, and you can count on me to help you to the last gasp.”

“Well, well,” said I, impatiently, “let us get dressed and go on deck to talk it over.” I well knew there would be no more sleep for us that night, and although I was not in love with the lost princess I was as eager to effect her rescue as Moit himself.

“But I must warn you, gentlemen,” I continued, “that you have to deal with the wiliest and fiercest savage in existence, and if we venture into his dominions again the chances of our ever coming out alive are mighty slim.”

“All right, Sam,” retorted Uncle Naboth, cheerfully; “we’ve got to take those chances, my lad, so what’s the use of grumbling?”

“If you’re afraid, Sam — ” began Moit, stiffly.

“Oh, get out!” was my peevish reply. “I may be afraid, and small wonder if I am; but you know very well I’ll go with you. So get your togs on, both of you, and I’ll meet you on deck.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN
WE ATTEMPT A RESCUE

THE ENTIRE SHIP'S company was aroused by this time, and it amused me to find that every man jack, down to the commonest sailor, was tremendously indignant and most properly incensed because Nalig-Nad had dared to steal his own daughter — the successor to his throne — from the white men with whom she had fled.

Ned Britton's plan was to arm our entire company "to the teeth" and march in solid ranks through the forest until we came to the king's village, which he figured lay about opposite the point where our ship had stranded. Once at the village we could surprise the place, capture Ilalah, and bear her in triumph back to the wreck.

There were several objections to Ned's optimistic plan. In the first place we did not know the forest, and the Indians did. They could hide behind the trees and pick us off with their arrows before we could use our fire-arms; or they might ambush us, and annihilate our band. Moreover, we were not sure Ilalah had been taken directly to the king's village. They might have hidden her somewhere else.

"It's another case of automobile, Mr. Moit," declared Uncle Naboth. "If we're a-goin' to get that girl you'll have to use the convertible, as sure as fate."

"There is no doubt of that," returned the inventor, promptly. "I have determined to start as soon as it is daylight."

"What is your idea, Duncan?" I asked.

"Simply to enter the country of the Techlas, show them a bold and fearless front, find out where the princess is, and then rescue her in some way. I'm afraid they will treat her badly, because she defied them and ran away with me."

"But she is to be their next ruler, after Nalig-Nad is dead," said I.

"Yes, if she outlives him. But the king has two other children, and he may prefer one of them to rule."

"That's a fact," I answered. "I've seen them. And Nalig-Nad must have been furious at Ilalah for favoring the hated whites."

"There is no time to lose," continued Duncan, nervously. "We must start as soon as possible and make our plans on the way. Who will go with me?"

Everyone wanted to go, of course; but finally it was settled that Uncle Naboth and I, with Nux and Bryonia, should accompany Duncan Moit in the automobile. If we did not return within twenty-four hours then Ned Britton was to land his sailors and march quickly through the forest to our rescue.

This arrangement was the best we could think of, and when I frankly told the men that this hazardous duty would not be forced upon them, since the adventure was wholly outside their province as seamen, they one and all declared they would "see us through" or die in the attempt.

Only Dick Lombard, whose arm had been broken, and an old sailor with a bruised knee were to be left behind, that they might care for the ship in our absence.

"No one can steal the cargo, anyhow; it's too heavy," I remarked; "and if the Indians manage to do us up entirely Mr. Harlan will still be able to get his steel beams. So we need not worry over the ship."

It was a desperate enterprise, and we knew it; but so strong was our admiration for the Princess of the Techlas that we did not hesitate to attempt in her behalf all that brave men might be capable of.

At the first break of day we got the automobile over the side and safely launched it. There was not a moment's unnecessary delay, and as Duncan was now familiar with the river channel we were soon paddling at our best speed up the river.

By the time the red rays of the rising sun gleamed over the water we had passed the two hillocks and reached the southern tributary that led into the land of the Techlas.

We saw no Indians in the forest this time. Either it was too early for them to be abroad or they had assembled inland for some purpose. The forest was deserted.

Our progress was, of course, much slower than on land. I think the automobile paddled about eight miles an hour in still water, but as we now had to stem a current we made less time than that. But distances are not great in Panama, where the isthmus has a breadth of only some fifty miles, so that we were not long in passing the northern forest and coming to the coastal plains.

We left the river at the same spot as before, where the bank was low and shelving; for in talking over our plans we had decided to make directly for Nalig-Nad's own village. It was reasonable to suppose that Ilalah had been first taken there, it being the nearest point to the ship from whence they had stolen her. The king might intend to hide her, presently, even if he permitted his rebellious daughter to live; but we judged that he would not expect us to give chase so soon. That we would dare venture into his dominions a second time the astute monarch would hesitate to believe.

We relied much upon the promptness with which we had acted, and although we were forced to travel by a roundabout route we ought, with good luck, to reach the king's village by the middle of the forenoon.

Once on the broad and level plains Moit allowed his machine to do its best. We knew there were no obstructions in the way, so we made a wonderful dash across the country.

No effort was made by the San Blas to oppose us or interfere with our progress. We observed no warriors at all, and the few farmers we passed scarcely paused in their labors long enough to stare at us.

When we came to Ogo's village, however, we saw by means of the glass that the place was swarming with Indians, who were as busy and excited as bees in a hive. This puzzled us, and made us fear the princess might be in this place instead of the village farther on. But we decided to stick to our first programme, so we circled around the town to the north and continued on our way.

Much faster than we had covered the distance before, we now fled over the plain, and soon the enclosure became visible and our journey was almost over.

A great jagged section of the wall had been blown up by the explosion, wrecking some of the huts at the same time; but as we drew nearer we discovered that Nalig-Nad had caused a big ditch to be dug, in the form of a half moon, reaching from one end of the broken wall to the other. This ditch was evidently made on our account, and as it circled outward into the plain it prevented most effectually our entering the enclosure with the automobile.

We smiled at so childish an attempt to bar us from the village, but it informed us plainly that the king had anticipated our return and feared us, which knowledge served to encourage us very much.

We halted the machine outside the ditch, a hundred yards or so from the wall, and then proceeded to take careful observation of the condition of affairs at the village.

Our arrival had created no apparent excitement. There were no crowds to be seen and the few natives, men or women, who stalked across the space that was visible within the wall, going from one building to another, merely turned their faces toward us for a moment and then continued on their way. A woman sat at one side of the gap milking a goat; another near her was hanging some newly washed tunics on the edge of the broken wall to dry in the sun; but neither of these gave us more than a glance or allowed us to interrupt their occupation.

This apathy was mystifying. Surely we had created enough excitement at the time we left the king's village to ensure a degree of interest in our return. If the savages imagined their puny ditch any protection they were likely to find themselves much mistaken.

Presently we saw something that aroused us to action. Ilalah appeared,

crossing the enclosure from one of the side huts to the king's palace. Her hands were bound firmly behind her back and her eyes were covered with a thick scarf which effectually blindfolded her. She was led and pushed along by two sour visaged old women, who showed their princess scant courtesy.

Moit swore roundly under his breath and I myself was filled with indignation at the poor girl's condition; at the same time we were gratified to know we had found her by coming promptly to the right place.

"Now," said Duncan, grimly, "we know what to do."

"What is it?" I enquired.

"They will bring her out again, sooner or later," he answered, "and then we must make a dash, seize her, regain the automobile, and fly back to the ship."

"Easy enough!" ejaculated Uncle Naboth, admiringly.

The women had finished milking and hanging out their clothes. Just now the courtyard seemed deserted.

"This is our chance," cried Moit. "Follow me, all of you except Mr. Perkins. He must stay to guard the machine and to wave us a signal when Ilalah appears. We will creep up to the broken wall and hide behind it until the princess comes back. Then we will make a rush all together and capture her before the Indians know what we are about. Are you all armed?"

We were, and ready.

Duncan leaped from the car and we followed him. Then, bounding across the narrow ditch, we ran silently but quickly to a position behind the wall, where those inside could not see us. There we crouched, panting, to await Uncle Naboth's signal.

CHAPTER TWENTY
OUTWITTED

THE SILENCE OF death seemed to reign in the little village. All life had for the moment ceased, and gradually this extraordinary fact impressed me ominously.

"Where are all the people?" I whispered to Moit.

"I can't imagine," he answered.

"Guess dey in de co'te yard of de palace," said Bry, who with Nux stood just beside us. "Princess bein' judged; ev'body lookin' on."

That seemed plausible; and it was a condition especially favorable to our plans; so we waited with suppressed excitement, our eager eyes upon the automobile, until suddenly we saw Uncle Naboth spring to his feet and wave his red handkerchief.

At the signal we four rose as one man and dashed through the gap into the enclosure, each with a revolver held fast in either hand.

As I bounded over the loose rubbish something suddenly caught me and threw me violently to the ground, where I rolled over once or twice and then found myself flat upon my back with a gigantic Indian pressing his knee against my chest.

I heard a roar from Moit and answering shouts from our two blacks, and turning my head saw them struggling with a band of natives who surrounded them on every side.

Indeed, our conquest was effected much sooner than I can describe the event on paper, and within a few moments all four of us stood before our captors disarmed and securely bound.

I own I was greatly humiliated by the clever deception practiced upon us by Nalig-Nad. The wily king had foreseen our arrival and using Ilalah as a bait had ambushed us so neatly that we had no chance to fight or to resist our capture. The victory was his, and it was complete.

Stay; there was Uncle Naboth yet to be reckoned with. I could see him still standing in the car glaring with amazement at the scene enacted within the enclosure.

The Indians saw him, too, and with wild and triumphant yells a score of them rushed out and made for the car. But my uncle was warned and had calmly laid a number of revolvers upon the seat beside him.

With a weapon in either hand the old gentleman blazed away at the Techlas as soon as they approached, doing such deadly execution that the natives were thrown into confusion and held back, uncertain what to do.

Having emptied one brace of revolvers Mr. Perkins hurled them at the

heads of his assailants and picked up another pair. I wondered that the San Blas did not shoot him down with arrows, or impale him on a spear, for the top was down and he was unprotected from such missiles; but doubtless they had been instructed to capture him alive and had not been prepared for such a vigorous resistance.

Presently an Indian who had made his way around to the opposite side put his hand on the rail and leaped lightly into the car; but my uncle turned in a flash and seized the fellow at the waist in his powerful arms. Lifting the astonished Techla high in the air Uncle Naboth flung him bodily into the furious crowd before him, tumbling a number of his foes to the ground with this living catapult.

But such magnificent strength and courage was without avail. Before uncle could seize his revolvers again a dozen warriors had leaped into the car beside him and grasped him so firmly that further struggles were useless. The little man collapsed immediately and was dragged out and brought to where we had been watching him in wonder and admiration.

"Good for you, Uncle!" I cried. "If we could have managed to put up such a fight it might have been a different story."

He smiled at us cheerily.

"Hain't had so much fun, my lads, since Polly had the measles," he panted; "but it couldn't last, o' course, 'cause I'm all out o' trainin'."

And now that all our party had been captured, transforming powerful enemies into helpless victims, King Nalig-Nad appeared before us with a calm countenance and ordered us taken to one of the huts, there to remain in confinement to await his pleasure concerning our disposal.

"Who's this feller?" asked Uncle Naboth, looking hard at the king.

"It is Nalig-Nad," I replied, rather depressed by our hard luck.

"Why, hello, Naddie, old boy — glad to meet you!" said Mr. Perkins, advancing as far as his captors would let him and holding out one of his broad, fat hands.

The king regarded him silently. It was the first time he had had an opportunity to inspect this addition to our former party. But he paid no attention to the outstretched hand.

"Know your daughter well," continued Uncle Naboth, unabashed at the marked coolness with which his friendly advances were met; "she's a fine gal, Nalig; oughter be proud o' her, old chap!"

With this he began to chuckle and poked the king jovially in his royal ribs, causing the stern visaged monarch to jump backward with a cry of mingled indignation and rage. This so pleased my uncle that his chuckle increased to a cough, which set him choking until he was purple in the face.

The king watched this exhibition with amazement, but when his prisoner recovered with startling abruptness and wiped the tears of merriment from his eyes, the barbarian gave a disdainful grunt and walked away to his palace. He was followed by his band of attendant chiefs, whom I recognized as his former counsellors.

I looked around for Ilalah, but she had disappeared the moment we rushed into the enclosure, having doubtless been dragged away by her attendants as soon as she had served the purpose of luring us into the trap.

We were now taken to one of the huts built against the wall and thrust through a doorway with scant ceremony. It was merely a one-roomed affair with thick walls and no furniture but a clay bench at the back. The only aperture was the doorway. Several stout warriors, well armed and alert, ranged themselves before this opening as a guard.

We were not bound, for having lost all our weapons, including even our pocket-knives, we were considered very helpless.

"I don't like the looks of this thing," I remarked, when we had seated ourselves quite soberly in a row on the mud bench.

"Bad box, sure 'nough, Mars' Sam," said Bryonia, with a sigh.

"I hope they won't touch the machine," observed Moit, nervously. "I don't mind what they do to me if they let the automobile alone."

"That's rubbish," said I in a petulant tone; "they couldn't run it to save their necks. Don't worry, old man."

"I s'pose we won't have much use for an auto-merbeel in the course of a jiffy or two," added my uncle, cheerfully.

"Oh, I depend a good deal upon Ned and his men," I replied. "He will be sure to come to our rescue early tomorrow morning."

"Too late, den, Mars' Sam," muttered Nux. "Dat wicked king ain't goin' let us lib long, I 'spect."

"Then why did he put us here?" I demanded. "If he intended to kill us quickly he'd have murdered us on the spot."

"There was nothing to prevent his doing that, most certainly," said Moit, eagerly adopting the suggestion.

This aspect of the affair was really encouraging. So elastic is hope in the breasts of doomed men that we poor creatures sat there for an hour or more and tried to comfort ourselves with the thought that a chance for escape might yet arise. It was pitiful, now that I look back upon it; but at the moment the outlook did not appear to us especially gloomy.

I do not believe that any regret for having followed the Indian girl and tried to rescue her entered into the mind of any one of the party. Ilalah had stood by us and it was our duty to stand by her, even had not Moit been so

infatuated by her beauty that he could not be contented without her.

Being a boy and less stolid than my elders, I caught myself wondering if I should ever behold the handsome ship my father was building, and sighed at the thought that I might never stand upon its deck after all the ambitious plans we had laid for the future. There was a little comfort in the thought that all the diamonds were safe in the locker of the wreck and that Ned would look after them and carry my share as well as Uncle Naboth's to my father. But we were likely to pay a good price for the treasure we had wrested from the San Blas.

Midday arrived and passed. Food was brought to our guard but none was given to us. We were not especially hungry, but this neglect was ominous. It meant that we had either not long to live or our foes intended to starve us. We tried to believe that the latter was the correct solution of the problem.

Soon after noon, however, all uncertainty vanished. Our guards entered, commanded by one of the chiefs, and said we were to be taken to judgment. They prepared us for the ordeal by tying our hands behind our backs with thongs, so securely that there was no way to slip the bonds. Then they fastened us together in a string by an original method.

A coil of dressed skin was brought and an Indian held one end while another made a slip-noose and threw it over Duncan's head. A second slip-noose was placed around Bryonia's neck, a third around that of Uncle Naboth, a fourth around Nux and the fifth around my own neck. There was still enough of the coil remaining for a second guard to hold — and there we were. If any one of us attempted to run, or even to struggle, he would only tighten his noose, and perhaps those of the others, and risk a choking.

It wasn't a bad method of keeping us orderly and meek, and we were not at all pleased with the arrangement, I assure you.

When we had been thus secured, the chief — who, by the way, was a "green chief" — ordered us sternly to march; and so, like a gang of chained convicts, we tramped from the gloomy hut and passed out into the courtyard.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE SACRIFICE

THE ELABORATE PREPARATIONS made for our "judgment" were certainly flattering; but we were in no mood to appreciate the mocking attentions of the San Blas.

The open space of the enclosure in front of the palace was filled with a crowd of silent Indians, so many being present that we knew they must have gathered from all parts of the territory.

Our guards led us through the close ranks of these spectators to a clear place near the center, where King Nalig-Nad sat upon a bench with a score of his favorite green chiefs ranged just behind him. At the sides of this interesting group several women, all of whom had green in their tunics, squatted upon the ground. At the king's feet were the same pretty boy and girl I had seen on my first presentation to the potentate.

But this was not all. In the open space at the right of the king stood Ilalah between two stout guards. The girl's hands were bound behind her back as ours were, but she was no longer blindfolded. Her proud and beautiful face wore a smile as we were ranged opposite her, and she called aloud in English in a clear voice:

"Have fortitude, my White Chief. In death as in life Ilalah is your own."

A murmur of reproach came from those of the San Blas who understood her speech. The king looked at his daughter with a dark frown mantling his expressive features.

"And I belong to Ilalah," replied Duncan Moit, composedly, as he smiled back at his sweetheart.

Indeed, I was proud of the courage of all my comrades on this trying occasion. Bryonia and Nux were dignified and seemingly indifferent, Uncle Naboth smiling and interested in each phase of the dramatic scene, and the inventor as cool in appearance as if this gathering of the nation was intended to do him honor. I do not know how I myself bore the ordeal, but I remember that my heart beat so fast and loud that I was greatly annoyed for fear someone would discover its rebellious action and think me afraid. Perhaps I really was afraid; but I was greatly excited, too, for it occurred to me that I was facing the sunshine and breathing the soft southern air for almost the last time in my life. I was sorry for myself because I was so young and had so much to live for.

Ilalah, it seemed, was to be judged first because her rank was higher than that of the strangers.

The king himself accused her, and when he began to speak, his voice was

composed and his tones low and argumentative. But as he proceeded his speech grew passionate and fierce, though he tried to impress upon his people the idea that it was his duty that obliged him to condemn Ilalah to punishment. However that plea might impress the Techlas it did not deceive us in the least. It was father against daughter, but perhaps the king's hatred of the whites had turned him against his first born, or else he preferred that the pretty girl nestling at his feet should succeed him.

"Lords and chiefs of the Techlas," he said, speaking in his native language, "the Princess Ilalah has broken our laws and outraged the traditions that have been respected in our nation for centuries. We have always hated the white race, and with justice. We have forbidden them to enter our dominions and refused to show them mercy if they fell into our hands. But this girl, whose birth and station are so high that she is entitled to succeed me as ruler of the Techlas, has violated our most sacred sentiments. She has favored and protected a band of white invaders; she has dared to love their chief, who has lied to us and tricked us; she has even forgotten her maidenly dignity and run away with him, preferring him to her own people. It is the law that I, her father, cannot judge or condemn her, although it is my privilege to condemn all others. Therefore I place her fate in the hands of my noble chiefs. Tell me, what shall be the fate of the false Techla? What shall be Ilalah's punishment?"

The chiefs seemed undecided and half frightened at the responsibility thus thrust upon them. They turned and consulted one another in whispers, casting uncertain looks at the princess, who smiled back at them without a trace of fear upon her sweet face.

Standing close beside Ilalah I now discovered our old friend Tcham, the goldsmith and arrow-maker, whose eager face showed his emotion at the peril of his friend. His dark eyes roved anxiously from the girl to her judges, and it was plain to see that he was fearful of her condemnation.

I myself tried to read the decision of the chiefs from their faces, and decided that while Ilalah was doubtless a great favorite with them all, they could find no excuse for her conduct. Their conference lasted so long that the king grew impatient, and his animosity became more and more apparent as he glowered menacingly upon the girl and then glanced appealingly at her judges, who tried to avoid his eyes.

Finally, however, the conference came to an end.

A tall, lean chief, whose gray hairs and the prominence of the green stripes in his tunic evidently entitled him to be the spokesman, stepped forward and bowed low before the king.

"Mighty Ruler of the Techlas," he said, "we have weighed well the

strange conduct of the Princess Ilalah and desire to ask her a question."

"The speech of the accused may not be considered," said the king, gruffly.

"It affects not her condemnation, but rather her punishment," returned the other.

"Then proceed."

"Princess," continued the old man, speaking in a kindly tone as he addressed the young girl, "if in our mercy we spare your life will you promise to forsake your white chief and yield him and his followers to our vengeance?"

"No!" she answered, proudly.

Her questioner sighed and turned to his fellows, who nodded to him gravely.

"Then," said he, again turning to the king, "we find that the conduct of the Princess Ilalah merits punishment, and the punishment is death!" The king smiled triumphantly and cast a look around the assemblage. Not a man or woman returned his smile. They stood steadfast as rocks, and only the little arrow-maker gave way to his grief by bowing his head in his hands and sobbing most pitifully.

"We also find," continued the grave chieftain, breaking the painful pause, "that the law forbids any Techla to lift a hand against one of the royal blood; and especially is that person immune who is next in succession to the throne." This statement caused a thrill that could not be repressed to pass through the crowd. The natives looked on one another curiously, but satisfaction lurked in their dark eyes.

I began to like these people. In themselves they were not especially disposed to evil, but their fiendish king had dictated their thoughts and actions for so long that they were virtually the slaves of his whims.

"Therefore," said the chief, speaking in a firm voice, "who will execute our decree of death upon the royal princess?"

"I will!" cried Nalig-Nad, springing to his feet. "The king is bound by no law save his own will. The girl is condemned to death, and die she shall!"

With a lightning gesture he caught up his bow and notched an arrow.

I looked toward Ilalah. Her face was palid and set but she did not flinch for an instant. One fleeting glance she gave into Duncan's face and then turned her eyes steadily upon her fierce and enraged sire.

The king did not hesitate. He drew the bowstring to his chin, took rapid aim, and loosed the deadly shaft.

A cry burst from the assemblage, and even while it rang in my ears I saw Tcharn leap into the air before the princess, receive the arrow in his own breast, and then fall writhing in agony upon the ground.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE THRUST OF A SPEAR

INSTANTLY THERE WAS tumult all about us. The crowd broke and surged toward the central point in the tragedy, forcing us who were in front to struggle on the crest of the wave. Their reserve vanished and each man cried to his neighbor in eager tones and allowed the mad excitement of the moment full sway.

Someone cut Ilalah's bonds and the girl sank to the ground to support the head of the little arrow-maker upon her breast, pressing back his thin locks and tenderly kissing him upon the forehead.

But he knew nothing of this grateful kindness. His eyes were set and glazed, for the arrow had lodged in his heart.

A tug at my thong threatened to strangle me, for Moit had bounded forward to kneel beside Ilalah and try to assist her in spite of his own helpless condition. Then some semblance of order was restored and our guards pushed us back and eased the thong which was fast throttling me.

From the murmured words of the natives I gathered that Tcharn had atoned by his sacrifice for all the guilt charged against the princess, as the law declared that when the death penalty was imposed another could die instead of the condemned and so set him free.

For this reason the king was raging like a wild beast and threatening those who expressed sympathy for the girl who had so miraculously escaped his brutal vengeance.

"But the whites, at least, shall die — and the black men who are with them!" he shouted aloud, casting at us such glances of hatred and ferocity that we knew our fate was sealed.

They had carried poor Tcharn away and the princess had risen to her feet and now stood bravely confronting her father.

"It is folly to talk of injuring these strangers," she answered him, boldly. "I alone know their wonderful powers and that they are able to crush us all if we dare attempt to harm them."

The king let out a disdainful roar, but Ilalah's words impressed many in the crowd and caused the Techlas to murmur again.

"What can they do?" asked Nalig-Nad, derisively. "They are but human and they are in our power."

"They have their magic chariot," she said, "which you all know can deal death and destruction to their foes."

"Magic!" retorted the king, laughing boisterously; "do you call that poor, man-made contrivance magic?"

All eyes turned toward the opening, where a hundred yards beyond the broken wall poor Moit's automobile was standing motionless as we had left it.

Most of those present had witnessed the machine's marvelous performances, and in nearly every face now lurked an expression of awe or apprehension. Nalig-Nad saw the look, and it aroused him to fury.

"Come!" he cried, "I will prove that the white men have no magic."

Seizing a heavy, bronze-tipped spear from an attendant he ran from the enclosure and made directly for the automobile, followed by a crowd of his most devoted adherents. The others, with us, remained to watch curiously what he would do.

I saw Moit's face pale and his lips tremble; but he stood firm and steadfast while the king rushed upon his beloved machine and with a powerful stroke drove the spear clean through the plates of sheathing which protected the body.

I own I was amazed at such a display of strength, but a more athletic savage than Nalig-Nad I have never beheld. When the jagged rent was torn in the side of the automobile the crowd that surrounded it danced gleefully and jeered at the helpless child of our poor inventor's brain as if it were alive and could feel their scorn.

Again Nalig-Nad seized a spear and hurled it at the side of the machine, piercing once more the light but stout metal. A third went crashing into the automobile, and then —

And then it seemed as though the world had suddenly come to an end.

I was dashed so forcibly against the huge body of my guard that where he fell upon the hard earth his head was crushed in like an eggshell. But I did not know this until I came to my senses and heard the sounds of moaning all around me and saw the ground covered with the forms of the stricken natives.

A knife severed my bonds and set me free, and I staggered to my feet to find Ilalah and Duncan Moit supporting me until I could recover sufficiently to stand alone.

Nux and Bryonia, all unhurt, were busy restoring the bruised and bewildered Techlas to consciousness, while Uncle Naboth sat upon the king's bench, his clothing torn to tatters, and wiped away with his red handkerchief the blood that trickled from a cut in his head.

I looked around wonderingly, trying to imagine what had happened, and saw a piece of dull silver metal driven edgewise into the front of the palace, where it was wedged firmly into the hard clay. That gave me a hint, and I looked out upon the plain where the automobile had stood and found that it

had disappeared. So had Nalig-Nad and the crowd of furious natives that had surrounded him as he plunged his spear into the heart of Duncan Moit's great invention.

Then I remembered the can of glycerine explosive and knew the whole terrible story in an instant. The spear-point had made Ilalah Queen of the Techlas. It had also deprived her lover of the perfect fruit of years of inspired thought and faithful toil.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE DESERTER

WHILE THE VILLAGE slowly recovered from the effects of this dreadful calamity and the uninjured were caring for their less fortunate brethren, our party was ushered into a comfortable apartment of the palace and given food and drink and such comforts as the place afforded.

We saw nothing of Ilalah at the time, for with those chiefs left to her she was doing her best to relieve the misery of the stricken village. Moit was with her, alert and active, keeping constantly by her side and eagerly assisting her in the work of mercy. This I learned afterward. Just then I imagined him frantic with grief and despair, and I found myself regretting the destruction of his great invention even more than the loss of life caused by the explosive. The dead were unimportant savages; the machine that had perished with them was the most splendid achievement, I firmly believe, that any man in any era of civilization has ever been able to boast.

But when toward evening Duncan Moit came to us with Ilalah, I was astonished at his placid stoicism. Grieved he certainly was, but his face expressed resolve and thoughtfulness more than despair.

"I'm awfully sorry, old man," I said, laying a sympathetic hand upon his shoulder. "I know how long and tedious the time will seem until you are able to construct another machine as perfect as the one you have lost."

He shuddered a little at my words but replied gently:

"Sam, I shall never build another machine. That dream is over."

"Over!" I cried, astonished. "What do you mean? Will you abandon all your ambitions — the certain fortune that awaits you — the applause and admiration of your fellow men?"

"What do they all amount to?" he asked. "Yes; I abandon them. I'm going to live with Ilalah."

"Here?"

"Here; in the half savage and almost unknown land of the Techlas. The result of years of labor has been wiped out of existence in a flash, and I have not the courage to begin all over again. I have no patterns of the machine and the drawings and specifications all were destroyed with it. I could never build another that would equal it in perfection. But why should I attempt it? I do not need an automobile here. I do not need fortune, or fame, or anything but love; and this Ilalah has given me freely."

"Do I understand you to mean that you will always remain in this forsaken country?"

"That is my intention," he said. "I shall help my wife to rule her people

and in her companionship be happy in a simple, natural way."

We argued with him long and earnestly, while Ilalah sat beside him silent and smiling but very sure that we could not prevail over his sudden but preposterous resolution.

They found a few scraps of what they believed to have once been Nalig-Nad, and that night the remains were consumed with fire, accompanied by many impressive ceremonies. Other funeral pyres burned also, both in the enclosure and on the plain beyond; for the most malignant of the green chiefs had followed the king to assist him in destroying the automobile and had therefore shared his fate.

Bright and early next morning Ned Britton appeared at the edge of the forest leading his band of seamen to our rescue. We advanced eagerly to meet him and told him the news of the king's destruction and of our altered standing with the new ruler of the San Blas. Ned had heard and felt the explosion even on the wreck, but thought that it must have been an earthquake.

The newcomers were not regarded with much favor by the Indians, yet I thought that we all assisted greatly to lend dignity to the day's ceremonies, which included the formal acknowledgment of Ilalah as ruler and lawgiver of the nation and her subsequent marriage — a most primitive rite — to the inventor, Duncan Moit. Ilalah's husband was next adopted as a Techla, and then the excitement seemed to subside and the population settled down to business again.

However, there was no denying the fact that the natives resented our presence among them and were ill at ease while we remained in the village. So I told "King Duncan," as Uncle Naboth insisted upon jocosely calling him, that we would make haste to return to our ship.

He offered no objection to our going, but stated simply that it would be our wisest course. Then he hesitated a moment, as if embarrassed, and added:

"You must never come back, you know. The Techlas will live their own lives in their own way, and hereafter I am to be one of them and shall forget everything that exists outside our borders. We permit you to go freely now, as a return for your kindness to our queen; but should you be daring enough to return at any time I warn you that you will be received as enemies, and opposed to the death."

"Will you become another Nalig-Nad, then?" I asked, indignant at the traitorous words.

"In the future, as in the past, the demoralizing influences of the whites and their false civilization will be excluded from the dominions of the San Blas," he answered, coolly. "My wife will rule as her fathers did, in spite of the fact

that one white man has been admitted into the community. You have been my friends, but when you leave me now you must forget our friendship, as I am resolved to do. Should you invade the country of the Techlas again, you do so at your peril."

This assertion, coming from one whom I had trusted and regarded as a faithful comrade, filled me with consternation not unmixed with resentment. But the man had always been peculiar and I tried to make allowances for his erratic nature.

"Tell me, then," I said, after a moment's thought; "how about dividing those diamonds?"

"They are yours. I have no use for such things now," he added, a touch of sadness in his voice. "You are welcome to whatever share was due me — on one condition."

"What is that, Duncan?"

"That you will tell no one where you found them and will promise never to return here for more."

I hesitated, and Uncle Naboth looked sorely disappointed.

"It is my intention," continued Moit, firmly, "to support the traditions of the Techlas. They must own nothing that will arouse the cupidity of the outside world, for only in this way will they be able to control their own territory. I am glad the audacious Tcharn is dead, and I will destroy all his pretty goldsmith work within the next few days. Also I shall have the valley of diamonds thoroughly searched and all the white pebbles cast into the sea. Therefore no temptation will exist for you or your fellows to come here again. Our laws will be rigidly maintained, and any strangers, white or black, who defy them will be severely punished."

Yes, I had always suspected a streak of madness in Moit. Perhaps the destruction of his marvelous invention had served to unbalance a mind already insecurely seated. Anyway, I could see that he was in deadly earnest and that any argument would be useless. My companions, also, noted a strange glitter in his eyes that warned them he would not lift a finger to save their lives if they again ventured to invade the country ruled by Queen Ilalah.

So, with regret, we submitted to the inevitable. We bade Duncan Moit and his beautiful bride farewell and marched away through the forest till we came to the banks of the river, where the wreck lay in plain sight. A strong escort of silent natives watched us until we were all on board, and then they melted away and disappeared like ghosts.

I have never seen the inventor since, or stepped a foot upon the land of the Techlas.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

WE LEAVE PANAMA

WELL, THE STORY is told, as you may easily guess. Uncle Naboth and I ran up to Colon, and not liking that city took a train across the isthmus to Panama, which we liked no better. The people we met were a miserable lot, and did not compare either in intelligence or dignity with the isolated tribes of the San Blas. Some day, however, when the great canal is built, Americans will invade these parts in such numbers that the present population will disappear.

It is a mistake to think the climate of Panama unhealthful. On the uplands, both north and south of the depression where the canal zone is established, it is as healthful as any tropical country in the world. In the zone itself, which is ten miles wide, bad sanitation caused by the carelessness of the French workmen used constantly to breed fevers and disease. The Americans are now busily cleansing the Augean stables and good sanitary conditions are rapidly being established. But I will say this: that unless one has business in Panama he may readily discover a more desirable location for a residence.

We soon returned to the wreck, which we preferred to the towns of the isthmus, and there amused ourselves until the *Carmenia* arrived at Colon. Then her captain, an active and energetic young man named Colton, took charge of the remains of the *Gladys H.* He had received orders to remove the cargo, strip the wreck of all valuables and then abandon her where she lay.

He brought his ship alongside with ease and as soon as he was in charge and had given me a receipt, our people removed their personal possessions and were rowed round to Colon, where a steamer was shortly due that would carry us to New Orleans.

I kept an eye upon the forest for Moit, thinking he might appear to bid us good-bye; but he did not. We warned Captain Colton not to land in the San Blas country, but did not confide to him any part of our recent remarkable experiences.

A few days later we caught the steamer and made a quick voyage across the gulf. We reached Chelsea on the twelfth day of February, and were warmly welcomed by my father, who reported the *Seagull* nearing completion.

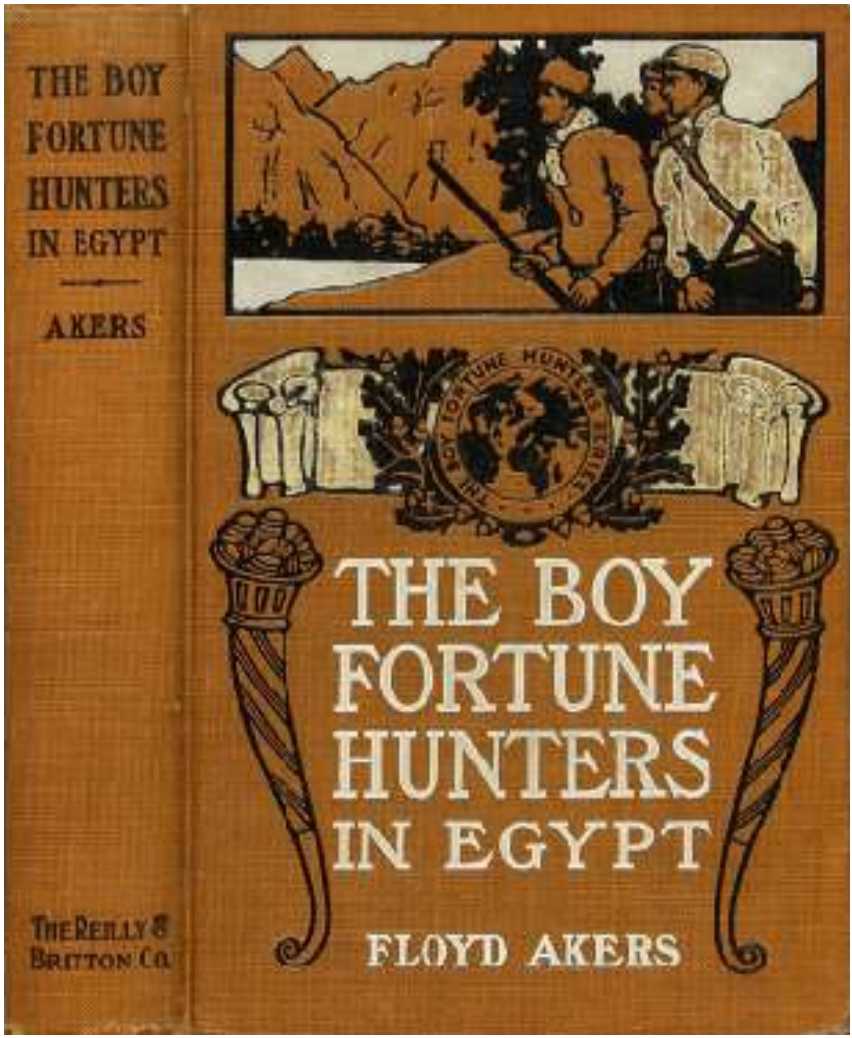
The diamonds were sold for a surprising amount of money, because the stones proved exceptionally large and perfect, and the proceeds were equally divided between Ned Britton, Uncle Naboth and myself. We had selected three good specimens of the “white pebbles” to sell for the benefit of our faithful seamen, and the amount of prize money they received from this

source greatly delighted them. Nux and Bryonia would never accept anything in the way of money at all. They said that they belonged to Uncle Naboth and "Mars Sam," and they knew very well that whatever we had they were welcome to.

Neither Mr. Harlan nor his company ever blamed me for the loss of the *Gladys H.* It was one of those fateful occurrences that mortal man is powerless to control.

THE BOY FORTUNE HUNTERS IN EGYPT

Reilly & Britton published *The Boy Fortune Hunters in Egypt* in 1908, the third in a series under Baum's pseudonym, Floyd Akers, illustrated by Emile A. Nelson. The novel follows young ship captain Sam Steele and his friends as they seek the ancient and secret trove known as the treasure of Karnak. The companions encounter numerous dangers, from enraged camels to murderous desert tribes to scorpion-filled pits. Baum based some of the colorful details on his own Egyptian travels in 1906.



A first edition copy of 'The Boy Fortune Hunters in Egypt'

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Baum and his wife, Maud Gage Baum, in Egypt, 1906

CHAPTER ONE
THE RUNAWAY

I was standing on the deck of the *Seagull,* looking over the rail and peering into the moonlight that flooded the bay where we lay at anchor, when the soft dip of an oar caught my ear.

It was the softest dip in the world, stealthy as that of an Indian, and in the silence that reigned aboard ship I stood motionless, listening for a repetition of the sound.

It came presently — the mere rustle of the drops as they slid off the oar's blade — and a small boat stole from the shadows astern and crept to our side.

I glanced along the rail and saw, a few paces away, the dim form of the watch, alert and vigilant; but the man knew I was there, and forbore to hail the mysterious craft below.

At a snail's pace the boat glided along our side until it was just beneath me, when I could see a blot in the moonlight that resembled a human form. Then a voice, so gentle that it scarce rose above the breeze, called out:

"Ahoy, mate!"

Now I ought to explain that all this was surprising; we were a simple, honest American merchant ship, lying in home waters and without an element of mystery in our entire outfit. On the neighboring shore of the harbor could be seen the skids from which the *Seagull* had been launched a month before, and every man and boy in Chelsea knew our history nearly as well as we did ourselves.

But our midnight visitor had chosen to steal upon us in a manner as unaccountable as it was mysterious, and his hail I left unanswered while I walked to the landing steps and descended them until I stood upon the platform that hung just over the boat.

And now I perceived that the tub — for it was little else — was more than half full of water, and that the gunwale rode scarce an inch above the smooth surface of the bay. The miserable thing was waterlogged and about to sink, yet its occupant sat half submerged in his little pool, as quiet and unconcerned as if no danger threatened.

"What's up?" I demanded, speaking rather sternly.

The form half rose, the tub tipped and filled, and with a gentle splash both disappeared from view and left me staring at the eddies. I was about to call for help when the form bobbed up again and a hand shot out and grasped a rope dangling from the landing stage. I leaned over to assist, and the fellow scrambled up the line with remarkable agility until I was able to seize his collar and drag him, limp and dripping, to a place beside me.

At this time I was just eighteen years of age and, I must confess, not so large in size as I longed to be; but the slender, bent form of the youth whom I had rescued was even of less stature than my own. As he faced me in the moonlight and gave a gasp to clear the water from his throat, I noted the thin, pinched features and the pair of large, dark eyes that gazed with pleading earnestness into my own.

"For Heaven's sake, what are you up to?" I asked, impatiently; "and how came you to be afloat in that miserable tub? It's a wonder you didn't sink long before you reached our side."

"So it is," he replied in a low voice. "Are you — are you Sam Steele, sir?"

"Yes."

"Ah! I hoped it would be you. Can I go aboard, sir? I want to talk to you."

I could not well have refused, unless I consigned the fellow to the waters of the bay again. Moreover, there was a touching and eager appeal in the lad's tones that I could not resist. I turned and climbed to the deck, and he followed me as silently as a shadow. Then, leaning against the rail, I inquired somewhat testily:

"Couldn't you wait until morning to pay me a visit? And hadn't you enough sense to know that old dinghy wouldn't float?"

"But it did float, sir, until I got here; and that answered my purpose very well," he replied. "I had to come at night to keep from being discovered and recaptured."

"Oh! You're a criminal, then. Eh?"

"In a way, sir. I'm an escaped cabin-boy."

That made me laugh. I began to understand, and the knowledge served to relieve the strain and dissolve the uncanny effect of the incident. An escaped cabin-boy! Well, that was nothing very wonderful.

"Here, come to my room and get some dry togs," I said, turning abruptly to the gangway. The lad followed and we passed silently through the after-cabin, past the door of Uncle Naboth's quarters — whence issued a series of stentorian snores — and so into my own spacious stateroom, where I lighted a lamp and carefully closed the door.

"Now, then," I exclaimed, pulling some of my clothes from a locker, "slip on this toggery at once, so your teeth will stop chattering."

He discarded his dripping garments and replaced them with my dry flannel shirt and blue trousers, my thick socks and low shoes. I picked up his own ragged clothes and with a snort of contempt for their bedraggled and threadbare condition tossed them out of the window into the sea.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, and clutched at his breast.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

“Nothing. I thought at first you had thrown away mother’s picture; but it’s here, all right,” and he patted his breast tenderly.

“Hungry?” I inquired.

“Yes, sir.” He gave a shiver, as if he had just remembered this condition; and I brought some biscuits and a tin of sardines from my cupboard and placed them before him.

The boy ate ravenously, washing down the food with a draught of water from the bottle in the rack. I waited for him to finish before I questioned him. Then, motioning him to a seat on my bunk, for he seemed weak and still trembled a bit, I said:

“Now, tell me your story.”

“I’m a Texan,” he replied, slowly, “and used to live in Galveston. My folks are dead and an uncle took care of me until a year ago, when he was shot in a riot. I didn’t mind that; he was never very good to me; but when he was gone I had no home at all. So I shipped as a cabin-boy aboard the *Gonzales,* a tobacco sloop plying between Galveston and Key West, for I always loved the sea and this was the best berth I could get. The Captain, José Marrow, is half Mexican and the cruelest man in the world. He whipped me when he was drunk, and abused and cuffed me when sober, and many a time I hoped would kill me instead of keeping up the tortures I suffered. Finally he came up here with a cargo, and day before yesterday, just as he had unloaded and was about to sail again, he sent me ashore on an errand. Of course I skipped. I ran along the bay and hid in a lumber shed, from the top of which I could watch the *Gonzales.* She didn’t sail, because old Marrow was bound to have me back, I guess; so I had to lay low, and all the time I was sure he’d find me in the end and get me back. The sloop’s in the bay yet, sir, only about a quarter of a mile away.”

“Well?”

“Well, last evening a couple of men came to sort some of the timbers, and I lay hid on top the pile and listened to their talk. They spoke of the *Seagull,* and how it was to sail far away into the Mediterranean, and was the best built ship that ever left this port.”

“That’s true enough, my lad.”

“And they said Cap’n Steele was the best man to work for in the merchant service, and his son, Sam Steele — that’s you, sir — was bound to make as good a sailor as his dad, and had been in some queer adventures already, and was sure to find more of them before he was much older.”

I had to smile at that evident “taffy,” and my smile left the boy embarrassed. He hesitated a moment, and then continued:

“To a poor devil like me, sir, such a tale made me believe this ship a

floating paradise. I've heard of captains who are not as cruel as old Marrow; so when the men had gone I decided to get to you in some way and beg you to take me aboard. You see, the Mexican is waiting to hunt me down, and I'd die sooner than go back to his terrible ship. If you'll take me with you, Mr. Steele, I'll be faithful and true, and work like a slave for you. If you won't, why, just say the word, and I'll jump overboard again."

"Can you swim?"

"No."

I thought a moment. "What's your name?" I asked, finally.

"Joe Herring."

"Well, Joe, you're asking something unusual, I must say. I'm not the captain of the *Seagull,* but merely purser, or to be more exact the secretary to Mr. Perkins, the supercargo. I own a share in the ship, to be sure, and purchased it with money I made myself; but that fact doesn't count when we're at sea, and Captain Steele is last man in the world to harbor a runaway member of the crew of a friendly ship. Indeed, your old master came aboard us this morning, to inquire about you, and I heard my father say that if he set eyes on you anywhere he'd let Captain Marrow know. As he never breaks his word this promise is to be depended upon. Do you see, now, what a fix you're in?"

"I do, sir."

His voice was low and despondent and he seemed to shrink back in his seat into an attitude hopeless and helpless.

I looked at the boy more closely, and the appeal in his pinched features, that had struck me at the first glance on the landing stage, became more impressive than ever.

"How old are you, Joe?"

"Fifteen, sir."

He was tall, but miserably thin. His brown hair, now wet and clinging about his face, curled naturally and was thick and of fine texture, while his dark eyes were handsome enough to be set in the face of a girl. This, with a certain manly dignity that shone through his pitiful expression, decided me to befriend the lad, and I had an inspiration even in that first hour of meeting that Joe Herring would prove a loyal follower and a faithful friend.

"We sail at ten o'clock, and it's now past midnight," I remarked, thoughtfully "Yes, sir; I'll go any time you say."

"But you can't swim, Joe."

"Never mind. Don't let me be a bother to you. You'll want to turn in," casting a wistful look around my pleasant room, "and so I'll find my way on deck and you needn't give me another thought."

“Very good,” said I, nodding. “I think I’ll turn in this minute.”

He rose up, slowly. “Just climb into that upper berth, Joe, and go to sleep. There’ll be work for you tomorrow, and you’ll need to get rested.”

He stared into my smiling face a moment with a startled look that soon became radiant. Then broke down and cried like a baby.

“Here, no snivelling!” I growled, savagely. “Pile into that berth; but see you get your shoes off first.”

He obeyed, still blubbering but evidently struggling to restrain his sobs. Indeed, his privations of the past two days, half starved and hunted like a dog, had completely unnerved the poor fellow, When he had tumbled into the berth I locked the door, put out the light, and rolled myself in my own blanket.

A few moments later I heard Joe stirring. He leaned over the edge of the bunk and murmured: “God bless you, Sam Steele! I’ll never forget, sir, the way you — ”

“Oh, shut up and go to sleep, Joe,” I cried. “You’ve kept me awake long enough already.”

“Yes sir.” And after that he was silent.

CHAPTER TWO
OUR VENTURE

THOSE WHO WERE present at the launching of our beautiful new *Seagull* were unanimous in declaring her the trimmest, daintiest, most graceful craft that had ever yet floated in the waters of old Chelsea bay. Her color was pure white, her brass work brilliant as gold. She was yacht built, on the lines of the fast express boats, and no expense had been spared in her construction or fittings.

My father, Captain Steele, one of the ablest and best known sailors on the Atlantic coast, had personally supervised the building of the *Seagull* and watched every step of progress and inspected every bit of timber, steel, or brass, so that nothing might be slighted in any way. She was one hundred and eighty-seven feet in length, with a thirty-six foot beam and a depth of twenty-one feet, and her net tonnage was close to fourteen hundred. We had her schooner rigged, because Captain Steele believed in sailing and had designed his ship for a merchantman of the highest class, but of the old school.

Uncle Naboth and I, who were also part owners of the ship — the firm being Steele, Perkins & Steele — had begged earnestly to convert her into a modern steamer; but my father angrily resented the suggestion.

"Her name's the *Seagull,"* he declared, "an' a seagull without wings 'ud be a doggone jack-rabbit; so wings she mus' have, my lads, ef Dick Steele's goin' to sail her."

We had really put a fortune into the craft, and Uncle Naboth — a shrewd old trader who marked the world as it moved and tried to keep pace with it — was as anxious to have the ship modern in every respect as I was. So we stood stubbornly side by side and argued with the Captain until he finally granted a partial concession to our wishes and consented to our installing an auxiliary equipment of a screw propeller driven by powerful engines, with the express understanding that they must only be used in case of emergency.

"It's a rank waste o' money, an' takes up vallyble room," he growled; "but ef so be you ain't satisfied with decent spars an' riggin,' why, git your blarsted ol' machinery aboard — an' be hanged to ye both!"

This consent was obtained soon after my return from Panama, but Uncle Naboth and I had ordered the engines months previously, having been determined to install them from the day the *Seagull* was first planned; so no time was lost in getting them placed.

You will know the *Seagull* more intimately as my story progresses, so I will avoid a detailed description of it just now, merely adding that the ship was at once the envy and admiration of all beholders and the pride and joy of

her three owners.

My father had sailed for forty years and had at one time lost his right leg in a shipwreck, so he stumped around with a cork substitute. But he was as energetic and active as in his youth, and his vast experience fully justified his reputation as one of the ablest and shrewdest seamen in the merchant service. Indeed, Captain Steele was universally known and respected, and I had good reason to be proud of the bluff old salt who owned me as his son. He had prejudices, it is true, acquired through many strange adventures at sea and in foreign parts; but his heart was simple and frank as that of a child, and we who knew him best and loved him well had little fear of his stubborn temperament.

Naboth Perkins, my dead mother's brother, was also a remarkable man in his way. He knew the sea as well as did my father, but prided himself on the fact that he "couldn't navigate a ferry-boat," having always sailed as supercargo and devoted his talents to trading. He had been one of my earliest and most faithful friends, and although I was still a mere boy at the time the *Seagull* was launched, I had encountered some unusual adventures in company with quaint, honest Uncle Naboth, and won certain bits of prize money that had proved the foundation of our fortunes.

These prize-winnings, converted into hard cash, had furnished the funds for building our new ship, in which we purposed beginning a conservative, staid career as American merchantmen, leaving adventures behind us and confining ourselves to carrying from port to port such merchandise as might be consigned to our care. You will hear how well our modest intention was fulfilled.

The huge proportions and staunch construction of the *Seagull* would enable her to sail in any known sea with perfect safety, and long before she was completed we were besieged with proposals from shippers anxious to secure our services.

Uncle Naboth, who handled all such matters for our firm, finally contracted with a big Germantown manufacturer of "Oriental" rugs to carry a load of bales to Syria, consigned to merchants there who would distribute them throughout Persia, Turkey, and Egypt, to be sold to American and European tourists and carried to their homes as treasures of Oriental looms.

It was not so much the liberal payment we received as the fact that the long voyage to the Syrian port would give us an opportunity of testing the performances of the *Seagull* that induced Mr. Perkins to accept the contract and undertake the lengthy voyage.

"If she skims the Atlantic an' the Mediterranean all right," said he, "the boat'll weather any sea on earth; so we may as well find out at the start what

she's good for. 'Sides that, we're gittin' a thunderin' price fer cartin' them rags to Syria, an' so the deal seems a good one all 'round."

My father gravely approved the transaction. He also was eager to test the powers of our beautiful new ship, and this would not be his first voyage to the Orient, by any means. So the papers were made out and signed and as soon as our last fittings and furnishings were installed and our crew aboard we were to voyage down the coast in sunny September weather and anchor in the Chesapeake, there to load our cargo.

Our ship's company had been carefully selected, for the fame of my father's new vessel and the popularity of the Captain himself attracted to us the best seamen available; so we had the satisfaction of signing a splendid company of experienced men. In addition to these sailors we shipped a first and second engineer, clever young fellows that became instantly unpopular with my father, who glared at the poor "mechanics" as if he considered them interlopers, if not rank traitors. Some of the seamen, it was arranged, would act as stokers if the engines were called into requisition, so with the addition of a couple of oilers who were also carpenter's assistants we were satisfied we might at any time steam or sail, as the occasion demanded.

I am sure Captain Steele had already acknowledged in his heart that we were justified in equipping the *Seagull* with engines, since any old salt fully realizes the horror of being becalmed and knows the loss such a misfortune is sure to entail in time, wages, and grub. But he would not admit it. Instead, he persisted in playing the part of a much injured and greatly scandalized seaman. It would be time enough to "take water" when the value of the propeller was fully proved.

Ned Britton was Captain's Mate, of course. Ned had sailed with my father for years; he had also sailed two exciting voyages with Uncle Naboth and me, and we all admired and respected this strong, gallant fellow as much as we had come to trust in his ability.

Two other curious characters were established fixtures of any craft that the firm of Steele, Perkins & Steele might own. These were two stalwart black men named Nux and Bryonia, South Sea Islanders whom Uncle Naboth had rescued from death years before and attached to his service. Since then they had become my own trusted friends, and more than once had I owed my life to their intelligence and faithfulness. Bryonia, or Bry, as we called him, was a famous cook, and always had charge of our ship's galley. With Bry aboard we were never in want of a substantial, well cooked meal; for, as Uncle Naboth was wont to declare: "Thet Bry could take a rope's end an' a bit o' tarpaulin an' make a Paris tubble-de-hoot out'n 'em."

Nux was cabin steward and looked after our comforts aft with a deftness

and skill that were wholly admirable. These blacks were both of them shrewd, loyal, and brave, and we knew we might always depend upon their fidelity.

On the morning following my adoption of Joe Herring I left the runaway locked up in my stateroom and went on deck to watch the final preparations for our departure. A fair breeze swept down the bay, so at ten o'clock we hoisted anchor, spread our main and foresails and, slowly gathering way, the *Seagull* slipped through the water on her maiden trip amid the shouts of hundreds who stood on the shore to watch and bid us God speed.

We fired a shot from our small howitzer as a parting salute to our friends, dipped our pennants in gallant fashion, showed our heels, and sped away so swiftly that the harbor was soon left far behind.

We passed the old *Gonzales* soon after leaving our anchorage. It was still waiting to recapture its absconding cabin-boy, though why Captain Marrow should attach so much importance to the youth I could not then understand.

As soon as we were well at sea I liberated Joe and told him he was to be my special servant and assistant, but must also help Nux to look after the cabin during his spare time — which was likely to be plentiful enough. Knowing that the sooner I established the lad's footing aboard the easier it would be for us both, I sent him on an errand that would take him past my father's station on the deck. His sharp eye encountered the boy at once, as I had expected, and he promptly roared out an order for him to halt.

Joe stopped and saluted respectfully. He was looking cheery and bright this morning; indeed, a different boy from the one I had pulled from the sinking dinghy the night before. Life bore a new aspect for Joe and his heart was light as a feather. He looked honest and wholesome enough in the fresh blue suit I had given him, and he had been duly warned that his only remaining danger lay in not winning the countenance of the skipper.

"Who are you? 'n' where 'n' thunder 'd you come from?" demanded Captain Steele.

"Joe Herring, sir. Master Sam's assistant, sir," answered the boy, in his quiet tones.

"Assistant! Bungs an' barnacles! Assistant to Sam! What doin'? Loafin' an' a-killin'time?"

"I beg to refer you to Master Sam, sir," was the composed answer, although from where I watched the scene I could see that Joe was badly frightened.

"What Sam needs is suthin' to do, more 'n a grub-devourin' assistant," pursued my father, sternly. "Look here; did my son lug you aboard?"

"He did, sir," replied Joe, truthfully.

“Send him to me, then,” ordered my father.

I stepped forward at once, saluting the Captain with my usual deference. When we were at sea I had been taught to put by the fact that this was my father, bearing in mind only the immediate fact that he was my commander. Still, in my capacity as secretary to Uncle Naboth I was in a measure independent of ship’s discipline.

“What tricks are you up to now, Sam?” demanded the Captain, scowling at me.

“Father, this boy was the runaway from the *Gonzales,* whom Captain Marrow has been seeking so earnestly. He was so abused by the Mexican that he would rather die than return to his slavery. So he threw himself on my mercy, and knowing he would surely be retaken if I left him ashore, I brought the lad with us. Don’t blame him, sir. I’ll take all the responsibility.”

The Captain stared at me a moment.

“See that you do, then,” he grumbled. “Sam, it’s a illegal an’ unperfessional act to harbor a runaway.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Usually no good ever comes of it.”

“He’s an honest lad, sir.”

The Captain eyed him closely.

“It’s no affair o’ mine,” he muttered, half turning away. “The boy belongs now to the Perkins outfit, mind you. I’ll have no runaways ner stowaways in my crew.”

I knew then the battle was won, and that my father would refuse to surrender Joe to his old captain under any circumstances. The “Perkins outfit,” so sneeringly referred to, meant Uncle Naboth and myself, and although it was evident the mission of the *Seagull* was dependent on the “Perkins outfit” to manage and arrange its commerce in a profitable manner, it pleased my father to denominate us landlubbers and consider us of “no ‘count” in the sailing of the ship.

Uncle Naboth wasn’t aboard yet. He had gone by rail some days before to Philadelphia to attend to the business of our cargo, and it was not until we anchored in the placid waters of the Chesapeake that my uncle appeared, smiling and cheery as ever.

Mr. Perkins was short and stout, with a round, chubby face, smoothly shaven, and a circle of iron-gray locks around his bald head. His eyes were small, light blue and twinkling; his expression simple and childlike; his speech inelegant and with a humorous twist that rendered him an agreeable companion. But as a trader Naboth Perkins was famed far and wide; his shrewdness was proverbial; his talent for bargaining fairly marvelous; his

honesty undisputed. I have heard merchants say it was a pleasure to pay Mr. Perkins his demands, even though they could procure the same service elsewhere at less cost. For he was square as a die, faithful to the smallest detail, and his word was absolutely to be relied upon. The little old gentleman was known as a money-maker, and had been the partner of my father, his brother-in-law, for many years.

Such a character could not fail to be eccentric, and Uncle Naboth's ways were at times puzzling; but I knew he was devoted to me, since he had proved this quality many times; and I naturally regarded my whimsical uncle with great affection.

When Mr. Perkins came aboard he announced that the bales of rugs were all on the dock and ready to load without delay. I was much interested in our queer cargo, for it seemed strange to me that Americans should ship "Oriental" rugs to the Orient, to be purchased there by Americans and brought back home again. But Uncle Naboth, who had been through the mills at Germantown, explained the matter very clearly.

"You see," he said, "there ain't enough genooine Oriental rugs left to supply the demand, now thet they've got to be sich a fad with rich people. When the Orient was fust diskivered there was a good many rugs there, but it had took years to make each one of 'em, an' some was so old they had holes wore in 'em; but that made' em the more vallyble 'cause it proved they was antiques. They picked' em up fast, an' the Orientals was glad to sell 'em an' say nothin'. Ev'ry tourist thet goes to the East wants to buy rugs to send home, an' he'll pay 'most any price that's asked fer rare ol' patterns an' dim, washed-out colors. Ef there's a few holes, badly mended, so much the better, fer they proves the rugs is old. So the clever Easterners an' the cleverer Yankees hit on a scheme to supply the demand, an' here in Germantown they makes thousands of rare ol' Oriental rugs every year. They buy a few genooine ones to copy the patterns from, an' they weave 'em by machinery. Then the new rugs is put into a machine that beats dust an' dirt into 'em an' beats it out again, till the new, fresh colors gits old an' faded. After this they're run through a rubbin' machine that wears 'em down some an' makes a few holes, here an' there; an' then the menders take 'em an' darn the holes. In about a day's time one o' them rugs goes through about as much wear an' tear by machinery as it would get in centuries of use; an' fer my part I can't tell the diff'rence atween a genooine Oriental an' a imitation one. We've got a whole cargo to take to Syria, an' in a few months they'll mostly come back agin, an' be laid on the floors of our millionaires. Queer traffic, ain't it, Sam? But if you stops to think, there's been enough Oriental rugs carted out'n the Orient, in the last hundred years, to carpet most of Asia an' Africa with; so it

stands to reason they ain't all the real thing. If it wasn't fer Yankee ingenooity an' Oriental trickery the supply'd been exhausted years ago, an' our people 'd hev to carpet their floors with honest, fresh rugs instead o' these machine worn imitations. That would break their hearts, wouldn't it?"

But Uncle Naboth had arranged also to carry another queer line of merchandise on our voyage, consisting of several large cases consigned by a Connecticut manufacturer. These contained imitations of ancient Egyptian scarabs (a sort of mud beetle considered sacred by the old sun-worshippers), and a collection of funeral figures, tiny household gods and other articles supposed to be found only in the tombs of the primitive kings and nobles of Egypt.

"The Egyptian gov'ment," explained Uncle Naboth, "won't let any more genooine relics be taken out'n the country, 'cause they wants' em all fer the Cairo Museum; so the Yankees hev come to the front agin, an' made mud relics by the bushel, so's the eager tourists can buy what they wants to bring home an' prove they've been there. These cases o' goods is consigned to merchants in Luxor, a little town up the Nile, an' I've agreed to run over to Alexandria, after we've unloaded our Syrian rugs, an' dump the rubbish on the dock there. There ain't many cases of it, but the profits is so big that we get well paid for job."

"But how did these wares get to Philadelphia from Connecticut?" asked my father."

"Oh, I've been correspondin' with ol' Ackley, the Yankee that makes 'em, fer some time," said my uncle, "but I couldn't tell how much room the rugs would take up until I got here. When I found I could stow the Egyptian rubbish, I telegraphed to Ackley an' the consignment got here by freight yesterday. But that ain't the worst of it, partners."

"What is the worst?" I inquired.

"Why, the Yankee manufacturer has sent me his beloved son, with a letter askin' me to carry him with us to Egypt, so's he can study the country an' find out what ancient relics they need supplied in large quantities, an' collect from the dealers fer this first batch."

"We don't take passengers," said my father, sharply.

"So I said; but the young duffer is here, an' won't take no fer an answer. He says he's willin to pay fer his passage, an' his dad wants him to keep an eye on them precious modern antiquities as we're to carry. So I've put the case up to you, an' you can decide it."

"It's none o' my business, Naboth," said my father, turning away with a frown; "I don't like passengers, but you an' Sam can do as you please. Only, if you take him, keep him out o' my way."

Uncle winked at me, and I knew the passenger would be booked.

Work of loading the cargo progressed rapidly, and in two days the bales of rugs were all aboard and carefully stowed in our dry and ample hold.

Then the Yankee antiques for Egypt appeared for loading, and with them came a youth whose appearance caused me to smile involuntarily.

"Archibald Ackley, Jr., Middletown, Conn.," his cards read. He was a stocky, well built fellow about seventeen years of age, although he evidently wished to appear much older. He had sharp gray eyes, lanky hair of light tow color, immense hands and feet, a swaggering gait, and a style of dress gay enough to rival the plumage of a bird-of-paradise.

Archibald's features might have been handsome originally, but a swiftly pitched base-ball had once ruthlessly pushed his generous nose against his left cheek, and there it had remained.

The youth sported a heavy watchchain that was palpably plated, a big "diamond" on his cravat that perhaps came from the famous "Barrios mines," of New York, and his fingers were loaded with rings of vast proportions set with doubtful gems. It may be Mr. Ackley, Jr., imagined himself an exquisite, and sought to impress people by a display of wealth that may have cost him or his father several dollars; but, as I said, my first glimpse of his gorgeous person caused me to smile — an impertinence I quickly tried to repress.

Mr. Perkins and I considered carefully the young man's request for a passage to Egypt, and as we had ample accommodations we decided to take him along; but when he came for his answer and I caught sight of him for the first time, I almost regretted our decision.

Uncle Naboth, however, seemed not to be disagreeably impressed. He shook the boy's hand — it was a "flipper," all right — with cordial greeting and said to him:

"Very good, Archie, my lad; we've talked it over an' you can go 'long ef so be you want to. But remember this is a merchantman, an' no passenger ship, an' make up your mind to abide by Cap'n Steele's rules an' reggleations."

"That's fair," said the boy, evidently pleased. "I'm not likely to bother any one. All I want is a berth to sleep in and three square meals a day. How's the feed?"

"Why, we have hearty appetites, ourselves, my lad, an' there's no call for you to starve as I knows on," with a wink at me. "You'll eat at our table an' have the best the ship affords."

"That's what I want," said Archie, nodding his bullet head; "there's nothing too good for me. What's the price for the passage?"

I told him.

"That's a pretty steep figure," he rejoined, uneasily. "I can take an ocean liner for about the same cost."

"It is your privilege, sir," I said, stiffly. "We don't want passengers; so we don't want you. But Mr. Perkins is disposed to accommodate you because your father is one of our shippers. Go or stay, as you like; but make up your mind quickly, for we sail at seven."

He scowled first at me and then at uncle; but presently he grinned.

"I haven't a choice," said he, carelessly. "Pop's paying the shot, for he wants me to keep an eye on the scarabs and things and see the goods safe landed and the money collected for them. They're shipped to a lot of Arabs who can't be trusted. So here's your money, and I'll mail the receipt for the passage to Pop before we skate away, so he'll know it's you who are robbing him instead of me."

I felt like punching the cad's nose, but Uncle Naboth laughed good naturedly and nodded approval.

"That's businesslike an' to the point," said he. "Take the money, Sam, and give our passenger the proper receipt."

I did so, and Archibald Ackley, Jr., stalked away down the dock to fetch his baggage from the hotel.

To my surprise the *Gonzales* made the harbor that afternoon and anchored alongside us. I promptly hid the trembling Joe in my cabin and locked him up; it proved a wise action because Captain Marrow lost no time in boarding us and asking for an interview with Captain Steele.

This made me nervous, for I knew my father would not lie under any circumstances, and I dreaded the result of the Mexican's visit. So I stood beside my father to make every possible endeavor to save my protege from recapture.

"Cap'n Steele, sir, where's my cabin-boy?" asked Marrow, gruffly, as he came up and touched his cap.

My father looked him over with grave attention.

"Cap'n Marrow," he replied, sternly, "where's that calf that broke out'n my ten-acre lot three year ago come next Sunday?"

Marrow muttered a curse and glared at us evilly.

"I happen to know, Steele, that my boy Joe, who was tryin' to vamoose, stole a rotten dinghy an' rowed out to the *Seagull* the night afore you sailed. Ain't thet so?"

"Mebbe," said my father.

"Then I demand him in the name o' the law, an' I'll hold you here in the bay till you give me back the stolen goods," continued Marrow, savagely.

“Ned,” said my father, turning quietly to his brawny mate, “show Cap’n Marrow over the side, an’ if he’s too slow in goin’, toss him overboard.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” returned Ned, pleasantly.

“I’ll hev the law, remember! You can’t sail from the harbor till you’ve given up my property!” roared the exasperated Mexican.

“Mebbe,” repeated my father, again, as he turned indifferently away.

But I saw trouble brewing and resolved to head it off.

“Captain Marrow,” I said, politely, with a motion to Ned to delay his intention, for the mate’s hand was lifted to seize the fellow in his terrible grip, “please allow me to explain this case. A boy — perhaps it was your runaway — did indeed board us at Chelsea, as you say; but my father, Captain Steele, did not discover his presence until we were at sea. Then we were obliged to carry him on here, where he was put upon the dock. I assure you I saw him bolt for the land as fast as he could go.”

This was true in fact, as I had sent Joe on an errand. I did not relate, of course, that the boy had quickly returned, but my tale seemed to impress Marrow and explain why Captain Steele had so recklessly sneered at his demands, as if wilfully defying the marine law. “If you make haste, sir,” I continued, very courteously, “you may still be able to lay hands on the boy, who I am sure has no money to take him any distance from Philadelphia.”

Marrow looked at me shrewdly.

“Did Joe say anything about me, or about money?” he asked.

“Not a word, sir,” answering the last question. “But I advise you to make haste. And you must forgive Captain Steele for his abrupt answers, caused by what he considered the insolence of your demand and the knowledge that you are in the wrong in threatening to hold his ship. You know, sir, it would cost you heavily to do this, when the court found you were unable to prove your case.”

This argument decided the man. He swore a nasty oath and stamped his foot in futile rage; but he at once left the ship to be rowed ashore, and that was the last we saw of him.

Still I wondered at his interest in the miserable, half starved boy he had so wickedly abused; and I wondered at his strange question about money. There must be some mystery about Joe.

At seven o’clock, all being snugly stowed and the last of our fresh provisions taken aboard, we hoisted anchor and headed out toward the mouth of the bay. Our passenger had settled himself in a spare cabin an hour before, having brought with him two huge “telescopes” that appeared to contain all his belongings.

I did not let Joe out of his confinement until about midnight, and when

from the swish of the water against our sides I knew we had reached the open sea.

CHAPTER THREE
AN OBSTINATE PASSENGER

IT IS USELESS to relate the unimportant incidents of our voyage to Gibraltar and up the Mediterranean. The *Seagull* behaved beautifully in both good and bad weather, amply fulfilling our most ardent expectations. It is true the voyage was unnecessarily long, since with our powerful engines we could have cut down our time to less than one-half; but we were obliged to concede this to Captain Steele's prejudice in favor of sailing, and the breeze held so steady and persistent that we cut the waves like a clipper and made a most remarkable sailing record for the voyage.

It was not until we passed Sicily that the *Seagull* was required to prove her staunchness. The waves at the lower end of the Mediterranean were wilder than any I had ever before encountered, but our beauty rode them like a swan and never a seam spread nor a beam so much as creaked.

The voyage, however, served to make us better acquainted with both our boy passenger and my boy assistant — the rich man's son and the runaway Joseph — though this acquaintance was not ripened without some interesting experiences.

A more willing or grateful follower no one could have than Joe Herring. The kindly treatment accorded him was in such sharp contrast to the dog's life he had led aboard the *Gonzales* that he was anxious to show his appreciation on every possible occasion. His dark eyes followed me affectionately wherever I went, and he would leap quickly to anticipate my every order. Also he liked to serve Uncle Naboth and my father, and proved so considerate of their wishes and comforts that he soon won their hearts completely. Nor was Joe so frail as he seemed at first glance. His muscles were hard as iron and on occasion his thin frame developed remarkable strength. This he proved conclusively within the first week of the voyage, as you shall hear.

Our young passenger, whose imposing name we had quickly shortened to plain "Archie," seemed likely to cause us unsuspected trouble. He at once developed two bad habits. The first was to sit on deck, lolling in a folding deck chair he had brought aboard, and play distressing tunes upon a harmonica — which he termed a "mouth-organ." The lad must have had a most powerful inherent love for music to enable him to listen to his own awful strains; but it was clear his musical talent was not developed, or at least not properly educated to any artistic degree.

The first morning out the Captain, forced to listen to this "music," scowled and muttered under his breath but forbore to interfere with the

passenger's evident enjoyment of his own performance. The second morning he yelled at Archie to "shut up!" but the boy calmly disregarded the order. The third morning my father stumped over to where I sat and ordered me to take away Archie's "blamed ol' jew's-harp" and fling it overboard.

I had myself been considerably annoyed by the wretched music, so I obeyed so far as to stroll over to our passenger and ask him to kindly discontinue his performance.

He looked up resentfully.

"This is the passenger's deck, ain't it?" he demanded.

"We have no passenger's deck; but we allow you to sit here," I replied.

"Then leave me alone, and mind your own business," he retorted. "I'm a free born American citizen, and I've paid my passage and can do as I please."

"But you can't annoy everybody with that beastly music while you're aboard the *Seagull,*" I answered, rather nettled at his attitude. "We also have rights, sir, and they must be considered."

"I've paid for mine," he said. "You get out, Sam Steele. I know what I'm doing," and he commenced to play again.

I looked at him reflectively. Just how to handle such a situation puzzled me. But Joe stood just behind and had heard all. With a bound of amazing quickness he was upon the unprepared Archie, seized the mouth-organ from his grasp and flung the instrument of torture far over the side.

"Beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure," he said, with a grin.

Archie whistled softly and looked his assailant over. He rose slowly from his chair and, still whistling, began to unbutton his coat and take it off. He folded it neatly, laid it in the chair, removed his linen cuffs and placed them beside his coat, and proceeded deliberately to roll up his sleeves.

The youth's intentions were so obvious that I was about to order Joe to go below, as his slight figure seemed no match for the burly Archie, when a pleading look in the boy's eyes restrained me.

Uncle Naboth and Ned Britton, who had been promenading the deck near, had noted the incident and now paused to see its outcome. Some of the sailors also were interested, from their distant posts, while my father stood on the bridge and looked at our little group with an amused smile lighting his rugged face.

Altogether it would not do to retreat in face of the coming fray, or to interfere with the logical outcome of Joe's rash act. The Yankee boy's face was white and set, and his soft whistle only rendered his bull-headed determination to exact revenge the more impressive.

Having rolled up his sleeves, doubled his great fists and swung his arms

once or twice to ease his muscles, Archie advanced steadily upon poor Joe, who stood listlessly with his hands thrust in his coat pockets and his head and shoulders bent slightly forward, in his accustomed pose.

"That mouth-organ cost two dollars," said Archie, grimly, "and you don't look as if you're worth two cents. So I'll just take it out o' your hide, my son, to teach you a lesson."

With that he paused and swung his right fist upward, and Joe, roused to action at last, gave a sudden bound. My eye could scarcely follow him as he leapt at Archie, embracing him and clinging to his antagonist like a vise. To my astonishment, the bulky Yankee swung around, tottered and fell heavily upon his back, with Joe kneeling triumphant upon his breast.

We all gave an admiring cheer, for we could not help it, and at the sound Joe arose and stood in his place again, meekly as before.

Archie got up more slowly, feeling the back of his head, which had whacked against the deck. He made a sudden rush and a lunge with his fist that might have settled Joe had he not dodged and closed again on his adversary with the same lightning tactics he had at first employed. They fell in a heap, and although Archie tried to keep Joe hugged to his breast the latter slid away like an eel and a moment after was on his feet and had assumed his careless, waiting pose.

When the Yankee got up this time he was again softly whistling. Without a glance at his late antagonist he deliberately rolled down his sleeves, attached his cuffs and resumed his coat. Then he walked over to Joe and with a smile that showed more good nature than chagrin he held out his bulky hand.

"Shake, sonny," said he. "You're good stuff, and I forgive you everything. Let's be chums, Joe. If I could have landed on your jaw I'd have mashed you like a turnip; but you wouldn't let me, and so I'm bound to give in gracefully-"

That speech was the best thing the boy had done, and my original dislike for him began to evaporate. Joe shook the proffered hand cordially, and my father, who had come down to join our group, gave Archie an admiring buffet on the shoulder and said: "You'll do, my lad."

But after all Joe was the hero of the occasion, and we all loved him for the clever and skillful fight he had put up. Archie was an expert boxer, as we afterward discovered, but Joe's talent for wrestling gave him a decided advantage in a rough-and-tumble encounter.

At luncheon we were all in a hearty good humor, but imagine my dismay to hear shortly afterward the strains of a mouth-organ coming from the deck! I ran up at once, and there sat Master Archie in his chair, blowing furiously

into an instrument fully three inches longer than the one Joe had tossed overboard.

I laughed; I could not help it; and even my father's face wore an amused smile. Joe looked at me inquiringly, but I shook my head and retreated to my cabin. Such a queer condition of mutiny deserved careful thought.

But, as I said, Archie had another bad habit. He smoked cigarettes in his stateroom, which was against our most positive rules. The first time we observed from the deck thin smoke curling through the open window of Archie's cabin, a hasty investigation was made and the cause speedily discovered. The boy was lying in his berth, reading a novel and coolly puffing his cigarette.

Uncle Naboth sent for the passenger and gravely informed him he'd have to quit smoking cigarettes in his cabin.

"On deck it don't matter so much," added my uncle, "though a decent pipe is a more manly smoke, to my notion. But we've put a furtun' into our new ship, an' can't afford to take chances of burnin' her up on the first voyage. Cigarettes are dangerous. If you throw a lighted stub into a corner we may go up in smoke and perhaps lose many vallyble human lives. So we can't allow it, young man. Smoke yer paper cigars on deck, ef ye want to; but don't light another in yer cabin."

Archie made no promise. He listened to my uncle's lecture, and walked away without a word.

An hour later I saw smoke coming through the window again, and peering through the aperture discovered Archie lying in his bunk, calmly smoking. The boy was exasperatingly stubborn. I called black Nux and gave him an order. With a pleased grin the South Sea Islander brought a length of fire hose, attached it to a plug in the scuppers and carried the nozzle to Archie's window. Presently we heard a yell as the powerful stream struck the smoker and completely deluged him. He leapt from his berth, only to be struck full in the face by the water from the hose, which sent him reeling against the door. I shut off the water, and Nux, kneeling at the low window, looked down on the discomfitted Archie and exclaimed:

"Goodness sake, Mars Ackley! Were dat on'y you-uns? Thought it were a fire, sure thing. Beg pard'n, Mars Ackley!"

After the boy changed his drenched clothing for dry he came on deck and stalked around in silent anger while Nux went to the cabin and cleared it of the water and wet bedding. I wondered if the lesson would be effective, but could not judge a nature that was so unlike any I had ever before encountered.

Bye-and-bye Archie calmed down sufficiently to drop into his deck chair

and begin playing his mouth-organ. He wailed out the most distressing attempts at tunes for an entire hour, eyeing defiantly any who chanced to look toward him; but we took care not to pay the slightest attention to his impertinence. Joe came to me once with a pleading look in his eye, but I shook my head sternly. The sailors were evidently amused by our little comedy forward, for I could see them exchanging smiles now and then when a screech more blood-curdling than usual came from the mouth-organ.

Archie tired himself out in time and went below. He closed and locked his window and began again to smoke in his cabin. In half an hour the smoke was so thick in the little room that we could see nothing but its gray clouds through the thick pane.

The set frown upon my father's face told me trouble was brewing for our passenger, but as yet the Captain forbore to interfere. Uncle Naboth came to me indignant and angry and demanded to know what should be done to the "young pig" whose actions were so insolent and annoying.

"Let me think," I replied, gravely. "We must certainly conquer young Ackley in some way, even if we have to toss him overboard; but I hope it will not come to that."

"Then think quick an' to the point, Sam," rejoined my uncle; "for I'm jest achin' to wollop the fool wi' a cat-o'- nine-tails."

At dinner Archie joined our table, silent but with a sneering and triumphant look upon his face. He was not handsome at any time, but just now his damaged face was positively disagreeable to behold. It occurred to me that the trouble with the young fellow was that he had not been taught to obey, and doubtless he imagined we were his enemies because we were endeavoring to prevent him from doing exactly what he wanted to. His idea of being a "free-born American citizen" was to be able to override the rights and privileges of others, and the sooner he got that notion out of his head the better it would be for him.

Archie was a deliberate eater and remained at the table with a sort of bravado because we took not the slightest notice of him. So I left him finishing his meal when I went on deck.

A few minutes afterward, however, he came bounding up the companionway with a white face and rushed up to where Uncle Naboth and I were standing.

"I've been robbed!" he cried, shaking his big fist at me. "My cabin's been entered by a thief, and I'll have the law on you all if you don't restore my property!"

"What have you lost?" I inquired.

"You know well enough, Sam Steele. I've lost all my cigarettes — ev'ry

box of ‘em! — and my four mouth-organs, too. They picked the lock on my door, and opened my telescopes, and stole my property.”

“How’s this, Sam?” inquired Uncle Naboth, his eyes twinkling.

“I don’t know, sir,” I answered, greatly surprised. “There are no duplicate keys to the cabin doors, and Ackley had his in his pocket, I suppose.”

“They picked the lock, I tell you, and the locks on both my traveling cases,” declared the boy, in a rage; “and you must be a fine bunch of practiced thieves, because they were all locked again after the goods were stolen.”

“How about your window?” I asked.

“I left it bolted on the inside. No one could enter that way.”

“Did you lose anything except the cigarettes and the mouth-organs?” I continued, beginning to be greatly amused.

“No; but those things are my property, and you or your people have stolen them. Look here, Sam Steele,” he added, coming close and shaking his fist threateningly; “either you return my property in double quick time or I’ll take it out of your hide. Just make your choice, for I mean business.”

I think he saw that I was not afraid of him, but I chose to ignore his challenge. I was neither as clever a wrestler as Joe Herring nor as expert with my fists as Archie Ackley; so it would be folly for me to undertake a personal encounter. But I said, quietly enough:

“You are getting insolent, my lad, and insolence I will not stand for. Unless you control your temper I will order you to the ship’s lockup, and there you shall stay until we drop anchor again.”

He gazed into my face long and steadily, and then began to whistle softly as he turned and walked away. But a few moments later he returned and said:

“Who’s going to make good my loss?”

“Send me your bill,” replied Uncle Naboth. “I’ll pay it.”

“I think Joe stole the things,” continued Archie.

I called Joe to us.

“Did you enter Ackley’s cabin and take his cigarettes and mouth-organs?” Uncle Naboth inquired.

“No,” said Joe, looking at Archie and laughing at his angry expression.

“Do you know who did it?” persisted my Uncle.

“No,” said Joe, again.

“He’s lying!” cried Archie, indignantly.

“Are you lying, Joe?” I asked, gently.

“Yes, sir,” returned Joe, touching his cap.

“Then tell the truth,” said I.

“I won’t, sir,” replied the boy, firmly. “If you question me, I’m bound to

lie; so it will be better to let me alone."

This answer surprised and annoyed me, but Uncle Naboth laughed aloud, and to my astonishment Archie frankly joined him, without a trace of his recent ill-nature.

"Just as I thought," he observed. "You're a slick one, Joe."

"I try to do my duty," answered Joe, modestly.

"Bring me your bill, young feller," said Uncle Naboth, "and I'll cash it in a jiffy — an' with joy, too. I don't see jest how Joe managed the affair, but he's saved us all a lot of trouble, an' I'm much obleeged to him, fer my part." And the old gentleman walked away with a cheerful nod.

"Uncle's right," I said to Archie. "You wouldn't be reasonable, you know, and we were simply obliged to maintain our ship's discipline. So, if your offending goods hadn't been abstracted so cleverly, there would have been open war by another day and our side was the strongest."

Archie nodded forgivingly toward Joe.

"Perhaps it was best," he admitted, with more generosity than I had expected from him. "You see, Steele, I won't be bulldozed or browbeaten by a lot of cheap skates who happen to own a ship, for I'm an independent American citizen. So I had to hold out as long as I could."

"You were wrong in that," I remarked.

"Right or wrong, I'll hold my own."

"That's a bad philosophy, Archie. When you took passage aboard this ship you made yourself subject to our rules and regulations, and in all honesty you're bound to abide by them. A true American shows his independence best by upholding the laws of his country."

"That's rot," growled Archie, but Joe and I both laughed at him because he could find nothing better to say. When he returned to his deck chair the passenger's face bore its normal expression of placid good nature. It was evident he prided himself on the fact that he had not "given in" of his own accord, and perhaps he was glad that the force of circumstances alone had conquered his stubborn temper.

CHAPTER FOUR
A RIOT AND A RESCUE

After that we had little trouble with Archie Ackley, although in many ways the stubborn nature of the boy was unpleasantly evident. In his better moods he was an agreeable companion, but neither Joe nor I, the only two other boys aboard, sought his society more than was necessary. My uncle and the Captain both declared there was a heap of good in the lad, and a few such lessons as the one he had received would make a man of him.

Joe I found a treasure in many ways, and always a faithful friend. Since that first night when he had come aboard he had nothing to tell of his past history or experiences; but his nature was quick and observant and I could see he had picked up somewhere a considerable fund of worldly knowledge which he could draw upon as occasion offered.

My father, Uncle Naboth, and I were all three delighted with the *Seagull's* sailing performances, though secretly I longed to discover how she would behave under steam, since her propeller had never been in use since the day it was given a brief trial test in Chelsea Bay. Tomlinson, the engineer, assured me we could make from sixteen to eighteen knots when the engines were working, and the man was naturally as impatient as I was to test their full powers. Still, we realized that we must wait, and Captain Steele was so delighted with the superb sailing qualities of the ship that even I had not the heart to suggest supplanting his white wings with black smoke from our funnels.

In due time we crossed the stormy Mediterranean and reached in safety our Syrian port, where we unloaded the rugs and delivered them in good condition to the consignees. We sailed along the coast, past Port Said, and finally came to the Bay of Alexandria, where we were to unload Ackley's cases of "modern antiques" and get rid of our passenger.

It was a new experience to me to find myself on the historic shores of Egypt, anchored before the famous city founded by Alexander the Great. I begged Uncle Naboth to take me ashore; overhearing my request Archie Ackley invited us all — with an air of great condescension — to dine with him at the Royal Khedivial Hotel.

My father refused. He was too fond of the *Seagull* to leave her alone in a foreign port; but Ned Britton took his place, and the four of us — Archie, Uncle Naboth, the Mate and I — followed by our faithful blacks, Nux and Bryonia, disembarked on the quay and walked up the long, foreign-looking streets to the big hotel.

It was a queer sensation to find ourselves moving amidst a throng of long-

robed turbaned Arabs; fez-topped Turks, with Frenchmen, and Syrians; gray-bearded, stooping Jews; blind beggars; red-coated English soldiers, and shrinking, veiled Moslem women.

"What a mess of foreigners," cried Archie, and Uncle Naboth, with a laugh, reminded him that we were the foreigners and this curiously mixed crowd, the natives.

We dined in sumptuous style at the handsome hotel, for Archie proved a liberal host and feasted us royally. It was late at night when we retraced our steps toward the quay; but the streets of the city were still thronged with people, many of whom were sitting at little tables placed on the sidewalks, where they smoked and drank Turkish coffee and chatted together in a very babel of tongues.

As we left the heart of Alexandria and drew near to the water-front the streets became more deserted and the lights were fewer and dimmer. There were still straggling groups here and there, and suddenly, as we turned a corner, we observed a commotion just ahead of us and heard a terrified voice cry out:

"Help — Americans — help!"

Ned Britton gave a bound and was in the thick of the melee at once. Archie was only a step behind him and I saw his big fists swinging right and left in fast and furious fashion, while Joe ducked his head and tossed a tall Arab over his shoulder with marvelous ease. Nux and Bryonia took a hand, and while none of our party was armed, the free use of their terrible fists wrought such havoc among the long-gowned Arabs that the result of the skirmish was not long in doubt. Like a mist they faded away and escaped into the night, leaving a little man wriggling and moaning upon the ground as if in deathly agony. I held fast to my left arm, which had been slashed by a knife and was bleeding profusely, while I stared around in surprise at our easy victory. Uncle Naboth had not taken part in the fray, but now appeared seated calmly upon the prostrate form of the Arab whom Joe had vanquished, and his two hundred and odd pounds rendered the prisoner fairly secure.

Our blacks raised the little man to his feet, where he ceased squirming but stood weakly leaning against Nux and trembling like a leaf.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked Ned.

The stranger shook his head. It was so dark in this spot that we could not distinguish his features very clearly, "I — I think not," he gasped. "But they nearly had me, that time. If you hadn't come up as you did, I — I — "

He broke off abruptly and leaned over to peer at the Arab Uncle Naboth was sitting upon.

"That's him! That's Abdul Hashim himself! Kill him — kill him quick,

some one!" he yelled, in a sudden frenzy.

The cry seemed to rouse the Arab to life. Like an eel he twisted, and Uncle Naboth slid off his back and bumped upon the sidewalk. The next moment we Americans were alone, for Abdul Hashim had saved his bacon by vanishing instantly.

"Oh, why — *why* did you let him go?" wailed the little man, covering his face with his hands. "He'll get me again, some day — he's sure to get me again!"

"Never mind that," said Ned, gruffly, for we were all disgusted at this exhibition of the fellow's unmanly weakness. "You can thank God you're out of his clutches this time."

"I do, sir — I do, indeed!" was the reply. "But don't leave me just now, I beg of you."

We looked at Uncle Naboth for advice. Bry had slit my sleeve with his pocketknife and was binding a handkerchief tightly around my wound, for he was something of a surgeon as well as a cook.

"We're going aboard our ship," said my uncle, shortly. "You're welcome to come along, my man, an' stay till mornin'."

The stranger accepted the invitation with alacrity and we started again for the quay, which was reached without further incident. Our boat was waiting and we were soon rowed where the *Seagull* was anchored and climbed aboard.

Under the clear light of the cabin lamp we looked at the person we had rescued with natural curiosity, to find a slender man, with stooping shoulders, a red Van Dyke beard, bald head and small eyes covered with big spectacles. He was about forty years of age, wore European clothes somewhat threadbare and faded in color, and his general appearance was one of seedy respectability.

"Gentlemen," said he, sitting in an easy chair and facing the attentive group before him, "I am Professor Peter Pericles Van Dorn, of the University of Milwaukee."

I had never heard of such a university; but then, Milwaukee is a good way inland. Neither had any of us before heard the name so unctuously announced; though we were too polite to say so, and merely nodded.

"It will please me," continued the Professor, "to be informed of your station and the business that has brought you to Egypt."

My uncle laughed and looked at me quizzically, as if inviting me to satisfy the stranger. Captain Steele scowled, resenting the implied impertinence. The only others present were Archie and Ned Britton.

I told Van Dorn we were a merchant ship from Boston, and had casually

touched at the port of Alexandria to unload some wares belonging to Mr. Ackley, who was going to ship his property to Luxor and deliver it to merchants there.

"What sort of wares?" demanded the stranger.

"Scarabs, funeral figures, and copies of antique jewelry," replied Archie, a bit uneasily.

"The curse of the country," snapped the little man, scornfully. "There ought to be a law to prevent such rubbish being shipped into Egypt — except," pausing to continue with a touch of bitterness, "that there are too many laws in this beastly country already."

"The poor tourists must have scarabs to take home with them," said Archie, with a grin. "About fifteen thousand travelers come to Egypt every year, and your Khedive won't let any genuine scarabs leave Egypt."

"Don't call him *my* Khedive, sir!" cried the little professor. "I detest — I *hate* the government here, and everything connected with it. But you are not interested in that. Gentlemen," assuming a pompous tone, "I am glad to meet you. You have arrived in the very nick of time to save me from assassination, or at least from utter failure in my great work. I am sure it was an All-wise Providence that directed you to stop at Alexandria."

"Disguised as old Ackley's mud scarabs," added my uncle, dryly.

"And what are your future plans?" inquired the Professor, eagerly.

"To return to America at once," I replied.

"No! A thousand times no!" shouted little Van Dorn, banging his fist on the table. "I charter you from this minute. I engage this ship — at your own price — to transport me and my treasure to New York!"

"Treasure!" we exclaimed, incredulously.

The Professor glanced around and lowered his voice.

"The greatest treasure, gentlemen, that has ever been discovered in Egypt. I have found the place where the priests of Karnak and Luxor hid their vast wealth at the invasion of Cambyses the Persian."

He paused impressively. My father looked at his watch and Uncle Naboth yawned. For myself, I should have liked to hear more, but my wound was paining me and Bry awaited my coming to dress it properly. So I said to our guest:

"If you please, Professor, we will hear your story in the morning. It is now late, and we are all longing for our berths. So we will bid you good-night and wish you pleasant dreams."

He glared at me indignantly.

"Can you sleep after what I have told you?" he demanded.

"I hope so, sir," I replied, and turned away to call Joe to show the man to

his room. He made no farther protest, but going away and looking rather thoughtful.

Bry found that the knife had merely inflicted a flesh wound on my arm, and promised it would give me little trouble. The bleeding had stopped, so my black surgeon washed the cut thoroughly, bandaged and plastered it quite professionally, and sent me to bed to sleep soundly until morning.

Really, I forgot all about the Professor, who looked the part of a savant much better than he acted it, it seemed to me.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE PROFESSOR'S SECRET

At breakfast Professor Van Dorn was silent and preoccupied, and as soon as the meal was over asked for a private interview with the person in authority aboard the *Seagull.* We went to the Captain's room, a large cabin where all could be comfortably seated. None of us had much confidence in the stranger's romantic assertions of the night before, but we were all curious to know what tale the man had to relate, and were disposed to listen. Archie's eyes bunged out so far from his round face that I took pity on the boy and asked him to join us. Ned Britton came, too, for he had been present at Van Dorn's rescue and we trusted him implicitly.

When we were seated and the Professor had assured himself we could not be overheard, he at once asked permission to relate the business that had brought him to Egypt and the strange experiences he had encountered here. We told him to fire away and we would hear his story.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you must know that I hold the honorable chair of Egyptology in my university. Since my youth I have studied arduously the history of this most ancient people, from whom sprung the modern civilization of which we boast today." He spoke pedantically, and I began to think he might be a real professor, after all. "To perfect my studies my college generously sent me here, three years ago, and soon after my arrival I became acquainted with Professor John Lovelace, whose famous works on ancient Egypt you have doubtless read."

We had not read them, but we let the assertion pass.

"Over here," continued the narrator, "he was usually called Lovelace Pasha, but he was not entitled to the distinction except in the imagination of the natives, who had a high respect for his intelligence and industry. At the time we met Lovelace he was searching diligently but secretly for a vast treasure, and he took me into his confidence and engaged me to assist him. You must know that in the sixth century before Christ Egypt was at its height of wealth and greatness; and the most important treasures were at that time in the possession of the priests of the great temple of Karnak. They consisted of wonderful gems, countless jewels and ornaments of gold and silver and, above all, a library of papyrus rolls relating the history of Egypt during that now unknown period between the sixth and twelfth dynasties.

"At this time, when the Egyptians had grown as proud and insolent as they were wealthy, that terrible Persian, Cambyses, invaded the country with a conquering host and steadily advanced up the Nile toward Karnak and Thebes, laying waste the country as he came and despoiling the temples of

their wealth. The legends say that the priests of Karnak, terror stricken, threw all their treasure into the Sacred Lake which adjoins their temple, in order to keep it from falling into the hands of the invader; and, as the lake is bottomless, the treasure has never yet been recovered.

"Now, sirs, Professor Lovelace, a shrewd and far-seeing man, doubted the truth of this story. It was an undeniable fact that the great treasure of Karnak was hidden somewhere by the priests, and that Cambyses put all the holy men to the sword because they would not reveal their secret. Also it is historical that the treasure has not since been discovered, and that the conqueror was unable to lay hands upon it after all his efforts to do so. During the centuries that have passed the Sacred Lake has been

dragged many times, with the hope of finding the immense wealth of Karnak; but it is now known that the quicksands at the bottom of the lake would have swallowed it up instantly, so naturally all these attempts have proved absolute failures.

"My friend Lovelace, pondering on this queer story, came to believe that the wily priests had never thrown their treasure into the lake at all. No one knew better than they that to place it there was to lose it forever; furthermore, the most valuable part of the treasure consisted of the historic papyri — the bark rolls on which the ancient Egyptians inscribed their records. To place these in water would be to destroy them; thus the falsity of the tale was evident. It was clear, my friend decided, that the priests had hidden the treasure somewhere in the desert, near Karnak, where the shifting sands would leave no evidence of the place to betray it to the keen eyes of the Persian. But they spread the report that it had been cast into the lake, so if any traitor might be among the people the truth would not be revealed.

"Since Cambyses put every priest of Karnak to death, in his unreasoning anger, there was none to recover the treasure when the Persian was gone home again, from which Professor Lovelace conjectured that it still lay secure in its original hiding-place.

"But where was that hiding place? That was the question to be solved. For years he sought in the desert without success but with rare patience, and at just about the time I arrived in Egypt he obtained a clue to guide him.

"On one of the ruined temple walls, hidden away in an unimportant corner, is carved a diagram which to an ordinary observer appeared to mean nothing at all. But Lovelace studied it and came to the conclusion that the diagram described the spot where the treasure was hidden. There was a picture of a high arch, called in Egypt a pylon; and through this picture, from one corner diagonally across to another corner, a line was chiseled. This line extended far beyond the pylon, past a grove of three pictured palm trees, and

then ended in a cross. Do you follow me, gentlemen?" with an eager, nervous glance into our faces.

Uncle Naboth nodded, but he looked bewildered. Archie's face wore a perfectly blank expression. My father was smoking placidly and looking out of the cabin window. Said I:

"We are not very familiar with Egyptian history, Professor; but I think we catch the drift of your story. Pay out the cable, sir, and we'll grasp what we can of it."

He seemed relieved, saying:

"Very well, my boy. Egyptian history is very fascinating, but this is neither the time nor the place for me to instruct you in it. Still, it is necessary that you understand something of the importance of the proposition I am going to make you, and I will be as clear as possible in my descriptions. The arch, or pylon, referred to in the picture, had three square towers, to distinguish it from many others, and after searching long among the ruins of Karnak, which cover many acres, Lovelace Pasha and I found one which, though partly demolished, still had one of the characteristic towers left, with traces of the others. Taking these as our guide we drew an imaginary line from corner to corner, as in the diagram, and taking our compass we started out to follow this imaginary line across the desert. Three miles away we found, to our great joy, the group of palms, very ancient, without doubt, but still standing, and near to these was a small oasis watered by a tiny spring.

"The question now remaining was, how far beyond the three palms was the point marked on the diagram by the cross — the point where the treasure had been buried? We were obliged to work very cautiously, for at this oasis lived a small but fierce tribe of desert Arabs having for their shiek, or ruler, one Abdul Hashim — the same devil who nearly murdered me last night. The Arabs were curious to know what we were after, for they are great thieves and often steal the contents of an ancient tomb after some lucky excavator has discovered it. So we kept our secret from them, until finally they became so angry that they would have driven us away from their neighborhood had not Professor Lovelace secured an order from the Khedive granting him the privilege of excavating and exploring in certain sections of the desert for relics of Egypt's ancient civilization. The Khedive will always grant these licenses, permitting the explorer to work at his own expense in the interests of science; but when a discovery has been made the laws oblige us to give or sell everything to the National Museum at Cairo, where they pay only the most insignificant prices because there is no other legal way in which one may dispose of ancient treasure or relics.

"But that absurd law did not concern us at the time; what we were eager

for was to discover the hidden treasure of Karnak, and to avoid the hostile Arabs we worked mostly during the clear moonlit nights, when all the tribe were asleep. We had sand-augers made, with which we burrowed into the sand to the foundation of rock underneath, striving to find some obstruction to indicate where the treasure was buried. By means of our compass we were enabled to follow a straight line, and we worked slowly and carefully for a distance of five miles beyond the oasis, and then back again, without any definite result. Sometimes we would strike an obstruction and dig down only to find a point of rock or a loose boulder, and the task seemed to me, after a few months, to be endless and impracticable. But Lovelace would not give up. He was positive he was on the right track, and when I declared I had had enough of the job and was going back to Cairo, he became suspicious of me, and threatened to kill me if I deserted him.

"This was my first suspicion that his mind had become unbalanced.

"'You know too much, Van Dorn, to be permitted to go away and blab my secrets to others,' he said. I assured him I should keep a closed mouth, but the fellow was so crazy over his idea that he would not trust me. He was a big man, determined and masterful, and I had to obey him whether I wanted to or not. I stuck to the search, though I became afraid of my companion.

"Well, sirs, not to bother you with details which are to you unimportant, I will say that finally, after more than two years of patient search, we chanced upon the treasure. My auger one day stuck in the sand and could not be withdrawn. Digging down we found that the point had plunged into a bronze ring and become fast. Lovelace gave a howl of joy at sight of the ring, for he knew then that our search was ended.

"It was after midnight, with bright stars shining down to light us as we worked. We cleared away the sand to the depth of more than four feet, and found the ring, duly attached to a large block of granite that rested on the rock foundation."

"Is there a layer of rock under the desert sands, then?" I inquired.

"Yes; in this section of the country," was the answer. "Archeologists will tell you that originally the earth was covered by a vast table-land of solid rock such as we now call sandstone. The erosion of wind and weather caused bits of this rock to crumble. The simoons caught them and whirled them around, breaking off other particles of rock and crumbling them into sand. As ages passed the sand increased in volume, until now the desert is covered with it to a depth of from two to six feet, and sometimes even more. Often the winds blow this sand into billows, leaving the bare table-land of rock to be seen stretching for miles and miles.

"But to return to my story. The block of granite was heavy, measuring

three by six feet on the surface and being more than two feet in thickness. Three bronze rings were imbedded in it, but pry and lift as we would we could not budge the huge stone an inch. It was evident that we must have help, so we covered up the stone again, marked the spot carefully, and went back to the Arab village.

"Next morning Lovelace bargained with the sheik, Abdul Hashim, for the use of two of his men to assist us. Also we were obliged to send to Luxor for four stout staves to use as levers. You may well imagine that all this excited the wonder of the Arabs, and I doubted if Lovelace would be able to keep his secret from them. However, he appeared to attach no importance to this danger, and the next evening we set out for our buried stone, accompanied by our assistants bearing the oaken staves. We quickly dug away the sand and cleared the stone, and then we four used the levers together and by straining our muscles to the utmost managed to lift the huge slab of granite until it stood on edge.

"Underneath was a rock cavity, carefully chiseled out by hand, and at first we saw only a mass of dried reeds brought from the Nile bank. Removing these we came upon heavy layers of rotted cloth, of the kind that was once used in Egypt for wrapping mummies. But after this padding was dragged away the treasure became visible and Lovelace's hands shook with excitement while he examined it. First there were many rolls of papyrus, carefully swathed in bandages; then several Canopic jars of pure gold, each containing quarts of wonderful pearls, rubies and emeralds; and finally a vast collection of wrought jewelry, gold and silver ornaments, some packed in rude wooden boxes which were old and falling to decay and others scattered loosely over them and filling every crevice.

"Lovelace said not a word while we were examining this vast treasure, the most remarkable collection that has come down to us from antiquity. His face was white and set and except for the trembling of his hands he kept himself under perfect control. The eyes of the Arabs, however, glittered with cupidity, and I caught them exchanging significant glances.

"The Professor took a couple of handfuls of rubies and pearls and thrust them carelessly into his pockets. He selected a few golden ornaments of exquisite workmanship, and replaced all the rest of the treasure, with its padding, in the rock cavity. When this had been done he commanded us to replace the granite slab, which we did, tipping it forward so that it again covered the orifice. Our next task was to fill in the sand, and as a light breeze was blowing we knew that in an hour the desert would show no marks of the excavation we had so recently made. The levers we left lying beside the granite slab, buried deep in the sand.

“Lovelace now motioned the Arabs to return toward their village, and they set out eagerly enough, we following close behind them. But after we had proceeded a few hundred yards Lovelace Pasha drew his revolver and calmly shot both men dead.

“‘Now, Van Dorn,’ he said to me, ‘help me to bury this carrion.’

“Horrified as I was at the murderous act I hastened to obey, for there was something strange about the Professor that night — a steely, cruel gleam in his usually kindly eyes — that recalled my former suspicions and made me fear that his great discovery had actually driven him mad.

“Silently we dug away the sand where the men had fallen and covered them up, smoothing the surface afterward as well as we were able. We proceeded to the village.

“‘Where are my children?’ demanded the sheik, sternly-

“‘Gone away on a far errand,’ said Lovelace.

“It was true enough, but Abdul Hashim was dissatisfied and suspicious. We slept late the next morning, and meantime the sheik had sent spies upon our trail. The jackals had dug up the bodies of the murdered Arabs and had half devoured them when their comrades reached the spot.

“It was open war between the tribe and us. We occupied a small stone house at the edge of the village. It had but one door and no windows, being merely a bare room thatched with palm leaves. When we heard the tribe running toward us with wild cries we knew the climax had arrived. Lovelace stood in the doorway and kept the Arabs at bay with his revolvers, but he did not know how long he would be able to hold out. He gave me the gems and gold ornaments and told me to escape and make my way to Luxor for help. I was instructed to put the treasure into the bank, gather a rescue party, and return as speedily as possible. Luxor was distant only four miles across the desert.

“While the Arabs were watching in front of the house I stood on the Professor’s shoulders, broke through the thatch at the rear, and dropped from the top of the stone wall to the sands beneath. While he returned to the entrance to distract their attention by a shot, I darted away toward Luxor and was soon safe from pursuit, even had I chanced to be observed.

“I performed my errand quickly and returned with a detachment of mounted police lent me by the governor of the city, for Professor Lovelace was a well-known explorer and under the protection of the Khedive. We arrived too late. I found only the Professor’s dead body, terribly mutilated by the knives of the Arabs. They had tricked him in some way during my absence, and so obtained their revenge.

“Abdul Hashim calmly told the officers that Lovelace Pasha had gone

mad, and was slain by them in selfdefense. He pointed to two dead men and several wounded to prove the truth of his assertion. I told another story, as you may imagine, but with no hint of the treasure. Shortly afterward I had the satisfaction of inducing the governor to raze Abdul Hashim's village to the ground, so that not one of the rude stones remained upon another, while the tribe was driven farther into the desert to seek new quarters.

"Fortunately I had not banked the sample treasure we had taken, not wishing to delay my friend's rescue, so that now I found myself the sole possessor of any knowledge relating to the great discovery. It has remained my personal secret until this hour, when I have confided it to you, gentlemen, in order to induce you to assist me."

He paused, as if the tale was ended, and for a time we, his listeners, remained silent and thoughtful. The story had impressed me, for one, greatly, and it had seemed to ring true until he came to that row with the Arabs. There were some unlikely statements about the death of Lovelace and Van Dorn's peculiar escape from the village, but I reflected that my ignorance of the ways of this people might well account for any seeming improbabilities that lurked in the story.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TREASURE OF THE ANCIENTS

UNCLE Naboth was the first to speak.

"Tell me, sir," said he, "why you have selected us to receive your confidence."

"I had two reasons," replied Van Dorn. "One is that I am afraid. I left Luxor and traveled to Cairo, trying to think of a way to secure the treasure for myself. At Cairo I was shot at from a window and narrowly escaped death. I came on here to Alexandria, as secretly as I could. Last night I was set upon by a band of Arabs, among whom I recognized the terrible Abdul Hashim. Had you not appeared at the same instant I would certainly have been killed. It seems as if Providence had decreed that we should meet. You have a swift vessel, bound for America, and I have a great treasure to be secured and transported home. Assist me in this emergency and your reward shall be greater than you could gain from a dozen voyages."

"This treasure," said my father, slowly and reflectively, "belongs to the Egyptian government, accordin' to your own say-so."

"Oh, no!" cried Van Dorn.

"I take it that way, from your statement."

"I said the present laws of Egypt, enacted a few years ago, forbade any relic of the old civilization to be taken out of the country. The Museum will buy all my treasure, and give me an insignificant sum not at all commensurate with its value; but what right has the Khedive to claim what I have worked so hard to secure? In America the gems alone will sell for millions."

"But this is an Egyptian treasure," I said. "The laws seem to me to be just. What right have you, a foreigner, to remove this great wealth from the country?"

"The right of discovery," retorted the little Professor, promptly, with an energetic bob of his head. "Who is the Khedive of Egypt? A Turk. A foreigner like myself, if you please, who rules here as a dependant of Turkey, and pays the Sultan eleven millions a year in tribute — a sum he wrings from the remnant of the true Egyptians, and from the Arab and other native population, by means of excessive taxes. This treasure once belonged to Egypt, we will admit, and it was buried by the Egyptian priests to save it from just such invaders as these Turks. But Egyptians no longer rule Egypt, nor ever will again; so that in simple justice this treasure belongs solely to its discoverer rather than to the usurper in the land where it lies buried."

"Still," said Uncle Naboth, "we have this government to reckon with.

Morally, you may be entitled to the treasure, but legally the decrees of the Khedive are inviolable. Eh? If we attempt to run away with this 'ere treasure, an' get caught, we can be punished as common thieves."

"But we shall not be caught!" cried the Professor. "Mark you, no one in Egypt suspects the existence of this treasure, so to take it will be robbing no one — not even the Khedive."

"Doesn't Abdul Hashim suspect it?" I inquired.

"Yes; perhaps I should make an exception of Abdul Hashim; but his information is at present confined to mere guessing, and he is too wily and covetous ever to tell his suspicions to a government official. What he wants is to get the treasure for himself, and the real battle, if we meet opposition, will be between Abdul Hashim and us. We ought to have killed him last night, when we had the chance; but unfortunately the dog made his escape."

"He's a dangerous enemy," observed Ned Britton.

"Only to the unarmed and helpless," quickly replied the Professor. "A half dozen Americans could defy his entire tribe. And it is possible we shall get a chance to kill him before he makes more trouble."

"You speak of murder very easily," said my father.

"They are but heathen men, wicked and cruel," protested the Professor, "and so numerous that a few of them sent to perdition will never be missed. As long as the government remains in ignorance of my secret we are safe from interference, except through this wild and worthless tribe led by Abdul Hashim, and brave Americans have no cause to fear him. Moreover, there is the treasure itself to be considered. Is it not worth while to risk something to secure an immense fortune?"

"What proof have you," asked Uncle Naboth, "of the existence of this treasure?"

Van Dorn hesitated a moment, then unbuttoned his vest and took from around his waist a leathern belt. This he laid carefully upon the table, and opening its folds drew out a number of brilliant rubies.

"Here is my proof," said he, offering the gems for inspection. "They are a part of the treasure Lovelace took on that terrible night I have described to you."

We examined them. They were large and brilliant, but cut into squares and oblongs, triangles and octagons, with smooth flat surfaces.

"These may be glass," remarked Uncle Naboth, musingly.

"I am a lapidary," said the Professor, his voice slightly trembling with indignation. "I assure you they are the most splendid rubies in the known world. Here are pearls. Even your ignorance will acknowledge their genuineness."

He produced, as he spoke, several superb pearls, as large as peas and tinted in exquisite rose colors.

"Ah," exclaimed Mr. Perkins, "I know pearls, all right; for I have traded for years with the Philippine pearl fishers. You are a strange man, Professor Van Dorn, to wish to risk your life for more of this plunder. Here is a fortune in itself."

Van Dorn shrugged his stooped shoulders, his red beard bristling with scorn.

"Would you, then, advise me to allow the treasure of Karnak to remain another two thousand years buried in the sands of the desert?" he asked. "Are your big speculators in America satisfied to acquire a million, or do they every one labor like slaves to make their million into a billion? Men are satisfied with many things in this age, but never are they satisfied with wealth. The more we have the more we strive to obtain. But here — look at these ornaments. Can modern goldsmiths match them?"

He drew out a golden necklace of magnificent workmanship, quaint in design and wrought with a delicacy and skill that were wonderful. A bracelet, two rings, and a diadem set with amethysts were also exhibited to our admiring eyes.

"These," said the Professor, "you must admit are both antique and valuable; yet they are a mere sample of the immense treasure I have discovered. There is enough, as I have told you, to make us all wealthy, and I am willing to divide liberally in order to obtain your assistance. But I shall not urge you. If you are too stupid or cowardly to accept my offer, keep my secret and go about your business. No harm is done. There will be thousands willing to undertake the adventure."

He put the jewels and ornaments back into the belt and buckled it around his waist, hiding it again underneath his vest. He leaned back in his chair, lighted a cigarette, and glanced at our grave faces inquiringly.

"Be good enough to go on deck for a time, Professor," said my father. "We will talk the matter over among ourselves before venturing to give you an answer."

He rose without protest and retired, and at once we began an earnest discussion of the proposal. The first point to settle was the legality of the thing, and it seemed to us the Professor was right in his contention that the present powers in Egypt, which had acquired the country by wars of conquest, had no more moral right to claim the buried treasure of the ancient priests of Karnak than had its recent discoverers. The old religion based on the worship of Isis and Osiris had disappeared from the earth and its votaries were long since dead or dispersed. The hidden treasure, formerly the

property of this religious body, had now no legal claimants and belonged to whomsoever had the fortune to find it and the courage to seize and hold it. That the Khedive had made laws forbidding anyone to remove ancient treasure from Egypt did not affect us in the least. We were free Americans and in no way under the dominion of the Turks who had conquered Egypt. They might exact tribute from this land and establish the claim of might to whatever wealth the country contained; but it was our privilege to evade this might if we chose to. There are true Egyptians yet living in Egypt, but they are poor-spirited folk and are largely outnumbered by the Arabs, Turks and other foreigners, so that the control of their native land is doubtless lost to them forever.

Having thus satisfied our consciences that we were justified in undertaking an adventure to secure this wealth, we faced the consequences of failure or discovery. There was nothing to demand our immediate return to America, and the time required by the undertaking was therefore available. But the *Seagull* represented a fortune to us, and we hesitated to jeopardize her safety. According to international treaty we were not safe from seizure in case the ship violated the laws of Egypt; but there was a strong probability that the worst fate liable to overtake us, if discovered, would be the confiscation of the treasure. The Khedive would hesitate to involve his country in a dispute with the United States by resorting to extreme measures. We were taking a chance, of course; but the game seemed well worth the chance, and none can expect to win who hesitates to risk a stake.

Having disposed of governmental interference we faced the question of a war with Abdul Hashim and his tribe, and decided to contest the Arab's claim — which was not in any way equal to that of the Professor, according to the story he had told us. We had before this encountered some desperate adventures in strange lands and were not disposed to shrink from a skirmish with these lawless Arabs, if they forced it upon us. There remained, then, but two points to be settled: the best way to get the treasure aboard ship, and our share in the division, once we had safely transported it to America.

We recalled the Professor and asked him for his plans and proposals. He was a queer little fellow, this Van Dorn; half coward and half bully; but there was no doubt the man possessed a share of shrewd intelligence.

"If we undertake to go up the Nile, past Cairo and Assuit," he said, "and try to bring the treasure back to Alexandria, the chances are that we should never succeed. This is the most populous portion of Egypt, and government spies and the mounted police are everywhere. Had this been my plan I should not have appealed to you to assist me. Your claim to become my allies lies in the fact that you have a swift ship unknown in these waters, a brave crew,

and the American love for adventure. But the ship is the most important possession of all."

"You don't expect us to sail up the Nile, do you?" I asked, impatiently.

"No, that is impossible," was his quiet reply. "From here to Luxor is seven hundred miles; but the Arabian Gulf, in the Red Sea, is only ninety miles from where the treasure is hidden. You will take your ship to Port Said, through the Suez Canal, and so down the Gulf to the small and unimportant town of Koser, where there is a good harbor. Here we shall hire camels which will take us in four days across the Arabian desert to the treasure, which we shall load upon the camels and bring back with us to the ship. We shall not appear at Karnak or Luxor at all, you see, and shall encounter only the desert Bedouins, who are quite friendly to Europeans. Nor need we even approach the ruins of Abdul Hashim's village. I know how to find the spot where the treasure lies, and in that lonely place there will be none to spy upon us."

"But how shall we find our way across the desert?" asked Uncle Naboth.

"Why, there still exists an ancient caravan route from Koser to Luxor," the Professor returned, "and we shall be able to secure guides who know every step of the way. It will be a tedious journey; four days to go and four to return; but, as I have said, the reward will be ample for such insignificant hardships."

"Your plan seems safe and practical," observed my uncle. "I like the idea. But now, Van Dorn, we must come to the most important point of all. What do you offer us in return for the use of our ship, for our services and for the expenses of the undertaking?"

"I will give you ten rubies and ten pearls," said he. "They are of such size and purity that you can easily sell them for ten thousand dollars. That is an ample reward, it seems to me."

I laughed, and the others — even to Archie — smiled as if amused. The little Professor had spoken with an air of great condescension, as if conferring upon us a rare favor.

"How much treasure is there?" asked my father.

"That will not matter to you," retorted Van Dorn. "I will give you the pearls and the rubies now, before we start. They shall be your wage. Afterward, all the treasure we secure shall be my own exclusive property."

Uncle Naboth yawned — it was a habit he had when bored — and my father slowly arose and stumped from the room.

"When will you go ashore, Professor?" I asked.

"What do you mean by that question?" he demanded, his face nearly as red as his beard.

“Only that we intend to sail on our return voyage at sundown, and probably you are not quite ready to go to America in our company. One of the boats will land you on the quay whenever you please to go.”

He looked at me intently, his face now turned chalky white.

“Come, Archie,” said I, cheerily, “let’s go and see about unloading your boxes.”

“Stay!” cried Van Dorn, suddenly. “What do you people demand?”

“We? Oh, sir, we make no demands at all. Your proposition was, as you doubtless well knew, one it would be impossible for us to accept. But we shall keep your secret, never fear, and the best proof is that we are off for America. You are at liberty to go ashore and negotiate with others.”

“And be murdered by Abdul Hashim,” he added, bitterly.

“Ah; that is your affair,” I replied, indifferently.

I went on deck with Archie and directed the men in getting the Ackley cases hoisted from the hold and swung aboard a small lighter, which landed them safely on the quay. I intended to send the boy’s two big telescopes with the goods, but Archie objected.

“Wait a bit,” he whispered to me soberly. “I haven’t decided yet to go ashore.”

“Not to deliver your father’s goods to the merchants at Luxor?” I asked, with a smile.

“No. See here, Sam; I’m in on this deal,” he announced, earnestly. “If you fellows go fortune-hunting you must take me along.”

“Oh, you want a share, do you?” I said, sarcastically.

“I won’t refuse a small slice, Sam; but the most I’m after is the fun. This is the biggest deal I’ve ever heard of, and it promises a lot of sport before you’re through with it. Let me in, will you?” he added, pleadingly.

“I’m willing, Archie. But it’s likely we can’t come to terms with the Professor. He don’t want to divvy fair, you see.”

The little man was now walking disconsolately about the deck. Apparently he was in a state of deep dejection.

I went with Archie to the quay, where he paid the import duties on his father’s wares and arranged to have them forwarded by the railway to Luxor, where they were consigned to himself.

“You see, we don’t know these Greek and Syrian merchants,” he explained, “and we can’t trust dealers in humbug goods. That’s why father wanted me to come along. I’m to collect for the stuff when I deliver it, and also take orders for anything more they want us to manufacture.”

“But don’t you intend to travel with the goods?” I asked.

“No. They can wait at Luxor for me until we’ve decided what to do about

the Professor's treasure. According to his story it lies buried only a few miles from Luxor, so I may be able to attend to both errands at the same time."

Ah; if we only knew what this plan was destined to cost us!

CHAPTER SEVEN
A GREAT UNDERTAKING

As archie and I returned along the quay from the custom house, to regain our boat, I noticed standing upon the edge of the dock the solitary but impressive figure of an Arab.

He was fully six feet tall and splendidly formed. His dirty white burnous was wrapped around him in a way to emphasize the dignity of his pose, and his handsome countenance was calm and impassive. From beneath the ample folds of a black and yellow turban two wide dark eyes were set on a point of vision across the bay, and following his gaze I saw that it was directed toward the *Seagull* lying at her anchorage. These eyes, accustomed to the distances of the desert, might be stronger than my own, yet I myself found that I could discern dark forms moving about upon our deck, and one in especial — was it the Professor? — was leaning quietly over the side nearest the quay.

The Arab did not notice Archie or me, so I had a chance to examine him critically. He was not old — perhaps thirty-five — and his unshaven face was a light tan in color. As we rowed out to the ship his eyes at last fell upon us, and I thought that he watched us intently until we were well aboard. From the deck I could still see his stalwart, motionless figure standing erect in the same position; and perhaps the Professor saw him, too, for he came toward me with an uneasy expression upon his face and requested another interview with my father, Uncle Naboth, and myself.

I summoned Ned Britton, Archie, and Joe, as well, and presently we all assembled in my father's cabin.

"I have been thinking over this proposal," began Van Dorn, "and have concluded that my first offer was not liberal enough, in the circumstances. To be frank with you," his little, ferret eyes were anything but frank, just then, "the treasure is useless to me without your assistance in obtaining and transporting it to a place of safety. So I am willing to meet your views in the matter of a division of the spoils."

We regarded him silently, and after a moment he added: "What do you think would be just, or satisfactory?"

My uncle answered. He was an experienced trader.

"According to your own story, sir," said he, "you are not the original discoverer of this treasure. Professor Lovelace worked several years in tracing it, and finally succeeded because he had found an obscure diagram engraved on the ruined walls of a temple. He hired you to assist him. Tell us, then, what share of the plunder did he promise you?"

The Professor hesitated, but thinking to deceive us, though his manner assured us he was lying, he said boldly:

“I was to have one-half. But of course after Lovelace was murdered the whole belonged to me.”

“Was there any compact to that effect?” I asked.

“Not exactly. But it is reasonable and just, is it not?”

“Had Lovelace no heirs — no family?”

“None whatever.”

Said Uncle Naboth, with his usual deliberation:

“If you were to receive one-half the treasure from Lovelace, in return for your assistance, we will make the same contract with you in return for ours. Lovelace seemed to think it was worth that much, and we will abide by his judgment.”

Van Dorn turned red. There was no escape from the toils he had cast about himself by his foolish statement. He looked thoughtfully out of the window, and following his gaze I saw the solitary Arab still standing on the quay with his face set in our direction.

A scarcely perceptible tremor seemed to pass over the Professor’s slight frame. He turned to us with a new animation in his face.

“Professor Lovelace reserved for himself the collection of papyrus rolls,” said he, in a brisk tone. “I will do the same. These writings would be of no value to you, in any event. All of the jewels, ornaments, or other treasure than the papyri, I will agree to divide with you equally.”

“Very good,” said Uncle Naboth, with a nod. “It is our agreement. Write it down, Sam, and all these witnesses shall sign the document.”

I brought paper and pens and began to draw up the agreement. Presently I paused.

“In case of your death, Professor, I suppose you are willing all the treasure should belong to us, since that was your own claim when Lovelace died?”

He grew a little pale as he answered: “Do you want to put that in the paper?”

“Yes, if you please.”

“Will you agree, on your part, to protect me from harm in all possible ways, to guard my life as completely as you do your own lives?”

“Certainly.”

“Then include it in the contract. It would be a terrible thing to die just when all this treasure is fairly in my grasp; but if I lose my life in the venture there is no one to inherit my possessions.”

As I resumed my writing Uncle Naboth remarked:

“We’ll look after you, sir, never fear. Sam only means to cover any

possible mishaps, and I guess he's right. But we'll be satisfied with a fair division, and intend to do our duty by you if it costs us our lives to protect you."

When the contract was ready the Professor signed it without a word of protest, and after the witnesses had attached their signatures the little man went on deck and left us alone.

"He means treachery," remarked my father, coolly.

Uncle nodded.

"Quite possible, Dick; but it will be our business to watch him. His story is true, because he has the evidence to prove it, and I've no doubt he'll lead us straight to the treasure. But what his game is afterwards, I can't imagine."

After that we sat silent for a time.

"Uncle," said I, happening to think of the thing, "Archie wants to go along with us."

Mr. Perkins scratched his head reflectively.

"What share does he want?" he asked.

I turned to Archie for the reply.

"If I'm any help to you, you can give me whatever you please," said the boy. "I want to see the fun, mostly; but I'll not refuse any reward I'm able to earn."

"That's fair and square," said Uncle Naboth. "You're welcome to come along."

"Now, then," proclaimed my father, "we've got to talk to the men. That's your job, Sam — you've got the gift of palaver. The enterprise is irreg'lar an' some dangerous, an' our lads must be told jest what they're expected to do."

We went on deck and piped all hands aft for a conference.

As clearly as I was able I related to the crew the story Van Dorn had told us, and his proposal to us to assist him in getting the treasure. The only points I concealed were the location of the hoard and its probable value.

"If you will join us in this adventure," I added, "we promise every man three times his regular pay, and in case we get the treasure one-tenth of our share also be divided equally among you. We don't expect much trouble, yet there may be a scrimmage or so with the Arabs before we get done. Any of you who fear this danger or don't like the job we've undertaken, will be left at Port Said until we return, and we shall think none the worse of those men, who will simply forfeit their prize money. Now, lads, what do you say?"

There wasn't a dissenting voice among them. They were Americans. Many had sailed with us before, and all were picked men who had proved themselves honest and trustworthy. My father had indeed chosen his crew with care and judgment, and I think we were not much surprised that from

Ned Britton down to the meanest sailor all were eager to undertake the venture.

We cleared the port, sailed down to Port Said, and paid our fee to be passed through the Suez Canal to the Gulf of Arabia — no insignificant sum, by the way, but an incidental expense of the enterprise. The Professor had sadly informed us that he had no ready money to meet any of these emergencies; therefore we undertook to pay all expenses.

Our last view of the quay at Alexandria showed the strange Arab still at his post, motionless and staring calmly after us. I noticed that Van Dorn heaved a sigh of relief when we drew away from the harbor and the solitary watcher had faded slowly from our sight.

We were obliged to lie for four days at Port Said before our turn came to enter the canal, for several big liners of the East India Company and many packets of many nations were before us. Having our own engines we did not require a tug, and after a seemingly interminable period, although the distance is only one hundred miles, we emerged from the canal at Suez and Port Ibrahim and found the broad waters of the Red Sea lying before us.

Heading southward we found fair breezes that wafted us at a good speed along the two hundred and fifty miles of barren coast between Suez and Koser. The Arabian desert, bleak and covered in places with bare mountains, was in sight on our right all the way, and the few small villages we passed did not seem inviting.

At length, on the evening of the 12th of February, we anchored in the little harbor of Koser, and although the natives came flocking around us in their miserable fishing boats, offering fruit for sale and doubtless wondering what chance had led so strange and trim a craft as the *Seagull* to their forsaken port, we made no attempt to land or communicate with them until the next morning.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GEGE-MERAK

AFTER BREAKFAST UNCLE Naboth, the Professor, and I rowed ashore and landed on the primitive wooden quay, whence we proceeded to the town — a group of mud dwellings, palm thatched, standing on a small eminence near the bay. At the left of the town were several large storehouses belonging to the government, where tithes of grain were kept.

A silent but observant group of natives met us on shore and accompanied us up the path to one of the principal houses, where Van Dorn, who understood Arabic, informed us the sheik and cadi awaited our coming.

After a brief delay we were ushered into a low but spacious room where the light was so dim that at first I could see nothing. Presently, however, my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom and I made out a big, whiskered Arab sitting cross-legged on a mat and surrounded by a group of friends and advisors.

To my relief they spoke English; brokenly, yet sufficiently well to be understood; and the sheik in most polite phrases begged to know why we had honored his poor village by a visit.

The Professor explained that our vessel was bound for India, but that some of our party had an errand at Luxor and we wished to secure a guide, an armed escort, and some good camels, to form a caravan to cross the desert and return. The ship would wait in the harbor until we had accomplished our journey.

They listened to this story respectfully. We were Americans, they judged. Only Americans in Egypt were credited with doing unusual things. An Englishman or other foreigner would have taken the railway to Luxor by way of Cairo.

But they had no desire to grumble at our strange whim. To keep the ship in their harbor a week longer would mean more or less patronage of the village bazar as well as harbor fees for the sheik. The caravan across the desert would mean good earnings for many worthy citizens, no doubt.

But just here they seemed to scent difficulties. The Arabs talked together earnestly in their own language, and the Professor explained to us in an anxious voice that guides were scarce in Koser just then. The best, a famous Arab Bedouin, had gone west to the mines on a three weeks' journey. Another had just departed to take a party to Kift. The third and last one available was lying ill with a fever. There was no trouble about camels; the sheik had himself several superior animals to offer, and a neighbor chief of the Bega Bedouins owned a splendid drove and could furnish any number

required. But the guide was lacking, and a guide was absolutely necessary; for the desert was trackless and infested by *haramyeh,* or robbers.

That seemed to settle the matter, to the great grief of the sheik; but the little Professor protested most vigorously that he had to go, and that a way must be found to secure for us a competent guide. Extra money would be available in the emergency, he added, and the hint set the bearded Arabs conferring again. They talked in Arabic, and I heard the name of Gege-Merak mentioned several times. The Professor, listening intently, told me this was the Bega chief who owned the camels. Gege-Merak had once been the most famous guide on the desert, but he was now old, and had retired from active life years ago. Still, if there was plenty of money to tempt him, he might be induced personally to lead us to Luxor and back.

The discussion resulted in a messenger being dispatched to Gege-Merak, who lived a day's journey in the desert, to propose our offer and bring back the chief's reply. There would be nine of our own party, and we desired an escort of six armed natives, besides the guide.

The delay was inevitable, and we waited as patiently as we could for the messenger's return. That evening we entertained the sheik and his chief men at dinner aboard the ship, and before they returned to the shore they vowed undying friendship for us all, including Nux and Bryonia.

My father's cork leg especially won their admiration and respect, and they declared he must be a very great and famous Captain in his own country to be entrusted with the command of so noble and so beautiful a ship. We told them he was. The Professor added that next to the President himself all Americans revered Captain Steele, who had won many battles fighting against his country's enemies. I was amused at this absurd description, but it afterward served us a good turn, and perhaps preserved our lives.

The next day we visited the bazar, where unimportant articles were offered for sale, and as the sheik was himself the principal owner we purchased considerable rubbish that we had no use for, just to keep the rascals good natured.

On the third day, at about sunset, the messenger returned, and to our surprise he was accompanied by a train of fifteen camels — all fine, strong specimens of these desert steeds.

He had brought bad news for the sheik, though. Gege-Merak had consented to guide the strangers in person, but he would supply all the camels, tents, and blankets himself, and receive all the hire for them. Moreover, the armed escort must be all from his own tribe; no dog of an Arab should have anything to do with his caravan.

The sheik frowned, cursed the impudent Bega, and swore he would not

allow his dear friends, the Americans, to fall into Gege-Merak's power.

Uncle Naboth and I went out and examined the escort. They were handsome, well-formed fellows, with good features and dark, bronze hued complexions. Their limbs were slender and almost delicately formed, yet promised strength and agility. I decided at once that these men looked less like robbers than the Arabs of the village.

The Ababdeh — for the Bega warriors belonged to this caste — sat their camels stolidly and in silence, awaiting the acceptance or rejection of the offer of their chieftain. They were dressed in coarse woolen robes colored in brilliant native hues, but they wore no head covering except their luxuriant, bushy hair, which formed a perfect cloud around their faces and seemed to me nearly a foot in thickness. In their girdles were short knives and each man carried slung across his back a long, slender rifle with an elaborately engraved silver stock.

My uncle agreed with me that the escort looked manly and brave. We concluded there was a way to satisfy the sheik, so we went back to him and offered to pay a liberal sum for his permission to engage Gege-Merak. He graciously consented, although he warned us that the desert Bega were not the safest people in the world to intrust with our lives and that only the fear of consequences would prevent the Ababdeh chief from murdering us and rifling our bodies.

The Professor, however, had no such fears. He confided to us his opinion that we were fortunate in having no Arabs in our party. In case we chanced to encounter Abdul Hashim, the Bega would be more likely to prove faithful than would the Koser Arabs. So he had reason to hope for our safe return from our adventure.

For my part I pinned my faith to our stalwart escort of American sailors, thinking in my pride and ignorance that any one of them would be worth six Bega or Arabs if it came to a fight, and forgetting that the desert is a prison to those who do not know its trackless wilds.

Desiring as little delay as possible we loaded the camels that evening with provisions from our ship and the light baggage, taking no more of the latter than was absolutely necessary. Bryonia, who was going with the party, insisted on carrying certain pots and pans with which to provide proper meals while en route, and these the Bega looked upon with absolute disdain. But I was glad to see our cook's provision for our comfort, since we were to be gone eight or nine days at the least.

Next morning we mounted the camels and set out. After some careful figuring we had organized our party as follows: The Professor first, of course; then Uncle Naboth, Archie Ackley, Joe, and myself. My father made

some objection to three boys joining the party, but it was an adventure in which any boy would be eager to participate, and Joe begged so hard to go along and was so devoted to me personally that I argued the matter until Captain Steele gave in and consented. My father thought he could not ride a camel in comfort because of his cork leg, so he remained aboard to look after the ship. He let Ned Britton join us, though, and three sailors, all loyal fellows and splendid specimens of American manhood. This completed our party of nine. We were all armed with revolvers and repeating rifles, and felt that in case of attack or interference we could give a good account of ourselves.

The weather was warm at this season, but when we started, soon after dawn, a gentle breeze was coming over the desert and we set out in good spirits in spite of the fact that the motion of the camels caused us to sway awkwardly in our tall saddles. We should get used to this motion in time, the Professor assured us; but at first it jolted us terribly.

It seemed as if the entire population of the village had assembled to see us start, and from their looks they evidently considered us little less than madmen. The sheik wished us a safe journey and promised in the hearing of the Bega to avenge us in case we met with treachery; but at the same time, he told the Professor privately, he refused to guarantee our savage escort in any particular.

Bidding my father and the crew of the *Seagull* a cheery farewell, we left Koser and began our journey across the desert.

The Ababdeh were silent fellows, but when I questioned them I found that at least two of their number understood and spoke English fairly well. They did not waste words in expressing themselves, but seemed intelligent and respectful in their demeanor toward us.

Our progress the first day was slow, for the way was across heavy sands that tired the camels to walk upon. We made a halt for luncheon and at about sundown reached the encampment of the Bega chief, Gege-Merak. It was situated on a tiny oasis of the desert, which boasted a well of good water and a group of a dozen tall spreading date-palms. Under the palms were set the chief houses of the village, made of mud and thatched with palm leaves; but the huts of the people extended also out upon the desert, on all sides of the oasis. These mainly consisted of low walls of mud roofed with squares of canvas, and none save the house of the chieftain was high enough for a man to stand upright within it.

I was surprised at the number of this isolated tribe of Bega, and it was a wonder to me how they all managed to subsist. They had many goats and camels and a small herd of buffalo-cows — too many, seemingly, to crop the

scant herbage of the oasis; but there was no attempt at agriculture that I could discover.

We halted before the house of the chief, and after conferring together our escort conducted my uncle, the Professor, and myself into the building. We found ourselves in a large, cool room, lighted and aired by open spaces between the top of the walls and the roof. At the rear was a dark passage, doubtless leading into other apartments, but the appearance of the interior was extremely primitive and unattractive.

Upon a rush mat at one side of the room sat a young girl, her slender form graceful and upright, her dark eyes fixed curiously upon us. She seemed about fifteen years of age, but may have been two or three years younger, for the women of these desert gypsies mature early in life. Her hair, unlike that of the other Bega we had seen, was not bushy and cloudlike, but its luxuriant tresses were heavily plaited into several braids, two hanging in front over either shoulder and two others dropping behind her back. On her arms or ankles were broad bands or bracelets of silver, some of them set with odd stones of strange colors and shapes. Golden bangles — perhaps Persian or Arabian coins — were strung together on wires and woven into the braids of her hair. She wore a robe of some thin, strong material which was striped in alternate bands of scarlet and green — a robe more becoming than its description sounds, I think — and across her rounded shoulders was folded a Syrian scarf covered with rich embroidery.

The girl was undeniably handsome. She would have been conspicuous by reason of her beauty in any civilized community. Here, surrounded by a barbaric desert tribe, she seemed a veritable daughter of Venus.

I could not stare long at this gracious sight, for beside the girl sat, or rather squatted, a personage whose powerful individuality compelled attention.

Gege-Merak — for I did not doubt I beheld the chief — was a withered, wrinkled old man scarce five feet in height when standing upright, a veritable dwarf among his handsome, well formed subjects. One eye — the right one — was gone, and across the sightless cavity and reaching from his cheek to his forehead, was a broad, livid scar as from the slash of a knife or a sword-cut. The other eye, small and glittering, regarded us with a glare as disconcerting as that of a snake, it being set in his face deep amid the folds of wrinkled flesh. His chin protruded and his thin lips were closed together in a straight line, while his bushy hair was snow-white in color, denoting great age.

I own I was amazed to find the famous chief so different from his people; and when I realized that we had voluntarily put our lives into the keeping of this old, evil-featured Bega, I began to suspect there was a foundation for the

Arab sheik's persistent croak of danger. Still, as Gege-Merak sat huddled upon his mat, motionless save for that roving, terrible eye, it occurred to me that he was too old and feeble to lead the caravan himself, as he had sent word to us that he would do, and without doubt would delegate the task to some other.

At our entrance the warriors knelt to their chief and crouched subserviently their foreheads to the mats; but afterward they stood erect in a group at one side. They neither saluted nor appeared to notice the girl at all.

"So," said Gege-Merak, in a quiet voice and speaking excellent English. "Here are the travelers who wish to be led to Luxor. What is your errand there?"

He looked from one to another of us, and I took upon myself to answer him, as the Professor seemed to hesitate.

"Sir, that is our business alone," I declared, stiffly. "All that we require from you is your camels, your warriors to guard us, and a guide."

"I am rebuked, Effendi," said he, fixing his small eye upon me with a penetrating gaze, but exhibiting no humility in his tones. After a slight pause: "Do you agree to my price in return for the service you require?"

"Yes; you are to receive one hundred English pounds."

"In advance," he added, softly.

"One-half in advance," said I. "The remainder when we have returned in safety."

"Let me see the money."

I produced a bag containing fifty gold pounds, and stooping down counted them out upon the mat before him. He watched me silently.

"Now I will see the other fifty," he said.

I began to dislike the chief; but now the Professor said, somewhat to my surprise.

"Pay him the full amount, Mr. Steele; it will be better that way."

"Why?" I asked, turning to him rather angrily.

"Because the great chief is suspicious of our honesty, and we want him to believe we are honest. Also because Gege-Merak's word is sacred, and he will be faithful when he is paid. For a third reason, it will be just as well for you not to carry that gold across the desert and back again, when the chief is able to put it away in a safe place before we begin the journey."

Gege-Merak listened carefully and it was evident he approved this argument. But he said nothing and merely looked at me inquiringly.

Of course, if the natives would prove faithful, the Professor's plan of advance payment was best. After a look toward Uncle Naboth, which he answered with a nod, I drew out another fifty pounds and counted it upon the

mat beside the first.

“Now, Gege-Merak,” said I, “you are paid in full.”

CHAPTER NINE

ACROSS THE BLACK MOUNTAINS

THE CRUEL LITTLE eye of the chief twinkled brightly at sight of all this golden display, but he made no motion to gather it up. Instead, he turned his keen glance first upon me and then upon the others of our party, as if striving to gauge our thoughts and read our secret characters.

"I will see the other Americans," he finally said.

The Professor summoned Ned Britton, Archie, Joe, Bry, and the sailors, and soon they all stood wonderingly before the Bega chief. He examined each one with silent interest, down to the smallest item of attire. He nodded and asked them to again withdraw.

"Effendi," said he, addressing me when the others were gone, "you are deceiving me in regard to your errand. Your party is strong and heavily armed. You ask me for brave warriors to assist you, and for my own services as guide. All this is not usual with peaceful traders or travelers who wish to cross the desert to Luxor on an errand of simple business. Another thing. You willingly pay me a big price — more than my service is really worth. Again, you ask for two extra camels, bearing empty saddle-bags. Therefore you have a secret intention you do not reveal to me. The little red-beard's eyes are bright with fever. You all expect trouble. You may get me mixed with your trouble, so that the authorities will imprison me and scatter my tribe. I am a good subject of the mighty Sultan and our father the Khedive. Therefore I refuse the compact. Take your gold, Effendi, and return to Koser."

This speech of the wily chief fairly took away my breath. Uncle Naboth seemed disappointed, and the Professor trembled nervously. I am sure our various emotions were clearly apparent to Gege-Merak, for his roving eye bore an expression of grim amusement.

It was the Professor who finally answered. He knew the covert disposition of these strange people better than we did.

"See, then, my brother, how much we trust in your friendship and honesty," said he. "Our errand is indeed twofold, as you have wisely suspected. One part is to permit the young effendi, Archie Ackley, whom you have just seen, to collect pay for his wares from certain merchants in Luxor. The second part of our errand is to permit me to secure some property belonging to me which I left concealed in a part of the desert near Karnak. Our bargain with you is to guide and escort us safely to these places and enable us to bring back to our ship at Koser the property I have mentioned and young Ackley's payments from the merchants. For our purpose of

transportation the two extra camels will be sufficient. But we shall have no trouble with the authorities, because we intend to commit no crime and break no law of the land. I will not conceal from you the fact that I am at enmity with a miserable Arab sheik named Abdul Hashim, who lives upon the desert near Luxor and who might try to prevent me from securing my property if he knew I had come for it. He does not suspect my journey at present, and I hope to avoid him altogether, since he is just now under the displeasure of the Khedive's police, which has destroyed his village and scattered his lawless band. But we must go armed in case the Arab dares to molest us, and part of your liberal payment is to fight well for us if there should be need. Also, bands of robbers infest the desert, and we do not wish to be robbed on our journey. So we take all needful precautions. Is the great and wise chief, my brother, now satisfied?"

Gege-Merak was silent for a time, thoughtfully studying the mat at his feet. Then he replied:

"I know Abdul Hashim. He is a jackal. I know the police have destroyed his village, as you truly say; but he is rebuilding it. Abdul Hashim has powerful friends, and he will fight his foes in spite of our father the Khedive. If I accept your offer I may lose many camels and men. Also I make a foe forever of Abdul Hashim and his tribe. No; I will not consent; the hundred gold pounds is not enough."

He had caught us fairly. I saw plainly enough that we must either abandon the adventure altogether or consent to be robbed at the start by this grasping Bega. The Professor asked permission for us to withdraw and consult together, and we went into the open air to hold a conference.

Uncle Naboth asked the Professor how much he judged the treasure to be worth. We had already invested a considerable sum in the speculation and were about to risk our lives as well.

Van Dorn could only estimate the amount of the treasure, of which he had obtained merely a glimpse. But he thought its total value could not possibly equal less than five hundred thousand pounds, or two and a half million dollars in American money. It was well worth doubling the chief's bribe, he urged, and we all were loth to retreat on the eve of our adventure. We decided to win Gege-Merak's support at all hazards, and presently stood again in the presence of the chief.

He sat just as we had left him, with the beautiful, statuesque girl at his side, and the money still spread before him on the mat.

"Brother," said the Professor, "we have counselled together and decided that your demands are not unfriendly. For your powerful support, for the risk you take and the assurance that you will stand by us bravely and faithfully,

we will double the price first agreed upon. Twenty pounds more we will give you now. It is all the remaining money we brought with us. But upon our return to the ship we will give you eighty pounds in addition, making two hundred pounds in all. Does this satisfy you?"

"No," was the quiet answer. "Give me the twenty pounds and your writing to pay me one hundred and eighty pounds more on our return to the ship and I shall be content. If any of my men are killed in fighting I will say nothing. If any of your party is killed you shall not blame me in any way. Make a writing as I have said and I will be true to you. This is my last word."

I groaned in spirit at the necessity, but I tore a leaf from my notebook and with my fountain pen wrote the agreement. Uncle Naboth and the Professor added their signatures to mine. It was a great sum in Egypt, this fifteen hundred dollars, and we had promised not to hold Gege-Merak responsible if any of us lost our lives in the venture. But the Professor assured us we had won a powerful ally and that the investment was warranted by our necessity.

I gave the Bega chief the paper, which I felt sure he could not read, and counted out our remaining twenty pounds upon the mat. Thereupon he spoke to the girl in his native tongue, for the Bega have a language of their own, although they usually speak a hybrid Arabic. She leaned forward, calmly gathered up the money in her scarf, arose and left the room by the dark passage. She was tall for her age and moved with grace and dignity.

"At daybreak," said Gege-Merak, "the caravan will be ready to start. I shall go with you. To-night my brothers will sleep in a house prepared for you. Ketti will lead you to it."

The young warrior who had guided us to the village from Koser now came forward and bowed to us respectfully. We nodded farewell to the chief and followed Ketti to a large house of one bare room, where our entire party shortly assembled. Bry had already brought out his pots and pans and soon a good supper was ready for us. Appetites are keen upon the desert, and the evening was already well advanced when we had finished the repast. Soon after, tired by our first day of camel riding, we rolled ourselves in our blankets and fell asleep.

I was roused even before daybreak by the noise and shouting in the village. Every inhabitant seemed astir and in a state of wild excitement, yet there was nothing for our party to do but fold our blankets and eat the breakfast our black cook quickly served us. At first we stumbled around blindly in the gloom, but gradually the sky grew lighter, until suddenly the first red beams of the sun shot over the edge of the desert. Beside the well and just in front of the chief's house the camels were assembled, all bridled and saddled and ready for the journey. We took the beasts assigned us and

mounted to our places while the obedient creatures knelt to receive their burdens. The entire population of the village stood around, silent now, but observant, to watch the start.

When we were ready I noticed that two of the camels still knelt awaiting their riders. They bore gorgeous trappings, the saddles being studded with brass and silver ornaments. The delay was brief, for soon the little old chief came from his house, followed by the girl we had seen the night before.

I had wondered how Gege-Merak, who had seemed to be nothing more than a withered, dried-up mummy, could by any possibility be able to lead the caravan in person; but now, to my surprise, he advanced with swift steps, agile and light as the tread of a panther, and seated himself upon his kneeling camel. His one bright eye roved over the assembled villagers, who all prostrated themselves an instant before resuming their former upright positions. The chief was clad in the same bright colored burnous he had worn the night before. An old-fashioned pistol was stuck in his sash and at his side hung a Turkish cimetar with a jeweled handle. When his camel had risen to its feet Gage-Merak made a brief speech to the villagers and gave the signal to start.

The girl, meantime, had quietly mounted the other camel and taken her place beside the chief. No one saluted her or seemed to notice her presence, yet to me she was scarcely less interesting than her aged companion. The Bega women were numerous in the village, were generally good looking and bold in their demeanor, yet the warriors seemed to make a point of disregarding them altogether, as if the sex was wholly unworthy of masculine attention. It seemed to be a Bega characteristic and partly explained why the chief's companion was so generally ignored, but I was curious to know something of the girl who was to accompany us. So as we rode slowly away from the oasis, I asked Ketti, who was near me, who she was.

"Gege-Merak's grandchild," was the answer, and I thought the young warrior's eyes rested for an instant upon the young girl with a gleam of admiration.

"Will she succeed the chief, when he dies?" I inquired.

"No, Effendi. Iva is but a woman. Only a man becomes chief of a Bega tribe."

"I see. In our country, Ketti, a woman is considered equal to a man."

He made no reply to the observation and after a moment I continued:

"Tell me, then, why does Iva ride with us on this journey?"

He frowned, glancing around sharply to see that we were not overheard. But we had ridden quite out of earshot.

"Effendi, we speak little of such matters, but it is the superstition of Gege-

Merak. He believes that he will live as long as his grandchild lives, but no longer. If she dies, then he will die. Allah has decreed it. For this reason the chief does not dare to leave her behind, lest some harm happen to her."

I laughed at this explanation, but the warrior's face was grave. He was by far the handsomest and most intelligent of our escort, and his dignified and straightforward expression attracted me toward him.

"Always the chief does not treat Iva well," he added, as if to himself, as he glanced again to where the oddly mated couple rode at the head of the caravan. "Her health he guards, because he is selfish; but he makes the girl his slave."

It occurred to me I had been right in guessing that the young man entertained a tender feeling toward Iva. But I could scarcely blame him. She was very attractive.

We made toward a dim ridge of mountains that showed at the southeast and during the day drew gradually nearer to them. At night we encamped in the foothills. The rocks were bare and of a black color, and the surrounding landscape was wholly uninviting. Just beyond us the hills grew to mountains, which formed a seemingly endless range.

"Do we climb those peaks?" I asked the chief, as our followers prepared the camp.

"There are passes between them, which we follow for two days," he answered, briefly. Ketti told me they were the Hammemat Mountains, composed of a hard, dark stone called breccia, and that the ancient Egyptians had quarries here, using the stone to form their statues from.

From this first night the native and American camps were separate. The Begas pitched low tents for our use, but on their side only one tent, for the use of Iva, was set up. The men, including the aged chief, when they slept simply rolled themselves in their *abayeh* or ragged blankets and lay down upon the sand.

Bryonia, having brought a couple of sacks of charcoal from Koser to use for fuel, managed to cook us a good supper. The Bega did no cooking, but satisfied their hunger with hard bread and dried goat's flesh, washed down with a swallow or two of tepid water. We invited Gege-Merak and Iva to join us at our meal, but the chief curtly refused.

"I eat with my people," he said.

This action seemed to worry the Professor and his face grew anxious and thoughtful.

"If Gege-Merak had broken bread with us, or eaten of our salt," he remarked, "we might have depended upon his faithfulness at all times. It is a rather suspicious circumstance, to my mind, that he refuses to join us."

“I don’t trust him at all,” said I.

“Nor do I,” added Uncle Naboth. “Seemed to me, first time I spotted the rascal, that he was playin’ a deep game. Don’t you think it was foolish, Professor, to pay him all that money?”

“Not at all. If we had refused to pay it he might have robbed us of it on the journey. Now he knows he can get nothing more from us until we return to the ship. That will be our salvation, I imagine. To get the balance of his payment he’ll be sure to return.”

“But he doesn’t agree to bring us all back with him,” observed Archie, musingly. “He’ll be entitled to the money, just the same, if a few of us are killed.”

“That matter,” said Ned Britton, grimly, “we must attend to ourselves. There are nine o’ us to six o’ them copperheads, for the girl don’t count. So I guess they’ll think twice afore they attack us.”

“I don’t fear any open rupture,” replied Van Dorn, with a moody glance toward the Bega camp. “What we must guard against is treachery. If the chief had eaten with us I should have feared nothing; but I know the ways of these Begas, and it will be best for us to set a guard every night while we sleep.”

“Why, there’s nothing to murder us for at present,” I objected. “When we get the treasure, if we ever do, it will be another matter. Just now — ”

“Jest now,” interrupted Uncle Naboth, “we’ll keep on the safe side and take the Perfessor’s hint. Snakes is snakes, an’ you can’t tell when they’re a-goin’ to strike. Let’s set a watch nights, from now on.”

The suggestion was a reasonable one, and we determined to follow it.

CHAPTER TEN

DEEP IN THE DESERT SANDS

THE SECOND DAY'S journey was through wild passes of the Hammemat, among which we might easily have become bewildered and lost our way had not Gege-Merak's knowledge of the mountains enabled him to guide us accurately. We passed an old Egyptian mine and, soon after, the quarries which they had abandoned centuries ago, and at evening came to the famous well of Bir-Hammemat, the curb of which is sixteen feet in diameter. Here we made our camp, and so wild was the spot that we kept a constant though secret watch throughout the night. The Bega, however, seemed to harbor no thoughts of treachery, and although they made their camp on the opposite side of the well from our own they neither by look nor action gave us cause to suspect their loyalty.

We emerged among the foothills on the third day, and before noon passed a landmark in the way of an old Roman well, now dry and abandoned. It had once been a large cavity, walled up with huge layers of stone, and I imagined it must originally have been very deep, too, for even yet the rubbish in its bottom was a good fifteen feet from the curb. I glanced at the place carelessly enough as we passed, never dreaming of the tragedy soon to be enacted there.

Pushing on at excellent speed we mounted more rocky hills, here composed of yellow and red Nubian sandstone and granite. Just at sundown we reached the Pass of Mutrok without incident.

The Professor was excellently satisfied with our progress.

"Four hours across the desert from here," he told us at supper, "lies the small village of Laketa, which is but four hours more from Luxor. The treasure lies some two hours' journey from Laketa, toward Karnak, and my plan is to halt at the village, when we reach it, and leave our native escort there. I can guide you myself from Laketa, so only the Americans shall go to the place where the treasure lies hid. We shall take with us the two extra camels, and when we rejoin the Bega we must keep these camels constantly with our party, and refuse to tell the chief or any of his followers what load they bear. This is a necessary precaution, I assure you. So far our journey has been uneventful, but once we have secured the treasure we must exercise exceptional caution and vigilance until we get it safely aboard the ship."

This was good and timely advice, we well knew, and Van Dorn's plan seemed practical enough. Before leaving the ship our sailmaker had prepared several large canvas bags for holding the treasure, and the Professor had brought along a supply of sealing-wax with which to seal up the treasure in

the bags until it was delivered on board the ship and could be appraised and divided between us. According to his recollection of the cavity and its size Van Dorn judged that two camels would be ample to transport all its contents.

During this third day the Bega had seemed to regard us with less friendly glances than before, and just as we dismounted at the camp an unpleasant incident occurred that for a time promised open rupture between us.

One of the camels having gone lame during the afternoon, Iva had been transferred from her own beast to that of the chief, riding behind whom she finished the journey in no very comfortable manner. The girl, proud and reserved, speaking seldom and then only in monosyllables, seemed wholly out of place in this caravan of men, and we realized that the chief's absurd superstition about her was responsible for much of her sullen behavior.

Iva had ridden in a cramped position until her limbs were numbed, and as she slid off the kneeling camel she stumbled and fell awkwardly against the chief. In sudden rage Gege-Merak turned and struck her a blow on the side of her head, and the next instant he found himself tumbling headlong to the earth. For Archie had happened to stand near, and seeing the outrageous act had bowled over the great Gege-Merak as coolly as if he had been a schoolboy. Even before the chief could rise the Bega had sprung at us with drawn knives and leveled pistols; but Gege-Merak, hearing their shout of rage, rolled over and held up an arm in warning. They slunk back, then, while Ketti assisted the ancient chief to his feet. He was unhurt, for his mummified little form was tough as leather. Neither had Iva been much injured by the blow she had received, for she stood by quiet and submissive to all appearances. But I had caught a fierce gleam in her dark eyes that proved she secretly resented her brutal treatment. The sharp edge of one of her clumsy ear ornaments had cut her cheek, and two or three tiny drops of blood trickled down her face; but this was unimportant. She well knew Gege-Merak would take good care not to seriously endanger her health or life, even in a fit of temper, as long as his superstition regarding her held sway. But a kick, a blow, or a bitter epithet was often her portion.

This was not the end of the incident. After supper and during the brief Egyptian twilight Ketti came to us with a message from the chief. He asked us to kill Archie before morning and expose his body to be torn and devoured by the jackals, that the insult to Gege-Merak's dignity be avenged.

We greeted the request with a roar of laughter, and Archie declared he would run across and punch the old fellow's nose for his impudence. Ketti, who was less a barbarian than any of his tribe, in our opinion, was still too dense to understand our answer until we said frankly that we fully approved

what Archie had done and had no intention of punishing him.

"Then," said the messenger, "you must deliver him to our chief, who will satisfy his vengeance according to our customs."

"See here, Ketti," I replied; "you're a good fellow, and I'll explain to you our position. The poorest American is of higher rank than the most important Bega that lives, and your Gege-Merak is merely our servant, having accepted our pay. Aside from that, we Americans won't allow any woman of any race to be abused in our presence, and you might tell your wicked old chief that if he dares to touch the girl again while in our company, we'll tie him up and horsewhip him."

Ketti listened to this speech with keen interest. Perhaps he secretly approved our stand, for his expression was thoughtful rather than angry.

"Do not send this message by me, Effendi," said he, in a low voice. "It will mean to fight, and that must not be — for we are friends."

"Are we, Ketti?" I inquired, doubtfully.

"I am your friend," answered the warrior, evasively. "But our chief is proud, for he is the father of all the Bega of Egypt, our tribe being the head tribe of our people, and the Arabs and Turks have taught us that the whites are but dogs, and have no rank. It will make danger for you to defy Gege-Merak tonight. Tell him you will punish the Archie-boy when you reach your ship, in your own way, which is to cut him in pieces and feed him to the fishes; once we knew a ship-sailor who did that, and the promise will make Gege-Merak content."

"Very well, Ketti," broke in the Professor, nervously; "deliver that or any other message you like, and we'll remember your friendship when we get back to Koser. Say anything to your chief that will restore peace between us, for we must remain friends."

Ketti nodded understandingly and returned to his people. Doubtless he promised the old ruffian that we would take ample vengeance upon our companion, for we could hear his voice declaiming loudly our reply before all the tribesmen. Gege-Merak's dignity was thus restored at little expense to us, and we heard no more of the matter. The incident, however, showed us that we stood in a delicate position and that our protective escort might at any moment become our most vindictive enemy.

Next morning we slept late and resumed our journey at leisure. The Professor told the chief that we should not require his escort beyond the village of Laketa. He might remain there with his band and rest until we were ready to begin the return journey, probably upon the following day. Gege-Merak listened quietly and made no comment beyond saying that his people were our servants and that to hear was to obey — an Oriental figure of

speech that meant nothing at all.

After leaving the mountains a series of low bleak hills had been encountered, and about the middle of this forenoon we reached the ruins of the old Roman hydrauma, or caravan station, long since abandoned. Three miles farther brought us within sight of Laketa, a small group of mud huts occupying an oasis which boasted two small wells and five palm trees.

We were at the village before noon, and found ourselves greeted by a dozen Bisharin, men, women, and children. They were small, skinny people, naked except for a loin cloth, and having bushy hair saturated with foul smelling grease. The Bisharin claim kinship to the Bega nation, but are much inferior in physique or intelligence to the Ababdeh who formed our escort. They are great thieves, as are all these gypsy Bedouins, but, too cowardly to fight in the open, they prefer to creep upon their victims unobserved and stick a knife or short spear into their backs.

These natives of Laketa, however, lived so near to Luxor and civilization that they had lost much of their native fierceness and were a cowed and humble group. They welcomed Gege-Merak joyously, knowing him as a great chief; but they stood more in awe of us than they did of their visiting allies. The Professor assured us that we had nothing to fear from them. He had often been to this village with Lovelace, during the time they were engaged upon their tedious search for the treasure, and the Bisharin knew him and treated the little “red-beard” with profound respect.

We made our camp beside one of the wells, while our escort encamped beside the other, situated on the opposite side of the group of huts. During the afternoon we rested from the fatigue of our journey and perfected our plans, canvassing all matters of detail in the presence of our entire party, so that every man might understand exactly what our intentions were and what work would probably be required of them.

We informed Gege-Merak that we should ride that evening to a place near Luxor, where the Professor would gather his belongings and pack them on the two extra camels. Most of us would return during the night or at daybreak; all would again be assembled at the oasis by noon, when the return journey would be begun. We should camp the next night at our old station in the mountain pass, which could easily be reached before dark.

It was all simple and easily understood, and the chief appeared to be satisfied with the arrangement. We had an early supper and at sundown our band of Americans departed, taking the direction of Luxor and using as a landmark the low hill called Tel-Ambra, lying southward of the village. The Bega gathered in a silent group to watch us move slowly over the desert, but night soon fell and they must have shortly lost sight of us in the gloom.

The Professor knew this territory by heart. There was no moon, and even the stars lacked their usual brilliance because of fleecy clouds that moved swiftly across the sky — an unusual sight in Egypt. Such clouds, when they appear, contain no moisture, but are what are called "smoke clouds." There was plenty of light to guide us, however, so the Professor was sure of his route.

In an hour and a half we passed around the base of Tel-Ambra, which is a barren rock cropping out of the desert, some twenty feet in its highest part and about half a mile in circumference. Skirting this rock we turned abruptly to the north, altering our course decidedly, for our first direction was only undertaken to deceive the Bega.

Thirty minutes of this northerly course brought us in sight of a group of three straggling palms which showed like black streaks against the sky; but now the Professor called a sudden halt, and I could hear him storming and cursing in low but tense tones as he sat his camel and glanced around him observantly.

"What's wrong, sir?" I asked, coming to his side.

"That scoundrelly Arab, Abdul Hashim, has rebuilt his village," he answered, with evident chagrin. "The police tore down every wall and scattered the stones far and wide; but here they are piled up again to form houses, and even the roofs of some are newly thatched."

He pointed away to the left, and the stars being bright at the time I had no trouble in perceiving that we had halted a few hundred yards from a native village. But it was black and seemed deserted.

"What does it matter?" I asked, impatiently. "We can surely keep away from Abdul Hashim and his people until morning, and by that time we ought to have gained possession of the treasure."

The Professor shook his head, doubtfully; but he gave the command to march and we hurried away from this dangerous vicinity and approached the group of palms. The feet of the camels made no noise on the desert sands and our people were all too anxious and intent upon the adventure to speak unnecessarily; so like shadows we passed through the shifting and ghostly light that reached us from the stars, and soon gained our destination.

I had often wondered, in thinking upon the subject, how the Professor would be again enabled to locate with any degree of accuracy the buried treasure, situated as it was in a barren spot where the sand drove over it with every breeze. So now I watched him curiously as he dismounted at the palms and, drawing a line from one of the trees to another, seemed to pick out a star straight ahead to guide him and began pacing his way regularly over the desert. He gained an absolute regularity of pace in an amusing and ingenious,

yet simple manner, attaching a cord from one of his ankles to the other, after carefully measuring its length. Consequently all his paces were mathematically equal, or could vary but slightly.

The rest of us followed him silently. I tried at first to count the number of paces, but from my high seat presently lost track of the count. But I had no idea it would matter to us; we should never be likely to visit this weird spot a second time.

At last the Professor came to a sudden halt and held up his hand. We leaped from our camels without waiting for them to kneel and two of our sailors promptly produced shovels from their panniers and began to dig in the spot the Professor indicated. They worked with steady industry, you may be sure, and we took turns relieving them at the task, for shoveling sand is by no means an easy job.

After going a certain depth without finding the granite slab we began making our pit wider, and within an hour a shovel wielded by Bryonia bounded back with a metallic sound that told us the search had finally been successful.

While the men quickly cleared away the remaining sand, disclosing three bronze rings imbedded in an oblong slab of granite, I could not help marveling at the Professor's cleverness in locating the spot so accurately after several weeks of absence.

"It is a matter of simple mathematics," he explained, while he watched the sand fly with eager eyes. "The only thing that could interfere with my calculations would be the removal of the palm trees. But I did not fear that, as they are centuries old."

The big stone was now cleared of sand. The three sailors and Ned Britton stooped and put their shoulders to the slab, raising the ponderous weight slowly but surely until it stood upright on its edge. Then the Professor knelt down and with nervous haste threw out the padding of dried rushes and the thick layers of rotted mummy cloth that covered the contents of the vault.

Now, more gently, he began removing a number of bandaged cylinders, something like eighteen inches long and six inches in diameter. These, I supposed, were the rolls of papyrus bark that told the history of that dark period of Egypt between the Sixth and Twelfth Dynasties. From the tenderness with which Van Dorn handled these rolls — which he rewrapped in new canvas, sealed securely and then handed to Ned to be placed in one of the panniers — I had no doubt he considered them the most valuable and important part of the treasure. There were sixteen rolls; all of them, according to our bargain, Van Dorn's personal property. After these had been cared for the Professor threw aside another layer of bandages and then, at

last, the more tangible wealth of the powerful priests of Karnak was revealed to our wondering eyes.

Under the dim stars we could see the sparkle of many rich jewels and the gleam of a vast store of golden vases, exquisitely worked; of many chains, bracelets and other ornaments; of pearls and precious stones. Indeed, the pit seemed full of the queer and valuable things.

Van Dorn did not pause an instant to admire this gorgeous sight. He took one of the canvas sacks which Ned handed him and began filling it with the jewels. It was difficult to see just what they were, but the Professor took all that came to his hand and soon had filled the sack. He tied its mouth securely and brought out his sealing wax. When he lighted a match to melt the wax its rays illumined the pit, and I drew a deep breath of wonder at the splendor that met my eyes.

"Ah; treasure!" said a soft voice beside me.

Startled, we all sprang up at the words and found squatting beside the pit the form of the withered Bega chief, Gege-Merak.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TAKING CHANCES

THE PROFESSOR gave a cry of positive terror, and before it was well out of his throat Ned Britton had made a leap and pinioned the chief to the ground with the weight of his huge form.

We were all greatly startled; and dismayed, as well, for it seemed that in spite of all our precautions Gege-Merak had spied upon us and the secret of the treasure now extended to him — the most uncomfortable confederate, from our standpoint, we could possibly have gained. Already an enemy, and more powerful in this country, his own, than we were, and reckless of any consequences that follow lawless acts, Gege-Merak was the last person we would have chosen to share our important secret. The worst feature of the whole matter was that we ourselves were defying the laws of Egypt in stealthily removing this vast hoard, hidden by Egyptian priests long before the present rulers had ever set foot in the land. If the government suspected our act we should all be summarily imprisoned.

No doubt the Bega chief knew very well our predicament, and that we could not appeal to the authorities whatever injury he might inflict upon us; so he would be inclined to fight us for the possession of the treasure, if any dependence could be placed upon the native character. If we tried to compromise, then a large share of our find must go to Gege-Merak; but he was not likely to be satisfied with a little.

These thoughts doubtless flashed across every mind in the pause that followed Ned's capture of the spy. I know, anyway, that they passed rapidly through my own mind, and appalled me.

Two of the sailors had sprung forward to assist the mate, and now they produced several lengths of cord from their pockets — every sailor carries such things — and the chief was soon fast bound and laid upon the sand a few paces away. One of the sailors was left sitting beside him as a guard.

While the Professor nervously continued to fill the canvas bags from the pit and to seal each one securely, we counselled together in whispers as to the best method of dealing with Gege-Merak. The sailors and Bryonia loaded the sacks into the panniers of the camels, which were strongly woven of rushes, as fast as they were filled and sealed, and still the pit seemed to contain as many jewels and precious stones as had been removed. We began to tremble with a realization of the hugeness of the treasure, and to understand that in spite of our ample provision to carry it, some must be left behind. But that meant turning it over to the chief, who now knew its location, unless----------

“Gege-Merak must die!” growled the little Professor, through his teeth. His face was pale and his eyes were glittering with excitement.

Some of us breathed deeply; but none made reply in words. I dreaded the necessity as much as any one could, but saw clearly that the chief’s death was inevitable. It meant not only our protection, but perhaps our salvation. We were now burdened with too vast a store of wealth to be safe on the desert for a single moment, if Gege-Merak was to be at large to dog our steps. We now implored the Professor to return the papyrus rolls to the cavity and take instead more of the treasure; but Van Dorn obstinately refused. “It is my own share, and you have agreed I should take it,” said he. “There are millions in gold and precious gems, besides; isn’t that enough to satisfy you?”

“But this may be our last chance at the treasure,” replied Uncle Naboth, anxiously.

The Professor gave him a queer look. It seemed defiant and half threatening, but a moment later he dropped his head to resume his work.

“That’s nonsense,” he snapped, wrathfully. “The stuff has lain here for ages, and what we now leave will remain in safety until we can come again — unless we give Gege-Merak a chance to grab it. We mustn’t do that, gentlemen. If the chief lives he will never allow us to reach the ship again; you may be sure of that. We’ve had evidence already of his grasping disposition. It’s our lives against his, now, and we must not hesitate to save ourselves.”

“Bring the chief here, Cunningham,” called Uncle Naboth, peering through the gloom where our sailor sat upon the sand guarding his prisoner. Cunningham did not move, and Uncle Naboth called again. Then Joe ran across to him, bent over, and gave a cry that raised us all to our feet in an instant.

“The man’s dead!” he shouted. “Gege-Merak is gone!”

It was true enough. The wily chief had managed to slip his bonds and plunge a knife to the heart of his unsuspecting guard before he crawled away into the night and escaped.

We were horrified at the disaster. Our fears had now become realities, and as we looked gravely into one another’s eyes under the dim stars we realized that our lives were in deadly peril.

“You’re a lot of clods — of duffers — of fools!” screamed the Professor, stamping the ground in furious rage. “You deserve to die for being so clumsy; you deserve to lose the treasure you are not clever enough to guard! Bah! to think I have leagued myself with idiots!”

Archie grabbed him by the shoulder and gave him a good shaking.

“Shut up, you red-whiskered ape!” he said, menacingly. “Keep a civil tongue in your head, or I’ll skin you alive!”

We were all irritated and unnerved, and I tried to quiet both Archie and Van Dorn, and to bring them to a more reasonable frame of mind.

“It’s no use crying over spilt milk,” said I. “Let’s face the peril like men, and do our best to get the treasure safely to the ship. Even if Gege-Merak gets the rest, we have a fortune already.”

“He’ll get that, too,” groaned the Professor. “The chief has more cunning than the whole crowd of you.”

The two camels were now heavily loaded with the sealed canvas sacks containing the treasure and the library of historic papyri. We next strapped the four panniers to the two beasts — one on either side of each camel — and Van Dorn with the remainder of his wax smeared the buckles so that if the panniers were opened or tampered with we should speedily know the fact. He did not trust us wholly, it seemed, nor did we fully trust him. The man had been acting ugly of late, and the fact that we had no chance to examine any of the treasure we had so quickly thrust into the sacks made it necessary that the seals remain intact until we could open them in safety and in each other’s presence.

Having now secured all of the ancient deposit of wealth that we could carry, we held a solemn conference to determine our future movements. The Professor, who had calmed down somewhat but was still sullen, admitted that with proper caution we might find our way back to Koser over the same route by which we had come. The only puzzling part of the trail was that which lay through the intricate passes of the Hammemat mountains, and we were willing to chance finding the right path because we had no option but to undertake the risk. From being our guide Gege-Merak had now become our most dreaded foe. We were better armed than the chief’s band, and outnumbered it, although three of our party were only boys. Aside from an ambush or an unexpected addition to the chief’s party we might hope to hold our own against him in a declared warfare.

If we could have started at once on our return journey our chances of reaching the *Seagull* in safety might have been better; but it was necessary for Archie to visit Luxor and deliver his father’s goods to the merchants who had ordered them, and to receive payment on delivery. This necessitated a delay which could not be avoided even under the present trying circumstances.

Van Dorn assured us that by morning we could plainly see the outlines of Karnak and Luxor across the desert, and he said the journey could be made in three hours. If Archie started at daybreak he could reach Luxor in time for

breakfast and by concluding his business as soon as possible ought to be able to rejoin our party by noon.

But Archie did not relish going alone upon this mission, and I had grown to like the young fellow so well that I offered to accompany him. It was decided all of us should move around the base of Tel-Ambra, after concealing every trace of our visit to the pit, and there encamp to await our return from Luxor.

We had to bury poor Cunningham in the sand; but we dug him a deep grave and wrapped him in two blankets in lieu of a proper coffin. The stone having been dropped to cover the cavity and the sand piled in and smoothed above it, we marched across to Tel-Ambra and came to a halt well on the other side of it. Here we speedily made camp and appointed Bryonia and Ned Britton to watch while we lay down to sleep.

I was so excited by the occurrences of the night that I could not compose myself to slumber for some time, but lay awake and watched Van Dorn, who, also restless, paced up and down in the sands, apparently in deep thought. He had grown moody and unsociable, and since his violent exhibition of temper I had come to dislike him more than ever.

When dawn came creeping over the desert I sprang up and aroused Archie. The others were mostly awake, I found, and while we munched a little food Joe came to me and begged to travel to Luxor in our company.

Ned Britton, who had now assumed military command of our party, thought there would be no greater danger to the others and more safety to Archie and me if Joe accompanied us; so Uncle Naboth's consent was obtained and we three mounted our camels and set off at a brisk pace toward Luxor, the outlines of which city the Professor pointed out.

The morning air of the desert was crisp and invigorating, and so fresh were our camels that in two and a half hours we reached the Karnak road and soon after clattered into the streets of Luxor.

It is an odd town, a mingling of the modern and ancient. On the bank of the Nile stands the ruin of the great temple so famous in history, its many rows of lotus-capped columns rising toward the sky in magnificent array. Beside the monster temple is a litter of mud huts; across the way is the wall surrounding the fine modern Hotel Luxor, and against this wall on all sides are rows of booths occupied by the Greek, Syrian, and Arab merchants as bazars.

When we arrived and inquired for the merchants with whom Archie was to deal, we found their shops still closed; so we entered the grounds of the hotel, left our camels at the stables, hired a dray to fetch Archie's boxes from the railway station, and then treated ourselves to a good breakfast served in

civilized fashion. By the time it was finished the boxes were waiting in a cart outside, and the merchants, we found, had arrived at their shops and were anxious to examine the goods.

We realized the necessity of making haste and so accepted the invitation of a Syrian dealer to open our boxes in a big vacant room back of his bazar. We admitted only the two men who had ordered the goods, although a group of curious natives wished to enter with us, and soon Archie, Joe, and I had the cases open and the goods spread out for examination.

The Syrian and his fellow merchant, a gray-bearded Greek, gravely inspected and approved the clever imitations of ancient scarabs, charms, figures, urns, and the like, that had been "made in America" to deceive American tourists in Egypt; but when Archie demanded to be paid the price agreed upon they both demurred, claiming the trinkets were not worth the sum asked.

Archie was indignant and threatened to box up the goods again and ship them to Cairo; and then began the inevitable bargaining that is so tedious but necessary in dealing with the Egyptians.

While my friend, who proved no unskillful bargainer, was engaged in this occupation I chanced to glance toward the one dirty window in the place and saw a man standing outside who instantly riveted my attention. He was tall and stately, with a calm, handsome face and steady eyes, and while he gazed in upon us it suddenly flashed across me that I had seen this Arab before — standing on the quay at Alexandria and staring at the *Seagull* as we had sailed out of the harbor.

Yes; it was indeed Abdul Hashim, the Professor's most bitter enemy; and as this fact was revealed to me I remembered the peril of our friends awaiting us on the desert and turned impatiently to Archie to ask him to hasten.

As I spoke the eyes of the Arab outside turned toward mine and, perhaps seeing my glance of recognition, he turned and disappeared.

"Archie," I said in a low voice, "for heaven's sake end this squabbling. Too much depends on our prompt return to quarrel over a few beastly piasters."

He seemed to realize this, for he quickly closed with the offers of the merchants and they paid him the sum he had agreed to take in English bank notes and gold. While the money was being counted out I saw Abdul Hashim again at the window, his greedy eyes feasting upon the money; and this made me more nervous than before. I quickly made my way outside and moved around to the window, but the Arab had disappeared and I failed to find him in any of the neighboring streets.

I told Archie and Joe of my discovery, and that Abdul Hashim had seen us

receive the money. The tale alarmed my friends, but after a moment's thought Archie decided what to do.

We went at once to Cook's banking office, which was in the hotel building, and there Archie exchanged his gold and notes for a draft on the bank's American correspondents, for the full amount. The paper he placed in his stocking, flat on the sole of his foot, and then he drew on his boot with a sigh of relief.

"If it is stolen," said he, "no one can cash it but my father; but I'd like to see the Arab or Bega clever enough to find the draft where I've hidden it. Come on, boys; we're free now; so let's hurry back to our party and the treasure."

The camels had been watered and fed by the hotel attendants, and we hastened to mount them and start on our return journey. As we left the town it was a little after eleven o'clock, for much valuable time had been consumed in settling Archie's business.

"But it's what I came to Egypt for," said he, "and father would be wild if I neglected the business he sent me on, even to get a share of that treasure. As it is I'm afraid he'll think me a poor hand at a bargain, to take less than was agreed upon."

"There's no trusting to the word of these native merchants," I remarked, as we sped away over the sands. "How much did you manage to get for that rubbish, Archie?"

"About twenty-five hundred dollars. But I ought to have had three thousand."

"And what did it cost to make the stuff?" I inquired, curiously.

"Oh, the material is mostly mud, you know; but the molds and the workmanship are expensive. With the freight and my own expenses added, the finished product cost us nearly nine hundred dollars."

"Not a bad deal, then," said I, with a laugh. "Your father will find himself a bit richer, anyhow."

"But think of what those rascally merchants will make!" he exclaimed indignantly. "The scarabs, which cost them about half a cent each, they'll sell for twenty piasters — and that's a whole dollar!"

"Say, boys," observed Joe, quietly, "we're being followed."

We turned quickly in our saddles at this startling news, and a glance told us Joe was right. Coming toward us in a cloud of dust, from the direction of Luxor, were several camels and donkeys. Already they were near enough for us to see that they were ridden by a band of Arabs, who were urging the animals to their best speed.

We pricked up our camels with the sharpened sticks provided for that

purpose, and with groans of protest the supple beasts threw out their hoofs and fairly flew over the sands.

CHAPTER TWELVE
ABDUL HASHIM EXPLAINS

FAR AHEAD WE could see the outlines of Tel-Ambra standing clear against the blue sky, and toward this we headed, for our friends would be there awaiting us.

Our pursuers also redoubled their pace, and it became a set race in which only the endurance of our animals was of importance. The camels we rode were among the best of Gege-Merak's herd, and we saw with satisfaction that they could easily keep the distance between ourselves and the Arabs.

Gradually the mound grew nearer and we strained our eyes to discover Uncle Naboth and his party, who should be near its base. Perhaps they were on the other side and had not observed our approach. The quick pace was beginning to tell on our camels, which all breathed heavily; but on we dashed at full speed, for the remaining distance was short.

We reached the base of the hill, skirted it without slacking rein, and then with a sense of dismay realized that we were alone upon the desert — save for that grim and relentless band following in our wake. Uncle Naboth, the Professor, Ned Britton, the sailors and Bry — even the camels with the treasure — had all been swallowed up by the mysterious waste of sands.

And now we three boys, left to our fate, must show the mettle we were made of. We halted our panting camels, backed them against a rocky cliff of Tel-Ambra, and hastily unslung our repeating rifles.

"Don't let us be captured without a struggle, boys," I exclaimed.

"We'll fight while there's a bullet left or a breath in us," responded Archie, promptly.

"All right, fellows, if you say so," said Joe, strapping on his cartridge belt; "but it seems to me you're making a mistake."

"How so?" I asked, rather indignantly.

"Look at them," said Joe. The Arabs had halted just out of range, but we could count their numbers now. "There are about twenty of the rascals, and they're all armed. We can't hope to beat them in a fight. We can kill a few, of course, but they'll down us in the end. And what then? Why, they'll be mad as hornets, and want revenge. It's natural. But as it now stands we are not the enemies of these heathens, as I can see, having had no dealings with them. I understand they want to rob us, for they think we've got the money those merchants paid Archie — that beast Abdul Hashim is at the head of them. But if we submit quietly to being searched they won't find any money and they'll scarcely dare kill us for disappointing them."

"I don't know about that," said Archie, eyeing the foe fiercely. "I've heard

Van Dorn say these Arabs will kill a Christian as calmly as they'll eat a dinner. They think a good Mahommedan will gain paradise by killing an infidel dog. And besides that, if they try to rob us and then let us go our ways, they'll be afraid we will make trouble for them with the police. No, Joe; it's robbery they mean first, and murder afterward; you can rely upon that."

"Maybe so, sir," answered Joe. "But I was just looking for our one chance. To fight means sure death; to give in quietly means a hope for life — not a great hope, sir, but one just big enough to hang your hat on. If you say fight, I'm with you. If you say be foxy and try diplomacy, I'll like it better."

"Humph!" said I, partly convinced. "Perhaps Joe's right."

"I'm sure he is," responded Archie, frankly. "But I hate to see those beggars down us so easily."

"Discretion is the better part of valor," I quoted, pompously; yet I longed to fight, too.

"We aren't giving in, fellows," declared Joe; "we're just playing our best cards in the game, and it isn't our fault if we don't hold all trumps. Come on; don't let's act like cowards, or even whipped curs. Let's go to meet them — and, say, put up your rifles. We won't show any force, but try to smile and look pleasant."

The Arabs had been conversing together, evidently trying to decide how to attack us. They knew if they came within range of our rifles some of them would be shot down, and since they now had us safely snared they might take time to figure out the problem.

Had there been any hope of our overtaking our friends I should have advised keeping the Arabs at bay as long as possible. But as far as the eye could reach, in every direction, the desert was deserted save by the two groups at Tel-Ambra. What, I questioned, anxiously, could have induced my uncle and Ned Britton to desert us? Such an act was wholly unlike them, and there must indeed have been a powerful reason behind it. At present it was all a profound mystery to us, and we had no time to make an attempt to unravel the web.

Thinking Joe's counsel good, in the circumstances, we started our camels and advanced leisurely toward the Arabs. They were startled at first, expecting a fight; then, as they saw our rifles slung over our shoulders, they became puzzled by our audacity and amazed at our boldness. But they stood in a motionless group awaiting our approach, and as we drew near to them I, being slightly in advance of the other two, said in a voice which I strove to render calm:

"Good day, gentlemen. Can you tell us the way to the village of Laketa?

I'm afraid we've missed the trail."

The Arabs looked at us stupidly a moment, and then Abdul Hashim spurred his donkey — a strong, thin limbed beast — toward me and touched his turban. His gesture indicated respect, but his steady eyes were as unfathomable as a pool at midnight.

"The blessing of Allah be thine, Effendi," said he. "What is your errand at Laketa?"

"To rejoin the rest of our party," I answered confidently.

"Ah, yes; your party from the ship, with the red-bearded jackal Van Dorn at their head," he said, with a flash of resentment as he mentioned the Professor.

"You are wrong in one thing," said I, calmly. "Naboth Perkins, my uncle, heads the party."

"Why try to deceive us, Effendi?" asked Abdul Hashim, in a sterner tone. "You take me for a fool, it seems; and a fool I am not. You would not be here — you could not be here — unless led by the red-beard, who is a dog and a traitor to his masters."

"I don't answer for Van Dorn," I replied, with a shrug. "It seems you know the Professor, and don't like him; but I'm sure that is none of our business. All we ask of you is the favor of a courteous direction to Laketa. If you will not give this, we must proceed without it, and find the place the best way we can."

I had observed that as we conversed the band of Arabs had crept around our group, slowly encircling us in all directions, so that now they fairly hemmed us in. Also their long rifles were in their hands and their belts were stuck full of pistols and knives. The party had been formed for warfare, without a doubt.

Although noting all this I endeavored to appear unconcerned as I awaited the sheik's reply.

The latter smiled rather grimly and said:

"We will indeed be your guides, young sirs; but not to Laketa. Forgive me if I ask for your companionship until you have told us all I wish to know."

"And what is that, Abdul Hashim?" I asked boldly.

"You know my name?"

"Of course. We knocked you down that evening we rescued Van Dorn from your clutches in Alexandria, and he told us your history. The Professor wanted us to kill you; but we refused. Perhaps you remember that?"

"I remember that I owe my life to my own skill, and not to your mercy." He expressed himself in excellent English, for an Arab. But the English have occupied Egypt for so long that nearly all the natives have learned to speak

or at least understand our language.

"You have not told me what it is that you wish to know," I said, impatiently.

He looked me over with a thoughtful expression and proceeded to examine each of my comrades, in turn. Then he said, abruptly:

"You will come to my village."

At once the Arabs began to move forward, and we, being surrounded, were forced to accompany them. They were an evil appearing lot, dirty and hungry looking, and I did not doubt that any one of them would murder us with much satisfaction, merely for the pleasure of killing.

As for Abdul Hashim himself, I began to perceive he was a character, and one worth studying in other circumstances. Never have I seen more handsome features on any man, but they were as immobile as if carved from marble. Any expression you might read showed in his eyes, which he could not control so well as he did his face. Usually they were calm as those of the sphinx, but at times they flashed evilly — nay, even with a gleam of madness in them — and always they were cruel and terrible in their aspect. In civilized countries a man like this would be greatly dreaded; here he was an insignificant sheik, with a handful of followers too degraded to be of any importance.

We passed around Tel-Ambra to the left and headed for the small group of rude stone huts which the Professor had sighted the night before and had aroused in him such violent emotions. The place was not far distant from the three ancient palms, and as we rode along I glanced over the desert to try to discover the spot where the treasure was hid; but the endless, undulating sands refused to reveal their secret. Indeed, the brisk morning breeze appeared to have smoothed away every trace of our night's work.

Abdul Hashim said little until we reached his village, which had hastily been rebuilt after the police had demolished it. Even before then it must have been a miserable affair; now it was scarce worthy the name of village, or suitable for mortal habitation. Doubtless the only object of a settlement at this place was to waylay travelers who crossed the desert from the Red Sea, and I could conjecture without much chance of going wrong that robbery had been the only means of livelihood for its inhabitants.

Entering a narrow street we were told to dismount in front of the most important hovel the place contained. We obeyed because we could not well do otherwise. Abdul Hashim personally ushered us into the dwelling, and as we entered the Arabs slyly cut the straps of our rifles and took the weapons from us. We dared not resent this insult, but though we made no protest in words we were angry enough when we turned to face the sheik, who alone

had entered with us.

The room consisted of four bare stone walls of uneven height, only a portion of the inclosed space being roofed or thatched with palm branches. Slabs and blocks of stone lay around in all directions, as if the work of restoring the walls was still incomplete. In one corner a black goat with a white spot over one eye lay asleep in the shade, and a rude bed of palm leaves stood underneath the thatch.

"Now," began our captor, in a brusk tone, "let us come to an understanding, if you will. You *gidân* must tell me all that I wish to know, or I will put you to sleep forever. But first I will tell you what I already know. It is this: The red-bearded jackal you call Van Dorn was formerly the slave of a wise explorer named Lovelace Pasha, who was my friend. Lovelace Pasha sought for buried treasure in the desert, and I gave him my assistance in return for his promise to give me and my people a share of the treasure, if he found where it lay. This Lovelace was a real effendi — a gentleman — and always to Abdul Hashim a true friend.

"One night he found the treasure, and with him at the time were two of my tribe — one being my own brother — and the slave Van Dorn. Lovelace Pasha took a few jewels and started to return to my village, but the discovery had driven Van Dorn mad. He shot my men and killed them, and would have shot Lovelace Pasha had he not caught and held the red-beard and wrenched the pistol from his grasp. So my friend bound Van Dorn with ropes and brought him to my village, with the sad news of the crime he had committed. Also Lovelace Pasha showed me the jewels which he had taken, and said there was much treasure to divide and that I should have my share according to the compact, as I had been faithful to him.

"My people, *gidân,* do not take vengeance upon those whom Allah has smitten with madness; so we did no harm to Van Dorn. Lovelace Pasha declared the fellow was without mind or reason, but offered to care for him until the morning, as he did not fear him. So he took him into his house and my village went to sleep.

"In the morning we found that another great crime had been committed. Van Dorn had broken his bonds, stabbed Lovelace Pasha to the heart, robbed him of the jewels, and escaped to Luxor. With him he carried the secret of where the treasure lay hid, and too late we gained the knowledge that the red-beard was not mad, as one without reason, but merely mad to gain all the treasure for himself and willing to kill and defy all who stood in the way of his gaining the vast store his master had discovered. For, mark the cunning of the miserable thief, Effendi: this Van Dorn told the police that I and my people had murdered the great Lovelace Pasha, and the governor, believing

him, sent a strong force to my village and destroyed it, declaring me and all my tribe outlaws.

"Thus did the jackal add to his crimes and prove he was not afflicted of Allah, but by the devil of the Christians. And, tell me, would a Christian, even, love him after this?

"I followed him secretly to Alexandria and with some friends to assist me was about to capture Van Dorn and make him lead us where the treasure is hid, when he cried out in fear and your party came to his rescue. Again he escaped me, for you took him aboard your ship and sailed away. I watched you, and feared that my revenge and the secret of the treasure were both lost to me. Then I remembered the jackal's slyness, and knew that some time he would return to secure the wealth that was hid in the sands near to my village. So I came home to watch for him, yet I did not expect him to act so soon. In Luxor I saw you and recognized the fact that you belonged to the ship in which Van Dorn had sailed away. They told me you had ridden your camels in from the desert, therefore I knew you had followed the trail from the Red Sea. It was all plain enough, with a little thought. I got my men together and followed you, as you know."

The sheik paused. He had spoken earnestly and well, and his story bewildered us because we had until now believed in the plausible tale the Professor had told us. If Abdul Hashim's relation was true the little Professor was indeed a diabolical scoundrel; and I had a secret conviction that a part of it, at least, was to be believed rather than Van Dorn's version. But was not Abdul Hashim also a scoundrel and thief? You had but to look at the fellow to doubt that there was an honest hair in his head. Privately I decided that neither was entitled to any share of Lovelace's find; but however the original discoverer had been done to death a bitter feud had undoubtedly sprung up between Van Dorn and the Arab — both eager to profit by Lovelace Pasha's murder.

"Tell me," resumed the sheik, abruptly, "where is your ship — at Koser?"

I nodded.

"And you came over the caravan route through the mountains?"

I nodded again.

"Perhaps, then, you know when the jackal will try to secure the treasure?" the sheik continued, eyeing me intently.

I decided there was little harm in being frank with the man. He knew there was a treasure and that Van Dorn was after it and would not rest till he got it. So it would avail us nothing to lie, and I hoped our final safety might result from being frank and truthful.

"Van Dorn has already secured the treasure," I answered.

For the first time the passionate heart of the man conquered his impassive frame. He gave a start of dismay and his face was for an instant contorted with fear and anger. But presently he controlled himself with a great effort and asked:

"When was this, Effendi?"

"Last night."

"Were you with him?"

"Yes!"

"Where, then, is the robber now?"

"I do not know. We went to Luxor on business and our party was to wait for us at Tel-Ambra. When we arrived they were gone."

I had reminded him of something. He looked at Archie and said:

"You received some money at Luxor. This is a dangerous place, so I will myself take care of your money until you are in safety, or rejoin your friends. Give it to me."

Archie grinned.

"Why, you're as big a thief as Van Dorn," he answered, easily. "But I've fooled you, my good Arab. The money is now in Cook's bank at Luxor, and I don't believe they'll give it up if you go and ask them."

The Arab frowned; but perhaps he remembered there was more important game to be bagged, for he said no more about Archie's money, to the boy's great relief.

"Did the jackal secure much treasure?" he inquired, turning to me with a trace of eagerness in his voice.

"Quite a lot. Enough to load two camels," I replied.

"And did any remain after that?"

"Plenty, as far as I could judge."

"Where is the place?"

"I could not find it again if I tried; nor could my companions. Van Dorn did not tell us how to get to it. He led us there at night, and it is still his secret as far as we are concerned."

After this Abdul Hashim began to pace nervously up and down the room, the floor of which was hard earth. Suddenly he paused.

"How many people came with you from Koser?" he demanded.

I was glad he asked the question that way, for it gave me an opportunity to answer truthfully and still mislead him.

"Gege-Merak, who guided us, had an escort of six Bega warriors; in our party were nine — fifteen in all," said I.

"Gege-Merak!" he exclaimed, in an annoyed tone, and resumed his pacing. Evidently the news did not please him.

I acknowledge that I hardly knew how to conduct myself in so strange an emergency. The question was whether to try to make an ally of the sheik or to defy him. It naturally worried me to be separated from my uncle and his party of Americans, of whose fate I now stood in doubt. The treasure I believed to be seriously threatened by Gege-Merak, who had so inopportunely discovered our secret, and the chief would have no hesitation in murdering us all if he found an opportunity. With Abdul Hashim on our side we might successfully defy Gege-Merak, yet to set the Arab on the trail meant sure death to the Professor and a loss of much of the treasure, since the sheik would be sure to put forward his claim for a division, under the alleged compact existing between himself and Lovelace.

Truly we Americans were in double peril, from the Bega chief on one side and the Arab sheik on the other; and how we might extricate ourselves from the difficulties that beset us was a difficult problem. If we three boys were again with Ned and Uncle Naboth we could assist them to fight it out, but our loss must have weakened them greatly, and alone we three were well nigh powerless.

"Fifteen," repeated Abdul Hashim, musingly; "fifteen. Are you Americans true men?" he then inquired, with an appearance of earnestness.

"True as steel," I said.

"Will they deliver Van Dorn to my vengeance?"

The question amused me.

"No, sheik; they will be true to Van Dorn, who has been true to them. They do not know the story you have just told me, and have no grievance against the man."

"But when they learn the truth will they deliver him up?" he persisted.

"I think not. My uncle would take an American's word in preference to that of an Arab."

"I must fight," said Abdul Hashim, as if to himself. "But not openly. I must meet treachery with treachery. Very good."

He stopped and looked at us with composure, as if he had settled all difficulties in his own mind and outlined a plan of action.

"I shall yet secure my treasure and my revenge," he continued, and then bowed low to us and left the room. The bow was a mockery, and we felt less assurance in the sheik's absence than when we faced him.

But here we were, prisoners of an unscrupulous and lawless Arab, and realizing that any present attempt to escape would be useless, we sat down upon the palm branches to await the next act in the drama.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
PRISONERS

THE SITUATION WAS not long in developing. A tall, dirty Arab came in with some coarse food, which we ate because it was now the middle of the afternoon and our long ride had made us hungry.

Scarcely had we finished the meal when more Arabs came to lead us from our quarters. We found six camels saddled and kneeling in the village street. Three were our own, and with them were three others that seemed equally good — doubtless the pick of Abdul Hashim's animals. The sheik and two stalwart Arabs stood beside the beasts and, as we approached, Abdul Hashim tersely commanded us to mount. We obeyed, selecting our own camels; I ventured to ask if we could not have our rifles, which I saw the sheik and his two men holding. The result was that he not only refused my request, but ordered us carefully searched, and so our knives and revolvers were taken away. These the three coolly appropriated and we were compelled to mount.

Slowly we rode away from the village toward the spot where the three aged palms reared their fronded heads above the sands. Somewhere near their roots there must have been moisture, which welled up from below, but never reached the surface of the desert. It is the only way to account for the life of these trees amid the sandy waste, whereon nothing else was able to grow. Often you meet with such phenomena in tropical climes — vegetation existing seemingly without moisture — but there must be a rational explanation of these remarkable occurrences.

Abdul Hashim seemed moody, and a frown darkened his handsome bronzed features. When we arrived at the palms he turned to us and said:

"I have decided to give you a full hour in which to discover the location of the treasure. To deny that you know where it lies is useless, for if you fail to find it you will all three die here. I will not be burdened with prisoners, and I dare not set you free; so you may preserve your lives but in one way, by finding the treasure."

This foolish speech made me very indignant with the fellow and discovered the sheik in an altogether new character.

"You must think we are a bunch of idiots!" I exclaimed, angrily. "If you dare not set us at liberty now, you surely would not dare do so after we had found the treasure for you."

"You may as well kill us now, without farther trouble," added Archie, gloomily.

"But that would be awkward for Abdul Hashim," observed Joe, with a quiet smile. "Have we not warned the Cadi at Luxor that we saw the sheik at

the window of the bazar, and that we feared mischief at his hands? And did not the Cadi promise us that if harm came to us he would take vengeance on Abdul Hashim?"

I looked at Joe admiringly. It was all pure invention, but I could see that the remark impressed the sheik and caused him to waver in his purpose.

"The death of Abdul Hashim won't help us after we are murdered," remarked Archie, with a grin of appreciation.

"But it will be a satisfaction, nevertheless, to our friends," I added, attempting indifference.

Joe's argument was the most forcible one we could have advanced to safeguard our lives, and we were glad to see that it made our captor thoughtful. It might not serve, after all, if the sheik saw any particular object in killing us off, but until he did, the thought of punishment evidently deterred him from harming us.

He tried another argument.

"Come," said he, assuming a soft, caressing tone, "there is much treasure left, you say, and we will divide it equally. Or we will make it in quarters — I am not greedy, and a quarter is enough for one poor Arab like me, who only wants money to rebuild his village. And afterward I will escort you and your prize safely to Koser, or to Cairo, as you may prefer. All will be well with us, and we shall part friends. Is it agreed, then?"

He was not at all clever, this big and handsome bandit. No wonder the Professor found it easy to fool him.

For answer I shook my head. "What you ask is impossible," I said, truly. "Van Dorn has guarded his secret well, for only he knows where to unearth the treasure."

"Then," declared the sheik, with an abrupt change in tone, "I must have Van Dorn. Come; let us ride on."

"Do you expect to capture Van Dorn's party with three men?" inquired Archie, maliciously.

"No; I will tell you my plan. I intend to make a compact with Gege-Merak, if I can overtake him," was the calm answer. "Together we will get the treasure that has been already taken and what still remains. We have only to wrest the secret from the red-bearded jackal, and kill him. Then we will divide the spoils and each go our own way. It is simple and easy enough to do, is it not?"

It seemed to me rather difficult, but I said nothing. Knowing more of the situation than Abdul Hashim did, I realized that the Bega chief was already our secret enemy and would doubtless be glad to form an alliance with the Arab, although the Bega professed to despise the Bedouins who shared the

desert with them. I pinned my faith to Ned Britton, our stalwart sailors, and Bry, and to the cleverness of the Professor. Abdul Hashim would find some opposition in carrying out his “easy and simple” plans.

The camels were now sent forward at a swift pace and soon we reached the miserable oasis of Laketa. There we learned that all the men of the village — some half dozen — had joined Gege-Merak’s party and gone into the mountains. The party of Americans had followed in pursuit an hour later, said an old woman who spoke English imperfectly.

“Why pursuit?” I asked in wonder, when the sheik, at this information, turned to me with a triumphant leer.

That, however, the ignorant creature could not explain, either in her native dialect or in English. We only knew that friends and foes had disappeared into the foothills several hours before, and it puzzled me greatly to understand why Uncle Naboth had left us three boys to our fate and started in pursuit of the Bega chief. The only plausible explanation was that the Professor wanted to kill Gege-Merak before he could betray the secret of the treasure and set the authorities at Koser upon us; but even then it was unlikely that my uncle would consent to abandon me and my companions for the sake of the treasure or to obey Van Dorn’s whim. It was not like the faithful old fellow, who had stood by me in many a former emergency.

Abdul Hashim did not delay at the village, but pushed on hastily, late as it was. We three boys were ordered to ride ahead, and our captors followed with rifles ready to shoot if we dared swerve from the path. Neither could we outdistance them, for their camels were as swift as our own and more obedient to their control. So we were as much prisoners as if bound and manacled.

The twilight is brief in Egypt, so soon after the setting of the sun we were obliged to make a halt. We had now reached the old abandoned well of the Romans, and beside it we made our camp.

First of all the Arabs tethered the camels; then calmly proceeded to bind us in an original manner. Our legs were tied from ankles to knees, and a rope was placed around each of our necks, looping us together and connecting us in one string with the most powerful of the two Arabs who accompanied the sheik. We were given food and a swallow of tepid water each, and afterward our wrists were firmly tied behind us. Trussed up like so many mummies, we were commanded to lie down and sleep!

Strange to say, we did sleep — not comfortably, perhaps, but from extreme fatigue; for the hard riding of the day had thoroughly exhausted us.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
THE WELL OF THE SCORPIONS

NEXT MORNING I awoke at early dawn to see Abdul Hashim standing by the curb of the abandoned well and looking into its depths thoughtfully. His men joined him a moment later, and they conversed together in low tones in Arabic. Several times I heard the word "akareb" mentioned, which I knew to signify scorpions, and at times they would cast a pebble into the well and then peer after it curiously.

At first I could not imagine what the fellows were up to. I knew scorpions were thick in these foothills, and remembered that my friend Ketti had warned me of them as we passed through; but why should the Arabs be so interested in the fact that there were numbers of these vermin at the bottom of the abandoned well?

The sheik soon solved the mystery, to my great horror. He came to us and kicked us in turn, bidding us harshly to rise.

Something in the man's eyes warned me of grave danger. His mood had changed over night and instead of the thin mask of friendliness there was now a wicked look on his finely cut features that I was positive meant our imminent destruction — if he could accomplish it.

I slowly and with effort struggled to my feet, as did Archie and Joe. I braced myself for the final struggle.

"If I am to reach Gege-Merak I can carry you with me no longer," announced the sheik, in a surly tone.

"Therefore you will have the misfortune to fall into the well here, and if your bones are ever found no one can blame me for your death."

"The well is full of scorpions, boys," I said to my companions. "The sheik means to murder us."

Archie shuddered, Joe remaining strangely silent.

"It isn't a pleasant fate, Abdul Hashim," I continued, turning to face the scowling Arab. "Why don't you shoot us down, and make an end of it?"

"Ah, I fear your friend, the Cadi," he responded, with a guttural laugh. "My plan is safe for me, and as sure for yourselves. There shall be no bullet holes in your flesh to trap me; there shall be no bonds around you to prove foul play if you are discovered in the well before the scorpions have picked your bones clean. Now, then, Hassan — get to work!" he added, turning with a gesture of command to his tall follower.

Hassan proceeded to free Joe from his bonds — he was first at hand — and the others at the same time began to untie our cords.

"I will give you a chance to fight the scorpions," said the sheik, grimly;

but that was the biggest mistake he ever made. He should not have risked loosening our bonds. He took us for mere boys, but forgot that even a boy, if he is an American and desperate, will fight to the last for life and liberty.

The tall one pushed Joe toward the edge of the well and was about to thrust him over the brink when the boy, who had seemed dazed and inert, suddenly stooped and grasped the Arab's legs. It was the old trick that had once before astonished us. There was a brief struggle and then the man rose into the air, his arms extended and swinging in space, and plunged head foremost into the pit. His cry of terror, as he fell, was bloodcurdling, and Abdul Hashim gave an answering yell and sprang toward Joe with a knife glittering in his upraised hand.

Swift as an arrow the boy darted under his arm and ran where a rifle leaned against the rock. I saw him swing around and fire point blank at the sheik, who was not three paces away — but I had business of my own to attend to. For the burly Arab who had partly unfastened my bonds now clutched me by the throat and threw me to the ground, where he knelt on my chest and drew his pistol from his belt. Just as he fired the weapon was thrust aside and Archie's big fist crashed into the fellow's face and knocked him flat beside me.

"All right, Sam; you can get up now," said the Yankee, cheerfully. "The war's over."

He cut my remaining bonds with a knife; half conscious of what had happened, I sat up and looked around.

Joe was seated on a rock bandaging his leg with a handkerchief.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Only a scratch," he replied. "Abdul Hashim's knife grazed me as he fell."

The sheik was lying motionless upon his face. Archie turned him over and the dark eyes stared steadfastly at the sun, without blinking. I found myself trembling as with an ague.

"It's dreadful, boys!" I gasped, appalled by what we had done.

"So it is," answered Joe, nodding; "but it was our lives against theirs, Sam, and — "

He paused abruptly, glaring at something behind me. Archie screamed a warning and I sprang to my feet to find that the third Arab had recovered consciousness and was about to plunge a knife into my back.

I caught his wrist and struggled to hold the keen blade away from me, but the fellow was strong as an ox and mad with rage. Archie came to the rescue and dealt him a couple of stinging blows, so that he dropped the knife and caught us both in a fierce embrace, crushing the two of us against his breast

while he dragged us nearer to the well.

I realized his intention and screamed and struggled without avail. Nearer and nearer to the scorpion pit we were dragged until all three of us, a writhing mass of flesh and muscle, were tottering on the brink.

Suddenly a pistol shot cracked — seemingly close to my ear — and the Arab's head dropped. He gave us one final, spasmodic hug, and partly relaxed his grasp. I felt that we were all three reeling into the awful depths below, when my hair was clutched and I was torn from that terrible embrace and hurled to the earth. It was Joe who had saved me, and from where I lay I saw him straining to save Archie also from falling into the well. The Arab was either dead or desperately wounded, but with his final instinct of enmity he clung to Archie on one side while Joe dragged at him from the other. The Arab's body, however, was hanging over the pit, and its weight would soon draw my struggling, desperate friends after it unless prompt help was rendered them. I again leaped up and, half dazed as I was, clung frantically to Joe, and my added weight gave us the victory. For the Arab's grasp slackened and his body slowly collapsed and fell with a thud to the bottom of the pit, while we three, clinging together and panting from our efforts, staggered away to sink weakly upon the ground.

It had all happened in half the time it takes to tell it, and for a moment the sudden revulsion from impending death to absolute freedom was more than we could comprehend. A little time ago we were being dragged by our terrible captors to the scorpion pit, there to meet a frightful death, and now two of our assailants were themselves in the pit, while the third lay motionless before us!

"How did it happen?" I asked myself, greatly bewildered; and then I remembered how Joe's trick at wrestling had tumbled the first man into the well; how Joe had seized the rifle and shot Abdul Hashim; how Joe had vanquished the last Arab by a pistol shot as Archie and I struggled with him for dear life.

Joe? Yes; Joe had done all this. The quiet, slender lad I had once befriended through pity had now saved us all three from an awful fate, and by his extraordinary pluck and quick wit had proved himself a hero indeed.

Joe sat before me in an inert heap, breathing fast after his amazing efforts. Silently I reached out and grasped both his hands in mine, pressing them with gratitude too deep for words. Archie awoke from his stupefied abstraction and shook our deliverer's hands warmly in his big paws. But he too forbore to speak. Words are poor things, and — Joe understood, I'm sure.

Finally we grew calm enough to resume conversation and to inquire what it was best we should do next. I was for taking the three best camels and

pushing on toward Koser, hoping to find the pass through the mountains and regain the ship. My friends thought the plan as safe and practical as any. So I arose, rather unsteadily for my nerves were still on edge, and searched the saddle-bags for food, having had no breakfast. I found plenty of dates, banyans and dried goat's flesh, and we each took a portion of these and began to eat.

Presently Archie crawled to the edge of the well and leaning over looked in. I saw his face blanch and a look of horror come to his eyes, but neither Joe nor I asked a single question as our comrade hastily drew back and came to our side. Nor have I questioned him since. Whatever the Yankee boy saw in that gloomy pit he has never cared to speak of.

We were about to mount our animals, having recovered our rifles and some of our other weapons, when the quick tread of approaching camels reached our ears. Unnerved by our recent experience, our first impulse was to grasp our rifles and leap behind a sheltering rock, from which refuge we might determine whether friends or foes were drawing near.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
VAN DORN TURNS TRAITOR

THE TREAD OF the camels sounded ahead of us from up the trail, and soon we were reassured by a loud voice speaking in hearty American fashion. Shortly after there moved into our line of vision Uncle Naboth and Ned Britton, riding side by side, while after them came Bryonia and the sailors from the *Seagull.*

With a shout of joy, we leaped from our concealment, and my uncle fairly tumbled off his tall camel in his eagerness to embrace me. It was indeed a joyful reunion, and for a while no questions were asked on either side, the satisfaction of knowing we were all safe and reunited being enough for us.

But soon the silent form of Abdul Hashim stretched upon the ground attracted attention, and Uncle Naboth leaned over it and asked in a hushed voice:

"Who killed him, Sam?"

"Joe, uncle; and by killing him saved all our lives." As quickly and in as few words as possible, I related the tragic scene just enacted.

But the relation of Abdul Hashim's enmity reminded me to ask a question, in turn.

"Where is the Professor, uncle?"

"And where's the treasure?" demanded Archie, almost in the same breath.

Uncle Naboth frowned and looked glum, and Ned swore a deep oath in sailor fashion.

"The Perfessor, Sam, is a infernal scoundrel!" my uncle answered.

I glanced at the dead Arab. Was his story indeed true, I wondered, and had Van Dorn wronged Abdul Hashim even as the sheik had declared? If so, much might be forgiven the Arab.

"Let us admit the Professor is a scoundrel," I remarked, "for such a statement does not surprise me. But that does not account for his absence."

"Yes; it does," retorted Uncle Naboth; "an' it 'counts for our runnin' away and leavin' you boys in the lurch. Almost it accounts for your all bein' killed — which you would 'a' been, lads, if it hadn't been fer Joe." Here he glanced affectionately at our hero, who grew red and embarrassed.

"True enough, uncle," I said. "Tell us about it, please."

"It were this way, Sam," he began, seating himself upon a stone and mopping his brow with his red silk handkerchief, for it was hot up here among the rocks and Mr. Perkins was round and chubby. "You boys hadn't more 'n started for Luxor yesterday mornin' before that blasted Gege-Merak come a-ridin' up with his band an' all the scoundrels in the village. They

halted a little way off, for we showed fight an' they was summat afraid of us. But that little dried-up one-eyed chief was game to come on alone, an' as soon as he was in speakin' distance he begun jabberin' away in Arabia to the Perfessor. Van Dorn answered back, for he can talk Arabia well enough himself, an' so they jabbered together for a time. I asked 'em to speak so's we could understand, for ol' Gege can talk English if he wants to, as you know; but the Perfessor told me not to interfere.

"'You leave me to deal with him,' says he, 'an' I'll negotiate this business all right. P'raps,' says he, 'the Bega will keep our secret, after all, an' not want a share o' the plunder, either. He ain't lookin' for trouble,' says the Perfessor.

"So I said nothin' more, an' they talked an' jabbered a long while. Then on a suddint Van Dorn turns an' says: 'The chief thinks some o' you understan' Arabia, the langwidge as we're speakin', an' he suspicions we're a-trappin' him.'

"'We're all honest English,' says I, 'an' I'm glad to say we don't know a word of Arabia. What does he want, anyhow?'

"The Perfessor looked hard at Gege, but ol' one-eye wouldn't talk English. 'Come,' says the Perfessor, 'state your terms.' But still Gege was silent as a clam.

"'I guess,' says the Perfessor, 'you all better draw aside an' leave me to dicker with the chief. Draw back a little,' says he, motionin' to us.

"Well, you know, Sam, we'd come to rely a good deal on Van Dorn. He'd led us straight to the treasure, as he'd said he would, an' he'd sealed it all up accordin' to agreement until we could get it aboard ship an' divide it proper. An' we knew we'd have a hard time gettin' back to Koser if we had to fight Gege an' his men all the way. So we thought if Van Dorn could settle the trouble in his own fashion we'd give him every chance to do so. Leastwise, that's what I thought, for I told the boys to ride off a little way, out o' earshot. We did that, leavin' the Perfessor an' the chief together, and leavin' — that's where we blundered, my lad — leavin' the two camels with the treasure with 'em. But we hadn't a thought of treachery until ol' Gege raised his arm an' the whole troop o' villains come rushin' forward. They surrounded the Perfessor an' the camels, fired a few shots at us, an' then turned an' rode as fast as they could for the village.

"Ned an' I didn't know what to do for a minute. The Perfessor was escapin' as lively as the rest, leadin' one treasure camel, while ol' Gege led the other; so we knew well enough he'd put up the job on us and made a dicker with Gege to rob us of our share.

"'The boys won't be back till afternoon, so let's foller the thieves an' fight

it out,' says Ned. That struck me as sensible, so after 'em we went, not meanin' at the time to desert you, but tryin' to save the treasure we had earned an' to balk the plans of that dum-sizzled Perfessor."

"You did quite right, uncle," said I. "I don't blame you a bit. Well?"

"Well, lad, they didn't stop at the village, as we expected, but kep' right on. Also we kep' right on. Whenever we got too close they'd turn an' shoot at us, but they never hit anything, an' we didn't dare shoot much ourselves for fear o' killin the girl, who was ridin' her camel just beside the chief an' the Perfessor."

"Iva?"

"Yes. She's a pretty girl, Sam, and ain't to blame in this matter, as I can see; so we hated to harm her. Another thing, we ain't so used to shootin' folks for a bit o' money as these villains is. So all day we chased ol' Gege through the hills, an' towards dark we were a long way ahead o' here, past the next stretch o' desert beyond, and well into the black mountains. Then, to our surprise, instead o' keepin' in the trail, the chief and his party turned aside into a narrer path an' rode plumb into a blind ravine, where they made camp.

"I couldn't understan' the whys an' wherefores of this, at first, but Ned an' I figgered out that the foxey ol' chief, or the Perfessor, or both, didn't care to get any nearer to Koser with that treasure while we were hot on their track. They mean to stop in that canyon until they can get rid o' us, some way or 'nuther; for to let us chase' em into the settlement, or to get there first an' warn the police, would mean that they'd have to give up the boodle, sure thing, an' p'raps render an account for killin' poor Cunningham.

"We watched the mouth of that ravine all night, but couldn't get any nearer the thieves 'cause one man, well armed, can stand in that narrer place between the rocks an' keep off an army. This mornin' we decided we'd go back an' find you boys, for you've been on my mind a good deal an' I've worried about you. So I'm mighty glad to find you so soon, safe an' well."

This story was as perplexing as it was interesting. I tried to understand the policy of the Professor's strange desertion.

"Why, uncle, do you think Van Dorn preferred to deal with the Bega chief rather than remain faithful to us?"

"There's several things to explain it, Sam. 01' Gege knew the secret, first an' foremost, an' the Perfessor reckoned we could never get to Koser alive an' with the treasure as long as the chief was agin us an' hankerin' to get his fists on them jewels an' things. Van Dorn had agreed to give us half of all the treasure, exceptin' the rolls of writin', an' if he stuck to his bargain with us ol' Gege might capture the outfit, bein' stronger than we are an' knowin' the

country better. On the contrary, if Van Dorn deserted an' went over to the chief, he could make the same terms with him an' stand a better chance of gettin' out safe. Mebbe he's got a plan to return for the rest of the treasure, an' mebbe his idea is to take it to Luxor, so's to keep out of our way. Anyhow, the Perfessor's a low-down villain, Sam, an' he's tryin' to feather his own nest at our expense. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he's plottin' right now how to kill us all, so's to make himself safe. You see, he an' Gege has that paper, signed by us, sayin' we don't hold anyone responsible if we're killed in this adventure. That was a great mistake, Sam; we hadn't ought to 'a' signed it, at all."

"But Van Dorn wouldn't dare go to the ship and face my father," said I.

"Of course not. His plan would be to find some other vessel to carry his plunder away from Egypt. He's cunning as a weasel, that Perfessor, an' vile as a skunk."

I thought it a good time to relate to our friends the story of Van Dorn's treachery to Lovelace Pasha, as told us by the Arab sheik; and they all agreed that Abdul Hashim's version was likely to be true, and that the "red-beard" had been a scoundrel from the beginning of his connection with the affair, plotting to get the treasure away from both the explorer and the sheik, in case it was discovered. We were sorry Abdul Hashim had been killed, but his coldblooded attempt to murder us had led to his own undoing, and he was now out of the running for good and all. The Arab might have possessed some manly instincts, and perhaps was a better man than Van Dorn, if the two could be compared; but his hatred of the white infidels made him as dangerous as the other, and we felt that one desperate enemy, at least, had been removed from our path.

"I wish he could have lived long enough to meet the Professor once more," said I, with a sigh; "but fate has robbed the poor devil of even his revenge."

We buried him among the rocks, to keep the jackals from preying upon his body, and mounted our camels to ride toward the place where Gege-Merak was encamped.

There was little need of haste now. The chief did not wish to escape us, it seemed, anymore than we wished him to escape. The treasure was a magnet that drew both parties toward it irresistibly, and in order to possess it we must isolate ourselves in these mountains until we had fought the matter out and one side or the other became the victor.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE MAD CAMEL

BEYOND THE OLD Roman well, which had this morning witnessed so strange a tragedy, there lay, as you will remember, a stretch of sandy desert some five miles in extent, beyond which rose the black breccia cliffs of the Hammemat Mountains. It was in a rift of these cliffs that Gege-Merak had established himself.

We were proceeding leisurely across the sands and had come near enough to the edge of the mountain to note well its defiles, when our attention was arrested by a strange occurrence. A camel came racing at full speed from the hill path and dashed out upon the flat desert where we rode. For a short distance the beast made straight toward us, and we could see a rider clinging to its back — a huddled up figure dressed in a green and scarlet robe.

"It's Iva!" cried Archie, astonished, and at the same moment the dress also enabled me to recognize the chief's granddaughter.

Even as my friend spoke, the camel swerved and commenced running in a circle, scattering the sand in clouds as it bounded along in great leaps. The girl huddled lower, clinging desperately to her seat as the seemingly infuriated beast continued on its wild career.

"Why, the camel's mad!" I exclaimed, remembering the tales of mad camels I had heard related, and seeing in the animal's erratic actions the solution of the mystery.

There was no doubt of it now. The huge beast ran here and there in an aimless manner, never slacking its terrific speed, but darting first this way and then that, and finally renewing the circular course that was the clearest proof of its crazed condition.

Our party had halted involuntarily to watch the strange scene, but I felt that the girl was in serious danger and urged my camel forward without any clear idea of how I could render her assistance. In a moment I found that Archie and Joe had both joined me; pricking our animals to a faster pace we rode straight for the place where the mad camel was performing his capricious pranks. Suddenly the beast stopped — so abruptly that Iva flew over its head and landed in the sand twenty feet or more away. She seemed unhurt by the fall, for instantly she was on her feet and, picking up her skirt, ran toward us with the speed of a deer. At the same time the mad brute's eye caught the flash of her gaudy robe and, with a loud bellow, he darted after her flying figure.

For a second my heart was in my throat. Then I jabbed the pointed stick into the flank of my camel and shouted:

“Quick, boys — keep close together and run the beast down!”

It was a desperate act, but Iva’s peril was imminent. Even the lion in his jungle is not more terrible to face than a mad camel, and in a few moments the girl might have been trampled into a shapeless mass by the feet of the frenzied animal.

Riding so close together that the flanks of the three camels touched, we dashed swiftly on. Iva saw us, and, almost as we were upon her, turned and darted to one side. Her camel had also marked us, but with elevated head and flashing eyes, its hoofs spreading in the air as it bounded along, it made no attempt to pause. Next moment we came together and struck with the force of a catapult, the impact being so great that I sailed skyward and alighted — fortunately on my feet — several yards away. Archie and Joe also took croppers, and as soon as we recovered ourselves we looked toward the camels. They were all in a bunch at first. The mad one was down, and also one of the others, while the remaining two were stamping on them with terrific blows from their powerful feet.

It was a camel fight then, sure enough, for it is the instinct of these creatures to destroy one of its kind if it becomes crazed and runs amuck; and Archie’s camel, having tumbled down, would have suffered severely from the indiscriminate attack of its companions had it not found a chance to rise and join them against the real offender.

When, finally, the mad one lay crushed and motionless upon the sands, the others quieted down and stood meekly awaiting us to come and remount them.

Meantime Ned Britton, who followed close behind us, had leaped down and caught up the terrified girl, and when I looked to see what had become of her I found her seated upon Ned’s steed with our big mate beside her, while he strove to quiet her fears and agitation by smoothing her hair with his rough hand.

Heretofore Iva had been sullen and silent, keeping by the side of the old chief, her grandfather, like a shadow and seeming to lack any interest in her surroundings. But now, as we gathered around her with sympathetic faces, she became animated and frank, thanking us very sweetly and with evident gratitude for coming to her rescue.

“But how did it happen, Iva?” I asked. “Why did you leave Gege-Merak?”

She drew back with a sober look; then, impulsively, she said:

“I will tell you all, for Ketti says you are honest and good, and I know my grandfather to be cruel and wicked.”

The speech astonished us, but the girl continued, quickly:

“Ketti has quarreled with his chief, and he is in disgrace — Ketti, who

will be chief after my grandfather dies!”

“Will he, Iva?” I asked. “Is Ketti to be the next chief?”

“Yes; it is his right,” she answered, proudly; “and that is why Gege-Merak hates him. But Ketti is good, and when he is chief I am to marry him.”

“Bravo, Iva!” cried Archie. “Ketti is the best fellow in your gang, to my notion.”

“I think so, too,” said I. “But go on with your story, Iva.”

“The red-beard offered to give our chief half the treasure he has found if Gege-Merak will kill you all. My grandfather has promised to do so, but the men we brought from Laketa are cowards and do not dare to kill the Americans, and we have not enough men to be sure we will beat you in a fight. So the chief sent me back to our village to get all of the fighting men of our tribe and bring them to join him in yonder valley.”

“A very pretty plan,” remarked Uncle Naboth.

“That was why Ketti quarreled,” said the girl. “He said you must not be killed, for if we injured you the whole tribe would suffer, and perhaps be destroyed. Ketti does not care for treasure; he says it makes our people thieves and jackals; and he wants to live honestly and in peace, as our forefathers did. There was another thing, too, Effendi. The chief also plots to kill Red-beard, now that he is in our power, and to keep to himself all the treasure. Ketti told my grandfather that was not right, for we had given Redbeard our word, and the word of a Bega chief should be an honest word, and never false.”

“It won’t hurt the Perfessor to kill him,” observed Uncle Naboth reflectively. “The dum-sizzled scoundrel deserves several kinds of deaths, as a matter of justice.”

Iva did not know how to take this speech, but, after looking at my uncle in grave protest, she continued:

“So Ketti was disgraced — he, the bravest of our tribe! — and the chief, my grandfather, commanded me to ride to the village for our warriors, because I could not fight if you attacked him, and I knew well the way. He made me take Sekkat, our swiftest camel, although Sekkat has been acting strangely for two days. There is Sekkat,” she continued, pointing to the crushed remains of the beast that had so nearly destroyed her. “No sooner had I ridden out of the valley where the camp is than I understood that Sekkat was mad. I tried to turn him, and he rushed down the path and out upon the desert. The rest of my story you know, Effendi, and I thank you again for saving my life. Ketti also will thank you,” she continued, with a proud look at us.

“But Ketti is disgraced,” I said, smiling.

Her eyes flashed at this and her brow grew dark and fierce.

“Not for long will Ketti bow to any man’s anger!” she cried. Looking about us with an air imperious as that of any queen, she added: “Come with me, brave Amerikani! I will show you how to save both Ketti and yourselves, even as you have saved me. More; you shall save Redbeard and his treasure, too.”

That last promise was not necessary, but we accepted it with the rest, and that right joyously, as you may imagine.

“What is your plan, Iva?” I asked, as we once more put our camels in motion and rode toward the black cliffs of the mountain.

“Wait; you will see,” she replied, setting her lips firmly together. So much were we impressed by this girl’s courage and frankly avowed friendship that we followed her lead blindly, questioning her no more.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

IVA

IT SOON BECAME evident to us that Iva knew this country intimately. She abandoned the clearly outlined entrance to the pass through which we had come on our way from Koser, and led us around to the less promising cliffs at the left. An hour's ride brought us to a ravine we had not before noticed, and silently we entered this and rode among boulders and loose stones until the steep rocky sides closed in on us and we could proceed no farther. Then we dismounted and picketed our camels. Taking only our rifles and ammunition with us, we followed the Bega girl up a dizzy and difficult path that one would have judged, at first sight, it was impossible to scale. But Iva, mounting light as an antelope, seemed sure of her way, and where she went we could not well hesitate to follow.

The perilous climb brought us to the top of the cliff — a rocky ridge, narrow and uneven, with peaks here and there that shot their points still farther toward the sky. Presently the girl paused and looked over the edge and dropped lightly into a pocket-like hollow of the inner cliff — a place that reminded me of an upper box in a theatre.

Here, quite protected from observation, we could look down upon the ravine in which Gege-Merak and his men were encamped. Just beyond the pass we could see the two tall warriors who were guarding its entrance, so we had approached the ravine from the rear.

The cunning old chief had chosen his retreat well. On all sides were smooth walls of black breccia, where not even a mountain goat could have found a foothold. Only at the entrance was there any cleft that allowed one to enter or leave the place. The camels stood grouped at one end, and the four panniers containing the treasure of the priests of Karnak had been piled upon a rocky table and were guarded by one of Gege-Merak's own men. The ravine was perhaps eighty feet wide by some three hundred feet long, and several of the low, spreading Bedouin tents had been pitched just underneath the hollow wherein we lay.

The chief and all his company, except the guards I have mentioned, must have been congregated under these tents when we arrived at our point of observation, and for more than an hour we lay there patiently attentive without seeing any evidence of life in the camp below. We supposed that Iva's adventure was unknown to them, shut in as they were, and doubtless the chief believed her even then to be speeding toward his village to bring back reinforcements of fighting men.

But Gege-Merak had no intention of remaining idle in the meantime, as

we were soon to observe. For at last the Bega began to stream out of the chief's tent, and among them came Van Dorn, his arms bound close to his sides and a big warrior now leading, now pushing him along.

The Professor seemed weak and unnerved, for he stumbled among the loose stones that littered the way and would have fallen more than once had not his guard steadied him. His head was bare and his clothing torn in many places. Doubtless the fellow had struggled desperately before he had finally been secured.

They led Van Dorn to the end of the ravine opposite us and placed him with his back against the rock. The Bega and the Bisharin from Laketa, all animated and talking eagerly in their native tongue, formed a group fifty yards away. Prominent amongst them we could see the dwarfed, withered form of the aged chief, and the stalwart, towering figure of Ketti.

Gege-Merak gave an order and a man stepped forward and leveled his rifle at the Professor. Before he could fire, Van Dorn shrieked in terror and dropped to the ground. They raised him again, cuffing and shaking him until once more he stood upright. Yet he trembled visibly. Again the Bega warrior raised his rifle, but, answering the victim's pitiful screams, Ketti now sprang before the man and wrenched away his weapon, protesting — so loudly that his voice reached even to our high nest on the cliff — against the deed the chief had ordered.

Gege-Merak fairly danced with rage at this defiance. He gave a command which at first his men seemed reluctant to execute, but finally two of them approached Ketti, seized him and drew him away, binding his arms to his sides. Iva was frantic at this act, and we had to warn her several times to be quiet or we should surely be discovered by those below.

It was while I was busy soothing Iva that I heard a shot and a cry of agony, and turned in time to see Van Dorn fall flat upon his face. Poor fellow, the treasure had cost him his life. However treacherous he had been in his dealings with Lovelace, with Abdul Hashim and with us, his final alliance with old Gege-Merak had brought him into contact with a nature as unscrupulous as his own, and the barbaric chief had evened up all scores by robbing the man of his ill-gotten wealth and his life at once.

But it seemed that Gege-Merak's vengeance was not yet complete, and we could see from the tense and strained attitudes of the warriors that Van Dorn's death was but an incident in the drama. If, indeed, the chief had cause to hate Ketti, that young man's rash interference with his commands had given Gege-Merak the chance, perhaps long desired, to punish him. It may be he lived in fear of the handsome fellow who was destined to succeed him at his death, for Ketti's popularity with the tribe was indisputable. Anyway,

his orders, now given in a firm, loud voice, seemed instantly to seal the fate of Iva's lover.

Bound and helpless as he was, the young man was led to the spot where Van Dorn had stood and set with his back against the wall of rock. But there was no craven spirit in the victim this time. Proudly the warrior stood facing his chief, his pose erect, his dark eyes calmly regarding his destroyer and a slight smile of scorn curling his lips.

Gege-Merak shouted his commands, but not a tribesman moved to obey. Softly Iva reached out her hand and grasped my repeating rifle, and I let her take it. She knelt before me, her brown face rigid, her eyes dark with horror, and rested the barrel on the ledge of rock before her. I saw Uncle Naboth and Ned glance at each other significantly; but they made no move to interfere.

Again and again the chief shouted his orders, waving his arms imperiously and stamping his foot in rage; but the Bega stood stolid and unyielding, and their Bisharin allies shrank back and huddled in a frightened group in the rear.

Gege-Merak himself snatched a rifle from a warrior's hand and swinging around leveled it full at Ketti. At the same instant Iva's rifle cracked beside me and I saw the aged chief totter, drop his weapon and sink slowly to the earth. A shout went up from the assembled group below, and with one impulse they turned their eyes toward us.

And now the girl sprang upon the dizzy ledge and stood where all might see her figure clearly outlined against the sky. High above her head she held the rifle that had slain her wicked grand-sire, and as the Bega recognized her they shouted again — joyfully this time — and waved their hands to her in full approval of her act.

I own I was horrified for a moment, remembering the ties of blood between Iva and Gege-Merak; but she was a wild, half-civilized child of the desert, and to her simple mind her lover's life must be preserved at any cost.

All was eager animation in the ravine. Ketti's bonds were quickly removed, and the big fellow waved his thanks to the sweetheart whose courage had saved him.

"Come," said Iva, calmly, as she stepped down to a safer position beside us. "There are only friends in Ketti's tribe now; let us go to him."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

KETTI PROVES A FRIEND

AS HASTILY AS might be we groped our way down the dangerous pathway to the ground below the cliffs. There we regained our camels and made for the desert, around the spur of the mountain, and so up the regular trail to the mouth of the ravine.

Ketti was eagerly awaiting us, and as she saw him Iva quickly rode forward and threw herself from her camel to crouch with bowed head before the new chief.

Coming to her side, Ketti raised her gently and, while we watched with curiosity from one side and the assembled Bega watched from the other, the young warrior gravely placed one hand beneath Iva's chin, palm upward, and the other hand upon her head, palm down.

This, we learned afterward, was the betrothal ceremony of the Bega. When a young man chose his bride he went to her and took her chin and head between his palms, and thus made claim to her for all time. None other dared afterward make advances to the girl, under penalty of incurring her affianced youth's anger. Indeed, I was told this was frequently the only ceremony performed at all, whether of betrothal or marriage, by many of the tribes, although there was a form of native wedding that included various and lengthy rites and involved much feasting and dancing.

The girl, it seems to me, has not a fair chance in this custom, for she is not allowed to refuse a man who so salutes her. It is true a brother or father may challenge a presumptuous warrior and fight him to the death, but the girl herself is helpless.

I am sure Ketti and Iva had an elaborate wedding ceremony thereafter; but that is not a part of my story, from which I fear I have digressed. Feeling quite safe with the friendly Ketti, we had no hesitation in following him and his band into the ravine, where we dismounted and went at once to examine the body of Van Dorn. He was quite dead, having been shot through the heart, and Ned Britton lifted him and bore him to one of the low tents, of which Ketti willingly gave us the use. Gege-Merak's body still lay upon its face where it had fallen, and to my surprise none of the natives touched it or even so much as glanced toward it, so far as I could see.

In the tent, Ned and one of the sailors searched Van Dorn's clothing and removed from it the leathern belt, his rings and watch and a small note-book. Last they found, sewn into the lining of his well-worn coat, a package, rather bulky, though flat, covered with goat-skin, tied and sewn securely and carefully sealed. These things I took possession of, and Uncle Naboth and I

went to see Ketti to get permission to bury the body.

We found the young chief seated on a rock beside Iva, with whom he was conversing most earnestly. He smiled at us as we came up, and said:

"We have made changes, Effendi. I am now chief."

"So I understand, Ketti," I answered, "and I'm glad of it. We are friends with the Bega now, are we not?"

"We are friends," he announced, gravely. "Gege-Merak was bad, and had no love for you. He loved treasure better, and killed the Red-beard to get it all. But Ketti does not want his brothers' wealth. It is enough that you have paid the Bega to guide and protect you."

"Do you mean that you will return to us the treasure?" I asked, striving to conceal my astonishment.

"It is not Ketti's. It was not Gege-Merak's. It is yours," he said, simply. "My tribe shall not rob, nor shall they slay their friends. While I am chief, the Bega who call me master must be honest and good, and keep the laws the great Khedive has made. Is it not so, Iva?"

"It is the only way for our tribe to prosper and grow in strength," she answered, soberly. "Under our great and good Chief Ketti we will be rich and strong, and our father the Khedive will call us good children."

"You shall say, when you return to Koser," continued Ketti, regarding us earnestly, "that my tribe was true and honest, and touched not one jewel of your treasure. You will say that we guided you straight and protected you from enemies and thieves and earned your money well. Is it so, Effendi?"

"We will say that, Ketti," I replied.

"But there are also things which you will not say, Effendi," he continued, with a note of anxiety in his voice.

"And what are they, my friend?"

"You will not say my people killed the Red-beard; for you do not know what killed him. You will not say where he is gone, for that you do not know. Is not the land broad for men to wander in? And if any asks you about Gege-Merak you will be sorrowful and tell how he died in the desert, being old and feeble, and you will say that Ketti succeeded him as chief of the tribe. Then you will mount the great ship that awaits you and sail away."

I began to understand. Ketti intended to make a bargain with us. He feared the consequences of the murder of Van Dorn and did not want the fact that Iva had shot her grandfather known. If we would promise to be discreet in these matters he would restore to us the treasure, which he considered another element of danger to him, not realizing that we were slyly removing it in defiance of the Khedive's orders. Had he known that — but, fortunately, he did not know it.

“It shall be as you say, Chief Ketti,” I returned; “for we wish you and Iva only happiness, and to tell some things might cause you trouble. If your father the Khedive asks us of your service, we will say you are a good chief, and faithful.”

That pleased him greatly.

“The treasure is untouched,” said he. “Not a seal is broken. It awaits your orders, Effendi.”

Willingly he gave us permission to bury the Professor among the rocks, which we did during the afternoon. When we returned to the ravine from this labor we were surprised to notice that in our absence the natives had gathered several heaps of stones, which were piled in the form of a wide circle around Gege-Merak’s body. But the body itself had not been disturbed, and the Bega were now lounging in various parts of the ravine and conversing together in their customary indifferent manner.

Ketti came to us with the information that we should start at dawn next morning for Koser, which he hoped to reach in two days’ fast riding.

“But what will you do with Gege-Merak?” I inquired.

“His ceremony of entombment will be held this evening, Effendi. Your people will be welcome to watch the solemn rites,” he added.

We had supper and awaited with curiosity to witness the proposed ceremony; but the natives were in no hurry, and showed no activity until the stars were bright in the sky.

At a word from Ketti, every Bega and Bisharin sprang up and stood in a circle around the dead chief’s body. Beginning a low chant they now commenced to move slowly around Gege-Merak, keeping step to the chant and bending in lithe, rhythmic attitudes characteristic of the Eastern dances. And ever the chorus grew louder and faster until it became a roar and at last a wild shout. Also the excitement of the warriors increased until presently they were dancing with frenzied leaps.

Suddenly, as they circled round just beside the piles of rock, each man seized a stone from the nearest heap and hurled it at the dead body. From the next pile he grabbed another stone, until the missiles were raining upon Gege-Merak’s prostrate form from every direction. As the dance reached its climax of animation and the shower of rock continued, the old chief’s body began to disappear from sight, until he was covered up entirely and entombed in a mound of stone several feet in height.

It was a shocking sight, and seemed to us extremely brutal; but Iva, who stood by our side, calmly declared it was the custom of her people, and that a chief was highly honored who was thus buried by his people where he fell or expired. The chant, she told us, was a relation of his virtues and his mighty

deeds on earth.

If a chief dies or is killed on the desert, his people cast sand upon him, in like manner, and afterward weight the mound with rocks; and, as his body is never moved from the spot where he expired, they take down his tent or house after the funeral and set up the habitation in another place, leaving his burial mound stationary.

The wild chant rang in my ears long after the grim ceremony was completed and the camp had become quiet for the night. We Americans slept uneasily through the next few hours and at dawn awoke to eat a hasty breakfast and mount our camels.

The panniers were replaced on the two extra animals by Ned and Bryonia, who now took charge of the treasure. We were pleased to observe the truth of Ketti's statement that the wax upon the buckles of the panniers had not been tampered with and was still intact.

The Bisharin left us here and went away to their village, and without incident we traversed the trail back to Koser, which we reached, weary but exultant, at the close of the second day. My father and a number of sailors, apprised by a swift messenger of our coming, were at the wooden dock to meet us, and we unstrapped the four treasureladen panniers from the saddles of the camels and sent them on board by a boat commanded by Ned in person.

Captain Steele produced the hundred and eighty pounds due to Ketti for his services, according to the contract we had made with Gege-Merak, and I asked that an extra gold piece be given to each of the Bega warriors, which was willingly agreed to since we had been successful in our quest. It made the simple fellows very happy indeed.

After consulting with Uncle Naboth and gaining his consent, I opened the Professor's leathern belt and took from it the prettiest jewel it contained, a diadem of yellow gold set with clusters of pearls and sapphires. This I presented to Iva as a wedding present from her American friends, and the beautiful girl was proud indeed of the gift, as well she might be. Once, perhaps, it had adorned the brow of some famous Egyptian queen, and though it might now appear incongruous upon the person of a poor Bega woman, we were so grateful to Iva for the service she had rendered us that we thought it none too good to express our appreciation.

We parted from Ketti and his people in the mostly friendly manner, and he returned that night to his village in the desert.

It was not so easy to get rid of the bearded Arab sheik of Koser, who was curious to know what we had brought from Luxor and what adventures we had met on the way. It was strange, he added, that the Bega had brought us

safe back again; it was not like that clever, evil old Gege-Merak. Fortunately no one had told him of the old chief's death, or he would have been still more curious.

But we refused to satisfy the fellow's desire to gossip and kept our mouths fast shut when he was around. Also we refused his polite offers of entertainment and to his disgust hoisted sail early the next morning and headed up the gulf toward Port Ibrahim.

Now that we had the treasure safe aboard, every moment we delayed was fraught with danger, and the doubtful friendship of this sheik of Koser was no longer of any value to us.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

LOVELACE PASHA

THE TREASURE WAS taken from the panniers and, still snugly packed in the canvas sacks which Van Dorn had so carefully sealed, carried to my stateroom and dumped unceremoniously into a huge chest.

After a brief conference we had decided to leave it untouched until after we had passed through the Suez Canal and, free from the shores of Egypt, were safe on the broad waters of the Mediterranean. Then we would open the sacks, sort and examine the treasure, and divide it in ways still to be agreed upon. Our contract with Van Dorn, you will remember, gave us his share in case of his death.

And now, while we sailed up the long branch of the Red Sea which is called the Arabian Gulf, I examined with some curiosity the things Ned had taken from the Professor's dead body.

His note book had been a sort of diary, but from it several leaves had been torn, as if he had recorded events which he afterward feared might compromise him, and had thus destroyed their written evidence. From what remained I gathered that the man was no "professor" at all, but a wandering adventurer attracted to Egypt by the recent valuable discoveries there. Falling in with Lovelace, he had hired his services to that savant to assist his search, and from scattered notations in the book I formed the shrewd conclusion that the fellow had never possessed the shadow of a claim to Lovelace's discovery. Abdul Hashim had read his character fairly well, and it seemed that Van Dorn had played a desperate and murderous game to win the treasure for himself and rob, incidentally, the real discoverer and any others who might lay claim to a portion of the buried wealth.

Turning from the note book, I cut the stitches of the goatskin cover of the parcel which Van Dorn had so cleverly concealed in the lining of his coat, and proceeded to break the seals, which I observed bore the monogram "J. L.," surmounted by a winged sphinx. This was not Van Dorn's seal, but that of Lovelace Pasha, and I judged that after the owner had sewn and sealed the packet it had in some way come into the possession of Van Dorn, who had never yet ventured to open it.

At this time all of those most interested were gathered with me in the Captain's room: Uncle Naboth, Ned, Archie and Joe, as well as my father. When I removed the covering a small locket dropped out, and this I opened to glance at a sweet, womanly face that met my gaze.

Over my shoulder came a sob and a cry and Joe seized the locket from my hands.

“My mother!” he said, softly, as he devoured the miniature with eager, loving eyes.

We looked at the boy in astonishment.

“Your mother, Joe?” I questioned, stupidly.

He swiftly drew from beneath his clothing the slender chain which I had often observed he wore around his neck, and showed us a similar locket attached to it. Opening this with trembling fingers, the boy laid the lockets side by side, and we saw that the portraits were nearly identical.

“Father and I each had one,” he said, in an awed whisper; “mother has often told me that.”

“Did you ever know what became of your father, Joe?” I inquired.

“No; he went away when I was a baby, and we never heard of him again. For that reason mother was sure he was dead, for she said he loved her and would not otherwise have deserted her.”

“Then,” said I, softly, “you are about to discover your father, Joe; for the man who wrote this and owned the locket could be none other.”

“Wrote what?” asked Uncle Naboth.

I had been hastily examining a flat book which accompanied the locket. It had leaves of coarse paper closely covered with writing in a fine, scholarly hand.

“Here is a manuscript which I believe I will read aloud,” said I. “It may be interesting to us, in view of our recent adventure, and I am sure it will tell Joe something about his father.”

As I spoke I turned over the pages to the end, and Uncle Naboth, peering over my shoulder, exclaimed:

“Why, it’s signed by John Lovelace. That must be the same Lovelace Pasha who discovered the treasure.”

“He was not a Pasha,” I returned, “although he was called so. He was not even entitled to the name of Lovelace, for here he tells us who he really was — John Herring.”

Joe was staring intently, first at the lockets and then at me. His face was pale and his dark eyes glowed with nervous excitement.

“Sit down, uncle,” I said, “and let me read what is here written.”

All now assumed attentive attitudes while I proceeded to read as follows:

“‘This shall be, to any who reads it after my death, my last testament and my final behest. For some weeks I, John Herring, have feared treachery and sudden death, although I cannot discover from what direction the danger threatens. So I am determined to explain herein my position in Egypt, for, being reserved by nature, I know that at present I am a mystery to all with whom I have come into contact in this ancient and romantic land.

“‘I am an American, a native of Galveston, and a graduate of Harvard. Soon after I left college my father, who was reputed a wealthy man, died without estate, and I was thrown upon my own resources. Being little fitted for a business career I gained scant success, except that I took a wife to share my poverty — a gentle natured woman who gave me devotion and love but was unable to further my fortunes because her nature was weaker than my own.

“T was led into an illegitimate venture by a friend named José Marrow, an enterprising Mexican who owned a sloop and proposed that I join him in smuggling laces and cigars from Mexico into the United States. We succeeded for a time and I made considerable money. But at length I was discovered, as was inevitable, and only saved myself from imprisonment by sudden escape. Marrow managed to get me aboard a vessel bound for Gibraltar and I was obliged to leave my wife and baby boy without the comfort of a farewell, although I sent them all the money I had and my friend Marrow promised to see they were provided for in case I was unable to send them more before it was gone. But I thank God I have been able to supply their wants, and each year I have sent a substantial remittance to them through Marrow, who by good fortune was never suspected of being implicated in the smuggling-’”

“But we never got a dollar!” broke in Joe, indignantly. “Old Marrow must have kept every penny of the money.”

Without replying to this I continued to read:

“‘Twelve years ago I made my way to Egypt, and having been a student of Egyptology in my college days, I became much interested in the excavations being made to secure ancient relics. Soon I was myself successfully engaged in this search, and I have had the good fortune to discover several important tombs of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty.

“‘This success finally led to my undertaking a queer and seemingly impossible search — for the treasure hidden by the High Priest Amana of Karnak at the time of Cambyses’ invasion. I conceived the idea that the treasure had been buried in the sands of the desert, instead of in the Sacred Lake, according to popular tradition. For several years I searched the desert around Karnak without result, and just as I was beginning to despair I came upon an inscription graven upon an angle of the ruined walls of the temple of Seti, which described — although not accurately — the place where the treasure had been hidden.

“‘I must explain that this treasure of Karnak is mainly a library of papyri recounting the history of the Egyptians during the period between the Sixth and Twelfth Dynasties. As no other records of this period exist our historians

have been in the dark concerning this broad epoch, although we know from inscriptions found at Abydos and Edfu that the papyrus rolls hidden by the priest of Karnak gave a full account of that portion of Egyptian history which we have hitherto been unable to account for. So the discovery of this library means fame and riches to one fortunate enough to find it, and it is supposed that a store of gold and precious jewels was buried by the priests at the same time, which should further enrich the discoverer.

"'I have an explorer's and excavator's license granted me by the Khedive under the name of John Lovelace, which name I assumed on coming to Egypt, although, as I have said, my real name is John Herring. It was necessary to cover my identity in this way to avoid extradition in case the American customs officers discovered my retreat. But my crime was not an important one and I believe it has long since been forgotten.

"'The finding of the Karnak treasure is now merely a question of time, since I know by the secret inscription where to search for it. But I found that I needed help, and engaged a man named Van Dorn, who has at one time been a foreman at the workings of the Italian excavators in the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes, to assist me. He has now been with me nearly three years, receiving 400 piasters a month, which is equal to about 20 American dollars. He is a faithful worker, but has a covetous and dishonest mind, so that I suspect he will not be trustworthy in case I discover the treasure. Unfortunately, I have been obliged to intrust him with knowledge nearly equal to my own, and the misgivings I have expressed at the beginning of this testament are mostly due to this man's connection with my search. I fear the day when the treasure is at last unearthed.

"'Besides Peter Van Dorn, who is to receive one thousand dollars, in addition to his wage, if the treasure is found, I have employed members of an Arab desert tribe led by one Abdul Hashim, which inhabits a village near Tel-Ambra. For his services the sheik Abdul Hashim is also to receive one thousand dollars when I find the treasure, but nothing if I am unsuccessful. My contract with the sheik, to be exact, is for 200 pounds Egyptian. My permit from the Khedive obliges me to sell the papyri to the Cairo Museum for a sum not less than the total of my expenses during the search for them, and should there be other treasure of gold or jewels, one-half belongs to the Khedive and the other half to me. This I write plainly to explain all just claims against the treasure, should I succeed in finding it.'"

Here the writing halted, but under date of January 11, 190 — , it continued as follows:

"'At last the search for the treasure of Karnak has been successful. Last night Van Dorn and I located a granite slab in which are set three bronze

rings — evidence indisputable that here lies the wealth hidden centuries ago to escape the rapacity of Cambyses. To-night we are to take two Arabs of Abdul Hashim's tribe to assist us in lifting the slab, which Van Dorn and I were unable to do alone. I am eager to see what lies beneath it. Van Dorn has been acting more suspiciously than ever this morning, and is in a state of wild excitement. Perhaps that is natural, and I do not see how he can rob me of either the honor of the discovery or of the treasure itself; but I shall watch him closely.

"'Some months ago I wrote to José Marrow, my friend in Galveston, who now commands a trading ship, stating that I expected shortly to find a large treasure, and that if I succeeded I would send all of my share to him to be applied to the education and advancement in life of my son, who is now nearly fifteen years of age. Marrow has written me that my wife is ill and needs more money than I have sent; but I am now sure of being able to provide generously for my family.

"'If anything happens to me to prevent my carrying out this plan, I implore whoever may come into possession of this writing as a matter of simple humanity and justice to fulfill my wishes and send my share of the proceeds of the treasure to Capt. José Marrow, at Galveston, Texas, U. S. A., to be applied by him for the sole welfare of my wife and son. And I ask his Gracious Highness, the Khedive, if by chance this should come to his notice, to order my estate disposed of as I have said above.

"'I shall seal and otherwise protect this manuscript from prying eyes, and it may be that my fears are fanciful and unfounded, and that I shall myself have the delight of enriching my dear ones in person. I wish nothing for myself. The honor to my name as the discoverer of the historic papyri of Karnak will be a sufficient reward.

"'JOHN LOVELACE.'"

"Humph!" said Uncle Naboth; "is that all?"

"That is all, sir," I answered, closing the book. "But it explains a lot that we did not know, and transfers the ownership of the treasure from us to Joe."

They all sat thoughtfully considering this for a time. Then Joe said:

"I may have a sort of claim to my father's share, although that is not quite clear. But the half that was to go to the Khedive you people are now fully entitled to."

"That's a sure thing," observed Archie, whose keen Yankee wit had grasped the situation quicker than mine did. "But let's consider another thing, my friends. We agreed long ago that the hidden treasure of those old priests belonged by right to whoever was lucky enough to grab it. It isn't the Khedive's, and never has been. Lovelace — or Joe's father — may have

made a deal with the Khedive to insure his own safety, but Lovelace did nothing more than to locate the place where the treasure lay. He never got his fists on it. Neither did Abdul Hashim, nor Van Dorn, nor old Gege-Merak, although any one of ‘em would have seized it if he could and held on to it like grim death to a grasshopper. The fact is, we got possession of the treasure ourselves, at considerable risk, and it belongs to us except for the liens Joe’s father had on it. In my opinion we needn’t consider the Khedive any more than the Shah of Persia or any other hungry shark.”

“You’re right,” said Uncle Naboth. “We’ll keep half an’ give Joe half. That’s fair, I guess.”

“But first,” said I, “let’s get safely away from Egypt,” and I left them and went on deck to find we had just sighted Suez.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE KHEDIVE TAKES THE LAST TRICK — BUT ONE

WE REACHED PORT SAID without interruption at five o'clock on a gloomy afternoon, and my father managed to get his papers signed so he could clear the port an hour later.

We had used our steam to make the journey through the Canal, and so we determined to steam for the next twelve hours, at least, in order to show our heel to Egypt as soon as possible.

Heading slowly down the harbor we were surprised at being hailed by a small government launch flying the Egyptian flag, which pressed close to our side, while an officer in uniform stood up and gesticulated wildly toward us.

"What's wanted?" asked Captain Steele, leaning over the rail.

"Stop! Wait!" cried the fat officer, brokenly. "I must come on board."

"Hike along, then," called my father, but made no signal to stop the engines.

We were moving very slowly, for we had to steer clear of the numerous craft anchored in the harbor, so the launch grappled our side and Ned let down a ladder which the official clutched and swarmed overboard with surprising agility.

"Stop! Go back!" he shouted, as soon as he reached the deck. "This ship is the ship *Seagull;* it is arrest — you are all arrest!"

"What for?" demanded the Captain.

"I have instruction from his Excellency the Minister of Finance to stop you. You must not leave Egypt, he say. You have treasure on board — treasure contraband to the Egyptian Government."

We stared at one another aghast. How in the world had this information come to the ears of the government? and what should we do — what *could* we do — in this emergency? Arrest and confiscation first, and a legal battle to follow! We shuddered even to contemplate such a difficulty.

"Crowd on full steam, Tomlinson," said Captain Steele to the Chief Engineer, who stood beside him. The man saluted with a smile and retired to obey.

"As for you," continued my father, turning to the officer, "I advise you to get back to your boat in double quick time. We've got our papers, in reg'lar fashion, and we're free American citizens. You can't arrest us a single minute — you or your whole blamed Egyptian outfit."

"But I command! You are under my arrest! You are criminal!" screamed the fat man, stubbornly. "In the name of — "

"In the name of Sam Hill, throw the cuss overboard!" roared the Captain,

losing all patience.

To my horror Ned promptly obeyed and the pompous official tumbled over the rail head first and disappeared with a splash in the water below.

Those in the launch shouted excitedly and let go our side to rescue their superior. He bobbed up a minute later and they grabbed him with a boat-hook and drew him, dripping and gasping, aboard their boat.

But it was too late for them to board us again. Our propeller was by this time whirling rapidly and churning the water into a creamy streak in our wake. Slowly we drew away from the government boat, which puffed after us at its best gait, the inmates shaking their fists at us threateningly but in vain. Presently we lost sight of them altogether in the gloom, for twilight was fast falling.

Out into the blue waters of the great Mediterranean we sped and I for one greeted the expanse gratefully. We had narrowly escaped a serious disaster, for if the Khedive had once gripped our hard-won treasure we should never have set eyes on it again. Also we might have found ourselves and our ship hopelessly compromised in the meshes of Egyptian law.

We headed for the southwest point of the island of Sicily, for we dared not undertake to pass the straits of Messina. This way would also bring us sooner to Gibraltar, and we determined to head our course between Tunis and Sicily, out of the beaten path of ships, and to keep away from any port until we were afloat on the broad Atlantic.

All night our engines throbbed powerfully and we sped swiftly on our course. By morning we began to feel we were out of danger, and at breakfast I decided that during the forenoon we would open the canvas sacks and take a good look at our treasure. But while we still sat at table the mate came down with a grave face to report that a man-o'-war had just been sighted and was bearing down on us.

We rushed eagerly on deck to inspect the boat through our glasses and made her out easily enough. She was a big armored cruiser, heavily armed, and seemed intent on heading us off.

"But we may be more scared than hurt," remarked my father, calmly. "All nations have men-o'-war in these waters, and it ain't a bit strange we should run across one. Like as not she won't mind us at all."

"But the course she's headed won't take her to any port in creation," observed Ned, shaking his head dolefully. "She's after the *Seagull,* sure enough."

It really looked that way, and we stood with bated breath and watched the huge hulk come on. It would be folly to try to run away; still we did not pause an instant.

In an hour she was less than a mile to leeward, and soon we saw a puff of smoke followed by a shot that flew singing across our bow. At the same time she hoisted her flag peak and Ned took a look at it through his glass.

"Egypt," he said, laconically, and my heart sank like a chunk of lead.

"The jig's up, fellows," I said, mournfully. "Joe, my lad, you've been rich for nearly a whole day. To-night you'll be a pauper again."

Joe grinned, but not with a pleasant expression, and turned away to vanish below deck. I was really sorry for the poor chap — and sorry for ourselves, too.

"Never mind," said Archie, consolingly; "we've had a lot of fun, anyhow. The Khedive can't rob us of that."

As Captain Steele hesitated to obey the first shot a second one quickly followed, and this came so near to piercing the hull of his beloved *Seagull* that my father uttered a gruff explanation and ordered Ned to lay to. The engines were stopped and slowly we lost way and floated quietly upon the sea, which was smooth as a mill-pond. The sky was overcast with a mantle of solid gray and not a breath of wind was stirring.

Had we not been so preoccupied with other matters I am sure we would ere this have been speculating on the queer atmospheric conditions that prevailed, and wondering what they might portend.

The cruiser slowed up near by and lowered a gig, which was speedily manned. Then, being rowed with admirable precision, it shot across the space which separated us and came alongside. We threw out a boarding ladder and two officers climbed it and a minute later stood upon our deck, where they inquired courteously for the Captain. They were fine-looking fellows, middle-aged and with an air of breeding. Their duty, whatever it might be, would doubtless be performed in a gentlemanly manner.

My father advanced to announce that he commanded the *Seagull* and would be glad to know by what authority he was arrested on the high seas.

Said the elder of the two: "You resisted an officer of the Egyptian government in the harbor of Port Said, and escaped. We consider you still our prisoner, although you have fled into neutral waters."

"My papers are regular, sir, and you have no right to arrest me or to fire upon my ship," returned my father, boldly. "If you persist in your illegal and high-handed course, sir, you will make this an international affair," he added.

"There is little danger of that, Captain Steele," answered the officer, with a smile. "It may be we have exceeded our authority in arresting you here; but kindly permit me to state our case. In Egypt you dug up a treasure — an important treasure — which you are now carrying away in defiance of our laws. We should not have permitted your ship to clear our port, I admit, but

unfortunately we did not receive the news of your misdemeanor in time to prevent by force your escape. However, we do not intend to be robbed. Our instructions from the Minister of War at Cairo are positive. We are told to recover the treasure or send your ship to the bottom of the sea — or to do both, at our discretion. The matter of legality we will not discuss. We have the power to take this treasure if you refuse to give it up cheerfully, and I assure you we will do so. That is all. I await your decision, Captain."

Well, there was nothing for us to do but give up the treasure. If we tried to withhold it we would lose both the treasure and the *Seagull.* We held a short conference, however, Uncle Naboth, Ned and Archie being present besides my father and myself. Joe was also an interested partner, but was not on deck and we had no time to hunt him up.

We decided there was but one way out of our difficulty. The American government would scarcely support us in a claim for damages, under such peculiar circumstances; and this the clever Turks knew as well as we did.

The thing that most amazed us was the accuracy of their information, and we wondered who could have revealed to the government the fact that we had secured the treasure. Abdul Hashim was dead, but some of his tribe might have learned our secret and reported it to the authorities in order to obtain vengeance for their shiek's death. Or the villagers of Laketa, who had seen the treasure in Gege-Merak's possession, might have disclosed the information. We did not suspect Ketti for a moment.

Anyway, the mischief was out and it only remained for us to give up the treasure and make our way homeward somewhat the poorer for our unsuccessful enterprise.

"Pardon me, gentlemen, if I ask you to make haste," said one of the Turkish officers, stepping to our side. "The simoon is threatening both our ships, so we are anxious to finish our errand and be gone."

Indeed, the day had grown suddenly darker and the sea sighed audibly, although it was perfectly still. My father looked anxiously at his bare rigging and hurried away to give an order for additional security. Ned followed him, and Uncle Naboth turned to me and said, with almost a groan:

"Give 'em the treasure, Sam, an' let's be done with the blamed Egyptians forever."

I bowed to the officer.

"If you will come below you shall have it," I said; "but you'd better get a couple of your men to help carry it."

He went to the side and shouted an order, and two of the men from the gig sprang on deck. I took them to my stateroom, threw open the lid of the great chest and said:

“There, gentlemen, is the entire treasure, including the rolls of papyrus. If you doubt that it is all here, you are welcome to search the ship.”

They lugged it all away and I sighed to think we had never obtained so much as one good view of the plunder we had been at so much pains to gain. The canvas sacks still bore the original seals which Van Dorn had placed upon them in the desert beside the pit.

When the last sack was in the boat they did delay to search the ship, to my extreme disgust. But their search was hasty and perfunctory, and after visiting the other cabins and peering into the forecastle and galley — as if we would keep treasure hidden in such places! — they finally got into the gig to return to their ship. I demanded a receipt, but they refused to give one, mumbling that the threatening simoon was likely to strike us any minute.

And then they cast off and rowed away toward their own vessel, making such speed as they could; but unfortunately they had delayed too long. The simoon struck us like a blow and the *Seagull* keeled over at a dangerous angle and trembled through every beam.

As I clung desperately to the rail my eyes followed the Turkish gig, and I saw its prow rise from the water as the whirling cloud of mingled wind and sand caught it, and dump its occupants — officers, men and all — into the now seething flood. Yes, the treasure went, too — the priceless historic papyri, the golden ornaments and splendid jewels of the great priests of Karnak — all, all were swallowed up by the waters and vanished forever from the sight of men!

The wrecked gig was only a mass of splinters. They shot life-lines from the deck of the cruiser and these were clutched by those of the boat’s crew who rose again to the surface. But I cannot say how many of those ill-fated Turks were finally rescued. For we had our own ship’s safety to look after, and when the dreadful simoon had subsided, which it did as suddenly as it had appeared, but after several hours of terror, the Khedive’s man-o’-war was but a dim speck upon the horizon, and soon we had lost sight of her altogether.

When, the strain being at last over, we met together in the main cabin for supper, it was a dismal enough lot of faces that surrounded the table. Except Joe. Joe did not seem dismal at all. He smiled upon us most cheerfully, until we all hated the boy for his good nature under such trying circumstances.

No one, however, cared to mention our great loss — which was in everyone’s mind — except Archie, who growled out:

“Why in thunder couldn’t the simoon have arrived an hour or so earlier, before we were robbed?”

But we chose not to heed the wail. Fate has her own way of ordaining

things.

I rose abruptly and passed into my cabin, and to my surprise Joe followed. As he lighted my lamp and turned up the wick so that it illumined the room brightly, I heard him whistling softly to himself.

The boy annoyed me, and I turned upon him rather savagely.

"You seem quite content to have lost your inheritance," said I; "but the rest of us are not so well satisfied. Can't you try to respect our feelings?"

He grinned at me most provokingly.

"Strikes me we've got something yet to be thankful for, sir," he replied. "The Turks didn't bag so much treasure as they thought they did."

I stared at him with sudden interest.

"What do you mean, Joe?"

He stepped to my bunk and drew back the curtains. Then he threw aside the blanket and disclosed the berth heaped full with glittering jewels and golden ornaments that sparkled brightly under the clear rays of the lamp.

My cry brought the others running hastily into the room, but as their gaze followed my own and fell upon the mass of treasure they stood mute and still, filled with a wonder that fairly dulled their senses.

At last Uncle Naboth tumbled into a chair and began mopping his forehead with his red silk handkerchief, and I awoke far enough to ask, in an awed whisper:

"How did it happen, Joe?"

"Why, it was dead easy, Sam," he replied with a laugh. "As soon as that infernal gunboat fired at us I knew something had to be done to save the treasure. So I ran down here and ripped open the seams at the bottom of all those canvas sacks, and dumped about three-quarters of the contents of each one of 'em into your berth. I left some of the stuff in the ends of the sacks that were tied and sealed, so if the Egyptians opened any of' em they'd think they were still loaded all the way down with jewelry. Then I had to fill up the spaces, and that was harder than you'd think. I first chucked in all the old bits of iron and brass I could find in the junk-chest; but that wasn't near enough. So I ran to the galley and got Bry to give me a lot of potatoes and a bag of beans. With these I filled up the treasure sacks and then sewed up all the seams again. It took some time to do this, and the only way I could hide the treasure was to cover it up with this blanket and draw the curtains. Mebbe I wasn't scared stiff when the officers came down here! But they never thought to search the bunk in this cabin, though they went through all the others. I'm sorry, sir, I didn't empty the bags entirely, for they never opened any of 'em; but I thought it was best not to take too many chances, and I guess we've saved about two-thirds of all the treasure we brought from the desert —

except, of course, the rolls of writing, and those we didn't care so much for, anyhow."

By the time the boy had finished this speech he was the focus of all our admiring eyes.

"Don't worry about what's lost, Joe," said Uncle Naboth, earnestly. "There's enough left to make us all rich; an' we owe it to your pluck and wit — an' to nothin' else."

"Three cheers for Joe!" yelled Archie, joyously.

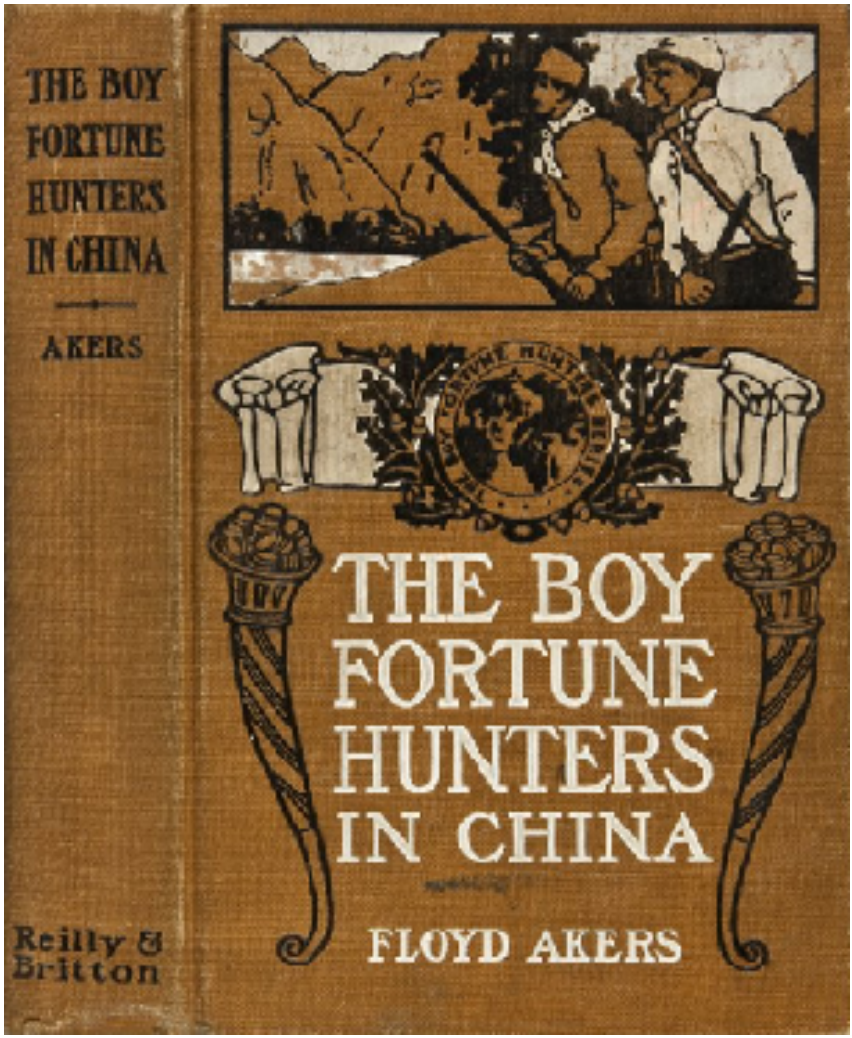
"Pshaw!" said Joe, flushing red, "what else was there to do?"

Three weeks after we anchored safely in Boston harbor, and before many days had passed, Uncle Naboth's prediction was amply fulfilled. The proceeds of the treasure made us all, in our humble stations, "rich," and Joe's share, being so much the largest, made him very rich indeed.

THE END

THE BOY FORTUNE HUNTERS IN CHINA

The fourth in a series, *The Boy Fortune Hunters in China* appeared in 1909, published by Reilly & Britton under Baum's pseudonym, Floyd Akers. Sam Steele and his friends rescue a wounded Chinese prince from the ocean. With his approval, Kai Lin Po tips them off about a family tomb filled with treasure and so the boys embark on a journey leading them to exciting and dangerous adventures in China.



A first edition copy of 'The Boy Fortune Hunters in China'

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CHAPTER ONE
A SEA TRAGEDY

The sinking of the first-class passenger steamship *Karamata Maru* in the neighborhood of Hawaii on June 17, 1908, has been the subject of so much newspaper comment that doubtless the reader imagines he knows all the circumstances connected with the fatal affair. But I have carefully read these newspaper reports and am astonished to find them quite perverted and unreliable, the result of carelessness or ignorance on the part of correspondents, the desire of officials to shield themselves from blame and the tendency of editors to amplify scant material into three-column articles with numerous "scare heads."

I may well speak with authority in this connection, because it was our ship, the *Seagull,* which first arrived at the scene of the disaster and rescued the passengers and crew of the ill-fated *Karamata Maru* from their imminent peril. So I shall tell you the story in my own way, as it has an important bearing on the extraordinary events that afterward took place — events which have led me to write this book, and place on record a series of adventures so remarkable as to have been seldom if ever equalled.

To begin with, I beg to introduce myself as Sam Steele, of Chelsea, Massachusetts, eighteen years of age and filling the responsible position of purser and assistant supercargo on the trim little merchantman yacht, the *Seagull.* Indeed, I am one of the three owners of our ship, the others being my father, Captain Richard Steele, and my uncle, Naboth Perkins. My father is a seasoned and experienced seaman, who has sailed in nearly every navigable part of the world. My uncle is an expert trader and an honest man — a combination that accounts for his great success in his profession.

Circumstances placed me on shipboard at an early age, and in the course of several long and eventful voyages I have encountered many adventures and queer happenings that have made me richer in experience than most young fellows.

One may remain modest and unassuming, I think, and still bear witness to the truth of adventures in which he has participated. It is not because I love to speak of myself that I am telling my own story, but because I have full knowledge of those events in which I bore a personal part, and so am qualified to relate them. And you will discover, when I have finished the tale, that I have not posed as a hero, but merely as a subordinate actor in the drama — what, I believe, is called a "walking gentleman" or "general utility man" in theatrical parlance. The theatre being, at its best, a reflection of real life, the illustration is permissible.

It will be necessary to tell you something about the company assembled aboard the *Seagull* when she began her voyage from San Francisco early in May to carry a cargo of mixed merchandise to Canton, China.

The *Seagull* has no regular itinerary, but sails a free lance in any sea and to any country where it may be profitable for her to go. Both my father and Uncle Naboth have adventurous natures, and prefer to let fate direct their future rather than attempt to plan a succession of tedious and uninteresting voyages which might mean surer gain but would afford less excitement. This has resulted, however, in a neat fortune for each of the *Seagull's* three owners, and our success has encouraged us to persist in our eccentric methods. In the merchant service our beautiful ship is dubbed a "tramp," and I and my chums are called "the Boy Fortune Hunters," Uncle Naboth "the Yankee Trader" and Captain Steele "crazy old Peg-leg," — because poor father has really a wooden leg, which in no way, however, renders him less able as a skipper. But we laugh at this harmless raillery and, well knowing that we are envied by many who thus banter us, pursue our own way with unconcern.

So it happened that after a prosperous voyage around the Horn, to deliver a valuable cargo of tin-plate to the great canning factories of Oregon and Washington, we had barely anchored in the bay at San Francisco before we received a commission to sail to Canton with a cargo of merchandise. This suited us all; but none better than me, for I had long desired to visit China, Japan and the Philippines. Also it suited Joe Herring, our cabin boy and my particular friend; and it suited Archie Ackley, a well-to-do young fellow who had sailed with us on a former voyage and passed as my chum. Archie was a reckless, adventurous sort of chap, and had made the trip around the Horn on the *Seagull* to give a broken leg time to knit perfectly, the said leg having been damaged in a foolish wrestling bout.

I am sure you would shake your head dubiously if I were to recount all of the characteristics of this youth which had endeared him to our little ship's company. I should be obliged to say, for instance, that Archie was stubborn as a mule, conceited as a peacock, reckless of all conventionalities, and inclined to quarrel and fight on the slightest provocation. But I should hasten to add that he was brave as a lion and tender as a woman to those he loved. His loyalty had been fully proven on the occasion of that former voyage to which I have referred, when he accompanied us to Egypt and won our hearts completely.

Archie was about my age; but Joe, our cabin boy, was a little younger, and as staunch a friend and queer a character in his way as you will ever be able to find on this astonishing earth.

Joe is rich. He could purchase a mate to the *Seagull* and never feel the expenditure. He could sail on our craft, if he chose, as an honored guest; but he prefers to remain a cabin-boy. Yet, in truth, there is little caste among us, and if Joe prefers to have duties to occupy him during a voyage, and fulfils those duties admirably, no one admires him less for that reason. Captain Steele slaps him on the shoulder as fondly and familiarly as he does Archie or me, and fat little Uncle Naboth locks arms with Joe and promenades the deck with him for hours.

A slight, stooping lad, is Joe, with great dark eyes, steady and true, and a faint smile always curling his lips. His face is sensitive and expressive, and in his slender frame lurk strength and agility that are positively amazing when they are called into action. Yet he is a silent fellow, though by no means unsociable, and when he speaks you are inclined to pay attention, for you know that Joe has something to say. We three boys were inseparable comrades at the time of which I am writing, although perhaps Joe and I were a little closer to each other than we were to Archie.

The ship's crew were staunch and able-bodied seamen, carefully selected by my father, and our engineers were picked men of proven ability. But I must not forget to introduce to you two important characters in the persons of our chef and steward. The former was a South Sea Islander named Bryonia, and the latter another South Sea Islander named Nux. I say "named" advisedly, for Uncle Naboth named them in this queer way when he rescued the poor natives from an open boat years ago and restored them to life by liberal doses of Nux and Bryonia — the only medicines that happened to be in his possession at the time. They were, of course, unable to speak English, at first; but they learned rapidly and were devoted to Uncle Naboth, and afterward to me. Indeed, I had come to regard both Nux and Bry as my own personal followers, and well had they proven their claim to this title. They were nearly as dark as Africans, but very intelligent and faithful in every emergency. In addition to these qualities Bry was a capital cook, while as a steward Nux was unsurpassed, and looked after our comforts in a way so solicitous that he really spoiled us.

We were about ten days out of the Golden Gate and had left Honolulu well on our starboard quarter, when one evening we ran into a dense fog that could almost be felt. It set the deck hands all coughing and wetted them to the skin; so we all shut ourselves up aft in the cabin and Captain Steele slowed the *Seagull* down to half speed and kept the fog-horn blowing every half-minute. We believed there was little danger in this part of the broad Pacific, although every sailor dreads a fog as he does a ghost and is uneasy until it lifts.

Uncle Naboth and Archie played checkers on one end of the cabin table while Joe and I had a quiet game of crib-bage together. Father smoked his pipe and darned stockings under the light of the swinging lamp, for Ned Britton, the first mate, was in charge of the deck, and no better sailor than Ned, or one more careful, ever was born.

So we passed the evening of the 16th of June pleasantly enough, in spite of the drenching fog outside, and when the watch changed, all of us save Captain Steele turned into our bunks and fell asleep without minding the weird wail of the fog-horn in the least. It is the kind of noise you forget to listen to when you get used to it.

I was roused from my slumbers by the agitated shuffling of feet on the deck overhead, the violent ringing of the engine bells for the ship to go astern and a medley of shouts and orders through which my father's clarion voice could be distinctly heard.

Before I was fully awake I found myself standing on the floor and fumbling with my clothes, instinct guiding me rather than knowledge of what was impending. Danger there was, I realized, and I noticed that my cabin was dimly lighted, as though by the break of day. A moment later I rushed on deck, to find all crowding at the starboard bulwarks and peering out into the mist.

Suddenly — scarce a boat's length away, it seemed — there came a terrific crash and a grinding of timbers, followed by shrieks and cries so heartrending that I found myself shuddering with horror. Yet not a man of us moved. We stood as if turned to stone. For it was not the *Seagull* that had struck; but behind the impenetrable curtain of the fog a tragedy of the sea was being enacted that was terrible enough to curdle the blood in our veins; for we realized that Death was claiming his victims from the men and women of some unknown vessel.

Then, by one of those marvelous transformations wrought by Nature, the fog instantly lifted and dissipated, and there before us was a sight that wrung moans, curses or shouts from our very hearts, so awful was it.

A big liner — the *Karamata Maru,* we afterward learned — had driven her bow straight into the broad side of a great freighter, a derelict known as the *Admiral Swain,* which had been abandoned in a storm a month earlier.

The *Karamata Maru* had crushed through the sides of the derelict and then her bow had lifted and slid high and dry across it, plunging the stern of the liner deep into the sea. In this terrible position the great liner trembled a moment and then broke in two. Her steel plates buckled and crumbled like tin, and the crash that followed as she splintered and tore asunder was greater than that when she struck. Again we heard the screams and terrified cries of

the poor victims and as the sea rushed madly into the gaping compartments and the escaping steam hissed from the open seams, scores of men and women threw themselves into the water in an effort to escape what seemed a more horrible fate than drowning. We saw and heard all this, for the *Seagull* had lost headway and floated gently a short distance from the scene of the tragedy. But the next moment we awoke to action. Every life preserver and rope's end we could muster flew overboard and our boats were manned and lowered in a twinkling. Big Ned Britton, the mate, was the first to put off in the cutter, and was picking the struggling forms from the sea long before the whaler was on the scene and assisting in the work of rescue. I took the gig myself and at once found my task so arduous that I had little time to mark what the other boats were doing. I only know that we all accomplished wonders, and every man, woman and child that managed to float until we reached them was rescued. Fortunately the sea was calm, and the light breeze that had dissipated the fog merely rippled the waves.

At last, as I looked around for more survivors, someone hailed me from the wreck of the *Karamata Maru* and I bade my men row swiftly to her side. Already the great liner rode so low that the little group awaiting me was almost on a level with my head, and I realized that I was in a dangerous position in case she sank. The freighter also was filling rapidly.

First those on the *Karamata Maru* lowered an injured man into the gig, and two attendants — one the ship's doctor, I afterward learned — came with him.

"Hurry, gentlemen," I called to the others; but they shook their heads and retreated from the side.

"It's no use, sir," growled the doctor. "They're ship's officers and won't leave their charge. Cast off, for God's sake, or we'll follow her to the bottom when she sinks!"

I obeyed, seized with a sudden panic at the warning words, and my men rowed lustily from the dangerous neighborhood of the wreck.

We reached the side of the *Seagull* just as Ned had assisted the last of his rescued passengers up the ladder, and I made haste to get my own aboard. The injured man had fainted. I noticed that he was a Chinaman, although dressed in European costume, and that he was an object of great solicitude on the part of his attendant and the doctor. We put him in a sling and hoisted him up the side, and after the others had followed and I was preparing to mount the ladder myself a mighty shout from our deck arrested my attention. I turned quickly, just in time to see the awful climax to this disaster. The derelict and the liner sank together, and the sea gave a great gasp and closed over them, whirling and seething about the spot as if a thousand sea-monsters

were disporting themselves there. The suction was so great that had we not already caught the davit, falls the gig would have assuredly been drawn into the whirlpool, while the ship to which I clung trembled in every beam, as if with horror at the sight she had witnessed.

CHAPTER TWO

PRINCE KAI LUN PU

When I gained the deck of the *Seagull* an affecting sight met my eyes. It was crowded thick with despairing and agitated men and women, for all had lost their possessions and many their friends and relatives within the preceding half hour. Bry had brewed huge pots of coffee, for the morning air was still chilly and the rescued ones had nearly all been pulled from the water; so, our hearts full of pity for the poor wretches, we tried to comfort and cheer them as well as lay within our power.

The collision happened at twenty minutes after five in the morning; by six o'clock all the rescued were on the deck of the *Seagull.* We found we picked up two hundred and eighteen out of the three hundred and twenty-seven who had constituted the passengers and crew of the ill-fated *Karamata Maru.* One hundred and nine, including the Japanese officers, who deliberately went down with their ship, had perished.

It was nine o'clock before the steamship *Nagasaki Maru* hove in sight, and eleven when she came alongside us. I make this positive statement despite the inaccurate newspaper reports to the effect that the *Nagasaki Maru* was at the scene of the collision and assisted the *Seagull* to rescue the survivors.

Of course the *Nagasaki Maru,* belonging to the same line as the lost *Karamata Maru,* promptly transferred all the rescued ones to her own decks; and that was just as well, because our ship was too small to carry them all in comfort, and we were really under no obligations to do more than we had already done. The *Karamata Maru* had been bound for Japan, so the *Nagasaki Maru,* being on her way to San Francisco, undertook to leave the passengers and crew of her sister ship at Honolulu until they could be picked up by some other west-bound ship.

As they steamed away from us the poor survivors who swarmed upon her decks saluted us with a hearty cheer of gratitude for our services, and this appreciation fully repaid us.

As I stood leaning over the rail and watching the fast receding *Nagasaki Maru,* Joe touched my elbow.

"Lunch is ready, Sam."

Then I remembered that I had eaten nothing except a cup of Bryonia's coffee since early morning, and I quickly went below. Already we had steamed away upon our course and the midday sun was shining brightly overhead.

I found all our ship's officers assembled in the saloon except the second

mate, old Eli Trent, who had the deck watch, and during the meal we naturally discoursed at length upon the exciting events of the morning.

I had nearly finished luncheon when our steward, Nux, whispered over my shoulder:

"Chinaman wants to see you, Marse Sam."

"What Chinaman, Nux?" I asked in surprise.

"Hurt man, Marse Sam. He in front stateroom."

I looked inquiringly at my father.

"We've took a passenger, Sam," said the Captain, calmly buttering his toast. "The Chinaman you took off'n the wreck is a high mandarin, a prince, or suthin', and wanted to get home to China as soon as possible, fer he's hurt bad."

"We don't usually accept passengers," I remarked thoughtfully, "but if this poor fellow is injured and homesick, it's our duty to do what we can for him."

"And that isn't much," added a gruff voice behind me, and the ship's doctor from the *Karamata Maru* dropped into a seat at the table and began to eat. We watched him a moment in silence. Then I asked:

"Is your patient very bad, Doctor — "

"Gaylord; my name's Gaylord. I'm an Englishman, although I sailed on that blasted Jap ship. And my patient, Prince Kai, is dying. He'll never see China again."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, really distressed, and the others echoed my sympathy.

"He got jammed between the timbers," explained Dr. Gaylord, as he continued his luncheon, "and although three of his attendants threw themselves around him and met their own death in trying to shield him, the Prince was badly smashed and can't possibly live more than a day or two. It's a shame," he added, shaking his grizzled head, "for Kai Lun Pu has just been made one of the five Viceroys of the Empire, and he's a fine young fellow who had a promising future. The redemption of China, gentlemen, must come through these young scions of the nobility who are being educated at the colleges of England and America. They'll imbibe modern, progressive ideas, and in time upset the old prejudices of the Flowery Kingdom altogether."

He turned and cast at me a scrutinizing gaze. "You're the young man who brought us off the wreck, I think?"

I nodded.

"The Prince has asked for you twice. Perhaps you'd better go to him now. I've given him a hypodermic and he feels easier."

"Why does he wish to see me?" I asked curiously.

“Some fool notion of gratitude, I suppose. These educated Chinese are very courteous and punctilious fellows. It’s likely he wouldn’t die comfortably if he had neglected to thank you for your slight services.”

“Shall I go in alone?” I asked hesitatingly.

“Yes; walk right in. The Death’s-Head is with him,” added the doctor with a snort of contempt that I did not understand.

So I softly turned the handle of the stateroom door and walked in. It was not a pleasant errand to visit a dying man, and I wanted to get it over with as soon as possible.

The state cabin of the *Seagull* was a roomy — almost spacious — apartment, and we had fitted it up carefully for the use of any important guest we might have aboard. It had never been used but once before, and as I glanced around it I felt a pang that it was now to be the scene of a death, and that a miserable Chinaman should put this blemish upon it.

Seated upon a stool beside the curtained bunk was the Chinese attendant I had brought aboard with the Prince and the doctor. Immediately I understood Dr. Gaylord’s expression, “the Death’s-Head,” for this Chinaman typified that mythical horror in feature and expression. Perhaps I should say lack of expression, for his face was as immobile as Death itself, of a pallid gray-green color, and the skin was drawn tight as parchment over his high cheek-bones and across his thin lips. The eyes were dark and bright, but conveyed no more animation or intelligence than would glass eyes. He was dressed rather primly in a suit of black broadcloth, cut in London fashion.

As I entered, this attendant rose like an automaton and drew the curtains of the bunk, muttering a brief sentence in Chinese.

CHAPTER THREE
SMILING AT DEATH

I advanced with a respectful bow and found myself looking squarely into the eyes of the injured man. Then I gave a start of surprise, for a young man — almost a boy, he seemed — was smiling at me from the pillows as cheerily as if greeting an old friend who had come to take part in a jubilation.

In my recollections of him I have never thought of Prince Kai Lun Pu as a Chinaman. His features bore certain characteristics of his race, assuredly; but he was so thoroughly Europeanized, so cultured, frank and agreeable in demeanor, that no one could possibly think of him otherwise than as a royal good fellow whom it was a privilege to know. With his poor maimed body covered by the counterpane, the pleasant — almost merry — expression of his boyish face made one doubt that he had been injured at all, and I thought he looked as little like a dying man as anyone could.

"You are young Mr. Steele," said he in perfect English, "and I am well pleased to see you, sir; for you have rendered me a rare service and have earned my lasting gratitude."

"It was a simple duty," I responded, with an answering smile; "but I am glad I was able to serve so important a personage, Prince."

"Important?" said he, arching his eyebrows; "ah, perhaps you might find me so, were we together in my own province of Kwang-Kai-Nong." A shadow passed over his face, and he sighed; but next moment, with renewed cheerfulness, he added, "but we are not in China, Mr. Steele, and aboard your noble ship the humble passenger must defer to your own more powerful individuality." He cast an amused glance at the Death's-Head and said:

"Defer, Mai Lo, to the noble American; defer for us both, since I am helpless!"

The attendant, outwardly unmoved and unresponsive, prostrated himself before me, and then resumed his former position. I could not resist a light laugh at the ridiculousness of the performance, and the Prince joined in the merriment. Then, suddenly recollecting myself, I became grave and asked:

"Are you suffering, Prince? Do you think you are badly hurt?"

The bright eyes regarded me intently for an instant, after which he turned to the Death's-Head.

"Leave me, Mai Lo; I would converse with my host," said he.

The attendant again prostrated himself, this time to his Prince, and retired without a word of protest. But almost immediately the Doctor came hurrying in, and there was protest in both his words and demeanor.

"Look you, Prince Kai," he said, "this is no time for reckless folly. I gave

you morphine to quiet your pain and enable you to sleep, and you positively must not excite yourself and neutralize the effect of the medicine."

The young man gave him a look half whimsical, half sympathetic.

"My dear Gaylord," said he, "you have, in your wisdom, numbered the hours remaining to me, and I accept the decree as final. But why should I sleep during those brief hours, when rest eternal will soon be mine?"

The Doctor flushed and cast down his eyes. He was a good-hearted man, and not yet calloused in the presence of death. The Prince smiled upon him in kindly fashion and asked:

"Is there an ample supply of morphine?"

"There is ample, my Prince."

"Then listen to my wish. I do not care to sleep, nor do I want to suffer in the brief time you have allotted me. Let me secure all the pleasure I am able to until the Earth Dragon completes his vengeance upon me. That will be kind, dear Doctor, and your reward shall be provided for."

The old surgeon took the Chinaman's hand and pressed it warmly.

"Never mind the reward, my Prince," said he. "I'm out of a job just now, and am glad to experiment upon you, so I shan't get rusty. Your wish shall be respected."

"Then leave me with Mr. Steele awhile," was the reply, "and see that Mai Lo doesn't disturb us."

The Doctor bowed with deference and withdrew.

"Prince," said I, "they call me Sam aboard this ship, and I'll be glad to have you do the same. I'm not much used to a handle to my name, and if we're to be friends — "

"We're to be friends, Sam," he rejoined, quickly; "so just squat upon that stool and let us have a good chat together."

I was really charmed with my new acquaintance, he was so animated, so frank in admitting me to his friendship and so evidently grateful to me for the slight service I had rendered him. His brightness made me forget the pitiful fact that he had but a short time to live, until he himself reminded me of it.

I can imagine no more delightful a companion than Prince Kai Lun Pu must have been before his terrible accident. He began by telling me much of his history, in a whimsical, half facetious way that deprived the relation of any affectation or egotism.

A prince of the royal blood and related to the reigning Manchu family, Kai had been early singled out for an important position in the empire and sent to England to be educated. He had graduated from Oxford a year before, and after a brief visit to his own country, where he held a long consultation with the Emperor and that terrible old woman, Tsi An, the Dowager

Empress, he had toured Europe, Egypt and India, and afterward visited the principal cities of the United States. This had enabled him to study other nations and to note their manners and customs, and he was returning to China as a Viceroy and a member of the Imperial Cabinet, to which post he had already been appointed, when he met with the terrible accident which was to cut short his brilliant career.

So much this royal prince confided to me in our first interview; but he cared less to talk of himself than to be amused, and soon he began to question me as to my own history and adventures.

Being willing to amuse the poor fellow, and having no duties that required my attention, I passed the afternoon in relating the adventures of my brief life. These seemed to astonish him greatly, and he questioned me closely in regard to Alaska and Panama, where I had voyaged with my father and Uncle Naboth, but which he had never visited. I also told him some queer adventures of mine in Egypt, but he was more familiar with that country.

I feared to weary the young Prince with my long stories, but he would not let me go. Twice during the afternoon Dr. Gaylord came in and administered to his patient hypodermic injections of morphine, and these must have kept him free from pain, for he made no complaints and retained his bright cheerfulness until I finally insisted on leaving him.

Outside his door was the unemotional Mai Lo, standing as stiffly as a statue. The attendant saluted me with great respect and immediately entered his master's room.

Dr. Gaylord was in the saloon smoking a cigar, and he nodded as I approached and said:

"Queer fellow, Prince Kai, isn't he?"

"A very charming fellow, I think, Doctor."

"Yes; and richer than Rothschild — or your Rockefeller," he added. "You should have seen him arrayed in his native costume on board the *Karamata Maru,* and surrounded by his four devoted followers. He was a picture, I assure you, and dignified and gracious enough to warrant his royal blood. Everyone liked him, heathen though he is."

"Heathen!" I echoed, surprised.

Of course he's a heathen. But I admit he makes you forget that, for in London and at Oxford he acquired the polish of an English gentleman. It was only when I noted the rascals surrounding him that I realized he was a Chinaman."

"But they were faithful," I suggested.

"To the death," said he, with a slight shudder. "They even tried to oppose their frail bodies between him and the ship's splintering timbers. Sir, it would

have made you cringe to see their mangled remains — as I did. But the sacrifice did no good at all.”

“You are sure he will die?” I asked.

“I am positive. Surgical skill can do nothing to save him. If only old Death’s-Head had perished with him,” he added, with a glance toward the state cabin, “I should feel more reconciled. But Mai Lo happened to be in a safe place, and escaped.”

“Is he old?” I asked musingly.

“You never can tell a Chinaman’s age from his looks,” said the Doctor. “Yet I would wager that Mai Lo is sixty, if he’s a day. I’m told that at home he’s the governor of Prince Kai’s native province, and a person of consequence.”

“I don’t like him,” said I, frankly.

“No one likes him, not even his young master,” returned the Doctor. “By the way, how old should you judge Kai Lun Pu to be?”

“Perhaps the Prince is eighteen — or nineteen,” I hazarded.

“He is seven-and-twenty. These Chinese seem to age very slowly, unless they’re addicted to opium, like the coolies. Have a cigar, sir?”

I shook my head and went on deck, where Archie and Joe at once collared me with a demand to know what “His Royal Muchness, the Chinaman” had been talking about all the afternoon. I was quite full of the subject and told them as much as I knew about our injured passenger, adding that I was sincerely sorry the poor fellow must die.

CHAPTER FOUR
A STARTLING PROPOSITION

Next morning after breakfast I was again summoned to attend Prince Kai Lun Pu. I may as well remark in this place that with the Chinese the surname comes first, and Kai was my new friend's family name, as mine is Steele. "Pu" with him stood in the place of "Sam" with me, and Lun was his middle name. But as the Chinese name always means something, a free translation of Kai Lun Pu into English would be "blossom of the tree," Kai being a tree, or in some connections the root of a tree. So the Prince's name was a very pretty and appropriate one, although it sounds so queer to our uncomprehending ears.

My new friend greeted me as cheerily as on the previous day, although I noted the fact that dark circles had settled around his eyes and his cheeks were a bit more hollow. The doctor was with him when I came in, and I asked if his patient had slept.

"Not a wink," he replied. "Our Prince does not intend to lose a moment of life, and so I sat up with him until after midnight myself. Then he talked to Mai Lo until daylight."

"And that was time wasted," added the Prince, with a queer glance at his attendant, "for Mai Lo has a limited vocabulary, although he is so wise and experienced. I think he spoke six words to me in return for all my chatter. So now I will excuse him from my presence until I require his services."

Mai Lo heard and prostrated himself humbly before his Prince, retiring with the stealthy glide of a ghost. The doctor was preparing his hypodermic syringe, and the sick man watched him thoughtfully.

"Do you see much change in my condition?" he presently asked.

"A little," answered the doctor. "Your vitality is wonderful. An ordinary man would have succumbed long ago."

"Am I sure of today?" enquired the Prince.

The surgeon administered the hypodermic before replying. Then he said, slowly:

"While your heart retains its action you will live; but a clot may interfere with the action at any time. I cannot promise you even today, yet you may see the light tomorrow — or of several tomorrows."

"But not many of them?"

"Not many, Prince."

"Ah, the Earth Dragon is relentless. I cannot reach China?"

"No, indeed. To Shanghai or Hong Kong is two weeks. And there is another thing that I must speak to you about. I have no means of embalming

or preserving your body."

For a moment the Prince looked grave. Then he laughed again, lightly, but I thought with little or no mirth. In spite of his Occidental education Kai Lun Pu retained the prejudices of his forefathers and longed to have his body carried to China and laid to rest in his ancestral halls.

"What a fuss old Mai Lo will make when I am cast into the sea!" he remarked. "You'll have to put him in irons, Sam, or he'll run amuck among you and cause mischief."

"If he does he shall go after you," I promised. "That is, unless you wish him preserved to carry out your bequests at home and convey your messages to your friends."

The Prince made a face so ridiculous that both Gaylord and I smiled at him.

"I will confide to you a secret," said he; "my servant is fully as repulsive to me as he is to you. But he is a man of high birth, a mandarin and the hereditary governor of my own province; so I had to carry the fellow with me on my travels."

"He looks like a dummy," I suggested.

"And his looks are very deceptive," retorted the Prince. "Mai Lo is remarkably subtle and observing, and as intelligent as he is proud and ambitious. Really, until my accident occurred, I feared the fellow, although I knew he would sacrifice his life for me if necessary. It will be his duty after my death to return to his home, propitiate the Earth Dragon, and then commit suicide; but the chances are Mai Lo will find a way to avoid that. There will be too much to feed his ambition."

"Will he inherit your estates?" inquired the doctor.

"By no means. Mai Lo is noble, but not of the blood royal. My estates will go to the Emperor, because I have no heir; my ancestral halls will be sealed up and abandoned, and — I shall soon be forgotten."

"Why so?" I asked.

"Because I shall never become an ancestor myself," he responded, laughing genuinely this time. "An absurd statement, isn't it, Sam? But my countrymen are devoted Shintoists, or ancestor worshippers, and while I have gained honor and respect in life through my powerful ancestry, in death I lose all and am speedily forgotten." While I thoughtfully pondered this statement the doctor withdrew and left us alone together.

"Do you believe in this queer religion of ancestor worship, Prince?" I inquired.

"Of course not, Sam. I'm a mighty poor Chinaman, as far as our orthodox traditions and religious observances are concerned. In fact my people are not

really religious at all, for they vilify and even thrash their bronze and wooden gods if they do not behave properly, and the whole ceremonial worship of China is a farce. I do not mind telling you that even before I went to Europe my heart refused to acknowledge those decayed ancestors of mine as more important than the dust to which they have returned in the course of nature. But I kept the secret of my apostacy to myself, and in order to secure ample funds to enjoy the pleasures of Europe I even robbed my ancestral halls of a portion of their treasure."

"Oh!" I said. "Is there treasure, then, in your ancestral halls?"

He smiled.

"More than half the wealth of China — the accumulated wealth of centuries — is tied up forever in this absurd manner," he replied. "My family was old at the time of the Tartar invasion, and it has always been wealthy. In my ancestral halls, in my province of Kwang-Kai-Nong, lies a mass of treasure that would startle the world if it were to be unearthed and publicly displayed. Yet no one has ever seen it in my generation but myself."

"I do not quite understand this system," I said, much interested in these statements.

"It is our immemorial custom," explained the Prince, "to bury with each head of a family one-half the wealth he possesses, to be used by him when his resurrection occurs at the end of the world. The remaining half is inherited by his eldest son, his successor. A daughter never inherits, you know. When the son dies, one-half his wealth is laid with his body in the tombs of the ancestral halls, and so this accumulation goes on from century to century, and half the wealth of the nation is continually abstracted from its resources."

"But suppose there is no son," said I. "What happens then?"

"Then the line ends. In the case of a noble family, such as ours, the confidential servant secretly seals up the ancestral halls and then commits suicide, so that no one may ever discover where they are located. If he hesitates to kill himself by the ninth day the other servants promptly kill him; so his fate is really sealed in case his lord dies without an heir."

"And is Mai Lo your confidential servant in this case?" I asked curiously.

"You have guessed it," replied the Prince, smiling. "If I were sure he would do his duty it would deprive death of half its sting; but I suspect, Sam, that Mai Lo has as little respect for ancestor worship as I myself, and it is my impression that he will rob the tombs of my forefathers very freely before he seals them up forever."

"But won't his fellow-servants kill him if he fails to commit suicide?" I asked.

“I could answer that question more positively if I knew the mind of Mai Lo better,” returned the Prince, more gravely than was his wont. Then he brightened and said:

“I am much interested in your friends Archie and Joe, who were so loyal and brave in your Egyptian adventures, which you related to me yesterday. Did you not say they were still your comrades?”

“Yes, indeed, Prince. Both are now aboard the *Seagull.”*

“May I see them? Will you bring them here to see me?” he asked, eagerly.

“They will be greatly pleased,” I replied. “When?”

“At once. You remember the doctor’s warning.”

“I’ll get them,” said I, rising.

“Send Mai Lo,” suggested the Prince. I did so, asking the attendant, who stood stiffly outside the door, to summon my friends to an audience with Kai Lun Pu.

In a few minutes Joe and Archie arrived, as eager as I knew they would be to make the acquaintance of our interesting passenger.

The Prince conversed with them upon various subjects for fully an hour, pressing them for details of our former adventures and shrewdly drawing out the characteristics of both the boys without their suspecting it in the least. I felt quite proud of my friends, for although each in his own way was odd to the verge of eccentricity, two more manly, truer hearted fellows did not exist — or at least that was my opinion of them.

The Prince seemed to approve of them, too, and with their quaint answers and ways they certainly amused him — Archie bluff and outspoken and Joe modest and retiring as a girl.

Presently, as he lay back upon his pillows, Kai Lun Pu began to laugh. He laughed again, seemingly much amused; and still again, with evident enjoyment of some thought that had occurred to him. Archie and Joe stared at him rather uneasily, and I own I had myself a fleeting suspicion that his maimed body was finally affecting his mind. But the next moment the Prince said, in his ordinary tones:

“By all the big and little gods, I’ll do it!”

“Do what, Prince?” I asked, curiously.

“Give you a new adventure to undertake,” he replied, almost gleefully. “You three boys are not tired of adventures, are you?”

“Not much,” returned Archie, stoutly.

“And although you’ve found some small treasure already, you wouldn’t object to finding more, would you?” he continued, eyeing us closely.

Our eager faces must have answered him; but I said, as calmly as I could:

“What is the proposition, your Highness?”

“The proposition is simply this, Sam; I’m going to show you how to rob my ancestral halls!”

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HALLS OF HIS ANCESTORS

I'm afraid we looked rather foolish at this suggestion. Archie was open-mouthed and wide-eyed; Joe's sensitive face took on a frown, and I felt myself flushing red.

"You see, Prince," I said at last, shifting uneasily in my seat, "we've been adventurers, but not buccaneers, and to *rob* -"

"Nonsense!" cried Kai, laughing at us again; "the word 'rob' does not mean to steal, even in your bungling English. And I used it figuratively. To rob my ancestral halls would not be a sin, for you would deprive no living person of what is his at present or might be his in the future. As for the dead, my opinion is that my ancestors are very dead; and, in case their bodies resurrect at the end of the world, they won't mind whether they are wealthy or not. I tell you, Sam, I can imagine no more foolish idea than to bury treasure with the dead, and had I lived to return to China it was my firm intention to rob the ancestral halls myself. In that case no one would ever know it, and there would be no danger. Why, as I said before, I abstracted certain jewels from the tombs years ago, and spent the proceeds in high living. So, if I was willing to rob the ancestral halls myself, and approve of your robbing them in my place, now that I am prevented, you need have no scruples on the plea of morality. Listen, friends: I present to you three — to Sam and Joe and Archie — all of the treasure contained in my ancestral halls. It is yours — I give it freely — but you must go and secure it, and that will be a dangerous expedition."

"Why so?" asked Archie.

"Because you won't have me to assist you," he replied. "Because you must oppose the ancestral devotion, amounting to a religion, of the entire Chinese nation. Because my own followers and servants would cut you down in an instant if your errand were discovered, and — " He hesitated.

"Any more interesting reasons?" I asked.

"The strongest of all," said he. "Because I am convinced that Mai Lo means to get the treasure himself."

Joe gave a low whistle, and Archie looked especially thoughtful.

"Is it worth while, then, for us to undertake the adventure?" I questioned.

"For centuries past one-half of the wealth of one of the richest families in China has been placed in the vaults which I call my ancestral halls," he returned. "This wealth consists of jade, precious stones — especially rubies — pearls and stores of gold and silver. There is enough to ransom a kingdom, and as I cannot use it myself I should like you to get it — if you

can. Your task would be difficult in any event, for to rob any ancestral hall is a great crime in China. Even the graves of the poor, which are stone or mud vaults with roofs of bamboo and palm leaves, are respected by all. Yet your greatest danger is from Mai Lo. If he cannot rob my ancestral halls himself he will try to prevent anyone else from doing so."

"Well, then," said Archie, "let's toss him overboard, while we have the chance. He's only a Chinaman." The next instant, seeing the amused smile on the Prince's face, he realized what he had said and began to apologize. "It's so hard, sir," he added, "to think of you except as one of ourselves."

Perhaps the naive compliment pleased the Prince, for he laughed and said:

"It might be a *wise* thing to cast Mai Lo into the sea. But I do not think you will undertake murder, even to secure my treasure. So I will do what I can to enable you to outwit the mandarin. Can you find me a piece of paper and a small brush?"

Joe got them from his cabin in a few moments, and while he was absent we all sat in silence.

I spread the piece of paper upon the coverlet in front of the Prince, and dipped the brush in ink for him. His left arm was broken and useless, but fortunately he could use his right arm and hand, though with difficulty. At once he began writing in Chinese characters upon the paper, and presently he finished and held out the brush for me to take.

"You cannot read my signature, Sam," said he, "but it is there, and will be recognized. It is an order to all my dependents to recognize you and your companions as my guests for one year, and to serve you as faithfully as they would myself. I have added that my spirit will watch to see if I am obeyed and to take vengeance if I am not. That is, of course, nonsense to us; but it ought to be effective with my people. Take the paper, Sam, and guard it carefully. Stay! call in Mai Lo for a moment."

I did so, and the Prince said to his attendant in an easy tone:

"Witness this order, Mai Lo."

The mandarin glanced at the document, but though I watched him carefully I could detect no sign of emotion in his glassy eyes, or even surprise or interest upon his puttylike features. He took the brush from my hand and obediently added his signature to that of the Prince. Then, at his master's command, he again retired.

I took the paper, folded it carefully, and placed it in my wallet.

"Then you are decided to undertake the adventure?" asked the Prince, in a pleased voice. I looked at Archie and Joe, and they both nodded. So I answered:

"We will seek for the treasure, your Highness."

“Good!” said he. “Now take the signet ring from my finger.”

I obeyed. It was a heavy gold band, curiously engraved and set with a huge ruby. The stone had an upper flat surface, on which were cut three strange characters.

“Do not display this ring except in case of necessity,” warned Kai Lun Pu. “When you do, it will command obedience of every man in my province. It will even be powerful with the Emperor. So keep it safely.”

I thanked him and stowed the ring in my pocket.

“And now,” said the Prince, “there is but one more thing I can do for you, but that ought to prove of great assistance in your venture. Listen carefully, all of you, for the secret I am about to confide to your ears may not be written down in any way, and the memory alone must guard it. Heretofore it has been handed down in my family from generation to generation by confiding the knowledge to the eldest son, who alone inherits. My ancestors would have died sooner than allow a stranger or an alien to know this family secret; but I — I am different. In me the shackles of tradition and foolish custom have been broken by a liberal education and a knowledge of the great world whose existence many of my countrymen do not even suspect.”

He paused a moment, as if in thought, and then continued as follows, speaking slowly and distinctly but in a lowered voice:

“It will be easy for you to locate the ancestral halls of the family of Kai. It is near to my own palace, and you will first see a quaint but beautiful house of polished bamboo, with an entrance on each of its four sides. Each entrance is guarded by a god, and it will be wise for you to pretend to propitiate these gods by offerings. Burn prayers for my spirit’s welfare before them. You must not enter this house, for it is sacred; but I will describe it to you.

“In the center is a stone walled pit, with steps leading downward. In the center of the pit is a bronze tablet, which, when lifted, discloses a passageway. This passage forms a long tunnel slanting into the earth, and if you could follow it, it would lead you to the underground vault, or chin, where my noble ancestors lie buried. This vault is cut from the solid rock, and is a big domed chamber ornamented with the best art of the ages that have elapsed since its construction. The tapestries are said to be the best and most valuable in the whole Empire. Around the sides of this chamber are the niches where repose the burial caskets of my respected ancestors, and beside each casket are placed the chests, urns and taborets containing one-half the wealth this ancestor died possessed of. Do you understand this description?”

“I can picture it perfectly,” said I.

“That is well. But now for the secret.” Again he lowered his voice, with an uneasy glance toward the door, behind which he knew Mai Lo was

stationed. Then he continued:

"There is a second, or secret, entrance to the burial chamber, which no one outside of the heir of our house has ever suspected. It was built seven centuries ago by Kai Tai, a pious man who wished to worship in secret at the tombs of his ancestors without the formal ceremony required when entering the ancestral hall publicly. This private entrance is also a tunnel, and leads from my palace itself. Now, my friends, pay strict attention. There is, in the palace, a set of rooms called the Suite of the Horned Fish, from its mode of decoration. These are the apartments always occupied by the royal prince of our line, and so they will be vacant when you arrive at the palace. The main doorway to the Suite of the Horned Fish will doubtless be guarded night and day, and it will not be wise for you to try to force an entrance therein. But in the bend of the passageway just beyond the entrance is a tapestry representing the Earth Dragon embracing a woman, and behind this tapestry you will find a small ball or knob of bronze. Pull this ball toward you, outward, and a private door will open leading directly into my sleeping chamber. Once there, you are not liable to interruption.

"In one corner of this chamber is a great statue of the first Kai in armor. It is a dreadful thing, and used to frighten me when a boy; but in its carving the statue shows great artistic skill. By pushing the left foot sideways — it will require a strong pressure — a panel in the wall back of the statue will be released. It is the entrance to the secret passage and once you have found it the rest is easy. It leads to one of the niches in the vault of my ancestors, the tapestries cleverly concealing the doorway. By means of this passage you may convey all or a part of the treasure to my chamber in the palace, and from there I must leave you to your own ingenious devices to transport it safely to Shanghai or aboard your ship. Have I made this quite plain to you, my friends?"

"Quite plain," we all answered, pleased to have the adventure so easily arranged for us; and I added:

"How can we thank you, Prince Kai?"

He smiled.

"I am well repaid in believing you will outwit old Mai Lo, and secure the treasure he means to steal," was his reply. "If I possess a spirit I shall try to watch you and enjoy the fun."

"Oh, don't do that!" exclaimed Archie with a shudder.

"But you won't know it, and I haven't much faith in a spiritual existence," he replied.

"What have you faith in?" I asked, shocked to hear him speak so lightly on his death-bed.

“We Shintoists believe in our ancestors,” said the Prince mockingly, I thought; “and that has always made us more sensible than our Buddhist neighbors. Also I have studied Christianity, Mohammedanism and Theosophy, and they have led me to admire Confucius more. So I get back to Shintoism in the end. I shall die in the faith of my ancestors, but not hampered by their narrow prejudices, I hope.”

He sighed with this, and I thought his cheeks looked more sunken and his skin more pallid than I had yet noticed them. So I said:

“This has been a trying interview, your Highness, and you need rest. Shall we retire?”

He hesitated, and then nodded with a return of his old brightness:

“Send in the doctor,” said he, “it’s time for more morphine.”

CHAPTER SIX

"OLD DEATH'S HEAD"

When we arrived on deck again the wind had freshened and the pleasant spell of weather we had lately experienced seemed likely to leave us. But our gallant *Seagull* headed the waves merrily, with scarcely any heaving of her swan-like body, and we knew her staunchness so well that we did not dread any weather that might overtake us.

Finding a sheltered position in the waist, we three boys eagerly discussed our important interview with the Prince and the chances of success in the adventure offered us.

"He's made everything so blamed easy for us that it's like taking candy from a babe," said Archie, gleefully.

"He has certainly proved himself a generous friend," I assented. "It's a pity he must die. I'd rather have him alive and my friend, than to get the treasure. Eh, Joe?"

"Exactly," answered Joe, in his quiet voice.

"I like the chap, too," said Archie, "but our sentiment won't alter the facts in the case, will it? Here's a treasure — and a whopper, too, I imagine — calling to us to come and take it, and — "

"And here's Mai Lo, who wants it himself," added Joe.

"Oh, him!" cried Archie, scornfully.

"Joe's right," said I, thoughtfully; "Mai Lo is a power to be reckoned with. Even the Prince fears him."

"I don't," declared Archie, "the man's a dummy. Anyone that'll kow-tow and get on his knees the way this fellow does, is a coward and a sneak."

"The doctor," said Joe, softly, "calls him 'Old Death's-Head.'"

"Well, what of it?"

"I'm afraid of Death."

We both started at this; but Archie, recovering courage, asked:

"What can one miserable Chinaman do, opposed to three Americans?"

"Very little, in America," replied Joe. "But we're going to his own country, to China, where old Death's-Head is a high mandarin, and the governor of a province. He won't kow-tow there, for the Prince is his only superior, and the Prince will be deep under the ocean soon."

We thought this over. There was usually something to think over when Joe made a long speech.

"Do you mean, then, that you're scared out; that you won't undertake this thing?" demanded Archie, finally.

"No," said Joe, "I'm going to China. That is, if you fellows are game to go

with me."

"That's the way to talk!"

"But we're putting our heads in the jaws of a trap, and the least little thing is likely to spring it," added Joe.

Archie looked puzzled.

"I can't understand why you take that view of it," he protested. "It seems to me the thing's easy enough. We've got the Prince's letter to his people, and the ring, and the secret of the private way into his ancestral hall. If we bungle such a job as that, we ought to be hanged."

"And will be, or worse. So we mustn't bungle it," said Joe. "Where is this province of Kwang-Kai-Nong, Sam?"

"I forgot to ask," I replied, wondering at my oversight.

"China's a big country," suggested Joe.

"I know. I'll inquire about the location, and how to get to it, the next time I see the Prince."

"Do," said Archie, "that'll help a lot."

But I didn't see the Prince again. At the lunch table we found the doctor, eating with apparent gusto but with an intent look on his face.

"How's your patient, Doc?" Uncle Naboth was asking as I entered.

"Why, I'm out of a job again," replied Doctor Gaylord, gravely.

"Great Goodness! The man ain't dead, is he?" demanded my uncle.

"He is, sir."

I do not know why I had such a sudden sinking of the heart as I heard this. Perhaps the noble young Chinaman had won from me more admiration and affection than I had suspected, during the brief time I had known him.

I glanced at Joe and Archie, and they were looking mighty solemn.

"Wasn't it rather sudden, Doc?" inquired Uncle Naboth, after a pause, during which he stirred his tea energetically.

"Yes, he might have lived another four-and-twenty hours. But he wore out the morphine and began to suffer terribly. So I killed him."

"What!"

"Gave him an overdose of morphine, at his own request, and he went to his long sleep with a smile of gratitude upon his face."

There was another pause. "Ahem!" said Capt. Steele, clearing his throat, "was that — er — er — strictly professional, Dr. Gaylord?"

"It was strictly humane, Captain. The man was crushed and mangled from the waist down, and according to all the laws of science and common-sense has been as good as dead ever since the accident. He couldn't have lived until now without the morphine. When that failed to soothe him the end was bound to creep nearer by slow degrees, allowing him to suffer horrible

torments. I couldn't stand that, and he couldn't. So he begged me to end it for him, and I did."

"You're a good man, Gaylord," remarked Uncle Naboth, mopping his bald head with his red bandanna. "I'm glad you had the courage to do it."

"This Prince of China," said the doctor, leaning back in his chair and thrusting his hands in his pockets, "was a royal good fellow. I had observed him on shipboard, and was attracted by his cheerful, intelligent face. When the *Karamata Maru* broke up I left everyone else to attend to Kai Lun Pu, until I discovered he was fatally injured. Unfortunately all my surgical tools and requirements were out of reach, and in the pockets of the clothes which I grabbed up before I rushed on deck were only a small medicine case and my hypodermic outfit. I assisted Mai Lo, the only one of the Prince's attendants who survived, to get Kai off the wreck and safe aboard this ship, and at his urgent request I remained with him, since the doctor of the *Nagasaki Maru* could look after the few survivors of the *Karamata Maru* who were injured. I am well paid for doing this, but I want to state that the money did not influence me in the least."

To look at the doctor was evidence of the truth of this statement; so we merely nodded assent.

"As soon as I had him settled in your cabin yonder," he continued, "I told him that he was dying. Kai accepted the decree like a philosopher and asked me how long I could keep him alive without suffering. It was then that we made our bargain, and I promised he should die comfortably. It seems he had certain family affairs to arrange with Mai Lo, who represents him in his province, and afterward he had several long talks with Sam and the other boys here."

He paused to look from one to the other of us curiously, and the shrewd glance from beneath his prominent gray eyebrows was rather disconcerting.

"By good luck," he went on, "the Prince finished his arrangements, whatever they were, before the effect of the morphine wore out. When I went to him a while ago I saw the time had come to fulfil my promise. I asked him if he was ready and he said he was. So, in the parlance of the Chinese, he sleeps with his ancestors."

In the silence that followed we were all busy with our own thoughts. Finally my father asked:

"Where is Mai Lo?"

"Burning prayers before the body. He's going to make trouble for us, pretty soon."

"How's that?" asked the Captain.

"These Chinese believe it's a lasting disgrace to allow their bodies to be

buried anywhere but at home. Mai Lo has already asked me when I would embalm the body; but I've been making inquiries and find there's no material aboard the *Seagull* that will enable me to preserve the corpse of Kai Lun Pu until we can get him to China. He himself understood this, and was willing to be cast overboard; but old Death's-Head has different ideas, and when he learns what we are going to do he will make trouble, as I said."

"What can he do?" asked Uncle Naboth.

"These Chinese have a disagreeable way of running amuck and slicing a few people into mincemeat before they can be overcome. I won't say Mai Lo will do that, but he will do something — anything in his power to prevent us lowering his master's body into the sea."

"He won't run amuck," said I, positively; "nor will he do anything that will endanger his own life."

"Why not, Sam?" asked my father. "Mai Lo's a queer chap. I can't make him out at all. Seems to me he's likely to do anything."

"Except endanger himself," I added. "The Prince knew Mai Lo better than anyone, and from what he told me I believe Mai's more clever than you suppose, and too ambitious to sacrifice his life for a mere whim."

"It isn't a mere whim," said the doctor. "The Shintoists are ancestor worshippers, and the sacredness of a dead body is part of their religion. Mai Lo, if he's a good Shintoist, believes he himself will be condemned by the spirits of his own ancestors if he allows his master to be cast into the sea, whence it is impossible he can be resurrected when the end of the world comes."

"But *is* Mai Lo a good Shintoist?" I asked.

"Mm — I don't know. He claims to be; but the fellow puzzles me. Many of the Chinese wear a mask of expressionless reserve; but Mai Lo is the most incomprehensible being I have ever met. If he weren't clever he wouldn't be a high mandarin, so we can't judge him by his terracotta face and beady eyes."

"Oh, well," remarked my father, "we can't endanger our own health by keeping a decaying body on board, so whenever you're ready for the ceremony, Doctor, we will give the Prince as decent a sea-burial as possible. And that in spite of the old mandarin. By the way, Sam, see if Mai Lo wants anything to eat."

I arose and knocked softly upon the door of the state cabin. Presently it was opened a mere crack and I caught a glimpse of Mai Lo's expressionless face behind it. But when he saw me he closed the door again quickly, before I had time to speak; and I heard the key click in the lock.

"Let the beast starve," I growled, turning away to go on deck; and the

others seemed to approve the sentiment, for they followed me without protest.

CHAPTER SEVEN
WE BECOME CONSPIRATORS

You'll find my first suggestion was good," said Archie, as we stood in the shelter of the wheel-house, for the wind was half a gale by this time. "The proper thing to do is to chuck old Death's-Head overboard."

"It would certainly simplify matters," I agreed; "but unfortunately it can't be done."

"Then we ought to cultivate his friendship," said Joe.

"How can we?"

"I don't know; but it's a great mistake to allow him to think he's our enemy."

"Why so, Joe?"

"We've got to go into his province to get the treasure. He's powerful there, and we need his good will. He might make it pretty hot for us otherwise."

"True enough," said Archie, gloomily. "But you can't cultivate the friendship of a dummy. He won't respond worth a cent."

"He must have *some* sentiment," suggested Joe; "his faithfulness to his Prince proves that. Let's study him and try to discover how to reach his gratitude, or self-esteem, or--"

"Or what?"

"How to further his ambition."

"If the Prince is buried at sea," I said, reflectively, "Mai Lo will be disgraced at home. If we can save him from this disgrace he ought to be grateful, for it will give him a chance to carry out his ambitious plans."

"I thought he was obliged to commit suicide," said Archie.

"So he is; but not immediately. First he must settle his master's affairs, and that business ought to provide pretty fair pickings for an unscrupulous man. Then he will be obliged to seal up the ancestral hall and destroy all traces of any entrance to it, or even its existence. All this takes time, and will give him a chance to complete his plans for running away with his plunder, most of which will be stolen from the tombs of the Prince's ancestors."

"Will he dare do that?" asked Archie.

"Mai Lo has seen a good deal of the world outside of China," said I, "and such experience is bound to destroy many of the doctrines of his religious belief. Contact with our western civilization made the Prince an unbeliever in Shintoism, and perhaps did the same for Mai Lo."

"Then why is he so set on lugging the body of the Prince to China? He must know that this ancestor worship is a humbug."

“He does. Also he knows that his people at home are still firm believers in it. It is to save himself from disgrace that he will insist on taking the body home.”

“I see,” responded Archie. “But he can’t do that, you know. There’s no way to embalm the Prince properly, and Captain Steele has already decided to drop the body overboard.”

Looking aft I saw the doctor pacing the quarter-deck with his pipe in his mouth, and suddenly the sight inspired me with an idea.

“Boys,” I said, “we’ve got to have some help in this affair. We can’t carry out the adventure all alone. Suppose we ask the doctor to join us?”

“Old Gaylord?”

“Yes. He has good stuff in him, to my notion; and he says he’s out of a job.”

“A good idea,” said Joe.

“Won’t he ask for too big a slice of the pie?” inquired Archie.

“According to the Prince there’s more treasure in his ancestral halls than we could cart away in a year. If Dr. Gaylord will help us we won’t lose anything by giving him his share.”

“I don’t see how he can help us a bit,” declared Archie. “For my part I’d rather have Ned Britton or Mr. Perkins. They’re true blue and game to fight to the last.”

“This isn’t a matter that depends on fighting, Archie,” I reminded him. “Our whole ship’s crew wouldn’t make a showing against the thousands of Chinamen if it came to open warfare. It’s a question of ready wit, courage and audacity.”

“Then I can’t make out why you want the doctor,” returned Archie, with a puzzled look.

“I know,” said Joe, in his quiet voice. “I think I’ve caught Sam’s idea, and it’s a good one.”

“What is it, then?” asked Archie.

“With the doctor’s help we can fool Mai Lo and save him from disgrace. And that will win his gratitude. Eh, Sam?”

“Quite right, Joe. Shall I call the doctor over?”

They nodded, and at my summons Dr. Gaylord willingly joined our little group.

“Doctor,” said I, “there’s a conspiracy afloat. Do you want to join it?”

He gave me a shrewd glance.

“I knew there was something up,” he said, “and I’ve been trying to study out what secret Prince Kai confided to you. It has worried me almost as much as it has Mai Lo.”

“Oh!” said I, with a gasp. “Does *he* suspect anything?”

“Mai Lo is no fool, and you were closeted with Prince Kai a long time. Also, he witnessed an important paper, and I heard him ask the Prince what had become of his ring.”

“What was the reply?” I inquired.

“Prince Kai told him he had given it to Sam Steele for an important purpose, and that he had appointed you to carry out his secret wishes. Also he exacted a promise from Mai Lo to obey you and render you any assistance you might demand.”

“Good!” I exclaimed.

“Good as far as it goes,” said the doctor, drily; “but it won’t go far with Mai Lo. He’s likely to cut your throat some night if you leave your door unlocked.”

“Then you distrust him?” I asked, uneasily.

“More than that, Sam. I’m afraid of him. But let me have your story and your proposal, and I’ll tell you in a jiffy whether I’ll join your conspiracy or not.”

So I began by relating in full my various interviews with Prince Kai, in the last of which Archie and Joe had been participants. I added that I believed the Prince’s idea of our robbing his ancestors arose from my relation of our former adventures in search of a treasure, which I had told him with a view to amusing him. Once the mischievous notion had seized him, he began to plan ways to assist us, and I think he derived a certain pleasure during his last hours in imagining our difficulties and trying to overcome them. Another thing that doubtless influenced him was the desire to outwit Mai Lo, whom he suspected, probably with good reason, of a desire to rob the tombs himself.

Dr. Gaylord listened to all the story without interruption, and I could see that he was intensely interested. When I finished he smoked for a time in silence, while we watched him rather anxiously. Finally he knocked the ashes from his pipe and said, with decision:

“It looks too pretty to miss, my lads, and if you see where an old fellow like me can be of use to you, I’ll stand by to the last. But I want to warn you that we are taking big chances in this adventure, and if any one of us escapes with a whole skin he’ll be lucky. On the other hand, I know something of the enormous wealth of these ancestral halls, and if we succeed in our undertaking our fortunes will be made. That won’t mean much to you youngsters, of course; but it will enable me to buy a snug farm in England and settle down to end my days in peace. So I’m with you, lads, and you can count on my venturing as much as any of you.”

“Do you know in what part of China the province of Kwang-Kai-Nong is, doctor?” I inquired.

“Surely. It’s away up in the northwest, in the foothills of the Himalayas — a most retired and out-of-the-way place; and that’s what’s going to make our task doubly hard.”

“How can we get there?” asked Archie.

“By starting at Shanghai, traveling up the Yang-tse-Kiang a thousand miles or so to Ichang, and then cutting across country by elephant-train to the edge of the world, which is the province of Kwang-Kai-Nong. That’s not very definite, is it? But the road to Kai-Nong, the capital, is probably well known.”

“Mai Lo will show us the way,” I said.

The doctor looked at me blankly.

“We shall be obliged to take my father and Uncle Naboth into our confidence soon,” I continued, “for the *Seagull* must make straight for Woosung anchorage, so that we may escort the body of Prince Kai to Shanghai, and up the Yang-tse, while our ship goes to Canton to unload. Then they can pick us up when we return.”

“Look here,” said Dr. Gaylord, testily, “have you gone crazy?”

“I hope not, sir.”

“Then what’s this nonsense about escorting Prince Kai’s body — ”

“To Kai-Nong, so he may rest with his ancestors,” I interrupted. “That will save Mai Lo from disgrace, and will enable him to return home in triumph. To do this, he will gladly show us the way.”

The doctor’s stare turned to a grin.

“I begin to understand,” said he. “So that is why you wanted me to join your party.”

“Exactly,” I replied. “We can’t get along without you.”

“And the spoils of war?”

“There shall be an equal division.”

“Very good!” said the doctor. “Very good indeed. The conspiracy is an established fact, and the conspirators are bound to win.”

With a smile I glanced over his shoulder to where a motionless form stood by the rail gazing steadfastly into the sea. The man was too far away to have overheard us, but the sight of him froze my smile in an instant.

It was Mai Lo.

“Come,” I said abruptly; “let’s go below and talk it over. It’s getting chilly here.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

DR. GAYLORD'S PROPOSAL

The doctor and I had an important interview with Mai Lo that very evening. The man was evidently on guard before the door of his dead master's room; for, the moment one of us approached the state cabin, there was Mai Lo confronting him, although the mandarin had been seen at quite another part of the ship a short time before. At such times the expressionless face and unfathomable beady eyes were turned toward us like those of a basilisk, and they impressed me with an uneasy sensation in spite of the fact that I felt that he alone was helpless to oppose us in anything we might decide to do.

But it was not our cue at present to antagonize Mai Lo, but to win his confidence. My father had already loudly declared in the Manchu's hearing that the body of Prince Kai must be buried at sea, and considering Mai Lo's prejudices it was not unreasonable to suppose that he looked upon us as his enemies.

Our first act in the comedy we were playing was to send Uncle Naboth to explain to the attendant that Captain Steele regretted the necessity of disposing of the body of his master at sea; but because the *Seagull's* medicine chest contained no drugs or chemicals with which to embalm or preserve the body, there was no way to avoid this sea-burial if we wished to preserve the health of all on board.

Mai listened in apparent apathy to this explanation, which he had doubtless understood before, and the doctor and I waited a couple of hours to give him time to think it over before we sought him out and with mysterious gestures beckoned him to follow us to my own cabin. This he did, but would not close the door and sat in a position where he could keep an eye upon the locked door of the state cabin.

"Mai Lo," said I, "you know that Prince Kai and I became friends before he died, and that he wished me to go to his palace at Kai-Nong and there perform for him certain services, the details of which are secret and must not be confided to anyone — even to you, his most faithful servant."

He listened to me calmly, and then nodded his head.

"The Prince well knew his body would be lowered into the waters of the sea," I continued, "and he was resigned to the necessity. We Americans do not care very much what becomes of our bodies when we are dead, but I know you Chinese feel differently about it, and it has made me unhappy to think I could not take the body of my friend Kai to China and place it in the burial-halls of his ancestors. Dr. Gaylord and I were conversing upon this subject, a short time ago, when he informed me that his science had taught

him a way to preserve a body for a long period without the use of the usual drugs; but it is a method that requires great skill and labor, and constant watching, and is, moreover, very expensive."

By this time Mai Lo was intensely interested; there was no doubt of that. His gaze was fixed steadfastly upon my face and I thought there was a faint gleam of curiosity in his eyes.

He was silent at first; but I intended he should speak, and after a long pause he did so.

"The expense," said he, in a harsh, guttural voice, but fair English, "is not to be considered. The estates of Prince Kai are ample to meet any demand."

"Just so," I replied easily. "Were it not so, my own fortune would willingly be devoted to the honor of my friend. The question is not one of money, but whether we can prevail upon Doctor Gaylord to give us his time and services. He says the task is a difficult one; and, if he undertakes to preserve the body of my friend and your master, he must watch over it constantly and escort it in person to the halls of Prince Kai's ancestors. I have promised to go with him and to take two of my own friends to assist him and guard him; but the doctor knows something of China and fears he will be molested and perhaps lose his life during the long journey to the province of Kwang-Kai-Nong and back again to Shanghai. It is this that makes him refuse the undertaking, so I have decided to ask you if you cannot help us, and relieve Doctor Gaylord of his fears."

I spoke slowly, so that each word might be fully understood by the Chinaman, and it was not long before he answered me.

"China is a safe country at all times," said Mai Lo, and I noticed that his raspy, guttural tones were as expressionless as his face. "But on this mission, when one is in the service of Mai Lo, and favoring the powerful family of Kai, the person of Doctor Gaylord would be sacred from harm."

There were several things about this brief assertion that I did not like. The mandarin, so humble and subservient to his Prince that I had come to regard him as a mere valet, now assumed that we would be "in the service of Mai Lo" during our journey into the interior. Then, again, our return trip was not assured; it would only be of interest to Mai Lo to see that we arrived safely at the capital of Kai-Nong with the body.

This struck the doctor, too; for he said, in his positive way:

"If I go in safety I must return in safety. It won't do, Mai Lo, to give me empty promises. Either you must show me, without the shadow of a doubt, how I am to return to Shanghai with my American escort, or I don't stir a step and the body of Prince Kai goes overboard."

Mai Lo took a silver box from inside his richly embroidered robe and

abstracted some betel-nut and lime leaves, which he placed in his mouth.

“What assurance do you demand?” he asked.

“This,” said the doctor. “You will yourself remain on board the *Seagull* as an hostage, until we return from Kai-Nong.”

Mai Lo remained silent a long time, while we watched him anxiously. At last he spoke, as deliberately as before.

“You imperil your own safety by this request,” said he. “Without me to protect you, your party might be attacked and slain.”

“I thought you said China was perfectly safe!” I exclaimed, contemptuously.

“It is perfectly safe wherever I go,” he answered.

We were both greatly disappointed at this position of Mai Lo, for we had thought that by leaving him on board the ship we could carry out our plans safely. China might be a dangerous country to travel in, but we feared this incomprehensible mandarin more than anything else.

“Oh, well,” said the doctor, carelessly, “let us abandon the idea altogether. I don’t want the job, to be frank with you both, and I won’t run my head into danger if I can help it. So we’ll say no more about it.”

CHAPTER NINE
WE OUTWIT MAI LO

There are other ways to assure your safety," said Mai Lo, as the doctor rose as if to go.

Then he turned his face toward me and asked:

"Cannot the friend of Prince Kai trust the promises of his friend's servant?"

"No," I replied. "The Prince himself told me to trust no one."

"You have his letter of authority and his ring."

"He is dead," I answered, with a shrug. "I am not sure the commands of the dead Prince are as powerful as those of his living servant. I am told you are all-powerful in Kai-Nong, Mai Lo."

"We who worship our ancestors obey the commands of the dead without question, even if it costs us our lives," said the mandarin.

This might be true, but I had little faith in Mai Lo being influenced by the traditions of his people. Prince Kai had distrusted the man and warned me to look out for any treachery from him. But it was not my purpose to antagonize the mandarin at this juncture.

"Satisfy the doctor, and you satisfy me," I declared, with assumed indifference.

"I will write an agreement," said Mai Lo, "in which I promise you safe conduct to Kai-Nong and back to Shanghai. This you will deposit with the American Consul at Shanghai. If I fail in my agreement he will send the paper to the Emperor, who will at once order me beheaded."

"Very good," said the doctor, somewhat to my surprise. "That will satisfy us amply. Write the agreement and I will at once begin work upon the body of Prince Kai. If I am to succeed no time must be lost."

"And the price?" asked the mandarin.

"Ten thousand taels, and all expenses of the journey."

"It is agreed."

Mai Lo composedly arose and went to the state cabin, which he entered.

"It's just as well to accept his terms," said the doctor to me, in a low voice. "What we want is to impress him with the fact that we rely upon his protection. Then we'll watch him for evidences of treachery and be upon our guard."

"Would the Emperor behead him if he played false?" I asked, thoughtfully.

"Assuredly. Tsi An doesn't want any trouble with foreign countries just now, and when we speak of the Emperor we really mean the old dowager,

Tsi An."

Presently the Chinaman returned and handed the doctor a paper closely written upon in Chinese characters. I looked at the document rather suspiciously, being unable to read it; but the doctor promptly folded it and put it in his pocket-book. Then he said in a brisk and business-like tone:

"Take me to the Prince, Mai Lo. I must get to work."

Work he did, and to all appearances very energetically. While he made his preliminary arrangements I had a long talk with father and Uncle Naboth, and after explaining to them the details of the entire adventure I obtained their permission to carry it out. Uncle Naboth wanted to go with us to "see the country," he said; but I pointed out that it was a long and tedious journey which my respected relative might not enjoy, being quite stout and rather short of breath. Moreover, the cargo of merchandise we were carrying needed his attention; and, if we boys failed to secure the treasure we were to hunt for, it would be as well to make the trip a profitable one in a more legitimate way. Finally it was arranged that only Archie, Joe and I should proceed to Kwang-Kai-Nong in the doctor's company, with the two black South Sea Islanders, Nux and Bryonia, for body-servants. Numbers would not count for much in the expedition, while courage, wit and caution would accomplish more than an army.

It would only delay the *Seagull* a few days to stop at Woosung anchorage before proceeding to Hong Kong on the way to Canton to unload cargo, and the prospect of rich returns for this delay fully warranted it.

These matters being arranged, and my father and Uncle Naboth being acquainted with the doctor's secret plans, we proceeded quietly to complete our arrangements.

Dr. Gaylord employed only the services of Mai Lo to prepare the body of his Prince for the process of preservation, and it must be admitted that the mandarin worked faithfully and willingly — almost I had said cheerfully, except that such a word could never be applied to the unemotional Mai Lo.

These preparations being completed at midnight, Dr. Gaylord drove the attendant away, claiming that his "secret process" would not allow the presence of any one. And then the doctor, as he afterward told me, rolled himself up in a blanket and behind the locked door slept peacefully in the presence of the corpse until morning.

Nor was Mai Lo again admitted to the state cabin, although he maintained his position as guard outside the door, both day and night.

As soon as breakfast was over I went to the carpenter and had him make a pine box for a coffin. This we covered with black cloth and clamped with heavy bands of iron.

The cover was hinged and fastened down with three Yale locks, in addition to a row of stout screws.

This funeral strong-box was completed about the middle of the afternoon, and Archie, Joe and I lugged it down to the saloon and deposited it before the door of the state cabin.

Very soon the doctor came out with his sleeves rolled up and looking very business-like, although he had been reading a novel all day. He, also, approved the chest; so we solemnly carried it into the state cabin and deposited it upon the floor. Mai Lo was ordered to remain at the door, but he kept it open and watched us intently from his position there. The body lay upon the bunk swathed from head to foot in bandages, which were thoroughly dampened, and gave out an odor which I knew to be rum, as I had conveyed several bottles of this liquor to the room, concealed in a gunny sack to puzzle Mai Lo.

The lid of the coffin being laid back, we gently lifted the body of the Prince in our arms and deposited it in the box, wrappings and all. Then the doctor sprinkled the corpse with more rum from a jar, and closed the lid and locked it, placing the keys in his pocket.

"Everything is all right, so far," he remarked to Mai Lo, as he put on his coat and prepared to leave the room. "It will be necessary for me to sprinkle the body with my secret preparation every few hours, especially during the next week or ten days. In this work I shall require the services of Sam Steele only. You will keep out of this room, my man, and prevent any one from entering it without my orders, as the fumes of the drugs might cause another death aboard."

Mai Lo nodded and locked the door behind us, and I was greatly pleased that the doctor had succeeded so far in his imposition.

At seven o'clock the doctor and I again entered the state cabin and remained there for half an hour, leaning out of the port-hole, which was extra large in this cabin, and conversing together in low tones. Then we emerged and passed the evening as usual, everyone on board seeming to take little interest in the fact that we had a dead man in the state cabin.

The sailors, always a superstitious and suspicious lot, had asked some questions of Archie and Joe, but when told that the doctor had preserved the body, which was to be taken to Shanghai, they seemed satisfied with the situation, although I knew every man Jack would have been relieved to see the corpse lowered into the sea.

The doctor rapped on my door at midnight, although I was not asleep and had been eagerly awaiting the summons.

Together we entered the state cabin, the door of which was unlocked by

Mai Lo, who seemed perpetually sleepless and alert. We first bolted the door to prevent intrusion, and then lighted a lamp and began preparations for the most important act in our comedy.

My heart was beating strongly as I assisted the doctor to unlock the lid of the box and silently lay it back. Then we lifted out the corpse and the doctor swiftly and skillfully removed the bandages, disclosing the still smiling face of the dead Prince.

We had smuggled in at various times several heavy pieces of iron, and these were now congregated in a gunny sack. We attached this sack to the feet of the body, carried it to the port-hole and slid it out into the water. It disappeared into the night almost without a sound, although I thought I heard a faint splash at the stern.

But now our task was only half accomplished. Bolsters and blankets were bound together in such shape that they resembled in outline the form of the Prince. Then the doctor carefully bandaged it, and when the dummy was put in the coffin to replace the corpse it was difficult to realize the substitution. With a sigh of relief we moistened the bandages anew with rum, and then closed and locked the lid.

Mai Lo was at his post when we left the state cabin.

“Everything is progressing finely,” remarked the doctor; but the stolid attendant made no reply, and we passed on to our own cabins.

CHAPTER TEN
AN UNHEEDED WARNING

The voyage of the *Seagull* across the Pacific was safely accomplished and with excellent speed. We crossed the Yellow Sea without incident and in due time anchored at Woosung, which is at the mouth of the Yang-tse-Kiang. This river is navigable for small steamers for several hundred miles, but the yellow mud that it washes down from the foothills of the interior mountain ranges forms a huge bar across the mouth, which ocean steamships cannot cross. So passengers are obliged to disembark at Woosung and take either the railway or a small steamer for the twenty-five mile run up to Shanghai.

Mai Lo decided upon the steamer. As soon as we anchored we went ashore and made arrangements, and on the following morning our little party prepared to follow him, and start at once upon our strange adventure.

The Chinese Health Inspector for the port was curious and exacting. He made us unlock the coffin of Prince Kai and when the swathed figure was exposed he prodded it cautiously with his bamboo wand. Mai Lo was indignant at this outrage, and protested so vigorously that the official refrained from further investigation. He countersigned the doctor's certificate of death from accidental injury, and allowed us to proceed.

Until this time we had been uneasy lest Mai Lo should suspect the imposture we had practiced. He had remained so stolid and indifferent that, although we had allowed him at various times to see us saturating the bandaged form with our rum, we could not feel really assured that he believed the corpse of Prince Kai was still in our keeping. But the mandarin's genuine anger at the meddling official — if voluble and brusque phrases in Chinese may be construed as anger — fully restored our confidence.

The chest was solemnly rowed to the quay, just beneath one of the mud forts, and placed aboard a smart little river steamer that was puffing a cloud of black smoke from its funnel.

Uncle Naboth came off with us in another boat, for he was to accompany us as far as Shanghai and see us started upon our real journey up the Yang-tse. We carried light baggage, but concealed about our persons a plentiful supply of arms and ammunition.

Less than half a day's ride upon the winding yellow waters of the river brought us to the important city of Shanghai — the most important in all the Province of Chili.

The doctor and I insisted upon conveying the important casket to the Astor House, where we were to stop, and the proprietor gave us a private room for it in an outbuilding and appointed several Chinese servants to guard

the supposed corpse of the Prince.

Here, during the next few days, came several Chinese relatives of the dead man to burn prayers for his peaceful repose before the little image of a god and the wooden ancestral tablets which Mai Lo had set up at the head of the casket. These prayers were printed in Chinese characters upon rice paper, and when burned before the god were considered very efficacious.

At times the doctor and I continued to treat the bandages with rum, for although Mai Lo was not often present upon these occasions we feared he might have spies set to watch us, and so dared not neglect our functions.

The mandarin lived, during these days of our stay in Shanghai, in the native city, and said he was busy perfecting arrangements for our long trip to the Province of Kwang-Kai-Nong.

Shanghai consists of a native city and a European city, besides four conceded districts occupied by Americans, French, English and Germans. These grants or concessions have their own judicial courts and are guarded by their national marines, so that we found our surroundings wholly American, and plenty of American faces greeted us in our country's section of the city.

This was at first quite reassuring; but one had only to walk into the European section, patrolled by the handsome and gigantic Indian Sikhs, or into the dirty native city, to realize that we were indeed upon foreign territory-

One of our first errands after our arrival was to visit the American Consul, who received us very courteously. We told him of our contract to escort the body of Prince Kai Lun Pu to the province of Kwang-Kai-Nong, and that our agreement with Mai Lo provided for our safe return to Shanghai. He shook his head dubiously and asked to see the contract. This we produced, and waited patiently while the consul's interpreter translated it in writing. When reduced to English the paper read as follows:

"Listen to the obligation which Mai Lo, High Mandarin and Governor of the province of Kwang-Kai-Nong, in His Imperial Chinese Majesty's Domain, hereby voluntarily agrees to perform:

"Mai Lo will escort in honor and safety the person of the renowned physician Gregory Gaylord, a subject of the Kingdom of England, from the City of Shanghai, in the Province of Chili, to the City of Kai-Nong in the Province of Kwang-Kai-Nong, and with him shall go the Americans known as Sam Steele, Archie Ackley, and Joe Herring, with their attendants, all in equal honor and safety.

"And if Doctor Gregory Gaylord shall conduct the corpse of His Royal

Highness the Revered Prince Kai Lun Pu, well preserved and cared for, upon this journey to the City of Kai-Nong, then will Mai Lo pay to this Doctor Gregory Gaylord the sum of ten thousand taels in genuine money of the Empire of China.

"And if the Englishman and the Americans and their attendants before mentioned do conduct themselves with honesty and faith, neither stealing nor murdering upon the journey or while within the City of Kai-Nong, then shall Mai Lo escort them each and every one in honor and safety back again to the City of Shanghai and deliver them to the American Consul in that city, unharmed.

"And this Mai Lo shall do as soon as the foreign guests shall together or separately make request to return to Shanghai, and all of the expenses of guards and of food and of transportation shall be defrayed from the private purse of Mai Lo, as a part of his contract and obligations.

"So Mai Lo, promising to be faithful in the names of his greatly worshipped ancestors, agrees to do and will do, or forfeit his life, his rank and his fortune.

And that all men may know his intentions he has here signed his name in witness.

"MAI LO."

The doctor and I each read this translation in silence, but afterward glanced at one another with grim forebodings. But the consul, who was studying another copy, said to us thoughtfully:

"This agreement is more frank and favorable than I feared it would prove. Usually these unscrupulous mandarins insert such clauses in their contracts that their subtle meanings may be construed in various ways, thus giving them opportunities to violate the real meaning of their promises. But here is a paper of a different sort, direct and concise and with no subterfuges. I think you may trust yourselves to Mai Lo, especially as he knows this document is in my possession; and I will inquire carefully into the matter should any harm befall you. Without the goodwill of this powerful governor, however, I would advise you not to undertake the dangerous journey into the faraway province of Kwang-Kai-Nong. Indeed, I warn you that the City of Kai-Nong has considerable evil repute, and is seldom visited by Americans or Europeans. But Mai Lo is able to protect you even in that remote capital."

"We shall go," replied the doctor, briefly. "But if we do not return by the first of September you must make inquiries concerning us; and if — "

"If?" said the consul, with an amused glance.

"If you find we've disappeared, or anything has happened to us, please see that Mai Lo is punished," concluded the doctor.

“I will do all in my power,” responded the consul. “The Chinese character is complex, and crafty beyond measure. But I am sure Mai Lo would not have executed this document unless he meant fairly by you. I shall lock the original up in my safe, and you may keep the translation to refer to in case of necessity.”

We thanked him and went our way, rather more gloomy than the consul suspected. For we could not tell the American representative that our errand to Kai-Nong was to carry away the treasure from Prince Kai’s ancestral halls, and that if we were caught doing this, Mai Lo might easily construe our act as one of theft, and have us put to death. It did not matter that we were acting according to the Prince’s expressed wishes.

“Mai Lo must have suspected why we wanted to go to Kai-Nong, and so have put in that dangerous clause,” I said to the doctor.

“True; the fellow has entrapped us very cleverly,” replied Doctor Gaylord. “Yet he may be innocent of any intent to do so.”

“I’m not going to bank on that,” said I. “The consul knows the Chinese, and he says they are crafty. Mai Lo seems to have no more intelligence than a lump of putty, but for that reason he’s doubly dangerous. You can’t tell how much he knows, or what he thinks.”

“If we object to that clause in the agreement, we shall acknowledge evil intentions on our part,” remarked the doctor; “and, if we say nothing, he may find a way to use that same clause to excuse himself for our murder.”

“Well,” said I, grimly, “I’ve gone into this thing, and I’m going to stay in — to the finish.”

“So am I,” replied Doctor Gaylord; but I did not like the way he said it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AN UNEXPECTED DESERTION

No one can gain any adequate idea of the magnitude of the Empire of China until he has journeyed up that great waterway, the Yang-tse-Kiang, and observed the millions upon millions of natives that throng both the river and its banks. For the first four hundred miles of its twisting, serpentine course, the Yang-tse seems to wind through one successive village, back of which the skillfully cultivated gardens and fields are visible. The people as a rule seem peaceful and plodding; but we soon discovered a deep-rooted antipathy for foreigners in their character which induced them to regard us with scowling countenances or mischievous jeers. Whenever we tied up at the river-bank they crowded around to mock us and make faces at us like a pack of unruly schoolboys, and we began to realize that we would be far from safe if we ventured among them unprotected.

Our steamer was a wheezy little flat-bottomed affair, which in spite of its awkward appearance breasted the stream energetically and made fairly good time. It had been chartered especially for our party by Mai Lo, and was to carry us as far as Ichang, where we were to take mules and elephants to Kai-Nong.

Mai Lo was now a vastly different personage from the humble and groveling attendant of Prince Kai whom we had first known. He boarded the steamer at Shanghai clothed in gorgeous Chinese raiment of embroidered silks and accompanied by a band of servitors from his own province, whom he had picked up in the city. He was as silent and undemonstrative as ever, but had assumed a new dignity of demeanor. His commands were obeyed by all around him as readily as if he had been an autocrat, or the Emperor himself, and whenever he spoke to any of our party, which was but seldom, there was a suspicion of a sneer in his harsh tones that was very annoying, although his words were so courteous that we could not well find fault with them.

It mattered very little to Archie, Joe or myself that Mai Lo assumed these airs, but the doctor was uneasy and discontented, and more than once expressed regrets that we had been foolish enough to undertake such a risky adventure. Yet he continued to perform the duties he had undertaken in a brisk, businesslike manner. At least three or four times in every twenty-four hours the doctor and I entered the little room where the supposed body of the Prince had been placed in state, surrounded by flags and decorations, and moistened the bandages with the rum. We had brought with us three large demijohns of the liquor, which Doctor Gaylord had labelled “poison,” so that

we might continue the farce until the end of our journey.

Mai Lo, however, no longer guarded the corpse of his Prince in the same jealous manner as he had on board the *Seagull.* This might easily be accounted for by the fact that now there was no danger that could menace the dead. The Chinese have an intense reverence for a corpse, and would not molest one under any circumstances.

"All the same," said the doctor, gloomily, "I wish Mai Lo would take a little more interest in the remains of Prince Kai. His indifference makes me suspect that the crafty mandarin knows more than we give him credit for."

Our little party was accorded excellent treatment on this voyage, and we had little to complain of. Our South Sea Islanders had nothing to do, and received almost as much deference as ourselves from the Chinese aboard the steamboat, who looked upon Nux and Bryonia with unfeigned curiosity. Our blacks were as grave and dignified as judges, and conducted themselves in their customary admirable manner. I believe they had themselves been princes, or at least nobles, in the half-civilized island from whence they had come, and certainly their conduct under trying circumstances had always been such as to win my confidence.

We were eight days getting to Ichang, for the boat tied up at the bank the greater part of each night, and resumed its journey at daybreak. The Chinese boatmen have a horror of traveling by night, except those of the pirate junks, who prefer the dark to cloak their movements. Sometimes, of course, it is necessary to travel at night, and in consequence every Chinese boat has an eye painted on each side of the bow so that the boat can see where it is going in the dark and avoid running aground or into the rocks.

Ichang we found to be another important and densely populated city, and to my surprise there were several European travelers there. A regular line of steamers runs between Ichang and Shanghai.

Doctor Gaylord met an old friend, a retired English officer, and seemed overjoyed to see him, for they held a long and animated conversation together that evening.

Mai Lo put us up at the best hotel, but the proprietor objected to receiving the "remains" of Prince Kai, and so the casket was left on board the steamer until we were ready to start — the next morning but one after our arrival. This made it necessary for the doctor and me to make trips to the boat from the hotel, since we dared not neglect any of the useless but impressive duties we had assumed in caring for the dummy corpse.

On the first of these excursions we were nearly mobbed by the natives; but fortunately our entire band was together and Nux and Bryonia cleared the way, using freely some stout lengths of bamboo.

So the rabble did not press us too closely, and on our following trips to the boat they were careful not to interfere with us, although they jeered and mocked “the foreign pigs.”

The attitude of the natives seemed to make the doctor very nervous; but the others of us did not mind their silly actions, as it was evident that we were feared as much as we were hated.

It appeared that Mai Lo had arranged for his caravan in advance — probably by the Chinese Imperial Telegraph — so we were delayed only two days in Ichang. The evening before we started Doctor Gaylord was again engaged in earnest conversation with his tourist acquaintance, and when we left him to go to bed — for we were to start at daybreak next morning — they were still talking together.

Joe aroused me next morning while it was still dark, and told me that I had barely time to dress and get my breakfast.

When the meal was finished — and Chinese breakfasts do not consume much time — we all marched down to the river, from the banks of which the caravan was to start.

There were three elephants and some twenty spindle-legged mules in the convoy, and our escort consisted of Chinese warriors carefully selected by Mai Lo.

The casket of Prince Kai was to ride in state upon one of the elephants, and to be accompanied by the doctor and myself, as his assistant. The doctor was late and had not yet arrived, so I personally directed the removal of the casket from the cabin of the steamer and saw that it was carefully loaded upon the elephant and secured just in front of the howdah. The beast was profusely decorated with flags and streamers of gay colors. The Chinese do not use black as mourning, and this was their way of honoring the memory of the late Prince. Some of the flags were embroidered with the regulation Earth Dragon, but others bore the figure of the Sacred Ape, which was the especial emblem of the House of Kai.

The doctor had not yet arrived by the time the elephant was loaded, and we began to be impatient. Mai Lo came to me to inquire why the noble physician was delayed, but I could not tell him. Messengers were sent back to the hotel, and in the meantime I watched two of the puffing, flat-bottomed little river steamers leave the bank a few rods away and begin a race down the river toward Shanghai. They had disappeared around the bend of the river a full half hour when a native touched my shoulder and stealthily handed me a soiled bit of crumpled paper.

I found it was a note from the doctor, and to my astonishment it read as follows:

“I have thrown up the job and gone back to Shanghai. Too dangerous to tackle. I advise you to follow my example. Life is worth more than you can possibly gain.”

“So,” said a harsh voice beside me; “the noble physician has run away.”

I turned with a start to face Mai Lo, who had insolently read the note over my shoulder.

“So it seems,” I answered, blankly.

“Run away!” exclaimed Joe and Archie, who were unable to comprehend this desertion.

“Gone back to Shanghai,” I answered, handing them the paper.

“Will you follow his example?” asked Mai Lo, calmly. “I must know at once, as we are ready to start.”

We three boys, confronted by this trying emergency, glanced into one another’s eyes; but after exchanging this look I was prepared to answer Mai Lo.

“We are going to Kai-Nong,” I said, with an air of unconcern. “Whenever you are ready, we will begin the journey.”

CHAPTER TWELVE
MAI LO MAKES A DISCOVERY

Mai Lo looked at me a long time in silence. Then he said:

"The noble physician is old and wise."

"And that means that we boys are young and foolish," I retorted. "But listen to me, Mai Lo. We have traveled in many lands, young as we are. We have had adventures, and faced dangers. Some who decided to oppose us are lying buried in Alaska, Panama, and Egypt — and we are here to travel in your company to Kai-Nong."

I am not given to boasting, but here was an occasion when a little bombast might count in our favor; so I looked Mai Lo squarely in the eye and took a step nearer to him as I spoke, that he might understand that I was not afraid. Moreover, the mandarin was assuming airs of superiority that I resented. It would never do to let him believe that we were in his power.

But no one could have told by Mai Lo's expression whether my speech had impressed him or not. His eyes were like beads of glass, and I had begun to believe that there were no muscles in his face at all.

"What is your object in traveling to Kai-Nong?" he asked, after one of his irritating pauses.

"As a matter of fact, that does not concern you, my man," I replied. "A higher authority than your own has given me a mission to perform, and if I have any trouble with you I shall use the letter and ring of Prince Kai to provide a separate escort to Kai-Nong."

"I am your servant," said Mai Lo, in his rasping voice.

"Please do not forget it," I rejoined, curtly.

"I will put some of my own people on the elephant to guard the body of my illustrious master," said he.

"No; I will ride there myself, and perform the doctor's duties in preserving the body. I have assisted him so long that I understand the process perfectly, and I have a duplicate set of the keys in my pocket."

Again the mandarin stared at me silently before he ventured to speak. Then he said:

"It is not necessary to continue that farce longer."

It was my turn to stare now; and I heard Archie cough softly and Joe give vent to a low whistle.

"Farce!" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Yes. The body of the mighty and magnificent Prince Kai is by this time sufficiently preserved. Save yourself any further trouble concerning it."

"Oh, I intend to carry out the contract," I declared, hardly knowing how

else to reply to this astounding statement.

"Do you intend to demand the ten thousand taels?" he asked.

"Certainly. We have earned it already."

"You shall have it," said Mai Lo, calmly. "This matter is between you and me, and I will pay you the money in Kai-Nong. But let the casket alone, hereafter, and save yourself trouble. Give me the keys."

"In Kai-Nong, when I have the ten thousand taels."

"Very well," was the ready reply.

My easy victory assured me I was still master of the situation. For some reason Mai Lo, finding he could not bulldoze me, was afraid to oppose me openly.

I ordered Nux and Bryonia to ride upon the elephant bearing the casket of Prince Kai, and the mandarin made no objection to the arrangement. In their native language, which I understood to some extent, I told the blacks to keep their eyes open and their weapons handy, and at a signal from us to hasten to our assistance. Then Archie, Joe and I mounted the second elephant, while Mai Lo climbed the third one, followed by a little withered Chinaman in yellow dress, whom I had never seen before.

The escort mounted the mules, several of which bore our light baggage, and then the word was given to start.

Our mahout, or elephant driver, was a small Chinaman with an enormous head but a merry and even jovial face that formed a sharp contrast to that of the impassive Mai Lo. As we started I asked him a question, to determine if he understood English, and he replied with a flood of sing-song Chinese that formed a sentence a mile long.

We were well out of the city gates before the speech ended, and when our driver found we had ceased to pay any attention to him he threw back his head and laughed as heartily as a schoolboy.

Knowing that we could talk freely together in our howdah, we three began to discuss earnestly the desertion of Doctor Gaylord and its bearing upon our fortunes.

"I'd like to know what scared him out," said Archie. "Doc wanted the money and the treasure as badly as any of us, and his ten thousand taels was a sure thing."

"He was all right until he met that English friend at Ichang," I said. "I believe he must have heard something from him about Mai Lo or the country between here and Kai-Nong that took away his courage."

"Perhaps," remarked Joe, thoughtfully, "Mai Lo himself has been talking to Doctor Gaylord, and warned him not to go farther. You see, Mai Lo knew all along about the imposture we practiced in regard to the body of the

Prince, and it may be that when the doctor found that his trick was discovered he thought it time to dig out."

"It's a mystery," I said, soberly, "and I'm rather sorry to lose the doctor. He had a pretty level head usually, and would have been a great help to us when we got to Kai-Nong."

"Shall we get there, do you think?" asked Archie.

"Of course."

"I thought the jig was up when Mai Lo discovered there was a dummy in the casket, instead of the body of Prince Kai," he continued.

"Why so?"

"Because Mai Lo was so dead set against our tossing the body overboard while we were at sea. He would have defended it with his life, then. Why does he take the discovery so quietly now?"

"The explanation is very simple," I answered. "Chinese customs are peculiar; and especially those that relate to ancestor worship. Should Mai Lo return to Kai-Nong without the body of his dead prince he would be eternally disgraced, and unless he at once committed suicide he would be killed by the other servants of the Prince. So it was a matter of life or death to him whether we tossed the body overboard or preserved it and brought it to China."

"But we really did toss it overboard; and Mai Lo knows it now," objected Archie.

"But no one else knows it," I explained. "It was brought to Woosung and passed by the inspector as the mortal remains of Prince Kai. The Shanghai papers reported the arrival of the body of the Prince, in the care of his faithful servant, the noble governor, Mai Lo, and also gave an account of the accident that caused his death. So now all China knows that Mai Lo did his duty, and is escorting the remains of his master to the ancestral halls at Kai-Nong."

"I see," said Joe, nodding. "The secret is between Mai Lo and ourselves. That is why he frightened the doctor away, and tried to prevent us from continuing the journey to Kai-Nong."

"Exactly," I returned. "Mai Lo has been saved — for a time, anyhow — from committing suicide, by the very trick we played to deceive him. Perhaps he saw through our game from the beginning; I do not know. But we played into his hands, and so he let us go on. Now there is no further danger, for he knows we dare not betray the imposture and it will be easy for him to place the supposed body in the ancestral halls without its being examined by anyone. Yet he preferred not to have us with him when he should reach Prince Kai's palace."

"Naturally," said Archie.

“But this knowledge is a protection to us, anyhow,” observed Joe. “Mai Lo is sharp enough to know that if he plays us any tricks we will explode the whole deception.”

“That idea is doubtless influencing him, even now,” I said. “What we have to fear is not open warfare, but trickery and secret assassination. I don’t know how powerful the letter and ring of Prince Kai will be in his own province, of which Mai Lo is governor; but the Prince seemed to think they would command obedience. Time will have to determine that.”

“What did you mean by saying that Mai Lo would be saved from suicide for a time?” asked Archie.

“Why, according to the rules and regulations of ancestor worship, he’s got to commit suicide in a short time, and there’s no way of getting out of it — except to disappear from China forever. The Prince was the last of his royal line, and left no heir; so the rules oblige his chief representative to seal up his ancestral halls and destroy all traces of them, so that they will never be disturbed until the resurrection. Before doing this, Mai Lo must convert one-half the fortune of Prince Kai into gold, silver and jewels, and deposit the treasure beside his coffin. When all this is accomplished — and it will require a little time, although it must be done speedily — Mai Lo must commit suicide, in order that the secret of the entrance to the ancestral vaults shall perish from the knowledge of men. If he fails to kill himself, the other servants will kill him.”

“Suppose,” said Joe, slowly, “it was discovered that we shared the knowledge of the entrance to Prince Kai’s ancestral halls; what would happen then?”

“They would surely kill us,” I answered. “But the secret entrance of which the Prince informed me is unknown to any of his people — even to Mai Lo. I do not fear discovery.”

“What *do* you fear?” asked Archie.

“I fear for our personal safety while we remain in Kai-Nong, and I am not sure that we can find a way to remove the treasure to Shanghai, once we have secured it,” I answered. “But we have known all along that there would be risks to run, and there’s no need crossing these bridges until we come to them. Prince Kai said it would be a question of wit and courage; but he predicted that we would win.”

“So we shall!” declared Archie.

“Of course,” remarked Joe, easily. “Prince Kai ought to have known what he was talking about.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE ELEPHANT TRAIN

That overland journey of more than eight hundred miles by elephant train is well worth describing, yet it has so little real bearing upon this story that I shall pass it over as briefly as possible.

In spite of our fears, Mai Lo treated us with great respect during this journey, and the escort showed us the same consideration that they did the mandarin.

Elephant riding isn't at all disagreeable when you get used to the swaying motion, and as we were sailors we quickly accustomed ourselves to the amble of the big beasts. But to ride day after day is decidedly tedious, and we were glad whenever a halt was called and we could stretch our legs.

During the first stage of our journey, which was through a densely settled country, we made little more than thirty miles a day. But when we reached Min-Kwa, which is on a shallow tributary of the Yang-tse, we exchanged our elephants for horses — fine, spirited beasts — which enabled us to make much better time.

We now headed directly northwest, on a bee-line from the Himalayas, and I noticed that as we proceeded not only the character of the country but that of the people changed. The placid, indifferent countenances of the peasants were replaced by darker, fiercer features; for here were the descendants of the Tartar horde that once overran and conquered the Chinese. Also the women, instead of being small and insignificant in appearance, and mild and docile in character, were handsome, powerful creatures whose every action displayed energy and grace. I could not help admiring them, although their glances denoted bitter hatred of the foreigners — a feeling common throughout the Empire.

The broad, smooth road — a magnificent thoroughfare, that would shame the best of our American boulevards — sometimes lay through dense forests of splendid trees, and again twined its way amid groves of bamboo; but usually we passed through fields that were under cultivation. It surprised me to observe the perfection of utility that pervaded the country on every hand, until I remembered that here was the most ancient civilization in the world. There were no waste places; the numerous population demanded that every acre be cultivated. Stately walls of excellent construction are used to divide the land, instead of the frail fences we set up, and the bridges over dry streams or gullies would excite the envy and admiration of our modern engineers. All the land required irrigation, and Mai Lo informed me during one of our conversations that the system of irrigation now employed dated

back more than two thousand years, and was still so satisfactory that it could not be improved upon.

"When America adopts our plan," said the mandarin, "irrigation will be a success there; but not before. I have seen your methods, and they are very imperfect."

Chinese fruits were plentiful and cheap. Six big, delicious pears could be purchased for one cash — about one-tenth of a cent; and bunches of finger-shaped grapes as big as one's head we bought for two cash. Mai Lo kept us well supplied with fruit, and indeed we fared luxuriously throughout the entire journey. Always at night the mandarin selected a native house and turned the inhabitants out that we might use it for our own accommodation. I suppose his authority as a governor allowed him to do such arbitrary things, for even the fierce Tartars humbly submitted to his will. Sometimes we passed the night at villages, where there may be always found comfortable inns; but wherever we slept Nux and Bryonia by turns guarded the slumbers of us three Americans, while the withered little imp of a Chinaman who rode with Mai Lo upon his elephant performed the duty of guarding the mandarin. Mai Lo seemed to trust us as little as we trusted him, yet we all realized it would be folly to come to open warfare at this time.

If anything happened to us, it would not be until we were at Kai-Nong; we were quite sure of that. So, for the present we slept as placidly as if on board our own beautiful *Seagull.*

Only one disagreeable incident occurred in this portion of our journey. Sometimes, when we camped early, our native escort amused themselves with games; perhaps to restore their circulation after long periods of riding. The most popular of these games was one called "shipsu." In playing it two men had to grasp tightly a short bamboo rod with both hands and then try to throw one another without releasing hold of the bamboo. Any trick was allowable in this novel wrestling-match except taking the hands from the bamboo, and it was therefore a rough-and-tumble in which strength and skill were required. Usually our men played shipsu among themselves, but one evening in an inn yard where we were all watching the game, surrounded by a throng of villagers, a sturdy Manchu offered to cope with one of Mai Lo's men and the challenge was accepted.

The struggle was long and interesting, and the combatants jostled the bystanders by abrupt turns and side leaps. Finally the Manchu hurled his antagonist to the ground, causing him to release his hold of the rod. With a shout of victory the Manchu whirled the rod above his head and then, happening to find himself near Bryonia, our tall South Sea Islander, who had been silently looking on, the fellow struck him a deliberate blow upon his

head. Bry's fist shot out and the Manchu went sprawling upon the ground, while a roar of rage went up from the bystanders. Knives glistened all around us and our Chinese escort promptly surrounded our little party and faced the natives expectantly. But Mai Lo waived his hand, and to my astonishment the escort melted away and left our black to face his enraged enemies alone.

"Why did you do that, Mai Lo?" I demanded, angrily, while the natives, perhaps suspecting some trick, hesitated to attack Bry.

"Your man has committed a crime; he must die, and perhaps the other black will die with him," replied the governor, calmly.

While I stood dumfounded at this assertion I heard Joe say:

"Be careful, Mai Lo. Archie is behind you with his revolver pointed at your head. If anyone lays hands upon our black it will be the signal for your own death."

Mai Lo did not look around. He did not shrink or pale or display fear. But he promptly waved his hand again and the escort once more closed around us.

Then the governor addressed the crowd in Chinese, and talked volubly for a long time. In a language where it requires two hundred syllables to say "good morning" it is probable that Mai Lo's address was brief and to the point; anyhow, the sullen crowd melted away and left us alone, and soon after we entered the inn and went to bed.

The incident was not referred to again on either side, but it proved to us how readily the governor was prepared to sacrifice any members of our party, and so weaken our numbers, and it warned us to be constantly upon our guard. I did not doubt but that Mai Lo had some plan in mind to circumvent us when we got to Kai-Nong, and doubtless he was confident of success; but we refused to be panic-stricken.

It looks as if we were in the dragon's jaws," remarked Archie, one day, with a yawn.

"I don't mind that," replied Joe, "if we can keep the dragon from biting."

"Nor I. But sometimes it looks dubious to me. We're about fifteen hundred miles in the enemy's country, and the world has lost all track of us. Perhaps-"

"Perhaps, what?" I asked, impatiently.

Perhaps the noble physician was wise, after all."

Look here, Archie. What's the use of crying before you're hurt?"

"It's my only chance," said he, with a grin. "If Mai Lo gets his work in, I shan't be able to howl."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CHIEF EUNUCH

About the middle of the seventeenth day we passed through a dark and gloomy teak forest and came to a place where two stone towers stood, one on either side of our road. Just behind these towers some fifty tents were pitched, and a herd of elephants and horses were browsing near them. The tents bore streamers with the Sacred Ape of Kai embroidered upon them, and a throng of natives in gay costumes stood in a group awaiting us.

"What's up?" I called to Mai Lo, whose elephant was ambling close behind our own.

"These pillars," said he "mark the boundary of Kwang-Kai-Nong. When we pass them I shall be in my own territory."

"Oh, and are these your people?" I inquired.

"Yes. I have sent messengers ahead to warn them of my coming. So they are here to receive the body of their prince."

As we continued to advance the group stood motionless, and I had leisure to examine them. They were finely formed fellows, tall and athletic, and many of them wore beards, some jet black, some gray, some snow white. It was easy to see that this reception committee was composed of the best element of the Kaitos, probably most of them nobles and holding important offices in the principality.

The mahout in charge of the elephant which bore the casket of the Prince now urged his beast slightly in advance of our party, and, as it passed the gateway marked by the towering pillars, the members of the group prostrated themselves and with loud wails and groans grabbed up the dust from the road and scattered it over their bowed heads and bodies, until they were a sight to behold. Then they raised themselves to their knees, extended their arms skyward, and howled in concert like so many coyotes. The din was ear-splitting, and while it continued Mai Lo descended from his elephant and groveled with the others in the dust before the casket of Prince Kai.

Then two aged Kaitos advanced and raised the governor, and escorted him to a tent. The others continued their cries until the casket had been lifted from the elephant and conveyed into another tent — the largest and most decorated one of the encampment.

During this time we had remained unnoted observers of the scene; but when the casket disappeared behind the walls of the tent the people, having risen and dusted themselves, began to look upon us with curiosity. Nux and Bryonia, who had dismounted with the casket and stood like ebony statues beside the elephant, attracted most of the scrutiny, but bore the ordeal with

much dignity.

I was pleased to observe in these people a lack of that ferocious hatred that had marked the countenances of most of the Chinese we had encountered. These men seemed more curious than antagonistic. When we boys dismounted and stood among them they all inclined their bodies in more or less lowly obeisance.

Probably the messengers sent forward by Mai Lo had described us to these people as the friends of the late Prince, for they seemed not surprised to find us with the governor's party.

The tent in which lay the casket of the Prince was at once surrounded by a cordon of guards, armed with scimitars shaped like those of the ancient Saracens. But no one entered the tent itself.

The principal members of the reception party followed Mai Lo into his tent, while others ushered us into still another tent, in which we found couches spread, and low tables before them bearing refreshments of tea and cakes. Here we remained all the afternoon. Nux and Bryonia stood guard outside the entrance, stolidly bearing the gaze of the natives.

When the sun went down there was another period of wailing throughout the camp; but the noise soon ceased. Shortly afterward one of our escort, who understood a few words of English, came to us with an invitation to join "the noble governor and the great Wi-to" at the evening banquet.

I inquired who the "great Wi-to" might be, and was told that he was the Chief Eunuch and Supreme Ruler of the palace of Prince Kai, and the most important personage, in short, in Kwang-Kai-Nong after the illustrious governor.

When we entered the banquet tent we found about twenty of the most important Kaitos assembled. A circle of low wicker tables stood in the center of the tent, with rugs spread before them. At one side, in the center of a small group, stood Mai Lo, arrayed in splendid costume, and beside him stood a slender, stooping individual with a smooth shaven face, whose magnificent robes caused even those of the governor to appear plain. Around his neck was a chain of superb rubies. When Mai Lo, in a pompous and somewhat haughty tone, presented us to Wi-to, the Chief Eunuch gave us a whimsical look and raised a pair of bright, intelligent eyes to meet our own. "The strangers are welcome," he said in a low, soft tone — the first speech I had heard from a Chinaman that was not harsh and rasping since my conversation with Prince Kai. His English was not so perfect as that of the Prince, but much smoother than Mai Lo's, and it gave me a sense of relief to find another English-speaking personage in this far-off country.

My notion of eunuchs had been that they were fierce creatures of powerful

build, usually Ethiopians, and greatly to be feared. I had heard tales of their absolute power in the palaces of the nobles, and that even the mighty Empress Tsi An had failed to curb the influence of her palace eunuchs. So it pleased me to find Wi-to more agreeable in manner and speech than the imperturbable governor, and I answered him as pleasantly as I could, saying:

"We have come on a sad mission, your Highness; to escort the remains of your master and our beloved friend to his old home. Had the Prince not requested us to come here, we should not have ventured to intrude upon you at this unhappy moment."

I did not know whether it was proper to address the Chief Eunuch as "your Highness" or not; but perhaps the compliment pleased him, for he smiled, then screwed up his face into a semblance of grief, then smiled again.

"We are deeply grieved and inconsolable," said he, cheerfully. "The illustrious and royal Prince Kai, whose memory I serve as faithfully as I did his person, has lived at Kai-Nong but little since he was a boy, and we had hoped that upon his return he would command the affairs of his province and become a mighty Viceroy of the Celestial and August Emperor. But he has passed on to a greater Empire."

Mai Lo now summoned us to the feast in a voice that I thought a trifle impatient; but the eunuch paid no attention. He was examining Archie as he had me, and asked him how he liked China.

"I don't want to be impolite," said the bluff Archie, "and perhaps this country is all right for the people who live here; but for my part I prefer America."

"That is natural," returned Wi, laughing; "and curiously enough, Prince Kai had the same idea, or rather he preferred any part of Europe to his old home. Did my duties permit, I too would travel."

Mai Lo called again, and the eunuch turned and nodded. Then he said to Joe:

"I hope the journey has not tired the friend of my Prince?"

"I'm as fresh as a daisy," said Joe. "But I can hardly call the Prince my friend, although I knew and liked him. Sam, here, was the especial friend of Prince Kai."

That was what the shrewd eunuch had wanted to find out. He turned good-naturedly toward the governor and asked his pardon for the delay, in English.

When we seated ourselves upon the rugs, I found that I was at the right hand of the Chief Eunuch and Joe at his left. Archie sat next me, and far away on the other side squatted Mai Lo, with dignified Kaitos on either side of him.

The meal was excellently prepared and served, though I had no idea of

what the dishes consisted. Wi-to plied me with questions concerning the death of the Prince and the details of his accident. I gave him the story as clearly as I could, and our conversation, held in low tones, did not interrupt the chatter in Chinese going on around us. I asked Wi-to where he learned to speak English, and he said that Prince Kai had taught him.

"It is an excellent language to converse in, and easier than our own," said he, "for it is much more simple. And when my Prince and I talked together no listeners could understand what he said. That is a great convenience in palace life, I assure you."

Two things of importance impressed themselves upon me during this interview. One was the fact that the Chief Eunuch was not afraid of Mai Lo, and was rather inclined to snub the governor, and the other that Wi-to seemed disposed to be friendly toward us.

Joe observed another fact that escaped me, and that was the evident disfavor with which all the nobles present regarded the eunuch. They treated him with great respect, but shunned his society, and Joe declared that we had forfeited the general regard by hobnobbing with him.

This was disconcerting, at first, but when I came to think it over I decided that it was best for us to be on a friendly footing with Wi-to, whatever the others might think of us. For he was in command of the palace, and the palace was to be the scene of our adventures. Mai Lo we knew to be opposed to us, and therefore a friend such as the Chief Eunuch was not to be despised.

After the feast, which lasted far into the night, we all went out and joined the throng which had congregated before the tent where the supposed body of Prince Kai lay in state. There an interesting ceremony was performed. First there was much wailing, grief being expressed in childish "boo-hoos" accompanied by the clang of cymbals and gongs. The uproar was deafening for a time, but gradually subsided. Then the people advanced one by one to the entrance of the tent and there burned papers cut into queer shapes. These papers represented the things Prince Kai might need while his spirit was wandering in the land of the Genii, and consisted of chairs, tables, chests, wearing apparel, jewelry, nuts, fruit and the like. Many sheets of gold and silver tinsel were likewise burned, the idea being to supply the Prince with wealth to purchase whatever he might need in the mysterious country to which he had gone.

The ceremony was interesting, as I said; but it grew tedious, and we were glad when it was over and we were permitted to retire to our tent for the night.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
THE ROYAL HOUSE OF KAI

Early next morning the procession was formed for the journey to Kai-Nong, the capital city of the province.

The casket of the Prince was loaded upon a magnificent elephant, which was caparisoned from head to foot with silken streamers and bunting of gorgeous colors. No one now rode beside the casket, but a guard of three score warriors, each with the emblem of the Sacred Ape embroidered upon the breast of his tunic, formed a cordon around the elephant and marched solemnly beside it.

Following the royal elephant came that of the governor, Mai Lo, and then five elephants bearing the most important nobles. After these came our own elephant, and behind it that of Wi-to, the Chief Eunuch. A troop of horsemen, good riders and martial looking fellows, followed in our wake, and in the rear were our former escort and the baggage animals.

Before the royal elephant and its guards was a motley crowd of natives beating gongs, clashing cymbals and wailing their nerve-racking "boo-hoos." As we proceeded, men left their fields and gardens and the wayside houses and joined these mourners, so that by noon there was a black mob ahead of us for a quarter of a mile, all wailing and making as much noise as they could — which I assure you was considerable.

I was glad to be in the rear and as far away from the mourners as possible, and it was with great relief that I saw before us, as we mounted a slight eminence, the white walls of a great city. Behind it towered the nearest peaks of the Himalayas, still many miles distant, and the scene was picturesque and impressive.

Another hour's riding brought us to the gates of the city, and here the mob halted and redoubled its clamor while we all passed through.

But now we found fresh crowds of the citizens awaiting us with tom-toms, cymbals and gongs, and these caught up the wails of those outside and made more noise than ever. The streets through which we passed were broad and smooth, and lined with substantial dwellings of stone. On either side of the streets, as we passed, were rows of prostrate forms scattering dust upon their heads as evidence of grief for the death of their prince. The bazaars were closed and the entire city of Kai-Nong seemed in mourning. We afterward learned that the capital contains three hundred thousand inhabitants, and is one of the most prosperous cities of northwestern China.

We had ridden fully a half-hour through the streets, our ears saluted every instant with the deafening and discordant notes of grief, when at last we

reached a vast garden surrounded by a high wall.

Here we halted, being confronted by a group of officials headed by the Fuh-yin, or mayor of the city. He evidently delivered an oration of much power, judging from its length and the groans from our party which interspersed it. At its conclusion Mai Lo made a brief reply from his seat on the elephant. At the end of this the Fuh-yin and his officials prostrated themselves while the royal elephant bore the casket through a huge ornamental gateway into the gardens.

And now, to my surprise, the elephant of the Chief Eunuch pressed forward and that officer took the position of honor in the procession — immediately following the casket. The guards, too, fell away and remained outside the walls, while only the elephant of Mai Lo and our own were permitted to pass the gateway.

But once inside the gardens we saw that a new escort had been provided for the royal remains. Sixty gorgeously appareled men, armed with scimitars and broad axes, formed a circle around the elephant that bore the casket and prepared to guard it. They were stalwart, erect fellows, of proud bearing but evil and ferocious countenances, and each wore a yellow turban coiled upon his head, with a golden clasp, in effigy of the Sacred Ape, fastening the folds just above the forehead.

These were the eunuchs, the palace guards, or servants and attendants of the harem. For now we were within the palace grounds, and Wi-to had assumed command of the procession.

The wailing and clamor died away to a faint murmur behind us as we wound in and out by intricate paths between stately trees and beside beds of brilliant flowers; but from afar at moments we still heard the sounds of grief, which were continued in the city until midnight.

The gardens were of astonishing extent and were artistically planned and carefully tended. The trees and shrubbery were thick in places. We emerged from their shade to find beautiful gardens of flowers surrounding us. Once in a while I caught glimpses of the buildings, which seemed very ornate and constructed mainly of teak, mahogany and dressed stone, all with tiled roofs, curved and serrated.

At last we deployed into a broad space at the foot of a green mound, upon which stood the palace and outbuildings, rambling structures so numerous and extensive that they presented almost the appearance of a village.

The main building was a splendid one. Polished stone formed the walls, and blue tiles the many gabled, turreted and curved intricacies of the roof. Carved teakwood covered the face of the stone in many places. At the great portico of the entrance the carving was elaborate almost beyond relief.

From the mound to the broad space where we had halted were terraces with many steps leading up to the palace, and at intervals on these steps were urns of graceful design, statues of wood and bronze and lamps of artistic ironwork.

We all dismounted here, and the mahouts led away the elephants. Some of the eunuchs bore the casket of the Prince up the broad steps of the terrace, while Wi-to bowed low, first to the Governor and then to us, and welcomed us to the Royal House of Kai.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE GOVERNOR SHOWS HIS TEETH

Followed by Nux and Bryonia, who never relaxed their vigilance over us, we three boys attended the governor and the Chief Eunuch to the entrance of the palace — the first foreigners to step foot in this retired stronghold of an ancient race.

At the carved portico Mai Lo turned and regarded us intently, and then began a long lingo in Chinese to which the eunuch listened carefully. The casket had disappeared through the entrance; the army of eunuchs had melted away and disappeared; we seemed quite alone with these two natives, one of whom we knew distrusted and hated us.

The result of the conversation was that we were shown into a broad, lofty hall just within the entrance and asked to seat ourselves until rooms could be prepared for our accommodation.

The Chief Eunuch, who made this request, looked at us shrewdly and with an expression more grave and reserved than he had yet shown us, and then turned and entered a side room in company with the governor.

We were much annoyed at this discourteous treatment. It was now the middle of the afternoon, and we had eaten nothing since breakfast, at daybreak. Wi-to certainly should have given us some food before leaving us to sit in the hall awaiting his convenience. The pretence of preparing rooms for us was absurd. With such an army of servants the palace should have been, and doubtless was, perfectly appointed. But here we were, seated upon stiff carved sofas in the great hall of the palace, and here we must remain until it suited Mai Lo and the eunuch to relieve us.

The magnificence of the palace aroused our admiration in spite of our annoyance. The floor was tiled and covered here and there with costly rugs; the woodwork everywhere was elaborately carved, and every nook and corner was crowded with rare ornaments and bric-a-brac, art treasures which would have filled the soul of a collector with envy. On one face of the wall was a display of ancient armor and weapons inlaid with gold and silver and set with precious gems. At either side of the entrance stood a huge bronze figure of the Sacred Ape, its grinning jaws filled with ivory teeth and its eyes set with immense rubies.

We had ample leisure to look around us, for no one came to our relief during the next hour. Also we had time to discuss our situation.

“What do you think it all means, boys?” I asked.

“Looks as if they had allowed us to come this far so that they might murder us,” answered Archie, frowning.

“Mai Lo must have said something to the Chief Eunuch that turned him against us,” remarked Joe.

“That’s my idea,” I said; “but if I get a chance I intend to put a spoke in Mai Lo’s wheel. We’ve got to win the good will of the eunuch or we’re done for. He seems to have unlimited power in the palace.”

“Do you think Mai Lo has said anything about the — the body?” whispered Archie, glancing suspiciously around. “Speak low, fellows; we don’t know how many ears may be listening behind that carving.”

“I’m quite sure Mai Lo won’t betray his own secret,” said I. “He has probably warned the eunuch not to trust us, as we might steal the whole palace.”

Joe had started to reply when a door opened and Mai Lo entered the hall and approached us.

“Why are we kept here waiting?” I demanded, trying to control my temper. “I won’t stand such treatment, Mai Lo, I assure you. We must be treated with proper respect or something unpleasant is going to happen.”

He looked at me steadily. “Brave words,” said he.

“But we have deeds to back them,” retorted Joe.

“You’ll force us to ruin if you’re not careful, Gov’nor,” added Archie, savagely.

“Yes,” said I, as if the idea had just occurred to me; “if you think to play us false, Mai Lo, it will cost you your life.”

He turned his glassy eyes from one to the other of us, and when I had finished he asked, quietly:

“Will you make a compact with me?”

“We have one already,” I replied, “deposited at the American consul’s office, at Shanghai.”

“But that is so far away,” he said significantly.

“What then?” I demanded.

“Will you promise not to talk about what has occurred?”

“What will you promise in return?”

“To send you safely back to Shanghai at once — tomorrow.”

“We intend to remain here some time.”

“You cannot remain here alive.”

“Indeed!” I exclaimed. “If that is your game I will expose you now — to the Chief Eunuch.”

“You will not see him again,” said Mai Lo, slowly, “unless you promise to return at once to Shanghai.”

“We are the guests of your Prince for a full year, if we care to remain. Dare you oppose your Prince’s orders?” I inquired.

“I am now the supreme power in this principality,’ he replied.

I turned to my comrades.” What do you say, boys?” I asked.

“Don’t give in,” said Archie.

“Let’s fight it out,” observed Joe, promptly.

“Then your lives shall be the forfeit,” announced Mai Lo, and before we could stop him he blew a shrill blast upon a little silver whistle that hung around his neck.

But I saw the action and motioned to Nux and Bry. Instantly my blacks had pounced upon the governor and drawn him behind us, holding him secure, while from a dozen nooks about the hall sprang eunuchs with drawn scimitars, who ran swiftly toward us.

As the foremost approached I stepped forward and cried out:

“Stop!”

They knew no English, but they comprehended the action, and paused irresolutely.

“Order them away, Mai Lo,” growled Archie. “Quick, or I’ll put a bullet through your head!”

“Hold on, Archie,” I called, still facing the eunuchs. Then I showed them the ring of Prince Kai and said sternly:

“Wi-to!”

They understood at a glance, and lowering their weapons, bowed humbly before me. Then one of them ran up the hall and disappeared, while we stood motionless in our places. Mai Lo was held fast by the blacks, Archie and Joe stood behind me with drawn revolvers and I faced the band of eunuchs.

Wi-to suddenly entered and came hastily toward us.

“What is the meaning of this?” he asked, taking in the scene at a glance.

“Mai Lo has been hasty and summoned your men by mistake,” I answered. “He wishes you to send them away.”

Wi looked at the captive governor, who stood motionless with Archie’s revolver pointed directly at his left ear, and then the eunuch smiled as if amused.

“Is this true, most noble Governor?” he inquired.

“It is true,” answered Mai Lo, calmly.

Then Wi laughed outright and clapped his hands. The men disappeared as if by magic.

At a signal from me the blacks released Mai Lo, who deliberately rearranged his clothing.

“I want a personal conversation with you, Wi-to,” I said; “but first of all we want something to eat, and proper entertainment.”

“Are you not the slaves of Mai Lo?” he asked.

“No; we are his masters.”

Again I showed the ring of Prince Kai, and the effect was to send the Chief Eunuch to his knees before me.

“We are the friends and representatives of your dead master,” I continued, “and are here to carry out his orders. Mai Lo knows this perfectly well, for Prince Kai ordered him to obey me as he would his royal master, and he himself witnessed with his signature the authority I bear. But he does not seem inclined to respect this order for some reason of his own; so I appeal to you to protect and assist us.”

The eunuch rose and bowed gravely.

“Your orders shall be obeyed,” he said.

“Not so,” interrupted a harsh voice from the governor. “The ring was stolen from me on the journey here.”

“I can disprove that statement,” said I, easily, “and I am surprised that Mai Lo, who is so soon to commit suicide, would dare to speak falsely. Give us some food, Wi-to, and then we can talk further of this matter. But I won’t have the governor present at the interview.”

The eunuch nodded and turned away.

“Follow me, if you please,” said he.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WI-TO PROVES FAITHFUL

After being profusely fed we were ready for an important interview with Wi-to; an interview that was to determine our standing in the Royal House of Kai.

The governor had left us in the hall and we had not seen him since; but as it was now to be open warfare between us we did not care what his future intentions might be.

The Chief Eunuch had forborne to question us while we ate, and appeared unusually thoughtful; but when we rose he ushered us into a little room on the main floor which seemed to be his private office. It was luxuriously furnished and we were given comfortable chairs.

Nux and Bryonia accompanied us here, as they did everywhere; but Wi-to seemed to disregard the precaution of having any of his own men present at the interview.

He offered us cigars, and when we refused he lighted one himself and leaned back in his chair. "What proof have you that the ring of Prince Kai was not stolen?" he asked.

For answer I took the Prince's letter of authority from my pocketbook and handed it to him to read.

He perused it carefully and with a grave countenance; then folded the paper, pressed it to his forehead and returned it to me.

"The Prince is my master, whether he is here in the flesh or wandering in the land of the Genii," said the eunuch. "He has given to you, Sam Steele, the power to command his servants, and I, as one of the most faithful of these, will obey you, even for the term of one year. But much has happened since my noble master died, and Mai Lo has told me strange things about you, which, if true, would annul even the authority of the great Prince Kai. Let us talk together; tell me all that I do not know."

"You have heard how the Prince was injured, and how we brought him to our ship and cared for him until he died," said I.

"Now, before Prince Kai died, there were certain matters he wished to attend to. At his palace in Kai-Nong were some possessions he wanted taken to England and America and given to friends in those countries, that they might cherish his memory. There were some papers in his yamen here that he wished to destroy, that no eyes might read them. There were some of his servants here that he wished to reward for faithful service. All this he asked me and my two friends to do for him, in his name and by his authority; and we promised Prince Kai Lun Pu it should be done."

The eunuch had listened carefully, and I had tried to be as direct in speech as I could, realizing that to make any blunder at this time would prove fatal to our plans.

“Why did not the Prince ask his governor to do all this? Has not Mai Lo been a faithful servant and followed his master to the ends of the earth?” asked Wi-to.

“The Prince was very wise,” I said.

“He was very wise,” repeated Wi-to, nodding.

“He had traveled far and learned many things.”

“It is true.”

“Also he had learned how to read men’s hearts, and he saw that the heart of Mai Lo had changed since he had mixed with foreign people, and become acquainted with foreign ways. Therefore the Prince no longer trusted Mai Lo.”

“Yet Mai Lo has been faithful and brought the body of his master many thousand li, that it may rest in peace in the halls of his ancestors,” remarked Wi.

“True,” I acknowledged.

“Had the governor wished to be faithless he could have remained in foreign lands and so preserved his life. By returning here he is forced, as soon as his affairs and those of his Prince are arranged, to kill himself — or be killed,” said the eunuch, thoughtfully.

“He has done all this,” I replied, “and Prince Kai, who distrusted him, expected him to act in this way. For the governor is very crafty and full of tricks. To remain abroad would make him a poor man. Mai Lo wants to be rich, and to pass his life in Europe, with many slaves and all the luxuries of the Western civilization. So Prince Kai said to me that the governor would come back to Kai-Nong, to get much treasure and with it flee from this empire to Europe.”

Wi-to seemed genuinely astonished. “Where could Mai Lo get such treasure?” he asked.

“His duty is to convert all the fortune of Prince Kai into cash and deposit it in the ancestral chih, or tombs.”

The eunuch laughed.

“Prince Kai has squandered all his fortune,” said he. “Outside of what his palace contains there is little or nothing to convert into cash.”

I own I was astonished at this statement, but I tried not to show it, and continued:

“Among other duties, Mai Lo is to seal up the ancestral chih, and destroy all traces of its existence. Listen now, Wi-to, for this is the important thing

that was in the mind of Prince Kai; he declared to me that Mai Lo would rob his ancestral halls of the great treasures deposited there during the past ages."

"Impossible!" gasped the eunuch, staring at me in amazement.

"Mai Lo is no Shintoist," I explained. "His travels have made him a renegade and taught him to despise the religion of his ancestors. He has no intention of committing suicide, according to the traditions of your people. Nor will he allow the vast treasures of the House of Kai to remain sealed up in the burial halls when he has the power to enrich himself with them. His power as governor of this province will enable him to make secret arrangements to fly to Shanghai or Hong-Kong, and from there to leave China forever and carry his stolen wealth with him."

The eunuch arose and paced the floor thoughtfully. He was much agitated at what I had said and was pondering my words carefully.

"You have no faith in Mai Lo, yourself," I suggested, watching him closely. "You know in your heart he is treacherous and false, just as the noble Prince knew it."

Suddenly he sat down and his brow cleared.

"You must be right," he said.

"That is why Prince Kai employed comparative strangers to do his bidding," I went on. "We had not known him long, but he believed he could trust us, and so he gave me his letter of authority and his ring, that we might receive the support of his faithful servants in the tasks we have undertaken."

"And you think I will side with you against the powerful governor?" asked the Chief Eunuch.

"I am sure you will; and the Prince was sure," I answered, confidently.

"But I can destroy you foreigners with a word, and sweep you from my path. Then I can make an alliance with Mai Lo and together we could rob the ancestral halls and escape to some other country to enjoy the wealth. Yes, yes! It is a pretty plan, and we could do it easily."

"But you will not," said Joe, while I stared aghast at the eunuch.

"Why not?" he asked, turning to the boy with a curious expression upon his face.

"In the first place," replied Joe, "you are a faithful and true servant, or Prince Kai, who knew men's hearts, would not have made you his Chief Eunuch. From what I have seen of your followers I believe you are the only gentleman of the whole lot."

"I also am a eunuch," said Wi. "I am of lowly birth, and as a child my parents sold me to the House of Kai to become a eunuch. My consent was not asked. Why should I be faithful to my masters?"

"It's your nature," asserted Joe. "I said you were a gentleman, and so you

are, as we Americans accept the word. With us a gentleman is he who behaves as a gentleman should, not a person highly born. But there is still another reason. A eunuch is of no use in the world outside of his own province. Here you have power. In Europe you would be despised and insulted. You don't know the big outside world, and you would be unhappy there, in spite of your wealth."

"You'd feel like a fish out of water," added Archie, nodding.

Wi-to laughed, and the laugh was not forced, but merry and spontaneous.

"Again you are right!" said he. "My Prince offered twice to take me away with him to see the outside world, and I refused — for the very reasons you have given. Now I will ask another question. Why should I not divide the treasure with Mai Lo and remain here to enjoy it? No one would know where my wealth came from."

"I cannot answer that,' said I, musingly;" if you are faithless enough to do such a thing."

"He is not faithless," persisted Joe.

"Then you are answered, Wi-to," I declared, laughing.

"I see I must answer my own question," said the eunuch. "This estate will become the property of the Celestial and August Emperor, because Prince Kai left no heir to inherit it. It may stand for many years unoccupied, and in that case I may lead a life of ease and be the real master here. If the Celestial and August Emperor should bestow this estate and palace upon some mandarin or high official, it is the custom to retain the services of the Chief Eunuch who has before ruled the household. So, in any event, I have no incentive to be faithless."

"Will you allow Mai Lo to carry out his plan to rob the ancestral halls?" inquired Archie.

"No. You are right in thinking that the governor and I are not friends, for he has tried to interfere with my rights, and that I will allow no man to do. Outside the palace walls Mai Lo commands the province of Kwang-Kai-Nong; within this enclosure my word is law. But he has one privilege within my domain which I cannot refuse him. By virtue of his office he is the sole protector of the chih, or ancestral halls of the House of Kai. He alone has the right to enter there, now that the noble Prince Kai has gone to the Genii. For myself, although I have guarded the entrance for many years, I have never seen the interior of the building, nor do I know the way to the vaults beneath it. But although Mai Lo may enter the halls he must not remove any of the treasure that belongs to those ancestors of the House of Kai that lie buried there. It will be my business to prevent that."

"Very good," said I. "And now, Wi-to, since you have seen the written

instructions of Prince Kai, how do you intend to treat us who are here to represent his interests?"

"You shall be honored guests in this palace," was the prompt reply.

"And will you protect us from the governor?" inquired Joe.

"While you are inside the palace enclosure you shall be safely guarded from Mai Lo and all other enemies. But remember my power does not extend beyond this fu."

With that he clapped his hands together and two eunuchs stepped forward from behind a screen, so silently that their appearance startled me. Speaking rapidly, Wi issued some orders to his men in Chinese, and then turned again to us.

"If the suite of rooms I have placed at your disposal is not satisfactory," said he, "you may have your choice of any the palace contains, excepting only the royal apartments. Your meals will be served in your own rooms at such hours as you direct, and whatever you may desire I shall be prompt to provide. This man," indicating the taller of the two eunuchs, "is instructed to devote himself to your service. His name is Tun; he is a Manchu and will be faithful. Tomorrow, if you desire, I will myself show you through the palace and the gardens."

"We thank you, Wi-to," said I.

And then the eunuchs led the way and we followed them back into the great hall, up the elaborate winding stairway and along several passages until we came to a richly carved door. Tun opened this and motioned us to enter.

So we went in, followed by Nux and Bryonia; but the eunuchs remained outside.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
THE SACRED APES OF KAI

I am not MUCH acquainted with palaces, but I venture to state that those of European countries are not more magnificent, even when inhabited by royalty, than that of this Manchu prince of the ancient line of Kai. It is a mistake to think that the Chinese are half civilized, or wholly uncivilized, as I myself had carelessly considered them until I visited their Empire. They boast a civilization older than any other existent nation; they were cultured, artistic and learned thousands of years before the Christian Era, and while the inventions and clever utilities of our modern Western civilization give us advantages in many ways over the Chinese, we cannot withhold our respect and admiration for the accomplishments of this ancient and substantial race.

Our suite was so luxurious as to astonish us.

It consisted of ten rooms, five being sleeping rooms furnished in carved teakwood, mahogany and rosewood. The bedsteads and other furniture were marvels of intricate carving, and statues, vases and ornaments were everywhere. The floors were strewn with costly rugs and the walls hung with priceless tapestries. We called it the "Kite Suite," because these tapestries bore many scenes in which kites were flying.

We judged from the parting speech of Wi-to that we were not expected to leave our apartments again that day, so we passed the evening in perfecting our plans of procedure and discussing ways to further our important undertaking. So far we had prospered in our adventure as well as we could possibly expect. Mai Lo had exhibited considerable foolishness and lack of foresight in his opposition to us, and we were learning to despise the mandarin's enmity. But the Chief Eunuch was more sagacious and discerning, and, as Prince Kai had warned us, he would have no hesitation in cutting us down if he discovered us robbing the ancestral halls of Kai. So we knew that we must plan shrewdly in order to deceive Wi-to, and that above all we must retain his confidence and good will.

We talked long over our plans, but found that we could not map out a definite program without knowing more of the palace and its surroundings. And much must be left to chance and circumstance.

Our meals were served in one of the rooms of our suite. The food provided was not such as we were accustomed to at home, but it was deliciously cooked and seasoned, and many of the dishes we learned to enjoy with relish. The meal of that evening will serve as a sample of the dinners we ate while in Prince Kai's palace:

First, there was tea — and last, there was tea. But the first tea was

followed by shark-fin soup, pigeon-egg stew, bacon fritters with egg batter, shredded duck, pickled watermelon seeds, fried mush of almond meal, chicken combs, stewed mushrooms, almond cream custard, spiced shellfish, bird's-nest pudding, olives and nuts, chicken soup, fresh fish boiled and then mashed after the bones had been removed, snow fungus, brains of yellow-fish, water lily seeds, some mysterious sweets, and queer cakes, and then tea. I ought to say that every course was also a rice course, because a bowl of rice was placed in front of each one of us and kept full by the attendants throughout the meal. Also we were served, between teas, a sickish sweet wine which was warm and sparkling, but which none of us could drink. The Chinese use their fingers a good deal in eating; and, instead of finger-bowls, the attendants pass us from time to time towels that had been dipped in hot water. The funny part of it was that our only implements were ivory chop-sticks, and we had much amusement in trying to use these, until our man Tun perceived our difficulties and brought us some Syrian spoons, inlaid with gold, which had probably been purchased by some Kai as curiosities. With these we made out very well.

The palace seemed to throng with eunuchs. There had been sixty in the procession, but those were not all the palace contained. When our meals were served there was a eunuch to wait upon each one of us, and a dozen more to carry in and remove the dishes. These men were invariably respectful and even humble, but they were an ill-looking crew, and we were never at ease in their presence.

As none of Wi's men seemed able to speak English, except Tun, and he very imperfectly, the Chief Eunuch himself came to us in the morning. He asked whether we would like to examine the palace and grounds. We accepted the invitation with alacrity.

Proceeding down the passage we turned a circular elbow where hung a splendid tapestry on which was represented the Earth Dragon, with its coils encircling the figure of a woman, who struggled vainly to escape. The horrible grinning teeth of the monster were close to her despairing face, and my heart beat fast as I recognized this tapestry as the one Prince Kai had told us concealed the secret door to his sleeping chamber.

Archie and Joe recognized it, too, and I feared their significant looks might attract the notice of Wi; but he had no knowledge of the secret himself and so proceeded calmly along the main passage.

Presently we came to an elaborately carved doorway, above which was an ivory fish with two horns upon its head. Before this doorway stood a sleepy-looking eunuch who saluted his chief as we passed by.

"This," said Wi, "is the entrance to the Suite of the Horned Fish, the royal

apartments. I am sorry I cannot allow you to see them, but entrance is prohibited except to those of the royal line of Kai. Opposite, however, is the Suite of the Pink Blossoms, and that is well worth your inspection." We entered many suites on this upper floor of the palace, and admired their splendor and magnificence. Then we descended the great stairway and inspected the state and family apartments, the royal dining hall, and many other rooms, all gorgeous beyond description. The wealth of bronzes, paintings, ornaments and tapestries was wonderful, and was doubtless the accumulation of centuries of cultured and wealthy princes of Kai.

We passed out at the rear of the palace. A stately flower-garden filled the space between the main building and the numerous outbuildings. All these were located upon the mound, and there were many handsome trees and curious shrubs to lend beauty and shade to the scene. The outbuildings were interesting and consisted of the storehouses, the artisan's home, the artist's house, the house of the weavers, the kitchens and the servants' quarters. Also there were several beautiful summer-houses and retreats, pagoda-shaped and very cool and inviting.

On the further slope of the mound we observed an odd-looking pagoda built of stone pillars supporting a yellow-tiled roof, above which floated many gay pennants. As we drew near we found the central part to consist of a circle of stout brass bars, within which were imprisoned a dozen or more gigantic apes. The beasts set up a series of sharp, barking cries as we aproached, and when we stood before the cage they sprang at the bars and shook them angrily, as if they longed to escape and tear us to pieces.

Never have I beheld such fierce and horrible beasts as these. Wi-to, who first made obeisance and then stood calmly looking at them, explained that they were the Sacred Apes of the House of Kai, and were tended with reverent care, having their own corps of servants to minister to them.

They were covered with short gray hairs and their limbs were remarkably powerful. Their eyes were bright and fierce, but gleamed with intelligence. Among them I noticed one enormous fellow who seemed to dominate the band. He did not attack the bars as did the others, but squatted in the center of the cage, with his head slightly bent forward and his grinning teeth wickedly displayed.

"This is the King Ape, Fo-Chu by name," said Wi, seeing my eyes fixed upon this dreadful creature. "He is very old — some say a hundred years — and his strength equals his age. Fo-Chu has nine executions to his credit in my own time; how many he has killed since he came here I cannot guess."

"Who were his victims?" I asked, with a shudder, as the cruel eyes of the King Ape chanced to meet mine.

“His attendants, usually. But there is a story of how Kai-Tu-Ghai, the grandfather of our late Prince, wearying of life because of dissensions in his harem, opened the door of this cage and shook hands with Fo-Chu. When they found Kai-Tu-Ghai he was nothing but shreds, for the King Ape had lapped up every drop of his blood.”

“What a horrible death!” I exclaimed.

“Of course this added to the importance of Fo-Chu,” continued Wi, with a slight smile, “for he was afterward held more sacred than before, containing, as he does, the soul of Kai-Tu-Ghai. That is why he is the King Ape and the most sacred of all the band, for in him still lives the spirit of an ancestor of the House of Kai, and it is believed that Fo-Chu will live to the end of the world and protect the fortunes of this royal house. When he kills an attendant we say that Kai-Tu-Ghai was angry, as it is his privilege to be, and what is left of the slave is buried with high honor.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN
THE PEARL OF KAI-NONG

We were glad to turn away from these disgusting and fearful creatures, and Archie asked our conductor:

"Is there a harem connected with the palace?"

"Of course," said Wi; "but you are not permitted to visit it."

"Had the late Prince many wives?" inquired Joe.

"He had none at all. In the harem lives his sister, a young girl but sixteen years of age. Her mother is long since dead, but she has nine aunts, now well advanced in years, to keep her company. They were the wives of Kai-Tien, the father of Prince Kai Lun Pu."

"And was the Prince fond of his sister?" I asked, remembering that he had never mentioned her.

"He scarcely knew her. She was a mere child when he went to England, and during his brief visits to Kai-Nong afterward he seldom entered the harem."

"Will she inherit none of his property?" asked Archie.

"She inherits nothing. But she is entitled to a home in the harem as long as she lives, and our Celestial and August Emperor will doubtless attend to her welfare. Nor-Ghai, as she is named, is quite beautiful, and she will be presented to the Most Serene Emperor as a candidate for his harem, in a few months."

This was almost as horrible as the story of the King Ape, and I was glad our approach to a beautiful building put an end to the conversation.

We had descended from the mound and passed through a grove of willow trees, finding before us the edifice I have referred to. It was very ornamental in design, and was built almost entirely of bamboo wands polished to a mirror-like surface. The workmanship was everywhere exquisite, and the carving so delicate and flowerlike that I was amazed. The building was not extensive, being perhaps thirty feet square, and on each of its four sides was a flight of steps leading up to a platform before an entrance.

"Oh," said I, "this must be the House of Ancestors."

"You are right," said a harsh voice beside me, and turning I beheld the expressionless, putty-like countenance of Mai Lo. He reminded me of "old Death's-Head" more forcibly than ever, and I was not at all pleased to have him intrude upon us.

"What are you doing here?" I demanded angrily.

"This is my domain," he replied, with a sweep of his arm. "I rule the Ancestral Halls as their especial guardian."

“You ought to be the Keeper of the Sacred Apes,” I retorted, with a sneer.

“That is my function also,” quietly answered Mai Lo.

Somewhat at a loss how to proceed I turned again to gaze at the Ancestral Halls which were to play so important a part in our adventures. A guard paced slowly up and down before each entrance; not one of the eunuchs, but a soldier in handsome costume and armed with a naked scimitar.

“Do you live in the palace grounds?” Joe asked the governor.

“My residence is there,” said Mai Lo, pointing to a large, substantial building some distance away. “Prince Kai desired me to live near to the Ancestral Halls. I have another house outside the walls, in the city.”

“Where is the body of Prince Kai?” suddenly demanded Archie.

“It already rests in the chih of his ancestors.”

“Then you will seal up the vaults at once and tear down this beautiful building?” I asked.

“Very soon. When the business of the estate is settled,” replied Mai Lo.

“And then?” I continued.

The governor did not reply, but I saw a smile curl the thin lips of the Chief Eunuch.

“Then,” said Archie, carelessly, “Mai Lo will put a dagger into his heart and join his prince in the Land of the Genii, as a faithful servant should.”

Mai Lo turned his glassy eyes upon the speaker, but said nothing. Evidently it was not pleasant to be reminded of such a duty, and Archie did not gain in popularity with the noble governor by his speech. But we were growing to despise Mai Lo, and cared little what he thought behind the impassive mask of his parchment-like features.

“I should like to see the inside of that building,” remarked Joe.

“It is forbidden,” was the abrupt reply. “No one but Prince Kai and I has been inside it during this generation.”

“Then how do we know that the body of Prince Kai rests in the tombs of his ancestors?” I asked, maliciously, for I liked to annoy the noble governor.

“It is not required of you to know that, or any other business of this province,” returned Mai Lo. “I alone am responsible, and none dares interfere with my duties. You are here on sufferance, young men; the sufferance of Wi-to, who is making a mistake in harboring you. If you abuse the hospitality extended you, I shall hold Wi-to responsible.”

“Hardly that, most wise and noble Governor,” returned Wi-to, quietly. “Your name is signed to the order given these young men by Prince Kai himself.”

“I did not read the paper.”

“You were not required to read it,” retorted the eunuch, smiling. “Your

signature merely vouches for the genuineness of the illustrious Prince's order. I but obey that order. Those responsible are, first of all, the Royal Prince, himself; and in his absence, Mai Lo, his legal representative."

It was now the turn of Wi-to to receive the glassy stare of the governor; but as Mai Lo made no reply in words we considered that the eunuch had scored a point.

We now saluted the governor and retired to the mound of the palace, where he did not attempt to follow us.

"It is unfortunate," said Wi-to, thoughtfully, "that there are two rulers here with powers so intermingled that there is likely to be friction between them. It is the fault of our beloved Prince, who intrusted the hereditary governor of his province with more honors than are customary. But, alas! Mai Lo will soon sleep with his ancestors, and his son Mai Tchin will rule in his place."

"So the governor has a family," I remarked.

"Yes. Mai Tchin is better than his father, but weak and undecided in character. Also he has a daughter, Mai Mou, who is called the Pearl of Kai Nong."

"Is she so beautiful?" asked Archie.

"So it is reported. My eyes have never been dazzled by the vision of her presence," said the eunuch, gravely.

"I thought Chinese women were not confined so closely to the harems," I remarked.

"They are not," was the reply. "Before they are married the women of the nobles have much freedom, and wander at will in the gardens of their home. Also the married women are allowed much freedom, and are permitted to visit one another in their sedan chairs."

We all laughed at this, and explained to Wi-to that this did not seem any great privilege when compared to those of our American girls. But the idea of allowing girls to meet and converse with strangers did not appeal to the eunuch, who thought that Americans must take very little interest in their female chattels to guard them so carelessly.

When we got back to the palace Wi took us to his own room and said:

"You are permitted the freedom of the entire palace, except the royal apartments, and of the palace grounds except the Halls of Ancestors. Wander where you will, and enjoy yourselves. When you are ready to tell me the commands of our illustrious Prince, which you came here to execute, I will assist you to carry them out. But there is no need to hurry; you have a year, by command of Prince Kai Lun Pu, and I can extend further courtesy to my master's guests if I so desire."

Now, we had been waiting for an opportunity to speak of the matters we

were here to attend to, so I said to Wi:

"Let us tell you now of the duties we are required to perform. We wish to be as frank and open with you as possible, to show we are grateful for your trust in us and your faithfulness to your master."

He bowed low and waited for me to continue. "You must know that your Prince made many warm friends in Europe and America, for every one loved him who knew him. He was entertained and shown many favors that he greatly appreciated. On his death-bed Kai Lun Pu remembered those friends, and wished to return the favors he had received. So he asked me and my two comrades here, to travel to his city of Kai-Nong and go to his palace here, and there select such ornaments, ivories and bronzes as might suit the pleasure of those destined to receive them.

These things we were to choose from among the contents of this palace, and he charged us to carefully pack them ourselves in cases which you, Wi-to, would provide for that purpose. Then we are to carry them back to our own country and distribute the gifts to those for whom they are intended. I have a list of the names in my possession."

I paused here, and again the eunuch bowed gravely.

"Are you to take many of the treasures and precious relics from the palace?" he asked.

"No. We are not to take anything that is of great value. But among the thousands of articles gathered here we will select modest gifts for the friends of the Prince, and you will yourself see what we have selected and advise us. If there is anything you prefer to have remain here, we will respect your wishes. The idea is not to rob the palace of its treasures; but the Prince gave us power to select whatever we pleased, so it is our desire to consult you and your pleasure in making our choice."

He seemed pleased by this consideration on our part, and said:

"We cannot quarrel over that matter, since you are so courteous. Are there any other commands?"

"Yes. We are to get certain books that are in the rooms which were occupied by the Prince, and take them with us, to be given to His Majesty, the King of England."

I thought it was as well to add to our importance by naming this important ruler as a friend of the Prince, and one who was to figure in this gift distribution. I did not know positively that the Prince had any books in the palace, but judged that a young man educated at the English universities would be more than likely to own something of a library. Moreover, books were heavy, and they would remove any suspicion caused by the weight of the cases we wanted to carry away.

Fortunately I had guessed correctly. The eunuch bowed gravely once more, but said:

"This is more difficult to carry out than the first order, for it is forbidden to allow any one to enter the royal apartments but the attendants."

"We can arrange that by your bringing the books yourself to another room, where we can choose what we wish," said Joe.

The eunuch brightened.

"Of course," said he, "that will make the order quite easy to fulfil."

"There is a third order," I continued, "that will require more time and perhaps be more difficult. The Prince wished me to look over all the documents and papers contained in his private desk and destroy certain ones I am to find among them. I suppose the desk is also in the royal apartments; but that can likewise be brought to our rooms, where I may make the examination at my leisure."

After saying this I paused to see what effect it might have. I did not know that the Prince had either a desk or papers; but again I had guessed aright.

"Have you the key to the great cabinet?" inquired Wi-to, thoughtfully.

"Prince Kai said you would furnish the key."

This was wholly a chance shot; but it hit the mark beautifully.

"Very well," was the reply. Then he continued: "Our illustrious and sublime Prince has indeed given you important duties to fulfil, but he was right in saying that Wi-to would assist you to do his will."

"He was sure of your loyalty," said I.

For a time the eunuch sat thinking upon the information I had given him. Then, suddenly raising his eyes, he inquired:

"What reward are you to have for taking this long journey, and all the trouble and expense of distributing the Prince's gifts to his friends?"

For an instant I hesitated how to reply to this question, and I saw the anxious looks on the faces of Archie and Joe, which warned me of the importance of my reply. So I marshaled my wits and smiled at Wi-to to gain time.

CHAPTER TWENTY

"THREE LITTLE MAIDS FROM SCHOOL"

THE CHIEF EUNUCH eyed me expectantly. He was a clever fellow in his way, and had more than ordinary intelligence; but all his life had been passed in this retired place and he judged people and things from his own limited point of view. He could understand how his master might wish to reward friends with costly gifts, because he had lived surrounded by rare and precious objects of art. Likewise he supposed books precious, because there were so few in the palace, and he had seen so much intrigue in his life that it was but natural that the Prince wished to destroy certain papers left in his desk before a successor obtained possession of them. But he could not understand our undertaking the commission to do these things without reward. So when I answered his question, I said:

"You must not suppose we are mercenary, or that we journeyed to Kai-Nong solely for a reward; but Prince Kai did tell us we might each select a jewel or ornament for ourselves while we were here."

"That is just," said the eunuch.

"But we will confess that the chief reason for favoring your Prince, aside from our friendship for him, was a love of adventure. Mai Lo paid our expenses here, and will pay to send us back if we demand it. We have his contract. But if he is not able to do that, we have funds of our own in Shanghai which we can draw upon. For, mark you, Wi-to, we are important people in our own country."

"I am sure of that," was the reply. "And if you have a contract with Mai Lo, he must pay to send you back to Shanghai."

"If he is alive. But he ought to commit suicide before long."

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed the eunuch. "You intend to compel him to do this?"

"We intend to see that he doesn't rob the Ancestral Halls and run away with the treasure. For that reason we may remain your guests longer than would be required to execute the orders of Prince Kai, who greatly feared that Mai Lo would rob his ancestors."

"You shall remain as long as it pleases you," returned Wi-to, with sparkling eyes. "And you may call upon me and all my followers to assist you, in case the renegade governor tries to escape you."

"Thanks; that was just what we expected," I exclaimed.

Then, feeling well satisfied with our interview and our tour of inspection, we left the Chief Eunuch and returned to our own rooms.

"Do you think it wise to harp on the subject of Mai Lo's robbing the

Ancestral Halls?" asked Joe, when we were where we could not be overheard.

"Why isn't it wise?" I asked.

"Why, the Chief Eunuch may get suspicious that something is up."

"I want him to get suspicious of Mai Lo, and watch that old fox so carefully that he won't get a chance to steal anything until we get through. Besides, it will relieve us of any suspicions. Wi thinks it's impossible for us to get to the burial vaults, because our enemy the governor guards all entrances. And he's crafty enough to believe that we wouldn't talk about robbing the Ancestral Halls if we had any idea of doing it ourselves."

"Sam's right," declared Archie.

"I think so, too," acknowledged Joe. "But I began to fear we were overdoing the thing. Our talk about the orders of Prince Kai worked all right, didn't it?"

"Why, it was all very reasonable to the eunuch," I said, "and we will have no trouble in getting the packing cases to our rooms, where we can replace the ornaments and books with the treasure."

"It looks too easy altogether," said Archie, doubtfully.

"You must remember Prince Kai planned it all, and he knew the conditions here perfectly," answered Joe. "I imagine our greatest difficulty will be in getting back to Shanghai. If the governor acts ugly and refuses us an escort we won't get fifty miles without being murdered."

"Don't let's worry about that," I said, sharply, for the thought had already worried me a good deal. "That's another bridge that needn't be crossed till we come to it."

We were naturally eager to explore the Ancestral Halls and see what the treasure consisted of which had been so freely given us by Prince Kai — if we could take it. It might be much or little, but judging from the wealth and magnificence of the palace the treasure buried in the vaults was likely to be ample to satisfy us.

After all, I think it was the adventure that charmed us, more than the longing for gain. We had been set a difficult task, and boylike we determined to accomplish it.

Deciding it would not be wise to make any important move for the first few days, we passed the time wandering about the palace or in the grounds. We found that Wi-to trusted us fully now, and we were allowed to do whatever we pleased without being annoyed by the watchful attendance of the eunuchs.

Wi asked me if we wanted a guard at the door of our chamber, and I promptly answered No. There was no one in the palace except ourselves and

the eunuchs, and it was not necessary for them to guard us against themselves. So we were left free to come and go as we pleased; but when we wandered as far as the outer walls of the palace enclosure we found eunuchs stationed at every gateway. We did not know whether we would be allowed to pass these guards or not, but we made no attempt to do so, preferring not to trust ourselves to the mercies of our enemy the governor.

Once in awhile we encountered Mai Lo in our walks, but he kept near to the Ancestral Halls and paid no attention to us. He was supposed to be settling up the estate of his dead master, but according to our observations he seemed chiefly occupied in pacing the paths, in deep thought. However, we let him alone and kept out of his way.

It was while we were exploring an end of the garden where a thicket of fruit trees grew that we met our first real adventure.

The trees formed a regular jungle; but there seemed a well worn path between them, so we followed on, winding this way and that, until the sound of voices and laughter arrested our attention. The voices were sweet and fresh and the laughter ringing and merry.

While we paused to listen, hesitating whether to retreat or advance, a sentence in English caught our ears, and we looked at one another in surprise. Broken English it was, very quaintly and prettily uttered, and in a girl's voice; but after hearing it none of us cared to run away.

"Seen them I have — a peep — a view only — but they were young and handsome, these foreign devils," said the voice.

A peal of laughter greeted the remark, and the chatter went on in lower tones.

"We must be near the harem," whispered Archie.

"Nonsense," cautiously replied Joe. "The harem's way back by the palace. That's a sort of summer-house ahead of us."

It was merely a circle of willows, with their branches mingling and interlacing to form a roof.

"If they've had a peep at us, whoever they are, I mean to have a peep at them," said I; and without waiting for a reply I softly tip-toed toward the willows.

The others followed, but I did not heed them. Really I was hungry for the sight of a girl, merely to relieve the monotony of our intercourse with the harsh-featured eunuchs; but more than all I was curious.

Halting at the circle of trees I found a place where I could see the interior between the trunks, and then I paused spell-bound.

A table of woven reeds was in the center of the leafy bower, and around it were low chairs and settles of the same material. Seated at the table were

three young and pretty Chinese girls — and if you think a Chinese girl cannot be pretty you should have seen this group as I saw it.

One maid was leaning on her dainty elbows over the table, on which lay an open book. She was not reading it, but looking earnestly at another maid half reclining upon a bench opposite. Her eyes were dark and smiling, her teeth white as pearls, her cheeks like rose leaves and her hair had a wonderful arrangement of bows and knitting-needles — or some such things — stuck this way and that to hold it all together.

The girl reclining was even prettier, and wore a wonderful pink gown, all embroidery and fluffy silk trimmings. I may not be describing all this properly, but I am doing my best to tell you what I saw.

There was a third girl sitting upon a stool and doing a bit of embroidery — at least she had a needle and some work in her hands; but she was not paying much attention to the work, for when I got to my peep-hole it was this maid — a tiny, dainty, dimpled bit of a roguish-looking thing — who was engaged in talking.

"I'll do it, Mai Mou — even if they beat me, or kill me!" she was saying, impetuously; "I'll have a glance myself, this very evening, from my window, and see what they are like."

"But why need you care, Nor Ghai?" asked the reclining beauty, in a soft, subdued voice. "What if Ko-Tua has seen these foreign devils, and praises their beauty — what to you is it all?"

"To me!" returned the impetuous one; "they knew my brother, who has gone to join the Genii. I loved well our Lun Pu, who never knew me or cared for me. Perhaps the fearful, handsome strangers will tell me of him."

I knew who they were now — at least, two of them. Nor Ghai was the little sister of the Prince — she was the girl with the embroidery. Mai Mou was the daughter of our enemy the governor; she was well named the Pearl of Kai-Nong. As for the third, the beauty with the book, who had been called Ko-Tua and who claimed to have had a peep at us, I had no idea where she belonged.

But what I had overheard decided me upon a bold step. It would have been bold even in America; here in China it was actually audacious.

I saw the opening in the willows that formed the entrance to this leafy pavilion, and crept toward it, motioning the boys to follow. When near enough I boldly stepped out, walked into the pavilion and then paused as if astonished at what I had discovered there. Archie and Joe were with me, and we were greeted by a panicky chorus of muffled screams. Lucky it was they were muffled, or the cries might have brought the eunuchs upon us. Perhaps the frightened girls remembered this and screamed just loud enough to show

they were properly scared.

“Pardon us, ladies, for intruding,” I said, removing my cap and making a low bow. “We are the foreign devils, and we’re glad to make your acquaintance.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AN UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW

REALLY, we had created a sensation in the summerhouse. The three beauties were huddled together in a bunch as far away as the circling willows would permit, and with clasped hands and wide open eyes they were staring at us intently.

"Permit us to introduce ourselves," said Joe, in his most polite manner. "I am Joseph Herring, of America."

"And I am Archie Ackley, of the same grand old country."

"I am Sam Steele, at your service, ladies. Won't you sit down?" I continued. "Now that we are here let us tell you all about Prince Kai Lun Pu, and how he sent us to this place."

"Go away!" said Mai Mou, in low tense tones.

"Oh, no, we can't do that," said Joe.

"But you must," persisted the Pearl.

"Why so?" asked Archie, calmly seating himself at the table.

"You will be sliced if you are found here," announced Nor Ghai, with a dimpled smile, half frightened, half amused.

"Sliced! What does that mean, little friend?" I asked.

"You are bound to the plank and the axe begins at your feet and slices you thin until you are dead — and long afterward."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Archie, contemptuously. "We're not afraid."

"If you care not to consider yourselves, then consider us," begged the fair Ko-Tua. "If you are found here we shall be beaten with bamboos upon the soles of our feet and cast into dungeons without food."

"Don't worry," I said, assuringly. "I will not allow the eunuchs to harm you."

"How can you prevent it?" asked Mai Mou, curiously.

"This is our authority," I replied, exhibiting the Prince's ruby ring.

"Oh — h!" sighed Nor Ghai, gliding swiftly toward me. Then she knelt and touched the ring with her rose-bud lips, saying:

"It is his, Mai Mou! It is my brother's signet, Ko-Tua! We need fear nothing, I am sure."

"Then sit down and let's talk it over," I said, motioning toward the chairs.

Very timidly they approached, like frightened doves about to fly at the least alarm, and then they plumped down upon a bench all together, with their arms twined around each other for mutual encouragement.

"How does it happen you speak English?" I inquired, pretending not to notice their fears.

“One of my father’s wives lived at Hong-Kong before he brought her here, and she taught us,” replied Nor Ghai, simply. “Do you think we the English speak with perfection?”

“Nothing could be more perfect,” laughed Archie.

“Ah — h!” they murmured, looking at each other delightedly.

“We the English talk much with ourselves,” declared Ko-Tua, casting her eyes down modestly to avoid Joe’s stare. “We can faster talk in English than in our own language.”

“That’s a great blessing,” said Archie; “you must have a lot to say to each other.”

“And we study all the time, velly hard and good,” added Mai Mou, looking earnestly at Archie for approval.

“I’m sure you are very wise and learned,” said he.

“Now,” broke in Nor Ghai, wiggling expectantly in her seat, “tell me of Lun Pu — all of Lun Pu — and how he came to join his ancestors, and how you foreign dev — you, you — ”

“That’s right. We’re foreign devils.”

“How you came to Kai-Nong?”

“Let me see,” I rejoined; “you are the Prince’s sister, I believe; Nor Ghai by name.”

“How did you know?” she exclaimed, clasping her hands with a little gesture of pleasure.

“And this must be Mai Mou, the governor’s daughter, called by all the world the Pearl of Kai-Nong,” added Archie.

“How strange,” she murmured. “Do you know everything?”

“Not quite,” laughed Joe. “For instance, we do not know who Ko-Tua is. Will she tell us?”

Now Ko-Tua was not the least charming of the little maids by any means. Her features were not quite so regular as those of Mai Mou, nor so merry and winning as those of Nor Ghai; but she was sweet and dainty as a spring floweret and her eyes had a pleading and wistful look that was hard to resist. So we were all greatly astonished when Mai Mou answered Joe’s question by saying:

“Ko-Tua is my little mother; she is my father’s new wife.”

“What!” I exclaimed. “Has the old governor been marrying since he returned?”

“No — no!” answered Ko-Tua, smiling and blushing. “I was married to the noble Mai Lo six years ago.”

“Impossible! How old are you now?”

She looked inquiringly at Mai Mou, who answered:

“Fifteen summers has Mai Mou looked upon.”

“And you were married at nine!”

“That must be it,” she nodded, counting upon her slender fingers. “Ten — Teven — tlelve — thirt’ — fourt — fliftleen!”

“It’s preposterous!” cried Joe, indignantly. “The old rascal ought to be sliced for daring to marry a child.”

“What is wrong?” asked Mai Mou, wonder-ingly. “Is not my little mother beautiful? Is she not nice? Is not my father’s harem well appointed and comforting?”

“Are you happy, Ko-Tua?” asked Joe, earnestly.

“Oh, yes, foreign one. Only the birds are happier.”

“Then we won’t slice Mai Lo,” I announced, airily.

I picked up the book that lay open upon the table and found it an English translation of Plutarch.

“Do you like this?” I asked.

“Oh, yes!” they cried. And Ko-Tua added: “We are entertain much by its stories.”

It seemed pretty heavy reading for young girls.

“We have the Shakespeare and we have the verse songs of Blylon,” announced Nor Ghai, gleefully. “My brother, Lun Pu, gave them to my father’s wife who came from Hong Kong. But now you may tell us, foreign ones, since you are with us so unlawfully, about my brother’s accident.”

So we began the story, trying between us to tell it in such a way as to remove all horror from the tragic incidents. But it seemed they loved to dwell mostly upon those very details, having the same love for slaughter and bloodshed that I have observed in the natures of some of our own children. Even Nor Ghai had known the Prince so slightly that he was a mere personage to her, and his untimely end was to these fair and innocent girls but a romance that was delightful to listen to.

With the telling of the story and answering the numerous questions showered upon us, the hours passed rapidly, until finally Ko-Tua sprang up and declared it was time for them to go, or Mai Lo’s eunuchs would be looking for her. “Will you come here again tomorrow?” I asked Nor Ghai, taking her little hand in mine — a liberty she did not resent.

She turned to the others.

“Shall we come here tomorrow?” she inquired.

Mai Mou looked at her “little mother.”

“Let us come,” said Ko-Tua, after a little hesitation. “We shall then be able to learn more of the English.”

Nor Ghai laughed at that and said, with a pretty courtesy:

“We shall come.”

Then they glided from the pavilion with quick little steps that were not ungraceful, and we stood silently in our places until all sounds of their departure had ceased.

We were much elated by this meeting, and had no thought of the danger we might incur by arranging for a future interview with the charming orientals. You must not think we had fallen in love with these Chinese beauties, for that was not the case. I don’t say that I shall never fall in love; but when I do it will be with an American girl, and it won’t matter much whether she is beautiful or not, so long as I love her.

But I think every well regulated young fellow is fond of chatting with nice girls, and in this heathen country we were so beset with dangers and had so little companionship outside of our circle of three, that it was a pleasant change to meet these pretty maids and converse with them.

“It’s wrong, you know,” remarked Archie, as we wandered slowly back to the palace. “That is, from the standard of Chinese etiquette. We may really get ‘sliced’ if we keep up the meetings, and even if we escape that, the girls will be terribly punished if they’re caught.”

“That’s true,” said Joe. “Do you think the ring would save us in this case, Sam?”

“I think it would with Wi, but we’ve got to figure on the old governor finding out that we’re associating with his wife and daughter. I’m convinced that would make him furious.”

“Then let’s go ahead,” said Archie, grinning with delight. “It will do me good to worry old Mai Lo into fits.”

“Oh, if he finds it out, he’ll be sure to resort to slicing,” said Joe, “if he can get his hands on us.”

“Never mind,” said I. “The girls come here to visit Nor Ghai, and that’s how we happened to meet them. It’s different from our intruding into the governor’s harem, or even into the harem of the palace. If Mai Lo doesn’t want his wife and daughter to meet strangers he should keep them safe at home.”

“The chances are he doesn’t know they are in the habit of visiting Nor Ghai,” observed Archie. “Anyhow, I’m going to have all the fun I can, in spite of old Death’s-Head.”

That expressed our sentiments exactly. We were foolish, I admit; but boys are apt to be foolish at times, and some great writer — I don’t remember his name — has said that a woman is at the bottom of every misfortune.

Here were three of them, and they looked harmless enough. So we voluntarily thrust our heads into the trap.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE SECRET PASSAGE

When we met the girls in the secluded pavilion the next afternoon, we found that Nor Ghai had brought the Shakespeare and Byron, and she begged us to explain certain passages in them that had puzzled the fair students of English. This we did, and before we parted that day a friendly footing had been established between us that was very pleasant indeed. Of course another interview was arranged for, as all of us had become reassured by our success in escaping observation, and if we still had any qualms of fear we did not allow them to prevent future meetings.

But the girls were more alive to the conditions surrounding them than we were, and their fertile brains arranged a series of signals to let us know whether it was safe to enter the pavilion or not, since at any time one of the eunuchs or older members of the harem might see fit to accompany them. Also they timed their stay by our watches, so as to leave before there was a chance of their being sought for.

All this savored of intrigue, but our meetings were harmless enough. I don't say that little Nor Ghai was averse to a bit of flirtation, but none of us encouraged her because we had no thought of flirting with our new friends. We talked in boyish fashion and treated them exactly as if we were brothers and sisters.

Meantime the days flew swiftly by, and still Mai Lo paced the gravel paths before the Ancestral Halls of Kai, and we hesitated to begin our appointed task. But finally one evening, while talking over our plans and chances of success, Joe proposed that we should explore the secret passage and accustom ourselves to the way to the underground vaults; so we promptly decided upon the adventure.

At about ten o'clock, the usual time, we dismissed our eunuch, Tun, who always remained in waiting until we retired for the night, and then, instead of going to bed, we put out our lights and sat quietly in the darkness until after midnight.

Every time we had passed by the bend in the hall we had noticed the tapestry of the dragon, but never had we ventured to disturb it to see what was behind the hangings. We dared not show a light in this passage because just around the bend was the guard of the royal apartments, eternally pacing up and down to prevent anyone from penetrating to the sacred precincts.

We had, unfortunately, no candles; but I had unhooked a small oil lamp from a bracket in one of our rooms, and matches were plentiful. When I softly opened our door to listen, there was not a sound to be heard throughout

the palace except the steady footfalls of the distant guard; so, being in our stocking-feet, we tip-toed along the corridor, feeling our way in the darkness by keeping one hand on the wall, until we reached the bend in the passage.

We could not see the dragon tapestry, but knowing its exact location I crept beneath the heavy drapery, followed closely by Archie and Joe, and then began to feel for the bronze knob. Across the face of the wall in every direction we fumbled, and I had almost begun to despair of finding it without a light when Joe grasped my shoulder and guided my hand to a tiny projection far to the left.

Yes; it was a knob, all right. I grasped it and pulled it toward me, and at once we heard a faint swish, and a breath of colder air reached us. I felt along the wall, and found an opening, through which I passed, drawing the others with me. Another heavy tapestry was on this side of the wall, and we crept beneath its folds on hands and knees.

"Do you think it's safe to scratch a match?" I whispered.

"It's got to be done, safe or unsafe," replied Joe, and in a moment a faint light flared up, and Joe shaded it with his hands while I cast a hurried glance at the tapestry.

"No light can shine through that, I'm sure," said I. "Here, Joe; light the lamp." I held it while he touched the match to the wick, and then we stood up and gazed furiously around us.

We found ourselves in a lofty sleeping chamber that was beautifully furnished. The carved mahogany bedstead with its pagoda-like canopy towered fully fifteen feet in height, and its curtains were cloth-of-gold. Around the frieze, just above the heavy tapestry hangings, was a row of embossed golden fishes with ivory horns, set in a background of azure blue. Near to where we stood, at the left of the secret panel, a number of bronze tablets were attached to the wall, their faces engraved with Chinese characters. I supposed these to be the tablets of ancestors, which every house contains in its inmost sanctum. Before the tablets was a sort of altar, containing a vase for burning incense and prayers. A broad archway, hung with stiff draperies, formed a communication with the next room of the suite, and just beyond it stood a great carved cabinet with numerous drawers and recesses and a writing shelf in the center. This I thought must be the Prince's "desk" which I had asked the Chief Eunuch to remove to my room, without realizing its size. That he had promised to do so filled me with wonder, for I doubted if it could be carried through the archway.

Passing around the huge bedstead and holding the lamp before us, we peered into the further corner of the room and with one accord shrank back in sudden fear. For before us stood a gigantic form in glittering armor, with a

face-mask so terrible in expression that it might well cause a sinking of the heart. And behind the mask glittered two cruel, piercing eyes, while the right arm swung a scimitar as if about to attack the beholder and hack him asunder.

"Never mind," muttered Joe, with a low laugh. "It isn't alive, although it looks it."

"It's the statue we were searching for," said I.

"No wonder it used to scare the Prince," remarked Archie. "Ugh! I shouldn't want to own that fellow for an ancestor."

"This was the first Kai," I rejoined. "They must have been giants in those days, if he's a sample warrior."

Then I leaned down and tried to press outward the left foot of the statue, which stood flat upon the floor without any pedestal. It resisted and I knelt down and tried again, pushing with all my strength and using the other foot as a purchase. The foot gave a little — not more than half an inch — and I heard a sharp click and a grating sound behind the tapestries.

"All right," said Joe, pushing aside the drapery while Archie held the lamp. "The panel is open."

The opening disclosed was about five feet high and not more than eighteen inches wide, but it was sufficient to allow us to pass through with ease. A secret passage, narrow and low, had been built in the great side-wall of the palace, and a few paces from the panel a flight of steps, made of stone, led downward. These continued to descend until we had passed below the foundations of the building, when we entered a tunnelled passage slanting straight into the earth. The walls were protected with stone and cement, but there was a damp, musty smell in the passage; and, as we advanced, numerous vermin, such as rats, lizards and fat spiders, scampered away from the path to hide in the little nooks between the stones.

Archie, who went first, carrying the lamp, growled continually at these pests, but I felt they could not be dangerous or the Prince would have warned us against them.

We traveled what seemed a very long distance to us, under the circumstances; but I now believe the passage was a bee-line to the burial vaults from the palace, and of course the vaults were located some distance from the building that appeared above ground. But my sense of direction was so confused that I would then, and even afterward, have been unable to locate the vaults from the palace grounds.

Finally we reached a steel door which was unlocked and opened easily. Beyond this hung a tapestry, and pushing that aside we came to an alcove, arched high above us and having a grating of bronze or similar metal at the

further side.

In the center of the alcove lay a superb sarcophagus or burial casket, set across two slabs of marble. This was of wrought bronze and bore upon the cover a mask with a surprising resemblance to the statue of the first Kai in the Prince's bedroom.

We did not pause to examine it long, however, for all about the coffin stood carven stands and taborets weighted with curious ornaments in solid gold and silver, while upon a low table were several suits of splendid armor, inlaid with gold and set with precious stones that glistened brightly under the lamplight. Nor was this all. Ornaments of green and yellow jade were scattered about, and at the foot of the coffin stood a semi-circle of big jars of bronze.

I thrust my hand into one of these jars and drew it out filled with beautiful emeralds.

"We don't need to go any farther, boys!" I exclaimed with a gasp. "Here are riches enough, in this one niche, to satisfy a dozen fortune hunters."

Archie examined another vase and found rubies and pearls in it. The third was quite empty, and so was the fourth, but the fifth and last one contained many jade rings, bracelets and necklaces, with which were mingled several large sapphires.

"Yes," said Archie, sighing; "here's more treasure than the priests of Luxor buried in the desert. But let's continue our explorations. This can't be all of the ancestral chih, for only one ancestor is buried here."

"He must have been very rich in his lifetime, if this was but half of his fortune," remarked Joe. "I wonder if he got it all honestly?"

"Probably not," I replied. "This fellow is an ancient, and perhaps lived in an age of robbing and pillaging. But come on, fellows; let's see if we can pass those gratings."

Only a catch, worked from either side, held the grating in place, and swinging it open we passed into what was doubtless an immense domed chamber, for our tiny lamp could not light more than a small portion of it. On either side of the alcove from which we had emerged hung magnificent tapestries worked in threads of gold and silver and representing scenes of battles, processions and the like. The workmanship was so fine on the first tapestry we examined that it seemed impossible it could be anything but a painting, and a marvelous one at that. But we found the other fifty or more sections hung around the domed chamber to be equally perfect in execution.

Beyond the tapestry hangings, each section of which was some sixteen feet in width, was another grating leading to an alcove, and this system we afterward found was continued all around the chamber. None of the gratings

were locked and all opened readily to our touch. The alcove we next entered contained another splendid casket and even more golden ornaments and precious gems than we had found in the first. We accounted for the empty jars in the first alcove, which connected with the secret passage, by the pilfering from them by Prince Kai, of which he had told us.

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Joe, as we eagerly started to examine the next alcove. "If we're not careful we're going to lose our bearings in this big place and get lost. Before we wander any further away let's mark the grating to the alcove we came from when we entered."

That seemed good advice, so we retraced our steps until we reached the first alcove, where Joe tied his handkerchief to the grating. Then, feeling assured we could find the place again, we proceeded upon our explorations.

We had examined five or six of the chih, or alcoves of the dead, all of which contained enormous wealth, when suddenly I stumbled against a low stand just outside of a grating. Holding the lamp high to see what the obstruction was, I found upon the stand a large lamp, nearly filled with oil, and a box of London safety-matches.

"Oho!" said I; "Mai Lo has been here."

"I suppose he can now wander through these ancestral vaults at will, since there is no one to forbid him," said Joe.

"I hope he won't decide to come while we're here," remarked Archie, "or our pretty plans will be nipped in the bud."

"Oh, it isn't necessary for Mai Lo to lose sleep to enter these vaults," I replied. "But it is as well to be on our guard, and I'm glad we found the evidences of his visit."

Entering the alcove before which the table and lamp stood, we looked around with astonishment, for here was more evidence of Mai Lo's presence in the tomb. This niche was evidently very rich in treasure, and the vases and bowls of gems had been emptied into a great heap in the center of the floor. From this heap some one had been assorting the jewels into varieties and sizes. In one place were pearls, the finest of which had been placed in one row, the next largest in a second row, and so on. Rubies had been assorted in a similar way on another side of the chih, and emeralds in a third place. No jewels seemed to have been taken away, and from the size of the heap there was much more assorting to be done, and the job was scarcely begun.

The beauty of the row of great pearls appealed to Archie strongly, so he picked them up, one by one, and placed them in the pocket of his jacket.

"If anything should prevent our coming here again," he remarked, "these pearls will well repay us for our journey to Kai-Nong."

But he never suspected that they were likely nearly to cost us all our lives.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE TREASURE OF THE ANCIENTS

FROM ALCOVE TO alcove we went, finding in each a different class of treasure, according to the wealth of the occupant and the period in which he had lived. Here a scholar was laid, and beside him a mass of parchment manuscripts, which either represented a half of his fortune or had been purchased at such high prices that his heir preferred to bury the manuscripts with his ancestor and keep the half of his wealth represented by more tangible assets. In another place we found many painted pictures, in another bales of silks, rotted and fallen to decay. But usually the wealth of these ancestors of Kai Lun Pu consisted of splendid gems and jewelry, ornaments of gold, silver and jade, and in many cases golden coins of the Empire. Well might Prince Kai say that his Ancestral Halls contained enough wealth to ransom a kingdom. To carry it all away with us would have re-quired a railway train or the hold of a steamship.

"What we must do," said Joe, who was a fair judge of gems and jewelry, "is to select only rubies, emeralds and pearls, and perhaps some of the fine jades. These may be carried in a small space, if we don't take too many of them, and they'll sell more readily at home for cash."

We quite agreed with him in this, and believed we would now be able to order the packing cases of such a size as to fit our needs. We might have some trouble in carrying our plunder through China to Shanghai, and to strive to take too much of this almost inexhaustible wealth might very easily cause us to lose it all.

So eager and excited were we by the sight of this splendid treasure-house that we lingered in the tombs a long time, and finally reached an alcove where rested the casket we had made aboard the *Seagull,* and which contained the bandaged pillows and bolsters that had been substituted for the body of Prince Kai.

It was still locked, and had not been disturbed in any way by Mai Lo; nor was there any treasure beside it. From there on to the alcove where we had entered, and where Joe's handkerchief was attached to the grating, the niches were empty. These ancestral chih would have accommodated several generations yet, had not the last of the royal line perished without an heir.

"Good gracious! It's after four o'clock!" exclaimed Archie, leaning over to examine his watch by the flame of the lamp.

"Then we must hustle back," I said, "for it begins to get daylight at five, and we mustn't get caught in the passages of the palace."

So we ran into the alcove of the first Kai and closed the grating behind us.

Then we thrust aside the tapestry, passed through the steel door, and fastened it securely. A moment more and we were treading the tunnel in single file back to the palace.

The way was up hill now, and harder walking, but it did not seem so long as it did when we came down. In a few minutes we had reached the stone steps and were climbing them to the chamber of the Prince.

The sliding panel behind the statue puzzled us a little, but we soon discovered how to close it, and it caught in place with the same little click that had released it when the foot was pushed aside.

Without pausing again in the bed-chamber, we crept beneath the tapestry and out of the panel door into the corridor, and then paused to listen with bated breath. The guard could still be heard treading heavily before the door to the Suite of the Horned Fish; so we took off our shoes again, pushed aside the dragon tapestry, and noiselessly crept to our own room.

You may be sure we breathed easier when we were safe within our own quarters, for day was just breaking and our return had been timed none too soon.

Nux and Bryonia, whom we had left to guard our rooms from possible intrusion while we were absent, were mighty glad to see us back again, and their eyes opened wide with astonishment when Archie displayed his pearls as proof that we had found the treasure.

But the night of excitement had wearied us greatly, so we all turned in and slept like dead men until our faithful blacks called us to breakfast.

It was while we were at this meal that Joe uttered an exclamation, and glancing up I saw his face go white and frightened.

"What is it, old man?" I asked quickly.

"My handkerchief!" he replied. "I left it tied to the grating of the alcove!"

We looked at one another in stupid bewilderment for a moment, trying hard to think how to remedy such a blunder. But nothing could be done for that day, anyhow, and if Mai Lo happened to visit the Ancestral Halls during that time he would have ample proof that we had been there.

"Of course he may not notice it," said Archie, comfortingly.

"Why, it's a regular flag — white against all those dark hues of tapestries and black spots of alcoves. Of course he'll notice it," retorted Joe with a groan.

"Not any more than he'll notice the absence of the pearls," I suggested. "Mai Lo is evidently busy assorting the treasure he means to run away with, and his first visit there will assure him someone else has been in the vaults."

"Oh, but without the handkerchief he would be unable to guess who it was," answered Joe. "The handkerchief gives him just the clew he needed."

“Never mind,” said I; “the governor can’t do anything about it that I can see. If he is onto our game, we are also onto his, and he won’t dare whisper to the people outside that he is visiting the vaults. When he enters the building he is supposed to be praying, and he must not enter the underground chih after laying the body of the Prince there. His only legitimate business now is to seal up the vaults and destroy all traces of them.”

“And then make an end of himself,” added Archie.

“Just so.”

But in spite of our brave talk we were decidedly uneasy over the way in which we had bungled our adventure of the night, and as soon as breakfast was finished we started out with one accord and took the path that led to the Ancestral Halls.

Nux followed us, but Bry remained in our rooms. This plan we had adopted several days before, having only one of our blacks with us when we ventured out of the palace and leaving the other to guard the entrance to our apartments. The reason for this procedure was that we soon expected to accumulate considerable treasure in our rooms, and we wanted it understood that we permitted no intrusion further than the outer reception-room. Indeed, Bry was guarding, this morning, a few pearls that Joe estimated to be worth over fifty thousand dollars; and the way he did it was to tie them in a handkerchief and carry them in his pocket. As for separating our faithful servants, it was evident that nothing could ever be done in this place by brute force, and a thousand men would be of no more use to us than one.

We sauntered carelessly along, so as not to convey the impression that we had any object in our walk more than to get a bit of air and exercise. Often we passed the magnificently attired house-hold eunuchs, singly or in groups; but we had now become familiar sights to these creatures, and they merely touched their yellow turbans respectfully and passed on.

Around the outbuildings the place thronged with less important servants, all under the general command of Wi-to and his lieutenants. Sounds of industry came from the House of the Artisans, where the bronze, brass and gold workers were busy. In front of the House of the Weavers were groups throwing shuttles back and forth or spinning the threads to be used in the looms.

Kitchen servants passed and repassed in every direction, and this part of the grounds was in many ways the most interesting of all, for here beat the pulse that gave life to the whole establishment.

Moving on, we took the path descending the mound toward the Ancestral Halls — not the one that led past the cage of Sacred Apes, for we hated those fearful creatures and avoided them — but a shaded, winding way that was

very pleasant, though it led past a pond of black water which was said to be the home of a monster Devil-Fish. Before long we came to a halt directly in front of the north entrance of the beautiful bamboo palace of the dead, and the soldier on guard, radiant in the crimson and sapphire uniform of the governor's service, waved his scimitar partly in salute and partly in warning.

"Mai Lo?" I said to him, questioningly. He spoke no English, but could not fail to understand I was asking for the governor; so he turned his thumb toward the entrance, to indicate that his master was inside the building, and then resumed his strut back and forth before the door. Well, that was all we wanted to know, and our hearts sank as we realized that our enemy was even now in the underground chih examining the traces of our midnight visit there. We slowly turned and retraced our steps as far as a group of trees that stood a little way up the mound and commanded an unobstructed view of the entire House of Ancestors. Here we seated ourselves upon shady benches and passed the next two hours moodily talking over the situation.

At the end of that time we observed Mai Lo appear from the building by the entrance nearest us. He was as deliberate and reserved in demeanor as ever, and after a word to the guard he took the very path that led past the trees where we were.

"Let's get out," advised Archie, hastily.

"No," said Joe, "let's stay and hear what the old duffer has to say. Don't be afraid to talk up to him, Sam."

"I won't," was my promise.

Then we grimly awaited the governor's approach. He paced steadily up the path, his hands clasped behind his back and his face turned square to the front.

So he reached the trees and came to a halt before our bench. Upon his parchment-like yellow face there was no sign of expression; in the bead-like eyes turned upon us was no ray of intelligence.

Without doubt Mai Lo had been astounded by the discovery he had made that morning: that we were able to penetrate to the sacred chih of the Ancestors of Kai. If he was human, he must have been stirred to the very depths of his nature.

But here he stood, as passionless and cold as a statue, his glassy stare wandering from one to another of us in turn, but no word passing his thin, compressed lips.

What a relief it would have been had he denounced us, threatened us, cursed us for foreign devils and scoundrels! But no. He merely fixed his soulless eyes upon us, and I began to realize how the ancient Greeks might have got their idea of Medusa and the terrible gaze that turned men to stone.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE ROYAL CABINET

When the governor had gone — and he returned along the path as silently as he had come, after his passionless inspection of us — we arose and walked to the palace, finding mighty little to say on our own account.

On the broad piazza that led into the main building of the palace we found the Chief Eunuch, leaning heavily against a pillar. I had been trying to communicate with Wi-to for several days, but Tun, who carried our messages, always returned to say that his master was closely occupied with his duties and begged to postpone the interview. During these days we had neither seen nor heard of the Chief Eunuch, so I was a little surprised to find him on the piazza. His face was haggard and worn, his eyes puffy and bloodshot and his person untidy.

"Good morning, Wi," said I, cordially. "Have you been ill?"

He smiled at me rather childishly, and replied:

"The Earth Dragon has had me in his coils — and nearly strangled me. Ah — oh! how unhappy I have been! Who has such deep and dreadful sorrows as poor Wi-to? Who suffers such horrible pangs? Who — but never mind. The sun-god is smiling this morning, and the breeze is sweet and lovely. Are my master's guests wholly content? Have they any orders for their lowly servant?"

I own this rambling, inconsequent speech somewhat puzzled me. Wi-to did not seem himself; he was surely not at his best today. Ordinarily the Chief Eunuch was the most intelligent, shrewd, courteous and agreeable Chinaman we had met, save only Prince Kai Lun Pu.

But I pretended not to notice his peculiar bearing and asked him when he could have the desk of Prince Kai moved into our rooms. I wanted to begin my work of inspection at once, I told him; but really the only reason I made the request at all was to allay any suspicions he might harbor.

To my surprise he at once blew his whistle and brought a dozen eunuchs running to answer the summons. Still leaning against the pillar Wi-to chattered away in Chinese for a time until his men prostrated themselves and hurried away to fulfil his commands.

"The cabinet will come to you, my master," now answered the eunuch. "Is there anything else I can do?"

"Why, as regards the selection of the gifts — "

"Don't hurry," he interrupted, rubbing one eye with his knuckles. "Take it easy; much time; no hurry; only Mai Lo want you out of the way. Mai Lo? Dlam Mai Lo! English dlam. Pah!"

Really, I couldn't understand Wi-to in this peculiar condition, so we left him still leaning against the post and went away to our own rooms.

Pretty soon there was considerable racket in the passageway, and we sent Bry to see what it meant. He returned grinning from ear to ear, and said the eunuchs were moving a house. So we looked out, and there were some twenty or more of the palace servants, perspiring and struggling with the immense cabinet that had been standing in the Prince's bed-chamber. How they ever moved it at all was a wonder; but move it they did, inch by inch, and squeezed it through the great entrance door to our reception-room. I had them place it against the wall nearest the door and then they went away glad that the task was accomplished.

It was an absurd thing to do, and in all reason and common sense we should have been permitted to examine the cabinet where it originally stood; but oriental prejudices are difficult things to overcome, and since it was forbidden strangers to enter the royal apartments, the mountainous cabinet had to come to Mahomet Sam.

Now I had no right, as a matter of fact, to examine this private cabinet of the royal line of Kai, and my request to do so was but a blind to further our real plans. But since it was here, and since Wi-to had sent me a bunch of keys to unlock the different compartments, the temptation to look inside was irresistible.

"It's this way," I said to the boys; "if we don't look over these things, others who may not be as friendly to Prince Kai's memory are sure to do so. The estate and palace will shortly pass to the Emperor, who will either retain it for himself or give it to some favorite. So I believe we are justified in seeing what this old mystery-box contains."

They agreed with me fully, so we began the examination. First we opened the desk part and found many documents in Chinese, sealed, signed and filed in a very business-like manner. These we could not read, and their importance was all unknown to us. Also there were numerous letters. One bunch of yellow missives bore the Imperial Vermilion Seal of the Emperor.

In order to carry out our deception I tore up a number of the least important looking papers and burned them in a brazier. At the bottom of the heap of letters I found a book in which the Prince had written in English a sort of diary, although the entries were seldom dated and seemed to be whimsical sentences he had recorded merely to relieve his mind. The poor fellow had had no one around him in whom he could confide, as to an intimate friend; so he had made this little book his confidant.

Believing that here, if anywhere, we would be likely to find clews to guide us in our undertaking, we read this book aloud, so that among the three of us,

to say nothing of Nux and Bry, we might catch whatever ideas it contained that might be of service to us.

Many of the passages were sarcastic comparisons between the customs of his own people and those of Europeans, and I must admit that, from Prince Kai's point of view, the Europeans did not always come out best. One entry that interested us was as follows:

"What unselfish and responsible servants am I blest with! What competent officials direct my affairs in my absence! Look upon them, oh my ancestors, and pity me. At the head of my province is a man born to be its governor who, lacking such birthright, would be unfit for the duties of the humblest slave. Cold, unfeeling, ambitious and without honor, this man works but for his own selfish interests, and lacks the strength of intellect to ruin me for his own gain. Since I read him so truly he cannot injure me; but what a farce is this hereditary right to govern a great province such as Kwang-Kai-Nong! When Mai Lo lies with his ancestors there will be his son to govern, a weak imbecile, helplessly degenerate. I am quite certain I must find an excuse to behead both father and son, that I may free myself of this incubus of the House of Kai.

"The Fuh-yin of the city of Kai-Nong is even a worse scoundrel than Mai Lo. I have proof that he murdered his own brother, in order to become mayor and rob the city of its revenues. Some day when I have time I shall accuse and condemn my Fuh-yin, and invent a horrible execution worthy of his sins."

"In the palace the one power is the Chief Eunuch, who might make things very unpleasant for me were he not by nature faithful and obedient to his master. I made him chief when old Koa-Ming-Dhu was stabbed by one of my father's wives, raising Wi-to from the ranks of the eunuchs. I believe he is grateful, and so am willing to overlook his one weakness. For Wi-to gets drunk periodically, and frequently stays drunk a week, and while he is in this condition everything about the palace is neglected."

"I see," said Joe, when I read this extract. "That was the trouble with Wi-to today. He's been on a drunk and is just coming 'round."

"That is an unfortunate trait," I said, musingly. "For if we happened to need the services of the Chief Eunuch and he failed us, being on one of his sprees, we might lose our lives."

Presently we found another interesting item in the book. It said:

"I've been making a careful inspection of the riches contained in the tombs of my ancestors. It seems strange that I am the first of our race to abjure ancestor worship and look upon these dead effigies of my forefathers as they really are — heaps of dust. Nothing could be more foolish, according

to the enlightened age in which I live, than burying wealth in the tomb of its owner, where neither he nor any one else can apply it to use. Yet so ingrained in my nature are racial prejudices that it was long before I could induce myself to touch that wealth. When finally I did so I took the contents of several jars in the chih of the first Kai. The Jews to whom I sold the treasure in London robbed me, but I obtained enough money to make a lavish display of wealth while I was at college. But today I discovered a rare treasure indeed in the tombs of my ancestors. It is in the chih of Kai-Abon, the seventh of our royal race. The contents of his alcove seemed so unattractive that I had never given the place much attention before; but today I discovered that the great wealth of this prince was carefully arranged to deceive any one who might be tempted by an open display. Turning over a heap of cheap brass trinkets I uncovered a superb gem which has been known to the world as the Beryl of Tartary. No one has ever known what became of this family heirloom until now. I covered it up again, because the time has not yet come when I can sell it or use it myself. In a corner was an old scimitar with plaster and mud covering its surface. I rubbed away the filth and found upon the handle the Seven Rubies of Persia, which one of my ancestors won in battle. Each ruby is said to contain a drop of blood from the heart of a king, and whoever wields this scimitar is considered invincible, for the spirits of the seven kings fight for its champion. This treasure I could not leave buried, so I have brought it to my chamber and concealed it in the lower drawer of my cabinet. No one now alive will know where I got it."

"Hold on a minute," cried Archie. "Let's take a look at this wonderful weapon."

So we unlocked the lower drawer and at first could find nothing. But Archie soon saw that the drawer was so deep that it must have a false bottom. This was indeed the case, and when we had pried up this false bottom with our knives, we came upon a chamois bag in which was the famous scimitar. It had no sheath and the Prince had carefully polished it. Its delicately tempered blade of blue steel was bright as a mirror. The handle was of gold, and seven splendid rubies, blood-red in color, were imbedded in the yellow metal.

Also in the drawer were a necklace of magnificent pearls and a single emerald as big as a pigeon's egg. These we gave to Bry to add to our collection, but the scimitar we replaced in the top of the drawer, where it could easily be obtained if required. Upon examination we found many of the compartments of the cabinet empty. At a recent period someone — probably the Prince — had evidently cleared it out.

There was more written about the wonderful treasures in the tomb of Kai-

Abon, which there is no need to repeat in these pages. Nor were any of the other entries in the book of especial interest to my patient reader, although we read them all and got a clearer idea of Prince Kai's inner nature than we had ever had before. Only once did he mention his sister, Nor Ghai, and then it was merely to say that he intended some day to send her to England or America to be educated according to modern methods.

We passed the rest of the day in the examination of this wonderful cabinet, and when evening arrived we were undecided whether or not to make another trip that night to the underground vaults. Somehow I could not get that inscrutable glassy stare of the mandarin out of my mind, and the recollection of it seemed to trouble my comrades as it did me.

We finally decided to postpone our next trip through the underground passage until we were prepared to carry away a portion of the treasure; so we locked the cabinet, put the keys away and quietly went to bed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE TRAP IS SPRUNG

Next morning we found the Chief Eunuch quite recovered from his debauch and as keen and attentive to his duties as ever. One of his men had neglected his tasks while Wi-to was under the influence of liquor, so his chief called him into his private office and cut him down with his own scimitar.

The incident created no excitement in the palace, and when we met Wi after breakfast was over he was as smiling and complaisant as ever. But it taught us how little human life was valued in this strange land.

I ventured to ask the Chief Eunuch once again to assist me to select the ornaments for Prince Kai's friends, and to my relief he consented readily. So we walked through the state apartments and made choice of some moderate-sized articles, of no great value but of considerable weight.

Also I chose two teakwood chests bound in bronze, with excellent locks, in which I said that I would pack the books.

Wi-to was pleased that we were so modest in our demands and showed no disposition to rob the palace of its most rare and precious objects of art. So when it came to a choice of our own gifts the eunuch declared that he would himself make the selection, acting as the confidential servant of his late master, whose generous nature he well knew.

"I will send the gifts to your rooms," he said, "and the gifts for our royal prince's friends shall be brought as well; and the packing-cases as soon as our artisans can prepare them." We thanked him, and he added, cordially: "Do not let these preparations hasten your departure, I entreat you. It is good to have guests in the palace. If you go away there will be nothing for me to do but quarrel with Mai Lo."

We had an appointment that afternoon to meet the girls in the willow pavilion; so when the hour arrived we sauntered away from the palace and lost ourselves in the shrubbery, afterward picking our way cautiously toward the remote corner where the pavilion stood.

The girls were all assembled and eagerly awaiting our coming, for we had promised to tell them more about our American women, in whom they were greatly interested, and to describe their dress and social privileges and methods of amusement. I suppose that to these poor secluded creatures, who experienced so little variety in their narrow lives, our stories sounded like fairy tales. Some inkling of woman's position in our western civilization they had gleaned from their copies of Byron and Shakespeare, which, by the way, only Ko-Tua had the ability to read. But the books could not answer questions, and the pretty maids were full of questions today, some of which

we were puzzled to answer.

During our several interviews our relations with the little Chinese beauties had become so friendly and free from constraint that they were no longer afraid of us and we sat around the wicker table like brothers and sisters.

As Joe was describing a bit of modern finery Mai Mou exclaimed:

"Ah! You can wear that when you become a widow, Ko-Tua."

"A widow!" said I. "When will that be, Ko-Tua?"

"I do not know; but before long, Sam. My husband must soon kill himself, you know."

"I've heard something of the sort. Will it make you unhappy to become a widow?"

"No, I shall be glad. I hate Mai Lo," she replied, simply.

I glanced at Mai Mou.

"And you, little Pearl?" I inquired.

"I do not like my father, either," she replied. "But I do not know him very well. Perhaps he is better than he seems."

"No, he is worse," said Archie, positively. "I'm sure of it."

"But when the time comes," continued Ko-Tua, raising her big, wistful eyes, "my husband — "

She gave a great start, and a look of horror spread over her beautiful face and actually transformed it. For her eyes had caught some object beyond our circle, and remained fixed and dilated.

Mai Mou followed her gaze and gave a little cry that conveyed the agony of a wounded deer. Nor Ghai stood up in her place and the smile faded from her pallid face.

Of course we boys whirled around at once, and there stood Mai Lo, just within the entrance, his glassy stare taking us all in, his hands folded tightly upon his broidered robe.

That last posture was new to me and gave me the idea that at last the mandarin was as much aroused as he had ever before been in his life.

He must have enjoyed the confusion he had caused, for I confess that I felt as guilty as a school-boy caught in the act of robbing an apple-orchard.

The discovery was so unexpected that for a time I could hardly comprehend its import, but presently vague thoughts of possible consequences to these innocent girls began to pass through my brain, and they steadied me and made me grow angry instead of afraid. The other boys must have felt the same way, for it was Archie who broke the terrible silence by saying with a growl:

"Shall I kill him, Sam?"

I was almost tempted to consent, but when Archie drew his revolver and

cocked it with a cool deliberation, I put my hand on his arm and said:

"Not yet."

One thing puzzled me. Bryonia had come with us to a place within sight of the pavilion, where we left him in the thicket of trees as a watch to warn us of danger. But here was the mandarin, and Bry was still silent. What could have become of our faithful black?

Perhaps Archie's threatening attitude helped to unlimber the silent Mai Lo's tongue, for without altering his position he said in his calm, monotonous tones:

"I suppose you are aware, young men, of the penalty for this outrage."

"Outrage!" I cried, resentfully.

"An outrage against the most sacred institution of China — the harem."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Archie. "Don't be an ass, Mai Lo. You've traveled a little and you know you're talking rot."

"This is not America; it is Kai-Nong," said the governor, grimly. "You have violated the sanctity of my family relations. You have disgraced Nor Ghai, the daughter of the princely and royal Kais. For this our laws have provided a relentless penalty — death!"

"It is so," wailed the little Nor Ghai, bursting into tears. "You will die — you will all be sliced! And I knew it and warned you."

Mai Lo lifted his hand and Mai Mou and Ko-Tua crept obediently toward him with bowed heads and passed out of the pavilion. I saw them push through a hedge and in a flash realized why Bryonia had not seen the approach of the governor. We were nearer to Mai Lo's house than the palace, and there was probably a gate in the wall that had admitted the girls and the governor from a direction opposite to that in which we had ourselves come.

Nor Ghai had started to follow her companions, but Mai Lo uttered a harsh order in Chinese and she halted, standing like a statue.

The mandarin clapped his hands, and four of his gaudily dressed soldiers burst through the hedge and entered the pavilion, guarding its entrance. There was no other way for us to escape.

Mai Lo thoughtfully took a position behind his soldiers before he made his next move.

"If you will leave this place at once, without a moment's delay, and travel straight to Shanghai," he said, deliberately, "I will spare your lives. If not — "

"Well, what then?"

"I will summon my eunuchs and have you killed."

"Go ahead!" I said, scornfully.

"You refuse?"

“Of course. We are not afraid of you.”

The mandarin blew a whistle, and through the hedge leaped a band of a dozen fierce fellows wearing the governor’s colors of crimson and azure. They bore naked scimitars, and at a word from Mai Lo dashed past the soldiers and flew toward us.

Three revolvers cracked and three of the eunuchs fell, while others stumbled over them; and as the fellows held back, startled at such unexpected opposition, with one accord we saw our chance to escape. Each seized a stool and swinging it for a weapon we leaped upon our enemies and literally fought our way to the entrance. I tried to see Mai Lo and brain him as a farewell token, but the wily mandarin had taken pains to be out of the way.

Once free of the imprisoning willows we fled with all our speed toward the palace, and as soon as they had recovered from their astonishment the soldiers and eunuchs were after us in hot chase.

Emerging from the thicket into the palace gardens we came plump upon a rescue party, consisting of Nux and Bry at the head of a band of eunuchs led by Wi-to himself.

Our pursuers halted until the governor came up, running with somewhat undignified haste. He jabbered away to the Chief Eunuch, behind whose men we had taken refuge, and Wi appeared both astonished and embarrassed by what he heard. Turning to me, he asked:

“Is it true? Have you forced yourselves into the presence of Mai Lo’s wife and daughter, and also of the Princess Nor Ghai?”

“Why we have seen and talked with them, if that’s what you mean,” I replied.

“I demand the culprits,” called Mai Lo. “In the name of the law, I demand them!”

“Go quick,” whispered the Chief Eunuch, scowling. “Quick, for your lives, to the palace!”

We obeyed without question, sprinting along the paths at our best gait and urged by the loud clamor of protesting voices behind us.

Bry and Nux brought up our rear more leisurely, and Wi-to held back the mandarin’s gang of cut-throats until we had a good start.

But after we had reached our apartments and bolted the outer door securely we had not time fully to regain our breath before the shouts of our pursuers were heard in the halls and passages.

The noise calmed down presently, and after several minutes a sharp rap came at our door.

“It is I; admit me!” said the voice of the Chief Eunuch.

Joe opened the door, but bolted it again as soon as Wi-to had stalked into the room.

The eunuch gazed upon each of us in turn with black looks. Then he said, slowly and bitterly:

“Why, in the name of Buddha, have you done the one thing that has forfeited my right to protect you?”

“Have we?” I asked, curiously.

“Yes,” he snapped, grinding his teeth savagely. “You are doomed. Even my power cannot save you!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

A FEARFUL ENCOUNTER

I have always BELIEVED Wi-to was the best friend we had in Kai-Nong, and that he was quite willing to serve us to the best of his ability, thus honoring the will of his dead master. But his oriental education and surroundings had saturated his otherwise liberal mind with the conventions and prejudices of his people; and he had a supreme contempt for women and could not tolerate such an unwarranted act as we had committed; in other words, making the acquaintance of three pretty and interesting girls who were inmates of harems.

So Wi-to stormed and paced the floor, in one breath condemning us to horrible tortures and in the next trying to figure out a way to save us.

Meantime we, the culprits, maintained an appearance subdued and expectant, but could not bring ourselves to realize that we had merited punishment.

"I will not give you up to Mai Lo," declared the Chief Eunuch, positively; "but he has the right to send his men to capture you. For a time I can hold him at bay, but such delay cannot save you. If I provided for your escape from the palace, which I might easily do, you could not cross the province ruled by Mai Lo, and his influence as governor of Kwang-Kai-Nong extends more or less throughout the Empire."

"Where is Mai Lo now?" I asked.

"He has returned to his house. But his soldiers are left to guard the exits of the palace, and they are ordered to capture you alive or dead. It is an insult to me to invade my territory in this way, and had you been guilty of any other crime I could have driven away the slaves of the governor. But a violation of the sanctity of the harem is so serious that our laws allow the criminals to be taken wherever they seek refuge."

"We haven't been near the harem," protested Archie.

"Your action is worse. You met the women clandestinely."

"Are not foreigners sometimes introduced to Chinese women by their lords?" I asked.

"It is sometimes done in the coast cities, such as Shanghai and Hong-Kong; but never where the ancient laws of our Empire prevail," said the eunuch. "Besides, only the master of the harem can demand the death penalty for its violation; so, had Mai Lo introduced you to his wife and daughter, you would have had nothing to fear. As it is, the old serpent will have your lives."

"Not if we can help it," said I. "What would you advise us to do, Wi?"

He paced up and down for a time in deep thought. Then he said:

“Your only hope is to escape from Kai-Nong. Perhaps the governor will not care to follow you, once you are out of his way.”

“We won’t go until we have carried out the wishes of Prince Kai,” I returned, stubbornly.

“You can do that very easily and quickly.” He cast his eyes around the room and noticed the ashes of the burnt paper in the brazier. “I see you have examined the cabinet.”

I nodded.

“The other work need not take you long,” he continued. “I will at once send the ornaments and cases here to your room, and you may pack them at your leisure. Then my men will carry them for you to the border of Kwang-Kai-Nong, and there await your coming. They will arouse no suspicion, and you must disguise yourselves and travel separately to the meeting place. The signet ring of the House of Kai will doubtless protect you from interference on the journey. So, while the governor’s men are still guarding the exits of the palace, you will be on your way out of the country. Yes! That is a good plan to follow.”

“But how can we get away if Mai Lo guards all the exits?” inquired Joe.

“Ah, that is my secret. No one knows this palace as I do. There are secret ways of which the governor does not dream.”

This statement made me uneasy until I remembered that Prince Kai had assured me that the private passage to the underground vaults was unknown to any member of his household but himself.

To gain time we agreed to the suggestion of Wi-to, and the eunuch went away to issue his commands.

Before long all the ornaments, the two chests, and the packing-cases had been brought to our rooms and placed at our disposal. Also Wi-to sent our own gifts, and I was pleased to find that he had selected some exquisite ivory carvings that were of great artistic value. Perhaps they were worth more than all the other things we had chosen, and I was delighted at the evidence of the Chief Eunuch’s good will.

Our evening meal was served in our rooms as usual, and was as sumptuous as ever; but we had not our usual appetites and were glad when the dragging, ceremonious meal was ended.

“Of course,” said Archie, “we’ve got to make a trip to the vaults tonight and bring back all the treasure we can.”

That was inevitable; so we waited patiently until midnight and then removed our shoes and stole softly down the passage to the dragon tapestry. We took Bry with us and left Nux to guard our rooms.

Being now acquainted with the way we proceeded more quickly than on

the first occasion and were soon treading the damp and musty tunnel leading to the tombs.

When we reached the alcove of the first Kai we looked for Joe's handkerchief and found that it had been removed from the grating. This was no more than we had expected.

"My idea," said I, "is to go straight to the alcove of the seventh Kai, old Abon, which the Prince's book declares is the richest of all. We'll get that big beryl, for one thing, and anything else that seems especially valuable."

"All right," said Archie, unfastening the grating. "It must be the seventh alcove to the left of this, for those on the right are still vacant."

Joe started first and I came next with the lamp. Archie and Bry were just behind me. Suddenly we all stopped short.

From out of the darkness of the vast domed chamber a harsh cry smote our ears and we heard a rush of footsteps toward us.

Spellbound, we stood peering into the gloom, expecting we knew not what. And then into the dim circle of light made by our lamp there bounded a huge gray form, which like a catapult hurled itself upon Joe.

I gave a scream of fear, and the cry went echoing through the great dome like the roar of a multitude. For in a flash I realized what had happened. The great ape, Fo-Chu — the man-eater — had been loosed upon us.

The body of the ferocious beast beat Joe down as if he had been a feather, and sent him sprawling upon the floor. But at the same time the ape, blinded by the violence of its own onslaught, struck its head with terrific force against a grating and rolled over again and again before it could recover itself.

Instantly Bry seized Joe in his strong arms and fled back to the alcove we had just left, and Archie and I were but an instant behind. Yet so active was the great ape that, just as I pulled the grating to behind me, he made a second leap, and the weight of his body against the bronze bars sent me plunging head foremost into the alcove. The lamp flew from my hand and was extinguished, while in my fall I threw down one of the vases and its contents scattered themselves over the floor and rained around me like hailstones.

It was Archie who had presence of mind to throw the catch in place that secured the grating, and so protect us from Fo-Chu, who raged and beat upon the bars in his desire to reach us.

In the darkness I struggled to my feet, while Bry lighted a match and recovered the lamp, which, being metal, was not broken. Not much oil had been spilled, and when the flame from the wick flared up we looked at each other to see what damage had been done. The blood was streaming from a cut in my cheek and Joe had a bump upon his forehead as big as a goose-egg;

but when we glanced at the horrible visage of the Sacred Ape, who clung fast to the outside of the grating and regarded us with evil eyes and vicious bared teeth, we were thankful enough that we had escaped so lightly.

"Here is another item of account against Mai Lo," growled Archie, staring at the beast.

"Yes," said I, while Bry bound up my cut with a handkerchief; "it's easy enough to explain this little surprise. The governor is keeper of the Sacred Apes, and discovering that we knew a way to enter the vaults he loosed the old man-killer in them, expecting the ape to make an end of us all."

"He nearly succeeded," said joe, tenderly feeling of his bruise. "I thought when old Fo-Chu struck me that my game was up."

"Well, what's to do now?" demanded Archie.

"Let's take what is in this alcove and be satisfied," I suggested, shuddering as I glanced at the ape and met its cruel gaze.

Silently we began to gather up the scattered gems that littered the floor. Bryonia had brought along a strip of tapestry from our rooms, and we spread this upon the tiles and placed the gems upon it in a glittering heap.

We took such pearls, rubies and emeralds as seemed of good size and color, but the jade and golden ornaments were too clumsy and big to be utilized. When we had emptied the jars and vases we had a princely fortune piled upon the cloth, yet it did not satisfy us.

"You see, Prince Kai had robbed this alcove already," remarked Joe, "and there is so much to be had in the other places that I hate to go back and call this a night's work."

"But what can we do?" I asked, eyeing the great ape who still clung to the bars of the grating and fiercely watched our every movement.

"Confound the beast!" exclaimed Archie, and threw a small emerald at the brute.

The jewel missed him and fell in the domed chamber. In a flash Fo-Chu bounded after it, caught it in his claws, and examined it with almost human shrewdness. Then he sprang at the grating again, and clung there as before.

"Good!" cried Joe. "I believe we can capture the ape and get him out of the way for good. Shall we risk it?"

When he explained his plan we thought it was worth a trial. On looking around we found a chain necklace, with heavy links of gold set with gems. Joe stood before the grating and waved the necklace just out of reach of the beast's hand, tantalizing old Fo-Chu until he grew furious and shook the bars with fierce energy.

Then suddenly Joe released the necklace and sent it flying far into the chamber.

With a bound the ape was after it, and Joe released the catch and skipped out of our alcove in an instant, running to the next grating to the right, which he opened before Fo-Chu discovered he had been tricked. But seeing Joe standing quietly at the next alcove the beast uttered a snarl and with savage impetuosity hurled his huge body straight at his proposed victim. Joe slid behind the wall and allowed the ape to fall sprawling within the alcove. The next instant the boy was outside, slamming the grating to and springing the catch.

We who had watched this bold trick with bated breath now uttered a cry of joy and dashed out of our retreat.

"The tables are turned," said Joe, panting a little from his exertions. "You are now our prisoner, Fo-Chu."

The ape realized it and with blood-curdling yelps was furiously testing the bars in his effort to escape. But they held securely and we knew we were safe.

The only danger was that the beast would discover the method of releasing the catch; but Bry happened to have a small Yale lock in his pocket, so we unearthed a heavy bronze chain from one of the alcoves, and by tossing an object inside the niche induced Fo-Chu to dive for it. This gave us a chance to snap the lock through its links.

Knowing we were now masters of the situation we proceeded to the tomb of Kai Abon and examined it with care. It yielded us about two quarts of superb rubies, besides three dozen magnificent pearls and the great beryl. From there we visited the place where Mai Lo had been assorting his jewels, but found he had removed the heap and secreted his treasure elsewhere. The vault of the third Kai, however, contained a vast store of fine gems, and after we had secured these and added them to the treasure already acquired, we were well satisfied with the result of our night's adventure.

Before we returned along the passage we went to take another look at the Sacred Ape. He was squatting upon the floor of his alcove, motionless but alert, and by the lamplight I thought his eyes glowed like two great rubies.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN
THE BATTLE IN THE CORRIDOR

When WE reached our rooms and behind bolted doors examined the contents of the tapestry curtain, we were amazed at the splendor of the treasure we had obtained.

"But it isn't on board the *Seagull* yet," Joe reminded us, and we sighed regretfully as we realized the truth of this statement. Nux took charge of the booty and then we all went to bed and tried to sleep; but on my part the attempt was not very successful. I wakened every little while with a start to see the glowing eyes of the great ape regarding me from the darkness, or the great gray body hurtling through the air to fall upon me; and my cheek pained me from the deep gash it had received.

So I slept but fitfully until daybreak, when I rose to find Archie and Joe already up and Bryonia making coffee over an alcohol stove.

Our first care was to dispose of the jewels, and this we did by tearing the leaves out of some of the books of Prince Kai, a big heap of which had been sent us by the eunuch, and wrapping the gems in them. Afterward we packed two boxes with them and nailed on the covers. To carry out the deception we had planned, we next concealed in the empty drawers of the cabinet enough ornaments to have filled the two boxes.

So far our work had progressed very well, and we had just finished breakfast and were congratulating ourselves on our progress when our eunuch Tun ran in and told us that the governor's troops had been ordered to advance upon our retreat and capture us in our rooms.

"Send for Wi-to at once," I commanded.

The eunuch hesitated.

"No can," he said, with downcast eyes.

"Why not?" asked Archie, impatiently.

"Wi-to no see anybody," answered the man.

"Great Caesar! He isn't drunk again, is he?" I cried, recalling with sudden fear what such a calamity would mean to us.

The fellow was loyal to his chief and would not confess the truth; but it was not hard to guess. It occurred to me that his annoyance over our trouble about the women had sent him upon another spree, fast upon the heels of the last one. But the loss of the Chief Eunuch's protection was a serious thing to us just then, and evidently Mai Lo, having heard the news, had decided to order an attack at once, a thing he would not otherwise have dared do.

"Shall we barricade the door?" I asked.

"I've a better plan than that," replied Joe, who was a thoughtful fellow

and full of resource. “Let us stand in the passage outside and shoot down any one who turns the corner by the dragon tapestry. There are two reasons for adopting this plan. One is that we can reserve the use of the secret panel in case we want to get to the vaults by way of the underground passage, and the other is that we can retire into our rooms as a last resort and bolt the door.”

“And in that case we’d be like rats in a trap,” added Archie.

I saw the wisdom of Joe’s proposal and at once sent our two blacks with revolvers to hold the passage.

“Don’t be afraid to shoot,” I said. “It’s our lives against theirs, and if they find we mean business they may decide to let us alone.”

Nux and Bry grinned approvingly and took their stand in the passage, while we remained to discuss the situation.

Presently we heard the crack of pistols and howls of rage, and gained the passage in time to see the governor’s soldiers come crowding around the bend while our blacks discharged their weapons with cool aim and telling effect.

The foremost wanted to draw back when they met with opposition, but those behind, who could not see what was happening, pushed them along by main force, and so dense was the pack of crimson and azure tunics that Nux and Bry could not fire without hitting some of them.

But there was another danger — that their very numbers would defeat us if they obtained the advantage; so we all joined in the scrimmage and poured a hail of bullets into the foe. Those who fell literally blocked the bend in the passage, and at last their cries were heeded by those in the rear and the mob surged back and disappeared from sight.

We could hear their loud jabbering for a few minutes and then from the sounds we knew they had all retreated to the lower hall of the passage.

Presently a head slid slowly into view, which we recognized as that of Tun. The eunuch signalled to us not to shoot, and then ran up to ask if the soldiers could remove their dead and wounded. We gave permission at once and then stood on guard while the fallen were dragged away.

Pretty soon Tun came back to say that there would be no further attack until the soldiers could find their governor and get from him further orders. Just now Mai Lo was nowhere to be found.

So we left Bry alone in the passage and sat down in our room to talk over our predicament.

Now it seems that just beyond the main doorway that led into our suite of rooms this length of passage abruptly ended, and as it was hung with tapestry we supposed it was a blank wall. But as Bry paced up and down he was astonished to see the tapestry move. Then it was pushed aside and a lovely

girl emerged and signalled to him by placing her finger over her lips.

Our man understood and was discreet enough to show the girl into our reception-room without a word. We sprang up amazed when Nor Ghai stood before us, her hands crossed upon her breast and her head bobbing with courtesies in a comical fashion. But as I looked at her I saw her eyes were red with weeping; so I took her hand and said gently:

"What is it, little friend? Have they dared to harm you?"

"No — no — no!" she replied, hastily. "Wi-to has but told me not to leave the palace. It is not for myself I weep, but for my poor companions," and she broke down and sobbed bitterly.

We three fellows looked uncomfortably enough at this exhibition of female misery, and did not know how to comfort Nor Ghai.

So to hide our embarrassment, Archie demanded in a rough voice:

"What has old Death's-Head been doing to them?"

"Who — who mean you?" sobbed Nor Ghai.

"Why, the gov'nor, of course, Mai Lo."

"Him — him has took away all their jewels and silks an' clothe poor Ko-Tua an' Mai Mou in black cotton. An' — an' — " with fresh sobs — "tomorrow him say him cut out both their tongues for talk with foreign devils!"

The little maid, in her misery, wasn't doing very well with her English; but we understood.

"The old scoundrel!" cried Archie, greatly shocked.

"We mustn't allow this, boys," said Joe, with decision.

"Why, it strikes me we're in rather bad shape to interfere," I suggested, regretfully.

"We *must* interfere," declared Archie. "We got these girls into this trouble by our rashness, and we must get 'em out of it again."

"We've also got ourselves into trouble," I reminded him.

"That doesn't make any difference," said Joe. "We're men and they're just girls, and helpless in this heathen country. We've got to hunt up Mai Lo and stop this little game before it's too late. If we can't save the treasure and the girls both, let the treasure go to blazes!"

Nor Ghai looked at him gratefully, and Archie gave him a sounding whack on the shoulder.

"Where is the governor?" I asked the girl.

"I know not. But Ko-Tua, she run away and come to me, with Mai Mou. They in my harem now."

"Why, that's better than finding the governor," I said. "Don't let them go home again, Nor Ghai."

“I cannot help. The eunuchs will take them,” she said.

“Well, there’s only one thing to be done,” I announced, gravely. “They must come here.”

“Ah, oh!” exclaimed the girl. “If they do that, Mai Lo cut off their heads.”

“He won’t get a chance,” said Archie; “or if he does, he’ll have to cut off our heads too. Bring your friends here, Nor Ghai.”

She hesitated, looking from one to the other of us in bewilderment.

“Have no fear, little friend,” said I, gently. “Go and fetch Ko-Tua and Mai Mou to us. In that way alone can you possibly save them.”

She nodded brightly, smiling through her tears, and tripped away.

We watched the passage an hour; two hours. Then we began to fear that Nor Ghai had in some way been prevented from returning. But no; she appeared, finally, leading the governor’s girl wife and daughter by either hand, and then she explained that she had much trouble in inducing her friends to accept our protection.

To them the governor of Kwang-Kai-Nong was a mighty power, and they feared to defy his authority by seeking the protection of three boys who were foreigners and themselves fighting for their lives.

Indeed, when I came to consider the matter from this point of view, I was surprised that Nor Ghai had succeeded in winning them over.

But here they were, finally, and Ko-Tua said to us in her simple way:

“With no tongue a woman could not live happy, could she? So we do not care if we lose our lives. We come to you and trust you, for Nor Ghai says Wi-to is your servant, and Wi-to is almost as great as Mai Lo.”

I had my doubts of Wi-to’s usefulness to us at this juncture, but did not express them. As well as we could we impressed the maids with the fact that we were not beaten yet and intended to put up a good fight to the last. Nor Ghai told us that the news of our defeat of the soldiers had already reached the harem, and had caused the condemned girls to decide to place themselves under our protection.

We had Nux lead Ko-Tua and Mai Mou to the further chamber of our suite, and when they had entered we ordered the black to stand at the door and guard them.

Nor Ghai thanked us and went back to her harem. She said she was in no danger, as no one had authority to punish her except Wi-to. There would be a hunt for Ko-Tua and Mai Mou presently, but only Nor Ghai knew the secret entrance to our corridor.

When she had gone we felt our responsibilities overpowering us, and tried to concoct some plan to force old Mai Lo to pardon his wife and daughter. If we could not do that we must carry them away with us to Shanghai; but in

that case they would double our danger and we should not know what to do with them after they were safe out of Kwang-Kai-Nong.

“I say, Sam,” remarked Archie, after we had been thinking it over for a long time, “this is one of those bridges you’re always talking about. Don’t let’s cross it till we come to it.”

After luncheon, which Tun and his helpers served as usual, we passed an anxious and dreary afternoon. Tun had informed us that the captain of the soldiers had still been unable to locate the governor, to get his commands, and seemed unwilling to attack us again without further orders. Also we gleaned the information in a roundabout way that Wi was still shut up in his room under the influence of a strong drink brewed from rice.

About three o’clock Archie slapped his leg and exclaimed:

“I’ll bet a cookie Mai Lo is in the vaults sorting treasure!”

“I feel sure of it,” said I.

“Well, then,” proposed Joe, after a pause, “let’s go down and find him, and have it out with the old rascal in the tombs of the ancestors.”

“In what way?” I asked.

“Let’s offer to divide with him. There’s enough for us all. Who cares what becomes of the governor — whether he suicides or not — so long as we get out of this infernal country and back to Shanghai with our share of the plunder?”

“That’s a clever idea, Joe!” I exclaimed. “There’s no use fighting if a peaceable arrangement can be made. Why haven’t we thought of making a bargain with Mai Lo before?”

It did not take us long to prepare for the trip. The passage was still deserted, but it was necessary to leave both Nux and Bry to guard the entrance to the rooms, and the girls.

So we three boys crept to the dragon tapestry, passed the secret panel without being discovered and soon were creeping along the tunnel for the third time on our way to the chih of the Ancestors of Kai.

I carried with me the famous scimitar we had found in the cabinet — the one with the seven great rubies set in the hilt. For our ammunition was getting low, and if we found a need to use weapons in our present adventure the scimitar might prove very handy.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE VENGEANCE OF THE RUBY SCIMITAR

I think we had all forgotten that the King Ape had been left imprisoned in the vaults. But when we entered the first alcove from the tunnel and heard the monster barking and growling in the recess at our right, the presence of the beast was recalled to us very forcibly. We paid little attention to the ape just then, however, for we were eager to discover whether or not the governor was really in the ancestral vaults.

As we passed from behind the tapestry we put out our lamp, each of us holding a few matches in our hands to use in case of emergency.

The blackness was now intense, and as we crept stealthily in single file toward the gate the gloom seemed to press upon us and embrace us. Likewise the silence of the immense vaults, which had been hewn out of solid rock beneath the great mound, was oppressive; for while the jabbering of the King Ape and his violent shaking of his grating at times reverberated through the dome with a thousand echoes, the hush of death that otherwise pervaded the place was but rendered the more effective.

On the occasions of our former visits I had looked upon these chih as mere treasure-houses; now, moving silently through the darkness, I suddenly realized we were in a place of the dead, with many generations of warriors, princes and imperial viceroys lying in state in their heretofore inviolable tombs. Would not the spirits of these great ancestors of Kai resent our intrusion? Spirits! I gave a start at the recollection of a remark Kai Lun Pu had made on his deathbed: "If I find that I possess a spirit I shall try to watch you, and enjoy the fun."

I am not usually nervous, but I admit that when I recalled this significant speech I shuddered and grasped the scimitar of Kai Abon more tightly in my hand.

"What in thunder's the matter with you, Sam?" growled Archie, who had his hand on my shoulder.

I did not care to say; but just then Joe, who was in advance of me, touched the grating and whispered:

"Here's the gate — stop a minute."

He unfastened the catch and we passed into the great domed hall.

On our right came a sudden rattling of the bars, where the monster ape was still struggling to escape his prison. I reflected that he must be getting hungry by this time, and hunger would make him more ferocious than ever. But our first impulse was to peer anxiously around the great chamber to discover if any light indicated the presence of Mai Lo.

There it was! a faint glimmer coming from one of the alcoves far to the right.

"We've got him," muttered Archie, triumphantly.

"Why, he's here, all right," I replied in a low tone, "but in order to reach the place we must creep along the wall, so as not to get lost."

"Come ahead, then," said Joe, and started feeling his way by keeping one hand on the tapestry hangings that separated the various alcoves.

Suddenly there came a violent rattling of metal near at hand and Joe stopped so abruptly that I ran into him.

"Say, fellows; we can't pass this alcove," warned Joe. "That infernal monkey might reach out and grab us if we came too near."

"Light the lamp," said I, "and hold it under your coat.

Mai Lo is in an alcove and he's too busy to notice us at this distance."

Joe obeyed. As the light of the wick illuminated our surroundings we found we had halted none too soon. The huge ape had his body pressed close to the grating, which, to our astonishment, we saw was now a mass of twisted and bent metal, so loosened and displaced by the constant wrenching of the powerful beast that only the chain and lock with which we had fastened it seemed to hold the grating in place.

"He'll be out of there before long," remarked Joe, half fearfully.

"Then we must dive into some alcove," I suggested. "But I guess the bars will hold until we've had our talk with Mai Lo."

Circling around the place so as to avoid the reach of the ape's long arms we came to the tapestries beyond his den and continued our progress, extinguishing the light as we drew nearer to the alcove from whence came the glimmer we had first observed.

We walked with stealthy tread and stood before the alcove without a sound of our approach having been noted.

The grating had been set wide open and held from swinging to by a big vase set against it. In the center of the alcove a light burned upon a low taboret, and near it squatted Mai Lo, absorbed in selecting and arranging a mass of jewels piled up before him.

So occupied was the governor with this pleasant task that he never looked up until after we had entered and stood in a silent row before him.

Then his body gave a twitch beneath his broidered robes, but his passive face showed no expression at all. Perhaps it was incapable of expression. Even the eyes had no more animation beneath their surfaces than shoe-buttons. "So you have escaped," he said.

"Oh, there was nothing to escape," I answered with a smile.

"My guards surrounded you."

“They tried to, but there were not enough of them. And they are fewer in number now than they were.”

He stared at us without reply; without altering his position. He even rubbed the ruby that was in his hand against the satin of his sleeve as if to polish it.

“Hasn’t all this nonsense gone far enough, Mai Lo?” I inquired. “Are you not getting tired of opposing us when you know we can defy your power and carry out our plans without your consent?”

He calmly lowered his gaze and began to polish the ruby again. From the distant alcove where Fo-Chu was confined came the ape’s horrid growls and the shaking of the bars; but the governor seemed little interested in anything but the heap of plunder before him.

“You have tried in various ways to destroy us,” I went on. “You set your eunuchs on us in the pavilion; you ordered your soldiers to cut us down in the palace; you loosed the King Ape in these vaults to tear us to pieces. But what is the result? We are here still, and free, and masters of the situation.”

Mai Lo slipped the ruby in his pocket and took another from the heap before him.

“How can you enter the Ancestral Chih?” he asked. “My soldiers guard every avenue of approach.”

“There are some things it is not necessary for you to know,” I retorted; “and that is one of them. But we did not come here to quarrel, but to make peace with you.”

This seemed to interest him, for he transferred his beady gaze from the gems to my face.

“This constant opposition is annoying,” I continued, “and while Prince Kai Lun Pu gave to us the riches contained in these vaults, and showed us how to secure them, we find there is more than we need, or can carry back with us.”

“Prince Kai had no right to give you the wealth of his ancestors,” said Mai Lo.

“Perhaps not. Neither have you any right to rob the Ancestral Halls. Instead, you ought to seal them up, and commit suicide. But you won’t do that. You want to escape with enough treasure to make you rich for the rest of your life.”

He regarded me intently, but made no reply. So I went on:

“We do not care whether you escape or kill yourself, except that by working together, instead of in opposition, we may all succeed in getting away with the treasure. There’s more than enough for us all.”

Still he made no reply. From the dome came a sudden crash of metal and

the wild yelp of the giant ape. But we all stood motionless, wrapped in the importance of the governor's decision.

"Well, what is it to be — war or peace?" I asked, impatiently.

"War," he said, quietly. "You are miserable foreign pigs, and I will kill you. Not one gem of this treasure shall you carry away. Your knowledge of these chih has sealed your doom."

I felt like striking the rascal with the naked scimitar I held — the scimitar for which the seven kings fought whose life-blood was contained in the seven rubies. But I resisted the temptation, while Archie exclaimed: "Don't be a fool, Mai Lo!"

"Your obstinacy may ruin us all," Joe added.

"We don't intend to be killed," I observed, bitterly; "and you ought to know that by this time. We — "

I stopped short with a thrill of horror, for a sudden pattering of feet reached my ears. The governor sprang up just as we three with one accord shrank back against the wall, and the next instant the King Ape bounded into the alcove, his eyes like balls of fire, his grinning teeth bared viciously.

Mai Lo alone confronted the beast, who faced his victim chattering with an almost human expression of cruel joy. I saw the mandarin feel in his breast and draw out a glittering poniard, while his eyes fastened themselves upon those of the ape. An instant more and the brute sprang forward and caught Mai Lo in his embrace.

Once, twice, I saw the keen blade bury itself in the hairy breast of Fo-Chu. Then the monster, with a shriek of mingled rage and agony, thrust the man from him and bounded back against me, the sudden movement sending me reeling against the wall. As I fell I extended my arm in which I still clasped the ruby scimitar, and in a flash the ape had snatched the weapon from my hand and with renewed screams swung it in a gleaming circle around his head.

But his attention was distracted from us, who stood motionless with fear, toward the form of the governor, who was rising from the place where he had fallen. And Fo-Chu remembered that the great pain in his breast had been caused by the weapon of Mai Lo. So with a wild cry he leaped forward and swung the scimitar with tremendous power. It caught Mai Lo just above the shoulders, and the rarely tempered blade sheared through bone and muscle. The head toppled with a dreadful thud to the pavement,' while for an instant the body stood erect and swaying. Then it fell in a heap, and with a screech that chilled my very blood with horror, the monster threw himself upon the body and rent it limb from limb with a fury that was absolutely devilish. The cracking bones and tearing flesh sickened me so that for the first time in my

life I fainted, losing all sense of danger and surroundings as I sank limply to the floor.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE SEVERED HEAD

It's all right, Sam," said Archie, vigorously shaking me. "Sit up, old man."

I obeyed, opening my eyes to gaze fearfully around me. The lamp on the taboret still burned steadily and crouching motionless upon the mangled remains of Mai Lo was the form of the giant ape. Joe and Archie supported me to my feet, peering into my face anxiously.

"Is — is he dead?" I asked in a faint voice.

"Dead as nails!" declared Archie, with a laugh. "Old Fo-Chu has saved us a lot of trouble, while the governor kindly saved us from the beast by giving Fo-Chu his quietus. It couldn't have been better if we had planned it; but my! wasn't it a jolly fight?"

"It was awful, boys!" I exclaimed.

Joe nodded.

"The horror of it nearly got me, too," he admitted. "But, as Archie says, it was a fortunate thing for us, take it all in all."

Feeling somewhat restored in strength I stooped down and picked up the scimitar, which lay where the ape had dropped it. The blade was reeking with warm blood, and I hastily wiped it clean with the rich tapestry that hung upon the wall of the room.

"The seven kings must have fought for the scimitar that time," I observed. "It was a fearful blow."

Together we rolled the great body of the dead ape over, with the idea of getting together the remains of Mai Lo. But the nauseating heap of flesh, mingled with shreds of the broidered robes that had enveloped it, was so repulsive that we decided not to touch it.

"Leave him with the ancestors of Kai," advised Joe. "We'll be away from here before long."

"I'll never enter this place again!" I declared, with a shudder, for my nerves were still on edge.

"Nor I," said Joe, hastily.

"Then let's get all we want now," suggested Archie.

We did. Without fear of further interruption we explored such alcoves as we had not previously visited and appropriated the best of the treasure they contained. We were all fairly well loaded when at last we returned to the scene of the recent tragedy, where we added the heap of jewels that Mai Lo had been examining. There was no time to assort them, so we took them all.

Archie seized the scimitar and hacked away a section of the tapestry, and while I wondered what he was going to do he picked up the severed head of

Mai Lo by its queue and dropped it into the cloth, gathering up the corners to form a bag.

"What is that for?" I asked, wonderingly.

"Why, it's proof that the governor is extinct," he said, with a grin. "No one is allowed to enter this place, so we must establish the demise of our dearly detested enemy in the upper world. Are you fellows ready?"

"Come on," I said, picking up my burdens.

We returned to the alcove of the first Kai and for the last time crept behind the tapestry and emerged into the tunnel through the steel door.

Silently we plodded along the incline, for the dreadful sight we had witnessed and the repulsive burden Archie carried in his left hand depressed us in spite of our attempt to appear cheerful.

As we reached the flight of steps leading to the palace, Joe, who bore the lamp, turned to me and said:

"Going to take that thing home with you, Sam?"

Then I remembered I was carrying the ruby scimitar. As I looked upon it a horror of the weapon suddenly took possession of me. I set down my bundles, snapped the blade across my knee, close to the handle, and cast the ancient bit of steel upon the ground. The golden hilt, set with the seven rubies of the kings, I slipped into my pocket. It is the one prize of those I secured in Kai-Nong that I have never parted with.

By the time we reached our rooms we found that twilight had fallen. Bry met us at the door with the information that no one had disturbed him during our absence. We placed our burdens in a corner and covered them with a cloth, afterward retiring to our rooms to wash the grime from our hands and faces. Tun came in shortly to ask if he should serve dinner, and told us that Wi-to was "better now" and would be "alle light" by morning.

We had little appetite for the meal, but made an attempt to eat. The exciting events of the past few days were beginning to tell upon us and there was little hope of relaxing the nervous tension until our strange adventure had been accomplished.

The death of Mai Lo had simplified matters very much. "Unless," said Joe, "we are accused of his murder; in which case our goose is cooked."

"That's why I brought the head," remarked Archie, glancing at the corner.

"That's why you ought not to have brought it," I objected.

"But we must have peace and the good will of the natives in order to get away safely with the treasure," he replied, sensibly enough. "Mai Lo has committed suicide."

"Suicide!" I exclaimed.

"Certainly, my boy. It was up to him to make away with himself, thus

doing his duty and fulfilling the expectations of the people."

I looked at him admiringly.

"Will you please tell me, Archie," I said, "how we can convince the people that Mai Lo cut off his own head?"

"Why, tell 'em the truth," he returned. "Tell them Mai Lo gave the Sacred Ape a scimitar and fought a duel with him. That would be a neat way to suicide and appeal to their artistic sense. The ape got in the first swipe and — and-"

"And what?"

"And here's the head to prove it," he answered triumphantly.

I shook my head.

"It won't do, old man. Such an absurd story, coming from us, his enemies, would be enough to condemn us."

We sat thinking over the situation for a time, and then Joe exclaimed abruptly:

"I have it! We will get Wi-to to tell the story."

"That's better," I said, relieved. "He ought to be sober enough to act the part tomorrow. But in the meantime what are we to do with the governor's wife and daughter? They are in no further danger, so we needn't keep them cooped up in that room any longer."

"Send for them," suggested Joe.

So we asked Nux to summon the two maids, and soon they toddled timidly into our presence.

"Ko-Tua," said I, solemnly, "you may go home and put on your widow's gown."

"What you mean, Sam?" she asked, eagerly.

"Why, your respected husband, the admirable old villain Mai Lo, has had the kindness to commit suicide."

"Ah, oh!" cried both the girls, with one voice; and then to our amazement they plumped down upon their knees and bowed their heads to the floor and began wailing and beating their front hair with the palms of their hands.

We allowed their emotions full play for a time, but they kept up the monotonous cries and self-inflicted blows longer than we thought necessary.

"Oh, shut up, Ko-Tua!" grunted Archie, stooping down to give the pretty widow's shoulder a vigorous shake. "Stop the racket until you're in public. You're not so eternally sorry, are you?"

She looked up with a smile and slowly rose, Mai Mou demurely following her example.

"I'm glad," said Ko-Tua, frankly. "Now I no have tongue cut out. But Mai Lo my husban', an' he dead, an' — oh, oh! ah-oh! oh-ah! — "

“Hi! cut it out!” yelled Archie, as the widow relapsed into her wails. “If you don’t behave, I’ll — I’ll bring Mai Lo to life again!”

She stopped at once.

“You sure he dead?” inquired Mai Mou.

“Absolutely sure,” I replied. “He committed suicide, and we saw him do it. But see here, young ladies; you mustn’t mention this till tomorrow, when public announcement is made. Do you understand? Go home and control your grief until you hear the news from others, and then howl as much as you please.”

They were puzzled at this order, but when we explained that our own lives depended upon their silence they willingly promised to obey.

At first we were all unable to figure out how they were to return to their homes without being seen and causing gossip; but Bry proposed that he should rap upon the door at the end of the passage and see if he could not arouse Nor Ghai.

The rapping had no effect for a time, and after a few attempts we abandoned that idea and tried to think of something else. Meantime, as our dinner-table still stood piled with eatables, we prevailed upon Ko-Tua and Mai Mou to satisfy their hunger, which they did with ardor but exquisite daintiness, smiling at us happily as they ate.

“Really,” whispered Archie, “if I’d known Mai Lo’s death could cause so much pleasure I’d have asked him to commit suicide long ago.”

Presently, without warning, Nor Ghai glided into the room and took in the scene with one comprehensive glance.

“I heard the knock, but could not come then, as I was not alone,” she explained. “Is there something you wish me to do?”

“You might take these girls into your harem and keep them there,” I replied.

“But Mai Lo’s eunuchs will find them!” she exclaimed.

“Never mind; there is nothing to fear. Mai Lo is dead.”

“Dead!” she repeated, clasping her little hands.

“He has committed suicide,” I answered.

“Never! Mai Lo never suicide,” she declared, positively. “If Mai Lo dead, somebody kill him.”

“Somebody did,” I replied, smiling at her shrewd knowledge of the governor’s character. “It was the Sacred Ape, Fo-Chu.”

“But Fo-Chu is escaped and lost. I heard it today.”

“Well, Mai Lo found him, and thought it was a good time to shuffle off his mortal coil. You remember that in Shakespeare?”

She nodded.

“So Mai Lo shuffled.”

“Isn’t it nice, Nor Ghai?” asked the widow, delightedly. Then with a sudden thought: “Ah — oo! ah-oo! ah — ”

“Cut it out, Ko-Tua,” warned Archie.

“Her tongue!” gasped Nor Ghai.

“No, that’s quite safe; but she isn’t supposed to use it for wailing except in public. Take her to your rooms, little one, and don’t fear for her or Mai Mou any longer. Your troubles are nearly over, I’m sure.”

So Nor Ghai smiled also, and led her two friends away. The last we ever saw of them were their pretty forms toddling up the passage with their pretty faces turned over their shoulders to smile upon us. Then the tapestry hid them and they were gone.

CHAPTER THIRTY

THE POOL OF THE DEVIL FISH

THAT EVENING, being unable to sleep, we sat up late, packing our booty into the chests furnished by the eunuch. They were light and strong and so closely did the gems pack that we were able to get our ivories and some other valuable ornaments into an extra case. Before we went to bed all the boxes were tightly nailed, wound with cords, and the cords sealed with wax. As the seals bore the impression of Prince Kai's signet ring I felt sure they would be respected.

Next morning we sent for Wi-to, and when he appeared, looking still a bit "groggy," as Archie expressed it, we told him the story we had invented to suit our necessity.

"Mai Lo is dead," I began.

The Chief Eunuch started.

"You have killed him?" he asked.

"No; he committed suicide."

"Impossible!"

"So I would have said had I not seen it," I answered, gravely. "And perhaps, after all, the governor did not intend to fulfil his duty so hastily. Sit down, Wi-to, and listen to the story."

He sat down, but looked incredulous and uneasy.

"While you were ill yesterday," I began, "we went out to take a walk."

"With the governor's soldiers guarding every door?" he asked.

"Why, you yourself have said there were secret passages that the governor did not know of. You must not forget, sir, that we are the trusted friends and emissaries of Prince Kai Lun Pu."

This may or may not have satisfied him. Anyhow, he said nothing but looked at me inquiringly.

"We wandered through the grounds, trying not to meet anyone," I continued, "until we came to the great pool by the rocks which your people say is inhabited by the devil-fish."

"It is true," said Wi-to. "I, myself, have seen the monster."

I was much relieved to hear this, for it made my invention seem more plausible.

"While we stood looking into the pool," said I, "the governor suddenly stepped from the grove of trees nearby and advanced toward us. He held a naked scimitar in his hand, such as his soldiers use, and he seemed very angry. He reproached us for making the acquaintence of his wife and daughter and for opposing his soldiers, and declared we should not escape

him again."

This struck the enuuch as quite reasonable. He began to look interested.

"We were angry, and argued with him," I went on, "and while we were quarreling Mai Lo suddenly gave a loud cry. We looked around and saw the great ape called Fo-Chu, the King, leaping toward us from the grove."

I paused and Wi-to said:

"He escaped from the pagoda several days ago, and could not be found."

"We were all frightened," said I, "for the beast seemed feirce and excited. The governor alone was armed, and as Fo-Chu bounded forward Mai Lo thrust out the scimitar and ran it through the ape's body. But Fo-Chu drew the blade from his own breast, swung it in the air, and with one blow severed the governor's head from his shoulders. Then the ape seized the body and leaped into the pool with it, and both sank quickly beneath the black waters. I am quite sure the beast was dying at the time, and perhaps the devil-fish grabbed them, for neither one came to the surface again."

As I finished the yarn the Chief Eunuch coughed and looked puzzled.

"But although the bodies were gone," I added, "the head of Mai Lo remained upon the ground where it had fallen."

"Here it is," announced Archie, "we used to call him old Death's-Head, and may be it is appropriate," and holding the horrible thing in his hand, he advanced and laid it at the eunuch's feet.

Wi-to grew pale and stared into the placid face of his enemy. Mai Lo stared back at him, and I could not see that the beady eyes or parchment face had changed at all in death.

"Ugh!" said the eunuch, turning away. "It is certain the man is dead. But who will believe your story?"

"You will, to begin with," said I, confidently, "and you will make others believe it."

"How?"

I brought some rice-paper, brush and ink from the cabinet, where there was a store of such material, and laid them on the table.

"Write the words I shall give you, in Chinese, as Mai Lo would have written them," I said.

The eunuch smiled as if suddenly enlightened, and accepted the task cheerfully.

"'Wishing to die, as it is my duty to do,'"I dictated, "'I have loosed the Sacred Ape and trusted myself to his avenging hand. If I am dead after we have met, all the world will know that Mai Lo, Governor of Kwang-Kai-Nong and the trusted servant of Prince Kai Lun Pu, who lies with his ancestors, has done his full duty."

Wi-to nodded like an automaton and wrote with much skill upon the paper, beginning at one of the bottom corners of the sheet and working up.

The Chinese characters were neat and uniform, and when the document was finished Wi-to laid down the brush with a sigh of content.

"I have not used your words," said he, "but I have used the idea. And the signature," he added, with a sly leer, "is the signature of Mai Lo himself. I will now go and exhibit the head and the paper, and salute Mai Tchin as the new governor."

So eager was he that he caught up the head by its queue and dragged the grinning trophy away with him without having it wrapped into a neat parcel, as I had intended should be done.

Wi-to might not believe our story, but he was assuredly glad to be rid of his long-standing foe, and we had given the wily eunuch the clew that would enable him to deceive anyone who might be interested in knowing how the governor met his death.

I have beside me, as I write, a clipping from the Hong-Kong Gazette announcing the death of the Governor of the Province of Kwang-Kai-Nong. It states that he committed suicide according to Shinto requirements, owing to the premature death of his master, Prince Kai Lun Pu, late Viceroy of the Imperial Chinese Empire.

Within an hour we left our rooms and ventured to walk out into the palace and wander in the grounds again. The soldiers had all been withdrawn and the palace eunuchs made humble obeisance to us as we passed.

There was no excitement apparent around the palace.

The artisans were busy with their tasks and the gardeners pruned and weeded as deliberately as ever. But when we descended the mound we heard a loud chorus of moans proceeding from the governor's house, and knew that his death was now publicly recognized.

The place was getting decidedly distasteful to us, and that evening we told Wi-to that we had performed all the requests of Prince Kai and wanted to return to Shanghai at once. He replied that he was sorry to have us go, but appreciated the fact that the unpleasant incidents of our visit must outweigh with us the pleasure we had had. Next morning we were waited upon by the new governor, who received us in the state apartment of the palace. We found him a weak, undecided young man, who seemed frightfully nervous at his sudden accession to power and eager to get rid of us. We explained to him the terms of our contract with his father, Mai Lo, and while we did not mention the ten thousand taels, we insisted upon a proper escort to Ichang and payment of all the expenses of the trip back to Shanghai. He agreed to every demand with alacrity, and I could see he was in positive terror of the

“foreign devils.”

Within forty-eight hours the arrangements were all completed and the train of elephants, horses and attendants gathered in the open space before the palace. The eunuchs carried down our heavy cases and loaded them upon the elephants, and while the bearers must have thought them tremendously heavy they dared not complain, and the Chief Eunuch’s suspicions were in no way aroused.

Wi-to seemed really grieved to lose his guests, and we thanked him cordially for his hospitality and parted from him, both he and we expressing the utmost good will.

Our escort was led by a very polite fellow, who spoke amusing pigeon-English and had evidently been instructed by Mai Tchin to show us especial deference and obey our slightest command.

The result was that we met with little annoyance from the natives along the route, and reached Ichang with our entire treasure intact, after a very agreeable journey.

There we left our elephants and horses and boarded the steamer for Shanghai, taking with us merely an escort of a dozen soldiers. These richly dressed warriors commanded sufficient respect to insure our safety on the trip.

At Shanghai Uncle Naboth was waiting for us, and the dear old fellow was overjoyed at our safe return.

“Got any treasure?” he asked.

We pointed to the sealed packing-cases which the porters were laboriously unloading.

“There’s enough there, Uncle,” I whispered, “to make us all rich as Rockefeller — if we can get it safe aboard the *Seagull.”*

“Why, we’ll hire a special steamer to transport it to Woosung,” he declared; and knowing Mr. Perkins as we did we were all relieved when the treasure had been turned over to his care.

We met Dr. Gaylord in Shanghai, and he was still “out of a job.” He seemed amazed that we had returned safely from our adventure and asked us a thousand questions which we answered discreetly, without telling him too much. But he was a good-hearted old fellow, and had been of much service to us before his courage had failed him and led him to desert our cause. Remembering this, I placed a small packet in his hands when we parted at the wharf and asked him not to open it until after we had gone.

I hope it helped the good doctor to buy that farm in England which he so much desired; for although the packet merely contained what Archie described as “some of the loose plunder that was in our pockets,” it ought to

have been sufficient to set the doctor up for life.

Fortunately there are no customs officials at the port of Woosung, and our chartered steamer puffed directly to the side of the *Seagull* and loaded us and our treasure on our own craft.

We received a joyful welcome from my father and the officers and crew, you may be sure, and before we had told all of our story we were well out at sea and were homeward bound.

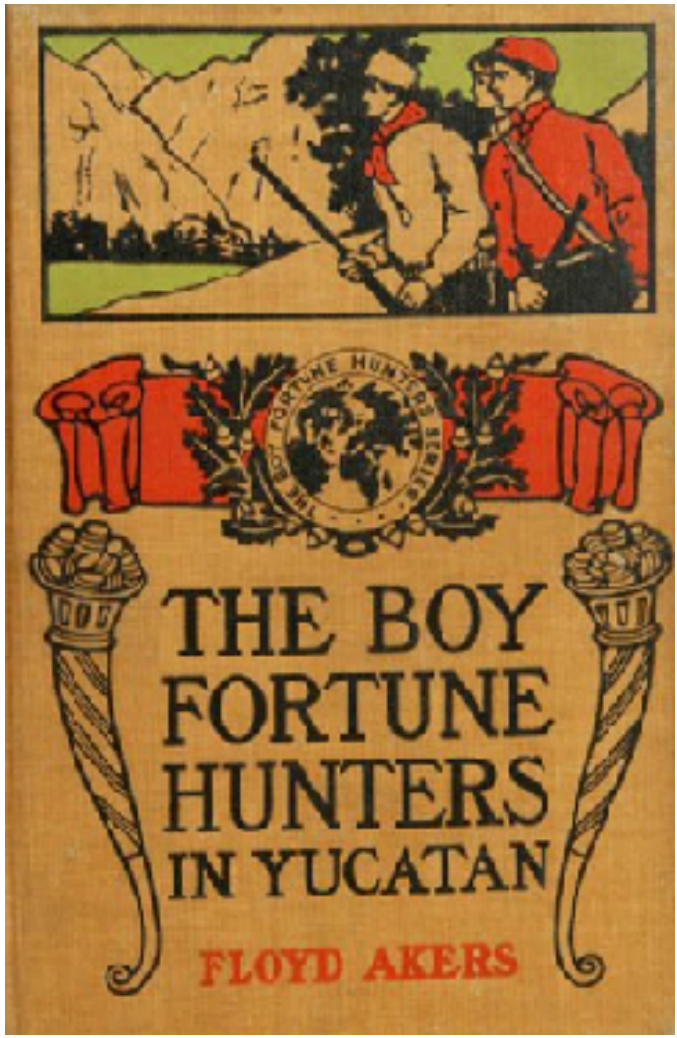
I have often wondered if our visits to the Ancestral Halls of the House of Kai have ever been discovered, or the treasure we abstracted at the instance of the Prince ever missed.

But from the far-away Province of Kwang-Kai-Nong to the deck of the wandering *Seagull* is a far cry, and it is unlikely we shall ever know what happened in Kai-Nong after our departure.

Since that time we "Boy Fortune Hunters" have been through many other experiences, not all rewarded with equal profit, but, I can assure you, quite as thrilling; and some of these I purpose to relate at another time. Some of our earlier adventures, such as those with which we entertained the dying Prince Kai, may be read in the other volumes of *Sam Steele's Adventures.*

THE BOY FORTUNE HUNTERS IN YUCATAN

The Boy Fortune Hunters in Yucatan, published by Reilly & Britton in 1910, was Baum's fifth in a series appearing under the pseudonym, Floyd Akers. Once again, Sam Steele and his friends are after a vast treasure, this time among the people of Tcha, a city in the remote jungles of Yucatan, founded by a tribe from the lost continent of Atlantis. Throughout this adventurous tale, the boys must deal with dangers, including a violent earthquake, inter-tribal warfare, and betrayal by allies.



A first edition copy of The Boy Fortune Hunters in Yucatan

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CHAPTER 1

WE MEET LIEUTENANT ALLERTON

"What do you say, Sam, to making a stop at Magdalena Bay?" asked Uncle Naboth, as we stood on the deck of the *Seagull,* anchored in Golden Gate Harbor.

"Magdalena!" I exclaimed; "why, it's a wilderness."

"I know," he replied; "but the torpedo fleet is there, doin' target practice, an' Admiral Seebre has asked us to drop some mail an' dispatches there, as well as a few supplies missed by the transport that left last Tuesday."

"Oh, Admiral Seebre," I rejoined. "That puts a different face on the matter. We'll stop anywhere the admiral wants us to." Merchantmen though we are, none of us can fail in genuine admiration for Uriel Seebre, the most typical sea dog on earth — or on water, rather.

So we waited to ship the supplies and mail, and by sunset were shrouded in golden glory as we slowly steamed out of the harbor and headed south.

It's a pretty trip. Past old Santa Barbara, the man-made harbor of San Pedro — the port of Los Angeles — and along the coast of beautiful Coronado, we hugged the shore line to enjoy the splendid panorama of scenery; but once opposite the Mexican coast we stood out to sea until, three days afterward, we made Magdalena Bay and dropped anchor amid the rakish, narrow-nosed fleet of the torpedo flotilla.

There isn't much to see at Magdalena. The bay itself is fairly attractive, but the shore is uninteresting and merely discloses a motley group of frame and adobe huts. Yet here the Pacific Squadron comes semiannually to practice target shooting.

As it was four o'clock when our anchor reeled out we decided to lie in the bay until sunrise next morning. We signaled "mail and supplies" and two boats put out from the *Paul Jones,* the flagship of the miniature but formidable fleet, and soon boarded us. They were in charge of Lieutenant Paul Allerton, whom we found a very decent fellow without a hint of that contempt for merchantmen affected by so many Annapolis fledglings.

We soon had the stores lowered — they were not many — and delivered the mail pouch and dispatch box, getting a formal receipt for them. As supercargo and purser, I attended to this business personally.

"I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Steele," said Lieutenant Allerton, "and to have seen your famous boat, the *Seagull.* We've heard a good deal of your curious adventures, you know."

I laughed, and Uncle Naboth Perkins, who stood beside me, remarked:

"Our days of adventure are about over, I guess, Mr. Allerton."

“Have you bagged so much treasure you are ready to retire?” asked the officer.

“It isn’t that,” replied my uncle. “We’ve been tramps a long time, an’ sailed in many seas; but the life’s a bit too strenuous for us, so’s to speak. These boys o’ ours are reckless enough to git us inter a heap o’ trouble, an’ keep us there, too, if we didn’t call a halt. So, seein’ as life counts for more ‘n anything else, Cap’n Steele an’ I hev made the youngsters turn over a new leaf. We’re now on our way to the Atlantic, ‘round the Horn, an’ perpose to do peaceful tradin’ from now on.”

Allerton listened with thoughtful interest. He seemed on the point of saying something in return, but hesitated and then touched his cap.

“I must be going, gentlemen. You know how grateful we exiles are for the mail and tinned stuff, and I tender the thanks of the fleet for your courtesy.”

Then he went away and we considered the incident closed.

We were a strangely assorted group as we congregated on the deck of our beautiful craft, the *Seagull,* after dinner that evening, and perhaps here is an excellent opportunity to introduce ourselves to the reader.

Our ship, which we believe has been termed “the pride of the merchant marine,” was constructed under our personal supervision, and sails or steams as we desire. It is about a thousand tons burden, yacht built, and as trim as a man-o’-war. It is commanded by my father, Captain Richard Steele, one of the most experienced and capable sailors of his time. He is one-third owner, and I have the same interest, being proud to state that I furnished my share of the money from funds I had personally earned. Uncle Naboth Perkins, my dead mother’s only brother, owns the remaining third.

Uncle Naboth is a “natural bom trader” and a wonder in his way. He isn’t a bit of a practical sailor, but has followed the seas from his youth and has won the confidence and esteem of every shipper who ever entrusted a cargo to his care. He has no scholastic learning, but is very wise in mercantile ways and is noted for his sterling honesty.

My father has a wooden leg; he is old and his face resembles ancient parchment. He uses words only for necessary expression, yet his reserve is neither morose nor disagreeable. He knows how to handle the *Seagull* in any emergency and his men render him alert obedience because they know that he knows.

I admit that I am rather young to have followed the seas for so long. I can’t well object to being called a boy, because I am a boy in years, and experience hasn’t made my beard grow or added an inch to my height. My position on the *Seagull* is that of purser and assistant supercargo. In other words, I keep the books, check up the various cargoes, render bills and pay

our expenses. I know almost as little of navigation as Uncle Naboth, who is the most important member of our firm because he makes all our contracts with shippers and attends to the delivery of all cargoes.

Over against the rail stands Ned Britton, our first mate. Ned is father's right bower. They have sailed together many years and have acquired a mutual understanding and respect. Ned has been thoroughly tested in the past: a blunt, bluff sailor-man, as brave as a lion and as guileless as a babe. His strong point is obeying orders and doing his duty on all occasions.

Here is our second mate, too, squatted on a coil of rope just beside me — a boy a year or two younger than I am myself. I may as well state right here that Joe Herring is a mystery to me, and I'm the best and closest friend he has in all the world. He is long and lanky, a bit tall for his age and has muscles like steel. He moves slowly; he speaks slowly; he spends hours in silent meditation. Yet I have seen this boy in action when he moved swift as a lightning bolt — not striking at random, either, but with absolute intelligence.

Once Joe was our cabin boy, promoted to that station from a mere waif. Now he is second mate, with the full respect of Captain Steele, Ned Britton and the entire crew. He wears a common sailor suit, you'll notice, with nothing to indicate his authority. When he is on duty things go like clockwork.

And now I shall probably startle you by the statement that Joe is the rich man, the financial autocrat, of all our little group. His bank account is something to contemplate with awe and reverence. He might own a dozen more expensive ships than the *Seagull,* yet I question if you could drive him away from her deck without making the lad absolutely miserable. Money counts for little with Joe; his associates and his simple if somewhat adventurous life completely satisfy him.

Reclining at my feet is a burly youth rejoicing in the name of Archibald Sumner Ackley. He isn't a sailor; he isn't a passenger even; Archie is just a friend and a chum of Joe's and mine, and he happens to be aboard just because he won't quit and go home to his anxious parents in Boston.

I fear that at the moment of this introduction Archie doesn't show up to the best advantage. The boy is chubby and stout and not exactly handsome of feature. He wears a gaudy checked flannel shirt, no cravat, yellowish green knickerbockers, and a brown jacket so marvelously striped with green that it reminds one of a prison garb. I never can make out where Archie manages to find all his "striking" effects in raiment; I'm sure no other living being would wear such clothes. If any one ever asks: "Where's Archie?" Uncle Naboth has a whimsical way of putting his hand to his ear and saying: "Hush;

listen!”

With all this I’m mighty fond of Archie, and so are we all. Once on a time we had to get used to his peculiarities, for he is stubborn as a mule, denies any one’s right to dictate to him and is bent on having his own way, right or wrong. But the boy is true blue in any emergency; faithful to his friends, even to death; faces danger with manly courage and is a tower of strength in any encounter. He sails with the *Seagull* because he likes the life and can’t be happy, he claims, away from Joe and me.

And now you know all of us on the quarter deck, and I’ll just say a word about our two blacks, Nux and Bryonia. They are South Sea Islanders, picked up by Uncle Naboth years ago and devoted now to us all — especially to my humble self. We’ve been together in many adventures, these ebony skinned men and I, and more than once I have owed my life to their fidelity. Nux is cabin master and steward; he’s the stockiest of the big fellows. Bryonia is ship’s cook, and worthy the post of chef at Sherry’s. He can furnish the best meal from the least material of any one I’ve ever known, and with our ample supplies you may imagine we live like pigs in clover aboard the *Seagull.*

Our crew consists of a dozen picked and tested men, all but one having sailed with us ever since the ship was launched. We lost a man on the way back from China a while ago. and replaced him in San Francisco with a stalwart, brown-skinned Mexican, Pedro by name. He wasn’t one of the lazy, “greaser” sort, but an active fellow with an intelligent face and keen eyes. Captain Hildreth of the *Anemone* gave us the man, and said he had given good service on two long voyages. But Pedro had had enough of the frozen north by that time and when he heard we were short a man begged to join us, knowing we were headed south. Captain Hildreth, who is our good friend, let us have him, and my father is pleased with the way the Mexican does his work.

The *Seagull* was built for commerce and has been devoted mainly to commerce; yet we do not like the tedium of regular voyages between given ports and have been quite successful in undertaking “tramp” consignments of freight to be delivered in various far-off foreign lands. During these voyages we have been led more than once into dangerous “side” adventures, and on our last voyage Joe, Archie and I had barely escaped with our lives — and that by the merest chance — while engaged in one of these reckless undertakings. It was this incident that caused Uncle Naboth and my father to look grave and solemn whenever their eyes fell upon us three, and while we lay anchored in San Francisco harbor they announced to me their decision to avoid any such scrapes in the future by undertaking to cover a regular route

between Cuba and Key West, engaging in the tobacco and cigar trade.

I did not fancy this arrangement very much, but was obliged to submit to my partners and superiors. Archie growled that he would "quit us cold" at the first Atlantic port, but intended to accompany us around the Horn, where there might be a "little excitement" if bad weather caught us. Joe merely shrugged his shoulders and refrained from comment. And so we started from the Golden Gate en route for Cuba, laden only with our necessary stores for ballast, although our bunkers were full of excellent Alaska coal.

The stop in Magdalena Bay would be our last one for some time; so, being at anchor, with no duties of routine confronting us, we sat on deck enjoying the beautiful tropical evening and chatting comfortably while the sailors grouped around the forecastle and smoked their pipes with unalloyed and unaccustomed indolence.

The lights of the near-by torpedo fleet were beginning to glimmer in the gathering dusk when a small boat boarded us and we were surprised to see Lieutenant Allerton come on board again and approach our company. This time, however, he wore civilian's clothes instead of his uniform.

Greeting us with quiet respect he asked:

"May I sit down, gentlemen? I'd like a little talk with you."

Captain Steele pointed to a chair at his side.

"You are very welcome, sir," he answered.

Allerton sat down.

"The despatches you brought," said he, "conveyed to me some joyful news. I have been granted a three months' leave of absence."

As he paused I remarked, speaking for us all:

"You are to be congratulated, Lieutenant. Isn't that a rather unusual leave?"

"Indeed it is," he returned, laughingly. "I've been trying for it for nearly two years, and it might not have been allowed now had I not possessed an influential friend at Washington — my uncle, Simeon Wells."

"Simeon Wells!" ejaculated Uncle Naboth. "What, the great electrician who is called 'the master Wizard'?"

"I believe my uncle has gained some distinction in electrical inventions," was the modest reply.

"Distinction! Why, I'm told he can skin old Edison to a frazzle," remarked Archie, who was not very choice in his selection of words, as he rolled over upon his back and looked up at the officer wonderingly. "Didn't Wells invent the great storage battery 'multum in parvo', and the new aeroplane motors?"

"Uncle Simeon is not very ambitious for honor," said Mr. Allerton

quietly. “He has given the government the control of but few — a very few — of his really clever electrical devices. His greatest delight he finds in inventing. When he has worked out a problem and brought it to success he cares little what becomes of it. That, I suppose, is the mark of an unpractical genius — unpractical from a worldly sense. Still, his relations with the government, limited as they are, proved greatly to my advantage; for when he found my heart was set on this leave of absence, he readily obtained it.”

“The request of Simeon Wells ought to accomplish much more than that, considering his invaluable services,” I suggested.

“For that reason he has warned me he will not interfere again in my behalf,” answered Allerton; “so I must make the most of this leave. It is this consideration that induced me to come to see you to-night.”

We remained silent, waiting for him to proceed.

“I understood from what you said this afternoon that you are bound for Cuba, by way of the Horn,” he resumed, after a moment of thought. Captain Steele nodded.

“You have a fast ship, you leave immediately, and you are going very near to my own destination,” continued Allerton. “Therefore, I have come to ask if you will accept me as a passenger.”

I cast an inquiring glance at Uncle Naboth, and after meeting his eye replied:

“We do not carry passengers, Lieutenant Allerton; but it will please us to have you accept such hospitality as we can offer on the voyage. You will be a welcome guest.”

He flushed, as I could see under the light of the swinging lantern; for evening had fallen with its usual swift tropical custom. And I noticed, as well, that Mr. Allerton seemed undecided how to handle what was evidently an unexpected situation.

“I — I wanted to take my man with me,” he stammered.

“Your servant, sir?”

“One of our seamen, whose leave I obtained with my own. He is a Maya from Yucatan.”

“Bring him along, sir,” said my father, heartily; “it’s all the same to us.”

“Thank you,” he returned, and then sat silent, swinging his cap between his hands. Allerton had a thin, rather careworn face, for so young a man, for he could not be more than thirty at most. He was of medium height, of athletic build, and carried himself erect — a tribute to his training at the Naval Academy and his service aboard ship. There was something in the kindly expression of his deep-set, dark eyes and the pleasantly modulated tones of his voice that won our liking, and I am sure we were sincere in

declaring he would be a welcome guest on the ensuing voyage.

"I — I have several boxes — chests," he said, presently.

"We've room for a cargo, sir," responded Uncle Naboth.

"At what hour do you sail?" inquired Allerton, seeming well pleased by our consideration for him.

"Daybreak, sir."

"Then may we come aboard to-night?"

"Any hour you like," said I. It was Joe's watch, so I introduced him more particularly to our second mate, as well as to the other members of our party.

"Shall we send for you, Mr. Allerton?" asked Joe.

"Oh, no," he replied. "The ship's boat will bring me aboard, thank you. The boys are sorry to see me go so suddenly, but I feel I must take advantage of this fortunate occasion to secure passage. I might wait here a week or two before any sort of tub came this way, and I need every minute of my leave. Cuba lies only a hundred and twenty miles across the channel from Yucatan."

With this he returned to the torpedo boat he served, and so accustomed were we to little surprises of this nature that we paid small heed to the fact that we had accepted an unlooked for addition to our party for the long voyage that loomed ahead of us. We were quite a happy family aboard the *Seagull*, and Lieutenant Allerton appeared to be a genial fellow who would add rather than detract from the association we enjoyed.

CHAPTER 2

WE LISTEN TO A STRANGE PROPOSITION

I did not hear our passengers come aboard that night, being sound asleep. By the time I left my room next morning we were under way and steaming briskly over one of those quiet seas for which the Pacific is remarkable.

In the main cabin I found Lieutenant Allerton sitting at breakfast with Captain Steele, Uncle Naboth and Archie. Joe was snoozing after his late watch and Ned Britton was on deck. Behind our guest's chair stood the handsomest Indian I have ever seen, the Maya he had mentioned to us and whose name was Chaka. Our South Sea Islanders were genuine black men, but Chaka's skin was the color of golden copper. He had straight black hair, but not the high cheek bones of the typical American Indian, and the regularity of his features was certainly remarkable. His eyes were large, frank in expression and dark brown in color; he seemed intelligent and observant, but never spoke unless first addressed, and then in modest but dignified tones. His English was expressive, but not especially fluent, and it was easy to understand that he had picked up the language mainly by hearing it spoken.

My first glance at Chaka interested me in the fellow, yet of course during that first meeting I discovered few of the characteristics I have described. At this time he was silent and motionless as a statue save when opportunity offered to serve his master.

The lieutenant wore this morning a white duck mess costume for which he apologized by saying that his civilian wardrobe was rather limited, and if we would pardon the formality he would like to get all the wear from his old uniforms that was possible, during the voyage.

We told him to please himself. I thought he looked more manly and imposing in naval uniform than in "cits."

"But I don't see how he can be shy of clothes," remarked Archie, after breakfast, as we paced the deck together. "Allerton lugged seven big boxes aboard last night; I saw them come up the side; and if they don't contain his togs I'd like to know what on earth they *do* hold."

"That's none of our affair, Archie," I remarked.

"Do you think this thing is all straight and above board, Sam?" asked my friend.

"Of course, Archie. He's a lieutenant in the United States navy, and has a regular leave of absence. He joined us with the approval and good will of his commander."

"I know; but it seems queer, somehow. Take that copper-faced fellow, for

instance, who looks more like a king than a servant; what has Allerton got such a body guard as that for? I never knew any other naval officer to have the like. And three months' leave — on private business. Suff rin' Pete! what's that for?"

"You might ask the lieutenant," I replied, indifferently.

"Then there's the boxes; solid redwood and clamped with brass; seven of 'em! What's in 'em, Sam, do you suppose?"

"Archie boy, you're getting unduly suspicious. And you're minding some one else's business. Get the quoits and I'll toss a game with you." Our passenger was very quiet during the following day or two. He neither intruded nor secluded himself, but met us frankly when we were thrown together, listened carefully to our general conversation, and refrained from taking part in it more than politeness required.

Joe thought the young fellow seemed thoughtful and ill at ease, and confided to me that he had noticed Allerton now made more of a companion of the Maya than a dependent, although the man, for his part, never abated his deferent respect. Chaka seemed to regard Allerton with the love and fidelity of a dog for its master; yet if any of the sailors, or even Nux or Bryonia, spoke to the Indian with undue familiarity Chaka would draw himself up proudly and assume the pose of a superior.

We were much interested in the personality of these two unusual personages — that is, Joe, Archie and I were — and we often discussed them among ourselves. We three boys, being chums of long standing, were much together and had come to understand one another pretty well. We all liked Paul Allerton, for there was something winning in his personality. As for the Indian, Chaka, he did not repel us as much as he interested and fascinated us. One night big Bry, whom we admitted to perfect familiarity because of his long service, said to us:

"That Maya no common Injun, Mars' Sam, yo' take my word. He say his country Yucatan, an' that place Yucatan don' mean nuthin' to me, nohow, 'cause I never been there. But, wherever it is, Chaka's people mus' be good people, an' Chaka hisself never had any other marsa than Mars' Allerton."

"He has been serving in the navy, Bry."

"That don' count, sah. Yo' know what I mean."

On the evening of the third day out from Magdalena we were clustered as usual upon the deck, amusing ourselves by casual conversation, when Lieutenant Allerton approached us and said:

"I'd like to have a few moments' confidential talk with whoever is in authority here. It's rather hard for a stranger to determine who that may be, as you all seem alike interested in the career of the *Seagull.* But of course

someone directs your policies and decides upon your business ventures, and that is the person I ought properly to address."

We were a little puzzled and astonished by this speech. Uncle Naboth removed his pipe from his lips to say:

"This group is pretty near a partnership, sir, seein' as we've been through good and bad luck together many times an' learned how to trust each other as brave an' faithful comrades. We haven't any secrets, as I knows on; an' if so be you talked in private to any one of us, he'd be sure to call a meetin' an' tell the others. So, if you've anything to say about the ship, or business matters, or anything that ain't your own personal concern, set right down here an' tell it now, an' we'll all listen the best we know how."

Allerton followed this speech gravely and at first appeared embarrassed and undecided. I saw him cast a quick glance into Chaka's eyes, and the Maya responded with a stately nod. Then the lieutenant sat down in the center of our group and said:

"I thank you, gentlemen, for your kindness. It would seem that I have imposed upon your good nature sufficiently already; yet here I am, about to ask another favor."

"Go on, sir," said my father, with an encouraging nod.

"From what I have been able to learn," continued the lieutenant, in his quiet voice, "your ship is at this moment unchartered. You are bound for Havana, where you expect to make a lucrative contract to carry merchandise between that port and Key West; mostly, of course, leaf tobacco. Is that true?"

"It's quite correct, sir," said Uncle Naboth.

"In that case, there is no harm in my making you a business proposition. I want to land on the east coast of Yucatan, at a place little known and seldom visited by ships. It will take you a couple of hundred miles out of your course."

For a few moments no one spoke. Then Captain Steele said:

"A trip like that, Mr. Allerton, involves a certain amount of expense to us. But we're free, as far as our time is concerned, and we've plenty of coal and supplies. The question is, how much are you willing to pay for the accommodation?"

A slight flush crept over Allerton's cheek.

"Unfortunately, sir," he replied, "I have very little ready money."

His tone was so crestfallen that I felt sorry for him, and Joe turned quickly and said:

"That's unlucky, sir; but I've some funds that are not in use just now, and if you'll permit me to loan you whatever you require I shall be very happy to

be of service."

"Or," added Uncle Naboth, carelessly, "you can pay us some other time; whenever you're able."

Allerton looked around him, meeting only sympathetic faces, and smiled.

"But this is not business — not at all!" said he. "I did not intend to ask for financial assistance, gentlemen."

"What did you intend, Mr. Allerton?" I inquired.

He refrained from answering the direct question at once, evidently revolving in his mind what he should say. Then he began as follows:

"Ever since I came aboard I have had a feeling that I am among friends; or, at least, congenial spirits. I am embarked on a most Quixotic adventure, gentlemen, and more and more I realize that in order to accomplish what I have set out to do I need assistance — assistance of a rare and practical sort that you are well qualified to furnish. But it is necessary, in order that you understand me and my proposition fully, that I should tell you my story in detail. If I have your kind permission I will at once do so."

It began to sound interesting, especially in the ears of us three boys who loved adventure. I think he could read the eagerness in our eyes; but he looked earnestly at Captain Steele, who said:

"Fire ahead, Mr. Allerton."

He obeyed, seeming to choose his words carefully, so as to make the relation as concise as possible.

"My home is in a small New Hampshire town where the Allertons have been the most important family for many generations. I was bom in the same room — I think in the same bed — that my father and grandfather were born in. We had a large farm, or estate, and a fine old homestead that was, and is, the pride of the country. We have until recently been considered wealthy; but my poor father in some way acquired a speculative passion which speedily ruined him. On his death, while I was yet a cadet at Annapolis, it was found that all the land and investments he had inherited were gone; indeed, all that was left was the homestead with a few acres surrounding it.

"My mother and my two maiden sisters, one a confirmed invalid and both much older than I, found themselves wholly without resources to support themselves. In this emergency an old lawyer — a friend of the family, who I imagine has little keen ability in business matters, advised my mother to mortgage the place to secure funds for living expenses. It seemed really necessary, for the three forlorn women were unequal to the task of earning their living in any way.

"When this first fund was exhausted they mortgaged the homestead again, and still again; and although they had lived simply and economically, in

twelve years the old place has become so plastered with mortgages that it is scarcely worth their face value. Little can be saved from a second lieutenant's pay, yet I have been able to send something to the dear ones at home, which only had the effect of staving off the inevitable crisis for a time. Uncle Simeon, too, has helped them when he remembered it and had money; but he is a man quite impractical in money matters and the funds required for his electrical experiments are so great that he is nearly as poor as I am. Very foolishly he refuses to commercialize his inventions.

"Conditions at home have naturally grown worse instead of better, and now the man who holds the mortgages on the homestead has notified my mother that he will foreclose when next they fall due, in about four months' time from now. Such is the condition of my family at home, and you may well imagine, my friends, how unhappy their misfortunes and necessities have made me. As the climax of their sad fortunes drew near I have tried to find some means to assist them. It has occupied my thoughts by day and night. But one possible way of relief has occurred to me, suggested by Chaka. It is a desperate chance, perhaps; still, it is a chance, and I have resolved to undertake it."

He paused for a moment; but no one cared to speak, although we were much interested in the story.

"Nine years ago," continued Lieutenant Allerton, "while I was ensign on the *Maryland*, we were cruising on the east coast of the promontory of Yucatan when one evening we observed a small boat being sculled rapidly toward the ship by a young native the color of bronze, who was naked except for a loin cloth. After him darted a motley crowd of boats, in hot pursuit, the occupants screaming wild invectives at their escaping prey.

"Our captain ordered a gig lowered and I was sent out in it, met the fugitive, and took him aboard. We managed to regain the ship before the frantic natives could reach us. However, they shot a myriad of poisoned darts at us and were only driven off when a volley from our men sent them scurrying back to shore in a panic.

"The young fellow I had rescued was Chaka. He seemed to consider me his especial preserver and attached himself to me with a persistency that induced the captain to let me have him in my own room, where we soon became friends. Chaka is very intelligent, as you have doubtless observed. I taught him English and he taught me the Maya tongue. When, some months after, I was transferred, I managed to take Chaka with me and have him enrolled as a seaman. We have been together nine years, and we are better friends than at first."

He looked up at the Maya, who bowed gravely in acknowledgment.

CHAPTER 3

WE UNDERTAKE THE YUCATAN ADVENTURE

"I have learned all of Chaka's history, as he has learned all of mine," continued Allerton, resuming his story. "My friend is a royal prince of the Itzaex, the one native tribe of Yucatan that defied the Spanish invaders of the Sixteenth Century and remains unconquered to this day. This tribe dwells in the vast sierras of Yucatan, near the Great Lake, and the Atkayma of the Itzaex has the same importance and power as the Inca of Peru or the Caciques of the Aztecs formerly enjoyed. Chaka is the eldest son of the ruling atkayma; by this time he may even have succeeded to the title of atkayma himself, the head of his people, for his father was an old man when the boy left him. The family of rulers is a sacred one, said to be descended from the sun, and every one of the atkayma's fifty thousand subjects would die for him without hesitation.

"At the time I rescued Chaka he was an adventurous youth who, ignorant of the name of fear, was leading a band of his people on an expedition to the seacoast, in search of turtles. In some way he became separated from his companions and found himself surrounded by a horde of Mopanes, the hereditary tribal foes of the Itzaex. I am sure the boy rendered a good account of himself before he was forced to leap into a boat and scull out to sea, where his sharp eyes had noted our ship approaching. He had been bred with a horror for the white man, but preferred to take his chances with us rather than be cut down by the Mopanes.

"When he came to know us, and to understand our advanced civilization, the youth decided that he preferred it to the wild, crude life of his own people, and has gladly sacrificed his royal heritage to remain with me. Our friendship has been very sweet to us both, and we are as brothers."

It was good to watch the Maya's face during this tribute. His pride in his friend and his devotion to him might easily be read in the tender and unabashed expression of his handsome brown eyes.

"And now," said Allerton, "I come to the most important part of my story. When Chaka learned of the sore straights of my dear mother and sisters, and found how unhappy the lack of wealth was making us all, he became brooding and thoughtful, and finally proposed to me a plan which, if successful, would enable me to redeem the old homestead, provide my family with every comfort, and give me ample means besides. It is a bold — even an audacious — conception; but it may be accomplished, nevertheless, with Chaka's aid. I have decided to undertake it, and have been preparing for the expedition for more than a year. The last thing necessary was my leave of

absence, and this you brought to me at Magdalena with the admiral's despatches."

You may guess that by this time Archie, Joe and I were wide-eyed and open-mouthed with interest in this remarkable story. We could hardly wait for the lieutenant to explain his references to the adventure on which he had embarked, and he seemed to appreciate this and did not keep us waiting.

"The Maya tribes, which had inhabited Yucatan for centuries before the Spaniards discovered the country," said he, "were not, after all, the original inhabitants of the promontory. Ancient ruins of the cities and temples of the Mayas, equaling in beauty and size any of those erected by the Aztecs of Mexico, may yet be seen scattered over the land. Their civilization, customs, laws and literature amazed the early Spaniards who found them. Yet long before the Mayas came a civilization had existed in Yucatan greater than any they could ever boast. The legends of Chaka's people, the unconquered Itzaex, relate how the country was first settled by a race from Atlantis, a great island continent which was later submerged and utterly destroyed by some unusual convulsion of nature.

"This nation from Atlantis bore the name of Tcha. It settled in the mountainous regions of Yucatan, covering originally all that territory now occupied by the Itzaex, the Mopanes and the Kupules, midway between Campeache and the Mosquito Coast. There they built great cities of white marble, exquisitely carved, many of the walls bearing hieroglyphics and picture writings not unlike those of the ancient Egyptians. They were learned in arts and sciences and had their libraries and colleges. They worshipped the Sun-God — the original deity of the Atlanteans — and also Bacâb, a god afterward adopted by the Mayas, who supported the heavens on his shoulders. The rulers of the Tcha were all chosen from the priesthood, the highest caste among them, and were male or female, as the case might be.

"Chaka tells me that when the Mayas came to Yucatan they found all these cities deserted and falling to ruins. Only skeletons, lying here and there in the streets, and found in great numbers in the dwellings, showed that the palatial buildings had ever known inhabitants. There is a great mystery concerning these deserted cities. Some think a pestilence fell upon the people and destroyed them; others that a rain of scorpions depopulated the country. Nothing remained, seemingly, to tell the fate of this mighty vanished race. The Mayas, being superstitious, were afraid to occupy the marble cities. They tore down the walls and used the materials for their own inferior buildings. Scarce a vestige now remains of the ancient civilization of the Tcha. Yet, according to Chaka, a remnant of that wonderful people still exists, in much the same way that it did six thousand years ago; and strange

as it may seem, inhabits a hidden city in the mountains of Yucatan."

I had been getting a little weary of the historical lecture; but now I saw why Allerton had related it. A tribe of Atlanteans six thousand years old, and living in a hidden city of Yucatan! Yes; we were all intent enough by this time. It seemed like a fairy romance, yet the words were uttered with careful deliberation. I glanced at Chaka: the grave look upon the Maya's face was ample confirmation that he at least believed in the truth of this marvelous statement.

"This remnant of the Tcha was never discovered by the Spaniards," continued Mr. Allerton, "and even the many tribes of the Mayas remain to-day ignorant of their presence in Yucatan. It is certain the owners of the various haciendas dotting the plains at the west and north have never heard of the hidden city. But the hereditary Atkayma of the Itzaex has had the knowledge for centuries, and kept the secret even from his own people. In return for this protection the Tcha have given to the rulers of the Itzaex certain powers which have enabled them to resist all attacks upon their domain and to remain free and unconquered to this day.

"There are not many of the ancient race of Tcha, and they live so secluded in their mountain fastness that nothing definite is known concerning them. When Chaka's father was a young man he, with a band of followers, unconsciously invaded the territory of the Tcha and climbed the mountain near their sacred retreat. The atkayma and his men were promptly seized and carried into the hidden city, where all were destroyed except the Itzaex ruler. He was, after taking a solemn oath, allowed to return to his people, so that by means of his authority he might prevent any further intrusion on the part of his subjects.

"When Chaka was old enough to understand these things his father, the old atkayma, confided to him this story, at the same time urging him, when he in turn became the ruler of his nation, to protect the Tcha from discovery or molestation. One thing that Chaka especially remembers is his father's description of the enormous wealth of the hidden city, where the streets were literally lined with gold and all ornaments and utensils were of the same precious metal. Brilliant red jewels, probably rubies, seemed as common as pebbles elsewhere. The Itzaex are a simple people, caring little for gold or gems, so the treasure of the Tcha has never tempted them.

"And now, gentlemen, I think you will understand from this brief relation the adventure upon which Chaka and I have embarked. My friend will guide me to his people, the Itzaex, and from there we will make a descent on the hidden city of the ancient Tcha and collect such treasure as we are able."

I drew a long breath, while Archie, Joe and I stared into one another's

eyes. How curious it seemed that just at this juncture, when we had supposed we were through with fortune hunting for good and all, this alluring tale was suddenly told us. We were eager to know what would follow, for it was evident that Allerton would not have told us so much had he not, as indeed he had hinted, desired our assistance.

Uncle Naboth grunted as he shifted uneasily on his deck chair. Uncle is a brave old fellow, and adventurous, too; but he is getting old, and has enough means to render him rather indifferent to treasure seeking.

My father seldom allows his feelings to be detected from his expression. He has a way of wiggling that wooden leg of his from side to side that often tells me his mood; but he is accustomed to restrain all speech until he has fully made up his mind, after which it is very difficult to move him.

Fortunately, I thought, the leg did not now indicate that he was much disturbed. He actually seemed interested in the lieutenant's recital and was at present slowly revolving it in his mind.

"I s'pose, sir," began Uncle Naboth, "you'd like us to drop you on the coast, near to where you'll find Chaka's people. We'll do that. But as fer waitin' to pick you up, when you're ready to quit, why that's a hard thing to figger on, seein' no one knows how long the job'll take you, or if you'll ever get away at all."

Mr. Allerton did not reply at once. When he did his voice trembled a little, as if the matter he was about to broach were of vital importance to him.

"I want to make you a proposition, gentlemen," he said, addressing us all, "and I hope you will consider it carefully before rejecting it. There is untold wealth in the secluded city of the Tcha. If we are going there to plunder we may as well take enough to make every one of us rich. Yet my idea is not to rob that ancient people, but to obtain a portion of their gold and jewels by fair means. They have an ancient superstition that if a white man ever discovers their retreat he will become their master — second only in power to the Sun-God. Even the priests must bow before him and admit his supremacy. They believe that such a white man, capable of penetrating to their city, would be a superior being, excelling themselves in intelligence; for their city is carefully guarded from all possible intrusion.

"This story may or may not be true; yet, without knowing anything very definite about the city or the people we are to visit, both Chaka and I consider it reasonable to suppose that this isolated race, cut off from all the rest of the world and its progress, and despising gold and jewels except for their beauty, might be delighted with some of the convenient and pretty knickknacks and modem inventions so common to us, and so inexpensive. So I have packed in my chests a supply of novelties which I will offer to trade for gold and

rubies, thus obtaining the desired treasure in a legitimate way."

"That sounds reasonable, an' clever, too," remarked my father, nodding approvingly.

"I've quite a lot of beads and cheap jewelry aboard myself," announced Archie. "Perhaps we could trade that in."

"I don't imagine people who have rubies and gold would care for cheap jewelry," replied Joe.

"My original idea," said Allerton, "was to go alone with Chaka to his people, and have them escort us to the neighborhood of the hidden city. There Chaka and I would make an attempt to evade the guards and slip into the city, using some appliances to accomplish this which I will explain to you later. But the more I have dwelt upon this adventure, the more dangerous it seems to me if undertaken by two people. The truth is that I have made somewhat elaborate preparations to impress this unknown nation, and I need more assistance than Chaka can render, and more intelligent comrades than the fierce native Itzaex. The chances of success would be much greater, I am sure, if I had half a dozen white comrades, brave and trustworthy, willing to follow me anywhere."

"Here's one. Lieutenant!" I cried, starting up and extending to him my hand. "Will you accept me as a volunteer?"

"Oh, well," said Joe, calmly, "if Sam goes of course Archie and I go with him."

"To be sure," nodded Archie, lazily.

Allerton seemed very grateful as he shook our hands. We shook hands with Chaka, too, who appeared to be equally pleased.

"I knowed it!" growled Uncle Naboth, ruefully; "I saw it cornin' from the start. Seems like we can't sail in any direction without these fool boys runnin' their necks inter danger. That hidden city sounds interestin', though. Guess I'll go, too, Lieutenant — blamed if I don't!"

Now, my dear Uncle Naboth is so short and so fat that his person is almost a ball in shape. Also he wheezes a bit because his breath is scant, and no one would be likely to select him for an ideal mountain climber and adventurer under any circumstances. There was an amused gleam in Allerton's eye as he said:

"Thank you very much, sir. I shall be delighted to have you with us, if you can stand the mosquitoes."

"Eh? Are they 'skeeters there?" inquired my uncle.

"A great many, I fear. It is near the famous Mosquito Coast, you know."

Uncle Naboth looked grave and a bit uncomfortable, but made no further remark. I knew very well, however, that nothing on earth would induce him

to enter a jungle swarming with his deadly enemies the mosquitoes, and that he would find an early excuse to back out of the expedition.

"O' course," said Captain Steele, "I'll hev to look after the *Seagull,* fer my part, an' be ready to pick you up when you've made good. Hick'ry legs ain't much as mountain climbers, no how; so it's just as well I ain't along."

"If you'll take me with you, sir," said Ned Britton, who had been silent until now, "I'll consider it a rare favor."

Allerton was genuinely glad of this splendid recruit. Ned wasn't strong at brain-work, but of powerful physique, active and fearless. I could see that Chaka regarded him as the most valuable of the volunteers.

"There's your half dozen whites, sir, including yourself," said father. "But I guess you'd better pick one more, 'cause Naboth'll be et up by 'skeeters afore you get very far."

"Then you must choose from among the sailors," I suggested. "They are all good men, Lieutenant, and you can't go wrong."

"I'll look them over awhile and make the selection when I know them better," was Allerton's reply. "I cannot tell you how greatly your prompt and hearty cooperation has delighted me. These three young fellows," pointing to us in turn, "have won considerable renown already for their desperate adventures, and not a man sails the seas who hasn't heard of them and admired their grit. I'm in luck to have met you; in greater luck to have you join my enterprise. And now let us understand the terms of the agreement. If we succeed — any of us — in returning to this ship with treasure, I ask that a share be set aside to reclaim my old homestead and support my mother and sisters. If I should not be fortunate enough to come out of the adventure alive, then I ask you to keep Chaka with you and make him your friend, sending on my share of the spoils to my family. You can easily obtain Chaka's discharge from the navy, as he has served the required time."

"That's all right, sir," I replied. "We are all taking chances, as we know very well, and I think the best way to fix the business deal is to say that your home shall be redeemed first of all, as that is the main object of the undertaking. After that all of us who come back safe and sound may share and share alike. What do you say, Uncle Naboth?"

"Very good, Sam."

"Seems to me that's fair and square," added Archie.

"We're furnishing the ship an' crew," remarked my father, musingly. "True, sir," responded Allerton readily. "But in those seven chests I have an outfit fully as important for the success of the expedition as your ship and crew. We will let one offset the other, if you like."

"Suits me," declared my father, who cared less for driving a bargain than

for asserting the importance of the *Seagull.* “But it’s gettin’ pretty late, boys, and I’m sleepy. Guess my wooden leg’s fell asleep a’ready. So let’s turn in and do the rest o’ the talkin’ later on. There’ll be lots o’ time to figger everything out afore we round the Horn.”

So we separated, the group on deck breaking up.

CHAPTER 4

WE SCENT DANGER AHEAD

We were all somewhat thoughtful after this interview, for it was evident we had undertaken an adventure the details of which were quite obscure to us. For my part I was too nervous and excited to bunk in just yet, so I took Joe's arm and we walked over to the bow, where the clear starlight enabled us to watch the *Seagull* cut her way through the water. Chaka was at the rail before us, and started to move away; but I stopped him, saying:

"We are all brothers now, Chaka, and therefore we must become better friends. Now that we are aware of your station and rank in your own country we stand equal."

"Only that?" said Joe. "Is the Atkayma of the Itzaex merely the equal of a common seaman?"

"I'm not common, Joe," I protested; "and I've a notion a decent American is the social equal of an Indian chief. It's social equality I'm talking about, not rank."

"Cap'n Sam is right," observed Chaka, with a smile that would have fascinated a woman. "Equality among men is found only in heart and brain."

His readiness to converse, remembering his former reserve, almost startled me.

"Perhaps you're right," drawled Joe. "But tell us, Chaka, is there much danger in this coming adventure, do you think?"

The Maya looked grave.

"Plenty danger, Cap'n Joe." Every one was a "Cap'n" to Chaka; he considered it a complimentary title, bound to please. "Danger from Itzaex, first of all; but not much, for I am Chief s son. More danger from Mopane tribe, who hate Itzaex. Most danger from the mighty Tcha, who very strong, very jealous, very watchful."

"What are those people like?" I asked.

The Maya shook his head.

"My father not tell me. When I ask, he tremble, like he afraid; and my father is brave man. But the Tcha country very small — in the middle of a mountain — and their legend say a white man some day discover them and be their master. My brother Paul is white man."

"So you think our greatest danger will be to get to the hidden city, do you?"

"Yes. It long, bad journey. Mopanes watch by seashore, and fight us. My own people I have not seen for many years. When I find them they greet me as child of the sun, and help me. But Itzaex hate all white men, and I must

use my power to protect white men from their hatred. That will be a danger to you, if not to me."

"I see. Well, it promises to be an exciting trip, all right," I said cheerfully, for the truth was that the danger of the adventure appealed to me more than the prospect of securing treasure. "It isn't always necessary to fight your way in a hostile country, in order to win out, Chaka. Diplomacy and caution, backed by a little good judgment, are better than guns and pistols. Eh, Joe?"

"A little courage in avoiding a fight has often done us good service, Sam," agreed my friend.

Chaka seemed to approve this view.

"Sometime my brother Paul tell you more'," he said.

I noticed he now spoke of Allerton as "my brother Paul," when mentioning him to us; and there was a world of affection in the way he said it.

"Brother Paul has a big brain; his mind see far ahead. Also he have great man for Uncle — Cap'n Simeon Wells. We spend whole month last summer with Cap'n Wells, who know how to do many strange things."

"He's a jim-cracker electrician, all right," said Joe.

"He give much wonder-things to my brother Paul, to help him with the Mopanes, the Itzaex and the Tcha. We keep wonder-things in the seven big boxes. You see, some day."

With this information the Maya left us, and Joe and I sat another hour discussing the coming adventure before we finally turned in.

Uncle Naboth was pretty glum next morning. He was trying to find some way to back out of the expedition gracefully and with credit. Finally he said to us:

"You boys ain't to be depended on; I've found that out. We had all our plans fixed to get into a steady, respectable coast trade, where there wouldn't be a single thing to keep any o' us awake nights; and here, when we're only a week out o' port, you've gone an' upsot the whole deal."

"It *is* funny, Uncle, I'll admit," said I. "But you can't blame us for it, I'm sure. Lay it to Fate, where the responsibility belongs. Remember, too, that you were one of the first to offer to join the expedition."

"I were wrong about that, Sam," he replied, eagerly. "I meant to stick to my principles, as an honest man should. An', by jinks, I *will* stick to my principles! Don't try to argy with me; don't try to coax me. As sure as my name's Naboth Perkins I'm goin' to stick to this ship, whatever you reckless bunch o' youngsters may decide on."

"Do you back down, sir?" demanded Archie, who was secretly much amused.

“No, sir; not a jot. I stick to my first principles; that’s all.”

Well, we were glad he took it that way, for we didn’t want Uncle Naboth with us. He was brave enough, we knew; but he had a way of getting us all into unnecessary trouble, and his rotund figure prevented him from being as active as the rest of us. A better fellow never lived than this same Naboth Perkins, but we all felt he was safer on board ship than in the wildernesses of Yucatan, and we had a suspicion we would be safer without him, too.

From that time on the adventure was our one topic of conversation. Chaka suggested that he teach us to speak the Maya tongue during the voyage, and we eagerly accepted the offer. I had already a smattering of Arabian and Chinese and could speak fluently the native language of our South Sea Islanders, Nux and Bryonia. So it was little trouble to me, with the painstaking instructions of Chaka and Allerton, to learn to comprehend fairly the Maya tongue. Joe was a natural linguist and kept pace with me easily, but poor Archie was woefully thick-headed when it came to foreign languages. Even Ned Britton, who was wholly uneducated, got along better than he. We kept up our lessons until the day we sighted the coast of Yucatan, but even then Archie understood only a few words of Maya. The mate, for his part, knew all that was said to him, but was rather slow and uncertain of speech, while Joe and I could converse readily with Allerton and Chaka in the Maya.

One of the queerest things, in this regard, was our discovery that black Nux, our steward, had caught on to Chaka’s language with little difficulty, and had himself taught it to Bry. They surprised us one evening by joining in our conversation, and that decided Allerton to ask permission to add them to our party.

“I have never seen finer physical specimens of manhood than these blacks,” he said to me, “and your reports of their loyalty and courage have quite warmed my heart toward them. Perhaps their jet black complexions would be as great a novelty to the Tcha as white skins, and these fellows will add greatly to the strength of our party.”

“That will make nine of us, altogether — ,” I said musingly; “you and Chaka, we three boys, Ned Britton, a sailor, and Nux and Bryonia. By the way, have you chosen the sailor?”

“I think I shall take the Mexican who is called Pedro,” answered Allerton. “He is an active fellow and looks honest. Moreover, he is accustomed to a climate similar to that of Yucatan, which is at present a province of Mexico, although so much of it is yet an unexplored wilderness. Do you think Pedro will be willing to join us?”

“I think so, if only for a share of the spoils,” said I. “But I advise you not to mention the subject to him until the last moment. You see, every man jack

of them forward would like to go too."

As you may imagine, we asked many questions of Chaka during the voyage regarding his native country, and the route we were to take to get there. On the whole his answers were clear and satisfactory, for although he had been away for nine years he was a youth of fifteen when forced to escape the Mopanes.

According to his statements all the tribes of Yucatan Indians are called Mayas, and have a common language which varies only slightly according to the dialects of the scattered tribes. All the natives, with the exception of the Itzaex, have at times been conquered by the Spaniards, who first invaded the peninsula in 1506. But the Mayas are mostly wild and untamed to this day, and save for the tribes inhabiting the flat and settled portions of the North and West they indulge in the same barbaric and warlike existence as when the whites first came among them.

After four hundred years of settlement there is less land tilled in Yucatan to-day than there was in its first century of annexation to Spain. The interior and mountainous district is still a wilderness and exceedingly dangerous for a white man to enter.

The most powerful and warlike tribe, now as in the beginning, is that of the Itzaex. These people have no desire to acquire more territory, but hold firmly to their original heritage and fight desperately any of their neighbors who dare cross their boundaries. On the other hand, the Itzaex are barred from the seashore by a fierce tribe known as the Mopanes, and on other sides by the Kupules and Choies.

The hidden city of the remnant of the ancient Tcha nation lies directly in the heart of the Itzaex territory, which is doubtless the reason none of the other tribes is aware of its existence. The chief city of Itzlan is built on the shores of a beautiful fresh water lake lying two thousand feet above the sea level; but Chaka declares no mortal eyes save those of his own tribe have ever yet beheld the place. Which, of course, makes us the more eager to see it.

We had a most delightful voyage south, the Pacific being on its good behavior. Excellent time was made even through the turbulent waters of the Horn, and not until we had rounded the continent and were in the waters of the Atlantic did Allerton again refer to the contents of his seven mysterious chests.

One day, however, he proposed opening them, as he said it would be well for all of us who were to join the expedition to be thoroughly familiar with their contents. So, one by one, the boxes were brought into the roomy main cabin by Nux and Bryonia, where Allerton proceeded to open them.

CHAPTER 5

WE INSPECT A NOVEL AERIAL INVENTION

"You must understand," said the lieutenant, "that from the moment I decided to undertake this adventure I began preparing my 'sinews of war.' I calculated that an isolated people like the Tcha would be greatly impressed by our wonderful modern inventions. Also I figured that many things might be collected by me which would assist in the difficult task of penetrating a hostile territory and climbing the almost inaccessible mountains leading to the hidden city. Fortunately I was stationed last summer for more than a month at Washington, where I confided my plans to my uncle, Simeon Wells, and had many long conversations with him as to a proper equipment for this difficult undertaking. His cleverness in electrical matters was of great assistance to me, for his famous storage battery, combining tremendous power with light weight, will enable me to carry some important devices into the very heart of the wilderness. Also my uncle knew of several recent inventions of which I was myself ignorant, and through his influence I managed to secure them. Here, for instance, is an important example."

With this he took from a chest a curious contrivance that seemed to us like a cross between a rubber air-cushion and an undershirt. As Allerton explained the thing, it was to be worn by pulling it on over the head and allowing it to loosely cover the body from the neck down to the thighs. It was composed of two layers of thin, ribbon-like tissue, and could be inflated like a balloon.

"This strap," explained Allerton, "is for attaching to your left side a small metal case — here is one — containing the crystals of themlyne. By pouring a little water upon the crystals, through the valve, a very volatile but powerful gas is created, called 'theml,' which inflates the garment. Chaka will put one on, so you may see exactly how it works."

The Maya immediately complied, slipping the rubber arrangement over his head and putting his arms through the holes provided for that purpose. He then attached the metal case, which I think was aluminum, and supplied the themlyne crystals with water. At once the gas began rushing into the queer garment, which became inflated until Chaka's upper half was puffed out in a ludicrous manner. He turned off the gas, then, and cast an inquiring glance at Allerton.

"Instead of weighing some one hundred and eighty pounds, as he did a while ago," announced the lieutenant, "Chaka is now but little heavier than air itself."

To verify this the Maya leaped lightly to the cabin table, bounding back to

the floor again with the resilience of a rubber ball.

"In climbing mountains," explained Allerton, "as well as in descending precipices and the like, this inflated garment will prove invaluable. It is not made of rubber, as perhaps you imagine, but of a new and wonderful material as tough as steel, and as impenetrable. It is a recent scientific discovery to be used in making unpuncturable automobile tires, and I am the first person who has ever adapted it to any other purpose. The gas-jacket, as 1 call it, was suggested by Uncle Simeon, and I immediately appreciated its value. There are ten of them in this chest, each fitted with a themlyne tank for inflating it. Now I will demonstrate its most important use. If Chaka lets a little more gas into the jacket it will carry him off his feet."

Chaka did this, slowly rising like a balloon to the ceiling of the cabin, but remaining upright because his legs anchored him in a perpendicular position. He now touched a valve which released a certain portion of the gas and enabled him to descend again to the floor.

"As the jacket is ordinarily worn," said Allerton, "the idea is to retain enough weight in your body to enable you to control all your motions, at the same time reducing your weight to the extent of preventing fatigue. I could leap over a precipice in that jacket and alight at the bottom uninjured. If I wished to escape an enemy, I could soar into the air, out of reach."

He took out his pocket knife and asked me to slash or prick the gas-jacket which Chaka was wearing; but the material resisted all my attempts.

"I doubt," remarked Allerton, "if a bullet at close range would penetrate it; I have never tried the experiment, but where we are going there are no bullets used by the natives."

We were all filled with wonder at this curious contrivance.

"How much gas will that little case of crystals generate?" I asked.

"Enough to inflate the jacket a half dozen times," he replied. "But I have an ample supply of themlyne crystals in another chest, to replenish the cases when necessary."

"Won't any other gas do?" inquired Archie.

"Not so well. And no other gas can be procured so quickly and easily as themlyne."

"Of course, when the stuff is gone the jackets are useless," suggested Joe.

"Yes; but we do not expect to use much gas except in case of emergency. At such times we are sure to find the jackets very useful. There is an appliance I myself have invented to attach to the fully inflated garments, which will render them equal to aeroplanes, and much more reliable and safe," continued Allerton.

He motioned to Chaka, who took from the chest two objects that

resembled closed Japanese fans, which the native first buckled to either side of his gas-jacket and then thrust his arms through a series of catgut loops. Allerton had to assist him in this, as the bulky jacket kept Chaka from using his hands to good advantage. When all was ready, the Maya raised his arms and showed himself possessed of wings. As his arms hung down by his sides the wings remained closed; as he raised them the fans unfolded. They were made of a material similar to that of the jacket.

"We have not had much opportunity to experiment with these wings," admitted the lieutenant. "They may prove awkward, at first, and perhaps unaided would not carry one far into the air. But when one has ascended to an altitude by means of the inflated jacket the wings should enable him to direct his course, and to soar with the wind, or tack as a ship does, for long distances."

"I can't see much practical use in all these fixin's," remarked Uncle Naboth. "Seems to me you ain't goin' to Yucatan to do circus acts or to knock out the Wright brothers, but jest to fight a lot o' Injuns an' grab some gold an' things. Could you carry much of a load through the air in them jackets?"

"I fear not," admitted Allerton, gravely. "As I before stated, one of my ideas is to impress the natives with the wonders of our modern civilization."

"Well, it orter do that, all right. It's impressed me," said Uncle Naboth.

CHAPTER 6

WE SEE AN ASTONISHING THING

"The most wonderful thing I have to show you," said Lieutenant Allerton, as Chaka divested himself of the gas-jacket and, after folding and putting it away, prepared to open another chest, "is that which I owe entirely to the genius of my inventive uncle, and his friendly interest in me. Indeed, I may say with truth that you are the first persons in all the world, save the President of the United States, my uncle and myself and Chaka, who have ever been initiated into the mysteries of the marvelous electrite. That is not its correct scientific name, but that is what I shall call it. Some day I am sure this invention will revolutionize and abolish warfare, securing peace to all the nations of the earth. It is so tremendous in its possibilities that when Uncle Simeon finally perfected it, after years of experimenting, he was afraid to give it to the public. He took the President into his confidence, with the result that they have decided to wait and watch conditions before deciding what to do with the electrite. But my uncle has been anxious to test the contrivance in actual use, and at my earliest entreaty permitted me to have eight of them made, to carry with me on my expedition. I may say that I rely more upon the possession of these electrites than upon any other portion of my equipment to carry us through to success."

In the chest which Chaka now opened we saw a number of carefully wrapped parcels. One of these the lieutenant picked up and opened on the cabin table. There was a layer of stout paper, a wooden box, a covering of felt, one of chamois, then white tissue — and finally Allerton produced a nickel plated tube fifteen inches long and curved at one end like the handle of a revolver. From this handle dangled two insulated electric wires.

We were much interested in this proceeding, but as yet unable to understand what the tube was for. From a square box Allerton next withdrew a belt that at first glance resembled a cartridge-belt, except that it was broader and twice as thick. All around the outer surface was a row of curious electric tubes, joined irregularly together.

"This," said the exhibitor, proceeding to strap the belt around his waist, "is the most condensed form of the famous Simeon Wells storage battery." He then attached the wires of the tube to the belt and slipped the electrite into a loop, or holster, at his right side. "I am now ready," continued Allerton, "to meet any savage beast or any foe that dares face me, for I am armed with the most powerful weapon the world of science has ever produced. If attacked I draw the electrite," suiting the action to the word, "point it at my enemy, and press this button on the tube with my thumb. That will release a charge of

electricity sufficient to stun an elephant at a hundred yards' distance."

We looked at him in wonder, and many exclamations, varied according to the temperament of the members of our group, greeted his assertion.

"How many times will it shoot?" asked Archie.

"Forty-five times. That will exhaust the power of the belt," replied Allerton.

"And then?" said Captain Steele.

"Then we must use another belt, sir. I have six belts for each electrite, and eight electrites."

"Have you ever tested it?" I asked, a little bewildered as I began to comprehend the marvel of the thing.

"No; not yet. But Professor Wells, the inventor, has fully tested its power, first on dogs and small animals, then on a horse, and finally upon his janitor, who agreed to submit to the ordeal."

"You don't mean to say he murdered the man!" cried Uncle Naboth, horrified.

"Not at all, sir. The most astonishing thing about the electrite is that it doesn't kill — it stuns. A charge from it will knock a man over instantly, rendering him unconscious and apparently lifeless. From two to three hours later, depending upon his physical condition and vitality, he will regain consciousness and be little the worse for his experience save perhaps for a headache. This is why I told you the electrite is destined to abolish war and conserve peace. Nothing can stand against it. Its use will enable an army to conquer and yet avoid bloodshed. If electrites were used by two opposing forces no wails of widows and orphans would follow in the wake of a battle to cast their gloom over the victors."

We sat spellbound and in silence for a time, thoughtfully considering these things. Gradually I, for my part, began to appreciate the marvel of this great invention.

"I'd like to test it," said Joe, calmly. "Will you try it on me, Lieutenant?"

"You are too valuable a person to experiment upon," said he; "but in a way Chaka and I have tested each of our eight tubes, using an extra storage belt which I brought along for that purpose. We secured permission to hunt, one day, on the shore of Magdalena Bay, and knocked over rabbits, gulls and a couple of coyotes with ease. We could not wait to see if they recovered, but I have Uncle Simeon's assurance that, in the case of a man, recovery is certain unless he has some bad heart trouble or other physical defect. Uncle's janitor, upon whom he experimented — a brawny Irishman — was upon his feet again in a little more than two hours."

"It's surely a queer weapon," remarked Uncle Naboth. "But when it

comes to fighting natives in Yucatan I guess I'd prefer a good rifle. What's the use of knockin' an enemy over if you don't put him out o' business for good an' all?"

"No one likes to kill a human being when it can be avoided," I answered, rather indignantly. "If we are opposed by natives and can render them unconscious for two hours, it's just as good for our purpose as killing the poor devils."

"My idea, exactly, Sam," approved Allerton. "But unfortunately we cannot use our electrite at will, being limited in our number of battery charges. So we must carry guns and revolvers, too, and save these finer weapons for emergencies."

He then proceeded to show us other curious things contained in the chests, some of which you will hear of during the progress of my story. Three of the big boxes were completely filled with mechanical toys and novelties, aluminum utensils, brass buttons, metal combs, brushes of various sorts, bales of gorgeous colored silks and china ornaments. Allerton admitted that these things had cost him considerable money, practically exhausting the combined resources of his eccentric but inspired uncle and himself, as well as Chaka's savings.

"If we do not succeed," said he, quietly enough, "I shall be a bankrupt. But if my plans carry, as I hope they will, no sacrifice is too great to redeem the old homestead and provide for the future of those dear, dependent women."

"Succeed!" cried Archie; "of course we'll succeed. With such an outfit as that there's no chance at all of failure."

No one replied to this enthusiastic speech. We were busy with our thoughts. There was a long and difficult journey before us, fraught with desperate adventures, before any one might say with assurance that success lay within our grasp.

But we considered it worth the attempt, nevertheless.

CHAPTER 7

WE OUTWIT THE ENEMY

In the gray of the morning I stood with my friends beside the rail, peering anxiously at a dim black line that marked the Yucatan coast. In order to avoid the islands and settled coast districts of the north-east we had approached Yucatan by way of the Mosquito Coast and British Honduras, expecting to sight the country in its wildest and most barbarous district.

Chaka, who had resided as a boy in the interior but had made several trips to the sea, was uncertain whether he would recognize the Bay of Mopa from the water or not. It was from the bay I have mentioned, which lay in the hostile Mopane territory, that the trail led into the country of the Itzaex — the only trail Chaka knew of and therefore the trail we must follow.

Although waging a fierce warfare with neighboring tribes the Mopanes were accustomed to deal arbitrarily with ships and expeditions from Honduras which came to trade for the enormous green turtles that abounded on their coast. This fact we relied upon to shield us from immediate hostilities.

As the sun slowly rose and dissolved the gray shades from the morning sky we found ourselves quite near to a wild but very attractive shore. The sandy beach was shelving and touched the sea at a level. Back of the beach began the scrub — low bushes somewhat resembling our sagebrush but set closer together. Beyond the scrub rose the great forests of logwood and mahogany, covering the land as far as the eye could reach.

Chaka told us the villages of the Mopanes were all within the forest's edge, but by eight o'clock, when we came close enough to view the scene distinctly, we were enabled to see statuesque bronze figures dotting the shore here and there. Doubtless these were sentinels, set to watch us and see where we landed.

"Not here!" exclaimed the Maya, shaking his head.

We swung around and steamed slowly north, keeping sharp watch for hidden shoals and rocks, as no map in my father's collection was able to guide a mariner in these practically unknown waters. Small bays and indentations were numerous, and each of these Chaka scanned with thoughtful care. Once, indeed, he decided he had found the right place, and we ventured into a pretty bay and lay to while our guide carefully considered the landmarks. But the native, although slow to form conclusions, had a positive nature and was not to be deceived by minor appearances.

"Not here, Cap'n Steele," he said again, and we stood out and continued on our way, hugging the coast as closely as we dared in order to give Chaka

a better view.

We passed the whole day in this tedious search and it was almost evening when the Maya gave a cry of delight and raised his arms to indicate that he had sighted the right haven. It was more a bight than a bay, and my father looked grave at the huge rocks scattered a full quarter of a mile from the shore line.

Natives watched us here, as everywhere, and when we lay to a score of dugouts were pushed into the water and filled with Indians who soon swarmed along our side. Chaka now kept out of their sight, fearing to be recognized, and Allerton called to one lot of natives, which showed an impudent disposition to board us, to keep off or take the consequences. They were astonished to hear a white man speak the Maya tongue and declared they wanted to come aboard to "trade." Allerton replied that we had nothing to trade and would proceed at once on our way north.

This did not seem to satisfy them. They were all copper-colored, athletic fellows, quick and nervous in action and with jet-black eyes which glinted fiercely. They seemed utterly unafraid of us and one boat load of four made a sudden dash up our side, leaping to seize a rope ladder we had left swaying from the bulwarks and climbing it with the agility of cats.

Ned Britton happened to be watching that spot and the burly mate grasped the first native by an arm, swung him clear of the side, and then hurled him bodily at the others following. All four went down with a rush, disappearing below the surface of the placid water, while their comrades screamed an angry defiance and sent a volley of small slender darts — which reminded me of arrows — aimed at every head showing above the side. We had no trouble in dodging them, but Allerton warned us they were poisoned and we did not relish such an attack.

Captain Steele had already rung to go ahead and we gathered way and moved from our dangerous position as quickly as possible. The natives Ned had dislodged scrambled into their boat again, but the fellow he had seized seemed to have a broken arm and howled lustily as his comrades dragged him aboard.

The Mopanes showed no disposition to follow us and as we gained the open sea we observed them paddling back to the shore.

"A pretty reception, I must say!" growled Archie in disgust. "So that's the sort of vermin we're supposed to tackle, is it?"

"I imagine this is only a sample of their peculiarities," mused Joe. "Mopanes bad Indians," admitted Chaka, who had now come on deck again.

"Well, I suppose we must take them as we find them," I rejoined, with a sigh. "The trouble seems to be that no one has taken pains to civilize them."

“What’s our plan now, sir?” asked Ned, turning to Allerton.

“We’ll stand out until darkness comes on, and then return to the bay with all lights out and disembark as silently as possible,” was the answer. “We rely on the usual native custom of ‘sleeping nights and fighting days’ to shield us from observation. We have now created the impression that we have sailed away for good, and as ships are a rarity in this latitude the Mopanes will all retire to their villages back in the forest and go to bed. That will give us a chance to land, make our preparations and get a good start on the secret trail leading to the Itzaex country.”

“Meantime, what’s to become of the ship?” asked Ned.

“Captain Steele and his men will stand on and off the coast until our return. We have arranged a series of signals so that he will know when we approach, and come in to meet us. His task will be a tedious one, for if all goes well it will take us at least two or three weeks to make our journey and accomplish our purpose. Still, we may be driven back at once, and need succor any day, especially if Chaka’s people refuse to recognize his authority and show us hostilities.”

“In that case,” said I, “the adventure will become hopeless, will it not?”

Allerton looked sober and did not reply. Chaka was quite undisturbed by the suggestion of disloyalty on the part of his tribesmen and said, “If we can fight Mopanes, we also can fight Itzaex.”

“But the chests!” I exclaimed, suddenly remembering the baggage. “What is to become of them? One contains our supplies, you know, and I imagine all are quite necessary to us. Yet how will nine people be able to lug seven heavy chests through a forest trail, beset with dangers?”

“Our outfits,” explained Allerton, “are contained in three of the chests, so when we have emptied those of their contents they may be left behind. The other four will be provided with jackets and wheels. One man is sufficient to propel each one of them.”

I admit I looked and felt puzzled at this statement.

“And now,” continued our leader, “it is time for us to begin our preparations, while there is a scrap of daylight. We may also light our decks for a time, but on nearing shore we shall be black as night.”

The crew of the *Seagull*, having been already apprised of our adventure and scenting the prize money promised them, were every one eager to be of assistance. The chests were brought on deck and three of them opened.

“We must now shed for a time all European customs and clothing,” announced Paul. “From this moment we assume the outfits I have provided for the occasion.”

While the sailors looked on curiously he asked Archie to strip and dress

for his part. The boy quickly shed his apparel, even to his underclothes, for Allerton gave him first of all a union-suit "mosquito proof," and — as we later found — fairly proof against the poisoned darts of the natives. Knickerbockers and gaiters of a curious woven gauze material — pliable metal, in fact — came next, and the gas-jacket covered all the rest of his body save the head.

"The jacket is also an armor," observed Allerton; "and, while it must be worn all the time, night and day, it need not be inflated until necessary to acquire lightness. The gas tank generator weighs but six ounces and will be worn with the jacket, so it may be ready in any emergency. It is the same with the eight electrites, which we eight adventurers will keep constantly at our sides. The extra belts must, of course, remain in one of the chests until needed, as will the extra supply of themlyne."

He then supplied Archie with a head-mask of curious design. The top was like a pith helmet, very light and the more comfortable because it did not rest upon the head but upon a globe of woven wire, in which the boy's entire head was encased.

This material, as transparent as a fine gauze screen, was so strong that when Allerton tested it by jumping on it with both feet it scarcely bent at all.

"This is a protection from gnats and mosquitoes, darts and arrows, and all other venomous things," said Paul. "I think we shall find them quite comfortable when we get used to them."

Being attached to a collar, with straps underneath the arms, these masks remained stationary, allowing the wearer to move his head in any direction, although he could not lower his chin very much. High leather shoes, lined with the same material, and pliable gauze gauntlets for the hands and arms, completed this remarkable attire. When Archie had slung his gun over his shoulder and stuck a brace of revolvers and a bowie into his belt, he certainly looked as curious as any individual that ever walked.

I am quite sure that this description of Allerton's outfit will lead the reader to think it exceedingly clumsy and unmanageable; and such, at first was my own opinion. But subsequent use proved the contrary. Walking around to test his "rigging," as he called it, Archie declared he was not uncomfortable in the least. Everything was very light in weight, and the gauze garments were cooler than the clothing he had been accustomed to. Yucatan is a hot country, but not insufferably so, owing to the prevailing breeze that comes from the sea in either direction. Allerton had realized this in preparing his outfits.

While the rest of us, using Archie as an example, proceeded to dress ourselves in a like manner, Allerton and Chaka were busily engaged in drawing especially prepared gas-jackets over the four chests we were to take

with us. These coverings were then inflated with themlyne until the heavy boxes became so light that I could lift any one of them with one hand. No other gas known to science possesses so great buoyancy; a small volume of it overcame weight — i. e., the attraction of gravitation — to a wonderful degree. A single wire wheel with a broad, flat tire, was now attached to the front end of each chest, and two handles to the rear, converting the baggage into quaint looking wheelbarrows.

This task completed, Paul looked at a heap of material on the deck and said, as if the thought had just occurred to him:

"I see I have an extra outfit." He turned to look at the interested group of sailors. "Will any one of you lads venture to join us?" he asked.

With one accord they stepped forward and touched their caps.

"Thank you, my friends," said Allerton gratefully. "I'll take Pedro, I think. He's a native of this part of the world and therefore especially fit to stand the climate. Will you come, Pedro?"

I thought his face showed a trace of embarrassment, perhaps chagrin, at being chosen; but he stepped up alertly enough and was assisted into his toggery.

"Unfortunately," remarked the lieutenant, "I was able to procure but eight electrites, so Pedro must depend wholly upon his firearms for protection."

Pedro grinned and nodded at hearing this. He was wholly ignorant of what an electrite might be. But he could handle a gun all right, he said, and a good keen knife was his pet weapon. With these by his side he felt perfectly safe.

Uncle Naboth laughed immoderately as we lined up on the deck, while Speckles, the boatswain, who was now to act as mate to Captain Steele, threw a searchlight over the group. For it was quite dark by this time and we were again headed back toward the bay where we were to disembark.

Nux and Bryonia, our stalwart blacks, seemed gigantic in their novel equipment. Ned was almost as huge a figure, while the rest of us, including Chaka, sized up to a fair and even imposing average. Pedro laughed at us too, and at himself, while the sailors were frankly amused at our appearance. I was myself somewhat influenced by the humor of the situation, for while I have undertaken many adventures during my brief life I was never so garbed before — nor was any other man, for that matter. We were the original gas-jacketed, electrite-armed, mosquito-and-dart-proof adventurers of the world!

Allerton and Chaka were serious enough, however, to warn us that our fun was somewhat ill-timed. We were on the eve of a desperate and important undertaking.

"Time to blacken up, my lads," said father, who never neglected a sharp lookout. So every light aboard was quickly "doused" except the shielded one

of the binnacle.

The night seemed especially favorable, although Paul said that starlight would be as good for us as an overcast sky, provided the natives were at home and asleep. If by chance they were prowling around they would see us anyhow. But, for my part, I concluded it was just as well the white *Seagull* did not show too plainly from shore against the deep blue water. Those Mopanes had sharp eyes, and if they observed our approach from the forest there would promptly be something doing.

Well, we crept into the bay quietly enough, after all, only one muffled engine doing duty, and approached the south bend of the shore as closely as we dared. The boats were already on the davits, the oars wrapped with canvas to prevent their creaking. Into one we loaded the wheelbarrow chests and then our little band took places in the others.

I did not fail to press my father's hand before I left the deck. Our affection is fervent and strong, thank God, and we understand one another perfectly. I knew the grim old fellow gave me a prayer in his heart and trusted a tender Providence to send his boy back to him in safety; but never a word of protest or caution did he utter. It might unnerve me, and was not needed.

With scarcely a sound our keels ground on the beach. It required but a few moments to land and carry the chests to the shore, and then we shook hands, one and all, with the seamen and knew we had their best wishes for our success. They returned to the ship at once, and we adventurers quickly prepared to follow Chaka, who from this moment assumed the lead. Nux and Bryonia each trundled a chest, as did also Pedro and Ned. The things were so light that if we came to a rough place the men raised them bodily and carried them across.

CHAPTER 8

WE FIGHT A GOOD FIGHT

In five minutes we were threading the underbrush, a difficult task because it grew so thickly; but fortunately it was not of great extent and a journey of fifteen minutes brought us to the edge of the forest.

Chaka had marked his way by sighting a group of three giant mahoganies whose spreading tops formed a perfect triangle. He paused a moment just in the center of this group, pushed aside a bunch of tangled vines and with a grunt of satisfaction led us into a broad, well defined trail. This, we understood, was the route followed by the Itzaex when they invaded the territory of the Mopanes, in order to gather turtle, or to fish. Such invasions had always been bitterly contested, but Chaka's people were never deterred from an undertaking by the prospects of a fight.

It seems strange that after nine years this Indian boy should remember the place at all. Chaka was but fifteen when picked up by Allerton, and he certainly did not look his twenty-four years now. Civilized life had not taught him to forget his boyish adventures, and Allerton must have placed implicit confidence in the Maya, since all our plans and hopes were based upon his assertions and his knowledge of the country.

Joe, Archie and I, who had often talked over these things, could not yet decide how far the lieutenant was justified in his unswerving trust. We liked Chaka and believed in him; but might he not be deceiving himself as well as us in many important details — especially those regarding the Tcha and the hidden city? It was all hearsay, after all, the tale of the old atkayma, who might easily have exaggerated his experiences.

It was dark as Erebus in the forest. I can't imagine how Chaka found his way so accurately. But he seldom hesitated, leading us forward at a steady gait and only pausing when the narrow way obliged us to use our best inventive genius in getting the chests between the trees. Once or twice we had to make a detour through wild and tangled underbrush and networks of vines, in order to squeeze the chests into the trail again, and all this delayed us considerably.

After three hours of dogged progress we stopped to rest, and now Chaka flashed a dark lantern on the scene, believing we were so far from the Mopane villages that the light would not be seen. That helped some, as you may imagine, and it seemed to me, with my limited knowledge of such things, that we had covered at least a dozen miles of forest path when Allerton called a halt and said we would sleep until daylight.

We dozed in our outfits, just as we were, not venturing to remove any part

of our armor for fear of a surprise. Nor were we at all uncomfortable. I remember that I dropped down upon the leaves and moss just where I had stood, thoroughly tired by the long march. There was little fear of scorpions, serpents or other vermin, since we were so well protected, and I for one needed no lullaby to send me fast asleep.

Chaka and Allerton kept watch by turns, on this occasion, and I heard Paul rebuking "my brother Chaka" for not calling him when he should have done so.

I thought it must still be night when they wakened me, and in truth I was not at all ready to get up; but when I rose and rubbed my eyes I could dimly discern the trunks of the trees all about me, with small patches of gray sky showing here and there through the tops; so I realized it was time to tramp on again.

Allerton unlocked a chest and gave us each a cup of hot coffee from thermos bottles, where it had been placed aboard ship. We ate some biscuits, too, and felt greatly refreshed.

All had proceeded so nicely thus far that my original fears as to the dangerous nature of this undertaking had become lulled. It was cool and pleasant under the shade of the trees as we started on again, and the song birds were in full chorus.

Suddenly Chaka, who led us, stopped short and held up his hand. Instantly Paul was beside him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"A hunting party. Warriors. Many," returned the Maya, his head bent forward, listening intently.

"Are they Itzaex, my brother?"

"Mopanes!" said Chaka.

"Does it mean fight, then?"

"It means fight, my brother."

Silently we had stood listening to this. Now we prepared for action.

"Use your firearms first," commanded Allerton; "and then, if necessary, the electrites. But remember we must save every charge in the batteries that we can."

We placed the four chests on end in a row, forming a scanty bulwark, and took station behind them. The party of Mopanes, evidently returning to their villages from a hunting expedition, were now heard noisily jabbering in the distance, the sounds gradually drawing nearer. It seemed they knew and used this trail as well as the Itzaex did, although Chaka had called it a "secret trail." How many we were about to face we could not conjecture, but none of us showed or felt much fear. Indeed, I am inclined to think we one and all

welcomed the chance to prove the qualities of our equipment. I was sorry to receive orders not to fire the electrite, being curious to know how effective these queer weapons would be; but I well knew Allerton was right in husbanding our supply of stored electricity. We might need every charge badly before we had played the game to the end.

The trail wound irregularly here and there through the dense forest, but for some seventy yards ahead it came straight toward us, broader and more open than in most places, which was all to our disadvantage. This was offset by the fact that the natives had no suspicion an enemy was in their path. They were between the Itzaex and their own people, and imagined they had nothing to fear. Not even a scout had been sent ahead. They rounded the curve in a dense mass, chattering and laughing until they caught sight of us standing motionless in the trail. Then their astonishment was genuine enough.

I think, had they found us garbed in the same manner as all white men who had visited their coast had been, that there might have been chance for a parley; but our appearance was so strange that they did not hesitate a moment about attacking us. The first of the band, which numbered about a hundred warriors, had scarcely halted when their wicked darts began to fly in our direction.

These darts, the most dangerous weapons employed by the Maya tribes, are slim strips of a tough vine, cut and hardened in the sun until they become nearly as hard as steel. One end is sharpened and coated with a deadly vegetable poison; the other has a flat piece of bark inserted in a notch to give it "wings." The darts are carried in a bark sheath and are hurled with amazing swiftness and accuracy. The Maya tribes also use bows and arrows, as well as long spears with heads of sharpened stone or iron. But these latter weapons are most serviceable in hunting; in a fight the Mayas depend largely upon the darts, a prick from one of the points sending its poison coursing through the veins of the victim, who expires in agony in a few minutes.

It may be the distance was in our favor; anyway the darts rattled against our armor harmlessly enough. And we did not give the enemy time to come nearer, just then. Taking careful aim we returned a volley from our rifles which, backed by the thick mass of howling Indians, did terrible execution. Nearly a score fell where they stood and the others took to instant flight.

I felt much elated by our success until I noticed Chaka shaking his head as if greatly annoyed. There was little opportunity to inquire the reason, for in a surprisingly brief space of time a dart struck full upon my headgear, and so sharp was the slender point that it stuck in the meshes and hung there. Another and another dart followed, from this or that side and even from behind us. The cunning Mopanes had leaped into the thicket and surrounded

us, from their concealment being enabled to attack us with impunity. Arrows also flew, striking us sharp blows. A spear knocked Pedro clean off his feet, but failed to wound him, as it struck against his impervious gas-jacket.

"We must get out of this!" exclaimed Allerton. "It's a regular trap."

"Come!" cried Chaka.

We followed his lead. The blacks, Ned and Pedro wheeled the chests while we others walked beside them and took a shot at every head that showed in the jungle.

It proved somewhat revolting to climb over the dead and dying that cluttered the way just ahead. One wounded Mopane struck at my leg with a knife and tried to grab me; but I clubbed him over the head with my rifle and he fell back and lay still.

There seemed no escape for us, as the rascals were able to follow through the brushwood almost as fast as we covered the trail; but Chaka moved rapidly on, increasing his pace until we were all on a jog-trot, and at last we understood his reason.

The path opened abruptly into a vast clearing, nearly a quarter of a mile in extent. It had been created originally by a forest fire, as the charred trunks of trees testified. Near the center was a small pool of stagnant water.

We ran to the edge of this pool and, facing around once more, prepared to defend ourselves. If the natives remained in the forest their weapons were comparatively harmless; if they cared to "rush" our position we had decidedly the best of it.

They were in no hurry to decide, it seemed. After hurling a few darts and shooting a few arrows they ceased activities for a full hour, during which time we sat on the chests and got our breath back so we could discuss the situation.

"How far are we, from Itzlan?" inquired Allerton.

Chaka considered.

"About two hours' journey, Brother Paul," he replied.

"Two hours from the boundaries, I suppose," said Paul. "And how far from the City of Itza?"

"Two days, my brother."

That was not very encouraging.

"It seems to me," said Archie, "a good plan would be to send Chaka on to his people as a scout. He could sneak through the enemy all right. And then he could bring his people to our rescue."

"No," replied Allerton, "I cannot afford to risk Chaka on such a mission. If we lose him, we lose everything. I am quite sure the Mopanes cannot seriously injure us. We simply must devote the necessary time to fighting

them off, and then continue our journey.”

CHAPTER 9

WE FIND OURSELVES OUTNUMBERED

The space or clearing in which we had sought refuge was covered thickly with bushes averaging from two to three feet in height. They were green with a thick-leaved foliage, and as I sat idly looking at them it occurred to me they were very pretty in such a place and relieved the dismal appearance of the charred stumps. Presently I decided, as the sun was now beating down upon our heads, to crawl underneath the nearest clump of bushes and seek coolness in their shade. This I proceeded to do, dropping on hands and knees and creeping beneath the leafy covering while my friends eyed me curiously.

Next moment I experienced one of the greatest surprises of my life. I was not quite concealed by the network of bushes when my head bumped suddenly against something hard, and lifting my encased face with some difficulty I found a Mopane Indian lying flat upon his belly, his eyes not a yard away — glaring viciously into mine. I think he must have been fully as much astonished as I was.

In such emergencies I have a bad habit of acting first and considering afterward; so before I realized what I was doing I had pulled a revolver and sent a bullet into the fellow's skull. He gave a yell that was startling and sprang full upon his feet before he toppled over dead.

His cry was echoed from fifty throats. From every part of the bush arose Mopanes who rushed at us with one accord. Some of them had crawled pretty near. As I sat up I faced one at arm's length and let go another shot from the revolver I held.

Meantime my comrades quickly recovered from the momentary paralysis caused by the suddenness of the assault and stood their ground bravely. I was very proud of their coolness. Nux and Bryonia, Ned, Archie and Joe were all splendid fighters and even Mexican Pedro seemed void of fear as he plugged shot after shot at his assailants. Altogether, the affray was too hot for the Mopanes and they soon scampered back to the woods for shelter. As they went we picked off as many of them as we could, for the more we rendered *hors de combat* the better chance we had to escape.

They were not likely to repeat this attempt again. Another long wait followed.

"I hate to lose so much ammunition on the fools," grumbled Allerton. "Be shy, my lads, of wasting a single shot; our work has hardly begun yet."

This stealthy attack of the natives gave Chaka an idea, however. After consulting with his "Brother Paul" he hid behind the chests and deliberately began divesting himself of all the trappings he had until now worn. When I

glanced at him, presently, there sat our Maya on the ground, arrayed only in his copper colored skin and a white loin cloth. In the folds of the latter he concealed a knife and a small revolver. Then, lying flat, he wriggled himself into the bushes and was soon lost to view.

I tried to follow his course, but so expert a woodsman was Chaka that not a movement of a leaf betrayed his whereabouts.

"What's his object, Paul?" I asked.

"He's going to explore the path at the other side of the clearing, where he believes the trees are so open that the Mopanes won't dare follow us. If that is so we won't wait for the next move the devils make, but break for the trail at once and fight our way on to the Itzaex country."

"Very good," said I; "anything is better than this." And so we sat and waited patiently for our spy to return.

Meantime, as it was getting near noon, we took advantage of the lull in hostilities to eat our luncheon. The food refreshed us very much, and Archie, who has always some longing unsatisfied, bewailed the fact that we had no ice on such a sultry day. I knew that we had ice, but said nothing of it. In Allerton's thermos chest reposed a fine cake of the crystallized fluid which, with other things, he was reserving for "emergencies."

Fully two hours had passed before we observed Chaka's naked body come bounding through the clearing without any attempt at concealment. Evidently he was in a state of great excitement. Skirting the edge of the pool he came directly toward us, disregarding the arrows and darts that rained upon him from the nearest edge of the forest. Then, with a final bound he fell flat at our feet, sobbing in a very ecstasy of grief and despair.

We looked at one another wonderingly as Allerton knelt down, took his friend's head in his lap and stroked the dark hair as tenderly as a woman might have done. He asked no questions until Chaka's passionate sobbing was gradually subdued.

"My poor brother!" he said in the Itzaex dialect.

Chaka seized his hands and pressed them.

"It is my father, dear Paul!" he said, miserably. "They have killed the atkayma — they have murdered him!"

"Who has done this, my brother?" inquired Allerton.

"The Mopanes."

We others looked upon the scene silently, forbearing comment. I realized, for my part, that the old atkayma's death might seriously affect the success of our enterprise; but I had not suspected Chaka was so fond of his royal father, having left him to his own devices for so many years.

As for that, however, I had not reckoned on the horror of the thing,

although I might have appreciated better Chaka's sensitive nature, so astonishing in one bom to a savage life.

Before long the youth was able to tell his story, and he told it none too soon, either.

"I found the trail," said he, speaking his own tongue, which we all understood save Pedro and Archie — and perhaps the latter caught a few words. "I ran along it swiftly for some distance. Then I heard shouts and the Mopane war song of victory. I knew another band of those devils was approaching us and hid myself to count their numbers. They are many, oh my brother! There has been war, and for this once my people have been defeated. I know not where the battle was fought nor how many were engaged; but victory is with our enemies. On their spears they bear the heads of many brave Itzaex; foremost among them is that of the great, the noble atkayma — my father!"

He broke down again, to renew his sobs.

"Poor Chaka!" said Paul.

There was no time left us for more parley. We began to hear the shouts of the approaching hosts and must prepare for a desperate defense. It was all right for Chaka to grieve over his father; it struck me as a curious coincidence that just as the royal son arrived in his own country, after an absence of many years, the aged atkayma of the Itzaex met his fate at the hands of his persistent enemies.

The Mopanes deployed into the clearing in a dense throng, exultantly shouting their savage peans. Some blew shrill blasts on conch shells; one or two battered energetically the native kettledrums, made from tortoise shells over which skins were tightly stretched.

At once the new arrivals were joined by the remnant of the band that had first attacked us. I say "remnant" because we must have slain or wounded nearly half of their original number. With eager exclamations they pointed in our direction, and the eyes of every warrior examined us intently. They were standing some distance away, but we could observe their every action distinctly. One huge fellow, who bore a spear with a grinning head set on its point, leaped upon a stump and began haranguing the others, who listened respectfully to his words.

"I wonder if this pop-gun will carry so far," remarked Archie, and before any could interfere he took careful aim and fired. The chief — as he seemed to be — leaped fully three feet into the air, uttering a terrible cry, and as he fell his people caught him in their arms. But I am sure he was dead or desperately wounded.

This warning induced them all to withdraw into the forest, where

doubtless they held a council of war.

CHAPTER 10

WE ESCAPE ANNIHILATION

Meantime we nine, trapped as we were, prepared for defense against an army of natives.

"Won't it be better to use the electrites, sir?" inquired Joe. "There must be three or four hundred of those fellows, at least, and if they rush us we won't stand much show."

"I fear even the electrites wouldn't save us in that event," replied Allerton, whose face showed anxiety for the first time. "I think we should stand ready to inflate our gas-jackets, however, so if the worst happens we may escape by rising into the air. Fortunately the pool will supply us with water to generate the themlyne crystals. But let us wait until all other means fail and our lives are actually in danger." He turned to Chaka, who still lay upon his face, and said: "My brother must resume his outfit, so as to be able to fight with us."

The Maya made no reply, nor did he rise or attempt to resume the clumsy garments he had discarded.

At Paul's suggestion we hastily cut a quantity of the thick bushes and piled them high in a circle surrounding our position — so high that we could just stand erect and aim our rifles over the top of the frail barricade. The bushes were no protection, but they prevented the savages from aiming at our bodies. The task was quickly accomplished and then we arranged our ammunition handily and prepared to fight as long as fighting was possible.

"Don't volley," counseled Allerton; "fire in steady, regular order, according to the numbers I will give you. Such a continual discharge is likely to be the most effectual."

He had scarcely finished speaking when the Mopanes came from the forest. Depending upon their great numbers they did not rush us, but advanced deliberately across the clearing, chanting a war song as they came. As soon as they were well within range we opened fire, and nearly every shot took effect because we were cool and cautious. The Indians were not deterred, however, and I remember thinking, even during the battle, that they were especially brave in their absolute disregard for death.

This last band of Mopanes was better armed than the first. They bore battle axes and war clubs in addition to their spears. Not a missile was sent in our direction in response to our fusillade, although we continued to pepper them so persistently that the front ranks fell like grain before a scythe, only to be trampled upon indifferently by those following. Their plan seemed to involve a great sacrifice of numbers that they might finally accomplish their purpose.

Pedro, who had proved a poor shot, devoted himself to recharging our repeating rifles and revolvers, so we had no need to relax our defense to reload. It was certainly a most dangerous predicament in which we now found ourselves, but I am glad to say none of us weakened or showed nervousness. Chaka, to my surprise, took no part in the fight at first, but as the enemy drew nearer he sprang up and began firing with the rest of us.

On came the savages, and we kept as busy as possible stopping all we could. Now they were a hundred yards off; now seventy; now fifty. We had dropped an amazing lot of them, yet still they advanced.

Then a diversion occurred of so startling a character that for a time we were utterly unable to comprehend it. The Mopanes abruptly stopped, turned half around until they faced the south, from whence they had come, and without paying any further heed to us began jabbering and gesticulating in wild excitement.

"Keep it up, boys!" cried Allerton. "They're getting demoralized at last."

That was evident; yet I knew we had had no hand in demoralizing them. The band was now separating, darting this way and that about the clearing as if in a panic. But the fugitives, after a wild scramble here and there, quickly massed again in the center of the clearing and faced outward, their backs forming the inner part of a great circle.

Next moment the mystery was explained. From behind every tree that bordered the open space stepped a stalwart warrior, copper skinned and naked save for a loin cloth. They were taller than the Mopanes, more dignified in demeanor, more deliberate in action. Each man was quickly followed by another, and still another, until fully a thousand had closed in and formed a circle around the terrified Mopanes — as well as around us.

As the first man stepped from the forest Chaka uttered a wild cry and threw down his weapons. Then he stood as if turned to stone, watching as one in a dream the tragedy that ensued.

"That settles our case," exclaimed Archie, desperately. "We might have tipped over a few hundred of those fellows, but a few thousand is too many."

We had stopped firing and Paul was watching Chaka's face.

"I think we are saved," said he in a low voice. "These men are the Itzaex, who have followed the Mopanes to seek revenge for the murder of their atkayma."

"Oh!" said Archie; and more than one breath of relief was drawn at this explanation.

It was not hard to understand why the Itzaex nation had remained unconquered and supreme through all the centuries. In strong contrast to the chattering Mopanes they uttered no sound as they advanced, and every

warrior seemed but a part of one great machine.

So far as I could determine by watching the confused scene there was little resistance on the part of the surprised and greatly outnumbered Mopanes. Some made a dash for the forest, only to be cut down; others stood their ground and fought doggedly until an Itzaex battle-axe or a spear thrust put an end to their further interest in the affair.

In scarcely more time than I have taken to write it the murderers of the old atkayma were virtually annihilated. Then the victors calmly formed ranks and faced toward us — half curiously, half expectantly. They seemed to realize they had interfered in our fight with the Mopanes, but as yet they did not know whether to regard us as foes or allies.

But now Chaka awoke to action. With a hasty word he pressed Paul's hand and leaped the barrier, advancing alone and with majestic strides toward his people.

We were near enough to observe the scene closely; almost near enough to hear every word spoken The Itzaex seemed astonished at Chaka's appearance. They looked upon him wonderingly, and I now noticed for the first time that Chaka alone wore a white loin cloth; those of all the others were of some color, green and yellow predominating.

When the boy had almost reached them he stopped short, lifted one arm with an imperious gesture and said:

"I am Chaka, returned to you after many days. My father is dead. Itzaex, salute your atkayma!"

With one accord they knelt and prostrated themselves, old and young alike. There was no word of question, no display of antagonism. The people knew and saluted their chief.

Chaka slowly advanced to where the leader of the Itzaex knelt in front of his followers. Beside him lay the gory head of the old atkayma, the skin of its face drawn into a horrid grin. The boy knelt to the ghastly thing and kissed its forehead. Now he plucked from the matted gray hair a single heron's feather — the emblem of royalty — and placed it among his own dark locks. Then be stood erect.

During this scene not an Itzaex moved. Each head touched the ground. The warriors were silent as well as motionless.

"Rise, my people!" commanded Chaka, in clear, ringing tones. They obeyed, and now a legion of dark eyes was fixed full upon the youth confronting them. "The Itzaex are still brave and dauntless," continued the young atkayma. "The Mopane cats are punished for their crime. The murder of the great and noble Tcheltzada, my father, who has ruled you long and wisely, has been quickly and terribly avenged. I thank you." Now the

chieftain of the party, an enormous grizzled warrior, stepped forward and said:

"Tell us, then, O Atkayma, where you have been; why now you are here."

"Then listen to my words," was the reply. "It is nine years since I led a band of young men to the sea. The Mopanes fell upon us and cut my comrades down. Some, I hope, escaped. I found a boat and fled across the great water, the enemy following. A ship of the white people — the powerful Americans — saved me and took me on board, repelling the Mopanes. I was carried to far lands, with no way to return to my people. Years passed by. I found a good friend among the white men, a friend who has now helped me to come back to you. He is yonder, with seven others who have assisted me. On our journey to Itzlan we were surprised by Mopanes. You may see how many we have destroyed."

The warriors glanced around. The ground was literally covered with bodies. They well knew they had not slain all these themselves.

"My white friends," continued Chaka, "must become the friends of the Itzaex nation; my people must become their friends. To them you owe the safe return of your atkayma."

This last statement was the first to be received with disfavor. There were sundry grunts of protest and gestures of dissent. The old chieftain bowed low and made reply.

"Never, O Atkayma Chaka, has the white man been the friend of the Itzaex," said he.

"Time changes many things. These white people have been like brothers to me," announced Chaka, in a firm voice. "I know them. In their hearts is no treachery; they seek no conquest; they are good and true. Tell me, Gatcha, have they not destroyed many of the enemies of the Itzaex? Have they not given you back your hereditary atkayma, just as the gods have permitted my father Tcheltzada to meet his doom? If you fail to greet my preservers as friends, the gods, from whom I am descended, and for whom I speak, will surely punish you."

That seemed to settle the case with the Itzaex. Once more they prostrated themselves before Chaka in token of obedience, and the chieftain Gatcha said:

"It is well, O Atkayma. If your uncle, the mighty Datchapa, receives the white men, we have no objection to offer to them."

The youth frowned and drew himself up haughtily.

"Who, then, is master; my Uncle Datchapa or Chaka?" he demanded.

There was no response.

Chaka turned and came back to us.

“Do not fear,” he said in English. “My people will obey me. Come; let us go.”

We gathered up our traps and followed the new atkayma to where his warriors stood awaiting us. I observed that they regarded us who were white with a disdain that was scarcely tolerant and decidedly uncomfortable. Nux and Bryonia, however, won favor immediately — doubtless because of their color; perhaps for their imposing forms and composed demeanor. The latter was not unlike a notable characteristic of the Itzaex warriors.

Paul, who headed us, placed his right hand on the left shoulder of the chieftain Gatcha, which was the native salutation of peace and friendship. The old fellow seemed pleased and gravely responded. I followed suit, understanding this custom was expected, and so we all in turn saluted the warrior, whom we afterward discovered was the most famous general of the nation.

Then, without more ado, we started away, our party occupying a central position beside the Atkayma Chaka, who stalked along with a newly assumed dignity that was rather amusing, although I must admit the boy had always displayed considerable dignity.

The Itzaex had doubtless seen white men before, or at least heard of them; yet I am sure the peculiar manner in which we were garbed astonished them. Not that they allowed themselves to show surprise; they were too phlegmatic for that; but even this secluded race realized that no such queer rigging was ever worn by human creatures before, white or black, and since they had no reason to laugh at us they must have been impressed with the fact that we were distinctly unusual.

Any present danger to us seemed now eliminated, for with this superb escort we would surely be able to penetrate to the heart of Itzlan, where the capital city called Itza was located. Two days’ journey from here, Chaka had called it; but the Itzaex marched with such long, swinging strides that they covered the ground more rapidly than we had been able to do before.

CHAPTER 11

WE ENTER THE CITY OF ITZA

We held no unnecessary converse with one another on the trail, not being anxious to appear as chatterboxes before these silent natives; but when we had camped for the night in another small clearing, which we reached at dusk, we gathered in a group and in English talked over the day's adventures and our future prospects. Chaka came and sat with us after he had indulged in a somewhat lengthy interview with Gatcha the chief, and he looked rather solemn and thoughtful.

"My father was out hunting with a small party of twelve," said he, "when the Mopanes, who had long been lying in ambush, seized and assassinated him. One warrior made escape and aroused the city, so Gatcha gathered his men and gave chase. Before he left Itza, however, the chief tells me that my Uncle Datchapa, believing me to be dead, as had my father, caused himself to be proclaimed atkayma. That is bad, my friends, for now Datchapa will not be glad to see me."

"Is he as bad as that?" I asked.

"My Uncle Datchapa," returned Chaka, slowly, "is an old man, and a wise man as well. He has renown as a warrior and a statesman, and my people respect him greatly. Also he is ambitious, and as a boy my mother warned me to avoid him, lest he seek my death that he might succeed my father as atkayma. Gatcha, who has no love for Datchapa, but fears him, tells me my father also watched his ambitious brother carefully, being afraid to trust him at the head of the army. Gatcha is not sure that my uncle did not secretly send for the Mopanes and then induce the Atkayma Tcheltzada to hunt with a handful of followers. If this is true — but I hope it is not true — then Datchapa will be much disappointed when I return."

"Never mind," said Paul, soothingly. "My brother Chaka is the royal one."

"So is Datchapa royal," was the reply. "He is my father's brother. But our laws forbid him to become atkayma as long as his brother's son lives."

"Then we must be careful," I suggested.

"It is not for myself, Cap'n Sam, that I fear," returned Chaka, "but for my white comrades. Datchapa, wicked and ambitious as he is, dare not oppose me openly. But he is Chief of the Council, which directs our laws, and he may show enmity to my white friends and try to arouse the people to destroy them."

"In that case," said Joe, "I advise you to clap your precious uncle into jail as soon as you arrive. It will be the safest plan."

Chaka made no answer to this.

We now began to appreciate the advantages of the gauze protectors with which Paul had supplied us, perhaps at Chaka's suggestion. The natives had promptly built smudge fires of damp forest leaves, in order to drive back the hordes of mosquitoes and other insects that settled in the camp as soon as we did. My, how those mosquitoes did sing! The Itzaex, accustomed as they were to the pests, squirmed and swatted the bloodsuckers continually, while we in our armor and head-gear were proof against attack. Chaka himself, who had seemed until now too proud to pose before his people in any foreign attire, hastily assumed his outfit and slept in it all night. Old Gatcha the chief, who proved not a bad fellow on better acquaintance, frankly expressed his admiration for our devices and asked if we had any more "cages" in the chests. Since we could not accommodate him he lay down naked beside the smudge of a fire and let the winged vampires bleed him at their leisure.

All were up bright and early next morning and so swift was our progress during the day that when we again made camp Chaka assured us we were but three hours' journey from the capital.

During this day we passed no villages, being told that the great City of Itza was the only congregation of dwellings on this side of their territory. To the west and south were a dozen or more important towns, with cultivated fields and orchards connecting them; but ages of warfare with the fierce Mopanes had taught them the danger of establishing villages in this district. Itza really served as a barrier, it being too populous and powerful to be attacked.

Chaka estimated the total population of Itzlan at over fifty thousand people, while the Mopanes could number no more than ten thousand, all told. This border warfare, however, was regarded as a mere incident in life by the Itzaex, who had other foes at the opposite borders of their domain. Nor did they devote all their time to fighting; they were mighty hunters and fishermen, as well as skilled in agriculture and certain crude manufacturers. According to the youthful atkayma there were no other tribes in Yucatan so powerful and civilized as the Itzaex, and I am inclined to think he was right.

By the way, the similarity of the names Aztec and Itzaex has induced some scholars to think they were originally one and the same race; but the earliest conquistadors, who knew both people, declared that the Itzaex were much the handsomer and more intelligent people, although their buildings and civilization were somewhat inferior to those of the race of Montezuma. We must take into consideration, however, the fact that the Spaniards were never able to penetrate far into Itzlan, while they conquered the Aztec territory with comparative ease — by the aid of treachery and audacious trickery.

On the second morning we were up before the dawn and a brisk march brought us presently to a broad, flat plateau that was very beautiful and enticing, as its green fields and waving grain lay glimmering in the sun. We were all glad to be out of the dark forests, and before long, on mounting an incline, we saw before us the white, low, buildings of a vast city, built around the shores of a placid lake and shaded by groups of magnificent trees.

The extent of this great City of Itza amazed us all, and Chaka smiled proudly as he pointed out the royal palace, the great temple, and the strong walls and gateways.

On nearer approach the whiteness of the buildings became more grimy and weather-stained and the houses were found to be generally small and greatly scattered. We afterward learned that Itza has a population of nearly twenty thousand, which is certainly an extensive settlement to be hidden in the wilds of Yucatan. The walls included not only the buildings but the lake itself, and were thick and strong if not very high.

Beyond the city we saw for the first time the sierras, the highest mountains in the peninsula. It was mainly a range of rounded knolls, most of them being covered with verdure and easily accessible. Directly in the center, however, were four small rocky peaks and one towering one that seemed to rise into the clouds. The sides of the latter mountain seemed precipitous and formed of straight walls of rock.

Runners had been sent forward and before we reached the walls of Itza people came pouring out of the nearest gate in a dense throng, every eye being set in our direction. There was no confusion or excitement apparent — I wonder if an Itzaex ever could get excited? — but they plainly showed their interest in their newly discovered youthful atkayma by trooping out to meet him.

And Chaka received a right royal welcome.

Men, women and children "bit the dust," as Archie said, by prostrating themselves before him. The boy looked very handsome in his gleaming copper skin and the single heron feather set in his hair, and he walked into his hereditary kingdom as proud as a peacock, as well he might.

Just within the gates stood an impatient group clad in flowing robes embroidered with colored feather work. I think I omitted saying that most of the people of the city wore single loose robes similar to the togas of the ancient Greeks or the burnous of the Egyptians. Only those engaged in hunting or upon an expedition of war cast aside all covering but the loin cloth.

A curious fact which I observed was that all the robes were of colors or tints. Among the common people dark blues and purples were much affected.

The merchants and middle classes, including the warriors, wore greens and yellows. The nobility adopted delicate shades of lavender, rose and saffron. I saw no red, as yet. Pure white was reserved for the royal family alone, and the foremost figure in the group I have mentioned was an old man arrayed in soft flowing white and bearing over his arm another garment of like texture and color.

As Chaka entered the gate this ancient dignitary — I knew at once it was his precious Uncle Datchapa — raised an arm to bar his way and gazed shrewdly into the young man's countenance. It did not take long to convince him, for in a moment he threw the extra robe over Chaka's head and then knelt before him as the others had done. All the group, members of the nobility and the royal council, followed suit, and there they remained until the new atkayma bade them rise.

It seemed to me that we, Chaka's friends and comrades, were somewhat important and distinguished ourselves, and entitled to consideration; but old Datchapa and his backers disregarded us utterly, affecting to ignore our presence. We stuck stubbornly at the atkayma's heels and except for his uncle, whom he retained at his side, all the other big bugs were forced to fall into the procession behind us.

A procession it really became now. Musicians were present who blew weird sounds upon reed flutes and beat tom-toms to keep us all in step. The streets were lined with spectators, who uttered no cheers of welcome, but fell on their faces automatically as Chaka approached and rose again when he had passed on. It seemed as if we tramped miles and miles before the royal progress finally reached the shores of the lake, where stood the palace. It was a great, rambling building, two stories high and built of blocks of rough marble with pillars and ornaments showing much clever carving.

Chaka mounted the broad steps to the entrance and then turned and addressed the crowd. He told them how he had been carried away from Yucatan nine years before and of how he had managed to return. He praised his "white brothers" for their noble assistance and introduced Allerton to them especially, placing his hand on Paul's shoulder in token of his friendship. He then expressed his joy at beholding again his native land, his sorrow at the terrible death of his beloved father, the former atkayma, and his intention of ruling his people wisely and with consideration. He called upon them to prove their allegiance and pledge their support at all times to their royal ruler, the Child of the Gods, who promised to protect them in return.

They answered the speech by raising their right arms and shouting a single word: "Kaym!" in unison, after which the throng quietly dispersed.

Posed just before the entrance door to the palace I had noticed three

interesting figures which, during the proceedings, had remained motionless as statues. They were all three tall and imposing, with sharp, thin features and alert eyes. Their robes were of a blood-red color and had a cape or broad collar of white. Upon their heads they wore high, round, brimless hats of white feather-work, the first headdresses of any sort I had seen.

Chaka now turned to this trio and knelt humbly before them. One after another placed a hand upon his bent head and muttered a few words, after which they all three turned and disappeared through a small doorway.

The atkayma remained kneeling for several moments, while we stood watching him. Then he soberly regained his feet and motioned to us to approach.

“Follow me closely,” he said in English. “There is danger all about you, so try to be discreet, my brothers.”

Then he entered the broad arch that led into the palace.

CHAPTER 12

WE SIGHT THE QUARRY

As compared with the palaces of civilized nations I cannot say much in favor of Chaka's royal dwelling. When I consider that it existed in the heart of an isolated, practically unknown wilderness, I admit it was something to win approval. It must have been centuries old, for the mark of ages was upon it everywhere, as it was upon most of the buildings of Itza. Built of square blocks of a coarse and unpolished but durable marble, set with cement, there had been little attempt at architectural display on the part of the builders. The palace covered nearly an acre, having several wings which had been added at different periods. The interior was cool but dirty; the walls and floors had never been scrubbed, I imagine. The ceilings of the main floor were so low that I could reach up and touch them; those on the second floor, to which we ascended by means of a narrow, steep stair without a rail, were more lofty.

The place was full of servants, officials and hangers-on; but Chaka managed to recognize the chief steward, or whatever he was called, and after a brief interview with that factotum had us ushered into a big bare room on the second floor, in one of the wings.

We took our precious chests with us, of course, and prepared to camp. That's the right word to use, for the only furniture in the room was a row of stone benches around the wall. Aside from the doorway were two outside openings intended for windows, over which a network of vines grew, keeping out the sun, but admitting light and air and permitting us to get a limited view of the street. Over the doorway hung a sort of portiere of wool and feather-work, gorgeously colored. The chamber was a primitive abode, indeed, yet we approved it because our position could be easily defended and we knew not what to expect from the bigoted, unresponsive Itzaex.

Relying on Chaka's ability to protect us for a time, at least, we now divested ourselves of our bulky equipment. That was a distinct relief, for it was the first time since leaving the ship that we had lain it aside. We replaced it with thin white duck trousers and jackets which we had brought along for such an occasion in one of the chests. Ned Britton proposed strolling out and seeing the town, but Allerton thought it wiser to remain where we were until we had word from Chaka.

About noon a troop of Indian girls entered, bearing food in various pots and earthen dishes which they set upon the floor before us. I have remarked upon the beauty of the male Itzaex, but I must confess their women are not up to the standard. Nearly all are short and dumpish in form, with dull eyes and apathetic countenances. I never saw a pretty Itzaex girl while I was there.

The food was plentiful and of good quality, but poorly seasoned and carelessly cooked. The meats were mutton or wild game, supplemented by various vegetables such as rice, barley and a root resembling turnip. The bread was heavy and tough; but we managed to eat it, nevertheless, and I am sure we ought to have been satisfied for the feast was as good as the natives were able to provide.

After dinner we waited in vain for Chaka to come to us. As the hours rolled by, Allerton began to be uneasy and disturbed. Not until the sun had sunk low upon the horizon and we had come to heartily detest the blank walls of our room did our friend, the atkayma, finally appear. He seemed grave and thoughtful as he entered, and after a word of greeting he squatted on the floor before us.

"They have kept me busy," he said in English. "I could not come before. There have been councils and discussions all day. Just now I have come from the great temple, where the priests have been telling me my duty."

"Poor Brother!" said Paul. "It is not easy to be a king."

Chaka shrugged his shoulders.

"Not that, Brother Paul," said he. "But it is not easy to run against the traditions of an ancient people, to defy a powerful priesthood and stand alone against a nation."

"Have you done that, Chaka?"

"I had to do it. Otherwise you would all now be dead."

"Do they object to us so strongly?" I asked.

"White men," said the atkayma, "centuries ago deceived my people, who destroyed them. Never since have they permitted a white man to penetrate into their country. Their one great hatred — greater than that for the Mopanes — is this hatred of the whites. When I, as the head of the nation, brought you here, the people submitted reluctantly, but now they demand your death — that you be sacrificed upon the funeral pyre of my murdered father. It is the custom to sacrifice to the gods on such an occasion."

"I suppose your precious uncle is at the bottom of this," remarked Archie.

"He has induced the priests to demand you as sacrifices. I have just come from the great temple, which is on an island in the lake. The priests will not listen to my protests. They are determined to destroy the hated white men and the blacks who are with them. According to our law no strangers may exist in our land or leave it alive."

"We'll show them a trick or two," remarked Ned Britton, smiling.

Chaka hesitated; then he added:

"The priests and the council have hinted that unless you are all delivered up to them at daybreak to-morrow morning, when my father's body is to be

cremated with much ceremony, they will assassinate me, their atkayma, and place my uncle at the head of the nation."

We looked at one another a little bewildered at this. Chaka had misjudged his power over these stubborn people, and a serious complication had unexpectedly arisen.

"In that case," said Allerton slowly, "something must be done to-night."

Chaka nodded, but made no other reply. He sat on the stone floor, swaddled in his robe of royalty and hugging his knees in a very unroyal attitude. Paul eyed him thoughtfully, likewise refraining from speech. We others knew it was an occasion when we were not called upon to interfere with the promoters of the expedition.

Gradually the sun sank. After a brief twilight, darkness flooded the room. We were growing impatient when Chaka slowly arose and said: "Come, my Brother Paul. Also you, Cap'n Sam; and Cap'n Joe, as well. We must talk. It will be a small council. My other friends will remain here and wait for us."

"I don't like dividing our party," said I, doubtfully.

"There will be no division."

"Where are you going, then?" asked Ned.

"To the roof above. Soon we will return. Wait."

Allerton, Joe and I followed the atkayma to the door. Just outside another narrow stair led to a small opening through which I saw a starry sky. We ascended these stairs and stood upon a flat roof surrounded by a low parapet.

The sky was a clear blue, set with myriads of diamond stars. Already a full moon was rising above the city, shedding its soft light so broadly that we could clearly distinguish the surrounding landscape. The air was dry, hot and perfectly still.

"Yonder," said Chaka in English, as he faced the south, "stands the great mountain of Aota. Around it are the four peaks of Gam. That country is barren and covered with rocks. There are secret caves in which dwell fierce animals with evil spirits, and deep wells that draw one to his death. So my people have always been told, and they believe the tale. No Itzaex ever go to those mountains; they are considered sacred to the spirits of evil."

"And where lies the hidden city?" asked Paul, eagerly.

"In the very center of Aota, whose steep sides it is impossible for man to climb."

"It can't be a very big place," I remarked.

"That mountain is bigger than it seems from here," declared Joe.

"Yes," said Chaka; "it is a big mountain, and in its center, so my father told me, is a big valley where all things beautiful grow and flourish. The people are not many as compared with the Itzaex. Perhaps they number a

thousand — perhaps two thousand — I do not know. But they are a powerful race, descended from those who once came from Atlantis, and in their valley they find all that they need to support life."

We stood looking thoughtfully at the barren, towering peak. No wonder elaborate preparations had been made to invade such a stronghold.

"I wish we had their gold and rubies without the trouble of going there," I said.

"Well," said Allerton, awakening to a more alert mood, "we haven't; and the journey must be made. What do you propose, Chaka? Can we steal away from the city to-night and start toward Aota?"

The atkayma shook his head.

"Look!" said he, pointing below. "The walls are guarded by my warriors. I myself might easily pass through, but not the white people. Already the word has gone abroad that the priests demand your lives. The funeral pyre of the dead atkayma requires victims. My uncle has aroused public hatred against you, and the Itzaex nation thirsts for your blood."

"That's pleasant," commented Joe.

"But what's the program, then?" I inquired. "We don't agree to be murdered, of course, however thirsty your people may be. That isn't what we came here for."

"No," said Chaka. "We have really little to fear. If my Brother Paul and my other friends approve, I will show them how we may escape."

"Speak, my brother," returned Paul.

"It is not wise to go to-night," began Chaka, "for I do not know the way to the mountain very well. All I know is that by some means we must get to the top of Aota. There is no wind. If we ascend into the air now we will remain suspended over the city, except for the small progress we could make with our wings, which have never been tested. In this country a breeze always springs up in the morning. It blows from the north and the north-west. That would help to carry us away toward the mountain, or at least far away from the city."

"But aren't we to be burned on the funeral pyre at daybreak?" demanded Joe.

"At daybreak I am commanded to deliver you to the priests at the great temple," said Chaka. "There will be many ceremonies. You will be taken to the top of the temple, which is a pyramid, and there, in the sight of the people below, you are to be slain. Afterward your bodies will be laid upon the funeral pyre. My plan is to allow all this to happen but the killing. We will inflate our gas-jackets in readiness and at the right time, while the breeze is blowing, mount into the air and escape."

“Well, I’m game,” said I, drawing a long breath, for I saw exciting times ahead.

“I’m with you, Chaka,” added Joe in his quiet voice.

Allerton walked to the parapet and stood there several minutes, thinking deeply. Then he returned and placed his hand on Chaka’s shoulder.

“It is a good plan, my brother,” he said. “We will follow it to the end.”

We went below and told the others. Nux and Bryonia grinned and nodded as if they had been invited to attend a circus; Ned asked a few questions and said he was satisfied; Pedro shook his head and vowed it seemed “ver’ much danger” but he would go with the crowd. Archie was asleep and growled when we woke him up. “Settle it to suit yourselves,” he said, yawning. “I’m agreeable to anything but keeping awake all night.”

I’m ashamed to say I slept very soundly myself, worn out by our long journey and its excitements. I think every one slept, for that matter, unless it was the Mexican. When the atkayma went away he sent us some soft mats which we spread upon the benches and reclined upon.

It was still dark when Chaka again aroused us. He was accompanied by two tall Itzaex in red robes, who bore lighted torches. A group of Indian maids came behind them with a simple breakfast of fruits and milk.

We first ate and then proceeded to don our equipment. There was a word of protest from one of the priests, but Chaka silenced him and to the amazement of the torch-bearers calmly began to put on his own gas-jacket and electrite outfit. He refrained from assuming the headgear and threw his ample robe over the other fittings, thus effectually hiding them. I believe these priests, shrewd as they seemed, were wholly unable to guess what our strange apparel was for. After all, it mattered little to them, so long as we came quietly to our fate.

When finally we were fully equipped and the surplus material had been packed into a chest, the atkayma produced a small but very strong cord made from hemp, with which he proceeded to loop us all together in a string, himself being attached to one end and Paul to the other. Archie began to protest at this, but Allerton told him it was intended as an additional safeguard.

Then we started on, the priests going first and Chaka following, drawing the rest of the string after him. The ropes had been left long enough for us to trundle the chests along easily, and so far as I was concerned the only uncomfortable thing was my wings, which kept getting in my way. These had been left to dangle at our sides until such time as we chose to thrust our arms through the loops, in order to use them for flying. In their folded state they did not resemble wings at all, and although the Itzaex prided themselves

on never showing a trace of curiosity I am quite sure we had them guessing in more ways than one.

CHAPTER 13

WE SEEK SAFETY IN FLIGHT

Once outside the palace we found a great concourse of natives awaiting us, headed by some twenty red-robed priests. In spite of the evil looks cast upon us, there was no insulting word or jibe uttered. I gave the Itzaex credit for saving their breath when it was not needed.

Although the sky had now begun to lighten and all near-by objects were fairly distinct, the torches were still carried ahead as we began our march. This was brief. Soon we came to the lake and were led upon a large flat-boat which at once set out for the temple, urged by a score of rowers with long paddles. The people tumbled into hundreds of other craft, big and little, and followed at our heels.

Arriving at the island the priests took us in charge and escorted us up the steep steps forming the side of the great temple.

This was the largest building in Itza. It was shaped like a pyramid, with steps on all four sides leading to the flat top, some hundred feet from the base. Openings here and there showed that the center of the pyramid was divided into rooms, where the priests doubtless dwelt and held their secret rites and ceremonies. All great public events, such as our proposed carving, were held on top the temple in plain view of the populace gathered below.

Just as we had reached the top — a long and weary climb — the sun rose red over the horizon, and at once there was a clang of gongs and bells and a shrill blowing upon many conch-shells. While this lasted — a full minute, perhaps — we quietly gazed about us.

We stood upon a platform about fifty feet square, the outer edge being lined with priests standing in statuesque attitudes. In the very center of the place was a cube of marble with a hollow space at the top, in which lay a glistening knife. It was not a pretty sight, I assure you, and for an instant it made me shudder.

Now the priests set up a low chant, while at the bottom of the steps appeared the three patriarchs I had noticed at the palace the day before. This was the holy triumvirate, and they ascended with dignified deliberation while the multitude below and those still occupying the fleet of boats all prostrated themselves reverently.

"It's time to inflate the gas-jackets, boys," whispered Allerton.

He uncorked a canteen of water and saturated the crystals of themlyne in his case, afterward handing the canteen to me. One by one we all followed suit, while the chanting priests eyed us doubtfully but forbore to interfere. The gas generated freely and began to fill the hollow jackets, which swelled

until we were just able to keep our feet on the platform. Pedro let in a little too much, and would have floated had not Chaka quickly shut off the valve and released some of the excess gas. Pedro, frightened at his own buoyancy, managed to regain his feet with difficulty, and the incident made the priests surrounding us all the more suspicious.

"Are your electrites ready?" inquired Paul.

We nodded.

"Use them if necessary," he commanded.

Then we waited. I looked anxiously for the promised breeze, which so far had failed to put in an appearance. But it was yet early.

Slowly the holy three mounted the steps and we were all ready for them when they arrived at the top. Scarcely glancing at us they turned to the people and commanded them to rise, an order that was speedily obeyed.

Then one of the three began a harangue in a loud impressive voice. He said they were gathered to witness a sad and solemn but most important ceremony, decreed by the all-wise gods of their fathers. The former atkayma, the noble and wise Tcheltzada, a direct descendent of the gods, who had ruled the nation for many years, had finally met his fate fighting nobly against their enemies the Mopanes, who had beheaded him. By the command of the royal Datchapa a terrible revenge had been taken upon the murderers and the noble victim's head and body had been recovered. These now lay at the foot of the pyramid on the funeral pyre, and in order to please and propitiate the gods, who had loved and cherished the great Tcheltzada, a number of strangers, including several of the hated white people, were to be slain and their blood sprinkled upon the ashes of the lamented atkayma. All this in honor not alone of the dead, but of his son the new Atkayma Chaka and his most holy brother, the wise and esteemed Datchapa, who as leader of the royal council had decreed the interesting ceremony that was about to take place.

I could see how cleverly the priests favored old Datchapa by giving him the credit of catering to the people's hatred and lust for blood. It boded ill for Atkayma Chaka's future that his wiley uncle practically controlled the powerful priesthood.

As the chief priest concluded his speech he turned about and asked:

"Who condemns these prisoners to the sacrifice?"

"I do," answered a voice, as Datchapa stepped from behind a row of priests. "As head of the Royal Council of Itzlan I condemn these prisoners to be slain and their blood mingled with the ashes of Tcheltzada — if the gods consent to accept the tribute."

At this all eyes were fixed upon an ugly little image of the god Bacâb,

which was perched upon a shelf about midway up the front of the pyramid.

"Do the gods so consent?" demanded Chaka in a loud voice, taking his part in the ceremony.

The three priests knelt and stretched their arms toward the grinning Bacâb, and to my astonishment the image nodded its head in a very natural way.

"The gods consent!" cried aloud the three, in unison.

At that moment I saw Chaka protrude the nozzle of his electrite from his robe and point it at his uncle. Every other eye was at that instant turned intently upon the horrible figure of the god.

Suddenly old Datchapa threw up his arms and toppled backward. He was standing near the edge of the platform, so the people might observe his dignified form as he condemned the prisoners, and the result of his fall was that he began to bound down the steps in an inert heap, slowly at first and then with more rapid bumps and leaps until at last he fairly rose into the air and tumbled full upon the funeral pyre of the defunct Tcheltzada.

A cry of horror went up as priests and populace alike observed this dreadful scene, none able to interfere. If the gods approved the sacrifice it seemed like a queer way of attesting their delight.

There had been no sound of firearms, nothing to indicate from whence came the blow that had felled the royal Datchapa. While the consternation was at its height Chaka cried aloud:

"The gods disapprove! Beware, oh, Priests, the vengeance of the gods!"

For a silent, repressed people, the Itzaex now indulged in as near an approach to pandemonium as they will ever come. Some of the natives sided with the priests and some against them. The priests themselves were frantic with anger not unmixed with fear, and shrewdly realized their prestige was at this moment in sore jeopardy. Moreover, Chaka's attitude was defiant; he claimed the whites as his friends, and whatever strange thing had happened to Datchapa might logically be attributed to his doing.

In a fit of unreasoning fury one of the triumvirate caught up the knife from the altar and leaping full upon the young atkayma strove to plunge it into his heart. The armor prevented the blade from penetrating, but the impact knocked Chaka from his feet and priest and potentate were now rolling together dangerously near to the steps. Ned caught Chaka's leg and saved him, and as the priest clung to his victim and again raised the wicked blade to strike I sent a charge from my electrite against him and he quit the struggle then and there.

But it was war, now, and no mistake. With a savage growl the whole posse of priests was upon us, and what we did in the next few seconds

startled us almost as much as it did our audience. Every man brought his electrite into full play and we mowed down the red-robed rascals like blades of grass. So effective was the electric current discharged that the victims had no time to even gasp; they simply tumbled down and lay still. Moreover, the charge spread at such close quarters, like small shot from a blunderbuss, and one charge sometimes paralyzed three, or even four, at a time. A few fell upon the steps, but none experienced the sensational descent of old Datchapa. Before we realized it the platform was cluttered with motionless bodies and not one enemy remained erect or animate.

Our remarkable victory ought to have won the admiration and applause of the people; but it didn't. On the contrary the natives burst into a hoarse roar of ferocious rage and with a single impulse started up the pyramid.

From all sides they rushed, vengeful and furious, and we decided not to await their coming.

"Turn on the stop-cocks and let more gas into your jackets," said Paul. "Be careful not to get too much — just enough to float us comfortably."

"Where's the breeze?" I asked as I obeyed.

"Never mind the breeze. Let's get off this hill."

"How about the chests, sir?" inquired Ned.

"Chaka and I will inflate their coverings. Hurry, my lads — there's no time to lose."

Roped together as we were it was funny to see the effect of adding to the gas already in our jackets. Nux and Bryonia, accustomed to prompt obedience, were the first to float, and each held on to a chest until that, too, was rendered light enough to float. Ned and his chest soared next; then Archie, Joe and I went up. Pedro's chest started upward and he lost hold of its handles. I don't know whatever would have become of that precious box had not Archie grabbed its wheel as it went by and held on to it like grim death. Next moment Chaka and Allerton together left the top of the pyramid; but something was wrong with Pedro; he could not find the cock that admitted the gas to his jacket.

He was roped between Bryonia and Ned, and his weight threatened to hold us all anchored when Paul and Chaka, on the ends of the string, appreciating the danger, turned more gas into their own jackets and drew big Pedro gradually off his feet. Slowly — too slowly, altogether — we rose into the air.

The Itzaex, during this time, had been scrambling up the sides of the pyramid. Now the foremost to reach the top, a big, powerful fellow, made a leap and grasped Pedro by the leg, anchoring the lot of us again, although the Indian could not drag us down, but hung clinging while Pedro swore and

kicked at him with the other foot.

I thought this was a good time to work my electrite, and down fell the Indian, crumpling several of his fellows who had rushed forward to help him, while our anxious bunch gained new headway and slowly mounted skyward. Ned found the supply cock and gave Pedro's jacket its full allowance of gas; so now we kept together better and were soon a good fifty feet above our starting place and perhaps a hundred and fifty feet above the ground of the island.

"That's high enough," said Paul. "Press the valves gently, each one of you, and let out gas until we cease to rise — but not enough to start a descent."

We did the best we could, but some of course blundered and lost too much gas, being then obliged to let in a new supply. Finally, however, we had both the chests and ourselves in a condition of "status quo" and hung motionless just above the pyramid. It was a queer sensation to be "up in the air" like this. I felt a bit dizzy at first, and I noticed poor Pedro kept his eyes shut as if afraid to look down.

Few of the Itzaex were armed that day, as none had expected a fight; so except for a few darts hurled toward us with uncertain aim we were not molested. It was interesting, though, to look down and see that great pyramid black with human beings who stood in amaze watching our aerial exhibition. The Itzaex are not easily astonished, but I'm sure we had them going just then, and small wonder.

"Here comes the breeze!" cried Paul, suddenly. "Get your wings ready, lads, and head for that tall mountain. Now — all together!"

The breeze came almost directly from the north and caught us so abruptly that it fluttered our string of adventurers like rags on a clothesline before we collected our wits and made ready to take advantage of it. I got my arms through the loops, spread my wings and tried my best to flop them as a bird would.

I now realized the wisdom of connecting us together, for we were all new to the use of these curious wings and worked them in so many diverse ways that had we been independent of one another we soon would have become hopelessly separated. As it was, the more successful flyers dragged on the others, and the wind impartially dragged us all on together; so after a few moments, when I remembered to look back, I found the pyramid and its mass of humanity a good mile distant.

In the last few weeks I've been reading about aeroplanes and airships, and what has been accomplished with them. How imperfect — how futile and absurd — they all seem when compared with the Wells Gas-Jacket and Fibre

Wings. All their intricate machinery, their rudders and ballast, accessories and paraphernalia are sure to give place to the eminently practical and satisfying mode of aerial navigation which I believe we were the first to employ during our adventurous trip to Yucatan. Allerton, who was more expert than the others, soon unfastened the cord and began to fly independently, and the ease with which he did it was marvelous. Using the wings to guide him, as a bird does, he let the stiff breeze carry him along with remarkable swiftness, tacking sidewise as he pleased and following any direction his fancy dictated. He would not let the rest of us cut loose, though, but explained to us the theory of his flight and taught us by example how to control our wings.

CHAPTER 14

WE INTERVIEW THE RED-BEARD

The mountain, Chaka stated, was four days' journey from the City of Itza. This was because the country surrounding the barren peak was rugged and very difficult to traverse. Yet our path through the air was so smooth and our speed so great that it was early in the afternoon when we approached so near to Aota that caution induced us to descend and call a halt.

"Here lies the goal of all our struggles," said Paul. "From this moment we must exercise great care in all we do, for we cannot afford to risk failure by an error of judgment."

After counseling with Chaka, Allerton decided to land on the west side of the mountain, about half way to the summit. By a careful manipulation of our wings and gradually letting the gas from our jackets we managed to accomplish this in safety, and although we lit upon the rocks about half a mile from the spot we had first selected we were well satisfied with the result of our exciting trip.

No wonder the Itzaex never ventured near Mount Aota. Such a jumble of huge jagged rocks, treacherous precipices, canyons, rifts and caverns I have never seen before nor since. As we settled to the ground we saw no place level or large enough to hold us all, except a deep ravine; so we fluttered down into this and planted our feet upon a pebbly bottom through which a torrent rushed during the rainy season, but which was now dry as a bone.

"It isn't a bad hiding place from which to reconnoiter," remarked Paul, when we had all seated ourselves to rest and take breath, for flying is rather strenuous when long continued. "What do you think, Chaka; shall we make our camp here?"

"Let us find water," suggested the atkayma.

So we set off in pairs and in different ways to discover water, leaving Pedro to guard the chests. Archie and I walked up the canyon together, finding many fissures leading from it and many dark caverns appearing in the rocks; but nowhere was there evidence of water. After proceeding a half mile or so we returned to find all the party again congregated. Nux and Bryonia alone had been successful, having found a way to climb up the lower side of the ravine, from whence they descended the mountain a short distance and reached a spring of clear, cold water that bubbled out of a rift in the rock. Quite near was the mouth of a large cave, which they did not wait to explore.

As this spot seemed the most suitable location for a camp we took the chests and made our way laboriously out of the ravine and down the mountain a few hundred feet to the spring, where we all drank of the water

eagerly. There was but a narrow ledge to give us foothold here, so we approached the cave, the mouth of which appeared just where the ledge ended.

A few paces from the entrance the cavern was black as ink; so Paul got out his lamp — a modem acetylene search-light affair — and lighted it.

"Get your weapons ready," he said, "for we don't know who lives in this mansion, or whether the owner is willing to take boarders. Don't use firearms; we're too near the Tcha city for that. If you have to defend yourselves shoot the electrites."

The search-light soon cast its gleam to the further wall, and we decided the cave was vacant. A slight rustling sound now reached our ears, growing gradually louder in volume, and looking downward I saw dozens of snakes wriggling toward us, hissing venomously as they came. They were tiny things, not much bigger around than a lead pencil and some seven or eight inches long.

"Reetee!" shouted Chaka, springing backward. "Run, friends — run for your lives!"

"But no, my brother," answered Paul, restraining him. "We are well protected."

Chaka shuddered, but stood his ground, watching the serpents fearfully. They struck at our feet and legs continually, not coiling but throwing themselves forward by rising upon their tails.

Although the sheathing of our shoes and gaiters was impervious to their fangs, the attack was too horrible not to resent. With one accord we began trampling them under heel, destroying the creatures by scores. But the more we killed the more appeared, creeping upon us from numberless tiny cracks in the walls. They came straight to the attack, fighting mad at being disturbed, and we soon began to tire of the hopeless battle.

"Let's cut it!" said Archie, and there was no dissenting voice. Gradually we withdrew toward the mouth of the cave, the snakes following persistently, until when we stood upon the ledge it looked as though we must abandon the position and seek another camp.

"What *are* the things, anyhow?" asked Ned.

"Reetee," said Chaka; "the most deadly serpents known."

Nux and Bryonia knew snakes pretty well, having had large experience with them in the South Seas. Bry begged Allerton to give him the key to the supply chest, and going to it he searched for and brought out a package of dry mustard. Then he took the lamp and reentering the cavern with it, the black kicked the bodies of the dead and dying serpents together in a heap and scattered over it fully half the mustard the package contained. Next moment

he came running back to us, and was none too soon, for with a rush the vermin attacking us wriggled back into the cave, where they made straight for the mustard heap, burying their fangs in the carcasses of their damaged brethren.

The result was astonishing. Almost instantly the deadly reetee succumbed to "mustard poison," as our blacks gravely called it, and in five minutes that lot of harmless mustard — harmless to us, that is — had accomplished more than our boot-heels could do in a week. The odor of the mustard drew every serpent from its hiding place, and contact with the yellow powder was its death warrant. We didn't care for the cave, with its horrid carpet of dead reetee, but at least we were now free from the vipers' attacks.

"The fact is," said Paul, "we can't stay here, or anywhere else on the mountain, for long. Even if our approach has not been observed, which we have little reason to hope, the spies of the Tcha, which are certainly on the lookout, will soon locate us. So it is necessary we get into the hidden city as soon as possible."

"On which side of the mountain is the entrance?" I asked Chaka.

"I do not think there is any entrance," said he; "at least, none that is known to those outside."

"Yet your father visited this city?"

"Many years ago, when he was a young warrior. At that time he and his band had taken a fancy to hunt on this mountain and began to climb it in search of game. One night, as they lay sleeping, all were seized and bound. Then, being blindfolded, they were carried bodily through what seemed to be a long passage. In the morning their bonds were removed and they found themselves within the splendid hidden city of the Tcha. A council was held, at which it was decided to kill all but my father, the atkayma of the Itzaex. He was made to promise that he would never mention the secret of the existence of the city to any but his son or his successor who would rule his nation in his place after him. Ever, during his life and the lives of his successors, he was to prevent any of the Itzaex or other people from wandering near to this mountain. Under these conditions his life would be spared and he would be sent back to his home. Of course my father promised, and the next night was blindfolded and led through other passages, finding himself alone at daylight at the very foot of the mountain. He told me all this, so that I could fulfill his pledge when I became atkayma; but he would tell me nothing of the people of Tcha, except that they were a wonderful race and their city was magnificent with gold and beautiful red gems. Some few details I gleaned from him, but aside from what I have now told you I know nothing."

“Then,” said I, “the thing is all hearsay. There is no positive proof that within the steep and forbidding walls of this mountain lies any city at all.”

Chaka looked at me reproachfully.

“My father, the atkayma, never lied,” he said.

“I don’t mean that, old man. He might have got a crack on the head, and dreamed it all. Or the things he saw may have impressed him, an ignorant savage, as more wonderful than they really were.”

“I believe the story, Sam,” said Allerton, sharply. “Indeed, I have risked my life and future happiness upon its truth. Why should you doubt?”

“Oh, I don’t Paul,” said I. “I’ve seen too many queer things to doubt anything but the commonplace. But you must admit it’s a rather flimsy story to base such great hopes on.”

We were sitting on the chests on the narrow ledge, talking in this manner, when Bry, who was facing the cliff that rose sheer above us, uttered a cry and pointed upward.

We all turned, to stare in astonishment.

Not ten yards distant, upon a tiny shelf of rock that looked like a bracket jutting out from the cliff, squatted a man.

He was clothed in a white toga which had a border of deep blue. His hair and a long beard that swept to his knees was golden red. His eyes were large and blue in color, his features regular, expressive and intelligent. Strangest of all, his skin was white as our own!

I could not see that he bore any arms, but while he might not be very tall, if standing erect, the muscles that showed in his bare arms and neck convinced me he was powerfully built and strong as an ox.

Silently he sat, his knees clasped by his brawny hands, and even when he found himself observed he gave no start nor evidence of emotion.

The situation became rather embarrassing to us at last, for while we were objects of the man’s earnest scrutiny — a scrutiny that seemed to search out and analyze our very thoughts — his composed countenance offered us little information in return.

Chaka, as the important member of our party, just then, stood up and bowed with great solemnity. Speaking the Maya tongue, common to all the tribes throughout Yucatan, he said:

“I greet a friend. May peace reign between us.”

“If our god so decrees,” was the reply, in a deep, resonate voice. This was an established Maya form of greeting among strangers. Said Chaka, continuing:

“Whence do you come?”

“My foot was planted here before your own. It is for you to say from

whence you came."

The man spoke quietly, without a trace of curiosity in his tone. Doubtless he did not require information concerning us.

"I am Chaka, Royal Atkayma of the Itzaex," returned our spokesman. "These companions are from countries beyond the sea."

The red-beard nodded.

"Little is there on bleak Aota to reward you for your journey," he remarked. It seemed he spoke the native language as well as Chaka did. "May the gods of your fathers direct you upon your return."

It was hard to answer this hint and say we were not going back just then. We had no doubt that before us perched an inhabitant of the hidden city, one of the mysterious and ancient race of Tcha. Remembering the report of Chaka's father that spies were detailed to guard the mountain from intrusion, we at once decided that this fellow was of this class. He would have had poor eyes, indeed, had he not noted our aerial approach, and his presence was now to be attributed to his desire to warn us against ascending the mountain farther.

As for our being able to get much information from him, the task seemed hopeless; but Allerton, addressing us in a low voice in English, said:

"I am going to ask this man some questions. Now that he has discovered us I can see no harm in trying to pump him. He will report our presence to his superiors, anyhow."

"Maybe not," I responded, significantly.

"Don't try to hurt him, for heaven's sake!" warned Allerton. "We can't afford to antagonize these people in any way. Our cue is to make them our friends."

I had my own opinion concerning that, but said nothing.

The lieutenant now turned to the man above us, speaking the Maya to him.

"The legends say that the ancient race of Tcha still exists, hidden somewhere near here. Your presence leads us to believe the tale."

There was no reply.

"Your skin is white; you are not of the Maya race," continued Paul. The man remained silent.

"May we not visit your people, and greet them as friends?"

Red-beard shook his head. "You talk in riddles," he replied coolly.

"A white skin in Yucatan is unusual," hinted Paul.

"Yet five of you have white skins," answered the other, not giving our sun-browned Mexican credit for belonging to our race.

"We are Americans," said Paul. "Soon we shall return to our own country,

far away, from whence we came. It would please us, since we are here, to meet your people, who have so long secluded themselves from the great world."

The red-beard made no reply to this. He did not refuse to answer any direct question, but would not argue or give us any satisfaction in return for our friendly advances.

"We ask to be taken to your city," continued Paul.

The man sat motionless.

"If you refuse our reasonable request we will find the way without your guidance," Allerton went on in a firm voice. He was getting provoked.

"In that case you will sacrifice your lives," came the threatening rejoinder.

"Not so," said our leader bluntly. "Our lives are not to be — "

He paused abruptly, for the ledge was vacant. The Tcha had disappeared as if by magic.

With a bound Bryonia leaped up and caught a projecting rock from which he swung himself to the shelf the red-beard had occupied. Then he also disappeared and we waited anxiously the result of his quest. A few moments later the black protruded his head and shook it gravely.

"Dey's a tunnel heah," he announced; "but it blocked up good an' tight."

Chaka and Allerton both investigated, we standing below to "boost" them to the shelf. When they came back they reported that a small tunnel, merely a crevice, in fact, led into the cliff for a distance of about twenty feet and then ended in a solid wall.

"Of course it isn't solid," added Paul, "for the fellow evidently escaped that way and lowered a big stone to block the tunnel. But from this side it is impossible to remove the obstruction."

"Well, then, what next?" I inquired.

"Let us wait here until darkness falls. It isn't a very comfortable location, I admit, but it will do for a few hours. Then we will inflate our jackets, rise to a level with the top of the mountain, descend into the city, and take our chances of receiving an affectionate welcome."

We considered this plan thoughtfully and after discussing it in all its phases decided it was best to follow, under the peculiar circumstances.

CHAPTER 15

WE BECOME PRISONERS OF THE TCHA

Without doubt our presence on the mountain and our declared intention of visiting the hidden city was by this time known to the Tcha. Our best policy would be to appear among them at once, rather than wait for them to formulate a plan to prevent our purpose.

"They can't be very fierce people, if the others are like the sample we've seen," remarked Archie. "He wasn't at all a bad looking fellow."

"I believe I would rather face the Tcha than tackle the Itzaex again," added Ned Britton. "We know how to deal with white folks."

"I do not forget that the Tcha killed my father's followers without mercy," said Chaka. "But that need not discourage us. We made the journey to gain this hidden city, and my brother Paul's plan to fly over the mountain seems to me to be wise."

Our thoughts were none too cheerful as we sat there hour after hour and discussed the forlorn hope, perhaps imagining more terrors than actually existed. It was a big mountain. We could realize that, now we had reached it and were perched like birds upon a narrow ledge of rock, with a dangerous precipice at our feet. There was room for a pretty big city inside the grim walls of this barrier, if it really was hollow and a city of living people existed within it.

We brewed some coffee over an alcohol stove and Paul made enough extra to fill his thermos bottles. In the supply chest — one of the four we carried — was a quantity of food in very condensed form. By boiling water brought from the spring, we made some very excellent soup from a small tablet, and a tin of beef, with a biscuit apiece, enabled us to feast in a very satisfactory manner.

All our operations had to be conducted on a shelf of rock not two feet wide, and the place was so littered with the carcasses of the vipers we had killed that the only way to sit or lie down was by perching upon the chests.

Gradually the sun sank and twilight fell. Nearly all of us were impatient to start as soon possible, but Allerton restrained us.

"We have waited long and endured much to gain this position," said he. "It would be reckless folly to spoil our prospects now by acting prematurely."

So we waited, hour after hour, until the patience of even our staid blacks was well-nigh exhausted. Archie grumbled and growled continually, while Joe whistled softly to himself. Pedro fell asleep and only escaped falling into the precipice by Ned's quick grasp on his arm as he was rolling off a chest.

Finally Allerton looked at his watch for the twentieth time.

"Midnight," he announced. "I think we may risk it now."

We were getting used to the trick of inflating our gas-jackets. In a few moments each man was a miniature balloon, with wings ready to direct his flight. We expanded the coverings of the chests until they floated gently, and were about the same weight as the air itself. Then we examined our electrites, to which we all attached fresh storage belts, saw that guns and revolvers were loaded and in working order, and then were prepared to undertake the most important phase of our adventure.

The moon was up again and the stars bright and gleaming. While we might have preferred darkness, if allowed a choice, we were obliged to make the best of a night that seemed alive and thrilling with heavenly radiance. We could see what we were doing, anyway, and since we were exploring an unknown country that fact was comforting to a degree.

Once more we looped ourselves together by means of the cord, and then at Allerton's command we turned on the gas until we began to float gently upward.

Using our wings, which were becoming less awkward to us, we guided ourselves toward the center of the mountain top. Within a quarter of an hour we were poised directly over it.

And now, indeed, we not only recognized the truth of Chaka's report, derived from his father, but were filled with amazement at what we beheld.

Within the walls of the great mountain lay a deep cup, or valley, the surrounding peaks forming its bulwark or wall of defense, and effectually shutting out the outside world. And in the valley, as it was disclosed to our eyes under the moonlight, were trees, rivers and fields of verdure and of grain.

But in a great circle following the oblong shape of the valley and extending from the walls of the mountain a quarter of a mile or so toward the center, was the city we had sought, brilliant with thousands of electric lights. The buildings were constructed of white, highly polished marble, not being flat or square as were the dwellings of Itza, but having towers, gables, and minarets, and presenting many novel and beautiful designs of architecture. The streets — both the circular ones extending around the valley and the cross streets — were broad and smooth as our American boulevards, and were lined with splendid shade trees.

It was an impressive sight from our bird's-eye position, this handsome city, and quaint enough to rank with any European town of ancient date. But it was altogether more fantastic than even the Chinese towns I had visited, and being built like a belt, following the outlines of the enclosing mountain,

it certainly presented a most unique appearance.

The City of the Tcha, with its central rural or country district, may be roughly estimated at four miles in length and from three to three and one half miles wide, which proves what a big mountain Aota really was.

Allerton's sharp eyes eagerly examined the place and he presently whispered to us instructions to descend at a point as near to the central portion of the valley as possible, in this way avoiding the city.

We could not now hope to find the population asleep, seeing that the twinkling lights were everywhere. Although a few buildings of one sort or another were scattered here and there throughout the rural district — otherwise the center of the valley — these would be easy to avoid until we had landed and taken our bearings.

We did not hesitate long, but pressed the escape-valves and began to descend. Pedro, whose mechanical understanding was sadly undeveloped, made his usual blunder and nearly precipitated us to the ground in a heap by dragging at the ropes; but Paul's cleverness managed to save us from injury, so that we all landed a bit abruptly but safely upon a greensward, while Pedro got a severe bump that nearly drove the breath from his body.

Instantly we removed the ropes and peered about us to discover where we were. A low, white building, all unlighted, was a few yards away; we were upon the broad and velvety lawn surrounding it. Near by ran a small brook, spanned by artificial bridges of pretty design. There were flower beds beyond the brook and a driveway or road circled to the end of the nearest bridge. The air was delightfully cool, a hush lay upon the whole country and the entire scene was peaceful and charming.

While we stood there taking our bearings I happened to turn toward the low building, wondering for what purpose it was used, when I observed a door open, and a file of men pour out in rapid succession. They separated into two files, with the evident intention of surrounding us.

My cry of warning was scarcely necessary, for now we were all watching these files. Tall, stalwart fellows they were, clothed in white togas similar to the one the red-beard we had first seen wore. Circular casques, fitting tightly to their heads, glittered brightly in the moonlight and in their arms the Tcha carried spears with silver shafts and heads of gold.

"Well, shall we fight, Paul?" I asked hurriedly, as I fingered my electrite.

"No. Let us see first what their intentions are. We come here in peace. If we declare war now, we may ruin all our chances of trading for the treasure we have journeyed so far to obtain."

His tone was one of subdued excitement. We were all of us intensely nervous and wrought up by this outcome of our extraordinary adventure.

Silently but with remarkable swiftness the Tcha surrounded us; then, turning abruptly and with admirable military precision, they faced us and advanced until they formed a close circle but a few paces distant. For our part we made no move to escape nor to oppose them. With all the dignity and assumed confidence we could muster we stood with folded arms, silently regarding them.

The spears grounded on the grass with a slight thud. Every man became a living statue. Then a young fellow stepped to the front and saluted.

His complexion was white and he wore a short red beard. This fairly describes the entire company he commanded. The light was sufficient for us to see them clearly, and to note the expression on their faces. It was composed and calm. I have never seen people so alert and yet so sedate and dignified as these ancient Tcha. In action they are marvelously quick; in repose as motionless as if carved from stone.

Allerton advanced a pace and returned the young officer's salute.

"If we intrude," he said in the Maya language, "we offer our apologies. We are travelers from the United States of America, come to examine this unknown part of Yucatan. We claim from you and your people the same hospitality we would show to you were you to visit our own country."

The officer listened respectfully. When Allerton had concluded his speech the other said, using the same language:

"I am instructed to furnish you lodgings for the night. Follow as I lead."

His voice was clear and distinct, his tone arbitrary, as if he anticipated no opposition and would brook none. Yet the words seemed fair enough, and in return Paul merely bowed his assent.

We were conducted to the building from whence the soldiers had issued, the men forming a hollow square and escorting us while we marched in the center. It looked to me very like a capture, but Paul whispered to us in English not to resent anything at the present time.

Through the doors we were ushered into a big dark hall, where we stood until suddenly a light flashed ahead of us and its rays disclosed surroundings of a most magnificent character.

"Come!" commanded the officer, leading the way up the hall. We obeyed, turned a bend in a corridor and found ourselves in a room about twenty feet square.

"In the morning," said the young Tcha, tersely, "I will again come to you."

He saluted once more, backed through the door and closed it behind him. We heard a metallic sound, as if a heavy bar had fallen into place.

"Prisoners, sure enough!" exclaimed Archie.

“Never mind,” said Paul. “Isn’t it a gorgeous prison?”

It was, indeed. The walls and floor were of polished marble, but the former were draped with splendid hangings and the latter spread with thick, soft rugs. Couches covered with downy cushions — enough for us all — stood here and there, and these were made of a metal that Allerton declared to be solid gold. Save for an ornamental table of similar material these couches were the only furniture of the room. In the center of the ceiling glowed a curious flat-shaped electric lamp that lighted the place fully, but without any disagreeable glare. I saw no way to shut it off, but Joe discovered in a comer a cord which, when gently pulled, drew a mask over the lamp and darkened the room. We afterward discovered that this room was really plain and unprepossessing when compared to even the humbler dwellings of this magnificent city, but at the moment of our introduction to it we regarded its splendor with awe.

There was one window, letting into a court. It had no glass panes but was crossed and recrossed by heavy bars of a metal resembling bronze. There was no way to remove these bars and, the door having been securely fastened, we were forced to admit that we had been very securely jailed. Later we learned that this building was reserved for a prison, or as near such an institution as the Tcha required. It was called “The House of Seclusion” where offenders were sent for punishment; but it was very seldom used.

It was no use worrying. Here we were, at last, in the hidden city. Young men require lots of sleep. I settled myself upon one of the gold framed couches and was soon oblivious to every threatened danger.

CHAPTER 16

WE VIEW THE HIDDEN CITY

"Shall I make coffee?" I heard Paul ask.

Opening my eyes I found the sun streaming through the barred window. The others except Archie and Pedro were awake.

As if to answer our leader's question, steps were heard on the marble floor of the passage outside. Bars were removed, the door swung open and in came four soldiers bearing our breakfast.

This consisted of fresh sweet milk, a plentiful supply of fruits, including peaches, dates and melons, and a quantity of excellent bread made into small loaves and baked with a hard crust.

I made a mental examination of these strange people as they arranged the food upon the table. Their complexions were much fairer than my own, which was well browned by sun and weather; yet they lived in a tropical climate. Every Tcha we had seen so far had red hair, and I may as well add that every Tcha we saw afterward, male and female, possessed red hair, with its invariable accompaniment of blue eyes. They were very careful of their personal appearance, being as neat as wax from head to toe. The casques of these soldiers, who also acted as police — they were called "public guardians" — were formed of plates of gold hardened by means of some alloy.

As soon as they had performed their duties these men withdrew, leaving us to gather round the golden table, pouring milk from a golden tankard into golden goblets and eating from golden plates. All these utensils were skillfully engraved with conventional decorative designs, no figures or landscapes being used whatever. Around the base of the tankard was set a row of brilliant red stones which Paul after examination pronounced rubies of almost priceless purity and size.

"There's almost enough wealth here in this room," he said, "to repay us for coming."

"Then let's take it and go," I suggested.

"Can we go?" inquired Chaka.

Not just then, I realized perfectly.

After giving us ample time for our breakfast the young officer reappeared. He was accompanied by a single soldier bearing over his arm a number of white togas.

"I am commanded to take the strangers before the Tribunal," he announced.

"Very well," said Paul. "We are ready to go."

“You must go unarmed.”

At a signal from Allerton we laid down our guns and revolvers, drew our knives and placed all in a heap upon the floor. We stuck to the electrites.

“Remove your flying clothes,” commanded the officer.

“We refuse to do that,” said Paul, firmly.

“You must go before the Tribunal naked, save for these robes I have brought,” was the stern decree.

Paul smiled and sat down indifferently upon a sofa.

“Then we won’t go,” said he. “You must remember, my good man, that our customs are not the same as your own. We are neither your prisoners nor your slaves, but your guests. We will submit to no indignities at your hands, sir. If you so desire, we will wear the robes you have brought, but only over our other garments.”

The officer bowed, turned on his heel and left the room, his attendant following.

“That’s the way to treat ‘em,” cried Archie, jubilantly. “When they find we’re not to be bulldozed they’ll show us more respect.”

Not many of us were so optimistic. I did not like the look on the officer’s face as he retired.

“He has probably gone to report and receive further orders,” said Paul, a bit anxiously. “I think I was right to be so positive, but it is hard to judge these people. One thing is certain, we mustn’t give up our electrites or gas-jackets. If it comes to open war at any time I am confident these devices will save us and permit us to escape.”

We all fully agreed with him in this, and having planned and discussed our actions in case of emergencies we settled down to wait, as patiently as might be, the course of events.

Suddenly a shutter swung across the window with a click, shutting out the light and leaving us in darkness. I felt my way to the cord, drew the mask from before the electric lamp and so lighted the room artificially.

“I wonder what that was for?” exclaimed Paul, uneasily, as we all stared at the shutter before the window. “Can you explain it, brother?”

Chaka shook his head. “The Tcha queer people. It is not easy to understand them,” he said.

A fragrance, as of some delightful perfume, was now wafted to our nostrils from some hidden source. We all noticed this, but no one made any remark at first. The perfume grew stronger, presently, and more pungent. I was sitting on a couch and threw myself back against the cushions, feeling drowsy and inert. My eyes closed; I felt a delicious sense of oblivion stealing over me. Somewhere out of space I heard Paul’s voice saying:

“Resist it! resist this fatal essence, or we are lost!”

I had no especial desire to resist anything. Just then I felt entirely comfortable and contented. Dreams were coming to me; dreams rose-colored and sweet. I wandered in cool forests picking brilliant wild flowers and listening to the songs of birds. The songsters were Birds of Paradise, superbly plumed, and they sat on the branches of trees and talked, as well as sang, telling me pretty fables. Other delights I enjoyed, wading in a clear brook and catching fishes in a straw hat, as I once did as a small boy. Then I leaped upon a green bank and raced up and down in thoughtless glee.

Some one caught me and began shaking me with no gentle hand.

“Sam! Sam, my lad! Wake up — wake up!”

In much disgust at being disturbed I opened my eyes. Sunshine again in the room. The shutter had been removed from the window. Joe was bending anxiously over me, while black Nux fanned me gently.

The dream dissolved. I sat up, quickly recovering my wits.

All but Nux and Joe were still asleep under the influence of the powerful narcotic which had filled the room. I ran to Paul and began to shake and fan him. Joe tackled Archie, and Nux tried to restore Chaka. Bry came to unassisted and presently joined us.

Five minutes later we had all recovered and sat staring at one another in bewilderment. There was no trace of headache or other bodily ill-effect from our enforced loss of consciousness; but a far greater misfortune had overtaken us.

We had been stripped naked while we slept and all our equipment and outfit, defensive and aggressive, including the four chests, had been taken from us.

We were helpless prisoners in the hidden city of the Tcha.

Whatever confidence in ourselves we had felt before we endured this irreparable loss was now reduced to a minimum. I am quite sure there was not a coward among us, as the term is generally understood; but our present predicament was serious enough to make the bravest of the brave anxious and despondent.

We said nothing for a time. There was nothing to say. Archie, who usually grumbled and complained, now startled us by an abrupt laugh.

“What fools we were to think we could outwit these Tcha,” he said, in a voice that was positively cheerful. “They haven’t been hidden from the world all these thousands of years without getting a little civilized in their own way; and, by jinks! it was as clever a dodge as I ever heard of. No threats, no force, no back-talk. They laid down the law to us, and found we wouldn’t agree to it. So they made us come to time, in the pleasantest possible manner.

They deserve to win, those fellows. Hurrah for the Tcha!"

"I'm inclined to think," said Allerton, with a sigh, "it's all up with us now. I'm sorry, lads, that I drew you into this trap."

"Don't mention it, Paul," I replied, trying to shake off a sense of impending doom. "We got along famously under your leadership until just now, and what has happened is in no way your fault. Let's brace up, all of us, and take things as they come."

"Of course," remarked Joe, in his slow way. "I've been in places nearly as desperate as this before, and managed to wiggle out alive. We seem to be beaten, at present, but it's a good omen that these people didn't kill us while we lay unconscious and at their mercy."

"That's true," nodded Ned Britton. "While there's life, there's hope."

"We won't show the white feather, anyhow," said Archie. "If it comes to dying, as it may, we'll die game."

Pedro gave a sob and drew his hand across his eyes.

"Don' mine me," he said, apologetically. "If Pedro mus' die, he die like a game, too — a much small game. But Pedro no like to die. It hurt so bad."

"So it does," laughed Archie. "We're none of us hankering for it, my boy."

Nux and Bryonia were seemingly unmoved. They were accustomed to accepting the inevitable with philosophy.

"Bad t'ing, Mars' Sam," was all Nux said; and Bry shook his head and remarked:

"I like to have one big fight to end it. If big fight come, Bry don't mind."

Chaka was silent and reserved. After clasping his Brother Paul's hand a moment he relapsed into a state of dignified unconcern. He reminded me of the Mussleman who is content with this life but is willing to die because he believes the next life better.

Before long the officer returned, with his attendant and the robes. We had braced up now and showed neither anger at what had occurred nor fear at our helpless condition. On his part the young fellow made no reference to his easy victory over us. He quietly passed around the robes and sandals, waited until we had put them on and then said, somewhat more respectfully than before:

"You will now accompany me to the Tribunal."

With this he turned to leave the room. We followed in double file, Chaka and Paul first, then Joe and I, Archie and Ned, Nux and Bryonia and Pedro at the end. We assumed a demeanor of proud indifference which I assure you we were far from feeling.

Down the corridor, along the big hall and through the door we marched,

and not a soldier appeared to guard us. It was not necessary.

Now we had our first daylight view of the magnificent valley and the city of Tcha.

From the level where we stood the mountain sides rose almost perpendicularly to a height of two hundred feet or more; not in smooth cliffs, but rugged, irregular and picturesque. At the base of these sides had been built the largest and most important of the palaces and dwellings; but these were all at the south end of the oval valley. The north end was fitted with huge buildings more substantial than ornate, and here we afterward learned were located the manufactories and warehouses. A broad boulevard ran before this unbroken circle of buildings, and it was bordered by parkings of close cropped grass, drinking fountains and broad-spreading palms. Then came a circle of less imposing dwellings, in two rows, one facing the first or Great Boulevard, the other row facing the valley on a second boulevard, this of course being of less extent, as it formed the inner circle. The same arrangement was repeated five times, thus carrying the city proper in a vast belt around the outer edge of the valley.

All of the central space was devoted to agriculture, and except for a few public buildings only granaries and storehouses were built there. Yet it was all as elaborately laid out as a public park, and the soil must have been wonderfully fertile.

One or two natural brooks that flowed through the place fed several canals used for irrigation and boating; and although the Vale of Tcha was really extensive, without an inch of waste space, it was so hemmed in by the mountain that it looked like a toy kingdom.

Escorted by the officer we traversed paths bordered with gay flowers which led through the pasture lands and grain fields, making indirectly toward a large enclosure near the north end of the valley. I could not imagine what this place was, at first, but saw many white-robed figures flocking to it from various parts of the town. When we drew nearer it resolved itself into a great outdoor hall, built much like the ancient Greek theatres, although it was probably much older than the Greek nation.

All unguarded we followed our conductor to the entrance of this theatre. There was no possible chance to escape. While we were in the Vale of Tcha and unarmed we were virtually in a prison, with ten thousand native inhabitants for jailors.

CHAPTER 17

WE ARE CONDEMNED BY THE TRIBUNAL

The theatre, or rather assembly hall, was built so that a small stage or platform faced row after row of circular marble seats which rose in tiers, one slightly elevated above another, until the highest tier was some sixty feet above the ground. As we were led in I noticed that the seats were nearly filled with men, women and children. All wore the staple white toga, often over finer garments which fitted the body loosely and were more or less embroidered and decorated according to the fancy or the station of the wearer. Sometimes these togas were solid white throughout, but more usually there was a plain or figured band of a different color around the hem and the neck. The women affected wider borders and more color on their garments than the men.

Every inhabitant of Tcha, male or female, had red hair. There were many shades from deep auburn to brick red; but it was all undeniably red. Eyes, too, were invariably blue, being likewise of many graduations of shade, from dark violet to light watery azure. The complexions of the people, as I have said, were dazzlingly fair, with few freckles, and this despite the warm latitude in which they lived. However, I never knew it uncomfortably warm in Tcha.

Having remarked upon the fine physique of the men of Tcha, I may as well state here that their women were the handsomest females I have ever seen. It would not have been possible to find an unattractive maid or matron in the hidden city. They were, as a rule, tall and slight, exceedingly graceful and free of carriage and of extraordinary facial beauty. Cheery and bright they seemed but neither talkative nor frivolous. Modest and unassuming at all times they yet maintained an air of stately pride that won and retained the respect and deference of the opposite sex. In Tcha the women were considered the equal of men in all ways, and their superiors in many.

A more reserved and unexcitable race has never existed. In the assemblage we faced there was no disorder of any sort. Even the children restrained any evidence of feeling. Inimical, powerfully opposed to the strangers who had intruded upon them we felt them to be; yet no jeers nor insults came from the throng, which represented the rank and file of the populace.

The officer lined us up facing the low platform, upon which sat a group of three aged men. Their beards — many wore beards in this valley — were snow white, and their heads were bald. They were not wrinkled nor decrepit, but carried themselves erect and proudly.

Of course I knew this was the powerful Tribunal which was to decide our fate, and so I examined their faces with interest. Their eyes, which returned our gaze, were mild and calm in expression. There was no sign of hatred, antagonism or cruelty in those placid countenances. Somehow I took heart as I read the faces of the Tribune, and felt relieved that we had been brought before them for judgment.

All others in that vast throng were commoners: the three aged members of the Tribunal alone possessed authority. We knew nothing as yet of the political constitution of the people, but this conclusion was self evident.

The officer knelt and removed his casque.

"Here, Fathers, are the strangers," he said.

One of the three addressed us.

"Who speaks for you, strangers?" he inquired.

Allerton stepped forward and bowed respectfully. The three aged heads bent to acknowledge the salutation.

"It is well," said another. "We desire to question you, sir, and trust you will answer us truly. Why are you here?"

"We came," said Paul, using the expressive Maya language, which seemed to be spoken in the valley, "merely from curiosity. We are experienced travelers, from a country afar off, and we wished to see your valley, to meet your people and to make you our friends."

The third Tribune spoke. "How came you to know that the Vale of Tcha exists?" he asked.

Allerton hesitated, not knowing how to answer. He tried to choose his words with great care, for words meant lives at this crisis.

There was no impatience displayed by the Tribune, yet our leader's very hesitation was against us. It was a fair question, from their standpoint, but the most difficult one Paul could have been called upon to answer. He must at all hazards protect his friend and "brother."

But Chaka showed his mettle then. He advanced a pace and standing beside Allerton he said in a clear voice that could be heard by all:

"It was I who told him of the hidden Vale of Tcha."

The three graybeards examined the speaker carefully.

"You are an Itzaex," said one.

"I am Chaka Atkayma, the child of the gods and the hereditary ruler of my people," was the proud assertion. Chaka was superb when he assumed this mood.

"And how came you to know of the Vale of Tcha?" was the next question.

"My father, the great Tcheltzada Atkayma, told me."

The members of the Tribunal exchanged glances of intelligence.

“Did he ask you to keep the information secret, to use it only to prevent your people from coming too near to the mountain of Aota?”

“He did,” said Chaka. “But I related the story to my brother Paul, whom I love as myself. When he became eager to visit your city I offered to guide him.”

The graybeards nodded. They felt they were now getting the plain, unvarnished truth.

“Did you not realize the penalty of your act; the fate sure to overtake you if you succeeded in coming among the people of Tcha?”

Allerton had recovered his wits by now, and strove to shield his friend.

“He did, your Highness, and warned my comrades and me. But we paid little heed to his protests. Why should we be unwelcome in Tcha? We come not as enemies but as friends. We are few in numbers; the Tcha are thousands. In no other country of the great wide world are peaceful strangers forbidden the hospitality of the people.”

I thought this was a hard hit, and a corking good argument; but the three bald heads did not seem impressed by it. One of them replied:

“The Tcha have the right to make their own laws, and to protect themselves from intrusion. For thousands of years we have been sufficient to ourselves, ignoring the outer world from whence you came. We have forbidden strangers to come among us. Through the Tcheltzada Atkayma of the Itzaex we warned all men to keep away from our domain, under penalty of death. You have disregarded our warning; you have disobeyed our laws. Therefore you must submit to the punishment your folly has brought upon you.”

Pleasant prospect, wasn’t it? Chaka said, in a firm voice:

“I alone, your Highness, deserve punishment. It was my disobedience of your commands that permitted these people to come to the Vale of Tcha. I claim at your hands full punishment for my fault, and the release of my innocent friends.”

“Not so!” cried Allerton, quickly. “It was I who, learning of your hidden city, persuaded Chaka Atkayma to guide me here. It was I who induced these comrades to accompany us. The fault is mine, your Highness. I alone deserve the death penalty.”

For an impressive moment the three members of the aged Tribunal gazed full into the faces of these strange contestants for the honor of death. Then they deliberately rose, walked around the bench where they had been seated and sat down in a row with their backs toward us and the assemblage.

At this every head in the audience was bowed low, as if in prayer. Absolute silence reigned. Not even the rustle of a garment was to be heard.

The Tribunal was deciding our fate.

I own that I felt desperately uneasy and weak-kneed. The gentleness of demeanor of the old men and the quiet repression of the populace should have been reassuring; but somehow the chills would run up and down my back in spite of me. Chaka and Paul turned and embraced one another with mutual love and gratitude, after which they stood proudly erect and awaited their fate. As for the rest of us, fearful as we were we failed to show the white feather. Cowardice at such a time would be strangely out of place; because, perhaps, it was so unavailing. Unless it may prove profitable, cowardice is the rankest folly.

After a brief consultation the members of the Tribune came back to their first position, facing us. Their gaze was as calm and inscrutable as before. Then one of them rose to his feet and addressed the assemblage.

"The strangers are all condemned to death," said he, quietly. "The laws of our fathers, the founders of the Vale and City of Tcha, must be obeyed. Once we pardoned an atkayma of the Itzaex and sent him back to his people, that through fear and in self-protection he might preserve us from further molestation or intrusion. That was deemed a wise action at the time, but it is not necessary for us to spare the atkayma's son, who stands before us. For, thinking the young man had perished, Tcheltzada confided our secret to his brother Datchapa, an old and wise Itzaex who will now rule his people and is too cautions to disobey our commands."

I wondered how he knew all this, and if old Datchapa had really survived his tumble down the side of the pyramid. When the speaker sat down another Tribune rose, saying:

"As our laws provide, in such cases, the civil government of Tcha, which we the Tribune represents, is powerless to do more than condemn strangers who intrude upon our domain. The prisoners must now be turned over to her Supreme Highness the High Priestess of the Sun," (here Tribunal and people all bowed their heads humbly) "that they may be used for the sacrifice, if found fit, or otherwise destroyed. This is our decree, the decree of the Tribunal of Tcha, from which there is no appeal."

Here the third judge arose.

"The prisoners must be taken to the Holy Temple at once and delivered to the representatives of her Supreme Highness, the hereditary High Priestess of the Sun. And may the god approve us and shed his blessings upon us, now as heretofore."

CHAPTER 18

WE ARGUE WITH THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Well, it was all over, and we had no chance to demur or make any protest. The members of the Tribune gathered their robes about them and walked away, and then the tiers of seats began to empty, without haste and in an orderly, circumspect manner.

Curious looks were cast at us, but I could read neither pity nor abhorrence in any countenance. We were wholly outside the lives of this strange race, and they accepted our fate as a matter of course.

The officer who had brought us here now turned and said:

"You have been tried and judged, strangers. You have heard the verdict of the just Tribunal. Follow me."

Of course we tagged along after him; there was nothing else to be done. We now headed straight for the city, and that especial part of it situated at the south end of the valley. The people, returning to their dwellings, avoided interfering with us. While within earshot they did not discuss us or our unhappy destiny. Through centuries they have been taught consideration for others, nor did they forget the lesson even in their conduct toward strangers and condemned criminals.

Our glimpses of the residences we passed filled us with wonder and admiration. Highly polished marble, ornate and artistic carvings, exquisite tropical shrubbery, closely mowed lawns, fountains, cornices and ornaments of wrought gold were everywhere visible. The approaches to some of the finer dwellings were paved with layers of golden sheets, riveted together and in some instances bordered with fine rubies and other gems. Gold seemed the most abundant metal the Tcha possessed, and they had a secret way of hardening it that rendered it as durable as steel, without impairing its beauty.

Approaching nearer and nearer to the south wall of the mountain enclosing the valley, we at last reached the most impressive and extensive building of all — the Temple of the Sun. Ample grounds surrounded the huge, majestic pile, enclosed by marble walls ten feet in height, which were supplemented by a six-foot ornamental railing of elaborately worked gold. The entrance gates were likewise of gold, and bore in the center of each a highly polished representation of the sun shedding its rays in every direction.

News of our coming had evidently preceded us, for the great gates at once swung inward to receive us and a group of tall priests, most of them advanced in years, stood ready to admit the devoted band of prisoners to the sacred precincts. The official did not pass the gates. He reverently removed his casque and said:

“Holy fathers, to your keeping I confide the condemned. They now belong to our mother, the divine and adorable High Priestess of our god, the Sun.” Then, turning to us he continued in an earnest tone: “Destiny directs all human life. You are brave men, strangers, and are prepared to well fulfill the decree of Destiny. Being on the threshold of the great Hereafter, I give you greetings and good wishes. May your journey be peaceful and swift.”

Without awaiting our thanks for this doleful farewell he turned and departed, while with small ado we were marched through the gates and allowed to hear them swing shut behind us, the ring of their golden bars sounding like a knell in my ears. According to the best calculations of the Tcha we were never to pass this barrier again, either alive or dead.

Directly facing the gates was the great temple, entered by a broad flight of steps and composed of four walls, roofless and open to the rays of the sun. Entirely separated from this main building were two others of smaller dimensions but much more elaborate. That at the right had a separate enclosure and was connected with the temple by a peristyle; the other, toward which we were directed, stood alone.

This, we found, was the palace of the High Priest, and the residence of the numerous priests of the sun. The leaders of the reception committee were diverse. One was a wild-eyed, ascetic looking fellow who glared at us but kept silent; the other proved a kindly-faced man who treated us with marked respect.

After giving us a cool and refreshing beverage to drink — it reminded me of lemonade — we were taken to the presence of the High Priest, a doddering, withered old individual who seemed to have lived far beyond his allotted time and was drowsing contentedly when we disturbed him. He woke up to stare at us a moment, then waved us away, saying to our escort:

“They belong to the great god, the Sun. Cherish them; treat them tenderly, as befits those to be prepared for the sacrifice.”

At the moment we were inclined to resent this. None of us, I am sure, had any desire to become a sacrificial offering. But as we left the High Priest, who had fallen asleep again even before he had finished speaking, Chaka congratulated us on our good fortune.

“Had we been deemed unworthy of their great god,” he explained in English, “they would have killed us at sundown to-night, murdering us in cold blood and tossing our carcasses to the beasts. Sacrificial offerings are reserved for especial occasions and are often prepared for weeks in advance, being cherished and fattened that they may become the more acceptable to the god. Therefore this order means we shall gain time to plan an escape. That may not be impossible, my friends, after all; and, in any event, time has

its value."

Afterward the atkayma told us that had not the High Priest been in his dotage he assuredly would not have accepted our blacks for sacrifice. The Mexican might pass, perhaps, as his skin was not unlike the color of that of the Itzaex; but the Sun-god might not like black sacrifices. The event, however, proved that Chaka was wrong in this conclusion.

We were now treated with great respect by the priests, even the wild-eyed one being willing to "cherish" the victims. Having been formally dedicated to their god, our persons were sacred and our comfort and welfare the objects of much solicitude. If one of us expressed a desire it was at once granted, and we were surrounded by every luxury the luxurious palace afforded. In effect we became autocrats, commanding the priests at will. One thing only was denied us — permission to leave the temple enclosure.

For four dreary days we lived this sybaritic life; they were dreary because we had little to do but to eat and sleep and take life easy. Of course we talked over our delicate position and sought to evolve some plan of escape, but without the precious outfit that had been taken from us we were practically helpless.

All the Vale of Tcha was under the supreme rule of the High Priestess of the Sun, an hereditary title that had been handed down from mother to daughter for thousands of years — how many thousands we as yet were unable to learn. The High Priestess was attended by fifty Virgins between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Having served to the latter age they were released, sent back to their homes and permitted to marry. The daughters of these original Virgins of the Sun were entitled to succeed their mothers, in time; if there were not enough of them, choice was made of young girls from the noblest families of the nation.

Next in rank came the High Priest, who was supported by fifty priests. These last, however, held their positions for life, and their ranks were filled from time to time by the most intelligent and deserving of the young men of Tcha. But so arduous were the duties of the priesthood that there was no time to fuss over civil affairs and the administration of the laws; so a Tribunal was selected by the High Priestess, the members of which served during their natural lives, directing all the minor affairs of the nation.

The Tcha believed but in one god, the Sun, from whence they considered they derived all the good things of life. They were communists to an extent, although divided into castes. The manufacturers' guild was the most important of all, after the priesthood and the nobility, the latter being a luxurious class consisting of relatives of the priestesses and their subsequent children, but who constituted the scientific and literary class as well. The

manufacturers' guild included goldsmiths, weavers, millers and bakers, and all those who produced goods or wares from raw material. Next came the agriculturists, then the miners, and finally the builders.

Every inhabitant of the Vale of Tcha belonged to one or another of these castes and was supposed to keep busy, a drone being despised by all. Everything produced went into the public warehouses and from there was distributed to each family according to its requirements.

On the afternoon of the fourth day of our imprisonment a message came to us that the High Priestess desired to see the "sacrificial devotees." The priests at once bustled about and brought us fresh togas and our white duck suits, which we wore under the robes. We were washed and brushed like schoolboys and given endless advice as to our conduct in the presence of "the Divine and Supreme Ama."

"Ama" meant in the Maya tongue "mother." If the High Priestess had any other name we never heard it.

When we had been properly fixed up and inspected by the wild-eyed one, who had authority under the senile High Priest, we were ushered past the great temple to the gates of the enclosure beyond. Here the priests turned us over to the care of six beautiful damsels whose tunics bore the device of the flaming sun. They were in no way embarrassed by the care of nine men of a strange race. Indeed, they regarded us impersonally as sacrifices intended in the near future to propitiate their god.

Demurely they led us along flower-bordered walks, into the main entrance of the magnificent palace of the Priestesses, through a lofty hall and out by a rear entrance, down a long pergola shaded by climbing roses, past a garden resplendent with rare and gorgeous blooms, and finally into a roomy pavilion that stood almost at the edge of the cliff that towered above the city.

The pillars, roof and floor of the pavilion were of pure white marble. In the center was a fountain that sent its cooling sprays far into the air. Beyond the fountain we found the floor strewn with exquisite rugs and downy cushions while in the rear of this spacious retreat was a golden divan upon which reclined the High Priestess, Supreme Ruler of the Vale of Tcha.

How shall I describe Ama to you? Shall I say she was the embodiment of grace and beauty, that her figure was tall and supple, her hair a golden bronze, her eyes turquoise and her lips budded like a rose? All that seems stale and flat in depicting Ama.

To our amazement this redoubtable High Priestess, in whose hands reposed all power, was a mere child, scarcely more than seventeen years of age.

No daintier, fairer, sweeter girl could be imagined. Reared from the cradle

to occupy this exalted position, she was a real queen, regal alike in bearing, in natural attributes, in education and in person. Never had she known a wish unfulfilled, never a command thwarted. She had succeeded her mother at twelve years of age, and her omnipotence among the Tcha was accepted by the girl without a thought that she owed all to the accident of birth.

As we stood before her the mighty priestess sat up and examined us with undisguised interest. First she deliberately stared at Paul, until his eyes fell and a deep blush suffused his face. Then Chaka was observed, with evidences of lively approval. Indeed, the youthful atkayma looked very handsome in his haughty, dignified pose, and his brown eyes met those of Ama quite frankly. When she turned to me I bowed and smiled. She was only a girl; why should I fear her? Yet for some reason we had all forgotten entirely our instructions to prostrate ourselves most humbly before the Supreme Ruler. We felt more like treating her as we would an American girl.

One by one she silently scrutinized us all. Then, lying back on her cushions, she waved her hands and said:

"Be seated, thou consecrated ones, thou who art sacred to our Lord the Sun. Let us converse together," she added, graciously.

We squatted on the rugs, arranging ourselves as comfortably as possible, and the attendant Virgins followed suit. When we were seated Ama said:

"Are you contented? Have you any request to make?"

"One, your Highness," ventured Paul, earnestly.

"Speak, then."

"Your god," said he, "is not the God of our fathers. We do not wish to be sacrificed to a strange god. Coming as friends and without evil intent to your country, we have been deprived of our liberty and consecrated to a god we do not worship. The action of the Tcha has been unjust and unkind. We desire to be set free and allowed to return to our own people."

Ama seemed disturbed by this statement. She sat up again, resting an elbow upon her knee and her chin upon the palm of her hand, listening carefully.

"Alas," she said in reply, "your protest comes all too late. The decree has passed the Tribunal. The High Priest has accepted you as worthy sacrifices. Already are you consecrated to the Divine Sun, whose majesty would be outraged if robbed of his offerings."

"Haven't we anything to say about our own fate?" I asked indignantly.

"Oh, no, indeed!" she responded, smiling bewitchingly. "When one breaks the laws of a country he loses his individual right to direct his fate. Is it not so in the land from whence you came?"

"How are outsiders to know your laws, when you seclude yourselves from

all the rest of mankind?" inquired Joe.

"If we seclude ourselves, it is evidence we do not desire intrusion," she answered.

We began to admit to ourselves it would not be easy to influence this fair young girl. She had been taught to conserve the traditions of her people; her ethics of law were fairly sound.

For a time she appeared to be absorbed in thought. Then she said abruptly:

"Tell me of your own country. You differ from and are superior to others who, at times, have come here to disturb us. Most of them, I am told, for it was all before my time, were found to be unworthy to be dedicated to the sacrifice. But you, it seems, have learned to fly as the birds fly, and you bear strange and death-dealing weapons. You clothe yourselves with many hitherto unknown devices, and in your chests are many things the use of which we are ignorant."

This speech gave Allerton an idea.

"The countries of the outside world," he answered, "are of vast extent and throng with millions of people. These teach to one another the knowledge they acquire and the scientific discoveries they make. Therefore they progress much more rapidly than any secluded people, such as the Tcha, can hope to do. Forgive me for saying it, your Highness, but your people are ignorant of many things. They are far behind other nations in arts, sciences and inventions, and very insignificant when compared with the people from whom we came."

"In other words," I explained, "you are way behind the procession, Ama — chasing the times, so to speak."

She listened, and regarded us thoughtfully.

"The Tcha is the greatest nation in all the world!" she declared, with queenly pride.

"It is far from that, your Highness," replied Allerton. "If you ventured outside this puny circle of rocks, your nation would soon be swallowed up by the great world and practically annihilated. Because we are nine helpless travelers you seize and destroy us. In the outside world your entire population would appear meaner and more helpless than we nine are among you here."

She suddenly sprang up with flashing eyes and stamped her foot angrily upon the rug, like a pettish school-girl.

"How dare you come here and lie to me?" she cried with spirit. "How dare you malign my people, the mighty Tcha, to their Supreme Ruler, the Priestess of the Sun? Begone, outcasts that you are! begone and leave me to forget the shame you have thrust upon me!"

We went away, of course. There wasn't time to argue the proposition, and I feared Paul had made a sad mistake. Archie was sorry, too, for I had noticed he was holding the hand of a pretty priestess who sat next him.

But there was a satisfied look on Allerton's face, and as the Virgins thrust us out of their enclosure into the arms of the priests awaiting us he said in English:

"That shot told, all right, and soon she will want to know more about the outside world. Don't be despondent, boys; I've an idea we may win out yet."

CHAPTER 19

WE SAVE A VALUABLE LIFE

That Paul was correct in his conclusion was proven the very next day. Again the High Priestess sent for us, but asked that the blacks, Ned and Pedro be left behind. We objected to this, declaring we must all come, or none at all, and to our surprise she withdrew her exceptions and commanded us all to attend her.

This time she received us in the open air, in a large area directly beneath the overhanging cliff, which was covered with a network of climbing vines to relieve its ruggedness and hide the protruding points of rock. It was almost a perpendicular wall, at this place, and I saw the mouth of a cavern that had a well-worn path leading into it. Doubtless the mountain was honey-combed with caves and recesses, some being natural and many others artificial.

Close to the cliff stood a throne-like seat cut from a solid block of rock. It was well lined with cushions, however, amongst which sat the girlish High Priestess, even more charming and lovely than when we had first seen her. The ground before the throne was strewn with rugs, upon which sat not only many of the Virgins of the Sun, but a large gathering of the people of Tcha, evidently culled from the most cultured and important among them. I recognized the three aged members of the Tribunal, who occupied a position near the Priestess, and the doddering old High Priest, who had already fallen asleep among his cushions. But no one, however important, was allowed a raised seat in the presence of the Supreme Ruler of Tcha.

One of the girls who acted as Master of Ceremonies assigned us our places. Chaka was led to the right of the throne; Paul was placed somewhat to the left. Joe, Archie and I were seated about midway in the audience, while the others of our party were consigned to the very rear.

I understood readily enough the meaning of this assemblage. Ama was going to make Paul prove his statement that the Tcha was a mean and insignificant race, and she had invited her most prominent people to support her in the argument.

So it proved. With much dignity but in simple words she repeated the assertion made to her the day before. Then she turned to Paul and regarding him with steady eyes she asked:

“What nation, in the world you know so well, is more ancient than that of the Tcha?”

He smiled, bowing low before her.

“I do not know how old the Tcha may be,” he said.

She motioned to an important looking fellow who rose and answered:

“The Tcha nation has existed seven thousand, four hundred and nineteen years, each year being composed of three hundred and sixty five days.”

“Then,” said Allerton, readily, “I am sure you lead all nations in point of age. But have you existed in this mountain hollow all that time?”

“No. Our race came from Atlantis four thousand and eighty-five years ago, and established itself here and at the north. The cities erected elsewhere were in time all destroyed. Only this branch of the Tcha, owing to our methods of seclusion and our wise laws, exists to this day.” Allerton bowed in acknowledgment and turned to Ama again.

“Has any other race you know been able to harness the electric currents of nature, and make them furnish power and light?” she demanded.

“These things are common throughout the world,” said he.

The Tcha exchanged looks of wonderment, and some shook their heads doubtingly. Finally one arose and said:

“The records which we have preserved show that when we brought our knowledge of electricity from Atlantis, the savage inhabitants of this continent were wholly ignorant of it. They had even no chariots to run by electricity. The records prove this.”

“Then,” spoke Paul, “you are entitled to precedence in this matter, as well. Such things the world is well acquainted with to-day, and we have many uses for electricity which you, perhaps, have never yet dreamed of; but they have all been discovered within the last fifty years.”

This admission seemed to please the Tcha. Ama, who took a deep interest in the discussion, said:

“Tell me, then; what electric devices are in use by your people that we know not of?”

“By means of a wire.” he replied, “I, at one end of this valley, can talk with a person at the other end, who will hear me distinctly, although I do not raise my voice. Again, I can point a tube at one standing a hundred paces away, and render him as one dead; yet he will recover in a short space of time. Still again, I am able to — ”

I sprang to my feet, crying aloud in fear and horror.

“Look out — for God’s sake!” and pointed upward.

For, gazing casually at the cliff overhead, I had seen a large rock slowly detach itself from the wall and hang trembling just above Ama’s throne, as if held in place only by the clinging vines above it.

Many an eye followed my direction and although I had spoken in English they all understood the terrible danger that threatened their Priestess. Yet not a soul moved; abject horror seemed to have paralyzed them. Ama alone was unconscious of her impending death and stared wonderingly at the startled

faces before her.

Suddenly Paul gave a leap and bounded straight for the throne. Swift as an arrow he flew and caught the girl in his arms. At the same time the huge rock broke away and came hurtling to the ground. Paul saw it, and, acting instinctively, exerted all his strength and threw the girl bodily from him. Chaka, rushing forward, caught her just as the crash came and the great mass — I think it must have weighed two tons — fell full upon the throne of the High Priestess.

Trying to stifle the sob that rose in my throat I dashed to the spot, knowing that my dear friend — I had come to be very fond of Allerton — was buried beneath that massive fragment. His had been a noble deed, I fully realized, but it seemed so hard to have him crushed and mangled, to have him swept suddenly from life, for the sake of a paltry Tcha girl, Supreme Ruler though she might be.

The people had awakened now and were clustering anxiously around their Priestess, who lay half fainting in Chaka's arms. The young atkayma did not look at her; he stared straight ahead at the spot where his "brother Paul" lay buried.

"Here! Lend a hand!" I shouted, first in English and then in Maya. Nux and Bryonia, Ned, Pedro, Archie and Joe were all with me by that time. The great rock had split half over the throne, and one fragment — that which lay above Paul — rested with its edge partly supported by the arm of the seat.

We seized it and pulled all together, trying to pry it upward. Several of the Tchas now came to our assistance, and in desperation we tugged again, this time succeeding in forcing the fragment backward. Then Joe stooped down and drew Paul out, handing his bruised and bleeding form to Nux, who held it tenderly in his strong arms as a mother might cuddle a child.

Chaka, having resigned his burden, came to us with features drawn and tense with agony. The poor fellow did not sob nor weep; he merely leaned over and kissed his friend's forehead. Then without awaiting permission we all retired, following Nux and his burden back to our luxurious rooms in the priests' palace.

We laid Allerton tenderly on a couch and cut away his clothing. Bry was a very expert surgeon of the uneducated but intelligent sort, having had a lot of practical experience with wounds and bruises in his day. He now assumed command of the situation.

With his ear to the injured man's heart the black gave a grunt of satisfaction and then turned to take the water I had brought in a basin to wash away the blood stains.

My own heart was thumping like a trip hammer.

“Will he live, Bry?” I asked, breathlessly.
“Can’t say Mars’ Sam,” was the reply. “But he’s alive now, shore ‘nuf!”

CHAPTER 20

WE FIND THE TCHA GRATEFUL

Allerton said that he seemed to live an hour during the time the rock was falling. He saw plainly that he could not save both himself and Ama, so he threw the girl to Chaka and at the same time tripped and fell to the ground just beside the throne. That trip alone saved him, as the fragment that broke from the main portion struck in such a way that a small space was left, in which his body lay. He was considerably bruised and cut, but with the exception of two broken ribs and a sprained arm escaped any other important injury. We had him sitting up in an hour, and under Bry's skillful manipulation, assisted by a Tcha priest who was fairly proficient in surgery, his broken ribs quickly mended. But the shock to his nervous system had been severe and Paul became an interesting invalid for several days after the accident.

Being an ancient people, the Tcha have a code of laws that seems to cover every possible happening; but some of them, perhaps evolved centuries ago, are quite extraordinary. One law declares that if any person performs an exceptional service for the High Priestess, such as "preserving her life or preventing her from suffering physical injury," he shall become immune from any punishment he may have incurred by any previous act, and all edicts against him shall be annulled.

The Tribunal was aware of this law and promptly acted upon it; but the august body, during its conference, encountered a puzzling and unexampled difficulty. Who had saved the life of the High Priestess? Either it was Paul, who had removed Ama from beneath the falling stone, or Chaka, who had caught her and carried her to a safe distance, or myself, whose cry had called attention to her danger.

To my mind Paul alone had accomplished the salvation of the Supreme Ruler; but the aged Tribunal could not see it exactly in that light. They argued the case among themselves until they were in despair of being able to settle it conclusively. One voted for me, one for Chaka and one for Paul, and being very conscientious and eminently just none would alter his decision. So the matter was laid before the High Priest, as provided for by law when the Tribunal could not agree. As usual the old sleepyhead revoked; he said he didn't know and didn't care who had saved Ama; it was sufficient for him that she had been saved; let the High Priestess herself solve the knotty problem. And then he fell asleep again.

Therefore the case came to Ama herself for solution, and she appeared as perplexed as the others. Finally she took it under advisement and said she

would come to a decision some day in the near future.

I am sure the incident considerably improved our standing in the community. It must have humiliated the Tcha, who are really brave and energetic, that they all sat in paralyzed terror while the condemned strangers saved their High Priestess from sudden death. A careful investigation was now made of the cliff to see if any more stones were loose, on the principle of locking the barn door after the horse is stolen; but no one was ever accused of negligence for not having inspected the cliff before. Occasionally a rock had been known to drop into the valley, but it was a rare occurrence and seldom did much harm. The Tcha considered this accident a mere fatality, and therefore unavoidable.

The sensations of the lovely and sedate Ama when seized and hurled about like a ball were not subject to popular discussion. For a day or two following we heard indirectly that the girl was nervous and unstrung, as well she might be; but on the third day she sent for Paul, Chaka and me, and thanked us all very prettily and impartially.

The public argument over the merits and discoveries of our respective civilizations was now abandoned for good. But Ama had us frequently brought to her pavilion, where she questioned us closely and seemed greatly interested in our personal history and home life. All subjects interested her: politics, geography and inventions most of all. On one occasion Paul asked for our chests.

"If we had them here," said he, "I could furnish you and your attendants with much amusement, and prove to you many things that are difficult to explain in words."

She considered this request, and when we were next called to an interview with her Highness we found the four chests standing in a row before her couch. They had all been broken open and the contents rummaged, but not a single article had been removed or injured in any way except that the extra gas-jacket and inflatable coverings for the chests had been abstracted. Our electrites, the use of which they shrewdly suspected, and all of our gas-jackets and firearms were withheld from us.

Paul first unrolled our maps and showed Ama the great world, with its lakes, seas and oceans and chains of lofty mountains. He showed her on a smaller map the location of Yucatan, and how insignificant the peninsula was when compared with the great continent of which it formed a part. Then with a pencil he made a tiny dot to show the location of Mount Aota and its comparative size.

Ama observed all this with pensive earnestness. She made no remarks nor admissions, but was evidently impressed. The poor girl had been trained to

consider herself the head of a mighty nation which was so important that it haughtily excluded the rest of creation from vulgar contact with it. She had considered the Tcha of superior intellect, far in advance of any other race, and the chosen people of the one great and true god — the Sun.

In this belief she and her preceptors were to an extent justified. Their tiny kingdom lay in the heart of the Itzaex territory, and the savage nations surrounding them were in every respect inferior to the Tcha. They also served as a shield against the nations beyond, and this fact deceived the Tcha, who naturally judged all foreign people by those about them.

Their literature was rich in legendary lore, but of their contemporaries they were wholly ignorant. They kept a record of their own history, using great books made of a fibre parchment, the leaves being sometimes three feet square and bound at the edges. They used both hieroglyphics and picture writing, and what I saw was quite artistically executed. One great building was used as a library for these books and contained records dating from the time of their emigration from Atlantis, whence they had been driven by political wars. The Tcha were merely a branch of the horde that settled in Yucatan. Their leader was a powerful and able Priestess who, discovering the fertile vale within the mountain of Aota — doubtless in bygone ages the mouth of a volcano — decided to settle therein with her especial followers. In some way the Tcha escaped the destruction that overwhelmed the other cities of Yucatan, and their prosperity continued undiminished through all the centuries. They knew when Atlantis was submerged, and by means of a system of spies kept touch with the doings of the Maya tribes that afterward settled in the peninsula. The coming of the Spaniards was a danger recorded in their books, but they had persuaded the Itzaex to stand firm and oppose the invaders, and through their assistance that tribe was never conquered or their territory overrun.

It surprised me that a people so shrewd in other ways had never sent spies or emissaries to the modem nations throughout the world; but the fact was that they had not the faintest conception that our great civilization existed. They alone, in their ignorant belief, were progressive and cultured.

Our advent was destined to undeceive them in this respect.

Having shown Ama how small was her valley Allerton proceeded to prove our superior inventive genius. He exhibited to the wondering eyes of Ama and her pretty priestesses some of the novelties we had brought with us for this very purpose and for trading. There was a small phonograph for one thing, with an assortment of vocal and instrumental records, and when these were played they created a veritable sensation. Paul promptly presented the outfit to the High Priestess, and it afforded her great pleasure. The Tcha were

a music-loving people, but their musical instruments were quite primitive.

Next we stretched a copper wire from the palace of the priests to Ama's pavilion and set up a telephone at each end. This aroused no end of excitement, and all the priests and priestesses soon learned how to use it. Ama called us up every morning, and she used the wire to convey her orders to the priests, instead of communicating with them by messenger, as before.

A pocket electric flash-light excited considerable admiration, as did some clocks and watches. The Tcha still used sundials to mark the time. Some tiny music-boxes, playing one tune, were presented by us to various officials and the gifts won us much favor.

We exhibited all these things with careful deliberation, making them serve as vehicles for many interviews with the lovely priestess. In return she graciously showed us some of the accomplishments of the Tcha.

We were taken to a vast cave where a large volume of water gushed from the rocks with irresistible force. Some inventive Tcha had long ago constructed an electric motor operated by this water power, and it supplied electric lights to all the valley. They did not turn off their lamps, but allowed them to bum until the filament burned out, masking them with shields when the lumination was not required. Archie showed them how to make a cut-off, and also improved the shape of their lamps. So receptive and skillful were the native glass-blowers and artisans generally that they soon reconstructed their entire plant on modern principles.

They made a very superior storage battery, by means of which the chariots of the High Priestess and her nobility were propelled, in much the same fashion as our automobiles. They were clumsy and slow, it is true, but curiously enough this electrical device, and the others that they used, dated from the time of their exodus from Atlantis. The records proved conclusively that electricity was known and utilized on that lost continent.

The gold which was so plentiful in the valley was taken from mines in the center of one of the neighboring mountains, connected with the hidden city by a broad tunnel. The supply was practically inexhaustible. Other metals were found in the walls of Aota, and this accounted for many of the caverns we noticed.

We learned that the beautiful rubies came from the subsoil of the valley itself, and the Tcha skillfully cut and polished them, using them for ornamenting even the most common articles of use. When Ama saw that we admired the rubles she took us to the gem-cutters' building and gave us a pocketful each of choice and brilliant stones — fully enough plunder to repay us for our eventful journey, had we been able to carry it away. But if we were to be sacrificed to their bloodthirsty god the Sun, we would never need rubies

again.

It was very hard for Ama to decide which of the strangers was to be preserved from sacrifice as the reward for saving her life. She seemed to grow quite fond of Chaka, as the days passed by. He often sat at her feet telling, like Othello, the story of his life and adventures, while she listened with fascinated interest. Moreover, he was atkayma of the Itzaex, and therefore far outranked any of the rest of us, who could claim no such high sounding titles.

Chaka was, as I have remarked, an exceedingly handsome fellow, and his soft brown eyes grew expressive whenever he turned them upon the bewitching priestess. Ama was permitted — nay, required — to marry, and being supreme among her race could choose her own husband. I sometimes wondered if it would be the fate of the young atkayma to become the husband of Ama.

But there was Paul, too, and our friend the lieutenant had by this time fallen as desperately in love with the girlish priestess as had Chaka. While he lacked the personal beauty of the Maya chieftain, Paul was white, and therefore to my mind a more fitting mate for the beautiful Ama. He also belonged to the powerful American people whom the priestess had come by this time to fully respect, and that was in his favor too. Really, it was all guesswork as to which admirer she might prefer, for the girl treated them with equal frankness and consideration.

Once, when she sat apart with Chaka, I overheard him urging her to free Paul.

"It was Paul who saved you," said he. "No other deserves the reward."

Another time Allerton pleaded for the atkayma, saying that unless Chaka had caught her as Paul stumbled she would have been crushed.

I was glad to find myself disregarded in the matter, since I knew very well my service in crying a warning was not to be compared with what they had done. It must have amused Ama to hear these two brave fellows each plead for the other, for at last she said:

"You must decide it between yourselves, and I will abide by the decision."

This mischievous shift accomplished nothing at all, as the girl plainly foresaw. They argued with one another until the deadlock became more set than ever. They proposed to leave it to me to decide, and I refused to interfere. Neither would any of our party umpire the case. In despair they told Ama it was up to her again.

She shook her head and sent for the ancient High Priest, curtly bidding him keep awake and attend to what she said.

“I cannot decide which of these three strangers actually saved me from death,” said she. “It is natural I should be grateful to all three, for which reason it is unjust to force me to decide the question. Therefore I command you, by virtue of your office, to say, and at once, which shall be pardoned and so saved from the sacrifice.”

“I’ll think it over,” sighed the High Priest.

“You’ll do nothing of the sort,” declared Ama, imperiously. “To-morrow some one of these devoted ones must be selected for the sacrifice of Adakalpa, the Feast of the Harvest. Gather thy wits then, my counselor, and speak!”

“May I sit down?” asked the ancient one, wearily.

“No, for you would then fall asleep. I command you to decide between these three — ” she pointed to where we were lined up in a row” — at once. Then you may return to your couch.”

The High Priest yawned and blinked his watery eyes at us.

“Pardon all three,” he announced. “Each had a hand in the matter, and it will save us the bother of choosing between them, perhaps unjustly.” Ama sat up, laughing. She clapped her hands delightedly.

“Oh, wise and clever counselor!” she cried. “Your decree shall be obeyed. Sleep, now, if it pleases you, for Chaka, Paul and Samsteele,” so she always called me, rolling my two names into one, “are from this moment free and honored subjects of Tcha.”

I think the old fellow who had thus favored us was half asleep before they had led him back to the gate. As for Paul, Chaka and I, we shook hands heartily and congratulated one another. The same idea was uppermost in the minds of all three — that our freedom might lead to our being able to free our comrades.

CHAPTER 21

WE LOSE POOR PEDRO

The edict of the High Priest was proclaimed to the people in the great theatre and received with the same composure that our condemnation had been. Thereafter we three wandered at will throughout the valley, unguarded and unmolested. We were offered a palace, but retained our quarters in the house of the priests, to be with our comrades, and there in secret conference we decided upon our mode of procedure for the future.

Escape from Tcha by means of the steep walls of rock was an impossibility, unless we could stumble upon one of those secret tunnels that led to the outer declivities. Even then it would be difficult for us to get the sacrificial victims out of the temple enclosure. Compassing all this, however, it was likely we would be followed and either recaptured or slain before we could reach the Itzaex country. If not, we would be in the power of either Uncle Datchapa, if he still lived, or the red robed devils of priests, who would have no hesitation in promptly murdering us.

No; it would not do at all. We had only one hope of escape: to recover our gas-jackets and soar above the valley, over the forests and back to the ship where my father was by this time anxiously awaiting us.

So we decided that Paul, Chaka and I, being free to go and come at our pleasure, must begin a careful and cautious search for the place where our confiscated property had been deposited. We judged this would be one of the warehouses where public supplies were kept.

Next day we started on our secret mission, each going a different way. I had been instructed to seek out the officer who had first arrested us and robbed us in the prison, and try to pump him; so after breakfast I sauntered away through the city, past the theatre and along the flower bordered paths that led to the low white building near the center of the valley.

I met one of the soldiers, or "public guardians," on my way, and found him not loth to enter into conversation. He told me the officer's name was Pagatka and his rank that of Waba, or Captain. He did not know where the Waba Pagatka might be found; the officer was likely to be anywhere that duty called him.

When I began cautiously to refer to the property that had been taken from us the fellow withdrew into a shell of reserve. He admitted he had been one of those who had surrounded us and led us into the prison; but after that he had returned to his home and knew nothing of subsequent happenings. I deemed it wise not to press him or arouse his suspicions as to what I was after. He parted from me presently and went his own way.

My search for the Waba Pagatka was unsuccessful. I entered the great hall of the prison, where a small guard was stationed, and was allowed to go anywhere I pleased. All the smaller rooms but one were unoccupied. Here a man was confined who had quarreled with his neighbor and in the heat of argument had used bad language. He told me he regretted the occurrence, as it had seriously disgraced him.

There was no place here where our gas-jackets and electrites were likely to be hidden. The soldier in charge thought I might find the Waba in the manufacturing district, so I left the prison and began my journey toward the upper end of the valley.

The air was sweet and invigorating, for the altitude, even here in the cup of the mountain, was considerable and rendered the climate delightful. Everywhere the farmers were busy in their fields, and centuries of cultivation seemed not to have exhausted the soil in the least. Perhaps they had learned how to fertilize and restore it; anyhow, the crops were bountiful and not a weed nor rank growth of any sort was to be seen.

At midday I reached a dwelling at the north edge of the city and asked for food. It was willingly furnished and in abundance, for every inhabitant of Tcha was entitled to his neighbor's hospitality, all supplies being provided by the government.

During the afternoon I wandered about the district of the artisans, trying to catch sight of the elusive Waba Pagatka, but failing dismally. I took occasion, however, to look into several warehouses and found them all filled with the handicraft of the people or with raw material to be worked up. Returning, I circled the city and passed the weavers' dwellings, where I was greatly interested in the looms these clever people had invented. They wove the finest linen I have ever seen and a material much worn by the women which seemed to me softer and more exquisitely finished than the best of our silks. Yet it was not made from the cocoon of the silk worm, but from a reed that was shredded into hair-like filaments. It was really wonderful how great a variety of things were grown, mined and manufactured by a few people in a tiny shut-in place like this.

It was late before I reached the palace of the priests, and I was both hungry and tired by my day's tramp. Entering the large room reserved for us I found my comrades sitting with solemn faces, silent and depressed. Paul and Chaka were there, so they had evidently been as unsuccessful as myself.

I glanced around the circle.

"Where's Pedro?" I asked.

"They have taken him," said Paul sadly.

"Where to?"

“To the sacrifice.”

I started back in horror.

“The sacrifice!”

“Yes,” returned Allerton. “It seems to-day is the Feast of the Harvest, and when the sun is highest in the sky — at midday, that is — they sacrifice to their god in gratitude for the ripening of the grain. Ama spoke of this yesterday, but I had forgotten it. This morning while we were away, the priests came here and forced the boys to draw cuts, without explaining what it was for. Poor Pedro drew the lot, and was led away — he knew not where.”

I shuddered.

“Poor Pedro, indeed!” said I. “How did you learn all this?”

“Oh, there was no secret about it afterward,” spoke up Archie, gloomily. “They brought in three of their precious priests dead as herrings, and five that were badly done up and in need of repairs. There was wild excitement in this bungalow for a time, as you may guess, and it didn’t take us long to get the whole story from the chattering, frightened crowd. It seemed poor Pedro was dazed when first he discovered he was to be sacrificed to the sun, and he walked like a man in a dream to the slaughtering pen — up in the great temple yonder. But he woke up when they came at him with a knife, and died game, like the brave fellow he was.”

“First,” continued Joe, taking up the thread of the story, for Archie was trying to swallow a lump in his throat, “Pedro grabbed two of the priests and bumped their heads together so fiercely that their skulls cracked like egg-shells. Then he caught another by the ankles and swung him around, felling the crowd that rushed on him with this living battering-ram. Living for a time, that is, for when he finally let go the fellow was mashed to a pulp.”

“Of course,” added Ned Britton, “they got Pedro at last, as they were bound to do when his strength gave out, and I suppose his heart’s blood is now in a golden pan, exposed to the rays of their god the sun, who will drink it up. Pah! Before they carved old Pedro, though, he yelled out that he had given the sun a few extra sacrifices to keep him company, and he only wished there had been more in reach of his arm.”

“It was dreadful,” said Paul. “The old High Priest had a fit, it seems, and they can’t tell yet whether he’ll live or die.”

“Was Ama there?” I asked.

“Certainly,” said Archie, in an indignant tone. “The girl’s as cold blooded as the rest of the gang.”

“It is her religion,” declared Chaka, defending her. “She knows no better, and considers it just and right to sacrifice to the Sun-God. But when Pedro

began to fight so desperately she at once arose and retired from the scene."

This horrible news had rendered me as sad and gloomy as the others. Silently we sat, wondering if a similar fate would overtake us all. I, being no longer in personal danger, reproached myself for leaving my comrades at such a time; yet I knew I could not have saved Pedro from his fate.

"Hereafter," said Ned." they intend to bind the victims. This is the first time any one has ever fought them, it seems, and the priests won't take chances after this deadly experience."

"Too bad, Mars' Sam," said Nux, regretfully. "I like to kill a few Tcha before I die, too. But if dey ties me up, I sutt'nly can't."

The result of Pedro's exploit was to render the priests fearful of the rest of us. Our quarters were that evening changed to a small wing at the rear of their palace, which jutted out toward the temple. It was but one story in height and could be shut off entirely from the main building by a heavily barred door. They gave us our supper — we were always liberally fed — and then closed the barrier between us.

Examining this new apartment I was surprised to find it much less secure as a prison than our former quarters. Indeed, it was no trouble at all for any of us to lower ourselves from the window to the ground. But evidently the priests were more anxious about their own safety than about ours, and there was little danger of the sacrificial victims being able to escape very far, even if they managed to avoid the guards at the gates.

The air grew very oppressive this night, and the heat was intense — a new experience to us, for we had found the nights cool. Toward morning the wing in which we were confined began to sway from side to side with a sickening motion, and one lurch sent me rolling from my couch to the stone floor.

As I sat up, the commotion ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

"An earthquake!" exclaimed Paul, unmasking the electric light. "It's a wonder the building didn't topple down on our heads."

"Are earthquakes common here?" I asked Chaka.

He shook his head.

"Not common," said he; "but about once in a lifetime we get some little shakes; nothing as bad as this, though."

Next morning the sun shone as serenely as ever and when we walked out we found but little damage had been done in the valley. But the people had become sadly disquieted by the occurrence; and the priests especially, for some secret reason, were in a state of great fear and perturbation. They talked excitedly among themselves and sent constant messages to Ama, not using the telephone because they feared we might overhear them.

Suspecting that more trouble was brewing, Paul, Chaka and I resolved not

to quit our comrades this day, but remain and watch the course of events. We had all been alike unsuccessful the day before in locating our property, and now we judged it wise to postpone the search to another time.

CHAPTER 22

WE FACE A DEADLY PERIL

At noon Ama sent for us three, and when we arrived at her pavilion we found her pale and distressed.

"The Sun-God is angry with my people," she said, "because the sacrifice yesterday was violent and destroyed three faithful priests. A new sacrifice is called for, to placate the terrible deity who rules the heavens and the earth."

We stared at her aghast.

"The Sun-God is angry because you sacrificed to him a helpless stranger, who worshipped a far greater God than your sun," I said sternly. "Listen, Ama: if more of our comrades are sacrificed, far greater harm will befall the Tcha."

She regarded me half fearfully for a moment; then her sweetest smile swept over her lovely face.

"Samsteele," said she, "the Tcha have sacrificed to the great Sun-God for thousands of years, and he has kept the nation prosperous and happy in return. There is no power equal to the power of the glorious Sun, and the Tcha are his favored children." Her voice softened a little as she added: "If I could favor you, my friends, I would not send your comrades to the sacrifice; but the laws of my land and the jealousy of our great god will not allow me to save them. Shall I peril the welfare of all my people for the sake of a few strangers? Impossible! The customs of seven thousand years must be adhered to; the majesty of our god must be sustained and his just wrath appeased. I cannot help your friends. The sacrifice must take place."

"When?" asked Paul, looking at her with pleading eyes until her own dropped.

"At sunset," she whispered.

"To-day!"

"Yes."

"And who is to be chosen?" I inquired anxiously.

"The two big black men. My priests think they will be more acceptable to our god than the whites. Always when we have sacrificed any of the Itzaex the mighty Sun has smiled upon us."

I drew a long breath.

"Ama," said I, "we will not permit this. The sacrifice shall not take place."

She sprang to her feet, tense and white with anger.

"Shall not?" she cried; "aye, but it *shall* take place — at sunset this day! I, the High Priestess of the Sun. have proclaimed it, and in the Vale of Tcha there is no appeal from my edict."

She was magnificent in her defiance, but I had no heart to admire her just then.

"If you murder those poor fellows their God — far mightier than yours — will have revenge," I said, trembling between fear and rage, for Nux and Bryonia were very dear to me.

She drew herself up to her full height and pointed at us a slender finger.

"Go!" she said imperiously.

Never had we seen the girl in this mood before. Her eyes were cold and hard as rocks, her lips set with firm determination, her poise queenly and aggressive.

We turned slowly and left the august presence, realizing that Ama, however beautiful and bewitching she might be in repose, was a veritable tigress when aroused to defend the faith in which she had been reared.

Even the sky had grown dark during our interview, and the sun had withdrawn his face as if in shame that any benighted race should sacrifice human lives in his honor. The purple-gray mask of the sky was so unusual at this season of the year — perhaps at all seasons, so far as we knew — that it was little wonder the superstitious Tcha interpreted the sign as one of anger from their outraged deity, whose altar had been the scene of strife.

Returning to our friends we were loth to tell them of the fate in store for our honest blacks. Indeed, it was but a preface to the fate that awaited them all unless we could find a way to resist the all powerful Tcha. Finally, as the day drew on, Chaka had an idea and beckoned to Paul and me to follow him. We were permitted to go wherever we pleased, whereas the others were forbidden to leave their room.

"The High Priest is gentle," whispered the atkayma, when we were outside. "Let us plead with him."

We knew that the old dotard dwelt in the most splendid suite in the building, so we made our way toward it. A guard informed us that his Highness was ill, and could not be disturbed. We tried to argue the point, but the man would not relent. No one but Ama might intrude upon his master.

Saddened by this rebuff we wended our way back to our wing, only to confront another disappointment. Orders had been received from the High Priestess to forbid our mingling with the sacrificial devotees. We were to be allowed the privileges of every citizen of the valley, but the laws forbade a citizen from associating with those condemned to the sacrifice.

And here was our old acquaintance the Waba Pagatka guarding the passage with a file of his soldiers, all fully armed. Protest was useless, and so helpless did we feel that our eyes, as we gazed it one another, were filled with black despair.

We went out and wandered aimlessly around the temple enclosure. Even the grounds outside the wing where our friends were confined were now guarded, so we were unable to approach them from that side.

The sky was growing blacker and more threatening. Not a breath of air stirred. Even the birds had ceased to sing. There was a mystical hush in the atmosphere that was appalling. The priests going to and fro between the temple and their palace noted these unusual portents and turned frightened glances upward, as if seeking to propitiate their angry god.

I wondered if, seeing there was no sun, and therefore no sunset, the sacrifice would be postponed; but before long my doubts were set at rest. The fatuous priests were even hurrying the ceremonies, for presently a gorgeous procession issued from the palace.

All the members of their order were in full regalia, the silver emblems of the sun glittering on their breasts. In their midst walked, or rather tottered, Nux and Bryonia, the two gigantic blacks being so weak that they could scarcely move without assistance. Their hands were tied securely behind their backs. Afterward we learned that the anoesthetic perfume had again been employed to render all our friends unconscious and incapable of resisting. Then Nux and Bry had been bound and carried out before they had fully revived.

At the same time that the procession of priests issued forth, marching with stately tread despite their nervous fears, a similar procession of the Virgins of the Sun, with Ama at their head, appeared from the opposite enclosure.

The iron gates had been thrown wide and a vast concourse of people had assembled to witness the sacrifice. They stood silent and watchful, for none was permitted to enter the temple until the priestesses and priests had taken their places within.

A short distance from the entrance the two files united, side by side approaching the sacred edifice.

Paul, Chaka and I stood silently by, helplessly watching the terrible ceremony. I strained my eyes for a last sight of my faithful followers, believing their doom to be sealed.

The procession had begun to mount the steps of the temple when a subdued roaring sound became audible, followed by a crash resembling a thunder-clap. The ground heaved up before us and sent us all three sprawling upon our faces. Crash after crash now resounded throughout the valley, and I sprang to my feet in time to see part of the great temple wall bend outward and fall in a mass of debris. Rocks from the near-by wall of the mountain began to rattle down like hailstones, and the darkness was even greater than before.

“Ama!” cried Paul; and “Ama!” shrieked Chaka in return; but they could not go to her at the moment, hard as they tried. We clung together like drunken men, striving for a foothold while the ground rolled and groaned beneath our feet and our ears were filled with the screams of women and the hoarse cries of men. Priests and priestesses were flying in every direction, and we saw Ama the center of a group of maidens that managed to gain their enclosure and slam shut the gates — as if that would do any good, or shut out the awful earthquake! It relieved both Paul and Chaka, however, to know the girl was safe.

The people who had gathered for the sacrifice suffered most, I think, for they were massed together and only those on the outskirts could scuttle away through the streets, where many met death from falling walls and rocks. The moans of the maimed and dying were blood curdling, and I could hardly bear to hear them.

“Quick!” I gasped; “let us find Nux and Bry.”

I knew, of course, we were experiencing another earthquake — a frightful one this time — but there was nothing we could do for ourselves or others, unless we might find and save the blacks.

This proved not difficult. We came across them at the steps of the ruined temple, Bry lying flat while Nux knelt beside him, still bound. The priests had deserted them in the attempt to save their own lives. In a flash I whipped out my knife and set both the poor fellows free. We then raised Bry, to find he was stunned but very little hurt. Between us we supported them, trying to make our way back to our quarters.

Parts of the palace of the priests had split open or caved in, but our one-story wing seemed not to have suffered from the quake, which was by this time reduced to a few minor tremors.

Being afraid to enter the palace — from whence guards and priests had alike fled — we reached the window outside our wing and our shouts brought the pallid faces of Joe and Archie to the opening. We hoisted Bry up to them, and they dragged him bodily into the room. Nux was able to climb in himself, and Paul, Chaka and I quickly followed.

“Where’s Ned?” I asked, looking around.

“He went out to skirmish for you,” said Joe. “We’ve all been out, during the worst of it, but Archie and 1 thought you’d get back here as soon as you could, and we concluded it’s just as safe here as anywhere.”

“Guess the city’s pretty well broken up,” added Archie, gazing from the window into the blackness that was only relieved by the glow from the light within our room. “I’ve seen earthquakes in my day, but this beats all that — ” He stopped with a sort of gasp and a moment later cried out: “It’s him! Gee

willikins — it's him!"

"Who?" we exclaimed, running to the opening.

Limping slowly toward the wing and supported by Ned Britton came Pedro, who we supposed had been sacrificed to the Sun-God the evening before. His clothes were torn nearly to shreds, and there was a look of terror and suffering on his face that was pitiable to behold as the dim light struck it.

Paul leaped out to assist Ned in hoisting the Mexican to the window ledge, and we others drew him in as tenderly as we could. He sank on a couch with a moan, limp as a rag.

We gave him water first and then a swallow of spirits from Paul's flask, but when we questioned him he stared at us silently and shook his head.

"Where did you find him?" some one asked Ned.

"Beside the temple. The wall had fallen down and a big part of the marble floor heaved up and then tumbled into a cellar underneath. I had an idea Nux and Bry might be in the ruins, and while I peered about me a head was pushed up from the cellar and I recognized Pedro. It gave me a shock, I can tell you, for we thought he was dead. The marble blocks were yet rocking and tilting pretty lively, but I made a dash and dragged Pedro out to a safer place. He was nearly done up, but I managed to get him here."

CHAPTER 23

WE BECOME AGGRESSIVE

After a little time the Mexican began to recover his self possession and with it his tongue. We found he was nearly starved, so we fed him sparingly and gave him a bit more of the spirits. By and by, a little at a time he told his story.

His struggles with the priests was much as we had heard it described, except in one important particular. Pedro fought so desperately that he dismayed his opponents, and during the mêlée one of them touched a spring that released a trap in the floor, precipitating the Mexican into a dark cellar underneath. When freed of his weight the block of stone swung into place again, and he found himself in a veritable dungeon, so far as light and air were concerned.

The cowardly priests left him there, announcing that he had been sacrificed, as they feared to admit to the people that he had gotten the best of them in the fight. Pedro's leg had been hurt by the fall, and it caused him a good deal of pain. The air was close and damp and full of musty odors.

After a time the prisoner began to crawl around, and found the place was used partly as a storehouse, as it contained many bales and parcels of various wares. Having a few matches in his pocket Pedro lighted one of them and right before his face discovered our electrites and storage-battery belts, all in a heap. He hunted around for our gas-jackets, but they were not there. When his matches gave out he lay still in the dark and wondered what would happen to him. Probably the priests intended he should starve to death, and he was getting weak and hungry when the earthquake came. The earth swayed all around him, the building crumbled away and the marble floor heaved up and burst open, many of the marble blocks dropping into the cellar — fortunately not in his neighborhood. Pedro was frightened nearly out of his wits, but seeing dimly that a way of escape had opened up he climbed upon a heap of marble, stuck out his head, and found Ned Britton watching him.

When we had drawn this story from the Mexican — and it took him a long time to tell it — we decided to assume the defensive and aggressive and take a firm stand against the priesthood, our most vicious enemies.

The cries and moans of the stricken ones were gradually dying away and white robed priests began to steal back to their dwelling — such as had escaped injury, that is.

We examined the doorway to our wing and found the heavy metal doors that sealed it from communication with the rest of the palace. Preferring to

have them remain open we managed to bend and wedge them in such a way that they could not again be closed upon us, as had been done when our comrades had been overcome by the anoesthetic. We fixed the metal window-slide the same way, and being now assured that we could no longer be confined in the room against our will we held a council to decide our future actions.

Presently there came to us the tall, thin priest whom we had noted as one in authority under the aged High Priest. His face was shrunken and his eyes, shrewd and roving in expression, were sunk in great hollows. His lips were so thin that they did not cover his protruding teeth and on his chin was a straggling beard of dark red. This fellow — his name was Katalat — had attracted our notice not only because of his repulsive appearance but for the reason that all the other priests deferred to him and he was openly antagonistic to our party. He had had little to say to us until now, but when he came into our room he cast a vengeful, vindictive glance around and said:

"The great god is very angry. See how he has punished us for not sacrificing all of you, and at once!"

"See how he has punished you for daring to harm any of us," I retorted angrily. "If your god had desired our lives, he would not have saved us from injury and destroyed so many of your own people."

He looked at me wickedly. I think he was clever enough to know that the sun had nothing whatever to do with the earthquake.

"The noble High Priest Pentchakoma is dead," he announced.

"That's bad!" said Paul, heartily. "Did the earthquake frighten the old man, then?"

"The roof fell upon him. And now I, Katalat, have by our laws become High Priest in his stead."

"Has Ama appointed you so soon?" inquired Paul.

"The High Priestess has nothing to do with the appointment. It is the law," he retorted.

"But she is the Supreme Ruler," said Chaka. "If she does not approve — "

"She *must* approve!" cried Katalat fiercely. "Otherwise — "

"Well, what then?" asked Paul, as he paused.

The telephone bell rang. We had placed the instrument just outside our room, in the passage, so it would be convenient to the priests and to us. I started to answer the summons, but the priest blocked my way.

"Stop!" he commanded. "I forbid you to communicate again with the High Priestess."

Paul nodded to Ned, who reached out an arm, grabbed Katalat by the collar and whirled him into a comer, where the big mate stood guard over

him.

“Answer the telephone, Sam,” said Allerton.

As I went I heard the priest vowing dire vengeance. It was Ama calling, as I had expected.

“Are you — is — is — are *any* of you hurt?” she inquired, stammering in her anxiety.

“No; we are all safe. And you, Ama?”

“I am broken hearted! My poor people! My poor city!”

“Never mind,” said I. “The city can be fixed up again, and more people will grow. Do you want us?”

“Not now. Come to me early to-morrow.”

“We will if the priests let us. There’s an ugly fellow here now, named Katalat, who says he’s the new High Priest and forbids our seeing you again.”

There was a brief silence.

“Beware of Katalat,” Ama said, in a hesitating voice. “I fear trouble ahead for us all. Come tomorrow, if you can — all of you.”

Then she severed the connection, and I went back to make to make my report.

“Boys,” said I, “we’d better settle with this High Priest right now — for good and all.”

“In what way?” asked Paul.

“By wringing his neck.” Then, still speaking in English, I repeated what Ama had said.

“But we can’t murder him in cold blood,” remarked our leader, looking at Katalat thoughtfully; “nor can we allow him to lead a rebellion against us, and perhaps against Ama.”

“Let us keep him a prisoner until morning,” suggested Chaka, in his quiet way. “After we have seen the Supreme Ruler we can better decide what to do with him.”

That seemed good advice, so we told Archie and Joe to bind the priest and gag him. He fought desperately at first, but Joe had a ju-jutsu trick that quickly laid old Katalat on his back, and Archie stuffed a cloth into his mouth and silenced his cries. One or two priests, hearing the scrimmage, came pattering along the passage, but Paul and Chaka met them and sent them away again.

Night had fallen by this time and as soon as it was quite dark — it had been gloomy enough before — Allerton suggested that some of us form a party to go for the electrites. We left Nux and Bryonia, quite recovered by this time, with Ned and Pedro to guard our prisoner, while the rest of us set

out for the temple by way of the open window.

There was not a star in the sky, but fortunately Paul had retained his dark lantern, and we depended upon that to assist us when we got to the temple. Until then we dared not show a light. We stumbled over rubbish and debris at every step, and once or twice, as we neared the temple, I recoiled as my foot touched something that I instinctively felt was a dead body.

Finally we came to the ruined wall, and after climbing over the scattered blocks of marble Paul got out his lantern to guide us.

We found the hole in the floor, and after lighting up the aperture and sending a ray into the basement to show us the way, Allerton handed the lamp to Chaka and dropped lightly into the cellar. It was a rather risky proceeding, for the great building was in a dangerous condition. Only one wall had actually fallen, but the others were more or less cracked and displaced, while some of the huge blocks of marble that had formed the coping were liable to topple down upon us at any moment. Nor was the flooring any too secure. But Joe and I followed Allerton without hesitation, and then Chaka handed us the lamp. Presently, amid bales and boxes of curious shapes we came across our property and passed the belts and electrites from one to another until Archie and Chaka received them above and laid them in a pile.

"Now let's get out of this," I said. "It's too dangerous to suit me."

"Wait a minute," called Paul, who had been turning the light in every direction. As he spoke he clambered over some bales and then pounced upon some object he had discovered. It proved to be the extra gas-jacket that had been taken from our chest, and Joe and I both uttered shouts of joy at its recovery.

"The others may be here, too," I exclaimed, my fears all forgotten. "Let's search for them."

We did, but without result. We came across one or two minor articles that had seemed suspicious to the Tcha who rifled our chests, but no firearms nor any more of the gas-jackets were in the cellar of the temple. Finally we climbed out of the hole again and, carefully securing the belts and electrites, made our way back to our quarters.

CHAPTER 24

WE WITNESS A DARING DEED

Having armed ourselves with the electrites, each putting on a fresh belt, we concealed the precious gas-jacket beneath a divan. True, there was but one for nine of us, but it meant that one person in the party, at least, would be able to leave the valley at will, and that counted for a good deal with those in our present uncomfortable position. Paul even thought the inflated jacket might be made to float two, at a pinch. At present there was no suggestion of any one's taking advantage of the find to run away from his comrades; but it was a satisfaction to us all to know we had recovered the jacket. Plenty of themlyne crystals were in the chest left to us, and the little case attached to the jacket was filled with them, in readiness for any emergency.

None of us slept much during the rest of that eventful night, unless it was Pedro, who was so exhausted he needed to regain his former strength. Next morning we foraged for breakfast, not permitting any of the priests to enter the room lest they spy their leader as our prisoner. They were a very subdued crowd, by this time, and gave us no trouble.

But the question was how to visit Ama in a bunch, as she had requested, and still leave old Katalat a safe prisoner in our room. Finally we solved the problem by deciding to take him with us.

"Now that we are armed," said Paul, "even the Waba Pagatka will hesitate to interfere with us. But the valley is so utterly demoralized just now that I scarcely think we shall be attacked."

The sky still retained its sombre hue, and Nux, who was bom in a land subject to earthquakes, shook his head and predicted more trouble for the Vale of Tcha.

"When one quake come," he said, "three quakes come. Each is more badder than de odder."

We had had two already, and anything worse than last night's performance was surely to be dreaded. But we were not borrowing trouble just then.

We found great confusion in the quarters of the priestesses. Their palace had not suffered so much damage as that of the priests, but huge stones from the mountain side littered the ground everywhere. The beauty of this retreat was evidently spoiled for some time to come.

We had met with no interference on the way, although the priests gathered to watch us march their leader away as our prisoner. Ama, however, was startled to see Katalat in bonds and at once ordered us to release him. We did so reluctantly, and when she demanded an explanation Paul said we

considered the new High Priest dangerous to us all. Katalat smiled grimly at hearing this, but said nothing.

"He is a Tcha," remarked Ama, proudly, "and a faithful servant of our great and glorious god, the Sun. In his youth he was our record-keeper and librarian, being skilled in literature and the arts. Such a one can be dangerous only to the enemies of the Tcha."

But she was too distressed over the condition of the valley and her dead and suffering subjects to dwell upon this incident long, and eagerly she begged us to advise her what to do to restore a semblance of order and comfort as quickly as possible. Being travelers of wide experience, she added, we ought to know how to handle such a condition better than the Tcha, who were seemingly stunned by their misfortune — the first of its kind that had overtaken them since they had occupied the valley thousands of years ago.

We counseled her as well as we could, and it seemed a good omen that just then the sun appeared in the sky and sent his warming rays to flood the stricken valley. Of me the girl seemed much afraid, saying I had predicted the calamity that had overtaken them, and in addition to being a seer she imagined I might be a wizard, as well, and by diabolical arts had wrought all this desolation. It amused me to be accorded such powers, but I am sorry to feel that pretty Ama was afraid of me.

Paul suggested that she call a meeting of the inhabitants at the great theatre, or assembly hall, and there give them instructions what to do, as well as an encouraging speech. She caught at this plan eagerly and dispatched her messengers at once. Meantime Chaka and Allerton gave the girl much good advice, and Archie and Joe aided them quite effectually. She would not listen to me at all, so I kept silent.

All this time the new High Priest stood dumbly listening to the conversation. He took no part in the conference himself, even when the Supreme Ruler appealed to him, and I thought his conduct that of a cad and a cur. After Ama he held the highest rank in the Vale, and it certainly was his duty to assist her in her present trouble. But no; he kept his mouth shut and his wild roving eyes fixed intently on our faces.

Presently the messengers returned to say that the people were assembling at the theatre, and Ama immediately prepared to join them. She must deck herself in her imperial robes, it seemed; so we were requested to meet her just at the edge of the city and accompany her to the meeting. She noticed our electrites but did not ask in what manner we had recovered them. Also she noted Pedro's presence, and that the supposed sacrifice was still alive and well; but not a word concerning him passed her lips. She was intent on more

important matters.

While we waited in the grounds Chaka made a trip to our room and put on the gas-jacket, covering it with his flowing tunic. This he did at Allerton's request. The High Priest, being now free, had rejoined his satellites and we saw them all whispering together before they marched away in a body to the meeting. Doubtless old Katalat meant to cause trouble, if he could.

We followed them slowly, halting just without the circle of buildings to wait for Ama. I thought she would come in the golden electric chariot she used on state occasions, but because of the rocks and debris that cluttered the way she was obliged to walk.

The High Priestess and her escort made an impressive appearance, nevertheless. First came six young girls swinging censers, then Ama alone. Following her were the Virgins of the Sun in their snow-white gowns.

At her signal we went ahead and were approaching near to the theatre when the final calamity overtook this devoted land.

The clear sky had nothing to do with the third earthquake. It came unheralded, without an instant's warning. A sound as of a heavy sea dashing against breakers was followed by so mighty a crash that every living creature in the Vale of Tcha reeled and fell headlong.

It was all over, then. A mere instant had wrecked the beautiful city and buried hundreds in its ruins. More than that, as we rose dazed and trembling to our feet we saw that the south end of the huge mountain had split in twain, and through the rift we could look far out upon the plains toward the Great Lake and the City of Itza.

But now another horror confronted us. The ground of the valley had likewise split into big cracks, one of them almost at our feet. The censer girls had disappeared; the Virgins had likewise been swallowed up or had rushed back to firmer land. But there, upon a tiny island formed by two irregular chasms, stood Ama, erect and motionless, while the bit of ground that supported her slight and beautiful form swayed visibly to and fro, as if hesitating which way to plunge its fair burden into the black gulf below.

I saw a flash and felt a rush of air past me as Chaka made a great leap and alighted at the girl's feet. For a moment I thought they were both about to be engulfed, but he steadied her with one hand as he knelt beside her, while with the other he fumbled with the valve of the themlyne case. He had cast aside his tunic before he made that wonderful leap, and as we stood spellbound, watching him with throbbing hearts, we could see the gas-jacket slowly swell as the powerful gas was generated and rushed into it.

It seemed a desperate chance to take; there was scarcely any foundation to support the swaying bit of ground, which was crumbling away before our

very eyes. A few seconds now would end it all, and we stared helplessly, with a sickening dread of the impending tragedy.

Chaka straightened up, gained his feet and passed an arm around Ama's waist. She appeared not to notice him; her face was white and set, her eyes turned steadily ahead to the spot where Paul stood with clasped hands, praying as he had never before prayed in all his life.

Chaka and Ama swayed with the little island, which toppled and fell with a roar into the abyss. Slowly — slowly but surely — they two sank after it, the girl clasped tightly in the atkayma's arms, and disappeared from our view.

Archie and I caught Allerton as he sank unconscious and inert to the ground. Joe had run away, for some reason. I was scarcely able to stand, myself, and the cry of horror from the throng of people who, rushing from the theatre, had witnessed this scene, conspired to unman me still further.

But a sudden revulsion of feeling came, for above the huge crack appeared Chaka's head — rising, gradually rising, an inch at a time — until he was again in full view, the girl still clasped in his arms. She had fainted, and lay with her golden red hair streaming over the atkayma's shoulder.

We shouted for joy, then, and all the Tcha behind us echoed the shout, for once startled out of their inbred apathy.

Straight up, to some twenty feet above the chasm's edge floated Chaka, and then remained stationary. The gas-jacket was inflated to its fullest extent, but was not light enough to carry the double burden higher. No air stirred; here was no way to succor the pair, it seemed, or bring them to firm ground.

We had reckoned without Joe, however. I never knew where the boy found that rope, or how he came to think of running in search of it. But now the line shot into the air, in true sailor — or cowboy — fashion, and Chaka managed to grab it with one hand while he clung to Ama with the other. Then Joe slowly and steadily drew them away from their dangerous position to where we stood with outstretched arms eager to receive them.

The assistance came none too soon, for the gas was escaping through a defect in the valve and without the aid of the rope Chaka would soon have made a second and final descent into the gulf. As it was, he was barely above the edge when we drew him in.

The Maya was as calm and cool as if no danger had threatened him. Some Tcha women brought water and took charge of Paul and the High Priestess, trying to restore them to consciousness. While they worked, without warning the crack came together with a sound like a thunderclap, the impact throwing us all upon our faces again. Only an uneven ridge of crumpled earth marked the line where the great jagged opening had extended half way across the

valley.

Chaka, standing beside me, gave an involuntary shudder.

“There was fire below us,” he said in an awed tone, “and that was what caused Ama to faint. Under this mountain is a great volcano. It has been burning for countless ages, biding its time, and the people knew it not until the crouching monster rose to-day in its might and vanquished them.”

“See!” I exclaimed. “The cleft in the mountain side is still open. Beyond is your own country, Chaka.”

“Yes,” he replied, with an accent of sadness; “the hidden city is hidden no longer.”

CHAPTER 25

WE REPEL THE INVADERS

Allerton was soon himself again and assisted in rubbing the girl's hands to restore their circulation, while Chaka, who had saved her life with such admirable courage, stood passively by, regarding the scene.

Presently Ama opened her eyes, and naturally the first thing they fell upon was Paul's anxious face. She smiled at him, sighed, and stirred uneasily as the recollection of the fearful experience through which she had passed slowly dawned upon her. Then she sat up and struggled to her feet, gazing with horror at her ruined city and the vista of the Itzaex country that showed through the riven mountain.

"Come!" she said, and without heeding her own people, who flocked about her, she extended one hand to Chaka, the other to Paul, and supported between them staggered away to examine the extent of the damage.

One would expect wild excitement in the valley now; but the Tcha were a queer race. Those who had been saved from injury by assembling at the theatre sat down where they were and gazed in mute despair at the ruins of the splendid city they had known and loved so well. Even the priests were completely demoralized, and I saw our enemy Katalat, wrapped in his robe, standing silent and alone, his glassy eyes fixed on the ground at his feet, as if lost in thought.

After all there was little to blame in the demeanor of the Tcha. The race having existed in this favored spot for centuries upon centuries, the present inhabitants had had no thought of insecurity. So suddenly had the earthquakes and their attendant misfortunes come upon them that they were stunned for the time and incapable of action, or even logical thought.

Ama moaned and wept at every step of her progress through the city. There was hardly a building that had escaped damage; by far the majority were irretrievably demolished. The artisans' quarters had suffered most, as their buildings were not as strongly built as the others, and hundreds of dead were buried under the walls of their home.

The poor girl could not bear the sad sights for long. Even with our assistance, which we earnestly volunteered, little could be done in this hour of disaster to relieve the stricken ones; so presently Ama turned toward her own palace.

Here was more desolation, but parts of the vast building still remained intact, and the rooms occupied by the High Priestess were yet habitable. Of the fifty attendant priestesses only about thirty had escaped death, the others having been swallowed up when the earth opened. The survivors were

wailing dismally when we arrived, and there was no way to comfort them.

Ama withdrew to her rooms and shut herself up. We did not see her again for three days. Meantime we resumed our former quarters in the one-story wing of the priests' palace, which was about all there was left of that building. Katalat and his followers took possession of the prison, which being low and solid had escaped damage, and for a time we heard nothing of them, either.

I proposed to our party that we collect such stores of food as we would find and a few more rubies and make our way back through the Itzaex country to the ship. Paul said we could go if we wished, but for his part he intended to stay until Ama was out of her trouble. Chaka declared he would stay also. There was no use in arguing with them, for they both loved the girl; so of course we all stayed. No one can desert a comrade at such a time.

On the evening of the third day a Tcha who had been put to guard the rift in the mountain came running to say that a great horde of Itzaex warriors was marching toward us and had encamped for the night but three hours' distance from the city.

When this news reached Ama she sent for us at once, asking what could be done to protect her people.

"What are your future plans?" asked Paul, calmly. "Do you intend to rebuild the city?"

"To be sure," she replied. "Already I have consulted with the Tribunal, with the High Priest Katalat and with my principal nobles, and we have determined to erect a new city upon these ruins. But it will take many years to do this and my people have not yet recovered from the shock of their misfortunes."

"Now that the mountain side is split open and a path made into the valley," said Allerton, "all the world will be coming here, and you cannot prevent it. Here are the Itzaex now, bent on conquering the remnants of the Tcha and plundering you of your treasures. They are merely the forerunners of others to come."

She wrung her hands in abject despair.

"What shall I do?" she moaned. "Oh, what shall I do?"

"Fight!" said Chaka, suddenly. The Itzaex were his own people, too.

"We'll help to drive them away," declared Archie, enthusiastically.

Paul was thoughtful.

"How much of a fighting force can you command?" he asked.

"The Public Guardians have always been sufficient for our purposes," said Ama. "They number one hundred and are commanded by the Waba Pagatka. But I think every man in the valley will willingly fight to protect us from our

foes."

"Who leads the miners?" was his next question.

"Their chief, a Tcha named Ampax."

"Send for him, and also for Pagatka," he requested.

She dispatched messengers at once.

Pagatka came first and saluted the High Priestess with his usual deference.

"Gather all your men," said Ama, "and take them to the opening the earthquake has made in the mountain. You are to guard us against the Itzaex, who will attack us early in the morning."

"I have but eighty men left alive," he stated. "The Itzaex are thousands."

"But you have possession of the pass," said Paul, "and I and my comrades will be there to help you. At all hazards the Itzaex must be kept from entering the valley. If they succeed, they will kill without mercy every inhabitant."

The Waba asserted he would do all in his power and retired to assemble his men. Like all the rest of his people he was completely discouraged and had no hope of making a successful resistance.

When the miner, Ampax, arrived he proved to be a fine big fellow with a bushy beard of fiery red and keen, steadfast eyes. He was asked to get together all the men of his caste that he could and raise a rampart of stones across the mouth of the pass. As this was nearly a hundred feet in width it seemed a herculean task; but Ampax promptly undertook to do all that was possible. We liked this fellow. In this crisis he was the most capable Tcha we had found.

All night the miners labored at the pass and many others of the Tcha, when they understood the matter, willingly assisted them. The ground was well littered with rocks and blocks of marble from ruined buildings, so material was close at hand. By daybreak a barrier had been erected nearly five feet in height entirely across the opening.

Waba Pagatka came with his men, fully armed with spears and battle-axes, and the soldiers were lined up behind the barrier. Ama had ordered our firearms and ammunition returned to us, and these, supplemented by our electrites, made our little party of nine more formidable than the eighty soldiers of Pagatka. But the Tcha were at last beginning to take a lively interest in their own welfare, and at daybreak volunteers began to join our ranks in fair numbers, among them several of the priesthood. They came armed very primitively with whatever weapons they could pick up. Axes, knives and heavy clubs were the chief of these, and there were a few bows and arrows brought out, but not many. Never in the lifetime of this generation had they been called upon to fight a battle; but they were a calm and determined lot, in spite of their inexperience, and we looked for them to

render a good account of themselves.

Altogether we mustered that morning some four hundred men all told, and opposed to us were more than five thousand skilled Itzaex warriors, the bravest and fiercest fighters I have ever known. Really, our case seemed desperate.

The enemy broke camp at daybreak and marched up the mountain in good military order. At their head was borne aloft an open palanquin, upon which reclined a man who was doubtless their leader. Paul examined him through his field glasses and declared he was none other than our old enemy Datchapa. How the ancient uncle of the atkayma had managed to survive his tumble down the pyramid was a wonder; but he had, and of course he had soon recovered from the shock of the electrite.

The attack of the Itzaex was now fully explained. Chaka's father, believing his son dead, had before his own demise confided the secret of the hidden city to Datchapa, who would become his successor. Doubtless he included in the tale a description of the beauty and riches of the city and valley. So when the earthquake came and the Itzaex saw the mountain rent asunder and a passage opened, old Datchapa had quickly decided to invade and conquer the stricken and helpless kingdom of the Tcha. That secluded race was certainly unprepared to oppose such an invasion, never having dreamed of trouble with their neighbors, the Itzaex, which proved how little they understood the savage nature of the tribe surrounding their retreat.

The sun had risen brilliantly when the attack began. The Itzaex were probably surprised at sight of the rampart which had sprung up in a single night, but they did not hesitate to advance upon it. Datchapa halted his palanquin to one side, but quite near the scene of action, and sat up, propped by his cushions, to direct the battle. I imagine his fall had broken some limbs that were slowly mending, but the old fellow's energetic spirit urged him to lead his people on this momentous occasion in spite of his injuries.

Our party of nine was stationed close to the barrier, one every ten feet or so from the next, thus forming a line that controlled the entire space. All around us stood the defenders awaiting with composure the attack.

A shower of darts directed toward us did no harm at all, because we escaped them by simply ducking our heads. Arrows were likewise harmless. The Itzaex understood the situation and with savage cries swung their clubs and battle-axes and bounded forward to scale the rampart.

We used our repeating rifles, cutting into their front ranks with fearful effect; but the enemy came on undaunted. The Tcha now leaped to the top of the wall and from their point of vantage fought so desperately, yet coolly, that after some ten minutes of hand to hand conflict the Itzaex retreated to

gain breath and reform their ranks. They left scores of dead and dying before the barrier, but our own forces had suffered severely, too. I was proud of the Tcha at that moment. They were fully as fearless as their enemies and made a capital defense when you consider they had never been trained for warfare.

The big miner Ampax touched Paul's arm and pointed to a great cliff that far up on the mountain's edge overhung the pass. The earthquake, in rending Aota's side, had left this tremendous mass suspended by a small neck of rock. I had not noticed the thing before, as from inside the valley the slender connection was not clearly seen, and during the darkness of the night it had also escaped the notice of the miners. But Ampax had spied it in the nick of time, and as I gazed up at the thing now it looked mighty dangerous to those who stood below.

"If I can break off that mass," said Ampax, "it will block the pass."

Paul nodded.

"Try it," he replied, and at once Ampax selected a dozen assistants who, laden with bars and mattocks of heavy bronze, began to climb the side of the cliff, using a path that a goat would have hesitated to attempt.

Allerton called me to him.

"Sam," said he, "in our chest is a stick of dynamite. It is wrapped in foil and is kept in a padded box marked 'XXD.' Run and get it, my lad, and carry it to Ampax as quickly as you can. You know how to use it."

"Will there be time?" I inquired, anxiously.

"I think so. With our electrites and the rifles we ought to be able to drive those savages back once or twice more."

"All right, Paul; I'm off."

Handing my firearms to Pagatka, who ought to do some good with them for he was an intelligent fellow, I sprinted as fast as I was able back to our quarters. The rift in the mountain was at the south end, nearly a quarter of a mile distant from the temple enclosure; but it took a little time to unlock the chest and secure the dynamite.

Taking the precious box under my arm I hastily started to return when I came upon Ama standing with a group of her women at a point where her eyes could command the pass.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

I pointed up the mountain toward the great mass of rock that overhung the opening, explaining that only a small neck of rock held it in place and Ampax was trying to break it away so as to block up the pass. I added that in the box was a powerful explosive that would assist the miner in his task, and that we must hurry or the Itzaex would have broken through the defense before we could accomplish our object.

“The climb is what I dread,” said I; “it’s a dizzy path, and I’m not sure I can make it.”

“I will guide you,” she suddenly exclaimed. “Follow me, Samsteele!”

Turning, she ran lightly back to the temple enclosure, and after a moment’s hesitation I decided to follow her. We were not heading for the pass at all, yet Ama ought to know her own mountain better than I did.

The girl proved a swift runner and I, being already short of breath, had no easy job to keep up with her. As we dashed into the gardens surrounding Ama’s ruined pavilion the battle cry of the fierce Itzaex again resounded in our ears and we realized that another attack upon the barrier had begun.

Ama entered the big cavern in the mountain, where I had never before been. We skirted a bathing pool, fed by springs that gushed from the rocks, and quite at the rear end of the place came to a small passage. It was black as ink, but Ama took my hand and drew me after her along the passage, scarcely abating her speed as she went.

The tunnel broadened after the entrance was passed, and inclined upward, making more than one turn. The floor was smooth, and although I could not discern even the girl’s form before me, we made good progress. On and up we went, and the unusual exertion was making me pretty short of breath when a ray of light appeared ahead. Ama made another run for the top and we emerged abruptly upon the very crest of the mountain, only a few hundred feet from the rift.

The ridge was not very wide and we could look down both sides of the mountain from where we stood. There was no time for admiring the view, however, for Ama hurried me along until we came to where Ampax and his men were laboring. They had already driven a hole into the big neck of rock connecting the fragment with the mountain — it looked much bigger here than from below — but I could see it would have taken them a long time to have done the job in their own way.

From below came the wild cries of the attacking savages, mingled with the sound of firearms as our boys bravely opposed them. The Tcha uttered no sounds as they fought, but they were none the less terrible for that.

Approaching Ampax I asked him to drive a deep hole with his bar in the hollow he had already made in the neck of rock. He had no idea what I proposed doing, but Ama ordered him to obey me, and he did. The poor fellow was sweating from every pore with his exertions.

I took the dynamite from the box and carefully lowered it into the hole, attaching a fuse I had found in the parcel. It was not a very long fuse, but it must answer our purpose.

Just then the Itzaex retired for the second time, being repulsed with great

loss to both sides. Mounting the big fragment I leaned over the edge and called to Paul that all was ready. At once he withdrew all the Tcha and our own boys from the barrier, making them retreat to a safe distance. The scene of conflict, as I now viewed it, was a veritable slaughter-pen, the dead and dying lying heaped in every direction. It was surely time for a diversion.

I ordered Ampax and his men to run along the ridge, and told Ama to go with them. They were slow to understand me and I could not wait long for them to get out of the way because the Itzaex were already forming for another rush. So I lighted the fuse and ran from the place so fast myself that the miners took warning and hastened after me. Seizing Ama's arm I dragged her along the ridge until the explosion knocked us all flat upon the rocks and sent three miners flying over the precipice.

The crash that followed the detonation shook the ridge again, and then a hearty cheer went up from the exhausted Tcha who stood below in the valley. I knew then that the pass was blocked and the battle over.

CHAPTER 26

WE HEAR STRANGE NEWS

Paul told me afterward that the advancing Itzaex had reached the barrier and, astonished at finding no opposition, were climbing upon it in a closely packed mass when the great rock fell. The slaughter must have been terrible, for not only did the fragment completely fill the vast space, but the rubble of loose rocks following it killed many on both sides. Among the victims were Datchapa and his palanquin bearers, and being now without a leader the superstitious terrors of the Itzaex, who had always feared this "sacred mountain," influenced them to abandon further hostilities and return to their own city.

When she counted the cost of the defense, however, the brave High Priestess was in despair. Many of the noblest and best citizens had perished, and between war and earthquake the population of the valley was now reduced to a mere handful, and those mostly priests, women and children. There were enough men left, however, to cause the girl a still greater anxiety than she had yet endured, as we soon discovered.

The task of disposing of the dead was immediately undertaken by the artisans, miners and agriculturists, of whom more survived than of the higher castes. This was necessary in order to prevent a plague, and by Ama's direction all the bodies were taken to a large cave at the north of the valley and therein deposited, after which the opening was hermetically sealed.

The Priestess sent word to Katalat to perform the burial service at the cave, but he returned no answer and appointed an inferior to attend to the obsequies. Hearing of this Ama dispatched a messenger requesting the High Priest to attend her at once; but he disregarded the order.

This conduct was so unusual, so rebellious and exasperating that the High Priestess became very angry and ordered the Waba Pagatka to seize Katalat and bring him to her presence. The Captain respectfully bowed, but said:

"I shall not be able to do that, your Highness. Strange tales have been told our people by the High Priest, and these tales have inflamed the populace against you."

"Against me — the High Priestess of the Sun, the Supreme Ruler of the Vale of Tcha!" she exclaimed, indignantly.

"Even so, your Highness," was the calm response.

"Then," said Paul, who was present, "it is even more necessary than before to arrest this rebellious priest."

Pagatka remained silent.

"Do as I command you, Waba," said Ama.

“My men will not obey me,” he returned.

“Is the army in revolt, then?” inquired Chaka.

“All the valley is in revolt against the High Priestess,” declared Pagatka. “I am sorry,” he added; “I do not believe the tales myself; but the people all side with Katalat, and I alone am powerless.”

When asked what the tales were, the captain would not say, so finally Ama dismissed him.

Then she turned to us a white and startled face and asked if we knew anything of the matter; but of course we were as ignorant as herself. Nor were any of the priestesses wiser than their mistress. While Ama had been secluded in her palace, from whence she strove to issue orders for the disposal of the dead and the welfare of her stricken kingdom, old Katalat had taken advantage of the people’s despair and grief to rouse them to rebellion against the girl. It did not surprise us much; we had sized up this fellow correctly from the very beginning.

One of the priestesses had a brother who was an intelligent and faithful youth, and proposed sending him out to gain information as to what conspiracy was going on. Ama caught at the suggestion and the boy was sent on his mission.

He returned in little more than an hour with the information that Katalat had called a meeting of the Tcha at the theatre for that very morning, and already the citizens were flocking to the place.

“I also will go,” announced the High Priestess.

“Better not, Ama,” said Paul. “Let our party of men go instead, and return to you with news of what Katalat proposes to do.”

“No,” she returned positively; “they might prevent your return, these lawless ones. I cannot understand it at all, my friends. Ever have the Tcha been a loyal and law-abiding people until now. It is their duty to obey me, as their hereditary Supreme Ruler, descended from the first Ama who ever reigned in this valley. That Katalat should dare defy me is not so strange as that my people support him in his rebellion. Have I not done my full duty in these trying times? Can anything be justly urged against me? But even so, I am supreme in the Vale of Tcha! My word is as powerful as the law itself, for it is the law.”

She was getting angry, and I did not blame her much. But it was time for us to start for the theatre, if we were to take part in the meeting that had been called, so we waited for Ama to arrange her robe of state — feminine fussiness being the same in every country — and then all followed her in a procession to the theatre, her thirty priestesses forming an imposing train in our wake.

The theatre was two-thirds full when we arrived, and I think those present represented about all the able-bodied population remaining in the valley — some four or five hundred, all told. Misfortune, desolation and ruin had told upon their iron nerves at last and deprived them of their boasted self-control, for as we entered the place only scowling faces greeted us.

On the platform, in full view of the audience, stood Katalat. At his left the aged members of the Tribunal sat in a row upon their golden bench. I think they were all surprised at the sudden entrance of the High Priestess, and the Tribunal especially became visibly agitated; but the High Priest merely cast a cold glance at the girl and thereafter ignoring her presence began an address to the people.

Ama flushed and her eyes flashed. Mounting the steps of the platform she took her stand proudly beside Katalat, reading the countenances of the people as she faced them. Our party remained in a group at one side, midway between the stage and the audience. The Virgins of the Sun sat upon the lower tier of benches, wonderingly regarding the scene.

"People of Tcha," began the priest, "I have called you here to confer with me upon a very important matter — a matter that affects your lives and future welfare — a matter that has caused the death of hundreds of your relatives and friends and laid your fair city in ruins."

A murmur of anger ran through the assemblage, but Katalat raised his hand and silenced it.

"Our laws are centuries old," he resumed, "and they are so wise and just that we have always prospered in obeying them. One of our principal laws is that the legitimate daughter of the High Priestess, descended in a direct line from our first Ama, shall rule supreme in our beautiful valley."

Every eye was now turned upon the girl, and I was puzzled to understand why the rebellious priest should have rendered her this tribute.

"Until a few weeks ago," continued Katalat." peace and comfort reigned in the Vale of Tcha. We were enjoying the reward of ages of honest labor and obedience to the laws of our race. Then there descended upon us these strangers." Here his eyes flashed upon us wickedly, and another vicious demonstration broke from the crowd, which was quickly suppressed by the speaker.

"Then began our misfortunes," said the priest. "Our mother, Ama, whom we had all revered and trusted, fell under the evil influence of these vile foreigners. She saved three of them from the sacrifice and made them all her friends, favoring them above her own subjects. They were constantly admitted to her palace, where men are not allowed except to discuss important matters of state with the Ruler. I admit that our Ama counseled

with these strangers day by day, disregarding the advice of her faithful priests and her Tribunal, and so bringing countless disasters upon us. By our laws any outsiders who dare intrude upon the Tcha must be put to death; yet Ama has made them her friends and counselors. You know the result. Death and desolation for our people and honors and preference for our enemies."

Another burst of rage greeted this tirade, but now the High Priestess stepped forward and held up her hand with a regal gesture that quelled the tumult as if by magic.

"People of Tcha," said she in her clear voice, "you listen to lies and to evil suggestions. These strangers have defended you from harm even when you sought their death. Their power alone saved you from the Itzaex invasion; twice have they saved the life of your Ama. Shall we be ungrateful for this? Shall we let unreasoning anger make us inhuman beasts?"

"The white strangers are intruders!" cried Katalat fiercely, as if fearing the influence of her argument.

"Listen!" said the girl. "How many of you have heard your mothers say that whenever a white stranger finds a way to enter this valley he will become the saviour of our people and the master of our race? The prophecy has been handed down from generation to generation, and at last it has been fulfilled. This man," here she pointed to Paul, "the leader of those you call intruders, but yesterday saved our race from annihilation; therein has he become our saviour." Now she drew herself up proudly as she continued with sparkling eyes: "And he is to be my chosen husband, thus becoming the master of us all, as the prophecy saith. Citizens and subjects, I call upon you all to honor this man!"

"Not so!" shouted Katalat, raising a clenched fist. "I declare that this man's evil arts brought upon us the earthquakes. Never have we suffered such disasters until the strangers came among us, encouraging our High Priestess to disregard the laws and rob our mighty and glorious god of his rightful sacrifices."

"I will disregard the law no longer," said Ama, turning suddenly upon the priest. "Any disrespect to the Supreme Ruler of the Tcha is by our law severely punished. Waba Pagatka, I order you to arrest this false and rebellious priest!"

The captain glanced toward Katalat, but did not move to obey. Advancing a step the priest said in an impressive voice:

"Had the Supreme Ruler of the Tcha issued that order, the Waba Pagatka would at once execute it. But this girl is not our Supreme Ruler — she never has been!"

This assertion fairly took Ama's breath away. It even made me gasp, and

Paul's eyes seemed about to pop out of their sockets.

"Explain your statement, sir!" cried the High Priestess, quickly recovering herself.

"I will," he replied. "The explanation is due to all the people and should have been made before. You will all remember that ere I became a priest I kept the historic Records of our Library, wherein is written on imperishable parchment every incident that transpires in our valley. In reading these records years ago I discovered an important secret. Our former Ama was childless. She had no daughter to succeed her."

A murmur of astonishment came from the assembled people. The girl facing them never flinched a muscle.

"Fearing she would be condemned and hated for her failure to supply a successor to the long line of hereditary rulers," continued Katalat, calmly, "the High Priestess secretly took a child of one of her former priestesses into her palace and proclaimed the infant as her own daughter. When she died, some five years ago, the girl who now stands beside me — the fraudulent substitute — took her place, and none suspected the imposture.

"For myself, I had taken an oath to keep silent unless some act of the false Priestess imperiled the welfare of the nation. In protecting these invaders, our natural enemies, and so bringing upon us the wrath of our justly incensed god, the destruction of our city and the death of hundreds of loyal subjects, this girl has indeed released me from my oath. At last you know the truth — that there is no hereditary High Priestess now living to rule over you, and that therefore her power and supremacy devolve upon me, the lawful High Priest of the Sun."

That last statement impressed me with the belief that the man was lying. So evidently thought Ama. She drew a breath of relief and actually smiled into the stern faces confronting her — a dazzling, brilliant smile that should have won her case then and there.

"You have listened, my subjects, to this false and absurd accusation," she said. "Now I ask you to demand from Katalat the proofs of his assertion."

"The proofs have been submitted to the Triumvirate, to the Counselors and to the Waba Pagatka," was the quiet rejoinder. "In the Book of Records is the signed confession of our last High Priestess and a copy of the oath she obliged me to take."

One of the aged Triumvir arose from his seat.

"I have seen and examined the Book of Records, and I testify that the statement of the High Priest is true," said he.

"I also vouch for the truth of the statement," said another.

"And I," added the third.

“If any citizen should still doubt me,” continued the priest, “the record will be shown to him. I have no personal enmity against this girl, who, alas, is now nameless. It was my duty to expose her at this time, and I have done so only to promote the future welfare of the Tcha.”

Ama, who had stood proudly erect until now, suddenly reeled and would have fallen had not both Chaka and Paul leaped upon the platform and supported her. As they led her away Katalat smiled his evil smile and turned to Pagatka.

Arrest those intruders and confine them securely in the House of Seclusion,” he commanded.

If he tries that dodge we’ll paralyze him!” I shouted, angrily.

But the waba advanced calmly toward us, and a file of his men followed him.

Come, boys; let’s beat a retreat,” whispered Paul. “We must get Ama back to her palace.”

We turned to obey, Paul and Chaka going first and hurrying the half fainting girl between them. Ned and Archie backed them up, with Nux and Bryonia just behind. Pedro had no electrite, so Joe and I took charge of the rear.

I had scarcely taken three steps when the waba leaped forward and seized my arm. Whirling around I flashed my electrite and tumbled him into a heap. But the current spread and shot far beyond Pagatka, catching unawares old Katalat as he stood grinning on the platform. He threw up his arms and made a dive into the arena, where he lay as one dead.

A roar of fury burst from the throng. Every able-bodied man present sprang from his seat and rushed toward us, and so bitterly were they incensed that I am sure they would have torn us to pieces could they have laid hands on us.

But we fought a good fight, keeping them off with our electrites while we beat an orderly retreat toward the city. The powerful electric charges stunned them by the dozens, and more would have suffered had not the Tribune called aloud for them to desist.

Let them go! Let them go!” I heard one of the old men cry. “They cannot escape from the valley.”

Believing this to be true, the Tcha held back, for they were not especially anxious to be knocked senseless; and they knew from experience that our weapons, although not deadly, were very effective at close range.

So we gained the temple enclosure and Ama’s palace without further trouble; but no sooner were we inside the building than it was surrounded by the ranks of the Tcha. They camped there, too, as if they had no intention of

going away until they forced us to surrender.

Ama's apartments were at the front of the palace on the second floor, at the end of a narrow hallway. When we had securely barricaded the door into this hall we were shut off from communication with any other part of the building. Two of the priestesses had entered with us to wait upon their mistress, and when Ama had retired to her chamber, sobbing as if broken hearted, we took possession of the big reception room and prepared for defense.

"It's no use, though," said Paul gloomily. "We'll have to give in sooner or later. If only we had our gas-jackets it would be a different story."

"We have one," returned Chaka significantly.

Yes; we had one. Joe was wearing it to-day, for we had made it a rule that some one of the party should wear the extra jacket constantly, to use in case of emergency.

"Ama must be saved," remarked Paul, with decision. "I don't believe that cowardly priest's story. I am quite sure he forged that record to ruin the girl and give himself supreme power. But the Tcha believe him, and they will be sure to do Ama some mischief if she remains here, because she had been our friend, if for no other reason."

"That's true," I agreed. "But the gas-jacket won't carry two very far, as we know, and the girl can't very well go alone."

Allerton was thoughtful for a moment. Then he said:

"Chaka is a little too heavy for this task, as has been proven. We must select the lightest of our party to carry Ama away to the *Seagull,* where Captain Steele will take good care of her. One of you three boys — "

"Joe's the lightest," I said.

"I think you are, Sam."

"Well, I'm not going," I declared. "You don't weigh a pound more than I do, Joe."

"Don't argue, Sam," exclaimed Allerton, sternly. "This is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. You must be far lighter in weight than any of us, and I command you to save Ama."

"Well, there's lots of time to decide," I returned. "We're all safe enough in this fortress for the present."

They took this for an admission that I consented; but I had not the slightest intention of deserting my comrades for the sake of a girl.

We now began to examine our arms and equipment, to see how much fight there was left to us. In our storage belts were only a couple of dozen charges for the electrites, all told. Some had four or five, some less. There were extra belts in our room in the wing of the priests' palace, but we could

not get at them now. Our firearms were in even worse condition. There were four shots in Ned's repeating rifle and one in Paul's. Every revolver was emptied but mine, and I had just one cartridge to the good.

Not a very encouraging prospect for a party hemmed in by a crowd of enemies eager for their lives; but we must make the best of it.

CHAPTER 27

WE SETTLE AN OLD SCORE

After three hours Ama came to us. She had exchanged her regal robes for a simple white toga, in which she appeared very charming in spite of her reddened eyelids and trembling lips. She was a brave girl, I willingly confess, and bore the terrible blow as well as any woman could have done.

Perhaps the bitterness of her disappointment and chagrin was lessened by the thought that her friendship for Paul had brought it upon her. Girls like to make sacrifices for the man they love, I'm told. Repudiated and scorned by the people she had so faithfully served, Ama naturally turned to those who had stood by her in her trouble, and she must have known that every one of us was a faithful friend and devoted to her cause.

Chaka's conduct filled me with admiration With all his heart and soul he loved this beautiful girl; yet when he saw that "his brother Paul" loved her, too, and that Ama turned more readily to Allerton than she did to him, he had never faltered in his steadfast affection for them both. The girl's admission in the theatre that she would accept Paul as her husband settled Chaka's chances for good and all, and he never whispered or wavered an eyelash. He was a savage, this handsome, dignified young fellow, born in savagery and even yet only half civilized. I wish there were more civilized whites as noble as he.

Ama was able to discuss the day's events with a fair amount of composure.

"My heart is aching and my head whirls," she said pitifully; "but one cannot die because an ungrateful people has bitterly wronged her."

"We may all die soon," remarked Archie, gruffly.

"Not all," said Ama, with a wan smile. "When you, my friends, have made your escape from this valley, I will go out and deliver myself up to the cruel vengeance of the Tcha."

"How can we escape?" asked Allerton.

"Can you not fly away, as you came?" she returned, as if surprised.

"Not without our flying clothes," he said. "They were taken from us when first we arrived."

"But they are here," she exclaimed. "I had them brought to me so I might examine them, and discover the secret of their use. But it was too puzzling; I was stupid and did not understand."

We listened to her with hearts beating high with hope for the first time.

"What do you mean by 'here'? Where are these flying-clothes, Ama?" inquired Paul in a voice that trembled in spite of his effort to control it.

She reflected a moment.

“They were put in my wardrobe room. Come; I will show you.”

We all followed her through the gorgeous suite, extensive and magnificent enough for any queen, and at the end of a passage came to the room she had described. The gas-jackets were piled neatly upon a shelf, and with them were the cases containing the themlyne crystals.

I’m almost sure that was the happiest moment of my life. I felt like kissing everybody all around — even including Ama and her maidens. But none of us did anything so foolish, and we accepted our good fortune like philosophers.

When we had carried the treasure back into the big reception room I noticed that Paul sat in a corner with Ama and held a lengthy conversation with her. He also held her hand, even though she needed no support at that time. Chaka gazed silently from the window, and thinking that perhaps the interview was of a personal nature we none of us interrupted the conversation, although after an hour or so the wait began to be tedious.

They finally came to us, however, hand in hand, and both their faces were radiant with bliss.

“Ama is coming with us,” announced Paul; “for whether Katalat’s story is true or not the Tcha believe him, and this is no place for Ama hereafter. She will wear the extra gas-jacket and I’ll take care of her myself.”

Chaka approached and shook the hands of both very warmly.

“You will be happy, and I am glad,” he remarked simply, and the poor fellow was not to blame if his smile was a little sad and wistful.

“When shall we start?” I asked abruptly, to change the subject.

“At once,” replied our leader.

“Sorry we didn’t get more rubies,” said Archie. “I’ve a few in my pocket yet, but most of them I left in my room over there,” indicating with a jerk of his thumb the palace of the priests.

Ama turned to him. “I have many of the red stones here, if you wish them,” she said.

“They will be very useful to us all in the world I am taking you to,” asserted Paul, being recalled to the practical side of our undertaking. Perhaps he had lost sight of the fact that Ama was not the only treasure he desired.

The girl led us to another room of the suite, a sort of storage place it seemed. Rubies? Well, well! There were quantities of them, lying loose in boxes or packed in stout sacks. All had been selected for their size and purity as the personal property of the Supreme Ruler. Ama bade us take all we wanted, and between us we managed to stow every stone upon our persons. The were not so very bulky, after all; but their value would make Paul

independent for life and redeem his old homestead, as well as repay us all for the risk of this exciting adventure.

We fitted the extra gas-jacket to Ama and then donned our own. There was some question as to whether we had enough themlyne to carry us until we reached the *Seagull*, so I offered to drop down outside our old quarters, jump in the window and secure the large case of crystals from the chest. This was agreed to, and when we were ready to depart Ama bade good bye to her two faithful maidens and we went out upon a broad balcony that faced the temple. The jackets had already been partly inflated. We were roped together again, Ama between Paul and Chaka, the latter at the end of the string. I was left free for the present, so as to alight at the wing as I had proposed, but I took Ned's hand and when the gas was turned on we all rose slowly from the balcony and, flopping our wings, made our aerial way over the ruins of the old temple.

Cries of anger greeted us from the populace who watched below, but we paid no heed to them. I saw the poor Waba Pagatka sitting on a bench with his head tied up in a bandage as the result of his encounter with the electrite, and he didn't seem sorry to see us get away.

A moment later, as we approached the priests' palace, I released Ned's hand, let out some gas and dropped swiftly to the ground just beside the wing. Scrambling through the window I unlocked our supply chest and found the large case of themlyne. That was all I dared take and I leaped through the window and let more gas into my jacket, that it might float me again. This took a little time, of course, and my descent had been marked by some of the people nearest the building.

Before I could get away a big fellow rushed around the comer and came straight at me. I pulled my electrite and knocked him over. Another followed and met the same fate. I was now so buoyant that my toes scarcely touched the ground; but I could not rise yet, and here was a third Tcha after me. The electrite promptly settled him just as old Katalat himself appeared, running like a fiend to prevent my escape.

He was not afraid of the electrite, having had one dose of it and knowing that it did not kill; nevertheless I aimed it at the priest and pressed the button. Nothing happened. The storage battery had become exhausted.

The gas-valve was wide open. Slowly I left the ground and soared upward, and at that interesting moment Katalat grabbed my legs and held fast, shouting lustily for help. I remembered there was one cartridge left in my revolver.

I glanced upward and saw that my friends were too far away to be of any assistance to me. A dozen Tcha were rushing to help Katalat secure me, and

his wicked eyes glared triumphantly into mine as he held me in a vice-like grip.

There was no help for it. I got the muzzle of the revolver against his ear and pressed the trigger. With a cry he reeled backward and ended his career for good and all. Next moment I was in the air and out of danger.

CHAPTER 28
WE WIN AND LOSE

Passing the City of Itza, Chaka announced his determination to rejoin his people and rule over them as their lawful atkayma. Now that Uncle Datchapa was dead he would meet with no opposition, especially if his white brothers continued their trip through the air and did not alight in the city.

Paul protested loudly at first, but a whisper from Ama, whose womanly intuition led her to understand the situation, induced him to let Chaka act as he desired. Their parting, as they embraced in the air, was as affecting as it was novel, and Ama graciously allowed Chaka to kiss her hand by way of farewell. The atkayma handed his electrite to Pedro and divided his rubies among us all, saying he would have no use for them.

"Do not grieve for me, Brother Paul," said the Maya, pleadingly. "I am sure to be happier in my own country, ruling my people, than in your stiff and luxurious civilization. It's the call of the wild, I suppose, and I am wise to heed it. Think of me kindly sometimes, you and Ama; but think of me as free and contented, leading the chase and the wars against the Mopanes. And now, farewell!"

He unfastened the rope from his belt, released a portion of the gas from his jacket, and slowly descended into the city. We waited long enough to see him surrounded by the natives, who prostrated themselves humbly before him, and then resumed our journey.

****

It was a tedious yet arduous trip, that flight over Eastern Yucatan, for the wind was contrary, and we had hard work to make satisfactory progress. There was no safety in alighting, so we kept on as best we could.

The night was brilliantly lighted by the stars and moon, and we were too excited to feel fatigue. It was a marvelous experience for Ama, yet the girl was not a bit afraid and endured the strain as well as the stoutest of us.

By daylight we came to the seacoast, and proceeding north, with a slight breeze in our favor now, we presently sighted by the aid of Paul's field glasses our handsome ship the *Seagull.* She was standing in toward the shore from the open sea, a proceeding followed daily by my father ever since we had left him, so that he might be on hand to assist us if we suddenly appeared along the shore.

They were all considerably astonished when they discovered us coming by "air route," and it was amusing to us from our elevated position to observe them craning their necks to watch us. Archie, when we were just over the deck — father had stopped the engines by that time —

mischievously dropped a ruby that struck Uncle Naboth plump on his bald head and made him whoop like an Indian.

We landed safely on the deck, and oh, how glad we were to feel the planks under our feet again and be relieved from all anxiety.

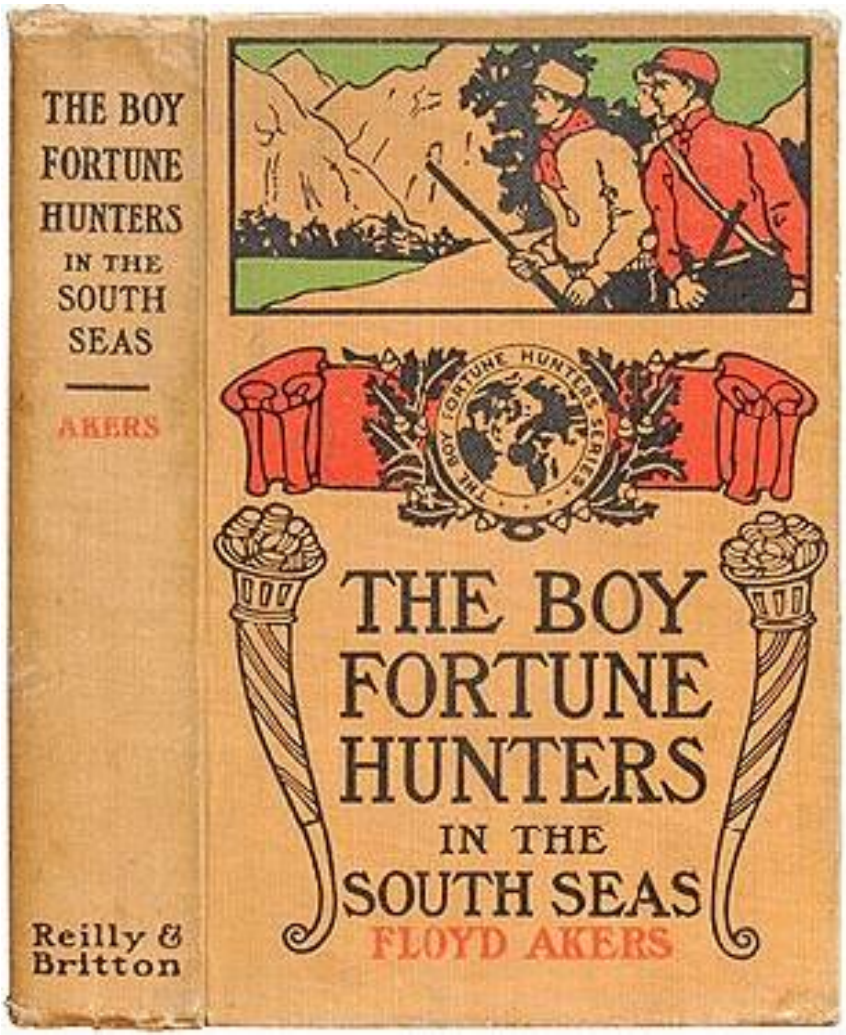
Ama received a cordial greeting from both father and Uncle Naboth, and was given the state cabin. It was wonderful how quickly she adapted herself to our ways, and pleasant to see her happiness in her new experiences, which she enjoyed by the side of Lieutenant Paul Allerton.

When we arrived in Havana, where we came to safe harbor, Paul and Ama were quietly married. We gave her a ruby necklace, hastily put together by a clever Cuban goldsmith, as her wedding gift. The bride and groom started at once for a trip to the New Hampshire homestead, where, after paying off the mortgages, Paul intended to visit his family until obliged to rejoin his ship at San Diego.

THE END

THE BOY FORTUNE HUNTERS IN THE SOUTH SEAS

Published in 1911 by Reilly & Britton under Baum's pseudonym, Floyd Akers, *The Boy Fortune Hunters in the South Seas* is another rousing adventure story, the sixth and last in the series. Sam Steele and his companions find themselves shipwrecked on a strange island where natives worship the Pearl God and hoard vast quantities of precious pearls in their temple. Adventures ensue as the boys must deal with revolutionaries, a lost king, and the possibility that they'll all die violent deaths by drowning while in pursuit of riches.



A first edition copy of 'The Boy Fortune Hunters in the South Seas'

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CHAPTER 1

SENOR DE JIMINEZ

"There's one thing certain," said my uncle, Naboth Perkins, banging his fist on the table for emphasis. "If we don't manage to get a cargo in ten days we'll up anchor an' quit this bloomin' island."

My father the skipper, leaning back in his easy-chair with his legs — one of them cork — stretched upon the table and his pipe in his mouth, nodded assent as he replied:

"Very good."

"Here it is five weeks since we finished unloadin' that machinery," went on Uncle Naboth, "an' since then the *Seagull's* been floatin' like a swan in the waters o' Port Phillip an' lettin' the barnacles nip her. There ain't a shipper in Melbourne as'll give us an ounce o' cargo; an' why? Jest because we're American an' float the Stars an' Stripes — that's why. There's a deep-seated conspiracy agin American shipping in Australia, an' what little truck they've got to send to America goes in British ships or it don't go at all."

Again Captain Steele nodded.

"S'pose we try Adelaide," suggested big Ned Britton, our first mate. "That's jest as bad," declared Uncle Naboth. "It's an off season, they say; but the fact is, Australia sends mighty little to the United States, an' those that ship anything prefer English bottoms to ours. Everything's been contracted for months ahead, and the only chance the *Seagull* has of going home freighted is to grab some emergency deal — where time counts — an' load an' skip before any Britisher comes into port."

"Well?" said my father, inquiringly.

"Well, that's what we've been waitin' for, an' I'm gettin' desprit tired o' the job. So now I'll give these folks jest ten days to rustle up a cargo for us, an' if they don't do it, away we goes in ballast."

I laughed at his earnestness.

"Why, Uncle Naboth, it won't hurt us to go home without freight," said I. "In fact, we'll make better time, and for my part I see no use in waiting ten days longer for such a ghostly chance."

"Don't be foolish, Sam," returned my uncle, impatiently. "Boys never have any business instincts, anyhow. It's our business to carry cargoes, so to make the long voyage back home light-waisted is a howlin' shame — that's what it is!"

"We were paid so much for the cargo we brought that we can well afford to run home in ballast," I remarked.

"There you go — jest like a boy. You've got a fat bank account, Sam

Steele; an' so hev I; an' so's the Cap'n, your father. An' we three own the *Seagull* an' can do as we blame please with her. But business is business, as Shylock says to the lawyers. We're runnin' this schooner to make money — not one way, but both ways — an' our business is to see that every league she travels counts in dollars an' cents. Nice merchantmen we'd be to float off home in ballast, jest 'cause we got a big lump fer bringin' a load of farm machinery here; wouldn't we, now?"

"Oh, I don't object to your trying for a cargo, Uncle Naboth. That's your part of the business, and if any man could make a contract you can do so; but I see no use in getting annoyed or worried in case we find it impossible to secure a consignment of freight."

Uncle Naboth smiled grimly.

"I ain't worried, Sam," he said more mildly. "I'm only tellin' you an' the Cap'n what my sentiments is."

We were seated in our pleasant sitting-room at the Radley Arms, one of the cosiest inns I ever stopped at. It was a place much patronized by mariners of the better class, and Mrs. Wimp, our landlady, was certainly a wonderful cook. Joe Herring, my chum and a lad who, although only about my own age, served as second mate of the *Seagull,* had aroused my uncle to speech by remarking that as far as he was concerned he wouldn't mind boarding all winter at the Radley Arms. But Joe was a silent fellow, as was my father Captain Steele, and having evoked the above tirade he said nothing further. Uncle Naboth had a perfect right to issue his ultimatum concerning our freight, being supercargo and part owner, and as our recent voyages had been fairly prosperous and we were already amply paid for our present trip to Australia we were all in a mood to take things philosophically.

I think Ned Britton, the mate, was the most uneasy of our party, but that was because he disliked the land and was only comfortable when afloat. Ned even now lived on shipboard and kept everything taut and in running order, while my father, Uncle Naboth and I had rooms at Mrs. Wimp's admirable inn. I am free to confess that I like a bit of land loafing now and then, while poor Ned is never happy unless he knows the water is sliding under the keel.

Joe and I had ransacked sleepy old Melbourne pretty well by this time and had enjoyed every day of the five weeks we had been ashore. There wasn't a great deal of excitement in town, but we managed to have a good time and to keep amused. Our little group had sat in silent meditation for a few moments following my uncle's last remark, when Mrs. Wimp stuck her head in the door and said:

"'Ow'd yer loike to see a gent as wants to see yer?"

We looked at one another inquiringly.

“Who is it?” demanded Uncle Naboth.

“‘E didn’t say.”

“Didn’t say what, Mrs. Wimp?”

“Didn’t say ‘oo’ e were.”

“Did he say who he wanted to see?”

“No, sir.”

“Then never mind. Tell him to call again, Mrs. Wimp,” I ventured to say, amused at the landlady’s noncommittal manner.

“No, no!” exclaimed my uncle. “It may be somethin’ about a cargo. Who did he ask for, Mrs. Wimp?”

“‘E jus’ dropped in an’ said: ‘Is the *Seagull* people stoppin”ere?”They is,’ says I. ‘Then I wants to see’ em,’ says ‘e. So I comes up to see if it’s agreeable.”

“It is, Mrs. Wimp,” asserted Uncle Naboth. “Be kind enough to show the gentleman up.”

Thereat Mrs. Wimp withdrew her head and closed the door. My father filled his pipe anew and relighted it. Joe looked thoughtfully out of the window into the alley below. I turned over a newspaper that lay upon the table, while Ned and my uncle indulged in a few remarks about the repairs recently made to the ship’s engines. Not one of us realized that the next few minutes were destined to alter the trend of all our lives.

Then came the visitor. He silently opened the door, closed it swiftly behind him and stood with his back to it, shrewdly eyeing us each one in turn.

The man’s stature was quite short and he was of slight build. His hair, coarse in texture, sprinkled with gray and cropped close, stood straight up on his forehead like a scrubbing brush. His eyes were black and piercing in expression; his nose rather too fat; his chin square and firm; his face long and lean, and his skin of the dusky olive hue peculiar to natives of southern climes. His apparel was magnificent. The velvet coat had gold buttons; he sported a loud checked vest of purple and orange, and his cravat was a broad bow of soft white ribbon with gold fringe at the edges.

At once I began speculating whether he was a vaudeville actor or a circus barker; but either idea was dispelled when I noticed his diamonds. These were enormous, and had a luster that defied imitation. His shirt buttons were diamonds as big around as my little finger nail; he had another monster in the center of his bow tie and his fingers fairly glittered with gems of the same character. Every link of a huge watch guard was set with diamonds, and his cuff buttons were evidently worth a small fortune.

The appearance of this small but gorgeous individual in our dingy sitting-

room produced an incongruous effect. The air was fogged with tobacco smoke; my father still lazily rested his legs across the table-top; the rest of us lounged in unconventional attitudes. However, being Americans we were more astonished than impressed by the vision that burst upon us and did not rise nor alter our positions in any way.

"Which it is the gentleman who the ship *Seagull* owns?" demanded the stranger, mixing his English in his agitation, although he spoke it very clearly for a foreigner.

Uncle Naboth became our spokesman.

"There are three owners," said he.

"Ah! where they are?"

"All in this room," replied my uncle.

"Excellent!" exclaimed our visitor, evidently pleased. He glanced around him, drew a chair to the table and sat down. My father moved his wooden leg a bit to give the stranger more room.

"What is price?" he inquired, looking at Mr. Perkins, whom he faced.

"Price for what, sir?"

"Ship," said the man.

"Oh, you want to buy the ship?" gasped my uncle, fairly staggered by the suggestion.

"If you please, if you like; if it is rais — rais — raison — *a* — ble."

Uncle Naboth stared at him. My father coolly filled his pipe again. The man's quick eye caught Joe and I exchanging smiling glances, and he frowned slightly.

"At what price you hold your ship?" he persisted, turning again to my uncle.

"My dear sir," was the perplexed reply, "we've never figured on selling the *Seagull.* We built it to keep — to have for our own use. We're seamen, and it's our home. If you'd ask us offhand what we'd sell our ears for, we'd know just as well what to answer."

The man nodded, looking thoughtful.

"What the ship cost?" he asked.

"Something over two hundred thousand dollars."

"United State America dollars?"

"Of course."

Our visitor drew an envelope from his pocket; laid it on the table and scribbled some figures upon the back.

"Ver' well," he said, presently; "I take him at two hunder' thousan' dollar, American."

"But — "

“It is bargain. What your terms?”

“Cash!” snapped Uncle Naboth, laughing at the man’s obstinacy.

The diamond-bedecked man leaned his elbow on the table and his head on his hand in a reflective pose. Then he straightened up and nodded his head vigorously.

“Why not?” he exclaimed. “Of course it must the cash be. You will know, sir, that a gentleman does not carry two hunder’ thousan’ dollar about his person, and although I have had more than that sum on deposit in Bank of Melbourne, it have been expend in recent purchases. However, nevertheless, in spite of, I may say, I have ample fund in Bogota. I will make you draft on my bank there, and you may sail with me in my ship and collect the money in gold when we arrive. That is cash payment, Senor; is not?”

“Bogota!” remarked my uncle, by this time thoroughly bewildered. “That is a long way off.”

“Merely across Pacific,” said the other easily. “There is direct route to it through the South Seas.”

My father nodded in confirmation of this statement. He knew his charts by heart.

“Sir,” said Uncle Naboth, sitting up and heaving a deep sigh, “I have not the honor of knowing who the blazes you are.”

The stranger cast a stealthy glance around the room. Then he leaned forward and said in a low voice:

“I am Jiminez.”

This impressive statement failed to enlighten my uncle.

“Jiminez who?” he inquired.

For an instant the man seemed offended. Then he smiled condescendingly.

“To be sure!” he replied. “You are of United State and have no interest in South American affairs. It is natural you have ignorance regarding our politics. In Bogota the name of De Jiminez stands for reform; and reform stands for — ” He hesitated.

“What?” asked my uncle.

“Revolution!”

“That’s only nat’ral,” observed Mr. Perkins complacently. “I hear revolutions are your reg’lar diet down in South America. If there didn’t happen to be a revolution on tap your people wouldn’t know what to do with themselves.”

Senor de Jiminez frowned at this.

“We will not politic discuss, if you please,” he rejoined stiffly. “We will discuss ship.”

“We don’t want to sell,” said my uncle positively.

De Jiminez looked at him speculatively.

"I tell you with frankness, I must have ship," said he.

"What for?"

"I will tell you that — but in more privacy," with a wave of his hand toward our interested group.

"Oh, these are all *Seagull* men," announced Uncle Naboth. "I'll introduce you, Mr. Yim — Him — Jim — "

"Jiminez." He pronounced it "He-ma-noth" now, in Spanish fashion. "This is Captain Steele, our skipper and part owner," continued my uncle. "This young man is Sam Steele, his son, and also part owner. Sam is purser and assistant supercargo of the *Seagull.* I'm supercargo, the third owner, and uncle to Sam an' brother-in-law to the Cap'n. Is that all clear to you?"

De Jiminez bowed.

"Here is Ned Britton, our first mate; and also Joe Herring, our second mate. Both are trusted comrades and always know as much as we know. So what you say, stranger, is as private before these people as if you spoke to but one of us. Therefore, fire ahead."

The man considered a moment; then he said slowly:

"You must know there are spies upon me here in Melbourne, as there are everywhere, whichever I go; so I cannot too careful be. You ask me why I want ship. I answer: to carry supplies of war to Colombia — arms and ammunition for the Cause — all of which I have successful purchase here in Australia."

"Oh; you're going to start something, are you?" inquired Uncle Naboth.

"It is already start, sir," was the dignified response. "I am to complete the revolution. As you do not understan' ver' well, I will the explanation make that my country is rule by a bad president — a dictator — an autocrat! We call ourselves republic, Senor Américaine; but see! we are not now a republic; we are under despotism. My belove people are all slave to tyrant, who heeds no law but his own evil desire. Is it not my duty to break his power — to free my country?"

"Perhaps," answered Mr. Perkins, his calmness in sharp contrast to the other's agitation. "But I can't see as it's any of *our* bread-and-butter. It's your country, sir, but you must remember it's not ours; and to tell you the cold fact, we don't propose to sell the *Seagull."*

At this Senor de Jiminez looked a bit worried. But the little Spaniard was game, and did not give up easily.

"I must have ship!" he asserted. "I am rich — have much money entrusted to me for the Cause — my estate is ver' large. The best families of Colombia are all with me; now and always, whatever I do. See, Seftor; it was my

ancestor who discover South America! who discover the River Orinoco! who was first governor of my country under the Queen of Spain! Yes, yes. I am descend direct from the great navigator Gonzalo Quesada de Jiminez, of whom you read in history."

"I congratulate you," said Uncle Naboth dryly.

"I have here in Melbourne congregate the means to carry on the war, which is now languish for want of arms and ammunition. It is all ready to send to Bogota. Therefore, you see, I must really have ship."

"But why buy one?" asked my uncle. "Why not send your stuff as freight?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the other. "You are United State. Well, United State forbid any merchant ship to carry arms to friendly state for starting revolution. If I hire you to do so, I get you in trouble, and myself in trouble. I want no quarrel with United State, for when I am myself President of Colombia I must stand well with other powers. So it is same with every nation. I cannot hire a ship. I must buy one and take responsibility myself."

This frank and friendly explanation led me to regard the flashy little man more kindly than before. I had been busy thinking, knowing that Uncle Naboth had set his heart on making some money on the return voyage. So, during the pause that followed the speech of Senor de Jiminez, I turned the matter over in my mind and said:

"Tell me, sir, what you propose doing with the ship after you get to Colombia with it?"

He stared at me a moment.

"It is of little use then," said he, "unless I could put some cannon on board and use him for gunboat."

"Have you ever been aboard the *Seagull?"* I continued.

He shook his head.

"I have inquire about every ship now in Port Phillip," he said. "Not one is available but yours that is big enough to carry my cargo — all others are owned in foreign lands and cannot be bought. But I see your ship, and it look like a good ship; I inquire and am told by my friends here it is famous for speed and safety."

"It is all that," agreed my uncle heartily.

"We have a couple of guns on board already," I continued; "for sometimes we sail in seas where it is necessary for us to protect ourselves. But as a matter of fact the *Seagull* would make a poor gunboat, because she has no protective armor. So it seems all you could use her for would be to carry your revolutionary supplies to Colombia and land them secretly."

"That is all that I require!" he said quickly, giving me a keen look.

“Sam,” said my uncle, “you’re goin’ to make a dum fool of yourself; I kin see it in your eye!”

CHAPTER 2

I ADVANCE A PROPOSITION

By this time all eyes were upon my face, and realizing that I was about to suggest a bold undertaking I was a little embarrassed how to continue.

"For our part, sir," said I, addressing Senor de Jiminez and keeping my gaze averted from the others, "it is our intention to sail for America presently, and we would like to carry a good paying cargo with us. So it strikes me we ought to find a way to get together. Have you spent all your funds here in purchases, or have you some left?"

He figured on the envelope again — eagerly now, for his quick brain had already grasped my forthcoming proposition.

"I have still in bank here equal to nine thousan' dollar United State money," said he.

"Very well," I rejoined. "Now suppose you purchase from us the *Seagull* for two hundred thousand dollars, and pay down nine thousand in cash, agreeing to resell the ship to us as soon as we are free of the cargo for the sum of one hundred and ninety-one thousand dollars, accepting your own draft, which you are to give us, in full payment. In that way the thing might be arranged."

He had brightened up wonderfully during my speech and was about to reply when Uncle Naboth, who had been shaking his head discontentedly, broke in with:

"No, Sam, it won't do. It ain't enough by half. Your scheme is jest a makeshift an' I kin see where we might get into a peck o' trouble aidin' an' abettin' a rebellion agin a friendly country. Moreover, you don't take into account the fact that we've got to operate the ship across the South Seas, an' the salaries an' wages fer such a long voyage amounts to considerable."

I have respect for Uncle Naboth's judgment, so was rather crestfallen at his disapproval. But Senor de Jiminez, who was alert to every phase of the argument, said quickly:

"It is true. Nine thousan' dollar is too much for an ordinary voyage, and too little for such voyage as I propose. I will pay fifteen thousan' dollar."

"You haven't the cash," remarked my uncle, "and revolutions are uncertain things."

Jiminez took time to muse over the problem, evidently considering his dilemma from every viewpoint. Then he began to shed his diamonds.

He took out his jeweled cuff buttons, his studs, pin and watch guard, and laid them on the table.

"Here," said he, "are twenty thousan' dollar worth of jewels — the finest

and purest diamonds in all the world. I offer them as security. You take my nine thousan' dollar in gold, and my personal note for six thousan', which I pay as soon as in Colombia we land. If I do not, you keep the diamonds, which bring you much more in your own country. You see, gentlemen, I trust you. You are honest, but you make a hard bargain — hard for the man who must use you in spite of difficulty. But I have no complaint. I am in emergency; I must pay liberally to accomplish my great purpose. So then, what is result? Do I purchase the ship as Senor Sam Steele he describe?"

Uncle Naboth hesitated and looked at my father, who had listened with his usual composure to all this but said not a word. Now he removed his pipe, cleared his throat and said:

"I'm agree'ble. Colombia ain't so blame much out'n our way, Naboth. An' the pay's lib'ral enough."

"What do you think, Ned?" asked my uncle.

"The Cap'n's said it," answered the mate, briefly.

"Joe?"

Joe started and looked around at being thus appealed to. He was only a boy; but Uncle Naboth knew from experience that Joe never spoke without thinking and that his thoughts were fairly logical ones.

"The deal looks all right on the face of it, sir," said he. "But before you sign a contract I'd know something more of this gentleman and his prospects of landing his arms in safety, so we can get away from Colombia without a fight. Let Sam find out all he can about this revolution and its justice, and get posted thoroughly. Then, if it still seems a safe proposition, go ahead, for the terms are fair enough."

"Of course," answered Uncle Naboth, "we don't mean to jump before we look. Other things bein' equal an' satisfaction guaranteed, I'll say to you, Mr. Jim — Yim — Jiminez, that I b'lieve we can strike a bargain."

The little man's face had seemed careworn as he listened intently to this exchange of ideas. Evidently he was desperately anxious to get the *Seagull* to deliver his contraband goods. But he offered no objection to Joe's cautious suggestion. Instead he turned to me, after a little thought, and said:

"Time is with me very precious. I must get to Bogota as soon as possible — to the patriots awaiting me. So to satisfy your doubts I will quickly try. It is my request, Senor Sam, that you accompany me to my hotel, and the evening spend in my society — you and your friend Senor Joe. Then tomorrow morning we will sign the papers and begin to load at once the ship. Do you then accept my hospitality?"

I turned to Uncle Naboth.

"Do you think you can trust Joe and me?" I asked.

“Guess so,” he responded. “Your jedgment’s as good as mine in this deal, which is a gamble any way you put it. Go with Mr. Jiminez, if you like, and find out all he’ll let you. Mostly about him, though; nobody knows anything about a revolution.”

“Very well, Uncle,” I answered. Then I turned to the Colombian. “Sir,” said I, “we cordially accept your invitation. You seem fair and just in your dealings and for the present, at least, I’m glad to have formed your acquaintance. Keep your diamonds until we ask for the security. As you sail in our company you may as well wear them until circumstances require us to demand them of you.”

He bowed and restored the gems to their former places. Then he rose and took his hat.

“You will return with me to my apartments?”

“If you desire it,” said I.

“Then, Senors, I am at your service.”

Joe quietly left his seat, saying: “I’ll be ready in a jiffy, Sam,” and started for his room — a room we shared together. After a moment’s hesitation I followed him.

“What are you going to do?” I asked.

“Slick up a bit and pack my toothbrush. Didn’t you hear De Jiminez speak of his ‘apartments’ at the hotel? And we’re to stay all night it seems.”

“True enough,” I exclaimed. “We must look decent, old man,” and I quickly changed my clothing and threw into a small grip such articles as I thought might be needed. Joe was ready before me, and I saw him quietly slip a revolver into his hip pocket; so I did the same, smiling at the incongruity of going armed to make a semisocial visit.

We found Senor de Jiminez slightly impatient when we returned to the sitting-room, so we merely said good-bye to our friends and followed him out to the street. The Radley Arms was situated in a retired and very quiet district, and our exit seemed entirely unobserved except by our curious landlady. A sleepy beggar was sitting on the comer, and before him the Colombian paused and said in a calm tone:

“What will your report be, then? That I have visited the Radley Arms? Well, let me give you help. I had friends there — these young gentlemen — who are returning with me to my hotel. You will find us there this evening and until morning. Will such information assist you, my good spy?”

The beggar grinned and replied:

“You’re a rare one, De Jimenez. But don’t blame me; I’m only earnin’ my grub.”

“I know,” said the other gravely. “You do the dirty work for my

countryman, the chief spy. But I do not care; you are both powerless to injure me, or to interfere with my plans."

Then he walked on, and a short distance down the street hailed a cab that was rolling by. We three entered the vehicle and were driven directly into the busiest section of the city.

"The driver of this cab," remarked De Jiminez, "is also a spy; and if you could behind us see, you would find the beggar riding with us."

"They seem to keep good track of you, Senor," said Joe.

"I do not mind," answered the man. "If my arrangement with you succeeds I shall be able to get away from here before my enemies can interfere."

It was already growing late in the day and the streets were lighted as we entered the main thoroughfares. Our host seemed lost in thought and few remarks were exchanged between us during the long ride.

Finally we drew up before an imposing looking edifice which I quickly recognized as the Hotel Markham, quite the swellest public house in all Melbourne. It cost one a lot to stop at such a place I well knew, but reflected that Senor de Jiminez, if important enough to conduct a revolution, might be expected to live in decent style — especially if the "patriots" paid his expenses.

I suppose it would be becomingly modest to admit right here that Joe and I were rather young to be sent on such an errand. Perhaps Senor de Jiminez recognized this fact even more fully than we did. But in justice to ourselves I must add that we were boys of more than ordinary experience, our adventures on many voyages having taught us to think quickly, act coolly and carefully consider every motive presented to us. Predisposed as I was in favor of this queer Colombian, who interested me because he was playing a desperate game and had the nerve to play it well, I had no intention of deceiving myself or allowing him to deceive me in regard to his standing and responsibility. It was my business to find out all I could about the man, and I fully intended to keep my eyes and ears wide open.

The first thing I noticed as we entered the hotel was the respectful deference paid our conductor by the servants, who seemed eager to wait upon him. The manager came from his little booth with a smile and bow for Senor de Jiminez and promptly assigned Joe and me to a large room which he said was connected with the "suite" of our host. De Jiminez himself conducted us to this room, a very luxurious chamber, and then excused himself, saying:

"You will wish to prepare for dinner and I must the same do also. When you are ready, be kind to come into my apartments, Number 18, which is the

first door at your left. Have you necessaries in everything?" We assured him we were amply provided for and he left us with a courteous bow. There wasn't much for us to do, except to wash and brush ourselves and examine the rich furnishings of the place. Neither Joe nor I was an utter stranger to luxurious living, although our ordinary quarters were commonplace enough and our mode of life extremely simple. We have seen palaces of great magnificence, and therefore the handsome room assigned us did not impress us as much as it interested us.

We whiled away half or three-quarters of an hour in order not to crowd our host too closely, and then we knocked at the door of room Number 18.

CHAPTER 3

WE MEET SOME QUEER PEOPLE

A servant in private livery admitted us to a spacious drawing-room and Senor de Jiminez, arrayed in a regulation dress suit, in which he appeared far more imposing than in the flashy attire he had before worn, advanced quickly to greet us. At a center table sat an aged, pleasant faced lady and crouching in a chair by the fireplace was a youth of about my own age, who bore so strong a facial resemblance to De Jiminez that it needed no shrewdness to guess he was his son.

Our host led us first to the lady.

"Young gentlemen," said he, as with profound deference he bowed before her, "I have the honor to present my mother, Senora de Jiminez."

She smiled graciously and extended her hands to us.

"It is unfortune," he added, "that she is not with your English language familiar."

"Oh, but I speak Spanish — a little," said I; for I had learned it during a sojourn in Panama. Then I told the lady I was glad to meet her, speaking in her own tongue, and she bade me welcome.

De Jiminez seemed pleased. He next led me to the young fellow by the fire, who had not risen nor even glanced toward us, but seemed tremendously interested in his own thoughts. These could not have been very pleasant, judging from the somber expression of his face.

"My son Alfonso," said our host, introducing us. "Alfonso, I present Mr. Steele and Mr. Herring, two young American gentlemen I have recently met."

The boy looked up quickly.

"Not of the *Seagull!"* he exclaimed in English.

"Yes."

"Then — " he began eagerly; but his father stopped him with a gesture.

"I am making consideration of a proposition they have made to me," he observed with dignity. "Perhaps, Alfonso, we may sail back to Colombia in the *Seagull.*"

The boy's eyes glistened. They were dark and restless eyes, very like those of his parent. He rose from his chair and shook hands with us with an appearance of cordiality. We now saw he was remarkably short of stature. Although he was sixteen the crown of his head scarcely reached to my shoulder. But he assumed the airs and dress of a man and I noticed he possessed his father's inordinate love for jewelry.

"Would you prefer in the hotel restaurant to dine, or in our private salon?"

inquired the elder De Jiminez.

"It is unimportant to us, sir," I returned. "Do not alter your usual custom on our account, I beg of you.

"Then," said he, "I will order service in the salon." He seemed relieved and went to consult his servant.

Meantime young Alfonso looked at us curiously.

"You do not own the *Seagull,* I suppose," he remarked.

"Why not?" I asked with a smile.

"It's a fine ship. I've been over to look at it this afternoon — "

"Oh; you have!"

"Yes. They would not let me go aboard, but I saw all I wished to. It is swift and trim — what is called 'yacht built.' It can sail or go by steam. Your crew looks like a good one."

"That is all true, sir," I agreed, amused at his observations.

"And you young fellows own it?"

"I don't," said Joe. "I'm second mate, that's all. But Mr. Steele here is one-third owner, with his father and uncle owning the other two-thirds."

Alfonso looked at me intently.

"Have you sold it to my father?" he asked in a low voice.

"Not yet," said I, laughing. "But, as Senor de Jiminez told you, we are considering the matter."

"You know why we want it?"

"'We'?" I repeated. "Are you also a conspirator — pardon me, a patriot — then?"

"I am a De Jiminez," he returned proudly. "After my father I am entitled to rule over Colombia."

"To rule? That savors of monarchy. I thought Colombia is a republic."

"You are quite right. It *is* a republic — as Mexico is; as Venezuela and Costa Rica are. But the president has great power. Is not Diaz equal to a king?"

"I am not very well posted on South American or Mexican politics," I replied evasively. "But from what your father said I imagine there is already a president in Colombia."

He gave a frown at this, amusingly like his father's frown. Then his face cleared and he said; "Permit me to explain. The family of De Jiminez has controlled Colombian politics ever since my great ancestor discovered the country and called it New Grenada. But a few years ago, while my father was traveling in Europe, the opposition obtained control and still has the presidency. The important and wealthy class, however, resented the usurpation, and even before my father, alarmed at the situation, hurried back

home, a revolution had begun. I say a revolution, because the opposition had firmly established themselves. We are really attempting a restoration of the rightful party to its former power."

"In our own republic," I said thoughtfully, "the votes of the majority rule. Why do you not resort to the ballot instead of to arms?"

"I have visited your country," he said. "The conditions there are different. In Colombia we have a small class of wealthy and influential people and a horde of vulgar laborers who are little more than slaves. They have small intelligence, no education, and work for a bare living. My father tried to establish a school system that would enable them to rise above such conditions. They would not send their children to the schools. Then he tried to force them by law — compulsory education you know, copied from your own and other countries — but they rebelled at this and the opposition made capital out of their resentment. The result was the overthrow of the De Jiminez party as I have stated."

This seemed to put a new aspect on the revolution. I began to approve the action of the De Jiminez party and to sympathize with their "cause."

"Has your father many followers in Colombia?" I asked.

"The intelligent class is of course with him; small in numbers but controlling the wealth of the country. We ourselves are coffee planters and bankers, and we employ several hundred laborers who will do whatever we may direct — and do it willingly. Many of the families in sympathy with us can also control their servants; but we have found great difficulty in securing arms and ammunition for them. We have organized and drilled several regiments — I have drilled our own men myself — but they cannot fight without weapons. That is why we are so eager to ship our cargo of arms to Colombia."

The elder De Jiminez had returned in time to hear the conclusion of this speech, and he nodded approval. It seemed to me that the little fellow really talked remarkably well. He spoke better English than his father and expressed himself in well chosen language. It at once occurred to me why Joe and I had been invited here. The young De Jiminez was a rabid partisan of "the Cause" and his clever father imagined that an enthusiastic boy would be more apt to impress boys of his own age than his senior might impress men. The thought put me somewhat on my guard and made me inquire into things more carefully.

"Australia seems a queer place to obtain a cargo of arms," I remarked. "There are no factories here I believe."

"No," said our host, "the arms I purchased came from England consigned to a local firm. We could not purchase direct for it would result in

international complications; but we have many friends here in Australia. It is a favorite resort for exiles from my country, and that is why I arranged the purchase here. But come; dinner is served and I hope you have good appetites."

He gave his arm to his old mother, who was remarkably active for her years, and led the way to a connecting room where the dinner was served. It was a fine spread, and Joe and I did full justice to the many courses.

Afterward we returned to the drawing-room, where the old lady read a Spanish periodical while we chatted in English concerning Colombian affairs and the revolution.

I learned that the De Jiminez family was considered among the wealthiest of the republic. Our host conducted an important banking business in Bogota and had extensive coffee plantations in the foothills. He was not directly known as the leader of the revolutionists, but would be chosen the new president by the insurgents if they succeeded in overturning the present government. Yet De Jiminez was scarcely safe in his own country just at present and intended to land in a secret cove on the coast and transport his cargo of arms inland to one of the rendezvous of the revolutionists.

Young Alfonso was as ardent a partisan as his father. He was tremendously ambitious and it seemed his father encouraged this, telling his son many times that the future of his country would some day be dependent upon the boy's ability and courage and that he must uphold the honorable name of De Jiminez.

Their assumed importance was of course amusing to me, who looked upon their seven by nine country with tolerant disdain; but to them Colombia and the revolution were the most tremendous things in the world. And, after all they were simple, kindly people, honestly inclined and desirous of improving the conditions in their native land if this "tempest in a teapot" resulted in their favor. I had already decided that we would be justified in concluding the deal with Senor de Jiminez when a diversion was created by the arrival of visitors.

The servant ushered two ladies into the room. One was a beautiful woman of middle age and the other a tall, slim girl who was evidently her daughter. Both were exquisitely dressed and impressed me as persons of importance even before I noticed the extreme courtesy with which our host greeted them.

Introductions followed. The elder lady was Senora de Alcantara of Bogota, and the younger her daughter Lucia. At once Madam inquired in an eager tone:

"Well, De Jiminez, have you succeeded in getting a ship?"

"I think so," he replied, glancing at me a bit doubtfully. "The only thing

still to be settled is the matter of terms. I have not much money left to satisfy the owners, who have no confidence in their being able to collect when we arrive at Colombia. But I hope it can yet be arranged in a satisfactory manner."

"I also hope so," she returned, "for I am anxious to travel home in your company."

"You!" he exclaimed in unfeigned astonishment.

"Yes. I have just received letters of absolute pardon from the government. I am free to return to my home in Bogota whenever I please."

"You surprise me, Senora," he said, evidently disturbed by the news. Then he took the lady aside, and while they were conversing privately Alfonso said to us:

"De Alcantara, her husband, was the first leader of the revolution, and was killed in battle two years ago. His wife and daughter fled to Australia and their estates were confiscated. This is indeed surprising news; but I think the government wishes to placate the wealthy classes by this lenient action."

Senor de Jiminez returned to our group smiling and content. I overheard Madam de Alcantara say in Spanish to Madam de Jiminez, "Never, under any circumstances, will I abandon the Cause. I shall return to my estates, because here I am an exile and dependent upon our friends for maintenance. There I may intrigue to advance the revolution, although I am warned against mixing in politics if I accept the government's amnesty."

"The Cause is sacred to us all," was the calm reply.

Lucia de Alcantara was at once monopolized by Alfonso, who deserted us to pay the young girl marked attention. She did not appear to resent this; neither did she respond with much enthusiasm. She was really a beautiful girl, not more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, and her slender, willowy form towered so far above the undersized Alfonso that I remarked to Joe, aside: "That certainly is the long and short of it old man, isn't it?"

"I suppose there will be accommodations in the *Seagull* for the ladies?" inquired Senor de Jiminez.

"Yes," said I; "they might be made fairly comfortable."

He said no more then, but presently sat down to a quiet game of bezique with Madam de Alcantara, leaving Alfonso to entertain us as well as Lucia. We found that the girl spoke English, and she became so interested in our accounts of the United States that she fairly ignored the youthful Colombian to question us about our country, our ship, and the chances of our sailing together across the South Seas.

It was quite late when they left, Alfonso and his father both escorting their guests to the carriage, and on their return Joe and I pleaded fatigue and

retired to our rooms.

“Well, Joe,” I said, when we were alone, “what do you think now?”

“Mighty pretty girl,” he returned musingly.

“But about the business deal?”

“Oh, that,” he responded, waking up. “I’m in favor of it, taking it all around. We get well paid and run no especial chances except when we land the goods. We’ve done harder things than that, Sam, for less money; so it needn’t bother us much. You see the Alcantaras can have the for’ard cabin and — ”

“Bother the Alcantaras!” I exclaimed impatiently. “You’re usually opposed to passengers, Joe.”

“I know; but they’re anxious to get home and Lucia said — ”

“‘Lucia!’”

“Isn’t that her name?” he demanded.

“I believe it is.”

“She’s a clever sort of a girl. Usually, Sam, girls are dubs; but this Spanish creature has lots of ‘go’ to her and won’t make bad company on the voyage.”

I let him alone, then, and went to bed. Joe Herring was a silent fellow at ordinary times, but if I had let him ramble on about this girl I am sure he’d have kept me awake half the night. It didn’t strike me there was anything remarkable about her either.

CHAPTER 4

NUX AND BRYONIA

Our report seemed to satisfy my uncle and my father when we returned to the Radley Arms at ten o'clock the next morning. At twelve Senor de Jiminez appeared in his checked vest and diamonds and signed the contract, paying us nine thousand dollars in gold and giving us a draft on his own bank in Bogota for six thousand. We also secured papers granting us the right to repurchase the *Seagull* by returning the notes we accepted for the sale price, which notes we believed not worth the paper they were written on. Then, all business details being completed and the ship formally turned over to its new owner, the early afternoon saw us all aboard the *Seagull* engaged in stowing the cases of arms and ammunition which had already begun to arrive. De Jiminez did not intend to waste any time, that was certain, and one dray after another brought our freight to the lighter, which transferred it to the ship.

The boxes were of all sizes and shapes, being labeled in big black letters "Machinery." They were consigned to the coffee plantation of De Jiminez. There were a lot of them and they were tremendously heavy things; but we stowed them in the hold as rapidly as they arrived and two days sufficed to get the entire cargo aboard.

On the evening of the second day our passengers boarded us. There were five of them including the elder De Jiminez, his mother and son, and Madam de Alcantara and her daughter. They were accompanied by trunks and bandboxes galore; enough to make my father grunt disdainfully and Uncle Naboth look glum. I think none of us — except perhaps our erratic second mate, Joe — was greatly delighted at the prospect of female passengers on a long voyage; but we had made our bargain and must abide by it.

De Jiminez had bustled around all day getting the ship's papers in shape and preparing for the voyage, while young Alfonso, whom Uncle Naboth had promptly dubbed "Little Jim," attended to the loading of the boxes with the coolness and care of a veteran. They couldn't wait a moment after the last case of arms was aboard. Bill Brace, the engineer, had steam up long ahead of time; so at dusk we hoisted anchor and slowly steamed out of Port Phillip into the calm blue waters of the South Pacific. If any government spies watched De Jiminez depart he was indifferent to them, and they were now powerless to interfere with his plans.

The comfort of our passengers depended wholly upon two men of our crew whom I have not yet had the opportunity of introducing to you. Our own personal comfort had depended upon them for years, so I am justified in making the above statement. They were gigantic blacks; not negroes of the

African type, but straight-haired ebony fellows who were natives of some island in these very seas where we were now sailing. Their names were Nux and Bryonia, and one was our steward and the other our cook — fairly entitled, indeed, to be called our "chef."

Concerning these curious names there is a serio-comic story which I will briefly relate.

A number of years ago, while Uncle Naboth Perkins was sailing an old tub he and my father jointly owned on a voyage from New Zealand to San Francisco, he encountered somewhere in the South Seas a native canoe drifting upon the waves. It seemed at first to be vacant, but as it passed close to the lee of the slow-going sailing vessel the seamen noticed something lying flat in the bottom of the dugout. They threw a grappling hook and drew the little boat alongside, when they discovered two black men lying bound hand and foot and senseless from lack of food and water. How many days they had drifted about in that condition no one could tell, least of all the poor victims. Being hoisted aboard the bodies were laid side by side upon the deck and Uncle Naboth, who was the only excuse for a physician there was aboard, examined them and found that both were still alive. But the condition of the poor fellows was exceedingly precarious. Had they not possessed such stalwart frames and splendid constitutions they would have been dead long before.

So Uncle Naboth brought out the ship's medicine chest and found it rather shy of restoratives. Aside from calomel and quinine, neither of which seemed appropriate for the case, the only remedies the chest contained were two bottles of homeopathic pills — one of nux vomica and the other of bryonia.

My uncle pondered a time between these unknown medicines and decided to give one black the nux and the other the bryonia, hoping thus to save at least one of the disabled castaways. So a course of treatment began. Both were liberally fed brandy and water and one was given six pills of nux vomica and the other six pills of bryonia, the doses being administered every hour. Mr. Perkins became intensely interested in the results, and that no mistake might be made he labeled one black boy "Nux" and the other "Bryonia."

"Nux" regained consciousness first, and while the amateur physician was regretting that he had not fed them both the same dope "Bryonia" opened his eyes to the world again.

I have always suspected the brandy and water really did the job, but Uncle Naboth was so proud of his medical skill that he will never admit that possibility.

"It's a doctor's duty to guess," he has said more than once referring to this

occasion, "an' I managed to guess right because I only had two medicines an' both of 'em was recommended to kill or cure. The doggone little sugar pills must' a' had extract o' magic in 'em; that's what I think."

Anyhow, Nux and Bryonia got well and regained their strength, and more grateful fellows never lived. Neither could understand a word of English, while their own language was a puzzle to all the crew; but they were quick to observe and ready to undertake any work that lay at hand.

Not knowing where to drop the castaways, nor wishing to delay the voyage because of two black men, my uncle decided to carry them along with him, and their intelligence and devotion so won him that before the voyage ended he prized Nux and Bryonia more than all the rest of the crew put together. They gradually picked up a word of English here and there until they were able to make themselves understood, and in time they learned to speak it fluently. But they had never a word to say of their experiences or past life and we really knew little about their antecedents.

The following year we had another ship in which I sailed my first voyage with Uncle Naboth, and Nux and Bryonia watched over me so faithfully — saving my life on one important occasion — that I learned to regard them both very highly and a friendship was formed between us that time has only strengthened. So of course when we built our fine new ship the *Seagull,* Nux and Bry became fixtures in it as much as we were ourselves, and I must admit that no owners ever had more faithful or capable servants.

Bryonia was the taller of the two, although both were stalwart fellows, and perhaps he was a bit more shrewd and active than Nux. He became our cook, learning the art with amazing rapidity, and I am positive that no ship's cook ever lived who was his superior. Nux, a jolly good-natured fellow who was strong as an ox, was our steward and cared for the after cabin perfectly. They did other tasks when occasion required, and the two have accompanied me in more than one hair-raising adventure, proving themselves plucky, intelligent and true to the bone. Somehow we had all come to depend greatly upon our black South Sea Islanders, and they in turn were very fond of us — especially of Uncle Naboth and myself.

It so happened that this was the first voyage since they were picked up that had taken us to the South Seas. We had been to Alaska, to Panama, to Egypt, China and Yucatan, but the fortune of commerce now led us for the first time into the South Pacific. When first we headed for Australia I had said to them; "Well, boys, you're going somewhere near your native land on this voyage."

They exchanged a quick glance, but said nothing in reply. They seemed neither overjoyed nor sorry, but accepted this journey with the same calm

philosophy they had the others. In mentioning the incident to Uncle Naboth he said:

"I don't see why our going through the South Seas should make any difference to them. Why, Sam, the South Pacific has a million little islands in it, none of which amounts to a row of pins. Nux and Bry were natives of one of these dinky islands an' I guess they had a hard, wild life of it judging from the condition they was in when I found 'em. My pickin"em up was great luck for the pair an' no mistake. They're civilized Injuns, now, an' their life on shipboard is luxury compared to what they used to have. Besides we've treated 'em well an' they've grown fond of us; I doubt if we landed plump on their native island they'd ever leave the ship an' go back to their old life."

"I should hope not!" I exclaimed. "How old do you think they are, Uncle Naboth? Whenever I ask them they shake their heads and say they do not know."

"Perhaps they don't; many of the savage races never keep track of their age; they think it's bad luck to count the years. But I should judge these fellows are about twenty-five years old. Nux may be a little older, but not much."

Perhaps it was natural that these native islanders should be a source of much curiosity to Alfonso de Jiminez and Lucia de Alcantara. They were accustomed to seeing dark-skinned races, and in Australia one meets Borneans, Samoans, the East India and native Malay tribes, Philippinos, Japs and Chinese; but such handsome and dignified blacks as Nux and Bryonia were different, indeed, and I have often thought the desert Moors the nearest approach to them of any people I have ever seen.

Our islanders wore neat uniforms of gray and gold, which rendered their appearance the more striking. They would never accept money for their service, saying they owed their lives and happiness to us and could never repay us. Moreover they declared they had no use for money. But they delighted in their uniforms, so we kept them well supplied and they wore them at all times.

The addition of five passengers to our complement did not phase Bry in the least. On the contrary it gave him a chance to cook some of the delicious dishes for which he was famous among ourselves, and so to extend his reputation. Nux had more extra work than his comrade, looking after the cabins and serving the meals; but he had a great capacity for work and made no complaint whatever.

Captain Steele had been a mariner all his life and was no stranger to the South Seas; but this course from Melbourne to the coast of Colombia, while not unknown to the charts, was strange to him and he had to put in a lot of

study before he got his lines properly marked and knew exactly where to travel.

"Ye see, Sam," he said to me one evening as I sat in his cabin watching him figure, "it would be all plain sailin' if it warn't fer them measley little islands — hundreds of 'em the chart shows, an' there's indycations of hundreds more that ain't been located. If we get a hair's breadth off our course we'll have to do a good bit of dodgin'. The spots on the chart marked islands means a lot of rocks in plain English, an' rocks won't do the *Seagull* any good if we happen to bump agin 'em."

"Isn't there a way to avoid most of the islands?" I asked.

"Not that anyone knows of. The South Seas is spotted with 'em most everywheres an' it's better to keep in your reg'lar course, where you know your soundin's, than to try findin' a clearer track over to Colombia."

"Let's see," I said, tracing the chart with my finger; "our course lies directly through the Low Archipelago. What a lot of islands there are! But there seems to be plenty of room between them."

"Certainly," agreed my father. "Give us weather like this an' we'll dodge every rock in our way."

I understood what he meant. The weather is treacherous in these seas near the equator, and it would be bad for us to encounter a storm among the rocky shoals of the islands. Just now the weather was magnificent and the sea as smooth as glass. Our engines were in fine working order and we made sufficient speed to satisfy even the restless new "owner," Senor de Jiminez.

A piano was in the main cabin and Lucia played and sang very agreeably. Her songs were mostly those dreamy Spanish things with melody enough to haunt you long afterward, and Joe especially listened with eagerness to every note, although "Little Jim" was always on hand to turn the music. Joe couldn't do that, not being able to read a note and he was often on duty besides; but Lucia knew he appreciated her music and whether our boy mate was in the cabin or tramping the deck overhead she played to please him more than she did Alfonso.

Now that all the hurly-burly of stowing the cargo and getting under way was over, our passengers settled down to enjoy the voyage, and it was then that the peculiar traits in their various characters became noticeable. I admit that we are all peculiar in one way or another, as some clever student of human nature has observed and recorded before my time. Perhaps, therefore, our new acquaintances were no more odd in their ways than the ordinary run of humanity.

Madam de Jiminez was as placid and contented as the day was long. She required little amusement and was no bother at all. Madam de Alcantara, on

the contrary, proved fussy and exacting. She led poor Nux a dog's life, waiting on her whims, and her daughter had no easy time of it either. Lucia was very dutiful and obedient and ran at once when summoned by her mother which was every fifteen minutes on a fair average. Yet the Senora was quite gracious to all about her and never lost her temper or said unkind things. Being as beautiful as she was gracious we had not the heart to blame her. I believe her fussiness was a nervous affliction and that the lady really had a kindly nature. Lucia was devoted to her and tenderly loved her.

This girl, the third of our female passengers, was always bright and cheery and the life of the party. She accepted Alfonso's marked attentions with absolute indifference. Being accustomed to them she evidently considered them characteristic of the boy and to be borne with patience while in his society. Joe pleased her better; but she was not the least bit a flirt and had no thought as yet of falling in love with anyone. Her feeling for Joe was one of good comradeship.

Little Jim would have been a very decent fellow could he have modified his airs of importance and curbed his excessive vanity. He was really a bright, clever boy, and the son of a man somewhat distinguished in his own country. But the youth's patronizing manner was intolerable, and one evening when he had joined Joe and me and we were leaning over the rail together I was obliged to "call him down" in no gentle manner.

"I don't mind associating with you here where there is no formality, you know," he said; "but if you ever come to Bogota you must not expect me to be quite so free with you."

"If ever we come to Bogota," I remarked, "we are liable to find you in jail or in hiding among the mountains. These petty South American revolutions take queer turns sometimes and are liable to become dangerous."

"Petty!" he exclaimed. "Petty revolutions!"

"That is certainly what they are," I returned. "Your country is so small and insignificant that we seldom hear of it in the big world; and your revolution is so absurdly unimportant that we never hear of it at all."

"But you will!" he cried. "When we have won and my father is made president the world will ring with our victory."

"Nonsense," said I. "The newspapers in the United States will give it about an inch of space, and the people who read that inch will wonder where on earth Colombia is."

He seemed nettled at this, and a little crestfallen.

"That inch of publicity," I continued, "you will perhaps get in case you win. But if you lose you remain unnoticed. There are lots of Central and South American republics, and plenty of revolutions in them at all times. To

be frank with you, Alfonso, the people of more important nations are weary of reading about them."

He hardly knew what to reply, but his humiliation was of short duration. After strutting up and down the deck a few turns he rejoined us and said:

"You may sneer at Colombia — and at her great revolution — but you cannot sneer at the family of De Jiminez. We are very ancient."

"You are, indeed," I assented. "You have had a great many ancestors; but they are mostly dead, are they not?"

"How far back can you trace *your* descent?" he asked.

"As far as my father. Those before him we've lost track of. They are also dead, and therefore of no importance to us just now."

"The family of De Jiminez," he stated proudly, "is very wealthy."

"Why mention so common a thing?" I responded. "There are thousands of big fortunes in the world. Joe Herring, who stands there beside you and is our second mate, is a millionaire; yet he lacks distinction on that account because there happen to be so many other millionaires in the world."

He turned and stared at Joe by the light of the swinging lantern.

"You a millionaire!" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps a little better than that," admitted Joe, quietly. "I'm a seaman and pretty nearly a man."

"But you have money — a million?"

"My agent says it's getting to be nearly twice that; it grows so tremendously while I'm away."

"Then why do you sail in a ship as second mate?"

"Mainly because I love the life, and secondly because I love Sam, here," returned Joe gravely. "The adventure and companionship give me more pleasure than to pose in a big city as a rich young kid. As a matter of fact the money is a nuisance to me."

"Why don't you buy a ship of your own and hire Sam to sail with you?" asked Little Jim.

"Hire Sam! Why Sam is worth more of that dreadful money than I am. I'm sure he could buy the De Jiminez estates with the bank thrown in and still be rich."

The statement dazed Alfonso.

"Is it true? Is it possible?" he asked. "Or are you joking?"

"It is true," said Joe. "The surprising thing is that you have not heard of the *Seagull* and its adventures before this. The ship has made several fortunes for its owners, and in the United States and Europe it is famous. But I suppose that in as much as we hear little of Colombians they hear little of us."

Alfonso did not try to patronize us so extensively after this conversation, but he patronized others and I was sorry he could not remedy so great a defect in his character. His father was just as important in his way, but not so officious. A passion for display in dress and jewelry possessed the elder De Jiminez and he spent most of his spare time in changing his clothes, appearing before us in a succession of dazzling costumes that fairly made us gasp for breath. He had other jewels beside the diamonds. Sometimes he wore rubies, and sometimes emeralds; but he was never as proud as when sporting his glittering assortment of diamonds. I think he imagined their sparkle rendered him personally admirable and the envy of all beholders, and the poor man never knew we callous Americans were laughing at him.

Senor de Jiminez was very happy to have succeeded at last in accomplishing his great mission. The arms and munitions of war had been secured with great difficulty and after many disappointments. Best of all, a ship had been chartered to carry the stores to Colombia. With such reinforcements the languishing revolution would receive new impetus — sufficient, he fondly hoped, to render it successful.

CHAPTER 5

A SOUTH PACIFIC TYPHOON

Our fine weather held for five days. Then, just as we were approaching the dangerous district Captain Steele had spoken of to me, the sky lowered, a stiff breeze came out of the northwest and the waves began to pile up as only the waves of the South Pacific can.

By night it was blowing a gale; but our passengers, with the exception of Lucia and Alfonso, had taken to their berths long before this. The *Seagull* behaves beautifully in a storm. An ordinary gale does not disturb her coolness in the least. She merely tosses her head, takes the bit in her teeth, so to speak, and prances a trifle instead of gliding.

But this was no ordinary storm. We who had experienced all sorts of weather in our voyages were soon forced to admit that fact. The wind veered every hour or so; it blew steadily for a time and then came in gusts — ”pushes,” Uncle Naboth called them — that were exceedingly trying to both the ship and crew. We would no sooner find our sea legs on one slant of the deck when over she flopped and we had to seek a new angle to cling to. The waves were tremendous and the wind seized their curling edges and scattered them in foamy spray over the ship. The sky became black as ink; the gale roared and shrieked with maddening intensity; yet we bore it all stolidly enough for a time, confident of the staunchness of our bark and the skill of her captain.

My father had put on his pea-jacket and helmet at the beginning of the storm and kept his station on deck sturdily. He assured us he knew exactly where we were and that we had a clear sea ahead of us; but when the *Seagull* began to swerve here and there, driven by the irresistible power of the gale, even he became bewildered and uncertain of his bearings.

All that night the ship fought bravely. It kept up the fight throughout the long succeeding day. Perhaps it was because all hands were weary that the ship seemed to head into the storm of the second night with less than her usual energy and spirit.

Drenched to the skin I crept along the deck to where my father stood. I am no seaman and have no business on deck at such a time, but I will own that for the first time in my experience at sea I had become nervous, and I wanted the captain to reassure me.

I found him near the bow, clinging to the rail and trying to peer into the night. He was dripping with spray and had to wipe his eyes every few moments to enable him to see at all.

“How’s everything, father?” I asked, my mouth to his ear.

He shook his head.

"All right if we don't bump something," he managed to say when a brief lull came. "We've veered an' sliced an' slipped around so much that I don't just know where we're at; 'cept we're way off our course."

That was bad; very bad. We hadn't sighted an island since the storm began, but that was no evidence we were not near a group of them. There was a fairly good searchlight aboard the ship, and it was now being worked every minute from the lookout; but it couldn't do more on a night like this than warn us of any near by danger.

"Go back!" roared my father in my ear. "Go to bed an' save your strength. You may need it afore long."

That was the most fearful speech I ever heard him utter. Nothing had ever disturbed his supreme confidence before. I crept away heartsick and awed, and managed to get safely below, where I found Uncle Naboth smoking his pipe in the main cabin.

"Where yer been, Sam?" he inquired.

"Talking to father."

"What does he say?"

"We've lost our bearings and the sea is full of islands. The ship is all right, you know. It's only the water that's dangerous."

He gave a grunt and looked thoughtful.

"I've seen gales, 'n' gales," he remarked presently. "Usually they're respectable critters an' you know what to expect of 'em. But this sort of a jugglin' wind beats all figgerin'. Fer me, Sam, I fall back on our luck. It's stayed by us so far, an' I don't see no reason fer it to change front. Eh?"

"I agree with you, Uncle," I replied, and was about to add another optimistic remark when in rushed — or tumbled, rather — Senor de Jiminez, his face white and his teeth chattering. He had shed his gorgeous raiment and was attired merely in a dark brown bath robe.

"Tell me," he said, steadying himself by the table as the ship lurched to leeward, "is there — can there be — any danger?"

"Danger of what?" I asked, not knowing just how to reply to him.

"To the cargo — to the arms!" he gasped in choking tones. Then I saw he was not frightened about the safety of the people, or even the ship, but was exercised solely on account of those precious arms.

"Why, if we go down, the cargo goes with us," I returned, smiling in spite of the gravity of the situation. "But I imagine we'll all float long enough to — "

The *Seagull* lurched the other way as a great wave caught her, and while we clung to the furniture for support there came a sharp crack and the ship

staggered and keeled well over.

She lay there a long time, trembling slightly. I could hear the waves dash against her with the force of a trip hammer. The door of the stateroom opposite flew open and Madam de Alcantara came rolling into the cabin and landed at my feet. I managed to seize her and drag her to a chair beside me; but she clung round my neck sobbing and crying out: “What is it? Oh, what is it? Are we sinking? Is all lost?” This in Spanish was quite impressive.

“Be calm, Madam,” I replied, noticing that she was robed in a charming dressing gown and had not been injured by her dash across the cabin floor. “There’s nothing serious the matter, you may be sure.”

I was not really confident of this. Never had I known the *Seagull* to behave in such a manner before. She rolled terribly, and the waves were dealing her sides thundering blows, one after another.

Uncle Naboth was endeavoring to gain the door to get on deck when Joe came in, water running from his slicker in floods and his face covered with grease and grime.

“What’s up, old man?” I demanded.

“Screw snapped and tore away the rudder,” said Joe. “I was in the engine-room when it happened. It sent the wheels whirling, I can tell you, before we could shut down.”

“Then we’re now drifting?”

He nodded.

“If there was any chance at all we could ship a new rudder. That would serve to keep us straight, anyhow, and we could use the sails as soon as the wind moderates. But the gale’s as crazy as a bedbug, and I can’t see that anything can be done just now.”

“Nothing but wait,” said I. “Where’s father?”

“Trying to lash a rudder to the stem; but it’s hopeless.”

“And Ned?”

“Ned’s with him, of course. I wanted to help but they ordered me below.”

By this time all of our passengers had gathered in the cabin listening to Joe’s dismal report. Nux was there, too, tying Madam de Jiminez fast in a big chair so she would not fall out and then tendering his services wherever they were needed.

For a wonder the ship became a bit steadier now that she was absolutely helpless. She got into the trough of the sea where the wind did not buffet her so badly, and although the waves washed over her constantly she was so tight and staunch that she shed the water like a duck. I do not remember ever to have passed a more uneasy hour than the one that followed the cracking of the screw and the loss of our rudder. Had it not been for the women it is

likely I would have regarded our predicament in the light of an adventure, and been excited and elated over the danger. But the presence of our female passengers altered the case entirely and rendered it far more serious.

We were a glum lot, if I may except Uncle Naboth, who still strove to smoke his pipe and remain philosophic. Alfonso was calm and endeavored to comfort his father by saying that as long as we floated the arms were safe. Lucia devoted herself to her mother with a coolness that was admirable, and Madam de Jiminez was as quiet and contented as ever, not making any sort of a fuss and proving her courage in a way that quite won us all. I do not know just what hysterics are; but if they're a sort of a wild fit that induces one to run amuck, then Madam de Alcantara had them — and had them badly. She screeched and kicked and howled and wailed that she was too young to die; although for that matter she hadn't the advantage of many of us, and I don't see that youth has any special show in a South Sea gale, anyhow.

At the end of an hour my father came stumping in on his wooden leg, looking haggard and weary.

"Brandy, Sam!" he said, tumbling into a chair.

I brought him the bottle and a glass and he took a good swig.

"Bry can't make coffee. The galley's washed out," continued the captain. And then he drew his hand across his forehead with a gesture that I well knew, and that always betokened perturbation of an unusual sort.

"Did you fail to ship the rudder?" I asked.

"'Tain't that, Sam. There wasn't much chance, anyhow. But Billy Burke an' Dick Leavenworth is washed away — gone — done for!"

My heart gave a thump of dismay. Two of our finest seamen lost; fellows I had earnestly respected and admired. It was the first fatality our crew had ever experienced, so no wonder my father was broken-hearted over it. I remembered that Leavenworth had a family, and the thought made me shudder.

"The ship will the storm stand, and be all good — will it not?" asked De Jiminez, by this time thoroughly unstrung and despairing. There was something almost pitiful in the question — hoping against hope — and of course Captain Steele lied to reassure him.

"The *Seagull's* all right," he asserted. "She'll stand a much worse knockin' around than this, an' be none the worse for it. You'd better all go to bed an' try to sleep. If only we had a clear sea I'd turn in myself."

"But it is said we are drifting, Captain! A propeller we have not; a rudder we have not! We have no defense against the sea — we are impotent — helpless!" wailed De Jiminez.

“Why, yes; that’s a fact,” admitted the captain. “We’re jest like a chip, floatin’ whichever way the wind blows. But you never heard of a chip sinkin’, did you?”

“N — no,” was the doubting reply.

“What do you mean by saying there’s not a clear sea?” asked young Alfonso.

“Study yer jogerfy,” said my father gruffly. “You’ll find the South Seas specked with islands everywheres. I don’t jest know where we are at this minute, but I’ll gamble there’s islands not far away.”

“Oh. Then if the ship happens to break up we can easily get to land, and perhaps save the cargo,” remarked Little Jim complacently.

My father stared at him, muttered some inaudible remark and rose to return to the deck.

“Must you go?” I asked.

“It’s my place, Sam,” said he.

“But you’ll be careful?” I never said such a thing to him before, but I had poor Dick and Billy Burke in my mind — cautious fellows, both of them — and my father had a wooden leg.

“I’ll lash myself to the riggin’ when I get to it,” he returned, and disappeared up the companionway.

We sat in dismal silence for a time. The wind seemed to be abating, but the waves continued their mad rolling as vigorously as ever. Finally Madam de Jiminez expressed a wish to return to her stateroom. Nux understood Spanish, for our blacks were marvels at acquiring languages and could speak half a dozen tongues; so the steward assisted the old lady to her berth and made her as comfortable as possible. After a long argument Lucia prevailed upon her mother to go to bed, and the moaning, despairing woman was led to her room. Perhaps inspired by this example Uncle Naboth decided to “turn in,” but the two De Jiminez stuck it out and remained all night in the cabin, deploring their hard luck in choicest Spanish. As much to escape their moody companionship as anything else I went to my own room and lay down upon the bunk without removing my clothing. It was then about three o’clock, and although the motion of the vessel had greatly moderated I found it no easy task to stay in my berth. Being at the mercy of the waves the *Seagull* performed some queer antics, and once or twice I wondered if she wouldn’t “turn turtle,” so far over did the waves keel her. But, queerly enough, we get used to anything in time, and as I was much exhausted 1 finally fell into a doze, and then into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER 6

A FREAKISH SHIPWRECK

Joe wakened me at early dawn, laying a wet, clammy hand in mine and jerking me to a sitting position.

"Get up, Sam!" he said. "Something's going to happen pretty quick."

"Are we leaking?" I asked as I tumbled from the berth.

"Yes; but that isn't it. Come on deck; and step lively while you've got the chance."

He rushed away with the words and I followed him closely.

The sky was gray and overcast, and although it was so early there was light enough to observe distinctly our surroundings. The waves were simply gigantic and the disabled *Seagull* was like a fisherman's bob in their grasp. The cargo had not shifted, fortunately, owing to its being so heavy and so carefully stowed, so we kept on our keel as well as the sea would allow us. I found nothing terrifying in the view from the deck until my eye caught sight of a dark object looming ahead, which I instantly recognized as the rocky shore of an island. The waves were bearing us rapidly toward it, and we were helpless to resist.

"See there! and there!" cried Joe, pointing to right and left.

I saw. Rocks were everywhere, on all sides of us. We were right in the heart of a group of South Sea islands — what group, we had no idea. My father's stem, set face showed from the poop; the sailors stood motionless at the rail. The two De Jiminez, father and son, clung together and stared with blanched faces at the threatening coast.

There was scarcely any wind, as we were partially sheltered in this location. A wind might possibly have saved us; but as it was, and in our crippled condition, there was absolutely no hope.

Uncle Naboth stumbled toward us and said to Joe:

"Call the passengers. Get 'em all on deck an' see that there are plenty of life preservers. Ned's getting the boats ready to launch."

I went with Joe, for there was nothing I could do on deck. Madam de Alcantara began to scream again, but she was not slow in grabbing her jewels and gaining the deck, where she collapsed at once and sobbed like a baby. We got the old lady up easily, and she was as cheerful as anyone could be under such trying circumstances. I had Lucia search for all the cloaks and warm clothing she could lay hands on and Joe and I brought up a lot of blankets; for the air was chilly, even in this tropical clime, and I knew we would all be soaked if we managed to get ashore in the boats.

Bryonia provided a lot of food for us — tinned meats, biscuits and various

edibles that might be eaten uncooked — and had the forethought to add some utensils for cooking, as well. A keg of fresh water was deposited in each of the boats. By this time the grim island ahead was very near, and Captain Steele shouted his orders to have the boats lowered.

We put the women into the first, while it still swung at the davits, and Ned Britton, cool as a cucumber, picked a crew to man it. He watched his chance and dropped the longboat neatly on the crest of a high wave, casting loose as the ship rolled heavily in the opposite direction. A little cheer arose from our men as they saw Ned's boat floating safely, and at once Joe began loading the gig. The two De Jiminez and Uncle Naboth were with this lot; but Joe was not so fortunate as Ned had been. He dropped the boat all right into the gulf between two big waves, but a line got tangled, somehow, and in a jiffy the gig was over and her occupants struggling frantically in the water. The boatswain dropped the third boat quick as a flash, got free from the ship and began picking up the swimmers. Ned also came to the rescue, at the peril of capsizing his own frail craft, and he drew Little Jim aboard as the boy was sinking for the third time. His father was hauled in by a boat hook wielded by the sturdy boatswain, and fortunately Uncle Naboth was spilled so close to the side that he was able to seize a rope and hold fast until rescued. Not a life was lost and the third boat, the cutter, carried its double load easily.

There remained to us but one more boat to launch, and I went to my father and said:

"Come, sir; there's nothing to be gained by waiting."

He shook his head.

"Get aboard, Sam," said he, "and take all the men that's left with you. I'm goin' to stay here."

"But that is folly!" I cried. "It's a useless sacrifice, father. You can't help the poor *Seagull* by staying."

"It's my ship — part o' her, anyhow — an' I'll stay by her like she's always stayed by me," he returned obstinately.

I was in despair and for a moment knew not what to do. Turning half around I found the two big blacks, Nux and Bryonia, standing just behind me. The remaining sailors were already in the boat, looking anxiously towards us.

I caught Bry's eye and there was an inquiring look in it that could not be misunderstood.

"Take him, boys!" I exclaimed, and at the word the two promptly caught my father up and bore him kicking and struggling to the boat, where they dumped him on the bottom and then sat upon him.

The lines were quickly cast off and we floated squarely upon the brow of a

wave. The men at the oars pulled lustily and we increased our distance from the ship with steady strokes. They then lay to, merely trying to keep a balance as we slid down the side on one wave and up the slope of another.

I had my eyes fastened on the *Seagull,* and presently a huge mountain of water came sweeping along, caught her full on its crest and rushed with her upon the rocks of the island, now very near to us.

The ship went ashore stem foremost, upright as a die and riding the top of the great wave like a swan. It tucked her into a cove between two elevated points of rock and then receded and left her perched there. There was no crash of splintering timbers — no sound at all. The foremast swayed, cracked off and tumbled over the side; but the other masts stood firmly and it seemed to our wondering eyes as if some monster had grabbed the ship from the sea and set it high on the rocks to dry. Our oarsmen had plenty to do just then to keep us from swamping, for although we were not directly in the track of the monster wave we were near enough to feel a portion of its resistless power and we were nearly sucked in upon the reefs ourselves. But I shouted as frantically as a madman, and from the other boats, which were at the right of us, arose a hearty cheer that made our seamen pause long enough to stare over their shoulders at the marvelous sight. Then they cheered too, for we all loved the dear old *Seagull.*

Instead of a wreck — the fatal smash-up that had seemed imminent and was expected by all — the good ship was suddenly rendered safe from further harm, for no other wave that followed was powerful enough to dislodge her.

Nux and Bryonia allowed the captain to sit up to view the wonderful sight, and my father stared until his eyes bulged from their sockets. He said nothing, however, but turned his attention to our personal dilemma, for there was no surety that we could manage to gain the shore alive. A forbidding line of rocky reefs faced us and should we attempt to land among them our frail boats would be instantly dashed to pieces. Bryonia, who had stood up to look at the ship when he released my father, remained for some time upright, shading his eyes with his hand and peering attentively at the coast. Presently he gave a grunt and muttered something to Nux in their native language. I caught the words, for long ago they had taught me, merely as a pastime, their peculiar dialect.

"Faytan!" he said. "Look, Ketaha, is it not so?"

Ketaha was Nux's original name, never used since Uncle Naboth had picked him up. He too stared at the coast line steadily, and then nodded his head.

"It may be Faytan, my Louiki. Perhaps we are wrong. But it surely looks

like Faytan.”

“Do you know this island, then?” I asked, speaking their own language.

r “If it is Faytan, we have been very near to it; but we have never landed upon the island,” replied Bry. “The Pearl People live in Faytan, and they are the enemies of all the other islanders — of all the world. If it is Faytan, we are risking our lives to land there.”

“It is risking our lives to try to keep afloat in this sea,” I replied. “Our men cannot fight these waves for long, Bry.”

He turned away and whispered to Nux. After a brief confab the latter said to us in English:

“Jus’ try to turn dat point o’ rock yonder, Cap’n Steele. Den I guess you find a cove to land, where dere am no rocks.”

The English of the blacks was somewhat imperfect, although they spoke their own language with excellent expression. But you must remember they had acquired our language on shipboard, from all classes of people, and seamen are not noted for grammatical precision.

Captain Steele at once took command of our boat and directed the men to pull around a point of rock. They obeyed with a will and, although they found it a desperately hard task in such a raging sea, finally succeeded in breasting the waves and making the point. Immediately we found ourselves sheltered from the force of the waves and, sure enough, a strip of white sand lined the shore of a small cove just ahead.

“Faytan!” cried Bry, and covered his face with his hands.

“Faytan!” echoed Nux; but he frowned and said nothing more.

The other boats had followed our lead and, heavily laden though they were, managed to round the point. Within half an hour we had run all three boats upon the tiny beach, pulled them out of reach of the sea, and stood wet and despondent in a dismal group upon this unknown isle.

CHAPTER 7
THE PEARL PEOPLE

"This is a terrible experience," said De Jiminez in a gloomy voice. "A nation's fate has been decided by a South Sea typhoon!"

"All is not lost," replied Little Jim, attempting to console him. "The ship is high on the rocks yonder, and all the arms and ammunition may yet be saved. Perhaps the natives of this island are civilized and friendly, and will care for us until we can find another ship to take us to Colombia."

His father shook his head disconsolately.

"I doubt if any people at all live on these rocks," he said. "The place seems absolutely barren."

"Why, there is a grove of big trees a quarter of a mile back," declared Alfonso, "and the island is surely big enough to support many inhabitants. Wherever there are trees we are likely to find fields of grain and fruits. Come; let us go inland and explore the place."

During this conversation the three women had huddled under their wet cloaks, terrified and trembling. To them this adventure was a dreadful thing. To be shipwrecked upon a barren island is not wholly unknown to mankind, but may well be regarded at all times with foreboding and horror.

"Come, then," said the elder De Jiminez; "let us walk to the forest yonder. We shall find better shelter there, if nothing more."

"Wait a moment, please!" I exclaimed, for I had been watching Bryonia and Nux, who stood apart eagerly conversing together.

"Why should we wait?" demanded Alfonso, annoyed at my interference.

"Because these blacks are natives of the South Seas," I replied, "and they think they recognize this island. Let us therefore counsel with them before we act."

"Bah! Any of these islands is safe enough," persisted the boy.

"I am not sure of that," I responded. "We are far from the usual path of ships as we have been blown from our course by the gale. This island is not marked upon any chart, I am sure, which means that there is no record of a white man having ever visited it."

This statement had its influence upon our passengers, for they cast uneasy glances around and I am sure De Jiminez had no desire to risk the safety of the women by acting recklessly.

Presently our blacks came toward us with grave faces. Bryonia approached my father and said; "We pretty sure this Faytan Island, the home of the cruel Pearl People. If that is so, we no safe here, and better go away."

"What, and leave the *Seagull*!" exclaimed my father.

“If no go away,” returned Bry in solemn tones, “we soon be dead.”

“Why?”

“Pearl People never let people come to their island. If people come, they kill ‘em quick. Nux and I, we once live on island near here. Twice the young men of my people make a war party to conquer Pearl People. The first time none ever came back. The second time Nux and I we go with them. We have many hundred fighting men — warriors. We come to other side of island, where is big city. Pearl People see us and send many hundred boats to meet us on the water. We make brave fight. All our warriors die. Nux and me, we bound and put in bottom of canoe. Pearl People king say he take us to city and kill us with fire to honor his great Pearl God, who win him the fight. But sudden storm come up; very bad storm; our boat break away and drift out to sea; we nearly die from thirst and pain when you pick us up and save us. That the story of the Pearl People. They very bad, cruel blacks.”

Bry’s dramatic recital gave us all food for thought, as may well be imagined. The sailors and passengers formed an eager group around him and listened intently to the tale; but there was little of comfort in it for anyone.

Uncle Naboth, my father and I, Joe and Ned Britton went a little apart from the others and held a council. After considering the situation we favored Joe’s advice, which was to cut across the end of the island to where the *Seagull* was perched upon the rocks, enter the ship and take possession of it before our enemies did. We could be more comfortable there than elsewhere on this bleak shore. Our supplies were there, probably uninjured; moreover, we could use it as a fort and defend it successfully against a horde if attacked.

If Bry and Nux were correct about this being Faytan, then this was the safest plan we could adopt. If our blacks were wrong we would soon discover the fact and could later decide on a definite plan of action.

It would be impossible to launch the boats again and return around the point to the ship, for the sea was yet in fearful turmoil; so we decided to leave the boats where they were, and try to find our way across the rocks.

Our passengers, when this was explained to them, readily agreed to the plan, provided the ship proved to be in a safe position and we were able to get aboard. Of course our crew, all old and tried men, were ready to obey any orders they received, so we lost no time in making the start and our promptness doubtless saved our lives.

There was a gloomy sky and the wind howled mournfully among the rocks. We appointed two men to assist Madam de Jiminez and two others to aid Madam de Alcantara who, since a real calamity had befallen us, had ceased to wail and settled into a state of helpless stupor. Alfonso and Joe

walked with Lucia, but the girl was fully as active as they were and could climb the rocks like a mountain goat.

There was a fairly level country between the forest and the cove, but in order to reach the ship we had to clamber over a mass of jagged rocks that proved exceedingly difficult. There were high peaks with deep ravines between them, for the point we were crossing was of volcanic formation and some eruption had tossed the huge stones helter-skelter in a confused mass. At one time we were high enough to see the ocean — still rolling wildly — and at its feet the dear old *Seagull* perched like a monument on the rocks. Then we got tangled up with the ravines again and when next we emerged we were across the point, and only a hundred rods or so from the jagged coast where the ship was.

It was a marvelous thing, this high beaching of the *Seagull.* The wave that carried her ashore must have been a monster, for the ship stood at least twenty feet above the water level and she had been gently placed between two huge rocks in a cavity that seemed especially made to receive her. She stood level as a die, stem to the island and bow to the sea — the sea that she was likely never to sail again; for no human agency could ever launch her from that altitude, with a double row of sharp reefs between her and the deep water. As a seagoing vessel we admitted that the career of the *Seagull* was ended; but as a place of refuge — a residence and a fort — the ship in its present location would prove invaluable to us as long as we were obliged to remain upon the island.

We found the rocks that supported her so steep and difficult to climb that we sent Joe and Ned Britton ahead, they being as sure-footed as cats. On reaching the ship they found only a loose rope hanging over the side to enable them to get aboard; but Joe managed to mount by this means and at once let down a ladder. A few minutes sufficed to gather ropes enough for their purpose, which was to furnish something to assist us in mounting to the ship. It was not easy to get the two ladies up, but Lucia was as active as a boy and assisted her mother even better than we could.

Soon we were all aboard, and to us who had always trod the decks when the *Seagull* lay upon the bosom of the water it was a peculiar experience to find her stationary and wedged tight between two big rocks. There was more or less disorder on board, as was natural when you consider we had deserted the ship in a panic of fear; but there seemed no especial damage of any sort and the men set to work and quickly put things to rights again.

The sea was falling rapidly. After we reached the ship there was no wave of sufficient magnitude to dash the spray over her side, and few that even wetted her. The passengers at once sought their staterooms and put them in

order for further occupancy. De Jiminez was delighted at the thought that he had saved his precious cargo, although what good the guns and truck could do the revolution in Colombia was a mystery to the rest of us. Little Jim was in a sullen, silent mood and seemed to think fate was playing him a sorry trick. Perhaps she was; but my opinion is we were lucky to come out of the typhoon as well as we did. It was assuredly the worst storm I have ever experienced.

So far we had seen no natives at all, and Uncle Naboth said to Bryonia:

"Perhaps you're mistaken about this being the island of the Pearl People. For if them natives you've described are as careful as you say they are about guarding their coast, they would have been after us long before this."

"We quite sure we right," answered Bry. "But you see, in such storm as this they think no natives of other islands can come here to attack, so they stay at home in their big city. To-morrow they come here, plenty of them; and then we must fight hard."

This set my father thinking. He turned to Ned Britton and said:

"Do you s'pose we could get the boats around to-night? The sea's easier now and if we wait till to-morrow we may have the natives on us. We can't very well afford to lose the boats, for without 'em we'd have no way to leave this island."

Ned cast a look over the water and then nodded.

"All right, Cap'n," he said. "We'll try it."

He went away to pick his men, and Bry returned to the kitchen galley and started dinner. Fortunately the *Seagull* was well provisioned and we had enough supplies to last our party for several months.

As Nux was laying the cabin table for the noonday meal I said to him:

"Why are the natives of Faytan called the Pearl People — and why should your tribe make such a desperate effort to conquer them?"

"'Roun' dis island, Mars Sam," said he, "is de fines' pearls in all de world. Dey grow in a certain sort o' clamshell what can't be foun' anywhere else. An' de Faytan natives dey jus' crazy 'bout dem pearls, an' fish fer 'em all de time. But dey won't sell none nor give 'em away; dey jus' keeps 'em all heaped up in de Pearl City, an' wears 'em on deyre bodies fer orn'ments. Dey worship de pearls in de great temple an' believes dey gives 'em strength an' health an' makes 'em defeat all deyre enemies. If any boat comes here an' sends anyone ashore dey kill 'em quick. Sometimes de tribes of other islands come in big numbers to try to get de pearls; but Faytans always too strong for' em an' kill 'em all."

"Then how do you know about the pearls, and the Pearl City, and the Pearl Temple, and all that?" I inquired.

“How we know?”

“Yes. If no one ever gets away alive, how did you find out about these people?”

“I tell you,” said Nux. “Bry’s father he great chief of our people — what you call king. One day when he go with many canoe to fight the Grinto Islanders, a storm come up an’ drive him far away. All de canoe keep together with lines, an’ lay still on de water all night, floatin’ where ever de wind drive ‘em. When day break in momin’ he find two canoe from Faytan have drift in among ‘em. When Faytan people see our canoe dey go fast to escape; but our warriors go faster. Dey catch Faytan canoe an’ de Pearl People fight us. Dey kill twenty-two of our warriors an’ we kill six Faytan people an’ make two prisoners. The prisoners we carry back home. Dey big fellows an’ don’t talk much; but dey brag of de Pearl People an’ say they rich an’ strong, an’ nobody can ever conquer dem an’ get de pearls. Sometimes dey tell us all about de Pearl City an’ de great temple, an’ all dat; an’ our chief ask ‘em to show de way to Faytan an’ he prove he can conquer de Pearl People. Dey tell chief dey hate us so bad dey will show de way. So many young men of our tribe go in canoe, an’ de two Faytan natives go an’ show dem de way. I guess ‘bout four hundred went, but only seven came back. All de res’ was murdered by de Pearl People. De prisoners try to escape in de fight an’ get to land; but our chief he kill ‘em both an’ den escape himself an’ come home with six others.”

“That was hard luck,” I remarked.

“My father,” said Nux, “was kill in dat fight.”

“But you tried it again?”

“Many years after. Chief he old, den, an’ his son grow up an’ want to go to Faytan. De chiefs son is Bry. He my cousin. We hear much talk about Pearl People, an’ Bry — his right name Louiki — he beg chief to go. So we get a thousan’ warriors with spear, ax an’ bow ‘n’ arrow, and go in many canoe to Faytan. Bry told you what happen. I think we two the only ones that escape.”

I thought over this story with much care.

“Do you believe all that rubbish about the pearls, Nux?” I asked. “Why not, Mars Sam? I see de Pearl People when I fight ‘em. All have their bodies covered wid strings of fine pearls. Big pearls. Some white, some blue, some pink. I see de pearls. Why do I not believe?”

“Did you see the big city?”

“I see part of it from de sea. We couldn’t get on shore. It mighty fine city, Mars Sam — over on de odder side dis island.”

“Then how did you happen to recognize the back end of the island where

we are now?"

"Before we fight we come close, in de night, to see if we can land here an' not be seen. We think if we can fight on land we beat de Faytans, who fight best on water. But when we row up an' down dis coast we find we cannot land. We try de little cove; but dey on watch. Dey on watch all aroun' de island; so we go bold to de front an' fight in sight of de city."

"Seems to me, Nux," I observed, turning this over in my mind, "we're likely to have some lively times with these natives."

The black nodded very soberly.

"Pearl People very big; very dang'rous," he replied. "They thick as leaves on the trees. If we go 'way alive, Mars Sam, it's cause we have a ship full o' guns an' ca'tridges, which shoot better than bow 'n' arrow can.

"Yes, indeed," I said, smiling; "it is certainly fortunate we have such a cargo. And the ship, cast ashore in this place, is a splendid fort. We won't despair yet, Nux."

The ladies did not appear at dinner, all three having gone to bed to rest after their dreadful night. Nux carried coffee and toast to them, and the rest of us dined at the cabin table in rather solemn fashion. There was little in the situation to cheer any of us.

Toward evening Ned and his men left the ship and began their tedious climb over the rocky point to the cove where we had left the boats. I saw that all of them were well armed and warned them of the warlike disposition of the natives. The sea was now smooth enough to render the journey around by boat practical, and as we had seen no sign of any inhabitants, so far, we hoped we were as yet unobserved. But that thick forest ahead of us might be harboring a hundred watching eyes.

They failed to discover themselves, in that case, then or afterward. It grew dark quickly and I feared our boys would not reach the boats until long after nightfall. But the sky was clearing, in patches, and in places we could see thousands of stars glittering dimly.

We had established a good watch on deck and drawn up all the ladders, so that a surprise was well-nigh impossible. Joe and I paced up and down in the dusk, for we were careful not to show any lights, and talked about the queer stories we had heard of the Pearl People.

"If half these tales are true, Joe," said I, "I mean to have a try at some of those pearls before we leave here."

"Of course," he returned. "It would be foolish for us not to land such a rare treasure when it's right at hand — hunting for us, so to speak. But what interests me most, Sam, is the Pearl City, with its palaces and temples. That might be worth seeing."

“Nux says the natives number many thousands, and they have decreed death to all strangers. But who knows, Joe? We may see the city after all.”

As he was about to reply we heard the far-off crack of rifles — a regular volley — and knew the sound came from the cove. After that there was deep silence.

The struggle had begun.

CHAPTER 8

THE REEF PATROL

Because no sound of any sort now came to our ears we were beginning to worry about the fate of our men when Bry joined us on deck. He said the Faytans did not shout when they fought. They uttered no war cry of any sort, but went into battle silently and if slain died without a murmur. Victory was accepted with the same stoicism, so it was impossible for us to tell how the battle had gone. That Ned Britton's party had met the natives there was no doubt. The shots told us that. Only time could disclose the result.

My father and Uncle Naboth had come on deck and soon young Alfonso joined our anxious group.

"I hope your men didn't provoke a battle with the islanders," said the latter. "My father and I depend on them for assistance in getting away from here."

"They'll be glad to assist you to get to glory," replied Uncle Naboth, "for that's their best stunt. Haven't you been told these Faytans, or Pearl People, as our blacks call 'em, decree death to any who land on this island?"

"Oh, that's Nux's story; but I don't believe it," said the boy. "When we tell them who we are they'll be sure to treat us decently."

"Do you suppose they've ever heard of Colombia?" I asked.

"Why not?" be retorted. "They must have some intercourse with the outside world. Ships visit every known island, nowadays."

"I doubt if a ship has ever been here before," said I. "This isn't a known island; it's not on any map or chart or other record. There are plenty of such islands in the South Seas, I suppose. Bryonia and Nux happen to know this place, for their own native island is only about a hundred leagues away; but my father and uncle, who have sailed all the traveled paths in the South Pacific, have never heard of Faytan before." Alfonso became silent at this; but he remained on deck, and it was after midnight before our anxiety was satisfied.

Ned's signal came as a joyful surprise to us, and we hastily threw down the ladders and ropes to assist the fugitives in gaining the deck, in case they were pursued. The mate leaped on board first of all, saying: "Let down the davits; and lively, too, lads! We've got the boats; but Lord only knows what else we've brought with us."

In the hurry that followed no questions were asked. It was better to work first and talk afterward. The davits were swung out and the ropes lowered; but after that it was some time before we got the first signal to haul away, for the men had to carry the heavy boats up the slanting rocks before they could

be attached. Pretty soon the longboat came swinging up; then the gig, and finally the cutter. We had lost the fourth boat, the whaler, in launching it in the storm, but all the boats left on the shore of the cove, with their contents, were now secured. We had to work by the light of the stars, which was dim enough; for until the boats and all the men were under shelter we dared not show a light.

Finally three of our men were hoisted over the side moaning with pain. These were tenderly received by their fellows and stowed below, while Bry, the best surgeon on the ship, hurried after to see what could be done for them. When we got Ned into the cabin to spin his yam we found his left hand covered with a bloodsoaked bandage tom from his shirt, yet he had been working so industriously we had not suspected he was wounded.

"We got to the cove, all right," he said, "though it were a bitter climb over them sharp rocks. We didn't wait a minute after gett'n' thar, but run the boats down the beach into deep water an' prepared to get away at once. Part of us were still waist deep in the water an' the others gett'n' the oars shipped, when without warnin' a hail of arrers fell among us. It was dark, a'most, but when I glanced at the shore I could see the white sand covered with scores o' black natives; so I knew our first move was to dig out lively. Yaller Tom were bleedin' beside me in the water, an' I had to pull an arrer out'n my own hand afore I could help him; but in a jiffy we were aboard an' rowin' like mad. The arrers kept failin"round us, but didn't do any more damage, so afore we got out o' rifle range I let the boys drop oars an' fire one round into that black line o' savages. Some of 'em must have dropped, but they never give a whimper; so we rowed on agin an' soon lost sight of 'em. The waves rolled us' round some, for the storm left a heavy swell, an' to keep from grindin' on the reefs we had to pick our way mighty careful. There ain't no decent water anywhere near this ship, an' at first I thought we'd never get the boats to it; but a mile or so north we found an openin' in the first reef, an' half a mile or so south o' here we got through the second reef. We had to keep quiet, for fear the savages had followed us along the shore, so they could drop on us when we tried to land; but they failed to connect. Seen anything of 'em?"

"No," replied Uncle Naboth. "Who's hurt, Ned, besides yourself?"

"I guess Yaller Tom is done fer. The arrer's broke off in his chest an' he wouldn't let us pull it out. Nicodemus Brown's got a splinter through his shoulder, an' young Dipps got an ugly gash in the leg. That's the worst o' the story, although several of us'll carry scars to remind us of this night's work."

"I think," said I, "you owe your escape to the fact that the natives had no canoes on this end of the island. They must have discovered you while you

were climbing the point, but got to the cove just a little too late to meet you."

"Perhaps," said Captain Steele, "it would have been a more even fight if you could have faced them on land."

"I'm satisfied as it was," returned Ned, shaking his head doubtfully. "They were thick as fleas, Cap'n, an' if we hadn't got away in the boats when we did we could have shot 'em down till our cartridges give out, an' then there'd have been enough left to have murdered us neat an' quiet. We must get ready for them folks, sir; they're sure to be on us in the momin', if they don't arrive sooner. But I count myself lucky to have got back with the boats with no worse calamities than we really had."

"So do I," said my father. "I'm much obliged, Ned."

I went to the forecastle to inquire about the wounded. Bry looked grave over Yellow Tom's case, but said the others would quickly recover. Our islander knew all about arrow wounds, such as these, and could treat them more successfully than a regular surgeon might have done.

"Do you suppose the arrows were poisoned?" I asked.

"No," he replied; "South Sea natives do not poison arrows. We leave that to the Negritos of the Philippines and inland tribes of Australia. We islanders fight like men, not like cowards."

"I fear we shall find plenty of fighting ahead of us," I remarked, rather gloomily.

The black nodded.

"If we stay here we must fight," said he. "I think it better to take the women away in the boats, and trust the sea. From here I am sure I can find the way to my own island, where I am a chief."

I made no comment on this suggestion and returned thoughtfully to the deck. I knew Bryonia's advice was sound enough, but I hated to leave without an attempt to see the Pearl City and get some of the big pearls I had heard of. The result proved, however, that we could not have taken to the boats had we decided to.

We kept an alert watch that night, you may be sure, but not a sound did we hear except the sullen roar of the breakers against the reefs. As dawn broke the lookout made a discovery. About a quarter of a mile away, between the first and second reefs, was a solid line of canoes, each carrying from three to six native Faytans. This line extended from the point to half a mile down the coast, and the patrol so established was sufficient to render our escape in the boats impossible.

There was no sign of activity among the natives. They sat stolidly in their canoes, their eyes bent upon the ship, perched high before them, and these sentries were destined to remain at their posts for many days to come.

Now that we were discovered we experienced a feeling of relief. Whatever might happen from this time on we could accept calmly and with our eyes wide open. It was no game of hide and seek, but open defiance.

"I suppose we must accept this as a declaration of war," remarked Senor de Jiminez at the breakfast table. The ladies had all risen early to go on deck and examine the canoe patrol, so for once we were a complete assemblage.

"It certainly is no peaceful demonstration," I replied.

"Still, we may be able to treat with them and peace establish," continued the Colombian. "Let us offer to give them a few guns if they will let us go."

I noticed Nux grinning in a comer of the cabin and was at once reminded of the humor of the suggestion advanced.

"Do they know about guns, Nux?" I asked.

"No, Mars Sam."

"If they did," I asserted, "they'd realize their ability to capture all we have. But I understand these people never treat with intruders."

"We did not mean to intrude!" exclaimed Madam de Alcantara in a frightened voice.

"No; it was forced upon us," I agreed. "I wonder if these fellows, to whom a ship like ours is unknown, are not amazed to find the *Seagull* set high upon the rocks of their coast."

"All savage tribes," remarked Senor de Jiminez, reverting to the former subject, "are said to deal with foreigners as they are dealt with. These people may be inimical to other native tribes, who sometimes come to fight and rob them, but it seems to me if we treat them politely they will become friendly in return."

"You may try it, if you like," said Uncle Naboth dryly. "They didn't wait to discover whether Ned Britton's party were polite or not; they jest shot 'em up an' asked no questions."

"Oh, dear!" wailed Madam de Alcantara. "I'm sure we shall all be murdered by these heathen brutes. Why — oh, why — did I ever sail on your ill-fated ship!" and the poor lady began to shed real tears.

Lucia's mother had a weak character, in spite of her proud and haughty airs when safe ashore in a civilized community. Any adverse fortune floored her at once and I am sure she had already suffered agonies such as ordinary death could not equal. Her daughter, attentive and sympathetic in a charming, unobtrusive way, sought to console and encourage her parent; but it was a hopeless task. The sight of the natives had completely unnerved Madam de Alcantara, and she sobbed so bitterly that Lucia had to lead her to her room.

Madam de Jiminez had nothing to say. She seldom asked a question, and knowing she would be cared for as well as circumstances would permit,

showed us always a benign and cheerful face. She was never in the way, and we all so admired the old lady's courage that she suffered no lack of attention. The one beautiful thing about her son and grandson was the devotion they lavished upon her. Selfish they might be in all other ways, but both were willing at all times to sacrifice their pleasure to insure her comfort. Misadventures such as this are sure to bring out the good and bad in one's nature, and we learned to gauge one another quite correctly during this period of mutual danger and suffering.

On gaining the deck after breakfast we found that the idea of turning the ship into a fort was being carried out in a practical manner. We always carried a supply of rifles and cutlasses in the gun room, in case of an emergency such as this. These had been brought out and distributed lavishly along the deck, where one could conveniently seize them. We had plenty of ammunition without having recourse to the revolutionary supplies, and we judged that from the shelter of our bulwarks we could repel any horde of savages attempting to clamber up the rocks. Even if we allowed them to reach the summits of the twin peaks unmolested they could not scale the ship's side; so, with plenty of provisions and an arsenal to fight with, we felt fairly safe for the present.

In addition to the small arms, we had two brass howitzers mounted at the bow and stem of the *Seagull.* These were usually masked with canvas sacks, designed to disguise them so the ordinary observer would not notice our armament; but they were now uncovered and put in order for action, our men training them so as to command the open space between us and the edge of the dark forest.

We had ample time for these preparations. The canoes guarding the reef passages lay motionless and no sign of life was observable on the land side. We hardly knew how to account for this; whether they were tempting us to leave the ship or were themselves preparing for an assault. However, it was our business to "stand pat" and await results.

The day passed tediously. Lounging by the rail we looked down upon the grim line of warriors, so silent and motionless, and they looked up at us. Fortunately for them they were beyond the range of our rifles. I brought up my glasses and focused them so the natives were distinctly visible in every detail. They were handsome, stalwart fellows, averaging fully six feet in height I judged, although now all were crouching in the canoes. They were not black, as were Nux and Bryonia, but a dark chocolate brown. Their hair seemed straight and fine of texture and was allowed to grow long and be curled into a knot at the back of the head, as women often wear it. Their only article of dress was a loin cloth, made of a dark colored material on which

were sewn curious designs in pearls. All wore ornaments of pearls, such as necklaces, armlets and anklets, the gems being of such size and color that I believe the humblest native in the line carried the equivalent of a fortune upon his person.

I watched the Pearl People for hours. Their marked characteristic seemed to be patience. Their features seemed finely cut and intelligent, but the members of the patrol were just now very apathetic, seldom changing their positions or indulging in the interchange of remarks. Their business was simply to wait, and they displayed marvelous resignation to duty. If they were curious they did not show it; if they resented this inactivity they gave the resentment no expression. Automatons could not have been more docile. Yet the Faytans struck me as being dignified, reserved and most admirably trained to obedience, while their stem countenances marked them as cold and cruel.

In the afternoon, while a dismal silence pervaded the ship, I was startled by hearing the clear tones of our piano. Some one began to play a spirited march, and of course I knew it was Lucia. The brave girl was trying to cheer us all with her music, and I am bound to admit it had an animating effect. For an hour she played and sang, choosing the most stirring tunes she knew, and when I finally went below I found all the passengers had gathered in the cabin with Joe and Uncle Naboth, while young Alfonso was joining in a Spanish madrigal that was popular in his own country and all thoughts of our precarious position seemed thrust into the background.

That evening De Jiminez played écarté with his mother while Madam de Alcantara was led to forget her fears far enough to read a book. We lighted the cabin brilliantly, making no further attempt to evade the watching eyes of the natives, and enjoyed a few hours of solace if not of pleasure.

Next day the waiting game was continued. South Sea natives seldom or never attack at night, according to Nux; but these Faytans were so unlike other savage tribes that we could not be sure this was one of their customs. So we divided the watch and kept a sharp lookout night and day.

CHAPTER 9

ALFONSO'S ANTOINETTE

Nothing happened this second day of our imprisonment. The Faytans evidently had some plan of campaign mapped out, or they would not have established the patrol of canoes. We began to consider what their intentions could be.

"Let's give 'em credit for a leetle intelligence," said Uncle Naboth, who had been studying the natives through his binoculars. "The chief that runs this place must have some ability, and as soon as he discovered us here he must' a' thought it all out. Mebbe he lay awake doin' it, for next momin' we found them canoes on guard. That was the first trick in the game."

"Not a bad one, either," I remarked.

"Not from the chiefs standpoint. It kept us from escapin' in the boats, which is the one thing, it seems, he don't intend to let happen. Now, our boys here," pointing to Bryonia and Nux, "have a notion that the Pearl People don't want any strangers around. They never let 'em land, if they can help it, and drive' em away or kill 'em. Accordin' to that theory the Faytans ought to be glad to have us go. But here they are, keepin' us fast prisoners. Why's that, Bry?"

Bryonia had stood moodily silent. He now looked up and shook his head.

"Can't say, Mars Nabot'," he answered. But he spoke in a hesitating way that led me to think he preferred not to speak frankly.

"It's really a puzzler," resumed Uncle Naboth. "If they mean to kill us, why don't they start in and fight it out?"

"Perhaps they realize our position is impregnable," I suggested.

"It ain't exactly that," declared my uncle. "If they happen to think to shoot some burnin' arrers at us, they can easily set fire to the ship, an' then we're done for."

"Not knowin' about ships, they may not think of that," said my father, uneasily.

"Well, what then?" asked De Jiminez.

"Then," replied Joe, "the wily islanders expect to conquer us in one of two ways. First to starve us out, and — "

"They can't do that in a hurry," muttered the Captain.

"And second to let us die of thirst," continued Joe.

We all became thoughtful at this suggestion. I knew we had supplies of fresh water sufficient for an ordinary voyage, and an aerator to doctor it with if it became stagnant and unpalatable; but barreled water is not the safest thing to depend upon, and thirst was a greater menace than lack of food. Yet

it seemed improbable that a savage chieftain would have thought this all out and determined upon so tedious and unwarlike a plan of conquest.

Afterward I found Bryonia alone and said to him:

"Why do you think the Faytans wish to keep us here?"

"Don' know, Mars Sam."

"Yes, you do, Bry. Anyhow, you've some idea."

"I may be wrong."

"This is in confidence, Bry. You may trust me."

He hesitated a moment.

"I wish, Mars Sam," he said in a low voice, speaking his native tongue, "that the lady passengers had not showed themselves."

"Oh, that's it!" I exclaimed. "Are the natives partial to white women, Bry?"

"I know other chiefs," he said, "and I know they like to take women of other nations for wives. In my own island it is like that. I think if we were only warriors the Faytans would drive us away, or let us take the boats out. That is the only way I can explain the strange manner in which they are acting."

"You may be right," I returned, and walked away to think it over.

The third day brought no more incident than the others that preceded it. I had abandoned the idea that the Faytans intended to besiege us until we succumbed to hunger or thirst, and told Joe so. Also I confided to my chum Bry's theory that they were concocting a plan to get our women. This made Joe look grave and anxious.

When Alfonso joined us, presently, I thought it best to acquaint him with our fears.

"If that is so," said the boy, "we will see that the women never fall into their hands alive. But I am confident there will be some way of escape open to us before our condition gets desperate."

"What is your father doing?" I asked, thinking I would like a conference with Senor de Jiminez.

"He is writing a speech to deliver before the Colombian Congress when he becomes president," replied Alfonso with a smile. "Poor father! He doesn't know what despair means. I'm sure he has no real conception of our present position."

"I wish," said Joe, musingly, as he stared out over the island, "that I could see into that forest yonder. I wonder if it's full of watching natives, or if they're all lying snug in the big Pearl City we've heard about."

Alfonso was thoughtful. For awhile he, too, stared at the forest. Then a sudden idea occurred to him, for his face brightened and he laughed aloud.

“Fellows,” said he, “I’ve a notion to go over to that city and see what it looks like. Also, I’ll take a peep into the forest as I pass by.”

I looked at him in amazement, saying:

“Have you gone crazy, then?”

Again he laughed, quite gleefully.

“I don’t wonder you suspect my sanity,” he answered; “but the truth is that I had forgotten all about a certain important shipment of mine that is now in the hold of this ship and may be of great help to us in our present emergency. However,” he added, more soberly, “the thing was intended for a far different purpose.”

“A shipment? What is it?” I inquired.

“Why, nothing more nor less than one of those new fashioned biplanes. I bought one of the latest improved *Antoinettes* when I went over to Paris, during the time father was purchasing the arms in Australia. He sent me there on some banking business, you know, and I naturally took in the aviation exhibition. It did not take me long to decide that a biplane would be of great assistance to the revolution and I induced the great Blériot himself to teach me how to work it. Before I left Paris I could manage the thing beautifully, and I’ve made a good many successful flights. It is all packed in three cases, with bands of red paint around them so they can be identified from the arms, and I have many extra parts in separate cases. It must seem queer to you to realize I have a flying machine in this out-of-the-way place — where we’re shipwrecked on a savage island.”

“It is strange,” I admitted.

“The *Antoinette* would make even you fellows stare, I guess,” continued Alfonso.

“Oh, as for that,” said Joe, “both Sam and I have done some aerial stunts in our time, and made some pretty long flights. But a biplane’s a new invention to us.”

“It occurred to me that I could put the machine together here on deck,” announced Alfonso, “and make a trip over the forest to the Pearl City. I won’t land there, of course, but I’ll circle around and find out what we want to know, and then come back again. What do you think?” he asked a little anxiously.

“Seems like a brilliant idea,” I said approvingly.

“Will you fellows help me to get it together?”

“Of course,” said Joe. “And the sooner the better.”

“Then order your men to fetch up the boxes with the red bands. There are three of them.”

I went to Uncle Naboth and my father and explained what Little Jim

wanted to do. They both considered the thing impracticable and foolhardy, but said we could give the young Colombian whatever assistance he needed.

So the boxes were sent for and presently hoisted from the hold by means of the cranes provided for such purposes. Only one was at all heavy, and that contained the motor and tools.

The carpenter unscrewed the covers and soon a confused mass of canvas planes, braces, platforms and other odds and ends lay upon the deck. Alfonso, with his coat off and sleeves rolled up, began to select the pieces and connect them. He had written instructions for setting up the machine, but did not need to refer to them often, being evidently quite familiar with the details of its mechanism.

It did not seem to me that the thing was at all serviceable; it was very frail and more like a toy than a flying machine; but the boy assured me it was an exact duplicate of the one that held the world's record for altitude and speed.

"Aren't you afraid to trust yourself to it?" asked Joe.

"Afraid! Of course not," was the reply. "It is perfectly safe if operated intelligently — barring unavoidable accidents."

We both assisted, being guided by his directions, and all three of us worked the remainder of that day. Lucia discovered us at about the time we began assembling the airship, and was so fascinated by the proposition that she remained constantly by our side, watching every move we made. She made no remarks, but her dark eyes missed no detail, and whenever Alfonso instructed us she listened as carefully as we did. It seemed queer for a girl to take such an interest in a flying machine — a thing that some men do not care to fool with. In addition to the girl a curious group of the sailors surrounded us, for I have found that those who sail the seas have a certain sympathy for those who sail the air.

I had myself become enthusiastic over the machine, as I began to understand the theory of its operation. The *Antoinette* was as scientifically constructed as it was delicate and graceful. I could see possibilities in the thing, now, and that night was a sleepless one for me, so eager was I to continue our work the next morning. We got the frame complete the second day, and set the engines in position.

By evening the biplane seemed all ready to fly, but Alfonso asserted it must be adjusted and tested with the utmost care, as all depended on the tenseness and equalization of the planes. He told us, however, he hoped to make the flight the following morning.

Our relations with the natives had remained unchanged. The only event of each day was the arrival of food and supplies for the floating besiegers. These were brought in canoes around the island and a share distributed to

each of the line of boats. Then the commissary department silently withdrew and the excitement was over. As for the guard, their patience seemed untiring. The warriors must have been more or less cramped in their canoes. If some of them were relieved at times, it was during the nights, for darkness fell upon the silent line and daybreak found it still unbroken. Perhaps some slept, lying in the bottoms of the canoes, while others watched. I have no means of knowing.

Finally our youthful and adventurous Colombian got his machine adjusted to suit him, explaining to Joe and me, as he worked, all the details of equilibrium and shifting the balance, and how to handle the wheel and run the motors. The engines were not unlike those used on automobiles, yet lighter in weight and made as delicately as a watch. The wheel answered the slightest touch, and any change in direction required a quick eye and quick thought. Indeed, to fly in a biplane is no dreamy man's job, for every nerve and muscle must be tense and responsive and lend life to the inanimate thing he directs.

Alfonso was cool as a cucumber while making his tests and I could see that his eager enthusiasm was due more to the delights of an exhilarating flight through the air than a desire to see the Pearl City, or discover what our enemies were doing. Doubtless he had for some time been aching for an opportunity to use his novel machine, and his present attempt was mainly due to this wish.

Being of a mechanical turn of mind and interested in all such propositions, I followed intently every movement that Alfonso made in putting the biplane together, adjusting it and preparing for the flight.

"I almost believe I could work it myself," I remarked with a smile. "That 'almost' qualifies your egotism," replied Little Jim, with assurance. "It is the flight itself — the management of the machine in the air — that really requires knowledge and skill."

"But that can only come with experience," I said. "How many flights have you made?"

"Several," he declared proudly. "Once I remained in the air for thirty-seven minutes. I can do better than that, now, for I have here an improved machine and the condition of the atmosphere in these latitudes is almost perfect, since the storm cleared."

He took his seat in the machine. We had cleared a long run along the deck, from stem to stem, for his use in starting.

"First," said he, "I'll take a turn among those boats over the reefs. I may land here on my return, or I may keep on over the island; it will depend upon circumstances."

Every soul aboard had gathered to watch this interesting attempt, and I noticed that Lucia's eyes were big and sparkling with excitement. Alfonso was quite the hero of the hour and it filled him with pride and elation to be the observed of all observers. His father, who had always vigorously opposed his son's experiments with airships, but realized the fact that the biplane might be of much service to the revolution, was a curious and silent spectator. He had indulged in a stiff argument with Alfonso the night before, but had met defeat at the hands of his wayward son. The boy's courage and confidence were indisputable, and perhaps Senor de Jiminez was a bit proud of his son's progressive ideas.

"The airship is bound to be a great factor in the future history of nations," asserted Alfonso, and this could not be successfully controverted until the future revealed itself and became history.

Joe and I followed directions in turning the motor and running the machine along the deck for a start. It rose just before it reached the bow, soared over the rail and headed straight out to sea, still ascending. Absolute silence pervaded the anxious group on deck. We could plainly hear the whir of the motors as the biplane, swift as a dart, flew over the reefs, descried a graceful curve and circled around the boats a hundred feet or more in the air.

The Faytans were certainly a stolid lot, as we afterward proved; but the flight of the airship was so startling that they craned their necks to watch it, and some rose in the canoes while others ducked down and covered their heads as if in terror. Fear was unknown to this people, but superstition bound them in chains, and this surely seemed like a demonstration of the gods.

I must admit the boy handled the machine beautifully, and it responded to his touch like a thing of life. Several times he circled around, then swept out to sea until he was a mere birdlike speck, and finally came back and headed directly for the ship. Perhaps it had been five or six minutes since he left us, but to us it seemed an hour, so excited were we by his daring and his success.

We kept the deck clear, pressing close to the rail, and it seemed Alfonso's intention to land. He came toward us in a straight line; then the machine dipped, for as it neared us it was fully three hundred feet above the sea. Now the aeronaut shut down the motors and glided gracefully downward at an angle of nearly forty degrees. We were preparing to shout our applause, when like a great bird the biplane swept over the deck, struck the mainmast at about its middle and came crashing down in a heap — operator and aeroplane being mixed in a confused jumble.

CHAPTER 10
THE PEARL CITY

Joe and I rushed in first of all and pulled Alfonso out of the wreck. He was insensible and bleeding profusely from a cut across the forehead. Others eagerly took the boy from us and carried him below, his father sobbing that his son was dead, dead, dead! and now could never become the president of Colombia.

I knew well enough Alfonso wasn't dead, and told Lucia so when she asked me with a white, startled face.

"A little damaged, that's all," said I, and watched her as she hurried away, womanlike, to render what assistance she could.

"It were surely wonderful!" cried Uncle Naboth, viewing the mangled biplane that lay at the foot of the mast; "but he's spoilt his flying machine the first trip."

"Oh, I'm not at all sure about that," I replied. "What do you think, Joe?"

"Why, it's like Alfonso — a little damaged, that's all," he answered with a grin. "The motor seems all right, and that's the main thing."

We made an examination, then, and found some of the framework of the planes splintered. Otherwise nothing was injured and a little work would soon restore the thing to good working order.

Bryonia and "Capstan Bob," the latter having been a poor doctor before he became a good sailor, attended the injured boy, and soon word came up that Alfonso had regained consciousness. He had broken his left arm and cut his scalp open, but was not seriously injured. Late in the afternoon he asked to see me, and when I went down to his room I found him quite cheerful over his personal mishap, but worried about the condition of his biplane. This I assured him could easily be repaired, and he told me there was a supply of extra frames in one of the boxes, and asked me to look after the airship and rig it up again.

"I want to make another trip in it as soon as I am able," he told me. "This broken arm is an unfortunate thing, but I guess I can manage the wheel with my right hand. Are you sure the motor is uninjured?"

"It worked smoothly when I tested it," I answered; "but I'll go over it again more carefully and make sure."

"Do," he urged. "You and Joe can do the work, and to-morrow I'll come on deck and direct you. I'll be all right by that time."

The morning, however, found Alfonso so stiff and sore from his bruises, his gashed forehead and his cracked arm, that he could not leave his berth. The women waited upon him tirelessly and Joe and I, left to our own devices,

decided to set to work on the biplane without the owner's assistance. It interested us more than ever, now that we had seen what the thing could do, and I had acquired a powerful desire to test its virtues myself. If we could restore the machine to good condition, and should our safety demand knowledge of the movements of the natives, I felt I would not hesitate to undertake a flight.

All that day we worked, finding spare parts to replace those that had been damaged. It was evident that accidents to the frame were expected and anticipated, since duplicates of almost every part of them had been furnished. Only the motor and steering gear were without duplicate parts; but these were little likely to become injured, even by a direct fall.

On the following morning Joe and I arose before daybreak and got Bry to make us some coffee while we finally adjusted the biplane. I had decided to attempt a flight secretly, as I feared Senor de Jiminez or his son would refuse us permission had we asked to go. The seat was so arranged that it would carry two; so, both Joe and I being light in weight ought not to prove too great a burden for the machine. I had intended to go alone, at first, but Joe begged so hard that I did not like to refuse him, and he agreed to allow me to manage it without interference.

We instructed Bry and Ned Britton how to start us, but we took our run on the deck from stem to stem, so as to head over the island.

The *Antoinette* rose like a bird — just as the sun came up — and with a sense of elation and delight I realized we were actually flying. Up we shot, right over the forest, which came beneath us so suddenly that for the first time I recognized the marvelous speed of the machine.

Determined to investigate this threatening barrier, I turned the wheel so as to descry a succession of circles and descended until we were just above the tallest tree tops. Joe had a pair of powerful glasses, and while I watched the biplane he examined the forest.

"The woods are full of savages," he remarked, attentively looking downward; "but most of them are lined up facing the ship."

"What are they doing?" I asked.

"Stripping the trees of bark, and flattening it out. That's queer. All are working at this except the double line of sentries at the edge of the forest."

"Perhaps they're making shields of the bark," I suggested; "in which case they intend to attack us presently. But if they think we use bows and arrows, which a bark shield will stop, they're much mistaken."

"Who knows what they think?" muttered my companion.

"And who cares? Keep your balance, Joe; I'm going to explore the rest of the island."

First I rose to quite an altitude, so that we might determine the extent of the island. Then I spied a large settlement at the far east of us — the farthest point from the ship — and deciding that this was the Pearl City I headed directly for it.

A few moments only sufficed to bring us above the city, a journey of perhaps ten miles from our starting point. Here again I circled while we inspected the place.

The city was of tremendous extent; for here, we afterward learned, resided every inhabitant of Faytan. There was a pretty landlocked bay before it, and the waterfront was thick with craft, mostly with canoes such as we had seen, although there were some ponderous flat-bottomed boats that resembled rafts more than ships. These I thought might be used for the pearl fishing, although they were gaudily decorated and had many seats with rudely carved backs.

Between the forest and the city were large cultivated fields, with groups of cocoanut and date palms showing here and there, and we discovered several bands of workers on these farms, all calmly engaged in performing their proper tasks.

But the city itself was far more interesting than its surroundings. The buildings were of clay bricks, of a light gray color, little wood being used in their construction. They were of great size and laid out in regular order, forming streets that radiated in all directions from a central square. Directly in the middle of this space was a great circular building which was painted a dark blue color — the only painted building in the city — and lavishly decorated with pearls. The doorways, windows and cornices, and even portions of the dome, were thickly set with these precious gems, only pearls of great size and luster being chosen for the purpose. This was the temple; but I ought to explain that many of these details were not perceived by us at that time, while we circled in the biplane over the city and looked curiously down upon it. Perhaps it was this very curiosity that was our undoing, for I must have neglected the machine in some way to send it suddenly swerving, first to one side and then the other, in an erratic motion that was bewildering and instantly destroyed my cool confidence. The strain on the planes was dangerous, and although we managed to keep our balance I could not steady the thing nor bring it to a stable equilibrium. We were at a dangerous elevation should we fall, and to avoid this catastrophe I involuntarily descended, without any regard as to where we might land.

It was almost a fall, as it was. We first dove headlong, at a dangerous angle, and then I swung her head up, shut off the motor, and she fluttered, rocked and came to a sudden stop with a jolt that well nigh drove the breath

from our bodies. Joe pitched from the seat and rolled over a few times; then he sat up and looked at me in a dazed way that would have made me laugh had I not been wondering just then how many bones I had broken. But after the jar on my nerves had subsided I crawled out of the machine, which dropped its planes as if ashamed of its rude action, and found we were on the flat top of one of the high buildings that overlooked the place of the Pearl Temple.

I crawled to the edge, which had a low parapet, and looked over. A hundred eyes met mine, staring at me with wonder in spite of the stoic nature of these remarkable islanders.

It was not strange that they marveled. Airships are not yet everyday affairs in our own country, so this one might well startle the natives of a secluded South Sea island which even ships do not sight. I am not certain which party was at first most bewildered, Joe and I or the Faytans; but we were first to recover, and our desperate situation called for decisive thought.

Hastily I ran over the machine. A guide rope had parted, and I promptly knotted it together again. In all other respects the *Antoinette* seemed uninjured.

"Get aboard, Joe!" I cried; "we must make a run for it the best way we can."

"Someone has to push the thing," he returned. "I'll start it and you take it away, Sam. If you reach the ship safely you can come back with a rescue party."

"That's nonsense!" I exclaimed. "I won't go without you, and you know it. Here, help me run it over to the edge, and we'll see what we can do. It may dip at first, but there is lots of room in the square down there for us to get a start and rise again."

"And lots of savages to grab us if we bump the ground. My way's best, Sam."

"Your way is impossible!" said I. "We will either go together, or we'll both stay right here."

The speech was prophetic. Before I had the words well out of my mouth the natives began to pour in a stream out upon the roof, coming through a square hole in the center which we had not thought to guard.

Each of us was armed with a brace of revolvers, but we hesitated to use them. As we backed away to the furthermost edge I said to Joe:

"Don't shoot. They'll capture us anyhow by force of numbers, and we'll stand better with them if we don't hurt anyone. Keep your pistols out of sight, for a better time may come to use them."

Joe nodded.

“You’re right,” he said briefly.

The Faytans lined up before us, a score of great muscular fellows with singularly intelligent features and of grave, dignified demeanor. As I looked upon them I decided to adopt a certain plan of action. Extending my hand and smiling in a fearless, friendly manner, I slowly advanced toward the man directly in front of me. There seemed to be no captain or leader among them.

“Greeting, good friends,” I said in the language of Tuamotu, the island Nux and Bry had come from, and which they had long ago taught me to speak. All the natives of the South Seas have, I believe, a common language, although each island seems to use a dialect or “brogue” of its own. At any rate the islanders seem able to understand one another when they meet in peace or war, and for that reason I hoped to make myself understood.

That I succeeded was soon apparent. The man did not take my extended hand, but he said in a deep, musical voice:

“We are not friends. It is not possible.”

“No?” I returned, as if astonished. And, indeed, his frankness was surprising, for these islanders are usually subtle and deceptive, claiming friendship when they intend murder. “Why is it not possible for us to be friends?”

“Because you come unasked. Because we do not harbor strangers. Because intruders deserve death, and the laws of the Faytans decree it.” This was not at all pleasant.

“We came not here of our own will,” I said after a moment’s hesitation. “The gods of the Storm and Wind thrust us upon your island. We wish to go away; to return to our own country.”

“That cannot be,” said another standing near the first speaker. “To allow a stranger from the world beyond the sea to escape would be to allow him to carry tales of Faytan to his countrymen. Then they would send many boats here to rob us of our pearls and make us trouble.”

“Therefore,” added another, “you must die to save Faytan.”

“In what way?” I asked, more to gain time than because the mode of dying interested me just then.

“The King will determine that. We will take you to the King.”

“Very well,” I responded cheerfully. “Come, Joe; let’s visit the King.”

He grinned at this, for Joe isn’t easily scared, and we allowed the Faytans to escort us from the roof, going so docilely that they did not bind us or even touch our bodies. They merely surrounded us in a dense mass, and since they were of gigantic size and strong as bulls that was as secure a method as any.

The house through which we passed was not badly arranged or furnished. We saw numerous rooms from the corridors we traversed, and they were

more pleasant and homelike than you might suppose, considering this to be an uncivilized island which the world's progress had never yet thought of.

The square outside — it was a circle, really — was thronged with men, women and children, all scantily clad as far as clothing was concerned, but the humblest wearing a fortune in pearl ornaments.

This island of Faytan must be very populous. There were at least two hundred men in the boats guarding the reefs; the forest was full of them; many were working in the fields, and still the Pearl City was packed full, as far as we could see. The natives were of superior physique and intelligence. We had thought Nux and Bry exceptionally well built fellows, for South Sea Islanders, and we had often proved their fidelity and keenness of intellect; but the Faytans were fully their equals in every respect, and I knew from the reports of Tuamotu that they had no such capital as the Pearl City and lived in a more primitive manner.

Crossing the square between close ranks of silent, staring natives, we were escorted to the steps of the Great Temple and in through a high arched doorway.

CHAPTER 11

A KING, A PRIEST AND A BOY

To our surprise there was no great hall of concourse before us, but an entrance hall from which opened several doorways hung with finely woven mats, all of which were lavishly decorated with conventional designs in pearls. Before each doorway stood a guard, armed with a spear and a double-edged battle-ax, the latter fashioned from gypsum by the method employed by the North American Indians.

There was a captain of these guards and when one of our conductors spoke to him in a low voice this official disappeared through a central doorway. He returned presently and Joe and I were told to follow him. After us came merely a half dozen of our captors, closing the rear, and so in stately procession we tramped down a long corridor and came to the throne room.

It was a high, spacious apartment, having many windows covered with translucent fishskin dyed in various colors. These had the appearance of stained glass and were quite effective. Around three sides of the room ran a stone bench covered with mattings and in the center was a raised place, or dais, with a broad, pearl-encrusted seat.

Heaped upon the royal bench were many gay colored blankets woven from a soft cocoanut fibre, and lying flat upon these, face downward, was the mighty King of Faytan.

His Majesty was only a boy. His copper-colored form was lean and slender, but no greater in length than my own.

He did not move for a time and I had opportunity to examine him curiously. The knot of hair twisted upon the back of his head was decorated with five monstrous black pearls — the rarest and most valuable sort known. Around his waist was a broad belt on which exquisite rose pearls were thickly clustered. Over his shoulder was draped a short cloak sewn thick with the same precious gems. But aside from this richness of decoration there was nothing to distinguish the youthful king from his subjects, unless it was his attitude. This might indicate grief, despair or suffering, for though he moved not a muscle there was such utter abandon in his pose that I caught myself feeling sorry for the youth's misery without knowing why or how he was miserable.

We stood motionless, awaiting his royal pleasure. After a time, with a slow, writhing motion he raised himself to a sitting position and showed his face to us.

I was born and bred in a democratic republic, and believe that all men are free and equal; nevertheless there was a serene dignity in this boy's

countenance that plainly marked him royal. Wherever I might have met him I should have recognized in him the king; yet he was a mere savage secluded on an unknown island.

The unhappiness that had marked his former attitude showed plainly in his face, but its proud regard seemed to demand no pity from anyone. Whatever it was, the king was strong enough to bear it alone.

He eyed Joe and me with calm interest, his look flashing over us from head to heel and noting every detail of our appearance. Then he turned to the captain of the guard and nodded permission for him to speak.

"Flying through the air on a thing with wings," began the man, "these two intruders alighted upon the top of the house of Aza, where they were captured. They are brought before your Majesty for judgment."

The king passed his hand across his eyes with a wearied gesture. Then he looked toward us again and said:

"They are young." His voice was low and soft.

"You are also young, your Majesty," I ventured to state.

"Then you understand our tongue?" he said quickly.

"Imperfectly. I was taught to speak it by a native of Tuamotu."

"Tuamotu! So you have come here to get our pearls?"

"No, indeed. We were shipwrecked, having been driven out of our course by the storm. We are not robbers, your Majesty, but only unfortunate voyagers."

He nodded.

"You are indeed unfortunate to land upon the shore of Faytan," said he. "It means death to all of you."

"Not necessarily," I returned, coolly. "For my part, I expect to live a long time yet."

"You do not understand," he persisted gently. "It is the law of the island — the law of my forefathers — that all strangers who land upon Faytan shall be put to death."

"A cruel law," I remarked; "and an unjust one."

"It is to protect us from invasion," he explained in a kindly tone. "This is the richest island in all the world, and the most favored by nature. My people are the bravest and strongest of mankind. No other nation can at all compare with this, for we are protected and favored by the powerful Pearl God." As he mentioned this deity all the Faytans present prostrated themselves, muttering:

"The King is the Priest of the Pearl God. Through him we acquire power and protection!"

The king had also bowed his head, reverently and with no hint of self-

adulation. When the chant ended he turned to us and continued:

"Strangers, it is not through hatred that your death is decreed. There is no hate in my breast, although you have killed my father, the late King of Faytan."

His voice faltered, and I exclaimed:

"Killed the King! We? It is impossible."

His grief was readily explained now, but although these people posed as our enemies I was really shocked at the assertion that we had rendered this boy fatherless.

"I do not think the deed was intentional," he returned, musingly, "for it was dark and your weapons could single out no man. But my noble father's death was the result of your coming here. When runners from the other end of the island brought the news of your arrival, my father the King set out at once with a band of chosen warriors to capture you. He arrived at the cove at nightfall, in time to see your people leap into your boats and start out to sea. Our warriors sent arrows after you, and you replied with the weapons that sting. One stung my father and he fell dead. The warriors brought him back to the Pearl City, where I slept, and I was awakened to be told I had lost my dearest friend and was now the King of Faytan."

He bowed his head again and for a time remained motionless.

"I am sorry," I said quietly. "It was the fortune of war."

"Yes," he returned, raising his head to look at me curiously; "the fortune of war; the same fate that led you here in the storm to meet your death."

I began to feel a little uneasy.

"Is there no way of evading that foolish law of yours?" I asked.

"No. Away from Faytan every stranger is safe. He is nothing to us then. But when a stranger comes to Faytan the law decrees his death. There is no escape."

"Does the law say in what manner we are to die?" I inquired.

"No. The King determines that. But it is our custom to grant our prisoners the easiest death of which we have knowledge, which is by drowning. The only demand of the law is that every invader shall die. There is no desire on our part to be cruel."

I pondered the matter.

"Does the law state how soon the prisoner shall die?" was my next inquiry.

"No. That would, of course, depend upon circumstances," he admitted.

"In that case, there is no need for us to worry over my death for the present, or over that of this friend who is with me," said I in my easiest manner. "I begin to admire your law, your Majesty. It says very truly that

every intruder upon your island shall die. But every native of Faytan, too, must die — in time."

He saw my point, but was not impressed.

"The law says you shall be put to death, not that you will be permitted to die in time," said he.

"Oh; very well, let it be that way," I agreed. "But I am innocent of any intent to wrong you, or any of your people, your Majesty; so I appeal to you to postpone putting me to death as long as possible."

He stared at me in a puzzled way.

"It is not fear," he muttered, "that drives you to beg for your life — for a few brief hours or days. What is it, then?"

"I've acquired a habit of living," said I, "and I hate to break it. Also I have a duty to perform — to instruct you in the truth concerning the great world outside of Faytan, of which I find you are very ignorant. I must show you how far behind other nations you are; how much you have yet to learn. You cannot gain this information from your own people, who are as ignorant as you are; you must gain it from me, before I am put to death. You say proudly that you rule a great country, but there is a way for you to make it a far greater country. You say your people are happy and prosperous, but I can teach you how to give them many comforts they are now without."

At last I had interested him, for he was an intelligent youth. His eyes flashed. He rose to his feet, facing me, and asked:

"Can you do this?"

"Yes; and more. I can tell you of things you have never even dreamed of, which will make Faytan greater and more powerful than it has ever been — since the beginning of time."

"Then," said he, "your death shall wait until I have listened to your teachings. But do not misunderstand me. I grant you neither pardon nor life. I merely postpone your death."

"That is fair enough," I answered. "I am satisfied."

Deliberately and with dignity he again seated himself, turning toward my captors, who had heard all this conversation plainly.

"You may go," said he.

Evidently the king had no thought of asking anyone's advice as to his actions. He told the captain of the guard to take us to a certain room and keep us safely until he sent for us, and as we bowed low and left the youthful monarch he turned and cast himself prone upon the blankets of the throne again. When I looked back over my shoulder I found he had buried his face in his hands and his attitude was one of great dejection.

CHAPTER 12

THE "CROOKED ONE"

The Pearl Temple was also the Royal Palace, for as the king was the sole priest of the Pearl God it was fitting that his abode should be in this sacred place. Seldom has a nation placed the supreme power, both religious and political, in the hands of one person. It is concrete autocracy and usually a priesthood protects a country from its king while the king protects it from the priests. But here was decidedly a one-man rule — and the man was a boy. If we could win the boy's friendship there were no complications to thwart his will, and therein lay our sole chance of salvation.

Joe and I talked it over in our prison, a fine big room in the rear portion of the temple, with windows opening on the square. There were no guards, nor were we bound or otherwise restrained except by the command of the king to remain in the room until sent for. We might easily have dropped from one of the windows to the crowded streets; but that would have availed us nothing. We might have walked out by way of the corridors, and met the guards at the other end. Really, we were safe enough, and our captors knew it.

Our unfortunate mishap caused us considerable uneasiness. It was not so much on account of our personal safety, although of that we had ample cause to fear; but I worried lest my father or Uncle Naboth, suspecting we were captured, should send out a party to attempt to rescue us. From my present information I knew that would mean death to them all; only while in the ship fort, with ample supplies of guns and ammunition, could they successfully oppose these numerous and powerful Faytans.

At noon we were given ample rations of excellent food; fish, turtle and lobster forming the chief dishes. The drinking water, almost ice-cold from earthen jars, was the finest I ever tasted. Women waited upon us, but when I spoke to them in their native tongue they refused to answer.

After the meal the king came in, unannounced and alone. The youth walked with great dignity and his face was very sad. Sitting upon a bench beside us he said:

"You will tell me of the world beyond the sea, and I will listen. But first tell me your names, and what island you come from."

We introduced ourselves and said we were Americans, but of course that meant nothing to him.

"I am Attero, the twentieth of that name who has ruled in Faytan," said he proudly. Then he began to examine our clothing and to feel the texture of the cloth, asking us how it was made and of what use the various garments might be.

Joe is not much of a talker, so I spent several hours giving the king the most primitive sort of information, taking care to so explain our machinery and inventions as to set him wondering at our cleverness. He was more interested at first in "the weapon that stings" than in any other mechanical contrivance, and you may be sure I explained the death-dealing character of our guns in a most impressive manner.

"Your people are many, oh King," said I; "but our rifles and revolvers have more stings in them than you have people, although our own numbers are so few."

He pondered this a moment.

"I thought that might be so," he returned. "That is a reason why I did not sooner send my people to capture you. My chief Medicine Man, Kuru, has been studying this matter, and Kuru has found that while the metal stings enter human flesh, and pass through it, they do not go far into the bark of the trees. For when my father and some of his people were stung, many other stings flew over their heads and reached the forest, where we found the marks they made. This is the first time such weapons have been used by invaders into Faytan. All others have had spears and arrows like our own. Also you are the only pale-skins who have come to Faytan."

"The pale-skins have more wisdom than the dark-skins," I asserted. "They have conquered all the known world. The reason Faytan has not yet been conquered by us is that until the storm drove us upon your coast we did not know such an island existed."

He bowed gravely.

"That proves how wise my forefathers were in making our laws," said he. "We have been left in peace because the restless pale-skins, who love to conquer what does not belong to them, did not know where to find Faytan. Had we permitted any to leave our shores alive you would then have heard of us. Also my forefathers declared that other nations would want our pearls, which have brought good luck to us for many years. Is that also true?"

"It is," I replied frankly. "My people like all pretty things, and you must know that pearls are found not alone in Faytan, but in many other parts of the world."

He seemed surprised.

"As many as we have?" he asked.

"Perhaps not. But pearls are not unknown to us. See," and I showed him my watch fob, which was set with a large diamond surrounded by small pearls. He paid no attention to the diamond but examined the pearls carefully. Then he smiled.

"Have you seen any so small, so dull and colorless in my kingdom?" he

asked.

"No, your Majesty."

"Such trifles grow in small shellfish, which we do not open, but throw back into the sea to allow them to grow. Those which you have are dead. The life is gone from them. We know how to keep all our pearls alive by bathing them in the salt water," he said. Then he asked, "What is on the other end of this yellow chain?"

I exhibited my watch and explained its use. He was greatly excited over this trinket, especially when I showed him the wheels and how to keep them going by winding. I thought it good policy to make him a present of the watch, which was a cheap affair, and he accepted it with evidences of joy and gave me in return a necklace of pearls worth a fortune.

When he left us he said:

"You must tell me more of your wonderful land and your wise people, for truly you are able to teach me much."

He paused on his way out and came slowly back to us.

"Tell me how my people can be safe from your stings," he begged.

"By keeping a long distance away from them," I replied promptly.

"Is there no other way?"

"None, your Majesty."

"My chief Medicine Man, Kuru, thought that if we made shields of bark, and carried them before us, the stings would not hurt."

That explained the work we had seen the natives doing in the forest. But I hastened to assure King Attero that such shields were useless, as when they came near to our guns the bullets would go through them easily.

"Then," said he, in a grieved tone, "many of my people will die, for they will make the attack to-morrow morning."

"Can you not send swift messengers and stop them?" I asked anxiously "I will not do that," he answered, "for it is not good to give one order to change another. But I will spend the night in beseeching the great Pearl God to protect my people from the pale-skins. Our god has never yet failed us."

With that he left us and we saw no more of him until the following afternoon. When he entered our room then, the boy king was more cheerful of countenance and stepped more firmly and proudly than ever.

"The Pearl God told me not to fear, for all would be well with my people," he announced.

I looked at him curiously. Could one so naturally intelligent really believe some mythical god had spoken to him? But it is not safe to question anyone's religion. Ignoring the point, I asked:

"Have you heard news of the battle?"

“Yes. Many of my warriors have been killed, and your ship has not yet been captured. But they are still fighting.”

I heard this report with pleasure, and Joe shouted: “Hooray!”

The king did not seem annoyed.

“If we do not succeed to-day, we will to-morrow,” he prophesied, with cool assurance. “For to-morrow I shall go to the battle myself, and carry with me our greatest Chieftain, known as the Crooked One.”

“May we go, also?” I inquired, eagerly.

He considered the request thoughtfully. Then he replied:

“It would seem best to drown you both this evening, before I leave for the fight. The Crooked One has advised that, and his wisdom is great. But I wish to be taught more of your knowledge, so I will let you live until my return.”

“But why must we stay here?” I asked.

“Would you assist me in defeating your people, if I took you with me?”

“No,” said I.

He took my hand and touched it lightly to his breast.

“What I like in the pale-skins,” he said, “is the truth-tongue. You do not try to deceive me. That is why I have let you live to teach me. From a lying teacher I would gain but little knowledge.”

I have said before that this boy was remarkably intelligent for a savage. There was also a nobility in his nature that was admirable and noteworthy. I am no more truthful than the average American, but it was not easy to try to deceive one of so simple and frank a character. From the first I had thought it the best policy to be honest with him. Had the pale-skins always been honest in their dealings with the dark-skinned races many national tragedies would have been averted.

We passed several hours in conversation, Joe taking a part in the talk, now and then, but leaving most of it to me. Finally the king withdrew, saying he would not see us again until after his return from the “war.”

It was getting dark and we were thinking of going to bed on our benches — which were plentifully supplied with soft blankets — when a sound of slow and dragging footsteps along the corridor aroused us. A light flickered across the doorway and was followed by a native bearing a torch of rottenwood.

At once I knew who it was. The shrewd, withered features, iron-gray locks and penetrating glance; the humpbacked frame, long arms and spindle legs could belong to none but the “Crooked One,” of whom the king had spoken. I wondered if he came with his Majesty’s permission, for he shielded the torch with a portion of an ample robe that partially covered his misshapen body and peered at us silently a while before addressing us.

Then he said, speaking in a low, soft voice:

"Strangers, I am here to assist you. Our mighty King, the wise Attero, has accepted you as his friends; but that will not save you from the death which the law decrees."

He paused impressively, and I asked:

"What *will* save us, then?"

"Perhaps nothing at all," he returned, evasively. "But I am the King's adviser, even as I was his father's adviser, and I command all the warriors of Faytan. If King Attero listens to anyone, he will listen to me."

"And you will try to save us?"

"If you will do what I am about to ask."

I reflected.

"There seems no way to evade the law," said I. "The law is as old as Faytan, I am told, and demands the death of every stranger landing upon your shores. The King has himself informed us that he is powerless to evade the law, even if he desired to."

The Crooked One smiled sardonically.

"Who makes the laws of Faytan?" he demanded.

"The King's forefathers made this law, it seems," I returned.

"True. Only the King can make a law in Faytan. And — *only the King can unmake it."*

I sprang to my feet, inspired by a new hope. Of course the king had power to abrogate the present law! Why had I not thought of this before? It was an absurd law. The king was our friend.

The Crooked One, having spoken so impressively, was now regarding us with marked attention. The look enabled me to recover my composure quickly.

"Well, then?" said I.

He sat down upon a bench, looking more crooked than ever.

"I am Chief of the Warriors of Faytan," he repeated. "I have fought many invaders, and all are dead. For it is true that until now none has been able to resist the number and power of the Faytans I have led. Your own people cannot resist them for long; yet they are more terrible in a fight than any we have ever met. There are perhaps as many persons in your ship as I have fingers and toes; there are more Faytans than the hairs of my head. In time, in spite of your stinging weapons, which the King says are called guns, we shall surely capture you all. But if there is much fighting many of my warriors will have died before we conquer and destroy the pale-skins. I do not wish to have my warriors die. Why is it necessary? So I have come to you, the King's teachers, to say this: Teach me, also. Teach me how to capture your

people, and in return I will ask the King to make a new law and cancel the old one, so that you two will be permitted to remain in Faytan as long as you live, not only safe from harm, but honored by the King and all his people."

"Chief," I returned, amused but angry, "we could not be honored by anyone if we proved ourselves dishonorable. Will any of your warriors betray you, or your King, to save their own lives? I do not think they would. Nor will we be less noble than the Faytans. But I will give you this answer: We could not betray our people if we would; for there is no way you or your warriors can avoid death if you fight with the pale-skins. Had you made them your friends they would have gone away and left you in peace. But if you foolishly continue to make war upon them, you and your island are lost forever, for no human power can save you."

"A man is but a man," he returned, "whether his skin be pale or brown. You have powerful weapons, but you are few in numbers. If you could kill half my warriors the other half would finally conquer you."

"That remains to be proven," I said.

He arose from the bench and paced up and down, the light of the torch making him appear like some huge goblin.

"So you would sacrifice your own lives to save your friends?" he asked.

"Willingly, if it is necessary."

"And are they as loyal to you?"

"Any one of them would die to save us," I asserted proudly.

He laughed at this; a low, cackling laugh that was not pleasant to hear.

"Then they must be allowed to do so," he said, and picking up the torch left the room without another word or even a parting glance in our direction.

"I don't like that," growled Joe. "He's up to some deviltry, I'm sure."

"The same thing has occurred to me," I replied. "Let us remember his words. He will allow our friends to die to save our lives. It's a trick of some sort, Joe. The Crooked One is far more dangerous than the King himself."

"What can he do?" inquired my friend.

"I don't know; but that clever old head has conceived some shrewd idea, or I'm greatly mistaken. We must be on our guard, Joe. I wish we had some way of warning our people."

"Might send them a wireless," said Joe, grinning.

"Well, let's go to bed and forget it," I suggested. "Nothing can happen before morning, anyhow."

CHAPTER 13
LIVING SHIELDS

But in this declaration I was wrong. Something happened within the hour — a summons to attend the king. We had gone to bed but had not fallen asleep when the messenger came, so in a few moments we were ready to follow the captain of the guard to the throne room.

His Majesty was ready for the field. He bore a short spear with rows of pearls set in the shaft, and over his shoulder was slung a bow and sheaf of arrows. In his belt was the native two-edged tomahawk, and the young fellow looked fit to render a good account of himself, had he been going to fight savages like himself.

Beside the king stood the Crooked One, who bore no arms at all. We afterward learned that this famous chieftain, contrary to the custom of these islanders, never fought in person but contented himself planning the battle and directing his men. In this he was unconsciously imitating the great generals of the civilized world.

"Come," said Attero. "We are ready for the journey."

"Oh! are we to go along?" I asked in surprise.

"Yes," said he, and marched out into the square. We followed. It was pitch dark, but a group of men outside bore torches. Several litters had been provided, similar to the "stretchers" we carry wounded men on. The king took possession of one of these, the Crooked One of another. A third and fourth were for the use of Joe and myself. As soon as I had reclined upon the litter four men started away with it, going on a jog trot, and I found it by no means uncomfortable.

It was a queer procession. Half a dozen runners carried torches ahead of us to light the way. The king's litter came first; then the chieftain's, followed by mine and Joe's. More torchbearers closed the line. And so we proceeded at a rapid pace over hill and dale through the black night to the opposite end of the island.

As we came to the further edge of the forest, dawn broke. It was a gray, dismal day and I thought the sky threatened rain.

A great assemblage of warriors met us and welcomed the king and the Crooked One with evident satisfaction. I stood by and listened while several leaders made their reports. It seemed the fighting had been constant the day before, and time and again the natives had been repulsed with heavy loss. The "stinging things" went straight through the bark shields, which the wise Kuru had recommended, and they had therefore been abandoned. Between the forest and the ship the plain was strewn with dead and wounded Faytans,

and their friends could only go under cover of darkness to reclaim their bodies, as whenever they showed themselves a hail of bullets greeted them.

I was very proud to learn that my friends were doing such excellent work. Against their rapid-fire guns the poor natives with their primitive weapons had no show whatever. Yet the simple creatures had persisted in sacrificing themselves uselessly.

The Crooked One listened calmly to the reports. Then he asked:

"Have any of the invaders left the ship?"

Not any, they told him, since the two who were prisoners had flown away through the air.

"Very good," said he. "To-day, my warriors, we will capture all the pale-skins."

I was curious to learn how he would do it; but breakfast seemed the first thing on the programme, and of this meal Joe and I were given an ample share.

Afterwards the king walked aside with his chieftain while they conferred together privately, speaking in low tones. The natives, stolid and calm, obeying implicitly — and indifferent to life or death — awaited their pleasure in silence. Then Joe and I were led to the edge of the forest and permitted to step out into the open and observe the ship. There was no sign of life on board at first, and rather anxiously I pulled out my handkerchief and waved it to and fro, regardless of the Faytans just behind me. Joe imitated my example and after a moment a flag was run up on the mainmast and ducked once or twice to show we had been recognized.

To find only that short distance separating us from our friends was distinctly aggravating and I was almost tempted to cut and run for the ship and chance a spear thrust between my shoulders. Turning my head to see how near the natives were I found the Crooked One grinning with much satisfaction, and saw him exchange a triumphant glance with the youthful king.

This nettled me, for I at once suspected we had been playing into the hands of our enemies and for some reason had been placed where we were in order that our friends on the ship might recognize us. A moment later the chieftain gave a signal and we were seized by strong natives and our hands bound firmly behind our backs.

Then the mystery was explained.

The Faytan warriors, fully armed, formed in two long lines just behind us, Joe being placed in front of one line and I before another. It was easy to guess their plan then. They intended to use us for living shields, believing our friends would not dare to fire upon us, and so advance near enough to the

ship to board it with a rush and slay the pale-skins by sheer force of numbers.

It was a desperate attempt, cleverly conceived, and based upon my assertion to the Crooked One that our friends would sacrifice themselves for our sakes.

But nature took a hand in the game just then. The sky had been overcast since daybreak, and just as the two lines were advancing into the open, pushing Joe and me before them, the clouds opened and immense drops of rain came pattering down. It grew dark, too, so that we could scarcely see the ship, and the Faytans hesitated and looked inquiringly at their chieftain.

The Crooked One eyed the sky, listened to the low growl of thunder, and ordered his men back to the forest. Next moment the rain came down in floods, and a bolt of lightning crashed overhead and sent a tall tree toppling down upon us. No one was hurt, but it was now so dark we could not see one another, and the great battle of the elements seemed to render our puny human war insignificant.

I realized this would be a good time to make a break for liberty, but our hands were tied and the cords held by stalwart Faytans, so that we were unable to take advantage of the opportunity.

Crash after crash succeeded, and the thunder was deafening, while around us the lightning darted like angry serpents. They have terrible storms in these tropics, at times, and it is no unusual thing for an island to suddenly disappear and never be heard of again. The tempest we now experienced was so extraordinary that I believe it awed even the natives.

I could hear the sea pounding against the rocks and wondered if the boats patrolling the reefs could survive. An hour, perhaps, the storm lasted; but it broke almost as suddenly as it began, and while the trees still dripped rivulets upon us, who were drenched to the skin already, the sun came out brilliantly, shining for the first time that day. The clouds tumbled away hurriedly, as if they had business elsewhere; the wind hushed and was still and only the fierce boom of the breakers remained to remind us of our late fearful experience.

The Faytans also recovered quickly. A few moments sufficed to turn the hundreds of dusky dripping statues into eager, alert warriors, and again the Crooked One ordered the advance — in the same manner previously attempted.

Neither Joe nor I was big enough to fully cover the lines of gigantic warriors crowding behind us; but the idea was that our friends would not dare fire for fear of hitting us. If the natives could in this manner advance close enough to stampede up the rocks to the ship, they hoped to get enough men aboard to conquer our small party very quickly. For at close range the

savages had no doubt of their own superiority.

For a time it seemed their plot would be successful. Joe and I held back as much as we could, with that pushing crowd behind us, but steadily we approached the ship and no sign came from those on board. I began to be worried. Surely Uncle Naboth and Ned Britton were too clever to allow a lot of half naked islanders to outwit them; yet not a head appeared above the bulwarks, not a puff of smoke or rifle ball proved that our tried and trusty seamen were prepared to sell their lives dearly and defend the women to the last.

We had reached the first of the rocks that clustered above the shore and had begun to stumble over them when, with an abruptness that fairly made me jump, a near by crack of firearms saluted us and a straggling volley was poured upon the devoted natives. Not from the ship, however; the shots came from a ridge of rocks directly to the left of us, and the Faytans began falling by the dozens.

"Drop, Joe!" I cried, and at the same time fell flat upon my face between two protecting rocks and lay there while the slaughter continued.

I was exulting in the strategy that had outflanked the Faytans and reflecting that our boys had made a dash for those rocks during the darkness of the storm, when their movements could not be observed, when two stout arms seized me and raised me bodily from the ground. I thought at first some of our own people had rescued me, but being turned face down over a broad shoulder I saw the dusky skin of a savage below me and knew that I had been taken by a Faytan.

Instantly I began to struggle and cry out, but bound as I was I could offer no serious resistance and my howls were almost drowned by the crack of rifles, which continued unabated. I know now that my friends saw my plight and Ned and Senor de Jiminez, who were both splendid shots, made one or two attempts to bring down my captor; but my sprawling body so covered him that only his head and legs were free, and to fire at him at all was to put me in imminent danger.

He was a powerful fellow, and fairly ran with me — no light burden, if I am small — back to the forest. There were few of his band as successful and he doubtless owed his own safety to the fact that he bore me upon his back.

The "stinging weapons" had played fearful havoc with the attacking party, and even as the few stragglers who survived — most of them wounded — crept back to the protecting forest, our men sallied from the rocks, hastily stripped the pearl ornaments from the fallen, and regained the ship without a single casualty.

I stood among the trees watching them, with the king at one side of me

and the Crooked One on the other side. My joy was equaled by the chagrin of my enemies when we saw Joe was safe with his comrades and being complimented on all sides, while the ladies waved their handkerchiefs to him from the deck of the ship.

We were a silent party. I, because I was so disappointed and disgusted at my hard luck that I could almost have cried, and the others because their prettily conceived plan of attack had been thwarted and their warriors mowed down by scores.

"It is useless, your Majesty," announced the Crooked One, regretfully; "the weapons of the pale-skins are too bitter for us to face. The other plan is best. It will require time and patience; but it is best."

"Come, then," replied the King, briefly. "We will return to the city."

"What is the other plan?" I inquired, as we were conducted to our litters.

"We shall let thirst and hunger fight for us," answered Attero, readily. "Your people will soon need fresh water; but they cannot get it without entering the forest, where my warriors will patiently await them."

I got into my litter, where my bonds were removed and I was borne along by my bearers beside the king.

"Did the boats escape the storm?" I asked presently.

He nodded.

"Of course. There was less danger to them on the water than to us in the forest."

"But the reefs — "

"My men are fishes first, and warriors afterward. They are used to storms and do not dread them."

I did not see how any living thing could withstand the breakers on the reefs, but said nothing more on that subject.

The king was unusually quiet and seemed not to wish to converse with me. I could not well blame him, seeing he had just witnessed the destruction of many of his choicest fighting men.

Dismally enough we made our way back to the Pearl City, where to my satisfaction I was taken to my old room at the back of the temple. I missed Joe, but was glad he was safe with his friends. It was not the room that I cared especially for, but the evidence that I still retained the young king's good will. Had he ordered me to some other place in close confinement, I might know my end was not very far off.

CHAPTER 14

A DESPERATE ATTEMPT

Attero sent for me the following day and asked me to continue my descriptions of American life. In view of the fact that he was determined upon the destruction of our entire band I thought best to impress upon him our national importance and to assure him that, as our ships sailed every sea, it was only a question of time when others would discover Faytan and come in such numbers that they could not be successfully opposed. Also I explained many of the luxuries and conveniences we enjoyed, of which the Faytans were wholly ignorant, and informed the king that he and his people could readily secure them all in exchange for a portion of their pearls.

"At present the pearls are of no value to you," said I, "as you can use them only as ornaments. But by disposing of even your smallest ones you can secure practical inventions and manufactured goods that would have the effect of civilizing your people and render their lives far more pleasant and useful."

Attero thought deeply upon this matter, and I could see my arguments tempted him; but neither during this interview nor others could I overthrow the prejudices inherited from a long line of exclusive ancestors, who believed Faytan was the important portion of the world and none but Faytans must ever be permitted to live upon the island.

"I would like the good things the pale-skins have," he admitted, "but not at the price we would have to pay. Our riches lie in our pearls; not because they could be exchanged for so many other things, but because they bring us good luck, and the vast collection we have keeps the Pearl God here among us, and thus insures his protection. We are now prosperous and do not miss your great inventions because we have never had them. But if we allowed you to go away and return with more of your people, think what would happen! Our happy life would become one of turmoil and eagerness to gain worldly goods. Some of my people would want more than their share, and that would lead to envy and quarrels. At present all property belongs to the King, and each of his subjects is given what he requires. My people are content with this condition and it would be foolish for me to change it."

"Then," said I, "I have another proposition. Allow us to leave this island, and do you come with us as our guest. We will take you to America and show you our cities and our great civilization. You will acquire much wisdom, much learning and experience. And afterward, if you still desire it, we will bring you back here, land you upon your island, and go away without telling anyone of Faytan or its king. We will faithfully keep your secret, your

Majesty, and you will be no worse off than before we came, but far richer in knowledge of the world."

I thought this would win him, for a time; but finally he rejected the plan, as he did all others I suggested. We talked together on several days, but my stories of our life and the wonders of our civilization seemed to content him. One evening he said to me:

"You have given me much to think of, Steele; and after you are dead I shall remember you as a good teacher. I am even sorry the law compels me to put you to death; but it does, and my chiefs and medicine men are beginning to reproach me for the delay."

"The King is supreme," I said rather uneasily.

"Because he obeys the same laws his subjects do," was the answer. "Were I to disobey the laws of my great ancestors there would soon be rebels and traitors in Faytan."

I remembered the suggestion of the Crooked One.

"The King who makes the laws has power to change them," I asserted. "If you proclaim a new law, saying that I, your friend, must be permitted to live, your subjects will accept it willingly."

He smiled and looked at me rather pityingly.

"It would please me to do that," said he; "but it would be wrong. I must not, for my own pleasure, disobey my forefathers, who in their wisdom said that all strangers must be put to death. Is my own judgment so perfect that I dare oppose that of twenty noble rulers of Faytan? No. I have the power to save you in that way; but I will not do so."

"Never mind," said I; "we will speak of this matter again, some other time."

He gave me a steady look.

"There will be no opportunity," was his reply. "I like you, Steele. I am glad you have been my friend. But to-morrow you will be put to death."

"To-morrow!"

"I have waited too long already. My people are unhappy to see a pale-skin alive when the law condemns him to death. It will be to-morrow."

He turned away.

"Wait, your Majesty — hear me!" I pleaded.

He waved me aside with a haughty gesture and left the room. The Faytans are philosophers and accept death without a murmur. The king, my friend, could not understand my protest.

Friend? Well, it was a queer sort of friendship that made no effort to save me; that had no sympathy for my unhappy fate.

I am a good deal of a coward at times. That night I could not sleep.

Thinking over my predicament with sober care I could see no possible way of escape. My prison was well guarded. If I managed to leave it there was no chance of my being able to pass through the native city and gain the ship unchallenged. Still, desperate conditions require desperate remedies, and I had my two revolvers in my pocket, both fully loaded. About midnight it occurred to me to make a bold dash for liberty. If I failed I could be no worse off than now, since I was condemned to die the next morning.

The windows of my room were not glazed or barred. They were big square openings placed about five feet above the floor. By standing on the stone bench that ran around the room I could look out upon the square at the rear of the temple. I had no light; neither was there any light burned outside; but the stars were bright enough for me to observe all surrounding objects distinctly. I found the square deserted save by a solitary form standing almost directly beneath my window, his back toward me. A blanket covered his head and shoulders, for the natives dread the chill night air and usually wear a blanket in this manner when abroad at night.

I waited for the man to move away, but when a half hour passed and he did not stir I decided he was a sentry placed there to prevent my escape. It was the first time a guard of any sort had been set to watch over me.

The sight of his blanket gave me an idea. I gathered up one of the heaviest of those with which my bench was provided and creeping into the thick embrasure of the window I spread the blanket, dropped it swiftly over the head of the sentry, and then leaped down and caught him firmly around the arms, bearing him to the ground with my weight.

Although muffled in the blanket, which obstructed free action, the fellow struggled desperately, and I soon realized I could not subdue him. I dared not fire a revolver, as the sound would bring a horde upon me; so I managed to draw my pocket knife and open the blade. With this I stabbed repeatedly at the blanket, trying to reach the man's heart, but the cloth was so thick and closely woven that the rather blunt end of my knife would not penetrate it, and all the while I was having greater difficulty in holding him down.

Rendered desperate by this condition I suddenly sprang away and made for the nearest alley that led out of the square, leaving the sentry to fumble with the blanket until he could free his head.

Before he could do this I had entered a narrow street, up which I ran at my best speed. By good luck it led westward, and I had visions of making a successful run across the island when suddenly in the darkness a pair of strong arms were flung around me and I was pinioned in a viselike grip.

"Pardon me," said a low, sneering voice, in the native tongue. "It is not wise to walk out at night. The dews of Faytan are dangerous."

It was the Crooked One.

Panting and breathless I stood an unresisting prisoner, for I knew the game was up. But I did not reply, understanding that any remark would only call forth more triumphant sneers. As we stood there footsteps hastily approached and another joined us.

“Have you got him?” asked the newcomer.

“Yes, your Majesty.”

“Good,” said Attero. “He nearly smothered me.”

“I beg your Majesty’s pardon,” said I. “I had no idea it was you.”

“And had you known — what then?” he asked.

“I believe I should have acted in the same way.”

The Crooked One laughed and said:

“While I hold him, your Majesty will do well to search him. He may carry dangerous weapons.”

Attero had no hesitation in obeying this request. He took away my revolvers. My knife I had dropped in the square. Then I was led back to my prison.

“I suspected,” said the Crooked One as he thrust me into my old room, “that on this night you would attempt to escape, knowing you are to die tomorrow.”

“It was but natural,” added the king, calmly. “So we watched, my chieftain and I, that we might prevent it. Good night, Steele. Myself, I cannot sleep because of your impending doom. It makes me very unhappy. But die you must.”

With these words he left me, but the Crooked One remained to say: “Every street is well guarded. Escape is impossible. Be patient, therefore, for no man can evade his fate.”

He shuffled after the king, and left alone I threw myself upon the bench and waited for daylight.

CHAPTER 15
MY EXECUTION

I have several times been in danger of a violent death, and yet I still survive. "No man can evade his fate," said the Crooked One; yet it is equally true that no man knows or can foresee his fate. One who frequently escapes death learns to fall back upon philosophy and ceases to worry overmuch.

I must have fallen asleep after a time, for when I opened my eyes the sun was flooding the room and my usual breakfast of milk and fruits stood upon the bench near me. I had scarcely finished the meal when in came a dozen Faytan warriors, headed by the Crooked One himself.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"What if I am not?" I retorted. "You intend I shall go with you, of course."

He inclined his head gravely — not mockingly. Even he, standing in the presence of death, respected my feelings.

They did not bind me, but led me out between close files of the warriors. In the square was a vast crowd, silent and attentive. With my guard I passed to the east and took the broadest thoroughfare — that leading to the bay.

I had never been in this direction before, but I remembered seeing the water front from the airship when Joe and I first entered the city. The crowd swayed back to let us pass and then closed up behind us, following after in a long procession.

It was not far to the beautiful landlocked bay before which the Pearl City had been built, and when it came into full view I found the water thickly covered with boats of every description. The entire populace seemed to have turned out to witness my execution, and the occasion partook of the nature of a festival, for boats, barges and buildings were gay with the peculiar banners these people use for decoration. They were of all colors and shapes, and every one was bordered with pearls.

One of the biggest flat-bottomed barges, manned by a score of oarsmen, lay at the foot of the street waiting to receive us. I stepped aboard, the guards followed and the Crooked One took a seat beside me. Then, while the crowd scrambled for all the empty boats remaining, our oarsmen dipped their paddles and we moved slowly away toward the center of the bay.

A clear space, several hundred feet in diameter, had been left for my exclusive use, and I looked at it rather disapprovingly because the clear, smooth stretch of water was destined, seemingly, to extinguish all my future hopes and ambitions. Death by drowning may be a merciful mode of execution, but I do not think any condemned person can look with

composure upon death in any form. For my part I took a sudden aversion to water, although I had always loved it before.

First we drew up before the royal barge, in which sat the young king upon a high seat. Around this place, and indeed all around the clear space in the bay, were clustered hundreds of boats, so densely packed that their sides touched. Every boat had as many passengers as it would hold, but the natives were quiet and no shouts nor jeering did I hear.

Standing up beside me the Crooked One bowed low before the king and said in a loud voice:

"Here is a stranger who has dared to land upon the shores of Faytan. What shall be done with him, King of Faytan?"

"Let him die," answered the king, speaking so that all might hear.

With an abruptness that startled me, all that vast concourse repeated the sentence after him:

"Let him die!"

It was a veritable roar of voices, expressing all the restrained repugnance of the people for a stranger and their demand for vengeance. It was not so much personal hatred on their part as a desire that I should pay the long deferred penalty for my crime — the crime of being shipwrecked on their coast.

The chieftain resumed his seat and motioned to the oarsmen. With their former deliberation they paddled us out into the clear space, until we had reached the very center of it. Quite naturally I had expected to be bound and have a weight attached to me before I was thrown overboard to drown, but it transpired that this was not the Faytan custom. The king had said he was merciful and did not torture his victims, yet it was with a thrill of horror that I realized my death was to be made a spectacle for the delectation of the natives, who were assembled to watch and enjoy my struggles as I slowly drowned.

Two strong warriors caught me up and tossed me into the water without any warning or preparation. Then the barge receded to a position beside that of the king, leaving me to my fate.

I am a good swimmer, having lived on the water all my life. After the plunge I arose to the surface, supported myself and looked about me. My clothes were a drag upon me, so I managed to divest myself of my coat and my shoes while I trod water.

Why I should make what appeared a useless struggle for a brief period of life was not clear to my mind just then. I was the center of a great theater and thousands of eyes watched me with grave interest. At the edge of the clearing a man was stationed in the prow of every boat with an uplifted spear to

prevent my clinging to the side. They wanted me to struggle. The longer I tried to keep above water the longer the spectacle would last. No matter how powerful a swimmer I might prove I would wear out my strength in time, and they were prepared to wait patiently to witness my antics and my final conquest.

The thought came to me to disappoint them by letting myself quietly drown at once; but so strong is hope in the human breast that I abandoned the idea and determined, instead, to fight it out to the very end.

I rested leisurely upon my back, trying to avoid giving way to excitement and wondering how long I could last, when suddenly a dark object swept across the sky, approaching me with marvelous rapidity. In an instant I knew it was the biplane, and the knowledge so excited me that it was almost fatal. I rolled over and began to sink; then I struggled to the surface to find the airship just over me.

"Catch hold of the frame — here — anywhere!" called an eager voice — eager though it strove to be calm.

I raised myself and made a frantic effort to obey, but failed and sank again. When I came to the surface a moment later the biplane was circling over the bay. Again it came toward me, and this time it dipped until it nearly touched the water. I grabbed the frame as it passed by and clung to it desperately, for it nearly jerked my arms from their sockets.

Arrows were whizzing about me in a cloud; the natives were shouting angrily and a thousand boats were rushing toward us; but the next instant I was high in the air, dangling from the frail crossbar of the lower plane, and my safety was only a question of whether I could hang on or not.

A face bent over me from the seat and stared into mine — a girl's face.

"Lucia!" I cried in wonder.

"Save your breath and hold on!" she returned. "Can you manage it, Sam?"

"I'll try — for awhile."

"Till we get to the ship?"

"I — I'm afraid not."

Indeed, this rush through the air was fast driving the life out of me. My arms and hands were so numb there was no feeling in them at all. Lucia had straightened up to attend to the machine, and the next thing I knew I bumped the earth, lost my hold, and went rolling over and over.

"Quick!" cried the girl. "Let me help you."

I sat up, quite dazed, and glanced about me. We were in an open field, just now deserted by the natives, and Alfonso's *Antoinette* rested upon the ground a short distance away. I could not have stood alone, but Lucia dragged me to my feet and half supported me while I tottered to the machine. It was a great

effort to climb aboard, but the girl, naturally strong and rendered doubly so by excitement, got me into the seat and then deftly started the motors as she sprang up beside me.

The machine rolled along the ground a little way, lifted its nose and then soared into the air like a bird. I was still marveling at the girl's wonderful control of the aeroplane when the ship came in sight. We dipped downward, the motor ceased to whir and the next moment we gracefully alighted full upon the deck of the ship.

A mighty cheer rang in my ears. Then all turned black and I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER 16

THE WAY IT HAPPENED

When I recovered I was surrounded by my friends. Father and Uncle Naboth were administering restoratives while Ned Britton, Alfonso and Senor de Jiminez stood by in a sympathetic group with the sailors for a background. Lucia, squatted in a heap upon the deck, was sobbing into a wet handkerchief. Evidently, now that the adventure was over, the brave girl was wholly unnerved.

Still dazed, but trying to collect my thoughts, I sat up.

"Where's Joe?" I asked.

My father was silent and Uncle Naboth shook his head. Lucia redoubled her sobs. This made me anxious. I got upon my feet with an effort and said:

"Isn't he here?"

"No," said Lucia, spreading out her hands with a piteous gesture. "He is in the Pearl City. I left him there."

Then, by degrees, they explained it all to me. Joe could not rest contented while he knew I was in danger, and from his knowledge of King Attero he believed the savage ruler would drown me as soon as I ceased to interest him in my tales of the civilized world. He confided his fears to Lucia, and suggested that as the biplane was still reposing upon the roof of the house in the Pearl City, he might rescue me by its aid if he could succeed in getting there. He had already crossed the island twice, and believed he could make the trip in a single night. Lucia encouraged him to make the attempt, and offered to go with him; but he would not allow her to do that. When Joe mentioned the matter to father and Uncle Naboth they both disapproved the idea, considering it a hopeless and foolhardy adventure. They did not forbid him to go, however, but said if he undertook the thing he must do so on his own responsibility.

My friend would not be dissuaded, but he confided no further in my relatives and went about his preparations in his own way. With Lucia's aid he made a stain that dyed his skin to a copper color, and then stripped himself of all clothing except a loin cloth such as the Faytans wore. He took a blanket and his revolvers and then, when all was ready and night came, Lucia let down a knotted rope for him and he climbed down the side unobserved and began his journey.

The girl, meantime, had made up her mind not to be deprived of the glory of a share in the adventure. With the impulsiveness of a Spaniard in her was united the athletic training of an American girl, and her romantic nature impelled her to an act that was no less than folly. She silently followed Joe

and tracked him more than half way across the island before he discovered her. Then he was in a dilemma. She positively refused to return to the ship, and he did not like to have her do so unattended. On the other hand he had an intuition that I was in immediate danger and time pressed, so he dared not go back and postpone the event. Therefore he unwillingly permitted the girl to accompany him.

After they had succeeded in passing the warriors in the forest they met no delays on their journey and before daybreak arrived at the city. Joe found the house where we had left the airship, but could not get in. He secreted himself and Lucia in a nook between two rear buildings until morning, when the family that inhabited the place arose. By good luck they managed to creep in unobserved and made their way to the roof, where they found the biplane had been left undisturbed. The natives knew nothing of its operation and perhaps regarded the machine with superstitious awe.

In overhauling the machine Joe discovered that Lucia understood it as well as he did. She had watched us put it together and repair it after Alfonso's accident and had listened carefully and intelligently while we were instructed in its use. Now she helped Joe adjust it, and they got it in order just as I was led out for my execution.

Peering over the edge of the roof Joe watched me being led away and at first could not understand what was up. But when the entire population not already gathered at the water front hurried after us, he gave a shrewd guess that the hour of my execution was at hand.

He knew pretty well what the programme would be. I was to be drowned in sight of the watching Faytans. The water front was not visible from their station on the housetop, but Lucia proposed she should take a flight in the airship and find out how seriously I was in danger.

He allowed her to go for two reasons. One was that he believed he could start the machine all right from the roof, which she could not do. And then, if she found a chance to rescue me, we could go back to the ship in the biplane and Lucia and I would both be saved. To go himself meant to leave her there alone upon the roof, in a strange city and surrounded by enemies.

Of course her mission was a desperate one at the best; but Joe considered it less hazardous than for her to be left upon the roof, and the biplane could not be trusted to carry three.

He questioned Lucia closely, and her knowledge of the machine was more accurate than his own. She had never operated it, but neither had he, for that matter, so in the end he let her go.

The biplane was started safely at the first attempt, and Lucia rose well into the air and circled around until she got her bearings and could overlook the

tragedy being enacted on the bay. Then, seeing my danger, she headed directly for me — and the result you know.

"Where is he now?" I asked Lucia.

"Still in the Pearl City," she replied. "Before I left him he said he would hide until to-night and then make his way back across the island."

"Did he say where he would hide?"

"Yes. He was afraid some one would visit the roof as soon as the natives found that the airship had been taken away. So, while every one was on the water front, he intended to steal away and hide in the room that used to be your prison, at the back of the temple. He said no one would think of looking for him there, and he could get in through the windows and get out again when it grew dark."

I didn't like that plan very well, and began to be worried about my friend. I found my strength returning rapidly and as soon as I could get about I began to examine the airship, to see if it was in proper order. Alfonso, his arm in a sling and his head well bandaged, sauntered up to me and said:

"You fellows seem to have little respect for the property of others. See what trouble you've caused by stealing my *Antoinette."*

"You are right," I admitted. "What will you take for the machine?"

"I won't sell it. It belongs to the revolution."

"Well, the revolution can't use it just now, and I can," I returned. "So if you won't sell it I'll borrow it."

"What are you going to do?" he inquired.

"I'm going to look for Joe. Those Faytans are in an ugly temper just now, and they'll make a quick end of him if they find him."

"Don't be a fool, Sam," cautioned Uncle Naboth.

"Joe can take care of himself," added my father.

"I thought I could, too; but if Joe hadn't tried to help me I'd be drowned by this time. Do you think I ought to desert a comrade, father?" He looked at me thoughtfully a moment. Then he muttered as he turned away:

"Do as you like, Sam. You know best."

I turned to Alfonso.

"How about the biplane?" I asked. "Can I borrow it, or must I steal it again?"

"Take it and welcome," he replied. "Joe's a good fellow. I wish I could go after him myself."

Alfonso wasn't half bad for a South American. He had his faults, but a lot of good qualities with them.

"You can't go just now," warned Lucia, who had been listening to us with nervous attention.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Look!” She pointed to the sky, and for the first time I noticed that it was a leaden gray. The sun had not wholly disappeared, but was a half luminous ball glowing through murky clouds.

“Another of them blamed storms is comin’,” remarked Uncle Naboth; “but we don’t have to shorten sail for ‘em while we’re floatin’ on dry land.”

“The other storm didn’t come that way, sir,” observed Ned Britton, gravely.

We were silent now, for darkness fell upon us suddenly. It was almost as if a light had been extinguished at night. There wasn’t a breath of air stirring and the sea was like glass, but a queer moaning sound came to our ears and we could not discover what caused it.

“Better get below, Lucia, and look after your mother,” said Alfonso.

I could hear her move away obediently, but was unable to see any of the forms that stood around me.

We waited for we knew not what, and the unseen but recognized danger filled us with awe.

Suddenly the deck slid from beneath my feet and I fell flat upon my face. The ship heaved and rolled as if it were tossing upon the waves of the ocean, and her timbers creaked and groaned mournfully. At the same time crash after crash echoed around us, accompanied by a strange rending sound, as if all creation was being tom asunder.

Then the ship stood firm, as it had been before, trembling slightly at times but no longer tossing at its rock anchorage. The blackness continued, however, and our men lighted the lanterns, disclosing our white, pallid faces as we peered at one another questioningly.

Black Nux had raised me to my feet and was even yet partially supporting me.

“What is it?” I whispered.

“Eart’quake, Mars Sam,” he replied in a calm voice. “Guess it all over now.”

There were a few more trembles, and then came the rain — in a deluge, as it had rained before. We were all driven to seek shelter below, and there we waited anxiously for the sky to clear, that we might discover what cataclysms the quake had wrought.

It rained for two solid hours. The darkness continued for an hour or so longer. It lightened gradually, so that the first intimation I had of it was the clearing away of the shadows that had lurked in the comers of the cabin, where the lamplight did not penetrate. I went on deck, where I found Ned, with Nux and Bryonia and most of the crew, all peering anxiously through

the dim light in the direction of the sea.

"What is it, Ned?" I asked, joining them.

"The reefs!" he said, pointing with a trembling finger. "Where are they, Sam?"

I also looked, straining my eyes to discover the two jagged lines of rock jutting out of the sea between us and the open water, as well as the boat patrol that had guarded them ever since the day of our shipwreck. But through the gray atmosphere I could see nothing but the broad expanse of ocean. The waves rolled in, one after another, and broke against the very rocks that held the *Seagull* a prisoner.

There was something queer about the position of the ship, too. Heretofore we had been perched between the two points of rock, full twenty feet above the sea. Now the waves almost lapped our sides, and instead of the rocky points being below us, they reared themselves far above the deck on either side.

I turned toward the island, from whence not a sound was heard. The light had strengthened sufficiently for me to see the forest line, and presently I was aware that some of the trees near the edge had tottered and fallen their length upon the plain. Otherwise the landscape seemed unchanged, and the open space between us and the forest, which had been the scene of such deadly conflict, looked just as it had before.

Truly the earthquake had wrought wonders, and in some ways had benefited us. The most startling change was the destruction of the reefs, leaving the sea free before us. The boats filled with warriors, placed to guard us from escaping, had been swallowed up with the reefs, and no vestige of that formidable array remained except a few fragments of the canoes which washed ashore.

Perhaps inspired by a common hope we all descended the ladders to the ground. There we were better able to appreciate all that had happened. Except that the sky was still gray and forbidding, we now had plenty of light to examine our surroundings clearly.

One glance at the *Seagull* dispelled our half formed hopes. Although her keel was now on a level with the ocean, which even lapped her bow, the ship was wedged fast between the two huge rocks. These must have separated during the earthquake and allowed her to settle down into her present position; but they still held her as in a vise.

"If another quake comes, which ain't unlikely," observed Uncle Naboth, "them rocks is liable to come together again, in which case they'd crack the *Seagull's* sides like a nut in the jaws of a nutcracker."

It was quite possible, and the statement did not reassure us in the least.

“If we could but manage to launch her,” said Alfonso, “we have now plenty of deep water for her to slide into.”

My uncle looked at the young Colombian reproachfully.

“Them ‘ifs’ seem to excuse a lot of fool remarks,” he said. “The only way to launch the *Seagull* would be with dynamite, and after that she wouldn’t be likely to float.”

It was now the middle of the afternoon, and although the sky continued gloomy there was no air stirring and I dared not wait longer if I meant to rescue Joe. I was very uneasy about my old chum, for the earthquake was likely to have created as much havoc at the Pearl City as it had at this end of the island.

My father had gone into the hold with the carpenter and Ned to examine the condition of the ship. The little damage we had sustained from the typhoon which had tossed the ship to her elevated perch had already been repaired — quite foolishly we thought. But the *Seagull* was still dear to the heart of Captain Steele, and he took as much care of her now that she was useless as when she was proudly riding the waves.

“What’s the programme?” asked Uncle Naboth, as I prepared to start.

“I’m going to try to get to the city and find Joe. If possible I’ll get him aboard and fetch him back with me. That’s as far as I can plan now, Uncle.”

“You won’t be foolhardy?”

“I’ll try not to be.”

Then I took my seat, Lucia started the motors, and a moment later I was flying over the forest.

CHAPTER 18
A RUN FOR LIFE

Ascending to an altitude of several hundred feet I attempted what is called the "spiral dip," circling in the air while gradually descending. But the shadows lay so thick in the forest that I could not tell whether any Faytans remained there or not. So I rose again and headed east across the island in the direction of the Pearl City.

I must have covered five of the ten miles in the next five minutes, and the machine was working perfectly, when on glancing down I discovered a native sprinting across the fields at a rapid pace. After him, but nearly a quarter of a mile away, rushed a horde of savages. There must have been at least two thousand of them, all intent upon the chase.

This was so peculiar that I did another spiral dip to get a little closer to the scene of action, and as I neared the ground and could see more plainly it suddenly flashed upon me that the flying native was Joe. Lucia had said that he had stained his skin and dressed himself in the native loin cloth, but I had forgotten that until now. It explained the scene perfectly. Joe had been discovered in the Pearl City, but had managed to escape and was now heading for the ship, followed by a host of pursuers.

My friend was a mighty runner; I knew that. It was Joe's especial athletic accomplishment, and with such a lead I believed he could keep the Faytans behind him until he reached the ship, unless — unless the forest still harbored an army of warriors, in which case they could easily head him off.

With this contingency in mind I resolved to pick him up and take him with me; so, judging the distance as accurately as I could, I swooped downward and landed about a hundred yards ahead of the fugitive.

"Climb aboard, Joe!" I called. "Take it easy, old man. We're safe enough now."

He dashed up, panting but still full of energy, and said:

"How can we start her, Sam?"

"Take your seat, and I'll show you," I replied. I had seen Lucia do the trick and thought I could repeat it. The motor started, but the machine would not rise. It bumped along the rough ground a way until I became alarmed and stopped it.

"Try again," said Joe, coolly.

I glanced over my shoulder and found the Faytans were getting uncomfortably near. But I kept my wits and took time to readjust the machine a little, so it would rise more quickly. A half dozen or so of the pursuers were well in advance of the others, and I suspected they might

interfere with our start. So I faced about and carefully emptied my revolvers at them, halting all but one. Then I turned back to the machine, started the motor and ran beside it a few paces before I sprang into the seat.

Just then I heard a revolver crack beside me, but could pay no attention to it because the biplane was speeding into the air at a tremendous clip. It persisted in mounting upward, because I had adjusted it that way, and in working the steering gear to obviate this the machine got a side motion that was both unpleasant and dangerous.

"Steady her, Sam!" called Joe; but I couldn't.

To add to my perplexity it grew dark again; the moaning sound was repeated, and looking down I saw the earth shaking under me like a bowl full of jelly. It was a horrible sight, and in my agitation I must have bungled in some way, for the fearful side motion increased, and both of us had to hold fast to keep from being hurled from our seats.

Suddenly the biplane took a dive — swift as a bullet, but was supported from falling by the outstretched planes. I lost all control, but managed to shut off the motor and then cling to the frame with all my might.

Down, down we went, but fortunately still gliding diagonally in the direction of the ship. It was a regular tumble by this time, and I am positive the biplane turned over and over several times. We just skipped the further edge of the forest and crashed into the branches of a fallen tree — one of those felled by the earthquake. With a jar that drove the breath out of me I bounded from the branches and fell prone upon the ground. Joe landed near me, and aside from the severe shock we both escaped serious injury or the breaking of bones and soon scrambled to our feet.

I had turned to glance at the biplane, now a hopeless mass of junk, when Joe suddenly caught my hand and said:

"We must run for it, Sam!"

Bursting in a stream from the forest came hundreds of Faytan warriors, brandishing their weapons as they ran. They were so near that an arrow or a well thrown spear might have caught us easily, but the savages seemed intent on capturing us.

I am not a great runner, but on this occasion, at least, I did myself credit as a sprinter. Joe's hand in mine and his superior swiftness helped, of course, and we managed to keep a lead till we were near the ship, when a volley from the deck effectually halted our pursuers.

Even as we clambered up the side by means of the ladders they let down, the sky darkened again and another tremble shook the earth. It made us totter, but was not severe enough to cause any especial damage, and we were all getting used to the quakes by this time, so were not much frightened.

Scientists have told me they are puzzled to explain this apparent connection between the sky and the earthquakes. Atmospheric conditions have nothing to do with earth convulsions, and vice versa, they say. Yet it is a fact that in Faytan we could tell when a "tremble" was coming by the sudden darkening of the sky.

The Faytans were learning a few lessons by experience. When the light became strong enough for us to see again we found the plain fairly alive with natives, and more were constantly pouring in from the forest.

At once all hands were assembled at the rail and our men lost no time in opening fire, for we did not dare give our enemies time to attempt to board us in such numbers, and it was now much easier to scale our sides since the ship had settled down to the sea level.

"Train the howitzers!" called my father, and the gunners leaped to their posts. We had not used the cannon before, as they had not been required, but now the savages were massed before us on the plain and a charge of grape and canister was more effective than many rifle balls.

We took the aggressive and without waiting to be attacked fired the two cannon, one after another, point blank into the mass of Faytans. It was still too dark for us to see just what had been accomplished, but I shudder to think of the wholesale destruction we must have caused. They were doggedly determined, however, to get the "pale-skins" at any cost, and if we destroyed hundreds there were hundreds more to take their places.

Presently they were swarming below us so close that the cannon were only effective in slaughtering those crowding the plain behind them, and every one of us able to hold a rifle stood at the rail and picked off the nearest of our enemies. Their method of getting aboard was curiously primitive. One man clung to the end of a long pole, which others raised in the air and lifted so he could catch our rail. We had little difficulty at first in shooting these down as fast as they were raised to our level; but the attack was concerted with some skill, and every inch of the rail needed to be guarded.

"It must be the young king who is directing this battle," I said to Joe as we stood side by side, firing whenever we saw a head appear.

"It can't be the king," he replied. "I shot him just as you carried me off in the biplane."

"You shot the king!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. He was right upon us and about to grab the frame when I let go at him. Didn't you hear me shoot?"

"Yes, but I was busy with the machine. I'm rather sorry for Attero," I answered, regretfully.

"My opinion is that the Crooked One has planned this onslaught,"

continued Joe, “and that he is bound to get us this time at any sacrifice. He’s a wily old fox.”

We were too busy after that for further conversation. The smoke and din of battle was something terrifying, and even now I wonder that the savages were not disheartened by the noise and the sight of their comrades falling on all sides of them. When we consider how unused they were to firearms we must admit their courage was wonderful.

I think we all began to realize that the situation was serious. On deck Alfonso was fighting as well as he could with his broken arm, while his father stood at his side and rendered an excellent account of himself. Below in the cabin Madam de Alcantara had first fainted and then gone into convulsions. Her shrill screams were not the least disheartening sounds that reached our ears, yet I knew Lucia and Madam de Jiminez were with her and that the poor lady was only frightened and not in a dying condition.

The constant tax on our nerves and the need to be constantly alert was fast wearing out the strongest of us. Bryonia, who had fought nobly, came over to me presently and suggested that we get the women into one of the small boats and launch it while all of us covered the retreat with our guns. He thought they might escape in that way, whereas we were almost certain to be overcome at length by sheer force of numbers, and then all would be doomed.

I did not approve of the attempt myself, but counseled with my father, and Uncle Naboth, who promptly turned down the proposition. Just then four Faytans succeeded in leaping aboard, and were engaged in a hand to hand fight with Nux and Bry, who met them, when Ned got a sword through one and Joe disposed of another with a pistol shot. That evened the numbers and our blacks were not long in ridding themselves of their opponents.

But this temporary invasion was a warning that we were losing ground and our enemies gaining confidence, so we redoubled our activity and found plenty to do in protecting ourselves from the boarders.

CHAPTER 19

A CAPRICIOUS EARTHQUAKE

The fight was still raging fiercely when blackness fell upon us once more, and for the first time I became panic-stricken. The sky had not been clear all day, but we had managed to see until now, ever since the fight began, but with a black pall hanging all around us and thousands of enemies marking us for death the outlook was absolutely terrifying. The Faytans had not been afraid of the dark before, and if now they had the temerity to continue the attack we could not hope to resist them long.

My fears were soon justified. I heard Joe cry: "Look out, Sam!" and felt rather than saw a big warrior standing before me. The moaning sound that preceded a quake sang in my ears as I struck out furiously with my cutlass, and then the ship reared her stem and pitched us all in a struggling mass down the incline of the deck to the bow.

I struck against a naked body and two hands grasped my throat and effectually stopped my breath until I got a pistol out and shot my assailant dead. At least he relaxed his hold and slid away from me — and I slid too, rolling and bumping against obstacles of every sort till my bones cracked. And now through the pitch darkness everything seemed to go — ship and all — and a sheet of water struck me and made me gasp.

The *Seagull* was level now, but rolled from side to side while big waves dashed over her and rushed out of the scuppers in a perpetual stream. I heard a faint cheer from the forecastle; but now the elements were in a wild turmoil and I was too utterly bewildered to think.

The wind had instantly risen to a gale; the waves beat upon us in fury, and through the darkness the *Seagull* floundered here and there in an aimless way that was puzzling and perilous.

While I clung to a bit of rigging and tried to get my breath I realized but one thing clearly — that the ship was afloat again. An earthquake more severe than any that had previously occurred had split the two rocks asunder and allowed her to slide into the sea. But where were we now? And where were the Faytans?

It takes a good deal to phase Captain Steele. Even while I stood marveling my father had grasped the wheel, and as our rudder and screw had been fully repaired the aimless pitching of the ship was rectified as soon as her head was brought to the wind and she faced the waves. Then suddenly the sky brightened sufficiently for us to see one another again.

In the bow stood huddled a group of nearly a dozen Faytan warriors, while our men were scattered here and there clinging to whatever support

they could find. I found that Joe wasn't a dozen yards away from me. The *Seagull* was floating serenely on a rather turbulent sea and the coast of Faytan was a quarter of a mile on our lea.

We stared at the warriors a moment, and they stared at us. Then with one accord we all made an advance toward the savages, determined to settle the fight the first thing we did. They did not wait for us, but leaped the rail into the sea and began swimming toward their island.

"Let 'em go!" shouted my father. "And some of you get busy and toss those bodies overboard. Where's the firemen? Step lively, lads, and get up steam as soon as the Lord'll let you."

The men gave a cheer and responded with alacrity. We stripped all the pearl ornaments from the dead natives that cluttered the deck, and afterward threw the bodies overboard. During this operation I came upon Senor de Jiminez seated in the scupper with his back to the bulwark and sobbing like a baby.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" I asked anxiously.

"No — no! Everything is right," he answered. "We are saved — the revolution is saved! Hurrah for the revolution!"

Joy affects some people that way, but I have no patience with men who cry.

We got up steam presently, but found the *Seagull* was leaking like a sieve. It took all the power of our engines to keep the pumps going; so my father ordered sail hoisted, and as the wind had moderated to a stiff breeze we were soon bowling along with the mainsail and jib set. The mizzenmast had gone by the board at the time of the wreck.

My father's face wore an anxious expression and he called Uncle Naboth and me into the cabin for a consultation.

"We can keep afloat this way for a time — perhaps for days, if the leaks don't get worse," he said; "but it's foolish to take such chances. There are islands near by, I'm sure. Shall we stop at the first one we sight?"

"H-m. It might prove to be another Faytan," said my uncle, doubtfully. "I've had enough fighting to last me for a while."

"Wait a moment," said I. "I want to get Bry."

"What for?" demanded my father.

"He's the only one aboard who knows these seas," I replied.

Bryonia came to the cabin and being questioned declared that he knew the way to his own island of Tuamotu from here, but could not tell how to get from there back to our regular course.

"I know, though," said Captain Steele, "for Tuamotu is marked on my chart. It seems a French ship stopped there once, and did some trading with

the natives, so I've got it pretty fairly located."

"But what sort of a reception will your people give us, Bry?" I asked.

He smiled.

"I am Chief of Tuamotu," he answered proudly. "I am equal to a king. My friends will be welcome."

"All right," said my father. "Take the wheel, Bry, and steer us towards Tuamotu."

Bry became navigator then, and although he knew nothing of the science, he possessed an instinct that guided him correctly. Having once been over the course from Tuamotu to Faytan he had the points firmly fixed in his mind, and as the distance was only about a hundred miles and the breeze held finely, on the second day we sighted a big island which both Bry and Nux declared to be Tuamotu.

Meantime a semblance of order had been restored to the ship. From being in the depths of despair our passengers were now elated with hope. They paid little heed to the fact that water was pouring into our hold as fast as the engines could pump it out, for having escaped the more tangible dangers of Faytan they believed our luck had changed and all would now be well with us.

Our men realized the situation and wore grave looks. But Lucia pounded the piano and sang her Spanish songs, Senor de Jiminez resumed his writing of the speech to be delivered before the Colombian Congress, and Madam de Alcantara dressed herself in her most gorgeous robes and declared she had enjoyed her recent adventure except for a sad attack of "nerves."

Joe and I made a list of the pearls we had secured at Faytan, including those rifled from the dead bodies of our enemies. They made so large a collection and were of such extraordinary size and color that we knew they would sell for an immense sum in America. All of our men were to participate in the "prize money," for all had helped to earn it.

Joe, however, was richer in pearls than all the rest of us. When left by Lucia at the Pearl City he had easily made his way unobserved to the temple and crept through the window into our old room. Here he remained quietly secreted for a time, but the silence throughout the great building was so profound that he ventured to explore some of the passages that were unknown to him. One of them led him to the inner shrine of the temple, where an ugly image of the Pearl God was installed. At the feet of this deity had been placed the most splendid pearls found by the Faytans for many generations past, and Joe calmly filled the folds of his loin cloth as full as they would hold of the choicest gems.

At that moment he was discovered by an attendant, who raised a hue and

cry just as the king was returning from the bay at the head of his people, all heartily disgusted by my escape.

Joe managed to leap from the window and speed away before the Faytans fully recovered from their astonishment, and then began the race which I had ended by taking Joe aboard the airship. Next to Joe's splendid pearls, the value of which would make any man rich, however greedy he might be, my own string of gems, presented me by Attero, was of prime importance. Tiffany has since valued them at forty thousand dollars, but I will not part with them. I liked Attero and have always regretted that Joe had to kill him.

CHAPTER 20
KING BRYONIA

When we sighted Tuamotu it occurred to us that the most important person in our company was now our cook Bryonia — or rather Louiki, as he was called by his people. We had to depend upon the hospitality of these natives for some time to come; or until we had fully repaired the leaks in the *Seagull* for the long voyage still before us. Therefore we held a consultation and decided to appoint Bry to the temporary office of High Admiral, and to defer to him most respectfully while we lay at the island. For if his people found their chief occupying a menial position they might lose respect for him, and cause us a lot of trouble, whereas if he arrived clothed with grandeur and power his prestige would be increased. Nux also must be an important personage, for he was the chiefs cousin and close comrade. It was all explained to our passengers and crew, and so popular were the two faithful blacks that every one entered into the spirit of the deception with glee, expecting much amusement as the result.

Tuamotu we found a beautiful island, finely wooded, with a range of mountains in the center, and altogether somewhat larger than was Faytan. As Bry had declared, there was a fine harbor, with a shelving beach upon which we proposed to run the *Seagull* at high tide, so as to get at her leaks most conveniently.

As we entered this harbor on a bright, sunny morning we found the shore thickly clustered with natives, all as black as the ace of spades. They were not, as a class, so intelligent looking as the Faytans; neither were they so big and powerful of frame; but comparing them with other South Sea Islanders I must admit they were vastly superior to the general run. There was little ferocity about them, although I know they can fight and are brave and sturdy warriors. Just now they were merely curious and excited, for ours was the first ship but one to anchor in their bay. We had made a brave display of bunting and flags, and when we dropped anchor and furled our sails we fired a single shot from the bow by way of salute.

After many conferences with Bry we had decided upon our course of action, so at once the gig was lowered and manned by a chosen crew, while Bry and Nux, arrayed in their best gray and gold uniforms, gravely descended the ladder and took their seats in the stem. I must admit they moved with admirable dignity, and their great size lent them an impressive appearance. No one but us could know that the uniforms were those of servants.

They were received in silence when first they landed, but then we saw Bry

stand before his people and begin a speech, and presently a shout arose so prolonged and loud that it was fairly deafening. Those nearest Bry fell on their knees and tried to kiss his feet, while those on the outskirts leaped about, performing antics of joy. Then a tall native advanced and folded Bry in a cordial embrace, afterward embracing Nux in like manner.

We knew then that our men had been recognized and loyally welcomed home. A procession was formed to the village on the hill, and Bry and Nux marched ahead of it while the shouts and gambols continued unabated. The ship seemed no longer the center of interest to the natives, although scattered bands of them soon began to saunter back to the shore to gaze upon the unusual spectacle.

Much entertained by the reception and satisfied that our black friends were having a good time, we patiently awaited their return, listening the while to the monotonous "chug-chug" of the pumps as they drove out the water that persistently rushed into the hold.

After a couple of hours the procession reappeared, Bry and Nux again at the head. They marched down to the shore and while the chief and his cousin reentered the gig, accompanied by two other blacks, three canoe loads of favored individuals clung to their wake and followed them to the ship as invited guests. At a respectful distance a swarm of other canoes came toward us, but they kept their distance from the ship and had no disposition to intrude.

We received the visitors with great ceremony. Nux told us that the tall black — he who had first embraced them — was his own brother. When the old chief, Bry's father, had passed away, this man became the successor to the rule of the island, as all thought that the legitimate heir, Louiki, had perished in the battle with the Faytans. So Nux's brother had been chief until Bry's return when, being a good fellow at heart, he welcomed the long lost one and gladly resigned the royal office in his favor.

In this party were the principal men and officials of the island, and Bry showed them all over "his" ship, afterward giving them a plentiful feast in the main cabin. Joe and I waited upon them, and it was fun to see Bry at one end of the table and Nux at the other, posing as the ruling spirits of the *Seagull.* My father and Uncle Naboth kept out of sight, as did all our passengers, although Alfonso and Lucia hid on deck and looked through the cabin windows at the savage feasters. The natives of Tuamotu were duly impressed by the magnificent surroundings of their chief, and when he told them his ship needed repairs and tinkering they gladly volunteered to render him every assistance in their power.

So his Majesty dismissed them and sent them back to land, and when they

were gone he put on his apron and cooked our dinner.

At five o'clock it was high tide, so we ran the *Seagull* as far upon the sandy beach as she would go, using the engines to propel her, and then the natives swarmed into the water and braced her sides securely with long poles. As the tide receded it left us high and dry, and by daybreak our men were able to begin work. They found several planks badly sprung and one gaping hole tom in the bottom by the sharp rocks as we slid into the sea during the earthquake at Faytan. It would take several days to repair the damage, because we could only work part of the time, while the tide was out.

Meantime, we were entertained by Bry in the chiefs house. It was the best in the village, or on the island, but made of logs with a palm thatched roof and far inferior in all ways to the houses of Faytan. Bry gave us a native repast, consisting mainly of roast goat and cheese, with a variety of delicious fruits. There was constant feasting and a succession of dances and ceremonies in honor of the chiefs return, and I was curious to know how all this would affect Bry, and whether he would leave us to rule over his native island, or not.

But when the repairs were completed Bry announced his intention of sailing with us.

"Allola, who is the brother of Nux, will make my people a good chief," he said, "and my life with you has spoiled me to be now an ignorant islander. I could not be contented here any more; so I will go with you, and stay with you always."

There had never been any question about Nux. He had always said he preferred the life on our ship to being a big man in Tuamotu.

All being ready, hundreds of natives waded into the water at high tide and by sheer force of numbers pushed the *Seagull* off the sands till she floated. This operation was assisted by our propeller, but we could not have moved the heavy ship without the aid of Bry's subjects.

The chief held a final farewell celebration, and distributed among his people many beads and trinkets, a stock of which we always carried with us. Then, amid the shouts of the multitude, who were all really sorry to see us go, we started our engines, whistled three times and fired a gun, and steamed out of the hospitable harbor.

The voyage to Colombia was without important event. We soon got upon our course again and encountered no more bad weather.

But at our destination Senor de Jiminez received some startling news. The revolution had, by a clever coup, overthrown the unpopular government and won without bloodshed. As De Jiminez did not happen to be present, another patriot was elected to the presidency, and was doing his duty ably when we

arrived.

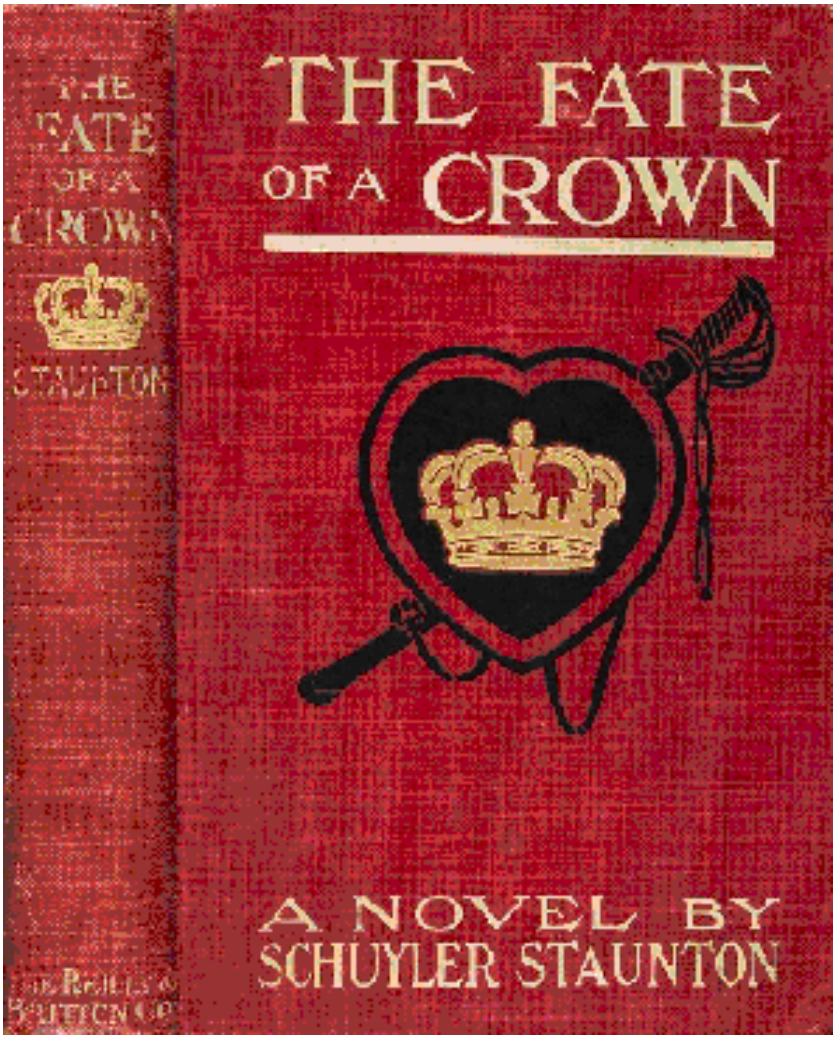
So the feelings of young Alfonso and his father were a combination of both joy and sadness; but the joy predominated when they were greeted enthusiastically by their political friends and De Jiminez was publicly thanked for his services to his party.

We were able to unload the guns and ammunition without danger, after which we settled our accounts in a satisfactory manner with the revolutionists, who recognized all of De Jiminez' obligations. Then, being once more the legal owners of the *Seagull,* we bade good-bye to our passengers, who had shared with us the dangerous adventure at Faytan, and steamed northward toward San Francisco.

I noticed that Joe and Lucia exchanged rings, and overheard him promise to see her again. I wonder if he ever will?

THE FATE OF A CROWN

The Fate of a Crown was Baum's attempt at an adventure novel for adults. Reilly & Britton published the novel in 1905 and Baum assumed the moniker, Schuyler Staunton. Glen C. Sheffer provided the illustrations. Set in Brazil in 1889 during a revolution, the novel includes historical figures as characters. Its protagonist, however, is a fictional American named Robert Harcliffe, who travels from his home in New Orleans to Brazil to act as secretary to a wealthy politician. What follows is a melodramatic adventure filled with politics, romance, murder, and mystery. The novel was moderately successful and Baum used the Staunton pseudonym again the following year with the publication of *Daughters of Destiny*.



A first edition copy of 'The Fate of a Crown'

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CHAPTER I

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

LEANING back in my chair, I smoked my morning cigar and watched Uncle Nelson open his mail. He had an old-fashioned way of doing this: holding the envelope in his left hand, clipping its right edge with his desk shears, and then removing the inclosure and carefully reading it before he returned it to its original envelope. Across one end he would make a memorandum of the contents, after which the letters were placed in a neat pile.

As I watched him methodically working, Uncle Nelson raised a large blue envelope, clipped its end, and read the inclosure with an appearance of unusual interest. Then, instead of adding it to the letters before him, he laid it aside; and a few minutes later reverted to it again, giving the letter a second careful perusal. Deeply musing, for a time he sat motionless in his chair. Then, arousing himself from his deep abstraction, he cast a fleeting glance in my direction and composedly resumed his task.

I knew Uncle Nelson's habits so well that this affair of the blue envelope told me plainly the communication was of unusual importance. Yet the old gentleman calmly continued his work until every letter the mail contained was laid in a pile before him and fully docketed. With the last he suddenly swung around in his chair and faced me.

"Robert," said he, "how would you like to go to Brazil?"

Lacking a ready answer to this blunt question I simply stared at him.

"De Pintra has written me," he continued — "do you know of Dom Miguel de Pintra?" I shook my head. "He is one of the oldest customers of the house. His patronage assisted us in getting established. We are under deep obligations to de Pintra."

"I do not remember seeing his name upon the books," I said, thoughtfully.

"No; before you came into the firm he had retired from business — for he is a wealthy man. But I believe this retirement has been bad for him. His energetic nature would not allow him to remain idle, and he has of late substituted politics for business."

"That is not so bad," I remarked, lightly. "Some people make a business of politics, and often it proves a fairly successful one."

My uncle nodded.

"Here in New Orleans, yes," he acknowledged; "but things are vastly different in Brazil. I am sorry to say that Dom Miguel is a leader of the revolutionists."

"Ah," said I, impressed by his grave tone. And I added: "I have supposed that Dom Pedro is secure upon his throne, and personally beloved by his

subjects."

"He is doubtless secure enough," returned Uncle Nelson, dryly, "but, although much respected by his people, there is, I believe, serious opposition to an imperial form of government. Rebellions have been numerous during his reign. Indeed, these people of Brazil seem rapidly becoming republicans in principle, and it is to establish a republican form of government that my friend de Pintra has placed himself at the head of a conspiracy."

"Good for de Pintra!" I cried, heartily.

"No, no; it is bad," he rejoined, with a frown. "There is always danger in opposing established monarchies, and in this case the Emperor of Brazil has the countenance of both Europe and America."

As I ventured no reply to this he paused, and again regarded me earnestly.

"I believe you are the very person, Robert, I should send de Pintra. He wishes me to secure for him a secretary whom he may trust implicitly. At present, he writes me, he is surrounded by the emperor's spies. Even the members of his own household may be induced to betray him. Indeed, I imagine my old friend in a very hot-bed of intrigue and danger. Yet he believes he could trust an American who has no partiality for monarchies and no inducement to sympathize with any party but his own. Will you go, Robert?"

The question, abrupt though it was, did not startle me. Those accustomed to meet Nelson Harcliffe's moods must think quickly. Still, I hesitated.

"Can you spare me, Uncle?"

"Not very well," he admitted. "You have relieved me of many of the tedious details of business since you came home from college. But, for de Pintra's sake, I am not only willing you should go, but I ask you, as a personal favor, to hasten to Rio and serve my friend faithfully, protecting him, so far as you may be able, from the dangers he is facing. You will find him a charming fellow — a noble man, indeed — and he needs just such a loyal assistant as I believe you will prove. Will you go, Robert?"

Uncle Nelson's sudden proposal gave me a thrill of eager interest best explained by that fascinating word "danger." Five minutes before I would have smiled at the suggestion that I visit a foreign country on so quixotic an errand; but the situation was, after all, as simple as it was sudden in development, and my uncle's earnest voice and eyes emphasized his request in no uncertain manner. Would I go? Would I, a young man on the threshold of life, with pulses readily responding to the suggestion of excitement and adventure, leave my humdrum existence in a mercantile establishment to mingle in the intrigues of a nation striving to cast off the shackles of a monarchy and become free and independent? My answer was assured.

Nevertheless, we Harcliffes are chary of exhibiting emotion. Any eagerness on my part would, I felt, have seriously displeased my reserved and deliberate uncle. Therefore I occupied several minutes in staring thoughtfully through the open window before I finally swung around in my chair and answered:

"Yes, Uncle, I will go."

"Thank you," said he, a flush of pleasure spreading over his fine old face. Then he turned again to the letter in the blue envelope. "The Castina sails on Wednesday, I see, and Dom Miguel wishes his new secretary to go on her. Therefore you must interview Captain Lertine at once, and arrange for passage."

"Very well, sir."

I took my hat, returned my uncle's grave bow, and left the office.

CHAPTER II
VALCOUR

THE Castina was a Brazilian trading-ship frequently employed by the firm of Harcliffe Brothers to transport merchandise from New Orleans to Rio de Janiero. I had formed a slight acquaintance with the master, Pedro Lertine, and was not surprised when he placed his own stateroom at my disposal; for although the vessel usually carried passengers, the cabin accommodations were none of the best.

The Captain asked no questions concerning my voyage, contenting himself with the simple statement that he had often carried my father with him in the Castina in former years, and was now pleased to welcome the son aboard. He exhibited rare deference toward my uncle, Nelson Harcliffe, as the head of our firm, when the old gentleman came to the head of the levee to bid me good by; this Uncle Nelson did by means of a gentle pressure of my hand. I am told the Harcliffes are always remarkable for their reserve, and certainly the head of our house was an adept at repressing his emotions. Neither he nor my father, who had been his associate in founding the successful mercantile establishment, had ever cared to make any intimate friends; and for this reason the warmth of friendship evinced by Uncle Nelson in sending me on this peculiar mission to Dom Miguel de Pintra had caused me no little astonishment.

After his simple handshake my uncle walked back to his office, and I immediately boarded the Castina to look after the placing of my trunks. Before I had fairly settled myself in my cozy state-room we were under way and steaming down the river toward the open sea.

On deck I met a young gentleman of rather prepossessing personality who seemed quite willing to enter into conversation. He was a dark-eyed, handsome Brazilian, well dressed and of pleasing manners. His card bore the inscription, *Manuel Cortes de Guarde.* He expressed great delight at finding me able to speak his native tongue, and rendered himself so agreeable that we had soon established very cordial relations. He loved to talk, and I love to listen, especially when I am able to gather information by so doing, and de Guarde seemed to know Brazil perfectly, and to delight in describing it. I noticed that he never touched on politics, but from his general conversation I gleaned considerable knowledge of the country I was about to visit.

During dinner he chattered away continually in his soft Portuguese patois, and the other passengers, less than a dozen in number, seemed content to allow him to monopolize the conversation. I noticed that Captain Lertine treated de Guarde with fully as much consideration as he did me, while the

other passengers he seemed to regard with haughty indifference. However, I made the acquaintance of several of my fellow-voyagers and found them both agreeable and intelligent.

I had promised myself a pleasant, quiet voyage to the shores of Brazil, but presently events began to happen with a rapidity that startled me. Indeed, it was not long before I received a plain intimation that I had embarked upon an adventure that might prove dangerous.

We were two days out, and the night fell close and warm. Finding my berth insufferably oppressive I arose about midnight, partially dressed, and went on deck to get whatever breeze might be stirring. It was certainly cooler than below, and reclining in the shadow beside a poop I had nearly succeeded in falling asleep when aroused by the voices of two men who approached and paused to lean over the taffrail. They proved to be Captain Lertine and de Guarde, and I was about to announce my presence when the mention of my own name caused me to hesitate.

"I cannot understand why you should suspect young Harcliffe," the Captain said.

"Because, of all your passengers, he would be most fitted to act as de Pintra's secretary," was the reply. "And, moreover, he is a Harcliffe."

"That's just it, senhor," declared the other; "he is a Harcliffe, and since his father's death, one of the great firm of Harcliffe Brothers. It is absurd to think one of his position would go to Brazil to serve Miguel de Pintra."

"Perhaps the adventure entices him," returned de Guarde's soft voice, in reflective tones. "He is but lately from college, and his uncle may wish him to know something of Brazil, where the greater part of the Harcliffe fortune has been made."

"Deus Meo!" exclaimed the Captain; "but you seem to know everything about everybody, my dear Valcour! However, this suspicion of young Harcliffe is nonsense, I assure you. You must look elsewhere for the new secretary — provided, of course, he is on my ship."

"Oh, he is doubtless on board," answered de Guarde, with a low, confident laugh. "De Pintra's letters asked that a man be sent on the first ship bound for Rio, and Nelson Harcliffe is known to act promptly in all business matters. Moreover, I have studied carefully the personality of each of your passengers, and none of them seems fitted for the post so perfectly as young Harcliffe himself. I assure you, my dear Lertine, that I am right. He can be going out for no other purpose than to assist de Pintra."

The Captain whistled softly.

"Therefore?" he murmured.

"Therefore," continued de Guarde, gravely, "it is my duty to prevent his

reaching his destination.”

‘You will have him arrested when we reach Rio?”

“Arrested? No, indeed. Those Americans at Washington become peevish if we arrest one of their citizens, however criminal he may be. The situation demands delicate treatment, and my orders are positive. Our new secretary for the revolution must not reach Rio.”

Again the Captain whistled — a vague melody with many false and uncertain notes. And the other remained silent.

Naturally I found the conversation most interesting, and no feeling of delicacy prevented my straining my ears to catch more of it. It was the Captain who broke the long silence.

“Nevertheless, my dear Valcour — ”

“De Guarde, if you please.”

“Nevertheless, de Guarde, our Mr. Harcliffe may be innocent, and merely journeying to Brazil on business.”

“I propose to satisfy myself on that point. Great God, man! do you think I love this kind of work — even for the Emperor’s protection? But my master is just, though forced at times to act with seeming cruelty. I must be sure that Harcliffe is going to Brazil as secretary to the rebel leader, and you must aid me in determining the fact. When our man goes to breakfast in the morning I will examine his room for papers. The pass-key is on the bunch you gave me, I suppose?”

“Yes, it is there.”

“Very well. Join your passengers at breakfast, and should Mr. Harcliffe leave the table on any pretext, see that I am duly warned.”

“Certainly, senhor.”

“And now I am going to bed. Good night, Lertine.”

“Good night, de Guarde.”

They moved cautiously away, and a few minutes later I followed, regaining my state-room without encountering any one.

Once in my bunk I lay revolving the situation in my mind. Evidently it was far from safe to involve one’s self in Brazilian politics. My friend Valcour, as the Captain had called him, was a spy of the Emperor, masquerading under the title of Senhor Manuel Cortes de Guarde. A clever fellow, indeed, despite his soft, feminine ways and innocent chatter, and one who regarded even murder as permissible in the execution of his duty to Dom Pedro. It was the first time in my life I had been, to my knowledge, in any personal danger, and the sensation was rather agreeable than otherwise.

It astonished me to discover that de Guarde knew so perfectly the contents of Dom Miguel’s letter to my uncle. Doubtless the secret police had read and

made a copy of it before the blue envelope had been permitted to leave Brazil. But in that case, I could not understand why they had allowed the missive to reach its destination.

In his cool analysis of the situation, my friend the spy had unerringly hit upon the right person as the prospective secretary of the revolutionary leader. Yet he had no positive proof, and it was pleasant to reflect that in my possession were no papers of any sort that might implicate me. Uncle Nelson had even omitted the customary letter of introduction.

"De Pintra knew your father, and your face will therefore vouch for your identity," the old gentleman had declared. Others have remarked upon the strong resemblance I bear my father, and I had no doubt de Pintra would recognize me. But, in addition, I had stored in my memory a secret word that would serve as talisman in case of need.

The chances of my puzzling Dom Pedro's detective were distinctly in my favor, and I was about to rest content in that knowledge, when an idea took possession of me that promised so much amusement that I could not resist undertaking it. It may be that I was influenced by a mild chagrin at the deception practised upon me by de Guarde, or the repulsion that a secret-service man always inspires in the breast of a civilian. Anyway, I resolved to pit my wits against those of Senhor Valcour, and having formulated my plan I fell asleep and rested comfortably until daybreak.

It had been my habit to carry with me a pocket diary, inscribing therein any vivid impressions or important events that occurred to me. There were many blank pages, for my life had been rather barren of incident of late; but I had resolved to keep a record of this trip and for this purpose the little book was now lying upon the low shelf that served as table in my room.

Arising somewhat before my usual hour I made a hurried toilet and sat down to make entries in my diary. I stated that my sudden desire to visit Brazil was due to curiosity, and that my uncle had placed several minor business matters in my hands to attend to. My return to New Orleans would depend entirely upon how well I liked the country where our house had so successfully traded for a half-century. Arriving at this point, I added the following paragraphs:

"On the ship with me Uncle Nelson is sending a private secretary to Dom Miguel de Pintra, who, it seems, was an ancient customer of our house, but is now more interested in politics than in commerce. This secretary is a remarkable fellow, yet so placid and unassuming that no one is likely to suspect his mission. He seems to know everything, and has astonished me by his intimate knowledge of all that transpires upon the ship. For example, he tells me that my friend de Guarde, of whom I have already grown fond, is

none other than a certain Valcour, well known in the secret service of his majesty the Emperor of Brazil. Valcour is on board because he knows the contents of a letter written by de Pintra to my uncle, asking for a shrewd American to become his private secretary; also Valcour is instructed to dispose of the rebel secretary before we land at Rio — meaning, of course, to murder him secretly. This seemingly horrible plot but amuses our secretary, for Valcour has only poor Captain Lertine to aid him, whereas the wonderful American has a following of desperate men trained to deeds of bloodshed who will obey his slightest nod. From what I learn I am confident the plan is to assassinate my friend Valcour in a secret manner, for here is a rare opportunity to rid themselves of a hated royalist spy. Poor de Guarde! I would like to warn him of his danger, but dare not. Even then, I doubt his ability to escape. The toils are closing about him, even while he innocently imagines that he, as the Emperor's agent, controls the situation. It would all be laughable, were it not so very terrible in its tragic aspect.

"But there! I must not mix with politics, but strive to hold aloof from either side. The secretary, though doubtless a marvel of diplomacy and duplicity, is too unscrupulous to suit me. He has actually corrupted the entire crew, from the engineers down, and at his word I am assured the fellows would mutiny and seize the ship. What chance has my poor friend de Guarde — or Valcour — to escape this demon? Yet, after all, it is not my affair, and I dare not speak."

This entry I intended to puzzle Senhor Valcour, even if it failed to wholly deceive him. I wrote it with assumed carelessness, to render it uniform with the former paragraphs the book contained. These last were of a trivial nature, dating back for some months. They would interest no one but myself; yet I expected them to be read, for I left the diary lying upon my shelf, having first made a number of pin-marks in the paint, at the edges of the cover, so that I might assure myself, on my return to the room, whether or not the book had been disturbed.

This task completed, I locked the door behind me and cheerfully joined the breakfast party in the main cabin.

De Guarde was not present, but no one seemed to miss him, and we lingered long in light conversation over the meal, as it is the custom of passengers aboard a slow-going ship.

Afterward, when I went on deck, I discovered de Guarde leaning over the rail, evidently in deep thought. As I strolled past him, puffing my cigar, he turned around, and the sight of his face, white and stern, positively startled me. The soft dark eyes had lost their confident, merry look, and bore a trace of fear. No need to examine the pin-marks on my shelf. The Emperor's spy

had, without doubt, read the false entry in my diary, and it had impressed him beyond my expectation.

CHAPTER III

A GOOD REPUBLICAN

DURING the remainder of the voyage I had little intercourse with Senhor Manuel Cortes de Guarde. Indeed, I had turned the tables quite cleverly upon the spy, who doubtless imagined many dangers in addition to those indicated in my diary. For my part, I became a bit ashamed of the imposition I had practised, despite the fact that the handsome young Brazilian had exhibited a perfect willingness to assassinate me in the Emperor's interests. Attracted toward him in spite of my discoveries, I made several attempts to resume our former friendly intercourse; but he recoiled from my overtures and shunned my society.

In order to impress upon de Guarde the truth of the assertions I had made in the diary I selected a young physician, a Dr. Neel, to impersonate the intriguing and bloodthirsty American secretary. He was a quiet, unobtrusive fellow, with an intelligent face, and a keen, inquiring look in his eyes. I took occasion to confide to Dr. Neel, in a mysterious manner that must have amused him, that I was afflicted with an incomprehensible disease. He promptly mistook me for a hypochondriac, and humored me in a good-natured fashion, so that we were frequently observed by de Guarde in earnest and confidential conversation. My ruse proved effective. Often I surprised a look of anxiety upon the Brazilian's face as he watched Dr. Neel from a distance; but de Guarde took pains not to mingle with any group that the physician made part of, and it was evident the detective had no longer any desire to precipitate a conflict during the voyage to Rio.

I do not say that Valcour was cowardly. In his position I am positive I could not have escaped the doubts that so evidently oppressed him. He secluded himself in his state-room, under pretense of illness, as we drew nearer to Brazil, and I was considerably relieved to have him out of the way.

Captain Lertine, to whom Valcour had evidently confided his discovery of the diary, was also uneasy during those days, and took occasion to ask me many questions about Dr. Neel, which I parried in a way that tended to convince him that the physician was none other than the secret emissary sent by my uncle to Miguel de Pintra. The goodd Captain was nervous over the safety of the ship, telling me in a confidential way that nearly all his crew were new hands, and that he had no confidence in their loyalty to the Emperor.

His face bore an expression of great relief when we anchored in the bay of Rio de Janiero on a clear June morning at day-break, and no time was lost in transferring the passengers of the Castina to a small steam launch, which

soon landed us and our effects upon the quay.

I had not seen Valcour since we anchored, but after bidding good by to Dr. Neel, who drove directly to his hotel, I caught a glimpse of the detective's eager face as he followed the doctor in a cab.

The whole affair struck me as being a huge joke, and the sensation of danger that I experienced on board the ship was dissolved by the bright sunshine and the sight of the great city calmly awakening and preparing for its usual daily round of business.

I dispatched my trunks to the Continental Railway station, and finding that I had ample time determined to follow them on foot, the long walk being decidedly grateful after the days on shipboard. Much as I longed to see the beauties of Brazil's famous capital, I dared not at this time delay to do so, as my uncle had impressed upon me the necessity of presenting myself to de Pintra as soon as possible after my arrival.

Another thing that influenced me was the deception that I had practised upon the detective. Valcour, with the Emperor at his back, was now a power to be reckoned with, and as soon as he discovered that I had misled him the police would doubtless be hot upon my trail. So my safest plan was to proceed at once to the province where my new chief had power to protect me.

I reached the railway station without difficulty and found I had a quarter of an hour to spare.

"Give me a ticket to Cuyaba," I said to the clerk at the window.

He stared at me as he handed the card through the grating.

"Matto Grosso train, senhor," he said. "It leaves at eight o'clock."

"Thank you," I returned, moving away.

A tall policeman in an odd uniform of black and gold barred my way.

"Your pardon, senhor Americano," said he, touching his visor in salute; "I beg you to follow me quietly."

He turned on his heel and marched away, and I, realizing that trouble had already overtaken me, followed him to the street.

A patrol was drawn up at the curb, a quaint-looking vehicle set low between four high wheels and covered with canvas. Startled at the sight I half turned, with a vague idea of escape, and confronted two stout policemen at my rear.

Resistance seemed useless. I entered the wagon, my captor seating himself upon the bench beside me. Instantly we whirled away at a rapid pace.

I now discerned two men, also in uniform, upon the front seat. One was driving the horses, and presently the other climbed over the seat and sat opposite my guard.

The tall policeman frowned.

“Why are you here, Marco?” he demanded, in a threatening voice.

“For this!” was the prompt answer; and with the words I caught a quick flash as the man called Marco buried a knife to the hilt in the other’s breast.

My captor scarce uttered a sound as he pitched headforemost upon the floor of the now flying wagon. The driver had but given a glance over his shoulder and lashed his horses to their utmost speed.

Cold with horror at the revolting deed I gazed into the dark eyes of the murderer. He smiled as he answered my look and shrugged his shoulders as if excusing the crime.

“A blow for freedom, senhor!” he announced, in his soft, native patois. “Dom Miguel would be grieved were you captured by the police.”

I started.

“Dom Miguel! You know him, then?”

“Assuredly, senhor. You are the new secretary. Otherwise you would not be so foolish as to demand a ticket to Cuyaba — seat of the revolution.”

“I begin to understand,” I said, after a moment’s thought. “You are of the police?”

“Sergeant Marco, senhor; at your service. And I have ventured to kill our dear lieutenant in order to insure your safety. I am sorry,” he added, gently touching the motionless form that lay between us; “the lieutenant was a good comrade — but a persistent royalist.”

“Where are you taking me?” I asked.

“To a suburban crossing, where you may catch the Matto Grosso train.”

“And you?”

“I? I am in no danger, senhor. It is you who have done this cruel deed — and you will escape. The driver — a true patriot — will join me in accusing you.”

I nodded, my horror of the tragedy growing each moment. Truly this revolutionary party must be formed of desperate and unscrupulous men, who hesitated at no crime to advance their interests. If the royalists were but half so cruel I had indeed ventured into a nest of adders. And it was the thought of Valcour’s confessed purpose to murder me on shipboard that now sealed my lips from a protest against this deed that was to be laid upon my shoulders.

Presently the wagon slowed up, stopping with a jerk that nearly threw me from my seat. The sergeant alighted and assisted me to follow him.

We were at a deserted crossing, and the buildings of the city lay scattered a quarter of a mile away.

“Take this flag, senhor. The engineer will stop to let you aboard. Farewell,

and kindly convey my dutiful respects to Dom Miguel."

As the wagon rolled away the train came gliding from the town, and I stepped between the tracks and waved the flag as directed. The engine slowed down, stopped a brief instant, and I scrambled aboard as the train recovered speed and moved swiftly away.

For the present, at least, I was safe.

Quite unobtrusively I seated myself in the rear end of the passenger coach and gazed from the window as we rushed along, vainly endeavoring to still the nervous beating of my heart and to collect and center my thoughts upon the trying situation in which I found myself. Until the last hour I had been charmed with my mission to Brazil, imagining much pleasure in acting as secretary to a great political leader engaged in a struggle for the freedom of his country. The suggestion of danger my post involved had not frightened me, nor did it even now; but I shrank from the knowledge that cold-blooded assassination was apparently of little moment to these conspirators. In less than two hours after landing at Rio I found myself fleeing from the police, with a foul and revolting murder fastened upon me in the name of the revolution! Where would it all end? Did Uncle Nelson thoroughly realize the terrible nature of the political plot into which he had so calmly thrust me? Probably not. But already I knew that Brazil was a dangerous country and sheltered a hot-headed and violent people.

It was a long and dreary ride as we mounted the grade leading to the table-lands of the interior. Yet the country was beautifully green and peaceful under the steady glare of the sun, and gradually my distress passed away and left me more composed.

Neither the passengers nor trainmen paid the slightest attention to me, and although at first I looked for arrest at every station where we halted, there was no indication that the police of Rio had discovered my escape and flight.

Night came at last, and I dozed fitfully during the long hours, although still too nervous for sound sleep. We breakfasted at a way-station, and a couple of hours later, as I was gazing thoughtfully out the window, the conductor aroused me by settling into the seat at my side. He was a short, pudgy individual, and wheezed asthmatically with every breath.

"I received a telegram at the last station," he confided to me, choking and coughing between the words. "It instructed me to arrest an American senhor traveling to Cuyaba. Have you seen him?"

I shivered, and stared back into his dull eyes.

"Ah! I thought not," he continued, a short laugh. "It is not the first telegram they have sent this trip from Rio, you know; but I cannot find the fellow anywhere aboard. Do you wonder? How can I be expected to

distinguish an American from a Brazilian? Bah! I am not of the police."

I began to breathe again. The conductor nudged my ribs with his elbow.

"These police will perhaps be at the station. Cuyaba is the next stop. But we will slow up, presently, at a curve near the edge of the forest. Were I the American, and aboard this train, I would get out there, and wait among the trees in the forest until Dom Miguel's red cart comes along. But *ai de mim,* the American is not here! Eh? Thank God for it! But I must leave, senhor. Good day to you."

He bustled away, and at once I seized my traveling-bag and slipped out to the back platform. We slowed up at the curve a moment later, and I sprang to the ground and entered the shade of a group of trees that marked the edge of the little forest.

And there I sat upon a fallen tree-trunk for two weary hours, wondering what would happen next, and wishing with all my heart I had never ventured into this intrigue-ridden country. But at the end of that time I heard the rattle of a wagon and the regular beat of a horse's feet.

Peering from my refuge I discerned a red cart slowly approaching over the road that wound between the railway track and the forest. It was driven by a sleepy Brazilian boy in a loose white blouse and a wide straw hat.

As he arrived opposite me I stepped out and hailed him.

"Are you from Dom Miguel de Pintra?" I asked.

He nodded.

"I am the American he is expecting," I continued, and climbed to the seat beside him. He showed no surprise at my action, nor, indeed, any great interest in the meeting; but as soon as I was seated he whipped up the horse, which developed unexpected speed, and we were soon rolling swiftly over the country road.

CHAPTER IV
THE CHIEFTAIN

THE province of Matto Grosso is very beautiful, the residences reminding one greatly of English country estates, except that their architecture is on the stiff Portuguese order. At least a half-mile separated the scattered mansions from one another, and the grounds were artistically planned and seemingly well cared for. At this season the rich, luxuriant foliage of Brazil was at its best, and above all brooded a charming air of peace that was extremely comforting after my late exciting experiences. We met few people on the way, and these were peasants, who touched their hats respectfully as we passed.

We had driven some five miles when we came to an estate rather more extensive than its neighbors, for the hedge of blooming cactus that divided the grounds from the roadway ran in an unbroken line as far as the eye could reach.

However, we came to a gateway at last and turned into the grounds, where magnificent trees shaded a winding drive ascending to the fine old mansion of de Pintra.

A man stood upon the porch shading his eyes with his hand and gazing at us as we approached. When I alighted from the cart he came down the steps to meet me, bowing very courteously, and giving my hand a friendly pressure. No other person was in sight, and the red cart had disappeared around the corner of the house.

"You are welcome, sir," he said, in a quiet but most agreeable voice. "You come from my friend Nelson Harcliffe? That was my thought." He paused to give me a keen look, and then smiled — a sweet, winning smile such as I have seldom seen. "Ah! may you not be a Harcliffe yourself? Your features seem quite familiar.

But, pardon me, sir; I have not introduced myself. I am Miguel de Pintra."

I fear I stared at him with somewhat rude intentness, for Dom Miguel was a man to arouse interest in any beholder. Tall, spare, but not ungraceful, his snow-white hair and beard made strong contrast with his bronzed features. His eyes, soft and gentle in expression, were black. His smile, which was not frequent, disclosed a line of even, white teeth. His dress was a suit of plain, well-fitting black, supplemented by irreproachable linen. Taken altogether, Dom Miguel appeared a model of the old school of gentility, which may be as quickly recognized in Brazil as in England, France or America. Indeed, it seemed an absurdity to connect this eminently respectable personage with revolutions, murders, and intrigue, and my spirits rose the moment I set eyes

upon his pleasant face.

"I am Robert Harcliffe," said I, answering the question his politeness would not permit him to ask; "the son of Marshall Harcliffe."

A flash of surprise and delight swept over his dark face. He seized both my hands in his own.

"What!" he cried, "Nelson Harciffe has sent me his own nephew, the son of my dear old friend? This is, indeed, a rare expression of loyalty!"

"I thought you knew," I rejoined, rather embarrassed, for the fathomless eyes were reading me with singular eagerness.

"I only knew that Nelson Harcliffe would respond promptly to my requests. I knew that the Castina would bring my secretary to Brazil. But whom he might be I could not even guess." He paused a moment, to continue in a graver tone: "I am greatly pleased. I need a friend — a faithful assistant."

"I hope I may prove to be both, sir," I returned, earnestly. "But you seem not to lack loyal friends. On my way hither from Rio de Janiero I have been protected more than once, doubtless by your orders."

"Yes; the cause has many true adherents, and I notified our people to expect an American gentleman on the Castina and to forward him to me in safety. They know, therefore, that you came to assist the Revolution, and it would have been strange, indeed, had the royalists been able to interfere with you."

"Your party is more powerful than I had suspected," I remarked, thinking of my several narrow escapes from arrest.

"We are only powerful because the enemy is weak," answered Dom Miguel, with a sigh. "Neither side is ready for combat, or even an open rupture. It is now the time of intrigue, of plot and counterplot, of petty conspiracies and deceits. These would discourage any honest heart were not the great Cause behind it all — were not the struggle for freedom and our native land! But come; you are weary. Let me show you to your room, Robert Harcliffe."

He dwelt upon the name with seeming tenderness, and I began to understand why my father and my stern Uncle Nelson had both learned to love this kindly natured gentleman of Brazil.

He led me through cool and spacious passages to a cozy room on the ground floor, which, he told me, connected by a door with his study or work-room.

"I fear my trunks have been seized by the government," said I, and then related to him the details of my arrest and the assassination of the police lieutenant.

He listened to the story calmly and without interruption; but when it was finished he said:

"All will be reported to me this evening, and then we will see whether your baggage cannot be saved. There were no papers that might incriminate you?"

"None whatever."

Then I gave him the story of Valcour, or de Guarde, and he smiled when I related the manner in which the fellow had been deceived.

"I knew that Valcour had been dispatched to intercept my secretary," said he, "and you must know that this personage is not an ordinary spy, but attached to the Emperor himself as a special detective. Hereafter," he continued, reflectively, "the man will be your bitter enemy; and although you have outwitted him once he is a foe not to be despised. Indeed, Harcliffe, your post is not one of much security. If, when I have taken you fully into our confidence, you decide to link your fortunes to those of the Revolution, it will be with the full knowledge that your lifemay be the forfeit. But there — we will speak no more of business until after dinner."

He left me, then, with many cordial expressions of friendship.

A servant brought my luncheon on a tray, and after eating it I started for a stroll through the grounds, enjoying the fragrance and brilliance of the flowers, the beauties of the shrubbery, and the stately rows of ancient trees. The quiet of the place suggested nothing of wars and revolutions, and it was with real astonishment that I reflected that this establishment was the central point of that conspiracy whose far-reaching power had been so vividly impressed upon me.

Engaged in this thought I turned the corner of a hedge and came face to face with a young girl, who recoiled in surprise and met my gaze with a sweet embarrassment that caused me to drop my own eyes in confusion.

"Your pardon, senhorita!" I exclaimed, and stood aside for her to pass.

She nodded, still searching my face with her clear eyes, but making no movement to proceed. I noted the waves of color sweeping over her fair face and the nervous tension of the little hands that pressed a mass of flowers to her bosom. Evidently she was struggling for courage to address me; so I smiled at her, reassuringly, and again bowed in my best manner, for I was not ill pleased at the encounter.

I have always had a profound reverence for woman — especially those favored ones to whom Nature has vouchsafed beauty in addition to the charm of womanhood. And here before me stood the most beautiful girl I had ever seen, a type of loveliness more sweet and delightful than any I had even dreamed could exist.

It was my fate to recognize this in the moments that I stood watching her lips tremble in the endeavor to form her first words to me.

"You are the American?" she asked, finally.

"Assuredly, donzella. Permit me to introduce myself. I am Robert Harcliffe."

"My uncle expected you," she said, shyly.

"Your uncle?"

"Dom Miguel is not really my uncle," answered the girl; "but he permits me to call him so, since he is my guardian. Yet it was not from him I learned of your arrival, but from Francisco, who traveled from Rio on the same train."

My face doubtless showed that I puzzled, for she added, quickly:

"Francisco is my brother, senhor. We are both devoted heart and soul to the Cause. That is why I felt that I must speak with you, why I must welcome you to our fellowship, why I must implore you to be strong and steadfast in our behalf!"

I smiled at the vehemence that had vanquished her former hesitation, and to my delight her exquisite face lighted with an answering smile.

"Ah, you may laugh at me with impunity, senhor Americano, for I have intuitions, and they tell me you will be faithful to the cause of freedom. Nay, do not protest. It is enough that I have read your face."

With this she made a pretty courtesy and vanished around the hedge before I could summon a word to detain her.

It is astonishing to what an extent this encounter aroused my enthusiasm for "the Cause." Heretofore I had regarded it rather impersonally, as an affair in which I had engaged at the request of my good uncle. But now that I had met this fellow-conspirator and gazed into the enchanting depths of her eyes, I was tremendously eager to prove my devotion to the cause of freedom.

True, I had seen the girl but a few moments. Even her name was unknown to me. But she was a rebel; Francisco, her brother, was a rebel; and Dom Miguel permitted her to call him "uncle." Very good; very good, indeed!

When I returned to my room I was surprised to find my trunks there, they having arrived in some mysterious way during my brief absence.

I dressed for dinner and found my way to the drawing-room, where my host — or my employer, rather — was conversing with a lady and a gentleman.

There was no reason my heart should give that bound to warn me; no one could fail to recognize that slender, graceful figure, although it was now enveloped in dainty folds of soft white mulle. But she had no intention of allowing her chance meeting to stand for a formal introduction, and as Dom

Miguel presented me she shot a demure yet merry glance at me from beneath her long lashes that might readily have effected my conquest had I not already surrendered without discretion.

"The Senhorita Lesba Paola," announced de Pintra, speaking the name with evident tenderness. Then he turned to the man. "Senhor Francisco Paola," said he.

Francisco Paola puzzled me at that first meeting nearly as much as he did later. His thin form was dressed in a dandified manner that was almost ludicrous, and the fellow's affectation was something amazing. Somewhat older than his bewitching sister, his features were not without a sort of effeminate beauty, of which he seemed fully aware. At once I conceived him to be a mere popinjay, and had no doubt he would prove brainless and well-nigh insufferable. But Dom Miguel introduced Paola with grave courtesy and showed him so much deference that I could not well be ungracious to the young dandy. Moreover, he had a stronger claim to my toleration: he was Lesba's brother.

Scarcely were these introductions complete when another lady entered the room. She gave a slight start at sight of me, and then advanced gracefully to Dom Miguel's side.

"My daughter, Mr. Harcliffe; Senhora Izabel de Mar," said he, and gave me a curious glance that I could not understand.

I looked at Madam Izabel and lowered my eyes before the cold and penetrating stare I encountered. She was handsome enough, this woman; but her features, however regular, were repellant because of their absolute lack of expression — a lack caused by repression more than a want of mobility. Her face seemed carved of old ivory. Even the great eyes were impenetrable, reflecting nothing of the emotions that might dwell within. I found myself shivering, and although I sincerely tried to be agreeable to Dom Miguel's daughter, the result was little more than farcical.

My sudden appearance in the household had evidently caused Madam Izabel surprise; perhaps it annoyed her, as well. But she drew me to a seat beside her and plied me with questions which I was at a loss how to answer, in view of the supposedly private nature of my mission to Brazil. Inwardly I blamed Dom Miguel for not telling me how far his daughter and his guests were in his confidence; but before I blundered more than a few aimless sentences a light voice interrupted us and Francisco Paola leaned over Madam Izabel's chair with a vapid compliment on the lady's charms and personal appearance that was fairly impertinent in its flippancy.

The look she gave him would have silenced an ordinary man; but Senhor Francisco smiled at her frown, took the fan from her hand, and wielded it in a

mincing manner, pouring into her unwilling ears a flood of nonsense that effectually cut me out of the conversation.

Dom Miguel came to my relief by requesting me to take the younger lady in to dinner, and to my surprise Madam Izabel took Paola's arm without apparent reluctance and followed us to the dining-room.

The repast would have been, I fear, rather stupid, but for Senhor Francisco's ceaseless chatter. To my great disappointment the donzella Lesba Paola appeared exceedingly shy, and I could scarce recognize in her my eager questioner of the afternoon. De Pintra, indeed, courteously endeavored to draw the ladies into a general conversation; but his daughter was cold and unresponsive, and the host himself appeared to be in a thoughtful mood. For my part, I was glad to have the fop monopolize the conversation, while I devoted my attention to the silent girl beside me; but it was evident that a general feeling of relief prevailed when the ladies returned to the drawing-room and left us to our cigars and wine.

When the servants had been dismissed and we three men were alone, Dom Miguel addressed me with unrestrained frankness.

"I suppose you know little of our revolutionary movement, Mr. Harcliffe," he began.

"Very little, indeed," I responded, briefly.

"It dates back for several years, but has only recently attained to real importance. Gradually our people, of all degrees, have awakened to the knowledge that they must resist the tyranny of the imperial government, with its horde of selfish and unscrupulous retainers. The Emperor is honest enough, but weak, and his advisors leave him no exercise of his own royal will. Spurred by the nation's distress, the Revolution has at last taken definite form, and at present centers in me. But as our strength grows our danger increases. The existing government, knowing itself threatened, has become keen to ferret out our secrets and to discover the leaders of the Cause, that they may crush all with one blow." He paused, and flicked the ash from his cigar with a thoughtful gesture. "For this, and many another reason, I need the assistance of a secretary whom I may trust implicitly — who will, if need be, die rather than betray my confidence."

I glanced hesitatingly at the man opposite me. It seemed strange that Dom Miguel should speak of these personal matters before a third party.

Paola was trying to balance a spoon upon the edge of his glass. He met my gaze with the usual vacant smile upon his face, yet in the instant I caught a gleam in his eye so shrewd and comprehensive that it positively startled me. Instantly his face was shrouded in a cloud of smoke from his cigar, and when it cleared away the idiotic leer that appeared upon his countenance

indicated anything rather than intelligence.

Dom Miguel looked from one to the other of us and smiled.

"Perhaps I should tell you," said he, earnestly, "that no man is higher in our counsels or more thoroughly esteemed by all classes of patriots than Francisco Paola. You may speak in his presence with entire freedom."

At this the popinjay twisted the end of his moustache and bowed with mock dignity. I stared at him with an astonishment tinged with disgust. His eyes were now glassy and his gaze vacuous. The eternal smile expressed merely stupidity and conceit.

I turned to Dom Miguel, who gravely awaited my reply.

"Sir," said I, "you are my father's old friend. My uncle, who was my father's partner and is now my own associate in business, sent me to you with the injunction to serve you to the best of my ability. This, by way of gratitude for many favors shown our house by you in the days when a friend counted largely for success. Being an American, I love freedom. Your cause shall be my cause while I remain with you. Of my power to serve you there may be question; but my loyalty you need never doubt."

Dom Miguel reached across the table and grasped my hand warmly. Paola poured himself a glass of wine and drank to me with a nod of his head.

"When first I saw you," said de Pintra, with emotion, "I knew we had gained a strong ally, and God knows we need trustworthy friends at this juncture. The great Revolution, which is destined some day to sweep Brazil from Para to Rio Grande do Sul, is now in my keeping. In my possession are papers wherein are inscribed the names of the patriots who have joined our Cause; to me has been intrusted the treasure accumulated for years to enable us to carry out our plans. Even those plans — carefully formulated and known to but a few of my associates, the trusted leaders — are confided to my care. I cannot risk a betrayal that would imperil the Revolution itself and destroy all those concerned in it, by employing for secretary a Brazilian, who might become a spy of Dom Pedro, or be frightened by threats and imprisonment."

Leaning forward, he regarded me earnestly. His eyes, so gentle in repose, now searched my own with fierce intensity.

"I cannot even trust my own household," he whispered; "my own flesh and blood has been suspected of treason to the Cause. There are spies everywhere, of both sexes, among the lowly and the gentle. So I accept your services, Robert Harcliffe, and thank you in the name of the Revolution."

It was all rather theatric, but I could not question the sincerity of his speech, and it succeeding in impressing me with the gravity of my new position.

“Come,” said Paola, breaking the tense pause, “let us rejoin the ladies.”

Five minutes later he was at the piano, carolling a comic ditty, and I again wondered what element this seemingly brazen and hollow vessel might contain that could win the respect of a man like Miguel de Pintra. Evidently I must, to some extent, glean a definite knowledge of the Revolution and its advocates through a process of absorption. This would require time, as well as personal contact with Dom Miguel and his confrères, and my only hope of mastering the situation lay in a careful study of each personage I met and a cautious resistance of any temptation to judge them hastily. Nevertheless, this mocking, irrepressive Francisco Paola had from the first moment of his acquaintance become an astounding puzzle to me, and so far I could see no indication of any depths to his character that could explain the esteem in which he was held by the chief.

But now his sister’s sweet, upturned face drew me to her side, and I straightway forgot to dwell upon the problem.

CHAPTER V

MADAM IZABEL

I slept well in my pleasant room, but wakened early, the bright sunshine pouring in at my open window and the songs of many birds sounding a lively chorus.

After a simple toilet I sprang through a low window to the ground and wandered away among the flowers and shrubbery. It was in my thoughts to revisit the scene of my first meeting with Lesba, but I had no hope of finding her abroad at that hour until I caught a glimpse of her white gown through a small arbor. The vision enchanted me, and after pausing a moment to feast my eyes upon her loveliness, I hastily approached to find her cutting roses for the breakfast-table. She greeted me in her shy manner, but in a way that made me feel I was not intruding. After a few conventional remarks she asked, abruptly:

"How do you like Dom Miguel?"

"Very much," said I, smiling at her eagerness. "He seems eminently worthy of the confidence reposed in him by his compatriots."

"He is a born leader of men," she rejoined, brightly, "and not a rebel of us all would hesitate to die for him. How do you like my brother?"

I was sorry she asked the question, for its abruptness nearly took my breath away, and I did not wish to grieve her. To gain time I laughed, and was answered with a frown that served to warn me.

"Really, donzella," I made haste to say, "if I must be quite frank, your brother puzzles me. But I think I shall like him when I understand him better."

She shook her head as if disappointed.

"No one ever understands Francisco but me," she returned, regretfully.

"Does he understand himself?" I foolishly asked.

The girl looked at me with a gleam of contempt.

"Sir, my brother's services are recognized throughout all Brazil. Even Fonseca respects his talents, and the suspicious Piexoto trusts him implicitly. Francisco's intimate friends positively adore him! Ah, senhor, it is not necessary for his sister to sing his praises."

I bowed gravely.

"Let me hope, donzella, that your brother will soon count me among his intimates." It was the least I could say in answer to the pleading look in her eyes, and to my surprise it seemed to satisfy her, for she blushed with pleasure.

"I am sure he likes you already," she announced; "for he told me so as he

bade me good by this morning."

"Your brother has gone away?"

"He started upon his return to court an hour ago."

"To court!" I exclaimed, amazed at his audacity.

She seemed amused.

"Did you not know, senhor? Francisco Paola is Dom Pedro's Minister of Police."

I acknowledged that the news surprised me. That the Emperor's Minister of Police should be a trusted leader of the Revolutionary party seemed incomprehensible; but I had already begun to realize that extraordinary conditions prevailed in Brazil. Perhaps the thing that caused me most astonishment was that this apparently conceited and empty-headed fellow had ever been selected for a post so important as Minister of Police. Yet the fact explained clearly how I had received secret protection from the moment of my landing at Rio until I had joined Dom Miguel.

The girl was laughing at me now, and her loveliness made me resolve not to waste more of these precious moments in political discussion. She was nothing loath to drop the subject, and soon we were chattering merrily of the flowers and birds, the dewdrops and the sunshine, and all those inconsequent things that are wont to occupy youthful lips while hearts beat fast and glances shyly mingle. When, at length, we sauntered up the path to breakfast I had forgotten the great conspiracy altogether, and congratulated myself cordially upon the fact that Lesba and I were well on the way to becoming good friends.

Madam Izabel did not appear at the morning meal, and immediately it was over Dom Miguel carried me to his study, where he began to acquaint me thoroughly with the standing and progress of the proposed revolution, informing me, meantime, of my duties as secretary.

While we were thus occupied the door softly opened and Izabel de Mar entered.

She cast an odd glance in my direction, bowed coldly to her father, and then seated herself at a small table littered with papers.

A cloud appeared upon Dom Miguel's brow. He hesitated an instant, and then addressed her in a formal tone.

"I shall not need you to-day, Izabel."

She turned upon him with a fierce gesture.

"The letters to Piexoto are not finished, sir," she exclaimed.

"I know, Izabel; I know. But Mr. Harcliffe will act as my secretary, hereafter; therefore he will attend to these details."

She rose to her feet, her eyes flashing, but her face as immobile as ever.

“I am discharged?” she demanded.

“Not that, Izabel,” he hastened to reply. “Your services have been of inestimable value to the Cause. But they are wearing out your strength, and some of our friends thought you were too closely confined and needed rest. Moreover, a man, they considered — ”

“Enough!” said she, proudly. “To me it is a pleasure to toil in the cause of freedom. But my services, it seems, are not agreeable to your leaders — rather, let us say, to that sly and treacherous spy, Francisco Paola!”

His face grew red, and I imagined he was about to reply angrily; but the woman silenced him with a wave of her hand.

“O, I know your confidence in the Emperor’s Minister, my father; a confidence that will lead you all to the hangman, unless you beware! But why should I speak? I am not trusted, it seems; I, the daughter of de Pintra, who is chief of the Revolution. This foreigner, whose heart is cold in our Cause, is to take my place. Very well. I will return to the court — to my husband.”

“Izabel!”

“Do not fear. I will not betray you.

If betrayal comes, look to your buffoon, the Minister of Police; look to your cold American!”

She pointed at me with so scornful a gesture that involuntarily I recoiled, for the attack was unexpected. Then my lady stalked from the room like a veritable queen of tragedy.

Dom Miguel drew a sigh of relief as the door closed, and rubbed his forehead vigorously with his handkerchief.

“That ordeal is at last over,” he muttered; “and I have dreaded it like a coward. Listen, senhor! My daughter, whose patriotism is not well understood, has been suspected by some of my associates. She has a history, has Izabel — a sad history, my friend.” For a moment Dom Miguel bowed his face in his hands, and when he raised his head again the look of pained emotion upon his features lent his swarthy skin a grayish tinge.

“Years ago she loved a handsome young fellow, one Leon de Mar — of French descent, who is even now a favorite with the Emperor,” he resumed. “Against my wishes she married him, and her life at the court proved a most unhappy one. De Mar is a profligate, a rake, a gamester, and a scoundrel. He made my daughter suffer all the agonies of hell. But she uttered no complaint and I knew nothing of her sorrow. At last, unable to bear longer the scorn and abuse of her husband, Izabel came to me and confessed the truth, asking me to give her the shelter of a home. That was years ago, senhor. I made her my secretary, and found her eager to engage in our patriotic conspiracy. It is

my belief that she has neither seen nor heard from de Mar since; but others have suspected her. It is hard indeed, Robert, not to be suspicious in this whirlpool of intrigue wherein we are engulfed. A few weeks ago Paola swore that he found Izabel in our garden at midnight engaged in secret conversation with that very husband from whom she had fled. I have no doubt he was deceived; but he reported it to the Secret Council, which instructed me to confide no further secrets to my daughter, and to secure a new secretary as soon as possible. Hence my application to your uncle, and your timely arrival to assist me."

He paused, while I sat thoughtfully considering his words.

"I beg that you will not wrong my daughter with hasty suspicions," he continued, pleadingly. "I do not wish you to confide our secrets to her, since I have myself refrained from doing so, out of respect for the wishes of my associates. But do not misjudge Izabel, my friend. When the time comes for action she will be found a true and valuable adherent to the Cause. And now, let us to work!"

I found it by no means difficult to become interested in the details of the plot to overthrow the Emperor Dom Pedro and establish a Brazilian Republic. It was amazing how many great names were enrolled in the Cause and how thoroughly the spirit of freedom had corrupted the royal army, the court, and even the Emperor's trusted police. And I learned, with all this, to develop both admiration and respect for the man whose calm judgment had so far directed the mighty movement and systematized every branch of the gigantic conspiracy. Truly, as my fair Lesba had said, Dom Miguel de Pintra was "a born leader of men."

Night after night there assembled at his house groups of conspirators who arrived secretly and departed without even the servants having knowledge of their visit. During the counsels every approach to the house was thoroughly guarded to ward against surprise.

Strong men were these republican leaders; alert, bold, vigilant in serving the Cause wherein they risked their lives and fortunes. One by one I came to know and admire them, and they spoke freely in my presence and trusted me. Through my intercourse with these champions of liberty, my horizon began to broaden, thus better fitting me for my duties.

Francisco Paola, the Emperor's Minister, came frequently to the conferences of the Secret Council. Always he seemed as simpering, frivolous, and absurd as on the day I first met him. To his silly jokes and inconsequent chatter none paid the slightest attention; but when a real problem arose and they turned questioningly to Paola, he would answer in a few lightly spoken words that proved at once shrewd and convincing. The

others were wont to accept his decisions with gravity and act upon them.

I have said that Paola impressed me as being conceited. This might well be true in regard to his personal appearance, his social accomplishments — playing the piano and guitar, singing, riding, and the like — but I never heard him speak lightly of the Cause or boast of his connection with it. Indeed, he exhibited a queer mingling of folly and astuteness. His friends appeared to consider his flippancy and self-adulation as a mask that effectually concealed his real talents. Doubtless the Emperor had the same idea when he made the fellow his Minister of Police. But I, studying the man with fervid interest, found it difficult to decide whether the folly was a mask, or whether Paola had two natures — the second a sub-conscious intelligence upon which he was able to draw in a crisis.

He certainly took no pains to impress any one favorably, and his closest friends were, I discovered, frequently disgusted by his actions.

From the first my judgment of the man had been influenced by his sister's enthusiastic championship. Lesba seemed fully in her brother's confidence, and although she was not a recognized member of the conspiracy, I found that she was thoroughly conversant with every detail of our progress. This information must certainly have come from Francisco, and as I relied absolutely upon Lesba's truth and loyalty, her belief in her brother impressed me to the extent of discrediting Madam Izabel's charge that he was a traitor.

Nevertheless, Paola had acted villainously in thrusting this same charge upon a woman. What object, I wondered, could he have in accusing Izabel to her own father, in falsely swearing that he had seen her in conversation with Leon de Mar — the man from whose ill treatment she had fled?

Madam Izabel had not returned to the court, as she had threatened in her indignant anger. Perhaps she realized what it would mean to place herself again within the power of the husband she had learned to hate and despise. She still remained an inmate of her father's mansion, cold and impassive as ever. Dom Miguel treated her with rare consideration on every occasion of their meeting, seeking to reassure her as to his perfect faith in her loyalty and his sorrow that his associates had cast a slur upon her character.

To me the chief was invariably kind, and his gentleness and stalwart manhood soon won my esteem. I found myself working for the good of the cause with as much ardor as the most eager patriot of them all, but my reward was enjoyed as much in Lesba's smiles as in the approbation of Dom Miguel.

That the government was well aware of our plot there was no question. Through secret channels we learned that even the midnight meetings of the Secret Council were known to the Emperor. The identity of the leaders had

so far been preserved, since they came masked and cloaked to the rendezvous, but so many of the details of the conspiracy had in some way leaked out that I marveled the Emperor's heavy hand had not descended upon us long ago. Of course de Pintra was a marked man, but they dared not arrest him until they had procured all the information they desired, otherwise they would defeat their own purpose.

One stormy night, as I sat alone with Dom Miguel in his study, I mentioned my surprise that in view of the government's information of our plot we were not summarily arrested. It was not a council night, and we had been engaged in writing letters.

"I suppose they fear to precipitate trouble between such powerful factions," he answered, somewhat wearily. "The head of the conspiracy is indeed here, but its branches penetrate to every province of the country, and were an outbreak to occur here the republicans of Brazil would rise as one man. Dom Pedro, poor soul, does not know where to look for loyal support. His ministry is estranged, and he is not even sure of his army."

"But should they discover who our leaders are, and capture them, there would be no one to lead the uprising," I suggested.

"True," assented the chief. "But it is to guard against such a coup that our Council is divided into three sections. Only one-third of the leaders could be captured at any one time. But I do not fear such an attempt, as every movement at the capital is reported to me at once."

"Suppose they were to strike you down, sir. What then? Who would carry out your plans? Where would be the guiding hand?"

For a moment he sat thoughtfully regarding me.

"I hope I shall be spared until I have accomplished my task," he said, at length. "I know my danger is great; yet it is not for myself I fear. Lest the Cause be lost through premature exposure, I have taken care to guard against that, should the emergency arise. Light me that candle yonder, Robert, and I will reveal to you one of our most important secrets."

He motioned toward the mantel, smiling meantime at my expression of surprise.

I lighted the candle, as directed, and turned toward him expectantly. He drew a rug from before the fireplace, and stooping over, touched a button that released a spring in the flooring.

A square aperture appeared, through which a man might descend, and peering over his shoulder I saw a flight of stairs reaching far downward.

De Pintra turned and took the candle from my hand.

"Follow me," he said.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECRET VAULT

THE stairs led us beneath the foundations of the house and terminated in a domed chamber constructed of stone and about ten feet in diameter.

In the floor of this chamber was a trapdoor, composed of many thicknesses of steel, and so heavy that it could be raised only by a stout iron windlass, the chain of which was welded to a ring in the door's face.

Dom Miguel handed me the candle and began turning the windlass. Gradually but without noise the heavy door of metal rose, and disclosed a still more massive surface underneath.

This second plate, of highly burnished steel, was covered with many small indentations, of irregular formation. It was about three feet square and the curious indentations, each one of which had evidently been formed with great care, were scattered over every inch of the surface.

"Put out the light," said de Pintra.

I obeyed, leaving us in total darkness.

Next moment, as I listened intently, I heard a slight grating noise, followed by a soft shooting of many bolts. Then a match flickered, and Dom Miguel held it to the wick and relighted the candle.

The second door had swung upward upon hinges, showing three iron steps that led into a vault below.

The chief descended and I followed; not, however, without a shuddering glance at the great door that stood suspended as if ready to crash down upon our heads and entomb us.

Just within the entrance an electric light, doubtless fed by a storage battery, was turned on, plainly illuminating the place.

I found the vault lined with thick plates of steel, riveted firmly together. In the center was a small table and two wooden stools. Shelves were ranged around the walls and upon them were books, papers, and vast sums of money, both in banknotes and gold.

"Here," said my companion, glancing proudly around him, "are our sinews of war; our records and funds and plans of operation. Should Dom Pedro's agents gain access to this room they would hold in their hands the lives and fortunes of many of the noblest families in Brazil — and our conspiracy would be nipped in the bud. You may know how greatly I trust you when I say that even my daughter does not guess the existence of this vault. Only a few of the Secret Council have ever gained admittance here, and the secret of opening the inner door is known only to myself and one

other — Francisco Paola."

"Paola!" I exclaimed.

"Yes; it was he who conceived the idea of this vault; it was his genius that planned a door which defies any living man to open without a clear knowledge of its secret. Even he, its inventor, could not pass the door without my assistance; for although he understands the method, the means are in my possession. For this reason I alone am responsible for the safekeeping of our records and treasure."

"The air is close and musty," said I, feeling oppressed in breathing.

He looked upward.

"A small pipe leads to the upper air, permitting foul vapors to escape," said he; "but only through the open door is fresh air admitted. Perhaps there should be better ventilation, yet that is an unimportant matter, for I seldom remain long in this place. It is a storehouse — a secret crypt — not a work-room. My custom has been to carry all our records and papers here each morning, after they have been in use, that they may be safe from seizure or prying eyes. But such trips are arduous, and I am not very strong. Therefore I will ask you to accompany me, hereafter."

"That I shall do willingly," I replied.

When we had passed through the door on our return the chief again extinguished the light while he manipulated the trap. Afterward the windlass allowed the outer plate of metal to settle firmly into place, and we proceeded along the passage and returned to the study.

Many trips did I make to the secret vault thereafter, but never could I understand in what manner the great door of shining steel was secured, as Dom Miguel always opened and closed it while we were in total darkness.

As the weeks rolled by I not only became deeply interested in my work, but conceived a still greater admiration for the one man whose powerful intelligence directed what I knew to be a gigantic conspiracy.

Spies were everywhere about Dom Miguel. One day we discovered his steward — an old and trusted retainer of the family — to be in the Emperor's pay. But de Pintra merely shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. Such a person could do little to imperil the cause, for its important secrets could not be surprised. The grim vault guarded them well.

My duties occupying me only at night, my days were wholly my own, and they passed very pleasantly indeed, for my acquaintance with Lesba Paola had ripened into a close friendship between us — a friendship I was eager to resolve into a closer relation.

But Lesba, although frank and ingenuous in all our intercourse, had an effectual way of preventing the declarations of love which were ever on my

tongue, and I found it extremely difficult to lead our conversation into channels that would give me an opportunity to open my heart to her.

She was an expert horsewoman, and we took many long rides together, during which she pointed out to me the estates of all the grandees in the neighborhood. Dom Miguel, whose love for the beautiful girl was very evident, seemed to encourage our companionship, and often spoke of her with great tenderness.

He would dwell with especial pride upon the aristocratic breeding of his ward, which, to do him justice, he valued more for its effect upon other noble families than for any especial advantage it lent to Lesba herself; for while Dom Miguel was thoroughly republican in every sense of the word, he realized the advantages to be gained by interesting the best families of Brazil in the fortunes of his beloved Cause, and one by one he was cleverly succeeding in winning them. My familiarity with the records taught me that the Revolution was being backed by the flower of Brazilian nobility — the most positive assurance in my eyes of the justice and timeliness of the great movement for liberty. The idea that monarchs derive their authority from divine sources — so prevalent amongst the higher classes — had dissolved before the leader's powerful arguments and the object lessons Dom Pedro's corrupt ministry constantly afforded. All thoughtful people had come to a realization that liberty was but a step from darkness into light, a bursting of the shackles that had oppressed them since the day that Portugal had declared the province of Brazil an Empire, and set a scion of her royal family to rule its people with autocratic sway.

And Lesba, sprung from the bluest blood in all the land, had great influence in awakening, in those families she visited, an earnest desire for a republic. Her passionate appeals were constantly inspiring her fellows with an enthusiatic devotion to the cause of liberty, and this talent was duly appreciated by Dom Miguel, whose admiration for the girl's simple but direct methods of making converts was unbounded.

"Lesba is a rebel to her very finger-tips," said he, "and her longing to see her country a republic is exceeded by that of no man among us. But we are chary of admitting women to our councils, so my little girl must be content to watch for the great day when the cause of freedom shall prevail."

However, she constantly surprised me by her intimate knowledge of our progress. As we were riding one day she asked:

"Were you not impressed by your visit to the secret vault?"

"The secret vault!" I exclaimed. "Do you know of it?"

"I can explain every inch of its construction," she returned, with a laugh; "everything, indeed, save the secret by means of which one may gain

admission. Was it not Francisco's idea? And is it not exceedingly clever?"

"It certainly is," I admitted.

"It was built by foreign workmen, brought to Brazil secretly, and for that very purpose. Afterward the artisans were sent home again; and not one of them, I believe, could again find his way to my uncle's house, for every precaution was taken to prevent their discovering its location."

"That was well done," said I.

"All that Francisco undertakes is well done," she answered simply.

This faith in her perplexing brother was so perfect that I never ventured to oppose it. We could not have remained friends had I questioned either his truth or ability.

Madam Izabel I saw but seldom, as she avoided the society of the family and preferred the seclusion of her own apartments. On the rare occasions of our meeting she treated me with frigid courtesy, resenting any attempt upon my part to draw her into conversation.

For a time it grieved me that Dom Miguel's daughter should regard me with so much obvious dislike and suspicion. Her sad story had impressed me greatly, and I could understand how her proud nature had resented the slanders of Francisco Paola, and writhed under them. But one evening an incident occurred that served to content me with Madame Izabel's aversion, and led me to suspect that the Minister of Police had not been so guilty as I had deemed him.

It was late, and Dom Miguel had preceded me to the domed chamber while I carried the records and papers to be deposited within the vault.

After raising the first trap my employer, as usual, extinguished the candle. I heard the customary low, grating noise, but before the shooting of the bolts reached my ears there was a sharp report, followed by a vivid flash, and turning instantly I beheld Madam Isabel standing beside us, holding in her hand a lighted match and peering eagerly at the surface of the trap.

My eyes followed hers, and while Dom Miguel stood as if petrified with amazement I saw the glitter of a gold ring protruding from one of the many curious indentations upon the plate. The next instant the match was dashed from her grasp and she gave a low cry of pain.

"Light the candle!" commanded de Pintra's voice, fiercely.

I obeyed. He was holding the woman fast by her wrist. The ring had disappeared, and the mystery of the trap seemed as inscrutable as ever.

Dom Miguel, greatly excited and muttering imprecations all the way, dragged his daughter through the passage and up the stairs. I followed them silently to the chiefs study. Then, casting the woman from him, de Pintra confronted her with blazing eyes, and demanded:

“How dare you spy upon me?”

Madam Izabel had become cool as her father grew excited. She actually smiled — a hard, bitter smile — as she defiantly looked into his face and answered:

“Spy! You forget, sir, that I am your daughter. I came to your room to seek you. You were not here; but the door to this stairway was displaced, and a cold air came through it. Fearing that some danger menaced you I passed down the stairs until, hearing a noise, I paused to strike a match. You can best explain the contretemps.”

Long and silently Dom Miguel gazed upon his daughter. Then he said, abruptly, “Leave the room!”

She bowed coldly, with a mocking expression in her dark eyes, and withdrew.

As she passed me I noted upon her cheeks an unwonted flush that rendered her strikingly beautiful.

Deep in thought de Pintra paced the floor with nervous strides. Finally he turned toward me.

“What did you see?” he asked, sharply.

“A ring,” I answered. “It lay upon the trap, and the stone was fitted into one of the numerous indentations.”

“He passed his hand over his brow with a gesture of despair.

“Then she saw it also,” he murmured, “and my secret is a secret no longer.”

I remained silent, looking upon him curiously, but in deep sympathy.

Suddenly he held out his hand. Upon the little finger was an emerald ring, the stone appearing to be of no exceptional value. Indeed, the trinket was calculated to attract so little attention that I had barely noticed it before, although I remembered that my employer always wore it.

“This,” said he, abruptly, “is the key to the vault.”

I nodded. The truth had flashed upon me the moment Madam Izabel had struck the match. And now, looking at it closely, I saw that the stone was oddly cut, although the fact was not likely to impress one who was ignorant of the purpose for which it was made.

The chief resumed his pacing, but presently paused to say:

“If anything happens to me, my friend, be sure to secure this ring above all else. Get it to Paola, or to Fonseca, or Piexoto as soon as possible — you know where they may be found. Should it fall into the hands of the royalists the result would be fatal.”

“But would either of your associates be able to use the ring, even if it passed into their possession?” I asked.

“There are two hundred indentations in the door of the trap,” answered de Pintra, “and the stone of the ring is so cut that it fits but one of these. Still, if our friends have time to test each cavity, they are sure to find the right one, and then the stone of my ring acts as a key. My real safety, as you will observe, lay in the hope that no one would discover that my ring unlocked the vault. Now that Izabel has learned the truth I must guard the ring as I would my life — more, the lives of all our patriotic band.

“Since you suspect her loyalty, why do you not send your daughter away?” I suggested.

“I prefer to keep her under my own eye. And, strange as her actions of to-night seem, I still hesitate to believe that my own child would conspire to ruin me.

“The secret is not your own, sir,” I ventured to say.

“True,” he acknowledged, flushing deeply, “the secret is not my own. It belongs to the Cause. And its discovery would jeopardize the revolution itself. For this reason I shall keep Izabel with me, where, admitting she has the inclination to betray us, she will not have the power.”

After this night he did not extinguish the light when we entered the vault, evidently having decided to trust me fully; but he took pains to secure the trap in the study floor so that no one could follow us. After watching him apply the key several times I became confident that I could find the right indentation without trouble should the occasion ever arise for me to unlock the vault unaided.

Days passed by, and Madam Izabel remained as quiet and reserved as if she had indeed abandoned any further curiosity concerning the secret vault. As for my fellow-rebel, the Senhorita Lesba, I rode and chatted with her in the firm conviction that here, at least, was one secret connected with the revolution of which she was ignorant.

CHAPTER VII
GENERAL FONSECA

ONE evening, as I entered Dom Miguel's library, I found myself face to face with a strange visitor. He did not wear a mask, as did so many of the conspirators, even in the chiefs presence; but a long black cloak swept in many folds from his neck to his feet.

My first thought was to marvel at his size, for he was considerably above six feet in height and finely proportioned, so that his presence fairly dominated us and made the furnishings of the room in which he stood seem small and insignificant.

As I entered, he stood with his back to the fireplace confronting Dom Miguel, whose face wore a sad and tired expression. I immediately turned to withdraw, but a gesture from the stranger arrested me.

"Robert," said Dom Miguel, "I present you to General Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca."

I bowed profoundly. General Fonseca was not only a commander of the Emperor's royal army, but Chief Marshal of the forces of the Revolutionary party. I had never seen the great man before, as his duties required his constant presence at the capital; but no figure loomed larger than his in the affairs of the conspiracy.

Seldom have I met with a keener or more disconcerting glance than that which shot from his full black eyes as I stood before him. It seemed to search out my every thought, and I had the sensation of being before a judge who would show no mercy to one who strove to dissemble in his presence.

But the glance was brief, withal. In a moment he had seized my hand and gripped it painfully. Then he turned to Dom Miguel.

"Let me hear the rest of your story," said he.

"There is nothing more, General. Izabel has learned my secret, it is true; but she is my daughter. I will vouch for her faith."

"Then will not I!" returned Fonseca, in his deep, vibrant tones. "Never have I believed the tale of her estrangement from that scoundrel, Leon de Mar. Men are seldom traitors, for they dare not face the consequences. Women have no fear of man or devil. They are daughters of Delilah — each and every one."

He turned suddenly to me.

"Will you also vouch for Senhora Izabel de Mar?" he asked.

"No," I answered.

"And quite right, sir," he returned, with a grim smile. "Never trust a woman in politics. But how about Francisco Paola? Do you vouch for him?"

I hesitated, startled by the question.

“Answer me!” he commanded.

“I cannot see that I am required to vouch for any one, General,” said I, nettled by his manner. “I am here to serve the Cause, not to judge the loyalty of its leaders.”

“Ugh!” said he, contemptuously; and I turned my back upon him, facing Dom Miguel, over whose features a fleeting smile passed.

Fonseca stalked up and down the apartment, his sword clanking beneath his cloak, and his spurs clicking like castanets. Then he planted his huge figure before the chief.

“Watch them both,” said he brusquely; “your daughter and your friend. They are aware of our most important secrets.”

De Pintra’s face reddened.

“Francisco is true as steel,” he retorted, firmly. “Not one of us — including yourself, General — has done more to serve the Cause. I have learned to depend upon his discretion as I would upon my own — or yours.”

The general frowned and drew a folded paper from his breast pocket.

“Read that,” said he, tossing it into Dom Miguel’s hand. “It is a copy of the report made by Paola to the Emperor this morning.”

De Pintra glanced at the paper and then gave it to me, at the same time dropping his head in his hands.

I read the report. It stated that the Minister of Police had discovered the existence of a secret vault constructed beneath the mansion of Miguel de Pintra, the rebel chief. This vault, the police thought, contained important records of the conspiracy. It was built of double plates of steel, and the entrance was guarded by a cleverly constructed door, which could only be unlocked by means of a stone set in a ring which was constantly worn by Dom Miguel himself. In conclusion the minister stated that every effort was being made to secure possession of the ring, when the rebels would be at the Emperor’s mercy.

“Well, sir, what do you think of Francisco Paola now?” inquired Fonseca, with a significant smile.

“Did he not himself invent vault?” I asked.

“He did, sir.”

“How long ago.”

“A matter of two years. Is it not so, Dom Miguel?”

The chief bowed.

“And until now Paola has kept this secret?” I continued.

“Until now, yes!” said the general. “Until the vault was stored with all our funds and the complete records of the revolution.”

“Then it seems clear to me that Paola, as Minister of Police, has been driven to make this report in order to serve the Cause.”

Dom Miguel looked up at me quickly, and the huge general snorted and stabbed me with his terrible eyes.

“What do you mean?” demanded Fonseca.

“This report proves, I fear, that our suspicions of Madam Izabel are well founded,” I explained, not daring to look at Dom Miguel while I accused his daughter. “Paola has doubtless discovered that this information regarding the vault and its mysterious key has either been forwarded to the Emperor or is on the way to him. Therefore he has forestalled Madam Izabel’s report, in order that he may prove his department vigilant in serving the government, and so protect his high office. Can you not see that Paola’s claim that he is working to secure the ring is but a ruse to gain time for us? Really, he knows that he could obtain it by arresting Dom Miguel. But this report will prevent the Emperor putting his man Valcour upon the case, which he would probably have done had he received his first information from Izabel de Mar.”

For a moment there was silence. Then the general’s brow unbent and he said with cheerfulness:

“This explanation is entirely reasonable. It would not do for Paola to get himself deposed, or even suspected, at this juncture. A new Minister of Police would redouble our danger.”

“How did you obtain this copy of the report?” asked de Pintra.

“From one of our spies.”

“I have no doubt,” said I, “that Paola was instrumental in sending it to you. It is a warning, gentlemen. We must not delay in acting upon it, and removing our treasure and our records to a safer place.”

“And where is that?” asked Fonseca.

I looked at the chief. He sat thoughtfully considering the matter.

“There is no need of immediate haste,” said he presently, “and nothing can be done to-night, in any event. To-morrow we will pack everything in chests and carry them to Senhor Bastro, who has a safe hiding-place. Meantime, General, you may leave me your men to serve as escort. How many are there?”

“Three. They are now guarding the usual approaches to this house.”

“Let them ride with you to the station at Cruz, and send them back to me in the morning. I will also summon some of our nearby patriots. By noon tomorrow everything will be ready for the transfer.”

“Very good!” ejaculated the general. “We cannot abandon too soon the vault we constructed with so much care. Where is your daughter?”

“In her apartments.”

“Before you leave to-morrow, lock her up and put a guard at her door. We must not let her suspect the removal of the records.

“It shall be done,” answered de Pintra, with a sigh. “It may be,” he continued, hesitatingly, “that my confidence in Izabel has been misplaced.”

The general did not reply. He folded his cloak about him, glanced at the clock, and strode from the room without a word of farewell.

When he had gone Dom Miguel turned to me.

“Well?” said he.

“I do not like Fonseca,” I answered.

“As a man he is at times rather disagreeable,” admitted the chief. “But as a general he possesses rare ability, and his high station renders him the most valuable leader the Cause can boast. Moreover, Fonseca has risked everything in our enterprise, and may be implicitly trusted. When at last we strike our great blow for freedom, much will depend upon Manuel da Fonseca. And now, Robert, let us retire, for an hour before daybreak we must be at work.”

It was then eleven o’clock. I bade the chief good night and retired to my little room next the study. Dom Miguel slept in a similar apartment opening from the opposite side of the study.

The exciting interview with Fonseca had left me nervous and wakeful, and it was some time before I sank into a restless slumber.

A hand upon my shoulder aroused me. It was Dom Miguel.

“Come quick, for God’s sake!” he cried, in trembling tones. “She has stolen my ring!”

CHAPTER VIII
A TERRIBLE CRIME

SCARCELY awake, I sprang from my couch in time to see de Pintra's form disappear through the doorway. A moment later I was in the study, which was beginning to lighten with the dawn of a new day.

The trap in the floor was open, and the chief threw himself into the aperture and quickly descended. At once I followed, feeling my way down the iron staircase and along the passage. Reaching the domed chamber a strange sight met our view. Both traps had been raised, the second one standing upright upon its hinged edge, and from the interior of the vault shone a dim light.

While we hesitated the light grew stronger, and soon Madam Izabel came slowly from the vault with a small lamp in one hand and a great bundle of papers in the other. As she reached the chamber Dom Miguel sprang from out the shadow and wrenched the papers from her grasp.

"So, madam!" he cried, "you have betrayed yourself in seeking to betray us. Shame! Shame that a daughter of mine should be guilty of so vile an act!" As he spoke he struck her so sharply across the face with the bundle of papers that she reeled backward and almost dropped the lamp.

"Look to her, Robert," he said, and leaped into the vault to restore the papers to their place.

Then, while I stood stupidly by, not thinking of any further danger, Madam Izabel sprang to the trap and with one quick movement dashed down the heavy plate of steel. I saw her place the ring in its cavity and heard the shooting of the bolts; and then, suddenly regaining my senses, I rushed forward and seized her arm.

"The ring!" I gasped, in horror; "give me the ring! He will suffocate in that dungeon in a few minutes."

I can see yet her cold, serpent-like eyes as they glared venomously into my own. The next instant she dashed the lamp into my face. It shivered against the wall, and as I staggered backward the burning oil streamed down my pajamas and turned me into a living pillar of fire.

Screaming with pain, I tore the burning cloth from my body and stamped it into ashes with my bare feet. Then, smarting from the sting of many burns, I looked about me and found myself in darkness and alone.

Instantly the danger that menaced Dom Miguel flashed upon me anew, and I stumbled up the iron stairs until I reached the study, where I set the alarm bell going so fiercely that its deep tones resounded throughout the whole house.

In my chamber I hastily pulled my clothing over my smarting flesh, and as the astonished servants came pouring into the study, I shouted to them:

"Find Senhora de Mar immediately and bring her to me — by force if necessary. She has murdered Dom Miguel!"

Over the heads of the stupidly staring group I saw a white, startled face, and Lesba's great eyes met my own with a quick look of comprehension. Then she disappeared, and I turned again to the wondering servants.

"Make haste!" I cried. "Can you not understand? Every moment is precious."

But the frightened creatures gazed upon each other silently, and I thrust them aside and ran through the house in frantic search for the murderess. The rooms were all vacant, and when I reached the entrance hall a groom stopped me.

"Senhora de Mar left the house five minutes ago, sir. She was mounted upon our swiftest horse, and knows every inch of the country. It would be useless to pursue her."

While I glared at the fellow a soft hand touched my elbow.

"Come!" said Lesba. "Your horse is waiting — I have saddled him myself. Make for the station at Cruz, for Izabel will seek to board the train for Rio."

She had led me through the door across the broad piazza; and as, half-dazed, I mounted the horse, she added, "Tell me, can I do anything in your absence?"

"Nothing!" I cried, with a sob; "Dom Miguel is locked up in the vault, and I must find the key — the key!"

Away dashed the horse, and over my shoulder I saw her still standing on the steps of the piazza staring after me.

The station at Cruz! I must reach it as soon as possible — before Izabel de Mar should escape. Almost crazed at the thought of my impotency and shuddering at the knowledge that de Pintra was slowly dying in his tomb while I was powerless to assist him, I lashed the good steed until it fairly flew over the uneven road.

"Halt!" cried a stern voice.

The way had led me beneath some overhanging trees, and as I pulled the horse back upon his haunches I caught the gleam of a revolver held by a mounted man whose form was enveloped in a long cloak.

Then came a peal of light laughter.

"Why, 'tis our Americano!" said the horseman, gayly; "whither away, my gallant cavalier?"

To my delight I recognized Paola's voice.

“Dom Miguel is imprisoned in the vault!” I almost screamed in my agitation; “and Madam Izabel has stolen the key.”

“Indeed!” he answered. “And where is Senhora Izabel?”

“She has fled to Rio.”

“And left her dear father to die? How unfilial!” he retorted, laughing again. “Do you know, Senhor Harcliffe, it somehow reminds me of a story my nurse used to read me from the Arabian Nights,’ how a fond daughter planned to — ”

“For God’s sake, sir, the man is dying!” I cried, maddened at his indifference.

He drew out a leathern case and calmly selected a cigarette.

“And Madam Izabel has the key,” he repeated, striking a match. “By the way, senhor, where are you bound?”

“To overtake the murderess before she can board the train at Cruz.”

“Very good. How long has Dom Miguel been imprisoned in the vault?”

“Twenty minutes, a half-hour, perhaps.”

“Ah! He may live in that foul and confined atmosphere for two hours; possibly three. But no longer. I know, for I planned the vault myself. And the station at Cruz is a good two hours’ ride from this spot. I know, for I have just traveled it.”

I dropped my head, overwhelmed by despair as the truth was thus brutally thrust upon me. For Dom Miguel there was no hope.

“But the records, sir! We must save them, even if our chief is lost. Should Madam Izabel deliver the key to her husband or to the Emperor every leader of the Cause may perish upon the gallows.”

“Well thought of, on my word,” commented the strange man, again laughing softly. “I wonder how it feels to have, a rope around one’s neck and to kick the empty air?” He blew a cloud of smoke from his mouth and watched it float away. “But you are quite right, Senhor Harcliffe. The lady must be found and made to give up the ring.”

He uttered a low whistle, and two men rode out from the shadow of the trees and joined us.

“Ride with Senhor Harcliffe to the station at Cruz. Take there the train for Rio. Present the American to Mazanovitch, who is to obey his instructions.”

The men bowed silently.

“But you, senhor,” I said, eagerly, “can you not yourself assist us in this search?”

“I never work,” was the reply, drawled in his mincing manner. “But the men I have given you will do all that can be done to assist you. For myself, I think I shall ride on to de Pintra’s and kiss my sister good morning. Perhaps

she will give me a bite of breakfast, who knows?"

Such heartlessness amazed me. Indeed, the man was past my comprehension.

"And General Fonseca?" said I, hesitating whether or no to put myself under Paola's command, now that the chief was gone.

"Let Fonseca go to the devil. He would cry 'I told you so!' and refuse to aid you, even though his own neck is in jeopardy." He looked at his watch. "If you delay longer you will miss the train at Cruz. Good morning, senhor. How sad that you cannot breakfast with us!"

Touching his hat with a gesture of mock courtesy he rode slowly on, and the next moment, all irresolution vanishing, I put spurs to my horse and bounded away, the two men following at my heels.

Presently I became tortured with thoughts of Dom Miguel, stifling in his tomb of steel. And under my breath I cursed the heartless *sang froid* of Francisco Paola, who refused to be serious even when his friend was dying.

"The cold-blooded scoundrel!" I muttered, as I galloped on; "the cad! the trifling coxcomb! Can nothing rouse him from his self-complaisant idiocy?"

"I imagine you are apostrophizing my master, senhor," said one of the men riding beside me.

Something in his voice caused me to turn and scrutinize his face.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "you are Sergeant Marco."

"The same, senhor. And I shall not arrest you for the death of our dear lieutenant." A low chuckling laugh accompanied the grim pleasantry. "But if you were applying those sweet names to Senhor Paola, I assure you that you wrong him. For three years I have been his servant, and this I have learned: in an emergency no man can think more clearly or act more swiftly than his Majesty's Minister of Police."

"I have been with him four years," announced the other man, in a hoarse voice, "and I agree with you that he is cold and heartless. Yet I never question the wisdom of his acts."

"Why did he not come with us himself?" I demanded, angrily. "Why should he linger to eat a breakfast and kiss his sister good morning, when his friend and chief is dying, and his Cause is in imminent danger?"

Marco laughed, and the other shrugged his shoulders, disdaining a reply.

For a time we rode on in unbroken silence, but coming to a rough bit of road that obliged us to walk the horses, the sergeant said:

"Perhaps it would be well for you to explain to us what has happened. My friend Figgot, here, is a bit of a detective, and if we are to assist you we must know in what way our services are required."

"We are both patriots, senhor," said the other, briefly.

So I told them the story of Madam Izabel's treachery and her theft of the ring, after locking her father within the vault. At their request I explained minutely the construction of the steel doors and described the cutting of the emerald that alone could release the powerful bolts. They heard all without comment, and how much of my story was new to them I had no knowledge. But of one thing I felt certain: these fellows were loyal to the Cause and clever enough to be chosen by Paola as his especial companions; therefore they were just the assistants I needed in this emergency.

It was a weary ride, and the roads became worse as we progressed toward Cruz. The sun had risen and now spread a marvelous radiance over the tropical landscape. I noted the beauty of the morning even while smarting from the burns upon my breast and arms, and heart-sick at the awful fate of my beloved leader — even now perishing amid the records of the great conspiracy he had guided so successfully. Was all over yet, I wondered? Paola had said that he might live in his prison for two or three hours. And the limit of time had nearly passed. Poor Dom Miguel!

My horse stepped into a hole, stumbled, and threw me headlong to the ground.

For a few minutes I was unconscious; then I found myself sitting up and supported by Sergeant Marco, while the other man dashed water in my face.

"It is a dangerous delay," grumbled Marco, seeing me recovering.

Slowly I rose to my feet. No bones were broken, but I was sadly bruised.

"I can ride, now," I said.

They lifted me upon one of their horses and together mounted the other. My own steed had broken his leg. A bullet ended his suffering.

Another half-hour and we sighted the little station at Cruz. Perhaps I should have explained before that from Cuyaba to Cruz the railway made a long sweep around the base of the hills. The station nearest to de Pintra's estate was Cuyaba; but by riding straight to Cruz one saved nearly an hour's railway journey, and the train for Rio could often be made in this way when it was impossible to reach Cuyaba in time to intercept it. And as the station at Cruz was more isolated than that at Cuyaba, this route was greatly preferred by the revolutionists visiting de Pintra.

My object in riding to Cruz upon this occasion was twofold. Had Madam Izabel in her flight made for Cuyaba to catch the train, I should be able to board the same train at Cruz, and force her to give up the ring. And if she rode to Cruz she must await there the coming of the train we also hoped to meet. In either event I planned, as soon as the ring was in my possession, to hasten back to the mansion, open the vault and remove the body of our chief; after which it would be my duty to convey the records and treasure to the

safe-keeping of Senhor Bastro.

I had no expectation of finding Dom Miguel still alive. With everything in our favor the trip would require five hours, and long before that time the prisoner's fate would have overtaken him. But the chiefs dying wish would be to save the records, and that I intended to do if it were possible.

However, the delays caused by meeting with Paola and my subsequent unlucky fall had been fatal to my plans. We dashed up to the Cruz station in time to see the train for Rio disappearing in the distance, and to complete my disappointment we found standing beside the platform a horse yet panting and covered with foam.

Quickly dismounting, I approached the horse to examine it. The station master came from his little house and bowed with native politeness.

"The horse? Ah, yes; it was from the stables of Dom Miguel. Senhora de Mar had arrived upon the animal just in time to take the express for Rio. The gentleman also wanted the train? How sad to have missed it! But there would be another at eleven o'clock, although not so fast a train."

For a time I stood in a sort of stupor, my mind refusing to grasp the full horror of the situation. Until then, perhaps, a lingering hope of saving Dom Miguel had possessed me. But with the ring on its way to Rio and the Emperor, and I condemned to inaction at a deserted way-station, it is no wonder that despair overwhelmed me.

When I slowly recovered my faculties I found that my men and the station master had disappeared. I found them in the little house writing telegrams, which the official was busily ticking over the wires.

Glancing at one or two of the messages I found them unintelligible.

"It is the secret cypher," whispered Figgot. "We shall put Madam Izabel in the care of Mazanovitch himself. Ah, how he will cling to the dear lady! She is clever — ah, yes! exceedingly clever is Senhora de Mar. But has Mazanovitch his match in all Brazil?"

"I do not know the gentleman," I returned.

"No? Perhaps not. But you know the Minister of Police, and Mazanovitch is the soul of Francisco Paola."

"But what are we to do?" I asked, impatiently.

"Why, now that our friends in Rio are informed of the situation, we have transferred to them, for a time, all our worries. It only remains for us to await the eleven o'clock train."

I nodded, staring at him through a sort of haze. I was dimly conscious that my burns were paining me terribly and that my right side seemed pierced by a thousand red-hot needles. Then the daylight faded away, the room grew black, and I sank upon the floor unconscious.

CHAPTER IX
THE MISSING FINGER

WHEN I recovered I was lying upon a cot in the station-master's private room. Sergeant Marco had ridden to a neighboring farmhouse and procured bandages and some olive oil and Figgot, who proudly informed me he had once been a surgeon, had neatly dressed and bandaged my burns.

These now bothered me less than the lameness resulting from my fall; but I drank a glass of wine and then lay quietly upon the cot until the arrival of the train, when my companions aroused me and assisted me aboard.

I made the journey comfortably enough, and felt greatly refreshed after partaking of a substantial luncheon brought from an eating-house by the thoughtful Figgot.

On our arrival at Rio we were met by a little, thin-faced man who thrust us all three into a cab and himself joined us as we began to rattle along the labyrinth of streets. He was plainly dressed in black, quiet and unobtrusive in manner, and had iron-gray hair and beard, both closely cropped. I saw at once he was not a Brazilian, and made up my mind he was the man called Mazanovitch by Paola and my companions. If so, he was the person now in charge of our quest for the ring, and with this idea I examined his face with interest.

This was not difficult, for the man sat opposite me with lowered eye-lids and a look of perfect repose upon his thin features. He might have been fifty or sixty years of age; but there was no guide in determining this except his gray hairs, for his face bore no lines of any sort, and his complexion, although of pallid hue, was not unhealthy in appearance.

It surprised me that neither he nor my companions asked any questions. Perhaps the telegrams had explained all that was necessary. Anyway, an absolute silence reigned in the carriage during our brief drive.

When we came to a stop the little man opened the door. We all alighted and followed him into a gloomy stone building. Through several passages we walked, and then our conductor led us into a small chamber, bare except for a half-dozen iron cots that stood in a row against the wall. A guard was at the doorway, but admitted us with a low bow after one glance at the man in black.

Leading us to the nearest cot, Mazanovitch threw back a sheet and then stood aside while we crowded around it. To my horror I saw the form of Madam Izabel lying dead before us. Her white dress was discolored at the breast with clots of dark blood.

"Stabbed to the heart," said the guard, calmly. "It was thus they brought

her from the train that arrived this afternoon from Matto Grosso. The assassin is unknown."

Mazanovitch thrust me aside, leaned over the cot, and drew the woman's left hand from beneath the sheet.

The little finger had been completely severed.

Very gently he replaced the hand, drew the sheet over the beautiful face, and turned away.

Filled with amazement at the Nemesis that had so soon overtaken this fierce and terrible woman, I was about to follow our guide when I found myself confronting a personage who stood barring my way with folded arms and a smile of grim satisfaction upon his delicate features.

It was Valcour — the man who had called himself de Guarde on board the Castina — the Emperor's spy.

"Ah, my dear Senhor Harcliffe! Do we indeed meet again?" he cried, tauntingly. "And are you still keeping a faithful record in that sweet diary of yours? It is fine reading, that diary — perhaps you have it with you now?"

"Let me pass," said I, impatiently.

"Not yet, my dear friend," he answered, laughing. "You are going to be my guest, you know. Will it not please you to enjoy my society once more? To be sure. And I — I shall not wish to part with you again soon."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Only that I arrest you, Robert Harcliffe, in the name of the Emperor!"

"On what charge?" I asked.

"Murder, for one," returned the smiling Valcour. "Afterward you may answer for conspiracy."

"Pardon me, Senhor Valcour," said the little man, in a soft voice. "The gentleman is already under arrest — in the Emperor's name."

Valcour turned upon him fiercely, but his eyes fell as he encountered the other's passive, unemotional countenance.

"Is it so, Captain Mazanovitch? Then I will take the prisoner off your hands."

The little man spread out his palms with an apologetic, deprecating gesture. His eyes seemed closed — or nearly so. He seemed to see nothing; he looked at neither Valcour nor myself. But there was something about the still, white face, with its frame of iron-gray, that compelled a certain respect, and even deference.

"It is greatly to be regretted," he said, gently; "and it grieves me to be obliged to disappoint you, Senhor Valcour. But since this man is a prisoner of the police — a state prisoner of some importance, I believe — it is impossible to deliver him into your hands."

Without answer Valcour stood motionless before us, only his mobile face and his white lips showing the conflict of emotions that oppressed him. And then I saw a curious thing happen. The eyelids of Mazanovitch for an instant unclosed, and in that instant so tender a glance escaped them that Valcour trembled slightly, and touched with a gentle, loving gesture the elder man's arm.

It all happened in a flash, and the next moment I could not have sworn that my eyes had not deceived me, for Valcour turned away with a sullen frown upon his brow, and the Captain seized my arm and marched me to the door, Figgot and Marco following close behind.

Presently we regained our carriage and were driven rapidly from the morgue.

This drive was longer than the first, but during it no word was spoken by any of my companions. I could not help staring at the closed eyes of Mazanovitch, but the others, I noticed, avoided looking at him. Did he see, I wondered? — *could* he see from out the tiny slit that showed beneath his lashes?

We came at last to a quiet street lined with small frame houses, and before one of these the carriage stopped. Mazanovitch opened the front door with a latchkey, and ushered us into a dimly lighted room that seemed fitted up as study and office combined.

Not until we were seated and supplied with cigars did the little man speak. Then he reclined in a cushioned chair, puffed at his cheroot, and turned his face in my direction.

"Tell me all you know concerning the vault and the ring which unlocks it," he said, in his soft tones.

I obeyed. Afterward Figgot told of my meeting with the Minister of Police, and of Paola's orders to him and Marco to escort me to Rio and to place the entire matter in the hands of Mazanovitch.

The little man listened without comment and afterward sat for many minutes silently smoking his cheroot.

"It seems to me," said I, at last, "that the death of Senhora de Mar, and especially the fact that her ring finger has been severed from her hand, points conclusively to one reassuring fact; that the ring has been recovered by one of our band, and so the Cause is no longer endangered. Therefore my mission to Rio is ended, and all that remains for me is to return to Cuyaba and attend to the obsequies of my poor friend de Pintra."

Marco and Figgot heard me respectfully, but instead of replying both gazed questioningly at the calm face of Mazanovitch.

"The facts are these;" said the latter, deliberately; "Senhora de Mar fled

with the ring; she has been murdered, and the ring taken from her. By whom? If a patriot has it we shall know the truth within fifteen minutes." I glanced at a great clock ticking against the wall. "Before your arrival," he resumed, "I had taken steps to communicate with every patriot in Rio. Yet there were few able to recognize the ring as the key to the secret vault, and the murder was committed fifteen minutes after the train left Cruz."

I started, at that.

"Who could have known?" I asked.

The little man took the cigar from his mouth for a moment.

"On the train," said he, "were General Fonseca, the patriot, and Senhor Valcour, the Emperor's spy."

CHAPTER X

"FOR TO-MORROW WE DIE!"

I remembered Fonseca's visit of the night before, and considered it natural he should take the morning train to the capital.

"But Valcour would not need to murder Madam Izabel," said I. "They were doubtless in the plot together, and she would have no hesitation in giving him the ring had he demanded it. On the contrary, our general was already incensed against the daughter of the chief, and suspected her of plotting mischief. I am satisfied he has the ring."

"The general will be with us presently," answered Mazanovitch, quietly. "But, gentlemen, you all stand in need of refreshment, and Senhor Harciffe should have his burns properly dressed. Kindly follow me."

He led the way up a narrow flight of stairs that made two abrupt turns — for no apparent reason — before they reached the upper landing. Following our guide we came to a back room where a table was set for six. A tall, studious-looking Brazilian greeted us with a bow and immediately turned his spectacled eyes upon me. On a small side table were bandages, ointments, and a case of instruments lying open.

Within ten minutes the surgeon had dressed all my wounds — none of which, however, was serious, merely uncomfortable — and I felt greatly benefited by the application of the soothing ointments.

Scarcely was the operation completed when the door opened to admit Fonseca. He gave me a nod, glanced questioningly at the others, and then approached the table and poured out a glass of wine, which he drank eagerly. I noticed he was in full uniform.

"General," said I, unable to repress my anxiety, "have you the ring?"

He shook his head and sat down with a gloomy expression upon his face.

"I slept during the journey from Cuyaba," he said presently, "and only on my arrival at Rio did I discover that Senhora de Mar had traveled by the same train. She was dead when they carried her into the station."

"And Valcour?" It was Mazanovitch who asked the question.

"Valcour was beside the body, wild with excitement, and swearing vengeance against the murderer."

"Be seated, gentlemen," requested our host, approaching the table. "We have time for a slight repast before our friends arrive."

"May I join you?" asked a high, querulous voice. A slender figure, draped in black and slightly stooping, stood in the doorway.

"Come in," said Fonseca, and the new arrival threw aside his cloak and sat with us at the table.

“The last supper, eh?” he said, in a voice that quavered somewhat. “For tomorrow we die. Eh, brothers? — to-morrow we die!”

“Croaker!” cried Fonseca, with scorn. “Die tomorrow, if you like; die to-night, for all I care. The rest of us intend to live long enough to shout huzzas for the United States of Brazil!”

“In truth, Senhor Piexoto,” said Marco, who was busily eating, “we are in no unusual danger to-night.”

Startled by the mention of the man’s name, I regarded him with sudden interest.

The reputation of Floriano Piexoto, the astute statesman who had plotted so well for the revolutionary party, was not unknown to me, by any means. Next to Fonseca no patriot was more revered by the people of Brazil; yet not even the general was regarded with the same unquestioning affection. For Piexoto was undoubtedly a friend of the people, and despite his personal peculiarities had the full confidence of that rank and file of the revolutionary party upon which, more than upon the grandees who led it, depended the fate of the rising republic.

His smooth-shaven face, sunken cheeks, and somewhat deprecating gaze gave him the expression of a student rather than a statesman, and his entire personality was in sharp contrast to the bravado of Fonseca. To see the two leaders together one would never suspect that history would prove the statesman greater than the general.

“Danger!” piped Piexoto, shrilly, in answer to Sergeant Marco’s remark, “you say there is no danger? Is not de Pintra dead? Is not the ring gone? Is not the secret vault at the Emperor’s mercy?”

“Who knows?” answered Fonseca, with a shrug.

“And who is this?” continued Piexoto, turning upon me a penetrating gaze. “Ah, the American secretary, I suppose. Well, sir, what excuse have you to make for allowing all this to happen under your very nose? Are you also a traitor?”

“I have not the honor of your acquaintance, senhor,” said I, stiffly; “nor, in view of your childish conduct, do I greatly desire it.”

Fonseca laughed, and the Pole turned his impassive face, with its half-closed eye-lids, in my direction. But Piexoto seemed rather pleased with my retort, and said:

“Never mind; your head sits as insecurely upon its neck as any present. Tis really a time for action rather than recrimination. What do you propose, Mazanovitch?”

“I am waiting to hear if you have discovered the present possessor of the ring,” answered the captain.

“No; our people were ignorant of its very existence, save in a few cases, and none of them has seen it. Therefore the Emperor has it, without doubt.”

“Why without doubt?” asked Mazanovitch.

“Who else could desire it? Who else could know its value? Who else would have murdered Madam Izabel to secure it?”

“Why the devil should the Emperor cause his own spy to be murdered?” inquired Fonseca, in his harsh voice. “You are a fool, Piexoto.”

“What of Leon de Mar?” asked the other, calmly. “He hated his wife. Why should he not have killed her himself, in order to be rid of her and at the same time secure the honor of presenting his Emperor with the key to the secret vault?”

“Leon de Mar,” said Mazanovitch, “is in Rio Grande do Sul. He has been stationed there for three weeks.”

For a time there was silence.

“Where is Paola?” suddenly asked Piexoto. “I want to know what Paola is doing in this crisis.”

“He was last seen near de Pintra’s residence,” said Figgot. “But we know nothing of his present whereabouts.”

“You may be sure of one thing,” declared Marco stoutly; “that Francisco Paola is serving the Cause, wherever he may be.”

The general snorted derisively, and Piexoto looked at him with the nearest approach to a smile his anxious face had shown.

“How we admire one another!” he murmured.

“Personally I detest both you and Paola,” responded the general, frankly. “But the Cause is above personalities, and as for your loyalty, I dare not doubt it. But we wander from the subject in hand. Has the Emperor the ring or is he seeking it as eagerly as we are?”

“The Emperor has not the ring,” said Mazanovitch, slowly; “you may be assured of that. Otherwise — ”

Piexoto gave a start.

“To be sure,” said he, “otherwise we would not be sitting here.”

CHAPTER XI

LESBA'S BRIGHT EYES

LATER that evening there was a large gathering of the important members of the conspiracy, but the result of their deliberations only served to mystify us more than before as to the murderer of Madam Izabel and the possessor of the ring. Many were the expressions of sorrow at the terrible fate of Dom Miguel — a man beloved by all who had known him. The sad incident of his death caused several to waver in their loyalty to the projected Republic, and I was impressed by the fact that at this juncture the Cause seemed to be in rather desperate straits.

"If the ring is gone and the records discovered," said one, "we would best leave the country for a time, until the excitement subsides, for the Emperor will spare no one in his desire for vengeance."

"Let us first wait for more definite information," counseled the old general, always optimistic. "Should an uprising be precipitated at this time we have all the advantage on our side, for the Republic is to-day stronger than the Empire. And we have yet to hear from Paola."

So, after much comment, it was determined to watch every action of the court party with redoubled vigilance, and in case danger threatened the republicans, to give the signal that would set the revolution going in full swing. Meantime we would endeavor to get in touch with Paola.

But the Minister of Police had mysteriously disappeared, and although telegrams were sent in every direction, we could hear nothing of Paola's whereabouts. Inquiries at the court failed to elicit any information whatever, and they were doubtless as ignorant on the subject as ourselves.

Officially, I was supposed to be occupying a dungeon in the fortress, and Mazanovitch had actually locked up a man under my name, registering the prisoner in the prescribed fashion. Therefore, being cleverly disguised by the detective, I ran little risk of interference should I venture abroad in the city.

Curiously enough, Mazanovitch chose to disguise me as a member of the police, saying that this plan was less likely than any other to lead to discovery. Wherever I might wander I was supposed to be off duty or on special service, and the captain enrolled me under the name of Andrea Subig.

I was anxious at times to return to Cuyaba, for Lesba's white face, as I had last seen it on the morning of Dom Miguel's incarceration, haunted me perpetually. But the quest of the ring was of vital importance, and I felt that I dared not return until I could remove my dear friend's body from the vault and see it properly interred.

Under Mazanovitch's directions I strove earnestly to obtain a clue that

might lead to a knowledge of where the missing ring was secreted; but our efforts met with no encouragement, and we were not even sure that the murderer of Izabel de Mar had ever reached the capital.

On the third morning after my arrival I was strolling down the street toward the railway station, in company with Mazanovitch, when suddenly I paused and grasped my comrade's arm convulsively.

"Look there!" I exclaimed.

Mazanovitch shook off my hand, impatiently.

"I see," he returned; "it is the Senhorita Lesba Paola, riding in the Emperor's carriage."

"But that scoundrel Valcour is with her!" I cried.

"Scoundrel? We do not call Senhor Valcour that. He is faithful to the Emperor, who employs him. Shall we, who are unfaithful, blame him for his fidelity?"

While I sought an answer to this disconcerting query the carriage whirled past us and disappeared around a corner; but I had caught a glimpse of Lesba's bright eyes glancing coyly into the earnest face Valcour bent over her, and the sight filled me with pain and suspicion.

"Listen, Captain," said I, gloomily, "that girl knows all the important secrets of the conspiracy."

"True," answered the unmoved Mazanovitch.

"And she is riding in the Emperor's carriage, in confidential intercourse with the Emperor's spy."

"True," he said again.

"Paola has disappeared, and his sister is at court. What do you make of it, senhor?"

"Pardon me, the Minister of Police returned to his duties this morning," said the man, calmly. "Doubtless his sister accompanied him. Who knows?"

"Why did you not tell me this?" I demanded, angrily.

"I am waiting for Paola to communicate with us, which he will do in good time. Meanwhile, let me counsel patience, Senhor Americano."

But I left him and strode down the street, very impatient indeed, and filled with strange misgivings. These Brazilians were hard to understand, and were it not for Lesba I could wish myself quit of their country forever.

Lesba? What strange chance had brought her to Rio and thrown her into the companionship of the man most inimical to her brother, to myself, and to the Cause?

Was she playing a double game? Could this frank, clear-eyed girl be a traitor to the Republic, as had been Izabel de Mar?

It might be. A woman's mind is hard to comprehend. But she had been so

earnest a patriot, so sincerely interested in our every success, so despondent over our disappointments, that even now I could not really doubt her faith.

Moreover, I loved the girl. Had I never before realized the fact, I knew it in this hour when she seemed lost to me forever. For never had speech of mine brought the glad look to her face that I had noted as she flashed by with Valcour pouring soft speeches into her ears. The Emperor's spy was a handsome fellow; he was high in favor at court; he was one of her own people —

Was he, by the by? Was Valcour really a Brazilian? He had a Brazilian's dark eyes and complexion, it is true; yet now that I thought upon it, there was an odd, foreign cast to his features that indicated he belonged to another race. Yes, there was a similarity between them and the features of the Pole Mazanovitch. Perhaps Valcour might also be a Pole. Just now Mazanovitch had spoken kindly of him, and I stopped short in my calculations, for I had made a second startling discovery. My wanderings had led me to the railway station, where, as I approached, I saw the Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro de Alcantara, surrounded by a company of his Uruguayan guard, and in the act of boarding a private car attached to the Matto Grosso train.

I had never before seen the Emperor, but from descriptions of him, as well as from the deference of those about him, I had no doubt of his identity.

His hurried departure upon a journey, coupled with Paola's presence at the capital, could only bear one interpretation. The Minister of Police had been in conference with the Emperor, and his Majesty was about to visit in person the scene of the late tragedy, and do what he might to unearth the records of that far-reaching revolution which threatened his throne.

Here was news, indeed! Half-dazed, I started to retrace my steps, when a soft voice beside me said:

"Have you money, senhor?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Then," continued Maz-anovitch, "you must take this train for Cuyaba. Let the Emperor guide you. If danger threatens us, telegraph me the one word, 'Lesba'! Do you understand, Senhor Har-cliffe?"

"I think so," said I, "but let me use some other word. Why drag a woman's name into this affair?"

He coughed slightly.

"It is a word you will remember," said he. "Good by to you, senhor."

He had an odd way of disappearing, this strange Pole, whose eyes I had never seen. With his last word he actually melted into the crowd of loiterers who were watching the Emperor's departure, and I could not have found him again had I so desired.

My first thought was to rebel at leaving Rio, where Lesba Paola had taken refuge from the coming storm. But the girl seemed amply amused without me, and my duties to the interests of my dead chieftain forbade my deserting the Cause at this crisis. Therefore I would follow the Emperor.

As the train moved slowly out of the station, I swung myself upon the steps of the rear car, and the next instant was tumbled upon the platform by a person who sprang up behind me.

Angrily protesting, I scrambled to my feet; but the fellow, with scarcely a glance in my direction, passed into the car and made his way forward.

The exclamations died suddenly upon my lips.

The belated passenger was Senhor Valcour, the spy.

CHAPTERXII

THE MAN IN THE SHRUBBERY

THE name of an Emperor is a fine thing to conjure with. When we arrived at the station at Cuyaba at early evening a score of saddle-horses and several carriages were awaiting the royal party.

I stood in the shadows of the station and watched the guardsmen mount and surround the equipage in which their imperial master seated himself. His civic companions — men of high rank, evidently — occupied the other carriages; and then the entire cavalcade swept away into the gloom and left me alone.

The station agent was known to me as a patriot, but he was still bobbing his head after the royal party when I accosted him.

"Get me a horse, Pedro."

"A horse! Ah, your excellency is joking. Every horse that could be found has been impressed by the Emperor."

"Anything will do. A nag of any sort, with saddle or cart, will answer my purpose. The Cause demands it, Pedro."

"I am powerless, your excellency. Absolutely powerless!"

It was true enough. The only way for me to get to de Pintra's mansion was on foot, and after inducing the man to give me a peasant's dress in exchange for my police uniform, I set out at once.

It was a long and gloomy walk. There was a moon, but large banks of clouds were drifting across the sky, and the way was obscured more than half the time, causing me to go slowly in order to avoid stumbling into the ditches.

I met no one on the road, for the highways were usually deserted at this hour, and the silence all about me added its depressing influence to the anxiety of my thoughts.

The Emperor's advent into this stronghold of the Revolution indicated that at last he had determined to act and suppress the conspiracy that had grown to such huge proportions. With the real leader — "the brains of the revolt," as de Pintra was called — out of the way, Dom Pedro doubtless had concluded he could easily crush the remainder of the conspirators.

But his success, I argued, would depend upon his securing the key to the secret vault, for without that the records would never come into his possession.

Did he have the key? Was this the explanation of his sudden activity? The thought made me hasten my steps, but although I put forth my best efforts it was close upon midnight before I sighted the great hedge that surrounded de

Pintra's mansion. I half-expected to find the gateway guarded, but to my relief the avenue was as deserted as the highway had been.

Cautiously I passed along the drive leading to the mansion. I am not usually nervous at such times, but something in the absolute stillness of the scene, something menacing in the deep shadows cast by the great trees, unnerved me and made me suspicious of my surrounding.

Once, indeed, I fancied that stealthy footstep advancing to meet me, and with a bound I sprang from the driveway and crouched among the thick shrubbery, listening intently. But after a few moments I became reassured and resumed my journey, avoiding this time the graveled drive and picking my way noiselessly across the grass, skirting the endless array of flower-beds and shrubbery.

Fortunately the moon came out, or I might have lost my way; and before long the black line of shadow cast by the mansion itself fell at my feet. Peering ahead, I saw that I had approached the right wing of the house. It was here that my own room was located, and with a low exclamation of relief I was about to step forward into the path when my eyes fell upon a sight that caused me to suddenly halt and recoil in horror.

It was a man's arm showing white in the moonlight, and extending from beneath a clump of low bushes.

For a few moments I gazed at it as if fascinated, but quickly recovering myself I advanced to the bushes and gently withdrew the body until it lay exposed to the full rays of the moon. I fully expected to recognize one of our conspirators, but when I turned the man over a face was disclosed that was wholly unknown to me — that of a dark, swarthy person of evident intelligence and refinement.

He had been shot squarely between the eyes, and doubtless had met death instantly. I was about to consider the man a government spy who had been killed by Paola or some other of the conspirators, when I discovered, with a start of dismay, that the man's left hand had been completely severed at the wrist. Also the hand was missing, and although I searched the ground carefully in the neighborhood, I could find no trace of it.

This discovery gave me ample food for thought. The only plausible reason for the hasty amputation of the hand had doubtless been to secure a ring which the dead man had worn — the secret key to Dom Miguel's vault probably, since the murder had been committed at this place.

In whose possession, then, was the ring now? Madam Izabel, the Emperor's spy, had first stolen it. Then another had murdered her for its possession — not a conspirator, for all had denied any knowledge of the ring. Could it have been the man who now lay dead before me? And, if so, who

was he? And had the government again managed to secure the precious jewel and to revenge Madam Izabel's assassination by mutilating this victim in the same way that she had been served?

But if the dead man was not one of the few leaders of the conspiracy who knew the secret of the ring, how should he have learned its value, and risked his life to obtain it from Madam Izabel?

That, however, was of no vital importance. The main thing was that the ring had been taken from him, and had once more changed ownership.

Perhaps Paola, lurking near his uncle's mansion, had encountered this person and killed him to get the ring. If so, had he carried it to the Emperor? And was this the explanation of Dom Pedro's sudden visit to de Pintra's residence?

Yet what object could Paola have in betraying the conspiracy at this juncture?

Filled with these thoughts I was about to proceed to the house, when a sudden thought induced me to stoop and feel of the murdered man's arm. *The flesh was still warm!*

The murder had been done that very evening — perhaps within the hour.

I own that the horror of the thing and the reckless disregard of life evinced in this double murder for the possession of the ring, warned me against proceeding further in the matter; and for the moment I had serious thoughts of returning quietly to Rio and taking the first steamer for New Orleans. But there were reasons for remaining. One was to get possession in some way of Dom Miguel's body and see it decently buried; for he was my uncle's friend, as well as my own, and I could not honorably return home and admit that I had left him lying within the dungeon where his doom had overtaken him. The second reason I could not have definitely explained. Perhaps it was curiosity to see the adventure to the end, or a secret hope that the revolution was too powerful to be balked. And then there was Lesba! At any rate, I resolved not to desert the Cause just yet, although acknowledging it to be the wisest and safest course to pursue.

So, summoning all my resolution and courage to my aid, I crept to the window of my room and, by a method that I had many times before made use of, admitted myself to the apartment.

I had seen no lights whatever shining from the windows, and the house — as I stood still and listened — seemed absolutely deserted. I felt my way to a shelf, found a candle, and lighted it.

Then I turned around and faced the barrel of a revolver that was held on a level with my eyes.

"You are our prisoner, senhor!" said a voice, stern but suppressed. "I beg

you to offer no resistance.”

CHAPTER XIII

DOM PEDRO DE ALCANTARA

I held the candle steadily and stared at my captor. He was dressed in the uniform of an officer of the royal guards — the body commanded by Fonseca. At his back were two others, silent but alert.

"You are here in the service of General da Fonseca?" I asked, with assumed composure.

"In the Emperor's service, senhor," answered the officer, quietly.

"But the general — "

"The general is unaware of our mission. I have my orders from his Majesty in person."

He smiled somewhat unpleasantly as he made this statement, and for the first time I realized that my arrest might prove a great misfortune.

"Pardon me if I appear discourteous," he continued, and made a sign to his men.

One took the candle from my hand and the other snapped a pair of handcuffs over my wrists.

I had no spirit to resist. The surprise had been so complete that it well-nigh benumbed my faculties. I heard the officer's voice imploring me in polite tones to follow, and then my captors extinguished the candle and marched me away through a succession of black passages until we had reached an upper room at the back of the house.

Here a door quickly opened and I was thrust into a blaze of light so brilliant that it nearly blinded me.

Blinking my eyes to accustom them to the glare, I presently began to note my surroundings, and found myself standing before a table at which was seated the Emperor of Brazil.

Involuntarily I bowed before his Majesty. He was a large man, of commanding appearance, with dark eyes that seemed to read one through and through. Behind him stood a group of four men in civilian attire, while the other end of the room was occupied by a squad of a dozen soldiers of the Uruguayan guard.

"A prisoner, your Majesty," said the officer, saluting. "One evidently familiar with the house, for he obtained entrance to a room adjoining Dom Miguel's library."

The Emperor turned from the papers that littered the table and eyed me gravely.

"Your name!" said he, in a stern voice.

I hesitated; but remembering that officially I was occupying a dungeon in

Rio I decided to continue the deception of my present disguise.

"Andrea Subig, your Majesty."

Some one laughed softly beside me. I turned and saw Valcour at my elbow.

"It is the American secretary, your Majesty, one Robert Harcliffe by name."

The spy spoke in his womanish, dainty manner, and with such evident satisfaction that I could have strangled him with much pleasure had I been free.

"Why are you here?" inquired the Emperor, after eyeing me curiously for a moment.

"I have some personal belongings in this house which I wished to secure before returning to the United States. Your men arrested me in the room I have been occupying."

"Why are you anxious to return to the United States?" questioned the Emperor.

"Because my mission to Brazil is ended."

"It is true," returned Dom Pedro, positively. "The conspiracy is at an end."

"Of that I am not informed," I replied evasively. "But I have been employed by Dom Miguel de Pintra, not by the conspiracy, as your Majesty terms it. And Dom Miguel has no further need of me."

"Dom Miguel is dead," retorted the Emperor, with an accent of triumph in his voice.

"Murdered by his daughter, your spy," I added, seeing that he was aware of the truth.

He merely shrugged his broad shoulders and turned to whisper to a gray-bearded man behind him.

"This conspiracy must be summarily dealt with," resumed the Emperor, turning to me again, "and as there is ample evidence that you are guilty of treason, Senhor Harcliffe, I shall order you put to death unless you at once agree to give us such information as may be in your possession."

"I am an American citizen and entitled to a fair trial," I answered, boldly enough. "You dare not assassinate me. For if I am injured in any way the United States will call you to full account."

"It is a matter of treason, sir!" returned the Emperor, harshly. "Your citizenship will not protect you in this case. I have myself visited your country and been received there with great courtesy. And no one knows better than I that your countrymen would repudiate one who came to Brazil for the treasonable purpose of dethroning its legitimate Emperor."

That was true enough, and I remained silent.

“Will you give us the required information?” he demanded.

I was curious to know how much the royalists had learned, and in what position the republicans had been placed by this imperial visit to their headquarters. Dom Pedro had said that the conspiracy was at an end; but I did not believe that.

“I am sure you err in believing me to be in the secret counsels of the republicans,” I said, after a moment’s thought. “I was merely employed in the capacity of private secretary to Dom Miguel.”

“But you know of the underground vault? You have visited it?”

“Often,” I replied, seeing no harm in the acknowledgment.

“Can you open it for us?” he demanded.

I laughed, for the question exposed to me his real weakness.

“Your Majesty must be well aware that there is but one key,” I replied, “and without that secret key I am as powerless as you are to open the vault.”

“Where is the key?” he asked.

“I do not know. Senhora de Mar stole it from Dom Miguel.”

“And it was taken from her by one of your conspirators.”

“Have you traced it no farther?” I inquired, carelessly.

He shifted uneasily in his chair.

“My men are now investigating the matter,” said he. “Doubtless the ring will soon be in our possession.”

“And how about the murdered man in the shrubbery?” I asked.

The royalists exchanged glances, and one or two uttered exclamations of surprise.

“Is there a murdered man in the shrubbery, Captain de Souza?” questioned the Emperor, sternly.

“Not that I know of, your Majesty,” returned the officer.

“I found him as I approached the house,” said I. “He has been shot within the hour, and his left hand severed at the wrist.”

It was evident that my news startled them. When I had described the location of the body some of the soldiers were sent to fetch it, and during their absence the Emperor resumed his questioning. I told him frankly that none of the records of the republicans was in my possession, and that whatever knowledge I had gained of the conspiracy or the conspirators could not be drawn from me by his threats of death. For now I began to understand that this visit to Dom Miguel’s house was a secret one, and that the royalists were as much in the dark as ever regarding the conspiracy itself or the whereabouts of its leaders. One thing only they knew — that the records were lying with Dom Miguel’s dead body in the secret vault, and that the

ring which opened it was missing.

Before long the soldiers bore the body of the latest victim of the fatal ring into the presence of the Emperor, and Valcour bent over it eagerly for a moment, and then shook his head.

“The man is a stranger,” he said.

Others present endeavored to identify the murdered man, but were equally unsuccessful.

I could see by their uneasy looks that they were all suspicious of one another; for Captain de Souza protested that no shot could have been fired without some of his men hearing it, and the fact that the ring they sought had been so recently within their very reach led them to believe it might not now be very far away.

For all the Emperor’s assumed calmness, I knew he was greatly disturbed by this last murder, as well as by the impotency of his spies to discover the whereabouts of the ring. When Valcour suggested, in his soft voice, that I had myself killed the fellow in the shrubbery, and had either secreted the ring or had it now in my possession, they pounced upon me eagerly, and I was subjected to a thorough search and afterward to severe questioning and many fierce threats.

For a few moments the Emperor listened to the counsels of the group of advisors that stood at his back, and then ordered me safely confined until he had further use for me.

The officer therefore marched me away to the front of the house, where, still securely hand-cuffed, I was thrust into a small chamber and left alone. The key was turned in the lock and I heard the soft foot-falls of a guard pacing up and down outside the door.

The long walk from the station and the excitement of the last hour had greatly wearied me; so I groped around in the dark until I found the bed with which the room was provided, and soon had forgotten all about the dreary conspiracy in a refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAN WITH THE RING

TOWARD morning a tramping of feet aroused me; the door was thrust open long enough for another prisoner to be admitted, and then I heard the bolts shoot into their fastening and the soldiers march away.

It was not quite dark in the room, for the shutters were open and admitted a ray of moonlight through the window. So I lay still and strained my eyes to discover who my companion might be.

He stood motionless for a time in the place the soldiers had left him. I made out that he was tall and stooping, and exceedingly thin; but his face was in shadow. Presently, as he moved, I heard a chain clank, and knew he was hand-cuffed in the same manner as myself.

Slowly he turned his body, peering into every corner of the room, so that soon he discovered me lying where the moonlight was strongest. He gave a start, then, but spoke no word; and again an interval of absolute silence ensued.

His strange behavior began to render me uneasy. It is well to know something of a person confined with you in a small room at the dead of night, and I was about to address the fellow when he began stealthily approaching the bed. He might have been three yards distant when I arose to a sitting posture. This caused him to pause, his form well within the streak of light. Resting upon the edge of the bed and facing him, my own features were clearly disclosed, and we examined each other curiously.

I had never seen him before, and I had little pleasure in meeting him then. He appeared to be a man at least fifty years of age, with pallid, sunken cheeks, eyes bright, but shifting in their gaze, and scanty gray locks that now hung disordered over a low forehead. His form was thin and angular, his clothing of mean quality, and his hands, which dangled before him at the ends of the short chain, were large and hardened by toil.

Not a Brazilian, I decided at once; but I could not then determine his probable nationality.

“Likewise a prisoner, senor?” he inquired, in an indistinct, mumbling tone, and with a strong accent.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Ah, conspirator. I see; I see!” He nodded his head several times, and then growled sentences that I could not understand.

While I stared at him he turned away again, and with a soft and stealthy tread made the entire circuit of the room, feeling of each piece of furniture it contained, and often pausing for many moments in one spot as if occupied in

deep thought.

At last he approached the bed again, dragging after him a chair in which he slowly seated himself opposite me.

“Retain your couch, senor,” he muttered. “I shall not disturb you, and it will soon be morning. You may sleep.”

But I was now fully awake, and had no intention of sleeping while this strange individual occupied his seat beside me.

“Who are you?” I demanded. “A patriot?”

“Not as you use the term,” he answered, at once. “I am Mexican.”

“Mexican!” I echoed, surprised. “Do you speak English?”

“Truly, senor,” he answered, but his English was as bad as his Portuguese.

“Why are you here and a prisoner?” I asked.

“I had business with Senor de Pintra. I came from afar to see him, but found the soldiers inhabiting his house. I am timid, senor, and suspecting trouble I hid in an out-building, where the soldiers discovered me. Why I should be arrested I do not know. I am not conspirator; I am not even Brazilian. I do not care for your politics whatever. They tell me Miguel de Pintra is dead. Is it true?”

His tone did not seem sincere. But I replied it was true that Dom Miguel was dead.

“Then I should be allowed to depart. But not so. They tell me the great Emperor is here, their Dom Pedro, and he will speak to me in the morning. Is it true?”

This time I detected an anxiety in his voice that told me he had not suspected the Emperor’s presence until his arrest.

But I answered that Dom Pedro was then occupying de Pintra’s mansion, together with many of his important ministers.

For a time he remained silent, probably considering the matter with care. But he was ill at ease, and shifted continually in his chair.

“You are Americano?” he asked at last.

“Yes,” said I.

“I knew, when you ask me for my English. But why does the Emperor arrest an American?”

I smiled; but there was no object in trying to deceive him.

“I was private secretary to Dom Miguel,” said I, “and they suspect my late master to have plotted against the Emperor.”

He laughed, unpleasantly.

“It is well your master is dead when they make that suspicion,” said he; then paused a moment and asked, abruptly, “Did he tell you of the vault?”

I stared at him. A Mexican, not a conspirator, yet aware of the secret

vault! It occurred to me that it would be well to keep my own counsel, for a time, at least.

"A vault?" I asked, carelessly, and shook my head.

Again the fellow laughed disagreeably. But my answer seemed to have pleased him.

"He was sly! Ah, he was sly, the dear Senor Miguel!" he chuckled, rocking his thin form back and forth upon the chair. "But never mind. It is nothing. I never pry into secrets, senor. It is not my nature."

I said nothing and another silent fit seized him. Perhaps five minutes had passed before he arose and made a second stealthy circuit of the room, this time examining the barred window with great care. Then he sighed heavily and came back to his seat.

"What will be your fate, sehor?" he asked.

"I shall appeal to our consul at Rio. They must release me," I answered.

"Good. Very good! They must release you. You are no conspirator — a mere secretary, and an American."

I nodded, wishing I might share his confidence. Presently he asked for my name and residence, and I answered him truly.

"I myself am Manuel Pesta, of the City of Mexico. You must not forget the name, senor. Manuel Pesta, the clockmaker."

"I shall not forget," said I, wondering what he could mean. And a moment later he startled me by bending forward and asking in an eager tone:

"Have they searched you?"

"Yes."

"It is my turn soon. This morning."

He leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and fell silent again.

For my part I lay back upon the pillow, yet taking care to face him, and so we remained until daylight came and gradually drove the shadows from the little room.

Even then my strange companion did not move. He was indeed a queer mixture of eager activity and absolute self-repression. Another hour passed, and then we heard footsteps approaching down the passageway.

With a start Pesta aroused himself and fixed a searching glance upon my face. Trembling with nervousness he suddenly raised his manacled hands and removed from his mouth a small object that glittered in the morning light.

My heart gave a sudden bound. *It was the ring that opened the secret vault!*

His own agitation prevented his noting my amazement. Thrusting the ring toward me he whispered, hurriedly:

"Conceal it, quickly, for the love of God! Keep it until I come for it — I,

Manuel Pesta — until I demand it of Robert Harcliffe of New Orleans. It may be to-day — it may be many days. But I will come, senor, I — ”

The bolts of the door shot back and a squad of soldiers entered. Their sudden appearance barely gave me time to drop the ring into an outside pocket of my coat. As two of the soldiers seized him I noticed that the Mexican was trembling violently; but he arose meekly and submitted to be led from the room. Two others motioned me to follow, and in a few moments we were ushered into the room where I had had my interview with the Emperor.

Valcour was standing by the fireplace when we entered, and eyeing the Mexican with indifference he said to the captain:

“This is the man you found secreted in the outbuilding?”

“It is, senhor,” answered the captain.

“Have you searched him?”

“Only partially. We took from him this revolver, a knife, and this purse. There were no papers.”

Valcour took the weapons in his hands and examined them. The revolver, I could see as he threw back the barrel, was loaded in all six chambers. The knife he glanced at and turned to place upon the mantel when a second thought seemingly induced him to open the blades. It was a large, two-bladed affair, and the bright steel showed that it was sharpened as finely as a razor. As I watched the Emperor’s spy I chanced to look toward the Mexican and surprised an expression that nearly resembled terror upon his haggard face. Perhaps Valcour saw it, too, for he drew a handkerchief from his pocket and carefully wiped out the seats in the handles where the blades lay when the knife was closed. A small stain appeared upon the linen, and the spy carried the handkerchief to the window and inspected the stain with interest. While he was thus engaged the Emperor entered the room, followed by his ministers, and seating himself at the table calmly proceeded to light a cigar. Evidently he had just breakfasted, for he had an appearance of content that indicated a comfortable condition.

Valcour, returning from the window, first saluted the Emperor with great deference, and then addressed the Mexican.

“Why did you kill that man last evening and sever his hand with your knife?”

The Mexican gazed at him in horror.

“I — senor, as God hears me, I — ”

“Tell me why!” said Valcour calmly.

The fellow glared at him as if fascinated. Then he threw his hands, all manacled as they were, high above his head, and with a scream that caused

even the Emperor to start, fell upon the floor in a swoon.

Valcour turned him over with his foot.

“Search him!” he commanded.

The men were thorough. Not a shred of clothing escaped their eyes. And after they had finished the detective himself made an examination.

Dom Pedro was evidently much interested. Without any explanation further than Valcour’s accusation, all present understood that the Mexican was charged with the murder of the man found in the shrubbery and therefore he must either have the ring upon his person or had deposited it in some secret place.

He lay unconscious after the search had ended, and Valcour, after a moment’s reflection, ordered the men to carry him back to the room where he had passed the night, to guard him well, and to send for a physician.

The Emperor relighted his cigar, which had gone out, and in the interval I heard the sound of a troup of horse galloping up the drive. There was no mistaking the clank of sabers, and Dom Pedro leaned forward with an expectant look upon his face, in which the others joined.

Then the door burst open and a man entered and knelt before the Emperor. I could scarcely restrain a cry of surprise as I saw him.

It was Francisco Paola.

CHAPTER XV

A DANGEROUS MOMENT

NOT since I parted with him in the road on the morning of Dom Miguel's murder had I seen Paola or heard from him directly.

At that time, after giving me two men who had proved faithful both to me and the Cause, he had ridden on to the house of death — "to breakfast with his sister." From that moment his actions had been a mystery not only to me but to all his fellow-conspirators.

But now it seemed easy to understand that the Minister of Police had been attending to the Emperor's business, and that he had also been playing a double game from the beginning, and promoting the revolution that he might the more easily crush it.

As he rose to his feet after saluting the Emperor, Paola glanced around the room and noted my presence. I could not well disguise the scorn I felt for this treacherous fellow, and as he met my eyes he smiled and twirled his small moustache with a satisfied air.

"Well?" demanded the Emperor. "All is indeed well, your Majesty," returned the minister, lightly. "The leaders of the conspiracy, with one exception, are now under arrest."

"And that one?"

"Sanchez Bastro, a coffee-planter with a ranch near by. He has crossed the border. But it is unimportant."

"And Mendez?"

"Imprisoned in the citadel."

"Barros?"

"He is comforting Mendez, in the same cell."

"Treverot?"

"Unfortunately we were obliged to shoot him. He chose to resist.

"Hm! And Piexoto?"

"Is below, under arrest."

"Have him brought here." The captain left the room, and again the Emperor turned to Paola.

"You have done well, senhor; and your reward shall be adequate. It was a far-reaching plot, and dangerous." And Dom Pedro sighed as if greatly relieved.

Paola brushed a speck of dust from his sleeve and laughed in his silly fashion.

"The serpent is only dangerous, your Majesty, until its fangs are pulled," he drawled, and strolled away toward Valcour, while the soldiers brought in

Senhor Floriano Piexoto.

The famous patriot was not only handcuffed, but his elbows were bound together by cords across his back. But despite his bonds he walked proudly and scowled into Dom Pedro's face as he confronted him. Indeed, I was filled with admiration to find that this man whom Fonseca had called "croaker" could be brave when occasion demanded it.

"So, my clever statesman has seen fit to turn traitor," began the Emperor, sternly regarding the prisoner.

"A champion of Liberty must needs be a traitor to Dom Pedro," replied Piexoto, with equal sternness.

"But the conspiracy is at an end, and I am inclined to be merciful," resumed the Emperor. "I am told you were the trusted friend of Miguel de Pintra, and knew his secrets. If you will inform us how to unlock the secret vault, I will promise to regard your offense lightly."

Piexoto stared at him a moment indignantly. Then he turned with a frown upon Paola.

"Ask of your Minister of Police," he retorted; "for there stands a double traitor! It was he who stood closest to de Pintra, winning his confidence only to betray it. It was Francisco Paola who planned the secret vault. Who should know better than he how to open it?"

The Emperor turned to Paola with suspicion written visibly upon his stern features.

"Did you plan the vault?" he demanded.

"Truly, your Majesty. Otherwise the records would have been scattered in many places. I planned the vault that all might be concentrated in one place — where we should find them when we were ready to explode the conspiracy. Records — plans — money — all are now at our hand."

"But we have not the key. Why did you plan so complicated a lock?"

"Nothing else would have satisfied de Pintra. As for the lock, it is nothing. A drill through one of the steel panels would have admitted us easily. But — "

"But what, sir? Why do we not drill now, instead of seeking this cursed ring?"

The Minister smiled and again twirled his moustaches.

"Because Dom Miguel suddenly developed inventive genius on his own part. I was absent when the work was completed, and too late I discovered that de Pintra had made pockets everywhere between the steel plates, and filled every pocket with nitroglycerine."

"Well?"

“That is all. To drill into the vault is to explode a pocket of nitro-glycerine, which in turn will explode all the other pockets through concussion.”

“And then?”

“And then the contents of the vault would be blown to atoms. Of the mansion itself not one stone would remain upon another. The records we seek would be lost irrevocably.”

Valcour, pale with fear, uttered a cry and dashed through the door, while the Emperor rose to his feet with a look of terror upon his face.

“They are drilling now!” he gasped.

Silently we stood, none daring to move; and into our drawn faces Piexoto gazed with a grim and derisive smile.

Paolo, more composed than any of the others, except Piexoto, began rolling a cigarette, but remembering the Emperor’s presence he ceased.

And so we stood, motionless and silent, until footsteps were again heard and Valcour re-entered wiping the perspiration from his forehead with an embroidered handkerchief. His face wore a look of relief, but there was a slight tremor in his voice as he said:

“I have ordered the drilling stopped, your Majesty.”

Dom Pedro, thus reassured, strode back and forth in evident perplexity.

“We must have the key!” he said, angrily. “There is no other way. And the key cannot be far off. Has your prisoner, the Mexican, recovered?”

“I will go and see,” answered the detective, and again left the room.

I caught a look of surprise upon the face of the Minister of Police. It was fleeting, but I was sure it had been there.

“May I inquire who this prisoner is?” he asked. One of the men who acted as secretary to the Emperor, receiving a nod from Dom Pedro, informed Paola of the finding of the dead body in the shrubbery, and of the consequent arrest of the Mexican.

“And the key was not found in his possession?” he inquired, eagerly.

“No.”

“Then he secreted it, fearing arrest. Have the outbuildings been searched?”

“Not yet.”

“Let it be done at once.”

Valcour, entering in time to hear this, flushed angrily.

“That is my business, Senhor Paola. I will brook no interference from the police.”

“Ah! had it not been for the police, Senhor Valcour would have blown his Emperor into eternity,” returned Paola, smiling blandly into the spy’s

disturbed countenance.

“Enough of this!” cried the Emperor. “Let the grounds and out-buildings be carefully searched. Is your prisoner recovered, Valcour?”

“He is raving mad,” returned the detective, in a surly tone. “It requires two soldiers to control him.”

I breathed a sigh of relief, for I had feared the Mexican, in his terror, would betray the fact that he had given me the ring.

CHAPTER XVI

TRAITOR TO THE CAUSE

THE Emperor retired while the search of the grounds was being conducted, and Piexoto and I were escorted to another room upon the ground floor and locked in. There were two unbarred windows looking upon the grounds, but a sentry was posted at each of these, and as we were still hand-cuffed, our escape was impossible.

For a time my companion did nothing but curse Paola in the most hearty and diversified manner, and I made no effort to stop him. But finally this amusement grew monotonous even to its author, and he asked me how I had allowed myself to be captured.

I therefore related my adventures, but said nothing about the ring.

"I have always suspected Paola," he told me, "and often warned Dom Miguel against him. The man's very nature is frivolous. He could not be expected to keep faith. Yet it is surprising he did not choose to betray the Emperor, rather than us; for the Revolution is too powerful and too far advanced to be quelled by the arrest of a few of its leaders."

"But what of Fonseca?" I asked curiously. "Why was he not arrested also? Why was not his name mentioned to the Emperor?"

"I confess the fact puzzles me;" returned Piexoto, thoughtfully. "Fonseca is even more compromised than I am myself, and unless he had a secret understanding with Paola, and purchased immunity, I cannot account for his escaping arrest."

"But the general will not forsake the cause, I am sure," I said, earnestly. "And it seems that Senhor Bastro, also, has succeeded in eluding arrest. Therefore, should the royalists fail to find the key to the vault, all may yet be well, in spite of Paola's treachery."

"There is another perplexing matter," returned Piexoto, pacing the room in deep thought. "Miguel de Pintra never told me the vault was sheathed with nitro-glycerine. Did you know it?"

"Yes," I answered. "But the secret was revealed to me by Lesba Paola, the Minister's sister.

"I can scarcely believe it, nevertheless," he resumed. "Yet what object could the traitor have in preventing their reaching the records, unless he knew the attempt to drill through the walls would destroy us all — himself included?"

"Perhaps he has fear that the records would incriminate him with the Emperor," I suggested.

"Bah! He has made his terms, evidently. That he worked faithfully in our

interests for a time is quite believable; but either the Emperor's bribes were too tempting or he lost faith in the Cause."

I was about to reply when the door opened to admit Paola. Piexoto paused in his walk to glare at the Minister, and I was myself no less surprised at the inopportune visit.

But Paola, with the old, smirking smile upon his face that nothing ever seemed to banish, nodded pleasantly at us and sat down in an easy-chair. He rolled a cigarette and carefully lighted it before he addressed us.

"Senhors, you are about to denounce me as a traitor to the Cause," said he; "but you may both spare your words. Before the Cause existed I was Minister to the Emperor. A policeman walks in devious paths. If I am true to the oath I gave the Emperor, how dare you, Floriano Piexoto, who have violated yours, condemn me?"

"I don't," answered the other. "It is absurd to condemn a man like you. Treachery is written on every line of your false face. My only regret is that I did not kill you long ago."

'Yet the chief, Dom Miguel de Pintra, trusted me," remarked Paola, in a musing tone, at the same time flicking the ash from his cigarette with a deliberate gesture. "He was, it seems, the only one."

"Not so," said I, angry at his insolent bearing. "Your sister, sir, had faith in you."

He looked at me with a quizzical expression, and laughed. I had ventured the remark in an endeavor to pierce his shield of conceit and indifference. But it seemed that even Lesba's misplaced confidence failed to shame him, for at that moment the girl's loyalty to the Cause seemed to me beyond a doubt.

"My sister was, I believe, an ardent republican. Poor little girl! How could she judge the merits of a political controversy? But there, senhors, let us have done with chidings. I am come for the key."

Piexoto and I stared at each other aghast. The key! Could the Minister suspect either of us of possessing it?

"Quite prettily acted, gentlemen," he resumed, "but it is useless to oppose my request. I suppose our friend Harcliffe has passed it on to you, senhor? No? Then he must have it on his person."

"Are you mad?" I asked, with well-assumed contempt.

"No; but the Mexican is. I have just left his room, and he raves perpetually of a ring he has given to Robert Harcliffe, of New Orleans. A ring that must be restored to him on demand."

"He raves," said I, coolly, although my heart was beating wildly.

"He does, indeed," acknowledged Paola. "And he tells exactly where the

ring was placed — in the outer pocket of your jacket. Will you pardon me, senhor, if I prove the truth of his assertion?"

He rose and advanced to me with a soft, stealthy tread, and I backed away until I stood fairly against the wall, vainly endeavoring to find some way to circumvent him.

"Hold!" cried a clear voice, and as Paola swung around upon his heel I saw beyond him the form of Valcour outlined by the dark doorway.

"You were doubtless about to search the prisoner, senhor," said the spy, calmly, as he approached us. "I have myself just come from the Mexican's room and heard his ravings. But the task must be mine, since the Emperor has placed the search for the key in my hands."

Paola turned with a slight shrug and resumed his seat.

"I have searched the prisoner already," he announced, "but failed to find the ring. Doubtless he has passed it to Piexoto, or secreted it. Or, it may be, the Mexican's words are mere ravings."

The detective hesitated.

"Who is this Mexican, Senhor Paola?" he asked.

"Frankly, I do not know. Not a conspirator, I am sure, and evidently not a royalist."

"Then how came he to know of the existence of the ring?"

"A mystery, my dear Valcour. Have you yet identified the man this Mexican murdered?"

"Not yet."

"I myself have not had a good look at the body. If you will take me to him I will endeavor to locate the fellow. It was doubtless he who murdered Madam Izabel."

As he spoke he rose and walked quietly toward the door, as if he expected Valcour to follow. But the spy, suddenly suspicious, cast a shrewd glance at me and replied:

"One moment, Senhor Paola. I must satisfy myself that neither Harclifle nor Piexoto has the ring, in order that I may report to the Emperor."

"As you like," returned the Minister, indifferently, and resumed his chair.

Valcour came straight to my side, thrust his hand within my pocket, and drew out the ring.

"Ah!" he cried, his face lighting with joy, "your search must have been a careless one, my dear Paola! Here is news for the Emperor, at last."

He hurried from the room, and Paola, still smiling, rose and faced us.

"It is a great pity," said he, pleasantly, with his eyes on my face, "that God permits any man to be a fool."

Before I could reply he had followed Valcour from the room, and Piexoto,

regarding me with a sullen frown, exclaimed:

"I can say amen to that! Why did you not tell me you had the ring?"

I did not reply. The taunts and the loss of the ring had dazed me and I sank into a chair and covered my eyes with my hands.

Pacing the room with furious energy, Piexoto growled a string of laments and reproaches into my unwilling ears.

"My poor comrades! It is their death-warrant. These records will condemn to punishment half the great families of Brazil. And now when the battle is almost won, to have them fall into the Emperor's hands. Thank God, de Pintra is dead! This blow would be worse to him than death itself."

"However," said I, somewhat recovering myself, "we shall now secure his body from that grim vault. That is one satisfaction, at least."

He did not see fit to reply to this, but paced the floor in as great agitation as before.

Captain de Souza entered with two of his guards.

"The Emperor commands you to unlock the vault," he said to me. "Be good enough to follow, senhor. And Senhor Piexoto is also requested to be present."

"Tell the Emperor I refuse to unlock the vault," I returned, firmly.

"And why?" demanded Piexoto, scornfully. "It is merely a question of time, now that they have the key, when they will find the right indentation in the door."

"True," I answered. Then, to the captain: "Lead on, I will follow."

They escorted us to the library and down the winding stair until we stood in the well-known chamber at the end of the passage. The outer door of the vault lay open, displaying the steel surface of the inner door, with its countless indentations.

The Emperor and his secretary, together with Paola and Valcour, were awaiting us. The latter handed me the ring.

"His Majesty commands you to open the door, senhor Americano," he said.

"I believe the Minister of Police designed this vault. Let him open it himself," I replied, my resolution halting at the thought of what the open door would reveal.

"Yes, I designed it," said the Minister, "but I did not execute the work. Doubtless in time I could open the door; but the Emperor is impatient."

I saw that further resistance was useless. Bending over, I fitted the stone of the ring into the proper indentation, and shot the bolts. The great door was swung upward, a whiff of the damp, confined air entered my nostrils and made me shiver.

Reaching my hand within the vault I turned the switch that threw on the electric light, and then withdrew that the others might enter.

But no one moved. The light illuminated the full interior of the great vault, and every eye gazed eagerly within.

Valcour uttered a groan of baffled rage; Piexoto swore horribly in a scarcely audible tone, and the Minister of Police laughed.

"Good God!" cried the Emperor, with staring eyeballs, *"the vault is empty!"*

CHAPTER XVII
THE TORCH OF REBELLION

WITH a bound I stood within the grim vault and searched its confines with anxious eyes. True enough, the place was empty. Not a scrap of paper, a book, or a bank-note had been left there. The shelves that lined the walls were as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

The records of the Revolution were gone. The body of Miguel de Pintra was gone. Thank God, the great and glorious Cause was as yet safe!

Valcour was on his hands and knees, prying into the corners for some scrap that might have been overlooked.

Paola stood beside me with the old aggravating simper upon his face, twirling one end of his moustache.

Suddenly Valcour stood up and faced him.

"Traitor!" he cried, with a passionate gesture, "it is you who have done this! It is you who have led us here only to humiliate us and laugh at us!"

"Your Majesty," said Paola, without moving his head, "will you kindly protect me from the insults of your servants?"

"Have peace, Valcour!" growled the Emperor. "Senhor Francisco has proved his loyalty, and doubtless shares our chagrin. Come, gentlemen, let us leave this dismal place."

I followed slowly in the train of the party as it wound its way through the narrow passage and up the iron stairs into the library. My hand-cuffs had been removed when I was brought to open the vault, and an idea came to me to lag behind and try to effect my escape from the house.

But Valcour was waiting for me at the trap door, and called Captain de Souza to guard me. I was taken to the large room on the ground floor, from whence they had brought me, thrust through the doorway, and the key turned upon me.

Piexoto had been taken elsewhere, and I found myself alone.

My thoughts were naturally confused by the amazing discovery we had just made, and I was so engaged in wondering what had become of Dom Miguel and the records that I scarcely looked up when the door opened to admit Francisco Paola.

He had in his hand a small parcel that looked like a box, which he placed upon a table near the open window.

Next he drew a note-book from his pocket, scribbled some lines upon three several leaves, and then, tearing them out, he reached within the box, taking care to lift but a portion of the cover, and busied himself some moments in a way that made me wonder what he could be doing. I had no

suspicion of the truth until he carried the box to the window and quickly removed the cover. Then, although his back was toward me, I heard a rapid flutter of wings, followed by a strange silence, and I knew that Paola was following with his eyes the flight of the birds he had liberated.

"So, my dear Minister, I have at last discovered your secret!" said a sharp voice, and as Paola whirled about I noted that Valcour had entered the room and was standing with folded arms and eyes that sparkled triumphantly.

"Orders to my men," remarked the Minister, quietly, and brushed a small feather from his arm.

"True enough!" retorted Valcour, with a bitter smile. "Orders to General Fonseca, whom you strangely overlooked in making your decoy arrests. Orders to Sanchez Bastro, who is to distribute arms to the rebels! And where did the third pigeon go, my loyal and conscientious Minister of Police? To Mazanovitch, or to that Miguel de Pintra whom you falsely led us to believe had perished in yonder vault?"

He came close to the Minister.

"Traitor! In setting free these birds you have fired the torch of rebellion; that terrible flame which is liable to sweep the land, and consume royalist and republican alike!"

Paola, the sneering smile for once gone from his face, gazed at his accuser with evident admiration.

"You are wonderfully clever, my dear Valcour," said he, slowly. "You have wit; you have a clear judgment; your equal is not in all Brazil. What a pity, my friend, that you are not one of us!"

Somehow, the words seemed to ring true. Valcour flushed to the roots of his hair. "I hate you," he cried, stamping his foot with passion. "You have thwarted me always. You have laughed at me — sneered at me — defied me! But at last I have you in the toils. Francisco Paola, I arrest you in the name of the Emperor."

"On what charge?"

"The charge of treason!"

Paola laughed softly, and in a tone denoting genuine amusement.

"Come, my brave detective," said he; "we will go to the Emperor together, and accuse each other to our hearts' content!"

He attempted to take Valcour's arm, in his inimitable jaunty fashion; but the spy shook him off and followed Paola from the room, trembling with suppressed rage.

For my part, I knew not what to make of the scene, except that these men were bitter enemies, and each endeavoring to destroy the other. But could Valcour's accusation be true? Had the torch of revolution really been fired?

God forbid that I should ever meet with such another man as Francisco Paola again! Deep or shallow, coxcomb or clever conspirator, true man or traitor — it was as impossible to read him or to judge his real character as to solve the mighty, unfathomable Secrets of Nature.

One moment I called him traitor; the next I was sure he was faithful to the Cause. But who could judge the man aright? Not I, indeed!

Thus reflecting, I approached the window and looked out. Eight feet below me one of the Uruguayan guards paced back and forth upon the green lawn, his short carbine underneath his arm, and a poniard swinging at his side.

The fellow looked up and saw me.

"Close that window!" he commanded, with a scowl.

I obeyed, sliding the sash to its place. But still I gazed through the glass at the labyrinth of walks and hedges defining the extensive gardens at this side of the house. I knew every inch of these grounds, having wandered there many hours during my sojourn at the mansion. And the thought came to me that it would not be difficult to escape in that maze of hedge and shrubbery, had I once a fair start of my pursuers.

Within my range of vision was a portion of the driveway, and presently I saw the Emperor's carriage roll away, followed by several others. Piexoto was seated in the last of the carriages, but only a small portion of the Uruguayan guard accompanied the cortege.

I tried to see if the Minister of Police was among those who were returning to Rio, but was unable to note his presence in the brief time the carriages were in view. Nor did Valcour seem to be with them. Captain de Souza evidently remained in charge of the guards left at the mansion.

Well, I longed to leave the place myself, now that the emptiness of the secret vault had been disclosed; but for some reason my captors desired me to remain a prisoner.

The day dragged wearily away. One of the Uruguayans brought me food at noontime, and I ate with good appetite. The room grew close, but when I attempted to raise the window the surly guard outside presented his carbine, and I respected his wish to leave the sash lowered.

During this time I had ample opportunity to speculate upon the astonishing events of the morning; but my attempt to solve the problem of what had become of Dom Miguel and the records seemed absolutely futile. That the body of the chief had been removed by some friendly hand — the same that had saved the funds and papers — there was no doubt whatever. But when had this removal taken place?

At one time a fleeting hope animated me that the vault had been entered in

time to save Dom Miguel from suffocation; but a little reflection soon caused me to abandon that notion. Allowing that the slayer of Madam Izabel had been a patriot, and left the train at the first station beyond Cruz, he could not possibly have returned to de Pintra's mansion on the swiftest horse within eight hours of the time my friend had been entombed alive, and long before that Dom Miguel would have succumbed to the confined atmosphere of his prison.

Moreover, none of the conspirators who knew of the ring or was competent to recognize it had been on the train at the time of Izabel de Mar's death. Therefore the patriot who finally secured the key to the vault and saved the records must have obtained the ring long after any hope of saving the life of the imprisoned chief had been abandoned.

Somehow, it occurred to me that the man in the shrubbery had not been murdered by the Mexican, but by some one of our band who had promptly cleared the vault and escaped with the contents — even while the Emperor and his party were in possession of the house. The ring might have been dropped during the escape and found by the Mexican — this being the only plausible way to account for its being in his possession.

Although these speculations were to some extent a diversion, and served to occupy my thoughts during my tedious confinement, there were many details to contradict their probability, and I was not at all positive that I had discovered the right explanation of the mystery.

It must have been near evening when the door was again opened. This time a man was thrust into the room and the door quickly locked upon us.

I started from my chair with an exclamation of dismay. My fellow-prisoner was the mad Mexican!

CHAPTER XVIII
A NARROW ESCAPE

THE man did not seem to notice my presence at first. For a time he remained motionless in the position the guards had left him, his vacant eyes fixed steadily upon the opposite wall.

Then, with a long-drawn sigh, his gaze fell and wandered to the table where stood the remains of my luncheon. With a wolf-like avidity he pounced upon the tray, eagerly consuming every scrap that I had left, and draining a small bottle of wine of the last dregs it contained.

When he had finished he still continued to fumble about the tray, and presently picked up a large, two-tined steel fork and examined it with careful attention. They had brought no knife into the room, and I had scarcely noticed the fork before; yet now, as the Mexican held it firmly in his clinched fist, and passed it to and fro with a serpent-like motion, I realized with a thrill of anxiety that it might prove a terrible weapon in the hands of a desperate man.

Evidently my fellow-prisoner had the same thought, for after a time he concealed the fork in his bosom, and then turned to examine the room more carefully. His first act was to approach the window, and when he started and shrank away I knew our ever-vigilant guard had warned him not to consider that avenue of escape.

Next he swung around and faced the place where I sat, slightly in the shadow. The day was drawing to its close, and he had not noticed me before. A swift motion toward his breast was followed by a smile, and he advanced close to me and said, in his stumbling English:

"Aha! My American frien' to which I gave the ring! It is safe, senor? It is safe?"

I nodded, thinking to humor him. Indeed, I could not determine at that moment whether the man was still insane or not.

He drew a chair to my side and sat down.

"Listen, then, my frien'. Together we will find riches — riches very great! Why? Because we Mexicans — Careno and myself — we build the door of the big vault under this house. So? They bring us here blindfold. We work many days on the big plate with strange device cut in the steel. Careno was expert. Only one place, cut with great cunning, shot the bolts in their sockets. For myself, I am clock-maker and gem-cutter. They tell me to cut emerald so it fit the plate, and mount it in ring. Yes, it was I, Senor Americano, who do that fine work — I, Manuel Pesta!

"Then they carry us away, blindfold again, to the border of Uruguay. We

do not know this house — we cannot find it again ever. So they think. But to make sure they hire men to assassinate us — to stab us to the heart in those Uruguay Mountain. Fine pay for our work — eh, senor? But, peste! Careno and I — we stab our assassins — we escape — we swear vengeance! For two year we wander in Brazil — seeking, ever seeking for the house with the vault.

"How clever they are! But we, are we not also clever? On a railway train one day we see a lady with the ring! We cannot mistake — I made it, and I know my work. It is key to the big vault! Careno cannot wait. He sit beside lady and put his knife in her heart. The train rattle along and the lady make no noise. But the ring sticks, so Careno cuts off finger and puts in pocket. Are we not clever, senor? Now we have ring, but yet know not of the house with the vault. We keep quiet and ride on to Rio. There the dead lady is carried out and all is excitement. She is Senora Izabel de Mar, daughter of Dom Miguel de Pintra. She come from her father's house at Cuyaba. This we hear and remember. Then a man they call Valcour he rush up and cry, 'Her finger is gone! The ring — where is the ring?' Aha! we know now we are right.

"So we go away and find out about Miguel de Pintra — the head of great rebellion with millions of gold and notes to pay the soldiers when they fight. Good! We know now of the vault. We know we have key. We know we are now rich! Careno and I we go to Cuyaba — we find this house — we hide in the bushes till night. Then Careno get mad for the money — he want it all, not half — and he try to murder me. Ah, well! my pistol is quicker than his knife, that is all. He is wearing ring, and it stick like it stick on lady's hand. Bah! I cut off Careno's hand and carve away the ring. It is simple, is it not?

"But now the soldiers gallop up. The house is fill with people. So I must wait. I hide in secret place, but soon they drag me out and make me prisoner. What! must I lose all now — millions — millions of gold — and no Careno to share it? No! I am still clever. I keep ring in mouth until I meet you, and I give it to you to keep. When they search me, there is no ring."

He sprang up, chuckling and rubbing his hands together in great delight. He danced a step or two and then drew the steel fork from his breast and struck it fiercely into the table-top, standing silently to watch it while the prongs quivered and came to rest.

"Am I not clever?" he again asked, drawing out the fork from the wood and returning it to his breast. "But I am generous, too. You shall divide with me. But not half! I won all from Careno, but you shall have some — enough to be rich, senor Americano. And now, give me the ring!"

By this time his eyes were glittering with insanity, and at his abrupt demand I shifted uneasily in my seat, not knowing how to reply.

“Give me the ring!” he repeated, a tone of menace creeping into his high-pitched voice.

I arose and walked toward the window, getting the table between us. Then I turned and faced him.

“They have taken the ring from me.” I said.

He stood as if turned to stone, his fierce eyes fixed upon my own.

“They have opened the vault with it,” I continued, “and found it bare and empty.”

He gave a shrill scream at this, and began trembling in every limb.

“You lie!” he shouted, wildly. “You try to cheat me — to get all! And the vault has millions — millions in gold and notes. Give me the ring!”

I made no reply. To reiterate my assertion would do no good, and the man was incompetent to consider the matter calmly. Indeed, he once more drew that ugly fork from his breast and, grasping it as one would a dagger, began creeping toward me with a stealthy, catlike tread.

I approached the edge of the round center-table, alert to keep its breadth between me and my companion. The Mexican paused opposite me, and whispered between his clinched teeth:

“Give it me! Give me the ring!”

“The guard will be here presently,” said I, fervently hoping I spoke the truth, “and he will tell you of the ring. I am quite sure Senhor Valcour has it.”

“Ah, I am betrayed! You wish to take all — you and this Valcour! But see, my Americano — I will kill you. I will kill you now, and then you have nothing for your treachery!”

Slowly he edged his way around the table, menacing me with his strange weapon, and with my eyes fixed upon his I moved in the opposite direction, retaining the table as my shield.

First in one direction and then in the other he moved, swiftly at times, then with deliberate caution, striving ever to take me unawares and reach me with his improvised dagger.

This situation could not stand the tension for long; I realized that sooner or later the game must have an abrupt ending.

So, as I dodged my persistent enemy, I set my wits working to devise a means of escape. The window seemed my only hope, and I had lost all fear of the sentry in the more terrible danger that confronted me.

Suddenly I exerted my strength and thrust the table against the Mexican so forcibly that he staggered backward. Then I caught up a chair and after a swing around my head hurled it toward him like a catapult. It crushed him to the floor, and e’er he could rise again I had thrown up the sash of the window

and leaped out.

Fortune often favors the desperate. I alighted full upon the form of the unsuspecting sentry, bearing him to the ground by my weight, where we both rolled in the grass.

Quickly I regained my feet and darted away into the flower-garden, seeking to reach the hedges before my guard could recover himself.

Over my shoulder I saw him kneeling and deliberately pointing at me his carbine. Before he could fire the flying form of the Mexican descended upon him from the window. There was a flash and a report, but the ball went wide its mark, and instantly the two men were struggling in a death-grapple upon the lawn.

Away I ran through the maze of hedge and shrubbery, threading the well-known paths unerringly. I heard excited shouts as the guardsmen, aroused by their comrade's shot, poured from the mansion and plunged into the gardens to follow me. But it was dusk by this time, and I had little fear of being overtaken.

The estate was bounded upon this side by an impenetrable thick-set hedge, but it was broken in one place by a gardeners' tool-house, which had a door at each side, and thus admitted one into a lane that wound through a grove and joined the main highway a mile beyond.

Reaching this tool-house I dashed within, closed and barred the door behind me, and then emerged upon the lane.

To my surprise I saw a covered carriage standing in the gloom, and made out that the door stood open and a man upon the box was holding the reins and leaning toward me eagerly as if striving to solve my identity.

Without hesitation I sprang into the carriage and closed the door, crying to the man:

"Quick! for your life — drive on!"

Without a word he lashed his horses and we started with a jerk that threw me into the back seat.

I heard an exclamation in a woman's startled voice and felt a muffled form shrinking into the corner of the carriage. Then two shots rang out; I heard a scream and the sound of a fall as the driver pitched upon the ground, and now like the wind the maddened horses rushed on without guidance, swaying the carriage from side to side with a dangerous motion.

These Brazilian carriages have a trap in the top to permit the occupants to speak to the driver. I found this trap, threw it upward, and drew myself up until I was able to scramble into the vacant seat. The reins had fallen between the horses, evidently, but we were now dashing through the grove, and the shadows were so deep that I could distinguish nothing distinctly.

Cautiously I let myself down until my feet touched the pole, and then, resting my hands upon the loins of the madly galloping animals, I succeeded in grasping the reins and returned safely to the box seat.

Then I braced myself to conquer the runaways, and when we emerged from the grove and came upon the highway there was sufficient light for me to keep the horses in the straight road until they had tired themselves sufficiently to be brought under control.

During this time I had turned to speak a reassuring word, now and then, to the unknown woman in the carriage.

Doubtless she had been both amazed and indignant at my abrupt seizure of her equipage; but there was not yet time to explain to her my necessity.

We were headed straight for the station at Cuyaba, and I decided at once to send a telegram warning Mazanovitch of danger. For Paola had turned traitor, the vault had been opened, and the Emperor was even now on his way to Rio to arrest all who had previously escaped the net of the Minister of Police.

So we presently dashed up to the station, which was nearly deserted at this hour, and after calling a porter to hold the horses I went into the station to write my telegram.

Mazanovitch had asked me to use but one word, and although I had much of interest to communicate, a moment's thought assured me that a warning of danger was sufficient.

So, after a brief hesitation, I wrote the word "Lesba," and handed the message to the operator.

"That is my name, senhor," said a soft voice behind L. FRANK BAUM me, and I turned to confront Lesba Paola.

CHAPTER XIX
THE WAYSIDE INN

ASTONISHMENT rendered me speechless, and at first I could do no more than bow with an embarrassed air to the cloaked figure before me. Lesba's fair face, peering from beneath her mantilla, was grave but set, and her brilliant eyes bore a questioning and half-contemptuous look that was hard to meet.

"That is my name, senhor," she repeated, "and you will oblige me by explaining why you are sending it to Captain Mazanovitch."

"Was it your carriage in which I escaped?" I inquired.

"Yes; and my man now lies wounded by the roadside. Why did you take me by surprise, Senhor Harcliffe? And why — *why* are you telegraphing my name to Mazanovitch?"

Although my thoughts were somewhat confused I remembered that Lesba had accompanied her brother to Rio; that her brother had turned traitor, and she herself had ridden in the Emperor's carriage, with the spy Valcour. And I wondered how it was that her carriage should have been standing this very evening at a retired spot, evidently awaiting some one, when I chanced upon it in my extremity.

It is well to take time to consider, when events are of a confusing nature. In that way thoughts are sometimes untangled. Now, in a flash, the truth came to me. Valcour was still at the mansion — Valcour, her accomplice; perhaps her lover.

To realize this evident fact of her intrigue with my brilliant foe sent a shiver through me — a shiver of despair and utter weariness. Still keeping my gaze upon the floor, and noting, half-consciously, the click-click of the telegraph instrument, I said:

"Pardon me, donzella, for using your carriage to effect my escape. You see, I have not made an alliance with the royalists, as yet, and my condition is somewhat dangerous. As for the use of your name in my telegram, I have no objection to telling you — now that the message has been sent — that it was a cypher word warning my republican friends of treachery."

"Do you suspect *me* of treachery, Senhor Harcliffe?" she asked in cold, scornful tones.

I looked up, but dropped my eyes again as I confronted the blaze of indignation that flashed from her own.

"I make no accusations, donzella. What is it to me if you Brazilians fight among yourselves for freedom or the Emperor, as it may suit your fancy? I came here to oblige a friend of my father's — the one true man I have found

in all your intrigue-ridden country. But he, alas! is dead, and I am powerless to assist farther the cause he loved. So my mission here is ended, and I will go back to America."

Again I looked up; but this time her eyes were lowered and her expression was set and impenetrable.

"Do not let us part in anger," I resumed, a tremor creeping into my voice in spite of me — for this girl had been very dear to my heart. "Let us say we have both acted according to the dictates of conscience, and cherish only memories of the happy days we have passed together, to comfort us in future years."

She started, with upraised hand and eager face half turned toward the door. Far away in the distance I heard the tramp of many hoofs.

"They are coming, senhor!" called the man who stood beside the horses — one of our patriots. "It's the troop of Uruguayans, I am sure."

Pedro, the station-master, ran from his little office and extinguished the one dim lamp that swung from the ceiling of the room in which we stood.

In the darkness that enveloped us Lesba grasped my arm and whispered "Come!" dragging me toward the door. A moment later we were beside the carriage.

"Mount!" she cried, in a commanding voice. "I will ride inside. Take the road to San Tarem. Quick, senhor, as you value *both* our lives!"

I gathered up the reins as Pedro slammed tight the carriage door. A crack of the whip, a shout of encouragement from the two patriots, and we had dashed away upon the dim road leading to the wild, unsettled plains of the North Plateau.

They were good horses. It surprised me to note their mettle and speed, and I guessed they had been carefully chosen for the night's work — an adventure of which this denouement was scarcely expected. I could see the road but dimly, but I gave the horses slack rein and they sped along at no uncertain pace.

I could no longer hear the hoof-beats of the guards, and judged that either we had outdistanced them or the shrewd Pedro had sent them on a false scent.

Presently the sky brightened, and as the moon shone clear above us I found that we were passing through a rough country that was but sparsely settled. I remembered to have ridden once in this direction with Lesba, but not so far; and the surroundings were therefore strange to me.

For an hour I drove steadily on, and then the girl spoke to me through the open trap in the roof of the carriage.

"A mile or so further will bring us to a fork in the road. Keep to the right,"

said she.

I returned no answer, although I was burning to question her of many things. But time enough for that, I thought, when we were safely at our journey's end. Indeed, Lesba's mysterious actions — her quick return from Rio in the wake of the Emperor and Valcour, her secret rendezvous in the lane, which I had so suddenly surprised and interrupted, and her evident desire to save me from arrest — all this was not only contradictory to the frank nature of the girl, but to the suspicions I had formed of her betrayal of the conspiracy in co-operation with her treacherous brother.

The key to the mystery was not mine, and I could only wait until Lesba chose to speak and explain her actions.

I came to the fork in the road and turned to the right. The trail — for it had become little more than that — now skirted a heavy growth of underbrush that merged into groves of scattered, stunted trees; and these in time gradually became more compact and stalwart until a great Brazilian forest threw its black shadow over us. Noiselessly the carriage rolled over the beds of moss, which were so thick now that I could scarcely hear a sound of the horses' hoofs, and then I discerned a short distance ahead the outlines of an old, weather-beaten house.

Lesba had her head through the trap and spoke close to my ear.

"Stop at this place," said she; "for here our journey ends."

I pulled up the horses opposite the dwelling and regarded it somewhat doubtfully. It had been built a hundred yards or so from the edge of the dense forest and seemed utterly deserted. It was a large house, with walls of baked clay and a thatched roof, and its neglected appearance and dreary surroundings gave it a fearsome look as it stood lifeless and weatherstained under the rays of the moon.

"Is the place inhabited?" I asked.

"It must be," she replied. "Go to the door, and knock upon it loudly."

"But the horses — who will mind them, donzella?"

Instantly she scrambled through the trap to the seat beside me and took the reins in her small hands.

"I will look after the horses," said she.

So I climbed down and approached the door. It was sheltered by a rude porch, and flanked upon either side by well-worn benches such as are frequent at wayside inns.

I pounded upon the door and then paused to listen. The sounds drew a hollow reverberation from within, but aroused no other reply.

"Knock again!" called Lesba.

I obeyed, but with no better success. The place seemed uncanny, and I

returned abruptly to the carriage, standing beside the wheel and gazing up through the moonlight into the beautiful face the girl bent over me.

"Lesba," said I, pleadingly, "what does all this mean? Why have you brought me to this strange place?"

"To save your life," she answered in a grave voice.

"But how came you to be waiting in the lane? And who were you waiting for?" I persisted.

"By what right do you question me, Senhor Harcliffe?" she asked, drawing back so that I could no longer look into her eyes.

"By no right at all, Lesba. Neither do I care especially whether you are attached to the Empire or the Republic, or how much you indulge in political intrigue, since that appears to be the chief amusement of your countrymen. But I love you. You know it well, although you have never permitted me tell you so. And loving you as I do, with all my heart, I am anxious to untangle this bewildering maze and understand something of your actions since that terrible morning when I parted with you at Dom Miguel's mansion."

She laughed, and the laugh was one of those quaint flashes of merriment peculiar to the girl, leaving one in doubt whether to attribute it to amusement or nervous agitation. Indeed, where another woman might weep Lesba would laugh; so that it frequently puzzled me to comprehend her. Now, however, she surprised me by leaning over me and saying gently:

"I will answer your question, Robert. My brother is at the mansion, and in danger of his life. I was waiting with the carriage to assist him to escape."

"But how do you know he is in danger?"

"He sent me word by a carrier-pigeon."

"To be sure. Yet there is one more thing that troubles me: why were you in Rio, riding in the Emperor's carriage with the spy Valcour?"

"It is simple, senhor. I went to Rio to assist in persuading Dom Pedro to visit the vault."

"Knowing it was empty?"

"Knowing it was empty, and believing that the Emperor's absence would enable Fonseca to strike a blow for freedom."

"Then Fonseca is still faithful to the Cause?"

"I know of no traitor in our ranks, Robert, although it seems you have suspected nearly all of us, at times. But it grows late and my brother is still in peril. Will you again rap upon the door?"

"It is useless, Lesba."

"Try the back door; they may hear you from there," she suggested.

So I made my way, stumbling over tangled vines and protruding roots, to the rear of the house, where the shadows lay even thicker than in front. I

found the door, and hammered upon it with all my strength. The noise might have raised the dead, but as I listened intently there came not the least footfall to reward me. For a time I hesitated what to do. From the grim forest behind me I heard a half-audible snarl and the bark of a wolf; in the house an impressive silence reigned supreme.

I drew back, convinced that the place was uninhabited, and returned around the corner of the house.

“There is no one here, donzella,” I began, but stopped short in amazement.

The carriage was gone.

CHAPTERXX

"ARISE AND STRIKE!"

I sprang to the road and peered eagerly in every direction. Far away in the distance could be discerned the dim outlines of the carriage, flying along the way from whence we had come.

Lesba had brought me to this place only to desert me, and it was not difficult to realize that she had sent me to the rear of the house to get me out of the way while she wheeled the carriage around and dashed away unheard over the soft moss.

Well, I had ceased to speculate upon the girl's erratic actions. Only one thing seemed clear to me; that she had returned to rescue her brother from the danger which threatened him. Why she had assisted me to escape the soldiery only to leave me in this wilderness could be accounted for but by the suggestion that her heart softened toward one whom she knew had learned to love her during those bright days we had passed in each other's society. But that she loved me in return I dared not even hope. Her answer to my declaration had been a laugh, and to me this girl's heart was as a sealed book. Moreover, it occurred to me that Valcour also loved her, and into his eyes I had seen her gaze as she never had gazed into mine during our most friendly intercourse.

The carriage had vanished long since, and the night air was chill. I returned to the porch of the deserted house, and curling myself up on one of the benches soon sank into a profound slumber, for the events of the day had well-nigh exhausted me.

When I awoke a rough-looking, bearded man was bending over me. He wore a peasant's dress and carried a gun on his left arm.

"Who are you, senhor," he demanded, as my eyes unclosed, "and how came you here?"

I arose and stretched myself, considering who he might be.

"Why do you ask?" said I.

"There is war in the land, senhor," he responded, quietly, "and every man must be a friend or a foe to the Republic." He doffed his hat with rude devotion at the word, and added, "Declare yourself, my friend."

I stared at him thoughtfully. War in the land, said he! Then the "torch of rebellion" had really been fired. But by whom? Could it have been Paola, as Valcour had claimed? And why? Since the conspiracy had been unmasked and its leaders, with the exception of Fonseca, either scattered or imprisoned? Did the Minister of Police aim to destroy every one connected with the Cause by precipitating an impotent revolt? Or was there a master-

hand directing these seemingly incomprehensible events?

The man was growing suspicious of my silence.

"Come!" said he, abruptly; "you shall go to Senhor Bastro."

"And where is that?" I asked, with interest, for Paola had reported that Bastro had fled the country.

My captor did not deign to reply. With the muzzle of his gun unpleasantly close to my back he marched me toward the edge of the forest, which we skirted for a time in silence. Then the path turned suddenly into a dense thicket, winding between close-set trees until, deep within the wood, we came upon a natural clearing of considerable extent.

In the center of this space was a large, low building constructed of logs and roofed with branches of trees, and surrounding the entire structure were grouped native Brazilians, armed with rifles, revolvers, and knives.

These men were not uniformed, and their appearance was anything but military; nevertheless there was a look upon their stern faces that warned me they were in deadly earnest and not to be trifled with.

As my intercourse with the republicans had been confined entirely to a few of their leaders, I found no familiar face among these people; so I remained impassive while my captor pushed me past the guards to a small doorway placed near a protecting angle of the building.

"Enter!" said he.

I obeyed, and the next moment stood before a group of men who were evidently the officers or leaders of the little band of armed patriots I had seen without.

"Ah!" said one, in a deep bass voice, "it is Senhor Harcliffe, the secretary to Dom Miguel."

I have before mentioned the fact that whenever the conspirators had visited de Pintra they remained securely masked, so that their features were, with a few exceptions, unknown to me. But the voices were familiar enough, and the man who had brought me here had mentioned Sanchez Bastro's name; so I had little difficulty in guessing the identity of the personage who now addressed me.

"Why are you here, senhor?" he inquired, with evident anxiety; "and do you bring us news of the uprising?"

"I know nothing of the uprising except that your man here," and I turned to my guide, "tells me there is war in the land, and that the Revolution is proclaimed."

"Yes," returned Bastro, with a grave nod.

"Then," I continued, "I advise you to lay down your arms at once and return to your homes before you encounter arrest and imprisonment."

The leaders cast upon one another uneasy looks, and Bastro drew a small paper from his breast and handed it to me. I recognized it as one of the leaves from his notebook which Paola had attached to the carrier-pigeon, and upon it were scrawled these words, “Arise and strike!”

It was the signal long since agreed upon to start the Revolution.

With a laugh I handed back the paper.

“It is from Francisco Paola, the traitor,” I said.

“Traitor!” they echoed, in an astonished chorus.

“Listen, gentlemen; it is evident you are ignorant of the events of the last two days.” And in as few words as possible I related the occurrences at de Pintra’s mansion, laying stress upon the arrest of Piexoto, the perfidy of the Minister of Police, and the death of Treverot.

They were not so deeply impressed as I had expected. The discovery of the empty vault had aroused no interest whatever, and they listened quietly and without comment to my story of Paola’s betrayal of his fellow-conspirators to the Emperor.

But when I mentioned Treverot’s death Bastro chose to smile, and indicating a tall gentleman standing at his left, he said:

“Permit me to introduce to you Senhor Treverot. He will tell you that he still lives.”

“Then Paola lied?” I exclaimed, somewhat chagrined.

Bastro shrugged his shoulders.

“We have confidence in the Minister of Police,” said he, calmly. “There is no doubt but General Fonseca, at Rio, has before now gained control of the capital, and that the Revolution is successfully established. We shall know everything very soon, for my men have gone to the nearest telegraph station for news. Meantime, to guard against any emergency, our patriots are being armed in readiness for combat, and, ‘in Matto Grosso at least, the royalists are powerless to oppose us.”

“But the funds — the records! What will happen if the Emperor seizes them?” I asked.

“The Emperor will not seize them,” returned Bastro, unmoved. “The contents of the vault are in safekeeping.”

Before I could question him further a man sprang through the doorway.

“The wires from Rio are cut in every direction,” said he, in an agitated voice. “A band of the Uruguayan guards, under de Souza and Valcour, is galloping over the country to arrest every patriot they can find, and our people are hiding themselves in terror.”

Consternation spread over the features of the little band which a moment before had deemed itself so secure and powerful. Bastro turned to pace the

earthen floor with anxious strides, while the others watched him silently.

"What of Francisco Paola?" suddenly asked the leader.

"Why, senhor, he seems to have disappeared," replied the scout, with hesitation.

"Disappeared! And why?"

"Perhaps I can answer that question, Senhor Bastro," said a voice behind us, and turning my head I saw my friend Pedro, the station-master at Cuyaba, standing within the doorway.

"Enter, Pedro," commanded the leader. "What news do you bring, and why have you abandoned your post?"

"The wires are down," said the station-master, "and no train is allowed to leave Rio since the Emperor reached there at midnight."

"Then you know nothing of what has transpired at the capital?" asked Bastro.

"Nothing, senhor. It was yesterday morning when the Emperor's party met the train at Cuyaba, and I handed him a telegram from de Lima, the Minister of State. It read in this way: 'General Fonseca and his army have revolted and seized the palace, the citadel, and all public buildings. I have called upon every loyal Brazilian to rally to the support of the Empire. Return at once. Arrest the traitors Francisco Paola and his sister. Situation critical."

"Ah!" cried Bastro, drawing a deep breath, "and what said the Emperor to that message?"

"He spoke with his counselors, and wired this brief reply to de Lima,' I am coming. 'Also he sent a soldier back to de Pintra's mansion with orders to arrest Francisco and Lesba Paola. Then he boarded the train and instructed the conductor to proceed to Rio with all possible haste. And that is all I know, senhor, save that I called up Rio last evening and learned that Fonseca was still in control of the city. At midnight the wires were cut and nothing further can be learned.

Therefore I came to join you, and if there is a chance to fight for the Cause I beg that you will accept my services."

Bastro paused in his walk to press the honest fellow's hand; then he resumed his thoughtful pacing.

The others whispered among themselves, and one said:

"Why need we despair, Sanchez Bastro? Will not Fonseca, once in control, succeed in holding the city?"

"Surely!" exclaimed the leader. "It is not for him that I fear, but for ourselves. If the Uruguayans are on our trail we must disperse our men and scatter over the country, for the spy Valcour knows, I am sure, of this

rendezvous."

"But they are not hunting you, senhor," protested Pedro, "but rather Paola and his sister, who have managed to escape from de Pintra's house."

"Nevertheless, the Uruguayans are liable to be here at any moment," returned Bastro, "and there is nothing to be gained by facing that devil, de Souza."

He then called his men together in the clearing, explained to them the situation, and ordered them to scatter and to secrete themselves in the edges of the forests and pick off the Uruguayans with their rifles whenever occasion offered.

"If anything of importance transpires," he added, "report to me at once at my house."

Without a word of protest his commands were obeyed. The leaders mounted their horses and rode away through the numerous forest paths that led into the clearing.

The men also saluted and disappeared among the trees, and presently only Bastro, Pedro, and myself stood in the open space. "Come with me, Senhor Harcliffe," said the leader; "I shall be glad to have you join me at breakfast. You may follow us, Pedro."

Then he strode to the edge of the clearing, pressed aside some bushes, and stepped into a secret path that led through the densest portion of the tangled forest. I followed, and Pedro brought up the rear.

For some twenty minutes Bastro guided us along the path, which might well have been impassable to a novice, until finally we emerged from the forest to find the open country before us, and a small, cozy-looking dwelling facing us from the opposite side of a well-defined roadway.

Bastro led us to a side door, which he threw open, and then stepped back with a courteous gesture.

"Enter, gentlemen," said he; "you are welcome to my humble home."

I crossed the threshold and came to an abrupt stop. Something seemed to clutch my heart with a grip of iron; my limbs trembled involuntarily, and my eyes grew set and staring.

For, standing before me, with composed look and a smile upon his dark face, was the living form of my lamented friend Miguel de Pintra!

CHAPTER XXI

ONE MYSTERY SOLVED

"COMPOSE yourself, my dear Robert," said Dom Miguel, pressing my hands in both his own. "It is no ghost you see, for — thanks be to God! — I am still alive."

I had no words to answer him. In all my speculations as to the result of Madam Izabel's terrible deed, the fate of the records and the mysterious opening of the vault without its key, I never had conceived the idea that Dom Miguel might have escaped his doom. And to find him here, not only alive, but apparently in good health and still busy with the affairs of the Revolution, conveyed so vivid a shock to my nerves that I could but dumbly stare into my old friend's kind eyes and try to imagine that I beheld a reality and not the vision of a disordered brain.

Bastro assisted me by laughing loudly and giving me a hearty slap across the shoulders.

"Wake up, Senhor Harcliffe!" said he; "and hereafter have more faith in Providence and the luck that follows in the wake of true patriotism. We could ill afford to lose our chief at this juncture."

"But how did it happen?" I gasped, still filled with wonder. "What earthly power could have opened that awful vault when its key was miles and miles away?"

"The earthly power was wielded by a very ordinary little woman," said Dom Miguel, with his old gentle smile. "When you rode away from the house on that terrible morning Lesba came and unlocked my prison, setting me free."

"But how?" I demanded, still blindly groping for the truth.

"By means of a duplicate key that she had constantly carried in her bosom."

I drew a long breath.

"Did you know of this key, sir?" I asked, after a pause, which my companions courteously forbore to interrupt.

"I did not even suspect its existence," replied Dom Miguel. "But it seems that Francisco Paola, with his usual thoughtfulness, took an impression in wax of my ring, without my knowledge, and had an exact duplicate prepared. I think he foresaw that an emergency might arise when another key might be required; but it would not do to let any one know of his action, for the mere knowledge that such a duplicate existed would render us all suspicious and uneasy. So he kept the matter secret even from me, and gave the ring into the keeping of his sister, who was his only confidante, and whom he had

requested me to accept as an inmate of my household, under the plea that I am her legal guardian. This was done in order to have her always at hand in case the interests of the conspiracy demanded immediate use of the duplicate key. That Francisco trusted her more fully than he has any other living person is obvious; and that she was worthy of such trust the girl has fully proved."

"Then you were released at once?" I asked; "and you suffered little from your confinement?"

"My anguish was more mental than of a bodily nature," Dom Miguel answered, sadly; "but I was free to meet Paola when he arrived at my house, and to assist him and Lesba in removing the contents of the vault to a safer place."

"But why, knowing that his sister held a duplicate key, did the Minister send me in chase of the ring Madam Izabel had stolen?" I demanded.

"Because it was necessary to keep the matter from the Emperor until the records had been removed," explained de Pintra. "Indeed, Francisco was on his way to us that morning to insist upon our abandoning the vault, after having given us warning, as you will remember, the night before, that the clever hiding-place of our treasure and papers was no longer a secret."

"I remember that he himself revealed the secret to the Emperor," I remarked, dryly.

"And acted wisely in doing so, I have no doubt," retorted Bastro, who still stood beside us. "But come, gentlemen, breakfast must be ready, and I have a vigorous appetite. Be good enough to join me."

He led the way to an inner room, and de Pintra and I followed, his arm in mine.

It seemed to me, now that I regarded him more attentively, that my old friend was less erect than formerly, that there were new and deep furrows upon his gentle face, and that his eyes had grown dim and sunken. But that the old, dauntless spirit remained I never doubted.

As we entered the breakfast-room I saw a form standing at the window — the form of a little man clothed neatly in black. He turned to greet us with pale, expressionless features and drooping eyelids.

It was Captain Mazanovitch.

"Good morning, Senhor Harcliffe," he said, in his soft voice; and I wondered how he had recognized me without seeming to open his eyes. "And what news does our noble Captain Bastro bring of the Revolution?" he continued, with a slight note of interest in his voice that betrayed his eagerness.

While we breakfasted Bastro related the events of the morning, and told

how the news he had received of the activity of the Uruguayan guards, in connection with the impossibility of learning from Rio what Fonseca had accomplished, had induced him to disband his men.

"But can you again assemble them, if you should wish to?" inquired Dom Miguel.

"Easily," answered our host; but he did not explain how.

While he and Dom Miguel discussed the fortunes of the Revolution I made bold to ask Captain Mazanovitch how he came to be in this isolated spot.

"I was warned by the Minister of Police to leave Rio," answered the detective; "for it appears my — my friend Valcour would have been suspicious had not Paola promised to arrest me with the others. I have been here since yesterday."

"Your friend Valcour is a most persistent foe to the Cause," said I, thoughtfully. "It would have pleased you to watch him struggle with Paola for the mastery, while the Emperor was by. Ah, how Paola and Valcour hate each other!"

Mazanovitch turned his passionless face toward me, and it seemed as though a faint smile flickered for an instant around his mouth. But he made no answer.

After breakfast Pedro was sent back to Cuyaba for news, being instructed to await there the repairing of the telegraph wires, and to communicate with us as soon as he had word from Rio.

The man had no sooner disappeared in the forest than, as we stood in the roadway looking after him, a far-off patter of horses' feet was distinctly heard approaching from the north.

Silently we stood, gazing toward the curve in the road while the hoof-beats grew louder and louder, till suddenly two horses swept around the edge of the forest and bore down upon us.

Then to the surprise of all we recognized the riders to be Francisco Paola and his sister Lesba, and they rode the same horses which the evening before had been attached to the carriage that had brought me from de Pintra's.

As they dashed up both brother and sister sprang from the panting animals, and the former said, hurriedly:

"Quick, comrades! Into the house and barricade the doors. The Uruguayans are upon us!"

True enough; now that their own horses had come to a halt we plainly heard the galloping of the troop of pursuers. With a single impulse we ran to the house and entered, when my first task was to assist Bastro in placing the shutters over the windows and securing them with stout bars.

The doors were likewise fastened and barred, and then Mazanovitch brought us an armful of rifles and an ample supply of ammunition.

"Do you think it wise to resist?" asked de Pintra, filling with cartridges the magazine of a rifle.

A blow upon the door prevented an answer.

"Open, in the name of the Emperor!" cried an imperious voice.

"That is my gallant friend Captain de Souza," said Lesba, with a little laugh.

I looked at the strange girl curiously. She had seated herself upon a large chest, and with her hands clasped about one knee was watching us load our weapons with as much calmness as if no crisis of our fate was impending.

"Be kind to him, Lesba," remarked Paola, tucking a revolver underneath his arm while he rolled and lighted a cigarette. "Think of his grief at being separated from you."

She laughed again, with real enjoyment, and shook the tangled locks of hair from her eyes.

"Perhaps if I accept his attentions he will marry me, and I shall escape," she rejoined, lightly.

"Open, I command you!" came the voice from without.

"Really," said Lesba, looking upon us brightly, "it was too funny for anything. Twice this morning the brave captain nearly succeeded in capturing me. He might have shot me with ease, but called out that he could not bear to injure the woman he loved!"

"Does he indeed love you, Lesba?" asked de Pintra, gently.

"So he says, Uncle. But it must have been a sudden inspiration, for I never saw him until yesterday."

"Nevertheless, I am glad to learn of this," resumed Dom Miguel; "for there is no disguising the fact that they outnumber us and are better armed, and it is good to know that whatever happens to us, you will be protected."

"Whatever happens to you will happen to me," declared the girl, springing to her feet. "Give me a gun, Uncle!"

Now came another summons from de Souza.

"Listen!" he called; "the house is surrounded and you cannot escape us. Therefore it will be well for you to surrender and rely upon the Emperor's mercy."

"I fear we may not rely on that with any security," drawled Paola, who had approached the door. "Pray tell us, my good de Souza, what are your orders respecting us?"

"To arrest you at all hazards," returned the captain, sternly.

"And then?" persisted the Minister, leaning against the door and leisurely

puffing his cigarette.

But another voice was now heard — Valcour's — crying:

"Open at once, or we will batter down the door."

Before any could reply Mazanovitch pushed Paola aside and placed his lips to the keyhole.

"Hear me, Valcour," he said, in a soft yet penetrating tone, "we are able to defend ourselves until assistance arrives. But rather than that blood should be shed without necessity, we will surrender ourselves if we have your assurance of safe convoy to Rio."

For a moment there was silence. Then, "How came *you* here?" demanded the spy, in accents that betrayed his agitation.

"That matters little," returned Mazanovitch. "Have we your assurance of safety?"

We heard the voices of Valcour and de Souza in angry dispute; then the captain shouted: "Stand aside!" and there came a furious blow upon the door that shattered the panels.

Bastro raised his rifle and fired. A cry answered the shot, but instantly a second crash followed. The bars were torn from their sockets, the splintered door fell inward, and before we could recover from the surprise we were looking into the muzzles of a score of carbines leveled upon us.

"Very well," said Paola, tossing the end of his cigarette through the open doorway. "We are prisoners of war. Peste! my dear Captain; how energetic your soldiers are!

A moment later we were disarmed, and then, to our surprise, de Souza ordered our feet and our hands to be securely bound. Only Lesba escaped this indignity, for the captain confined her in a small room adjoining our own and placed a guard at the door.

During this time Valcour stood by, sullen and scowling, his hands clinched nervously and his lips curling with scorn.

"You might gag us, my cautious one," said Paola, addressing the officer, who had planted himself, stern and silent, in the center of the room while his orders were being executed.

"So I will, Senhor Paola; but in another fashion," was the grim reply.

He drew a paper from his breast and continued, "I will read to you my orders from his Majesty, the Emperor Dom Pedro of Brazil, dispatched from the station at Cuyaba as he was departing for his capital to quell the insurrection."

He paused and slowly unfolded the paper, while every eye — save that, perhaps, of Mazanovitch — was fixed upon him with intent gaze.

"You are instructed to promptly arrest the traitor Francisco Paola, together

with his sister, Lesba Paola, and whatever revolutionists you may be able to take, and to execute them one and all without formal trial on the same day that they are captured, as enemies of the Empire and treasonable conspirators plotting the downfall of the Government.'"

The captain paused a moment, impressively, and refolded the document.

"It is signed by his Majesty's own hand, and sealed with the royal seal," he said.

CHAPTER XXII
THE DEATH SENTENCE

I glanced around the room to note the effect of this startling announcement upon my fellow-prisoners. Bastro's scowling face was turned full upon the officer, but showed no sign of fear. De Pintra smiled rather scornfully and whispered a word to Mazanovitch, whose countenance remained impassive as ever. Paola, with the perpetual simper distorting his naturally handsome features, leaned back in his chair and regarded his trussed ankles with whimsical indifference. Indeed, if the captain thought to startle or terrify his captives he must have been grievously disappointed, for one and all received the announcement of the death sentence with admirable composure.

It was Valcour who broke the silence. Confronting the captain with blazing eyes, while his slight form quivered with excitement, he cried:

"This is nonsense, de Souza! The Emperor must have been mad to write such an order. You will convey your prisoners to Rio for trial."

"I shall obey the Emperor's commands," answered the captain, gloomily.

"But it is murder!"

"It is the Emperor's will."

"Hear me, Captain de Souza," said Valcour, drawing himself up proudly; "you were instructed to obey my commands. I order you to convey the prisoners to Rio, that they may be tried in a court of justice."

The other shook his head.

"The order is to me personally, and I must obey. A soldier never questions the commands of his superiors."

"But I am your superior!"

"Not in this affair, Senhor Valcour. And the Emperor's order is doubtless to be obeyed above that of his spy."

Valcour winced, and turned away to pace the floor nervously.

"But the lady — surely you will not execute the Donzella Paola in this brutal fashion!" he protested, after an interval of silence.

The captain flushed, and then grew pale.

"I will speak with the lady," he said, and motioning aside the guard he entered the room where Lesba was confined, and closed the door after him.

We could hear his voice through the thin partition, speaking in low and earnest tones. Then a burst of merry laughter from Lesba fell upon our ears with something of a shock, for the matter seemed serious enough to insure gravity. Evidently the captain protested, but the girl's high-pitched tones and peals of merriment indicated that she was amusing herself at his expense, and suddenly the door burst open and de Souza stumbled out with a red and

angry face.

"The woman is a fiend!" he snarled. "Let her die with the others."

Valcour, who had continued to pace the floor during this interview, had by now managed to get his nerves under control, for he smiled at the captain, and said:

"Let us see if I have any argument that will avail."

While the officer stood irresolute, Valcour bowed mockingly, opened the door, and passed into Lesba's room.

It was de Souza's turn now to pace the floor, which he did with slow and measured strides; but although we strained our ears, not a sound of the interview that was progressing reached us through the partition.

After a considerable time it seemed that the captain regretted having allowed Valcour this privilege, for he advanced to the door and placed his hand on the knob. Instantly the spy appeared, closing the door swiftly behind him and turning the key in the lock.

"I withdraw my opposition, Captain," said he. "You may execute the lady with the others, for all I care. When is the massacre to take place?"

The officer stroked his moustache and frowned.

"The order commands the execution on the same day the conspirators are arrested," he announced. "I do not like the job, Valcour, believe me; but the Emperor must be obeyed. Let them die at sunset."

He turned abruptly and left the house, but sent a detachment of the Uruguayans to remain in the room with us and guard against any attempt on our part to escape.

We indulged in little conversation. Each had sufficient to occupy his thoughts, and sunset was not very far away, after all. To me this ending of the bold conspiracy was not surprising, for I had often thought that when Dom Pedro chose to strike he would strike in a way that would deter all plotting against the government for some time to come. And life is of little value in these South American countries.

"Where are the records?" I whispered to Dom Miguel, who sat near me.

"Safe with Fonseca in Rio," he answered.

"Do you imagine that Fonseca will succeed?" I continued.

"He is sure to," said the chief, a soft gleam lighting his eyes. "It is only we who have failed, my friend." He paused a moment, and then resumed: "I am sorry I have brought you to this, Robert. For the rest of us it matters little that we die. Is not a free Brazil a glorious prize to be won by the purchase of a few lives?"

It was futile to answer. A free Brazil meant little to me, I reflected; but to die with Lesba was a bit comforting, after all. I must steel myself to meet

death as bravely as this girl was sure to do.

Paola, after sitting long silent, addressed Valcour, who, since the captain's exit, had been staring from the window that faced the forest.

"What did de Souza say to Lesba?" he asked.

The spy turned around with a countenance more composed and cheerful than he had before shown, and answered:

"He offered to save her from death if she would marry him."

"Ah; and she laughed at the dear captain, as we all heard. But you, senhor, made an effort to induce her to change her mind — did you not?"

"I?" returned Valcour. "By no means, senhor. It is better she should die than marry this brutal Captain de Souza."

This speech seemed to confirm my suspicion that Valcour himself loved Lesba. But Paola cast one of his quick, searching glances into the spy's face and seemed pleased by what he discovered there.

"May I speak with my sister?" he asked, a moment later.

"Impossible, senhor. She must remain in solitary confinement until the hour of execution, for the captain's gallantry will not permit him to bind her."

Then, approaching de Pintra, Valcour stood a moment looking down at him and said:

"Sir, you have made a noble fight for a cause that has doubtless been very dear to you. And you have lost. In these last hours that you are permitted to live will you not make a confession to your Emperor, and give him the details of that conspiracy in which you were engaged?"

"In Rio," answered Dom Miguel, quietly, "there is now no Emperor. The Republic is proclaimed. Even at this moment the people of our country are acclaiming the United States of Brazil. Senhor, your power is ended. You may, indeed, by your master's orders, murder us in this far-away province before assistance can reach us. But our friends will exact a terrible vengeance for the deed, be assured."

Valcour did not answer at once. He stood for a time with knitted brows, thoughtfully regarding the white-haired chieftain of the Republic, whose brave utterances seemed to us all to be fraught with prophetic insight.

"If your lives were in my hands," said the spy, with a gesture of weariness, "you would be tried in a court of justice. I am no murderer, senhor, and I sincerely grieve that de Souza should consider his orders positive."

He turned abruptly to Mazanovitch, and throwing an arm around the little man's shoulders bent swiftly down and pressed a kiss upon the pallid forehead. Then, with unsteady gait he walked from the room, and at last I

saw the eyes of Mazanovitch open wide, a gaze of ineffable tenderness following the retreating form, until Valcour had disappeared. Paola also was staring, and the disgusting simper had left his face, for a time, at least.

Silence now fell upon the room. Bastro, in his corner, had gone to sleep, and Dom Miguel seemed lost in thought. From the chamber in which Lesba was confined came no sound to denote whether the girl grieved over her approaching fate or bore it with the grim stoicism of her doomed comrades.

The guard paced up and down before the closed door, pausing at times to mutter a word to his fellows, who stood watchfully over us. From my station on the chest I could gaze into the yard and note the shadow of the house creeping further and further out into the sunshine, bringing ever nearer the hour when the bright orb would sink into the far-away plateau and our eyes would be closed forever in death.

Yet the time dragged wearily, it seemed to me. When one is condemned to die it is better to suffer quickly, and have done with it. To wait, to count the moments, is horrible. One needs to have nerves of iron to endure that.

Nevertheless, we endured it. The hours passed, somehow, and the shadows grew dim with stretching.

Suddenly I heard a clank of spurs as de Souza approached. He gave a brief order to the Uruguayans who were lounging in the yard, and then stepped through the doorway and faced us.

“Get ready, senhors,” said he. “The hour has come.”

CHAPTERXXIII

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR

WE aroused ourselves, at this, and regarded the captain attentively.

He turned his stern gaze upon one after the other, and gave a growl of satisfaction as he noted no craven amongst us.

"You shall draw cuts, gentlemen, to decide the order in which you must expiate your crime. I will show no partiality. See, here are the slips, a number written upon each. Julio shall place them in his hat and allow you to draw."

He handed the bits of paper to one of his men and strode to the door of Lesba's room.

"Open!" he commanded, giving it a rap with his knuckles.

There was no reply.

"Open!" said he, again, and placed his ear to the panel.

Then, with a sudden gesture, he swung the door inward.

A moment the officer stood motionless, gazing into the chamber. Then he turned to us a face convulsed with anger.

"Who permitted the woman to escape?" he demanded.

The guards, startled and amazed, peered over his shoulders into the vacant room; but none dared to answer.

"What now, Captain, has your bird flown?" came Valcour's soft voice, and the spy entered the room and threw himself carelessly into a chair.

De Souza looked upon his colleague with evident suspicion, and twisted the ends of his moustache in sullen fury. Perhaps he dared not accuse Valcour openly, as the latter was the Emperor's authorized representative. And it may be the captain was not sincerely sorry that Lesba had escaped, and so savec him from the necessity of executing her, for, after a period of indecision, the wrath of the officer seemed to cool, and he slowly regained his composure. Valcour who was watching him, appeared to notice this, and said:

"You forgot the window, my Captain. It was not difficult for the senhorita to steal across the roadway unobserved and take refuge in the forest. For my part I am glad she is gone. Our royal master has little credit in condemning a woman to such a death."

"Have a care, senhor! Your words are treasonable."

"The Emperor will be the first to applaud them when he has time to think. Indeed, de Souza, were I in your place, I should ignore the order to execute these people. His Majesty acted under a severe nervous strain, and he will not thank you, believe me, for carrying out his instructions so literally."

"A soldier's duty is to obey," returned the officer stiffly. Then, turning to

the tall Uruguayan who helc the hat, he added:

"Let the prisoners draw, Julio!"

Another soldier now unfastened our bonds, anc Paola, who was the first to be approached by Julio took a slip of paper from the hat and thrust it into his pocket without examination.

Sanchez Bastro drew next, and smiled as he read his number. Then came my turn, and I own that I could not repress a slight trembling of my fingers as I drew forth the fatal slip. It was number four.

"Good!" murmured de Pintra, reading the slip over my shoulder. "I shall not be alive to witness your death, Robert." And then he took the last paper from the hat and added: "I am number two."

"I am first," said Bastro, with cheerfulness. "It is an honor, Dom Miguel," and he bowed respectfully to the chief.

Paola wore again the old, inane smile that always lent his face an indescribable leer of idiocy. I knew, by this time, that the expression was indeed a mask to cover his real feelings, and idly wondered if he would choose to die with that detestable simper upon his lips.

"Come, gentlemen; we are ready."

It was the captain who spoke, and we rose obediently and filed through the doorway, closely guarded by the Uruguayans.

In the vacant space that served as a yard for Bastro's house stood a solitaiy date-palm with a straight, slender trunk. Before this we halted, and Bastro was led to the tree and a rope passed around his body securing him to the trunk. They offered to blindfold him, but he waved the men aside.

"It will please me best to look into the muzzles of your guns," said the patriot, in a quiet voice. "I am not afraid, Senhor Captain."

De Souza glanced at the sun. It was slowly sinking, a ball of vivid red, into the bosom of the far-away plateau.

At a gesture from the officer six of the guardsmen stepped forward and leveled their carbines upon Bastro, who stood upright against the tree, with a proud smile upon his manly face.

I turned away my head, feeling sick and dizzy; and the rattle of carbines set me trembling with nervous horror. Nor did I look toward the tree again, although, after an interval of silence, I heard the tramp of soldiers bearing Bastro's body to the deserted house.

"Number two!" cried de Souza, harshly.

It was no time to turn craven. My own death was but a question of moments, and I realized that I had little time to bid farewell to my kind friend and strive to cheer him upon his way. Going to his side I seized Dom Miguel's hand and pressed it to my lips; but he was not content with that, and

caught me in a warm and affectionate embrace.

Then he was led to the tree. I turned my back, covering my face with my hands.

“For the Cause!” I heard his gentle voice say. The carbines rang out again, and a convulsive sob burst from my throat in spite of my strong efforts to control my emotion.

Again I listened to the solemn tread of the soldiers, while from far away the sound of a shout was borne to us upon the still evening air.

Somehow, that distant shout thrilled me with a new-born hope, and I gazed eagerly along the line of roadway that skirted the forest.

De Souza was gazing there, too, with a disturbed look upon his face; but the light was growing dim, and we could see nothing.

“Number three!”

It was Paola’s turn, and he walked unassisted to the tree and set his back to it, while the soldiers passed the rope under his arms and then retired. But they left Valcour confronting the prisoner, and I saw the simper fade from Paola’s lips and an eager gleam light his pale features.

For a few moments they stood thus, separated from all the rest, and exchanging earnest whispers, while the captain stamped his foot with savage impatience.

“Come, come, Valcour!” he called, at last. “You are interfering with my duty. Leave the prisoner, I command you!”

The spy turned around, and his face was positively startling in its expression of intense agony.

“If you are in a hurry, my dear Captain, fire upon us both!” said he, bitterly.

With a muttered oath de Souza strode forward, and seizing Valcour by the arm, dragged him back of the firing-line.

But at that instant a startling sound reached our ears — the sound of a cheer — and with it came the rapid patter of horses’ feet.

The soldiers, who had already leveled their guns at Paola, swung suddenly around upon their heels; de Souza uttered an exclamation of dismay, and the rest of us stood as motionless as if turned to stone.

For sweeping around the curve of the forest came a troop of horsemen, led by a girl whose fluttering white skirts trailed behind her like a banner borne on the breeze. God! how they rode — the horses plunging madly forward at every bound, their red eyes and distended nostrils bearing evidence of the wild run that had well-nigh exhausted their strength.

And the riders, as they sighted us, screamed curses and encouragement in the same breath, bearing down upon our silent group with the speed of a

whirlwind.

There was little time for the Uruguayans to recover from their surprise, for at close range the horsemen let fly a volley from rifle and revolver that did deadly havoc. A few saddles were emptied in return, but almost instantly the soldiers and patriots were engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand conflict, with no quarter given or expected.

De Souza fell wounded at the first volley, and I saw Valcour, with a glad cry, start forward and run toward Paola, who was still bound to his tree. But the captain, half raising himself from the ground, aimed his revolver at the prisoner, as if determined upon his death in spite of the promised rescue.

“Look out!” I shouted, observing the action.

Paola was, of course, helpless to evade the bullet; but Valcour, who had nearly reached him, turned suddenly at my cry and threw himself in front of Paola just as the shot rang out.

An instant the spy stood motionless. Then, tossing his arms above his head, he fell backward and lay still.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE EMPEROR'S SPY

ALTHOUGH the deadly conflict was raging all about us, I passed it by to regard a still more exciting tragedy. For with a roar like that from a mad bull Mazanovitch dashed aside his captors and sprang to the spot where Valcour lay.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" he moaned, raising the delicate form that he might pillow the head upon his knee. "How dared they harm you, my precious one! How dared they!"

Paola, struggling madly with his bonds, succeeded in bursting them asunder, and now staggered up to kneel beside Valcour. His eyes were staring and full of a horror that his own near approach to death had never for an instant evoked.

Taking one of the spy's slender hands in both his own he pressed it to his heart and said in trembling tones:

"Look up, sweetheart! Look up, I beg of you. It is Francisco — do you not know me? Are you dead, Valcour? Are you dead?"

A gentle hand pushed him aside, and Lesba knelt in his place. With deft fingers she bared Valcour's breast, tearing away the soft linen through which a crimson stain had already spread, and bending over a wound in the left shoulder to examine it closely. Standing beside the little group, I found myself regarding the actors in this remarkable drama with an interest almost equaling their own. The bared breast revealed nothing to me, however; for already I knew that Valcour was a woman.

Presently Lesba looked up into the little man's drawn face and smiled.

"Fear nothing, Captain Mazanovitch," said she softly; "the wound is not very dangerous, and — please God! — we will yet save your daughter's life."

His daughter! How much of the mystery that had puzzled me this simple word revealed!

Paola, still kneeling and covering his face with his hands, was sobbing like a child; Mazanovitch drew a long breath and allowed his lids to again droop slowly over his eyes; and then Lesba looked up and our eyes met.

"I am just in time, Robert," she murmured happily, and bent over Valcour to hide the flush that dyed her sweet face.

I started, and looked around me. In the gathering twilight the forms of the slaughtered Uruguayans lay revealed where they had fallen, for not a single member of Dom Pedro's band of mercenaries had escaped the vengeance of the patriots.

Those of our rescuers who survived were standing in a little group near by, leaning upon their long rifles, awaiting further commands.

Among them I recognized Pedro, and beckoning him to follow me I returned to the house and lifted a door from its hinges. Between us we bore it to the yard and very gently placed Valcour's slight form upon the improvised stretcher.

She moaned at the movement, slowly unclosing her eyes. It was Paola's face that bent over her and Paola that pressed her hand; so she smiled and closed her eyes again, like a tired child.

We carried her into the little chamber from whence Lesba had escaped, for in the outer room lay side by side the silent forms of the martyrs of the Republic.

Tenderly placing Valcour upon the couch, Pedro and I withdrew and closed the door behind us.

I had started to pass through the outer room into the yard when an exclamation from the station-master arrested me. Turning back I found that Pedro had knelt beside Dom Miguel and with broken sobs was pressing the master's hand passionately to his lips. My own heart was heavy with sorrow as I leaned over the outstretched form of our beloved chief for a last look into his still face.

Even as I did so my pulse gave a bound of joy. The heavy eyelids trembled — ever so slightly — the chest expanded in a gentle sigh, and slowly — oh, so slowly! —

the eyes of Dom Miguel unclosed and gazed upon us with their accustomed sweetness and intelligence.

"Master! Master!" cried Pedro, bending over with trembling eagerness, "it is done! It is done, my master! The Revolution is accomplished — Fonseca is supreme in Rio — the army is ours! The country is ours! God bless the Republic of Brazil!"

My own heart swelled at the glad tidings, now heard for the first time. But over the face of the martyred chief swept an expression of joy so ecstatic — so like a dream of heaven fulfilled — that we scarcely breathed as we watched the light grow radiant in his eyes and linger there while an ashen pallor succeeded the flush upon his cheeks.

Painfully Dom Miguel reached out his arms to us, and Pedro and I each clasped a hand within our own.

"I am glad," he whispered, softly. "Glad and content. God bless the Republic of Brazil!"

The head fell back; the light faded from his eyes and left them glazed and staring; a tremor passed through his body, communicating its agony even to

us who held his hands, as by an electric current.

Pedro still kneeled and sobbed, but I contented myself with pressing the hand and laying it gently upon Dom Miguel's breast.

Truly it was done, and well done. In Rio they were cheering the Republic, while here in this isolated cottage, surrounded by the only carnage the Revolution had involved, lay stilled forever that great heart which had given to its native land the birthright of Liberty.

* * *

Lesba had dressed Valcour's wound with surprising skill, and throughout the long, dreary night she bathed the girl's hot forehead and nursed her as tenderly as a sister might, while Paola sat silently by and watched her every movement.

In the early morning Pedro summoned us to breakfast, which he had himself prepared; and, as Valcour was sleeping, Lesba and Mazanovitch joined me at the table while Paola still kept ward in the wounded girl's chamber.

The patriots were digging a trench in which to inter the dead Uruguayans, and I stood in the doorway a moment and watched them, drinking in at the same time the cool morning air.

There Lesba joined me, somewhat pale from her night's watching, and although as yet no word of explanation had passed between us, she knew that I no longer doubted her loyalty, and forbore to blame me for my stupidity in not comprehending that her every action had been for the welfare of the Cause.

At breakfast Pedro told us more of the wonderful news; how the Revolution had succeeded in Rio with practically no bloodshed or resistance; how Fonseca had met the Emperor at the train on his arrival and escorted him, well guarded, to the port, where he was put on board a ship that sailed at once for Lisbon. Indeed, that was to be the last of Dom Pedro's rule, for the populace immediately proclaimed Fonseca dictator, and the patriots' dream of a Republic of Brazil had become an established fact.

Presently we passed into the outer room and looked upon the still form of Miguel de Pintra, the man to whose genius the new Republic owed its success — the great leader who had miserably perished on the very eve of his noble achievement.

The conspiracy was a conspiracy no longer; it had attained to the dignity of a masterly Revolution, and the Cause of Freedom had once more prevailed!

Taking Lesba's hand we passed the bodies of Bastro and Captain de Souza and gained the yard, walking slowly along the road that skirted the

forest, while she told me how Valcour had assisted her to escape from the chamber, that she might summon the patriots to effect our rescue. She had wandered long in the forest, she explained, before Pedro met her and assisted her to gather the band that had saved us. Yet the brave girl's grief was intense that she had not arrived in time to rescue her guardian, Dom Miguel, whom she so dearly loved.

"Yet I think, Robert," said she, with tearful eyes, "that uncle would have died willingly had he known the Republic was assured."

"He did know it," said I. "For a moment, last evening, he recovered consciousness. It was but a moment, but long enough for Pedro to tell him the glorious news of victory. And he died content, Lesba, although I know how happy it would have made him to live to see the triumph of the new Republic. His compatriots would also have taken great pride in honoring Dom Miguel above all men for his faithful service."

She made no reply to this, and for a time we walked on in gloomy silence.

"Tell me, Lesba, have you long had knowledge of Valcour's real identity?"

"Francisco told me the truth months ago, and that he loved her," she replied. "But Valcour was sworn to the Emperor's service, and would not listen to my brother as long as she suspected him of being in league with the Republicans. So they schemed and struggled against one another for the supremacy, while each admired the other's talents, and doubtless longed for the warfare to cease."

"And how came this girl to be the Emperor's spy, masquerading under the guise of a man?" I inquired.

"She is the daughter of Captain Mazanovitch, who, when her mother died, took delight in instructing his child in all the arts known to the detective police. As she grew up she became of great service to her father, being often employed upon missions of extreme delicacy and even danger. Mazanovitch used to boast that she was a better detective than himself, and the Emperor became attached to the girl and made her his confidential body-guard, sending her at times upon important secret missions connected with the government. When Mazanovitch was won over to the Republican conspiracy his daughter, whose real name is Carlotta, refused to desert the Emperor, and from that time on treated her father as a traitor, and opposed her wit to his own on every occasion. The male attire she wore both for convenience and as a disguise; but I have learned to know Valcour well, and have found her exceedingly sweet and womanly, despite her professional calling."

It was all simple enough, once one had the clew; yet so extraordinary was the story that it aroused my wonder. In no other country than half-civilized

Brazil, I reflected, could such a drama have been enacted.

When we returned to the house we passed the window of Valcour's room and paused to look through the open sash.

The girl was awake and apparently much better, for she smiled brightly into the face Paola bent over her, and showed no resentment when he stooped to kiss her lips.

CHAPTER XXV
THE GIRL I LOVE

IT was long ago, that day that brought Liberty to Brazil and glory to the name of Miguel de Pintra. Fate is big, but her puppets are small, and such atoms are easily swept aside and scattered by the mighty flood-tide of events for which we hold capricious Fate responsible.

Yet they leave records, these atoms.

I remember how we came to Rio — Valcour, Lesba, Paola, and I — and how Paola was carried through the streets perched upon the shoulders of the free citizens, while vast throngs pressed around to cheer and strong men struggled to touch the patriot's hand and load him with expressions of love and gratitude. And there was no simper upon Paola's face then, you may be sure. Since the tragedy at Bastro's that disagreeable expression had vanished forever, to be replaced by a manliness that was the fellow's most natural attribute, and fitted his fine features much better than the repulsive leer he had formerly adopted as a mask.

Valcour, still weak, but looking rarely beautiful in her womanly robes, rode in a carriage beside Francisco and shared in the fullness of his triumph. The patriots were heroes in those early days of the Republic. Even I, modest as had been my deeds, was cheered far beyond my desserts, and for Lesba they wove a wreath of flowering laurel, and forced the happy and blushing girl to wear it throughout our progress through the streets of the capital.

Fonseca invited us to the palace, where he had established his headquarters; but we preferred to go to the humbler home of Captain Mazanovitch, wherein we might remain in comparative retirement during the exciting events of those first days of rejoicing.

Afterward we witnessed the grand procession in honor of the Dictator. I remember that Fonseca and his old enemy Piexoto rode together in the same carriage, all feuds being buried in their common triumph. The bluff general wore his most gorgeous uniform and the lean statesman his shabby gray cloak. And in my judgment the adulation of the populace was fairly divided between these two champions, although the Dictator of the Republic bowed with pompous pride to right and left, while the little man who was destined to afterward become President of the United States of Brazil shrank back in his corner with assumed modesty. Yet Piexoto's eyes, shrewd and observing, were everywhere, and it may be guessed that he lost no detail of the day's events.

Paola should have been in that procession, likewise, for the people fairly idolized the former Minister of Police, and both Fonseca and Piexoto had

summoned him to join them. But no; he preferred to sit at Valcour's side in a quiet, sunlit room, effacing himself in all eyes but hers, while history was making in the crowded streets of the capital.

It required many days to properly organize a republican form of government; but the people were patient and forbearing, and their leaders loyal and true; so presently order began to come out of chaos.

Meantime Valcour mended daily, and the roses that had so long been strangers to her pale cheeks began to blossom prettily under the influence of Francisco's loving care.

They were happy days, I know; for Lesba and I shared them, although not so quietly. For the dear girl was all aglow with the triumph of Liberty, and dragged me as her escort to every mass-meeting or festival and every one of the endless processions until the enthusiasm of her compatriots had thoroughly tired me out. The Liberty of Brazil bade fair to deprive me of my own; but I bore the ordeal pretty well, in Lesba's society.

Then came a day when I obtained my reward. Valcour had made a quick recovery, and now needed only the strengthening influence of country air; so one bright morning we all boarded a special train and traveled to Cuyaba, reaching safely the de Pintra mansion in the early evening.

Nothing seemed changed about the dear old place, which I had already arranged to purchase from Dom Miguel's executors. Pedro had resigned his position as stationmaster to become our major-domo, and the thoughtful fellow had made every provision for our comfort on this occasion of our homecoming.

Captain Mazanovitch was with us. He had retired from active service to enjoy his remaining years in his daughter's society, and although he seldom allowed one of us to catch a glimpse of his eyes, the face of the old detective had acquired an expression of content that was a distinct advantage to it.

I had chosen to occupy my old room off the library, and early on the morning following our arrival I arose and passed out, into the shrubbery. Far down the winding walks, set within the very center of the vast flower gardens, was the grave of Dom Miguel, and thither I directed my steps. As I drew near I saw the square block of white marble that the patriots had caused to be erected above the last resting-place of their beloved chieftain. It bore the words

"MIGUEL DE PINTRA SAVIOR OF BRAZIL"

and is to this day the mecca of all good republicans.

Lesba was standing beside the tomb as I approached. Her gown was as white as the marble itself, but a red rose lay upon her bosom and another above Dom Miguel. She did not notice my presence until I touched her arm,

but then she turned and smiled into my eyes.

"'Savior of Brazil!'" she whispered softly. "It is splendid and fitting. Did you place it there, Robert?"

"No," I answered; "the credit is due to Piexoto. He claimed the privilege for himself and his associates, and I considered it his right."

"Dear uncle!" said she; and then we turned reverently away and strolled through the gardens. Every flower and shrub lay fair and fresh under the early sun, and we admired them and drank in their fragrance until suddenly, as we turned a corner of the hedge, I stopped and said:

"Lesba, it was here that I first met you; on this exact spot!"

"I remember," said she, brightly. "It was here that I prophesied you would be true to the Cause."

"And it was here that I loved you," I added; "for I cannot remember a moment since that first glimpse of your dear face that my heart has not been your very own."

She grew sober at this speech, and I watched her face anxiously.

"Tell me, Lesba," said I at last, "will you be my wife?"

"And go to your country?" she asked, quickly.

I hesitated.

"All my interests are there, and my people, as well," I answered.

"But I cannot leave Brazil," she rejoined, positively; "and Brazil needs you, too, Robert, in these years when she is beginning to stand alone and take her place among nations. Has not Fonseca offered you a position as Director of Commerce?"

"Yes; I am grateful for the honor. But I have large and important business interests at home."

"But your uncle is fully competent to look after them. You have told me as much. We need you here more than they need you at home, for your commercial connections and special training will be of inestimable advantage in assisting the Republic to build up its commerce and extend its interests in foreign lands. Brazil needs you. *I* need you, Robert! Won't you stay with us — dear? For a time, at least?"

Well, I wrote to Uncle Nelson, and his reply was characteristic.

"I loaned you to de Pintra, not to Brazil," his letter read. "But I am convinced the experiences to be gained in that country during these experimental years of the new republic, will be most valuable in fitting you for the management of your own business when you are finally called upon to assume it. You may remain absent for five years, but at the expiration of that period I shall retire from active business, and you must return to take my place."

On those terms I compromised with Lesba, and we were married on the same day that Valcour and Francisco Paola became man and wife.

"I should have married you, anyway," Lesba confided to me afterward; "but I could not resist the chance to accomplish one master-stroke for the good of my country." And she knew the compliment would cancel the treachery even before I had kissed her.

As I have hinted, these events happened years ago, and I wonder if I have forgotten any incident that you would be interested to know.

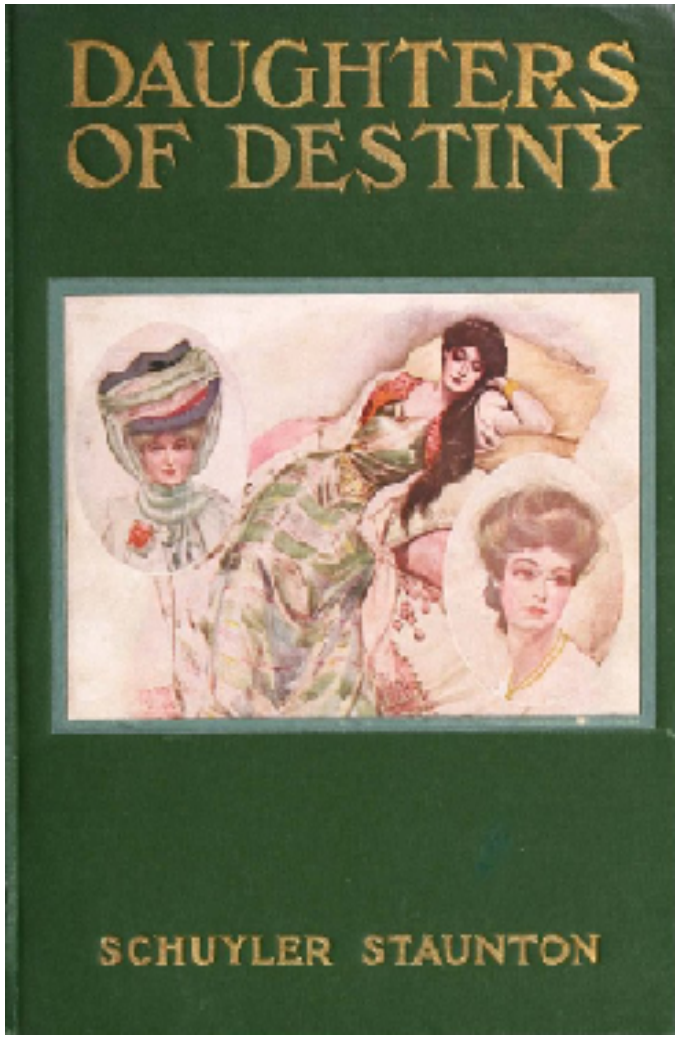
Dom Miguel's old home became our country residence, and we clung to it every day I could spare from my duties at the capital. It was here our little Valcour was born, and here that Francisco came afterward to bless our love and add to our happiness and content.

The Paolas are our near neighbors, and often Captain Mazanovitch drives over with their son Harcliffe to give the child a romp with our little ones. The old detective is devoted to the whole noisy band, but yesterday I was obliged to reprove Francisco for poking his chubby fingers into the captain's eyes in a futile endeavor to make him raise the ever-drooping lids.

The five-year limit expired long since; but I have never been able to fully separate my interests from those of Brazil, and although our winters are usually passed in New Orleans, where Uncle Nelson remains the vigorous head of our firm, it is in sunny Brazil that my wife and I love best to live.

DAUGHTERS OF DESTINY

Baum used one of his several pseudonyms for publication of *Daughters of Destiny*. He created Schuyler Staunton by adding "u" to the surname of his maternal uncle, Schuyler Stanton. *Daughters of Destiny* was Baum's second adventure novel aimed at adult readers, published by Reilly & Britton in 1906 and illustrated by Thomas Mitchell Pierce and Harold DeLay. *Daughters of Destiny* takes place in Baluchistan, a mountainous region of the Iranian plateau. The American Construction Syndicate plans to build a railroad across Baluchistan and the novel follows the adventures of the Americans involved in seeing it through. They become entangled in a succession conflict regarding the throne of Baluchistan and Baum weaves a complicated plot featuring religion, a forbidden love affair, conspiracy, false identity, sword battles, fleeing in the desert and more. Baum originally planned to call the novel, *The Girl in the Harem*.



A first edition copy of 'Daughters of Destiny'

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CHAPTER I.

PRINCE KASAM OF BALUCHISTAN

"What country did you say, Prince?"

"Baluchistan, my lord."

The great financier lay back in his chair and a slight smile flickered over his stern features. Then he removed his eye-glasses and twirled them thoughtfully around his finger as he addressed the young man opposite.

"I remember," said he, "that when I attended school as a boy one of my chiefest trials in geography was to learn how to bound Baluchistan."

"Ah, do not say that, sir," exclaimed Prince Kasam, eagerly. "It is a customary thing, whenever my country is mentioned, for an Englishman to refer to his geography. I have borne the slight with rare patience, Lord Marvale, since first I came, a boy, to London; but permit me to say that I expected *you* to be better informed."

"But, why?" asked the nobleman, raising his brows at the retort.

"Because Baluchistan is a great country, sir. You might drop all of England upon one of its plains — and have some trouble to find it again."

Lord Marvale's eyes twinkled.

"And how about London?" he asked. "You have many such cities, I suppose?"

"There is but one London, my lord," answered the young man composedly; "and, to be frank with you, there are few clusters of houses in my country that are worthy the name of cities. We Baluchi are a wild race, as yet untamed by the influence of your western civilization, and those who wander in desert and plain far exceed in numbers the dwellers in towns."

"I am not so ignorant as you may suppose," declared Lord Marvale; "for it is a part of my business training to acquire information concerning all countries of the world, however remote and barbaric they may be. For instance, I know that your country is ruled by the Khan of Kelat, and that the English have established a protectorate over it."

"Kelat!" cried the other, a touch of scorn in his tone; "that, sir, is not Baluchistan at all. It is the country of the Brahoes, a weak and cowardly race that is distinct from the Baluchi, my own people. Small wonder they need the English to protect them! But Kelat, although placed in Baluchistan by your map-makers, is another country altogether, and the unconquered Baluchi owe no allegiance to any nation in the world."

For a time the financier sat silently in his chair. Then he asked:

"You have lived here since childhood, Prince?"

"Since eight years of age, my lord."

“Why were you educated in London, if your people dislike Europeans?”

“For political reasons, sir. I am the sole legitimate descendant of seven generations of Khans of Mekran — rulers of all Baluchistan. But in my grandsire’s time our throne was usurped by Keedar Khan, a fierce tribesman who carried all before his mighty sword. His son, Burah Khan, now an old man and in bad health, at present rules at Mekran. Therefore I was sent by my kinsmen, who are yet powerful and loyal to our family, to London, that I might escape assassination at the hands of the usurpers.”

“I see; you hope to succeed Burah Khan.”

“That is my ambition. All that stands in my way is a son of the khan, who, however, has been confined in a Sunnite monastery since youth and is reported to be more fitted to become a priest than a ruler of men.”

“Well?”

“My lord, I desire your cooperation and assistance. Twice have I secretly revisited Baluchistan, where my uncle is vizier to the present khan. The adherents to my cause are many. We have no money, but possess vast store of rare jewels, and much gold and silver plate hoarded for centuries — since the day when Alexander’s army, marching through our land, was forced to abandon and cast aside much of its burden of plunder. If we can convert this treasure into money it is our intention to hire an army of Afghan mercenaries to assist us and with their aid to rise at the death of Burah Khan, which cannot be long delayed, and again seize the throne that by right belongs to me. You, my lord, are noted for your shrewdness in financing great affairs. Here is one of magnitude in which you may profit largely. Will you aid me?”

The man appealed to was, through long experience, a competent judge of human nature, and while Kasam spoke he studied the young Oriental critically.

The prince was of medium height, full faced and broad shouldered. His beard was clipped in modern fashion, and he wore a conventional frock coat. But his swarthy skin and glittering dark eyes proclaimed his Eastern origin; and for head-dress he wore the turban of his tribe, twisted gracefully but with studied care into that particular fold which to an Oriental declared as plainly as the written page of a book the wearers nationality and tribe and degree.

To the Westerner a turban means nothing more than a head-covering; to the Oriental it is eloquent of detail. In the manner of fold, the size, the color and the material of which it is composed, he reads clearly the wearer’s caste and condition in life, and accords him the exact respect that is his due.

Aside from the turban, Kasam wore the tribal sash over his shoulder, thus combining the apparel of the orient with that of the occident in a picturesque and most effective manner.

The expression of his face was animated and winning; he gesticulated freely, but with grace; the words that flowed from his full red lips were fervent, but well chosen.

Prince Kasam spoke fluent English. His handsome countenance glowed with the eager enthusiasm of youth, with the conscious pride of high station, of powerful friends and of a just cause.

Lord Marvale was impressed.

"Come to me in three days," said the banker. "I will make enquiries and take counsel with my colleagues. Then I shall be able to consider your proposal with more intelligence."

Three days later a long conference was held in Lord Marvale's office, during which Prince Kasam related with clearness yet characteristic Eastern loquaciousness the details of a carefully planned conspiracy to replace him upon the throne of his ancestors. The plot seemed both simple and practical, and Lord Marvale was by no means averse to acquiring the rare treasure of ancient plate and the rich oriental jewels that the adherents of Prince Kasam were anxious to exchange for English money and support.

It was not the only conference before the bargain was finally struck, but Kasam's proposals met with no serious opposition and it was arranged that he should secretly return to Baluchistan, get together the treasure, and bring it with him to London, where Lord Marvale would convert it into money and also negotiate with the Afghans for an army of mercenaries. The countenance and moral support of the English government the banker could safely pledge.

It did not occur to Kasam that time might become a powerful factor in his future plans, and that all this detail would require considerable time to consummate. He had worn out many years of tedious waiting in London, and really thought events were beginning to move swiftly. But when he received a message stating that Burah Khan was failing fast and urging him to hasten home, he realized that in order to accomplish his purposes he must lose no single moment in delay. Therefore he hurried to Lord Marvale with the information that he would return at once to Baluchistan.

"Good!" exclaimed the banker. "Your decision will relieve me of a slight embarrassment and enable me, through your courtesy, to serve an influential friend."

"That will please me very much," said Kasam.

"There has arrived in London a party of American capitalists representing a great New York syndicate, and our minister in Washington has given their chief a letter to me, asking me to arrange for the safe conduct of the party through Baluchistan."

"Baluchistan! My own country? Why, my lord, few Englishmen have ever

approached its borders, and never an American — so far as I know. What can induce them to visit Baluchistan?”

“I understand it is a matter of some railway enterprise or other. These Americans penetrate into the most outlandish and unfrequented places, and no one ever pays much attention to their wanderings. But the minister’s letter asks me to supply them with a guide. What do you say, Prince, to undertaking the task yourself? It will enable you to return to Mekran incognito, as the conductor of a party of wealthy and influential Americans; and, as you are not likely to be recognized, you may accomplish your task of collecting the treasure more safely than if you travelled alone.”

“That is true,” answered the young man, thoughtfully; and after a moment’s reflection he added: “Very well; inform your Americans that I will guide them to Baluchistan — even to the walls of Mekran — and no one can do it more safely or swiftly than I.”

CHAPTER II.

THE AMERICAN COMMISSION

When the American Construction Syndicate, of New York and Chicago, conceived the idea of laying a railway across Baluchistan, through the Alexandrian Pass and so into the Lower Indies — thus connecting Asia and Europe by the shortest possible route — it was regarded as a bold undertaking even for this gigantic corporation. But the Syndicate scorned the imputation that any undertaking might be too hazardous or difficult for it to accomplish; so, when the route was proposed and its advantages understood, the railway was as good as built, in the minds of the directors.

There were preliminaries, of course. A commission must be sent to Baluchistan to secure right of way. And the route must be surveyed. But these were mere matters of detail. Already the Syndicate had built a road across the Balkans; even now it was laying rails in Turkestan. And this Baluchistan route was but a part of a great system wisely and cleverly projected.

The Alexandrian Pass was the same that nearly proved fatal to Alexander the Great on the occasion of his invasion of India. Since then little had been heard of it. But doubtless the Pass was still there, and had been waiting all these years for some one to utilize it. It was part of the domain of the Khan of Mekran, who also ruled the greater part of Baluchistan.

The directors had the histories consulted. Baluchistan seemed practically unknown to history. There were no books of travel in Baluchistan. Strange! The country was there — very big on the maps — and some one ought to know something about it. But no one apparently did.

Well, the Commission would discover all there was to know, and a semi-barbarous country would be easy to deal with.

Next the Commission itself was considered, and Colonel Piedmont Moore was selected as its chief. Colonel Moore was one of the Syndicate's largest stockholders and most respected officers, and the gentleman himself directed the selection of the chief, because he had decided to get away from the office for a time and travel, his health having become undermined by too close attention to business.

Dr. Warner, his intimate friend, had repeatedly counselled him to break away from work and take better care of himself. Travel was what he needed — travel in such remote lands that no temptation would exist to return to New York to "see how the Syndicate was getting on."

When the Baluchistan Commission was first spoken of the Colonel mentioned it to his old friend, who was also a stockholder in the concern, the

doctor having grown wealthy and retired from active practice several years before.

"Just the thing!" declared the old gentleman. "A trip to Baluchistan would probably set you on your feet again. Let me see — where is it? Somewhere in South America, isn't it?"

"No; I believe it's in Asia," returned the Colonel, gravely. "And that is a long distance to journey alone."

"Why, bless your soul! I'll go with you," declared Dr. Warner, cheerfully. "I've intended to do a bit of travelling myself, as soon as I got around to it; and Baluchistan has a fine climate, I'm sure."

"No one seems to know much about it," answered the Colonel.

"All the better! Why, we'll be explorers. We'll find out all about Darkest Baluchistan, and perhaps write a book on our discoveries. We'll combine business and pleasure. I'm in the Syndicate. Have me, appointed as your second on the Commission, and the Syndicate shall pay our expenses."

So the plans were made, and afterward amplified to include the Colonel's son, Mr. Allison Moore, as official surveyor. Not that Allison Moore was an especially practical or proficient man in his profession — indeed, the directors feared just the contrary was true — but this wag going to be a sort of family party, and the Colonel was a person absolutely to be depended upon.

He was willing to vouch for his son, and that settled the matter.

In fact, the Colonel was glad to have Allison with him on this trip. Glad to have the young man under his eye, for one thing, and glad of an opportunity to advance his son professionally. For Allison seemed to have some difficulty in getting the right sort of a start, even though he had spent years in making the attempt.

At first the young man declined to go to Baluchistan, and there were angry words between father and son. But Dr. Warner acted as peacemaker and Allison finally consented to go provided his father would pay certain debts he had accumulated and make him an allowance in addition to his salary from the syndicate. It was the first salary he had ever received, and although the syndicate thought it liberal enough, it seemed absurdly small to a gentleman of Allison's requirements.

All this having been pleasantly settled, the doctor proposed taking along his daughter Bessie, who had been pleading to go ever since the trip was suggested.

At first the Colonel demurred.

"It's a business expedition," said he.

"Business and pleasure," amended the doctor, promptly.

“And I don’t know what sort of country we’re going to. It may not be pleasant for ladies.”

“We’ll make it pleasant for them. Better take Janet with you, Colonel, and we’ll induce Aunt Lucy to go along as chaperon.”

“She wouldn’t consider such a trip an instant.”

“Who wouldn’t?”

“Janet.”

“Ask her about it.”

So the Colonel mentioned it at dinner, in a casual way, and Miss Janet Moore at first opened her beautiful dark eyes in surprise, then considered the matter silently for a half hour, and at dessert decided she would go.

The Colonel was pleased. It was difficult to interest Janet in anything, and if the Baluchistan trip would draw her out of her dreamy lassitude and awaken in her something of her old bright self, why, the syndicate be thanked for conceiving the idea of a Commission!

The old gentleman tolerated his son as a cross to be borne with Christian resignation: he was devoted to his beautiful daughter.

Janet Moore in face and form represented that type of American girl which has come to be acknowledged in all countries the ideal of womanly grace and loveliness. The delicate contour of her features did not destroy nor even abate their unmistakable strength and dignity. The well-opened eyes were clear as a mountain pool, yet penetrating and often discomfiting in their steadiness; the mouth was wide, yet sweet and essentially feminine; the chin, held high and firm, was alluringly curved and dimpled, displaying beneath it a throat so rarely perfect that only in the Sicilian Aphrodite has sculptor ever equalled it. Her head was poised in queenly fashion upon a form so lithe and rounded that Diana might well have envied it, and while Janet’s expression at all times bore a trace of sadness, a half smile always lingered upon her lips — a smile so pathetic in its appeal that one who loved her would be far less sympathetically affected by a flood of tears. The girl had suffered a terrible disappointment seven years before. The man she loved had been proven an arrant scoundrel. He had forged her father’s name; been guilty of crime and ingratitude; worse than all else, he had run away to escape punishment. It had been clearly proven against Herbert Osborne, yet Janet, by a strange caprice, would never accept the proof. She had a distinctly feminine idea that in spite of everything Herbert was incapable of crime or any sort of dishonesty. And, knowing full well that she stood alone in her belief, the girl proudly suffered in silence.

There was more to Janet’s old romance than anyone ever dreamed; but whatever the girl’s secret might be, she kept all details safely locked within

her own bosom.

The Colonel was surprised that his daughter should so readily agree to undertake a tedious and perhaps uninteresting journey to a far-away country; but he was nevertheless delighted. The change would assuredly do her good, and Bessie Warner was just the jolly companion she needed to waken her into new life.

So the doctor was informed that the two girls would accompany the Commission, and Bessie at once set out to interview her Aunt Lucy and persuade that very accommodating lady to go with them as chaperon. Aunt Lucy was without a single tie to keep her in New York, and she was so accustomed to being dragged here and there by her energetic niece that she never stopped to enquire where Baluchistan was or how they were expected to get there. In her mild and pleasant little voice she remarked:

"Very well, dear. When do we start?"

"Oh, I'll send you word, auntie. And thank you very much for being so nice."

"We'll be back by Thanksgiving, I suppose?"

"I hardly know, dear. It's a business trip of papa's, and of course the length of our stay depends entirely upon him and the

Colonel, who is some way interested in the matter. By the way, it's called a Commission, and we'll be very important travellers, I assure you! Good bye, auntie, dear!"

Then she hurried away; for that suggestion of returning by Thanksgiving day, scarcely a month distant, showed her how little Aunt Lucy really knew of the far journey she had so recklessly undertaken.

So this was the personnel of the famous Commission that was to invade Baluchistan and secure from the Khan of Mekran a right of way for a railroad through the Alexandrian Pass: Col. Piedmont Moore, Chief; Dr. Luther Warner, Assistant; Allison Moore, Civil Engineer; Janet Moore and Bessie Warner, chaperoned by Mrs. Lucy Higgins, Accessories and Appendages.

The Commission crossed the ocean in safety; it reached London without incident worthy of record, and there the Chief endeavored to secure some definite knowledge of Baluchistan.

Not until he had presented the British minister's letter to Lord Marvale did the

Colonel meet with any good fortune in his quest. Then the atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty suddenly cleared, for a real Baluch of Baluchistan was then in London and could be secured to pilot the Americans to their destination.

To be sure this native — Kasam Ullah Raab by name — was

uncommunicative at first regarding the character of the Khan of Mekran or the probability of the Syndicate's being able to negotiate for a right of way through his country; and, indeed, the Baluch could be induced to commit himself neither to criticism nor encouragement of the plan. But, after all, it was not to be supposed that much information of value could be secured from a mere guide. The main point to be considered just then was how to journey to Mekran with comfort and despatch, and incidentally the accomplishments and attainments of the guide himself.

Kasam's charming manners and frank, handsome countenance soon won the confidence of the entire party. Even Allison Moore did not withhold his admiration for the "gentlemanly barbarian," as Aunt Lucy called him, and the young ladies felt entirely at ease in his company.

"Really," said Bessie, "our Kasam is quite a superior personage, for a guide."

And the prince overheard the remark and smiled.

During the journey the guide proved very thoughtful and gallant toward the young ladies, and with the friendly familiarity common to Americans they made Kasam one of themselves and treated him with frank consideration. It was perhaps natural that the prince should respond by openly confiding to them his rank and ambition, thus explaining his reason for journeying with them in the humble capacity of guide. Before they had reached Quettah the entire party knew every detail of Kasam's history, and canvassed his prospect of becoming khan as eagerly as they did the details of their own vast enterprise. Indeed, the Colonel was quick to recognize the advantage the Commission would acquire by being on friendly terms with the future Khan of Mekran, and since Burah

Khan was old and suffered from many wounds received in many battles, the chances were strongly in favor of the young prince being soon called to the throne.

"My uncle is vizier to the usurper," said Kasam, "and I will secure, through him, an interview for you with Burah Khan. Also my uncle shall extend to your party his good offices. He is the leader of the party which is plotting to restore to me the throne of my ancestors, and is therefore entirely devoted to my interests. Of course you will understand that I dare not publicly announce my presence in Mekran; therefore I will guide you as a hired servant, and so escape notice. Only my uncle Agahr and two of the sirdars — or leaders of the tribes — are acquainted with my person or know who I really am. But the spies of the Khan are everywhere, as I have discovered during my former secret visits to Mekran, and it is best for me to avoid them at this juncture."

All this was intensely interesting to every member of the Commission, and it is no wonder Bessie smiled upon the handsome guide who possessed so romantic a story. But Bessie's brightest smiles seemed less desirable to Kasam than one sympathetic look from Janet's Moore's serious dark eyes.

The evident adoration with which the "foreign prince," as she called him, came to regard Miss Moore was a source of much uneasiness to Aunt Lucy; but Janet did not seem to notice it, and the young man was ever most humble and discreet while in her presence. In fact, there was nothing in the prince's behavior that the gentle old lady might complain of openly. Yet she had her own suspicions, clinched by experienced observation, of the foreigner's intentions, and determined to keep a sharp lookout in the interests of her charge. Soon they would enter a barbarous country where this handsome prince would be more powerful than the great Commission itself. And then?

At Quettah they secured camels and formed a caravan to cross the corner of the Gedrasian Desert and so journey on to Mekran; but there was more or less grumbling when this necessity was disclosed. Allison

Moore, who had behaved fairly well so far, flatly declined to go further toward the wild and unknown country they had come so far to visit. The inn at Quettah was fairly good. He would stay there. Vainly his father stormed and argued, alternately; he even threatened to cut his son off with a dime — the nearest approach to the legendary shilling he could think of; but Allison proved stubborn. Having once declared his intention, he answered nothing to the demands of his father or the pleadings of Dr. Warner. He smoked his pipe, stared straight ahead and would not budge an inch from Quettah.

"I'll wait here till you come back," he said, sullenly. "If you ever do."

This was the first disagreeable incident of the journey. Even Bessie was depressed by Allison's inference that they were involved in a dangerous enterprise. As for Aunt Lucy, she suddenly conceived an idea that the band of Afghans Kasam had employed to accompany the caravan were nothing more than desperate bandits, who would carry the Commission into the mountains and cither murder every individual outright or hold them for an impossible ransom.

Kasam's earnest protestations finally disabused the minds of the ladies of all impressions of danger. It was true that in Baluchistan they might meet with lawless bands of Baluchi; but their caravan was too well guarded to be interfered with. They were supplied with fleet saddle horses and fleeter dromedaries; the twenty Afghans were bold and fearless and would fight for them unto death. Really, they had nothing at all to fear.

So at last they started, an imposing cavalcade, for the Khan's dominions, leaving Allison in the doorway of the inn smoking his everlasting pipe and

staring sullenly after them. The ladies rode dromedaries, and found them less uncomfortable than they had at first feared they would be. The Colonel did not seem to mind his son's desertion, for Kasam had whispered in his ear an amusing plan to conquer the young surveyor's obstinacy.

An hour later one of the prince's Afghans, selected because he spoke the English language, returned from the caravan to warn Allison that he was in grave danger. The night before a plot had been overheard to murder and rob the young man as soon as his friends had departed.

"If you shoot well and are quick with the knife," added the Afghan, coolly, "you may succeed in preserving your life till our return. His Highness the Prince sent me to advise you to fight to the last, for these scoundrels of Quettah have no mercy on foreigners."

Then Allison stared again, rather blankly this time, and the next moment requested the Afghan to secure him a horse.

Kasam was assuring the Colonel for the twentieth time that his son would soon rejoin them when Allison and the Afghan rode up at a gallop and attached themselves without a word to the cavalcade. And the Colonel was undecided whether most to commend the guide's cunning or his son's cautiousness.

This portion of their journey was greatly enjoyed by all members of the party. The doctor declared he felt more than ever like an explorer, and the Colonel silently speculated on all that might be gained by opening this unknown territory to the world by means of the railway. The distinct novelty of their present mode of progression was delightful to the ladies, and Aunt Lucy decided she much preferred a camel to an automobile. Even Janet's pale cheeks gathered a tint from the desert air, and despite the uncertainties of their pilgrimage the entire party retained to a wonderful degree their cheerfulness and good nature.

At the end of four days they halted in a small village where Kasam intended them to rest while he alone went forward to Mekran to obtain their passports. For they were now upon the edge of the Khan's dominions, and without Burah's protection the party was liable to interference by some wandering tribe of Baluchi.

The accommodations they were able to secure in this unfrequented village were none of the best, and Allison began to grumble anew, thereby bringing upon himself a stern rebuke from the guide, who frankly informed the young man that he was making his friends uncomfortable when nothing could be gained by protesting.

"You cannot go back, and you dare not go forward without passports," said Kasam. "Therefore, if you possess any gentlemanly instincts at all, you

will endeavor to encourage the ladies and your father, instead of adding to their annoyance. When one travels, one must be a philosopher."

"You are impertinent," returned Allison, scowling.

"If I yielded to my earnest desire," said the prince, "I would ask my men to flog you into a decent frame of mind. If I find, when I return, that you have been disagreeable, perhaps I shall punish you in that way. It may be well for you to remember that we are no longer in Europe."

The young man made no reply, but Kasam remembered the vengeful look that flashed from his eyes.

Heretofore the prince had worn the European frock coat; now he assumed the white burnous of his countrymen. When he came to bid adieu to his employers before starting for Mekran, Bessie declared that their guide looked more handsome and distinguished than ever — "just like that famous picture of the Son of the Desert, you know."

Kasam was about to mount his horse — a splendid Arabian he had purchased in the village — when a tall Baluch who was riding by cast a shrewd glance into the young man's face, sharply reined in his stallion, and placed a thumb against his forehead, bowing low.

Kasam's brown face went ashen grey. He gazed steadily into the stranger's eyes.

"You are bound for Mekran, my prince?" asked the tall Baluch, in the native tongue.

"I ride at once."

"Make all haste possible. Burah Khan is dying."

"Dying? Blessed Allah!" cried Kasam, striking his forehead in despair. "Burah Khan dying, and our plans still incomplete! I have waited too long."

"Perhaps not," retorted the other, significantly. "It is a lingering disease, and you may yet get to Mekran in time."

"In time? In time for what?" asked Kasam.

"To strike!"

Kasam stared at him. The tall Baluch smiled and shook the rein over his horse's ears.

"I am of the tribe of Raab, my prince. May Allah guide you to success."

Kasam did not reply. His head rested against the arched neck of his horse, and his form shook with a slight nervous tremor. But next moment he stood erect. The dazed look inspired by the bitter news he had heard was giving way to his old eager, cheery expression.

"All is not lost!" he said, speaking aloud. "Fate knocks, and I will throw open the door. Allah grant that Burah Khan lives until I reach Mekran!"

He sprang to the saddle, put spurs to his steed and dashed away at full

speed into the desert.

“I hope,” said the Colonel, looking after him anxiously, “that nothing has gone wrong.”

CHAPTER III.

THE PERSIAN PHYSICIAN

Burah Khan, known as the Lion of Mekran, Headsman of the Nine Tribes of Baluchi and Defender of the Faith, was, without doubt, a very sick man.

He lay upon a divan in the courtyard of his palace, propped with silken cushions redolent of the odors of musk. The waters of the fountain that splashed at his side were also scented with musk, and the heavy and stifling perfume permeated the entire atmosphere of the court. At the head of the divan sat a girl, indolently waving a fan above the head of the Khan. Not far from his feet a white-bearded man squatted upon a rug and eyed the sick one with curious intentness. This was Agahr, the vizier. Behind him sat a group of officers and sirdars, silently watching the scene.

Burah Khan, despite his sad condition, was fully clothed in his customary regalia. He wore a waistcoat of dingy white plush upon which were sewn enough rubies to have ransomed a kingdom. His yellow satin trousers were soiled and crumpled. The long outer robe was of faded rose-color and had nine stars, formed of clustered diamonds, down the front. The deep collar was stiff with masses of the same precious gems. The entire dress seemed as tawdry as a circus costume at the end of the season; but it was of enormous value, and the Khan, with oriental love of magnificence, clung to it even as he lay upon his death-bed.

He was a notable character, this Burah Khan, son of the terrible Keedar Khan who had conquered all of Baluchistan and ruled it with a rod of iron. Burah had inherited with the throne the fierce hatred with which his father was ever regarded; yet he had not only held every province secure, but had won the respect and fear of all his people. The thirty years of his rule had not been void of wars and bloodshed, yet at the head of his nine Baluch tribes the Khan had swept aside all opposition and won for himself the title of "The Lion of Mekran," Mekran being his dwelling-place when not in the saddle.

Today, gaunt and haggard, he lay gasping upon his divan. His fingers opened and closed convulsively in the meshes of his iron-gray beard; his drooping eyelids were sunk in deep sockets. The pallor of death showed through his swarthy skin. To Agahr and the silent group behind him it seemed that the Khan was conquered at last.

The sick one moved restlessly and raised his hand.

"Has — has — he come?" he asked, speaking the words with much difficulty.

Agahr leaned forward, without rising, and answered his master with composure:

“Not yet, lord.”

It was a question often repeated and as often answered with the same words.

A moan came from the Khan. The vizier noted the patient’s restlessness and made a sign with his hand. At once the curtains of the rear entrance were swept aside and a troop of girls entered. They were robed in white; vines of the mountain iral were twined in their hair; in their hands were bellalas. The girls danced. A tall Arab with immense hoops of gold in his ears beat a tambo to mark the time, and the bellalas chimed a tinkling chorus.

The eyes of the Khan never opened, but he made an impatient gesture and moaned again. The intent Agahr noted this and at his command the noise of the tambo ceased and the girls withdrew. Evidently the Khan could no longer be amused in this fashion.

For a brief space of time the courtyard again became silent. Then, so suddenly that a thrill crept over the watchers, a tall imposing figure glided to the side of the divan and cast a shadow over the face of the sick man.

Burah Khan moved, opened his eyes and fixed his gaze eagerly upon the new arrival. The vizier arose quickly and approached the couch, bowing low and looking into the calm countenance of the stranger with undisguised anxiety. The group of minor officials also looked their interest, and the girl forgot to wave her fan while she examined the person of the man so long awaited.

“The great physician is here, my master,” whispered the vizier. But Burah Khan did not heed him. An expression of relief had come to his pinched features, and his eyes were fixed earnestly upon the face bent above him, as if he would read his fate in the countenance of the famous Persian who had been brought all the way from Kelat to minister to his imperative needs.

The physician raised the sick man’s eyelids and glanced beneath them. He placed his right hand under the Khan’s head and at the same time pressed an ear to his chest. It seemed enough. He stood erect, with folded arms, bending a searching yet kindly gaze upon the face upturned to his.

“Tell me!” pleaded the Khan, feebiy.

The Persian gave a quick glance around. Then he answered:

“They listen.”

“Let them hear,” said the Khan, raising himself with an effort upon his elbow. “They — are all — friends.”

A queer look came over the stranger’s face. But he said, in a calm voice:

“The sickness is fatal. You will die.”

For a moment the Lion of Mekran returned the other’s gaze steadily. Then he lay back upon his pillows and sighed.

Agahr, who eyed his master as if fascinated, heaved an echoing sigh, and the group of officials exchanged looks of consternation.

"When?" asked the Khan, his voice now strong and clear, his eyes on the impassive face before him.

"A day — an hour," replied the Persian, slowly. "It is Death's secret."

For a few moments the silence was unbroken save for the splash of the fountain as its perfumed spray fell into the marble basin. Then the Khan again aroused himself.

"Can you hold Death at bay — for a time?" he asked.

"How long?"

"Speak, Agahr!" turning to his vizier. "How long to get my son here — to assemble the Sirdars of the Nine Tribes?"

Agahr was trembling visibly. He clasped and unclasped his thin hands nervously and glanced first at his master and then at the physician.

"Speak!" said the latter, sternly.

"To the monastery of Takkatu is three days' journey — three days, at least," he said, hesitatingly. "And for Prince Ahmed to return will require three more. Seven days — a week — with fast riding."

"Then," said the Khan, calmly, "they must ride fast." He turned to the Persian. "Can you fight Death so long?"

The Persian nodded. The pluck of Burah Khan aroused his admiration.

"I will fight Death so long," said he, gravely.

"And the sirdars?" asked the sick man, once more turning to his vizier.

"They can be assembled in five days," answered Agahr, after a moment's reflection. "Three are already here."

"Good!" declared the Khan. "Let Dirrag ride within the hour."

"For the sirdars?"

"For Ahmed."

He fell back again, and a man rose from the group behind Agahr and with an obeisance toward the divan glided swiftly from the courtyard.

The physician, noting the action, turned to the vizier.

"Dirrag?" he enquired.

"Dirrag," responded the other, mechanically.

The Persian gave his patient a sharp scrutiny, and drawing a phial from his bosom placed it to the now colorless lips of the Khan.

"Clear the place," he commanded Agahr, and without awaiting a response himself stepped quickly through the outer arch.

Outside Dirrag was mounting a strong Arabian mare. The Persian arrested him with a gesture.

"The Prince must be here in six days," he said, in a low but commanding

voice. “Six days, or — ”

“I understand,” said Dirrag, and put spurs to the mare.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE VIZIER

Upon a stone gallery overlooking the courtyard of a handsome dwelling not far from the palace of the khan reclined a girl, beautiful with that mysterious Eastern beauty that has been for ages the despair of poets and artists and which attains its full charm only in the Orient. She was scarcely seventeen years of age, yet her rounded outlines, her graceful poise, her sedate demeanor, all proclaimed her a maiden on the verge of womanhood. Her eyes, round and soft as those of a fawn, were absolutely inscrutable; her features in repose held the immutable expression of the Sphynx. When she smiled sunbeams danced in her eyes and a girlish dimple showed in her chin. But she rarely smiled. The composed, serious, languorous expression dominated her exquisite face.

The girl was richly dressed. Her silken gown was of finest texture; pearls of rare size were twined in her dark hair; a golden serpent whose every scale was a lustrous diamond spanned her waist; upon her breast glittered a solitary blood-red ruby of historic fame, known in song and story for generations.

For this maiden was Maie, only daughter of Agahr, Grand Vizier to the Lion of Mekran and to his father before him — the terrible Keedar Khan.

Next to Burah himself in rank, virtually directing all the civic affairs of the nation, responsible to none save his stern master, Agahr was indeed a personage of vast importance in the realm. The sirdars of the nine fighting tribes of Baluchi, the main support of the Khan, might look upon the vizier scornfully; but they obeyed his laws and avoided any interference with his civic functions.

Maie was the daughter of Agahr's old age, his only companion and his constant delight. To her he confided many of the problems that from time to time confronted him, and often a quiet word from the girl's lips showed him the matter in a new light and guided him in his actions. The old man had discovered a store of common sense in the dainty head of his daughter; the inscrutable velvet eyes were wells of wisdom from which he drew solace and counsel in all difficulties.

On the evening of this eventful day came Agahr to the gallery where his daughter reclined. And as he sat beside her she turned her eyes upon his face and seemed to read it clearly.

"The Khan is worse," said she, quietly.

"He is dying," answered the vizier. "The Persian physician has come from Kelat, and he says there is no hope."

"We shall be making history soon," remarked the girl, in soft tones. "The

Khan will pass away, and Kasam is here."

The vizier moved uneasily on his seat.

"Kasam is here; yes," said he. "But no one knows the secret save us. No one knows who our Kasam is."

"They will know soon," returned the girl in a calm, expressionless voice. "Our cousin Kasam is rightful heir to the throne — when the Lion's eyes are closed in death."

"You forget that Burah Khan has also a son," said the old man, harshly. "Even now Dirrag is riding full speed to the Sunnite monastery at Takkatu to bring hither the Prince Ahmed."

"That he may be acknowledged successor to the throne by the assembled sirdars of the Nine Tribes?"

"Yes."

"But the Khan is dying. The Prince cannot arrive in time."

"Perhaps not. Yet that accursed Persian has promised to prolong the Khan's life for seven days. If he succeeds — "

The girl bent forward suddenly.

"He must not succeed!" she exclaimed, in a clear voice.

Agahr shrank from the intentness of her gaze.

"Hear me!" she continued. "Kasam is our kinsman; the throne is his by right. Most of our citizens and many of the members of the Nine Tribes secretly favor his claim. A crisis approaches, and we must take advantage of it. The Lion of Mekran must not live seven days. If his son Ahmed, who has been secluded for twenty years in a monastery, and is said to be devoted to Allah, is not here to be recognized as the successor to the throne, the people will acclaim Kasam their khan. It is all very simple, my father. The Lion of Mekran must not live seven days!"

"What, plotting again, cousin?" cried a cheery voice behind them. Agahr gave a sudden start and wheeled around with a frown, meeting the smiling face of Prince Kasam, but the girl moved not even an eyelid.

"Pardon me, uncle, for startling you," said the young man, coming forward and taking a seat beside the vizier. "I arrived in time to hear cousin Maie doom Burah Kahn to an early death, as if the dark angel fought on our side. What a wonderful little conspirator you are, my Maie!"

She looked into his face thoughtfully, not caring to acknowledge the compliment of his words or the ardor of his gaze. But Agahr said, gruffly:

"The conspiracies of women cost many men their heads."

"Very true, uncle," replied Kasam, becoming grave. "But we are in sore straights, and a little plotting may not come amiss. If the son of the old Lion — who, by the way, is also my cousin — is acknowledged by the sirdars, he

is liable to make a change in his officers. We may lose our vizier, and with the office more than half our power with the people. In that event I can never become kahn."

"The son of Burah must be a weakling and a dreamer," said the girl, thoughtfully. "What can be expected of one who for twenty years has associated with monks and priests?"

"Twenty years?" exclaimed Kasam; "then my cousin Ahmed must be nearly thirty years of age."

"And a recluse," added Maie, quietly. "You, Prince, are not yet twenty-five, and you have lived in the world. We need not, I am sure, fear the gentle son of Burah — even though he be acknowledged by his father and the sirdars of the tribes."

"Which will surely happen if the Khan lives seven days. Is it not so? But if Allah calls him sooner, and my friends are loyal — why, then, I may become khan myself, and much trouble spared. The English have an injunction to 'strike while the iron is hot.' We may safely apply it to ourselves."

Maie glanced at her father, and there was a glint of triumph in the dark eyes.

"It is what I have said," she murmured. "The Lion of Mekrari must not live seven days."

"Do you know, fair one," remarked Kasam, lightly, "that only yesterday I bewailed the approaching fate of the usurper, and longed to have him live until we could secure England's support?"

"England!" she cried, scornfully. "What is that far-away nation to our Baluchistan? It is *here* that history will be made."

Kasam laughed merrily.

"What a logical little head you have, cousin!" he answered, laying his hand upon her own, caressingly. "To us, indeed, Ba-luchistan is the world. And England's help is far away from us in this crisis. Tell me, Maie, what is your counsel?"

"It is your duty, Prince, to prevent Burah Khan from living until his son arrives to be acknowledged his successor."

Kasam's face became suddenly grave.

"*My* duty, cousin?" he replied. "It is no man's duty to murder, even to become khan. But perhaps I misunderstood your words. I am practically a stranger in my own land, and can do little to further my own interests, which naturally include the interests of my friends. If Burah Khan fails to live until his son's arrival it will be through the will of Allah, and by no act of mine."

"You are a coward," said the girl, scornfully.

“Yes,” he answered, coldly; “I am afraid to become a murderer.”

“Peace, both of you!” commanded the vizier, angrily. “You are like a pair of children. Do you think that I, who have been Burah’s faithful officer for thirty years, would countenance treachery or foul play while he lies upon his death-bed?

I long to see Prince Kasam seated upon the throne, but it must be through honest diplomacy, and by no assassin’s stroke.”

“Right, my uncle!” cried Kasam, seizing the vizier’s hand in a hearty clasp. “Otherwise, were I khan, you should be no officer of mine.”

Agahr and his daughter exchanged a quick glance, and the girl said, languidly:

“I was doubtless wrong, urged on by the intensity of my feeling and my loyalty to the Tribe of Raab. But a woman’s way is, I think, more direct and effective than a man’s.”

“Even if less honest, cousin?” retorted the young man, playfully pinching her cheek. “Let us bide our time and trust to the will of Allah. This evening I must set out on my return to Quanam. What answer shall I take to my foreign friends who await me?”

“Tell me, Kasam; why do they wish to cross our territory — to visit our villages and spy upon our people?” asked Agahr, suspiciously.

“It is as I told you, my uncle. They are people of great wealth, from the far western country of America, and it is their custom to penetrate to every part of the world and lay rails of iron over which chariots may swiftly speed. We have no such rails in Baluchistan.”

“Nor do we desire them,” returned the vizier, brusquely.

“But they would bring to us all the merchandise of that wonderful western world. They would bring us wealth in exchange for our own products,” said Kasam, eagerly.

“And they would bring hundreds of infidels to trick and rob us. I know of these railways,” declared the vizier.

“I also,” answered Kasam, lightly. “I have been educated in Europe, and know well the benefits of western civilization.”

“But the Baluchi do not Our own high and advanced civilization is enough for us.”

The young man smiled.

“It is not worth an argument now,” he remarked. “The present mission of this party of infidels is to examine our country and consider whether a railway across it would be profitable. All that I now require is a passport and safe conduct for them. It will benefit our cause, as well, for only as the guide to these foreigners dared I return to my native land. If I am permitted to

depart tonight with the passport I can easily return in time for the crisis that approaches. Then perhaps our American friends will be of service to us, for no one will suspect their guide of being the exiled heir to the throne."

The vizier hesitated.

"But the railway — "

"Bother the railway!" interrupted Kasam, impatiently. "That is a matter of the future, a matter for the new khan and his vizier to decide upon, whoever they may chance to be."

"Here is the passport," said Agahr, reluctantly drawing a parchment from his breast. "Burah Khan was too sick to be bothered with the request of the infidels, so I made out the paper and signed it by virtue of my office."

"Ah, and affixed the great seal, I perceive," added Kasam, taking the document. "I thank you, uncle Agahr. We shall get along famously together — when I am khan."

He bade them adieu the next moment, embracing the vizier and kissing his cousin's hand with a gallantry that brought a slight flush to the girl's cheeks. And soon they heard the quick beat of his horse's hoofs as he rode away.

Maie and her father looked into each other's eyes. Presently the old man spoke, slowly and thoughtfully.

"You will share his throne, my child."

The girl nodded and fanned herself.

"The life in Europe has made Kasam foolish," said she. Then, leaning forward and regarding the vizier earnestly, she added in a whisper:

"Nevertheless, Burah Khan must not live seven days!"

CHAPTER V.

THE PERIL OF BURAH KHAN

Three days had passed. The khan remained sunk in a stupor caused by the medicines administered by the Persian physician, who hovered constantly around the bedside of his patient. Burah now lay in a well aired, high vaulted chamber. The musk-scented cushions had been ostracised, the dancing girls dismissed. Quiet reigned throughout the vast palace.

Occasionally Agahr would thrust his head through the curtains draping the entrance, as if seeking to know that all was well; but the Persian merely gave him a reassuring nod and motioned him away.

This summary banishment did not please the vizier. His daughter had assisted him in forming several plans of great political import, and the conduct of the foreign physician prevented their being carried to a successful issue.

Thus Agahr, appearing again at the entrance, beckoned with imperative gesture the Persian to join him; and, after a careful inspection of his patient, lying peaceful and unconscious, the physician obeyed.

Together they paced up and down the deserted marble passage, the Persian's quick eye never leaving the entrance to the khan's chamber, while Agahr plied him with eager questions concerning his master's condition.

"He will live until his son, the Prince Ahmed, arrives," said the other, calmly. "He will remain unconscious, but he will live."

"And then?" asked the vizier, anxiously.

"Then I will awaken him. He will have full command of all his faculties for a brief period — and then he will pass away quickly."

Agahr sighed.

"Is it not possible for him to pass away during this stupor?" he enquired.

"Yes, it is possible," answered the Per-sian. "But I believe I can prevent that My task requires constant vigilance: that is why I dare not leave the Khan's chamber."

"I will send a man to relieve you," said the vizier. "You can instruct him in his duties and he will be faithful."

"No," returned the Persian.

An awkward silence followed. Then Agahr stopped suddenly and said:

"I will be frank with you. The son of Burah Khan is not the rightful heir to the throne of Mekran. It is the exiled Prince Kasam, from whose grandsire Keedar Khan by right of sword wrested all Baluchistan. Therefore it is best for the country that Burah does not live until his son arrives."

He paused, wiping the perspiration from his brow and glancing half

fearfully into the grave face of the physician. The latter nodded.

"I understand," said he.

Agahr became reassured.

"The ancestors of Prince Kasam," he continued, earnestly, "ruled the land for nine generations. Then the Baluchi rebelled and put their Headsman, the fierce Keedar Khan, upon the throne his own brother was forced to vacate. I being at the time vizier, remained Keedar's vizier, as I have remained vizier to his son. By means of wars and bloodshed these terrible men have for forty-six years dominated all Baluchistan. It is now time, in the interest of justice and humanity, that the rightful heir should recover the throne."

"Did not Prince Kasam's ancestors conquer this country with the aid of the Afghans, and put to death every member of the then reigning family?" asked the Persian.

"It is a matter of history," said Agahr, proudly. "They were my ancestors, these bold conquerors, as well as the ancestors of Prince Kasam."

"Yet Keedar Khan made you his vizier, and his son retained you?"

"Yes; and I have been faithful."

"But now, it seems to me, you are speaking treason," said the physician.

"Not so," declared the vizier, indignantly. "Burah Khan, by your own showing, is virtually dead at this moment. I owe no allegiance to his son, whom I have never seen."

"How is that?" asked the physician, in surprise.

"When Ahmed was a child his father, fearing a revolt and that his boy might fall by an assassin's knife, placed him in the Sunnite monastery at Takkatu for safe keeping. There he has remained ever since. It will be necessary for Burah Khan to officially acknowledge him before the chiefs of the Nine Tribes and to appoint him his own successor, before Ahmed can legally occupy the throne. If this is not done the people, who are weary of the rule of these tyrants, will acclaim Kasam as khan."

"But Prince Ahmed will arrive, and be acknowledged. Burah Khan has so willed it, and he is still the master."

Agahr faced the Persian with an angry frown.

"Do you refuse to assist us?" he asked, sharply.

"I refuse to betray the man whose life I have promised to preserve until his son arrives," declared the physician.

"But you are a stranger — a Persian."

"Even so."

"And you expect a reward, or you would not have hastened to Mekran when summoned by the Khan. Name your price. I will double it, and you shall depart this very night."

The Persian smiled.

“Here, and throughout the world,” said he, “the strongest argument is the clink of gold. Listen well, your Excellency. I have promised Burah Khan life for seven days. I shall keep my promise. Then, if the Prince does not come, I can do no more.”

The vizier started.

“If the Prince does not come?” he repeated, thoughtfully.

“To be sure.”

“Ah! I had not thought of that!” exclaimed the old man.

“It is the only thing I fear,” said the other, with exasperating coolness; “but I rely upon Dirrag. If you are able to delay him you will doubtless win the throne for Prince Kasam.”

Before the mocking tones had died away the physician disappeared behind the draperies of the khan’s chamber, and the vizier, controlling his anger and chagrin as best he might, walked away to concoct further plans.

The woman who brought the Persian his evening meal became confused under his sharp scrutiny and started to retire hurriedly. He arrested her with a stern command, saying:

“Sit here and taste of the dish you have brought.”

Then she began to tremble.

“Master, I dare not!” she wailed.

“Very well. Take away this food and bring me eggs boiled in the shell.”

The physician was bending over the couch of the khan when one of the under cooks entered silently with the eggs. The man was of the Brahoe caste, small and wiry. He placed the eggs upon the table and eyed for a time the back of the tall Persian, who seemed intent upon his patient. But a moment later he suddenly straightened, threw back his hand and caught the wrist of the Brahoe in a firm grasp.

A dagger fell upon the rug, and the man shrank back shuddering before the gleaming eyes of the physician.

An instant they remained motionless. Then, releasing his prisoner, the physician picked up the dagger, placed it within his own bosom and seated himself quietly at the table. One of the eggs he cast aside; there was a tiny pin-hole through the shell. The others he ate with his usual composure. As he raised a cup of water to his lips the Brahoe, who had watched him with amazement, suddenly stretched out his hand in warning.

“Wait! it is poisoned,” he whispered. “I will bring you more.”

Swiftly he glided away and presently returned with a fresh bowl of clear water.

The physician drank without hesitation.

“You may go,” said he, setting down the bowl.

“Master,” said the man, “be warned.

You are surrounded by dangers. But you are brave, and I am your servant henceforth. Eat hereafter only the food I bring you.”

The Persian nodded and gave the Brahoe a smile. Still the man hesitated, peering cautiously about as if suspecting listeners. Finally he came nearer and said in a low voice:

“I do not know all; your foes are cunning and powerful. But the old khan is not to live the seven days. And life is lightly esteemed in Mekran — if it stands in the way of a purpose. Do not sleep tonight.”

“I never sleep,” returned the Persian, looking upon the man curiously.

Indeed, the critical condition of Burah Khan seemed to require his constant attention. The strange physician watched the silent form carefully throughout the night, and only once noted a slight movement of the draperies that guarded the entrance to the chamber.

At daybreak he drew the curtains of the windows to let in the light, and turned about in time to dash his heel upon the head of a small but venomous serpent that was poised to strike him with its fangs. Some one had placed it in the room during the night — a messenger of death to either the Khan or his physician, it mattered little which.

The Persian stared at the writhing snake a moment and made a gesture of impatience.

“It is only the fourth day,” he muttered. “I wonder where Dirrag is.”

An hour later the woman brought in his breakfast.

“Where is the Brahoe?” he demanded, sharply.

“He was found dead this morning,” said the woman, shuddering. “Some enemy, it seems, strangled him while he slept.”

The frown upon the Persian’s brow was so fierce that the woman slipped away in terror.

“It is only the fourth day,” he growled again, between set teeth; “but the Khan shall live until the seventh day — unless Dirrag comes before. I have sworn it, and, by Allah, I will keep my oath!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN OF DESTINY

A young man paced with nervous strides an open gallery of the ancient monastery of Mehmet, set high upon the mountain peak of Takkatu. He was tall and slender, his face worn thin by fasting and endless vigils, his shoulders stooping, his hands so emaciated that the fingers resembled eagles' talons. His forehead was high and protruding; his eyes bright and glistening; but the lower part of his face, from the small, delicate nose to the receding chin, indicated a weak and vacillating character.

Prone upon a narrow divan against the wall reclined another man, also young but of stalwart, rugged frame and with calm and well-fashioned features. His pose was absolutely without motion: not even a muscle twitched. The dark lashes lay over his closed eyes without a tremor.

Both wore the loose yellow gowns and high turbans of the Sunnite novitiates, but the one who paced the marble tiles had a band of white around his flowing sleeve — an indication of his superior degree.

Through the open peristyle came spicy breezes from near-by Araby. The sun cast intense shadows; a mighty stillness enveloped the monastery, as if the world slept.

The two novitiates were not alone. On a stone bench near the outer arches was seated an aged priest, clothed all in pure white, whose set face and hard, unseeing eyes indicated him wholly oblivious of his surroundings. Neither the young men seemed to consider his presence, although from time to time the nervous pacer would cast a swift glance in his direction.

Suddenly the latter paused before the divan.

"Give me your counsel, Hafiz!" said he, addressing the prostrate form. "Tell me what I must do."

The man upon the divan moved and sat up, regarding the other gravely with clear grey eyes.

"Well?" said he.

"Must I submit to it?" asked the other, eagerly. "Has my father the right to make this unreasonable, unjust, shameful demand?"

Hafiz nodded.

"After all these years of study and research," continued the slender brother, with a passionate gesture, "after a life devoted to religious concentration, to the worship of Allah and His divine manifestations on earth; after delving far into the inner mysteries of the Faith and seeing the day approach when I shall become of the Imaum — after this holy life in this holy temple must I be dragged into the coarse, material world again? Bah! it

is outrageous — impossible!”

“Yet imperative,” added the man on the divan.

His companion had resumed his agitated walk, but suddenly paused again and cast a frightened look at the placid countenance turned upon him. Then the frown faded from his own brow; his eyes softened and he said, gently:

“Forgive me, dear Hafiz! I am beside myself with grief. Tell me what I must do!”

“They have sent for you?” asked Hafiz.

“Yes. My father, the Khan, who has forgotten me since I came here, a little child, is now dying, and he commands my presence that I may succeed him as ruler of the tribes of Mekran.”

“Have you known e’er this that you were Prince of Mekran?”

“Not till this hour, when our beloved mufti revealed to me the tidings.”

“But *he* knew it?” said Hafiz, with a glance toward the entranced priest by the arch.

“Yes; he knew it, but preserved the knowledge. It seems there was reason for this. My father’s house has powerful enemies, who would gladly have murdered his heir in childhood. So that no one but the Khan and his trusted vizier knew where I have been hidden all these years. And I —

I have grown to manhood with the belief that I might devote my life to religion; yet now, when my soul craves peace and that exaltation which is accorded only to Allah’s chosen servants, I am rudely summoned to a life of worldly turmoil, to take part in endless political intrigues and brutal warfares — all of which my spirit loathes.”

“‘Tis fate, Ahmed,” said the other, thoughtfully, “and to be borne with the resignation our creed teaches. You are of royal birth, of an ancient line of heaven-born rulers, and you must fulfill your destiny.”

“Ah, now you have given me my argument,” retorted Ahmed, with a quick smile. “I am not of an ancient line of heaven-born rulers. We are usurpers.”

“Yes?”

“Yes. My grandfather, according to the” tale I have just heard, was a younger brother of the reigning khan, whom he ruthlessly slew and supplanted. By terrible and bloody wars my grandsire Keeder conquered the tribes that were faithful to his brother’s son, and forced them to acknowledge and obey him. A fierce man was Keedar Khan, and always more hated than loved. But before he died all Baluchistan rendered him homage, and his son, my father, proved as stern and warlike as his sire. For thirty years he has ruled with an iron hand, and is today known to the world as the Lion of Mekran.”

“Yet he is dying?”

“He is dying; and he sends for me, his only child, that I may be acknowledged his successor before the assembled sirdars of the nation.”

“You must go.”

“Think what that means!”

“You will be khan.”

“Ruler of a nation of disaffected tribes, half of whom are eager to return to the allegiance of their rightful sovereign and who have only been held in subjection through two generations by the might of an iron will and the right of a gleaming sword.”

“Who is this rightful sovereign you mention?”

“My cousin Kasam, whom I have never heard of until this day. He has been educated in foreign lands, I am told, to guard him from my father — as I have been reared in this holy place to prevent my being killed by the enemies of our house.”

“And you would reject a throne — a throne bequeathed you by a warrior sire — because there is a pretender to the place?” asked Hafiz, with calm features but sparkling eyes. “It was by the sword the first royal family reigned in Mekran; it is by the sword your family reigns. Your duty is to your own kin. Let your strong arm maintain the power your ancestors have won and established!”

Ahmed shrank from the flashing eyes of his friend and spread out his palms with a deprecating gesture.

“I am no warrior, Hafiz. I am an humble servant of Allah. In a month I shall be Imaum!”

Hafiz gazed upon the slender, shrinking form of the heir of Mekran with earnestness. Truly it seemed unwise to urge the gentle devotee to abandon the monastery for the intrigue of a palace. He sighed, this stalwart, broad-shouldered monk of Takkatu, and reclined anew upon the divan.

“I wish,” he said, regretfully, “I had been born the son of your father.”

For a time Ahmed resumed his fretful pacing of the gallery, and no sound but his footsteps fell upon the ears of the three. The aged priest still sat, immobile, at his post, and the tall monk reclined as motionless upon his divan.

At times Ahmed would pause and wring his thin hands, murmuring: “I cannot! I cannot leave this holy place. In a month I shall be Imaum — a chosen comrade of the Prophet!”

A bell, low-toned and sweet, chimed from a neighboring spire. At the summons the priest stirred and turned himself to the east, the involuntary action being imitated by the younger men. Then all three cast themselves

prone upon the marble floor, while a distant voice came softly but clearly to their ears, chanting the words: *"Allah is great. There is no god but Allah. Come ye to prayer. Come ye to security!"*

As the tones faded away Ahmed groaned, repeating the words: "Security! come ye to security! O Allah, help me!"

But the others remained silent and motionless for a protracted time, and even Ahmed ceased his muttering and succumbed to the impressiveness of the mid-day prayer.

Finally the priest arose and made a sign.

"Retire, my son," said he to Ahmed, "and compose thy soul to peace. Allah has shown me the way."

The young man gave a start, his features suffused with a glow of delight, his eyes sparkling joyfully. Then he bowed low before the mufti and left the gallery with steady steps.

Hafiz remained, curiously regarding the aged priest, whose lean face now wore a look of keen intelligence. He came close to the stalwart novitiate and fixed upon him a piercing gaze.

"Allah is above all," he said, "and Mahomet is the Prophet of Allah. Next to them stands the Khan — the Protector of the Faith."

"It is true," answered Hafiz.

"Prince Kasam has been educated in London. His faith, be he still true to Mahomet, is lax. For the glory of Allah and the protection of our order, a true believer must rule at Mekran. The son of Burah Khan must sit in his father's place."

"It is true," said Hafiz, again.

"Yet our beloved brother, Ahmed, is about to become of the Imaum. His soul is with Allah. His hand is not fitted to grasp the sword. Shall we rob the Faith of its most earnest devotee?"

The calm grey eyes and the glittering black ones met, and a wave of intelligence vibrated between them.

Hafiz made no reply in words, and the priest paused in deep thought. At length he continued.

"For seven years, my brother, you have been one of us, and we have learned to love you. You came among us fresh from a life tragedy. You suffered. Allah comforted you, and within our walls you found peace. The sun and wind kissed your cheeks and turned them brown; your strength increased. The purity of your soul was grateful to the Prophet, and he granted you knowledge and understanding. But you were not destined to become a priest, my Hafiz. Allah has chosen you for a more worldly life, wherein you may yet render Him service by becoming a bulwark of the Faith!"

A smile softened the stern chin of the novitiate and lent his face a rare sweetness.

“I understand, O Mufti,” he answered; but there was a thrill in his voice he could not repress.

The priest clapped his hands and an attendant entered.

“Send to me Dirrag the messenger,” he commanded.

No word was spoken on the gallery until the son of Ugg appeared.

Dirrag was still white with the dust of his swift ride across the desert. He came in with a swinging stride, glanced with a momentary hesitation from one to the other of the two men, and then knelt humbly before Hafiz.

“My lord,” said he, “your father commands your presence in Mekran. We must ride fast if you are to find him still alive.”

“In an hour,” answered the priest, calmly, “Prince Ahmed will be in the saddle. I commend to your wisdom and loyalty, good Dirrag, the safety of the heir to the throne of Mekran.”

CHAPTER VII.

DIRRAG

When Burah Khan picked Dirrag of the tribe of Ugg as his messenger to the monastery of Takkatu, he knew his man.

Dirrag was brother to the sirdar of his tribe, and the tribe of Ugg was Burah Khan's tribe, prominent above all others for having furnished two great rulers to the nation: Keedar the Great and his warrior son the Lion of Mekran. Well might the tribe of Ugg be proud, and well might Dirrag be faithful to his own kin.

The messenger was thin and wiry; he was not a tall man, but neither was Burah Khan, for that matter. Dirrag wore a black, thick beard that covered nearly his entire face. His eyes, as they glinted through the thicket of whisker, were keen as a ferret's. One of his ears had been sliced away by a cimeter; his left hand had but one finger and the thumb remaining; his body was seared with scars on almost every inch of its compact surface. Dirrag was no longer ornamental — if he had ever possessed that quality — but he was an exceedingly useful man in a skirmish and had fought for years beside Burah himself. They knew each other.

When Dirrag mounted his mare at the castle gates he did not hesitate as to his direction, but sped away toward the mountains. An ordinary messenger would have headed due east, so as to pass around the mountain range and reach by easy ascent the height of Takkatu. But the strange physician had told him Prince Ahmed must be at his father's side in six days, and Dirrag had looked into the man's eyes. He knew that much depended upon his promptness in fulfilling his mission, and so he rode, straight as the bird flies, toward Mount Takkatu.

And he rode swiftly, hour after hour, till shadows crept over the land and night fell. He dipped the mare's nose into two streams between then and daybreak, but paused only during those moments. At sunrise he dashed up to an enclosure, drew the bridle from his panting mare, threw it over the head of a snow-white stallion corralled near by, sprang astride the fresh animal and was off like the wind.

A Baluch came from a stone hut, watched the cloud of dust that marked Dirrag's flight and then calmly proceeded to tend and groom the weary mare the messenger had discarded.

"Oh, ho!" he muttered, "old Burah has the death-sickness at last, and the young prince is sent for. May Allah rest my master's black and scoundrelly soul!"

He had tended the relay for years, waiting for this hour.

Dirrag reached the monastery in the middle of the third day after leaving Mekran. He was obliged to curb his impatience for four tedious hours before the return journey could be begun. But the messenger was well ahead of his time, and provided Prince Ahmed proved a good rider would see Mekran again before the six days allotted him had sped.

There were good horses at the ancient monastery of Mehmet. No more famous stable existed in all Baluchistan. Dirrag glanced with pride at their mounts as he rode away beside his kinsman the prince. Also he noted with satisfaction the firm and graceful seat of his companion and his evident mastery of the splendid bay stallion he bestrode.

Therefore the warrior smiled grimly and tossed his head.

"Six days!" he muttered. "It is too many by one."

A long, swift stride the slender bays struck, and they maintained it hour after hour without seeming to tire. Dirrag was no chatterer, and the son of the Lion of Mekran, whom the tribesman regarded admiringly from time to time from the corner of his eye, seemed liable to prove equally reticent.

The warrior had never seen his master's son before, and had shared a common misgiving with the Baluchi concerning the monastery-bred prince. But his doubts were more than half relieved by his first view of the athletic form and steady poise of his kinsman. If the priests had hot spoiled him — But, there! time would show. At present it was enough that the heir could ride.

Another day arrived before Dirrag was called upon to answer a single question. In the cool hour just before the sun arose, as they slowly rode up an incline, resting the horses for the long canter down hill, the prince asked:

"In what condition did you leave Burah Khan?"

"Your father, my prince, was near his end," he replied, slowly. "His illness has been long and tedious, and the Persian physician who arrived from Kelat gave him barely seven days to live. This is the fourth day."

"And when shall we reach Mekran?"

"On the morning of the sixth day — with the blessing of Allah."

The younger man pondered the matter long. Then he said:

"Who recommended the Persian? Were there no physicians in Mekran?"

"Burah beheaded his own physician three weeks ago. He has executed, altogether, five men of medicine since this illness came upon him. The others have fled or are in hiding. As for the Persian, I am told Agahr the Vizier would have prevented his coming; but Melka of our tribe, who rules the khan's harem, rode fast to Kelat, and the Persian came."

"Agahr. Is he not our cousin?"

"Your uncle, lord, thrice removed. He is own cousin to Kasam the

Pretender."

Another period of silence, finally broken by questions as calmly and indifferently put.

"This Kasam the Pretender. Is he popular in Mekran?"

"They do not know him, any more than they know yourself. He has lived in a far country since boyhood, and is said to be still there."

"But he has friends — partisans?"

Dirrag hitched uneasily in his seat.

"There are some, even yet, who deny the right of a son of Ugg to rule. Old Keedar did not strike softly, and the sword of Burah was ever long and sharp. You will have enemies, my master, when you are khan."

"Open enemies?"

"And secret ones. The open enemies you need not fear."

At noon they entered the Gedrusian Desert, the uplands being all behind them.

There is little danger in this tract of waste land to those familiar with it. Numerous pools and oases sustain the traveller of experience. Dirrag knew every inch of the desert, and as their present route was across but one corner of it he entered fearlessly.

Night had fallen and the moon and stars were out when they halted the weary horses beside a pool. Ahmed dismounted and had knelt beside the water to drink when Dirrag suddenly grasped his shoulder and threw him forcibly backward. He arose slowly, rearranged his burnous and cast an enquiring look at his companion.

"The pool is poisoned," said Dirrag.

Bending over, he pointed to the bottom of the shallow water, where the moon shone on several slender twigs that were covered with a pale green bark.

"It is from the shushalla — the snake-tree," he said, gruffly. "A drop of this water will bring instant death. This is very annoying. Our pools are never poisoned without a purpose, my master. Perhaps we are watched."

"I saw a rider against the horizon, as we came up," replied Ahmed.

He stretched his muscular arms, yawned with weariness and lay down upon the sand, instantly becoming motionless. It was a trick of relaxation he had learned at the Sunnite monastery.

Dirrag looked at him approvingly. The novitiate Hafiz had cast aside his yellow robes with his monastic name, and now wore the simple dress of a Baluch tribesman, without ornament or jewel of any sort. The fold of his turban, however, proclaimed him a member of the tribe of Ugg, and the cimeter at his side — the gift of the wily priest of Mehmet — was a weapon

of rare quality, its hilt sparkling with clustered gems. Dirrag, when he first saw it, had made humble obeisance to the cimeter.

The former recluse also bore a short spear, with the accompanying shield of hammered bronze, and these completed his equipment.

Dirrag, wondering vaguely if his young master knew how to handle his weapons, unsheathed his own blade and, squatting at the edge of the pool, impaled the green twigs, one after another, upon its point and drew them from the water. When all had been thus removed he buried the deadly branches deep in the desert sands, and then reclined beside his master. The horses sniffed eagerly at the pool, but would not drink until they were given permission.

Silence fell upon the group. When three hours had passed Dirrag arose, crept to the pool and dipped his finger in the water, tasting a drop warily. Then he leaned over and drank, somewhat sparingly, and laid himself down again, commending his soul to Allah.

In another hour he sprang up, alert and brisk, and touched Ahmed's shoulder.

"You may drink, master," said he. "The pool is cleansed."

Five minutes later, men and horses alike refreshed, they gallopped away through the moonlight.

The fifth day dawned — the fifth according to Dirrag's calendar, which dated from the moment he had left Mekran. Ahmed had been in the saddle thirty-six hours, with brief periods of rest. Dirrag, man of iron though he was, began to show signs of fatigue. He was used to long riding, but now his eyelashes seemed lead and every stroke of his horse's hoofs sounded in his ears like the beat of a drum.

Soon after the sun arose they discovered a group of horsemen far across the desert, who seemed to be riding in the same direction they were. The horsemen were mere specks upon the sands, at first, but as the hours passed they grew larger.

"Travellers to Mekran," remarked Dirrag, calmly. "The sirdars have been assembled. Doubtless it is the party of some dignitary journeying to the death-bed of Burah Khan."

"How far distant is Mekran?" asked Ahmed.

"We shall reach it, Allah willing, by an-other daybreak," replied the warrior. "It will be the morning of the sixth day. The Persian gave me full six days. I shall save twelve hours, and twelve hours to a dying man is a long time."

There was an accent of pride in his voice. Agahr had said the journey would require seven days with fast riding. But Agahr was a townsman; how

should he know how fast the men of Ugg can ride?

The group of horsemen drew nearer. At noon Dirrag could see them almost plainly enough to determine what tribe they belonged to — almost, but not quite. Shortly afterwards, however, they whirled and rode directly toward the two travellers, and then Dirrag straightened in his saddle, cast the sleep from his eyes and gave a low growl.

"They are of the Tribe of Raab — a wild and rebellious band that hates Burah and supports the cause of Kasam the Pretender."

"Why are they here?" asked Ahmed.

"To prevent our reaching Mekran, I suppose. They do not want the sirdars and your father to publicly acknowledge you the successor to the throne."

"Well?"

"It was for the same reason the pool was poisoned. Treachery first; then the sword. Can you fight, my prince?"

"I can try," smiled Ahmed. "We are taught the arts of warfare in the monastery."

"You surprise me. I thought the priests passed their time in the worship of Allah."

"And in preparing to defend the Faith, good Dirrag. Yet I do not know how well I can wield a cimeter in actual combat Naked steel differs from a wooden foil. And the men of Raab outnumber us."

"There are a dozen of them, at least. But you and I are of the tribe of Ugg. If we cannot win the fight we may at least honor our kinsmen by taking three lives to our one."

"It is worth the trial," returned Ahmed, cheerfully, and he drew the cimeter from its leathern sheath and eyed the blade curiously.

"The spear first, my lord," said Dirrag.

"After that the sword play. These men of Raab are not skillful, but they are brave." And he proceeded to instruct Ahmed in the conduct of the coming encounter.

The horsemen were now so near that their shouts could be plainly heard. They were racing on at full speed, waving their spears in the air as they rode.

"Seel" exclaimed Ahmed, after a glance over his shoulder. "We are being surrounded."

Dirrag looked and growled again; but there was a more cheerful note to his voice this time.

"A caravan!" he exclaimed. "They are yet far off, but they have dromedaries and are swiftly approaching. If we can escape the first attack of the assassins we may be rescued yet."

There was no time for further words. The fierce tribesmen of Raab were

quickly upon them, and by a concerted movement Ahmed and Dirrag whirled their horses in opposite directions, separating as they dashed away over the sands. This was intended to cause the band to divide, a part following each fugitive. But, to Dirrag's annoyance, only two came after him, yelling and shaking their spears, indeed, but seeming not over anxious to engage him in combat, so long as he did not rejoin Ahmed.

It was upon the young heir of Mekran that most of the Raabites hurled themselves, circling around him at full gallop and watching a chance to thrust a spear into his back.

Ahmed recognized his peril. He cast his spear at one assailant, cleft another through turban and skull with his keen cimeter, and then, with a word to the gallant bay of Mehmet, he raised the horse high in the air and hurled it like a catapult at the foeman who chanced to be before him.

Even at the moment of impact the glittering blade whistled again through the air and the man of Raab sprawled with his horse in the desert sands, while Ahmed's steed broke through the circle of his foes and bounded away to rejoin Dirrag, who was so lost in admiration of his young master's prowess that he hardly looked to defend himself from his own assailants.

"Shall we fly?" asked Ahmed.

"It is useless," panted Dirrag, ranging his horse beside that of his master, so that it faced the opposite direction. "They can outrun us easily, for our steeds are weary. But a few more strokes like those, my prince, and the dogs will themselves take to their heels."

There was no indication of this at present, however. Again the enemy with fierce determination surrounded the two, and while each guarded the other's back they sat side by side and gave stroke for stroke with calm precision.

"Hold!" cried an eager voice, sounding above the melee.

The men of Raab, as if fearful of being robbed of their prey, made a sudden furious dash. At the same time a pistol shot rang out and the leader tumbled from his saddle. The Raabites were demoralized, and fell back. They had no fire-arms.

"Forbear, I command you!" said the same imperative voice. "I am Prince Kasam."

Yells of surprise and disappointment broke from the tribesmen. With a sudden impulse they wheeled and galloped swiftly over the desert, while the rescued men, wearied and breathless, lowered their swords to gaze around them in surprise.

The caravan had come upon them unawares. Twenty stout Afghans rode back of the young prince who had interrupted the conflict, and behind these stood dromedaries upon whose ample backs were perched ladies in European

dress and gentlemen composedly smoking cheroots.

"Well done, Kasam," cried Colonel Moore, approvingly, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs.

Dirrag, who had dismounted to pull a spear-head from his horse's flank, scowled and shrank back so that the bay's body partly hid him. Ahmed, at the sound of English words, drew the folds of his burnous close about his face, so that only the grey eyes were left revealed; but he sat his horse quietly and gave the native salute.

"We thank Prince Kasam for our rescue," he said in the native tongue.

Kasam flushed and laughed good-naturedly.

"Keep my secret, friend," he returned. "I was, indeed, foolish to reveal my station to that rabble yonder. But they are men of Raab, from which tribe I am myself descended, and in the emergency it seemed the only way to compel their obedience."

The other bowed coldly and turned away to watch the Afghans rifling the bodies of the fallen.

"Bury those fellows in the sand," ordered Kasam, shivering as he looked at the stark forms. "Were they not of my tribe they should feed the jackals for so cowardly an attack. What was your quarrel, friend?" turning again to Ahmed.

The latter made no reply, waving a hand toward Dirrag. Whereat the warrior, despite his repugnance, forced himself to come forward and answer for his silent chief.

"We are of the tribe of Ugg," said he, briefly.

Kasam laughed.

"That is the usurper's tribe," said he; "the tribe of old Burah, who is either dying or dead at this moment. No wonder my kinsmen assailed you!"

Some of the ladies and gentlemen, who had understood nothing of this conversation, now rode forward with eager questions in English concerning the affray and those who had been slain. Bessie screamed at sight of the mound of sand that was being rapidly heaped over the victims, and Aunt Lucy declared she was about to faint and would fall off the camel. Dr. Warner, in well chosen words, denounced a country where such murderous assaults were possible, and the Colonel regretted they had not arrived in time to see more of the fight. Even Allison Moore displayed considerable interest in the incident, and condemned Kasam for interrupting what might have been "a very pretty scrap."

Meantime Ahmed, with muffled face, sat his horse as if turned to stone, and Dirrag scowled more and more at the gabble of the foreigners.

"Friend," said Kasam, mistaking the scarred warrior for the leader of the

two, “we are riding to Mekran. If you travel ioo our way you have permission to attach yourselves to my caravan. It will doubtless insure your safety.”

To what extent Dirrag might have resented this implication that they were unable to protect themselves is uncertain, for an ungracious reply on his part to the kindly-meant invitation was interrupted by a recollection of the importance of his mission and the dangers that now menaced his young companion.

“Prince Kasam has our thanks,” he muttered. “We journey to Mekran.”

As the caravan started anew Janet Moore, who had remained quietly in the background, among the baggage-men and camel-drivers, rode slowly forward and joined the group of Americans. Whereupon Bessie laughingly reproached her for her timidity, and began chattering an unintelligible explanation of what had happened.

The men of Ugg silently joined the caravan. Neither they nor their horses seemed much the worse for the conflict, although Dirrag’s animal had a gaping wound in the thigh that would soon become stiff and sore, and the warrior had himself added a scratch across the forehead to his collection of wounds.

“Your countrymen seem to regard life very lightly, Prince,” said the Colonel, as they rode together near the front.

“Among themselves they have fought for centuries,” answered Kasam. “Yet I am told that of late years, under Keedar and Burah Khan, these minor frays have been forbidden and the combatants, if caught, severely punished. But old Burah is as good as dead, now, and the squabbles of the tribesmen are likely to break out afresh until I have time to reorganize the government and pacify the country.”

“Will you, too, be known as ‘a fighting khan,’ such as the ‘Lion of Mekran?’” asked Bessie, looking upon the young man with admiring eyes.

“I hope not, indeed,” he replied, laughing. “I shall try to instil European ideas into the heads of my stupid countrymen, and teach them the superiority of the Arts of Peace.”

None noticed that Ahmed’s horse had gradually forged ahead until he rode just behind the party of Americans.

“Isn’t it queer,” remarked Miss Warner, musingly, “that the future potentate of this big country is personally conducting us to his capital? It was really nice of you, Prince, to return with our passports. For a time we thought you had forsaken us, and Allison was bent on our retracing our steps and quitting the country.”

Kasam glanced into Janet’s grave face.

“You need not fear my deserting you,” he said earnestly. “Indeed, had I remained in Mekran during these days of waiting for the Khan’s death I should have gone wild with suspense, for there is nothing that can be done until Burah breathes his last breath. His physician, a stubborn Persian, promised him life for seven days.”

“Suppose the Persian fails, and you are absent?” suggested the Colonel.

“If the Persian fails, so much the better,” returned Kasam; “for then the monk-taught weakling son of Burah will not be acknowledged his successor, and the title of Khan reverts to me.”

“But if the son arrives before his father’s death?”

It was the doctor who asked this question.

“Then we revolt — I believe that is the plan — and drive every member of the tribe of Ugg from Mekran. But my cousin Ahmed cannot arrive before the seventh day, which is the day after tomorrow, and, according to my uncle Agahr, who is clever at intrigue, it will not be possible for Burah’s son to arrive at all.”

“Why not?” demanded the Colonel.

“Assassination, I suppose,” suggested the doctor.

Kasam shrugged his shoulders.

“I do not ask my Uncle Agahr to explain these things. Ahmed is not to be assassinated, however; he promised me that. Otherwise, it matters little what prevents him from reaching his father’s death-bed.”

“What a splendid man that barbarian isl” whispered Bessie to Janet. The latter turned slowly in her seat and gave a start of surprise, for Ahmed rode just behind her. The look in the calm grey eyes seemed to thrill the girl strangely, for she swayed in her saddle and might have fallen had not the “barbarian” thrust out a strong arm and steadied her.

“What are you doing here?” cried Kasam, angrily, in the native Baluch. “Back to the rear, my man, where you belong!”

Ahmed bowed gravely and retreated to where Dirrag rode. Nor did he again venture near the front.

“How cross you were to that handsome fellow,” said Bessie, pouting her pretty lips.

“Why, as for that, Miss Bessie,” returned the Prince, “I happened to remember that I was indulging rather freely in political gossip; and while it is impossible that he should understand English, your handsome fellow is of the tribe of Ugg — our hereditary foes.”

“If all the tribe of Ugg are like these two samples,” remarked the doctor, “it may not be so easy to thrust them from your capital.”

“They are not, I suppose. I do not remember to have seen so fine a

specimen of manhood as the tall one among the natives before. What a pity that I know so little of my own country," continued the young man, regretfully. "Did you notice how reverent my Afghans are toward that little, battle-scarred warrior we rescued? He may be some man of note — some mighty hero — for all I know. But doubtless he is a mere quarrelsome tribesman, beneath my notice. When I am khan I shall make it a point to study my people thoroughly, that I may better understand how to manage them."

At sundown they reached the edge of the desert and came to the fertile plains of Melin. Here camp was made and, wearied with the day's journey, the travellers made their repast and retired early to rest.

"Tomorrow night we shall sleep in Mekran," said Kasam. "I am sorry I cannot invite you directly to the palace; but until old Burah dies I am as much a stranger in my own country as any of you. However, my Uncle Agahr will see that you are provided with comfortable quarters."

"Are there no inns in Mekran?" asked Allison.

"Inns are plentiful, but afford only the most primitive accommodations. We must house you in the dwelling of one of our adherents. There are many of these, I assure you, of rank and wealth. And now, I bid you good-night, ladies. May Allah guard your rest."

At the door of their tent the doctor and Colonel Moore smoked a cigar before retiring.

"I am sorry," said the latter, in a low voice, "that in my ignorance of Baluchistan I permitted the girls and Aunt Lucy to accompany us."

"They've stood the trip pretty well, so far," replied the doctor, carelessly.

"Yes; but consider what a mess the country is in, politically. There's liable to be open warfare — perhaps a massacre — in a day or two, according to Kasam. And the girls may — "

"Oh, we'll keep the girls out of danger," declared the doctor. "I've no doubt they are as safe here as at home. I will acknowledge the country is more wild and uncivilized than I had dreamed, but we're on a matter of business, Colonel, and I flatter myself we have as good as accomplished our purpose already. Kasam is sure to grant us right of way for our railroad — when he is khan."

The Colonel smoked a while in silence.

"This young man," he remarked, at length, "seems to have little doubt of the success of his cause. Yet from all I have picked up since we drew near to Baluchistan, that terrible Burah Khan who is dying is absolute master of the situation. And his son — "

"His son is a priest-ridden devotee of Mahomet, who knows better how to

pray than to rule a turbulent nation. Don't worry about Kasam, my dear Colonel. He's sure to win out. And if he doesn't — "

The doctor smiled cynically.

"What then?"

"Why, if he doesn't," retorted the doctor, tossing away his cigar and rising to retire, "the priest-bred weakling — is his name Ahmed? — will be just the sort of ruler the Metropolitan Construction Company loves to deal with. However the cat jumps we are sure to have the railway; so let's go to bed."

Just before daybreak the leader of the Afghans came to Kasam's tent and awoke him.

"The men of Ugg are gone," said he.

"Never mind," returned the Prince, sitting up to yawn. "When did they go?"

"Early last evening; soon after we made camp. They stole away unobserved."

"It doesn't matter in the least," said Kasam.

"Except that they have taken your Excellency's black stallion, and left in its place the wounded bay, which is too stiff to travel."

"Why, that was base ingratitude," said the young man, with unconcern. "I must punish those fellows, if ever I see them again. But it is only a day's journey to Mekran. I'll ride a dromedary, good captain; and, by the way, let us make an early start."

But at the same moment that Prince Kasam's camp was awakening to activity Ahmed and Dirrag, after a night's hard gallop, rode through the marble gates of Mekran.

It was the morning of the sixth day.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WOMAN'S WAY

"And now," the vizier had said to his daughter on the evening of the fourth day, "let us rest content. The sirdar of the tribe of Raab — our faithful ally Zarig — has sent a force to patrol the desert trails over which Dirrag must pass with Ahmed on his return to Mekran. Zarig has sworn that the son of Burah shall never reach here by the seventh day."

"That is good," answered Maie, thoughtfully. "But it is not enough."

Agahr threw out his palms with an impulsive gesture.

"What would you have?" he asked, impatiently. "I have suborned every servant in the palace; I have followed every plan you have suggested; intrigue and cunning each moment battle for our great object."

"Yet the Persian sits beside Burah Khan and baffles our every plot," replied the girl. "I will go to him myself, my father."

"You! Impossible."

"No one shall ever know but yourself, and you will guard my secret. But see the Persian I must. Despite his pretended loyalty he is a mere man — and surely there is a way to influence any man that lives."

An hour later Agahr secretly introduced Maie into the palace, and while he himself guarded the passage leading to the chamber of Burah the girl boldly pushed aside the draperies at the entrance and confronted the physician.

The Persian was standing beside the couch as she entered, and after a glance at his visitor he quietly drew a silken coverlet over the still form and advanced to where the girl stood awaiting him.

"I am the daughter of the vizier," she said, softly.

"You are welcome," declared the Persian; but he passed one hand over his forehead as he spoke, and his voice sounded weary and discouraged.

Maie threw back her veil and smiled, while the physician, leaning upon the low table that bore the shaded lamp, gazed wonderingly at the beautiful face revealed.

"May I rest myself?" she asked, in her sweet voice, and without awaiting permission she passed between the table and Burah's couch and sank gracefully upon a low divan.

The Persian hesitated an instant, and cast an uneasy glance at his patient Then he seated himself beside the table and bowed.

"It is the same old tale, I suppose?" he said, enquiringly. "You do not wish the Khan to live to acknowledge his son?"

The girl gave a little laugh.

“It is very pleasant to find you both frank and comprehensive,” she returned, “for now many useless words may be spared. Tell me, Persian, why you insist upon interfering with our plans to depose the sons of Ugg and restore the throne to the former rulers of Baluchistan? What is it to you, a stranger, whether Burah Khan dies tonight — this very moment — or lives to acknowledge his son two days hence?”

“Only this,” he answered quietly. “I have given my word.”

“Do you fear for your reputation as a skillful physician? Elai! You have already accomplished wonders enough to make you famous. Had you not arrived in Mekran, Burah Khan long since would have passed away.”

“It was a draught of my own invention,” said the man, musingly. “I am anxious to test its powers. If it will hold Death at bay for seven days I shall have solved an important problem in medical science.”

“But why is it necessary to test your draught on the Khan of Baluchistan? There may be thousands of similar cases wherein the matter of life and death is unimportant. Perhaps, in spite of your great fame, you lack money. See I With a quick gesture she arose and approached the table, emptying upon its spread the contents of a chamois bag. Before the physician’s eyes sparkled a score of exquisite gems — diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds of enormous value.

He gave them but a glance and looked into the girl’s eyes. They sparkled as brilliantly as the jewels, but were equally mystifying. What she read in his own eyes is uncertain, but a moment later she sank at his feet and clasped his knees in her rounded arms.

“For the cause of science,” she murmured, looking up into his face with a ravishing smile, “I will gladly promise the great physician ten gems, equally as flawless and pure, for every one now before him! It is a rare treasure, my Persian. All I ask in return is permission to attend the Khan until morning.”

His brow flushed, but he did not withdraw his gaze from her dark eyes.

“Ah, do not refuse me,” she pleaded, resting her head against him so that the fragrance of her hair saluted his nostrils like an enchanting perfume. “It is so little for you to do, when you may ask so much in return!” Her bosom heaved with emotion and pressed against his knee. “You shall have a palace of your own, my friend, here in Mekran, where you may woo Science at your will and command a thousand slaves to do your bidding. Are we not playing for a throne? And who shall have greater power than the man that enables the new khan to sit therein and rule a kingdom? I am the daughter of the vizier, my Persian, and hereafter no physician but you shall attend me.”

She nestled closer, with a little sigh of content that seemed to indicate the battle was won to their mutual satisfaction, and for a moment both

maintained the pose, silent and motionless.

Suddenly the physician stood up, freeing himself from the girl's embrace. With an abrupt motion he swept the glittering gems into the little bag and tossed it at the girl's feet. Then, with folded arms, he stood looking down at where she still crouched by the empty chair, her lovely features convulsed with a passion terrible to witness.

But the mood quickly passed. Her face cleared. She raised her hand and rearranged the disordered masses of her hair, laughing the while in low tones and lifting her eyes unabashed to the man who had repulsed her.

The Persian shuddered.

Slowly rising to her feet she made him a mocking bow and said, jestingly:

"The chisel must indeed be dull that can carve no emblem on the marble. No man, believe me, is incorruptible; I have failed merely because I overestimated my own powers. Well, I will go."

She looked around for her cloak. It lay over the divan, and she passed the Persian as if to get it. But in the act of picking it up she paused, straightened, and in two bounds stood beside the couch of the unconscious khan. A dagger flashed, and once — twice — thrice she plunged it deep into the bosom of the form hidden by the silken coverlet. Then she turned with a laugh of triumph toward the physician, the dagger still clasped in her jewelled fingers.

The Persian smiled.

Without a word he walked to the couch, and as she shrank aside he seized the coverlet and thrust it back, revealing nothing more than a mass of bolsters and cushions cleverly placed to outline the form of a man.

The girl, rigid and staring, turned her eyes from the couch to the physician.

"Where is he?" she whispered.

He took her wrist, fearless of the dagger she still held, and led her to an alcove. Throwing back the curtains he allowed her to gaze upon the still form of Burah Khan, lying peacefully beside a window through which the moon's rays flooded the small apartment with mellow light.

Maie made no attempt to escape the grasp upon her wrist. She permitted the man to lead her back to the larger room, where he wrapped the cloak around her shoulders and placed the bag of jewels in her hand.

A moment later she rejoined the vizier in the passage.

"Well?" he enquired, anxiously.

"We must pin our faith to the men of Raab," she replied, between her set teeth. "The Persian is not human — he is a fiend!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE SIXTH DAY

Dirrag led his master straight to the royal palace, reaching it just as the first rays of the sun fell upon the city. As he arrived unexpectedly, there was none to receive him except a few sleepy servants and the sirdars of the tribes of Mem and Agot, who shared the watch over the chamber of the khan. These, being loyal to the reigning house, were overjoyed at the speedy and safe return of the messenger, and cast curious glances at his tall companion.

But Dirrag knew where his duty lay and did not linger an instant. He pressed on to the khan's own chamber, and entered without announcement, followed closely by Ahmed.

The Persian stood by an open window, engaged in rolling a cigarette. He paused, motionless, as he saw Dirrag. His eye lighted with satisfaction, and he drew a sigh of relief.

"Back already!" he said, pleasantly.

"As you see," answered Dirrag, with pride. "It is the morning of the sixth day, and I have saved twelve hours from my allotted time. And here is Prince Ahmed, the son of Burah Khan, and heir to the Lion of Mekran — safe and sound, although nearly as weary as I am myself."

A long speech for Dirrag, but warranted by the marvelous ride he had so successfully accomplished.

The Persian seemed not to hear it. He was staring fixedly at the tall form of the Prince.

"You!" he gasped, as if a great surprise overwhelmed him.

Ahmed, with wide eyes reading the other through and through, and seemingly filled with equal astonishment, answered steadily and briefly:

"I am the man."

"I have searched for you throughout the East," said the physician, recovering in a degree his composure. "And now — "

"Now you have found me," returned Ahmed, smiling upon the other.

The two men clasped hands, and Dirrag, uneasily regarding the amazing thing, shifted his booted feet back and forth with a child's nervousness.

"You the son of Burah Khan!" exclaimed one.

"You the famed physician of Persia!" said the other.

But Dirrag did not understand. They spoke a queer language unknown to him.

Presently, however, the physician noted his distress and drew away from the Prince, saying in the Baluch tongue:

"My lord the Prince Ahmed is welcome. It is fortunate for us all that he

has arrived safely.”

“And in time, I hope?” enquired Ahmed, eagerly. “How is my — how is Burah Khan’s health?”

The Persian gave a little laugh, sat down, and proceeded to light his cigarette.

“Burah Khan is dead,” said he.

“Dead!”

The physician nodded, blowing a cloud of smoke from his nostrils. Dirrag gave a groan and sank limply into a chair. Ahmed, with a swift glance into the Persian’s face, merely frowned and stood at attention, as if waiting to hear more.

“It is doubtless a great misfortune,” continued the physician, speaking in a leisurely tone, “and I have been in a desperate quandary, having no one in all the throng surrounding the late khan in whom I dared confide. The vizier is a traitor, and at the head of a formidable conspiracy. The sirdars, with one exception, are faithful; but they are warriors, and not fitted to counsel in so delicate a matter as this. So I have watched beside the khan’s dead body for two days and two nights, and none save myself knew he had ceased to breathe.”

“But, elail did you not promise — ” began.Dirrag, in a boisterous tone.

“I did,” interrupted the other, coolly. “I promised Burah Khan should live seven days — even while I saw the death-damp upon his brow. For I read the vizier clearly, and suspected there was a conspiracy to supplant the dying man’s son. It mattered nothing to me except that it gave me pleasure to try to defeat the plot old Burah was himself unable to foil. Moreover, I had faith in a peculiar powder that has been known to hold life within a body for many days. It seemed the game was worth the candle, did it not? And the old khan, to my great satisfaction, did manage to live for four days of the six required by Dirrag to make the journey to Takkatu and back. Then he died without awakening.”

“It is terrible,” said Dirrag, wiping the sweat from his brow.

“Not so,” returned the physician, with an odd smile. “A man has ample time to think when he sits by a dead body. We three are the sole owners of the secret. Well? Shall we ring down the curtain, or go on with the play?”

“The play!” repeated Dirrag, vacantly.

“It is all a play, my friend,” said the Persian, reassuringly, “and we, living or dead, are expected to assume our characters to the end. So, if an honest man is sometimes called upon to enact the part of a villain, it is not greatly to his discredit.”

Ahmed stepped close to the physician, and his grey eyes gazed full into

the other's brown ones.

"If I become khan," said he, "it will be due to your friendly offices."

"I acknowledge it," the physician replied.

"If I become khan," persisted Ahmed, in the same level tone, "no man on earth shall dictate my acts or cripple my power."

The Persian smiled, indulgently.

"I will acknowledge that, also," said he.

"Then," continued the Prince, throwing himself upon a chair, "let the play go on!"

Great was the excitement in Mekran when the news flew from palace to town that Dirrag had returned, bringing with him the son of the dying khan. Maie heard it from the mouth of a slave, and after one reproachful glance at her father sat silent and still as a graven image, while the vizier, with pallid face and a great fear at his heart, hastened away to the palace.

The men of Mem and Agot guarded the gateway and jeered openly at Agahr as he hurried through. Within the courtyard were assembled the sirdars and chiefs of all the fighting tribes of Baluchi, waiting in grim silence for the drama about to be enacted. They saluted the vizier.

Agahr started to ascend the stairway leading to the gallery that gave entrance to the khan's chamber; but a row of hard-featured men of Ugg forced him back. No one could be admitted until the Persian physician gave the order. He was preparing his patient for the ceremony.

"But I am the Khan's vizier!" protested the old man, trembling despite his effort at command.

A rugged warrior faced him and bowed low.

"In all else, master, your word is law," said he, courteously. "But in the chamber of death the physician rules supreme — by the grace of Allah and the will of His Highness the Khan."

Agahr turned and waited with the others in silence.

It was not long. A tall Arab slave, known as a favorite attendant of the Lion of Mek-ran, appealed upon the stairs and called aloud:

"Burah Khan, son of Keedar the Great, Headsman of the Nine Tribes of Baluchi and Defender of the Faith, commands the Sirdars of the Nation and the officers of his household to attend him!"

They obeyed at once, fully conscious of the mighty import of the message. The sirdars came first, followed by Agahr and the civil officers and then a long train of household retainers of lesser rank — all proceeding with dignified steps up the marble stairway, along the gallery, and so into the spacious chamber of the Khan.

The Arab slave, acting as major-domo, ranged them in the order of their

rank, facing the curtained alcove in which lay the body of their ruler.

Then, as silence fell upon the throng, the curtains were drawn and those assembled gazed upon an impressive scene.

Upon a couch covered with costly furs reclined the Khan, his sunken features dimly outlined in the soft light and the jewelled stars upon his breast glinting darkly as his bosom rose and fell. Over him bent the strange physician, administering from a golden cup the draught which it was understood would restore the sick man to intelligence for a brief period. But after a glance at this tableau all eyes were turned to the upright form of a young man standing with folded arms at the head of the couch. He was clad in a magnificent robe of purple satin richly embroidered with pearls, and by his side hung the famous cimeter known to every sirdar as the sword of Keedar Khan, and which had been entrusted by Burah to the priests of the monastery for safe keeping until Prince Ahmed should be called to Mekran.

There was something in the majestic presence of the heir, his haughty bearing and the look of pride in the calm grey eyes that wandered from one to another of the faces confronting him, that sent a thrill through all the assemblage. To some that thrill meant elation, to some fear; but to all it brought a subtle recognition of the fact that here was the heritage of power, that the son of Burah and grandson of Keedar was a man to be promptly obeyed.

The physician, passing an arm under the sick man's head, supported him to a sitting position, and Burah Khan, after taking his son's right hand in his own, began speaking to his people slowly and in low, halting accents.

"Here — is Prince — Ahmed, my son and rightful — heir. I, Burah Khan, standing — in the shadow of — death, do acknowledge him to be my — successor — to the throne of Mekran. Sirdars of the — Nine — Mighty Tribes of the — Baluchi, do ye, also, acknowledge him — to be your — Khan and Master — when I am gone?"

So still was the throng that every word of the faltering voice was distinctly heard. As it ceased the nine sirdars drew their swords and cast them at Ahmed's feet, crying aloud:

"We acknowledge Ahmed to be our Khan, when Allah claims his sire, Burah Khan."

Answering the shout was a sob and a sudden fall. The spectators drew aside with significant looks as slaves carried the faint-ing vizier from the chamber. Then all eyes turned again to the alcove.

Burah lay back upon his couch with closed eyes, and Ahmed knelt beside him.

The physician bent over and placed an ear above the old man's heart Then

he stood erect and signed to the Arab to draw the curtain.

“Burah Khan is dead,” said he, solemnly. “May Allah and the Prophet grant him peace!”

The curtain fell, and very humbly and reverently the assembled people bowed their heads and crept from the chamber of death.

CHAPTER X.

AHMED KHAN

"Behold the walls of Mekran!" said Kasam proudly.

They had been riding all afternoon through a beautiful and fertile valley, rich with fields of waving grain, tracts of vegetables, vineyards and orchards, all tended by the Kendars, Brahoes and Melinos, for the warlike Baluchi were too dignified to till the soil. It was from this valley that the city of Mekran derived its main sustenance and support, and now, as they mounted a little eminence, the city itself came into view — a huge, whitewashed stone wall above which peeped the roofs of many dwellings, mosques and palaces.

"The palace of the khan," said Kasam, "is near the center, beside the famous bubbling pools of Mekran. You may tell it by the high towers and minarets. It is all built of marble and its gardens are more beautiful than any in Europe."

"You may well be proud of this great city, which you are so soon to rule," observed Bessie, instantly connecting the prince with the place of his nativity. "It is one of the prettiest sights I have ever seen."

"We must make this an important depot for the new railway," said the Colonel, with something like enthusiasm. "The whole world will come to see Mekran when the journey can be made in Pullmans."

But as they drew nearer and the sun sank toward the horizon Mekran lost much of its beauty. The whitewash of the great wall was seen to be grimy and stained in many places, and the roofs above it showed considerable discoloration by the weather. It was an old city, and had long since lost the freshness of youth. Indeed, Allison took occasion to denounce, with some contempt, a place which seemed "nearly as filthy as the people of this beastly country themselves," and Kasam flushed slightly with a realization that neither Mekran nor his people could be counted quite immaculate.

Beneath the setting sun, however, the spires and domes glowed golden red, and even the young engineer ceased reviling the place they had come so far from civilization to visit.

At dusk the caravan entered at the North Gate, and Kasam called attention to the thickness of the wall as they rode through, and to the picturesque watch-tower perched above the gate. Then, coming into the light of the inner city he gave a start of surprise, for lining the sides of the narrow street were solid ranks of Baluchi warriors, both mounted and on foot, who stood so silently in their places that their presence was all unsuspected until the Prince came full upon them. Hesitating, he reigned in his horse, and at that moment the iron gates fell with a clang behind the last of his cavalcade.

“You are going to have a reception, Prince,” remarked Dr. Warner, who rode near the guide.

Kasam muttered a curse and urged forward his horse. The Baluchi instantly closed their ranks, surrounding him with a solid phalanx.

“Welcome to Mekran, my lord,” said a voice, and Kasam turned to find the warrior he had rescued in the desert riding at his stirrup. There was no mistaking Dirrag. The fresh scratch upon his brow marked his seared face with a streak of livid red.

“His Highness the Khan has requested your presence at the palace,” continued the warrior, in respectful tones.

“Me?” asked the young man, startled.

“You are Prince Kasam, I believe.”

“Ah, I begin to understand. You have betrayed me as a fitting return for having saved your life. It was to be expected in a man of Ugg. But why does old Burah demand my presence? Am I a prisoner?”

“Burah Khan is in Paradise,” said Dirrag, gravely.

“Dead!... And his son?”

“Now rules as Ahmed Khan.”

Kasam’s bronzed features drew tense. He became silent.

As they turned a corner he noticed they had become detached from the others of his party and were now alone.

“Where are my companions?” he enquired, with anxiety. “I am guiding a party of foreigners, who are strange to Mekran.”

“They will be safely cared for,” answered Dirrag, reassuringly.

“And my Afghans?”

“They also. The Khan has provided for all.”

The answers were far from satisfactory, but Kasam had perils of his own to confront, and dismissed his American friends from his thoughts with the belief that the new khan would not care to interfere with their liberties.

His own case was far more embarrassing: for the moment, at least. The tidings of Burah’s death and his son’s succession to the sovereign office of Khan had struck him like a blow. It was only the evening of the sixth day, he reflected, and Agahr had not expected anything important to happen until the seventh day, at least. How in the world had Ahmed managed to reach Mekran from Takkatu so soon?

Then the truth flashed upon him, and he groaned aloud. The tall Baluch he had rescued from the men of Raab and escorted safely to the plains of Melin was none other than Prince Ahmed himself, and Kasam’s folly in interfering with his uncle Agahr’s plans had resulted in his own undoing!

They were at the palace now.

Dirrag held Kasam's horse while he dismounted and then escorted the young man into the courtyard and through several winding passages. Soon they came to a small chamber, the entrance to which was guarded by the Arab slave Memendama, who allowed them to pass at a word from Dirrag. Here were more attendants and slaves, richly dressed in the crimson, white and purple of the House of Ugg. Kasam looked uneasily upon the expressionless faces, and cast himself upon a divan to await the summons to the Khan's presence. It came in a few brief moments, and Dirrag led the Prince through still another passage to a marble balcony, where two men were seated at a small fable and a third stood at the carved rail looking into the gardens below.

Kasam glanced at the two who were seated and failed to recognize them. One was Merad, the Persian physician; the other the sirdar of the tribe of Ugg.

The man at the rail turned about, and Rasam knew him at once. He had been Dirrag's companion in the desert.

"I am glad to welcome you, Prince Kasam," said the khan, courteously. "Pray be seated."

He motioned toward a chair, but Kasam stood erect.

"Tell me first," said he, "whether I am to consider myself a guest or a prisoner."

"Surely not a prisoner, my cousin. I may use that title, may I not, since we are related?"

"The relation is distant," said the other, proudly. "I am of the Tribe of Raab, and for seven generations my ancestors ruled all Baluchistan."

"So I understand," returned the Khan, dryly. "They were also my ancestors, for the same royal blood flowed in the veins of Keedar Khan. But why should we speak of the past? Today, by the grace of Allah, I am myself ruler of Baluchistan."

"By treachery and cunning, rather than Allah's grace," retorted the Prince, defiantly. "Should right and justice prevail I would myself be sitting upon the throne of my forefathers."

"It is a matter of common knowledge," answered Ahmed, quietly facing the other and looking calmly down from his superior height into the passionate face of the younger man, "that neither right nor justice entitled your forefathers to rule this land. It may comfort you, cousin, to look into the history of the Tribes, concerning which you seem to be somewhat misinformed. But it is not worth arguing at present. What interests us more keenly is the condition that confronts us. Through the sad ending of Burah Khan, whose body now lies in state in the Mosque of the Angels, I am

suddenly called to the throne. Because of my inexperience in affairs of state I shall need, as councillors and advisors, the assistance of all those to whom the welfare of Baluchistan is dear. Doubtless you love your country, Prince Kasam, and your European education will have given you broad and intelligent ideas of modern government. Therefore I value your friendship. Will you become my vizier, and assist me to rule my people to their greatest good?"

Kasam was astounded. The proposition, coming from one whom he had reason to consider his greatest foe, was as unexpected as it was impossible. Moreover, it indicated a weakness of character and lack of sound judgment in the new ruler that both pleased and encouraged him. Ahmed was a big and burly fellow, it was true, but he seemed as gentle as a woman. Evidently a monastery training did not stimulate virility of mind.

Kasam thought rapidly during the few moments that he stood with downcast eyes before Ahmed Khan, and his conclusions determined him upon his course of action. Then, remembering they were not alone, he glanced toward the table and encountered the physician's mocking gaze. If Ahmed was weak, here at least was a strong man. Indignant and alarmed at what he read in the dark eyes he turned to Abdul, the Sirdar of Ugg, for reassurance. That white-haired dignitary sat with composed and placid countenance quietly regarding the khan, whose words and actions alone seemed to afford him interest.

"What if I refuse?" asked Kasam, sharply, turning again to Ahmed.

"Then you will grieve me."

The Prince smiled contemptuously.

"But you will put me in prison, or assassinate me?"

"Why should I?"

"Because, if you cannot induce me to serve you, it will be wise to get me out of your way."

"I cannot believe that," returned Ahmed, gently. "The conspiracy of your uncle, Agahr, to place you upon my throne is well known to me, yet I have not even reproached him for his apparent disloyalty. I can understand that the heir of former khans would strive to regain his lost heritage, and your ambition seems to me a natural one. But I am here, and shall remain. Your adherents are weak and impotent. You could not be khan unless they were stronger than my own. Because I appreciate your disappointment I offer you the highest office within my gift. Be my vizier; trust me as I trust you, and let us be friends."

"I refuse!"

"Then you may go free, to act as you deem best."

“Free! I may go free?”

“Assuredly. I owe you that courtesy, even did I fear you, for having assisted me in the desert. My act may not balance accounts, but it will be an earnest of my gratitude.”

“Let us cry quits,” said Kasam, eagerly, “and start a new score. For I warn you, Ahmed Khan, that from this day I will oppose you with all my might.”

Ahmed bowed. His face showed neither disappointment nor surprise, and as if he considered the interview at an end he turned again toward the railing, looking down into the flower beds and shrubbery.

Kasam hesitated, glancing at the other silent witnesses of the scene. The Persian was industriously rolling a cigarette. Dirrag stood with legs astride, evidently admiring his boots. But the sirdar, Abdul, seemed annoyed, and said to the Khan:

“The man openly threatens your Highness. We are not sure of his tribesmen of Raab. Would it not be well to take some action in this matter?”

“Let him go,” replied the Khan, without turning.

Kasam flushed at the tone of indifference. It seemed to him that he was being treated like a child.

“The sirdar is old and wise,” he exclaimed, angrily, “and the Khan of Mekran is young and foolish. Elai! the die is cast. I will go.”

With this he strode from the room, and none hindered. The slaves and attendants in the outer chamber made no interference with his retreat. Although he had a vague fear that the Khan’s words were insincere he traversed the halls, passed through the courtyard, and so left the palace.

A solitary attendant was leading his horse back and forth, as if awaiting him. Kasam was amused. The Khan needed a few lessons from his warlike sirdars if he wished to remain secure in his throne. The Prince mounted his horse and, filled with exultant thoughts, galloped away to the house of Agahr the Vizier.

Night had fallen by this time, and as Kasam approached he found Agahr’s house dark and silent. The lamp that usually swung in the archway was unlighted; there were no slaves at the door. Kasam was seized with sudden misgivings. What if, in spite of Ahmed’s assurances, the plotting vizier had fallen under the new khan’s displeasure? Much depended upon Agahr, for all of Kasam’s interests were in his keeping. Scarce a day had passed since Ahmed Khan had come into power; but much may happen in a day; indeed, much had happened, as he was soon to discover.

Answering his imperative summons a. slave cautiously unbolted the door and, after a stealthy inspection of the visitor, admitted him with alacrity.

“Is my uncle here?” demanded Kasam.

The slave nodded, caught up a torch and turned to lead the way down a passage.

The Prince followed.

Suddenly a drapery was pushed aside and he entered a room brilliantly lighted. Agahr sat upon a divan, and beside him, her fair face scarcely concealed by her veil, was Maie. Facing them in a close drawn circle were Zarig, the Sirdar of Raab, a lean priest in a coarse woollen robe, and several men with restless faces that proved to be strangers to Kasam.

All were silent, even when the Prince, finding all eyes turned upon him, slapped his chest rather theatrically and exclaimed: “I am here!”

Maie twisted the rings upon her slender fingers; the vizier nodded gravely to his nephew and stroked his gray beard; the sirdar sprang tp his feet and strode back and forth in the narrow confines of the room, pausing anon to cast a shrewd glance into Kasam’s puzzled face. The others merely exchanged nods of understanding, save the priest, who frowned and fixed his eyes upon the floor.

At length the vizier broke the embarrassing silence.

“This,” said he, waving a listless hand toward the new arrival, “is Kasam of Raab.”

“Welcome!” said the sirdar, laconically, and resumed his stride. Without rising the others turned to bow gravely, but seemed to display little real interest.

Although at first both hurt and annoyed by the nonchalence of those assembled, the young prince was quick to decide that the conspirators were doubtless overwhelmed by the sudden death of Burah and the accession of his son Ahmed. It should be his part to instil new courage into their timid hearts.

“I have just come from an interview with the young khan,” he said, seating himself in the sirdar’s vacant chair and looking around the circle to note the effect of his announcement.

The company did not seem especially impressed. Perhaps, he reflected, they were aware that Dirrag had taken him to the palace directly on his arrival.

“Ahmed Khan,” continued Kasam, “has offered to make me his vizier.”

Ah, they were eager enough now. Every eye was turned curiously upon the young man.

“I refused,” said Kasam, proudly. “I defied him to his very face, and bade him beware my power.”

Agahr drew a sigh of relief, and Maie smiled. The sirdar, who had paused again, renewed his pacing.

“Friends,” cried Kasam, “the die is cast From this day I will fight Ahmed Khan for the throne of Mekran. Never will I rest until the usurper is conquered and I am master of all Baluchistan.”

“A noble ambition,” said the sirdar, nodding approval.

“You have my best wishes, cousin,” added Maie, sweetly.

“But forbear, I pray you, my good Kasam, from telling me of your future plans,” spoke Agahr, adjusting his robe carefully. “His Highness the Khan has also accorded me an interview, and offered to retain me as his vizier in case you refused the office. Therefore — ”

“And you accepted?” asked the young man, indignantly.

Agahr frowned.

“I have filled the office for forty-six years,” said he; “and surely none is better fitted than I for the place. Moreover, his Highness hath promised to increase my honors and reduce my labors, and since I grow old in serving the nation this consideration pleases me and renders me content.”

“Yet you would serve a trickster — a weak, priest-ridden impostor — instead of me, your kinsman and a Prince of Raab?”

“The man you call weak,” said Agahr, composedly, “has proven himself strong. In ruling Baluchistan from the throne of Mekran he will be masterful, energetic and supreme. Within his veins flows the blood of two mighty khans whom all the nation feared — as they will come to fear him. Had we considered Ahmed to be really weak, my Kasam, your cause would have prospered and gained adherents; but to oppose the new khan would be as foolish as it would prove vain. Already he has seized every thread of power in an iron grasp.”

The company doubtless approved this speech, for all except the sirdar nodded wisely and sighed. But Zarig stopped abruptly and gave the Prince a keen look.

“You are trapped,” said he, harshly; “trapped by friends and foes alike. What will you do, Prince Kasam?”

“Fight!” answered the young man, stoutly. “Even if I stand alone I will defy the son of Burah Khan. But I will not stand alone. England, the greatest of all nations, will support my cause, and Afghanistan will lend an army to fight for my standard. Before I have done with Ahmed Khan I will pull down the walls of Mekran about his ears.”

Maie smiled again, and the lean priest laughed outright. But Zarig strode forward and grasped Kasam’s hand.

“Words — all words!” he cried. “Yet the spirit is the spirit of conquerors, and you may count the tribe of Raab upon your side. Too long have I and my people bowed down to the men of Ugg. We are but one tribe of nine, but we

have more wealth than all the others combined, and enough courage to match any force the young khan may send against us. Come, Kasam of Raab; let us leave these cowardly croakers to sun themselves in the favor of the usurper. It is our part to sound the battle-cry!"

Having delivered this bombastic speech the sirdar left the room, followed closely by Kasam, and in the stillness that followed their departure Maie, still smiling, bent forward and whispered: "Words — all words!"

BOOK II
THE WOMAN

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTURE OF DAVID THE JEW

"Now, girls, I want you to tell me what we're going to do," said Aunt Lucy, looking over her spectacles at Janet and Bessie, while her needle continued to ply in a jerky fashion. "Your father, Janet Moore, says he is waiting here in Mekran to get an audience with the high jumboree of this forsaken country about that nonsensical railroad; and *your* father, Bessie Warner, says we are staying here because we can't get away. Now, I want to know what it all means."

They were sitting in the cool and spacious upper chamber of a square white house which had been mysteriously placed at the disposal of the Americans the evening of their arrival in Mekran. It was comfortably furnished, with no less than a dozen native servants to wait upon them, their meals being bountiful and prepared with exact regularity. But no one about them had any knowledge of the English language, nor did any person in authority appear whom they might question by signs or otherwise. It almost seemed as if they had been established in this place by some fairy godmother who had then gone away and forgotten all about them. Their personal baggage had arrived with them, but there were no stables connected with the mansion and their entire caravan had disappeared.

"I think," said Janet, answering their chaperon, "that we are all as much puzzled as you are, Aunt Lucy."

"Puzzled!" exclaimed the old lady, indignantly; "why should we be puzzled? Aren't we free American citizens, and haven't we enough money to pay our way back to New York if we want to go?"

"It isn't that, dear," said Bessie, soothingly. "We have both the financial means and the inclination to leave Mekran. But Kasam seems to have wholly deserted us, and we don't know what has become of our horses and dromedaries and tents and other things. Even the Afghans who were employed to guard us have disappeared."

"I always had my suspicions of that Kasam/9 declared the old lady with a toss of her head;" and he turned out exactly as I thought he would. He's stolen the whole caravan, under our very noses, and he'd have stolen you, too, Janet Moore, if I hadn't kept an eye on him. Stolen you and put you into some harem or other, and dressed you in pink silk bloomers and a yellow crepe veil, like those creatures we saw passing the house the other day in stretchers."

Janet smiled, and Bessie burst into merry laughter.

"Oh, Auntie! those were not stretchers," she protested. "They were

palanquins. And didn't the girls look lovely, nestled among their cushions!"

"Don't mention the hussies, Bessie. It's an outrage to parade such frightful depravity in the public streets."

"You know, dear," said Janet, softly, "that it is the custom in these Eastern countries to veil all females from the eyes of men, which are thought to defile the purity of young girls and married women alike. It seems to me a pretty thought, however misapplied, according reverence and sacrechiess to our sex that is in strong contrast to the bold freedom of more civilized communities."

"But the harems are dens of iniquity," declared Aunt Lucy, sternly.

"The harems are simply the quarters set aside for the women of the native households," replied Janet, "and they contain the mothers and daughters of families as well as the wives. Of course only the wealthier natives can afford harems, which are naturally more or less luxurious. But even the lower classes require their women to be veiled when in public."

"Swathed, you mean," snapped the elder lady. "Bandaged up to the eyes like mummies. You needn't talk to me about harems, Janet Moore; I know very well they're not respectable, and so do you. Did you ever hear of a harem in America? We wouldn't allow such things a minute! And do you mean to say these miserable Baluchi are not all Mormons?"

"They're Mahomedans, Auntie — or Sunnites, which is very much the same thing," remarked Bessie, "but if you mean that they have a plurality of wives, it's a thing that can't be proved, for Kasam says that even the law is powerless to invade the sanctity of the harem."

"Sanctity!" with a scornful snort. "And don't quote that young man — that caravan stealer — to me. What has all this to do with our imprisonment, I'd like to know? And what's going to be the end of it all? I've had enough of this place."

"We've all had enough of it," said a gloomy voice, and Allison entered and threw himself into a chair.

"Is there anything new, Allison?" asked Janet, looking at her brother anxiously.

"Not that I know of," he replied. "I've been roaming through the streets trying to find some one that can speak English; but they're all dummies in Mekran, so far as we're concerned. One fellow I met had a fine black horse — the most glorious Arabian I have seen — and he led it with a rag twisted around its neck. I offered him a whole pocketful of twenty-dollar gold pieces, but, by Jovel he just glanced at the money and shook his head. The American eagle doesn't seem to be of much account in this neck-of-the-woods."

"Where is papa?" asked Janet.

"Engaged in writing an official communication to the Khan, I suppose, on

the engraved letter-head of the Commission. I believe he has left seven of these already at the royal palace."

"Don't they pay any attention to them?" asked Bessie.

"Why should they? No one in this enlightened town can speak or read English, now that Kasam has gone."

"Where do you suppose Kasam has gone to?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. Run away with our animals, I guess. I always had a suspicion your lovely prince was no better than a horse-thief."

"Nonsense!" said Bessie, indignantly. "I'm sure Kasam is not responsible for our present difficulties. It's that horrid Ahmed Khan, who got the start of Kasam while he was escorting us, and robbed him of his kingdom."

Allison's laugh sounded rather disagreeable.

"I can't understand," said he, "how any decent American girl can go into raptures over a brown-skinned Oriental, with treacherous eyes and a beastly temper. Kasam's no better than the rest of his tribe, and as for being khan, I don't believe he ever had a ghost of a show. The last we saw of him he was being escorted by the khan's guard to the palace — like a common criminal. Probably he's been in prison for the last three weeks."

"If that's the case how could he steal our caravan?" demanded Bessie, triumphantly.

"Don't ask so many questions, Bess. We're an ignorant lot of duffers, I'll admit, but the fact remains that Kasam is either a jail-bird or a horse-thief. You can take your choice."

"Do you know whose house this is, and who is entertaining us in this sumptuous way?" asked Janet, curiously.

"Haven't the faintest idea. This is certainly the land of mystery. We don't owe it to Kasam, you may be sure, for he had no idea when we entered the town where he was going to lodge us. And it can't be the mighty Khan, for he won't see us or have anything to do with the Commission or its members. Possibly it's that uncle whom Kasam used to talk about, the vizier, or something of that sort. If we could only find anyone to talk with we might discover the clue to the puzzle."

"In the meantime we're no better than prisoners," said Aunt Lucy, snappishly. "There's nothing to see if we go out and nothing to do if we stay in, and we're cut off from all the news of the world. We don't even know who's been elected President of the United States, and we can't ask a single question because nobody understands us. If you men had any gumption at all you'd hustle around and find out why we are treated in this impertinent manner. One thing's certain; unless something is done mighty soon I, for one, mean to quit the Commission and go back home — even if I have to

walk and pay my own expenses!”

As the good lady paused in her speech a distant noise of drums and bells was heard, accompanied by the low rumble of a multitude of voices. The sounds gradually grew nearer, and Allison stepped out upon a balcony to see what caused it. Janet and Bessie followed him, but Aunt Lucy had aroused herself to such a pitch of indignation that she remained seated in her chair, busily endeavoring to mend the rents in her travelling skirt, caused during the stress of the long journey to Mekran, and refused to even look at “the heathens.”

A procession turned the corner of the street and approached at a slow pace, while the inhabitants of the neighboring houses flocked out upon the balconies and roofs to watch it pass. First came a dozen Baluch warriors, the royal colors proclaiming them members of the tribe of Ugg. They were superbly mounted and seemed to be picked men. Following them were three dromedaries, gaily caparisoned. Two were ridden by native officers, but on the third was seated a man dressed simply in a black flowing robe confined at the waist with a silver girdle. He wore upon his head a round black cap, being shielded from the sun by a square of green silk, supported by four slender rods attached to his dromedary’s saddle.

“It is the Persian! It is the great physician!” murmured the people, as this rare personage gazed about him and with dignified bows returned the greetings.

All in Mekran had heard the wondrous story of this mystic who had caused Burah Khan to live six days longer than the fates had decreed, and all united in honoring him.

Surging on either side of the dromedaries came a rabble beating upon gongs and jingling bells while they shouted extravagant compliments to Merad the Persian.

The remainder of the procession consisted of fifty tribesmen, fully armed and wearing the colors of the khan. Several heavily laden camels at the end implied that the caravan was setting out upon a long journey.

As the Persian came opposite the house of the Americans the physician turned his dark eyes for a moment upon the balcony, and they met those of Allison.

“Good God!” cried the young man, starting back as if in terror. At the same time Janet gave a low moan and sank fainting into Bessie’s arms.

“What is it? What has happened?” asked the girl, in frightened tones. “Aunt Lucy, come and help met Janet has fainted.”

While they carried her into the room and fussed over her, as women will on such occasions, Allison turned and rushed down into the street. He was

not long in overtaking the dromedaries, and, running beside them, he shouted:

"Wait, doctor! Let me speak to you a moment!"

The Persian was bowing in the direction of a balcony on the opposite side of the street, and seemed not to hear the young American. But Allison was desperate.

"Wait — wait!" he cried again, and turned to seize the camel's bridle.

Then the physician slowly turned his head and gazed curiously down upon the man.

"I must speak with you," said Allison, tugging at the bridle.

The Persian seemed puzzled, but smiled indulgently and glanced toward his attendants. Instantly a big Baluch rode forward and grasped Allison by his collar, thrusting him back into the crowd.

The procession moved on, the honored Persian again bowing to right and left and wholly indifferent to the cries the American sent after him. When the last pack animal had passed, Allison's guard released him; but the engineer followed with dogged steps until the caravan had reached the iron gateway and passed through without halting, the noisy rabble shouting enthusiastic farewells as it disappeared. Then, silent and thoughtful, Allison returned to the house.

"Without doubt I have been mistaken," he mused; "and yet it seems strange that the world should contain two men whose features are identically the same — and both of them physicians, too. In New York Osborne passed for an East Indian, and this man is a Persian. If they were the same surely he would have recognized me, if only to curse me as he did at home in the old days."

He found Janet not only recovered but laughing gaily at what she called her "foolish weakness." Somehow it jarred upon Allison to hear his melancholy sister laughing, to note the sparkle in her eyes and the flush that for the first time in years mantled her fair cheeks. He had no difficulty in accounting for all this, yet when she cast an eager, enquiring look at her brother he took a certain satisfaction in answering it with a scowl and a shake of his head.

"I followed him," said he, "and managed to speak to him. We were both mistaken, Janet. It is a stranger — some notable the people seem to know well, and call by the name of Merad."

"Merad?"

"Yes. He has started upon a journey across the plains — returning to his home, I think."

To his surprise Janet smiled and began twisting up her disordered hair.

“Very well, dear,” she answered, carelessly, and as if dismissing the subject from her mind as unimportant she turned to renew her conversation with Bessie.

Suddenly a scuffle was heard in the passage.

“I’ve got him! I’ve got him!” called the voice of Dr. Warner; and then the draperies were pulled aside and the Colonel and the doctor rushed into the room dragging between them a nondescript form from which came yells of protest in a high minor key.

“We’ve got himl” shouted the Colonel, triumphantly, as the prisoner was dumped in the center of the room.

“Land of mercy! What *have* you got?” demanded Aunt Lucy, glaring upon the strange object with amazement.

The doctor drew out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead vigorously.

“He speaks English!” he answered, impressively, waving the handkerchief in the direction of the limp captive.

Janet laughed, almost hysterically; but the others stared with marked interest at the man who could speak English.

He was exceedingly short in stature, and likewise exceedingly squat and round of form. His head was entirely bald except for a bushy lock upon the very top, but a long beard, tangled, unkempt and grizzled, reached nearly to his middle. His cheeks were fat, his eyes small and beady, and his nose so curved that its point was perpetually lost in the flowing beard. For costume the man wore a gown of red and white quilted silk that Aunt Lucy afterward declared reminded her of a bath robe, except that no word signifying “bath” could ever be properly applied to either the robe or the wearer. There were sandals upon his grimy feet and a leathern pouch hung at his girdle.

“Wherever in the world did you get him?” asked Bessie, drawing a long breath.

“Energy and enterprise will accomplish anything,” replied the doctor, proudly. “The Colonel and I went to the booths this morning to search for tobacco. All the shops in this infernal town are mere booths, you know, and all are located against the inner side of the city wall. Until today we had never visited any of these places except the nearest ones, for they all look alike. But good tobacco is a scarce article in Mekran, and we kept circling around the wall until we came to one dirty little hole where this man sat. To our surprise and joy he answered us in English. We fell on his neck — I believe the Colonel kissed him — and then we seized him and brought him here.”

“I do not remember kissing him,” retorted the Colonel, with twinkling

eyes. “It must have been the doctor.”

“Oh, Luther!” said Aunt Lucy, horrified. “How could you ever do it?”

“He speaks English,” replied the doctor. “We’ve adopted him.”

A whine came from the prostrate victim.

“What’s his name?” asked Allison.

“Hi, there. What’s your name?” questioned the doctor, stirring the bundle with his foot.

“Davit, goot Excellency,” came the meek reply.

“Stand up, David, so we can get a good look at you,” said the Colonel.

So David rolled over and with some difficulty scrambled to his feet. Miss Warner began to giggle, and Janet laughed outright. Even Aunt Lucy allowed a grim smile to rest upon her wrinkled features.

“Who are you, David?” enquired the doctor.

“I iss merchant, most Excellency. Chew merchant.”

“Where did you learn English?”

“From mine fadder, who vas a Cherman merchant unt lived in Kelat.”

“Who taught him English?”

David looked reproachful.

“He knew it, most High Excellency. Mine fadder could shbeak anyt’ing efferyvhere.”

“Except the truth, I suppose. Tell me, David; are you rich?”

The Jew cast a frightened look around him.

“All I haf in de vorlt,” he moaned, “iss in my pouch. If you rob de pouch I am nodding any more whateffer!”

The Colonel with a sudden motion grasped the pouch and jerked it free from the girdle. Then, while David wept real tears of anguish, his tormentor emptied the contents of the pouch upon the table. These consisted of a miscellaneous collection of native coins of very little value.

“Really, you are very poor, David,” the Colonel remarked.

“I am vorse, goot Excellency,” he replied, encouraged by the tone. “Who iss so misserable ass Davit? Who iss so poor, so frientless, so efferyt’ing? I shall go dead!”

“Don’t do that, David. If a man is poor, he should strive to get rich. Watch me,” and the Colonel took a handful of gold from his pocket and threw it into the pouch, afterward adding the former insignificant contents. The injunction to watch this proceeding was wholly unnecessary. David’s eyes sparkled like diamonds and he trembled with eagerness while the Colonel carefully tied the mouth of the pouch.

Then, tossing the bag from hand to hand so that it jingled merrily, he said:

“This is real wealth, David — good yellow gold. And it shall all be yours,

with an equal sum added to it, if you consent to serve us faithfully."

David fell upon his knees and waved his short arms frantically toward the pouch.

"I vill do anyt'ing, great Excellency! I vill be serf ant — I vill be slafe! Yes, I vill be brudder to you all!"

"Very good," returned the Colonel. He walked to a massive cabinet, elaborately carved, that was built into the wall of the room. Unlocking a drawer he tossed the pouch within and then carefully relocked it and placed the key in his own pocket.

There was a look of despair on David's face. He still knelt upon the floor, his arms rigidly outstretched toward the cabinet.

"Now, David," continued the Colonel, calmly, while the others looked on, much amused, "you must not forget that you are going to be very rich, and that all this money — doubled, and perhaps tripled — will be yours as soon as you have earned it And you are going to earn it by speaking English, and translating our speech to the natives, and by doing exactly what we tell you to do, at all times and under all circumstances. But if you deceive me — if you prove unfaithful in any way — you will never see your pouch again."

"I vill shpik Engliss all day! I vill do anyt'ing!" protested David.

"Once," said the doctor, "a man proved faithless to us. And what do you suppose happened to him, David? Well, you couldn't guess. I skinned him very carefully and stuffed him with sawdust, and now he sits on a shelf in my home with a lovely smile on his face and two glass eyes that all observers consider very beautiful."

David groaned.

"I am true man, most Excellency! I half neffer deceive. I neffer *can* deceive!

"We shall trust you," said the doctor, gravely. "I feel quite certain you will never deserve to be stuffed with sawdust."

"How absurd!" ejaculated Aunt Lucy. "Do give him a bath and some decent clothes, and stop bothering him. If we've got to have the fellow around let's make him respectable."

"That is a task that can only be performed outwardly," returned the doctor, imperturbably. "But even that is worthy of consideration. Come, Allison, let us see what can be done toward the renovation of David."

As the shuffling form of "the man who could speak English" disappeared through the archway, Aunt Lucy, who had been shrewdly studying his face, remarked oracularly:

"He's playing possum. You mark my words, that Jew's no fool. If he was, he wouldn't be a Jew."

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIRL ON THE DIVAN.

"Now this," said the Colonel, "is to be a council of war. We are in grave difficulties, and may as well look the matter straight in the face."

The little band of Americans seemed all to agree with him, for it was with fitting gravity that they turned their eyes upon the leader of the Commission — all except Aunt Lucy, whose wondering gaze was full upon little David, resplendent in his new costume. David's outer robe was orange and white, and his inner garb brilliant green. An orange turban was twisted around his bald head and orange hose covered his stubby legs. This gorgeousness was due to a whim of the doctor, and it appeared to be eminently satisfactory to David. A native barber had trimmed and curled his straggling beard and the Jew had been scrubbed and scented so thoroughly that he had a fresh and wholesome look, which was in strong contrast to his former unkempt condition.

"If he is to be our emissary and interpreter," the doctor had said, "he must be made worthy of the great Commission, and in this barbarous country color is everything."

"Then," replied Aunt Lucy, "David is everything. He reminds me of a brass band on parade."

David was now present at the council, seated between the Colonel and the doctor.

"In the first place," resumed the leader, "we must acknowledge that we are virtually prisoners in this town, possessing no means in the way of animals or attendants of getting away. David has talked with the servants in this house and has discovered that we are guests of his Highness the Khan, who has ordered us supplied with every comfort that can be procured. Why the khan has taken an interest in our affairs — we being entire strangers to him — is a deep mystery. Unless he feels that he owes us some compensation for having driven Kasam out of Mekran."

"Did he drive Kasam out?" asked Bessie.

"I understand from David that there is room for but one on the throne, and Ahmed Khan naturally prefers to sit there himself. So our friend Kasam made tracks and left us to shift for ourselves. All of the tribe of Raab, a powerful clan in Baluchistan, have deserted Ahmed and joined Kasam, who is in open revolt."

"Would it not be safer for us to leave here and join Prince Kasam?" enquired Bessie.

"Why, I'm inclined to think, from the gossip David has picked up, that

Kasam's cause is a forlorn one, and that he's not particularly safe himself. Ahmed Khan may wake up some day and poke him with a sharp stick. Moreover, there's no disguising the fact that when our guide left Mekran and set up in business for himself he deliberately robbed us of the beasts we had bought and paid for with our own money, besides carrying off our Afghans, whose pay was fortunately in arrears. The Prince couldn't well have treated us with less consideration, and in strong contrast with his actions Ahmed Khan has come to the front like a man and taken care of us. Let's pin our faith to Ahmed Khan."

"Cannot we induce Ahmed to supply us with a caravan?" asked Allison.

"That's the point. That is, it's one point. We mustn't lose sight of the fact that we came here to get a right of way for the railroad. The first concession to get from the Khan is the right of way. The means to journey back to the railway at Quettah is the second consideration, although no less important. These things being accomplished, we will have performed our duty to the Syndicate and to ourselves."

"When will they be accomplished?" enquired Aunt Lucy, in brisk, matter-of-fact tones.

"Ahem! That I cannot say, to a day, my dear Mrs. Higgins. The fact is, I've sent David twice to the Khan, with demands in writing for an interview. But David can't get within a mile of the Khan, notwithstanding his impressive costume — which cost eight fillibees, native money."

"The Khan," added the doctor musingly, "is quite an exclusive personage. His Highness' guards have threatened to tattoo our dear David unless he ceases to bother them."

David groaned, thereby concurring in this statement.

"Then what is to be done?" asked Janet, who had displayed a lively interest in her father's discourse.

The Colonel shook his head, rather despondently.

"What do you suggest, David?" asked the doctor.

David had been earnestly regarding the cabinet in which his gold was stored. Now, however, being addressed, he reluctantly withdrew his eyes from the vicinity of his treasure, heaved a deep sigh as if awakening from a happy dream, and said:

"Vy nod try de vizier?"

"What vizier?"

"De grant vizier, Agahr. He iss rde biggest man here ven der Khan he iss somewhere else."

"That seems a practical hint," said the Colonel. "I'll write a new letter, addressed to the vizier."

David turned uneasily in his seat “Letters, most Excellency, iss a bad vay. Noboddy takes letters to Agahr de vizier. Dey go talk mit Agahr.”

“Will he see people?”

“Vy nod? He iss vizier.”

“Then one of us had best go and interview him, and take David along for interpreter,” decided the Colonel promptly.

“He speaks such lovely English!” added Aunt Lucy, with a toss of her head.

“The vizier won’t hear his English,” said the doctor, “and I suspect David’s native dialect is somewhat clearer and more comprehensive. Otherwise he’d have been murdered long ago. Now then, who’ll tackle the vizier?”

“I’ll go,” replied Allison, to the surprise of all. “I’m tired of hanging around doing nothing, and this mission promises a bit of excitement.”

“Very good,” said his father, pleased at the remark. “Be firm with him, Allison. Insist upon his securing an interview for me with the Khan, and also tell the vizier we want a caravan to take us to Quettah. Let him understand we have plenty of money to pay for what we require.”

“I’ll do the best I can,” said Allison. “Come, David.”

Agahr had just awakened from his afternoon siesta and was sitting with Maie in a cool, darkened room. Both the vizier and his daughter were in a happy mood.

“There has been a more agreeable atmosphere at the palace since the Persian physician went away,” said the old man. “The fellow had a suspicious manner of looking at me, as if he knew all my secret thoughts and intended to betray them.”

“I hate the man!” exclaimed Maie, with a shiver of her rounded shoulders.

“And I,” answered Agahr. “But he is gone. Let us hope he will never return.”

“Yet the Khan liked him?” said the girl, enquiringly.

“They were old friends, although their ages differ so widely; and there is a secret between them, of some sort. The physician, who dominated everyone else, was very gentle with Ahmed.”

“That was his cunning,” declared Maie. “It is not wise to attempt to rule Ahmed Khan.” She broke off suddenly, and nestling closer to Agahr upon the divan she asked, in soft accents: “Do you think he is attracted toward me, my father?”

“He has eyes for no one else when you are by,” returned the vizier, fondly caressing the girl’s hand. “But that is not strange, my Maie. You are more beautiful than the houris of Paradise.”

She sighed, very gently, as if the tribute was sweet.

“And how does Ahmed Khan spend his days?” she enquired. “Do the dancing girls still amuse him?”

“He has sent all the dancing girls away,” was the reply, “and every inmate of Burah’s harem, both young and old, has been conveyed by Melka to the Castle of Ugg, far away in the South country.”

“I wonder why?” said the girl, thoughtfully. “Perhaps, having been a priest so long, he does not care for women.”

Agahr smiled.

“Then why is he improving and beautifying the harem?” he asked.

“Is he?” she cried, starting up.

“The apartments of the women were turned over to an army of workmen a week ago. In another week the harem will be beautiful beyond compare. And the gardens and Court of the Maidens are being made magnificent with rare plants and exquisite flowers. That is not an indication, my beauty, that the Khan does not care for women.”

“True,” she returned, and sat as if lost in thought. Then she asked:

“What woman, besides myself, has the Khan looked kindly upon?”

“None,” answered the vizier, without hesitation. “It was only this morning he spoke to me of you, asking how many summers you had seen and saying you were rarely beautiful.”

She smiled contentedly.

“How wise we were, oh my father, to abandon the cause of the Pretender and ally ourselves with Ahmed Khan.”

“Kasam is too weak and unreliable to become a leader of men,” returned the vizier, calmly.

“Yet for years — while Burah Khan grew aged — I imagined I should become the queen of Kasam’s harem, and plotted shrewdly to place him upon the throne. Is it not amusing, my father, to remember that I learned to speak the awkward English tongue, just because Kasam had lived in England and spoke that language?”

“It was time wasted,” said the vizier. “But that reminds me that those American travellers are still in Mekran. I wonder why the Khan is keeping them.”

Maie started.

“Are there not women among them?” she asked.

“Two or three of the party are women.”

“Are they beautiful?”

Agahr laughed, and pinched her cheek.

“There are no beautiful women but ours,” he returned, “and of them you

are the queen, my Maie! However, jealous one, the Khan has never looked upon these foreign women, nor does he care to."

"Then why does he keep the Americans here? Will he permit them to build their railway?"

"Indeed, no," said the vizier. "He agrees with me that a railway would ruin our country. But why he will neither see the Americans nor permit them to depart from Mekran is really a mystery."

"Ah, I must discover it!" the girl exclaimed, earnestly. "When a thing is not understood it is dangerous. And it is well to beware of all women, even though they be foreigners and ugly of form and feature. I can manage any man who lives, my father, be he khan or vizier," with a smile into his face; "but even the far-seeing Prophet failed to understand my sex aright."

"I have put a spy in the household of the Americans," said Agahr.

"Whom?"

"David the Jew."

"David is clever," said Maie, thoughtfully. "But will he be faithful? Gold is his only master."

"I have promised, if David is faithful, to purchase from him those wonderful African pearls — at his own price. That will make him rich, and the pearls will be your bridal gift, my daughter."

She clasped her hands, ecstatically.

"And the great diamond that David brought from Algiers? What of that?"

"The Khan himself has purchased it, by my advice."

"Then it shall be mine!" she whispered. "You have done well, my father. How long has David been with the Americans?"

"Three days. I expect him here, presently, for the foreigners begin to grow impatient of restraint, and I have told David to let me quiet them with promises."

"Question the Jew closely when he comes, concerning the Americans. I must know more of them, and we must watch them closely."

The vizier arose, arranged his robe, and with slow steps left the room to cross a passage that admitted him to the apartment wherein he was wont to receive visitors on affairs of state. The fringe of the drapery caught as he threw it back, and hung partially open behind him; but neither he nor

Maie, who still reclined upon her divan, noted this.

Scarcely was Agahr seated in his great velvet-lined chair of state when a slave entered to announce the arrival of David and the young American, who desired an audience.

The vizier hesitated, in deep thought, mindful of Maie's injunctions. Finally he said to the slave:

“Admit David the Jew to my presence; but tell him the American must wait in the outer chamber until he is summoned.”

So presently little David entered the room, drawing the draperies closely behind him and then turning to bow cringingly before the vizier.

Allison waited impatiently. Why should Agahr wish to speak with David in secret? It looked decidedly suspicious, thought the young man, and after a few moments he arose and glanced down the passage. He seemed to be entirely alone, and the heavy rugs would deaden any sound of footsteps.

Stealthily he made his way down the passage toward the crimson draperies that had fallen behind David’s pudgy form. On his way he passed an entrance on the opposite sidey to which the curtain hung half open, displaying the dim interior of the room. And then he paused as if fascinated, his eyes fixed upon the most exquisite picture he had ever beheld.

Maie lay carelessly stretched upon the divan, her robe thrown back, her arms crossed behind her head and the outlines of her rounded limbs showing daintily through the folds of soft mulle that enveloped them. Her eyes, languid and dark, gazed full into those of the intruder, and as she noted his enraptured face she smiled in a way that instantly robbed Allison of all caution or even a realization of his delicate position in this household. In two strides he was by her side, kneeling at the divan and clasping the unresisting hands of the girl in both his own.

“Oh, my darling!” he whispered, looking deep into the lustrous eyes, “how very, very beautiful you are!”

Such sincere tribute was beyond Maie’s power to resist. The little head might be full of ambitions, schemes and intrigues, yet there was room for a vivid appreciation of man’s adoration, and this abrupt method:of wooing was sure to appeal to her Eastern imagination. She sighed, forgetful of all save the handsome face bent over her, and only the sound of her father’s stern voice coming from the opposite chamber had power to recall her to the present.

“You must go, my American,” she said, in clear English, “or you will be discovered.”

“Ah, you speak my language?” said Allison, in delight; “then you will understand me, sweet one, when I tell you how lovely you are — how passionately I adore you!”

He clasped his arms around her and drew her so close that her bosom rested against his own. The red lips were nearer now — so near that he kissed them again and again, in a very abandon of ecstatic joy.

“They will find you,” said Maie, softly. “And they will kill you.”

“What does it matter?” he rejoined, recklessly. “One moment such as this

is worth a hundred deaths!”

With a sudden movement she freed herself from his embrace and sat up, facing him.

“Take this key,” she whispered, drawing it from her bosom, where it was secured by a silken thread. “It unlocks the Gate of the Griffins, at the end of our garden.

Meet me there tonight — an hour before midnight — and take care you are seen by no prying eye. And now, go — and go quickly!”

She broke the thread and handed him a tiny silver key, which he thrust into his pocket.

“One kiss, sweetheart,” he begged; “just one more to comfort me until — ”

“Go, or all is lost,” she answered, almost fiercely, and seizing his arm she dragged him to another doorway and thrust him from the room with a force her slender form did not seem to warrant.

It was time. Allison heard footsteps and voices, and staggering through an anteroom he barely had time to reach the outer chamber and throw himself into a chair when David and a slave entered.

“Hiss goot Excellency, de vizier, vill see you,” said David, looking with open surprise into Allison’s flushed and excited face.

“I must have fallen asleep, David,” said the American, reaching out his arms as if to stretch them, “for I dreamed I was in Paradise, and you were imploring the Prophet to pardon my sins.”

David grinned, and turned to lead him to the vizier. But the Jew’s keen eyes had made a hasty survey of the room, and noted a curtain swaying gently where no breeze could ever have reached it.

CHAPTER XIII.
A WILD WOOING

"Well?" asked the Colonel; "what luck?"

"None at all," growled Allison. "The vizier is as tricky and sly as his master. He assumed a dignified and benevolent air, was very sorry we were discontented, but can do nothing to help us."

"How about horses?"

"The vizier states it is an ecclesiastical command that no beasts of burden shall be sold to an infidel, under pain of death. His Highness the Khan regrets it; His Excellency the Vizier regrets it You are referred to Aboullah O'Brien, Grand Mufti of the Mosque of the Angels, who issued the order to the faithful."

"It iss Aboullah Beyren," corrected David, meekly.

"How long has this order been in effect?" enquired the doctor.

"Since the day we arrived. It was not aimed at us, by any means. It was a coincidence."

"That looks bad," said the Colonel, gravely. "How about my interview with the Khan?"

"The vizier will intercede for you. He will go down on his knees to His Supreme Mightiness; he will implore the Star of the Heavens to see you. But he doubts if we ever get within earshot of the Glorious and Magnificent Defender of the Faith, who is otherwise known as Ahmed Khan. It seems he has other fish to fry, and is busy getting them ready. We can do nothing with the scoundrelly vizier, I am certain."

"Then we must depend upon David to get me an audience with the Khan. Americans are not accustomed to fail in what they undertake. See here, David," turning to that worthy merchant; "can't you bribe your way into the royal palace?"

"I will try, most Excellency," answered David, eagerly. "But de bribe must be great moneys — grant moneys — many golt fillibees! Unt I promise nodding. Maybe I see de Khan; maybe nod. Who can tell?"

"It sounds like a risky investment, David," remarked the doctor. "We'll take time to think it over."

They thought of many things, in the days that followed, but could arrive at no plan that promised to provide a caravan or give them an opportunity to negotiate with the Khan concerning the new railway.

The Colonel went personally to the palace one day, taking along the trembling David as interpreter. The official who met him at the entrance listened to him respectfully, but assured him that no message from an infidel

could be carried to the Khan. Hints of money had no effect. It would cost him his head to disturb the Khan on such an errand.

Under these unfortunate conditions the Colonel began to be worried, and even the doctor lost much of his habitual cheerfulness. Aunt Lucy vowed vengeance upon every barbarian in Baluchistan, and promised the United States would wipe this miserable country off the map as soon as she returned and reported their treatment to her friend the senator.

But Allison, to the wonder of all, stopped grumbling and bore his imprisonment with rare fortitude and good nature. Janet also grew brighter and merrier day by day — a circumstance that did much toward reconciling her father to their enforced stay in Mekran. Bessie, always philosophic and gay, made no complaint of any sort. And so the days passed swiftly away and as yet brought no change in the fortunes of the stranded Commission.

One evening David came in greatly excited. A messenger had arrived from the Khan. Although that haughty potentate still ignored the Commission he had placed two saddle horses from his own stables at the disposal of the young ladies. If they would ride at daybreak on the following morning — that hour being the most cool and delightful of the day — the Khan would send a competent guard to protect them. His Most Serene and Magnificent Highness offered this courtesy in order to relieve the monotony of the young ladies' stay in his capital. He made no mention of the other members of the party, who might exist as monotonously as ever. And the messenger awaited an answer.

This was, indeed, a startling proposition. Eastern women did not ride, yet the Khan seemed to know that nothing could be more acceptable to American girls than a dash across country on the back of a spirited horse. They were very glad to accept the favor, and the Colonel hoped it might lead in some way to more friendly relations between them and the ruler of Mekran, and perhaps result in the interview he so ardently desired.

"But who's going to chaperon them?" enquired Aunt Lucy. "It seems I'm not invited.

The Colonel thought the khan's guard would be sufficient.

"But it's a heathen country, and they'll have to bandage their faces," declared the old lady.

"We'll wear veils until we are out of Mekran," said Bessie. "Then there will be no masculine eyes to see us, and we'll take them off."

So at daybreak Janet and Bessie were ready for their ride, and soon a grizzled Baluch warrior rode up to the house leading two magnificent bays from the famous stables of Mehmet. The one that Janet rode was the very animal that had carried Ahmed on his swift journey from the monastery, and

Bessie's horse was but little inferior.

The warrior saluted and assisted the ladies to mount. It was Dirrag. He led them through the streets, around the palace enclosure ànd out at the south gate. A beautiful country lay spread before them, and as the keen morning air saluted their nostrils, brightened their eyes and flushed their cheeks, the girls dashed away at a canter with Dirrag silently following a few paces behind.

After their long confinement within the walls of a city dwelling this free, invigorating exercise was a great delight to the two girls, and they enjoyed the ride thoroughly.

Passing through the city on their return they closely veiled their faces, yet were evidently objects of curiosity to those of the natives who were abroad so early.

Dirrag held the stirrups for them to dismount and then silently touched his cap and led the horses back to the khan's stables. But next morning he was again at their door with the mounts, and their ride became a daily event to the girls.

Dirrag knew no English, but Janet and Bessie had come to understand many of the Baluch words — a dialect evidently founded upon Arabic — and could even speak a few simple sentences, learned by contact with the native servants and somewhat puzzling explanations from David. So the silence of their first rides began to be broken by laconic observations on the part of the battered old warrior, who seemed not to object to acting as escort to the charming infidel women. Occasionally they passed the house of Agahr the Vizier, and Maie, who was informed of all that occurred in the capital, watched from her latticed window the graceful forms of the American girls riding by and on several occasions when they neglected to arrange their veils caught glimpses of their fair faces.

It was enough to set the vizier's daughter wild with envy and chagrin. Why should the Khan favor these outcasts — these women of another world? Was it for them the harem was being prepared, despite her father's protestation that Ahmed had never seen the foreign women nor ever would see them? The girl well knew that their beauty could in no way compare with her own in the eyes of any true Baluch. The Americans were deformed by being laced and belted at the waist and wearing heavy, close-fitting draperies that must not only be uncomfortable but were decidedly ugly in appearance. But Maie could not deny they sat their horses gracefully and with rare self-possession, and men have queer ideas of beauty. Perhaps Ahmed Khan might admire the novelty of their white faces, their queerly arranged hair and the pink finger nails that lacked any trace of the beautifying henna.

Maie was jealous, and with good reason.

She had abandoned her handsome cousin Kasam for the more powerful and scarcely less handsome Ahmed Khan, and if fate destined her to lose them both she was surely to be pitied.

But her father declared he had no such fears. Ahmed was difficult to understand, it was true; but Ahmed was a man, and he had seen and admired Maie. Was he not beautifying his harem? and what place could these stiff Americans have amid the luxuries of the perfumed baths, the gardens of the Court of the Maidens, or the musk-scented cushions of the oriental divans? It would be as absurd as putting a frog in the jar devoted to gold-fish. Add to this argument the fact that Maie was the most beautiful maiden the world had ever known, and none but a fool could fail to read the lines of destiny.

One morning Dirrag turned to the west, and led his fair companions across the valley and up the curve of the long hill that enclosed it. The country was more wild and unsettled here than at the south or east, and when finally they mounted the brow of the hill and gazed down into the next valley Dirrag pointed out a cluster of white dots showing far away against the green of the fertile plains.

"Kasam," said he.

The girls looked with eager interest "Is it a camp?" asked Bessie, twisting her tongue into the Baluch dialect.

Dirrag seemed to understand.

"Kasam is a rebel," he said, looking calmly at the tents. "Many traitors to our great khan have joined him. His army grows daily. It will be battle, some day, and Kasam and his host will disappear like snow before the sun."

"Has the Khan also an army?" asked Janet.

Dirrag smiled, proudly.

"The warriors of Mekran are as numerous as the leaves in the forest Our mighty khan does not mind Kasam, for the buzzing of a bee against the window-pane is not annoying. But when the time comes he will crush the rebel in a day."

"That may not be so easy," exclaimed Bessie, while her eyes sparkled indignant-ly. "Prince Kasam is no child. I'll bet he knows very well what he's about!"

Dirrag shrugged his shoulders. He did not understand, for in her excitement she spoke in English. But other ears heard the words, and a young man rode out from a clump of trees that had concealed him and advanced toward the ladies with a bow and a smile.

It was Kasam himself, mounted upon a magnificent gelding that was black as night. He wore a native costume, sparkling with jewels, and looked as handsome and manly as any prince in a fairy tale.

Dirrag, frowning and alert, drew his terrible curved cimeter and prepared to defend his charges. But the girls were pleased at the encounter, and Bessie managed to cry out in Baluch: “Don’t strike, Dirrag! It is Prince Kasam.”

“Good reason to strike,” growled the warrior; but he stood at attention, awaiting the outcome of the adventure and admiring secretly the enemy’s boldness.

“I thank you, fair ladies, for your protection,” said Kasam, speaking gaily and in English. “Not that I particularly fear your doughty champion, but because it affords me the opportunity I have longed for to talk frankly with you, and explain why I seemingly abandoned you on the eve of your arrival in Mekran.”

“And also why you carried away our entire caravan,” added Janet, severely.

Kasam laughed.

“All is fair in love and war,” he rejoined. “You did not need the caravan any longer, and I needed it badly. It was natural I should take advantage of your good nature and my own necessities. Look!” pointing proudly to the plain below; “it is the encampment of my army — the host that is to win for me the throne of Mekran!”

“Are our horses and dromedaries there? And our escort of Afghans?” asked Janet.

“All are there. For the money loss you have sustained I can easily recompense you. As for my own desertion, I agreed to guide your party to Mekran, and I kept my promise. Really, I cannot see that you have just cause for complaint.”

“We have no way to leave the city,” re-plied Janet. “Your act has made us prisoners in Mekran.”

“That was part of my plan,” declared the young man, eyeing the girl with open admiration. “I do not want you to leave Mekran until I am khan.”

“Why?” she asked.

He hesitated, and glanced at Dirrag.

“Let us ride on,” he said, “and, if you will kindly pace beside me, Miss Janet, I will confide to your ears alone my hopes and ambitions.”

He reached out and caught the rein of her bridle, drawing the horse beside his own, and then he rode slowly down the hill toward the city. Dirrag, puzzled by the action and marvelling that the Prince should venture so near the khan’s headquarters, followed a few paces behind Kasam, with Bessie at his side. The girl’s face had flushed red at Kasam’s evident preference for her friend, and her lips were pressed ominously together. She nodded approval as she saw that the warrior beside her still held his drawn cimeter tightly

clasped in his hand, for the stern look upon his grim features boded no good to the rebel prince.

For a few paces Kasam rode in silence; then, glancing behind to make sure they were not overheard, he said:

"Miss Moore — Janet! the conditions that surround me oblige me to be frank with you, and to discard all foolish formalities. Although I have been educated in London you must not forget I am a native Baluch, and that we of the East are children of impulse, obeying the dictates of our hearts spontaneously and scorning that cold formality so much affected by your race. I have neither the time nor the opportunity to woo you in the dignified Western fashion. But I love you; and, after all, that is enough for a man to say!"

"Prince Kasam!"

"Since you must hear me, pray rob your voice of its scorn, my love. Be sweet and fond as a woman should. Let your real soul peep out of your beautiful eyes — let your heart bound wild and free in unison with my own. We are man and woman, fitted to sweet communion one with the other and destined to be happy in the passionate union of our lives." His voice was broken and excited; his eyes sparkled with fierce intensity; the conventionality of the Western civilization he had once known was all forgotten. "I love you — I adore you, my Janetl And I am a prince — soon to be Khan of all this great land. Speak to me, dear one! Promise to leave all else and cling to me alone — to follow my fortunes until I can place you in the palace where you shall be queen!"

"You have taken me by surprise, Prince Kasam," said Janet, gravely. "I am sorry you have spoken in this way."

"And why?" he cried. "Can love be denied when it clamors at the door of an eager heart? Why should I not love you? Why should you not accept my love?"

She looked into his animated face and smiled sadly.

"Because I do not belong to myself," she answered, trying hard, as a true woman will, to soften the blow. "Can I give you what another claims as his right?"

She should have said more, or not so much; but she did not know the Baluch temper.

He drew a quick breath at her words and reined his horse to a sudden halt. Her own horse stopped at the same time, and for one long moment Kasam gazed steadily into the fair face she turned pleadingly upon him.

With an exclamation and a passionate gesture he spurred forward. The black gelding was off like the wind across the plain, and Janet was left to

stare wonderingly after him.

Dirrag swore heartily; but the native oaths, lacking translation, did not offend the ears of the American girls. The warrior dared not leave his companions to pursue the prince, who circled around and made straight for the hillside in the direction of his encampment.

An embarrassing silence fell upon the three as they again rode forward. Dirrag was plainly suspicious of Janet's secret conference with the rebel, and Bessie's sweet face was masked with a grieved and despondent expression that was new to it.

But Janet was too preoccupied to notice her friend's distress, nor did she deign to explain, even with a word, her strange interview with Kasam.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VEILED WOMAN.

"What does it mean?" demanded Maie, stamping her small foot in passion. "Tell me at once, my father — what does it mean?"

The vizier sat doubled up in his chair a picture of abject humiliation and despair. His chin lay inert against his chest; the white beard streamed to his waist, where long and bony fingers clutched it and dragged at the meshes nervously; his eyes refused to meet the glowing orbs his incensed daughter turned upon him like searchlights baring the soul.

"Will you speak?" she asked, scornfully. "Will you speak, most sublime and magnificent Vizier — if only to proclaim yourself an ass?"

"Have peace — have peace!" muttered Agahr, moving uneasily. "How was I to know that Merad the Persian would return?"

"Oh trusting and childlike servant — thou one innocent in all the world of guile!"

"Ahmed tells no one of his plans," the vizier went on, heedless of her jibes; "nor can I be expected to probe the secret thoughts of the Khan. When Merad departed there was no hint of his mission or that he expected soon to return. My spy waits in Ahmed's private chamber; my spy serves his every meal; my spy listens to the secret conferences he holds with sirdars and officers of the household. If the Khan sneezes, I know it; if he stirs abroad my eyes follow his every step. But his thoughts, being known only to himself and to Allah, baffle my efforts, and the jargon he speaks to the foreign physician is a language none else can understand."

Maie clutched at her silken scarf and rent its folds in twain, twisting and tearing the tender fabric until its threads lay scattered in all directions.

"I hate him! I have hated him from the first," she said. "Aye, even as I clasped his clammy form in my arms, and knew that water rather than blood flowed in his veins, I loathed the man and guessed he would strive to ruin me!"

"You did this?" asked the vizier, sternly. "You clasped the Persian in your arms — a man so old that he might call you daughter? You played the wanton with this stranger?"

"Even so," she answered, mockingly. "I would have sacrificed anything, at that time, to have cut old Burah's thread of life. But, elai! your cold Persian would not respond. He spurned me from him. I was very safe in his presence, my father."

Agahr's brows did not unbend. He eyed his daughter with a look of smouldering fury.

“Hear me, Maie,” he commanded; “you are the child of my heart, my best beloved. With you I have plotted and intrigued until my very soul is stained with evil in the Prophet’s sight; but all for your future glory and pride, and with no thought of my own advantage. But if you disregard your own purity, if I find that you give yourself to strange men or humble me in the sight of Allah, I swear to kill you as quickly as I would a dog of an infidel! Aye, my own slaves shall cut you down like a noxious weed.”

She laughed then, showing her dimples and her pearl-like teeth; but the laugh rang hard in Agahr’s ears.

“What man has knowledge to teach a woman?” she asked, with a careless gesture. “Is your wisdom so little, my father, that you judge me lacking in worldly cunning? Bah! have comfort, then! Never can you plot so well for Maie as Maie can plot for herself. And when I fall the heavens shall follow in my wake. Enough of this. We face a real trouble. The Persian has returned to Mekran, bearing in a splendid palanquin a woman veiled and closely guarded, who is received into the harem of the khan after he had embraced her form in the sight of many servants. In this we read my own rejection, the failure of all our clever plotting. The harem, then, was not made beautiful for me, but for this strange woman whom the Persian brings to warm the cold heart of Ahmed Khan. Is she beautiful? Is she young and winning? Has she charms to delight the senses. Then why should she be chosen before me — the daughter you yourself have declared to be incomparable? Answer, you man of spies — spies so impotent that they cannot penetrate the secrets of the harem!”

“It is all a deep mystery, my Maie,” sighed the vizier, solemnly stroking his beard. “But let us not be disheartened. There is room in the khan’s harem for more than one woman.”

“Unless Maie is first, there is no room for her in any man’s harem,” she retorted, proudly. “Have done, my father, with thoughts of Ahmed Khan. Our Kasam is assembling an army. Perhaps it is not too late to bargain with him for our support.”

“Not long ago,” said the vizier, slowly, “we rejected Kasam.”

“The more reason that he will be eager to make a compact with us. We can open to him the gates of Mekran.”

“A day or two ago,” continued the vizier, “the Prince came out from his camp and met the American women who ride with Dirrag each morning. He conversed long and tenderly with the dark haired one. My spy saw all from a thicket on the hillside.”

Maie’s dainty face became grave and thoughtful.

“It is difficult to estimate the power of these American women,” she said,

after a pause. “Only yesterday I feared they might win the favor of Ahmed Khan; yet it seems I was wrong, for another has been received into his harem. Kasam’s interest in them may be equally unimportant. He saw many such creatures in England, and cared nothing for them. Besides, he has a throne to win, and with it he may have — ”

She stopped abruptly, and rising from her cushions approached a large mirror, where she examined her reflection with much care. Then she returned slowly to her divan.

“You are right, my father: no woman that I have ever beheld can compare with me in beauty of form or face — in grace or in womanly loveliness. The Americans could not amuse Kasam as I can. Let us think of them no longer, but send messages at once to the camp of the Prince. Without doubt he will accept our terms eagerly.”

“I will do as you wish,” returned the vizier, but with evident reluctance. “There is little doubt we can do better with Kasam than with the Khan, but by allying ourselves with the rebel we place our own necks in danger. I wish the Prince had a share of Ahmed’s compelling will and cool judgment. When the armies meet Kasam may not win the battle.”

“But the armies must not meet!” returned the girl. “With our aid Kasam can accomplish his ends by strategy. In battle the khan would crush him to the earth, but in cunning our Prince will prove the victor. Select your messenger with care — one whose death will not cause you to mourn, for we must trust no one with our secret. When he is ready to depart I will give him instructions.”

“It shall be done,” said the vizier.

“And now it grows late, and I will retire.”

She made him a dutiful obeisance and left the room to go to her apartment.

An hour later, while the vizier slumbered, Maie stole away to the end of the garden and by the Gate of the Griffins came upon Allison, who clasped her fondly in his arms.

Next day David brought to the house of Colonel Moore the gossip of the city, telling of the return of Merad the Persian. The physician had been to Quettah for the most beautiful woman in the world, whom he had purchased for the price of ten thousand fillibees to grace the harem of the young khan.

The ladies received this wonderful tale with various comments. Aunt Lucy was very indignant that any female, however depraved, should be bought and sold like so many goods and chattels. Bessie wondered if the girl was really beautiful, and whether she was proud to have brought so large a sum of money. Janet said nothing, but listened with downcast eyes and

flushed cheeks.

Somewhere or other Allison had also heard this gossip, and he took pains to quietly impress his sister with the fact that the incident fully proved them to have been mistaken in thinking they recognized the Persian on the day he had left Mekran.

“The doctor we knew in New York was an impertinent meddler,” he said, when they could not be overheard; “but he wasn’t the man to purchase women for the harem of a barbarian, you may be sure. We probably had our scare for nothing.”

“Scare?” she exclaimed. “What do you mean, Allison? Why should you fear to meet — ”

“Hush!” he interrupted, nervously glancing around. “They may hear you; and it isn’t best, on your own account, to mention that name. I didn’t mean that we need fear to meet him, but that he would be afraid to meet us. Is it not so?”

“You are talking riddles,” she answered, coldly, and left the room to avoid discussing the matter further.

CHAPTER XV.

SALAMAN

A solitary camel came into Mekran by the north gate, driven by a lean Baluch in a soiled yellow burnous and bearing upon its back a palanquin with curtains of faded silk. It ambled through the streets and knelt at the portals of the khan's palace, where the curtains were drawn and an aged priest cautiously descended.

Before the entrance was drawn up a company of warriors of the Tribe of Agot, who solemnly saluted the new arrival and pressed backward that he might pass within.

The priest paused to note their splendid dress and brightly polished weapons, eyeing them with the simplicity of a child viewing his first pageant. His countenance was strangely sweet and guileless, although not lacking in dignity, and his white garb was of spotless purity. But above his breast — the focus of every eye of the true believer — hung suspended a jewelled star that proclaimed him the Grand Mufti of the Sunnite faith. No wonder the awed warriors pressed backward before the great Salaman, who had come all the way from his retreat at Takkatu to visit their khan.

Passing through the courtyard and up the marble stairway the venerable priest stopped often to mark the luxurious furnishings of the palace. The building itself was scarcely equal to his own monastery, but the splendor of its fittings was in strong contrast with the simplicity to which he was accustomed. The slave Memendama preceded him, pausing at every turn to salam before his master's guest.

The ante-rooms were filled with sirdars and captains of the tribes, all resplendent in attire, as befitted the courtiers of a great khan. Within one alcove sat Agahr the Vizier, in deep converse with a group of greybeards who were evidently officers of rank. These also rose to bow before the priest, and Salaman stopped to read the vizier's countenance with curious intentness. When he had passed Agahr looked after him with a troubled face, and the others, exchanging significant glances, left him and walked away.

At last Memendama stopped beside a portiere which he drew aside to allow the priest to enter. It was the private apartment of the khan.

Salaman, stepping within the small room, gave a shrewd glance around and allowed the semblance of a smile to flit across his grave features. The place was well lighted with high windows, although the afternoon already waned, but the walls and floor were bare and the furniture almost severe in character. Beside a wooden bench knelt the Khan, his head resting upon his outstretched arms and his body without motion.

The priest's glance was almost tender as he softly crossed the chamber and seated himself within the embrasure of a window. The silence remained unbroken.

After a time the Khan moved and raised his head, fixing his eyes upon the white-robed priest. There was no start of surprise in his gaze. Very gently he arose, knelt again before Salaman and kissed with humility the hem of the priestly robe.

"You are here, my father," he said, "and I am grateful."

The priest laid his hand upon the bowed head.

"All is well, my son," he answered. "Allah and the Prophet have given you guidance, and your days are righteous." He paused a moment and then added: "We are pleased with Ahmed Khan."

Again there followed a period of prolonged silence.

Then the young man asked:

"You know of my troubles, father?"

"Yes, dear Hafiz. The American girl is here in Mekran."

"Is it not strange that she has come from across the world to the one place where I have found refuge?"

"The ways of Allah are good ways," responded the priest, "and He holds the strands of fate in relentless hands. Your life is just beginning, my Hafiz."

An eager look sprang to the young man's eyes. He searched the calm countenance of Salaman as if he feared it might belie the speaker's words.

"Do you bid me hope, my master?" he asked, in trembling tones.

A change came over the priest's face. His eyes seemed masked with a delicate film that gave them far-seeing power. The lines of the aged features grew tense and hard, as if deprived of all nervous volition. His head fell slowly forward until the white beard swept to his knees and lay upon them like a drift of snow.

Hafiz drew back, clasping his knees with his hands and looking up at the entranced mufti with expectant gaze.

"The deeds of men bear fruit," said the voice of the priest, sounding cold and unreal in the intense stillness, "and the sun of Allah's will ripens it all together and brings it from many parts to be heaped within one measure. The harvest is near, my son. Events will crowd one another like waves lapping the pool's edge, and from the midst of strife and bloodshed I see you rising calm and serene, with the mark of our gracious Prophet upon your brow... The Voice of Allah whispers in my ears... and all is well!"

Silence followed, and neither moved. A shadow crept over the windows, slowly dimming the light. An hour passed, and another. The room was dark now, and scarcely could the Khan discern the form of the priest seated before

him. Blackness fell, and the stillness of death remained. From a neighboring minaret the hours chimed sweetly but all unheeded.

Then came a gleam of silver, striking aslant the priest's face and crossing the room like a solid bar, its end melting against the further wall. The bar grew and spread as the moon rose higher, and soon the entire room was flooded with a mellow light that rendered every object distinctly visible.

As if the radiance brought life in its dancing beams the aged mufti breathed again and moved slightly in his seat. Hafiz, alert to mark the change, softly arose and went to an alcove, returning with a tray upon which was arranged a simple repast. This he placed upon a tabaret beside Salaman and then brought a bowl of water and a towel, bathing the hands and face of his master with a touch as tender as that of a woman. The priest's expression was normal now, but very thoughtful. He ate sparingly of the food, and afterward the Khan also tasted the dish.

Then Hafiz, having carried away the tray, lighted a small lamp, green shaded, and both men approached the table and sat beside it.

"May I ask of Ahmed, my father?"

"He is now of the Imaum, well favored of the Prophet, his comrade, and happy in pursuit of a divine solution of the mysteries."

"Here his gentle soul would have been cankered with misery."

The priest nodded. Hafiz, after a hesitating look into the other's face, continued:

"I have placed a woman in my harem, father."

A smile reassured him.

"All is known to me, my son," came the calm reply. "But I must speak with you concerning the Vision with which Allah has just favored me. Your vizier is not a true man, dear Hafiz."

"I have feared as much, my father, though striving to win him to me by many favors."

"He plots for your destruction, urged to treachery by a maiden very beautiful to mortal eyes, but equally repulsive to the all-wise Allah."

"It is his daughter," said the Khan, musingly.

"I have seen a man riding from Agahr the vizier to the camp of Kasam. Listen well, my son, for the Vision was given me that you might have knowledge."

In low tones Salaman now described the scenes he had witnessed in his trance, and the Khan attended gravely to each word of the recital, frowning at times, then smiling, and at the last giving a shudder of horror as the catastrophy was unfolded.

Afterward he sat long in deep thought, exclaiming at last, with a sigh of

regret: “These are evil days, my father!” But the priest’s face shone calm and bright.

“No man knows content,” he answered, “who has never faced despair. The blessed Allah gives us night that we may welcome the dawn.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ABDUCTION

Janet and Bessie had continued their morning rides with Dirrag, notwithstanding the unpleasant meeting with Prince Kasam, which, although duly reported by the warrior to the Khan, had not been deemed of sufficient importance to interrupt their pleasure.

But since then Dirrag had led them through the valley to the south and east, where the country was more thickly settled, and avoided riding very far from the walls.

However, on the morning following the arrival of the Grand Mufti Salaman at Mekran, Bessie pleaded with Dirrag to again take them up the westward slope, that they might once more look upon the camp of the Prince. Dirrag hesitated at first, but finally consented and turned the horses' heads in that direction. The steeds of Mehmet, he reflected, were the fleetest in the khan's dominions, and his own trusted cimeter would be equal to any emergency. Moreover, when a woman pleaded Dirrag's heart was water, and Bessie was his favorite.

It was a beautiful morning, and the sun had just risen to cast a golden glow over the distant plain, where the white dots appeared to their eyes in increased numbers.

"Kasam's army is growing," said Bessie. "Surely there are many more tents than there were before."

"The air may be filled with vultures, yet they dare not attack a living lion," remarked Dirrag, quietly.

"But why shouldn't Kasam himself be the lion?" she retorted. "Is he so much inferior to the mysterious Ahmed Khan?"

"The future will decide that," said Dirrag. "Those who know my master have no fear of Kasam of Raab."

After remaining a short time to watch the picturesque scene spread out before then they turned their horses to descend the hill. All three were busy with their own reflections, and had nearly reached the foot of the incline, with the walls of Mekran less than two miles away, when three mounted men who had been concealed in a thicket dashed out and, without warning, fell savagely upon the band. Two with drawn swords engaged Dirrag in fierce combat, while the third, coming beside Janet, dragged the girl from her horse, swept her across to his own saddle, and then galloped away with his victim clasped tight in his arms.

Bessie, reining in her horse, sat as if turned to stone, for she recognized in the abductor of Janet their old friend Prince Kasam.

With dull eyes and set face she followed the flight of his horse as he bounded up the hill with his burden, nor could the growls of Dirrag, who was engaged in beating down the swords of his assailants with mighty strokes, distract her from the more astounding sight.

Janet, unable to elude the fierce embrace of the man who held her, did not waste her strength in useless struggles. But after the first surprise of her capture had passed away she managed to find her voice, crying out:

"Release me, Prince Kasam!"

"Never!" he answered, exultantly. "You are mine, now — mine forever! And no earthly power shall ever tear you from my arms."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To my tent, beloved, there to become my bride. Don't you know that I love you — love you — love you!"

He repeated the words at each bound of his great black horse, pressing her yet closer to his breast, as if a madness possessed him.

"Never will I wed you!" gasped the frightened girl, trembling in spite of her effort at control. "You are a coward to seize me thus, and you are mad!"

"Yes, mad with love," he answered in a desperate voice. "I cannot live without you, my Janet. Willing or unwilling, it matters not. You shall be mine, and mine alone!"

She turned and whispered a word in his ear. He laughed.

"So much the better, dear one. We shall not have to wait for a ceremony. This is not England, nor America, but wild, free Baluchistan, and I am master of a host You are mine — you are mine — you are mine!"

He did not see a great bay speeding across from a neighboring grove to intercept his path. He was kissing the girl's hair, her neck, her shoulders; hugging her fast in his wild embrace and blind to everything else.

The man upon the bay sat motionless, his huge, muscular frame bent slightly forward to favor the flight of his steed and his eyes fastened upon the Baluch prince and his fair burden.

The minutes were few before the noble bay of Mehmet pressed upon the flank of Kasam's gelding; the abductor felt a stinging blow upon the neck that lifted him full from his saddle and set him headlong upon the ground; but as he fell Janet was seized in an iron grasp and torn from his arms, being instantly transferred to a seat upon the other horse.

The bay never paused in its rapid flight, but swerved and circled until its head was turned toward Mekran.

Janet, bewildered and stunned by the excitement of her adventure, for a time lay inert within the strong arms of her rescuer. Then, slowly and shyly, she turned her face to his, and meeting the look in his grey eyes she smiled

happily and nestled her head against the man's broad breast.

And it so happened that Ahmed Khan leaned over and kissed the white brow of the American girl just as his bay bore them past the spot where Dirrag stood with gory blade looking down upon the two motionless forms he had slain. Bessie had tumbled from her horse and lay in a heap upon the ground, sobbing as if her heart was broken.

The warrior smiled significantly as he looked after the flying form of his master. Then he turned and, not unkindly, shook the weeping girl's shoulder.

"Come," he said, "we will ride back alone to Mekran."

CHAPTER XVII.

DAVID SELLS AN IMPORTANT SECRET

David brought the note, which he had received from the hands of the khan's Arab slave, Memendama. It was in Janet's clear script and read as follows:

"Do not worry about me in any way, for I am safe and happy. Of my own free will I have become an inmate of the harem of the Khan."

Aunt Lucy gave a shriek and fell over backward upon the floor, where her heels beat a tattoo against the rug. No one paid the slightest attention to her. The Colonel stared straight ahead with stony eyes and a look of horror upon his face. The doctor stalked restlessly up and down the room with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, whistling softly to himself. Allison, stolid and unimpressed, lighted his pipe and puffed away with supreme nonchalance. Bessie had not yet recovered from the adventure of the morning. She lay face downward upon a divan and wept miserably.

Under these adverse circumstances Aunt Lucy's fainting fit vanished. She sat up and glared wildly upon the perturbed group.

"This," she announced, "is the result of travelling in heathenish and godless countries. We are ruined!"

Her brother waved his hand impatiently, but no one answered in words.

"And to think how that demure minx Janet has deceived me all these days and made me believe she was respectable! Oh, it is terrible."

"Shut up!" said Allison, rudely.

"You're a beast, that's what *you* are!" retorted the old lady, white with fury, "and a fit brother for your designing sister. And to think that I've got myself mixed up with such a scandal. An American girl the inmate of a harem! What will be said when this news reaches New York? And Colonel Moore an officer of the great Metropolitan Construction Syndicate!"

"See here, Lucy," warned her brother, "you keep mum until you know what you're talking about Janet is as good a girl as ever breathed."

"Only de best gets into de khan's harem," remarked David, consolingly.

Aunt Lucy turned upon him like a tigress.

"It's your doing, I'll be bound," she cried. "You're a traitor!"

David winced a little, and studied the pattern in the rug.

"Now," said the doctor, "it strikes me you're getting nearer to the truth, except that David is too much of a fool to be a scoundrel, and so may escape suspicion. But I'm inclined to think there has been treachery in some quarter, and that Janet has been forcibly seized by the Khan. I wish there was an American or English consul in this forsaken town."

"Her letter says she went willingly," snapped Aunt Lucy, and the Colonel

groaned at the suggestion.

"It was probably written under threat of death or torture," replied the doctor, positively. "These Orientals are equal to any villainy. Knowing Janet as we do, and believing in her modesty and truth, it is absurd to interpret her letter in any other light. What do you think, Bessie?"

The girl shook her head, wiping the tears from her reddened eyelids.

"I don't know, papa. There's some dreadful mystery about it, I'm sure."

"The thing to do," said Aunt Lucy, "is to appeal to Prince Kasam. I never trusted that young man very much, but he's been decently brought up in a civilized country, which is more than you can say for that awful khan. In the circumstances the Prince ought to be willing to help us rescue Janet."

The Colonel stood up and brushed the gray locks from his forehead.

"I'll find a way to get to Kasam at once," he said, in a harsh and strained voice. "In which direction did you tell me, Bessie, his camp lies?"

She rose and walked steadily to the Colonel, putting her hands upon his shoulders and looking full into his eyes.

"I have not told you all the truth of what happened this morning," she began, bravely. "It was Kasam and his men who first attacked us, and Kasam who bore Janet away while the others tried to kill Dirrag. Afterward the Khan appeared and rode after them, rescuing Janet just as they reached the top of the hill. Kasam must have been killed or dreadfully hurt, for we did not see him again. The rest happened as I told you. Dirrag cut down the two men and saluted the Khan as he rode by with Janet in his arms. I must have fainted just then, for I knew nothing of this; but Dirrag afterward assisted me to get home, and when I wept at the capture of Janet he told me to dry my eyes, for she had smiled when the Khan kissed her."

"Impossible!" cried the Colonel.

"Dirrag is very honest," returned Bessie, hesitatingly, "and he thinks the Khan carried her to his harem that she might be safe from Kasam. I will not say she did not object; but, Colonel, there has been some-thing strange about Janet for some time — something I could not understand."

"I thought she was happier," said the Colonel, huskily; "that she was learning to forget."

"She has laughed in her sleep," continued Bessie; "she, who used to be so sad and melancholy. And only this morning she sang an old song as we galloped away from the town, and semed as light hearted as a child."

The Colonel buried his face in his hands, and a sob rose to this throat.

"Oh, my girl — my dear little girl!" he murmured; "what can I do to save you!"

"Cheer up, Dad," said Allison, brusquely. "There's no use taking it so

hard. What does it matter whether Janet's in a harem or anywhere else, so long as she's happy and content? My opinion is we're wasting our pity on her. She isn't the sort to write a letter under compulsion, and you know it as well as I do."

"Really," the doctor remarked, "I can't understand the thing at all. If the girl had ever seen Ahmed Khan she might have fallen in love with him. It's common report that he's a fine looking fellow. But until today they were perfect strangers. H — m! Let me see. Wasn't there some old romance in Janet's life — some trouble or other?"

"Yes," said the Colonel. "But that is past and gone — years ago. Yet she brooded upon it, doctor, and it may have driven her mad."

"I've detected no signs of insanity in your daughter," returned the doctor, rather nettled at the suggestion. "But Allison is right; there's no use borrowing trouble over the matter until we know more. Perhaps we shall think of some way to communicate with her, or to force the Khan to give her up. We seem absurdly helpless in this tyrant-ridden town, although were we in any other country on earth we might easily assemble an army and rescue your daughter by force of arms, provided diplomacy failed. Kasam seems as impossible as the Khan, for Bessie's story leads me to suspect he's the greater scoundrel of the two."

David had appeared ill at ease during this conversation. Now he rose from his seat and after a half frightened glance around announced in a timid voice:

"I haf a secret!"

"Has it anything to do with Janet Moore?" asked Aunt Lucy, in her sharpest tone.

"It iss a fine secret," said David, fixing his little eyes upon the Colonel, "ant it is vort' a t'ousand fillibees."

The old lady gave a snort of contempt, but the Colonel seemed interested, and as he shrewdly examined the Jew's face he noted great beads of perspiration standing upon his shiny forehead — a warrant that David, at least, was very much in earnest in his proposition. It was not impossible David had a secret, and that he considered it a dangerous one to disclose.

"Will you swear that your secret is worth a thousand fillibees to me?" he asked.

"Sure, most Excellency — if your daughter she is vort' so much money," earnestly answered the Jew.

"She is worth more," declared the Colonel. "Tell me what you know, and you shall have the price you ask."

But David only stood still and trembled, answering not a word.

"Bessie," said the doctor, "take your Aunt Lucy into the next room, and

keep out of earshot. We must have a business conference with David."

When the women had gone the Colonel walked over to a desk and took from a drawer a long envelope filled with English bank-notes, which he carefully counted. They amounted to six hundred pounds. To these he added a roll of gold and brought all the money to David, placing it upon the table beside him.

"There, David, are a thousand fillibees, in good English and American money. It is yours if you can tell me how to rescue my child from the palace of the khan."

David reached out his eager hands.

"Not yet," cautioned the Colonel, sternly. "You must first prove that your knowledge is of value to us."

The man drew back, discomfited.

"I vill nod risk mine head," he said, dog-gedly, "unless I haf de moneys. Id iss more to you dan id iss to me. Gif me de t'ousant fillibees or I nod speak von vort!"

The Colonel returned to the desk and brought forth a revolver.

"You will tell me all you know," he said, "or you will soon be a dead man, and then you won't care for the money. And if you do not tell me the truth, if your secret is not worth to me this sum of money which you have demanded, you shall never leave this room alive. On the other hand, if you have not deceived me the money shall be yours. Take time to think it over, David, and be sure I will keep my word."

David trembled anew, and cast a sly glance at the doctor, who looked as stern and determined as his terrible friend. Because of the excitement of the moment Allison had allowed his pipe to go out, and now sat regarding the Jew with a cruel smile upon his handsome features. Evidently these Americans were not to be trifled with. David looked longingly at the money, and gave a sigh. He was fairly trapped, and he knew it

"Most Excellency," he said, mopping his brow with a dirty red cloth, "tonight de vest gate of Mekran vill be open't to Prince Kasam ant hiss army. De city vill be surprised."

"Who will open the gate?" asked the Colonel.

David hesitated.

"Tell me!"

"De vizier," whispered the Jew, with pallid lips.

"Well, and what then?"

"De Khan ant hiss people vill rush out of de palace to fight; but dey vill not be ready to fight, an' Kasam vill cut dem down."

"I see. And then?"

“Vhile de city iss in de uproar I leat you by a secret vay into de harem of de Khan. You vill take de girl ant carry her avay.”

“Very good. Are you sure you know this secret way, David?”

“Sure, most Excellency. I pait a high price to find it oudt. A t’ousant fillibees! Id iss too liddle, altogedder.”

The Colonel took a key from his pocket, unlocked the cabinet, and drew out David’s leathern pouch. Into this he stuffed the money — notes and gold together — and then replaced the pouch in the cabinet, locking it securely.

“You will be a rich man, David, when we return from the palace,” said he.

David clinched his hands and an angry took flashed in his beady eyes.

“Id iss nod right!” he protested. “You Americans do nod play de fair way, at all. You ged my secret ant you keep my moneys.”

“Only until we have proven you,” replied the Colonel. “If you are true, David, you will be rich. When are the gates to be opened?”

“Ad midnight.”

“All the gates?”

“Only de vest gade. De vizier, he vill trust no von bud himselfs.”

“Then how did you know of the plot?”

The Jew was silent.

“It will pay you to be honest, David.”

“De vizier musdt sent a man to de prince,” he said, reluctantly; “ant de man he owes me two golt fillibees. He tells me hiss message to de prince, ant I cancels de debt. *Sullah ben cairnol* id iss vell I did, for I safe mineself moneys. Ven de man comes back he hass a fit unt dies. De vizier he iss a cleffer excellency — bud nod so cleffer ass Davit.” He stopped to chuckle softly and rub his hands together; but suddenly he paused and cast a gloomy look at the cabinet.

The Colonel tossed him the key.

“Now you will know the money is surely yours,” he said. “Keep the key yourself, David, for you are going to stay here with us until after midnight. If you guide us safely to the harem you may go free. If we find you guilty of treachery I will put a bullet through your head. But in either event the key unlocks the cabinet and the money is now in your possession.”

David nodded and secreted the key in his bosom.

“I am true man,” he muttered. “Id iss impossible for me to deceive so great an excellency!”

“We three,” said the doctor, “will accompany David to the harem.”

Allison grew red and uncomfortable.

“One of us, sir, should remain here to guard the women. Let me stay. Surely my father and you will be able to look after David and bring Janet

home in safety."

"That is not a bad idea," returned the doctor. "There will be wild times when Kasam's army enters the city. It will be well for you to be on hand to protect Bessie and my sister from possible intruders."

This being arranged to the young man's satisfaction the elder gentlemen left the room to make preparations for their adventure, leaving Allison to smoke his pipe and keep an eye upon the slippery David.

When they were alone the Jew approached his companion and whispered:

"Tonighdt you vill be in de garden mit de vizier's daughter."

Allison's face flushed with mingled fear and anger.

"What do you mean by that, you scoundrel?" he exclaimed.

"Davit knows!" chuckled the Jew, wagging his head. "Six time — sefen time — you meet mit Maie vhen no one knows bud Davit. Tonighdt you go again. She iss very lofely — very beaudifull Ah, yes. Bud do nod fear. Davit vill say nodding — if he iss vell pait."

"Well paid? So you intend to rob me, also, do you?"

"I am true man, Excellency. Your fadder should know; de vizier should know; bud Davit vill forget efferyt'ing if he hass a hundert fillibees."

"A hundred fillibees! I haven't so much."

"Fifty, den. Fifty fillibees iss so small for so big a secret!"

"Very well; tomorrow you shall have them," said Allison.

"Bud, most Excellency, suppose I shouldt remember tonighdt, ant your fadder ant de vizier shouldt know vot Davit knows? I cannod forget de secret unless I haf de fifty golden fillibees. I vouldt try, Excellency; I vouldt try hard; bud I could nod — could nod forget."

Allison pulled at his pipe and thought it over, while the Jew stood cringing and smiling before him. Then he drew from his pocket all the gold and notes he could find and gave them into David's hand.

"You're making money fast, you dirty pig of a Jew," he growled. "But watch out that you don't lose it just as quickly. I'll get even with you before I'm through."

But David had other secrets, the thoughts of which made him accept the young man's threat with a good grace. With evident delight he concealed the money in the bosom of his robe. It lay next to the hundred fillibees which Agahr the Vizier had given him that very morning. And the key to the cabinet was also in his possession.

David sighed from pure happiness, and sat down upon a chair to wait for the Colonel and the doctor.

"De easiest t'ing in de vorlt to sell," he murmured, contentedly, "iss secrets!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VIZIER OPENS THE GATE

When Agahr entered his daughter's apartment that night the girl sat propped with silken cushions while a female slave brushed and arranged the folds of her glossy hair and another woman sat at her feet to anoint them with pungent and sweet-smelling ointments. A shaded lamp of Egyptian design swung from the ceiling and cast a rosy hue over the group, and the air was redolent of the spicy perfumes of the East.

Agahr stood before his daughter for a time in silence, searching her fair and composed face with much earnestness. The soft, languorous eyes met his own frankly and lovingly, and she smiled until the dimples showed daintily in her pretty cheeks.

"You are welcome, oh my father," she tenderly exclaimed.

He seated himself in a chair and waved the women away.

"You are about to retire, my Maie?" he asked, when they were alone.

"I am preparing for the night, dear one, but I shall not retire as yet. How could I sleep with our fortunes swinging with the pendulum of fate? This night we win or lose all."

He did not reply, but sat moodily studying her expression, and she moved restlessly and turned her face slightly to the shade.

"Yet there is small risk of failure," she continued, after a pause. "The Khan, secure in the strength of his loyal tribes, has neglected to prepare for immediate battle, and Kasam's host, once inside the gate, will carry all before it."

"And then?" he asked, gravely.

"Then Kasam will keep his promise, and make me his queen. It is the price we demanded for giving him his throne. And, through me, my father, you shall hereafter rule Mekran."

The vizier sighed and stroked his beard.

"Are you willing to become Kasam's queen when you know he loves the American girl whom he attempted to carry away by force? Will you be able, without his love, to bend him to your will?"

Maie laughed softly, clasping her jewelled fingers behind the folds of her hair.

"Let him love the American girl!" she answered, a touch of scorn in her voice. "While he dallies in her presence I will direct the affairs of state. Listen, my father, I have never loved Kasam from the first. Nor could that cold-eyed Ahmed Khan have ever won my heart. Yet to favor my ambition I would have mated with either one. The fates now favor Kasam, and if I

cannot rule him through love I will rule him through cunning. The foreign girl will not stand in my way. In the harem of a khan are subtile poisons and daggers with needle points, and no dull-witted Western maiden can ever hope to oppose your Maie's intrigues."

Agahr stared at her as if afraid. The perfect repose of her features as she hissed the fiendish words struck a chill to his very bones.

"You are false as Iblis itself, my Maie," he said. "How do I know you will not sacrifice me, also, to your great ambition?"

"Have no fear, my father," she returned, her low laugh rippling through the perfumed atmosphere. "You live but to please your Maie; would she foolishly betray her most faithful servant? We are one in all things."

Again he sat silent, the frown growing upon his face. Perhaps he had begun to realize, for the first time in his life, that all this loveliness before him breathed passion and sensuality, but no warrant of a soul beneath its exquisite outlines. His child was beautiful, indeed; so beautiful that he had worshipped her as an angel of paradise, sent to comfort and console his old age. He had longed to see her acknowledged above all women of Baluchistan as the brightest star in the harem of the Khan himself — the greatest pride and glory a father and a true believer could conceive. He had plotted and planned to this end without regard or consideration for others: even with an humble subversion of self. But she had given him nothing in return. Her very love for him was more calculating than filial. And he knew her furtive mind so intimately that he might well doubt her truth.

"Since you were a child," he said, musingly, "I have made you my comrade; more, my confidant. You were not treated like other women of Islam, but given the full freedom of my household. I have loaded you with jewels, with fine cloths from the looms of Persia, of Turkey and of China; with precious perfumes and cosmetics from Arabia. Your slaves are the loveliest maidens of Circassia and Morocco, purchased with vast sums to minister to your lightest whims. Even the harem of the Khan cannot boast a greater luxury than that which surrounds you. Yet you have dared to deceive me."

The last words were spoken with impetuous force, as if evoked by a sudden thought. The lashes that veiled her eyes flickered slightly at the accusation, but she made no other movement His voice grew stern.

"Tell me, why have you favored a dog of an infidel?"

"I, my father? I favor a dog of an infidel? Are you mad?"

"It has come to my ears," he said, stiffly. "The young American who came here with Kasam."

Maie stared at him as if amazed, as in truth she was. Then her head fell

back and from her slender throat burst a peal of merriment that was well-nigh irresistible. She sprang up lightly, dropping her outer robe, and cast herself with abandon into the old man's arms, clinging to his neck and nestling within his lap while her laughter filled his ears like the sweet chime of silver bells.

"Oh, my foolish, ridiculous old father!" she cried, while kissing his forehead and smoothing his beard over her bosom, like a mantle. "Has the serpent of folly bitten you? What monster of Agoum put such dreadful thoughts of your little Maie into your suspicious head? An infidel! Has the Prophet forsaken me? Were I lacking in any modesty — which Allah forbid! — would a daughter of Raab choose an infidel?"

Agahr held her tight, and his heart softened, "The tale was brought to me, and I could not but doubt," he said, doggedly. "But I am very glad to find you innocent, my precious one. Forget the words, Maie, for they were inspired by a lying tongue — one that I will tear out by the roots at tomorrow's sunrise!"

He arose from his seat, clasping her in his arms like a little child, and carried her to a divan, where he gently laid her down. Then he bent over and kissed both her cheeks.

"I must go now," said he. "Midnight approaches, and I must be at the gate to admit Kasam."

"You will disguise yourself?" she asked, holding one of his hands as she gazed up at him.

"I shall cover my head with a cloak.

Beni-Bouraz is Captain of the Guard, and he must know it is the Vizier who commands him to open. Afterward it will not matter who recognizes me."

"Be careful," she cautioned. "We must guard against treachery. Are you sure no one knows our plot?"

"The messenger who returned from Kasam is dead. Yamou attended to him,"

She nodded.

"Then go, my father; and may Allah guide your hand!"

Slowly he turned and without further word left the room. The passage was dark, and he stumbled along, feeling his way, until he came to the draperies that hid his own chamber. Having thrust these aside he entered to find the room well lighted but deserted by even his slaves.

Thoughtfully the old vizier sat at his table and pondered well the scene just enacted within his daughter's boudoir. While in her presence he had seemed convinced of her innocence; but now the old doubts assailed him

anew.

Presently his brow cleared. He reached out his hand and touched a soft-toned gong, and immediately the tall, dark figure of a Moor entered and made obeisance.

“Yamou,” said the vizier, “David the Jew was here this morning. He had a secret to sell. He swears that my daughter meets the young American infidel in my own garden, entering by the Gate of the Griffins.”

The black stood as if made of stone, not a muscle of his face moving.

“Have you known of this, Yamou?”

“No, my master.”

“It may not be true. David declared they will meet tonight — just before the midnight hour. You will take three of the most trusted slaves and at once hide yourselves in the shrubbery at the end of the garden. Remain there until daybreak, unless the infidel should indeed come.”

“And if he comes?”

“Kill him, Yamou!” said the old man, with sudden passion. “And if Maie goes to meet him kill her also. I’ll harbor no toy of an infidel dog in my household, even though it be my own daughter!”

Yamou bowed and touched the cimeter at his belt “You shall be obeyed, my master.”

Agahr glanced at the brutal visage of the Moor and hesitated, repenting already his command. But Maie had protested her innocence in no uncertain words. He would believe her. Should she prove false, the fate that would overtake her would be her own fault, and not to be laid at his door. But there! she was innocent, without a doubt. Her ambitions were too great to permit her to descend to so unnatural and foolish an intrigue. It would do no harm to wash the blemish of David’s lying tales from his daughter’s fair name by hiding the slaves in the shrubbery. If proof were needed, there would be the proof.

“You may go, Yamou.”

The slave salamed again, and noiselessly withdrew.

Left alone, Agahr drew a black cloak over his dress, arranging the folds to conceal his face and beard. Then he crept through an ante-room and along a short passage to a secret door that led into a small garden. Crossing this open space he unlocked a gate in the wall and so let himself into a lane that ran past the grounds of his mansion.

The streets seemed deserted and the night was very dark, for a storm was threatening. But Agahr knew every inch of his way and without hesitation threaded the narrow streets until he finally reached the west wall of the city.

Above the gate a dim light shone through the windows of the watch

tower, and the vizier mounted the steep stone steps and pushed open the door.

Upon a bench sat two burly Baluchi, earnestly intent upon a game of dice. At the far end of the room, half hidden by the dim shadows, lay a dark group of slumbering guardsmen.

“Ah-yah!” called one of the dicers, as he noted the presence of a visitor; “what is wanted at this hour? None can pass the gate till daybreak.” And he calmly continued to toss the cubes.

Agahr walked up to him and threw back the folds of his Cloak.

“The vizier!” cried both men, in a breath, and rose to their feet, saluting.

“Yes. Open the gate for me, Beni-Bouraz. I am to meet a friend here tonight.”

“But, master — ”

“Silence! Do as I bid you, Captain. Open the gate.”

The officer bowed low. Then he walked to the end of the room and kicked two of his men.

“Get up, you dogs. His Excellency the Vizier commands the gate to be opened.”

They got upon their feet, growling at the summons, and shuffled over to the windlass. Beni-Bouraz released the bar, and the men began winding up the huge chain that raised the gate.vAs he noted this, the vizier turned to descend.

“Come with me, Captain,” he said to Beni; “it may be necessary to hold the gate open for a time. I will myself give you the command to close it.”

The officer followed him down the stairs, and when they had disappeared from the room a big guardsman arose from the group of sleepers and, still muffled in his robe, followed after the captain. Also the others arose, seemingly alert, and by the light of the torch exchanged grins with the men at the windlass.

When Agahr paused before the heavily-barred gate it had already ascended toward the arch far enough to admit a horseman. Presently, with a final creak that sounded very audible in the stillness of the night, the windlass stopped and the gate remained poised in the archway.

Agahr bent forward, and heard the soft pattering of horses’ feet. The sound was repeated to the right and left, echoing far out upon the plains as if an army was awakening to action. Then the patter broke into a gallop, and a single horseman rode through the gate, a drawn sword clutched in his hand.

“Light a torch!” said the voice of Kasam. “My men cannot see this accursed gateway.”

Almost instantly a light flamed up behind them, and its red glow spread

outside the gate and showed the plain fairly alive with a host of warriors.

“Advance!” shouted Kasam, and waved his sword around his head.

Then a strange denouement came. The immense gate, suddenly loosened from the tower, fell with a crash, crushing beneath its weight those of the front rank that already pressed forward to enter. A strong hand seized the prince and dragged him from his saddle, disarming him at the same instant.

And then a mighty shout burst from many throats, sounding from all the length of the great wall as well as from the horde that clamored helplessly without. Torches flashed, tom-toms were beat with lusty strokes and the alarm gong sent its warning tones reverberating throughout the city.

Agahr the Vizier was astounded. Even his sacred person had been seized and his limbs bound fast with strong cords. It had all happened so suddenly that the old man did not recover his wits until he heard the cries of Kasam’s host as it retreated before the hail of missiles descending from the wall.

Then he turned to confront the stern features of Ahmed Khan, and dropped his eyes before the gaze he encountered.

Kasam, also securely bound, stood with a look of sullen rage upon his handsome face, but proudly erect as ever.

“I am betrayed!” he muttered.

“I, also, Prince, was nearly betrayed,” replied the Khan, in a harsh voice. “The fortunes of war, in this benighted country, are often nursed by the hand of treachery. Fortunately for the safety of Mekran, I was warned in time.”

Kasam turned angrily upon the vizier.

“I owe this to you, I suppose!” he said, bitterly.

“My bonds will prove my faith,” returned Agahr, with dignity.

The Khan raised his hand, as if to command peace. The red light of the torch upon his face seemed to soften its sternness.

“That your disloyal plans have come to naught,” he said, in more kindly tones, “is due alone to the will of Allah. Come, Captain Beni-Bouraz; you may follow me with your prisoners to the palace.”

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE GARDEN OF AGAHR

When her father had left her alone Maie lay still, for a time, in deep thought. "It must be," she reflected, "that our dear David, in spite of my bribes, has sold our secret to my father. For tonight, at least, I have lulled his suspicions. And he will soon be at the gate to admit Kasam; so I fear nothing. But the little David must not be able to annoy me again."

With this came a thought whereat she laughed. Rising from her couch the girl went to a tiny cabinet and cautiously unlocked it. She busied herself there for several minutes, at times laughing softly to herself, but with no trace of merriment in the notes. Finally she clapped her hands to summon a maid.

"Bring here one of the slaves," she commanded.

The girl withdrew, but presently returned alone.

"There are no slaves in the house, my mistress," she reported.

"Indeed! My father must have taken them with him," Maie replied. Then, after consideration, she added: "You will do as well, Halima; nay, perhaps better. Do you know David the Jew?"

"Yes, my mistress."

"Then get your cloak and seek David out, wherever he may be. And, when you have found him, give to him this casket, Halima, with the greetings of the daughter of the vizier; and tell him it is a token of my faith in him."

She brought from the cabinet a small box, exquisitely enamelled and inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

"Keep it safely concealed in your cloak, Halima. It does not lock, but opens by pressing this spring — so!" The lid flew back, disclosing a quantity of gold and gems and a silken purse; and after permitting the girl to glance within she closed the cover, snapping it into place. "Now that you have seen the contents, my child, you will not care to open it again. Keep it well fastened until it is in David's hands."

The girl promised to obey, and taking the box started at once to perform her mission. It seemed to her a queer hour — the dead of night — to carry a present to a Jew; but the whims of Maie were past accounting for, and the duty of a slave was to obey without question.

Left to herself, Maie glanced at the hour-glass and hastily caught up the mantle which she had discarded the better to display her charms to her father. She wound the robe carelessly about her shoulders, pressed a panel in the wall, and gained egress by a narrow stairway to the gardens.

"It is very dark," she murmured, feeling her way along a path; "but so

much the better. My Allison will not need a light to know that it is I!”

Onward she crept, turning the angles of the hedges with unerring instinct, until she paused beneath a group of stately siszandras where the shadows were even deeper than elsewhere. But her eyes, growing accustomed to the darkness, soon made out the dim outlines of a stone bench, and she stooped and passed her hands along its length until she discovered that it was vacant.

“He is late,” she whispered; “or perhaps I am a moment early. He will come soon.”

Languidly she reclined upon the bench, her face turned toward the carved pillars that marked the Gate of the Griffins, standing but a few paces away like silhouettes against the murky sky.

After a few minutes’ lapse a key clicked in a lock; a stealthy foot-fall reached her ears, and the next moment a man knelt beside her.

“Ah, sweet one!” he whispered, clasping his arms around her yielding form and covering her face with kisses; “again for a few moments I may enjoy paradise with you by my side! I have been very impatient, my Maie, for this hour.”

“Yet you are late, Allison.” She spoke his name tenderly, and her broken English rendered the sibilant very charming in his ears.

“I may be a trifle late, little one, for I met several groups of men stealthily creeping through the darkness. I cannot understand why every warrior in the town seems abroad at this hour of the night.”

She sat up suddenly, clinging to him.

“Which way did they go?”

“To the westward, all of them,” he replied.

Somehow the words sent a chill to her heart, for she remembered her father’s mission to the west gate. Could their carefully guarded conspiracy have been betrayed? She listened eagerly, but all about them the town lay still as death. It was not yet midnight.

Her lover’s caresses recalled her to the present. Allison had drawn her closer beside him on the bench, and throwing back her mantle was pressing her passionately to his heart. Unresistingly she nestled in his arms, the dainty oriental perfumes that radiated from her body filling his nostrils with their ravishing odors and the soft contact of her cheek against his thrilling him with a joy akin to madness.

Words were barren messengers of love now; only the throbbing of his heart and her gentle sighs betrayed to the caressing breeze the fact that the bench was occupied.

Suddenly she shuddered, clutching at his hand so fiercely that her nails were imbedded in his flesh. A low moan escaped her lips, and then her grasp

relaxed and she fell back limp and inert.

Filled with a nameless horror, Allison looked up. The sky had lightened, somewhat, permitting him to discern before them the form of a huge black, who held within his hand a dripping sword. Even as Allison gazed the weapon leaped back and came straight for his heart in a quick thrust. He shrank from the point, springing sideways, but could not wholly escape. A biting pain pierced his side. But now he was upon his feet, one hand pressing the wound and the other holding his revolver.

A shot rang out, followed by a scream. The black swayed and fell, but others rushed with naked cimeters to take his place. Allison leaned against the bench and fired again — and again — and again, a fierce joy filling his breast at the outcries of his victims, even while the blood surged through his brain and he felt the numbness of death creeping over him.

The shots from the revolver were answered by loud cries from the other end of the garden — that nearest the house. Torches flashed, sending gleams of light dancing over the flowers and grasses toward the silent group beside the stone bench. Then came Dirrag, bounding over the sward with a band of chosen warriors in his wake.

At the ghastly tableau which the lights disclosed they paused, looking on one another with horror in their eyes. And now the deep tones of the gong from the west gate smote upon the air, rousing with its brazen warning all the sleeping city. The far-away outlines of the wall sprang into flame, while the hoarse cry of a multitude rolled grimly out upon the midnight zephyrs.

In the garden of Agahr a grizzled war-rior bent over Allison's unconscious form.

"I think, my captain, the American still lives," he said.

For a moment Dirrag did not reply. He was gazing sadly upon the lovely face of Maie, whereon still lingered the traces of a happy smile. But the dark eyes, inscrutable as ever, were wide and staring, and the warrior leaned over and gently covered the dainty form with the folds of her mantle.

Then he stood up and coughed, for the night air had gotten into his throat.

"Come along, you dogs!" he growled. "Let us report to the Khan. The conspirator he sent us to arrest has escaped him."

"And the American?" asked a man.

"Oh, the American?" Dirrag hesitated, wondering how his master would desire him to act. "Well, bring the infidel dog along with you," he said.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GIRL IN THE HAREM

David was in high spirits. True, these absurd Americans had virtually made him a prisoner in their house until his services were required to lead them to the harem of the khan; but he had been clever enough to arrange all his plans beforehand. Now, as he sat in the dim room awaiting the hour of action, he felt he had good reason to congratulate himself. The service of the vizier had been especially remunerative, for in addition to his liberal pay as a spy he had that morning received from Maie a large sum to keep her secret, with a promise of more to follow, and then he had secured an equal sum from Agahr for betraying his daughter's secret. Was that not clever? Allison, also, who now sat opposite him silently smoking and at times stealthily glancing at his watch, had contributed much money for the preservation of a secret that was a secret no longer. There were three good strings to that bow, thought David, chuckling delightedly. And now the old underground passage into the khan's harem, which the Jew had discovered long ago and feared he would never have any use for, had paid him richer returns than all else. Mentally he figured up his various accumulations, both in money and jewels, and decided he was too rich to remain longer in Mekran. He would return very soon to Kelat, where there was more room for enterprise; or perhaps he would go on to Quettah, or even so far as — "

"Come!" said the Colonel's voice, its stern tones interrupting David's meditations; "we are ready."

Allison gave a sigh of relief, looked at his watch for the twentieth time, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe. He might be a trifle late, but Maie would wait.

"We will leave you to look after the women," the Colonel said to his son. "Both the doctor and I are fully armed and will be equal to any occasion. But if David is right, and the night attack takes place on time, I anticipate no difficulty in getting Janet away from the harem."

"Good luck to you," said Allison, standing up to yawn and stretch his limbs.

"Have you a revolver?" asked the doctor, as his eyes wandered toward the rooms where his daughter and his sister slept "Always carry it," said Allison.

"Then be watchful until we return. No one knows what may happen."

"I'll watch out," said the young man, carelessly. And then, as David led the Colonel and the doctor to the street by one door, Allison slipped out at another and ran as speedily as possible in the direction of the vizier's gardens.

David was short and fat, but he proved an agile walker, and the darkness of the night was no hindrance to his way. He led his companions through many black alleys, turning first one way and then another, until he finally paused before a small stone house that stood vacant and delapidated. Drawing a key from his pocket he unlocked the door and drew the others into a damp and close-smelling room.

A moment later he struck a match and lighted a candle.

"Now ve can see vhere ve go." he said, complacently.

The Americans looked around them with some curiosity. Although doubtless of considerable age the house seemed never to have been finished inside, or even occupied as a place of abode. Bits of the building blocks were yet scattered over the earthen floor.

"Vonce, in de time of Keedar Khan," said David, "a young kaid built dis house ant made a tunnel unner de grount to de khan's harem, vhere hiss sveetheardt vas lifting. When she vas nod combing de vhiskers of de Khan she vas hugging de young kaid; ant vhen she vas nod hugging him she vas combing de Khan's vhiskers. Id vas very nice arrangements. Bud von night de Khan called on de female vhen he vas nod expected, ant he cut de young kaid ant de girl both into slices before he enquired how de feller got into de harem.

Id vas all very careless of de Khan; but he had a bad temper. So de tunnel vas neffer used again until I find it oudt a couple year ago. I buy de place cheap because de mans vot owned it neffer looked to find a tunnel. Ant now id iss very handy for us, ant very cheap for a t'ousant fillibees. Come — I show you."

Chuckling softly, the Jew led the way through a narrow passage and down a few steps into a sort of underground cellar at the rear. Here, in one corner, a flagstone stood on edge, disclosing another flight of steps. Down these David proceeded without hesitation, the Americans following closely at his heels. Then came a damp, ill-smelling tunnel, so low that only David could traverse it without bending down. The candle lighted the way only a few steps in advance, and numerous rats scurried from their path as they slowly advanced.

It seemed like a never-ending journey; but, just as the Colonel was about to protest, the passage suddenly widened and grew higher, and the light of the candle fell upon a cedar panel let into the wall before them.

"Have you the key, David?" whispered the doctor.

"Id iss no key; id iss a spring," replied the Jew. "Vod time iss id now?"

The Colonel looked at his watch. It was nearly midnight.

"Shall we risk entering, doctor?" he asked; "or shall we wait for the

alarm?”

“I doubt if we could hear an alarm where we are,” was the answer. “Let us go in.”

David’s self-possession seemed suddenly to desert him.

“I iss no Moslem,” said he, beginning to tremble; “but I respect de harem. Id iss to die if one iss caught. Davit vill stay here ant vait for you.”

The doctor locked his fingers fast in the Jew’s collar.

“You’ll come with us,” he declared. “Open the door, David!”

Perhaps David did not intend to obey so readily. He had scarcely touched his quivering forefinger to the dull metal of the spring when a sharp click was heard and the door moved and swung outward.

A gleam of light saluted them, half dazzling their eyes, and the group remained motionless, staring wonderingly at the scene the open panel disclosed. Perhaps the Colonel had expected to see in the khan’s harem a mass of silken draperies, luxurious couches and priceless rugs, while scowling black eunuchs guarded with their naked swords a group of henna-dyed, bepainted and bespangled, girls. Instead, he looked upon a scene that somehow reminded him of home. The furnishings were of an oriental character, it is true, but they were simple and in good taste, and an undefinable air of refinement pervaded the room.

Beside a table on which stood a bronze lamp sat a middle-aged lady with a beautiful face and sweet gray eyes. She was robed in a conventional European gown and seemed to be engaged, when so suddenly interrupted, in reading a well worn copy of the New York Herald. At her feet, upon a low stool, sat Janet, listlessly sewing upon some trifle that rested in her lap. On the other side of the table, his dark eyes fixed upon his work, sat the man we as yet know only as Merad, the Persian physician, busily engaged in writing.

At the abrupt opening of the panel, the existence of which was evidently unknown to them, the startled group turned wondering eyes upon the intruders, who seemed fully as astonished as themselves.

“God bless me!” cried the Colonel, partly recovering himself and stepping within the room. “Can it be you, Mrs. Osborne, in this impossible place? — And you, too, doctor!”

“Why, father! How did you ever get here?” exclaimed Janet, springing up to give him a warm embrace and a kiss.

And then the Colonel remembered, and a frown came over his face, succeeded by a puzzled expression.

“Isn’t this the khan’s harem?” he asked.

“I believe so,” returned Janet, laughing. And then Mrs. Osborne, with old-fashioned courtesy, came forward and offered the Colonel her hand, smiling

pleasantly into his staring eyes. The man, also, rose from his seat to shake hands with both the Colonel and the doctor, the latter gentleman seeming to be more amused than surprised at the encounter.

"You have taken us somewhat by surprise, but you are welcome," said Merad, in his deep, dignified tones, but speaking perfectly the English language. "I can appreciate your amazement at finding us in this place, for while we knew of your presence in Mekran, you were doubtless unaware that Mrs. Osborne and I are guests at the khan's palace."

"I — I can't understand it!" gasped the Colonel.

"Janet, my dear," said Mrs. Osborne, "will you try to find chairs for our friends?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the doctor, looking around him rather nervously, "we came here to rescue Janet from the toils of an Eastern harem, and this is the most civilized looking place I've found in all Baluchistan. What does it all mean?"

"Permit me," said Janet, saucily, "to in-troduce you to the mysterious veiled lady who was reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the world," and she waved a hand toward Mrs. Osborne. "I will acknowledge that she is the most beautiful, but, daddy dear, I am myself the queen of the harem, and His Highness the Khan's favorite wife — being at present the only one!"

The Colonel's face expressed horror and grief.

"I — I don't understand," he muttered, vacantly.

"The explanation is very simple," replied Dr. Osborne. "My son Howard, who was at one time your private secretary, is at present Khan of Mekran."

A sudden stillness succeeded this announcement, and then a look of comprehension stole over the Colonel's face. He rose from his chair and drew himself up with cold dignity.

"Then, sir, I demand to know what my daughter is doing in the house of the scoundrel who swindled me seven years ago? As for her statement that she is his wife, that is, of course, a lie!"

The Persian confronted him with folded arms, looking down upon the Colonel from his superior height with the same intent and compelling force in the dark eyes that had awed the native assemblage at the deathbed of Burah Khan.

"Howard Osborne is not a scoundrel!" he said.

"He is worse than that!" roared the choleric colonel, now beside himself with anger; "he is a thief, a forger and a coward. He signed my name for twenty thousand dollars, and ran away with the money. I have never seen his face from that day to this."

"It is true that my son left New York with this stigma attached to his

name," said the other, calmly. "But he did it to save you, Piedmont Moore, from a still greater humiliation, although I vainly pleaded with him to consider his own family before yours."

"What do you mean?" demanded the Colonel, plainly staggered at this statement.

Merad, hesitating for the first time, glanced at his wife, who shook her head pleadingly for him to hold his peace. But Janet sprang forward and stood erect beside him.

"Tell him!" she cried, defiantly. "The infamous secret has been kept too long."

Then Merad spoke in a low, clear voice.

"Your own son was the forger," he said.

"It's a lie!" shouted the Colonel, shrinking back, nevertheless, from the Persian's calm gaze.

"It is true. The money saved Allison from shame and exposure; so Howard dared not force him to return it. But the bank, being the direct victim of the forgery, placed the matter in the hands of the detective police. The toils were closing slowly but surely around your son when Howard, seeing no other way to save you, and tenderly loving the sister of the real criminal, whose heart he feared would be broken at the disclosure of her brother's infamy, decided to save you all by acknowledging himself the forger. It was a rash idea, hastily conceived and executed in a panic of fear, for the detectives were close upon the trail. He left me a note, telling me the whole truth and begging me not to betray Allison, for he had fled the country and would never return. Well knowing that he did not realize the consequences of his generous act, his mother and I set out to follow him, and for seven long years we have striven in vain to regain our lost son. I will not bore you, Colonel Moore, with a recital of our anxieties and sufferings — borne on your account; but I think it ill becomes you to revile the name of Howard Osborne. Rather should you fall at his feet in gratitude for one of the most noble and unselfish acts any man has ever performed."

The impressive and convincing tones carried with them the warrant of truth. The Colonel fell back upon his chair, covering his face with his hands, and Janet knelt beside him, her arms around his neck and her cheek to his, striving silently to comfort him. And while they remained thus, with little David gaping in the frame of the panel and still holding the flickering candle above his head, the door of the apart-ment suddenly opened and Ahmed Khan strode in.

One look into the grave faces of the group before him warned the ruler of Mekran that a crisis had arisen. Janet arose and stole swiftly to his side, and

he placed an arm around her with a reassuring smile. The Colonel looked up, and meeting the calm grey eyes of Howard Osborne he seemed shaken with a fury of doubt and rage.

“It is all false!” he cried, springing to his feet. “I am being tricked and deceived — even by my own daughter. This fellow is no Khan of Mekran, but a fugitive from American justice, masquerading as a native of Baluchistan. The forger of seven years ago is the impostor of today! Come to me, Janet. That man is not worthy to touch you.”

“Worthy or unworthy,” said the girl, clinging yet closer to the Khan, “my place is by his side. We were married seven years ago, before he left America. I am his wife, father!”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHAMBER OF DEATH

The silence that followed Janet's declaration was broken by the tramp of feet along the connecting passage, followed by an abrupt knock upon the door. The Persian opened it, glanced without, and then stood aside.

"Bring him in, Dirrag," he said.

Slowly the little band of warriors entered, bearing between them a limp form which they laid gently upon a couch.

The Colonel's face, as his staring eyes fell upon his son, was gray and haggard, but the old gentleman seemed to have exhausted his capacity for being surprised. Mrs. Osborne, with a shudder and a sympathetic moan, turned away weeping, but Janet crept close to the couch and gazed in mingled fright and horror upon her brother's motionless form.

"Is he dead?" asked the Colonel, hoarsely.

"Not yet," replied Dr. Warner, his hand on Allison's heart; "but he is dying."

"Where did you find him, Dirrag?" asked the Khan, in a quiet voice.

"In the vizier's garden, your Highness. He was attacked by Agahr's slaves, who likewise slew their master's own daughter, Maie."

The wounded man groaned, slightly moving his head.

"Stand back, all of you!" commanded the Colonel, with a sudden accession of his old brave spirit. And as they obeyed he himself approached the couch, a look of stern resolution upon his face. "Allison must speak, he must clear up this mystery before he dies."

The Persian motioned all the warriors save Dirrag to leave the room. Then he drew from his robe a small phial and forced its contents between Allison's set lips.

In a moment the young man groaned again, and then slowly opening his eyes, gazed vacantly upon the group around him.

"Allison," said his father — firmly, but in a tone less harsh than before — "here is Howard Osborne, whom I always have accused of forging, seven years ago, my check for twenty thousand dollars. He claims that he is innocent."

Allison moved restlessly, his eyes wandering from face to face as if in search of some one who was not present.

"I — I believe Howard is innocent," he answered, with much difficulty.

"Who was the culprit, then?"

The wôunded man stared back into his eyes, but made no reply.

"They say you are dying, my son," continued the old man, gently, "and if

you have done wrong — if you have ever deceived me — now is the time to confess all, and clear the name of an innocent man.”

Allison made a motion with his hand, wearily.

“Where is Maie?” he asked, “and why do you keep the place so cursed dark?”

The doctor placed an arm under his head, raising it slightly.

“Tell me, Allison,” pleaded the Colonel, “who forged that paper? Who was it, my son?”

“Why, — I did it, father — It’s all over, now — only twenty thousand — not worth — fussing about Maie! Are you there, my Maie?”

With the words he made an effort to rise, and a crimson stream gushed from his mouth and nostrils. The doctor laid him back upon the cushions, while the Persian sought to stay the hemorrhage with his handkerchief. But Allison was spent His limbs twitched nervously once or twice, and after that he lay still.

The harem of the Khan had become a chamber of death.

CHAPTER XXII.

BY THE HAND OF ALLAH

The events of this fateful night, numerous though they had been, were not yet ended.

Leaving the women to care for the dead man the Khan had withdrawn to his state apartment, taking with him the Persian, Dr. Warner and Colonel Moore, as well as David the Jew.

"It is best that all mysteries and misunderstandings be cleared up at once," said the young ruler, when his guests had been seated. "The hour is late, but I believe you will prefer not to rest until you have become acquainted with the facts that explain my presence here as the Khan of Mekran. But there are others in the palace who are entitled to hear the story, and with your permission I will ask them to join us."

The Colonel nodded consent He was yet too dazed by the appalling tragedy of the hour to command more than a listless interest in these consequent proceedings. Dr. Warner was grave and thoughtful, but seemed to realize intuitively that fate had been kind to his old friend in removing Allison from his life. After the first shock of grief had passed the Colonel himself would acknowledge this. The boy had been a thorn in his side for many years.

"Dirrag," said the Khan, "tell Captain Beni-Bouraz to unbind his prisoners; and do you lead them here to me."

They sat in silence until the command was obeyed, and Kasam and the aged vizier entered the room.

The Prince carried himself rather better in misfortune than when free to direct his own actions. He appeared composed and dignified, accepting his fate with a stout heart and seemingly without desire to bemoan the triumph of his enemy. Agahr's face was sternly set. What his thoughts might be none could tell.

The Khan greeted his prisoners cour-teously, and waited until they had seated themselves before he began to speak.

"Gentlemen," said he, addressing the entire group, "events have occurred this night which render it necessary that you be made acquainted with some portions of my life history that you are now ignorant of. A few minutes ago Colonel Moore accused me of being an impostor, because seven years ago he knew me in America as Howard Osborne."

Kasam gave a start at these words.

"I have never believed you were a Baluch," he said, scornfully. "You were foisted upon us by that false mufti of Mehmet, Salaman, to further

some interest of his own."

"It is true that I am not the son of Burah Khan," responded the other, in even tones. "My father is Dr. Merad Osborne, known to the people of Mekran as a Persian physician, and now here to verify my statement."

All eyes were turned upon the dark visage of the tall physician, seeking in vain a resemblance between the two men that would lend truth to the astonishing assertion.

Merad smiled.

"I will tell you my story," he said, "and then you will understand us better."

"I, for one, do not care to hear it," exclaimed Kasam, with scarcely suppressed eagerness. "If this man is no son of Burah Khan, he stands before us a fraudulent usurper, and the throne of Mekran belongs to me!"

"Not so," answered a clear voice, speaking in English, and the white-robed priest of Takkatu pressed through the group and stood before the Prince. "Ahmed Khan sits upon his throne by a better right than you can ever boast, Prince Kasam of Raab!"

Kasam was about to retort angrily, but he marked the jewelled star upon Salaman's breast and controlled himself to bow low before the emblem. England had not wholly driven out of the young Baluch's heart the faith of his fathers.

"Your words are strange, my father," he murmured, still somewhat rebelliously.

"Is not this man acknowledged to be the son of Merad?"

"And who is Merad?" asked the priest, gravely.

"I do not know, my father."

"Tell him, Merad."

"I am the son of Keedar Khan," said the physician, proudly.

A cry of surprise burst from his hearers. Even the vizier, who knew no English, caught the name of Keedar Khan and looked upon the Persian with curious eyes.

"I believe," said Kasam, brokenly, "it will be best to hear your story."

The priest stepped back, giving place to the physician.

"Keedar Khan had two legitimate sons," began Merad, "of whom I was the younger by several years. My brother Burah was fierce and warlike, and realizing that I might at some time stand in the way of his ambition and so meet destruction, I fled as a youth to Teheran, where I was educated as a physician by the aid of secret funds furnished by my father. When Keedar died and Burah ascended the throne I wan-dered through many lands until I finally came to America, where I met and loved Howard's mother, the

daughter of a modest New York merchant named Osborne. In wedding her I took her name, my own being difficult for the English-speaking tongue to pronounce, and from that time I became known as Dr. Merad Osborne, a physician fairly skilled in the science of medicines.

"Our son grew to manhood and became the private secretary of Colonel Moore. In appearance he favored his mother, rather than me, having her eyes and hair as well as the sturdy physique of the Osbornes. Seven years ago, or a little more, the catastrophy that wrecked our happiness occurred. Howard disappeared, self-accused of forging his employer's name for a large amount. He left behind, for the eyes of his mother and me alone, a confession of his innocence, together with the startling information that he had secretly married Colonel Moore's daughter before the knowledge of Allison's crime was known to him. His youth and inexpe-rience led him to believe that his sacrifice would shield his wife's brother and father from public exposure and disgrace, failing to take into consideration the wrong done to his girl-wife and to his own parents.

"I at once suspected that my boy had fled to the Orient, for he had always maintained an eager interest in my tales of Persia and Baluchistan, and knew I was a native of this country, although he was ignorant of the fact that he was the grandson of the great Keedar Khan. So his mother and I left New York, searching throughout the East in a vain endeavor to trace our lost son. At last we were reluctantly compelled to abandon the quest, and I settled in Kelat, where my fame as a Persian physician soon became a matter of note.

"It was in this capacity that I was sent for to minister to my dying brother, Burah Khan, who knew not that I was his brother. But I strove faithfully to carry out his will, and to preserve his life until the arrival of his heir. Then came from the monastery of Takkatu, where he had secluded himself, my own son, appointed by the Grand Mufti of the Sunnites to represent the successor of Burah Khan upon the throne of Mekran. To the great priest of our Faith," bowing low to Salaman, "no knowledge is barred, and from Howard's story of his father's life the Mufti knew the truth, and that he had a greater right, according to the laws of the tribes, to rule this country than the son of Burah Khan, who, also an inmate of the monastery, pleaded to be left to pursue his sacred studies at Takkatu.

"Of the strange coming of the Americans, through whom my son had been exiled from the land of his birth, I need not speak. The ways of Allah are indeed inscrutable, and Ahmed Khan has acted, during these past days of trial, by the advice of the great Salaman himself."

A silence followed this terse relation, which had sufficed to explain many things both to Kasam and to the Americans. David, also, shrinking back into

his corner, listened eagerly, wondering if there was any part of the strange story that he could at some future time sell to his advantage.

"There is little that I can add," said the Khan, musingly, "to my good father's words. That he has always remained a faithful Moslem you can easily guess, and it was but natural I should embrace the creed of my forefathers. I found much comfort in the religious seclusion of the monastery, but it is nevertheless a great relief to me to be freed at last from the taint of guilt that has clung to my name. The only wrong I did in America was to secretly marry the girl I loved and then leave her to mourn a lover whom she might well consider faithless and unworthy. My only excuse is that I was young and impulsive, and my dear wife, who had never ceased to have faith in my honor, has generously forgiven me the fault."

As the Khan paused, Kasam the prince strode forward and held out his hand.

"Forgive me, my cousin," he said, bravely, "that I have been led to misjudge and oppose you. From this time forth Ahmed Khan shall boast no more faithful follower than Kasam of Raab."

Howard pressed the proffered hand gratefully. Then he walked over to the aged vizier, who had been a silent and puzzled witness of the scene, and touched him gently upon his shoulder.

"You are forgiven, and you are free, Agahr," he said in Baluch. "Go to your home, and may the Prophet shield your heart from the bitterness of the blow that there awaits you."

Agahr looked into his eyes.

"Is it Maie?" he whispered.

The Khan nodded.

"The hand of Allah," said he in kindly tones, "spares neither the high nor the lowly."

Agahr threw up his arms with a wild scream.

"The hand of Allah!" he cried; "no, no! not that! It was the hand of him that loved her best — the hand of her father!"

And muffling his head in his cloak he tottered slowly from the room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VENGEANCE OF MAIE

To those who looked after Agahr with pitying eyes a slave entered, announcing a messenger for David the Jew.

The little man hurried away to the next chamber, where, dimly lighted by a swinging lantern, stood the form of a girl whose face was concealed to the eyes by the folds of a dark mantle. But the eyes were enough for David. He knew her at once.

"Halima!" he exclaimed. "Vy do you seek Davit?"

The girl drew a small box from her cloak.

"The gift of Maie," she said.

"Maie! Bud, dey tell me Maie iss dead."

"Of that I know nothing," answered the slave girl, all unmoved. "It is nevertheless her gift. I have been seeking you since before midnight, and but now discovered you were at the palace. Take the casket; and, mark me: here is the spring that opens it."

She drew the cloak around her again and with quiet, cat-like steps left the room.

David gazed after her with joy sparkling in his eyes.

"Id iss my luck!" he muttered, hugging the casket in an ecstasy of delight. "Id iss de luck of cleffer Davit! Efen de dead adds to my riches. Led me see — led me see if Maie iss generous."

With trembling fingers he touched the spring, and as the lid flew back he leaned over and feasted his eyes upon the gems and gold that sparkled so beautifully in the dim light.

Then the silken purse attracted his attention. He drew it out, loosened the string, and thrust in his thumb and finger.

Next moment an agonized yell rang through the palace. With a jerk that sent the gold and jewels flying in every direction the Jew withdrew his finger, glaring wildly at an object that curled about it and clung fast. Then he dashed the thing to the floor, set his heel upon it and screamed again and again in mad terror.

The cries aroused those in the next room; the draperies were torn aside and the Khan entered, followed by Merad, Kasam and the Americans.

David lay writhing upon the floor, and even as they gazed upon him his screams died away and his fat body rolled over with a last convulsive shudder.

"What has happened?" asked Kasam, bewildered — as, indeed, they all were.

The physician bent over and cautiously examined the crushed thing that had proved to be David's bane.

"It is a mountain scorpion," he said, "the most venomous creature in existence."

Maie's vengeance had survived her; but perhaps it mattered little to the dead girl that David's punishment had been swift and sure.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPIRIT OF UNREST

Two weeks had passed since the events just narrated, and peace seemed to have again settled over the isolated town of Mekran. Kasam remained at the palace, declaring himself a faithful adherent of Ahmed Khan, but although he had sent word to Zarig, the sirdar of Raab, who yet remained encamped with his warriors in the west valley, that peace was declared, the rebellious sirdar had refused to come into the city and make obeisance to Ahmed of Ugg.

All the Americans were now housed within the palace, and Aunt Lucy had come to revise and reconstruct her opinion of that whilom den of iniquity, the harem. But Allison's tragic death had sobered the good lady, as it had all of their little band, and checked for a time at least her garrulity and desire to criticise. There was no doubt of Aunt Lucy's democracy, yet it was amusing to note her pride in the fact that Janet was the wife of an Eastern potentate of the importance of Ahmed Khan. It would be a splendid tale to carry back to New York, and she had already decided to leave an envelope always carelessly lying upon her table addressed to "Her Imperial Majesty the Khanum of Mekran and Empress of Baluchistan." It would serve to amuse visitors while she arranged her hair at the mirror before coming down.

Kasam's wild passion for Janet had quickly evaporated with the news that she was wedded to Ahmed. The young prince was greatly subdued in spirit, and made no objections to Bessie's kindly efforts to console him. His position in the palace was necessarily an uncomfortable one, for he held no clearly defined rank in the household and there was no gift within the power of the Khan that it would be dignified in him to accept. Reared from childhood with the ambition of sometime becoming the ruler of Mekran by virtue of his royal blood, it was naturally difficult for Kasam to realize that this brilliant dream was past and he must be content to abandon it forever.

So he wandered restlessly in the gardens, with Bessie by his side, and accompanied the girl on long rides through the pleasant valleys, and might have been as happy as in the old days had he allowed himself to forget his disappointment.

Meantime Salaman, the Grand Mufti of the realm, remained the chosen companion of the Khan, who, notwithstanding the deference he paid to his illustrious father, leaned more upon the aged priest than any other of his friends. And thus it was that one bright morning they walked together upon a high roof of the palace, where none might interrupt their earnest communion.

"I have thought well upon your words, my son," said Salaman, "and examined critically your desires, striving honestly to quell my own

inclination to oppose you. But I fear I cannot understand you wholly. What is there in this favored country — the land of your famous forefathers — that repels you, and inclines you to leave it?"

Ahmed paced up and down, thoughtfully weighing his words e'er he replied.

"It is, as you well say, my father, a land favored of Allah; yet the life here is the life of the lotus-eaters; or one of holy concentration; or even of idle dreams. Time has no wings in Baluchistan. We live, and lo, we die, while the sun shines fair as ever, the breezes rustle through the palms, the fountains still splash in their marble basins, and the endless chain of humanity creeps on from the cradle to the grave with uneventful languor. As it was a hundred years ago, so it is today; as it is now it will be found in future ages — merely Baluchistan, the home of a million contented souls, all faithful to Allah, all indifferent to earthly conditions outside their narrow limits."

"Truly, a paradise on earth!" said Salaman, nodding approval.

"In the West," said the Khan, a stronger note creeping into his voice, "a spirit of unrest is ever abroad. It impels men to do and to dare, feeding upon their brain and brawn rather than upbuilding them. They strive — strive ever, though erring or misdirected — putting their shoulders all together to the wheel of the juggernaut chariot of Progress and sweating mightily that some thing may be accomplished that was never known before. And in this they find content."

"Poor souls!" murmured the priest "Father, I am of these — my mother's people — rather than of those who rest satisfied with Allah's gifts. Here I may never be at peace. As Khan of Mekran I would overturn all existing conditions. I would plunge my people into reckless wars of conquest, build rails for iron chariots to speed upon — shrieking the cry of Progress throughout the land. Merchants from all nations would gather here to rouse the tribesmen to barter and sale, teaching them lies and deceptions now all unknown to their simple hearts. My father, I would be as dangerous to your people as a firebrand in a thatch. Let me go. Send me back to that country whence I came: the country that taught me unrest; the country where alone I shall find employment for an earnest heart and a strong right arm! Put Kasam in my place."

"It may he that you are right; that you know what is best for us all," replied the priest, sadly. "But you demand that I perform a difficult task. You are Khan of Mekran, acknowledged legally by the sirdars and — "

"Not by Burah Khan," interrupted the other, with a smile. "It was my faithful Dirrag who, dressed in the dead Burah's robes, enacted the Khan's part and acknowledged me before the sirdars." Salaman gave a sigh of regret.

“True, dear Hafiz,” he said, unconsciously adopting the old affectionate appellation. “But you are grandson of the great Keedar. You rule justly and by right of inheritance. And in the beginning you accepted the throne readily enough. What has caused your inclinations to so change?”

“I have found a wife,” said the young man, proudly; “and she is an American. Without her I was content to merely exist.

With her by my side I am roused to action. Hear me, father. Kasam will rule you better than ever I could do. Has heart is here — where he was born. He will forget, as I never could do, the urgent prompting of that western civilization we have both known. Let Kasam be khan!”

Salaman came close to Ahmed, placed both hands upon his shoulders, and laid his aged head against the strong young breast.

“We have been friends, my Hafiz, and I have loved you. It grieves my very heart to let you go. But if I can compass the thing and bring the people to consent, it shall be according to your will. For life is brief, as you say, and Allah waits above for us both. And wherein would the charm of friendship lie if the selfishness of one should steal the other’s heart’s desire?”

For reply Ahmed gathered the speaker into his steadfast embrace; and so they stood silent and alone upon the housetop, with Allah’s sun lovingly caressing the brown locks of the Khan and the silvery beard of the high priest.

CHAPTER XXV.

KASAM KHAN

In the great throne room of the palace at Mekran were assembled all the dignitaries of the nation — sirdars, captains, kaids; muftis and mueddens from the mosques; civil officers and judges from the towns; high and lowly officials of the royal household. Even. the obstinate and unbridled Zirag had yielded to Kasam's demand and, doubtless more through curiosity than obedience, had left his camp to enter the city and witness the day's event.

Of the nature or character of this event all were alike ignorant. They merely knew they were commanded to assemble, and the authority of the khan, backed by that of the Grand Mufti Salaman, ranking next to him, was sufficient to bring them to a man at the appointed hour.

The press was truly great, even in this spacious hall of audience. Upon a raised dais sat Ahmed Khan, arrayed in his most magnificent robe of state. At one side, but upon a lower platform, sat Prince Kasam, and at the Khan's right hand stood the Grand Mufti, wearing his decoration of the jewelled star.

A silence bred of intense curiosity pervaded the assemblage. Even Zarig, who, clad in his well-worn riding dress, had pressed close to the platform, was awed by the dignity of the proceedings and glanced nervously from Kasam to Ahmed and then upon the stately form of the priest.

Presently the great Salaman stepped forward, offering a brief prayer imploring the guidance of Moses, of Jesus, of Mahomet and of Allah the All-Wise upon their deliberations. Then, drawing himself erect, he addressed the people in these words:

"My friends and brothers, it is my duty to declare to you, as representatives of all the people, that a great wrong has been done you. It was not an intentional wrong, nor one which, having been discovered, may not be fully redressed; nevertheless, you must hear the truth and act upon it as you deem just and right."

He paused, and a thrill of excitement swept over the throng. In all their history no such thing as this had been known before.

"The man who sits before you as Ahmed Khan," resumed the priest, in a cold voice, "came to you purporting to be the grandson of Keedar Khan and the son of Burah Khan, and thus entitled to rule over you. He is, indeed, the legitimate grandson of the great Keedar; but he is no son of Burah, being the offspring of Keedar's younger brother Merad, who fled to Persia an exile in his youth."

Notwithstanding the astonishing nature of this intelligence the assemblage maintained its silent, curious attitude. Many eyes were turned upon the calm

and dignified countenance of Ahmed Khan, but no mark or token of unfriendliness was manifested in these glances. The priest continued: “Those among you who heard the dying Burah acknowledge this man to be his son, before all the sirdars, will marvel that my statement can be true. You must now know that at that time Burah had really been dead for two days, and that another falsely took his place. It was this lawless one who, masquerading as the khan, made the formal acknowledgment For this reason Ahmed has never legally been your khan. He is not your khan now.”

At last a murmur burst from the throng; but to the listening ears of the priest it seemed more a sound of amazement than of protest or indignation. Ahmed arose from the throne, drew off his splendid robe of office and laid it over the arm of the chair, disclosing to all eyes the simple inner garb of a tribesman of Ugg. With dignified mien he stepped from the dais to the lower platform and held up a hand to command silence. Instantly every voice was hushed as if by magic.

“Brothers,” said he, “if I have wronged you I beg your forgiveness. Most willingly I now resign the throne to which I am not entitled, and ask you to choose for your-selves one more worthy than I to rule over you.”

As he paused a cry arose that quickly swelled to a clamorous shout:

“Ahmed! Give us Ahmed for our Khan! None shall rule us but Ahmed, the grandson of Keedar Khan!”

Salaman turned pale at this unexpected denouement, which threatened to wreck all his plans. He strode forward and seized Ahmed’s arm, dragging him into the background and then returning himself to confront the multitude.

Higher and higher the shouts arose, while the priest waved his hands to subdue the excitement that he might again be heard.

Zarig, scowling fiercely as the crowd pressed him against the edge of the platform, fingered his dagger as if longing to still this unwelcome homage to one of the hated tribe of Ugg; but so far as Salaman could determine there were few others who did not join the enthusiastic tribute to Ahmed.

But gradually the dignitaries tired of their unusual demonstration, and remem-bering their official characters subsided to their accustomed calm. The priest took advantage of the first moment that he could be plainly heard.

“Listen well, chieftains and friends!” he cried. “It is clear to me that your loyalty and admiration for Keedar’s grandson have clouded your clearer judgment. Not that I denounce Ahmed as unworthy to rule, but that before your eyes sits one entitled above all others to occupy the throne of his forefathers — the descendant of seven generations of just and worthy rulers of this land. Brothers, I present to you one who is a native-born Baluch —

the noblest of you all — Prince Kasam of Raab!”

Kasam, who until now had been ignorant of the purposes of Salaman, and was therefore as greatly astonished as any man present, obeyed the beckoning finger of the priest and arose to face his people with that air of proud dignity he knew so well how to assume.

Zarig shouted his name wildly: “Kasam! Kasam Khan!” and a few others, carried away by the priest’s words, followed the sirdar’s lead. But the shouts for Kasam were soon drowned by more lusty acclaims for Ahmed, and Salaman hesitated, at a loss how to act, while Kasam shrank back as if he keenly felt the humiliation of his rejection.

Driven to frenzy by the wild scene about him, Zarig sprang with one bound to the platform.

“No Ahmed Khan for me!” he shouted, and drawing a slender dagger from his belt he threw himself upon the American with the ferocity of a tiger.

But Kasam was even quicker. Before the multitude realized the tragic nature of the scene being enacted, the Prince had fallen upon his sirdar and plunged his knife twice into Zarig’s breast The man fell to the floor in a death agony, dragging Ahmed with him, while above them Kasam stood grasping the weapon that had so promptly saved the life of the man whom his people had preferred before him.

Then, indeed, a shout of admiration burst from the Baluchi, their impulsive natures quick to respond to the generosity of such an act Ahmed, freeing himself from the dead sirdar, rose up and seizing the royal robe he had discarded flung its brilliant folds over Kasam’s shoulders. Then he knelt before his preserver, and Salaman, prompt to take advantage of the diversion which was likely to turn the tide of popular enthusiasm his way, knelt also at Kasam’s feet as if saluting him as kahn.

Zarig had accomplished by his mad act all that he had once longed for in life. The cries for Kasam grew stronger and more spontaneous, and Ahmed was able to quietly withdraw from the platform without his absence being observed.

Soon the people were as eager in shouting for Kasam as they had been for Ahmed, and Salaman lost no time in completing the ceremony that established the heir of seven generations of rulers firmly upon the throne.

Janet met her husband at the entrance to the harem, where he had hurried as soon as he could escape from the hall.

“Well, how did it end?” she asked. ‘They terrified me, at first, with their cries for Ahmed Khan.”

“They terrified me, too, sweetheart,” he answered lightly. “But my cousin Kasam is truly made of the right stuff, and turned the tide in the nick of time.

Now then, join me — all together, dear one! — hurrah for Kasam Khan!”

And as their voices died away an answering shout, grave and stern, came like an echo from the great audience chamber:

“Kasam Khanl.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

HER SERENE HIGHNESS THE KHANUM

Never had a better equipped caravan left the gates of Mekran to cross the Gedrusian Desert in the direction of Kelat and civilization. The palanquins of the dromedaries were so comfortable that Aunt Lucy declared she felt as if on shipboard. The horses were the finest the famous monastery of Mehmet had ever bred; the pack animals bore tents and material for the nightly camp that would have been worthy the great Alexander himself, and everything that might contribute to the comfort and even luxury of the travellers had been provided with a liberal hand. Here were the twenty Afghans, too, glad of the chance to return to their own country again; but of the former patty some were missing and some had been added.

Dirrag was the guide, this time, and the faithful fellow lost no opportunity to implore Howard Osborne to take him along to America. "Your Highness will need a bodyguard," he argued, "so why not take me, whom you may trust?"

"We don't use body guards in America, Dirrag," was the laughing answer.

"But we have such things as true friends — when we can get them," said Janet, brightly; "so I shall insist upon having my old warrior by my side, wherever we may go."

"That settles it, Dirrag," announced the doctor; "you're half an American already. Heigh-ho! I wish I could go with you. But Bessie says I must return to her just as soon as I've bought the new furnishings for the palace and seen Lucy well on her way home. You may expect me to end my days in this jumping-off place, my dear Colonel."

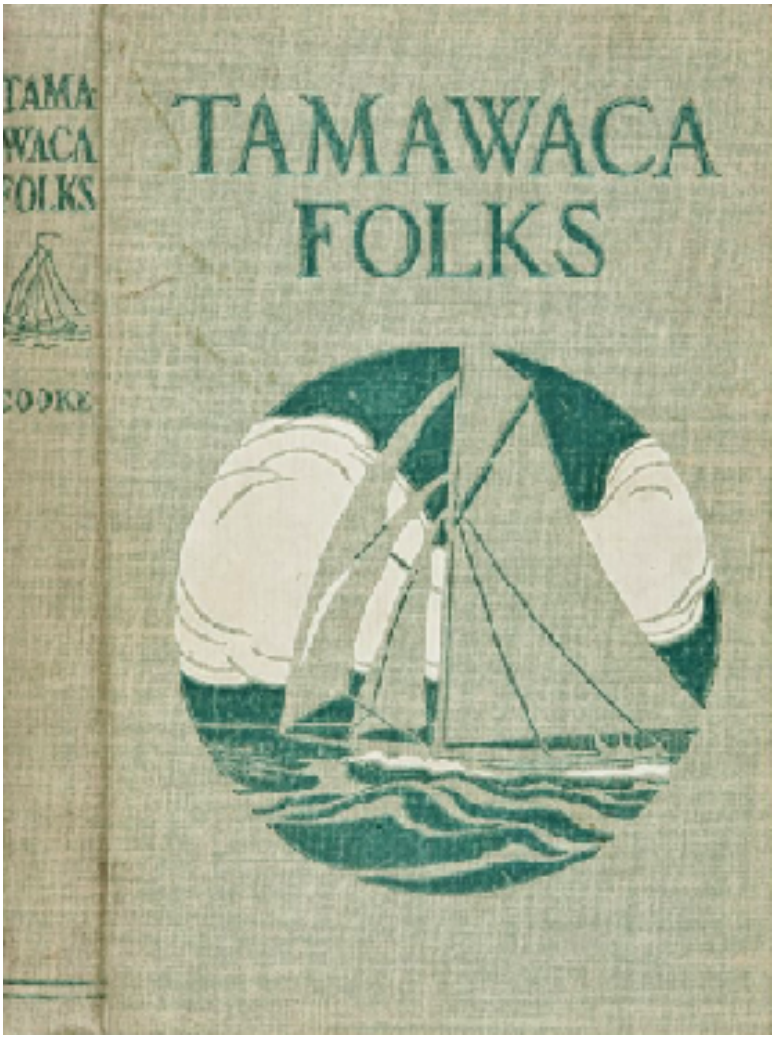
"It's really a very fine country," declared Aunt Lucy, with an air of proud proprietorship; "and it's only natural, Luther, you should wish to live with Her Serene High-ness the Khanum of Mekran and Empress of Baluchistan, who is your only daughter and my niece."

"Fiddlesticks!" said the doctor, laughing. "I really believe the only reason Lucy is anxious to get back to New York," he remarked to Dr. and Mrs. Osborne in a loud aside, "is to air her relationship with the Khanum. Oh, by the way, Colonel," turning to his old friend, "how about that railroad?"

"Bother the railroad!" growled the Colonel. "I'd forgotten all about it."

TAMAWACA FOLKS: A SUMMER COMEDY

Tamawaca Folks: A Summer Comedy appeared in 1907 under the pseudonym, John Estes Cooke. Privately published by L. Frank Baum, the semi-autobiographical novel describes the summer community of Tamawaca, Michigan, where Baum bought a house in 1900 after his first success with *Father Goose: His Book*. Baum nicknamed the house, "the Sign of the Goose." The novel relates the story of a Kansas City lawyer named Jarrod, who falls in love with the community and fights the corruption threatening it. As well as having fun with a romantic subplot, Baum draws a delightful parody of himself in the "distinguished author" Mr. Wright, whom he describes as "stubborn, loud-mouthed and pig-headed."



A first edition copy of' 'Tamawaca Folks'

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L. Frank Baum reading on the porch of the Michigan house he called "The Sign of the Goose"

L. Frank Baum steering a boat near his Michigan house

EXPLANATIVE.

The author begs to state that whatever is contained in this modest volume has been written in a spirit of the broadest goodfellowship, and with malice toward none. He has met odd and entertaining people in all quarters of the world and has brought them together in “Tamawaca Folks” merely that he might weave them into his little romance, and with no thought of being in any way personal. Therefore, since these are many and variant types and can have no individuality for that reason, the writer begs his reader not to attempt to fit any of the fictitious characters to living persons, lest your neighbor try to fit one of my masquerade costumes to you — which would be an impertinence I am sure you would not like. The temptation, I admit, is natural, because the people portrayed are all human and even their composites have prototypes in nearly every locality. But desist, I entreat you.

Tamawaca exists, and is as beautiful as I have described it. I chose it as the scene of my story because I once passed an entire summer there and was fascinated by its incomparable charm. The middle West has no spot that can compete with it in loveliness.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAWYER.

When Jarrod finally sold out the Crosbys he had a chance to breathe freely for the first time in years. The Crosbys had been big ranch owners and herders, mine owners, timber and mill owners, bankers, brokers, bucket-shop manipulators and confirmed bull-dozers and confidence-men. They played the game for big stakes always and won by sheer nerve and audacity.

Jarrod was their lawyer and they kept him in hot water every minute. They had a habit of rounding up other folks' cattle, cutting other people's timber, jumping claims, tapping mines and misbehaving generally. And Jarrod had to straighten out these misdeeds and find a way to keep his clients from behind the bars.

Old man Crosby, who had been shot in the hip in a raid, ran the Bank of Oklahoma, and ran it so crookedly that Jarrod was often in despair. No one would believe a Crosby under oath, while Jarrod was acknowledged by even his enemies to be square as a die and fair as the scales of justice. So his position was extremely difficult. He saved the Crosbys from their misdeeds for years, by dint of hard work and constant diplomacy, and at last, when a thousand penalties confronted them and could not be staved off much longer, the lawyer managed to sell for them their entire holdings and induced them to retire from business in general and lawlessness in particular.

When it was all over Jarrod went home to Kansas City, nodded to his wife, looked curiously and with some interest at his children, and then sat down in an easy chair and sighed. It was all new and strange to him — this being "at home" — and he wasn't sure at first whether he liked it or not.

Mrs. Jarrod liked it, though, and made much of him, so that gradually his uneasiness wore off and he settled down meekly to the practice of law in general. Four or five hours a day he spent in his office, listening to the unimportant grievances of common folks and striving to keep his nerves from jumping.

He hadn't thought to feather his nest, yet the Crosbys had good-naturedly tossed a lump of money at him and he had accepted it. But a nervous man must keep busy, even when those same nerves operate to keep him cold and quiet as an alternative to dancing and yelling like a madman. So Jarrod "held on to himself" and tried to enjoy his devoted family and the petty details which were all that remained of a business too long neglected to serve those wild Crosbys.

The reaction had set in following his recent months of hard work, and before many days he felt himself both physically and mentally exhausted and

knew that unless he deliberately created a diversion his run-down constitution would be likely to involuntarily create one that he wouldn't like.

As fate would have it, on a balmy spring day he met an old friend — a Dr. Brush — who was a prominent and highly respected clergyman. Said the doctor:

"You need a change, Jarrod. Why don't you go to some quiet, pleasant summer resort, and loaf until fair?"

"Where can I find such a place?" asked Jarrod.

"Why, any of the Lake Michigan resorts are desirable — Tamawaca, Bay View, Charlevoix or Petoskey. I've been to Tamawaca a couple of summers myself, and like it immensely. It isn't so fashionable as Charlevoix and Petoskey, but it is the most beautiful place I have ever seen, bar none."

"What's there?" enquired Jarrod, listlessly.

"Lake Michigan, to begin with; and Tamawaca Pool, which is really a lovely inland lake. You'll find there good fishing and bathing, a noble forest running down to the water's edge, pretty cottages nestled among the trees, lots of ozone, and quiet till you can't rest."

"Eh?"

"I mean quiet so you *can* rest."

"It sounds promising," said Jarrod. "Guess I'll go. My wife remarked yesterday we ought to escape the summer's heat on the children's account. This idea will please her — and it pleases me. I used to fish when I was a boy. And hunt. How's the hotel, Brush?"

"Bad as possible. Take a cottage. That's the only way to enjoy life."

"How can I get a cottage?"

"Oh, ask Wilder, when you get to Tamawaca. There are always cottages to rent. But stay! you might take Grant's place. He's a St. Louis man, and I understand his cottage is for rent. I'll write and ask him, if you like."

"Do, old fellow. And thank you very much."

He went home and told Mrs. Jarrod, who was delighted with the plan.

"Where did you say it was?" she asked.

"On Lake Michigan, somewhere. I forget the name of the place."

"How do you get there?"

"I didn't enquire."

"And whose cottage are you going to rent?"

"Why, — it belongs to a man in St. Louis. Dr. Brush knows him."

Mrs. Jarrod asked no more questions, but she straightway put on her bonnet and called upon Mrs. Brush.

In an hour she knew all that was necessary about Tamawaca.

The clergyman got a reply, in course of time, from Grant of St. Louis. His

cottage was in Wilder's hands to rent. Jarrod must see Wilder about it as soon as he got to Tamawaca. It was all furnished and ready to move into.

"Who is Wilder?" Jarrod asked his friend.

"Wilder! Oh, I forgot you don't know Tamawaca," said Dr. Brush. "Therefore you don't know Wilder. Wilder is Tamawaca."

"I see," returned Jarrod, nodding.

"Oh, no you don't. You *think* you see, I've no doubt. But there is only one Wilder upon earth, and perhaps that is fortunate. You've been in with those pirate Crosbys for years. Well, Wilder is the Crosby — in other words the pirate — of Tamawaca. See now?"

"He runs things, eh?"

"Yes; for Wilder. A charming fellow, by the way. Looks like a cherub, and acts like — "

"You interest me," said Jarrod, brightening. "I'm glad I'm going to Tamawaca.

A few days later the Jarrods — bag and baggage, parents and children — travelled up to Chicago and landed in the morning at the Auditorium Annex. A little fat man stood before the counter in front of Jarrod and winked saucily at the clerk. His face was moon-shaped and rosy, guiltless of whisker, and bore an expression at once gentle and whimsical.

"Gimme the best room you have," he called out, while scribbling his name on the register.

"Ah, a twenty-dollar suite?" asked the clerk, cheerfully.

"Hear me out!" retorted the little man. "Gimme the best room you have for four dollars a day."

"Oh," said the clerk,' his jaw dropping. "Here, front! show the gentleman up to 1906. Any baggage, sir?"

"Just my wife," sighed the little man, with another wink, and a stout lady of ample proportions grabbed his arm and whisked him away. She didn't seem at all offended, but laughed pleasantly and said: "Now, George, behave yourself!"

Jarrod looked at the register. The little fat man had written: "Geo. B. Still, Quincy, III."

The Jarrods shopped during the day, and bought themselves and the children cool things for summer. In the evening they went down to the river and boarded the big steel steamer that was to carry them to their destination.

CHAPTER II.

JIM.

A whistle blew; the little tug strained at its cable, and snorting and puffing in the supreme struggle it drew the great steamer "Plymouth" away from its dock to begin its journey down the river to the open lake and thence, discarding its tug, across mighty Michigan to Iroquois Bay, Tamawaca, and the quaint city of Kochton.

The passengers thronged both the ample decks to catch the cooling breeze that came as soon as they were in motion, for the day had been especially warm for June. The older folks drew long lines of chairs to the rails, while the young people walked up and down, chattering and gay. To nearly all the voyage meant the beginning of a holiday, and hearts were light and faces eager and expectant.

Jarrod had no sooner located his family in a comfortable corner than he was attracted by a young man who sauntered by.

"Why, Jim, is it you?" he exclaimed, jumping up to hold out a hand in greeting.

The other paused, as if astonished, but then said in a cordial tone:

"You here, Mr. Jarrod?"

He was a tall, athletic looking fellow, with a fine face, a straightforward look in his eyes and a clean-cut air about him that was pleasant to behold. Jarrod had recognized him as the only son of a man he had known in St. Louis — a man very prominent and wealthy, he remembered.

"What are you doing here, Jim?" he enquired.

"Why, I live in Chicago now, you know," was the reply.

"You do?"

"Didn't you know, sir? I left home over a year ago. I'm hoeing my own row now, Mr. Jarrod."

"What's wrong, Jim?'

"Father and I couldn't agree. He wanted me to take to the patent medicine business, because he has made a fortune in it."

"Very natural," nodding.

"The poor father suffers a good deal from rheumatism, you know; so as soon as I left college he proposed to turn over to me the manufacture and sale of his great rheumatism cure."

"Ah."

"And I balked, Mr. Jarrod. I said the proprietor of a rheumatism cure had no business to suffer from rheumatism, or else no business to sell the swindling remedy."

“To be sure. I know your father, Jim, so I can imagine what happened, directly you made that statement. Did he give you anything when you — er — parted?”

“Not a sou. I’m earning my own living.”

“Good. But how?’

“They don’t take a boy just out of college for the president of a bank or the director of a railway. I’m just a clerk in Marshall Field’s.”

Jarrod looked him over, critically. The cheap new summer suit — perhaps it had cost fifteen dollars — could not disguise his manly bearing. On another man it might have proclaimed its cheapness; on Jim no one noticed its texture.

“How much do you earn?” asked the lawyer, quietly.

“Twelve dollars a week. But it’s an interesting experience, Mr. Jarrod. You’ve no idea how well a fellow can live on twelve dollars a week — unless you’ve tried it.”

Jarrod smiled.

“Where are you bound for?” he asked.

“A little place called Tamawaca, there to spend my two weeks’ vacation. Just think of it! After fourteen months I’ve saved enough for an outing. It isn’t a princely sum, to be sure — nothing like what I spent in a day at college — but by economy I can make it do me in that out-of-the-way place, where the hotel board is unusually cheap.”

“I’m told it is as bad as it is cheap,” said Jarrod.

“That stands to reason, sir. I’m not expecting much but rest and sunshine and fresh air — and perhaps a nice girl to dance with in the evening.”

“I see.”

“And, by the way, Mr. Jarrod,” this with some hesitation, “please don’t tell anyone who I am, if you’re asked. I call myself James Ingram — Ingram was my mother’s name, you know — and I’d rather people wouldn’t know who my father is, or why I’m living in this modest way. They would either blame me or pity me, and I won’t endure either from strangers, for it’s none of their business.”

“I’ll remember, Jim. Will you let me present you to Mrs. Jarrod?”

“Not tonight, please. This meeting has a little upset me. Wait till I get settled a bit. You’re going to Tamawaca.

“Yes. We shall spend the summer there, if we like it.”

“Then, sir, I’ll be sure to see you again. Good night, Mr. Jarrod.”

The young man walked on, and the lawyer looked after him approvingly.

“He’ll do,” he muttered. “He hasn’t crushed down the pride yet, and I hope he never will. But he’s got a backbone, and that’s worth everything!”

In drawing a chair to the rail he found that seated beside him was the little fat man he had noticed at the Annex. This jovial individual was smoking a big cigar and leaning back contentedly with his feet against the bulwark. Jarrod thought the expression upon the round face invited companionship.

"Going to Tamawaca?" he asked.

"Yep," said Geo. B. Still.

"Been there before?" continued Jarrod, leaning back in turn.

"Yep. Own a cottage there."

"Oh," said the other; "then I'm glad to meet you."

"Because I own a cottage?"

"No; because you can tell me something about the place."

"Sure thing!" responded Geo. B. "Climate's fine. When I first went there I had a bad case of indigestion. Doc said I was as good as dead. Told me to eat toasted straw for breakfast and have my wife get her black ready. Look at me now! Would a crape manufacturer smile at my picture? Pshaw!"

"You seem very well," remarked Jarrod. "Was it the breakfast food, or the climate?"

"Climate, I guess. My taste don't run to breakfast foods. I'd make a poor horse. So I shovelled in plenty of welsh rabbits and lobster newburgs and corn fritters and such remedies, an' washed 'em down with good beer and a few bottles of sherry. Why, sir, the treatment worked like magic! Digestion perfect — pulse reg'lar — spirits gay and unconfined — happiness rampant. That Tamawaca climate's a peach."

"Do you think I can rent a cottage there?"

"Sure. Ask Wilder. He'll fix you."

"Is there a grocery handy, where one can purchase supplies?"

"Yep. Wilder runs it."

"And a meat market?"

"Wilder's."

"Can I rent a good boat, for fishing?"

"Wilder has 'em."

"Good. Dear me! I forgot to get a bathing suit in Chicago."

"Never mind. Wilder's Bazaar has 'em. Two dollars for the dollar kind."

"What time does the boat get to Tamawaca.

"Four o'clock in the morning. But you stay on board and ride to Kochton, and get your sleep out. Then, in the morning you take a trolley back to Tam. The steamer puts your baggage off at Iroquois Bay, just across the channel."

"What becomes of it?"

"Wilder ferries it over for twenty-five cents a piece. It's too far to jump."

"But isn't that a heavy charge?"

“Not for Wilder. It’s a good deal, of course, but Wilder’s deals are always good — for Wilder. You’re lucky he don’t take the baggage.”

“Oh. Is he that kind?”

“Exactly. What you get, you get of Wilder. What Wilder hasn’t got, you don’t get. When you allow for expenses you want to figure on so many dollars for living, and so much to Wilder for letting you live.”

“But that’s an outrage.”

Geo. B. laughed.

“It always strikes a stranger that way — till he gets used to it,” he said. “I’ve been to a good many summer resorts, in my day, and always there’s somebody on hand to relieve the innocent resorter of his wad. If there wasn’t, you’d feel you’d missed something. It’s like going to law — don’t matter much which lawyer you go to, you’re bound to be robbed.”

Jarrod smiled.

“Therefore, if you want Tamawaca, sir, you’ve just got to take Wilder with it,” resumed the little man; “and perhaps you couldn’t be half so happy there if Wilder was gone.”

“Does he own the place?”

“Of course. He and old man Easton. Wilder has one-third and old man Easton two-thirds of the whole place; but then, Easton also has Wilder, just the same as all the rest of us have him.”

“What sort of a man is Easton?”

“Fine old religious duffer, who loves to pray for your spiritual well-fare while he feels for your pocket-book. Public opinion’s divided between the two partners. Some say Wilder’s a highwayman and Easton’s a robber, while others claim Easton’s the highwayman and Wilder’s the robber. You can take your choice.”

“What a bad state of affairs!” ejaculated Jarrod, with twinkling eyes. “I’m sorry the boat has started.”

“Never mind. It isn’t as bad as Atlantic City, by a long shot. Why, last year a friend of mine went to Atlantic City with a letter of credit and an automobile, and in three months he was working at the hotel for money enough to get home and the hotel man was riding in his automobile. Tamawaca isn’t as bad as that, so sit up and look pleasant. Tamawaca’s the gem of the world — a heaven for loafers, lovers, bridge-players and students of nature — including human. You’ll like it there. But as for Wilder and Easton — say! any combination lock on your inside pocket?”

“No.”

“Then use a safety pin, and keep your coat buttoned.”

Jarrod smiled again. His spirits rose. He scented battle as a cat scents

cream. Here was a delightful condition of affairs existing in a tucked-away resort where he was going to spend the summer, and the chances were he would be amply amused. Any capricious manifestation of human nature was sure to charm him, no matter what phase it exhibited, and the man who had for years fought and conquered the terrible Crosbys was not likely to shrink from a pair so frankly enterprising as Easton and Wilder seemed to be. And, if he must put in three long months at Tamawaca, Jarrod simply *had* to be amused.

He slept well on the boat that night — the first sound sleep he had enjoyed for months.

CHAPTER III.

WILDER.

When Jarrod arrived at Tamawaca in the course of the next forenoon he found all prophecies most amply fulfilled. Fronting the beautiful bay was a group of frame buildings bearing various signs of one general trend: "Wilder's Grocery;"

"Wilder's Ice Cream and Soda Fountain;"

"Wilder's Model Market;"

"Wilder's Boat Livery;"

"Wilder's Post Office" (leased to Uncle Sam;)

"Wilder's Bakery;"

"Wilder's Fresh-Buttered Pop-Corn;"

"Wilder's Bazaar;"

"Wilder's Real Estate Office," etc., etc.

As the lawyer helped his family off the car a man dashed out of the grocery, ran up to him and seized both his hands in a welcoming grip. He was a stocky built, middle sized man, with round features chubby and merry, a small mouth, good teeth and soft brown eyes that ought to have been set in a woman's face.

"My dear, *dear* boy, I'm delighted to see you — indeed I am! Welcome to Tamawaca," said the man, in a cordial, cheery tone. "And these are the dear children! My, my — how they *have* grown! And Mrs. Jenkins, too, I declare! Nora, my dear," turning to a pleasant faced woman who had followed him out, "here are our dear friends the Jenkinses, that Mr. Merrington wrote us about. Allow me to present Mrs. Wilder, my dear Mrs. Jenkins, and I'm sure she's as glad to see you as I am myself."

"Pardon me," said the lawyer, a little stiffly; "my name is Jarrod."

"Of course — of course!" cried Wilder, unabashed. "Nora, my dear, help me to welcome our good friends the Jarrods, that Dr. Brush has written us about. How nice to see you at last in lovely Tamawaca! And the children will have the time of their lives; and Mrs. Jarrod will be delighted with our swell society — nothing sweller in all Michigan, I assure you!"

"It's awfully nice to see you here," added Mrs. Wilder, as smiling and cheerful as her mate. "Won't you come into the bazaar and sit down for awhile? Perhaps Mr. Jarrod has some business to talk over with my husband."

"Yes," said Jarrod, as his wife and children trooped after the pleasant little lady into the roomy and well-stocked bazaar; "I want to enquire about Grant's cottage. He says you have the rental of it."

Wilder's face fell, and his merry expression gave way to one of absolute despair.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, as if deeply distressed; "how very unfortunate. Grant's cottage was rented only last evening. How sad that I did not know you wanted it!"

"But there are others, of course," suggested Jarrod, after a moment's thought.

"Let — me — see," mused Wilder, reflectively. "There's the Stakes place — but that's rented; and Kimball's is gone, too; and Smith's, and Johnson's, and McGraw's — all rented and occupied. My dear boy, I'm afraid you're up against it. There isn't a cottage left in Tamawaca to rent! But never mind; you shall stay with me — you and the wife and the dear little ones. I live over the grocery, you know — really swell apartments. You shall stay there as my guests, and you'll be very welcome, I assure you."

"Oh, I can't do that, Wilder," said Jarrod, much annoyed. They had strolled, by this time, to the porch of the grocery and bazaar — a long building facing the bay on one side and the hotel on the other. It had wide porches set with tables for the convenience of consumers of ice-cream sodas. Inside, the building was divided into the meat market, the grocery and the bazaar, all opening on to the same porch.

Jarrod sat down at one of the tables, feeling homeless and despondent. He had eaten a dreadful breakfast in Kochton, an hour before, and it hadn't agreed with him. Through the open door of the bazaar he beheld Mrs. Wilder talking earnestly with his wife. She had given his little girl a large and expensive doll to hold and his little boy a full-rigged toy sailboat to play with.

"Ah!" cried Wilder, slapping the table with emphasis; "I have it! You are saved, dear boy — and not only saved but highly favored by fortune. How lucky I happend to think of it!"

"What is it?" asked Jarrod, with reviving interest.

"Why, I've got Lake View for sale, the prettiest and finest cottage in the whole Park. You shall have it, dear boy — you shall have it for a song."

"But I don't want to buy a cottage," protested Jarrod. "I've not even seen Tamawaca yet, and I don't know as I'll like it."

"Not like it! Not like Tamawaca!" Wilder's voice was sad and reproachful. "My dear boy, *everybody* likes Tamawaca. You can't help liking it. Come, I'll show you the charms of our little heaven upon earth, and at the same time you shall examine lovely 'Lake View.'"

During this conversation a little group of people had been gathering a few paces behind Wilder, all with anxious faces but a diffidence about

interrupting him. Wilder noted this group and excused himself from Jarrod for a moment.

"Yes, Mrs. Jones," he said, in his earnest, winning tones, "give me your baggage checks and I'll have the trunks up to your cottage in a jiffy. Certainly, Miss Vanderslop, I'll be glad to telephone for you — no trouble at all! Here, William," to his clerk in the grocery, "cash this check for Mr. Chambers. What's that, Mrs. Harringford? the bread sour? Too bad, dear girl, too bad! But accidents will sometimes happen. William, give Mrs. Harringford her money back; the bread's sour. What is it, Mr. Harden? Gasoline stove won't work? I'll have a man up to fix it in half an hour; don't worry, dear boy; half an hour at the latest. *Good* morning, Mrs. Still! here are the keys to your cottage. I've had the women clean it and put it in order and it's all ready for you to walk into and sit down. No trouble at all — no thanks — glad to be of use to you. What is it, my little man? a note from mamma? Ah, yes; tell her it will give me great delight to reserve a berth for her on tomorrow night's boat. And now, Mr. Jarrod, I'm at your service."

"You seem to be a busy man," said Jarrod, with a smile.

"Usually I am," replied Wilder, mopping his forehead; "but there's not much doing this morning; it's too early in the season; I'm resting up for the busy days coming. Let us walk over to the Lake front, and I'll astonish you with the beauty of our fairyland."

So Jarrod, leaving his family to be entertained by Mrs. Wilder, who seemed an eminently fitting spouse for her cheery husband, followed this modern Poo-Bah along a broad cement walk that led past the hotel and through a shady grove. There were cottages on every side, clustered all too thickly to be very enticing, but neatly built and pleasant enough for a summer's outing. A few paces more brought them to a magnificent view of the great inland sea, and soon they emerged upon a broad beach lapped by the rolling waves of grand old Michigan.

Jarrod's eyes sparkled. It *was* beautiful at this point, he was forced to admit, and the cool breath of the breeze that swept over the waters sent an exhilarating vigor to the bottom of his lungs and brought a sudden glow to his cheek.

Along the lake front was another row of pretty cottages, running north and south for a distance of half a mile or more. At frequent intervals an avenue led from the beach back into the splendid forest, where, Wilder explained, were many more cottages hidden among the trees.

"Some people prefer to live in the forest," said he, "while others like to be nearer the water. The cottage you have just bought is near the big lake, and finely located."

“I didn’t know I had purchased it, as yet,” remarked Jarrod, drily.

“I forgot,” said Wilder, laughing. “There are a good many things for me to think of, you know, and sometimes I get ‘em mixed.”

“I see.”

“Here,” continued the guide, as they went south along the wide beach walk, “is the residence of the Father of Tamawaca, my dear partner Mr. Easton. A fine man, sir, but erring in judgment now and then.” He stumbled on a loose, worn out plank, and came to a halt. “This walk, dear boy, ought to be repaired. I’ve talked to Easton about it more than once, but he says he’s too poor to squander money on public improvements. It’s his idea that the cottagers should repair the walks.”

“Isn’t this in front of his own residence?” asked Jarrod.

“Y-e-e-e-s; seems to be. But Easton says, and with justice, that all the people living above here are obliged to use this walk to get down town — where the store and post-office are located — and so they ought to see that it’s kept in proper condition.”

“Who owns the street?” enquired Jarrod.

“Why, we own it, of course — Easton and I. You see, this whole place was once a farm and some men bought it and laid out and platted Tamawaca Park. They incorporated under the laws of Michigan as a summer resort company, and so they kept the control of all the streets and public grounds in their own hands. It’s a private settlement, you understand, and when a man buys one of our lots he acquires the right to walk over our streets as much as he likes — as long as he behaves himself.”

“And if he doesn’t?”

“If he doesn’t we can order him off.”

“Was the original plat recorded?” asked Jarrod.

“Yes; of course.”

“With the streets and public grounds laid out in detail?”

“Certainly.”

“Then,” said the lawyer, “the first man that bought a lot here acquired a title to all your public streets and grounds, and you lost the control of them forever.”

“Nonsense!” cried Wilder.

“I’ve read law a bit,” said Jarrod, “and I know.”

“Michigan law is different, dear boy,” announced Wilder, composedly. “Still we mean to do what’s right, and to treat every cottage owner fair and square — as long as he does what we tell him to.”

Jarrod’s face was beaming. He had not been so highly amused for months — not since the Crosbys had sold out. He hadn’t seen Lake View Cottage as

yet, but already he had decided to buy it. A condition that would have induced an ordinary man to turn tail and avoid Tamawaca was an irresistible charm to this legal pugilist. But his cue was now to be silent and let Wilder talk.

"Here, dear boy," that seraphic individual was explaining, "is where Noggs lives, the wealthy merchant prince of Grand Rapids. And here's the cottage of our distinguished author. Don't have to work, you know. Just writes books and people buy 'em. Snap, ain't it?"

"Looks that way," said Jarrod. "What's that cottage standing in the middle of yonder avenue?"

"Oh, that belongs to old man Easton."

"Why is it there?"

"Why, lake front lots are scarce, you know; but cottages on the lake front rent for good money. So Easton built one in the street, and rents it at a high figure. Clever scheme, ain't it?"

"Didn't the cottage owners object?"

"It was built in the winter, when no one was here. When the resorters came in the spring and saw it, they wailed an' tore their hair. But it was too late, then. While they swore, Easton prayed for 'em; he's religious. The old saint's got lots o' cottages on public grounds, but no one can make him tear 'em down because we control the public grounds ourselves. Whatever's public here belongs to me an' Easton. Understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Here's where the big stock-yards man from Chicago lives. Pretty place, eh? And here's the cottage of George B. Still, the magnate of Quincy."

"I've met him."

"Fine fellow, and so's his wife. One of the largest grocery bills, sir, at the Park! Ah, here we come to the cottage of the famous philanthropist from Chicago Commons — Professor Graylor. Used to be a rich man, but spent everything he had to convert the heathen dagos of the Windy City. Now all he's got left is this cottage and a clear conscience — poor man!"

"Why do you say 'poor man'?"

"Because, dear boy, a clear conscience ain't an available asset. I've got one myself, and I know," said Wilder, plaintively. "But here we are at Maple Walk — one of the most picturesque avenues in town. Please climb these few steps; it is on this walk your charming cottage stands."

"Mine?"

"To be sure. No man of judgment, dear boy, would refuse to buy it, and I can see you 're a good bit wiser than the average resorter. I'm *so* glad you came!"

“Thank you.”

“You ‘re just the sort of man we need, Mr. Jarrod — the sort we’re always lookin’ for.”

“To walk on your streets and repair your sidewalks?”

“Exactly.”

“And patronize your mercantile establishments?”

Wilder laughed heartily.

“Why not?” he asked, laying a familiar and caressing hand on the other’s shoulder. “You’ve got to live; an’ poor Wilder’s got to live.”

“Poor Wilder can’t help living, it seems to me,” returned Jarrod, reflectively. “All these people are forced to trade with you, because there’s no one else to patronize. You’ve established a monopoly here.”

“It ain’t that,” said Wilder, becoming serious. “I don’t want to monopolize anything, I’m sure. All I want is for people to come here and have a good time, and I can’t trust anyone but myself to give ‘em the right service and the right goods at the right prices. That’s why I run everything myself — and lose money year after year a-doin’ it.”

“How can you lose money?”

“Why, on the folks that don’t come here. If Tamawaca was double the size, I’d make double the money, wouldn’t I? But it’s a small place, you see, and no man’s so energetic that he can get more than there is. So I work every season just to accommodate the people. When you’ve been here a little while you’ll find that out. I’ll cash your checks, lend you money, run your errands, settle your quarrels with your wife, reconcile your hired girl to sleeping in the basement and play blind-man’s-buff with your children. That’s Wilder — everybody’s friend but his own, and too honest for his own good.”

“Indeed, Mr. Wilder,” said Jarrod, “I can see already that you are a remarkable man. What could Tamawaca do without you?”

“That’s it! Why, dear boy, it would bust higher than Guilderoy’s kite! That’s why I take such good care of my health. But here we are at Lake View. Behold your future home!”

Jarrod liked the place. It was high enough to command an outlook upon the lake and to catch every breeze, yet not too high for an ordinary climb.

“What’s the price?” he asked.

“Just step inside and see the rooms. It’s magnificently furnished.”

“What do you ask for the place?”

“There’s a fine pump in the back yard and a sideboard in the dining room.”

“How much?”

“It was painted only this spring and everything’s in apple-pie order. Just

step inside."

Jarrod sat down on the steps.

"I'll give you a thousand dollars for it," he said.

"My dear boy, the lot alone's worth fifteen hundred."

"Is the cottage on the lot?"

"Why do you ask?"

"It don't look it."

"Never mind that. I'll sell you the lot and the cottage. If the house isn't on the lot it's somewhere in the neighborhood, and no one's going to ask any questions."

"Why not?"

"Because they daren't. They're all in the same boat. There hasn't been a surveyor allowed in Tamawaca for ages. When a man wants to build, he buys a lot of me an' Easton an' then hunts for the lot. If he thinks he's found it, he's lucky. If there don't appear to be a lot where he thinks it ought to be, he just builds his cottage and takes the chances."

"All right," said Jarrod. "I'll take my chances. How much for Lake View?"

"Well, dear boy, I've taken a liking to you, and so I'm willing to sacrifice. I'll pay good money to get you here as a resident. But it's a dreadful shame to think how property's advanced here lately. I've tried to keep it down, but I can't. Here's a case, though, where I can forget high prices and be generous. You can have Lake View for four thousand dollars."

"What!"

"And I'll trust to luck to keep Nora and me out o' the poor-house."

Jarrod reflected.

"I'll give you two thousand," he said.

"Then it's yours. Do you want to go in and look around, or shall we walk back and get your wife and children, so they can begin to enjoy their new home?"

"We'll go back," said Jarrod, wondering to what extent he had been bled. "I'll have plenty of chances to see the inside of my cottage later."

"True. And while we're down at the store we'll make out the list for groceries and meats and gasoline and such things, and I'll send 'em up in fifteen minutes."

Mrs. Jarrod was glad to see her husband again, although in his absence Mrs. Wilder had thoroughly posted her in regard to everyone of note at Tamawaca. She was rather astonished at the rapidity with which they had acquired citizenship, but went to William at once to order her groceries and supplies, while Jarrod drew his check to pay for Lake View and then settled

with Mrs. Wilder for the doll and the sail-boat — one of which had been broken while the other his dear child refused to part with without a scene.

Two hours later they had taken possession of their cottage, unpacked their trunks and settled themselves for the summer. The children had taken off their shoes and stockings and run down to the lake to paddle around at the water's edge, where it was perfectly safe; Mrs. Jarrod was instructing a maid that Wilder had promptly secured and sent to her, while Jarrod himself — collarless and in his shirtsleeves — had drawn an easy chair out upon the porch and set himself down to think.

On a tree facing him was a sign that read: "Ask Wilder." These signs he had noticed everywhere at Tamawaca, and as he stared at this one he smiled grimly.

"There's no need asking Wilder," he murmured. "Let him alone for a time and he'll tell you everything — even more than he imagines he does. But I'm glad I came. Wilder's a genius, and his nerve is a challenge to all the world!"

CHAPTER IV.

JUST GIRLS.

She was rather pretty, judged by the ordinary standards. The other girls called her "the heiress," because she so frankly confided to them the information that her uncle — an enormously wealthy man — had no one to inherit his millions but herself, and so had made his will in her favor. Meantime, while he continued to live, this estimable old gentleman gave his niece "just anything I want, girls! He just *begs* me to spend all the money I can, and is sorry I don't spend more."

Such opulence was not observable in the appearance of the young lady, nor did it lead her to reckless extravagances. She bought about as many icecream sodas as the other girls who were shy of rich uncles, and dressed equally as well as the majority of the young women at Tamawaca, but no better. She had no jewel cabinet, or automobile, or pug dog or embroidered underwear; so her chums and comrades, who only knew her at this summer resort, were wicked enough to rally her upon her vast wealth and slyly insinuate "they were from Missouri" by dubbing her "the heiress."

Clara accepted the title with much content. She felt she was entitled to the distinction and held her chin a bit higher when she passed common folks on the street.

This afternoon, however, she was not on dress parade. Dressed in her bathing uniform she reclined upon the sands in company with several companions likewise attired and listened eagerly to the comments of two young ladies who had made an important discovery.

"He came this morning, girls," said Betty Lowden, impressively, "and he's just the cutest thing that ever came off from the boat. Such eyes, my dears! — and such lovely fluffy hair — "

"And the air of a real gentleman, girls," broke in Mary Newton; "you couldn't mistake him anywhere; and before we passed him he looked at me twice!"

"No dear, once at the weather signal and once at you," corrected Betty. "I noticed especially, for afterward he stared at me a whole minute."

"Why, you mean, disagreeable — "

"Seems to me," remarked little Susie, quietly, "that it's a bit of good luck to have any sort of a young man drop down upon us so early in the season. I'm told they're scarce enough at any time in Tamawaca, so I didn't expect to meet a real Charles Augustus for a whole month yet."

"His name is James — James Ingram. Mary and I ran to look at the hotel register, and he's the only man that arrived today."

“And you haven’t met him yet, either,” suggested Mary, with an exasperating air of proprietorship.

“No?” said Susie, demurely, as she dipped her hands into the sands and let the shining grains run through her fingers. “But,” glancing dreamily over the heads of the others, “I expect to meet him — within the next half hour.”

“Oh, Susie!”

“How absurd!”

“I’ll bet you the sundaes for the crowd, Betty, that I’ll be able to introduce him to all of you in half an hour from this second.”

“And you’ve never met him before?” suspiciously.

“Never.”

“You must be crazy,” said the heiress, scornfully.

“Don’t turn around quickly — take your time, Mary. But just let me know if that’s James,” continued the girl, in a soft voice.

They gave a jump, then, and every one of them stared ruthlessly. They saw a tall young man come down the walk at a swinging stride, glance hungrily at the sparkling waves, and then enter “Wilder’s Bathing Establishment,” which stood near by, at the water’s edge.

“It *must* be him!” gasped the heiress.

“It *is* him!” cried Betty, triumphantly. “Isn’t he splendid?”

“Say, girls,” observed Gladys McGowan, “let’s take Susie’s bet. It’ll be worth a round of sundaes to meet our Jim right away, without losing precious time.”

“Half an hour, Susie?”

“Half an hour at the most, girls.”

“Then it’s a go! How will you manage it?”

Susie still played with the sands, while the others watched her nervously. She was a tiny thing, and not especially beautiful, but the girls liked her because she was “good fun” and exhibited a rare cleverness at times. All they knew of her history was that Susie was visiting at the Carleton cottage.

“You’ll help me, girls?” enquired the adventurous one.

“Of course. But what’s your plan, dear?”

“Wait.”

Presently a bather emerged from Wilder’s Establishment, walked down to the shore near them, gave a glance of brief interest at the group of girls reclining upon the sands, and straightway plunged into the lake and swam out with bold, vigorous strokes.

Every feminine eye followed him.

“Jim can swim, all right,” observed Gladys, admiringly.

Susie nodded.

“I thought he could,” she said. “Now, girls, in we go!”

“What! Into the water?”

“Certainly.”

“And get wet?”

“It’ll take a week to dry our hair again!”

Susie ignored the protests.

“Oh, we’ll just putter around a bit. It won’t hurt us,” she said.

They arose reluctantly and one or two dipped a stockinged toe into the cool water and cringed. But Susie waded in without a quiver, and realizing the importance of the occasion they grew bold and slowly followed her. The heiress waited until the very last, and hesitated even then. But there was “Jim” in the water, and it wouldn’t do to let the other girls get an advantage over her.

So presently they had all trailed along the gently shelving bottom until the water had reached their waists, and in the case of little Susie, who was in the lead, it came quite up to her chin.

The young man had cleaved his way a good distance out; but now he was returning more slowly, leaping and turning like a dolphin at play and then floating luxuriously upon his back for awhile. As he drew nearer to the girls Susie whispered:

“Now scream — and scream loud, mind you!”

In amazement they watched her swim out a few strokes — for the girl could actually swim — and then saw her throw up her hands and heard her cry out.

Wildly they shrieked a chorus. It was the real thing in the way of a scream, and owed part of its vigor to the fact that Susie’s action seemed horribly natural.

Instantly the young man rolled off his back and elevated his head, treading water. He saw a girl struggling madly and heard the shrill outcry of her companions. A moment more he was dashing to the rescue.

Did Susie see him coming through one corner of her eye? She disappeared entirely, and was under water an alarming time. When she finally bobbed up a strong arm was folded around her waist.

“Don’t struggle! Keep quiet and leave it to me,” said Jim, calmly; and the sound of his voice seemed to have a soothing effect upon the drowning girl. She rested in his circling arm quite comfortably, and before another minute he found a footing and then waded ashore with *both* arms around her, while Susie’s envious friends scampered out beside him and insisted upon helping to restore her.

Very gently the big fellow laid her on the sand and knelt anxiously beside

her. But she had been rescued at exactly the right moment, so now she opened her eyes, smiled sweetly, and heaved a sigh.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you, sir, for saving me!" she said. The voice was pretty husky for a girl that had to be held, but Jim was young and did not notice that.

"Don't mention it," he replied, delighted to find she was likely to live. "You'd better get home as soon as possible, and have a good rub-down and a glass of tonic. May I assist you?"

"If you please. I know it's foolish and — and silly; but I'm so frightened and weak yet."

"Naturally," replied the sympathetic hero; and then the heiress, who could stand no more foolishness, jerked Susie to her feet before she had a chance to smile into the boy's grave eyes again. That was wasted energy, of course, for Susie just now absolutely controlled the situation. Her delicate form swayed so visibly that the boy seized her arm at once, and Clara thoughtfully usurped the other arm and began to lavish such tender devotion upon her that Gladys laughed outright — a cold, harsh laugh that sent a shiver down the heiress' back and made her vow to "get even" at the first opportunity.

Mischievous Susie was dying for a good laugh herself at the complete success of her stratagem; but she mastered the impulse and, letting Jim support her as much as he would, tottered slowly along the beach in the direction of home. The girls surrounded her, flooding her with eager questions of how it had happened and how she felt, and generous praises of her brave and noble rescuer. For none except the heiress could withhold her admiration for Susie's cleverness or was the least bit jealous.

On the way they were all introduced, in the most natural manner, to the man of the hour, and then the heroine enquired in a languid tone that could not disguise her meaning: "What time is it, Clara dear?"

"Oh, less than half an hour since you attempted suicide," returned the heiress, composedly. "Brace up, Susie dear, for I'm going to buy you a sundae tonight,"

Of course the young man didn't understand this speech. He left the girl "whose life he had saved" at the Carleton porch, and begged permission to call in the evening and enquire after her — a permission instantly granted.

Then, with Betty and Mary and Gladys and the heiress all chattering in a breath as they surrounded him, Jim returned to the bathing establishment, where they separated. The heiress was a pretty girl, and the boy smiled as he bade her good-bye.

As he dressed himself he could not help congratulating himself upon his good luck in meeting this "bunch of nice girls" on the very day of his arrival.

It augured a pleasant vacation.

As for the “bunch,” Gladys said on the way home:

“Isn’t Susie a deep one, though?”

“She thinks she is,” answered the heiress, with a toss of her shapely head. “Do you remember, dear, how the cat’s paw once pulled the chestnuts out of the fire for some one else?”

“Oh, yes;” answered Gladys, sniffing. “It was for a monkey, wasn’t it?”

Those sweet, sweet girls!

CHAPTER V.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

Mrs. Still, who lived but a few doors from the Jarrods, called upon Mrs. Jarrod the next afternoon, and after welcoming her cordially to Tamawaca and congratulating her upon acquiring pretty Lake View, invited her and Mr. Jarrod to attend a card party at the yacht club that evening.

Jarrod didn't play "five hundred," but when the good-natured Stills called for them soon after dinner he complacently accompanied his wife to the club, which was located half way around the bay and was reached by one of Wilder's ferry-boats after a five minutes' ride from the Tamawaca dock. It was a pretty building, gay with electric lights. On the ground floor was a reception room filled with sailing trophies, and a big room reached through swinging doors which was devoted to the needs of thirsty men. The upper floor was one large room set with card tables, and here Mrs. Still introduced Mrs. Jarrod to a numerous concourse of merry folks who were all impatient to get at the cards and gamble fiercely for two hours or so to win a set of prizes that represented an outlay of about seventy-five cents in the aggregate. When the "prizes" were won they were usually either dropped quietly into the lake on the way home or reserved to be gambled for at some other social gathering. I knew one lady who won the same prize seven times in the same season, and likewise gave it away seven times. The only reason that she kept it then was that her guests flatly refused to accept it as a trophy, it having become sadly shop-worn.

Jarrod was ushered by Geo. B. into the thirst room and introduced to a solemn group of three or four men who wore yachting caps and shirts, and had brass buttons sewn on their blue serge coats.

"Howdy," said Berwin, a man with a bald head and serious eyes. "Hear you've bought a cottage, Jarrod. Want to join our Club?"

"I'd like to," the lawyer replied, hesitating; "but I've — "

"Ten dollars, please. That's the price for season membership."

Jarrod paid it.

"But I've got no sail-boat," said he.

"That's all right," observed Stakes, a little fellow with a peppery and pugnacious countenance. "None of the crowd upstairs owns a sail-boat, but they're all club members, just the same. We four — Homperton, Berwin, Diller and myself — own boats, and we're the yacht club in reality. We built this shop on credit, and run it ourselves, but we let the folks upstairs support it by paying ten dollars a year. It pleases 'em to be members of a yacht club, you know, and helps us out financially. Much obliged for your donation."

“Do I have a vote?” asked Jarrod, much amused by this frank explanation.

“Of course; but according to our constitution only men with sail-boats can be officers of the club. So you must vote for us.”

“Once,” remarked Diller, a fine looking chap who was intently interested in a squat bottle and a siphon, “I had money and ambition and no sail-boat. Who was I, anyhow? A landsman! A nobody! Didn’t belong to a yacht club, or anything else.”

“Except Mrs. Diller,” interjected Geo. B., with a sly wink at Jarrod.

“Then I bought a sail-boat — ”

“And a dingy,” added Geo. B.

“And paid up the debts of the club and was made Commodore. Commodore Diller! Who was I then? Why, ev’rybody said: ‘Morn’n’, Com-modore!”Have a smoke, Com-mo-dore!”One more with me, Com-mo-dore!’ Ah; that’s bein’ somebody, that is. Commodore Diller! Com-mo-dore Dil-ler.”

“Some men acquire greatness,” said Jarrod, sympathetically.

“Fact is,” remarked the solemn Berwin, “that Diller’s a fine sailor. Got a good boat, too. Every race we have, Diller’s there.”

“Where?” asked Diller, looking up with a puzzled expression.

“Oh, somewhere,” said Berwin. “Only yesterday I said to Wilder — ”

“Con-found Wilder!” yelled little Stakes, growing red with sudden rage and pounding the table fiercely. “Why should that monster’s name be mentioned in the sanctity of the sanctum of this respectable Yacht Club? Wilder’s a robber, a thief, a con-man, a — a rascal, and a — a — a — ”

“That’s all right,” interrupted Homperton. “He’s an upstairs member, and we’ve got his ten dollars.”

“Well, that’s something,” admitted Stakes, calming down somewhat. “It’s a pleasure to rob a robber, once in awhile.”

“Sh — h!” said Geo. B., mischievously. “You forget that both Mr. Jarrod and I are present, and have also been separated from our membership fees.”

“You don’t mind,” said Stakes. “You’re good fellows, for folks that don’t own sail-boats, and your wives will get ten dollars worth of struggle up stairs before the season’s over. Eh?’

“I think so,” said Jarrod.

Later in the evening the ferry-boat called for the card players, but broke her engines just as she reached the dock. That was unfortunate, for she had broken her engines only four times that day and this was her last trip. Wilder was with her, and he promptly hustled all the people aboard, collecting the fares as they crossed the gang-plank, and then, after some delay, he informed his passengers in a despairing voice that the blamed thing wouldn’t go.

Something was wrong with the engines, but if they would be patient he would tie up to the dock and overhaul the machinery and get things in shape again. Of course they all trooped off to the dock again. One or two ventured to suggest a return of their fares; but Wilder had gone somewhere for a lantern and taken the pocketful of nickels with him. Before he returned his people had formed a merry procession to the shore back of the club house, where they struck the trolley-car tracks and tramped the half mile to Tamawaca singing and joking and thoroughly enjoying themselves. They were acquainted with Wilder's ferry-boat, and never allowed it to make them unhappy.

Mrs. Jarrod was pleased and triumphant. She had won the third prize — a nineteen cent handkerchief embroidered with the initial "S." — and it was indeed fortunate that she did not overhear the remark of Mrs. Sauter s that it was the same one she had dropped at the last yacht club party.

Next morning Jarrod went down to the post office and met several of his fellow cottagers. They were, as a class, highly respectable, well-to-do and good natured business men, who sought in this delightful nook rest and recreation after months of weary toil in their offices, factories, mills or mines. They talked freely of the adverse conditions existing in Tamawaca, of their abject dependence upon the whims of Wilder and Easton, of the usurpation by these men of the cottagers' rights and privileges, and ended always by expressing an opinion that the law, if appealed to, would not support the owners of Tamawaca in their autocratic actions.

"Wilder's all right," said one.

"He's a good fellow, personally, and mighty accommodating. But he owns only a one-third interest, so what can he do against a man like Easton, who owns two-thirds and refuses to spend a nickel to keep his own property in repair?"

"Easton isn't so bad," remarked another; "but he's an old man, and weak, and Wilder makes him do anything he likes."

"Why don't the cottagers organize?" asked Jarrod.

"They are organized. The annua meeting is to be held next Saturday night," was the reply. "But they never do anything at those meetings except bewail their condition of slavery and mildly denounce Wilder and Easton."

"What we lack," said a grizzled old fellow with piercing black eyes glinting underneath shaggy brows, "is a leader; an organizer. The whole system of imposition here is a fester that is gradually coming to a head. What we shall require presently is a clever surgeon with a sharp lancet."

As the speaker walked away Jarrod looked thoughtfully after him.

"Who is that man?" he enquired.

“Why, that’s Colonel Kerry. Years ago he used to be one of the owners of Tamawaca; but they say he quarrelled with the methods of his partners and sold out to them. That was before either Wilder or Easton bought in; but the Colonel has never mixed in public affairs since.”

“I wonder he doesn’t use the lancet himself,” said Jarrod.

“Oh, he’s capable enough, I assure you; but the Colonel isn’t hunting trouble. He sticks to his cottage up on the hillside and minds his own business. But he’s a shrewd observer, and no one knows the inside history of all the encroachments upon the rights of our residents during the last dozen or so years better than old man Kerry.”

Jarrod strolled along the walks for an hour or two, noting carefully the conditions of neglect everywhere apparent. Nature had done wonders for Tamawaca; man had done little but mar nature, if we except the many handsome or cosy cottages that peeped enticingly from their leafy bowers or stood on the hills overlooking the two lakes.

Tamawaca occupies the point between the channel and Tamawaca Pool to the north, and Lake Michigan on the west, where a sloping height is thickly covered with a noble forest that creeps past the dwellings down to the water’s edge. In the hills are romantic ravines, flower-strewn vales and vine-covered cliffs. To a lover of nature nothing could be more exquisitely beautiful.

Jarrod tripped and stumbled along the walks. The boards were rotted and falling apart. In places the sand had drifted over and covered the highway completely. An air of neglect brooded everywhere in the public places, and where a bit of land had originally been left for a small park the ground was strewn with empty tin cans, bones, papers and other debris.

It grieved him to note this condition of affairs. A little well directed energy and a little well expended money would make Tamawaca blossom like a rose; but both these essentials seemed lacking. The cottagers would do nothing because they were told the streets and public places were not theirs, and the owners would do nothing because they figured they could get as much out of the cottagers without additional investment. The people who built at Tamawaca, and lived there during the summer months, were perhaps regarded as legitimate prey by those who directed their fates during that time. Wilder and Easton supplied them with everything. They owned the electric light plant and the water works. Indeed, they owned and controlled everything that the cottagers were obliged to have, and netted a fine income each year.

All this was a challenge to Jarrod. The fires of his mental energy must be fed, even when he was “resting,” and without the slightest personal

antagonism to Wilder and Easton, but simply because he saw there was a battle to be fought for the cottagers, whose ranks he had joined, his logical mind began to figure out ways and means to force the fighting.

A day or two later the lawyer took the electric car to Kochton and read a little Michigan law in the office of a friendly attorney. The result apprised him that he was uncovering nothing more than a huge game of “bluff,” which had been played so long and with such amazing assurance that it had completely cowed its victims.

Jarrod came home smiling. “There’s nothing like a summer resort for quieting one’s nerves,” he told his wife.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUND OUT.

When Jim called to enquire after Susie on the evening of his adventure he found her dressed in a fluffy white costume and sitting demurely upon the porch awaiting him.

Mr. Carleton came out to thank the boy for rescuing his little guest, and after one shrewd glance into the frank and manly face he retired and left the young folks together, satisfied that Susie had made no undesirable acquaintance.

They had plenty to talk about, although this was practically their first meeting. But Susie had faithfully promised her girl friends to bring Jim over to the hotel for the dancing that evening, so she was obliged, although reluctantly, to curtail their pleasant chat and invite him to escort her to the dance.

Jim was tremendously fond of dancing, so he accepted with alacrity. When they arrived at the ball-room of the hotel, where cottagers and guests alike were welcomed by the proprietor, they found Gladys and Mary, Betty and the heiress all eagerly awaiting them. On the floor were many couples of girls joyously dancing together, for boys of any sort were scarce indeed, and their absence could not induce the girls to forego the pleasures of the waltz and two-step. Jim promptly began to participate by dancing with Susie, as politeness required, although she was too short in stature for the big fellow and dancing was not one of her best accomplishments. He did not allow her to guess they were an awkward couple, however, and thanked her as gratefully as if he had not barely escaped being tripped a dozen times.

Next he led out the heiress, who in addition to being pretty and graceful was an especially skillful dancer. My! how Jim did enjoy that two-step. He danced with Betty next, and with the heiress again; then with Gladys and once more with the heiress. Mary's turn came afterward, and he really ought to have asked Susie once more; but by the time he had taken the heiress out for one final whirl the dancing was over and it was too late.

Clara was glowing and triumphant. She had fairly monopolized the most desirable young man in Tamawaca the whole evening, and it thrilled her with delight to notice how Mary and Gladys frowned at her and shrugged their shapely shoulders, and how saucily Betty stuck up her nose when she found she could not look indifferent. But Susie only smiled cordially at her rival and told Clara she danced as prettily as any girl she had ever met.

Then Jim took them all across to Wilder's for an ice-cream soda — the only entertainment by which it was possible to repay the girls for his delightful evening; and if he shivered a bit when he paid the bill no one could

ever have suspected it from his manner.

"A few more of these treats," he thought, "will curtail my vacation considerably. I must be careful, or I'll ruin my present opportunity to have a good time."

You may be sure the heiress urged him to call the next day, and equally sure that he accepted the invitation. Instantly he found himself popular with all the girls, for every unattached female at Tamawaca wanted to know the handsome youth. Presently he received so many invitations to go boating and bathing and auto-riding, and for luncheons, picnics, cards and dancing parties, that almost every waking moment of his day was fully occupied.

Throughout this social revelry the heiress clung to her conquest like grim death. However much her girl friends might accuse her of "artful selfishness and selfish artfulness" she was clever enough to charm the young man by her uniform good temper and her frank delight in his society. Jim's heart was not mush, but he was human enough to enjoy a mild flirtation. He did not neglect other girls of his acquaintance entirely, but was most often seen in the society of the heiress; so gradually the others came to acknowledge her priority and expected only a modest share of his attention.

To Susie Jim remained always friendly and considerate, and sometimes during that giddy first week of his vacation he would steal away to the Carleton porch to sit down for a peaceful hour with the little girl whose life he had saved. During these interviews Susie would praise Clara's beauty and accomplishments until Jim looked at her curiously and his face grew troubled. He would admit that the heiress was "good fun," but refrained from more enthusiastic comment.

But there was only a week of this hero-worship. Then the sky fell, and Jim passed out of the lime-light into comparative oblivion.

Katie Glaston came over from Chicago one day, and as she knew Gladys and Mary she was joyfully welcomed to the select circle of "the bunch." And of course one of her first experiences was to run against Jim and Clara on the board walk. They were bound for a boat ride and the girls halted them long enough to graciously introduce the "hero" to Katie.

She acknowledged the introduction with marked coldness.

"Glaston?" said Jim, reminiscently; "any relation to D. B. Glaston?"

"He is my father, sir," said the young lady, and turned her back to speak with Betty.

Jim raised his eyebrows slightly, smiled with quiet amusement, and then walked on beside Clara, who had noticed the snub and was angry and indignant.

"What impudence!" she exclaimed, when they had passed out of earshot.

“And from Katie Glaston, too! Why, Jim, her father is nothing more than a manager in a department store.”

“I know,” said Jim, nodding. “He’s my chief. I’m in his department at Marshall Field’s.”

Clara shivered and stopped short. Then she walked on more slowly, with a red face and eyes staring straight ahead.

“Don’t joke, Mr. Ingram,” she remonstrated.

“Oh, I’m not joking,” rejoined the young fellow, with a light laugh. “Didn’t you know? I thought I had told you that I am a mere clerk in a department store.”

“I — I’m afraid one of my terrible headaches is coming on,” she murmured, with embarrassment. “It is so hot this afternoon. Would you mind taking me home, Mr. Ingram?”

“Perhaps it would be better,” he said, quickly. “The sun will be fierce on the water, and a rest may save you from the headache.”

They turned at once and retraced their steps. At the corner of Mishahaken Avenue they again passed Katie and her group of friends. The heiress marched stiffly by, but could not forbear one glance toward the group and caught Betty’s scornful smile as a consequence. Poor Clara’s humiliation was so great that she nearly sobbed outright. A clerk! A mere clerk in Marshall Field’s. And she had been devoting herself to the fellow for a whole week!

Jim was not blind, and needed no explanation. Silently he escorted the girl to her cottage, the amused twinkle in his eye growing stronger every moment as he noted her indignation and resentment increasing. At her porch she dismissed him with a mumbled word and ran in to indulge in a good cry as a safety valve to her vexation. And the discarded youth lightly retraced his steps to the hotel, whistling reflectively as he went — which was ample proof that he did not realize how serious was the wicked imposition he had practised.

Of course Katie had informed the other girls most fully of the fact that young Ingram was “a cheap clerk in her father’s department,” and although Gladys merrily declared it would be an added inducement for her to trade at the store, the other shrewd damsels were quick to see that such an acquaintance was quite undesirable.

“We really have no protection from such adventurers at a summer resort,” observed Betty. “I understand now why he picked out ‘the heiress.’ Her supposed fortune interested him.”

“Supposed, Betty?”

“Well, she doesn’t display any moving pictures of it.”

“We were too eager to get acquainted with a stranger, just because men were scarce,” Mary remarked, a little bitterly. “This ought to teach us a lesson, girls.”

“Hush! Here he comes.”

They fell silent, every pretty back turned to the walk, and Jim swung by without encountering a look or a word.

The young man had not been a clerk for more than a year without having been forced to realize e’er now that his position debarred him from a certain class of social recognition. It must be admitted that he had purposely concealed his occupation while on this vacation, in order to enjoy a bit of feminine society, of which he was as wholesomely fond as every boy ought to be. And, being an optimistic young fellow, he now congratulated himself upon the good times he had managed to secure, instead of regretting the fact that he had finally been “found out.”

For two days following his “discovery” he swam and walked and had a fine time in his own company, saving himself from unnecessary snubs by assisting his former girl friends to avoid him. Then, one afternoon as he passed the Carleton cottage, Susie Smith ran out and seized him, urging him so cordially and unaffectedly to come in for afternoon tea that he could not well refuse.

Mr. and Mrs. Carleton greeted their guest with so much genuine kindness that the lonely young fellow felt his welcome to be sincere, so he passed the next two hours very delightfully indeed. Really, he had not enjoyed those last two days. His nature craved a certain amount of social intercourse with nice people, and he could not be entirely happy without it.

But it would be wrong to deceive Susie and the kindly Carletons. When he left, after accepting an invitation to an informal bridge party arranged for that evening, Mr. Carleton walked down to the post-office with him, and Jim promptly relieved himself of his secret on the way.

But the old gentleman cut short his explanation.

“I know, Ingram,” he said. “Susie heard the story from some of her girl friends, and it has pleased us to know you are able to enjoy a brief relaxation from your tedious and confining work. But did you not once tell me that you are a Cornell man?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Couldn’t you find a better opening than a clerkship?”

“Not at first, Mr. Carleton. I wasn’t prepared for a profession, you see, and I have discovered that people are suspicious of the ability of boys fresh from college.”

“How much longer does your vacation last?”

“Until next Monday. Three days more, sir.”

“And then you go back to work?”

“Rested and refreshed, sir.”

“Let us sit down a moment.” They had come to a bench, and after they were seated Jim suddenly resolved to tell the kindly old gentleman all his story. He respected Mr. Carleton very highly, not because he had achieved enormous financial success but because that success had not destroyed his generous consideration for others less fortunate. So he related his history briefly but fully, and when he had finished the elder man said:

“I think you have been inconsiderate in dealing with your father, my boy. I remember to have met him on several occasions, and he impressed f me as being an excellent business man and a genial, gpod-natured fellow, as well. But think how much unhappiness your defection must have caused him.”

For once Jim was crestfallen, and seeing that his words had made an impression upon the young man Mr. Carleton forebore further reproof and rose to resume his walk. He spoke pleasantly of other matters, however, and when they parted at the post-office Jim felt that the old gentleman was still his friend.

He attended the card party that evening and had a good time. Tamawaca society is made up of many little cliques, as indeed is society everywhere, certain people being attracted to one another through congeniality or former association. So it happened that the Carleton clique was one somewhat exclusive and removed from those to which Jim had formerly been introduced, and he met with no humiliating slights. Susie treated him exactly as she had before Katie Glaston’s unfortunate arrival, and made him grateful by neither overdoing her cordiality nor referring to his humble condition in life. It was a friendly atmosphere, and put him entirely at his ease.

The three final days of Jim’s vacation were as merry and satisfactory as the first week had been, and Susie’s charming personality grew upon him steadily, so that he had no reason to regret the companionship of Clara or her particular group of friends.

The heiress, for her part, was amazed that Susie did not promptly cut “the clerk’s” acquaintance. “But,” she remarked to Mary and Betty, “the poor thing may not be much herself, and is glad to associate with anything masculine. Some folks, you know, dear, have no occasion to be particular.”

Jim had intended to leave on Sunday’s boat for Chicago, that he might be at work on Monday morning. But Saturday afternoon he received an astonishing telegram from his chief, Mr. D. B. Glaston. It read: “Your services will be no longer required.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING.

It did not take Jarrod long to decide that there were no grounds for Wilder's claim that the streets and parks at Tamawaca were in his control. On the contrary they belonged entirely to the cottage and lot owners, neither Easton nor Wilder having any more legal rights thereto than the most insignificant cottager.

They had usurped rights, however, of the most extraordinary character. In the public parks, originally reserved in the recorded plats, the partners had selected the best building locations and erected cottages upon them, which were rented at good figures. They had also sold many "lots" that were nothing less than public property to innocent or ignorant purchasers, who had in some instances built expensive houses upon them, relying confidently for protection upon the guarantee deeds Easton or Wilder had given them.

This wholesale disregard of people's rights had been going on for years — long before the present owners had bought Tamawaca. From his observations Jarrod concluded that the former owners, of whom there had been several sets or combinations, had all come to a realization that their vandalism had rendered their positions unsafe, for which reason they had presently shifted the burden to the shoulders of their successors, who now were Easton and Wilder. Perhaps these two men, because their predecessors had with impunity occupied public lands, had become more careless or more grasping than any of the others, for their usurpations were on a larger scale. Easton, for example, had impudently placed a cottage directly in a public street, disregarding all rights and protests.

One day, during his rambles, Jarrod came upon a fine cottage perched high on the hill overlooking the bay. On the porch was seated an old gentleman whom the lawyer recognized as Colonel Kerry.

"Come up and sit down," called the colonel, hospitably.

So Jarrod sat down to rest.

"I'm glad to learn you're a new resident," said Kerry. "You have bought Lake View, I understand."

"Yes," acknowledged Jarrod. "There was nothing to rent, so I had to buy a cottage or go elsewhere."

The colonel smiled.

"Plenty of places to rent," he observed.

"Wilder said not."

"He may have said so. See that cottage across the way? It's a very nice place; belongs to Grant of St. Louis; has been for rent all this spring."

“Oh. Wilder said it was rented. I tried to get it, you know.

Again the colonel smiled, and his smile was the sardonic kind that is sometimes exasperating.

“Wilder wanted to sell Lake View,” he exclaimed; “but he’s been holding the place for seventeen hundred and fifty, which is more than it’s worth. Perhaps you whittled the price down to where it belonged.”

Jarrod did not reply. He felt rather uncomfortable under the colonel’s shrewd glance.

“Tamawaca’s a beautiful place,” said he, glancing over the wonderful scene spread out before him — a scene with few rivals in America. Framed by the foliage of the near-by trees, Tamawaca Pool lay a hundred feet below him, its silver bosom dotted here and there with sailing craft, launches, or pudgy ferry-boats speeding on their way, while the opposite shore was lined with pretty cottages nestled in shady groves.

“Glad you like it, sir,” said the colonel, following his gaze. “I’m fond of the place myself.”

“But your public affairs are in a terrible condition, Colonel Kerry.”

“I agree with you.”

“Why don’t the people rise up, and demand their rights?” enquired Jarrod, curiously.

“Simply because they ‘re here for rest and enjoyment, and not to get mixed up in law-suits and contentions.”

“But their vested rights are being disregarded.”

“To be sure. That is no secret, sir. But our cottage owners are mostly business men who come here each year for two or three months of rest and relaxation, and conditions which they would fight bitterly at home they here tamely submit to, rather than risk involving their vacations in turmoil and trouble. That’s human nature, Mr. Jarrod.”

“Perhaps so,” said Jarrod, doubtfully. To him a fight was recreation, but others might feel differently about it.

“And it’s the salvation of Easton and Wilder,” continued the colonel. “As long as people can enjoy the sweet, fresh air, the grateful bathing, the fishing and boating and other recreations, they won’t bother about their rights. I feel that way myself. No man knows better than I how our people have been despoiled, for I’ve been here many years and at one time owned an interest in the place myself. But others know the truth as well as I do, and if my neighbors prefer to submit, surely I am not called upon to fight their battles for them.”

“Why did you sell out your interest?” asked Jarrod.

The colonel held a scrap of paper in his hands. He carefully twisted it

between his fingers into a neat spiral before he replied.

"There are two ways to make money," said he, finally. "I favored one way and my partners the other. So I quit the business."

Jarrod sat silent for a time. Then he asked:

"Does your Cottagers' Association amount to anything?"

"No."

"Then why does it exist?"

"To save Wilder and Easton from the danger of a more serious organization. They encourage it. Once a year the cottagers meet and talk things over, and rail at their oppressors and become very indignant. Then they go home with the idea they've performed their full duty. Those meetings are good fun, Mr. Jarrod. Wilder always attends them and welcomes every cottager as cordially as if he were giving a party. Then he sits in a front seat and laughs heartily at the rabid attacks upon himself and his partner. The next annual meeting is tomorrow night. I advise you to go."

"I intend to," said Jarrod. "By the way, how do Wilder and Easton agree with each other?"

"Not at all. They constantly quarrel over one thing or another. Wilder resents the fact that old man Easton is pocketing two-thirds of the profits, while Easton resents Wilder's habit of laying every unpopular act to his partner, who is therefore bitterly hated while Wilder is considered by many a good fellow. Each would be glad to get rid of the other, if that were possible, but? neither wants to be got rid of."

"I see."

"Outside of their business peculiarities,' continued the colonel," both these men possess many good qualities. I don't want to give you a wrong impression of them. Wilder is really kind and accommodating. It is his nature to want to please people and to stand well in popular opinion. Easton honestly believes that he is a Christian gentleman, and he is said to be a good father and husband. But in their dealings with the cottagers these partners have contracted a sort of moral color-blindness; they can't distinguish their own rights from those of others."

"I believe I understand you. Good morning, Colonel."

"Good morning, Mr. Jarrod."

Saturday evening Jarrod attended the meeting. It was held in a big, shedlike structure in the woods called the "Auditorium," where divine services were held on Sundays. All Tamawaca was there, for the men took their wives to enjoy the "fun." It was the only occasion during the whole year when the cottagers got together, and here they were accustomed to frankly air their grievances and then go home and forget them.

On the platform sat a dignified, pleasant faced old gentleman who nodded courteously to each arrival.

At the secretary's desk was a little man intently perusing a newspaper.

When all had assembled the chairman arose and rapped gently upon the rostrum.

"The meeting will please come to order," he said, and a sudden hush fell upon the place.

"I believe the first thing in order is for the secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting."

The secretary glanced over his paper.

"I've mislaid 'em somewhere," he said; "but they don't amount to anything, anyhow."

The chairman looked reproachful when the meeting joyously applauded this announcement.

"Ahem!" he said. "Are there any remarks?"

A tall, thin man rose from the benches and cleared his throat. Instantly every eye was upon him. Someone beside Jarrod laughed, and the lawyer turned around to find Geoge B. Still seated there.

"La — dies and gen — tle — men!" began the orator. "We are gathered 'together this evening to — ah — to meet one another. The — er — reason we are so — ah — so gathered together in one meeting is to — er — consider why we should be — er — should be brought in contact one with another for the public welfare of Tamawaca this gathering!"

As he paused impressively Geo. B. murmured: "Gather up the sands from the s — e — a sho — o — r — e!"

"I take it," continued the speaker, raising his voice aggressively, "that we are met here with a purpose; I may say — er — an object in here gathering together. It is my earnest wish, ladies and gentlemen, that this — er — purpose may be fulfilled!"

He sat down amid a round of applause, mainly bestowed because he sat down. But he held himself erect and didn't lean against the back of the bench for a good five minutes.

"I call for the reports of the committees," announced the chairman. A man arose and said: "The committee on water begs to report that it has had the water analyzed by a competent chemist and found the said water perfectly pure."

Here a gentleman with a ruddy face jumped up and asked:

"Is the committee referring to the bathing water?"

"I refer to the drinking water," said the committee.

"Ah," ejaculated the red-faced man, a total lack of interest in his tone.

Little Stakes jumped up. “I want to know why the electric lights go out every night at ten o’clock,” he shouted, excitedly. “I want to know why we pay — ”

“Look here — you’re out of order!” cried the chairman, “So are the lights!” yelled Stakes; but he sat down.

“I call for the report of the committee on lights,” continued the chairman, in deference to the protest.

There was an intense silence.

“The committee on lights will please report,” said the chairman, looking closely at Geo. B. Still.

The little fat man slowly arose.

“Am I the committee on lights?” he enquired.

“You are, sir.”

“Are you sure?”

“Perfectly sure, Mr. Still. I remember Mr. Bennett nominated you and there were several seconds.”

“Oh. The minutes being lost, I supposed the seconds were lost, too.”

“You were mistaken, Mr. Still.”

“Well, the committee on lights, Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen, finds that we are such good livers we haven’t the gall to make a report.” And Mr. Still subsided slowly into his seat.

“Just like a lady’s gown,” said a wag, jocosely: “en traile.”

“I’d like to know,” roared a man on the back row of benches, “if the street lights burn till twelve o’clock.”

“Can’t say,” replied Geo. B. “I don’t sit up to watch ‘em.”

“I move the report of the committee on lights and livers be accepted,” said the wag.

The chairman gravely put the motion and it carried.

“How about the treasurer’s report?” asked some one. “Did the secretary mislay that, too?”

The secretary glared at the speaker. Then he laid aside his newspaper, took an old envelope from his pocket, and read a memorandum evidently penciled upon the back of it.

“Total receipts,” said he, “one dollar and eighty-nine cents. Total expenditures, two cents. Total cash balance on hand, one dollar and eighty-seven cents. Respectfully submitted.”

“What shall we do with the report?” asked the chairman.

“I want to know where that two cents went to,” cried Mr. Calker, the energetic gentleman on the back bench. “I demand an itemized report!”

The secretary and treasurer swore under his breath — or almost under his

breath, while the audience laughed.

“The two cents in question,” he shouted, angrily, “was expended for one postage stamp issued by the United States of America, on which there was no rebate; and the stamp was thereafter attached to a letter to Mr? Calker asking him to pay up.his back dues to this Association — which letter was absolutely disregarded.”

“Then that expenditure was a misappropriation of public funds,” said Mr. Calker, in a satisfied tone.

“Move the treasurer’s apology be accepted,” said a voice.

“Move we adjourn,” said another voice.

“Wait — wait!” cried the chairman. “We must elect our officers for the coming year.”

“Move the same officers be continued,” said the last speaker.

“Second the emotion,” said the tall man.

It was carried, unanimously but without emotion.

Then Jarrod arose to his feet, to the evident surprise of the assemblage.

“Mr. President and ladies and gentlemen,” he began, in his rich, resonant voice.

The president bowed.

“Mr. — er — er” —

“Jarrod.”

“Mr. Jarrod has the floor.”

“I am a newcomer here,” said Jarrod, “and have recently bought the cottage known as ‘Lake View.’ With that property I acquired an equity in all the parks and highways of Tamawaca; but I find that some one has usurped portions of those parks and highways and erected cottages and other buildings upon them. Those buildings must be removed, and the public lands be restored to the public. I move you that your president be instructed to appoint a committee of five cottage owners, who will be authorized to take any necessary legal steps to enforce the removal of all buildings now upon public grounds, and the restoration of all public lands illegally sold and deeded to individuals.”

Had a bomb been exploded in their midst the cottagers could not have been more astonished. They gaped at Jarrod in open-mouthed amazement, and were silent as bridge players struggling for the odd.

“Second the emotion,” suddenly yelled Geo. B.

The chairman wiped his brow and looked worried. He repeated the motion and asked for remarks. No one responded. Then he put the motion to vote, and the people shouted “Aye!” with an enthusiasm the old Auditorium had never heard before. For dimly they realized that at last a leader had come

among them, and proposed to do the thing they should have done themselves years before.

"I appoint on this committee," said the chairman, "Mr. Jarrod; Colonel Kerry; Judge Toodles; Mr. Wright and Mr. Teekey."

"Move we adjourn!" cried a voice.

This time the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMETHING DOING.

Wilder couldn't sleep that night.

"Something queer happened at the meeting," he told Nora. "I can't understand exactly what it means, just yet; but I'll find out before I need another shave."

So on Sunday afternoon he walked up to Lake View and interviewed Mr. Jarrod as follows:

"Tell me, dear boy, what's the joke? It was awfully funny, and I laughed as much as anybody. But what's your idea? Just to guy the people?"

"My idea," said Jarrod, calmly, "is to sue you and Easton in the courts and make you vacate wherever you've taken possession of public property."

"What! Sue me!"

"Exactly; you and Easton."

Wilder's merry face grew thoughtful.

"Do you mean it?" he asked, a bit uneasily.

"Certainly."

Wilder thought again. Then he laughed.

"Why, it would ruin old Easton," he remarked, cheerfully; "ruin him entirely. But he deserves it. I'd like to see his face when he has to give up! It's what he's always been afraid of — that people would some day wake up and make it hot for him."

"How about yourself?" asked Jarrod.

"Oh, it would ruin me, too, if you carried out the plan," admitted Wilder. "But you won't carry it out."

"Why not?'

"Because you can do better."

"In what way?"

"See here, Mr. Jarrod," drawing his chair closer; "I take it we're friends, and can talk this over confidentially.

What Tamawaca needs ain't to get back the few lots we've built on, but to improve what there is left. We need new walks and driveways and a lot of public improvements. We need to clear up the rubbish and make things look decent. We need a new hotel, and a lot of other things to please the people and make 'em happier and more comfortable."

"That's true," said Jarrod. "But why, as one of the owners of Macatawa, haven't you attended to these things?"

"Me? How could I? I've only got a third interest, and the man don't live that can wring a nickel out of Easton for public improvements. I've

quarrelled with him and fought with him for years to try to get something done; but he just won't. Says he hasn't got the money; and perhaps that's true, for we lose money here every year."

"Oh, you do, eh?"

"Of course. Everything the company owns is run at a loss — electric light plant, water works, ferries, hotel, boat liveries — everything! By hard work Nora and I manage to make a bare living from our little mercantile enterprises and the cottages we own and rent — just a bare living. But the company property is a dead one. If things were kept up better we might sell some more lots, and get more people here, and so make a little money; but Easton don't see it that way."

"How does he see it?"

"Why, he just wants to putter 'round and lose money. I've tried to buy him up, so as to make something of the place myself; but he won't sell. That is, he wouldn't sell before this. But I imagine he would now."

"Because if we sue him he will lose it all?"

"You've hit the nail on the head! Listen, dear boy: you take your committee to Easton tomorrow and threaten to sue him if he won't sell out for — say, er — thirty thousand dollars. That's all the property's worth. He'll sell, or my name ain't Wilder. Get an option to purchase within thirty days."

"And then?"

Wilder turned half around and gave a solemn wink.

"Then if the cottagers can't raise the money, I'll raise it for 'em!"

"Good!" exclaimed Jarrod. "I think they'll raise it."

"And I think they won't," returned Wilder, smiling sweetly. "They're a bunch of oysters. Whenever I try to raise a few hundreds by subscription to build a new walk, they throw me down."

"Because it is your property," suggested Jarrod. "You and Easton owe a duty to the cottagers to keep the walks in repair at your own expense."

"Well, it'll all be different if we can get the old man to sell out."

"Will you assist us?" asked the lawyer.

"Sure thing. I'll agree to take ten thousand for my third, although it cost me a good deal more years ago. That'll leave twenty thousand for Easton's share, and it's all he deserves. But never mind the details. You just get that option for thirty thousand, and the game's won."

"I'll try," promised Jarrod.

Nora saw that her better half wore a broad smile when he returned to her.

"What's the result, presh?" she asked — the endearing term being a contraction of "precious."

"The result hasn't happened yet," he answered, evasively; "but when it

does my dream will come true, little wife, and I'll own Tamawaca."

"That's nice," she replied. Then, as he turned toward the door: "Are you going out again?"

"Why, I promised Nancy Todd that I'd stay with her father while she went to Kochton on an errand," he said, resuming his usual cheery manner. "Old Todd's all crippled up with rheumatism and helpless as an infant in arms. Nancy hasn't any one to leave him with, so I told her I'd look after the old man myself."

"I'm glad you did, presh," said the little woman, earnestly. "It'll do Nancy a world of good to get away from him for a time. She's all used up with the nursing and worry. And while you're over at Todd's I'll drop in and see poor Mrs. Jones, who is sick in bed and needs cheering up. We'll both be back by supper-time, I guess."

That was the way with the Wilders. Sharks in business and the tenderest and sweetest of all humanity when anyone needed a helping hand.

I once heard an irascible old cottager exclaim: "Damn the Wilders' scheming heads!" And then, after a pause: "But God bless their kindly hearts!" It was the epitome of their characters, expressed in a nutshell. How we all swore at them — yet how we loved them!

CHAPTER IX.

DEVELOPING THE NEGATIVE.

Jarrod got his Committee of Five together and looked them over. As might be expected they were a queerly assorted lot and promised to be difficult to manage.

The promise was fulfilled during the several meetings of the committee that were quietly held on back porches. Colonel Kerry was the one tower of strength; but a man used to managing thousands of miners and keeping them in order was not likely to be easily managed himself. Kerry was odd as Dick's hat band and had little to say at the meetings. He read Jarrod's purpose clearly, and endorsed it; but the old fellow couldn't stand the arguments and wandering suggestions of his fellow members on the committee. While he listened he tore a fragment from an old letter or newspaper and rolled it with infinite care and skill into the inevitable spiral, shaping the thing between his fingers as carefully as if it were something precious. But if anything occurred to annoy him he promptly destroyed the spiral, put on his hat, and walked home without a word. Then Jarrod had to go after him and urge and explain until Kerry consented to come back to the meeting.

The members of the committee were all prominent men. If Kerry could have cursed them freely everything would have been harmonious — as far as he was concerned. As he couldn't swear his only recourse was to quit and go home.

The author fellow, Mr. Wright, was another hard proposition. He was stubborn, loud-mouthed and pigheaded, and wanted to carry everything with a high hand, the way they do in novels. He had about as much diplomacy as a cannon-ball, and his fellow members had to sit on him twice a minute to keep him from spoiling everything. Judge Toodles knew a heap of law but was sure to get tangled in its intricacies, and when he tried to unravel himself was nearly as lucid and logical as a straw in a cocktail. Teekey was an unknown quantity. He owned a fine cottage built on public property, and although he had originally been an "innocent purchaser" his doubtful title so worried him that he was accustomed to obtain from Wilder and Easton a new deed about once a year, and each deed he filed gave him a little more public land. He was reputed a wealthy and eminently respectable gentleman, and the chances of his fighting on the side of the cottagers and jeopardizing his own property to assert the principles of right and justice were considered good — but not gilt-edged.

With this ill-assorted material Jarrod labored until he molded it into shape.

For it must be admitted that in the end the members of the committee stood shoulder to shoulder and did their full duty by the cottagers who had appointed them. By these five Tamawaca was redeemed and its incubi unseated.

Meantime Jarrod had reluctantly indulged in several interviews wjth old Easton. This man was a most peculiar character. He loved to sing hymns and made an excellent exhortation at any religious gathering. Indeed, one milk-fed preacher who lived on the hill was openly jealous of his evangelistic abilities. But the miserly instinct was predominant in Easton's nature and, as Wilder expressed it, he could "squeeze a cent till it hollered." It was this characteristic that subverted all the good in his nature and made him universally detested. Wilder, his partner, pursued his system of graft with the grace and cheeriness of a modem Dick Turpin. Wilder was open-handed and charitable, generous on occasion, always hospitable, and more crafty than roguish. Easton was deliberate and calculating in his extortions and, like the ostrich who hides his head in the sand to escape observation, fondly imagined that no one suspected his persistent brigandage. He derived a fat income from the necessities of the cottagers but pleaded poverty as an excuse for not doing his duty by them. His methods were sly and stealthy and he looked grieved and hurt if any exasperated cottager frankly called him a damned scoundrel.

Jarrod forced himself to cultivate Easton's society in order to study the man, for the elder partner's mild blue eyes and innocent expression puzzled him at first. Easton, for his part, considered Jarrod an impertinent meddler, but resolved to use him as an instrument to carry out a pet scheme he had for dispossessing Wilder.

"With Wilder s interest out of the way," he would observe, "everything would be well at lovely Tamawaca. If I were the sole proprietor here the cottagers would soon find out how dearly I love them. Wilder obstructs all my generous plans to improve conditions, and I'd like to buy him out."

"Why don't you?" enquired Jarrod.

"He won't sell to me," was the reply. "But perhaps we can fool him."

"How?"

"I'll explain — in confidence. You buy out his interest. Tell him you'll make it very uncomfortable for him if he refuses to sell. See? I'll furnish the money, and afterward you can turn the whole thing over to me." "Would that be fair and honorable?" asked Jarrod, gravely.

"Would I propose it, otherwise?" returned Easton, as if surprised at the question. "Mr. Jarrod, my feet are in the straight and narrow way, and I will not diverge from the path of rectitude. But if in that path appears a snake, I

am surely justified in scotching it. You buy out Wilder, as I said, and then I'll buy you out. Nothing dishonest in that — eh?"

"I'll think it over," said the lawyer. "I may decide to buy you both out."

"Of course. As a blind. But only as a blind, you understand."

"I don't understand everything just now, Mr. Easton. I must give the matter some careful thought."

During several similar conversations, however, Jarrod came to know his man intimately, and as his knowledge grew his respect for the "Father of Tamawaca" decreased. Neither Easton nor Wilder believed the cottagers would ever assert their rights, and therefore each was scheming desperately to oust his partner and get the control in his own hands.

Finally Jarrod decided the time had arrived to act. He got together his committee of five, explained to them his plans, and received the assurance of their loyal support. Then, a meeting being arranged, they called in a body upon Easton at his office and frankly stated that the partners must sell out to the cottagers all their interests at Tamawaca or prepare to stand a law suit for the recovery of the public lands illegally sold and occupied by them.

Perhaps Easton imagined that Jarrod had taken his cue and was acting upon it. He tried to restrain a smile of triumph in order to listen gravely to the proposition.

Wilder sat in a corner and hugged himself gleefully. The old man was "up against it" at last, and Wilder was responsible for forcing him to "face the music" — at least that was Wilder's belief.

Jarrod, in behalf of the cottagers, began the interview by calmly stating their case. They had been robbed of certain public lands that belong to them in legal equity, and the partners had not only sold these lands to themselves, individually, and built cottages and public buildings upon them, but had conveyed many of these lands to others, giving them warranty deeds in lieu of clear titles. If the matter was brought to the attention of the courts Easton and Wilder would be obliged to make these warrants good; in which case, so extensive had been the fraudulent sales, such an order from the court would involve the partners in financial ruin.

However, it was not the desire of the cottagers to ruin their oppressors. They much preferred to buy out their holdings at Tamawaca, and be rid of them forever. Therefore they offered thirty thousand dollars for the property, assuming in addition to the purchase price some six or eight thousands of standing indebtenness.

Jarrod might be carying out "the blind," but something in his manner as he made this clear and uncontrovertible statement disturbed Easton's equanimity and rendered him suspicious that the lawyer had not properly

swallowed the bait that had been dangled before him. But in this juncture he could think of no way to escape. Whichever way he looked he encountered the cold eyes of the determined and resentful committee of five, and to delay his answer until he could sound Jarrod was impossible. Moreover, Wilder, who acted his part admirably, seemed to Easton to have tumbled blindly into his trap. The junior partner declared that he was willing to dispose of his one-third interest for ten thousand dollars, and the fear that he might retract this offer led Easton to close with the proposition made him by the cottagers.

At the worst he could wiggle out of it in some way, he believed; so the one thing to do was to nail Wilder on the spot.

The final result of this serio-comic interview was that Wilder and Easton both signed an option in favor of Jarrod as trustee for the cottagers, agreeing to sell the entire real and personal property in which they were jointly interested for thirty thousand dollars, at any time within thirty days following that date.

When the option was signed and in his pocket Jarrod felt that his purpose was accomplished. His committee had redeemed this beautiful summer resort from all speculative evils, ensuring its future control to the cottagers themselves, whose best interests would now be conserved.

It was indeed a great triumph, and the Committee of Five, solemnly shook hands with one another and went home to tell their wives and neighbors of their success.

Wilder, in the seclusion of his own home, danced a jig of jubilation.

"They've got the option," he said to Nora, "but they've got no money. I'll furnish the money to take up the option — and the deed is done!"

"Will they give you the option?" asked Nora.

"Why not? Somebody's got to make the bluff good, and I'm the only one that can afford to. What do these folks want of a summer resort? They couldn't run it properly for five minutes. And Easton's the man they hate, because he's always stood in the way of public improvements. Wilder's their friend — eh? — and they'll all be glad when he's the whole thing."

Easton was a bit less sanguine. "The situation," he told his better half, "is not as clear as I wish it was. But I've never yet failed to get my way with the cottagers, and a little diplomacy ought to enable me to win this time. My only fear is that Jarrod may not be honest."

CHAPTER X.

JIM GETS A RAISE.

Jim opened the fatal telegram in the post-office, and his face must have been a study; for Jarrod, who was observing it from a distance, became interested and at once approached his young friend.

"No bad news, I hope, Jim?'

The boy laughed and held out the telegram.

"Just a kick in the dark, Mr. Jarrod, and it only hurts because it was so unexpected. I've been a model clerk, you know, and now that I've just spent my surplus capital on a vacation, I'm granted another and longer one, without pay. Well," with an involuntary sigh, "there are other clerkships, of course, and I'll probably get one. But you've no idea, sir, how much labor it takes to find a job at twelve a week — especially in the summer season."

"Jim," said Jarrod, thoughtfully, "this is a bit of good luck, if judged from my own selfish viewpoint. I need some one very badly, to help me clear up a lot of accumulated work. Would you mind being my clerk for a few weeks?"

Jim's face was beaming.

"Do you really mean it, Mr. Jarrod? Can I be of use to you?"

"Indeed you can, my boy. You'll have to stay at Tamawaca, but as a worker instead of a drone. Can you run a typewriter?"

"Yes; I used one at college for a couple of years, and got to be fairly expert. But I know nothing of shorthand."

"That isn't necessary. I shall require your services every forenoon, but you may have the afternoons to yourself. I'll give you twenty dollars a week and pay your board at the hotel."

"Isn't that too much, Mr. Jarrod?"

"Not for the work you must do. Any intelligent man would cost me that much, and I will need you but a couple of months — until I go home."

"Very good, sir. I'll do my best to please you."

"Then you're my secretary. Come around to my cottage at nine o'clock Monday morning."

"Thank you, Mr. Jarrod."

That evening Jim told Susie he would not have to bid her good-bye, as they had expected, for he had been discharged as a dry-goods clerk and employed as a private secretary, which was a distinct advance in his fortunes.

Susie listened gravely, but was evidently much pleased.

"The girls told me yesterday," she said, "that Katie had written her father and asked him to discharge you, because you had been impudent enough to become acquainted with the exclusive young ladies of Tamawaca under false

pretenses."

"But I didn't, Susie! I met them through your accident, and they never asked me how I earned a living."

"I know; but they forget that. They say you imposed upon them by assuming that you are a gentleman."

Jim laughed merrily.

"Where do you draw the line, Susie, between a gentleman and — and — what's the other thing? — an undesirable acquaintance?"

"Perhaps so. I don't draw the line, myself, so you must ask the girls to explain. Perhaps, now that you've become the private secretary of a famous lawyer, you will be cultivated instead of being snubbed. But I'm not sure of that."

Jim started work Monday morning and found his task no sinecure. Jarrod had a lot of correspondence to answer and a good many papers to be copied. Also there was an inventory to be made of the property covered by the option given by Easton and Wilder, and their books to be gone over. But Jim was both industrious and intelligent, and seemed to "fit the job" very well indeed.

Katie Glaston's triumph was brief. She had actually boosted Jim several pegs on the road to fortune, and when the girl discovered this she was so provoked that she left Tamawaca and went to visit friends at Spring Lake.

The other girls began to be properly ashamed of themselves, although the heiress refused to alter her opinion that "a poor young man had no business at a summer resort."

Gladys and Betty began nodding to Jim as he passed by, and although he returned the salutations with graceful politeness he never stopped or attempted to resume the old friendly relations. He had grown wonderfully fond of plain little Susie, who had remained his faithful adherent, and her society seemed just now fully sufficient to satisfy all his needs. He even took her to some of the dances, and found her a much more satisfactory partner than on that first evening when he met her and tested her accomplishments as a Terpsichore. She was still a bit awkward, but the little speeches they whispered to each other made them forget they were dancing until the music stopped and reminded them of the fact. The heiress had a new beau — a bulky blond named Neddie Roper — who was reputed a social lion and a railway magnate, although it afterward transpired he worked in the Pullman shops. Therefore Clara positively ignored "that Smith girl and her dry-goods clerk," who ought to have felt properly humiliated, but didn't.

Wilder came to Jarrod in a day or so and said:

"Well, dear boy, I've got the cold cash in hand to take up that option; so if you'll turn it over to me I'll settle the matter in a jiffy."

“In what way?” asked Jarrod.

“Why, I’ll pay Easton his twenty thousand and let him go. And then I’ll begin an era of public improvements, and try to induce the cottagers to fix things up a bit.”

“I can’t let you have the option,” replied Jarrod. “It was given to me as trustee for the cottagers, and belongs to them.”

“Have they got thirty thousand dollars to take it up?”

“No; not yet.”

“And they never will have it,” declared Wilder. “Your cottagers are a lot of corn-cobs, and you couldn’t squeeze any juice out of them with a cider-press.”

“I’m not sure of that,” returned Jarrod, smiling. “Anyhow, the option is theirs to accept or reject, and I’ve called a meeting for Saturday night to find out what they wish to do.”

That worried Wilder a little until he reflected that the cottagers5 meetings were all “hot air and soap-bubbles.” They couldn’t raise thirty thousand dollars for Tamawaca in thirty years, and sooner or later the option would be turned over to him as a matter of course.

Meantime old man Easton had been quietly observant of the situation, and after the meeting of the cottagers was announced his suspicions that Jarrod was “not honest” took definite form and threw him into a condition bordering upon nervous prostration. He made a bee-line for the lawyer’s cottage, and found Jarrod sunning himself on the front porch.

“Good morning, Mr. Jarrod,” he began, cordially.

Jarrod nodded, but did not ask his visitor to be seated. He had just been going through the books of the partners and had discovered things that to his mind rendered social intercourse with a man like Easton impossible.

“I’ve called around to get that option,” remarked the old man, seating himself upon the porch railing.

“What option?”

“The one I gave you so as to fool Wilder. You know what I mean,” with an attempt at a jocose laugh which ended in an hysterical gurgle.

“Do you refer to the option you granted to me, as trustee for the cottagers of Tamawaca?” asked the lawyer, coldly.

“Why — why — that was only a bluff, you know. I gave you the option so as to buy out Wilder. You know that well enough.”

Jarrod shook his head.

“The option belongs to the cottagers,” he said. “You can’t have it, Mr. Easton.”

“What! Can’t have the option!” His voice expressed both astonishment

and reproach.

"By no means."

"I — I'm — afraid I'm going to — to faint!" gasped Easton in a wailing voice, as he fanned himself with his hat.

"I wouldn't," remarked the lawyer.

"But I — Oh, this is terrible — terrible!" gasped the old man, piteously. "If I don't get that option, Mr. Jarrod, I shall be ruined — utterly ruined!"

His frail body swayed from side to side, and with eyes half shut he watched the effect of his misery upon the stern faced man seated before him.

"Quite likely," said Jarrod, yawning.

"Ruined — ruined! At my age to face the poor-house! Oh, my poor family — oh, — oh, — oh!"

He leaned backward, threw up his arms and fell over the rail of the porch to lie motionless on the soft sand beneath.

Jarrod laughed. After a minute or so of silence he said calmly:

"There's a red spider crawling up your left pant-leg."

Easton sat up and with a nervous motion shook the bottoms of his trousers. Then he glanced at his persecutor, who was just now gazing reflectively over the smooth waters of the lake, which showed between the foliage of the trees.

"Sir," said the old man, in a voice trembling with emotion, as he dusted the sand from his clothes and once more mounted the steps of the porch, "you are a cold-blooded brute!"

"I know," acknowledged Jarrod. "But I'm not as bad as I used to be. Ask my wife. She'll tell you I haven't knocked her down and stamped on her in over a month."

Easton sighed. He must change his tactics, evidently.

"I take it," he remarked, in a mournful voice, "that this is a business matter."

"You should have taken it that way before," said Jarrod.

Easton brightened.

"Of course," he rejoined. "How careless of me! But now, I trust, we understand each other. How much, Mr. Jarrod?"

"Eh?"

Easton glanced furtively around to assure himself there were no listeners.

"How much will you take to deliver to me that paper — the option Ï gave you the other day?"

"Sir!"

"That's all right. Get as indignant as you like, Mr. Jarrod. I admire you for it. But just state your figure and I'll write you a check." He took out a check-

book, and began to unscrew his fountain-pen. “Every man has his price, of course; but I know you won’t rob me, Mr. Jarrod. You’ll be reasonable, because I’m an old man and can’t afford to — ”

A door slammed and he looked up startled. The porch was empty save for his own astonished person, and after waiting five or ten minutes for the lawyer to return Easton slowly slid his check-book into his pocket and tottered home with feeble, uncertain steps.

After that interview Jarrod seemed different, even to his friends. His jaw was set and his eyes had a steely gleam in them that boded no good to any who might interfere with his purposes. Never before, even in those wild days when he strove to control the Crosbys, had he felt so humiliated and humbled in his own estimation, and his one desire was to have done with this miserable business as soon as possible.

The cottagers’ meeting was a surprise not only to Wilder, who took pains to be present and had pains because of it, but to the participants themselves. Jarrod’s report of what had been accomplished set them wild with enthusiasm, and when they realized that their committee had faithfully served their interests and found a way to release them from the bondage of Easton and Wilder, they promptly awoke from their customary lethargy and voted to take up the option. Every person present agreed to subscribe for stock in a new company composed exclusively of cottagers, which would thereafter own and control Tamawaca and operate the public utilities without profit and for the benefit of the community as a whole.

“But,” said Wilder to Jarrod, next day, “you can’t issue stock until you have the property, and you have no way to raise the thirty thousand to get the property. Why not turn the option over to me without any more fooling?”

“Wait,” replied the lawyer, smiling. He did not resent Wilder’s eagerness to get the option, because he was frank and straightforward in his methods. But his one word was so far from encouraging that Wilder looked at him and shuddered involuntarily. Never in his experience had he encountered a man like this, who didn’t know when he was beaten and couldn’t be cajoled or bulldozed. From that moment his fears grew, until he was forced to realize that in carrying out his clever scheme to oust his partner he had also ousted himself from a peculiarly profitable business enterprise.

Wilder was right in his statement that it had always been impossible to induce the cottagers to put any money into public improvements; yet that was because they realized they were asked to pay for things that Easton and Wilder should have done at their own expense. But conditions had now changed. Jarrod could have had a hundred thousand dollars as easily as the thirty required to take up the option. A dozen stood ready to advance the

money, but the lawyer selected three of the most public spirited and liberal of the cottagers, and made them popular by letting them advance ten thousand each. The option was taken up, because neither Easton nor Wilder could find a way to legally withdraw from its terms, and the transfer was consummated, all the property being formally deeded to the newly incorporated Tamawaca Association.

Thus ended one of the most amusing financial intrigues on record. The amount involved was insignificant; Tamawaca itself is almost unknown in the great world. Yet the three-cornered game was as carefully planned and played as any of the campaigns of Napoleon, and it was won because each of the partners conspired against the other and was finally content to be a loser by the deal as long as he could cause annoyance to his enemy. Never, in all probability, could the cottagers in any other way have been able to secure control of the beautiful resort where they had built their summer homes.

As for Jarrod, he hid to escape congratulations that were showered upon him from every side, and in the seclusion of his side porch breathed a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER XL.

ROUGH-HOUSING.

Jim speedily found himself upon friendly terms with all the "resorters" at Tamawaca. He worked for Jarrod mornings and in the afternoons and evenings enjoyed himself thoroughly. When "Ragatta Week" arrived — the week of the Yacht Club boat races, when the four yachtsmen competed for the prizes that were donated by the liberal merchants of Kochton and Grand Rapids, and divided the spoils amicably — during that week Jim helped to get up the annual "Venetian Evening," the one really famous attraction of the year.

On this occasion the entire bay was enclosed with lines of gorgeous Japanese lanterns placed in artistic designs along the shore. The Yacht Club, the hotels at Iroquois Bay and Tamacawa and all the buildings facing the bay were elaborately decorated with bunting and lanterns, while the sail-boats anchored upon the mirror-like surface of the water displayed a like splendor. Bands played on the ferry-boats, bonfires on the neighboring heights glared and twinkled, many launches brilliant with colored lights moved slowly over the bay, while rockets and roman candles sent their spluttering displays into the dim sky overhead. All the world was there to see the sight and the-popcorn and peanut men reaped a harvest.

It has been seriously asserted that Venice in its palmiest days has never been able to compete with Tamawaca on "Venetian Evening."

During the delightful August weather social functions at the resort reached their acme of enjoyment and followed one another as thickly as the fleeting hours would permit. In some circles these affairs were conducted with much solemn propriety; but many folks who suffered under the imperious exactions of "good form" during the rest of the year revolted from its tyranny while on their summer vacations, and loved to be merry and informal. They were gathered from many cities of the South, East, North and West, and here thrown together in a motley throng whose antecedents and established social positions at home it would be both difficult and useless to determine. So certain congenial circles were formed with the prime object of "having a good time," and they undoubtedly succeeded in their aim.

Jim, who before he quarrelled with his father had been accustomed to mingle with the 400 of old St. Louis, was greatly amused at some of these entertainments, many of which he attended with demure little Susie.

Rivers, a jolly fellow who owned a lake front cottage — one of the titles to distinction at Tamawaca — organized a "surprise party" on George B. Still (another lake-fronter) one evening. A band of some twenty people

assembled at the cottage of a neighbor, all carrying baskets laden with frosted bricks in place of cake, beer-bottles filled with clear spring water but still bearing Budweiser labels, mud-pies with nicely browned crusts, turnips fried to resemble Saratoga chips and other preposterous donations of a similar character.

Then they stole silently to George's cottage, and when he opened the door in answer to their timid knock built into a sudden flood of merriment that never subsided until after midnight.

The Stills were as pleased as could be, but no one paid much attention to them. Somebody thumped the piano while everybody else danced a two-step regardless of interfering toes or furniture.

Little Drybug, a dapper man who weighed about seventy-six pounds but didn't look so heavy, cavorted with blushing Mrs. Still who weighed something less than three hundred — but not much — and nearly committed suicide in the attempt. Commodore Diller danced with Grandma Jones, a rosy-cheeked antiquity who blushed as charmingly as a girl of sixteen, and the general mix-up was, about as laughable as could well be.

In the breathless pause that presently ensued as a matter of course, Mr. Idowno, a solemn faced gentleman who had attended the party with his smiling, chubby wife but could not dance a single caper, protested in an audible tone that it was time he must be going. "I have to work for a living, you know," explained this individual, who was director in several banks and controlled a number of business enterprises and could not get them off his mind.

But the company laughed him to scorn and decided to play "five hundred" for a series of prizes that had not been provided in advance, and were therefore invisible.

So the self-invited guests rigged up card tables and chose partners and fought and quarreled for points until Mrs. Rivers rung a gong and invited all to supper.

Then they jumped up and trooped into an adjoining room, where the frosted bricks and mud pies had been spread for a banquet; and although George R. accepted his donations with good humor the guests began to wonder if the joke was not on themselves, after all, since their jolly exertions had created a demand in their interiors for real food.

"Well, I must be going," said the solemn Idowno. "I have to work for — "

"This way, please!" called Mrs. Still, cheerily, and threw open another door, disclosing an enticing array of provender that caused a stampede in that direction.

"How on earth did you happen to have all this on hand?" Susie enquired

of Mrs. Still, as she and Jim squeezed themselves into a corner. “Didn’t Mrs. Rivers keep her surprise party a secret?”

“Of course, as secret as she can keep anything,” answered the laughing hostess; “but I had an intuition there’d be a lot of hungry folks here tonight, so we’ve been busy all day getting ready for them.”

After the supper, which consumed two hours in being consumed, Mr. Idowno once more claimed he must be going; but the guests rose up and loudly demanded the prizes they had won at cards. From the size of the hubbub it appeared that nearly every one present was entitled to a prize.

For once the Stills were nonplussed. They really hadn’t thought of “prizes” for their surprise party, and hesitated what to say or do. But their guests settled the matter in their own way.

Mr. Iward took possession of a Japanese screen; Mrs. Rivers grabbed a mantel ornament; Mrs. Jarrod seized upon an antique candlestick she had long coveted and plump Mrs. Diller grabbed a picture off the wall. Mrs. Purspyre found a Bible and appropriated it because she had always had a curiosity to read it. Mr. Bowsir espied a paper-cutter of ivory, which he secured after a struggle with George B., who wanted it himself, while Katherine Pance swiped an embroidered cover from the center-table and Mr. Connover took the table itself.

And so, amid screams and laughter, the pretty room was despoiled of its treasures, for the Stills were greatly outnumbered by their guests and powerless to protect their property.

As the heavily laden company trooped away down the walk, singing as blithely as the forty thieves might have done, Mr. Wright, the author-man, who had really won a prize but found the place stripped when he returned from the dining-room (where he had been to hunt for one last sandwich) gave a sigh and lifted the front door from its hinges, carrying it home with many protests that “it was just about as useful as any prize he had won that year.”

And so ended the “surprise party,” but little Minnie Still said confidentially to her chum next day:

“We had a rough-house at our cottage last night, and they behaved just dreadful! Why, if we young folks ever acted the way those old married people did, my mother would send me back to Quincy in double-quick time.”

Such commentaries by children upon their elders are doubly sad when they happen to be true.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. HERRINGFORD's PARTY.

"Jim," said Colonel Kerry, meeting the young man at the post-office, "that cottage of Grant's, up near mine, has been rented at last. Thé parties took possession today."

"Who got it, Colonel?"

"One of the big millionaires of St. Louis, they say; and he's arrived with his wife and daughters and a whole gang of servants. Jarrod says he's a capital fellow, but didn't mention the size of the capital. Money won't buy health, Jim, and the poor Midas is an invalid and came here to try tQ brace up."

Jim was white and staring.

"You — you didn't hear the name, Colonel?"

"Why, yes; it's Everton."

The young man gave a low, solemn whistle and walked away with a guilty and disturbed demeanor, while the colonel favored a group that had overheard his remarks with further particulars concerning the new arrival.

There was considerable excitement in quiet Tamawaca over the advent of the Evertons; for while the resort boasted several families of great wealth, none was so marvelously rich or of such conspicuous note as the well known patent medicine man who had won mountains of gold by the sale of his remedies. And when it was understood his own poor health had brought him to this place to seek relief the folks were really shocked, and George B. Still declared he would send the poor man a bottle of "Everton's Magic Healer" and ask him to read the printed testimonials. The affair was a nine days' gossip because the people had for the time exhausted the subject of Easton & Wilder and craved excitement.

When Jim went to Susie with a hanging head and told her his father had come to the very place where he had himself taken refuge, the girl counselled with him seriously, and advised him not to run away but rather to meet his family frankly and if possible resume friendly relations with them.

"The only thing that Mr. Carleton urges against our engagement," she said, "is that you have not treated your parents fairly in this matter. And your poor father is ill, they say, and must be unhappy over the desertion of his only son. How do you feel about it, Jim?"

"Why, I haven't looked at the matter in that light before, Susie," he replied. "But I'll think it over and try to do what is right. What do we do this evening?"

"We're invited to Mrs. Herringford's party, and I'm curious to go and see

what it will be like. The old lady is the mother of Mrs. Drybug — you remember the Drybugs, don't you? Both the little dears weigh about as much as a healthy schoolboy, and they remind one of ants because they're so busy and you have to be careful not to step on them."

"I remember. If Mrs. Herringford is the mother of the Drybugs she ought to be able to do stunts."

"Well, let's go."

So they went, as curious as every one else who had been invited, and were glad they did not miss the show.

The oldest inhabitant could not remember when Mrs. Herringford had ever entertained before. At the Yacht Club card parties she was always in evidence, and the little lady played such an earnest, strenuous game that the men rather avoided being her partners. Once George B. Still, being caught, "bid" with such desperate recklessness that he set back poor Mrs. Herringford far enough to ruin her game, and she went home broken-hearted. But usually she glared at her partner so fiercely that he played with unusual care and made the game a business and not a diversion. Every one liked her, when she was at some other card table.

Tonight the lady wished to repay all her social obligations in a bunch by giving a party at her cottage. Being rather nervous, she asked Mrs. McCoy and the Widow Marsh to assist her to receive. Mrs. McCoy was a sweet little woman who was everybody's friend and therefore could refuse Mrs. Herringford nothing that might please her, while the Widow Marsh was possessed of such grace and beauty that she charmed every male heart in spite of her modest ways and made the women with husbands nervous whenever she was around.

With two such drawing cards the Herringford party could scarcely fail of success, yet as the guests slowly arrived the atmosphere of gloom that hung over the place was hard to dissipate. Mr. Idowno, one of the first comers, began to look at his watch and suggest that it was time to go, as "he had to work for a living;" but the Widow Marsh suspected his intention and made him forget his worries by sitting at his side and telling him how young he was growing.

The invited guests were so slow to arrive that some never came at all, but bye and bye there were enough to start the card playing, and then the hostess made them a clever speech.

"I haven't any prizes for the winners," she announced, "because I want a very harmonious gathering here tonight and prizes always result in disappointment, malice and envy. Besides, they're getting expensive. But I hope you'll all play in a friendly spirit for the honor of winning, and that

you'll have a real good time."

Instead of applauding this speech, Mr. Idowno looked at his watch, but his wife pinched him and made him put it away and take a seat at one of the card tables.

It is impossible to repress Tamawaca folks when they are out for a good time — which is the only reason they are ever out. "These people," whispered Lucy Kerry to her neighbor, "would enjoy themselves at a funeral."

"True," was the reply; "especially if they could pick the corpse."

To relieve any chill in the temperature they at once began to laugh and joke with one another, while Mrs. McCoy and the Widow Marsh fluttered around to see that all were properly paired and the cards were rightly sorted. The game began with as much energy as a lack of prizes would warrant, but no effort could make it a whirlwind of joy, so presently they gave up the cards and played blindman's bluff and puss-in-the-corner. Mrs. Herringford was worried to death lest some one should catch her and kiss her, but no man was so ungentlemanly.

Although these youthful frolics served to while away the front of the evening, there was no temptation to linger very late, so when Mr. Stakes suggested that they all "go home and have a good time" the party was on the verge of breaking up.

"Wait — wait!" cried Mrs. Herringford. "We're going to have refreshments."

Being cowed by wonder and made curious by the unexpected revelation, they waited.

The hostess disappeared into the kitchen.

"It hardly seems possible," murmured Mrs. Purspyre, "but truth is stranger than Mrs. Herringford. We shall see what we shall see. Her grocery bill was twenty-eight cents last week, and she is said to have half a million in government four-per-cents. Perhaps she's going to open her heart, to prove she's alive and not a resuscitated Egyptian mummy, as Mr. Wright claims she is. Let's wait."

They waited, and waited so long that the Widow Marsh and Mrs. McCoy had hard work to prevent a stampede through the front door. But finally the hostess appeared, bearing two plates and radiant with the joy of generous hospitality.

"Run, Lucy and Grace and Ada and Mary," she called, "and help me bring in the plates. The refreshments are all ready!"

They ran and brought in the plates. Upon each one was placed with dainty care one soda cracker, one withered ginger-snap and one puffy cracknel. The

guests took the “refreshments” in dismal silence and began to gnaw.

“But there’s no plate for you, my dear,” said Mrs. McCoy to the hostess, in a solicitous tone.

“Never mind,” returned the little lady, cheerfully; “I ain’t hungry, so I guess I can wait till breakfast.”

Mrs. Purspyre choked on the puffy cracknel and was saved to the world by a glass of water. Mrs. Herringford thoughtfully brought water for them all.

“You’ll find it nice and fresh,” she said, with pardonable pride, as she poured the precious fluid with a lavish hand.

“Then it’s different from this ginger-snap,” remarked Mr. Wogie, nursing a jarred tooth.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” announced Mr. Sherlock, getting upon his feet and waving one arm. “Let us thank Mrs. Herringford for her kind entertainment, which will be a red letter event in our calendar of glorious memories. This dissipation is unusual with us all, but I hope in no case will it prove fatal. Once in a while it is good for stagnant humanity to indulge in high life and cracknels — ”

“Bravo!” shouted one of the Naylor girls, who had pocketed her refreshments to carry home as a souvenir.

“Therefore,” concluded the orator, “let us leave the glamour and bewildering gaiety of these festivities and seek a more common-place seclusion. Let us thank Mrs. Herringford once again — and go home.”

“Bravo!” yelled Idowno, jumping up, and instantly the meeting adjourned.

CHAPTER XIII.
RECONCILIATION.

"Mr. Jarrod," said Jim when he went to work next morning, "father's here."

"I've just been to call upon him," returned the lawyer, looking steadily at the young man; "but you haven't."

Jim flushed.

"Does he know I'm here?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"I told him. He didn't know it until then. Your mother and Nellie and May are all delighted and eager to see you."

"And father?"

"He did not express himself as glad or sorry. You've offended him deeply, Jim."

The boy thrust his hands into his pockets and looked thoughtful.

"I'd like to see mother," he said, musingly. "She's as tender and sweet as any mother can be, Mr. Jarrod; but the poor dear is entirely under my father's thumb, and even his frown terrifies her."

"Hm," said the lawyer. "I thought that kind of wives became extinct years ago."

"Mother's the old-fashioned sort, sir. And the girls are all right, in their way — for sisters. But dad has a dreadful temper, and when he gets on his high horse all I can do is to jaw back."

"No two in a family should try to ride the high horse at the same time," observed Jarrod; "and you must remember that the head of the house controls the stables. He's sick, Jim, and his pain makes him crabbed. Why not try to bear with him, and be friendly?"

"That's what Susie says. Perhaps I really ought to go up to the cottage and call."

"There's no question about it. Go now."

Jim hesitated.

"I said I'd never darken his doors again, you know," he intimated, weakly.

"These are not his doors. It's Grant's cottage."

"So it is. Well, I'll go."

He pulled his hat down over his ears desperately, buttoned his coat in spite of the heat, and with tense muscles but trembling lips marched up the hill to the Grant cottage.

Before he could knock the door flew open and he was in his mother's arms. The poor lady was sobbing with joy, and led her errant son into the room where his father sat propped with cushions in an easy chair.

"Here's Jim!" she said, trembling with uncertainty and a well founded

fear of the interview to follow.

Mr. Everton looked at his boy and nodded.

“Sit down, Jim,” he said. The tone was not harsh, but lacked cordiality.

Jim sat down.

“How are you, sir?”

“Pretty bad. I don’t seem to find any relief.”

Once Jim had wickedly suggested that he take his own rheumatism cure; but the remark had led to all their trouble, so he twirled his hat and answered perfunctorily:

“I’m sorry, sir.”

Such mildness of demeanor ought to have placated the father. But Everton was eyeing his son suspiciously.

“They tell me you’re working. A lawyer’s clerk.”

“I’m Mr. Jarrod’s private secretary, sir.”

“Huh! Good job for a college man, isn’t it? Nice investment I made when I sent you to Cornell.”

Jim wondered what he would say if he knew he had until recently been a dry-goods clerk.

“Haven’t you had about enough of this two-penny folly?” demanded his father, more harshly.

“Oh, I’ve discovered that I can earn my own living,” said the boy, flushing.

“That isn’t the point. I reared you with the expectation that you would be of some use to me when I grew old and feeble. That time has arrived. I need you to help look after the business. Look here: do you owe nothing to me?”

Jim examined the pattern on the rug.

“Just as much as I owe myself, sir. Surely not more.”

“Then pay your obligation to me first, and you can do as you please afterward.”

“All right. That’s fair.”

His mother, who sat beside him silently holding his hand, hugged him again, and even Mr. Everton seemed pleased by the frank answer.

“You jeered at the business once, and called it a — a fake!” resumed the elder man, somewhat bitterly; “but it’s nothing of the sort. Every one of the Everton Remedies is prepared according to the formula of a skillful physician, and they’ve helped lots of suffering people. Is not my name highly respected? Answer me!”

“I think it is.”

“Very well. You shall be my assistant and have an interest in the business. I’ll allow you ten thousand a year.”

“Good!” said Jim, brightening suddenly. “Then I can get married.”

“Oh, Jim!” cried his mother.

“To whom, sir?” asked his father.

“Why, to Susie. Perhaps you haven’t heard of her. She’s a girl I met at Tamawaca.”

“What’s her other name?”

“Smith. Susie Smith,” dwelling on it lovingly.

“Smith! Well, who is she?”

“The sweetest girl in all the world, sir.”

“Bah! Who are her people? Where does she come from?”

“I don’t know.”

“Nonsense.”

“I haven’t asked about her family. Why should I, when she’s all right herself? She’s stopping with Mr. Carleton — W. E. Carleton, the railway contractor. He says he knows you.”

“Well?”

“Susie lives in New York, I think, or some Eastern city. Her mother is dead but her father is still on deck — I’m positive of that, for she often speaks of him.”

“What does he do?”

“Can’t imagine, I’m sure.”

“Jim, you’re a fool — a doddering imbecile!”

“All right.”

“Oh, Henry — please don’t quarrel!” exclaimed Mrs. Everton, beginning to weep anew.

But the invalid was suffering twinges and would not be stayed.

“You’ll have to give up that girl for good and all,” he roared. “Susie Smith! Some cheap stenographer or a paid companion to Mrs. Carleton, I suppose. Some designing hussy who thinks you’ll have money, and wants to get her clutches on it. Susie Smith! For heaven’s sake, Jim, why can’t you have a little sense?”

Jim got up, slowly and with a white face.

“Father, I don’t know much about Susie except that I love her and mean to marry her. And I won’t have you sneer at her, even if you are ill and bad tempered. You have no reason to say a word against her.”

“Smith!”

“I know,” a smile creeping over his face to soften its fierceness; “but I’ll change that name, pretty soon. Susie Everton isn’t so bad, is it?”

“Give her up, Jim. Don’t let her come between us.”

“She’s there, Dad, and you, can’t thrust her away.”

“Give her up.”

“I won’t!”

Mrs. Everton was sobbing softly. The invalid turned on his cushions with a sigh. But his jaws were closed tight and his brow bent to a frown. Jim had quite regained his composure.

“I hope you’ll soon get better, sir,” he remarked. “I shall be in Tamawaca for some weeks yet, and if I can be of any help in any way, let me know. Good bye, mother.”

As he turned to go the door burst open and Nellie and May dashed in and threw themselves upon their brother with glad cries and smothering kisses. They were bright, pretty girls, and Jim loved them and was proud of them.

“Is it all made up, Jim?’ asked Nell, anxiously.

“Not quite, little sister,” smiling at her.

“Oh, but it must be! It’s all wrong, dear, for us to be separated this way. Tell him so, father!” turning appealingly to the invalid.

“He refused my overtures,” said Mr. Everton, testily.

“Oh, no!” laughed Jim; “he refused my sweetheart.”

The girls clapped their hands gleefully.

“We’ve heard all about it, in the town,” said one. “Oh, Jim, you lucky boy!”

“And whom do you think it is, Dad?” asked the other eagerly, as she seated herself beside her father’s chair.

“I don’t know; and Jim don’t know.”

“But *we* know! She’s an old friend of ours. We knew her at Wellesley, and we’ve just called upon her and kissed her and hugged her for old times’ sake. Father, it’s Susie Smith!”

“Smith!” with a snort of contempt.

“The only, only child of the great Agamemnon Smith, the richest Standard Oil magnate after Rockefeller himself!”

Jim fell into a chair and stared at his father. His father stared at him.

“And that isn’t all,” said May, gushingly. “Susie’s as lovely as she is rich — the sweetest, cutest, brightest and cunningest little thing that ever lived.”

“To think that Susie Smith will be our sister!” cried Nell, clasping her hands ecstatically.

“And — and — Jim can change that name of Smith, you know,” faltered poor Mrs. Everton, glancing at her husband nervously.

The invalid roused himself and looked up with a smile.

“So he can,” he observed, drily. “Hang up your hat, Jim, and let’s talk it over.”

Jim hung up his hat.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF COURSE.

Things settled into easy grooves at Tamawaca.

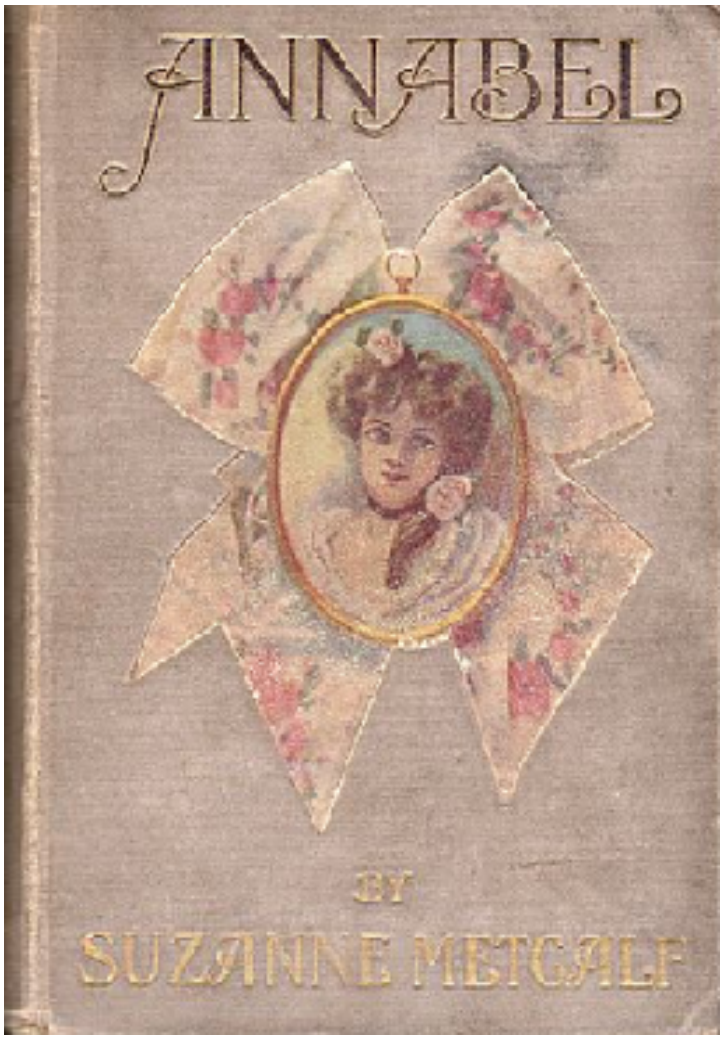
Now that Wilder was no longer a public autocrat people accepted him in his new role as an humble member of the community, according him the consideration due any well behaved cottager. Easton kept out of the way for a time, and gradually folks forgot him and regained their accustomed cheerfulness. He had been a thorn in their sides, but the wound soon healed when the thorn was removed. Few of us care to remember unpleasant things, and communities are more generous than we are inclined to give them the credit for being.

The "New Tamawaca" began to arouse the interest of the cottagers, who threw themselves heart and soul into its regeneration. Things were done for the first time in the history of the place, and done with a will and enthusiasm that accomplished wonders in a brief period. Miles of cement walks were laid through the woods, and a broad thoroughfare now extends the length of the lake front, where once it was dangerous to travel on foot. To the visitor it is the chief charm of the place. There are new public buildings, too, and the little parks that were formerly dumps for refuse are made sweet and enticing with shrubs and flowers.

Because of all this, and the era of prosperity that has dawned upon it, Tamawaca is growing steadily and many pretty cottages are springing up on the vacant lots. One of the most attractive of these is owned by Jim and Susie, who have ample reason to be fond of the delightful resort where they had the good fortune to first meet.

ANNABEL, A NOVEL FOR YOUNG FOLK

Annabel, published by Reilly & Britton in 1906 was one of Baum's first novels meant for young girls. Thus he used the pseudonym, Suzanne Metcalf. H. Putnam Hall provided the illustrations. The Horatio Alger-style plot features a plucky hero named Will Carden who helps his mother and siblings grow vegetables for a living, though the family once owned a steel mill. The plot features the requisite villain, a friendly mentor, a lovely heroine, a mystery, which once solved, leads to success and prosperity. *Annabel* was not a great success but did appear in a second edition, illustrated by the Belgian-American artist, Joseph Pierre Nuyttens.



A first edition copy of 'Annabel'

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CHAPTER ONE

WILL MEETS WITH A REBUKE

"HERE are your vegetables, Nora," said Will Carden, as he scraped his feet upon the mat before the kitchen door of the "big house."

"Come in, Masther Willyum," called the cook, in her cheery voice.

So the boy obeyed the summons and pushed open the screen door, setting his basket upon the white table at Nora's side.

"Oo, misery! but them pays is illegant," she said, breaking open a green pod and eating the fresh, delicious contents. "Why, Masther Willyum, the bloom is on 'em yet."

"I picked them myself, Nora," the boy answered, with a pleased laugh, "and only a little while ago, at that. And you'll find the tomatoes and the celery just as nice, I'm sure."

"They can't be bate," responded the cook, emptying the basket and handing it to him. "Sure, I don't know whatever we'd do widout yez to bring us the grand stuff, Masther Willyum."

"I wish," said he, hesitatingly, "you wouldn't call me 'master,' Nora. Call me Will, as everyone else does. I'm not old enough to have a handle to my name, and I'm not much account in the world — yet."

Nora's round, good-natured face turned grave, and she looked at the boy with a thoughtful air.

"I used to know the Cardens," she said, "when they didn't have to raise vegetables to earn a living."

Will flushed, and his eyes fell.

"Never mind that, Nora," he answered, gently. "We've got to judge people by what they are, not by what they have been. Goodbye!" and he caught up his basket and hastily retreated, taking care, however, to close the screen door properly behind him, for he knew the cook's horror of flies.

"Poor boy!" sighed Nora, as she resumed her work. "It ain't his fault, at all at all, that the Cardens has come down in the wurruld. But down they is purty close to the bottom, an' it ain't loikly as they'll pick up ag'in in a hurry."

Meantime, the vegetable boy, whistling softly to himself, passed along the walk that led from the back of the big house past the stables and so on to the gate opening into the lane. The grounds of the Williams mansion were spacious and well kept, the lawns being like velvet and the flower beds filled with artistic clusters of rare blooming plants. A broad macadamed driveway, edged with curbs of dressed stone, curved gracefully from the carriage porch to the stables, crossing the lawn like a huge scroll.

At one side of this a group of children played upon the grass — two boys and three girls — white the nurse who was supposed to have charge of the smallest girl, as yet scarcely more than a baby, sat upon a comfortable bench, engaged in reading a book.

As Will passed, one of the little girls lay flat upon the ground, sobbing most dismally, her golden head resting upon her outstretched arms. The boy hesitated an instant, and then put down his basket and crossed the lawn to where the child lay, all neglected by her companions.

"What's wrong, Gladie?" he asked, sitting on the grass beside her.

"Oh, Will," she answered, turning to him a tear-stained face, "m — my d — d — dolly's all bwoke, an' Ted says she'll h — h — have t' go to a h — h — hospital, an' Ma 'Weeze an' Wedgy says they'll in — m — make a f — f — un'ral an' put dolly in the c — cold gwound, an' make her dead!" and the full horror of the recital flooding her sensitive little heart, Gladys burst into a new flood of tears.

"Don't you worry about it, Gladie," he said in a comforting tone. "We'll fix dolly all right, in less than a jiffy. Where is she, and where's she broke?"

Hope crept into the little face, begot of a rare confidence in the big boy beside her. Gladys rolled over upon the grass, uncovering a French doll of the jointed variety, dressed in very elaborate but soiled and bedraggled clothes and having a grimy face and a mass of tangled hair. It must have been a pretty toy when new, but the doll had never won Gladys' whole heart so long as it remained immaculate and respectable. In its present disreputable condition it had become her dearest treasure, and when she handed the toy to Will Carden and showed him where one leg was missing from the knee down, a fresh outburst of grief convulsed her.

"Her l — leg is all b — bwoke!" she cried.

"That's bad," said Will, examining the doll carefully. "But we'll play I'm the doctor, come to make her well. Where's the other piece, Gladie?"

The child hastily searched for her pocket, from which, when at last the opening was found, she drew forth the severed leg. By this time the other children had discovered Will's presence and with a wild whoop of greeting they raced to his side and squatted around him on the lawn, curiously watching to see how he would mend the doll. Theodore was about Will's own age, but much shorter and inclined to stoutness. His face habitually wore a serious expression and he was very quiet and stolid of demeanor. Reginald, the other boy, was only nine, but his nature was so reckless and mischievous that he was the life of the whole family, and his mother could always tell where the children were playing by listening for the sound of Reginald's shrill and merry voice.

Mary Louise was fourteen — a dark-haired, blueeyed maiden whose sweet face caused strangers to look more than once as she passed them by. To be sure she was very slender — so slight of frame that Reginald had named her "Skinny" as a mark of his brotherly affection; but the girl was so dainty in her ways and so graceful in every movement that it was a wonder even her careless younger brother should not have recognized the fact that her "skinny" form was a promise of great beauty in the years to come.

Then there was Annabel, the "odd one" of the Williams family, with a round, freckled face, a pug nose, tawny red hair and a wide mouth that was always smiling. Annabel was twelve, the favored comrade of her brothers and sisters, the despair of her lady mother because of her ugliness of feature, and the pet of Nora, the cook, because she was what that shrewd domestic considered "the right stuff." Annabel, in spite of her bright and joyous nature, was shy with strangers, and at times appeared almost as reserved as her brother Theodore, which often led to her being misunderstood. But Will Carden was no stranger to the Williams children, being indeed a schoolmate, and as they flocked around him this bright Saturday morning they showered questions and greetings upon their friend in a somewhat bewildering manner.

The boy had only one thought in mind, just then: to comfort little Gladys by making her dolly "as good as new." So whistling softly, in his accustomed fashion, he drew out his pocketknife and began fishing in the hole of the doll's leg for the elastic cord that had parted and allowed her lower joint to fall off. Gladys watched this operation with wide, staring eyes; the others with more moderate interest; and presently Will caught the end of the cord, drew it out, and made a big knot in the end so it could not snap back again and disappear. Then, in the severed portion, he found the other end of the broken elastic, and when these two ends had been firmly knotted together the joints of the leg snapped firmly into place and the successful operation was completed.

"Hooray!" yelled Reginald, "It's all right now, Gladie. We'll postpone the funeral till another smash-up."

The little one's face was wreathed with smiles. She hugged the restored doll fondly to her bosom and wiped away the last tears that lingered on her cheeks. The callous nurse looked over at the group, yawned, and resumed her reading.

"Can you make a kite fly, Will?" asked Theodore, in his quiet tones.

"Don't know, Ted," replied Will. "What seems wrong with the thing?"

At once they all moved over to the center of the lawn, where a big kite lay with tangled cord and frazzled tail face downward upon the grass.

"It keeps ducking, and won't go up," explained Reginald, eagerly.

The tail seems too long," said Mary Louise:

"Or else the cord isn't fastened in the right place," added Theodore. "We've been working at it all morning; but it won't fly."

"Guess it's a ground-kite," remarked Annabel demurely. "It slides on the grass all right."

Will gave it a careful examination.

"Looks to me as if the brace-strings were wrong," said he, resuming his low whistle, which was an indication that he was much interested in the problem. "They don't balance the kite right, you see. There, that's better," he continued, after changing the position of the cords; "let's try it now. I'll hold it, Ted, and you run."

Theodore at once took the cord, which Will had swiftly untangled and rolled into a ball, and stood prepared to run when the kite was released. Next moment he was off, and the kite, now properly balanced, rose gracefully into the air and pulled strong against the cord, which Theodore paid out until the big kite was so high and distant that it looked no bigger than your hand.

Ted could manage the kite now while standing still, and the other children all rushed to his side, with their eyes fastened upon the red speck in the sky.

"Thank you, Will," said Theodore.

"That's all right," answered Will, indifferently; "all it needed was a little fixing. You could have done it yourself, if you'd only thought about it.

How's the sick kitten, Annabel?"

"Fine," said the girl. "The medicine you gave me made it well right away."

"Oho!" cried Reginald, joyfully, "he gave Annabel medicine to cure a sick kitten!"

"I'll give you some for a sick puppy, Reggie," said Will, grinning.

The kite-flyers were now standing in a group near a large bed of roses at the side of the house, and none of them, so intent were they upon their sport, had noticed that Mrs. Williams had come upon the lawn with a dainty basket and a pair of shears to gather flowers. So her voice, close beside them, presently startled the children and moved the inattentive nurse to spring up and hide her book.

"Isn't that the vegetable boy?" asked the lady in a cold tone.

Will swung around and pulled off his cap with a polite bow.

"Yes, ma'am," said he.

"Then run away, please," she continued, stooping to clip a rose with her shears.

"Run away?" he repeated, not quite able to understand.

"Yes!" said she, sharply. "I don't care to have my children play with the

vegetable boy."

The scorn conveyed by the cold, emphatic tones brought a sudden flush of red to Will's cheeks and brow.

"Good-bye," he said to his companions, and marched proudly across the lawn to where his basket lay. Nor did he pause to look back until he had passed out of the grounds and the back gate closed behind him with a click.

Then a wild chorus of protest arose from the children.

"Why did you do that?" demanded Theodore of his mother.

"He's as good as we are," objected Annabel.

"It wasn't right to hurt his feelings," said Mary Louise, quietly; "he can't help being a vegetable boy."

"Silence, all of you!" returned Mrs. Williams, sternly. "And understand, once for all, that I won't have you mixing with every low character in the town. If you haven't any respect for yourselves, you must respect your father's wealth and position and me."

There was an ominous silence for a moment. Then said little Gladys:

"Will's a dood boy; an' he fixted my dolly's leg."

"Fanny! take that rebellious child into the house this minute," commanded the great lady, pointing a terrible finger at her youngest off-spring.

"I don't want to," wailed Gladys, resisting the nurse with futile determination.

"Oh, yes you will, dear," said Mary Louise, softly, as she bent down to the little one. "You must obey mamma, you know. Come, I'll go with you."

"I'll go with Ma'-Weeze," said the child, pouting and giving her mother a reproachful glance as she toddled away led by her big sister, with the nurse following close behind.

"A nice, obedient lot of children you are, I must say!" remarked Mrs. Williams, continuing to gather the flowers. "And a credit, also, to your station in life. I sometimes despair of bringing you up properly."

There was a moment's silence, during which the children glanced half fearfully at each other; then in order to relieve the embarrassment of the situation Annabel cried:

"Come on, boys; let's go play."

They started at once to cross the lawn, glad to escape the presence of their mother in her present mood.

"Understand!" called Mrs. Williams, looking after them; "if that boy stops to play with you again I'll have Peter put him out of the yard."

But they paid no attention to this threat, nor made any reply; and the poor woman sighed and turned to her flowers, thinking that she had but done her duty.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DOCTOR TELLS THE TRUTH

Meantime, Will Carden walked slowly up the lane, his basket on his arm and his hands thrust deep into his pockets. Once out of sight of the Williams' grounds his proud bearing relaxed, and great tears welled in his gray eyes. The scornful words uttered by Mrs. Williams had struck him like a blow and crushed and humiliated him beyond measure. Yet he could not at first realize the full meaning of his rebuff; it was only after he found time to think, that he appreciated what she had really meant by the words. Her children were rich, and he was poor. There was a gulf between them, and the fine lady did not wish her children to play with the vegetable boy. That was all; and it was simple enough, to be sure. But it brought to Will's heart a bitterness such as he had never known before in all his brief lifetime.

He liked the Williams boys and girls. They had always been good comrades, and not one of them had ever hinted that there was any difference in their positions. But of course they did not know, as their mother did, how far beneath them was the poor "vegetable boy."

Will glanced down at the worn and clumsy shoes upon his feet. The leather was the same color as the earth upon the path, for he worked in the garden with them, and couldn't have kept them clean and polished had he so wished. His trousers were too short; he knew that well enough, but hadn't cared about it until then. And they were patched in places, too, because his mother had an old-fashioned idea that patches were more respectable than rags, while Will knew well enough that both were evidences of a poverty that could not be concealed. He didn't wear a coat in summer, but his gray shirt, although of coarse material, was clean and above reproach, and lots of the village boys wore the same sort of a cheap straw hat as the one perched upon his own head.

The Williams children didn't wear such hats, though. Will tried to think what they did wear; but he had never noticed particularly, although it was easy to remember that the boys' clothes were of fine cloths and velvets, and he had heard Flo speak of the pretty puffs and tucks in the Williams girls' dresses. Yes, they were rich — very rich, everyone said — and no one knew so well as Will how very poor and needy the Cardens were. Perhaps it was quite right in Mrs. Williams not to want her children to associate with him. But oh! how hard his rejection was to bear.

Bingham wasn't a very big town. Formerly it had been merely a headquarters for the surrounding farmers, who had brought there their grain to be shipped on the railroad and then purchased their supplies at the stores

before going back home again. But now the place was noted for its great steel mills, where the famous Williams Drop Forge Steel was made and shipped to all parts of the world. Three hundred workmen were employed in the low brick buildings that stood on the edge of the town to the north, close to the railway tracks; and most of these workmen lived in pretty new cottages that had been built on grounds adjoining the mills, and which were owned and rented to them by Chester D. Williams, the sole proprietor of the steel works.

The old town, with its humble but comfortable dwellings, lay scattered to the south of the "Main Street," whereon in a double row stood the "stores" of Bingham, all very prosperous because of the increased trade the steel mills had brought to the town.

The great Williams mansion, built only a half dozen years before, stood upon a knoll at the east end of the main street, and the natural beauties of the well-wooded grounds had been added to by planting many rare shrubs and beds of beautiful flowers. It was not only the show place of Bingham but the only really handsome house in town, and the natives looked upon it with much pride and reverence.

The cottage occupied by the Cardens stood upon the extreme south edge of the village, and with it were two acres of excellent land, where Will and Egbert, assisted at times by their mother and little Florence, raised the vegetables on which their living depended. Egbert was a deaf-mute and his right arm was shriveled and almost useless, all these afflictions being the result of an illness in his babyhood. But it was surprising how much work he could do in the garden, in the way of weeding and watering and even spading; so he was a great help to the family and contributed much toward the general support. Egbert was two years older than Will, who was now fifteen, and Florence or "Flo," as everybody called her was a yellow-haired, sunny-natured little elf of ten.

Fortunately, the family living did not depend altogether upon the garden; for Mr. Jordan, the secretary at the steel works and at one time John Carden's best friend, had boarded with the family for eight years ever since the day when Will's father so mysteriously disappeared, only to be reported dead a month later, and the family fortunes were swept away in one breath.

Mr. Jordan occupied the best room in the cottage, and paid his board regularly every Saturday night. He was a silent, reserved man, about fifty years of age, who seldom spoke to Mrs. Carden and never addressed the children. After supper his custom was to take a long walk down the country lane, returning by a roundabout way to shut himself in his room, whence he only emerged in time for breakfast. After that meal, which he ate alone, he

would take *a* little lunch basket and stalk solemnly away to the mills, there to direct the clerical work that came under his supervision.

Mr. Jordan was a man greatly respected, but little liked. He had no friends, no companions whatever, and seemed to enjoy the clock-like regularity and solitude in which he lived.

It was toward this humble home that Will Carden, after being dismissed by Mrs. Williams, directed his steps on that bright Saturday forenoon. He tried hard to bear up under the humiliation he had suffered; but there was no one near to see him and for a few minutes he gave way to the tears that would force themselves into his eyes, and let them flow unrestrained. Yet he kept on his way, with bent head and stooping shoulders, a very different boy from the merry, light-hearted youth who had carried the heavy basket to the big house only an hour ago.

Suddenly, to the eyes blurred with tears, a huge, dark form loomed up in the road just ahead of him. Will hastily wiped away the unmanly drops and tried to whistle. Some one was coming, and whoever it was must not know he had been guilty of crying. Also he shifted his path to the edge of the road; but the other did the same, and the boy stopped abruptly with the knowledge that he had been purposely halted.

Then he glanced timidly up and saw a round, bearded face and two shrewd but kindly eyes that were looking at him from beneath a slouched felt hat.

"Hello, Doctor," he said, letting his dismal whistle die away, and starting to pass round the stalwart form before him.

But Dr. Meigs laid a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder, and made him face round again.

"What's up, Will?"

The voice was big and full, yet gentle as it was commanding.

"Noth'n', Doctor."

"Look here; you're telling whoppers, young man. Lift up your head."

Will obeyed.

"You've been crying."

"Something got in my eye," said the boy.

"To be sure. Tears. What's it all about, Will? And, mind you, no lying! Your father's son should speak the truth boldly and fearlessly."

"Why, Doctor," was the halting answer, "It's nothing that amounts to shucks. I stopped a minute to fly a kite with the Williams children, up at the big house, and Mrs. Williams came out and said she didn't — " There was a catch in his voice, but he quickly controlled it: "didn't want me to play with them. That's all — Well, I'll be going, Doctor."

“Halt!” cried Dr. Meigs, sternly, and Will could see he was frowning in that awful way he had when anything especially interested him. “Stand up, William! Throw back those shoulders — chest out — that’s the way. That’s how your father used to stand, my boy.”

“Did he?” asked Will, brightening up.

“Straight as an arrow. And looked everyone square in the eye, and spoke the truth, as an honest man should.”

“Then why,” inquired Will, half scared at his own boldness, “did my father run away, Doctor Meigs?”

“Run away!” roared the doctor, in a terrible voice. “Who told you that? You’ve been listening to those lying tales of the scandal-mongers.”

“Didn’t he?” timidly asked the boy.

“Not by a jugfull!” declared the doctor, emphatically. “John Carden would no more run away than he would do a dishonest action. And he was as true as steel.”

Will stood straight enough now, and his gray eyes glistened with joy and pride. Whatever statement old Doctor Meigs made he believed implicitly. The doctor had known Will since the day he was born which was longer than Will could remember the doctor; but there had never been an hour of that time when the physician had not been the staunch friend of all the Carden family, and stood by them loyally in spite of their reverses and final poverty. He always called at least once a week to see Egbert, whose bad arm sometimes pained him, and to have a quiet chat with Mrs. Carden; and if either Will or Flo chanced to be ailing, the doctor was prompt with his remedies. But no bill had ever been presented for such services.

“I wish you’d tell me about my father,” said Will, wistfully. “Mother never says much about him, you know.”

“Her heart is broken, my boy,” murmured the doctor, laying a caressing hand upon Will’s shoulder; “but it’s because she has lost her husband and friend, not because she has for a moment doubted his memory. Do you see those big buildings over there?” pointing to the distant steel works; “Well, before they were built, another and more modest building stood in their place, where your father first discovered the secret process that has since made Chester Williams a rich and famous man. Did you know that? But John Carden made himself poor with his experiments, and Mr. Jordan loaned him money to carry on the tests until your father was deeply in his debt. There was but one way out, to go to England and interest the great steel manufacturers of that country in the new process, which John Carden knew to be very valuable. In order to save money, your father sailed in a second-class ship that foundered at sea and drowned him and all on board; and

because he told only Mr. Jordan and myself of the object of his trip abroad, the story got around that he had run away, having failed in business, and thus cruelly deserted his family. Jordan is a reserved man, and never talks to anybody, but I've nailed the lie wherever I've heard it. Well, after your father's death it was found that he had transferred his secret process to Mr. Jordan, in return for the money he owed him; and Jordan turned the secret over to Williams, who has established that great factory to produce the wonderful quality of steel your father invented. It is said that Mr. Jordan gets a royalty on all the steel the Williams mills turn out, and if that is so, and I have no reason to doubt it, he is a wealthy man by this time, and is profiting a hundred-fold for the money he loaned John Carden. So the debt is cleared, and your family owes no man a penny. As for Jordan, I don't like the man, myself; he's too silent and stealthy to suit me; but I must say he's done the square thing by your mother in boarding with her right along, and so helping her to support her children."

"It helps a lot," said Will, thoughtfully.

"And now, my boy, you've got the whole story about your father, and got it square and fair. Every time you see the Williams mills you ought to be proud to remember that it was John Carden's genius that made them possible, and that has enabled Chester D. Williams to amass a fortune. As for Mrs. Williams, who was once as poor as yourself, I believe, and is now a bit too proud of the money her husband has made, don't you pay any attention to her. If she doesn't want you to play with her children, don't you mind, Will. Remember that the Cardens have lived in Bingham for three generations — long before the Williamses were ever heard of — and there isn't a thing in their history they need be ashamed of. Poverty's no crime, young man; and when you're a little older poverty won't bother you, for you'll carve out a fine fortune for yourself, unless I'm very much mistaken."

Will looked into the big, whiskered face with grateful eyes. Dr. Meigs had not only comforted him, but made him proud of his family and of himself.

"Thank you, Doctor," he said. "I guess I'll go, now."

"Put out your tongue!" commanded the doctor.

Will obeyed meekly.

"You're right as a trivet. Run along, now, and weed that garden. And say take half a peck of peas over to old Mrs. Johnson. I almost forgot about it. Here's a quarter to pay for them. Tell her a friend sent them around. I believe it was old Nelson, but I can't remember now."

Then the doctor picked up the little case in which he carried medicines, and strode away down the road, the end of his stout cane ringing on the hard earth at every step.

CHAPTER THREE

MR. JORDAN BECOMES MYSTERIOUS

LITTLE FLO HEARD Will's merry whistle as he drew near, and gave a sigh of relief. It was dreary work weeding the radishes in the hot sun, without a soul to talk to. Egbert was fixing slender poles in the ground for the young beans to climb; but Egbert didn't count much as a companion, because he could neither talk nor hear, although he was wonderfully quick to understand signs, or even a movement of the lips; so the child was glad her brother Will had returned.

He only paused to toss his basket into the open door of the barn, and then came straight to the radish bed.

"Working, sis?" he cried, cheerily.

"Mother said I must weed till noon," she answered. "She's baking, so she can't help."

"Well, how does it go?" he asked, kneeling down to assist in the labor.

"Oh, I don't mind," she said, in a voice that sounded less indifferent than the words. "Poor folks have to work, I s'pose; but Saturday ought to be a holiday oughtn't it, Will?"

"Sure enough. Where do you want to go?"

"Mabel Allen's got a new set of dishes for her birthday, and she said if I'd come over we'd have tea. And Annabel Williams told me to stop in and see Gladys's doll's new clothes."

Will's face hardened, and his whistle died away. He plucked at the weeds savagely for a time, and then said: — '

"Look here, Flo; you run on and have tea with Mabel. I'll 'tend to the weedin'. But I wouldn't go to the big house, if I were you."

"Why not?" asked Flo, in surprise.

Will thought a minute — just long enough to restrain the angry words that rose to his lips. Then he said "We're poor, Flo, and the Williams family is rich, and they give themselves airs. I don't know as I blame 'em any for that; but the Cardens are as good as the Williamses, even if we haven't money, and I don't like to have them patronize us, that's all."

The girl looked puzzled.

"Annabel's always been nice to me, and I like her. I like Gladys, too. Why, Will, I thought all the Williams children were your friends!"

"So they are," answered Will. "The children don't put on airs, sis; it's Mrs. Williams that don't like them to play with poor kids, like us. So I wish you wouldn't go there. When you see them in school, it's all right to be friendly; but they never come over here, so don't let's go there."

“All right, Will,” she answered, with a sigh, for she longed to visit the beautiful grounds and rooms at the big house. “But, do you think you can spare me?”

“Easy,” said Will.

“But mother said — ”

“I’ll fix it with mother. You run along and have a good time.”

Will did a lot of work in the garden that day, and all the time he was thinking deeply of what he had heard from Doctor Meigs. It never occurred to him to doubt a word of the story of his father’s misfortunes and death.

At supper that night he cast many stealthy looks at Mr. Jordan, who sat wholly unconscious of the scrutiny and as silent as ever. Indeed, this peculiar gentleman was well worthy of examination, aside from the fact that he had been a friend of John Carden in the old days.

Mr. Jordan — his name was Ezra, but few were aware of that — was fully six feet in height, but wonderfully thin and gaunt of frame. His lean face was close-shaven, and his head was bald save for a fringe of locks above the ears. These were carefully brushed upward and plastered close to his shiny skull. But his eyebrows were thick and bushy, and sprinkled with gray, so that they gave him a rather fierce expression. Over his eyes he constantly wore big, gold-rimmed spectacles, which magnified the sight of those looking toward them; so that Mr. Jordan’s eyes became unnaturally large and glaring, and apt to disturb one’s composure and render it an uncomfortable thing to stare at him for long.

That glance of Mr. Jordan’s spectacles used to fill Will and Flo with awe when they were younger; but Will had found chances to get a side view of the man’s face, and beneath the spectacles noted that the eyes were really small and watery, and of a mild blue color; so that now the spectacles were less horrible.

One peculiarity of the man was that he walked rigidly upright “as stiff as a ram-rod,” Will declared and on his evening strolls he never used a cane; but stalked away as slowly as a ghost, with his hands clasped behind his back and his spectacles staring straight ahead. He always wore a long frock coat of black and a rusty silk hat, which added to his tallness and made him quite remarkable.

No one could remember, when Mr. Jordan had not lived in Bingham; yet he had no relatives nor even intimate friends. While not reputed wealthy, he was considered “a man of means,” and everyone bowed respectfully but gravely to him as he passed by. At the mills he was called “the Automaton” by the younger clerks, because he performed all duties with absolute punctuality and unvarying deliberation.

No one knew why Chester D. Williams had given Mr. Jordan such full control of the steel works, but his word was law in the offices, and even the proprietor assumed a different air whenever he addressed his secretary. As to the man's capability, that could not be doubted. Under his supervision no detail of the business was neglected and the concern ran like clock-work.

The Carden children were of course accustomed to the presence of their boarder. Perhaps Egbert might retain a vivid recollection of the days when his father was alive, and Mr. Jordan was unknown to the parlor bedroom or the seat at the head of the table; but to Will those times were very hazy, and to Flo it seemed as if the boarder had always been there, grim and silent from the first, but now scarcely noticed save by tired-faced Mrs. Carden, whose daily duty it was to make Mr. Jordan comfortable in return for the weekly five dollars that was so important an item to the little household.

On this Saturday evening, when supper was over, Will sat upon a box at the entrance to the tumble-down shed that was called by courtesy a "barn," and watched the boarder start out for his regular evening walk.

Mr. Jordan never neglected this exercise, no matter what the weather might be. People in Bingham had long since decided that he walked for the benefit of his health, as a relief from the close confinement at the office during the day; and it amused the gossips that the man's habits were so regular that

neither wind nor snow, frost nor blizzard had ever yet induced him to vary his daily program by staying indoors.

And he always walked in the same direction, turning down the lane to the left of the cottage and following it a full half mile to a grove of great oak and maple trees; through this to the Danville turnpike; along the turnpike to Holmes' Cross Roads; back to the village, and through the village to the Carden house, where he hung up his hat and went directly to his room for the night. A fine walk — four miles at the least — and an evidence of the man's perfect health and remarkable physical endurance, when his age and lean body were taken into consideration.

"Mr. Jordan is as tough as hickory," the people declared; but as his life was so absolutely regular he was never an object of curiosity to his neighbors, who took but a casual interest in him. Perhaps, had he ever varied his program, even for a day, the act would have occasioned great excitement in Bingham; but he never did.

Tonight Will looked after him thoughtfully, and followed with his eyes Mr. Jordan's upright form as it moved slowly down the lane toward the distant grove. He wished he might speak with the silent man about his father. If Mr. Jordan had loaned John Carden money and stood by him during all his

dark days of experimenting, as the doctor had said, he must have been a good and faithful friend, thought the boy. Perhaps he wouldn't mind telling Will something more of those old days.

Impelled by this idea, the boy arose and started across lots to overtake the solitary walker. When he came to the lane, Mr. Jordan had not yet reached the grove, but was pacing the road with calm and precise steps, not one an inch longer or shorter than another.

Something about the rigid, unemotional form caused Will to hesitate. He had never spoken much with Mr. Jordan, and suddenly he became abashed at his own temerity. Yet it was always hard for Will to abandon any plan he had once formed. He did not go back; but he slackened his pace, trying to think of the best way to approach the self-absorbed man ahead of him. And so, while he trailed along the lane with halting footsteps, Mr. Jordan came to the edge of the grove and entered it.

The path through the grove curved from left to right and back again, passing around the big trees that had been spared the axe on account of some whim of their owner, who was none other than Mr. Jordan himself. Lumber men had often tried to buy this bit of fine timber; but the owner refused all offers.

"It will keep," was his unvarying reply. And it had "kept" for many years.

When Will reached the edge of the trees the man was out of sight around the bend; so the boy, encouraged to hasten, pressed quickly along until the turn in the road was reached, when he stopped in great surprise.

For Mr. Jordan had halted in the center of the grove — really a most unexpected thing for him to do — and, turned half around, was staring fixedly at a large oak that grew a few paces from the road.

Now was the time for Will to join him and open the conversation. He realized his opportunity, and was mustering up the necessary courage to advance, when Mr. Jordan walked straight to the oak tree, cast a hasty, half suspicious glance around him, and then passed one hand swiftly up and down the shaggy bark of the trunk at a point about on a level with his own head.

Will, shrinking back so as to be nearly hidden by a clump of bushes, stared open-mouthed at this amazing sight, and while he stared, Mr. Jordan returned to the road, faced ahead, and marched as stiffly and deliberately as ever upon his way.

The incident had not occupied more than a minute's time, but it was strange enough to deprive Will of any desire to overtake or speak with the man he had unwittingly spied upon. He let Mr. Jordan continue his walk, and turning back made his own way leisurely home.

The next morning, when he came to think it all over, he decided that Mr.

Jordan's action in the grove was not nearly so remarkable as he had considered it in the dim light of the preceding evening. Doubtless the owner of those splendid trees had seen some hole in the bark of this oak, or had fancied it damaged in some way, and so had felt of the trunk to reassure himself. Anyone might have done the same thing, and for a dozen different reasons.

Yet why did the man glance around in that curious half-frightened way, as if fearful of being seen, if he was merely about to do an ordinary thing? It was the flash of that single look that had made Will uneasy; that rendered him uneasy every time he thought about it. But he could not explain why. If there was any one person in Bingham who was in no way mysterious, that person was Mr. Jordan.

Sunday was a bright, delightful day, and soon after the late breakfast was over the Carden children, dressed in their best, started for the Sunday-school service, which was held before the regular church services began. Egbert and Will walked on either side of little Flo, and the three were as merry and wholesome a group of young folks as one could wish to see.

Egbert was not a bit ill-natured or morose on account of his infirmities, but always wore a smile upon his cheerful face. And the village children liked him, as was easily seen by their pleasant nods when the three Cardens joined the group at the church door.

The Williams children were there, too, and while Gladys grabbed Flo's hand and drew her aside with

eager whispers, the others formed a circle around Will and Egbert and tried to make the former feel that they were as friendly as ever, in spite of their mother's banishment of the "vegetable boy" the day before.

"Mother was a little bit nervous yesterday," said Mary Louise, in her sweet and sympathetic way. "You mustn't mind it, Will."

"Of course I won't," he answered promptly.

"Mother," said the saucy Annabel, in a reflective tone of voice, "is a reg'lar caution when she gets nervous; and she's nervous most of the time."

"Mrs. Williams was quite right," said Will; "and it was lucky she sent me home, for I'd an awful lot of work to do, and that kite made me forget all about it."

The bell rang just then, calling them in; but Reginald whispered to Will: "You're a brick!" and Theodore shyly took his friend's hand and pressed it within his own as they entered the doorway.

All this did much to warm Will Carden's heart and restore to him his self-respect, which had been a little shattered by Mrs. Williams' contemptuous treatment.

However disdainful of poverty some of the grown folks may be, children, if they are the right sort, are more apt to judge a comrade by his quality and merit, than by the amount of his worldly possessions. And Will decided the Williams children were “the right sort.”

CHAPTER FOUR

MEIGS, MUSHROOMS AND MONEY

"WILL," said Dr. Meigs, as he stopped one afternoon to lean over the garden fence, "how are things going?"

"Pretty well, Doctor," answered the boy, cheerfully.

"Are you getting ahead, and laying by something for the winter months, when the vegetables won't grow?"

"We're getting ahead some," said Will, becoming grave; "but it's always a struggle for us in the winter, you know. I guess I'll try to get a job in the steel works in October. I'm pretty husky, for my age, and I ought to be able to earn fair wages."

"Humph!" growled the doctor, frowning upon the young fellow fiercely. "You think you've had schooling enough, do you?"

"Oh, no! But mother needs help. She's getting more tired and pale-looking every day; and Egbert can't do much with his bad arm. So it's a case of force, Doctor. I've just got to dig in and do something."

"That's true," replied the big doctor. "But you're going to be more than a mere laboring man when you grow up, Will Carden, and I don't mean to let you get into those beastly mills. They'd sap your young strength in no time, and make you an old man before your years would warrant it. No; we'll think of something else. Read that!"

He thrust a small book into the boy's hand and immediately marched away down the road.

Will looked at the book wonderingly. It was a treatise on mushroom culture; something he had never heard of before. But he spent his leisure during the next few days reading it carefully. The author told how a great deal of money could be made by raising mushrooms on a small plot of ground, under proper conditions and with intelligent care.

When again he saw Doctor Meigs Will said to him:

"Here's your book, Doctor. It's interesting, all right; but I can't see how I could possibly do anything at that business."

"Why not?" inquired the doctor, seating himself calmly by Will's side, with the evident intention of arguing the question.

"In the first place," said Will, "I've got no way to raise mushrooms. They need a warm spot of earth, to do well, and a rich soil, and plenty of shade."

"Good!" said the doctor, nodding approval. "I see you've paid some attention to the matter. Well, that old barn of yours is just the place."

"The barn!"

"Surely. I've just been examining it. It never was anything more than a

shed, without even a floor; and for a long time, while Deacon Wilder owned this place, horses and cattle were kept there. The soil in that barn is two feet thick and very rich. It'll grow mushrooms like sixty!"

"But it's cold in the barn, in winter. The boards are falling off in places, and — "

"We'll patch it up," said the doctor, with decision; "and we'll put a heater in it — one of these regular greenhouse boilers, with hot-water pipes running under the surface of the ground, so as to keep the soil always warm. Firewood doesn't cost much in this part of the country."

Will smiled at such cheerful optimism.

"And when you've raised the things," he said, "what are you going to do with them? The Bingham people wouldn't buy ten cents' worth of mushrooms in ten years."

The doctor snorted contemptuously.

"The Bingham people! Do you think I'm a fool, Will Carden?"

"Who then?"

"Why, it's only twenty-two miles to the city. There are four trains every day. In the city are a thousand customers longing to buy mushrooms, in season and out, and willing to pay big prices for them, too."

Will whistled, thoughtfully.

"It's a bigger thing than I expected," he acknowledged. "But, Doctor, it's out of the question. I wouldn't dare risk our little savings in this experiment, and aside from what's put by for the winter, I haven't enough money to buy the spawn to start with; or patch up the barn; or buy the water heater; or even market the stuff when it's grown."

"Who said anything about your spending money?" demanded the doctor, roughly. "All I want of you, sir, is to hire out to me to raise mushrooms. I'm going into the business."

"You!"

"Yes, me. Confound it, Will Carden, do you think I've no ambition, just because I'm a country doctor? My daughter, that married the wholesale grocer in the city, has three children already, and they've got to be looked after."

"Can't the wholesale grocer do that?" asked Will, with twinkling eyes.

"I've a right to leave a fortune to my own grandchildren if I want to," growled the doctor; "and it's none of your business, anyway, young fellow. The question is, will you hire out to me? You and Egbert; I want the two of you. The wages will be small, but they'll be sure even if I have to collect some bills to pay them. And I'll furnish all the capital needed to fix up the barn and start things going."

Will fairly gasped with astonishment.

"Do you really mean it, Doctor?" he asked.

"I usually mean what I say," was the gruff retort. "Now, then, answer me! And, by hookey, if you refuse I'll charge you two dollars for this consultation! Doctors can't waste their time for nothing."

"If you mean it, Doctor, of course I'll hire out to you; and so will Egbert."

"It won't interfere with your schooling, you know. You'll have to get up early mornings, and perhaps some cold nights you won't get much sleep, with tending the fires; but there'll be plenty of time for you to go to school, and poor Egbert can study his deaf-and-dumb lessons in the shed as well as anywhere else, while you're away."

It must be mentioned here that Egbert had failed to learn to read and write at the village school, and through the doctor's influence was now receiving lessons by correspondence from a prominent deaf-mute academy in New York, by means of which his progress had lately become marked and rapid.

"All right, Doctor. It's a bargain," announced Will, in a subdued voice but with a new sparkle in his eyes. "Give me that book again. I'll have to study it, I guess. When shall we begin?"

"The first of August," said Doctor Meigs, seriously. "It's a vacation month, and you'll have a lot to do getting things in shape. I'll have Joe Higgins fix the barn up. He owes me a big bill, and that's the only way I'll ever get my pay. And Joe's a pretty fair carpenter. Now, about wages. They've got to be small to start with. I'll give you and Egbert ten dollars a month each."

"Ten dollars!"

"That'll make twenty for the two of you. It's small, but it's all I can afford at first. But, to make up for that, I'll give you, Will, a working interest in the business."

"What's that?" asked the boy.

"Why, after all expenses are paid, including your wages, we'll divide the profits."

Will looked into the kindly eyes, and his own dimmed.

"Doctor," said he, "you're the best friend a fellow ever had. But it's too much. I won't take it."

"How do you know there's going to be any profit?" demanded the doctor sternly. "And if there is, who'll make it? Don't you be a confounded idiot, Will Carden, and bother me when I'm trying to drive a bargain. I know what I'm doing, and those grandchildren have got to be provided for."

"Suppose we fail?" questioned Will, half fearfully.

"Bosh! We can't fail. I've talked with that wholesale grocer son-in-law of

mine, and he agrees to find customers for all the toad-stools we can raise. So it's up to you, old fellow, to sprout the mushrooms and then the thing's settled."

"I'll do the best I can, Doctor."

"Then it's all agreed, and I'll draw up the papers for you to sign."

"Papers!"

"Of course. This is an important business, and it's got to be ship-shape, and in writing, so there'll be no backing out. Suppose that wholesale grocer goes bankrupt — what's to become of my grandchildren?"

Then he picked up his medicine case and stalked away, leaving the boy thoroughly bewildered by the propositions he had advanced.

He told Egbert about it, for all of the Carden family were familiar with the sign language, and the deaf-mute at once became greatly interested, and eagerly agreed to undertake his share of the work. Also, he told his mother, and the poor woman sat down and cried softly, afterwards wiping away the tears with a corner of her apron. She was really tired with all the house work, and the prospect of twenty dollars a month added to their income seemed like a fortune to her. But she said:

"I'm afraid the doctor can't afford it, Will."

"Afford it!" he exclaimed. "Why, mother, I wouldn't think of taking the wages unless I felt sure of making a profit. He seems mighty certain about it, and if work will help to win out, we'll do it, sure as shootin'!"

Which proved that he had caught some of the doctor's own enthusiasm.

For a week the boy heard nothing more about the partnership, but at the end of that time a load of lumber arrived from the Bingham lumberyard, and soon after Joe Higgins, the carpenter, walked up to the barn with his basket of tools, and with a nod to Will took off his coat and started to work.

Next day came the doctor with a big, legal-looking document for Will to sign, which he first read in a solemn voice from beginning to end. It set forth clearly the terms of their contract, and after the boy had signed his name under the doctor's he began to feel the magnitude of the undertaking, and the responsibility put upon his young shoulders. Doctor Meigs also brought more literature treating of mushroom culture, which he advised Will to study carefully.

Joe Higgins worked three weeks repairing the barn. He not only made it what he called "air-tight," but in the east end he partitioned off a room, and built a floor to it, and then put an outside window and door in, making it very cozy and comfortable. This was to be the "office," where the heater was also to be placed, so that it would warm the room as well as supply hot water to the pipes extending under the ground in all directions throughout the interior

of the big barn.

The room was hardly completed before the heater arrived from the city, with men to set it up and arrange the system of pipes. Will dug all the trenches for the pipes to lie in, and then with Egbert's help covered them over again. Also, the two boys devoted days to another important work, which was the placing of straw all around the outside edge of the barn, and covering it with a bank of earth that reached well up onto the boarding. This was to keep the frost from getting inside.

The wisdom of the doctor in starting this work in August was now apparent, for the entire month was consumed in getting the barn in shape and spading up the rich soil ready to receive the mushroom spawn.

Early in September the industry was started, and in a few days thereafter small mushrooms, that looked like buttons, thrust their heads above the earth within the warm, damp barn, and speedily grew to a size that permitted them to be marketed.

The doctor carried the first picking home with him, and Will took the next lot to the big house and sold them to the astonished and delighted Nora, who placed an order for a pound of them every week. But soon the crop began to mature very fast, and by the doctor's orders Will packed them in paper boxes holding a pound each, and afterward arranged the boxes in a neat crate, which he shipped by express to the wholesale grocer in the city whose children their grandfather was so greatly interested in. The doctor supplied the boxes and crates, and on the former was printed: "Carden & Co.'s Fresh Mushrooms. Warranted Wholesome and Delicious." And below followed several recipes for cooking mushrooms, printed for the benefit of those who were unaccustomed to preparing them. Nora furnished some of the recipes, and old Mrs. Meigs the rest, so Will felt sure they would be successful.

For two or three weeks Carden & Co. shipped a crate of mushrooms daily to the city. Then something went wrong; the crop failed suddenly, and the spawn was discovered to be dead and useless. The doctor helped Will to investigate the cause of the trouble, and afterward to overcome it; and then fresh spawn was planted and the mushrooms began to grow again.

The wholesale grocer wrote that he was much annoyed by this delay. The demand for mushrooms in the city was much greater than the supply, and his customers were disappointed when they didn't get them.

"We've been selling too cheap," declared the doctor. "This is a good time to raise the price. We'll get fifty cents a pound, hereafter."

It seemed a large price to Will, for now the mushrooms grew with scarcely any care, and he found he was able to attend school and also look after the work very easily. It was not until cold weather crept on that the task

became at all arduous; but the frosty nights obliged the two boys to watch the fires carefully, and finally Will and Egbert moved their bed to the little room at the end of the barn and slept there comfortably during the remainder of the winter, so they could "attend to business properly."

The wholesale grocer son-in-law sent all the money received for the sale of the mushrooms to the doctor, so Will did not know exactly how the business was coming along, for he had no idea how much money the doctor had spent in preparation. But the monthly wages were paid to the boys with great regularity, and on the first day of January the doctor declared the first dividend, paying Will forty-three dollars as his share of the profits up to date.

There was no prouder boy in Bingham than Will Carden when he realized he was engaged in a successful business venture. He had already started a bank account, for the family needs did not require all the money the two boys earned as wages, and Will declared that this forty-three dollars should never be touched unless absolutely necessary, as it was to remain in the bank as the foundation of his fortune. We will know later who it was that suggested this idea to him.

"Better than working in the mills, isn't it?" said the doctor triumphantly, while for once he allowed a smile to spread over his round, whiskered face.

"Indeed it is," answered the grateful boy. "And I owe everything to you, Doctor."

"Nonsense!" returned the doctor, beginning to frown; "you owe it all to your own industry, and to the fact that my poor grandchildren need looking after."

CHAPTER FIVE

WILL BECOMES A HERO

IT WAS DURING this winter, his sixteenth year, when Will entered upon the footing of a successful "business man," that two important adventures befell him.

The first was on one cold Saturday in November just before the snow fell. The gray sky warned the boy that a storm was likely to set in, and as he needed more firewood for the heater he resolved to go into the grove and pick up all the dead branches which the wind had blown from the trees, and to put them in piles so that Nick Wells, the carter, could come for them on Monday morning. So he put some luncheon in his basket and, telling his mother he would not be home for supper, hastened away to the grove, leaving Egbert to care for the fire in the "office."

There was plenty of dead wood lying around the grove, and Will worked steadily piling it up until evening approached and it grew dusk.

He was just about to stop work and return home when he heard a sound of footsteps approaching, and stood silent a little way from the path to watch Mr. Jordan pass by on his regular evening walk, which he permitted nothing to interrupt.

To Will's astonishment the man stopped abruptly in the middle of the grove and gazed earnestly at an oak tree. Then, exactly as he had done on that other evening when Will had watched him, he walked up to the tree and passed his hand hurriedly up and down the rough bark, returning almost immediately to the path to continue on his way.

This repetition of the same curious action Will had before noticed filled the boy with surprise, and puzzled him greatly. What possible object could Mr. Jordan have in feeling of the bark of an oak tree situated in the center of a deserted grove, where few people ever passed But while he pondered the matter, darkness fell upon the grove, and he was obliged to hasten home to relieve Egbert.

It snowed a little during the night, and all day Sunday a thin white mantle lay upon the frozen ground. Mr. Jordan took his usual evening walk, and Will looked after him thoughtfully, wondering if he made a regular practice of stopping to feel the bark of the oak tree. But he made no attempt to follow his mother's boarder, as the boy would have considered it a mean trick to spy upon the man, however peculiar he might be.

Yet early on Monday morning, when he drove over to the grove with Nick Wells to load the wood he had piled up, Will could not resist the temptation to go to the tree and see if Mr. Jordan had indeed stopped there the evening

before. Yes, there were the tracks of his boots, clearly outlined in the snow. Will knew exactly the way he had walked to the tree, cast that furtive glance over his shoulder, and then passed his hand up and down the bark.

But why? That was the question; and surely it might well puzzle older heads than that of Will Carden.

The other adventure referred to had a distinct bearing upon the boy's future life, and made him the village hero for many months to come.

Christmas week arrived with weather sharp and cold, although wonderfully brisk and exhilarating. One of the chief pleasures of the young folks of Bingham in winter was to skate upon Marshall's pond, a broad stretch of deep water lying just west of the town, and not far from the Williams homestead. This pond was fed by a small brook that wound for miles through the country, and here the Bingham iceman harvested his supply each winter, often cutting holes in the ice which, when lightly frozen over, made dangerous places for the skaters, who did well to avoid them.

The day following Christmas a large crowd of youngsters assembled at the pond for skating, many of the boys and girls being anxious to try the new skates Santa Claus had brought them. The Williams children were all there except little Gladys, and Will Carden came over also, for he was an expert skater and had decided that an afternoon's sport would do him good.

It was a merry throng, indeed, and Will was gliding along over the ice with Mary Louise when a sharp scream reached his ears and he saw the children scattering from one spot like a flock of frightened sheep.

Will dropped Mary Louise's hand and sped as quickly as possible toward the place. He had known in an instant that an accident had occurred, and as he drew near he saw that the ice had broken. Then a small arm came into view above the surface, its fingers clutching wildly for support before it again disappeared.

Without hesitation Will flew toward the hole. The ice cracked and gave way as he reached the edge, and immediately he plunged into the water, where he kept his wits and began reaching in every direction for the drowning form he had noted.

From those standing at a safe distance a cry of horror arose; but it quickly changed to a shout of joy as Will Carden rose to the surface and caught at the edge of the ice for support, for in one arm he held Annabel Williams' almost lifeless form.

"Shove us a rail, you fellows!" he called, wisely refraining from trying to draw himself up by the flimsy edge of ice he clutched.

The boys were quick to understand what he wanted, and a score of willing hands tore the rails from a fence that came down to the shore of the pond,

and slid them along the ice so that they reached across the hole and both ends rested on a firm foundation. Will seized the first one that came within reach, and then a couple of the boys crept out upon the rails and caught hold of Annabel, drawing her from the icy water and carrying her safely to land. Others assisted Will and although he was dripping wet and his teeth chattered with cold, as soon as he reached safe ice he shook off the supporting hands of his friends and walked over to the unconscious girl.

"Give me all the shawls and wraps you can spare!" he cried, and as they were eagerly offered he wrapped them around Annabel and then lifted her in his arms and started at his best pace for the Williams house, which was fortunately the nearest in the village to the pond.

Other boys offered to help him, but Will shook his head and plunged on, the curious crowd following at his heels, while one or two volunteered to run ahead and warn the family of the accident.

Mary Louise paced at Will's side, sobbing bitterly.

"It's all right; don't cry," he said to her. "I can feel Annabel stirring in my arms, and I'm sure she's alive."

As they reached the gate that marked the entrance to the grounds a stout little man bounded

down the path toward them, bare-headed and with a look of fear in his protruding eyes.

"Give her to me! Give me my child!" he said; and Will placed his burden at once in the father's arms and turned away. For he was shivering in every bone of his body, and knew he ought to get home and change his own clothes as soon as possible.

Mr. Williams carried Annabel into the house, issuing as he went a string of commands.

"Jane, prepare a hot water bath; Fanny, send Peter for the doctor; Nora, bring me some towels and warm flannels," and so on until all the servants were running about upon their various errands.

He carried the girl to her room, and tore or cut away her clothing, plunging her as quickly as possible into a warm bath. She was quite conscious now, and kept saying: "I'm all right, papa! I'm all right."

But the man grimly insisted on carrying out his plans, and after the bath rolled her in warm flannels and tucked his child snugly into bed.

"Mrs. Williams' compliments, sir," said the servant; "and she begs to know how is the little girl."

"Tell Mrs. Williams not to disturb herself," he answered, gruffly; but Annabel herself called a more satisfactory message, for she said:

"I'm all right, tell mamma."

Nora, blubbering with joy and thankfulness, for Annabel was her especial pet, brought in a bowl of hot lemonade, which Mr. Williams forced the convalescent to drink. And then Doctor Meigs arrived, and after a glance around the room and a brief examination of his patient, nodded his shaggy head in approval.

"She'll come along nicely, sir," he said; "thanks to your prompt and intelligent methods. But it was a close call for the little one. Who pulled her out?"

"I haven't heard," replied the great man, looking up with sudden interest. "But I'll find out at once, for whoever it was most certainly saved her life."

"It was Will Carden," said Theodore, who had entered unobserved, and stood just behind them.

"I might have suspected that," remarked the doctor, dryly, but there was a tone of pride in his deep voice that he could not disguise.

"Carden?" said Mr. Williams, reflectively; "Carden? I wonder if he is any relation to John Carden, who — "

"Just his son, sir," interrupted Doctor Meigs calmly. "The son of that John Carden who discovered. the process of making steel which your mills are now using."

"I know; I know!" said Mr. Williams hastily. Then he bent down and kissed Annabel's white brow.

"I like Will," she whispered.

"Try to sleep, my darling," he answered, gently. "Fanny will sit by you; and, if you want me, send at once."

Then he stood up, cast another loving glance at his daughter, and followed by the doctor left the room.

Few strangers would have supposed Chester D. Williams to be a successful business man, if they judged him superficially by his appearance. Unlike his lady wife, he assumed no airs or mannerisms that might distinguish him from any other man you came across. His clothes, although made by an excellent tailor, were carelessly worn, and had not his wife kept careful watch of him he would have continued to wear one necktie until its edges were disgracefully frayed. In build the man was not very prepossessing, being below medium height and inclined to stoutness, while his beardless face was round and red and only his kindly eyes redeemed his features from being exceptionally plain.

Yet in the big outside world people liked Chester Williams and respected his ability. No one knew better how to obtain a favorable contract for steel, or fulfilled it more exactly to the letter of the agreement. In mechanical industries he was acknowledged a great man, and was known to have

accumulated an immense fortune. Here in Bingham, where he was seldom seen, for his business in the city claimed a large share of his time, the owner of the steel mills was an absolute autocrat, and his word was law to the simple villagers. Yet he had never abused their trust and confidence in him.

"Step in here a moment, doctor," he said, pushing open the door to his study. So Doctor Meigs followed him in and sat down.

"I am very grateful for my child's rescue," began Mr. Williams, with a slight tremor in his voice. "Tell me, Doctor Meigs, what sort of boy is this Will Carden who proved himself so brave this afternoon?"

"Can't say," replied the doctor, a merry twinkle in his eye. "That is, with modesty. For Will is my partner."

"A doctor!"

"No; a mushroom grower."

Mr. Williams seemed puzzled, but waited to hear more.

"You'd better see the boy yourself," continued the doctor. "He's proud, you'll find; and he's very poor."

"Poor?"

"Yes. His father lost all his money in experimenting with that steel process; and then he started for London and was lost at sea. Therefore, the family is dependent mostly upon the industry of this boy."

"I see."

For a moment the mill owner remained lost in thought. Then he asked:

"How did Jordan get the control of John Carden's secret process?"

"I never knew the particulars," replied Doctor Meigs; "but Mr. Jordan has told me that he loaned Mr. Carden money to carry on his experiments."

"Bosh! Jordan never had a dollar in his life until after I made the deal with him and started these mills. He was nothing but an humble clerk in the bank here."

"I remember," said the doctor, regarding the other man with a blank expression.

"But at the time I made my arrangements with Jordan he showed me a paper signed by John Carden which transferred all his interest in the secret process, together with the formula itself, to Ezra Jordan, in consideration of the sum of ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand dollars!" ejaculated the doctor.

"Which Jordan never owned," said Williams, slapping his knee emphatically. "When I inquired at the bank, the cashier told me that Jordan had never had any money except his salary, and it is certain he had not embezzled a dollar while in the employ of the bank. But it was none of my business, after all. Only, Jordan drove such a hard bargain with me for the

use of his process that I'm paying him a fortune every year, in royalties, and he runs the works himself, so as to be sure I don't rob him. The paper executed by John Carden seems genuine, and the only thing that puzzles me is why he transferred such a valuable secret, just as it was proven a success, to a man he could not possibly have borrowed money from, because the man never had it to lend."

"You astonish me," said Doctor Meigs, with evident sincerity. "I've never been able to understand Mr. Jordan, myself. He is a very reserved individual, and I knew that he was quite intimate with John Carden, before the latter left Bingham on his fatal journey. But that there was anything wrong or at all suspicious in Jordan's dealings with his old friend, I have never even dreamed."

"There may be nothing wrong at all," returned Mr. Williams. "But in that case the inventor of the best steel process in the world was a fool."

Doctor Meigs made no reply, but rose to take his leave; and after showing the physician to the door Mr. Williams turned into the sitting room, where the lamps had been lighted. All the children were there but Annabel, who was reported to have fallen asleep, and it was good to observe how eagerly they clustered about their father's knee, and how fond they seemed to be of him.

Mrs. Williams presently sent word that she was "so upset by Annabel's careless accident" that she would dine alone in her own room, and the children greeted this announcement with a whoop of delight that made their father frown and turn more red than usual, with shamed chagrin. They trooped into the dining room happy and content, and as soon as they were seated, began to chatter of Will Carden.

"Do you know him?" asked the father.

"Know Will Carden! Well, I guess we do!" replied boisterous Reginald.

"We all like Will," said Mary Louise, in her gentle voice; "and if he had not been so prompt to rescue Annabel I am sure she would have been drowned, for everyone else was too frightened to move. But Will didn't wait a minute. He plunged right in after her."

"He is a brave boy," said Mr. Williams.

"And he can do lots of things," remarked Theodore, slowly.

"He fixted my dolly's leg!" shouted Gladys, anxious to testify in her friend's behalf.

"Yes, and mamma sent him about his business, and wouldn't let him play with us," added Reggie, in a grieved tone.

"Why?" asked the father.

"Oh, because he's a vegetable boy, and poor. She said we'd got to respect

your position in society," replied Reginald, with a grin.

"She scolded me awfully," declared Gladys, nodding her head sagely.

"Hush, my daughter," said Mr. Williams, with unaccustomed severity. "You must not criticise mamma's actions, for she loves you all and tries to act for your best good. But it's nothing against Will Carden to be a vegetable boy, you know. How old is he?"

"About sixteen, I think," said Mary Louise.

"Well, when I was his age," continued Mr. Williams, "I was shovelling coal in a smelting furnace."

"That isn't as respectable as being a vegetable boy, is it?" asked Theodore, gravely.

"Both callings are respectable, if they enable one to earn an honest livelihood," returned his father, with a smile. "There is no disgrace at all in poverty. The only thing that hopelessly condemns a person is laziness or idle inaction."

"But mother — " began Reginald.

"Mother sometimes forgets how very poor we ourselves used to be," interrupted Mr. Williams, looking earnestly into the circle of eager faces; "and I am very glad she can forget it. I'll talk to her, however, about your friend Will Carden, and I've no doubt when she learns how brave he has been she will at once withdraw her objections to his playing with you."

"Thank you, papa," said Mary Louise, reaching out to take his hand in her slim white one.

"You're all right, daddy, and we love you!" exclaimed Reggie, earnestly.

The great mill owner flushed with pleasure, and his eyes grew bright and moist.

"But," observed Gladys, her mouth full of bread and butter, "mamma scolds me lots o' times."

"Hush!" commanded her father, sternly; and a cloud came over his face and drove the joy from his eyes.

CHAPTER SIX

A BOY AND A MILLIONAIRE

WILL CARDEN, little the worse for his ducking of the day before, sat in his little "office" at the end of the barn, his feet braced against the heater, his chair tipped backward, and his eyes fastened upon an open letter he held in both hands.

He had read it a dozen times since Peter, the coachman up at the big house, had brought it to him, and he was now reading it once more.

It was very brief, simply saying: "Please call at my office at your convenience." But it was signed "Chester D. Williams," in big, bold script, and that signature, Will reflected, would be good for thousands of dollars — even hundreds of thousands if signed to a check.

While the boy was thus engaged, the door burst open and Doctor Meigs entered, stamping the snow from his feet and shaking it from his shoulders as a shaggy Newfoundland dog shakes off the rain. It had been snowing for an hour, and the big flakes were falling slowly and softly, as if they had a mission to fulfill and plenty of time to accomplish it.

"Hello, Doctor," said Will, cheerily. "Read that."

Doctor Meigs took the letter, sat down, and read it carefully. Then he looked up.

"How's your throat?" he asked.

"All right," said Will.

"Sore, any?"

"Not a bit."

"Feel chills creeping up your back?"

"No."

"Head hot?"

"Why, I'm all right, Doctor."

"Put out your tongue!"

Will obeyed, just as he had done ever since he could remember.

"H — m! Strange; very strange," muttered the doctor.

"What's strange?" asked the boy.

"That you're fool enough to jump into ice-water, and clever enough to beat the doctor out of his just dues afterward."

Will laughed.

"How's Annabel?" he asked.

"As good as ever. Why did you pull her out so quick, you young rascal? Don't you know Chester D. Williams is rich enough to pay a big doctor's bill?"

“I was afraid at first,” answered the boy, reflectively, “that I hadn’t pulled Nan out quick enough. It was a close call, and no mistake.”

“Well, your reward is at hand. The whole town is praising you, and calling you a hero. And the great man himself has sent for you.”

Will shifted uneasily in his chair.

“You know, Doctor, it wasn’t anything at all,” he said.

“Of course not. One girl, more or less, in the world doesn’t make much difference.”

“I don’t mean that. Annabel’s a brick, and worth jumping into twenty ponds for. But anyone could have done the same as I did.”

“To be sure. How are the toadstools coming?”

Will knew the doctor was in a good humor when he called their product “toadstools.” If he was at all worried he spoke of them as mushrooms.

“Pretty good. But what does Mr. Williams want to see me about?” he inquired.

“Wants to give you ten dollars for saving his daughter’s life, perhaps.”

Will straightened up.

“I won’t go,” he said.

The doctor grinned.

“Throwing away good money, eh? We’ll have to raise the price of toadstools again, to even up. But, seriously, I advise you to go to Mr. Williams, as he requests you to. He isn’t half a bad fellow. His only fault is that he makes more money than any one man is entitled to.”

“You don’t really think he’ll — he’ll want to pay me anything, do you?”

“No; he wants to thank you, as any gentleman would, for a brave, manly action.”

For the first time Will grew embarrassed, and his face became as red as a June sunset.

“I’d rather not, you know,” he said, undecidedly.

“It’s the penalty of heroism,” remarked the doctor, with assumed carelessness. “Better go at once and have it over with.”

“All right,” said Will, with a sigh of resignation.

“I’m going back to town, and I’ll walk with you.”

So Will stopped at the house and sent Egbert to mind the fire, and then he tramped away to the village beside the burly form of his friend.

It was not as cold as it had been before it began to snow, and the boy enjoyed the walk. He liked to hear the soft crunching of the snow under his feet.

When he shyly entered the office at the steel works his face was as rosy as an apple, and he shook off the snow and wiped the moisture from his eyes

and looked around him.

There were two long rows of desks in the main room, and at one corner, railed in to separate it from the others, was the secretary's office and desk. Will could see the bald head of Mr. Jordan held as rigidly upright as ever, and recognized the two side locks of hair that were plastered firmly to his skull.

Then Mr. Jordan turned slowly around and saw him, and after calmly staring at the boy for a time he motioned to a clerk.

The young man approached Will and inquired his business.

"I want to see Mr. Williams," he answered.

"Mr. Jordan transacts all the business here," said the clerk stiffly.

"It isn't exactly business," replied the boy, and drew out the letter he had received.

At once the clerk became more obsequious and begged Will to be seated. He watched the man, whom he knew to be the son of a local storekeeper, go to a glass door and rap upon it gently. Then he entered and closed the door carefully behind him, only to emerge the next moment and beckon Will to advance.

"Mr. Williams will see you at once, sir."

Will walked into the private office feeling queer and uncomfortable, and the clerk closed the door behind him.

Mr. Williams was sitting at his desk, but at once jumped up and met the boy with both hands extended in a cordial greeting.

"I'm glad to see you, Will Carden," he said simply. "My little girl is very dear to me, and I owe you more than I can ever repay."

"Why, Nan's dear to me, too, Mr. Williams," replied the youth, feeling quite at ease again. "And I'm glad and grateful that I happened to be around just when she needed me. We're in the same class at high school, you know, and Annabel and I have always been chums."

"That's good," said the great man, nodding as if he understood. "I hope you will be better friends than ever, now. She wants to see you, and Mrs. Williams has asked me to send you up to the house, if you will go."

Will flushed with pleasure. To be invited to the big house by the very woman who had snubbed him a few months ago was indeed a triumph. He didn't suspect, of course, that Mr. Williams had kept his promise to the children, and "talked to" his wife with such energy that she was not likely soon again to banish one of their playmates because he chanced to be poor. Indeed, Mrs. Williams had no especial dislike for the "vegetable boy;" she merely regarded him as a member of a class to be avoided, and her sole objection to him as a companion to her children was based upon a snobbish

and vulgar assumption of superiority to those not blessed with money.

"I'll be glad to see Annabel again," said Will. "I hope she's none the worse for her accident."

"Just a slight cold, that's all. But sit down, please. I want a little talk with you about yourself."

Will became uncomfortable again. But he sat down, as the great man requested.

"Tell me something of your life; of your family and your work; and let me know what your ambitions are," said Mr. Williams.

It was a little hard for Will to get started, but the man led him on by asking a few simple questions and soon he was telling all about Flo and Egbert, and how hard his mother was obliged to work, and of the mushroom business the doctor had started and all the other little details of his life.

Mr. Williams listened attentively, and when the boy mentioned the fact that Mr. Jordan had always boarded with them since his father had gone away, the millionaire seemed especially interested, asking various questions about his secretary's habits and mode of life which plainly showed he was unfamiliar with Mr. Jordan's private affairs.

"Do you remember your father?" he inquired.

"Not very well, sir," Will replied. "You see, I was very young when he went away, and he was accustomed to working so steadily night and day at his steel factory that he wasn't around the house very much. I've heard mother say he was so occupied with thoughts of his invention that he didn't pay a great deal of attention to us children, although his nature was kind and affectionate."

"Was Mr. Jordan with him much in those old days?"

"I can't remember about that. But mother has always said that Mr. Jordan was father's best friend, and for years he always came to our house on Sunday to dinner. He was a bank clerk, then; and that was before he boarded with us, you know."

"Is he kind to you now?"

"Mr. Jordan? Why, he's neither kind nor unkind. But he pays his board regular, and in a way that's kindness, although he doesn't say a word to anyone. The boarder helps us to live, but it also wears out mother's strength, for she's very particular to cook the things he likes to eat, and to make him comfortable. I'm in hopes that the mushroom business will prosper, for then we can let our boarder go, and it will be much easier for mother."

"I, too, hope you will succeed. But if you don't, Will, or if you ever need help in any way, come straight to me. It would make me very happy to be of some use to you, you know."

“Thank you,” said the boy. “I’ll not forget.”

The great mill owner was not at all a hard person to talk to. He seemed to understand “just as a boy would,” Will afterward told Mrs. Carden. And when he left the office it was with the pleasant sensation that he had made a new friend — one that could be relied upon almost as much as old Dr. Meigs.

Mr. Jordan was staring at him fixedly as he walked out; but he said nothing about the visit, either then or afterward when he met Will at supper. But once in a while he would turn his queer spectacled eyes upon the boy, as if he had just discovered a new interest in him.

CHAPTER SEVEN
AN AFTERNOON CALL

NEXT afternoon Will put on his best clothes and walked up to the big house.

On the way he was undecided whether to go to the front door or the back one. Never before had he entered the place as a guest, and in the end he wisely compromised by advancing to the side entrance that he had observed was mostly used by the children.

Annabel saw him from the window and beckoned him in, her face all smiles of welcome, and that helped him to retain his composure.

"Come right in, sir," said Fanny, the maid who admitted him. "Miss Annabel's not allowed to go to the door yet."

"Hello, Will," said the girl, shyly slipping her hand in his. "I'm awful glad you've come, for everybody has gone out and left me today."

"Why, Nan, how white you look!" he exclaimed. "That water in the pond must have been pretty cold for you."

"No more than for you, Will," she replied.

"But it wasn't the cold, you know; 'twas the awful fear of dying — of being drowned and lost under the ice," and she looked at him with big eyes into which a shade of fear crept at the very recollection of that dreadful moment.

"There, there, Nan," said he soothingly; let's sit down and talk about something else," and he led her to a sofa, still holding her small white hand in his brown one.

The girl glanced at him gratefully. Will seemed to understand her even better than Mary Louise did; and he had a gentle way with her that was at once pleasant and comforting.

"Where did the folks go?" he asked, with well assumed cheerfulness.

"Out coasting. The hill back of Thompson's is just fine, now — as smooth as glass, Ted says. I'd like to be with them, for my sled's the swiftest of them all, but," with a sigh, "Doctor Meigs, says I must stay in the house for three days. Isn't it dreadful, Will?"

"Oh, I don't know, Nan. He's usually right about these things; and it seems mighty pleasant in here," glancing around at the cozy room with its glowing fire in the grate.

"It's nice now," she answered, sweetly, and Will looked at her with sudden interest. He had never before noticed how bright and fair Annabel's face was. The freckles didn't seem to mar it a bit, and the nose turned up just enough to make her expression jolly and spirited. And as for the hair, the red was almost pretty where the firelight fell upon it.

Will had paid no attention until now to girls' looks. A girl had seemed to be "just a girl" to him. And he, as well as her brothers and the other boys, had often teased Nan about her red hair and pug nose, without observing either of them very closely. But today he began to think all the fellows must have been blind, and that the girl's claim to beauty was greater than any of them had ever suspected.

Somehow, too, Annabel's accident and near approach to death seemed to have changed her. At any rate she was never the same to Will afterward. He couldn't well have explained how she was different, but the large blue eyes had a new look in them, she was less romping and boisterous in her ways and gentler in her speech.

She sat quietly in her corner of the sofa, a demure and almost bashful look upon her pleasant face. But in her natural and simple way she entertained her boy friend so cleverly that he never suspected he was being entertained at all.

"Papa says you've been to see him, and that you two have become great friends," she remarked.

"Mr. Williams was surely very nice to me," he answered, with enthusiasm. "I'm sure your father's a good man, Annabel."

"The best in the world, Will. We're always happy when father's home. But that isn't very often, you know, he's so busy."

There was a pause, after that, which neither noticed.

"Nora says you grow those lovely mushrooms we've been having lately," she said. "Do you, Will?"

"Yes; didn't you know it? In the old barn. Doctor Meigs and I are partners. Do you like mushrooms, Nan?"

"Very much; and so does papa."

"I'll bring you some tomorrow," he promised, greatly delighted to find something he could do for her.

"That will be fine," she answered; "because, if you bring them, we can have a talk, you know. And it's sort of dull, staying in the house all day. The others are out every minute of the time, for school begins again next Monday, and they want to have all the fun they can while vacation lasts."

"That's natural," said Will. "It's too bad you have to stay in during vacation. Say, Annabel, do you like to read Indian stories?"

"I don't know; I've never read any."

"I've got a swell Indian book at home; one that the Doctor gave me on my birthday. It's all about Dick Onslow among the red-skins, and I call it a corker!"

"I'd like to read it," said Annabel, smiling at his enthusiasm.

"Well, I'll bring it over," he agreed. "Then when you're alone, you can

read it."

"Thank you," said the girl, dreamily.

Then came another pause. It didn't seem to them necessary to talk all the time; but finally Annabel gave a little start and began speaking of the school and their mutual friends in the village so that the time passed swiftly away and it began to grow dark before either of them noticed it.

But by and by Will chanced to remember that Egbert had been left to tend the fires alone, so he jumped up and said he must go. And Annabel made no attempt to keep him, but stood at the window and waved her hand in farewell as he passed down the walk.

Mrs. Williams had another of her bad head-aches that day, so she did not join the family at the evening meal, a circumstance that filled the children with thoughtless delight.

Mr. Williams was with them, however, for whenever he could be in Bingham he loved to have his family about him, and all the little folks were very fond of him indeed.

"Will was here today," said Annabel; whereat there was an uproar from the others because they had missed their favorite playmate. And Gladys added:

"I'se busted my top, so Will's got to make it fixed."

"He's coming again tomorrow," Annabel announced, "to bring me a book, and some mushrooms. Then he can fix the top, Gladys."

Mary Louise looked at her sister curiously, and even Ted smiled at the wave of red that dyed Nan's cheeks.

"Seems to me you're getting pretty thick, just because he dragged you out of the pond," cried Reggie, mischievously.

"Will's a fine fellow," said Mr. Williams, gravely, "and I hope he'll come often!"

"So does I!" declared Gladys; and then the conversation shifted to another subject, greatly to Annabel's relief.

Mary Louise was nearer Will's age than Annabel, being now fifteen and almost on the verge of young womanhood. And Annabel, although little more than a year her junior, had until now been considered merely a romping, careless girl, although it was true she was scarcely behind her sister in the high school classes. Big Will Carden, taller at sixteen than Mr. Williams himself, and strong and manly in build, seemed so much older and more matured than Annabel that it was really absurd for Reginald to couple their names, even in a joking way.

Will came the next day, to find Annabel again alone; but presently little Gladys toddled in and brought her top to be mended, and when he had

succeeded in making it spin, the little one nestled in his lap with a sigh of contentment.

"Will," she asked, after a moment of earnest thought, "is you Nan's beau?"

"Of course!" he replied, laughing gayly. "And yours, too, Gladie!"

That made the wee one smile with satisfaction, and it pleased Annabel also, although she hastened rather awkwardly to talk of Dick Onslow and declare she would enjoy reading of his adventures.

On Monday the holidays ended, and Mr. Williams regretfully returned to his office in the city, where most of his time was spent.

Annabel was by this time fully recovered, and went to school with the others; but Will walked home with her that afternoon, and the next afternoon also, and this was enough to start all the older scholars plaguing them, as young folks will do in case of boy and girl friendships, and calling them "sweethearts."

Will merely laughed and replied good-naturedly to the taunts, and Annabel tossed her tawny head half in pride and half in defiance and told the other girls they were jealous. So it was not long before their comrades tired of teasing them and they were left to do as they pleased.

When spring came on and the weather grew warmer, Will Carden not only walked home from school with Annabel, but came every morning across lots to meet her at the corner of the street near the big house and accompany her to the school. Sometimes Mary Louise or Theodore joined them, but more often they were left to themselves, the boys growling that "Will wasn't half as much fun as he used to be," and the girls wondering what he could see in "that freckled-faced Nan Williams" to interest him so greatly.

But the truth was that the two had grown very congenial, and liked to be together. Annabel had learned all about Will's life and ambitions and understood him as no other companion had ever been able to do. He was sure of her sympathy whenever anything went wrong, and knew she would share his joy when he was "in luck."

It was Annabel who advised him to "make a nest egg" of the forty-three dollars which the doctor paid him in dividends the first of the year, and the girl planned shrewdly in many ways to encourage him and give him confidence in his future. In addition to this, she was more clever in her studies than Will, and often she was of great assistance to him in explaining the lessons when his slower mind failed to grasp the details.

It is not easy to explain how so much real wisdom came to lurk in Annabel's childish head; but people said she was more like her father than any of the other children. During the months that followed her rescue from

the icy pond she grew more sedate in demeanor than before, and more considerate of her brothers and sisters, so that they soon came to look upon her as their mentor, in a degree, and asked her advice about many of the little trials of their daily lives.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DAWN OF PROSPERITY

IN APRIL Mrs. Williams, whose health had been poor during all the winter, failed so rapidly that the doctor who came from the city to examine her declared she needed an European trip, with a residence abroad of at least a year, in Spain or Italy.

This idea was eagerly seconded by the lady herself, so Mr. Williams at once arranged for her to go. She at first proposed to take Gladys with her, but her husband, guided by Dr. Meigs' advice, demurred at this, telling her frankly that the child would be better off at home. She wept a little, fearing she would be lonely; but Mr. Williams was firm, and at length she started away with an immense quantity of baggage, a qualified nurse to care for her ailments, and her own maid. Her husband traveled with her to New York, saw her safely aboard her steamer, and then returned to Bingham quite cheerfully, for the poor lady had improved in health and spirits since the day the trip was planned, and he had little doubt the residence abroad would tone up her nerves and restore her to a normal condition.

But, now that his children were without a mother to direct them, Mr. Williams came to the conclusion that it was his duty to spend more of his time at home, so he arranged to be in Bingham the best part of every week, and hired a representative to attend to the city office.

It was now that the father had, for the first time in years, full opportunity to study the disposition and character of each member of his family. They were all dear to him, so it is probable that he discovered many admirable qualities in each of his children; but it did not take him many days to decide that Annabel, especially, was growing into a very sensible and reliable little woman. Mary Louise was sweet and winning as a June rose, and he was very proud indeed of his fair and dainty daughter, but it was Annabel alone who seemed to be interested in him personally, and who questioned him so intelligently in regard to his daily cares and worries, that he soon came to confide in her many of the business details that no one else, save perhaps Mr. Jordan, was in any way aware of.

This drew father and daughter closer together, so that they soon became good comrades and were very happy in one another's companionship.

One day she said to him: "Papa, I wish you'd build another schoolhouse at the mill. The old one isn't big enough for all the children of the work-men, and so they're crowding us out of the village school. We have to hold some of the high school classes over Barnes' store, even now."

"Why, I'll look into the matter," he answered, rather surprised at a young

girl taking an interest in such things. But on investigation he found she was right, and that another schoolhouse was greatly needed in the "new town," where his cottages stood. Moreover, the school funds of the county and township were exhausted; so one of the things Mr. Williams did that summer was to build a pretty new schoolhouse, which he named "Annabel School," providing from his own resources for the hiring of proper teachers.

In the fall important changes occurred in the family at the big house. Mrs. Williams wrote that she was so much improved in health that she had decided to extend her residence abroad for some time longer; so the father, doubting his ability to properly direct the education of his growing daughters, decided to send Mary Louise and Annabel to a private academy in Washington for young ladies. This led to Theodore's begging to be sent to a military school, and his father, after considering the matter, consented. So on the first of September the family practically was broken up; all three of the older children departing for their new schools, while only Reginald and Gladys remained with their father at Bingham. And while these lively youngsters did not permit life at the big house to become very monotonous, Mr. Williams greatly missed the older ones from the family circle. But others missed them, too, and among these was Will Carden, who suddenly found a great blank in his daily existence, caused by the absence of his old schoolfellows. Doubtless he missed the companionship of Annabel most of all, for she had been his confidant and most intimate friend.

On the very day of their departure Mary Louise and Annabel drove up in their little pony cart to say good-bye to Will, and now almost every week a little letter would come from Nan telling him of her school life and asking him about the happenings in Bingham, and especially how the mushroom business progressed.

This business industry of Will's prospered finely. In July Dr. Meigs gave him three hundred dollars as his share of the profits for six months, and the vegetable garden had also brought in an unusual amount of money; so, for the first time since the father of the family had been lost at sea, the Cardens found themselves in possession of a nice bank account, and were relieved of the little worries that always follow in the wake of poverty.

It was fall, however, before Will and his mother finally decided to tell Mr. Jordan that they would not keep a boarder any longer. He had been with them so long, and his assistance had been so greatly appreciated in the past, that Mrs. Carden felt a natural hesitation in asking him to leave. So Will took the matter into his own hands, and one evening, when Mr. Jordan returned from his walk, the boy stopped him in the little hallway and asked him to step into the sitting room for a moment.

“Perhaps you’ve noticed,” began Will, “that mother has been getting more pale and thin during the last two or three years. Doctor Meigs thinks it’s because she works too hard around the house; and so do I. So we’ve decided not to keep a boarder any longer, but to let mother take it easy, and rest up.”

Mr. Jordan’s spectacled eyes had been fixed calmly upon the young man’s face from the moment he began to speak. Now he gave a scarcely perceptible start, as if astonished at what he heard, and Will was quick to note it.

“We’re very grateful, you know,” he hastened to add, “for all your kindness in the days when we needed help. But my business is prospering pretty well, just now, and I’m laying by a little money; so we think it’s best to relieve mother of all the work we can.”

The man still stared at him, reading coolly and deliberately every line of the boy’s expression.

“I’d like to thank you, also, for all your kindness to my father, in the old days,” continued Will, after a considerable pause. “Doctor Meigs has told me how good you were to him, and how you loaned him money. And you’ve been a good friend to us ever since.”

Still there was no reply. The man neither acknowledged nor denied that he was entitled to such thanks. He stood upright, facing Will as calmly as ever; yet for a brief moment his body swayed from side to side, and then, as if overcome by a powerful effort, it stiffened again and was still.

The boy had nothing more to add to his dismissal of the boarder, and expected that Mr. Jordan would either reply or go to his room. But for a time he did neither, and the silence and suspense were growing unbearable when at last the man spoke.

“I will retain my room,” said he, “and take my meals in the town. You do not need the room I occupy, and this plan will cause Mrs. Carden very little work.”

Will was puzzled. Why a man of Mr. Jordan’s means should care to remain in such a poor home was a mystery. He could get much better accommodations at the village hotel for about the same sum he paid Mrs. Carden, and he would be more independent there. But while he canvassed the matter in his mind Mr. Jordan suddenly moved away and with slow steps mounted the stairs to his room, thus terminating the interview.

When the boy reported to his mother the result of this conference, she said:

“He is so reserved in his nature that I think Mr. Jordan shrinks from any public place where he might come in contact with strangers. That is perhaps the reason he does not wish to give up his room. He is accustomed to it, and the man is a slave to habit. Well, let him keep it, Will, if he wishes to; for so

long as he takes his meals elsewhere it will not, as he says, cause me much inconvenience. Did he say how much he was willing to pay for the use of the room?"

"No," replied Will, who was really disappointed, for he had hoped to do away entirely with the restraint imposed upon the family circle by the man's presence.

Mr. Jordan now began to get his meals in town; but after supper he would take the same long walk he had always done, ending it at the door of the Carden cottage, when he retired to his room for the night. The question of room-rent he settled by handing Mrs. Carden two dollars and a half every Saturday; not a very munificent sum, but perhaps, after all, as much as such accommodation was worth.

And so the family accepted the man's presence with hopeless resignation.

"As a matter of fact," said Will to the doctor, "we can't get rid of him."

CHAPTER NINE

MYSTERIES AND SUSPICIONS

WILL HAD BY this time mastered the secret of mushroom growing so thoroughly that both partners felt justified in expecting a regular net profit of a thousand dollars a year from it, which meant an income of five hundred dollars each.

"It relieves my mind wonderfully," remarked the doctor; "for now I'm quite sure my poor grandchildren will not go hungry. But, Will, the earning will never be any bigger. That's the extent of the possibilities in mushroom growing. Are you satisfied with the prospect?"

"Certainly I am, Doctor. It's just that much more than I ever expected to earn, at my age; and the beauty of it is, I can go to school at the same time."

"But when you've finished your school days, what then?"

"Why, I haven't thought much about that," confessed Will. "But I'll have a nice little nest egg by that time, and can go into business that will pay better. And Egbert can continue to raise the mushrooms, because it's one of the few things the poor fellow is fitted for."

"Very good," said the doctor.

"What business would you advise me to get into, Doctor?"

"Let's wait awhile, and see what happens. Keep busy, my boy; make every day of your life count, and the future will be sure to take care of itself."

That afternoon the good doctor met Mr. Williams, who stopped to converse with him.

"Do you remember our conversation in regard to Jordan's relations with John Carden, which we had about a year ago?" he asked.

"Yes," was the prompt answer.

"Well, the man's getting very hard to handle, and I'm afraid I shall have trouble with him. I wish I knew more about his dealings with Carden, and was sure about his right to control this process."

"What's the trouble?" inquired the doctor.

"Why, when I made my arrangement with Jordan, some ten years ago, he agreed to place a detailed description of the secret process in my keeping, as an evidence of good faith and to protect me if anything happened to him. One of his conditions was that he should have the sole right to furnish me with a certain chemical that is required to be mixed with the molten iron in the furnaces, and which gives to our steel that remarkable resiliency, or elasticity, which is among its strongest features. The contract allowed Jordan to supply this chemical at regular market prices, and he has always furnished it promptly, ordering it shipped directly to him in unmarked packages from a

manufacturing chemist in the east. One day last week we ran short of this material for the first time, and without saying anything to Jordan I went to our local drug store and obtained enough of the chemical the process calls for to complete the batch of steel we had in preparation. Well, the stuff didn't work, and the whole lot was ruined. Also the foreman declared the chemical I obtained was wholly unlike the chemical Mr. Jordan had always supplied, and that made me suspicious that something was wrong. When Jordan delivered the new lot I took a sample of it to the city, and had it examined by competent chemists. It wasn't the stuff the written formula calls for, at all, so it is evident that Jordan had deceived me in this one important ingredient, which he called by a false name, and has given me a worthless document. It's a criminal act, and leaves me at the man's mercy. So long as I use the stuff he supplies me with, I turn out the finest steel in all the world; but without Jordan I couldn't manufacture a pound of it, for he alone knows the secret."

"This seems to be quite serious," said the doctor, gravely. "If Mr. Jordan is capable of sharp practice in one way, he may be in another."

"That's it. That is why I suspect the story about his loaning John Carden money, and getting the secret of the process in payment of the debt."

The doctor wrinkled his shaggy brows into a deep frown.

"It's all a mystery," he said. "I knew John Carden from his boyhood days up, and a more level-headed fellow never lived. He had plenty of money when first he began to figure on a new way to make steel, for the Cardens had been well-to-do for three generations. But while I knew the man well, I was never so close to him or so intimate with him as Jordan was. The bank clerk used to sit night after night in the steel factory watching Carden with his experiments, and I believe it was that interest in his work that won Carden's heart."

"Quite likely," said Mr. Williams, nodding.

"There is no doubt that John Carden spent a tremendous lot of money on those experiments," continued the doctor; "and he told me himself, before he went away, that while he had finally perfected a process that was worth millions, he had spent every cent he possessed in doing it. Yet he made no mention of Mr. Jordan's having loaned him money, and it was only after Mr. Carden's death that I learned from the man's own lips that he had been obliged to take over the right to the process to cancel the debt."

"I don't believe a word of it," declared the manufacturer, positively. "But, tell me, why did Mr. Carden go away just as he had perfected his invention?"

"Because he could find no one in America to invest in the business. The steel men were suspicious of the new invention, and refused to believe in it. So Carden started for England, with the idea of inducing some Birmingham

capitalist to establish mills to turn out his product. Carden himself explained this to me, and asked me to keep an eye on his family during his absence."

"And he never reached England?"

"Never. He was booked on one of the regular steamships, but changed his mind at the last moment, for some reason, and shipped on a sailing vessel, which was wrecked in a heavy storm and all aboard lost."

"Did you know of this at the time?"

"Of what?"

"That Carden had gone on a sailing ship, instead of a regular line?"

"No. Now that you call my attention to it, I remember that the first news we had of his being on the vessel was when we learned that the ship was lost. Then Mr. Jordan, who was terribly distressed, to do him justice, showed us a letter Carden had written him on the eve of sailing, thus proving him to have been aboard the fated ship."

"That is strange," mused Mr. Williams. "But it must be true after all, or John Carden would have been heard of many years ago."

"That is evident," returned the doctor. "He was too big a man to be suppressed for long, and he was so fond of his wife and children that he would be sure to take the first opportunity to communicate with them."

"You're sure no letter ever came?"

"I am positive."

"Who gets the Carden mail?"

"Why, I believe Mr. Jordan always calls for it at the post office, if there happens to be any, and takes it to the house when he goes to supper."

"Humph!" exclaimed Mr. Williams, and then the two men looked into one another's eyes with a gaze that was startled and not without a gleam of horror.

"We'll talk this over again, sir," said the doctor, abruptly. "Just now you've given me a great deal to think about, and I need time to consider it properly."

"I understand," said the manufacturer, and with a handshake the two separated.

As the Christmas vacation drew near, Will Carden became eagerly impatient to welcome his absent comrades home again. It had been lonely in the school room without Theodore and Mary Louise and Annabel; but now they were all coming home for a two weeks' holiday, and the young fellow was looking forward to these days with glowing anticipations.

He had intended meeting his friends at the train, but the girls arrived earlier than they had been expected, so that Will was busily working in the yard when he chanced to look up and see a pony cart being driven at reckless

speed down the road. It was a pleasant winter day, for a clear sun shone overhead and there had been no snowfall as yet, so the pony's hoofs pattered merrily over the hard road and soon brought his driver within hailing distance.

Of course Will ran eagerly to meet his visitor, and there in the cart sat a young lady so sedate and dignified that the sight almost took his breath away. Four months had done much to change Annabel. She was dressed more becomingly than of old, and her skirts were longer. The freckles seemed to have entirely disappeared, leaving her face fair as a lily, except for the bloom lent the round cheeks by the brisk drive in the wind. Also, she seemed to Will's critical eyes to be slighter and taller than before, and her red hair, instead of falling in two braids over her shoulder, was now made into a neat knot at the back of her head.

These sudden blossomings of young girls are often subjects of wonder, and we cannot blame Will that he was amazed. But, nevertheless, here was Annabel again, and the boy smiled a welcome that gained a ready response, for the young lady sprang from the cart and clasped both his brown hands in an eager way that proved she was glad to see him. After all, when he looked into her eyes he could see the same Nan of old, and outward appearance didn't count for much.

"I've come here first of all," she said, "because I couldn't wait a minute. How big you've grown, Will!"

"Why, I didn't know it," he replied. "But you, Nan — why, you're a regular swell!"

"Fudge!" cried Nan, disdainfully; "you won't catch me getting swell — or swelled — I can tell you. But they call us 'young ladies' at school, and we get to be perfect sticks. Oh, but it's good to be back in Bingham, where everything's sweet and simple, and you can do as you please!"

"It's good to have you back, Nan," he said.

"Why, there's Flo!" she exclaimed. "Come here, dear, and kiss me this minute."

Flo, who had just come from the house, ran at once into Annabel's arms, and Will stood by and grinned with great delight, although something about the girl filled him with a strange embarrassment.

"Now, sir," said Annabel, "I'm ordered to bring you back home with me, and you're to stay to dinner and spend the evening."

"I'm not dressed, nor ready," protested Will.

"Then get ready at once; and while you're about it I'll drive Flo over to the grove. Jump in, dear."

Flo readily complied with this request, for it was a great treat to ride in the

pony cart; so in a moment they were whirling up the lane as fast as the fat little pony could prance, and Will, pleased indeed to be invited to the big house, went in to dress himself carefully for the occasion.

By the time he was ready, and had kissed his mother good-bye, the cart was back again; so he took Flo's place beside Annabel and was driven slowly away.

They had a good many things to talk over, it seemed; all about Annabel's new boarding school and Will's old high school; and about their mutual friends in the village, and the new book Annabel had sent Will to read, and about the mushroom business, in which the girl was keenly interested, and a good many other subjects.

So the pony had time to get new breath into its pudgy body, while the cart moved leisurely up this road and down that lane until at last they turned into the grounds of the big house.

Will was warmly greeted by Theodore and Mary Louise, as well as the younger children, and he first admired Ted's gray uniform, all covered with brass buttons, and then turned to gaze shyly at the slim, beautiful girl whom he hesitated, because she was "such a young lady," to address familiarly as Mary Louise.

Mr. Williams, too, was present, happy to have his children all beside him once more, and the great steel manufacturer was so jolly a companion, and entered so heartily into the amusements of the young folks, that not one of them felt any restraint in his presence, but grieved when he left them.

The big dinner which Nora had prepared for this occasion was one of the merriest functions the establishment had ever known, and Fanny, the waitress, and Thomas, the butler, afterwards compared notes and figured that the party had remained nearly two hours at the table which was surely long enough to satisfy the most vigorous appetite. But only those just home from boarding-school know what it is to sit down to a good home dinner; and there was so much to talk about that they could not be eating every minute, either.

Following this evening, which Will long remembered, came two weeks of constant excitement, during which coasting and sleighing parties, dances in the evenings and an old-fashioned "hay-ride" to a neighboring town, kept the young folks of Bingham busy as bees. Will couldn't be present at all these gayeties, because the fires had to be kept going in the heater, and he insisted that Egbert should have a share in the season's fun. But Egbert was little inclined to social pleasures, from many of which his infirmities naturally barred him, so that Will participated in a good many of the amusements provided for the holidays.

There was no accident to mar this Christmas season, as there had been a

year before, and the end of the vacation days brought regret to all. But it is true that pleasures are the more enjoyed when they are followed by periods of earnest work, and the two girls and Theodore returned to their schools with rosier cheeks and brighter eyes than they had brought home with them, while lurking in their hearts were many pleasant memories that could be called upon, during the months that followed, to lighten the tedium of study.

During a long walk which Annabel and Will took just before their parting, they agreed to exchange letters at least once a week, and afterward the contract was faithfully kept. Will wrote at length of all the gossip of the little village, and Nan related her experiences at school; so the letters were always bright and interesting to the recipients, although others might not have fully understood them.

CHAPTER TEN

BAITING THE TRAP

One DAY in the early spring Mr. Williams sent an invitation to Dr. Meigs to dine with him, and after the meal they sat together in the study conversing; for the two men had become fast friends, and seemed to understand one another excellently.

"A curious thing has happened lately," said the host, flicking the ash from his cigar with a thoughtful air, "and one of my objects in asking you over this evening is to tell you of it, and ask your advice."

The doctor nodded and settled himself in his chair to listen.

"It is now some ten years ago that my attention was attracted by a sample of steel of such remarkable quality that I at once became interested, and after a time I managed to trace it to Bingham, where it had been made by John Carden, in his old factory. But the maker had gone from the town, and was reported dead, and on being referred to Mr. Jordan, at the bank, I learned that the process for making this wonderful product was now owned by him. I made Ezra Jordan a proposition for the exclusive use of the process, on a royalty basis, and having come to terms I proceeded to build these mills, and the houses for my workmen, and afterwards moved here with my family. All of this you already know. I confess that I have made a great deal of money since then, for certain manufacturers and machinists cannot do without my steel, which no other maker has been able to duplicate. I might mention, incidentally, that Jordan has also made a fortune out of his royalties.

"A while ago I confided to you my discovery that Jordan had deceived me in regard to the formula; but I didn't worry much about that, because I knew that as long as I made money for him he would cause me no trouble. Now, however, a more startling evidence of the man's treachery has come to my knowledge. The Italian government requires a large amount of high-class steel for use in their naval armament, and I submitted samples of my product with the certainty that I would secure the order, which will amount to millions of dollars. Imagine, therefore, my chagrin at being informed that another sample of steel, even finer than mine, and with the same peculiar characteristics that can be produced in no other way than by the Carden process, has been submitted to them by an English firm, and at a lower price than I demanded. What do you think of that, Doctor Meigs?"

"I cannot account for it," was the reply, "unless some one in England has stumbled upon the same process."

"That is, of course, possible, but not at all probable. I am more inclined to think that Mr. Jordan has made another deal, this time with the English firm,

and is drawing royalties from them as well as from me.

"I see. You accuse the man of competing against himself."

"In this case, yes. But whichever gets the contract will pay him his royalties, so he is safe. Otherwise he would not figure on our competing, for I sell no steel abroad, and our duties prevent the English makers from sending it here."

"Do you know the name of the English firm?" asked the doctor.

"Yes; the Italian commissioner was frank enough in stating it. My rival is the Atlas Steel Company, of Birmingham."

"Why don't you interview Jordan, and have it out with him?"

"My idea exactly. That is just what I want to do. But that will be an important interview, my dear Doctor, and I want you to be present."

"Me?" said the doctor, surprised.

"Yes. I've got a notion in my head that Jordan has defrauded the Cardens, as well as me, and you must stand as the friend of the Cardens, in case we get the man to admit anything. It can't be possible, sir, that Jordan ever loaned John Carden money, for in those days he was poor. In that case why should we suppose that Carden, who was shrewd enough to become a successful inventor, would turn over all rights to his process to another man, leaving his family in utter poverty?"

"It doesn't seem reasonable," agreed the doctor.

"Let us take Jordan unawares, and accuse him of his villainy. Perhaps we may induce him to confess all, and then your presence as a witness would be valuable both to me and to the Carden family."

"Very well; when do you want me?"

"Call at the office at three, tomorrow afternoon. I'll have Jordan in, and we'll see how much can be scared out of him."

So the matter was arranged, although Dr. Meigs had his doubts about their success. Chester D. Williams was evidently a man who liked to face a difficulty without fear and bore his way to the bottom of it. And it really seemed that he had ample foundation for his suspicions of Mr. Jordan. But when the doctor thought it all over, and looked back upon Mr. Jordan's regular and modest life, and remembered how admirable his conduct had ever been in the eyes of all who knew him, he hesitated to believe the man guilty of such bold and audacious villainy as was suggested by Mr. Williams' recent discoveries.

Doubtless the man was by nature cold, and he might be heartless. It was within the bounds of possibility that he had robbed John Carden's family of all those immense royalties earned by the process. But to sell the same process to an English corporation was altogether too hazardous a scheme for

any man to undertake: unless, indeed, his past success had made him reckless.

In any event, the doctor doubted that sufficient proof could be advanced to convict Mr. Jordan. The inventor was dead, and no one else could prove that Jordan had no right to the process. And without proof the case was hopeless.

Yet promptly at three o'clock Dr. Meigs called at the steel works and was admitted to Mr. Williams' private office.

The proprietor was engaged at his desk when his friend entered, and after a nod in the doctor's direction and a request that he be seated, he swung around and touched an electric button.

"Please ask Mr. Jordan to step here," he said to the boy who answered the bell.

Such promptness fairly startled the doctor, but in a moment he collected himself for the coming interview, acknowledging to himself that Mr. Williams was right. If a disagreeable duty was to be performed, the sooner it was over with, the better.

Mr. Jordan entered with his usual stiff and solemn air, and gave the doctor a brief nod of recognition. Then he paused before Mr. Williams' desk in a way that indicated rather than expressed an inquiry as to why he had been summoned.

The mill owner laid down his pen and looked his secretary square in the face.

"Mr. Jordan," said he, "We have lost that order of the Italian government."

"Why?" asked the other, a shade of disappointment in his harsh voice.

"Because the Atlas Steel Company of Birmingham, England, has offered the same steel as mine at a lower price."

"Impossible!" cried the man, startled for once out of his usual apathy.

"No, it is true," replied Mr. Williams, calmly. "The Atlas works is using the Carden process, and turning out a product even better than we are at Bingham."

Mr. Jordan's face was pale and haggard. He looked around with a hunted air, and then, seeing that both men were regarding him keenly, he controlled himself with an effort and wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"How could they know of my — of the Carden process?" he asked, hoarsely.

"The answer is very simple," said Mr. Williams, with admirable composure; "you sold the secret, in order to obtain a royalty from them, as well as from me."

CHAPTER ELEVEN
ON THE WRONG TRAIL

FOR A MOMENT Mr. Jordan made no reply. But he stared at his employer with eyes so full of horror that his sincerity was very evident.

"I sell the secret to others!" he exclaimed, at last. "Why, it would ruin me. Do you accuse me of being a fool, sir, as well as a scoundrel?"

"All scoundrels are fools," returned Mr. Williams, dryly. "But, if you have not sold the secret to the Englishmen, please explain to me where and how they got it."

Again the hunted, fearful look crossed the man's face, and again he made an evident struggle to appear calm.

"I cannot explain it, sir. But it need not affect our business to any serious extent. There is enough demand for our steel in America to keep our furnaces busy, without going abroad for orders."

He spoke mechanically, as if the problem was not new to him and he had often considered the matter in much the same way as he now clearly expressed it. Yet the set, expressionless tones were habitual to him, as they are to all who are unaccustomed to speak at any length.

"That is not the point," said Mr. Williams, sternly. "We are confronted, for the first time, with competition, and by a firm active enough to oppose us in foreign markets. What will be the end of it? What will happen when they attempt to compete with us in our home markets?"

"They must pay duty, and we can always meet their price," said Mr. Jordan, his voice sounding a bit defiant.

"The royalties I am obliged to pay you on my product more than offset the duties," retorted the manufacturer. "Indeed, your demands force me to exact so high a price that our customers are already complaining. The secret is a secret no longer, it seems. Then why should I continue to pay you royalties?"

"If you choose to discontinue our arrangement, sir, I can dispose of the process to others. The firm of Thomson Brothers & Hayden stands ready — "

"Bah!" exclaimed Mr. William's, slamming the desk with his fist in momentary scorn. "You know very well I cannot abandon my present product. It would render this expensive plant of no further value."

Mr. Jordan bowed, with deference.

"I am willing to fulfill our contract in the future, as in the past, on the exact terms it stipulates. I have no doubt the mills will continue to prosper. Anything more, sir?"

He half turned, as if to go.

“Yes,” snapped the proprietor, who began to realize he had accomplished nothing by this interview.

Mr. Jordan waited, and for a time his employer remained silent, staring curiously at the impenetrable face of his secretary. Then he asked:

“How did you come to own this process, anyway? Why does it not belong to the heirs of the man who discovered it?”

Mr. Jordan poised his gaunt form more erectly than ever, and his glittering spectacles were directed full upon the other’s face. “I believe I have already explained that. John Carden transferred to me his right to the discovery in consideration of money which he owed me and could not pay.”

“You loaned him money?”

“Yes.”

“Where did you get it?”

“Sir, that is not your affair.”

“You never earned a dollar more than a bare living until I began to pay you royalties on the process. On the other hand, I have evidence that Carden loaned you money.”

The man shrank back.

“You are becoming offensive, Mr. Williams, in your remarks, and I beg to remind you we are not alone,” he said, not without dignity.

“I am interested in this matter myself, sir,” said Dr. Meigs, now speaking for the first time. “You know that I am a friend of the Carden family, even as I have always been your friend, Mr. Jordan. Therefore it would please me to be able to disentangle this mystery and have all doubts removed from my mind. You have told me, as you have told Mr. Williams, that John Carden owed you ten thousand dollars when he went away. Naturally we are curious to know how so great a sum came into the possession of a poor bank clerk, such as you then were. And also I have wondered what John Carden ever did with that money.”

Again the secretary wiped his brow, but, ignoring for the present Mr. Williams, he turned toward the doctor to reply.

“You have no right to ask me such questions, Doctor Meigs; but it may be that from your standpoint there is some justice in your suspicions. I am, therefore, quite willing to answer you. John Carden spent all his own money, and afterward mine, in expensive experiments. The money I obtained by a lucky speculation in a lottery, the ticket for which I bought under an assumed name, as I did many other tickets, when I was a poor clerk and had no hopes of otherwise acquiring wealth. It is very natural I should hesitate to declare myself a gambler, by explaining this openly; but never since that time have I invested one cent in speculation of any sort. And now, as I have duties to

attend to, I will bid you good afternoon, believing that you will respect my confidence."

As he concluded, the secretary, who never within the knowledge of man had uttered so lengthy a speech before, bowed gravely and stalked from the room, holding himself as rigidly upright as an Egyptian obelisk.

When he was gone the two friends exchanged glances.

"Well?" said Mr. Williams, interrogatively.

"I admit that I am puzzled," answered the doctor. "It is quite possible for Mr. Jordan to have won ten thousand dollars on a lottery ticket."

"Yes; that was clever. There's no controverting it."

"But I do not think he sold the secret of your process to the Englishmen."

"Nor do I. The man's looks convinced me I was mistaken. But they also convinced me he has a secret he is desperately trying to hide. We're on a false scent, that's all."

"I'm inclined to agree with you."

"And what can explain the fact that the Atlas company of Birmingham is using the Carden process?"

"Are you sure it's the same process?"

"Humph! Do you know anything about the way steel is made?"

"No."

"It is a very delicate process to extract the impurities from iron and to transform that metal into a steel that will stand severe tension and become of so fine a temper that it will cut diamonds. Our product also had marvelous resiliency, and can be forged without losing any of its qualities. All this is accomplished by manipulations that are the result of accurate scientific calculations. No one could stumble upon such a process as Carden evolved by years of intelligent effort, and by no other process than Carden's could such steel ever be manufactured."

"Well, what will you do now?"

"I don't know. What I'd like to do is to go to Birmingham at once and see if I can solve the mystery."

"Why don't you?" asked the doctor.

"I'm afraid to leave Jordan, to tell the truth. If he should attempt to run away I must be here to stop him. His suspicions will be aroused by this interview, and should he escape he would take the secret with him, and I would be forced to close the works. Can't you go, Doctor?"

"No, indeed. I can't leave my patients. There are some who need me every day of their lives or think they do, which is the same thing. A physician isn't his own master, you know, and moreover this isn't a physician's business. Send a confidential agent."

“I will. Whom do you suggest?”

“Will Carden.”

Mr. Williams smiled into the doctor’s earnest face.

“If I sent Will to Europe, Jordan would at once become suspicious,” said he.

“No one need know he has gone to Europe. We’ll keep it quiet, and as he is known to be my partner in the mushroom business I can send him away on our private affairs, and Mr. Jordan will have no cause to be suspicious.”

“I will think over the suggestion before deciding. But I’m glad you mentioned Will. He’s a fine, intelligent young fellow, and the trip would do him a lot of good.”

“Indeed it would. Good afternoon, Mr. Williams.”

“I am grateful to you for giving me this hour,” said the manufacturer, rising to shake his friend’s hand, “for although we have not accomplished much it has relieved me of some of my suspicions of Mr. Jordan. I am still positive he deceived me about the formula, and there is no doubt he is a cold-blooded miser who would stick at nothing to make money. Also, he has a secret. But, after all, few men are thoroughly understood, and in the end Jordan may prove to be less of a scoundrel than we have considered him.”

With this the interview terminated, and Doctor Meigs went away to call upon his patients. But for a time there was an unusually thoughtful expression upon his kindly face.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE "SPECIAL MESSENGER"

WILL CARDEN WAS quite surprised to receive another invitation to confer with Mr. Williams. This time, however, he was asked to call at the Williams house in the evening "on a matter of great importance," and while this was less formal than the previous appointment it was also more mysterious. Wondering greatly why he was summoned, the boy dressed himself with care, kissed his mother good night, and walked down the road toward the village, filled with impatient eagerness.

Will's fortunes were quite prosperous at this juncture; or, as he reflected in his boyish fashion: "Things seem to be coming my way." But he was too wise to attribute it to "luck," knowing full well how much he owed to the kindness of good Doctor Meigs, backed by his own sturdy labor and a strict attention to the details of his business.

"These 'lucky' fellows," the doctor had once said, "are usually found to have created their own luck by hard work and upright methods," and the observation struck Will as being very close to the truth. This spring he had abandoned the idea of raising a variety of small vegetables, as he had done in previous years, and contented himself with planting all his available ground with potatoes. These, if properly cared for, would pay nearly as much profit as the market garden, and be a good deal less work. Now that the mushrooms were doing so well the boy felt he could afford to take life a trifle easier, and this method reduced Egbert's labors as well as his own.

Pondering these things he rang the bell at the big house and was at once ushered into Mr. Williams' study, where he was delighted to find Doctor Meigs seated.

After the first words of greeting Mr. Williams said:

"Will, how would you like to go to England, on a little business trip?"

The youth was so astonished that for a moment he stared at his questioner vacantly, and during this interval the mill owner made a rapid but not less complete inspection of the messenger he was about to entrust with so important and delicate an errand.

Will Carden could hardly be called a boy any longer. He was nearly eighteen years of age, and had grown swiftly toward manhood since the reader was first introduced to him. Tall and well-knit, with broad shoulders and an erect bearing, a stranger might easily have guessed the young man to be two or three years older than he really was. Moreover, there was a sagacious and observant expression upon his young face that might well have been caused by his vivid appreciation of the responsibilities thrust upon him

so early in life. Yet, lest you mistake Will for a paragon, let it be said that the same expression may often be seen upon the face of a manly young fellow looking broadly upon the great future, and it is well worth observing. Will had his failings, as all properly constituted boys have; but they were such as threw his better qualities into strong relief.

Mr. Williams seemed well satisfied with his brief inspection, and felt intuitively that he might rely upon the youth's discretion and faith.

"Are you in earnest, sir?" asked Will.

"Very much in earnest," was the quiet reply. "The errand is a secret one, yet I do not ask you to go as a spy, but rather to investigate as fully as possible the business of the Atlas Steel Company of Birmingham. Upon your success depends to a great extent my future prosperity as a manufacturer. Will you undertake this mission?"

"If you think I am capable, sir, I will gladly go. It would please me to be of use to you, and I would enjoy the voyage and the chance to visit a foreign land."

"Very good," said Mr. Williams. "I will pay all of your expenses, and allow you a hundred dollars a month for salary while you are absent."

"That is too much, sir, and I cannot accept it," said Will, firmly. "It will be enough to pay my expenses. Egbert can look after things while I am away, so that the business will suffer very little."

"I am sorry you decline my offer," replied the manufacturer, rather stiffly. It obliges me to find another messenger, to whom I will probably be forced to pay double the salary I have offered you. Men who are competent and whom I may trust, are not to be had for a song, Mr. Carden."

Will looked red and embarrassed. He had never been called "Mr. Carden" by his friend Mr. Williams before, and the formal title led him to believe he had unwittingly offended the man who had been so kind to him. He looked appealingly at the doctor.

"You're a confounded idiot, sir!" said that brusque personage, with a deeper frown than usual, although in his heart the doctor was secretly admiring the boy. "Here is a chance to be of great service to Mr. Williams, who coolly informs you that much of his future prosperity — a matter of many millions, doubtless depends upon this mission to England. Do you wish to rob him, sir, by forcing him to employ a high priced agent, when you can do as well for a smaller sum?"

Will seemed bewildered.

"You don't appear to understand me, Doctor," he said, reproachfully. "It will be a splendid thing for me, a regular holiday, to make a trip like that. Why should I ask my friend to pay me a lot of money in addition?"

“The laborer is worthy of his hire,” quoted Doctor Meigs, bluntly. “Can’t you see that by accepting the salary which is little enough, in all conscience you give Mr. Williams the right to use your services in any way he may direct?”

“Come, come, Will!” cried Mr. Williams, springing up to lay a kindly hand upon the youth’s shoulder. “Don’t let us haggle over a price. You’re worth the sum I offer, and much more, to me. So take it, and let’s call the matter settled.”

“As you like, sir,” answered Will, feeling rather helpless between his two friends. “I am very grateful to you both for all your kindness to me, and I’ll do anything you say I ought to do.”

“Good!” growled the doctor, approvingly. “We’ll put you through your paces, all right.”

Mr. Williams laughed, and his laugh was always a pleasant one.

“And now,” said he, “I will tell you why I am anxious to investigate the business of the Atlas company, which threatens me with a dangerous competition.”

The conference lasted until a late hour, and when it was ended Will understood perfectly what was required of him, and undertook to discover, if possible, where the English concern obtained the secret of the Carden process for making forge steel.

“When shall I go, sir?” he finally asked.

“As soon as possible. Within a week, if you can get away. Steamers sail nearly every day, at this season.”

“How will next Wednesday do?” inquired Will, after a moment’s thought.

“Excellently,” returned Mr. Williams. “I will send you money and further instructions to your home, for Mr. Jordan must not suspect you are in my employ. It will be best for you to confide in no one but your mother and Doctor Meigs. Merely tell your brother and sister, or any other inquirers, that you are going East.”

“Very well, sir.”

One can imagine the eager anticipation that controlled Will Carden during the next few days. He ordered a new suit of clothes from the local tailor, and the doctor helped him to select a suitable outfit for his travel. Although he had never been farther away from Bingham than the city, which was twenty-two miles distant, Will had no fears of his ability to take good care of himself. He might appear a trifle “green” to experienced travellers, he admitted; but at his age any well balanced youth has ample self-command and judgment, so that he anticipated nothing but pleasure during the next busy month or two.

Only one thing grieved him. He would be away during Annabel's vacation, and the young folks had laid many plans to be together during this time. But he left with Mr. Williams a note for the girl, telling her this was a business matter of her father's that could not be delayed, and begging her not to forget him during his absence. Singularly enough, neither he nor Annabel saw anything humorous in this request.

Then, just at the last minute, Mr. Williams entrusted to him another errand that was not wholly agreeable. Letters had come from Mrs. Williams that she was about to return home, being much improved in health; and her husband asked Will to proceed directly from Liverpool to London, there to meet Mrs. Williams at the Savoy Hotel and escort her to her steamer: Will was to see her safely started toward America before proceeding to Birmingham upon his more important mission.

At last he was off, and so novel was his journey that he enjoyed even the tedious trip to New York. The Eastern agent of Mr. Williams met him on his arrival at the great metropolis, and after a day's delightful sight-seeing with the good-natured agent as guide, Will was deposited safely aboard the big Cunarder that was to bear him over the vast expanse of the ocean.

Here was a change, indeed, in Will Carden's fortunes. From "vegetable boy" to "special messenger to Europe" seemed like an abrupt transition, and often as he walked the deck he wondered if it were all a dream, and he would presently awaken in his bed at home. But then his better judgment would inform him that there was nothing so very remarkable in his good fortune, after all. With a good friend such as Dr. Meigs, a fortunate opportunity to save the life of a millionaire's daughter, and the inheritance of an honorable name, much more than this might happen to a young fellow. Will had been in line for promotion, that was all; but he resolved to prove worthy, that his friends might not regret their confidence in him.

There is an old saying that "to be worthy of good fortune is to invite good fortune," and there is much wisdom in the adage. The worthy do not always prove fortunate, it is true; but fortune is not so blind and fickle as we are sometimes led to believe, and sterling worth is a magnet that frequently attracts it.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MY LADY IS GRACIOUS

THE bustle and confusion of landing filled Will with eager joy. It is truly an experience of moment to any one, so it is not wonderful that our youth, fresh from a country town, should thrill with excitement at this first glimpse of a foreign land. But he did not lose his head, and managed to rescue his small trunk from the mass of baggage tumbled upon the quay, and to get it transported to the railway station.

Then the train whirled him away, and with bustling Liverpool behind him he had mighty London to look forward to — the "City of Cities" in the eyes of all civilized humanity.

By dint of intelligent inquiry on shipboard he now knew exactly how to act. Once arrived at the terminal station he took a cab for the Savoy Hotel, where Mr. Williams had requested him to take a room. He met with one disappointment, in finding that Mrs. Williams had not yet arrived, for according to her letter she should have been at the Savoy some days since, and Mr. Williams had cabled her to await there Will's arrival.

However, there was nothing to do but await the lady's appearance; so he went to his room, removed all traces of travel, and descended to obtain his first serene view of the world's metropolis. He found a near-by restaurant, at which he dined most luxuriously, but grieved at sight of his bill. Dr. Meigs had impressed upon him the fact that Mr. Williams had millions at his disposal, and therefore his confidential agent's expenses need not be in any way curtailed. Mr. Williams had himself informed the young man that so long as Will acted as his representative he must live in a style befitting his employer's position in the world.

"Do exactly as you think I would do myself, were I — making the trip in person," he said.

So Will, although conscious of reckless extravagance from his own viewpoint, determined not to hesitate to spend Mr. Williams' money freely in providing a respectable living; but it startled him to find how much was actually required to live in London in the same way that others did with whom he was constantly thrown in contact.

After dinner he decided to attend an opera, a species of entertainment he had never before witnessed; but he contented himself with a seat obtained for the most modest sum the bills quoted. Being extremely fond of music, and of a naturally artistic and appreciative mind, the inexperienced boy found in the opera a veritable fairyland, and his dreams that night were filled with fantastic creations called up by the gorgeous spectacle he had beheld and the

ravishing strains of music he had listened to. He realized he was getting a tremendous lot of experience in a very sudden manner, and it kept him keyed up to a high pitch of nervous tension until he became more accustomed to the novelty of existence in a great city.

Next morning he inquired for Mrs. Williams again, only to find she had not yet arrived.

"She should have been here several days ago," he said to the registry clerk, in an anxious voice.

"Where was she coming from, sir?" the man inquired.

"Paris, I believe."

"Then I beg you not to worry," returned the clerk, with a reassuring smile; "for most ladies find it a difficult matter to leave Paris, and frequently they linger there many days after they have planned to depart. Be patient, sir; and if the lady delays too long we will make inquiries for you in Paris."

That relieved Will's anxiety to an extent, for he could easily understand how a woman of Mrs. Williams' temperament would be likely to forget she was overdue in London, so long as the charms of Paris amused her.

His instructions were to await her at this hotel, so he decided to give her three days more of grace, and if she did not then arrive to cable his employer for advice how to act.

Will knew, in a general way, what he most cared to see in London, for he was as intelligent as the average American high school boy, and although he had never in his wildest dreams expected to go abroad, had stored up a mass of general information that was now very useful to draw upon. So, with the aid of a guide-book, he found his way to the Tower, the House of Parliament, and Westminster Abbey, returning toward evening to his hotel with the uncomfortable feeling that should Mrs. Williams have arrived in his absence she would surely be annoyed by his neglect.

But the clerk met his inquiry with a shake of the head, and relieved his fears.

Next day he visited St. Paul's and stood before the tombs of Wellington, Nelson and other great men whose names were familiar in history. And then he mounted the top of an omnibus and rode for miles through the busy thoroughfares, until the immensity of the city overpowered him, and half bewildered he returned to his hotel to rest and collect his thoughts. It was a famous opportunity for a boy like Will Carden to take advantage of and those two days of waiting gave him experience that furnished him with pleasant recollections in all the years to come.

That evening he saw Henry Irving enact King Lear, and learned a lesson he never forgot. When on the following morning he came down to the office,

the clerk informed him that Mrs. Williams had telegraphed she would arrive at ten o'clock, so he need have no further anxiety.

He watched her arrival, with two maids, a mountain of trunks and a dozen servants impressed at the entrance to carry parcels, wraps and miscellaneous articles of all descriptions; but the sight deterred him from approaching her until she was settled in her suite of rooms.

Then he sent up a card and received an answer that Mrs. Williams would see Mr. Carden at one o'clock. The tedious wait made him nervous and disconcerted, so that when the important hour arrived and he was shown to the great lady's apartments he realized that he was not likely to create a very favorable impression.

Nor did he.

Mrs. Williams was reclining upon a couch, but she arose languidly and examined him through a little eyeglass, saying afterward in mincing tones:

"Dear me! Isn't it the vegetable boy?"

"Yes'm," said Will, shamefaced and awkward.

"I have been wondering whom it could be that Mr. Williams cabled would meet me here. The name was unknown to me. What are you, a valet?"

"Hardly that, madam," replied Will, with a hearty, boyish laugh; and surely that laugh must have made a favorable impression upon the lady, for she lowered her eyeglass and murmured "I have been from home so long that I am ignorant of present conditions there. But you seem to have grown bigger, and — and — older."

"Naturally, madam," said he; and then he added, with an assumption of such dignity as he could command under the circumstances: "I have the honor to be your husband's confidential agent, abroad upon business matters. For this reason Mr. Williams thought it best that I should meet you here and offer such services as I may be able to render you."

"To be sure," she said, musingly; "and it was very thoughtful of him. If I remember rightly, you were the boy that carried Annabel home the day she fell into the pond."

He bowed.

"I am glad to see, Mrs. Williams, that you seem to have quite recovered your good health," he observed, to get away from the subject.

"Not quite, sir," she answered, in a more cordial tone; "but I am much better than when I first came from America. Won't you sit down?" noting that he was still standing. "And now, please tell me how you left my children. Were they well? Are they growing? Really, I shall be glad to see them again after this long separation."

Will had his own ideas about the interest the woman took in her children;

but it was a subject very interesting to him personally, so he chatted away in his usual bright manner, relating the progress of his friends and play-mates and adding such gossip of

Bingham as he thought might interest his listener.

And Mrs. Williams began to approve more and more of the pleasant young man before her.

“Are you returning home with me?” she asked, presently.

“I’m afraid not. I have business in Birmingham that may detain me for some time,” he replied.

She seemed really disappointed.

“I hate London,” said she, wearily, “so I shall take the first steamer home. You will look it up for me, tomorrow, and make arrangements?”

“With great pleasure, madam.”

And you must dine with me this evening. I will meet you in the pink salon at half past seven, and we will go to the main restaurant.”

“Thank you, madam,” he said, filled with a sense of depression at the very idea of dining with the great lady.

As he rose to go she added, as if by an afterthought:

“You will, of course, appear in full dress, Mr. Carden. Until then, au revoir.”

With a bow he was dismissed, and as he stumbled into the hall and the maid closed the door behind him, he remembered that a fulldress suit was something he did not possess.

Really, he ought to go back and tell her so; but the very thought of doing this made him panic-stricken, and instead he went down stairs to get some luncheon and think over his predicament.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A DINNER IN A DRESS SUIT

ON HIS WAY Will passed the ladies' restaurant, and noted the handsome toilets of its occupants with something of a shock. Mrs. Williams would doubtless be elaborately gowned that evening, and of course he ought to be in full dress also. What an absurd situation to confront a poor country boy, who had been so proud of the new suit the Bingham tailor had provided him with! Will Carden in a "swallowtail!" The very thought made him smile — and then shudder. Whatever should he do?

The gentlemen's lunch room was rather full, but the courteous usher asked permission of a guest who sat at a small table in one corner, and then seated Will opposite him.

The gentleman was reading a newspaper, and merely glanced at the new arrival. Will could see that he had a big, impressive figure, a close-cropped beard of iron-gray, and an expression upon his face that was grave yet kindly.

Having made this cursory inspection, he gave his simple order to the waiter and then relapsed into moody abstraction. That dreadful dress suit haunted him like some malignant demon. If he made an excuse to cancel the engagement Mrs. Williams would be offended; if he appeared in his ordinary clothes she would be more offended still. And now that she had begun to treat him with some slight consideration he disliked to do anything to forfeit her respect or good will.

"Something disagreeable, sir?" asked a pleasant voice.

The gentleman had laid down his paper and was engaged in eating his luncheon. As he spoke he glanced at Will with a smile, which the boy returned, feeling rather ashamed of his depression because of so trivial a matter.

"Something quite disagreeable, as you observe, sir," he answered.

"You are an American?"

"Yes, sir. And you?"

A shadow crossed the gentleman's face.

"Formerly I lived in the States. But I am quite English, now, although I have never ceased to love my native land. That is why I ventured to speak to a young man who is so evidently an American. Can I be of any assistance to you?"

Will laughed.

"To be frank with you, my tribulation is caused merely by a lack of a dress suit," said he. "I must dine with a lady a very 'swell' lady, sir, tonight,

and I — possess only the clothes you behold."

"You have lost your baggage?"

"No, sir; I never have owned a dress suit. Indeed, these are the best clothes I have, and had not the lady asked me to dine with her I should have considered them equal to all my requirements."

"What part of America are you from?"

"A little town called Bingham."

The man gave a sudden start, and moved his lips as if about to speak. But, no words came, and closing his jaws firmly together, as if to repress the impulse, he leaned back in his chair and gazed at Will with a look that was more pathetic than curious.

The boy scarcely noticed the interruption. He rambled on, explaining that he was sent abroad on business by a Mr. Williams, and was only staying in London to see the wife of his employer aboard the steamer on her way home.

It was cruel, he protested, for her to ask him to dine with her in a fashionable hotel, knowing as she did his station in life, and still more cruel to ask him to appear in a dress suit.

Of all this, and much more, he talked as he ate his luncheon, and the gentleman listened in grave silence, but most attentively.

After the meal was finished he asked:

"Have you money?"

"Yes, sir; plenty."

"Then I believe I shall be able to relieve your embarrassment, if you will walk with me a few doors down the street."

"I shall be very grateful, sir."

The gentleman arose to leave the cafe, and Will noticed that the waiters and ushers all bowed with profound deference as he passed out. But that was not singular. The most careless observer could not fail to be impressed by his new friend's dignified bearing.

On the street he nodded to several acquaintances and tipped his hat gracefully to a lady who rode by in a handsome equipage. Will was quite proud of his companion, who was evidently a person of importance.

But now they turned into a fashionable tailor shop, and the proprietor was bowing and scraping most humbly before the gray-haired gentleman, who beckoned him aside.

Will did not hear the conversation that ensued, but the tailor rubbed his hands together complacently and nodded so often that the boy wondered he did not dislocate his neck.

"He will fit you out, all right, and send you the suit in ample time," said the gentleman, returning to Will's side. "And now, if there is no way I can be

of further assistance to you, permit me to bid you good day."

"Thank you very much, sir."

With a smile and nod the man was gone, and now the obsequious tailor was inviting him to stand upon a pedestal to be measured. Evidently the fellow had received definite instructions what to do, for he asked no questions except where to send the clothes, and declared again and again that they would be delivered by six o'clock.

Will passed the rest of the afternoon looking up steamship offices and inquiring about sailings to New York. Mrs. Williams had said he could do this tomorrow, but he preferred to attend to the matter at once. He finally selected a steamer that sailed the next Saturday, which would give the lady ample time to prepare for the trip, and having made the booking he returned to his hotel to await with considerable anxiety the approach of the eventful evening.

At six o'clock a large parcel was delivered to his room, and upon opening it he found not only his new full-dress suit, but the accompanying linen, the proper tie, and everything else that he might need. His chance acquaintance had proved a veritable magician, for even to one of Will's inexperience it was evident such an outfit could only be procured upon short notice by means of considerable influence.

The bill that lay in the bottom of the bag startled him at first; but, had he known it, it was remarkably small for the amount and quality of the goods it covered.

From his observations during the voyage across, and his three days in London, Will Carden was not ignorant of what was required in society in the way of evening dress, and the outfit before him permitted little chance of mistake. He dressed himself very carefully, finding that each article fitted admirably; and when all was accomplished he spent several minutes gazing wonderingly at his own reflection in the long mirror.

He reached the pink salon a little ahead of his engagement, and Mrs. Williams was a little behind hers; so the interval gave him time to regain his composure. He found several gentlemen present who were dressed exactly like himself, and that made him feel almost at ease by the time Mrs. Williams appeared.

She wore a handsome evening dress of black net trimmed with jet, and many brilliant gems sparkled upon her neck and hands. After the first inquiring glance at her escort she smiled approvingly, for Will looked very proper and handsome in her critical worldly eyes and it was an agreeable experience to have a nice looking young man at her side.

They found a small table awaiting them in the restaurant, where the scene

was so brilliant that it filled Will with surprise. Handsomely gowned ladies were present in profusion, and the soft glow of the rose-shaded lights on rich glass and napery made a beautiful picture not easily forgotten by one unaccustomed to such luxuries.

Will noticed, as he seated himself; that at a neighboring table his friend of the afternoon was dining with two male companions, all in prescribed evening dress. The gentleman saw him, and returned his bow with a pleasant smile.

Mrs. Williams maintained a flow of social small talk that Will was scarcely able to understand, and surely could make little reply to. But she did not seem to expect him to converse, except in monosyllables, so he assumed an air of respectful attention to her remarks and let his thoughts and eyes wander amid his novel surroundings. He neither knew nor cared what food was being served, for he seemed to be in a fairy land, and the merry hum of voices, the soft strains of music, the silent rush of the waiters and the atmosphere of sensuous comfort pervading the magnificent arched room, all tended to bewilder his mind and render him indifferent to the commonplace occupation of eating.

Presently a lady detached herself from a group of diners and came to their table to greet Mrs. Williams, who seemed to be an old acquaintance. After acknowledging Will's polite bow on his introduction the lady ignored him and seated herself in a vacant chair beside Mrs. Williams, beginning a brisk conversation which soon drifted into gossip about those present.

"I suppose you know very few of our London notables," she said, "having passed so much of your time on the Continent. The lady in lavender at the third table to your right is the Duchess of M — ; and just behind her is Lady Mary K — , whose divorce suit you have doubtless read of. And do you see those gentlemen at a table by the pillar yonder? They are well worth attention. The one with the moustache is Prince Von D — , and the plain-faced man is Mr. Ashkam, the great London banker. The third, with the gray hair and beard, is the head of the Atlas Steel works, the famous John Carden, who is reputed one of the wealthiest manufacturers in the United Kingdom. Next to them — "

Will's fork fell from his hand, clattering against his plate with a sound so startling that it attracted many eyes in his direction.

Trembling violently, and with a white face, he was staring at the man pointed out as John Carden, who returned the look with astonishment.

"Excuse me — I — I am ill — I cannot stay here!" he stammered in a low voice; and rising hurriedly, regardless of Mrs. Williams' shocked expression, he staggered from the room.

The gentleman hastily followed. He found Will in the dimly lighted anteroom, where the boy stood wringing his hands in an agony of nervous excitement. Seeing the man, he rushed toward him at once, saying:

“John Carden! Are you really John Carden?”

“Yes.”

“John Carden of Bingham?”

“Yes,” repeated the other, seizing Will’s outstretched hands; “once of Bingham.”

“Then I am your son!” cried the boy, with a sob. “I am Will Carden.”

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ANNABEL MAKES A DISCOVERY

WHEN MARY LOUISE, Annabel and Theodore came home for the summer vacation there was genuine disappointment to all in finding Will Carden absent from Bingham. But I think none missed him so sincerely as Annabel.

She drove over to see Mrs. Carden and Flo and chatted with them for an hour; but it was not until she found time to be alone with her father, "for one of our good talks, daddy," that she learned the truth about Will's mission abroad. In that connection Mr. Williams was obliged to tell her something of his suspicions of Mr. Jordan, and the girl listened earnestly to all he said.

"I never did like the man, dear," she declared; "nor does Will like him, although Mr. Jordan was so good to his dead father. But why don't you force the secretary to tell you the real secret of the process, when you are entitled to it?"

"I mean to, when the proper time comes," was the reply. "But I cannot get rid of the idea that Jordan has some other object than to withhold this knowledge."

"I suppose he thinks that as long as you are ignorant of the real secret of the process you cannot discharge him, or stop the payment of his royalties," she said, musingly.

"The secret is no longer so important as it was formerly," said Mr. Williams, somewhat gloomily. "That Birmingham discovery worries me more than I can explain. The English steel is even a better grade than my own, and if its makers choose to invade this country their competition would seriously affect my business, and might even ruin it."

"I'm sure Will can find out all you wish to know," she returned. "Don't fret, papa. Let us wait until he gets back."

Shortly after this conversation the manufacturer met Doctor Meigs, who asked:

"How is Jordan conducting himself these days?"

"Rather strangely," said Mr. Williams.

"I sometimes think he's getting ready to run away."

"Think so?"

"Yes. I have paid the fellow over a hundred thousand dollars in royalties, and this money, which has been accumulating in the same bank in the city that I myself use, and am also a director of, has suddenly been withdrawn and placed elsewhere."

"Where?"

"I do not know."

“Perhaps he has invested it.”

Mr. Williams shook his head, doubtfully.

“Then, during the last few weeks,” he continued, “he has been nervously rushing out our orders and getting the goods delivered, when there is no need at all of haste.”

“Why?”

“Because as soon as delivery is made he is entitled to his royalty, which he draws promptly, and sends away. It looks to me as though he is trying to get together all the money he can, and then skip out.”

“But why should he do that?” inquired the doctor, who was plainly puzzled by this statement.

“I can’t explain it, unless that foreign competition has frightened him. Ever since we had that conversation in my office, at which you were present, Jordan has been a different man. Little things seem to startle him, whereas he used to be the coolest man I ever met. He looks up sharply at every one who enters the office, and gets very irritable over small things that never before annoyed him. I’ve been watching him closely, you see.”

“Could he possibly know we have sent Will to England?”

“I believe that secret is safe. Only Mrs. Carden knows it, and she would never betray it to Jordan, you may be sure.”

“What will you do?” asked the doctor.

“Keep an eye on him, and if he attempts to get away hold him until he tells me truly the secret of the process that he sold me. Otherwise he is free to go wherever he pleases.”

“Have you heard from Will?”

“No, and it is rather strange that I have not. He has cabled me that Mrs. Williams will arrive on the Baltic, which is due in New York next week; but he said not a word about himself or the business matters on which he is engaged.”

“Perhaps there is nothing yet to say,” suggested the doctor, and with a handshake the friends parted.

On Sunday afternoon Annabel asked her father to join her in a walk, as the day was delightfully pleasant. He agreed at once, and they strolled along the lanes until they came to the Carden house, where they stopped for a little visit with Will’s mother. Mrs. Carden had greatly improved in health since being relieved of so much of the drudgery of housework, and the increased prosperity of the family fortunes had rendered her brighter and more cheerful than of old. Possessed of an excellent education and much native refinement of manner, Mrs. Carden had formerly been one of the most popular women in Bingham, and although her husband’s tragic loss had greatly embittered

her life during the past dozen years, she was gradually resuming her natural sweetness and charming personality.

So both Annabel and her father passed a pleasant hour at the house, and then started on to resume their walk.

“Let us go by the grove,” said the girl. “It’s Mr. Jordan’s favorite walk, and Will says he never misses an evening unless there’s a hurricane to stop him.”

“And hurricanes are uncommon,” added her father, smiling. “Well, it looks cool and pleasant under the trees, so we’ll walk that way. But why do you suppose Mr. Jordan takes such long journeys every evening?”

“For exercise, I imagine. Will says he starts right after supper and tramps a good five miles. And when he gets back he shuts himself in his room and sees no one until morning.”

“A strange man,” said Mr. Williams, musingly; “and either extremely simple or extremely shrewd. I can’t decide which.”

There was little other conversation between the two until they reached the grove; but as they passed between the great trees Annabel suddenly said:

“Do you know, papa, I almost suspect Mr. Jordan is crazy?”

“No; why do you think that?”

“Because he does such funny things. I remember Will’s telling me once about a queer thing that happened in this very grove.”

“What was it?” asked her father, absently.

“Mr. Jordan used to stop at a certain tree, and after looking around to find out if anyone was near he would pass his hand swiftly up and down the bark of the tree, as secretly as if he were committing some crime.”

Mr. Williams turned to gaze upon his daughter’s face with wonder.

“Then,” said Annabel, “he would come back to the path, and resume his walk.”

“Which tree was it?” asked her father, earnestly.

“Why, I think I can find it, for twice Will has pointed it out to me when we were walking here. Let me see. Here is the turn in the path — and here is where Mr. Jordan always stopped... and there — no, not that one — the big oak just beside it... that’s the very tree, papa! Will once found the tracks of Mr. Jordan’s feet in the snow, where he’d walked up to it. Isn’t it funny?”

Mr. Williams shook his head. There was a puzzled expression upon his face. He stared at the tree for a time as if in a brown study. The incident just related was singular enough to be interesting, but the old oak was just like a dozen other oaks that stood around. Why should Mr. Jordan pay especial attention to that particular tree?

“Where are you going, papa?”

“I’m going to examine the tree more closely.”

He walked straight up to it, and stood minutely examining the bark. Then he passed his hand over it.

“Higher up,” said Annabel. “He used to feel about on a level with his head, Will told me, and he’s taller than you are, papa.”

Mr. Williams touched the bark higher up, and looked mystified. Surely there had been no reason for Mr. Jordan’s action. Perhaps the man was mad, after all, and this was one of his crazy notions.

Wait a moment though! Wasn’t that a crack in the rough bark? Mr. Williams took out his pocket-knife, and inserted the blade into the crack. Yes, the bark had separated slightly at this point. He followed the line with his knife blade, with growing excitement. It zig-zagged this way and that, keeping first to the right, then upward almost as far as he could reach, then to the left on almost a straight line; then down again to the starting point.

Mr. Williams withdrew the blade and took a long breath.

“That square of bark is separate from the rest,” he said.

“How odd!” answered Annabel, her eyes bigger than usual.

Her father looked around, and espied an old root lying near. He dragged this over to the tree, and standing upon it was able to place his face close to the bark.

Then he indulged in a low whistle, for he had discovered a blackened screw-head half hidden by the roughness of the surface. Again he drew out his pocketknife and deliberately snapped one of the blades in half. With this improvised screwdriver he set to work, and shortly had the screw removed.

Mr. Williams had been a mechanic in his younger days. He knew just what to do under the present circumstances.

Annabel watched him with an interest that became more intense every moment.

He found a second screw, and removed it; a third, and then a fourth. With this the piece of bark came away in his hand, revealing a hollow cavity in the tree behind it.

Mr. Williams took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Then he thrust his hand into the cavity, and when he withdrew it he was clutching a bundle of papers, tied together with a cotton cord.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MR. WILLIAMS DECIDES To ACT

WHAT IS IT, papa?" whispered Annabel, with extreme eagerness.

The man sat down upon the root and hastily examined the papers. When again he looked upon his daughter his face was white and drawn, and in his eyes was an expression of intense horror.

"My dear," he said, gently, you have been the means of discovering one of the most wicked plots that any man has ever conceived."

"What is it?" she asked, again.

"I can't tell you all until I have read these papers carefully. They are ample proof, however, that Jordan is one of the greatest scoundrels on earth! Why he should have placed these papers here, instead of destroying them, I cannot understand."

"Perhaps God made him do it," said the girl, in an awed voice.

He leaned over and kissed her.

"Surely the hand of God is visible in all this, my darling," he replied, gravely. "And He doubtless led us to this grove today."

He placed the packet carefully in an inner pocket of his coat, which he afterward buttoned carefully.

Then, after a moment's thought, he replaced the bark, putting the screws back in place. This task being finished, he proceeded to drag away the root upon which he had stood.

Even a careful observer could not now have known the bark had ever been disturbed, and satisfied that the secret was safe he led Annabel from the grove and across to a lane that would bring them close to their own home.

"You must keep all this mystery to yourself, my darling," he enjoined her, "for a time, at least, until we have planned how best to act."

"Very well, papa," returned the girl, seriously. She knew well that something important had been unearthed, and although curious, as any girl might well be, to unravel the enigma, she was wise enough not to urge her father to confide in her until he chose to do so.

Indeed, he knew only a little of the truth himself, as yet; such as had been hurriedly gleaned by a brief examination of the papers.

Arrived at the house, he dismissed Annabel with a kiss and dispatched a groom at once to find Doctor Meigs and bring that gentleman back with him. After this he shut himself up in his study with orders that he must not be disturbed.

As it was Sunday the doctor was soon found, and came at once; suspecting that something of unusual importance had occurred. He

immediately joined Mr. Williams in the study, and for several hours the two men were closeted in the little room, engaged in deep conference.

Gradually the children, awed by the atmosphere of mystery that pervaded the entire house, retired to bed, and then the servants turned out the lights and followed them, leaving only old Thomas, the butler, to show the doctor out and lock the doors for the night.

Thomas was almost asleep himself when aroused by the bell. He found the doctor and Mr. Williams standing together in the hall, and started at the sight of their stern, white features.

"Then it is fully decided we shall wait until Wednesday?" asked the doctor, his voice harsh and grating.

"Until Wednesday," returned Mr. Williams, wearily. Then he pressed his friend's hand. "Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Thomas closed the door after the departing guest and locked it. When he turned around his master was staring into space with such a fierce look in his eyes that the old servant shrank back in fear, and then slunk away, leaving the man alone with his thoughts.

Next morning Mr. Williams caught an early train to the city, where he at once sought a detective bureau, staying several hours in earnest consultation with the chief. The result was not immediately evident, although when the manufacturer took the afternoon train for Bingham, a quiet man, plainly dressed and unobtrusive, followed him into the car and seated himself in a corner. At the last moment another man, dressed in a loud checked suit and seeming to be a commercial traveller, to judge by his sample cases, swung himself aboard the train and noisily took a seat near to Mr. Williams, who did not recognize him in any way.

Both of these men left the train at Bingham, but they did not follow the owner of the steel works, who crossed the tracks and proceeded pensively toward the offices.

Mr. Jordan nodded as usual when his employer entered, and then calmly resumed his work. Mr. Williams entered his private office and looked through the mail before going home to dinner.

Annabel thought that her father kissed her more tenderly than usual that evening; but she did not refer to their secret, nor did he mention it in any way.

Mr. Jordan partook of his usual frugal meal at the hotel, and then started for his walk. The commercial traveller was smoking a big cigar upon the porch as the secretary passed out, but Mr. Jordan did not notice him. He walked down the road as far as the Carden house, turned up the lane, and

with measured steps and upright form pursued his way to the grove and through it. At one point he stopped and listened. Everything was still among the trees, except that a thrush sent a last wailing note after the dying sun. Mr. Jordan seemed satisfied. He left the path and walked calmly to an oak tree, where he passed his hand rapidly over the surface of the bark.

It was all done in an instant, and as he afterward proceeded on his way he had no idea that a plainly dressed stranger had been standing behind a clump of bushes watching his every movement.

The next day Mr. Williams was at the office as usual, but when Mr. Jordan sent a clerk to ask for a conference about some of the business details his superior answered that he was too busily engaged to see his secretary.

Mr. Jordan seemed surprised and uneasy, but he said nothing.

In the afternoon a telegram was laid upon Mr. Williams' desk. He opened it indifferently, but a moment later sprang to his feet with a cry of delight.

It read: "Arrived in New York today. Night train to Bingham. Be with you tomorrow. Mrs. Williams, who, with my son, accompanies me, quite well. John Carden."

"Excellent!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together in an ecstacy of joy. "The hand of fate is surely in this. Or," and here he bowed his head reverently, "perhaps my little girl is right, and it is the hand of God!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MR. JORDAN HEARS A STORY

THE CHILDREN WERE delighted with the news of their mother's speedy return. During her long absence all grievances had been forgotten, and they only remembered that the absent mother, whom they loved, was coming back to them.

All through the house was a flutter of excitement, which even the servants were unable to escape. Mary Louise, like the sweet and dainty house-fairy she was, wandered through her mother's long-deserted rooms, putting everything in order with a discretion and taste that was essentially womanly. And Annabel prepared vases of her mother's favorite flowers, whose fragrance would be sure to prove a tender greeting to the returned traveller. Even little Gladys insisted on helping "to get ready for mamma," although her sisters would gladly have dispensed with her assistance.

Annabel had another source of pleasure, for her father had said, rather briefly but with an odd look in his eyes: "Will is coming back with your mother, although it is sooner than I had expected him."

She knew from the gravity of his voice that he did not wish to be asked questions, so she only smiled happily at the news, and kissed him.

Over at the Carden cottage Mr. Jordan was having a restless night. He returned from his evening walk as usual, but when he had locked himself in his room he began pacing the floor restlessly, a thing which Mrs. Carden, who could hear his footsteps plainly, did not remember that he had ever done before.

Had anyone been able to peep within the room — which no one ever could — he would have found the secretary's thin face distorted by a wrathful scowl. Indeed, Mr. Jordan was not at all pleased with the way things were going at the mills. Mr. Williams' evident repugnance to him, which had been growing for some time, and his flat refusal that day to confer with his secretary, had awakened in the man vague misgivings for which he could not account. And then that discovery by Mr. Williams of the English steel made by the Carden process was liable to precipitate a crisis.

Mr. Jordan had known of this foreign steel for years, but had hoped Mr. Williams would never discover it. There was an ominous atmosphere surrounding him just now that warned the secretary that he must no longer delay action — such action as he had planned for, long ago. He thought the matter over carefully, as he paced the floor, and finally made his decision. But even after he went to bed he could not sleep, and tossed restlessly upon his couch until morning came.

Then he arose and dressed with his usual care. His personal possessions were not very great. The old horse-hair trunk contained little of value, and as his eyes roved over the room he saw few things that he really cared for.

In the end he put together a few toilet articles and some linen and underwear, which he made into a package and wrapped with a newspaper. Then, with a last look around, he left the house in his usual quiet manner and walked up the road to the village.

The man had frequently consulted his watch, and timed his actions to a nicety. He passed the village and reached the railway station just as the early train to the city was due. But he did not go upon the platform, where his presence might excite surprise, preferring to stand behind the square, brick station-house until he heard the train draw in. Even then he calculated his time. It would take so long to unload passengers; so long for the people to enter the cars; so long to load the baggage, and —

"All aboard!" cried the conductor.

Mr. Jordan smiled grimly and walked around the corner of the building. Yes, he had just time to swing aboard as the train drew out.

But then a disagreeable accident happened. A commercial traveller, dressed in a loud checked suit, dashed out of a door of the depot in the direction of the train and ran plump against Mr. Jordan, almost knocking that gentleman down and sending his newspaper bundle flying several yards away. The blundering fellow actually tumbled down, and in struggling to rise caught Mr. Jordan around the knees and held him so fast that he could not move.

"Let go — release me!" shouted the secretary angrily.

"I beg your pardon! I beg your pardon!" the other kept repeating humbly; but by the time he had scrambled up and released his victim the train had pulled away, and now at constantly increasing speed was flying along the tracks in the direction of the city.

"You scoundrel!" roared the exasperated gentleman, "you've made me lose my train!"

"I beg your pardon! I really beg your pardon, sir!" answered the traveller, in a meek voice, as he stopped to pick up his sample cases. "It was horribly awkward of me, I know; but I've missed the train, myself. There's another at noon, however, so I'll go back to the hotel and get some breakfast."

Mr. Jordan glared at him without reply. Then he decided to make the best of his misfortune and return to the hotel for breakfast himself.

He walked into the office a little earlier than usual, deposited his newspaper bundle beside his desk, and went to work as methodically and calmly as ever. The clerks noticed no change in him. He was as positive in

his orders as usual, and his manner gave no indication of the fact that he had secretly planned to abandon his post.

At ten o'clock Dr. Meigs came in, and was shown at once into Mr. Williams' private office. A few minutes later a clerk said to the secretary:

"Mr. Williams wishes to see you, sir."

Mr. Jordan glanced at the clock, and then at his bundle, and hesitated. But a moment's thought served for him to decide how to act, and with a sullen frown upon his brow he arose and entered the private office.

"Sit down," said Mr. Williams, pointing to a chair that faced both his own and the one in which the doctor was seated.

Mr. Jordan obeyed.

"I want to tell you a story," said his employer, gravely; "and I wish you to listen to it carefully and without interruption."

The man flushed, but answered nothing.

"About eleven years ago," began Mr. Williams, "two men lived in Bingham who were friends. One was a clerk in a bank, the other was a steel manufacturer who was experimenting to find a better way to make his product. He did, indeed, discover a new and valuable process, but at a time when his fortunes were at a low ebb, and all his resources, save a few hundred dollars, had been exhausted. Being unable to form a company in America to manufacture his steel under the new process, he decided to go to Birmingham, England, where he thought he would have a better opportunity to interest capitalists. He divided his remaining money into two parts, taking half with him and leaving the remainder with his friend to be applied for the use of his wife and three children until he could send for them to join him, or return himself to support them. This man, whom he thought he could trust, promised faithfully to care for his friend's family as if they were his own."

Mr. Jordan was now regarding the narrator with interest, but there was an amused and slightly scornful smile upon his thin lips.

"The inventor — let us call him John Carden — sailed on a White Star steamer to England," resumed Mr. Williams; "but that fact was known only to his friend, who did not advertise it. Instead, he watched the newspapers, and when he saw that a sailing vessel, the *Pleiades,* which left New York about the same time that Carden did, had foundered at sea and gone down with all hands on board, he went to the wife of his friend with well-assumed horror and told her that her husband had been upon this sailing ship, and was now dead. He even showed a letter in her husband's handwriting, carefully forged, stating that he had arranged to sail on the *Pleiades* from motives of economy. And here was a newspaper report of the vessel's loss. A very pretty plot to get rid of John Carden, and it succeeded perfectly. Not only

was all Bingham soon aware that Carden was lost at sea, but slanderous stories were circulated that he had run away to escape his creditors, and also that he owed his false friend, Ezra Jordan, ten thousand dollars, which he had borrowed to carry on his experiments — a story which Mr. Jordan himself confirmed with hypocritical sighs."

"Sir, you are insulting!" cried Jordan, springing to his feet with a livid face. "I will hear no more of this lying tale."

"Sit down!" Was the stern command. "You must hear it either from me or in a court of justice — perhaps both, before we are done."

Mr. Jordan sat down.

"I am not sure that you realize the full horror of this abominable crime," resumed Mr. Williams. "It transformed a bright and happy woman — happy — despite their impending poverty — in her husband's love, into a broken-hearted, crushed and desolate widow, whose only incentive to drag her weary way through life was the necessity of caring for her fatherless little ones. It was worse than murder, sir, for it prolonged for years the suffering of a human heart."

For a moment he paused, and in the stillness that ensued the doctor could be heard muttering dreadful words, as if to himself. Indeed, he could not trust himself to look at Mr. Jordan, who sat as motionless as if turned to stone.

"Before Carden went away," continued Mr. Williams, suddenly arousing himself and speaking in a sharp, clear tone, "he left in a sealed envelope an exact description of his secret process for making steel, and gave it into his friend's keeping with instructions that it must not be opened unless he met with sudden death. In that case Jordan was to lease or sell the process for the benefit of Carden's family-"

"It's a lie," said Jordan, sullenly. "He transferred the right to me. You have seen the paper."

"A mere forgery," declared Mr. Williams. "Long before I came to Bingham, to find the man who could make such wonderful steel, you had opened the sealed envelope and prepared the forged transfer of all rights to yourself. I was very fully deceived, at that time; and although you exacted from me excessive royalties for the use of the process, I made a contract with you — in good faith and built this establishment."

"Well, you have made a fortune out of it," retorted Jordan, savagely. "Why are you now hounding *me,* who gave you the opportunity to make millions?"

"Because you are an unprincipled scoundrel, sir! Because you have never been entitled to one dollar of the money I have paid you. The money belonged to the family of John Carden, or to John Carden himself."

“The Carden family has not suffered,” answered the man, moving uneasily in his seat. “I’ve boarded with them, and always helped support them.”

The doctor uttered an exclamation that was like a roar, and clenching his fists, half started to rise from his chair. But Mr. Williams restrained him with a look, and motioned him to have patience.

“Let us continue the story,” he said, “for its appalling details are not half told. With John Carden well out of the way it was necessary he should not return to life to confound his destroyer. This required all of Jordan’s ingenuity. For Carden not only wrote to him, when he had arrived in England, but he also wrote to his wife, and Jordan had to watch the mails carefully in order to intercept these letters. If one had reached Mrs. Carden the conspiracy would have been foiled. It was a bold game; and I marvel even now that it succeeded. Carden found friends in Birmingham almost at once, who saw the value of his process and were eager to promote the manufacture of the new steel. The Atlas Steel Company was formed, with Carden a large stockholder, and soon he had sufficient means to send for his wife and family. I am almost sure that Jordan forged letters from Mrs. Carden to her husband about that time, purporting to be answers to those she received, for in no other way could his suspicions have been lulled. But the proofs of this are missing. I know, however, that when Carden forwarded to Jordan the money to enable his family to proceed to England, that Jordan kept the money for his own uses, making various excuses to his friend to account for the delay of the family in starting.

“His object in this was to work upon the husband the same horrible plot that had succeeded in ruining the life of the wife. He was watching the newspapers again.”

Jordan listened with his bald head thrust eagerly forward. His face was white and terrified.

After several months the opportunity came, for the devil seems to favor his servants at times. The Italian steamer *Victor Chalfante* went down in midocean, in a terrible storm, and Jordan, on receipt of the news, cabled John Carden that his family was on board.

“We may well imagine the agony of the unhappy husband and father when he learned that his wife and children had been so suddenly swept into eternity. Indeed, he wrote one pitiful letter to his old friend that would surely bring tears to the eyes of any honest man. It is here,” touching a bundle of papers with a gesture almost tender. “But Jordan — Jordan the fiend, the worse than murderer — only chuckled gleefully at the success of his plot. John Carden would never return to America now, and Mrs. Carden would

never be able to tell her husband of the new steel mills that had been started in Bingham. Jordan was triumphant, and began to accumulate the fortune which he had so cleverly arranged to steal from his friend.

"He made two mistakes, however. One was that he forgot that there is an Almighty God watching over us all. The other was that he foolishly entrusted all the incriminating papers in his conspiracy to a hollow in an oak tree."

"It's false!" shouted Jordan, now fully beside himself and rising to shake an impotent and trembling fist in Mr. Williams' face. "It's false, and I can prove it. John Carden is dead, and the money is all mine! John Carden is dead, and — "

"John Carden is alive!" cried a clear voice, as the door burst open to admit the speaker. And then John Carden himself strode into the room, followed by his son Will.

"Hurrah!" shouted the doctor, and springing to his feet he dashed at his old friend and actually embraced him in the exuberance of his joy. Chester D. Williams had never seen John Carden before; but the men were not strangers, for all that, since Will had told his father all the details of the great manufacturer's history, and never wearied singing his praises. So in a moment the two men had clasped hands, the beginning of a friendship long to continue.

Jordan, shrinking back against the wall in abject terror at this denouement, made a stealthy effort to escape through the open door, but was halted by the burly form of the commercial traveller in the checked suit, who suddenly occupied the door-way.

"Beg pardon, sir, but there's no hurry," said the fellow, with a grin. "Better stay and see the fun. It's going to be hot in a minute."

Then he retreated and closed the door behind him, and Jordan turned to confront the blazing eyes and sternly set features of the man he had so bitterly wronged.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

WILL'S BEST GIRL

MAN'S justice is helpless to punish adequately such crimes as Ezra Jordan had been guilty of, and John Carden was so grateful for the final restoration of his beloved wife and children that he was not disposed to prosecute legally the false friend who had been responsible for his years of anguish.

"Let us leave this criminal to a Judgment surer and mightier than ours," he said, and the others acquiesced in his decision.

But in the stormy interview that followed Mr. Williams stipulated that Jordan, as a price of his personal freedom, should refund to John Carden every penny of that vast sum of money of which he had so treacherously defrauded him, and although it was worse than death to the miser to disgorge his ill-gotten gains, he was forced to agree to the proposition.

This being settled, Will was called upon for an explanation, and related the strange story of his finding his father in London. Mr. Carden followed with a brief outline of his successful career in Birmingham, where his wonderful process had made for him a great fortune and a respected name.

The conference being now ended, Will and his father hurried away to meet the mother and wife, who was as yet ignorant of the glad surprise awaiting her. For father and son had gone straight to the office of the steel works from the station, delaying only long enough to place Mrs. Williams in the carriage that had been sent to whirl her home to the waiting arms of her eager children.

As for Mr. Jordan, he was turned over to the mercies of the commercial traveller and the little detective in plain clothes, who would see he did not escape until he had fulfilled his obligation of refunding his fortune to John Carden.

When Will and his father neared the cottage the boy went on ahead to prepare his mother for the great surprise, and after she had clasped him in her arms and hugged the boy to her heart's content, (with Flo dancing merrily around and Egbert smiling his pleasure at his brother's return,) he said to her earnestly:

"Mother, Mr. Jordan has been discovered to be a very wicked man."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that," she exclaimed; "what has he done?"

"Why, he's robbed father, for one thing, by stealing his secret and selling it; and besides he tried to make us all believe father was dead."

She gave a sudden cry, at this, and clasped her hands above her heart. Then, reading his face with questioning eyes, she managed to say:

"Speak, Will! What do you mean?"

“Why, father wasn’t lost at sea at all. He’s been in Birmingham all this time.”

She swayed for an instant, as if about to fall. Then, drawing herself tense, she said:

“If this is true, why did he never write to us? Why has he been silent so long?”

“Because Mr. Jordan made him believe we were dead, too, and poor father has been mourning for us all these years.”

“I — I don’t understand,” she murmured, brokenly. “How do you know all this, my son?”

“Father told me. I met him in London, and he came back with me.”

A light seemed to break upon her, glorifying her worn face.

“Where is he, Will?”

“Here!” said a new voice, and John Carden stepped within the door and held out his arms.

She fainted then, which was a very natural thing to do under such trying circumstances; but when she regained consciousness she lay happily within her husband’s close embrace, and now Will seized the staring Flo by one hand and the confused Egbert by the other, and led them softly from the room.

Great was the excitement in Bingham when the news of John Carden’s return flew from lip to lip, together with the dreadful tale of Mr. Jordan’s wickedness. When the latter had made restitution and slunk away to some unknown part of the country, there was none to regret his loss, but many willing to declare they had always mistrusted him. Scores of citizens flocked to congratulate Mr. Carden and his wife, and the poor woman was happier than she had ever been since the days when her handsome and talented husband had first led her to the altar.

The two steel magnates talked over their business complications together, and decided to form a partnership, continuing the manufacture of the Carden Process Steel both in Bingham and in Birmingham, and thus controlling the industry on both sides of the ocean.

And Mrs. Williams gave a big dinner to celebrate this important event, and kissed Mrs. Carden very sweetly when she arrived upon the arm of her distinguished husband. And Nora, so happy that she had to pause frequently to wipe away the tears that gathered in her kindly eyes, quite outdid herself in the preparation of the feast.

“Glory be!” she said to the imperturbable Thomas, “The Cardens, God bless ‘em! have come to their own again.”

Will and Annabel sat side by side at the table, smiling and contented at

being together. Even Reginald was on his good behavior, and Gladys, who had conceived a violent love for her mother since that lady's return, was demure and silent. Flo sat next to Theodore, and Mary Louise was beside Egbert, to whom, being pitiful of his deficiencies, she was very attentive.

Merrier comrades were never seated at one table, and Will was the hero of the hour. Mr. Williams made a neat speech, at dessert, praising the boy so highly that his cheeks grew as red as cherries. Said he:

"We owe to Will the discovery of Mr. Carden — "

"Oh, no," cried Will. "We owe that to Mrs. Williams."

"And the dress suit," added his father, with a smile and a proud glance at his son.

"And we owe to Will the discovery of the papers in the oak tree," continued Mr. Williams.

"Why, that was Annabel!" said Will.

"Anyhow," declared the doctor, who, with his napkin tucked under his chin, was supremely happy, "we owe to Will those famous mushrooms we have just eaten."

"Oh, Doctor!" remonstrated Will. "You're the head of the firm, and I've no doubt you sold them to Nora at a big profit."

They all laughed, then; but they were glad to laugh at the slightest excuse to be merry. And it was an evening they all remembered as long as they lived.

Having made such satisfactory arrangements with Mr. Williams to continue the business at Bingham, Mr. Carden prepared to return to Birmingham, taking with him Mrs. Carden and Flo and Egbert. For the scene of his prosperity was to become his future home. It was arranged that Will should remain in America and attend college, after which he was promised Mr. Jordan's place as secretary at the Bingham mills, in order that he might represent his father's American interests.

"We're going to be partners, some day, my boy," said Mr. Williams, slapping Will's shoulder with characteristic heartiness; "so hurry through college, and get ready for work. And remember that every vacation you are to come straight to my home."

Of course Will was very happy at this prospect; and, because he must enter Princeton in September, he devoted most of the days that remained to him in driving or walking with Annabel.

One afternoon they met the doctor striding down the road with his stout cane in one hand and his medicine case in the other.

He halted before Annabel and Will, scowling dreadfully.

"What's this I hear about your going to college?" he asked the boy.

“It’s true,” said Will, smiling. “I’m afraid, Doctor, I’ll have to give up growing mushrooms.”

“You will, eh? Well, sir, what’s going to become of those poor grandchildren of mine?” growled the doctor.

“If they are ever in need, sir, I’ll agree to support them.”

“In that event, we’ll dissolve partnership,” said the old fellow, less gruffly. Then he added:

“Put out your tongue!”

“What for?” asked Will.

“You’ve got symptoms.”

“Of what?”

“A disease that’s mighty common,” declared the other, with an amused laugh at his own pleasantry; “but one that seldom proves fatal.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” said the boy, with downcast eyes.

Dr. Meigs turned suddenly to Annabel, chucking her playfully underneath her chin before she could draw back.

“Aren’t you in this young lady’s company pretty often these days?”

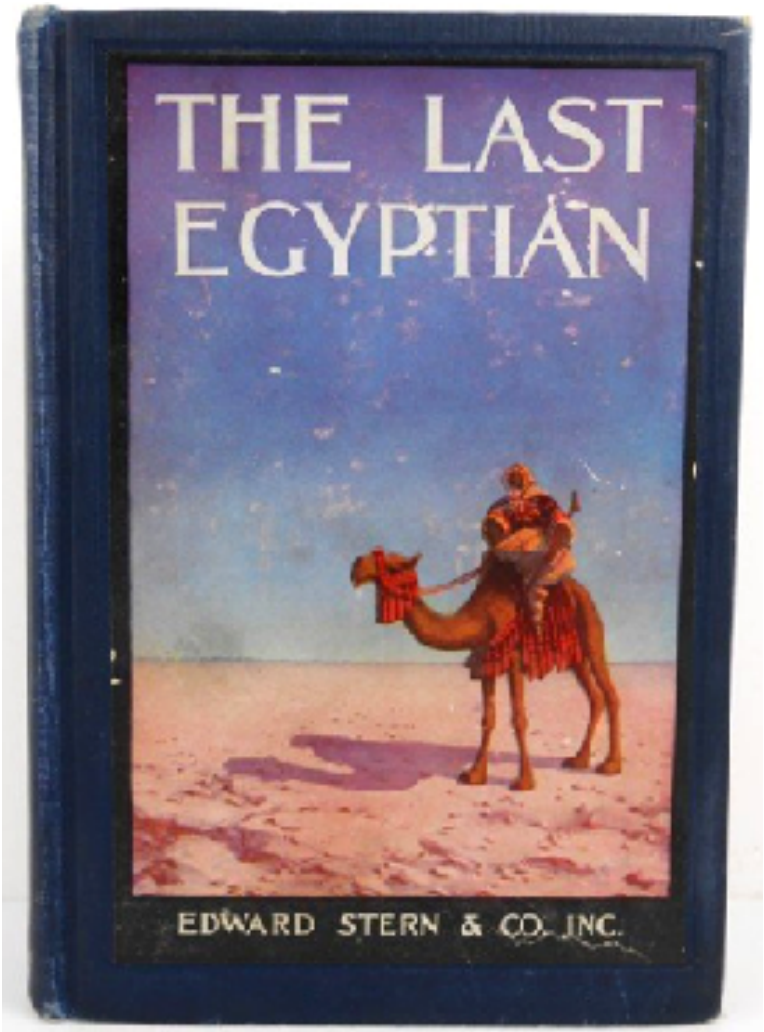
Will straightened perceptibly, plainly showing his confusion. He glanced shyly at Annabel who stood with downcast eyes, her face suffused with blushes, then he blurted out:

“Of course I am. Annabel’s an old chum.”

THE END

THE LAST EGYPTIAN

Baum's final novel intended for an adult audience was *The Last Egyptian*, published anonymously by Edward Stern & Company in 1908, illustrated by Francis P. Wightman. H. Rider Haggard's exotic novels provided inspiration for all of Baum's adventure tales. Three different characters narrate the novel. Gerald Winston Bey is an English Egyptologist, Kara an Egyptian, and Tadros, a dragoman. A complicated plot evolves, featuring, among other things, secrets and revenge, a romance, and vast quantities of gold and rare jewels. Baum used his five week trip to Egypt in 1906 to good effect, providing much local color and detail. In 1914, he adapted the book as a movie under the same title, produced by his own Oz Film Manufacturing Company.



A first edition copy of 'The Last Egyptian'

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CHAPTER I.

WHERE THE DESERT MEETS THE NILE.

The sun fell hot upon the bosom of the Nile and clung there, vibrant, hesitating, yet aggressive, as if baffled in its desire to penetrate beneath the river's lurid surface. For the Nile defies the sun, and relegates him to his own broad domain, wherein his power is undisputed.

On either side the broad stream humanity shrank from Ra's seething disc. The shaduf workers had abandoned their skin-covered buckets and bamboo poles to seek shelter from the heat beneath a straggling tree or a straw mat elevated on stalks of ripe sugarcane. The boats of the fishermen lay in little coves, where the sails were spread as awnings to shade their crews. The fellaheen laborers had all retired to their clay huts to sleep through this fiercest period of the afternoon heat.

On the Nile, however, a small steam dahabeah puffed lazily along, stemming with its slow motion the sweep of the mighty river toward the sea. The Arab stoker, naked and sweating, stood as far as possible from the little boiler and watched it with a look of absolute repulsion upon his swarthy face. The engineer, also an Arab, lay stretched upon the deck half asleep, but with both ears alert to catch any sound that might denote the fact that the straining, rickety engine was failing to perform its full duty. Back of the tiny cabin sat the dusky steersman, as naked and inert as his fellows, while under the deck awning reclined the one white man of the party, a young Englishman clothed in khaki knickerbockers and a white silk shirt well open at the throat.

There were no tourists in Egypt at this season. If you find a white man on the Nile in April, he is either attached to some exploration party engaged in excavations or a government employee from Cairo, Assyut or Luxor, bent upon an urgent mission.

The dahabeah was not a government boat, though, so that our Englishman was more likely to be an explorer than an official. It was evident he was no stranger to tropical climes, if we judged by his sun-browned skin and the quiet resignation to existing conditions with which he puffed his black briar and relaxed his muscular frame. He did not sleep, but lay with his head upon a low wicker rest that enabled him to sweep the banks of the Nile with his keen blue eyes.

The three Arabs regarded their master from time to time with stealthy glances, in which wonder was mingled with a certain respect. The foreigner was a fool to travel during the heat of the day; no doubt of that at all. The native knows when to work and when to sleep — a lesson the European

never learns. Yet this was no casual adventurer exploiting his folly, but a man who had lived among them for years, who spoke Arabic fluently and could even cipher those hieroglyphics of the dead ages which abound throughout modem Egypt Hassan, Abdallah and Ali knew this well, for they had accompanied Winston Bey on former expeditions, and heard him translate the ugly signs graven upon the ugly stones into excellent Arabic. It was all very wonderful in its way, but quite useless and impractical, if their opinion were allowed. And the master himself was impractical. He did foolish things at all times, and sacrificed his own comfort and that of his servants in order to accomplish unnecessary objects. Had he not paid well for his whims, Winston Bey might have sought followers in vain; but the Arab will even roast himself upon the Nile on an April afternoon to obtain the much-coveted gold of the European.

At four o'clock a slight breeze arose; but what matter? The journey was nearly done now. They had rounded a curve in the river, and ahead of them, lying close to the east bank, were the low mountains of Gebel Abu Fedah. At the south, where the rocks ended abruptly, lay a small grove of palms. Between the palms and the mountains was the beaten path leading from the Nile to the village of Al-Kusiyeh, a mile or so inland, which was the particular place the master had come so far and so fast to visit.

The breeze, although hardly felt, served to refresh the enervated travelers. Winston sat up and knocked the ashes from his pipe, making a careful scrutiny at the same time of the lifeless landscape ahead.

The mountains of gray limestone looked very uninviting as they lay reeking under the terrible heat of the sun. From their base to the river was no sign of vegetation, but only a hardened clay surface. The desert sands had drifted in in places. Even under the palms it lay in heavy drifts, for the land between the Nile and Al-Kusiyeh was abandoned to nature, and the fellaheen had never cared to redeem it.

The water was deep by the east bank, for the curve of the river swept the current close to the shore. The little dahabeah puffed noisily up to the bank and deposited the Englishman upon the hard clay. Then it backed across into shallow water, and Hassan shut down the engine while Abdallah dropped the anchor.

Winston now wore his cork helmet and carried a brown umbrella lined with green. With all his energy, the transition from the deck of the dahabeah to this oven-like atmosphere of the shore bade fair to overcome his resolution to proceed to the village.

But it would never do to recall his men so soon. They would consider it an acknowledgment that he had erred in judgment, and the only way to manage

an Arab is to make him believe you know what you are about. The palm trees were not far away. He would rest in their shade until the sun was lower.

A dozen steps and the perspiration started from every pore. But he kept on, doggedly, until he came to the oblong shadow cast by the first palm, and there he squatted in the sand and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

The silence was oppressive. There was no sound of any kind to relieve it. Even the beetles were hidden far tinder the sand, and there was no habitation near enough for a donkey's bray or a camel's harsh growl to be heard. The Nile flows quietly at this point, and the boat had ceased to puff and rattle its machinery.

Winston brushed aside the top layer of sand with his hands, for that upon the surface was so hot that contact with it was unbearable. Then he extended his body to rest, turning slightly this way and that to catch in his face the faint breath of the breeze that passed between the mountains and the Nile. At the best he was doomed to an uncomfortable hour or two, and he cast longing glances at the other bits of shade to note whether any seemed more inviting than the one he had selected.

During this inspection his eye caught a patch of white some distance away. It was directly over the shadow of the furthest tree of the group, and aroused his curiosity. After a minute he arose in a leisurely fashion and walked over to the spot of white, which on nearer approach proved to be a soiled cotton tunic or burnous. It lay half buried in the sand, and at one end were the folds of a dirty turban, with faded red and yellow stripes running across the coarse cloth.

Winston put his foot on the burnous and the thing stirred and emitted a muffled growl. At that he kicked the form viciously; but now it neither stirred nor made a sound. Instead, a narrow slit appeared between the folds of the turban, and an eye, black and glistening, looked steadfastly upon the intruder.

"Do you take me for a beast, you imbecile, that you dare to disturb my slumbers?" asked a calm voice, in Arabic.

The heat had made Winston Bey impatient.

"Yes; you are a dog. Get up!" he commanded, kicking the form again.

The turban was removed, disclosing a face, and the man sat up, crossing his bare legs beneath him as he stared fixedly at his persecutor.

Aside from the coarse burnous, sadly discolored in many places, the fellow was unclothed. His skin showed at the breast and below his knees, and did not convey an impression of immaculate cleanliness. Of slender build, with broad shoulders, long hands and feet and sinewy arms and legs, the form disclosed was curiously like those so often presented in the picture-writing upon the walls of ancient temples. His forehead was high, his chin

square, his eyes large and soft, his cheeks full, his mouth wide and sensual, his nose short and rounded. His jaws protruded slightly and his hair was smooth and fine. In color the tint of his skin was not darker than the tanned cuticle of the Englishman, but the brown was softer, and resembled coffee that has been plentifully diluted with cream. A handsome fellow in his way, with an expression rather unconcerned than dignified, which masked a countenance calculated to baffle even a shrewder and more experienced observer than Winston Bey.

Said the Englishman, looking at him closely:

"You are a Copt."

Inadvertently he had spoken in his mother tongue and the man laughed.

"If you follow the common prejudice and consider every Copt a Christian," he returned in purest English, "then I am no Copt; but if you mean that I am an Egyptian, and no dog of an Arab, then, indeed, you are correct in your estimate."

Winston uttered an involuntary exclamation of surprise. For a native to speak English is not so unusual; but none that he knew expressed himself with the same ease and confidence indicated in this man's reply. He brushed away some of the superheated sand and sat down facing his new acquaintance.

"Perhaps," said he — a touch of sarcasm in his voice — "I am speaking with a descendant of the Great Rameses himself."

"Better than that," rejoined the other, coolly. "My forefather was Ahtka-Rā, of true royal blood, who ruled the second Rameses as cleverly as that foolish monarch imagined he ruled the Egyptians."

Winston seemed amused.

"I regret," said he, with mock politeness, "that I have never before heard of your great forefather."

"But why should you?" asked the Egyptian. "You are, I suppose, one of those uneasy investigators that prowl through Egypt in a stupid endeavor to decipher the inscriptions on the old temples and tombs. You can read a little — yes; but that little puzzles and confuses you. Your most learned scholars — your Mariettes and Petries and Masperos — discover one clue and guess at twenty, and so build up a wonderful history of the ancient kings that is absurd to those who know the true records."

"Who knows them?" asked Winston, quickly.

The man dropped his eyes.

"No one, perhaps," he mumbled. "At the best, but one or two. But you would know more if you first studied the language of the ancient Egyptians, so that when you deciphered the signs and picture writings you could tell

with some degree of certainty what they meant."

Winston sniffed. "Answer my question!" said he, sternly. "Who knows the true records, and where are they?"

"Ah, I am very ignorant," said the other, shaking his head with an humble expression. "Who am I, the poor Kāra, to dispute with the scholars of Europe?"

The Englishman fanned himself with his helmet and sat silent for a time.

"But this ancestor of yours — the man who ruled the Great Rameses — who was he?" he asked, presently.

"Men called him Ahtka-Rā, as I said. He was descended from the famous Queen Hatshepset, and his blood was pure. Indeed, my ancestor should have ruled Egypt as its king, had not the first Rameses overthrown the line of Mènes and established a dynasty of his own. But Ahtka-Rā, unable to rule in his own name, nevertheless ruled through the weak Rameses, under whom he bore the titles of High Priest of Amen, Lord of the Harvests and Chief Treasurer. All of the kingdom he controlled and managed, sending Rameses to wars to keep him occupied, and then, when the king returned, setting him to build temples and palaces, and to erect monuments to himself, that he might have no excuse to interfere with the real business of the government. You, therefore, who read the inscriptions of the vain king wonder at his power and call him great; and, in your ignorance, you know not even the name of Ahtka-Rā, the most wonderful ruler that Egypt has ever known."

"It is true that we do not know him," returned Winston, scrutinizing the man before him with a puzzled expression. "You seem better informed than the Egyptologists!"

Kāra dipped his hands into the sand beside him and let the grains slip between his fingers, watching them thoughtfully.

"Rameses the Second," said he, "reigned sixty-five years, and — "

"Sixty-seven years," corrected Winston. "It is written."

"In the inscriptions, which are false," explained the Egyptian. "My ancestor concealed the death of Rameses for two years, because Meremptah, who would succeed him, was a deadly enemy. But Meremptah discovered the secret at last, and at once killed Ahtka-Rā, who was very old and unable to oppose him longer. And after that the treasure cities of Pithom and Raamses, which my ancestor had built, were seized by the new king, but no treasures were found in them. Even in death my great ancestor was able to deceive and humble his enemies."

"Listen, Kāra," said Winston, his voice trembling with suppressed eagerness; "to know that which you have told to me means that you have discovered some sort of record hitherto unknown to scientists. To us who are

striving to unravel the mystery of ancient Egyptian history this information will be invaluable. Let me share your knowledge, and tell me what you require in exchange for your secret. You are poor; I will make you rich. You are unknown; I will make the name of Kāra famous. You are young; you shall enjoy life. Speak, my brother, and believe that I will deal justly by you — on the word of an Englishman."

The Egyptian did not even look up, but continued playing with the sand. Yet over his grave features a smile slowly spread.

"It is not five minutes," he murmured softly, "since I was twice kicked and called a dog. Now I am the Englishman's brother, and he will make me rich and famous."

Winston frowned, as if he would like to kick the fellow again. But he resisted the temptation.

"What would you?" he asked, indifferently. "The burnous might mean an Arab. It is good for the Arab to be kicked at times."

Possibly Kāra neither saw the jest nor understood the apology. His unreadable countenance was still turned toward the sand, and he answered nothing.

The Englishman moved uneasily. Then he extracted a cigarette case from his pocket, opened it, and extended it toward the Egyptian.

Kāra looked at the cigarettes and his face bore the first expression of interest it had yet shown. Very deliberately he bowed, touched his forehead and then his heart with his right hand, and afterward leaned forward and calmly selected a cigarette.

Winston produced a match and lighted it, the Egyptian's eyes seriously following his every motion. He applied the light to his own cigarette first; then to that of Kāra. Another touch of the forehead and breast and the native was luxuriously inhaling the smoke of the tobacco. His eyes were brighter and he wore a look of great content.

The Englishman silently watched until the other had taken his third whiff; then, the ceremonial being completed, he spoke, choosing his words carefully.

"Seek as we may, my brother, for the records of the dead civilization of your native land, we know full well that the most important documents will be discovered in the future, as in the past, by the modem Egyptians themselves. Your traditions, handed down through many generations, give to you a secret knowledge of where the important papyri and tablets are deposited. If there are hidden tombs in Gebel Abu Fedah, or near the city of Al-Kusiyeh, perhaps you know where to find them; and if so, we will open them together and profit equally by what we secure."

The Egyptian shook his head and flicked the ash from his cigarette with an annoyed gesture.

"You are wrong in estimating the source of my knowledge," said he, in a tone that was slightly acrimonious. "Look at my rags," spreading his arms outward; "would I refuse your bribe if I knew how to earn it? I have not smoked a cigarette before in months — not since Tadros the dragoman came to Al Fedah in the winter. I am barefoot, because I fear to wear out my sandals until I know how to replace them. Often I am hungry, and I live like a jackal, shrinking from all intercourse with my fellows or with the world. That is Kāra, the son of kings, the royal one!" Winston was astonished. It is seldom a native complains of his lot or resents his condition, however lowly it may be. Yet here was one absolutely rebellious.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because my high birth isolates me," was the reply, with an accent of pride. "It is no comfortable thing to be Kāra, the lineal descendant of the great Ahtka-Rā, in the days when Egypt's power is gone, and her children are scorned by the Arab Muslims and buffeted by the English Christians."

"Do you live in the village?" asked Winston.

"No; my burrow is in a huddle of huts behind the mountain, in a place that is called Fedah."

"With whom do you live?"

"My grandmother, Hatatcha."

"Ah!"

"You have heard of her?"

"No; I was thinking only of an Egyptian Princess Hatatcha who set fashionable London crazy in my father's time."

Kāra leaned forward eagerly, and then cast a half fearful glance around, at the mountains, the desert, and the Nile.

"Tell me about her!" he said, sinking his voice to a whisper.

"About the Princess?" asked Winston, surprised. "Really, I know little of her history. She came in a flash of wonderful oriental magnificence, I have heard, and soon had the nobility of England suing for her favors. Lord Roane especially divorced his wife that he might marry the beautiful Egyptian; and then she refused to wed with him. There were scandals in plenty before Hatatcha disappeared from London, which she did as mysteriously as she had come, and without a day's warning. I remember that certain infatuated admirers spent fortunes in search of her, overrunning all Egypt, but without avail. No one has ever heard of her since."

Kāra drew a deep breath, sighing softly.

"It was like my grandmother," he murmured. "She was always a daughter

of Set."

Winston stared at him.

"Do you mean to say — " he began.

"Yes," whispered Kāra, casting another frightened look around; "it was my grandmother, Hatatcha, who did that. You must not tell, my brother, for she is still in league with the devils and would destroy us both if she came to hate us. Her daughter, who was my mother, was the child of that same Lord Roane you have mentioned; but she never knew her father nor England. I myself have never been a day's journey from the Nile, for Hatatcha makes me her slave."

"She must be very old, if she still lives," said Winston, musingly.

"She was seventeen when she went to London," replied Kāra, "and she returned here in three years, with my mother in her arms. Her daughter was thirty-five when I was born, and that is twenty-three years ago. Fifty-eight is not an advanced age, yet Hatatcha was a withered hag when first I remember her, and she is the same to-day. By the head of Osiris, my brother, she is likely to live until I am stiff in my tomb."

"It was she who taught you to speak English?"

"Yes. I knew it when I was a baby, for in our private converse she has always used the English tongue. Also I speak the ancient Egyptian language, which you call the Coptic, and I read correctly the hieroglyphics and picture-writings of my ancestors. The Arabic, of course, I know. Hatatcha has been a careful teacher."

"What of your mother?" asked Winston.

"Why, she ran away when I was a child, to enter the harem of an Arab in Cairo, so that she passed out of our lives, and I have lived with my grandmother always."

"I am impressed by the fact," said the Englishman, with a sneer, "that your royal blood is not so pure after all."

"And why not?" returned Kāra, composedly. "Is it not from the mother we descend? Who my grandfather may have been matters little, provided Hatatcha, the royal one, is my granddame. Perhaps my mother never considered who my father might be; it was unimportant. From her I drew the blood of the great Ahtka-Rā, who lives again in me. Robbed of your hollow ceremonial of marriage, you people of Europe can boast no true descent save through your mothers — no purer blood than I, ignoring my fathers, am sure now courses in my veins; for the father, giving so little to his progeny, can scarcely contaminate it, whatever he may chance to be."

The other, paying little heed to this discourse, the platitudes of which were all too familiar to his ears, reflected deeply on the strange discovery he

had made through this unconventional Egyptian.

"Then," said he, pursuing his train of thought, "your knowledge of your ancestry and the life and works of Ahtka-Rā was obtained through your grandmother?"

"Yes."

"And she has not disclosed to you how it is that she knows all this?"

"No. She says it is true, and I believe it. Hatatcha is a wonderful woman."

"I agree with you. Where did she get the money that enabled her to amaze all England with her magnificence and splendor?"

"I do not know."

"Is she wealthy now?"

Kāra laughed.

"Did I not say we were half starved, and live like foxes in a hole? For raiment we have each one ragged garment. But the outside of man matters little, save to those who have nothing within. Treasures may be kept in a rotten chest."

"But personally you would prefer a handsome casket?"

"Of course. It is Hatatcha who teaches me philosophy to make me forget my rags."

The Englishman reflected.

"Do you labor in the fields?" he asked.

"She will not let me," said Kāra. "If my wrongs were righted, she holds, I would even now be king of Egypt. The certainty that they will never be righted does not alter the morale of the case."

"Does Hatatcha earn money herself?"

"She sits in her hut morning and night, muttering curses upon her enemies."

"Then how do you live at all?"

Kāra seemed surprised by the question, and considered carefully his reply.

"At times," said he, "when our needs are greatest, my grandmother will produce an ancient coin of the reign of Hystaspes, which the sheik at Al-Kusiyeh readily changes into piasters, because they will give him a good premium on it at the museum in Cairo. Once, years ago, the sheik threatened Hatatcha unless she confessed where she had found these coins; but my grandmother called Set to her aid, and cast a spell upon the sheik, so that his camels died of rot and his children became blind. After that he let Hatatcha alone, but he was still glad to get her coins."

"Where does she keep them?"

"It is her secret. When she was ill, a month ago, and lay like one dead, I searched everywhere for treasure andfound it not. Perhaps she has exhausted

her store."

"Had she anything besides the coins?"

"Once a jewel, which she sent by Tadros, the dragoman, to exchange for English books in Cairo."

"What became of the books?"

"After we had both read them they disappeared. I do not know what became of them."

They had shifted their seats twice, because the shadow cast by the palms moved as the sun drew nearer to the horizon. Now the patches were long and narrow, and there was a cooler breath in the air.

The Englishman sat long silent, thinking intently. Kāra was placidly smoking his third cigarette.

The rivalry among excavators and Egyptologists generally is intense. All are eager to be recognized as discoverers. Since the lucky find of the plucky American, Davis, the explorers among the ancient ruins of Egypt had been on the qui vive to unearth some farther record of antiquity to startle and interest the scholars of the world. Much of value has been found along the Nile banks, it is true; but it is generally believed that much more remains to be discovered.

Gerald Winston, with a fortune at his command and a passion for Egyptology, was an indefatigable prospector in this fascinating field, and it was because of a rumor that ancient coins and jewels had come from the Sheik of Al-Kusiyeh that he had resolved to visit that village in person and endeavor to learn the secret source of this wealth before someone else forestalled him.

The story that he had just heard from the lips of the voluble Kāra rendered his visit to Al-Kusiyeh unnecessary; but that he was now on the trail of an important discovery was quite clear to him. How best to master the delicate conditions confronting him must be a subject of careful consideration, for any mistake on his part would ruin all his hopes.

"If my brother obtains any further valuable knowledge," said he, finally, "he will wish to sell it to good advantage. And it is evident to both of us that old Hatatcha has visited some secret tomb, from whence she has taken the treasure that enabled her to astound London for a brief period. When her wealth was exhausted she was forced to return to her squalid surroundings, and by dint of strict economy has lived upon the few coins that remained to her until now. Knowing part of your grandmother's story, it is easy to guess the remainder. The coins of Darius Hystaspes date about five hundred years before Christ, so that they would not account for Hatatcha's ample knowledge of a period two thousand years earlier. But mark me, Kāra, the

tomb from which your grandmother extracted such treasure must of necessity contain much else — not such things as the old woman could dispose of without suspicion, but records and relics which in my hands would be invaluable, and for which I would gladly pay you thousands of piasters. See what you can do to aid me to bring about this desirable result. If you can manage to win the secret from your grandmother, you need be her slave no longer. You may go to Cairo and see the dancing girls and spend your money freely; or you can buy donkeys and a camel, and set up for a sheik. Meantime I will keep my dahabeah in this vicinity, and every day I will pass this spot at sundown and await for you to signal me. Is it all clear to you, my brother?"

"It is as crystal," answered the Egyptian gravely.

He took another cigarette, lighted it with graceful composure, and rose to his feet. Winston also stood up.

The sun had dropped behind the far comer of Gebel Abu Fedah, and with the grateful shade the breeze had freshened and slightly cooled the tepid atmosphere.

Wrapping his burnous around his tall figure, Kāra made dignified obeisance.

"Osiris guard thee, my brother," said he.

"May Horus grant thee peace," answered Winston, humoring this disciple of the most ancient religion. Then he watched the Egyptian stalk proudly away over the hot sands, his figure erect, his step slow and methodical, his bearing absurdly dignified when contrasted with his dirty tunic and unwashed skin.

"I am in luck," he thought, turning toward the bank to summon Hassan and Abdallah; "for I have aroused the rascal's cupidity, and he will soon turn up something or other, I'll be bound. Ugh! the dirty beast."

At the foot of the mountains Kāra paused abruptly and stood motionless, staring moodily at the sands before him.

"It was worth the bother to get the cigarettes," he muttered. Then he added, with sudden fierceness: "Twice he spurned me with his foot, and called me 'dog'!"

And he spat in the sand and continued on his way.

CHAPTER II.

HATATCHA.

The mountains of Abu Fedah consist of a low range about twelve miles long and from two to three hundred feet in height. These hills are wedge-shaped, and from a narrow, uneven ridge at the summit the sides slope downward at a sharp angle on either side, affording little apparent foothold to one who might essay to climb the steeps. At the south end are pits wherein were found numbers of mummified crocodiles, proving that these reptiles were formerly worshipped by the natives of Al-Kusiyeh, which is the ancient city of Qes of the hieroglyphic texts, and was afterward called Cusae by the Greeks. It was, in its prime, the capital of the fourteenth nome or province of Upper Egypt, and a favorite winter abode of the kings of the Middle Empire. The modem village, as before explained, lies a mile or two from the Nile bank, in a fertile valley watered by bubbling springs. The inhabitants are mostly Arabs, or a mixture of the Arab blood with that of the native fellaheen, which last, in common with the Copts, are direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians.

The early Egyptologists expected to find important tombs secreted in the limestone cliffs of Gebel Abu Fedah; but careful search only revealed the mummy crocodile pits and a few scattering and uninteresting cavities roughly hewn in the rocks, which might have contained mummies at one time, but had been rifled of their contents ages ago. The few inscriptions remaining in these rock tombs indicated that they were the burial places of ordinary citizens of Qes, and such cavities as were observed all faced the Nile. The opposite slopes of the mountains, facing the east, seemed never to have been utilized for tombs, fond as the Egyptians were of such opportunities to inter their dead in rocky places, above the reach of jackals or marauders.

Kāra skirted the south end of the mountain and passed around the edge of a bleak gray cliff. Here, close against the overhanging sandstone, was clustered a nest of wretched hovels, built partially of loose fragments of rock and partly of Nile mud baked in the sun. The place was called Fedah by the natives, and its scant dozen of inhabitants were those of pure Egyptian lineage, who refused to mingle with the natives of Al-Kusiyeh.

The most substantial of the dwellings was that occupied by Hatatcha and her grandson. It had been built against a hollow or cave of the mountain, so that the cane roof projected only a few feet beyond the cliff. A rude attempt on the part of the builders to make the front wall symmetrical was indicated by the fact that the stones bore quarry marks, and at the entrance arch, which had never been supplied with a door, but was half concealed by a woven mat,

the stones were fully four feet in thickness.

The other huts, ranged beside and before this one, were far less imposing in construction; but all had the appearance of great antiquity, and those at the north and south edges of the huddle were unoccupied and more or less ruined and neglected. Tradition said that Fedah, in spite of its modem Arabic name, was as old as ancient Qes, and there was no reason to doubt the statement. Its location was admirable in summer, for the mountain shaded it during the long hot afternoons; but around it was nothing but sand and rock, and the desert stretched in front as far as the borders of Al-Kusiyeh.

Kāra, entering the short and narrow street between the hovels, pushed a goat from his path and proceeded calmly toward his dwelling. As he entered its one room, he paused to allow his eyes to grow accustomed to the gloom and then gazed around with an expression of mild surprise.

In one comer, upon a bed of dried rushes, lay the form of an old woman. Her single black cotton garment was open at the throat, displaying a wrinkled, shrunken bosom that rose and fell spasmodically, as if the hag breathed with great effort. Her eyes were closed and the scant, tousled locks of fine gray hair surrounding her face gave it a weird and witch-like expression. In spite of her age and the clime in which she had lived, Hatatcha's skin was almost as white as that of Europeans, its tint being so delicate as to be scarcely noticeable.

Upon a short wooden bench beside the rushes sat a girl with a palm branch, which she swayed back and forth to keep the flies from settling upon Hatatcha's face. She was, perhaps, fifteen years of age, but as fully matured in form as an English girl of twenty-five. Her face was remarkably handsome from the standpoint of regularity of contour, but its absolute lack of expression would render it uninviting to a connoisseur of beauty. Her dark eyes were magnificent, and seemed to have depths which were disappointing when you probed them. She wore the conventional black gown, or tunic, but because of the heat had allowed it to slip down to her waist, leaving her shoulders and breasts bare.

After a long and thoughtful look at his grandmother, Kāra sat down beside the girl and put his arm around her, drawing her close to his body. She neither resented the caress nor responded to it, but yielded herself inertly to the embrace while she continued to sway the palm branch with her free right arm.

"Ah, my Nephthys," said the man, lightly, in the Coptic tongue, "is our Hatatcha in the grip of the devils again?"

The girl made no reply, but at the sound of Kāra's voice the old woman opened her great eyes and gazed for an instant steadfastly upon her grandson.

Her hands, which had been nervously clutching her robe, were raised in supplication, and she said in English, in a weak, hoarse voice:

"The draught, Kāra! Be quick I"

The man hesitated, but released the girl and stood up.

"It is the last, my Hatatcha. You know that no more can be procured," he said, in protest.

"I shall need no more," she answered, with much difficulty. "It is the last time. Be quick, Kāra!" Her voice died away in an odd gurgle, and her chest fluttered as if the breath was about to leave it.

Kāra, watching her curiously, as a dog might, was impressed by the symptoms. He turned to Nephthys.

"Go out," he commanded, in Coptic, and the girl arose and passed under the arch.

Then he went to a part of the wall and removed a loose stone, displaying a secret cavity. From this he took a small vase, smooth and black, which had a stopper of dull metal. Carrying it to Hatatcha, he knelt down, removed the stopper and placed the neck of the vase to her lips. The delicate, talon-like fingers clutched the vessel eagerly and the woman drank, while Kāra followed the course of the liquid down her gullet by watching her skinny throat.

When it was done, he carried the empty vase back to the crypt and replaced the loose stone. Then he returned to the bedside and sat down upon the bench. A bowl containing some bits of bread stood near. He stooped and caught a piece in his fingers, munching it between his strong teeth while he stared down upon Hatatcha's motionless form.

It was quite dark in the room by this time, for twilights are short in Egypt. But the pupils of the man's eyes expanded like those of a cat, and he could follow the slow rise and fall of the woman's chest and knew she was again breathing easily.

An hour passed, during which Kāra moved but once, to drink from a jar standing in the opposite comer. Hatatcha's condition disturbed him. If she died, he would be at a loss what to do. Unused to work and without resource of any sort, life would become a burden to him. He was, moreover, accustomed to be led by the strong old woman in all things, and she had been the provider during all the twenty-three years of his life. Kāra had been trained to think deeply upon many subjects, but here was one which had never occurred to him before because Hatatcha had never discussed it, and the matter of her death was until lately a thing that did not need to be considered. But her condition was serious to-night, and the precious life-giving elixir was gone to the last drop.

All the people around Abu Fedah deferred to Hatatcha, because she claimed, with some show of reason, to be of royal descent. But they did not know the story of Ahtka-Rā, and her escapades in London years ago were all unsuspected by them. Hatatcha only confided such things to Kāra, and he would never dare breathe them to any except the Englishman, from whose lips the tales would never be liable to return.

But there was a great deal that Kāra himself did not know, and he realized this as he gazed uneasily upon his sick grandparent. She ought to tell him where the coins and jewels had come from, and if there were any left. He would need some trifles of that sort when she was gone. And the matter of her funeral — she had expressed strange desires, at times, regarding the disposition of her body after death. How was he to find means to carry out such desires?

A voice, low and clear, fell upon his ear and made him start. Hatatcha's big eyes were open and he caught their sparkle even in the darkness.

"Come nearer," she said.

He dropped upon the floor at her side and sat cross-legged near her head, bending over to catch her slightest whisper. She spoke in English to him.

"Anubis calls me, my son, and I must join his kingdom. My years are not great, but they have worn out my body with love and hatreds and plans of vengeance. You are my successor, and the inheritor of my treasures and my revenge and hates. The time is come when you must repay my care and perform a mission for which I have trained you since childhood. Promise me that you will fulfil my every wish to the letter!"

"Of necessity, Hatatcha," he responded, calmly. "Are you not my grandmother?"

She remained silent a moment.

"You are cold, and selfish and cruel," she resumed, her tone hardening, "and I have made you so. You are intelligent, and fearless, and strong. It is due to my training. Listen, then! Once I was young and beautiful and loving, and when I faced the world it fell at my feet in adoration. But one who claimed to be a man crushed all the joy and love from my heart, and left me desolate and broken. Like a spumed hind, I crept from the glare of palaces back to my mud hut, bearing my child in my arms, and here I mourned and suffered for years and found no comfort. Then the love that had destroyed my peace fell away, and in its place Set planted the seeds of vengeance. These I have cherished, and lo! a tree has sprouted and grown, of which you, my son, are the stalwart trunk. The fruit has been long maturing, but it is now ripe. Presently you, too, will face the world; but as a man — not like the weak woman I was — and you will accomplish my revenge. Is it not so, my

Kāra?”

“If you say it, my Hatatcha, it is so,” he answered. But he wondered.

“Then pay close attention to my words,” she continued, “and store them carefully in your mind, that nothing shall be forgotten when it is needed to assist you. I will explain all things while I have the strength of the elixir, for when it leaves me my breath will go with it, and then your labors will begin.”

Kāra leaned still* lower. For once his heart beat faster than was its custom, and he felt a thrill of excitement pervading his entire being. The climax in his life had at last arrived, and he was about to discover what things he was destined to accomplish in the great unknown world.

Hour after hour Hatatcha’s low voice continued to instruct her grandson. Occasionally she would question him, to be sure that he understood, and several names she made him repeat many times, until they were indelibly impressed upon his memory.

At last she took the forefinger of his right hand and with it made a mystic sign upon her naked breast, making him repeat after her a dreadful oath to obey her instructions in every way and keep forever certain grave secrets.

Then she fell back and lay still.

Daybreak came in time, and a streak of light crept under the arch and touched the group in the comer.

The aged hag, filthy and unkempt, lay dead upon her couch of rushes, and beside her sat Kāra, his face immobile, his eyes staring fixedly at the opposite wall.

He was thinking.

CHAPTER III.

THE DRAGOMAN.

Nephthys came from her mother's hut in the cool of early morning, bearing on her head an earthen jar. She was bound for the river, to carry from thence their daily supply of water.

As she passed Hatatcha's dwelling she found Kāra standing in the archway, and he drew the girl toward him and kissed her lips. They were cold and unresponsive.

"How is your grandmother?" she asked, indifferently.

"She is with Isis," he answered, holding her arm with one hand and feeling her brown cheek with the other.

The girl shuddered and glanced askance at the arch.

"Let me go," she said.

Instead, he folded an arm around her and kissed her again, while she put up a hand to steady the jar from falling.

Then Kāra experienced a sudden surprise. His body spun around like a top and was hurled with force against the opposite wall. At the same time the jar toppled from Nephthys' head and was shattered on the ground. The girl staggered back and leaned against the stones of the arch, staring at the path ahead.

In front of her stood a young man most gorgeously arrayed. A red fez, such as many wear in Egypt, was perched jauntily upon his head. Covering his breast was a blue satin jacket elaborately braided with silver, and where it parted in front a vest of white silk showed, with a line of bright silver buttons. His knee breeches were of saffron pongee, wide and flowing, like those of a Turk, and from there down to his yellow slippers his legs were bare. Add a voluminous sash of crimson silk and a flowing mantle suspended from his shoulders, and you can guess the splendor of the man's attire.

His person was short and inclined to stoutness, and his face, with its carefully curled black mustache, was remarkably regular and handsome. His eyes were nearly as large and black as Kāra's, and at the present moment they flashed fire, while an angry frown distorted his brow. He stood with his legs spread apart and his hands pressed upon his hips, regarding the girl with a glance of sullen fury.

Nephthys returned the look with one of stupor. Her face was quite as expressionless as before, but her nostrils dilated a little, as if she were afraid.

"Tadros!" she muttered.

Kāra lifted his tall form from the ground and stood scowling upon his assailant.

“The cursed dragoman again!” he exclaimed, with bitterness.

Tadros turned his head slightly to direct a look of scorn upon his enemy. Then he regarded the girl again.

“What of your promise to me, woman?” he demanded, sternly. “Are you the plaything of every dirty Egyptian when my back is turned?”

Nephthys had no reply. She looked at the pattern of the silver braid upon his jacket and followed carefully its curves and twists. The blue satin was the color of lapis lazuli, she thought, and the costume must have cost a lot of money — perhaps as much as fifty piasters.

“Your mother shall answer for this perfidy,” continued the dragoman, in Arabic. “If I am to be toyed with and befooled, I will have my betrothal money back — every piaster of it!”

The girl’s eyes dropped to her feet and examined the fragments of the jar.

“It is broken!” she said, with a wailing accent.

“Bah! there are more at Keneh,” he returned, kicking away a bit of the earthenware. “It will cost old Sĕra more than the jar if she does not rule you better. Come!”

He waved his hand pompously and strutted past her to the door of her mother’s hut, paying no heed to the evil looks of Kāra, who still stood motionless in his place.

The girl followed, meek and obedient.

They entered a square room lighted by two holes in the mud walls. The furniture was rude and scanty, and the beds were rushes from the Nile. A black goat that had a white spot over its left eye stood ruminating with its head out of one of the holes.

A little withered woman with an erect form and a pleasant face met Tadros, the dragoman, just within the doorway.

“Welcome!” she said, crossing her arms upon her breast and bending her head until she was nearly double.

“Peace to this house,” returned Tadros, carelessly, and threw himself upon a bench.

Sĕra squatted upon the earthen floor and looked with pride and satisfaction at the dragoman’s costume.

“You are a great man, my Tadros,” she said, “and you must be getting rich. We are honored by your splendid presence. Gaze upon your affianced bride, O Dragoman! Is she not getting fat and soft in flesh, and fit to grace your most select harem?”

“I must talk to you about Nephthys,” said the dragoman, lighting a cigarette. “She is too free with these dirty Fedahs, and especially with that beast Kāra.” His tone had grown even and composed by this time, and his

face had lost its look of anger.

"What would you have?" asked old Sĕra, deprecatingly. "The girl must carry water and help me with the work until you take her away with you. I cannot keep her secluded like a princess. And there are no men in Fedah except old Nikko, who is blind, and young Kāra, who is not."

"It is Kāra who annoys me," said Tadros, puffing his cigarette lazily.

"Kāra! But he is the royal one. You know that well enough. The descendant of the ancient kings has certain liberties, and therefore takes others, and he merely indulges in a kiss now and then. I have watched him, and it does not worry me."

"The royal one!" repeated the dragoman scornfully. "How do we know old Hatatcha's tales are true?"

"They must be true," returned Sĕra, positively. "My mother served Hatatcha's mother, because she was the daughter of kings. For generations the ancestors of Kāra have been revered by those who were Egyptians, although their throne is a dream of the past, and they are condemned to live in poverty. Be reasonable, my Tadros! Your own blood is as pure as ours, even though it is not royal. What! shall we Egyptians forget our dignity and rub skins with the English dogs or the pagan Arabs?"

"The Arabs are not so bad," said Tadros, thoughtfully. "They have many sensible customs, which we are bound to accept; for these Muslims overrun our country and are here to stay. Nor are the simple English to be sneered at, my Sĕra. I know them well, and also their allies, the Americans and the Germans and French. They travel far to see Cairo and our Nile, and drop golden sovereigns into my pockets because I guide them to the monuments and explain their history, and at the same time keep the clever Arabs from robbing them until after I am paid. Yes; all people have their uses, believe me."

"Ah, you are wonderful!" ejaculated the old woman, with earnest conviction.

"I am dragoman," returned the man, proudly, "and my name is known from Cairo to Khartoum." He tossed a cigarette at Sĕra, who caught it deftly and put it between her lips. Then he graciously allowed her to obtain a light from his own cigarette.

Meantime, Nephthys, on entering the hut behind Tadros, had walked to the further side of the room and lifted the lid of a rude chest, rough hewn from eucalyptus wood. From this she drew a bundle, afterward closing the lid and spreading the contents of the bundle upon the chest. Then she turned her back to the others, unfastened her dusty black gown, and allowed it to fall to her hips. Over her head she dropped a white tunic, and afterward a robe of

coarse gauze covered thickly with cheap spangles. She now stepped out of the black gown and hung it upon a peg. A broad gilt belt was next clasped around her waist — loosely, so as not to confine too close the folds of spangled gauze.

Tadros, during his conversation with Sĕra, watched this transformation of his betrothed with satisfaction. When she had twined a vine of artificial flowers in her dark hair, the girl came to him and sat upon his knee. Her feet were still bare, and not very clean; but he did not notice that.

"I will speak to Hatatcha about Kāra," remarked the old woman, inhaling the smoke of her cigarette with evident enjoyment, "and she will tell him to be more careful."

"Hatatcha is dead," said Nephthys.

Sëra stared a moment and dropped her cigarette. Then she uttered a shrill wail and threw her skirt over her head, swaying back and forth.

"Shut up!" cried the dragoman, jerking away the cloth. "It is time enough to wail when the mourners assemble."

Sëra picked up her cigarette.

"When did Hatatcha go to Anubis?" she asked her daughter.

"Kāra did not say," returned the girl. "I was with her at the last sunset, and she was dying then."

"It matters nothing," said the dragoman, carelessly. "Hatatcha is better off in the nether world, and her rascally grandson must now go to work or starve his royal stomach."

"Who knows?" whispered Sĕra, with an accent of awe. "They have never worked. Perhaps the gods supply their needs."

Or they have robbed a tomb," returned Tadros. "It is much more likely; but if that is so I would like to find the place. There is money in a discovery of that sort. It means scarabs, and funeral idols, and amulets, and vases and utensils of olden days, all of which can be sold in Cairo for a good price. Sometimes it means jewels and gold ornaments as well; but that is only in the tombs of kings. Go to Hatatcha, my Sĕra, and keep your eyes open. Henf! what says the proverb? 'The outrunner of good fortune is thoughtfulness.'"

The mother of Nephthys nodded, and drew the last possible whiff from her cigarette. Then she left the hut and hurried under the heavy arch of Hatatcha's dwelling.

Five women, mostly old and all clothed in deep black, squatted in a circle around the rushes upon which lay the dead. Someone had closed Hatatcha's eyes, but otherwise she lay as she had expired. In a comer Kāra was chewing a piece of sugar-cane.

Sëra joined the circle. She threw sand upon her head and wailed shrilly,

rocking her body with a rhythmical motion. The others followed her example, and their cries were nerve-racking. Kāra looked at them a moment and then carried his sugar-cane out of doors.

For a time he stood still, hesitating. There was work for him to do, and he had only delayed it until the mourners were in possession of the house. But the sun was already hot and a journey lay before him. Kāra sighed. He was not used to work.

He walked to the north end of the huddle and entered the house of the blind man, Nikko. A Syrian donkey, with a long head and solemn eyes, stood near the door, and its owner was seated upon the ground rubbing its feet with an old rag that had been dipped in grease. Kāra caught up a bridle and threw it over the donkey's head.

"Who is it?" asked Nikko, turning his sightless eyes upward.

Kāra made no reply, but swung the saddle across the animal's back and tried to strap the girth. The old man twined his thin legs around those of the donkey and reached up a hand to pull the saddle away.

"It is Hatatcha's brute of a grandson!" cried Nikko, struggling to resist. "No other would try to rob me of my dear Mammek. Desist, or I will call the dragoman, who arrived this morning!"

For answer Kāra dealt him a kick in his stomach and he doubled up with a moan and rolled upon the ground. Then the royal one led Mammek out of the door and lightly leaped upon the donkey's back.

"Oo-ah!" he cried, digging his heels into the animal's flanks; and away trotted Mammek, meek but energetic.

There was no path in the direction he went and the desert sands seemed interminable. Kāra sat sidewise upon the donkey and sucked his sugar-cane, keeping the beast at a trot at the same time. An hour passed, and another. Finally a heap of rocky boulders arose just ahead of him, with a group of date palms at its foot. The heap grew bigger as he approached, and resolved itself into a small mountain, seared by deep fissures in the rocks. But there was verdure within the fissures, and several goats lay underneath the trees. Kāra rode past them and up to the foot of the mountain, where there was an overhanging entrance to a cave.

Throwing himself from the donkey, he ran into the cave and knelt at a spring which welled sparkling and cool from the rocks. Mammek followed and thrust his nozzle into the water beside Kāra's face. They drank together.

Then the man stood up and called aloud:

"Hi-yah, Sebbet; hi-yah!"

Someone laughed behind him, and Kāra swung upon his heel. There stood confronting him a curiously misshapen dwarf, whose snowy hair contrasted

strangely with his dark chocolate skin. He was scarcely as tall as Kāra's waist, but his body and limbs were so enormous as to convey the impression of immense strength. He wore a spotless white burnous, which fell from his neck to his feet, but his head was bare of covering.

While the young man stared the dwarf spoke.

"I know your mission," said he, in ancient Egyptian. "Hatatcha is dead."

"It is true," returned Kāra, briefly.

"She swore I would live long enough to embalm her," continued the dwarf, rubbing his nose reflectively; "and she was right. A wonderful woman was old Hatatcha, and a royal one. I will keep my compact with her."

"Can you do it?" asked Kāra, wondering. "Do you know the ancient process of embalming?"

"Why, I am no paraschites, you understand, for the trade is without value in these degenerate days. But I successfully embalmed her mother — your great-grandmother — and Hatatcha was greatly pleased with the work. Does not your great-grandmother look natural? Have you seen her?"

Kāra shook his head.

"Not yet," he said.

"And I have safely hoarded the store of aromatic gums and spices, the palm wine and myrrh and cassia, and the natron, with which Hatatcha long since entrusted me. The strips of fine linen for the bandages and the urns for the entrails are still in my storehouse, where they have remained since your grandmother gave them into my hands; so there is no reason why her wishes should not be carried out."

"You will return with me?" asked Kāra.

"Yes, and bring the dead to this desolate spot," replied the dwarf. "It is no longer Hatatcha, but the envelope which she used, and will use again. Therefore it must be carefully preserved. The process will require forty days, as you know. At the end of that time I will deliver Hatatcha's mummy into your hands. You must then give to me a flat, oblong emerald that is graven with the cartouch of the mighty Ahtka-Rā. Is not that the compact, my prince?"

"It is, my Sebbet."

"And you know where to find it?" asked the dwarf, anxiously.

"I know," said Kāra.

The dwarf seemed pleased, and retired to make preparations for his journey. Kāra fell asleep in the cave, for the sun had been terribly hot and the long ride had exhausted him. The blind man's donkey also lay down and slept.

In the middle of the afternoon Sebbet awakened the young Egyptian and

gave him some cakes to eat and a draught of goat's milk. Then he brought out a stout donkey of a pure white color and mounted it with unexpected agility. Kāra noticed a large sack fastened to the saddle-ring.

A moment later they were riding together across the sands.

"We must not reach Fedah before sundown," remarked the dwarf, and Kāra nodded assent. So they went at a moderate pace and bore the blistering rays of the sun as none but natives of Egypt can.

At sundown they sighted Gebel Abu Fedah, it was dark when they entered the narrow street of Fedah. Kāra dismounted from Mammek's back at its master's hut, and at a slap on the thigh the donkey bolted quickly through the doorway. Then the young man followed after the dwarf to the threshold of his own dwelling.

The mourners had gone home and Hatatcha lay alone; but someone had placed a coarse doth over her face to keep the flies away.

The dwarf drew from his pocket a rush-candle and lighted it. Removing the face-cloth he gazed for several minutes earnestly upon the features of the dead woman. Then he sighed deeply, untied the sack from his and blew out the flame of the candle.

Kāra stood in the archway, looking at the slender rim of the moon. In a short time the dwarfs white donkey paused beside him. The sack, now bulky and heavy, hung limply across the saddle. Kāra could see it plainly in the dim light.

He put his hand on the sack.

"Will it ride without tumbling off?" he asked.

"I will hold it fast," replied the dwarf, springing upon the donkey's back behind the burden. "Poor Hatatcha! She will not know we are taking our last ride together in Khonsu's company."

"Good-night," said Kāra.

"Good-night. In forty days, remember."

"In forty days.".

"And the emerald?"

"You shall have it then."

The donkey hobbled out of the archway and passed silently down the little street. Presently it had faded into the night and was gone.

Kāra yawned and looked attentively at the huts. In only one, that of old Sĕra, a dim light burned. The man frowned, and then he laughed.

"Let the dragoman have his Nephthys," he muttered. "For me Cairo, London and the great world beckon. And women? Bah! There are women everywhere." He entered the house and unrolled the mat that hung across the archway, fastening it securely to prevent intrusion.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREASURE OF AHTKA-RA.

Kāra went to the cavity beside the arch and took from it a small bronze lamp. It was partly filled with oil, on the surface of which a cotton wick floated. The lamp itself was of quaint design, and the young man remembered it since the days of his childhood, but had rarely seen it in use.

Having lighted the wick and spread it with his fingers until it flamed up brightly, Kāra turned his back to the arch and carefully examined the rear wall of the room. The house, as has been explained, was built against a shallow cave of the mountains; but, owing to the irregularity of the hollow, part of the rear wall was of solid masonry, while the other part was formed by the cliff itself. Kāra had never before paid much attention to that fact, but now it struck him as very evident that the masonry had been constructed to shut off an orifice too deep or too irregular to be utilized as part of the dwelling. Otherwise, the continuation of the cliff would have rendered a wall unnecessary. The stones were of large size and were built up and cemented as far as the overhanging rock that formed the greater portion of the roof.

The Egyptian's eyes rested upon the third layer of these stones, and he counted from the comer to the seventh stone. In appearance this was not different from the others; but Hatatcha's directions had been exact, and she knew.

He walked to the spot and pressed hard against the right edge of the stone. It moved, and gradually swung inward, the left edge being supported by solid pivots of bronze at the top and bottom.

The opening disclosed was about four feet long by three feet in height, and Kāra at once crept through it, holding his lamp extended before him. Yes; his surmise had been correct — a low, but deep and irregular cavern was behind the wall.

His first care was to close up the entrance by pressing the block of stone back to its former position. There was a bronze handle on the inner side that would permit him to open it again easily.

The cavern felt damp and cool, and when he raised his lamp he saw some deep fissures leading far under the mountain. He selected the second from the left of these rifts and cautiously made his way along the rough floor. At first it seemed that he had made a mistake, for this way was less promising than several of the others; but when he stopped and thought upon Hatatcha's directions, he knew that he was right.

The rift made a sudden turn and sank downward; but the rocks under his feet were now more even and the way became easier to traverse. A hundred

paces farther, the passage ended abruptly in a sharp point where the rock had originally split.

The young Egyptian walked to the extreme end and then carefully measured three paces back again. Raising his lamp, he examined the right wall of the tunnel closely. It contained many irregular cracks and hollows, but one indentation seemed, on observation, to be surrounded by a tiny circle of black, or a color darker than the other portions of the rock.

Kāra uttered an ejaculation of pleasure. He had feared he might not find this spot, in spite of his grandmother's assurances that it was plain to keen eyes.

Drawing a short, pointed dagger from the folds of his burnous — a weapon he had found in the crypt beside the arch of the living-room — the Egyptian thrust it into the orifice of the rock and pushed until it had sunk in to the very hilt. Then he turned the handle, and a sharp "click" was audible.

Kāra stepped back a pace, and a part of the rock, circular in shape, swung slowly out into the passage, revealing another tunnel running at right angles with the first. Unlike the other, this was no natural fissure of the rock, but an excavation cleverly made by the hands of man. The roof was arched and the floor level and smooth.

The man slipped through the opening and proceeded along the arched passage. He did not close this door behind him, for Hatatcha had warned him not to do so. The floor had a gradual slope and he knew that he was going still farther beneath the mountain at every step. The atmosphere now became hot and stifling and he found it difficult to breathe; but he continued steadily walking for a matter of five minutes — which seemed an hour — holding the lamp before him, until finally he noticed the blaze of the wick flicker, as if a breath of fresher air had reached it.

By this time his breast had seemed ready to burst, and his breathing was fitful and gasping; but he hurried forward and now found the air cooler and fresher and drew it into his lungs gratefully.

The path was no longer downward, and before him he presently discovered a huge pillar of rock, which at first sight seemed to block the tunnel. Rude hieroglyphics were graven upon it. Passing around this at the left, he found himself in a high, vaulted chamber, and stopped with a sigh of satisfaction.

The chamber was circular in shape, and not more than sixteen feet in diameter. An air-shaft in the dome evidently led to some part of the summit of the mountain, for Kāra found himself breathing naturally again.

"This," said he, "must be the library that Hatatcha mentioned."

All around the walls of the vault were niches, cut in regular rows and

containing box-like receptacles covered with inscriptions and pictures in gaudy colors. In the center of the room stood a large round slab of granite, finely polished upon its upper surface.

Kāra drew a box from its niche and set it upon the granite slab beside his lamp. Then he took from it a roll of papyrus, which he examined with interest.

Yes; he had read it before. It was one of those so often mysteriously produced by his grandmother to assist in his education. He examined another roll, and a third, leisurely and with care. These also he knew well. There were two hundred and eighteen rolls of papyrus in this ancient library, and the knowledge they contained had all been absorbed by the young Egyptian years before. He read them easily, and knew at once from their context the different meanings of many signs that are yet puzzling less-favored students of the hieroglyphics.

The manuscripts dated from the fourth dynasty down to the days of the Ptolemies, and, in a large cavity below the rolls of papyrus, were ranged the earlier works of Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Manetho, Horapello, Strabo and others, as well as the volumes on modem Egyptian and European history that old Hatatcha had purchased in Cairo within the last few years. Several historical stelæ of the earlier kings of Egypt also leaned against the walls, arranged in chronological order, and this library, founded by Ahtka-Rā, which had been preserved and added to for so many centuries, was a veritable storehouse of the records of his remarkable country.

Kāra smiled queerly as he glanced around the room.

"Others argue concerning ancient Egypt," he muttered; "but I alone know the truth."

A pile of papyrus rolls in another cavity seemed of less importance than those so carefully arranged in boxes. Kāra brought an armful of them to the central slab, dusted them with his rope, and selected fifteen of their number after a cursory glance at their contents. The others he restored to their place. This being accomplished, he took up his lamp and returned to the passage, this time circling the pillar of rock to the right.

It led into an immense oblong chamber, so vast that the light of Kāra's bronze lamp seemed to penetrate the blackness but a few feet in advance. But other lamps were suspended from huge bronze brackets, and several of these the Egyptian proceeded to light, finding them nearly all supplied with oil.

Then, stepping backward, he gazed about him with an irrepressible sensation of awe. The huge chamber was filled with mummy-cases, arranged upon solid slabs of Aswan granite. Nearest to the entrance were a dozen or so slabs that were unoccupied. Then appeared a splendid case of solid ebony,

elaborately carved upon every inch of its surfaces. This had been made for Hatatcha in London, during her residence in that city, and secretly transported to this place by devices only known to her. The inscriptions were all in the sign language except the one word, "Hatatcha," which appeared in Roman letters upon the cover. It was empty, of course, and Kāra proceeded to the next slab. Upon it lay the mummy of his great-grandmother, Thi-Aten, the one so naturally embalmed by the dwarf Sebbet. Her limbs were bandaged separately and the contour of her face might be clearly seen through the thin and tightly-drawn linen that covered it. Kāra sighed and made a profound obeisance to the mummy before proceeding up the chamber.

As he advanced, the mummies increased in age and also in the magnificence of their cases and the importance of their inscriptions. Some of the slabs were covered thickly with hieroglyphics relating the life history of their occupants, while on them were crowded curious ushabtiu figures, amulets and scarabs. Finally Kāra reached the end of the chamber and paused beside the mummy of the great Ahtka-Rā, who, while not king in name, had nevertheless ruled Egypt during his lifetime through the weak Rameses II, whom men ignorantly call "the Great."

Long the Egyptian knelt before the remains of his great ancestor. Rameses himself, and Seti his father, and many other kings of Egypt were lying in the museum at Cairo, to be impudently stared at by crowds of curious modem tourists; but this famous one had wisely provided for his own seclusion and that of his posterity. It was Ahtka-Rā who had constructed this hidden tomb during his lifetime, and he kept the secret so well that no painted or graven record of it existed to guide a meddling foreign race to its discovery in the years that were to come.

Kāra's eyes fairly gloated upon the mummy case of his wonderful ancestor. It was studded thick with precious stones, any of which might be deemed a fortune to one who, like himself, had existed so long in a lowly condition. But he did not disturb these gems. Instead, he touched a spring in the slab, a portion of which slid forward and revealed an opening.

Kāra took his lamp and crept into the aperture. There were seventeen steps leading downward; then came a short passage, and he entered another large chamber hewn from the solid rock.

Here was the treasure house of Ahtka-Rā, its contents doubtless primarily rifled from the treasure cities of Pithom and Raamses, which after his death were found to have been despoiled.

The entire room was faced with polished granite, and around the walls were granite tables to hold the treasure, as well as immense wide-mouthed

vases of porphyry, malachite, lapis lazuli, camelian and bronze. Upon the tables were heaps of chains, bracelets, ornaments and utensils of pure gold. In the center of the room stood twelve alabaster pedestals, two rows of six each, and each pedestal supported a splendid vase containing gems of various sorts. On the floor were numerous other vases and receptacles for jewels and golden ornaments, and one of these Kāra noticed was yet more than half filled with the precious coins of Darius Hystaspes, some of which his grandmother had used to provide herself with necessities because they were of a comparatively modem date and would arouse no suspicion that the source of their supply was the ancient tomb of Ahtka-Rā.

Indeed, it was easy to be seen that many of Ahtka-Rā's successors had added to this treasure house instead of pilfering from it. The original store, contained in the twelve great malachite vases, was practically untouched, although Hatatcha must have drawn upon it at one time. All the treasure littering the tables and floor had been added since Ahtka-Rā had lain in his tomb.

Kāra's face was unmoved, but his eyes glistened brightly. He thrust his hand into a jar and drew it out filled with rubies. They were of all sizes and shades of coloring and were polished in flat surfaces instead of being cut into rose facets according to modem methods. Some of the stones had small characters graven upon them, but usually they were smoothly polished.

The Egyptian now turned to the wall tables. Here were also rubies, diamonds, amethysts and emeralds, set in golden ornaments of many designs. Some of the stones were of so great a size as to be extremely valuable. A casket of dark wood inlaid with silver hieroglyphics attracted Kāra's attention. He threw back the lid and took from it a massive chain of gold, which he threw over his head. Each link was finely engraved with characters relating the name of some king and a deed he had accomplished. Kāra read some of the inscriptions and was amazed. The chain had originally been made in twelve links by Bâ-en-nëter, the twelfth king dating from Mënës, during whose reign the Nile flowed honey for eleven days. His successor, Uâtch-nës, took the chain and added another link, and so the chain had grown through succeeding ages down to the time of Ahtka-Rā. No wonder it was long and heavy!

Kāra did not like to replace this marvelous chain. He dropped its links inside his burnous and left it hanging around his neck.

After an hour or more devoted to the inspection of these treasures, which the young man naturally regarded as his own, forgetting that Hatatcha had warned him he but held them in trust, Kāra reluctantly prepared to leave the chamber. First, however, he selected twenty-three great diamonds from a jar

and concealed them in the folds of his turban. The turban is called the Egyptian's pocket, because a burnous seldom has pockets, and many things can be secreted in the voluminous cloth of a turban.

"Here is one diamond for every year I have lived," said Kāra. "Surely I am entitled to that many."

But it did not satisfy him. He thrust his hand into the jar of rubies again and took all that his fingers could clutch. He loved the color of the rubies. They appealed to him.

Then he crept up the stairs, reëntered the mummy chamber, and closed the secret slide in the malachite slab upon which lay the mighty Ahtka-Rā.

Who, not initiated, would ever suspect the enormous wealth lying so close at hand? Kāra sighed deeply and held himself proudly erect. He was just beginning to realize his own importance.

Extinguishing the lights of the lamps he had kindled in this chamber, he retraced his steps to the library, where he gathered up the fifteen rolls of papyrus, carrying them in the front breadth of his burnous while he held fast to the hem. In this way he returned along the arched passage until he came to the rock door which he had left ajar. He climbed through the opening and thrust the rock back into place, listening while the heavy bolt fastened itself with a sharp click.

He was now in the natural fissure of the mountain cavern, and it did not take him long to reach the stone wall which alone separated him from Hatatcha's dwelling.

He paused a moment, with his ear to the wall; but hearing no sound, he extinguished his light and then caught the handle imbedded in the stone and swung the block upon its pivots. In a moment he was in the living-room, and the wall through which he had passed seemed solid and immovable.

He must have been absent for several hours during his exploring expedition into the mountain, and the night was now far advanced.

Kāra flung the papyri into a comer, covered them with loose rushes from his grandmother's couch, and then threw himself upon his own bed to sleep. He had been awake the better part of two nights, and his eyelids were as heavy as if weighted with lead.

CHAPTER V.

A ROLL OF PAPYRUS.

At daybreak the dragoman thrust his head stealthily through the arch and looked at Kāra's sleeping form with suspicion. He had visited the young man's house in the evening and found him absent and Hatatcha's body also gone. He came again later, and once more at midnight, and still Hatatcha's dead form and her grandson's quick one were alike missing.

Then the dragoman, wishing to know to what secret place the old woman's remains had been taken, and from which direction Kāra returned, and having a fair share of oriental shrewdness, had stretched two threads across the narrow street — one on either side the arch — and afterward returned to his couch in the house of old Sĕra to sleep.

Daybreak found him awake and stirring. He discovered both his threads unbroken, yet the young Egyptian was sound asleep within the room. The dragoman scratched his left ear in perplexity and shook his head. Kāra was doubtless clever, but his unusual actions led Tadros to believe there was something important afoot. And that matter of the coins and the ancient jewel of old Hatatcha was well worth investigating.

He sat down cross-legged in the cool arch and waited. Kāra slept on. The girl Nephthys brought the dragoman a cake for his breakfast, silently placed it in his hand, and carried her jar to the river. On her return she paused to allow her master to drink and then left him again.

Tadros lighted a cigarette and smoked it to the end. Then he pushed aside the mat and looked into the room long and steadily. Kāra lay like one dead; in some strange manner the lazy one must have exhausted his strength — perhaps in carrying his grandmother's corpse to some far-away tomb. Ah, that was the secret place, doubtless, from whence the coins and the jewel had come. Kāra must know of it, and therefore it would be well for Tadros to win his confidence. What was that heap of rushes in the comer, and why had they been taken from Hatatcha's former couch? The dragoman was suddenly interested. He unfastened a portion of the mat and crept into the room. Kāra did not hear him. Softly he advanced on hands and knees to the comer. He felt among the rushes and drew out a roll of papyrus.

For a moment the dragoman sat still, his heart beating wildly. Here was a find, indeed! He knew of a dozen scholars who would willingly bankrupt themselves to discover a new papyrus roll.

He crawled slowly back to the arch and seated himself where a ray of light came between the mat and the gray stones. Here he unrolled the manuscript and examined it eagerly. He did not claim to be much of a

student, but he could read hieroglyphics a little and was a judge of ancient picture-writing. Here was doubtless a scroll of great antiquity and value, relating incidents of the war of Rameses against the Kheta, and its state of preservation was wonderful. In this place was a list of captives brought back to Thebes; in that was the expense account of the army. Here was told the —

"Henf!"

The sharp, quick cry was followed by a sudden rustle of the rushes, and with a spring like that of a panther, Kāra was upon the impudent intruder into his domain. Before Tadros could rise, his assailant was kneeling upon his body and with lithe, delicate fingers clutching viciously at his throat. The dragoman struggled to free himself, but could not. He tried to breathe, without effect. The skin of his bronzed face grew black, and his eyes protruded from their sockets with a look of horror and fear.

Seeing this, Kāra's set face suddenly relaxed and lost its look of murderous determination. He released his hold of the dragoman and pushed away the mat to allow more air to get to him.

Slowly the other, gasping and uttering low moans, recovered his breath. Kāra's fingers had left great discoloured blotches upon his neck; but that did not matter. From certain death he was coming back to life, and the transition was one to evoke gratitude and joy. Life was sweet to the dragoman — the sweetest thing he possessed.

Kāra, standing erect, looked down upon him with arms folded in repose and a countenance very thoughtful. Two reasons had stayed his vengeful hands. To murder Tadros would get him into trouble with the authorities, and so cause him great annoyance at this critical juncture, when liberty of action and freedom from espionage was important. In the second place, his half-formed plans included the use of the dragoman for his own advantage. Tadros was both clever and well known. He would become a good servant when he knew it would further his personal interest to be faithful, and so it was best that the dragoman should live — for a time.

He had now almost recovered from the shock of Kāra's assault, and began to grow angry.

"What do you mean, you dog, by felling me like a wild beast and trying to throttle me?" he demanded, with his first breath.

"What do you mean by stealing into my house and prying into my private affairs?" returned Kāra brusquely.

The dragoman's eyes fell upon the papyrus at his feet, and his face changed its expression.

"Where did you get it?" he asked, quickly. "Are there more of them? Is it a tomb or a temple? Tell me, Kāra, tell me all about it."

The Egyptian smiled, grimly.

“There are more of them,” he said. “Look! in that comer are fourteen other rolls; but whether they came from a tomb or a temple I do not know. They are my inheritance from Hatatcha. Where she found them she alone could have told; but she carried the secret to the nether world.”

Tadros mused for a time.

“Where have they been kept all these years?” he asked in a tone of disbelief.

“Hidden underneath the rushes of her bed. I dragged them all out last night, as you can see.”

“Were there any more of the coins?”

“A few.” He showed some in his hand.

“Ah!”

The dragoman drew a deep breath.

“You are rich, my prince,” said he. “Fifteen papyri of the ancient days! — they are worth a fortune in any event.”

“How much?” asked Kāra, amused.

“This one,” said Tadros, picking it up and partly unrolling it to glance again at the writing, “I could sell in Cairo for five hundred piastres — perhaps a thousand. It is wonderfully dear and well preserved.”

“You may keep it for yourself,” said Kāra.

Tadros stared.

“I will exchange it for the girl Nephthys,” continued the young man, coolly. “For her you have paid to old Sĕra two hundred and fifty piastres already. You must pay a like sum to take the girl away with you, and afterward you must pay for her support. Very well; I will relieve you of the burden. You will not only save your money, but you will get a papyrus worth four times what you have invested.”

Tadros frowned and looked glum.

“But the girl is mine!” he exclaimed.

“And the papyrus is mine,” returned Kāra. “Perhaps I could buy two or three like Nephthys with it; but never mind, it shall be yours in the way of exchange.”

Tadros moved uneasily and cast a longing glance at the roll.

“I like not this barbaric traffic in womankind,” he muttered, with indecision.

“Nor I,” agreed Kāra. “It is Sĕra who is to blame. If she has a fat daughter, she will want a fat price for her. Otherwise, how can she be recompensed for the girl’s keep? But five hundred is too much for Nephthys. I would have to give her mother the other two hundred and fifty piastres myself — and you

would have the roll. By Isis, ‘tis a bad bargain! Here; let us say no more about it. Give me the papyrus.”

“Wait — wait!” cried Tadros. “Why are you so unjust in your conclusions? The bargain is made. No one but a sneaking Arab goes back on his word.”

“It is as you say,” replied Kāra, stretching his long arms and yawning. “But it is a fine papyrus, Tadros — all about the Kheta and King Rameses.”

“I know; I know!” returned the dragoman, nervously tucking his prize under his arm. “Come with me at once. I will inform Sĕra of the transfer of my property.”

He rose to his feet a little unsteadily, because his throat still hurt him, and led the way.

Kāra quietly followed.

In Sĕra’s hovel mother and daughter were weaving upon a rude cane loom.

“See here,” announced the dragoman; “this Nephthys is too free with her favors, and I cannot be coming forever to this forsaken village to look after her. Besides, I must get back to Cairo to attend to my business, so I have sold the girl to my friend Kāra here, and when he takes her away from you, if ever he does, he is to pay the other two hundred and fifty piastres I promised.”

Sëra seemed surprised, but nodded her head cheerfully.

“It is all the same to me,” she replied. “If the royal one has the money to satisfy you, it is none of my business, I am sure. An alliance with the descendant of the great Ahtka-Rā is something to be proud of.”

The girl had broken a thread. As she prepared to retie it, she glanced from one to the other of the two men with a look of indifference.

“I do not promise to make Nephthys a wife,” said Kāra, slowly, “although, of course, it may come to that. My plans are not formed for the future. But I have acquired the girl in betrothal through my compact with Tadros, and his rights are hereafter mine.”

“She grows plumper every day,” said Sĕra, glancing at Nephthys critically. “You will seek long, my Kāra, before you find a more desirable wife. Yet I am in no hurry to lose my daughter, believe me, even for the money she will bring. Take your time about deciding the matter.”

“I will,” responded Kāra, briefly.

“And now, tell me, what has become of your grandmother, Hatatcha?”

“I have carried her into the desert to be embalmed.” And then, to avoid further questioning, he went away.

CHAPTER VI.

KARA BATHES IN THE NILE.

Tadros followed him into the street again.

"Those other papyri," he said — "do you wish me to sell them for you?"

"They are already sold," replied Kāra, regardless of truth.

"Indeed! To whom?"

"Winston Bey, the Englishman."

Tadros uttered an exclamation of annoyance. "Where have you met him?" he asked.

"Here, at the Nile landing. His boat will come to-night for the papyrus rolls."

Many thoughts passed rapidly through the dragoman's mind. Here was bad news, indeed. He had planned on getting all those wonderful rolls into his own hands, and his disappointment was keen to find that this isolated Egyptian of an out-of-the-way rock village had already been approached and bought up by one of those rascally scientists, before he, the clever dragoman, had even known of the existence of the treasures. "He will rob you," he ventured to suggest.

"Very well," replied Kāra, indifferently.

Tadros was in despair. Yet one thing was plainly evident — if Winston Bey was about to unload fourteen newly found rolls of papyrus upon the directors of the museum in Cairo, it would be well for him, the dragoman, to get his one roll in first, at the highest possible price. That could easily be accomplished. Winston's dahabeah would consume four or five days on the downward voyage. Tadros could cross the Nile in a small boat and catch the railway on the other bank, which would land him in Cairo the next day. He promptly decided to take the railway.

"I expect," said Kāra, "to be in Cairo myself shortly. If you are there, I would like to hire your services as dragoman."

Tadros, aroused from his meditations, gave a start, and wonderingly examined the speaker from his dirty bare feet all the way up his soiled burnous to his strong, calm face and faded turban. He had been a native of Fedah himself, and had known "the royal one," as he scornfully called Kāra, from boyhood. Until now he had regarded him as a permanent fixture of the little village; a listless, lazy do-nothing, supported in some mysterious way by his grandmother and destined to grow old amid his solitary surroundings.

Some slight importance Kāra had doubtless acquired through his inheritance of the papyri; but that he should think of visiting Cairo and employing the brilliantly appareled dragoman was a marvel that fairly

astounded Tadros. Yet, why not? He would have money. Tadros could assuredly teach him how to spend it. Kāra might become an incident in his career — an element in his future prosperity.

"Call upon me at any time," he said, condescendingly. "You shall have the advantage of my experience and knowledge of the world."

"That is what I want," returned the Egyptian, "and I will pay you liberally for it."

He passed into his dwelling, and the dragoman, watching him go, decided to make speedy preparation for his own departure.

He felt much easier in his mind than at first. What if Winston Bey purchased the papyrus rolls? Would not Tadros be the young man's guide? Very good. Very good, indeed!

Kāra lay down again and slept until after noon. Then he went to the hut of Nefert, who baked the bread for the village, and bargained with her for a loaf and a bowl of milk. Also he acquired from her a large, coarse sack. In exchange he gave her Hatatcha's water jar, which had come from Keneh, and an old scarf his grandmother had worn over her head.

He ate the loaf and drank the milk, feeling much refreshed. Then he carried the sack to his dwelling and placed the papyrus rolls in it.

From the secret cavity beside the arch he took the bronze vase with the metal stopper, a scarab ring that his grandmother had sometimes worn, and a slender dagger with a steel blade. The bronze dagger that served as a key to the rock door he left in the cavity, as well as the lamp.

Having replaced the stone, he glanced around to see whether there was anything that might be disturbed or stolen during his absence; but the room was bare of anything to tempt a thief or a despoiler. So he swung the sack over his shoulder and walked out and around the end of the mountain on his way to the Nile.

Winston Bey had kept his word. On the chance that the strange Egyptian he had encountered would manage to secure either valuable information or some ancient relics from his mysterious grandmother, he had kept his dahabeah in the neighborhood, ignoring the protests of his unhappy Arab crew. The afternoon following his interview with Kāra, he landed near the group of palms an hour before sunset, and waited until darkness fell without obtaining a sight of the Egyptian. Then he dropped down the stream to Tel El Armana, where the dahabeah remained until the next noon.

To-day he figured on another disappointment; but when Gerald Winston had an object in view he pursued it with dogged determination, and he had resolved to keep his appointment each day for a week at least before considering his future actions. There was no question but he was on the track

of an important discovery, and he did not intend to abandon the quest lightly.

On this second day, therefore, when he approached the grove and saw a white-robed figure sitting in the shade, his heart gave a joyful bound. He hurried forward and recognized Kāra, who remained motionless until the Englishman had saluted him. Then he bowed his head, gravely.

Winston's eyes were on the sack that rested beside the Egyptian, and his voice sounded eager in spite of his effort to restrain it.

"Well, my brother?" he exclaimed.

"My grandmother, Hatatcha, is dead," said Kāra.

The Englishman shrank back in horror.

"You have killed her?"

"Oh, no; not at all," answered the other composedly. "She was dying when I returned home after my conversation with you. It would not pay me to kill Hatatcha, you know."

"What did you learn from her?"

"Nothing. She was beyond questioning. But she whispered that I should seek under the rushes of her bed for my inheritance, and then Anubis took her to his kingdom. Her secret, if she had one, she carried with her."

Winston was deeply chagrined. He reproached himself for not having interviewed the old woman in person and endeavored to wrest her secret from her. Now, alas, it was too late!

"What have you in the sack?" he inquired, almost indifferently.

"My inheritance," said Kāra.

"Of what does it consist?"

"I have fourteen rolls of ancient papyrus manuscript."

"Fourteen rolls?" cried Winston, trembling with sudden excitement. "Let me see them, man — let me see them!"

Kāra did not move.

"I am going to Cairo," said he. "Will you take me with you in your boat?"

"Yes; to be sure. Come to the boat at once."

"That is better," declared the Egyptian. "You can then examine the papyri at your leisure and determine whether they are of interest to you."

He slowly arose to his feet and swung the sack across his shoulder. Winston eagerly preceded him. The stifling heat was all forgotten. Hatatcha's unfortunate death was forgotten. A treasure had been unearthed at last, and surely from fourteen manuscripts much important information might be gleaned.

On the deck of his dahabeah he glanced at the papyri with amazement. Each one was perfectly preserved and unrolled without danger of breaking.

"Their condition is extraordinary!" he observed. "Where, did you say, you

found them?”

“In a hollow of earth, covered by the rushes of Hatatcha’s couch.”

Winston raised his head to look at the speaker closely.

“Then they have not been there long, I am sure.”

“That,” said Kāra, with a shrug, “is a matter of which I have no knowledge.”

The scientist carefully unrolled a manuscript. “This,” he said, musingly, “is a poem by the poet Pen-ta-urt. And it is a composition I have never seen before.”

He began reading it, and soon Kāra corrected him in a passage and explained bow he should properly translate it. Winston’s eyes sparkled. This Egyptian really knew the hieroglyphics better than he did. His assistance might be invaluable in some ways. Perhaps the man would prove as remarkable a find as the manuscripts.

The next writing was an address to his soldiers by Amenhotep III, on the eve of his invasion of Syria. It was beautifully executed, and would prove a valuable addition to the literature of the fifteenth century before Christ.

Far into the night Winston pored over the writings, finding in some veritable treasures and in others little of worth save for their age and beauty of execution. Still, as a collection, the fourteen rolls constituted a remarkable library of ancient literature, and its fortunate discoverer slept but little on that eventful night.

Before daybreak the dahabeah was wheezing and puffing down stream on its way to Cairo, and Kāra, who had slept well extended upon the deck, was given a breakfast such as he had never before tasted. The fragrant coffee was a revelation to him, and the chops and fruit made his eyes sparkle; yet so sedate was the Egyptian’s demeanor that Winston was unaware that his guest had never before eaten a properly prepared meal.

The Englishman’s satisfaction this morning was so great that he also bestowed upon Kāra one of his choicest cigars, and again the Egyptian tasted a luxury hitherto unknown to him.

While they were quietly enjoying their smoke Winston said:

“Will you sell me the rolls?”

“Yes,” replied Kāra.

“I will give you a thousand Egyptian pounds for them. That, you know, is about a hundred thousand piastres.”

Kāra made a mental calculation and frowned darkly.

“Perhaps it is not enough,” added Winston, quickly; “but on the other hand it may be too much altogether. Until I have examined the writings with more care I cannot value them accurately.”

“I will accept your offer,” said the Egyptian, still frowning. “I am sure it is fair, and even liberal. What annoys me is that I have made a fool of myself.”

“In what way?”

“I purchased a girl yesterday, and paid three times what she is worth.”

Winston smiled.

“Do not let it bother you,” he said, in an amused tone. “Few women are worth what they cost, believe me, and where their sex is concerned men are often fools.”

“My brother’s speech is wise,” returned the grave Kāra. “I will conceal my annoyance, for some day I may be indemnified.”

“Had Hatatcha any of the coins of Darius Hystaspes left?” inquired Winston, after a moment’s thought.

“Here are seven,” said the other, producing them.

The Englishman was delighted.

“I will pay you five pounds each for these,” said he.

“Then they are yours,” declared Kāra.

Afterward he showed the Englishman the bronze vase, which also changed hands at a liberal purchase price.

“And is this all?” asked Winston.

“It is all,” said Kāra.

“You will be rich, my brother. Here are ten pounds in English gold to seal our bargain. After we arrive in Cairo I will take you to my banker and transfer to your account the entire amount due you. You may draw then upon the bank as you require your money, in any sums that suit your convenience — so long as it lasts.”

“I thank you,” replied the Egyptian.

As they proceeded down the river, Kāra noted the spotless tunics and trousers of the Arabs, who one and all regarded “the dirty Copt” with open contempt. He also examined intently the Englishman’s dress. When the boat tied up at Assyut to allow Winston to visit a friend who was convalescent at the excellent hospital maintained there, Kāra walked through the bazaars, and returned to the dahabeah bearing several bulky packages.

That night he bathed in the river while the others all lay asleep. Afterward he stealthily transferred the contents of his turban to a chamois bag, which he fastened around his neck. Then he flung the old burnous and the turban overboard.

In the morning they found the Egyptian transformed. He wore an English shirt, with collar and necktie all of white, loose linen trousers that were gathered at the ankles in Arab style, and over these a flowing white burnous of spotless purity. Upon his head was a red fez; upon his feet red slippers

from Algiers; about his neck hung the massive chain of the kings; upon his finger was his grandmother's ring set with the scarab of Ahtka-Rā.

Winston was astonished, and gazed upon the Egyptian with approval. Then his eye caught the chain, and he uttered an exclamation of wonder.

"Where did you get it?" he asked, clutching at the chain to examine one of its exquisitely engraved links.

"It is also a part of my inheritance, but an heirloom that I dare not part with," returned Kāra. "It is the record of the kings, my ancestors, from Mënës to Ahtka-Rā," and he explained the meaning of the chain to Winston, and assisted him to decipher some of the inscriptions upon the heavy links.

"But this is a priceless treasure!" exclaimed the savant, filled with unbounded amazement at what he beheld.

"It is proof of my contention that I am of royal blood," answered the other, proudly. "While I live I will not be separated from it."

"You are right," agreed Winston, promptly; and from that moment he entertained a new respect for this humble descendant of the ancient rulers of Egypt.

Not one of the manuscripts mentioned Ahtka-Rā; but the chain had at its end the link of that astute leader of men, and his identity was thus established beyond a doubt. The scarab, of unquestionable antiquity, was likewise a proof that Kāra's ancestor was a descendant of kings. Immediately the young Egyptian became a person of consequence.

Kāra now smoked cigarettes, having purchased several boxes at Assyut. This was the most satisfactory luxury that attended his new condition, and conspired, more than anything else, to render him pleased with his lot.

The dahabeah arrived in Cairo on the morning of the fourth day.

Winston at once took a carriage and drove Kāra to the bank, where he placed the sum agreed upon to the young Egyptian's credit. Kāra, who wrote English in a dear and delicate hand, was given a cheque book and registered his signature as follows: "Prince Kāra."

"Residence?" inquired the banker.

"I have just arrived, and am not yet located," was the answer. "To-morrow I will send you my address."

"Let me also know where you are to be found," said Winston, "for I must introduce you to the Egyptologists here."

Then he left his new acquaintance to drive post haste to the museum, there to show his new-found treasures to his many friends.

CHAPTER VII.

A STEP TOWARD THE GOAL.

Kāra wandered about the streets. Cairo is a marvel to the most blasé traveler; it could not fail to impress an inexperienced native. But the Egyptian masked the astonishment under an expression cold and reserved and a manner dignified and undemonstrative. No one must suspect he was fresh from the desert and the Nile country. The shops of the jewelers especially attracted his attention, and he stopped many times to examine the splendid gems displayed in the windows. Some were priced, and he wondered at their value. It is said that no capital in the world contains so many rare and costly gems as Cairo.

In the evening he crossed the great bridge of Isma'il Pasha to the island of Gizireh, staring at the procession of carriages, camels, automobiles and donkeys that at twilight followed on one another's heels. In the carriages and automobiles rode Syrians, Turks, Copts and Arabs, clothed in conventional European dress, save for the red fez everywhere prevalent. The burnous and native dress had been abandoned by these aristocrats, and this met with Kāra's full approval. He was not averse to innovations upon the ancient customs in which he had been reared. If the dominant people of his country and age were English, then the manners and customs of the English should be adopted by those who wished to compete with them in importance.

Also he began to understand that it is more dignified to ride than to walk. At Gizireh he hailed a carriage and in it returned across the bridge, avoiding the dust and heat and mingling with a procession of beautifully costumed women and handsomely dressed men. His own costume was poor enough in comparison, but his magnificent chain drew the eye of more than one curious observer.

And now Cairo was ablaze with lights, and the population seemed gathered upon the sidewalks before the cafés and restaurants. Kāra discovered that he was hungry. He dismissed his carriage and seated himself at one of the outdoor tables, ordering liberal refreshment. Opposite him sat a young English girl with a vacant-faced man for escort. Kāra, as he ate, examined this girl critically, for she was the first of her class he had seen at close range. Her dress was dainty and beautiful; but she was not fat at all. She was vivacious, and talked and laughed with unrestrained liberty. She seemed to imagine herself on an equality with the man beside her, who, despite his inanity, was still a num. Altogether, Kāra was disappointed in her, although his grandmother had warned him that the training of European women imbued them with peculiar ideas, to which he must defer in his

association with them.

As he watched the girl, Nephthys rose several degrees in Kāra's estimation. Nephthys was certainly fat and soft of flesh, and she did not talk much. The possession of such a woman was quite desirable, and perhaps he had not paid an extravagant price for Nephthys after all. These independent, chattering Western women must be tolerated, however, until he had accomplished his mission; so it would be well to begin at once to study their ways.

Presently someone touched his shoulder familiarly, causing Kāra to shrink back with an indignant gesture. Tadros, the dragoman, stood smilingly beside him, more gorgeously arrayed than ever. Tadros was in an excellent humor. He had not been obliged to take his roll of papyrus to the museum for a market, but had disposed of it to a private collector for a price far exceeding his expectations, which had not been too modest. Altogether he had made an excellent trade, and there might be other pickings in this unsophisticated fellow-townsman of his, whose very presence in Cairo was warrant that he had money to part with.

Before accosting Kāra the dragoman had observed the change in his appearance and demeanor. The former recluse was no longer disgustingly filthy, but seemed clean in person and was gowned in a snowy and respectable burnous. The objectionable turban had given place to the fez; the red slippers were of excellent morocco. Best of all, the chain around his neck was rich and heavy and of remarkable workmanship. Kāra was not only presentable, but his manner was dignified and well bred.

All this indicated suddenly acquired wealth — that mysterious old Hatatcha must have left to her grandson much more than the papyrus rolls; and although Kāra might endeavor to be secret and uncommunicative, he was bound to betray himself before very long. Now was the heated term, and even gay Cairo was listless and enervated. The dragoman would have ample leisure to pick this bone skilfully before the tourist season arrived.

Kāra's first angry exclamation was followed by a word of greeting. He was glad Tadros had found him, for as yet he had secured no place of residence, and the bigness of the city somewhat bewildered him in spite of his assumed reserve.

The dragoman agreed to take him to a respectable rooming-house much frequented by Copts of the better class. When they had arrived there, Kāra's guide made a mystic sign to the proprietor, who promptly charged his new guest double the usual rate, and obtained it because the Egyptian was unaware he was being robbed. The room assigned him was a simply furnished, boxlike affair; yet Kāra had never before occupied an apartment so

luxurious. He examined the door with care and was pleased to find that it was supplied with a stout bolt as well as a lock and key.

"Now," said the dragoman, "it is yet early; we have barely crossed the edge of the evening. I will take you to the theatre to see the dancing girls, and later to a house where they wager money upon a singular and interesting game of red and black. We can afterward eat our supper at a restaurant and listen to a fine band composed of Hungarian gypsies. How will that suit you?"

"Not at all," replied Kāra, coldly. "I am going to bed. Be here to receive my orders at seven o'clock in the morning."

Tadros fairly gasped with astonishment.

"Seven o'clock is too early," he said, a little sullenly. "The city is asleep at that hour."

"When does it awaken?"

"Well, the shops are open at about nine."

"Come to me, then, at nine. Good night."

This summary dismissal was a severe disappointment to the dragoman, yet he had no alternative but to take his leave. Strange that Kāra had refused the dancing girls and the game table; but perhaps he was really tired. Tadros must not expect too much from his innocent at first.

At nine o'clock the next morning he found that the young Egyptian had breakfasted and was impatiently awaiting him.

"Take me to the leading jeweler in town," said Kāra.

The dragoman frowned, but presently brightened again and took his employer to a second-rate shop, where his commissions were assured.

"Not here," said Kāra. "I have seen much better shops."

Tadros tried again, but with no better success; so he altered his plans and took Kāra direct to Andalaft's, trusting to luck to exact a commission afterward.

"Now, then," said he, briskly, "what shall we examine first?"

But Kāra ignored him, asking to see the proprietor in private. Mr. Andalaft graciously consented to the interview, and when the Egyptian entered the great jeweler's private room Tadros was left outside.

Kāra laid a splendid ruby upon the merchant's table. The latter pounced upon it with an eager exclamation.

"It is very old," said the Egyptian. "Tell me, sir, is there any one in Cairo who can recut it in the modem fashion?"

"But it will be a shame to alter this exquisite gem," protested Andalaft. "It is the square, flat cutting of the ancients, and shows the stone to be absolutely pure and flawless. Such specimens are rare in these days. Let it alone."

Kāra shook his head with positiveness.

"I must have it recut," said he, "and by the best man obtainable."

"Ah, that is Van der Veen, the Hollander. He does all my important work. But Van der Veen will himself argue against the desecration. He is a man of judgment."

"Where can I find him?" asked the prince.

The merchant reflected.

"I will give you a letter to him," said he. "If the stone must be recut, I want Van der Veen to do it himself. He has three sons who are all expert workmen, but no one in the world can excel the father."

He wrote the note, addressed it, and gave it to Kāra. Then he again picked up the ruby and examined it.

"If you would but sell it," he suggested, with hesitation, "I could secure for you a liberal price. The Khedive has placed with me an order for a necklace of the ancient Egyptian gems; but in two years I have been unable to secure more than three stones, none of which compare with this in size or beauty. Allow me."

He opened a drawer and displayed the three antique stones — two emeralds and an amethyst. Kāra smiled, and putting his hand in a pocket underneath his burnous, he drew out five more rubies, but little inferior in size to the one he had first shown.

"Tell me," said he, "what price you will pay for these, to add to the Khedive's necklace."

Andalaft was amazed, but concealed his joy and eagerness as much as possible. Carefully he examined the gems under a glass and then weighed each one in his scales.

"I will give you," said he, after figuring a little, "four hundred pounds for the five stones."

Kāra shrugged his shoulders and picked up the rubies.

"That may be the price for ordinary gems," he remarked; "but their age and cutting give these an added value. I am holding them at eight hundred pounds."

The merchant smiled.

"It is easy to understand," said he, with politeness, "that you are a connoisseur of precious stones; but, because you love the antique, your partiality induces you to place an undue value upon your rubies. Come! let us say six hundred."

"I will not bargain," returned the Egyptian; "nor do I urge you to buy. If you cannot afford to pay my price I will keep the rubies," and he made a motion to gather them up.

“Stay!” exclaimed the jeweler. “What does it matter? The Khedive wishes them, and I must make the sacrifice for his pleasure.”

With a hand he vainly endeavored to render steady he wrote a check for the sum demanded, and Kāra took it and went away. Andalaft had made an excellent bargain; yet the Egyptian, for all his cleverness, did not know that he had been victimized.

At the house of the diamond-cutter, on a quiet side street at the lower end of the Mouski, Kāra had a long interview with Van der Veen and his three sons. As a result they agreed, after examining the magnificent diamonds shown them, to devote their exclusive services to Prince Kāra for a full year, he promising to keep them busy with the work of recutting his collection of ancient gems.

Afterward he sent Tadros with notes to Gerald Winston and the banker, informing them of his temporary address, as he had promised. Then he had an excellent luncheon and smoked a Cuban cigar. In the afternoon he followed his imploring dragoman into several shops where he made simple purchases, and returned early to his hotel to find Winston impatiently awaiting him.

“You must accompany me at once to see my friend Professor Daressy, with whom I am already disputing concerning the new papyri. He is much interested in your method of interpreting the manuscripts, but requires a better proof of its accuracy than I can give him. Will you come?”

“It will give me pleasure,” answered Kāra — he drove with Winston to the curator’s house. His knowledge of the hieroglyphics was well founded, and he was not averse to an argument with the two savants. Indeed, they found his explanations so clear and concise that they were equally amazed and delighted.

The Egyptian dined with them in a private room, where the discussion could not be interrupted, and it was late in the evening when he returned thoughtfully to his own humble lodging.

“Tadros,” said he, “find me a comfortable house in a good part of the city. Something like that of Professor Daressy will do.”

“It will cost a lot of money,” objected the dragoman. “Never mind; I will pay the price,” returned the prince, haughtily.

So the next day Tadros rented a furnished house near the Ezbekieh Gardens for twelve hundred piastres a month, and charged Kāra two thousand piastres for it. The prince moved in, and for three or four weeks devoted himself to watching the Van der Veens recut his treasures, to long conversations with those Egyptologists who were spending the heated term in Cairo, and to a study of the collection of ancient relics in the great

museum which Maspero had founded under Said Pasha. Incidentally he observed the social life and manners of those with whom he came in contact, and acquired a polish of his own in a surprisingly short period.

At the end of the month he returned to Fedah, taking his dragoman with him. Tadros went without protest, for he was making excellent profits from his old-time friend and had perfected a system of robbery that almost doubled Prince Kāra's expenses.

They traveled by train and crossed the river in a boat, arriving in the evening at the tiny village. Tadros carried Kāra's large traveling case and walked behind him, as was fitting in a paid retainer.

And so they entered the narrow street of the village, where all the dozen or so inhabitants stood in their doorways to stare and nod gravely at their returned fellow-citizens.

Kāra bade his dragoman leave the luggage in his own dwelling and seek a lodging for himself with old Nefert or Amenka. He then walked on to where Sĕra and her daughter awaited him.

He pinched Nephthys' fat cheeks, felt of her round bare arms, and finally kissed her lips, declaring that she was steadily improving in condition and would put to shame many of the women of Cairo.

Nephthys allowed the caresses listlessly, her eyes only brightening slightly when the gaily dressed dragoman came near and stood watching the proceedings. He wore a green jacket with gold embroidery to-day, and the girl observed it with evident approval.

"I sold her too cheaply, Kāra," remarked the dragoman, stroking his thin mustache reflectively.

"In that I do not agree with you," answered Kāra.

"I will pay double the price for her return," said Tadros.

"The girl is not for sale. And see here, my man, keep your hands off her while you are in Fedah, or I will be obliged to kill you."

"Never fear; I know my duties," replied the dragoman, turning on his heel. It would not be wise to offend Kāra just now. The bone was not yet picked.

Nephthys put on her spangled gown and sat upon Kāra's knee, while her mother brought cakes and milk for their refreshment. Kāra threw a chain of beads over the girl's head, and she laughed for very pleasure. Sĕra felt of the beads and counted them. They were blue, and had cost five piastres, but the two women were delighted with them and would enjoy their possession for many days.

It was late when Kāra left Sĕra's hut.

"In the winter," said he, "I will doubtless come for the girl and take her to Cairo. Then you shall have the rest of your money. Meantime, here is

backshish to console you.”

He gave her a piece of gold — the first she had ever possessed — and went away to his dwelling.

“Nephthys,” said the mother, “I am proud of you. You have made us both rich!”

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS GRANDMOTHER'S MUMMY.

When Fedah seemed asleep, Kāra took the lamp and the bronze dagger from their hiding place and swung back the stone in the rear wall, passing through into the mountain cavern. Then, replacing the stone, he made his way along the crevice, through the circular rock door into the arched passage, and down the latter to the mummy chamber.

Here he removed the lid of Hatatcha's mummy case and carefully dusted the interior. The forty days were ended. The case might have its occupant before morning.

Within the splendidly carven casket Kāra found an oblong green stone, with polished flat surfaces. On one of these surfaces was the cartouche of Ahtka-Rā, as follows:

The Egyptian examined this relic carefully and placed it in his pocket. It was the emerald that Hatatcha had promised the dwarf Sebbet in payment for embalming her body. How Andalaft's eyes would sparkle could he but see this wonder!

But this thought reminded Kāra that he was loitering. He picked up his lamp and went to the mummy of Ahtka-Rā, sliding back the slab of malachite and descending through the opening to the treasure chamber hidden below.

His first act was to inventory carefully the contents of the twelve great vases that stood upon their alabaster pedestals. From these vases he abstracted choice specimens of emeralds, sapphires, diamonds and rubies, filling with them several small leathern sacks he had brought concealed upon his person. Perhaps he had taken a fortune in this careless manner; but so vast was the treasure that the contents of the vases seemed scarcely disturbed.

In one of the numerous jars resting upon the granite floor, and which had doubtless been added to the hoard at a much later period than that of Ahtka-Rā, the Egyptian found a quantity of pearls of a size and quality that rendered them almost peerless among the treasures of the world. The jar contained a full quart, and Kāra took them all. At the moment he did not comprehend their value, although Hatatcha had told him that a single one of these pearls would be sufficient to ransom a kingdom.

The gems he had already secured were enough to weigh heavily upon his person; but Kāra was greedy. He examined the contents of many jars and

vases, choosing here and there a jewel that appealed to his fancy, and adding to his selection a number of exquisite ornaments of wrought gold; but at last he was forced to admit that he had taken enough from the treasure chamber to answer his present purposes, and so he reluctantly returned to the vault above.

As he closed the slab, his eye fell upon a strange jewel set in the mummy case of Ahtka-Rā. It was surrounded by a protecting band of chased gold, and sparkled under the rays of Kāra's lamp in a manner that distinguished it from any of the thousands of other gems that literally covered the mummy case of the great Egyptian; for at first this odd jewel had a dark steely lustre, which changed while Kāra's eyes rested upon it to a rich transparent orange, and then to an opal ground with tongues of flame running through it. A moment later the color had faded to a dull gray, which gradually took on a greenish tinge.

Kāra set down the lamp and pried the stone from its setting with the point of his dagger, placing it afterward in a secure inner pocket of his robe. As he did so, a golden bust of Isis that stood upon the mummy case toppled and fell to the pavement, and from a hollow underneath the bust rolled a small manuscript of papyrus. This Kāra took also, and replaced the bust in its former position. His nerves must have been of iron, for the uncanny incident had not even startled him.

Now he made his way back to the entrance and along the passage, finally emerging with his treasure into the room that had been his former dwelling-place. All was silent and dark. A mild bray from the blind Nikko's donkey was occasionally heard, and at times the faraway hoot of a desert owl; but those within the village seemed steeped in slumber.

Kāra divided his burden by placing the greater part in his traveling case, which he locked securely. Then he reclined upon the rushes and was about to compose himself to sleep when the mat across the archway was thrust aside and Sebbet entered.

"I am here, most royal one!" he announced.

Kāra sat up.

"And my grandmother?" he inquired.

"Here also, my prince. Ah, how natural is Hatatcha! You will be delighted. It is a skilful and almost perfect piece of work, even though I praise my own craft in saying so."

With these words the dwarf led in the donkey. Upon its back was the form of a swaddled mummy, which was bound to a flat plank to hold it rigidly extended.

"I will show you the face," continued Sebbet, in an eager tone, as he lifted

the mummy and placed it upon the ground.

"Do not trouble yourself," said Kāra. "I will look upon my grandmother at my leisure. The night is waning. Take your price and go your way."

He handed the dwarf the emerald, holding the lamp, which he had relighted, while Sebbet examined the stone with great care.

"Yes; it is the great emerald with the cartouche of Ahtka-Rā," said the embalmer, in a low, grave voice.

"Osiris be praised that at last it is my own! Hatatcha was a wise woman, and she kept her word."

Kāra extinguished the light, but the moon was shining and sent some of its rays through the arch to relieve the gloom.

"Good-night," said he.

The dwarf stood still, thinking deeply. Finally he said, glancing at the mummy:

"Where will my old friend repose?"

"It is her secret," returned the prince, brusquely. "She trusted you not to ask questions."

"And yourself? Will you not wish to be mummified when your course is run?"

Kāra laughed.

"Ah, my Sebbet, are you immortal?" he asked. "Do you expect to live to embalm all the generations? You made a mummy of my great-grandmother and of my grandmother. Your hairs are now white. Be content, and think upon your own future."

"That has already occupied my mind," answered the dwarf, quietly. "Farewell, then, prince of a royal line. Your ancestors thought first of the tomb, then of the life preceding it. You are indulging in life, with no thought of the tomb and the resurrection. It is the new order of things, the trend of a civilization that forgets its dead and hides the silent ones in the earth, that they may putrify and decay and become mere dust. Very well; the age is yours, not mine. May Osiris guide thy life, my prince!"

He turned to his donkey and led the ghost-like animal out into the night. Kāra stood still, and in a moment he could hear their footsteps no longer.

Then he secured the mat before the arch and for a second time swung back the stone in the wall. This done, he felt in the dusk for the mummy of Hatatcha, and lifting it in his arms, bore it through the opening and replaced the stone. The body was heavy, and he panted as he paused to light his lamp.

It was nearly an hour before Kāra, weary and perspiring, finally deposited the mummy of his grandmother beside its elaborately constructed case. He

then unfastened the straps that bound it to the board, and by exercising great care succeeded in placing the body in its coffin without breaking or injuring it. Next he removed the outer strips of linen that swathed the head until the outlines of Hatatcha's face showed clearly through its mask of tightly drawn bandages. Then he stood aside, and holding up the lamp, gazed long and earnestly upon the calm features.

"I promised," he murmured, "here to repeat my oath: That I will show no mercy to any one of Lord Roane's family; that I will hunt them down, every one, as a tiger hunts his prey, and crush and humble them in the eyes of all men; that not one shall finally escape my vengeance, and that all shall know in the end that it was Hatatcha who destroyed them. So be it. By Âmen-Rà, the Sun-God who gave me being; by Ahtka-Rā, whose blood now courses through my veins; by my hope of peace on earth and in the life to come, I swear that Hatatcha's will shall be obeyed!"

His voice was cold and even of tone; his face grave, but unmoved. He placed his hand upon the breast of the mummy and repeated the mystic sign he had used at her death-bed. This done, he raised the heavy carved lid of the case and placed it in position.

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Next morning Kāra gave Nephthys a kiss and returned across the river on his way to Cairo. The dragoman carried the traveling bag and grumbled at its weight. He was in a bad humor. It is all very well to make money, and Kāra is a veritable mine; but had Tadros realized that Nephthys was so fat and flabby, it would have required much more than a roll of papyrus to induce him to part with her. True, he had managed, while her master was asleep, to stealthily meet the girl and embrace her; but he lacked the satisfaction that exists in proprietorship. One should be careful about selling young women. They are like untried camels — liable to develop unexpected and valuable qualities.

These reflections engrossed the dragoman all the way to Cairo; but there were other things to demand his attention. Prince Kāra announced his intention of taking the next steamer to Naples, and then traveling to Paris and London. He asked Tadros to accompany him.

"But that is impossible!" was the reply. "I am a dragoman of *Egypt,* the chief of my profession, a guide unequaled for knowledge, intelligence and fidelity in all the land! But take me away from my own country, and what am I? Take me from the poor tourists, and what will become of them?"

"I need you in Europe, to do things in my service that I would not dare propose to anyone else. I believe," said the prince, coolly, "that you are an unprincipled scoundrel. You lie easily and without hesitation; you rob me

cheerfully every day that you are in my employ; you have no conscience and no morality, except that you are afraid of the law. I have studied your character with care, and I have estimated it aright." Tadros first looked shame-faced, then humble, then indignant.

"By every god of Egypt," he cried, earnestly, "I am an honest man!"

"That is proof of my assertion to the contrary," replied the unmoved Kāra. "Now, I need a scoundrel to assist me, and you are the man of my choice. Continue to fleece me, if you like; I do not mind. But if you serve me faithfully in some delicate matters that will soon require my attention, I will make you the richest dragoman alive, so that Raschid and the Haieks will all turn green with envy. On the other hand, should you choose to betray me, you will not require riches, for the nether world has no commerce."

Tadros thought it over.

"We are Egyptians," he said, at last. "Your enemies are equally mine. Very well; command and I will obey. Are you not a prince of my people? And why should I ever wish to betray you?"

"Because wise men sometimes become fools. In your case a lapse from wisdom means death. Others may bribe you with an equal amount of money, but I alone will exact the penalty for betrayal. I think you will remain wise."

"Ah, that is certain, my prince!" declared Tadros, with conviction.

And so Kāra sailed from Alexandria, taking with him the great diamonds which the Van der Veens had already reçut, the wonderful pearls which no eye but his had yet beheld, and the priceless treasures of Ahtka-Rā.

The dragoman followed him, humble and obedient.

CHAPTER IX.

ANETH.

Charles Consinor, ninth Earl of Roane, was considerably discouraged at the moment when Luke the butler placed the big blue government envelope upon his table, thoughtfully leaving it at the top of the daily heap of missives from impatient creditors.

During a gay and dissipated life, his lordship had seen the ample fortune left him by his father gradually melt away, until now, in his old age, he found it difficult to secure sufficient funds to enable him to maintain a respectable position in the world. He had been ably assisted in his extravagances by his only son, the Viscount Roger Consinor, who for twenty years past had performed his full share in dissipating the family fortunes.

Aside from their mutual prodigality, however, the two men had little in common. The father was reckless, open-handed and careless of consequences, indulging himself frankly in such dissipations as most men are careful to hide. The son was reserved and sullen, and posed as a man eminently respectable, confining his irregularities mainly to the gaming table. Between them they had loaded the estates with mortgages and sold every stick and stone that could be sold. At last the inevitable happened and they faced absolute ruin.

There seemed no way out of their difficulties. The viscount had unfortunately married a wife with no resources whatever, although her family connections were irreproachable. The poor viscountess had been a confirmed invalid ever since her baby girl was born, some eighteen years before, and was merely tolerated in the big, half-ruined London mansion, being neglected alike by her husband and her father-in-law, who had both come to look upon her as a useless incumbrance. More than that, they resented the presence of a young, awkward girl in the house, and for that reason banished Aneth at twelve to a girl's school in Cheshire, where she had remained, practically forgotten, until her eighteenth year. Then the lady preceptress shipped her home because her tuition fee was not promptly paid.

Aneth found her mother so confirmed in the selfish habits of the persistent invalid, that the girl's society, fresh and cheery though it proved, only irritated her nerves. She found her father, the morose viscount, absolutely indifferent and unresponsive to her desire to be loved and admitted into his companionship. But old Lord Roane, her grandfather, had still a weakness for a pretty face, and Aneth was certainly pretty. Moreover, she was sweet and pure and maidenly, and no one was better able to admire and appreciate such qualities than the worn-out roué whose life had been mainly spent in the

society of light women. So he took the girl to his evil old heart, and loved her, and tried to prevent her discovering how unworthy he was of her affection. The love for his granddaughter became the one unselfish, honest love of his life, and it assisted wonderfully in restoring in him some portion of his long-lost self-respect.

Aneth, finding no other friend in the gloomy establishment that was now her home, soon became devoted, in turn, to her grandsire, and although she was shrewd enough, in spite of her inexperience, to realize that his life had been, and still was, somewhat coarse and dissipated, she fondly imagined that her influence would, to an extent, reclaim him — which it actually did, but only to an extent.

There was little concealment in the family circle as to the state of their finances. Father and son quarreled openly about the division of what little money could be raised on the overburdened estates, and the girl was not long in realizing the difficulties of their position. If the viscount had nothing to gamble with, he became insufferable and almost brutal in his manner; if Lord Roane could not afford to dine at the club and amuse himself afterward, he was irritable and abusive to all with whom he came in contact, save only his granddaughter. The household expenses were matters of credit, and the wages of the servants were greatly in arrears.

And so, when the affairs of the family had become well-nigh desperate, the big blue envelope with the government stamp arrived, and like magic all their difficulties dissolved.

A newly appointed cabinet minister — a man whom Lord Roane had reason to consider an enemy rather than a friend — had for some surprising and unknown reason interested himself in Roane's behalf, and the result was a diplomatic post for him in Egypt under Lord Cromer, and a position for the viscount in the Egyptian Department of Finance. The appointments were lucrative and honorable, and indicated the Government's perfect confidence in both father and son.

Lord Roane was astounded. Never would he have dared demand such consideration, and to have these honors thrust upon him at a time when they would practically rescue his name and fortune from ruin was almost unbelievable.

He accepted the appointment with alacrity, joyful at the prospect of a winter in gay Cairo. Roger shared his father's felicity, because the gaming in the oriental city would be more fascinating than that of London, where people had begun to frown when he entered a room. The invalid viscountess hoped Egypt would benefit her health. Aneth welcomed any change from the horrible condition in which they had existed latterly.

“Grandfather,” said she, gravely, “our gracious Queen has given to you and to my father positions of great trust. I am sure that you will personally do your duty loyally, and with credit to our honored name; but I’m afraid for father. Will you promise me to keep him from card-playing and urge him to lead a more reputable life?”

“Phoo! Nonsense, child. Roger will behave himself, I am sure, now that he will have important duties to occupy him. The Minister of Finance will keep him busy, never fear, and he will have neither time nor inclination for folly. Don’t worry, little one. Our fortunes have changed; we shall now be able to pay the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker, and there is little doubt the Consinors will speedily become the pride of the nation. Ahem! Tell Luke, my dear, to fetch my brandy and soda as you go out. And, stay! Remember, we are to leave London on the fourth of October and you must have both your mother and yourself ready to depart promptly. I depend upon you, Aneth.”

She kissed him and went away without further comment, reflecting, with a sigh, that her fears and warnings were alike unheeded.

Lord Roane, left to himself, began wondering anew to what whim of fate he owed his good fortune. Really, there seemed no clue to the mystery.

It was a complicated matter, even to one on the inside, so it is no wonder the old nobleman failed to comprehend it.

Many years ago the cabinet minister and Lord Roane had been intimate friends; then the former fell madly in love with a little Egyptian princess who was the rage of the London season, and sought her hand in marriage. Roane also became enamored of the beautiful Hatatcha, and went so far as to apply for a divorce from his wife, that he might wed her. The fascinating Egyptian, guileless of European customs and won by the masterful ardor of Roane, chose him from among all her suitors, and casting aside the honest love of Roane’s friend, fell unconsciously into the trap set for her and became the mistress of the man who promised her such rare devotion. Presently, however, the heartless roué tired of his easy conquest and carelessly thrust her aside, although the divorce for which he had applied on false representations had now been granted, and he was free to marry his victim had he so wished.

All London was indignant at his act at the time, and no one was more enraged than Roane’s former friend. He searched everywhere for the Egyptian princess when Hatatcha fled from London to hide her shame, and on his return from the unsuccessful quest, he quarreled with Roane and would have killed him had not mutual friends interposed.

Time had, of course, seared all these old wounds, although the hatred

between the two men would endure to the grave. The betrayer was careless of criticism and wealthy enough to defy it. The man who had truly loved was broken-hearted, and from that time avoided all society and especially that of women. But he plunged into politics for diversion, and in that field won for himself such honor and renown in future years that at last he became a member of Her Majesty's cabinet, second in power only to the Premier himself.

Thus Prince Kāra found him. The Egyptian had only to use the magic name of Hatatcha to secure a private audience with the great man, who listened quietly while Kāra demanded vengeance upon his grandmother's betrayer.

"In England," said the minister, "there is no vendetta. The rage I fostered thirty-odd years ago, when my heart was wrung with despair, has long since worn itself out. Time evens up these old scores without human interference. Roane is to-day on the verge of ruin. His only son is a confirmed gambler. Their race is nearly run, and the gray hairs of Hatatcha's false lover will go dishonored to the grave. Is that not enough?"

"By no means," returned Prince Kāra, with composure. "They must be made to suffer as my grandmother suffered, but with added agony for the years of impunity that have elapsed. It was her will — the desire of her long, miserable life. Will you, her old friend, deny her right to be avenged?"

A flood of resentment swept into the heart of the listener. Years may sear a wound; but if it is deep, the scar remains.

"What do you ask of me?" he answered.

Before replying, Kāra reflected for some time, his eyes steadily fixed upon the floor.

"Are there no women in Lord Roane's family?" he asked, finally.

"There are two, I believe — his son's wife, who is an invalid, and his granddaughter."

"Ah!" The long-drawn exclamation was one of triumphant satisfaction. Again the Egyptian relapsed into thought, and the minister was growing impatient when his strange visitor at last spoke.

"Sir," said he, "you ask me what you can do to assist me. I will tell you. Obtain for Lord Roane a diplomatic post in Cairo, under Lord Cromer. Obtain some honorable place for his son as well. That will take the entire family to Egypt — my own country."

"Well?"

"In London there is no vendetta. Crimes that the law cannot reach are allowed to go unpunished. In Egypt we are Nature's children. No false civilization glosses our wrongs or denies our right to protect our honor. I

implore you, my lord, as you respect the memory of poor Hatatcha, to send Lord Roane and his family to Egypt."

"I will," said the minister, with stem brow.

And so it was that the Government remembered old Lord Roane, and likewise his illustrious son, the Viscount Roger Consinor, and sent them to Egypt on missions of trust.

CHAPTER X.

LORD CROMER'S RECEPTION.

It was but natural that Lord Cromer, with his intense loyalty to the home Government, should endeavor to show every honor to the latest recipients of Her Majesty's favor. He gave a splendid dinner to Lord Roane and his family, which was followed by a reception attended by nearly every important personage then in Cairo.

At the dinner Gerald Winston was introduced to Aneth Consinor, and had the good fortune to be selected to escort her to the table. She won the big Englishman with the first glance from her clear, innocent eyes, and he was delighted to find that she conversed easily and with intelligence upon the themes that most interested him.

Winston knew something of the reputation of Lord Roane at home, and remembered not only his intrigue with the Egyptian princess in his youth, but the gossip of many more recent escapades that were distinctly unsavory. He had also heard whispers concerning his son, the viscount, that served to cast more or less discredit upon a name already sadly tarnished; but no one could look into Aneth's candid eyes without being convinced that she was innocent of the sins of her fathers. Winston exonerated her at once of any possible contamination from such sources, rejoicing exultantly that the English maiden was unconscious of the smirch of her environments. However, as he listened to the girl's bright chatter, an incongruous thought struck him and made him frown involuntarily. He remembered that she was a cousin — on the left hand, to be sure, but no less an unrecognized second cousin — to that dirty Egyptian whom he had lately discovered under the palms of Fedah, and who had since, by an astonishing evolution, become Prince Kāra. Lord Roane was grandfather to them both. It was not Aneth's fault — perhaps she would never know of the illicit relationship; but his own knowledge of the fact rendered him uneasy for her sake, and he began to wish she had never been allowed to set foot in Egypt.

But here she was, and apparently very happy and contented by his side.

"Perhaps I am wrong in my estimate of Cleopatra," she was saying; "but the inscriptions on the temple at Dendera seem to prove her to have been religious and high-minded to a degree. Perhaps it is Shakespeare's romance of Antony and Cleopatra that has poisoned our minds as to the character of a noble woman."

"Have you been to Dendera?" he asked; "and can you read the inscriptions?"

"I have penetrated into Egypt no farther than Cairo, Mr. Winston," she

responded, with a laugh; “therefore my acquaintance with the temples is confined to what I have read. But at my school was a teacher passionately fond of Egyptology, and around her she gathered a group of girls whom she inspired with a similar love for the subject. We have read everything we could procure that might assist us in our studies, and — don’t laugh, sir! — I can even write hieroglyphics a bit myself.”

“That is quite simple,” said he, smiling; “but can you decipher and translate the sign language?”

“No; so many individual signs mean so many different things, and it is so impossible to decide whether the inscription begins to read from right to left, or in the middle, or up or down!”

“That may well puzzle more experienced heads than yours, Miss Consinor,” said he. “Indeed, I know of but one man living who reads the hieroglyphics unerringly.”

“And who is that?” she asked, with eager interest. He bit his lip, blaming himself for the thoughtless slip of his tongue. Nothing should induce him to mention Kāra by name to this girl.

“A native whom I recently met,” he answered, evasively. “But tell me, are you not going to make the Nile trip?”

“I hope so, when my grandfather has time to take me; but he says his new duties will require all his present attention, and unfortunately they are connected with the new works in the Delta rather than with upper Egypt.” She glanced across at Lord Roane, who was conversing lightly with two high dignitaries, and his eyes followed hers. “But won’t you tell me something of your own experiences in the Nile country?” she asked. “I am told you are a very great discoverer, and have lately unearthed a number of priceless ancient papyri.”

“They are interesting,” returned Winston, modestly, “but not so extraordinary as to deserve your comment. Indeed, Miss Consinor, although I have been many years in Egypt, engaged in quiet explorations, I cannot claim to have added much to the vast treasures that have been accumulated.”

“But His Grace the Khedive has made you a Bey,” she persisted.

He laughed frankly and without affectation.

“The Khedive has this cheerful way of rewarding those who will spend their money to make his ancient domain famous,” he replied. “Beys are as plentiful in Egypt as are counts in France.”

“But you have made *some* discoveries, I am sure. The wonderful papyri, for instance — where did you find them?”

“I bought them, Miss Consinor, with good English money.”

She appeared disappointed, but brightened a moment later.

“At least it was you who discovered and excavated the birth-house at Kom Ombos. I have read your article concerning it in the *Saturday Review*.”

“Then you know all about it,” said he. “But see; nearly opposite us is the great Maspero himself — the man who has done more for Egypt than all the rest of us combined. Does he not look the savant? Let me tell you something of his most important work.”

Here was a subject he could talk on fluently and with fervor, and she listened as attentively as he could desire.

After dinner they repaired to the great hall of the palace, to participate in the reception. Lord Cromer was soon gracefully greeting his guests and presenting them to Lord Roane, Viscount Consinor and the Honorable Aneth Consinor.

Gerald Winston, standing at a distance from the group, gave an involuntary shiver as he saw Prince Kāra brought forward and presented.

Lord Roane greeted the Egyptian with the same cordiality he had bestowed uniformly upon his host’s other guests. Why should he not? Only Winston, silently observant in the background, knew their relationship — except Kāra. Yes; Kāra knew, for he had said so that day beneath the palms of Fedah. But now his demeanor was grave and courteous, and his countenance composed and inscrutable.

Aneth smiled upon the handsome native as he passed slowly on to give place to others.

Kāra, who now affected European dress, wore the conventional evening costume; but he was distinguished by the massive and curious chain that hung from his neck, as well as by a unique gem that he wore upon a finger of his left hand. It had no real color, yet it attracted every eye as surely as if it possessed a subtile magnetism that was irresistible. No one saw it in the same aspect, for one declared it blue, another gray, a third brown and the next one green. But all agreed that it had a strange, fascinating gleam, and declared that it radiated tiny tongues of flame.

It was the stone Kāra had picked from the burial case of Ahtka-Rā.

Later in the evening the Egyptian found opportunity for a short conversation with Aneth, who was plainly attracted by this distinguished-appearing native. He found her curious concerning the chain of the kings, and proudly explained it to her, reading some of the inscriptions upon the links.

“Some time,” said he, “it will give me pleasure to go over all the links with you, for in them is condensed the history of the great kings of the early dynasties. There is not another such record in existence.”

“I can well believe it,” replied the girl. “You must honor me with a call,

Prince Kāra, for I am an ardent Egyptologist, although a very ignorant one."

"I thank you," said Kāra, bowing low; "I shall esteem it a privilege to enlighten you so far as I am able. My country has a wonderful history, and much of it is not yet printed in books."

Shortly after this he left the reception, although many of the ladies would have been delighted to lionize him. He had become known in the capital as the last of the descendants of the ancient kings of Egypt; and while more than one was skeptical of the truth of this statement, its corroboration by the natives who knew of his lineage, the wide advertisement given his claims by Tadros, the dragoman, and the enormous wealth the Prince was reputed to possess, all contributed to render him a most interesting figure in Cairoene society. It is certain that had he cared to remain at Lord Cromer's reception, he would have met with no lack of attention; but his object in attending was now accomplished, and he left the assemblage and found his carriage awaiting him in the driveway.

"Home!" said he, in Coptic, and his dragoman nodded cheerfully and sprang upon the box. The journey was made in moody silence.

Meantime Winston rejoined Aneth and found her a seat in a quiet comer, where they could converse undisturbed. He had watched Kāra uneasily while the Egyptian was addressing the English girl, and now inwardly resolved to counteract any favorable impression the native prince might have made upon her unsophisticated mind.

Why he should interest himself so strangely in this young woman he could not have explained. Many a fair maid had smiled upon Gerald Winston without causing his heart to beat one jot the faster. Nay, they had at times even practiced their arts to win him, for the bluff, good-looking young Englishman was wealthy enough to be regarded a good catch. But the society of fashionable ladies was sure to weary him in time, and here in Egypt he met only butterflies from England and America, or the coarse-featured, stolid native women, who had no power to interest any European of intelligence.

But Aneth Consinor seemed different from all the others. Not because she was fresh and sweet and girlish, for he had seen nice girls before; not that she was beautiful, because many women possess that enviable gift; not that she was gracious and intelligent, with a fascinating charm of manner, although that counts for much in winning men's hearts. Perhaps, after all, it was her sincerity and the lights that lay in the clear depths of her wonderful eyes that formed her chief attraction. The eyes, he remembered, had impressed him at first, and they were destined to retain their power over him to the last.

And the strangest thing of all, it occurred to him, as he sat pleasantly chatting with her, was the fact that she was Lord Roane's granddaughter and

the child of Lord Consinor. A remark that Kāra had once made flashed across his mind: “The father, giving so little to his progeny, can scarce contaminate it, whatever he may chance to be.” Perhaps this was more logical than he had hitherto cared to believe.

Aneth mentioned Prince Kāra presently, and asked whether he knew him.

“Yes,” he answered; “it was I who discovered him. Kāra is one of my few finds.”

“And where was he discovered?” she asked, amused at his tone.

“In a mud village on the Nile bank, clothed in rags and coated with dirt. But he was very intelligent, for he had been educated by a clever relative who had once lived in the world; and, in some way, he and his people had access to an ancient hoarded treasure, so that the man was rich without knowing how to utilize his wealth. I purchased his treasure — or a part of it, at least — and brought him to Cairo. He was observant and quick to adapt himself to his new surroundings. He sold more treasure, I have since learned, and visited Paris and London. In six months the dirty Nile dweller has become a man of the world, and society accepted him because he is rich and talented.”

“How curious!” she exclaimed. “And is he, indeed, a descendant of the ancient kings?”

“So I believe — on his mother’s side, for the Egyptians trace their descent only from their mothers. Yet they are so inconsistent that it is of their fathers they boast. The Egyptian women have usually been poor creatures, listless and unintelligent. In this they differ from the women of almost every other semi-tropical country.”

“They must have been different in the olden times,” said the girl, gravely; “for it is not likely that the first real civilization of the world sprang from a stupid race. And think for how many centuries these poor creatures have been enslaved and trodden into the dust. I am inclined to think the contempt with which the Saracens regarded women is responsible for their present condition in Egypt. Have you found none of them clever or womanly, as we understand the latter term?”

He thought of Hatatcha.

“There are doubtless a few exceptions, even in these days,” he answered. “And you are right about ancient women having had their place in Egyptian history. Besides poor Cleopatra, whom you so bravely defended at dinner, there was Queen Hatasu, you know; and Nitocris, Hatshepset and others who rendered themselves immortal. Have you visited our museum yet?”

“Only for a glance around; but that glance was enough to fill me with awe and wonder. I mean to devote many days to the study of its treasures.”

“Let me go with you,” he begged. “It would please me to watch your eager enjoyment of the things I know so well. And I can help you a little.”

“You are very good, indeed,” said the girl, delighted at the suggestion. “We will go to-morrow afternoon, if you can spare the time.”

“May I call for you?” he asked.

“If you please. I will be ready at one o’clock, for I must take full advantage of my opportunity.”

So he went home filled with elation at the promise of to-morrow. And never before had Gerald Winston given a thought to a woman after leaving her presence. To-night he dreamed, and the dream was of Aneth.

CHAPTER XI.

SETTING THE SNARES.

Kāra also dreamed. The girl's eyes haunted him. He saw her bright, eager glance, her appealing smile, the graceful pose of her beautiful head wherever he might chance to look. And he cursed the persistent vision and tried to exorcise it, well knowing it might lead to his undoing.

The Egyptian's present establishment consisted of a handsome villa on the Shubra road which at one time had been owned by a high Turkish official. It was splendidly furnished, including many modem conveniences, and had a pretty garden in the court that led from the master's quarters to the harem. Tadros, the dragoman, proudly boasted to himself — he dared not confide in others — that the furnishing of this villa had enabled him to acquire a snug fortune. Kāra allowed him a free hand, and much gold refused to pass through the dragoman's fingers.

Tadros had ceased to bemoan the loss of his beloved tourists by this time. Even a dozen profligate Americans could not enrich him as his own countryman was doing. And the end was not yet.

A few days after the reception Kāra lunched at the Lotus Club and met there Lord Consinor. Later the prince played a game of écarté with Colonel Varrin, of the Khédivial army, and lost a large sum. Consinor watched the game with interest, and after the colonel had retired proposed to take a hand with the Egyptian himself. To this Kāra politely assented. He was a careless player, and displayed little judgment. The result was that he lost again, and Consinor found himself the richer by a hundred pounds.

The prince laughed good-humoredly and apologized for his poor playing.

"The next time you favor me with a game," said he, "I will try to do better."

Consinor smiled grimly. To meet so wealthy and indifferent a victim was indeed rare good luck. He promised himself to fleece the inexperienced Egyptian with exceptional pleasure.

The Lotus Club was then, as now, the daily resort of the most prominent and at the same time the fastest set in Cairo. Both Roane and Consinor had been posted for membership, although the former seldom visited the place until after midnight, and then only to sup or indulge in a bottle of wine when there was nothing more amusing to do. It appeared that Lord Roane was conducting himself with exceptional caution since his arrival in Cairo. His official duties were light, and he passed most of his days at the rooms in the Savoy, where his party was temporarily located until a suitable house could be secured and fitted up. He left Aneth much alone in the evenings, however,

and the girl was forced to content herself with the gaieties of the fashionable hotel life and the companionship of those few acquaintances who called upon her. As for the viscount, he was now, as always, quite outside the family circle, and while he seemed attentive to his desk at the Department of Finance, the office hours were over at midday and he was free to pass the afternoons and evenings at the club. The viscountess remained languidly helpless and clung to her own apartment, where she kept a couple of Arab servants busy waiting upon her.

Consinor had told Aneth that he would not touch a card while he remained in Egypt; but if he had ever had an idea of keeping his word the resolution soon vanished. He found Kāra irresistible. Sometimes, to be sure, the prince had luck and won, but in that event it was his custom to double the stakes indefinitely until his opponent swept all his winnings away.

This reckless policy at first alarmed Consinor, who was accustomed to the cautious play of the London clubs; but he observed that Kāra declined ever to rise from the table a winner. No matter with whom he played, his opponent was sure to profit in the end by the Egyptian's peculiar methods. For this reason no man was more popular at the club or more eagerly sought as a partner in "a quiet game" than Prince Kāra, whose wealth seemed enormous and inexhaustible and whose generosity was proverbial.

But the rich Egyptian seemed to fancy Consinor's society above all other, and soon it came to be understood by the club's habitués that the two men preferred to play together, and the viscount was universally envied as a most fortunate individual.

Yet Kāra was occupying himself in other ways than card-playing during the weeks that followed the arrival of Lord Roane's party in Egypt. The victims of Hatatcha's hatred had been delivered into his net, and it was now necessary to spin his web so tightly about them that there could be no means of escape. The oriental mind is intricate. It seldom leads directly to a desired object or accomplishment, but prefers to plot cunningly and with involute complexity.

One of Lord Roane's few responsibilities was to audit the claims against the Egyptian Government of certain British contractors who were engaged in repairing the Rosetta Barrage and the canals leading from it. This barrage had originally been built in 1842, but was so badly done that important repairs had long been necessary. At one place a contractor named McFarland had agreed to build a stone embankment for two miles along the edge of a canal, to protect the country when the sluice-gates of the dam were opened. This man found, when he began excavating, that at one time a stone embankment had actually been built in this same place, although not high

enough to be effective, for which reason it had become covered with Nile mud and its very existence forgotten. Finding that more than half of the work he had contracted to perform was already accomplished, the astute McFarland kept his lucky discovery a secret and proceeded to complete the embankment. Then he presented his bill for the entire work to be audited by Roane, after which he intended to collect from the Government. The matter involved the theft of eighteen thousand pounds sterling.

Kāra, whose well-paid spies were watching every official act of Lord Roane, learned of the contractor's plot by means of its betrayal to one of his men by McFarland himself, who, in an unguarded moment, when he was under the influence of drink, confided his good fortune to "his dear friend." But it was evident that Roane had no suspicion of the imposture and was likely to approve the fulfilment of the contract without hesitation.

Here was just the opportunity that the Egyptian had been seeking. One morning Tadros, being fully instructed, obtained a private interview with Lord Roane and confided to him his discovery of the clever plan of robbing the Government which McFarland was contemplating. Roane was surprised, but thanked the informer and promised to expose the swindle.

"That, my lord, would be a foolish thing to do," asserted the dragoman, bluntly. "The Egyptian Government is getting rich, and has ample money to pay for this contract and a dozen like it. I assure you that no one is aware of this secret but ourselves. Very well! Are we fools, my lord? Are there no commissions to be exacted to repay you for living in this country of the Turks, or me for keeping my ears open? I do not want jour thanks; I want money. For a thousand pounds I will keep silent forever. For the rest, you can arrange your own division with the contractor."

Roane grew angry and indignant at once, asserting the dignity of his high office and blustering and threatening the dragoman for daring to so insult him. Tadros, however, was unimpressed.

"It is a mere matter of business," he suggested, when he was again allowed to proceed. "I am myself an Egyptian, but the Egyptians do not rule Egypt. Nor do I believe the English are here from entirely unselfish motives. To be frank, why should you or I endeavor to protect the stupid Turks, who are being robbed right and left? In this affair there is no risk at all, for if McFarland's dishonesty is discovered no one can properly accuse you of knowing the truth about the old embankment. Your inspector has gone there now; on his return he will say that the work is completed according to contract. You will approve the bill, McFarland will be paid, and I will then call upon you to collect my thousand pounds. Of your agreement with the contractor I wish to know nothing; so, then, the matter is settled. You can

trust to my discretion, my lord."

Then he went away, leaving Roane to consider the proposition.

The old nobleman's career was punctured with such irregularities that the contemplation of this innocent-looking affair was in no way appalling to his moral sense. He merely pondered its safety, and decided the risk of exposure was small. Cairo was an extravagant city to live in, and his salary was too small to permit him to indulge in all the amusements he craved. The opportunity to acquire a snug amount was not to be despised, and, after all, the dragoman was correct in saying it would be folly not to take advantage of it.

The next day Kāra personally interviewed the contractor, telling him frankly that he was aware of all the details of the proposed swindle. McFarland was frightened, and protested that he had no intention of collecting the bill he had presented.

But the prince speedily reassured him.

"You must follow out your plans," said he. "It is too late to withdraw now. When you go to Roane he will inform you that he has discovered the truth. You will then compromise with him, offering him one-half of the entire sum yon intend to steal, or a matter of nine thousand pounds. Give him more, if necessary; but remember that every piastre you allow Roane I will repay to you personally, if you can get my lord to sign a receipt to place in my hands."

"I see," said McFarland, nodding wisely. "You want to get him in your power."

"Precisely; and I am willing to pay well to do so."

"But when you expose him you will also implicate me."

"I shall not expose him. It will merely be a weapon for me to hold over him, but one I shall never use. You can depend upon that. Take your eighteen thousand pounds and go to England, where it will enable you to live in peace and affluence."

"I will," said the contractor. "I'll take the chances."

"There are none," returned Kāra, positively.

So it was that Lord Roane bargained successfully with the contractor and won for himself twelve of the eighteen thousand pounds for auditing the bill. The money was promptly paid by the Government and the division of spoils followed. Tadros called for his thousand pounds and gave a receipt for it that would incriminate himself if he ever dared divulge the secret. Roane also gave a receipt to McFarland, although reluctantly, and only when he found the matter could be arranged in no other way.

This receipt passed into the hands of Kāra. The contractor at once returned

to England, and my lord secretly congratulated himself upon his "good luck" and began to enjoy his money.

While this little comedy was being enacted, Kāra found opportunity to call more than once upon Miss Aneth Consinor, who was charmed by his graceful speech and his exceptional knowledge of Egyptian history. Even Winston, whom Kāra met sometimes in the young lady's reception-room, could not deny the prince's claim to superior information concerning the ancients, and he listened as eagerly as Aneth to the man's interesting conversations, while impotently resenting the Egyptian's attention to the girl.

Aneth, however, knowing no reason why she should not admire the handsome native, whose personal attractions were by no means small, loved to draw him into discussions on his favorite themes and watch his dark, glowing eyes light up as he explained the mysteries of the priestly rites of the early dynasties. Whatever might be the man's secret designs, he always treated the English girl with rare gentleness and courtesy, although the bluntness of his speech and the occasional indelicacy of his allusions betrayed the crudeness of his early training. Winston grew to dislike and even to fear Kāra; for while he had nothing tangible with which to reproach the Egyptian, his experience of the native character led him to distrust the man intuitively.

Kāra doubtless felt this mistrust, for a coolness grew up between the two men that quickly destroyed their former friendship, and they soon came to mutually understand that they were rivals for Aneth's favor, and perhaps her affections.

Neither, however, had any idea of withdrawing from the field, and Aneth distributed her favors equally between them because she had no thought beyond her enjoyment of the society of the two men who had proved so especially agreeable. The girl had no chaperone except a young English lady whose rooms adjoined her own and with whom she had established a friendship; but Mrs. Everingham took a warm interest in the lonely girl and was glad to accompany her in many an excursion from which Aneth would otherwise have been debarred. The visits to the museum with Winston were frequent and of absorbing interest, for the handsome young Egyptologist was a delightful guide. Following an afternoon examining the famous relics, they would repair to the terrace at Shepheard's for five-o'clock tea, and here Kāra frequently joined them. The prince had brought from Paris an automobile, together with a competent French chauffeur, and in this machine many pleasant excursions were made to pyramids, Heliopolis, Sakkara and Helwan, the Egyptian roads being almost perfection. Winston and Mrs. Everingham always joined these parties, and neither could fail to admit that

Kāra was a delightful host.

CHAPTER XII.

NEPHTHYS.

Kāra's plans were now maturing excellently, save in one particular. He did not wish to acquire a fondness for the girl who was his proposed victim, yet from the first she had cast a powerful spell over him, which all his secret struggles failed to remove. Waking or sleeping, her face was always before him, nor could he banish it even when engaged in play with her father at the club.

The Egyptian was shrewd enough to recognize danger in this extraordinary condition, and it caused him much uneasiness.

Finally, during a wakeful night, he thought of a means of escape.

"Tadros," said he to his dragoman in the morning, "go to Fedah and fetch Nephthys here. I have an empty harem at present; she shall be its first occupant."

Even the dragoman was surprised. He had begun to look upon his master as one affecting the manners and customs of the Europeans rather than the followers of the lax Muslim faith; but his face showed his pleasure at receiving the command.

"Most certainly, my prince," said he, with alacrity. "I will take the first train to Fedah, and the beauty shall be in your harem within three days."

Kāra caught the tone and the look.

"On second thought, Tadros," he said, gravely, "I will send Ebbek in your place. I may need your services here in Cairo."

"Ebbek! that doddering old Arab! He will never do at all," cried the dragoman, blusteringly. "I alone know Fedah, and I alone know how to deal with Sĕra, and how to bring her fat daughter to you in safety. It is I who will go!"

"Send Ebbek to me."

"Not so; I will go myself to Fedah."

"Am I the master, Tadros?"

"You think so, because you are rich. If I knew of the tombs you are plundering, it is I who would be the master!"

"You are in great danger, my poor dragoman." Tadros, who had been glaring defiantly upon the other, dropped his eyes before the cold look of Kāra.

"Besides, some one must pay old Sĕra the two hundred and fifty piastres due her," he muttered, somewhat confused. "It was the contract, and she will not let the girl come unless she has the money."

"Send Ebbek to me."

The dragoman obeyed. He did not like Kāra's manner. He might, in truth, be in danger if he persisted in protesting. No one was so deep as he in his master's confidence. But what did he know? Merely enough to cause him to fear.

Ebbek performed the mission properly. He not only paid Sĕra her due, but gave her five gold pieces into the bargain, by his master's instructions; and he brought the girl, closely veiled, to Cairo and delivered her to Kāra's housekeeper.

The rooms of the harem had been swept and prepared. They were very luxurious, even for Cairo? and Nephthys was awed by the splendor of the apartments to be devoted to her use. Her dark, serious eyes, glorious as those attributed to the houris of Paradise, wandered about the rooms as she sank upon a divan, too dazed to think or speak.

Neither faculty was a strong point with Nephthys, however. Meekly she had obeyed the summons from the master who had purchased her. She did not try to consider what that summons might mean to her. What use? It was her fate. Perhaps at times she had dimly expected such a change. Kāra had once mentioned to her mother the possibility of his sending for her; but she had not dwelt upon the matter at all.

In the same listless manner that she had carried water from the Nile and worked at the loom she followed old Ebbek to Cairo, leaving her mother to gloat over her store of gold.

The journey across the river was a new experience to her — the journey by railway was wonderful; but she showed no interest. The great eyes calmly saw all, but the brain was not active enough to wonder. She had heard of such things and knew that they existed. Now she saw them — saw marvelous Cairo, with its thousand domes and minarets, its shifting kaleidoscope of street scenes, its brilliant costumes and weird clamor — and the medley of it all dulled her senses.

In a way she was really amused; but the amusement was only sensual. This costume was more gorgeous than the braided jacket of Tadros the dragoman, she observed; that house was better than the one old Hatatcha had lived in. But beyond this vague comparison, the sights were all outside her personal participation in them. The part she herself was playing on the world's great stage, the uncertainty of her immediate future, the reason why this tall, gray-bearded Arab was escorting her to Cairo, were all things she failed to consider.

So it was that on her entry into Kāra's splendid harem the girl could not at first understand that the luxury surrounding her was prepared for her especial use. Had she comprehended this fact, she would still have been unable to

imagine why.

She rested upon the cushions and gazed stupidly, yet with childish intentness, at the rich draperies and rugs, the gilded tables and chairs, the marble statuary and the tinkling perfumed fountain in the comer, as if fearing the vision would presently dissolve and she would awake from a dream.

She had brought a bundle under her dark blue shawl, a bundle containing her cotton tunic, the spangled robe and the wreath of artificial flowers. The blue beads Kāra had once given her were around her neck — all but one, which she had carefully removed and given to Sĕra her mother for an amulet.

She scarcely noticed when the old hag who acted as Kāra's housekeeper tossed her precious bundle scornfully into a comer and began to disrobe her. The shawl, the black cotton dress, the coarse undergown, were one by one removed, and then the fiat-bottomed home-made shoes.

When she was nude, the hag led her to an adjoining chamber, where her bath was prepared. Nephthys wondered, but did not speak. Neither did old Tilga, the housekeeper. She saw that the girl needed a scrubbing rather than a bath, and gave it to her much as if she were washing a child.

Afterward, when the fat, soft skin was dried, and annointed, and properly perfumed, Tilga led Nephthys to the robing-room, and dressed her in underclothing of silken gauze and a marvelous gown that was fastened with a girdle of cloth of gold. Pink stockings were drawn snugly over her chubby legs, and pink satin slippers, with silver bead-work, adorned her feet.

Then Tilga dressed the girl's magnificent hair, placing a jeweled butterfly against its lustrous coils.

When Nephthys was led before a great mirror, she could scarcely believe the image reflected therein was her own. But the woman in her was at last aroused.

She smiled at herself, then laughed — shyly at first, now with genuine delight. She could have remained hours before the mirror admiring the gorgeous vision; but the hag pulled her away, dragging her by one wrist back to the boudoir, with its gilded furniture and the fountain.

As she sank again upon the divan her eyes saw a tabouret at her side, upon which was a bronze lamp with a floating wick and a tray of cigarettes. She seized one of the latter eagerly, with a half-defiant look at old Tilga, and lighted it from the tiny flame of the lamp. Then she leaned back upon the cushions and inhaled the smoke with perfect enjoyment.

Tilga nodded approval, surveying her new charge the while critically. She had much experience with harems, and wondered where Prince Kāra could have found this exquisite creature; for, to Oriental eyes, at least, Nephthys was rarely beautiful, and, perhaps, few men of Europe would have gazed

upon her perfect features and great velvet eyes without admiration.

The rich dress transformed the Nile girl. Her luxurious surroundings but enhanced her beauty. Seemingly she was born for a harem, and fate had qualified her for this experience.

The afternoon that Nephthys arrived, Kāra was at the club, playing écarté with Lord Consinor. He was steadily winning, and in compliance with his usual custom, he declared he would continue to double until he lost.

"I'm not anxious to get your money, Consinor," he remarked, carelessly. "There will doubtless come a change in the luck before long."

The viscount was visibly disturbed. In all his experience he had never seen a man win so persistently. Already the stakes, because of Kāra's system of doubling, were enormous, and the game had attracted a group of spectators, who were almost as eager as the participants.

Gradually the afternoon waned, until at length the prince announced in a low voice that the stakes were ten thousand pounds. Consinor shivered: but with his eyes on the flame-lit ring of the prince, he cut the cards and played his hand as well as he was able. Kāra won, and the viscount threw down the cards with a white face. Already he was ruined, and to risk a deal for twenty thousand pounds was more than his nerves could bear.

"I'm done, Prince," said he, hoarsely.

"Bah! it is nothing," returned Kāra, lightly. "We will merely postpone the play until a more favorable time, when this cursed streak of luck — which I deplore more than you do — is broken. We will start afresh, and you shall have a chance to win your money back. Sign me a note of hand and I will go."

The viscount drew a sheet of paper toward him and signed a note of hand for ten thousand pounds. According to the rules of the club, the paper must be witnessed by two members, so Colonel Varrin and Ering van Roden penciled their initials upon it.

Kāra stuffed the document carelessly into a side pocket; but a moment after, as if struck by a sudden thought, he pulled out a paper and rolled it into a taper. This he lighted from the blaze of a lamp and with it relit his cigar, afterward holding the taper in his fingers until it was consumed to a fine ash. Not a. word was spoken. The others watched him silently, but with significant looks, never suspecting he had substituted another paper for the note of hand, while Consinor, as the ash was brushed to the floor, breathed more freely.

"The pleasure of winning ought to be enough for any man," remarked the prince, and, rising from the table, he sauntered from the room.

"Nevertheless, it is a debt of honor," said Colonel "Vanin, gravely." But it

is fortunate, Consinor, you were playing with Prince Kāra. The fellow is so confoundedly rich that money means nothing to him, and he will not take his winnings unless you force him to accept them."

"I know that," returned the viscount. "I would never have allowed another man to double the stakes during a winning streak. Perhaps I should not have allowed the prince to do so."

Then he also left the club, for, despite Kāra's seeming generosity in destroying the note, his own insidious nature led him to suspect every man he had dealings with, and the amount involved was so enormous that it would swallow up double the sum his father's crippled estates were now worth. On his own account he had nothing at all beyond the salary he drew from the Ministry of Finance; so he realized his danger, and could not resist feeling that he had been led into a trap.

Meantime Tadros had not forgotten, as his master had done, the probable arrival of Nephthys by the afternoon train. He should have waited in the anteroom of the club for Kāra's orders; but instead he returned to the house and found that the girl had already been there for an hour.

"I will see her," he muttered, and disregarding old Ebbek, who would have stopped him, he entered the harem.

Thrusting aside the draperies, Tadros coolly stalked into the girl's boudoir and then stopped short in undisguised astonishment at what his eyes beheld. Nephthys was reclining upon the divan, smoking her cigarette, resplendent in her fleecy silks, the golden braid and the sparkling jewels.

She smiled and nodded as she saw her old friend the dragoman, but Tilga burst into a flood of angry protestations and curses, rushing at the intruder and trying to drive him from the room with futile pushes of her lean hands.

Tadros resisted, and when the hag started to scream he covered her mouth with his hand, holding her fast at the same time.

"Listen, old imbecile!" he muttered. "Do you wish to lose your place with Prince Kāra? Be sensible, then. You arc under my orders — the orders of Tadros the dragoman, and you must obey me."

"I obey only the prince," retorted Tilga, sullenly. "You will not be dragoman when the master hears you have violated his harem."

"Ah, but he will not hear! It is to be our secret, Tilga. You are going to enter my service, and I will make you rich in a few months. See! here are five hundred piastres — five golden pounds in good English money. It is only a promise of more to come. Take it, Tilga."

The hag took it, but with reluctance.

"If the prince discovers — " she began.

"But he won't," declared Tadros, promptly. "He will discover nothing.

Just now I left him at the club, playing cards with an Englishman. Go outside, my Tilga, and watch in the courtyard.”

She hobbled away, still muttering protests, and the dragoman seated himself upon the divan beside Nephthys.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TALISMAN OF AHTKA-RA.

Kāra found he had only time to dress for a dinner with Mrs. Everingham. Aneth was to be there also, and he must not neglect the intrigue he was conducting to obtain an ascendency over the girl. That was the reason, he told himself, why he was so anxious to attend.

His plans were progressing well at this time. The only adverse element was the obvious infatuation of Gerald Winston for Miss Consinor; but the Egyptian had carefully gauged the depths of the young girl's character. She was interested in antiquities, and therefore encouraged Winston, who was a noted scholar; but there was no danger in that. Kāra knew more of Egyptology than all the scholars in Cairo, and had often seen Aneth's face brighten when he told her some strange and interesting bit of unwritten history. To be sure, Winston was her own countryman, and had an advantage in that; yet Mrs. Everingham had once said in his hearing that a handsome foreigner was always fascinating to an Englishwoman, and he had remembered the careless remark and pondered its truth until he had come to believe it.

He had a better argument than any of these in reserve, however. If the Englishman really succeeded in winning Aneth's love in the end, then Kāra knew how to compel the girl to obedience.

As he left his room he found the dragoman leaning against a pillar of the courtyard.

"Is Nephthys here?" he inquired.

"I suppose so," answered the dragoman, yawning sleepily. "She was due to arrive this afternoon, wasn't she?"

Kāra looked at him with sudden suspicion.

"Have you seen her?" he demanded.

"Am I the keeper of your harem?" retorted Tadros, indignantly. "Old Tilga has been hidden in the" women's quarters for hours. Probably she is attending to your Nephthys."

He eyed his master disdainfully, and Kāra walked an and entered the carriage. He had barely time to join the company at dinner, and Nephthys could wait.

Winston was not present this evening, and the prince found Aneth unusually gracious. She chatted so pleasantly, her manner was so friendly and her clear eyes so sweet and intelligent, that Kāra gave way to the moment's enchantment and forgot all else in the delight of her society.

Nor did he recover readily from the spell. After returning home he paced

the floor for an hour, recalling the English girl's fair face and every change of its expression. Then he gave a guilty start as a recollection of Hatatcha swept over him, impressing upon his memory his fearful oath.

Kāra's nature, despite his cold exterior, was fervid in the extreme. He had sworn to hate this girl, yet to-night he loved her passionately. But Hatatcha's training had not entirely failed. He calmed himself, and examined his danger critically, as an outsider might have done.

To yield to his love for Aneth would mean enslavement by the enemy, a condition from which his judgment instinctively revolted. To steel his heart against her charms would be difficult, but its necessity was obvious. He determined to pursue his plot with relentless hatred, and to raise between the girl and himself as many bars as possible. He scorned his own weakness, and since he knew that it existed, he resolved to conquer it.

Once Hatatcha had said to him: "You are cold, selfish and cruel, and I have made you so." True; these qualities had been carefully instilled into his nature. He was proud that he possessed them, for he had a mission to fulfil. And if he desired any peace in his future life, that mission must be fully accomplished.

In the morning he went to see Nephthys, and his face brightened as he realized how remarkably beautiful she was. The Orientals generally admire only the form of a woman, being indifferent to the face; but Kāra was modern enough to appreciate beauty of feature, while holding to an extent the Eastern prejudice that a fat and soft form is the chief attraction of the female sex. So he found Nephthys admirable in every way; and if her indifference and perfect subjection to his will in any way annoyed him, he was at this time unaware of the fact. He wished this girl to replace Aneth Consinor in his affection and esteem, and would forgive much in Nephthys if she could manage to bring about this excellent result.

After this he devoted much of his attention to the Nile girl, striving in his association with her to exclude all outside interests. He purchased for her marvelous costumes and hired two Arab maidens to attend her and keep her royally attired. Kāra's most splendid diamonds and rubies were set by Andalaft in many coronets, brooches and bracelets to deck her person, and many of the wonderful pearls he had brought from the secret tomb were carefully sized and strung to form a necklace for the Egyptian girl's portly neck.

Nephthys was pleased with these possessions. They drew her from the dull lassitude in which she had existed, and aroused in her breast a womanly exultation that even her mother could never have imagined her able to develop. It may be the girl began to think and to dream; yet if so, there was

little outward indication of the fact. To comprehend any woman's capabilities is difficult; to comprehend those of Nephthys seemed impossible. She was luxury-loving by nature, as are all Orientals, and accepted the comforts of her surroundings without questioning why they were bestowed upon her. Whatever sensibilities she possessed had long lain dormant. They might be awakening now; her delight in adornment seemed the first step in that direction.

Kāra purposely remained away from the club for several evenings following that in which he had won Consinor's ten thousand pounds. Perhaps he wished his enemy to become uneasy and fret at the delay in wiping out the debt, and if so, it would have gratified him to know the feverish anxiety with which the viscount haunted the club, and watched every new arrival in the hope that Kāra would appear.

At last the Egyptian judged that he had waited long enough, and prepared to still further enmesh his victim. In his room that evening he took from a secret drawer of his cabinet a small roll of papyrus, on which were closely written hieroglyphics. To refresh his memory he read the scroll carefully, although it was not the first time he had studied it since it had fallen at his feet when the bust of Isis was overturned at the tomb of Ahtka-Rā. Freely translated, the writing was as follows:

"Being finally prepared to join Anubis in the nether world, I, Ahtka-Rā, son of the Sun and High Priest of Amen, have caused to be added to the decoration of my sarcophagus the precious Stone of Fortune given to me by the King of Kesh (Ethiopia) in return for having preserved him and his people from the wrath of Rameses. It is my belief that this wondrous stone will guard my tomb when my spirit has departed, and by its powers preserve my body and my treasure from being despoiled, until that time when I shall return to Qemt (Egypt) to live again. Let no descendant of my house remove it from its place, for the Stone of Fortune is mine, and I bequeath it not to any of those who may come after me. In time of need my children may take of the treasure what they require, but to disturb my Stone of Fortune will be to draw upon the offender the bitterest curse of my spirit. It may be known to all from its changing color, being never the same for long; and the color of it is not bright, as is the ruby or the camelian or amethyst, but ever gloomy and mysterious. That none may mistake its location, I have embedded it in a triple band of gold, and it is placed at the head of my sarcophagus. There shall it remain. Since it came into my possession I have ever worn it in my bosom, and by its magic I have been able to control Rameses the son of Seti, to rule his kingdom as if it were my own, to confound all my enemies and accusers, and to amass such riches as no man of Qemt has ever before

possessed. Also has it brought to me health and many years in which to accomplish the purpose of my present existence. For this reason do I refuse to part with it in the ages during which I await the new life. Whatever else may happen to my tomb, I implore those who live in the days to come to leave to me this one treasure."

It was signed by Ahtka-Rā and sealed with his seal, being doubtless the work of his own hand.

Kāra rerolled the papyrus and put it away, pausing to glance with a smile at the strange ring he wore upon his hand.

"My great ancestor was selfish," he murmured, "and wished to prevent any of his descendants from becoming as famous as he himself was. Nevertheless, had I read the script before I removed the stone from the sarcophagus, I would have respected Ahtka-Rā's wish; but I did not know what treasure I had gained until afterward, when it was too late to restore the stone without another visit to the tomb. A curse is a dreadful thing, especially from one's ancestor, and it is even to avoid Hatatcha's curse that I am now fulfilling her vengeance. But Ahtka-Rā may rest content; I have merely borrowed his talisman, and it shall be returned to him when I have obtained full satisfaction from my grandmother's enemies. Meantime, the stone will protect me from evil fortune, and when it is restored the curse will be averted."

Something in this expression struck him as incongruous. He thought deeply for a moment, a frown gathering upon his brow. Then he said: "I must not deceive myself with sophistries. What if the curse is already working, and because of it the English girl has turned my strength to weakness? But that cannot be. Whenever I have worn this ring I have mastered all difficulties and triumphed as I desired; and I will triumph in my undertaking to-night, in spite of the reproach I can already see in Aneth's eyes. I am still the controller of my own destiny as well as the destinies of others; for if the talisman did so much for Ahtka-Rā. as he claims, it will surely prove stronger than any curse."

With a laugh he shook off the uncanny feeling that had for the moment oppressed him, and went to the club.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROGUES ANCIENT AND MODERN.

Consinor arrived early at the Lotus Club and took his seat at a small table facing the doorway, where he whiled away the time by playing solitaire.

Presently Kāra entered and greeted him cordially, seeming to be in an especially happy mood.

"Well, shall we try our luck?" he said, seating himself at the opposite side of the table.

Nodding assent, Consinor gathered up the cards and shuffled them. Several loungers who knew of the previous game and wondered what the next meeting between the two men would evolve, clustered around the table to watch the result.

Kāra won the cut and dealt. He played rather carelessly and lost. The stakes were a pound sterling.

"Double!" he cried, laughing, and again the viscount nodded.

The luck had shifted, it seemed, for the prince repeatedly lost. At first he chatted gaily with those present and continued to double with reckless disregard of his opponent's success; but by and by he grew thoughtful and looked at his cards more closely, watching the game as shrewdly as his adversary. The stakes had grown to four hundred pounds, and a subtle thrill of excitement spread over the little group of watchers.

Was Consinor going to win back his ten thousand pounds at one sitting?

Suddenly Kāra, in dealing, fumbled the cards and dropped one of them. In reaching to pick it up it slipped beneath his foot and he tore it into two. It was the queen of hearts.

"How stupid!" he laughed, showing the pieces. "Here, boy, bring us a fresh pack of cards," addressing an attendant.

Consinor scowled and reached out his hand for the now useless deck. Kāra slipped the cards into his pocket, including the mutilated one.

"They are mine, prince," said the viscount; "I use them for playing my game of solitaire."

"Pardon, but I have destroyed their value," returned Kāra. "I shall insist upon presenting you with a new deck, since my awkwardness has rendered your own useless."

Consinor bit his lip, but made no reply, watching silently while the prince tore open the new deck and shuffled the cards.

The viscount lost the next hand, and the score was evened. He lost again, and still a third time.

"The luck has changed with the new cards," said he. "Let us postpone the

game until another evening, unless you prefer to continue."

"Very well," Kāra readily returned, and throwing down the cards, he leaned back in his chair, selected a fresh cigar from his case and carefully lighted it.

Consinor had pushed back his own chair, but he did not rise. After watching Kāra's nonchalant movements for a time, the viscount drew from his pocket three curious dice, and after an instant's hesitation tossed them upon the table.

"Here is a curiosity," he remarked. "I am told these cubes were found in an Egyptian tomb at Thebes. They are said to be three thousand years old."

The men present, including Kāra, examined the dice curiously. The spots were arranged much as they are at the present day, an evidence that this mode of gambling has been subjected to little improvement since the early Egyptians first invented it.

"They are excellently preserved," said van Roden. "Where did you get them, viscount?"

"I picked them up the other day from a strolling Arab. They seemed to me very quaint."

"There are several sets in the museum," remarked Pintsch, a German in charge of the excavations at Dashur. "It is very wonderful how much those ancients knew."

Lord Consinor drew the dice toward him.

"See here, Prince," said he, "let us try our luck with these antiquities. It is quicker and easier than écarté."

"Very well," consented Kāra. "What are the stakes?"

"Let us say a hundred pounds the throw."

This suggestion startled the group of spectators; but Kāra said at once:

"I will agree to that, my lord."

He lost once, twice, thrice.

Then, as Consinor, with a triumphant leer, pushed the dice toward him, Kāra thrust his hands in his pockets and said in a quiet voice to the onlookers:

"Gentlemen, I call upon you to witness that I am playing with a rogue. These dice are loaded."

Following a moment's horrified silence, the viscount sprang up with an oath.

"This is an insult, Prince Kāra!" he cried.

"Sit down," said Colonel Varrin, sternly. "No mere words can condemn you, sir. Let us examine the dice."

The others concurred, their faces bearing witness to their dismay and

alarm. Such a disgraceful occurrence had never before been known within those eminently respectable walls. The honor of the club was, they felt, at stake.

The cubes were carefully tested. It was as Kāra had charged — they were loaded.

“Can you explain this, Lord Consinor?” asked one of the party.

“I cannot see why I should be called upon to explain,” was the reply. “In purchasing the dice, I was, wholly ignorant of their condition. It was a mere impulse that led me to offer to play with them.”

“It is well known that these ancient dice are frequently loaded,” interrupted Pintsch, eagerly, as if he saw a solution of the affair. “Two of the sets exhibited in the museum have been treated in the same clever manner.”

“That is true,” agreed Varrin, nodding gravely.

“In that case,” said Consinor, “I am sure you gentlemen will exonerate me from any intentional wrong. It is simply my misfortune that I offered to play with the dice.”

“Was it also your misfortune, my lord,” returned Kāra, calmly, “that you have been playing all the evening with marked cards? I will ask you to explain to these gentlemen why this deck, which you have claimed in their presence to be your private property, bears secret marks that could only have been placed there with one intent — to swindle an unsuspecting antagonist.”

He drew the cards from his pocket as he spoke handed them to Colonel Varrin, who examined them with a troubled countenance and then turned them over to his neighbor for inspection.

While the cards passed around, Consinor sat staring blankly at the group. The evidence against him was so incontrovertible that he saw no means of escape from the disgrace which was sure to follow.

“Gentlemen,” said Kāra, when the last man haH examined the cards and laid them upon the table again, “I trust you will all bear evidence that it is not my ususl custom or desire to win money from those I play with. Rather do I prefer to lose, for in that way I obtain the amusement of playing, without the knowledge that I may have inconvenienced my friends. But when a common trickster and cheat conspires to rob me, my temper is different. Lord Consinor owes me ten thousand pounds, and I demand from him in your presence prompt payment of the debt. Also, I depend upon you to protect me and my fellow-members from card sharpers in the future, which I am sure you will gladly do. For the rest, the matter is in your hands. Good evening, gentlemen.”

He bowed with dignity and withdrew. The others silently followed, scattering to other rooms of the club. Varrin, as a club official, took with him

the incriminating dice and the marked cards.

Lord Consinor, knowing well that he was ruined, sat muttering curses upon Kāra and his own “hard luck” until he noticed the deserted room and decided to go home. The disaster had fairly dazed him, so that he failed to realize the fact that as he called for his hat and coat in the lobby the groups of bystanders ceased their eager talk and carefully turned their backs in his direction.

The viscount had never heard of Hatatcha; yet it was her vengeance that had overtaken him.

CHAPTER XV.

WINSTON BEY IS INDIGNANT.

In their rooms at the Savoy next morning Lord Roane and his son quarreled violently. The day's paper contained a full account of the affair at the club, and while no names were mentioned, there was no misunderstanding who the culprit was. "An English nobleman who had lately arrived to fill an important position in the Ministry of Finance was detected playing with marked cards and loaded dice by a well-known Egyptian gentleman of wealth and high station, who promptly exposed the fraud in the presence of several reputable dub members. Fortunately, the Englishman's name had only been posted and he had not yet been admitted to membership in the club, so that his trickery and consequent disgrace in no way reflects upon that popular and admirably conducted institution, etc."

Lord Roane was vastly chagrined and indignant as he read the account.

"You low, miserable scoundrel!" he roared, facing his son; "how dare you drag the name of your family in the mire, just as we are assuming an indisputable position of respectability in Cairo? To be a gambler is despicable enough, but to become a common cheat and swindler is utterly unpardonable. What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing," said Consinor, sullenly. "I am innocent. It was a plot to ruin me."

"Pah! a plot of yours to ruin others rather. Speak up, man! Have you nothing to say to excuse or palliate your shame and dishonor?"

"What use?" asked the viscount, apathetically. "You will not believe me."

"Do you believe him, Aneth?" asked the old man, turning to gaze upon the girl's horrified face. "Do you believe that this cur, who is my son and your father, is innocent?"

"No," she answered, shrinking back as Consinor looked up curiously to hear her reply. "He has deceived me cruelly. He promised me he would not touch a card again, or play for money, and he has broken his word. I cannot believe him now."

"Of course not," her father retorted, reddening for the first time. "My precious family is so rotten throughout that even its youngest member cannot give a Consinor credit for being honest or sincere."

"See here, Roger; I will not have Aneth insulted, even by you. I'm not a saint, I'll admit; but I've never been guilty of petty swindling, and your daughter is pure enough to shame us both. As for you, I've done with you, and you must from this time work out your salvation in your own way. You've dissipated any inheritance you might have had; but I'll give you a

thousand pounds in cash if you'll take your ugly face out of Cairo and promise not to come near us again.

I'll take care of your wife and daughter, neither of whom, I am positive, will miss you for a single hour."

"It's a good offer," said Consinor, quickly, "and I'll accept it. Where did you get the thousand pounds?"

"That," declared my lord, stiffly, "is none of your accursed business! Now go. Leave your resignation with the Minister of Finance and then make yourself scarce. Here, I'll write you a check now."

Consinor took the paper.

"If it is good, and the bank will cash it," he said, slowly, "I'll do as I have agreed, and not trouble you again. Good-by, Aneth. Look out for that snakey Egyptian who is following you around. He alone is responsible for this affair, and you cannot afford to trust him; and give my fond farewell to your mother. She won't mind if I do not appear in person to irritate her nerves."

"Where will you go?" asked Lord Roane.

"That, sir, to repeat your own words, is none of your accursed business."

With this filial response he left the room, and Aneth burst into a flood of tears. Never had she felt so wretched and humiliated as at this discovery of her father's infamy, and although Roane tried to comfort his granddaughter by pointing out the fact that Roger had long been a gambler with a character not above suspicion, the girl had so fondly hoped for her father's regeneration that her disappointment was indeed bitter.

"It won't hurt us so very much, my child," continued the old nobleman, stroking her head soothingly. "The world will know we have repudiated Roger, and will sympathise with our distress. In a few months the scandal will be forgotten, and we may again hold up our heads. I'm afraid I've lived a rather wicked life, my dear; but for your sake I would like to retrieve my good name and die possessed of the honor and respect of all my fellow-men. And this, I believe, I can accomplish. Don't worry, little one! Be brave, and the blow will not hurt half so much."

There were tears in his own eyes as he marked her distress, and he continued to encourage her until the young girl had partly recovered her self-control and the first shock of her sudden misfortune had been blunted. Then he kissed her tenderly and went away to his office.

The account in the morning paper had likewise caused Gerald Winston considerable amazement and dismay. His first thought was of Aneth and the trouble that had come to her; his next a feeling of resentment toward Kāra. After pacing the floor restlessly for an hour, he called for his saddle-horse and rode down the Shubra road to interview the Egyptian at his villa.

Kāra was at home and received his visitor with cold politeness, which Winston passed unnoticed. He was not in a mood to be affected by trifles.

"I understand that you accused Consinor of cheating at the club last night," he began, impetuously.

"Well?" said Kāra, lifting his brows inquiringly. "Why did you do it?"

"Because it was true. He was robbing me."

"You know what I mean, sir! You have been posing as a friend of Miss Consinor. To expose her father to public shame was the act of a cowardly enemy."

"What would you have done in my place?" asked Kāra, calmly.

"I? I would have concealed the discovery and allowed the man to go, refusing to play with him again," declared Winston.

"And so have allowed him to rob others, perhaps?"

"If necessary, yes, that his daughter's good name might be protected. But a private warning would have induced him to abandon further trickery."

"He is an old offender, I believe," said Kāra, leaning back in his chair and regarding the other with an amused expression. "It might benefit you to reflect that Miss Consinor's good name has not been acquired on account of her father's respectability, any more than through the reputation of her grandsire, who has grown old in iniquity. Therefore, I cannot believe that I have injured her in any way."

A tinge of passionate hatred in the man's voice as he referred to Lord Roane aroused Winston's attention. Then, suddenly, a light broke upon him.

"See here, Kāra," he said, sternly, "are you persecuting these people and plotting against them because of the old wrong that Roane did your grandmother, Hatatcha?"

"I am neither persecuting nor plotting against them," declared Kāra. "Consinor has ruined himself unaided. As for his daughter, I have every object in protecting her from scandal."

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"I intend to marry her."

At this cool statement Winston stared aghast. Then he gave a bitter laugh.

"That is absurd and impossible," he said.

"Why so?"

"You are cousins."

"She does not know that, and you will not tell her because you have so much regard for her grandfather's good name," with a sneer.

"I see. It is your plot to ruin her; but it will fail, because she will never consent to marry you," he continued.

"How do you know that?" asked Kāra.

“It is improbable that she can love you.”

“In that, sir, I am inclined to differ with you. Even if Aneth discovered our relationship, it would not matter. In olden days our Egyptian kings married their sisters. And I suppose that Lord Roane would emphatically deny the assertion that I am his grandson. I would myself deny it, and you have no proof to back your statement of the fact.”

“You told me the story with your own lips.”

“To be sure — and the story was true. I do not mind acknowledging it at this moment, because there are no witnesses present; but if you repeat the statement in public, I will deny it absolutely.”

For a moment Winston remained thoughtfully silent. Then he said:

“You are proposing a dreadful crime, Kāra, but it will avail you nothing to defy morality in this way. There is another reason why Miss Consinor will refuse to marry you, and it is entirely distinct from the subject of your relationship.”

“To what do you refer?”

“To the woman you are keeping, even now, in your harem. It is a matter of public scandal, and I am surprised that society has not already ostracized you for your audacious defiance of propriety. You are neither an Arab nor a Mohammedan. Doubtless the offense has not yet come to Miss Consinor’s ears; but if it does, have you any idea she would place her happiness in the hands of a man of your character?”

Kāra frowned. Here was a weapon against him that he had never before recognized.

“I suppose you will take pains to inform Miss Consinor that I have a slave-girl among my servants,” he said, mockingly.

“I shall ask Mrs. Everingham to tell her the truth concerning your domestic relations,” returned Winston, decidedly.

The Egyptian arose.

“I think it will be as well to end this interview, Winston Bey,” he said. “You are yourself a pretender for the hand of my future bride, and it is useless to endeavor to fairly discuss matters wherein you are so selfishly concerned.”

“Do you choose to defy my warnings?” asked Winston, angrily.

“By no means. I merely ignore your implied threats. They can in no way interfere with my plans.”

“I believe,” said Winston, striving to control his indignation, “that those plans are inspired by hatred rather than love. I shall do my best to oppose them.”

“Naturally. It is your privilege, sir.”

Winston turned to go.

"I shall always regret," he remarked, bitterly, as a parting shot, "that I was so foolish as to bring a filthy native from out the natural environment of his mud village."

"The filthy native would have found other means of escape had you not brought him; so you need not reproach yourself," returned Kāra, with a smile. "But the trifle you have mentioned should not be your deepest regret, my stupid Englishman!"

"Did I do anything more foolish?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"You kicked me twice beneath the palms of Fedah."

"Ah! I should not have restrained myself to two kicks."

"Be content, sir. Twice was sufficient, since it is liable to cause you much unhappiness. I had it in mind, had you kicked me again, to kill you."

Winston left the villa more thoughtful than he had been on his arrival. The matter involved much more, it seemed, than the loss of Lord Consinor's reputation. Kāra's confident tone had not failed to impress his rival, and the Englishman was more uneasy than he cared to admit even to himself. His love for Aneth was sincere and unselfish, and he could imagine no greater calamity for the girl than to acquire a fondness for the treacherous native whose presence he had just left. Such a contingency had not occurred to him before, and for this reason Kāra's claims were as startling as they were revolting. He longed to go to the girl at once and strive to comfort her in this, her hour of sorrow; but a natural delicacy restrained him. She would like to be alone, at first, until she had somewhat recovered from the humiliation she would be sure to suffer at the public exposure of her father's misdeeds. Afterward he could assure her of his confidence and friendship, and, when the proper time came, of his love. Meantime he contented himself by sending Aneth a basket of the most beautiful roses to be found in Cairo.

No such delicacy of feeling influenced Kāra. In the afternoon he went to the Savoy and sent up his card.

Aneth was alone, Mrs. Everingham having just left her for a drive. The girl received the Egyptian almost with eagerness.

"Can you forgive me, Prince?" she asked, by way of greeting, as she stood before him with scarlet cheeks and downcast eyes.

"Forgive you for what, Miss Aneth?" he replied, gently.

"For — for the wrong my father did you," she stammered.

Kāra smiled, and she glanced up shyly in time to catch his expression of amusement.

“Let us sit down and talk it over,” he said, taking her hand and leading her to a chair. “But it will be unnecessary, I am sure, for me to say that I have nothing to forgive, since you have in no way offended.”

“But my father — ” she began, timidly, again dropping her eyes in shame.

“Yes, I know, Miss Aneth,” said he. “Your father did a foolish thing, for which people will justly condemn him. I am very sorry that it was through me he was detected, but I assure you I was powerless to prevent it. Others saw the marked cards and forced the accusation against him. Believe me, I would have saved him if possible; but I could not.”

“I believe you, Prince Kāra,” she said. “It was all my father’s fault, and his punishment is only such as he deserved.”

“I am deeply grieved for your sake,” continued Kāra, and indeed the sight of her sweet face, convulsed with anguish, so appealed to him at the moment that his speech was almost sincere. “I know what this disgrace will mean to you, Aneth — the avoidance of your former associates, and the jeers, perhaps, of those who have envied you. The world is heartless always, and visits the sins of the fathers upon their children; so that your innocence will not be considered save by your truest friends.”

He paused, for she was crying now, softly but miserably, and the tears moved him strangely.

“That is why I have come,” he continued, his voice trembling with earnestness, “to assure you of my faith in you and of my steadfast friendship. Nay, more; I offer to protect you against the sneers of all the world, if you will grant me the right.”

The girl started, glancing nervously and almost affrightedly into his face.

“I — I do not understand you, Prince Kāra,” she murmured.

“Then I must speak more plainly,” he quickly rejoined, springing up to stand before her with sparkling eyes and outstretched hands.

“Aneth, my sweet one, I love you! To me you represent the joys of earth and the delights of paradise. Only in your presence do I find happiness and content. Be my wife, Aneth; give me yourself, and I will guard you so well and place you so high that all the world will bow at your feet.”

The speech shocked her, for there was no mistaking the man’s earnestness. Nor did she know how to reply, the proposal being as unexpected as it was inopportune.

Aneth may have had vague dreams of love, as maidens will and should have; but she had been so happy in Cairo that she had not thought the attentions of Kāra meant more than the kindly good-fellowship of the other men she had met. Indeed, she had not considered such a subject at all, and at this hour, when her heart was wrung with grief, she found in it no response to

her suitor's fervid appeals.

"I cannot reply to you just now, Prince Kāra," she said, with hesitation; "it is all new to me, and quite unexpected, and — and I do not wish to marry anyone." His face hardened as he gazed upon her timid, shrinking form, but the longing in his dark eyes remained. With all his lately acquired polish, the native failed to comprehend that an English girl does not yield herself to the demands of any man unless her heart and inclinations lead her to acknowledge his authority. But he was wise enough to perceive that the difficulties of the situation required tact if he wished to succeed.

"Aneth," said he, more quietly, "this is no time for evasions or misunderstandings between us. I have told you that I love you, that my earnest desire is to make you my wife. You need a protector at this moment, and a delay is as foolish as it is dangerous to your interests. If you love me at all, you can tell me so to-day as well as later."

"Ah, that is it, Prince! I'm afraid that I do not love you in the way that you wish," answered the girl, aroused to a more dignified tone by his persistence.

"I am very grateful to you, Prince Kāra, and appreciate the honor of your proposal; but I have nothing more to offer you than my sincere friendship."

"Then I will accept that as sufficient for the time being," said he. "I will marry your friendship, Aneth, and perhaps the love will some time follow."

"Oh, I cannot allow that!" she cried, distressed. "I am sorry to hurt you when you are so kind to me; but can't you see that I am unnerved and unhappy to-day, and that if you force me to answer you, I can only say 'no'?"

He grew thoughtful at this, studying her features carefully. After a moment he replied:

"I will not press the question further now, but will give you two days for consideration. Will you answer me at the end of that time?"

She hesitated, knowing already what the answer would be and that it was best he understood her at once. Yet to her inexperienced mind it seemed more easy to postpone the matter until she had time to collect her thoughts and reply to Kāra more gently and effectively.

"Yes," said she, answering him; "come to me in two days, please."

To her surprise he bowed gravely and at once left the room; but the relief she experienced made her glad that she had found this simple way to evade her present difficulties. In two days she would know better what to say to him.

Kāra was astonished at his own forbearance. Where he might have threatened and compelled he had merely implored, and he could not in the least understand the mood that had swayed his actions. But while in the girl's

presence he seemed not to be himself, or even to know himself.

If only Aneth would love him, how gladly would he shield her from the inheritance of his grandmother's malignant vengeance! Even if she could not love him, he was determined to win her for his wife, for the longing of his heart was at this time too great to be denied.

In her tears and distress the girl had seemed more lovely than ever, and, as he drove slowly homeward, he dwelt upon her with an ecstasy of adoration that seemed entirely foreign to his cold and calculating nature. At this moment perhaps he really loved Aneth; but the Eastern lover is prone to sudden fits of intense passion that soon exhaust themselves, and the reaction is apt to restore them to their native apathy with surprising abruptness.

When Kāra arrived home he at once crossed the courtyard and entered the quarters devoted to women. Ever since Winston had sneered at his relations with Nephthys that morning, the thing had rankled in his mind, and now, fresh from Aneth's presence, he reproached himself for his folly in bringing the stupid Nile girl to Cairo. For, in spite of his efforts to amuse himself in her society, Nephthys had not only proved unable to destroy his love for Aneth, but her quiescent indifference, beautiful though she was, served rather to disgust him by its sharp contrast with the English girl's brightness and innocence.

Never doubting that he would shortly install Aneth in Nephthys' place, he suddenly resolved to have done with the Egyptian girl, who had been so great a disappointment to him.

There was a dark scowl upon Kāra's face as he pushed aside the draperies and entered the apartment of Nephthys. He found the girl seated upon her divan, with the dragoman comfortably established beside her. Both were smoking cigarettes and Tadros was holding Nephthys with one arm loosely clasped around her waist.

They did not notice the master's presence for a moment; but when they looked up, Kāra was standing before them with folded arms. The frown had vanished, and his expression was one of positive content; for here was his excuse.

"Tadros," said he, in a soft voice, "be good enough to go into the courtyard. You may wait there for me."

The dragoman stood up and flicked the ash from his cigarette. He was evidently much disturbed.

"If you think, Kāra — " he began, in a very loud, boisterous voice.

"Go into the courtyard, please," interrupted the other, quietly.

Tadros hesitated and glanced at Nephthys. The girl was staring with frightened eyes into her master's face. Following her gaze, the dragoman

gave a shudder. Kāra's countenance was as cold and inexpressive as that of a statue. Tadros had learned to fear that expression. Softly he tiptoed from the room, and the draperies fell behind him.

Clinging to the curtains of the arch leading to the next room, appeared old Tilga, who was trembling violently. Had the master been an Arab, her life was already forfeited. She was not sure what an Egyptian would do under the circumstances.

Kāra beckoned her to approach. Then, pointing a finger at Nephthys, he said:

"Remove those jewels and ornaments."

As the old woman eagerly attempted to obey, Nephthys stood up and asked in a low, horrified voice:

"What are you going to do?"

Kāra did not reply. He watched Tilga's nervous fingers rapidly removing the diadem, earrings, brooches and bracelets, which she cast in a heap upon a table. Nephthys submitted quietly until the hag seized her string of pearls; then she shrank away and clutched at her throat to save her treasure, loving the pearls better than all else.

Kāra grasped her wrists firmly and drew her hands down to her side, while Tilga unwound the triple row of priceless pearls from the girl's neck aiid added it to the heap upon the table. He continued to hold her fast until the housekeeper had stripped from her fingers the rings of diamond, ruby and emerald. Then he let her go, and Nephthys moaned and covered her face with her hands.

"Take off her robes," commanded Kāra, sternly.

Tilga rushed to do his bidding, and, when Nephthys resisted, the hag struck her across the face with her open hand. She literally tore away the exquisite gown, as well as the silken hose and satin slippers, until the girl stood shorn of all her finery except the fleecy underclothing.

"Leave her that," said Kāra. "And now, where is her black cotton dress?"

Tilga hurriedly fetched it from a closet in the robing chamber. She brought the head-shawl and the coarse shoes also.

Nephthys was sobbing now as miserably as a child that has been robbed of its toys.

"I won't wear them! I won't have them! Take them away!" she wailed, as the old Fedah garments were produced.

But the woman shook her angrily and slapped her again, covering her with the crude, soiled gown, and then pushing her back upon the divan while she placed the flat shoes upon the girl's bare feet. Tears were still standing in Nephthys' great eyes, but she submitted to the inevitable with a resumption

of her old obedient manner.

“Call Ebbek,” said the master; and Tilga displayed such activity that she quickly returned, dragging the Arab after her.

“You will take this woman back to Fedah, whence you brought her, and deliver her over to her mother again. There is a train at sundown, and you will be able to catch it if you are prompt. Drive to the station in a carriage.”

Ebbek bowed without betraying surprise at his master’s unexpected command. Perhaps he had been observant, and knew the reason for the girl’s dismissal.

“Must old Sĕra return your money?” he asked.

“No; tell her she may keep it. Here is gold for your expenses. Feed Nephthys at the railway station, if you have time, and buy her some cigarettes. Now hasten.”

Ebbek took the girl’s arm to lead her away. As she passed Kāra she halted to say, with despairing intensity:

“I hate you! Some day I will kill you.”

Kāra laughed. He was in a pleased mood.

“Good-by, Nephthys,” he rejoined, complacently. “Tell Sĕra I present you to her with my compliments.”

Then he left the room and found Tadros standing stiffly outside the door.

“Follow me,” he said, and the dragoman obeyed.

He led the way to his own room and sat down facing the dragoman.

Tadros remained standing. He held in his hand the stump of a half-burned cigarette, which he eyed critically and with an air of absorbing interest.

Kāra, being amused, remained silent.

After a time the dragoman coughed to dear his throat.

“You see, Kāra,” he began, “I bought the girl first, and paid good money for her when I was desperately poor — a fact that deserves some consideration; yet you forced me to sell her.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, for an insignificant roll of papyrus. I don’t complain, having accepted the bargain; but you mustn’t blame me for all that has happened. By the beard of Osiris! is a man’s heart to be bought and sold like a woman’s body? It is absurd.”

He paused, shifting from one foot to the other. Then he lifted his eyes, and was pained to find Kāra staring at him fixedly.

“There should be no quarrel between us,” he continued, striving to speak confidently. “I have been your jackal, and did your dirty work for a fair amount of pay. What then? To ruin me will cause your own downfall. You dare not do it. But I am honest with you, and a good servant. You need not

fear me in the future, for I will promise you on my word to avoid your harem — the word of Tadros the dragoman!" As he spoke, a shrill scream reached their ears. Tadros bounded to the window, and through the lattice saw Ebbek pushing the unhappy Nephthys into a carriage. He turned a frowning face toward his master.

"What are you doing to the girl?" he demanded, fiercely.

"Sending her back to Sĕra."

The dragoman uttered a curse and made for the door.

"Come here!" cried Kāra, sternly.

Tadros stopped, hesitated, and then returned. He realized that he could do nothing.

"Very well," said he, sullenly. "She will be safer in Fedah than in Cairo. But you have been cruel, Kāra. A man who is really a man would not treat a beast as you have treated Nephthys. To teach her the splendid luxury of a palace and then thrust her back into a mud hut on the forsaken Nile bank is a positive crime! I suppose you have also taken away her fine clothes and her pretty ornaments?"

"Yes."

"Poor child! But there — one does not argue with a snake for fear of its venom. I am likewise in your power," said the dragoman, gloomily.

Kāra actually laughed at his rueful expression.

"You were born a fool, my Tadros," said he, "and a fool you will die. Look you! there is no excuse in all your chatter to me of your own treachery — the crime that our customs declare merits death. You simply accuse me of harshness in sending away a faithless woman. Tell me, then, some plausible reason why I should not kill you."

Tadros grew pale.

"There are two reasons," he replied, seriously. "One is that murdering me would cause you to get into trouble with the police. The other is that you have need of me."

"Very good. The first argument does not count, because you could be killed secretly, with no personal danger to me; and that, without doubt, is the manner in which I shall kill you some day. But your present safety, my Tadros, lies in your second reason. I still need your services, and will permit you to remain alive until I am quite sure to have no further use for you."

The dragoman drew a long breath.

"Let us forget it, Kāra," said he. "I admit that I have been somewhat indiscreet; but what then? All men are indiscreet at times, and you will cease to blame me when you discover how faithful I am to your interests."

Kāra did not reply. The carriage had long since driven away. The

dragoman again shifted his position uneasily.

“May I go?” he asked.

“Yes.”

And Tadros withdrew, his heart filled with fear and hatred; but the hatred remained long after the fear had subsided.

CHAPTER XVI.

KARA THREATENS.

Those two days were uneasy ones to Kāra. He felt no dread of Aneth's final answer, but the waiting for it was wearisome. Their arrangements might easily have been concluded at the last interview had he not been weak enough to defer to the girl's foolish desire to postpone the inevitable. Since he had come from Fedah, the world had been his plaything, and he found it in no way difficult to accomplish those things he determined upon. He had, therefore, acquired unbounded confidence in the powers of Ahtka-Rā's remarkable Stone of Fortune, which he believed to have a strong influence over all his undertakings. So the Egyptian merely sought to occupy his time to good advantage until he could bring his bride — willing or unwilling mattered little — home to his handsome villa.

He sent Tadros to summon the most famous merchants of Cairo to wait upon him, and arranged to have the women's quarters redecorated in regal fashion. He selected many rich silks and embroideries for Aneth's use when she should need them, and secured an increased corps of Arab servants, well trained in their duties, to attend the slightest wish of their new mistress. He realized that the establishment must hereafter be conducted more upon the plan of a modem European household, and that the apartments of the harem must be transformed into parlors, reception-halls and drawing-rooms.

In marrying Aneth he determined to abandon all Oriental customs and adopt the manners of the newer and broader civilization. He would exhibit his wife in society, and, through her, gain added distinction. His villa would become renowned for its fêtes and magnificent hospitality. Such a life appealed to his imagination, and a marriage with the English girl rendered it possible.

Hatatcha had educated and trained Kāra for a purpose; but now her mission and his oath to fulfil it were alike disregarded. He had given the matter considerable thought recently, and decided that his love for Aneth Consinor canceled all obligations to persecute her or her people further. Hatatcha was dead and forgotten by the world, and her wrongs could never be righted by any vengeance that he might inflict upon her enemies. She could not appreciate the justice of retribution, since her spirit was far away in the nether world with Anubis, and her body in the tombs of Fedah. He had, at first, been conscientious in his determination to accomplish his grandmother's will, but a girl's eyes had thwarted him, and Hatatcha had herself proved weak when love assailed her. Even as all his schemes were approaching fruition and his grandmother's revenge was nearing

accomplishment, the compelling power of his love arrested his hand and induced him to cast aside everything that might interfere with his prospective happiness.

On the afternoon of the second day he dressed himself carefully and ordered his chauffeur to be ready to drive him to the Savoy; but as he was about to leave his room, a note was brought to him from Aneth. He tore it open and eagerly read the message —

Dear Prince Kāra: —

I am not going to risk another unpleasant interview, because I am anxious we should remain in the future, as in the past, good friends and comrades. But please do not again ask me to marry you, for such a thing is utterly impossible. While I am glad lo enjoy your friendship, I can never return the love you profess to bear me, and without love a true woman will not marry. So I beg you will forget that such a thing has ever been discussed between us, and forbear to refer to it again.

Your friend,

ANETH CONSINOR.

As he read the note Kāra's face grew set and stem and his dark eyes flashed ominously. He read it a second time, with more care, trying to find some word of hope or compromise in the frankly written epistle. But there was none.

He experienced a sensation of disappointment and chagrin, tinged with considerable astonishment. Strange as it may seem, he had never for a moment anticipated such a positive refusal. But his nature was impetuous and capricious, and presently anger drove all other feelings from his heart; and the anger grew and expanded until it was hot and furious and took full possession of him.

Perhaps it was the blow to his self-esteem that was most effective in destroying the passion he had mistaken for love. Anyway, the love dissolved with startling rapidity, and in a half hour there was little tenderness remaining for the English girl who had repulsed him. He accepted her answer as conclusive, and began at once to revive his former plans of vengeance. One transport was liable to prove as sweet and exciting as another to him, and he began to revel in the consciousness that he was the supreme master of the fate of all the Consinors. Hatatcha was right after all. These English were cold and faithless, and unworthy the consideration of one of his noble race. He had been incautious and weak for a time, but now he resolved to fulfil his

oath to the dead woman to the very letter.

He tore the offending paper into fragments, and left the room with a resumption of his old inscrutable demeanor. It was the look that Tadros had learned to fear.

“Drive me to the Savoy,” he said to his chauffeur.

Lord Roane had reserved one small room on the first floor of the hotel as an office, and here he transacted such business matters as came under his jurisdiction. Kāra found him unoccupied, and Roane, who knew his visitor but slightly, greeted the man with cordial politeness.

“Pray be seated, Prince,” said he, offering a chair; “I am entirely at your service.”

The other bowed coldly.

“I fear my mission may prove somewhat disagreeable to you, my lord,” he began, in quiet, even tones.

Roane gave him a shrewd glance.

“Ah, I hear that my son is largely indebted to you for losses in gambling,” he returned, thinking that he understood Kāra’s errand. “So far, it is merely a rumor that has reached me; but if you come to me to plead that case, I beg to assure you that I am in no way responsible for Consinor’s debts of honor.”

The Egyptian shrugged his shoulders as a Frenchman might have done.

“That is another matter, sir, which I do not care to discuss at this time,” he answered. “My present business is to obtain your consent to marry your granddaughter.”

Roane was startled with amazement.

“Aneth! You wish to marry Aneth?” he asked, as if he could not have heard aright.

“Yes, my lord.”

So confident was the prince’s tone that Lord Roane, although much unnerved by its suddenness, began involuntarily to consider the proposition. The fellow was handsome and dignified and reputed to be as rich as Croesus; but the Englishman had a natural antipathy to foreigners, especially the dark-skinned ones. The idea of giving Aneth to an Egyptian was revolting.

“Ahem! This is indeed a surprise, Prince,” he said, haltingly. “The child is hardly old enough yet to think of marriage.”

Kāra did not reply to this observation.

“Have you — ah — approached her with this proposal as yet?” inquired Roane, after a few moments’ reflection.

“I have, sir.”

“And what did she say?”

“She refused to marry me, giving as her reason the fact that she does not

love me," was the calm reply.

Roane stared at him.

"Then why the devil do you come to me?" he demanded, angrily.

"Because the girl must not be allowed to choose for herself," said Kāra.

"Must not, sir?"

"Decidedly not, Lord Roane. Too much depends upon her refusal. At present your granddaughter stands disgraced in the eyes of all the world, because of that dishonest father, who, as you remarked a moment ago, owes me ten thousand pounds."

"Aneth disgraced!" cried Roane, indignantly; "by no means, sir! Even your vile insinuations cannot injure that pure and innocent girl. But Consinor has gone away, and his daughter is now under my personal protection. I will see that she is accorded the respect and consideration to which she is entitled, despite her father's misdeeds."

"Such an assertion, my lord, is, under the circumstances, ridiculous," replied Kāra, with a composure equal to the other's irritation. "In the near future, when you are yourself disgraced and imprisoned, who will then be left to protect your granddaughter's good name?"

Roane uttered a roar of exasperation.

"You infernal scoundrel!" he exclaimed, "how dare you come here to browbeat and insult me! Leave my presence, sir!"

"I think you will be glad to hear more," remarked Kāra, without changing his position. "Perhaps you are not aware that your robbery of the Government through the contractor, McFarland, is fully known to me."

Roane fell back in his chair, white and trembling.

"It's a he!" he muttered.

"It is not a lie," said the imperturbable Egyptian. "The proofs are all in my hands. I hold your receipt to McFarland for the stolen money."

Roane glared at him, but had not a word to reply. He felt like a rat in a trap. From the most unexpected source this blow had fallen upon him when least expected, and already he bitterly regretted his lapse from honesty.

"The Egyptian Government, when it learns the facts," continued Kāra, "will show you no mercy. Even Lord Cromer will insist upon your punishment, for he will resent any embezzlement in office that would bring the English colony here into disrepute. You must be aware of your danger without the necessity of my calling your attention to the fact; so that you have, absolutely, no hope of escape except through my clemency."

"What do you mean?" asked the old nobleman, hoarsely.

"That at present the secret is in my sole possession. It need never be disclosed. Give me Aneth in marriage, and you will not only secure your

safety, but I will sec that you want for nothing in the future. I am wealthy enough to promise this."

"The girl has refused you."

"Never mind. You will force her to accept me."

"No, by God, I will not!" cried Roane, springing to his feet. "Hell and all its imps shall not induce me to drag that innocent child to my own level. I am a felon because I am an ass, and an ass because I have no moral stamina; but even then, my heart is not as black as yours, Prince Kāra!"

The Egyptian listened unmoved.

"The matter deserves more careful consideration," said he. "Sentiment is very pretty when it does not conflict with personal safety. An examination of your case reveals comfort and prosperity on the one hand, disgrace and prison on the other."

"They weigh nothing against Aneth's happiness," returned the old man, promptly. "Expose me as soon as you like, sir, for nothing will ever induce me to save myself from the fruits of my folly at the expense of that poor girl. And now, go!"

Kāra smiled with quiet scorn.

"It is quite refreshing to witness your indignation," said he. "If it were equaled by your honesty, you would have no reason to fear me."

"Nor do I fear you now," retorted Lord Roane, defiantly. "Do your worst, you infamous nigger, for you cannot bribe me in any way to abet your shameful proposals."

Kāra reddened at the epithet, but did not reply until he had risen and started to move toward the door. Then he half turned and said:

"It will enable you to appreciate your danger better, Lord Roane, if I tell you that I am but the instrument of an Egyptian woman named Hatatcha, whose life and happiness you once carelessly ruined. She did not forget, and her vengeance against you and yours will be terrible, believe me, unless you engage me to defeat it instead of accomplishing it. My personal interest induces me to bargain with you. What do you say, my lord? Shall we discuss this subject more fully, or do you wish me to go?"

Roane was staring at him with affrighted eyes. A thousand recollections flashed through his mind at the mention of Hatatcha's name, attended by a thousand terrors as he remembered his treatment of her. So lost was he in fear and wonder that Kāra had to speak again.

"Shall I go, my lord?"

"Yes," was the answer. It seemed to be wrenched from the old man's throbbing breast by a generosity that conquered his cowardice.

Kāra frowned. He was disappointed. But further argument was useless,

and he went away, leaving Roane fairly stunned by the disclosures of the interview.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANETH SURRENDERS.

Kāra went straight to Aneth's apartments, insisting that he must see her.

The girl was much distressed by this sudden visit, and, thinking that the Egyptian wished merely to renew his protestations and appeals, tried hard to evade the ordeal of an interview. Mrs. Everingham was with her at the time, and in her perplexity Aneth confided to her in a few brief words Kāra's infatuation, and asked her advice how to act under such trying circumstances.

Mrs. Everingham was a woman of strong character and shrewd judgment. She was tall and admirably formed, with undoubted claims to beauty and a carriage queenly and dignified. The wife of a prominent engineer, she had lived much in the Orient and was accustomed to its unconventionalities as well as to its most representative social life. Although so much older than Aneth, the lady had manifested a fondness for the lonely girl from their first meeting, and had gladly taken her, as she expressed it, "under her wing," as well as to her sympathetic heart; so that Aneth had come to rely upon her friend in many ways, and now turned to her in this emergency.

"I think it will be best for you to see him," advised Mrs. Everingham, after a thoughtful consideration of the case. "If you evade the explanation he doubtless wishes to force upon you, he is the sort of man to annoy you persistently until you grant him an interview. Better have it over at once; and be positive with him, my dear, as well as gentle, so that you leave no hope alive to warrant his renewing his suit."

"Won't you stay with me, Lola?" begged Aneth. "That would hardly be fair to Prince Kāra," smiled Mrs. Everingham, "for my presence would embarrass and humiliate him unnecessarily. No; I will withdraw into the next room, where I shall be within call, but invisible. Be brave, Aneth dear. These disagreeable duties are often thrust upon women who, like yourself, have a faculty of unconsciously winning men's hearts, and are exacted as inevitable penalties. I am sorry for the poor prince, but he is not of our race and had no business to fall in love with an English girl."

Then she kissed her protégé and retired to the adjoining room, taking pains to leave the door ajar. Aneth sighed, and called her Arab to admit Kāra.

When the Egyptian entered, his manner in no way indicated the despair of a rejected lover, or even the eagerness of one who hoped to successfully appeal his case. Instead, he bowed coldly, but with profound deference, and said:

"You must pardon me, Miss Aneth, for forcing this interview upon you; but it was necessary."

“Forgive me, also, Prince Kāra,” faltered the girl “I am sorry you came, for my answer was final. I can never — ”

He waved his hand with a gesture of insolent indifference that arrested her words.

“You will not be called upon to repeat the dismissal conveyed in your letter,” said he. “I may ask you to reverse your decision, but it will be a matter of business between us, in which inclination will have no part.”

“Sir,” she replied, shrinking back before his stem look, “I — I fear I do not understand you!”

“Be seated,” he requested, “and I will explain.”

She obeyed silently, with a partial recovery of her self-control. Strange as the Egyptian’s words proved, they were, after all, more bearable than his endearing protestations would have been, and in her ignorance she welcomed any topic but love.

Kāra spoke with brutal frankness.

“The scandal caused by your father’s dishonesty is too recent for you to have yet escaped its contamination,” he began. “Lord Consinor has left Cairo owing me money, a matter of some ten thousand pounds. That you may have no cause to doubt my word, please to examine this note of hand. It is witnessed by two respectable gentlemen residing in this city.”

He handed her the paper and she took it mechanically, wondering what it meant.

“According to our laws,” he resumed, “I can bring an action to recover this money against any member of Consinor’s family. I am assured such an action would ruin Lord Roane completely.”

She was afraid of him now, but drew herself up proudly.

“That will not matter in the least, sir,” she replied. “Lord Roane will gladly meet any just obligation, even though it may leave him penniless to do so.”

“My lord does not express himself quite so honorably as that,” replied Kāra, with an open sneer. “But this note of hand is really unimportant. I merely mentioned it to emphasize the debt that you and your grandfather already owe me. Your father has cleverly escaped the result of his misdeeds by absconding. Unfortunately, Lord Roane is unable to do the same thing.”

“No one will blame Lord Roane for his son’s faults,” she protested, greatly distressed by the cruelty of Kāra’s remarks.

“That is not my meaning,” he replied. “Roane’s own misdeeds are so much more serious than those of his son that, when they are discovered, he cannot escape a prison cell.”

Aneth gasped in horror. The accusation was at first beyond belief; but

Kāra's tone was positive and a sudden recollection of her grandfather's doubtful life flashed over her and made her dread to question further.

It was not needful. The man continued calmly to enlighten her concerning McFarland's crime and her grandfather's participation in it, while the girl sat with wide-open eyes and a look of despair upon her white face.

Finally Kāra produced a second paper.

"This, Miss Aneth," he said, more gently, "is the receipt signed by Lord Roane for his share of the stolen money. It is proof positive against him, and you will, of course, recognize his signature. Besides, I can produce two witnesses to the crime — a crime for which the penalty is, as I have hinted, a long term of imprisonment as well as dishonor through all the ages to come. But this is only for discovery. There is no penalty exacted for an undiscovered crime. Personally, I do not wish to see Lord Roane disgraced and sent to prison, or your invalid mother impoverished, and you, yourself, left to the mercies of a reproachful world; so I have come here to-day to save you all from these consequences of Roane's folly, if you will let me."

Aneth tried to control her bewilderment. She wanted to think calmly. So vividly had Kāra described Lord Roane's offense, that she saw it all before her as in a dream, and knew that the old man's feet were stumbling at the edge of a bottomless pit. But the last words of the Egyptian, if she heard them aright, seemed to promise a chance of her awakening and exorcising the nightmare.

"How can you save us?" she asked, wearily.

"By making you my wife," he answered. "It all rests with you, Miss Aneth. I alone can protect Lord Roane from any possibility of discovery, and I will do so if you now promise to marry me. More than that, I will pay off all the mortgages on your grandfather's estates, so that he may live in comfort during the remainder of his life, honored and respected by all. And you shall have your father's note of hand for the ten thousand pounds as soon as I receive your promise, as an earnest of my good faith."

"And if I refuse?" she suggested, trembling.

"Then you render me powerless to aid, and plunge your aged grandfather into prison, disgraced and humiliated beyond any hope of redemption."

"No, no! I cannot do that," she wailed, miserably. "He has been so good to me and loved me so fondly that I dare not — I will not — sacrifice him to secure my own happiness!"

"It is as I hoped," said Kāra, a note of triumph in his voice. "Do you promise, sacredly and on your honor, that you will marry me in return for my shielding your grandfather from the consequences of his crime?"

"Yes," she answered, clasping her hands with a shudder.

“And you will come to me any day and hour that I may appoint?”

“Yes.”

“Aneth! Aneth! what have you said? What have you done?” cricd Mrs. Everingham, running from her hiding-place to clasp the terrified girl in her arms.

“What have I done?” repeated Aneth, vacantly. “Why, Lola, I have saved my dear grandfather from disgrace and ruin.”

“You shall not keep that promise!” declared the ‘woman, turning fiercely to confront Kāra. “It was wrung from you by threats — by blackmail — and this scoundrel is playing upon your generous and loving heart. You shall never keep so absurd a promise.”

“Yes,” returned Aneth, bravely; “I have given my word, and I shall keep it.”

Kāra laid a paper upon the table.

“There is your father’s note, Miss Aneth. You may destroy it.” He hesitated an instant, and then added the second paper. “And here is your grandfather’s receipt for the stolen money. So fully do I trust to your good faith that I leave the incriminating evidence all in your own hands. Good afternoon, Miss Aneth.”

With a bow, grave and courteous, he passed from the room, and Mrs. Everingham lifted the girl in her strong arms and carried her into the adjoining chamber to lay her tenderly upon her bed. The strain had been severe, and Aneth had fainted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FINDING A WAY.

Gerald Winston endured several miserable, uneasy days following that of Lord Consinor's public disgrace. He longed to call upon Aneth, but dared not intrude, and so compromised by sending her a daily gift of flowers. At last, however, he decided to see Mrs. Everingham and endeavor to ascertain Aneth's condition, and whether her father's fault was making her as sorrowful as he feared.

He found Mrs. Everingham at her rooms in the Savoy, and was admitted at once.

"I want to ask you about Miss Consinor," he said, after he had been warmly greeted, for they were good friends and she was glad he had come.

"Aneth is very unhappy," was the sober reply.

"I can understand her humiliation, of course," he continued, with a sigh; "although I hoped she would be brave, and not take the unfortunate circumstance too much to heart."

"She is young," answered Mrs. Everingham, evasively, "and cannot view these things as composedly as we do. Moreover, you must remember that Lord Consinor's trouble touches her more deeply than anyone else."

"Unless it is the viscountess," he suggested.

"Oh, the poor viscountess knows nothing of it! She passes her time in an exclusive consideration of her own ailments, and will scarcely see her own daughter at all. Do you know, Gerald, I sometimes wonder why the child can be so sweet and womanly when her surroundings are so dreadful."

"I know what you mean," he said. "Consirior has always borne a doubtful reputation at home, and in past years Roane's life has also been more or less disgraceful. But the old fellow seems to be conducting himself very properly since he came to Egypt, and it is possible he has reformed his ways."

She did not reply at once, but sat musing until she said, with startling abruptness:

"Gerald, do you love Aneth?"

He flushed and stammered in his endeavor to find words to reply. Since his interview with Kāra he had confessed to himself that he did love Aneth; but that other should discover his secret filled the big fellow with confusion.

"Why do you ask?" he faltered, to gain time.

"Because the girl needs true and loving friends more at this moment than in all her life to come," said she, earnestly.

"I will be her true friend in any event," he returned.

"But I must know more than that," persisted Mrs. Everingham. "Tell me

frankly, Gerald, do you love--?"

"Yes."

"Well enough to wish to make her your wife, in spite of her family's shady history?"

"Yes," he said again, looking at her inquiringly. "Then I shall confide to you a great secret; for it is right that you should be apprised of what is going on; and only you — with my assistance, to be sure — can hope to defeat the cunning plot that threatens to separate Aneth from you forever."

Thereupon she related to him the details of the interview she had overheard between Kāra and the girl, and told of the promise Aneth had made to save her grandfather from disgrace by marrying the Egyptian.

"But this is nonsense!" he exclaimed, angrily. "The man is a fool to wish to force any woman to marry him, and a scoundrel to use such means to accomplish his purpose."

"I know; I have discussed this matter with Aneth long and earnestly, but all in vain. She is determined to sacrifice herself to save Lord Roane from this disgrace; and Prince Kāra is inflexible. For some unknown reason he has determined to make this girl his wife, although he did not talk like a lover, and she told him frankly she could never love or even esteem him. Really, it seems incomprehensible."

"I know his reason well enough," answered Winston, moodily. "He is acting under the influence of the strongest and most evil human passion — revenge. If you will kindly listen, my friend, I will relate a bit of Finding a Way romance that should enable you to understand the Egyptian's purpose."

He proceeded to recount the story of Hatatcha and Lord Roane, adding his grounds for believing that Kāra had from the first contemplated the ruin of the entire Consinor family.

"This is horrible!" cried Mrs. Everingham, indignantly. "If what you say is true, this native prince is himself a grandson of Roane, and therefore Aneth's cousin."

"I have called his attention to that fact, and he declares it is no bar to his marrying her. I imagine his real meaning is that the relationship is no bar to his prosecuting his nefarious plans. Does Lord Roane know of this proposed sacrifice of his granddaughter for his sake?"

"No; and Aneth has made me promise to keep the secret from him. I cannot see that he would be able to assist us in any way, if he knew all that we know."

"Perhaps not. Is the story true? Has Roane actually embezzled this money?"

"I do not know."

“It seems to me,” said the young man, thoughtfully, “that our first action should be to discover the truth of Kāra’s assertion. He may have trumped up the charge to work upon Aneth’s feelings, and lead her to consent to marry him against her will.”

“That is true,” she said. “How can we investigate the matter?”

“Very easily. I will go to-morrow to the Rosetta Barrage and examine the embankment. Afterward I can look up the records and discover what sort of contract this man McFarland had, and how much money he collected for its execution. That will give us the truth of the matter, and I can accomplish it all in two days* time.”

“Then go; but make haste, for every day is precious. We do not know when the prince may call upon Aneth to fulfil her promise.”

They discussed the situation a while longer, and then Winston withdrew to prepare for taking the early morning train.

The second evening after, he again called upon Mrs. Everingham.

“Well,” she inquired, eagerly, “what did you discover?”

“It is all true,” he answered, despondently. “The swindle has been cleverly consummated, and in just the way Kāra explained it to Aneth. There is no doubt of Lord Roane’s guilt; neither can we doubt that Kāra has both the power and the will to expose and imprison him if it suits his purpose to do so.”

“Then,” said Mrs. Everingham, firmly, “we must find another way to save Aneth. The poor child is heart-broken, and moans every moment that she is left alone with her misery. Lord Roane tries earnestly to comfort her, for I am sure he loves her as well as one of his character is capable of loving. But he imagines she grieves over her father, and does not suspect the truth.”

“Is she still resolved upon keeping her promise?” he inquired.

“Yes; and that in spite of all I can say to move her. The girl has a gentle and loving nature, but underneath it is a will of iron and a stubbornness such as the early martyrs must have possessed. She holds her own happiness as nothing when compared with her grandfather’s safety.”

“Then what can we do?” he asked, pacing the floor nervously.

“We must resort to a cunning equal to Kāra’s in order to induce Aneth to break her foolish promise,” responded Mrs. Everingham, promptly.

“I fear I do not quite understand,” he said, stopping before her to read her countenance for the clue.

“I think — nay, Gerald, I am certain — the girl loves you; for I have questioned her skilfully during your absence and led her to speak of you, watching her telltale eyes as she did so. In my opinion it is this secret love for another that makes her sacrifice so grievous, and will end in breaking her

heart."

He blushed like a girl at hearing this, but was evidently reassured and delighted.

"Yet I do not understand even now, Mrs. Everingham," he said.

"It is not so much that you are stupid as that you are a man," she answered, smiling. "You must become the instrument to save Aneth from herself. In a few moments I shall take you to see her. Her rooms are just across the hall, and doubtless she is at this moment alone, Lord Roane having left the hotel an hour ago. This evening I will give you countenance, but thereafter you must play your own game, and do your utmost to draw from Aneth a confession that she loves you. When you have done that, our case is won."

"Why so?"

"Can't you see, Gerald? No right-minded girl would ruin the life of the man she loves to save her grandfather from the consequences of his own errors. If she is in the mood to sacrifice, we will let her sacrifice Lord Roane instead of herself or you."

"Oh!" he said, blankly. "I can't do that, you know, Mrs. Everingham."

"Why not?"

"It would not be honest or fair. And it would be selfish in me, and — and unmanly."

"But I am not thinking of you at all, sir, except as the instrument. I am thinking of Aneth and her life's happiness. Are you willing, on your part, to sacrifice her to such a man as Kāra, that he may crush her to gratify his revenge?"

"No; but — "

"Will you permit her, in her blindness and folly, to break her own heart and ruin her own life, when you know that you can save her?"

"No."

"The struggle is between you and Kāra. Lord Roane is a felon, and to save him from the penalty due his acts will be to merely postpone the day when another of his criminal misdeeds will be discovered. There is little possible redemption for a man who has attained his sinful years; but if the possibility did exist, the price would be too high. Opposed to the desirability of shielding this reprobate nobleman and giving Kāra his way — which simply means Aneth's ruin — we must consider your mutual love and the prospect of a long life of happiness for you both. Do you dare to hesitate, Gerald Winston?"

"I will do exactly as you say, Mrs. Everingham," he replied, impetuously. "I can't let her go to this fiend — to the terrible fate that awaits her. Tell me

what to do, and I will obey!"

"Your first duty will be to come with me to her room. And drop that long face, sir! Be cheery and lighthearted, and woo Aneth as tenderly as if you were wholly ignorant of the dreadful position she is in. Arrange to call again to-morrow, and in the future do not leave her alone for a single evening, and haunt her at all hours of the day. Remember that time is precious, and the situation demands all your skill and diplomacy. It cannot be a long siege; you must determine to capture her by attack."

"I — I'll try," he said, nervously.

And so he met Aneth again, for the first time since her trouble had come upon her, and he performed his part so creditably that Mrs. Everingham had but little fault to find with her coadjutor. The sight of the girl's swollen eyelids and her sad and resigned expression of countenance so aroused his loving pity and indignation at the cruel plot that had enmeshed her, that he could scarcely restrain the impulse to declare at once his love and entreat her to give him an immediate right to protect her.

Perhaps Aneth read something of his love for her in his eager face, for she joined with Mrs. Everingham in sustaining the flow of small talk that was likely to prove her best safeguard, and in this way was led to forget for the moment her cares and fears. She hesitated a moment when Gerald proposed to bring her a new book next afternoon, but finally consented. Therefore, he left her feeling more buoyant and hopeful than he had thought could be possible a few short hours before.

From that evening his former shyness disappeared, and he pushed his suit with as much ardor as he dared, utterly ignoring Aneth's evident desire to restrain him from speaking too plainly. But sometimes she, too, forgot her impending fate, and gave way to the delight of these happy moments. Already she knew that Gerald loved her, for her woman's instinct was alert, and at night she lay upon her bed and wailed miserably because the gates of paradise had suddenly opened before her, and her willing feet were so bound that she might not enter.

During these days Lord Roane devoted much of his time to his grandchild, treating her with almost reverential tenderness and striving in every possible way to cheer her spirits. The old man realized that his probation might be short. At any moment Kāra was liable to fulfil his threat and expose him to the authorities, and involuntarily he caught himself listening at all times for the footfall of the official coming to arrest him. He even wondered why he had escaped so long, knowing nothing of the manner in which Aneth had saved him.

And the girl, noting his loving care for her and marking the trouble that

often clouded his handsome face, was encouraged in her resolve to carry out her compact with Kāra rather than see her aged grandfather thrust into prison, humiliated and disgraced.

Between her awakening love for Gerald Winston and her desire to save the family honor, the girl was indeed in pitiable straits. Yet never for a moment did she hesitate as to which way the path of duty led.

She felt that every day she remained unmolested by the Egyptian was a precious boon to be grateful for, yet always she dreaded Kāra's summons. However, he was in no hurry, realizing the bitterness to her of these days of waiting, and enjoying the prolongation of her sufferings. All the love that Kāra had formerly borne the girl seemed to have dissolved as if by magic, and in its place had grown up schemes for so horrible a vengeance that he often wondered whether Hatatcha herself might not have hesitated to accomplish it.

But Kāra did not hesitate. The very diablerie of the thing fascinated and delighted him, and he anticipated the event with eager joy.

Tadros spent much of his time at the hotel, in charge of Kāra's elaborate system of espionage. His functions as dragoman gained for him special privileges, and the hall porter allowed him free access to the lobby; yet he was only able to enter the upper halls when he could plead some definite errand. This excuse was provided by a guest of the hotel, an agreeable Frenchman who was in Kāra's employ and maintained a surveillance over the interior of the establishment, while a half-dozen Arabs and Copts watched carefully the exterior. Thus Tadros was enabled to keep in close touch with the movements of Lord Roane and Aneth, as well as to spy upon those who might visit them, and his orders were to report promptly to Kāra any suspicious circumstances which might indicate that his victims were planning their escape.

But, from the dragoman's reports, all seemed well, and his prospective prey apparently made no effort to evade their fate.

Kāra depended much upon Aneth's delicate sense of honor and her strength of character, and read her so truly that there was little chance of her disappointing him. Roane, however, caused him a little uneasiness, and the Egyptian's spies shadowed him wherever he went. But Kāra misjudged the old gentleman if he supposed that Roane would tamely submit to Aneth's sacrifice had he known her secret. The girl understood him better, and although she did not know of his indignant rejection of Kāra's offer to shield him at the expense of his granddaughter's happiness, Aneth knew that if Roane learned the truth he would at once give himself up to justice in order

to save her; and here was a danger the clever Egyptian had not even suspected.

In many of his dealings Roane was doubtless an unprincipled knave; but certain points of character were so impressed upon his nature, through inheritance from generations of more noble Consinors, that in matters of chivalry his honor could not be successfully challenged.

The dragoman said nothing to Kāra about Winston's frequent visits to Aneth. During his hours of watching Tadros indulged in reflection, and these musings encouraged a growing resentment toward his master that destroyed much of his value as a confidential servant. Aside from the resentment, Tadros was afraid of Kāra, and also uneasy as to his financial condition. The prince, who was accustomed to scatter money with a liberal hand, had of late refrained from exhibiting a single piastre. Tadros wondered, and grew suspicious. One evening, as he reported to Kāra, he said:

"The tradesmen are clamoring for their money. They say you are not paying them as promptly as you did heretofore."

Kāra looked up with surprise.

"Is not my credit good?" he inquired.

"For the present, yes," replied the dragoman; "but it will not remain good unless you begin to pay for all the magnificence you are putting into this villa."

"I see," said Kāra, nodding thoughtfully. "They are fools, my Tadros, but they might become troublesome. Keep them satisfied with promises for a time longer. That should not be a difficult task."

Tadros looked at him distrustfully.

"Tell me, my prince; have you spent all your treasure?" he asked.

The Egyptian smiled.

"If I should live a thousand years, my Tadios," he returned, "I could not spend the half of it."

"Then why do you not pay these merchants?"

"Because I have at this time no more money in the bank, and it is not convenient for me to leave Cairo just now to secure a further supply."

"Oh, I see!" remarked the dragoman, heaving a sigh of relief. "You must make another trip to Fedah."

Kāra gave him one of those intent, thoughtful looks that always made Tadros uneasy; but when he spoke his voice sounded soft and pleasant.

"What causes you to think my treasure is at Fedah, my good friend?" he asked.

The tone reassured the dragoman.

"It stands to reason, my prince, that it is there," he answered, with frank

indifference. “Do I not well remember first seeing the papyri in your house, and afterward carrying away from there the heavy traveling case that was filled with precious gems?”

“Ah! was it?”

“Of course, Kāra. How else could you give so many ancient gems to the Van der Veens to recut, or turn so many more into money by selling them to Andalaft, the jeweler?”

“You have been observant, my Tadros.”

“It is natural. I am no fool. But if, as you say, there is more treasure at Fedah, I will undertake to keep the rascally tradesmen quiet until you can make another deposit in the bank.”

Kāra was still reading the countenance of his dragoman.

“It is quite evident that you are no fool, my Tadros,” he said, softly; “yet I had not imagined you capable of so much shrewdness and wisdom. Look you! Fedah consists of a rock and a few stone houses cemented with Nile mud. It is familiar to you, being your birthplace as well as my own. Now where do you suppose, within the limits of that simple village, a treasure could have been discovered?”

“It has puzzled me,” acknowledged Tadros; “but I suppose you do not wish me to know the exact location. Nevertheless, it is evident that the treasure is a very ancient one, and therefore it must have been hidden by your forefathers in the mountain itself, or perhaps on the desert that adjoins the village.”

“A long-buried and forgotten temple; eh, Tadros?”

“Oh, no; a tomb, of course! They did not keep pearls and rubies in the temples. Only in tombs could such trinkets be found. That is why I believe your statement that you are the last descendant of the great kings of Egypt; for this tomb was not discovered by accident, I know. The secret of its existence must have been handed down through the generations. Hatatcha knew, and told you of it before she died; so it is your personal property, and its possession proves your noble blood. I am glad the treasure is ample; for at the rate you are squandering money, it would otherwise be soon exhausted.”

“Very wisely argued, indeed,” said Kāra. “I wonder how much of my inheritance has already found its way into your own pockets.”

“Not too much, you may be sure,” answered the dragoman, gravely. “I am very honest, and take only my rightful perquisites. It is better, that these trifles should go to me than to strangers, for I am your own kinsman and almost as pure an Egyptian as yourself.”

“True. I do not complain, my Tadros. But in acquiring my money you should take care not to acquire too much knowledge of my affairs with it, for

such knowledge is liable to prove extremely dangerous. Consider the pearls of wisdom that have even now dropped from your lips. Must they not be repaid? And already I am greatly in your debt."

"You are talking riddles," growled the dragoman, uneasily. "Tell me what you mean in plain words."

"Do you remember the day that Nephthys broke her water-jar?"

"Yes."

"You struck me, your prince, and knocked me down."

"Well, you choked me afterward. That should even the score."

"Not quite. I choked you for spying upon me. That was another offense. The blow has not yet been accounted for."

Tadros frowned.

"I do not bear grudges myself," he muttered.

"There are a few other matters scored against your account," continued Kāra. "Still, so long as you serve me faithfully, and I have need of you, I shall not exact a reckoning; but they stand on record, my Tadros, and some day the account must be balanced. Do not forget that. For these reasons, and remembering that you have declared yourself no fool, I am certain that you will admit you were wrong about the location of my treasure. When you think it over, you will conclude that it lies in Luxor, or Abydos, or perhaps is a myth altogether, and never has existed. And, when you chatter to others, no mention of a hidden tomb or temple will be permitted to pass your lips. I am quite sure you will be circumspect, and I trust you to keep to yourself the secret of my affairs. If I thought you would betray me, I would kill you now, instead of waiting. But you will not do that; you are too fond of living and of the money you are saving to hazard losing both."

Tadros returned to his duties in a very thoughtful mood. In playing upon his fears, Kāra had overreached himself, and made the dragoman so much afraid that he believed his life hung by a thread. Therefore, he sought most earnestly for a way of escape from the thrall of his terrible countryman.

The following morning Gerald Winston, on leaving Mrs. Everingham after a conference concerning their plans, met Tadros face to face in the corridor of the hotel. He recognized the man at once as Kāra's dragoman and confidential servant. Moreover, he suspected that the fellow had just come from the Consinor apartments; so he had no hesitation in accosting him.

"May I speak with you a moment in private?" he asked.

"Most certainly, sir."

Winston led the way into Mrs. Everingham's drawing-room, where the lady greeted his return with surprise, but a quick appreciation of the importance of securing an interview with Kāra's confidant.

“You are Prince Kāra’s dragoman, I believe?” began the Englishman.

“Yes, Winston Bey.”

“And devoted to him personally, of course?”

“To an extent, naturally,” returned Tadros, hesitating what to say. “You see, he pays me liberally.”

Winston and Mrs. Everingham exchanged glances. Then the lady took up the conversation.

“Prince Kāra,” she said, in a stem tone, “is a scoundrel, being even now engaged in perfecting one of the most diabolical plots the mind of man has ever conceived.”

Tadros did not reply. It was not his business to deny the charge.

“Our desire and intention to defeat this plot,” she continued, “lead us to speak to you frankly. We must save Miss Consinor from an ignoble alliance with your master.”

Tadros listened carefully.

“To accomplish our purpose, we are willing to expend a great deal of money — enough to make some faithful ally comfortable for the remainder of his life.” A pause followed this significant statement. Tadros felt the effect of their scrutinizing glances, and cleared his throat while he looked swiftly around to make sure they could not be overheard. Then, reassured, he answered with his native bluntness of speech.

“I am willing to earn this money,” said he, “if you will show me how to do it with safety. Kāra is a fiend. He would not hesitate to kill all three of us if he had reason to suspect we were plotting against him.”

“I will give you a thousand pounds,” said Winston, “if you will tell us what you know of Kāra’s plans. I will give you two thousand pounds additional if we succeed in saving Miss Consinor.”

Tadros was pleased. He had intended to break with Kāra anyway. To be well paid for doing this was a stroke of good fortune.

“I accept your offer,” he replied. “But I must inform you that there is no time to be lost. I have just taken a message to Miss Consinor, telling her to be ready to go to Kāra at nine o’clock this evening.”

“This evening!” exclaimed Winston, alarmed. “And what was her reply?”

“She assured me that she would keep her compact with the prince and be ready to accompany me at the hour named. I am to call for her and take her in a closed carriage to Kāra’s villa.”

“And then?” asked Mrs. Everingham, eagerly. “Then there is to be a mock ceremony of marriage, which is intended to entrap the young lady so that she will think everything is regular, and will make no disturbance,” answered Tadros, calmly. “A Copt, named Mykel, who is one of Kāra’s servants, is to

be dressed as a priest and perform the Coptic marriage service, which is a Christian function not unlike your own. But the man is not a priest, and the marriage will be illegal. The intention is to destroy the young lady's good name, after which Kāra will drive her away. Then he intends to deliver her grandfather, Lord Roane, over to justice."

"What a dreadful crime!" exclaimed Mrs. Everingham, indignantly. "And Aneth is sacrificing herself because she believes the act will save her grandfather."

"That is Kāra's promise," returned the dragoman. 'But he has no intention of keeping it. Did he not give her a forged copy of Roane's receipt? For some reason my prince aims at the ruin of the entire Consinor family. The young lady's father he has already disgraced and driven from Cairo."

"I understand his motive," said Winston, "and believe you are right in claiming that Kāra will not spare Lord Roane once Aneth is in his power. The danger is terrible and imminent, for nothing will move Aneth to abandon her purpose. She imagines she is saving Roane, and has exacted from us a promise not to tell the old gentleman of her sacrifice. So our hands are tied."

"It seems to me," declared Mrs. Everingham, after a moment's thought, "that we must use the self-same weapons in fighting Kāra that he is employing. With the dragoman's assistance it ought to be easy to save Aneth, even against her will."

"In what way?" inquired Gerald, earnestly.

She did not reply at once. Instead, she studied the dragoman's countenance with steadfast eyes. "What is your name?" she asked.

"Tadros, madam."

"Will you follow our instructions faithfully, and not betray us to Prince Kāra?"

"Yes. I hate Kāra. He will kill me for deserting him if he gets the chance; but then he intends to kill me anyway as soon as he can spare my services. If your plan includes the murder of Prince Kāra, I shall be very glad."

"It does not; but we will protect you from any harm, rest assured. Your task is simple. When you call for Miss Consinor to-night you will drive her, not to the prince's villa, but to the embankment, where you will place her on board Winston Bey's dahabeah. It will lie opposite Roda, on the west bank. Cross the Gizireh bridge and drive as rapidly as possible to the boat, where we shall be waiting to receive you."

"My dahabeah!" cricd Winston, astonished.

"To be sure. You will have everything in readiness for a voyage up the Nile, with a prisoner aboard."

"A prisoner?"

“Yes; Aneth. She will, of course, refuse to go willingly, having given Kāra her word. I will accompany the party as her keeper, and we must find some way to induce Lord Roane to join us also. Once afloat on the mysterious river, Kāra will have no means of knowing what has become of his victims, and before we return, my friend, we shall have perfected such arrangements as will render the prince’s intention to marry our Aneth impossible. That is why I desire Lord Roane to join the party. He also will be safe from Kāra for a time.”

“I understand you now,” said Winston; “and while I do not see quite to the end of the adventure, the plan will at least give us time to formulate our future action and enable us to thwart Kāra’s immediate schemes.”

“That is my idea,” she returned. “Something must be done at once; and by abducting Aneth, we not only gain time, but save her temporarily from the consequences of her own folly.”

Then she turned to Tadros.

“What do you think of my plan?” she asked.

“It is excellent,” said he, “except for one thing; there are several spies about this hotel, who would at once follow us and inform Kāra that we had boarded the dahabeah; but I think I can find a way to throw them off the scent. They are under my orders, and I will send them to other stations before nine o’clock. Aside from this, then, do I understand that my only duty is to deliver the young lady on board the dahabeah?”

“That is all we ask.”

“I will show three red lights,” said Winston, “so that you cannot mistake the exact location of the boat.”

“I know the boat,” replied the dragoman. “Abdallah, your engineer, is a friend of mine.”

“You will not fail us?” asked Mrs. Everingham, anxiously. “All depends upon you, Tadros!”

“I know, and I will not fail you,” he said.

“I believe you will earn the three thousand pounds,” remarked Winston, significantly.

“As for that, sir,” replied the dragoman, with dignity, “I hope you will give me credit for a little humanity as well as cupidity. Being an Egyptian, I love money; being a man, I am eager to assist a woman in distress. But, above all else, I shall have pleasure in defying Kāra, who hates me as heartily as I hate him. Thus, three passions vouch for my fidelity — love, pity and hatred. Can you doubt my devotion to the cause?”

After this he went away, leaving his fellow-conspirators to plan the details of the evening’s adventure.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ABDUCTION.

Mrs. Everingham passed the afternoon in Aneth's company. The girl was visibly nervous and excited, but made pitiful attempts to conceal her weakness. In no way did she allude to Kāra or to the fact that the hour had arrived when she was to consummate the sacrifice of her own happiness to maintain her grandfather's integrity and the honor of her family's name.

Her friend ventured one or two remarks about the folly of her promise and the absurdity of keeping it; but these so distressed Aneth, and had so little visible influence upon her decision, that Mrs. Everingham abandoned the topic and turned the conversation into more cheerful channels. When she mentioned Gerald Winston she noticed that Aneth's cheeks flamed scarlet and then turned deathly white; so here was another subject to be avoided, if she did not wish to make the girl's position unbearable. Indeed, those last days of association with Gerald had taught Aneth the full extent of her martyrdom, and now she began to realize that she was losing all that might have rendered her life's happiness complete, had it not been for the advent of Kāra and his terrible threat to destroy the family honor and send her loving grandfather to prison.

Early in the evening Mrs. Everingham kissed her friend and returned to her own room across the corridor, there to complete her simple preparations for the proposed voyage.

Meantime Winston had been busy with Lord Roane. The young man was fortunately a prime favorite with Aneth's grandsire, and he listened attentively to Gerald's explanation of a plot to rescue his darling grandchild from the slough of despondency into which she had fallen.

"Mrs. Everingham is confident a Nile voyage would do much to cheer her up and keep her from dwelling upon her troubles," he suggested. "What do you think of the idea, sir?"

"Capital," said Roane — "if Aneth can be induced to consent. I asked her to run over to Helwan the other day, for a few weeks' change of scene; but she declared she would not listen to such a proposal."

"That is our difficulty," acknowledged Winston, speaking in a confidential tone. "She has told Mrs. Everingham she would not leave Cairo, but we think her decision is based upon the fear that you would be unable to accompany her; so we have decided to engage in a little conspiracy, for the morbid condition into which she has fallen has made us all anxious. Is there any reason, my lord, why you should not leave Cairo for a month or so?"

"None whatever, if my going will benefit Aneth in any way."

“Very good! Now, here is our plan. I have fitted my private dahabeah for a cruise. Mrs. Everingham will go along to chaperone your granddaughter, and you will join us to complete her happiness and keep her contented. Only one thing stands in our way — the young lady’s refusal to embark. That barrier will be surmounted by Mrs. Everingham, who is a woman of experience and who loves Aneth as well as if she were her own daughter. So this evening you and I will get aboard quietly, without declaring our intentions to anyone, and rely upon Mrs. Everingham’s promise to join us with Aneth at nine o’clock. Do not ask me, sir, how she will succeed in overcoming your granddaughter’s scruples against leaving Cairo. We will trust to woman’s wit. When the party is embarked, we go up the Nile, to find roses for your grandchild’s pale cheeks and have a jolly good time as well.”

Roane accepted the program with enthusiasm. He himself was in a dreadfully nervous state, expecting hourly to be accused of a crime the proof of which would separate him forever from Aneth. To get away from Cairo just now, without Kāra’s knowing where he had gone, would be to gain a few weeks’ respite. Eagerly he availed himself of the opportunity.

Winston knew there was no danger of the old man’s betraying their plans, but he could not divine what Kāra’s next move might be, and resolved to take no chances; so he clung fast to Roane until he had put him and his light luggage aboard the dahabeah, whereupon he sent a messenger to apprise Mrs. Everingham of his success.

So far, all had gone well; but Mrs. Everingham’s anxiety grew as the hour of nine approached. Lord Roane had sent word to Aneth that he would be out for dinner and might not return to the hotel until late that night; so the girl, glad of this fortunate chance, had her dinner served in her own room, and the Arab servant, being intercepted by Mrs. Everingham, declared that she ate little and wept continually, as if overcome by some hopeless sorrow.

All depended now upon the faithfulness of Tadros the dragoman, and Mrs. Everingham, finding nothing more for her woman’s ingenuity to devise, entered a carriage at half past-eight o’clock and was driven quietly to the embankment. Within sight of the three red lights Winston had displayed, she halted her vehicle to await the arrival of the dragoman.

Tadros, meantime, being fully instructed by Kāra as to the conduct of his mission, drove in the Egyptian’s private carriage to the hotel. The coachman had been instructed to obey the dragoman’s orders implicitly, so he suspected nothing when Tadros, having alighted at the Savoy, commanded him to drive to the citadel and remain in the shadow of the mosque until midnight.

The dragoman then hired another carriage that was driven by a sleepy and stupid-looking Arab, after which he immediately entered the hotel and went

directly to Aneth's room.

She opened the door in person, having dismissed all her attendants.

"It is nine o'clock, miss," announced Tadros, as he entered.

The girl clasped her hands with a gesture and look of terror.

"Where is — is — Prince Kāra?" she asked, vaguely.

"At his villa, awaiting, with the bridal party, your arrival. You must understand that the wedding is to be very quietly conducted, yet strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Christian faith. My master desires me to say that every consideration and courtesy shall be shown you, his highest ambition in the future being to promote your happiness."

She shuddered.

"Is that all he said?"

"Except that his promises to you shall be faithfully kept, and Lord Roane's comfort and safety carefully provided for."

"Let us go," she said, hastily. "I am ready."

"Any luggage, miss?" he asked.

She pointed to a small traveling-case that stood beside her, and Tadros stooped and picked it up.

With a frightened glance around her, she placed a note directed to Lord Roane upon the table and then hurriedly left the room, leaving the door unlocked.

The dragoman escorted her to the side entrance, reserved for ladies, and they were fortunate in finding it almost deserted at that moment. Aneth entered the carriage quickly, as if fearful of being interrupted in her escape, and Tadros closed the door and took his scat beside the driver.

"To the opera house," he said, for the benefit of the few loungers who stood upon the pavement.

After driving a couple of blocks, he made the Arab driver stop in front of a tobacco shop, and sent him in to purchase some cigarettes. The moment the fellow disappeared, Tadros started the horse and applied the whip, and the carriage had whirled swiftly around the comer before the wondering Arab returned to the street, to find his equipage and his passengers missing.

Aneth, as soon as she had leaned back against the cushions, had fallen into a sort of stupor. Her weary brain refused to think or to speculate upon the doubtful fate to which she was rushing. She felt the carriage bumping over the crossings and saw vaguely the lights flash by; but she noted neither the direction in which they were proceeding nor the length of their journey. Across the Nile bridge the horses abated their speed; but then through the darker lanes of the west embankment they dashed along at a wild pace, that might have frightened the girl, had she been capable of realizing the actual

conditions.

Suddenly, with a jolt that almost threw her into the opposite seat, the carriage halted. She looked out of the window and saw three dim red lights burning, and beyond these the glint of a stray moonbeam upon the river.

When Tadros came to assist her in alighting, she saw Mrs. Everingham standing behind him.

“Where am I?” asked the girl, wildly.

“Hush, dear,” said her friend, taking her in her arms to kiss her tenderly. “Am I not welcome at your wedding?”

“But why are we here?” asked Aneth, pleadingly. “Why are we at the river, and where is Prince Kāra?”

“Come and let me surprise you,” answered Mrs. Everingham, soothingly, leading the young girl, who was still half dazed and thoroughly mystified, aboard the dahabeah and into the brightly lighted little cabin. There sat Lord Roane and Gerald Winston.

Aneth stared, and then, looking wildly around, she gave a plaintive cry and threw herself into her grandfather’s arms.

“I don’t understand!” she wailed, sobbing hysterically. “What does it all mean? Why are you here, and where is Prince Kāra?”

Roane was puzzled by her speech, as well as distressed by her agitation.

“Prince Kāra!” he repeated. “Confound it, Aneth, you don’t want that rascally nigger, do you?”

“No, no!” she replied; “but he wants me, and I have promised; I must go to him. Why am I here? What have you done?”

By this time the dragoman had tied his horses to a palm and come aboard, just as Hassan drew in the gangplank and Abdallah started the wheezy engine. Tadros stood in the cabin doorway and listened intently to Aneth’s protests.

“See here, miss,” he exclaimed, with assumed sternness, “you are in my charge, for I am Prince Kāra’s dragoman, and you have promised to obey me. Is it not so?”

She turned to look at him.

“Are you obeying Prince Kāra’s orders?” she demanded.

“To be sure! He wished to surprise you. He says he merely intended to test your honesty, being interested in knowing whether an English girl would keep her promises. But he does not desire to make you unhappy. He is a prince, and generous; therefore, he releases you from your compact, and you are free from this time forth to do exactly as you please.”

She was white and trembling now.

“But my grandfather — ” she began, eagerly.

Tadros cut her short.

“He also is safe, in proof of which you see him at your side. You need have no fears in the future that — ”

He stopped abruptly, for the overwrought nerves of the girl could not withstand this sudden revulsion of fate. Gerald caught her swaying form and carried her to her berth, where Mrs. Everingham tended her lovingly and applied restoratives to relieve her faintness.

As for Lord Roane, he swore loudly and glared upon the dragoman.

“What cursed nonsense is this?” he cried.

Tadros smiled, and Gerald came up and seized the dragoman by both hands, pressing them warmly.

“Thank you, my man!” said he. “You are a loyal ally, and I shall not forget how you have lied to save us from an embarrassing position.” Then he turned to Lord Roane. “If there is anything your lordship does not understand,” he said, “I will gladly endeavor to explain it. Prince Kāra has been playing a deep game, with you and Aneth as pawns; but I think we have him checkmated at last.”

The old nobleman did not reply at once. Any questioning on his part would necessarily be a very delicate matter. He turned his eyes thoughtfully toward the shore, where the lights of Cairo were slowly disappearing from their view.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHEIK AGREES.

Kāra congratulated himself. For one whose early life had been passed in a hovel, he had been very successful in directing the destinies of the great. All his grandmother's vengeful plans, supplemented by his own clever arrangement of details, had matured in a remarkably satisfactory manner, and this evening he was destined to complete the ruin of Lord Roane's family. In addition to compromising Aneth beyond all hope by a false marriage, he would to-morrow have my lord cast into prison on a charge of embezzlement. The proof which he had pretended to place in the girl's keeping, and which she had without doubt promptly destroyed, was merely a forgery of the receipt to McFarland. The original was still safe in his custody.

This ruse had been a clever one. His judgment of the girl's nature was marvelously accurate. Having destroyed the paper to insure her grandfather's safety, Aneth was effectually prevented from breaking her contract with Kāra. There was no way for her to recede. He had paid the price, and she was left with no excuse for not fulfilling her part of the agreement.

When Kāra entered his courtyard he found it ablaze with lights. The women's apartments, now completely refitted, were truly magnificent. A dozen servants, arrayed in splendid costumes, stood motionless at their posts, awaiting the arrival of their new mistress. Mykel, a rascally Copt whom Kāra had recently attached to his household, was clad in priestly robes, and paced up and down the court with an assumed dignity that elicited sly smiles from his fellow-servants.

Only the prince's own people were present, for Kāra wished to be in a position to deny even the farce of a ceremony, should Aneth attempt in the future to use it as an excuse for her downfall. But it pleased him to lull her suspicions in this way in the beginning, and so render her an easy victim. It also gave an added flavor to his revenge.

Tadros had been carefully instructed, and would have no difficulty in fulfilling his mission. He ought to reach the villa on his return by half-past nine, allowing for natural delays. Kāra trusted Tadros because the dragoman was so completely in his power; but, with his usual caution, he had sent a spy to watch his messenger and report any irregularity in his conduct. Tadros did not know of this spy; otherwise, he might have felt less confidence in himself.

Half-past nine arrived, but no sound of carriage wheels broke the stillness. The servants stood motionless in their places, and Kāra paced the courtyard in deep reflection while engaged in drawing on his white kid gloves. The

false priest stood under the bower of roses where the ceremony was to take place, trying to find the service in the Coptic Bible he had borrowed.

Nine-forty-five; ten o'clock. The dark-eyed servants noticed that their master grew uneasy and cast anxious glances toward the entrance.

It was twenty minutes later, when the nerves of the most unconcerned were beginning to get on edge, that the patter of horses' feet and the rapid whir of wheels broke the silence. A carriage dashed up to the villa and halted.

Kāra hurried forward expectantly, but paused abruptly when he met the spy who had been sent to watch Tadros.

"Where is the dragoman?" he demanded, in a sharp voice.

"The dragoman, your highness, is a traitor," said the man.

Kāra's nervousness suddenly subsided. He became composed in demeanor and his voice grew soft.

"Explain, if you please," said he.

The man bowed.

"Arriving at the hotel, Tadros sent away your excellency's carriage — "

"Where is it now?"

"I do not know. Then he engaged another equipage — that of the Arab named Effta Marada, bearing the number of ninety-three. Tadros brought the young lady down and placed her in Effta's carriage, ordering him to drive to the opera house. I sprang up behind and accompanied them. Tadros soon got rid of Effta by sending him on an errand and then drove quickly away. He crossed the Nile to the west embankment nd drove down the river to a point opposite the island of Roda, where your dragoman placed the lady on board dahabeah."

"Yes; go on."

"When the boat steamed away up the river, I took the deserted carriage and drove here as rapidly as possible. That is all, your excellency."

"Whose dahabeah was it?"

"That belonging to Winston Bey. I saw him on board."

"Did you see anyone else?"

"The lady who has been a friend to Miss Consinor."

"That is Mrs. Everingham."

"And an old Englishman, Lord Roane."

"Ah! Quite a family party. And our dear Tadros vent with them?"

"He did, your excellency."

"Up the river, you say?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Thank you. You may retire."

Kāra turned to Ebbek.

"Put out the lights and send the servants to their quarters," he said, calmly.

In his room the prince tore off the white gloves and changed from evening dress to a gray traveling suit. Then he returned to the now deserted courtyard and sat down in the moonlight beside the fountain to smoke a cigar.

The blow had been sharp and sudden. While Kāra fully realized the natural capability of Tadros for deception and double dealing, he also knew that the blustering dragoman was an arrant coward, and so was bewildered at the courage manifested in his treachery.

But it was characteristic of Kāra that he neither bemoaned his adverse fortune nor became despondent. He entertained a passing regret that he had delayed killing the dragoman, but did not permit himself to dwell long upon his servant's defection. The thing to be first sought was a remedy for the apparent failure of his carefully laid plans. By and by he would attend to the dragoman's reward. Just now it was imperative to prevent his intended victims from succeeding in their attempt to escape.

There was no demand for immediate action. The dahabeah was, as he knew, a slow steamer, and would be forced to breast the Nile current sluggishly. His enemies doubtless depended for their safety from pursuit upon Kāra's supposed ignorance of their whereabouts. He admitted that someone had plotted shrewdly against him. On the Nile a party in a small boat is almost as isolated as if at sea. The express steamers and tourist steamers pass now and then, but they travel rapidly, appearing and disappearing within the brief space of half an hour. Aside from these, only the native barges, picturesque and ghostlike as they drift by, break the ripples of the broad river. The banks are sprinkled with many villages, and at this season shaduf workers are plentiful; but the native has tired of staring at the Nile flotilla, unless awaiting with eagerness the landing of the big tourist steamer, from whose passengers a scant livelihood is gained, and this occurs only at certain points of interest.

So Kāra had time to be deliberate. It even occurred to him that this seeming calamity might turn out to be exceptionally favorable to the success of his schemes. In Cairo one must act with circumspection, because the police of the city are alert and almost incorruptible. The Nile dwellers fear the law rather than respect it; but they are too far from the capital to be very much afraid. Where tourists disembark, a mounted officer is stationed to lash the impudent villagers into a state of dull apathy, such as the caged tiger feels for its trainer; but they lapse into savagery when his back is turned, and in the more unfrequented villages the sheik is absolute king.

Kāra considered carefully these conditions, and soon formed new plans to

complete his vengeance. Then, the cigar being finished, he went to bed and slept until daybreak.

"I shall be absent for several days," he said to Ebbek, as he ate an early breakfast. "See that everything is in perfect order when I return. If tradesmen come to demand money, promise them payment immediately on my arrival in Cairo."

"Yes, my master."

He caught the morning train for Luxor and arrived by noon at a station opposite the native village of Beni-Hassan, whence he crossed the river in a small boat.

The children of Hassan have for centuries been known as "the bandits of the Nile," and their three connected villages, lying close to the river bank, have replaced those that were totally destroyed by the Government during the reign of Mohammed 'Ali in the hope of scattering the tribes and breaking up their thieving propensities; but the Beni-Hassans rebuilt their mud dwellings and calmly remained in possession. To-day they are cautiousty avoided by isolated tourists, who are fully warned of their evil reputation.

As he landed, Kāra found the villages seemingly deserted. Underneath the tall palms at the right a few swathed figures lay motionless, while small black goats and stray chickens wandered listlessly about; but the visitor paid little attention to these signs. He knew the old men and women were swarming in the huts while the younger men were away at the distant tombs in the hills or engaged in earning a stipend at the neighboring shadufs.

Turning to the left, he followed a path leading up a slight incline to the low bluff covered with a second grove of stately palms, beneath the shade of which the better dwellings of Beni-Hassan have been built. He had never been in the village before, but had heard it described innumerable times since his boyhood. Even when he paused before an extensive building having cane and mud walls and a roof of palm leaves, he was fairly certain he had correctly guessed the location of the place he sought.

"Does Sheik Antar live here?" he asked a child that came out to stare at him.

The little one nodded and ran within. Kāra sat down cross-legged upon the path of baked mud, removed both his shoes and placed them beside him, and then patiently awaited his reception.

After some five minutes a gigantic Arab bent his head to emerge from the low doorway, and, after a calm but shrewd glance at his visitor, came forward and stood before Kāra.

"Allahu akbar!"he said, spreading wide his arms in greeting. "The stranger is welcome to all that I possess."

“May Allah bless and guard the habitation of the mighty sheik!” responded Kāra, in purest Arabic.

Then the sheik sat cross-legged upon the ground, facing his guest, and also removed his red morocco slippers. His beard was gray and his eyes black and piercing. His frame was lean and the flesh hard as iron, denoting great strength. He wore the green turban that proved he had made the Mecca pilgrimage.

“It pleases me that I behold the mighty Sheik Antar, beloved of Allah, and the curse of all enemies of the prophet,” began Kāra after a brief silence, during which the men eyed each other earnestly.

“My brother speaks well,” was the grave reply; “yet so lost am I in wonder at the glory and honor conferred upon my humble home by his presence, that the exalted name of my guest escapes my fickle memory.”

Kāra bowed to the ground.

“I am of Gebel Abu Fedah, the grandson of the Princess Hatatcha, and descended from the line of Ahtka-Rā and the royal kings of ancient Egypt My name is Kāra.”

With dignified gesture the sheik extended his hand and clasped that of the stranger.

“The fame of the last great Egyptian has already reached my ears,” said he. “Raschid, the Syrian dragoman, whose boat, the *Rames es,* was here but three days since, told me of your life in Cairo, of your magnificence and vast riches, of your generosity and wisdom. Fedah I know, for the sheik of Al-Kusiyeh is my comrade. The glory of Kāra the Egyptian is reflected upon every dweller along the Nile bank.”

After another pause to permit of due and deliberate appreciation of this compliment, Kāra drew a heavy sigh and responded:

“Yet all is not at peace with me, most noble Antar. My enemies oppress me and cause me much sorrow; wherefore I am driven to appeal to my brother for aid.” The eyes of the sheik sparkled.

“Already,” said he, “confusion has fallen upon Kāra’s foes; for they surely cannot escape the blight of Antar’s hatred!”

“Then see how gratitude flows from my heart like a very cataract,” answered the other, with downcast eyes. “It is little that Kāra can do to repay such brotherly love; but the great sheik must distribute for me ten thousand piastres to his worthy poor, even on that day when my enemies are confounded.”

Antar’s brow was thoughtful. A great payment meant a great service.

“My brother will tell me a story,” said he, “and I will listen.”

Thereupon, in the flowery language of Arabia, which English words but

feebly translate, the Egyptian told of a boat steaming slowly up the Nile and bearing his enemies toward the villages of Beni-Hassan. He described the women and the men, and noticed that the sheik grunted with discouraging emphasis when Winston Bey's name was mentioned. Then, following out the idea of relating a tale, Kāra told how his brother, the mighty sheik Antar, fell upon the dahabeah and captured it, turning over all the passengers and crew to Kāra except one — Tadros the dragoman being unfortunately killed and dropped overboard to find a final resting-place in the mud at the river's bottom. Then Winston's crew was replaced by six strong men of Beni-Hassan, who obeyed Kāra's commands as willingly as if they proceeded from Antar himself. And Kāra afterward steamed up the Nile to Fedah, with the sheik on board, and at Fedah gave to him not only the ten thousand piastres for his poor, but many gems of fabulous worth for his personal adornment and that of his women.

Was it not a pretty story? he concluded, and did it not sound like a prophecy in Antar's discerning ears?

The sheik considered long and earnestly. He did not like meddling with Winston Bey, whom he knew of old and respected highly; but Kāra's allusion to the gems was irresistible, and Antar might discover a way to keep from being recognized by the scientist.

It required several hours to conclude the bargain, but at last both men thoroughly understood the details of the service that was required and must be rendered. The assault upon the dahabeah was discussed and planned, and the terms of payment agreed upon. The killing of Tadros was an incident that the sheik accepted without demur.

With two clever rascals such as the Egyptian and the Arab in charge of the raid, there seemed little hope that Winston Bey's unsuspecting party could escape absolute destruction.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOTUS-EATERS AND CROCODILES.

If in all the realm of travel there is a voyage that is absolutely ideal, it is the trip up the Nile. The constant change of scene, varying with every bend in the river; the shifting lights, the gentle ripple of the waters, the distant songs and shouts of the native boatmen; the outlines of the Libyan hills by moonlight and the rocky wastes of desert, dotted with gorgeous crimson and yellow cacti, by day; the sunsets that paint the cloudless Egyptian skies with entrancing splendor, and the silhouettes of donkey and camel trains above the high embankment at twilight; these, taken in connection with the care-free, lotus-eating existence of the voyager, leave an impression so vivid and sweet and altogether satisfactory that no other experience in the whole world of travel can compare with or ever efface it from one's memory.

Aneth believed the dragoman's assertion that Prince Kāra had been generous at last and released her from her promise. Neither Winston nor Mrs. Everingham dared vouch for the dragoman's statements; but they remained silent while Tadros, unabashed, explained that his master was whimsical and erratic, but very kind-hearted and considerate, and incapable of wronging any one in any way.

"As for Lord Roane, miss," he said, confidentially, "there is no doubt he did an imprudent things which vexed my master, who has a high sense of honor; so he frightened my lord, to teach him to be more careful in the future. But never had he the slightest idea of exposing him to public infamy, I assure you. Kāra has told me so himself."

The dragoman derived much satisfaction from these inventions, especially as he noticed how implicitly Aneth believed them, and how they operated to cheer her spirits and render her content with her novel and delightful surroundings. Everyone on board was devoted to the girl, and, under the genial influences of the voyage, she recovered, to an extent, her old brightness and vivacity. There was no harm now in blushing happily at the love-light in Gerald's eyes, and her three companions were those she loved best in all the world. Her recent cares and heartaches seemed all to have been left behind in Cairo, and she could look forward to many weeks of keen enjoyment.

She was sorry, however, that she had misjudged Prince Kāra, and promised herself to implore his pardon immediately on her return to Cairo.

Gerald and Mrs. Everingham, while they did not disabuse Aneth's mind, were a trifle uneasy at the growing audacity of the dragoman's statements, and warned him to be more careful. After the girl had regained her health and

self-possession, they would explain to her the truth of the matter and discredit Tadros freely; at present they were content to note her bright eyes and the roses creeping back to her cheeks.

Lord Roane had wisely decided not to ask questions. From what he overheard he understood that Kāra was now befriending Aneth instead of persecuting her, and this being the case, his own danger was reduced to a minimum. He could not understand the Egyptian's change of attitude in the least. If Kāra had intended merely to frighten him, he had succeeded admirably, and Roane told himself that the punishment he had already suffered through terror and despair was sufficient to expiate his long-forgotten sin against Hatatcha. But did Kāra think so? That was a question he could not answer, but he decided to defer all worries for the present at least.

Gerald Winston would have been less than human had he refrained from showing to Aneth, during these delightful days, how dearly he loved her and what happiness her companionship brought to him. The moonlit evenings on deck were sufficient to inspire the most bashful lover, and Gerald did not dare waste his golden opportunities. If he won Aneth at all, it must be on this trip, and under the spur of Mrs. Everingham's counsel to be bold, he soon put his fate to the test and marveled at his success. The girl had suffered too much to trifle with her lover's heart, and her consent was readily won. It was his intention that they be married while at Luxor or Aswan, there being English churches in both places and ample conveniences for a proper conduct of the ceremony. Roane was fond of Winston, and offered no objection to a plan which would ensure Aneth's happiness and which seemed to be defective only in its precipitancy.

The project pleased Aneth as much as it delighted her lover. In her days of misery, when she thought she had lost him forever, the full value of Gerald's love had been so impressed upon her that she clung to him now, realizing that he represented the full measure of her future happiness; still, she experienced an uneasy sensation that any unnecessary delay might prove dangerous. Her contract with Kāra, moreover, had taught her to face the possibility of a sudden marriage, and what was a hateful ordeal then would now become a crown of triumph.

"Whenever you like, Gerald," she said, "I will become your wife. I could never wish for other witnesses of my wedding than my dear grandfather and Mrs. Everingham; and happiness is such a precious thing and life so uncertain, that I have no desire to resist your proposal."

"Thank you, my dear one," he said, gravely.

"And I think I prefer Luxor to Aswan. It will be so romantic to be wed in the old Theban city, where the Egyptian princesses once made their home

and where they lived and loved, will it not?"

"It shall be Luxor," he declared.

That week was one of never-to-be-forgotten delight Even Tadros wore a perpetual smile, although this method of sweet communion between lovers was all new and amazing to him. He felt quite secure now for the first time since Kāra had asserted his power over the dragoman's destinies, and wondered — the thing being so easy — why he had so long hesitated to break with his arrogant and imperious master. As the dahabeah lazily breasted the languid current of the river, Tadros idly wondered what Kāra was doing now, and could not forbear a laugh at the thought of the Egyptian's anger and perplexity when he had discovered the flight of his proposed victims. Oh, well — Kāra had pitted his cunning against the dragoman's intelligence! It was little wonder he was discomfited.

On the afternoon of the seventh day they steamed slowly past Beni-Hassan, their moderate progress being due to the fact that the boat tied up from every sunset to the next sunrise. Beni-Hassan was a picturesque village as viewed from the river, where its filth and stench were imperceptible, and the groups of splendid palms lent a dignity to the place that a closer inspection would prove undeserved.

Aneth, seated happily by Gerald's side beneath the ample deck awning, admired the village greatly, and her lover promised to stop there on their return and give her an opportunity of visiting the famous tombs in the nearby hillside.

At twilight they anchored midway between Beni-Hassan and Antinoe, the boat lying motionless a few yards away from the east bank.

The evenings are delightful in this part of Egypt, and it was midnight before the passengers aboard die dahabeah sought their couches. Tadros, indeed, being wakeful, lay extended upon the stem deck of the steamer long after the others were asleep, engaged in thoughtfully gazing at the high bank and indulging in pleasant dreams of future prosperity when he had added Winston Bey's three thousand pounds to the snug savings he had already accumulated.

Presently a dark object appeared for an instant at the top of the bank and quickly vanished against the black surface below. Another succeeded it, and another.

Tadros scratched his head in perplexity. These dark objects seemed to have form, yet they were silent as the dead. He counted a dozen of them altogether, and while still pondering upon their appearance, being undecided as to whether they were ghosts or jackals, his quick ears caught a splash in the water beside the bank.

They were not jackals — that was certain; for those ravenous beasts never take to the water. Neither are ghosts supposed to bathe. From where he lay, the surface of the river was scarcely a foot distant, and, leaning well over the stem, Tadros managed to discover in the dim light several heads bobbing upon the water.

He ought to have given an immediate alarm, but terror rendered him irresolute, and before he had time to act, it was too late to arouse his fellow-passengers.

Clambering up the bow were half a score of naked Arabs, their knives held between their glistening teeth, their dark eyes roaming fiercely around.

Tadros' first impulse was to fight; but just as he was about to rise to his feet a man whom he knew bounded aft and sprang into the little cabin where the women lay asleep.

It was Kāra.

There was no indecision on the part of the dragoman after that. He slipped off the deck into the water with the dexterity of a seal sliding from a rock, and while a succession of terrified screams and angry shouts bombarded his ears, Tadros swam silently across the Nile toward the opposite shore.

The water was cold, and he shivered as he swam; yet the chill was from within rather than from without. There are no crocodiles in the Nile now; but in places there are serpents and sharklike fish that will bite a mouthful of flesh from a swimmer's leg. Tadros knew of this, but did not think of it just then. Reflected in his mind was Kāra's dark visage, grim and malignant, and with certain death facing him aboard the dahabeah, the dragoman's only impulse was to get as far away from the danger as possible.

The turmoil on the boat prevented his escape from being immediately noticed, and after a long swim, that nearly exhausted his strength, he reached the west shore and fell panting upon the hard earth.

Slowly regaining his breath, he strained his ears to catch any sound that might proceed from the dahabeah; but now an oppressive silence reigned on the opposite side of the river. The lights of the steamer gleamed faintly through the night, but the fate of those he had left on board was wrapped in mystery. Perhaps Kāra and his band of assassins would murder all except the girl; it was possible he would murder her as well. Anyway, the dragoman's connection with the enterprise had come to an abrupt ending.

A mile or so away was the little town of Roda, with its railway station. Tadros started to walk toward it, keeping well back from the edge of the bank so that he might not be discovered in case anyone pursued him.

His dejection and dismay at this sudden reversal of fortune were extreme. He had lost the last vestige of the jaunty bearing that usually distinguished him. With three thousand pounds already earned but irretrievably lost, and the knowledge that Kāra's merciless enmity would pursue him through life, the dragoman's condition was indeed deplorable.

He wondered what he should do now. Returning to Cairo was out of the question. He would go back to Fedah, his old home. Nephthys and her mother were there, and would hide him if Kāra appeared unexpectedly. Yes, Fedah was his only haven — at least until he had time to consider his future plans.

By and by he reached the station at Roda — the village named after the ancient island in the Nile opposite Cairo. A sleepy Arab porter was in charge of the place and eyed the dragoman's wet clothing with evident suspicion. When questioned, he announced that a train would go south at six o'clock in the morning.

Tadros slipped outside the station and found a convenient hiding-place against a neighboring house, where the shadows were so deep that he could not be observed. Here he laid down to rest and await the arrival of the train.

By daybreak his clothing had dried, but he observed with regret that his blue satin vest had been ruined by the river water and that his Syrian sash was disgracefully wrinkled. Next to life itself, he loved his splendid costumes, so that this dreary discovery did not tend to raise his dampened spirits.

When the train drew in he boarded it and found himself seated in a compartment opposite to Lord Consinor. They stared at each other for a moment, and then the viscount emitted a sound that seemed a queer combination of a growl and a laugh.

"It is Kāra's alter ego," he sneered, in English.

"Pardon me, my lord," said the dragoman, hastily, "the alliance is dissolved. I have even more reason than you to hate the prince."

"Indeed?" returned Consinor.

"He is a fiend emanating directly from your English hell," declared Tadros, earnestly. "I know of no other diabolical place where Kāra could have been bred. One thing is certain, however," he continued, with bitter emphasis, "I will have vengeance upon him before I — die!"

There was no mistaking the venom of the man's rancorous assertion. Consinor smiled, and said:

"It would give me pleasure to share your revenge." A sudden thought struck Tadros — a thought so tremendous in its scope and significance that he was himself astonished and stared blankly into the other's face. For a time

he rode in silence, revolving the idea in his mind and examining its phases with extreme care. Then he inquired, cautiously:

“Where are you going, my lord?”

“To Assyut.”

“I thought you had left Cairo long ago.”

“So I did. I have been to Alexandria, but found nothing there to amuse me. I am now bound for Assyut, and from there I intend traveling to Aswan, and up to Wady Haifa.”

“Are you in any hurry to reach there?”

“Not the slightest.”

“Then leave the train with me at Kusiyeh. I have something to propose that will interest you.”

Consinor studied him a moment.

“Does this program include our revenge?” he asked. “Yes.”

“Very well; I will do as you suggest.”

“Good!” exclaimed Tadros. Then he leaned over and whispered: “Revenge and a fortune, my lord! Is it not worth while?”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DRAGOMAN'S INSPIRATION.

They left the train at the station opposite Fedah, and the dragoman secured a native to row them in his skiff across the river. Consinor asked no questions and appeared wholly indifferent as to their destination. Indeed, his life had been so aimless since his disgraceful flight from Cairo that he welcomed any diversion that might relieve its dull monotony.

When they arrived at Fedah, Tadros took him secretly to the hut of old Nefert, the bread-baker, which was directly across the street from the dwelling of Hatatcha, now owned by Kāra. The viscount was inclined to resent the filthiness of the hovel wherein he must hide, until the dragoman led him to the shade of the opposite archway and explained to him something of the project he had in mind.

Tadros began by relating the "royal one's" early history, emphasizing the fact that old Hatatcha had been able to support herself and Kāra without any labor whatever. Then he told of Hatatcha's death, and how he, Tadros, had discovered the valuable rolls of papyrus in Kāra's possession. From thence to the brilliant advent of the "prince" in Cairo was but a step, and the entire history permitted but one explanation — the fact that Kāra had knowledge of an ancient tomb containing great riches.

"Once," said the dragoman, "Kāra and I made a visit to Fedah; but I did not suspect his errand and so neglected to watch him, being at the time greatly occupied with a certain maiden. In the morning I found he had loaded his traveling cases with treasures — wonderful gems that have enabled him to live in princely fashion ever since."

"Where did he get them?" asked Consinor, eagerly. "As I said, from some hidden tomb, the secret of which is known only to himself."

"Do you think he has carried all of the treasure away?"

"I have reason to believe that more remains than has ever been taken. Once, in an unguarded moment, Kāra told me that he could not spend it all in a thousand years."

"Do you suppose we can discover this tomb?"

"Yes, if we are clever. It is no use to hunt without a clew, but Kāra will furnish us the clew we need."

"In what way?" the viscount inquired.

"He is coming here presently."

Consinor frowned.

"I do not care to meet him," he said, hastily.

"Nor do I," rejoined Tadros, with a shudder; "but it will not be necessary

for us to meet Kāra, who will not suspect we are in the village."

"What then?"

"He is coining to secure more treasure, his former supply being exhausted, as I have reason to know. He has promised his tradesmen money, and will not dare delay his visit to Fedah. Besides, he is not far from here at this very moment. By to-morrow, if he comes in Winston Bey's dahabeah, he will reach this place. If he decides to take a railway train, he may be here this evening."

"In that case, what do you propose to do?" demanded Consinor.

"Spy upon him; discover where the treasure is hidden, and when he is gone, help ourselves," was the confident reply.

The idea seemed quite feasible when further elaborated. They entered the room of Kāra's dwelling and examined the place carefully.

"This," explained the dragoman, "is doubtless his starting-point. From here he has either a secret passage into the mountain, or he steals away to the desert, where the entrance to the tomb is hidden underneath the shifting sands. We must be prepared to watch him in either event, and that is why I have proposed to you to assist me, rather than try to secure all the fortune myself. I am assured there is plenty for two, and to spare."

"Doubtless," replied the viscount, laconically. Already he saw visions of great wealth, which would enable him to return to London and rise superior to all the sneers and scandals that had been thrust upon him.

They discussed the matter long and earnestly, the few inhabitants of the village, stupid and inert, being entirely ignorant of their presence. It was finally decided that on Kāra's approach Consinor should conceal himself beneath the dried rushes of the old bed, Tadros so arranging his position that the viscount could observe every action of one moving within the room. Then the dragoman would himself lurk at the edge of the village to follow Kāra if he stole away into the desert.

As a matter of fact, Tadros was firm in his belief that the treasure was hidden within the mountain; but he had no intention of risking his own life when he could induce Consinor to become his catspaw. Discovery meant death — he knew that well enough. It was better not to take chances, and if the viscount succeeded in learning Kāra's secret it would mean the same to Tadros as learning it himself. He knew how to handle this outcast Englishman, and if the treasure proved as large as he suspected, he could afford to be generous, and would play fair with his accomplice. Otherwise — but that could be considered later.

Tadros did not desire to expose the stranger to the curious gaze of the villagers, but there was no harm in their knowing that the dragoman had

come among his old friends once more; so he insisted that Consinor should stay concealed in Nefert's hovel, flying to a dark comer at the sound of every footstep, while he himself visited Sĕra and her daughter in furtherance of his sagacious plans.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

As the dragoman approached Sĕra's hut he paused upon the threshold to observe the scene within, hesitating, as he remembered that it was because of his own reckless conduct that the Nile girl had been stripped of her beautiful gowns and jewels and sent home from Cairo scorned and repudiated.
Her humiliation and despair had haunted him ever since.

But now he found her seated meekly at the well-worn loom, casting the shuttle back and forth with the same mechanical lassitude she had exhibited of old. The discolored black dress, open at the breast and much patched and tom, was her sole garment. Even the blue beads were again about her neck.

But the eyes she turned toward Tadros were different, somehow. Their former velvety depths were veiled with a dull film, while the smoothness of her brow was marred by the wrinkles of a sullen frown.

After a moment, however, she seemed to recognize the dragoman, and rose from her place with a sudden eager look and flushed cheeks.

"You have come for me again?" she asked.

"No," answered Tadros, casting himself upon a settle. He felt abashed without knowing why he should entertain. such a feeling — abashed and sorrowful, in spite of his habitual egotism and selfish disregard of others.

Nephthys leaned back and resumed her weaving. The film covered her eyes again. She paid no further attention to her mother's guest.

Sĕra, however, was voluble and indignant.

"That Kāra," she hissed, "is a viper — a crocodile — a low, infamous deceiver! He is worse than an Arab. Henf! If I had him here I would stamp him into the dust. Why did he spum my beautiful daughter from his harem? Tell me, then!"

"Merely because Nephthys and I, being old friends, wished to converse at times of you and our acquaintances at Fedah. Why should we not gossip and smoke a cigarette together? Once I owned her myself."

"True. You were a fool to sell her."

"Still, you must not forget that Nephthys has had an experience," he resumed, more lightly. "For a time she was a queen, splendid and magnificent beyond compare in her robes of satin and her sparkling jewels. Ah, it is not every girl who enjoys such luxury, even for a brief season! Let her be content."

"Content!" screamed old Sĕra, shrilly; "it has ruined her. She is no longer happy in the old home, and when she speaks, which is but seldom, it is only to curse Kāra. Look at her! Is she now fat and beautiful as before? No. If the

poor child lives long enough, she will die a skeleton!”

“Allah forbid!” exclaimed Tadros, hastily. “But if she expects to be taken back again, her case is hopeless. I am sure Kāra will never relent or restore her to favor. He is a poor judge of a woman. But I,” slapping his chest proudly, “I will take Nephthys to myself; and while I do not promise to robe her as gorgeously as did Kāra, she shall become fat again, and have her silks and ornaments the same as before.”

“And the cigarettes?”

“Of course.”

He drew a box of the coveted cigarettes from his pocket and tossed it toward her. Sĕra lighted one eagerly and gave the box to Nephthys. After staring at it blankly for a moment the girl seemed to understand. She took a cigarette and lighted it from the one her mother was smoking. A smile of childish enjoyment slowly spread over her face, and she left her loom and came and sat upon Tadros’ knee.

“I expect Kāra in Fedah presently,” remarked the dragoman. “But he must not know that I am here. We have had a falling-out. I quarreled with him, and he threatens me.”

“Never fear,” said Sĕra, calmly. “I can hide you in the cavity in the rear wall, which the royal one knows nothing of. There you will be safe until he goes away.”

“Very good!” he replied.

“When will Kāra come?” asked the woman, “and why does he visit Fedah again?”

“I expect him to-night or to-morrow. Why he comes I do not know.”

“Perhaps to pray beside Hatatcha’s mummy.”

“Where is that?” he asked, quickly.

“I cannot discover,” she returned. “Often I have examined their dwelling, but no secret door can I find anywhere. The tomb must be in the hills — or perhaps in the desert. There is an oasis where the dwarf Sebbet lives. He was known to be one of Hatatcha’s most devoted followers.”

“True,” said the dragoman, thoughtfully.

“The tomb must be in Sebbet’s oasis. Once Kāra stole old Nikko’s donkey and rode there.”

“Was that the last time we came here?” questioned Tadros.

“No; it was when Hatatcha died.”

“Then the tomb is not in the oasis. I am sure it is quite near Fedah. But listen, my Sĕra; if I agree to take Nephthys and provide for her, you must help me when Kāra comes.”

“I have promised to hide you in the old wall,” she replied. “Can I do more

than that?”

“Yes. You must go at once to the hill and watch for the royal one’s coming. Your eyes are sharp, even though you are old. He will come from the Nile — either across the river or from the north, on a boat that smokes and has no sails. As soon as you discover him you will hurry here to me, and that will give us time to prepare for Kāra. Will you do this for me?”

“May I have the box of cigarettes to take with me?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will do your bidding.”

She went away to the hill at once, leaving Tadros with Nephthys; but the girl had already forgotten his presence and was staring straight before her with lusterless eyes.

The dragoman sighed.

“It is very unfortunate,” he murmured, examining her critically, “but it is doubtless true, nevertheless — she is getting thin.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SHEIK DEUUBS.

No one on board the dahabeah had entertained even a suspicion of danger. Winston Bey knew well the unreliable character of the natives of certain villages, but even he did not dream that the steamer would be molested or its passengers annoyed; therefore, the surprise was complete.

Mrs. Everingham, awakening with a start, heard the patter of many feet upon the deck and saw a man advancing into the cabin where she and Aneth had been sleeping.

Her first inspiration was to scream; but instead she reached beneath her pillow and drew out a small revolver, with which she fired two shots in rapid succession point blank at the intruder.

Neither bullet took effect, but they startled Kāra as much as her vigorous screams, in which Aneth now joined. He retreated hastily from the cabin, thus allowing Mrs. Everingham to close the door and secure it with a heavy bar provided for that purpose.

The after-cabin having been given up to the women, Winston and Lord Roane occupied a smaller cabin forward. Between the two were the kitchen and the engine-room. As the natives boarded the steamer near the bow, their first act was to drop into the forward cabin and seize the white men before they were fairly awake. Roane offered no resistance 'whatever, but Winston struggled so energetically that it took three of the men, headed by the gigantic sheik, to secure him. It required but a few moments to bind the prisoners securely hand and foot, and then they were left in their bunks under a guard of natives, who held their bare knives in their hands in readiness to prevent any possible escape.

The four Arabs of Winston's crew were easily overcome, and by the time that Kāra arrived forward they laid upon the deck carefully pinioned. There had been no bloodshed at all, and the steamer was now entirely in the control of Kāra and his mercenaries.

"All right," said the sheik, nodding his satisfaction as the Egyptian approached. "It was very easy, my prince. The two white men are below, and the boat is ours."

Kāra, by the dim light of a lantern, peered into the faces of his prisoners.

"Where is the dragoman?" he asked. "Did you kill him, as I commanded you to do?"

"We had not that pleasure," returned the sheik, "for he was not on board."

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure, my prince."

“He may be in hiding. Search every part of the steamer thoroughly except the cabin of the women.” The sheik shrugged his shoulders, but gave the command to his men. They examined every possible hiding-place without finding the dragoman.

Meanwhile Kāra squatted upon the deck, thinking earnestly of what his future action should be, while the silent sheik sat beside him with composed indifference. When the Arabs returned from their unsuccessful quest, the Egyptian said to his ally:

“Let your men watch the prisoners until morning. We can do nothing more at present.”

So they stretched themselves upon the deck and rested until daybreak.

As soon as it was light enough to distinguish objects readily, Kāra arose and ordered Winston and Lord Roane brought upon deck. There they saw the Egyptian for the first time and understood why they had been attacked.

“I suspected that I owed this little diversion to you,” said Winston, glaring angrily upon his enemy. “Perhaps you do not realize, Prince Kāra, that by this lawless act you have ruined yourself and your career.”

“No,” returned Kāra, smiling; “I do not realize that.”

“These things are not tolerated in Egypt to-day,” continued the Bey.

“Not if they are known,” admitted Kāra.

“Do you think, sir, that I will remain silent?” demanded Winston, indignantly.

“Yes.”

“And why?”

“Because I have no intention of permitting you to return to Cairo. Understand me, Winston Bey — I entertain no personal enmity toward you; but you saw fit to interfere with my purposes, and in doing so destroyed yourself. Having been lawless enough to capture your boat, an outrage only justified by my desire to obtain possession of the persons of Aneth Consinor and Lord Roane, I am compelled, in order to protect myself, to silence every person aboard who might cause me future annoyance. Therefore, it is necessary to kill you.”

“You dare not!”

“You misjudge me,” answered Kāra, coolly; “but I shall be glad to furnish you immediate proof of my sincerity.” Turning to Antar, he said: “Comrade, oblige me by placing your knife in the heart of Winston Bey.”

The sheik did not move.

“Well?” cried Kāra, impatiently.

“It is not in the compact,” returned the imperturbable Arab.

“You are wrong,” said the Egyptian, sharply. “It was fully understood you

should obey my commands, especially as to killing those of my enemies whom I desired to silence."

"My brother will remember," returned the sheik, "that there was also another understanding — a little matter relating to certain jewels and piastres."

"You shall have them!"

"And you shall be obeyed — when I have them." Winston smiled, and Kāra saw it and uttered a curse. "Will you thwart me now, when it is too late for either of us to retreat with safety?" he asked Antar, angrily.

"By no means. I do not object to the killing, believe me, my brother; but my people are poor, and the money you have promised them will do much to ease their sufferings. Let me but see the gems and the piastres and all your desires shall be gratified." Winston looked at the gigantic Arab closely. He seemed to remember the man, but could not place him, for Antar had not only trimmed his gray beard, but had dyed it a deep black. Still, all natives are crafty and covetous, and the words he had overheard gave him an idea.

"Listen, my sheik," he said in Arabic. "If it is money you wish, I will double Kāra's offer to you. It is but natural that a man will pay more for life than another will pay for revenge. State your price, and the sum shall be yours."

Antar turned toward the Egyptian, an expression of satisfaction upon his keen features.

"My brother will answer," he said.

"This is absurd," declared Kāra. "Winston Bey but trifles with you. His money is all in Cairo. When you go there to get it, he will throw you into prison, and your people will be destroyed and their houses tom down to satisfy the Government police."

"The noble sheik is no fool," observed Winston. "He will keep us in his power, closely guarded, until he has sent to Cairo and obtained the money. Also, I will promise not to betray him, and my word is as good as that of Prince Kāra."

"But why should he go to Cairo at all?" asked the Egyptian. "If he will but come with me to Fedah he shall have his price. Not all of Winston Bey's wealth can approach the magnificence of the treasure I will place in Antar's hands."

The eyes of the sheik sparkled.

"Good!" he exclaimed.

"You will be faithful to me?" asked Kāra.

"Why not?"

"There is much treasure at my command. Not a mere handful of gems

shall be yours, but enough to make your tribe wealthy for all time to come."

"I believe that my brother speaks truth."

"Then," said Kāra, relieved, "I ask you to kill Winston Bey as a proof of your confidence in me. The others may live until we get to Fedah."

"Tah! What is the use of dividing the ceremony?" returned the sheik, with a gesture of indifference. "I like not this pig-sticking in sections. It means cleaning one's knife several times instead of once. Be patient, my brother. When we have arrived at Fedah and our friendship is further cemented by your royal generosity, then will I accomplish all the killing in a brief space and have done with it. Is it not so?"

Kāra hesitated, but saw clearly that the wily sheik would not trust him. Moreover, he feared that Winston's eager offers to outbid him, if persistently repeated, might prove effectual unless he carried out his own promises to the greedy Arab. He had not expected to pay Antar any great price for his services, and in the beginning intended that the "handful" of gems would b e a very small one; but Antar had entrapped him cleverly, and he now realized he must expend an exorbitant sum to induce the old sheik to obey his orders.

After all, that did not matter. The entire treasure had been Hatatcha's before it descended to him, and a portion of it would be well expended in securing her vengeance. He alone knew that the hoard was practically inexhaustible, and he might even bury the big Arab in jewels and golden ornaments and still have left more than he could use in his own lifetime.

So he agreed, with assumed content, to Antar's proposition, and Abdallah, the engineer, was released from his bonds and instructed to start the dahabeah upon its voyage up the river. It would be thirty hours before they could hope to reach Fedah.

Roane and Winston were permitted to remain upon deck, but were tied to their chairs and carefully guarded. Breakfast was served, and Kāra accompanied the Arab who carried the tray to the cabin of the women. The Egyptian had not disturbed them since the night before, well knowing they had made themselves as secure as he could have done.

He rapped boldly upon the door and said:

"Let me in."

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Everingham.

"Prince Kāra."

"By what right do you annoy us with your presence aboard this boat?" she continued.

"That I will explain when you permit me to see you," he answered.

For a few moments there was silence.

"Your breakfast is here, and the servant is waiting for you to open the

door," continued Kāra.

Somewhat to his surprise the bar was removed, and Aneth threw the door wide open.

"One moment, please!" cried Mrs. Everingham, and as Kāra was about to enter he saw the lady standing in the middle of the cabin with her revolver pointed toward him.

"I was so startled last night that I missed you," she said, calmly; "but I am almost certain I can shoot straight this morning."

Kāra shrank back a little.

"Why do you fear me?" he asked.

"I don't," she answered. "It is you who fear, and with reason. But I do not trust you, because you have convinced me that you are a consummate scoundrel. If you have anything to say to me or to Miss Consinor, we are prepared to hear it; otherwise you had better go, for I am extremely nervous and my finger is upon the trigger."

"I have taken possession of this steamer," he announced. "All on board are now my prisoners."

"How dramatic!" she returned, with a laugh. "May I ask what you intend to do with us? Will you scuttle the ship, or raise the black flag and become a modem pirate of the Nile? Come, my buccaneer, confide to us your secret?"

"In due time, madam, you shall know all, and more, perhaps, than will please you," he answered, furious at her gibes. "One thing, however, is certain. Miss Consinor" — and here he cast an evil glare at the girl, who stood with white face in the background — "shall not escape me again. I intend to take her to Cairo and keep her secure in my villa. As for you, Mrs. Everingham, your life hangs by a thread. If I could depend upon your discretion and silence I might spare you; but you are clever enough to understand that I cannot afford to take chances of future accusations."

"My man," replied Mrs. Everingham, "your own miserable life is at this moment not worth a farthing's purchase. If you dare to molest this girl or me again, or even show your ugly face in this cabin, I swear to shoot you upon the spot. Here, Selim, bring in that tray. Place it on the table; that will do. Now, Prince Kāra, I will give you one minute to disappear."

That was too long; he was gone in an instant, his face contorted with rage as he cursed the woman who had so successfully defied him.

On deck he met the sheik.

"Tell the engineer to urge the boat forward," he said; "we must keep moving day and night until we reach Gebel Abu Fedah."

"Very good," responded the sheik. "I am even more impatient than you are, my brother. It is only the prisoners, who have been watching us sharpen

our knives, that are in no hurry.”

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BRONZE BOLTS.

Old Sĕra kept watch faithfully that day and the next at her post of observation on the hill, finding solace through the tedium of the hours in an occasional cigarette from her precious box.

Soon after noon of the second day she hurried to Tadros.

"He is coming," she said.

The dragoman sprang up.

"From which direction?" he inquired.

"From down the river. He is in the steamboat, and in half an hour will be at the landing."

"Go back at once," commanded Tadros. "Wait until he lands, and then come to me immediately. I will be in Hatatcha's house."

Sĕra obeyed, and, to the dragoman's surprise, Nephthys followed her mother to the hill. The girl had roused herself when the old woman returned, and seemed to comprehend, from the eager conversation and the dragoman's orders, that Kāra was coming. She said nothing, however, but hastened after her mother and took a position beside her on the height commanding the river.

Tadros ran to the house of Hatatcha, where Consinor, having rebelled at the confinement in old Nefert's hovel, had that morning installed himself. It was as safe a refuge as the other, for none of the villagers ventured to enter the grim archway, and so long as the viscount escaped observation Tadros was content. There was little cheer in the gloomy room, however, and Consinor had begun to believe that he could scarcely be recompensed for the miserable hours of waiting by the promised reward when, to his infinite relief, his fellow-conspirator entered to announce that the long-anticipated time for action had arrived.

"There is not a moment to be lost," said Tadros. "Get under the rushes, quick!"

The viscount immediately burrowed beneath the dry rushes, and the dragoman placed him in such a position that his head was elevated slightly and rested against the stones of the wall, thus enabling him to observe every corner of the room through the loosely strewn covering.

Having safely concealed him, Tadros stood back and examined the rushes critically to satisfy himself that Kāra would have no suspicion that they had been recently disturbed. The arrangement was admirable. He could not see Consinor himself, even though he knew he was hidden there.

"Are you comfortable?" he asked.

“Not very.”

“I mean, can you remain quietly in that position for an hour or more?”

“Yes,” answered Consinor, through the rushes.

“Then I will go,” announced Tadros. “Be very careful in your actions. Remember that a fortune for both of us hinges upon the events of the next hour, and we must make no mistake. I go to watch the street and the desert beyond. Farewell, and may fortune attend you!”

He left the house, dropping the ragged mat over the inner arch and then crossing to Nefert’s hut.

Presently Sĕra came running toward him.

“He has landed and is coming this way,” she reported.

“Very well. Go home.”

“The cigarettes are all gone.”

He tossed her another box, and soon she had disappeared within her own doorway. Nephthys was not with her, but Tadros had forgotten the girl just then.

He crept within Nefert’s front room and hid himself in the shadows in such a way that he could see through the hole, which served as a window, the opposite archway of Hatatcha’s dwelling.

Kāra entered the narrow street and looked cautiously around him. It pleased him that no curious native was in sight. The sheik and his band were in possession of the dahabeah and the prisoners, and were awaiting Kāra’s return with impatience. Therefore, he must enter the secret tomb at once, without the cover of darkness to shield his movements; but the inhabitants of Fedah were dull and apathetic — they were not likely to spy upon him.

He glanced with pride at the ring he wore upon his finger. The talisman of Ahtka-Rā was indeed powerful, for it had enabled him to accomplish all that he desired, and was protecting him even now. Should he take this occasion to restore it to the tomb of his ancestor — that ancient one who had entreated that it be left with his mummy for all time, and had threatened with dire misfortune anyone who dared to remove it? Why should Kāra leave the precious Stone of Fortune in that mountainous dungeon? Why should he deprive himself of the powers it bestowed upon its possessor? It could not now benefit Ahtka-Rā, who was long since forgotten in the nether world; but it might be of service to Kāra in many ways. Yes; he would keep it, despite the pleading and curses of that dead one who so foolishly and selfishly wished it left with his mummy.

Perhaps some day, years hence, he would restore the stone to the sarcophagus from whence he had taken it; but not now. Again he looked at the strange jewel, which seemed of extraordinary brilliancy at that moment,

shooting its tongues of flame in every direction. The curse? Henf! Why should he care for the curse of a mummy, when the greatest talisman of fortune in the world was his?

He slipped within the archway of his dwelling and drew the mat closely behind him. Tadros had marked his every movement, and now breathed a sigh of relief. For the present, at all events, the adventure was in Consinor's keeping rather than his own, and Consinor must suffer the risk of detection.

The dragoman settled himself upon an earthen bench and kept his eyes on the archway. Presently Nephthys came stealing into view, treading with the caution of a cat and crouching low beneath the stone arch. She did not attempt to draw aside the mat, but squatted upon the ground just outside the barrier. Tadros observed her curiously, and noticed that one of her hands was thrust within her bosom, as if clutching some weapon.

A dagger? Perhaps. Nephthys had been wronged, and might be excused for hating Kāra. Should the dragoman interfere to save him? To what end? Before the girl could strike, the royal one's secret would be in Consinor's possession, and then — why, Nephthys would save them any annoyance their discovery might entail. Clearly, it was not a case that merited interference.

Meantime Consinor had noted the entrance of Kāra, as well as the care with which the matting had been fastened to keep out prying eyes. It shut out most of the light, also; but that bothered the Egyptian more than it did the Englishman, whose eyes had now grown accustomed to the dimness.

Kāra had to feel his way along the wall to the secret crypt, but he knew the location of the place exactly, and soon found it. Consinor saw him take from the recess a slender bronze dagger with a queerly shaped blade, and an antique oil lamp. With these he approached the opposite wall of the room — that which was built against the mountain — and pushed vigorously against one of the stones.

It swung inward. The spy saw only blackness beyond; but his first consideration was to count the stones from the comer to the opening, and then to note that it was in the third tier or layer of masonry. By this time Kāra had crept through and closed the orifice.

Consinor was breathing heavily with excitement. The great discovery had been made with ease. All he need do was to wait until Kāra came out and left the village, and then he would be able to visit the secret tomb and its treasure-chamber himself.

But as the moments slowly passed — moments whose length was exaggerated into seeming hours — Consinor began to feel uneasy. He remembered that Tadros had impressed upon him the necessity of following

Kāra wherever he went. The secret might not be all upon the surface.

Fearful that he had wasted precious time in delay, he threw aside the covering of rushes and approached the wall. It was scarcely necessary to count the stones. He had stared at them so long that he knew the exact spot which Kāra had touched.

Responsive to his push, the great stone again swung backward and he crept through as the other had done and found himself confronted with blackness.

The dragoman had foreseen such an event, and had thoughtfully provided his accomplice with a candle. Consinor lit it, and, leaving the stone entrance somewhat ajar, so that he might have no trouble in escaping if he were compelled to return in haste, he began a cautious exploration of the various passages that led into the mountain.

He lost some time in pursuing false trails; but at length he came upon a burnt match, tossed carelessly aside when Kāra had lighted his lamp, and it lay within the entrance of a rough and forbidding-looking gallery between the rocks.

However, Consinor followed this trail, and after stumbling along blindly until it had nearly ended in a cul-de-sac, he came to a circular door in the cliff which stood wide open. Beyond was a passage carefully built by man into the very heart of the mountain.

The viscount paused to examine the door carefully. It had been most cleverly constructed, and fitted its opening accurately. Six huge bronze bolts, working upon springs, were ranged along its edge, and the single hinge was of enormous size and likewise composed of solid bronze. But he could see no keyhole nor lever by means of which the door had been opened. The outer surface was an irregular rock, harmonizing with the side of the passage, but the edges and the inner surface were carefully dressed with chisels. An examination of the casing showed bronze sockets for the bolts securely embedded in the cliff, and he could understand that when the door was closed the bolts fastened themselves automatically. But how had it been opened? That was a mystery he could not penetrate; for Kāra, after unlocking the door, had inadvertently withdrawn the dagger from the secret orifice and carried it with him into the tomb. It was a foolhardy proceeding, for if by chance he dropped the dagger inside the passage, he would forever afterward be powerless to enter the tomb again, since it was the only key to the treasure-chamber in existence. Besides, the removal of the dagger from the orifice was useless; for, as Hatatcha had once explained to Kāra, the door could not be opened from the inside.

Consinor felt convinced that the Egyptian must have gone through this

passage, so he cautiously entered the doorway. It was a long, straight way, slanting downward, and before he had proceeded far, the atmosphere became dense and stifling. Still, he decided that where Kāra had gone he also could go, and so persevered, holding the candle above his head and walking as swiftly as he dared.

Meantime the Egyptian had penetrated to the vast mummy chamber, where, because of his haste, he neglected to light any of the bronze lamps, depending alone upon the dim illumination which the flickering wick of his small lamp afforded. He passed the bodies of Hatatcha and Thi-Aten, with scarcely a glance in their direction, and hastened between the rows of mummy cases toward the upper end of the room. Here, majestically imposing, stood the great sarcophagus of Ahtka-Rā, its thousand jewels glittering wierdly in the fitful glare of the floating wick, as Kāra held the lamp close to its side to detect the secret spring in the malachite slab that opened the way to the treasure-chamber.

The stone slid back with a sound that seemed like a moan of protest, and the Egyptian gave a nervous start as, for the first time, a realization of his dread surroundings flashed upon him.

But he controlled himself and muttered: “Perhaps it is the ghost of my great ancestor, bewailing the loss of his talisman. If his spirit could creep back from the far nether world, it would doubtless demand of me the return of the Stone of Fortune... Not yet, Ahtka-Rā!” he called aloud, mockingly; “save your curse for a year longer, and it will not be required. Just now I have more need of the talisman than you have!”

With these words he crawled into the aperture and descended the steps to the room below. He had brought with him two canvas sacks, one of which he proceeded to fill with the poorest and least valuable of the ornaments that littered the place. Even then the tribute to Sheik Antar was far in excess of the value of his services, and Kāra groaned at the necessity of bribing the crafty Arab so heavily.

The other sack was to contain his own treasure, and that he might avoid frequent visits to this gloomy place, which he began to dread, he selected the rarest of the great gems and the richest golden jewelry for himself, tumbling all together into the receptacle until it was full to overflowing and could only be tied at the neck by shaking down the contents.

The two sacks were heavy when he picked them up to carry them away. He suspended the bronze lamp in front of him by attaching its chain to a button of his gray coat. Then, a burden under either arm, he ascended the stairs and stepped from the orifice into the chamber above.

As he did this, the weight of the treasure shifted, and he stumbled and fell

heavily against the massive sarcophagus of Ahtka-Rā. The jar of the impact was enough to send the golden bust of Isis toppling from its place. It struck Kāra in the breast, upsetting the lamp and leaving him in total darkness. Then it rebounded and caught his hand, crushing it against the marble side of the tomb. The sharp pain caused by this made him cry out and cling, faint and ill, to the stones of the sarcophagus. There, motionless, he stood in the dark and listened while the bust fell into the opening at his feet, and slowly rolled, step by step, into the treasure-chamber beneath, finally adding itself with a hollow crash to the rich hoard the ages had accumulated therein.

Kāra shuddered. The awful incident, the blackness that enveloped him, the clamor of noise in that silent place and the quiet suspense succeeding it, all conspired to unnerve him and fill his heart with consternation. The Sacks had fallen from his grasp. He raised his injured hand, felt it, and gave a sudden cry of terror. The ring containing his ancestor's precious Stone of Fortune had been broken by the blow and the talisman was gone.

Gone! Then the curse had fallen. It was upon him even now, and perhaps at his side stood the grim spirit of Ahtka-Rā, leering at him through the darkness and exulting in his discomfiture.

Trembling in every limb, the Egyptian fell upon his knees and began creeping here and there upon the clammy stones, his eyes staring into the gloom and his fingers clutching at every slight protuberance in the hope of finding again the wonderful stone that could alone protect him in his extremity. The curse was upon him, but he would resist its awful power. He *must* resist; for if he succumbed now, there would be no future escape from his fate. The stone — he must find the stone! Somewhere in that vast chamber of death it lay, slyly waiting for him to reclaim it.

The cold indifference that was an integral part of Kāra's nature had completely deserted him. The superstitious fear inherited by him from the centuries had gripped his heart securely and made him its bondman. He mumbled incoherently as, prone upon all fours, he shuffled hither and thither in his vain search. The words of warning contained in the tiny parchment, the solemn curse of his ancestor upon any who deprived him of the talisman of fortune, seemed alone to occupy a mind suddenly rendered witless and unruly by the calamity of the moment.

The darkness was oppressive. There was no sound since the golden bust had bumped its way into the treasure-chamber. The atmosphere, although fed and restored from some hidden conduit, seemed stagnant and full of the bituminous stench of the mummies. Kāra drew his quaking body about with an effort, feeling that the silence, the dead air and the blackness were conspiring to stifle him. He found the lamp presently, but the oil was spilled

and the wick gone. It did not occur to him to strike a match.

"If the stone is here," he thought, "I shall see its flaming tongues even through the darkness. It cannot escape me. I must seek until I find it."

Twice he crept around the colossal sarcophagus of Ahtka-Rā, feeling his way cautiously and glaring into the darkness with distended eyeballs; and then came his reward. A streak of fire darted before his eyes and vanished. Another succeeded it. He paused and watched intently. A faint blue cloud appeared, whence the flames radiated. Sometimes they were crimson; then a sulphurous yellow; then pure white in color. But they always darted fiercely from the central cloud, which gradually took form and outlined the irregular oblong of the wonderful stone.

The radiance positively grew; the tongues of flame darted swifter and more brilliantly; they lighted the surrounding space and brought into relief the glistening end of Ahtka-Rā's tomb.

Kāra stared with an amazement akin to fear; for the talisman lay upon the floor just beneath the triple circlet of gold whence he had pried it with his dagger. It had not only escaped from its unlawful possessor, but had returned to where the ancient Egyptian had originally placed it; and now it mocked him with its magical brilliance.

He could have reached out a hand and seized it in his grasp; but so great was his horror of the curse of Ahtka-Rā that his impulse was rather to shrink from the demoniacal gem.

How wonderful was its brilliance! It lighted the sarcophagus and the wall beyond. It lighted the floor with a broad streak of yellow light. It lighted even Kāra himself, groveling before it on hands and knees. No ordinary gem could do this. It was sorcery, it was —

He uttered a scream that echoed horribly through the vault and sprang to his feet; for a glance over his shoulder had betrayed the secret of the strange illumination.

At the lower end of the room stood a man holding above his head a lighted candle. He was motionless, gazing curiously at the prone form of the Egyptian wallowing before a tomb encrusted with precious stones.

But now he returned Kāra's scream with a startled cry, and turned involuntarily as if to fly, when the other sprang up and advanced rapidly toward him.

Down past the rows of silent mummies sped the Egyptian, while Consinor awaited him in a stupor of indecision. Then, finally realizing his danger, he dashed the candle to the ground and ran up the passage as fast as he could go.

Kāra, although once more plunged into darkness by this action, knew the way much better than the Englishman, and did not for an instant hesitate to

follow him. The curse of Ahtka-Rā was now forgotten — the talisman forgotten. Kāra realized that another had discovered his secret, and the safety of the treasure demanded that the intruder should not be permitted to leave the tomb alive.

Consinor, on his part, was slower to comprehend the situation; yet there was no doubt the Egyptian meant mischief, and the only means of escape lay up the long, narrow passage. As he fled he collided with the huge pillar that divided the library from the mummy chamber and rebounded against the wall of the gallery, falling heavily to the ground.

In an instant Kāra was upon him, his knee pressing the viscount's breast, his slender, talon-like fingers twined around his enemy's throat.

But when it came to wrestling, the Englishman was no mean antagonist. As the native released one hand to search in his bosom for the bronze dagger, Consinor suddenly grasped him around the middle and easily threw him over, reversing their positions, his body resting upon and weighing down that of the slighter Egyptian. Failing to find the knife, Kāra again gripped the other's throat with his powerful fingers.

There was but one thing to do in this desperate emergency. Consinor raised his enemy's head and dashed it against the stone floor. The Egyptian's grasp relaxed; he lost consciousness, and, tearing himself from the fatal embrace, the viscount rose slowly to his feet, his brain reeling, his breath gradually returning to him in short gasps.

For a few moments he leaned against the wall for support; then, rousing himself to action, he tottered slowly along the passage, feeling his way by keeping one hand against the wall of rock.

He had not proceeded far, however, when a rustling sound warned him that Kāra had returned to life. His ears, rendered sensitive by his fearful plight, told him that his enemy had arisen, and he heard the fall of footsteps pursuing him.

But Consinor was already retreating as rapidly as possible, impelled to swiftness by the spur of fear. Proceeding through the intense darkness, at times he struck the sides of the rocky gallery with a force that nearly knocked him off his feet; but in the main it was a smooth and straight way, and the Egyptian did not seem to gain perceptibly upon him, being evidently as dazed by the blow upon his head as was the Englishman by the throttling he had endured.

And so they pressed on, panting along through the stifling atmosphere, until suddenly Consinor ran full against the rocky end of the passage and fell half stunned upon the floor. He heard the pattering of Kāra's footsteps, the sound indicating that the Egyptian was gradually drawing nearer, and, dazed

as he was, realized that sudden death menaced him. With a final effort he sprang to his feet, tumbled through the circular opening, and slammed the door into place with all his remaining strength.

He heard the sharp click of the bolts as they shot into their sockets, and the muffled cry of terror from the imprisoned Kāra.

Thoroughly appalled at what he had done, he again arose to his feet and moved rapidly along toward the entrance to the outer corridor.

For a certain distance the floor of this natural passage was as smooth as that of the artificial one, and before he came to the rougher portion, Consinor saw a dim light ahead that came from the opening in the wall of the room.

All semblance of composure had now deserted him. His cowardice fully manifested itself at his first discovery, and he was not sure, even now that the bronze bolts shut in his enemy, that he was safe from pursuit. With Kāra's despairing cry still ringing in his ears, he reached the wall, passed through the opening, drew the stone into place behind him as a further precaution, and then sped in a panic across the room.

Nephthys heard him coming and thought it was Kāra. As he tore down the matting and dashed through the arch, the girl rose to her feet and viciously thrust out her hand.

Consinor fell with a moan at her feet, drenching the hard ground with a stream of blood. By the time Tadros had rushed to his assistance he was dead.

The dragoman, on ascertaining that the victim was his accomplice, was frantic with despair. He rushed into the dwelling and gazed around him anxiously. The room appeared to his eyes just as it had a hundred times before. Kāra was nowhere to be seen, and the secret that Tadros had plotted so artfully to discover was lost to him forever.

"Confound you, Nephthys!" he cried, returning to the archway, "you've killed the wrong man and eternally ruined my fortunes!"

But the girl had disappeared. In her mother's hut she had quietly seated herself at the loom and resumed her work at the shuttle.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DRAGOMAN WINS.

Antar, the sheik, waited for Kāra until his patience was exhausted; then he left the dahabeah and came up through the sands to Fedah to discover, if possible, what had delayed the prince from returning with his promised reward. To Antar this cluster of hovels seemed mean and unattractive when compared with his own village, and these hills were not likely places for treasure tombs. He knew that the French and Italian excavators had been all over them, and found only some crocodile mummy pits.

The sheik grew suddenly suspicious. Kāra's promises were too extravagant to be genuine; doubtless he had deceived Antar from the first, and sought to obtain his services without payment. It was true that Kāra was reputed in Cairo to be wealthy, but he might easily have squandered his inheritance long ago. One thing Antar was certain of — the Egyptian prince must produce his treasure at once or the sheik, thinking he was duped, would undertake to exact a bit of vengeance on his own account.

Thus musing, he turned the comer of the hill and came full upon Tadros, who was expecting him. The dragoman's thumbs were thrust into the pockets of his gorgeous silver and blue vest. He stood with his feet spread well apart, in an attitude of dejection; his countenance was sorrowful and discontented.

"Ah," growled the sheik, "this is the man Kāra requested me to kill!"

"I do not doubt it," returned Tadros, meekly. "It is so much easier to kill one than to pay him the wages he has earned."

"Does he owe you money?" demanded Antar, sharply.

"Yes; and now I shall never get it."

"Why not?"

"Have you not heard? Prince Kāra came to this village a few hours ago and was met by a captain of police, who wants him in Cairo for more than a dozen crimes."

"What! Have you brought the police upon us?" exclaimed Antar, angrily.

"I? How absurd! I came here to get my money; but they have taken Kāra south to meet a detachment of soldiers who are coming from Assyut. Presently they will return here in force to rescue Winston Bey, who is in some trouble through Kāra's actions."

"You are lying to me," declared the sheik. "It is you who have set the officers upon us. You are a traitor!"

Tadros appeared distressed.

"You have known me long, my sheik," said he, "and have always found me an honest man. Never have I mixed with the police in any way. But do

you imagine the Government will neglect to watch over Winston Bey and protect him from his enemies? Ask the captain when he returns with the soldiers and Kāra. He will be here very soon now, and he will tell you that Tadros the dragoman had nothing to do with his coming here."

The sheik glanced around nervously.

"You say he will be here soon?"

"At any moment. Something has gone wrong with Winston Bey's dahabeah, it seems, and the soldiers are to put things right."

An tar fell into the trap. In common with most natives, he greatly feared the mounted police, and had no inclination to face a company of them. Quickly he ran to the end of the hill overlooking the river, and blew a shrill blast between his fingers as a signal to his comrades.

Instantly his men swarmed from the distant boat and sped over the sands toward him. The sheik met them and the whole band turned toward the north, quickly disappearing among the rugged crags of the mountains.

Tadros, convulsed with laughter at his easy victory, watched until the last Arab was out of sight. Then he walked down to the dahabeah, where, in the gathering twilight, he cut the bonds of the prisoners, assuring Winston Bey and his party, with many bombastic words, that he had vanquished their enemies and they owed their lives to his shrewdness and valor.

"You are free as the air," said he. "Fear nothing hereafter, for I will now remain with you."

"Where is Kāra?" asked Winston.

Tadros did not know; but he suspected that Consinor, before returning from the interior of the treasure-chamber, had murdered the Egyptian, whose mysterious disappearance could in no other way be explained. Not wishing to mention the viscount's name, whose murder might involve both Nephthys and himself in trouble, he stuck to his original lie.

"Kāra is fleeing in one direction and the Arabs in another," he said, pompously. "I am too modest to relate how I have accomplished this remarkable feat; but you must admit I have been wonderfully clever and successful, and by remaining faithful to your interests, have saved you from a terrible fate."

Winston did not answer, for he was just then engaged in holding Aneth in a close embrace, while Mrs. Everingham looked upon the happy pair with moist eyes and smiling lips.

But old Lord Roane felt that their rescuer merited more tangible acknowledgment of his services.

"You are a brave man, Tadros," he said.

"I am, indeed, sir," agreed the dragoman, earnestly. "When we return to

Cairo I will see that you are properly rewarded."

Tadros smiled with pleasure.

"Thank you, my lord," said he; "it is no more than I deserve."

"Just now," continued his lordship, "we are bound for Luxor to celebrate a wedding."

"With Tadros for dragoman," remarked the Egyptian, calmly lighting a cigarette, "all things are possible."

THE END

Shorter Fiction

Baum in 1911

OUR LANDLADY

Contributions to 'The Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer'

In July 1888, Baum and his wife moved to Aberdeen, Dakota Territory, where they opened a store, which they called *Baum's Bazaar*. However, Baum's habit of imprudently giving credit led to the eventual bankrupting of the store. Therefore, he turned to editing a local newspaper, *The Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, in which he wrote a column titled *Our Landlady*. The following weekly narratives ran from January 1890 until February 1891, and they concerned the humorous interactions of the titular landlady and her three regular lodgers, as well as several other residents of Aberdeen. The topics discussed are often controversial, especially by today's standards, and they give a detailed panorama of life in a small town in late Nineteenth Century America. These biting works are among Baum's very earliest writings and reveal traces of his later skill in satirical works.

The Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer faced financial barriers, just as experienced previously with *Baum's Bazaar*. The failure of the wheat crop in 1889 and 1890 sent the entire regional economy into a steep decline, affecting virtually every business in town. Baum's subscriber list dropped from 3500 customers to 1400, and many of those who remained could not pay their bills. The last known edition of Baum's paper was dated 21 March 1891; when he turned the paper over to the previous owner, who sold it on to someone else.

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She Remarks Emphatically on Some Timely and Truthful Topics

25 January 1890

"It beats all," said our landlady, as she threw down the plate of pancakes and wiped the turner on her apron, "it beats all how hard the times really is. There's no end to the sufferin', right here in our own neighborhood — excuse me, colonel, but your a butterin' of that cake the second time! Why, only yesterday a poor woman from the country was beggin' the grocery man to trust her for a pint o' kerosene, and he wouldn't let her have it. It made my heart bleed, that's what it did, and if any o' you boarders had a paid up lately I'd have gin it to her myself."

Here Tom looked rather red, and said hastily, "But Mrs. Bilkins, she might have been an impostor."

"Nonsense," replied the landlady, moving the syrup out of the colonel's reach, "the country people hain't got a cent — nor the city ones neither for that matter! Even the hotels is economizing. Don't it look bad for Al. Ward to eat at the Sherman House and Jim Ringrose go sneakin' down to Ward's for lunch?"

"Mrs. Bilkins!" cried the colonel, "are you trying to starve us? Let me tell you ma'am, that I for one won't be economized on. Fetch on the cakes!" The landlady darted a wicked look at him and retired to the kitchen.

"The times are bad," said the doctor, thoughtfully, as he removed the grounds from his coffee, "any one would think the prevailing epidemic would help my business, but it don't. Nine out of ten who declare they have la grippe are impostors, and the other one suffers tortures rather than pay for a prescription because he thinks the desease isn't fatal.

"That's false economy."

"Economy!" shrieked the landlady, reappearing with the hot cakes, "everybody's economizin'! What do you think o' Nat. Wendell's chewin' both ends of his toothpick, and Frank Beard blackin' of his own boots, an' Skip Salisbury refusin' to shake for the cigars, and Cholly Brockway's stayin' at Columbia three weeks rather than pay the fare home to see his girl? There's economy for you!" The colonel picked his teeth with a ruminating air.

"If," said he, "I had any money, I too would economize. But it's impossible to economize on nothing."

"Why, gendemen;" continued the landlady, sitting down across the arms of the baby's high chair, and waving the empty pancake plate with the air of a newly elected speaker to a brand new House, "why see how the uncommon

council is economizin'! Ain't they hired a lot o' poor men to plant sign posts in the snow, so as to keep them from starvin' and obligin' the city to bury 'em?

"Ain't they cut down poor Major Barrett's printing bill to $1700, when they might have gin him five thousand? And he such a nice, pleasant gendeman, too! I declare it's too aggravatin'! But economy must begin somewhere, and why not with the uncommon council — hey?"

But the boarders had quietly stolen away, and the landlady having wiped the mouth of the syrup jug with her finger, put it in her mouth (the finger, that is) and retired to the kitchen in a triumphant mood.

PETE

She Remonstrates on the Giddiness of Church Socials

1 February 1890

"When I was young," remarked our landlady, picking a gray hair out of the butter and laying it on the edge of the plate to tempt our appetites. "When I was a gal, they didn't have such goin's on at the church sociables."

"That must have been before my time," said the colonel, ignoring the icy regard of a scorned woman's eyes turned full upon him.

"To what do you refer, ma'am?" asked Tom unwarily, meaning to avert the coming storm.

"Why to these goin's on about buyin' gals at auction, as if they was so many slaves at the market! It's outrageous, that's what it is, and oughten ter be allowed in a Christian country!"

"But the girls didn't seem to object," suggested the doctor, eating a crust without spreading it.

"Oh, no, the gals didn't object!" acquiesced the landlady, elevating her nasal appendage; "the girls nowadays is too highty-tighty for anything. Why they're actually goin' to be weighed 'afore the men folks, I hear, and bought for so much a pound! Think o' that, gentlemen!"

"Nothing very improper in the thought, I'm sure," said the Colonel, helping himself to a pickled onion to remove the taste of the stewed prunes from his mouth. "It's only a little matter of fun, Mrs. Bilkins, and if the young ladies don't object I don't see why you should."

"I don't! Let 'em ruin their chances of gettin' married if they want to. Who'd marry a girl as was weighed 'afore the whole world? And at a church sociable, too! What can the ministers be thinkin' of?"

"They probably dream of the church debts being paid and are content," quoth Tom, sotto voce.

"These gals," continued the landlady, carelessly wiping her forehead with the doctor's napkin, "are probably all designing women, and are doin' their best to catch onter the fellers. Poor Skip's gone crazy over 'em they say, and Mutz and Peepo can't hardly wait for the next sociable to spend their money. And Harvey Jewett went to try and stop the doin's at Gilmore's and make 'em behave proper, and Harry Marple went to help him do it, and they was the two biggest fools o' the lot and almost fit each other to see which could buy the first string with a gal hitched onto the tother end of it! I declare it's enough to make me want to move to Columbia!"

"Don't do that!" exclaimed the colonel, with a startled look, but further remark was cut short by the entrance of the new boarder.

"I'm sorry to say, Mrs. Bilkins," said the new-comer, suavely, "that

important business calls me out of town. I have been here just a week. Please accept this check in payment; any one will cash it for you. Good day ma'am!"

He was gone, and the landlady turned the check over and murmured "I hain't got my glasses here. Colonel, will you give me the money on this 'ere thing?"

The Colonel glanced at it, got very red, and left the room without a word. She handed it to Tom, but he merely looked at the signature and walked away with a low whistle. The doctor did not wait, but softly made his exit, and the landlady, looking after them was struck by a sudden thought. She rushed to the window and held the paper close to her eyes. It was a check, right enough, and regularly drawn, but the signature was both mysterious and portentious: "Dan McGinty."

PETE

She Goes to a Ball and Lets a Cat out of the Bag

8 February 1890

"Yes," acknowledged our landlady, fanning her hot and florid face with her apron, "I do feel a little rocky today, colonel, and that's a fact. You see, everybody has to have a little recreation, though it's the first time in seving year as I've tripped the light fantastic myself."

"Been to a party, ma'am?" asked the doctor, picking a china button out of the gravy.

"Well, this were more like a ball," replied the landlady, smiling broadly; "an' a reglar out 'n outer it was, too! The music played reglar tunes, it did, and every onct in a while, when the boys stopped yellin', you could hear it as plain as day, an' — "

Here Tom interrupted the discourse with a cry of agony, and rushing to the window he carefully extracted something from his jaws with many facial contortions.

"What is it, Tom?" asked the doctor, expectantly.

"A pin!" groaned the unfortunate boarder, holding it up in full view; "'twas in the mashed potato."

"Madam!" cried the Colonel, severely, "you will oblige us by looking a little closer after your wearing apparel. It's my turn next, and I hav'nt the least doubt but I'll strike a corset in the horseradish or something equally as bad. We're not kickers, Mrs. Bilkins, — far from it, — but in the future be a little more particular!"

"Dear me, gentlemen," exclaimed the landlady, aghast; "I'm orful sorry, but I'm that flustrated today that I can't account for nothin' as happens, nohow! Disserpadon is so a tryin' to the nerves!"

"True," acquiesced the doctor, mildly, "but you haven't told us who was present at the ball."

"No — an' I must!" returned the landlady, brightening, "for they was a real swell crowd, I can tell you. There was me in my red gownd, an' Miss Smithers' hired lady in a black an' brown balmoral, an' Miss Jenkyns the dressmaker in a green perlice, an' a hired lady from West Hill in a yaller an' blue striped jersey, an' — "

"Never mind the ladies, Mrs. Bilkins," broke in Tom, more to try if his jaw would work than because he was interested.

"An' there was two other ladies there, too," continued the landlady, with much satisfaction, "but I did'nt hear their names, for no one interduced 'em: an' one wored a scarlet plush all embroidered up the side, an' — "

"But who were the gentlemen?"

“Oh, there was Jay Gould, an’ — ”

“Who?”

“Well, they called him Jay, anyhow. And he was a daisy, too, and swung around Miss Smitherses hired lady till she most fainted. An’ then there was Dill-ole-man — ”

“Who?”

“That’s what they called him. An’ a feller named Toothpicks, an’ a lot more o’ the swell boys. But I guess some on ‘em was nervous, for I heerd Jay Gould — — or whatever his name is — say to Toothpicks,” Oh lor’! if they ever know as we’ve been here!” So I guess they must have some wives to home, or some gals as they didn’t bring, anyhow. Don’t go, colonel, you haven’t had your pie yet.”

“What kind is it?”

“Mince, Colonel.”

“H’m. And the mince meat — did you buy it — ”

“Oh, I made it myself this blessed mornin’.”

“Very well, Mrs. Bilkins,” returned the colonel, as he took his hat and coat from the stand, “I’m not very hungry, anyway, and in view of your being so flustered today I believe I’ll forego the pleasure of the pie.”

And the doctor and Tom, with resigned looks, followed his example, while the landlady, gazing wistfully after them, remarked:

“There’s no great loss without some small gain — it’ll do for tomorrow, anyhow.”

PETE

She outdoes Nellie Bly and Makes a Trip around Aberdeen in 72 minutes and 6 seconds

15 February 1890

"Good heavings," cried our landlady, with a two-for-a-nickel look on her face and a sigh that burst her apron strings: "if I ain't done up then there never was a critter as was!"

"You do look tired," agreed the colonel, as the boarders gathered around the tea-table, "been excercising, ma'am?"

"Exercising!" snapped the landlady, indignantly, "well I should say so! Why that 'ere bold female named Bly warn't a patch on the way as I had to flummux around this blessed arternoon! You see our church serciety appinted me a c'mittee fer to get subscriptions to supply the poor heathen women in Africanistan with hairpins, an' tonight I've got to report, an' I had'nt done a single thing towards gettin' a penny o' money together to report with. An' so I says to myself, why if them tarnal fools o' men go to these church sociables an' pay a dollar or two a night fer just amusement, they'll be willin' to give me a few pennies fer the poor heathen wimmin in Africanistan. An' so at nine minutes arter four o'clock I sot out on my errant o' mercy, an' I had ter git back in time to git supper, and you can better believe it was quick work."

"Mrs. Bilkins," interrupted the doctor mournfully, "will you kindly tell me what this stuff is in the tea?"

The landlady looked surprised, and the colonel and Tom, as men will, instantly tasted their tea to see what was wrong.

"It's plaster!" screamed Tom, while the colonel sank back and gasped that he was poisoned.

"Nothing of the kind!" sniffed the landlady, angrily, as she peered into the cream jug, "it's just my clear starch as I mistook for the milk, that's all, an' considerin' the flurry as I were in it ain't to be wondered at!"

"Certainly not, ma'am," quoth the doctor resignedly, "but if you will accomodate us with a little lacteal fluid instead we shall be greatly obliged."

"And the pickles, ma'am, have a strong odor of kerosene," complained Tom. "Oh, that's nothin'," protested the landlady, "I must ha' set the dish right under the hangin' lamp, an' the blamed thing will leak ile in spite of all I can do. Try another piece, sir; that one might ha' caught it all."

"But did you get any subscriptions?" asked the colonel, when harmony was finally restored.

"Well, you see I thought as I'd do it thorough," replied the landlady, settling back in her chair and picking her teeth reflectively with the carving fork, "so an' I started in at the Northwestern bank buildin'. The lawyers was

busy. I found Johnny Adams a settin' with his feet on a high desk an' recitin' Pat. Henry's speech in a tremblin' voice; and Georgie Jenkins practisin' short-hand with a type-writer, an' Judge Crofoot an' Phil. Skilman a argufyin' as how far the sun were from the moon, an' — "

"Did they give you anything?"

"Nary cent. Johnnie he felt fer a nickel an' could'nt find it, an' Georgie he said as practisin' short-hand had made him short, and the Jedge he said excuse me a momint an' he went outer one door, an' Phil says excuse me fer a momint an' he went outer a nuther door and I waited some time and they did'nt come back, so I excused myself an' went down an' saw Major Barrett. An' he says as how he was just makin' a new bill fer the city printin' and I'd have ter wait til he collected it, and then he opened the 'cyclopedia fer to write his editorial an' I took the hint an' left. An' I stepped inter Al. Ward's an' he said if I wanted a mince pie fer the heathen, ter take it along, but as fer hairpins he did'nt go a cent on 'em. But I knew Al's pies was tew rich fer the heathen's blood. And I went up to the Dakota Bildin' and Loan assassination an' found Genajewell a scribblin' L.J. on the blottin' paper an' not a penny to be got outen' the whole crowd. An' then I met Sill an' he said as Slosser were kickin' on payin' him because he'd a hurt Fred Kile's feelin's what edits the Warner Schoolboy's Bugle an' because Billy Kid thinks as he's too fresh an' he knows hisself that he ain't, an' so I did'nt get any money there. An' Billy Paulhamus, as I come to next, said he's jest sent Susan B. Anthony a diamont necklace fer a birthday present and he hain't no spare cash. An' I met Sam Vroom, as is makin' sich a reckerd as the brittle statesman of Columbia, an' he'd spent his last cent fer a crowbar fer the boys to kill snakes with at ther county seat. An' Dave Strauss wanted to figger out how many women there was in Africanistan as had hair, an' how many hair pins it took to each head, an' how much hairpins was a gross an' how much it would cost to supply each woman, an' it took so long I came away an' left him. An' Ed. Randall said if it was guage pins it might interest him, but hairpins did'nt. An' Harvey Jewett wanted to know what kind of a snap it would be to send Dill out there with a cord o' clothspins, an' Scott wanted me to cash a wheat check an' pay him the balance, an' then I looked at the clock an' saw I'd just time to skip home an' git supper, an' when I got here I found I'd been gone jest seventy two minits an' six seconds, an' I'd been all round the town. I can almost sympathize with that Bly gal."

"And how much did you get?"

"Nary cent. But I've one satisfaction, anyhow," she continued, with a sigh, "I've a did my duty; and if the heathens in Africanistan want hairpins arter this, why, they can rustle for 'em themselves!"

She Insists on Her Boarders Keeping Lent, With Indifferent Success

22 February 1890

"I suppose," said the landlady, furtively eying an ink-stain on the carpet and smoothing the ample wrinkles out of her ample gown with her ample hands, "I suppose, gentlemen, as you're all good 'Piskipalians."

The doctor colored, and answered, "I frequently attend that church, and — yes, I may say that I am an Episcopalian."

"Ever sense that Jumper sociable!" remarked the landlady, sarcastically.

"I myself feel strongly drawn to that excellent — would you call it religion? or sect? or — "

"Call it the Guilded Clique!" chuckled the landlady, to the Colonel's no small confusion.

"And Tom -"

"I was brought up in the tenets of the church," replied that languid young man. "I don't know what the tenets were, but I was brought up in 'em."

"Then they was probably red flannels an' diapers," answered the landlady, absent-mindedly, while Tom turned to the photograph of Susan B. to enable him to regain his self-possession. For poor Susan has always possessed herself.

"Therefore," says the landlady, with a smile of satisfaction, "you are all 'Piskiples. Of course you'll keep lent."

The boarders looked at each other in surprise and uneasiness.

"I think I shall deny myself something," remarked the colonel; "I shall either smoke nickle cigars instead of imported ones or take to a pipe. I haven't dicided which."

"And I," said the doctor, cheerfully, "shall economise on horse feed. My mare has really had too liberal an allowance of oats lately. What shall you do, Tom?" and they all looked curiously at the dyed-in-the-wool Episcopalian.

"Oh, there is one course of denial which I always follow," says this interesting youth. "I deny myself postage stamps and write to all my friends on postals. It's inconvenient, ye know, but the lenten season must be duly observed."

The landlady smiled an Act III. Scene III smile, for the climax was approaching, and led them without a word to the dinner table.

"Mrs. Bilkins," said the colonel, when all were seated. "I am a little rushed today, as I have a client awaiting my return to renew a note. Please fetch on the dinner."

“The dinner,” replied the landlady, trying to repress a fiendish look of triumph, “is on. This is ash We’nsday. Most landladys who has ‘Piskiple boarders has nothin’ but ashes fer to eat today, but I ain’t that sort. Good ‘Piskiples, as’ tends the Guild socials so reglar, mustn’t be starved, altho’ they should be incouraged in them tenements o’ the church as Mr. Tom were brought up in. So I’ve got some nice mush an’ milk for you, and if your conscience don’t prick you, — fall to an’ eat hearty!”

The boarders were conquered. They turned their hollow eyes and mouths and pink suffused brows upon the mush, and naught save the rattle of the spoons against the bowls broke the ominous silence which was the only thing that had reigned in Aberdeen since winter set in.

“I once knew a woman,” remarked the colonel at last, spitefully, “so mean that she put holes in her fried-cakes to economise.”

“Did she die a horrible death?” asked Tom.

“She did.”

The landlady was unmoved.

“And an old woman with whom I boarded chopped her hash so fine that she had to press the atmosphere over the platter to keep it from floating in the air.”

“That was in lent,” beamed the landlady, good-naturedly.

Here the doctor distinguished himself.

“One good thing about this season,” said he, “is that boarding house keepers never ask you for any money, because they know it’s lent!”

Mrs. Bilkins turned pale, and left the room abruptly, while the boarders made the best of their meagre fare and started for town in a brighter mood.

The landlady looked after them through the crack in the kitchen door.

“It’ll be a heap o’ savin’ just now, this lent business; but I’m afeared,” with a sigh that came from the darns on the heels of her socks, “I’m afeared they’ll more n’ make it up at Yeaster!”

She Gets a Letter from her Brother in Harriman that Nearly Breaks up the Establishment

1 March 1890

"Mrs. Bilkins," gasped the Colonel, in amazement, "what does this mean? You've actually given us tenderloin steak for supper!"

"Dear me!" cried the landlady, "is it possible I'm that flustered? — but never mind! Eat it an' welcome, for tonight I give ye all warnin'!"

"Warning!" quoth Tom, "warning of what?"

"To go away — to find another boardin' place, for this 'ere old ranch ceases to exist termorrer!"

The boarders turned their wondering eyes upon the landlady. There she stood, her round face red with excitement, and wringing her hands convulsively together as she nodded her head at them as if it was worked by a Keely motor.

"May I ask," remarked the doctor, in a voice he strove to render calm, "may I ask, ma'am, where you are going?"

The landlady's agitation increased. "To Tennessee!" she managed to reply at last. For a moment there was dead silence.

"Harriman?"

The landlady nodded.

"This is Jim Ringrose's work," remarked Tom, tragically, "he's jealous of your reputation, ma'am. You'd better give up the idea and stick to Aberdeen."

"No such thing!" returned Mrs. Bilkins, indignantly. "Do you s'pose there's nobody there 'xcept from Aberdeen? My brother's there, gents, an' he's a writ me a letter about it, an' he says it's a wonderful openin' fer a hotel. If ye'll jest listen, I'll read it to ye."

"By all means," acquiesced the doctor, leaning back and picking his teeth, while the landlady drew the precious document from her bosom with trembling hands, adjusted her glasses, and began:

"I asked the boys from Aberdeen if they was lookin' fer a fust-class hotel, 'cause they was still carryin' their gripsacks, and one on 'em pulls me aside an' says:

"'My fren',' says he, 'is this here a prohibition state?'

"An' I says, 'ole hoss,' says I, 'you're welcome to do anything in Harriman but pray.' An' he turned to a fine lookin' man as was tryin' to get a cork out o' a bottle an' says:

"'Hank, what'd I tell you? It'll take longer'n this ter git the Brown Brothers grip on Harriman! Drink 'arty!' An' they did. An' another, he says:

“‘Where’ll we sleep, Jim?’ and the feller he spoked to wiped his mouth an’ says:

“‘Fred,’ says ‘e,’ less buy a claim an’ sleep on that.’

“‘Claim!’ says the Bared boy, ‘why these’ ere ain’t claims, — they’s lots.’

“‘Then,’ says a pleasant-faced gentl’man what they calls Jump, ‘then,’ says ‘e,’ less buy a lot of em!’

“‘This won’t do,’ says a’nuther wot looks like a preacher, ‘we’ve got to go to a hotel.’

“‘Hotels,’ says a solemn feller with his han’s in his vest pockets, ‘must be patronized. I’ve got one on my han’s now.’ But I didn’t see nothin’ on his han’s but warts. Then they all agrees, an’ ses to me to lead ‘em to the best hotel in town. An’ away I goes. There ain’t but one, an’ it can’t feed more’n a hundred people a day, an’ there’s anyhow 5000 here, an’ so I tole ‘em.

“‘Jest give us a chance to put our names on the register,’ says the hansom man, ‘an’ we’ll russle fer the vittles! I hain’t lived in Columbia all winter fer nothin’.’ An’ so I takes ‘em to the hotel an’ manages to get their luggage put in a corner o’ the wash room. There was six gripsacks, — little ones, a champaigan basket marked ‘Fred. Bared,’ a case o’ beer marked ‘me an’ ringrose’s,’ an’ a big jimmyjohn marked ‘Free-fer-all.’ There was a little package marked ‘poison’ in big letters, and writ on with a ledpencil was ‘Comps of Al. Ward — Somethin’ to make the boys think o’ home.’

“After a while I got ‘em a room, an’ they called me up an’ asked what I thought of Harriman fer an investment.

“‘Fust class,’ says I. ‘I’ve a knowed it fer twenty year. It’s a nice gap in the mountains, which is the only place as a railroad can get through — if it ever takes it into its head that it wants to get through at all. It’s also the only place as a cyclone can get through, an’ that gets through pretty lively oncet in a while an’ blows every shanty in Harriman down the other side o’ the mountains. But I ferget, gentlemen; I promised the estate agent as I wouldn’t mention that.’

“‘Boys,’ says one feller, ‘if my wife knewed I was in danger o’ cyclones, she’d go crazy. Ye see,’ he says, turnin’ to me, ‘we don’t have high winds in Dakota.’” Then the hansom man asked what lots was bringin’. I told him ‘bout a thousan’ dollars each. Then they looked at each other an’ wanted ter know if ye could buy a quarter of a lot.

“‘No,’ says I, ‘but yes can buy as many lots as ye want to.’

“‘Less buy a lottery ticket,’ says Jump.

“But they didn’t anser.

“They jest asked me to go out and see what I could buy an option on one little lot fer.

“Now, my dear sister, I write all this to let ye see how high the excitement is. You can make dollars here where ye could cents in Aberdeen. Come right along, an’ bring all yer friends.”

The landlady’s trembling voice ceased, an’ looking up she asked triumphantly, “What do ye say to that, gentlemen?”

“Go!” replied the colonel, dejectedly, “go by all means.”

“I’ve half a mind,” said the doctor, timidly, “to go with you!”

“What would it cost?” asked Tom, catching the excitement.

“Well,” replied the landlady, “my brother mentions that. He says: ‘If any more Aberdeen ducks want some o’ this pudden, and want ter know how much money it takes to invest in Harriman, you can show ‘em this slip o’ paper, which I picked up on the floor of the room the Aberdeen boys hangs out in. He probably dropped it by mistake, as it looks like a expense account.’ Read it, colonel,” added the landlady. The colonel took it and read as follows:

“Railroad ticket — $96.25
Sinch — 11.00
Sleeper — 1.50
Cigars — 1.00
Sinch — 16.50
Lunch — 10
Refreshments — — 12.00
Sinch (a bad one) — — 51.00
Cigars — 2.00
Refreshments — 2.00
Sinch — — 17.00
Refreshments — 1.50
Lent Ringrose — — 10.00
Sinch — 9.00
Lunch — — 05
Sleeper — 2.00
Cigars — 2.25
Lent Brown — — 15.00
Refreshments — — 14.00
Hotel Bill — 16.00
1/8 interest in one outside lot — 125.00
Total 835.15

SUMMARY

Bro't from Home — $1000.00
P'd out as above — 835.15
Got left — 164.85
Will cost to get back — 100.00
Total outlay — 935.15
Probable value of Lot — 200.00
Profits — 735-15"

The colonel finished amidst a dead silence, which was broken by a rap at the door.

The dirty-faced messenger boy had a telegram for Mrs. Bilkins. She read it, sighed deeply, and handed it to the colonel. It ran as follows:

"Stay where you are. The bottom may drop outen this thing an bust suthin'.

JERRY"

"That's my brother," said the landlady mournfully, "an' his jedgement is usually good. Gents, what'd ye like fer a Sunday dinner?"

She Dabbles in Politics and Aspires to a Great Office

8 March 1890

"Yes," said the landlady, as she peppered the hash and tasted of it to see if it was right; "Yes, I'm a gettin' some political aspersions into my head, an' don't see as why I shouldn't run fer office as well as any other citizen o' this here Yernited States."

"But," said Tom, opening the tightly stopped holes in the salt shaker with a toothpick, "woman is not yet enfranchised, you know."

March i8go "They ain't, hey?" retorted the landlady, glaring upon him, "I guess if Mary Etter Bones is good enough to be Vice-President o' South Dakota, Sairy Ann Bilkins is good enough fer mayor o' Aberdeen!"

"What!" exclaimed the doctor, aroused from his brown study of the hash, "do you then aspire to the Mayorality?"

"Why not?" answered the landlady, raising her eyebrows in surprise, "ain't I as good as Ben Stearns?"

"Undoubtedly, but — "

"And ain't Major Burke promised to 'lect me if I'm nomernated, an' will give him the city printin' to start his new paper, an' — "

"If you're nominated he might," interrupted the colonel, who is a thorough politician, "but no democrat, man or woman, who works against B. S. Barrett, can hope to secure the nomination for anything."

"Pooh," sneered Mrs. Bilkins, drawing herself up proudly, "I berlong to the oppersition, I does, an' I've got the wimmin to back me up. I've a writ to Mrs. Alice Pickeler to gimme her support, and the Bugle is to be my official organ."

"Well, even a hand-organ is better than no organ at all," remarked the doctor, "and I'm glad to see you so powerfully supported. Of course, so far as I'm concerned, I've helped support you so long that I won't go back on you now."

"Nor I," chimed in the others.

"Thanks, feller citizens an' boarders," said the landlady, majestically, "all I needs now is L. C. Dennis an' the Rhines votin' machine to carry me through to the Mayor's cheer."

"And with the new newspaper to back you, you have a brilliant career in prospect," remarked the doctor. "I suppose the paper will be conservative?"

"Oh yes," replied the landlady. "The editor agrees not to send nobody awanderin' broken hearted on the face o' the yerth because he just fooled with a buzz-saw. An' he agrees not ter call no mean names nor fill up his paper with bills o' fare a week old because he can't get news. An' he'll print

pamphlets fer church societies at five minits notis an' take 'em back agin with a smilin' face. All he asks is the city printin' at the highest market price, an' the reports o' Buder's Signal Service an' seven subscribers to carry him through to fortune."

"But who are your other supporters?" asked Tom.

"Why, there's Tom Nolan and Jim Davis, as is both overworked, an' are aching for some soft snaps, an' there's Al. Ward who wants ter supply the city pies, an' there's Miss Jones who says she's liberal enough to support anything but her stockings, an' there's Chollie Fisher that wants me to stand by him for the treasurership, because he feels easiest when he's a handlin' money, an' there's Mat Stroupe who thinks he can beat me if he runs agin' me, an' there's Billy Paulhamus who alius supports everybody to make hisself solid, an' there's Skip Salisbury who says he'd like to support a woman fer a little while an' see how it feels, an' there's Zach Spider who says he wants to tackle something excitin', an' there's C. N. Harris who says he can control his own vote an' — lots of others!"

"With such a backing," said the colonel with a sigh, "you ought to win."

"I shall," said the landlady confidendy, "but as it's a long time 'afore the caucus I believe I'll go down town an' buy a case o' strawberries to do up. It ain't quite the season, but they're plenty in town I hear, an' if I'm agoin' to be mayor o' this here berg, I won't have no time this summer to monkey over cannin' fruit, fer my time'll be tuk up with water main extensions an' lookin' up them seven subscribers fer the new paper!"

She Worries over Seed Wheat, and Gets Lectured by the Boarders

15 March 1890

"Oh, dear," exclaimed our landlady, as she sank into a chair and gasped for breath, "I've a most made up my mind to give up tryin' to be a public woman."

"What's happened now?" queried the doctor, stealthily wiping his plate with his napkin before helping himself to the cutlets.

"Why, I'm bothered to death about this seed wheat business," she replied, growing calmer before the gaze of the sympathetic boarders.

"You see, I knew very well that the gov'ner hadn't appinted the proper folks to look arter it, an' I decided that unless I took the matter inter my own hands the poor farmer's might whistle fer their seed. So I goes out an' sees cap. Hauser, an' asks him what he thinks about sellin' them 'air warrants. An' he says, says he, 'missus, the tea what we grows in Injy on me an' some other folkses plantations, beats the world.' And so I left him an' met Jedge Drake, an' I says, 'Jedge, what'll we do about seed wheat?' an' he answered, sayin', 'what do you s'pose I know about it? What's seed wheat got ter do with apintments?' an' he kissed his hand an' left on the fust train fer Pierre. An' then I came across Dight. McGlachlin, an' he tole me as how there was more wheat in the elevators than would plant two such states as South Dakota. But, says he, 'it takes money, ma'am, to git it out.' An' I called on the komishner of emigrants an' he said that if some rich folks like me would put up the kerlateral that the wheat would pop out'er them elevators right inter the farmers' hands. 'I'd put up some securities myself,' says he, 'but I'm a poor man as can't afford to run the chances.'

"An' Harvey Jewett said, that the club had a done their duty an' called the convention, and decided ter issue warrants, an' now if anybody wanted ter make them warrants sell, the rich folk could jest write their names on the back of 'em. An' so I come home discouraged an' — Great heavings!" she exclaimed, "I've lost my weddin' ring!"

"Don't get excited, ma'am," remarked the colonel. "I think I've found it," and he fished out a discolored band from the gravy.

"There!" cried the landlady, "I've growd so poor worrittin' over other people's business, that I can't keep even my rings on, an' arter this I'll jest mind my own business an' let other people mind mine."

"Bravo!" yelled Tom, "now you are getting sensible. I've felt like home without a mother ever since you got to running over the town, and my chum Clayton Thompson got stuck on the printing business. But if you'll look after

me in the future, I'll — I actually believe I'll pay something on account."

"Hm!" said the landlady.

"My dear Mrs. Bilkins," remarked the doctor, "Tom is right. In a certain sense we are your family, and a woman of family should not meddle in public affairs."

"Hm!" said the landlady.

"Your kind heart," said the colonel, "leads you to meddle in affairs that should be left to the sterner sex. Now you're a better cook than politician, or anything else, and you should devote your energies to those talents that the Lord has given you."

"Hm!" sniffed the landlady, as the boarders filed out; "it's the conceit o' men as is the biggest stumblin' block ter universal sufferin' o' women! But let 'em talk. They'll find I know my business — yes, an' everybody else's, too!"

She Discusses the Disadvantages of Prohibition, and Invents a New Method of Baking Pies

22 March 1890

"These is terrible times!" sighed our landlady, as she brushed the dust off the butter with her finger tips and tasted the milk to see if it was sweet. "All the town is riled up as if you'd stirred 'em with a stick like you would a hasty puddin'."

"Anything wrong?" queried the colonel, helping himself to the soup.

"Everything!" declared our landlady. "If Bill Fielder had only knowed what a damage he was doin' this town, he'd never a thunk up all them hard measures to prevent his feller-citizens from gettin' drunk. I've been tradin' a little this mornin', an' I went inter Scott's store for some borax, an' you orter heered him talk! He says he can't sell patent medicines without a license, because they all hez alcohol in 'em.' I'm goin' ter quit the town,' sez he. So I didn't buy the borox, as I wasn't goin' ter patronize anything but home instertutions, and I goes over to Lacey's, an' Doc he says — 'Them prohibish fellers is pritty hard on our perfeshin, but so long as they lets us sell Soda water with a wink in it I guess we'll pull through.' An' then I goes over to Narregang's — that ain't no druggist nor no loan agent nuther, cause he don't belong to nary gang, — an' he says, 'Why ma'am, they'll arrest a feller fer smilin' after the fust o' May, because it's agin' the law to be in good spirits!'"

"Great Scott!" yelled the doctor.

"Oh, it wasn't my joke," said the landlady, complacently.

"It wasn't that, Mrs. Bilkins. It was this confounded hairpin in the soup. I've run it twice through my tongue and broken off a front tooth."

"What, your new tooth?" asked Tom, sympathetically.

The Doctor scowled upon him in silence, and the landlady proceeded briskly: —

"But the drug fellers ain't a patch on the grocery men fur bein' riled. Harry Olwin is as much put out as the electric lights on a dark night, cause he can't sell lemon extract any more. 'Ye see, ma'am;' sez he, 'they might as well a took the bread and cake out o' my family's mouth as to perwent our a sellin' extracts. Them extracts,' he sez, pointin' to a row of 'em,' only costs us four cents a bottle, an' we gets 35 cents for 'em because it's pretty close to sell 'em fer a quarter. Now if they'd a forbid our sellin' sugar, who'd a kicked?"I would!' sez I, an' I came away. Teek Gilmore inter Beard an' Gage's was lookin' as mad as the city Auditor when he gits showed up in the papers. 'Lay in your stock o' pickles before the fust o' May, Mrs. Bilkins,'

yells Teek, ‘fer they’ve decided as vinegar is intoxicatin’, an’ can’t be sold without a license. What on earth can we put our spare water into when the vinegar barrel’s gone?”Try reducin’ the molasses with it,’ sez I sourcastically, an’ I left him pullin’ the hair outer Frank Beard’s head in great handfulls, he was so mad. Clayton Thompson was just sendin’ a boy down to buy Roache’s old sign that reads ‘all these goods at your own figgers,’ when I stepped in. He wanted it to put on his brandy peaches, he said, because they must be closed out ‘afore May fust.’ I don’t know what the folks will do,’ sez he with a care-worn air, ‘when they’ve got to buck agin’ the loss o’ the wheat crop and brandy-peaches at the same time!’ I ansered, ‘but perhaps you can git Frank Hagerty to take’ em off your hands, seein’ as they’re marked - ‘“

A horrible racket coming from the direction of the kitchen, here interrupted her.

“Fire!” shouted the boarders in unison, and followed by our landlady they all rushed into the kitchen.

Everything there appeared to be in its usual disordered condition. Mrs. Bilkins sank panting into a chair, while the colonel slipped his revolver quietly back into his hip-pocket.

“What could it have been?” asked Tom, as he wiped his forehead with a trembling hand and a pocket-handkerchief.

“I know!” suddenly cried the landlady, and going to the stove she opened the oven door and drew out an alarm-clock!

“You see,” she explained, “I had them pies a-bakin’ an’ I knew if I got talkin’

I’d ferget all about ‘em, an’ so I just sot the alarm to let me know when they was done, — an’ forgot all about it!”

“Mrs. Bilkins,” said the colonel, with marked disapproval, “some day you will over-reach yourself in one of these ingenious contrivances, and lose either your life, or your boarders — or both!” and followed by the others he walked angrily away.

“I don’t care,” muttered Mrs. Bilkins, as she blew on the clock to cool it, “it were a good scheme anyway, — an’ the pies is done to a turn!”

She Makes a Terrible Mistake and Quotes a Proverb

29 March 1890

Our landlady sat in the kitchen peeling some genuine green apples for pies, and as she dextrously separated the outer cuticle with the old razor that was the only visible relict of the late Mr. Bilkins, her thoughts wandered into figuring the cost of each apple and how much would go into a piece of pie and whether she could really afford to feed her boarders on such a luxury at the present rate of board. And then, glancing at the razor, she thought of the late Mr. B. and sighed as she remembered her lonely condition, till woman-like — widow-woman-like, we mean — she begun wondering when the fairy prince would come to her and awaken her into new life with a lover's kiss, saying "Sairy Ann, loved one, you shall never keep boarders more while your Alphonso lives to work his fingers to the bone to dress you in silks and satins!" The razor lay idle upon her knee now, and our landlady wiped her eyes and nose on her apron and gazed dreamily out of the window.

"Madam!"

It was the colonel's voice that aroused her. He had come to see if he couldn't get his dinner a little earlier than usual as he was going out of town for a day, but seeing how startled she was, he controlled the natural severity of his voice, and coming to her side he added — "My dear Mrs. Bilkins, I have a proposal to make to you."

Undoubtedly her previous train of thought had slighdy turned our landlady's head.

A light of rapture shone in her eyes; the pan of apples flew right over the colonel's head — the razor just skipping his cheek — and a large apple paring wound around his nose and buried its point in his right eye, while to cap the climax to his surprise Mrs. Bilkins threw herself with a loud scream of ecstacy into his arms.

The colonel has been through many wars, but this was a coup-de-main for which he was wholly unprepared.

He gave a groan and sat down abruptly upon the floor, Mrs. Bilkins falling upon his lap and retaining presence of mind enough to pin down both his arms in a warm and hearty embrace, while she stuck the knot of hair she wore on the top of her head plump into the colonel's open mouth.

For a moment nothing could be heard but the babble of Mrs. Bilkins' endearing words, for the colonel was struggling for breath and buried under the weight of a good 300 lbs.

Then the door suddenly flew open, and Tom and the doctor stood upon the threshold.

For one instant they stood horror-stricken, and then they wickedly burst into a roar of laughter, while the one eye the colonel could see out of glared angrily over the top of Mrs. Bilkins' head, and the landlady, impervious to interruption, murmured "My sweet, sweet colonel — I've a prayed for this hour to come an' I knew all the time as you loved me as I love you an' no knife can cut our love in-two, my own lovey dovey — "

"Excuse us," said the doctor, in his gende voice. "We were unaware that a love-scene was going on here, and finding no dinner ready, we — "

The colonel made a superhuman effort and rolled Mrs. Bilkins from his lap; then he sprang to his feet, pulled his dripping hat out of the water barrel, and with a cry of rage that sounded like a naughty cuss-word tore out of the back door and disappeared.

Tom attempted to assist Mrs. Bilkins to her feet, but she pushed him aside and rising unaided she cried "There, you've a found out our little love affair most as soon as we found it out ourselves! I don't care fer my part but the colonel seems a little riled."

"He does, indeed," said Tom.

"May we congratulate you?" asked the doctor.

"To be sure ye may!" answered the landlady, holding her breath to see if she couldn't blush, "now set right down here, an' I'll git dinner an' tell you all about it at the same time. Ye see this here lenten season is jest the time fer love-affairs. There ain't no parties, an' the boys an' gals jest keep company, and after the season o' Lent is gone there alius comes a season o' keeps, when marryin' an' givin' in marriage is in order. In Aberdeen a gal ain't in style if she ain't going ter be married after Yeaster, or ain't got a diamond ring ter show, anyhow. I can count more'n twenty couples as is parin' off, and the colonel and I jest thought as we'd be in style. He hain't give me no ring yet, but," she added reflectively, "he ain't had a chance!"

"I think he has gone for one now," said Tom.

"Well, anyhow," said the landlady, "you can't keep no secrets in a boardin' house, so it'sjust as well you found it out. The colonel ain't young, ner hansome, ner rich, an' he owes me nine weeks board, but love is blind, they say, an' he's a man, anyhow, and'll pertect me if he knows what's good fer hisself! But there — dinner's ready. Excuse my flustration, gentlemen, fer a perposal alius knocks a woman silly — even when she expects it!"

The two boarders ate their meal in dismal silence. They were full of awe and horror, and there was an air of mystery about the affair which puzzled them.

As they finished, a messenger boy strolled lazily in with a note for Mrs. Bilkins.

“Please read it, doctor,” she asked, excitedly, “it’s from the Kernel, but I’m that flustrated I could’nt find my glasses in a week!”

“‘My dear madam,’” read the doctor, “‘I simply wished to propose to you that you gave me a lunch before dinner so I could catch the train, as I am obliged to be out of town for a day. But as it is, I have gone without it, so don’t trouble yourself.’”

A hushed silence pervaded the room, during which the doctor was afraid to look at the landlady, and Tom was afraid to look at the doctor.

At length the former remarked quietly as he fitted his napkin into its pewter ring, “There’s many a slip twixt the cup and the lip.”

“An’ there’s as good fish in the sea as was ever pulled out’n it,” quoted our landlady bitterly.

“For my part,” said Tom to the doctor, as he closed the front door behind them, “if the colonel ever tries to put on any more airs, I shall just call him ‘the Landlord!”‘

“Men,” remarked Mrs. Bilkins, as she walked into the kitchen and kicked the cat for eating the soup, “men is all deceivers, an’ alius was. I won’t git a husband — not jest now — but I’ll get them nine weeks board if it takes a leg!”

She Tells Why Farmers Should be Happy and Displays Remarkable Forethought

5 April 1890

"Yes," said our landlady, as she buttered the toast with a strange compound she scraped from an old teacup, "yes, it's a splendid mornin', an' one that reminds me of my childhood's days."

"I have heard," said the doctor, tapping his boiled egg with his knife, "that in the beginning of the present century the weather was very delightful."

Our landlady looked puzzled, and glanced at the colonel, but the colonel's eyes sought his plate. He has been very quiet since his adventure of last week.

"The farmers," continued Mrs. Bilkins, "is in splendid spirits. They say the ground is as damp as an infant and will plow like new cheese. An' old Wiggins he perdicts a flood in the Jim river valley, an' every farmer in the land is happy, from Jena Jewell to ole Hick inbotham, for they expects a big crop — anything wrong wi' that egg, doctor?"

"Chickens," remarked the doctor, meekly, pushing aside his egg-cup, "should be broiled for breakfast — not boiled in the shell; and permit me to state that I consider it wicked to cook so young a fowl at all."

"Dear me," exclaimed our landlady, "what a fraud them grocers is, and so near Yeaster, too! Try another — do!"

But the doctor took a mature doughnut instead, one that he was well enough acquainted with to believe it entitled to vote under the universal suffrage bill.

"It's all very well for the farmers to feel good," said Tom, "but where are they going to get the seed to sow?"

"Pshaw!" replied Mrs. Bilkins, "that don't worry 'em. Ain't they got ole man Alley to look out fer 'em? Why, my cousin Jim were jest the destitutest man in Brown county, an' now he goes about grinnin' like Fred Wallace, he's so happy. He went to Alley, as is pullin' the strings down ter Bagley's elevator, an' he says, 'C'mish',' says he, 'I'll take them 75 bushel o' wheat as is cornin' to me.' An' the C'mish' had him sign a paper swearin' to everything excep' that his soul were his own, an' gin him the 75 bushel. An' then he goes to a private grain dealer, an' mortgages his stock fer another seventy-five bushel, an' then he goes to the bank and mortgages his farm fer enough money to buy a team o' horses, an' then he hired a boy fer his board to do his plowin'; an' now he's all fixed, an' is hangin' around the Senate waitin' fer a machine man ter sell him a new harvester, a threshin' machine, a hay baler an' a stump puller on time an' take his notes fer security. Oh, my

cousin Jim is a reglar Dakota farmer, an' don't you fergit it!"

"He is a Jim dandy," said the doctor, gravely.

"But what will he do when his notes come due?" asked Tom.

"Do? why give 'em all the wheat he's got an' put a new mortgage on his stock fer the balance an' a new mortgage on his farm fer enough to see him through the winter. What do s'pose he'll do?"

"And how long can he keep this up?"

"Well, he's been a farmer here fer seven year, an' he's better off today than he ever were. The fust year he got in debt he worried so his wife hed to lock up the razor an' the 'rough on agents, but now he lets the agents an' the banks worry, an' he lives happy an' contented."

"The banks," remarked the doctor, "own half the farms in the State."

"Mebbe they do," replied Mrs. Bilkins, "but they can't work 'em, an' so they let the farmers raise the crops for 'em. It ain't the farmers as is worryin' about the crops, it's them as holds the mortgages. But termorrer's Yeaster, ye know, an' I'd like to know as how you gentlemen'd like yer eggs cooked."

"I," said Tom, "will have a few boiled, a few fried, and a few roasted on the coals."

"An omelet," said the colonel, "will do for me."

"If they are fresh," the doctor replied, remembering his late encounter, "I'll have mine' scrambled, dropped on toast, and frizzled."

"Oh, they're fresh," declared our landlady.

But when they had gone down town she repaired to the attic and drew out an old box apparently filled with salt, but from which she fished enough soiled looking eggs to fill her apron.

"Some of'em ratdes a mite," she said, holding one to her ear, "but I guess they'll do. Them boarders thinks as they can bust this establishment jest because it's Yeaster, but I remembered Yeaster day last Summer, when eggs was six cents a dozen, an' there won't be any bust on my plate — not if I knows it!"

She Aspires to Rival Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Concocts Another Scheme

12 April 1890

"Yes," said our landlady, "times has been pretty lively this week, an' all because o' this political business. But it's all turned out pretty well."

"How's that?" asked the doctor, as he scraped the lard off his toast and carefully buttered it.

"Why, you see the witty man is feelin' kind o' moody, and the man as was wilder than he was is tamed down a bit, an' the moody man is a feelin' quite witty an' comfortable, so you see it's all turned out for the best."

"You seem to have sifted the matter pretty thoroughly," said Tom.

"Not I," replied the landlady, after extracting her false teeth, and wiping them on her apron, "I have too much to do siftin' my ashes an' flour to tackle anything else, but at politics I won't take a back seat for anybody. Them boobies that want to run things themselves says as a woman ain't got no head for politics, but I know different. Now I've jest writ a political dockyment that I think will most paralize that air People's Ticket o' theirs, an' I'd like to have you gentlemen read it an' see if it would'nt win more votes than Cholly Howard will for alderman."

"Why, it's poetry," exclaimed the doctor. Our landlady blushed, and the doctor passed it over to the colonel.

"Poetry," said the latter, "was never my forte. Here Tom, read it."

The landlady tittered and became so confused that she put salt into the colonel's second cup of coffee instead of sugar. "Listen," said Tom, and read as follows:

Hurrah, hurrah! the time is nigh
When every honest voter
Can lift his bugle voice on high
An' praise artesian water!

The saloonists they has got to go —
The boodlers too is beaten.
They're punkins that has rotted so
They ain't fit ter be eaten!

Poor Major How can advertise
"A closin' out sale" on the square.
He'll go to England,

and surprise His rich relations there.

We won't be taxed more than we're worth
To pay for water mains
That's buried in the frozen earth
And irrigate our lanes.

On Tuesday how the Dems. will holler
When their defeat they learns,
An' Moody's took 'em by the collar
An' gently kicked their Stearns!

"Very good, very good!" cried the doctor, "I didn't think it was in you, Mrs. Bilkins."

"Oh, it were," said our landlady modestly. "It came out kinder by jerks, but it's out, an' I expect it'll have its influence on the 'lection."

"It can't fail to," said the colonel, gravely, "and I'm glad to find you are a good republican."

"Oh, as for that," replied Mrs. Bilkins, "I'm like Clarence Becker, an' looks to see which side my bread is buttered on. An' as I ain't no fool, it's buttered pretty thick for Bob Moody, an' that's a fact. — But what's the matter, colonel?"

"I don't know," replied the veteran, in a voice whose calmness contradicted the uneasy look upon his face, "I simply reached out my leg under the table, and I'm afraid — I've put my foot in something."

Mrs. Bilkins looked startled.

"Dear me!" she said, "what can it be?"

The colonel slowly swung around in his chair and lifted his right leg above the level of the table. At its extremity was a lady's bandbox, and the colonel's foot was completely hidden in its interior.

Our landlady gave one look and a scream and decided to faint — but she changed her mind instantly, and seizing her precious band-box she jerked it from the colonel's boot and burst into a flood of tears.

Now nothing breaks the colonel up so much as a woman's tears, but experience is a dear teacher, and he dared not comfort her. He simply thrust his hands deeply into his trousers pockets and whistled.

The doctor was more gallant; he removed the cover of the wrecked band-box and withdrew the remains of Mrs. Bilkins' last pride and glory — her Easter bonnet!

"I declare!" said Tom sympathetically, "it's too awfully bad."

“But how did it come there?” asked the doctor.

“What is it?” demanded the colonel, beginning to be frightened.

“What is it, you brute?” sobbed Mrs. Bilkins, in terrible anger, “why it’s my Spring bonnet, as I bought of Miss McDonald only the Saturday ‘afore Yeaster, an’ everybody said as it were the prettiest hat in the whole town, yes, an’ the cheapest, too, an’ I put jest two week’s board inter it an’ now the colonel’s put his foot inter it an’ it’s busted wuss nor the Peoples’ ticket!” and she sobbed again, and wiped her eyes on the doctor’s napkin. And the colonel heaved a deep sea sigh and drew two shining gold pieces from his pocket and laid them on the table.

Silently the boarders withdrew and left our landlady alone with her sorrow.

But when they were gone she ceased crying and pocketed the gold pieces with a grim smile.

“The Kernel, he’ll make more’n that on ‘lection day,” she said, “an’ it’s only right to make him divide. But lor’ bless the fool! the bonnet ain’t hurt much. Miss McDonald said as it would stand no end o’ bangin’, an’ after I’ve had the feather dressed an’ the ribbons pressed a-bit it’ll look as good as new. Of course when I put it there I hoped the doctor’d be the one to step in it, ‘cause he’s so soft-hearted. But the scheme turned out pretty well as it was. A woman,” she continued, as she gathered up the bits of butter from the various plates and smoothed it all in shape again in the butter dish, “a woman has no business to keep boarders unless she understands human nature, — an’ I jest flatter myself as Mrs. Bilkins does!”

She Lectures the Boarders for Unseemly Conduct and Feeds Them a Green Apple Pie

19 April 1890

"Well, yes," said our landlady, "we're gettin' settled down to work agin. But I never did see such highfalutin' doin's as you boarders indulged in last Tuesday night. Now that you're sober minded agin, I might as well tell the truth."

"I'm sure, Mrs. Bilkins," exclaimed the doctor, "that I behaved myself with the utmost propriety. I was quiet as a mouse."

"Quieter," said our landlady, with sarcastic emphasis. "When Cholly Wright brought you home in a hack at midnight, with your feet stickin' out of one winder an' a new broom outer the other, you couldn't wiggle. It wasn't till the next mornin' as you told me about the glorious victory, an' how Frank Brown hired you to celebrate for him because Frank Hagerty wouldn't let him celebrate for hisself; an' how you shook han's with Cholly Howard so many times that the las' thing you remembered was Cholly leanin' agin' a telegraph pole and bobbin' his arm up and down like it was a pump handle — although he was the only pusson within two blocks; an' how you had the foresight to buy me a new broom to pay me for pullin' off your boots an' puttin' of you to bed."

"Very true," assented the docter, boldly; but he blushed furiously, and ate a piece of Mrs. Bilkins' com-starch cake without a grimace.

"Bosh!" exclaimed our landlady: "I ain't no fool, doctor. But I don't complain, because I raked in three new brooms that night. You see while I were a puttin' you to bed I heard a strange noise, so I goes inter the Kernel's room and finds a new broom tucked up in the Kernel's bed. I didn't know what to make of it then, but when I went down into the kitchen I found the Kernel leanin' up behind the kitchen door. 'Who are you?' says I. 'Hush,' says he, 'I'm the new broom, but don't make a noise or else you'll wake the gallant Kernel, as is upstairs abed an' fast asleep!' So I had ter get him to bed. An' just as I were a comin' down stairs I heard a sorter scratchin' on the front door. An' so I opened it and Tom fell inter the hall an' another new broom hit me right over the nose."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Bilkins," said Tom, "but you must excuse me. It only happens once in a lifetime."

"Very true," replied our landlady, "an' I don't bare no grudge, for it's the fust time I ever knew one o' you to touch the firewater, but it strikes me that it were a queer way to celebrate the 'lection of a law and order administration."

“Oh, that’s all right,” said Tom, “Charlie Howard — ”

“I don’t care nothin”bout Cholly Howard,” interrupted the landlady, severely, “an’ if Bob Moody’s ever elected agin I’ll make you all sign the temperance pledge before ‘lection or else I’ll close this here boardin’ house ‘til further notis. You ain’t eatin’, Kernel — try them turnips.”

“No thank you,” said the colonel, “I’m too happy to eat.”

“Humph!” rejoined Mrs. Bilkins, “I don’t see as my grocery bills is any less since ‘lection. But I know some folks as ain’t happy, although when I met the Majah today he were wearin’ a sickly smile on his face an’ a grease spot on his vest. ‘Grin an’ barrett, Majah,’ says I. ‘I’m a doin’ it,’ says he. An’ he toddled away like an old man with the rheumatiz. I was almost sorry for him, for some folks do say as he’s in his second childhood. Green apple pie, doctor?”

“If you please.”

“Just see how the times has improved under republican rule. Why, Thompson & Kearney has reduced their tea to twenty cents a pound, there’s eleven buildin’s goin’ to be built right away; the *News* has come out for republican principles, and it’s reported as Narregang set up the cigars to a man as he had just sold a dime’s worth of ipecac to for forty cents. The Fair man is sellin’ three postage stamps fer five cents, the saloons is bein’ turned into shoe-shops, an’ Taubman has took two drinks o’ water. Anything wrong with that pie, doctor?”

“Nothing especial,” he replied, meekly, “except that perhaps the under crust is a little burned, and the upper one a little too raw, and you forgot to take the string out of the dried apples you stuffed it with. But it don’t matter.”

“Some boarders,” soliloquized our landlady a half hour later, as she cleared away the dishes, “is too particular for anything. But when women has their rights the men can keep the boardin’ houses, an’ we’ll see then who is the biggest kickers. But it don’t matter, as the doctor says, for after all, Moody is elected, an’ I b’lieve my poetry had suthin’ to do with electin’ of him!”

Her Experiences in Attempting to Photograph a Baby, and the Severe Mental Strain that Ensued

26 April 1890

"Tell you what, gen'lmen," said our landlady, as she leaned over to turn the doctor's coffee and dropped a tea-leaf off her front hair into the cup, "I'm just about tuckered out, an' there ain't no more starch in my back-bone than there air in a dish rag."

"Why, when I saw you down town this morning," said Taub, fishing a tack out of the prunes, "I thought you looked remarkably fresh."

"So I might, this mornin'," acknowledged our landlady, sadly, "but that ain't now. You see my niece 'Raldy come to town this mornin' an' brought her baby, because she said the weather were so croptious that she wanted his pictur' took. So she helped me git the breakfast dishes out of the way, an' then we dressed the baby in his best duds an' took him down to the pictur'-taker to be tooked."

"I sympathize with the child," remarked the doctor, sadly, as he eyed the dark lumps in the mashed potatoes.

"Well, you won't," snapped our landlady, "when you've heerd all my story. Well, we got him to the gallery, an' washed his face, an' smoothed his gownd, an' brushed his hair — which is only a little red fizz — an' the fust thing we knew he begun to cry. An' jest then the pictur'-taker he yells 'fetch him along,' an' we fetched him along a bawlin' like a hired girl for the water-man when he's a half a mile away.

"'Now, then,' says the pictur'-taker, 'stop his yellin'.'

"'That's werry easy to say,' says I, kind o' riled by all the noise, 'but it ain't so easy ter be did!' Nor was it. A little thing will set a baby a cryin' but a yoke o' oxen won't stop him if he wants ter howl it out. We shooed him, an' cuddled him, an' tossed him in our arms, but he would yell. We couldn't stop him short o' chokin' the brat, an' it weren't wuth while ter do that. An'jest then Taub he comes in ter have his pictur' took 'afore he begins ter git thin on artesian water, an' he says, 'I'll quiet the baby,' says he. So he took him on his knee an' says 'there, there!' to him about fifty times, an' the more he says 'there' the more the little cuss yelled. An' Taub he said he had a engagement an' he went away. An' then Hiram Pratt he comed in wi' a draft, an' the pictur'-taker hed business on a suddent in another room an' Hiram he says 'I know what'll stop his yellin',' says he, so he got down before him an' sung: 'A Grasshopper sat on a sweet pertater bush!'

"An' the kid he just whooped her up fer glory an' Hi forgot the draft an' dropped out.

“An’ then Cholly Howard he came in ter be took fer a picter to hang in the council chamber, an’ he says ‘why don’t you stop that brat?’

“‘Stop him yourself,’ says I, fer I were nearly crazy with the racket. So Cholly he whistled ter him, an’ sing’d ter him, an’ chucked him under the chin, an’ patted him on the back, but he screeched so much louder that I most hoped he’d bust a blood-vessel an’ quit it. An’ finally Cholly he wiped the sweat off his face an’ says, ‘If that were my brat I’d hoss-whip him!’ an”Raldy she gets mad at that an’ shied a nussin’-botde at his head an’ he went away cussin’.

“By that time my nerves was so unstrung I wanted ter yell myself, but there weren’t no chance ter be heard while that six-months old baby held the fort.

“Jest then Johnny Waterman comed in with a rose in his butting-hole an’ a smile on his face, an’ he sat down, an’ blushed, an’ got up agin, an’ smiled an’ says to me ‘what’s wrong?’

“‘That!’ says I, pointin’ to the baby that was a whoopin’ of ‘er up wi’ his eyes shut an’ his mouth wide open.

“An’ Waterman he looked at him a minnit, an’ then went up an’ pulled a pin out from under his arm (that were a stickin’ in the poor baby all the time) an’ the infant he quit his racket an’ looked up an’ smiled!

“‘How did it come there?’ says I.

“‘I put it there to hold back his dress,’ says ‘Raldy,’ but oh, sir, I bless ye a thousan’ times! You must have lots o’ babies yourself for you know jest what ter do!’ An’ the pore feller blushed like a girl, an’ I had ter tell her he weren’t even married — not yet.

“But the whole thing broke me up so I had ter take a dose o’ the baby’s soothin’ syrup to quiet me.”

“Very sad,” remarked the colonel, extracting a morsel of egg shell from his custard pie; and the other boarders looked sympathetic.

“But did you get his picture taken at last?” asked Tom.

“Oh, yes,” replied Mrs. Bilkins, “an’ he looks jest like a cherub, an’ as if he’d never knowd what a pin were, nor ever even learnt how to cry. But the next time I goes with anyone to have a baby’s picter tooked, you can put me down fer a born fool, an’ no mistake!”

She Discourses on Many Topics and tells how Alley deals out the Corn

3 May 1890

"There ain't no use a talkin'," said our landlady, as she faced the boarders and threw out her arms so suddenly that two of her dress buttons popped off with pistolic reports — one going into the soup and the other into the doctor's left eye — "there ain't no use o' talkin' about hard times, for the times ain't hard a bit! Whenever you see a dancin' bear in the streets an' a dog show a paradin' around you can know as times is more flush nor otherwise!"

"But people feel rather poor, nothwithstanding," hazarded the doctor, meekly, as he placed a damp handkerchief over his eye to prevent its swelling.

"They don't neither!" retorted Mrs. Bilkins, fiercely. "People as feel poor don't pay a old codger eighteen hundred dollars a year to sup'intend their schools, as could'ent earn eighteen dollars ahoein' pertaters! Poor people ain't so extravagant as all that!"

"I'm surprised, Mrs. Bilkins," observed the colonel, severely, "to hear you speak in so rabid a manner. You shock me extremely."

"Well, p'raps I were a little hard," responded Mrs. Bilkins, more calmly, "but it just makes me mad. Real estate can't be bought for love or money in Aberdeen, an' our business men has to go to Huron to work up a boom. That shows Aberdeen ain't in the soup — if my butting is!"

"But the farmers at least are poor," said Tom, reflectively.

"Ah, the farmers!" she retorted, "p'raps they do feel ruther light in the pocket. But the farmers has kept us all goin' so fur, an' as soon as they gets another crop they'll keep us goin' agin. The only thing that bothers 'em now is to get feed. Now my cousin Jake he went down to ole man Alley's yesterday to git some o' that free com that he heerd the spring robins brought back with 'em. An' ole Alley he says, 'I don't know whether you can git any com or not;' says he, 'we give the corn to them that's done their full duty in trying to farm Dakota dust.'

"'Well,' says Jake, 'that's me.'

"'Got any hosses?' says Alley.

"'Six,' says Jake.

"'Got any feed?' says Alley.

"'No,' says Jake, 'I put green goggles on my hosses an' feed 'em shavin's an' they think it's grass, but they ain't gittin' fat on it.'

'What' come o' yer feed?' says Alley.

“‘All gone, an’ my money was spent ‘afore I got round to buyin’ any more.’” ‘How much wheat did you raise?’ says Alley, takin’ a apple out o’ his pocket an’ eatin’ of it.

“‘Two thousan’ bushels,’ says Jake.

“‘Any flax?’

“‘Flax didn’t do well,’ says Jake, ‘only got 350 bushel.’

“‘Well,’ says Alley, ‘you can’t have no corn nohow. A man what raises $1,400 wuth o’ wheat an’ $400.00 wuth o’ flax can buy his own feed.’

“‘No he can’t,’ says Jake, ‘when there’s so many dependin’ on him.’

“‘Got any children?’ says Alley, puttin’ the core in his pocket to give to the poor children.

“‘No,’ says Jake. Then Alley gits mad.

“‘Young feller,’ says he, ‘you can’t work me.’

“‘I ain’t tryin’ to,’ says Jake.

“‘Who’s a dependin’ on you?’

“‘Well, there’s them Hail Insurance agints, an’ the Machine men, an’ the Elevaitors, an’ the Loan agints, an’ the Prohibition speakers an’ singers an’ the preachers, an’ lots more. What’ll they do if I don’t git a crop this spring?’

“‘Oh, pshaw!’ says Alley, takin’ a chew o’ gum, ‘what’s them fellers got to do with your crop?’

“‘Not much raisin’ it,’ said Jake, ‘but a heap to do wi’ the spendin’ o’ the harvest money. Guess you don’t know much about Dakota farmin’,’ says he, ‘but I tell you what, ole man, when you’ve paid your hail insurance notes — losses or no losses — an’ bought a few supplies, an’ paid Narre four per cent on what you’ve borrowed, — it eats a big hole in the harvest, an’ then a feller comes along an’ says the country’s goin’ to the devil unless Ralph Brown’s circus is kep’ goin’ and so I subscribes to the circus tent an’ temperance songs an’ that makes another hole.

“‘Then Miller has to have McCormick’s note paid to keep his boss outer the poor house, an’ Hoit and Mack an’ the rest o’ the gang say the wheat’s full o’ dirt and hes got to be docked, an’ there goes more holes. Last year I divided up my crop amongst ‘em an’ was glad to get away alive — an’ feelin’ that anyhow I’d done my share to’ards supportin’” Mollie an’ the baby” an’ the rest o”em. Say — be I a goin’ to git that corn?’

“‘Why, yes,’ says ole Alley, at last, ‘I guess as your entitled to it. But be very careful o’ them twenty bushels o’ corn,’ says he, ‘for it cost Bach, an’ Hoit an’ Drake a heap o’ trouble to git, an’ I don’t know but what Mellette wishes it never had been growed.’ So after all that chin music Jake gits jest six dollars wuth o’ feed.

“I hain’t sent no spring poetry to the PIONEER, but when I think o’ the

poor farmers I feel like sayin’

All flesh is grass,
All grass is hay!
We are here tomorrow
An’ gone today!”

She Gives Away the Initiation Ceremonies of the United Workmen and has a Fruitless Search for the Chief of Police

10 May 1890

"There's one thing certain, genl'men," remarked our landlady, as she blew down the spout of the coffee-pot to clear away the grounds, "if you can't manage to get in a little earlier nights this 'ere boardin' house'll git a bad name, an' business will be ruined! Now where was you, Tom?"

"I!" exclaimed that gentleman, taken by surprise and blushing violently, "I was calling on Miss — Miss — on a lady, in fact."

"Then she didn't have a paternal sire," continued Mrs. Bilkins, severely, "or he'd a sent you home 'afore midnight. Now colonel — "

"My dear madam," he interrupted, "I was studying art; — drawing, in fact -"

"Humph!" exclaimed our landlady, "them sort o' artists make a good many chips. I'm onto you all right, colonel, an' I do hope you'll win enough to pay up last month's board."

The colonel was squelched.

"For my part," began the doctor, but Mrs. Bilkins interrupted him contemptuously, "Oh, you're always out wi' a patient! I know you, too! The worst men in the world to keep an eye on is the doctors, for you never know where to find 'em. But I'm glad o' one thing, an' that is none o' you was in that horrible crowd as joined the United States Workmen last night."

"The what?" asked the colonel.

"The United States Workmen, I said! Oh, I know all about it. They had twenty fellers to be initiated last night, an' everyone o"em got more nor he bargained for, I guess. Why the way they abused that poor Fletch is enough to break up the whole order, an' is a disgrace to a civilized community!"

"Did he ride the goat?" asked the colonel with suspicious interest. "Naw! he didn't ride no goat! You can't foolish me, Kernel, cause I ain't no fool. Miss Smithereses hired gal were there when they brought poor Fletch home, an' in his wild wanderin's he let the whole secret out."

"What did they do to him?"

"Why they put a black-cap over his head an' nearly hung him, an' then they made him walk a barb-wire fence in his stockin' feet, an' then they tossed him up in a blanket an' put him head fust into a water barrel!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Tom, in horror, "It's a wonder it didn't kill him."

"So it were. But that wasn't the wust of it. They asked him what he'd like

to buy fer the boys, an' Fletch, when he could get his breath, said 'nothin'!' So they got out a big wheel like the wheel o' a water-mill an' it had spikes all over it. An' they took poor Fletchie an' tied him onter the wheel like he were Mazeppy, an' then the Chief Bulldozer says sweetly" 'What'll you buy, Fletch?'

"'Nuthin',' says the miserable wictim.

"An' then they took hold o' the crank an' turned the wheel over once, an' the spikes hurt like blazes, an' when the Chief asked him agin 'what'll you buy?' Fletch he give in an' whispered "'Pop!'

"'Pop's no go here,' says the torturer, 'turn him over agin!'

"By that time the wictim's eye-balls was layin' over his specks an' he offered to buy ice cream.

"'Too cool,' says the torturer, an' they turned him over agin.

"Then Fletch says that if oysters and champagne were any objects he would be pleased to buy 'em for the crowd, an' so they took him off the wheel, all bloody an' wounded, an' sent him home in a hack."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed the doctor, but he winked at the colonel nevertheless. "An' Fletch's friends are wild for vengeance," continued Mrs. Bilkins, earnestly, "an' the fust thing they started to do was to find the chief o' police an' have the whole gang arrested. But they couldn't find him anywheres, an' so I told 'em I'd go out and find him myself. So I meets one o' our leadin' politicians, an' I says" 'Who's the new chief o' perlice?'

"'Dunno,' says he, 'it's a man I never heerd of.'

"'Go-long!' says I.

"'Go-long yerself,' says he, 'an' find him if ye can.'

"'I will!' says I, but I didn't know what a job I had on my hands.

"One feller he said as he heard it were Harvey Jewett, but I knew better. I went into all the stores, but some had fergot his name and some had never heard it, an' some said as it were a subjec' they didn't care to speak on. An' there lay poor Fletch all the while, sufferin' an' unavenged!

"Jest then I meets Jack Cavanaugh, an' he says the Chief was in to see him a minit before to ask what the handcuffs was used for. So I goes out an' meets another feller who said the chief was lookin' for a number two caliber revolver to carry in his hip pocket, an' so I gave up in despair an' went to Mayor Moody.

"'What do you want?' says he.

"'The chief o' perlice,' says I.

"'Hain't the people got through wantin' the chief o' perlice, yet?' says he." 'I hain't,'says I.

"'Go to the knights o' labor,' says he, 'I'm busy,' an' he turned away an'

went on figgerin' up the cost o' a campaign.

"Someone told me that there were three or four knights o' labor in the town, but they was hard to find, so I give up thejob an' went home, an' if poor Fletchie is ever goin' to get avenged on some one someone else'll have to find the chief o' perlice."

She Investigates the Original Package Deal With Doubtful Results

17 May 1890

"I'd like to know," declared our landlady, as she set the beefsteak on the table and sharpened the carving knife on a scythe-stone, "which o' you boarders hes been tryin' to git this establishment in trouble?"

The boarders cast a unanimous look of astonishment and righteous indignation at Mrs. Bilkins, and said nothing.

"'Tain't no use, genl'men," she continued, shaking her head 'til her hair settled carelessly over her left ear, "I've got the matter in black an' white, an' I'll have it out o' yer if it comes as hard as a wisdom tooth in the forceps o' a green dentist. Listen to this," and she unfolded a piece of paper majestically while the boarders glanced uneasily at one another, and Tom got white and the Colonel red, and the Doctor salmon-color. Mrs. Bilkins read out, in her best equal-rights voice, the following:

"'My dearest sister,' — that's the way he allus calls us — 'I regret to state as it hes comed to my knowledge that one o' your boarders hes been receivin' of a 'riginal packidge. The laws o' this here State must be upheld at any sacrifice, an' I advise you to inwestigate the matter to oncet. — Elder Burdock.'"

For a moment there was silence.

"Why do you call him that?" demanded the Doctor, feebly.

"Elder? Oh, I s'pose because he's older'n you'd think he was to hear him talk. Now, then, what have you got to say for yourselves?"

"Nothing!" protested the boarders, with one voice.

"To tell you the truth," continued our landlady, in a slightly mollified voice, "I didn't know when I got this 'ere dockyment what a' riginal package was. But where ignorance is bliss it's better to find out, an' so I goes on a inwestigatin' tower. The first man I see was Georgejinkens. He's my lawyer, because he never sends up a bill. 'Georgie,' says I, kinder smilin', 'what's a 'riginal packidge?'

"'Ma'am,' says he, throwin' aside a paper where he was figerin' on his school tax with a eighteen hundred dollar Supt. to pay, 'ma'am, when I were a boy, it were a prize packidge, what cost a nickle 'afore you could bust it an' take a brass ring outen its insides, with pink candy stuck all over it. No thanks — the infermashun is free!'

"But it's jest as well to be sure, so I went to my seconk best lawyer — that's Taub.

"'What's a 'riginal packidge?' says I.

“‘A’ riginal packidge,’ says he, ‘is a necessity in South Dakota.’ That wam’t no answer at all, but knowin’ he charged high fer sich legal opinions, I went over to Frank Brown’s and asked him.

“‘A’ riginal packidge,’ says the great man, lookin’ me square in the eye, ‘is a invention of the devil!’

“That unsettled me, so I tackled Ira Barnes. He was eatin’ pop-com outen a bag an’ he says,” ‘I’m kinder outer politics, Mrs. Bilkins,’ says he, ‘an’ don’t like to be tackled on sich subjec’s. But I’ll give ye a parable. This here bag were a ‘riginal packidge a minit ago, but now,’ says he, as he blew it up and busted it, ‘it’s a wuss inwestment than city warrants at par.’

“August Witte kinder smiled when I put the question to him.

“‘Mrs. Bilkins,’ says he, ‘you yourself are the most’ riginal packidge what I knows of!’

“That made me mad, an’ I give him a cast-iron look of virtuous indignation an’ lit out.

“As I walked down the street musin’ on the fact that I seemed to know as much as anybody else did, the Rev. McBride come along an’ overtook me.

“‘Parson,’ says I, brightenin’ up, ‘what’s a ‘riginal packidge, anyhow?’

“He looked up an’ down the street, an’ then drew me inter a doorway an’ pulled a queer little wooden case from his pocket.

“‘Mrs. Bilkins,’ says he, wi’ tears in his voice — at least it seemed as if his mouth was waterin’ — ‘some idjut has insulted me by sendin’ me this little ‘riginal packidge by mail! — it don’t hold but two ounces — but o’course that’s too much for a man as ain’t thirsty. But if that’s the size o’ the ‘riginal packidge deal, you can put me on the side o’ prohibition.’

“‘Is it licker?’ says I, reachin’ out my hand in holy horror.

“‘Don’t touch it,’ says he, puttin’ of it in his pocket, an’ stuffin’ a handkercher over it; ‘yes, it’s licker, an’ only fit for folks as ain’t well. I’m goin’ to keep it fer Doc. Diefendorf when he gets under the weather. If you put quinine in it, it ain’t so very bad.’

“So I comed home to dinner, an’ if it’s true as any o’ you boarders hes got a ‘riginal packidge in yer possession, I want ter know it.”

“Not I,” said the Colonel, stoutly.

“Nor I.”

“Nor I,” repeated the others.

“Well, I’m glad to hear it,” replied the landlady, looking wistfully out of the window, “for I should have considered it my duty to confisticate ‘em an’ keep ‘em for poor Doc. Diefendorf. — But I see a copy o’ the Reprint blowin’ about in my back yard, an’ I must go an’ take it away, for I see by the papers that Street Comiss’ner Lewis has ordered the citizens to remove

all rubbish from their premises!”

She Raises the Price of Board, but Lowers it Again Through Stern Necessity

24 May 1890

"Board is riz," said our landlady, decisively, as she slammed the plate of muffins on the table with such force that the colonel's hand made a nervous dive toward his hip pocket before he recovered himself.

"It seems to me," remarked the doctor, in a mild tone, "that it has fallen."

"May I ask," demanded Tom, forgetting in his agitation to butter his gingerbread, "may I ask why you announce that board has risen?"

"For oblivious reasons," returned Mrs. Bilkins, with dignity. "Ye see this rain has altered the complecshun o' affairs in Dakota, an' sot trade on its proper level. I stayed in the house all day Tuesday, while the rain poured down, an' got as grumpy as a councilman who thinks o' suthin' to say jest after the motion has passed; an' so when the sun come out Wednesday I thought I'd take a trip down town an' see how folks felt. Well, the fust man I see, I says" 'Fine rain we had.'

"'Yaw,' says he, 'but not near enough.'

"'P'raps that's so,' thinks I to myself, an' jest then I met another feller.

"'Elegant rain we had,' says I.

"'Good enough,' says he, 'what there were of it. Only wet half a inch down!'" 'No!' says I.

"'Yes!' says he.

"Well, I felt a little staggered. Jest then I met a friend o' mine as is a farmer." 'How's crops?' says I.

"'Pritty fair,' says he, 'if it were'nt so dry This drouth is killin' us!'

"'But it rained all day yesterday, like blazes,' says I, gittin' a little riled.

"'Yes, so it did,' says he, 'but it'll take a week o' sich rains to start the crop any.'

"'Look here,' says I, 'I may look like a fool, but looks is deceivin'. So you jest tell me what you're a drivin' at, or else don't never come to me for no more cold vittles.'

"'Well,' says he, lookin' around to see as nobody heerd, 'the facts is just these. Ye see, we've been growlin' about the dry so long that this here rain were a kind of shock to us, an' did'nt leave us nothin' to growl about. An' if we was fools enough to yell hurray! — the ground is wet! — the crops is growin'! — the country's saved! — an' all that rubbish, the people as we've been owin' so long would be arter us wi' sharp sticks to pay up. The only salvation fer a man as is in debt is to yell" hard times" no matter what happens. They say as we're croakers, but as long as we can keep 'em skeert,

the better it'll be fer us. See?' "Well, as I ain't blind, I told him I did, an' I walked on coagulating on the frailties o' human natur'. An' when I met any one I'd say" 'Nice rain, eh?'

"An' if he said it din'nt amount to much, or anything of that kind, I knew as he were in debt, an' respected his lilachelishness.

"But when I went into the stores to trade there was a different story to hear." 'Beautiful rain!' says the groceryman, rubbin' his hands. 'Want some o' them nice taters? Only sixty cents a bushel.'

"'But they was fifty cents Monday,' says I.

"'But it's rained,' says he, 'an' if I only had a heart like a grindstone I'd charge a dollar. But my greatest failin' is bein' soft-hearted!'

"I thanked him fer bein' so easy an' went inter a dry-goods store to buy a new apron.

"'Some o' that six cent caliker,' says I.

"'Certainly,' says he, 'but it's eight cents now.'

"'Why?' says I.

"'Cause it's rained. Now some men,' says he, 'as has cast-iron bowels o' compashun, would a charged ten, but I ain't built that way.'

"I offered him six cents and he took me up.

"It were just so in the shoe store. They wanted a dollar fer a pair o' rubbers, but o' course they took a quarter when I got mad. This gittin' mad I find saves me lots o' money.

"Well, the price o' beef is goin' up too, an' now there's a prospect fer crops it's safe to bet as flour'll be on the rise — 'specially when it's in the sponge — an' so I've jest made up my mind to raise the price o' board in this here tavern a dollar a week all around, an' you can pay it er skip — jest as you like!" And Mrs. Bilkins went into the kitchen and slammed the door.

The three boarders eyed each other aghast.

Then the doctor jumped up and followed our landlady into the kitchen. "Mrs. Bilkins," he began, in a choked voice, "I feel that I can't part with you, and yet I'm barely able to pay the old price. It's all right to raise on the others, but I'm sure you'll let me stay at the old figure. Here's a week in advance."

"All right, doc," replied our landlady, tying the money into a corner of her apron, "you can stay, but the others'll have to put up."

Now the doctor had scarcely gone when Tom stuck his head in, and seeing her alone, advanced confidendy to her side.

"My dear Mrs. Bilkins," said he, "you see I am fixed rather differently than the others, and can't afford to pay more. But here is last week's board and a dollar on this week's. Of course if I could afford to pay as much as they

can, I'd do it with pleasure, but I can't. Is it all right?"

"It's all right," responded our landlady, tying the money into another corner of her apron, with a sigh, "but don't say anything to the rest."

"Of course not."

A half hour later Mrs. Bilkins found the colonel finishing his cigar on the front stoop.

"I am very sorry to say," he remarked, in a voice shaken with emotion, "that I shall have to leave you. My finances won't permit any high-priced luxuries such as a rise in board. I did think that you and I were too old friends to be parted by a dollar a week, but it seems I was mistaken. By the way, here's a couple of dollars on my account."

"Kernel," said Mrs. Bilkins with a huskiness in her voice, "I'm sorry as I hurt yer feelin's. If I'd a thunk you'd a took it this way I wouldn't have said nothin'. But ye see a woman as talks as much as I do can't help offendin' somebody. Like Marthy's Mary Ann, I never opens my mouth but what I puts my foot in it. But I mean well, so nobody must mind what I say! You just stay along at the old price, but don't let the others know as I've relented."

"I won't," said the colonel, brightening, "but stay — I'd forgotten that I shall need a little change this afternoon. Could you lend me a dollar?"

"Cert'nly," replied our landlady, briskly, as she handed over the shiner, and then she watched his stately figure go down the street and whispered "That 'air dodge about a rise worked fust rate. It ain't no use keepin' boarders unless you understan' how to make 'em shell out. Of course I didn't git much outer the colonel, but I've got 'em all skeert, an' they'll be more prompt in the future. That rain were good fer the crops, but it were'nt so bad fer landladies, neither!"

She Manufactures Hash and Gives the Boarders a few Pointers on the Aberdeen Guards

31 May 1890

"You men folks," said our landlady, as she returned to the chopping- bowl after scaring two strange dogs away from the water-pail, "must feel like pritty small pertaters."

"Why?" queried the colonel, who was waiting, with the others, for the advent of the matutinal meal.

"Oh," replied Mrs. Bilkins, carelessly throwing the end of a beefsteak, a piece of bologna, a bit of pork-chop, and a small chunk of fried liver into her bowl, and wielding the chopper vigorously between each word of her sentences, "them Aberdeen Guards kinder knocks the spots off'n anything you men folks kin do. Now, the time was when the Amazons was celebrated throughout the world as the fiercest lot o' sodjers to tackle there was, an' the men folks was skeert to go near 'em, an' them 'air Aberdeen Guards is built on the same promisin' lines. I tell you, nobody need be 'feered fer the country's safety while them Aberdeen gals is aroun' to see things slide like they orter."

"I didn't attend their exhibition the other night," said Tom, looking hungrily at the chopping-bowl.

"Well, yer missed a great sight. I were there, an' I tell ye what, it was inspirin' an' no mistake. When the curtain rolled up an' a sharp voice yelled 'For'd mush!' there comed a suddent silence. The little patterin' noise to be heered was the enemies o' their country shakin' in their boots, an' the gurglin' sound what broke the stillness were the hearts o' the patriots leapin' inter their throats. Well, on comed the fierce an' furious warriors, their lances glitterin' an' their gum tucked temporarily under their tongues. Not one o' them thunk anything about their back hair, not one paid any attention to the fit o' the coattails on the sodjer in front o"em! Every one was thinkin' of their country's enemies an' how they'd like to scratch their eyes out. The men stopped figgerin' on how to bulldoze the assessor and yelled till they was red in the face. The women took out their sour-drops from their mouths and screamed hurray! The old veterans looked ashamed o' theirselves and kinder sorry as they had come, an' the kids was too tuk aback to even yell 'rats!' Cap. Hauser — now I don't mean the old 'un, but the young' un, who could show her dad some tricks in sodjerin', an' don't you fergit it! — put the Guards through their paces with business-like celery. They marched by ones an' twos, an' fours an' eights, an' they would a marched by sixteens, only there wam't enough of 'em to do it. The Cap. she watched' em like a

tiger, an' when one o"em allowed their gum to roll over her tongue the ossifer would cry 'I's right!' which meant as she was correct in her bet that they couldn't all keep the tooty-frooty quiet till the parade was over. An' then they'd blush an' look at the gal on the end as though they all suspected her, till the Cap skeert 'em out o' it by yellin"Front!' ter intimate as she'd call the bell-boy in a twinklin' if they didn't let that end gal alone. I guess they hates bell-boys by the way they minded her."

"But is this Aberdeen Guard only for show?" enquired the doctor.

"Not much!" responded our landlady, as she rolled the hash into little wads between her hands and dropped them into the frying pan. "They's organized so that the standin' army can be discharged. This is gen'ally understood. One man enquired if they had any navy, thinkin' that model essablishment might be abolished too, but the cap'n shook her head an' after a minit's thought replied that they all chewed gum an' left the navy to the men folks. This organization hain't fer show — it's fer business. O' course they was peaceable enough Wen'sday night, but each one has got a spear of Gossamer steel, with a flag near the end o' it. In a fight with their country's enemies they'll just run this spear through the foe's insides, wave the flag when it comes through, and let the lifeless body slide off'n the handle. There's a automatic arrangement in the handle that cuts a notch every time a body slides olf, to show how many heart's blood has been took, and the gal as has the fewest notches in her lance handle after a battle has got to set up the ice cream fer the whole lot. Then there's a piece o' flint on the handle o' the lance, besides, and they can point their spears at the foe, an' when the flash o' their eyes runs down the handle it strikts a streak o' lightnin' from the flint an' the steel spear-point, as is guaranteed either to kill or cure a traitor to their country. The one who uses up her ammunition fust is entitled to a box o' caramels. They're all single, these Guards, and is likely to stay so till they gets married. They're all kinder pritty too. I heard that one o' them has a beard, but I didn't see nothin' but smooth faces. They're pritty spry, and walked as if the y hadn't had no kitchen work to do for a week. You can bet one thing, and that is that these gals will make their mark 'afore you hears the last of'em, even if they has to do it with their lead-pencils.

"But breakfast's ready, genl'men, so be lively. 'Tain't nothin' but hash, to be sure, but you ain't likely to git no fish bones in yer throat, an' that's one comfort!"

She Tackles Religion and Gives Her Ideas of the Sunday Enforcement Law

7 June 1890

"I see by the papers," said our landlady, as she took a speck out of the milk-pitcher with her thumb, "that the church folks is to have a conwention to obleege folks to observe the Sabbath."

"So I see," replied the colonel, turning his beefsteak over to find a vulnerable point of attack.

"Well," she continued, "I've observed the Sabbath ever since I've been in this 'ere town, an' what I've observed ain't any credit to it. I hope they'll pass a law as'll make every man go to church or to jail, that's what I hope!"

"My dear Mrs. Bilkins," retorted Tom, "this is a free country, and I'd like to see any pack of religious fanatics oblige me to attend church when I don't want to go!"

Mrs. Bilkins put on her gold-rimmed "specs" and stared long and indignantly at the audacious speaker.

"I see how it is," she remarked, at length, "you want to go down to the post- office every Sunday mornin', with the other heathen men-folks, an' open an' read your mail, an' loaf in the drugstores, an' smoke bad cigars an' talk politics! As if that couldn't be done on week days! I'm ashamed o' you, young man!"

"I don't suppose," broke in the doctor, reflectively, "that there's anything wrong in what you have mentioned. And as far as this convention is concerned, they will find it difficult to restrict the personal liberty of people who are not religiously inclined."

"Don't you fool yourself," snapped our landlady, beginning to get angry. "You fellers can buck agin' politics all you wont to, but you'll find it harder to buck agin' religion. There was a feller in our town down east as didn't want the church bells to ring on Sunday mornin' cause it waked him up outer his beauty sleep; an' so he complained agin"em as a nuisance, an' the other heathen men in the town backed him up, an' made the a'thorities pass a law as no church bells should be ringed. Well, them church people, as had been as meek and *Junei8qo* quiet as Moses so long as they could jingle the bells and try to down the noise o' the rival churches, these same folks became roarin' lions o' indignation. They went to that 'ere complainer's house an' fetched him away, an' carried him up inter the church tower, an' tied the bell-rope around his neck.

"'Now,' says they, 'what have you got to say?'

"'Jest this,' says he, 'your a set o' rabid fanatics, an' your religion ain't

skin deep.'

"'Then,' says they, 'as we can't ring the church bells, we'll ring your neck. Pull him up, sexton!'

"'Hoi' up,' yells the wictim, 'I ain't werry pertic'lar about them bells. You can ring 'em for all I care. It's better to be kep' awake Sunday mornin' than be killed entirely.'

"So they let him off, an' the church bells in that town hes been ringin' ever sence."

"But these people in South Dakota are not content to ring their bells," said the colonel, "they want to oblige us to attend church whether we want to or not."

"Well, why shouldn't they?" she replied, "it don't hurt none to go to church, an' it's good discipline. It makes us appreciate our blessin's a good deal harder. A pusson as never goes to church can't realize the fun there is in stayin' away, an' somebody's got to support these ministers what is gittin' thicker an' thicker every day, or else they'll be obleeged to work fer a livin', an' religion will be at a standstill. An' that ain't all this conwention orter do. They orter obleege the sexton ter search every woman's pocket fer gum an' candy, and to arrest every man what puts buttons in the conterbushun box. Them is needed reforms. I tell you, people has lost all respect fer religion, now'days, an' if they won't be pius o' their own accord, it must be druv inter 'em by the iron hammer o' the Law. A close Sunday observance would mean to you boarders a clean shirt ev'ry Sabbath mornin', a sermon as 'ud teach you that life is not an empty dream, but is full o' ups an' downs — more downs nor ups — cold pork an' beans fer dinner, Sunday-school, an' prayer meetin' in the arternoon, more serious thoughts an' achin' backs in the evenin', an' a good night's rest. No politics, no cigars, no turkey dinner, no flirtin' or visitin' with pritty gals, no rest. An' then, if you didn't feel on Monday mornin' that this 'ere is a glorious existence six days in the week, the law could be repealed; but I expect, arter you'd tried it awhile, you'd think as Shakespeare did, or else it were Ella Wheeler Wilcox or Ed. Lowe or Billy Carleton — I don't know which an' I don't care — but this is what he thunk, an' I agree wi' him —

'To appreciate heaven well
It's well fer a man ter hev
Jest fifteen minits o' hell.'"

She Prepares a Treat for the Boarders Which Leads to a Strange Comedy of Errors

21 June 1890

"Yes," said our landlady, as she picked a fly out of the cream jug and fed it to the cat, "this is a great country an' no mistake. There ain't nothin' on earth as we don't have."

"Except beer," quoth the colonel, sotto voce.

"Yes, an' religion!" replied Mrs. Bilkins, catching the remark, "but most things you can count on findin' right here in Dakota. For instance, what do you think is on that dish?"

"I should judge," replied the doctor, as he eyed the dish critically, "that they were fried door-knobs."

"No," said Tom, "they look more like fricasseed over-coat buttons."

"Or broiled butter plates," hazarded the colonel.

"All wrong, gen'lmen," declared our landlady, much gratified, "them's mushrooms, an' growd in our own door yard! I don't blame you for not knowin"em, for they're a skeerce luxury in these here settlements."

"I suppose the rain brought them up," remarked the colonel, taking one upon his plate.

"Yes, Ike Fin he brung the rain, an' the rain brung the mushrooms. But that ain't all the rain did. I tell ye, it were a corker an' no mistake. An' the mos' dredfol part of it were its cornin' in the night. It seemed a pity to have poor Harvey Jewett pumpin' water out o' his cellar all night, an' stoppin' every two minutes to yell 'dam that Fin!' instead of tryin' to dam the water. An' the boys say the water run inter Al. Ward's milk an' filled the cellar o'the National Bank so full that it a'most watered the stock. An' Cap. Hauser he'd forgot ter git his cow in, so he wadded out in the pasture with his pants rolled up ter the knees, an' the rain cornin' down as thick as the subscription papers is on the merchants; an' Cap. he got hold o' the stake pin an' says he, 'so boss!' an' tried to pull it up, an'jest then his foot slipped an' he took a bath for the fust time in years in water that didn't cost a quarter a barrel. But some neighbors dug the mud out o' his eyes and ears an' saved him the expense o' a funeral. An' the next mornin' Miss Felch's hired gal she made a raft out o' a barn door an' poled out to the wood pile to get enough wood to light the fire. Them are tall yarns fer a drouth struck country, but they're kerrect, an' you can bet on it."

"The farmers must be glad of the rain," remarked Tom, with his mouth foil of mushrooms.

"Yes, but they still croak. The latest story is that the wheat all caught cold

because o' the damp weather, an' has sore throats; an' they say Higginbottom bought a cord o' pills from Doc. Fowler to try an' cure 'em. But o' course —

Hey! What's wrong, colonel?"

The boarders looked at the veteran and sprang to their feet in terror. His eyes rolled upward, his mouth was wide open, his tongue hung out, and his hands clutched wildly at the air before him!

"Oh Lor!" screamed our landlady, "my poor dear kernul! — what is it?" The sufferer made an effort and gasped, "I'm poisoned!"

"Pizened!" shrieked Mrs. Bilkins, "how?"

The colonel pointed to the mushroom dish.

"Those," said he, "are toadstools!" and relapsed again into contortions. Tom and the doctor grew visibly pale, while Mrs. Bilkins burst into tears and cried "Oh, what shall we do?"

"Brandy!" gasped the colonel.

Our landlady flew out of the room and presently rushed in with a large black bottle which the colonel clutched fiercely.

Tom caught a wink from the corner of the veteran's left eye and immediately came down with convulsions. The doctor looked puzzled for a moment, but as the brandy disappeared between the two sufferers like bargains at a quarter-off sale he too showed symptoms of poisoning and was only able to seize the antidote in time to consume the last drop.

"Tell you what," remarked the colonel, as the boarders walked down the street shortly afterward quietly puffing their cigars, "I've long suspected that Mrs. Bilkins kept a bottle for emergencies, and I thought I'd see if I couldn't get her to treat. Those were mushrooms all right, but it was a clever scheme."

"It was," agreed Tom.

"And it worked beautifully," said the doctor.

At that moment Mrs. Bilkins was eyeing ruefully her empty bottle.

"O' course," she soliloquized, "I knew mighty well that them was toadstools, but I didn't think they'd poison nobody, an' I wanted to make 'em believe as this was a great country. But there's no fool like a old fool, and I've lost a pint o' Jim Ringrose's pride. No — " she continued, as she picked up the bottle, "I hain't neither! I was so flustered that I guv 'em the vinegar bitters! But it cured' em jest the same, an' if I don't write a recommend for that 'air medicine, my name ain't Maria Bilkins!"

She Announces Her Birthday and Makes an Even Exchange With the Boarders

28 June 1890

"Today," murmured our landlady, as she rolled out the dough for the fried cakes and cut them out with a teacup and made a little hole in the middle with her brass thimble to save the dough; "today is the university o' my birth."

"What's that?" asked the doctor, looking up dreamily from his paper.

"She means her birthday," explained Tom, who was tying the cat by the tail to the tea-kettle.

"Oh," remarked the colonel, looking uneasy.

"I well remember," continued Mrs. Bilkins, wiping her eye absent-mindedly with the back of her hand, and leaving a white ring of flour around it, "my birthday last year. You all made me such pritty presents!"

Tom and the doctor exchanged glances of alarm and the colonel rattled a few loose coins in his pocket and sighed as he replied, "Yes, and you gave us a delicious supper in return."

"So I did," replied our landlady, blushing with pleasure and the heat of the cook stove. "I remember it well. There were strawberry short-cake an' a watermillion an' a cherry pie an' lots o' other delicates. Now, gen'lmen, how old do you s'pose I am today?"

"About sixty," replied Tom, with a grin.

"Wrong!" replied Mrs. Bilkins, with a frown, and she threw the dough so viciously into the hot lard that it spattered onto the cat.

That usually mild creature gave an unfeline howl of anguish and sprang from the table, while the empty teakettle being attached to her extremity flew into Mrs. Bilkins' face, the bottom blacking her other eye, while our landlady started back with a scream of dismay and fell into Tom's lap, whence they rolled upon the floor together.

As the cat made for the door she passed under the chair the doctor had tilted back against the wall, and the teakettle striking the legs with full force brought the learned physician down on top of the others, where he became entangled in Mrs. Bilkins' hoops and yelled "fire!" at the top of his voice.

The colonel laid down his paper and came to the rescue. He took the doctor's hands out of our landlady's wig and Tom's head out of the flour barrel and stood each upon his feet, while Mrs. Bilkins picked her upper teeth out of the oven and put herself generally to rights.

"This," said the colonel, sternly, to the originator of all the trouble, "comes from playing boyish tricks with cats."

“And also,” added Mrs. Bilkins, “from slandering a woman’s age!”

“Quite true,” replied the culprit, “I knew she was only fifty.”

“Fifty!” replied the doctor, scornfully, “she isn’t forty yet!”

Our landlady smiled through all her troubles.

“Gendemen,” said the colonel, “I happen to know that you are doing Mrs. Bilkins an injustice. I seldom fail to guess one’s age correctly, and I put down her age at just thirty-four.”

Our landlady actually beamed upon him.

“You shall have that short-cake, colonel,” she whispered, “if berries are 20cts a quart!”

The veteran walked away with a grim smile.

“I have saved a dollar on her present by that speech,” he reflected.

“A little while ago,” said our landlady to the others, as she again kneaded the dough industriously, “we was talkin’ of presents.”

“Yes, I remember,” replied the doctor, ruefully.

“We took the hint,” declared Tom.

“What hint?” said Mrs. Bilkins, innocently, “I was only goin’ to say as I must send Doc. Fowler a present, for I hear he’s goin’ to be married.”

“Nonsense!” replied Tom, “he’s only going to stand up with the groom.”

“Oh, is that all? Well, I guess I’ll give him the present, anyway, for it’s probably the nearest he’ll ever come to bein’ married hisself. An’ it ain’t right for us to forget our friends, for it’s these little offerin’s that make us realize that it’s better to live than to be buried by a eight dollar undertaker.”

“Mrs. Bilkins,” said the doctor, admiringly, as he lit his cigar and started for town, “you’d make a good enough orator to edit a daily paper. Good-bye — I won’t forget you are thirty-two today.”

“Perhaps,” ruminated our landlady, as left to herself she picked her favorite piece of gum from where it was stuck on the under side of the cake basket, “I might ha’ give it to ‘em a little too hard. It ain’t that I wanted the presents so much, for I’ll give ‘em a big supper to make up for it; but when a lady gits to be my age a birthday is a important event, an’ I don’t mean to be treated with disrespec’ by my own boarders — that ain’t my style!”

She Celebrates the Fourth and Relates Her Varied Experiences

5 July 1890

"It's lucky for me," said our landlady, as she staggered in from the kitchen with the bread plate, "that the Pilgrim fathers didn't make a declaration o' independence every day, for if we had to celebrate many of 'em, I wouldn't have no time to keep boardin' house."

"Did you participate in the festivities yesterday?" asked the colonel, politely.

"Participate?" replied Mrs. Bilkins, "well I should smile! Who didn't? But them injines spiled all o' my enjyment. Jest when the bands were playin' the beautifulest, I'd think o' them custard pies in the back kitchen and wonder if some injine warn't pryin' up the winder an' stealing 'em fer his squaws, an' that brought my heart up inter my throat. An' then when the procession comed along, every gal around me fell in love with the marshal o' the day, 'cause he looked so scrumptuous an' sot so straight in his saddle, an' that made me feel bad, 'cause I knew he were a married man. An' then everybody yelled 'Hooray for Huron!' an' the same folks yelled, 'Hooray for Pierre!' an' I knew that wasn't right, 'cause it would ratde Steve Hawkins an' he wouldn't know which town his inwestments were in. An' considerin' as he bought up the celebration for $2.50 he ought not to be bothered.

"An' then a tall galoot a ridin' of a bicycle run over my left com, an"afore I recovered myself along comed the thumpdoodlums an' nearly scared me outer my wits."

"You did have a bad time," said the doctor, "still, many enjoyed the day."

"Well, the day wern't without its dispensations," observed our landlady reflectively. "The skim-milk ice cream an' the artesian lemonade warn't bad, an' the Aberdeen Guard gals was wuth seein'. An' then to see them fellers climin' greesed poles an' runnin' races an'jumpin' up like a set o' fools wasn't such bad fun neither."

"Did you attend the ball game?" asked Tom.

"Oh, yes, — at the Opera House."

"No! No! that was the baby show."

"Well, that were the only bawl game I had any time for, an' o' course the fool judges guv the prizes to the homliest babies an' the prettiest mothers.

"I alius notis as that's the case. But still, with all the drawbacks, I'd a got along fust rate if I hadn't took it inter my head ter see the injine's war dance. I paid my money to a greasy lookin' injun an' walked in an' stood up. At one end o' the hall was a big chief named Cowjumps, an' back o' him were some sleepy-lookin' squaws an' dried-up babys, an' in the circle were the villainist

lookin' lot o' red devils as I ever seed, pushin' each other round the ring an' yellin'.

"'Hi-yah! hip-yah! hi-yah! hip-yah!' an' drummin' on a big kittle an' shakin' some tommyhawks and knives over their heads.

"'What's up?' says I to the policeman.

"'Hush!' says he.

"'What's got 'em riled?' says I.

"'Nothin',' says he, 'they're dancin'.'

"'Oh!' says I; 'well if they had a master they'd do it more polite.'

"An' just then I catched sight o' my red bed-spread, as I'd leit out on the line, on one o' the dancin' injins' shoulders. I didn't wait for nothin', but I jest busted inter that ring o' war dancers an' clubbed my umbreller in my fist an' belted him a good whack over the shoulders. He knew what I wanted in a minit and pulled out a watch an' handed me fer a bribe.

"'Not much!' says I, 'you just gimme that' air bed-spread!'

"An' he give it up. He said he found it in the band wagon, but I knowed as he was lyin'.

"This little rumpus broke me all up an' I went down to the P.G's. — I guess that means pritty gals — an' had some ice cream an' went home.

"I didn't see but one fireworks, an' that was a sky-rocket as comed through the front winder while I was sayin' my prayers. If I could find out who shot it I'd make him pay fer the glass, but as I can't, I'll jest contribute it as my share o' the celebration."

She Discourses upon Love and Politics

12 July 1890

"Times is pretty dull nowadays," said our landlady, as she killed a fly buzzing against the window with her slipper, and scared a lot more away from the sugar-bowl; "there don't seem to be nothin' goin' on but politics. I s'pose you've heard about Cholly?"

"No," replied the doctor, "I havn't. What about him?"

"Why he's goin' to run agin' Ben Harrison for the presidency."

"Nonsense!"

"That's what I tell's him. But he says if he can't be president he'll be state senator."

"Why not vice-president?" asked the Colonel, sarcastically.

"Because our Cholly won't have nothin' to do with vice. He'll take all he can get and get all he can, but he draws the line at that. All his friends are workin' for him, especially the G.A.R.'s, an' you'll either see somethin' or else you won't see nothin', you mark my words."

"How about the independents?" asked Tom.

"I'll tell you. The other mornin' I was sound asleep when I heerd a queer noise. It sounded like a turkey mother callin' her chicks to see a worm. At fust I — thought it was a gang o' burgulers, but when I got up an' stuck my head outer the winder I see it was some gals cluckin' to some other gals in the house oppersite.

"'What's up?' thinks I, fer it was only five o'clock, but I didn't see nothin' up but the gals. Well, they kep' cluckin' till they woke up the whole neighborhood, an' then they woke up the gal. Then several young fellers jined 'em an' I saw to onct that there was an elopement goin' on on a big scale. So I threw my shawl over my head an' rushes out, just as they was startin' up the street.

"'Hold, villin!' says I to one o"em, givin' a reglar war whoop, 'unhand that gal!'

"'Unhand yourself,' says Nat, 'what do you want?'

"'I want you to restore them gals to their homes. No elopin's goin' on under my nose if I knows it!'

"'Fiddlesticks!' says Alf. 'We ain't elopin', are we Hat?'

"'No, are we Lu?' says she.

"'We're just goin' fer a mornin' walk,' says J.B., lookin' mad.

"'At five o'clock?' says I, sardineically.

"'That's the best time,' says Eva, sweetly, 'for the air is fresh an' cool an' it gives us an apetite for breakfus'. We go every mornin' an' walk about two

miles an' it's more fun than the measles!'

"'Here comes Carrie,' says another, 'now let's leave this ole meddler.'

"'Thanks,' says I, 'if you don't like my company, don't cluck so loud as to raise the hull neigborhood. We ole folks ain't all in love, an' we needs our rest!' an' wi' that I slams inter the house an' watched 'em go up the street, an' I thought they was about as independent as any folks I ever seed. But I wouldn't like to feed 'em if they takes these long walks every mornin', although they do say as folks in love don't eat much."

"Speaking of eadng," remarked the colonel, "have you heard that Al. Ward was sun-struck yesterday?"

"Yes, but I knew that suthin' would strike Al. if he didn't put the quality o' grub up an' the price down. I'm thinking o' advertisin' this 'ere boardin' house in his front winder, but I don't care to ruin Al cause he's got a good heart, so I guess I won't interfere with his trade just yet."

She Buys a Cow and the Boarders Help Her Milk it

19 July 1890

"Gentlemen," said our landlady, as she met the boarders at the door with her own sweet smile, (copyrighted), "I've bought a new cow!"

"A live one?" asked Tom, with interest.

"A milch cow?" queried the colonel.

"A live milk cow!" responded Mrs. Bilkins, bobbing her head impressively. "A cow," remarked the doctor, fanning himself gently with his straw hat, "is a delightful animal. She not only ministers to the wants of humanity, but she is t mild in disposition, gentle in temperament and recognizes man as her friend and master."

"I suppose," said Tom, "you refer to the female cow."

The docter looked puzzled, but vouchsafed no answer.

"I thought," continued our landlady, "that you might like a little new milk for supper, and so, as we have a little time, you can come out in the back yard and see me milk her."

This delighted the boarders and they repaired to the rear of the house and gazed with awe and respect upon the sleek and gentle bossie.

"What do you call her?" inquired the colonel, putting up his eyeglasses for a close inspection.

"I haven't named her," smiled the landlady.

"Call her Elnora," suggested Tom, "or stop — Clochette — that's better!"

"She is named Clochette," said the doctor.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Bilkins, "I haven't any milking-stool!"

"That's bad," responded the colonel, "I suppose it's a necessity."

"Well, in my days," said Mrs. Bilkins, grimly, "folks didn't stand up an' milk."

"I have it!" said Tom, and he rushed into the house and returned with the piano stool.

Mrs. Bilkins eyed it dubiously.

"It ain't quite accordin' ter parlimentary rules, as Doc. Coyne said when he called Elder Burdock a sneak thief, but I guess it'll do."

She took the new, bright ten-quart pail in her hand, and followed by Tom with the piano stool approached the gentle bovine and patted her on the head. "Cattle," she remarked, "likes to be petted. Jest set the stool handy."

Tom did so, and the cow licked Mrs. Bilkins' hand and swung around upon her hind legs until the stool was out of reach.

"So! Clochette," said the doctor.

Tom replaced the stool, and again Clochette described a circle with her

hind legs.

"Try the other side," suggested the colonel.

Tom did so, and the cow moved the opposite way in the same manner.

"The proper way to milk Clochette," said the youth, as he wiped the gathering perspiration from his forehead, "is to get her alongside a board fence."

"But, unfortunately," replied the doctor, "we have no board fence handy."

"This thing," said Mrs. Bilkins, "must be done business like. This here Klokettle, or whatever her name is, is gentle enough, but we are strange to her. Now let me be the general an' you'll see how nice I manage her. Here, Tom, you hold her by the horns."

Tom accepted the nomination with as much alacrity as our Cholly could have shown, and grasped Clochette firmly by the horns.

"Now, Doc, you stand ready with the pianner stool, an' the colonel can stand on the other side o' her an' keep her from swingin' round."

The colonel calmly took his position, while the doctor put the stool in place and Mrs. Bilkins seated herself — the cow meanwhile chewing her cud with a ruminating air.

"This," smiled our landlady, beginning to milk, "is business! — So! Teakettle! — Doc., you hold her tail so's she can't switch it inter my eye every minnit.

— — There, see how nice the milk is — so white an' — ."

A slight interruption here occurred. Clochette sided away from the pail; the colonel exerted his strength and pushed her back again. Clochette stepped into the tin pail with such force that she became frightened. At the same moment the doctor unwisely jerked at her tail and Tom pushed her head down.

You can imagine the result. In an instant the scene changed. The piano stool went through the kitchen window with a crash. Mrs. Bilkins' legs might be seen struggling violently from the top of the garbage barrel; the tin pail flitted neatly over the colonel's head and the milk trickled down his neck; the doctor landed in the coal-house and Tom in the neighbor's premises, while Clochette took a vacation and browsed gently in a far-away pasture.

To remove the pail and extricate Mrs. Bilkins from her uncomfortable position was the work of a moment to our gallant colonel. Presently the doctor and Tom joined them, but no one looked toward Clochette.

"Colonel," said Mrs. Bilkins, huskily, "take this nickle an' go over to Cap. Hauser's fer a quart o' milk."

"If you will excuse us," said Tom, lightly, "the doctor and I will go to our room and prepare for supper."

Left to herself for a moment, our landlady tacked her shawl over the broken window and whispered softly to the cat:

“A woman is alius a fool when she asks a man to help her do anything. If I’d a been alone, that Klokettle an’ I would a had it out, an’ I’d a milked her or broke her neck. But the men-folks spiled it all. They think they can rush a cow like they rush a third ward caucus, but they’ll find they can’t. A cow is a female, an’ she wants her rights, an’ after all, I dunno as I blame her so much as I do Doc. fer bein’ such a fool as to pull her tail.”

She Talks About Railroads and Various Minor Matters

26 July 1890

"I've had a great deal to worrit me this week," said our landlady, nervously, as she put the saucer of fly-poison on the floor for the cat, and set the saucer of milk on the window sill.

"Politics?" queried the colonel, carelessly.

"Not exactly. I've ben workin' on this 'ere boulevard deal. Ye see if we don't git a full vote, one that's unanimosity, we can't git the railroad, an' so when I heerd as there was some kickers I thought as I'd go out an' tackle 'em. An' a hard fight I've had with 'em. But I've conquered, an' there won't be but one vote agin' that boulevard on election day. There's one feller that has got Bowels by name but not any by natur' that still kicks because it's his constitutional trouble, but nobody minds him anyhow."

"The town ought to be grateful for your labors," said Tom.

"That ain't the p'int. I'm grateful to myself, an' that settles it. What propity I owns, I owns, an' I knows which side o' my bread is buttered. Now, if it hadn't been fer this here boardin' house I could a made a heap o' money this week. First comes a feller an' says the editor of the Daily Nuthin' has gone to Big Stone to get rusty, an' wants me to be the editur wile he's gone.

"'How much do I git?' says I.

"'Oh,' says he, 'the reglar editur gits about one lickin' a week, a cussin' about forty times a day, free whiskey from the 'riginal package houses an' boards and finds himself.'

"'Don't he git no chairmanship of the jimicrat central c'mittee?' says I.

"'Hardly ever,' says he, quotin' Pinafore.

"'Then,' says I, 'I don't want the job.'

"Well, he hadn't no more nor gone, when another feller arrives an' says:

"'Ma'am,' says he, 'Kernel Puffball is gone ter the editorial meetin', an' we'd like yer to edit the Daily Anything.'

"'I'm afeared I ain't ekal to it,' says I.

"'Well,' said he, 'all you need is the New York and Chicago papers to steel from, an' the 'cyclopedia an' dicshunary. Four pounds o' conceit a day would make the people think as the editur were still to home, but no brains is necessary.'" 'Brains,' says I, lookin' as mad as Billy Paulhamus when he misses a caucus, 'is all I can furnish, an' you'll have to excuse me.' So, neither the Daily Nuthin' nor the Daily Anythin' will git edited, an' perhaps the people can read 'em without sweatin'."

"A sad state of affairs," remarked the doctor, mildly.

"Yes, most as sad as Al. Ward, when he got through wi' the masons this

week. Al. he hankered as much to be a mason as he did fer cushions and stickin' plaster after he got his degree. They say his shins was all black an' his back a sight to behold. But they let him five, an' he's grateful fer that. He says he'd rather hear Loucks lecture on finance than to do it agin, but, as they never innishiate a feller but once, I guess his misery is over."

"By the way," said the colonel, "I haven't seen our cow lately."

"No," returned our landlady, with a sigh, "I sold her las' week ter a feller as keeps a baby farm. It gives a person a air o' wealth an' respectability ter have a cow in the yard, but Klokettle an' I didn't agree, an' I never tried to milk her but onct."

Our Landlady (1)

2 August 1890

"Times is dull, is they?" inquired our landlady, as she cut into the watermelon with a business like air, "well, they may be to you, put they're lively enough fer some folks. Rustlers don't know what dull times is, it's only such perfeshional men as you, doc, or such loan agents as the colonel, (as hain't had nothin' to loan in six months) or sich worthless clerks as Tom, who spends his time waitin' fer the customers as don't come, that finds times dull. The farmer what's harvestin' has to rustle after he cuts one stalk o' wheat to reach another 'afore he loses sight of it; the politicians has to rustle to build fences, although why they do that when most of' em hain't got no lots to put 'em on beats me. The temperance men has to rustle so as people won't think that prohibition don't prohibit; the District Attorney has to rustle ter prove he's got it in fer the 'riginal package houses when he hain't; the ministers has to rustle for congregations — them as hain't throwed up religion fer politics — the business men have to rusde fer trade — the newspaper men has to rustle fer proof that every other newspaper man is a villian — an' so it goes, plenty to rustle for if you mean business, an' ain't under the soaperiferous influence o' the hot weather."

"Another piece of melon, please," said the doctor, mildly.

Mrs. Bilkins glared at him and cut a thin slice off the small end.

"To eat that would be suicide," he remonstrated.

"It costs just as much a pound as the core," returned our landlady, "and I can't afford to waste it. Some folks wants to make a meal off the delicates o' the season. What'd I furnish that mush an' milk fer if it wrrn't to fill ye up so you wouldn't want to git fat on watermelon? Some folks hain't got no sense, nohow!"

"They're going to have another opera," said Tom, to change the subject, "and I've been asked to sing in the chorus."

"Well, you can do as you please," returned Mrs. Bilkins, "but I hain't got no patience with them uproars. I'll git all the singin' I want when I'm an angil in heaven — but p'raps you don't expect to git there, so you'd better do yourn on earth."

"I am sorry, my dear Mrs. Bilkins, that you do not seem to be in good spirits today," said the colonel, quietly.

"Not any. No spirits has passed my lips fer a week."

"I mean that your equanimity is disturbed — that you are not in very good temper."

"Oh, I'm riled, am I? Well, I guess you'd be riled if you was me. Why, I

went down to Miss Chowder's to have my front bangs curled this mornin' right after breakfast, an' there I sees a crowd o' young fellers waitin' in the settin'-room.

"'What'r you here for?' says I, 'you fellers hain't got no bangs.'

"'No,' says one, 'but we's got mustaches!'

"An' I declare the hull lot was there to have their mustaches curled! An' the young ladies took longer to curl one mustash than they do three pair o' bangs, an' so I sot an' sot till dinner was ready, and my bangs hain't curled yet, an' there's a prayer meetin' tonight an' I won't dare face the deakin' nohow."

"That's too bad," replied the colonel, as he glanced at Tom, who blushed and tried to straighten out the curls in his mustache.

"Was Al. Ward there?" enquired the doctor.

"No — Al. curls his'n over a crowbar; but speakin' o' him reminds me of a good joke. Ye see Al. he let the barber — Pabst — git inter him fer a four dollar meal ticket, an' when he found the feller was a goin' ter leave town last Wen'sday he sent Dave and a officer down to the train to stop him, or collect the ducats." 'Well,' says Al., when Dave come back, 'where's the money?'

"'Couldn't get it,' says Dave. 'The feller cried and said as he were a orphan an' we had to let him go.'

"'Cried, did he?' says Al. 'Why, you chicken-hearted independent, he's got four dollars wuth o' my vittles in his insides! I'll capture him if it costs a million dollars!' an' he buckled his vest tighter an' rushed down to the depot. Well, by-'n-by he come back, kinder slow like. 'Where's the money,' says Dave. 'Why,' says Al., 'he cried an' said as he'd only seven dollars to take him to Californy, an' a feller as'll take a poor kid's last dollar is mean enough to join the demicrats. Tell you what, boys, that feller had a mother once.'

"There was a hushed silence all through the room, an' more'n one man at the lunch counter dropped a tear inter his mush an' milk. An' then Al. sighed an' went off to hunt up Skip. The last time I heard of'em they was talkin' politics with Goodwin. It's a simple little story but it shows that even pirates may have hearts, an' I advise any feller what's a good cryer to go down to Ward's and board on tick!"

She Exposes a Practical Joke and Tells About the Goose Quill Kiss

9 August 1890

"Well, I'm all tuckered out," exclaimed our landlady, as she entered the dining room in time to throw her hymn book at the cat, who was quietly eating out of the cream pitcher.

The first result was to frighten the household pet so badly that she jumped from the table to the window sill, (upsetting the fly trap into the stewed prunes in her flight), and alighting upon a strip of sticky fly-paper she uttered a screetch of dismay and sprang into the arms of her mistress, who promptly threw her out of the window — paper and all. The second result was that the colonel was induced to look up from his paper and ask, "Been to prayer-meeting, ma'am?"

"Well, not exactly," responded our landlady, as she made preparations for tea, "this 'ere is a sort o' religious community, an' thought if I went to a hoss-race without my prayer book, some one would know where I was goin'. This church business covers a multitude of sins."

"Where was the horse-race?" inquired Tom, with sudden interest.

"Oh, out to the Fair grounds. You see, there's a barber here named John, as is got a colt that's no earthly good, an' the boys are havin' lots o' fun with him. He can't trot fer sour apples, that's the fact, but John thinks as he's the best race hoss in Ameriky. Billy Paulhamus pertended he wanted to race with him, an' so they went out to the grounds, an' got John to drive his nag around till it was all tuckered out. Then Billy brought his hoss out an' let the colt beat him two straight heats. It were a burning shame to treat the poor barber so. The jedges and starters they were in the game, an' when the colt made a mile in five minits an' a quarter they tole the poor fellow that his time was 2:58! Five minits is the best that nag will even do. Baldwin, as has been guyin' John fer a long time *August i8go* about his hoss, made him an offer o' six hundred dollars, — when he wouldn't give six cents — for the colt, an' o' course the barber wouldn't take it."

"Are they trying to get the barber to make a bet?" asked the doctor.

"No — they ain't so mean as to work him fer money. It's jest a guy — that's all. Queer ideas folks git nowadays of fun. In my times fun was fun, an' don't you fergit it. Now look at this goose-quill deal. That shows how the kids nowadays is demoralizin'."

"What about the goose quill?" asked the colonel.

"Why, I didn't know anything about it myself until the other night. I was settin' on the back stoop in the dark, thinkin' of religious matters, when I

noticed the forms of a couple o' young people cornin' round the comer of a neighbor's house.

"'Now, if you won't tell,' says a gal voice, 'I'll show you how it's done.'

"'Oh, I won't tell,' says a boy's deep rich bass voice.

"'This idea o' kissin' through a goose quill,' continued the gal, 'is my own inwention. You get a kiss just the same only it's removed to a respectful distance. Do you feel able to go through the ordeal, Hi?'

"'You bet I do,' says the feller, 'let's have it!'

"Then I heard a sound like as if some one had pulled his foot out o' some wet mud an' the feller yells," 'Why, Gene, you've pulled a piece out o' my cheek!'

"'Oh, no, that's the beauty o' the thing, you know when you've got kissed. How do you like it?'

"'Oh, under some circumstances it's all right, but I think I like a meat kiss better.'

"'But that's improper,' says the gal. 'The idee of the goose quill is that it makes kissin' proper. All the gals has got 'em now.'

"An' then the young folks went away an' left me to my horrified reflections. I don't approve o' this goose quill arrangement. There's only one proper way to kiss as I knows on, an' when I was a gal the young folks would scorn goose quills. Of course, this 'ere's a free country, but sence that night, whenever I see a young feller with a round red mark on his cheek, I feel kinder sorry for him, because I know that the march o' Civilization and the inwention o' the goose quill kiss has cost him one of the pleasantest and most innocent delights of youth — well — yes — an' ole age, too, fer that matter!"

Our Landlady (2)

16 August 1890

"Things is awful dull jest now," remarked our landlady, as she threw her shawl over the broom handle and mopped her face with her apron, "an' the folks as knows when they're well off will either stay to home and loaf or go on their summer vacation. An' that reminds me that there's lots of folks in this town as tells the newspaper men they're going away, an' then don't go, an' they git the repertation o' bein' Summer excursionists without the expense. Jest tell me where the papers hain't told the people Max Bass was agoin' to, for instinct; an' yet Max has staid to hum all the time an' tended to his knittin', which the immigration folks usually does just before election, so's when the new appointment arrives they'll be on hand to receive it."

"A mere matter ofbusiness," said the colonel, as he cut into the pumpkin pie. "So's everything a mere matter o' business. Now, Tom here were on that Fair Grounds bond, and he might 'a gone jest as well on a coffee grounds bond fer all the money he could pay. An' so I tried to help him out by going to our public-spirited citizens today an' tryin' to get some contributions to help out the boys as is got stuck on this bond deal. I went into a drug store an' bought a stick o' gum.

"'How's times?' says I.

"'Good!' says he — the proprietor.

"Then I tackled him fer his subscripshun.

"'Times is too hard,' says he, 'I've just bought a lot in Chicago an' I can't pay no ten dollars on no bond, nohow. If they wants five dollars o' my little savin's, they can have it.'

"I were so disgustid that I left him an' went inter a hardware store an' bought an ounce o' nails.

"'How's times?' says I.

"'Good,' says he.

"'Are you goin' to pay up on that bond?' says I, careless like.

"'Not much,' says the gentlemanly proprietor, 'it's all right to sign a bond, cause it makes you solid with the people, but when it comes to payin' it, it's another act. The Lord didn't want no fair grounds and so the wind blew 'em down.'

"Well, I left the cuss an' come away, an' made up my mind that I wouldn't enquire no further. But I guess there's enough outsiders as'll chip in to make up fer the chumps as won't pay."

"You interest yourself too much in other people's business," said the doctor, quietly, "to be very popular. A good many of your criticisms have

leaked out, someway, and if you ever hope to change your name, you will have to be more careful."

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed our landlady, "if folks don't like my style they needn't listen to me. I've got to keep busy somehow, an' this 'ere boardin' house don't fully occupy my time. An' you'll find I'm pretty near right, too. As fer gettin' married agin, I'm losin' all hopes. The young folks is all a pairin' off an' leavin' no feller fer me. There's goin' ter be four bran' new weddin's in October, an' as soon as the weather gits cooler I s'pose there'll be a lot more. The goose quill kiss has accomplished its purpose and is going out o' fashion. When a gal goes to a picnic now, she just takes her goose quill along so's her ma won't suspect nothin', but I never see one as was wore out yit. But that ain't none o' my business. If the young folks can't enjoy theirselves, what's the use o' bein' born? Only it makes me sad to think how soon they'll all be marred off, fer then even kissin' won't delay a feller when he starts off to town at midnight fer a bottle o' soothin' syrup. It's the way o' the world, an' I agree with Shookspear when he says:

'Go it folks while yer young,
Fer when ye git old ye can't.'"

She gives a Picnic to the Boarders and Writes a Proclamation

23 August 1890

"Now this," observed our landlady, as she sat in the shade of her parasol and an enormous tree fully six feet high, and watched the festive Jim meander sluggishly at her feet like the slowly welling leak in a bucket of dishwater, "this is what I calls rusticatin'. When I invited you boarders to this here picnic, I intended you should enjoy all the delights of natur'. No one sighs fer the seashore when on a stream of this size you can see shore on both sides o' it — excuse me, colonel, ain't you well?"

"He has simply fainted," returned the doctor, gravely, as he fanned the veteran gently with his straw hat. "Perhaps he might be restored if we had a bottle of — "

"Tom, fetch out that bottle of birch beer," interrupted our landlady with an alarmed look.

"I'm afraid that birch beer — "

"Oh, don't you worry. As Narregang says, 'what's in a name?' The Kernel won't kick on the contents."

The colonel didn't. He took a hearty draught and was himself again.

"It strikes me," said Tom, who was endeavoring to find a place to drop his brand-new fish-line, "that the first thing to do at a picnic is to eat."

"A capital suggestion," said the doctor, approvingly. "I suppose, Mrs. Bilkins, that you did not forget the eatables?"

"Not much. Now colonel, look lively, fetch over that big basket — not that one — that's only fer show.

"O' course, we four peoples couldn't eat a barrel o' truck, but I didn't want the neighbors to think I was stingy, an' so I brung all the baskets I had in the house. Here, Tom, jest take the pickles out o' that custard, an' doc, you set them bottles in the water to cool, an' Kumel, see if you can scrape the butter off'en that cocoanut cake, while I spread the table cloth and pick the boiled eggs out of the sandwiches. — That's the stuff — pitch in, boys! don't be afraid — I won't punch yer tickets fer this 'ere meal — it's my treat. Doc, a little more beer — — ahem! birch beer, I mean, — thanks. Now, fellers, ain't this jest glorious?" No one replied, but each one was so busily occupied that Mrs. Bilkins seemed to consider an answer superfluous.

Finally the meal ended, and the boarders lit their cigars and lay under the shade of the saplings, while Mrs. Bilkins sat on the edge of the bank and drew forth her pencil and note-book.

"What are you writing," asked the colonel, after watching her silently for

awhile.

“Oh jest a proclamation.”

“A proclamation?”

“Fer Bob Moody. He kinder run short of ideas an’ asked me to help him out.”

“What’s it about?” inquired Tom.

“Well, if you won’t tell, I’ll read it to ye. But you mustn’t give it away, because he hain’t signed it yit, an’ until he does it ain’t public property.”

“Oh, we won’t say a word.”

“Then listen:

“‘Gen’l Orders number ‘steen.

“‘Mayor’s orfise. To ther sitizens uv this here burgh. As it hez comed to my nolidge that certin bad, wicked people hev bin in the habit ov meetin at houses and playin sech sinful games as progressiv uker and drive whisht, which aint either progressin or drivin the road to desency an public order, I thearfore, bein duely elected by frank hagerty, and the other sitizens of this hear town, do forbid, now an forever and ever, amen, sich unlawfull doins in the fucher. An playin marbels and tag in the public streets, and all uther gamblin except in stocks and morgages is hearby strictly prohibitid. For, havin witnessed the grate success of the Sabbath day, I propoas to have every day Sabbath in this hear town, so as my administrashun wil be appresheated by all free and liberal minded citizens.’”

“That won’t do,” said Tom, decidedly, “it’s carrying the thing too far. He’ll think you’re guying him.”

“No, I think he’ll like it. There’s two ways to become famous — one’s by bein’ very bad, an’ the other’s by bein’ very good. Now, it ain’t in Bob to be very bad, an’ yit he wants to git famous. An’ if he’ll jest continue his policy by addin’ mine to it he’ll have the biggest name o’ any mayor in South Dikoty, an’ the ministers’ll have to preach seven days in the week to keep the people okipied. But then — ”

A horrible occurrence cut short our landlady’s explanation. The bank on which she was sitting caved in suddenly and precipitated her violently into the placid bosom of the Jim. With a shout that was half grief and half joy, the boarders came to her rescue, and fished her, limp and dripping, from the impromptu bath.

“Now,” said the colonel, as he assisted her into the wagon, “you know what a cold water administration is.”

“Yes,” replied our landlady with a shiver, but a twinkle in her eye, as she wrapped the table-cloth about her damp form, “but it didn’t need that illustration to show me I didn’t like it. But this ain’t no time to talk politics.

Drive on, doctor, an’ if you don’t want Goodes to sell a twelve dollar coffin, drive like blazes!”

She Attends the Convention and is Disgusted with Politics

30 August 1890

"Well, I declare," exclaimed our landlady, as she opened the dining room door in time to catch Tom dancing with the hired girl, while the colonel beat time on the bottom of a tea-tray, and the doctor sat perched upon the side-board whistling the heel and toe; "well I declare if ye ain't worse nor a lot o' delegates!"

The colonel threw the tray under the table with a bang; the hired girl flew into the kitchen and slammed the door behind her, while the doctor slid gracefully from the side-board, and Tom with a red face and an embarrassed look sat down carelessly in the bread-pan full of "sponge," which stood upon a chair.

"Home from Mitchell?" inquired the doctor, in his best off-hand manner.

"No!" snapped our landlady, "I'm there yet." And she proceded to hang up her hat and shawl, after which she opened the kitchen door and informed the girl that "she'd give her half an hour to pack up her duds an' quit these diggin's."

The colonel winked at the doctor, the doctor winked at Tom, and Tom scraped the dough off the seat of his pants with a thoughtful air.

"Did you attend the equal rights convention?" inquired the colonel, pleasantly, when Mrs. Bilkins seemed to have regained her equanimity.

"Equal rights nuthin'!" retorted our landlady, "their meetin' was a second-class affair. You see Doc. Coyne got a fair-haired patient soon after he got there that kep' him busy, so I got his proxy an' swung with the Brown county delegation. Didn't we have a time though? Well I guess! The delegates from all the other counties was tied together with strings, an' ole Pettigrew he had the ends o' all the strings tied to his suspenders. An' Brown county delegates was all tied with one string too, an' every feller he thought he had hold o' the end o' the string. An' a fine circus it was. When anyone axed us what we wanted we yelled 'the yearth!' an' then the band would play 'Never no never no more.'

"'We've got this thing in our own hands,' says Dan Shields, 'an' we mean to keep it.' An' so they let us keep it.

"'Let's get on the band wagon,' says I.

"'That's where we are,' says Frank Brown, but somehow the other fellers didn't come our way, an' the Sessions axle grease clogged our wheels so's the vehicle wouldn't move. It's all right; we got what we deserved, but if Brown county had a' whittled a lot o' men outer a pine block they would a

been jest as good."

"The result should teach us to aspire to unity in our own ranks," remarked the colonel, grimly.

"It should teach us to keep outer politics," retorted Mrs. Bilkins. "Brown county weren't needed in that convention. We might o' stayed to hum an' saved our money. When we're such fools as ter buck agin' the powers that be, an' get in the soup, it's time to begin playin' checkers an' leave politics alone. But I hear you've had an elopement while I was gone."

"Yes, a quiet one."

"It's quite romantic. It makes a person think o' Pyramid an' Thisbee. An' so I've writ a stanza on it as follers:

"When Cholly saw 'Stel
In love he fell,
An' swore she was wuth havin'.
So he took her away
To Columb-i-a,
An' now she's Missus Gavin."

She returns from her Vacation and Visits the Fair

20 September 1890

"Yes," remarked our landlady, as she gathered up the watermelon rinds to make sweet pickles of and the seeds to plant in the spring, "you can bet I'm glad to get home agin. This goin'-a-visitin' ain't what it's cracked up to be. You see I visited my sister in Eurekie, and had to do all the housework and take care of three babies besides, an' so, arter three weeks of hard work I decided to come home an' take a rest."

"Have you attended the fair?" inquired Tom, as he pinned two Wolsey badges together and used them for a necktie.

"You bet! I went Wen'sday, that were women's day, although the women goes most every day so's there'll be some one to wear Pierre badges. The children got away with a good many Pierre badges, too, so Huron needn't think her badges is the only ones there is wored."

"How did you enjoy the races?" asked the colonel lighting a Pierre cigar. "Fust class. But the most soul inspirin' thing was the tight-rope act. Well sir, would you believe it, that feller actually walked backwards on a tight rope, a good ten foot from the ground! — an' all he had to keep him from failin' was a long pole that he could touch the ground with if he didn't happen to balance all right. An' then he sot right down on that rope an' staid there until he got his breath. An' then he tried to git up an' couldn't. An' the crowd yelled to encourage him. An' then he wiped his brow on his costume and kissed his hand an' tried it again. An' the crowd yelled so that he finally got up. An' after that he slid down inter a trapeze and hung on by his toes while he picked grass with his teeth. If he'd been a taller man he'd a bumped his head. This feller had more hair-breadth escapes to the square inch than a man would who eat reglar at Ward's. The sight was sickenin' in its awe-inspirin' grandeur. Many of the ladies turned away their heads to avoid seein' him tear up the yearth with his nose, but I was so hoaror-struck that I couldn't take my eyes off'n him. Well, at last he took hold of the ground and let go with his feet, an' the whole crowd heaved a sigh of relief, for they knew then as he was safe.

"Sam Vroom said he wouldn't done it fer ten dollars an' a baby, because it would a disarranged his front hair so. But it was a great fair an' no mistake. Colonel, you're too near the stove, your coat is burnin'."

"No," said the colonel, "it's my cigar. Did you hear Miss Anthony speak?"

"I tried to, but she didn't seem to have much to say 'cause she's said it so many times already. An' the boys kep' yellin"has she came?' an' then the

crowd would yell ‘not yet!’ in reply. But some of the Reverend ladies panned out all right. Things was so mixed up that I didn’t know when I got home whether I was a woman-suffrage-anti-Pierre-prohibition-jack-pot woman, or a anti-rights-anti-Huron-anti-up-anti-prohibition-anti-boodle-all- wool-an’-a-yard-wide politician; but judgin’ from my conglomerated feelin’s I guess I was.”

“Have you kissed the baby?” inquired the doctor, solicitously.

“Not yet, but unless this round of dissipation comes to a bust pretty soon there won’t be nothin’ else left to do. Between the fair and the operar, an’ Doc. Fowler’s weddin’ an’ Jay Paulhamuses last diamond ring, Aberdeen folks is gettin’ pretty near rattled, an’ nothin’ but a rise in wheat will bring ‘em to their sober senses.”

She Discusses Timely Topics and Criticises some Aberdeen People

4 October 1890

"The people of Aberdeen," said our landlady, as she set the pumpkin pie on the sideboard and placed a piece of poison fly paper over it to protect it, "are different from most any people I ever seed. This' ere is a western community, but the people are lots more effeeter here than they are in the yeast. When a man looses a penny through a hole in his pocket he goes an' gits it sowed up so's it won't happen agin. When a boy looses anything through a hole in his pocket, he sets down and cries. Now Aberdeen folks is jest like that boy."

"Mrs. Bilkins," remarked the doctor, laying down his paper and wiping his spectacles complacently, "you are speaking in parables and I, for one, do not comprehend the tenor of your remarks."

"I don't care whether my remarks is tenor or bass," snapped our landlady, as she wiped the butter knife on her apron and placed it on the dish; "what I says is gospel truth, and you'll find it out! Why, here we are in the very flower garden o' the yearth. Here we are in a country where the sile is richer and deeper than in any other part of Ameriky; where the poor eastern farmers have found peace and plenty, where the bankrupt eastern merchant has found a good trade and a good livin'; where clerks has blossomed into store-keepers and penny-ante men into bankers, an' convicks inter lawyers, an' salvation army dodgers inter ministers, an' roustabouts inter real estate and loan agents. An' they all fell inter soft snaps an' thought as they was great men in disguise, an' they'd never let their neighbors know the truth about the matter. Everything they had they owed to good crops an' when the crops went back on 'em they was a pitiful sight. They howl, an' they kick, an' they scream; an' say they'll quit the blasted country an' the Lord forgive 'em for ever comin' here — forgittin' all the time that if they hadn't come they'd probably starved to death 'afore now!"

"I think, Mrs. Bilkins," broke in the colonel, "that your remarks are too general. There may be some such as you mention but I am sure you recognize the fact that there are still many good and true men in Aberdeen," and he twisted his moustache and looked at her appealingly from out his eagle eye.

Our landlady was not proof against the handsome colonel's fascinations. She drew the back of her hand politely across her nose, smoothed her back hair dreamily, and stirred up the omelet with the stove hook and a coyly unconscious air as she replied:

“No, I know there is good men here — but they ain’t very plenty, and what there is ain’t got the pluck to take the hard times by the neck an’ choke ‘em off as they’d orter. They set down an’ groan an’ say they wish Aberdeen had some men to boom things the way Sioux Falls is doin’ an’ all the time fergetin’ that they is the men to do it an’ that they CAN do it if they wanter, an’ that even today Aberdeen is capable of havin’ a bigger boom than any other city in the state if her people would only let capital fights an’ foreign investments alone, and use the means of prosperity that are layin’ idle at their hands. If only every man would say ‘I will do suthin” instead o’ sayin”why don’t somebody else do suthin’?’ times would change mighty quick.”

“You speak with deep feeling, ma’am,” said Tom, fishing a collar button out of his sauce and putting it carefully in his vest pocket; “Do you know, Mrs. Bilkins, that the best hold you have upon your boarders is ministering to their curiosity? One never knows what he will discover next! It’s like a lottery.”

“Life is a lottery,” sighed our landlady, as she fastened one end of her bangs which had become loose and dropped down; “an’ it’s a wonder they don’t pass a law agin’ living for that reason. A good many folks come to Aberdeen an’ invested, and now howls because there’s come a little backset and they’d like to git out. Why, even Frank Hagerty says to me the other day, ‘I’ve just come from West Surperior,’ says he, ‘an’ it makes me tired to think as I must stay in Aberdeen, an’ can’t git where the rustle is.’

“‘Frank,’ says I, ‘it’s just like a feller gittin’ married; he may git a good woman but a homely one, an’ when he sees han’somer women he may hanker arter ‘em, an’ think his ole woman is no good. But it ain’t no use; you’re tied an’ you must make the best of it, an’ ten chances to one you’ll get more solid comfort out o’ that ole woman than you would if you had one o’ them lively beauties that wear out quick. The honeymoon of Aberdeen’s boom prosperity has wore off but she’s good an’ solid yit, an’ there’s lots o’ solid prosperity and comfort to be got outer her. Be true to her — don’t hanker arter the flesh-pots o’ Tennessee an’ Huron an’ West Superior, an’ you’ll make more solid money outer your first love than you could outer a hundred towns that goes up like a rocket and comes down like a stick!’”

“Did he see the force of your argument?” asked the colonel, curiously.

“He did. ‘It were a temporary weakness, Mrs. Bilkins,’ says he, ‘an’ you can put me down to stick harder nor any fly paper in Ameriky.’ An’ he’ll do it. But he’s only one of ‘em. If Aberdeen folks would all go to work to make the most outer their town, an’ shut their eyes to the outside world, it wouldn’t be long before we would be the most prosperous community in the northwest. I ain’t talkin’ to hear myself talk. I may keep a boardin’-house,

but I knows my business an’ a good many other folkses business, too!”

She Discourses on the "Hard Times Club," and tells a Story

11 October 1890

"One of the nonsensicalist things I've heard of," said our landlady, as she skimmed the milk carefully and poured the blue fluid into the cream jug, "is that 'air Hard Times Club. It may be a funny thing to talk about, but what'll it amount to?"

"I haven't heard of it," replied the doctor, as he picked a spoiled fly out of his coffee.

"Why, the young fellers is realizin' that if they go inter serciety this winter they can't pay their board bills, an' if they pay their board bills they can't monkey much with serciety. An' so they thunk up a scheme to revolutionize serciety itself and still keep the future voters with 'em, an' they calls this ijea the Hard Times Club."

"Who belongs to it?" asked the colonel, as he broke a piece from his toast with several powerful blows of the carving knife handle, and soaked it in his coffee.

"Oh, lots of 'em. There's Wendell, an' Winsor, an' Waterman, an' Milligan, an' Sam Vroom, an' Skip, an' Corwin, an' lots more. They wanted Al. Ward fer president but Al. he said times were too hard. You see, he knew he'd have ter set 'em up if he accepted an' so they made him Outer Guard instead, where his expenses will be light. Doc Fowler wanted ter join, but they told him there was a limit to everything, an' no man what smoked ten cent cigars could enter their sacred precincts. Married men can't belong. As ex-Governor Loucks wrote 'em when he declined to run fer treasurer o' the club, says he: 'they must lie in the beds theys made fer themselves an' if they hain't got any beds they must lie anyway." That may sound like a Loucks argument, but the club adopted it unanimous!"

"What is their plan of operation?" asked Tom, looking lovingly at his one nickel.

"Why, they're goin' to give a series of parties. The gals will furnish the music theirselves, and the club will meet at each other's houses — that is, those that's got houses. The refreshments is limited to crackers an' cheese an' spring water, and the gentlemen is allowed to dance in their stocking feet, so no shoe leather will be wore out unnecessary.

"The gals will furnish the refreshments an' also one small boy to be paid by the gals' fathers, to carry the club overcoat from one member to another on the nights o' the parties. In this way all can wear the overcoat by turns an' avoid beatin' the clothing stores outer more'n one garment."

“I’d like to join that club,” declared Tom.

“And I,” said the colonel.

“And I,” said the doctor.

“It’s got eighty-four members now,” said Mrs. Bilkins, “an’ the number’s increasin’ every day. August Witte were innishiated yesterday. No one can jine that don’t want more’n he’s got the money to pay for.

“The club’s goin’ to boycot all the banks and collectors and has passed a resolution to ignore the conterbution boxes in all the churches. Oh, it’s a fine idee, an’ll help the boys out amazin’.

“I hear the city’s goin’ to economize too. When the uncommon council wanted to discharge Street-comish Lewis our Cholly got up an’ said they might jest as well discharge the mayor. ‘Why don’t you?’ said one o’ the fathers. ‘Well,’ says Cholly, ‘I move we discharge Mayor Moody.’ There was a bust of applause at this, but one o’ the uncommon upset the deal by sayin’, ‘I move an amendment that we discharge the mayor an’ all the common council, an’ let Cholly run the city!’ That made everybody laugh an’ peace was restored. But it wasn’t a bad idee an’ if the amendment had carried I don’t know but what we’d been just as well off anyhow!”

She Confides to the Boarders a Deal to Advance the Cause of Equal Suffrage

18 October 1890

"Sometimes," said our landlady as she deftly stopped a hole in the coffee pot with a small piece of the dishrag, "I think the world is all goin' wrong, an' then, when I gits all discouraged, suthin' comes up to set it right agin. It's pritty evenly balanced, to tell the truth, an' them as philosophizes can see the good in human natur'."

"When you moralize," said Tom, finishing a sad inspection of his laundry list, "I know there is something in the wind. What is it, Mrs. Bilkins?"

"Well," she answered, "it's rayther a private matter, an' I agreed not ter let it git out."

"But," protested the colonel, getting excited at the prospect that something was being withheld from his knowledge, "we are all members of one family, my dear Mrs. Bilkins, and it is only right that we should know anything that concerns you."

"Won't you tell?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Never!" declared the doctor, and the others looked as solemn and virtuous as possible and shook their heads.

"Well then," began our landlady, "I've bin a good deal bothered to know how to boom Ekal Suffridge at the polls. The C'mittee wants us to set up the refreshments, but the grocers is onto the deal and has all adopted the cash sistem to avoid donatin' anything to the good cause. When you set out to refresh a lot o' voters you've got a big job on hand. They'll drink more coffee an' eat more san'wiches nor Pharaoh's army, an' they'll wipe their mouths on the tablecloth an' go off an' vote agin' ekal suffridge an' then come back an' eat agin. It's this thing that got me kinder discuridged like. If we only had the means to give each voter a free dose o' fizik, as John Firey is promisin' to do fer any one as votes fer him, we might git along. They wouldn't hang around like they does at the refreshment tables, but would vote quick and run. But fizik ain't in our line an' so I got discuridged. But yesterday a little feller with archery legs an' a convalessin' mustash comes an' knocks at the door an' says, 'Slacker rick em stan flor a' crummin.'

"'Nix cum a rouse,' says I.

"'Oxcuse me,' says he, 'I thought you was a Norske woman.'

"'No,' says I, 'I'm a Yankee.'

"'Well,' says he, 'is this the charmin' Miss' Bilkinses dear baardin' house?'" 'No sir,' says I, 'this' ere is the cheapest boardin' house, countin' by receets, in the Unitid States of Americky. But who air you, sir?'

“‘Feel-yer-paw,’ says he.

“‘No,’ says I, with kinder virtuous indignity, ‘I won’t feel yer paw til I knows who ye air.’

“‘That’s my name,’ says he, with a sort o’ sad an’ reproachful smile.

“‘Oh,’ says I, struck all of a heap, ‘you’re the injipendent what wants ter be county treasurer.’

“‘Them’s my sentiments, mom,’ says he.

“‘Next year,’ says I, ‘I’ll talk to yer, but this year I can’t vote.’

“‘But you’re on the ekal suffridge c’mittee,’ says he, ‘an’ I thought perhaps we could make a deal. Ye see I’m chock full o’ deals. I ain’t the sort o’ stuff what gives up when I knows I’m beat. If there’s anything in deals I mean to worry Frank Raymond into an early grave ‘afore election.’

“Well, here was my chance. Here was the means to feed the hungry voters on election day. ‘What’s yer deal?’ says I.

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘it’s jest this. Nearly every blamed injipendent is a ekal suffragist, but all the ekal suffridgists ain’t injipendents by a blamed sight.

Now if you people will git all the suffragists to vote fer me I’ll agree to git all the injipendents to vote for ekal suffridge, an’ more’n that, I’ll pay fer all the refreshibles when I git hold er the county money.’

“‘Will you?’ says I, joyfully.

“‘You bet I will,’ says he, ‘an’ I’ll send ye down from my store in Frederick six cans o’ mackerel fer sandwiches an’ a gallon o’ molasses to sweeten the coffee free of charge.’

“Well, I was that flumbusterkated that I fell on his neck an’ he fell on the table an’ the table fell on the cat. But we signed the agreement in black an’ white an’ the cause is safe. What do you think o’ that deal?”

“Ahem!” said the colonel, “it seems a good one for Fylpaa, but what will you get out of it?”

“What?” replied our landlady in amazement, “why, vittles — that’s what we’ll git; an’ it seems ter me that you’ve lived long enough at this here boardin’ house ter appreciate what vittles is.”

“Yes,” returned the colonel, slowly, “I think I have.”

She Relates some Exciting Ancedotes and Attends the Independent Barbecue

25 October 1890

"I can't understand," said our landlady, as she began clearing off the table just in time to prevent the colonel from helping himself to a third piece of pie, "why there's such a rush to git married jest when the cool weather comes on. This marryin' goes in streaks, I've noticed. It's like a drove o' cattle; they hesitate a long time about crossin' the road, but when one gits over the others go with a rush. But there's one o' the wictims that come pretty nigh losin' his gal this week."

"How was that?" asked Tom.

"Why he thought he'd jest take a little nap 'afore the ceremony to gain strength, an' so he laid down an' went ter sleep. An' the folks got all ready an' went ter church, an' the bride an' her folks waited an' waited and behold the bridegroom didn't cometh. An' his best man got skeert and rushed up ter his room an' found him in bed.

"'George,' says he, 'fer God's sake git up!'

"'Bankrupt stock,' says George, beginin' to wake up, 'sell' em fer half price.'" 'Great Heavings, man! air you mad?' yells his best man, pullin' him onter the floor.

"'S'matter,' says George, rubbin' his eyes, 'fire?'

"'No, no!'

"'Murder?'

"'No! wuss, you loonatix, wuss! It's a weddin'!'

"An' then the happy bridesgroom remembered and jumped inter his swallertail quicker'n Harvey Jewett could foreclose on a grocery store. But when they got to the church the minister was missin'. An' so the best man rushed up ter his room and found him asleep too.

"'Arise, Revenue Doc.,' says he, 'put on your togs an' walk, or you'll miss your fee!' An' the Revenue Doc. leaped with one jump inter his clothes, an' rushed to the church, and skinned up the middle ile, an'jest missed a harrowin' death be failin' through the register, an' then he did lightnin' change act an' come forth serene in his pontifical robes an' did the job up to the everlastin' satisfaction o' the contractin' parties. An' the audience never knew how near they missed seein' the show. The only great mistake he made was to make the groom say as he'd" obay" the bride, but as wee'l join we'er goin'? ter have ekal suffridge, that ain't a bad innovation."

"Some queer things happen in life," said the doctor, "and many exciting incidents never come to the knowledge of the public."

“That’s true,” quoth our landlady, “now I don’t usually run to a fire, but I did galivant up ter that one at Coe’s the other mornin’, and I wouldn’t a’ missed it fer a farm. The wall got afire back of the gasoline stove, an’ the smoke went ‘atween the ceilin’ boards and oozed out ‘atween the shingles on the roof. Miss Coe she put the fire out in a jiffy, and when the trouble was all over up galloped the chief o’ the fire department followed by the hose cart an’ the whole town. The smoke was still a pourin’ gently through the shingles, as it hadn’t had time ter escape, an’ it set ‘em all crazy.

“‘Hitch onter that’ air hydrant!’ yelled the chief, an’ the men yelled an’ cussed an’ tumbled over each other, an’ fit an’ cussed agin an’ hitched on. By that time the crowd had jumped onter the little roof and begun to tear off the shingles an’ the roof-boards with pickaxes an’ they played the hose onter the smoke till it didn’t have the heart to show itself any more. An’ the bystadders bossed the job an’ hooted an’ told the firemen their business an’ the excitement run high, I tell ye. It was nigh noon ‘afore the excitement calmed down an’ I got a chance to go in an’ see that the fire had damaged the buildin’ about $5 wuth and the firemen about $145 wuth. That’s the way with fires, but they’re a heap sight more excitein’ than a injipendent barbecue on a cold day.”

“Oh, you attended it, did you?” asked the colonel.

“Yes. I don’t often miss a free feed — an’ at heart you can bet l’m a injipendent fust, last an’ in between. But the grub was disappointin’. It didn’t have no salt on it, an’ the first piece I got was burnt to a crisp. ‘Gimme some a little rarer,’ says I ter my friend, Feelyerpaw. He did, but it were so rare that it hadn’t really got baked through, an’ so I quit eatin’ an’ went around advisin’ the wimmen an’ children an’ a few men I found not to eat nothin’ or they’d die o’ dyspepsia ‘afore election day. An’ I made up my mind then an’ there that the next time I went ter a barbecue I’d stay to home and eat pancakes, an’ I’ll come out ahead!”

She Gets Her Dander up and Goes Back on Politics

1 November 1890

"Yesterday night," said our landlady, as she set the table carefully, and arranged a knife, fork and spoon beside each boarder's plate, "were All-halloween an' there were quite a select party held ter celebrate the event."

"Did you go?" asked Tom, eying the table hungrily.

"You bet I did, an' I'm glad of it, although I feel almost as rocky as the fellers did as went ter Columbia We'nsday night. All the boys was with our party, an' the fust thing we done was to bob fer apples. As apples is high priced this year everybody laid 'emselves out to git suthin'. Tommy Camburn he bobbed fer an appel marked 'apintment,' but it had so much Moody grease on it that he couldn't get hold. Johnnie Drake he bobbed fer another 'appintment' appel, an' cried because he said Jumper had hoodooed it. Jump he bobbed fer an appel marked 'popularity,' but it were too smooth fer his teeth. Hank Williams were after a boodle appel an Johnnie Firey fit him so hard they didn't either of 'em git it. Billy Kidd grabbed a appel marked' injipendents truths,' an' found it rotton inside, an' Frank Brown's 'speculation' appel were as holler as a drum. Slosser wanted the biggest appel they was there, an' he got his fangs on it, too, but when he opened it, it were full o' wind and gaul an' he didn't seem ter enjoy it much. Elder McBride got his eye on the 'Pierre' appel an' worked like a nailer for it, but when he got it he found it stuffed with bogus checks and mortgaged lots, an' the dominie looked kinder sad arter that.

"Then the boys tried goin' down cellar backerds with a candle an' a lookin' glass. Johnnie Firey nearly fainted when he saw Hank Williams dressed as Fate lookin' over his shoulder, an' Judge Crofoot smiled kinder meloncolic at the reflection o' Johnnie Adams in his lookin'-glass. August Witte got skeert at seein' Bob Moody smile outer the glass at him, an' Cholly Howard saw a picter where all the common council was on their knees beggin' ter him fer help. All Dan Shields saw was a big dollar an' a packidge of Cholly Harris' stickers an' he groaned in speerit because he couldn't git the dollar.

"Finally I got disgusted with the hull thing an' when Jim Ringrose suggested that it would be more fun to go out and ring door bells, I come home feelin' as mad as a wet hen."

"It seems to me that that is your natural condition. The world don't agree with you."

"It may be I'm soured," snapped our landlady in answer to the impertinent remark of the colonel's, "but I think it's most enough to sour anybody, the

way this political champaign is a goin'. Take the capital fight, for instance. There's more dirty work done by the real estate robbers o' Pierre and Huron in one day than there is by the biggest pack o' thieves in the country in a hull year. I hain't got nothin' agin' the towns, mind ye, it's the people as is runnin' them as is disgustin' everybody that is anybody. If I had a right to vote next Tuesday I'd jest vote fer Bath fer the capital an' keep my self respec'. But the wimmin don't vote yet, er things would be different."

"I'm sorry," said the doctor, in his mild voice, "that you see fit to criticise people who are only endeavoring to turn an honest penny. But the capital fight is only a small part of the campaign. Now, in politics — "

"It's worse!" she yelled, slamming down the potatoes so fiercely that the dish separated gracefully into several portions, "it's enuff sight worse. The republicans is chokin' the pore injipendents, an' the demicrats is boostin' up the farmers an' laughin' in their sleeve at the muddle things is in. It ain't their picnic. This 'ere fight is' atween the injipendents and the republicans, an' if the grand ole party didn't have that ole war reckerd ter back 'em they'd come outer the little end o' the horn, too."

"I am aware," said the colonel, sarcastically, "that you favor the independents, but don't forget that in the hour of the nations' peril — "

"Fiddlesticks!" cried Mrs. Bilkins, glaring at her opponent, while she brought her clenched fist down plump into the butter dish, "that fight's been fit thirty year ago! W'ats that got ter do with that 'air McKinley an' that Silver bill an' such nonsense? The injipendents is in the right, only I don't like their kind o' mud-slingin' any more'n I do the republicans. It's a shame fer them to write sech mean things about Johnnie Adams an' Frank Raymond an' Jump' an' Hank Williams, as has never done no harm to a livin' critter, an' only works for the interests o' their feller men. But it's just as bad on the other side. Slosser's paper is so dirty nowadays that you kin hardly read it, an' the republicans calls my pore friend, Feelyerpaw, a villin an' pritty near proves it, too! They've found out all the wicked things as Loucks an' Scattergood an' the other fellers has done when they wasn't thinkin' an' told folks all about it, without considerin' their feelin's, an' even nice, innercent Tom Campbum is gittin' so he tells stories. Now then, let me ask ye, if there should happen, by any chance to be an honest man left in South Dikoty, what's he goin' ter vote fer?"

"The grand old party!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Independence and the Farmers' rights!" declared the doctor.

"Democracy," said Tom, "first, last and — "

"Nothin' o' the sort," interrupted our landlady, "if he's really honest, he'll jest vote fer ekal suffridge, Bath fer capital, an' — "

“Well?”
“An’ put the rest o’ the tickets inter the fire.”

She has her Last Say concerning Politics, and Criticises a Society Event

8 November 1890

"Anything new?" inquired our landlady, as she dumped the buckwheat cakes upon the table and salted the butter well so that the boarders would not eat of it too freely.

"Yes," replied the doctor, briskly, "Mrs. Oleson has presented her husband — "

"I mean about election," explained Mrs. Bilkins, straining the coffee through a piece of flour sack.

"No," replied the colonel, who had just come in, "no one can tell anything about the result of the election."

"Well," replied our landlady, "as far as that goes there's several results as I knows of, myself, although the county c'mitte may be in blissful ignoramus. Ye see I was 'pinted to go ter the polls and hold the voters in line fer ekal suffridge an"injipendence.' So I goes over to our ward an' sets to work. I had 'em all put a cross on the' yes,' so's the counters would know as they was votin' fer ekal suffridge, an' when Elder McBride come in he wouldn't do it nohow, 'cause, he said, women had sufferin' enough. So he put a cross on the 'no' an' chucked it in the box. Pritty soon Frank Brown, that knows everything about politics, come in an' says we was all wrong an' that the elder had voted fer ekal suffridge. An' the elder was so skeert he dasen't go home till midnight, an' then he wished he hadn't gone home at all. I'm sorry I made such a mistake. Cap. Hauser he begun to explain to me how it was early in the mornin', but the polls closed before he got through, so it didn't do no good. I think I seed more scandalous things done on 'lection day than ever Ed. Lowe dreamed of in all his philology, as Shookspear says. A man would walk in and loaf around a little while, an' then some Pierre feller would take him inter a corner an' talk ter him a minit, an' the man would put his hand behind him and then put it in his pocket an' walk up ter the polls an' vote while the other feller watched him like a cat does a mouse. Oh, I tell you, this is a great country, and jest about as free as a dictionary is that you git by buyin' forty dollars wuth o' goods at a store. Instid o' havin' one king, we've got hundreds, an' they run the government for what money there is in it, an' the people fer what money they can git out of'em. I think the reason they calls these politicians 'rings' is because there ain't anything square about 'em. But there, I've had enough of politics to last me a life-time, an' if you boarders don't give the sujec' a rest you can find some other boardin' house."

“I’m sure,” exclaimed the colonel, “that I’ve not said a word.”

“No, you republicans don’t say much jest now.”

Tom smiled sweetly and our landlady caught him at it. “Oh, you injipendents is as lively as Narregang at a ‘fantom party,’ but when you’ve been in politics a year or so you’ll be as corrupt as a pail o’ sour kraut. It takes politics to knock the honesty out of a person.”

“Yes,” remarked the doctor, dreamily, “you’ve had some experience yourself and you ought to know.”

Mrs. Bilkins looked at him rather sharply, but said nothing. She simply poured a half-frozen fly out of the milk pitcher into his second cup of coffee, and handed it to him with a sigh.

“That ‘Phantom Party’ seems to have been a great success,” said Tom, to change the drift of conversation.

“P’raps it were,” retorted our landlady, “but it don’t seem ter me to be proper fer gals and fellers ter galivant around in their night-dresses an’ sheets an’ sich things. There’s a place fer everything an’ the place fer sheets is on the beds; fer night gownds also. It must a been a funny thing. They say George Kimberly made frantic love ter another man’s wife, thinkin’ it were his own, an’ the married wimmen never got so many chances to dance at a party in their lives because the fellers didn’t know who they were. Quincy Braden couldn’t understand why everybody was onter his disguise until he took his sheet off an’ found ‘Braden’ marked on it in big letters in indellible ink. Narre, he found a fantom as jest suited him an’ danced all the evenin’ with her, an’ he told me in confidence he really thought he was falin’ in love with her. His feelin’s was like mixed pickles when she unmasked an’ he found it were his wife all the time. This here maskeradin’ may be all right, but as fer me, I’d rather go to a temperance oyster supper or a experience meetin’ any time.”

She Organizes a Reading Club in the Most Approved Style of the Art

15 November 1890

"I never thought," declared our landlady, as she sharpened the carver on one of the doctor's old boots, preparatory to an attack on the beefsteak, "that I should ever be drawed into the gaudy whirl o' sassiety."

"You mean the giddy whirl," remarked Tom.

"Perhaps, young man, you knows what I means better than I do myself, but I doubt it. If I'm to be a sassiety woming I'll be a out an' outer, and don't you fergit it, nuther!"

"That's right, Mrs. Bilkins," said the colonel, soothingly, "but may I ask what branch of society you are at present shining in?"

"Why, cert, Kurnel, o' course you may," replied our landlady, beaming again. "Ye see, the thing as is the cheesejust now is them 'air readin' clubs, an' so Miss Smithers an' I, we made up our minds we'd have one, too. You ain't anybody in Aberdeen if you ain't joined a readin' club. So we called a meetin' of all the prominent boardin' house keepers 'xcept Jim Ringrose, an' talked it over. When the meetin' were assembled I did like Jump alius does, and made myself Chairman. When I'd stated the objec' o' the meetin' Miss Johnsing got up an' said as readin' were a art she never buckled to, an' she thought she was too old to learn now.

"'Tain't ne'ssary to read,' says I; 'I never heerd that they did that at the readin' clubs.'

"'What do they do, then?' says Miss Johnsing.

"'Why, *eat*, you fool!' says I, slightly losin' my temper at so much ignorance in the nineteenth centenary.

"'Then,' says Miss Johnsing, 'I'm your huckleberry.'

"At that Miss Smithers slapped her face, an' quiet was restored.

"'O' course,' says I, 'we've got to have a name. There's the West Hill Readin' Club, an' the We'n'sdy Readin' Club, an' The Pleasant Hour Readin' Club an' the Bildin' an' Loan Readin' Club, an' we've got to be jest as high toned as any of 'em.'

"'An' don't any o' them 'air clubs do no readin'?' asked Mirandy Jenkins. Miss Smithers raised the back o' her hand to her, but I stopped the row with a look an' answered perlitely:

"'No, you ijut, they don't. Some has luncheons an' some grand dinners an' some refreshments — but they all eat. An' once a year they invites their husbunds to a feast.'

"'That lets me out,' says Miss Jones — the one as is crossed-eyed, 'I ain't

got no husband, an' I never will have, so there!'

"Well, I saw the thing would bust up in a fight yet if I didn't interfere, so I says, soothin'ly, 'my dear, you can invite Doc. Fowler. We'll make a by-law to that effec'.'

"'Doc. he's alius been mad about these wimmin's parties, an' once threatened to git up a" afternoon beer" fur the men, but prohibition throtded the skeme. Now we'll put Doc. on our list an' one more misguided man will be saved by a woman's smile — Miss Joneses smile!'

"Miss Jones was so tickled she larfed, an' quiet was restored.

"'I perpose,' said Miss Smithers, 'that we call this here club the Bilkins Readin' Club.'

"Everybody hoorayed, but I knew Miss Smithers did it so she could borrow my clothes line of a Monday, so I thunk twice 'afore I accepted the honor. But a woman likes fame as well as a man, so I smiled sweedy an' said: 'Thanks, I accept with reciprocity. An' I move that Miss Smithers has the fust meetin' at her house.'

"Everybody yelled approval excep' Miss Smithers, an' I knew by the way her back humped that she saw I'd got even with her."

"So the reading club is an accomplished fact," remarked the doctor, with an amused air.

"Yes, and you can bet you collar it's a daisy an' a reg'lar sassiety deal. Miss Smithers has so much pride that she'll do it up brown, an' I think the thing'll be a success. We're going to announce that we're reading Ella Wheeler Wilcox'es works, but o' course everybody'll know that's jest a perlite lie, an' that we don't read nuthin'. I hear the West Hill Club wants to cunsolidate with us, but the Bilkins Club must sink or swim on its own merrits, an' as long as I'm the chairman, you can gamble your socks it'll swim!"

She gives the Boarders a Thanksgiving Dinner and Discusses her Blessings

29 November 1890

"There's an old sayin'," remarked our landlady, impressively, as she plunged the fork into the turkey and waved the carving knife gracefully in the air to point her remarks, "that sufficient to the day is the evil of tomorrer; therefore, eat, drink and be gay, fer tomorrer we go back to hash agin."

"That is a noble bird," declared the colonel, eying the turkey in a friendly manner, "and worthy to be the emblem of a Thanksgiving feast."

"Yes," replied our landlady, "an' it cost nine cents a pound. We've got this much to be thankful for, anyhow, that turkeys is cheap — an' very fillin', too."

"I suppose," remarked the doctor, reflectively, that we have many other things to give thanks for, if we could only remember them."

"To be sure," returned our landlady. "We can give thanks that the Injins haven't tommyhawked us yet, an' that the county seat is where it can set fer keeps, an' that the weather keeps mild so's the coal will last longer, an' that the capital fight is over at last, an' that the injipendents is skeert to find 'emselves in power at last, an' that every merchant is sellin' goods cheaper than anyone else, an' that Harvey Jewett is still outer the poor house, an' that boardin' houses has all got good credit at the grocers yit, an' that there's so many tea-parties that folks can economize on grub at home, an' that the mayor ain't struck fer higher wager because he works so hard for the good o' the city, an' that the newspapers are able to run, whether folks pays their subscription or not, an' that opera companies is scarce at $2 apiece, an' that turnips is cheap if pertaters is dear, an' a good many other things. More turkey, doc?"

"Well, a little," he replied, taking a shoe-button that had been concealed in the dressing out of his mouth, "but the blessings you enumerate are the blessings of a community. Now do you think that individually we have anything to be thankful for?"

"In course I do! If we hadn't we'd a moved inter some community a leetle better off ter eat our thanksgiving dinner. Now, fer my part, I'm thankful that I got a week's board outer Tom, here, yesterday."

"And well you may be," replied that young man, helping himself to the last of the gravy, notwithstanding he discerned a hairpin in the bottom of the bowl; "and the doctor can be thankful for all the patients he'll get tomorrow because they will overeat today."

The doctor brightened up.

“To be sure,” he exclaimed, “I had forgotten that.”

“What,” said Tom, “have I got to be thankful for?”

“That you ain’t a bigger fool than you air,” retorted Mrs. Bilkins, as she brought in the mince pie; “for any feller that’ll deny his blessin’s a day like this ain’t fit to be outer a loonatix asylum.”

“I suppose that you are right,” replied the youth, “for misfortune is only comparative after all, and no one is so badly off that he mightn’t be worse. It’s hard to be called a fool, but I remember that I did pay you the board and so I won’t resent it.”

“That’s right; we’ll leave resentment to Loucks an’ the minister that didn’t get invited out to dinner today — if there is any. But say, Kernel, you seem to be kind o’ thoughtful, — what have you to be thankful for?”

“I was thinking,” replied the veteran; as he took a tooth out of the mince pie and laid it on the side of his plate, “that I ought to be thankful because when I bought my last suit of clothes I got two pair of pants instead of one — otherwise I should have to parade the streets this winter in my natural-wool underware.”

“There!” cried our landlady, triumphantly, “ye see we’ve all got suthin’ to be thankful for if we only stop to think it out. I make no doubt but people in the effet yeast thinks us Dakota sufferers won’t give no thanks today, but that’s where they’re off their belt. This thanksgivin’ is a glorious instertution, an’ I for one am glad as I live in a state where there’s still suthin’ to be thankful for, an’ turkeys is cheaper nor beefsteak!”

Our Landlady (3)

6 December 1890

"Well, here I am again," cried our landlady, as she threw open the door and walked in upon the startled boarders, "an' you can bet I'm glad to get back, fer I'm nearly starved to death."

"Glad to see you, ma'am," said the colonel, "sit down and have some dinner. The hired girl don't feed us quite as well as you did, but we've managed to get along."

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Mrs. Bilkins, eying the spread upon the table critically.

"Fried chicken, 'scalloped oysters, sweet pertaters, an' — Great Scott! I'll bet that girl ain't got two cents left in that ten dollar coupon book I give her jest 'afore I went away!"

"Probably not," returned the doctor, "as I had to order the dinner today on my own responsibility. But here you are, fresh from the reservations and you haven't told us anything about the Indians yet."

"That's so," exclaimed our landlady, "but this reckless prodigalness clean druv the Injins outer my head. Oh, yes, I've been to the reservation all right enough — bearded the lion in his whiskers so to speak, an' I'm alive yit to tell the tale."

"Tell us all about it," urged Tom, as he drew his chair to the stove and lit a cigar.

"I will. Ye see, arter the president wouldn't let Buffalo Bill run this campaign ter suit hisself an' General Miles, I made up my mind I'd take the thing inter my own hands and find out what the red demons intended to do, or not to do, as Ham expresses it. Fer this skare is like the bile on a man's tenderloins, it assumes tremenjous proportions without amountin' to anything, an' is more of a nuisance that it is a bother. So I tuk the President's Message, and the Life o' Buffalo Bill an' the Cranmer Contest Case an' put 'em in my reticule along with some crackers an' cheese an' my knittin' an' started fer the seat o' war. I thought if I struck anything rich I'd telegraph it to the New York papers an' make my expenses an' a reckerd as a female correspondint. Well, I struck the reservation about noon. I hired a boy to drive me half way, but he took to his heels an' so I druv on alone. Pritty soon I come to the camp an' found it deserted and the bones o' some of the government cattle strewed about the ground. But the fire was still smolderin' an' so I pushed on rapidly, as they say in the novels. Arter awhile I caught sight of a large body of Injinsjest ahead o' me. 'Hoi' up!' I yelled, but they turned and saw me, an' givin' a whoop o' terrer they run fer their lives. But

my nag was a good one, an' arter I'd begun to read the President's Message to him he run so fast that he caught up with the Injins in no time an' they threw 'emselves on their knees an' begged fer mercy.

"'Here you," Hole-in-the-Face,' "says I, fiercely, 'what do mean by runnin' away? Come up here an' explain yerself!'

"Now, Hole-in-the-Face is one o' the bravest Sioux outside o' Sioux Falls, an' he come up kinder sad an' says: 'Don't hurt us, Miss' Bilkins, an' we'll never do it agin.'

"'Why should I hurt you?' says I.

"'Why,' says he, 'the scouts is all bringin' in word that the whites is all risin' agin' the Injins an' so I was kinder afraid when I saw your complexion.'

"'Hole-in-the-Face,' says I, sternly, 'do I look as if I'd hurt a pore Injin?'

"'No,' says he, 'but Candidate-afraid-of-his-Pocketbook was in the camp this mornin' an' said the rumors o' the whites risin' that we'd heard was all true. He said that the whites was all starvin' in Dakota, an' the government wouldn't give 'em any rations, an' so they was cornin' to rob us Injins of what we had. I tell you the Injins is pritty badly skeert an' they're leavin' their homes an' bandin' together fer mutual pertection.'

"'What about them oxes what I saw the remains of at the camp?' says I.

"'Oh,' says he, 'ifwe hadn't killed 'em the whites would, an' self-preservation is the lust law of a good politician.'

"'But about that ghost-dance,' says I suspicious like.

"'Why,' says he, 'we live in a free country. We Injins can vote an' you wimmen can't, an' don't you fergit that. Religion is free as water an' much more plenty. If there's any fault found with our runnin' our religion to suit ourselves we'll jest join the independents, an' then I guess you'll be sorry you spoke.'

"'Hole-in-the-Face,' says I, 'is this a square deal?'

"'It is,' says he; 'jest look at it yourself. Here we Injins has been drawin' rations from the government an' layin' by our savin's till we've got in pritty fair shape, an'just when we least expect it, here comes a risin' of the starved whites, an' they're liable to swoop down on us at any minute an' rob us o' all we possess.'

"'No,' says I, 'they're afraid o' your swoopin' down on them.'

"He laughed sourkastically. 'What have they got as we want?' says he; 'Nothin'! But the Injuns has got lots that the government has guv 'em that the whites would like to have for themselves. No, Miss Bilkins, you can't fool me like that! But my braves is gettin' anxious to remove their property out o' harm's way, so good day to ye, as the legislater said to Gid. Moody.'

“I saw it were no good arguin’ with him, so I druv sadly back. Wherever I went the Injuns was fleein’ in one direction and the settlers in another. I’ve telegraphed the truth to all the papers, but they ansered an’ said:

“‘We ain’t lookin’ fer truth — can get all we want fer a cent a line, but a good lie is wuth a dollar a word to us any minnit.’

“‘You’re a set o’ rascals!’ I telegraphed back.

“‘If it was a news item,’ they answered, ‘we’d give ye a cent a line fer that assertion, but it ain’t, so shet up!’

“Well, I shet, an’ come home, a sadder but a hungrier woman. This gittin’ at the truth ain’t what it’s cracked up to be, an’ the next time I mix up in the Injin troubles I’ll let somebody else do the mixin’ an’ devote my time to economizin’ on coupon books.”

She Enjoys a pleasant chat with the Boarders

20 December 1890

"This coffee," remarked our landlady, as she poured out the colonel's cup and adding the skim milk stirred it vigorously with her own spoon, — for she liked the colonel; "this coffee is the Crushed Politician brand, an' I bought it yisterday of a agent fer a quarter with a diamond necklace set in tin throwed in."

"It tastes of crushed politician," said Tom, moodily.

"Named after the republican county committee, probably," added the doctor, sipping it warily.

"The necklace were worth a quarter any day," declared our landlady, "an' the agent said if the coffee weren't good he'd refund the money. Now, Kurnel, tell me the solid artesian truth, is that 'air coffee any good?"

"Well," replied the colonel, sadly, for he knew that a woman is ever sensitive about her coffee, "I believe that I'd get my money back — that is, if you ever expect to see him again — which you probably don't."

"No," sighed Mrs. Bilkins, "I'm alius gittin' fooled. It's jest like the time I went to the Curmess, wich some feller said would a been a dog-gone mess if the cur had been left off; but I heered Tom say as there was goin' to be a quart 'et an' a quint 'et an' I wanted to go an' help eat 'em. But the lunch was pritty high fer the kind an' there weren't a quart of it altogether, much less a quint. But there! I ain't got nothin' to say agin' the show, fer these church doin's is gen'ally wuth the money an' goes to a good cause, — that is, the receipts nearly alius pay the expenses. When they don't, them that's worked the hardest has to put up the rest o' the shuks, an' imagine they'll find their reward in Heving, where church sociables are at a bigger discount than Crismus presents in a barber shop. Now I've got to work all my spare time to turn my lavender silk fer the Charity Ball, fer I wouldn't miss it fer a farm. You'd have to go with me, Kumel, fer it ain't proper fer a lady to go alone, an' you can borry George Cadwell's swaller-tail, that he ain't wore sence the prize fight. I hope Narre, will be there so's I can jest grab him around the neck an' swing him in a good old-fashioned waltz, fer Narre, is a great dancer an' loves to spin."

"It's almost too warm for a dance," said the colonel, with a troubled face.

"Well, it is rather summery. I got a letter from my brother in Oshkosh the other day, an' he says in it, says he, 'here you've ben slavin' fer six year in Dakoty an' what have you got?'

"An' I ansered an' says: 'we've got the beautifullest weather in Ameriky,' says I.

“‘Then,’ he writ back, ‘send me two barrels an’ a hogshead, for it’s so rainy an’ nasty here that I ain’t gone to the bank fer three days, an’ my money drawers is runnin’ over!’ That’s jest like my brother, he alius liked a joke. But speakin’ o’jokes, a feller walked inter Salsberry’s yisterday an’ says, ‘hev you got a dairy fer sale?”No,’ says Skip, with a grin, ‘but Mr. Leavitt hes got one he’d like to dispose of.’ O’ course the feller meant a writin’ cullender, but Skip is nothin’ if he ain’t funny. He’s goin’ down to Pierre this week to see if they won’t make him United States Senator. I’d rather see Kernel Evans there, myself, but the town can’t hardly spare him. Well, Christmas is cornin’ mighty quick now, an’ everybody’ll be jest as happy as if we was all Senators. The only thing that worries me is that all the stores is sellin’ for less nor cost an’ I expect we’ll have all the merchants on the town after New Years. But I s’pose it can’t be helped unless everyone insists on payin”em a fair profit, an’ it ain’t in human natur’ to do that.”

She Fills the Colonel's Stocking and Talks of the Charity Ball

27 December 1890

"I say, Kernel," shouted our landlady, at the head of the head of the front stairs, "if ye want to see wat's in your sock an' eat the pancakes while their smokin' jest rustle a little an' come down to breakfus'!"

"What's that?" demanded Tom, as he came down stairs, "has the Colonel been hanging up his stocking?"

"Nothing of the kind," growled the veteran, making his appearance, "don't let Mrs. Bilkins make a fool of you."

They entered the dining-room, and there, sure enough, was a military looking stocking hung by the mantel and bulging out in a suspicious way.

"Ahem!" remarked the Colonel, turning red, "where did that sock come from?"

"Well," replied our landlady, reluctantly, as she looked fondly upon the Colonel's manly form, "it might 'a come outer the mendin', but the presincts is from Santa Claus sure!"

"Open it," said the doctor, entering the room.

"Open it," laughed Tom, "and we'll see what the Saint has sent you."

The Colonel looked from one to the other with a puzzled air.

"If this is a brutal joke," he suggested, "someone will die, but if it is a kind remembrance of Mrs. Bilkins, why I'm bound to accept it gratefully."

Our landlady smiled and blushed, and blew her nose on her apron with an embarrassed air.

"You know, Kernel," she murmured, "that you alius was my favrite; not as you pays your board so mighty reglar as you might, but you allus treats me as a gentleman should treat his landlady, an' I flatters myself I know a good man when I sees him."

The Colonel bowed mechanically.

"Examine it, do!" urged Tom, referring to the stocking, "for we're getting hungry."

The Colonel unpinned the neatly-mended sock and took out a small parcel which he opened with a trembling hand.

It contained a yellowish looking cigar which he laid upon the table and Tom pocketed promptly.

The next production was a gaily-decorated blotter, bearing the inscription:

"If you love me
As I love you,

No nife shall cut
Our love in to."

Tom laughed, the doctor coughed and the Colonel wiped the perspiration from his brow and made another dive at the sock.

"This," said he, "must be meant for a pen-wiper."

"Nothing of the kind!" protested Tom, indignantly, "it's a lock of hair, and it looks awfully like Mrs. Bilkins'."

The colonel darted a fierce glance at him and dropped the memento into the coal hod. Our landlady stopped giggling and looked solemnly out of the window.

"Boys," said the colonel desperately, "let's postpone the rest till new years."

"By no means," replied the doctor, "I am very interested and you know 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick.'"

"An' there's no good doctor in the neighborhood to cure it," murmured our landlady.

"Go on," said Tom, "I think the next is a doll."

"No," said the colonel, examining the article musingly, "it's a picture of Ed. Lowe."

"What on earth makes his pockets bulge out so?" inquired the doctor.

"I suppose," replied the colonel, "that he was still secretary of the county committee when that was taken."

"That 'air," broke in our landlady, "was all a mistake, I — that is — Santa Claus, must' a got hold o' the wrong pictur in the dark."

"Then he should certainly apologize," said the colonel. "What's this?"

"That," replied our landlady, with interest, "is a great thing. You can use it fer a watch key, a can-opener, a manicure set, a bread toaster, a watch charm or a corkscrew. I bought it at 33 1/3 per cent off, an' — "

"*You* bought it!" shouted the colonel. "Now let me ask you, madam, by what right you inflict blotters and cigars and watch charms and locks of hair upon an inoffensive man? Have I ever done anything to warrant — "

But our landlady had flown to the kitchen, and when she came back with red eyes and a plate of steaming cakes a quarter of an hour afterwards, the donations of Santa Claus had disappeared and the doctor was reading the paper and Tom teasing the cat and the colonel looking out of the window with an air as if wholly unconscious of the late unpleasantness. For they all liked Mrs. Bilkins, and a truce had been patched up with the colonel — at least until after breakfast was over.

"How did you like the Charity Ball?" inquired the doctor, as our landlady

poured out the coffee.

"Well, it were considerable high jinks," she replied, as the sunshine of her smile broke through her clouded face (copyrighted), "but I didn't stay long because it were so mixed an' Cholly Howard jumped on my toe so hard that I could not dance another step. But Miss. Joneses hired gal she said she never had so much fun in her life, and there was all the high toned an' the low toned jest mixed up like a hasty puddin' fer sweet Charity's sake, an' the sassiety made a heap o' money, too, altho' some cranky ones said the orchestra got half the receipts an' Hazeltine half an' the poor the other half. I seed a good many there that I know ain't paid their board bills fer weeks, but as long as it were for charity they're excusable for blowing in a dollar that way."

She Visits the Great Downditch Farm and tells the Boarders of its Wonders

3 January 1891

"Gentlemen," said our landlady as she entered the room at which the boarders were at supper, and threw her hat on the side-board and hung her shawl over the doctor's head; "this kind o' life ain't worth the livin', an' if ever I were sick o' this 'air boardin' house I am this minute!"

"What's wrong?" inquired the colonel, wonderingly, "I thought you had been on a visit to the Updyke farm, and to have you come home in such a humor as this is astonishing."

"Updyke!" cried our landlady, with an unmistakable sneer; "I hain't been near that wretchid hole; but I've been to a much more wonderful place."

"Indeed," quoth Tom, "here — sit right down in this chair and let me feed you 'scalloped oysters while you tell us all about it."

"All right, but don't interrupt me, for every word I'm goin' to say is gospel truth. Well, you know I sot out fer the Updyke farm. I got the best directions I could, an' travelled over the prairie till I most thought I'd lost my way. Bimeby I come to a feller ridin' swiftly along in a waggin. I rubbed my eyes in amazement fer a minit, 'cause there was no hoss or beast o' any kind hitched to it. Then I yells out, 'hullup.' He did, cornin' to a period right by me."

"A period?"

"Well, a full stop. I asked him how in blazes he made his waggin go by itself." "Lectricity,' says he; 'ye see, the machinery is stored under the seat. All I have to do when I want to go is press a button, an' she rushes.'

"'How do you guide it?' says I.

"'By this little wheel — like steerin' a ship. It beats bicycles 'cause you can carry a load an' it ain't no exertion.'

"'Who inwented it?' says I.

"'Downditch,' says he.

"'Well,' says I, 'can ye tell me where the Updyke farm is?'

"'Updyke,' says he, thinkitively, 'why, he used to work for Downditch, but his farm's a good ways off — on the other side of Aberdeen.'

"'Dear me,' says I, 'then I've walked all this ways fer nothin'. I wanted to see all the wonders he does with 'lectricity an' a artesian well.'

"'Humph!' says he, 'why don't you go on to Downditch's? Beats Updyke's all holler. Jest take that trail ter the right an' it'll fetch ye there. So long!'

"He teched his button an' the waggin whirled away, an' I thought my best

plan was to foller his advice, so I took the path ter the right, an' bimeby I come to a lot o' buildin's all clustered together an' painted pure white. The biggest one, all wings an' angles an' coverin' about a acre o' ground, I tuk to be the house, so I meandered up to the front door, an' seein' a electric button, I pushed it. Instanter the door flew open an' I started to step inside, but my feet went out from under me an' I went kerflop inter a big arm chair, which was on rollers an' started to once to move down the hall with me in it. A door opened as we come to it, an' as we passed through some little steel arms jumped down an' ontied an' tuk off my bunnit and jerked off my shawl, an' away we glided to another door. This opened automatic'ly, too, an' we entered a small room as I took to be a study. In it was a thoughtful lookin' man, who looked up an' bowed pleasantly as my chair stopped alongside o' his'n.

"'How do, Mrs. Bilkins,' says he.

"'Howdy,' says I, 'but how did ye know my name?'

"'It was writ inside yer shawl,' says he, 'an' the machine as took it off read it an' telephoned it to me.'

"I looked at him in wonder. He smiled an' touched a button on his vest.

Instantly a handkercher flew out of his pocket, wiped his nose an' went back agin, all of its own accord.

"'May I ask your name?' says I.

"He touched another button on his vest an' a card flopped out of his buzzum which read: 'Aesop Downditch, Scientist, Bom at Ipswich, 1821, graduated at Redfield College; fer ferther particulars, see autobiography, price $1. Fer sale here.'

"'You must be my guest until termorrer, Mrs. Bilkins,' says he, 'let me interduce ye to my wife an' dorter.' He teched a button on the table an' instantly two doors opened on opposite sides o' the room an' his wife an' darter rolled in on chairs an' smiled an' bowed. Mr. Downditch interduced me an' soon we was all buzzum friends.

"'It's time fer dinner, papa,' says Clarabel, his dorter.

"Mr. Downditch touched a button on his vest an' his watch flew outer a pocket an' opened in front o' him.

"'So it is,' says he, 'how tempus does fugit.'

"He an' his wife an' darter then all teched a little button that was on the outside o' the arm o' their chairs, an' a wash rag o' satin came out an' washed an' dried their faces quickly an' gently. I did the same an' I must say such an' inwention removes all the terrors o' wash day.

"'How is this did?' says I.

"'All' lectricity,' says he, smilin'. 'The power to run the motor is

furnished by our artesian well, an' by a little inwention I have arranged so that all the little household an' personal duties are performed by 'lectrical apparatus, an' it saves us no end o' trouble.' He teched another button on the table as he spoke an' at once the table sank through the floor an' another rose in its place, all set fer dinner an' kivered by the most luxuriousest meal you ever heard of. There was nineteen courses an' eatables of every description, from peaches an' cream to fried manna with nectar sauce. I tell you, fellers, such board is wuth a hundred dollars a week. We eat an' drunk all we could — that is, I did, an' when we was through the table disappeared through the floor agin.

"'Who washes the dishes?' says I.

"'We employ the same agent that prepares the food an' sets the table — 'lectricity;' says Missus Downditch. 'But it's time fer the theatre; would you like to attend it, Mrs. Bilkins, 'afore you retire for the night?'

"'You bet!' says I, 'I want to take in the whole aggregation' afore I leaves. It'll make the folks in Aberdeen sick when I tells 'em about it.'

"Mr. Downditch touched a button on his vest an' shrugged his shoulders by 'lectricity.

"'It ain't any more'n any on 'em can have,' says he, 'if they puts down artesian wells and utilizes the water properly. I bid you good evenin', Mrs. Bilkins.'

"As the chairs of us three ladies moved away I saw Mr. Downditch press a vest button an' open his mouth, an' the next instant a lighted cigar was in his mouth an' he was puffin' away contentedly. I tell you I wished I could bring that vest home to you boarders! It would surprise you. But I s'pose Downditch couldn't spare it. Well, the room we was wheeled to was furnished jest like a Oproar House. 'It's a model o' the Madison Square theatre,' says Mrs. Downditch. A big phonograph played the overture, an' then the characters o' the play come out an' acted. They was all dummies with phonographs inside of'em, an' the power was furnished by the artesian well. It was a good show though, an' after it was over I bid the ladies good-night.

"'When you git to your room,' says Missus Downditch, 'tech that' air button on the side o' your chair.'

"Then the chair started an' wheeled me through the halls till it finally entered a good sized room. The only piece o' furniture in it were the bed, but that was a corker. The head of it was as high as the ceilin' an' was sunk inter the wall, an'jest above the piliers was a row o' buttons. It had a lace cover an' looked so soft I wished I didn't have to undress 'afore I got inter it. But I remembered what Missus Downditch had said, so I pressed the button on the

chair. Instantly a number o' steel arms shot out an' undressed me in a jiffy, an' flung a embroidered night gownd over my head an' there I was! Before I had recovered from my surprise the blame thing lifted me up an' shot me inter bed, the bed clothes turnin' down jest before I landed. The bed was nice an' warm, bein' heated by 'lectricity. As my head touched the pillow it set off a music box that played 'Hard Times come agin no more,' until I was fast asleep. I woke up in the mornin' feelin' as happy as an editor who's got a new subscriber, an' lay thinkin' what a glorious thing artesian wells is. As I did so my eye caught the row o' buttons on the head-board. I teched one an' a large box-like lookin' thing swooped out in front o' me, with a rubber tube hangin' to it which plumped inter my mouth. The box had several buttons labelled coffee, tea, chocolate, rum-punch, water, an' so forth. In spite o' me I winked at the one as said rum-punch, an' it was so delicately adjusted that it set the thing off, an' I tell you it was a drink worthy o' Taubman. I teched the next button an' my face was washed in a jiffy. The next one brushed my hair an' done it up; the next one shot me outer bed plump inter the chair. By techin' the same button I did last night I was dressed and then the chair moved away toward the breakfast room.

"Mr. Downditch greeted me with a smile an' asked me if I had rested well. I told him I had, an' then I sot to work on the best breakfast I ever tackled. Mr. Downditch then excused himself as he had some business to 'tend to, and he bid me good by with a smile an' left.

"'What a nice man your husband is,' says I to Misus Downditch. 'He's alius smilin'.'

"'Oh, yes,' says she, 'he smiles by' lectricity.'

"Well, after that I kept my thoughts to myself, fer fear the 'lectricity should get hold o' them. I come away soon after breakfast an' after a long journey here I am! Now, gentlemen, don't look at me so queer. I ain't crazy by a long shot. I've jest told you the plain facts. An' now let me ask you, do you think, after all that luxury, that I'll be content to settle down an' wash dishes agin? Never! This 'ere establishment is a goin' to have a artesian well with electricity attachments, if it takes every dollar I've got in Hagerty's to sink it!"

She Tells the Boarders How to Make a fortune

10 January 1891

"The fools," said our landlady, as she mashed the potatoes vigorously, "ain't all dead yet."

"No," said Tom, with a half sigh. "I realize that every day that I linger in Aberdeen when I should be in some better country."

"Fiddlesticks!" ejaculated Mrs. Bilkins fiercely, "that's just what I was a talkin' about. To think of the idjuts leavin' Aberdeen just at the time when her troubles is about over, nearly makes me sick."

"Why should one stay?" demanded Tom; "with the same amount of energy it requires to earn a crust here, I could get a full loaf anywhere else. Why should I stay? Do I owe anything to Aberdeen?"

"Prap's not," replied our landlady, putting the dinner upon the table, and sharpening the carver upon her instep, "but you owe suthin' to yourself, certain. There's ben hard times here, that goes without tellin' but the hard times is about over. We are as sure o' gittin' a crop next year as we are o' livin' til the time comes. It might a ben better to hav' gone away two year ago, when the troubles begun, but to go now, when they's about over, is rank foolishness. Before you can hardly git settled in some other locality, you'll be startled by the news o' the crops in South Dakoty, by reports o' the thousands flockin' in to the most fertile country on the yearth, of the artesian wells goin' down until the ground is like a peppar box, of the rapid rise in real estate until in no other country will land bring so high a price as in the basin o' the Jim river. Tom, jest lem'me tell you a secret.

"All the money that I earnt in the last ten year in Aberdeen I've been a puttin' inter land. The other day I got a quarter section near Bath fer a hundred dollars — — wuth five thousand any day, an' yisterday I took a feller's mortgage an' his land an' giv' him enough to get out o' the country with, — an' all it'll cost me is the interest on the mortgage! I'm a holdin' that quarter fer eight thousan' dollers, an' I'll git that fer it inside o' two year. I wasn't very rich when I hed a few hundred dollers laid by from keepin' boardin' house, but today, when I think that I've turned nearly every hundred inter a quarter section o' land, I tell ye it makes me feel like a second Jay Gould. 'Afore a year is out there'll be a big cry fer land in the Jim River valley, an' by holdin' to it a little while longer my fortune is made. Gentlemen, there's goin' ter be the biggest excitement in these parts the west has ever knowd. If ye leave here, you'll want to git back as quick as the Lord'll let you, an' if you stay, — why you've got the biggest chance to make money you ever had or ever will have. I ain't much ofa prophet,

usually, but I'll stake my reputation that before one year is past Aberdeen will be so busy and boomin' she won't know herself, an' the dull times will be forgot an' never brought to mind. Write that in yer hat an' don' fergit I said it. More steak, Kernel?"

Choice Selections from Her Rambling Remarks

17 January 1891

"There's a horrible tale of suffering come to light," said the doctor at the breakfast table the other morning.

"What is it?" inquired our landlady, always interested in relieving the distressed.

"Why, the police found a poor collector lying on a marble doorstep in Aberdeen almost frozen and starved to death, and a prominent citizen, who is building an addition to his house to accommodate his bills, took him in and cared for him and took up a collection to send him to Pierre."

"Yes, I heerd tell o' that," said our landlady, "an' I've writ a little pome on the teching incident. It reads like this:

THE COLLECTOR

"He enters the room with a pensive air an' takes off his hat an' slicks his hair, an' places his little bill right where t'will meet his wictim's stony stare. An' the wictim he says, 'I guess that's square, an' quite kerrect, but I declare, I hain't a penny o' cash to spare. Jest call agin — ta, ta! — ah there!' An' the collector goes out in the winter air, an' under his breath he swears a swear. An' says, if the lord will let him git there he'll hie to a country where a crop failure's rare.

"An' fer my part," concluded our landlady, "I'm willin' to see him go."

"Sioux Falls is gittin' everything," said our landlady the other day. "She's got the State Fair now, an' you bet she'll keep it."

"Aberdeen usually gets something," remarked the Colonel in an aggravated voice.

"So she does," agreed our landlady. "Sence we got a Commercial Club Aberdeen usually gits left! It ain't so comfortin' a reflection as a mirror in a barroom, but it's the condensed essence o' truth jest the same!"

"If I was Billy Kidd," said our landlady, as she mixed the pancakes, "I'd change my name."

"To what?" queried Tom.

"Well, at fust I thought he could change it to Cap. Kidd because he roved, ye know, an' Billy he might do likewise. But as that would suggest freebootin' to the people, perhaps that wouldn't be healthy for him. Then there's Billy Goat — — that's a commoner name nor Billy Kidd, an' would be a sort o' scapegoat from the late onpleasantness."

“You’re rather hard on the poor fellow,” said Tom.

“No,” she replied, “I’m very fond o’ him, but he’s too old to be a Kidd any longer an’ I think Billy Goat’ll jest suit him.”

She Reads a Chapter in "Looking Backward" to the Astonished and Interested Boarders

31 January 1891

"This 'ere," said our landlady, as she sat by the fire mending the colonel's socks, "is a world o' change. Nuthin' stands still except the dude when he's a gittin' his pictur' took or his moustash waxed, an' one age succeeds another with lightnin' like rapidity."

"It is only," said Tom, solemnly, "when I feel in my pockets, that I realize there is no change."

"Everything progresses an' evolutes an' merges an' bubbles an' emanates an' convalutes inter suthin' else. Everything changes — '"

"Except the weather," put in the doctor.

"I never realized," continued our landlady, ignoring her interruptions, "how liable we was ter change till this mornin'. Ye see, when I was younger I used to be kinder somnambulary — "

"What?"

"Walked in my sleep, ye know. Well, I thought I'd got all over that until this mornin'. Ye see, I went ter bed kinder worried an' onsettled last night, an' I must a had 'em agin — the somnambularys, I mean, — ' cause when I woke up this mornin' I found I'd writ a long letter to my brother Jake in my sleep."

"Very curious," remarked the colonel.

"Yes, but the most curiousest thing of all was that I'd writ as if it was 1895, which ain't fer five year to come."

"Ah, I see — looking backwards."

"I should think it were lookin' a good ways ahead. But that letter had a good many strange things in it an' I've kinder wondered if the prophet's robe didn't kind'er fall on me in my sleep an' lead me to write that 'air epistal. Fer it's nearer to a prophecy than anything else."

"Read us the letter," suggested the colonel, "it may cheer us up a bit to know how things will be five years from now."

"Yes — do!" entreated the doctor.

"Werry good," said Mrs. Bilkins, with a pleased air as she drew a carefully folded document from her bosom. "I'll fire it off, but don't you interrupt me, fer I ain't responsible fer all I say in my sleep. The letter begins this way: — " DEAR JERRY: — Havin' jest arrived here in the great metropilis o' Aberdeen, which is in the Garden of Eden, — formerly state of South Dakoty, I wind up my automatick stenogripher to dictate to you a few lines 'afore the gong rings. The air ship on which I arove were

uncomfortably crowded, havin' on board a lot o' passengers from Weisbeer, that new continent lately diskivered by Jim Ringrose at the North Pole. The ship were in charge o' Capt. Sam Vroom and were two hours late, as usual. Immejudy on my arrival I went to the Creamery Hotel, which Al. Ward has jest opened at ten dollars a day. I got a room on the sixteenth floor as were quite conwenient. Seein' a stranger's directory phonograph in the room I touched it off an' listened to the followin' while I smoothed my hair: Aberdeen, Garden o' Eden, the center o' the wonderful irrigated valley o' the Jim. The most fertile an' productive land in the world surrounds this busy metropolis an' pours its treasures into the city's marts, from whence they are airshipped to all parts of the world an' also to Pierre. Aberdeen owes its wonderful growth to irrigation an' the Buildin' an' Loan Association, an' is the largest city but one on the western continent. Its principal exports is wheat, corn, pertaters, loose gold, diamond dust an' bond coupons. Hank Williams also sometimes exports a groan. Climate, salubrious. Inhabitants sober an' friendly, popilation unknown.'

"'How's that,' says I.

"'Begun countin' it two year ago an' ain't finished yit,' says the phonograph." 'Who's Mayor,' says I.

"'Jim Davis, you fool,' says the phonograph.

"'Why d'ye say fool?' says I.

"'Because yer so ignorant o' our great men. I s'pose ye don't know Congressmen Ed. Mutz an' Skip Salisbury; ner that Frank Beard is Senator; ner that Cranmer an' Kennedy is fightin' fer district attorneyship, while Taub. looks smilin'ly on; ner that the postmaster's got so busy he's had ter drop politics, ner nothin' else. Go 'long!'

"'Ye're a impident phone',' says I, 'an' I'll report ye.' But I went along. After dinner I went out on the big piazzer an' sot down.

"'Baum's Hourly Newspaper!' yells a feller rushin' up with a book as thick as yer head.

"'Why, Georgie Slosser,' says I, 'is this you?'

"'You bet,' says he, 'I'm just coinin' money. Got the control o' the sales on this piazzer. Buy a copy? Best paper in Aberdeen.'

"'Alius was,' says I, 'yes, I'll take one.'

"Well, I sot an' read all the news an' noticed that Aberdeen had changed since the great depression of '91. Here was an advertisement o' Narregang's Bank of Eden, with a capital o' ten millions an' a surplus of twenty. I noticed that Waterman's Aberdeen Band had jest giv' a successful performance at the court o' King Stanley, o' Africa. Here was Scott's Drug Store offerin' to sell patent faith cure at ten cents a bottle an' Scott's Lymph cure for sour

stomachs at a dollar a can. Also that he was goin' to close out an' move to Chicago. Here it told how Luke an' Merten had given a picnic to seven hundred employees, includin' all but the help in their woolen mills an' shoe factories at Bath, which couldn't be spared. Also a report o' the row the police had tryin' to keep the crowds away from Beard an' Gage's big department store on last market day. There was a pictur' of McWilliam's new white marble block on the second page, which showed up finely. Taken altogether, things seemed to be rushin' in Aberdeen.

"Jest then my attention were arrested by a shout, and a chariot dashed by drawed by ten milk-white steeds.

"'Who's that?' says I to a bystander.

"'Him?' says he, 'why that's President Crose o' the Alliance, the biggest man in Eden, an' the richest.'

"'Thanks,' says I, 'I might a knowed it. But tell me, was that Ed. Lowe that I seed drivin' the electric car that just passed?'

"'Probably. It's a belt line, an' he allus likes to be in the ring. Good day, ma'am, if you want any other information just consult a phone'.'

"But I sot an' watched the stream o' people glide by an' thought o' the poor, misguided folks what left Aberdeen a few years ago, just because a crop failed. If they could a seen ahead they couldn't been driven away with Kuehnle's Injun clubs. But p'raps it were best. The no 'count people was got red of an' only the solid ones left, such as is the rich folks o' Aberdeen in 1895. But, dear Jake, I must draw this 'ere letter to a close. I'll write more about these wonderful things termorrer.

Yourn sisterly,

Saryann Bilkins

"But," added our landlady, as she folded the sheet with a sigh, "'afore I could write more, I waked up, an' it were too late. Somehow it don't seem like a dream to me, but more like a vision that may come to pass in proper time."

She Discusses New Inventions with the Boarders

8 February 1891

"I read in the papers," said our landlady, as she finished sewing a button on the doctor's overcoat and bit off the thread, as a woman will, "that the great air ship is goin' ter be a success, after all."

"Yes," said the colonel, by way of reply, "it looks as though they will be able to make it work after they've rectified a few mistakes."

"Of course," said Mrs. Bilkins, "the thing wouldn't be perfect the first time — — it ain't in natur'. The cost of sewin' a yard of cloth on the first machine Howe inwented were six dollars. But he made it work in the end, an' I'll bet a cookie to a rat trap that this 'ere flyin' machine'll do the same."

"If it does," said Tom, "the railroads will be ruined."

"An' serve 'em right," exclaimed our landlady, taking her gum from the inside band of the colonel's Sunday hat; "they've beat the people long enough an' tyranized over 'em with a rod o' iron, an' I, fer one, will be glad to see 'em shut up shop. A air-ship can call for ye at your own residence, whenever ye hoist a signal flag. People will own their private ships, too, an' go where they pleases an' if anyone wants ter quit Dakoty then why they can step inter their airships an' float around till they come to a place as is got a crop. There's other things that private airships is good for. You can go on a picnic any time you like an' take the whole family. The hired man can use it to go arter the cow with, an' it'll save him the labor o' leadin' her home by hitchin' her to the ship an' skimmin' along the surface o' the ground. At election time they can make the pollin' places air ships, an' when the ballot closes the ships can rise ter a moderate distance where the candidates can watch 'em, an' the votes be counted without any chance o' futher contests. Stanley won't be anywheres. If a feller wants to explore Africa he can do it with neatness and despatch in his air-ship. If he wants ter go ter the North Pole he can do so — pervided he don't freeze. A trip to Europe will be as cheap as livin' to home, fer all you need is a stock o' pervisions. I tell you there ain't no end to an air-ship's usefulness, an' I'm glad to see 'em a success."

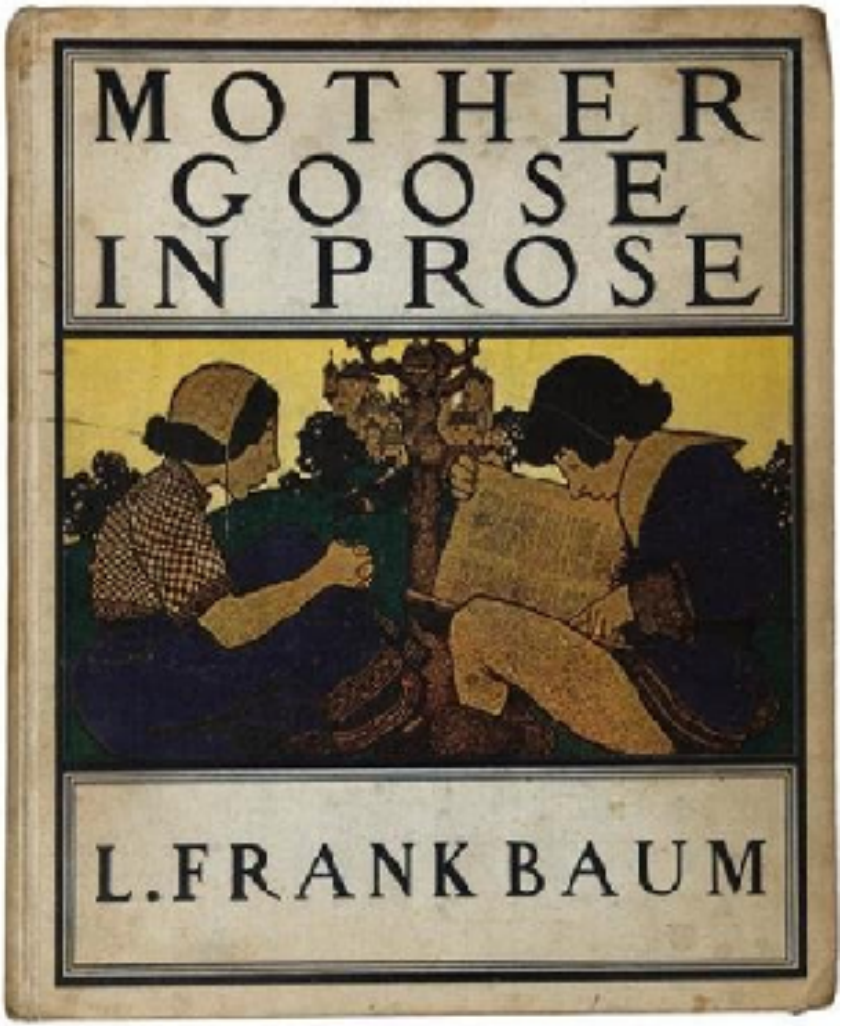
"There are a good many novel inventions lately," remarked the doctor, in a ruminating way.

"Yes," acquiesced our landlady, "an' Aberdeen ain't far behind other cities, either. Al. Ward has jest inwented a way to work over frowy butter an' make it gilt-edged creamery, an' he'll make a fortune out o' it. Wendell has inwented a way to set in a chair an' go to sleep with his feet on a red-hot stove without even burnin' the shoe leather — but he won't make a cent on

that. A bank cashear down to Ipswich has inwented a way o' lettin' his bank bust an' makin' folks think that he's only closin' out an' will pay 'em back their deposits next new years. The News has inwented a way o' makin' both ends meet, to their own surprise an' the grief o' their army o' readers. Mayor Moody has inwented a way o' makin' himself solid with the people at the expense o' the chief o' perlice. The blind pigs has inwented a way o' siccin' the prohibitionists onter the druggists an' escapin' themselves — oh, there's no end of inwentions, only they don't find a way o' makin' a dime buy a dollar's wuth, ner to give us a crop next year if there ain't no seed in the ground. There's an' irrigation business it will pay the geniuses to work at. They might also find a way to pay yer bills when you can't collect a cent to do it with; how to set through a sermon with a calm face when you know you've got ter put a nickel in the conterbushun box; also how to get help from the county commissioners an' keep your posish in bong tong serciety. But these things'll all be found out as the country progresses."

MOTHER GOOSE IN PROSE

Mother Goose in Prose, first published by Way & Williams in 1897, was L. Frank Baum's first children's book. It was also the first book illustrated by the renowned artist, Maxfield Parrish. The book features 22 stories based on Mother Goose nursery rhymes and with English settings. Baum includes each rhyme followed by a longer story. The final story, "Little Bun Rabbit" foreshadows Baum's Oz tales by including a little farm-girl named Dorothy, who talks to animals.



A first edition copy of 'Mother Goose in Prose'

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An advertisement for a giveaway of Mother Goose in Prose

Introduction

None of us, whether children or adults, needs an introduction to Mother Goose. Those things which are earliest impressed upon our minds cling to them most tenaciously The snatches sung in the nursery are never forgotten, nor are they ever recalled without bringing back with them myriads of slumbering feelings and half-forgotten images.

We hear the sweet, low voice of the mother, singing soft lullabies to her darling, and see the kindly, wrinkled face of the grandmother as she croons the old ditties to quiet our restless spirits. One generation is linked to another by the everlasting spirit of song; the ballads of the nursery follow us from childhood to old age, and they are readily brought from memory's recesses at any time to amuse our children or our grandchildren.

The collection of jingles we know and love as the "Melodies of Mother Goose" are evidently drawn from a variety of sources. While they are, taken altogether, a happy union of rhyme, wit, pathos, satire and sentiment, the research after the author of each individual verse would indeed be hopeless. It would be folly to suppose them all the composition of uneducated old nurses, for many of them contain much reflection, wit and melody. It is said that Shelley wrote "Pussy-Cat Mew," and Dean Swift "Little Bo-Peep," and these assertions are as difficult to disprove as to prove. Some of the older verses, however, are doubtless offshoots from ancient Folk Lore Songs, and have descended to us through many centuries.

The connection of Mother Goose with the rhymes which bear her name is difficult to determine, and, in fact, three countries claim her for their own: France, England and America.

About the year 1650 there appeared in circulation in London a small book, named "Rhymes of the Nursery; or Lulla-Byes for Children," which contained many of the identical pieces that have been handed down to us; but the name of Mother Goose was evidently not then known. In this edition were the rhymes of "Little Jack Homer," "Old King Cole," "Mistress Mary," "Sing a Song o' Sixpence," and "Little Boy Blue."

In 1697 Charles Perrault published in France a book of children's tales entitled "Contes de ma Mere Oye," and this is really the first time we find authentic record of the use of the name of Mother Goose, although Perrault's tales differ materially from those we now know under this title. They comprised "The Sleeping Beauty," "The Fairy," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Blue Beard," "Puss in Boots" "Riquet with the Tuft," "Cinderella," and "Little Thumb"; eight stories in all. On the cover of the book was depicted an old lady holding in her hand a distaff and surrounded by a group of children

listening eagerly. Mr. Andrew Lang has edited a beautiful English edition of this work (Oxford, 1888).

America bases her claim to Mother Goose upon the following statement, made by the late John Fleet Eliot, a descendant of Thomas Fleet, the printer:

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there lived in Boston a lady named Eliza Goose (written also Vergoose and Vertigoose) who belonged to a wealthy family. Her eldest daughter, Elizabeth Goose (or Vertigoose), was married by Rev. Cotton Mather in 1715 to an enterprising and industrious printer named Thomas Fleet, and in due time gave birth to a son. Like most mothers-in-law in our day, the importance of Mrs. Goose increased with the appearance of her grandchild, and poor Mr. Fleet, half distracted with her endless nursery ditties, finding all other means fail, tried what ridicule could effect, and actually printed a book under the title "Songs of the Nursery; or, Mother Goose's Melodies for Children." On the title page was the picture of a goose with a very long neck and a mouth wide open, and below this, "Printed by T. Fleet, at his Printing House in Pudding Lane, 1719. Price, two coppers."

Mr. Wm. A. Wheeler, the editor of Hurd & Houghton's elaborate edition of Mother Goose, (1870), reiterated this assertion, and a writer in the Boston Transcript of June 17, 1864, says: "Fleet's book was partly a reprint of an English collection of songs (Barclay's), and the new title was doubtless a compliment by the printer to his mother-in-law Goose for her contributions. She was the mother of sixteen children and a typical 'Old Woman who lived in a Shoe.'"

We may take it to be true that Fleet's wife was of the Vergoose family, and that the name was often contracted to Goose. But the rest of the story is unsupported by any evidence whatever. In fact, all that Mr. Eliot knew of it was the statement of the late Edward A. Crowninshield, of Boston, that he had seen Fleet's edition in the library of the American Antiquarian Society. Repeated researches at Worcester having failed to bring to light this supposed copy, and no record of it appearing on any catalogue there, we may dismiss the entire story with the supposition that Mr. Eliot misunderstood the remarks made to him. Indeed, as Mr. William H. Whitmore points out in his clever monograph upon Mother Goose (Albany, 1889), it is very doubtful whether in 1719 a Boston printer would have been allowed to publish such "trivial" rhymes. "Boston children at that date," says Mr. Whitmore, "were fed upon Gospel food, and it seems extremely improbable that an edition could have been sold."

Singularly enough, England's claim to the venerable old lady is of about the same date as Boston's. There lived in a town in Sussex, about the year

1704, an old woman named Martha Gooch. She was a capital nurse, and in great demand to care for newly-born babies; therefore, through long years of service as nurse, she came to be called Mother Gooch. This good woman had one peculiarity: she was accustomed to croon queer rhymes and jingles over the cradles of her charges, and these rhymes "seemed so senseless and silly to the people who overheard them" that they began to call her "Mother Goose," in derision, the term being derived from Queen Goosefoot, the mother of Charlemagne. The old nurse paid no attention to her critics, but continued to sing her rhymes as before; for, however much grown people might laugh at her, the children seemed to enjoy them very much, and not one of them was too peevish to be quieted and soothed by her verses. At one time Mistress Gooch was nursing a child of Mr. Ronald Barclay, a physician residing in the town, and he noticed the rhymes she sang and became interested in them. In time he wrote them all down and made a book of them, which it is said was printed by John Worthington & Son in the Strand, London, in 1712, under the name of "Ye Melodious Rhymes of Mother Goose." But even this story of Martha Gooch is based upon very meager and unsatisfactory evidence.

The earliest English edition of Mother Goose's Melodies that is absolutely authentic was issued by John Newbury of London about the year 1760, and the first authentic American edition was a reprint of Newbury's made by Isaiah Thomas of Worcester, Mass., in 1785.

None of the earlier editions, however, contained all the rhymes so well known at the present day, since every decade has added its quota to the mass of jingles attributed to "Mother Goose." Some of the earlier verses have become entirely obsolete, and it is well they have, for many were crude and silly and others were coarse. It is simply a result of the greater refinement of modern civilization that they have been relegated to oblivion, while the real gems of the collection will doubtless live and grow in popular favor for many ages.

While I have taken some pains to record the various claims to the origin of Mother Goose, it does not matter in the least whether she was in reality a myth, or a living Eliza Goose, Martha Gooch or the "Mere Oye" of Perrault. The songs that cluster around her name are what we love, and each individual verse appeals more to the childish mind than does Mother Goose herself.

Many of these nursery rhymes are complete tales in themselves, telling their story tersely but completely; there are others which are but bare suggestions, leaving the imagination to weave in the details of the story. Perhaps therein may lie part of their charm, but however that may be I have

thought the children might like the stories told at greater length, that they may dwell the longer upon their favorite heroes and heroines.

For that reason I have written this book.

In making the stories I have followed mainly the suggestions of the rhymes, and my hope is that the little ones will like them, and not find that they interfere with the fanciful creations of their own imaginations.

L Frank Baum

Chicago, Illinois, September, 1897.

Sing a Song o' Sixpence

Sing a song o' sixpence, a handful of rye,
Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie;
When the pie was opened the birds began to sing,
Was not that a dainty dish to set before the King?

If you have never heard the legend of Gilligren and the King's pie, you will scarcely understand the above verse; so I will tell you the whole story, and then you will be able to better appreciate the rhyme.

Gilligren was an orphan, and lived with an uncle and aunt who were very unkind to him. They cuffed him and scolded him upon the slightest provocation, and made his life very miserable indeed. Gilligren never rebelled against this treatment, but bore their cruelty silently and with patience, although often he longed to leave them and seek a home amongst kinder people.

It so happened that when Gilligren was twelve years old the King died, and his son was to be proclaimed King in his place, and crowned with great ceremony. People were flocking to London from all parts of the country to witness the festivities, and the boy longed to go with them.

One evening he said to his uncle,

"If I had sixpence I could make my fortune."

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed his uncle, "a sixpence is a small thing.
How then could you make a fortune from it?"

"That I cannot tell you," replied Gilligren, "but if you will give me the sixpence I will go to London, and not return until I am a rich man."

"The boy is a fool!" said his uncle, with anger; but the aunt spoke up quickly.

"Give him the money and let him go," she said, "and then we shall be well rid of him and no longer be obliged to feed and clothe him at our expense."

"Well," said her husband, after a moment's thought, "here is the money; but remember, this is all I shall ever give you, and when it is gone you must not come to me for more."

"Never fear," replied Gilligren, joyfully, as he put the sixpence in his pocket, "I shall not trouble you again."

The next morning he cut a short stick to assist him in walking, and after bidding goodbye to his uncle and aunt he started upon his journey to London.

"The money will not last him two days," said the man, as he watched Gilligren go down the turnpike road, "and when it is gone he will starve to death."

"Or he may fall in with people who will treat him worse than we did,"

rejoined the woman, “and then he ‘ll wish he had never left us.”

But Gilligren, nothing dismayed by thoughts of the future, trudged bravely along the London road. The world was before him, and the bright sunshine glorified the dusty road and lightened the tips of the dark green hedges that bordered his path. At the end of his pilgrimage was the great city, and he never doubted he would find therein proper work and proper pay, and much better treatment than he was accustomed to receive.

So, on he went, whistling merrily to while away the time, watching the sparrows skim over the fields, and enjoying to the full the unusual sights that met his eyes. At noon he overtook a carter, who divided with the boy his luncheon of bread and cheese, and for supper a farmer’s wife gave him a bowl of milk. When it grew dark he crawled under a hedge and slept soundly until dawn.

The next day he kept steadily upon his way, and toward evening met a farmer with a wagon loaded with sacks of grain.

“Where are you going, my lad?” asked the man.

“To London,” replied Gilligren, “to see the King crowned.”

“Have you any money?” enquired the farmer.

“Oh yes,” answered Gilligren, “I have a sixpence.”

“If you will give me the sixpence,” said the man, “I will give you a sack of rye for it.”

“What could I do with a sack of rye?” asked Gilligren, wonderingly.

“Take it to the mill, and get it ground into flour. With the flour you could have bread baked, and that you can sell.”

“That is a good idea,” replied Gilligren, “so here is my sixpence, and now give me the sack of rye.”

The farmer put the sixpence carefully into his pocket, and then reached under the seat of the wagon and drew out a sack, which he cast on the ground at the boy’s feet.

“There is your sack of rye,” he said, with a laugh.

“But the sack is empty!” remonstrated Gilligren.

“Oh, no; there is some rye in it.”

“But only a handful!” said Gilligren, when he had opened the mouth of the sack and gazed within it.

“It is a sack of rye, nevertheless,” replied the wicked farmer, “and I did not say how much rye there would be in the sack I would give you. Let this be a lesson to you never again to buy grain without looking into the sack!” and with that he whipped up his horses and left Gilligren standing in the road with the sack at his feet and nearly ready to cry at his loss.

“My sixpence is gone,” he said to himself, “and I have received nothing in

exchange but a handful of rye! How can I make my fortune with that?"

He did not despair, however, but picked up the sack and continued his way along the dusty road. Soon it became too dark to travel farther, and Gilligren stepped aside into a meadow, where, lying down upon the sweet grass, he rolled the sack into a pillow for his head and prepared to sleep.

The rye that was within the sack, however, hurt his head, and he sat up and opened the sack.

"Why should I keep a handful of rye?" he thought, "It will be of no value to me at all."

So he threw out the rye upon the ground, and rolling up the sack again for a pillow, was soon sound asleep. When he awoke the sun was shining brightly over his head and the twitter and chirping of many birds fell upon his ears. Gilligren opened his eyes and saw a large flock of blackbirds feeding upon the rye he had scattered upon the ground. So intent were they upon their feast they never noticed Gilligren at all.

He carefully unfolded the sack, and spreading wide its opening threw it quickly over the flock of black birds. Some escaped and flew away, but a great many were caught, and Gilligren put his eye to the sack and found he had captured four and twenty. He tied the mouth of the sack with a piece of twine that was in his pocket, and then threw the sack over his shoulder and began again his journey to London.

"I have made a good exchange, after all," he thought, "for surely four and twenty blackbirds are worth more than a handful of rye, and perhaps even more than a sixpence, if I can find anyone who wishes to buy them."

He now walked rapidly forward, and about noon entered the great city of London.

Gilligren wandered about the streets until he came to the King's palace, where there was a great concourse of people and many guards to keep intruders from the gates.

Seeing he could not enter from the front, the boy walked around to the rear of the palace and found himself near the royal kitchen, where the cooks and other servants were rushing around to hasten the preparation of the King's dinner.

Gilligren sat down upon a stone where he could watch them, and laying the sack at his feet was soon deeply interested in the strange sight. Presently a servant in the King's livery saw him and came to his side.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, roughly.

"I am waiting to see the King," replied Gilligren.

"The King! The King never comes here," said the servant; "and neither do we allow idlers about the royal kitchen. So depart at once, or I shall be forced

to call a guard to arrest you."

Gilligren arose obediently and slung his sack over his shoulder. As he did so the birds that were within began to flutter.

"What have you in the sack?" asked the servant.

"Blackbirds," replied Gilligren.

"Blackbirds!" echoed the servant, in surprise, "well, that is very fortunate indeed. Come with me at once!"

He seized the boy by the arm and drew him hastily along until they entered the great kitchen of the palace.

"Here, Mister Baker!" the man called, excitedly, "I have found your blackbirds!"

A big, fat man who was standing in the middle of the kitchen with folded arms and a look of despair upon his round, greasy face, at once came toward them and asked eagerly, "The blackbirds? are you sure you can get them?"

"They are here already; the boy has a bag full of them."

"Give them to me," said the cook, who wore a square cap, that was shaped like a box, upon his head.

"What do you want with them?" asked Gilligren.

"I want them for a pie for the King's dinner," answered Mister Baker; "His Majesty ordered the dish, and I have hunted all over London for the blackbirds, but could not find them. Now that you have brought them, however, you have saved me my position as cook, and perhaps my head as well."

"But it would be cruel to put the beautiful birds in a pie," remonstrated Gilligren, "and I shall not give them to you for such a purpose."

"Nonsense!" replied the cook, "the King has ordered it; he is very fond of the dish."

"Still, you cannot have them," declared the boy stoutly, "the birds are mine, and I will not have them killed."

"But what can I do?" asked the cook, in perplexity; "the King has ordered a blackbird pie, and your birds are the only blackbirds in London."

Gilligren thought deeply for a moment, and conceived what he thought to be a very good idea. If the sixpence was to make his fortune, then this was his great opportunity.

"You can have the blackbirds on two conditions," he said.

"What are they?" asked the cook.

"One is that you will not kill the birds. The other condition is that you secure me a position in the King's household."

"How can I put live birds in a pie?" enquired the cook.

"Very easily, if you make the pie big enough to hold them. You can serve

the pie after the King has satisfied his hunger with other dishes, and it will amuse the company to find live birds in the pie when they expected cooked ones."

"It is a risky experiment," exclaimed the cook, "for I do not know the new King's temper. But the idea may please His Majesty, and since you will not allow me to kill the birds, it is the best thing I can do. As for your other condition, you seem to be a very bright boy, and so I will have the butler take you as his page, and you shall stand back of the King's chair and keep the flies away while he eats."

The butler being called, and his consent secured, the cook fell to making the crusts for his novel pie, while Gilligren was taken to the servants' hall and dressed in a gorgeous suit of the King's livery.

When the dinner was served, the King kept looking for the blackbird pie, but he said nothing, and at last the pie was placed before him, its crusts looking light and brown, and sprigs of myrtle being stuck in the four corners to make it look more inviting.

Although the King had already eaten heartily, he smacked his lips when he saw this tempting dish, and picking up the carving-fork he pushed it quickly into the pie.

At once the crust fell in, and all the four and twenty blackbirds put up their heads and began to look about them. And coming from the blackness of the pie into the brilliantly lighted room they thought they were in the sunshine, and began to sing merrily, while some of the boldest hopped out upon the table or began flying around the room.

At first the good King was greatly surprised; but soon, appreciating the jest, he lay back in his chair and laughed long and merrily. And his courtiers and the fine ladies present heartily joined in the laughter, for they also were greatly amused.

Then the King called for the cook, and when Mister Baker appeared, uncertain of his reception, and filled with many misgivings, His Majesty cried,

"Sirrah! how came you to think of putting live birds in the pie?"

The cook, fearing that the King was angry, answered,

"May it please your Majesty, it was not my thought, but the idea of the boy who stands behind your chair."

The King turned his head, and seeing Gilligren, who looked very well in his new livery, he said,

"You are a clever youth, and deserve a better position than that of a butler's lad. Hereafter you shall be one of my own pages, and if you serve me faithfully I will advance your fortunes with your deserts."

And Gilligren did serve the King faithfully, and as he grew older acquired much honor and great wealth.

“After all,” he used to say, “that sixpence made my fortune. And it all came about through such a small thing as a handful of rye!”

The Story of Little Boy Blue

Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn.
The sheep ‘s in the meadow, the cow ‘s in the corn;
Where ‘s the little boy that minds the sheep?
He ‘s under the haystack, fast asleep!

There once lived a poor widow who supported herself and her only son by gleaning in the fields the stalks of grain that had been missed by the reapers. Her little cottage was at the foot of a beautiful valley, upon the edge of the river that wound in and out among the green hills; and although poor, she was contented with her lot, for her home was pleasant and her lovely boy was a constant delight to her.

He had big blue eyes, and fair golden curls, and he loved his good mother very dearly, and was never more pleased than when she allowed him to help her with her work.

And so the years passed happily away till the boy was eight years old, but then the widow fell sick, and their little store of money melted gradually away.

“I do n’t know what we shall do for bread,” she said, kissing her boy with tears in her eyes, “for I am not yet strong enough to work, and we have no money left.”

“But I can work,” answered the boy; “and I ‘m sure if I go to the Squire up at the Hall he will give me something to do.”

At first the widow was reluctant to consent to this, since she loved to keep her child at her side, but finally, as nothing else could be done, she decided to let him go to see the Squire.

Being too proud to allow her son to go to the great house in his ragged clothes, she made him a new suit out of a pretty blue dress she had herself worn in happier times, and when it was finished and the boy dressed in it, he looked as pretty as a prince in a fairy tale. For the bright blue jacket set off his curls to good advantage, and the color just matched the blue of his eyes. His trousers were blue, also, and she took the silver buckles from her own shoes and put them on his, that he might appear the finer. And then she brushed his curls and placed his big straw hat upon them and sent him away with a kiss to see the Squire.

It so happened that the great man was walking in his garden with his daughter Madge that morning, and was feeling in an especially happy mood, so that when he suddenly looked up and saw a little boy before him, he said, kindly,

“Well, my child, what can I do for you?”

“If you please, sir,” said the boy, bravely, although he was frightened at meeting the Squire face to face, “I want you to give me some work to do, so that I can earn money.”

“Earn money!” repeated the Squire, “why do you wish to earn money?”

“To buy food for my mother, sir. We are very poor, and since she is no longer able to work for me I wish to work for her.”

“But what can you do?” asked the Squire; “you are too small to work in the fields.”

“I could earn something, sir, could n’t I?”

His tone was so pleading that mistress Madge was unable to resist it, and even the Squire was touched. The young lady came forward and took the boy’s hand in her own, and pressing back his curls, she kissed his fair cheek.

“You shall be our shepherd,” she said, pleasantly, “and keep the sheep out of the meadows and the cows from getting in to the corn. You know, father,” she continued, turning to the Squire, “it was only yesterday you said you must get a boy to tend the sheep, and this little boy can do it nicely.”

“Very well,” replied the Squire, “it shall be as you say, and if he is attentive and watchful he will be able to save me a good bit of trouble and so really earn his money.”

Then he turned to the child and said,

“Come to me in the morning, my little man, and I will give you a silver horn to blow, that you may call the sheep and the cows whenever they go astray. What is your name?”

“Oh, never mind his name, papa!” broke in the Squire’s daughter; “I shall call him Little Boy Blue, since he is dressed in blue from head to foot, and his dress but matches his eyes. And you must give him a good wage, also, for surely no Squire before ever had a prettier shepherd boy than this.”

“Very good,” said the Squire, cheerfully, as he pinched his daughter’s rosy cheek; “be watchful, Little Boy Blue, and you shall be well paid.”

Then Little Boy Blue thanked them both very sweetly and ran back over the hill and into the valley where his home lay nestled by the riverside, to tell the good news to his mother.

The poor widow wept tears of joy when she heard his story, and smiled when he told her that his name was to be Little Boy Blue. She knew the Squire was a kind master and would be good to her darling son.

Early the next morning Little Boy Blue was at the Hall, and the Squire’s steward gave him a new silver horn, that glistened brightly in the sunshine, and a golden cord to fasten it around his neck. And then he was given charge of the sheep and the cows, and told to keep them from straying into the meadowlands and the fields of grain.

It was not hard work, but just suited to Little Boy Blue's age, and he was watchful and vigilant and made a very good shepherd boy indeed. His mother needed food no longer, for the Squire paid her son liberally, and the Squire's daughter made a favorite of the small shepherd and loved to hear the call of his silver horn echoing amongst the hills. Even the sheep and the cows were fond of him, and always obeyed the sound of his horn; therefore the Squire's corn thrived finely, and was never trampled.

Little Boy Blue was now very happy, and his mother was proud and contented and began to improve in health. After a few weeks she became strong enough to leave the cottage and walk a little in the fields each day; but she could not go far, because her limbs were too feeble to support her long, so the most she could attempt was to walk as far as the stile to meet Little Boy Blue as he came home from work in the evening. Then she would lean on his shoulder and return to the cottage with him, and the boy was very glad he could thus support his darling mother and assist her faltering steps.

But one day a great misfortune came upon them, since it is true that no life can be so happy but that sorrow will creep in to temper it.

Little Boy Blue came homeward one evening very light of heart and whistled merrily as he walked, for he thought he should find his mother awaiting him at the stile and a good supper spread upon the table in the little cottage. But when he came to the stile his mother was not in sight, and in answer to his call a low moan of pain reached his ears.

Little Boy Blue sprang over the stile and found lying upon the ground his dear mother, her face white and drawn with suffering, and tears of anguish running down her cheeks. For she had slipped upon the stile and fallen, and her leg was broken!

Little Boy Blue ran to the cottage for water and bathed the poor woman's face, and raised her head that she might drink. There were no neighbors, for the cottage stood all alone by the river, so the child was obliged to support his mother in his arms as best he could while she crawled painfully back to the cottage. Fortunately, it was not far, and at last she was safely laid upon her bed. Then Little Boy Blue began to think what he should do next.

"Can I leave you alone while I go for the doctor, mamma?" he asked, anxiously, as he held her clasped hands tightly in his two little ones. His mother drew him towards her and kissed him.

"Take the boat, dear," she said, "and fetch the doctor from the village. I shall be patient till you return."

Little Boy Blue rushed away to the river bank and unfastened the little boat; and then he pulled sturdily down the river until he passed the bend and came to the pretty village below. When he had found the doctor and told of

his mother's misfortune, the good man promised to attend him at once, and very soon they were seated in the boat and on their way to the cottage.

It was very dark by this time, but Little Boy Blue knew every turn and bend in the river, and the doctor helped him pull at the oars, so that at last they came to the place where a faint light twinkled through the cottage window. They found the poor woman in much pain, but the doctor quickly set and bandaged her leg, and gave her some medicine to ease her suffering. It was nearly midnight when all was finished and the doctor was ready to start back to the village.

"Take good care of your mother," he said to the boy, "and do n't worry about her, for it is not a bad break and the leg will mend nicely in time; but she will be in bed many days, and you must nurse her as well as you are able."

All through the night the boy sat by the bedside, bathing his mother's fevered brow and ministering to her wants. And when the day broke she was resting easily and the pain had left her, and she told Little Boy Blue he must go to his work.

"For," said she, "more than ever now we need the money you earn from the Squire, as my misfortune will add to the expenses of living, and we have the doctor to pay. Do not fear to leave me, for I shall rest quietly and sleep most of the time while you are away."

Little Boy Blue did not like to leave his mother all alone, but he knew of no one he could ask to stay with her; so he placed food and water by her bedside, and ate a little breakfast himself, and started off to tend his sheep.

The sun was shining brightly, and the birds sang sweetly in the trees, and the crickets chirped just as merrily as if this great trouble had not come to Little Boy Blue to make him sad.

But he went bravely to his work, and for several hours he watched carefully; and the men at work in the fields, and the Squire's daughter, who sat embroidering upon the porch of the great house, heard often the sound of his horn as he called the straying sheep to his side.

But he had not slept the whole night, and he was tired with his long watch at his mother's bedside, and so in spite of himself the lashes would droop occasionally over his blue eyes, for he was only a child, and children feel the loss of sleep more than older people.

Still, Little Boy Blue had no intention of sleeping while he was on duty, and bravely fought against the drowsiness that was creeping over him. The sun shone very hot that day, and he walked to the shady side of a big haystack and sat down upon the ground, leaning his back against the stack.

The cows and sheep were quietly browsing near him, and he watched

them earnestly for a time, listening to the singing of the birds, and the gentle tinkling of the bells upon the wethers, and the faraway songs of the reapers that the breeze brought to his ears.

And before he knew it the blue eyes had closed fast, and the golden head lay back upon the hay, and Little Boy Blue was fast asleep and dreaming that his mother was well again and had come to the stile to meet him.

The sheep strayed near the edge of the meadow and paused, waiting for the warning sound of the horn. And the breeze carried the fragrance of the growing corn to the nostrils of the browsing cows and tempted them nearer and nearer to the forbidden feast. But the silver horn was silent, and before long the cows were feeding upon the Squire's pet cornfield and the sheep were enjoying themselves amidst the juicy grasses of the meadows.

The Squire himself was returning from a long, weary ride over his farms, and when he came to the cornfield and saw the cows trampling down the grain and feeding upon the golden stalks he was very angry.

"Little Boy Blue!" he cried; "ho! Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn!" But there was no reply. He rode on a way and now discovered that the sheep were deep within the meadows, and that made him more angry still.

"Here, Isaac," he said to a farmer's lad who chanced to pass by, "where is Little Boy Blue?"

"He 's under the haystack, your honor, fast asleep!" replied Isaac with a grin, for he had passed that way and seen that the boy was lying asleep.

"Will you go and wake him?" asked the Squire; "for he must drive out the sheep and the cows before they do more damage."

"Not I," replied Isaac, "if I wake him he 'll surely cry, for he is but a baby, and not fit to mind the sheep. But I myself will drive them out for your honor," and away he ran to do so, thinking that now the Squire would give him Little Boy Blue's place, and make him the shepherd boy, for Isaac had long coveted the position.

The Squire's daughter, hearing the angry tones of her father's voice, now came out to see what was amiss, and when she heard that Little Boy Blue had failed in his trust she was deeply grieved, for she had loved the child for his pretty ways.

The Squire dismounted from his horse and came to where the boy was lying.

"Awake!" said he, shaking him by the shoulder, "and depart from my lands, for you have betrayed my trust, and let the sheep and the cows stray into the fields and meadows!"

Little Boy Blue started up at once and rubbed his eyes; and then he did as Isaac prophesied, and began to weep bitterly, for his heart was sore that he

had failed in his duty to the good Squire and so forfeited his confidence.

But the Squire's daughter was moved by the child's tears, so she took him upon her lap and comforted him, asking,

"Why did you sleep, Little Boy Blue, when you should have watched the cows and the sheep?"

"My mother has broken her leg," answered the boy, between his sobs, "and I did not sleep all last night, but sat by her bedside nursing her. And I tried hard not to fall asleep, but could not help myself; and oh, Squire! I hope you will forgive me this once, for my poor mother's sake!"

"Where does your mother live?" asked the Squire, in a kindly tone, for he had already forgiven Little Boy Blue.

"In the cottage down by the river," answered the child; "and she is all alone, for there is no one near to help us in our trouble."

"Come," said Mistress Madge, rising to her feet and taking his hand; "lead us to your home, and we will see if we cannot assist your poor mother."

So the Squire and his daughter and Little Boy Blue all walked down to the little cottage, and the Squire had a long talk with the poor widow. And that same day a big basket of dainties was sent to the cottage, and Mistress Madge bade her own maid go to the widow and nurse her carefully until she recovered.

So that after all Little Boy Blue did more for his dear mother by falling asleep than he could had he kept wide awake; for after his mother was well again the Squire gave them a pretty cottage to live in very near to the great house itself, and the Squire's daughter was ever afterward their good friend, and saw that they wanted for no comforts of life.

And Little Boy Blue did not fall asleep again at his post, but watched the cows and the sheep faithfully for many years, until he grew up to manhood and had a farm of his own.

He always said his mother's accident had brought him good luck, but I think it was rather his own loving heart and his devotion to his mother that made him friends. For no one is afraid to trust a boy who loves to serve and care for his mother.

The Cat and the Fiddle

Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon!
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran off with the spoon!

Perhaps you think this verse is all nonsense, and that the things it mentions could never have happened; but they did happen, as you will understand when I have explained them all to you clearly.

Little Bobby was the only son of a small farmer who lived out of town upon a country road. Bobby's mother looked after the house and Bobby's father took care of the farm, and Bobby himself, who was not very big, helped them both as much as he was able.

It was lonely upon the farm, especially when his father and mother were both busy at work, but the boy had one way to amuse himself that served to pass many an hour when he would not otherwise have known what to do. He was very fond of music, and his father one day brought him from the town a small fiddle, or violin, which he soon learned to play upon. I don't suppose he was a very fine musician, but the tunes he played pleased himself; as well as his father and mother, and Bobby's fiddle soon became his constant companion.

One day in the warm summer the farmer and his wife determined to drive to the town to sell their butter and eggs and bring back some groceries in exchange for them, and while they were gone Bobby was to be left alone.

"We shall not be back till late in the evening," said his mother, "for the weather is too warm to drive very fast. But I have left you a dish of bread and milk for your supper, and you must be a good boy and amuse yourself with your fiddle until we return."

Bobby promised to be good and look after the house, and then his father and mother climbed into the wagon and drove away to the town.

The boy was not entirely alone, for there was the big black tabby-cat lying upon the floor in the kitchen, and the little yellow dog barking at the wagon as it drove away, and the big moolie-cow lowing in the pasture down by the brook. Animals are often very good company, and Bobby did not feel nearly as lonely as he would had there been no living thing about the house.

Besides he had some work to do in the garden, pulling up the weeds that grew thick in the carrot-bed, and when the last faint sounds of the wheels had died away he went into the garden and began his task.

The little dog went too, for dogs love to be with people and to watch what is going on; and he sat down near Bobby and cocked up his ears and wagged his tail and seemed to take a great interest in the weeding. Once in a while he would rush away to chase a butterfly or bark at a beetle that crawled through the garden, but he always came back to the boy and kept near his side.

By and by the cat, which found it lonely in the big, empty kitchen, now that Bobby's mother was gone, came walking into the garden also, and lay down upon a path in the sunshine and lazily watched the boy at his work. The dog and the cat were good friends, having lived together so long that they did not care to fight each other. To be sure Towser, as the little dog was called, sometimes tried to tease pussy, being himself very mischievous; but when the cat put out her sharp claws and showed her teeth, Towser, like a wise little dog, quickly ran away, and so they managed to get along in a friendly manner.

By the time the carrot-bed was all weeded, the sun was sinking behind the edge of the forest and the new moon rising in the east, and now Bobby began to feel hungry and went into the house for his dish of bread and milk.

"I think I 'll take my supper down to the brook," he said to himself, "and sit upon the grassy bank while I eat it. And I 'll take my fiddle, too, and play upon it to pass the time until father and mother come home."

It was a good idea, for down by the brook it was cool and pleasant; so Bobby took his fiddle under his arm and carried his dish of bread and milk down to the bank that sloped to the edge of the brook. It was rather a steep bank, but Bobby sat upon the edge, and placing his fiddle beside him, leaned against a tree and began to eat his supper.

The little dog had followed at his heels, and the cat also came slowly walking after him, and as Bobby ate, they sat one on either side of him and looked earnestly into his face as if they too were hungry. So he threw some of the bread to Towser, who grabbed it eagerly and swallowed it in the twinkling of an eye. And Bobby left some of the milk in the dish for the cat, also, and she came lazily up and drank it in a dainty, sober fashion, and licked both the dish and spoon until no drop of the milk was left.

Then Bobby picked up his fiddle and tuned it and began to play some of the pretty tunes he knew. And while he played he watched the moon rise higher and higher until it was reflected in the smooth, still water of the brook. Indeed, Bobby could not tell which was the plainest to see, the moon in the sky or the moon in the water. The little dog lay quietly on one side of him, and the cat softly purred upon the other, and even the moolie-cow was attracted by the music and wandered near until she was browsing the grass at the edge of the brook.

After a time, when Bobby had played all the tunes he knew, he laid the fiddle down beside him, near to where the cat slept, and then he lay down upon the bank and began to think.

It is very hard to think long upon a dreamy summer night without falling asleep, and very soon Bobby's eyes closed and he forgot all about the dog and the cat and the cow and the fiddle, and dreamed he was Jack the Giant Killer and was just about to slay the biggest giant in the world.

And while he dreamed, the cat sat up and yawned and stretched herself; and then began wagging her long tail from side to side and watching the moon that was reflected in the water.

But the fiddle lay just behind her, and as she moved her tail, she drew it between the strings of the fiddle, where it caught fast. Then she gave her tail a jerk and pulled the fiddle against the tree, which made a loud noise. This frightened the cat greatly, and not knowing what was the matter with her tail, she started to run as fast as she could. But still the fiddle clung to her tail, and at every step it bounded along and made such a noise that she screamed with terror. And in her fright she ran straight towards the cow, which, seeing a black streak coming at her, and hearing the racket made by the fiddle, became also frightened and made such a jump to get out of the way that she jumped right across the brook, leaping over the very spot where the moon shone in the water!

Bobby had been awakened by the noise, and opened his eyes in time to see the cow jump; and at first it seemed to him that she had actually jumped over the moon in the sky, instead of the one in the brook.

The dog was delighted at the sudden excitement caused by the cat, and ran barking and dancing along the bank, so that he presently knocked against the dish, and behold! it slid down the bank, carrying the spoon with it, and fell with a splash into the water of the brook.

As soon as Bobby recovered from his surprise he ran after the cat, which had raced to the house, and soon came to where the fiddle lay upon the ground, it having at last dropped from the cat's tail. He examined it carefully, and was glad to find it was not hurt, in spite of its rough usage. And then he had to go across the brook and drive the cow back over the little bridge, and also to roll up his sleeve and reach into the water to recover the dish and the spoon.

Then he went back to the house and lighted a lamp, and sat down to compose a new tune before his father and mother returned.

The cat had recovered from her fright and lay quietly under the stove, and Towser sat upon the floor panting, with his mouth wide open, and looking so comical that Bobby thought he was actually laughing at the whole

occurrence.

And these were the words to the tune that Bobby composed that night:

Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon!
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran off with the spoon!

The Black Sheep

Black sheep, black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes, my little master, three bags full;
One for my master and one for his dame,
And one for the little boy that lives in the lane.

It was a bright spring day, and the sun shone very warm and pleasant over the pastures, where the new grass was growing so juicy and tender that all the sheep thought they had never tasted anything so delicious.

The sheep had had a strange experience that morning, for the farmer had taken them down to the brook and washed them, and then he tied their legs together and laid them on the grass and clipped all the heavy, soft wool from their bodies with a great pair of shears.

The sheep did not like this very well, for every once in a while the shears would pull the wool and hurt them; and when they were sheared they felt very strange, for it was almost as if someone took off all your clothes and let you run around naked. None of them were in a very good temper this morning, although the sun shone so warmly and the grass was so sweet, and as they watched the farmer and his man carry their wool up to the house in great bags, the old ram said, crossly,

"I hope they are satisfied, now that they have stolen from us all our soft, warm fleece."

"What are they going to do with it?" asked one of the sheep.

"Oh, they will spin it into threads and make coats for the men and dresses for the women. For men are such strange creatures that no wool grows on them at all, and that is why they selfishly rob us of our fleece that they may cover their own skinny bodies!"

"It must be horrid to be a man," said the Black Sheep, "and not to have any wool grow on you at all. I 'm sorry for that little boy that lives in the lane, for he will never be able to keep warm unless we give him some of our wool."

"But what a shame it is," continued the ram, "for the farmer to steal all the wool from us when we have taken all the trouble to grow it!"

"I do n't mind," bleated a young lamb named Frisky, as it kicked up its heels and gambolled about upon the grass; "it 's nice to have all that heavy wool cut off my back, for I sha' n't have to carry it around wherever I go."

"Oh, indeed!" sneered the ram, "you like it, do you? Have you any idea what you look like, all sheared down to your skin? How would you like to have someone come along and see you, now that you are all head and legs?"

"Oh, I would n't mind," said the lamb again; "I shall grow more wool by

wintertime, and I ‘m sure I do n’t look any worse than you do.”

Some of the sheep looked at the ram and began to titter, for he was old and thin, and looked very comical indeed without any wool. And this made him so angry that he went off by himself and began eating grass, and would not speak to the others at all.

“I do n’t know why sheep should feel badly about having their fleeces cut,” remarked the Black Sheep, thoughtfully, “for the farmer is very kind to us, and so is his dame, and I am glad my wool serves to keep them warm in the winter. For before the snow comes our wool will grow out again, and we shall not be any the worse for our loss.”

“What do those people who have n’t any sheep do for clothes?” asked the lamb.

“I ‘m sure I do n’t know. They must nearly freeze in the winter.
Perhaps the ram can tell us.”

But the ram was still angry, and refused to say anything, so the sheep stopped talking and began to scatter over the pasture and eat the tender, new grass.

By and by the Black Sheep wandered near the lane, and looking up, saw the little boy watching it through the bars.

“Good morning, Black Sheep,” said the boy; “why do you look so funny this morning?”

“They have cut off my wool,” answered the sheep.

“What will they do with it, Black Sheep?” enquired the little boy.

“They will make coats of it, to keep themselves warm.”

“I wish I had some wool,” said the boy,” for I need a new coat very badly, and mamma is so poor she cannot buy me one.”

“That is too bad,” replied the Black Sheep; “but I shall have more wool by and by, and then I will give you a bagful to make a new coat from.”

“Will you really?” asked the boy, looking very much pleased.

“Indeed I will,” answered the sheep, “for you are always kind and have a pleasant word for me. So you watch until my wool grows again, and then you shall have your share of it.”

“Oh, thank you!” said the boy, and he ran away to tell his mother what the Black Sheep had said.

When the farmer came into the field again the Black Sheep said to him,
“Master, how many bags of wool did you cut from my back?”

“Two bags full,” replied the farmer; “and it was very nice wool indeed.”

“If I grow three bags full the next time, may I have one bag for myself?” asked the sheep.

“Why, what could you do with a bag of wool?” questioned the farmer.

“I want to give it to the little boy that lives in the lane. He is very poor and needs a new coat.”

“Very well,” answered the master; “if you can grow three bags full I will give one to the little boy.”

So the Black Sheep began to grow wool, and tried in every way to grow the finest and heaviest fleece in all the flock. She always lay in the sunniest part of the pastures, and drank from the clearest part of the brook, and ate only the young and juicy shoots of grass and the tenderest of the sheep-sorrel. And each day the little boy came to the bars and looked at the sheep and enquired how the wool was growing.

“I am getting along finely,” the Black Sheep would answer, “for not one sheep in the pasture has so much wool as I have grown already.”

“Can I do anything to help you?” asked the little boy.

“Not that I think of,” replied the sheep, “unless you could get me a little salt. I believe salt helps the wool to grow.”

So the boy ran to the house and begged his mother for a handful of salt, and then he came back to the bars, where the Black Sheep licked it out of his hand.

Day by day the wool on the sheep grew longer and longer, and even the old ram noticed it and said, “You are foolish to grow so much wool, for the farmer will cut it all off, and it will do you no good. Now I am growing just as little as possible, for since he steals what I have I am determined he shall get very little wool from my back.”

The Black Sheep did not reply to this, for she thought the old ram very ill-tempered and selfish, and believed he was doing wrong not to grow more wool. Finally the time came to shear the sheep again, and the farmer and his man came into the pasture to look at them, and were surprised to see what a fine, big fleece the Black Sheep had grown.

“There will be three bagsful at the least,” said the master, “and I will keep my promise and give one to the little boy in the lane. But, my goodness! how scraggly and poor the old ram looks. There is scarcely any wool on him at all. I think I must sell him to the butcher!”

And, in truth, although the ram kicked and struggled and bleated with rage, they tied his legs and put him into the cart and carried him away to the butcher. And that was the last the sheep ever saw of him.

But the Black Sheep ran up to the bars by the lane and waited with a glad heart till the little boy came. When he saw the sheep waiting for him he asked,

“Black Sheep, Black Sheep, have you any wool?”

And the sheep replied,

“Yes my little master, three bags full!”

“That is fine!” said the boy; “but who are the three bags for?”

“One for my master, one for his dame,
And one for the little boy that lives in the lane.”

“Thank you, Black Sheep,” said the little boy; “you are very kind, and I shall always think of you when I wear my new coat.”

The next day the sheep were all sheared, and the Black Sheep’s fleece made three big bagsful. The farmer kept his promise and carried one bag to the little boy that lived in the lane, and the wool was so soft and so heavy that there was enough not only for the new coat, but to make his mother a warm dress as well.

The Black Sheep was very proud and happy when the mother and her little boy came down to the bars and showed the new clothes that had been made from the wool.

“This pays me for all my trouble,” said the Black Sheep, and the little boy reached his hand through the bars and patted her gently upon the head.

Old King Cole

Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe and he called for his bowl
And he called for his fiddlers three.

Old King Cole was not always a king, nor was he born a member of any royal family. It was only chance — ”hard luck” he used to call it — that made him a king at all.

He had always been a poor man, being the son of an apple peddler, who died and left him nothing but a donkey and a fiddle. But that was enough for Cole, who never bothered his head about the world’s goods, but took things as they came and refused to worry about anything.

So, when the house he lived in, and the furniture, and even the applecart were sold to pay his father’s debts, and he found himself left with the old fiddle that nobody wanted and the old donkey that no one would have — it being both vicious and unruly — he uttered no word of complaint. He simply straddled the donkey and took the fiddle under his arm and rode out into the world to seek his fortune.

When he came to a village he played a merry tune upon the fiddle and sang a merry song with it, and the people gave him food most willingly. There was no trouble about a place to sleep, for if he was denied a bed he lay down with the donkey in a barn, or even on the village green, and making a pillow of the donkey’s neck he slept as soundly as anyone could in a bed of down.

And so he continued riding along and playing upon his fiddle for many years, until his head grew bald and his face was wrinkled and his bushy eyebrows became as white as snow. But his eyes never lost their merry twinkle, and he was just as fat and hearty as in his younger days, while, if you heard him singing his songs and scraping upon the old fiddle, you would know at once his heart was as young as ever.

He never guided the donkey, but let the beast go where it would, and so it happened that at last they came to Whatland, and entered one day the city where resided the King of that great country.

Now, even as Cole rode in upon his donkey the King of Whatland lay dying in his palace, surrounded by all the luxury of the court. And as he left no heir, and was the last of the royal line, the councilors and wise men of Whatland were in a great quandary as to who should succeed him. But finally they bethought themselves of the laws of the land, and upon looking up the records they found in an old book a law that provided for just such a case as

this.

"If the King dies," so read the law, "and there be no one to succeed to the throne, the prime minister shall be blinded and led from the palace into the main street of the city. And he shall stretch out his arms and walk about, and the first person he touches shall be crowned as King of the land."

The councilors were greatly pleased when they found this law, for it enabled them to solve the problem that confronted them. So when the King had breathed his last they blindfolded the prime minister and led him forth from the palace, and he began walking about with outstretched arms seeking someone to touch.

Of course the people knew nothing of this law, nor even that the old King was dead, and seeing the prime minister groping about blindfolded they kept out of his way, fearing they might be punished if he stumbled against them. But Cole was then riding along on the donkey, and did not even know it was the prime minister who was feeling about in such a funny way. So he began to laugh, and the minister, who had by this time grown tired of the game, heard the laugh and came toward the stranger and touched him, and immediately all the wise men and the councilors fell down before him and hailed him as King of Whatland!

Thus did the wandering fiddler become King Cole, and you may be sure he laughed more merrily than ever when they explained to him his good fortune.

They carried him within the palace and dressed him in purple and fine linen, and placed a crown of gold upon his bald head and a jeweled scepter in his wrinkled hand, and all this amused old King Cole very much. When he had been led to the great throne room and placed upon the throne of gold (where the silken cushions felt very soft and pleasant after his long ride upon the donkey's sharp back) the courtiers all knelt before him and asked what commands he wished to give, since everyone in the kingdom must now obey his slightest word.

"Oh well," said the new King, "I think the first thing I would like is my old pipe. You 'll find it in the pocket of the ragged coat I took off."

One of the officers of the court at once ran for the pipe, and when it was brought King Cole filled it with tobacco from his greasy pouch and lighted it, and you can imagine what a queer sight it was to see the fat King sitting upon the rich throne, dressed in silk, and satins and a golden crown, and smoking at the same time an old black pipe!

The councilors looked at each other in dismay, and the ladies of the court sneezed and coughed and seemed greatly shocked, and all this pleased old King Cole so much that he lay back in his throne and roared with laughter.

Then the prime minister came forward very gravely, and bowing low he said,

"May it please your Majesty, it is not the custom of Kings to smoke a pipe while seated upon the throne."

"But it is my custom," answered Cole.

"It is impolite, and unkingly!" ventured the minister.

"Now, see here, old fellow," replied his Majesty, "I did n't ask to be King of this country; it 's all your own doing. All my life I have smoked whenever I wished, and if I can't do as I please here, why, I won't be king — so there!"

"But you must be the King, your Majesty, whether you want to or not. The law says so."

"If that 's the case," returned the King, "I can do as I please in other things. So you just run and get me a bowl of punch, there 's a good fellow."

The aged minister did not like to be addressed thus, but the King's commands must be obeyed; so, although the court was greatly horrified, he brought the bowl of punch, and the King pushed his crown onto the back of his head and drank heartily, and smacked his lips afterwards.

"That 's fine!" he said; "but say — what do you people do to amuse yourselves?"

"Whatever your Majesty commands," answered one of the councilors.

"What! must I amuse you as well as myself? Methinks it is no easy task to be a King if so many things are required of me. But I suppose it is useless to fret, since the law obliges me to reign in this great country against my will. Therefore will I make the best of my misfortune, and propose we have a dance, and forget our cares. Send at once for some fiddlers, and clear the room for our merrymaking, and for once in our lives we shall have a jolly good time!"

So one of the officers of the court went out and soon returned with three fiddlers, and when at the King's command they struck up a tune, the monarch was delighted, for every fiddler had a very fine fiddle and knew well how to use it.

Now, Old King Cole was a merry old soul, so he soon set all the ladies and gentlemen of the court to dancing, and he himself took off his crown and his ermine robe and laid them upon the throne, while he danced with the prettiest lady present till he was all out of breath.

Then he dismissed them, and they were all very well pleased with the new King, for they saw that, in spite of his odd ways, he had a kind heart, and would try to make everyone about him as merry as he was himself.

The next morning the King was informed that several of his subjects craved audience with him, as there were matters of dispute between them that must be settled. King Cole at first refused to see them, declaring he knew

nothing of the quarrels of his subjects and they must manage their own affairs; but when the prime minister told him it was one of his duties as king, and the law required it, he could not do otherwise than submit. So he put on his crown and his ermine robe and sat upon the throne, although he grumbled a good deal at the necessity; for never having had any business of his own to attend to he thought it doubly hard that in his old age he must attend to the business of others.

The first case of dispute was between two men who each claimed to own a fine cow, and after hearing the evidence, the King ordered the cow to be killed and roasted and given to the poor, since that was the easiest way to decide the matter. Then followed a quarrel between two subjects over ten pieces of gold, one claiming the other owed him that sum. The King, thinking them both rascals, ordered the gold to be paid, and then he took it and scattered it amongst the beggars outside the palace.

By this time King Cole decided he had transacted enough business for one day, so he sent word to those outside that if anyone had a quarrel that was not just he should be severely punished; and, indeed, when the subjects learned the manner in which the King settled disputes, they were afraid to come to him, as both sides were sure to be losers by the decision. And that saved King Cole a lot of trouble thereafter, for the people thought best to settle their own differences.

The King, now seeing he was free to do as he pleased, retired to his private chamber, where he called for the three fiddlers and made them play for him while he smoked his pipe and drank a bowl of punch.

Every evening he had a dance in the palace; and every day there were picnics and merrymakings of all kinds, and before long King Cole had the reputation of having the merriest court in all the world.

He loved to feast and to smoke and to drink his punch, and he was never so merry as when others were merry with him, so that the three fiddlers were almost always by his side, and at any hour of the day you could hear sweet strains of music echoing through the palace.

Old King Cole did not forget the donkey that had been his constant companion for so long. He had a golden saddle made for him, with a saddle-cloth broidered in gold and silver, and the bridle was studded with diamonds and precious stones, all taken from the King's treasury.

And when he rode out, the old fat King always bestrode the donkey, while his courtiers rode on either side of him upon their prancing chargers.

Old King Cole reigned for many years, and was generally beloved by his subjects; for he always gave liberally to all who asked, and was always as merry and happy as the day was long.

When he died the new King was found to be of a very different temper, and ruled the country with great severity; but this only served to make the memory of Old King Cole more tenderly cherished by his people, and they often sighed when they recalled his merry pranks, and the good times they enjoyed under his rule.

Mistress Mary

Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With dingle bells and cockle shells
And cowslips, all in a row.

High upon a cliff that overlooked the sea was a little white cottage, in which dwelt a sailor and his wife, with their two strong sons and a little girl. The sons were also sailors, and had made several voyages with their father in a pretty ship called the "Skylark." Their names were Hobart and Robart. The little girl's name was Mary, and she was very happy indeed when her father and her brothers were at home, for they petted her and played games with her and loved her very dearly But when the "Skylark" went to sea, and her mother and herself were left alone in the little white cottage, the hours were very dull and tedious, and Mary counted the days until the sailors came home again.

One spring, just as the grasses began to grow green upon the cliff and the trees were dressing their stiff, barren branches in robes of delicate foliage, the father and brothers bade good-bye to Mary and her mother, for they were starting upon a voyage to the Black Sea.

"And how long will you be gone, papa?" asked Mary, who was perched upon her father's knee, where she could nestle her soft cheek against his bushy whiskers.

"How long?" he repeated, stroking her curls tenderly as he spoke; "well, well, my darling, it will be a long time indeed! Do you know the cowslips that grow in the pastures, Mary?"

"Oh, yes; I watch for them every spring," she answered.

"And do you know the dingle-bells that grow near the edge of the wood?" he asked again.

"I know them well, papa," replied Mary, "for often I gather their blue blossoms and put them in a vase upon the table."

"And how about the cockle-shells?"

"Them also I know," said Mary eagerly, for she was glad her father should find her so well acquainted with the field flowers; "there is nothing prettier than the big white flowers of the cockle-shells. But tell me, papa, what have the flowers to do with your coming home?"

"Why, just this, sweetheart," returned the sailor gravely; "all the time that it takes the cowslips and dingle-bells and cockle-shells to sprout from the ground, and grow big and strong, and blossom into flower, and, yes — to wither and die away again — all that time shall your brothers and I sail the

seas. But when the cold winds begin to blow, and the flowers are gone, then, God willing, we shall come back to you; and by that time you may have grown wiser and bigger, and I am sure you will have grown older. So one more kiss, sweetheart, and then we must go, for our time is up."

The next morning, when Mary and her mother had dried their eyes, which had been wet with grief at the departure of their loved ones, the little girl asked earnestly,

"Mamma, may I make a flower-garden?"

"A flower-garden!" repeated her mother in surprise; "why do you wish a flower-garden, Mary?"

"I want to plant in it the cockle-shells and the cowslips and the dingle-bells," she answered.

And her mother, who had heard what the sailor had said to his little girl, knew at once what Mary meant; so she kissed her daughter and replied,

"Yes, Mary, you may have the flower-garden, if you wish. We will dig a nice little bed just at the side of the house, and you shall plant your flowers and care for them yourself."

"I think I 'd rather have the flowers at the front of the house," said Mary.

"But why?" enquired her mother; "they will be better sheltered at the side."

"I want them in front," persisted Mary, "for the sun shines stronger there."

"Very well," answered her mother, "make your garden at the front, if you will, and I will help you to dig up the ground."

"But I do n't want you to help," said Mary, "for this is to be my own little flower-garden, and I want to do all the work myself."

Now I must tell you that this little girl, although very sweet in many ways, had one serious fault. She was inclined to be a bit contrary, and put her own opinions and ideas before those of her elders. Perhaps Mary meant no wrong in this; she often thought knew better how to do a thing than others did; and in such a case she was not only contrary, but anxious to have her own way.

And so her mother, who did not like her little daughter to be unhappy, often gave way to her in small things, and now she permitted Mary to make her own garden, and plant it as she would.

So Mary made a long, narrow bed at the front of the house, and then she prepared to plant her flowers.

"If you scatter the seeds," said her mother, "the flower-bed will look very pretty."

Now this was what Mary was about to do; but since her mother advised it, she tried to think of another way, for, as I said, she was contrary at times.

And in the end she planted the dingle-bells all in one straight row, and the cockle-shells in another straight row the length of the bed, and she finished by planting the cowslips in another long row at the back.

Her mother smiled, but said nothing; and now, as the days passed by, Mary watered and tended her garden with great care; and when the flowers began to sprout she plucked all the weeds that grew among them, and so in the mild spring weather the plants grew finely.

"When they have grown up big and strong," said Mary one morning, as she weeded the bed, "and when they have budded and blossomed and faded away again, then papa and my brothers will come home. And I shall call the cockle-shells papa, for they are the biggest and strongest; and the dingle-bells shall be brother Hobart, and the cowslips brother Robart. And now I feel as if the flowers were really my dear ones, and I must be very careful that they come to no harm!"

She was filled with joy when one morning she ran out to her flower-garden after breakfast and found the dingle-bells and cowslips were actually blossoming, while even the cockle-shells were showing their white buds. They looked rather comical, all standing in stiff, straight rows, one after the other; but Mary did not mind that.

While she was working she heard the tramp of a horse's hoofs, and looking up saw the big bluff Squire riding toward her. The big Squire was very fond of children, and whenever he rode near the little white cottage he stopped to have a word with Mary. He was old and bald-headed, and he had side-whiskers that were very red in color and very short and stubby; but there was ever a merry twinkle in his blue eyes, and Mary well knew him for her friend.

Now, when she looked up and saw him coming toward her flower-garden, she nodded and smiled to him, and the big bluff Squire rode up to her side, and looked down with a smile at her flowers.

Then he said to her in rhyme (for it was a way of speaking the jolly Squire had),

"Mistress Mary, so contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With dingle-bells and cockle-shells
And cowslips all in a row!"

And Mary, being a sharp little girl, and knowing the Squire's queer ways, replied to him likewise in rhyme, saying,

"I thank you, Squire, that you enquire
How well the flowers are growing;
The dingle-bells and cockle-shells

And cowslips all are blowing!”

The Squire laughed at this reply, and patted her upon her head, and then he continued,

”‘T is aptly said. But prithee, maid,
Why thus your garden fill
When ev’ry field the same flowers yield
To pluck them as you will?”

“That is a long story, Squire,” said Mary; “but this much I may tell you,

”The cockle-shell is father’s flower,
The cowslip here is Robart,
The dingle-bell, I now must tell,
I ‘ve named for Brother Hobart
”And when the flowers have lived their lives
In sunshine and in rain,
And then do fade, why, papa said
He ‘d sure come home again.”

“Oh, that ‘s the idea, is it?” asked the big bluff Squire, forgetting his poetry. “Well, it ‘s a pretty thought, my child, and I think because the flowers are strong and hearty that you may know your father and brothers are the same; and I ‘m sure I hope they ‘ll come back from their voyage safe and sound. I shall come and see you again, little one, and watch the garden grow.” And then he said “gee-up” to his gray mare, and rode away.

The very next day, to Mary’s great surprise and grief; she found the leaves of the dingle-bells curling and beginning to wither.

“Oh, mamma,” she called, “come quick! Something is surely the matter with brother Hobart!”

“The dingle-bells are dying,” said her mother, after looking carefully at the flowers; “but the reason is that the cold winds from the sea swept right over your garden last night, and dingle-bells are delicate flowers and grow best where they are sheltered by the woods. If you had planted them at the side of the house, as I wished you to, the wind would not have killed them.”

Mary did not reply to this, but sat down and began to weep, feeling at the same time that her mother was right and it was her own fault for being so contrary.

While she sat thus the Squire rode up, and called to her

”Fie, Mary, fie! Why do you cry;
And blind your eyes to knowing
How dingle-bells and cockle-shells
And cowslips all are growing?”

”Oh, Squire!” sobbed Mary, “I am in great trouble

”Each dingle-bell I loved so well
Before my eyes is dying,
And much I fear my brother dear
In sickness now is lying!”

“Nonsense!” said the Squire; “because you named the flowers after your brother Hobart is no reason he should be affected by the fading of the dingle-bells. I very much suspect the real reason they are dying is because the cold sea wind caught them last night. Dingle-bells are delicate. If you had scattered the cockle-shells and cowslips all about them, the stronger plants would have protected the weaker; but you see, my girl, you planted the dingle-bells all in a row, and so the wind caught them nicely.”

Again Mary reproached herself for having been contrary and refusing to listen to her mother’s advice; but the Squire’s words comforted her, nevertheless, and made her feel that brother Hobart and the flowers had really nothing to do with each other.

The weather now began to change, and the cold sea winds blew each night over Mary’s garden. She did not know this, for she was always lying snugly tucked up in her bed, and the warm morning sun usually drove away the winds; but her mother knew it, and feared Mary’s garden would suffer.

One day Mary came into the house where her mother was at work and said, gleefully,

“Papa and my brothers will soon be home now.”

“Why do you think so?” asked her mother.

“Because the cockle-shells and cowslips are both fading away and dying, just as the dingle-bells did, and papa said when they faded and withered he and the boys would come back to us.”

Mary’s mother knew that the harsh winds had killed the flowers before their time, but she did not like to disappoint her darling, so she only said, with a sigh,

“I hope you are right, Mary, for we both shall be glad to welcome our dear ones home again.”

But soon afterward the big bluff Squire came riding up, as was his wont, to where Mary stood by her garden, and he at once asked,

”Pray tell me, dear, though much I fear
The answer sad I know,
How grow the sturdy cockle-shells
And cowslips, all in a row?”

And Mary looked up at him with her bright smile and answered,

”Dingle-bells and cockle-shells
And cowslips are all dead,

And now my papa's coming home,
For so he surely said."

"Ah," said the Squire, looking at her curiously, "I 'm afraid you are getting way ahead of time. See here, Mary, how would you like a little ride with me on my nag?"

"I would like it very much, sir," replied Mary.

"Then reach up your hand. Now! — there you are, little one!" and Mary found herself seated safely in front of the Squire, who clasped her with one strong arm so that she could not slip off.

"Now, then," he said "we 'll take a little ride down the hill and by the path that runs beside the wood."

So he gave the rein to his mare and they rode along, chatting merrily together, till they came to the wood. Then said the Squire,

"Take a look within that nook
And tell me what is there."

And Mary exclaimed,

"A dingle-bell, and truth to tell
In full bloom, I declare!"

The Squire now clucked to his nag, and as they rode away he said,

"Now come with me and you shall see
A field with cowslips bright
And not a garden in the land
Can show so fair a sight."

And so it was, for as they rode through the pastures the cowslips bloomed on every hand, and Mary's eyes grew bigger and bigger as she thought of her poor garden with its dead flowers.

And then the Squire took her toward the little brook that wandered through the meadows, flowing over the pebbles with a soft, gurgling sound that was very nearly as sweet as music; and when they reached it the big Squire said,

"If you will look beside the brook
You 'll see, I know quite well,
That hidden in each mossy nook
Is many a cockle-shell."

This was indeed true, and as Mary saw them she suddenly dropped her head and began to weep.

"What 's the matter, little one?" asked the Squire in his kind, bluff voice. And Mary answered,

"Although the flowers I much admire,
You know papa did say

He won't be home again, Squire,
Till all have passed away."

"You must be patient, my child," replied her friend; "and surely you would not have been thus disappointed had you not tried to make the field flowers grow where they do not belong. Gardens are all well enough for fancy flowers to grow in, but the posies that God gave to all the world, and made to grow wild in the great garden of Nature, will never thrive in other places. Your father meant you to watch the flowers in the field; and if you will come and visit them each day, you will find the time waiting very short indeed."

Mary dried her eyes and thanked the kindly old Squire, and after that she visited the fields each day and watched the flowers grow.

And it was not so very long, as the Squire said before the blossoms began to wither and fall away; and finally one day Mary looked out over the sea and saw a little speck upon the waters that looked like a sail. And when it came nearer and had grown larger, both she and her mother saw that it was the "Skylark" come home again, and you can imagine how pleased and happy the sight of the pretty little ship made them.

And soon after, when Mary had been hugged by her two sunburned brothers and was clasped in her father's strong arms, she whispered,

"I knew you were coming soon, papa."

"And how did you know, sweetheart?" he asked, giving her an extra kiss.

"Because I watched the flowers; and the dingle-bells and cowslips and cockle-shells are all withered and faded away. And did you not say that, God willing, when this happened you would come back to us?"

"To be sure I did," answered her father, with a happy laugh; "and I must have spoken truly, sweetheart, for God in His goodness was willing, and here I am!"

The Wond'rous Wise Man

There was a man in our town
And he was wond'rous wise;
He jumped into a bramble bush
And scratched out both his eyes.
And when he saw his eyes were out,
With all his might and main
He jumped into another bush
And scratched them in again!

Our town is a quiet little town, and lies nestling in a little valley surrounded by pretty green hills. I do not think you would ever have heard our town mentioned had not the man lived there who was so wise that everyone marvelled at his great knowledge.

He was not always a wise man; he was a wise boy before he grew to manhood, and even when a child he was so remarkable for his wisdom that people shook their heads gravely and said, "when he grows up there will be no need of books, for he will know everything!"

His father thought he had a wond'rous wise look when he was born, and so he named him Solomon, thinking that if indeed he turned out to be wise the name would fit him nicely, whereas, should he be mistaken, and the boy grow up stupid, his name could be easily changed to Simon.

But the father was not mistaken, and the boy's name remained Solomon.

When he was still a child Solomon confounded the schoolmaster by asking, one day,

"Can you tell me, sir, why a cow drinks water from a brook?"

"Well really," replied the abashed schoolmaster, "I have never given the subject serious thought. But I will sleep upon the question, and try to give you an answer to-morrow."

"But the schoolmaster could not sleep; he remained awake all the night trying to think why a cow drinks water from a brook, and in the morning he was no nearer the answer than before. So he was obliged to appear before the wise child and acknowledge that he could not solve the problem.

"I have looked at the subject from every side," said he, "and given it careful thought, and yet I cannot tell why a cow drinks water from a brook."

"Sir," replied the wise child, "it is because the cow is thirsty."

The shock of this answer was so great that the schoolmaster fainted away, and when they had brought him to he made a prophecy that Solomon would grow up to be a wond'rous wise man.

It was the same way with the village doctor. Solomon came to him one

day and asked,

“Tell me, sir, why has a man two eyes?”

“Bless me!” exclaimed the doctor, “I must think I a bit before I answer, for I have never yet had my attention called to this subject.”

So he thought for a long time, and then he said, “I must really give it up. I cannot tell, for the life of me, why a man has two eyes. Do you know?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the boy.

“Then,” said the doctor, after taking a dose of quinine to brace up his nerves, for he remembered the fate of the schoolmaster, “then please tell me why a man as two eyes.

“A man has two eyes, sir,” returned Solomon, solemnly, “because he was born that way.”

And the doctor marvelled greatly at so much wisdom in a little child, and made a note of it in his note-book.

Solomon was so full of wisdom that it flowed from his mouth in a perfect stream, and every day he gave new evidence to his friends that he could scarcely hold all the wise thoughts that came to him. For instance, one day he said to his father,

“I perceive our dog has six legs.”

“Oh, no!” replied his father, “our dog has only four legs.”

“You are surely mistaken, sir,” said Solomon, with the gravity that comes from great wisdom, “these are our dog’s fore legs, are they not?” pointing to the front legs of the dog.

“Yes,” answered his father.

“Well,” continued Solomon, “the dog has two other legs, besides, and two and four are six; therefore the dog has six legs.”

“But that is very old,” exclaimed his father.

“True,” replied Solomon, “but this is a young dog.”

Then his father bowed his head in shame that his own child should teach him wisdom.

Of course Solomon wore glasses upon his eyes — all wise people wear them, — and his face was ever grave and solemn, while he walked slowly and stiffly so that people might know he was the celebrated wise man, and do him reverence.

And when he had grown to manhood the fame of his wisdom spread all over the world, so that all the other wise men were jealous, and tried in many ways to confound him; but Solomon always came out ahead and maintained his reputation for wisdom.

Finally a very wise man came from Cumberland, to meet Solomon and see which of them was the wisest. He was a very big man, and Solomon was

a very little man, and so the people all shook their heads sadly and feared Solomon had met his match, for if the Cumberland man was as full of wisdom as Solomon, he had much the advantage in size.

They formed a circle around the two wise men, and then began the trial to see which was the wisest.

"Tell me," said Solomon, looking straight up into the big man's face with an air of confidence that reassured his friends, "how many sisters has a boy who has one father, one mother, and seven brothers?"

The big wise man got very red in the face, and scowled and coughed and stammered, but he could not tell.

"I do not know," he acknowledged; "nor do you know, either, for there is no rule to go by."

"Oh, yes, I know," replied Solomon; "he has two sisters. I know this is the true answer, because I know the boy and his father and his mother and his brothers and his sisters, so that I cannot be mistaken."

Now all the people applauded at this, for they were sure Solomon had got the best of the man from Cumberland.

But it was now the big man's turn to try Solomon, so he said,

"Fingers five are on my hand;
All of them upright do stand.
One a dog is, chasing kittens;
One a cat is, wearing mittens;
One a rat is, eating cheese;
One a wolf is, full of fleas;
One a fly is, in a cup
How many fingers do I hold up?"

"Four," replied Solomon, promptly, "for one of them is a thumb!"

The wise man from Cumberland was so angry at being outwitted that he sprang at Solomon and would no doubt have injured him had not our wise man turned and run away as fast as he could go. The man from Cumberland at once ran after him, and chased him through the streets and down the lanes and up the side of the hill where the bramble-bushes grow.

Solomon ran very fast, but the man from Cumberland was bigger, and he was just about to grab our wise man by his coat-tails when Solomon gave a great jump, and jumped right into the middle of a big bramble-bush!

The people were all coming up behind, and as the big man did not dare to follow Solomon into the bramble-bush, he turned away and ran home to Cumberland.

All the men and women of our town were horrified when they came up and found their wise man in the middle of the bramble-bush, and held fast by

the brambles, which scratched and pricked him on every side.

"Solomon! are you hurt?" they cried.

"I should say I am hurt!" replied Solomon, with a groan; "my eyes are scratched out!"

"How do you know they are?" asked the village doctor.

"I can see they are scratched out!" replied Solomon; and the people all wept with grief at this, and Solomon howled louder than any of them.

Now the fact was that when Solomon jumped into the bramble-bush he was wearing his spectacles, and the brambles pushed the glasses so close against his eyes that he could not open them; and so, as every other part of him was scratched and bleeding, and he could not open his eyes, he made sure they were scratched out.

"How am I to get out of here?" he asked at last.

"You must jump out," replied the doctor, "since you have jumped in."

So Solomon made a great jump, and although the brambles tore him cruelly, he sprang entirely out of the bush and fell plump into another one. This last bush, however, by good luck, was not a bramble-bush, but one of elderberry, and when he jumped into it his spectacles fell off, and to his surprise he opened his eyes and found that he could see again.

"Where are you now?" called out the doctor.

"I 'm in the elderberry bush, and I 've scratched my eyes in again!" answered Solomon.

When the people heard this they marvelled greatly at the wisdom of a man who knew how to scratch his eyes in after they were scratched out; and they lifted Solomon from the bush and carried him home, where they bound up the scratches and nursed him carefully until he was well again.

And after that no one ever questioned the wond'rous wisdom of our wise man, and when he finally died, at a good old age, they built a great monument over his grave, and on one side of it were the words,

"Solomon; the Man who was Wond'rous Wise."

and on the other side was a picture of a bramble-bush.

What Jack Horner Did

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb and pulled out a plum
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

Little Jack Horner lived in an old, tumble-down house at the edge of a big wood; and there many generations of Horners had lived before him, and had earned their living by chopping wood. Jack's father and mother were both dead, and he lived with his grandfather and grandmother, who took great pains to teach him all that a boy should know.

They lived very comfortably and happily together until one day a great tree fell upon Grandpa Horner and crushed his legs; and from that time on he could not work at all, but had to be nursed and tended very carefully.

This calamity was a great affliction to the Horners. Grandma Horner had a little money saved up in an old broken teapot that she kept in the cupboard, but that would not last them a great time, and when it was gone they would have nothing with which to buy food.

"I 'm sure I do n't know what is to become of us," she said to Jack, "for I am too old to work, and you are too young." She always told her troubles to Jack now; small though he was, he was the only one she could talk freely with, since it would only bother the poor crippled grandfather to tell him how low the money was getting in the teapot.

"It is true," replied Jack, "that you are too old to work, for your rheumatism will barely allow you to care for the house and cook our meals; and there is grandpa to be tended. But I am not too young to work, grandma, and I shall take my little hatchet and go into the wood. I cannot cut the big trees, but I can the smaller ones, and I am sure I shall be able to pile up enough wood to secure the money we need for food."

"You are a good boy, dear," said grandma Horner, patting his head lovingly, "but you are too young for the task. We must think of some other way to keep the wolf from the door."

But Jack was not shaken in his resolve, although he saw it was useless to argue further with his grandmother. So the next morning he rose very early and took his little axe and went into the wood to begin his work. There were a good many branches scattered about, and these he was able to cut with ease; and then he piled them up nicely to be sold when the wood-carter next came around. When dinner-time came he stopped long enough to eat some of the bread and cheese he had brought with him, and then he resumed his work.

But scarcely had he chopped one branch when a faint cry from the wood arrested his attention. It seemed as if some one was shouting for help. Jack listened a moment, and again heard the cry.

Without hesitation he seized his axe and ran toward the place from whence the cry had proceeded. The underbrush was very thick and the thorns caught in his clothing and held him back, but with the aid of his sharp little axe he overcame all difficulties and presently reached a place where the wood was more open.

He paused here, for often he had been told by Grandpa Horner that there were treacherous bogs in this part of the wood, which were so covered with mosses and ferns that the ground seemed solid enough to walk upon. But woe to the unlucky traveler who stepped unawares upon their surface; for instantly he found himself caught by the clinging moist clay, to sink farther and farther into the bog until, swallowed up in the mire, he would meet a horrible death beneath its slimy surface. His grandfather had told him never to go near these terrible bogs, and Jack, who was an obedient boy, had always kept away from this part of the wood. But as he paused, again that despairing cry came to his ears, very near to him now, it seemed:

"Help!"

Forgetful of all save a desire to assist this unknown sufferer, Jack sprang forward with an answering cry, and only halted when he found himself upon the edge of a vast bog.

"Where are you?" he then shouted.

"Here!" answered a voice, and, looking down, Jack saw, a few feet away, the head and shoulders of a man. He had walked into the bog and sunk into its treacherous depths nearly to his waist, and, although he struggled bravely, his efforts only seemed to draw him farther down toward a frightful death.

For a moment, filled with horror and dismay, Jack stood looking at the man. Then he remembered a story he had once heard of how a man had been saved from the bog.

"Be quiet, sir!" he called to the unfortunate stranger; "save all your strength, and I may yet be able to rescue you."

He then ran to a tall sapling that stood near and began chopping away with his axe. The keen blade speedily cut through the young but tough wood, and, then Jack dragged it to the edge of the bog, and, exerting all his strength, pushed it out until the sapling was within reach of the sinking man.

"Grab it, sir!" he called out, "and hold on tightly. It will keep you from sinking farther into the mire, and when you have gained more strength you may be able to pull yourself out."

"You are a brave boy," replied the stranger, "and I shall do as you tell

me.”

It was a long and tedious struggle, and often Jack thought the stranger would despair and be unable to drag his body from the firm clutch of the bog; but little by little the man succeeded in drawing himself up by the sapling, and at last he was saved, and sank down exhausted upon the firm ground by Jack’s side.

The boy then ran for some water that stood in a slough near by, and with this he bathed the stranger’s face and cooled his parched lips. Then he gave him the remains of his bread and cheese, and soon the gentleman became strong enough to walk with Jack’s help to the cottage at the edge of the wood.

Grandma Horner was greatly surprised to see the strange man approaching, supported by her sturdy little grandson; but she ran to help him, and afterward gave him some old clothing of Grandpa Horner’s, to replace his own muddy garments. When the man had fully rested, she brewed him her last bit of tea, and by that time the stranger declared he felt as good as new.

“Is this your son, ma’am?” he asked, pointing to Jack.

“He is my grandson, sir,” answered the woman.

“He is a good boy,” declared the stranger, “and a brave boy as well, for he has saved my life. I live far away in a big city, and have plenty of money. If you will give Jack to me I will take him home and educate him, and make a great man of him when he grows up.”

Grandma Horner hesitated, for the boy was very dear to her and the pride of her old age; but Jack spoke up for himself.

“I ‘ll not go,” he said, stoutly; “you are very kind, and mean well by me, but grandma and grandpa have only me to care for them now, and I must stay with them and cut the wood, and so keep them supplied with food.”

The stranger said nothing more, but he patted Jack’s head kindly, and soon after left them and took the road to the city.

The next morning Jack went to the wood again, and began chopping as bravely as before. And by hard work he cut a great deal of wood, which the wood-carter carried away and sold for him. The pay was not very much, to be sure, but Jack was glad that he was able to earn something to help his grandparents.

And so the days passed rapidly away until it was nearly Christmas time, and now, in spite of Jack’s earnings, the money was very low indeed in the broken teapot.

One day, just before Christmas, a great wagon drove up to the door of the little cottage, and in it was the stranger Jack had rescued from the bog. The

wagon was loaded with a store of good things which would add to the comfort of the aged pair and their grandson, including medicines for grandpa and rare teas for grandma, and a fine suit of clothes for Jack, who was just then away at work in the wood.

When the stranger had brought all these things into the house, he asked to see the old teapot. Trembling with the excitement of their good fortune, Grandma Horner brought out the teapot, and the gentleman drew a bag from beneath his coat and filled the pot to the brim with shining gold pieces.

“If ever you need more,” he said, “send to me, and you shall have all you wish to make you comfortable.”

Then he told her his name, and where he lived, so that she might find him if need be, and then he drove away in the empty wagon before Grandma Horner had half finished thanking him.

You can imagine how astonished and happy little Jack was when he returned from his work and found all the good things his kind benefactor had brought. Grandma Horner was herself so delighted that she caught the boy in her arms, and hugged and kissed him, declaring that his brave rescue of the gentleman had brought them all this happiness in their hour of need.

“To-morrow is Christmas,” she said, “and we shall have an abundance with which to celebrate the good day. So I shall make you a Christmas pie, Jack dear, and stuff it full of plums, for you must have your share of our unexpected prosperity.”

And Grandma Horner was as good as her word, and made a very delicious pie indeed for her darling grandson.

And that is was how it came that

”Little Jack Horner sat in a corner
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb and pulled out a plum
And said, “What a good boy am I!

And he was — a very good boy. Do n’t you think so?

The Man in the Moon

The Man in the Moon came tumbling down,
And enquired the way to Norwich;
He went by the south and burned his mouth
With eating cold pease porridge!

What! Have you never heard the story of the Man in the Moon? Then I must surely tell it, for it is very amusing, and there is not a word of truth in it.

The Man in the Moon was rather lonesome, and often he peeked over the edge of the moon and looked down upon the earth and envied all the people who lived together, for he thought it must be vastly more pleasant to have companions to talk to than to be shut up in a big planet all by himself, where he had to whistle to keep himself company.

One day he looked down and saw an alderman sailing up through the air towards him. This alderman was being translated (instead of being transported, owing to a misprint in the law) and as he came near the Man in the Moon called to him and said,

"How is everything down on the earth?"

"Everything is lovely," replied the alderman, "and I would n't leave it if I was not obliged to."

"What 's a good place to visit down there?" enquired the Man in the Moon.

"Oh, Norwich is a mighty fine place," returned the alderman, "and it 's famous for its pease porridge;" and then he sailed out of sight and left the Man in the Moon to reflect upon what he had said.

The words of the alderman made him more anxious than ever to visit the earth, and so he walked thoughtfully home, and put a few lumps of ice in the stove to keep him warm, and sat down to think how he should manage the trip.

You see, everything went by contraries in the Moon, and when the Man wished to keep warm he knocked off a few chunks of ice and put them in his stove; and he cooled his drinking water by throwing red-hot coals of fire into the pitcher. Likewise, when he became chilly he took off his hat and coat, and even his shoes, and so became warm; and in the hot days of summer he put on his overcoat to cool off.

All of which seems very queer to you, no doubt; but it was n't at all queer to the Man in the Moon, for he was accustomed to it.

Well, he sat by his ice-cool fire and thought about his journey to the earth, and finally he decided the only way he could get there was to slide down a moonbeam.

So he left the house and locked the door and put the key in his pocket, for he was uncertain how long he should be gone; and then he went to the edge of the moon and began to search for a good strong moonbeam.

At last he found one that seemed rather substantial and reached right down to a pleasant-looking spot on the earth; and so he swung himself over the edge of the moon, and put both arms tight around the moonbeam and started to slide down. But he found it rather slippery, and in spite of all his efforts to hold on he found himself going faster and faster, so that just before he reached the earth he lost his hold and came tumbling down head over heels and fell plump into a river.

The cool water nearly scalded him before he could swim out, but fortunately he was near the bank and he quickly scrambled upon the land and sat down to catch his breath.

By that time it was morning, and as the sun rose its hot rays cooled him off somewhat, so that he began looking about curiously at all the strange sights and wondering where on earth he was.

By and by a farmer came along the road by the river with a team of horses drawing a load of hay, and the horses looked so odd to the Man in the Moon that at first he was greatly frightened, never before having seen horses except from his home in the moon, from whence they looked a good deal smaller. But he plucked up courage and said to the farmer,

"Can you tell me the way to Norwich, sir?"

"Norwich?" repeated the farmer musingly; "I do n't know exactly where it be, sir, but it 's somewhere away to the south."

"Thank you," said the Man in the Moon. — But stop! I must not call him the Man in the Moon any longer, for of course he was now out of the moon; so I 'll simply call him the Man, and you 'll know by that which man I mean.

Well, the Man in the — I mean the Man (but I nearly forgot what I have just said) — the Man turned to the south and began walking briskly along the road, for he had made up his mind to do as the alderman had advised and travel to Norwich, that he might eat some of the famous pease porridge that was made there. And finally, after a long and tiresome journey, he reached the town and stopped at one of the first houses he came to, for by this time he was very hungry indeed.

A good-looking woman answered his knock at the door, and he asked politely,

"Is this the town of Norwich, madam?"

"Surely this is the town of Norwich," returned the woman.

"I came here to see if I could get some pease porridge," continued the Man, "for I hear you make I the nicest porridge in the world in this town."

“That we do, sir,” answered the woman, “and if you ‘ll step inside I ‘ll give you a bowl, for I have plenty in the house that is newly made.”

So he thanked her and entered the house, and she asked,

“Will you have it hot or cold, sir?”

“Oh, cold, by all means,” replied the Man, “for I detest anything hot to eat.”

She soon brought him a bowl of cold pease porridge, and the Man was so hungry that he took a big spoonful at once.

But no sooner had he put it into his mouth than he uttered a great yell, and began dancing frantically about the room, for of course the porridge that was cold to earth folk was hot to him, and the big spoonful of cold pease porridge had burned his mouth to a blister!

“What ‘s the matter?” asked the woman.

“Matter!” screamed the Man; “why, your porridge is so hot it has burned me.”

“Fiddlesticks!” she replied, “the porridge is quite cold.”

“Try it yourself!” he cried. So she tried it and found it very cold and pleasant. But the Man was so astonished to see her eat the porridge that had blistered his own mouth that he became frightened and ran out of the house and down the street as fast as he could go.

The policeman on the first corner saw him running, and promptly arrested him, and he was marched off to the magistrate for trial.

“What is your name?” asked the magistrate.

“I have n’t any,” replied the Man; for of course as he was the only Man in the Moon it was n’t necessary he should have a name.

“Come, come, no nonsense!” said the magistrate, “you must have some name. Who are you?”

“Why, I ‘m the Man in the Moon.”

“That ‘s rubbish!” said the magistrate, eyeing the prisoner severely, “you may be a man, but you ‘re not in the moon-you ‘re in Norwich.”

“That is true,” answered the Man, who was quite bewildered by this idea.

“And of course you must be called something,” continued the magistrate.

“Well, then,” said the prisoner, “if I ‘m not the Man in the Moon I must be the Man out of the Moon; so call me that.”

“Very good,” replied the judge; “now, then, where did you come from?”

“The moon.”

“Oh, you did, eh? How did you get here?”

“I slid down a moonbeam.”

“Indeed! Well, what were you running for?”

“A woman gave me some cold pease porridge, and it burned my mouth.”

The magistrate looked at him a moment in surprise, and then he said,

"This person is evidently crazy; so take him to the lunatic asylum and keep him there."

This would surely have been the fate of the Man had there not been present an old astronomer who had often looked at the moon through his telescope, and so had discovered that what was hot on earth was cold in the moon, and what was cold here was hot there; so he began to think the Man had told the truth. Therefore he begged the magistrate to wait a few minutes while he looked through his telescope to see if the Man in the Moon was there. So, as it was now night, he fetched his telescope and looked at the Moon, — and found there was no man in it at all!

"It seems to be true," said the astronomer, "that the Man has got out of the Moon somehow or other. Let me look at your mouth, sir, and see if it is really burned."

Then the Man opened his mouth, and everyone saw plainly it was burned to a blister! Thereupon the magistrate begged his pardon for doubting his word, and asked him what he would like to do next.

"I 'd like to get back to the Moon," said the Man, "for I do n't like this earth of yours at all. The nights are too hot."

"Why, it 's quite cool this evening!" said the magistrate.

"I 'll tell you what we can do," remarked the astronomer; "there 's a big balloon in town which belongs to the circus that came here last summer, and was pawned for a board bill. We can inflate this balloon and send the Man out of the Moon home in it."

"That 's a good idea," replied the judge. So the balloon was brought and inflated, and the Man got into the basket and gave the word to let go, and then the balloon mounted up into the sky in the direction of the moon.

The good people of Norwich stood on the earth and tipped back their heads, and watched the balloon go higher and higher, until finally the Man reached out and caught hold of the edge of the moon, and behold! the next minute he was the Man in the Moon again!

After this adventure he was well contented to stay at home; and I 've no doubt if you look through a telescope you will see him there to this day.

The Jolly Miller

There was a jolly miller
Lived on the river Dee;
He sang and worked from morn till night,
No lark so blithe as he.
And this the burden of his song
Forever seemed to be:
I care for nobody, no! not I,
Since nobody cares for me.

"Cree-e-eekety-cruck-crick! cree-e-eekety-cruck-crick!" sang out the big wheel of the mill upon the river Dee, for it was old and ricketty and had worked many years grinding corn for the miller; so from morning till night it creaked and growled and complained as if rebelling against the work it must do. And the country people, at work in the fields far away, would raise their heads when the soft summer breezes wafted the sound of the wheel to their ears and say,

"The jolly miller is grinding his corn." And again, at the times when the mill was shut down and no sound of the wheel reached them, they said to one another,

"The jolly miller has no corn to grind to-day," or, "The miller is oiling the great wheel." But they would miss the creaking, monotonous noise, and feel more content when the mill started again and made music for them as they worked.

But no one came to the mill unless they brought corn to grind, for the miller was a queer man, and liked to be alone. When people passed by the mill and saw the miller at his work, they only nodded their heads, for they knew he would not reply if they spoke to him.

He was not an old man, nor a sour man, nor a bad man; on the contrary he could be heard singing at his work most of the time. But the words of his song would alone have kept people away from him, for they were always these:

"I care for nobody, no! not I,
Since nobody cares for me."

He lived all alone in the mill-house, cooking his own meals and making his own bed, and neither asking nor receiving help from anyone. It is very certain that if the jolly miller had cared to have friends many would have visited him, since the country people were sociable enough in their way; but it was the miller himself who refused to make friends, and old Farmer Dobson used to say,

“The reason nobody cares for the miller is because he won’t let them.
It is the fault of the man himself, not the fault of the people!”

However this may have been, it is true the miller had no friends, and equally sure that he cared to have none, for it did not make him a bit unhappy.

Sometimes, indeed, as he sat at evening in the doorway of the mill and watched the moon rise in the sky, he grew a bit lonely and thoughtful, and found himself longing for some one to love and cherish, for this is the nature of all good men. But when he realized how his thoughts were straying he began to sing again, and he drove away all such hopeless longings.

At last a change came over the miller’s life. He was standing one evening beside the river, watching the moonbeams play upon the water, when something came floating down the stream that attracted his attention. For a long time he could not tell what it was, but it looked to him like a big black box; so he got a long pole and reached it out towards the box and managed to draw it within reach just above the big wheel. It was fortunate he saved it when he did for in another moment it would have gone over the wheel and been dashed to pieces far below.

When the miller had pulled the floating object upon the bank he found it really was a box, the lid being fastened tight with a strong cord. So he lifted it carefully and carried it into the mill-house, and then he placed it upon the floor while he lighted a candle. Then he cut the cord and opened the box and behold! a little babe lay within it, sweetly sleeping upon a pillow of down.

The miller was so surprised that he stopped singing and gazed with big eyes at the beautiful face of the little stranger. And while he gazed its eyes opened — two beautiful, pleading blue eyes, — and the little one smiled and stretched out her arms toward him.

“Well, well!” said the miller, “where on earth did you come from?”

The baby did not reply, but she tried to, and made some soft little noises that sounded like the cooing of a pigeon.

The tiny arms were still stretched upwards, and the miller bent down and tenderly lifted the child from the box and placed her upon his knee, and then he began to stroke the soft, silken ringlets that clustered around her head, and to look upon her wonderingly.

The baby leaned against his breast and fell asleep again, and the miller became greatly troubled, for he was unused to babies and did not know how to handle them or care for them. But he sat very still until the little one awoke, and then, thinking it must be hungry, he brought some sweet milk and fed her with a spoon. The baby smiled at him and ate the milk as if it liked it, and then one little dimpled hand caught hold of the miller’s whiskers

and pulled sturdily, while the baby jumped its little body up and down and cooed its delight.

Do you think the miller was angry? Not a bit of it! He smiled back into the laughing face and let her pull his whiskers as much as she liked. For his whole heart had gone out to this little waif that he rescued from the river, and at last the solitary man had found something to love.

The baby slept that night in the miller's own bed, snugly tucked in beside the miller himself; and in the morning he fed her milk again, and then went out to work singing more merrily than ever.

Every few minutes he would put his head into the room where he had left the child, to see if it wanted anything, and if it cried even the least bit he would run in and take it in his arms and soothe the little girl until she smiled again.

That first day the miller was fearful some one would come and claim the child, but when evening came without the arrival of any stranger he decided the baby had been cast adrift and now belonged to nobody but him.

"I shall keep her as long as I live," he thought, "and never will we be separated for even a day. For now that I have found some one to love I could not bear to let her go again."

He cared for the waif very tenderly; and as the child was strong and healthy she was not much trouble to him, and to his delight grew bigger day by day.

The country people were filled with surprise when they saw a child in the mill-house, and wondered where it came from; but the miller would answer no questions, and as year after year passed away they forgot to enquire how the child came there and looked upon her as the miller's own daughter.

She grew to be a sweet and pretty child, and was the miller's constant companion. She called him "papa," and he called her Nathalie, because he had found her upon the water, and the country people called her the Maid of the Mill.

The miller worked harder than ever before, for now he had to feed and clothe the little girl; and he sang from morn till night, so joyous was he, and still his song was:

"I care for nobody, no! not I,
Since nobody cares for me."

One day, while he was singing this, he heard a sob beside him, and looked down to see Nathalie weeping.

"What is it, my pet?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh, papa," she answered, "why do you sing that nobody cares for you, when you know I love you so dearly?"

The miller was surprised, for he had sung the song so long he had forgotten what the words meant.

"Do you indeed love me, Nathalie?" he asked.

"Indeed, indeed! You know I do!" she replied.

"Then," said the miller, with a happy laugh, as he bent down and kissed the tear-stained face, "I shall change my song."

And after that he sang:

"I love sweet Nathalie, that I do.
For Nathalie she loves me."

The years passed by and the miller was very happy. Nathalie grew to be a sweet and lovely maiden, and she learned to cook the meals and tend the house, and that made it easier for the miller, for now he was growing old.

One day the young Squire, who lived at the great house on the hill, came past the mill and saw Nathalie sitting in the doorway, her pretty form framed in the flowers that climbed around and over the door.

And the Squire loved her after that first glance, for he saw that she was as good and innocent as she was beautiful. The miller, hearing the sound of voices, came out and saw them together, and at once he became very angry, for he knew that trouble was in store for him, and he must guard his treasure very carefully if he wished to keep her with him. The young Squire begged very hard to be allowed to pay court to the Maid of the Mill, but the miller ordered him away, and he was forced to go. Then the miller saw there were tears in Nathalie's eyes, and that made him still more anxious, for he feared the mischief was already done.

Indeed, in spite of the miller's watchfulness, the Squire and Nathalie often met and walked together in the shady lanes or upon the green banks of the river. It was not long before they learned to love one another very dearly, and one day they went hand in hand to the miller and asked his consent that they should wed.

"What will become of me?" asked the miller, with a sad heart.

"You shall live in the great house with us," replied the Squire, "and never again need you labor for bread."

But the old man shook his head.

"A miller I have lived," quoth he, "and a miller will I die. But tell me, Nathalie, are you willing to leave me?"

The girl cast down her eyes and blushed sweetly.

"I love him," she whispered, "and if you separate us I shall die."

"Then," said the miller, kissing her with a heavy heart, "go; and may God bless you."

So Nathalie and the Squire were wed, and lived in the great house, and the

very day after the wedding she came walking down to the mill in her pretty new gown to see the miller.

But as she drew near she heard him singing, as was his wont; and the song he sung she had not heard since she was a little girl, for this was it:

”I care for nobody, no! not I,
Since nobody cares for me.”

She came up softly behind him, and put her arms around his neck.

“Papa,” said she, “you must not sing that song. Nathalie loves you yet, and always will while she lives; for my new love is complete in itself, and has not robbed you of one bit of the love that has always been your very own.”

The miller turned and looked into her blue eyes, and knew that she spoke truly.

“Then I must learn a new song again,” he said, “for it is lonely at the mill, and singing makes the heart lighter. But I will promise that never again, till you forget me, will I sing that nobody cares for me.”

And the miller did learn a new song, and sang it right merrily for many years; for each day Nathalie came down to the mill to show that she had not forgotten him.

The Little Man and His Little Gun

There was a little man and he had a little gun,
And the bullets were made of lead, lead, lead.
He went to the brook and shot a little duck,
And the bullet went right through its head, head, head.

There was once a little man named Jimson, who had stopped growing when he was a boy, and never started again. So, although he was old enough to be a man he was hardly big enough, and had he not owned a bald head and gray whiskers you would certainly have taken him for a boy whenever you saw him.

This little man was very sorry he was not bigger, and if you wanted to make him angry you had but to call attention to his size. He dressed just as big men do, and wore a silk hat and a long-tailed coat when he went to church, and a cap and top-boots when he rode horseback. He walked with a little cane and had a little umbrella made to carry when it rained. In fact, whatever other men did this little man was anxious to do also, and so it happened that when the hunting season came around, and all the men began to get their guns ready to hunt for snipe and duck, Mr. Jimson also had a little gun made, and determined to use it as well as any of them.

When he brought it home and showed it to his wife, who was a very big woman, she said,

"Jimson, you 'd better use bullets made of bread, and then you won't hurt anything."

"Nonsense, Joan," replied the little man, "I shall have bullets made of lead, just as other men do, and every duck I see I shall shoot and bring home to you."

"I 'm afraid you won't kill many," said Joan.

But the little man believed he could shoot with the best of them, so the next morning he got up early and took his little gun and started down to the brook to hunt for duck.

It was scarcely daybreak when he arrived at the brook, and the sun had not yet peeped over the eastern hill-tops, but no duck appeared anywhere in sight, although Mr. Jimson knew this was the right time of day for shooting them. So he sat down beside the brook and begun watching, and before he knew it he had fallen fast asleep.

By and by he was awakened by a peculiar noise.

"Quack, quack, quack!" sounded in his ears; and looking up he saw a pretty little duck swimming in the brook and popping its head under the water in search of something to eat. The duck belonged to Johnny Sprigg,

who lived a little way down the brook, but the little man did not know this. He thought it was a wild duck, so he stood up and carefully took aim.

"I 'm afraid I can't hit it from here," he thought, "so I 'll just step upon that big stone in the brook, and shoot from there."

So he stepped out upon the stone, and took aim at the duck again, and fired the gun.

The next minute the little man had tumbled head over heels into the water, and he nearly drowned before he could scramble out again; for, not being used to shooting, the gun had kicked, or recoiled, and had knocked him off the round stone where he had been standing.

When he had succeeded in reaching the bank he was overjoyed to see that he had shot the duck, which lay dead upon the water a short distance away. The little man got a long stick, and, reaching it out, drew the dead duck to the bank. Then he started joyfully homeward to show the prize to his wife.

"There, Joan," he said, as he entered the house, "is a nice little duck for our dinner. Do you now think your husband cannot shoot?"

"But there 's only one duck," remarked his wife, "and it 's very small. Can't you go and shoot another? Then we shall have enough for dinner."

"Yes, of course I can shoot another," said the little man, proudly; "you make a fire and get the pot boiling, and I 'll go for another duck."

"You 'd better shoot a drake this time," said Joan, "for drakes are bigger."

She started to make the fire, and the little man took his gun and went to the brook; but not a duck did he see, nor drake neither, and so he was forced to come home without any game.

"There 's no use cooking one duck," said his wife, "so we 'll have pork and beans for dinner and I 'll hang the little duck in the shed. Perhaps you 'll be able to shoot a drake to-morrow, and then we 'll cook them both together."

So they had pork and beans, to the great disappointment of Mr. Jimson, who had expected to eat duck instead; and after dinner the little man lay down to take a nap while his wife went out to tell the neighbors what a great hunter he was.

The news spread rapidly through the town, and when the evening paper came out the little man was very angry to see this verse printed in it:

There was a little man and he had a little gun,
And the bullets were made of lead, lead, lead.
He went to the brook and shot a little duck,
And the bullet went right through its head, head, head.
He carried it home to his good wife Joan,
And bade her a fire to make, make, make,

While he went to the brook where he shot the little duck,

And tried for to shoot the drake, drake, drake.

"There 's no use putting it into the paper," exclaimed the little man, much provoked, "and Mr. Brayer, the editor, is probably jealous because he himself cannot shoot a gun. Perhaps people think I cannot shoot a drake, but I 'll show them to-morrow that I can!"

So the next morning he got up early again, and took his gun, and loaded it with bullets made of lead. Then he said to his wife,

"What does a drake look like, my love?"

"Why," she replied, "it 's much like a duck, only it has a curl on its tail and red on its wing."

"All right," he answered, "I 'll bring you home a drake in a short time, and to-day we shall have something better for dinner than pork and beans."

When he got to the brook there was nothing in sight, so he sat down on the bank to watch, and again fell fast asleep.

Now Johnny Sprigg had missed his little duck, and knew some one had shot it; so he thought this morning he would go the brook and watch for the man who had killed the duck, and make him pay a good price for it. Johnny was a big man, whose head was very bald; therefore he wore a red curly wig to cover his baldness and make him look younger.

When he got to the brook he saw no one about, and so he hid in a clump of bushes. After a time the little man woke up, and in looking around for the drake he saw Johnny's red wig sticking out of the top of the bushes.

"That is surely the drake," he thought, "for I can see a curl and something red;" and the next minute "bang!" went the gun, and Johnny Sprigg gave a great yell and jumped out of the bushes. As for his beautiful wig, it was shot right off his head, and fell into the water of the brook a good ten yards away!

"What are you trying to do?" he cried, shaking his fist at the little man.

"Why, I was only shooting at the drake," replied Jimson; "and I hit it, too, for there it is in the water.

"That 's my wig, sir!" said Johnny Sprigg, "and you shall pay for it, or I 'll have the law on you. Are you the man who shot the duck here yesterday morning?"

"I am, sir," answered the little man, proud that he had shot something besides a wig.

"Well, you shall pay for that also," said Mr. Sprigg; "for it belonged to me, and I 'll have the money or I 'll put you in jail!"

The little man did not want to go to jail, so with a heavy heart he paid for the wig and the duck, and then took his way sorrowfully homeward.

He did not tell Joan of his meeting with Mr. Sprigg; he only said he could

not find a drake. But she knew all about it when the paper came out, for this is what it said on the front page:

There was a little man and he had a little gun,
And the bullets were made of lead, lead, lead.
He shot Johnny Sprigg through the middle of his wig,
And knocked it right off from his head, head, head.

The little man was so angry at this, and at the laughter of all the men he met, that he traded his gun off for a lawn-mower, and resolved never to go hunting again.

He had the little duck he had shot made into a pie, and he and Joan ate it; but he did not enjoy it very much.

"This duck cost me twelve dollars," he said to his loving wife, "for that is the sum Johnny Sprigg made me pay; and it 's a very high price for one little duck — do n't you think so, Joan?"

Hickory, Dickory, Dock

Hickory, Dickory, Dock!
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Hickory, Dickory, Dock!

Within the hollow wall of an old brick mansion, away up near the roof, there lived a family of mice. It was a snug little home, pleasant and quiet, and as dark as any mouse could desire. Mamma Mouse liked it because, as she said, the draught that came through the rafters made it cool in summer, and they were near enough to the chimney to keep warm in wintertime.

Besides the Mamma Mouse there were three children, named Hickory and Dickory and Dock. There had once been a Papa Mouse as well; but while he was hunting for food one night he saw a nice piece of cheese in a wire box, and attempted to get it. The minute he stuck his head into the box, however, it closed with a snap that nearly cut his head off; and when Mamma Mouse came down to look for him he was quite dead.

Mamma Mouse had to bear her bitter sorrow all alone, for the children were too young at that time to appreciate their loss. She felt that people were cruel to kill a poor mouse for wishing to get food for himself and his family. There is nothing else for a mouse to do but take what he can find, for mice can not earn money, as people do, and they must live in some way.

But Mamma Mouse was a brave mouse, and knew that it was now her duty to find food for her little ones; so she dried her eyes and went bravely to work gnawing through the baseboard that separated the pantry from the wall. It took her some time to do this, for she could only work at night. Mice like to sleep during the day and work at night, when there are no people around to interrupt them, and even the cat is fast asleep. Some mice run about in the daytime, but they are not very wise mice who do this.

At last Mamma Mouse gnawed a hole through the baseboard large enough for her to get through into the pantry, and then her disappointment was great to find the bread jar covered over with a tin pan.

“How thoughtless people are to put things where a hungry mouse cannot get at them,” said Mamma Mouse to herself, with a sigh. But just then she espied a barrel of flour standing upon the floor; and that gave her new courage, for she knew she could easily gnaw through that, and the flour would do to eat just as well as the bread.

It was now nearly daylight, so she decided to leave the attack upon the flour barrel until the next night; and gathering up for the children a few

crumbs that were scattered about, she ran back into the wall and scrambled up to her nest.

Hickory and Dickory and Dock were very glad to get the crumbs, for they were hungry; and when they had breakfasted they all curled up alongside their mother and slept soundly throughout the day.

"Be good children," said Mamma Mouse the next evening, as she prepared for her journey to the pantry, "and do n't stir out of your nest till I come back. I am in hopes that after tonight we shall not be hungry for a long time, as I shall gnaw a hole at the back of the flour barrel, where it will not be discovered."

She kissed each one of them good-bye and ran down the wall on her errand.

When they were left alone Hickory wanted to go to sleep again, but little Dock was wide awake, and tumbled around so in the nest that his brothers were unable to sleep.

"I wish I could go with mother some night," said Dock, "it 's no fun to stay here all the time."

"She will take us when we are big enough," replied Dickory.

"We are big enough now," declared Dock, "and if I knew my way I would go out into the world and see what it looks like."

"I know a way out," said Hickory, "but mamma wouldn 't like it if we should go without her permission."

"She need n't know anything about it," declared the naughty Dock, "for she will be busy at the flour-barrel all the night. Take us out for a little walk, Hick, if you know the way."

"Yes, do," urged Dickory.

"Well," said Hickory, "I 'd like a little stroll myself; so if you 'll promise to be very careful, and not get into any mischief, I 'll take you through the hole that I have discovered."

So the three little mice started off, with Hickory showing the way, and soon came to a crack in the wall. Hickory stuck his head through, and finding everything quiet, for the family of people that lived in the house were fast asleep, he squeezed through the crack, followed by his two brothers. Their little hearts beat very fast, for they knew if they were discovered they would have to run for their lives; but the house was so still they gained courage, and crept along over a thick carpet until they came to a stairway.

"What shall we do now?" whispered Hickory to his brothers.

"Let 's go down," replied Dock.

So, very carefully, they descended the stairs and reached the hallway of the house, and here they were much surprised by all they saw.

There was a big rack for hats and coats, and an umbrella stand, and two quaintly carved chairs, and, most wonderful of all, a tall clock that stood upon the floor and ticked out the minutes in a grave and solemn voice.

When the little mice first heard the ticking of the clock they were inclined to be frightened, and huddled close together upon the bottom stair.

"What is it?" asked Dickory, in an awed whisper. "I do n't know," replied Hickory, who was himself rather afraid.

"Is it alive?" asked Dock.

"I do n't know," again answered Hickory.

Then, seeing that the clock paid no attention to them, but kept ticking steadily away and seemed to mind its own business, they plucked up courage and began running about.

Presently Dickory uttered a delighted squeal that brought his brothers to his side. There in a corner lay nearly the half of a bun which little May had dropped when nurse carried her upstairs to bed. It was a great discovery for the three mice, and they ate heartily until the last crumb had disappeared.

"This is better than a cupboard or a pantry," said Dock, when they had finished their supper, "and I should n't be surprised if there were plenty more good things around if we only hunt for them."

But they could find nothing more, for all the doors leading into the hall were closed, and at last Dock came to the clock and looked at it curiously.

"It does n't seem to be alive," he thought, "although it does make so much noise. I 'm going behind it to see what I can find."

He found nothing except a hole that led to inside of the clock, and into this he stuck his head. He could hear the ticking plainer than ever now, but looking way up to the top of the clock he saw something shining brightly, and thought it must good to eat if he could only get at it. Without saying anything to his brothers, Dock ran up the sides of the clock until he came to the works, and he was just about to nibble at a glistening wheel, to see what it tasted like, when suddenly "Bang!" went the clock.

It was one o'clock, and the clock had only struck the hour; but the great gong was just beside Dock's ear and the noise nearly deafened the poor little mouse. He gave a scream of terror and ran down the clock as fast as he could go. When he reached the hall he heard his brothers scampering up the stairs, and after them he ran with all his might.

It was only when they were safe in their nest again that they stopped to breathe, and their little hearts beat fast for an hour afterward, so great had been their terror.

When Mamma Mouse came back in the morning, bringing a quantity of nice flour with her for breakfast, they told her of their adventure. She thought

they had been punished enough already for their disobedience, so she did not scold them, but only said,

"You see, my dears, your mother knew best when she told you not to stir from the nest. Children sometimes think they know more than their parents, but this adventure should teach you always to obey your mother. The next time you run away you may fare worse than you did last night; remember your poor father's fate."

But Hickory and Dickory and Dock did not run away again.

Little Bo-Peep

On the beautiful, undulating hills of Sussex feed many flocks of sheep, which are tended by many shepherds and shepherdesses, and one of these flocks used to be cared for by a poor woman who supported herself and her little girl by this means.

They lived in a small cottage nestled at the foot of one of the hills, and each morning the mother took her crook and started out with her sheep, that they might feed upon the tender, juicy grasses with which the hills abounded. The little girl usually accompanied her mother and sat by her side upon the grassy mounds and watched her care for the ewes and lambs, so that in time she herself grew to be a very proficient shepherdess.

So when the mother became too old and feeble to leave her cottage, Little Bo-Peep (as she was called) decided that she was fully able to manage the flocks herself. She was a little mite of a child, with flowing nut-brown locks and big gray eyes that charmed all who gazed into their innocent depths. She wore a light gray frock, fastened about the waist with a pretty pink sash, and there were white ruffles around her neck and pink ribbons in her hair.

All the shepherds and shepherdesses upon the hills, both young and old, soon came to know Little Bo-Peep very well indeed, and there were many willing hands to aid her if (which was not often) she needed their assistance.

Bo-Peep usually took her sheep to the side of a high hill above the cottage, and allowed them to eat the rich grass while she herself sat upon a mound and, laying aside her crook and her broad straw hat with its pink ribbons, devoted her time to sewing and mending stockings for her aged mother.

One day, while thus occupied, she heard a voice beside her say:

"Good morning, Little Bo-Peep!" and looking up the girl saw a woman standing near her and leaning upon a short stick. She was bent nearly double by weight of many years, her hair was white as snow and her eyes as black as coals. Deep wrinkles seamed her face and hands, while her nose and chin were so pointed that they nearly met. She was not pleasant to look upon, but Bo-Peep had learned to be polite to the aged, so she answered, sweetly,

"Good morning, mother. Can I do anything for you?"

"No, dearie," returned the woman, in a cracked voice, "but I will sit by your side and rest for a time."

The girl made room on the mound beside her, and the stranger sat down and watched in silence the busy fingers sew up the seams of the new frock she was making.

By and by the woman asked,

“Why do you come out here to sew?”

“Because I am a shepherdess,” replied the girl.

“But where is your crook?”

“On the grass beside me.”

“And where are your sheep?”

Bo-Peep looked up and could not see them.

“They must have strayed over the top of the hill,” she said, “and I will go and seek them.”

“Do not be in a hurry,” croaked the old woman; “they will return presently without your troubling to find them.”

“Do you think so?” asked Bo-Peep.

“Of course; do not the sheep know you?”

“Oh, yes; they know me every one.”

“And do not you know the sheep?”

“I can call every one by name,” said Bo-Peep, confidently; “for though I am so young a shepherdess I am fond of my sheep and know all about them.”

The old woman chuckled softly, as if the answer amused her, and replied,

“No one knows all about anything, my dear.”

“But I know all about my sheep,” protested Little Bo-Peep.

“Do you, indeed? Then you are wiser that most people. And if you know all about them, you also know they will come home of their own accord, and I have no doubt they will all be wagging their tails behind them, as usual.”

“Oh,” said Little Bo-Peep, in surprise, “do they wag their tails? I never noticed that!”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the old woman, “then you are not very observing for one who knows all about sheep. Perhaps you have never noticed their tails at all.”

“No,” answered Bo-Peep, thoughtfully, “I do n’t know that I ever have.”

The woman laughed so hard at this reply that she began to cough, and this made the girl remember that her flock had strayed away.

“I really must go and find my sheep,” she said, rising to her feet, “and then I shall be sure to notice their tails, and see if they wag them.”

“Sit still, my child,” said the old woman, “I am going over the hill-top myself, and I will send the sheep back to you.”

So she got upon her feet and began climbing the hill, and the girl heard her saying, as she walked away,

”Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,
And does n’t know where to find ‘em.
But leave ‘em alone, and they ‘ll come home,
All wagging their tails behind ‘em.”

Little Bo-Peep sat still and watched the old woman toil slowly up the hill-side and disappear over the top. By and by she thought, “very soon I shall see the sheep coming back;” but time passed away and still the errant flock failed to make its appearance.

Soon the head of the little shepherdess began to nod, and presently, still thinking of her sheep,

Little Bo-Peep fell fast asleep,
And dreamt she heard them bleating;
But when she awoke she found it a joke,
For still they were a-fleeting.

The girl now became quite anxious, and wondered why the old woman had not driven her flock over the hill. But as it was now time for luncheon she opened her little basket and ate of the bread and cheese and cookies she had brought with her. After she had finished her meal and taken a drink of cool water from a spring near by, she decided she would not wait any longer.

So up she took her little crook,
Determined for to find them,
and began climbing the hill.

When she got to the top there was never a sight of sheep about — only a green valley and another hill beyond.

Now really alarmed for the safety of her charge, Bo-Peep hurried into the valley and up the farther hill-side. Panting and tired she reached the summit, and, pausing breathlessly, gazed below her.

Quietly feeding upon the rich grass was her truant flock, looking as peaceful and innocent as if it had never strayed away from its gentle shepherdess.

Bo-Peep uttered a cry of joy and hurried toward them; but when she came near she stopped in amazement and held up her little hands with a pretty expression of dismay. She had

Found them, indeed, but it made her heart bleed,
For they ‘d left their tails behind them!

Nothing was left to each sheep but a wee little stump where a tail should be, and Little Bo-Peep was so heart-broken that she sat down beside them and sobbed bitterly.

But after awhile the tiny maid realized that all her tears would not bring back the tails to her lambkins; so she plucked up courage and dried her eyes and arose from the ground just as the old woman hobbled up to her.

“So you have found your sheep, dearie,” she said, in her cracked voice.

“Yes,” replied Little Bo-Peep, with difficulty repressing a sob; “but look, mother! They ‘ve all left their tails behind them!”

“Why, so they have!” exclaimed the old woman; and then she began to laugh as if something pleased her.

“What do you suppose has become of their tails?” asked the girl.

“Oh, some one has probably cut them off. They make nice tippets in winter-time, you know;” and then she patted the child upon her head and walked away down the valley.

Bo-Peep was much grieved over the loss that had befallen her dear sheep, and so, driving them before her, she wandered around to see if by any chance she could find the lost tails.

But soon the sun began to sink over the hill-tops, and she knew she must take her sheep home before night overtook them.

She did not tell her mother of her misfortune, for she feared the old shepherdess would scold her, and Bo-Peep had fully decided to seek for the tails and find them before she related the story of their loss to anyone.

Each day for many days after that Little Bo-Peep wandered about the hills seeking the tails of her sheep, and those who met her wondered what had happened to make the sweet little maid so anxious. But there is an end to all troubles, no matter how severe they may seem to be, and

It happened one day, as Bo-Peep did stray
Unto a meadow hard by,
There she espied their tails side by side.
All hung on a tree to dry!

The little shepherdess was overjoyed at this discovery, and, reaching up her crook, she knocked the row of pretty white tails off the tree and gathered them up in her frock. But how to fasten them onto her sheep again was the question, and after pondering the matter for a time she became discouraged, and, thinking she was no better off than before the tails were found, she began to weep and to bewail her misfortune.

But amidst her tears she bethought herself of her needle and thread.

“Why,” she exclaimed, smiling again, “I can sew them on, of course!” Then

She heaved a sigh and wiped her eye
And ran o’er hill and dale, oh.
And tried what she could
As a shepherdess should,
To tack to each sheep its tail, oh.

But the very first sheep she came to refused to allow her to sew on the tail, and ran away from her, and the others did the same, so that finally she was utterly discouraged.

She was beginning to cry again, when the same old woman she had before

met came hobbling to her side and asked,

“What are you doing with my cat tails?”

“Your cat tails!” replied Bo-Peep, in surprise; “what do you mean?”

“Why, these tails are all cut from white pussycats, and I put them on the tree to dry. What are you doing with them?”

“I thought they belonged to my sheep,” answered Bo-Peep, sorrowfully; “but if they are really your pussy-cat tails, I must hunt until I find those that belong to my sheep.”

“My dear,” said the old woman, “I have been deceiving you; you said you knew all about your sheep, and I wanted to teach you a lesson. For, however wise we may be, no one in this world knows all about anything. Sheep do not have long tails — there is only a little stump to answer for a tail. Neither do rabbits have tails, nor bears, nor many other animals. And if you had been observing you would have known all this when I said the sheep would be wagging their tails behind them, and then you would not have passed all those days in searching for what is not to be found. So now, little one, run away home, and try to be more thoughtful in the future. Your sheep will never miss the tails, for they have never had them.”

And now
Little Bo-Peep no more did weep;
My tale of tails ends here.
Each cat has one,
But sheep have none;
Which, after all, is queer!

The Story of Tommy Tucker

Little Tommy Tucker sang for his supper.
What did he sing for? white bread and butter.
How could he cut it, without any knife?
How could he marry, without any wife?

Little Tommy Tucker was a waif of the streets. He never remembered having a father or mother or anyone to care for him, and so he learned to care for himself. He ate whatever he could get, and slept wherever night overtook him — in an old barrel, a cellar, or, when fortune favored him, he paid a penny for a cot in some rude lodging-house.

His life about the streets taught him early how to earn a living by doing odd jobs, and he learned to be sharp in his speech and wise beyond his years.

One morning Tommy crawled out from a box in which he had slept over night, and found that he was hungry. His last meal had consisted of a crust of bread, and he was a growing boy with an appetite.

He had been unable to earn any money for several days, and this morning life looked very gloomy to him. He started out to seek for work or to beg a breakfast; but luck was against him, and he was unsuccessful. By noon he had grown more hungry than before, and stood before a bake-shop for a long time, looking wistfully at the good things behind the window-panes, and wishing with all his heart he had a ha'penny to buy a bun.

And yet it was no new thing for Little Tommy Tucker to be hungry, and he never thought of despairing. He sat down upon a curb-stone, and thought what was best to be done. Then he remembered he had frequently begged a meal at one of the cottages that stood upon the outskirts of the city, and so he turned his steps in that direction.

"I have had neither breakfast nor dinner," he said to himself, "and I must surely find a supper somewhere, or I shall not sleep much to-night. It is no fun to be hungry."

So he walked on until he came to a dwelling-house where a goodly company sat upon a lawn and beneath a veranda. It was a pretty place, and was the home of a fat alderman who had been married that very day.

The alderman was in a merry mood, and seeing Tommy standing without the gate he cried to him,

"Come here, my lad, and sing us a song."

Tommy at once entered the grounds, and came to where the fat alderman was sitting beside his blushing bride.

"Can you sing?" enquired the alderman.

"No," answered Tommy, earnestly, "but I can eat."

“Ho, ho!” laughed the alderman, “that is a very ordinary accomplishment. Anyone can eat.”

“If it please you, sir, you are wrong,” replied Tommy, “for I have been unable to eat all day.”

“And why is that?” asked the alderman.

“Because I have had nothing to put to my mouth. But now that I have met so kind a gentleman, I am sure that I shall have a good supper.”

The alderman laughed again at this shrewd answer, and said, “you shall have supper, no doubt; but you must sing a song for the company first, and so earn your food.”

Tommy shook his head sadly.

“I do not know any song, sir,” he said.

The alderman called a servant and whispered something in his ear. The servant hastened away, and soon returned bearing upon a tray a huge slice of white bread and butter. White bread was a rare treat in those days, as nearly all the people ate black bread baked from rye or barley flour.

“Now,” said the alderman, placing the tray beside him, “you shall have this slice of white bread and butter when you have sung us a song, and complied with one condition.”

“And what is that condition?” asked Tommy.

“I will tell you when we have heard the song,” replied the fat alderman, who had decided to have some amusement at the boy’s expense.

Tommy hesitated, but when he glanced at the white bread and butter his mouth watered in spite of himself, and he resolved to compose a song, since he did not know how to sing any other.

So he took off his cap, and standing before the company he sang as follows:

A bumble-bee lit on a hollyhock flower
That was wet with the rain of a morning shower.
While the honey he sipped
His left foot slipped,
And he could n’t fly again for half an hour!

“Good!” cried the alderman, after the company had kindly applauded Tommy. “I can’t say much for the air, nor yet for the words; but it was not so bad as it might have been. Give us another verse.”

So Tommy pondered a moment, and then sang again:

”A spider threw its web so high
It caught on a moon in a cloudy sky.
The moon whirled round,
And down to the ground

Fell the web, and captured a big blue fly!”

“Why, that is fine!” roared the fat alderman. “You improve as you go on, so give us another verse.”

“I don’t know any more,” said Tommy, “and I am very hungry.”

“One more verse,” persisted the man, “and then you shall have the bread and butter upon the condition.”

So Tommy sang the following verse:

”A big frog lived in a slimy bog,
And caught a cold in an awful fog.
The cold got worse,
The frog got hoarse,
Till croaking he scared a polliwog!”

“You are quite a poet,” declared the alderman; “and now you shall have the white bread upon one condition.”

“What is it?” said Tommy, anxiously.

“That you cut the slice into four parts.”

“But I have no knife!” remonstrated the boy.

“But that is the condition,” insisted the alderman. “If you want the bread you must cut it.”

“Surely you do not expect me to cut the bread without any knife!” said Tommy.

“Why not?” asked the alderman, winking his eye at the company.

“Because it cannot be done. How, let me ask you, sir, could you have married without any wife?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed the jolly alderman; and he was so pleased with Tommy’s apt reply that he gave him the bread at once, and a knife to cut it with.

“Thank you, sir,” said Tommy; “now that I have the knife it is easy enough to cut the bread, and I shall now be as happy as you are with your beautiful wife.”

The alderman’s wife blushed at this, and whispered to her husband. The alderman nodded in reply, and watched Tommy carefully as he ate his supper. When the boy had finished his bread — which he did very quickly, you may be sure, — the man said,

“How would you like to live with me and be my servant?”

Little Tommy Tucker had often longed for just such a place, where he could have three meals each day to eat and a good bed to sleep in at night, so he answered,

“I should like it very much, sir.”

So the alderman took Tommy for his servant, and dressed him in a smart

livery; and soon the boy showed by his bright ways and obedience that he was worthy any kindness bestowed upon him.

He often carried the alderman's wig when his master attended the town meetings, and the mayor of the city, who was a good man, was much taken with his intelligent face. So one day he said to the alderman,

"I have long wanted to adopt a son, for I have no children of my own; but I have not yet been able to find a boy to suit me. That lad of yours looks bright and intelligent, and he seems a well-behaved boy into the bargain."

"He is all that you say," returned the alderman, "and would be a credit to you should you adopt him."

"But before I adopt a son," continued the mayor, "I intend to satisfy myself that he is both wise and shrewd enough to make good use of my money when I am gone. No fool will serve my purpose; therefore I shall test the boy's wit before I decide."

"That is fair enough," answered the alderman; "but in what way will you test his wit?"

"Bring him to my house to-morrow, and you shall see," said the mayor.

So the next day the alderman, followed by Tommy and a little terrier dog that was a great pet of his master, went to the grand dwelling of the mayor. The mayor also had a little terrier dog, which was very fond of him and followed him wherever he went.

When Tommy and the alderman reached the mayor's house the mayor met them at the door and said:

"Tommy, I am going up the street, and the alderman is going in the opposite direction. I want you to keep our dogs from following us; but you must not do it by holding them."

"Very well, sir," replied Tommy; and as the mayor started one way and the alderman the other, he took out his handkerchief and tied the tails of the two dogs together. Of course each dog started to follow its master; but as they were about the same size and strength, and each pulled in a different direction, the result was that they remained in one place, and could not move either one way or the other.

"That was well done," said the mayor, coming I back again; "but tell me, can you put my cart before my horse and take me to ride?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Tommy; and going to the mayor's stable he put the harness on the nag and then led him head-first into the shafts, instead of backing him into them, as is the usual way. After fastening the shafts to the horse, he mounted upon the animal's back, and away they started, pushing the cart before the horse.

"That was easy," said Tommy. "If your honor will get into the cart I 'll

take you to ride." But the mayor did not ride, although he was pleased at Tommy's readiness in solving a difficulty.

After a moment's thought he bade Tommy follow him into the house, where he gave him a cupful of water, saying,

"Let me see you drink up this cup of water."

Tommy hesitated a moment, for he knew the mayor was trying to catch him; then, going to a corner of the room, he set down the cup and stood upon his head in the corner. He now carefully raised the cup to his lips and slowly drank the water until the cup was empty. After this he regained his feet, and, bowing politely to the mayor, he said,

"The water is drunk up, your honor."

"But why did you stand on your head to do it?" enquired the alderman, who had watched the act in astonishment.

"Because otherwise I would have drunk the water down, and not up," replied Tommy.

The mayor was now satisfied that Tommy was shrewd enough to do him honor, so he immediately took him to live in the great house as his adopted son, and he was educated by the best masters the city afforded.

And Tommy Tucker became in after years not only a great, but a good man, and before he died was himself mayor of the city, and was known by the name of Sir Thomas Tucker.

Pussy-cat Mew

”Pussy-cat, Pussy-cat, where do you go?”
”To London, to visit the palace, you know.”
”Pussy-cat Mew, wily you come back again?”
”Oh, yes! I ‘ll scamper with might and with main!”
Pussy-cat Mew set off on her way,
Stepping quite softly and feeling quite gay.
Smooth was the road, so she traveled at ease,
Warmed by the sunshine and fanned by the breeze.
Over the hills to the valleys below,
Through the deep woods where the soft mosses grow,
Skirting the fields, with buttercups dotted,
Swiftly our venturesome Pussy-cat trotted.
Sharp watch she kept when a village she neared,
For boys and their mischief our Pussy-cat feared!
Often she crept through the grasses so deep
To pass by a dog that was lying asleep.
Once, as she walked through a sweet-clover field,
Something beside her affrightedly squealed,
And swift from her path there darted away
A tiny field-mouse, with a coat of soft gray.
”Nowhere,” thought our Pussy, “is chance for a dinner;
The one that runs fastest must surely be winner!”
So quickly she started the mouse to give chase,
And over the clover they ran a great race.
But just when it seemed that Pussy would win,
The mouse spied a hole and quickly popped in;
And so he escaped, for the hole was so small
That Pussy-cat could n’t squeeze in it at all.
So, softly she crouched, and with eyes big and round
Quite steadily watched that small hole in the ground
”This mouse really thinks he ‘s escaped me,” she said,
”But I ‘ll catch him sure if he sticks out his head!”
But while she was watching the poor mouse’s plight,
A deep growl behind made her jump with affright;
She gave a great cry, and then started to run
As swift as a bullet that ‘s shot from a gun!
”Meow! Oh, meow “our poor Puss did say;
”Bow-wow!” cried the dog, who was not far away.

O’er meadows and ditches they scampered apace,
O’er fences and hedges they kept up the race!
Then Pussy-cat Mew saw before her a tree,
And knew that a safe place of refuge ‘t would be;
So far up the tree with a bound she did go,
And left the big dog to growl down below.
But now, by good fortune, a man came that way,
And called to the dog, who was forced to obey;
But Puss did not come down the tree till she knew
That the man and the dog were far out of view.
Pursuing her way, at nightfall she came
To London, a town you know well by name;
And wandering ‘round in byway and street,
A strange Pussy-cat she happened to meet.
”Good evening,” said Pussy-cat Mew. “Can you tell
In which of these houses the Queen may now dwell?
I ‘m a stranger in town, and I ‘m anxious to see
What sort of a person a real Queen may be.”
”My friend,” said the other, “you really must know
It is n’t permitted that strangers should go
Inside of the palace, unless they ‘re invited,
And stray Pussy-cats are apt to be slighted.
”By good luck, however, I ‘m quite well aware
Of a way to the palace by means of a stair
That never is guarded; so just come with me,
And a glimpse of the Queen you shall certainly see.”
Puss thanked her new friend, and together they stole
To the back of the palace, and crept through a hole
In the fence, and quietly came to the stair
Which the stranger Pussy-cat promised was there.
”Now here I must leave you,” the strange Pussy said,
”So do n’t be ‘fraid-cat, but go straight ahead,
And do n’t be alarmed if by chance you are seen,
For people will think you belong to the Queen.”
So Pussy-cat Mew did as she had been told,
And walked through the palace with manner so bold
She soon reached the room where the Queen sat in state,
Surrounded by lords and by ladies so great.
And there in the corner our Pussy sat down,
And gazed at the scepter and blinked at the crown,

And eyed the Queen's dress, all purple and gold;
Which was surely a beautiful sight to behold.
But all of a sudden she started, for there
Was a little gray mouse, right under the chair
Where her Majesty sat, and Pussy well knew
She 'd scream with alarm if the mouse met her view.
So up toward the chair our Pussy-cat stole,
But the mouse saw her coming and ran for its hole;
But Pussy ran after, and during the race
A wonderful, terrible panic took place!
The ladies all jumped on their chairs in alarm,
The lords drew their swords to protect them from harm,
And the Queen gave a scream and fainted away —
A very undignified act, I must say.
And some one cried "Burglars!" and some one cried "Treason!"
And some one cried "Murder!" but none knew the reason;
And some one cried "Fire! they are burning the house!"
And some one cried "Silence! it 's only a mouse!"
But Pussy-cat Mew was so awfully scared
By the shouting and screaming, no longer she dared
To stay in the room; so without more delay
She rushed from the palace and scampered away!
So bristling her fur, and with heart beating fast,
She came to the road leading homeward at last.
"What business," she thought, "has a poor country cat
To visit a city of madmen like that?
"Straight homeward I 'll go, where I am well fed,
Where mistress is kind, and soft is my bed;
Let other cats travel, if they wish to roam,
But as for myself, I shall now stay at home."
And now over hills and valleys she ran,
And journeyed as fast as a Pussy-cat can;
Till just as the dawn of the day did begin
She, safely at home, stole quietly in.
And there was the fire, with the pot boiling on it,
And there was the maid, in the blue checkered bonnet
And there was the corner where Pussy oft basked,
And there was the mistress, who eagerly asked:
"Pussy-cat, Pussy-cat, where have you been?"
"I 've been to London, to visit the Queen."

”Pussy-cat, Pussy-cat, what did you there?”
”I frightened a little mouse under her chair!”

How the Beggars Came to Town

Hark, hark, the dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town:
Some in rags, and some in tags,
And some in velvet gown.

Very fair and sweet was little Prince Lilimond, and few could resist his soft, pleading voice and gentle blue eyes. And as he stood in the presence of the King, his father, and bent his knee gracefully before His Majesty, the act was so courteous and dignified it would have honored the oldest noble man of the court.

The King was delighted, and for a time sat silently regarding his son and noting every detail of his appearance, from the dark velvet suit with its dainty ruffles and collar to the diamond buckles on the little shoes, and back again to the flowing curls that clustered thick about the bright, childish face.

Well might any father be proud of so manly and beautiful a child, and the King's heart swelled within him as he gazed upon his heir.

"Borland," he said to the tutor, who stood modestly behind the Prince, "you may retire. I wish to sneak privately with his royal highness."

The tutor bowed low and disappeared within the ante-room, and the King continued, kindly,

"Come here, Lilimond, and sit beside me. Methinks you seem over-grave this morning."

"It is my birthday, Your Majesty," replied the Prince, as he slowly obeyed his father and sat beside him upon the rich broidered cushions of the throne. "I am twelve years of age."

"So old!" said the King, smiling into the little face that was raised to his. "And is it the weight of years that makes you sad?"

"No, Your Majesty; I long for the years to pass, that I may become a man, and take my part in the world's affairs. It is the sad condition of my country which troubles me."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the King, casting a keen glance at his son. "Are you becoming interested in politics, then; or is there some grievous breach of court etiquette which has attracted your attention?"

"I know little of politics and less of the court, sire," replied Lilimond; "it is the distress of the people that worries me."

"The people? Of a surety, Prince, you are better posted than am I, since of the people and their affairs I know nothing at all. I have appointed officers to look after their interests, and therefore I have no cause to come into contact with them myself. But what is amiss?"

“They are starving,” said the Prince, looking at his father very seriously; “the country is filled with beggars, who appeal for charity, since they are unable otherwise to procure food.”

“Starving!” repeated the King; “surely you are misinformed. My Lord Chamberlain told me but this morning the people were loyal and contented, and my Lord of the Treasury reports that all taxes and tithes have been paid, and my coffers are running over.”

“Your Lord Chamberlain is wrong, sire,” returned the Prince; “my tutor, Borland, and I have talked with many of these beggars the past few days, and we find the tithes and taxes which have enriched you have taken the bread from their wives and children.”

“So!” exclaimed the King. “We must examine into this matter.” He touched a bell beside him, and when a retainer appeared directed his Chamberlain and his Treasurer to wait upon him at once.

The Prince rested his head upon his hand and waited patiently, but the King was very impatient indeed till the high officers of the court stood before him. Then said the King, addressing his Chamberlain,

“Sir, I am informed my people are murmuring at my injustice. Is it true?”

The officer cast an enquiring glance at the Prince, who met his eyes gravely, before he replied,

“The people always murmur, Your Majesty. They are many, and not all can be content, even when ruled by so wise and just a King. In every land and in every age there are those who rebel against the laws, and the protests of the few are ever heard above the contentment of the many.”

“I am told,” continued the King, severely, “that my country is overrun with beggars, who suffer for lack of the bread we have taken from them by our taxations. Is this true?”

“There are always beggars, Your Majesty, in every country,” replied the Chamberlain, “and it is their custom to blame others for their own misfortunes.”

The King thought deeply for a moment; then he turned to the Lord of the Treasury.

“Do we tax the poor?” he demanded.

“All are taxed, sire,” returned the Treasurer, who was pale from anxiety, for never before had the King so questioned him, “but from the rich we take much, from the poor very little.”

“But a little from the poor man may distress him, while the rich subject would never feel the loss. Why do we tax the poor at all?”

“Because, Your Majesty, should we declare the poor free from taxation all your subjects would at once claim to be poor, and the royal treasury would

remain empty. And as none are so rich but there are those richer, how should we, in justice, determine which are the rich and which are the poor?"

Again the King was silent while he pondered upon the words of the Royal Treasurer. Then, with a wave of his hand, he dismissed them, and turned to the Prince, saying,

"You have heard the wise words of my councilors, Prince. What have you to say in reply?"

"If you will pardon me, Your Majesty, I think you are wrong to leave the affairs of the people to others to direct. If you knew them as well as I do, you would distrust the words of your councilors, who naturally fear your anger more than they do that of your subjects."

"If they fear my anger they will be careful to do no injustice to my people. Surely you cannot expect me to attend to levying the taxes myself," continued the King, with growing annoyance. "What are my officers for, but to serve me?"

"They should serve you, it is true," replied the Prince, thoughtfully, "but they should serve the people as well."

"Nonsense!" answered the King; "you are too young as yet to properly understand such matters. And it is a way youth has to imagine it is wiser than age and experience combined. Still, I will investigate the subject further, and see that justice is done the poor."

"In the meantime," said the Prince, "many will starve to death. Can you not assist these poor beggars at once?"

"In what way?" demanded the King.

"By giving them money from your full coffers."

"Nonsense!" again cried the King, this time with real anger; "you have heard what the Chamberlain said: we always have beggars, and none, as yet, have starved to death. Besides, I must use the money for the grand ball and tourney next month, as I have promised the ladies of the court a carnival of unusual magnificence."

The Prince did not reply to this, but remained in silent thought, wondering what he might do to ease the suffering he feared existed on every hand amongst the poor of the kingdom. He had hoped to persuade the King to assist these beggars, but since the interview with the officers of the court he had lost heart and despaired of influencing his royal father in any way.

Suddenly the King spoke.

"Let us dismiss this subject, Lilimond, for it only serves to distress us both, and no good can come of it. You have nearly made me forget it is your birthday. Now listen, my son: I am much pleased with you, and thank God that he has given me such a successor for my crown, for I perceive your mind

is as beautiful as your person, and that you will in time be fitted to rule the land with wisdom and justice. Therefore I promise, in honor of your birthday, to grant any desire you may express, provided it lies within my power. Nor will I make any further condition, since I rely upon your judgment to select some gift I may be glad to bestow."

As the King spoke, Lilimond suddenly became impressed with an idea through which he might succor the poor, and therefore he answered,

"Call in the ladies and gentlemen of the court, my father, and before them all will I claim your promise."

"Good!" exclaimed the King, who looked for some amusement in his son's request; and at once he ordered the court to assemble.

The ladies and gentlemen, as they filed into the audience chamber, were astonished to see the Prince seated upon the throne beside his sire, but being too well bred to betray their surprise they only wondered what amusement His Majesty had in store for them.

When all were assembled, the Prince rose to his feet and addressed them.

"His Majesty the King, whose kindness of heart and royal condescension is well known to you all, hath but now promised me, seeing that it is my birthday, to grant any one request that I may prefer. Is it not true, Your Majesty?"

"It is true," answered the King, smiling upon his son, and pleased to see him addressing the court so gravely and with so manly an air; "whatsoever the Prince may ask, that will I freely grant."

"Then, oh sire," said the Prince, kneeling before the throne, "I ask that for the period of one day I may reign as King in your stead, having at my command all kingly power and the obedience of all who owe allegiance to the crown!"

"For a time there was perfect silence in the court, the King growing red with dismay and embarrassment and the courtiers waiting curiously his reply. Lilimond still remained kneeling before the throne, and, as the King looked upon him he realized it would be impossible to break his royal word. And the affair promised him amusement after all, so he quickly decided in what manner to reply.

"Rise, oh Prince," he said, cheerfully, "your request is granted.
Upon what day will it please you to reign?"

Lilimond arose to his feet.

"Upon the seventh day from this," he answered.

"So be it," returned the King. Then, turning to the royal herald he added, "Make proclamation throughout the kingdom that on the seventh day from this Prince Lilimond will reign as King from sunrise till sunset. And whoever

dares to disobey his commands will be guilty of treason and shall be punished with death!”

The court was then dismissed, all wondering at this marvellous decree, and the Prince returned to his own apartment where his tutor, Borland, anxiously awaited him.

Now this Borland was a man of good heart and much intelligence, but wholly unused to the ways of the world. He had lately noted, with much grief, the number of beggars who solicited alms as he walked out with the Prince, and he had given freely until his purse was empty. Then he talked long and earnestly with the Prince concerning this shocking condition in the kingdom, never dreaming that his own generosity had attracted all the beggars of the city toward him and encouraged them to become more bold than usual.

Thus was the young and tender-hearted Prince brought to a knowledge of all these beggars, and therefore it was that their condition filled him with sadness and induced him to speak so boldly to the King, his father.

When he returned to Borland with the tidings that the King had granted him permission to rule for a day the kingdom, the tutor was overjoyed, and at once they began to plan ways for relieving all the poor of the country in that one day.

For one thing, they dispatched private messengers to every part of the kingdom, bidding them tell each beggar they met to come to the Prince on that one day he should be King and he would relieve their wants, giving a broad gold piece to every poor man or woman who asked.

For the Prince had determined to devote to this purpose the gold that filled the royal coffers; and as for the great ball and tourney the King had planned, why, that could go begging much better than the starving people.

On the night before the day the Prince was to reign there was a great confusion of noise within the city, for beggars from all parts of the kingdom began to arrive, each one filled with joy at the prospect of receiving a piece of gold.

There was a continual tramp, tramp of feet, and a great barking of dogs, as all dogs in those days were trained to bark at every beggar they saw, and now it was difficult to restrain them.

And the beggars came to town singly and by twos and threes, until hundreds were there to await the morrow. Some few were very pitiful to behold, being feeble and infirm from age and disease, dressed in rags and tags, and presenting an appearance of great distress. But there were many more who were seemingly hearty and vigorous; and these were the lazy ones, who, not being willing to work, begged for a livelihood.

And some there were dressed in silken hose and velvet gowns, who, forgetting all shame, and, eager for gold, had been led by the Prince's offer to represent themselves as beggars, that they might add to their wealth without trouble or cost to themselves.

The next morning, when the sun arose upon the eventful day, it found the Prince sitting upon the throne of his father, dressed in a robe of ermine and purple, a crown upon his flowing locks and the King's scepter clasped tightly in his little hand. He was somewhat frightened at the clamor of the crowd without the palace, but Borland, who stood behind him, whispered,

"The more you can succor the greater will be your glory, and you will live in the hearts of your people as the kind Prince who relieved their sufferings. Be of good cheer, Your Majesty, for all is well."

Then did the Prince command the Treasurer to bring before him the royal coffers, and to stand ready to present to each beggar a piece of gold. The Treasurer was very unwilling to do this, but he was under penalty of death if he refused, and so the coffers were brought forth.

"Your Majesty," said the Treasurer, "if each of those who clamor without is to receive a piece of gold, there will not be enough within these coffers to go around. Some will receive and others be denied, since no further store of gold is to be had."

At this news the Prince was both puzzled and alarmed.

"What are we to do?" he asked of the tutor; but Borland was unable to suggest a remedy.

Then said the aged Chamberlain, coming forward, and bowing low before the little King,

"Your Majesty, I think I can assist you in your difficulty. You did but promise a piece of gold to those who are really suffering and in need, but so great is the greed of mankind that many without are in no necessity whatever, but only seek to enrich themselves at your expense. Therefore I propose you examine carefully each case that presents itself, and unless the beggar is in need of alms turn him away empty-handed, as being a fraud and a charlatan."

"Your counsel is wise, oh Chamberlain," replied the Prince, after a moment's thought; "and by turning away the impostors we shall have gold enough for the needy. Therefore bid the guards to admit the beggars one by one."

When the first beggar came before him the Prince asked,

"Are you in need?"

"I am starving, Your Majesty," replied the man, in a whining tone. He was poorly dressed, but seemed strong and well, and the Prince examined him carefully for a moment. Then he answered the fellow, saying,

“Since you are starving, go and sell the gold ring I see you are wearing upon your finger. I can assist only those who are unable to help themselves.”

At this the man turned away muttering angrily, and the courtiers murmured their approval of the Prince’s wisdom.

The next beggar was dressed in velvet, and the Prince sent him away with a sharp rebuke. But the third was a woman, old and feeble, and she blessed the Prince as she hobbled joyfully away with a broad gold-piece clasped tightly within her withered hand.

The next told so pitiful a story that he also received a gold-piece; but as he turned away the Prince saw that beneath his robe his shoes were fastened with silver buckles, and so he commanded the guards to take away the gold and to punish the man for attempting to deceive his King.

And so many came to him that were found to be unworthy that he finally bade the guards proclaim to all who waited that any who should be found undeserving would be beaten with stripes.

That edict so frightened the imposters that they quickly fled, and only those few who were actually in want dared to present themselves before the King.

And lo! The task that had seemed too great for one day was performed in a few hours, and when all the needy had been provided for but one of the royal coffers had been opened, and that was scarcely empty!

“What think you, Borland?” asked the Prince, anxiously, “have we done aright?”

“I have learned, Your Majesty,” answered the tutor, “that there is a great difference between those who beg and those who suffer for lack of bread. For, while all who needed aid were in truth beggars, not all the beggars needed aid; and hereafter I shall only give alms to those I know to be honestly in want.”

“It is wisely said, my friend,” returned the Prince, “and I feel I was wrong to doubt the wisdom of my father’s councilors. Go, Borland, and ask the King if he will graciously attend me here.”

The King arrived and bowed smilingly before the Prince whom he had set to reign in his own place, and at once the boy arose and presented his sire with the scepter and crown, saying,

“Forgive me, oh my King, that I presumed to doubt the wisdom of your rule. For, though the sun has not yet set, I feel that I am all unworthy to sit in your place, and so I willingly resign my power to your more skillful hands. And the coffers which I, in my ignorance, had determined to empty for the benefit of those unworthy, are still nearly full, and more than enough remains for the expenses of the carnival. Therefore forgive me, my father, and let me

learn wisdom in the future from the justness of your rule."

Thus ended the reign of Prince Lilimond as King, and not till many years later did he again ascend the throne upon the death of his father.

And really there was not much suffering in the kingdom at any time, as it was a prosperous country and well governed; for, if you look for beggars in any land you will find many, but if you look only for the deserving poor there are less, and these all the more worthy of succor.

I wish all those in power were as kind-hearted as little Prince Lilimond, and as ready to help the needy, for then there would be more light hearts in the world, since it is "better to give than to receive."

Tom, the Piper's Son

Tom, Tom, the piper's son,
Stole a pig and away he run;
The pig was eat and Tom was beat
And Tom ran crying down the street.

There was not a worse vagabond in Shrewsbury than old Barney the piper. He never did any work except to play the pipes, and he played so badly that few pennies ever found their way into his pouch. It was whispered around that old Barney was not very honest, but he was so sly and cautious that no one had ever caught him in the act of stealing, although a good many things had been missed after they had fallen into the old man's way.

Barney had one son, named Tom; and they lived all alone in a little hut away at the end of the village street, for Tom's mother had died when he was a baby. You may not suppose that Tom was a very good boy, since he had such a queer father; but neither was he very bad, and the worst fault he had was in obeying his father's wishes when Barney wanted him to steal a chicken for their supper or a pot of potatoes for their breakfast. Tom did not like to steal, but he had no one to teach him to be honest, and so, under his father's guidance, he fell into bad ways.

One morning

Tom, Tom, the piper's son,
Was hungry when the day begun;
He wanted a bun and asked for one,
But soon found out that there were none.

"What shall we do?" he asked his father

"Go hungry," replied Barney, "unless you want to take my pipes and play in the village. Perhaps they will give you a penny."

"No," answered Tom, shaking his head; "no one will give me a penny for playing; but Farmer Bowser might give me a penny to stop playing, if I went to his house. He did last week, you know."

"You 'd better try it," said his father; "it 's mighty uncomfortable to be hungry."

So Tom took his father's pipes and walked over the hill to Farmer Bowser's house; for you must know that

Tom, Tom, the piper's son,
Learned to play when he was young;
But the only tune that he could play
Was "Over the hills and far away."

And he played this one tune as badly as his father himself played, so that

the people were annoyed when they heard him, and often begged him to stop.

When he came to Farmer Bowser's house, Tom started up the pipes and began to play with all his might. The farmer was in his woodshed, sawing wood, so he did not hear the pipes; and the farmer's wife was deaf, and could not hear them. But a little pig that had strayed around in front of the house heard the noise, and ran away in great fear to the pigsty.

Then, as Tom saw the playing did no good, he thought he would sing also, and therefore he began bawling, at the top of his voice,

"Over the hills, not a great ways off,
The woodchuck died with the whooping-cough!"

The farmer had stopped sawing to rest, just then; and when he heard the singing he rushed out of the shed, and chased Tom away with a big stick of wood. The boy went back to his father, and said, sorrowfully, for he was more hungry than before,

"The farmer gave me nothing but a scolding; but there was a very nice pig running around the yard."

"How big was it?" asked Barney.

"Oh, just about big enough to make a nice dinner for you and me."

The piper slowly shook his head;

"'T is long since I on pig have fed,
And though I feel it 's wrong to steal,
Roast pig is very nice," he said.

Tom knew very well what he meant by that, so he laid down the pipes, and went back to the farmer's house.

When he came near he heard the farmer again sawing wood in the woodshed, and so he went softly up to the pig-sty and reached over and grabbed the little pig by the ears. The pig squealed, of course, but the farmer was making so much noise himself that he did not hear it, and in a minute Tom had the pig tucked under his arm and was running back home with it.

The piper was very glad to see the pig, and said to Tom,

"You are a good son, and the pig is very nice and fat. We shall have a dinner fit for a king."

It was not long before the piper had the pig killed and cut into pieces and boiling in the pot. Only the tail was left out, for Tom wanted to make a whistle of it, and as there was plenty to eat besides the tail his father let him have it.

The piper and his son had a fine dinner that day, and so great was their hunger that the little pig was all eaten up at one meal!

Then Barney lay down to sleep, and Tom sat on a bench outside the door and began to make a whistle out of the pig's tail with his pocket-knife.

Now Farmer Bowser, when he had finished sawing the wood, found it was time to feed the pig, so he took a pail of meal and went to the pigsty. But when he came to the sty there was no pig to be seen, and he searched all round the place for a good hour without finding it.

“Piggy, piggy, piggy!” he called, but no piggy came, and then he knew his pig had been stolen. He was very angry, indeed, for the pig was a great pet, and he had wanted to keep it till it grew very big.

So he put on his coat and buckled a strap around his waist, and went down to the village to see if he could find out who had stolen his pig.

Up and down the street he went, and in and out the lanes, but no traces of the pig could he find anywhere. And that was no great wonder, for the pig was eaten by that time and its bones picked clean.

Finally the farmer came to the end of the street where the piper lived in his little hut, and there he saw Tom sitting on a bench and blowing on a whistle made from a pig’s tail.

“Where did you get that tail?” asked the farmer.

“I found it,” said naughty Tom, beginning to be frightened.

“Let me see it,” demanded the farmer; and when he had looked at it carefully he cried out,

“This tail belonged to my little pig, for I know very well the curl at the end of it! Tell me, you rascal, where is the pig?”

Then Tom fell in a tremble, for he knew his wickedness was discovered.

“The pig is eat, your honor,” he answered.

The farmer said never a word, but his face grew black with anger, and, unbuckling the strap that was about his waist, he waved it around his head, and whack! came the strap over Tom’s back.

“Ow, ow!” cried the boy, and started to run down the street.

Whack! whack! fell the strap over his shoulder, for the farmer followed at his heels half-way down the street, nor did he spare the strap until he had give Tom a good beating. And Tom was so scared that he never stopped running until he came to the end of the village, and he bawled lustily the whole way and cried out at every step as if the farmer was still a his back.

It was dark before he came back to his home, and his father was still asleep; so Tom crept into the hut and went to bed. But he had received a good lesson and never after that could the old piper induce him to steal.

When Tom showed by his actions his intention of being honest he soon got a job of work to do, and before long he was able to earn a living more easily, and a great deal more honestly, than when he stole the pig to get a dinner and suffered a severe beating as a punishment.

Tom, Tom, the piper’s son

Now with stealing pigs was done,
He ‘d work all day instead of play,
And dined on tart and currant bun.

Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses
And all the King's men
Cannot put Humpty together again.

At the very top of the hay-mow in the barn, the Speckled Hen had made her nest, and each day for twelve days she had laid in it a pretty white egg. The Speckled Hen had made her nest in this out-of-the-way place so that no one would come to disturb her, as it was her intention to sit upon the eggs until they were hatched into chickens.

Each day, as she laid her eggs, she would cackle to herself; saying, "This will in time be a beautiful chick, with soft, fluffy down all over its body and bright little eyes that will look at the world in amazement. It will be one of my children, and I shall love it dearly."

She named each egg, as she laid it, by the name she should call it when a chick, the first one being "Cluckety-Cluck," and the next "Cadaw-Cut," and so on; and when she came to the twelfth egg she called it "Humpty Dumpty."

This twelfth egg was remarkably big and white and of a very pretty shape, and as the nest was now so full she laid it quite near the edge. And then the Speckled Hen, after looking proudly at her work, went off to the barnyard, clucking joyfully, in search of something to eat.

When she had gone, Cluckety-Cluck, who was in the middle of the nest and the oldest egg of all, called out, angrily,

"It 's getting crowded in this nest; move up there, some of you fellows!" And then he gave CadawCut, who was above him, a kick.

"I can't move unless the others do; they 're crowding me down!" said Cadaw-Cut; and he kicked the egg next above him. And so they continued kicking one another and rolling around in the nest until one kicked Humpty Dumpty, and as he lay on the edge of the nest he was kicked out and rolled down the hay-mow until he came to a stop near the very bottom.

Humpty did not like this very well, but he was a bright egg for one so young, and after he had recovered from his shaking up he began to look about to see where he was. The barn door was open, and he caught a glimpse of trees and hedges, and green grass with a silvery brook running through it. And he saw the waving grain and the tasselled maize and the sunshine flooding it all.

The scene was very enticing to the young egg, and Humpty at once resolved to see something of this great world before going back to the nest.

He began to make his way carefully through the hay, and was getting along fairly well when he heard a voice say,

"Where are you going?"

Humpty looked around and found he was beside a pretty little nest in which was one brown egg.

"Did you speak?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the brown egg; "I asked where you were going."

"Who are you?" enquired Humpty; "do you belong in our nest?"

"Oh, no!" answered the brown egg; "my name is Coutchie-Coulou, and the Black Bantam laid me about an hour ago."

"Oh," said Humpty proudly; "I belong to the Speckled Hen myself."

"Do you, indeed!" returned Coutchie-Coulou. "I saw her go by a little while ago, and she 's much bigger than the Black Bantam."

"Yes, and I 'm much bigger than you," replied Humpty. "But I 'm going out to see the world, and if you like to go with me I 'll take good care of you."

"Is n't it dangerous for eggs to go about all by themselves?" asked Coutchie, timidly.

"Perhaps so," answered Humpty; "but it 's dangerous in the nest, too; my brothers might have smashed me with their kicking. However, if we are careful we can't come to much harm; so come along, little one, and I 'll look after you."

Coutchie-Coulou gave him her hand while he helped her out of the nest, and together they crept over the hay until they came to the barn floor. They made for the door at once, holding each other by the hand, and soon came to the threshold, which appeared very high to them.

"We must jump," said Humpty.

"I 'm afraid!" cried Coutchie-Coulou. "And I declare! there 's my mother's voice clucking, she 's coming this way."

"Then hurry!" said Humpty. "And do not tremble so or you will get yourself all mixed up; it does n't improve eggs to shake them. We will jump but take care not to bump against me or you may break my shell. Now, — one, — two, — three!"

They held each other's hand and jumped, alighting safely in the roadway. Then, fearing their mothers would see them, Humpty ran as fast as he could go until he and Coutchie were concealed beneath a rosebush in the garden.

"I 'm afraid we 're bad eggs," gasped Coutchie, who was somewhat out of breath.

"Oh, not at all," replied Humpty; "we were laid only this morning, so we are quite fresh. But now, since we are in the world, we must start out in

search of adventure. Here is a roadway beside us which will lead us somewhere or other; so come along, Coutchie-Coulou, and do not be afraid."

The brown egg meekly gave him her hand, and together they trotted along the roadway until they came to a high stone wall, which had sharp spikes upon its top. It seemed to extend for a great distance, and the eggs stopped and looked at it curiously.

"I 'd like to see what is behind that wall," said Humpty, "but I do n't think we shall be able to climb over it."

"No, indeed," answered the brown egg, "but just before us I see a little hole in the wall, near the ground; perhaps we can crawl through that."

They ran to the hole and found it was just large enough to admit them. So they squeezed through very carefully, in order not to break themselves, and soon came to the other side.

They were now in a most beautiful garden, with trees and bright-hued flowers in abundance and pretty fountains that shot their merry sprays far into the air. In the center of the garden was a great palace, with bright golden turrets and domes, and many windows that glistened in the sunshine like the sparkle of diamonds.

Richly dressed courtiers and charming ladies strolled through the walks, and before the palace door were a dozen prancing horses, gaily caparisoned, awaiting their riders.

It was a scene brilliant enough to fascinate anyone, and the two eggs stood spellbound while their eyes feasted upon the unusual sight.

"See!" whispered Coutchie-Coulou, "there are some birds swimming in the water yonder. Let us go and look at them, for we also may be birds someday."

"True," answered Humpty, "but we are just as likely to be omelets or angel's-food. Still, we will have a look at the birds."

So they started to cross the drive on their way to the pond, never noticing that the King and his courtiers had issued from the palace and were now coming down the drive riding upon their prancing steeds. Just as the eggs were in the middle of the drive the horses dashed by, and Humpty, greatly alarmed, ran as fast as he could for the grass.

Then he stopped and looked around, and behold! There was poor Coutchie-Coulou crushed into a shapeless mass by the hoof of one of the horses, and her golden heart was spreading itself slowly over the white gravel of the driveway!

Humpty sat down upon the grass and wept grievously, for the death of his companion was a great blow to him. And while he sobbed, a voice said to him,

“What is the matter, little egg?”

Humpty looked up, and saw a beautiful girl bending over him.

“One of the horses has stepped upon Coutchie-Coulou,” he said; “and now she is dead, and I have no friend in all the world.”

The girl laughed.

“Do not grieve,” she said, “for eggs are but short-lived creatures at best, and Coutchie-Coulou has at least died an honorable death and saved herself from being fried in a pan or boiled in her own shell. So cheer up, little egg, and I will be your friend — at least so long as you remain fresh. A stale egg I never could abide.”

“I was laid only this morning,” said Humpty, drying his tears, “so you need have no fear. But do not call me ‘little egg,’ for I am quite large, as eggs go, and I have a name of my own.”

“What is your name?” asked the Princess.

“It is Humpty Dumpty,” he answered, proudly. “And now, if you will really be my friend, pray show me about the grounds, and through the palace; and take care I am not crushed.”

So the Princess took Humpty in her arms and walked with him all through the grounds, letting him see the fountains and the golden fish that swam in their waters, the beds of lilies and roses, and the pools where the swans floated. Then she took him into the palace, and showed him all the gorgeous rooms, including the King’s own bed-chamber and the room where stood the great ivory throne.

Humpty sighed with pleasure.

“After this,” he said, “I am content to accept any fate that may befall me, for surely no egg before me ever saw so many beautiful sights.”

“That is true,” answered the Princess; “but now I have one more sight to show you which will be grander than all the others; for the King will be riding home shortly with all his horses and men at his back, and I will take you to the gates and let you see them pass by.”

“Thank you,” said Humpty.

So she carried him to the gates, and while they awaited the coming of the King the egg said,

“Put me upon the wall, Princess, for then I be able to see much better than in your arms.”

“That is a good idea,” she answered; “but you must be careful not to fall.”

Then she sat the egg gently upon the top of the stone wall, where there was a little hollow; and Humpty was delighted, for from his elevated perch he could see much better than the Princess herself.

“Here they come!” he cried; and, sure enough, the King came riding along

the road with many courtiers and soldiers and vassals following in his wake, all mounted upon the finest horses the kingdom could afford.

As they came to the gate and entered at a brisk trot, Humpty, forgetting his dangerous position, leaned eagerly over to look at them. The next instant the Princess heard a sharp crash at her side, and, looking downward, perceived poor Humpty Dumpty, who lay crushed and mangled among the sharp stones where he had fallen.

The Princess sighed, for she had taken quite a fancy to the egg; but she knew it was impossible to gather it up again or mend the matter in any way, and therefore she returned thoughtfully to the palace.

Now it happened that upon this evening several young men of the kingdom, who were all of high rank, had determined to ask the King for the hand of the Princess; so they assembled in the throne room and demanded that the King choose which of them was most worthy to marry his daughter.

The King was in a quandary, for all the suitors were wealthy and powerful, and he feared that all but the one chosen would become his enemies. Therefore he thought long upon the matter, and at last said,

"Where all are worthy it is difficult to decide which most deserves the hand of the Princess. Therefore I propose to test your wit. The one who shall ask me a riddle I cannot guess, can marry my daughter."

At this the young men looked thoughtful, and began to devise riddles that his Majesty should be unable to guess. But the King was a shrewd monarch, and each one of the riddles presented to him he guessed with ease.

Now there was one amongst the suitors whom the Princess herself favored, as was but natural. He was a slender, fair-haired youth, with dreamy blue eyes and a rosy complexion, and although he loved the Princess dearly he despaired of finding a riddle that the King could not guess.

But while he stood leaning against the wall the Princess approached him and whispered in his ear a riddle she had just thought of. Instantly his face brightened, and when the King called, "Now, Master Gracington, it is your turn," he advanced boldly to the throne.

"Speak your riddle, sir," said the King, gaily; for he thought this youth would also fail, and that he might therefore keep the Princess by his side for a time longer.

But Master Gracington, with downcast eyes, knelt before the throne and spoke in this wise:

"This is my riddle, oh King:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the King's horses

And all the King's men
Cannot put Humpty together again!"

"Read me that, sire, an' you will!"

The King thought earnestly for a long time, and he slapped his head and rubbed his ears and walked the floor in great strides; but guess the riddle he could not.

"You are a humbug, sir!" he cried out at last; "there is no answer to such a riddle."

"You are wrong, sire," answered the young man; "Humpty Dumpty was an egg."

"Why did I not think of that before!" exclaimed the King; but he gave the Princess to the young man to be his bride, and they lived happily together.

And thus did Humpty Dumpty, even in his death, repay the kindness of the fair girl who had shown him such sights as an egg seldom sees.

The Woman Who Lived in a Shoe

There was an old woman
Who lived in a shoe,
She had so many children
She did n't know what to do;
She gave them some broth
Without any bread,
And whipped them all soundly
And sent them to bed.

A long time ago there lived a woman who had four daughters, and these in time grew up and married and went to live in different parts of the country. And the woman, after that, lived all alone, and said to herself, "I have done my duty to the world, and now shall rest quietly for the balance of my life. When one has raised a family of four children and has married them all happily, she is surely entitled to pass her remaining days in peace and comfort."

She lived in a peculiar little house, that looked something like this picture.

It was not like most of the houses you see, but the old woman had it built herself, and liked it, and so it did not matter to her how odd it was. It stood upon the top of a little hill, and there was a garden at the back and a pretty green lawn in front, with white gravel paths and many beds of bright colored flowers.

The old woman was very happy and contented there until one day she received a letter saying that her daughter Hannah was dead and had sent her family of five children to their grandmother to be taken care of.

This misfortune ruined all the old woman's dreams of quiet; but the next day the children arrived — three boys and two girls — and she made the best of it and gave them the beds her own daughters had once occupied, and her own cot as well; and she made a bed for herself on the parlor sofa.

The youngsters were like all other children, and got into mischief once in awhile; but the old woman had much experience with children and managed to keep them in order very well, while they quickly learned to obey her, and generally did as they were bid.

But scarcely had she succeeded in getting them settled in their new home when Margaret, another of her daughters, died, and sent four more children to her mother to be taken care of.

The old woman scarcely knew where to keep this new flock that had come to her fold, for the house was already full; but she thought the matter over and finally decided she must build an addition to her house.

So she hired a carpenter and built what is called a “lean-to” at the right of her cottage, making it just big enough to accommodate the four new members of her family. When it was completed her house looked very much as it does in this picture.

She put four little cots in her new part of the house, and then she sighed contentedly, and said, “Now all the babies are taken care of and will be comfortable until they grow up.” Of course it was much more difficult to manage nine small children than five; and they often led each other into mischief, so that the flower beds began to be trampled upon and the green grass to be worn under the constant tread of little feet, and the furniture to show a good many scratches and bruises.

But the old woman continued to look after them, as well as she was able, until Sarah, her third daughter, also died, and three more children were sent to their grandmother to be brought up.

The old woman was nearly distracted when she heard of this new addition to her family, but she did not give way to despair. She sent for the carpenter again, and had him build another addition to her house, as the picture shows.

Then she put three new cots in the new part for the babies to sleep in, and when they arrived they were just as cozy and comfortable as peas in a pod.

The grandmother was a lively old woman for one of her years, but she found her time now fully occupied in cooking the meals for her twelve small grandchildren, and mending their clothes, and washing their faces, and undressing them at night and dressing them in the morning. There was just a dozen of babies now, and when you consider they were about the same age you will realize what a large family the old woman had, and how fully her time was occupied in caring for them all.

And now, to make the matter worse, her fourth daughter, who had been named Abigail, suddenly took sick and died, and she also had four small children that must be cared for in some way.

The old woman, having taken the other twelve, could not well refuse to adopt these little orphans also.

“I may as well have sixteen as a dozen,” she said, with a sigh; “they will drive me crazy some day, anyhow, so a few more will not matter at all!”

Once more she sent for the carpenter, and bade him build a third addition to the house; and when it was completed she added four more cots to the dozen that were already in use. The house presented a very queer appearance now, but she did not mind that so long as the babies were comfortable.

“I shall not have to build again,” she said; “and that is one satisfaction. I have now no more daughters to die and leave me their children, and therefore I must make up my mind to do the best I can with the sixteen that have

already been inflicted upon me in my old age."

It was not long before all the grass about the house was trodden down, and the white gravel of the walks all thrown at the birds, and the flower beds trampled into shapeless masses by thirty-two little feet that ran about from morn till night. But the old woman did not complain at this; her time was too much taken up with the babies for her to miss the grass and the flowers.

It cost so much money to clothe them that she decided to dress them all alike, so that they looked like the children of a regular orphan asylum. And it cost so much to feed them that she was obliged to give them the plainest food; so there was bread-and-milk for breakfast and milk-and-bread for dinner and bread-and-broth for supper. But it was a good and wholesome diet, and the children thrived and grew fat upon it.

One day a stranger came along the road, and when he saw the old woman's house he began to laugh.

"What are you laughing at, sir?" asked the grandmother, who was sitting upon her doorsteps engaged in mending sixteen pairs of stockings.

"At your house," the stranger replied; "it looks for all the world like a big shoe!"

"A shoe!" she said, in surprise.

"Why, yes. The chimneys are shoe-straps, and the steps are the heel, and all those additions make the foot of the shoe."

"Never mind," said the woman; "it may be a shoe, but it is full of babies, and that makes it differ from most other shoes."

But the Stranger went on to the village and told all he met that he had seen an old woman who lived in a shoe; and soon people came from all parts of the country to look at the queer house, and they usually went away laughing.

The old woman did not mind this at all; she was too busy to be angry. Some of the children were always getting bumped heads or bruised shins, or falling down and hurting themselves, and these had to be comforted. And some were naughty and had to be whipped; and some were dirty and had to be washed; and some were good and had to be kissed. It was "Gran'ma, do this!" and "Gran'ma, do that!" from morning to night, so that the poor grandmother was nearly distracted. The only peace she ever got was when they were all safely tucked in their little cots and were sound asleep; for then, at least, she was free from worry and had a chance to gather her scattered wits.

"There are so many children," she said one day to the baker-man, "that I often really do n't know what to do!"

"If they were mine, ma'am," he replied, "I 'd send them to the poor-house, or else they 'd send me to the madhouse."

Some of the children heard him say this, and they resolved to play him a trick in return for his ill-natured speech.

The baker-man came every day to the shoe-house, and brought two great baskets of bread in his arms for the children to eat with their milk and their broth.

So one day, when the old woman had gone to the town to buy shoes, the children all painted their faces, to look as Indians do when they are on the warpath; and they caught the roosters and the turkey-cock and pulled feathers from their tails to stick in their hair. And then the boys made wooden tomahawks for the girls and bows-and-arrows for their own use, and then all sixteen went out and hid in the bushes near the top of the hill.

By and by the baker-man came slowly up the path with a basket of bread on either arm; and just as he reached the bushes there sounded in his ears a most unearthly war-whoop. Then a flight of arrows came from the bushes, and although they were blunt and could do him no harm they rattled all over his body; and one hit his nose, and another his chin, while several stuck fast in the loaves of bread.

Altogether, the baker-man was terribly frightened; and when all the sixteen small Indians rushed from the bushes and flourished their tomahawks, he took to his heels and ran down the hill as fast as he could go!

When the grandmother returned she asked,

"Where is the bread for your supper?"

The children looked at one another in surprise, for they had forgotten all about the bread. And then one of them confessed, and told her the whole story of how they had frightened the baker-man for saying he would send them to the poor-house.

"You are sixteen very naughty children!" exclaimed the old woman; "and for punishment you must eat your broth without any bread, and afterwards each one shall have a sound whipping and be sent to bed."

Then all the children began to cry at once, and there was such an uproar that their grandmother had to put cotton in her ears that she might not lose her hearing.

But she kept her promise, and made them eat their broth without any bread; for, indeed, there was no bread to give them.

Then she stood them in a row and undressed them, and as she put the nightdress on each one she gave it a sound whipping and sent it to bed.

They cried some, of course, but they knew very well they deserved the punishment, and it was not long before all of them were sound asleep.

They took care not to play any more tricks on the baker-man, and as they grew older they were naturally much better behaved.

Before many years the boys were old enough to work for the neighboring farmers, and that made the woman's family a good deal smaller. And then the girls grew up and married, and found homes of their own, so that all the children were in time well provided for.

But not one of them forgot the kind grandmother who had taken such good care of them, and often they tell their children of the days when they lived with the old woman in a shoe and frightened the baker-man almost into fits with their wooden tomahawks.

Little Miss Muffet

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating of curds and whey.
There came a great spider
And sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Little Miss Muffet's father was a big banker in a big city, and he had so much money that the house he lived in was almost as beautiful as a king's palace. It was built of granite and marble, and richly furnished with every luxury that money can buy. There was an army of servants about the house, and many of them had no other duties than to wait upon Miss Muffet, for the little girl was an only child and therefore a personage of great importance. She had a maid to dress her hair and a maid to bathe her, a maid to serve her at a table and a maid to tie her shoe-strings, and several maids beside And then there was Nurse Holloweg to look after all the maids and see they did their tasks properly.

The child's father spent his days at his office and his evenings at his club; her mother was a leader in society, and therefore fully engaged from morning till night and from night till morn; so that Little Miss Muffet seldom saw her parents and scarce knew them when she did see them.

I have never known by what name she was christened. Perhaps she did not know herself, for everyone had called her "Miss Muffet" since she could remember. The servants spoke of her respectfully as Miss Muffet. Mrs. Muffet would say, at times, "By the way, Nurse, how is Miss Muffet getting along?" And Mr. Muffet, when he met his little daughter by chance on the walk or in the hallway, would stop and look at her gravely and say, "So this is Miss Muffet. Well, how are you feeling, little one?" And then, without heeding her answer, he would walk away.

Perhaps you think that Miss Muffet, surrounded by every luxury and with a dozen servants to wait upon her, was happy and contented; but such was not the case. She wanted to run and romp, but they told her it was unladylike; she wished to play with other children, but none were rich enough to be proper associates for her; she longed to dig in the dirt in the garden, but Nurse Holloweg was shocked at the very thought. So Miss Muffet became sullen and irritable, and scolded everyone about her, and lived a very unhappy life. And her food was too rich and gave her dyspepsia, so that she grew thin and pale and did not sleep well at night.

One afternoon her mother, who happened to be at home for an hour,

suddenly thought of her little daughter; so she rang the bell and asked for Nurse Holloweg.

"How is Miss Muffet, Nurse?" enquired the lady.

"Very badly, ma'am," was the reply.

"Badly! What do you mean? Is she ill?"

"She 's far from well, ma'am," answered the Nurse, "and seems to be getting worse every day."

"Well," replied the lady; "you must have the doctor to see her; and do n't forget to let me know what he says. That is all, Nurse."

She turned to her novel again, and the Nurse walked away and sent a servant for the doctor. That great man, when he came, shook his head solemnly and said,

"She must have a change. Take her away into the country as soon as possible."

"And very good advice it was, too," remarked the Nurse to one of the maids; "for I feel as if I needed a change myself."

When she reported the matter to Mrs. Muffet the mother answered,

"Very well; I will see Mr. Muffet and have him write out a cheque."

And so it was that a week later Little Miss Muffet went to the country, or rather to a small town where there was a summer hotel that had been highly recommended to Nurse Holloweg; and with her went the string of maids and a wagon-load of boxes and trunks.

The morning after their arrival the little girl asked to go out upon the lawn.

"Well," replied Nurse Holloweg, "Sarah can take you out for half an hour. But remember you are not to run and get heated, for that will ruin your complexion; and you must not speak to any of the common children you meet, for your mother would object; and you must not get your shoes dusty nor your dress soiled, nor disobey Sarah in any way."

Little Miss Muffet went out in a very angry and sulky mood.

"What 's the use of being in the country," she thought, "if I must act just as I did in the city? I hate Nurse Holloweg, and Sarah, and all the rest of them! and if I dared I 'd just — just run away."

Indeed, a few minutes later, when Sarah had fallen asleep upon a bench under a big shade tree, Miss Muffet decided she would really run away for once in her life, and see how it seemed.

There was a pretty lane near by, running between shady trees far out into the country, and, stealing softly away from Sarah's side, the little girl ran as fast as she could go, and never stopped until she was all out of breath.

While she rested and wondered what she could do next, a farmer came

along, driving an empty cart.

"I 'll catch on behind," said Miss Muffet, gleefully, "just as I 've seen the boys do in the city. Won't it be fun!"

So she ran and caught on the end of the cart, and actually climbed into it, falling all in a heap upon the straw that lay upon the bottom. But it did n't hurt her at all, and the next minute the farmer whipped up his horses, and they went trotting along the lane, carrying Miss Muffet farther and farther away from hated Nurse Holloweg and the dreadful maids.

She looked around upon the green fields and the waving grain, and drew in deep breaths of the fresh country air, and was happy for almost the first time in her little life. By and by she lay back upon the straw and fell asleep; and the farmer, who did not know she was in his cart, drove on for many miles, until at last he stopped at a small wooden farmhouse, and jumped to the ground.

A woman came to the door to greet him, and he said to her.

"Well, mother, we 're home again, you see."

"So I see," she answered; "but did you bring my groceries?"

"Yes," he replied, as he began to unharness the horses; "they are in the cart."

So she came to the cart and looked within, and saw Miss Muffet, who was still asleep.

"Where did you get the little girl?" asked the farmer's wife, in surprise.

"What little girl?" asked he.

"The one in the cart."

He came to the cart and looked in, and was as surprised as his wife.

"She must have climbed into the cart when I left the town," he said; "but waken her, wife, and we will hear what she has to say."

So the farmer's wife shook the girl by the arm, and Miss Muffet sat up in the cart and rubbed her eyes and wondered where she was.

"How came you in my cart?" asked the farmer.

"I caught on behind, and climbed in," answered the girl.

"What is your name, and where do you live?" enquired the farmer's wife.

"My name is Miss Muffet, and I live in a big city, — but where, I do not know."

And that was all she could tell them, so the woman said at last,

"We must keep her till some one comes to claim her, and she can earn her living by helping me make the cheeses."

"That will be nice," said Miss Muffet, with a laugh, "for Nurse Holloweg never lets me do anything, and I should like to help somebody do something."

So they led her into the house, where the farmer's wife wondered at the fine texture of her dress and admired the golden chain that hung around her neck.

"Some one will surely come for her," the woman said to her husband, "for she is richly dressed and must belong to a family of some importance."

Nevertheless, when they had eaten dinner, for which Little Miss Muffet had a wonderful appetite, the woman took her into the dairy and told her how she could assist her in curdling the milk and preparing it for the cheese-press.

"Why, it 's really fun to work," said the girl, at first, "and I should like to live here always. I do hope Nurse Holloweg will not find me."

After a time, however, she grew weary, and wanted to rest; but the woman had not yet finished her cheese-making, so she bade the girl keep at her tasks.

"It 's time enough to rest when the work is done," she said, "and if you stay with me you must earn your board. No one is allowed to idle in this house."

So Little Miss Muffet, though she felt like crying and was very tired, kept at her work until at length all was finished and the last cheese was in the press.

"Now," said the farmer's wife, "since you have worked so well I shall give you a dish of curds and whey for your supper, and you may go out into the orchard and eat it under the shade of the trees."

Little Miss Muffet had never eaten curds and whey before, and did not know how they tasted; but she was very hungry, so she took the dish and went into the orchard.

She first looked around for a place to sit down, and finally discovered a little grassy mound, which is called a tuffet in the country, and seated herself upon it. Then she tasted the curds and whey and found them very good.

But while she was eating she chanced to look down at her feet, and there was a great black spider coming straight towards her. The girl had never seen such an enormous and hideous-looking spider before, and she was so frightened that she gave a scream and tipped backward off the tuffet, spilling the curds and whey all over her dress as she did so. This frightened her more than ever, and as soon as she could get upon her feet she scampered away to the farmhouse as fast as she could go, crying bitterly as she ran.

The farmer's wife tried to comfort her, and Miss Muffet, between her sobs, said she had seen "the awfulest, biggest, blackest spider in all the world!"

This made the woman laugh, for she was not afraid of spiders.

Soon after they heard a sound of wheels upon the road and a handsome carriage came dashing up to the gate.

“Has anyone seen a little girl who has run away?” asked Nurse Holloweg, leaning out of the carriage.

“Oh, yes” answered Little Miss Muffet; “here I am, Nurse. And she ran out and jumped into the carriage, for she was very glad to get back again to those who would care for her and not ask her to work making cheeses.”

When they were driving back to the town the Nurse said,

“You must promise me, Miss Muffet, never to run away again. You have frightened me nearly into hysterics, and had you been lost your mother would have been quite disappointed.”

The little girl was silent for a time; then she answered,

“I will promise not to run away if you will let me play as other children do. But if you do not allow me to run and romp and dig in the ground, I shall keep running away, no matter how many horrid spiders come to frighten me!”

And Nurse Holloweg, who had really been much alarmed at so nearly losing her precious charge, thought it wise to agree to Miss Muffet’s terms.

She kept her word, too, and when Little Miss Muffet went back to her home in the city her cheeks were as red as roses and her eyes sparkled with health. And she grew, in time, to be a beautiful young lady, and as healthy and robust as she was beautiful. Seeing which, the doctor put an extra large fee in his bill for advising that the little girl be taken to the country; and Mr. Muffet paid it without a word of protest.

Even after Miss Muffet grew up and was married she never forgot the day that she ran away, nor the curds and whey she ate for her supper, nor the great spider that frightened her away from the tuffet.

Three Wise Men of Gotham

Three Wise Men of Gotham
Went to sea in a bowl.
If the bowl had been stronger
My tale had been longer.

There lived in the great city of Gotham, over against the north gate, a man who possessed a very wise aspect, but very little else. He was tall and lean, and had a fine large head, bald and smooth upon the top, with a circle of white hair behind the ears. His beard was pure white, and reached to his waist; his eyes were small, dark, and so piercing that they seemed to read your every thought. His eyebrows were very heavy, and as white as his beard. He dressed in a long black mantle with a girdle corded about the middle, and he walked slowly and majestically, and talked no more than he was obliged to.

When this man passed down the street with his stately tread the people all removed their hats and bowed to him with great reverence, saying within themselves,

"He is very wise, this great man; he is a second Socrates."

And soon this was the only name he was called by, and everyone in Gotham knew him as "Socrates."

To be sure this man was not really wise. Had they realized the truth, not one he met but knew more than Socrates; but his venerable appearance certainly betokened great wisdom, and no one appeared to remember that things are seldom what they seem.

Socrates would strut about with bowed head and arms clasped behind him, and think:

"My! how wise these people take me to be. Everyone admires my beautiful beard. When I look into their faces they drop their eyes. I am, in truth, a wonderful man, and if I say nothing they will believe I am full of wisdom. Ah, here comes the schoolmaster; I shall frown heavily and refuse to notice him, for then he also will be deceived and think I am pondering upon matters of great import." Really, the one wise thing about this Socrates was his ability to keep quiet. For, saying no word, it was impossible he should betray his ignorance.

Singularly enough, over by the south gate of Gotham there dwelt another wise man, of much the same appearance as Socrates. His white beard was a trifle longer and he had lost his left eye, which was covered by a black patch; but in all other ways his person betokened as much wisdom as that of the other.

He did not walk about, being lazy and preferring his ease; but he lived in a little cottage with one room, where the people came to consult him in regard to all their troubles.

They had named him Sophocles, and when anything went wrong they would say,

"Let us go and consult Sophocles, for he is very wise and will tell us what to do."

Thus one man, who had sued his neighbor in the courts, became worried over the outcome of the matter and came to consult the wise man.

"Tell me, O Sophocles!" he said, as he dropped a piece of money upon a plate, "shall I win my lawsuit or not?"

Sophocles appeared to ponder for a moment, and then he looked at his questioner with his one eye and replied,

"If it is not decided against you, you will certainly win your suit."

And the man was content, and went away feeling that his money had been well invested.

At another time the mother of a pair of baby twins came to him in great trouble.

"O most wise Sophocles!" she said, "I am in despair! For my little twin girls are just alike, and I have lost the ribbon that I placed on one that I might be able to tell them apart. Therefore I cannot determine which is Amelia and which is Ophelia, and as the priest has christened them by their proper names it would be a sin to call them wrongly."

"Cannot the priest tell?" asked the wise man.

"No one can tell," answered the woman; "neither the priest nor their father nor myself, for they are just alike. And they are yet too young to remember their own names. Therefore your great wisdom is our only resource."

"Bring them to me," commanded Sophocles.

And when they were brought he looked at them attentively and said,

"This is Ophelia and this Amelia. Now tie a red ribbon about Ophelia's wrist and put a blue ribbon on Amelia, and so long as they wear them you will not be troubled to tell them apart."

Everyone marvelled greatly that Sophocles should know the children better than their own mother, but he said to himself,

"Since no no [both nos in original] one can prove that I am wrong I am sure to be right;" and thus he maintained his reputation for wisdom.

In a little side street near the center of Gotham lived an old woman named Deborah Smith. Her home was a wretched little hut, for she was poor, and supported herself and her husband by begging in the streets. Her husband was a lazy, short, fat old man, who lay upon a ragged blanket in the hut all

day and refused to work.

"One beggar in the family is enough," he used to grumble, when his wife upbraided him, "and I am really too tired to work. So let me alone, my Deborah, as I am about to take another nap."

Nothing she could say would arouse him to action, and she finally allowed him to do as he pleased.

But one day she met Socrates walking in the street, and after watching him for a time made up her mind he was nothing more than a fool. Other people certainly thought him wise, but she was a shrewd old woman, and could see well enough that he merely looked wise. The next day she went to the south of the city to beg, and there she heard of Sophocles. When the people repeated his wise sayings she thought:

"Here is another fool, for anyone could tell as much as this man does."

Still, she went to see Sophocles, and, dropping a penny upon his plate, she asked,

"Tell me, O wise man, how shall I drive my husband to work?"

"By starving him," answered Sophocles; "if you refuse to feed him he must find a way to feed himself."

"That is true," she thought, as she went away; "but any fool could have told me that. This wise man is a fraud; even my husband is as wise as he."

Then she stopped short and slapped her hand against her forehead.

"Why," she cried, "I will make a Wise Man of Perry, my husband, and then he can earn money without working!"

So she went to her husband and said,

"Get up, Perry Smith, and wash yourself; for I am going to make a Wise Man of you."

"I won't," he replied.

"You will," she declared, "for it is the easiest way to earn money I have ever discovered."

Then she took a stick and beat him so fiercely that at last he got up, and agreed to do as she said.

She washed his long beard until it was as white as snow, and she shaved his head to make him look bald and venerable. Then she brought him a flowing black robe with a girdle at the middle; and when he was dressed, he looked fully as wise as either Socrates or Sophocles.

"You must have a new name," she said, "for no one will ever believe that Perry Smith is a Wise Man. So I shall hereafter call you Pericles, the Wisest Man of Gotham!"

She then led him into the streets, and to all they met she declared,

"This is Pericles, the wisest man in the world."

“What does he know?” they asked.

“Everything, and much else,” she replied.

Then came a carter, and putting a piece of money in the hand of Pericles, he enquired,

“Pray tell me of your wisdom what is wrong with my mare?”

“How should I know?” asked Pericles.

“I thought you knew everything,” returned the carter, in surprise.

“I do,” declared Pericles; “but you have not told me what her symptoms are.”

“She refuses to eat anything,” said the carter.

“Then she is not hungry,” returned Pericles; “for neither man nor beast will refuse to eat when hungry.”

And the people who heard him whispered together and said,

“Surely this is a wise man, for he has told the carter what is wrong with his mare.”

After a few days the fame of Pericles’ sayings came to the ears of both Socrates and Sophocles, and they resolved to see him, for each feared he would prove more wise than they were, knowing themselves to be arrant humbugs. So one morning the three wise men met together outside the hut of Pericles, and they sat themselves down upon stools, facing each other, while a great crowd of people gathered around to hear the words of wisdom that dropped from their lips.

But for a time all three were silent, and regarded one another anxiously, for each feared he might betray himself.

Finally Sophocles winked his one eye at the others and said, in a grave voice,

“The earth is flat; for, were it round, as some fools say, all the people would slide off the surface.”

Then the people, who had listened eagerly, clapped their hands together and murmured,

“Sophocles is wisest of all. What he says is truth.”

This provoked Socrates greatly, for he felt his reputation was in danger; so he said with a frown,

“The world is shallow, like a dish; were it flat the water would all run over the edges, and we should have no oceans.”

Then the people applauded more loudly than before, and cried,

“Socrates is right the is wisest of all.”

Pericles, at this, shifted uneasily upon his stool, for he knew he must dispute the matter boldly or his fame would depart from him. Therefore he said, with grave deliberation,

“You are wrong, my friends. The world is hollow, like the shell of a cocoanut, and we are all inside the shell. The sky above us is the roof, and if you go out upon the ocean you will come to a place, no matter in which direction you go, where the sky and the water meet. I know this is true, for I have been to sea.”

The people cheered loudly at this, and said,

“Long live Pericles, the wisest of the wise men!”

“I shall hold I am right,” protested Sophocles, “until Pericles and Socrates prove that I am wrong.”

“That is fair enough,” said the people.

“And I also shall hold myself to be right until they prove me wrong,” declared Socrates, firmly.

“I know I am right,” said Pericles, “for you cannot prove me wrong.”

“We can take a boat and sail over the sea,” remarked Socrates, “and when we come to the edge we will know the truth. Will you go?”

“Yes,” answered Sophocles; and Pericles, because he did not dare refuse, said “Yes” also.

Then they went to the shore of the sea, and the people followed them. There was no boat to be found anywhere, for the fishers were all away upon the water; but there was a big wooden bowl lying upon the shore, which the fishermen used to carry their fish to market in.

“This will do,” said Pericles, who, because he weighed the most, was the greatest fool of the three.

So the wise men all sat within the bowl, with their feet together, and the people pushed them out into the water.

The tide caught the bowl and floated it out to sea, and before long the wise men were beyond sight of land.

They were all greatly frightened, for the bowl was old and cracked, and the water leaked slowly through until their feet were covered. They clung to the edge with their hands and looked at one another with white faces. Said Pericles,

“I was a fool to come to sea in this bowl.”

“Ah,” remarked Socrates, “if you are a fool, as you confess, then you cannot be a wise man.”

“No,” answered Pericles, “but I ‘ll soon be a dead man.”

“I also was a fool,” said Sophocles, who was weeping from his one eye and trembling all over, “for if I had stayed upon land I would not have been drowned.”

“Since you both acknowledge it,” sighed Socrates, “I will confess that I also am a fool, and have always been one; but I looked so wise the people

insisted I must know everything!”

“Yes, yes,” Sophocles groaned, “the people have murdered us!”

“My only regret,” said Pericles, “is that my wife is not with me. If only she were here” —

He did not finish what he was saying, for just then the bowl broke in two. And the people are still waiting for the three wise men to come back to them.

Little Bun Rabbit

”Oh, Little Bun Rabbit, so soft and so shy,
Say, what do you see with your big, round eye?”
”On Christmas we rabbits,” says Bunny so shy,
”Keep watch to see Santa go galloping by.”

Little Dorothy had passed all the few years of her life in the country, and being the only child upon the farm she was allowed to roam about the meadows and woods as she pleased. On the bright summer mornings Dorothy’s mother would tie a sun-bonnet under the girl’s chin, and then she romped away to the fields to amuse herself in her own way.

She came to know every flower that grew, and to call them by name, and she always stepped very carefully to avoid treading on them, for Dorothy was a kind-hearted child and did not like to crush the pretty flowers that bloomed in her path. And she was also very fond of all the animals, and learned to know them well, and even to understand their language, which very few people can do. And the animals loved Dorothy in turn, for the word passed around amongst them that she could be trusted to do them no harm. For the horse, whose soft nose Dorothy often gently stroked, told the cow of her kindness, and the cow told the dog, and the dog told the cat, and the cat told her black kitten, and the black kitten told the rabbit when one day they met in the turnip patch.

Therefore when the rabbit, which is the most timid of all animals and the most difficult to get acquainted with, looked out of a small bush at the edge of the wood one day and saw Dorothy standing a little way off, he did not scamper away, as is his custom, but sat very still and met the gaze of her sweet eyes boldly, although perhaps his heart beat a little faster than usual.

Dorothy herself was afraid she might frighten him away, so she kept very quiet for a time, leaning silently against a tree and smiling encouragement at her timorous companion until the rabbit became reassured and blinked his big eyes at her thoughtfully. For he was as much interested in the little girl as she in him, since it was the first time he had dared to meet a person face to face.

Finally Dorothy ventured to speak, so she asked, very softly and slowly,
“Oh, Little Bun Rabbit, so soft and so shy,
Say, what do you see with your big, round eye?”

“Many things,” answered the rabbit, who was pleased to hear the girl speak in his own language; “in summer-time I see the clover-leaves that I love to feed upon and the cabbages at the end of the farmer’s garden. I see the cool bushes where I can hide from my enemies, and I see the dogs and

the men long before they can see me, or know that I am near, and therefore I am able to keep out of their way."

"Is that the reason your eyes are so big?" asked Dorothy.

"I suppose so," returned the rabbit; "you see we have only our eyes and our ears and our legs to defend ourselves with. We cannot fight, but we can always run away, and that is a much better way to save our lives than by fighting."

"Where is your home, bunny?" enquired the girl.

"I live in the ground, far down in a cool, pleasant hole I have dug in the midst of the forest. At the bottom of the hole is the nicest little room you can imagine, and there I have made a soft bed to rest in at night. When I meet an enemy I run to my hole and jump in, and there I stay until all danger is over."

"You have told me what you see in summer," continued Dorothy, who was greatly interested in the rabbit's account of himself, "but what do you see in the winter?"

"In winter we rabbits," said Bunny so shy,
"Keep watch to see Santa go galloping by."

"And do you ever see him?" asked the girl, eagerly.

"Oh, yes; every winter. I am not afraid of him, nor of his reindeer. And it is such fun to see him come dashing along, cracking his whip and calling out cheerily to his reindeer, who are able to run even swifter than we rabbits. And Santa Claus, when he sees me, always gives me a nod and a smile, and then I look after him and his big load of toys which he is carrying to the children, until he has galloped away out of sight. I like to see the toys, for they are so bright and pretty, and every year there is something new amongst them. Once I visited Santa, and saw him make the toys."

"Oh, tell me about it!" pleaded Dorothy.

"It was one morning after Christmas," said the rabbit, who seemed to enjoy talking, now that he had overcome his fear of Dorothy, "and I was sitting by the road-side when Santa Claus came riding back in his empty sleigh. He does not come home quite so fast as he goes, and when he saw me he stopped for a word.

"'You look very pretty this morning, Bun Rabbit,' he said, in his jolly way; 'I think the babies would love to have you to play with.'

"'I do n't doubt it, your honor,' I answered; 'but they 'd soon kill me with handling, even if they did not scare me to death; for babies are very rough with their playthings.'

"'That is true,' replied Santa Claus; 'and yet you are so soft and pretty it is a pity the babies can't have you. Still, as they would abuse a live rabbit I think I shall make them some toy rabbits, which they cannot hurt; so if you

will jump into my sleigh with me and ride home to my castle for a few days, I 'll see if I can't make some toy rabbits just like you."

"Of course I consented, for we all like to please old Santa, and a minute later I had jumped into the sleigh beside him and we were dashing away at full speed toward his castle. I enjoyed the ride very much, but I enjoyed the castle far more; for it was one of the loveliest places you could imagine. It stood on the top of a high mountain and is built of gold and silver bricks, and the windows are pure diamond crystals. The rooms are big and high, and there is a soft carpet upon every floor and many strange things scattered around to amuse one. Santa Claus lives there all alone, except for old Mother Hubbard, who cooks the meals for him; and her cupboard is never bare now, I can promise you! At the top of the castle there is one big room, and that is Santa's work-shop, where he makes the toys. On one side is his work-bench, with plenty of saws and hammers and jack-knives; and on another side is the paint-bench, with paints of every color and brushes of every size and shape. And in other places are great shelves, where the toys are put to dry and keep new and bright until Christmas comes and it is time to load them all into his sleigh.

"After Mother Hubbard had given me a good dinner, and I had eaten some of the most delicious clover I have ever tasted, Santa took me up into his work-room and sat me upon the table.

"'If I can only make rabbits half as nice as you are,' he said, 'the little ones will be delighted.' Then he lit a big pipe and began to smoke, and soon he took a roll of soft fur from a shelf in a corner and commenced to cut it out in the shape of a rabbit. He smoked and whistled all the time he was working, and he talked to me in such a jolly way that I sat perfectly still and allowed him to measure my ears and my legs so that he could cut the fur into the proper form.

"'Why, I 've got your nose too long, Bunny,' he said once; and so he snipped a little off the fur he was cutting, so that the toy rabbit's nose should be like mine. And again he said, 'Good gracious! the ears are too short entirely!' So he had to get a needle and thread and sew on more fur to the ears, so that they might be the right size. But after a time it was all finished, and then he stuffed the fur full of sawdust and sewed it up neatly; after which he put in some glass eyes that made the toy rabbit look wonderfully life-like. When it was all done he put it on the table beside me, and at first I did n't know whether I was the live rabbit or the toy rabbit, we were so much alike.

"'It 's a very good job,' said Santa, nodding his head at us pleasantly; 'and I shall have to make a lot of these rabbits, for the little children are sure to be greatly pleased with them.'

“So he immediately began to make another, and this time he cut the fur just the right size, so that it was even better than the first rabbit.

“‘I must put a squeak in it,’ said Santa.

“So he took a box of squeaks from a shelf and put one into the rabbit before he sewed it up. When it was all finished he pressed the toy rabbit with his thumb, and it squeaked so naturally that I jumped off the table, fearing at first the new rabbit was alive. Old Santa laughed merrily at this, and I soon recovered from my fright and was pleased to think the babies were to have such pretty playthings.

“‘After this,’ said Santa Claus, ‘I can make rabbits without having you for a pattern; but if you like you may stay a few days longer in my castle and amuse yourself.”

“I thanked him and decided to stay. So for several days I watched him making all kinds of toys, and I wondered to see how quickly he made them, and how many new things he invented.

“‘I almost wish I was a child,’ I said to him one day, ‘for then I too could have playthings.’

“‘Ah, you can run about all day, in summer and in winter, and enjoy yourself in your own way,’ said Santa; ‘but the poor little children are obliged to stay in the house in the winter and on rainy days in the summer, and then they must have toys to amuse them and keep them contented.”

“I knew this was true, so I only said, admiringly, ‘You must be the quickest and the best workman in all the world, Santa.’

“‘I suppose I am,’ he answered; ‘but then, you see, I have been making toys for hundreds of years, and I make so many it is no wonder I am skillful. And now, if you are ready to go home, I ‘ll hitch up the reindeer and take you back again.’

“‘Oh, no,’ said I, ‘I prefer to run by myself, for I can easily find the way and I want to see the country.’

“‘If that is the case,’ replied Santa, ‘I must give you a magic collar to wear, so that you will come to no harm.’

“So, after Mother Hubbard had given me a good meal of turnips and sliced cabbage, Santa Claus put the magic collar around my neck and I started for home. I took my time on the journey, for I knew nothing could harm me, and I saw a good many strange sights before I got back to this place again.”

“But what became of the magic collar?” asked Dorothy, who had listened with breathless interest to the rabbit’s story.

“After I got home,” replied the rabbit, “the collar disappeared from around my neck, and I knew Santa had called it back to himself again. He did not

give it to me, you see; he merely let me take it on my journey to protect me. The next Christmas, when I watched by the road-side to see Santa, I was pleased to notice a great many of the toy rabbits sticking out of the loaded sleigh. The babies must have liked them, too, for every year since I have seen them amongst the toys.

"Santa never forgets me, and every time he passes he calls out, in his jolly voice,

"'A merry Christmas to you, Bun Rabbit! The babies still love you dearly.'"

The Rabbit paused, and Dorothy was just about to ask another question when Bunny raised his head and seemed to hear something coming.

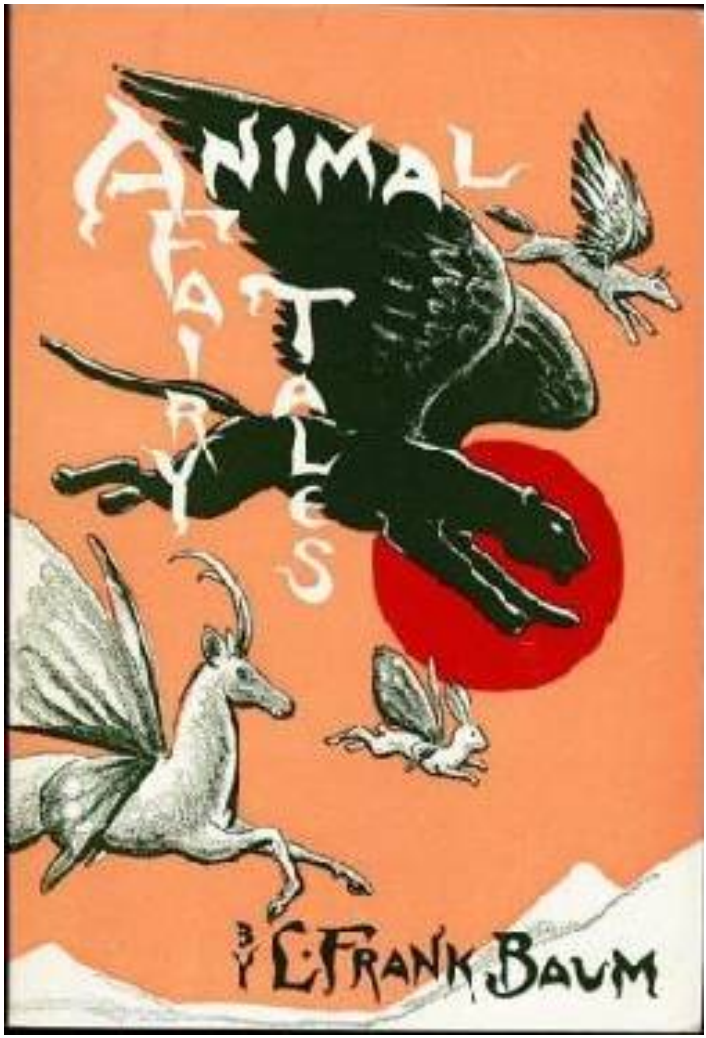
"What is it?" enquired the girl.

"It 's the farmer's big shepherd dog," answered the Rabbit, "and I must be going before he sees me, or I shall shall [both shalls in original] have to run for my life. So good bye, Dorothy; I hope we shall meet again, and then I will gladly tell you more of my adventures."

The next instant he had sprung into the wood, and all that Dorothy could see of him was a gray streak darting in and out amongst the trees.

ANIMAL FAIRY TALES

The short stories in this collection first appeared as magazine publications in 1905. Formed in a similar style to Aesop's Fables and the *Just-So Stories*, the tales offer a didactic, as well as humorous, tone. The nine stories featured in the collection were originally printed in consecutive monthly issues of *The Delineator*, a popular women's magazine, from January to September 1905. The tales were part of the magazine's regular feature, "Stories and Pastimes for Children", and primarily illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull.



The first edition

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The Story of Jaglon

From: *The Delineator*, January 1905.

There are three parts to the Wilderness. One is the Outer Circle, where the sandy hills are broken by clumps of shrubbery, a few trees and huge jagged points of rock which jut from the earth. Here the smaller animals mostly dwell. The Middle Circle of the Wilderness has more trees, a few rivulets and many rocky chasms, rifts and pinnacles. Larger animals with peaceful natures prefer to wander in this section, where opportunities to hide themselves are many. It is in the Inner Circle -- the vast, overarching forest -- that the most dominant, ferocious species of wild beasts love to roam. Here are several lakes formed of clear spring water, which reflect the shadows of the trees from their placid depths. Here soft mosses cover all the earth, deadening stealthy footfalls, and brilliant vines and creepers cling to the branches of the ancient trees, or embrace their rugged limbs, or wander aimlessly amid the mosses. The Inner Circle is the paradise of wild animals. They fight one another for the privilege to live there, and only the strongest survive.

The animal called Man is unknown in the Wilderness.

Jaglon was born in the Outer Circle, within a lair dug between the roots of a dead tree that reared its naked trunk high into the air. When Jaglon was three days old his father and mother left him to hunt, and never returned. What happened to them is not known. The Wilderness is full of secret tragedies and unsolved mysteries.

Nao, the Tiger Fairy, speeding invisible over the sands, heard a soft, piteous whine and paused to look. It was a baby cub, Jaglon -- a ball of downy yellow striving to open his eyes and discover why he had been left alone.

Nao took charge of the cub, nursing and comforting it. Others of the Tiger Fairies assisted Nao. Jaglon throve wonderfully, and grew fat and strong.

After he became big enough to eat meat -- and that was when the purple stripes began to show dimly on his tawny fur -- the Tiger Fairies remained invisible to Jaglon, although they continued to watch over his fortunes.

Now he left the lair daily to hunt; and as he chanced to be the largest animal in this part of the Wilderness, he was ever successful in securing a dinner. His bearing became dignified and self-confident; his eyes were steadfast and intelligent; his form grew big and muscular.

Jaglon did not know how much he owed the Tiger Fairies. Indeed, he knew nothing of the Fairies whatever, having been so young when they first came to nurse him. But the Fairies were much interested in the young cub.

They were proud of their work; it pleased them to note his strength, his nobility of character, the calmness of judgment they had instilled into his nature.

Jaglon saw none of his fellow Tigers. He was alone in this Outer Circle, and supposed he was like all others of his race. The rare qualities the Fairies had bestowed upon him he thought -- if he thought of them at all he owed to his ancestors; nor did he consider them at all unusual.

One day, soon after the Tiger had reached his full development, the Bat-Witch flew upon the body of a hare that Jaglon had slain for dinner and proceeded to devour it. The young Tiger did not know the Bat-Witch, so he fearlessly raised his paw and sent the creature whirling a dozen yards away.

The Bat-Witch screamed and fluttered furiously.

"You shall repent that blow!" she cried; "you shall repent it! You shall repent it!"

Jaglon never looked at her nor answered. He seized the hare in his jaws and stalked majestically to his lair.

The Bat-Witch was terribly incensed, and plotted revenge upon Jaglon. She knew him to be guarded by the Fairies, so she could only injure him in case he committed some wrong, or broke the Laws of the Wilderness, or was guilty of cowardice. The Bat-Witch had never known a Royal Tiger that at some time in his life had not done one of these things; so she watched Jaglon thereafter, and set traps to tempt him to wrongdoing, hoping thus to get him into her power.

The Royal Tiger was too big to inhabit the Outer Circle. He realized that, and the knowledge made him restless. From the small, insignificant animals around him he heard tales of the Middle Circle, where wolves, boars, jaguars and such creatures hid and warred with one another; and of the great Inner Circle, where resided the mighty Lion, King of Beasts, with scores of great and powerful creatures moving around him and enjoying this, the most pleasant and glorious section of the Wilderness.

"But there are no Tigers there," added a chattering Lynx one day, as he glanced maliciously toward the spot where Jaglon crouched. "The Lions drove them from the Inner Circle long ago, and they dare not return."

This mischievous speech set Jagion thinking. What! the Royal Tigers dared not return to the Inner Circle because some creatures called Lions had driven them out? What nonsense! He, Jaglon, was a Royal Tiger. And surely he dared enter the Inner Circle and face the King of Beasts. Why not?

He arose, stretched himself, and set out. No preparation was required. Stepping over the sands, skirting the bushes, leaping the bare, riven rocks, Jaglon came to the Middle Circle and entered it.

The Bat-Witch was watching, and it filled her cruel heart with joy to see the hated one so calmly placing himself in danger. Now, indeed, was her opportunity.

Fearlessly Jaglon penetrated the Middle Circle. It was vast in extent and strange to him. But time mattered nothing, and the way was straight ahead. So he was patient.

After a time he became hungry, and watched for prey: but here the animals are wary. Not unnoticed was the great form of the Royal Tiger stalking through the domain, and those animals that are lawful prey to Tigers took good care to keep out of Jaglon's way.

Presently he came upon a Leopard which held a pheasant between its paws, crouching above the prey as if afraid of being robbed.

Jaglon looked at the pheasant longingly. But he said:

"Fear nothing, friend. It is your food, not mine. I am no thief."

And on he marched with head erect.

The Bat-Witch, concealed in a bush, uttered a croak of disappointment.

Soon afterward Jaglon discovered a fox caught fast in a cleft of broken sapling, which had gripped the creature's bushy tail and made it prisoner.

Now, the Fox is lawful prey of the Royal Tiger; but Jaglon was affected by the despairing look in the entrapped animal's eyes, and would not kill it. With his muscular paw he bent back the sapling and released the Fox.

"Go!" said he; "your misfortune has saved you. But do not venture near me again while I am hungry. It is life against life, remember."

The Fox had already darted away toward safety; but the Bat-Witch, hidden behind a fallen tree-trunk, fluttered its skinny wings in helpless rage.

Before long night began to fall, and Jaglon sought a lair. The country was strange and lairs were few or hidden secretly.

The Tiger became impatient. He did not like the dew which now fell upon his sleek, well-tended coat of fur. But now he discovered an opening in a rock -- a snug, ample cavern that would suit him admirably. As he sought to enter a growl fell upon his ears and made him pause. His searching eyes discovered a small brown Bear curled in a far corner of the lair.

"Peace," said Jaglon; "I seek shelter."

"Seek it elsewhere!" grumbled the Bear. "I am here first. The cavern is mine."

"Surely there is room for us both," returned Jaglon, protesting, but in gentle tones. "The dew is wetting me. And I am a stranger. To-morrow I resume my journey."

"Keep out! " cried the Bear, menacingly. "You are a Tiger -- an outcast. I cannot trust you. Keep out -- or fight!"

Now, this was a silly speech, as well as unfriendly. Jaglon could have killed the Bear with one blow of his paw. But the Law of the Wilderness gave the cavern to its first occupant. The brown Bear was within his rights. The Tiger sighed and withdrew into the night air.

"Coward! Coward! Coward!" shrieked the Bat-Witch from a near-by tree. But even this taunt could not influence Jaglon to do wrong.

He did not know it was the Bat-Witch, seeking his destruction. But he knew he was not a coward; so he quietly sought shelter by creeping under a heavily leaved bush.

"Coward! Coward!" repeated the Witch, striving to arouse his anger; and from many a cave or hollow tree the slyly hidden creatures of the Middle Circle took up the cry and passed it from one to the other.

"Coward! Coward!"

But Jaglon never moved. Crouched beneath the frail shelter of the bush, he closed his eyes, laid his head upon his outstretched forelegs, and went to sleep.

The Tiger Fairies were greatly pleased with Jaglon. They had watched the efforts of the Bat-Witch to tempt him and rejoiced in his proud refusal to do wrong. Therefore Nao came to the sleeping Tiger and touched his shoulder lightly with her invisible paw.

Instantly Jaglon awoke, to find himself reclining upon soft mosses in a splendid cavern. Set in the arched roof were points of light that resembled stars, and their silver rays flooded the cavern and illumined it brightly as day. Upon a slab of polished jade were dainty morsels of the foods Tigers love best, and beside it a clear spring of water.

Jaglon was amazed. He looked about him hesitating and undecided, fearing that in his sleep he had wandered to the lair of some mighty King of his race. But a soft voice reassured him: "Eat, drink, sleep! Content thyself, Jaglon. The Fairies are pleased with you."

Jaglon ate; he drank; he reclined upon the mosses to sleep. From many animals he had heard tales of Fairies; for among beasts each race has its Fairyland. That the Tiger Fairies had favored him was wonderful; but he felt as little conceit as he did fear. Gratefully he accepted the comforts provided, and demanded no explanations. While in that drowsy state betwixt sleep and wakefulness he heard again the gentle voice:

"You are reserved for a mighty destiny, O Jaglon! In time of trial be brave, be noble, be forgiving. So shall you prove the champion of your race, now long outlawed and discredited. So shall you prove worthy the confidence of those who reared you and now guide your steps."

Jaglon had raised his head to listen.

“I will be worthy -- or die!” he answered.

And then he slept.

When the day broke Jaglon crept from the bush and stretched his huge form. The brilliant cavern, with its dainty food, its cool spring and its mossy couch had vanished; but the Tiger never doubted he had enjoyed its comforts. Nor were the words of the invisible Fairies forgotten. Jaglon repeated them to himself as he resumed his journey, and pondered them.

He now plunged into the mighty forests of the Inner Circle -- that favored place whence his race had been driven years before he was born. Whether or not the Royal Tigers had deserved their exile Jaglon did not know. But he would himself inhabit this Inner Circle, unless mastered by one more powerful. Such an animal there might be; he would soon know.

He met a group of Bisons, headed by their patriarch. The younger ones trembled, but the old one advanced to warn the intruder.

“Here is no place for Tigers. Begone!” said he.

Jaglon walked on, treading softly.

A Grizzly Bear emerged from a jungle of ferns and brush and looked at him with surprise.

“This is the Inner Circle,” he announced, gravely. “Do you not know your race is outcast? Return, or it will be too late.”

“It is yet too soon,” said Jaglon, quietly, and strode on.

An immense form loomed up before him, showing dark against the green foliage. It was a mother Elephant, suckling her calf. The little one gave a start and hid beneath its mother’s protecting trunk.

“Dear me!” exclaimed the Elephant, winking her small black eyes. “It’s a Royal Tiger, and in the Lion’s domain! Do you prize life so little, bold stranger?”

Jaglon paused. He had heard of Elephants, and that they were noted for wisdom.

“Why was my race outcast?” he asked.

The Elephant looked at him curiously, and replied.

“They were cruel, and treacherous, and overbearing: I knew them well, those dreadful ancestors of yours. And none in the Inner Circle was better pleased than I when the Lions conquered them and made one of their own race King.”

“That was long ago,” said Jaglon, thoughtfully. “Are the Lions never cruel, or overbearing, or treacherous?”

“Not treacherous,” was the reply: “but noble natures are often cruel, and the Lion is the most noble of all beasts ever created.”

“I do not think I am treacherous,” said the Tiger, musingly. “And if the

Lion excels me in other things, It must be because he is mightier than I, and entitled to rule. Bur that will be determined when we meet."

"What! You will dare to face the King! You, whose ancestors were driven from the Inner Circle!" cried the Elephant, an amaze. "Come, listen to my advice. I admire you for your gentleness, combined with your strength of body. Leave the forest while you may, and find contentment elsewhere. Our old King, who might have suffered your presence in his domain, is dead; and in his place rules Avok, his brother, whose stern and proud nature will brook no intrusion or interference. Leave us, I beg you, before you win the resentment of the powerful Avok!"

"Your words are kind, if ill chosen," answered Jaglon, rising from where he crouched. "I thank you for your friendliness, and will now bid you a good-morning!" And, more proudly than before, he advanced into the forest.

The Elephant looked after him thoughtfully.

"It will be a terrible encounter when the Royal Tiger meets Avok the King!" said she. "I must pass the word around the forest, that all may be present to witness it."

Jaglon had been simply reared. He did not know fear. He had never met a master. The information concerning the new King of the Lions merely strengthened his determination to demand a place among the great beasts of the Inner Circle.

Standing upon a rocky knoll, a Lion perceived Jaglon approaching from afar and went to tell the news to King Avok.

The monarch paced up and down before his lair a rocky cavern close to the shore of a beautiful lake. Important matters were engaging his attention, and he had sent to summon all the Lions of the forest to a council. So he but gave a growl of contempt when he heard of the presence of the Outcast in his kingdom, and turned his mind to more pressing business.

One by one the Lions that had been summoned arrived at the lake and ranged themselves in a half circle about the entrance to the cavern. Other beasts, also, warned by the Elephant, began to gather around; and these took positions behind the group of grave and dignified Lions. There were Bears, Bisons, Moose, Zebras, Hippopotami from the lake, Unicorns, Elephants and a few Rhinoceri. In the near-by trees squatted giant Apes; and two or three monstrous serpents lay coiled upon the rocks, their watchful eyes turned curiously upon the gathered denizens of the forest.

Then appeared from the cavern's mouth the King, stalking proudly to a position in front of the silent throng of animals.

Avok was of enormous size, although his body was lean and slender back of his powerful shoulders. His mane was long and shaggy and his brow was

wrinkled by a constant frown. He squatted upon his haunches and addressed the council.

“When my brother, the King, died,” began Avok, “he left three cubs, which I find are of little intelligence and scarcely fit to live. Now, as you all know, there is a foolish Law of the Wilderness which says the eldest male cub of the King shall succeed him, when full grown, and rule in his place. I propose to change this Law, and declare that my own cub shall be King after I am gone -- and not the cub of my dead brother. Do you approve this?”

The Lions cast uneasy glances at one another, yet remained silent. From the group of other animals, however, arose a growl of protest.

The King raised himself to his full height and glared around angrily.

“Let any who dares defy me step forward!” he cried, threateningly. But none advanced.

One aged Lion made bold to answer Avok.

“The Law of the Wilderness cannot be changed,” he said, slowly, “even by the King. Your brother’s cubs have royal blood in their veins. The eldest must rule in your place when full grown. Only until then are you King.” And to this speech came a roar of assent.

Avok stalked up and down in a fury, shaking his mane and lashing the ground with his tail.

“Then my brother’s cub shall never become full grown!” he declared, finally; “for I will drown the miserable beast in the water of the lake, and I dare anyone present to deny me that right!”

“I deny it,” replied a quiet voice; and Jaglon advanced from the rear of the startled group and placed himself opposite the King.

Shoulder to shoulder he stood as high as the great Avok himself; but under his glossy skin, as he moved, showed muscles more powerful than any Lion present could boast.

At first glance the King knew his antagonist a terrible one; and all the beasts, of whatever degree, silently acknowledged the Royal Tiger a fit champion to uphold the Law of the Wilderness.

“The Outcast!” they whispered one to another; but the tone was that of sympathy and admiration, rather than derision.

“The Outcast!” repeated the King, with scorn. “True, I cannot fight an Outcast.”

“You must,” returned Jaglon, speaking very quietly. “It was your race that drove my ancestors from the Inner Circle, where they had ruled many years. But now I come to declare myself King of Beasts and Master of the Wilderness. I am a Royal Tiger. I am King!”

Avok ruffled his mane and glared into Jagion’s eyes. They were clear and

steadfast.

"Your people were guilty of cruelty!" said the Lion.

"You wish to drown three helpless cubs," replied Jaglon.

"Your people were overbearing!" declared Avok.

"I am willing to abide by the Law; and in my domain every beast shall find their King a just King," said the other.

"Your race is treacherous!" cried the lion, furiously.

"You are yourself treacherous toward your dead brother," retorted Jaglon. Then, amid the silence that followed, "You must fight," he repeated.

"You must fight! You must fight!" exclaimed the other animals, eagerly; and not even the Lions offered a word of dissent.

Avok was brave enough. A moment he crouched, grim and menacing. Then, like a thunderbolt, he launched his immense body toward the waiting foe.

Jaglon's calm eyes had never left those of the Lion. He saw Avok's spring, and his own tense muscles responded promptly to his will. Tiger and Lion met in mid-air, with a shock so terrible that it startled even the cold and critical spectators. Avok was overborne, and fell to the ground with Jaglon above him, both struggling fiercely for the mastery. The Lion's claws, each point imbedded in his enemy's breast, shot forward so powerfully that the Tiger lost his hold and was hurled a dozen yards away.

But before Avok could regain his feet Jaglon had sprung again, landing full upon the gigantic head of his opponent, his claws tearing through hair and flesh, his jaws striving to reach the Lion's throat below the protection of the thick and matted mane.

Suddenly Jaglon felt the huge form of his enemy tremble violently; a murmur of horror from the other animals warned him that something strange had happened, and releasing his hold he leaped lightly aside and turned his gaze upon Avok.

The Lion, struggling to his feet, bounded here and there in an aimless fashion, roaring fiercely and striking out wildly with his terrible paws. And, although Jaglon was crouching silently near him, he seemed not to know which way to seek his foe.

An awed silence fell upon the assemblage. Every animal was gazing as if fascinated upon the sightless Monster, who, maddened by pain and anger, seemed unable to realize his own helpless condition.

But at last the truth broke upon him. He reared frantically upward, pawed at the air, and then crouched and made a mighty spring. His struggles had brought him near to the edge of the lake, and his body now shot through the air and fell with a great splash far out into the water.

Instantly the animals crowded to the shore and watched intently the spot where Avok had disappeared. The circling ripples of water spread slowly outward until they reached the furthest shores. A dread silence brooded over the lake. Avok was not seen again.

Throughout the Wilderness the story of the great fight is still told by mothers to their wondering children. To be as fierce, as brave, as strong and wise as King Jaglon, the Royal Tiger, is the highest ambition of every beast that roams the Inner Circle.

Yet, withal, Jaglon was patient in his strength, kind in his rule, and gentle toward those animals that were weaker or in distress.

And the Tiger Fairies were pleased that the cub they had protected and reared had won the admiration and respect of all the forest, and that his wisdom and might had redeemed his race from hatred and banishment. For as long as he lived Jaglon was, in truth, the King of Beasts.

The Stuffed Alligator

From: *The Delineator*, February 1905

When mothers are worried they are apt to be cross; and that explains why Mum'r Alligator spoke so sharply to her son Wolly.

"See here! Don't you dare swim into the swift current," she said, fretfully, as Wolly crossed to the end of the old log, which lay half buried in the marsh, and dropped into shallow water. "Keep to the warm pools and swim there as much as you like; but if you go near the river for a single instant I'll — I'll — I'll go to the Red-Eyed One and tell him how bad you are!"

It was a terrible threat. The Red-Eyed One was the mighty Magician of the Alligator people; the most wise, the most powerful, the most fearful creature of all the inhabitants of the Swamps. He could not be deceived by ordinary 'gators — the simple mud Wallowers that refused to think as they lay blinking in the sun — and it was known that the Red-Eyed One dealt out sharp punishment for disobedience. At least, this was what mothers told their children, when mothers were worried and cross; and the children were willing to believe anything of the mighty magician who dwelt in the Hidden Cavern.

Wolly Alligator had no thought of being disobedient when he swam away from home and left Dad'n Alligator asleep on a bank of mud and Mum'r Alligator taking her daily sun-bath on her log. Young Alligators are apt to become restless, and aged Alligators love peace and quiet. Moreover, Wolly was hungry.

Dad'n Alligator could be content a week longer on the meal of Spring lamb he had eaten a fortnight before; but Wolly had only been given part of a leg, and that was no satisfaction at all to a young and growing 'gator.

So he started with a firm though secret intention to discover a dinner, for in the stagnant pools of the marsh, where Alligators abounded, it was not likely a dinner would escape the hundreds of vigilant eyes that were watching on every side. Therefore he crossed the pools, crawled over the intervening bank of mud (which was the danger line) and came at last to where the broad river wandered away upon its crooked course.

At the other side of the river were green fields and pasture lands, Showing above the embankment. On this side the water of the river blended into the mud-bank and the marsh, with scarce any other distinction to mark its path beyond the steady flow of the current.

Here, at the river's edge, Wolly halted, and looked longingly across. Many dinners wandered on those green banks. Why should his mother forbid

him to stalk his prey? How should the Red-Eyed One know if he seized a fat sheep or a calf and returned with the morsel inside him?

It was the hunger that drove him to disobedience; for without stopping to consider either warnings or commands he swam slowly across the river and raised his nose above the edge of the green bank.

What happened at that moment Wolly could never explain clearly. A rope flew through the air and settled around his neck, gripping close to the scales. With a movement quick as a lightning flash he pounded his tail upon the bank and tried to turn; but the rope drew taut and threw him half a length farther upon the grass. Then, quivering, he lay still and darted a glance along the rope. The far end was wound about a tree, and a Man clung to the last fold. A Man! Anger swelled in Wolly's breast. An enemy and a dinner in one — and seemingly very near.

Like the wind was his rush upon the foe; but, alas! he had merely dashed to destruction. The folds of the line about the tree held him close prisoner and the Man was a safe distance away, still calmly holding in his hands the end of the rope.

Wolly was but half grown, yet he struggled for his life with a desperation worthy the Red-Eyed One himself. To be sure it was unavailing; but he always had the satisfaction of knowing he had done his best.

The last that he remembered was lying helpless amid the coils of rope and watching with upturned eyes the flash of a knife. Then his eyes saw blackness; his brain ceased to think; he lay still.

The Man was proud of his conquest. There was now one less Alligator to steal his lambs. He carried the thick, tough skin home to his bungalow and carefully cured it, the head being left on. Then he stuffed both head and body very artistically, and sent to the City for some glass eyes, which he fastened into the head.

After this Wolly lay, in a very life-like attitude, under a bench at the back of the porch; and when friends of the Man came to visit him he showed them his stuffed Alligator with considerable pride.

Mum'r Alligator became worried when Wolly did not return. Dad'n Alligator only thought she was getting fretful again, and blinked one eye after the other without budging from his mud-bank or replying with a single word.

This apathy made Mum'r indignant. She tossed her tail and wriggled about until the muddy water that circled around her log was churned into a foam that showed silver under the moon's rays. For night had come, but no Wolly.

In the morning she could bear the anxiety no longer. So she Slipped into

the water and made her way through the swamps until she reached a place where a cluster of great rocks broke the flatness of the landscape. Here she paused, made a dive into deep water, and came to the surface within a cavern hollowed out of the centre of the rock.

The cavern was not lighted; but, as Mum'r lay with her chin upon the rocky edge of the pool, she could dimly perceive an immense dark form lying outstretched before her.

The mighty magician was asleep.

Then a red light glowed in the dusk, flooding her with its rays. And now another light flashed beside it. The Red-Eyed One had unclosed his eyelids.

Mum'r was awed in the silence that followed. She felt the terrible gaze full upon her, reading her every thought. She wanted to speak, but could not.

Finally the magician coughed; and the sound was so warning, and at the same time so sympathetic, that Mum'r Alligator knew at once her worst fears were realized.

"Oh, my poor boy! my Wolly!" she moaned, the big tears rolling from her eyes and splashing into the pool.

"I'm sorry," remarked the magician; and he moved slightly his great body, so that the reflected light rippled from scale to scale until it died away at the far tip of his tail.

"What has happened?" implored Mum'r Alligator, mournfully; "tell me — what has happened?"

"The Man has captured your son," said the Red-Eyed One, slowly. "He has taken poor Wolly's skin and head, and has carried them to the house wherein he dwells."

With a wild sob Mum'r sank deep into the pool, swam back to the marsh, and dragged her weary, heart-sick body to the log she called her home.

Dad'n 'Gator opened both eyes at once when he heard the sad story; but he didn't move. Two hours later he remarked:

"Wolly was careless."

It wasn't much comfort to Mum'r; but she didn't expect comfort. Probably Dad'n felt sad and miserable in his own way; but he was old, and he had learned that words cure no ills and mend no breaks.

Afterward Mum'r Alligator went again to the Red-Eyed One, who told her that Wolly had been stuffed and now lay upon the Man's porch, looking as beautiful and lifelike as ever.

That was a great comfort to Mum'r, and she lay many days upon her log and dreamed of Wolly, and longed for him in her motherly way, until one morning a happy thought came to her.

The thought sent her hurrying at a rapid pace to the rocky cavern in which

the Red-Eyed One dwelt, where she asked him:

"Are you really a magician?"

"I am," was the reply, while the two eyes glared upon her as if resenting the inquiry.

"Then, can you not restore my Wolly to life?" demanded Mum'r, her voice trembling with eagerness she could not suppress.

"I can," said the Red-Eyed One, calmly.

"And will you — will you?" asked Mum'r, anxiously.

The magician paused. He was thinking. Presently he answered: "If you will promise that I receive from your family one fat sheep a month, for twelve months to come, and if you dare venture to the Man's house to restore Wolly to life, I will give you a charm that will work the transformation."

"I promise, and I dare!" cried Mum'r Alligator, without hesitation.

"Good!" said the magician. Then he paused again, thoughtfully.

Mum'r was so excited she could scarcely wait for him to continue. But it was several minutes before he said, speaking the words slowly and impressively:

"Under my left claw lies a magic gem which, if placed upon your son Wolly's head, will restore him to life. But if light falls upon this gem its virtue will depart. Therefore you must go at night to the house of the Man, and carry the gem in your mouth, so that even the moon cannot shine upon it."

Mum'r heard this with a shiver of dread; for Alligators never move in the dark if they can avoid it. But the rescue of Wolly had now become the one ambition of her life.

"Give me the magic gem," she said, firmly; "I will make the journey at night that no light may fall upon the talisman and destroy its charm."

"Wait until I close my eyes," returned the magician. "Then feel under my left claw for the gem, and conceal it in your mouth."

The red lights vanished, and the cavern became dark. Mum'r felt for the gem, placed it in her mouth and closed her huge jaws tight around it. Then she sank into the pool, swam from the cavern, and emerged in the Swamp which lay steaming under the hot rays of the afternoon sun.

It filled her with uneasiness to see the glaring sunshine all around her, and to know that if she coughed, or even yawned, Wolly would never be restored to her. But she kept her jaws fast closed and returned slowly to her log.

For a wonder, Dad'n Alligator was awake and stirring.

"Where's that file I sharpen my teeth on?" he demanded, as soon as Mum'r came near. "I want it. I'm hungry again, and I'm going hunting. Where have you put the file I sharpen my teeth on?"

Mum'r Alligator did not reply, of course. She dared not open her mouth while the sun beat down so brilliantly upon the marsh. Dad'n must find the file himself.

But hungry Alligators are cross Alligators. Dad'n stormed and raved and flopped around and wanted his file — which was nothing more than a sliver of rock, if the truth must be told. And Mum'r wouldn't answer a word.

I'm really ashamed to tell of Dad'n's actions. He lashed the shallow water into a sea of mud, and spattered it all over Mum'r's clean scales. Usually she would have lashed Dad'n in return with her sharp tongue; but now she remained meekly quiet, although there was a look in her half-closed eyes that boded future trouble, if her husband hadn't been too much excited to take notice of it.

Dad'n capped the climax of his evil deeds by actually pushing Mum'r off her log and calling her a fish — which is a terrible term of reproach among Alligators — and then floundered away to the river to seek his dinner before it got too dark, caring little in his rage whether his teeth were sharpened or not.

Mum'r's lips curled in a vengeful smile that was half a yard long; but she did not part them. Her jaws were locked over the precious gem, and she intended to keep them locked. Time enough to punish Dad'n when her great task had been accomplished.

She crawled out of the water into which she had been thrust and resumed her place upon the log, patiently waiting for the sun to set.

Toward evening Dad'n returned. His features wore a contented look, and as he rolled to his place on the bank Mum'r noticed a big lump just below his front paws — where his stomach was located. Dad'n was a mighty hunter; there was no doubt of that. But he had been selfish, and had eaten his dinner alone. Mum'r wouldn't forget.

He looked at her rather uneasily, and tried to make his peace before he went to sleep.

"Perhaps I was a little rough with you this afternoon when I couldn't find my file," he ventured to say; but Mum'r's grim look never relaxed. "Well, well; let bygones be bygones," he continued, carelessly, as he closed his eyes.

Mum'r said nothing. She could wait.

When night came she slipped from the log and began her journey. Over the mud-banks, through the swamps, across the broad river she travelled, and crawled up the steep bank to the meadow. By this time the moon was shining, and she paused to look around her.

A beaten path wound inland from the river. It had been worn by the feet

of sheep and men, and Mum'r crawled slowly along it. Beetles chirped in the tall grass, and in the far distance a dog barked; but no other sounds broke the stillness. For the sheep were in the fold and the cows in the barnyard.

Mum'r crept slowly on. Never had Alligator ventured before so near the abode of Man. Her presence in such a place at such an hour was all unexpected.

Now the dim outlines of the bungalow came into view. Its windows were dark, for time had drifted toward midnight. Mum'r drew nearer and nearer, creeping as noiselessly as possible. She came to the steps of the porch, hesitated an instant, and climbed up them.

She could see very well in the dark, and one glance showed her the motionless form of her stuffed darling lying underneath a bench at the back of the porch. She was tempted to cry out, to utter a wail of anguish; but her steadfast courage enabled her to resist the temptation.

Now was the supreme moment of her adventure. She crept forward and noted that Wolly's head was raised so high that there was not room under the bench for her to drop the gem from her mouth upon his head. So with her nose she lifted an end of the bench and thrust it gently aside. The next moment her jaws rested over her darling's head and the precious talisman slipped from her mouth.

So dark were the shadows at the back of the porch that no ray of light penetrated them, and the magic gem instantly sank into Wolly's head and disappeared. Mum'r had faithfully performed her mission!

She felt the form beside her stir. Then it thrust its nose against her shoulder, and a voice said wonderingly:

"Mum'r dear — is it you?"

Her heart gave a bound of joy; but she realized they were still in danger. Man is a terrible foe; and Man was very near to mother and son, although he lay asleep.

"Hush!" she whispered; "follow me!"

Then she turned and crept down the steps to the path; and Wolly, bewildered and understanding nothing of what had happened since the knife flashed long ago, followed obediently. Mum'r retraced her steps along the path to the river. Often she turned her head to watch Wolly, who crept close after her.

It was a great triumph, this bringing to life a stuffed Alligator by means of magic, and Mum'r had never respected the mighty Red-Eyed One so much as now.

When they reached the river bank and slid into the water the new day was breaking. They swam to the other side and lay half hidden in the marsh to

rest. There Wolly told his mother of his capture; and she told him of her visit to the Red-Eyed One, and of her bargain to bring him one fat sheep each month.

"That is a small price, indeed," said the child; "and it shall be my task to pay it. Wait here a moment, Mum'r. I hear a sheep-bell tinkle. Let us take the great magician a fat lamb this very morning, to show our gratitude."

"But think of the danger!" she cried.

"There is no danger," returned Wolly. "Being stuffed, I need fear neither gun nor knife-thrust; for not even Man can kill again the body that has been made to live by the magic of the Red-Eyed One."

That seemed reasonable; so Mum'r let him go back to the meadow.

The first lamb that Wolly brought into the marsh he made his mother eat; and then he captured the fattest sheep that came to the river to drink and bore it in his jaws toward the cavern of the magician. Often, on the way, they had to fight to retain this luscious morsel of food; for dozens of hungry Alligators attempted to rob them. But Wolly, small though he was, soon made himself feared; for nothing seemed to injure his stuffed body, and the snap of his jaws was as powerful as that of a steel trap.

So they made the first payment to the Red-Eyed One, and then returned to their home.

Dad'n lay sunning himself upon his mud-bank in a state of great contentment. Lazily he remembered the ease with which he had subdued Mum'r. Usually she scolded him. Now he had scolded her, and she had not dared utter a word. He was master now! If he had but ventured to push her off her log long ago he would have been master then, undoubtedly. That push had quite conquered her. Dad'n smiled to himself as he recalled her meekness and submission. He had been both brave and wise; he had —

Whack!

His brain suddenly reeled, and his eyes saw a multitude of stars.

Whack!

What had happened? Dad'n wondered. Was it an earthquake? Or had he been struck by a lightning-bolt?

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Dad'n's head was driven flat into the mud-bank. His tail lashed in terror and anguish; but it merely fanned the air or churned the water into a dingy foam. He managed to pull his head from the mud and open his eyes just as the angry sweep of a huge tail, bristling with hard scales, fell once more with terrific force upon his forehead.

He saw stars again; but he also understood. Mum'r had returned. Mum'r was not so meek as he had suspected. Mum'r was being revenged for every

slight to her dignity. Mum'r was probably vexed, or —

Whack! Whack!

Dad'n stopped thinking and began to act. Though dazed and half blinded, he rolled and floundered into deep but muddy water, dove to the right, swam to the left, wiggled around in a circle, and came to the surface to breathe only when he had put a good bit of water between himself and his angry wife.

Wolly lay on the log beside his mother, who panted from her exertions.

"Those were splendid blows," he remarked; "and well aimed. I am sure Dad'n is sufficiently punished."

An hour later a black nose rose from the water a few yards away and two black eyes looked pleadingly at the log.

"My head aches," said Dad'n.

"Oh, does it?" inquired Mum'r, a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. "Then, who do you suppose, my dear Dad'n, is a fish?"

Dad'n looked longingly at his mud-bank, and decided to purchase peace at any price.

"If there is a fish in this marsh," he announced, sadly, "it is certainly me."

Then he crawled upon the bank and presently forgot his troubles in sleep.

Wolly never grew to be a big Alligator, but he came to be a terror to the farmers across the river. For once every month he captured a fat sheep and carried it to the cave of the Red-Eyed One to keep the promise Mum'r had made the mighty magician. Again and again the Man shot at him, but so tough was his tanned skin that a bullet could seldom penetrate it, and even those that got through did the stuffed Alligator no harm. He was also clever enough to avoid a lasso since his first terrible experience with the rope; so that Wolly soon became famed as a mighty hunter.

One night, about a year after Wolly's rescue from the bungalow, an earthquake shook all that country about the Swamp. Mum'r was thrown from her log and Dad'n was so scared that he slipped from his trembling mud-bank into the water and stayed there all through the night.

But in the morning everything seemed peaceful again; so Wolly swam away at early dawn and captured the last sheep he was obliged to carry to the magician. And when he reached the place where the Red-Eyed One's cave had been, he found nothing left but a heap of jumbled rocks; for the earthquake had not only buried the ancient magician, but had erected above him a monument that to this day is regarded with veneration by every Alligator in the swamp.

So Wolly carried his sheep home to Dad'n and Mum'r; and thereafter he devoted himself to the task of providing a plentiful supply of food for his parents, so that they grew in time to be the biggest and fattest Alligators ever

known. Dad'n, who was something of a joker, would often say to his friends and gossips:

"There are three stuffed Alligators in our family. The Man stuffed Wolly, you know; and now Wolly stuffs us!"

The Discontented Gopher

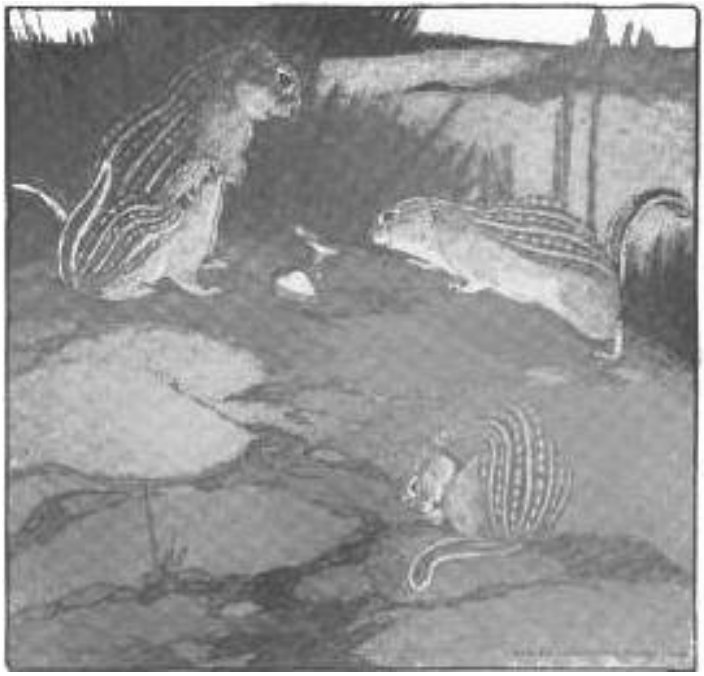
From: *The Delineator*, March 1905

DAWN began to lighten the sky. Mama Gopher stuck her head out of the burrow and sniffed the clear, sweet air. There was no taint of Man or animal in the breath, so she whisked from the hole and paused a yard or two away, on the summit of a little knoll.

Before her lay a broad sweep of Dakota prairie, whose dull brown color the Spring was tinting with suggestions of emerald. Far away — miles and miles, it seemed in the clear atmosphere — there were glimpses of plowed fields even now ready for the planting. But the day was too new for sight of men.

Mama Gopher whisked her bushy tail, thoughtfully stroked her nose with her front paw, and uttered a little chirruping cry: “Britz, come here!”

A streak of tawny amber flashed from the burrow, and a young Gopher, half grown, sleek and plump, squatted beside its mother. She gazed upon it, meditated a moment, and called again: “Kritt! Zikky!”



A slight scuffle reached her ears, as if the children contended which should be first to answer. Then two more young ones joined the group on the knoll, so swiftly and silently that Mama Gopher had to look at each one to be sure it was there. “The time has come,” she began, in a brisk, matter-of-fact tone, “for you three youngsters to start out in life and seek your own fortunes. I have cared for you faithfully during the Winter, as a mother should, and you have lain in my burrow and eaten of my store until the hole has grown crowded, and the food is nearly gone. Moreover, it is Spring, and time to be moving. We have slept all the Winter through, and grown lazy and fat. We must be going.”

“I am ready,” said Britz.

“And I! and I!” cried Kritt and Zikky, eagerly.

"Then listen to me," resumed the mother, more gravely. "You are the direct descendants of the Original Thirteen Lined Gophers of America — famed for ages in song and story. Because of your high birth I went yesterday to the Gopher Fairies and implored them to grant a gift to each of my three offspring. But the Fairies are busy and have many demands upon them, so numerous are the Gophers now in existence. Yet they granted me a single magic talisman, which is contained in one of the three nuts you see before you."

The children looked, and saw at Mama Gopher's feet three beautiful nuts lying upon the ground.

"You are the eldest, my dear Britz," she continued; "you shall choose first."

Britz selected a nut and cracked it with bis teeth. It was empty, save for a few grains of dust.

“The Fairy gift is not for you,” said the mother. “So bid us good-by, my dear, and start out to seek your own fortune.”

A moment later Britz shot out of sight, and Mama Gopher, after following him with her eyes, sighed and turned to the next child.

“You are second, Kritt. Choose one of the nuts.”

This the youngster did, but when he cracked his nut it was found to be as empty as the first.

“Good-by! I’m off,” he shouted, laughingly, and whisked away through the tall prairie-grass.

This left Zikky, the youngest, facing his mother upon the knoll and looking longingly at the remaining nut.

“Your brothers, by selecting the wrong nuts, have given you the prize,” said the old Gopher, with mingled tenderness and regret in her tones. “Crack it, Zikky, and see what is inside.”

Zikky cracked the nut, and a tiny golden ball rolled out.

“This ball,” said the mother, “will grant you one of two things: Contentment or Riches. Which will you select, Zikky?”

“Riches, to be sure1” cried the young one, promptly; “for there can be no Contentment without Riches.”

“The Fairies think differently,” said Mama Gopher; “and I myself must doubt the wisdom of your choice.

But it is too late to alter your decision now, and you must abide by it!”

“That I will do right gladly,” was the answer.

“Then swallow the ball and follow the golden pathway that will lead to Fortune. It is the gift of the generous Gopher Fairies, and I trust you will use your riches with a wisdom and dignity worthy of your noble ancestors. Good-by, my child!”

With these words Mama Gopher darted into her burrow, and Zikky was left alone.

Immediately he swallowed the golden ball, and no sooner had he done so than he saw an illumined path, like a ray of golden sunshine, running from his feet straight out into the prairie and far away.

Along this pathway he darted. Fortune, granted him by the good Fairies, lay at the other end. How lucky he had been — and how wise his choice!

Up hill and down dale, through meadow-land and sagebrush the golden path faithfully led him. It was a long journey, and the instincts of his race kept Zikky alert. His eyes were bright and sharp, and saw everything as he ran. His nose was slightly uplifted that he might scent any danger that came anigh. The birds, perhaps, saw a yellow streak glide swiftly through the clumps of dried grass — following a bar of golden light — but no other thing

upon the vast prairie knew that Zikky the Gopher was making a dash into the world to seek a home and fortune, or that he was guided by the powerful Fairies of his race.

Finally, as he topped a small ridge, the sun began to show over the horizon, and the golden pathway grew gradually more dim. Presently it led him to the edge of a plowed field, just below the brow of a hill, and there it ended in a round disk of mellow^ light.

While he paused, wondering what to do next, and where he should find the promised riches, a Voice sounded clearly in his ear:

“Dig here your burrow, and riches shall come to you. But it will be your task to secrete them, as well as to guard them when your treasure-house is full and overflowing. Beware of the abodes of men, which lie over the hill. Remain upon this spot; be vigilant and discreet, and your life and fortune will be safe.”

The Voice ceased. Zikky had listened carefully, and now believed he knew what was required of him. At once he tore in the sod a round hole, the size of the golden disk of light, which would be just big enough for his body to pass through. Then he clawed out the earth with both his fore feet, plying them rapidly one after the other until a little heap of loose soil lay on the grass behind him. This he next scattered, until not a trace remained. Gophers are not like prairie-dogs', they never leave a rim of earth around their burrows to advertise their whereabouts."

Again our adventurer scratched out a heap of earth, and again he scattered it wide. The sun rose slowly as he worked, but this did not worry h:m. Men were not likely to be abroad so early.

After an hour's hard labor the hole was deep enough to hide in. There was even room enough for him to turn around in. So Zikky abandoned work for the present and lay within his burrow to rest, while every nerve in his nervous body tingled with the morning's unusual exertions.

Scarcely had he curled himself up and closed his eyes when a peculiar rumbling sound began to be heard, coming, it seemed, from a far distance.

"The Fairies are beginning their work," thought Zikky. "I have done my part; it is their turn now." But he opened wide his little round ears and listened intently while the sound grew louder and nearer until it became a perfect roar. The earth trembled; the very air throbbed with noise; then came a sudden stillness. One or two shouts, in Men's voices, followed. He heard the occasional stamp of a horse's hoof. But the fierce rumbling that had made his heart beat-so quickly was no longer to be heard.

Zikky was no coward, and he was curious to know what share the Fairies had in this disturbance. Gradually he approached his nose to the opening of his burrow.

The air was tainted with human smells and horsey smells, but .also with a smell he loved dearly — the odor of Indian Corn!

Once his nose peeped from the hole his sharp eyes were instantly busy, for they were close beside it. He saw before him — scarcely three feet away — a big wagon loaded full of shelled corn, the most precious thing in all the world to Gophers. A few paces beyond were two Men, carrying baskets of the corn to fill a machine they used for planting it in the earth.

The men had spilled a good deal; the ground before the Gopher hole was thickly strewn with luscious kernels, while more was constantly sifting out between the boards of the wagon-box.

The young Gopher's heart beat high with joyful excitement as he softly withdrew into his burrow. The Riches promised by the Fairies were his! There was fortune enough piled around him to turn any ordinary Gopher's brain!

Yet his joy was tempered with anxiety. “The Riches will come to you, but it shall be your task to secrete them,” the unseen Fairy had said. But surely it was too soon to attempt that yet. The monstrous horses hitched to the wagon looked very dreadful to the Gopher, and without doubt the Men would return to fill their baskets anew. So Zikky crowded himself into the furthest confines of his shallow hole and remained quiet throughout the long day.

Toward evening he heard more shouting; the rumbling of the wheels commenced again; but this time the sound grew less and less, until it died away in the distance.

Then Zikky, happy and hungry, crept from his hole, finding the Fairy promise fully realized. The men had not stopped to pick up the scattered

corn, and it covered all the ground around the place where the wagon had stood. Zikky nibbled a kernel with much content and satisfaction, and then turned about and resumed his digging.

The moon rose over the ridge and found him still at work, for now he was obliged to scratch the earth from the far end of his long hole. Yet Gophers do not burrow deeply nor far. Six feet of inclined runway, just large enough for him to pass through, led to a circular chamber, roomy but snug. This was Zikky's sleeping place. There was still a storehouse to be built, which he dug beyond his bedroom and made large and deep, that it might hold the biggest store of treasure that ever yet fell to the lot of a Gopher. Zikky was young and without personal experience, but he inherited from a long line of ancestors an instinct that taught him positively how to make his home and how to provide for his treasure. When the burrow was complete and the loose earth scattered from its mouth Zikky curled himself up and slept until dawn.

Then he began to gather the kernels of corn. There were so many that he filled the great storehouse he had built without securing half the riches. So he built another storehouse on the other side of his living chamber, and began to fill that also.

While at work he heard the rumbling again; but today the wagon stopped at a. place a quarter of a mile away, so Zikky had no fear in quietly persuing his task. When evening came and the men had returned over the hill every grain of the scattered corn had been safely packed away in Master Zikky's storehouses.

Next day the men completed their planting far up on the hill, and they did not appear thereafter. A long silence fell upon field and prairie, and Zikky, nibbling away contentedly from his vast stores, began to realize that he was, in very truth, the richest Gopher in the world.

Ordinarily these little creatures are forced to work hard for a living. Zikky's brothers were even now, doubtless, striving to find a stray grain of corn or a dandelion-root to relieve their hunger. But there was no longer need for Zikky to work; his fortune was made already.

So he sat at the mouth of his burrow day after day, dozing in the warmth of the sun and caring little what might be going on in the outside world. He ate often and plentifully, and became excessively fat.

Then he grew discontented, as people of great wealth and no active interests are apt to do. He began to find existence dull and uninteresting. There seemed to be something lacking, in spit1 of his riches. He wondered what it could be. He was healthy; he was fat; his home was comfortable; his storehouses would supply food for a lifetime; he had no enemies to bother him.

Yet he was discontented.

Mischief is sure to follow this frame of mind; but, being a Gopher, Zikky did not know that. He never even regretted that he had not chosen Contentment instead of Riches. Life had brought him so many pleasures that he believed he could find more.

He came out of his hole one morning, glanced at the low ridge of hills that separated him from "the World," and conceived the idea that led to his undoing.

"I'll travel," he thought, "and see what there is to be seen."

Of course, he remembered what the Fairy Voice had said; "So long as you remain upon this spot your fortune and life will be safe."

But it happens that no discontented person ever Keeds good advice. "I saw Men the first day I came to this field," he said to himself, "and I am not at all afraid of them. I saw horses, too, which are much bigger than Men; but they did not harm me. The World lies beyond that ridge, and I am determined to see what it looks like. If I do not like it. I can return. At any rate, the trip will relieve the monotony of my existence."

So next morning he washed his face and brushed his fur and set off at a jog-trot for the ridge. The young corn was now growing fast, and reached far above the Gopher's head; so he journeyed between the straight rows until the field was passed and he reached the summit of the ridge. Here he hid himself in a clump of grass while he took his first look at what was to him "the World."

There were roads leading down into the valley beyond, and there were scattered farmhouses, barns and granaries. In the far distance was a larger cluster of houses — a village.

Zikky gazed at everything with much interest, and the scene seemed so peacefvil that he gained new courage.

"There is nothing to frighten one, after all," thought he; "I'll go down into the'Valley, and examine those buildings."

On he trotted, growing more bold and careless the farther he went. Once he looked a bit shyly at a herd of cows grazing in a pasture, but they paid no attention 'to him. The day was warm and pleasant, and the Gopher forgot the discontent that had haunted him so many days, and became quite cheerful and happy.

Suddenly a strange sound, fraught with terror new and awful, smote his ears. Zikky, roused from his dream of vain-glory and self-conceit, stopped short, trembled in every limb, and looked behind.

Bounding toward him was a beast he instinctively recognized as a fierce and furious foe.

Then his own muscles tightened; his body shot forward, and like a streak he darted over the fields. The dog was between the Gopher and the ridge, so Zikky was running through a-strange country. He had little time to note where he was going, and having passed a group of farm buildings he came full upon a Man, who was looking to see what game his dog was following. - The Gopher acted from instinct and circled swiftly around the Man, who hurriedly pointed a gun at him. There came a flash, a thunderous echo, and as the hunted animal dashed on he felt a stinging sensation in his hip that made him sick and faint.

But he knew he must run, run, run for dear life. Death encompassed him in many forms, turning the Valley of Peace he had so lately traversed into a Valley of Fear. His brain was in a whirl; his heart swelled painfully within him, and the strain upon his muscles grew into a dull ache. There was time for neither hope nor despair.

One idea alone possessed him — to run from the danger behind.

Once again he gave a fearful glance over his shoulder. The dog was nearer — coming straight on with lowered head and swift, powerful strides. The sight gave Zikky an access of fear; the fear gave him renewed speed.

Despite the terror and agony of that awful run the Gopher's instinct was awake, leading him to quickly spy a burrow that appeared in his path — a big, round hole slanting far into the earth. Instantly he popped within it, to fall upon the damp floor panting, trembling and exhausted.

The hound barked sharply without; there was a shrill whistle, and then silence.

Lying prone in the darkness and recovering by convulsive gasps his breath, the foolish Gopher began to long for the peaceful home and the riches he had deserted. Already he had seen enough of the world of men to decide it was no place for one of his race. He would return to his burrow as soon as he could find strength and opportunity.

As the beating "bf his heart grew less he began to wonder what sort of burrow had given him refuge. It belonged to no Gopher; that was certain. It was too big and deep. He crawled along the underground tunnel slowly and carefully, for it was strangely built, twisting this way and that in a remarkable manner.

Finally he saw daylight ahead, and knew that for some reason the burrow had two outlets. But he did not approach this second opening. He had not fully recovered from his fright, and the stinging in his hip was becoming more and more painful. So he lay quietly and dozed until there came a sudden rush behind him — so sudden that before he could move to escape his neck was seized between two rows of sharp teeth and he was dragged to

the opening and thrust upon the open prairie.

Had the dog been present the Gopher's story would have ended then; but the hound's master had called him away, thinking a Gopher too insignificant to bother with.

Zikky was the descendant of the noble family of Thirteen-Lined Gophers of America, who are tough and hard to kill. Although nearly choked by the indignant JackRabbit whose burrow he had invaded, he managed by persistent struggles to regain his breath. Then he realized the danger of his exposed position. Strengthened by fear, he gained his feet and looked about him.

The ridge he had crossed so confidently a short time before was visible in the distance; but between that haven of safety and the wounded Gopher stood the group of farm buildings. Zikky noted this, and stepped painfully forward, determined to give the buildings plenty of room and so escape the chance of meetingmore men or dogs. He was not in condition to travel swiftly. His neck smarted; his hip burned like fire, and the muscles of his legs ached from his hard run. Yet his life depended upon gaining the ridge unobserved.

After a while he came to the edge of a dry ditch, and into this he dropped, crawling along the bottom until he began to fear it was carrying him in the wrong direction, and out of his way. When he had managed to scramble out, he found that he had passed the dreaded farm buildings; but the ridge was still a long distance off. He began walking toward it, stopping often to breathe and keeping well under cover of the grass clumps.

Hope was beginning to animate the poor animal when it was turned to renewed terror by the sound of shouting.

He paused in his painful, shuffling gait, and saw two farm boys running toward him. He tried to make another dash for liberty, but he was weak and ill. Before he had gone more than a few yards a thick stick, hurled by one of the boys, struck his head. He fell over upon his side and lay still.

"Good shot!" cried the other boy, as he ran to the Gopher and picked him up by his bushy tail. "You hit him fair and square."

"He was nearly dead, anyhow," replied the one who had thrown the stick. "See, something has bitten him; and he's been shot, too. I'll just cut off his tail and put it with the others I have, in the barn. They pay a bounty of two cents apiece for Gopher tails, in Aberdeen. This makes nine of 'em I've killed in a week."

(Two cents apiece for Gopher tails! That means a Gopher's life. Is it really worth while, I wonder, to write so much about one of God's creatures whose life is worth only two cents?)

The proud slayer of nine Gophers in one week took a clasp-knife from his

pocket and with a quick stroke severed the tail from Zikky's body. Then he threw the Gopher into the grass and walked away with his comrade.

When the moon came up the tailless body jerked once or twice, in a spasmodic fashion, and Zikky's eyes slowly unclosed. It is hard to kill one of his race. The Thirteen-Lined Gophers of America seem to possess as many lives as a cat is said to have. He was full of darting pains, and his head was dazed. But he remembered, in a dim way, that he must reach the ridge. Slowly he began to crawl toward it.

"What good are my riches now?" he moaned, time and again. "I should have chosen the Gift of Contentment; it would have saved me this!"

The moonlight enabled him to see. The dew fell heavily and refreshed his strength. His courage was the courage of a line of ancestors who had ever clung to life with marvellous tenacity. But it was a journey Zikky never forgot, and the agony he suffered during that moonlit night effaced from his mind even the horrors that had gone before.

In some way — how, he never knew — he gained the ridge, dragged himself through the cornfield and came at early dawn to his burrow. He crawled in until he reached the roomy chamber flanked by his overflowing storehouses of grain, and there he curled his maimed body and sank, sobbing and broken-hearted,-into a sleep of litter exhaustion.

The Fairy gift Zikky had formerly scorned had come to him at last; but at what terrible cost!

"Contentment is best! Contentment is best!" he often murmured, in the days that followed. "Some day I shall seek out my mother and tell her I was wrong, and that riches do not bring Contentment."

But he never did. For he grew ashamed of his tailless stump, and when other Gophers strayed into his neighborhood, as sometimes happened thereafter, Zikky would only stick his head and shoulders from his hole, conversing with them, when conversation could not be avoided, while in that position.

"He is proud of his wealth, and stuck-up, and conceited!" the Gophers declared, as they went away.

But Zikky was only ashamed.

The Forest Oracle

(April 1905)

There was no more aristocratic family in the aristocratic suburb of Cocoanut Grove than that of Mr. and Mrs. H. Chatterton Chimpanzee. They lived in an exceedingly old carrigarry tree and were descended in a straight and unbroken line from the great Pruffer Duff Chimpanzee who was the Father of his Country. H. Chatterton had a circle of whiskers that ran from beneath his chin up both sides of his cheeks to meet in the brush of his scrubby hair. His eyes were black and slightly sad in expression, and his tail was remarkably long and slender — a sure proof of chimpanzee gentility. Mrs. H. Chatterton was also gray, and inclined to be stylishly fat. She had a habit of sitting in the sun for hours and blinking curiously at its brilliance, as if wondering how the thing came to be set in the sky.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Chatterton had a reputation among the neighbors for being exceptionally cultured. When visitors called, they sat and stared at their guests and let the visitors do all the talking. This proved them reserved and dignified. When they called upon their neighbors they sat still and let their hosts do the talking; and this showed good breeding. The residents of Cocoanut Grove were quite proud of the aristocratic H. Chattertons, and showed them much deference.

But every family, however great, is bound to suffer some tribulation or other, and the cultured and refined H. Chattertons labored under the infliction of a stupid son who was named Chip-Cheloogoo Chimpanzee, after the great philosopher of the same name. Why they should have a son so very dull they could not understand; but it was an undeniable fact that this youthful sprig of gentility was most tremendously stupid.

To relate an example: H. Chatterton loved to take an afternoon nap; and the way he did it was to tie his tail in a knot to the limb of the tree and then hang suspended, head downward, that his body might be rocked gently by the breeze. One day Chip-Cheloogoo, observing his sire in this position, united the knot in his father's tail and let the old gentleman take a header to the ground, where he was awakened by the sight of many gorgeous stars whose beauty he failed utterly to appreciate.

"But what can you expect from a child like Chip?" he muttered, as he picked himself up and felt the lump that was swelling on his head. "It is only another proof that the boy is stupid. For if he had not untied my tail I would not have dropped."

Mrs. H. Chatterton loved to tickle the back of her neck with the end of her tail, which bore a brush of stubby hair. One day Chip-Cheloogoo found upon

a dock a fine large bur, which he picked carefully with his slender fingers and stuck to the brush at the end of his mother's tail-when she was not looking. Soon after she tried to tickle her neck, as usual, and the bur stuck its prongs through her skin and made her jump three feet into the air from the limb upon which she was squatting. With a yelp of pain she whipped her tail around her body — which it encircled three times before the bur stuck fast under her left arm. Then she jumped four feet into the air, and, missing the limb as she descended, tumbled sprawling upon the ground beneath the tree.

"There is no doubt," remarked H. Chatterton, as he removed the bur and relieved his wife from her anguish, "that our son is remarkably stupid. For no one with a grain of sense would have placed a bur on his mother's tail."

"It is true," she sighed, regretfully; "I wonder how Chip can be so stupid!"

But Chip-Cheloogoo had an idea that he was not nearly so stupid as were his dear parents; and he thought the home-tree must be the most dreary spot in existence. So, without any consideration for the annoyance he might cause his family, he resolved to run away. Which, without doubt, was a still further proof of his stupidity.

Keeping his intention a secret, he left the aristocratic home-tree one bright morning and began his wanderings. Chimpanzees are not accustomed to stray far from home, so within a few minutes the youth found himself in a strange part of the forest, having left the suburb of Cocoanut Grove far behind him.

Mostly he travelled by swinging himself from tree to tree; but sometimes he scampered through a clearing, and once he jumped upon the back of a wild pig and clung there, while the frightened creature dashed through the forest at an awful speed. When danger threatened, he sprang into a tree again; and now he judged he was far enough from home to expect adventures.

The tree wherein he rested was at the edge of a small clearing, and on peeping between the leaves Chip-Cheloogoo saw a curious-looking object standing in the centre of the space.

It was an upright cylinder two feet thick and three feet high; it had a flat top and a hinged door at one side, and it was covered with rust.

I may as well explain to you that this strange object was merely a cast-iron stove, like those used in hunters' outfits. I do not know how it came there; perhaps it was abandoned by some of the pioneers who passed through the forest years ago. Anyway, neither Chip-Cheloogoo nor any of his people had ever seen a man; so the stove was to him a marvellous thing to be standing in the centre of a wild forest. And other animals, as will be seen, regarded it with the same awe.

But once the young chimpanzee had clapped eyes upon the stove he knew very well what he had discovered, for the thing was famous in the forest and was even spoken of in Cocoanut Grove.

"It's the Great Oracle!" exclaimed Chip-Cheloogoo, in a wondering whisper.

Yes, every animal in the forest had heard of the Great Oracle. When any creature was beset with trouble, or danger, or difficulties of any sort, it could go to the Oracle and learn how to escape or to remedy the evil. All that was necessary was to open the door, throw in some suitable gift for the Terrible Unknown, and then the Voice of the Oracle, sounding impressively in the stillness, would give the desired information.

Not all the animals were agreed as to the value of the information thus conveyed through the Great Oracle. Some said the words of the Terrible Unknown were meaningless; but many declared that, if considered with care, one might always find just the advice he needed concealed somewhere in the wise utterances. These argued that not to understand the Oracle showed a great lack of intelligence. So the Unknown was frequently consulted by the residents of the forest, and so widespread was the Oracle's fame that even H. Chatterton had often reverently mentioned it.

Chip-Cheloogoo thought of all this as he sat still in his tree and watched the clearing. Presently a red monkey — a very common creature — emerged from the opposite side with a large cocoanut under each arm. Opening the door of the Oracle the monkey threw in both cocoanuts; and then, stepping backward, he said:

"Tell me, O Mighty Oracle, will my grandfather get over his sickness, or will he die?"

Chip-Cheloogoo listened eagerly; and he heard a deep Voice proceed from the Oracle which spoke these words:

"If your grandfather's time has come, he will surely die."

The red one groaned.

"But," continued the Oracle, "if your grandfather does not die, then his time has not come, and he will get well!" The last four words were spoken clearly.

"Thanks! Thanks, O Mighty One!" cried the monkey, and scampered away joyfully.

"If I were an Oracle," said Chip-Cheloogoo to himself, "they would be right to call me stupid." But he took care to speak the words softly, and he continued to watch.

Before long a brown bear came rolling into the clearing, holding between his jaws a huge honeycomb. The sight of this made the young chimpanzee's

mouth water; but he sat still.

With a blow of his paw the bear dashed open the door and dropped the honey within the cylinder.

"Tell me, Oracle!" he demanded; "shall I fight the grizzly, whose snores disturb me, or will it be wiser to let him alone?"

The hollow, unseen Voice replied:

"How big is the grizzly?"

"Twice as big as I am," said the brown bear.

"Why do his snores disturb you?" asked the Oracle.

"Because he is a mighty hunter, and kills a big dinner every day, while I often go hungry. Then he sleeps and snores, while I lie awake and listen to him."

"The grizzly is too fat to make a good fight," returned the Oracle, after a moment's silence. "Although he is twice your size you can defeat him easily — if you choose the right time to attack him."

"Very good!" growled the brown bear. "He shall not bother me again." And away he rolled in the direction whence he had come.

Chip-Cheloogoo laughed to himself.

"The grizzly has some fun in store," he whispered. "I'd like to see that fight. What a fool the Great Oracle is."

Silence fell upon the forest and the clearing. An hour or two passed away. Chip-Cheloogoo thought he ought to be going; yet the Oracle seemed to chain him to the spot. He could not forget the cocoanuts and honey that had disappeared through the door, and he reflected enviously upon the ease with which the Terrible Unknown seemed to procure all the good things of life.

"I might wander for a month without finding so interesting a place," decided Chip-Cheloogoo, finally. "Let us wait, and study the Oracle with more care."

At noon a jaguar crept into the clearing and tossed the body of a bird to the Oracle.

"I want to know if the moon will shine to-night." said he. "I am going to hunt."

The Voice of the Oracle came sharp and distinct.

"Thief! Villain! Coward!" it cried; "have I not told you and all the rest that I will have no flesh flung to me? Begone! And only when you bring a fit offering dare to return!"

The jaguar's eyes glowed angrily. He lashed his tail against the ground and crouched low.

"Begone!" cried the Oracle, again; and the hollow Voice, seeming to come from the depths of the cylinder, sounded terrible and menacing. The

jaguar turned and slunk away.

"Very good!" said Chip-Cheloogoo, hidden in his tree. "The Oracle is not so very stupid, after all."

Toward evening a gray squirrel ran down from a tree and approached the cylinder. The careless jaguar had left the door ajar, so the squirrel reached up and swung it back, tossing two plump nuts in at the opening. Then, with much labor, the tiny creature managed to slam the door shut; after which it sat up before the Oracle and said, in an anxious tone:

"O Mighty Unknown! Oracle of the great Forest! I beseech you to tell me how to escape the cruel serpent that lurks near our nest."

The Voice of the Oracle answered, but Chip-Cheloogoo thought it sounded sleepy in tone.

"Keep out of the serpent's way, little one. And block up the entrance to your nest when you go to bed."

"I have done all that," declared the gray squirrel; and then waited anxiously for more advice. But none came.

"Perhaps those two nuts were not worth more," though Chip-Cheloogoo, as he watched the squirrel turn with a disappointed air to depart. "But, had the nuts been thrown to me, they would serve very well to relieve my hunger, and I would have given a yard of advice in return. It is certainly a great thing to be an Oracle!"

All that night he clung to his station in the tree and thought upon what he had seen and heard. Chip-Cheloogoo was young; and he was called stupid. Certain it is that he was rash. For by morning he believed he had hit upon a way to make his fortune.

At dawn he swung down from the tree and went close to the cylinder, examining it. Then he looked carefully at the ground in which the lower end seemed imbedded. It was covered with moss, which grew over the edge of the rusty iron. Evidently it had stood in that spot for a long time; but Chip-Cheloogoo was convinced the thing had no bottom whatever.

He now began moving around the Oracle in a circle, still keeping his bright little eyes close to the ground. The circle grew, and carried him farther and farther away from the cylinder; but not an inch of ground escaped his view.

The minutes grew to hours. Once or twice he was obliged to hide in a tree when some animal came to consult the Oracle; but as soon as they left the clearing he resumed his task at the exact spot he had left off.

By-and-by he came to the edge of the clearing, but that did not daunt him. He was bent on discovering the secret of the Oracle, and was stupid enough to persevere.

Just beyond the clearing a brook ran through the forest, sunk deep between two high banks. Chip-Cheloogoo examined the bank nearest the clearing with much eagerness, and saw a big bush growing half way down the side. More than this, there was a faint trail running up to the bush.

The chimpanzee's eyes sparkled. "Very good!" he exclaimed; "my famous Oracle is at last caught!"

He let himself down the bank until he came to the bush, and then pressed aside the branches. Just as he had thought, an opening was disclosed — a round hole dug far into the bank.

Chip-Cheloogoo dropped into the opening, let the bush spring back, and began creeping along the tunnel on all fours. Very softly he moved, step by step, until he saw light ahead. Following the gleam he came at last to a large cavern, the contents of which fairly surprised him.

For, lying carelessly about, on every side, was a wealth of treasure such as his stupid mind had never imagined could exist. Not only were there stores of nuts, fruits, fragrant roots and cocoanuts, but the cavern was littered with many queer ornaments and articles that the beasts had found in their travels and brought as offerings to the Terrible Unknown.

There were jewels among them, glittering in the dim light; and there were knives, hatchets and other weapons, and queer round pieces of yellow metal with words stamped upon their surfaces. Pretty playthings, all of these, to amuse one's idle hours, thought the discoverer; and enough good food to last one a lifetime!

"It's a fine thing to be an Oracle!" said Chip-Cheloogoo, again; but he remained quiet and kept his eyes busy.

The shaft of light came from the forest, dropping clear through a big hollow tree whose roots supported the roof of the cavern. At the far side from the entrance the intruder noticed a flight of steps which had been dug in the earth, and led upward. "To the cylinder!" guessed the stupid one. "How much pains the Oracle has taken to fashion this hiding-place!"

While he gazed about him he heard the sound of iron scraping, and then a monster cocoanut rolled down the steps and fell into the cavern.

"The Oracle is busy," whispered Chip-Cheloogoo, and crept at once to the further opening, and so up the steps.

At the top was the iron cylinder, and squatted in the hollow beneath the open door was an aged chimpanzee, so gray and wrinkled that the youngster thought he might have lived a century.

But now a voice was heard speaking from the clearing, and it made Chip-Cheloogoo start to recognize the accents of his father, the aristocratic H. Chatterton.

“Tell me, O Terrible Unknown,” spoke the father; “where is my stupid son Chip-Cheloogoo?”

“Where should he be?” asked the Voice of the Oracle, just above the stupid one’s listening ears.

“He should be at home,” replied H. Chatterton. “But he has run away, and he is so stupid and such an innocent that his mother and I are worrying lest something should happen to him.”

“Something will happen to him!” cried the Oracle, so positively that it made the listener shiver. “Something always happens to everybody. Either your stupid son will remain away, or he will return home in safety. I advise you to run away and stop worrying.”

“Run away!” gasped H. Chatterton.

“Yes; run away home.”

Then the door slammed shut, and Chip-Cheloogoo thought it best to creep back to the cavern.

A wise animal would at once have escaped; but Chip-Cheloogoo was not noted for wisdom as yet. He seized a hatchet in one nervous hand and crouched in the cavern, awaiting the arrival of the Oracle.

The aged Chimpanzee came down the steps and paused as he saw a strange form.

“Who are you?” he asked, plainly surprised at being discovered.

“I am the stupid one, and my name is Chip-Cheloogoo.”

“Why, so is mine!” exclaimed the other.

“I was named after the great philosopher,” said the youth.

“And I am the great philosopher!” declared the old chimpanzee.

The young one stared at him. “But you have other titles, it seems,” he at last replied. “You are the Terrible Unknown, the Mighty Oracle — the Fraud of the Forest!”

The old chimpanzee laughed.

“Sit down and make yourself at home, my dear namesake,” said he, “and stop playing with that hatchet. You do not seem to be so stupid as people think.”

The youngster carelessly tossed aside the weapon.

“Certainly I am not an Oracle,” he answered scornfully. He looked up as he spoke, and saw a ball of gray fur whirling at him through the air; and in the centre of the ball flashed the blade of a knife.

Like a streak of lightning the startled intruder bounded over the floor of the cavern and quickly turned. They had merely changed places, and now Chip-Cheloogoo crouched near a choice collection of weapons, one of which he grasped.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed the philosopher, from the opposite side. “I fear I frightened you, my dear namesake.”

“Not at all,” said the young one, coolly. “But do not let us quarrel, since you are about to die.”

“About to die! I about to die? How is that?” asked the wrinkled one, curiously, as he felt the edge of his knife and measured the distance with his eye.

“Why, as I came here I met a brown bear,” returned Chip-Cheloogoo, “and he told me of your cavern, and of the tunnel, and how to find it. At noon he will be here to tear the Oracle into shreds for advising him to fight a grizzly twice his size.”

“Did the grizzly win?” asked the Oracle, now quite interested.

“The grizzly nearly killed the brown bear,” said the other; “but he has still enough life to be revenged upon a wrinkled old chimpanzee.”

The philosopher reflected a moment. “Very well; let him come,” said he. “I think I know a way to conquer him.”

“And there is a red monkey coming to fight you because you deceived him. When he returned home his grandfather was dead.”

“I only said — ” began the Oracle.

“I know; but the red one will fight, and he has killed seven strong chimpanzees already,” interrupted the stupid one.

The Oracle shuddered.

“And the brown bear also told a jaguar the secret of this cavern,” continued the youth, calmly; “and the jaguar will kill you if the bear does not — because you rejected his offering. And there is a serpent waiting outside to slip through the door when it is next opened and destroy you because you advised the gray squirrel.”

By this time the aged philosopher was trembling as with the ague, and beads of perspiration stood thick upon his wrinkled forehead.

“Help me, namesake!” he pleaded, anxiously; “help me to defeat my enemies!”

“Not I!” retorted Chip-Cheloogoo. “You welcomed me with soft words and a sharp knife. Perhaps you were once a great philosopher, but now you are grown childish and silly. Your secret is out — even now the whole forest knows how you have deceived the animals. You will only live until the first of your enemies reaches this cave.”

“Then I am ruined! Ruined and discovered! Discovered and ruined!” moaned the other. “I might perhaps kill you, but I cannot kill all the animals that are coming to destroy me! What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?”

“Perhaps you may yet escape,” answered Chip-Cheloogoo, in a careless

tone. “If you run through the tunnel, and hide between the high banks of the brook, your enemies may not discover you until you have fled far from here and reached another forest where your frauds and deceptions are unknown.”

“You are right! I will fly at once!” cried the philosopher, now fully terror-stricken; and without waiting even to say good-by, he darted from the cavern.

Chip-Cheloogoo followed more leisurely. When he struck his head out beside the bush he could see the old chimpanzee running frantically between the banks of the brook, and presently he had passed out of sight in his wild rush to another forest and safety.

The stupid one laughed and returned to the cavern. Next minute a comb of fine honey rolled down the steps to his feet.

Chip-Cheloogoo sprang up the stairs and squatted in the cylinder.

“Who are you?” he demanded, striving to make his voice sound as deep and hollow as that of the old philosopher.

“It’s me,” spoke the voice of the brown bear, quite pleasant in tone. “I came to tell you that you were right, for I fought the grizzly and conquered him. So I have brought more honey to pay for your good advice.”

Then the bear went away, swinging his huge body proudly at each step. Chip-Cheloogoo drew a long breath. “I was just in time,” said he. “There is nothing like seizing on opportunity promptly.”

A handful of nuts rattled around his feet.

“Thank you!” called the voice of the gray squirrel. “I closed the entrance to my nest, as you advised, and now the serpent has gone away and left me in peace.” Shortly afterward three cocoanuts, one after the other, [forced him to] duck his head to escape them. “You are wise, O Terrible Unknown!” cried the red monkey, happily. “For my grandfather has recovered, and is now alive and well. Accept my grateful offerings!” And while the stupid one sat thoughtfully within the cylinder the door again opened and a fine bread-fruit — the luxury most prized by chimpanzees — fell at his feet and rolled down the incline into the cavern.

“Perhaps that will suit the Mighty Oracle,” growled the jaguar. “I am sorry I offended you yesterday by bringing a bird. Tell me, will the moon shine to-night?”

“If there are no clouds,” answered Chip-Cheloogoo.

“And will my hunt be successful?” continued the jaguar.

“Yes; if you find game,” said the Oracle.

“Thanks, O Mighty One!” returned the beast, and crept away to the forest.

Again the stupid one laughed softly to himself, and then he slid down the passage into the cavern.

The flood was strewn with the gifts he had just received.

“There are a good many ways to make an honest living,” said he, as he looked around him, “and although one may be born stupid, it is no bar to becoming a successful Oracle!”

The Enchanted Buffalo

From: *The Delineator*, May 1905

This is a tale of the Royal Tribe of Okolom--those mighty buffaloes that once dominated all the Western prairies, Seven hundred strong were the Okolom--great, shaggy creatures herding together and defying all enemies. Their range was well known to the Indians, to lesser herds of bisons and to all the wilds that roamed in the open; but none cared to molest or interfere with the Royal Tribe.

Dakt was the first King of the Okolom. By odds the fiercest and most intelligent of his race, he founded the Tribe, made the Laws that directed their actions and led his subjects through wars and dangers until they were acknowledged masters of the prairie.

Dakt had enemies, of course; even in the Royal Tribe. As he grew old it was whispered he was in league with Pagshat, the Evil Genius of the Prairies; yet few really believed the lying tale, and those Who did but feared King Dakt the more.

The days of this monarch were prosperous days for the Okolom. In Summer their feeding grounds were ever rich in succulent grasses; in Winter Dakt led them to fertile valleys in the shelter of the mountains.

But in time the great leader grew old and gray. He ceased quarreling and fighting and began to love peace--a sure sign that his days were numbered. Sometimes he would stand motionless for hours, apparently in deep thought. His dignity relaxed; he became peevish; his eye, once shrewd and compelling, grew dim and glazed.

Many of the younger bulls, who coveted his Kingship, waited for Dakt to die; some patiently, and some impatiently. Throughout the herd there was an undercurrent of excitement. Then, one bright Spring morning, as the Tribe wandered in single file toward new feeding grounds, the old King lagged behind. They missed him, presently, and sent Barrag the Bull back over the hills to look for him. It was an hour before this messenger returned, coming into view above the swell of the prairie.

“The King is dead,” said Barrag the Bull, as he walked calmly into the midst of the tribe. “Old age has at last overtaken him.”

The members of the Okolom looked upon him curiously. Then one said: “There is blood upon your horns, Barrag. You did not wipe them well upon the grass.”

Barrag turned fiercely “The old King is dead,” he repeated. “Hereafter, I am the King!”

No one answered in words; but, as the Tribe pressed backward into a dense mass, four young bulls remained standing before Barrag, quietly facing the would-be King. He looked upon them sternly. He had expected to contend for his royal office. It was the Law that any of the Tribe might fight for the right to rule the Okolom. But it surprised him to find there were four who dared dispute his assertion that he was King.

Barrag the Bull had doubtless been guilty of a cowardly act in goring the feeble old King to his death. But he could fight; and fight he did. One after another the powerful young bulls were overthrown, while every member of the Tribe watched the great tournament with eager interest. Barrag was not popular with them, but they could not fail to marvel at his prowess. To the onlookers he seemed inspired by unseen powers that lent him a strength fairly miraculous. They murmured together in awed tones, and the name of the dread Pagshat was whispered more than once.

As the last of the four bulls--the pride of half the Tribe--lay at the feet of the triumphant Barrag, the victor turned and cried aloud: "I am King of the Okolom! Who dares dispute my right to rule?"

For a moment there was silence. Then a fresh young voice exclaimed: "I dare!" and a handsome bull calf marched slowly into the space before Barrag and proudly faced him. A muttered protest swelled from the assemblage until it became a roar. Before it had subsided the young one's mother rushed to his side with a wail of mingled love and fear.

"No, no, Oknu!" she pleaded, desperately. "Do not fight, my child. It is death! See--Barrag is twice thy size. Let him rule the Okolom!"

"But I myself am the son of Dakt the King, and fit to rule in his place," answered Oknu, tossing his head with pride. "This Barrag is an interloper! There is no drop of royal blood in his veins."

"But he is nearly twice thy size!" moaned the mother, nearly frantic with terror. "He is leagued with the Evil Genius. To fight him means defeat and death!"

"He is a murderer!" returned the young bull, glaring upon Barrag. "He has killed his King, my father!"

"Enough!" roared the accused. "I am ready to silence this King's cub. Let us fight."

"No!" said an old bull, advancing from the herd. "Oknu shall not fight to-day. He is too young to face the mighty Barrag. But he will grow, both in size and strength; and then, when he is equal to the contest, he may fight for his father's place among the Okolom. In the meantime we acknowledge Barrag our King!"

A shout of approval went up from all the Tribe, and in the confusion that

followed the old Queen thrust her bold son out of sight amidst the throng.

Barrag was King. Proudly he accepted the acclaims of the Okolom--the most powerful Tribe of his race. His ambition was at last fulfilled; his plotting had met with success. The unnatural strength he had displayed had vanquished every opponent. Barrag was King.

Yet as the new ruler led his followers away from the field of conflict and into fresh pastures, his heart was heavy within him. He had not thought of Prince Oknu, the son of the terrible old King he had assisted to meet death. Oknu was a mere youth, half-grown and untried. Yet the look in his dark eyes as he had faced his father's murderer filled Barrag with a vague uneasiness. The youth would grow, and bade fair to become as powerful in time as old Dakt himself. And when he was grown he would fight for the leadership of the Okolom.

Barrag had not reckoned upon that.

When the moon came up, and the prairie was dotted with the reclining forms of the hosts of the Royal Tribe, the new King rose softly to his feet and moved away with silent tread. His pace was slow and stealthy until he had crossed the first rolling swell of the prairie; then he set off at a brisk trot that covered many leagues within the next two hours.

At length Barrag reached a huge rock that towered above the plain. It was jagged and full of rents and fissures, and after a moment's hesitation the King selected an opening and stalked fearlessly into the black shadows. Presently the rift became a tunnel; but Barrag kept on, feeling his way in the darkness with his fore feet. Then a tiny light glimmered ahead, guiding him, and soon after he came into a vast cave hollowed in the centre of the rock. The rough walls were black as ink, yet glistened with an unseen light that shed its mellow but awesome rays throughout the cavern.

Here Barrag paused, saying in a loud voice:

"To thee, 0 Pagshat, Evil Genius of the Prairies, I give greeting! All has occurred as thou didst predict. The great Dakt is dead, and I, Barrag the Bull, am ruler of the Tribe of Okolom."

For a moment after he ceased the stillness was intense. Then a Voice, grave and deep, answered in the language of the buffaloes: "It is well!"

"But all difficulties are not yet swept aside," continued Barrag. "The old King left a son, an audacious young bull not half grown, who wished to fight me. But the patriarchs of the Tribe bade him wait until he had size and strength. Tell me, can the young Prince Oknu defeat me then?"

"He can," responded the Voice.

"Then what shall I do?" demanded the King. "Thou hast promised to make me secure in my power?'

“I promised only to make you King of the Tribe--and you are King. Farther than that, you must protect yourself,” the Voice of the Evil Genius made answer. “But, since you are hereafter my slave, I will grant you one more favor--the power to remove your enemy by enchantment?”

“And how may I do that?” asked Barrag, eagerly.

“I will give you the means,” was the reply. “Bow low thine head, and between the horns I will sprinkle a magical powder.”

Barrag obeyed. “And now?” said he, inquiringly.

“Now,” responded the unseen Voice, “mark well my injunctions. You must enchant the young Prince and transform him from a buffalo into some small and insignificant animal. Therefore, to-morrow you must choose a spring, and before any of the Tribe has drunk therein, shake well your head above the water, that the powder may sift down into the spring. At the same time centre your thoughts intently upon the animal into which you wish the Prince transformed. Then let him drink of the water in the spring, and the transformation on the instant will be accomplished?”

“That is very simple,” said Barrag. “Is the powder now between my horns?”

“It is,” answered the Voice.

“Then, farewell, 0 Pagshat!”

From the cavern of the Evil Genius the King felt his way through the passages until he emerged upon the prairie. Then, softly--that he might not disturb the powder of enchantment--he trotted back to the sleeping herd.

Just before he reached it a panther, slender, lithe and black as coal, bounded across his path, and with a quick blow of his hoof Barrag crushed in the animal’s skull. “Panthers are miserable creatures,” mused the King, as he sought his place among the slumbering buffaloes. “I think I shall transform young Oknu into a black panther?”

Secure in his great strength, he forgot that a full-grown panther is the most terrible foe known to his race.

At sunrise the King led the Royal Tribe of Okolom to a tiny spring that welled clear and refreshing from the centre of a fertile valley.

It is the King’s right to drink first, but after bending his head above the spring and shaking it vigorously Barrag drew back, and turned to the others.

“Come! I will prove that I bear no ill will,” said he, treacherously. “Prince Oknu is the eldest son of our dead but venerated King Dakt. It is not for me to usurp his rights. Prince Oknu shall drink first.”

Hearing this, the patriarchs looked upon one another in surprise. It was not like Barrag the Bull to give way to another. But the Queen-mother was delighted at the favor shown her son, and eagerly pushed him forward. So

Oknu advanced proudly to the spring and drank, while Barrag bent his thoughts intently upon the black panther.

An instant later a roar of horror and consternation came from the Royal Tribe; for the form of Prince Oknu had vanished, and in its place crouched the dark form of a trembling, terrified panther.

Barrag sprang forward. “Death to the vermin!” he cried, and raised his cloven hoof to crush in the panther’s skull.

A sudden spring, a flash through the air, and the black panther alighted upon Barrag’s shoulders. Then its powerful jaws closed over the buffalo’s neck, pressing the sharp teeth far into the flesh.

With a cry of pain and terror the King reared upright, striving to shake off his tormentor; but the panther held fast. Again Barrag reared, whirling this way and that, his eyes staring, his breath quick and short, his great body trembling convulsively.

The others looked on fearfully. They saw the King kneel and roll upon the grass; they saw him arise with his foe still clinging to his back with claw and tooth; they heard the moan of despair that burg from their stricken leader, and the next instant Barrag was speeding away across the prairie like an arrow fresh from a bow, and his bellows of terror grew gradually fainter as he passed from their sight.

The prairie is vast. It is lonely, as well. A vulture, resting on outstretched wings, watched anxiously the flight of Bar-rag the Bull as hour by hour he sped away to the southward--the one moving thing on all that great expanse.

The sun sank low and buried itself in the prairie’s edge. Twilight succeeded, and faded into night. And still a black shadow, leap by leap, sprang madly through the gloom. The jackals paused, listening to the short, quick pants of breath--the irregular hoof-beats of the galloping bull. But while they hesitated the buffalo passed on, with the silent panther still crouched upon its shoulders.

In the black night Barrag suddenly lifted up his voice. “Come to me, 0 Pagshat--Evil Genius that thou art--come to my rescue!” he cried.

And presently it seemed that another dark form rushed along beside his own.

“Save me, Pagshat!” he moaned. “Crush thou mine enemy, and set me free!”

A cold whisper reached him in reply: “I cannot!”

“Change him again into his own form,” panted Barrag; “hark ye, Pagshat: ‘tis the King’s son--the cub--the weakling! Disenchant him, ere he proves my death!”

Again came the calm reply, like a breath of Winter sending a chill to his

very bones: “I cannot.”

Barrag groaned, dashing onward--ever onward.

“When you are dead,” continued the Voice, “Prince Oknu will resume his own form. But not before?’

“Did we not make a compact?” questioned Barrag, in despairing tone.

“We did,” said the Evil Genius, “and I have kept my pact. But you have still to fulfil a pledge to me.”

“At my death--only at my death, Pagshat!” cried the bull, trembling violently.

A cruel laugh was the only response. The moon broke through a rift in the clouds, flooding the prairie with silver light. The Evil Genius had disappeared, and the form of the solitary buffalo, with its clinging, silent foe, stumbled blindly across the endless plains.

Barrag had bargained with the Evil One for strength, and the strength of ten bulls was his. The legends do not say how many days and nights the great buffalo fled across the prairies with the black panther upon his shoulders. We know that the Utes saw him, and the Apaches, for their legends tell of it. Far to the south, hundreds of miles away, lived the tribe of the Comanches; and those Indians for many years told their children of Barrag the Bull, and how the Evil Genius of the Prairies, having tempted him to sin, betrayed the self-made King and abandoned him to the vengeance of the Black Panther, who was the enchanted son of the murdered King Dakt.

The strength of ten bulls was in Barrag; but even that could not endure forever. The end of the wild run came at last, and as Barrag fell lifeless upon the prairie the black panther relaxed its hold and was transformed into its original shape. For the enchantment of the Evil Genius was broken, and, restored to his own proper form, Prince Oknu cast one last glance upon his fallen enemy and then turned his head to the north.

It would be many moons before he could rejoin the Royal Tribe of the Okolom.

Since King Barrag had left them in his mad dash to the southward the Royal Tribe had wandered without a leader. They knew Oknu, as the black panther, would never relax his hold on his father’s murderer; but how the strange adventure might end all were unable to guess.

So they remained in their well-known feeding grounds and patiently awaited news of the absent ones.

A full year had passed when a buffalo bull was discovered one day crossing the prairie in the direction of the Okolom. Dignity and pride was in his step; his glance was fearless, but full of wisdom. As he stalked majestically to the very centre of the herd his gigantic form towered far

above that of any buffalo among them.

A stillness fraught with awe settled upon the Royal Tribe. “It is old King Dakt, cope to life again!” finally exclaimed one of the patriarchs.

“Not so,” answered the newcomer, in a clear voice; “but it is the son of Dakt--who has avenged his father’s death. Look upon me! I am Oknu, King of the Royal Tribe of Okolom. Dares any dispute my right to rule?”

No voice answered the challenge. Instead, every head of the seven hundred was bowed in silent homage to Oknu the son of Dakt, the first King of the Okolom.

The Pea-Green Poodle

(June 1905)

There were few dogs on Kaynyn Island that were smaller or more insignificant in appearance than Pippo-Tib. He was undersized and over-fat — even for a poodle — and so shaggy you could scarcely see his little black eyes gleaming through the mass of curly hair. Perhaps, had you noted those bright eyes, you would not have thought Pippo-Tib insignificant, for the eyes were droll and mischievous and questioning by turns. But in general Pippo slouched along in a very careless, undignified way, and paid so little attention to his toilet that often there were a dozen burrs clinging to his hair at the same time.

Kaynyn Island has been inhabited only by dogs for many generations, and the animals have become exceedingly intelligent and quite civilized, building cities of large size, establishing laws for their government and surrounding themselves with numerous comforts and conveniences. Upon the Island are many trees bearing dog-fruit and acres of bushes filled with chugu nuts, which all dogs prefer to any other food; so there is never any scarcity of provisions.

They were ruled by a King, who had three Counsellors to advise him what to do (if he didn't know himself), and there were many high officers of various sorts to carry out the King's orders.

The King was supposed to be the strongest and wisest dog in all the Island, and once every year any one of his subjects might challenge him to a trial of strength and wisdom, and — if he won the contest — could become King and rule in the place of his fallen adversary. But at the time of which I write, when Pippo-Tib was a mere puppy, the King of the Island was a great St. Bernard named Herowag, who had ruled many years because no one cared to oppose him.

In preceding years Herowag had fought many battles to protect his throne, and won them all, and he was so wise that when his strength finally failed, through old age, he hit upon a plan to maintain his regal title. For he made his Counsellors choose each year the one who should contend against him; and the Counsellors, by the King's secret order, always chose a dog so old and puny and weak that even the aged Herowag had no trouble whatever in defeating him.

This was no doubt unjust, but it was strictly within the letter of the Law, so that all the great Danes and Newfoundlands and Mastiffs who were fitted to take the old King's place had never a chance to prove their superior strength and wisdom. There was a great deal of grumbling (for the dogs of

Kaynyn Island speak together in a language simple and easily understood), but what could be done? The Counsellors dared not disobey the King, and the King always insisted upon having the weakest opponent they could find. So he won, of course, and continued to rule.

There was one other thing that sustained the King. He had appealed to the Dog Fairies, years ago, and they had promised he should never be defeated except by a dog of a pea-green color. So he had no fear, however old and weak he might become; for no pea-green dog existed in all the Island, and, so far as he knew, none had ever existed in the world.

However, the yearly contests, although conceded to be mere farces, were made occasions of great display, with feasting, games and processions enough to keep the common dogs amused. And it seemed only a question of how long the old King could manage to live as to when he would cease to reign.

It was while the undersized and over-fat Pippo-Tib was still a puppy that King Herowag held his seventeenth tournament, amid a great assemblage and with much splendor.

The King had only about half his teeth left, and everyone could see that he moved stiffly and awkwardly to meet his foe; but the champion chosen by the three Counsellors was in even a worse plight, so Herowag easily vanquished him.

It was Pippo-Tib who now burst out laughing, while all the other spectators remained grave and silent. And the scornful sound of the small poodle's laughter aroused the King's anger.

"Why do you laugh?" he demanded, turning upon the offender.

"Because," answered Pippo-Tib, irreverently, "if your Majesty had waited another five minutes the champion would have died without your assistance."

A titter arose at this, but was quickly silenced by a stern glance from the King.

"You shall repent this impudence!" the monarch cried, glaring upon the poodle. And, as Pippo-Tib stood exactly in front of him, the contrast between the huge St. Bernard with his golden crown and the wee poodledog covered with burrs was so great that even the three Counsellors could hardly repress their laughter.

As for Pippo-Tib, he shook the hair out of his eyes, the better to see the King, and said, in a flippant tone:

"I challenge your Majesty to fight next year for the crown."

And while the crowd roared at this joke Pippo gave a jump and brought both his fore feet down upon the King's left toes, which were remarkably tender because of two bunions upon them.

The monarch uttered an undignified howl of agony, and cried to his officers: “Arrest this traitor!”

But Pippo-Tib’s bright eyes had long before this noted a small hole in the wall, just big enough for his body to pass; so he made a dash for the hole and squeezed through it before the officers could reach him. As they were all much bigger than the hole, they were forced to go around the wall, and by that time the poodle had escaped and was well out of sight.

King Herowag was really furious, and a shrewd idea came into his head that would enable him to have revenge, and retain his crown at the same time.

“I accept the challenge of Pippo-Tib,” he cried aloud. “He shall fight me for the crown a year from to-day — if the three Counsellors agree.”

A growl of protest arose from the other big dogs, who wanted to fight for the crown themselves; but of course the Counsellors agreed to anything the King desired, and immediately named Pippo-Tib as the King’s next adversary. So those friends of the poodle who had been laughing at his mischievous pranks began to look serious.

For in the opinion of everyone present the huge old St. Bernard, in choosing Pippo-Tib to fight him, had positively condemned the little dog to death.

Pippo-Tib lived in a village down by the sea-shore, where most of the smaller and poorer dogs resided — the larger and wealthier classes inhabiting the interior. When the poodle returned home that night he had just amused himself by destroying a hornets’ nest, and had been stung in so many places that there were little knobs all over his body, making him look more queer than ever.

As he came into the village several acquaintances met him, saying:

“Poor Pippo-Tib! We are awfully sorry for you.”

“What’s the matter now?” asked the poodle.

“You are so young to die!” they replied. “It is so sad and unfortunate.”

“Who’s going to die, did you say?” asked Pippo-Tib.

“You are. The King has selected you to fight him for the crown next year.”

“Very well,” answered the poodle, rubbing one of the lamps with his front paw; “then I am likely to become your King.”

The absurdity of this retort aroused a shout of laughter but Pippo’s friends soon resumed their gravity.

“Why, King Herowag could easily snap your head off,” said one.

“Or even if he fell upon you, the weight of his great body would crush you to death,” said another.

“And you forget that the Fairies are protecting Herowag,” a third suggested. “I don’t believe that,” returned the poodle, stoutly. “The Fairies stand for right and justice, and the King is an unjust tyrant.”

“Did not the Fairies promise he should never be defeated except by a dog of a pea-green color?” asked the other.

“I don’t know. But that was a queer promise to make. What color am I?” inquired Pippo-Tib.

An old dog present answered: “When you were first born, I remember you were white; but ever since you have been of a decided dirt color. Certainly you are not pea-green.”

They laughed again, at this sally, and the poodle joined in the laugh with his usual good nature. Indeed, he refused to be worried because he was destined to fight the tyrannical old King; so, of course, his friends soon forgot to sympathize with him.

But Pippo-Tib was not so indifferent as he seemed. He fully realized that he was liable to meet death in the coming conflict, and he thought about the matter more seriously than any of his friends supposed.

His selection as the King’s adversary caused him to become of importance in the Island, for the first time in his life; for wherever he went he was pointed out as the King’s next victim, and everyone expressed sorrow for him because he was so small and insignificant.

One effect of this was to make Pippo-Tib ashamed of his dirt. So he began taking a morning bath in the brook, and before many weeks had passed the poodle had grown so white in color and so fleecy of fur that he was really pretty to look upon. All he needed to make him beautiful was a pink ribbon around his neck; but there were no pink ribbons in Kaynyn Island.

Half the year had passed away before Pippo could think of any plan to escape his doom. Then he resolved to consult the wise and powerful Dog Fairies, and ask their assistance.

Now, in order to invoke the Fairies it was necessary to gather a bouquet consisting of five different flowers: a dandelion, a daisy, a red clover, a buttercup and a featherblow. Pippo-Tib sought diligently, and soon was able to find all but the featherblow. These had disappeared, and would not blossom again before the last of April. And the first of May was the time set for the contest. So the poodle was obliged to wait, and if the featherblow failed to blossom on time he would be unable to summon the Fairies to his assistance, and his last hope would be gone.

Still, he refused to be discouraged. Wisdom and strength were needed to defeat the present King, and if he could but manage to win the contest he would not only save his life but become ruler of all the big and little dogs in

the Island.

"I am glad," said Pippo-Tib to himself, "that this chance has come to me. The stake is really worth fighting for, and if I am vanquished I won't be much worse off than I am now. I'd as soon die young as remain insignificant all my life. And if I win I shall be King of all Kaynyn Island — and the biggest dog in the world, in spite of my size!"

Now it was not only necessary to fight the King, but to defeat him also in an exchange of wits. Usually Herowag overcame his adversary in the fight, so that the second part of the programme had never been carried out; but Pippo knew he must reckon on being put to the test. Thinking the matter over with care, he decided he was fully a match for King Herowag in wit and wisdom, and that if he could but manage to win the fight the rest would be easy.

The Winter passed. Spring came and the flowers began to bloom. Pippo watched them anxiously, wandering day by day through field and grove. He found thousands of buttercups, daisies and dandelions, and soon the red clover also bloomed plentifully; but a featherblow was nowhere to be seen. The month of April was slipping away; already preparations were being made for the yearly festivities in the great square before the King's palace.

No one paid much attention to the approaching annual fight for the crown, for it was well known that Pippo-Tib was to be the opponent of the big Herowag, and it was thought the tiny poodle's death would be but an incident of the occasion. But all the dogs loved the processions and gorgeous displays, the feasts and amusements of the yearly festivities; and these were what they looked forward to most.

When the morning of April 30th dawned, the sun looked down upon a very anxious poodle. Pippo had searched weeks for a featherblow, without finding one, and now he almost gave way to despair. He had wandered away from all the towns and villages and had explored every place except a beech forest that lay in a low, marshy valley far to the left of the inhabited portion of the Island. It was a dreary, deserted sort of place, and seldom visited by anyone; but Pippo-Tib was desperate, and resolved to go there.

On his way he plucked a red clover, a daisy, a dandelion and a buttercup. "For," he thought, "these do not grow' in forests, and if by any chance I should find a featherblow, I need not waste time coming back to look for the other flowers."

The forest was of considerable extent, although the trees did not grow close together, and there was plenty of light and sun. Pippo entered it at the edge nearest the sea, and searched diligently every inch of the ground as he walked along. There were few flowers to be seen anywhere among the trees,

and nothing that at all resembled a featherblow.

All through that anxious day he searched, and night found him a very tired and hungry poodle, without a hope left of accomplishing his object.

He sat down in the middle of the forest to think over his approaching fate, and while he thought the moon slowly rose and sent her soft beams slanting through the forest. Pippo lifted up his voice in along, dismal howl. He had always made it a point to howl in this way whenever he saw the moon. Why he did it he could not tell; but it seemed a natural thing, and very comforting.

Then he glanced downward, and there at his feet bloomed a large, handsome featherblow!

Pippo stared at it long and wonderingly. He could scarcely believe in his good-fortune. Then, realizing that he must act promptly, he plucked the blossom, added it to the other four flowers in the bouquet, and called upon the Fairies to appear.

There was a slight rustling about him, as of the wind stirring the dead leaves, and then Pippo-Tib found himself surrounded by a group of beautiful Dog Fairies, who were seated upon the ground in the form of a crescent. Before them all was their dainty Queen, and as the astonished poodle gazed upon her she nodded pleasantly and said: "You have called us, Pippo-Tib. What is your request?"

"Give me strength to defeat King Herowag tomorrow," responded the poodle, bravely, although he could feel his heart beat fast.

"Why do you ask this?" inquired the Queen.

"Because he is an unjust tyrant," was the answer; "because he is using trickery and deceit to retain his crown; because he has ruled long enough, and another and younger King would be of more benefit to the Island."

"These reasons are sufficient," returned the Queen; "therefore, I will give you strength to defeat the King. But you must promise not to kill him."

"I promise," said Pippo, readily enough. The idea of his killing the big I Herowag!

"Then lie at my feet and close your eyes," commanded the Queen. And when Pippo obeyed he felt a great flood of energy and power enter into him, so that he knew himself able to fight and overcome any dog on all the Island.

"And now," continued the Fairy, when Pippo had risen and returned to his former place, "how about the contest of wisdom?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid to match my wits against those of the old King," answered the poodle, complacently.

"In that you are wrong," said the Queen; "for age brings greater and more mature wisdom than youth can ever boast. If you wish to conquer the aged King you must have more than strength and natural wit."

“Then give me wisdom!” begged Pippo-Tib, humbly; and the Fairy smiled and touched his forehead with her wand.

“Go forth and conquer!” said she; and the fairy band, one and all, repeated the words.

“But the contest takes place to-morrow,” said the poodle; “and I am a long way from the King’s palace.”

“You new strength will enable you to reach there in time,” returned the Queen, in a kindly voice; and Pippo thought her form was growing dimmer.

“But I really don’t know my way out of this forest!” he cried, hastily.

“Keep your eyes upon the moon, and follow in a straight line where it leads you,” was the reply; and as the voice ceased the fairy band vanished, and Pippo-Tib, happy and proud of his success, found himself alone in the forest.

Having cried his thanks to the invisible fairies of his race, he prepared to start upon his long journey. He was not tired any longer, nor hungry, and his former despair had been replaced by confidence and joy. So he raised his head, fixed his eyes upon the moon, and bounded forward in a straight line, as he had been told.

Now in the centre of this forest was a small lake, dark and stagnant and very deep. And all around its edge were terebinth trees, whereon grew the pistachio nuts. These nuts had fallen thickly into the lake, where the water drew out their greenish coloring until all the stagnant pool was stained a bright green.

Pippo-Tib knew nothing of this lake, and as his eyes were fixed upon the moon in the sky he presently fell plump into the water and sank nearly to the bottom before he recovered from his surprise.

But he was not frightened, for he had faith in the Fairies.

Soon he rose to the surface, got sight of the moon again, and swam straight toward it. This brought him to the opposite bank, where he scrambled out of the water, gave himself several brisk shakes, and again trotted swiftly upon his way.

The fresh night air soon dried his fuzzy hair, which seemed to be more curly than ever. But the poodle no longer showed white under the moon’s rays, although he knew nothing of the remarkable change in his appearance.

It was a long journey, but Pippo-Tib quite enjoyed it. For no matter how fast he ran he never became weary in the least, and his small body seemed filled with inexhaustible energy.

He was free of the forest long before morning, and the rising sun saw him galloping over the hills and plains. The moon was gone, but he knew his way now, and before long sighted the buildings that marked the site of the City of

the King.

* * *

"Very good!" thought Pippo-Tib; "I shall be in time, after all!"

Vast was the throng that crowded the square before the King's palace; for this was a popular holiday.

The King sat within his golden throne, which was made soft with silken cushions, and around him were ranged the three servile and silly Counsellors. A space was cleared, and the eyes of the spectators vainly sought Pippo-Tib, who should have arrived long ago.

King Herowag was in a bad temper. He had broken the last of his front teeth only that morning, in cracking a chugu nut, and was therefore more cross and unpleasant than usual.

The crowd became uneasy, for if Pippo failed to arrive on time the law condemned him to an ignominious death. Promptly on the hour a gong sounded, and the King rose from his throne. "I am here to meet my opponent" he said, gruffly; "but it seems the miserable cur is afraid to die, and has run away."

"Oh, no, your Majesty," cried a clear voice, in reply; "I would not run away for the world!" And with this Pippo-Tib trotted into the open space and faced the King.

A murmur of astonishment arose from all assembled, and even the King glared in a sort of terror at his antagonist. For the poodle's coat was a beautiful pea-green in color, and everyone remembered that the Fairies had predicted the King could never be defeated except by a pea-green dog.

Pippo-Tib did not know that the lake had dyed his flufly white hair green, so he accepted the murmur of surprise as a tribute to his courage.

"I am ready!" said he, proudly; "let us fight."

A spirit of despair seemed to take possession of King Herowag. He made a quick rush for Pippo, who in turn darted under the fierce jaws and tripped the huge St. Bernard most cleverly, sending him rolling over and over upon the ground before he could recover himself. Then the poodle sprang at the King's throat, and, having fastened his teeth there, actually dragged Herowag hither and thither as if he had been a mouse.

The crowd cheered and went nearly wild with excitement at this astounding spectacle, and Herowag, dragged in the dust and nearly dead through terror and exhaustion, cried out in a panting voice:

"Mercy! Have mercy! I am defeated. Spare my life!"

"Certainly," said Pippo-Tib, releasing his hold. "And it is high time you were defeated, for you have tyrannized over the people long enough. But I do

not seek your life; so you may live until you die of old age, for all I care."

While the throng applauded the pea-green poodle, the three Counsellors, pale with fear, assisted the King to rise and regain his throne. They brought him water, dusted him off, dressed his wounds, and replaced the crown upon his head. Also they whispered something in his ear, and as soon as he could speak the King addressed Pippo, saying:

"You have won the contest of strength, but before you can claim the crown you must prove yourself my superior in wisdom."

"That is true," answered the poodle, squatting before his adversary. "But you cannot be very wise, or you would never have selected me as your opponent. I'm not so green as I look."

There was a roar of laughter at this; but the three Counsellors called for silence, and then the King asked Pippo: "Why does the world revolve from left to right upon its axis?"

"Because if it revolved the other way it would be to the left, and that wouldn't be right," answered Pippo, promptly. And the judges scored a point for the poodle. After the applause had subsided Pippo in turn asked the King:

"Why does lightning never strike twice in the same place?"

The King looked puzzled, and tried to think. But his head was buzzing and he did not know the answer; so the judges scored a point against him.

To resume the contest Herowag put the question: "What is nicer to eat than a marrowbone?"

"Two marrowbones," answered Pippo; "but that is a childish question and unworthy a contest of wisdom. So answer me this: Is it best to be a bump on a log, or a log with a bump on it?"

"Isn't that childish?" asked the King.

"Not at all," said Pippo.

"Well I cannot see that there is any difference," returned the old St. Bernard, who was suffering from his wounds and bruises.

"There you are wrong," declared the poodle; "for if one is a log, it doesn't matter much whether there is a bump on it or not; but if one is a bump, it must have a log or something else to cling to. So it is better to be the log."

"Enough!" cried the King, in a weak voice. "It was predicted that a pea-green dog would be my ruin, so it is useless for me to struggle against fate."

"Pea-green!" cried Pippo. "What do you mean? Who is pea-green?"

"You are!" retorted Herowag; and while Pippo-Tib was turning his head wonderingly to view his own body, the former monarch took off his crown, slipped from the throne, and escaped through the crowd to the house of a poor relative, where he lived in retirement until the end of his days.

And so the judges awarded the victory to Pippo-Tib, and the pea-green

poodle was proclaimed King amid the shouts and rejoicings of the multitude.

You can imagine the enthusiasm of that day's celebration. No procession was ever so gorgeous, no feast so delicious, no games so merry as those that followed the crowning of the new King. The crown, by the way, was entirely too big for Pippo-Tib; but the new Counsellors he selected stuffed it well with paper.

When the monarch, happy, but tired, went to bed that night, one of his friends said to him:

"That was a clever idea of your Majesty, to dye yourself pea-green. I think it was your color that conquered the old King, as much as your strength and wisdom."

"Perhaps," answered the poodle, with a yawn, for he had not slept for two days. "And, if so, you will acknowledge it was a curious thing that I was obliged to dye in order to save my life!"

The Jolly Giraffe of Jomb

From: *The Delineator*, July 1905

In all the fair Land of Jomb there was no giraffe at all until Umpo came. And no one knew where he came from.

He was young and tender in the days when Varg the Bull saw him approaching over the grassy plain from the South, but the sight of the strange animal set all the herd quivering with nervous dread. Even the great Varg was disturbed in mind, and gathered the young heifers about him that they might be carefully guarded in case of danger. For, to the wild, danger lurks in every unknown thing.

The stranger approached without fear, his long neck erect, his dainty head turned first this side and then that to allow his big brown eyes to examine the mo-tionless cattle that awaited him. When he saw their attitude of fear he stopped and laughed merrily, drooping his head to his knees and then raising it high to laugh again.

The heifers drew sighs of relief, but the forehead of Varg the Bull wrinkled into a frown.

"Well, well," said little Umpo, squatting down so that his eyes were scarce above the level of those of the bull; "to think that you - the Lord of the Plains - should fear a harmless giraffe!"

"Are you a giraffe?" demanded Varg, looking at the strange creature with much astonishment.

"What else should I be, eh? Is there any animal on earth like me?" asked the other, with a wink.

"I have never seen anyone like you before," answered Varg, cautiously. "Will you fight?"

Umpo laughed again, with much amusement.

"No, indeed!" said he; "for you could kill me with one blow of your hoof, or one stab with your great horns. Fight? Why should I fight? Not that I am a coward, you understand, but that nature made me helpless. So let us be friends. This is a beautiful country. I will live here, and enjoy it with you. But I will acknowledge no chief, mind you, having no tribe of my own. I am the one giraffe in all Jomb, and 1 prefer death to being ruled by any not of my kind."

Now this was a frank speech, and a fair one, and it appealed to the justice of Varg the Bull. So he made fair answer. "You are welcome," said he, "so long as you show respect for our common laws. And I will not ask to rule you in any way. But there are others with whom you must make peace here."

"And who are those?" asked the smiling giraffe.

“The river bank is the domain of the hippopotami,” said Varg.

“I will make them my friends,” declared Umpo.

“And the strip of forest yonder, is ruled by Slythe the Red Panther.”

“I do not care for panthers,” replied Umpo, with a shrug of his tall shoulders. “But never mind! We shall be friends.”

“And beyond the forest is the desert of sands, where Feathro the Ostrich holds sway.”

“Good!” cried Umpo, again laughing; “the ostriches will love me, I promise you.”

“Then,” said Varg, “have no fear while you are in the Land of Jomb, for you may wander undisturbed from the river to the desert. It is a favored country, indeed, where peace and plenty reign. And, being your own master, there is but one common Law which you will need to respect: Never touch the Sacred Mimosa Tree, or destroy a single leaf or branch - as you value your life.”

Umpo the Giraffe gave a start of surprise at this and looked grave for the first time.

“The Sacred Mimosa Tree? What is that?” he asked.

“It is the tree that brings us all good luck,” answered Varg. “Come; I will show it you, that you may make no mistake, but ever respect it as we of Jomb do.”

He led the way across the grassy plain, followed by all the herd; and Umpo ambled beside him, chattering pleasantly and laughing in a frank, jolly way that won the approval of the grave Varg and all his people.

After an hour’s brisk trot they came to a tall, wide-spreading mimosa that stood quite separate from all the other trees, in solitary state. It was almost in the centre of the narrow plain, and midway between the river bank and the strip of forest land. Beautiful in grace and dignity was the splendid tree, and its slender branches bore thick masses of green and glossy leaves. The large, deep-green leaves were at the top, and protected the delicate young shoots that spread underneath.

Umpo looked at the leaves longingly. They have always been the favorite food of giraffes, and the wanderer had not met with many mimosa trees while on his travels.

“This is the Sacred Tree that gives good luck and health and fortune to every animal in our land,” said Varg, bowing his head in lowly fashion. “If it is injured in any way, troubles of many kinds will quickly overtake us. The one great Law of the tribes of Jomb is to guard it reverently. To pluck or destroy one leaf means death to the culprit.” Umpo laughed.

“I wish for luck!” he cried. “Therefore the Sacred Tree shall be as sacred

to me as to any animal in all Jomb."

"It is well," answered Varg, and straightway trotted back to his feeding grounds again.

Umpo wandered on to explore the extent of his new home, and it surely seemed that the young giraffe had little difficulty in making friends with all the tribes. His appearance doubtless surprise them, for never had such a creature been seen or even heard of before in that country; but for this very reason they looked upon him with favor, as a credit to the community, and he was so harmless in appearance and so merry in his ways that he became a welcome visitor wherever he chose to roam.

Also he was playful in disposition and loved to indulge in mischievous though harmless pranks; and with all his seeming helplessness he was quite indifferent to danger.

He would leap upon the broad back of a hippopotamus and let the huge beast swim the river for hours, while he stood upright and enjoyed the ride. The bearer would sometimes sink under the surface of the water and give Umpo a ducking; but he could swim, too, although not well, and always managed to reach the bank in safety. He laughed at the joke, instead of being angry, and the hippopotami were always glad when their jolly friend came to the river bank.

With the ostriches, also, Umpo had much mischievous fun. He would give a sudden, shrill cry to fill their timid hearts with terror and make them hide their heads deep within the sands. And then, while they stood thus, he played leap-frog with them, vaulting over their bodies with great nimbleness and laughing at the shudders they gave as his hoofs rested upon their broad backs.

It was with Slythe the Panther that Umpo had most difficulty in forming a friendship; for Slythe was of fierce nature and treacherous disposition, and his sleepy red eyes had a way of looking at the giraffe that made the stranger both uneasy and anxious.

"It is peace between us," the Panther would say, purring, as he lay crouched along a limb in his forest lair. "Go your way, Umpo, and fear not."

But Umpo was not entirely satisfied. "These meat-eaters are not to be trusted," he said to himself, "and if Varg the Bull and Pask the Hippopotamus and Feathro the Ostrich had not given me their protection, I am quite sure Slythe the Panther would eat me for his breakfast."

And therein lay the truth of the whole matter; for Slythe dared not prey upon one who was a favorite with all the other animals of the Land of Jomb; yet he longed most passionately to eat the giraffe.

Umpo grew rapidly, and became tall and graceful and very beautiful to look upon. His sleek coat was of fawn color upon the back and sides, dotted with gorgeous orange-red spots; but his breast was white as snow. His eyes, full, dark and brilliant, shone like cut-jewels.

But, although the animals admired his beauty, it was his genial disposition that most won them.

There were several groups of tropical trees scattered over the plain, and upon the juicy leaves of these the giraffe daily fed, reaching with his long neck even to the top branches. A few straggling mimosas were among these trees, but Umpo soon stripped the branches of every leaf, and grieved because there were no more.

When he became especially hungry he would visit the Sacred Tree and feast his eyes upon its luscious foliage; but he was loyal to his friends and respected his promise and left the great mimosa tree undisturbed.

Slythe watched him from his high perch near the edge of the forest; and as Umpo longed for the mimosa leaves so Slythe longed for Umpo. Indeed, his mouth watered every minute the jolly giraffe was in sight, and he licked his fierce chops and tried to think of some way to secure his prey without making the other animals his enemies.

At last the thought came to him.

One evening Umpo gazed upon the Sacred Tree and left the marks of his hoofs upon the soft ground underneath. Next morning all the young leaves of the tree were gone, and the branches were broken and mangled.

Slythe came bounding toward Varg the Bull and cried out: “Come quickly! Great trouble is upon the land. Bad luck will surely overtake us, for Umpo the Giraffe has despoiled the Sacred Tree to satisfy his wicked appetite!”

Varg came, and was angry with a mighty anger.

“The Jolly One shall die!” he said.

“I crave the right to kill him,” cried the Red Pan-ther, quickly; “for am I not the executioner?”

To them they summoned from the river Pask the Hippopotamus, and from the desert Feathro the Ostrich, and the four chiefs of the Land of Jomb examined the hoof-marks and decided that the giraffe was the guilty one and must by punished by death as the Law provided.

Umpo was lying in the shade of a clump of trees that morning, his long neck stretched along the grass. And suddenly a Voice fell upon his ears, saying: “Your enemy threatens you, and danger is near. But do not lose heart. Be brave and of good cheer, and all will be well!”

While he thought upon this message, and wondered what it could mean -

never guessing that the good Fairy of his race had spoken - a great clamor arose across the plain. And presently the four chiefs came tramping toward him, followed by a vast concourse of other animals. And now, indeed, Umpo realized that danger threatened him.

So, when all the beasts had gravely surrounded him and he had cast a glance into Varg's threatening eyes, the giraffe but raised his head to yawn as if half asleep, saying: "Welcome, friends! What may I do for your pleasure?"

"You may die the death of a traitor!" roared Varg, sternly; "for you have broken the one great Law, and despoiled the Sacred Tree."

"Nonsense!" returned the giraffe, lightly; and then slowly he rose to his feet and laughed in their fierce faces.

"A traitor must die, it is true; if, in fact, the Sacred Mimosa has been despoiled," said he. "But I am not the traitor, friends; so let us look elsewhere for the culprit."

Slythe lashed the ground angrily with his strong tail.

"I myself saw you eat of the leaves and break the branches," he growled.

"The Lord of the Forest lies as easily upon the plain as within his lair," Umpo answered, scornfully. "Good friends, I am hungry this very moment, and when you came near I was just wondering where I might get a breakfast."

The animals thronging about him exchanged uneasy glances with one another. Umpo, it seemed to them, did not appear to act as a culprit. Moreover, the Red Panther was not considered especially trustworthy. But Varg said:

"Enough! The word of a Chief is better than that of an outcast and a stranger in our land. Who else feeds upon the mimosa other than this long-necked one? Who else would violate the one great law? His very nature condemns him. Therefore will we give the giraffe to Slythe the Panther for punishment. Is it not just, my friends?" he added, turning to the other Lords.

"It is just," answered Pask the Hippopotamus. But as he turned away a tear glittered in his small eye.

"It is the Law, and Umpo must suffer," sighed Feathro the Ostrich, and his tone was exceedingly sad.

"Ah, well," said Umpo, raising his head proudly and gazing full at his relentless judges; "if you are determined upon my death I choose to be executed within the dark forest where Slythe rules. And I invite every one present who has been my friend to follow us and witness the deed, that you may know full justice is done."

This request surprised the assembled beasts, for it is their nature to wish to die alone and unwatched; but the Unseen Voice had again spoken to Umpo,

although no ears but his own had heard the sound.

Slythe's cruel lips were grinning with joy as he marched away; but the animals followed with solemn tread.

When they reached the edge of the forest Slythe stopped; but the giraffe said, quietly: "Not here, my master," and pressed forward among the trees.

The Panther glowered upon him with sullen fury.

"Wait," he cried.

"Not so," answered Umpo, still walking on. "Surely I may choose the place of execution!" And at his word the animals followed after, forcing Slythe to proceed.

Suddenly the Jolly One paused in the thick of the wood.

"What a heap of dead leaves is here!" he said. "Let us scatter them, friends, and see what they chance to hide."

With a snarl of rage Slythe bounded forward; but Varg, who had been watching the giraffe closely, got in the Panther's way and stopped him.

"Have peace!" he commanded, sternly. "What can you have to fear in your own forest, Slythe?"

But even as he spoke the giraffe had scattered the dead leaves, and underneath them all saw, as eagerly they stretched their heads forward, the branches of delicate green which had been torn from the Sacred Tree.

The secret was out, then.

Slythe the Panther, in his anxiety to ruin Umpo, had himself despoiled the tree and hidden the stolen leaves.

A roar of rage burst from the assembled animals.

The sound, grim and menacing, aroused the astonished Slythe. Crouching low, he made a mighty bound toward the high branches of a nearby tree, seeking to escape. But even while he was poised in midair the head of the giraffe shot out and struck the flying body a sharp blow that hurled the panther to the ground again.

He fell at the feel of Varg, and instantly the furious bull gored the wicked one. And Feathro the Ostrich struck the Panther a blow with its foot, and Pask the Hippopotamus trampled the body of the traitor deep into the ground.

Then they heaped the place with dead leaves, after which Varg said, more gently than was his wont:

"The punishment is complete. Let us go away."

And now the strangest event of that eventful day occurred. For as the army of beasts drew near to the Sacred Tree they saw, with inexpressible wonder and awe, that every broken leaf and branch had been replaced by some magic power, and the great Mimosa swayed in the soft breeze as graceful and perfect in shape as ever before!

And all knew by this sign that Umpo the Giraffe was under the protection of the Fairies of his race.

The Troubles of Pop Wombat

Illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull
From: *The Delineator,* August 1905

ALL was hushed and still in the cave, for Pop Wombat had a toothache. Four fat balls of reddish fur lay rolled in one corner, motionless save for the alertness of the little eyes that peeped from the feathery masses of hair. Mom Wombat silently reposed in another corner, her steadfast gaze full upon the head of the family, who lay in a despondent attitude near the entrance.

Pop Wombat had owned this same toothache for several hours, and it had turned his meek nature topsy-turvy. Indeed, the family had developed a nervous awe of the pain he suffered, and the unreliable state of his temper because of it. Suddenly the silence was broken. Pop writhed and tossed his round body as if frantic, and gave a most dismal howl.

"How absurd!" said Mom, a little impatiently. "Are you a bear, my dear Pop, that you growl so savagely?"

"Shut up!" said Pop, and rolled over in a huff.

No doubt, Mom's remark was annoying. There is little difference, in general appearance, between a wombat and a bear, except that the biggest wombat is hardly tall enough to reach to a bear's knee. But in their nature and disposition there is a vast difference in the two animals, for the bear is a meat-eater by preference, while the wombat feeds only on roots and vegetables. Of all creatures in the wilderness none has such a cheerful temper as the little wombat, who never fights unless driven to desperation, and attends strictly to his own affairs.

But to see Pop Wombat to-day no one would guess he possessed a mild and genial nature. The four cubs were filled with terror, and trembled every time their sire gave a groan or writhed upon the floor. And Mom Wombat, meek helpmate that she was, had become so nervous she could scarcely control herself.

“Why don’t you have that tooth out, Pop?” she asked for the twentieth time that morning.

“Out! Have it out? Do you want to see me murdered?” he retorted, in a peevish tone. “If it’s such fun, why don’t you have your own teeth out?”

“If they ached, I would,” answered Mom.

“That’s it!” he snapped. “You’re in no danger of getting hurt; so you want to see me mutilated and killed!”

“It won’t kill you to have a tooth pulled, my dear,” she persisted; “and Doc Pelican is down by the bend of the river now, and will do the job easily. If the tooth is out it won’t ache, and until it’s out it *will* ache, you know.”

“Mind your business!” growled Pop as he held his jaw between two chubby paws and groaned aloud.

Mom sighed, and the cubs shuddered. And then silence was renewed until Pop resumed his awful groaning.

“Why don’t you---” began Mom; but he cut her question short by suddenly jumping upon his feet.

“Hold your tongue, can’t you?” he howled. “I’m going down to Doc Pelican’s, and if you don’t like it you can do the next thing!” And he marched toward the mouth of the cave.

Mom didn’t mind his bitter words in the least, for she knew Pop loved her, and that it was only that toothache that induced him to say such things.

“Be very careful, dear,” she called after him. “Remember it’s broad daylight, and you may meet with enemies.”

He gave a scornful grunt and walked away, groaning lustily with every step. Yet Mom’s warning was not so foolish as Pop tried to make out. As a matter of fact, a group of dangerous foes was at that moment gathered in a cavern underneath the river bank, not a hundred yards away from the snug cave of the wombats.

“I’d like to eat old Pop as well as any of you,” said Dick Wolf, licking his lean chops. “ But you know the Law as well as I do. Unless he fights we dare not harm him.”

“Let’s *make* him fight!” suggested little Joe Weasel.

“We can’t,” replied Dick Wolf. “I’ve tried it.”

“Well, let’s claim he *did* fight,” proposed Bob Peccary; “he can’t prove he didn’t, after he’s eaten.”

Then the conspirators paused to look upon one another curiously, for not one of them felt he could trust the others in case they were brought before the judges to explain Pop Wombat’s death. Yet the thought of preying upon the fat and tender family of wombats was so tempting that they were ready to defy the Law and take the chance of their crime being discovered. If only

Pop could be induced to fight, the rest would be easy; but who had ever known him to even quarrel with any beast?

While they hesitated, Ned Lynx, the spy, solved the problem by rushing into the cavern and shouting:

“He’s out! Pop Wombat is out in broad daylight.”

“Now’s our time!” cried Hank Hyena, leaping up. “Let’s hide ourselves, and catch him as he comes back.”

They all agreed readily to this, and Charlie Fox said: “Make him fight if you can, my boys; but if you can’t---”

“If we can’t, we’ll kill him anyhow,” declared Jim Leopard; and the conspirators growled assent.

Meantime Pop Wombat had shuffled his fat body down to the river bend, moaning with the pain in his tooth with every step.

As Mom had predicted, he found Doc Pelican standing beside the water and eyeing the rushing stream with intent thoughtfulness.

“Say, Doc,” said Pop Wombat, coming up. I’ve got a bad toothache, and---”

“And you want the tooth pulled, I suppose,” said Doc. “Open your mouth, and I’ll jerk it out in a hurry.” Pop hesitated. “I don’t think it’s aching quite so bad, just now,” he remarked.

“Humbug!” said Doc.

Pop felt his jaw tenderly.

“Will it hurt?” he asked.

“Not the least bit!” said the Pelican. “I pulled one for Nick Tiger, the other day, and he said it was a real pleasure. Open your mouth.”

So Pop opened his mouth, and Doc asked: “Which tooth is it?”

“This one,” said Pop, touching it with his padded paw.

The Pelican thrust his long bill into the wombat’s mouth, seized a tooth in a desperate clutch, wiggled it briskly to loosen it, and then threw back his head with a powerful jerk.

Pop howled in agony, and rolled upon the ground as if taken with a fit.

“It’s all over,” said Doc, dropping the tooth into the river.

“You idiot!” roared Pop, fairly beside himself. “You’ve pulled the wrong tooth!

“Oh, did I?” asked the Pelican, with a chuckle. “Let me see.”

Pop stood up, shaking with pain, and opened his mouth again. Instantly

the Pelican seized the aching tooth and gave it a jerk.

It was too much for Pop to bear. His strong little jaws came together with a snap, and he bit Doc's head off as neatly as if it had been cut with a knife.

"Dear me!" said Pop, gravely, as he watched the floundering of the headless Pelican; "what have I done?"

"You've fought and killed a harmless creature, and broken the Law!" said a voice in reply, and Ned Lynx crept from the clump of bushes where he had been hidden. "Your own life is forfeit, Pop Wombat!" he added, gleefully.

But Pop had no wish to die. The strain upon his nerves caused by his recent suffering had roused him from his usual gentleness, and his present horror and fear completely changed his nature. He sprang upon the Lynx and dealt him a blow that laid the spy stunned upon the path, and then he started on a trot back toward his cave.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick Wolf, from his ambush; "he fights at last! Pop fights, brothers!" and without more ado he launched his lean body straight at the wombat's throat.

Pop struck again, and in his anger hurled Dick Wolf a dozen paces into the brushwood. But now in the path crouched Jim Leopard, his eyes green and watchful and his long tail swaying gently from side to side. And back of Jim the gaunt hyena stood with open mouth, disclosing two rows of cruel teeth. And on one side was Bob Peccary, and on the other side Charlie Fox, while the blood-shot eyes of Joe Weasel glared at him with savage joy.

For a brief moment Pop decided to fight them all. Then his unnatural courage rapidly oozed away, and he turned tail and dashed through the wilderness at his swiftest gait.

Usually he was as lazy as he was fat; but now terror lent him speed. He escaped the leopard's leap by a hair's breadth. He snapped at the hyena and caught the foe's muzzle between his own teeth. He knocked over the peccary so that the awkward beast tripped the rush of the fox. Next minute he was racing on in the lead of every pursuer.

But no wombat could keep up that speed for long, and Pop was about ready to drop when the opening of a cave met his eyes. He tumbled within and swung around with tooth and claw to guard his retreat.

But he was safe enough from his pursuers now. Indeed, his act filled them with consternation, and they hid themselves in the underbrush and lay panting and wondering and eyeing the cave.

"What audacity!" whispered Charlie Fox.

"What absurd recklessness!" said Jim Leopard.

"What folly!" declared the weasel.

By that time Pop Wombat agreed with them, for he remembered where he was, and whose cave he had invaded.

It was the lair of Mersag the Grizzly, and the largest, the fiercest, most powerful beast for miles around! Mersag dominated both forest and plain; every animal, however big or little, stood in awe of him; he was cruel and merciless, courageous and blood-thirsty, ferocious and lawless. To face him was death; to hear his mighty footsteps crunching through the brush wood was a signal for instant flight; to penetrate his lair was a madness worse than suicide.

But Pop Wombat, wild with fear, had not noticed where his feet had led him until it was too late to retreat. The great cave was vacant just then; but to quit it meant to be torn to pieces by his hungry enemies, while to remain until Mersag returned meant certain death.

So Pop crouched and trembled, and outside his foes wondered and waited.

Nor was it long before the grizzly's heavy footfalls were heard approaching. Dick Wolf, Charlie Fox, Jim Leopard and the others of their band slunk quickly under cover of the bushes. Pop Wombat's heart stood still in terror. And now, swaying majestically from side to side, the huge bulk of Mersag's grizzled body hove into view and rolled up the path to his cave.

He had that morning stalked a deer, slain it and eaten until he could eat no more; and now he was coming home to sleep.

Very contented and good-humored was Mersag at the moment when he reached his lair and found the trembling intruder facing him. He was surprised, no doubt; but after one look at Pop Wombat he gave a laugh and said: "What, in the name of folly, brings you here? Did you come to be eaten, my good Pop?"

"I suppose so," answered the other, uttering a groan.

"Well, I have often longed to pick your bones," said the grizzly, reflectively; "and it strikes me you will make a dainty morsel, with your fat ribs and tender flanks. But, to be honest, Pop Wombat, I am so filled with venison at this moment that a single mouthful more would choke me."

Hearing this, Pop began to pluck up heart.

"Spare me, Mersag!" he begged, piteously; "protect me from my enemies!"

“Which of the small creatures dares touch you, you fat coward?” returned the grizzly, with contempt. “The Law protects the harmless ones - from all save Me.”

“But I’ve broken the Law,” wailed Pop; “I was driven to desperation by a toothache, and I’ve killed Doc Pelican, and bitten the nose of Hank Hyena and skinned the shoulder of Bob Peccary! So the meat-eaters chased me in a furious pack, and I didn’t notice where I was going and ran in here to escape.”

Mersag lay over on his side and roared with laughter. Pop’s plaintive face was so comical that he could not help it. When he had finished his laugh and wiped his eyes with his paw, he said, cheerfully: “It’s the best joke I’ve heard this year! Really, Pop, you are very entertaining. But, tell me, what has become of the enemies who pursued you to my door?”

“They’re hidden in the bushes, outside,” said Pop.

“Well,” remarked Mersag, sitting upon his haunches and eyeing his victim shrewdly, “I’m awfully sorry I’ve no appetite for you at present. And you’re so fat and fit that I hate to give you up to those miserable creatures waiting outside. Let me think what is best to be done.”

“Save me! Save me, my dear, revered, handsome and most excellent Mersag! Save my life!” entreated poor Pop. grovelling before the gigantic form of the bear.

“Hâ€”mâ€”mâ€”m!” growled Mersag, reflectively. “I shall be hungry again, some day. I know it by past experience. One cannot always stalk a deer! See here, Pop, I’ll make a bargain with you. For a month I will protect you from your enemies, and you shall be free to wander where you will and to enjoy your home and your family. But at the end of a month you must return here and be eaten.”

“Mercy! Mercy!” wailed the unhappy wombat.

“Am I not merciful?” asked Mersag, surprised. “Instead of killing you to-day, I give you a month of life and freedom. Could anything be more generous and unselfish? But, of course, if you don’t care to promise---”

He raised his huge paw, threateningly, and bared his horrible teeth.

Pop grovelled again.

“I promise!” he screamed. “I promise! Save me to-day from my enemies and I promise to return in a month and give myself up to you.”

“Very good! Very good and wise,” said the grizzly, with a sleepy yawn. Pop looked full into the cavernous mouth, and shrank back trembling.

But now, Mersag walked to the door of his cave and shouted, in a loud voice:

“Hear me, Dick Wolf, and all who are with you! Pop Wombat is under my

protection from this time forth. If any harm comes to him through you, beware the vengeance of Mersag the Grizzly!”

There was no answer in words; but the brushwood crackled here and there as the scared and discomfited band of conspirators slunk away to their dens.

And now, Pop, said Mersag, swinging around, you may go. And go quickly, too, for I want to take my nap.”

Pop did not await a second bidding. In an instant he was out of the cave and shuffling along the path to his home.

He was yet somewhat confused in mind, and hardly remembered what had happened to him. But the journey was not half over before he began to realize the fatal bargain he had made for a month of life, and the terrible fate that awaited him.

Presently he began to moan and groan, and he moaned and groaned with every step until he reached home.

“Well,” said Mom, looking up as he entered, “did you have the tooth out?”

The tooth! Pop had forgotten all about it. It seemed a thousand years since he had left the cave with that miserable toothache through which he had forfeited his life.

He nodded silently in answer to Momâ€™s query. There was no need relating to her his dreadful experiences. It would only make her unhappy to know that in a month she would be a widow and their darling cubs fatherless.

A kind heart had Pop Wombat, as well as a gentle nature. So he kept his misery to himself, and devoted the month of life that remained to him in caring for his family with exceeding tenderness.

But to face a sure and horrible death is no easy matter, I assure you; and Pop worried and fretted until he lost all his plumpness and beauty and the brown fur hung upon his bones like a robe thrown over the back of a chair. Mom couldn’t make out what was wrong with him, and tried in various ways to make him confess he had a secret that was weighing upon his mind. But Pop stoutly refused to burden her with his worries, and bore alone the bitter grief that was consuming him, while day by day his form became more lean and gaunt until it afforded a sharp contrast with the plumpness of his unsuspecting family.

When the month was up he dared not bid the dear ones good-by, for that might awaken their suspicions and cause a scene. So, with a heart-broken sob that could not be repressed, he marched out of the cave and took the path leading to the lair of Mersag the Grizzly.

“Now, by the bones of my grandsire!” cried Mersag when he beheld the skinny form of the wombat, “what on earth have you been doing to yourself?

You are not fit for a vulture to eat!”

“It’s the anxiety,” said Pop, sadly. “I couldn’t help it, your honor. It has worn me to skin and bones.”

“Bah!” sneered the grizzly, and began pacing angrily up and down his lair. By chance he was fairly well fed at that moment, and although he might possibly have devoured a fat wombat, this lean specimen before him was repulsive to his appetite.

“Listen to me, Pop Wombat!” he said, pausing before his lawful prey; “I simply can’t and won’t eat you in your present demoralized condition. I’ll give you another month to get fat in, and if you are not then as plump and round as you should be, I’ll go to your cave and devour your wife and all

your children. They're fat enough, I know; and you may depend upon it I'll keep my word. Now, run along and get fat!"

Pop withdrew in an agony of fear. Get fat! How could he manage to fatten himself to order, with that awful fate overhanging his loved ones in case he failed? But he must not fail! In some way he must manage to become round again, for otherwise he would be responsible for the murder of all those most dear to him.

But the fact that his worry was now redoubled prevented Pop from accomplishing his desire. Try as he would, he grew thinner and skinnier day by day, and a great horror fell upon him. His anguish, as the second month drew near its end, was something terrible to witness, and Mom, who was loving and sympathetic to a degree, began to worry so over Pop's declining health that she also became thin and haggard. But the cubs, unconscious of all danger, remained as fat and jolly as ever, and Pop moaned miserably whenever he looked upon them.

Nothing but absolute despair could have driven a wombat to the act that Pop finally resolved upon. These animals feed upon wild vegetables and roots, as I have said, a certain instinct teaching them what is good to eat and what is not. And among the plants this instinct warns them to avoid is one called the tintain, which, if eaten, puffs up their bodies like bags of wind and causes them much incidental pain.

Pop happened to think of the tintain plant upon that very morning when he was due to render himself up to Mersag the Grizzly. He knew very well that if he presented himself in his present condition to the bear that Mersag would keep his promise and kill Mom and the cubs. So he resolved to trick the tyrant, if possible, as a last and desperate resort to save his family.

At daybreak he crawled out of his cave and began to search for tintains. These were quite plentiful, because all animals avoided them; so within a few minutes Pop was busily eating of the dreaded leaves. It required bravery to do this, but Pop had the courage of a loving and unselfish heart.

Presently he began to swell up, and to suffer oppressive pains, too; but these were nothing when compared to his anguish of mind, so he did not notice them. So ravenously did he devour the leaves that it was not long before his wrinkled skin was puffed out to its fullest extent, and he became, to all appearances, as round and plump as in his happiest days.

"Now, my darlings are saved!" murmured the Wombat, joyfully, and he went toward the grizzly's lair well content to sacrifice his own life for the sake of those dear ones at home.

But, as he rolled along, a sudden strange sound fell upon his ears, and a pungent odor of smoke saluted his nostrils. Suspicious, as all the wild are, at

unusual sounds and smells, Pop Wombat halted a short distance from Mersag's cave and hid himself in a clump of bushes. He was bound for his death, to be sure, but that was no reason instinct should not warn him to beware of other and unknown dangers.

Peering through the bushes he was startled to see terrible creatures in the dreadful form of Man grouped just outside the abode of the mighty grizzly. They had built a fire of the dead branches of trees, and upon the coals were roasting curious lumps of meat.

This was enough, in all reason, to astonish Pop Wombat; but his eyes grew even bigger next moment. For there before him, stretched broad upon pointed stakes and suspended against the trunk of a giant maple tree, swung the stripped and lifeless hide of the great grizzly himself!

Horror came upon Pop Wombat as he looked - horror, and then a growing sense of relief - and then unbounded joy.

For he was saved. His dear ones were saved. And that deadly creature Man had been the unconscious instrument of their salvation!

Softly and with grateful heart he made his way back to his own cave. Mom Wombat came anxiously to meet him, and her husband's bloated appearance and strange actions caused her much anxiety. For Pop's distended skin forced him to utter many dismal groans, yet he would stop groaning to laugh and caper madly about the room as if trying to surpass the antics of the cubs.

"He's been eating those poisonous tintains," thought Mom, "and the pain has driven him distracted."

Then she promptly knocked him over and began pummelling him briskly to get the wind out of him; and the cubs hurried up to join in the sport and cuffed poor Pop as hard as their little fists could strike.

And Pop laughed. He was happy as a prince. He even roared with merriment when Mom jumped upon him and kneaded his swelled body.

"To think you should be such a fool as to eat tintains!" she cried, indignantly, and continued her heroic treatment until Pop's body shrank slowly but surely into its accustomed condition.

Pop never minded the pain or the pounding a bit. He laughed, and hugged the cubs, and chucked his amazed wife under her double chin, and behaved in a way that was nothing less than ridiculous. The tintains are not especially dangerous, after all, and I think Pop had a right to laugh.

From that day he picked up flesh with his renewed cheerfulness, and became so fat that not a wombat in all the land could compare with him.

The Men who had hunted and killed the grizzly had disappeared from the neighborhood; Dick Wolf and his bloodthirsty pack had disbanded and were

now scattered throughout the wilderness; peace and contentment reigned in and about the cave of the wombats, and the cubs were growing big and strong day by day.

It is no wonder that Pop became fat!

The Transformation of Bayal the Porcupine

(September 1905)

It was understood by all the animals of the wilderness that Bayal the Porcupine owned a disagreeable temper. He showed neither kindness nor consideration toward those he chanced to meet, and if he spoke at all to other animals it was in a sneering or sarcastic tone that really made them wish he had remained silent.

The reason for this lay in the fact that Bayal was dissatisfied because he had been created a porcupine. As he rubbed his nose against the ground in search of insects for food, his sharp eyes saw the antelopes go bounding through the forests with the speed of the wind; saw the tribes of the wilderness shrink back in silence as the majestic tiger stalked proudly along his path; saw the huge form of the elephant loom dark against the sky and many of the wild prostrate themselves in awe of the Mighty One. Noting all this, Bayal moaned to himself:

"They are magnificent — they are grand! It is worth living to be one of the Masters of the Wilderness. But what am I? A pig! A stupid, rooting hedgehog!

Does the antelope see me? Does the tiger turn from his path because I am near? Does the elephant know a hedgehog exists? No! I am nothing. There are no songs in my praise. There are no legends telling of my deeds. I am unknown and unhonored!"

And then he would roll himself into a ball until his quills spread in every direction, and moan and groan and grieve until those who heard him heartily wished he had never been born.

Athlos, the Fairy of his race, whose duty it was to watch over the lives of the porcupines, was exceedingly sweet-tempered and loyal to her charges; but the selfishness and peevish disposition of Bayal became so hard to bear that more than once the gentle fairy was tempted to leave him to his fate and devote herself to more cheerful porcupines.

Of course, Bayal did not know of Athlos, nor that she listened always to his weary complaints, for with such knowledge he would not have dared to try her temper so severely. So he kept on grumbling and growling until the fairy, losing patience, resolved to teach him a lesson.

She appeared before Bayal one morning while he was grubbing for ants, in his usual discontented fashion; and the sight of Athlos radiant and beautiful, filled him with wonder and reverent awe and caused him to drag his quills upon the ground in humiliation.

"Tell me, Bayal," she said, looking on him with calm eyes, "why are you

always unhappy?”

“Because I am a lowly porcupine,” he answered, with eagerness. “It is not bad to be alive when one is of some importance in the world. But, if one must be so small and insignificant as I am, it were better not to live at all.”

“Do you, then, desire death?” Athlos asked, in grave tone.

The porcupine hesitated.

“No,” he replied, after a pause; “I prefer to live. But I also prefer to be an animal of importance.”

“And so you are, in your present form,” declared the fairy. “The beetles scurry from your path as you draw near; the lizard slips behind its rock, the mole seeks its burrow; even the hares and squirrels fear you. To them Bayal the Porcupine is mighty.”

“Pub! They are trash!” said Bayal, disdainfully. “It surprises me that you, most gracious Fairy, should know of the existence of such insignificant creatures as those you mention! And to win from them cither fear or respect does not content me while I am myself obliged to shrink from the leopard, the lion, the bear and the wolf. Why, alas! am I not one of those grand animals?

The fairy sighed, and looked sorrowfully upon him.

“Wisdom may not argue with folly,” said she. “Have your desire, Bayal, if you will. I am your guardian fairy. Choose, then, what form you will have among the animals of the forest or plain; and I, by means of my fairy powers, will bestow it upon you.”

To hear this delighted Bayal beyond measure.

“I will be an elephant, most gracious one!” he cried, in the instant. “Transform me, I implore you, into an elephant!”

“It shall be done,” declared Athlos.

The form of the porcupine changed, swelled and grew big. Almost before he realized the change he stood towering far above the brushwood wherein he had been wont to hide. Between his glittering eyes a huge gray trunk swayed, curling and uncurling at his will. His chest was broad and deep; limbs huge as tree-trunks supported his vast body. He raised his head and blew a shrill, triumphant blast from his throat. And then he tramped away through the wilderness, bellowing again and again in the exuberance of his joy.

He was great as the greatest; mighty as the mightiest; Lord of all the Wilderness! But in the elephant’s body was the soul of Bayal the Porcupine.

He did not stop to think of that. He did not think at all, in those first moments of his transformation. He simply gloried in his size and strength.

A python swung from a tree. The elephant caught it with his trunk, dashed

it upon the ground, and trampled it viciously through very wantonness. Then he marched on.

Presently he descried a herd of other elephants in a distant grove. He approached them, proud and arrogant. They looked upon him curiously as he drew near, but continued to feed with calm indifference. That did not please Bayal. He could see very well that he was taller than any of the herd.

These were his people now. He thrust himself into the group with impressive dignity, shouldering aside an old bull who seemed to be their leader. And the bull, with an angry cry, drew back and faced the intruder.

No one warned Bayal; but the other elephants moved slowly away from his vicinity, and before he realized that he was in danger the old bull, with lowered head and a bellow of defiance, came rushing toward him with sudden speed.

His own tusks were larger and sharper than those of his antagonist, but Bayal did not know how to use them. Moreover, he was taken by surprise. The shock threw him far back upon his haunches; there was a ripping, tearing sound, and he became conscious of a dull pain in his great chest. He looked, with startled eyes, at the angry bull who had charged him. The fierce leader of the herd had retreated a few paces and now, with red eyes and uplifted trunk, was about to rush again.

In the elephant's body was the soul of Bayal the Porcupine. He did not await the onslaught, but, swinging his huge bulk around, he fled with marvellous speed, trumpeting in terror as he went.

The rent in his breast alarmed him. When, miles away from the scene of his humiliation and defeat, he paused to find he was not pursued, the pain of his body overcame his fear of mind, and he stood still and trembled.

What could a wounded elephant do to seek relief? And why should his own people have turned against him? Was he not an elephant? The porcupines, he remembered, never interfered with their fellows, nor fought them. Were elephants less considerate of their kind? Perhaps he had made a mistake after all, to choose to become an elephant.

Again he trembled, and a great sob rose to his throat.

"Athlos! Oh, Athlos — come to me!" he moaned. And Athlos responded to the call and stood before him.

"I was wrong, Athlos, to wish to become an elephant," he said, his big body swaying from side to side with faintness. "Give me, I beg of you, another form!"

"Will you be a porcupine again?" asked the fairy gently.

"No, not that!" he cried, shuddering; "but elephants are very — too big! And they are ugly, and herd in families, and have no welcome for strangers. I

would be a smaller animal, smaller, and yet strong and masterful. Give me, I implore you, the form of a black bear!"

"So shall it be," the fairy answered, sighing; and Bayal felt himself shrink away and change in form. A moment more and the elephant shape, with its pains and fears, was gone, and Bayal found himself standing alone in the wilderness and wearing the likeness of a great bear — black and shaggy, strong and muscular.

Bayal was pleased, and shook his furry coat with fierce joy.

"Oh, ho!" he cried; "see what great claws I have! And these teeth. Now, indeed, I am of some importance in the Wilderness!"

At a jog-trot he mounted the low hills and made for the mountains beyond. The smaller animals scattered wildly at his approach, and it made his heart glad to realize how terribly he was feared.

His instinct led him to seek a cave, and the mountains would have many caves. He was near them, now.

"When I have found a cave I will hide until evening cools these rocks," he thought; "then I will go forth and hunt."

A glance showed him a jaguar crouching beside his path. Had he still been a porcupine Bayal would have instantly rolled himself into a ball. Even jaguars avoided porcupine quills. But he was a bear now: the jaguar's master!

So he tramped proudly on, with a low growl.

The jaguar's tail lashed the ground. He waited until the black bear was several paces in advance. Then the great cat launched its tawny body in the air and settled firmly upon the bear's haunches, clinging stubbornly.

Bayal whirled his fat body around with a growl of mingled surprise and pain. The jaws closed tighter, the jaguar was not to be shaken off. Fear entered into the soul of the black bear — which was the soul of Bayal the Porcupine. He wondered what he could do to escape, what a bear ought to do in such a terrible crisis. But he had not been a bear long enough to know; so he turned coward and ran.

Dreadful pains streaked through all the vast bulk of his body, and then he stumbled on a loose stone and fell, rolling over and over. When he regained his feet the jaguar still clung to his flank — motionless, evilly intent upon his death.

With great strides the frantic bear plunged forward. At last he saw a dim opening in the face of the cliff -the mouth of a cavern. It did not seem quite large enough for his body to enter. But Bayal was desperate. Summoning his last strength he dashed through the opening.

As he did so he uttered a cry that was almost a scream. For although the

hole proved big enough for his own carcass it was not big enough to admit the jaguar. Knocked from its hold the creature tumbled to the ground.

If the spirit of Bayal was cowardly, no less so was the spirit of the jaguar. The brute stood up and peered within the cave, which showed black in the shadow of the cliff; then he slunk away and disappeared.

Bayal had found that the cavern widened from its mouth, but as he staggered into the vaulted chamber beyond, his senses left him, and he swooned and fell lifeless upon the damp floor. When the awful consciousness of his plight came back to him he moaned with pain.

The suffering was at first too great to admit of thought; but in the midst of his agony he remembered Athlos, and called upon her name. Again the fairy responded, and gazed sadly into the bear's pleading eyes.

"I was — wrong — to wish — to be a bear!" said Bayal, gasping painfully the words. "Give unto me another form — good Athlos — and quickly — or I shall die!"

"Do you wish to be a porcupine again?" she asked, looking upon her foolish charge with tender sympathy.

"No, no!" he cried, trying to crawl to the fairy's feet, and sobbing with pain and longing; "not that, dear Athlos! But take away this shape of a bear, I beseech you! It is too big, and too ungainly. And the bear has dreadful enemies to maim and destroy him! I would have a form slender and fleet — a form fitted to prey, not to be preyed upon. Transform me into a jackal, fair Athlos!"

To the former porcupine his new shape seemed perfect. Relieved from his suffering, Bayal gave vent to a joyous yelp and darted from the cavern, not even remembering to be grateful to Athlos for her favor in saving him from death.

He was lean and muscular, and sped with wonderful fleetness down the mountain and into the grim forest. Night had fallen, and as the jackal ran the moon rose over the wilderness and lent to all things therein a soft and mellow radiance.

Bayal paused, squatted upon his haunches, and barked at the moon. The jackal is but a wild dog, and has a dog's instincts. He longed to sit there and bay the moon forever; but presently his insistent hunger urged him on.

"This is the true life, after all," he mused, clicking his teeth. "To be wild and free; to prey upon all other animals; to fear nothing; to hide by day and hunt by night — ah! why did I not choose in the beginning to be a jackal?"

He heard a far-away yelping in the depths of the forest and headed toward the sound. Jackals hunt in packs. The coward streak is in their nature, too, and they know they are more powerful when banded together.

After a long run Bayal entered a clearing in the forest and saw a score of fellow jackals leaping about, quarrelling, snapping at one another hungrily — but each fearful of engaging in open fight. Near them squatted their leader, old and gray, thinner than the rest, perhaps more hungry — and surely more wise. He caught a glimpse of Bayal and darted toward him.

"A stranger!" he snarled, with defiant, blood-shot eyes flashing an evil light.

"Where do you come from?"

"The mountains," answered Bayal.

"Why are you here?" the leader inquired, suspiciously.

"To join your pack, and hunt in your company," said Bayal.

"Will you obey my word?" asked the leader.

"Of course," said Bayal.

"Then you may join us."

That pleased Bayal. There seemed more chance of securing prey in company with these fierce-eyed jackals surrounding him than in hunting alone. And he was hungry.

None of the band welcomed Bayal or even noticed him except to snarl and snap if he came too near; but he was as powerful as any among them, and they had respect for his size and took care not to provoke him openly.

Before long a scout came darting in with good news. A few miles away he had tracked a wounded stag.

With joyful yelps the pack was off, following their leader in a swift lope toward the trail of their victim. And Bayal ran with the rest, his strong limbs keeping him close in the wake of the gray chieftain.

Such speed covered the ground quickly, and before long they came upon the stag, who limped painfully down a woodland path and was unable to increase his pace as he heard the hungry yelps of the jackals.

"Look out!" cried the leader to his pack; for the stag, trembling and terrified, turned suddenly upon them and. throwing up his antlered head, stood at bay.

Most of the pack drew back on the instant, yelping wildly; but Bayal did not understand. The sight of prey roused him to fury, and his hunger made him careless of danger.

He launched his body at the stag's throat; but he never reached it, for the prongs of the antlers met him.

Shaking his head fiercely, the stag dislodged his foe and trampled him under foot. Then he turned threateningly upon the circle of howling jackals which summoned him to death, yet feared to venture near.

The body of Bayal quivered, and presently he found strength to creep

away from the feet of the maddened stag. But now every member of the pack turned greedy eyes upon the maimed and helpless jackal, licking their hungry jaws as the leader said:

"He disobeyed me, and death is his portion. Fall upon him, my braves! He may hold our hunger in check until we are able to pull down the stag."

Bayal listened with horror, and shrank back toward the stag, seeking refuge where the jackals dared not tread. To be devoured by his own kind seemed a fate more dreadful than to be gored to death by the Forest King himself.

"Athlos!" he cried, terrified at the approach of death, "Athlos, come to me!"

The stag turned suddenly and dashed away, the pack yelping at his heels. Bayal, struggling for breath, faced the gentle fairy for the last time.

"I have been wrong, Athlos," he moaned, "wrong and wicked in my wish to wear a form other than my own. I have been punished, and I repent. Farewell, Athlos, for I die!"

Indeed, his eyes were already glazing as the fairy reached out and touched him, pityingly. But at the touch his pain passed from him, his heart gave a sudden throb of joy, and he stood up, full of health, and bowed low before the guardian of his race. His long quills trailed low upon the ground; his small black eyes looked happily upon the dawn of the coming day; his soul swelled with peace.

For the kind fairy had befriended him in spite of his folly and rebellion, and had given him back his own form.

In a lonely part of the wilderness Bayal the Porcupine has won the reputation among his intimates of being a wise philosopher. Indeed, he is known to envy no other animal that exists, and often declares he is glad to be an insignificant porcupine. Also, he is considerate of his neighbours, and has developed a most genial disposition.

A gray lizard that suns itself on a dead branch often converses lazily with Bayal, and listens with much respect to the porcupine's gossip.

"There goes a jackal!" the philosopher will say. "Poor creature; he lives in fear of his life, and is always hungry."

When a bear slouches along the path Bayal says to the lizard: "He looks big and strong; but he has his troubles, that fellow! I am quite sorry for the poor bears."

As for the elephants, he laughs at them, shaking his quills merrily.

"How awkward they are!" he cries, "and how they suffer if they are hurt! For the bigger the beast the bigger his pain, since there is more of him to ache. I'm glad that I am small and peaceful."

With that he curls up into a ball, with his quills spreading in every direction, and goes to sleep. And the lizard looks at him pityingly and whispers to herself:

“Poor thing! It’s not very grand to be a porcupine and root for beetles and ants. But if Bayal is happy in his lowly condition it’s no use regretting he is not a lizard!”

Mow wonderful these magic charms are! Here in the shallow pool stood the old Magic-Maker himself, while the startled deer screamed at sight of him and dashed into the forest.

The cry was heard by the father tiger, who stalked out of the thicket to find Nog scrambling from the water and grinning an evil grin of joy at regaining his natural form.

“Oh,” said the father tiger, clicking his teeth together. “I believe I owe you a debt for destroying my child. Prepare to die, Magic-Maker!”

The yellow body made a spring, but Nog dodged it and sped away through the jungle, trying to reach the safety of his home. The father tiger followed in pursuit, and an interesting race took place. Fear made the old wizard’s feet to fly, and the tiger’s leaps were long and swift, for his heart was bursting with rage and sorrow.

Near the edge of the jungle a vine tripped Nog and he fell flat upon his face. An instant later the great body of the tiger fell upon the Magic-Maker — and so the story ends.

It is a fairy tale told me by a black man who once lived on that same island of Pocofo.

UNCOLLECTED SHORT STORIES

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The Queer Visitors From Oz

The collected and complete "Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz" and "The Woggle-Bug Book" with original promotional articles and lyrics to "What Did The Woggle-Bug Say?"

In which is related the strange and wonderful adventures of the Scarecrow and his companions the Tin Woodman, Jack Pumpkinhead, the Sawhorse, Professor H.M. Woggle-bug T.E., and the flying Gump during a visit to the marvelous fairyland known as the United States of America.

BY L. FRANK BAUM

PROLOGUE

August 18, 1904: PLANET IN A PANIC OVER QUEER VISITOR

Big As a Horse and Beats the Air With Fans. ASTRONOMERS PUZZLED Special wireless telegraph to The North American from an unknown planet in the vicinity of Argo. (Copyrighted, 1904, on all planets throughout the universe.) August 17. Professor Swoggleman, the great astronomer of our planet, states that a body moving at a terrible rate of speed passed this planet last night at 11:34. The body had a most unusual appearance. It was as large as a coraman; or, as it is termed on the earth, a horse. Around the body there was a strange vibration or motion of air. This motion of the air seemed to be affected as if by the operating of large fans. The commotion seemed to be entirely beneath the body, and Professor Swoggleman thinks that the air was used to hold it up and give it motion. There was no light connected with the body. Professor Swoggleman thinks that it could not have been a meteor, unless it was just beginning its journey and had not attained the general characteristics of an aerolite. The body passed on the west side of this planet, and Professor Swoggleman was able to see it by the aid of his trans-reflector. The trans-reflector is a new invention of the professor's by which he can see on any side of our planets. A wireless dispatch has been sent to Professor Nindon, on the west side of the planet, to watch for the body. He wired back that he had already located it, and would send information about his discoveries.

August 19, 1904: FELL IN FRIGHT AT SIGHT OF MONSTER

Inhabitants of Argo Stricken by Queer Apparition. IS AS BIG AS A CAMEL. Wireless special dispatch to The North American from the unknown planet in the vicinity of Argo. (Copyrighted, 1904, on all planets.) August 18. The following dispatch was received from Professor Nindon in relation to the moving body which Professor Swoggleman discovered on the other side of our planet: "Professor Swoggleman. "Dear Sir: The body you discovered passed on the west side of this planet today. It passed very near,

so that it was unnecessary to use the telescope. Never have I seen its like in astronomy. “The body was as large as a smokdaugh; or, in the words of the earth, a camel. It moved by flopping large, fan-like things attached to its sides. “Upon its back was a cluster of curious-looking objects, tied together with rope. These curious things moved and looked at us as if they were alive and understood their surroundings. “The entire population of all the cities on this side was terribly frightened at the monster. A large number of people deserted their homes and fled to the mountains. Others rushed to the temples, while many fell prostrate on the streets. It was a common opinion that the monster had been sent to chastise the people for their wickedness. “For nearly three hours the object was in full view of the entire populace. At the end of that time it disappeared in the sky. “I am of the opinion that the monster might be one of those things which on the Earth are known as birds. Of course we have no birds on this planet; and I would not want my name used as saying it was a bird.”

August 20, 1904: 20,000 SOLDIERS LAY DOWN A KING’S ARMS

Hoodman’s Guards Flee Because of Fear of Strange Monster. PEOPLE QUIT THE CITY Special wireless dispatch to The North American from the North Star. (Copyrighted on all planets.) August 19. Over 20,000 soldiers deserted from the army of King Hoodman today. The army rebelled at an order of the King to attack a foreign monster which came through the air and alighted on Mount Haldon. The monster circled about the city of Tarnia and frightened the people so that thousands fled from every gate. Even the soldiers were frightened, and they would not fire upon the monster unless the entire army was called out. The King accordingly called out the army of 30,000 men, and the army fired upon the monster as it circled in the air. It is not thought to have been hit, but it sped away to Haldon Mountain, where it alighted on the top. The King ordered the army to ascend the hill and attack the monster. The men started, but were overcome by fear, and over 20,000 deserted. After some time, the King got 10,000 men together, and he led the army up the hill to where the monster was seen resting. Before the King reached the top the creature went into the air again and sailed away. Upon its back was a bag filled with berries which were picked from the berry plants on top of the mountain. It is supposed that the bad witch of the north picked them and gave them to the creatures.

August 21, 1904: FARAWAY WORLD IS SWEPT BY A CYCLONE

For Ten Miles it Leaves Behind a Trail of Ruin. A MONSTER OF THE AIR Special dispatch to The North American from one of the planets of the Little Bear Constellation. (All rights reserved.) August 20. A most peculiar cyclone visited this planet at midnight. The wind, instead of sweeping past the

planet, swept down upon it and seemed to turn us out of our orbit. A large number of houses were sunk into the ground by the terrible pressure of air. In some cases houses with weak foundations were sunk into the ground seven and eight feet. The results of the cyclone are to be traced for ten miles in a straight line. The cities of Jalson, Frit and Hamal suffered the greatest amount of damage. Reports from various parts of the planet state that it was not a cyclone but some air monster, which, in passing our planet, came too near. The monster in passing beat the air with its tail and fins so that it caused a rush of atmosphere, giving all the effects of a cyclone. Some of the guardians of the cities claim to have seen it. They say that the monster was as large as a penapoleo or an elephant. Others say that it was twice as large as a penapoleo. Professor Hobblesmack saw the monster through a telescope. He was about to examine it, when the creature hurled a large berry at him. The berry struck his telescope and broke it so that he could not use it until the monster was out of sight. He claims that the creature was as large as the animal known as the horse, which lives on the planet Earth. The berry which the monster hurled at Professor Hobblesmack is found on the plant North Star. A wireless telegram from there states that the monster was attacked by an army of 30,000 soldiers, and that it bewitched the entire army so that it escaped.

August 22, 1904: HEATHENS BESEECH THE GODS FOR HELP

One of the Seven Stars Shaken by Aerial Phenomenon. Wireless dispatch to The North American from one of the seven stars of the Dipper. (All rights reserved.) August 21. The gods of our people showed their wrath today by sending a terrible air monster among us. The monster alighted near the cave of the witch on Mount Sheekan, where no man dare go. It could be seen from the city at the foot of the mountain. The people were overcome by fear, and many deserted the city to flee in the opposite direction. The wise men of this planet gave forth a proclamation from the King's palace saying that the gods of the people had sent this monster as a warning to them in their sins. Great hordes of people took warning and rushed to the temples to expiate to the gods. In a few hours the entire population was praying to the gods and beseeching them to take the thing away. Their words were heard, for before dark the monster arose into the air and departed. It carried something on its back, which, it is thought, the witch of the mountain must have placed there. All the people of this planet are celebrating the departure of the monster. Even the king and wise men are celebrating within the castle.

August 23, 1904: PLANET URANUS IS SHAKEN TO CENTRE

Monster as Big as 10,000 Uranians Pays Unwelcome Visit. Planet Uranus special wireless dispatch to The North American. (Copyrighted, 1904, on all

planets throughout the universe.) URANUS, August 22. A terrible air monster passed this planet today. The monster approached from the direction of the Dipper and was headed toward the planet Neptune. It was 1000 times as large as one of our citizens. The entire population of all the cities on this side of the planet gathered to see it. The monster appeared, at first, like a small bird, such as live on the planet Earth. As it approached it gradually increased in size until it could be plainly seen. It had a head with sharp, piercing eyes, and a set of very sharp and dangerous-looking horns upon its head. Its tail stuck out in the air like the branch of a tree. Queen Nell XLIII, thinking that the monster was going to land upon our planet, called out the entire army. When the monster saw the army it flapped its wings all the more, making a terrible noise, as if trying to frighten our men. When it saw that we were not frightened it did not land. It was a good thing that it didn't, as we would have killed it. Upon its back were to be seen some strange-looking objects tied together with rope. One was thought to be a bag of meal, probably for food. The other was big and round, and resembled a foot-ball such as the people on the planet Earth use to start a fight between a lot of men.

August 24, 1904: NEPTUNE SHOCKED: MONSTER IS THERE

King Kala Defeated and His Brave Soldiers Killed. Neptune special to The North American. (All rights reserved.) August 23, 10:34 A.M. This planet is about to be destroyed. A terrible monster of the air has alighted upon it and is now fighting our army on a mountain near the city of Budaca. Reports from Budaca state that a large number of our soldiers have been killed, and King Kala, our greatest general, has been forced to withdraw his army. The monster occupied the top of the mountain, which has very smooth sides. From this position it bombarded our men with a terrible shot, which mowed our men down before they were able to approach near enough to use their weapons. It is thought that the monster is aided in the destruction of our troops by some unknown witch. The beast seems able to fight on all sides of the hill at once, and it mowed our men as if they were made of mud. King Kala has summoned aid from all sections of the planet, and it is said that he will beseech the witch of the south to dispel the terrible monster. One hour later The monster has departed. It went away in the air flying like a bird such as inhabit the planet Earth.

August 25, 1904: SATURN DARKENED: SUN WAS HIDDEN

Strange Body Passed Between the Planet and Its Luminary. Special wireless dispatch to The North American from the planet Saturn. (Copyrighted on all planets.) SATURN, August 24. This planet has been dark for sixty hours. Not a ray of light has shown upon us, and the people are in great stress. The

end of the world is feared. The professors at the colleges state that some foreign body has come between us and the sun. What it is they cannot say, and they even do not know how long it will hide the sun from our planet. Saturn, sixty hours later. The sun is out. A foreign body flying through the air hid it from sight. It is thought to have been a large meteor, and it is directed toward Jupiter. A wireless dispatch has been sent to Jupiter to prepare the people for the end, for if it strikes that planet it will demolish it. Our army was sent to attack and kill the monster and other creatures, but as soon as the army approached the giants got upon the monster's back and flew away.

August 25, 1904: GOAT TRIES TO EAT WOGGLE-BUG BUTTON

Animal Cannot Get Souvenir Down Its Throat, and is Saved by Woman.

A goat belonging to Mrs. Patrick Murphy, living in the Highlands, attempted to swallow a wogglebug button this afternoon, and caused much excitement in that section of the city known as Forty Acres. But the button did not go down, and a minute later the goat began to turn red in the face. It coughed and spluttered, and straightway started on a rampage about the Highlands. It overset a huckster's wagon, and the owner took refuge up a tree. Pedestrians sprinted for places of safety, and somebody was preparing to turn in an alarm of fire, when Mrs. Murphy appeared on the scene. She chased the goat for several blocks, calling it a variety of pet names, and finally overtook it. She made a careful examination of the goat, and, ascertaining the trouble, removed the button.

August 26, 1904: BIRD OR BEAST? ASK PEOPLE OF JUPITER

Bells Rung to Summon Dwellers to Seek a Monster. Jupiter special wireless dispatch to The North American. (All right reserved.) JUPITER, August 25. The people of this planet were awakened last night by the ringing of all the bells on the planet. The President of the planet had received a wireless dispatch from Saturn warning him of a foreign body moving through the air which would demolish our planet if it struck it. The body was discovered by the aid of telescopes. It was found to be a large bird carrying several people on its back. The bird was very large, and while it might hide the small sun of Saturn, it would not even hide a star from Jupiter. It alighted near the city of Dabin, where, the people say, the objects on its back looked like giants. They were twice as large as our men. One of them had a flat face, with one eye larger than the other, and he never winked. His head and body were stuffed with hay, which protruded through his clothing at the elbows and knees. Another was joined like a stovepipe, and at his side hung an oil can, as if he had to oil his joints occasionally. Another had a large head, forty inches in diameter. His face was set into a smile, and he smiled all the time. His eyes, nose and mouth were nothing but big holes cut into his head. One

of the giants had a terribly large head, which seemed to be very loose. The wind lifted his head from his shoulders and sent it against the straw man. The force of the blow knocked him down and the head landed on top of him. The tin man picked the head up and placed it back on the body of the giant, who continued to laugh. The company enjoyed themselves for a short time and then they departed toward Mars.

August 27, 1904: FOUR GIANTS RIDE ON BIG BIRD'S BACK

Winged Creature Big as a Horse Lands on Star. Special wireless telegraph to The North American from one of the Astrepoids. August 26. A large black bird bearing four giants upon its back landed on our planet today. The company did not seem to have any desire to injure our inhabitants, so they were allowed to go. They flew away through the air as they had come. The monster was as large as a horse and had huge wings, with a large set of horns upon its head. The giants were a curious-looking set. One of them was made of tin, and he carried an axe. The first thing he did when he alighted was to oil his joints. He was evidentally afraid he would rust. Another of the giants was not very strong, as he could not stand in the strong wind that swept over the mountain. He seemed to be made of straw, and the wind doubled him up easily.

August 28, 1904: WANDERING MONSTER KNOWN TO MARTIANS

It's the Gump, Carrying Visitors From Land of Oz. Mars special to The North American. (All rights reserved.) August 27. The great bird of the air which has visited a great many planets in the universe arrived here today. We are surprised that the natives of other planets should have been frightened, as it was simply the Gump from the "Land of Oz" bearing his companions, the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow and Pumpkinhead to the Earth. Of course the natives of other planets are not familiar with the funny things that take place on Earth, and for that reason they were probably frightened. The members of the company were the guests of the King while here. They stated that they were on their way to the United States, where they have an engagement with The North American. They left the "Land of Oz" ten days ago and had many peculiar experiences on their trip. On some of the planets the people were very much frightened, and they were unable to stay longer than an hour, lest the people would become desperate and injure themselves. After luncheon with the King, the little party left for the Earth. They expect to be well read during their stay in the United States, and the adventures which they will experience in that land are to be told in full in The North American every Sunday for many weeks.

August 28, 1904: WOGGLE-BUG KILLED: CHICKENS NOW SAFE

The Woggle-Bug has been killed, and owners of chickens breathe freer. For

several weeks chickens have been fatally stung on the head. The mystery surrounding the creature caused it to be called the Woggle-Bug. Mrs. George Schockly yesterday killed a large, queer-looking bug in her hennery, although two chickens had been stung before she struck the insect with a paddle. It will be placed on exhibition. No one recalls having seen its like before.

August 28, 1904: 'TWAS EXCITING, BUT NOT THE WOGGLE-BUG

Crowd Witnessed Spectacle With Curiosity That Indicated Great Expectations.

FLIGHT THROUGH AIR

Stretched across Arch Street, between Ninth and Tenth, during luncheon hour yesterday, was a heavy wire. Beneath it with upturned faces stood more than 5000 persons. The expressions varied from that of mere curiosity to open-mouthed astonishment. It was plain that something out of the ordinary was in the air, and the wire seemed to have something to do with it. "Dear me," said one old man, as he tried to make his way through the crowd. "What on earth is the trouble?" "It's in the air, mister," screamed an urchin. "The Woggle-Bug's comin' in and he's goin' to let us have that say of his." The old man hastily rubbed his spectacles and joined the multitude. "My, my!" he exclaimed. "I've heard so much about that Woggle-Bug! So it's to be here at last!" With that he adjusted his spectacles and set his eyes skyward. It was the difference between fiction and fact. It was not the Woggle-Bug, after all. Press agents, like poets and novelists, have license to utilize the imagination. Norman Jeffries, whom everybody knows, announced that one of his performers, supported solely by one foot and holding by his teeth a woman weighing 150 pounds, would slide down the wire. It was all right; but there was no woman. From a small wheel on the wire hung a strap. Holding the latter in his teeth, he (not Norman) made the slide. "Was that the Woggle-Bug?" asked the old man, whose eyes failed to show him the fleeting figure.

"What did the Woggle-Bug say?"

FROM THE LAND OF OZ
TO THE UNITED STATES
HERE THEY COME!
THE SCARECROW AND TIN WOODMAN
JACK PUMPKINHEAD, THE WOGGLE-BUG
THE ANIMATED SAWHORSE AND THE GUMP.
THEY ARE ON THEIR FIRST VACATION AWAY FROM
THE EMERALD CITY AND THE LAND OF OZ. THEY
WANT TO ROMP WITH THE CHILDREN OF THE
UNITED STATES. THE GLAD NEWS COMES TO
THIS NEWSPAPER AS FOLLOWS:

PROCLAMATION EXTRAORDINARY

If you can't read this, see above. TO: MR. L. FRANK BAUM By Royal Appointment Historian to the Land of Oz At the request of your Highly Esteemed Writeness, I have issued a Decree permitting my beloved subjects, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, the Woggle-Bug, and Jack Pumpkinhead, to visit the United States of America, in order that they may accumulate a great store of knowledge and experience in your most prosaic country. They are permitted to take with them the Animated Sawhorse and their journey will be made in the flying Gump. They should arrive upon your earth planet withijn a brief space of time, and I trust you will accord them a warm welcome and watch carefully over their interests.

Given under my Hand and Seal at my Royal Palace in the Emerald City in the Ninth Division of the Second Year of my Reign.

OZMA Reigning Princess of the fairyland of Oz (Successor to the Wizard of Oz)

Well, I felt like shouting "Hurrah!" when I got the above letter. These visitors from Oz are fine fellows. They may not be so worldly wise as some of the Americans are, and it is possible their ignorance of our ways and manners may get them in a few scrapes before their return to Princess Ozma. But they are used to adventures, and I have no doubt the Scarecrow and his friends will have a royal good time here. The Woggle- Bug is said to be very wise and quick to discover things, and the Scarecrow has proven more times than one that he can think and think clearly. As for Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman, he allows his kindly nature to direct his actions, and I understand the Pumpkinhead has learned to look to the Tin Woodman to protect him in case he does anything stupid and gets into trouble. I'm glad they brought the animated Sawhorse, for that remarkable creature can always be depended upon to do the right thing at the right time.

And you will notice they have arrived in the Gump, which is a sort of flying-machine they have made by tying two sofas together and putting a stuffed gump's head in front for a figurehead. The wings of this curious airship are merely four big palm leaves fastened to the sides of the sofas; and the whole thing has been given life by means of a magic powder such as could exsist in no place but Fairyland.

Whereabouts in the United States our friends from Oz first landed is a mystery ‹ just at present anyway. Walt McDougall and I (both wearing Magic Caps that render us invisible) are going to follow the Scarecrow's party wherever they go, so that we can tell about their adventures and make to pictures of them to amuse the readers of this paper. And now that they are safely arrived and have begun to explore America, let us watch and see what

happens.

L. FRANK BAUM, 1904

‘Do you see them yet?’ ‘No, but I do see fear and pandemonium on several planets. They’re on the way.’ L. Frank Baum and Walt McDougall watching for the Queer Visitors from Oz.

HOW THE ADVENTURERS LOST AND FOUND THEMSELVES

As day dawned the travelers from the Land of Oz looked over the sides of the Gump, which had been flying steadily all night, and discovered a large group of buildings just beneath them.

“Stop!” called the Scarecrow to the Gump; “we have doubtless reached our destination. Please land us as gently as possible.”

So the Gump fluttered down in the center of a large enclosure surrounded by many rows of vacant seats, and the travelers alighted and assisted the Sawhorse to reach the ground. Their first act was to place Jack Pumpkinhead upon the back of the steed, because the poor fellow, being somewhat carelessly made, can ride more safely than he can walk.

“Where are the United States?” asked Jack, looking around. “I don’t see them anywhere.”

“Where are the inhabitants of this strange place?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“Asleep, probably,” returned the Scarecrow. “You mustn’t forget that the unfortunate people who are made of flesh are obliged to sleep at night; and some of them forget to waken at daybreak. At least, that’s what little Dorothy once told me.”

“Let’s go home,” suggested the Gump, in a gruff voice; “this place is so strange it frightens me. Where are we, anyhow?”

No one could answer this question, and the Sawhorse shivered and said; “I’m getting nervous myself. Suppose something should happen!”

“Something’s got to happen,” declared the Scarecrow; “it always does. Something happened the minute we arrived. Now follow me, and we’ll explore this strange place.”

So they walked around the enclosure, and presently discovered a placard announcing a series of athletic games, which the educated Woggle-Bug read to his astonished friends. Also they chanced upon a number of dumb-bells, which delighted the Tin Woodman greatly. But while he amused his friends by lifting and juggling the dumb-bells, a strange sound ‹ like the roar of waters ‹ was heard,and Wash White, a colored groundskeeper with a track roller, appeared upon the scene, still half asleep and not noting the group of queer people that stood in the enclosure. The Sawhorse reared so wildly that he nearly dislocated Jack’s wooden joints, and the others were equally

startled at the sudden appearance of the wonderful jet-black Man of Flesh. Their cries caused sleepy Wash White to open his eyes, and what he saw made him yell with fear and run like the wind to the entrances, through which he escaped.

"What's the matter?" asked a Guard, who was tying his necktie.

"Matteh 'nuff!" screamed Wash, trembling. "I's seed de debbil an' all his relations!"

In the meantime our friends from Oz had captured the track-roller and formed a procession to explore the place. For not one of the party could guess where they were, and all were, and all were more or less uneasy at being so soon lost in a strange land. As they reached the entrance to the enclosure the Guard, trying hard not to believe in Wash White's "debbils" advanced with drawn club and chattering teeth and commanded them to halt.

At this instant the truth burst upon the Woggle-Bug, who cried in a loud voice: "I know where we are!"

"Where?" asked the Scarecrow, and the Woggle-Bug leaned close to his ear and said something in a whisper.

"Oh yes!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, nodding his head cheerfully, "how stupid of us not to have guessed!" Then he turned to his friend and said: "Come on, comrades. We've found ourselves again. We're at the stadium Athletic Field at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, in the United States of America, and the year is 1904."

HOW THE TIN WOODMAN ESCAPED THE MAGIC FLOOD

It was now that the true mettle of the adventurers from the Marvelous Land of Oz was clearly shown. Undaunted by the strange sights of this strange United States, they decided to explore the country thoroughly ‹ in the same way Columbus once did.

Soon they came to a series of small waterfalls tumbling downward in pretty cascades from a tall building on the brow of a hill. There was not much water in the channel just then, but the marble banks were broad and deep enough to contain a river

The Tin Woodman, seeing some pipes protrude from the bed of the stream, became curious to know what these queer-looking things were used for, and bravely ventured forth to explore and examine them. After a brief inspection he turned to his comrades upon the bank and said: "My dear friends, the pipes were doubtlessly placed here to ‹ "

He got no further in his speech, for suddenly some hidden power turned on a monstrous flow of water; the pipes spouted a deluge upon the poor Tin Woodman, who ‹ amidst the plaudits of his friends, who thought he had himself caused this mighty flood ‹ was swept off his feet and borne swiftly

down the stream.

In his terror the Tin Woodman clutched at Jack Pumpkinhead to save himself; but alas! the pumpkin came away in his grasp, and falling into the flood, floated along in his wake. Seeing now that something was seriously wrong, the thoughtful Scarecrow began running along the bank, hoping to find a way to save his friend, and the others followed him. Finding he was about to sink, the Tin Woodman, with great presence of mind, caught at Jack's pumpkinhead, which floated near, and used it as a life-preserver to sustain him; for otherwise the tin of which he was made would have forced him to the bottom, to become forever rusted and useless.

Finally the wise Woggle-Bug, being a swifter runner than the others, managed to seize the Tin Woodman with two of his hands, while with the other two he cleverly rescued Jack's pumpkin head, bringing both the unfortunates to dry land. Then, when the Tin Woodman sank down exhausted, but saved, at the feet of his faithful friends, the Scarecrow affectionately supported him and supplied him with quantities of oil to prevent his joints from becoming rusted, and to soothe and restore him to his usual vigor. Jack's head being replaced, that personage also found himself to be in perfect condition, so throughout the little party of adventurers the moments of intense excitement gave way to joy and thanksgiving.

"Where am I?" suddenly asked the Tin Woodman, raising his head. But none was able to reply until the discerning Woggle-Bug, whose bright eyes nothing seemed to escape, made the answer: "I'll tell you in a minute."

And then, while all the party grouped around him and listened intently, the Woggle-Bug told them, "This is the famous man-made Cascades, fountains of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition."

HOW THE STRANGERS FOUND THEMSELVES BETWEEN THE AUTO AND THE DEEP SEA

Once on a day the queer people from the Land of Oz arrived upon the seashore, where they gazed with much wonder at the vast expanse of water. Indeed, the unusual sight made them all rather timid, especially the Sawhorse; and the Tin Woodman exclaimed with a shudder: "It makes me feel rusty just to look at so much wet and dampness."

At that instant their eyes discovered a peculiar boat afloat far out among the waves. It was neither upon nor under the water, but partially submerged: and, after carefully inspecting it, the Woggle-Bug declared: "It's what they call a submarine boat, and can float both under water and upon it."

"What flag is that upon the masthead?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"I can't tell what nation it belongs to," replied the educated insect, "because the wind blows it so many different ways that it hides the design."

"Still," said the Pumpkinhead, "I'd like to know what country has designs upon this coast," and he tried to urge the Sawhorse nearer to the water. But the wooden steed seemed to regard the strange boat with fear, and refused to obey its rider, backing away with a haste that threatened to splinter its maple legs. So the Scarecrow, with rare presence of mind, cast a long rope about the neck of the frightened Sawhorse, to which they all clung in order to restrain his excited actions. "Do try to control yourself," said the Tin Woodman, in a reproachful voice. "I assure you there is nothing to be afraid of."

Before the Sawhorse could reply a horrible shriek rent the air clanging and groaning and wheezing as might well startle the stoutest nerves. The Woggle-Bug was trembling like a leaf; the Pumpkinhead gasped so hard that he coughed out three seeds; the Tin Woodman looked as if he were going to tarnish and moistened his tongue with a spurt of oil from his can, while the straw within the Scarecrow rustled as if stirred by a brisk breeze. As for the Sawhorse, terror deprived him of all reason and, as the huge automobile that had caused such consternation shot by them, the wooden steed forgot his fear of the great water and the submarine boat, and, rearing high in the air, he first threw Jack Pumpkinhead from his back and the bolted away with such vigor that all the party holding the rope was dragged over the beach and plunged headlong into the surf.

Fortunately, they were all able to scramble to dry land again. The automobile was out of sight and hearing, and the cold plunge having restored the Sawhorse to his senses, the animal soon regained his usual self-possession.

"We shall quickly dry in this sunshine," said the Tin Woodman, encouragingly; and then he again noticed the boat and added, "I really wonder what nation that flag belongs to!" As he spoke, a strong breeze fluttered the flag out from the mast and the Woggle-Bug's sharp eyes quickly made out the design.

"I know," exclaimed the insect, greatly pleased. "Tell me," pleaded the Tin Woodman, and the Woggle-Bug obligingly whispered the information in his tin ear.

"Would you mind telling the rest of us what the Woggle-Bug said?" the Scarecrow asked his friend, somewhat stiffly.

"Guess!" answered the Tin Woodman with a laugh. "That's what all the children will have to do!" But after all had failed to guess, he told them that it was the Naval flag of Germany.

HOW UNCLE ELI LAUGHED TOO SOON

Now it happened that while the travelers from the Marvelous Land of Oz

were going along a country road, the Tin Woodman discovered a queer looking object suspended from the limb of a tree.

"How curious!" exclaimed the Scarecrow. "This must be one of those peculiar fruits which grow in this magical land of America. Let us pluck it."

"No; don't touch it, I beg of you!" cried the wise Woggle-Bug, in a horrified tone. "It's one of those awful hornets' nests."

But already the Tin Woodman had thrust a tin finger into the nest, and now the angry hornets swarmed out and circled in great numbers around the adventurers. Our friends stood still and watched the little hornets with much interest for they were made of material that could not be stung. The Woggle-Bug was, of course, an exception; but his wisdom led him to do exactly the right thing.He sprang into the Gump and ordered that obedient creature to fly with him to a safe distance, beyond the brow of a neighboring hill.

All this had been watched with great amusement by old Uncle Eli, whose farm lay just across the road. Eli had never heard of the queer people from Oz, because ‹ as he said ‹ he never had any time to waste reading newspapers; so at first he thought some circus had broken loose, and approached the fence in order to get a free sight of the entertainment.

"Why, the dumb fools!" said Uncle Eli, "they're monkeyin' with that there hornets' nest!" And the thought of all the trouble the strangers were innocently encouraging was so pleasing to the farmer that he bent himself nearly double and fairly screamed with laughter.

"B'gosh!" roared Uncle Eli, wiping the tears of joy from his eyes with his chin whiskers, "the critters'll git stinged 'til they've got as many knobs on 'emas cucumbers!"

But the sound of his laughter had attracted the attention of the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, Jack Pumpkinhead, and the animated Sawhorse, and all these turned from the maddened hornets and pressed close to the fence to examine Uncle Eli. The hornets naturally swarmed with them, and thus discovering the old farmer, they at once decided that he was a victim much easier to sting than the people of straw and tin and wood. So they settled down upon Uncle Eli by the hundred, turning his chuckling laughter into howls of fear and distress. He amazed the good folks of Oz by jumping frantically up and down, swinging his arms like a windmill, and finally dashing away at a speed that made the Sawhorse envious. And every hornet followed after him.

"He has forgotten his rake," said the observant Scarecrow; "so I think I'll go and get it." With these words he climbed the fence into the field, and the Tin Woodman did likewise, for his glittering eyes had noticed a strange plant growing upon some vines nearby.

“How very odd!” said he, kicking the vines with his foot, and thereby detaching several of the peculiar formations that grew upon them. “I wonder what this plant is called?”

The Woggle-Bug, finding that the hornets had flown away, by this time had rejoined the party; and he was about to answer the Tin Woodman’s question when suddenly from amid the vines a number of streams began to squirt ‹ like those from miniature fire-engines ‹ and these struck the Tin Woodman, Jack Pumpkinhead and the Scarecrow and almost deluged them with a sticky fluid. Even the Sawhorse, which stood in the road, received a slight sprinkling.

“More magic!” exclaimed the Tin Woodman, as he ran to a safer and drier spot. “Event the plants are enchanted in this wonderful United States.”

“You were very foolish to touch those vines,” declared the Woggle-Bug.

“True; but what are they?” asked the Scarecrow, recovering from his astonishment.

Whereupon the Woggle-Bug obligingly told him; and, of course, the children who read this will have no trouble guessing that the Woggle-Bug said that they were called Squirting Cucumbers.

HOW THE SCARECROW AND TIN WOODMAN MET SOME OLD FRIENDS

No doubt every child that has followed the adventures in the United States of the living Scarecrow and the other queer people from the Land of Oz has been struck by the singular fact that everything here seems as wonderful to them as they themselves are wonderful to us. In their own fairyland they accomplish things by simple magic which we have to accomplish by complicated mechanical inventions. It is not a strange thing to them to bring a wooden Sawhorse to life by means of a magic powder; but an automobile (which is even more wonderful than a living Sawhorse) filled their simple minds with wonder. On the contrary, the Gump ‹ a carelessly made creature at best ‹ could fly much better than any of our recently invented and carefully planned flying-machines. But the latter astonished the Ozites because, not being alive, they could do so much by means of machinery alone. So perhaps the United States is, after all, as great a fairyland as the kingdom of Oz, if we look at the matter in the right way.

These strangers in our country are learning something new every day, and undergoing adventures that, while perhaps rather tame had they happened to any one of us, are very exciting to the Scarecrow and his comrades.

It was only the other day that they took a long ride in the Gump, which carried them so swiftly away from the scenes of their previous exploits that presently a vast prairie spread beneath them, and had they been better posted

in our geography they might have known they had reached the great State of Kansas.

"Let us alight here," said the Woggle-Bug. "Would it not be better to see what lies beyond the prairie?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Perhaps; but I'd like to see what an American farm is like," replied the Insect.

"So would I," added Jack Pumpkinhead. "If they grow pumpkins here I might get a new head. It strikes me that this one is not so fresh as it might be."

"But its alive, which a new one would not be," remarked the Tin Woodman, "and I can imagine a no more disagreeable feeling than to have a lifeless head upon a live body."

"Nevertheless," said the Woggle-Bug, "our friend Jack may well be interested in his own species. I, who have much more excuse for being alive than any of you ‹ since I was born living ‹ can sympathize with poor Jack. The seeds of discontent are in his brain. Let me alight and prove to him how much better off he is than all other pumpkins."

So, the Scarecrow consenting, they ordered the Gump to settle down slowly upon the prairie, which the creature did, coming to a halt at a spot near to a comfortable looking farmhouse. A man who was reaping in a field gazed upon the strange Gump with amazement; a woman who was hanging out clothes in the yard was so frightened that she dropped everything and rushed for the cyclone-cellar; and a little girl, followed by a black, curly dog, stood in the door of the house and shaded her eyes with her hand as she looked earnestly at the fluttering palm-leaf wings of the Gump. The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman decided to remain aboard, so Jack climbed over the side of the sofa that formed the body of the Gump and stood upon the ground. But the dog, now barking fiercely, rushed across from the house and began to bite the wooden legs of the Pumpkinhead.

"Call him off!" exclaimed Jack, who was trying to help the Sawhorse out of the Gump.

"I can't, for I don't know what to call him," replied the Woggle-Bug, getting down and standing beside Jack. The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, being in deep conversation regarding a cloud that floated above them, did not see the little dog, which, finding he could not bite Jack's wooden legs, flew furiously at the Woggle-Bug. The Insect might have been severely bitten had he not used two of his four arms to hold the dog at a safe distance, while with the other two he helped the Sawhorse to the ground.

Now, it is a well-known fact that dogs ‹ and little dogs, especially ‹ think it is their duty to bark at anything strange or unusual; so it is no wonder that

when the dog saw the Sawhorse he made a dash at it with so much energy that it appeared to be his ambition to tear the wooden steed to pieces. And the Sawhorse, not being pleased at the attack, kicked with both his hind legs just as the dog sprang at him. So up into the air flew the dog, howling as he went, and then the Tin Woodman, who was still looking at the cloud in the sky, saw a black ball descending through the air straight in his direction. He cleverly caught the little creature in his tin arms, and the dog, more astonished than hurt by the Sawhorse's kick, now found himself staring into the painted face of the Scarecrow. At once the dog seemed to recognize the Scarecrow, for he barked and wiggled around in the Tin Woodman's arms with every expression of delight, and licked the stuffed features of the Scarecrow with manifestations of extreme joy.

"Why, Toto ‹ my dear little Toto!" cried the Scarecrow, "where did you come from, and where is your mistress?"

The dog, of course, made no reply, but the little girl at this moment ran toward them crying: "My dear old friends! How glad I am to see you!"

"Dorothy!" shouted the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, together.

But there was no time then for more words, for the little dog sprang from the Gump to greet his mistress, thereby tripping up the Woggle-Bug, who fell across the Sawhorse and so frightened that animal that he bucked and threw both the Insect and Jack to the ground in a heap. Their jumbled bodies made a convenient stepping-stone for the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, who both left the Gump to meet and embrace the little girl in the most friendly and even affectionate manner.

As Jack disentangled himself from the heap he asked: "Who are these people?" And the Scarecrow replied: "Dorothy and Toto once visited us in the Land of Oz, and we were great chums there. But her home is here in Kansas, where the wheat fields grow."

"Oh!" responded Jack, adjusting his head, which had become turned to one side in his fall, "is that stuff wheat, that the farmer is cutting out there?"

"No, indeed," said the Woggle-Bug, who was anxious to air his wisdom. And he told the Pumpkinhead that the kind of grain was barley.

HOW THE SAWHORSE SAVED DOROTHY'S LIFE

Little Dorothy took great delight in showing the Scarecrow and his companions all the wonders of Kansas farm; and you may be sure the people from Oz were greatly pleased by this thoughtful attention. One time a cyclone had visited Kansas and whirled Dorothy far away to the Land of Oz where she had formed the acquaintance of the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow and encountered a series of thrilling adventures in their company. And now that they, in turn, had come to visit Dorothy's own country, the

girl did her best to entertain and interest her old friends.

One day the Scarecrow took Dorothy for a ride upon the Sawhorse, himself walking by her side, and presently they came to a big field that had been fenced in to confine an ugly bull that was owned by Dorothy's uncle. Pausing beside the fence, the Scarecrow happened to admire the pretty flowers growing within the field, and so Dorothy immediately jumped off the Sawhorse and climbed over the fence to pick the flowers for her friend.

But at this minute the bull spied her and came dashing up behind; so Dorothy, with a cry of fear, started to run across the field to the opposite fence, with the bull after her full tilt. The Scarecrow, seeing the child's danger, tossed the Sawhorse over the fence, and quickly following himself he mounted the wooden steed and rode swiftly in pursuit. Before long he managed to get between the fleeing Dorothy and the angry bull; but the animal, furious at this interference, hooked its sharp horns into the Scarecrow's stuffed body and sent him soaring high into the air. But it chanced that in the same instant the Sawhorse let his hind legs fly at the bull, and so powerful was the stroke of the wooden heels against the bull's forehead that the larger animal was knocked completely over, and rolled upon the ground half stunned by the shock.

Fortunately the Scarecrow, on descending to earth again, fell across the body of the Sawhorse; and although he was limp and considerably twisted by his flight and by the horns of the bull, the Scarecrow retained sufficient presence of mind to wind his long legs around the neck of the Sawhorse and so cling on to its back.

All this time Dorothy was running across the field as fast as her little legs would carry her, and the Sawhorse followed her, bearing the Scarecrow. The bull, soon recovering from the kick, and more maddened than ever, now came galloping after them so furiously that it was evident the girl could never gain the opposite side of the field in time to save herself. But the Sawhorse was swifter than the bull. He dashed past Dorothy at full speed, and as he did so the Scarecrow reached out his big arms and caught up the little girl, whom he managed to hold until the Sawhorse had crossed the field, and leaped with one great spring the stone wall that on this side formed the boundary. Next minute they had landed safely in the roadway, where stood the Woggle-Bug and the Tin Woodman, who had been taking a walk and had thus witnessed the adventure.

Right behind the Sawhorse had come the frantic, and when the wooden steed from Oz rose into the air to clear the wall, the bull, unable to stop himself, dashed headforemost against the stones. So great was the shock the bull was pushed together endwise, and flattened almost to a pancake; and

when he staggered backward to try and think what had happened to him, he was wrinkled up to just like one of those Japanese lanterns that you push end to end when not in use.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Dorothy, looking at the dazed and flattened bull from the safe side of the wall. "What will Uncle Henry say when he sees this?"

"He'll say it serves the creature right for chasing little girls, and trying to hook them," remarked the Tin Woodman, calmly.

"I'm glad the dear old Sawhorse saved my life," continued Dorothy, "but the bull cost lots and lots of money, and Uncle Henry says he's awful valuable."

"He isn't worth much now," mused the Scarecrow, looking critically at the animal, "unless he can be pulled out again and worked over into his old shape. But what ever could make such an ugly creature as that valuable?"

"Why, he's a thoroughbred," explained Dorothy, "and belongs to a very rare breed, besides."

"Indeed!" returned the Scarecrow; "what breed of cattle, then, does the creature belong to?"

"I know!" interrupted the Woggle-Bug, before Dorothy could reply. And then, proud of his knowledge, the Woggle-Bug told them truly that the breed of bull was the Galloway breed.

HOW THE OZITES MET A BEAUTY DOCTOR

It was much to be regretted that some thoughtless people made remarks upon the personal appearance of our visitors from the Land of Oz. When the sensitive Scarecrow overheard a High School say that "in her opinion he was not at all handsome," it grieved him very much. "For," said he, "while I have no desire to be exceptionally beautiful, I have always thought myself to be as good-looking as the average man."

"Yet you are not," returned the Woggle-Bug, regarding his friend critically. "I am myself very handsome for a bug; but you cannot be justly called a handsome man."

"Excuse me, H. M.," said the Tin Woodman, in a confidential voice, "but I heard a person say yesterday that there be bugs and bugs, but that you are the buggiest bug that ever bugged."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Insect, much shocked. "But don't worry," continued the Tin Woodman. "It is not possible for everyone to look as bright and beautiful as I do myself."

"You may be right," remarked Jack Pumpkinhead, "but if you are beautiful why did the lady say yesterday that your nose reminded her of Cyrano de Bergerac, and that your gaiters are dreadfully out of fashion?"

“Did she say that?” asked the Tin Woodman, suddenly becoming grave. “Then, perhaps, after all, American ladies may not consider me attractive. But what can I do? It is impossible for me to remove either my nose or my gaiters, for they are riveted and soldered to my body.”

“Well, I am sorry for you all,” said Jack. “But as long as I can remain handsome, the rest of you may console yourselves by gazing upon me.”

“True,” growled the Sawhorse. “Probably that boy meant nothing at all when he told me this morning that the Pumpkinhead reminded him of pies-an’-things. And he said you scared his pet cat into fits.”

“I? With my winning smile?” demanded Jack in a worried voice.

“Yes,” gruffly answered the Sawhorse, as he strolled away and left them.

The adventurers looked at one another earnestly, to see if their remarks could possibly be just, and to their dismay they perceived that there was much truth in the criticisms they had overheard.

“When beauty was passed around, we must have been behind the barn,” reflected the Woggle-Bug, gloomily. But at that moment he chanced to look up and saw a sign upon a neighboring house that read as follows: “Mme. QUI-SYM, BEAUTY SPECIALIST, HOMELY FOLKS MADE RADIANTLY BEAUTIFUL WHILE YOU WAIT.” “Ah!” said the Woggle-Bug, “here is our opportunity. Let us all become beautiful and then we need not worry about our looks.”

He then led his comrades into the office of the Beauty Specialist, and asked that they all be furnished with the best brand of beauty she had in stock.

“Of course you understand my treatments are expensive,” said Mme. Qui-Sym, who was a stately dame with a pug nose and a squint in her left eye. “But since you people are so famous, and have had your pictures in the papers, I will treat you free of all expenses ‹ if you will sign these testimonials.”

It was delightful to see the Tin Woodman lying upon his back and twisting his limbs into all sorts of positions in order to reduce the rotundity of his tin body. The Woggle-Bug meantime was running four little ‹ one with each hand ‹ up and down his form, to improve his complexion, while the Pumpkinhead sat patiently in a chair in a corner with a rubber mask over his face that made him look positively frightful. As for the Scarecrow, he was instructed to anoint his head liberally with a pomade from a pot labeled: “Cleopatra’s Secret Bloom of Beauty. Prepared in a Condensed and Double-Distilled Form from the Original Recipe. Never known to Fail but Once.” Meantime the Beauty Specialist was busily engaged in preparing the testimonials for the newspapers.

Presently the Tin Woodman sat up and said: “My gaiters seem to be still in the same old fashion as before, and my nose is quite unchanged. Yet I have performed the required exercises so faithfully that I have made a dent in the back of my neck with my right toe.”

“I am obliged to confess these rollers a failure,” joined in the Woggle-Bug. “A bug has no business with a complexion, anyhow. Let’s get out of here.”

The Pumpkinhead now removed his mask, but it was the same old Pumpkinhead that met their view, and Jack gazed at the Beauty Specialist reproachfully.

Soon the Scarecrow rubbed the “Beauty Bloom” from his face with a towel, and his friends were filled with horror when they found that every vestige of paint had come off also, and instead of his usual exhibit of pleasing features, the Scarecrow’s head was now nothing more than a cloth sack stuffed with bran and short bits of straw.

Great was the grief of the party from Oz at this mishap to their leader. But Mme. Qui-Sym was quite equal to the emergency.

“Fortunately, I can paint his old features on the sack again, for I have a picture of the Scarecrow that I cut from a recent newspaper.”

So she took a newspaper picture out of a drawer, to serve as a model, and then began painting, while the others watched her. But she had only made a nose and a mouth and a mustache when they all cried: “Stop!” and the Woggle-Bug added, angrily: “You’re putting another man’s features on our friend.”

“Why, to be sure!” exclaimed the Beauty Specialist. “It’s an equally famous personage, but I got hold of the wrong picture. Never mind, I’ll wash it off and begin over again.”

This time she selected the right picture from those in the drawer, and cleverly painted a new face upon the sack.

“Thanks,” murmured the Scarecrow. “I now realize now necessary a face is to the average person, for without one I found myself at a serious disadvantage.”

“Yes,” agreed the Tin Woodman, “it strikes me a face is equally useful whether it happens to be plain or beautiful. So let us abandon this absurd quest of beauty, and be thankful that we possess faces that answer all practical purposes.”

The Scarecrow looked into a mirror. “For a Scarecrow, I am really not bad looking,” said he.

“And my pumpkinhead will, I am sure hold its own with any other pumpkin head,” declared Jack. “I have yet failed to meet a tin man who is

my superior," said Nick Chopper, confidently.

"Why, then, let us turn over this Beauty Specialist to those who are more foolish and discontented than we are," observed the Scarecrow. "I am sorry all the world does not consider us handsome, but let us remember that old adage that 'handsome is as handsome does'."

"Nevertheless," said the Woggle-Bug, airily, "you had a narrow escape. For had she painted upon you that she first started, you would have lost your identity."

"Whose face was it?" asked the Scarecrow, anxiously.

And the Woggle-Bug told him that the Beauty Specialist had almost made him look like the famous financier J. Pierpont Morgan.

HOW THE ADVENTURERS ENCOUNTERED AN UNKNOWN BEAST

Now the Scarecrow and his party had been assured more than once that they are perfectly safe anywhere in the United States; so they have no fears whatever in venturing to explore this country, which is said to be highly civilized and so energetically governed that danger cannot lurk in any of its darkest corners.

Never doubting the truth of these assertions, our visitors from the Land of Oz have no hesitation in making long excursions into various parts of the country, and it was while upon one of these excursions that the adventure befell them which I am about to relate.

They had journeyed in the flying Gump to a barren and uninhabited in Arizona, and although at one time tempted to alight in a little village where a big tent with flying streamers was displayed, the Scarecrow induced them to restrain their curiosity and proceed to the alkali plains, which were an interesting sight indeed to those who had always lived in the fertile Land of Oz, where rich vegetation prevailed on every hand.

"There is not much to see here," said the Tin Woodman, after glancing around.

"That is the beauty of this landscape," declared the Woggle-Bug, pompously.

"There isn't a living thing in sight," sighed the Tin Woodman, as the Gump slowly fluttered to the ground.

"Oh, yes, there is," said the Pumpkinhead, whose eyes were considerably bigger than those of his comrades. "I see something waving at us from behind that big rock over there."

They all looked in the direction of the big rock; and there, sure enough, was something that resembled a rope with the end frayed out, moving slowly to and fro above the summit.

“Let us see what it is!” exclaimed the Scarecrow, whose curiosity was excited.

So Jack got his Sawhorse to the ground and mounted it, and the Gump fluttered with the others close to the vicinity of the big rock.

“It’s the tail of some animal,” declared the Scarecrow.

“Then don’t venture too near, until we discover if the animal is friend or foe,” suggested the Woggle-Bug, beginning to get uneasy.

Just as he spoke a curious sound came from behind the rock, and then the head of a beast, decked with a long flowing mane, was suddenly raised above the barrier.

“A lion!” cried the Woggle-Bug, and immediately the most startling confusion prevailed. For the Gump twisted sideways and tumbled its occupants to the ground, and then fled, screaming, to a far distance. The Sawhorse, plunging with fright, also threw his rider into the midst of the group and bolted away with frantic leaps.

Left thus to confront the supposed lion, and without means to escape, the confusion of the adventurers redoubled; but when the animal leaped upon the summit of the rock and began hurling stones at them with its hands, the calm judgment of the Scarecrow at once assured them that their enemy could not be a lion.

Somewhat reassured by this, the others struggled to regain their feet, and the Woggle-Bug implored the Tin Woodman to chop the strange animal with his gleaming axe. This the kind-hearted Woodman refused to do; but when a stone struck him in his chest and made a dent in his bright tin, his indignation overcame his gentleness and he seized and rushed furiously upon the foe.

The animal turned tail at once and scrambled back over the rock; but when the Tin Woodman attempted to follow it he was astonished to come face to face with a queer-looking old man, who waved him aside and shouted in a cracked voice:

“You let that beast alone! He’s mine.”

“I’m sure you are welcome to him,” said the Woggle-Bug, “but why did you allow your property to fling stones at us?”

“I was asleep,” returned the old man, in a surly tone. “This fellow escaped last night from our Circus and Menagerie ‹ Greatest Show on Earth, you know ‹ and hid out amid these rocks. And I’ve had the chase of my life to get him again. So I sat down to rest and fell asleep just as you came along.”

“We accept your apology,” said the Scarecrow politely. “But what sort of a beast is it?”

"I've got to get back to the circus," declared the man, who was dressed in a soiled and faded and otherwise outlandish costume.

"What kind of beast is it?" asked the Tin Woodman, gently but firmly.

"Admission twenty-five cents, children half price," said the man.

"Please tell us what it is!" implored Jack Pumpkinhead.

"Only one in captivity," muttered the man, turning to depart.

The people from Oz were by this time so annoyed by the old man's impolite treatment that they might have protested in a forcible manner had not the Woggle-Bug said:

"Never mind that circus fellow. I know what kind of animal it is, and will gladly tell you."

So they gathered around the Woggle-Bug, who told them that the queer creature was a Gelada baboon.

JACK PUMPKINHEAD AND THE SAWHORSE WIN A RACE AND INCITE A RIOT: THE WOGGLE-BUG RESTORES HARMONY

The Scarecrow and the Woggle-Bug, with their comrades, decided to visit the Jones County Fair, as Dorothy assured them it was one of the most interesting events of the year. But their appearance on the Fair Grounds spoiled the business of all the sideshows, for the people thought nothing quite so wonderful as the queer visitors from Oz, and it cost nothing at all to stare at them.

Dorothy decided to take them over to the race track, which was the center of attraction at the Fair. But once there, the Scarecrow became so greatly interested in the event of the day that he decided to enter the animated Sawhorse in the Free-for-all Running Race, although they warned him the race was to be run under regular Jockey Club rules, which would be strictly enforced. Jack Pumpkinhead readily agreed to ride his famous steed.

When Jack rode calmly upon the track the crowd jeered at sight of the wooden horse, and the bookmakers at once made the Sawhorse a 90 to 1 shot and found no takers. For the assembled farmers had no confidence in an animal made of wood, a hickory pedigree being considered of little account.

There was some trouble in getting a start for this great race, as the Sawhorse got nervous at mixing with common horses, and pranced around to show that although he was not so big as they were he was certainly more handsome and more agile.

At last the judge cried the word "Go!" and away swept the race horses, with the wooden animal far behind the others. But now the Sawhorse realized that it was time to prove his great speed; so he settled down to a steady run that was swift as the wind. One by one he overtook the other horses and passed them, but when the racers turned into the homestretch the

judges in their stand and all the people in the grand stand behind them all saw that the Sawhorse was in the lead, with the others stringing after him in single file.

As he dashed along, Jack carelessly leaned backward, and the wind caught his head and jerked it from the wooden neck that supported it and sent the pumpkin, which weighed over ten pounds, full tilt against the jockey who was riding just behind. The force of the blow sent the fellow sprawling in the dust of the track, but the pumpkin head, still keeping its course, struck down the next jockey ‹ and the next ‹ until all the jockeys were down.

The Woggle-Bug, who was standing outside the paling, saw Jack's head fall off, and sprang over the fence and upon the track just as the last rider had been bowled over. And by good fortune he saved the head from being smashed or cracked by cleverly catching it in his arms and running with it to Jack, whom he knew to be always uneasy without his head. The Sawhorse, coming first under the wire, had passed abruptly under the judges' stand, while the other horses had bolted for the stables; but now the dismounted jockeys came running up, angrily protesting against Jack, while the farmers in the grand stand shook their fists at the Sawhorse and yelled.

Seeing this, the Woggle-Bug, using all his arms and legs to good advantage, crawled up the outside of the judges' stand, and, making the surprised officials a polite bow, said to them: "It is evident, your honors, that the horses are all disqualified, and it is no race."

"That is my opinion," answered the chief judge; "but be good enough to explain why, under the rules, the horses are disqualified,"

So the Woggle-Bug whispered the reason in the judge's ear, and the official nodded his approval and rang the gong furiously to compel the crowd to silence.

"We have decided," he shouted, as soon as he could be heard, "to call it no race, and an eminent visitor from Oz, Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E., will now explain to you the reason."

With one hand on his heart, another waving a flag and a third throwing kisses to the ladies, the Woggle-Bug gracefully removed his hat with his fourth hand and addressed the crowd in a clear, distinct voice.

Immediately, the greatest confusion prevailed, with joy taking the place of anger; for the occupants of the grand stand shouted gleefully and tossed their hats into the air and everybody shook hands excitedly with everybody else and embraced the persons nearest them without stopping to consider whether they had been previously introduced or not.

In fact, the entire crowd was happy except one old gentleman who was

quite deaf, and therefore uncertain as to what had happened. But he had an ear-trumpet with him, so he held the big horn toward Dorothy, who sat next to him, and inquired, eagerly:

"What did the Woggle-Bug say?"

And the little girl had to shout with all her might in order to make the old gentleman hear her answer.

"The horses were disqualified because when they came under the wire, they were under weight."

THE SCARECROW BECOMES A MAN OF MEANS IN SPITE OF THE GIRLS AT A CHURCH FAIR

It was during a morning ride among the mountains that a strange accident happened to the queer people from the Land of Oz. The Gump hit his left wing against a rocky pinnacle and dumped all our friends into a great Jackdaw's nest that was perched upon a ledge of rock. At once the Jackdaws began screaming and fighting the intruders, and when at last they were driven away by the efforts of the Tin Woodman and the Woggle-Bug, it was discovered that the birds had stolen every wisp of straw from the Scarecrow's body and left nothing of him but his head and the clothes and boots he had worn. At first our friends despaired of saving the poor Scarecrow; but Jack Pumpkinhead, on searching the nest, discovered bushels of odds and ends that the thieving Jackdaws had stolen during many years and hidden in their inaccessible nest. Among the treasures were many banknotes, of large and small denominations, and with these the Ozites restuffed the Scarecrow, who was thereby in reality "made of money."

Feeling quite proud of their work, they now boarded the Gump and flew away from the nest, landing presently in a pretty town where a Church Fair was being held. All of the party except the Gump and the Sawhorse paid a visit to the Fair, where the pretty girls in attendance soon discovered the money sticking out of the Scarecrow and joyfully decided to sacrifice him to the cause of Charity. Pretty girls at Church Fairs know how to do this neatly and with dispatch, so that presently the Tin Woodman discovered that the unfortunate Scarecrow had been picked as clean by the girls as he had been by the Jackdaws! Calling to his friends to assist him, the Tin Woodman gathered up the Scarecrow's empty clothes, while the Pumpkinhead carried his head and hat and the Woggle- Bug his boots; and then they marched sorrowfully away to rejoin the waiting Gump.

Just then the Woggle-Bug, thrusting his hand into one of the boots, drew out five bills that had been crowded into the toe and so escaped the notice of the Church Fair girls. "Good!" cried the Insect, much pleased; "our friend the Scarecrow is saved!"

"How do you make that out?" inquired the Pumpkinhead.

"Why, they are luckily very big bills," returned the wise Woggle-Bug. "Three of them are Unites States banknotes for $1000 each; one is for 500 pounds on the Bank of England; and one for $100 in Canadian money. These we will take to the nearest Bank and have them changed into one-dollar United States bills, and there ought to be enough of the to stuff the Scarecrow in fine shape."

So they made haste to reach a Bank, where the Woggle-Bug presented the five bills to the to the cashier and asked to have them changed into the one-dollar United States bills. The cashier made some figures on a piece of paper and the began handing out great bundles of one-dollar bills, which the Tin Woodman and the Woggle-Bug separated and crumpled up and stuffed into the Scarecrow's clothes. When they had finished he stood before them smiling as genially as ever, and made a speech thanking the Woggle-Bug for rescuing him from ruin.

"You are not so rich as you were before the girls saw you," said the Tin Woodman; "but you may yet be considered a wealthy man."

"How many one-dollar bills did the cashier give you?" asked the Pumpkinhead.

The Woggle-Bug looked at the paper on which the cashier had made his figures and started to reply.

"Stop!" cried the Scarecrow; "I don't want anyone but myself to know how much I am worth. But you may tell, friend Woggle-Bug, how many dollars you got for that English and Canadian money." So the Woggle-Bug took him aside and told him that the cashier's figures added up to $3,431.25.

HOW THE WOGGLE-BUG PROVED HIS KNOWLEDGE OF CHEMISTRY

That adventures may be met with in the hamlets of these strange United States, as well as in the wild and unsettled portions of the country, was fully demonstrated by the visitors from Oz when they halted in a quiet little village that the Woggle-Bug might quench his thirst at a well.

This the Insect quickly did, the water being cool and refreshing; but the others of the party, who never drink anything at all because of their peculiar constitutions, began to exhibit great curiousity as to how the water got into this deep well, and why the sides were built of stone, and a dozen other things that would probably never occur to us who are accustomed to seeing wells.

Jack Pumpkinhead seemed especially interested, and, although the Scarecrow warned him not to lean too far over the well, he insisted upon gazing down into the depths beneath. The result of this recklessness might

well have been anticipated, for the pumpkinhead that Jack wore was merely set upon a wooden pin that served him for a neck, and was constantly getting twisted. Sometimes, indeed, it slipped off entirely; and this was what happened as Jack leaned over the well. Next moment his frightened companions heard a great splash as the pumpkin struck the water far below them.

"There!" cried the Scarecrow, with a catch in his breath; "our poor friend is indeed ruined!"

"A person who loses his head so easily as Jack," growled the Saw-Horse, "is never to be depended upon. All he's good for now is kindling wood." This unfeeling speech referred to Jack's body being made of wood, the various parts being jointed together so that he could use them conveniently. But without a head to direct it, this body was, in truth, of very little worth.

The Woggle-Bug, although startled by the accident to his friend, had little to say. Instead he was already busily engaged in thinking of a way of rescuing Jack from his watery grave.

It has been said, with considerable lack of kindness, that the Woggle-Bug's excellent education is of little acount, because it is applied to a Woggle-Bug intellect; but the wonderful insect is constantly proving the falsity of this scandal by doing and saying brilliant things which many people of regulation brains would be very proud of.

The Woggle-Bug's learning served him well at this critical moment, for an idea came to him that soon sent him running to a nearby drug store as fast as his slender legs would carry him.

Presently he returned with two great packets, the mysterious contents of which he quickly dumped into the well. Next moment, to the astonishment of his comrades, who were wondering if the Insect had gone crazy, a great sizzling and bubbling was heard from the depths of the well, accompanied by strong fumes, that made them gasp and sneeze as they withdrew from the edge of the curb.

Higher and higher rose the water in the well, roaring and spluttering as it came, and Jack's floating head rose with it, until the pumpkin suddenly popped high into the air and was caught by the Tin Woodman in a nervous but safe embrace.

Then, as the water slowly subsided again, the adventurers from the Land of Oz cried "Saved!" with one glad voice, and shook the Woggle-Bug's numerous hands with real gratitude.

The Scarecrow carefully wiped the moisture from the pumpkin with a wisp of straw taken from his own body, and then restored the head to Jack's neck; and you may be sure the poor fellow was highly delighted at the

reunion.

As they proceeded merrily upon their journey the Tin Woodman inquired curiously:

"My dear Wog, what was that powder you so cleverly used to rescue Jack?"

And the highly magnified Woggle-Bug, with justifiable pride in his achievement, willingly told that it was Seidlitz powder.

HOW THE WOGGLE-BUG GOT A THANKSGIVING DINNER

One day, while the Woggle-Bug was walking through the streets of a big city, he came upon a little girl who was crying bitterly. She was dressed in worn and faded garments, and her feet were bare ‹ although the air was frosty and the pavement of the street very cold. Now, the Woggle-Bug would surely have felt the cold himself had not his body been so warmly clothed, so he had pity for the poor child, and removing his hat as politely as if she were a great lady he asked:

"Tell me, little one, why are you dripping water from between your eyelids?"

"Because," she sobbed, "Th-Th-Thanksgiving is c-coming!"

"Can't it be stopped?" inquired the Woggle-Bug, sympathetically.

"I don't want it s-s-stopped," replied the child; "only I'd like a turkey for Thanks-giving, like the rich people have."

"Oh, turkey, eh?" said the Insect, thoughtfully. "Now, whatever could a little girl like you do with a turkey, I wonder."

"Ea-ea-eat it!" she sobbed.

"To be sure!" exclaimed the Woggle-Bug. "How strange I never thought of eating turkeys for Thanksgiving. But why haven't you a turkey to eat?"

"We're too poo-poor to b-buy one!" she answered.

"Well, well, my dear," said the Bug, in a kindly tone, "I'll promise to bring you all the turkeys you can eat-and I never break a promise. So shut off the water from your eyes, and turn on a few smiles."

Then, after inquiring where the girl lived, he left her and went back to his friends from the Land of Oz.

"I must have a few turkeys for a little girl to eat," said he. "Now, where would you advise me to get them?"

"This morning as I rode in the Gump," announced the Tin Woodman, "I saw great flocks of wild turkeys flying over the woods."

"Oh! That gives me an idea," cried the Insect. "I'll take the Gump and catch some fine wild turkeys for my little friend."

So he climbed into the Gump, which was always ready and willing to serve the queer people from Oz, and in less than an hour the Woggle-Bug

was floating over the forests where the wild turkeys lived.

Several flocks of the birds were then flying about; but they were shy of the Gumo, and kept away from it. Therefore the Woggle-Bug resolved to capture them in another way, and made four lassoes out of a roll of stout cord, tying a slip-noose in the end of each. The next flock of turkeys that he saw he ordered the Gump to chase, and so swift was the flight of this marvelous creature that before the birds knew it the Gump was in the centre of the flock.

Then the Woggle-Bug threw the four lassoes with his four hands, and a slip-noose settled over the heads of four of the birds, arresting their flight very suddenly. A minute after they were drawn into the Gump.

With much pride the Woggle-Bug displayed the four birds before the wondering eyes of his friends; and then, accompanied by the Scarecrow, he carried them to the home of the poor child.

"Oh! Oh!" she exclaimed; "what beautiful turkeys!"

"Only three of them are turkeys," said the wise Insect. "The fourth bird was flying with the flock, but it's quite different from the turkeys. However, I think the three turkeys will be sufficient for your Thanksgiving dinner."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said she, greatly delighted. "But what IS the strange bird?"

And the Woggle-Bug, who seemed to know everything, at once told her it was a Hornbill.

THE SCARECROW TELLS A FAIRY TALE TO CHILDREN AND HEARS A EQUALLY MARVELOUS TRUE STORY

"Tell me a fairy story about America," said the Scarecrow, as he sat upon a park bench with a group of children about him.

"All right," replied a bright-faced boy standing at the straw man's knee. "Once upon a time a man used a great ship to lay a wire rope along the bottom of the ocean, with one end of the rope resting in America and the other end in Europe. And since then a person in America can talk to a person in Europe, and recieve an answer in return, in the space of a few minutes, although it takes days to make the voyage across. And the words are carried along the wire rope by means of signs that stand for letters.

"That is indeed a surprising story," exclaimed the Scarecrow. "You must have wonderful fairies here. We have nothing to match that achievement in the country I came from."

"But now tell us a fairy story about the Land of Oz," begged the boy eagerly. So the Scarecrow began as follows:

"You must know, my dears, that in the Land of Oz everything has life that can become of any use by living. Now, I do not know of what use a live

Scarecrow can be unless he serves to amuse children; but it is a fact that, as soon as the farmer had stuffed me into the shape of a man, and made me a head by using this excellent cotton sack, I began to realize that I was a part of the big world and had come to life.

"Of course, I could not see, nor hear, nor talk at first; but the farmer brought a paint pot and a brush, and upon the front surface of my head, where a face properly belongs, he began to paint. First he made this left eye, which you observe is a beautiful circle, with a dot in the centre of it. The first object I saw with this eye was the farmer himself, and, you may be sure, I watched him carefully as he painted my other eye. I have always considered that man an artist; otherwise he could not have made me so handsome. My right is even finer than the left, and, after making it, the farmer gave me this exquisite nose with which I gathered the scent of the wild flowers and the new-mown hay and the furrows of sweet and fertile earth. Next my mouth was manufactured, so excellently shaped that I have never ceased to be proud of it; but I could not then speak, for I knew no words by which to express my feelings. Then followed these lovely ears, which completed my features. And now I heard the loud breathing of the farmer, who was fat and inclined to asthma, and the twittering songs of the birds and the whisper of the winds as they glided across the meadows, and the chatter of the field mice ‹ and many other pleasant and delightful sounds.

"Indeed, I now believed myself fully the equal of the man who had made me; but the idea was soon dispelled when the farmer sat me upon a stout pole in the cornfield and then walked away with his paint pot and left me. I tried at once to follow , but my feet would not touch the earth, and so I could not escape from the pole.

"Near me was a stile, and people crossing the fields would often stop at the stile and converse; so that by listening to them I soon learned how to speak properly. I had a fine view of the country from my elevation, and plenty of time to examine it curiously. Moreover, the crows often came and perched upon my head and shoulders and talked of the big world they had seen; so my education was unusually broad and diverse.

"But I longed to see the big world of Oz for myself, and my real mission in life ‹ to scare the crows ‹ seemed to be a failure. The birds even grew fond me and spoke to me pleasantly while they dug up the grains of corn the farmer had planted.

"One day I noticed a little girl sitting upon the stile. She was a stranger, I knew at once, and by the perplexed look on her face I guessed she had lost her way. So I spoke to her, and we made friends; and, after telling me that she had been blown by a cyclone from a far-away land called Kansas, the

girl consented to lift me from the pole and set me upon my feet. I could hardly walk at first, being unused to my legs and not knowing how to manage them; but the little girl helped me along, and, before we had traveled many miles, I could walk as perfectly as I do now.

"Since then I have had many strange adventures, but life in the Land of Oz was really peaceful when compared to the experiences I am meeting in America."

As the Scarecrow concluded his story the children clapped their hands in delight.

"Now, that was a real fairy tale, and truly marvelous!" cried the boy at his knee.

"But not more marvelous than your own tale of the wire rope that carried words across the ocean," replied the Scarecrow.

"That wire rope is called a cabe," said a soft voice behind the Scarecrow, and turning his head he saw that the Woggle-Bug had joined them and was standing behind the bench.

"Oh! do you know about the story?" asked the Scarecrow, surprised at his friend's great knowledge.

"Yes, indeed," answered the Woggle-Bug. "I can even tell you the exact year the first telegraph message was sent from America to Europe across the Atlantic cable."

"What year was it?" asked the Scarecrow, much interested.

And the Woggle-Bug, after a moment's thought, told him truly that the exact year was 1858.

JACK PUMPKINHEAD PAWNS THE SAW-HORSE

As Jack Pumpkinhead rode his wooden steed along the street one day, he passed by a department store, where his attention was arrested by a fine Mexican saddle displayed in the window. It at once occured to Jack that this saddle would be quite pretty and comfortable upon the back of the Saw-horse, and he longed to posess it. But upon the saddle was a card reading: "Only $7.93," and Jack reflected, with a sigh, that he did not own a single penny of that money which the people in America demand in exchange for merchandise. So he continued upon his way, until, presently, he noticed a peculiar emblem swinging above the door to the shop. This symbol, so remarkable to the man from Oz, was composed of three golden balls arranged in the form of a triangle, and our Pumpkinhead halted the Saw-Horse while he stared at it curiously. Then he allowed his to wander the shop window, which bore upon the glass this inscription: "A. Jackson Lily, Money Lender."

"Why, here is a way provided for me to purchase that pretty saddle," said

Jack, with real pleasure; “I have only to ask this Mr. Lily to lend me the money, and then return to the store and get the saddle. These queer American ways are not at all difficult to understand, if one tries to be intelligent!”

So he boldly rode the Saw-Horse through the doorway over which the three golden balls hung, and the wooden hoofs of the Saw-Horse clattered merrily upon the floor and soon brought a man from a little room in the rear.

“Here, you fellow! Don’t you know better than to ride into a gentleman’s shop?” exclaimed the man.

“No, indeed,” responded Jack. “If I knew better I would not do such a thing.”

“What do you want?” asked the man.

“I wish to borrow $7.93,” returned the Pumpkinhead readily.

“Very well, sir,” said the man. “Where is your security?”

“My security?” answered Jack, puzzled. “My security? Ah! My security lies in keeping my head fresh as long as possible.”

The man stared at him and shook his curly head as if perplexed.

“You must give me something that is worth $7.93 as a pledge that you will return the money,” he explained; and your head won’t do at all, as I can get better pumpkins for a nickel apiece.”

“I am sure you underestimate my worth,” replied the Pumpkinhead, stiffly. With these words he turned the Saw-Horse around in order to leave the shop; but as soon as the wooden animal began to move, the money lender expressed great interest and cried out: “Stop, my friend! I will gladly lend you the money you wish, if you will leave this wooden horse with me as a pledge.”

“That seems fair and reasonable,” answered Jack, and he at once dismounted from the back of the Saw-Horse. The man counted him out the sum of $7.93 and gave it to Jack, together with a little green ticket.

Greatly pleased with his sucess, Jack Pumpkinhead walked from the shop of the money lender and retraced his steps to the department store. The pretty saddle, surrounded by many other articles, was still displayed in the window, and, standing before the glass, Jack found no less a personage that Mr. H.M. Woggle-Bug, T.E.

“Hullo!” said he to his friend. “Come inside with me while I get a saddle for the Saw-Horse.”

“You cannot get it without money,” answered the Woggle-Bug. “These Americans want money for everything.”

“I am not so ignorant as you suppose,” declared Jack, proudly. “See! Here is the sum of money require ‹ exactly $7.93.”

“Where did you get it?” inquired his friend, curiously.

“From a money lender down the street,” replied Jack.

“And what did you give him in exchange?”

“The Saw-Horse,” said Jack.”

“Dear me!” sighed the Woggle-Bug; “why did I not keep an eye upon you? You need a guardian, friend Jack.”

“Why so?” asked Jack, wonderingly.

“Because you have given away the Saw-Horse for money to buy him a saddle. When you have bought the saddle, you will have no Saw-Horse to put it on. Does not that strike you as being an absurd act?”

“Yes, it really does,” admitted Jack.

“Then, instead of buyinh the saddle, return the money to the man and get back your Saw-Horse, which is of great value to you during your travels.”

So Jack, accompanied by the Woggle-Bug, returned to the shop of the money lender. Mr. Lily had placed the Saw-Horse in his show window, where it had attracted great attention. Somewhat dazed at being abandone by it’s master, the Saw-Horse stood with outspread legs in a patient attitude, while around it was arranged a profusion of old guitars, teapots, second-hand eye glasses and last year’s straw hats.

Jack entered the shop and handed the gentleman the money and the green ticket and asked for the Saw-Horse. But the money lender refused to make the exchange without more money.

“I must have interest,” said he, “to pay me for making the loan. One more dollar, please!”

“I have no more money,” answered Jack; “and, as I have returned to you the full sum that I recieved, I now demand my Saw-Horse.”

“I shall keep both the Saw-Horse and the money until you pay me the interest,” declared Mr. Lily.

So Jack and the Woggle-Bug returned to the street, where they gazed sadly though the glass at the beloved form of the Saw-Horse.

Goodbye, dear friend!” said Jack, wiping a tear from his left eye. “Through my ignorance I have lost your companionship forever!”

But, as they turned away, the Saw-Horse solved the problem by dashing his wooden heels against the glass so forcibly that the pane was shattered to fragments. Next moment he leaped through the opening to the sidewalk, and Jack mounted to his back rode away before the astonished Mr. Lily could recover from his astonishment.

“It is always well to avoid those shops where the three golden balls are displayed,” said the Woggle-Bug, when they were at a safe distance.

“Why do money lenders display three golden balls?” asked Jack.

“It is an ancient custom,” replied the wise Insect; “for the three balls were taken from the armorial bearings of a famous and nocle Lombard family of the thirteenth century, the head of which family was among the first money lenders.

“What was the name of that famous Lombard family?” inquired the Pumpkinhead, as he patted the neck of his Saw-Horse.

“I’ll tell you,” said the Woggle-Bug, and at once gave Jack the desired information: that it was the de Medici family.

DOROTHY SPENDS AN EVENING WITH HER OLD FRIENDS AND IS ENTERTAINED WITH WONDERFUL EXHIBITIONS

Dorothy had come to spend an evening with her old friends from Oz, who were occupying pleasant rooms provided for them by the Mayor of the city.

“It does seem like old times to be with folks from the Land of Oz again,” said she. “I think the reason I love you all is because you are so different.”

“Yes,” remarked the Scarecrow, thoughtfully. “I have learned since we came to visit America that we are quite different from your earth people. They call us fairies, and think everything we do is the result of magic.”

“But, really, you are fairies, in a way,” declared little Dorothy, “and you do wonderful things.”

“You people also do wonderful things,” said the Woggle-Bug, who was present; “but no one here seems surprised at moving-pictures, talking-machines, or telephones ‹ which surely owe their origin to magical arts.”

“That is because we are used to them,” the little girl replied. “The things that interest us are those we seldom see. Won’t you perform some of your own magic for me this evening?”

“With great pleasure,” answered the Scarecrow, “it is our duty to strive to amuse our guests, and we will attempt to do some things you seldom see in America.”

As he spoke he looked around the room and noticed, hanging upon the wall, a full-length picture of an old gentleman standing in a gilt frame. Folding his arms behind hs back the Scarecrow uttered the magic word: “Naubau!”

At once the old gentleman stepped from the background of the picture and made a polite bow to the company. The he unfastened the empty frame from the wall, caught it under his left arm, and began to dance a graceful and dignified jig, while the Woggle-Bug whistled a tune for accompaniment.

Dorothy watched him with great delight, and when he had completed his dance the old gentleman wiped his brow with his handkerchief, made another bow, hung the gilt frame upon its nail, and then stepped back into it. Next moment he was a picture again, flat and motionless as before.

“That was very interesting,” said Dorothy.

The Tin Woodman now stepped forward and made three magic signs, one after the other.

“Look out,” said he, “but don’t get frightened.”

The he took off his funnel-shaped hat and held it in front of him, and immediately a stream of water gushed from the funnel and fell upon the carpet. Dorothy screamed a little and stood upon her chair to keep from getting wet. Faster and faster came the water from the funnel, flooding all the floor of the room, and rising steadily until it almost reached the seats of the chairs on which all the party were now perched.

The Tin Woodman spoke a queer word that sounded like “chugaremolumchug!” and at once the little girl perceived enormous fishes swimming in the water. They were of many brilliant colors and all were lighted from within themselves, so that their bright colored scales glowed like the stained-glass windows of churches.

While the girl looked on wonderingly the Tin Woodman spoke another word and replaced the funnel upon his head. At once the gorgeous fish disappeared; the flood subsided, and ‹ strange to say ‹ not a drop of moisture remained upon the carpet or furniture to show where the water had been.

“That was strange and beautiful!” said Dorothy, with a sigh, as she resumed her seat upon the chair.

It was now the Woggle-Bug’s turn. The wise Insect took a flower-pot filled with fresh earth and proceeded to bury a seed within the soil. Then he set the flower-pot upon the floor and said:

“Usually, as you know, it takes many years for a tree to grow from a seed. That is because Nature supplies very slowly the elements of chemistry required to enable the tree to increase in size, and therefore it is obliged to grow just as slowly. But tonight I shall give the seed a large quantity of food it requires to make it grow, and you will be surprised at the result.”

He now crossed two fingers of his right upper hand, three fingers of his left upper hand, and four fingers of his right lower hand. Then with his left lower hand he made rapid circles above the flower-pot. At once a plant sprang into sight, rising higher and higher and spreading its breadth until it reached the ceiling, while it many branches nearly filled the room. Birds then appeared upon the limbs of this magic tree, warbling sweet songs; and although the night without was cold and dreary, this beautiful tree seemed to breathe a fragrance of summer and sunshine.

Dorothy’s eyes were fixed admiringly upon the tree when the Woggle-Bug made a quick movement with all his four arms ‹ a signal well known in magic by the people of Oz.

At once the tree shrank down into the pot and disappeared, and the room resumed its former appearance.

"That was indeed wonderful!" exclaimed the little girl. "What kind of a tree was it that you made to grow?"

"I'll tell you," said the Woggle-Bug, and he whispered to her that the name of the tree was Banyan.

HOW THE WOGGLE-BUG AND HIS FRIENDS VISITED SANTA CLAUS

"It's nearly Christmas time," said the Scarecrow, yesterday, "and I really think we ought to do something for the children of America who have welcomed us so kindly."

"What can we do?" asked the Tin Woodman.

"Why, it seems that on every Christmas Santa Claus brings the children toys for presents. So it strikes me that we also ought to furnish toys for the little ones, to prove our love for them," returned the Scarecrow.

"But where can we get the toys?" the Woggle-Bug inquired. "We have no money with which to purchase such things."

"True," acknowledged the Straw Man; "but in Oz we do without money, because when we want a thing we create it by means of the magical arts we are learned in. Let us therefore provide, by means of our magic, the toys we require for the children."

This suggestion being agreed to, they all retired to private rooms, that they might create the toys undisturbed and before long the Tin Woodman came back with an armful of tiny tin men that were exact duplicates of himself. They were all jointed in their legs and arms, and their heads could be made to turn to right or left.

Soon after, the Scarecrow entered the room carrying a lot of rag dolls that were small images of himself. These baby scarecrows were very quaint and amusing, and there was no doubt the children would like them. Then Jack Pumpkinhead brought in a number of small pumpkin heads, made out of paper, but with features exactly resembling Jack himself.

"They're hollow inside," said Jack; "but the children can fill them with candy."

When the Woggle-Bug entered the room he brought quantities of wee wogglebugs, dressed just like himself, and having their four arms and their legs made of wire and covered with fuzzy worsted. These toys were so comical that all the party laughed when they saw them.

"But our friend the Saw-Horse must not be neglected," said the Scarecrow; so he went away and did a little more magic, and soon returned with a drove of small wooden sawhorses, which had wheels under each of

their legs, so that the children could draw them over the floor by means of strings.

"Let us carry them to Santa Claus," suggested the Tin Woodman. "He can take them in his sleigh and distribute them with his other Christmas gifts."

This plan being approved, the entire party mounted aboard the Gump, which flew with them far away to the Laughing Valley where Santa Claus lives. They found the dear old man sitting in an easy chair before the fire, and smoking a short pipe. He had finished his yearly labors, and his sleigh was already loaded with packages of toys for the children's Christmas, while thw ten reindeer stamped impatiently to be off and away upon their journey.

"You are just in time!" exclaimed Santa, "and I will gladly carry your toys to the little ones."

"We would like every child to have one of them," said the Scarecrow.

"But ‹ good gracious, my friends!" cried the bluff old Santa, "you haven't enough for a quarter of the children I shall visit."

This news made the people from Oz very sad and downcast; but, noticing this, the good old man added: "Never mind; I'll make them go as far as I can, and these toys are so pretty that next year I will make a lot of them myself, so that every child may get one for Christmas. But now I must be off, or I shall never get my journey finished by Christmas morning."

So Santa Claus placed the toys in his sleigh and himself mounted the seat. The people of Oz also got into the Gump again, and then Santa said, with a sly wink:

"Let's have a race."

"To be sure," agreed the Scarecrow; "but nothing can go so swiftly as the flight of the Gump."

Santa Claus made no answer in words, but he cracked his long whip, and away shot the reindeer ‹ swift as the wind.

The Gump flew as it had never flown before, but every effort to keep pace with the sleigh of jolly Santa was in vain, and presently the people of Oz looked down through the moonlight and saw a tiny speck far ahead of them, which was their last view of the sleigh-load of toys destined for the children's Christmas.

"We are beaten," remarked the Scarecrow. "But I imagine Santa Claus is a greater magician than any that has ever lived in our Land of Oz."

And the Woggle-Bug quoted, impressively, these lines:

" 'Around the man who seeks a noble end, Not angels, but divinities attend.'

"That," said he, "was written by a famous American poet."

“What was his name?” asked the Scarecrow, curiously.

And the Woggle-Bug told him that it was Ralph Waldo Emerson.

HOW THE WOGGLE-BUG FOUND A LOST CHILD AND GAVE A LESSON IN HERALDRY

One day, while the queer visitors from the marvelous Land of Oz were strolling along the street, a woman ran up to them, crying in a loud voice:

“Help, kind people! Good people, help!”

“Certainly,” answered the Scarecrow. “Give us but an idea of how we may assist you and we will gladly be of service.”

“My child is lost!” sobbed the woman. “Please ‹ oh, please help me to find her.”

“I’ll go!” cried the sympathetic Jack Pumpkinhead, and at once he put spurs to the Saw-Horse and dashed down the street.

“Now, that is just like a pumpkinhead,” remarked the Woggle-Bug, looking after him. “He has gone to find a child he has never seen. Nor has he any description to guide him.”

“My child! My child!” wailed the mother. “Please help me to find her. You are fairies from Oz; you can do anything! Please find her.”

“Be patient, my poor woman,” said the Tin Woodman, “and tell us in what way you lost your child.”

“I was walking down the street with her, and stopped to look in a shop window. It was only for a moment, kind sirs, but during that time my little girl disappeared in the crowd, and I cannot find her anywhere. Oh ‹ boo hoo! ‹ what shall I do?”

“Stop crying, for one thing,” suggested the Woggle-Bug, “and tell us what your little girl looks like.”

“She wears a white dress and a pink bonnet,” said the woman, trying hard to suppress her tears.

“All right, I’ll find her!” exclaimed the kind-hearted Tin Woodman; and away he rushed up the street.

“Another foolish one,” remarked the Woggle-Bug. “There may be a dozen little girls running around loose and dressed in white, with pink bonnets. Tell me, madam, the color of your child’s hair and eyes.”

“She has yellow hair and blue eyes, sir,” answered the mother, beginning to weep afresh.

The sight of her tears greatly affected the good Scarecrow.

“I’ll search for your child, ma’am,” said he, and started off as fast as his wobbly legs could carry him.

“Dear me!” sighed the Woggle-Bug; “how much more useful folks could be in an emergency if they would only stop to think. My friends will never

be able to find your child, madam; so I must do it myself. And in order to recognize her, I will use one of the magical agencies we sometimes employ in Oz."

Saying this, he made a tiny prick in the woman's hand, so that a drop of blood appeared; and, taking this upon the end of his upper right-hand finger, the Woggle-Bug made a queer mark upon her forehead. It looked like this: .

"Now," said the Woggle-Bug, "the same mark will be plainly seen on the forehead of your child, wherever she may chance to be. So please remain here for a few moments, and I will promise to find your little girl and return her to your arms."

"Oh, thank you! I knew you were a fairy!" exclaimes the woman, gratefully.

"Well, of course we do things in Oz that are not done in America," admitted the Woggle-Bug, and started at once upon his quest.

The poor woman, still nervous and excited sat down to wait, and presently up rode Jack Pumpkinhead with a lot of children of all ages perched upon the Saw-Horse.

"Are any of these yours?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, indeed," answered the woman.

Just then appeared the Tin Woodman, a child riding upon his shoulders, one under each arm, and two more led by his tin hands.

"They all have pink bonnets, ma'am," he cried: "are any of them yours?"

"Not one of them!" replied the woman.

And now came the Scarecrow, pushing before him a crowd of children of all sorts and conditions.

"One of these surely must be yours, ma'am," said he, pleasantly, "for all have yellow hair and blue eyes."

"No, no!" she answered with big tears of anguish rolling down her cheeks. "Take 'em away!"

But now the Woggle-Bug strolled up, a pretty little girl held fast in his four arms.

"Here you are, madam!" said he. "See! She has the same mark upon her forehead."

And while the others looked on in surprise, the mother sprang up with a cry of joy and pressed the child to her breast, covering its little face with a hundred loving kisses.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" she exclaimed, in rapture; "I knew you would find her, for you are a fairy!"

Then she turned away, and as she did so the strange red mark disappeared from the foreheads of both mother and child.

“What was that mark?” the Scarecrow asked the Woggle-Bug.

“A peculiar design much used in heraldry,” answered the wise insect.

“But what is it called?” inquired the Tin Woodman. The Woggle-Bug smiled.

“It really has a name of its own,” said he, “and I shall be pleased to tell you what the mark is called.”

And, while they listened intently, he told them that it was the Cross Crosslet.

THE SCARECROW PRESENTS A MAGIC AUTOMOBILE TO A LITTLE GIRL

Now, although the queer people from Oz had come to the United States on a pleasure trip, they were greatly pleased when an opportunity arose for any og them to do a kindly act.

The Scarecrow was walking one day along a street where the houses were set close together and only the poorer classes of people dwelt. And soon he found, sitting upon a doorstep, a pretty little girl who had covered her face with her hands and was crying softly ‹ as if to herself ‹ in a very affecting manner.

The good Scarecrow was very sorry to see the child so grieved, so he sat down beside her and said:

“Tell me, my dear, why are you so sorrowful?”

“I ‹ I wants a ‹ a ‹ a automobile!” sobbed the girl.

“Good gracious! An automobile! Then why don’t you have one?” asked the Scarecrow, somewhat surprised that so small a child should want so large a toy.

“Because my pop’s too poor to buy me one,” she answered, looking at her new friend in amazement that he should ask such a question.

“In that case, my dear, you shouldn’t want an automobile,” said the Scarecrow, gravely.

“But I do ‹ I do!” sobbed the child, and began crying again.

Her tears were too much for the Scarecrow. “Very well; dry your eyes, and I’ll give you an automobile ‹ since that is the only thing that will make you happy,” said he.

The girl thought her queer companion was making fun of her; but he was not, indeed. He knew what an automobile was, for he had curiously noted one of the big red ones going along the street only that morning. So all he had to do was walk to the curbstone, where by means of a few magic words accompanied by the magical gestures that are usually required, he created an automobile that was exactly the same as the one he had seen.

The little girl sprang to her feet with a cry of astonishment; for there,

before the door, stood a beautiful big red touring-car, fitted up with leather cushions and handsome embroidered dust-robes and lunch and golf baskets and sparkling silver lanterns, and all the things that the most expensive automobiles possess!

"There," said the Scarecrow, "I will make you a present of this automobile. It is your very own, to do what you like with it; and I hope it will make you happy."

Then he bade her good-bye and walked away, soon disappearing around a corner. The girl half expected to see the automobile disappear, too, but it did not. It still stood before her, big and beautiful enough to delight the heart of a millionaire.

Now, this child had especially wanted an automobile because she believed it impossible for her ever to possess one, and now that the coveted machine was before her she had no idea what to do with it. She was still staring at it when her father came home from his work to get his dinner. The man couldn't refuse to believe the wonderful story the girl told him, for there stood the automobile to prove it, and he had often heard of the magical powers possessed by the people from Oz. But he was greatly perplexed, nevertheless.

"We haven't any barn to keep it in," said he, "nor any clothes good enough to wear while riding in such a swell chariot. And it would cost more than I earn to feed with gasoline. I think we ought to sell it, and buy coal for the winter. Anyhow, I've got to get back to work now, and we'll talk it over when I come home tonight."

But the girl was quite indignant at the idea of selling her beautiful automobile, and when her father had gone away and a crowd of admiring children from all over the neighborhood had congregated to gaze upon the wonderful thing, she proudly informed them that she was about to take a ride.

"Let me run it! Let me run it for you!" shouted a dozen boys, at once. Not one of them knew anything about an automobile, but most boys are willing to undertake any task that is really dangerous; so the girl thoughtfully selected one who had divided his stick of candy with her that very morning.

She climbed to a back seat and drew an embroidered robe over her faded gingham dress, and the barefooted boy chauffeur proudly mounted in front and gave a glance at the machinery.

"Get out of the way, you dubs!" he shouted to the crowd of children, who were spellbound with awe ‹ and then he shut his teeth tight together and pushed over the lever.

Slowly the huge machine, like a thing of life, moved down the street;

then it gathered headway, and, as the crowd shouted and cheered, the boy, swelling with pride, put the lever over as far as it would go. Next instant the magic automobile was flying down the street like a red streak of lightning swaying all the while from side to side and bumping furiously over the broken pavement.

At first the girl had hard work to catch her breath. Then she screamed:

"Stop it! Stop it!"

But the boy didn't know how to stop it. Pale, but courageous, he seized the steering wheel and swung the machine around a corner. They were getting into the more frequented streets, and the teams they passed crept close to the sidewalks as the great red monster whirled by them.

"It can't last long!" thought the girl, gasping for breath.

And it didn't.

They were building a house down the street, and big piles of brick had been placed far out into the roadway. Perhaps an expert automobilist could have avoided the obstruction with ease; but the boy, wild-eyed and frightened, abandoned hope.

Next minute there was a crash and a scream. The girl flew into the air, made a graceful curve, and fell flat into a big box of mortar the workmen had prepared. The boy flew higher, and landed in a sitting position on a scaffold of the new house ‹ breathless, but unhurt. As for the magic automobile, it was a crumpled mass of red slivers and twisted steel and tag-ends of leather; for it struck the brick-pile squarely, and what was left could be called by no especial name.

The boy caught a ride home on a delivery wagon and was soon back home again; but the workmen pulled the little girl from the mortar-box, and scraped her off as well as they could in the time they had to spare, and she finally walked home in a very subdued state of mind.

"That Scarecrow was right," she reflected, shivering also at the thought of what her mother would say about her soiled clothes. "Nobody ‹ not even a little girl ‹ has any right to want a thing they ought not to have. What I really need is a good switching, and the chances are that I'll get it when I get home!"

HOW THE TIN WOODMAN BECAME A FIRE HERO

Night was a rather dreary time for our friends, the visitors from the marvelous Land of Oz. For, with the single exception of the Woggle-Bug, not one of the queer people ever slept. One was straw, and one was tin; one had a carved pumpkin head, and their Saw-Horse was made of wood. To such creatures, sleep was, of course, an impossibility; but to avoid annoying other folks who DID sleep, they made a practice of standing in the corners

of a room with their faces to the wall during all the night, so they might not be tempted to talk or make a noise.

This standing still for so long a time was somewhat tedious, as any child who has tried it will be glad to acknowledge; so that one night, when the bells began clanging, and the whistles tooting, they all turned around from their corners with a sigh of relief.

"Someone else is making a racket now," said the Scarecrow. "I wonder what all those bells and whistles mean?"

But before any could answer, they heard cries of "Fire! Fire!" coming from the street.

"How dreadful!" exclaimed the Pumpkinhead. "But I dare not go near the fire, because my body is made of wood." And he turned his face resolutely to the wall again.

"Those are exactly my sentiments!" declared the Saw-Horse, and poked his nose as far into the corner as it would go.

"For my part," remarked the Scarecrow, "fire has ever been my great abhorrence. Any chance spark would soon be an end of me."

"My case is different," said the Tin Woodman. "I am composed of three-ply metal plate of the best quality, and fire does not worry me in the least. So, if you will excuse me, I'll go see if I can be of any service."

He walked into the street, and seeing people running in a certain direction, he followed them to a tall apartment building, from the windows of which smoke was pouring in great clouds. The firemen had already arrived and were shooting streams of water through some of the windows, while across the street were groups of half-dressed people shivering in the cold, who had been driven from their beds by the burning of the house. As the Tin Woodman joined the crowd of spectators, a very short but very fat woman, with variegated yellow hair and pink cheeks, rushed forward and cried out:

"Oh, my darling; my darling! He will be burned alive!"

"Where is he?" asked a big fireman, excitedly.

"There! There in that corner room!" screamed the woman, pointing to the second story.

At once the fireman placed a ladder against the building, and the big fellow bravely ran up the rungs to the window that the woman had indicated. But a burst of flame and smoke quickly drove him back again, and the woman began dancing hysterically up and down and crying: "My darling will be burned alive!"

"I'm afraid he will," said the fireman, sadly, "for no person can enter that room through the window without being killed."

“I can!” exclaimed the Tin Woodman. “Fear not, my good woman, for I will save your darling!”

A cheer broke from the crowd at hearing this courageous speech. But the Tin Woodman reflected that if a child was in the room he could not carry it out through the flames; so he looked around and discovered a big flour can, which a man had carefully carried downstairs after throwing his clocks and mirrors from the third-story window. So the Tin Woodman grabbed the big round flour can, which was also made of tin, and climbed up the ladder to the window. In through the smoke and raging flames he made his way, and in a few minutes the anxious crowd watching him from below saw him reappear, carefully holding a flour can in his arms.

“Your darling is saved!” shouted the Tin Woodman to the woman; and then a tremdous cheer greeted him as he came down the ladder and reached the ground. For no one but a tin man could ever have passed through the flames in safety, and even he was glowing red in several places where the fire had caught him. The big fireman, who admired bravery, grasped his tin hand with emotion ‹ and dropped it with a howl.

As soon as he was on the ground the Tin Woodman threw off the cover of the flour can and out jumped a little poodle dog, which the woman caught in her arms.

“Oh, thank you for saving my darling!” she cried, joyfully.

“Your darling!” growled the big fireman, disgusted and angry. “Were you raising all that row over a measly dog?”

“He isn’t measly,” she simpered; “he’s a dear, and a love, and a darling!”

The fireman turned to the Tin Woodman.

I don’t blame you for being hot,” he said, indignantly.

“It isn’t my honor that’s tarnished, anyhow,” replied the hero, with a slight sigh; “and if I’m obliged to get myself replated in the morning I shall not complain. For, after all, to the dog and the woman, the life I saved is very precious, and I am glad I had the chance to make somebody happy.”

But at this kind speech the fireman only frowned.

“You’ll feel different when you’ve cooled off,” he said.

THE TWO WISHES

In a certain village lived a pair of twin brothers, Fred and Ned. They were chubby, stout, freckle-faced boys, with big eyes and ears, warts on their hands, and usually bandages around one or another of their numerous fingers and toes.

One day the queer visitors to America from the marvelous Land of Oz visited the village, and Fred and Ned were among the children who thronged to see them. The boys were looking a bit grave and solemn just then, having

recieved a sound scolding from their mother. So their sad faces attracted the attention of the kindhearted Tin Woodman, who said to them:

"Come, look pleasant, my little men, for I have decided to give you each a fine present."

"What is it?" asked Ned eagerly.

"You shall each have one wish granted ‹ the first wish you care to make," replied the Tin Woodman. "So run along and be happy, and take care that you wish for exactly the right thing."

So the boys trotted along home filled with joy at the fairy gift of the good man of Oz, and on the way Fred said: "Look here, Ned; I'm sick of getting scolded all the time. I wish I might be a good boy."

"Well, then, you are," replied Ned with a grin, "for your first wish is bound to come true."

"That's all right. I'm glad I made a wise wish," declared Fred, soberly. "What do you wish?"

"I'm going to save my wish. There's no hurry," said Ned.

They entered the house through the back way, and there they spied on the pantry shelf a great panful of cookies, which their mother had just baked. "I'll make double the recipe for the boys'll be sure to steal half of them," she had thought.

Well, Ned filled his pockets full of cookies; but Fred shook his head and said:

"It's wrong to take those cookies without permission, so I'll let them alone."

"Your wish was magic, all right," announced Ned, with his mouth full of the delicious cookies.

Fred sighed, but said nothing.

In the afternoon, when they started for school the grocery wagon was driving by.

"Let's catch on!" shouted Ned, and ran to grab at the end board and swing there while the wagon rolled swiftly on. But Fred refused to join him, and walked all the way to school, which made him miss a fine snowball fight.

There Ned met him, and whispered: "Let's play hooky this afternoon. Some of us boys are going to the pond to skate."

"No, indeed. It is wrong to run away from school, and wrong to go skating without mother's knowledge. So I shall be good and go straight to my seat," said Fred.

"Well, good luck to you!" cried his brother, and ran off with the other bad boys.

Fred studied until his head ached, and then the teacher accused him of throwing a paper-wad that had been slyly snapped by the bad boy sitting behind him, and he had to stay an hour after school. He got home, tired and sad, just in time for supper, and found Ned, rosy-cheeked and fresh, coming in from the pond.

"The ice was great!" confided Ned. "Sorry as how you couldn't come, being as how you're so good."

"Yes, my wish has come true, and I'm glad of it," answered noble Fred. But he had not much appetite for supper, and enviously watched his bad brother, who ate with an eagerness that proved he was hungry and the food tasted good.

Next morning their uncle gave them each a dime; but Fred put the money in a missionary box to help buy neckties for the heathen in Africa, while Ned spent his for gum-drops and ate them during school hours.

"How do you like being good?" asked Ned, curiously, when they were going home.

"Pretty well; but it ain't just the feeling I thought it was," acknowldged Fred.

"Oh, you'll get used to it in time," declared his brother, and then ran and hid in the barn while their father made Fred sift the ashes from the furnace ‹ a job that even good boys cordially detest.

Next day the arithmetic examples were awfully hard. Ned got a boy that clerked in the drug store to give him the right answers, and was praised by the teacher. Fred scorned such a dishonest action, and, therefore, failed in his lesson, and was obliged to take a note from the teacher home to his mother, who read it, and promptly punished him with a trunk strap.

While he was sobbing in the woodshed (the scene of his humiliation), Ned came in and looked at his brother sympathetically.

"I'm sorry you're so confounded good, Fred," he declared. "It spoils half my fun to leave you out of all the joy that's going 'round."

"It spoils all my fun!" wailed Fred, feeling tenderly of the sore places. "Honest, Fred; it's getting so it actually hurts to be good."

Ned sighed, and rubbed a cobble-stone over the teeth of the bucksaw in a reflective manner.

"Say," said Fred, suddenly, "have you wished yet?"

Ned shook his head.

"No, I'm saving my wish."

"Don't save it any longer," pleaded Fred, anxiously. "You just wish I wasn't any better than the rest of the boys. Do it, Ned, old man, and I'll make it all right with you."

“I don’t seem to have much else to wish for, anyway,” answered Ned, slowly. “So as it’s lonesome havin’ you such a prig, I guess I’ll do it.”

And he did.

When the party from Oz stopped at the village on their return, the Tin Woodman again met the two boys, and asked:

“Well, my little men, what did you wish?”

“Why,” said Ned, “Fred wished he was good, and it hurt him; and I wished he wasn’t and now he’s all right. So both wishes came true, and we’re much obliged to you.”

The Tin Woodman looked thoughtful.

“When it hurts to be good,” said he, “it can’t amount to much. And I don’t suppose any one boy has a right to be better than the rest of the boys. So I shall not give you any more wishes, for fear they might lead you into mischief.”

Then he got into the Gump and flew away.

TIM NICHOLS AND THE CAT

Tim Nichols was not what you could rightly call a bad boy, because he was obedient to his parents, attended school regularly, got his lessons, and submitted to the Saturday night bath with remarkable courage and good nature. But there was a streak of boyish cruelty in his nature that crept to the surface now and again, and permitted him to do such naughty things as to tie a can to a stray dog, stick bramble burrs in the calf’s tail, or chase the chickens until they were wild with terror. But the thing he most delighted to torment was a cat,a nd the big gray pussy, named “Peggy,” that belonged next door, lived in deadly fear of her life every moment that Tim was around. To be sure, she had a habit of sitting on the woodshed roof to utter strange cries at the dead of night, and as Tim’s room overlooked the woodshed he usually carried a number of sticks and stones to his room, so that he could hurl them at Peggy when she became noisy. Sometimes they would miss fire, but often they struck the cat and tumbled her from the roof, and after such an event she would keep quiet until morning. But right after breakfast Tim, still relentless, would hunt her up and chase her with stones and clubs, until she hid herself, and so managed to escape the torment.

This state of affairs attracted the attention of our queer visitors from the Land of Oz, and after a consultation they decided to perform a little magic. So, through their efforts, all of Tim Nichols, except his body, was transferred into the body of the cat Peggy, and all of Peggy, except her body, was transferred into the body of Tim Nichols.

This happened just before supper, as Tim was entering the house. His parents only noticed that Tim ate as if he had not been fed for a week, and

afterward curled himself upon a rug before the fire, and went to sleep, so that they had to shake him hard at 9 o'clock to arouse him and send him to bed in the little room overlooking the neighbor's woodshed.

As for the cat, she sat upon the back fence, blinking in a very disturbed manner, for Tim's spirit, inside the fur body, was wondering how on earth he ever came to be a cat!

He smelled supper, and crept toward the kitchen hungrily, but Eliza scared him away with a broom stick, and he ran behind the ash barrel and hid until the moon came out.

Then, scarcely knowing why he did it, he jumped to the roof of the woodshed and eyed the moon with as much content as a hungry cat can possibly feel. Bye and bye a strange feeling came over him, and, for the first time since he could remember, Tim yearned to sing. So he lifted up his voice, and in a long "Ker-r-r-o-mee-ow-w-w!" sent a wailing cry soaring toward the moon.

Bang! came a big stone, bounding over the roof and just escaping his left ear.

Tim reflected. "It's that confounded boy up in the room there!" he growled. And then it struck him as curious that the boy in the window wore the body he used to own.

Chug! came a heavy piece of wood, striking his front leg a blow that made it tingle as if a thousand needles had pierced it.

"Why can't that brute leave a poor cat alone?" he grumbled, when the pain would let him think. And then, to relieve his anguish, he again lifted up his voice.

"Cuth-er-a-mee-ow! ‹ ow! ‹ ow!"

A second stick, hurled from the window, caught him unawares. Plumb against his lean body it crashed, and sent him sliding from the roof, to fall headlong upon the ground below. For a time, he lay quiet, unable to move. My, how it hurt! Would the awful pain ever cease?

No more singing to the moon tonight. After a time the stricken cat, breathing slowly, and with dulled eyes, recovered sufficiently to crawl to a refuge behind the ash barrel. And the boy went to bed and slept.

Early in the morning the people from Oz completed the magic charm, and transferred Tim back to his own body, and Peggy back to hers.

At breakfast, the boy was very thoughtful and sober, and soon afterward his mother found him sitting on the back steps and feeding Peggy out of a big bowl.

"What do you mean by giving that horrid cat all my nice cream?" demanded Tim's mother, reproachfully.

"Well," said Tim, "the poor old thing don't have much fun in life, I guess. So I'm goin' to see that Peggy has a square meal, once in a while, if I have to do without myself."

And, while Tim's mother stood by in silent astonishment, the cat lifted her face from the bowl and eyed the boy gratefully.

MR. WIMBLE'S WOODEN LEG

Mr. Wimble was one of the heroes of Spanish War. In climbing San Juan Hill a cannon ball carried away his left leg to the stump that remained and so hobbled around with the aid of a cane.

The government paid him enough pension money to enable him to live frugally, and Mrs. Wimble was such a good manager that she kept the little cottage neat and comfortable and cooked her hero husband dainty meals and cared for him most tenderly.

She placed a cushioned chair for him on the front porch every morning, where he sat and enjoyed the sunshine and admiration of the crowd of children that always assembled to look with awe upon his wooden leg and listen enraptured to his tales of war. When he wanted a match to light his pipe one of the children would eagerly run to fetch it, and it was considered a great honor to any child to be permitted to get the hero a cup of water from the pump.

At evening Mrs. Wimble helped him into the little parlor, where his slipper was warming beside the stove, and she hung up his hat and waited upon him lovingly, seeing that his place was supplied with the choicest bits she could afford to provide.

It is really delightful to know how our gallant soldiers are honored when they have suffered so much for their country.

Well, our friend Jack Pumpkinhead, one of the queer people from the Marvelous Land of Oz, passed by one day and noticed Mr. Wimble's wooden leg as he sat upon the porch sunning himself. "Poor fellow!" thought Jack. "I must really do something to relieve him!"

Jack is a bit stupid (being a Pumpkinhead), but he has a heart of oak, so he went home and performed a magical incantation that a powerful witch in the Land of Oz had once taught him. Mr. Wimble knew nothing of what Jack was doing, and went to bed in a peaceful frame of mind, his good wife unstrapping his woodenleg and hanging it on a peg beside the bed. But during the night the Pumpkinhead's incantation took effect, causing a new leg of flesh and blood to grow upon the stump of Mr. Wimble's old leg, so that when he got up the next morning he found, to his amazement, that he was just as good a man as he was before he went to war!

Mrs. Wimble was too astonished to say much. All her husband's trousers

had the left leg cut off, so she had to patch up two pair to make one of them have both legs, and this seemed to her very wasteful.

While they were at breakfast the pension agent came around and, finding the hero had now two legs, refused to pay him any more money. This made Mrs. Wimble nervous and angry.

"Get out of here!" she cried, pushing her husband toward the door. "You must find a job, now that you are an able man, and hustle to earn us a living!"

Poor Mr. Wimble knew not what to do. He had got out of the habit of work, and now found that, instead of being petted and cuddled, he would be called upon to lead a strenuous life. Formerly he had been a book- keeper, but he knew it would be quite difficult to get another position as good as the one he had abandoned to fight for his country.

As he stood upon the front porch thinking of this the children came along, but finding that their formerly interesting hero was now just like other men, they passed on their way to school with jeers and jokes at his expense.

Poor Mr. Wimble! The grocer came up, having met the pension agent, and said: "Now that you are no longer paid by the government I must have cash in advance for my goods." And the tailor followed, waving a bill for the last one-legged trouser he had made and demanding his money.

Then came Jack Pumpkinhead, proud and glad to see the hero with two whole legs, and he told Mr. Wimble of his incantation.

"Alas!" cried the unhappy man, "why did you interfere with the decrees of Providence? With one leg I was happy and honored; with two I am miserable and despised!"

"Well," said Jack, surprised to find his kind intentions had done harm rather than good. "It is easy enough to remove the leg again."

"Then do! Do it by all means!" begged Mr. Wimble, anxiously. "It was really shot away in the war, you know; and you had no right to replace it without my consent."

So Jack did another incantation that same night, and when Mr. Wimble awoke the following morning he called to his wife:

"Come, Susie, and strap on my wooden leg!" And, sure enough, there was only a stump where his left leg should have been!

As he sat on the porch that morning, telling stories to an awed group of children while his wife arranged cushions to support his back, Mr. Wimble looked and saw the Pumpkinhead.

"Thank you, my friend from Oz," said he. "I'm all right now; but for goodness' sake don't interfere in my affairs again!"

A MAGNETIC PERSONALITY

One day, while the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman were out for a walk, they were caught in a severe thunderstorm. They were on the brow of a bare hill when the storm broke, with no trees or other refuge near where they might seek shelter. The rain fell in torrents, wetting the Scarecrow so thoroughly that soon all the crispness was gone from his straw, and he sank upon the ground as limp as a rag and unable to move.

The Tin Woodman stood above his comrade in silent sympathy, while the lightning flashed around him and ran up and down his tin body and filled him so full of electricity that he became magnetized to a wonderful degree. Of course, he knew nothing of this, or that his body had acquired a power of magnetic attraction greater than 10,000 of those horse-shoe magnets which children use to pick up pins and tacks with. To be sure, he tingled in every limb, but the sensation was rather pleasant, and he did not mind it in the least.

When the storm had subsided he picked up the soaked form of his friend, the Scarecrow, and carried it back to the town, where he placed it, pulpy and helpless as it was, on a cot, and then ran out to find a bundle of fresh straw to restuff him with.

But as the Tin Woodman walked down the street his magnetized body created tremendous excitement. For when he passed Mrs. Van Druydur, the president of the Woman's Club, every hairpin shot from her head and stuck to the Woodman's body and stuck to his tin. The hatpins came also, and the lady's hat and hair both fell to the pavement, to her great confusion. A fat gentleman approached, and paused in his surprise; for the metal buttons of his vest tore themselves loose and joined the pins upon the Woodman's magnetized form, and his scarf-pin and cuff buttons followed, leaving the gentleman in a state that demanded instant attention. Mr. Spitzer now came along, and three silver dollars, four quarters and a dime sprang from his pocket and laid their flat surfaces against the Tin Woodman's breast. Also his watch and chain failed to withstand the magnetic attraction, and jerked themselves loose to fly to the Tin Man's body.

The poor Woodman attempted to restore these articles (for Mr. Spitzer was yelling "Stop thief!" at the top of his voice), but he could not keep the metal things away from him.

"They seem stuck on me, sir!" he exclaimed, with annoyance. "I'm sorry, but it can't be helped."

He started to walk away, but the gentleman followed, protesting loudly, although Mrs. Van Druydur had grabbed her hair and hat from the ground and skipped down a side street.

Soon the Tin Woodman passed a peddler bearing a tray of pocket knives,

every one of which flew to the metal body of the man from Oz and clung to it. The peddler shouted that he was robbed, and followed with the fat gentleman and Mr. Spitzer, while the Tin Woodman, becoming alarmed, started to run, and fled along the street as rapidly as possible. A shower of collar buttons leaped from the tray of another street peddler and attached themselves to the Tin Man's back. A policeman, too astonished to move, stood still while the Tin Woodman passed, and saw his silver star leap from his breast and cling to the back of the magnetized one's head. A tiny poodle dog, with a big brass collar around its neck, was drawn bodily to the fleeing Woodman's left elbow, where it yelped and howled without avail.

The Tin Woodman's body was by this time a regular curiousity shop of miscellaneous wares, and the crowd of pursuers grew thick behind him, crying to him to stop and restore the plunder. So he dodged into the open door of an electric light plant ‹ the first refuge he saw ‹ where the great dynamo was whirling rapidly to assemble the electricity that was needed. The man in charge yelled for everyone to keep back, as there was danger; but the Tin Woodman was not afraid of the dynamo, so he stood beside it while the big machine drew the magnetism out of his body that had been placed there by lightning.

Presently the hairpins and collar buttons and the poodle dog and money and other articles began to drop from his body and roll upon the floor, where their owners scrambled for them until each obtained possession of his property.

And while this restoration was taking place the Tin Woodman stole out of a back door and escaped, being very glad indeed to lose his personal magnetism.

He managed to secure a bundle of fresh straw and return with it to his friend, the Scarecrpw, whom he carefully stuffed into his usual dignified and attractive form.

"Ah, now we are all right again," said the Scarecrow, much pleased.

"To be sure," rejoined the Tin Woodman, thoughtfully. "But I think it will be best for both of us in the future, to avoid thunderstorms."

NAN'S MAGIC BUTTON

The Woggle-Bug was about to start out one morning upon his travels when little Nan Digsby came to him and said:

"Won't you please help me, Mr. Woggle-Bug?"

"Why, of course! But what can I do for you, little maiden?" asked the wise insect.

"They tell me you are a fairy, and can do anything," replied the child, "and so I want you to tell me how to cook."

“To cook!” exclaimed the astonished Woggle-Bug.

“Yes, we haven’t any mamma, you know, and I have to take care of my four little brothers and sisters and do the cooking for them and for daddy, when he comes home from work. And I’m afraid my cooking is something dreadful, for daddy said this morning the toast was burned and the coffee was dishwater and the bacon nothing but chips! Isn’t that terrible, dear Mr. Woggle-Bug? I do the best I can, but I don’t seem to know how to cook things. So I thought I’d ask you to help me.”

Now this appeal touched the Woggle-Bug’s tender heart, so he said to Nan:

“Here is a magic button, little girl. Sew it fast to your dress, for while you wear it you will be the best cook in all America.”

Very gratefully she thanked him, and ran away home with the button, which she at once sewed to her gingham dress with stout linen thread.

My! what a supper Mr. Digsby found when he came home that night! The biscuits were so light and delicious that they fairly melted in his mouth; the coffee was fragrant and clear as amber; the ham was broiled to a turn, and for dessert there was a wonderful pudding that would have made the Prince of Chefs strut with pardonable pride.

“My dear,” said Mr. Digsby, “you’ve been a long time experimenting; but you’ve struck the gait now, and if you keep on in this way, you’ll be worth your weight in gold!”

Nan did keep on in that way, and her arts of cookery soon became famous in the neighborhood. Never was bread so flakey or delicous as that Nan baked, and her fried cakes were simply marvelous. So the neighbors hired her to cook such things for them, and paid her very well for it, and soon the girl heard of a “Woman’s Exchange,” where good cakes and pies and doughnuts and other edibles were sold to people who had no time to do their own cooking or else didn’t know how.

One evening she noticed that her father looked sad and gloomy, and asked him the reason.

“Why, I fear we’re living too well for people as poor as we are,” he replied. “I’m afraid to ask how big our grocery bill is, for I haven’t paid it in weeks, and the rent is three months overdue, and I haven’t been able to save enough money to pay it. What in the world are we going to do, Nan?”

“Don’t worry about money, daddy dear!” exclaimed the little woman, proudly; “I’ve paid all the grocery bills and the rent, too, and here are thirty dollars besides. And I earned it all with my cooking!”

For more than a year the family of Digsby was the most prosperous in the neighborhood. Nan was really famous, and earned money so fast that a neat

little bank account was the result. Then a great misfortune occured. The magic button in way got loose and fell into the dough Nan was mixing for some drop cakes. She never noticed the loss, and the cakes were baked and sold at the Woman's Exchange and purchased by Mrs. Middler, a very fashionable and uninteresting lady. Mrs Middler was disgusted when she found a button in one of the cakes, but as there was a button missing from her morning robe, and this one nearly matched the others, she sewed it on and thought no more of the incident. Suddenly, however, she conceieved a great longing to cook, and as she lived in a respectable boarding house where the boarders were not allowed in the kitchen, this longing could not be gratified. However, she relieved herself by writing a fashionable cook book, which was printed and handsomely bound in delicate covers.

As for Nan, she had cooked for so long that she scarcely missed the precious button which had originally taught her all she knew. Occasionally, of course, she ruined a batch of cookies or burned the meat or failed to make light bread; but she was a deft little body, and knowing that she had no magic button to guide her, took great pains with her cooking and so got along pretty well.

ELIZA AND THE LOZENGES

Mr. Jubb was a very small man, who was ashamed of his size, for Mrs. Jubb was so large that she seemed a giantess beside him, whenever they walked out together. Naturally, Mrs. Jubb was also ashamed of being so exceedingly big, and so it was that this otherwise happy couple were rendered constantly miserable by their disparity of size.

Therefore, Mr. Jubb went to the Woggle-Bug one day and said: "O, Wise and Considerate Insect! Will you not make me taller and my wife shorter, so that we will become properly mated?" And, after some thought, the Woggle-Bug replied: "It seems to me that your request is only reasonable. So, here in this roll you will find four lozenges that are quite pleasant to take. Eat the first lozenge, and you will begin to grow big. When you are big enough, then eat the second lozenge, which will cause you to stop growing. The other two are for your wife. When she eat the first she will begin to grow small, and when she is small enough to suit her fancy, she must eat the last lozenge, which will cause her to remain always just that size. Do you understand the directions?"

"Yes," returned the little man, "but how about my clothes? Will they grow with me?"

"To be sure," answered the Woggle-Bug; "that is one of the great merits of these magic lozenges."

"Thank you! Thank you very much, indeed!" cried the delighted Mr.

Jubb, and he took the roll of lozenges and hastened home with them.

Now, the Jubbs had a little girl, named Eliza, who was taller than her father and shorter than her mother, and had a strange habit of getting into mischief.

While Mr. Jubb was explaining to his wife about the wonderful lozenges which the Woggle-Bug had given him, Eliza saw them lying upon the parlor table, and carried them away with her, thinking they were candy.

She ate the first lozenge as she walked down the lane back of her house, and before she realized what had happened she found she was tall enough to look over the high hedge beside the lane. This made her pause in surprise; but she continued to grow, and now could look right into the middle of a cherry tree. Indeed, it startled the child to find herself so big, and she began to be much alarmed as she realized she was still growing.

The tops of the houses were on a level with her chin by this time, and her feet had become so big that she stepped one foot over into the next street, to keep from getting crowded in the lane.

It was now that Mr. Jubb ran out of the house, crying: "Where's my lozenges? Where's Eliza?" But there was no need to ask the last question‹for there stood Eliza‹'most as big as a mountain, so that no one could fail to see her. She was crying, too, she was so frightened, and one of her teardrops splashed down upon poor Mr. Jubb's head and nearly drowned him, before he could scramble out of the pond it made.

"Eat another lozenge!" he screamed, knowing quite well what had caused Eliza to grow; but the girl's head was so high in the air that she could not hear him.

Still she grew‹bigger and bigger every minute! All the village people were in the streets watching her, and Eliza was afraid of hurting them; for her left heel had already crowded a barn from its foundation and her right toes were spreading into Deacon Migg's orchard and breaking down the trees.

What lucky idea induced the girl to eat the next lozenge just then I do not know, but she did eat it‹and stopped growing‹which was certainly a fortunate thing.

Little Mr. Jubb, anxious and distressed, now tried to tell the child to eat another of the lozenges, knowing it would cause her to grow small again. But she could not hear him from her elevation, although he used a megaphone, and she was afraid to stoop lest she might lose her balance and fall upon the town‹which would have caused terrible havoc. So her father got out the hook-and-ladder company, and climbed up the dizzy height until he was close to the hand that hung down at her side. Then the girl took the

little man carefully in her fingers and raised him up to her ear, where he at once shouted: “Eat the next lozenge‹quick!”

Without hesitation she obeyed, and began to grow small as rapidly as she had grown big. She replaced her father upon the top round of the ladder, and he hurriedly descended to the ground, amidst the cheers of the spectators.

Smaller and smaller now grew Eliza, until she had to step her right foot back into the lane again. By and by she was no bigger than her mother, and finally she reached her former size‹the size she had been before she fooled with the magic lozenges.

Then her father commanded her to eat the last of the lozenges, and she obeyed‹to the great relief of her distressed and loving parents and the satisfaction of the crowd.

Of course, this ended Eliza’s astonishing exhibition of magic, and afterward her father and mother were so glad to have their child restored to them that they agreed not to mourn over the loss of the lozenges, but to gladly remain the sizes that nature had made them, and be content with their lot.

And the Woggle-Bug said to himself: “I am often sorry for those poor mortals, but perhaps it is a fortunate thing that foolish and careless people do not understand the grave and important Secrets of Magic.”

THE WOGGLE-BUG ENCOURAGES CHARITY

The Woggle-Bug is greatly interested in American customs, yet our ways are sometimes difficult for him to understand.

The other day, in walking down the street, he came upon a beggar sitting silently at the edge of the curb. His limbs and body were bent and twisted, his clothing was old and ragged and his face expressed considerable misery. In his hand he held a tin cup, extended invitingly toward those who passed by.

The Woggle-Bug watched the beggar with much interest. A newsboy, who had sold out his stock, came along and cheerfully dropped a penny into the tin cup; a prosperous-looking gentleman passed by and never saw it; several ladies, nicely dressed and wearing diamonds and jewels, gave contemptuous glances at the beggar and passed on; a bartender, clothed in loud checks, rattled a silver quarter into the cup and a shop girl jumped on the car and gave the beggar the nickel which the conductor had neglected to collect from her.

Then for a time the people streamed past without seeming to know the beggar was there.

“It’s a great shame,” thought the Woggle-Bug, “that so few people take notice of this poor man and give him alms. I’ll see if I cannot help him.”

Then he ran to a big hardware store, and by leaving his watch for security (for he had no money) managed to borrow from the proprietor four large and bright tin cups. With these he returned to where the beggar sat, and holding one of the cups in each of his four hands he began rattling them noisily one against another, and crying out: "Help the poor, good people! Please help the poor!"

People stopped to stare wonderingly at the Woggle-Bug, and then laughingly began to rain pennies and nickels into his tin cups. If afforded them much amusement to see the four-handed, highly magnified insect thrusting his four cups in four directions at once, and when people are amused they are usually quite willing to pay for it. Before long the cups became so full that the Woggle-Bug had to empty them into the pockets of the beggar; and then he began to fill them anew.

For hours the generous Woggle-Bug stood there collecting coins for the miserable beggar, whose countenance seemed to grow more and more sad and pitiful as his wealth increased. But by and by evening came on and the crowds grew thinner, because so many people had gone home to supper. And now every pocket the beggar possessed was bulging with the weight of the money the Woggle-Bug had collected.

"These American people are not really uncharitable," said the insect. "I think the reason they did not stop to give you alms was because they failed to notice you sitting here by the curb."

"Oh, that's all right," answered the beggar, speaking quite cheerfully and for the first time. "Business is usually pretty good on this corner, but I have never known it half as good as it was to-day. I think I'll go home to dinner. Much obliged to you, I'm sure."

To the Woggle-Bug's surprise he straightened out his crooked limbs and slowly rose to his feet.

"A fellow gets cramped sitting like that all day," he remarked. "Here is my card; come and call on me some evening. I'll be glad to see you."

He thrust a soiled card into the Woggle-Bug's hand and walked away with scarcely a limp.

"Clever fellow, that," remarked a policeman, as the Insect gazed wonderingly after the beggar's departing form. "He's one of the syndicate, you know."

"What's that?" asked the Woggle-Bug.

"Why, the beggars' syndicate have all the good corners in the city, and pay us to let them stay here and keep the other fellows out. It's a pretty good business, too, and some of 'em get pretty rich. Why, only last week I was invited to the 'Blind and Crippled Beggars' Ball,' that was held in Turner

Hall, and they were dressed just as gay as the Barbers' Ball the week before."

"But it's a shame and an imposition!" declared the Woggle-Bug, indignantly, "to solicit alms from the public when help is not needed!"

"Perhaps it is," answered the policeman, reflectively, "but it does the public a heap of good, too. Many a person drops a nickel into a tin cup and feels good all day because he's dome something generous. Lots of times it's real charity, too. They aren't all frauds, you know. I've thought it all over, and I believe the beggars a good thing, for they encourage the people to kind actions, and my experience with people is that they need just that sort of encouragement."

"Perhaps you are right," said the Woggle-Bug, and he carried the cups back to the hardware store and redeemed his watch.

THE WOGGLE-BUG BOOK

Wherein is related the Unique Adventures of the Woggle-Bug One day Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E.; becoming separated from the comrades who had accompanied him from the Land of Oz and finding that time hung heavy on his hands (he had four of them), decided to walk down the Main street of the City and try to discover something or other of interest. The initials "H. M." before his name meant "Highly Magnified," for this Woggle-Bug was several thousand times bigger than any other woggle-bug you ever saw. ,And the initials "T. E." following his name meant "Thoroughly Educated"- and so he was, in the Land of Oz. But his education, being applied to a woggle-bug intellect, was note at all remarkable in this country, where everything is quite, different from Oz. Yet the Woggle-Bug did not suspect, this, and being, like many other thoroughly educated persons, proud of his mental attainments, he marched along the street with an air of importance that made one wonder what great thoughts were occupying his massive brain.

Being about as big, in his magnified state, as a man, the Woggle-Bug took care to clothe himself like a man; only, instead of choosing sober colors for his garments, he delighted in the most gorgeous reds and yellows and blues and greens; so that if you looked at him long the brilliance of his clothing was liable to dazzle your eyes.

I suppose the Woggle-Bug did not realize at all what a queer appearance he made. Being rather nervous, he seldom looked into a mirror; and as the people he met avoided telling him he was unusual, he had fallen into the habit of considering himself merely an ordinary citizen of the big city wherein he resided.

So the Woggle-Bug strutted proudly along the street, swinging a cane in

one hand, flourishing a pink handkerchief in another, fumbling his watch-fob with another, and feeling if his necktie was straight with another. Having four hands to use would prove rather puzzling to you or me, I imagine; but the Woggle-Bug was thoroughly accustomed to them.

Presently he came to a very fine store with big plate-glass windows, and standing in the center of the biggest window was a creature so beautiful and radiant and altogether charming that the first glance at her nearly took his breath away. Her complexion was lovely, for it was wax; but the thing that really caught the Woggle-Bug's fancy was the marvelous dress she wore. Indeed, it was the latest (last year's) Paris model, although the Woggle-Bug did not know that; and the designer must have had a real woggly love for bright colors, for the gown was made of cloth covered with big. checks which were so loud that the fashion books called them " Wagnerian Plaids."

Never had our friend the Woggle-Bug seen such a beautiful gown before, and it affected him so strongly that he straightway fell in love with the entire outfit-even to the wax-complexioned lady herself. Very politely he tipped his hat to her; but she stared coldly back without in any way acknowledging the courtesy.

"Never mind," he thought; '"faint heart never won fair lady.' And I'm determined to win this kaleidoscope of beauty or perish in the attempt!" You will notice that our insect had a way of using big words to express himself, which leads us to suspect that the school system in Oz is the same they employ in Boston.

As, with swelling heart, the Woggle-Bug feasted his eyes upon the enchanting vision, a small green tag that was attached to a button of the waist suddenly attracted his attention. Upon the tag was marked: "Price $7.93-GREATLY REDUCED."

"Ah!" murmured the Woggle-Bug; -my darling is in greatly reduced circumstances, and $7.93 will make her mine! Where, oh where, shall I find the seven ninety-three wherewith to liberate this divinity and make her Mrs. Woggle-Bug?"

"Move on!" said a gruff policeman, who came along swinging his club. And the Woggle-Bug obediently moved on, his brain working fast and furious in the endeavor to think of a way to procure seven dollars and ninety-three cents.

You see, in the Land of Oz they use no money at all, so that when the Woggle-Bug arrived in America he did not possess a single penny. And no one had presented him with any money since.

"Yet there must be several ways to procure money in this country," he reflected; "for otherwise everybody would be as penniless as I am. But how,

I wonder, do they man- age to get it?"

Just then he came to a side street where a number of men were at work digging a long and deep ditch in which to lay a new sewer.

"Now these men," thought the Woggle-Bug, "must get money for shoveling all that earth, else-they wouldn't do it. Here is my chance to win the charming vision of beauty in the shop window!"

Seeking out the foreman, he asked for work, and the foreman agreed to hire him.

"How much do you pay these workmen?" asked the highly magnified one.

"Two dollars a day," answered the foreman.

"Then," said the Woggle-Bug, "you must pay me four dollars a day; for I have four arms to their two, and can do double their work."

"If that is so, I'll pay you four dollars," agreed the man.

The Woggle-Bug was delighted.

"In two days," he told himself, as he threw off his brilliant coat and placed his hat upon it, and rolled up his sleeves; "in two days I can earn eight dollars-enough to purchase my greatly reduced darling and buy her seven cents - worth of caramels besides."

He seized two spades and began working so rapidly with his four arms that the foreman said: "You must have been forewarned."

"Why?" asked the Insect.

"Because there's a saying that to be forewarned is to be four-armed," replied the other.

"That is nonsense," said the Woggle-Bug, digging with all his might; "for they call you the foreman, and yet I only r see one of you:"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the man; and he was so proud of his new worker that he went into the corner saloon to tell his friend the barkeeper what a treasure he had found.

It was just after noon that the Woggle-Bug hired out as- a ditch-digger in order to win his heart's desire; so 'at noon on the second day he quit work, and having received eight silver dollars he put on his coat and rushed away to the store that he might purchase his intended bride.

But, alas for the uncertainty of all our hopes! just as the Woggle-Bug reached the door he saw a young lady coming out of the store dressed in those identical checks with which he had fallen in love!

At first he did not know what to do or say, for the young lady's complexion was not wax-far from it. But a glance into the window showed him the wax lady now dressed m a plain black tailor-made suit, and at once he knew that the wearer of the Wagnerian plaids was his real love, and not that stiff creature behind the glass.

“Beg pardon!” he exclaimed, stopping the young lady; “but you’re mine. Here’s the seven ninety-three, and seven cents for candy.”

But she glanced at him in a haughty manner, and walked away with her nose slightly elevated.

He followed. He could not do otherwise with those delightful checks shining before him like beacon-lights to urge him on.

The young lady stepped into a car, which whirled rapidly away. For a moment he was nearly paralyzed at his loss; then he started after the car as fast as he could go, and that was very fast indeed-he being a woggle- bug.

Somebody cried: “Stop, thief!” and a policeman ran out to arrest him. But the Woggle-Bug used his four hands to push the officer aside, and the astonished man went rolling into the gutter so recklessly that his uniform bore marks of the encounter for many days.

Still keeping an eye on the car, the Woggle-Bug rushed on. He frightened two dogs, upset a fat gentleman who was crossing the street, leaped over an automobile that shot in front of him, and finally ran plump into the car, which had abruptly stopped to let off a passenger. Breathing hard from his exertions, he jumped upon the rear platform of the car, only to see his charmer step oft’ at the front and walk mincingly up the steps of a house. Despite his fatigue, he flew after her at once, crying out:

“Stop, my variegated dear-stop! Don’t you know you’re mine?”

But she slammed the door in his face, and he sat down upon the steps and wiped his forehead with his pink hand- kerchief and fanned himself with his hat and tried to think what he should do next.

Presently a very angry man came out of the house. He had a revolver in one hand and a carving-knife in the other.

“What do you mean by insulting my wife?” he demanded.

“Was that your wife?” asked the Woggle-Bug, in meek astonishment.

“Of course it is my wife,” answered the man.

“Oh, I didn’t know,” said the insect, rather humbled. “But I’ll give you seven ninety-three for her. That’s all she’s worth, you know; for I saw it marked on the tag.”

The man gave a roar of rage and jumped into the air with the intention of falling on the Woggle-Bug and hurting him with the knife and pistol. But the Woggle-Bug was suddenly in a hurry, and didn’t wait to be jumped on. Indeed, he ran so very fast that the mark was content to let him go, especially as the pistol wasn’t loaded and the carving- knife was as dull as such knives usually are.

But his wife had conceived a great dislike for the Wagnerian check costume that had won for her the Woggle- Bug’s admiration. “I’ll never

wear it again!" she said to her husband, when he came in and told her that the Woggle- Bug was gone..

"Then," he replied, "you'd better give it to Bridget; for-. she's been bothering me about her wages lately, and the present will keep her quiet for a. month longer'

So she called Bridget and presented her with dress, and the delighted servant decided ,to wear it that very, night to Mickey Schwartz's ball. Now the Poor Woggle-Bug, finding his affections scorned, was feeling very blue and unhappy that evening. When he walked out, dressed (among other things) in a purple-striped shirt, with a yellow necktie and pea- green gloves, he looked a great deal more cheerful than he really was. He had put on another hat, for the Woggle-Bug had a superstition that to change his hat was to change his luck, and luck seemed to have overlooked the fact that he was in existence.

The hat may really have altered his fortunes, as the Insect shortly met Ikey Swanson, who gave him a ticket to Mickey Schwartz's ball; for Ikey's clean dickey had not come home from the laundry, and so he could not go himself.

The Woggle-Bug, thinking to distract his mind from his dreams of love, attended the ball, and the first thing he saw as he entered the room was Bridget-clothed in that same gorgeous gown of Wagnerian plaid that had so fascinated his bugly heart.

The dear Bridget had added to her charms by putting seven full-blown imitation roses and three second-hand ostrich- plumes in her red hair; so that her entire person glowed like a sunset in June.

The Woggle-Bug was enraptured;, and, although the divine Bridget was waltzing with Fritzie Casey, the Insect rushed to her side and, seizing her with all his four arms at once, cried out in his truly educated Bostonian way:

"Oh, my superlative conglomeration of beauty! I have found you at last!"

Bridget uttered a shriek, and Fritzie Casey doubled two fists that looked like tombstones, and advanced upon the intruder.

Still embracing the plaid costume with two arms, the Woggle-Bug tipped Mr. Casey over with the other two. But

Bridget made a bound and landed her broad heel, which supported 180 pounds, firmly upon the Insect's toes. He gave a yelp of pain and promptly released the lady, and a moment later he found himself flat upon the floor with a dozen of the dancers piled upon him-all of whom mere pummeling one another with much pleasure and a firm conviction that the diversion had been planned for their special amusement.

But the Woggle-Bug had the strength of many men, and when he flopped

the big wings that were concealed by the tails of his coat, the gentlemen resting upon him were scattered like autumn leaves in a gust of wind.

The Insect stood up, rearranged his dress, and looked about him. Bridget had run away and gone home, and the others were still fighting among themselves with exceeding cheerfulness. So the Woggle-Bug selected a hat that would fit him (his own having been crushed out of shape) and walked sorrowfully back to his lodgings.

"Evidently that was not a lucky hat I wore to the ball," he reflected; "but perhaps this one I now have will bring about a change in my fortunes."

Bridget needed money; and as she had worn her brilliant costume once and allowed her friends to see how becoming it was, she carried it next morning to a second- hand dealer and sold it for three dollars in cash.

Scarcely had she left the shop when a lady of Swedish extraction ‹ -a widow with four small children in her train- entered and asked to look at a gown. The dealer showed her the one he had just bought from Bridget, and its gay coloring so pleased the widow that she immediately purchased it for $3.65.

"Ay tank ets good deal money, by sure," she said to herself;' "but das leedle children mus' have new Fadder to mak mind un tak care dere murder like, bay yimminy! An' Ay tank no man look may way in das ole dress Ay been wearing."

She took the gown and the four children to her home, where she lost no time in trying on the costume, which fitted her as perfectly as a flour- sack does a peck of potatoes.

"Das beau ‹ tiful!" she exclaimed, in rapture, as she tried to see herself in a cracked mirror. "Ay go das very afternoon to walk in da park, for das man-folks go craze-like ven he sees may fine frocks!"

Then she took her green parasol and a hand-bag stuffed with papers (to make it look prosperous and aristocratic) and sallied forth to the park, followed by all her interesting flock.

The men didn't fail to look at her, as you may guess; but none looked with yearning until the Woggle-Bug, sauntering gloomily along a path, happened to raise his eyes and see before him his heart's delight-the very identical Wagnerian plaids which had filled him with such unbounded affection.

"Aha, my excruciatingly lovely creation!" he cried, running up and kneeling before the widow; "I have found you once again. Do not, I beg of you, treat me with coldness!"

For he had learned from experience not to unduly startle his charmer at their first moment of meeting; so he made a firm attempt to control himself,

that the wearer of the checked gown might not scorn him.

The widow had no great affection for bugs, having wrestled with the species for many years; but this one was such a big-bug and so handsomely dressed that she saw no harm in encouraging him-especially as the men she had sought to captivate were proving exceedingly shy.

"So you tank Ay ban lovely?" she asked, with a coy glance at the Insect.

"I do! With all my heart I do!" protested the Woggle-Bug, placing his four hands, one after another, over that beating organ.

"Das mak plenty trouble by you. Ay don'd could be yours!" sighed the widow, indeed regretting her admirer was not an ordinary man.

"Why not?" asked the Woggle-Bug. "I have still the seven-ninety-three; and as that was the original price, and you are now slightly worn and second-handed, I do not see why I need despair of calling you my own."

It is very queer, when we think of it, that the Woggle- Bug could not separate the wearer of his lovely gown from the gown itself. Indeed, he always made love directly to the costume that had so enchanted him, without any regard whatsoever to the person inside it; and the only way we can explain this remarkable fact is to recollect that the Woggle- Bug was only a woggle-bug, and nothing more could be expected of him. The widow did not, of course, understand his speech in the least; but she gathered the fact that the Woggle-Bug had money, so she sighed and hinted that she was very hungry, and that there was a good short-order restaurant just outside the park.

The Woggle-Bug became thoughtful at this. He hated to squander his money, which he had come to regard as a sort of purchase price with which to secure his divinity. But neither could he allow those darling checks to go hungry; so he said: .

"If you will come with me to the restaurant, I will gladly supply you with food."

The widow accepted the invitation at once, and the Woggle-Bug walked proudly beside her, leading all of the four children at once with his four hands.

Two such gay costumes as those worn by the widow and the Woggle-Bug are. seldom found together, and the restaurant man was so impressed by the sight that he demanded his, money in advance.

The .four children; jabbering delightedly in their broken English, clambered upon four stools, and the widow sat upon another. And' the Woggle-Bug, who was not hungry (being engaged in feasting, his ,eyes upon the checks), laid down a silver dollar as a guarantee of good faith.

It was wonderful to see so much pie and cake and bread-and-butter and

pickles and dough-nuts and sandwiches disappear into the mouths of the tour innocents and their comparatively innocent mother. The Woggle-Bug had to add another quarter to the vanished dollar before the score was finally settled; and no sooner had the tribe trooped out of the restaurant than they turned into the open portals of an Ice-Cream Parlor, where they all attacked huge stacks of pale ice-cream and consumed several plates of lady-lingers and cream-puffs.

Again the Woggle-Bug reluctantly abandoned a dollar; but the end was not yet. .The dear children wanted candy and nuts; and then they wanted pink lemonade; and then pop-corn and chewing-gum; and always the Woggle-Bug, after a glance at the entrancing costume, found himself unable to resist paying for the treat.

It was nearly- evening when the widow pleaded fatigue and asked to be taken home. For none of them was able to eat another morsel, and the Woggle-Bug wearied her with his protestations of boundless admiration.

"Will you permit me to call upon you this evening?" asked the Insect, pleadingly, as he bade the wearer of the gown good-bye on her door- step.

"Sure like!" she replied, not caring to dismiss him harshly; and the happy Woggle-Bug went home with a light heart, murmuring to himself:

"At last the lovely plaids are to be my own! The new hat I found at the ball has certainly brought me luck."

I am glad our friend the Woggle-Bug had those few happy moments, for he was destined to endure severe disappointments in the near future.

That evening he carefully brushed his coat, put on a green satin necktie and a purple embroidered waist-coat, and walked briskly towards the house of the widow. But, alas! as he drew near to the dwelling a most horrible stench greeted his nostrils, a sense of great depression came over him, and upon pausing before the house his body began to tremble and his eyes rolled wildly in their sockets.

For the wily widow, wishing to escape her admirer, had sprinkled the door-step and the front walk with insect Exterminator, and not even the Woggle-Bug's love for the enchanting checked gown could induce him to linger longer in that vicinity.

Sick and discouraged, he returned home, where his first act was to smash the luckless hat and replace it with another. But it was some time before he recovered from the horrors of that near approach to extermination, and he passed a very wakeful and unhappy night, indeed.

Meantime the widow had traded with a friend of hers (who had once been a wash-lady for General Funston) the Wagnerian costume for a crazy quilt and a corset that was nearly as good as new and a pair of silk stockings that

were not mates. It was a good bargain for both of them, and the wash-lady being colored-that is, she had a deep mahogany complexion- was delighted with her gorgeous gown and put it on the very next morning when she went to deliver the wash to the brick-layer's wife.

Surely it must have been Fate that directed the Woggle-Bug's steps; for, as he walked disconsolately along, an intuition caused him to raise his eyes, and he saw just ahead of him his affinity-carrying a large clothes- basket.

"Stop!" he called out, anxiously; "stop, my fair Grenadine, I implore you!"

The colored lady cast one glance behind her and imagined that Satan had at last arrived to claim her. For she had never before seen the Woggle- Bug, and ,was horrified by his sudden and unusual appearance.

"Go 'way, Mars' Debbil! Go 'way'an' lemme 'lone!" she screeched, and the next minute dropped her empty basket and sped up the street with a swiftness that only fear could have lent her flat-bottomed feet.

Nevertheless, the Woggle-Bug might have overtaken her had he not stepped into the clothes-basket and fallen headlong, becoming so tangled up in the thing that he rolled over and over several times before he could free himself. Then, when he had picked up his hat, which was utterly ruined, and found his cane, which had flown across the street, his mahogany charmer in the Wagnerian Plaids had disappeared from view.

With a sigh at his latest misfortune he returned home for another hat, and the agitated wash-lady, imagining that the devil had doubtless been lured by her beautiful gown, made haste to sell it to a Chinaman who lived next door.

Its bright colors pleased the Chink who ripped it up and made it over into a Chinese robe, with flowing draperies falling to his heels. He dressed himself in his new costume and, being proud of possessing such finery, sat down on a bench outside his door so that everyone passing by could see how magnificent he looked.

It was here that the wandering Woggle-Bug espied him; and, recognizing at once the pattern and colors of his infatuating idol, he ran up and sat beside the Chinaman, saying in agitated but educated tones:

"Oh, my prismatic personification of gigantic gorgeous- ness! ‹ again I have found you!"

"Sure ding," responded the Chink with composure.

"Be mine! Only be mine!" continued the enraptured Woggle-Bug.

The Chinaman did not quite understand.

"Two dlolla a day," he answered, cautiously.

"Oh, joy," exclaimed the insect in delight; "I can then own you for a day and a half-for I have three dollars left. May I feel of your exquisite texture,

my dearest Fabric?"

"No flabic. No feelee. You too flesh. I man China- man!" returned the Oriental calmly.

"Never mind that! 'Tis your beautiful garment I love. Every check in that entrancing dress is a joy and a delight to my heart!"

While the Woggle-Bug thus raved, the Chinaman's wife (who was Mattie De Forest before she married him) overheard the conversation, and decided this love affair had gone far enough. So she suddenly appeared with a broom- stick, and with it began pounding the Woggle-Bug as fiercely as possible-and Mattie was no weakling, I assure you.

The first blow knocked the Insect's hat so far over his eyes that he was blinded; but, resolving not to be again cheated .out of his darling, he grasped firmly hold of the Wagnerian plaids with all four hands, and tore a goodly portion of it from the frightened Celestial's body.

Next moment he was dashing down the street, with the precious cloth tucked securely underneath an arm, and Mattie, being in slight dishabille, did not think best to follow him.

The triumphant joy of the Woggle-Bug can well be imagined. No more need he chase the fleeting vision of his love-no more submit to countless disappointments in his efforts to approach the object of his affection. The gorgeous plaids were now his own (or a large part of them, anyway), and upon reaching the quiet room wherein he lodged he spread out the cloth and gloated long and happily over its vivid coloring and violent contrasts of glowing hues. To the eyes of the Woggle-Bug nothing could be more beautiful, and he positively regretted the necessity of ever turning his gaze from this bewitching treasure.

That he might never in the future be separated from the checks, he folded them, with- many loving caresses, into compact form, and wrapped them in a sheet of stout paper tied with cotton cord that had a love-knot at the end. Wherever he went, thereafter, he carried the parcel underneath his left upper arm, pressed as closely- to his heart as possible. And this sense of possession was so delightful that our Woggle- Bug was happy as the clay was long.

In the evening his fortunes changed with cruel abruptness.

He walked out to take the air, and noticing a crowd of people standing in an open space and surrounding a huge brown object, our Woggle-Bug stopped to learn what the excitement was about.

Pushing his way through the crowd, and hugging his precious parcel, he soon reached the inner circle of spectators and found they had assembled to watch a balloon ascension. The Professor who was to go up with the balloon had not yet arrived; but the balloon itself was fully- inflated and tugging

hard at the rope that held it, as if anxious to escape the blended breaths of the people that crowded around. Just below the balloon was a small basket, attached to the netting of the gas-bag, and the Woggle-Bug was bending over the edge of this, to see what it contained, when a warning cry from the crowd caused him to pause and glance over his shoulder.

Great horrors and crumpled creeps! Springing toward him, with a scowl on his face and a long knife with a zig-zag blade in his uplifted hand, was that very Chinaman from whose body he had torn the Wagnerian plaids!

The plundered Celestial was evidently vindictive, and intended to push the wicked knife into the Woggle-Bug's body.

Our hero was a brave bug, as can be easily proved; but he did not wait for the knife to arrive at the broad of his back. Instead, he gave a yell (to show he was not afraid) and leaped nimbly into the basket of the balloon. The y descending knife, missing its intended victim, felt upon the rope and severed it, and instantly the great balloon arose from the crowd and soared majestically toward the heavens.

The Woggle-Bug had escaped the Chinaman, but he didn't know whether to be glad or not.

For the balloon was carrying him into the clouds, and he had no idea how to manage it, or to make it descend to earth again. When he peered over the edge of the basket he could hear the faint murmur of the crowd, and dimly see the enraged Professor (who had come too late) pounding the Chinaman, while the Chinaman tried to dissect the Professor with his knife.

Then all was blotted out; clouds rolled about him; night fell. The man in the moon laughed at him; the stars winked at each other as if delighted at the Woggle-Bug's plight, and a witch riding by on her broomstick yelled at him to keep on the right side of the road, and not run her down.

But the Woggle-Bug, squatted in the bottom of the basket and hugging his precious parcel to his bosom, paid no attention to anything but his own thoughts.

He had often ridden through the air in the Gump; but never had he been so high as this, and the distance to the ground made him nervous.

When morning came he saw a strange country far beneath him, and longed to tread the earth again.

Now all woggle-bugs are born with wings, and our highly-magnified one had a beautiful, broad pair of floppers concealed beneath his ample coat-tails. But long ago he had learned that his wings were not strong enough to lift his big body from the ground, so he had never tried to fly with them.

Here, however, was an occasion when he might put these wings to good use, for if he spread- them in the air and then leaped over the side of the

basket they would, act in the same way a parachute does, and bear him gently to the ground.

No sooner did this thought occur to him than he put it into practice.

Disentangling his wings from his coat-tails, he spread them as wide as possible and then jumped from the car of the balloon.

Down, down the Woggle-Bug sank; but so slowly that there was no danger in the light. He began to see the earth again, lying beneath him like a sun-kissed panorama of mud and frog-ponds and rocks and brushwood.

There were few trees, yet it was our insect's fate to drop directly above what trees there were, so that presently he came ker-plunk into a mass of tangled branches-and stuck there, with his legs dangling helplessly between two limbs and his wings caught in the foliage at either side.

Below was a group of Arab children, who at first started to run away. But, seeing that the queer creature which had dropped from the skies was caught fast in the tree, they stopped and began to throw stones and clubs at it. One of these missiles struck the tree-Limb at the right of the Woggle-Bug and jarred him loose. The next instant he fluttered to the ground, where his first act was to fold up his wings and tuck them underneath his coat-tails again, and his next action to assure himself that the beloved plaids were still safe.

Then he looked for the Arab children; but they had scuttled away toward a group of tents, and now several men with dark skins arid gay clothing came from the tents and ran toward the Woggle-Bug.

"Good morning," said our hero, removing his hat with a flourish, and bowing politely.

"Meb-la-che-bah!" shouted the biggest Arab, and at once two others wound coils of rope around the Woggle-Bug and tied the ends in hard knots.

His hat was knocked off and trampled into the mud by the- Shiek (who was the big Arab), and the precious parcel was seized and ruthlessly opened.

"Very good!" said the Shiek, eyeing the plaids with pleasure. "My slaves shall make me a new waistcoat of this cloth."

"No! oh, no!" cried the agonized Insect; "it is taken from a person who has had small-pox and yellow-fever and toothache and mumps-all at the same time. Do not, I beg you, risk your valuable life by wearing that cloth!"

"Bah!" said the Shiek, scornfully; "I have had all those diseases and many more. I am immune. But now," he continued, "allow me to bid you good- bye. I am sorry to be obliged to kill you, but such is our custom."

This was bad news for the Woggle-Bug; but he did not despair.

"Are you not afraid to kill me?" he asked, as if surprised.

"Why should I be afraid?" demanded the Shiek.

“Because it is a well-known fact that to kill a woggle- bug brings bad luck to one.”

The Shiek hesitated, for he was very superstitious.

“Are you a woggle-bug?” he asked.

“I am,” replied the Insect, proudly. “And I may as well tell you that the last person who killed one of my race had three unlucky days. The first day his suspenders broke (the Arabs shuddered), the second day he smashed a looking- glass (the Arabs moaned) and the third day he was chewed up by a crocodile.”

Now the greatest aversion the Arabs have is to be chewed by a crocodile, because these people usually roam over the sands of the desert, where to meet an amphibian is simply horrible; so at the Woggle-Bug’s speech they set up a howl of fear, and the Shiek shouted:

“Unbind him! Let not a hair of his head be injured.” At once the knots in the ropes were untied, and the

Woggle-Bug was free. All the Arabs united to show him deference and every respectful attention, and since his own hat had been destroyed they wound about his head a picturesque turban of an exquisite soiled white color, having Stripes of red and yellow in it.

Then the Woggle-Bug was escorted to the tents, where he suddenly remembered his precious plaids, and asked that the cloth be restored to him.

Thereupon the Shiek got up and made a long speech, in which he described his grief at being obliged to refuse the request.

At the end of that time one of the women came up to them with a lovely waistcoat which she had manufactured out of the Wagnerian plaids; and when the Shiek saw it he immediately ordered all the tom-toms and kettle-drums in the camp destroyed, as they were no longer necessary. Then he put on the gorgeous vestment, and turned a deaf ear to the Woggle-Bug’s agonized wails.

But there were some scraps of cloth left, and to show that he was liberal and good-natured, the Shiek ordered these manufactured by his females into a handsome necktie, which he presented to the Woggle-Bug in another long speech.

Our hero, realizing that the larger part of his darling was lost to him, decided to be content with the smaller share; so he put on the necktie, and felt really proud of its brilliant and aggressive elegance.

Then, bidding the Arabs farewell, he strode across the desert until he reached the borders of a more fertile and favored country.

Indeed, he found before him a cool and enticing jungle, which at first seemed deserted. But while he stared about him a sound fell , upon his ear,

and he saw approaching a young lady Chimpanzee. She was evidently a personage of some importance, for her hair was neatly banged just over her, eyes, and she wore a clean white pinafore with bows of pink ribbon at the shoulders.

"Good morning, Mr. Beetle," said she, with merry laughter.

"Do not, I beg of you, call me a beetle," exclaimed our hero, rather peevishly; "for I am actually a Woggle- Bug, and Highly-Magnified at that!"

"What's in a name?" laughed the gay damsel. "Come, let me introduce you to our jungle, where strangers of good breeding are always welcome."

"As for breeding," said the Woggle-Bug, -my father, although of ordinary size, was a famous Bug-Wizard in his day, and claimed descent from the original protoplasm which constituted the nucleus of the present planetary satellite upon which we exist."

"That's all right," returned Miss Chim. "Tell that to our king, and he'll decorate you with the medal of the Omnipotent Order of Onerous Orthographers. Are you ready to meander?"

The Woggle-Bug did not like the flippant tone in which the maiden spoke; but he at once followed her.

Presently they came to a tall hedge surrounding the Inner jungle, and without this hedge stood a patrol of brown bears who wore red soldier- caps and carried gold-plated muskets in their hands.

"We call this the bearier," said Miss Chim, pointing to the soldiers, "because they oblige all strangers to paws."

"I should think it was a bearicade," remarked the Woggle-Bug.

But when they approached the gateway the officer in charge saluted respectfully to Miss Chim, and permitted her to escort the Woggle-Bug into the sacred precincts of the. Inner Jungle.

Here his eyes were soon opened to their widest capacity in genuine astonishment.

The jungle was as clean and well-regulated as any city, of men the Insect had ever visited. just within the gate a sleek antelope was running a pop-corn stand, and a little further on a screech-owl stood upon a stump playing a violin, while across her breast was a sign reading: "I am blind-at present."

As they walked up the street they came to a big grey monkey turning a hand-organ, and attached to a cord was a little nigger-boy whom the monkey sent into the crowd of animals standing by to gather up the pennies, pulling him back every now and then by means of the cord.

"There's a curious animal for you," said Miss Chim, pointing to the boy. "Those horrid things they call men whether black or white, seem to me the lowest of all created beasts."

“I have seen them in a highly civilized state,” replied the Woggle-Bug, “and they’re really further advanced than you might suppose.”

But Miss Chim gave a scornful laugh, and pulled him away to where a hippopotamus sat under the shade of a big tree, mopping his brow with a red handkerchief-for the weather was somewhat sultry. Before the hip was a table covered with a blue cloth, and upon the cloth was embroidered the words: “Professor Hipmus, Fortune Teller.”

“Want your fortune told?” asked Miss Chim. “I don’t mind,” replied the Woggle-Bug. “I’ll read your hand,” said the Professor, with a yawn that startled the Insect. “To my ,notion palmistry is, the best means of finding out what nobody knows or cares to know.”

He took the right upper hand of the Woggle-Bug, and after adjusting his spectacles bent over it with an air of great wisdom.

“You have been in love,” announced the Professor; “but you got it in the neck.” “True!” murmured the astonished Insect, putting up his left lower hand to feel of the beloved necktie.

“You think you have won,” continued the Hip; “but there are others who have 1, 2. You have many heart throbs before you, during your future life. Afterward I see no heart throbs whatever. Forty cents, please.”

“Isn’t he just wonderful?” asked Miss Chim, with enthusiasm. “He’s the greatest fortune teller in the jungle.”

“On account of his size, I suppose,” returned the Woggle-Bug, as they walked on.

Soon they came to the Royal Palace, which was a beau- tiful bower formed of vines upon which grew many brilliant- hued forest flowers. The entrance was guarded by a Zebra, who barred admission until Miss Chim whispered the pass- word in his ear. Then he permitted them to enter, and the Chimpanzee immediately ushered the Woggle-Bug into the presence of King Weasel.

This monarch lay coiled upon a purple silk cushion, half asleep and vet wakeful enough to be smoking a big cigar. Beside him crouched two prairie-dogs who were combing his hair very carefully, while a red squirrel perched near his head and fanned him with her bushy tail.

“ Dear me, what have we here?” exclaimed the King of the jungle, in a querulous tone. “Is it an over-grown pinch-bug, or is it a kissing-bug?”

“I have the honor to be a Woggle-Bug, your Majesty!” replied our hero, proudly.

“Say, cut out that Majesty,” snapped the King, with a scowl. “If you can find anything majestic about me, I’d like to know what it is.”

“Don’t treat him with any respect,” whispered Miss Chim to the Insect,

“or you’ll get him riled. Sneer at him, and slap his face if you get a chance.”

The Woggle-Bug took the hint.

“Really,” he told the King, “I have never seen a more despicable creature than you. The admirable, perspicacity inherent in your tribe seems to have deteriorated in you to a hyperbolated insousancy.” Then he reached out his arms and slapped the king four times, twice on one side of his face and twice on the other. And it gage him much satisfaction.

“Thanks, my dear June-Bug, said the monarch; “I now recognize you to be a person of some importance.”

“Sire, I am a Woggle-Bug, highly magnified and thoroughly educated. It is no exaggeration to say I am the greatest Woggle-Bug on earth.”

“I fully believe it, so pray do not play any more foursomes upon my jaw. I am sufficiently humiliated at this moment to recognize you as a Sullivanthauros, should you claim to be of that extinct race.”

Then two little weasels-a boy weasel and a girl weasel-came into the bower and threw their school-books at the squirrel so cleverly that one hit the King upon the nose and smashed his cigar and the other caught him fairly in the pit of his stomach.

At first the monarch howled a bit; then he wiped the tears from his face and said:

“Ah, what delightful children I have! What do you wish, my darlings?”

“I want a cent for chewing gum,” said the Girl Weasel.

“Get it from the Guinea-Pig; you have my assent. And what does my dear boy want?”

“Pop,” went the Weasel, “our billy-goat has swallowed the hare you gave me to play with:”

“Dear me,” sighed the Ding, “how often I find a hair in the butter! Whenever I reign people carry umbrellas; and my son, although quite polished, indulges only in monkey-shines. Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown but if one is scalped, the loss of the crown renders the head still more uneasy.”

“Couldn’t they find a better king than you?” enquired the Woggle-Bug, curiously, as the children left the bower.

“Yes; but no worse,” answered the Weasel; “and here in the jungle honors are only conferred upon the unworthy. For if a truly great animal is honored he gets a swelled head, and that renders him unbearable. They now regard the King of the Jungle. with contempt, and that makes all my subjects self- respecting.”

“There is wisdom in that,” declared the Woggle-Bug, approvingly; “a single glance at you makes me content with being so excellent a bug.”

“True,” murmured the King, yawning. But you tire me, good stranger. Miss Chim, will you kindly get the gasoline can? It’s high time to eradicate this insect.”

“With pleasure,” said Miss Chim, moving away with a smile.

But the Woggle-Bug did not linger to be eradicated. With one wild bound he cleared the door of the palace and sprinted up the street to the entrance of the jungle. The bear soldiers saw him dashing away, and took careful aim and fired. But the gold-plated muskets would not shoot straight, and now the Woggle-Bug was far distant, and still running with all his might.

Nor did he pause until he had emerged from the forest and crossed the plains, and reached at last the city from whence he had escaped in the balloon. And, once again in his old lodgings, he looked at himself in the mirror and said:

“After all, this necktie is my love-and my love is now mine forevermore! Why should I not be happy and content?”

THE END

Now ev’rybody’s guessing About the Woggle-Bug. What he may be expressing With smile so sly and smug: They say he’s most discerning, An oracle who “knows,” So all the world is yearning For the secrets he bestows.

What did the Woggle-Bug say? Just pull me next to his lay, Can it be Greek? oh tell me do! “Sprechen Sie Deutsch” or “Parlez-vous?” I want to know right away, Can’t wait another day; The question makes me furious, Because I’m mighty curious What did the Woggle-Bug sa-ay?

If you wonder why an actress Isn’t happy till divorced, Or why a hobo never works Unless he’s gently forced; If you’d know why Lipton teases Us so hard to win our mug, Perhaps you’ll get an answer If you ask the Woggle-Bug.

What did the Woggle-Bug say? Just pull me next to his lay, Can it be Greek? oh tell me do! “Sprechen Sie Deutsch” or “Parlez-vous?” I want to know right away, Can’t wait another day; The question makes me furious, Because I’m mighty curious What did the Woggle-Bug sa-ay?

When Dowie made a convert of A guileless millionaire. When the Czar of all the Russians found He had a son and heir: When you get a tip of Change that leaves You stranded on the rocks, Our save a thousand trading-stamps To get a rattle-box:

What did the Woggle-Bug say? Just pull me next to his lay, Can it be Greek? oh tell me do! “Sprechen Sie Deutsch” or “Parlez-vous?” I want to know right away, Can’t wait another day; The question makes me furious, Because I’m mighty curious What did the Woggle-Bug sa-ay?

The Woggle-Bug forever Is making some remark Which may be mighty clever But leaves us in the dark; It's most exasperating And rouses all our ire. Though bugs abominating We all eagerly enquire:

What did the Woggle-Bug say? Just pull me next to his lay, Can it be Greek? oh tell me do! "Sprechen Sie Deutsch" or "Parlez-vous?" I want to know right away, Can't wait another day; The question makes me furious, Because I'm mighty curious What did the Woggle-Bug sa-ay?

The Mating Day

From: *Short Stories*, September 1898

Gouigi the Hunter lay motionless beneath a wide-spreading yacca that towered far above the other trees of the forest. The moon was out, and its beams penetrating the leafy barriers, threw a network of fantastic shadows across the glistening brown body of the islander.

He lay upon his back with hands clasped firmly beneath his head, and his bright black eyes staring at the branches above him. A long, double-pointed spear was beside him, the ends drawn to the fineness of a needle's point, its length well-polished and greased save for the handles near the centre.

Gouigi was thinking, and he had lain in nearly the same posture since the dawn of the previous day. For custom decreed that all those islanders who intended to take part in the mating tournament should absent themselves for the period of a day and a night from the society of their fellows, and Gouigi had made declaration to the chief that he would fight at the tourney.

One day each year the natives of this island of Macheki, in the South Seas, set apart for the mating of the maidens with the young braves of the tribe, and on this day took place a series of conflicts among the aspirants to determine which should have first choice from the bevy of eligible maidens.

Usually, upon such occasions, the victor was content to triumph over his adversaries, without seriously injuring them, and those vanquished had thus an opportunity to fight among themselves for second choice, and so on until the maids were all chosen. And upon most mating days there were many of the young warriors to take part in the conflict, yet now Gouigi counted upon his fingers and found there were but seven all told, who had declared their intention or fighting upon the morrow. For amongst the maidens to be chosen was Cheluika, the daughter of the chieftain, and whoever won the first choice would thus in time become the first brave of the tribe, since the chief was very old and unlikely to live more than a few moons longer. Therefore, this time the duel would be fought to the death, the prize being the greatest fate had ever yet placed within reach of the mating-day champions, and only the strongest and bravest of the young men had dared to undertake the task of winning the Princess Cheluika, and with her the leadership of the tribe.

Gouigi mused on all this as he lay under the yacca awaiting the time to return to the village. Somewhere amidst the forest were six other warriors resting or preparing themselves for the fray, but he did not dwell upon them long. True, they were the pick of the tribe, well skilled in the use of the spear and of great and powerful build.

But he, Gouigi, was the strongest of them all--save, perhaps, Mati the Tiger, and Mati was a brute, whom he loathed and would delight to kill. He spat upon the ground when he thought upon him, and turned his musings into more pleas-ant channels.

Soon he would be chief of the tribe and able to command where he had before served. He would fight the Kankins for one thing, and drive them from the little neighboring island, whence they so frequently descended upon his people to annoy them with their poisoned darts. And he would move the village over into the little harbor at the south, where the winds were less fierce. There were so many things he had in mind to accomplish when he should become chief.

What a fortunate thing he had waited until Cheluika was to be mated instead of choosing little Natka last year, as he had at one time intended. It was Mati the Tiger who had put it into his head to wait.

"For my part," Mati had said at that time, "I shall wait for the mating of the Princess Cheluika, for whoever wins her will be chief."

And he, because he hated Mati and wished to fight him, had also waited, and so there was no one to choose little Natka, who had looked at him reproachfully, but said no word.

It had been a long year, in which he had repeatedly quarreled with his rival; but the end was nigh at last, and his ambitions would not only be fulfilled, but supplemented by a triumph over Mati the Tiger. True, it would be a struggle to the death; there was no doubt of that. But he, Gouigi, would win. As for Cheluika, he knew very little about her, for he had been several years with the other young men at the wars, and the fishing, and the hunting grounds, and the princess had grown up in the village. But he had noted that Cheluika was a handsome maiden, proud and reserved, and mixing little with the other girls of the tribe. He could recall, as he lay musing under the big tree, her full, rounded form, her piercing dark eyes, the erect carriage of her head and her disdainful smile. Yes, Cheluika would do very well for a mate. She was not so lively as little Natka, nor could he expect her to mend his lines so deftly or to polish his spear so carefully as the laughing maiden who often followed him to the shore when he went to the fishing. But she was the chief's daughter, and with her he gained power and position, which, in their way, meant as much to the simple islander as to his civilized brethren.

The moon was waning now, and the light breeze which fanned his brow and fluttered the leaves of the tree heralded, he knew, the dawn. He sat up, drew a piece of dried meat from his pouch, and leisurely ate of it, drinking afterward from a little stream that flowed near by. Then, sitting down again, he examined with care his spear, testing its strength in every possible way.

Apparently satisfied with his inspection, he proceeded to bind up his long hair, heavy with walrus grease, into a knot, fastening it upon the back of his head with a fish-bone. Afterward he made his toilet by rubbing every part of his body plentifully with grease, and then, seizing his weapon, he started through the forest on his way to the village. With the first streak of dawn every member of the tribe was astir, and soon men, women and children assembled upon the green slope that led to the sea. In two long lines that faced each other they squatted to witness the coming spectacle, and at the head of these lines sat the old chief, with the row of maidens just before him who were eligible to be mated.

The girls were calm enough, for it was well understood that but one would be chosen this day, since the fight was to the death. The surviving champion would, of course, select the princess. The daughter of the chieftain, proud and self-contained, sat at the feet of her father, while the maidens on either side cast many curious and some envious glances at her dark immobile face.

Little Natka was there, nearly at the end of the line, but her eyes were red with weeping, for on this day she knew that Gouigi was destined either to fall in death or to mate with the princess, and either event would rob her of him forever.

At the other end of the double row of spectators and facing the chief and the maidens, was the dark edge of the forest, and now, as the sun shot its first ray over the treetops, the aged chief arose painfully to his feet and exclaimed: "It is the day of mating. The maidens await their lords. Who demands to choose first amongst them?"

"I demand the choice!" cried a voice, and a tall, powerful warrior stepped from the forest and advanced into the square. A loud murmur arose from the people, for this was Mati the Tiger, whose prowess was well known and respected.

But scarcely had he taken his place, spear in hand, when a lithe, slender form darted from the thicket and said boldly:

"I am here to choose first from the maidens. Who denies my right?"

"I!" returned Mati, and poising his spear he advanced upon his rival, who quickly sprang to meet him.

The contest was short. For a moment both whirled their slender spears rapidly before them, and then, quicker than the eye could follow, they came together--and separated. Mati stood upright, but his antagonist, uttering a great cry, fell writhing upon the ground and then lay still, pierced to the heart by the sharp-pointed spear of his foe.

Again from the crowd arose a murmur of approval, and the Princess Cheluika, aroused from her customary reserve, laughed aloud and clapped

her hands together.

“Who now disputes my right?” cried Mati, strutting up and down in evident pride.

“I!” answered a voice, and another youth stepped from the forest to confront him.

The combat was longer this time, for the new champion was wary, and twice the warriors came together and separated before Mati’s powerful arm could drive his spear-point home. Again he received the plaudits of the spectators, and again the princess laughed.

The dead bodies were drawn from the square, and Mati turned to face another foe. But none were able to combat him long, and within the hour five dead forms lay side by side upon the green, silent evidences o his wonderful skill.

The princess was fairly transformed by excitement. A deep red glowed beneath her brown cheeks, her eyes glistened like a serpent’s, and as each warrior fell before the strong arm of Mati her little hands were the first to demonstrate approval. She seemed to revel in the bloodshed, and Gouigi, watching her from the concealment of the forest, wondered at her high spirits and glanced anon from her radiant face to where little Natka sat shrinking backward and shielding her eyes from the ghastly scene.

But his turn had come now. Mati was already shouting:

“Who now challenges my right to choose first?”

Gouigi grasped his spear firmly and advanced with slow strides into the open. The crowd greeted the newcomer with a growl of applause.

His great form, erect and firmly-knit, glistened bravely in the morning sun. His head was thrown back in an attitude both dignified and defiant, and his clear eyes, steadfast and piercing, sought his rival’s face and questioned it gravely. He looked every inch a chieftain, and the people, quick to judge a warrior’s powers and resources, glanced at one another and whispered:

“Mati has found his match!”

Mati himself undoubtedly realized that his most desperate fight lay before him, but he did not flinch. Shaking his spear in bravado and casting a look at Cheluika, who smiled and nodded her head to encourage him, he advanced with quick strides toward Gouigi the Hunter.

Swiftly the spears of the antagonists whirled above their heads, and then, with a sudden rush, they met, and the crash of the spears, splintered both into fragments, echoed sharply through the forest.

The natives looked at each other in amaze, for such a thing as this had not happened before in their experience. Gouigi and Mati, each astonished at the force of the other’s blow, stood face to face glaring defiance. Then Gouigi

turned his head.

“A spear!” he shouted.

Instantly two young men leaped from the ranks of the spectators and thrust their spears into the hands of the combatants.

“Good!” cried the princess, leaning eagerly forward.

The fight began anew, and so fiercely did it wage that for a time nothing could be distinguished but a mass of struggling brown limbs and the flash of the greased spears as they whirled in the sunshine. Then arose a wild cry, for Gouigi’s spear had broken near the middle and the Tiger was pressing him furiously. But Gouigi managed the half weapon that remained to him with such consummate dexterity that a minute later Mati’s spear was wrenched from his grasp and sent flying through the air. The Tiger reeled backward and fell upon his knees, and now, as in a flash, the sharp point of Gouigi’s spear was at his throat.

But ere he had time to strike a piercing scream cleft the air and Cheluika rushed forward and threw herself between the warriors.

“Hold!” she commanded, “he shall fight again!” Then, as a murmur arose, she added: “I am Cheluika, the daughter of your chieftain, and I say he shall have another chance!”

Mati, still kneeling with bowed head, never moved from his place, while Gouigi, with spear still poised, seemed as if carved from stone.

The aged chief tottered to his feet and looked around upon his people with a troubled air.

“It is wrong,” he said; “it is very wrong, and you all know it! But Cheluika is a woman, and she is my daughter. It shall be as she says. Mati shall have one more chance.”

The people were silent, sitting with knit brows and angry faces. But Gouigi drew back and cast down his broken spear.

“It is well,” he said calmly. “Arise, Mati the Tiger, and choose your weapon.”

Cheluika rushed back to where the chief sat, and drawing two great knives, fashioned from walrus tusks, from his girdle, cast them upon the ground before the duelists.

“There are the weapons!” she cried.

Mati sprang to his feet, seized one of the knives, and waved his hand at the princess in token of thanks. Gouigi stooped to pick up the other knife, but before he could resume the defensive Mati bounded upon him with the ferocity of his namesake, the tiger, and only a quick movement on Gouigi’s part saved him from death. As it was the blow but slashed his shoulder, and never heeding the dark blood that gushed forth he sprang at his treacherous

enemy with a fierceness that matched his own.

For a time the blows fell fast, the spectators gazing with breathless interest at the unwonted sight. Forward and backward they pressed, and then Mati's great left arm shot around Gouigi's neck and drew him close to his breast, but just as his knife was raised to strike, the combatants whirled half around and fell full length upon the ground. For a few seconds they remained motionless, then slowly Gouigi released himself from the other´s grasp and rose to his feet. But Mati lay prone upon his back, and protruding from his breast was the hilt of the Hunter's knife.

Amidst the cries of approval that greeted the conqueror was heard the clapping of hands, and Gouigi, glancing toward Cheluika, was rewarded with a bright smile and a nod of her stately head. But further along the line his eyes wandered, and there was little Natka, sitting back in her place and sobbing softly for joy.

The warrior's stern face relaxed, and for the first time that day he smiled grimly.

Then, although blood was dripping from many wounds upon his body, he advanced to the chief, and folding his arms with savage grace, said, in a clear voice:

"I claim the right to choose my mate from these maidens. Who dares dispute me?"

There was no reply, and the old chief again arose and slowly addressed him.

"You have fought a great fight, and you have won. There is none living who dares dispute your right. Therefore, choose your mate from these maidens, and may your house be ever the abode of peace and plenty!"

In these words was the ceremony concluded, and now all eyes were turned upon the Princess Cheluika. The daughter of the chief arose to her feet. The smile still lingered upon her features, but she held herself proudly erect as her dark eyes read the rebuke upon the faces confronting her.

"Mati was brave," she said, "but he is dead; and Gouigi was more brave, and is alive! Therefore, if I favored the Tiger in the fight it was to prove that Gouigi had the strongest arm and the greatest skill. Now you know why I gave Mati another chance. I have spoken."

She gave one proud look around her, and then her eyes sought those of Gouigi, and again she smiled. No shout of approval greeted her speech as she resumed her seat. The people were silently watching Gouigi. He stood before the chief in the same attitude as before, but now a frown contracted his swarthy face, and his great eyes glittered strangely.

"Choose, oh Gouigi!" commanded the chief.

Gouigi started and raised his head. Slowly his eyes passed down the line of maidens until they rested upon little Natka, and lifting his right hand he walked deliberately to where she sat and, drawing the astonished girl to his side, he exclaimed in a loud voice:

"I have won the right to choose, and from all these maidens I take Natka to be my mate!"

Even that isolated tribe of savages could appreciate a heroism greater than mere prowess in battle, and the air resounded with wild cries of approval as the men and women of Macheki gathered around Gouigi to offer their congratulations.

But soon a hush fell upon the crowd, and with one accord they turned toward the scene of the late conflict, for the proud Cheluika, unable to support the infamy of the slight Gouigi had put upon her, had rushed to the body of Mati and, drawing the knife from his breast, plunged it deep into her own heart.

The Return of Dick Weemins

From: *The National Magazine*, July 1897

Set down, — set down, stranger, an' I'll tell you the whole story. There aint much trade in the village about this time o' day, an' we've got a good hour to ourselves, take the chair, sir; the cracker-box'll do for me, it's Hank Barneses fav'rit seat, an' I feel more to home settin' on it than I do on a chair.

I don't remember as I ever saw a better sot up woman than the widder Weemins when I fust knew her, twenty year ago. She'd a cozy little cottage then, down at the end o' the lane, an' lived as comf'table as you please; plenty to wear, plenty to eat, an' able to give good schoolin' to her two little boys.

I had just took the grocery then, an' I don't mind sayin' as how I had half a notion to make up with the widder, an' ask her to become Missus Noll an' help run the store. To be sure she was well on in years, even then, bein' married late in life; an' care an' hard work had bowed her down a bit, an' streaked her head wi' grey; but there was a sweet, hopeful look in her face, 'specially when she turned to her two boys, that showed her heart were still young, an' sot in the place a heart ought to be.

But she hadn't been a widder long, then, an' hadn't fergot her man; so I kinder waited to see that sad and patient look pass out o' her face afore I perposed — an' it never did; an' so I never asked her to become Missus Noll. Besides, her husband had left her two thousan' dollars life insurance, an' I thought perhaps she'd think it was that as I were after, an' if she didn't the neighbors would; an' that helped to make me dumb, although I allus had a warm likeness fer the widder, if not an actual hankerin' to help her bear her sorrows.

She didn't seem to need much help in them days; she sewed for the hull neighborhood, an' worked hard an' late, makin' her own livin'; because, as she said, she wanted to save that two thousan' dollars for her boys, when they should grow up an' need it. They seemed good boys, too, 'specially the oldest, who had a businesslike way with him as be growed up that was unusual in most lads. An' if Dick, the youngest, were a bit wild an' liked to git inter mischief, why Tom was as model a youngster as any mother might wish.

An' so they grew up, well taught by the widder an' well-behaved as boys go, an' I watched 'em careful an' made up my mind that Tom would be a fine business man, an' succeed in the world; but Dick I had my misgivin's of. He wasn't so 'special bad, but he wasn't so 'special good, neither; an' he

hated work as bad as parson Bullum hated the devil.

But the widder seemed to turn her love on Dick more an' more, though she often said as she looked to his brother as her main prop in her old age. An' so, when they finished at the village school, partly to please the widder an' partly because I needed him, I took Tom inter my store for clerk, an' a mighty good hand he proved. But although we tried every way to provide for the younger son, Dick wasn't to be held in a store. He'd work well for a bit an' then git as uneasy as a dog in a church, an' jump at the first chance to git away. Nearly every store in town hired him, one time an' another, an' every one give him up as a bad job.

He hung around the billiard-room, an' beat every man that tackled him! he played card games all night in the little back room at the saloon, an' smoked cigars all day. The widder tried every argyment, but it didn't work. She cried, but it only made him bad-tempered, though he'd cry with her by the hour, an' say as how he knew he was bad to her an' no good to nobody else. An' then he'd dry her eyes, an' kiss her wrinkled cheek, an' tease a dollar out o' her to pay for more billiards an' cigars, an' drinks.

But Tom worked away manful an' came nigh bein' the support o' the whole fam'ly. He allus had a cheery word for his mother an' a kind word for Dick when he went home from his work, and the whole village was proud o' him, for he didn't seem to have a fault on earth. He didn't drink ner smoke ner play games, an' his week's wages was tossed inter his mother's lap every Saturday night.

So matters went on till '78, when the gold fever broke out fresh in Colorado, an' the papers was filled with news of the big strikes made every day by poor men who woke up to find themselves rich. It was the talk o' the hull town, an' 'specially the little crowd that congergated in the back room o' the saloon. An' no one listened to the stories more eagerly than Dick Weemins. For once he read the papers reg'lar, an' never could talk enough about the gold diggin's. He wasn't often a hard drinker, but durin' those days he was drunk more'n once, an' one afternoon I saw Tom stop at the saloon as he were goin' home to supper an' come out arm an' arm with his brother. He didn't scold or abuse him; but jest led him home an' put him to bed.

The next mornin' there was a conference at the widder's, an' soon after she come down to the store to ask my advice. It seems Dick had asked her to let him have the thousan' dollars she had been savin' for him, to go to the gold-diggin's with. He promised to brace up an' be a man if she would; an' agreed, in case he failed to make his fortune, never to ask her for another dollar while he lived.

To her su'prise Tom had sided with his brother, sayin' as he thought it

might be the savin' of him, an' that Dick would never need the money more'n he did then. For my part I were puzzled what to advise, but I told her I thought it was like throwin' the money away to let a lad like Dick go to the gold fields with it.

That settled the matter, as it only needed a little oppersition to induce the widder to agree; an' one fine mornin' Mister Dick, dressed up in a new suit o' store clothes, an' lookin' handsome an' happy, bid good-bye to us all an' left for the far West to make his fortune.

The same train that Dick Weemins went away on, Parson Bullum's daughter got off of, bein' jest back from boardin' school; an' I think Tom Weemins fell in love with her on the spot. She was a bright, lively little girl, was Bessie Bullum, an' somethin' of a beauty, too, in her way. She'd learned new-fangled notions at boardin'-school, an' dressed as dainty as any lady in the land. Her hair was yeller as gold an' her eyes as black as night — a combination I was allers opposed to in a woman. But Tom Weemins didn't think so, an' he begun to pay attentions to her in a way that soon set the tongues o' the hull neighborhood a' waggin'.

The girl took it very easy an' quiet, as if it was jest her due, an' bein' the queen among all the town girls it was only nach'ral that the most promisin' an' han'somest young man in town should make up to her.

The widder was kind o' lonely them days, bein' as how Dick was away at the diggin's an' Tom spendin' every spare minnit with Bessie, but she bore it very meek, as, indeed, she did all her trials; an' she looked very happy an' pleased when Tom told her one mornin', with a glowin' face an' sparklin' eyes, that Bessie Bullum had promised to be his wife.

Then the widder give him the other thousan' dollars, sayin' he had as much right to his share as Dick had; an' he bought the little store across on the corner an' put in a new stock, an' a bran' new sign over the door with his name on it in big letters. Trade begun to come his way, too, an' for a little while there was nothin' to mar the widder's contentment, 'cept that she never heard a word from Dick. O' course she allus hoped he was doin' well, and as he never was much of a letter writer she said as she couldn't well expect that he'd stop up suddin like, in the midst of diggin' gold, an' let her know how well he was doin'.

So things went on smooth enough for a time, but the first blow of all the widder's troubles wasn't long in comin'. A theatre troop played in the town for a week, an' Bessie Bullum went every night, an' got pretty well acquainted with the actor folks. Tom never suspected there was anythin' wrong in the acquaintance till 'bout a month afterwards, when he got a letter from Bessie sayin' she had run away an' joined a troupe, an' that he must

never expect to see her again.

He didn't take the blow as a man should. We all tried to tell him that a woman o' that sort wasn't worth worryin' about; but he only stared at us with a white face an' a dead look in his eyes, as if he didn't take in what we was sayin'. Instead o' goin' home to his supper, as usual, he dropped in to the salloon, an' when he come out late at night he was dead drunk, an' jest able to stagger home. From that time on he was more often drunk than sober, an' they say as how the father was once a drinkin' man, an' it come natch'ral to both the boys, only the widder's influence had allus kept Tom from it before.

Trade begun to drop away from the Weemins store, an' matters looked pretty black for the widder. Then come the next blow. Joe Harris, one of our boys that had gone out to the gold-diggin's, come home agin, a sadder an' a wiser man, an' he brought full reports of the doin's of Dick Weemins.

It seems when he first got there Dick was full o' pluck an' hope; but after a few days at the diggin's he got tired o' the hard work an' begun lookin' 'round for a easier way to make a fortune. Gamblers was thick in them parts, an' it didn't take long for Dick to git acquainted with 'em. You know the rest — Dick's thousan' dollars melted slowly away till he come outer the game one mornin' without a penny in the world. He borrered a revolver of one o' the gang an' went inter the woods to shoot himself, but he thought better of it an' become a perfessional gambler instead. When Joe come home Dick Weemins had already won a name for himself, but not one to make the poor widder any happier. He was called "Di'mond Dick," an' had the reputation of bein' the slickest hand at fleecin' the innercents in all the camp.

Joe's story got pretty well circulated, an' by an' by it reached the widder's ears, an' from that time her courage seemed to leave her; for she broke down complete, an' cried by the hour. Often I'd go by the cottage on my way to dinner an' see her bendin' over her work by the winder, the tears fallin' drop by drop on the sewin' she had took in to support herself an' Tom. You see the poor soul had set her heart on Dick's makin' a man of himself, for he were her fav'rit son an' the apple of her eye, so to speak. An' so his downfall cut her up more than Tom's, though that chap was as bad as he well could be. I don't believe he ever drew a sober breath, 'til one day he come down with the shakes, an' at the same time the sheriff walked inter the little store an' took all there was left to satisfy the creditors.

I tell you when I thought of all the wretchedness that saucy little Bessie Bullum had caused, I could have took the mis'rable girl by the neck an' strangled her with my own hands!

But that's neither here nor there. I'm stickin' to facts in this here story, — or a tryin' to, anyhow.

The widder couldn't sew much while Tom was wrastlin' with the devils the drink brought to him, an' so I took to leavin' a bit of a brown-paper parcel on her steps every night when I went home, an' I b'lieve it were needed bad enough.

After a time Tom got better. In a few days he was able to git out again, an' he headed straight for the saloon. That settled the matter, and a few of us got together an' kidnapped him an' took him to the ineb'rate asylum over in Jersey. Then the widder was took sick, an' the neighborin' women nursed her by turns till she recovered, but she got up a total wreck of her old self, an' unable to do any work. She was bent over nearly double, an' her hand shook so bad that she couldn't hold a needle in it.

Well, I ask you, stranger, what could be done in such a case? The man that owned her house didn't push for the rent, nor even complain, but still he couldn't afford to give it up to her entirely; an' even if he did, where was she to get the money for groceries an' coal an' such like? So the neighbors held a meetin' an' decided she'd better go over to the countyhouse, where they could care for her better than we could an' where her last years could be passed in peace an' comfort.

The widder cried a good deal when I broke to her the verdict, but said meekly as she was ready to go. Well, then *I* backed out, an' swore that as long as I had a cent on earth she should not go. This had its effect on the town people, but not on the widder. She suddenly developed a world o' stubbornness, an' said as it was false pride that made her shrink from the county-house, but true womanly pride that led her to refuse such help from a stranger. As if, after all these years, *I* could be called a stranger to the Widder Weemins, as I'd once thought of for Missus Noll! But no argyments would alter her determination, so to the county-house she went.

It must 'a' been a full year after, an' folks had kind o' forgot the Weemins fam'ly an' their troubles, when one mornin' as I come past the little cottage at the end o' the lane I saw a man settin' on the steps with his face in his hands. At first I thought it was a stranger. He wore better clothes than our town-people, an' a silk tile on his head, an' patent-leather shoes on his feet; and on the hand that hid his face a great di'mond glittered in the sunlight.

As I stopped in front of him he raised his head, an' I recognized Dick Weemins.

"Where's mother?" he asked, hoarsely.

The house was vacant jest then, bein' for rent, an' I s'pose he'd jest come from the depot an' was s'prised to find the old place locked up. Now I didn't have much sympathy for this man, but as I saw the haggard an' worried look on his face I somehow didn't jest know how to break the news to him! so I

stood fust on one foot an' then on the other an' tried to think it out.

"Where's mother?" he asked again.

"Over to the county-house."

"My God! *The county-house!* Where's Tom?"

"To the 'sylum — over in Jersey."

"Asylum? What asylum — and why?"

"Ineb'rate. Got the jams, an' was no good to nobody."

The man groaned an' put his face in his hands again.

Well, I felt as I couldn't help him any, an' so I left him settin' there an' went down to the store, an' got to work; but I couldn't forget the look on his face, somehow, an' I wondered what he would decide to do.

I heard by noon what he did do. He went to parson Bullum's an' got the whole story, straight, an' the parson didn't spare his daughter any, either, but laid the blame for all the trouble at her door, where it belonged.

Then Dick rented the little house an' furnished it with all the comforts the town could afford. An' then he drove away in a pony-carriage that was sent down from the city, an' was so slick that it made all our folks stare their eyes out, an' when he come back the widder was settin' by his side with the happiest smile on her face I'd seen for years. The whole village was excited by that time over the return o' Dick Weemins an' his queer actins, an' when he druv up to the cottage there was quite a little crowd gathered, an' they give the old widder a kind an' hearty cheer. Dick's face flushed with a grateful look, an' the poor woman smiled an' nodded at the folks in quite her old way.

Soon after Dick come inter my store an' ordered up goods in quite an extravygent way. I noticed his di'mond ring an' breastpin was gone, an' he give me a twenty-dollar bill to take my pay out of.

I hesitated a minnit, an' then, says I,-

"Dick Weemins, is that gamblin' money?"

He looked at me surprised like; then says he, —

"Gamblin' money? Yes; but as honest come by as any penny you ever touched."

"That it's not!" I spoke up, "for gamblin' an' honesty can't be spoke in the same breath."

"Indeed!" says he. How wonderful Dick Weemins had changed, to be sure. "Friend Noll, all occupations, to my notions, is gamblin' — or speculatin', which 'mounts to the same thing. Did anybody ever question Gould's or Vanderbilt's money? an' aint it all the proceeds o' gamblin'? For my part, I never robbed the widder ner the orphan, while these men have ruined thousan's. Your own business is a speculation — a sort o' gamblin'. If

you sell your goods at a profit, you win — otherwise you lose. The very money you give the parson is speculation: if he saves souls, you win, if he don't you lose. In my business when a man had more money 'u he knew what to do with, I let him speculate, an' if he lost I won. Am I worse than you? Is my money less honest come by?"

I felt his reasonin' was all wrong, but it took my breath away, an' never bein' very strong in argyment, I changed the bill an' said nothin'.

But this wasn't all the queer things that Dick Weemins did, by any means. He got his brother out o' the 'sylum, an' though he was nothin' but the wreck o' his old self, Dick undertook to build him up again. An' soon after the strangest thing happened of all his strange acting. He went away for nearly a week, an' come back leadin' a thin, veiled woman, dressed in a shabby black gown, who cried every step from the depot to the widder's cottage. But when she got there she threw off her veil an' fell on her knees before Tom "Weemins an' asked him to forgive her. An' he did, for they were married soon after; an' though we never heard the whole story, it got noised around that Dick had hunted up Bessie Bullum an' rescued her jest in time to save her from a grave in the river. And all this was done by Dick Weemins — nothin' but a wicked gambler.

Tom Weemins' big store is the pride of the town now, an' draws trade for all the rest of us. An' his wife seems contented an' happy, though she never goes out inter society. The widder is a pretty old lady now, but she's passin' her last days in peace an' luxury, an' has a woman that does nothin' but wait on her.

An' Dick? Well, stranger, you know this story I've been tellin' took place sev'ral year ago, an' times has changed with the gambler since then. But if you go up to the big brick house at the top o' the hill yonder, an' ask for the proprietor o' the woollen-mills that has made our town famous, you'll meet the best-lookin' an' most respected man in the hull county. He's mayor o' the town, too, an' they talk o' runnin' him for congress next term. And the curiousest part of it all, stranger, is that this man, the biggest gun as we've got in these 'ere parts, is no other than Dick Weemins, the reformed gambler!

The Extravagance of Dan

From: *The National Magazine*, May 1897

"To think," exclaimed farmer Biggs, solemnly, as in either hand he held upright the carving knife and fork, their butts resting upon the tablecloth; "to think as I should 'a' raised up a boy to be as extravygent as this!"
Aunt Annabel shook her head sorrowfully, Mrs. Biggs gave a low moan of grief and little 'Liz'beth with eyes big and wondering, stared full at her brother Dan.

Dan himself stood beside the breakfast table, half defiant, more than half embarrassed, and feeling uncommonly like a fish out of water. It was Sunday morning, and Dan, who had driven to town the evening before and returned late, had just sprung a genuine surprise upon the family circle.

"Jest look," continued his father, severely, as he pointed full at the culprit with the carving knife, "at that red shirt an' high dude collar!"

"It ain't red," protested Dan, eagerly; "it's pink, with white stripes."

"An' the blue necktie!" gasped Aunt Annabel, with another reproachful shake of her bead.

"An" the bran' new suit!" said Dan's mother, striving to conceal the tone of pride that crept into her voice.

"An' oh, Pop! — look at his shoes!" cried little 'Liz'beth, clapping her hands.

They all looked down at Dan's feet, and stared in amazement at the shiny, patent-leathers that glistened in all their newness.

"'Twere my money." said Dan, the blood surging into his round, beardless face, "an' I don't know as it's anybody's business 'cept mine. Can't a feller be a gentleman if he wants to?"

"Not with them hands," said his father, sternly.

Dan looked down at the big, red fists that hung far out of his sleeves, and then put them behind his back.

"Ner with them feet," declared Aunt Annabel, with evident contempt. Dan shifted them uneasily.

"Ner with that head o' hair." said his mother, critically. Dan's hands sought his head, and he ran his fingers slowly through the sandy shock of hair that adorned it.

"You kin cut it, can't ye, mar?" he asked, anxiously.

"I kin, o' course," replied Mrs. Biggs, "but I dunno as it would be a Christian act to encourage you in your foolish extravygence."

"Foolish ain't no name for it," announced Mr. Biggs; "it's down-right

wicked.”

“‘Twere my money,” repeated Dan, but the tears stood in his blue eyes as he realized the impossibility of justifying himself to his unsympathetic friends.

“You set down here an’ eat your breakfast,” said his mother, giving her husband a warning look; “we’ll see about that hair-cut afterwards.”

Dan meekly took his place at table, and the meal proceeded in silence, although ‘Liz’beth could not keep her admiring eyes off her big brother.

“Arter you’ve finished, Dan’l,” said his father, as he rose from his chair, “I’ll see you in the barn.”

Dan’s appetite was indifferent, and as be pushed back from the table, his mother said, —

“Come over here by the winder, son, an’ I’ll see what can be done with that hair. Father can wait a bit, I guess.”

Dan removed his coat and sat down obediently by the window. Mrs. Biggs took her scissors out of the work basket, and pinned a calico apron around Dan’s neck.

“The suit ain’t so bad,” she said, musingly; “it looks like good stuff, an’ it’s pretty well made.”

“Mr. Blodgett said it was the latest style,” remarked Dan, proudly.

“Oh, you got it over to Blodgett’s store, did you. How much did it cost, Dan?”

“Never you mind, mar,” said Dan, falling back upon his original defence, “1 earned the money.”

Mrs. Biggs sighed and snipped busily away with the scissors.

“I’m glad you wasn’t reckless enough to go to one of them barber fellers over town,” she said.

“Oh, I were reckless ‘nough; ‘twarn’t that, mar. I clean forgot all about it.”

“I’m afraid. Dan’l,” sighed Aunt Aanabel, “that you’re gittin’ into bad ways. I never knew your father to spend, so much money at one time in his life. It must ‘a’ cost a heap.”

Dan was silent, and the scissors clipped away briskly, until Mrs. Biggs announced the job was completed to her satisfaction.

“Now for pop,” said Dan, and he put on his coat and walked resolutely to the barn. His father sat upon an upturned pail in moody reflection, and when his son halted before him he looked up and said, —

“Dan, I allus tried to be a good father to you. When you come twenty-one this spring I let the hired man go an’ took you in his place — on half wages. ‘Taint ev’ry father would ‘a’ done that. An’ when you come to me last night

an' wanted fifteen dollars, I made sure you was goin' to put it in the bank. Sech a thought as your a spendin' of it recklessly never entered my head. Whatever made you do it, Dan — whatever made you do it?"

"Look here, pop; we've had 'bout 'nough o' this kind o' talk," said Dan, with spirit; "I've worked steady an' I've earned the money, an' it's my bus'ness. I'd got tired o' them baggy old clo's an' home-made shirts, an' made up my mind I'd dress as a feller should dress; an' now it's did, an' there's no backin' out. So you jest take it quiet an' let it pass."

"Well, well," said Mr. Biggs, after a little thought, "you never did sech a thing afore, an' so we'll let it pass, as you say. Mebbe it'll be a good lesson to you."

He arose from his seat, as if to indicate that the interview was at an end, but Dan hung around as though there was something more he wished to say. Finally he mustered up courage to ask, —

"Kin I take the brown mare an' the top buggy to drive to church?"

"The top buggy! Air ye too proud to ride wi' the rest of us in the wagin?"

"I thought I'd go over to the Larkinsville church this mornin'."

"An' why?" questioned his father, in surprise; "ain't the church at the Corners good enough fer you?"

"Oh, it's good 'nough; but all the best folks go to Larkinsville."

"The rich farmers as live on the turnpike go there," said his father, sharply, "but you ain't got no call to associate with the Larkins an' Pentons an' Abbeys. Why, they'd stick up their noses at the son o' a poor farmer like me."

"Anyhow," persisted Dan, stubbornly, "I'd like to go."

"Then go!" growled the farmer; "you'll know more the next time. I s'pose you want to show off them new clo's — an' the red shirt."

So Dan drove over to the Larkinsville church, and, strange to say, seemed in high spirits on his return. And on Monday morning he put on his old clothes again and went to work with his usual energy and good will.

During the week, farmer Larkins, reputed the richest man in the county, rode up to the Biggs farm to arrange for the purchase of some milch cows. While he was talking with Dan's father the boy passed by and touched his hat respectfully to the great man.

"That's a good lad you have there," said Mr. Larkins, looking after him; "he was over to our church Sunday, an' set in our pew; an' Sally 'lowed as he was the best behaved young man at the meetin'."

Mr. Biggs reddened with pleasure at this praise from so high an authority.

"Dan's a rare worker," he said, "an' I'm payin' him half wages now for takin' the hired man's place. He'll make a right smart farmer one o' these

days."

"Yes," replied Mr. Larkin, thoughtfully, "he has a likely look. I wish I had a son like him," and he mounted his grey nag and rode slowly away.

The next Sunday there was no opposition to Dan's driving the bay mare to the Larkinsville church, and Mrs. Biggs was really proud of her boy as she watched him drive away, so sprucely dressed in his new clothes. It was nearly dark when he returned, but no one questioned him, and he made no explanation as to what had detained him.

And so the summer passed away, and Sunday became Dan's day off. Sometimes he would not return until the family was in bed, and his father and mother spoke to each other anxiously about his "carryin's on" and feared his bad habits were growing on him. But Dan's newly developed stubbornness restrained them from remonstrating seriously.

Dan asked permission to attend the county fair in October, and to drive the brown mare with the top buggy, and his father reluctantly consented. But when the young man, after much hesitation, asked for two dollars to spend, Mr. Biggs firmly refused.

"Fifty cents was all I ever spent at a fair when I was a boy," he said, "an' to chuck away two dollars for sech nonsense would be downright sinful. I'll give you fifty cents, if you want it, but no more."

Dan looked him straight in the eye.

"There's about twenty dollars comin' to me, ain't there?" he asked.

"'Bout that. But I ain't goin' to encourage you in extravygent habits."

"I'll trouble you for two dollars," said Dan, white with anger, "or I'll take what's due me an' you can find another hand. I'm twenty-one, an' I'm my own master."

His father eyed him curiously a moment, but he saw Dan was in earnest, and so with a groan of protest he took the money from his pocket and gave it to him.

"I s'pose you're goin' to take that redheaded gal o' Jinkinses with you, an' squander the money buyin' her peanuts an' candy," he said spitefully; "them redheaded gals has ruined more men than you, Dan. But I see you're headed for destruction, an' you must go your own bent."

Dan did not reply. He put the money in his pocket, climbed into the "buggy and drove away without a word.

After that Dan got into the habit of absenting himself more than one evening in the week, and his parents became so worried that Mr. Biggs began praying earnestly for him at family prayers.

But nothing seemed to move Dan; even the prayers were ineffectual to stop him in what Aunt Annabel called his down'ard course."

One morning in December, Dan, having returned exceptionally late the preceding evening, remarked calmly at the breakfast table, —

"You'd better look up a hired man, pop; I'm goin' to be married New Year's day."

If a bomb had been exploded in their midst the Biggs family could not have been more startled.

His mother lay back in her chair and stared with eyes and mouth wide open; Aunt Annabel screamed and scared little 'Liz'beth into tears, and the farmer uttered a word under his breath that must have been taken bodily from the prayer-book.

Mrs. Biggs recovered herself first.

"Who to, Dan?" she enquired, breathlessly.

"To Sally Larkins."

"Sally Larkins!" they echoed, with one voice.

"Why, she's the richest gal in the county," said Aunt Annabel, in amazement.

"An' the prettiest!" said 'Liz'beth.

Dan caught his little sister in his arms and kissed her rapturously.

"An' she's an only child!" cried his mother, as the importance of the announcement came home to her.

"Dan," said his father, rising from the table and trembling with excitement, "I'll see you in the barn arter you're through your breakfast."

Dan kissed his mother and Aunt Annabel and 'Liz'beth with happiness shining from every feature of his round face, and then he sought his father.

"Dan," said that parent, impressively, "how air yon goin' to support a wife, to say nothin' o' supportin' yourself?"

"Mr. Larkins has promised to give us the Downs Farm for a weddin' present. There ain't no better piece o' land in the county."

Mr. Biggs sat silently upon the upturned pail, evidently engaged in deep thought.

"Dan," he said, at length, "I may have kicked a little at yer extravygence now an' then, but let bygones be bygones. A business deal is a business deal, an' to tell you the truth, that bit o' money o' yourn were mighty well invested!"

Nelebel's Fairyland

From: *The Russ* (a publication of San Diego High School) June, 1905.

I do not know exactly what naughty thing Princess Nelebel had done. Perhaps she had been making eyes at the Gnomes - which all fairies are forbidden to do. Anyway, she had been guilty of something so sadly unfairy-like, that her punishment was of a grievous nature. She was no more to inhabit the palace of the Fairy Queen, in the beautiful forest of Burzee--she was not even to live in Burzee at all, at least for a hundred years--but was condemned to banishment and exile in the first land she might come to, after crossing the ocean to the eastward.

Really, Nelebel must have done more than merely make eyes at the Gnomes; for the punishment she incurred was something awful. Yet the sweet, dainty little fairy could not have been very wicked, I am sure; for she was not the only one that wept when she prepared to leave Burzee, with its hosts of immortals, to take residence in some dreary, unknown land across the seas.

Of course, the beautiful fairy was not to go unattended, even into exile. Queen Lulea appointed forty of the crooked wood-knooks, and forty of the sprightly field-ryls, and forty of the monstrous gigans to accompany and protect Nelebel in her new home. The knooks, you know, are the immortals that make the trees and shrubs grow and thrive; and the ryls feed the flowers and grasses, and color them brilliantly with their brushes and paint-pots. As for the gigans, they were only strong and faithful.

On a fine morning, while the eyes of her old comrades were all wet with sorrowful tears, Princess Nelebel waved her wand and vanished with her little band from Burzee, to begin that exile which had been decreed, in punishment of her fault.

Although I have examined the Records of Fairyland with great care, I do not find anywhere the slightest reference to that journey of Nelebel across the great ocean; which leads me to believe the flight was so instantaneous, that there was no time for anything to happen; or else the journey was too unimportant to need recording.

But we know that she came to a strip of beach both rocky and sandstrewn--a barren waste, gently washed by the waves of the mighty Pacific--and that her first act, upon setting foot on this shore, was to throw herself flat upon the ground and sob until the very earth shook with the tremor of his wild expression of grief and loneliness.

The forty knooks squatted about her, silent and scowling. These creatures are very kindhearted, in spite of their ugly crookedness, and they scowled

because the lovely princess was so sad. The restless ryls, sorrowful but busy, pattered around and touched the knolls and hills, here and there, with their magic fingers. So presently the brown earth and yellow sands were covered with emerald grasses, wherein banks of fragrant roses and gorgeous poppies nestled. And, as Nelebel wriggled around in the abandon of her grief, her fair head finally rested upon a mass of blooming flowers, and their touch soothed her. And sweet grasses brushed and cooled her tearstained cheeks, till under their comforting influence she fell asleep. And upon her fell the warm rays of the kindliest sun that any country has ever known--or ever will know--and brought to the little maid forgetfulness of all her woes.

The crooked knooks, noting the transformations effected by the busy ryls, seemed suddenly to become ashamed of their own sullen inaction. They sprang up and bestirred themselves; and when they do this, something is bound to happen. Before long their masterful art had evoked a grove of graceful palms, which now, for the first time, vanquished the barrenness of this neglected coast, and gave the evening zephyrs something to play with. When the sun wooed the sleeping fairy too warmly, the palms threw their shadows over her; but the breeze crept low and kissed her brow and whispered lovingly into her pink ears. And Nelebel smiled, and sighed, and slumbered sweetly.

But what do you suppose the gigans were doing all this time? Where do you imagine they disposed of their enormous bodies, that the repose of their wee mistress might not be disturbed? From all accounts those gigans were the largest of all beings ever known, and even the giants that Jack killed must have been mere pygmies beside them. I am informed that seventy-four years, five months and eight days after the events I am recording, Queen Lulea, becoming annoyed at the awkwardness of the huge gigans, transformed them into rampsies--the smallest of all immortals. So there are no gigans at all, in these days.

Well, while Princess Nelebel was sleeping away her grief on the brow of the hill,* her forty gigans were squatting in the sand of the beach, close to the water's edge. And here, idly amusing themselves, the big fellows began digging in the sand--just as children do now-adays. They scooped up huge mountains of sand at every handful and tossed it out into the sea; and this soon built up a ridge of land between them and the ocean, while the hollow they made filled up with seawater and became an inland lake. When, in their digging, they came across a rock, they tossed it to the north of them; and thus was formed the promontory we now know as Point Loma. Then these playful gigans--not knowing they were changing the geography of a country--heaped piles of rock and sand and earth to the southward, forming those peaks,

known to future ages as the San Bernardino range of mountains. And one of the gigans, finding the inland lake was now deep enough, stretched out an arm and hollowed a trench against the side of Point Loma, that soon connected the lake with the ocean, thus creating a bay that is now world famous.**

What more those tremendous gigans might have accomplished, is uncertain. The ryls and knooks had, until now, been too busy to interfere with their big comrades' pastimes. But, at this moment, Nelebel awoke and sat up, and gave a little cry of delight.

All about her spread a carpet of green grass, inlaid with exquisite patterns of wild flowers. Gracious pepper and eucalyptus trees nodded to her a pleasant greeting. At her feet lay the beautiful bay, its wave-tips sparkling like millions of diamonds. And, while Nelebel gazed, a sun of golden red sank toward the rugged head of Loma and touched it with a caressing good-night kiss.

The exiled fairy, turning with indrawn breath to gaze upon the purple and rose tints of the mountains, clapped her pretty hands in an ecstacy of joy, and cried to her faithful servants:

"Here is a new Fairyland, my friends! and to me it is far more lovely than the dark and stately groves of old Burzee. What matters our exile, when the beauties of this earthly paradise are ours to enjoy?"

They are silent people--these knooks and ryls and gigans--so they did not bother to tell Princess Nelebel, that the magic of busy hands and loving hearts had made a barren waste beautiful to soothe her sorrow. Instead, they contended themselves with bowing mutely before their mistress.

But Nelebel wished a response to her enthusiasm.

"Speak!" she commanded. "Is it not, indeed, a new Fairyland?"

So now a crooked, scarred and grey-bearded knook made bold to answer: "Wherever the fairest of the fairies dwells," said he, "that place must be Fairyland." Whereat she smiled; for even fairies love compliments.

The Records, after dwelling long upon the beauties of this favored spot (which, long afterward, was called "Coronado"), relate the grief of Nelebel when her term of exile expired, and she was compelled to leave it. But the charm of her fairy presence still lingers over land and sea, and to this day casts its influence upon the lives of those pilgrims who stray, by good fortune, into the heart of Nelebel's Fairyland.

To Macatawa

From *The Herald* (Grand Rapids, Michigan), September 1, 1907

Fair Macatawa, let me fling
My praises in thy face, and sing
A tribute so deserved, mayhap
All men to nestle in thy lap
Will long, and be inspired with zest
To rest their heads upon thy breast!
This may be metaphoric, yet
The nestle and the rest you bet
Your badge belong no place but here -
And here you'll find them, never fear.
I beg to ask where else you'll find
A summer haven that's designed
So perfectly to charm mankind
And tone the liver, heart and mind?
Where else is every nerve relaxed
And every lung-cell overtaxed
To breathe the ozone laden breeze
That gives you sleep whene'er you please?
Where else do jaunty villas peep
From leafy bowers across the deep
Expense of Michigan, who soaks
With crystal tears the bathing-folks?
Where else does fickle appetite
Aspire to reach a dizzy height
In order that it may deplete
Your purse to feed it stuff to eat?
Where else in all the world's expanse
Do sunsets get so good a chance
To spread themselves and make us cry:
"They've spilled a paint-shop in the sky?"
Where else can maidens get so wet
When wearing bathing-suits? and yet
Where else is humor half so dry
Or wit and wisdom half so spry?
Where else do bridge fiends congregate
So thickly, or sit up so late?
Where else do pretty wives despise

The art of making goo-goo eyes
And husbands their own wires adore
Exclusively - and nothing more?
Where else do lovers seek the trail
Through woodland glens, and never fail
To cling together at all cost
To keep themselves from getting lost?
Where else are peaches double price
Because they taste so mighty nice?
Where else are peas so luscious sweet
Or chickens half so good to eat?
Where else are fishes so polite
That on your hook they always bite?
Where else do cottagers dictate
The cost of lights, the water rate.
And run the whole shebang just right
To make the sore-heads rave and fight?
Where else, in short, is found so nice
An imitation paradise?
Happy the boy or girl who knows
This land of rainbows, beaux and bows,
Where every night there is a chance
To revel in the merry dance;
Where motor boats are thick as bees
And all can mote whene'er they please;
Where all is love and peace and joy
Without a 'skeeter to annoy
Or sign of any carking care
To be discovered anywhere.
On you, dear Mac., where stands my shack,
I'll ne'er by work or deed go back;
But ever will I drool they praise
And love thee well for all my days.

The Equine Paradox

From: *The Woggle-Bug* stage show, originally published as sheet music, 1905.

Early morn the hunter's horn rings out upon the air,
Straight away we ride all day and never turn a hare,
The hounds all bay as if to say
The sport is rather tame,
And we'll admit that where we sit the lunch is rather lame.
Refrain:
Hi! Hi! Hi! Here's the way to ride.
We're mighty quick at any trick
When on a horse astride.
Our bare back feat can not be beat,
So on us keep your eye.
Just note the fact our greatest act
Is Hi! Hi! Hi!
Here's a troop of cowboys from the wild and wooley West,
How we ride is Teddy's pride as you perhaps have guessed,
To rope a steer or corral beer
Is our supreme delight,
And when we can not run away you ought to see us fight.
Refrain:
Hi! Hi! Hi! Here's the way to ride.
We're mighty quick at any trick
When on a horse astride.
Our bare back feat can not be beat,
So on us keep your eye.
Just note the fact our greatest act
Is Hi! Hi! Hi!
We're a bunch of circus riders just from Wankayoo,
Daring deeds as dashing speeds we'll now perform for you,
Your hair will surely stand on end,
We'll thrill you through and through,
And you will wonder why in thunder we're from Wankayoo.
Refrain:
Hi! Hi! Hi! Here's the way to ride.
We're mighty quick at any trick
When on a horse astride.
Our bare back feat can not be beat,

So on us keep your eye.
Just note the fact our greatest act
Is Hi! Hi! Hi!
We’s de weary willies and we always makes a fuss
Shoin saws to feed our jaws so dat’s a horse on us.
Our backs is broke and dat’s no joke,
Our nightmare is a buck,
Dough we may sigh for cake and pie, on workin’ we ain’t stuck.
Refrain:
Hi! Hi! Hi! Here’s the way to ride.
We’re mighty quick at any trick
When on a horse astride.
Our bare back feat can not be beat,
So on us keep your eye.
Just note the fact our greatest act
Is Hi! Hi! Hi!

My Ruby Wedding Ring

From: unidentified publication, October 12, 1896

The Inn at Loudre was very disagreeable. The odor of garlic and cabbage and the dampness and dirt were unsupportable, and so I decided to push on to Danvers. The only vehicle I could procure was a rattling two seated gig drawn by a bony white horse of doubtful ability, but as my destination was only three hours away and I was not liable to meet any one on the lonely road I started off cheerfully enough, resolved to enjoy my solitary drive to the utmost.

The moonlight as it glinted on the soft green of the hedges and streaked the gray of the dusty road was very beautiful, and before half a league had been passed over I heartily congratulated myself upon good fortune in escaping the horrible inn at Loudre.

After an hour's dreamy and delightful ride I came to a crossroads where with difficulty I deciphered the battered signpost and learned I must turn to the left to reach Danvers. So, clucking up my deliberate steed, who proceeded in a half dignified, half protesting fashion, I turned into a grassy lane between two tall hedges and drove through a lonely district until the dreamy influence of the night overcame me and I drifted into a somnolent state midway between sleep and waking.

I was aroused by the sudden halting of my horse, who gave a frightened snort and planted both feet firmly before him.

A subdued sobbing, as of a woman in distress, fell upon my ears, and leaning forward, I peered into the moonlight to discover whence it came.

A high brick wall ran close to the roadway, covered with ivy and lichens, and leaning against an angle of this, a few steps before me, was a slight, girlish form draped in a black mantle.

I sprang to the ground and softly approached her. Her face was buried in her hands, and she sobbed bitterly.

"Mademoiselle," I said, speaking in French, "You are in trouble. Can I assist you in any way?"

She lifted her head, and the moonlight fell upon the most beautiful face I had ever seen. Absolutely faultless in texture, it was surmounted by a crown of yellow hair that shone like gold in the glare of the moonbeams, while a pair of deep violet eyes that even tears could not dim looked earnestly into mine.

"Who are you?" I asked gently, "and why are you here?"

"I am Amelie de Boursons, monsieur, and I reside at the chateau just within these gates."

The soft, musical notes of her voice added to the powerful impression her ex-quisite beauty had already produced upon my heart.

“But it is late,” I continued. “Surely some great misfortune must have befallen you to bring you here at this hour.”

“It is true, monsieur,” she replied, strug-gling with a new paroxysm of grief. “Tomor-row is my wedding day.”

“But is that so terrible an event?” I asked.

“If you but knew, monsieur,” she said, “how vile and brutal is the man they are forc-ing me to marry, you would willingly save me from my horrible fate.”

She accompanied these words with an ap-pealing look into my face, then she dropped her head and sobbed anew.

I did not stop to reason upon the strange-ness of all this. I was a young, generous hearted man in those days and could not re-sist this appeal from beauty in distress.

“But tell me,” I said, “how can I save you from this distasteful marriage? Do you wish to fly? I have a conveyance close by and will gladly escort you to a place of safety.”

“To fly would avail me nothing,” she answered, with a sweet sadness. “They would follow us and force me to return.”

“But how else can I save you?” I asked helplessly.

“I do not know,” she replied, with a sudden calmness that suggested despair, “but unless you can find some wav to succor me I shall take mv own life.”

There was no doubt from the expression of her low, earnest voice that she meant this, and, filled with consternation at the thought, I racked my brains for some way to preserve both her life and happiness.

At last an idea came to me, but I trembled at my own presumption as I suggested it.

“Mademoiselle,” I said haltingly, “I see but one alternative. You must marry me.”

The violet eyes opened wide in surprise. “Marry you, monsieur?”

“Then pursuit would be useless. Being my wife, you would escape this villain who insists upon wedding you. I am free and able to give you all that would add to your happiness, and I shall learn to love you very dearly. It is true that I am a stranger to you, but I assure you that I am in all ways worthy to seek both your heart and your hand.”

She gazed with earnest intentness into my face for a moment and then re-plied slowly:

“I think I shall trust you, monsieur. Indeed, I cannot help myself. I will be

your wife.”

There was no coyness in her answer; no blush tinted the pale, beautiful face, but she drew herself up, with an air of simple dignity that commanded my re-spect and admiration.

“Then come,” I said eagerly. “We must lose no time. It will be midnight before we can hope to reach Danvers.”

“Not Danvers,” she replied, shrinking back as I sought to take her hand. “Let us go to Tregonne. There is a notary who will marry us, and we are far safer from pursuit.”

“Very well,” I answered. “Let us be off.”

Refusing my proffered assistance. Mlle. de Boursons walked to the carriage and sprang lightly to the back seat. Rather awkwardly I took my place in front, gathered up the reins and drove off as swiftly as I could induce the ancient steed to move.

Mademoiselle drew her mantle closely over her head and shoulders, and only once during the long drive did she speak. Then it was to direct me to the Tregonne road.

With ample time for reflection my adventure now began to seem rather queer and uncanny, and by the time we discovered the lights of Tregonne twinkling before us I had come to doubt the perfect wisdom of my present course.

But it was too late to draw back now, and the girl was very beautiful.

“This is the notary’s,” said my companion in her low, sweet voice, indicating by a gesture a rambling structure from whose windows gleamed a single light.

I leaped out, found the door at the end of a long pathway and knocked upon it loudly.

A tall thin man beyond the middle age, holding a tallow candle high above his head, answered my call.

“You are the notary? “ I asked briefly.

He nodded in assent.

“I wish to be married.”

“Married!” he echoed in surprise. “But when, monsieur?”

“Now; at once.”

“But the bride, monsieur?”

“I will fetch the bride. She is waiting without.”

I thought he intended to protest, so I left him abruptly and returned for the lady. She was already coming toward the house, and as I met her she motioned me to go before, while she followed silently up the pathway.

The notary admitted us without ceremony, and we entered a small, dimly

lighted room that appeared to be a study.

My companion at once seated herself in an armchair, but without removing the mufflings from her face.

The notary snuffed the candle, arranged his books and, turning to me with a penetrating look, said;

“I must know your name, monsieur.”

“Richard Harrington.”

“Your residence?”

“I am an American.”

He wrote the answers in his book. Then, glancing toward the armchair, he continued:

“The lady’s name?”

I waited for her to reply, but as she remained silent I answered:

“Amelie de Boursons.”

“Who?” cried the notary in a loud voice, springing to his feet, while a look of fear and consternation spread over his wrinkled face.

“Amelie de Boursons,” I repeated slowly, infected by the man’s agitation in spite of myself.

The notary stared wildly at the muffled form of the lady. Then, he drew out is handkerchief and wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead.

“What does this mean, monsieur?” I demanded angrily.

The man heeded me not the slightest; but, clutching the edge of the table to steady himself and extending his long, bony finger toward the girl, he exclaimed:

“Are you Amelie de Boursons?”

Slowly, with admirable grace and dignity, the lady threw back her mantle, and her marvelous beauty was again revealed.

The notary with distended eves fixed upon the visage sank back in his chair with a low moan.

“This must be explained, monsieur.” I cried, striding up to his side and grasping his shoulder. “Is there any reason I should not marry Mlle. de Boursons?”

“Mlle. de Boursons,” returned the notary, still regarding her with horror, “has been dead these forty years!”

“Dead!” I echoed, staring first at the notary and then at the girl, while a sense of bewilderment overcame me.

Mlle. de Boursons arose with a gleaming smile and came to my side.

“See, monsieur,” she exclaimed mockingly and giving me her hand. “Do you also think me dead?”

The hand was as cold as ice, but its touch sent a strange thrill through my

body.

"Come, monsieur," I said to the notary, who watched the scene in amazement. "Read the ceremony at once. We are in haste."

Slowly and with trembling voice the notary obeyed, the girl at my side returning the answers in a sweet, collected voice that disarmed my fears and calmed to some extent the notary himself.

I drew a seal ring from my finger and placed it upon her icy hand, and in its place she slipped a large ruby from her own hand upon mine.

The ceremony concluded, I paid the notary, thanking him briefly for his ser-vices, and, followed by my bride, walked down the path to my carriage. The notary stood in the doorway lighting us with the candle.

At the carriage I turned to hand my wife to her seat, but she had disappeared. I ran back to the doorway.

"Where is my wife?" I asked.

"She followed you down the path," said the man.

"But she is not there."

Without a word the notary accompanied me back to the carriage. No trace of the girl was to be seen.

Right and left among the shrubbery I searched. I called aloud her name, entreating her to come to me, but no sight of the beautiful face rewarded my efforts.

I returned to the notary's study filled with grave misgivings.

"Where can she be?" I asked dismally.

"In her grave," was the hoarse answer.

"Monsieur!"

"I told you before that she was dead. It is true. You have wedded a ghost."

The next morning, in company with the notary, I drove down the road 'til we came to the brick wall where I had first seen Amelie de Boursons.

We entered the gates and walked to the chateau that stood in the neglected grounds. An old woman admitted us, the caretaker, and at the notary's request allowed us to visit the gallery.

The notary threw back the shutters, and the sun came in and flooded the portrait of a beautiful girl whose violet eyes regarded me with the same sweet expression I had noted of my bride on the previous evening.

"It is Amelie de Boursons," said the notary in a gentle voice. "I have seen this picture often and heard the girl's pitiful story, and that is why I knew her last night to be a mere phantom. Her father was a stern, hard man, who insisted upon her marrying a person utterly distasteful to the young girl. She tried to escape, but was captured and brought home to confront her fate. On the wedding morn-ing they found her dead in her bed. She had taken her own

life. That was forty years ago, monsieur.”

As we left the room I glanced curiously at the ruby that sparkled on my finger.

I wear it to this day.

It is the only evidence I have ever possessed of my phantom bride.

The Runaway Shadows

From: various newspapers, June 5, 1901

I

The Frost King came down to breakfast one morning in a merry mood.

"Do you know what day it is?" said he to his son Jack.

"No, your Majesty," answered Jack, who was busily eating fried icicles.

"It is my birthday," he said.

"Ah!" cried Jack, springing to his feet. "Then it is the Coldest Day of the Year."

"Exactly!" replied his father. "So to-day, my dear boy, you may mix with the Earth People and play your pranks upon them to your heart's content. Many exposed noses and ears will be ready for you to nip, and many toes and fingers to pinch; so you will easily manage to keep busy."

"I'll start at once!" exclaimed Jack; "for I do not wish to miss an hour of this merry day."

II

Said the little Prince of Thumbumbia: "I want to go out and play."

"It is extremely cold, your Highness," remonstrated the chief nurse, uneasily.

"That does not matter," answered the Prince. "I have furs. So I will go out of doors to play; and my cousin, the Lady Lindeva, will go with me."

"Our men-at-arms declare it is the Coldest Day of the Year," remarked the chief nurse; "and naughty Jack Frost will be abroad."

The Prince of Thumbumbia stamped his small foot.

"The furs!" he cried, imperiously.

So the chief nurse sighed and summoned her maids, to whom she gave orders to fetch the furs. The Prince and his dainty cousin, little Lady Lindeva, were wrapped from head to foot in soft, rich furs, so when the maids were through with them, only their eyes and the tips of their noses were exposed. Then a shivering guardsman opened the front door of the castle just wide enough for them to get through, and they joined their mittened hands and walked out into the big courtyard.

The sun shone brilliantly, but so intense was the cold that even the soldiers who guarded the walls had gone within their little turreted houses and none had dared brave the severe weather save the two self-willed children.

As they toddled across the stone pavement the sun cast dark shadows behind them, which clung close to the children's heels whether they went

fast or slow.

The furs succeeded in keeping out the cold, but the Prince and Lady Lindeva found little to interest them in the courtyard, and began to realize the folly of venturing out.

Then merry Jack Frost came that way, and upon seeing the youngsters decided to pinch their ears. But these he found covered up. Next he thought he would nip their noses; but at the first attempt the little ones withdrew them into their furs. Jack Frost was really puzzled. He couldn't get at them anywhere.

Just at this time the prince and his cousin saw a snow-bird sitting upon the battlements and ran across the court to catch it. When they moved Jack Frost noticed the shadows following them, and a clever idea came into his head.

"I'll freeze the shadows!" he said to himself, with a laugh.

So, while the little ones stood still to watch the snow-bird, naughty Jack breathed softly upon the two shadows, which were holding hands exactly as the children did. Soon they became solid and rounded out into form, for the only reason shadows are so flat and helpless is because they are not solid. Being now frozen into shape they became greatly interested in themselves, and Jack Frost stopped long enough to put a mischievous notion into their heads.

"Let's run away," whispered the prince's shadow to that of the Lady Lindeva.

"All right; let's!" was the soft answer.

They glanced over their shoulders and then gave a look at the prince and his cousin, to whom they knew very well they belonged. But the children were intently watching the bird and had no thought for such trifling things as shadows.

Noting this, the two shadows slowly glided away, leaped the great wall with ease and ran in the direction of the Forest of Burzee. Jack Frost stood watching them as they moved swiftly over the snow, and he laughed joyously at the success of his stratagem.

The runaway shadows never stopped till they had reached the forest and gone some distance among the trees. Then, indeed, they paused to rest and recover their breaths; but each still held the other's hand and they kept close together.

Kahtah, the great tiger of Burzee, lay upon the limb of a tree and sleepily opened his eyes from time to time to look about him.

Suddenly he pricked up his ears and began moving his long tail from side to side.

"The Prince of Thumbumbia and the Lady Lindeva have come to the

forest!" he growled, softly. "I can see their shadows, so the children must be just behind that clump of bushes. Surely it was my good luck that brought them here, for I am hungry today and they will do excellently for dinner."

Then he thrust his sharp claws from their sheaths, bared his big yellow teeth and gave a mighty spring that landed him exactly behind the clump of bushes where the children, according to their shadows, ought to have been.

But he struck the frozen ground and found no one there. And the shadows laughed at him.

"You were fooled that time, Kahtah!" they cried; and when the tiger turned upon them fiercely they ran away through the trees and left him.

Soon after they met with a ryl, which asked:

"Why have you run away from your owners?"

"For sport," replied the prince's shadow.

"And because we are tired with tagging after some one else," added the Lady Lindeva's shadow.

"Ah, I see," remarked the ryl, looking at them with a wise expression; "you are frozen solid now, and think you amount to something. But you don't. When the weather changes and you thaw out you will fade into the air and become lost forever. That will be bad. And the children will have no shadows ever after. That will be bad, too. Can't you see you are acting foolishly?"

The shadows hung their heads and looked ashamed.

"My advice to you," continued the ryl, "is to return to the castle as quickly as possible and join yourselves to the prince and the little girl as you were before. It is far better to tag after those high-born children than to become nothing at all. And in truth you are only shadows, who can not expect to become anything better, although you will grow bigger as your masters grow."

For a moment there was silence; then the Lady Lindeva's shadow whispered to her companion:

"The ryl is right. Let us return at once."

"Very well," replied the prince's shadow. "We have had a good run and been independent for once in our lives. But I do not care to fade into the air and become nothing at all!"

So they turned around and went back to the castle.

III

After the shadows had left them the little prince and his cousin decided it was too cold to remain out of doors, and the snow-bird had flown away; so they returned to the big entrance of the castle and the guard let them in. But

scarcely had they reached the hall and allowed the maids to remove their furs, when a loud shout was heard and a cavalcade of horsemen rode up to the castle and dismounted in the courtyard. With them was a splendid carriage, drawn by four milk-white steeds.

The leader of these men, who were all noblemen and courtiers, entered the hall of the castle, and having bowed low before the prince he said:

"I am grieved to announce that his majesty, the king, has just died. His nearest of kin are yourself, prince, and your cousin, the Lady Lindeva. But since you are a boy, and she is a girl, we have decided to offer to you the rule of this mighty kingdom. If you will graciously ride with us to the city you shall be crowned before sunset." Then he kneeled before the prince and awaited his answer.

"I am sorry the king, my good uncle, is dead," said the boy. "But often I have thought I should like to be a king myself. So I thank you all and shall return with you to the city."

The chief nurse then replaced his soft furs and he walked out to enter the carriage which stood in waiting.

But when he stood in the bright sunshine one of the courtiers exclaimed:

"Why, the prince has no shadow!"

At this all eyes were turned upon the boy, and they saw that he alone of them all cast no shadow upon the pavement.

Silence then fell upon them, till one, more bold than the rest, said:

"It will never do to make him king; for when it is known he has no shadow the people will lose all respect for him and consider him less than a human."

"That is true," said another. "No one would obey a king so poor that he has no shadow."

"For this reason," declared the leader of the party, "we must make Lady Lindeva queen, and set her to reign over the kingdom in place of the unfortunate prince."

To this all were agreed, though many expressed regret. So the prince, who had been fully as much astonished at the loss of his shadow as any of the others, was led back into the castle and the Lady Lindeva brought forth in his stead.

But when the girl came into the sunshine the courtiers were shocked to discover that she had no more shadow than the prince. Whereupon they were puzzled how to act, and finally decided to return to the city and report the matter to Earl Highlough, who was chief man in all the kingdom.

When this great and wise statesman heard that neither the prince nor his cousin cast a shadow in the sunlight he refused to believe the report, and

announced that he would himself go to the Castle of Thumbumbia and investigate the matter.

And while he was upon the way the runaway shadows stole back to the castle and sought out the boy and girl, resolving never to leave them again. The warmth of the room soon drew the frost from the shadows, and rendered them so limp and flat that they were really glad to stick close to the heels of their owners.

The Earl of Highlough presently arrived with a great train of courtiers and attendants, and at once requested the Prince of Thumbumbia to step out into the sunshine of the courtyard. This the prince did, feeling sadly the humiliation of having no shadow.

But, behold! no sooner came he into the sun than he cast a long, black shadow behind him; and the courtiers applauded his triumph, and with loud shouts hailed him as their king.

IV

The records state that for many years the new king walked daily within the gardens of his palace in order to make sure he had not again lost his shadow. Even after he grew to manhood, and by wise rule gained the love and respect of his subjects, whenever he happened to walk out with the Lady Lindeva - now his queen - there were both accustomed to glance over their shoulders with anxious looks.

But the shadows, having learned wisdom from the ryl, never deserted them again, and Jack Frost, having new tricks to play, forgot all about the annoyance he had once caused His Royal Highness the King.

Jack Burgitt's Honor

From: The Associated Press, 1905

"Not me, Jack — not me! Think o' Susie!"

"I hev thought," said Jack doggedly, "an' I've thought o' mother an' her prayers fer me. But men do these things, an' they're never found out — not in cases o' this kind. I know it's wrong, but it seems like a devil had got hold o' me an' wouldn't let go, an' sooner or later I've got to give in. One of us has got to do the job, pard, an' you're no better nor I am.''

"We'll draw cuts," said Dick desperately.

"Thet's sensible," returned Jack, springing to his feet, "an' it sounds like business. If I hed to think o' this thing much longer I should go crazy. Which does the job — the long or the short?"

"Short," said Jack faintly.

"Then draw."

Dick reached out a trembling hand and drew the long blade of grass. Then they looked into each other .eyes a moment and turned away.

Soon after Jack emerged from the shanty in his coat and hat. The butt of a revolver protruded from his pocket, and his bowie was stuck in his belt. His white face wore a stern expression as he walked up to Dick and reached out his hand.

"Shake, pard," he said grimly. "It's the last time I can hold out an innercent hand."

"Don't go, Jack!" exclaimed Dick, with almost a sob. "Don't go, ol' man!"

"I must," was the reply. "There's no backin' out now." And he marched away toward the brush.

Old Hawks was busily at work that afternoon when a gruff voice at his side startled him.

"Hello, pard!"

He looked up to see Jack Burgitt standing near, his eyes fixed eagerly upon a nugget of gold which had just been washed out. Hawks examined the face of his visitor with shrewd intentness and shrank from what he saw there.

"Where did you come from?" he asked slowly as he thoughtfully considered the consequences of this visit and the character of the man before him.

Jack made a motion with his head.

"Down the valley," he answered.

"Prospectin'?"

“Yes. I see you’ve struck it rich.’’

“Fair. Only fair,” replied Hawks, with a sigh.

Jack looked at the ground, at the little pile of dust in the tin at Hawks’ feet, anywhere except at the face of the old man.

“Kin ye give me a bunk fer the night?” he asked at length.

“Certainly,” answered Hawks promptly, concealing his fears and glancing briefly at the sun. “It’s near supper time now, and I’ll stop work and fry us a bit of bacon. You’re welcome to stay and rest as long as you please.”

Hawks was a fair judge of human nature, and, while he knew perfectly well from his visitor’s actions that the man had come to rob if not to murder him, there was somehow a look of innate honesty in Jack’s face that puzzled him. As he cooked the supper he reflected how he could best extricate himself from his uncomfortable position. By a few casual remarks he drew Jack out and soon discovered that he already knew of his rich find and that Hawks had carried large quantities of dust to Brown’s bank at Black Rock.

Hawks valued money, but after all life was much sweeter to him than gold, and he decided to bend all efforts toward saving his life.

Therefore he conversed frankly with his visitor, and as Jack became more at his ease Hawks found himself thinking that his guest was far from being a hardened criminal and under other circumstances might possess many admirable qualities.

“It is this horrible thirst for gold that has mastered the fellow,” thought the old man, “and made him capable of a crime in order to obtain it. Very well. As I am too weak to cope with him, I shall sacrifice a part of my wealth to purchase my life.”

Jack was eating his supper slowly and swallowing each morsel with great difficulty. His face retained its pallor, but also bore an expression of stern resolve. Old Hawks looked at him slyly and trembled.

“Will you be returning to Black Rock to-morrow?’ he asked.

Jack nodded.

“Then you can do me a great favor.”

“How’s that?”

“I have a large quantity of gold on hand, and if you will take it to Brown’s for me and deposit it to my account it will save my making the trip.”

Jack stared at him in amazement. “How much is there?” he demanded.

“About twenty-five hundred- dollars’ worth,” replied Hawks after a moment’s hesitation, during which he resolved to make the stake large enough to save himself beyond question. “It will be heavy, I know, but I shall be glad to pay you for your trouble.”

Burgitt pushed back from the table, his face flushing a deep red.

“An’ you’d trust me with all that dust?” he demanded.

“Yes,” answered the old man, with a smile that was rather forced. “I can see well enough you’re an honest chap, an’ I’m safe to trust to your honor.”

Jack winced and to cover his confusion pulled out his red handkerchief and slowly wiped his brow.

“All right, pard,” he said shortly; “I’ll take it.”

“The gold is in gunny stacks stowed away in this crevice of the rock,” continued Hawks, who had decided it was better to betray his hiding place voluntarily. Jack nodded.

“It’s easy got at if once you know where it is,” explained the old man, “but as a rule no one would ever think of looking in that crevice for it.”

“Why did you tell me about it?” asked Burgitt, with a frown.

“Because,” repeated Hawks dryly, “I believe you to be an honest man.” He did not think it wise to say that a knowledge of the hiding place would render it unnecessary for his guest to murder him in order to search for the gold at his leisure. Now that he had told him plainly where to find it he felt assured his gold and his visitor would disappear together during the night.

But to his surprise Jack was there the next morning and the gold as well. After breakfast, during which he had many disturbed thoughts, Hawks brought out the bags and placed them in Jack’s hands.

“I’d like you to see old Brown weigh it,” he said, to keep up appearances, “for then he won’t dare to cheat me.”

“I will,” replied Jack. Hawks stood in his doorway and watched the powerful form of his late visitor move down the valley.

“There goes the result of two weeks’ hard labor,” he said, with a sigh, “but there is more to be washed out, and, after all, I have escaped very cheaply.”

Jack walked into the camp, where Dick sat stolidly upon his rock, and threw down the heavy sacks of gold.

Dick shuddered and turned away his eyes.

“Is he dead?” he whispered hoarsely.

“No,” replied Jack in quite a cheerful tone; “he’s alive an’ well fer all I know.” Then he sat down beside his partner and told him how old Hawks had innocently taken him for an honest man and trusted him to carry his wealth to the bank.

“I’m glad ye didn’t hev to kill him,’ said Dick when he had heard the story, “for I should never ‘a’ felt like the same man. I didn’t sleep a wink las’ night. Jack. But I s’pose we’d better git our traps together an’ make tracks. It’s a pretty good strike fer us when you think how easy it was come by.”

“What d’ye mean?” asked Jack fiercely.

“As how?” returned Dick in surprise.

“About our makin’ tracks. D’ye s’pose I’d steal the dust?”

“Win — didn’t ye start out to — to” — stammered Dick, and then he stopped short and looked at Burgitt with an expression of intense relief.

“See here, Dick Hamilton,” said Jack proudly, “ol” Hawks said as he’d trust to my honor. Did ye ever know me to break my word?”

“No.”

“Well, I won’t begin now. Thet gold’s goin’ inter ol’ Brown’s bank an’ to Hawkses credit or else my name ain’t Jack Burgitt!”

Dick held out his hand.

“You’re right, pard,” he said, “in’ we’ve been a pair o’ low scoundrels. You jest tote them bags over to Brown’s, an’ I’ll “begin washin’ fer dust ag’in. Our claim ain’t so durned bad, after all, ef it’s well worked.”

When Jack carried Brown’s receipt up to Hawks the old man was nearly paralyzed with amazement. “I owe you an apology, my friend,” he said when he had recovered his breath. “My worry over this confounded gold has made me suspicious of every one. I took you for a thief that night and thought you meant to murder me.”

“I did,” said Jack simply, “but when you trusted to my honor, why you jest knocked me clean out.”

And then he frankly told Hawks the whole story, and the old man was so affected that he invited the two partners to join him at once in working his rich claim.

“I’ve got nearly as much as I need already.” he said, “and there’s plenty left to make us all rich. Besides, it’’; dangerous working alone, and I shall feel safer with your protection. I’ve prospected in different parts of the country for six years, and I know that gold is hard to find, but an honest man, Jack Burgitt, is scarcer in these diggings than gold itself.”

A year later, when Jack took his fortune to his old mother and smiled delightedly at her amazement, he kissed her and said:

“It’s honestly come by, mother, ev’ry cent. An’ yet that ain’t altogether my fault, but the mistake that old Hawks made when he took me fer an honest man.”

Aunt Phroney's Boy

From: *St. Nicholas*, December 1912

The boy realized he had made a mistake before he had driven the big touring car a half-mile along this dreadful lane. The map had shown the road to Fennport clearly enough, but it was such a roundabout way that, when the boy came to this crossing, he decided to chance it, hoping it would get him to Fennport much quicker. The landscape was barren of interest, the farm-houses few and far between, and the cross-road seemed as promising as the main way. Meanwhile, at Fennport, the county fair was progressing, and there was no use wasting time on the road.

The promise faded after a short stretch; ruts and ditches appeared; rotten culverts and sandy hollows threatened the safety of the car. The boy frowned, but doggedly kept going. He must be fully half-way to another road by this time, and, if he could manage to keep on without breaking a spring or ripping a tire, it would be as well to continue as to turn back.

Suddenly the engines began muttering and hesitated in doing their duty. The boy caught the warning sound, and instantly divined the reason: he had forgotten to replenish the gasolene before starting, and the tank was about empty. Casting a quick, inquiring glance around, he saw the roof of a farm-house showing through the trees just ahead. That was a joyful sight, for he had scarcely dared hope to find a building upon this unused, seemingly abandoned lane. He adjusted the carbureter, and urged the engines to feed upon the last drops of the precious fluid they could absorb. Slowly, with staggering gait, the automobile pushed forward until just opposite the farm-house, when, with a final moan, the engines gave up the struggle, and the car stopped dead.

Then the boy turned and looked at the lonely dwelling. It was a small, primitive sort of building, ancient and weather-stained. There was a simple garden at the front, which faced the grove and not the lane, and farther along, stood a rickety, rambling barn that was considerably larger than the house.

Upon a tiny side porch of the dwelling, directly facing the road, sat an old woman with a battered tin pan full of rosy-cheeked apples in her lap. She was holding a knife in one hand and a half-pared apple in the other. Her mouth was wide open in amazement, her spectacled eyes staring fixedly at the automobile — as if it had been a magical apparition and the boy a weird necromancer who had conjured it up.

He laughed a little at the amusing expression of the old woman, for he was a good-humored boy in spite of his present vexations. Then, springing to the ground, he walked toward the porch and removed his cap, to make a graceful bow. She did not alter her pose, and, with eyes still fixed upon the car, she gasped:

"Laws-a-me! ef it ain't one o' them no-hoss keeridges."

"Nothing wonderful about that, is there?" asked the boy, smiling, as he reached the porch.

"Why not?" said she; "ain't they the mos' wunnerful things in all the world? Mart'n Luther's seen 'em in town, an' told me about 'em, but I never thought as I'd see one with my own eyes."

Her awe and interest were so intense that, as yet, she had not glanced once at the boy's face. He laughed, in his quiet way, as he leaned over the porch rail, but it occurred to him that there was something pathetic in the fact that the lonely old woman had never seen an automobile before.

"Don't you ever go to town yourself?" he asked curiously.

She shook her head. "Not often, though sometimes I do," she replied. "Went to Fennport a year ago las' June, an' put in a whole day there. But it tired me, the waggin jolts so. I 'm too old now fer sech doin's, an' Mart'n Luther 'lows it ain't wuth payin' toll-gate both ways for. He has to go sometimes, you know, to sell truck an' buy groceries; he's there to-day, 'tendin' the county fair; but I 've stayed home an' minded my own business 'til I hain't got much hankerin' fer travel any more."

During this speech, she reluctantly withdrew her eyes from the automobile and turned them upon the boy's face. He was regarding her placid features with a wonder almost equal to her own. It seemed so strange to find one so isolated and secluded from the world, and so resigned to such a fate.

"No near neighbors?" he said.

"The Bascomes live two miles north, but Mis' Bascome an' I don't git on well. She ain't never had religion."

"But you go to church?"

"Certain sure, boy! But our church ain't town way, you know; it's over to Hobbs' Corners. Ev'ry Sunday fer the las' year, I've been lookin' out fer them no-hoss waggins, thinkin' one might pass the Corners. But none ever did."

"This is a queer, forsaken corner of the world," the boy said reflectively, "and yet it's in the heart of one of the most populous and progressive States in the Union."

"You're right 'bout that," she agreed. "Silas Herrin's bought the lates' style thrash'n'-machine — all painted red — an' I guess the county fair at

Fennport makes the rest o' the world open its eyes some. We're ahead of 'em all on progressin', as Mart'n Luther 's said more 'n once."

"Who is Martin Luther?" asked the boy.

"He's my man. His name's Mart'n Luther Sager, an' I 'm Aunt 'Phroney Sager — the which my baptism name is Sophroney. Mart'n Luther were named fer the great Meth'dis' leader. He had a hankerin' to be a Baptis' in his young days, but he dasn't with such a name. So he j'ined the Meth'dists to make things harmoni'us, an' he 's never regretted it."

The boy smiled in an amused way, but he did not laugh at her. There was something in her simple, homely speech, as well as in the expression of her face, that commanded respect. Her eyes were keen, yet gentle; her lips firm, yet smiling: her aged, wrinkled features complacent and confident, yet radiating a childlike innocence.

"Ain't ye 'fraid to run the thing?" she asked, reverting to the automobile.

"No, indeed. It's as simple as a sewing machine — when you know how."

"I'd like to see it go. It come so sudden-like past the grove that when I looked up, you'd stopped short."

"I'd like to see it go myself, Aunt 'Phroney," the boy answered; "but it won't move a step unless you help it. Just think, ma'am, you've never seen a motor-car before, and yet the big machine can't move without your assistance!"

She knew he was joking, and returned his merry smile; but the speech puzzled her.

"As how, boy?" she inquired.

"The 'no-hoss kerridge' is a hungry monster, and has to be fed before he'll work. I hope you will feed him, Aunt 'Phroney."

"On what?"

"Gasolene. I forgot to fill up the tank before I started, and now the last drop is gone."

"Gasolene!" she exclaimed, with a startled look; "why, we don't keep gasolene, child. How on earth did you expec' to find sech a thing in a farm-house?"

"Don't you cook with gasolene?" he asked.

"My, no! We use good chopped wood — splinters an' knots. Mis' Bascome had a gas'lene stove once, but it bu'sted an' set fire to the baby; so they buried it in the back yard."

"The baby?"

"No, boy; the stove. They managed to put the baby out."

The statement puzzled him, but his mind was more on the gasolene.

“Doesn’t your husband use gasolene around the farm?” he inquired.

“No, ‘ndeed.”

“And you haven’t any naphtha or benzene - just a little?”

“Not a drop.”

“Nor alcohol?”

“Mercy, no!”

The boy’s face fell. “Where is the nearest place I might get some gasolene?” he asked. “Lemme see. Harpers’ might have it — that’s six mile’ west — or Clark’s store might have some, at Everdale. That’s seven mile’ off, but I ain’t sure they keep it. The only place they’re sure to have it is over to Fennport, which is ‘leven mile’ from here by the turnpike.”

The boy considered all this seriously. “Can I borrow a horse from you — and a buggy?” he asked.

‘‘Mart’n Luther ‘s gone to town with the only team we own. We ain’t had a buggy fer twenty-two years.”

He sighed, and sat down on the steps, looking disconsolately toward the big touring car that was now so helpless. Aunt ‘Phroney resumed her task of paring the apples, but now and then she also would glance admiringly at the automobile

“Come far?” she presently inquired.

“From Durham.”

“To-day? Why, Durham’s thirty mile’ from here.”

“I know; that’s only an hour’s run, with good roads.”

“Mercy me!”

“But the roads are not good in this neighborhood. I wanted to run over to Fennport to see the fair. I thought there might be some fun there, and I’d jog over this morning and run back home to-night. That wouldn’t have been any trick at all, if I hadn’t forgotten the gasolene.”

“Live in Durham?” she asked.

“Yes; Father has the bank there.”

“Pretty big town, I’ve heard.”

“Why, it’s only a village. And a stupid, tiresome village at that. Lonely, too. That’s why Father got this touring car; he said it would help to amuse me. May I have an apple?”

Aunt ‘Phroney smiled indulgently, and handed him an apple from the pan. The idea of one who lived in the thriving, busy town of Durham becoming lonely filled her with amusement. For her part, she hadn’t left the old farm-house, except to go to church, for nearly two years, and days at a time she never saw a human being other than her silent, morose husband. Yet she was not lonely — not really lonely — only at times did her isolation weigh upon

her spirits.

"Got a mother, child?" she softly inquired.

He nodded, biting the apple.

"Mother's an invalid. She doesn't leave her own rooms, and keeps two trained nurses and a special cook, and she studies social science — and such things."

"What does that mean?"

"I don't know; it's only a name to Father and me. But Father has the bank to interest him, and as I 'm not ready for the bank yet, he lets me run the automobile."

Aunt 'Phroney gave him a pitying look.

"Guess I un'erstan' your hist'ry now," she said gently. "You needn't say no more 'bout it. Hev another apple?"

"I will, thank you. They're fine. Grow 'em here?"

"Yes. Mart'n Luther 's entered a peck at the county fair, an' hopes to git the premium. It's two dollars, in cash. He's put up our Plymouth Rock rooster an' some pertaters fer prizes, too, an' seein' he's entered 'em, it don't cost him anything to get into the fair grounds — only the ten cents fer toll-gate."

"Why didn't you go with him?" asked the boy.

Aunt 'Phroney flushed a little. "That's some more hist'ry — the kind that's better not studied," she remarked quietly. "Mart'n Luther took it from his pa, I guess. His pa once cried like a baby when he lost four cents through a hole in his pocket. After that, ev'ry penny was kep' strapped up in his leather pocket-book, which were never unstrapped without a groan. Yes, Mart'n Luther's a' honest man, an' God-fearin'; but I guess he takes after his pa."

The boy finished his apple.

"Come out and see our touring car," he said. "I'd like to show it to you, although I can't take you to ride in it."

"Thank you," she eagerly replied. "I'll come in a minute. Let me git this apple-sass started cookin' first."

She went into the kitchen with the apples, but soon came back, and with a brisk air followed the boy across the patch of rank grass to the road.

"I can't walk six miles or more, you know," he remarked, "and lug a can of gasolene back with me; so I '11 have to wait until your husband conies back to-night with the team. You don't mind my staying with you, do you?"

"Of course not," she answered. "I like boys — boys like you, that is. We — we never had no children of our own."

He showed her all the parts of the automobile, and explained how they

worked and what they were for, all in a simple way that enabled her readily to understand. She was in a flutter of excitement at her close proximity to the wonderful invention, and the luxury of the seats and interior fittings filled her with awe. At first, he could not induce Aunt 'Phroney to enter the car and sit down upon the soft cushions, but, after much urging, she finally yielded, and was frankly delighted at the experience.

"It must 'a' cost a lot o' money," she observed. "I guess your pa is pretty good to you. Like enough he didn't take after any one with a strapped pocket-book."

"No," laughed the boy; "Father is always kind to me. But I wish – I wish"

"What, child?"

"I wish we lived together on a farm like this, where we could enjoy each other. All day he's at the bank, you know."

"If he worked the farm," said the woman, "you wouldn't see much of him then, either, 'cept at meal-time. Mart'n Luther gits up at daylight, works in the fields all day, an' goes to bed after supper. In heaven we may find time to enjoy the sassiety of our friends, but p'r'aps there'll be so much company there, it won't matter."

"I think," said the boy, solemnly, "we need a good deal more here than we shall need in heaven. Does any one get what he needs, I wonder?"

"Some may, but not many," she rejoined cheerfully. "Some of us don't get even gasolene, you know. Funny, ain't it, how such a little thing'll spoil a great big creation like this? Why, in some ways, it beats Silas Herrin's new thrash'n'machine; but it ain't so useful, 'cause the thrash'n'-machine runs along the road without horses to where it wants to go, an' then its injynes do the thrashin' better 'n hands can do it."

"I've never really examined one," he replied thoughtfully; "it must be very interesting."

"Come into the barn," she said, "an' I'll show you Silas Herrin's new one. He brought it here yest'day, but he an' all his crew are at the fair to-day, an' they won't begin thrashin' our crop till nex' Monday."

He followed her to the barn, willing to while away the time examining the big thresher. It filled nearly all the clear space on the barn floor, and towered half as high as the haymow. With its bright red body and diverse mechanical

parts, the machine certainly presented an imposing appearance. The boy examined it with much curiosity.

"There are two distinct engines," he said musingly; "one a motor, I suppose, and one to do the work. The big one runs by steam, but this smaller one seems a gasolene engine."

"Perhaps it is," said the woman; "I never had it explained to me like you did your own machine."

"If it is," he suddenly exclaimed, "there must be some gasolene among Mr. Herrin's traps to run it with! If I can only find it, I'll borrow enough to get me to Fennport."

Eagerly, now, he began the search, the woman looking on with interest. In a short time, he drew out from the interior of the thresher a ten-gallon can, which proved to be filled with the fluid he sought.

"Hooray!" he cried joyfully. "We'll have our ride, after all, Aunt 'Phroney."

"It — it ain't stealin', is it?" she asked doubtfully. "This all b'longs to Silas Herrin, you know."

"It's a law of the road, ma'am, that any one needing gasolene has the right to help himself — if he pays for what he takes. I'll pay Silas Herrin a good price, and he'll have plenty left to run his engine with."

He got a bucket, measured out about three gallons, and placed a silver dollar on top of the can for payment. Then, when he had "fed" his automobile, an operation watched carefully by the old woman, the boy turned and said:

"Aunt 'Phroney, I've a proposition to make. Get on your things, and I'll take you to the fair at Fennport and give you a good time."

"Land sakes, boy!" she cried, holding up both hands; "I couldn't think of it."

"Why not?"

"There's the work to do."

"Cut it out for to-day. Martin Luther 's having a holiday, and I 'm sure you 're entitled to one, too."

"He — he might be mad."

"I don't see why. It won't cost him a cent, you know, and perhaps we won't see him at all. We '11 have a good dinner somewhere, see all the sights, have a fine auto ride, and I'll fetch you home in plenty of time to get supper for your husband."

The temptation was too strong to be resisted. Aunt 'Phroney's face broke into a beaming smile, and she hurried into the house to get on her "bes' bib an' tucker."

Her reappearance caused the boy's eyes to twinkle. She wore a plain, black gown, baggy and ill made, an old-fashioned "Peasley" shaw', wrapped around her shoulders, and a wonderful hat that no milliner would have recognized as modern head-gear. But the boy did not mind. He helped her to the seat beside him, saw that she was comfortable, and started the engines slowly, so as not to alarm her.

The lane from the farm-house to the Fennport turnpike was in much better condition than the other end, which Aunt 'Phroney said was seldom used by any one. They traversed it with merely a few bumps, and on reaching the turnpike glided along so smoothly, that the old woman was in an ecstasy of delight.

"I almos' hope Mart'n Luther *will* see us," she remarked. "Wouldn't he be s'prised, though, to see me in this stylish no-hoss keeridge?"

"I think he would," said the boy.

"An' jealous, too. Mart'n Luther says I take life easier ner he does, 'though my work's jus' as hard fer me as his is fer him. Only difference is, I don't complain."

"Is — is your husband a poor man?" the boy hazarded.

"Goodness, no! Mart'n Luther's pretty well off, I'm told. Not by him, mind you. He only tells me what he can't afford. But our minister once said he would n't be s'prised if Mart'n Luther had a thousan' dollars laid up! It's a pretty good farm, an' he works it himself. An' he's so keerful o' spendin'."

"Doesn't he give you money for — for clothes and — and things?"

"Oh, yes; he 's good 'bout that. We made an agreement, once, an' he's stuck to it like a man. Ev'ry New-Year's, he gives me five dollars for dresses an' hats, an' ev'ry Fourth o' July I git fifty cents an' no questions asked."

The boy's eyes grew big at this.

"Doesn't he spend anything on himself, either?" he inquired.

"A little, of course. He gits his clo's secondhand from the drug-store keeper, who's about the same size as Mart'n Luther, but some fatter, an' he puts five cents in the contribution box ev'ry Sunday, an' — an' — well, there's the tollgate he has to pay for ev'ry time he goes to town. That toll-gate makes him orful mad. We're comin' to it pretty soon. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not at all," he cried, laughing merrily.

"Mart'n Luther's savin', an' no mistake,'' she continued musingly. "He wouldn't let me put him up no lunch to-day, 'cause he said Tom Dwyer would be sure to ask him to eat with him, an' if he didn't, he could easy get hold o' some fruit on exhibition. He said to save the food fer his supper to-night, an' he'd git along somehow."

“He ought to be worth several thousand dollars, at that rate,’’ observed the boy, not without indignation. “But what good is his money to him, or to you, if he doesn’t enjoy it? You ought to have a better allowance than you do, for you’ve certainly helped him to accumulate the money.”

She heaved a little sigh.

“He says he can’t afford any more,” she replied, “an’ I’m satisfied, as things be. I used to long to buy pretty things an’ go ‘round, once in a while, but I’ve got all over that now. I ‘m happy, an’ the Lord takes keer o’ me. Didn’t He send you here to-day with the — this — orto — orto — machine o’ yours?”

“I wonder if He did?” returned the boy, gravely. “Oh, here’s the dreadful toll-gate, Aunt ‘Phroney.”

It was nearly eleven o’clock when they entered the big gate of the fair grounds. The automobile attracted considerable attention, although there were two or three others in Fenuport. As the boy assisted Aunt ‘Phroney from the car, she was recognized by several acquaintances who frequented her church, and it was good to witness the old woman’s pride and satisfaction at the looks of bewilderment that greeted her. She took the boy’s arm and passed through the crowd with her chin well up, and presently they were in the main pavilion, where the largest part of the display was centered.

“Let’s look at the fruits an’ veg’tibles,” she eagerly exclaimed. “I want to see if Mart’n Luther’s won any prizes. Do you know, boy, he promised me all the money he won that come to over four dollars?” “Did he really?” “Yes, he were feelin’ quite chirky this mornin’, ‘fore he left, so he promised it. But if he won first prize on ev’rything, it’d be only five dollars altogether, so I guess he didn’t risk much.”

They found the fruits, but Martin Luther’s red apples had no ribbon on them, either blue or red.

“They don’t look as good here, ‘longside the others, as they did to home,” sighed Aunt ‘Phroney; “so I guess the jedge was correc’ in lett’n’ ‘em pass by. Let’s see how the pertaters turned out.”

Martin Luther’s potatoes had failed to win. They lay just between the lots which had drawn the first and second prizes, and even the boy’s inexperienced eyes could see they were inferior to the others.

“They bake well,” murmured Aunt ‘Phroney, “an’ they bile jus’ fine; but they ain’t so pretty as them others, thet’s a fact. I guess Mart’n Luther won’t hev to give me any of his prize-money this year — ’specially as he don’t git any.”

“Didn’t you say you had a chicken in the show?” asked the boy.

“Yes, an’ a mighty fine rooster he is, if I do say it. I’ve looked after him myself, ever since he were an egg, an’ he’s that high an’ mighty, I named him ‘The Bishop.’ Seems to me he’ll be hard to beat, but p’r’aps when he’s compared to others, the Bishop’ll be like the apples an’ ‘taters.”

“Where is he?”

“The poultry show’ll be in a tent somewheres.”

“Let’s find him,” said the boy, almost as interested as his companion.

They inquired the way, and, in passing through the grounds to the poultry tent, they passed a crowd surrounding one of those fakers so prominent at every country fair. Aunt ‘Phroney wanted to see what was going on, so the boy drew her dexterously through the circle of spectators. As soon as they reached a place of observation, the old woman gave a violent start and grabbed her escort’s arm. A lean, round-shouldered man with chin whiskers was tossing rings at a board filled with jack-knives of all sizes and shapes, in a vain endeavor to “ring” one of them. He failed, and the crowd jeered. Then he drew a leather wallet from his pocket, unstrapped it, and withdrew a coin with which he purchased more delusive rings. The boy felt Aunt ‘Phroney trembling beside him.

“See that ol’ feller yonder?” she asked.

“Yes,” said he.

“That’s Mart’n Luther!”

They watched him with breathless interest, but not one of the rings he threw managed to capture a knife. Others tried them, undeterred by the failure of the old farmer, and, after watching them a short time, out came Martin Luther’s leather pocket-book again.

“Come!” whispered the woman, in deep distress; “let’s go afore I faint dead away! Who’d believe Mart’n Luther could be sech a spen’thrift an’ prodigal? I did n’t b’lieve’t was in him.”

The boy said nothing, but led her out of the crowd. To solace his companion’s grief, he “treated” Aunt ‘Phroney to pink lemonade, which had the effect of decidedly cheering her up. They found the poultry tent almost deserted, and, after a brief search, the woman recognized the Bishop. A man down the row of cages was even now judging the fowls and attaching ribbons to the winning birds as he went along.

“He ‘II come to the Plymouth Rocks in a minute,” whispered Aunt

‘Phroney; “let’s wait an’ see what happens.”

It didn’t take the judge very long to decide. Quite promptly he pinned a blue ribbon to the Bishop’s cage, and Aunt ‘Phroney exclaimed: “There! we’ve got a prize at last, boy!”

The judge looked up, saw the boy, and held out his hand with a smile of recognition.

“Why, how are you, Mr. Carroll?” he exclaimed cordially; “I thought I was the only Durham man on the grounds. Did you drive your new car over?”

The boy nodded.

“They sent for me to judge this poultry show,” continued the man, “but it’s the poorest lot of alleged thoroughbreds I ever saw together. Not a really good bird in the show.”

“That ought to make your task easier,” said the boy.

“No, it makes it harder. For instance, there’s the Sweepstakes Prize for the best bird of any sort on exhibition. Tell me, how am I to make such an award, where all are undeserving?”

“Very well, I’ll tell you,” returned the boy, audaciously. “If I were judging, I’d give this fellow” — pointing to the Bishop — ”the Sweepstakes.”

“Eh? This fellow?” muttered the judge, eying Aunt ‘Phroney’s pet critically. “Why, I don’t know but you’re right, Mr. Carroll. I had it in mind to give the Sweepstakes to that White Leghorn yonder, but this Plymouth Rock seems well set up and has good style.”

The Bishop had recognized his mistress, and was strutting proudly and showing to excellent advantage. While the judge considered him, he flapped his wings and gave a lusty crow.

“I’ll take back my statement,” said the man. “Here is a really good bird. Guess I’ll follow your advice, Mr. Carroll”; and he pinned a bright yellow ribbon marked “Sweepstakes” next to the blue one on the Bishop’s cage.

Aunt ‘Phroney drew a long breath. Her eyes were sparkling.

“How much is the Sweepstakes, jedge?” she inquired.

“It’s the largest money prize offered — twenty-five dollars — and there’s

a silver water-pitcher besides. I ‘m sorry such a liberal premium did not bring out a better display. But I must hurry and make my report, for I want to catch the two o’clock train home. Good day, Mr. Carroll.”

As he bowed and left the tent, Aunt ‘Phroney was staring proudly at the Bishop.

“Twenty-five dollars!” she gasped, ‘‘an’ two dollars first prize for Plymouth Rocks! Twenty-seven dollars an’ a silver pitcher! Boy, do you know what this means? It means I’ll git twenty-three dollars — an’ Mart’n Luther’ll git jus’ four.”

“Will he keep his promise?” the boy asked.

‘“Yes. Mart’n Luther’s a’ honest man, an’ God-fearin’ — but he ain’t got much jedgment ‘bout ringin’ jack-knives. Dear me, who’d ever think he ‘d turn out a squanderer?”

The boy took her away to the big dining-hall. It was divided into two sections by a rail. On one side was a sign reading: “Square Meal, 25c.” On the other side was the legend: “Regular Dinner, with Oysters and Ice-Cream, 50c.”

Disregarding his companion’s protests, the boy led her into the latter section, which had few patrons compared with the cheaper one. No sooner had Aunt ‘Phroney tucked her napkin under her chin than she grew pale and stared amazed across the rail. The boy’s eyes followed hers and recognized Martin Luther seated at a table facing them, and eating with ravenous industry.

“Twenty-five cents gone — an’ he might ‘a’ took the lunch I offered him!” wailed the old woman. Perhaps the magnetism of their combined gaze affected Martin Luther, for he raised his eyes and encountered his wife’s horrified stare. The man was justified in being equally astonished. Motionless, with a piece of beef poised half-way to his mouth, he glared alternately at the strange boy and at Aunt ‘Phroney. His face betokened bewilderment, shame at being discovered, and, at the last, an unreasoning panic. He slowly rose to his feet, turned his back, and ignominiously fled from the hall.

“Never mind,” said the woman, her lips firmly set, “he’ll know he’s got somethin’ to explain when he gits home; an’ if Mart’n Luther ever hears the last o’ them jack-knives an’ his prodigal ‘square meal,’ my name ain’t Sophroney Sager!”

After the dinner, with its accompanying luxuries of oysters and ice-cream, was over, they saw the balloon ascension and the races; and then, early in the afternoon, the boy put Aunt ‘Phroney into the touring car and they drove to Fennport, where the tank was filled with gasolene. During this operation, the

boy noticed that the old woman shivered slightly in the cool autumn weather, and drew her thin shawl more closely around her as she sat waiting in the car.

"You ought to have brought a heavy coat," he said.

"Why I haven't got any,'' she returned, smiling at him cheerfully.

"No coat! What do you wear in winter, when you go to church?" the boy asked.

"When it's real cold, I wrap a comforter 'round me on the way, an' then wear this shawl into church. Aunt Sally left it to me when she died. It's real Peasley."

"Get out of the car, please, Aunt 'Phroney," the boy said quietly.

"Why cert'nly, if you say so; but what for?"

"I had a birthday last week, and Father gave me a check. I want to buy a present for my best girl at this store, and I wish you to help me pick it out."

She went in, then, full of interest, and the boy whispered to the clerk, who began to display a collection of thick, warm coats in sober colors.

"Try this one on, Aunt 'Phroney," urged the boy.

Suddenly she became suspicious, and flushed like a school-girl.

"Boy," she began, "if you dare — "

"Hush, please!" he pleaded. "Do you want to shame me before all these strangers? And spoil my birthday? And prove that I haven't any best girl?"

The appeal was effective. The old woman meekly submitted to the "try-on," and presently he said to the clerk: "This one will do. Mrs. Sager will take it with her and wear it home, as the air is a bit chilly."

Before she could recover from her dazed condition, they were once more in the automobile and speeding down the turnpike toward the farm.

"Feel warm enough, Aunt 'Phroney?" asked the boy, turning a merry face toward her. Then he saw that her eyes were full of tears. She nestled closer to him and murmured softly: "You know, boy, we — we never had a chick or a

child of our own!”

That evening father and son were seated in the banker’s library. “I spent twenty dollars of my birthday money, to-day.” said the boy.

“Indeed. In what way?”

“Trying to make an old country woman happy.” “Really, my son?”

“Really, Father; and I think — I ‘m quite sure — that I succeeded.”

And then he told him the whole story.

Who Called "Perry?"

From: *The Chicago Times-Herald*, January 19, 1896

It was nearly midnight when I boarded the train, and, entering the chair car, prepared to doze during the hours of my journey. "Call me at Perry," I said to the conductor as I surrendered my ticket, for I may be asleep."

He promised, and I settled myself comfortably for my nap.

I don't know how long I had slept, when some one shook me by the shoulder and shouted, "Perry!"

Opening my eyes I found the train was slowing up, and presently it came to a full stop. "Perry!" again shouted the voice in my ear. This time I sprang to my feet, seized my valise and stepped from the car to the platform just as the train glided away up the track.

I turned to look for the town and found myself confronted by a station agent holding a lantern.

"In which direction is the town?" I asked.

"Town!" he answered in surprise; "there's no town here."

"Isn't this Perry?"

"No, this is Head's Crossing. Perry is twenty miles further on."

"But the conductor," I said, angry at my misadventure, "called Perry, and so I left the car. I shall report him to the superintendent."

"The conductor was in the front car," replied the man, "and you stepped from the rear car. He could not possibly have called you."

"But some one shouted, 'Perry!'"

The agent looked at me incredulously, and said nothing.

"Is there another train?" I asked.

"Not until morning,"

"Where can I sleep?"

"I'll give you the cot in my office, if you like. The station is the only building within miles."

Rather ungraciously, I fear, I accepted his hospitality; but the cot was hard and I was too much annoyed to sleep, so I tossed about until suddenly the agent, who was at the telegraph key, startled me by exclaiming

"Good God!"

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"No. 16 has gone through the bridge at Coon Rapids, and the whole train is lying twenty feet under water!"

No. 16 was the train I had left to spend the night at Head's Crossing.

Haldeman

From: *Uplifters Hymnal,* 1915.
(Tune of "I'll Get You")

I

SOLO -
We know a fellow who's one of us;
He's generous - magnanimous;
Loves to be merry; never's contrary;
He's one of us - this genial cuss!
Uplifting art's the stunt he loves best;
He uplifts our hears with song and with jest;
Makes us his comrades and calls us his friends
As at our festive board he graciously unbends:
ALL THE UPLIFTERS -
Hal-de-man! Hal-de-man!
In his shirtsleeves, while at lunch,
He leads in song or Uplift bunch -
Oh, Hal-de-man! Excel him no one can!
By all our clan he is called a man,
Is Hal-de-man!
THEN, VERY SLOWLY -
Hal-de-man! Hal-de-man!
He loves girlies, he loves grub,
(For otherwise he'd be a dub)
And he loves beer, goodfellowship and cheer;
He loves to shake for the good bones' sake
Does Hal-de-man!

II

SOLO -
He's always cheery, he's always gay -
That is his way - fun and fair play -
Never gets dumpy, never is grumpy -
That is his way, day after day!
We've found this comrade faithful and true;
Just give him a chance, the right thing he'll do;
We love his faults, we'll his vurtues defend,
For one a friend, a friends's a friend unto the end!
NOW - ALL TOGETHER -
Hal-de-man! Hal-de-man!

Happiness will with us tarry
While we have our dear old Harry!
Hal-de-man! Since fellowship began
No bigger heart could uplift art
Than Hal-de-man!
REPEAT SOFTLY -
Hal-de-man! Hal-de-man!
He loves girlies, he loves grub,
(For otherwise he'd be a dub!)
And he loves beer, goodfellowship and cheer;
He loves to shake for the good bones' sake
Does Hal-de-man!

The King Who Changed His Mind

From: unknown publication, circa 1901

There once lived a King of Arol who possessed a most terrible temper, so that people spoke of him in whispers as “the Mad King.” To his face they bowed low and fearfully, for he had a bad habit of ordering his executioner to cut off a head, now and then, upon the slightest provocation - or with no provocation at all. The least thing was liable to excite his anger, and when there was nothing to be angry about he was so annoyed that he invented something.

This fierce and unreasoning King of Arol held absolute sway over his people, and none in all his dominions dared cross his mood or interfere with his cruelties. So he grew more wicked as he grew older, and all the members of his court who were able to escape his executioner became thin and worn with worry and anxiety.

Now the one thing that most often aroused the king’s anger was the sight of a child. He hated every one of them. Mothers would run to their doors with terrified faces when the king passed along, and drag their little ones into the houses until the wicked monarch was well out of sight. But as there is always a great number of children in every land, it was impossible that all should escape the sharp eyes of the king, and many a poor little innocent was severely beaten and bruised by the king’s attendants when it chanced to get in the way of the royal train.

“I hate children!” his Majesty would growl; “I hate ‘em! I hate ‘em! Keep them out of my way!”

You may be sure the children - and all the fathers and mothers as well - hated him in return. But they feared him, too.

The king had a young and pretty wife, whom he abused and ill-treated, as he did every one else. And he had a little son, the heir to his throne, whom he had never seen more than twice, and only then to scowl upon and order out of his sight. The poor queen was so fearful on her darling boy’s account that she kept him in a far-off wing of the palace, where he remained unnoticed and probably forgotten by his unnatural father.

This was a wise act, for the king’s hatred of children seemed to grow more bitter every day, and finally, when a little girl happened to frighten his horse, the cruel monarch became so violently enraged that he ordered his executioner to throw every child that lived in the City of Arol over the wall into the sea. And he signed the order with his royal seal, and set the day of the execution the next Thursday.

“I shall never be able to do it alone,” said the royal executioner, trembling at the enormity of the crime. “There are many hundreds of children in the city. Must all perish?”

“Not one shall remain alive!” answered the king, fiercely. “If you need help my royal guards shall assist you. And if one child escapes you and remains alive on Thursday night, I will have you and your men hanged by the neck!”

Now, this terrible command was given on Tuesday, just two days before the children were doomed to perish in the waters of the sea, and the news quickly spread to every part of the city. Parents began wailing and tearing their hair in bitter grief, and sobs and moans of anguish were heard on every side.

The queen, filled with horror, ran to her lord and king.

“Surely you will not drown your own and only child!” she exclaimed.

“Surely I will!” retorted the king.

“Oh, spare him! spare him!” cried the stricken queen, throwing herself upon her knees and raising her hands in supplication.

The king gave a cruel laugh and turned to his executioner:

“It is my command,” said he, “that this woman’s child be drowned the first of all!”

Then he spurned the half-fainting queen from his presence, and the guards carried her, weeping and nearly crazed with grief, to her own rooms.

But the beautiful queen did not long despair. She resolved to make every possible effort to save her child and thwart the king’s murderous will. And after some thought she disguised herself in a long cloak, that no one might know her, and crept through the streets to the dwelling of a mysterious woman named Hallita, of whom she had determined to seek counsel.

Hallita had only recently come to live in the City of Arol, and no one knew her history; but the people regarded her with much awe and respect because of her stately manner and kindly countenance. The queen found her sitting in her simple dwelling and at once told Hallita of the king’s cruel edict that all the children of the city should be thrown into the sea, and that his own little son should be sacrificed first of all. And then she asked the strange woman what she might do to save her darling from so dreadful a fate.

After a moment’s thought Hallita said:

“I will tell you my secret. Formerly I was one of the fairies that inhabit the Groves of Trom, and lived happily with my sisters for many years. But one day, being in a mischievous mood, I thoughtlessly broke one of the laws of the fairies, and as a punishment our queen commanded I should live among mortals, in mortal form, until I had saved a hundred mortal lives. This I have

until now despaired of accomplishing; but if I can turn the king from his purpose and induce him to change his mind, I will have saved many more than a hundred mortal lives and can return to my beloved Groves of Trom and resume my life as a fairy. Therefore will I do my utmost to save your child and all the other little ones in this unhappy town. Bring the little prince here as soon as it is dark, and he shall be securely hidden."

The queen hurried back to the palace with a much lighter heart than when she had left it, and as soon as it grew dark she led the little Prince and a trusted governess to Hallita's dwelling, where the good woman concealed him in an underground chamber that was comfortably furnished and lighted by thousands of fireflies placed close together on festoons of flowers that hung from the ceiling. Here the child, with his governess to attend him, was left to enjoy himself, and the queen kissed her boy good by and returned quickly to the palace, as Hallita had bidden her.

On the morning of the next day, which was Wednesday, the king sat alone in his room, sullen and brooding. He had almost come to regret having condemned so many children to death; but he kept muttering that he hated children, and that he had never in his life changed his mind when once he had resolved to do a thing, however evil it might be.

Suddenly Hallita entered the room and stood before the king, who at once became enraged that any one should dare to interrupt his privacy.

"You shall die for this!" he cried out; but the woman looked fearlessly into his face and answered:

"You shall also die, unless you recall your wicked order to throw the children into the sea."

Something in her appearance or her words made the king uneasy, for he asked:

"Who are you that dares threaten me with death?"

"My name is Hallita," she replied, "and my powers are far greater than yours can ever be, king though you are. Spare the children and I will leave you unharmed; but if you dare slay one of the innocent little ones I will surely put you to death."

Never before in his lifetime had the king been spoken to in this manner, and the woman's words, instead of warning him, filled him with a furious anger.

"The children shall die - every one of them!" he cried out. "I never change my mind, and I dare you to oppose my will!"

Hallita saw it was useless to argue with so unreasonable a person. She raised her right hand and waved it thrice in the likeness of a circle.

Instantly the king's form shrank away and grew less until he because the

same size as his little son, the Prince. Also his features changed into the likeness of his own child and his clothing was transformed from kingly raiment to the dress of a boy.

The astounded monarch then sprang from his throne with a shriek of terror, and stamped his little foot upon the floor.

"How dare you!" he shouted to Hallita, but so shrill and childlike was his voice that he stopped short in sudden fear, and presently burst into childish tears.

The king's guards now came hurrying into the room but were surprised to find only a strange woman and a child whom they thought to be the prince.

"Take the boy to his mother," Hallita said to them, "for the king will be angry if he finds him here."

So the guards dragged the king, yelling and struggling, into the apartments of the queen, where one of them said to him:

"Unless you remain quiet the king will not wait until tomorrow to kill you."

"I am the king myself, you fool!" cried the boy. But the guard only laughed at him.

"Prepare for death," the man continued, "and do not forget that tomorrow you will be the first child cast into the sea. It is the king's command, and his majesty never changes his mind."

When the guards had gone away the king asked of the queen:

"Who am I, madam?"

"You are my little son," said the queen, concealing her surprise at the transformation; "and you are condemned by your cruel father, the king, to be slain tomorrow morning."

"No, no, no!" shouted the king, as furiously as his little voice would allow; "you are all wrong. I am the king himself!"

For answer the queen brought to him a mirror, and when the king had looked upon it he became silent; for he saw that his form was the form of a child, and he began to realize that by his own decree he was in danger of being drowned on the morrow.

But when he tried to convince the queen that he was transformed she pretended not to believe he was other than her child. And when he continued to protest she called a nurse-maid and told her to take charge of the boy and make him obey.

This nurse-maid was by nature cross and short of temper, so that no sooner had she brought the king into the nursery than she soundly boxed his ears and threatened him with a switch unless he stopped talking nonsense.

"Be a good child tonight," she said at last, coaxingly, "for tomorrow you

are to die, and then you will be sorry you did not behave when you had the chance."

When she had left him alone, the king, who had taken the serving-woman's rebukes with astonishing meekness, sat himself down and became exceedingly thoughtful. He had never in his life imagined anything one-half so dreadful as the position in which he was now placed. No one seemed to have a doubt but that he was the child he appeared, and another day was likely to see him perish miserably by his own command.

The more he thought about it the more unjust this murderous command seemed to him to be, and he earnestly wished he might find a way to prevent his executioner from carrying it out.

Thought is a very good thing for one who has been naughty or wicked, and the king thought deeply all through the rest of the day, with most excellent results. For one thing, he decided that killing children because they annoyed him was absolutely cruel and not to be allowed, and he also decided that it is a wise thing for a king to change his mind once in a while, just as other folk do. And he came to believe that children who had cross nurse-maids were as much to be pitied as he had formerly blamed them, and he determined that if he could escape his unhappy fate he would always thereafter treat his own child with kindness and consideration.

And in the end he thought out a clever plan to save his life.

When it grew dark the cross nurse-maid brought him a supper of bread and milk and then put him to bed. But the king did not sleep. He lay awake until everything was quiet and then crept out of bed and felt his way in the darkness through all the rooms and passages until he reached the royal council chamber. This he entered, and, standing on tiptoe, reached a candle from the table and lighted it. Then he pushed a chair up to his desk, and, climbing upon the seat, managed to open a drawer and find a sheet of paper and the royal seal. This seal was made of virgin gold and set with precious jewels.

Very slowly, for his fingers were small to hold a pen, he wrote upon the paper as follows:

"The edict of death to the children of the City of Arol is hereby revoked by the order of the king."

This he signed and sealed with the royal seal, and then he carried it to the chamber where the royal executioner slept and pinned it fast to the door, as high up as he could manage to reach.

After doing this the king felt greatly relieved. He blew out the candle and went back to bed again, for he well knew that his orders would be obeyed and that no children would suffer death on Thursday morning.

There was great joy throughout the City of Arol next morning when the executioner publicly declared that the king had changed his mind, for once in his life, and decided to spare the little children.

The fairy who had called herself Hallita came to the palace and restored the king to his former manly shape; and then she went joyfully away to the Groves of Trom, having earned her freedom by saving so many human lives.

And the first thing the king did was to send for his little son, the prince, whom he treated with much tenderness, and he earnestly implored the queen to forgive him for his former wickedness and neglect. And because she was a good woman she forgave him readily and never had cause to regret it in after years.

For when the king discovered how much real happiness he could find in the society of his queen and his pretty child, he would frequently say to himself: “How glad I am that the fairy made me think, and that having thought, I resolved to change my mind!”

A Kidnapped Santa Claus.

From: *The Delineator,* December 1904.

Santa Claus lives in the Laughing Valley, where stands the big, rambling castle in which his toys are manufactured. His workmen, selected from the ryls, knooks, pixies and fairies, live with him, and every one is as busy as can be from one year's end to another.

It is called the Laughing Valley because everything there is happy and gay. The brook chuckles to itself as it leaps rollicking between its green banks; the wind whistles merrily in the trees; the sunbeams dance lightly over the soft grass, and the violets and wild flowers look smilingly up from their green nests. To laugh one needs to be happy; to be happy one needs to be content. And throughout the Laughing Valley of Santa Claus contentment reigns supreme.

On one side is the mighty Forest of Burzee. At the other side stands the huge mountain that contains the Caves of the Daemons. And between them the Valley lies smiling and peaceful.

One would think that our good old Santa Claus, who devotes his days to making children happy, would have no enemies on all the earth; and, as a matter of fact, for a long period of time he encountered nothing but love wherever he might go.

But the Daemons who live in the mountain caves grew to hate Santa Claus very much, and all for the simple reason that he made children happy.

The Caves of the Daemons are five in number. A broad pathway leads up to the first cave, which is a finely arched cavern at the foot of the mountain, the entrance being beautifully carved and decorated. In it resides the Daemon of Selfishness. Back of this is another cavern inhabited by the Daemon of Envy. The cave of the Daemon of Hatred is next in order, and through this one passes to the home of the Daemon of Malice - situated in a dark and fearful cave in the very heart of the mountain. I do not know what lies beyond this. Some say there are terrible pitfalls leading to death and destruction, and this may very well be true. However, from each one of the four caves mentioned there is a small, narrow tunnel leading to the fifth cave - a cozy little room occupied by the Daemon of Repentance. And as the rocky floors of these passages are well worn by the track of passing feet, I judge that many wanderers in the Caves of the Daemons have escaped through the tunnels to the abode of the Daemon of Repentance, who is said to be a pleasant sort of fellow who gladly opens for one a little door admitting you into fresh air and sunshine again.

Well, these Daemons of the Caves, thinking they had great cause to

dislike old Santa Claus, held a meeting one day to discuss the matter.

"I'm really getting lonesome," said the Daemon of Selfishness. "For Santa Claus distributes so many pretty Christmas gifts to all the children that they become happy and generous, through his example, and keep away from my cave."

"I'm having the same trouble," rejoined the Daemon of Envy. "The little ones seem quite content with Santa Claus, and there are few, indeed, that I can coax to become envious."

"And that makes it bad for me!" declared the Daemon of Hatred. "For if no children pass through the Caves of Selfishness and Envy, none can get to MY cavern."

"Or to mine," added the Daemon of Malice.

"For my part," said the Daemon of Repentance, "it is easily seen that if children do not visit your caves they have no need to visit mine; so that I am quite as neglected as you are."

"And all because of this person they call Santa Claus!" exclaimed the Daemon of Envy. "He is simply ruining our business, and something must be done at once."

To this they readily agreed; but what to do was another and more difficult matter to settle. They knew that Santa Claus worked all through the year at his castle in the Laughing Valley, preparing the gifts he was to distribute on Christmas Eve; and at first they resolved to try to tempt him into their caves, that they might lead him on to the terrible pitfalls that ended in destruction.

So the very next day, while Santa Claus was busily at work, surrounded by his little band of assistants, the Daemon of Selfishness came to him and said:

"These toys are wonderfully bright and pretty. Why do you not keep them for yourself? It's a pity to give them to those noisy boys and fretful girls, who break and destroy them so quickly."

"Nonsense!" cried the old graybeard, his bright eyes twinkling merrily as he turned toward the tempting Daemon. "The boys and girls are never so noisy and fretful after receiving my presents, and if I can make them happy for one day in the year I am quite content."

So the Daemon went back to the others, who awaited him in their caves, and said:

"I have failed, for Santa Claus is not at all selfish."

The following day the Daemon of Envy visited Santa Claus. Said he: "The toy shops are full of playthings quite as pretty as those you are making. What a shame it is that they should interfere with your business! They make toys by machinery much quicker than you can make them by hand; and they sell

them for money, while you get nothing at all for your work."

But Santa Claus refused to be envious of the toy shops.

"I can supply the little ones but once a year - on Christmas Eve," he answered; "for the children are many, and I am but one. And as my work is one of love and kindness I would be ashamed to receive money for my little gifts. But throughout all the year the children must be amused in some way, and so the toy shops are able to bring much happiness to my little friends. I like the toy shops, and am glad to see them prosper."

In spite of the second rebuff, the Daemon of Hatred thought he would try to influence Santa Claus. So the next day he entered the busy workshop and said:

"Good morning, Santa! I have bad news for you."

"Then run away, like a good fellow," answered Santa Claus. "Bad news is something that should be kept secret and never told."

"You cannot escape this, however," declared the Daemon; "for in the world are a good many who do not believe in Santa Claus, and these you are bound to hate bitterly, since they have so wronged you."

"Stuff and rubbish!" cried Santa.

"And there are others who resent your making children happy and who sneer at you and call you a foolish old rattlepate! You are quite right to hate such base slanderers, and you ought to be revenged upon them for their evil words."

"But I don't hate 'em!" exclaimed Santa Claus positively. "Such people do me no real harm, but merely render themselves and their children unhappy. Poor things! I'd much rather help them any day than injure them."

Indeed, the Daemons could not tempt old Santa Claus in any way. On the contrary, he was shrewd enough to see that their object in visiting him was to make mischief and trouble, and his cheery laughter disconcerted the evil ones and showed to them the folly of such an undertaking. So they abandoned honeyed words and determined to use force.

It was well known that no harm can come to Santa Claus while he is in the Laughing Valley, for the fairies, and ryls, and knooks all protect him. But on Christmas Eve he drives his reindeer out into the big world, carrying a sleighload of toys and pretty gifts to the children; and this was the time and the occasion when his enemies had the best chance to injure him. So the Daemons laid their plans and awaited the arrival of Christmas Eve.

The moon shone big and white in the sky, and the snow lay crisp and sparkling on the ground as Santa Claus cracked his whip and sped away out of the Valley into the great world beyond. The roomy sleigh was packed full with huge sacks of toys, and as the reindeer dashed onward our jolly old

Santa laughed and whistled and sang for very joy. For in all his merry life this was the one day in the year when he was happiest - the day he lovingly bestowed the treasures of his workshop upon the little children.

It would be a busy night for him, he well knew. As he whistled and shouted and cracked his whip again, he reviewed in mind all the towns and cities and farmhouses where he was expected, and figured that he had just enough presents to go around and make every child happy. The reindeer knew exactly what was expected of them, and dashed along so swiftly that their feet scarcely seemed to touch the snow-covered ground.

Suddenly a strange thing happened: a rope shot through the moonlight and a big noose that was in the end of it settled over the arms and body of Santa Claus and drew tight. Before he could resist or even cry out he was jerked from the seat of the sleigh and tumbled head foremost into a snowbank, while the reindeer rushed onward with the load of toys and carried it quickly out of sight and sound.

Such a surprising experience confused old Santa for a moment, and when he had collected his senses he found that the wicked Daemons had pulled him from the snowdrift and bound him tightly with many coils of the stout rope. And then they carried the kidnapped Santa Claus away to their mountain, where they thrust the prisoner into a secret cave and chained him to the rocky wall so that he could not escape.

“Ha, ha!” laughed the Daemons, rubbing their hands together with cruel glee. “What will the children do now? How they will cry and scold and storm when they find there are no toys in their stockings and no gifts on their Christmas trees! And what a lot of punishment they will receive from their parents, and how they will flock to our Caves of Selfishness, and Envy, and Hatred, and Malice! We have done a mighty clever thing, we Daemons of the Caves!”

Now it so chanced that on this Christmas Eve the good Santa Claus had taken with him in his sleigh Nuter the Ryl, Peter the Knook, Kilter the Pixie, and a small fairy named Wisk - his four favorite assistants. These little people he had often found very useful in helping him to distribute his gifts to the children, and when their master was so suddenly dragged from the sleigh they were all snugly tucked underneath the seat, where the sharp wind could not reach them.

The tiny immortals knew nothing of the capture of Santa Claus until some time after he had disappeared. But finally they missed his cheery voice, and as their master always sang or whistled on his journeys, the silence warned them that something was wrong.

Little Wisk stuck out his head from underneath the seat and found Santa

Claus gone and no one to direct the flight of the reindeer.

"Whoa!" he called out, and the deer obediently slackened speed and came to a halt.

Peter and Nuter and Kilter all jumped upon the seat and looked back over the track made by the sleigh. But Santa Claus had been left miles and miles behind.

"What shall we do?" asked Wisk anxiously, all the mirth and mischief banished from his wee face by this great calamity.

"We must go back at once and find our master," said Nuter the Ryl, who thought and spoke with much deliberation.

"No, no!" exclaimed Peter the Knook, who, cross and crabbed though he was, might always be depended upon in an emergency. "If we delay, or go back, there will not be time to get the toys to the children before morning; and that would grieve Santa Claus more than anything else."

"It is certain that some wicked creatures have captured him," added Kilter thoughtfully, "and their object must be to make the children unhappy. So our first duty is to get the toys distributed as carefully as if Santa Claus were himself present. Afterward we can search for our master and easily secure his freedom."

This seemed such good and sensible advice that the others at once resolved to adopt it. So Peter the Knook called to the reindeer, and the faithful animals again sprang forward and dashed over hill and valley, through forest and plain, until they came to the houses wherein children lay sleeping and dreaming of the pretty gifts they would find on Christmas morning.

The little immortals had set themselves a difficult task; for although they had assisted Santa Claus on many of his journeys, their master had always directed and guided them and told them exactly what he wished them to do. But now they had to distribute the toys according to their own judgment, and they did not understand children as well as did old Santa. So it is no wonder they made some laughable errors.

Mamie Brown, who wanted a doll, got a drum instead; and a drum is of no use to a girl who loves dolls. And Charlie Smith, who delights to romp and play out of doors, and who wanted some new rubber boots to keep his feet dry, received a sewing box filled with colored worsteds and threads and needles, which made him so provoked that he thoughtlessly called our dear Santa Claus a fraud.

Had there been many such mistakes the Daemons would have accomplished their evil purpose and made the children unhappy. But the little friends of the absent Santa Claus labored faithfully and intelligently to carry

out their master's ideas, and they made fewer errors than might be expected under such unusual circumstances.

And, although they worked as swiftly as possible, day had begun to break before the toys and other presents were all distributed; so for the first time in many years the reindeer trotted into the Laughing Valley, on their return, in broad daylight, with the brilliant sun peeping over the edge of the forest to prove they were far behind their accustomed hours.

Having put the deer in the stable, the little folk began to wonder how they might rescue their master; and they realized they must discover, first of all, what had happened to him and where he was.

So Wisk the Fairy transported himself to the bower of the Fairy Queen, which was located deep in the heart of the Forest of Burzee; and once there, it did not take him long to find out all about the naughty Daemons and how they had kidnapped the good Santa Claus to prevent his making children happy. The Fairy Queen also promised her assistance, and then, fortified by this powerful support, Wisk flew back to where Nuter and Peter and Kilter awaited him, and the four counseled together and laid plans to rescue their master from his enemies.

It is possible that Santa Claus was not as merry as usual during the night that succeeded his capture. For although he had faith in the judgment of his little friends he could not avoid a certain amount of worry, and an anxious look would creep at times into his kind old eyes as he thought of the disappointment that might await his dear little children. And the Daemons, who guarded him by turns, one after another, did not neglect to taunt him with contemptuous words in his helpless condition.

When Christmas Day dawned the Daemon of Malice was guarding the prisoner, and his tongue was sharper than that of any of the others.

"The children are waking up, Santa!" he cried. "They are waking up to find their stockings empty! Ho, ho! How they will quarrel, and wail, and stamp their feet in anger! Our caves will be full today, old Santa! Our caves are sure to be full!"

But to this, as to other like taunts, Santa Claus answered nothing. He was much grieved by his capture, it is true; but his courage did not forsake him. And, finding that the prisoner would not reply to his jeers, the Daemon of Malice presently went away, and sent the Daemon of Repentance to take his place.

This last personage was not so disagreeable as the others. He had gentle and refined features, and his voice was soft and pleasant in tone.

"My brother Daemons do not trust me overmuch," said he, as he entered the cavern; "but it is morning, now, and the mischief is done. You cannot

visit the children again for another year."

"That is true," answered Santa Claus, almost cheerfully; "Christmas Eve is past, and for the first time in centuries I have not visited my children."

"The little ones will be greatly disappointed," murmured the Daemon of Repentance, almost regretfully; "but that cannot be helped now. Their grief is likely to make the children selfish and envious and hateful, and if they come to the Caves of the Daemons today I shall get a chance to lead some of them to my Cave of Repentance."

"Do you never repent, yourself?" asked Santa Claus, curiously.

"Oh, yes, indeed," answered the Daemon. "I am even now repenting that I assisted in your capture. Of course it is too late to remedy the evil that has been done; but repentance, you know, can come only after an evil thought or deed, for in the beginning there is nothing to repent of."

"So I understand," said Santa Claus. "Those who avoid evil need never visit your cave."

"As a rule, that is true," replied the Daemon; "yet you, who have done no evil, are about to visit my cave at once; for to prove that I sincerely regret my share in your capture I am going to permit you to escape."

This speech greatly surprised the prisoner, until he reflected that it was just what might be expected of the Daemon of Repentance. The fellow at once busied himself untying the knots that bound Santa Claus and unlocking the chains that fastened him to the wall. Then he led the way through a long tunnel until they both emerged in the Cave of Repentance.

"I hope you will forgive me," said the Daemon pleadingly. "I am not really a bad person, you know; and I believe I accomplish a great deal of good in the world."

With this he opened a back door that let in a flood of sunshine, and Santa Claus sniffed the fresh air gratefully.

"I bear no malice," said he to the Daemon, in a gentle voice; "and I am sure the world would be a dreary place without you. So, good morning, and a Merry Christmas to you!"

With these words he stepped out to greet the bright morning, and a moment later he was trudging along, whistling softly to himself, on his way to his home in the Laughing Valley.

Marching over the snow toward the mountain was a vast army, made up of the most curious creatures imaginable. There were numberless knooks from the forest, as rough and crooked in appearance as the gnarled branches of the trees they ministered to. And there were dainty ryls from the fields, each one bearing the emblem of the flower or plant it guarded. Behind these were many ranks of pixies, gnomes and nymphs, and in the rear a thousand

beautiful fairies floated along in gorgeous array.

This wonderful army was led by Wisk, Peter, Nuter, and Kilter, who had assembled it to rescue Santa Claus from captivity and to punish the Daemons who had dared to take him away from his beloved children.

And, although they looked so bright and peaceful, the little immortals were armed with powers that would be very terrible to those who had incurred their anger. Woe to the Daemons of the Caves if this mighty army of vengeance ever met them!

But lo! coming to meet his loyal friends appeared the imposing form of Santa Claus, his white beard floating in the breeze and his bright eyes sparkling with pleasure at this proof of the love and veneration he had inspired in the hearts of the most powerful creatures in existence.

And while they clustered around him and danced with glee at his safe return, he gave them earnest thanks for their support. But Wisk, and Nuter, and Peter, and Kilter, he embraced affectionately.

"It is useless to pursue the Daemons," said Santa Claus to the army. "They have their place in the world, and can never be destroyed. But that is a great pity, nevertheless," he continued musingly.

So the fairies, and knooks, and pixies, and ryls all escorted the good man to his castle, and there left him to talk over the events of the night with his little assistants.

Wisk had already rendered himself invisible and flown through the big world to see how the children were getting along on this bright Christmas morning; and by the time he returned, Peter had finished telling Santa Claus of how they had distributed the toys.

"We really did very well," cried the fairy, in a pleased voice; "for I found little unhappiness among the children this morning. Still, you must not get captured again, my dear master; for we might not be so fortunate another time in carrying out your ideas."

He then related the mistakes that had been made, and which he had not discovered until his tour of inspection. And Santa Claus at once sent him with rubber boots for Charlie Smith, and a doll for Mamie Brown; so that even those two disappointed ones became happy.

As for the wicked Daemons of the Caves, they were filled with anger and chagrin when they found that their clever capture of Santa Claus had come to naught. Indeed, no one on that Christmas Day appeared to be at all selfish, or envious, or hateful. And, realizing that while the children's saint had so many powerful friends it was folly to oppose him, the Daemons never again attempted to interfere with his journeys on Christmas Eve.

Juggerjook

From: *St. Nicholas*, V. 38 No.2 December, 1910

"Oh, Mama!" cried Fuzzy Wuz, running into the burrow where her mother lay dozing, "may I go walking with Chatter Chuk?"

Mrs. Wuz opened one eye sleepily and looked at Fuzzy.

"If you are careful," she said; "and don't go near Juggerjook's den; and watch the sun so as to get home before the shadows fall."

"Yes, yes; of course," returned Fuzzy, eagerly.

"And don't let Chatter Chuk lead you into mischief," continued Mrs. Wuz, rubbing one long ear with her paw lazily. "Those red squirrels are reckless things and haven't much sense."

"Chatter's all right," protested Fuzzy Wuz. "He's the best friend I have in the forest. Good-by, Mother."

"Is your face clean, Fuzzy?"

"I've just washed it, Mother."

"With both paws, right and left?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Then run along and be careful."

"Yes, Mother."

Fuzzy turned and darted from the burrow, and in the bright sunshine outside sat Chatter Chuk on his hind legs, cracking an acorn.

"What'd she say, Fuz?" asked the red squirrel.

All right, I can go, Chat. But I've got to be careful."

As the white rabbit hopped away through the bushes and he glided along beside her, Chatter Chuk laughed.

"Your people are always careful, Fuz," said he. "That's why you see so little of the world, and lose all the fun in life."

"I know," replied Fuzzy, a little ashamed. "Father is always singing this song to me:

"Little Bunny,
Don't get funny;
Run along and mind your eye;

It's the habit
Of a rabbit
To be diffident and shy."

"We squirrels are different," said Chatter Chuk, proudly. "We are always taught this song:

"Squirrel red,
Go ahead!
See the world, so bright and gay.
For a rover
May discover
All that happens day by day."

"Oh, if I could run up a tree, I shouldn't be afraid, either," remarked Fuzzy Wuz. "Even Juggerjook couldn't frighten me then."

"Kernels and shucks! Juggerjook!" cried Chatter Chuk, scornfully. "Who cares for him?"

"Don't you fear him?" asked Fuzzy Wuz, curiously.

"Of course not," said the squirrel. "My people often go to his den and leave nuts there."

"Why, if you make presents to Juggerjook, of course he won't hurt you," returned the rabbit. "All the beasts carry presents to his den, so he will protect them from their enemies. The bears kill wolves and carry them to Juggerjook to eat; and the wolves kill foxes and carry them to Juggerjook, and the foxes kill rabbits for him. But we rabbits do not kill animals, so we cannot take Juggerjook anything to eat except roots and clover; and he doesn't care much for those. So we are careful to keep away from his den."

"Have you ever seen him or the place where he lives?" asked the squirrel.

"No," replied Fuzzy Wuz.

"Suppose we go there now?"

"Oh, no! Mother said--"

"There's nothing to be afraid of. I've looked at the den often from the trees near by," said Chatter Chuk. "I can lead you to the edge of the bushes close to his den, and he'll never know we are near."

"Mother says Juggerjook knows everything that goes on in the forest," declared the rabbit, gravely.

"Your mother's a 'fraid-cat and trembles when a twig cracks," said Chatter, with a careless laugh. "Why don't you have a little spirit of your own, Fuzzy, and be independent?"

Fuzzy Wuz was quite young, and ashamed of being thought shy, so she said:

"All right, Chat. Let's go take a peep at Juggerjook's den."

“We’re near it, now,” announced the squirrel. “Come this way; and go softly, Fuzzy Wuz, because Juggerjook has sharp ears.”

They crept along through the bushes some distance after that, but did not speak except in whispers. Fuzzy knew it was a bold thing to do. They had nothing to carry to the terrible Juggerjook, and it was known that he always punished those who came to his den without making him presents. But the rabbit relied upon Chatter Chuk’s promise that the tyrant of the forest would never know they had been near him. Juggerjook was considered a great magician, to be sure, yet Chatter Chuk was not afraid of him. So why should Fuzzy Wuz fear anything?

The red squirrel ran ahead, so cautiously that he made not a sound in the underbrush; and he skilfully picked the way so that the fat white rabbit could follow him. Presently he stopped short and whispered to his companion:

“Put your head through those leaves, and you will see Juggerjook’s den.”

Fuzzy Wuz obeyed. There was a wide clearing beyond the bushes, and at the farther side was a great rock with a deep cave in it. All around the clearing were scattered the bones and skulls of animals, bleached white by the sun. Just in front of the cave was quite a big heap of bones, and the rabbit shuddered as she thought of all the many creatures Juggerjook must have eaten in his time. What a fierce appetite the great magician must have!

The sight made the timid rabbit sick and faint. She drew back and hopped away through the bushes without heeding the crackling twigs or the whispered cautions of Chatter Chuk, who was now badly frightened himself.

When they had withdrawn to a safe distance the squirrel said peevishly:

“Oh, you foolish thing! Why did you make such a noise and racket?”

“Did I?” asked Fuzzy Wuz, simply.

“Indeed you did. And I warned you to be silent.”

“But it’s all right now. We’re safe from Juggerjook here,” she said.

“I’m not sure of that,” remarked the squirrel, uneasily. “One is never safe from punishment if he is discovered breaking the law. I hope the magician was asleep and did not hear us.”

“I hope so, too,” added the rabbit; and then they ran along at more ease, rambling through the forest paths and enjoying the fragrance of the woods and the lights and shadows cast by the sun as it peeped through the trees.

Once in a while they would pause while Fuzzy Wuz nibbled a green leaf or Chatter Chuk cracked a fallen nut in his strong teeth, to see if it was sound and sweet.

“It seems funny for me to be on the ground so long,” he said. “But I invited you to walk with me, and of course a rabbit can’t run up a tree and leap from limb to limb, as my people do.”

“That is true,” admitted Fuzzy; “nor can squirrels burrow in the ground, as rabbits do.”

“They have no need to,” declared the squirrel. “We find a hollow tree, and with our sharp teeth gnaw a hole through the shell and find a warm, dry home inside.”

“I’m glad you do,” remarked Fuzzy. “If all the animals burrowed in the ground there would not be room for us to hide from each other.”

Chatter laughed at this.

“The shadows are getting long,” he said. “If you wish to be home before sunset, we must start back.”

“Wait a minute!” cried the rabbit, sitting up and sniffing the air. “I smell carrots!”

“Never mind,” said the squirrel.

“Never mind carrots? Oh, Chatter Chuk! You don’t know how good they are.”

“Well, we haven’t any time to find them,” he replied. “For my part, I could run home in five minutes, but you are so clumsy it will take you an hour. Where are you going now?”

“Just over here,” said Fuzzy Wuz. “Those carrots can’t be far off.”

The squirrel followed, scolding a little because to him carrots meant nothing especially good to eat. And there, just beside the path, was an old coverless box raised on a peg, and underneath it a bunch of juicy, fat, yellow carrots.

There was room under the box for Fuzzy Wuz to creep in and get the carrots, and this she promptly did, while Chatter Chuk stood on his hind legs a short distance away and impatiently waited. But when the white rabbit nibbled the carrots, the motion pulled a string which jerked out the peg that held up the box, and behold, Fuzzy Wuz was a prisoner!

She squealed with fear and scratched at the sides of the box in a vain endeavor to find a way to escape; but escape was impossible unless some one lifted the box. The red squirrel had seen the whole mishap, and chattered angrily from outside at the plight of his captured friend. The white rabbit thought he must be far away, because the box shut out so much the sound of his voice.

“Juggerjook must have heard us, and this is part of his revenge,” said the squirrel. “Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I wonder what the great magician will do to me.”

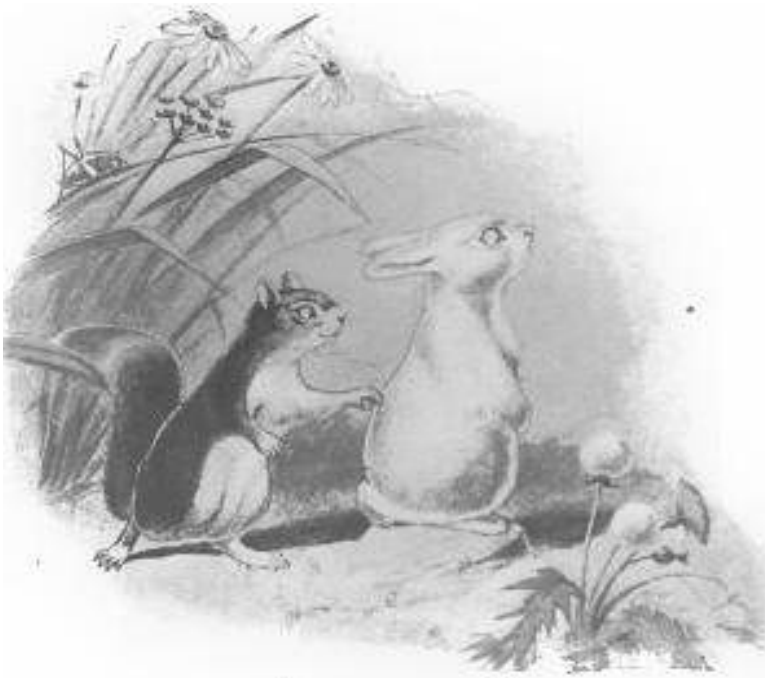
He was so terrified by this thought that Chatter Chuk took flight and darted home at his best speed. He lived in a tree very near to the burrow where Mrs. Wuz resided, but the squirrel did not go near the rabbit-burrow. The sun was already sinking in the west, so he ran into his nest and pretended to sleep when his mother asked him where he had been so late.

All night Mrs. Wuz waited for Fuzzy, and it was an anxious and sleepless night for the poor mother, as you may well believe. Fuzzy was her one darling, several other children having been taken from her in various ways soon after their birth. Mr. Wuz had gone to attend a meeting of the

Rabbits' Protective Association and might be absent for several days; so he was not there to help or counsel her.

When daybreak came, the mother rabbit ran to the foot of the squirrels' tree and called:

"Chatter Chuk! Chatter Chuk! Where is my Fuzzy Wuz? Where is my darling child?"



Chatter Chuk was too frightened to answer until his mother made him.

Then he ran down to the lowest limb of the tree and sat there while he talked.

“We went walking,” he said, “and Fuzzy found some carrots under a box that was propped up with a peg. I told her not to eat them; but she did, and the peg fell out and made her a prisoner.”

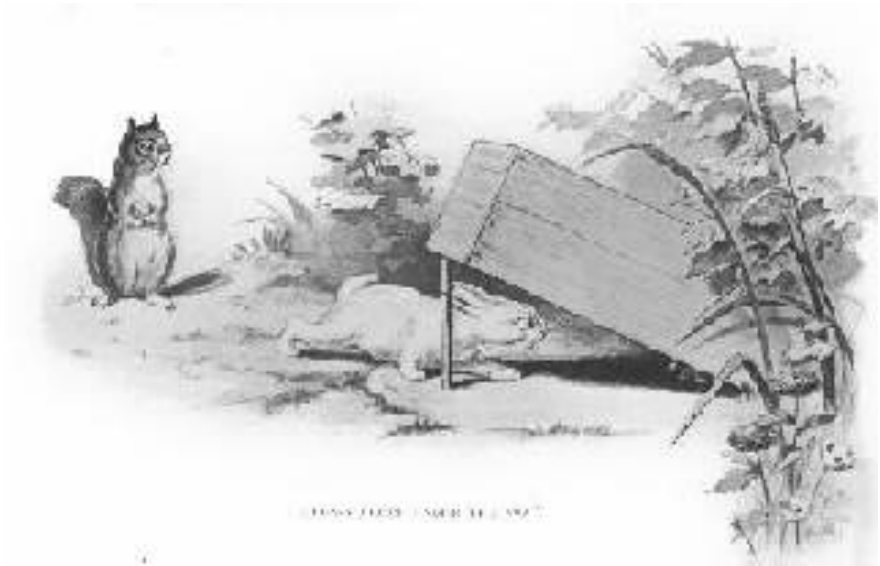
You see, he did not mention Juggerjook at all, yet he knew the magician was at the bottom of all the trouble.

But Mrs. Wuz knew rabbit-traps quite well, being old and experienced; so she begged the red squirrel to come at once and show her the place where

Fuzzy had been caught.

“There isn’t a moment to lose,” she said, “for the trappers will be out early this morning to see what they have captured in their trap.”

Chatter Chuk was afraid to go, having a guilty conscience; but his mother made him. He led the way timidly, but swiftly, and Mrs. Wuz fairly flew over the ground, so anxious was she to rescue her darling.



The box was in the same place yet, and poor Fuzzy Wuz could be heard moaning feebly inside it.

"Courage, my darling!" cried the mother, "I have come to save you."

First she tried to move the box, but it was too heavy for her to stir.

Then she began scratching away the earth at its edge, only to find that it had been placed upon a big, flat stone, to prevent a rabbit from burrowing out.

This discovery almost drove her frantic, until she noticed Chatter Chuk, who stood trembling near by.

"Here!" she called; "it was you who led my child into trouble. Now you must get her out."

"How?" asked the red squirrel.

"Gnaw a hole in that box--quick! Gnaw faster than you ever did before in your life. See! the box is thinnest at this side. Set to work at once,

Chatter Chuk!"

The red squirrel obeyed. The idea of saving his friend was as welcome to him as it was to the distracted mother. He was young, and his teeth were as sharp as needles. So he started at the lower edge and chewed the wood with all his strength and skill, and at every bite the splinters came away.

It was a good idea. Mrs. Wuz watched him anxiously. If only the men would keep away for a time, the squirrel could make a hole big enough for Fuzzy Wuz to escape. She crept around the other side of the box and called to the prisoner: "Courage, dear one! We are trying to save you. But if the men come before Chatter Chuk can make a hole big enough, then, as soon as

they raise the box, you must make a dash for the bushes. Run before they can put in their hands to seize you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Mother," replied Fuzzy, but her voice wasn't heard very plainly, because the squirrel was making so much noise chewing the wood.

Presently Chatter Chuk stopped.

"It makes my teeth ache," he complained.

"Never mind, let them ache," replied Mrs. Wuz. "If you stop now, Fuzzy will die; and if she dies, I will go to Juggerjook and tell him how you led my child into trouble."

The thought of Juggerjook made the frightened squirrel redouble his efforts. He forgot the pain in his teeth and gnawed as no other squirrel had ever gnawed before. The ground was covered with tiny splinters from the box, and now the hole was big enough for the prisoner to put the end of her nose through and beg him to hurry.

Chatter Chuk was intent on his task, and the mother was intent upon watching him, so neither noticed any one approaching, until a net fell over their heads, and a big voice cried, with a boisterous laugh:

"Caught! and neat as a pin, too!"

Chatter Chuk and Mrs. Wuz struggled in the net with all their might, but it was fast around them, and they were helpless to escape. Fuzzy stuck her nose out of the hole in the box to find out what was the matter, and a sweet, childish voice exclaimed: "There's another in the trap, Daddy!"

Neither the rabbits nor the squirrel understood this strange language; but all realized they were in the power of dreadful Man and gave themselves up for lost.

Fuzzy made a dash the moment the box was raised; but the trapper knew the tricks of rabbits, so the prisoner only dashed into the same net where her mother and Chatter Chuk were confined.

"Three of them! Two rabbits and a squirrel. That's quite a haul, Charlie," said the man.

The little boy was examining the box.

"Do rabbits gnaw through wood, Father?" he asked.

"No, my son," was the reply.

"But there is a hole here. And see! There are the splinters upon the ground."

The man examined the box in turn, somewhat curiously.

"How strange!" he said. "These are marks of the squirrel's teeth. Now, I wonder if the squirrel was trying to liberate the rabbit."

"Looks like it, Daddy; doesn't it?" replied the boy.

"I never heard of such a thing in my life," declared the man. "These little

creatures often display more wisdom than we give them credit for.

But how can we explain this curious freak, Charlie?”

The boy sat down upon the box and looked thoughtfully at the three prisoners in the net. They had ceased to struggle, having given way to despair; but the boy could see their little hearts beating fast through their furry skins.

“This is the way it looks to me, Daddy,” he finally said. “We caught the small rabbit in the box, and the big one must be its mother. When she found her baby was caught, she tried to save it, and she began to burrow under the box, for here is the mark of her paws. But she soon saw the flat stone, and gave up.”

“Yes; that seems reasonable,” said the man.

“But she loved her baby,” continued the boy, gazing at the little creatures pitifully, “and thought of another way. The red squirrel was a friend of hers, so she ran and found him, and asked him to help her. He did, and tried to gnaw through the box; but we came too soon and captured them with the net because they were so busy they didn’t notice us.”

“Exactly!” cried the man, with a laugh. “That tells the story very plainly, my son, and I see you are fast learning the ways of animals. But how intelligent these little things are!”

“That’s what my mother would do,” returned the boy. “She’d try to save me; and that’s just what the mother rabbit did.”

“Well, we must be going,” said the man; and as he started away he picked up the net and swung it over his shoulder. The prisoners struggled madly again, and the boy, who walked along the forest path a few steps behind his father, watched them.

“Daddy,” he said softly, coming to the man’s side, “I don’t want to keep those rabbits.”

“Oh, they’ll make us a good dinner,” was the reply.

“I--I couldn’t eat ‘em for dinner, Daddy. Not the mama rabbit and the little one she tried to save. Nor the dear little squirrel that wanted to help them. Let’s--let’s--let ‘em go!”

The man stopped short and turned to look with a smile into the boy’s upturned, eager face.

“What will Mama say when we go back without any dinner?” he asked.

“You know, Daddy. She’ll say a good deed is better than a good dinner.”

The man laid a caressing hand on the curly head and handed his son the net. Charlie’s face beamed with joy. He opened wide the net and watched the prisoners gasp with surprise, bound out of the meshes, and scamper away into the bushes.

Then the boy put his small hand in his father’s big one, and together they walked silently along the path.

* * *

“All the same,” said Chatter Chuk to himself, as, snug at home, he trembled at the thought of his late peril, “I shall keep away from old Juggerjook after this. I am very sure of that!”

“Mama,” said Fuzzy Wuz, nestling beside her mother in the burrow, “why do you suppose the fierce Men let us go?”

“I cannot tell, my dear,” was the reply. “Men are curious creatures, and often act with more wisdom than we give them credit for.”

A Cold Day on the Railroad

From *The Chicago Sunday Times-Herald*, 26 May 1895, 31

"The coldest day I ever knew," said the stranger, "was when I traveled up the branch to Glinton last winter. I knew it was cold when I saw the fireman get on top the engine with a shovel to shovel away the smoke as fast as it froze. Soon after we started the conductor entered the car, knocked his head against the side of the door to break off his breath, and yelled 'tickets!' before it froze again.

But it was no use: the word only penetrated a few feet and stuck fast in the atmosphere, but, as we could all see clearly, we could not help noticing that word 'tickets' frozen up in the front end of the car, and we were ready when the smiling conductor passed along. He smiled because he couldn't help it. He wore that expression when he encountered the ozone and it stuck to him. The poor fellow hit his hand against the seat in front of me and broke his little finger off as clean as if it had been an icicle. It rattled down onto the floor, but he picked it up and calmly put it in his vest pocket.

You see, he was used to that run.

A Shadow Cast Before

The Philosopher, December, 1897

I AM valet to his Majesty the Emperor. My family has served the royal household for nearly two centuries, and we regard the record with pardonable pride.

On my breast glitters an order to possess which many a nobleman would willingly forfeit his wealth, and the Great Emperor himself pinned it there!

I won it in this way.

Entering my master's room one morning to arouse him and serve his customary cup of chocolate, I found him in an especially happy mood, and he entertained me with a goodly number of harmless witticisms as I busied myself over his toilet.

While standing near the dressing table, which was covered with a broad cloth whose folds reached the carpet, I observed the drapery move, as though disturbed from beneath the table. The first time I thought it was my fancy, as no draught could penetrate the room, but as again the cloth swayed perceptibly, I walked to the table and raised the cover while I peered beneath.

The sight that met my gaze was so terrible and unexpected that I gave an involuntary cry.

Squatting under the table was a dark, hunched-backed figure, with evil eyes glowing like two coals, and grasping in its hand a long, double-edged dirk!

Hearing my exclamation His Majesty asked; "What is it, you rascal?"

To act promptly is one of the attributes of my family. Without replying to the Emperor I quickly reached beneath the table to clutch and draw forth the vile assassin. My hand met with no resistance; the fellow eluded me. Seizing the edge of the table I thrust it violently aside, and at the same time threw myself bodily upon the spot where the intruder must be.

There was no one there, and I sprawled upon the floor full of consternation and cutting so ridiculous a figure that His Majesty lay back and roared in merriment.

"You ass! You idiot!" he gasped, between fits of laughter, "what in God's name are you trying to do?"

But I pass over my master's reproaches, the more readily that they seemed fully deserved. For although I searched every portion of the chamber, the man had positively disappeared. And when I came to reason upon the matter calmly, I saw how impossible it was that any intruder could have gained access to the royal apartments.

Still, the incident impressed me.

One week later the Emperor was playing at quoits in the garden and I stood by to return the rings as he cast them. Finally a quoit, having alighted upon its edge, rolled briskly without the court and stopped at the edge of a cluster of low shrubs.

Stooping over to secure the errant quoit my eyes penetrated the leafy foliage beside it, and I plainly saw concealed therein the figure of the hunch-back, again clasping the murderous-looking knife and scowling as his dark eyes met mine.

A number of the Emperor's body guard stood a few paces away.

Keeping close watch of the bushes and determined that this time the villain should not escape me, I beckoned the soldiers to my side.

In an instant they had surrounded the shrub, while my eyes remained fastened upon the hunch-back. In one brief sentence I explained the position of the assassin, and at my word half a score of pikes were thrust into the bushes.

I own I expected to see them withdrawn reeking with the scoundrel's blood, and my amazement was supreme when the figure of the man vanished before my very eyes, and the pikes met with no resistance whatever!

Again I was forced to endure the ridicule of the courtiers and the soldiery, while my royal master angrily chided me as a visionary fool and intimated that I was fast outgrowing my usefulness.

Another week rolled away and one afternoon I accompanied his Majesty upon his daily ride. On our return to the palace my master dismounted, nodded gaily to the vast throng of subjects that stood by to gaze upon his benignant features, and started to walk up the avenue either side of which was densely lined with people eager for a near view of the Great Emperor.

I was but a step behind him when I saw, a few paces in advance, the misshapen form and scowling face of the hunch- back. His right hand was thrust within his bosom, and I knew intuitively that his fingers grasped the doubleedged knife.

As we reached the fellow I pressed to the Emperor's side, and at the same instant the hunch-back sprang forward with a bound.

The sharp blade flashed in his uplifted hand, and that moment might have been my master's last. But I had been forewarned. In an instant my hands clutched the villain's throat, and the blow intended for the Emperor penetrated my breast as I bore the assassin to the ground.

He did not leave the spot alive; for, as the Emperor lifted me in his own august arms, a dozen pikes pinned the would-be murderer to the earth.

It is true I was never able afterward to serve my dear master in person, but

he sees that my life wants nothing to render it more bright or contented, and if ever I am tempted to deplore my uselessness, one glance at the glittering order upon my breast restores my peace of mind.

I have since decided that the shadow of the calamity which threatened my master was cast before, and twice I was permitted in an occult way, to perceive the murderer, in order that when the event transpired I might preserve for Europe and for Christendom the greatest ruler of my time.

Aunt Hulda's Good Time

Aunt Hulda sat under the shade of the apple-tree paring the fruit that had fallen from the gnarled, overladen branches. She was dressed in a faded blue calico gown and a checked apron, and wore a home-made sun-bonnet upon her gray head. At her right was the roadway leading from the barn to the turnpike in front of the house. A few feet to the left was her back door-step. It was a warm afternoon, and the shade of the tree had tempted her from the hot kitchen, as it often did.

Aunt Hulda's meditations were not worthy of mention. She was a simple old body, living a simple, circumscribed life and thinking simple, unimportant things. For instance, she was about to make apple-sauce, and she knew her sauce was highly praised by the farmer's wives who now and then dropped in for a visit and some tea. These were memorable occasions with her. She reflected on the evident enjoyment Mr. Worrell had displayed only last week, when she ate two full saucers of Aunt Hulda's apple-sauce. From the same tree, too. It was a good tree; she had used its fruit in sauce for many years: thirty--maybe forty. It was hard to remember the time. Probably it would keep on bearing these rosy-cheeked apples as long as her days lasted and then-Then she looked up and saw the boy. He had just ridden up the turnpike on his bicycle, and glancing over the fence perceived Aunt Hulda seated under her tree.

He could not have said what made him pause, dismount and regard the homely picture thoughtfully as he leaned upon his wheel. When he saw that she observed him he took off his cap and bowed to her, and she returned the salutation composedly. Then, after a hesitating glance up the road, he trundled his wheel through the open gates and came to where the woman was sitting.

"Good afternoon," he said, pleasantly. "Will you let me lie here and rest a bit?"

She nodded. She liked boys; and this one was fresh and manly and good to look upon. He wore a modest gray suit and cap, and stockings of brown worsted. There was nothing "flashy" in his appearance, which could not be truthfully said of all the bicyclers Aunt Hulda had seen spinning along the smooth turnpike.

The boy leaned his wheel against the tree, reclined gracefully upon the grass, and resting his head upon his elbow, watched the deft fingers that busily continued to pare and quarter the apples.

"Tired?" she asked, in a motherly tone. She had never been blessed with children, but had all a mother's tenderness for youth still fresh in her old

heart.

“Not very.” he answered; “but it looked cool and pleasant here, and--and I thought I’d like to talk with you.”

She nodded again.

“You see, I am not limited as to time,” he continued, lazily stroking the kitten that had crept to his side, “for I am taking a cross-country trip on my wheel as part of my vacation. I never know where I shall stop at night: that is one of the delights of the trip. When dark overtakes me, or I grow tired, I stop at the nearest village.”

“The nearest place to here is Millbank,” remarked Aunt Hulda. “There’s a circus there to-day.”

“A circus? Why, that’s jolly! There’s nothing I love better than to attend a country circus. Not for the sake of the bareback riders and clowns, you understand; but to watch the people and enjoy their enjoyment.”

“Martin is there now,” she said.

“Martin?”

“My man. It’s his year. We take turns, you know: he goes one year, and I go the next. Martin went early this afternoon, so as to see the animals fed; but he won’t see the show till the evening performance. It’s always better evenings. He took his supper in his pocket.”

“But why didn’t you go together?” asked the boy, sitting up.

“It costs too much,” she replied, frankly.

“We really can’t afford it at all, now times are so hard; but we’re two old folks, living all by ourselves, and we thought as we’d divide up, and take in the circus every year. When I go, I tell Martin all about it; and when he goes he tells me. It gives us something to talk about when we’re alone in the evenings, and it’s almost as good as going yourself to hear Martin describe it.”

The boy lay back and looked at her curiously. He did not laugh. It seemed to him he was nearer tears than laughter, although he could see well enough the comedy of it.

“How far is the town?” he asked.

“Two miles.”

“Have you a horse?”

“Yes, indeed. Old Piebald is in the barn now. Martin never takes him to the circus; no more do I. We walk.

Piebald gets scart at the steam piano, and it costs a quarter to put him up in the hotel barn.”

“Let’s go,” said the boy, suddenly.

“Where?” demanded Aunt Hulda, dropping her knife in amazement.

“To the circus. Be my guest. I’ve plenty of money--more than I shall know how to spend on my trip, and I’d like to take you to the circus. We’ll see it all,--side-shows and everything,--and we’ll have a real jolly time!”

She stared at him stupidly a while. The audacity of the proposition almost took her breath away. She saw he was in earnest, however, and she glanced from her coarse blue gown to his neat gray suit with a puzzled air.

Strangers had been polite to her before, but none had ever offered to take her to a circus; nor indeed, anywhere else. But this was a boy; a nice boy, too. He had risen to his feet and was standing before her, cap in hand.

“Do let’s go!” he pleaded.

“I--I can’t,” she answered; “I’ve got to make the applesauce.”

“Let it wait,” he said, with a wave of the hand: “the circus only comes once a year.”

“There’s the supper.”

“I’ll help you get it--and eat it, also. And I’ll help do the dishes.”

“There’s the stock to be fed,” she continued. Her tone waas growing more irresolute, and he noted it.

“Two of us can feed the stock in no time,” he declared; “so come, please; let’s get to work at once.”

“I--I don’t know what Martin’ll think,” she protested, as a last resort. But she rose from her chair, nevertheless, and stood with the pan of apples under her arm, a look of pleased anticipation spreading over her wrinkled face. He took the pan from her and carried it into the kitchen.

“We’ll surprise Martin,” he said, easily; “but it will be easy to explain the matter. I’m sure he won’t object to your having a good time.”

“Oh, no! Martin’s real good to me,” she answered.

The next hour was a bright and happy one to them both. Aunt Hulda’s heart was not nearly so withered as her face, and there was a charm about this youngster, who had taken direction of her affairs in such a masterful way, that delighted her beyond measure. She was almost like a girl. Her laugh came freely and as sweetly as if she had been eighteen instead of fifty, and she answered his jokes with full appreciation of their fun.

The boy was enjoying himself, al80. He filled the kettle helped set the table, cut the bread and talked continually. Then when the simple meal was ready, and the apples were simmering on the stove, they sat down opposite one another at the rude table and feasted merrily.

He afterward tied a checked apron around his waist and wiped the dishes while Aunt Hulda washed them.

“We must hurry,” he said, “for I don’t want to miss a bit of the fun. Now for the stock!”

He carried water, climbed the loft to throw down hay, fed the pig and the chickens, and did it all so handily and quickly that Aunt Hulda was amazed. Next he led out old Piebald, harnessed him to the wagon, and had the equipage waiting beside the apple-tree before the woman had finished putting on her "best dress" and smoothing her hair.

"I guess everything's 'tended to," she said, as she climbed to a seat beside him. "I put your wheel in the kitchen, and left the apples to slow-bile and put the lamp handy for use when we come back, and fed the kitten."

"So there's nothing on your mind to keep you from having a good time," he commented.

They drove through the dust to the village, where the boy promptly put up old Piebald at the hotel stable. Then he walked with Aunt Hulda down to the tents, where they first visited the side-shows and saw the fat lady and the snake charmer and the living skeleton and all the other wonders.

There was a tremendous crowd. Every farmer and farmer's wife for miles around seemed to be there: and now and then Aunt Hulda would nod proudly and happily to an acquaintance, and delight in the curious looks that were directed upon her escort. They were all country people--all but the boy. His appearance rendered him wholly unlike the others: but he did not seem to know it. He chatted gaily with Aunt Hulda, and called her attention to everything he thought would interest her.

Then they visited the animals, and and he told her many wonderful things about them that were strange and edifying to the simple old woman. But the band was now playing fiercely in the big tent where the circus performance was held. Indeed, nearly every one had already entered, and they found themselves alone with a few stragglers.

"I believe the grand procession's going to start," she whispered, nervously.

"All right; let's go in," he replied, and led her to the entrance.

The big tent was literally lined with people, from the canvas roof to the seats at the very ring-side. It seemed impossible that it could hold another person. The boy looked anxiously around. On each side of the band-stand he discovered that a small box had been built, with a flowing red canopy over it and cushioned seats.

One of these boxes had been taken by a party from Squire Meldrum's house--the "big man" of the village,--and a merry group of young and old people occupied it. But the other box was vacant; for who beside the squire had money enough to pay a dollar a seat at the circus?

The boy stopped an usher, and after a whispered conversation was escorted, with Aunt Hulda, behind the tiers of seats and through a narrow

passage into the box. Their appearance caused a murmur of surprise from the surrounding benches. Many knew the old lady's pleasant, homely face and marvelled at seeing her thus occupying the position of honor opposite Squire Meldrum himself.

Martin was seated away down near the ring-side, but he looked up with the others, and his astonishment was intense when he saw Aunt Hulda framed by the crimson curtains and canopy, and a strange youth beside her who was paying her devoted attention. All during the circus the poor man divided his attention between this remarkable vision of his wife and the antics of the cl0wn8 and jugglers. He saw her drinking red lemonade with her companion, and that her lap was loaded down with peanuts and candy and popcorn; for the boy would do nothing by halves, and bought everything that was offered for sale.

Martin shook his head, and sighed and looked again. It was certainly Aunt Hulda, but how she came there was a mystery he could not fathom.

He waited outside the tent while they heard the concert, after the circus itself was over. Martin was not given to solving problems; time would explain everything, he thought. He knew when they were coming by her laugh, and such he could not remember hearing from Aunt Hulda since the happy days when hey were first wed. He put out his hand and touched her, almost diffidently, as they followed the crowd from the entrance.

"Huldy!" he said.

"Good gracious!" she cried; if it isn't Martin! We've been looking for you everywhere, for the boy wanted you to stay with us to the concert. It's his fault, Martin," she added, more soberly. "He would have me come in his company, you know,--and I couldn't well say no."

"I'm glad you had the chance," said Martin, simply. Then he plucked her sleeve. "Who is he?" he whispered.

"I don't know," she answered, behind her hand; "but, O Martin, he's been so good to me!"

"Well, are we ready for home?" broke in the boy. "I expect old Piebald is anxious to get back and munch his hay. Shall we go?"

They drove home almost in silence, with Martin sitting in the back of the wagon and the boy driving. Only once did Aunt Hulda speak, and that was to say, with a contented sigh, "I don't think we missed a single thing!"

While Martin put up the horse the boy got his wheel from the kitchen. "I shall sleep at Millbank to-night," he said, brightly; "for the hotel there seems like a comfortable place; but before I go I want to thank you for a very happy evening."

Aunt Hulda leaned down, and taking his round face between her hands,

kissed him tenderly.

“What made you do it?” she whispered. “Why were you so good to an old woman like me?”

The boy stood looking into the night for a moment before he answered. “Mother and I,” he said at last, softly, were always good comrades and had many jolly times together and when I saw you sitting under the tree this afternoon, my heart grew hungry for some one to go with me, as she used to do, and have a happy time. She’s dead now, you know.”

His voice broke with a sob, and the woman gathered him into her arms and held him close to her for a while. Then she kissed him again, with a sweet, motherly caress.

“Good night,” he said.

The next moment he had mounted his wheel and disappeared down the road; but she stood looking long after his figure had faded into the darkness, and listening until the last muffled sound had died away upon the soft night air.

Bessie's Fairy Tale

The Ladies' World for December 1911

"OH, Uncle!" said Bessie, climbing to my lap and curling herself up cosily, "please tell me all about--"

"But it is my turn, dear," I interrupted, smiling into the eager face.

"Your turn for what, Uncle?"

"To hear a fairy story. It isn't fair to make me tell them all."

"But I want to hear more about the Giant Killer, and the Little Lame Prince, and Cinderella, and Prince Marvel, and- and--"

"I know; but you have heard of them many times, while poor Uncle has heard none of your fairy tales at all."

"My fairy tales!"

"To be sure, Bessie. Isn't that wise little head full of fairy dreams and pretty stories? I am sure it is. Then tell me one, please!"

The big eyes were grave and earnest. They searched my face carefully, but could find no evidence that I was "poking fun" at my little niece. So she sighed and cuddled closer and said:

"This morning, Uncle, I told my dolly a fairy story. She's very fond of them, you know. But I'm afraid it was silly and you would not like it."

"I'm sure it wasn't silly, dear; and all stories have some good in them. Has your tale a moral, Bessie?"

"What's a moral, Uncle?"

"Is there a reason for it, and does It teach any lesson?"

"Must a story do that?"

"I don't know."

She considered the matter thoughtfully.

"The story I told my dolly," she remarked, after a moment, "was made up for a dolly to understand. Her brains are sawdust, you know, like the Scarecrow's; but there isn't any wizard here for me to take her to, so I'm afraid she won't ever be very bright."

"Did she like the story?"

"I think so, Uncle. There was a reason for it, and the reason was to keep Sarah Jane--that's my dolly--amused. But if there was any lesson in the story I'm afraid she didn't learn it; she's so stupid."

"Let me hear it, dear."

"And you won't think it silly?"

"Why should I? You are not silly, Bess. You're a very sweet little niece, and any story you 'made up' would be a nice story, I am sure."

“And you won’t laugh?”

“Not unless your people do something funny. Then I ought to laugh, you know.”

“Well,” she began, wriggling on my knee rather nervously until she forgot her diffidence, “once on a time there was a little boy who had to tend the house all by himself, with no one to help him. Every mornin’ he had to wash and dress his fathers an’ mothers an’ give ‘em their breakfasts an’ send ‘em off to school an’ tell ‘em to be good an’ study their lessons an’ not fight on the way home.”

“The fathers and mothers, Bess?”

“Yes, Uncle.”

“How many did the little boy have?”

“Two fathers and three mothers. And after they had gone to school and the house was in order an’ the breakfas’ things put away, the little boy had to go out to the cat-shed and milk the cat, so he could churn the butter for luncheon.”

“Oh,” I said, rather astonished.

“But the cat,” continued Bessie, warming up to the interest of her story, “was cross an’ dis’gree’ble, an’ didn’t like to he milked; so it would often kick and act up in a very bad way, and that made it hard for the little boy, you know.”

“What was his name?”

“The little boy’s?”

“Yes.”

“His name was Con-stant-’nople; but they jus’ called him ‘Nope.”

“I see.”

“Well, one mornin’ the cat acted dreffu bad, an’ kicked over the piano-stool that ‘Nope was sitting on, an’ dented the tin milk-pail an’ roared like a lion.”

“The cat did?”

“Yes, Uncle. And so the little boy was scared, and didn’t like to go near her, and there was no butter for lunch or cream for dinner.”

“That was too bad,” I said gravely.

“But just then ‘Nope looked up an’ saw a little old man standin’ in the cat-shed beside him. And the little old man had a nose so long that it touched his chin, and a chin so long that it touched his nose; and he walked on two weak legs an’ two stout sticks, and seemed to know more than he looked as if he did, only he didn’t.”

“M-m.”

“‘What’s the matter, ‘Nope?’ he asked the little boy.

“‘The cat kicks an’ acts ugly,’ says ‘Nope,’ an’ won’t let me milk her.’

“‘Then,’ says the little old man, ‘why don’t you go out in the yard an’ milk the milk-weeds? That’s easy enough, for they don’t kick,’

“‘Nope thought that was a good idea; so he went out in the back-yard, where there were lots of milk-weeds, and soon got his pail full of milk. He was’ strord’nary pleased, Uncle; but when be went to the house an’ churned the milkweed milk, what do you s’pose he got instead of butter?”

“I can’t imagine, Bess.”

“Nothing but spinach.”

She looked at me rather suspiciously.

“Did my people do anything funny then, Uncle?”

“No, dear; I was laughing at something else.”

“What?”

“A foolish notion, Bessie. Go on, please.”

“Well, then ‘Nope went back to the cat stable, for he just had to have some milk. And when he went in he said:’ Soo, — kittie! So-o-o-o, cat! Gently, ol’ girl!’ But the cat jus’ kicked out drea’ful, an’ wouldn’t let him milk her. So the little boy said:

“‘If you don’t stan’ still there won’t be any butter for lunch or cream for dinner.’

“‘Why?” asked the cat.

“‘‘Cause you won’t let me have the milk,’ he told her.

“‘Why don’t you go in the house an’ milk the cow?’ asked the cat.

“‘Good gracious! Whoever heard of milking a cow?’ says ‘Nope, indiginunt like.’ Cows are only good to lie in front of the fire, an’ purr, an’ look soft an’ pretty. Nobody milks a cow.’

“‘You are wrong,’ says the cat. ‘I read in a book only this mornin’ that cows give milk.’

“‘How foolish,’ says ‘Nope.’ Show me the book, if you can.’

“‘So the cat went to a cupboard and took out a fine big book, and laid it on the ground and turned over the leaves with her hoofs till he came to a certain page.’ Read that, if you dare,’ she said to the little boy, and it will prove that I am right and you are wrong.’ Jus’ like that, the cat said it.

“So ‘Nope looked at the page, and there in big letters he saw this verse:

“‘The bossie-cow is good and kind And man’s best friend, we think; She’s full of beefsteaks, you will find, And gives nice milk to drink’

“‘That’s awful strange,’ said the little boy, shaking his head. ‘But it’s in the book, sure enough. I’ll go an’ ask the cow about it.’ So he went in the house and found the cow asleep under the kitchen stove. An’ when he woke it up an’ looked at it he shook his head again, ‘cause the cow wasn’t as big as

the milk-pail, an”Nope knew there was somethin’ wrong.

“‘Do you give milk?’ he asked the cow.

“‘No, indeedy,’ said the cow, yawnin’ an’ stretchin’ herself awful lazylike. But I drink milk when I can get it. Got any?’

“‘Not a bit,’ says ‘Nope;’ ‘cause the cat’s actin’ ugly. Come on out with me and talk to her.’

“‘So the cow stopped washin’ its face with its paws an’ went out with Nope to the cat-shed an’ tried to argufy, ‘cause she was hungry for milk. But the cat was obst’nate an’ said it was printed in the book that cows give milk, so the cow would have to give the milk after this.

“‘Let’s see the book,’ said the cow, which was quite upset by the idea. So the cat got the book again, an’ turned to the page, an’ the cow read it an’ seemed scared like an’ didn’t know what to say. But while they were all lookin’ hard at the verse the wind blew into the cat-shed and turned over the leaf of the book, an’ there on the next page was a big picture of a red cat, with horns an’ ears an’ eyes all very natural, an’ under the picture was printed in big letters: ‘A COW.’

“‘Goodness me!’ said the cat. ‘I hadn’t seen that, before.’

“‘Well, well!’ said the cow;, it isn’t *me* at all.’

“‘Seems to me we’ve got mixed up, somehow,’ said the little boy. ‘The book must be right.’

“‘Of course,’ said the cat. ‘It’s printed.’

“‘Who named us, anyhow?’ asked the cow.

“‘Why, I did,’ said the little boy. ‘The man I bought this place from said there was a cow an’ a cat, an’ I could have them both. But I forgot to ask him which was which, and when he had gone away I had to name you both. So I thought *you* mus’ be the cat,’ pointin’ to the cow, you know; ‘an’ I thought *you* mus’ be the cow,’ pointin’ to the cat. ‘So I named you that way, an’ it would have been all right if you hadn’t looked in the book.’

“‘Didn’t your fathers and mothers know?’ they asked him.

“‘No,’ says he,’ cause they hadn’t been to school then.’

“So the little boy named ‘em both over again, an’ this time he named ‘em right, an’ the cow let him milk her so’s he could churn the butter for luncheon.”

With a long-drawn breath the little maid ended her story, and I said:

“That is a very interesting fairy tale, Bessie. But what is the moral?”

“Can’t you see?” she asked reproachfully. “It’s proof that if you’re ign’rant an’ call things by their wrong names you’re sure to get all mixed up.”

I nodded and kissed her. There is wisdom in little heads, after all.

The Man-Fairy

Meg's nose was red; but that was not due so much to the cold as from pressing it against the window-pane of the toy shop. It was not a very big toy shop. Far down street were others far more splendid and much larger; but to the waif who stood on the sidewalk, feasting her eyes on the treasures displayed within, this modest establishment seemed like a bit of fairyland.

In the window was a toy elephant which nodded its head with grave regularity. Also there was a fuzzy polar bear that could stand upright or be placed in any other position, because its legs were jointed and hinged. And there was a fine Noah's ark, with nearly fifty wooden animals, which all fitted inside the ark when it was closed, and a delightful toy village with the houses, trees and people all made of wood and brightly painted. Other fascinating things were in the window and farther on--in the tiny shop itself--Meg could see the rows of beautiful dolls, pop-guns and tin swords, jumping jacks, tops and games. No wonder her nose was red from pressure against the big window-pane. She was living in this vast domain of treasure, able to admire and enjoy all her eyes could embrace, and only kept from touching the wonderful things by a sheet of glass and the grimly-closed door.

This toy shop was a thing of beauty and a constant delight to the children of the poorer neighborhood in which it was located, and Mr. Wegg, the lean old man Meg noticed inside, who had a green patch over one eye and was intently reading a newspaper with the other, perhaps earned a modest living from the sales of his well-assorted but meager stock. Meg watched him a moment, envying him the possession of so many precious things. Then her eyes turned to the toys again.

"What are you wishing?" asked a quiet, pleasant voice at her side.

Meg laughed. Then she turned to find a little, fat gentleman standing next to her. He was not looking at the child, but seemed to be staring into the window, and she did not realize he was shrewdly watching the reflection of her face in the polished glass.

No one could call Meg a pretty child, but when she smiled, as she did now--dreamily and sweetly unconscious--her thin face became very winning and pleasant to see. The little man, whose hands were thrust into the pockets of his overcoat, himself smiled into the glass of the window and repeated his question.

"What are you wishing, my dear?"

"What made you think I was wishing anything?" she asked. It did not surprise her a bit to be addressed by a stranger, and he spoke so quietly and in such a friendly, confidential tone, that she responded with equal frankness.

“Why, it’s natural, you know,” he answered. “There are lots of fine things in this shop; lots of things dear to childhood. It’s very natural you should be wishing for some of them.”

Meg nodded. “Of course,” she said, musingly. Then they stood together for some moments, silently staring into the window.

“Tell you what I’ll do,” said the little man finally; “I’ll be a fairy, and grant you any wish you make.”

Meg looked up at him, doubtingly. The fat little man had a kind face, but it wore an expression rather sad. Her eyes wandered to his clothes. They were of good quality, and must, she thought, have cost a lot of money. Accustomed as she was to be teased and bantered, it scarcely occurred to her that her companion was in earnest.

“Any one wish?” she asked.

“Just one,” said he, smiling down at her. “Any one wish you make shall be granted. I promise.”

Meg laughed--a rippling little laugh that proved she appreciated the humor of the situation. “Then,” said she, “I wish I owned this whole toy shop!”

The little man raised his eyebrows and regarded her with surprise. Meg’s eyes had a merry challenge in them. He threw back his head and laughed aloud, with real enjoyment.

“Well, Mr. Fairy,” she said, “how are you going to back out of it?”

For answer he began to examine the waif with renewed interest, from the faded shawl wrapped around her head and shoulders to her thin-stockinged legs and worn shoes.

“All right!” he said, suddenly. “The wish is granted. Wait just a minute, dear.”

Then he marched straight into the toy shop, closing the door behind him. Meg saw Mr. Wegg lay down his paper, rise and bow respectfully. Then the little fat man said something, and Mr. Wegg’s mouth opened wide with astonishment and his one good eye stared fixedly. While Meg’s fairy continued speaking, Mr. Wegg glanced around his shop as if bewildered, and finally went to his little desk in the corner and made some figures on a sheet of paper. When he looked up again his lips moved and the man-fairy pulled out a big roll of money and began counting out bills on the counter. Finally Mr. Wegg put the money in his pocket and wrote something on a paper. Then he took down hat and overcoat from a hook, bowed low to the little man, and, with a joyful look on his face, walked out of the shop. Meg saw him turn down the street with hasty strides, as if afraid someone would call him back.

The little man now came to the door and held it open. “Walk in, my dear, and take possession of your toy shop,” he said, with a laugh as eager and cheery as that of a schoolboy.

The child slowly entered the shop. She was greatly amazed, it is true, but childhood has a curious way of accepting marvels as matters of course.

“Take off your things and hand them up,” said the little man, rubbing his hands briskly together. “My fairy wand didn’t work as quickly as Aladdin’s lamp, but it worked. You own the shop, now, and you must be ready to wait on your customers and do business.”

“Is--is it all mine?” she asked, wonderingly.

“It is all yours--absolutely,” he declared. “Your wish has come true.”

“Then what must I do?” enquired Meg, gravely.

“Don’t ask me,” said he, seating himself in the chair by the stove and picking up the newspaper Mr. Wegg had been reading. “Were the place mine I’d know what to do with it, but as it’s your own I have no right to interfere.” His eyes were twinkling and merry. The sad look had almost left his chubby face.

Meg stood by the stove and warmed her hands. There was a thoughtful look on her small face. She realized something wonderful had happened, and knew she must rise to the occasion and accept her good fortune in a way that would not disappoint her new friend. So she took off her shawl and hung it on the hook where Mr. Wegg had kept his hat and overcoat. She had to go behind the counter to do this, and the nearness of all the gorgeous toys rather frightened her for a time. But her place was behind the counter, of course; so she lingered there, cautiously touching and examining the various articles and growing each moment more jubilant and eager as the realization grew that every plaything was her very own! The little man was not reading at all, but over the paper his eyes were fixed upon the face and form of the little girl.

“What is your name?” he asked, presently.

“Meg. Meg Harradin,” said she, standing up a sleeping doll with tender hands--to see it open its eyes.

“Where do you live, Meg?”

“No. 29 Bobbins Row, third floor back.” She laid down the doll and made a red wooden monkey climb a yellow tick.

“How many in the family?” enquired the little man.

“Just mother and me. Mother works in the shirt factory. She goes away at eight and comes home soon after six. I take care of the room while she’s gone,” added Meg.

The man-fairy nodded. “Then,” said he, “you have plenty of time to

devote to your store."

"Oh, yes," agreed Meg, listlessly. She had found a set of toy dishes and was setting them out, one by one, with trembling, cautious fingers. How she had always longed for some toy dishes!

The door suddenly opened and a woman entered. She was well dressed and seemed prosperous. Meg had never seen her before. After a glance at the child behind the counter she turned to the man.

"What is the price of the woolly bear in the window?" she asked.

"That young lady owns the shop," the man-fairy replied, covering his face with the newspaper. "Don't ask me. I'm a stranger."

The customer turned to Meg and examined her worn calico slip and untidy hair with a glance of scornful surprise.

"What is the price of the bear?" she asked.

Meg went to the window and took out the bear, placing it upon the counter. There was no price-mark on it at all.

"Well! Can't you tell me?" demanded the woman, sharply. "I can't stand here all day waiting."

Meg didn't want to sell the bear. She hadn't even touched it before, or played with it, as she intended. And she had no idea what it was worth. Five cents had been the limit of her ambitions heretofore, and once a lady had given her a whole nickel to be her very own. Of course she knew such a fine big bear ought to cost a lot of money, so a thought struck her to hazard a price so great that it would render the sale impossible.

"It's--it's a dollar, ma'am!" she faltered.

The woman seemed astonished, and examined the toy bear for flaws. It appeared perfect, and she knew it would have cost three or four dollars down-town.

"Wrap it up, please," she said, and laid down a big silver dollar.

Meg's lips quivered and tears came into her eyes. In all her stock of toys nothing was finer than this fuzzy polar bear, and her heart was troubled at the thought of losing it so soon. But she happened to glance at the man-fairy and saw an odd look on his face that determined her to be brave. She found a sheet of wrapping paper, and with clumsy fingers made the precious bear into a parcel, which she handed to the customer. The woman went away highly pleased, and Meg opened the money drawer, which Mr. Wegg had left empty, and slowly dropped the silver dollar into it. Her first sale was not a success. What was that piece of cold, hard metal compared to her lovely, fuzzy polar bear?

The little man by the stove made no remark. Meg leaned her elbows on the counter and, with her chin in her hands, looked at him wistfully.

“Must I sell everything?” she enquired, in a hesitating voice.

“Ask yourself. I’m not running this toy shop,” he replied.

“I--I’d like some things to--to keep,” she said. “And I’d like to take some toys to Tommy Metz, who’s sick in bed with a fever, and to Lucille Jensen, who’s a cripple and can’t walk.”

“Then you’d better put ‘em away under the counter, where they won’t be seen,” he suggested in a kindly tone.

That idea pleased Meg. She went to the window and took out the Noah’s ark and the elephant with the nodding head and carefully stored them under the counter. The biggest and finest wax doll--the one that opened and closed its eyes--she put away, too, and then she began to select other toys. All this she did with a quick and nervous manner, as if fearing more customers would arrive and rob her of her treasures.

A boy came in to buy a pop-gun. Meg sold it for five cents, to the boy’s intense delight. He knew Mr. Wegg charged a quarter for these guns, but Meg did not share this knowledge and was quite willing to let the toy go.

“Isn’t anything marked with the price?” asked the man-fairy, a bit uneasily.

“No,” answered Meg.

“Ah, I suppose Mr. Wegg knew what everything was worth and so had no need to mark his stock. Never mind.

This is a fairy shop. It isn’t real.”

Saying this, the little man turned over his paper and began reading again.

The window-ledge looked bare to Meg, now that the biggest toys had been taken away. She brought some smaller articles from the shelves and filled in the spaces. That left parts of the shelves bare, for Mr. Wegg had spread everything out to make as big a showing as possible.

“One way to keep a toy shop,” remarked Meg’s friend, stealthily watching her, “is to sell the things and then buy more with the money they bring.”

“But why do that?” asked the child, as if surprised.

“So that you will always have something to sell,” he replied, with an amused laugh. “Let us suppose, my dear, you manage to sell all the toys that are here. It won’t take long to do that, I imagine, and then what will become of your shop?”

Meg reflected. “Why, why then--it won’t be a shop!” she exclaimed.

“No; it will be an empty store,” said he, looking at her curiously.

“Well, when that happens, I’ll go home and play with my toys,” she said, with ready philosophy.

The man-fairy made no objection to this plan. The ultimate fate of the toy shop seemed to interest him as little as it did Meg. She began to feel more at

home among the toys, and selected several others to add to the reserve stock under the counter.

Presently several boys, accompanied by the one who had purchased the pop-gun, rushed into the shop in a noisy group. Each held a nickel tightly clasped in his hand, and the row of pop-guns on Meg's shelves melted away under the demands of these eager customers. They bought some other toys, too, at equally low prices, for Meg's idea of five cents was both fanciful and reverent. The little man laughed as merrily as did the boys.

Meg seemed a little puzzled. "Am I selling things too cheap?" she asked.

"No, indeed!" her friend said, adding, "If those guns had been twenty-five cents, not one of those boys could have bought them. So your prices are just the right sort to make children happy, my dear. Such bargains might not be possible in a regular toy shop; but this is a fairy toy shop, isn't it?"

"Of course," said Meg. After a little thought she enquired, "Are--you--are you a real fairy?"

"Why, I've tried to be fair all my life," he said soberly; "and if that isn't being a fairy, I don't know what is."

"I don't see any wings."

"No; I'm a land fairy. I'm not supposed to fly. If I'd been whisking through the air I never would have found you looking into this window, you see."

"Why, of course," agreed Meg.

Then he took out his watch. "It's noon," said he. "Let's have some lunch."

"I can buy a quart of milk and a loaf of two-day bread for eight cents," cried Meg with pleasure. "Will that be spending too much?"

He considered a moment, and then said "Lock the door and come with me."

Meg obediently put on her shawl and came from behind the counter. Her man-fairy put a fresh supply of coal in the stove and when they passed out of the shop locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

"Won't customers come?" asked Meg.

"Maybe. But they can't buy anything until you return. Hungry?"

"Hungry as anything!" said Meg.

He walked her two or three blocks down the street until they came to an imposing-looking restaurant. Then he led his poorly-clad companion into a big room set with snowy tables, placed her in a soft leather-seated chair, and ordered what seemed a wonderful fairy meal. Meg forgot even her toy shop.

When they returned to the little store they found a throng of children clustered around the door, for the news had spread that rare bargains in toys could be had here, and many a savings bank had been broken into that

afternoon to get pennies with which to purchase the cheap and dearly-desired articles. Not all who came had money, but these less fortunate ones were interested in seeing the others buy, and when the man-fairy found a child who longed for something, yet had no pennies, he made the purchase himself, gravely handing Meg the money.

Business began to be brisk now, for no sooner had one group melted away with loads of toys than another appeared, clamoring for some of the "bargains." Meg was kept busy doing up parcels and she became bewildered with all this run of customers. So her friend offered to help her, and himself wrapped and tied up the purchases while she sold.

When at last a lull came, and they were again alone in the shop, Meg looked around her disconsolately. Great gaps were in the shelves that so recently had been filled with bright-colored toys and all the best and most desirable things had been carried away by the eager procession of customers. But the man-fairy rubbed his hands together and chuckled with glee.

"Great business, Meg!" he exclaimed. "There'll be many a happy youngster to night who owes his pleasure to you and to your toy shop."

"And to the man-fairy," said Meg, soberly. "All the same, it was lucky I put those things under the counter."

She peered at her treasures lovingly, and added two more dolls to the lot; for dolls were selling very fast, and might soon be gone altogether.

"Here they come again!" cried the little man, with enthusiasm; and indeed they did come! It was not a wealthy neighborhood; far from it. But the poorer classes are those who understand bargains best, and know how to take advantage of them; so some of the mothers came to select toys for their little ones.

The man-fairy paid especial attention to the children, and saw that everyone carried away some toy. Especially he favored the little girls, and seemed sorry when the dolls and dishes and games were all gone.

The afternoon passed swiftly indeed, and long before twilight fell the stock of toys had been reduced to a few broken or unimportant articles. These Meg and her friend gave away freely to all who would take them, and then they turned out the remnants of the crowd and locked the door.

"My! What a change," exclaimed the girl, eyeing the bare shelves. "Have I done right, sir, do you think?"

"Quite right, my dear," he answered cheerfully. Then he drew the shades and lighted the lamp. "Now, Meg, we'll try to wrap up your own things," he added.

It was no slight task getting all the things the child had put aside into neat packages. But both worked hard and at last the treasures were ready to carry

away.

“But I never can lug them in my arms!” cried Meg, aghast.

“I’ll help you,” said he.

“And what shall we do with the money?” she asked.

He took his big handkerchief, emptied the money into it and tied the corners firmly together. “Take this home and use it carefully,” he cautioned her. “Make it go as far as you can, dear, for man-fairies are scarce in this world.”

Someone tried to get in, so he unlocked the door and found it was Mr. Wegg, who looked at the bare shop in astonishment.

“You’re just in time, sir,” said the little gentleman. “We are ready to quit business, so we’ll turn over the shop to you again.”

Then Meg and her man-fairy loaded their arms full of the bundles, and, giving Mr. Wegg a cheery “good evening,” marched away up the street.

I suppose there was no happier child in town than little Meg as she deposited her wealth of treasure on the little bed in the dingy room at 29 Bobbins Row, third floor back. Her mother had not yet returned from her work.

The little man’s face was radiant with pleasure as he watched her.

“I must be going now. Good-bye, Meg,” he said, taking her hand.

“I--I want to thank you--oh, so much!” faltered the child, her eyes filling with tears, but a sweet, alluring smile flooding her face like sunshine breaking through a summer shower. “I--I’m afraid, Fairy-Man, this has cost you a lot of money!”

“I never made a better investment, my dear,” he answered gently, as he stooped to kiss her. “I was a sad and lonely man when I met you this morning, Meg, and you’ve given me the happiest day of my life.”

The Suicide of Kiaros

The White Elephant, September 1897.

I.

MR. FELIX MARSTON, cashier for the great mercantile firm of Van Alsteyne & Traynor, sat in his little private office with a balance- sheet before him and a frown upon his handsome face. At times he nervously ran his slim fingers through the mass of dark hair that clustered over his forehead, and the growing expression of annoyance upon his features fully revealed his disquietude.

The world knew and admired Mr. Marston, and a casual onlooker would certainly have decided that something had gone wrong with the firm's financial transactions; but Mr. Marston knew himself better than the world did, and grimly realized that although something had gone very wrong indeed, it affected himself in an unpleasantly personal way.

The world's knowledge of the popular young cashier included the following items: He had entered the firm's employ years before in an inferior position, and by energy, intelligence and business ability, had worked his way up until he reached the post he now occupied, and became his employers' most trusted servant. His manner was grave, earnest and dignified; his judgment, in business matters, clear and discerning. He had no intimate friends, but was courteous and affable to all he met, and his private life, so far as it was known, was beyond all reproach.

Mr. Van Alsteyne, the head of the firm, conceived a warm liking for Mr. Marston, and finally invited him to dine at his house. It was there the young man first met Gertrude Van Alsteyne, his employer's only child, a beautiful girl and an acknowledged leader in society. Attracted by the man's handsome face and gentlemanly bearing, the heiress encouraged him to repeat his visit, and Marston followed up his advantage so skillfully that within a year she had consented to become his wife. Mr. Van Alsteyne did not object to the match. His admiration for the young man deepened, and he vowed that upon the wedding day he would transfer one-half his interest in the firm to his son-in- law.

Therefore the world, knowing all this, looked upon Mr. Marston as one of fortune's favorites, and predicted a great future for him. But Mr. Marston, as I said, knew himself more intimately than did the world, and now, as he sat looking upon that fatal trial balance, he muttered in an undertone:

"Oh, you fool--you fool!"

Clear-headed, intelligent man of the world though he was, one vice had

mastered him. A few of the most secret, but most dangerous gambling dens knew his face well. His ambition was unbounded, and before he had even dreamed of being able to win Miss Van Alsteyne as his bride, he had figured out several ingenious methods of winning a fortune at the green table. Two years ago he had found it necessary to "borrow" a sum of money from the firm to enable him to carry out these clever methods. Having, through some unforeseen calamity, lost the money, another sum had to be abstracted to allow him to win back enough to even the accounts. Other men have attempted this before; their experiences are usually the same. By a neat juggling of figures, the books of the firm had so far been made to conceal his thefts, but now it seemed as if fortune, in pushing him forward, was about to hurl him down a precipice.

His marriage to Gertrude Van Alsteyne was to take place in two weeks, and as Mr. Van Alsteyne insisted upon keeping his promise to give Marston an interest in the business, the change in the firm would necessitate a thorough overhauling of the accounts, which meant discovery and ruin to the man who was about to grasp a fortune and a high social position--all that his highest ambition had ever dreamed of attaining.

It is no wonder that Mr. Marston, brought face to face with his critical position, denounced himself for his past folly, and realized his helplessness to avoid the catastrophe that was about to crush him.

A voice outside interrupted his musings and arrested his attention.

"It is Mr. Marston I wish to see."

The cashier thrust the sheet of figures within a drawer of the desk, hastily composed his features and opened the glass door beside him.

Show Mr. Kiaros this way," he called, after a glance at his visitor. He had frequently met the person who now entered his office, but he could not resist a curious glance as the man sat down upon a chair and spread his hands over his knees. He was short and thick-set in form, and both oddly and carelessly dressed, but his head and face were most venerable in appearance. Flowing locks of pure white graced a forehead whose height and symmetry denoted unusual intelligence, and a full beard of the same purity reached full to his waist. The eyes were full and dark, but not piercing in character, rather conveying in their frank glance kindness and benevolence. A round cap of some dark material was worn upon his head, and this he deferentially removed as he seated himself, and said:

"For me a package of value was consigned to you, I believe?" Marston nodded gravely.

"Mr. Williamson left it with me," he replied.

"I will take it," announced the Greek, calmly; "twelve thousand dollars it

contains."

Marston started.

"I knew it was money," he said, "but was not aware of the amount. This is it, I think." He took from the huge safe a packet, corded and sealed, and handed it to his visitor. Kiaros took a pen-knife from his pocket, cut the cords and removed the wrapper, after which he proceeded to count the contents.

Marston listlessly watched him. Twelve thousand dollars. That would be more than enough to save him from ruin, if only it belonged to him instead of this Greek money-lender.

"The amount, it is right," declared the old man, re-wrapping the parcel of notes; "you have my thanks, sir. Good- afternoon," and he rose to go.

Pardon me, sir," said Marston, with a sudden thought, "it is after banking hours. Will it be safe to carry this money with you until morning?"

"Perfectly," replied Kiaros; "I am never molested, for I am old, and few know my business. My safe at home large sums often contains. The money I like to have near me, to accommodate my clients."

He buttoned his coat tightly over the packet, and then in turn paused to look at the cashier.

"Lately you have not come to me for favors," he said.

"No," answered Marston, arousing from a slight reverie; "I have not needed to. Still, I may be obliged to visit you again soon."

"Your servant I am pleased to be," said Kiaros, with a smile, and turning abruptly he left the office.

Marston glanced at his watch. He was engaged to dine with his betrothed that evening, and it was nearly time to return to his lodgings to dress. He attended to one or two matters in his usual methodical way, and then left the office for the night, relinquishing any further duties to his assistant. As he passed through the various business offices on his way out, he was greeted respectfully by his fellow-employees, who already regarded him a member of the firm.

II.

ALMOST for the first time during their courtship, Miss Van Alsteyne was tender and demonstrative that evening, and seemed loath to allow him to leave the house when he pleaded a business engagement and arose to go. She was a stately beauty, and little given to emotional ways, therefore her new mood affected him greatly, and as he walked away he realized, with a sigh, how much it would cost him to lose so dainty and charming a bride.

At the first corner he paused and examined his watch by the light of the street lamp. It was nine o'clock. Hailing the first passing cab, he directed the

man to drive him to the lower end of the city, and leaning back upon the cushions, he became occupied in earnest thought.

The jolting of the cab over a rough pavement finally aroused him, and looking out he signaled the driver to stop.

“Shall I wait, sir?” asked the man, as Marston alighted and paid his fare.

“No.”

The cab rattled away, and the cashier retraced his way a few blocks and then walked down a side street that seemed nearly deserted, so far as he could see in the dim light. Keeping track of the house numbers, which were infrequent and often nearly obliterated, he finally paused before a tall, brick building, the lower floors of which seemed occupied as a warehouse.

“Two eighty-six,” he murmured; “this must be the place. If I remember right there should be a stairway at the left-- ah, here it is.”

There was no light at the entrance, but having visited the place before, under similar circumstances, Marston did not hesitate, but began mounting the stairs, guiding himself in the darkness by keeping one hand upon the narrow rail. One flight--two--three--four!

“His room should be straight before me,” he thought, pausing to regain his breath; “yes, I think there is a light shining under the door.”

He advanced softly, knocked, and then listened. There was a faint sound from within, and then a slide in the upper panel of the door was pushed aside, permitting a strong ray of lamp-light to strike Marston full in the face.

“Oho!” said a calm voice, “Mr. Marston has honored me. To enter I entreat you.”

The door was thrown open and Kiaros stood before him, with a smile upon his face, gracefully motioning him to advance. Marston returned the old man’s courteous bow, and entering the room, took a seat near the table, at the same time glancing at his surroundings.

The room was plainly but substantially furnished. A small safe stood in a corner at his right, and near it was the long table, used by Kiaros as a desk. It was littered with papers and writing material, and behind it was a high-backed, padded easy-chair, evidently the favorite seat of the Greek, for after closing the door he walked around the table and sat within the big chair, facing his visitor.

The other end of the room boasted a fire-place, with an old- fashioned mantel bearing an array of curiosities. Above it was a large clock, and at one side stood a small book-case containing a number of volumes printed in the Greek language. A small alcove, containing a couch, occupied the remaining side of the small apartment, and it was evident these cramped quarters constituted Kiaros1 combined office and living rooms.

“So soon as this I did not expect you,” said the old man, in his grave voice.

“I am in need of money,” replied Marston, abruptly, “and my interview with you this afternoon reminded me that you have sometimes granted me an occasional loan. Therefore, I have come to negotiate with you.”

Kiaros nodded, and studied with his dark eyes the composed features of the cashier.

“A satisfactory debtor you have ever proved,” said he, “and to pay me with promptness never failed. How much do you require?”

“Twelve thousand dollars.”

In spite of his self-control, Kiaros started as the young man coolly stated this sum.

“Impossible!” he ejaculated, moving uneasily in his chair.

“Why is it impossible?” demanded Marston. “I know you have the money.”

“True; I deny it not,” returned Kiaros, dropping his gaze before the other’s earnest scrutiny; “also to lend money is my business. But see--I will be frank with you Mr. Marston--I cannot take the risk. You are cashier for hire; you have no property; security for so large a sum you cannot give. Twelve thousand dollars! It is impossible!”

“You loaned Williamson twelve thousand,” persisted Marston; doggedly.

“Mr. Williamson secured me.”

Marston rose from his chair and began slowly pacing up and down before the table, his hands clasped tightly behind him and an impatient frown contracting his features. The Greek watched him calmly.

“Perhaps you have not heard, Mr. Kiaros,” he said, at length, “that within two weeks I am to be married to Mr. Van Alsteyne’s only daughter.”

“I had not heard.”

“And at the same time I am to receive a large interest in the business as a wedding gift from my father-in-law.”

“To my congratulations you are surely entitled.”

“Therefore my need is only temporary. I shall be able to return the money within thirty days, and I am willing to pay you well for the accommodation.”

“A Jew I am not,” returned Kiaros, with a slight shrug, “and where I lend I do not rob. But so great a chance I cannot undertake. You are not yet married, a partner in the firm not yet. To die, to quarrel with the lady, to lose Mr. Van Alsteyne’s confidence, would leave me to collect the sum wholly unable. I might a small amount risk--the large amount is impossible.”

Marston suddenly became calm, and resumed his chair with a quiet air, to Kiaros’ evident satisfaction.

“You have gambled?” asked the Greek, after a pause.

“Not lately. I shall never gamble again. I owe no gambling debts; this money is required for another purpose.”

“Can you not do with less?” asked Kiaros; “an advance I will make of one thousand dollars; not more. That sum is also a risk, but you are a man of discretion; in your ability I have confidence.”

Marston did not reply at once. He leaned back in his chair, and seemed to be considering the money-lender’s offer. In reality there passed before his mind the fate that confronted him, the scene in which he posed as a convicted felon; he saw the collapse of his great ambitions, the ruin of those schemes he had almost brought to fruition.

Already he felt the reproaches of the man he had robbed, the scorn of the proud woman who had been ready to give him her hand, the cold sneers of those who gloated over his downfall. And then he bethought himself, and drove the vision away, and thought of other things.

Kiaros rested his elbow upon the table, and toyed with a curious-looking paper-cutter. It was made of pure silver, in the shape of a dagger; the blade was exquisitely chased, and bore a Greek motto. After a time Kiaros looked up and saw his guest regarding the paper-cutter.

“It is a relic most curious,” said he, “from the ruins of Missolonghi rescued, and by a friend sent to me. All that is Greek I love. Soon to my country I shall return, and that is why I cannot risk the money I have in a lifetime earned.”

Still Marston did not reply, but sat looking thoughtfully at the table. Kiaros was not impatient. He continued to play with the silver dagger, and poised it upon his finger while he awaited the young man’s decision.

“I think I shall be able to get along with the thousand dollars,” said Marston at last, his collected tones showing no trace of the disappointment Kiaros had expected. “Can you let me have it now?”

“Yes. As you know, the money is in my safe. I will make out the note.”

He quietly laid down the paper-cutter and drew a note-book from a drawerof the table. Dipping a pen in the inkwell, he rapidly filled up the note and pushed it across the table to Marston.

“Will you sign?” he asked, with his customary smile. Marston drew his chair close to the table and examined the note.

“You said you would not rob me!” he demurred.

“The commission it is very little,” replied Kiaros, coolly. “A Jew much more would have exacted.”

Marston picked up the pen, dashed off his name, and tossed the paper towards Kiaros. The Greek inspected it carefully, and rising from his chair,

walked to the safe and drew open the heavy door. He placed the note in one drawer, and from another removed an oblong tin box, which he brought to the table. Reseating himself, he opened this box and drew out a large packet of banknotes.

Marston watched him listlessly as he carefully counted out one thousand dollars.

"The amount is, I believe, correct," said Kiaros, after a second count; "if you will kindly verify it I shall be pleased."

Marston half arose and reached out his hand, but he did not take the money. Instead, his fingers closed over the handle of the silver dagger, and with a swift, well-directed blow he plunged it to the hilt in the breast of the Greek. The old man lay back in his chair with a low moan, his form quivered once or twice and then became still, while a silence that suddenly seemed oppressive pervaded the little room.

III.

FELIX MARSTON sat down in his chair and stared at the form of Kiaros. The usually benevolent features of the Greek were horribly convulsed, and the dark eyes had caught and held a sudden look of terror. His right hand, resting upon the table, still grasped the bundle of bank-notes. The handle of the silver dagger glistened in the lamplight just above the heart, and a dark-colored fluid was slowly oozing outward and discoloring the old man's clothing and the point of his snowy beard.

Marston drew out his handkerchief and wiped the moisture from his forehead. Then he arose, and going to his victim, carefully opened the dead hand and removed the money. In the tin box was the remainder of the twelve thousand dollars the Greek had that day received. Marston wrapped it all in a paper and placed it in his breast pocket. Then he went to the safe, replaced the box in its drawer, and found the note he had just signed.

This he folded and placed carefully in his pocket-book. Returning to the table, he stood looking down upon the dead man.

"He was a very good fellow, old Kiaros, he murmured;" I am sorry I had to kill him. But this is no time for regrets; I must try to cover all traces of my crime. The reason most murderers are discovered is because they become terrified, are anxious to get away, and so leave clues behind them. I have plenty of time. Probably no one knows of my visit here to-night, and as the old man lives quite alone, no one is likely to come here before morning."

He looked at his watch. It was a few minutes after ten o'clock.

"This ought to be a case of suicide," he continued, "and I shall try to make it look that way."

The expression of Kiaros' face first attracted his attention. That look of terror was incompatible with suicide. He drew a chair beside the old man and began to pass his hands over the dead face to smooth out the contracted lines. The body was still warm, and with a little perseverance, Marston succeeded in relaxing the drawn muscles until the face gradually resumed its calm and benevolent look.

The eyes, however, were more difficult to deal with, and it was only after repeated efforts that Marston was able to draw the lids over them, and hide their startled and horrified gaze. When this was accomplished, Kiaros looked as peaceful as if asleep, and the cashier was satisfied with his progress. He now lifted the Greek's right hand and attempted to clasp the fingers over the handle of the dagger, but they fell away limply.

"Rigor mortis has not yet set in," reflected Marston, "and I must fasten the hand in position until it does. Had the man him- self dealt the blow, the tension of the nerves of the arm would probably have forced the fingers to retain their grip upon the weapon." He took his handkerchief and bound the fingers over the hilt of the dagger, at the same time altering the position of the head and body to better suit the assumption of suicide.

"I shall have to wait some time for the body to cool," he told himself, and then he considered what might be done in the meantime.

A box of cigars stood upon the mantel. Marston selected one and lit it. Then he returned to the table, turned up the lamp a trifle, and began searching in the drawers for specimens of the Greek's handwriting. Having secured several of these he sat down and studied them for a few minutes, smoking collectedly the while, and taking care to drop the ashes in a little tray that Kiaros had used for that purpose. Finally he drew a sheet of paper towards him, and carefully imitating the Greek's sprawling chirography, wrote as follows:

"My money I have lost. To live longer I cannot. To die I am therefore resolved.

KIAROS."

"I think that will pass inspection," he muttered, looking at the paper approvingly, and comparing it again with the dead man's writing. "I must avoid all risks, but this forgery is by far too clever to be detected." He placed the paper upon the table before the body of the Greek, and then rearranged the papers as he had found them.

Slowly the hours passed away. Marston rose from his chair at intervals and examined the body. At one o'clock rigor mortis began to set in, and a half hour later Marston removed the handkerchief, and was pleased to find the hand retained its grasp upon the dagger. The position of the dead body

was now very natural indeed, and the cashier congratulated himself upon his success.

There was but one task remaining for him to accomplish. The door must be found locked upon the inside. Marston searched until he found a piece of twine, one end of which he pinned lightly to the top of the table, a little to the left of the inkwell. The other end of the twine he carried to the door, and passed it through the slide in the panel.

Withdrawing the key from the lock of the door; he now approached the table for the last time, taking a final look at the body, and laying the end of his cigar upon the tray. The theory of suicide had been excellently carried out; if only the key could be arranged for, he would be satisfied. Reflecting thus, he leaned over and blew out the light.

It was very dark, but he had carefully considered the distance beforehand, and in a moment he had reached the hallway and softly closed ad locked the door behind him. Then he withdrew the key, found the end of the twine which projected through the panel, and running this through the ring of the key, he passed it inside the panel, and allowed the key to slide down the cord until a sharp click told him it rested upon the table within. A sudden jerk of the twine now unfastened the end which had been pinned to the table, and he drew it in and carefully placed it in his pocket. Before closing the door of the panel, Marston lighted a match, and satisfied himself the key was lying in the position he had wished. He breathed more freely then and closed the panel.

A few minutes later he had reached the street, and after a keen glance up and down, he stepped boldly from the doorway and walked away.

To his surprise, he now felt himself trembling with nervousness, and despite his endeavors to control himself, it required all of his four-mile walk home to enable him to regain his wonted composure.

He let himself in with his latchkey, and made his way noiselessly to his room. As he was a gentleman of regular habits, the landlady never bothered herself to keep awake watching for his return.

IV.

MR. MARSTON appeared at the office the next morning in an unusually good humor, and at once busied himself with the regular routine of duties.

As soon as he was able, he retired to his private office and began to revise the books and make out a new trial balance. The exact amount he had stolen from the firm was put into the safe, the false figures were replaced with correct ones, and by noon the new balance sheet proved that Mr. Marston's accounts were in perfect condition.

Just before he started for luncheon a clerk brought him the afternoon

paper. “What do you think, Mr. Marston?” he said. “Old Kiaros has committed suicide.”

“Indeed! Do you mean the Kiaros who was here yesterday?” inquired Marston, as he put on his coat.

“The very same. It seems the old man lost his money in some unfortunate speculation, and so took his own life. The police found him in his room this morning, stabbed to the heart. Here is the paper, sir, if you wish to see it.”

“Thank you,” returned the cashier, in his usual quiet way. “I will buy one when I go out,” and without further comment he went to luncheon.

But he purchased a paper, and while eating read carefully the account of Kiaros’ suicide. The report was reassuring; no one seemed to dream the Greek was the victim of foul play.

The verdict of the coroner’s jury completed his satisfaction. They found that Kiaros had committed suicide in a fit of despondency. The Greek was buried and forgotten, and soon the papers teemed with sensational accounts of the brilliant wedding of that estimable gentleman, Mr. Felix Marston, to the popular society belle, Miss Gertrude Van Alsteyne. The happy pair made a bridal trip to Europe, and upon their return Mr. Marston was installed as an active partner in the great firm of Van Alsteyne, Traynor & Marston.

* * * * * * *

This was twenty years ago. Mr. Marston to-day has an enviable record as an honorable and highly respected man of business, although some consider him a trifle too cold and calculating.

His wife, although she early discovered the fact that he had married her to further his ambition, has found him reserved and undemonstrative, but always courteous and indulgent to both herself and her children.

He holds his head high and looks every man squarely in the eye, and he is very generally envied, since everything seems to prosper in his hands.

Kiaros and his suicide are long since forgotten by the police and the public. Perhaps Marston recalls the Greek at times. He told me this story when he lay upon what he supposed was his death-bed.

In writing it down I have only altered the names of the characters. I promised Marston that so long as he lived I would not denounce him, and he still lives.

The Tiger's Eye

A JUNGLE FAIRY TALE

This is a fairy tale of Pocofo, which is an island of the South Seas, where the people are black and have never heard of telephones or chocolate caramels.

One half the Island of Pocofo is a dense jungle, filled with wild beasts which devour one another when they cannot get black people to eat. The other half of the island is inhabited by warring tribes of natives who fight and rob each other when they are not hunting the wild beasts. So it is not very peaceful in Pocofo, and I have often wondered how the wee brown children and baby animals manage to grow up where they are surrounded by so many dangers.

But they do grow up, and become strong men and women and fierce beasts. Then they take their part in the wars and worries of their day.

Once on a time a baby tiger was born in the jungle, and it was found to be blind in one eye. The father and mother tiger loved their baby and were sorry it had but one eye to see with.

"The black people may easily kill our darling," said the mother," for when they approach it on the blind side it cannot see them."

"The leopards and lions will do the same," added the father tiger, sadly. "We really need three or four eyes, to be able to watch all our enemies, and one eye is no protection for a baby tiger at all."

So they decided something must be done, and resolved to visit a Magic-Maker who lived near the edge of the jungle.

This Magic-Maker had the heart of a beast and the form of a man. He understood the language spoken by the animals and that spoken by the black men, and he served anyone who brought him payment for his magic. So the father and mother tigers took their baby to the straw hut in which Nog the Magic-Maker lived, and told him they must have another eye for their darling one.

"A glass eye?" asked Nog. "No; one that can see," was the reply.

"That is impossible," declared the Magic-Maker. I have much wisdom, and considerable skill in magic, but I cannot give your baby an eye that will see."

"Is there absolutely no way it can be done?" enquired the mother, in a grieved and disappointed voice.

"Oh, there is one way," said Nog, carelessly. "I could transform myself into an eye that could see; but in that case I would destroy my own form forever and become helpless except as an eye. Therefore, as I said, the thing is impossible."

"It may be from your point of view," growled the father tiger; "but to us it

is more important than our baby has the eye than that you continue to live in your present form--an unlovely shape at the best. So we insist upon your transforming yourself into an eye."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Nog, beginning to be frightened. "You don't suppose I'll consent to destroy myself for your foolish whim, do you?"

"Not willingly," admitted the tiger. "But here is the alternative; either you transform yourself into an eye for our child, or I and my dear wife will tear you into shreds."

The Magic-Maker, hearing this dreadful threat, looked around for a way to escape. But the mother tiger was crouched on one side of him and the father tiger upon the other, while the baby tiger was glaring hungrily at Nog with its one eye, as if longing to eat him.

Nog was a wise man. He knew that tigers were merciless and had little respect for Magic-Makers--or anything else, for that matter. So he thought over this uncomfortable alternative and decided it would cause him extreme pain to be torn to shreds by sharp tiger claws and teeth, whereas it would not hurt at all to transform himself into an eye. Moreover, as an eye he would still be alive, with a faint--a very faint--hope that some day he might be saved, whereas to be torn into shreds would kill him in the operation.

"I will have revenge if you make me do this dreadful thing," he threatened.

"We are determined to make you do it," declared the father tiger. "What do we care for your revenge?"

Finding escape impossible Nog heaved a deep sigh and transformed himself into an eye. It was just like a tiger's eye and it hopped into the empty eyesocket in the baby tiger's face and rolled around with a fierce and wicked expression, for the Magic-Maker was angry because he had been trapped and transformed against his will.

All the way home the baby tiger leaped here and there about the jungle, growling ferociously and never at rest. It even snarled at its mother when she tried to quiet it. And the very next day the child deserted the safety of the lair where it was born and wandered through the jungle in search of prey.

So sharp and far-seeing was the new eye that nothing escaped it, and so fierce was the temper of the wearer that the baby tiger boldly attacked animals twice its own size and defeated them all. It could not devour all the slain, so the bodies of the young tiger's victims littered all the jungle, and the animals complained bitterly of this awful destruction. One of the laws of the jungle is that no animal may kill except for food, yet here was the baby tiger killing for the wicked sport of murder. The animals straightway condemned the murderer and banded together to destroy the tiger which wore Nog the

Magic-Maker for an eye.

But the baby tiger avoided the stronger beasts and conquered the weaker ones. Meantime it grew wonderfully until it became a full sized tiger and a greater terror to the jungle folk than ever. One day it savagely fought its own father, who barely escaped with his life.

By this time the animals had become so angry and annoyed that they declared war upon the lawless tiger. They formed their army in line of battle and hunted the outlaw through the jungle till he was forced to fly to that part of the island where the black people lived.

Here the tiger's plan was to lie hidden by day and prowl over the country at night, killing all with whom he met. The people began to fear this enemy more than all the other animals of the jungle, yet few were brave enough to face the ferocious beast. These few he usually succeeded in killing before the fight was over.

Terror filled all the land and mothers kept their children in the huts so the cruel tiger could not find them.

Titticontoo was the little son of a native chieftain, and some time, if he lived to grow up, would rule a thousand black men himself. He was a pretty child, with sparkling brown eyes and soft hair, and he laughed all day at his play, being joyous of heart and quite happy.

Titticontoo did not know the meaning of clothes. He wore a cloth around his middle, woven of cocoanut fibre, but aside from that his little brown body was bare both night and day. He had no toys, so his only playthings were a small spear and a bow and arrows. With these he learned to skillfully shoot small birds, and so lithe were his muscles that he won every leaping and running contest from the other boys. He swam in the streams as nimbly as a fish. He said little and thought much. All the black people loved him because he was so smiling and cheerful, and Titticontoo loved his people in return and was generous and kind to all.

About the time the fierce tiger made its appearance in the land the boy's mother began to keep him shut up in the hut, fearing he might be killed. And at about the same time a horde of strange warriors from some unknown distant island landed on the coast of Pocofo and began to burn and slay and pillage wherever they went. So all the black men, headed by the chieftain who was Titticontoo's father, marched away to fight these strangers, while the women stayed at home to protect the children from the dreadful tiger.

One afternoon, as Titticontoo sat upon the floor of the hut playing with his little spear, a fierce growl was heard and suddenly there bounded into the room a great tiger. Its teeth were terrible to look at and its bared claws might well make the bravest shudder. One of its eyes--the left one--rolled with a

glare so wicked and cruel that Titticontoo's mother screamed and fainted with fear.

The boy, with the spear clutched in his little hand, sat still and looked at his enemy. The tiger snarled and crouched for a spring. Then its lean yellow body shot forward, the dreadful claws extended to clutch and rend its victim.

Titticontoo had never been afraid in his life, and he was not afraid now. He knew the tiger was dangerous and realized his mother had fainted and could not help him. So he must do his best to help himself. He set one end of his spear against the ground and pointed the other--the sharp end--at the leaping tiger.

Next moment the beast was upon him. A blow from its sharp claw sent the boy flying against the wall of the hut and tore out his left eye, leaving two livid gashes on his cheek. But the spear pierced the heart of the tiger and it fell dead.

In spite of the burning pain in his eye the brave boy crept forward to examine his fallen enemy. And then a strange thing happened. The eye that had once been the Magic- Maker popped out of the tiger's head and popped into the head of Titticontoo, where it took the place of the eye which had been tom out by the tiger's claw. For Nog was still alive, although he was now only an eye, and he realized there was no use in remaining in the head of a dead tiger.

He could do many more wicked and vengeful deeds, he thought, if he was in the head of the boy.

Strangely enough, Titticontoo's pain began to pass away as soon as the new eye popped into his head. He was glad at first to have the eye to see with, for he did not know it would try to influence him to evil deeds. When his mother recovered from her swoon she found the tiger dead and Titticontoo trying to bandage the gashes in his cheek. The eye did not pain him at all now.

All the women in the village, hearing the glad news that the tiger was slain, came running to the hut to congratulate Titticontoo upon his bravery; but the boy returned surly and ungracious answers and seemed to have lost his old merry ways and his kindly disposition.

Just then a band of the black men came running into the village to say their chieftain had been defeated and slain by the invaders and telling the women and children to fly to the jungle or they would all be captured and made slaves.

Hearing this Tittcontoo sprang up angrily and cried out:

"You are cowards--every man of you! How dare you be alive when your chieftain is dead? Follow me, and do not fear, for I will defeat these strangers

and drive them from our island."

"You! What can you do--you who are a mere boy?" asked the men, wonderingly.

"I have slain the tiger," replied Titticontoo, pointing proudly to the body of the beast.

They were amazed at this masterful feat, and when they looked upon the boy they noticed that his left eye flashed in a cruel and ferocious manner that was terrible to see. So they consented to return to the fight with the boy as their leader, and in spite of his mother's wails and protests Titticontoo seized his spear, pulled it from the tiger's heart, and with the blood still dripping from the weapon rushed away to lead his men.

They met the enemy not far from the village, and so bravely and desperately did the boy fight that his black men were encouraged and fought better by his side than they had ever fought before. Presently the strangers who had invaded the island became afraid and started to flee, for they could not bear the awful gleam of the tiger's eye when it was turned upon them.

Titticontoo pursued his foe, killing many with his spear and more with his bow and arrows. And when the strangers reached their boats they hastily tumbled into them and rowed away home; nor did they ever dare to invade Pocofo again.

Titticontoo returned with his victorious warriors to the village, where there was great rejoicing. Everyone declared he was the greatest chieftain and the fiercest fighter they had ever known; although he was but a boy.

Yet Titticontoo was strangely silent and ill at ease. He retired from the feasting and merrymaking to his mother's hut, where a great struggle took place in his heart.

Being by nature kind and gentle the boy was alarmed to find himself so cruel and bloodthirsty as he had been in the recent fight. He had begun to hate even his own people, and when his mother entered the hut to speak with him he drove her out in a fit of unreasonable anger.

"I know I am growing wicked and doing unmanly and unjust things," said he to himself; "and I believe it is all because of the tiger's eye which is in my head. I am becoming as fierce as the tiger was, and unless I pluck out this dreadful eye I shall soon be unable to resist its wicked influence. Then my life will be ruined and my people and my friends come to hate me."

Titticontoo realized it would hurt dreadfully to pluck out the eye. He remembered the burning pain he had felt when his own eye was torn out. But after a brief struggle his gentle heart and true manly courage finally triumphed. He suddenly clutched the eye with his fingers, pulled it out and cast it upon the floor. Then he bore the pain courageously and bathed his

wound in clear water and bound it up.

I am inclined to think this noble act proved what a great chieftain Titticontoo really was. His good heart saved him from a dreadful fate, for as soon as the tiger's eye was cast away he regained his finer nature and all his old gentleness.

The boy was ill and in pain for several days. Then he slowly recovered and his wound healed. "Titticontoo, the One-Eyed" he was always called after that: but every person on that island grew to love and respect him. He is now known as the greatest chieftain of his race.

Oh; I must tell you what became of the tiger's eye. For many days, while Titticontoo was ill, the eye lay upon the floor of the hut, and no one dared to touch it. For it glared as fiercely now as ever, since the spirit of old Nog the Magic-Maker was still alive within it. And what do you suppose Nog thought all this time? He knew he had his revenge for being obliged to transform himself into an eye, yet perhaps he wondered anxiously what was to be his future fate.

After a time the boy came and looked at the eye, and its cruel expression made him shudder. He was glad the evil thing was lying there upon the floor instead of being in his own head; but it seemed alive, and he did not know what to do with it.

That night he cast it into the fire; but when the embers had burned away there lay the eye among the ashes, as bright and watchful as ever. Then Titticontoo tried to stamp upon it, but it slipped from underneath his heel and remained uninjured.

The boy knew it would never do to leave the dreadful eye in his hut, where it would glare upon him constantly and watch with its intent gaze every movement he made. So he tied the thing to an arrow and shot the arrow from his bow far into the air, in the direction of the jungle. For it was a tiger's eye, and the jungle was the home of tigers.

The arrow sailed far over the tangled trees and then descended. It struck a dappled deer, glancing past its cheek and putting out the poor creature's left eye. The thing which Titticontoo had tied to the arrow became loosened and rolled upon the ground; but as the deer stood trembling with terror and pain the tiger's eye suddenly popped into the place of the one which had been dislodged, and so the spirit of Nog the Magic-Maker found a new resting place.

It is said the deer is the most timid and harmless of animals, but this creature now seemed inspired by a new and evil nature. It dashed away through the jungle, fighting every beast it met and transfixing its victims upon its sharp horns with wicked glee. And all the while the tiger's eye

glared viciously and thrilled the hearts of all who looked upon it with fear and dismay.

Finally the demon deer, panting and exhausted by the desperate war it had waged upon its fellow creatures, reached a pool of water and bent its head to drink.

Aha! That was just what old Nog the Magic-Maker had been looking for. Only one charm would restore him to his natural form: the tiger's eye must first be bathed in fire and then in water. Already Tittcontoo had given it the test of fire, and now, as the deer bent over the pool, the eye which contained the spirit of Nog dropped out of the deer's head and fell into the water.

How wonderful these magic charms are! Here in the shallow pool stood the old Magic-Maker himself, while the startled deer screamed at sight of him and dashed into the forest.

The cry was heard by the father tiger, who stalked out of the thicket to find Nog scrambling from the water and grinning an evil grin of joy at regaining his natural form.

"Oh," said the father tiger, clicking his teeth together. "I believe I owe you a debt for destroying my child. Prepare to die, Magic-Maker!"

The yellow body made a spring, but Nog dodged it and sped away through the jungle, trying to reach the safety of his home. The father tiger followed in pursuit, and an interesting race took place. Fear made the old wizard's feet to fly, and the tiger's leaps were long and swift, for his heart was bursting with rage and sorrow.

Near the edge of the jungle a vine tripped Nog and he fell flat upon his face. An instant later the great body of the tiger fell upon the Magic-Maker--and so the story ends.

It is a fairy tale told me by a black man who once lived on that same island of Pocofo.

They Played a New Hamlet

The Chicago Sunday Times-Herald, 28 April, 1895

"No," said the actor, as he put his feet on the opposite seat, threw his ulster over the head of the harmless old gentleman in front of us, and proceeded to light his corncob pipe, "life with a cross-roads aggregation ain't no snap. You traveling men think you lead hard lives, but as a matter of fact you don't know what trouble is. Why, I've worked for five companies since the 1st of October, and played every part you can think of except a bronze statue, and where am I now? On my way to join an Uncle Tom's Cabin company of the deepest dye! Wouldn't expect it in an artist and a gentleman, I know; but three meals a day are indispensable to my health and happiness, and I must do what I can till Henderson offers me a comedy part in his new extravaganza.

"Comedian? Not on your birthday; I'm a tragedian by instinct and education; but it so happened that I always have to play the comedy role wherever I go--fate, I suppose, or what these theosophist Indiamaniacs call Karma. I never remember playing a part to my liking, but once, and that was under adverse circumstances, I did the ghost in 'Hamlet,' and it was this way: I'd joined a party of barnstormers who were playing week stands through the mining towns of Pennsylvania. We sported a brass band at one time, but they had skipped out and left us with nothing but a bass drum, that was of little use as an attraction; still we lugged it around with us. Well, one week we were at a coal town way up on the hills above the Two Lick, where the natives were as green as grass. The first night's performance was a great success, but at its close a committee of miners waited on us with a request that we play 'Hamlet' the next night. Our manager replied that 'Hamlet' was not a part of our repertory, but that we'd give 'em a much better show. The miners were evidently disappointed, and the leader said:

"'See here, boss, we've got to have this here Hamlet show or the folks 'll git mad. None of us has ever seen it, but there was a digger here last year as could talk of nothin' else but Hamlet, as was the greatest show ever played an' had a ghost to it. Now, you say you're actors, but can't play Hamlet; we've talked with the boys, and that's the play they all want. You give us that an' we'll pack the house for you.'

"The manager looked puzzled and undecided, and another miner noticed it and exclaimed:

"See here, cap'n, if you can't give us Hamlet why leave that out, but give us the ghost, anyway.

“The manager put on his sweetest smile.

“‘My friends,’ he said, ‘you shall have the ghost and Hamlet, too.’

“‘Tomorrow night?’

“‘Tomorrow night.’

“The delegation thanked us earnestly and withdrew, while the members of the company turned upon their betrayer in anger and amazement.

“‘Who knows anything about Hamlet?’ I asked.

“Who’s got a copy of the play?” inquired the heavy man.

“‘Where’s the costumes coming from?’ screamed the leading lady.

“But the manager silenced us all.

“‘Look here,’ he said: ‘if they are bound to have Hamlet they shall have him. It’ll fill the house. I never saw Hamlet myself, but I know a few quotations from it, and the most they want is the ghost, anyhow. We’ll go on and do anything we like--fake the thing through--and when it gets dull we’ll ring in the ghost for excitement.’

“That settled it, but I had my own misgivings when I looked at the stage. We were playing in a schoolhouse, and, as there was no stage, we had been obliged to build one from some lumber a miner had brought to add a wing to his house. He wouldn’t let us cut the boards or nail them, so we laid them across some trusses, meeting the ends in the middle, and during the performance we had to exercise great care when we stepped or the end of a plank would fly up and give us an exit not down in the play.

“When the evening came there was a very nervous lot of actors behind the impoverished curtain, and even the manager lost a part of his assurance and would have backed out if he dared. But the miners were packed in the house like sardines in a box, and there wasn’t standing room for a fly, so we knew it would not be safe to change the bill on them.

“That performance of ‘Hamlet’ was the rankest parody of a play ever presented to a suffering public. The miners looked on critically and tried to make out what it was all about. The manager, who was chief actor as well, stayed on the stage most of the time himself, getting off time honored gags and trying to put a little go into his embarrassed and indignant company. I was to play the ghost, but not having seen ‘Hamlet’ at that time and having no idea how to dress the part I had covered myself with a sheet and swung the brass drum in front of me. As I’m rather short, my eyes just ranged across the top of the instrument. My cue was to be ‘Who art thou?’ but I was busily engaged in watching the antics of the company.

“They had been a little reckless in their movements and some of the boards near the center of the stage had slipped back, leaving a hole about two feet across. Owing to the drum I never saw this hole. I stood waiting for my

cue in the wings, but I was thinking intently of something else when I became conscious that the manager was standing at the other side of the stage glaring angrily at me an shouting ‘Who art thou?’ at the top of his voice.

“Instantly I stepped out, gave the drum a solemn beat at each stride and exclaimed ‘I am thy father’s ghost!” At the same time I unconsciously stepped into the gaping hole in the stage and disappeared like a shot; but the drum remained on top while I was struggling in the darkness to gain a footing and the crowd was shouting in intense delight at this magnificent denouement. The manager rang down the curtain and act first was concluded. They drew me out all covered with bumps and bruises, and while the company roared with laughter and the manager thanked me with tears in his eyes for saving the piece, I tried to collect my wits and discover what had happened.

“But this wasn’t the worst of it. Those cussed miners thought the accident was part of the piece, and during the next act shouted so energetically for the ghost that I was forced to go on and repeat the whole business. The third act was the same way, and when it was over my legs and arms were skinned, one eye was swelled shut, two of my front teeth were missing and every inch of my anatomy was sore. The crowd waited outside to escort me to the boarding house, where they gave me three rousing cheers. ‘Tell you what,’ said one of them to me the next day, as I sat propped up in bed, ‘that air Hamlet is a great show. We sorter wondered why you didn’t want to play it for us, but we understand now, and are grateful to you for givin’ in. If ever your troupe comes here again, an’ you give us Hamlet an’ the ghost, you can have every dollar the town holds!’

“And that,” concluded the actor, with a sigh, as he picked his grip out of the rack and put on his ulster, “is the only time I remember playing a tragic part, and yet my soul yearns for tragedy. Good-by, old man, I get out here. To-night, if you’ll stop off, you’ll see me once more in the grasp of relentless fate, and playing the fascinating part of Marks, the lawyer--for which sin may heaven forgive me!”

Yesterday at the Exposition

YESTERDAY was a busy day at the exposition. The pneumatic cars were discharged from the Lake Front Station at intervals of one minute the entire day, and every carriage was packed. One car, indeed, became inverted, but so rapid was the transit that the passengers were unaware of the fact until they arrived at the terminus at Kenosha Park, when the sudden stopping of the car caused them all to drop upon their heads on the cushioned ceiling, but fortunately no one was injured.

The air ships also carried large crowds to the grounds, and the Chicago Sealed Projectile Company fired projectiles regularly every five minutes, landing each time 1,600 passengers in the rubber receivers at Kenosha without accident. The invention is a great success, and the company is now arranging to fire projectiles regularly to Boston, where there are still enough inhabitants to make the enterprise remunerative. Besides these models of transit, many came from afar in their own motorcycles, while the thousands of motorcycles belonging in Chicago were utilized for the same purpose.

There were many foreign notables at the exposition, including the President of the German Republic, the Governors of Turkey and Armenia, M. Pagliosky of the Russian senate and the President of the Republic of Ireland. It is expected that the President of England will attend Saturday, if she can borrow an air ship from the Republic of Scotland to carry her over. Everyone is disposed to assist poor England since she became so impoverished, and we hope our citizens will endeavor to treat her representative with at least a show of respect while she is our guest.

There are many genuine novelties at Chicago's great fair. The new chemical fertilizer "Akasa" was exhibited to admiring crowds, and through its use wheat was grown from the seed in fifteen minutes, automatically thrashed, ground and baked in ten minutes longer, and a superb article of bread distributed to the crowd that had watched the seed planted a half hour before. The exhibit of smokeless tobacco attracted much attention, as did also the jagless whiskey, which has recently become so popular.

The new bicycle, which contains the motor in the half-inch tubing that forms the handle bar, was again proved a startling success. It is understood that one has been purchased by Mrs. Strident, the director general of the exposition, for her own use.

The popularity of thought-transference was evidenced by the large number of people who sought the solitude rooms at the government building to receive or dispatch thoughts to friends at home, and it is probable that very soon the telegraph will cease to be used save by the most stupid or material

people.

The exhibit of monster gems is very beautiful. These were all discovered by the use of Rontgen's light, which photographed them as they lay embedded in the bowels of the earth and so enabled the discoverers to dig them out.

The Midway is still attracting many visitors. The band of educated talking orangutangs from Africa divides popular attention with the native of New York, who is puffed up with pride at being the last of that strange race of creatures, who were swamped many years ago by the accumulation of consolidated conceit that overwhelmed the little island of Manhattan.

At the beauty and costume exhibit are a bevy of ladies wearing skirts and corsets, a mode of dress that was fashionable for a long period in the world's history. Many spectators can scarcely believe that so cramped and unlovely a costume was ever universally adopted by women, as the symmetry of the form is not only disguised thereby, but the discomfort to the wearer must have been great. Still there are authentic records to prove that skirts and corsets were once the accepted mode of dress.

The kinetoscope theaters were well filled, the greatest novelty being a reproduction at the Alhambra of a play presented by an actress named Bernhardt away back in 1896. The intonation of her voice came clearly from the perfected graphophone hidden in the flies, while the figures thrown by the reflecting kinetoscope were lifelike, and proved by their grace of motion that this actress was one of no mean ability.

The illumination in the evening was beautiful, and the sky was aglow with the gorgeous electrical designs displayed from the aerial island suspended over the exposition grounds. These, with the flashing lights of the passenger projectiles and the illuminations from the throng of air ships, made up a delightful scene, while the soft strains of music from the monster phonograph anchored three miles out in Lake Michigan fell sweetly and soothingly upon the ear.

To-day's edition of THE TIMES-HERALD contains many beautiful day and night scenes at the exposition, photographed in their natural colors.

L. FRANK BAUM.

120 Flournoy Street, Chicago.

[Third Prize, Ofler No.12, Chicago's International Exposition, A.D. 2090.]

How the Scroggs Won the Reward

Filling the space between two large building blocks was a little, one-storied office. It was flush with the sidewalk, and upon the large window was painted, in red letters,

MR. DICK ROGERS,
CITY BILL POSTER.

"Mr. Dick Rogers" was himself seated behind the window, a big cigar in his mouth, his feet resting upon the confused mass of papers which littered his desk, and his eyes fixed intently upon his morning newspaper.

From amid the stream of passing vehicles a handsome carriage drew up before the door. Mr. Rogers looked over the top of his paper and watched a gentleman step out upon the sidewalk, followed by a servant bearing in his arms a huge package. This the servant placed upon the table, and returned to the carriage.

"I have come once more to employ your services, you see, Mr. Rogers," said the caller, in a quiet, dignified voice.

"Just so," responded the bill-poster, with a nod. "So another year is up, eh? Mercy me! Mow time flies. I'm getting to gauge time by your visits, Mr. Lawrence; you're as reg'lar as clock-work. Let me see - this is the sixth year, ain't it?"

"Yes, this is the sixth year. How many times more I shall be obliged to come to you only God knows. I think I should already have abandoned the attempt were it not for my poor wife's sake."

His voice trembled a little and he turned a rather appealing and deprecatory glance upon the unmoved face of Mr. Rogers.

"Never say die, sir," remarked the bill-poster, cheerfully, "I s'pose you'd like 'em out right away?"

"If you please."

"Got a boy at liberty right now." He walked to a rear door, opened it partly and shouted:

"Scroggs!"

"Yep!" answered a clear voice.

"Bag, bucket, an' brush!" roared Mr. Rogers.

"Right ye are!" came the reply, seemingly from a distant apartment.

Mr. Rogers closed the door and returned to his chair.

"Scroggs'll do the job beautiful," he remarked.

"Are you sure he's reliable?" asked Mr. Lawrence, anxiously; "I am almost afraid to trust this to a mere boy."

“That’s Scroggs’s strong point - He’s reliable. Hain’t been with me quite a year, but I’d trust him anywheres. Never neglects a likely place, an’ never comes back ‘til the last sheet is posted. That kid’ll make a great man one o’ these days. I shall always give him your job after this, for I know you’ll like his work.”

Mr. Lawrence sighed at this intimation of the fruitlessness of his efforts, and the two men sat silently until the door was burst open and a boy of about ten years entered. He wore a bill-poster’s white jacket and trousers, very much spotted and soiled; a small cap was set far back upon his curly head, and in his hand he bore a canvas bag and a flat paste-bucket with a brush sticking out of the side.

“Here y’ are, Dick,” he announced.

“Promp as a biscuit, ain’t he?” asked Mr. Rogers, casting an admiring look at his small assistant. “Now, Scroggs, this gentleman is very particular about his work. They’re quarter-sheets an’ easy handled, an’ they’re to go in every likely spot you can find.”

“Specials, eh?” said Scroggs, as he stooped over the package, cut the cord and began filling his canvas bag with the sheets.

“Very special, my boy,” said Mr. Lawrence, earnestly. “You’ll not neglect the work; will you?”

Scroggs straightened up and regarded him with a look of pained surprise.

“D’ye know what they calls me, sir? Why, it’s ‘Scroggs, the Reliable!’ I’m proud o’ that. When I turns up my toes, sir, I’m a goin’ to have this cut on my tombstone: ‘Here lies Scroggs, who never missed a stick!’ An’ I won’t neglec’ your work, ‘cause why?’ Cause it would spoil the motter on the tombstone. Then air bills’ll go up full count an’ all right.”

He slung the bag over his shoulder and the paste-pot upon his back. Then he bobbed his head at the two gentlemen and passed out the door.

“A strange boy,” said Mr. Lawrence, musingly; “and very young for such work. Are not those bills and the paste too heavy for him?”

“Bless ye, no!” replied Mr. Rogers. “Scroggs likes pastin’. He stops so often, you see, he don’t mind the weight. It were a lucky day for me when old Scroggs, the blind man, died, an’ I got that boy. I’d noticed him leadin’ that old man around as keerful as a kitten, an’ I says to myself, a kid as’ll take that pains with his old dad has good stuff in him — an’ I were right. lie’s sharper ‘n chain lightnin’, too.

Mr. Lawrence settled his bill and re-entered his carriage. The bill-poster relighted his cigar and watched the equipage as it rolled away.

“That duck’s on a regular wild-goose chase,” he reflected, “but that’s no business o’ mine. I expect he’ll be a regular customer for years to come.”

Meanwhile Scroggs pursued his way up one street and down another, leaving a trail of bills wherever he went. They were odd-looking bills, he noticed, with great black letters at the top and considerable descriptive matter at the bottom. Scroggs could not read; he merely knew when the letters were right side up, but that was quite enough for his purpose. He was quick to sec a conspicuous position where a bill would be noticed by the general public, and he never let a good space escape him. Here was one in especial - the broad front of a deserted shop, where the remains of various old bills still fluttered. Scroggs pasted three bills in a row upon the front, and then sat down to rest a minute and admire his work.

"They're all exactly straight," he murmured, complacently, "an' jest the right distance apart."

Two men, passing by, stopped and read the bills curiously. Then a woman paused to read, and another man, and still another. Several boys joined the group and soon there was quite a little crowd inspecting the posters.

Scroggs smiled. It pleased him to think his work was so effective.

"Five thousand dollars!" remarked a fat man to no one in particular; "that's a pretty stiff reward."

There was no reply, and he passed on, his place being quickly filled by another. For the first time Scroggs began to wonder what the bills were about. Usually he was indifferent to the purport of his advertisements, but the remark of the fat man led him to suspect these bills were more important than usual. And the gentleman had told him they were special - very special.

The group slowly melted away; only the boys remained slowly spelling out the printed words. Scroggs looked at the boys critically, and decided he might venture a question.

"What does it say?" he asked.

"Can't yer read?" demanded the biggest boy.

Scroggs shook his head.

"Well, then, listen," said the boy patronizingly, "an' I'll read it out for yer."

He followed the lines with his finger and read aloud, slowly, and with some difficulty, as follows:

$5000 REWARD
ENTICED OR STRAYED

From his home, No. 3018 Wellington avenue, on June 2nd, 1890, Kenneth Keith Lawrence, familiarly called "Trotty." Age, four years and two months. Dark brown hair and eyes; large for his age, able to tell his name, but perhaps not his residence. Wore at the time of his disappearance a white dress with

blue sash, blue flannel jacket and straw sailor hat. Was last seen upon the sidewalk in front of said residence listening to the music of a hand-organ played by an old Italian. The above reward will be paid for information leading to the recovery of said Kenneth Keith Lawrence, and all prosecutions will be waived.

JOHN KEITH LAWRENCE
2013 Wellington Avenue.
Sept. 12, 1896.

"There, ye have it," continued the reader, "an' I wish I was the kid. Folks as can pay five thousand dollars reward must have money to burn, an' no mistake."

Scroggs made no reply; with hands thrust deep into his pockets he was staring blankly at the bills before him. The boys passed on, but still he stood thoughtfully regarding the printed announcement, and paying no heed, for once, to the fact that half his bills remained unposted.

Another little crowd collected about him; Scroggs retreated across the sidewalk, and sitting down upon his paste-pot rested his head upon his hands and continued to think deeply.

"Another Charlie Ross case," a man was saying in front of him.

Scroggs suddenly arose and swung his paste-pot over his back.

"I'll do it," he muttered, "no matter what comes of it. Why, it's the rummest go I ever heard tell of, an' I s'pose I might as well win that five thousan' dollars as anyone!"

Down the street he marched, and before he had gone a block his face had lost its grave expression and he was again whistling merrily. It was a long walk to Wellington avenue; miles and miles it seemed to Scroggs, and after he had reached the avenue he found that he was still a long distance from No. 2013, and the farther he walked the more imposing and grand were the residences that lined the street. Finally he paused before a large, handsome building, set well back in the midst of a carefully trimmed lawn, and stared thoughtfully over the iron gate. The boy tried hard to decipher the bright brass figures upon the gate, but finally he nodded his head and muttered:

"This is the place, all right; I'm sure o' that."

Carelessly shifting his bill-bag to the other shoulder he opened the gate, walked resolutely up the broad walk to the front door, and rang the bell.

The tall servant in severe black who opened the door looked at the miniature bill-poster in amazement.

"Mr. Lawrence in?" demanded Scroggs, meeting the man's gaze smilingly.

“Yes, he’s in, but I don’t think you can see him.”

“Oh, yes, I can,” returned the boy. “You jest tell him I’m Scroggs, an’ I’ve come to see him ‘bout that kid.”

“What kid?”

“The kid as was lost.”

“Come in,” said the servant, with alacrity: that was the message he did not dare to ignore.

Scroggs entered and sat down in the big hall while the servant departed to speak to his master. The boy eyed the grand furniture with a perplexed air, and then, impelled by some recollection of what was fitting, removed his cap and thrust it into the pocket of his jacket. As he did so, Mr. Lawrence entered and hurriedly approached him.

“You are the bill-poster’s boy,” he said, after a start of recognition; “I - I thought it was someone else. What is it, my lad — is anything wrong about the bills?”

“Not as I knows of,” replied Scroggs, looking up earnestly into Mr. Lawrence’s face; “I thought I’d come an’ tell you ‘bout the kid — him as was lost, you know.”

Mr. Lawrence sank back into a chair with a white face.

“What do you know of him?” he asked in a quick, agitated voice.

“I know everything,” responded Scroggs, with a grin; “I’m the kid!”

“You!” cried the man, springing to his feet; “Impossible! What do you mean, boy?”

“Now, don’t you get excited,” said Scroggs, coolly; “Jest set down agin an’ listen, an’ I’ll tell you all about it. You see I couldn’t read the bill myself, not knowin’ how, but I got another boy to read it, an’ the minit he said ‘Trotty’ I knew it was me. ‘Cause why? Trotty’s my name, sir. An’ I allus knew I belonged to somebody, ‘cause I never belonged to old Scroggs, but for the life o’ me I couldn’t remember who it was.”

By this time Mr. Lawrence was trembling violently, and striving to penetrate the boy’s dirt-begrimed face in search of familiar features; and now, suddenly, the truth came to him in a mighty wave that swept away all doubt.

“Come with me,” he cried; and taking the child’s hand led him up to his own private room.

“I must be sure I am right before I speak to my wife,” he thought; “disappointment might kill her.”

He carefully washed the grime from Scrogg’s countenance, brushed back his curly hair, and then, holding the rosy face firmly between his two hands he gazed upon it earnestly, studying every line of the boy’s expressive

features. There was a world of yearning and tenderness in the father's face, and suddenly he bent down and kissed Scroggs softly upon his forehead.

"Tell me all about it," he said gently. Scroggs appeared both bewildered and embarrassed at the warmth of his reception, and was at first at a loss how to begin; but after a moment's thought he said: T'were all on account o' that name o' Trotty. When I lived in this house," he continued, his eyes roving familiarly around the room, "you used to give me a cane to ride on - a cane with a bird's head on the end."

"Yes, an eagle's head!" interrupted Mr. Lawrence eagerly.

"Well, I rode that cane all over the house, upstairs an' down, an' so you an' the lady - was that my mamma? - you an' she used to call me Trotty. O' course, you know, I can't 'member everything, for I must' a' been a pretty small kid then; but when I heard that bill read it seemed to bring back lots of things as I'd forgot all about. I 'member one day a man comin"round with a music organ, an' I follered him, ridin' on my cane an' not noticin' where I was goin'. By 'n' by I got tired, an' it was getting' dark, an' I cried for my mamma. An' then the grinder give me a ride on his organ, an' took me home with him.

"Next day he promised to take me home, but he didn't do it. He took off my dress an' put some pants on me, which he said was more proper for a man; an' I thought so too. An' then we went way out into the country an' walked a good many days, an' he allus said he was tryin' to find my home. One day we come to a town where there was a blind man named Scroggs, an' the grinder sold the cane with the bird's head to the blind man. I cried when he took the cane away, an' after we had gone up the road a ways I turned an' run back to the town. I 'xpected the grinder would chase me, but he didn't, an' when I got back to the town I found the blind man a walkin' with my cane. He wouldn't give it up, but he said if I would come with him an' lead him back to the city he'd find my folks for me again. So I went with him, an' he was pretty good to me, was Scroggs. An' he said I got more pennies for him than he ever got before, an' that I'd better stay with him an' see the world.

"Well, after a while we come back to the city, an' we've lived here ever since. I s'pose if Scroggs hadn't been blind, he'd 'a' read your bills an' give me up, 'cause he liked money pretty well; but neither o' us knew as anybody was huntin' for me. 'Bout a year ago Scroggs died, an' I went to work for Dick Rogers, postin' bills. Ev'rvbody called me Scroggs an' thought I belonged to the blind man, but I alius 'membered as my name was Trotty, an' I've got the cane, sir, over to Dick Rogers's place."

Mr. Lawrence listened attentively to this story, which Trotty told very

simply and earnestly. When it was ended he took the boy tenderly in his arms.

“Thank God, my darling,” he said, “that we have found you at last!”

A few minutes later, when Trotty had shyly released himself from the embrace of his sobbing but delighted mother, who had recognized her boy at the first glance, he remarked, casually:

“I s’pose there’s no use postin’ the rest o’ them bills?”

“No,” said his father, with a smile, “the bills have fulfilled their mission.”

“But the five thousand dollars reward?” asked the boy, anxiously “Why, really, Trotty,” replied the happy father, as he bent down and kissed the bright face, “I believe you’ve earned that reward yourself.”

The Loveridge Burglary

There was no doubt about it; the house had been robbed. Mr. Loveridge knew it the moment he got out of bed and saw a vacancy on his white shirt-front where a handsome solitaire diamond had sparkled when he closed his eyes in sleep.

Mr. Loveridge was not readily excited. He calmly searched his vest pocket and discovered that his valuable time-piece was also missing. From his trousers had been abstracted a well-filled pocketbook.

Mr. Loveridge sighed. Then he reached over and awakened his wife.

"Mollie," he said, "the house has been robbed."

Mrs. Loveridge rolled over, dug her dimpled fists into her eves and murmured, sleepily: "What did you say, Charlie?"

"We have been robbed."

Mrs. Loveridge opened wide her eyes and stared at him in astonishment.

"The house has been entered by burglars," continued her husband.

"Burglars! Good gracious!" cried the little woman, springing from the bed in one bound. The word "burglar" was a terrible one to her, as it is, indeed, to every well-constituted woman. "Robbery" docs not sound nearly so awe-inspiring.

"Look for your jewels, Mollie," said her husband, pleased at having aroused her at last.

Mrs. Loveridge rushed to her dressing-table, stooped over it, and held up her hands with a little scream.

"They're gone!"

"So I supposed," returned Charlie, complacently, "they've probably stripped us of everything they could lay hands on."

Mrs. Loveridge screamed again.

"Oh, Charlie! My sealskin!" She ran to a closet, gave a little ejaculation of relief, and returned with a smiling face.

"They didn't find it, dear."

"But your jewels were much more valuable."

"In know, but I've only had the cape a week. It would have broken my heart had they taken it."

"H-m!" growled her husband; "suppose you dress yourself. We'll go downstairs and see if they have stolen the silver."

Mrs. Loveridge hastily complied, and together they descended to the dining-room. The silver was intact, nor could they find that anything below stairs had been disturbed.

But as they entered the sitting-room Mollie's sharp eyes made a

discovery, and she ran to the window with a cry of surprise.

A round hole had been cut in the plate glass, large enough for a man to have reached through and unfastened the sash. The bit of circular glass, with a piece of putty adhering to its centre, was lying on the sitting-room table. The sash was fastened, as if the intruder, having retired with his booty, had been thoughtful enough to close and secure the window behind him.

"He was a clever fellow," said Mr. Loveridge, thoughtfully; "I wonder why he didn't take the silver; but perhaps jewelry is easier to dispose of. I suppose we must investigate this matter?"

"Of course," returned his wife. "But oh, Charlie! isn't it lucky we have a detective in the family?"

"Do you think Tom could discover the thief?"

"I know he could, and we'll put the case in his hands at once. You know the Pinkertons have tried to get him several times, but he prefers to work on his own account. I suppose Tom is the best detective in America."

"Because he's your cousin."

"Nonsense! Because he can find out anything; that's the reason. He isn't one of those common, blundering fellows."

"Well, I'll see him when I get downtown, and put the case in his hands."

"Do, dear," replied Mrs. Loveridge. Then, clapping her hands, she added, "Won't it be jolly when Torn brings the villain to justice and restores all our jewelry!"

"If the fellow hasn't pawned it," remarked her husband; "I'd like to get my watch back again; it was one of your presents to me, you know."

Mrs. Loveridge threw up the window-sash and leaned out.

"How funny!" she exclaimed, after a moment; "see here, Charlie."

Mr. Loveridge leaned over the sill and saw a long, narrow indentation in the damp earth beneath the window, running from the path a few yards away directly to the spot below them, where it had made a deep impression. From beneath the window the trail wandered irregularly back to the path again, where it was lost in the gravel.

"What does it mean?" asked Mr. Loveridge.

"It's a bicycle track," replied Mollie; "it means that we have been robbed by a man on a bicycle!"

"But there are no tracks where he got off."

"He didn't get off, Charlie — that is, upon the ground — he ran the machine up to the window, leaned it against the wall, and stood upon the seat while he broke open the window."

"Humph!" said her husband, "if he's as clever a rascal as that, Tom will have a job catching him."

“Oh, Tom will be a match for him, never fear,” returned the lady, with full confidence in her cousin’s powers; “but let us have breakfast at once, so you can get downtown and let Tom know we have work for him.”

At ten o’clock Mr. Loveridge walked into his office, hung up his coat and glanced over the mail. Then he went to the telephone and rung up Mr. Tom I Harkins, detective.

Mr. Harkins was out. “He usually is out when any one wants him,” growled Charlie.

Mr. Loveridge felt that he had important news to communicate to some one. A man is not burglarized every day. He walked across the hall and rapped at the door of his old friend and crony Jenkin Foreman. “Come in!” cried a hearty voice, and Mr. Loveridge entered to find his friend in company with no less a personage than Mr. Tom Harkins.

He gave a sigh of satisfaction.

“Jinks,” he said — Jinks was the familiar name of Mr. Jenkin Foreman — ”I have been robbed.”

Jinks was sitting in his office chair, with a big cigar in his mouth and his feet upon the table. He removed the cigar, raised his eyebrows slightly and inquired, calmly, “How?”

Mr. Loveridge was disappointed. Perhaps he had not put the case forcibly enough.

“My house was ransacked by burglars last night, and all of my own and my wife’s jewelry stolen, as well as a large sum of money.”

Jinks cast a curious glance at Tom Harkins and smoked more furiously than ever.

“Any traces of the robbers?”

“None at all; scarcely any, that is.”

Here Mr. Loveridge lit a cigar of his own, put his feet on the table beside the other two pair that were occupying it, and proceeded to relate circumstantially the occurrences of the morning.

“And now,” he said, turning to Mr. Harkins, “I want to put the case in your hands. Mollie is confident you can find the scoundrel and restore our lost property. You’d better go up to the house and examine that bicycle track and see if you can find a clue.”

“I will,” said the famous detective, with a yawn; “Mollie can give me the pointers, I suppose?”

“Certainly. And you’d better stay to lunch and keep the poor girl company, if you think you can spare the time.”

Mr. Harkins slowly drew on his gloves.

“I shall use my best efforts of course, Loveridge; but you must remember

that no man is infallible. And besides, a burglar who rides a bicycle is a new 'genus homo,' and is likely to prove slippery."

"I know, I know," returned Charlie; "but you've worked out worse cases than this, and I believe you'll bag the scoundrel in time."

"I'll try," said Mr. Harkins, and departed upon his errand.

Jinks smoked in silence for a time.

"Charlie," he then exclaimed, "I'm afraid you've made a mistake."

"A mistake?"

"In giving this case to Tom."

"Nonsense! Tom is conceded to be a very clever detective, and he'll take a friendly interest in this affair besides."

Mr. Foreman looked thoughtfully at the toe of his patent-leather shoe. "Loveridge," he remarked, "have you noticed lately that Tom is failing?"

"Failing how?"

"In his mind."

"No."

"I have," said Jinks, with emphasis, "and as a personal friend I advise you to hire another detective; that is, if you want to recover your property."

"Oh, but I couldn't do that," remonstrated Mr. Loveridge; "Mollie would never forgive me, and I'd rather lose the whole thing than show a lack of confidence in a friend."

Jinks groaned.

"Business is business," he murmured.

"So it is, but Tom's head is as right as yours or mine. I believe he'll catch the burglar within a week."

"Tell you what I'll do," said Jinks; "I'll bet you fifty I can find a man who will discover the burglar before Tom does."

"Done!" said Charlie. It was one of his weaknesses not to be able to refuse a bet. Mr. Foreman arose, rung the bell of his 'phone, and called up the City Detective Bureau. He explained that Mr. Loveridge had been burglarized and directed them to send a man to his residence at once to secure evidence against the thief. They promised to do so.

Mr. Loveridge listened with a smile upon his handsome face.

"It's no use, Jinks," he said, as his friend hung up the 'phone, "those blundering fools never discover anything. Your fifty is lost already."

"Wait," said Jinks, "I'll not interfere in any way. If the regular detective doesn't nail your man before Tom does, the fifty is yours. And now let's go out and have a drink."

Tom Harkins was a good deal surprised, as he sat at luncheon with his cousin Mollie, to hear a detective from the city office announced. He saw the

man personally, and was assured that Mr. Loveridge had employed him to work upon the case.

"This is some of Jinks' doing," muttered the young man, as he gravely regarded his rival. He was a seedy-looking chap, and Tom at once estimated him as no better than the average run of city detectives.

"Look around the place," he said to him, condescendingly, "and see what you can discover. The fellow rode up on a bicycle, it is certain, but so far as I can determine left no other tracks behind him."

And then he bid Mollie good day, assuring her of his faithful endeavors to find her jewels in good time, and caught the next car into the city.

The other man looked after him thoughtfully. He was pleased at having met and spoken with the celebrated Detective Harkins. Would he ever be able to acquire so great a reputation himself, he wondered?

Mollie, to whose mercies Tom had commended the man from the city office, stood holding his soiled card rather gingerly in her pretty fingers. She glanced at it now, and asked:

"Would you like to look over the premises, Mr. Briggs?"

"If you please, ma'am," he replied, with deference.

"I suppose Mr. Loveridge wished you to assist Mr. Harkins on the case," she continued, doubtfully.

"He telephoned the office for a man, ma'am, and they sent me," he answered, evasively.

"Mr. Harkins has been very thorough in his investigations," continued Mollie; "he has searched every inch of the carpet and looked all through the grounds, but I don't think he found anything. And he seemed to be disappointed about it."

But Mr. Briggs wished to investigate on his own account, and he went to work very deliberately. He examined the window with its broken pane minutely, and put in his pocket the piece of putty that adhered to the bit of glass left upon the table. Then he went outside and inspected with care the track of the bicycle.

Mollie, who was watching him from the window, saw him kneel upon the damp ground and put his face close to the track. Creeping along on his hands and knees he examined it inch by inch, and finally paused with a low exclamation of surprise.

Mrs. Loveridge, becoming curious, went out and joined him.

"Have you found anything?" she asked.

"A clue, ma'am!"

"What is it?"

He drew a magnifying glass from his pocket and held it over the

indentation made by the wheel. She peered through it a moment and then said, “I don’t see anything.”

“The rear wheel of the bicycle had been punctured,” explained Mr. Briggs, “and was mended by a T-shaped rubber patch.”

“Can you see it?”

“I can see the impression of the patch very easily.”

“Let me look again,” demanded Mollie. “Oh, yes! I can see it quite plainly now. But how do you know it was the rear wheel?”

“Because had it been the forward one the mark of the patch would have been covered by the wheel that followed it.”

“Oh, I see. But is this discovery of any value?”

“Yes, indeed. Find the man who has the T-shaped patch on the rear wheel of his bicycle and you have the burglar.”

Mollie stared at him in surprise.

“There may be a good many T-shaped patches in use,” she suggested.

“Yes; the rubber patch is a common mode of repairing a tire,” he acknowledged; “but this one has its peculiarities. It was not put on neatly. The long arm is bent into a half-circle, and the edge of one of the short arms is cut like a half moon. All of these details are impressed clearly upon the soil, and are reproduced in three separate places.”

He took out his book again and made an accurate drawing of the patch.

“There are a good many hundreds of bicycles in the city,” he said, with a smile; “and many of them doubtless wear patches upon the tires. But a less important clue than this has often proved successful.”

Mrs. Loveridge could not help regarding the man with admiration. But probably Tom could find the burglar without resorting to such small details.

Mr. Briggs went away promising to keep a sharp watch for the T-shaped patch, and that evening Mrs. Loveridge told Charlie that after all the fellow might prove to be a good detective, and perhaps would help Tom discover the thief.

“These detectives are jealous of each other,” replied her husband, “and if Briggs gets the burglar it will be on his own hook. I’m sure I hope he won’t, for if he gets the thief before Tom does I shall lose another fifty.”

When Mr. Loveridge was starting for town the next morning he was surprised to observe that the bicycle tracks had been obliterated during the night, all traces of them being trampled into the earth.

It was two days afterward that Mr. Briggs, while crossing a boulevard, was almost run down by a bicycle. The rider, observing who he was, sprang from his wheel, with a laughing apology.

“Good morning, Mr. Briggs; how goes the Loveridge case?”

“Slowly, Mr. I Harkins,” returned the detective, “but I have hopes, nevertheless.”

“What! Have you a clue?”

“A small one, sir.”

As he spoke, Mr. Briggs looked involuntarily toward Harkins’ bicycle. Then he put his hand on the rear wheel, stooped over and stared at the tire for several moments in silence. When he looked up he found Tom Harkins’ eyes fixed steadily upon him, and the two men remained gazing at each other a full minute.

Suddenly Harkins sprang to the saddle, nodded to his companion, and sped swiftly down the boulevard.

Mr. Briggs drew out his handkerchief, mopped the perspiration from his forehead, and walked away to the office.

That afternoon Mr. Loveridge was seated in his friend Foreman’s office, engaged in disputing with that gentleman concerning the tariff, when Tom Harkins entered with a gloomy air, lit a cigar, and sinking into an arm-chair rested his feet upon the table.

“What’s up, Torn?” asked Jinks, pausing in his argument.

The great detective did not reply.

“Sulky, hey? Well, suit yourself. As I said before, Charlie, nothing but a high tariff will ever — ”

A soft rap sounded upon the door.

“Come in!”

Slowly the door opened and admitted Mr. Briggs. He took off his hat, nodded gravely to those present, and addressed himself timidly to Mr. Harkins.

“Can I see you a moment in private, sir?”

“No!” snapped Tom, “you can see me here.”

“But, sir — ”

“What do you want? Come — out with it!”

“I have a warrant for your arrest!” said Briggs, desperately.

“What for?”

“The Loveridge burglary.”

Charlie jumped to his feet with a cry of amazement, and stared at the detective in horror. But Jinks kept his seat and chuckled softly to himself.

“This is an outrage!” exclaimed Mr. Loveridge; “what do you mean, sir?” he demanded, turning to Briggs.

“Must do my duty, sir,” returned the man, doggedly; “my instructions were to find the criminal. Well, I have found him.”

Mr. Loveridge looked at Tom Harkins. That gentleman sat smoking

furiously and staring at the ceiling, but he said nothing. Jinks was rubbing his hands softly and chuckling in a diabolical fashion that greatly incensed Mr. Loveridge. He turned to Briggs again.

"Do you mean to say you have any evidence against my friend, Mr. Harkins?"

"The best of evidence, sir."

"What is it?"

"A T-shaped patch on his bicycle tire just fits the impression of a similar patch in the tracks left under your window."

Mr. Harkins here spoke for the first time, in a low, collected voice.

"The tracks have been obliterated. You have no proof."

"Pardon me," replied Briggs, "I have ample proof. I made a drawing of the patch in the presence of Mrs. Loveridge herself, and she saw the impression in the tracks. I call use the lady as a witness, if necessary."

"It will scarcely convict, however," said Tom.

"There is other proof," continued Mr. Briggs. "The diamond used to cut the window pane became loosened from its setting in die operation. You afterward searched the house for it. I found it sticking to the putty, and have identified the stone as one belonging to you."

"Good!" cried Jinks. Then he stood up and regarded the company complacently. The equanimity of Mr. Harkins seemed undisturbed; Mr. Loveridge was scowling angrily at the detective; Mr. Briggs appeared uneasy, and a bit frightened.

"Do you give up, Tom?" asked Mr. Foreman, in a tone of raillery.

"Yes," said Tom, with a drawl, "I suppose I must."

"What!" cried Mr. Loveridge, "do you acknowledge the crime?"

Mr. Harkins nodded gravely and blew a great cloud of smoke from his mouth.

"Sit down, Charlie," commanded Jinks; "take this seat, Mr. Briggs," he continued, placing a chair for the surprised detective.

Then he walked over to his safe, unlocked it and taking out a tin box, corded and sealed, he came forward and placed it in Mr. Loveridge's hands.

"There, Charlie, are the jewels," he said, cheerfully, "just as Tom gave them to me the morning after the burglary. I think you will find them all there, and the money as well. By the way, Tom, have you that hundred about you?"

While Loveridge and the detective were endeavoring to comprehend the scene, Mr. Harkins took out his wallet and counted over a bundle of crisp notes, which he handed to Mr. Foreman.

"Can you spare that fifty now?" continued Jinks, turning smilingly to the

bewildered Loveridge.

Charlie paid the bet without a word of protest.

“Now,” said Mr. Foreman, pocketing the money, “I’ll endeavor to explain this little mystery. Tom and I were conversing here one day when I made the statement that no burglar was so clever but that he could be caught. Tom contradicted this. ‘Why,’ said he, ‘I could rob a house, say Loveridge’s, for instance, and not leave the slightest clue behind me.’

‘I’ll bet you a hundred you can’t,’ said I. ‘Done!’ said Tom. ‘I’ll burglarize Loveridge within a week, and if I am not discovered within three months you are to pay me the hundred, and return the plunder to Loveridge with an explanation and a supper at Kinsley’s. If I am caught, I’ll pay the hundred and stand the consequences.’ That was the agreement, wasn’t it, Tom?”

Mr. Harkins nodded.

“But you see,” continued Jinks, “no man is so smooth but there is some one smoother, and Tom is a better thief-catcher than thief. Mr. Briggs has the honor of having detected the great detective himself!”

“And all,” added Tom, dolefully, “because of that confounded T-shaped patch!”

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Loveridge, lighting a fresh cigar complacently, “I invite you all to dine with jinks at Kinsley’s at six o’clock. He seems to be the only one who has come out of this transaction ahead, and I decree that he shall pay the bill. In the meantime I’ll send this jewelry up to Mollie, who will be delighted to recover her property; but I fear her confidence in Tom’s powers will be terribly shaken when she hears the story.”

Tom arose with a bored expression upon his usually calm face.

“I move we have a drink,” he said; “will you join us, Mr. Briggs?”

The Bad Man

It was a legal holiday, and the bank being closed I resolved to pass the after noon in my library at home re-reading Emerson.

Thoughts of the quiet, delightful hours before me had brought me to a happy and contented frame of mind when, soon after luncheon, as I was about to settle myself with my book, Magdalen came to me and said:

"I'm so glad, dear, you are going to be home this afternoon. Sarah is away and I've just remembered an appointment with the dressmaker. So you can keep an eye on the children while I'm gone; it will only be a short time, you know."

"But, my dear," I answered, in a disappointed tone, "I was going to read Emerson, and the children — "

"Oh, they'll be as good as gold," she declared, interrupting my protest; "they really need no looking after at all, but I shall be easier to know you're in the same room with them. They won't interfere with your reading a particle."

"Send them here, then," said I, resignedly; and presently they came — Kitty, Maebelle and Charlieboy — as lovely a trio as ever delighted a proud father's heart. But Emerson —

"Good-bye, dear," cried Magdalen, appearing in hat and jacket, and kissing us all briskly in turn. "The children won't bother you — will you, darlings? — and you can have a lovely, quiet time in their company. It's so seldom you can enjoy them, you know."

"Yes," said I, but doubtfully, "they can play about the library without annoying me at all. And if one of them breaks a leg I'll send for the doctor. So don't worry, dear."

She laughed at the idea of accidents and bustled away, saying she would not be long. The little ones were examining my collection of shells, so I lighted my pipe, leaned back in my lounging chair, and began reading.

Suddenly there was a gasp, a shrill cry of alarm from Kitty, and I sprang to my feet to find Charlieboy choking desperately and quite black in the face. I slapped him on the back, held his head downward by the heels, and use other vigorous measures, with the satisfactory result of seeing him again breathe freely.

"What was it?" I asked, trembling slightly from nervous excitement at the narrowness of the escape.

"He swallowed a shell," said Kitty. "One of those teenty pointed ones."

"Didn't 'wallow it!" exclaimed Charlie, indignantly; "I coughed it up."

I closed the cabinet and locked it. Then I glanced around, and seeing

nothing else that seemed liable to be swallowed, I returned to my book.

Presently I noticed Kitty, my demure little woman, standing by my chair. For a man whose time is almost constantly occupied by business cares I believe myself to be an especially fond and considerate father. But then I have a family of remarkably bright and attractive children.

"Won't you read to us, papa?" asked Kitty, as I looked up.

"You wouldn't care for Emerson," I answered.

"But I've a new fairy book," said she, "that Uncle Harry gave me on my birthday."

"He will probably want to read it to you himself, dear," I replied. Then, as she still lingered, I added: "I'm very much engaged just now, little one."

She went back to the others, and I had a few moments of peace.

Then Maebelle sprang into my lap, her yellow curls sweeping my face and her chubby arm knocking the book from my grasp.

"Oh, papa!" she cried, with enthusiasm, "let's play dames!"

"I don't know any games, chick."

"Kitty knows," answered the elf, clapping her hands; "we'll play 'ring-a-round-a-rosy'."

"Can't you play it without me?" I inquired, somewhat brusquely.

"When you's away we has to," said she. "But it'll be such fun to play wiz a big man. Come on, pop! I dess we won't play 'ring-a-round-a-rosy'. I dess we'll play 'London Bridge'!"

"I guess you'll run away, chick, and not bother papa," I returned, as gently as I could. "I want to be quiet and read my book."

She slid from my lap pouting and stamped her foot. Macbelle really has something of a temper.

"You ain't a bit o' fun," she declared. "I wis' mamma was here. She's fun."

I did not answer. Certainly I was not in a mood to be "fun" at that moment. There was a short period of quiet before some one nudged my elbow. Charlieboy was standing beside me. He stared into my face with his big blue eyes in a rather embarrassing fashion but did not speak.

After awhile I was nudged again. This is annoying when one is reading. I looked down.

"I want to 'moke a pipe," said Charlieboy, in a sweet and subdued voice.

"You are too young, my son."

He eyed my pipe and the curling smoke thoughtfully.

"My mouf's big 'nough," he said.

"Certainly," I answered. "But children never smoke. Only big grown-up men smoke."

He seemed to be considering this clear and positive statement with much earnestness; so I raised my book again.

“I want to’ moke a pipe,” said Charlieboy.

I paid no attention.

“I want to ‘moke a pipe!” more loudly.

“Charlieboy!” said I, sternly, “if you don’t let me alone I’ll spank you. You can’t smoke a pipe!”

The blue eyes never flinched, but regarded me intently.

“I want to ‘moke — ”

“Charlieboy!”

Here Kitty came up and seized his hand.

“Come, Charlieboy,” she said, gently, “we’re going to play doll by the window. Papa isn’t — isn’t comf’table to-day.”

“He’s cross,” declared my son, frankly; but he let Kitty lead him to the window, where with the aid of two mussed and much bedraggled dolls they seemed able to amuse themselves perfectly.

Somehow the various interruptions had rendered me nervous and destroyed my desire to read. I leaned back in my chair and dreamily regarded the three blessed infants their mother had declared would cause me “no trouble at all.”

I think I must have sunk into a doze when my attention was aroused by hearing Kitty say:

“Well, then, I’ll tell you a story.”

Charlieboy clapped his hands and climbed to the arm of the little woman’s chair, while Maebelle curled up on the window seat and prepared to listen earnestly.

“Once on a time,” began Kitty, “there was a Bad Man.”

“Ah-h-h!” exclaimed Charlieboy, gleefully, and I felt his big eyes were turned my way.

“He didn’t like to do anything that anybody wanted him to,” continued Kitty, “but he liked to sit in a big chair and read a book that wouldn’t int’rest anybody else.”

“An”moke a pipe!” added Charlieboy.

“Yes. When anyone asked him to join in a game, so he wouldn’t get dull and stupid, he told ‘em to run away.”

“An’ not bother him!” said Maebelle, sitting up and shaking her curls indignantly.

“Yes. He didn’t want to be happy. He just wanted to he bad, an’ an’ — ”

“An”moke a pipe,” said Charlieboy, “Well,” resumed Kitty’, “this Bad Man by-an’-by got to be so dis’greeable that folks didn’t want him ‘round.

So what do you s'pose they did?"

"Tanked him!" said Charlieboy.

"Took away his horrid book," said Maebelle.

"No; they put him in a big cage, where he could stay all by himself, an' not be bothered."

"An' where there was no little girl to love him," said Maebelle.

"An' they 'mashed his nasty pipe!" added Charlieboy, with intense delight.

"Of course," continued Kitty, demurely, "he couldn't bother anyone else while he was in the cage, an' he had time to think how bad he was to his children, which their own mother said was as good as gold an' perfec' treasures."

"Serve him right!" cried Maebelle, emphatically.

"An' there he stayed 'til — 'til he was sorry," concluded the story teller.

I wondered, as I sat there listening, if I ought not to get up and redeem myself by playing and romping with those youngsters to their hearts' content. But, I reflected, they were a mischievous lot, and their precious story was not only unfilial but of a blackmailing character. I resolved, therefore, not to be influenced by their slanderous insinuations.

"Ah-h-h!" gasped Charlieboy, in a hushed but tragic tone.

His sisters looked at him inquiringly.

"Let's build the cage," he whispered.

I closed my eyes lest the conspirators should learn I had overheard them, and soon I detected a soft, scraping sound as a chair was slowly pushed over the floor toward the place where I sat. There were subdued giggles and an occasional bang as the furniture struck together, but I gave no evidence of being awake.

Finally I heard Maebelle whisper, hoarsely:

"He's caged! The Bad Man can't get out 'til he's sorry."

Then I unclosed my lids just far enough to peek between them, and found myself surrounded by a circle of chairs, stools and settees — fairly hemming me in.

Suddenly I heard a crash, a chorus of horrified exclamations, and I knew my writing-table had gone over and its contents scattered far and wide. Still I did not move a hair's breadth, but sat quietly and reflected that the table had contained my tobacco-jar, several bottles of ink and a student lamp; all of which must make a rather pretty muss on the rug.

The children at last were quiet, and peeping at them again I saw them in a huddled and frightened group by the window. I knew they were being more punished by my inaction than had I scolded them severely; so I maintained

my pretended composure, while they looked at me and each other in dismay.

The ominous silence was broken by Magdalen's fresh, brisk voice, and I gave a sigh of relief as my wife appeared in the doorway.

"What does all this mean, sweetcakes? What game are you playing with papa?" she asked, pleasantly, without seeming to observe the overturned table.

"We're playin' Bad Man," said Maebelle, in her softest voice.

"An' papa's it," yelled Charlieboy.

Their mother actually smiled upon the disreputable rabble, and then she turned to me and inquired, sweetly:

"Have you had a good time, dear?"

"I haven't read a page."

"Were the children good?" she continued, anxiously.

I — glanced around upon the wreck and disorder.

"As good as gold!" said I.

The Diamond Back

The beginning of the story has been lost

...sunny rise and scattering cool rocks attracted me powerfully. I resolved to make it my future home and in a little gully beneath a wide spreading tree I found a shelving rock that suited me exactly.

But soon I discovered that whatever joys might be found here solitude was not one of them. Just across the gully there chanced to live another Diamondback who, judging from his size, was a year or so older than myself. He accosted me the morning after my arrival in a rather surly tone.

"Going to settle here?" he inquired, sticking his head from out a space between two points of rock and glaring at me superciliously.

"I think so," I answered with calmness, returning his look fearlessly.

"Well," he continued, "if you know what's best for yourself you'll not disturb me. I am King here."

"Oh, indeed," said I. "I was not aware of that."

"You know it now," he returned sneeringly, "and safety bids you remember it."

I did not wish to quarrel with him, my nature being gentle and forbearing, so I withdrew beneath my own cool shelf of rock and curled myself up to sleep.

I shortly discovered my neighbor to be both domineering and ill tempered, but by paying little attention to him and keeping out of his way I managed to secure the peace and quiet I so highly prized.

One afternoon, as I lay at rest beneath my shelter, I heard a strange rattle in the gully and looking out beheld the most beautiful creature my eyes have ever seen. She had coiled herself beneath a low spreading bush and rested quietly, her broad, handsome head supported by the topmost ring of her glistening body. She was of my race and her markings were absolutely perfect, shading from rich bronze to bright gold, while her eyes were brilliant enough to shame the stars.

All this I saw with one long, comprehensive look, and I own that a fountain of love for the beautiful stranger at once welled within my heart. Never, even to this day, has that love failed to dominate my life.

Slowly and with diffidence I advanced toward her and was about to greet my love with impassioned speech and caress when a sharp rattle behind me attracted my attention and a voice hissed in my ear:

"Back to your rock, fool! I choose this stranger for my mate, and I am King."

Filled with anger and indignation I swept toward my insolent neighbor

and threw myself upon him. Then ensued a frightful struggle, the details of which have never been clear in my memory. I only know that in the end I struck my curved fangs deep in my enemy's throat and as the poison coursed through his body his coils gradually relaxed and fell away from me. With an exultant thrill I realized I had triumphed.

I turned to the beautiful stranger and saw her eyes flash with pride and admiration.

"It was a good fight," she said in a sweet voice, "and you have nobly won. If you wish it, I will be your mate."

Then began those days which I look back upon as the happiest of my life. My darling and I were entirely of one mind and never a quarrel marred our delightful intercourse. She shared my shelf of rock and together we explored the hillside and hunted for food. A few times, indeed, we descended to the green meadow below the hill and chased the juicy hop-o'er-grasses 'til fully surfeited with the delicacy. Danger lurked upon this plain, we well knew, but though we occasionally heard the footsteps of Man we were wise enough to lie quietly concealed amid the grass until the echo of the heavy tread had passed out of hearing.

A year of supremest bliss thus elapsed; then one morning as I lay dozing my darling roused me while creeping from our nest.

"Where are you going?" I asked sleepily.

"I think I will glide down to the meadow and forage for hoppers, for I am hungry," she answered. "Will you join me?"

"No, dear," I replied; "I have scarcely had my sleep out, as yet. But be watchful, my love, and beware of the Man."

"Never fear," she said with a gay laugh; "It is somewhat too early for me to meet a human, and I am fully able to protect myself if I do. The Man, in truth, should beware of me!"

"Well, good-bye," I answered. "Do not be long."

"I shall return before you are fully awake," said she, and glided swiftly down the gully.

I must have slept longer than usual, for when at last I aroused myself the sun was sinking in a red glow over the hilltop. My darling had not returned.

Filled with anxiety for her safety, I left the nest and rushed hither and thither seeking some sign of my loved one. Near the foot of the hill I met one of those miserable Copperheads and, although as a rule I disdain to accost such creatures, I could not forbear asking if he had seen my mate.

"Follow the path that runs through the meadow," he answered with an evil leer; "you'll surely find her, for she is not likely to run away." And then he darted off, for the Copperheads fear the Diamondbacks as much as we

despise them.

The tone of malignant glee in his answer filled me with grave foreboding; but I sought the meadow path and glided slowly along it, thrusting my head this way and that in order not to miss my darling if she chanced to be near. The twilight was gathering, by this time, and as I came nearer the House of the Man no sound broke the stillness save the chirping of beetles or the occasional mooing of a distant cow.

My heart was beating rapidly now. Not with fear: I have never yet feared Man, although I know it is best to avoid him: but why did my mate fail to reply to my clear rattle? How could she have strayed so far from the safety of the hillside?

Then I turned a bend of the path and my startled eyes rested upon a sight I shall never forget. Lying across the beaten path was my darling mate; but her head was crushed and bruised to a shapeless mass and her beautiful form lay cold and still in death.

With a moan of anguish I crept to her side and laid my head against her motionless coils. The heart that had beaten with tender love a few hours before was now hushed forever and my own heart broke as I lay under the cold stars and realized my terrible loss. The night dews fell upon me, chilling and stiffening me until my folds were as cold and clammy as those of my murdered love; but still I remained, bemoaning the cruel fate that had taken her from me and dully wondering what was left me to make life worth the living.

Suddenly I knew. One thing was left me — revenge. The thought roused me to new life, in which all the gentleness of my nature was subverted and a harsh, bitter hatred of Man enthroned in its place.

Throughout the long night I lay beside my lifeless mate and planned my scheme of vengeance. Then the sun came up and warmed my stiffened coils, and I moaned anew as I realized that my poor darling would never feel the kiss of its kindly rays again.

At length I was roused by the sound of footsteps and knew that my enemy approached. But he was not alone; there was a patter of softer feet following the firm tread I had so often heard before, so I crept into the tall grass that bordered the path — and waited.

The sounds quickly drew nearer and paused at the spot I had just left. Peering from my retreat I saw not only the Man but two younger creatures of his race, on either side of him, their hands clasped in his own. The little ones were male and female; they scarce reached to the Man's waist; their feet and legs were bare. The sight pleased me. I would be able to exact a triple vengeance for the great wrong done me and mine. I began to consider which

I should attack first.

While I hesitated, all three bent over the lifeless form of my mate and the Man kicked it brutally with his foot. In an instant my anger seethed and, scarce pausing to give the warning rattle we always vouchsafe to humans, I darted forward and buried my fangs deep within the flesh of the monster's leg.

Oh what a cry of terror pierced the morning air then! I clasped my jaws more firmly to his flesh and writhed for very joy. The Man caught up a stick that lay near and rained blow after blow upon my back. These stunned me slightly and I loosened my hold and glided back into the grass; but my heart was filled with triumph, for I well knew the venom I had forced into the veins of my enemy would do its inexorable work.

Not until the screams of the small humans were followed by a rush of footsteps down the path and a renewed, tense silence, did I realize I had partially failed in my plans by allowing two of that hated race to escape. But there were other days to come, and now, I reflected, others might come to murder me as they had my poor darling. So I decided to retreat to my desolate home on the hillside.

I lay in the nest that was now ravaged of love and companionship through the entire day, through all the succeeding night, nursing my sorrow and reveling in thoughts of the just vengeance I had inflicted upon the murderer and the revenge which was still to comfort me. But the following morning I crept through the meadow and lay under a bush very near to the House, and presently I saw people bring a huge box from the House and gently place it within a covered wagon. A woman followed it, leading by the hand the two children who had escaped me the day before. All three were weeping bitterly and their tears filled me with joy. The Man I did not see, but I knew from their actions that he lay within the great box — as still and cold as my own poor love had lain upon the pathway.

There was little opportunity to complete my vengeance that day, for many humans had congregated and to show my presence in the neighborhood meant sudden death; so, when the wagon had been driven away, I crept softly back to my sheltered hillside and returned to my nest.

Many excursions I made thereafter to the green plains, where I lay, hour after hour, beside the beaten path, watching and waiting; but no sign of the Man's young rewarded me. The nest was desolate indeed; I could not bear its solitude for long and aside from my uncompleted vengeance there seemed nothing remaining for me in life that was worth the tedium of existence. With mind and heart alike dulled by grief I listlessly sought such food as I required and continued to haunt the path through the meadow.

There, as I rested in the cool grass, I dreamed again of the happy days now past and gone and always a mental vision of my dead mate's glossy coils and diamond-bright eyes was vividly before me.

One day an old Diamondback came creeping along and paused beside me. The hardness of his scales denoted great age; in his clear eyes I read ineffable composure and concrete wisdom — gained by long experience. When he accosted me in kindly tone I told him my story, and he said:

"Your history, my friend, is that of all created things. In life sorrow and gladness are always intermingled and I deem you fortunate, indeed, that for so long a time you enjoyed the society of a congenial mate — and lost her while love was still dominant in both your hearts. The mate of the Man whom you destroyed is suffering even as you suffer, yet both may find peace if it is earnestly sought. I have traveled far, my friend, and wherever I wander I find that all living things — the beasts, the birds, the humans, as well as those of our own race — are doomed to periods of intense suffering to compensate the pleasures they have enjoyed. Nature, it seems, equalizes life in this manner. Cease to grieve, therefore, over what is past, and face the future with fortitude. Who knows what solace life still holds for you?"

"Well," said I, grimly, "I may be able to complete my revenge. That will be some solace, I admit."

The ancient one regarded me gravely.

"Retaliation is Nature's law," he asserted; "but if you exact more than a just vengeance — an eye for an eye, a life for a life — you outrage Nature and become yourself an object of just reprisal. Be content that you have evened the score. Forget. Do not look backward; look forward, friend, to the blessings life holds for you. It is dark at night; on the morrow the sun shines."

With this he left me, drawing his great hoary length through the meadow with scarce a rustle of the grass. And when he was gone I pondered his words, realizing their wisdom but refusing their guidance.

It was the following day that, as I crept along beside the meadow path — listlessly, as had become my habit — I suddenly heard merry laughter and the sound of childish voices. At last I had stalked my prey.

Strangely enough, as I glided nearer I felt no sense of elation, nor did I exult because the hour of my vengeance was at hand. I had so long brooded upon this thing and settled my course of action that I now accepted the meeting as predestined. So I halted with my body still concealed in the long grass and my head slightly elevated to enable me to view clearly the scene before me.

On the pathway sat the two children of the Man, playing with some

pebbles they had gathered. Their light hair fluttered in the breeze; smiles wreathed their faces; their eyes were merry and unconcerned. Their little legs and feet were bare and spread themselves invitingly before me. The two were quite unaware of my presence; there could be no thought of death in their minds. Their laughter was free and spontaneous; they chattered in gleeful tones.

I waited. I could strike at any time, of course; so I watched the children curiously. They had not slain my mate, yet they were offspring of the Man who had done so; therefore, long ago I had doomed them to death, that my vengeance might be complete. The Man was already dead and gone from their lives; probably they had grieved for him in their childish way; yet today they seemed happy and joyous, their grief forgotten. That was what the ancient one had advised me — to forget. Could I ever feel joy again, I pondered, as these buoyant hearted ones did?

A bee flew down and alighted upon the girl's leg. When she moved to brush it away the tiny thing stung her. Instantly the laughter turned to wailing; she wept and cringed, although a bee sting is so slight a thing to suffer, and her sorrow seemed to arouse my sympathy — to my incredible amazement.

The boy strove to comfort his sister. He embraced her and kissed her cheek, uttering soothing words. Then he ran down the path a little way and returned with some mud, which he plastered over the place where the bee had stung. As he did this the little boy thrust his bare feet into the grass — so near to me that I drew back my head to avoid contact — and then I lay still and regarded the human flesh before me. It merely awaited the clutch of my fangs to send the poisoned venom coursing through the veins — a prelude to death.

"If you exact more than a just vengeance," the ancient one had said, "you outrage Nature."

The child was so unfearing, so unconscious of danger, that I could not bring myself to strike. A bee sting? What was that, compared to the bite of a Diamondback? Yet even a bee sting had wrought misery in a childish heart and the little one's tears unnerved me and made me vengeful against the bee. Our race has its dignity to maintain; we pride ourselves on never attacking Man save in self-defense or retribution, for our power to slay is so superior to that of Man that we can afford to be generous. This child had not wronged me; already I had exacted a life for a life; and yet — for days and weeks I had sought this moment, this opportunity, and gloated in anticipation over the deadly vengeance I would achieve.

I did not strike. The child rose to his feet and supported his sobbing sister

as they went down the path toward the House. I let them go, unmolested. The opportunity had come and gone; I never sought another.

It is a simple tale, and it is now told. I have grown old and big with many years; years which have brought me experience and a share of wisdom. I have never found joy again, but I have found peace, and this moiety of comfort I owe to the words of that ancient one who paused long enough in his wanderings to teach me the truest philosophy of life — to forget the past.

The Man with the Red Shirt

Early one evening, last summer. I was sitting on the porch of a hotel in a small town in northern Missouri. I had arrived in that place early in the afternoon, and although I had soon completed my business, I could not leave the town until the morning train.

As I sat wondering how I might spend the remainder of the evening, a traveling man, Arnold by name, whom I had met on the train that day, came out of the hotel. He was a man about forty-five years old and had a haggard expression. He proposed a walk to which I readily agreed. As we started down the steps, I looked behind me and saw a man wearing a bright red shirt standing in the hotel doorway; but I walked on with Mr. Arnold without saying anything about him.

As we went down the street, I noticed, on looking back, that the man with the red shirt was following us. I did not pay any attention to this at first; but as I kept hearing his ready tramp, tramp, behind, I began to grow nervous. We were now in a lonely part of town, and although my companion did not seem to pay any attention to our follower, I grew more uneasy every minute. At last I said to Mr. Arnold, "Do you not notice that we are being followed?"

He stopped, and without looking back, said, "So you see him, do you?"

"Of course I see him," I replied to his strange remark.

The man with the red shirt had now stopped about a rod from us. He stood, as he had stood in the hotel door, with his hands in his pockets, and with the same smile on his face. Mr. Arnold turned suddenly and without any comment walked back past the man. Wondering what it all meant, I also walked past him, and joined my friend. We returned to the hotel in silence, and seated ourselves in the parlor, which was at that time empty. As we did so, our follower came in, and seated himself on the opposite side of the room.

Arnold turned to me and said, "I am going to tell you my story, although by doing so I shall put myself completely in your power.

"About twenty years ago, I was traveling one day on a slow train in the southern part of the state. At a small station a man who looked just like the one you see sitting over there, boarded the train. He stood up in the front end of the car looking around, but finally came and sat down beside me. I was quite vexed at this as there were plenty of vacant seats in the car, but I went on reading my paper without appearing to notice him. Finally, I felt a slight tug at my watch chain, and looking up I saw the man walking rapidly down the aisle toward the rear platform. I felt for my watch, and as I expected, found it gone. Highly indignant, I started after him. He had reached the

platform, and as I stepped out, the door banged behind me. He was standing with his hands in his pockets. He had that same smile on his face which you now see. Knowing well that my watch was in his possession, I started to his side of the platform to take it away from him by force but just at that instance the car lurched, my foot slipped on something and I lunged heavily against him. To my horror he reeled backwards off the platform being unable to catch himself because his hands were in his pockets. I, however, saved myself by clutching hold of the railing.

"It happened that just at that moment the train was crossing a river. I was terrified to see him strike the trellis work of the bridge and fall into the water below.

"I did not know whether to pull the rope and stop the train or to notify the conductor. I had determined to do the latter, when I happened to think that perhaps people would not believe it was an accident and would accuse me of being a murderer. I, therefore, decided to say nothing about it. As I re-entered the car I looked fearfully around me, but none of the passengers seemed to have noticed what had happened.

"After about an hour's ride, the train arrived at my station and as I descended the platform, I saw, standing among the crowd, the man with the red shirt. That night I was taken with brain-fever and all during my sickness the man with the red shirt was visible to me.

"After I recovered, I determined to go on with my business, but he followed me, more or less all the time. I occasionally meet people who see him, but it is not often. If you do not believe in ghosts, tell me what it all means."

The man with the red shirt had been rocking to and fro on the other side of the room. His shadow was plainly outlined on the wall behind him and moved as he rocked. I got up and started toward him. When I was about six feet from him, I heard Arnold cry out, "Stop!" I did so, and looked around for a moment, but when I turned back the man with the red shirt had disappeared. The chair was still rocking slightly. There was no door nor window near where he had sat and he could not possibly have passed by me.

"I am completely mystified," I said as I returned to my chair.

"Well, as he has rid me of his company for a while, I think I shall retire," said Arnold. We shook hands and parted.

In the morning, I left the town. I have never again seen Mr. Arnold nor the man with the red shirt.

The Witchcraft of Mary-Marie

Mary-Marie wanted something to do. Her mother had died years before, and the cruel king had commanded her father to join the royal army and march into far-off countries to do battle. She could not even guess when he would return; indeed, few of the soldiers of the king's army ever did return from the fierce wars. So the girl lived through many tedious days in her lonely little hut, and gathered nuts and berries from the forest to satisfy her hunger. But her one gown was getting faded and shabby, and Mary-Marie could not think how she might manage to get another.

The hut stood beside a path that wound up the mountain side and away into the kingdom of Aurissau that lay in the valley beyond, and one day as Mary-Marie sat before her door an aged traveler came up the path and paused before her. The girl brought him a cup of water and in answer to his questions told how lonely and poor she was.

"But what can I do?" cried she, spreading out her arms helplessly. "I can not hew down trees, as my father used; and in all this end of the king's domain there is nothing else to be done. For there are so many shepherds that no more are needed, and so many tillers of the soil that no more can find employment. Ah, I have tried; but no one wants a weak girl like me."

"Why don't you become a witch?" asked the man.

"Me!" gasped Mary-Marie, amazed. "A witch!"

"Why not?" he inquired, as if surprised.

"Well," said the girl, laughing. "I'm not old enough. Witches, you know, are withered dried-up old hags."

"Oh, not at all!" returned the stranger.

"And they sell their souls to Satan, in return for a knowledge of witchcraft, continued Mary-Marie more seriously.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried the stranger angrily.

"And all the enjoyment they get in life is riding broomsticks through the air on dark nights," declared the girl.

"Well, well, well!" said the old man in an astonished tone. "One might think you knew all about witches, to hear you chatter. But your words prove you to be very ignorant of the subject. You may find good people and bad people in the world; and so, I suppose, you may find good witches and bad witches. But I must confess most of the witches I have known were very respectable, indeed, and famous for their kind actions."

"Oh. I'd like to be that kind of witch!" said Mary-Marie, clasping her hands earnestly.

"It's easy enough," answered the stranger. "I passed a witch's cottage

about five miles down this path, and there was a sign on the door which read:

WITCHCRAFT IN ALL ITS BRANCHES TAUGHT BY THE MOST APPROVED MODERN METHODS

"Were I you, my dear child, I would seek this cottage and learn to be a witch, for then you would have a busy and a happy life."

Saying these words the traveler rose and resumed his journey up the mountain, and Mary-Marie looked after him thoughtfully until he was out of sight. Then she jumped up and walked down the path, saying to herself:

"I'll go to the witch's cottage, anyway; and if I can coax her to give me lessons without cost I will learn her craft and become a witch myself." So. singing and dancing along the steep pathway, she covered the five miles in a space of two hours, and so came to the very cottage the stranger had mentioned.

Until now she had almost doubted the truth of the old man's words; but, sure enough, there was the sign — and it read exactly as he had stated.

Mary-Marie knocked once upon the door and it flew open. Inside she saw a big room, the walls and ceiling and floor all painted a pure white color. The only furniture was a pretty white chair by the window, and seated on the chair was a woman with a fresh sweet face, snow-white hair and clothing so pure and speckless that the girl was sure that it had just come from the laundry. Noting the kindly expression upon the woman's face, Mary-Marie bobbed a courtesy, as was proper, and stood in a modest attitude of waiting.

"Come in, Mary-Marie," said the woman pleasantly.

"Oh, of course she knows my name!" thought the girl.

"Yes, and I know why you have come to me," continued the witch, just as if Mary-Marie had spoken her thought aloud.

'Then you also know I have no money to pay you for teaching me." said the girl.

"There are always ways of making payment without money," said the witch, smiling, "so I will take you as my pupil, and teach you to become a witch. I think you have considerable talent for the profession, and you are young and beautiful. These qualifications are somewhat rare, for witchcraft is a fine art that is much neglected these days."

Here the white-haired lady stopped to sigh, and Mary-Marie, thinking over her speech, asked timidly:

"To make payment without money, must I sell my soul to Satan?"

"Surely not!" returned the witch, "nor to me. nor to any one else. For you shall not become a wicked witch, but rather a good and faithful one, using your arts for the benefit of all mankind."

"Then I'll take my first lesson now!" exclaimed the girl eagerly.

“Wait a moment.” said the woman; “we will not begin until we have made our bargain. You must promise, in return for my instruction, to perform three tasks for me.”

“Very well,” said Mary-Marie, “if I am able.”

“You will be able when you are a witch,” answered the woman. “But you must also agree to attend to my business before you begin to practice witchcraft on your own account.”

“Very well,” said Mary-Marie again.

“When you have faithfully executed my commands you shall be your own mistress, and work your witchcraft where you will for ever after.”

“Thank you,” said Mary-Marie; “let us begin at once.”

The witch waved her hand and a pretty white chair appeared beside her own. Mary-Marie sat down and took her first lesson, and thereafter, for many days, she applied herself to learning the art of witchcraft, and found her companion a very interesting teacher.

There was no work to be done about the cottage. When they became hungry a table appeared in the center of the room loaded with wholesome food that proved most grateful to the girl after her accustomed meals of nuts and berries. And for drink they had delicious nectar, cold as spring water, which welled up in a magic flagon whenever they grew thirsty. At night two pretty white beds appeared, upon which it was impossible not to sleep soundly; and Mary-Marie noticed that the dreams which came to her while slumbering in her magic bed were far more pleasing than the stories she read in a story book.

The girl was an apt scholar, and being interested in her work learned its mysteries with exceeding rapidity. At length came a day when all magical arts that the witch knew were also known by Mary-Marie, and then the old woman said: “Your education is finished. Tomorrow you shall start on your journey.”

“What journey?” asked the girl.

“One that is necessary for you to undertake in order to accomplish the tasks you promised to perform in my behalf,” was the answer.

“I am ready,” declared Mary-Marie.

“Then listen carefully to my instructions,” began the witch, drawing her chair nearer the girl, and speaking in an eager voice. “You must first go to the king’s palace.”

Mary-Marie looked at her frock and sighed.

“You will go as Princess Pritikin of Aurissau, as if on a visit of royal state. King Gruph has never seen this princess, so he will receive you courteously, and before he can discover the imposition you will have accomplished your

errand."

"And what is my errand to the king?" asked the girl.

"I am coming to that," answered the witch. "But first tell me: what do you know of the king?"

"Very little," said Mary-Marie. "Men call him cruel and heartless, and I believe it is true, for he sent my dear father to the foreign wars. And they say the king is terrible in anger, often slaying his servants with his own hand when they anger him."

"They say truly in all this," declared the witch gravely; "and it is harder to bear because he is not our rightful king."

"Indeed, everyone knows Prince Melra should sit in his father's throne, instead of his Uncle Gruph. But the prince has disappeared, and they say his uncle had him killed, in order that he might himself be king," said Mary-Marie, dropping her voice to an awed whisper.

"Well, your first task will be to get near enough to King Gruph to enchant him," continued the old witch; "and it is my desire that you change him into the form of a nanny-goat."

Mary-Marie laughed and clapped her hands.

"How funny it will be," she cried, "to see the stern king trotting around as a goat!"

But the witch did not laugh. She looked thoughtful instead.

"My first task is easy enough," resumed the girl; "what next?"

"Next you must escape with the goat and lead it over the mountains to the city of Ribdil."

"Will that be difficult?" asked Mary-Marie.

"Not for a witch," was the answer, "although common mortals might fail to find a path over those wild mountains. Your third task will be to sell the goat at the city gate to a butcher named Gurd. As soon as Gurd has killed the goat you must hurry back to me. Afterward you will be at liberty to act as you please, for you will have repaid the debt you owe me for your instruction in witchcraft."

Well, Mary-Marie did not much like the tasks the witch had set her to do, for she was a gentle-hearted girl and had resolved to practice witchcraft only for the good of her fellow-creatures; but she was obliged to fulfill her promises, so she only said:

"Very well; I shall start tomorrow."

Next day a beautiful carriage, with many gaily dressed guards and servants attending it, drove up to the king's palace. In the carriage sat Mary-Marie, robed in exquisite garments and appearing every bit as dignified and sweet as the royal princess she represented.

“Make way for the Princess Pritikin of Aurissau!” shouted one of the guards; and so imposing was the escort that every one bowed down to the ground, and even King Gruph, in person, came down the marble steps of his palace to open the door of the carriage and assist the princess to alight.

Two pages carried the train of her silken mantle and the king led her at once to the great banquet hall and set her on his right hand, while the royal musicians played their best music to entertain the beautiful visitor.

For a time Mary-Marie quite enjoyed herself.

“This is better than eating nuts in my lonely hut on the hillside,” she thought, as she feasted on the many dainties that covered the king’s table. “I am very glad I learned how to be a witch.”

She listened to the music and watched the dancers and the jugglers until it grew late and nearly all the courtiers and attendants had fallen sound asleep in their chairs. Only the king appeared fully awake, and he sat staring gloomily at the supposed princess as if for some reason he began to mistrust her errand at his palace.

Mary-Marie noticed that the king’s mood had changed, so she dared delay no longer, but slyly drawing a silver bodkin from her bosom she leaned forward, as if to address the king, and gave him a tiny prick with the bodkin on his left shoulder.

Instantly the king’s great form shrank away, and with a clatter of hoofs and a terrified bleat a nanny-goat fell upon the steps of the throne and then stood up trembling and turned its frightened eyes upon Mary-Marie.

The noise aroused all the slumbering courtiers, but when they rubbed their eyes and looked about them they found that both the king and the princess had disappeared, and only noticed that a barefooted, ragged girl was leading a goat from the hall by means of a hempen cord attached to its leg.

The young witch’s own carriage and servants had long since disappeared, so she had but to find a path leading toward the mountains and begin the second part of her journey, leading the goat beside her and picking her way carefully by the light of the moon.

The goat gave many pitiful bleatings, and Mary-Marie’s heart reproached her for what she was doing until she remembered the many cruel deeds of which the king had been guilty. Then she shook her finger at him and said:

“It serves you right!” and walked on swiftly.

At length the path, which constantly led upward, came to a stop at the edge of a deep gulf So Mary-Marie tied the goat to a rock and then lay down and slept until daylight.

In the morning she plucked four long hairs from the goat’s back, and, having knotted them together, threw one end toward the gulf, muttering a

few mystical words as she did so. Instantly a splendid bridge appeared, stretching from one edge of the gulf to the other, and on this the girl crossed in safety, driving the goat before her.

Having reached the other side of the gulf, she journeyed on until, nearing the highest peak of the mountain, she came upon a huge giant guarding the path.

"Stop!" he roared in a terrible voice. "None can pass here."

The little witch merely waved her hand and a cloud of thick dust swept into the giant's eyes and quickly blinded him. He dropped his club and began rubbing his eyes furiously, roaring the while with anger and pain. But Mary-Marie only laughed and said to the goat:

"How easy this witchcraft is when one knows how!"

And then she led the goat past the giant and down the mountain side, paying no further attention to his ravings.

Still other difficulties the little witch encountered, but she always overcame them by means of her magical arts, and finally she approached the city of Ribdil. Entering the gate she found near-by a big, brutal looking butcher, who stood before his shop and frowned at the passers-by.

"Is your name Gurd?" asked Mary-Marie.

"My name is Gurd!" answered the butcher with a fierce scowl. "What do you want?"

"Money for my goat," said Mary-Marie.

At this the butcher seized the goat and dragged it into his shop. Then he returned to the girl and cried:

"Be gone! Why are you loitering here?"

"I await the money for my goat," said Mary-Marie, looking at him bravely, although she was a bit frightened. For her witchcraft had enabled her to discover that this Gurd, who pretended to be a butcher, was in reality a powerful magician, whose arts might easily overcome her own unless she was clever enough to deceive him. It was Gurd's love of bloodshed that made him keep the butcher's shop, where he might satisfy his horrid longing to kill by slaughtering animals of all kinds.

The citizens of Ribdil all feared this evil man and avoided him whenever possible, and Gurd had no doubt the little girl whose goat he had stolen would be easily frightened.

He drew a sharp knife from his girdle and said:

"I will give you two minutes to escape. If you are not gone by that time I will kill you as well as your goat."

Mary-Marie was really tempted to run away when she heard that, for she knew her life was in great danger. But she resolved not to leave the place

until she had accomplished her mission, so she answered boldly:

"If you do not pay me for the goat I will complain to the king."

"The king, eh?" said Gurd with a rough laugh. "Do you think I fear any mortal king? Escape while you have the time!"

But the girl did not move, so Gurd suddenly grasped her in his strong arms and carried her inside the shop, closing the door behind them that she might not escape.

"When I have killed the goat it will be your turn!" he cried, and with a flourish of his knife he sprang upon the bleating animal and with one blow stabbed it to the heart.

The poor goat fell down in a pool of its own blood, and behold! its form gradually changed to that of King Gruph, who with one deep groan expired at the butcher's feet.

Gurd gave one look at his victim and then uttered a terrible shriek of anguish. His burly form began to shrink and dwindle away, and in less than a minute he stood before Mary-Marie a feeble palsied old man, with scarcely enough strength to stagger to a bench.

"I am ruined — ruined!" he wailed, beginning to sob like a child. "For I have slain the king, and it was fated that if I ever drew but one drop of his royal blood my magic powers would depart from me for ever! I am ruined — and by a girl!"

Then he raised his head and asked feebly: "Who are you?"

"My name is Mary-Marie, and I am a good witch," she answered.

"Who sent you on this errand?" he inquired, moaning.

"An old woman with a fair, fresh face and white hair, whose name I do not know, but who taught me my witch-craft," replied Mary-Marie.

The wretched man paused to pass his withered hand over his forehead.

"I know who you mean," he said with another sob; "but you will find her an old woman no longer. Go back, and say you have avenged the wrong I have done. In an hour I shall be dead, and men will fear me no longer!"

He sank to the floor in a heap, and Mary-Marie walked out of the butcher's shop and passed through the gate of the city. Then, finding herself alone upon the mountain path, she drew a purple handkerchief from her bosom and spread it upon the ground. It was just large enough for her to stand upon, and when her feet rested upon the cloth she spoke a magic word she had learned from her teacher.

A sudden breeze ruffled her hair an instant, and then she found herself standing in the road before the white cottage of the witch.

Mary-Marie sprang forward and knocked on the door. As it flew open she cried:

“Your tasks are done, mistress!”

But then she paused in astonishment, for instead of the old witch a handsome young man stood within the room, clothed in princely raiment and smiling happily at the surprised look on the maiden’s face.

“Come in, little witch!” he called in a gay voice; “come in and receive thanks for setting me free and restoring me to my kingdom!”

“Who are you?” gasped Mary-Marie.

“I am Prince Melra, who was supposed to be dead, bound by a powerful enchantment of the wicked magician Gurd, and I have been kept in the form of an old woman at the command of my uncle, King Gruph, that he might occupy the throne belonging by right to me. For five years I have suffered this enchantment; but I discovered that if ever the magician drew a drop of the king’s blood he would lose all his powers, and I would regain my freedom. So I studied the arts of witchcraft, only to find that my every movement was watched by the magician, and that I must find some one else to accomplish my purpose.”

“But how came you to select me?” asked the girl.

“I saw you one day gathering nuts in the forest, and loved you for your beauty and sweetness. So I took upon myself the form of an old man and passed your hut, stopping long enough to advise you to come to the old witch for lessons. Then I returned here by another path, and was in time to greet you. And while I taught you witchcraft I learned to love you more than before; so that now, being free and restored to my proper form and to my kingdom, I long to make you my queen.”

“I think I’m too young to marry,” said Mary-Marie, blushing.

“Then I must find another mate,” said the handsome prince, pretending to turn away.

“But girls often marry when they are too young,” exclaimed Mary-Marie quickly; “so, if you don’t object to my age — ”

“Oh, not at all!” cried the prince; “the younger we are the more years we shall have to be happy in.”

“That is true,” said the girl thoughtfully. “But if I’m to be married so young it’s a pity you ever taught me witch-craft.”

“Nonsense!” said the prince, kissing her sweet lips fondly; “you were bewitching, Mary-Marie, long before I became your teacher!”

The Ryl of the Lillies

Friday evening little Bob said to his mother: “Sunday next is Easter.”

“Yes, I know,” said she.

“Teacher asked us to bring flowers tomorrow to trim the church with,” he continued. “And all the boys and girls are going to bring all the flowers they can get to the church, and teacher will let us help with the trimming.”

The widow raised her head from her ironing and looked at her boy rather sadly. ‘You know, dear, I’m too busy to plant and tend flowers,” she said, “and so we have no flower garden. I need all the room in our little backyard to dry my clothes, too, so we could not grow flowers if we had the time to devote to them.”

Bob nodded his head.

“I know that, mother, but all the others will have flowers, so I could not help wishing I, too, could carry some to the church for Easter.”

The woman ironed silently for a time. Then she said:

“There ought to be buttercups and daisies blooming in the North Fields by this time. Why don’t you gather those? It isn’t far to go, and there are no more beautiful flowers in the world. Since we have no others, I’m sure those would be acceptable as an Easter offering.”

Bob was delighted with the idea.

“I’ll get some early tomorrow morning!” he exclaimed.

“They are flowers, anyway, even if they do grow wild in the fields. But teacher said lilies were the nicest flowers for Easter,” he added thoughtfully.

“So they are,” said his mother, “but lilies are rare flowers in the country, and I doubt if there are any in all the village. So, as there will probably be no lilies among the offerings of your companions, I am sure your buttercups and daisies will be as pretty as anything in the church.”

The next morning Bob was up even before the sun, and having hastily eaten his simple breakfast, he caught up his cap and ran through the village to visit the North Fields in search of buttercups and daisies.

It was a long walk for a small boy, but Bob did not mind it, and when he reached the fields he lost no time in beginning his search for the coveted flowers. Yet after an hour’s groping about he was unable to discover anything more than a few half opened buds of buttercups that would not be worth gathering.

Gradually the boy began to realize that his quest was a failure, and so great was his disappointment that at last he threw himself on his back amongst the new grass and burst into a great fit of sobbing.

However, grief with a healthy boy soon wears itself out, and when the

sobs had subsided he gave a long tremulous sigh and wiped his eyes.

Another low sigh echoed his own, and looking up he saw, seated upon the edge of a stump beside him, a tiny and curious creature. It had the form of a man, and was fantastically dressed in garments of many bright colors, but as Bob sat up and regarded it with wide open eyes, he saw that his queer neighbor could not be more than six inches tall when he stood upon his tiptoes.

The little man wiped his eyes carefully with a purple silk handkerchief and then said, in quite a cheerful tone:

"I feel better, don't you?"

"Have you been crying, too?" asked Bob.

"Indeed I have," was the answer. "I'm in great trouble, you must know, and my heart was so heavy that it tired me to carry it around. But I happened to pass by as you were indulging in your hearty and sensible fit of crying, and it struck me as just the thing to make my heart lighter. So I sat on the edge of this stump and wept and wailed gloriously. There's nothing like a good cry to cheer one up. I really feel much better, and I am greatly obliged to you for the suggestion."

With this he stood up and smoothed out the creases in his green and yellow striped trousers, and brushed his red silk hat with his coat sleeve, and arranged the bow of his lavender necktie.

"I fear I must be going," said he, "for I am due in Brazil at ten o'clock."

"Please wait a little while, just a minute," cried Bob earnestly. "I, I want to talk with you, and ask you some questions."

"Go ahead, then," said the little man, resuming his seat. "I've got an hour or so to spare, for the time in Brazil is slower than here."

"Thank you," said Bob, and continued to stare at the tiny creature.

"Well, well? Aren't you going to talk?" said the little man impatiently. "Where are those questions?"

"Are, are you a fairy?" asked the boy with hesitation.

The little fellow sighed again in a tired sort of way, and brushed a speck of dust from his white satin vest.

"Do you see any wings growing out of my body?" he asked in a reproachful tone. "Do you see any golden hair flowing over my shoulders, or any gauzy cobweb skirts floating about my form in graceful folds?"

"No," said Bob.

"Then I'm not a fairy," declared the little man positively.

"Perhaps you're a brownie," ventured Bob.

"A brownie!" exclaimed the other with scornful emphasis. "Really now, do I look like one of those impossible, crawly, mischievous elves? Is my

body ten times bigger than it should be? Do my legs look like toothpicks and my eyes like saucers?"

"No," said Bob, "they don't."

"Then I'm not a brownie," replied the man, crossing his legs and nodding his head at the boy in a funny way.

"I, I really don't know what to make of you," remarked the boy frankly. "Will you please tell me what you are?"

"Certainly," answered his companion, with a bow. "I am a ryl."

"Oh!" said the boy.

"Do you know what a ryl is?" asked the other a bit sternly.

"No, not exactly," acknowledged Bob.

"I thought not. The old nurses prefer to talk about those stupid fairies and hobgoblins, and never mention ryls to the children. And the people who write fairy tales and goose books and brownie stories and such rubbish sit down at writing tables and invent all sorts of impossible and unbelievable things. Why don't they seek out the ryls, who are servants of nature, and learn from them the wonderful truths that would instruct as well as amuse the young folks? The ryls have been sadly neglected, that's a fact. And who's to blame for it?" inquired the little man fiercely.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Bob. I He was sitting on the grass, clasping his knees, and looking intently at his strange companion who, as he squatted on the stump, was nearly on a level with the boy's eyes.

The ryl laughed merrily as he noted Bob's puzzled expression.

"I don't know who's to blame, myself," he said. "But since we have met under such tearful circumstances, and have enjoyed our griefs together, I'll be glad to tell you something about the ryls. We are servants of nature, as I said. All the things that grow have to be fed, just as people do. You boys can't grow big and fat unless you're fed, nor can a flower grow and blossom unless it has proper food."

"What do flowers eat?" asked Bob.

"They don't eat anything with mouths, for they haven't any. But they absorb their food from the earth, sucking it up with their roots so that it reaches the body of the plant and makes it grow, and bud, and blossom. And the ryls place the food in the earth for the roots to pick up."

"Oh," said Bob, "I see."

"Each ryl has a separate kind of plant to look after," continued the little man. "Now, I, for example, am obliged to look after the Easter lilies."

"Are you really?" cried Bob, springing to his feet in his eagerness and then sitting down again to be nearer the little man.

"Why are you so excited?" inquired the ryl.

“Because if you tend the Easter lilies I thought perhaps you could tell me where to find some. Do you know where they grow?”

“If you stop to think,” remarked the ryl, “you will see how foolish that question is. Of course, I know where they grow. But that reminds me of the great trouble I am in. I certainly must start for Brazil at once, for I have an immense field of Easter lilies growing there, and they will need to be cared for.”

“What is your great trouble?” asked Bob.

“Well, I’ll tell you. I have had no difficulty in getting most of the food required by my lilies this spring, yet there is one necessary thing that I’ve hunted for high and low and cannot find. It is the only plant food in the world that will dye the tips of the stamens of my lilies that rich yellow color which is so greatly admired and which offers such a beautiful contrast to the pure white of the leaves. There are hosts of lilies to be supplied with this coloring. A month or so ago I found enough of the food in Senegambia to color all my lilies except that one big field in Brazil, but I fear those must now remain pure white, since no more color food is to be had.”

“It’s too bad,” said Bob sympathetically. “I wish I could help you.”

The ryl clapped his hands with delight. “Perhaps you can,” he said with a sly wink at the boy. “Why do you suppose I have been stopping here with you and chattering nonsense unless I had a purpose? Ryls are not allowed to ask favors of human beings, but since you have offered of your own free will to help me, there is no reason why I should not accept the kindness.”

“What can I do?” asked the boy wonderingly.

“Your grandfather once had a bottle of the plant food I am in search of,” replied the ryl. “I don’t know where he got it or what he used it for, but he kept it in a tall blue bottle in the cupboard over the chimney.”

“Oh, yes,” said Bob. “I’ve seen the bottle often.”

“Do you know where it is now?” asked the ryl.

“It is still in the cupboard over the chimney. Mother has never touched it since grandpa died, for she didn’t know what it was.”

The little man rose to his feet and leaned over the edge of the stump as he said, in a voice that trembled with anxiety:

‘If I had that bottle I should be happy!”

“Then I’ll get it for you,” replied Bob. “But if you wanted it so badly, why didn’t you go and take it?”

“That would be stealing,” answered the ryl. “But if you make me a present of your grandfather’s bottle you will save my beautiful field of Brazilian lilies.”

“I’ll run for it now,” cried the boy. “Wait here until I come back.”

He sprang up and darted away toward the village. When he reached it he tore down the main street at full speed and reached his home almost out of breath. His mother happened to be out at the time, but the door was unlatched, and Bob soon pushed a chair to the chimney and began searching in the high cupboard for the blue bottle.

It stood in the exact spot his grandfather had left it and, seizing it in his hand, the boy climbed down and began his return journey without loss of time.

When he reached the North Fields there was the ryl, sitting on the stump and waiting patiently.

Bob placed the bottle on the stump beside the little fellow, and noticed, with surprise, that the cork reached far above the ryl's head.

"He'll never be able to open it," thought the boy, but the ryl did not seem a bit worried. He placed his hand over his heart and bowed gravely to Bob, saying:

"I cannot tell you how grateful I am for this favor. You have removed all my troubles by means of this gift. Now, in return, tell me why you were crying when I found you here."

"I had hoped to gather some wild flowers for Easter," said Bob, "but when I got here I found they had not yet blossomed. We are too poor to keep a flower garden, you know, so when I found there were no wild flowers it made me sorry."

The ryl leaned against the blue bottle, thrust his hands deep in his trousers pockets, and whistled a tune thoughtfully. The boy watched him with much anxiety, for he had begun to hope the ryl would help him. By and by the little man said:

"Well, you must come with me to Brazil. That is the only way to help you. When you are there I will give you enough lilies to make you the wonder and admiration of the whole village."

"O, I can't go so far from home!" cried the boy, "Mother would be dreadfully worried about me."

The ryl laughed. "It's a far journey," he said, "but not a long one. Here, take this bottle in your left hand."

Bob obeyed, although he was somewhat afraid.

"Now give me the little finger of your other hand," continued the ryl. Bob held it out, and the man closed his tiny fingers about the boy's bigger one in a firm clasp.

"Here we go!" remarked the ryl calmly, and Bob gave a great start of surprise and amazement.

For the North Fields, the stump, and the familiar landscape had entirely

disappeared, and the boy found himself standing beside the ryl in the midst of a vast field of pure white lilies, which nodded their heads in the tropical breeze, as if welcoming him among them.

"If I don't enlarge myself I may get stepped on. Watch me grow!" said the ryl.

Bob looked down and saw the top of the little man's head growing gradually bigger, and rising higher and higher until the ryl had become fully as tall as the boy.

"Now I feel safer," he said, "and if you will please hand me the bottle I'll get to work and feed my flowers."

Bob gave him the blue bottle and, removing the cork, the ryl began to sprinkle its contents on the earth at the roots of the lilies. He worked quickly and carefully, and the color food lasted until the farthest part of the field had been fed. Then, the bottle being empty, the ryl returned to where Bob was standing and said:

"See how quickly my lilies have gained their yellow tipped stamens."

Sure enough, when Bob peeped among the leaves he saw little caps of brilliant yellow swaying over the slender stems.

"My work is now complete," continued the ryl joyously, "and as I owe my success to your kindness I shall be glad to have you gather as many of my lilies as you can carry home."

The boy did not hesitate to accept this generous offer, and soon he had gathered a great armful of the exquisite flowers.

"These will do, thank you," said he.

But the ryl was not content. "Wait, wait, wait!" he cried laughingly and, plucking more and more of the flowers, he fairly loaded Bob down with them. Then, when the boy's eyes could just see over the top of his lilies, the ryl cried out: "Now, then, hold tight! Goodby, there you go!"

"Goodby!" answered Bob, but his voice sounded strangely far away in his ears, and in the same instant he was standing in the North Fields, his arms tilled with great bunches of Easter lilies, which filled the air with their delicate fragrance.

The little village church was gorgeously arrayed that Easter Sunday, for Bob's lilies were on every side, and were the wonder of all who saw them. Never before had such exquisite flowers been brought to the town, and everyone inquired where they came from.

So Bob's story was soon well known, for he had told his mother and the minister all about his adventure with the little ryl.

After the sermon was over the widow approached the minister and asked: "What do you think about it. sir? Did my boy really meet with the creature he

calls a ryl?”

“Well,” answered the minister gravely, “it sounds to our ears like an improbable tale. But if it is not true where did the lilies come from?”

“They certainly never grew in the North Fields,” replied the widow. “Perhaps, sir, a miracle has come to pass!”

“Quite likely, Madam,” said the good man, “Easter is the season of miracles.”

The Strange Adventures of an Easter Egg

There are eggs and eggs," as the old lady truthfully said many years ago. Some eggs develop into chickens and are, in due time, converted into pies or broils or hashed for salad, thus maintaining their reputation for good taste to the last, while their surviving friends, the chicken livers, cherish their memories with real tenderness and pick, cannibal-like, the bones thrown them at their evening meal. Other eggs develop until their fates become mixed, and they have no clear idea of their proper destinies; in which unsavory condition they often take to flight and attach themselves to wandering actors, ranting politicians or others who brave popular indignation. Still others cast their shells in the freshness of youth, and lend their silver and gold to the perfection of angels' food, custards, or Charlotte de Russe; or perhaps, settle the dispute in the coffee-pot or decorate papa's beard at the breakfast table or have stirring times with the cook in the kitchen.

So, you see, eggs are prone to many adventures in this queer world, and their lives are marvelously varied and quaint; no hen being able to guess, when she leaves her new egg in the nest, what its destiny may be.

Now, this is the story of one particular egg which, though of humble birth and insignificant prospects, had a heart of gold that led to the ultimate happiness of a very nice little girl. But the story doesn't begin with the egg.

It begins with Jeff Grasper, who had more money than he could spend — or would spend, anyhow. "And that's the reason I have it!" chuckled the old rogue; '"cause if I spent it for slick clothes and nice-tasting foods, or gave it to ev'ry beggar that asked, why, any fool 'ud know I'd soon be a beggar myself!"

Like all misers old Jeff kept most of his money hidden away in secret places, so he could often get it out to count and gloat over; but in the pocket of his threadbare trousers he always carried a number of shining gold pieces, so that he might jingle them together as he shuffled down the street and clutch at them lovingly with his long, bony fingers.

One day, about the middle of March, as old Jeff was walking down the lane at the back of the village, he was stopped by a shivering, thin-faced girl, who exclaimed:

"Please, sir, give me something to buy bread with!"

Beggars were the bane of Jeff's life. "No!" he snarled. "I won't!"

"I — I've never asked for help before," pleaded the child, wistfully; "but it's a hard winter, and — and we're so hungry at home!"

'"Tain't my fault," retorted old Jeff. "I ain't to blame if folks squander

their money an' then starve to death. Get out of my way, you imp!"

"But mother is sick," urged little Nan, lifting her pinched face to his. "I wouldn't beg for myself — it's only for her, sir, only for mother!"

The man drew' his hand from his pocket with a fierce gesture — so fierce, indeed, that a small gold piece leaped out after it and fell unheeded on the ground. And he shook his fist excitedly in the child's face as he shouted:

"Out o' my way, you miser'ble beggar! What do I care how sick your mother is? 'Tain't my fault. Out o' my way, or I'll call the constable!"

Then little Nan shrank away from the glare of his hard, selfish eyes, and drawing her shawl to shield her face from the wind, she walked slowly down the lane. Jeff passed the other way, muttering and growling angrily, and against the frozen earth lay the glittering, neglected gold piece.

I wish Nan had found it and bought food and medicine for her sick mother. The poor woman needed them, I'm sure, but in that case there would be no wonderful story to tell of the Easter egg, and the time came when Nan needed help more than the day she stopped old Jeff in the lane, and they both passed on and left the gold piece lying.

There were eyes in that neighborhood sharper than the angry ones of the man or the frightened ones of the child, and they belonged to Teazer, the redbreasted, bronze-hackled old rooster.

Teazer came clucking across the lane a few moments after Nan and old Jeff parted, and as he walked he turned his head this way and that so his bright eyes might miss no scrap of food that lay about. And so he spied the gold piece.

Attracted by the sparkling metal, Teazer stopped and uttered a succession of shrill cries. Afterwards he pecked at the gold with his bill, and decided it was not good to eat. He was for leaving it, then, and actually walked several steps before he thought better of it, and returned to view the bright yellow coin again.

Teazer was no thoughtless, empty-headed young cockerel; he had attained to years of discretion, and knew very well that gold piece did not belong in that mud-frozen lane. Therefore, it was a prize, and worth showing to his intimate friend, old Speckles.

He seized it carefully in his bill and trotted across the road to the old barn beyond. The doors were shut and barred, but Teazer knew his way through a gap in the stone foundations to the big haymow. There, in a small valley of hay very near the peaked roof, old Speckles sat upon her nest, dreaming away the time required to lay her daily egg.

As Teazer approached, announcing himself by a series of deep clucks in his throat, Speckles opened her eyes and asked:

“What brings you here, good friend?”

Before making reply, Teazer laid the gold upon the hay in front of the old hen and eyed it thoughtfully. The sun came in through a crack of the roof and made the round bit of metal glitter brightly.

“It’s a present for you, my dear,” said the rooster, courteously. “I found it in the lane and thought you might like to have it.”

“What use has it?” asked Speckles, curiously. “I cannot tell; but I’ve discovered it is not good to eat,” he answered. “Still, it is bright and pretty, I think.”

“Yes; it is pretty,” returned Speckles, looking upon the gleaming coin. “I thank you very much for your kindness, friend Teazer.”

Then the rooster strutted proudly away, thinking he had done a gracious and kindly act; and the speckled hen, who was more pleased than she let Teazer discover, sat upon her nest and feasted her eyes with long looks at the pretty treasure. When another hen came near the nest, Speckles slid the bit of gold under her wing where it was safely hidden. She did not care to let [the] gossip into the secret of her new possession.

When at length she left the nest there were three white eggs in the little hollow, and underneath them was tucked the gold piece. Speckles had no pockets in her feathered gown and could not carry it with her as old Jeff loved to do.

For several days the rich hen kept her treasure hidden in her nest bringing it forth at times to watch the sunbeams waken its glittering surface into life. But she soon grew thoughtful over the responsibility of her precious charge, and wondered gravely what she would better do with it.

“Any day now,” she reflected, “the children may come searching for hidden nests of eggs, and then they will find my beautiful treasure and carry it away. Or that horrid game rooster, who fights so desperately with my friend Teazer, may catch me looking at my prize and steal it. Or the other hens, who are selfish, may rob the nest when I am gone. I may have enjoyed my wealth for several happy days, so now I believe it will be wise to put it where no prying eyes will ever discover it.”

So when she fashioned her next egg to lay in her nest she put the shiny gold coin inside it, where it was concealed from sight by the thick white shell.

It is the story of this egg I have undertaken to tell, and now you know how it happened that within a large, pretty egg found in old Speckles’ nest was so remarkable a thing as a five-dollar gold piece.

Jimmie knew nothing of it, of course, when he climbed the haymow and discovered seven eggs in the nest. Old Speckles fluttered nearby, scolding

indignantly the dreadful robber, but Jimmie paid no attention to her protests. Me pocketed all seven of the eggs and carried them gleefully to his mother, who placed them in a yellow bowl on the kitchen shelf.

Now, although this particular egg containing the gold piece had at last started upon its adventures, who could guess what its fate was destined to be? As it lay in the yellow bowl it looked for all the world like any one of its fellows, and before long it was covered with many eggs brought from other nests in the big barn.

Surely some kindly fate was hovering over that yellow bowl. Eggs were boiled for breakfast the next morning, but the woman's fingers failed to grasp that particular egg to put in the kettle. Mrs. Smithers came from the village to buy a dozen eggs for her custard pies; but when they were counted into her pail the egg with the golden treasure was not among them. Eggs were brought in and eggs were taken away, until Jimmie's mother happened to think: "Those eggs at the bottom of the dish must be getting stale. I'll color them up for Easter, for the children keep such pretty colored eggs instead of eating them, and it won't matter whether they are fresh or not."

So, as Easter Sunday was very near, the woman emptied the yellow dish and boiled all the eggs in a big kettle. The egg containing the treasure was among them, but the boiling only served to wedge the piece of gold more firmly between the white and the yolk.

Then Jimmie's mother got her Easter dyes ready to color the eggs, and the first one she picked up to try chanced to be the treasure-egg. But she had made her dyeing liquids too thick and too dark; so, instead of turning the egg a dainty lavender color, as she had intended to, the egg took a dirty brown hue that was not at all pretty to look at. Therefore, the woman thinned her dyes and colored the remaining eggs most beautifully; but that first dark brown one was provokingly ugly, and not fit to be displayed with the others.

Jimmie's mother was a frugal woman and shrewd withal; so she said: "I will give this dirty-colored egg to Jeff Grasper, for he holds a mortgage on our land, and the present may lead him to be easy with us when we are not ready with the interest money."

So Jimmie was sent to carry the egg to old Jeff with his mother's compliments and Easter greetings.

Old Jeff took it, of course, for he never refused to take anything he could get. But he stuck up his nose at its dismal coloring.

"What an ugly Easter egg!" he snarled. "I'll pay that woman back for sending me such a gift. But I mean to peel it and eat it in spite of its color; for since I carelessly lost that gold piece I must economize until I make up for it. As I'm not especially hungry today, the egg will do for my supper."

But just as he was about to crack the shell (and find, of course, his gold piece inside it) a suspicious thought came to him.

"S'pose it's poisoned!" he muttered, nervously. "She might want to make away with me because she owes me money. It's a queer color for an Easter egg, that's sure, an' I'd better be careful. Guess I'll send it to the minister's children, an' that'll make 'em think I'm a good Christian!"

Congratulating himself on this bright idea, he sent the egg on Easter morning to the parsonage, where the minister's children, having many gaily colored eggs of their own, would pay no attention to it.

"It's as dark and ugly as old Jeff himself," declared one of little ones; so the minister gave it to the sexton to carry home to his wife after service.

"These little thoughtful kindnesses, that cost nothing, do a great deal of good in the world," said the minister to himself, and the egg might have wondered if that was the reason it was being passed around so cheerfully.

The sexton's wife was old and didn't care for Easter eggs herself, and her eyesight was poor and prevented her from discovering how ugly in color the egg was. But she had a kind heart, and remembered that in a neighboring cottage lived a little girl so poor that she would have no eggs or flowers or gifts of any kind to mark the glorious festival of Easter.

So she wrapped the egg in a paper and wrote "For Nan" on the outside and tottered over to the cottage, where she placed the gift upon a shelf without being seen by any one. That wasn't Jimmie's mother's way, nor the minister's way, but it was her way, nevertheless.

Nan was in the little bedroom with her sick, half-starved mother when the sexton's wife made her stealthy visit, for the worst of their days of privation were full upon them. But presently she came out into the living room, and her eyes were wet with tears.

"Oh, if only I had money to buy things for mamma!" sobbed the child. "I should be so happy then — oh, so happy! Perhaps if I ask again the good God to help me, He will find a way."

So she knelt down by a stool and prayed with all her anxious heart for a way to comfort and nourish her dear mamma, and as she rose and wiped the tears from her eyes she saw the parcel lying upon the shelf with "For Nan" written upon it in awkward letters.

"Oh, Mamma!" she cried, running into the little bed room, "I've found a present!"

The invalid's trembling fingers undid the parcel.

"It's an Easter egg," said the mother, a trace of disappointment in her voice, although she told herself she had no reason to expect a better gift for her child.

“It is not very pretty to look at, Nan, but it is worth much to us, for it can be eaten. Take it, dear. It will give you both nourishment and strength.”

“Then you must eat it yourself, Mamma,” exclaimed the child, brightening to think here was food for her dear one. “You need it much more than I do.” And she broke the shell and began peeling it from the smooth, white meat of the egg Then she ran for a plate and a knife to slice the egg with, and at the second slice the knife struck something hard.

Oh yes, my story is now told. You know all about the piece Nan found and can guess it was no brighter than the girl’s face as she held the treasure before the eyes of her mother and realized all the good things so much money would buy.

Indeed, it enabled the poor woman to regain her health, so that she was afterward competent to earn a living for herself and her child. Few who are not poor and helpless can understand what a little money does at the right time; and it came at the right time to Nan and her mother. I almost think Jeff, had he known all, would not have bemoaned the loss of the gold piece on that day when he shook his fist in a hungry child’s face.

Last summer a friend of mine heard old Speckles talking to her brood of chicks, and this is what she said:

“Once, my darlings, I owned a beautiful treasure, given me by that same friend Teazer, who was made into a pot pie by Jimmie’s mother last Sunday. It was a brilliant, glittery thing, and very pretty to look upon when the sunbeams struck it. But I very foolishly hid it inside one of my eggs, and Jimmie robbed me of my treasure and my egg at the same time. Boys are very cruel my darlings!”

But Nan often said, with hearty emphasis: “God bless whoever put that gold-piece into the Easter egg!” And perhaps Speckles was blessed, after all, in the love and obedience of her twelve fluffy chickens.

The Tramp and the Baby

It was a hot day and the road was dusty. It was not even a good road, being full of bumps and ruts; but it was a pretty road and wound in and out of the woods and up and down the numerous hills.

A man was trudging along with a slow and dragging step. His feet shuffled through thick dust as if the white, snufflike atoms floating in the mist about him were preferable to the exertion of raising his ponderous boots, in the tips of which his ragged trousers were carelessly tucked. The traveler's appearance, as he scuffed along, was not especially prepossessing. He had an unwashed skin and noisome clothing. A heavy, unkempt beard covered the lower part of his face and a slouched hat the upper. His hands were in his pockets, and beneath his left arm he carried a small bundle tied in a red handkerchief.

At the top of an ascent he paused, raised his stooping shoulders, took off his hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. While thus engaged he made a cursory examination of the scene before him. The country was peaceful and pleasant enough to view on any side. At the right a sweep of broad pasture extended far into the distance and lost itself in a row of hills at the horizon. The range was broken now and then by a stately oak or a clump of straggling beeches, while at the bottom of the little valley a tiny stream wound in and out like a silver ribbon on a green gown.

There must have been an innate love of the beautiful in the nature of the man who could stand so long regarding this bit of landscape, executed by the one brush that never errs; but presently he turned to the left, where a gentle slope led down to a high and thick evergreen hedge. Beyond this was an enticing grove of young apple trees, while still farther along his eye discovered a garden and an emerald lawn surrounding a handsome and substantial brick mansion.

His eyes brightened at the sight. They were large blue eyes, with a cow's calm and ruminative expression in their depths. There was nothing to indicate intelligence, nothing to inspire confidence; but a square view of them relieved the repulsive appearance he presented when his hat was drawn over his face.

"Looks like a snap," he muttered in a hoarse, growling bass. "Folkses what live in such style as that ain't likely to turn a pore man away hungry. But the time," he added, glancing at the sun, "Ain't strictly favorable. Say it's two o'clock; prob'ly they'll hev dinner at six, an' that's the right time fer me to turn up at the back door. If I likes their looks I may come the sick wife 'n' four children dodge, an' git a basketful to carry away. Fortune knocks a

good many times, an' gits the best show-down."

He looked around again, scratched his head reflectively and then, putting on his hat, deliberately stepped from the road to the grassy bank at the left.

"Hedges an' I is old chums," he muttered. "It'll be cool an' shady 'longside o' this one, an' four hours' sleep won't hurt me a bit."

It was but a few rods to the hedge, yet it took him a long time to reach it. Languidly he made for a big maple that stood beyond the hedge, but threw its leafy shade far into the lane. Here, the grass being thick and velvety, seemed an ideal spot for a summer's nap.

Our traveler threw down his bundle, removed his coat and rolled it into a pillow for his head, and with a sigh of content reclined at full length in the shade. Sleep did not come to him, however. The place was quiet and peaceful enough. Insects chirped merrily in the grass about him; a tree-toad barked occasionally from above and the busy hum of bees came fitfully to his ears. From far across the meadow he heard the faint lowing of a heifer; but aside from these languorous sounds the whole world seemed to dream.

Yet sleep did not come, and he began to speculate concerning the reason.

"Le's see; I climbed inter that haymow las' night at about sundown, an' slep' til after the farmer had milked his cows an' gone inter the field to work — 'bout fourteen hour I guess. I needed the rest. Then I got nine eggs from the hens' nests, put 'em in my pocket, an' jogged along. I built a little fire in the woods back there an' roasted the eggs fer breakfast. Then I jogged along an' come here. Funny how I can't sleep!"

He lay upon his side, resting his head upon his elbow and staring absently at the broad landscape before him. Then he tired of this position and turned upon the other side; but here the hedge obscured his range of vision. So he sat up, yawned, and pulled a soiled and torn newspaper from his pocket. Reposing again at full length, he flattened out the sheet and proceeded to read, following the lines carefully and slowly with his finger and moving his lips in formation of each word he spelled out.

The newspaper interested him. It mattered little what the date might be; sequence of events in the great world so far removed from his sphere was of no importance whatever. The world and he were two; nevertheless, he liked to peep at its doings occasionally.

After a period of laborious reading he laid the paper upon his knee.

"It's queer," he mused, "how they always hustle and bustle in the big cities; an' how they sweats and worries and makes theirselves miser'ble, jest to earn a living. People gits rich, sometimes, a-wrastlin' with business an' stocks, an' sich horrible tilings, but it don'r do 'em no real good. They're so busy they can't spare a second to take life easy. For me, I don't want no

money myself; I'm better off as I am seein' the world an' makin' the most of it. Money can't buy this soft, cool grass all aroun' me, the blue sky lookin' down through the trees, ner them birds a-whisperin' together at my elbow. I ain't what you might call respectible; no, I s'pose not," with a solemn shake of his head; "but I'm free an' my own master, an' when I wants ter travel I jes' travel, an' when I wants ter rest it's nobody's business but mine. City life may do fer nervous folks an' idjits, but not a feller what knows real life."

He brushed a fly from his nose, put the newspaper into his pocket, and, lying back upon his impoverished pillow, resigned himself to contemplation of nothing. The drowsy influence of the summer day finally stole over him; his eyes were closing, his senses deserting him, when suddenly he was aroused by a succession of unusual sounds.

"Ghlee — ghu — oo! Gwoo-oo-oo-ghu!"

The man raised his head and gazed about him in astonishment. There was nothing in sight, no beast or bird, that could have utter this incomprehensible language.

"Ee — yee! Oog — oo — ghu-ee!"

"Well, well! What in the dickens — " He broke off short; a ray of intelligence crossed his vacant face and he nodded his head three times with much gravity.

"It's t'other side the hedge. A calf; or a — owl — or, or — p'r'aps a — "

"Gru — oo — oo — ee! Coo — goo — ewoo — ghu!"

"Blamed if it's anything I ever hearn tell of! Mebbe it's ghostes, or rats, or — or — Hm!"

He felt of his head, shook it with a bewildered air and glanced helplessly toward the hedge. There was a place near the ground where the evergreen had been broken or pushed aside which seemed sufficiently large for him to crawl through. Being at the moment of an investigating turn of mind, he rose on his hands and knees and crept softly toward the hole in the hedge. It was even larger than he had suspected. He crawled into it, thrust his head through to the other side and became motionless from surprise.

Three feet from his head was a baby, sitting on a thick blanket and playing with its bare toes. It was beautifully and richly dressed and chubby and sweet, with ringlets of fair hair framing its little face. A dozen yards away a hammock swung from between two dwarf apple-trees, and reclining within it was a young woman with a nurse's cap upon her head and a white apron thrown over her face. Her book had fallen to the ground; she breathed heavily; evidently the dreamy quiet of the summer afternoon had wooed her to slumber.

The baby lifted its eyes suddenly and became aware of an enormous head projecting from the hedge and covered with matted hair and bristling whiskers, from which two mild blue eyes were staring fixedly into his own. The baby stared back. Its eyes were blue, too. They held a curious expression, as of surprise and awe and trust intermingled. Those innocent orbs were guiltless of fear, having known no evil within their brief experience.

The baby laughed, crowed, jumped its little body up and down ecstatically. Then it held out two tiny arms appealingly toward the tramp. It had found a new playfellow.

The man's eyes fell; a ruddy glow suffused his face. Well, well! when had this creature blushed before? He looked uneasily toward the hammock. The little one crowed again — more imperatively — and reached his little hands as far as he was able toward his new acquaintance.

The expression of dismay upon the tramp's face gave way to one of resolution. He extended two brawny hands, clasped the baby firmly, but gently, and drew it through the hedge to his own retreat.

The baby was delighted, and jumped and gurgled with joy. He had been left alone long enough, and here was a novel relief from playing with his rosy toes. The tramp smiled broadly and set the little one upon his knee, steadying it there while he gazed upon it admiringly. There were two great smudges on the dainty dress, where his grimy hands had touched it. He never noticed them. The baby never noticed them. Both were alike in this respect — they were wholly indifferent to dirt. They were equally unconventional, and each was pleased with the other at first sight.

The baby's sleeves were pinned with two heavy gold clasps; another, set with glistening diamonds, fastened the little bib to its waist. The tramp's eyes fell upon these baubles, admired them a moment and then came back to the face of his small comrade, whom he trotted gently upon his ragged knee.

The baby squealed rapturously; the blue eyes danced with joy and mischief, and suddenly he grasped a bunch of stubby whisker in each sturdy fist. The tramp chuckled softly and shook his head. The baby jumped and crowed and held on bravely. The man laughed.

The baby laughed louder. The play was repeated again and again. But the wee infant was observing. He finally released one tiny hand, clutched at a white object in his friend's vest pocket and drew forth a clay pipe. Relapsing into gravity, he examined it minutely. Then, as is the way with babes, he put it in his mouth and regarded his friend enquiringly.

This was too much for the tramp, who possessed a keen sense of the ridiculous. He lay back and shook with silent laughter, not daring to obey the

impulse to roar aloud because of the occupant of the neighboring hammock; but the baby's face was so droll that he found it almost impossible to control himself within safe bounds. He wiped his eyes on his sleeve, raised his head and saw the child make a wry face, look at the pipe doubtfully and throw it down. It didn't taste good. The tramp shook again with merriment, finding the act inexpressibly comical. Me gave the baby a bear-like hug that was still tender, and when the child struggled to be free the man got upon his hands and knees and swung the youngster upon his back.

A pair of fat hands instantly fastened themselves in his shaggy locks, and then solemnly and slowly he moved around in a circle, the soft grass making a cushion for his hands, the baby swaying from side to side and crowing jubilantly at this improvised circus. Was ever so jolly and so docile a comrade known? The baby jerked at the thick hair all unreproved; he kicked his little bare heels into his friend's ribs and no murmur arose in protest. The "horsey" was the most gentle and agreeable horsey in the world.

But babies like change. The tramp put him on the ground; he espied the red bundle and reached both hands toward it, glancing into his companion's face with his sharp, peremptory "Ghoo!' The tramp nodded, smiled, and gave him the bundle. The little hands turned it over and over and fumbled at the knots. Then he threw it down with a small show of temper. The tramp laughed, reached within the bundle and brought out a bread-crust. This the baby seized, put it to his mouth, evidently favored the strange morsel and smiled again with ineffable sweetness upon his benefactor.

A heavy sigh from the hammock behind the hedge fell upon the tramp's ear. He started, glanced guiltily around, became reassured and turned to his playfellow with a smile. The little one was nibbling the bread contentedly. The man looked thoughtful and played with the diamond brooch, turning it so that a stray sunbeam caught it and made it sparkle. Then he looked bashfully into the baby's face, hesitated, put up both his brown hands and pressed the whiskers away from his mouth in all directions, and then — he leaned forward and gently kissed the baby's soft white cheek.

Again the red blood surged to his forehead. He took the little one in his arms, crawled through the hedge, and placed the child upon its blanket, regarding it with a smile of amusement as it continued to maintain its interest in the crust. Then he crawled back again and gathered up his belongings.

* * *

The maid awoke with a start, looked quickly toward her charge, became reassured and stood up to stretch herself with a regretful yawn. Her eyes reached above the hedge and caught the roadway beyond.

A tramp was jogging along through the dust, holding a small red bundle under his arm. He whistled as he walked, and the notes were borne indistinctly to her ear through the clear atmosphere. She gave a little shiver of repugnance.

“Thank goodness he didn’t come this way!” she exclaimed.

The Yellow Ryl

I cannot understand how this furniture gets in such disorder every time I go shopping," said Mrs. Blandford, severely. "I do wish, Joslyn Stanton Blandford, you would be more careful and less mischievous."

Joslyn looked at his mother with round, grave eyes. He knew that when she called him "Joslyn Stanton" she was quite provoked, and it grieved him to be so misjudged.

"It was the same way when I was at the matinee the other day," she continued. "Everything topsy turvy and out of place when I came home. How in the world do you manage to do it, Joslyn Stanton Blandford?"

"I don't, Mama," said Joslyn, softly. "I haven't been into the living room while you were away."

"Don't tell me that!" exclaimed Mrs. Blandford, irritably. "Do you want me to believe the furniture joggles itself out of place?" Joslyn was silent. He could not explain the disorder in the living room, for he knew nothing about it.

"I shall ask your father to talk to you," said his mother, removing her wraps. "I can understand boys getting into mischief; but it horrifies me, Joslyn, to find you so obstinate and sullen and daring to deny you are to blame. Why don't you own up to it, in a manly way?"

"I didn't do it, Mama!" was all the little boy could say; and then he ran away to his own room and cried, for this was a sad homecoming after waiting so long for his dear mother to return from her shopping expedition. He had been all the afternoon in his play room, cutting pictures of figures out of magazines and fitting clothes to them, and except that he had run frequently to the hall window to see if mama was coming, he had not left this room once while she had been gone. Yes; once he had asked Suzanne for a glass of water; but that was all.

Suzanne had been in the kitchen ironing her aprons, or doing other work. She was an unsociable maid and did not like children very well, so Joslyn seldom bothered her, even when he was left alone.

Mrs. Blandford was not usually so cross with her little son. She had had a trying day, vainly endeavoring to match some dress goods, and so her temper was rather irritable when she returned home. A glance into the big living room had shown her that her carefully arranged furniture was considerably out of place. Even the piano had been moved out and stood with one end against the wall and the other far away. The table cover was wrinkled and half off and one of the china shepherdesses on the mantle was so near the edge it was a wonder it had not fallen and smashed to pieces.

She knew she had left the room in perfect condition when she went away, for she was a careful housekeeper; so only Joslyn, she thought, could be to blame for the disorder.

After a little her mother's heart reproached her for being so severe with her only child and she went to his room and tried to get him to admit his fault. But the boy was really sullen now, resenting the fact that his word had been doubted, so it was a hapless hour for both mother and son before the father and husband came home to dinner.

Mr. Blandford was a jovial man and very fond of his family. When he asked what was the matter with Joslyn, his wife, despite her threat, refrained from telling him how bad his boy had been. Joslyn ate little and was silent and very still, but he went to bed soon after dinner and forgot all his troubles in sleep, as a boy will.

Next morning only a recollection of his unhappiness remained to disturb him and he was almost his old self again by the time breakfast was over. Nor did Mrs. Blandford refer to the affair again until after luncheon, when Joslyn saw her putting on her things.

"Are you going out again, Mama?" he asked.

"Yes, dear; our bridge club meets at Mrs. Boothe's this afternoon," she replied. Then she bent down to kiss him and added: "Be a good boy, Joslyn, and don't get boisterous. I don't want to find the house in the condition I did yesterday. If you need anything, go to Suzanne. She will be in her room mending."

Then, as the boy stood silent, with a little frown upon his brow, she walked into the hall and drew together the sliding doors that shut off the living room — almost together, that is, for these doors would never come quite together, for some reason. She next pulled the heavy drapery across the rod above the door, as an additional barrier to the room.

Joslyn watched her, and so did the cat — a lean, sleek yellow animal that had come uninvited to the house several days before and had been adopted by Joslyn at once. Mrs. Blandford did not tell her little son not to enter the living room while she was gone, but he gathered a hint as to her wishes when she tried to close the sliding doors and afterwards drew the drapery over them.

When she had gone Joslyn still stood in the hall.

The cat had circled herself up under the table and pretended to be asleep. She was not a sociable companion, and although the boy had taken her into his house and fed her liberally the lean yellow creature would not play with him, but stole through the rooms like a shadow and devoted herself only to her own comfort.

Joslyn went into his play room across the hall and sat down upon the floor to cut out pictures. Then he began to wonder how the furniture in the big living room could have become so disordered two separate times without anyone having entered the place while his mother was away. He had himself been accused, yet he knew very well he was innocent. Suzanne seldom came into that part of the house. Who, then, could have been the mischief-maker? — unless it was the cat.

He glanced up and found he could see through his open door across the dim hall to where the cat lay curled up asleep. No; so small a creature could not possibly have moved all the furniture. Had not mama complained that even the big piano had been dragged out of place?

Had she stopped to think, she might have known even Joslyn could not do that. But as he looked thoughtfully into the hall he saw the cat slowly arise, glance around her, and then stealthily creep behind the drapery that shut off the living room. So slyly had she moved that not a sound was heard; but he could see the curtain wave gently as she crawled behind it to the opening between the partly closed doors.

The boy was now curious, and on hands and knees he crept forward as softly as possible and crossed the hall to the thick drapery. He crawled behind it as the cat had done and then found that the sliding doors had been left several inches apart. So he sat down, with the drapery at his back and his eyes commanding all the interior of the room, and looked to see what was going on.

The cat had lain down upon a rug and curled herself up again, but her eyes were not closed in sleep. Instead, they gazed steadily at the mantel where vases and ornaments stood on either side the pretty French clock.

Something in the animal's attitude made Joslyn decide to remain, half hidden as he was, and watch her. It was a long wait, and once or twice he was tempted to abandon his post. But finally the clock struck two, and then his patience was amply rewarded.

Instantly the cat arose and said in a clear, distinct voice: "Two o'clock! It's time for our frolic, friends — the third and last one we shall be able to enjoy."

Joslyn's heart nearly stopped beating, he was so amazed to hear a cat talk; and then it began to throb with excitement, for one of the dainty Dresden shepherdesses on the mantel leaned forward, losing all its china stiffness, and replied to the cat's speech.

"The last time, you say? Why is that?" she asked.

"Because my visit here ends today and I must journey on to other places," was the answer.

A taboret came trotting on its four legs from a corner and awkwardly approached the yellow cat. Joslyn thought he could see a comical face faintly outlined on the side of the taboret, although he had never noticed it before.

"Why don't you tell us your story?" asked the little thing, in a squeaky voice.

"Why should you wish to hear it?" replied the cat.

"You've brought us to life and given us some good times — which we never enjoyed before since we were made," said the taboret. "So we'd like to know who our good friend is."

"Moreover," added the shepherdess, who was now sitting on the edge of the mantle shelf and slowly swinging her feet, "if this is the last time we shall ever be able to move, we will have ages in which to think over these adventures, and your story will give us one more thing to think about."

The cat made a queer purring sound that Joslyn thought was meant for a laugh.

"Very well," it said, quietly; "I will tell you who I am and why I am here. Also I will tell you why I have given you these hours of frolic and play."

"Wait a minute! wait a minute!" cried several shrill little voices, and to Joslyn's astonishment all the pieces of furniture began to move away from their places and prance into the center of the room, where they surrounded the cat in an interested group.

"Wait for me, too!" called a voice more deep-toned than the others, and the big piano bent its carved legs and began stalking from the wall toward the cat.

"Keep away!" screamed a delicate Chippendale table; "you'll crush me with your big body."

"Stay back, awkward!" cried a carved mahogany chair; "do you intend to crowd all the rest of us away?"

"Can't you hear plainly from where you are?" enquired the second Dresden shepherdess, who had now stepped forward and was leaning gracefully against a big Venetian vase on the mantel.

The piano stopped half way, and its castors gave a groan.

"I'm the most important article in this room," it said indignantly, "and I must say I consider your remarks very disrespectful."

"Say whatever you please; we don't care, as long as you keep your distance," retorted papa's reading chair, sliding a little nearer the cat.

"Tut-tut, friends!" called a picture of an old gentleman in a hunting coat, which hung on the wall. "Don't quarrel, for goodness' sake. Let us enjoy these moments of freedom while we may."

"That's right; you're spoiling all the fun," added a Chinese Mandarin,

bobbing his head back and forth from his perch on the music cabinet.

The chatter ceased at this rebuke and the cat rubbed its nose softly with one paw and said:

"Of course you know I was born a fairy"; he paused as the furniture, the picture and all listened breathless. "Of course, you know, I was born a fairy.

Otherwise I could not have brought you to life. I am of a race of immortals called ryls, whose duty it is to paint the colors on the blossoming flowers. I am the Yellow Ryl, and carry a paint-pot full of yellow to color the buttercups and marigolds and other flowers when they appear upon their plants. It is a pleasant task, and I have enjoyed it for thousands of years. But our king, the White Ryl, is a very touchy and sensitive fellow, and because he thought I answered him impudently one day he resolved to punish me. So he gave me this form of a cat — a creature I always disliked — and commanded me to wander through the world for a year and a day. If I do no mischief in that time I am to be restored to my former condition." Thus spoke the cat.

"Well, friends, you've no idea how hard it is to keep out of mischief for a year and a day especially when one has the shape of such an insignificant animal. I dare not let the stupid human creatures know I am anything more than I appear to be — -a wandering, mongrel yellow cat, to be cuffed and kicked by all it meets — so there are few opportunities for enjoyment unless I occasionally exercise my fairy powers. In this house, where I am able to make but a brief stay, I found this room was often left alone for hours together; so I conceived the idea of bringing the furniture and other things here to life, and having a jolly romp with them when no one was around. My king cannot say this is mischief, for it does no harm to anyone. It is a great relief to me to get away from the matter-of-fact, simple life in which I am now placed, and to watch your absurd antics."

"Absurd!" cried the taboret.

"Yes; you are all absurd except the two pretty shepherdesses and the pictures," insisted the cat. "But you are none the less amusing on that account."

"Your king was right to call you impertinent," declared the piano, in a discordant key, "I have often heard Mrs. Blandford say I was the finest piano she ever knew, and I am certainly high-toned and aristocratic, Therefore I cannot be absurd."

'"I," said the mandarin, nodding briskly, "represent a high official of the Chinese Empire. There is nothing absurd about me," and he continued to bob his head emphatically.

"Solid mahogany is always respectable," said the center table, gravely.

“Only a disgraced yellow cat would dare call me absurd.”

“Keep it up, you blockheads,” remarked the old gentleman in the picture, carefully arranging a painted flower in his buttonhole, “Keep it up, and waste, in useless argument, the only hour in which you can ever hope to be alive. Then you will be sorry forever afterward.”

There was a sudden hush at this, and the cat arose and stretched itself with a yawn.

“We will have a dance,” it announced.

“Come down, Phoebe, dear, and play the piano.”

“Very well,” replied one of the shepherdesses.

Then the mahogany chair rolled up to the mantel and the center table came and stood beside it. The high back of the chair almost reached to the shelf of the mantel, so Phoebe, the shepherdess, stepped upon the back of the chair, then down to the table, and afterward, by putting a foot upon the arm of the chair and seat, she managed to reach the floor, where she arranged her dainty skirts and bowed to the company.

“Come along, Daphne!” called the cat, and the second shepherdess followed the first and stood beside her.

Phoebe went to the piano and one of the chairs reached out its arms and perched the pretty shepherdess upon the piano stool, where she began running her fingers over the ivory keys.

“Won’t the human people hear the noise?” asked the taboret.

“No,” replied the cat; “not a sound we make can be heard outside this room. That is part of my fairy charm. Take four partners, everybody, and dance your best. Daphne, you will waltz with me.”

“I am willing,” answered the second shepherdess.

Joslyn, whose head was now pushed between the sliding doors while his body remained outside, could hear probably because he was in a dim and shadowy position. The boy was so interested in the scene being enacted that he had forgotten all about himself and so no longer felt astonishment at what he beheld.

Phoebe played the piano very well and the merry tune was quite inspiriting. The cat and Daphne first waltzed away together and encircled the big room with movements of considerable grace. They were followed by the mahogany chair and a slender-legged arm chair, and then the taboret waltzed with the music cabinet — which obliged the mandarin to cling on for dear life — and a rocking chair slid around with a magazine rack for a partner. Soon all the furniture in the room had paired and was waltzing gaily — except the center table, which was so big and broad it waltzed alone. The table’s legs were very nimble, however, and as it tipped this way and that the

books mama had so carefully arranged upon it tumbled to the floor and began dancing by themselves.

Finally the center table stepped on the cat's tail, and with a howl of pain the yellow animal turned angrily and pushed the table over, so that it fell with a clatter upon its side. At this Phoebe ended the tune and everything stopped waltzing to take a rest. A couple of chairs raised the table to its feet with their arms, and the accident did not seem to spoil the general good nature at all, although the cat licked its tail tenderly as if it still hurt.

"That was fine!" laughed the center table, fanning itself with its embroidered cover.

"The most fun I ever had!" gurgled the taboret, taking another step or two to show it was not tired.

"I think I'd like a waltz with pretty Daphne," called the old gentleman from his picture.

"But you are only painted from the knees up," said the cat, looking at him critically.

"Never mind; half a leg is better than none at all," answered the gentleman. So the high-backed chair moved up to the wall and the old man stepped out of his picture and reached the floor safely. He wore a red hunting coat and white broadcloth breeches and his face had a genial and kindly expression.

"Pray be good enough to favor me with a waltz, fair shepherdess," said he, bowing to Daphne. As he half turned around Joslyn saw he was just as thin edgewise as the cloth he was painted upon; but from the front he looked very natural, except that his legs were cut off at the knees, "'Wait a minute!" cried the mandarin, rising from his usual sitting position, "I'm going to waltz with Phoebe."

"Phoebe has to play the piano," said the old gentleman.

"'Cannot anyone else play it?" asked the mandarin, anxiously.

"No one else has fingers, except Daphne, and I have chosen Daphne for my partner," was the reply.

"I'll play the piano," announced the cat, going to the instrument and springing upon the stool in a single bound.

So the mandarin came down from the music cabinet to waltz with Phoebe, and the cat began playing a tune that was lively and inspiring. The old gentleman whirled away with Daphne and the mandarin danced fairly well with Phoebe. In a few moments all the pieces of furniture joined in the romp and the noise and clatter were so great that Joslyn was amazed because Suzanne did not hear it and come rushing in.

While the frolic and fun was at its height the clock on the mantel suddenly

began to strike. At the first stroke the scene changed with marvelous abruptness. The furniture slid and scrambled back into the places where it belonged — or almost into place — the mandarin sprang to his perch on the cabinet and the books hopped upon the table and lay down. The mahogany chair and the table first ran to the mantel, where the two china shepherdesses used them to climb to the shelf, and then they hurried to take their own places.

So swift was the action of all the contents of the room that by the time the clock had deliberately struck three, something like order had taken the place of disorder and all movement had ceased. But Joslyn saw with a feeling of dismay, that to mama's eyes the living room would be found more disarranged than it had been yesterday, and he dreaded another scolding.

While the cat sat upon the rug calmly washing its face with its paws, the boy arose and walked boldly into the room.

"See here, you Yellow Ryl, or whatever you are," he said, "I want you to make these things get back where they belong. It's all right to have fun, and I don't blame you for that, but you will be making mischief if you get me into trouble, and I'll be scolded for this disorder unless you fix things up,"

The cat looked at him steadily, but made no reply.

"Oh, I know all about you," continued Joslyn, "for I saw and heard everything you said and did. But I won't tell, honest, if you'll put the furniture back where it belongs. Mama doesn't know 'bout fairies and she'll surely think I'm to blame if she finds things scattered 'round this way."

The cat gazed observantly around the room. The piano, being a clumsy thing at best, was not at all in its place, nor were many of the other pieces of furniture. The old gentleman had jumped into his picture so carelessly that the frame had been joggled and now hung crooked on the wall. The shepherdesses were standing with their backs to the room and the table cover was half off again.

Perhaps the Yellow Ryl realized the boy was justified in making his complaint, and perhaps it feared its king, the White Ryl, might consider this romp in the nature of mischief-making. Anyway, after its inspection of the room the cat slowly waved one paw — and with a slight rustling sound everything was changed.

Even mama's sharp eyes would not find anything wrong now, Joslyn joyfully acknowledged, and he turned to look at the cat again.

But the strange yellow animal had slipped away and was gone; nor did the boy ever see the creature again.

The Littlest Giant

An Oz Story

In a corner of Oz there is a high mountain called "The Giants' Peak," because all the giants who lived in that country inhabited that place. There were not many of them, thank goodness, and the people so detested them that they had driven them into this high place and kept them there although at times they would steal down into the plains and valleys to make mischief.

The royal family of the giants consisted of King Goola the Glutton, his wife Lazyliz and their little boy, Prince Kwa. This little boy giant was not very wise, for he ate a great deal and grew very fast and there was no school to send him to.

One day Kwa went out to where his father was standing on the mountain and asked:

"What can I do?"

"Don't bother me!" growled Goola.

"Why are giants so big?" inquired the boy.

"Don't ask fool questions," warned his father.

"Is a fool question one that cannot be answered?"

"Yes," said Goola the King. "Why don't you ask about something that is useful to know? Do you remember the lessons I have taught you?"

"Perhaps so," replied the boy giant, doubtfully.

"Well, what is the favorite slogan of the giants?"

'"Fee, Faw, Fum! I smell the girl with the chewing-gum; be she alive or be she dead, she'll sweep the floor and make the bed'."

"Wrong! all wrong," roared his father, in a rage. "It goes this way: 'Fee, faw, fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman'."

"But 'man' doesn't rhyme with 'fum'," complained Kwa, "and 'gum' does."

"Never mind that; you must stick to the regular formula, or I'll smash your head." Then, as evidence of what the threat meant, he landed such a cuff on Kwa's ear that the boy giant toppled to the ground and split a great flat rock on which he fell. As he sat up he heard his father say:

"Try to remember that now you are only a giantino, but that when grown to full size you will become a giant. Perhaps you may be King in my place, if those blood-thirsty Jack-the-Giant-Killers down in the valleys ever capture me."

"Are you afraid of them?" asked Kwa, slowly getting upon his feet.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Goola; "me, afraid of those tiny human beings, when I — have magic to aid me?"

“There are a lot of them,” remarked Kwa.

“True, my son; and when you become a full-grown giant it will be your chief business to fight and slay the humans — and to eat them. Therefore you may as well begin now to learn the ways of a warrior giant. In the first place, while on week days we usually eat oxen and elephants and such common food, we always like to have a nice fat human for our Sunday dinner.”

“I don’t care much for humans,” said Kwa; “that last one that mother baked was all skin and bones, and the flavor was bad.”

“I admit it;” replied Goola; “but humans are hard to catch, these days, and the one you refer to was an old farmer who had smoked tobacco so long that he was ill-flavored. The young ones are better and make fine broilers.”

“Do the humans eat giants, when they catch us?” inquired the boy.

“I think not. They simply kill us, stick us in the ground and cover us with earth and gravel. It is, of course, a disgrace not to be eaten when one is properly killed, but a dead giant has no power to compel men to eat him and those miserable humans do not know what is good.”

“What do they eat?” asked Kwa.

“Chili-sauce and ice-cream, I believe.”

“And mince pie,” said a voice behind them, and they now beheld the Littlest Giant, who had come up to them unobserved.

The littlest Giant was so small that the top of his head reached no higher than Kwa’s chin, but he was as large around as Goola the Glutton, and nearly as old. He was much despised by the other giants because he never grew tall, so the Littlest Giant lived all by himself in a cave of the mountains and had no wife or children. His right name was Bignonthaurus; but he was called Nibble, for short.

Goola the Glutton gave the Littlest Giant a stern look. “If you are going to interfere with my child’s education,” said he, “I will go away and leave you,” and he turned and marched into his castle and shut the door.

“That was very clever of the King,” remarked Nibble, looking after Kwa’s father without turning around, for like all that tribe of giants he had an eye in the back of his head as well as one in the center of his forehead, just over his nose. “The fact is, Kwa, that Goola wished to take a nap, for he tramped to the jungles last night and returned at daybreak this morning with an elephant under each arm and a couple of horses in his coat pocket.”

“I know,” replied Kwa, nodding his head; “we’re to have stewed horse for dinner tonight, and I’m very fond of the dish the way mother cooks it.”

“Horses are getting quite scarce,” sighed the Littlest Giant. “We have eaten so many of them that the poor humans are now obliged to ride around

in automobiles. Unfortunately, when the horses are gone, we cannot eat the automobiles."

"But tell me," begged the boy giant, "what did you mean by saying the humans eat mince pie?"

"I meant what I said. Mince pies, I am reliably informed, are their favorite diet."

"You didn't read it in the newspapers?"

"No, indeed; I believe it is true."

"And what sort of an animal is a mince pie?" inquired the curious Kwa.

"No one can ever tell," said Nibble, "for to trace a mince pie back to its origin is almost impossible. I must tell you, Kwa, that the pie consists of two crusts, between which is placed a compound of chopped meats and various other dainties, including raisins, plums and apples. The pie is then baked in an oven and eaten when it is fresh baked."

"A mince pie sounds very nice, Nibble;" said Kwa, smacking his lips. "I would greatly like to taste one of them."

The Littlest Giant gave the boy giant a shrewd look and replied: "One would scarcely be a taste for a giant, but a couple of dozen would make a nice mouthful. Isn't it sad that those miserable, tiny humans have so many delicious things to eat, while we poor giants must hunt like wild beasts to secure enough food to keep us alive? That is why we eat the humans when we can catch them, for if they eat their mince pies, and we eat them, we are likely to get an enchanting flavor of the pies."

"We do not catch many humans," said Kwa, "and I would prefer their pies at first hand. Is there no way for us to get some of them, Nibble?"

Now this was the very question the cunning Nibble had been leading the boy to ask, but at that moment Queen Lazyliz espied them from the castle window, which was only nine miles from where they stood, and came running out of the door toward them.

"Here comes your mother to drive me away," whispered the Littlest Giant. "Come to my cave when you have a chance, Kwa, and we will talk further about the mince pies."

Lazyliz arrived, swinging in her hand a rolling-pin as big around as a live-oak tree and shouting the while:

"Clear out of here, Nibble; quick! What do you mean, you disgraceful dwarf, by daring to speak to the royal Prince?"

Nibble did not wait to reply but ran away so fast that the ground trembled under the weight of his feet and the people in the valley said to one another: "The giants are getting uneasy; let's sharpen our spears, for fear they may come down on us."

Prince Kwa was not surprised at his mother's display of anger, because he knew all the big giants were constantly chasing the Littlest Giant away, whenever he came near to their dwellings; but the boy did not dislike Nibble because he was so near to the prince's own size, and that very afternoon he stole away from the castle and went to Nibble's cave.

Nibble had been sitting on a rock and waiting for the boy giant, and while he sat there his clever brain was thinking out a way to be revenged for all the insults he had suffered because of his size. It wasn't Nibble's fault that he was the Littlest Giant, yet all the big giants felt ashamed of him and called him a disgrace to their gigantic race. Nibble would sit on that rock in his isolated cave until he grew so lonely that he could bear it no longer, and then he would go to visit some of the other giants and be scolded and chased away from their homes. Their harsh words and cruel blows were a relief from his loneliness, for they furnished him with variety, so he accepted them as graciously as he could; but years of this uncomfortable life had finally made Nibble resentful and that was why he now decided to use Kwa to his own advantage.

"Down in the Second Valley;" he said to the boy giant, when they were seated together in Nibble's cave, "there lives a human baker who makes a hundred mince pies every day. You and I could go there some day — for it is only two hundred miles and we could walk that distance in half an hour — and seize the hundred pies and return here with them in our pockets. Then we could devour the delicious morsels at our ease and not a giant on the mountain would know anything about it."

"Let's do it, Nibble!" cried Kwa, eagerly. "Let's go tomorrow."

"We could easily get those pies," continued the cunning Nibble, speaking slowly, "if we had just one thing to assist us. But that one thing we have not got."

"What is it?" inquired the boy giant.

"Your father's Golden Dart."

Kwa was greatly disappointed when he heard that, for the Golden Dart was the most precious thing King Goola possessed and he never let anyone but himself touch it. The Golden Dart was the magic weapon which enabled the great giant to defeat all his foes and secure food for himself and his family. Whenever he left the mountain he carried the Golden Dart in his pocket, and when he cast it at an elephant or a human being or any other living thing, he would say:

"Fly away without delay; Quickly slay the giant's prey!" and the Golden Dart would slip through the air with the swiftness of the wind and pierce the heart of the giant's victim. Then it would whirl around and come straight

back to the giant's hand, in readiness to be used again. If he wished to slay an enemy King Goola would say:

"Swiftly go; carry woe To my foe and lay him low!" and the Golden Dart would obey and kill the giant's enemy before he could come near enough to fight Goola. It was no wonder the giant King prized his Golden Dart and guarded it jealously.

Now, Prince Kwa was only a boy and his knowledge was small and his judgement not developed. He was very sorry that Nibble needed his father's Golden Dart for the proposed adventure, because he had set his heart on testing those mince pies and like all human boys he wanted what he wanted when he wanted it and did not like to be denied.

"I am sure my father will not let us take his Golden Dart,' he said to Nibble.

"So am I," returned the Littlest Giant, "if we ask him for it." He gave Kwa time to think over this suggestion before he continued: "We could go to the valley in half an hour, seize the mince pies in five minutes and return here in another half hour. An hour and five minutes altogether. Why, Kwa, your father often sleeps for three whole hours, when he takes his afternoon nap."

"That is true," agreed the boy giant.

"When he goes to sleep you might steal into his room, take the Golden Dart and bring it here to me. Then we would go for the mince pies — I'm sure you will find them the most delicious food in all the world! — and on our return you will carry the Golden Dart to your father's room and lay it beside him while he still sleeps. He will never know we have used it and no harm will be done."

Kwa hesitated, for it was a daring thing to steal the King's magic weapon, even for an hour and five minutes, and he was afraid the theft would be discovered and he would be soundly beaten. Kwa remembered how hard old Goola struck when he was angry and the boy shuddered to think of the pommeling he would receive if caught in so bold an act of pilfering. Yet he wanted the mince pies.

"I'll think it over, Nibble," said he, getting up to go.

"All right," answered the Littlest Giant, in a cheerful tone; "if you don't wish to borrow the Dart, for an hour or so, we will say nothing more about those mince pies. They have a wonderful fragrance, and to smell them is almost as delightful as to eat them; however, unless we borrow the Dart for a brief space of time we shall never get near enough to the pies to even smell them."

Kwa walked slowly home and arrived in time for dinner, but all the while he ate of the stewed horses he thought of the mince pies and he gazed upon

the Golden Dart which his father always carried stuck in his belt with longing eye. Goola the Glutton was cross that evening, because one of the horses proved tough, being of a great age when it was killed, and he boxed Kwa's ears so soundly — without any cause whatever — that the humans down in the valley below heard the sound and mistook it for thunder.

Kwa was angry with his father, but more afraid than ever to steal the Golden Dart. Next morning he went to Nibble's cave and told him he dared not take the weapon, because if his father chanced to waken and found it missing he would beat Kwa so cruelly that the boy's flesh would be tender and sore for a month to come.

"I have been thinking of that," said the Littlest Giant, and going to a corner of his cave he brought forth a Golden Dart, which he held up before the eye of the wondering boy.

"When did you steal it?" asked Kwa.

"I didn't steal it; I made it," answered Nibble, laughing. "This Dart is gilded wood, instead of gold, and it has no magic power whatever. But it looks exactly like your father's enchanted weapon and even Goola couldn't tell the difference unless he tried to use it."

"But what is it good for?" inquired the boy giant.

"You will stick this in your father's belt when you take the magic Dart from him as he sleeps. If by chance he wakens while you are gone for the mince pies, he will think his Golden Dart is safe, and go to sleep again. In this way you will be safe from suspicion and whatever happens you will escape a beating."

Kwa was delighted with the Littlest Giant's cleverness. He took the Dart and concealed it in his sleeve and then went back to the castle of his father, the giant King.

Old Goola the Glutton ate a hearty luncheon of elephant steak — sliced thin and fried in perfumed fat- — and then he grew sleepy and lay down for his afternoon nap. Queen Lazyliz cleared the table and went into the kitchen to wash the dishes and while she was engaged in this task Kwa heard his father snoring lustily. The towers of the castle trembled with the sound, as if an earthquake had shaken them, and the boy giant stole quietly into Goola's bedroom and crept up beside him. When the giant drew in his breath, the Golden Dart was held tight; when he let out his breath, the Dart became loose. Noticing this, Kwa watched his chance and in one breath removed the Golden Dart from the belt and in the next breath replaced it with the imitation Dart. Then he softly left the room and the castle and ran to the cave of the Littlest Giant.

"Here it is!" he cried, panting as he held up the magic weapon.

Nibble's eye sparkled in his forehead, but he restrained his eager joy and said in a composed voice:

"Very good; let us be off at once, Kwa. And since your courage has made the trip possible I will give you two mince pies for every one I take myself. Are you sure this is the real Golden Dart?" he asked, extending his hand for it, as if to examine it.

"Oh, yes," replied Kwa, and having no suspicion of the Littlest Giant's great plans he allowed him to take the Dart.

Nibble's hand trembled with suppressed excitement as he placed the powerful weapon in his own belt. It was this very Golden Dart which had enabled Goola to become King of the Giants, as well as to rule them with cruel and merciless sway, for all feared the enchanted weapon which could pierce their hearts the instant it was commanded to do so. Goola had once captured it from a famous magician of the Gillikins, and now Nibble had captured it from Goola by cleverly encouraging Prince Kwa to fill his stomach with mince pies. The Littlest Giant was good natured in his triumph and decided that the boy had earned his promised reward.

Together they descended the mountain and reached the Second Valley, where stood the house of the baker. The man was terrified at beholding the two giants and fell on his knees and begged for mercy.

"Bring forth every mince pie in your bakery!" commanded Nibble, and the baker obeyed at once. There were ninety-three of them, for he had already sold seven of his morning's baking, and the giants filled their pockets with the pastry, taking the tins in which they were baked as well as the pies. Then they let the baker go unharmed and returned to the mountain. They reached Nibble's cave in exactly one hour and five minutes from the time they had left it; but Kwa said: "We did not need the Golden Dart, after all!"

"True," replied the Littlest Giant; "but we might have needed it."

While Kwa sat on the rock devouring the mince pies, which he thought very nice but not quite so good as Nibble had described them, the Littlest Giant went to the back of his cave and, quite unobserved by the boy, replaced the Golden Dart in his belt with another gilded wooden one, for he had made two imitations. Then he hid the real magic weapon in a crevice of rock and returned to Kwa, who had just finished eating his share of the pies, so that the floor of the cave was all littered with tins.

"You must run home and replace the Golden Dart before your father wakens," he said to the boy, drawing the imitation one from his belt and handing it to him.

Kwa ran home and found Goola still asleep; so he managed to exchange the darts without wakening the Giant King. Nibble had warned him to

destroy the wooden dart, so Kwa managed to thrust it unobserved into the kitchen fire, where it burned to ashes.

At dinner he saw his father appear, with the Dart stuck in his belt, and the boy was content in the belief that his trick had not been discovered. Kwa had eaten so many mince pies that he had no appetite for roast elephant, and his failure to eat so provoked his father that he boxed his son's ears again, not knowing that this time the punishment was deserved.

A day or two afterward, the elephants and horses being now devoured, King Goola started upon another hunting trip. He tramped six hundred miles or so and came upon a herd of fierce rhinoceri. Taking the Dart from his belt he said:

"Fly away without delay; Quickly slay the giant's prey!"

Then he cast the dart toward a distant bull rhinoceros, but it only flew a few feet and dropped to the ground.

Goola was amazed. He tried it again, but the dart would not fly because it was made of wood and had no magic power. Then Goola became frightened, not knowing why the dart had failed him, and he turned around to go home again. But in two steps he encountered an army of the humans, who were armed with sharp spears and had lain in wait to capture this cruel giant, who had killed so many men and horses.

Goals started to retreat, but the rhinoceri were now chasing him in a great band on one side and the army of humans was advancing on the other side, so that in less than five minutes Goola was a lifeless giant — one less of the dreadful race that had terrorized the people for ages.

When Goola failed to return the giants of the mountain called a meeting to elect a new king, and some were in favor of a fierce giant named Polycrimus and some favored the boy Kwa, the son of their former king. But, to the astonishment of all, the Littlest Giant stood up and declared he would be the King, saying that if any dared oppose him he would slay them without mercy.

So accustomed were they all to sneer at Nibble that they paid little heed to his threats until, by means of the Golden Dart, he had killed all the biggest and strongest of the tribe — making that many less to terrorize the peaceful inhabitants of the valleys. The others reluctantly submitted to the conqueror and the Littlest Giant became King.

"I think I will live in Goola's castle," he said, and so Lazyliz and the boy Kwa were obliged to move into the cave where Nibble used to reside.

After that all bowed low to the Littlest Giant and feared the magic power of his Golden Dart. Lazyliz could never understand how Nibble got the Dart, for Kwa did not tell, being too ashamed, and Nibble did not tell, being too

shrewd. But all knew that as long as Nibble possessed the enchanted talisman he would remain King.

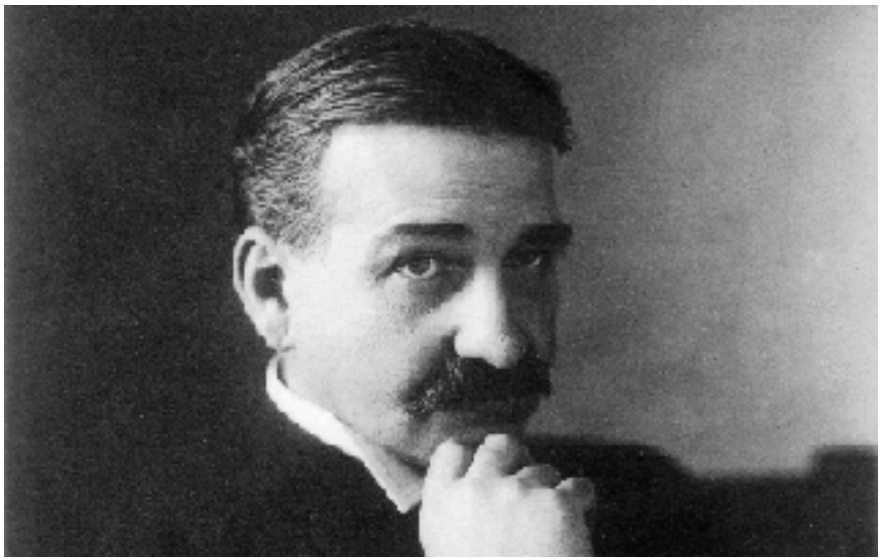
"Which proves," said the former queen to her son, the former prince, "that cleverness is worth more than size and strength."

"And it also proves," said Kwa to himself, "that it is unwise to deceive one's own father, or to steal what another values. For when I borrowed the Golden Dart I won, indeed, a lot of mince pies, which were soon gone; but I lost a father and a throne and am now condemned to pass my life in a cave, to atone for my fault."

Which proves, in addition to the above, that Kwa was beginning — too late, perhaps — to learn wisdom.

Thereafter, he spent many days amusing himself by spinning tin pie plates down from the mountain into the valleys below, until those reminders of his evil deed no longer cluttered the floor of the cave.

The Short Stories



LIST OF SHORT STORIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

SHE REMARKS EMPHATICALLY ON SOME TIMELY AND TRUTHFUL TOPICS
SHE REMONSTRATES ON THE GIDDINESS OF CHURCH SOCIALS
SHE GOES TO A BALL AND LETS A CAT OUT OF THE BAG
SHE OUTDOES NELLIE BLY AND MAKES A TRIP AROUND ABERDEEN IN 72 MINUTES AND 6 SECONDS
SHE INSISTS ON HER BOARDERS KEEPING LENT, WITH INDIFFERENT SUCCESS
SHE GETS A LETTER FROM HER BROTHER IN HARRIMAN THAT NEARLY BREAKS UP THE ESTABLISHMENT
SHE DABBLES IN POLITICS AND ASPIRES TO A GREAT OFFICE
SHE WORRIES OVER SEED WHEAT, AND GETS LECTURED BY THE BOARDERS
SHE DISCUSSES THE DISADVANTAGES OF PROHIBITION, AND INVENTS A NEW METHOD OF BAKING PIES
SHE MAKES A TERRIBLE MISTAKE AND QUOTES A PROVERB
SHE TELLS WHY FARMERS SHOULD BE HAPPY AND DISPLAYS REMARKABLE FORETHOUGHT
SHE ASPIRES TO RIVAL ELLA WHEELER WILCOX AND CONCOCTS ANOTHER SCHEME
SHE LECTURES THE BOARDERS FOR UNSEEMLY CONDUCT AND FEEDS THEM A GREEN APPLE PIE
HER EXPERIENCES IN ATTEMPTING TO PHOTOGRAPH A BABY, AND THE SEVERE MENTAL STRAIN THAT ENSUED
SHE DISCOURSES ON MANY TOPICS AND TELLS HOW ALLEY DEALS OUT THE CORN
SHE GIVES AWAY THE INITIATION CEREMONIES OF THE UNITED WORKMEN AND HAS A FRUITLESS SEARCH FOR THE CHIEF OF POLICE
SHE INVESTIGATES THE ORIGINAL PACKAGE DEAL WITH DOUBTFUL RESULTS
SHE RAISES THE PRICE OF BOARD, BUT LOWERS IT AGAIN THROUGH STERN NECESSITY
SHE MANUFACTURES HASH AND GIVES THE BOARDERS A FEW POINTERS ON THE ABERDEEN GUARDS

SHE TACKLES RELIGION AND GIVES HER IDEAS OF THE SUNDAY ENFORCEMENT LAW
SHE PREPARES A TREAT FOR THE BOARDERS WHICH LEADS TO A STRANGE COMEDY OF ERRORS
SHE ANNOUNCES HER BIRTHDAY AND MAKES AN EVEN EXCHANGE WITH THE BOARDERS
SHE CELEBRATES THE FOURTH AND RELATES HER VARIED EXPERIENCES
SHE DISCOURSES UPON LOVE AND POLITICS
SHE BUYS A COW AND THE BOARDERS HELP HER MILK IT
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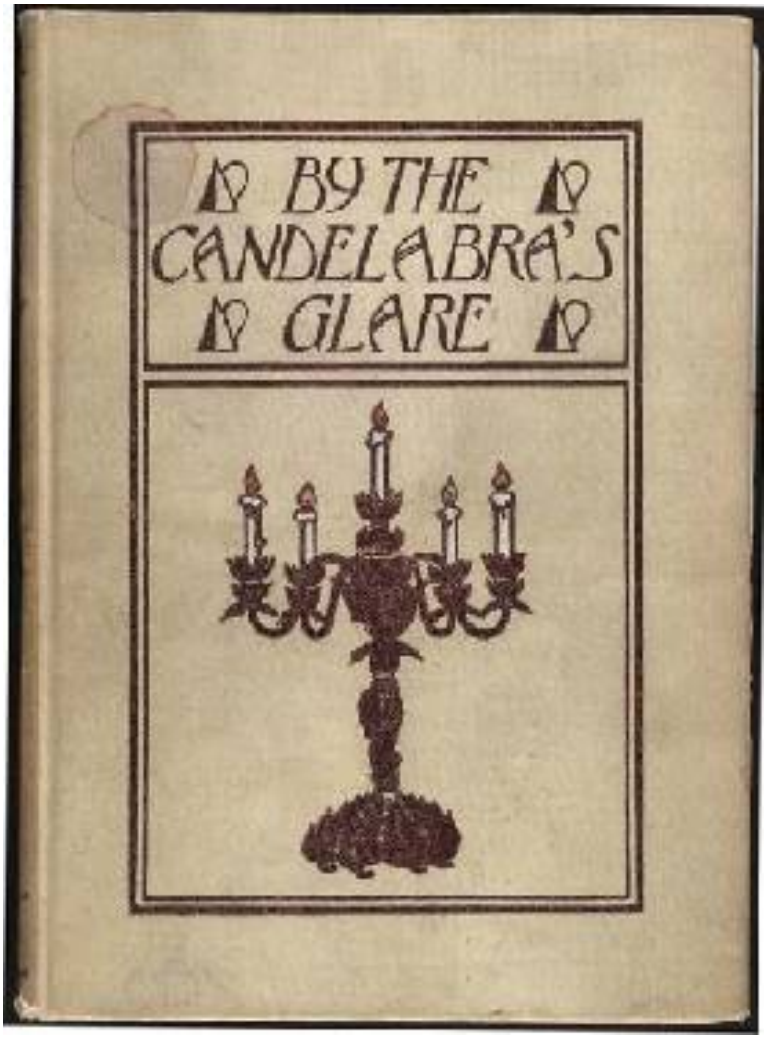
The Poetry Collections

A recent view of L. Frank Baum's house at Coronado Island, San Diego, California

BY THE CANDELABRA'S GLARE

By the Candelabra's Glare was L. Frank Baum's first collection of verse, privately printed in 1898. Baum obtained a small printing press and printed the book's 99 copies himself. He solicited the help of friends in its design, including eight illustrators, among them his future collaborator on *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, W.W. Denslow. The volume's 41 poems include a variety of sentimental and humorous verses, some previously published in newspapers. They range in subject from a humorous glimpse at feminists, to a farm wife in South Dakota, to a look at that era's mania for bicycles. Its final section featured nine poems for children. Baum expanded on the idea the following year with *Father Goose: His Book*, which gained his first great commercial success.



A first edition copy of By the Candelabra's Glare

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I am under obligations to Mr. A.H. Dwight, of the Dwight Brothers Paper Company, for the Paper on which these pages are printed, to Mr. Chauncey L. Williams for the end papers; to Mr. H.C. Maley, of the Illinois engraving company, for the zinc etchings; to Mr. Will A. Grant of Marsh and Grant, for the inks and sundry favors, and to Mr. George R. Smith, of The American Type Founding Company, for the types and press.

FOREWORD

A friend of mine, who has attained eminence as a critic, once found me glancing through a book of verse.

"What are you looking for?" he demanded.

"His excuse," said I.

"My dear boy," returned the eminent critic, frowning severely, "there can be no excuse for a book of verse."

"Not if it chances to be poetry?" I asked.

"Ah, said my friend, lightly, "that is another matter."

My best friends have never called me a poet, and I have been forced to admire their restraint. Nevertheless, this little book has an excuse. Unaided, I have set the types and turned the press and accomplished the binding. Such as it is, the book is "my very own."

Another peculiar thing about this volume, which, I believe, renders it unique, is the fact that there has not been a penny of expense attending its production. For my good friends, when they found I was going to make a book, insisted upon furnishing all the pictures and material, and I have generously allowed them to do so.

I have done my work in the evenings, when my business cares were over. It has been my recreation.

I know a man whose battles with the world have never impaired his cheery disposition, his faith in humanity, his generous optimism. Although essentially a man of business, he joys in living, and those who meet him drop from their shoulders the mantle and care of perplexity and live while in his presence. With full appreciation of my privilege to call him friend, I dedicate this modest volume to Harrison H. Roundtree, of Chicago.

Semi-Sentimental Verse by the Candelabra's Glare

OFT at night, while on my bed--
Tossing here and turning there--
Vagrant thoughts crowd in my head,
Lingering, till in despair
I arise, and to my desk
Draw my well-worn easy chair
And transfer the thoughts to words
By the candelabra's glare.
Vain imaginings, no doubt,
Meaning little, rhyming fair;
And when they are written down
And upon me coldly stare
In their new-born black and white,
I am tempted to declare
Never more I'll scribble verse
By the candelabra's glare.

(Honestly, I never owned a candelabrum. And I believe they seldom glare unless highly polished. But my good friend, Mr. Costello, considered the title of this book a good one and straightway designed me a cover and made the plates. So I wrote the verses to give the cover countenance, and substituting prosaic gas-light for the candelabra, the matter is true enough.)

T’ other Day

SUSIE tripped across the green
T’ other day;
Sweeter maiden ne’er was seen,
I must say.
Golden locks a bonnet covered,
On her cheeks the dimples hovered,
Pearly teeth her smile discovered
T’ other day.
I was passing ‘long and fell
In her way,
And thought it might be well
To delay
While in words that stuck and stumbled
All my bashful love I mumbled
And my heart before her humbled,
T’ other day.
Susie’s cheeks flushed like the rose
Straight away;
Seemed as if those blushes chose
To betray
She was not indifferent;
So I pleaded with intent
Till I won her shy consent--
T’ other day.
What! Did I say this took place
T’ other day?
Surely old time runs apace--
‘T is his way!
Though my grandson now is lying
On my knees to prove Time’s flying,
It still seems, there’s no denying,
T’ other day.

Right at Last

I

POLLY will not speak to me--
Very angry seems to be!
All because, while coming ‘long
From the meet for evening song
I have asked her for a kiss--
Just to seal our evening’s bliss.

II

Polly will not look at me--
Turns her back coquettishly;
Frowns demurely, tries to weep:
Is her anger then so deep?
Does she wish to punish me
For my rash temerity?

III

Polly will not hark to me--
Nor to my apology;
‘Til I, unable to resist,
Catch her in my arms and kiss
The pouting lips, and then I see
Polly sweetly smiles on me!

Time’s Vagaries

THERE’S a streak of gray in Mollie’s hair--
Ah, me! how Time flies!
Once her tresses were rich and fair,
But time has wrought this strange disguise
To make her sweeter in my eyes,
For Mollie’s beyond compare!
There’s many a wrinkle on Mollie’s face--
Ah, me! how Time flies!
But what a rogue Time is, to place
On velvet that subtle lace
To make her sweeter in my eyes
And give her added grace.
Mollie’s blue eyes are growing dim--
Ah, me! how Time flies!
‘T is strange that Time should seize the whim
To change them so; yet thanks to him,
She’s even sweeter in my eyes,
Despite the tyrant grim.
In fact, my Mollie’s growing old--
But then, you know, Time flies.
‘T was years ago when first I told
Fair Mollie of my love so bold,
And now she’s sweeter in my eyes
Than then, a thousandfold!

Her Answer

I

O'ER my darling's cheeks the lashes
Fall in trembling modesty,
Shutting out the loving flashes
From the eyes so dear to me.
And, although no word is spoken,
I am answered by this token.

II

O'er my darling's cheeks are stealing
All the tintings of the roses,
Love's unfailing sign, revealing
That in me her heart reposes.
As the blushes come and go
Well her answer do I know!

III

On my darling's lip there lingers
Just a hint of smile enchanting;
Softly clasped are dainty fingers,
Swells the bosom, faintly panting.
Never mind the whispered "yes,"
Love, your answer I can guess!

My Quandary

‘T IS very sad, alas! to be
In such a dreadful quandary--
   I wish you’d help me out!
Please tell me which--but there! I’ll just
Explain the case, and then, I trust,
   You’ll ease me of my doubt.
The baby is his father’s joy--
A chubby, dimpled, laughing boy
   Well worthy of my pride;
His rosy-tinted finger-tips
His candid eyes and smiling lips
   Mark Innocence personified.
And Bessie holds him in her arms
Close to her breast, and on his charms
   She feasts her loving eyes;
While o’er her face a radiance steals
That all her mother-love reveals
   In all its sweetest guise.
And so, my quandary is this:
Betwixt the babe’s and Bessie’s bliss
   Which do you think completer?
Or, put in in another way:
Suppose that you were me--now, pray,
   Which would you think the sweeter?

My First Love

WHEN first I pressed Rosanna's hand
My love did not withdraw it
'Til my hand trembled with delight,
And then, indeed, she saw it;
For very softly she withdrew
Her hand--and she was trembling, too!
When first I kissed Rosanna's lips
I thrilled with ecstacy;
And, though I've often kissed her since,
No other kiss can be
Quite so delicious as that one
Which sealed her for my very own.
When first my arm around her waist
Stole in a sweet embrace,
Her head upon my shoulder fell
To hide her blushing face.
She softly whispered "please let go!"
And yet, I think she liked it so.
Those first endearments linger yet
In memry's deep recess,
Although since then I 've surely had
A surfiet of caresses.
Yet well I know regret is vain,
Since my first love never comes again.

The Green-Eyed Monster

WHEN Mabel waltzed with Captain Brown
My heart was in a flutter,
I scarcely could repress a frown,
And naughty words did mutter.
Of course, I did not swear aloud,
For I was waltzing sadly
With Miss McGee, who's very proud
And dances very badly.
But as we whirled I oft did look
Where Mabel waltzed so lightly,
And wondered why the villain took
Her round the waist so tightly.
I saw her tranquil, downcast eyes,
Though she was blushing sweetly,
And noted how, to my surprise,
She seemed absorbed completely.
And when that horrid dance was o'er
As soon as I was able
I strode across the ballroom floor
And angrily sought Mabel.
But, e'er I had a chance to speak
She said, in accents sprightly,
"I saw you dancing with that freak
Whose dress is so unsightly;
"You did not even pity me,
Though I was bored to death,
But dance with poor old Miss McGee
'Til you were out of breath!"
At this, I laughed quite merrily
And smoothed away my frown,
For now I knew she loved but me,
And not poor Captain Brown.

Jessie, My Queen!

NOW, bow thy crest and bend the knee
And humbly droop thine eye,
And thus in reverent posture be
'Til Jessie, my Queen, goes by.
Nor shalt you have rebellious thought,
That thou must homage bear--
Far more than crowned Queen she ought
The crown of fame to wear.
For Jessie's eyes are clear and blue:
Can other Queens show eyes so true?
And Jessie's brow is smooth and white:
In such a brow would Queens delight!
And Jessie's lips are red and sweet:
Would Queens' lips be so sweet to meet?
And Jessie's hair is golden red:
What queen has such a regal head?
All other forms her form demeans
In all ways she's divine!
The world claims all the earhtly queens,
While Jessie, my Queen, is mine.
Then bow thy crest and bend the knee
And humbly droop thine eye,
And thus in reverent posture be
'Til Jessie, my Queen, goes by.

A Sonnet to My Lady's Eye

IF inspiration comes, I'll try
A sonnet to my lady's eye--
   Her black eye.
And yet, there seems a woeful lack
Of proper words to rhyme with "black,"
And black eyes savor of attack--
   I'd best abandon black.
I'll start again, and this time try
A sonnet to my lady's eye--
   Her gray eye.
And yet, what color does convey
So passionless a sense as gray?
And tigers' eyes are gray, they say--
   My lady's can't be gray.
Ah, now the idea comes! I'll try
A sonnet to my lady's eye--
   Her violet eye.
And yet, unless I much forget,
No lady's eye was violet
Since time began; so with regret,
   Adieu to violet!
And so at last I'm force to try
A sonnet to my lady's eye--
   Her blue eye.
And yet, what can I say that's new?
The whole world knows blue eyes are true;
Besides, I must confess to you
  My lady's eyes are blue!

Tell Me

TELL me, if at ev'ry meeting,
As I hold her hand in greeeting,
My poor heart is wildly beating--
Is this love?
When, in accents low and broken
Tender words to her I've spoken
Shall I know, and by what token?
This is love?
Tell me, when with pulses flying
For her presence I am sighing,
What's the method of applying
This to love?
For, you see, in years departed
Oft have I been broken hearted
When a maiden's "no" imparted
Woe to love.
Yet, somehow, I have existed,
And in other loves persisted,
Though each one I have insisted
Was true love.

At Last

I AM reading your letter tonight, dear heart,
The letter you wrote long ago.
The pages are tattered and falling apart
But well every sweet word I know.
You tell me your love will abide for alway
'Till once more I stand by your side
And as you say you will joyfully welcome the day
I returned for my own promised pride.
No matter though oceans are rolling between,
No matter though suitors may bow,
No matter though slow-dragging years intervene
You say you 'll be true to our vow.
Ah, many a summer has blossomed since then
And many a drear winter passed,
But now, my own love, I am coming again,
To claim your sweet promise at last.
I know that my hair is well sprinkled with gray,
That my features are wrinkled and stern;
For fighting the world is a grim sort of play,
As even the victor must learn.
But what do I care, when this old heart of mine
Has grown the more steadfast and true,
When even the traces of years are a sign
That I 've remained faithful to you?
I know that your poor heart has suffered much pain
Throughout the long years that are past,
But now, my own love, I am coming again
To claim your sweet promise at last!

The Answer

Dear Tom: your nice letter just reached me today.
  So glad you ‘re at last coming home!
My husband and I, there is no need to say,
  Insist on a call when you come.
And the children, sweet pets! will listen with joy
  To your tales of adventure so true;
And--oh! by the way, our youngest dear boy
  We’ve just christened Tom--after you!

Cycling Verse: A Header

I CATCH a flash from merry eye--
I see a wave of golden curl;
And then there swiftly passes by
Upon her wheel, a pretty girl!
I know my seat is not secure,
(I've only had my wheel a day),
And yet one glance I must procure
Before the vision speeds away.
Vainglorious fool! Upon my head
I land, nor see the sight I sought;
For down the street my charmer's fled
And I've a header for nought!

A Ruse

WHEN sweet Irene learned to ride
  Fearsome doubts did rend her;
So she kept me at her side,
  That I might defend her.
    And I cried “look out, Irene!
    Sit up straight and do not lean
    O’er the side of the machine--
      That’s the way to ride!”
Said the maiden “I’m afraid!--
  It’s so very treacherous;
And I Wish I’d stayed
  And not been so venturous.”
    “Nonsense!” I replied, “‘t isclear
    You are safe while I am here.
    Pedal on without a fear--
      Never be dismayed!--
But Irene, with reckless grace,
  From her saddle swayed,
And I in a close embrace
  Caught the frightened maid.
    “There is no cause for alarm,”
    I exclaimed, “You ‘re safe from harm
    While encircled by my arm.”
      “That is true,” she said.
Queer it was, but after that,
  (While my ring she wore)
Firmly the machine she sat--
  Frightened never more!
    And I said, “I’m glad you fell
    E’er you learned to ride so well.”
    “Yes,” said she, “but, truth to tell,
        “I intended that!”

The Proud Miss MacNeal

OH, very proud was Miss MacNeal!
Proud of her bloomers and proud of her wheel,
Proud of the style she couldn't but feel
The whole world recognized;
She was proud of the boots that fitted so neat,
Proud of her costume so natty and sweet,
Proud that her outfit was so complete
Beholders were paralyzed;
Proud that her mount was strictly high grade,
Proud that to scorch she was n't afraid,
Proud that her lady friends essayed
To flatter by imitation;
She was proud she held her head so high
That every commoner passing by
With envious and with jealous sigh
Acknowledged her lofty station.
Of course, there were some with hearts so sore
As they watched her pedal the boulevards o'er
Who declared her father had peddled before,
To earn an honest living;
But Miss MacNeal nor knew nor cared
The wicked tongues of those who stares
Such ancient history had bared
With memories unforgiving.
A little higher she raised her nose
A trifle jauntier she held her pose,
A glance of approval she gave her clothes
And smiled in sweet derision.
Nor knew that speeding down the street
With low-bowed head and twinkling feet
A scorcher rushed, her wheel to meet
In terrible collision.
There came a clash of steel to steel;
There lay a mess of damaged wheel;
And, torn and trembling, Miss MacNeal
Arose from out the gutter.
With bloomers rent both hip and thigh,
With vast contusions on her eye,

Upon the curb she sank to cry
And moans of grief to utter.
Nor failed to hear the wicked jeers
From onlookers, that met her ears
As wantonly they lavished sneers
Upon her wretched plight.
“The clouds that in the heavens spread
Are beautiful,” one mocker said,
“But cycling folk should look ahead--
Unless they ‘ve second sight!”
Oh, never more will Miss MacNeal
In natty bloomers mount her wheel
And all the sweet sensations feel
Of speeding down the street!
With humble mien she ambles down
The sidewalks that adorn the town,
And seems content in modest gown
To exercise her feet.

Farmer Benson on the Motocycle

“HERE, Betsy, come to the winder--quick!
   An’ limber along right spry--
It comes up the hill like a thousand o’ brick,
   An’ I want you to see it go by.
‘There’s curious things took place in this world
   Since we’ve lived, an’ before we die
We’ll see the peculiarest wheel that ‘ere whirled--
   When the new motocycle rolls by.
“There she goes! like a thing o’ life a’most--
   Just watch them ‘air rubber wheels fly!
That old hoss an’ wagon’ll have to clear coast
   When the new motocycle spins by.
“I thought when the ‘phone and the phonograph come
   I’d see no greater sight ‘til I’d die;
But I’ve seen the new gal in bloomers, by gum!
   An’ the new motocycle pass by.

Then and Now

WHEN Mary first wore bloomers
   Tom tore his hair and swore
He never could love her
   As he'd loved her just before.
But Mary 's wearing bloomers yet,
And Tom, regardless ofhis threat,
Still called her "my own darling pet"--
            In bloomers!
When Mary first wore bloomers
   The little dogs would bark
As on her wheel she sped along
   The pathway to the park.
But Mary's wearing bloomers still;
The dogs have lost their old ill-will
And all desire to chase and kill
            Those bloomers.
When Mary first wore bloomers
   The minister was grieved,
And only by an earnest prayer
   His feelings he relieved.
But Mary's wearing bloomers now;
The parson greets her with a bow,
And well she knows that he 'll allow
            Her bloomers.
When Mary first were bloomers
   The boys did shout and howl
"Git onter de female Turkish guy!"
   Regardless of her scowl.
In bloomers Mary stillis dressed--
The boys have ceased their ribald jest
And lost their wicked interest
            In bloomers.
When Mary first wore bloomers
   Her sire was really shocked;
The mater blushed and trembled
And her brothers at her mocked.
But Mary's wearing them today--
She's confident they 've come to stay;

And men do n’t look the other way
From bloomers.

Unassorted Verse

Johnson

(Extracts from the diary of Joel Baily, Constable.)

April 6th.

Who's Johnson?

No one knows who Johnson is.
Came to town a month ago,
Went to work, minded his biz.--
An' that's all our people know.
Seems a quiet sort o'man,
Doesn't talk about his life;
No ambition--not a plan--
Hasn't neither child ner wife.

July 3d.

Dickson's house burnt down today.
All rushed out, an' in their flight
Left their baby boy at play--
Quite forget'n' him through fright.
None dared stir 'til Johnson came,
Heard the news an' rushed inside,
Fought his way through smoke an' flame,
Saved the child. But Johnson--died.
No one knows who Johnson is,
But many loved the man today,
Glad I was a friend o'his--
Died a hero's death, *I* say.

July 10th.

Famous city detective's here;
Came to hunt a murd'rer down.
Tracked the feller nigh a year,
'Til he traced him to our town.
Said the man was desperate--
Worst he ever knew by half.
Hoped he hadn't come too late;
Then he showed me his photograph.
*'T was Johns*on!

La Reine Est Mort[1]--

Vive la Reine!

THEN shout hurrah for the woman new,
With her rights and her votes and her bloomers, too!
Evolved though bikes and chewing gum,
She's come!
And whisper farewell to the sweetheart fair,
To the blushing cheeks and modest air;
To the eyes that shone so tender and true--
Adieu!
And shout hurrah for the woman new!
With her necktie, shirt and tooth-pick shoe,
With tailor-made suit and mien[2] severe
She's here!
And bid good-by[3] to the matron sweet,
To the mother the whole world used[4] to greet
With reverence. She's had to quit
And flit!
And shout hurrah for the woman new!
Who wants a new Bible to suit her new view,
And writes for the papers and eats at the club
Her grub.
And search in vain for the loving wife--
That prise[5] once counted most precious in life;
That aggressive New Woman has put her away
To stay!

1. sic.
2. 23 June 1895 Chicago Times-Herald has "mein."
3. newspaper version has "goodbye."
4. newspaper version has "loved."
5. newspaper version has "prize."

Ye Warming Pan

OUR ancestor of early days,
  Although half civilized,
Had still some method in his ways
  And comfort highly prized,
He knew enough to warm his bed--
  This level-headed man--
“God bless the chap,” he often said,
“Who got the notion in his head
  To make the warming pan!”
We moderns who are girded
  By all inventions new,
Now crawl between two icy sheets
  And shiver ‘til we’re blue.
We stick our nose above the clothes
  And yell--when speak we can--
“The fashion blast from first to last
That made a relic of the past
  The ancient warming pan!”

The Egotist

I

NOW what care I what the world may think,
    So long as my thoughts are mine?
I may revel in dreams that are sweet to me,
In fancies and vagaries pleasant and free;
And no one will know of the joys I drink--
    So long as my thoughts are mine.

II

And what care I what the world may say,
    So long as my words are mine?
For others may prate of their worldly cares,
Of troubles, ambitions, of business or shares;
But I may converse in a pleasanter way--
    So long as my words are mine.

III

And what care I what the world may do,
    So long as my deeds are mine?
The scramble for wealth and power and fame
Is a life that to me seems dull and tame;
For I--but *that* I must not tell *you*
    So long as my deeds are mine!

The Youngster

I

A MAN is as old as he feels, they say.
And I feel quite young, and my heart is light;
Nor can I explain in plausible way
The dimness that ‘s creeping athwart my sight.

II

My heart is light and I laugh with joy,
Nor care a jot for the world and its ways;
Not even rheumatic twinges alloy
The pleasures I glean from these youthful days.

III

I laugh with joy--and I’d leap with glee
If only my back would permit the play;
For dear are the frolics of youth to me.
And a man ‘s as young as he feels, they say!

Nance Adkins

(Three years in succession the Dakota wheat crop failed. The third year farmers were left without seed. A committee was appointed to seek aid from neighboring states and to borrow sufficient wheat to furnish the needy farmers the required seed.

(Their efforts were successful, but many of the farmers were too proud to apply to the committee, or to accept what they considered charity. The story of Nance Adkins is true.)

SO I up an' says to William,
  As he sot the winder nigh
An' watched the flutterin' snow flakes
  As they floated from the sky:
"Come, old man--don't look so bitter,
  Fill yer pipe, an' take a smoke;
Draw yer chair up nigh the fire,
  An' let's talk awhile an' joke!
"It ain't right to be downhearted;
  Time to laugh is jest the while
When yer feel yer'd like ter blubber--
  Then it 's some use fer to smile!"
"Yes, says he, "I know, old woman,
  What it's right I orter do;
But the pluck is all gone from me--
  Nothin's left ter buckle to
"That can keep my wife an' children
  From starvation's boney grasp,
An' the future 's dark an' dreary--
  Ruin 's come to us at last!
"To be sure, I might ha' mor'gaged
  All we had to buy us feed
'Til there comes another harvest,
  If we only had the seed.
"Yes--I know--I might 'a' had it,
  But the false pride held me back;
I *could 'nt* make the 'application'
  An' *beg*--fer a single sack!
"I could easy face the hardships
  That 's a comin', I well know,
If it was n't that the children

An' you, wife, must suffer so!"
"Come, come, Bill," says I, quite cheerful,
Though a lump were in my throat,
"There's a many honest honest farmer
That 's in jest as bad a boat.
"So let 's kneel; and ask fer courage
As we're told to in His word;
It 'll make our hearts feel lighter,
Even if the prayer ain't heard."
Solemnly we knelt us down,
And together, hand in hand,
Prayed that He would grant His mercy
To the needy in the land.
Suddenly there come a rappin'
Right there on our kitchen door,
An' William opened it an' found
A man we 'd never seen afore.
An' he says, so bright an' smilin',
"Farmer, here's a load o' wheat
Jest the 'mount ye need fer seedin'--
Please ter sign this here receipt.
"Fer I come from the C'mitte
That has raised fer honest men
All the seed they need fer puttin'
'Em upon their feet agen.
"Here 's yer orig'nal Application:
'Farmer Adkins has a need
Fer an even hundred bushel,
On his land to use fer seed.
"'Signed, *Bill Adkins*.' There ye are, sir,
An' of course ye'll pay the men
Fer the seed they have advanced ye
When the harvest comes agen."
Silent like Bill took the paper;
Silent turned to where I stood
With the tears a rollin' down my
Face--because I felt so good!
An' he reached out both his strong arms
An he hugged me to his breast,
Sayin', "Nance, of all the blessin's

On this earth, the very best
“Is a wife that ‘s kind an’ loving!
This here seed I do n’t despite,
Though I guess the applicater
Were a woman ‘bout your size.
“Come, old girl, we ‘ll kneel once more;
You can thank the God above
Fer the blessin’ of the seed-wheat,
An’ I fer a noble woman’s love!”

A Bird Dog

IN the cage was the canary
Trilling forth in accents merry,
Full of life and also very
    Graciously contented.
On the floor the little Pug,
Watching, lay upon a rug,
And, to judge from wrinkled mug,
    Biridie's glee resented.
Soon he sprang upon the table--
Though you 'd scarce think he was able--
And straightaway ensued the babel
    Discordant and hideous!
Mary, hearing sounds of fray,
Entered quick in dire dismay,
But alas! the feathers lay
    Scattered most invidious.
Mary was beside herself,
But the Pug cared naught; the elf
Had the bird inside himself
    And was satisfied.
Mary wept and Mary wailed,
But the murd'rer never quailed;
He 'd have wept if he had failed,
    Now he grinned with pride.

When the Whistle Blows

TIRED faces brighten
  When the whistle blows,
Grave eyes quickly lighten,
  For the workman knows
Now the tedious work is done,
  Day is at its close,
And the daily wage is won
  When the whistle blows.
Homeward thoughts are turning
  When the whistle blows,
For the hearthstone yearning
  And the sweet repose
Surely won in labor's mart;
  So the workman goes
To his home with joyful heart
  When the whistle blows.

The Heretic

I KNOW they calls me “heretic”--
   An names that’s even wuss,
‘N’ say as I ‘m a shif’less chap,
   Not wuth a tinker’s cuss
They ask me why I do n’t go t’ church
   An’ hear the parson preach
An’ lis’n to the doctrines
   He’s anxious fer to teach.
   The church is mighty grand an’ fine,
      Too fine fer me, I guess,
   Fer it ‘s a place where rents are high
      An’ all is style an’ dress.
   The parson gets, fer what he says,
      A mighty lib’ral pay,
   An’ when they do n’t shell out enough
      He quits, an’ goes away.
The deacon tole me yisterday
   That when I come to die
I’ll burn in everlastin’ flame
   Forever an’ for aye!
Says he, “jes’ see how saintly
   A feller can become
Who says his prayers an’ does n’t touch
   Terbaccer, beer ner rum!”
   But when a man las’ winter
         Begged fer a loaf o’ bread
   To feed his starvin’ family
      This same good deacon said:
   “You scoundrel, if I find agen
      You ‘re beggin’ at my door,
   I’ ll put ye in the calaboose
      Fer sixty days, er more!”
Las’ Sunday old Sam Jackson,
   Who allus were a thief,
An’ cussed an’ swore an’ had no store
   O’ Christianlike belief,
Lay dyin’ in his shanty,
   An’ when he passed away

He tol' me he was 'mighty glad
He 'd never larnt to pray.
An' over to th' meetin'-house
They took up a c'lection
T' "spread th' Word in Asia,"
Or some other furrin section.
Thy did n't care that layin' 'round
The city were a show
O' heathens wuss ner Asia's--
'T wa' n't Christianlike, ye know.
It 's allus been my way t' try
To help my feller man,
An' when I find a wretch that's down
I boost him all I can.
I know 't ain't Christianlike, an' that
I orter pray instead.
That my poor soul won't be burnt up
Immejitly I'm dead.
Each churchman 's pluggin' fer himself,
An' cares fer nothin' more
If he can only land at last
Upon the golden shore.
An' so, I guess a heretic
I'd much prefer to be;
This selfish Christianity
Ain't good enough fer me!

A Rare Bit

(Writ dejectedly at early dawn.)

THE rarebit is an elfish imp
  That wields a deadly power,
Though frequently nonchalantly
  The demon we devour.
I think I ‘ve figured out the way
  This weird dish is created,
And if you ‘d try this recipe
  Below ‘t is plainly stated:
You take a drove of nightmares,
  Of headache quite a lot,
A cord of hard dyspepsia
  And of mulligrubs a jot,
And roll and mash and bake ‘em
  ‘Til browned to fit the code,
Then feed it to your dearest friends
  As “rarebit, à la mode”!
‘T would be palpably fictitious
  Though suff’ring from its sting,
Should I say it’s not delicious--
  Unfit to feast a king.
I can only pray devoutly,
  (In addition to my litany,)
From rarebit Lord deliver me,
  So I never more will get any!

The Fisher Man

WHEN balmy Spring days come once more
  I find myself a wishing
That I might wander on the shore
  And spend a day a fishing.
So I hie me to the store
  Where sporting goods beguile
And purchase an outfit galore,
  With which to fish in style.
I pay an X for rod and reel,
  For lines and flies a V,
And then II more to add a creel
  To hold the fish, you see.
And then for suit of curduroy
  I squander quite a sum,
And several dollars more employ
  For bait that is n't rum.
The railway fares are rather high
  (Trout brooks are isolated,)
But who cares for expense, say I,
  When sportively elated?
And when at last I reach the brook
  And cast my brightest fly,
I marvel how these fish will look
  When landed high and dry.

When Mc Guffy

“Whin McGuffy hits the growler
   He jist inflates his chist
An’ plants his futs upon the flure,
   Thin gives his belt a twist;
He throws his whole head back a bit
   An’ howlds the growler tight,
An’ thin the bottom av the pail
   Quite aisy comes in sight!”

Two Women

THE woman Old and woman New
Met one day, as women do,
And looked each other through and through.
“What’s creature’s this?” cried the woman Old,
“Who doth her ‘form divine’ enfold
In raiment immodest and bold?”
“Insolent wretch!” quoth the woman New,
“Shall I accept insult from you,
Who know naught but to cook and sew?”
“Cook and sew!” the other said,
“Is ‘t then no wit to make good bread
Or neatly mend for him you’ve wed?”
“Task for menials!” the New one cries,
A fine scorn flashing from her eyes;
“Such occupations I despise.”
“Despise! and why?” then asked the Old.
Such tasks are womanly, I’m told,
And always by our sex controlled.”
“Our sex controlled by them!” said she
Who so advanced seemed to be;
“But such low tasks won’t do for me.”
“Then tell me, pray, what can you do,
Of household drudgery in lieu,
That more becomes a woman true?”
“Do? I enter in man’s domain;
I type-write, lecture, deal in grain
And stocks, and exercise my brain
With politics and civic laws,
And I in these excel because
My energy can never pause,
My honor cannot be assailed,
And bribery has ever failed,
To tempt me. Ev’rywhere I’m hailed
As mistress of the universe!
My advent has removed the curse
From politics. I’m not averse
To taking in life’s game a deal,
To eating at the club my meal

Or riding straddle on my wheel."
"Stop!" said the Old, with blushing face,
"Women like you would soon disgrace
Our age, our country and our race!
You speak of buffeting with life
As if you loved the horrid strife
More than the tender name of 'wife'.
Where is your time for motherhood,
And housekeeping, and other good
And noble works that women should
Her privilege consider? Can
You for a moment think a man
Would love a woman who outran
Propriety in talk and dress;
Who never cared for a caress,
But urged her 'new' ideas with stress?"
"Love!" said with scorn of the other, I
The very name of love deny.
'T is a delusion. Tell me why
Woman should ever prize a love
Which brands her 'pet' and 'turtle-dove",
Bestowed by man, who stands above
Her, as 'lord of all creation',
'Lifts' her to his 'higher station',
And thus seals her degradation?"
"Love," said the Old one, thoughtfully,
"Is sweeter, dearer far to me
Than worldly strife could ever be."
"Poor thing!" the woman New now sighed,
"To rouse your interest I've tried
In occupations dignified
And fit for woman's higher sphere;
But you're old fashioned, weak and queer,
And past redemption now, I fear.
And so, I'll leave you to your fate,
Although I wish you'd emulate
My acts, and be regenerate."
"Poor thing!" the other answered, low,
"It seems a shame that you must go
Through life and sweet Love never know!

I wish that I could make you feel
The difference ‘twixt false and real,
And our true sphere to you reveal.”
Each pitying he other’s plight
They passed from one another’s sight.
Now tell me--can you?--which was right?

Homo Sum

When the bum has siezed the whiskey
And the whiskey ‘s siezed the bum
There ‘s a glaze upon his eyeballs
And his legs are rather numb.
Quite uncertainly he lurches
As he reels the sidewalk down,
All unconscious of reproaches,
Muttered oaths, disgusted frown.
Void his mind, his vision blurred,
Only brutal intuition
Doth enable him to keep
Perpendicular position.
You congratulate yourself
By saying proudly *“homo sum!”*--
When the bum has siezed the whiskey
And the whiskey ‘s siezed the bum.

That New Leaf

LOOKING back with much contrition
   On my former evil ways,
With the New Year came ambition
   Virtuously to end my days.
So my habits quick reforming,
   Flask and pipe were thrown aside,
And to nobler instincts warming,
   Cards and dice were scattered wide.
On my lips each oath I stifled
   As my collar-button strayed,
And when Nell my pockets rifled
   I knelt down and calmly prayed.
And I bought a brand new diary
   And upon its pages white
Aspirations grand and fiery
   Neatly I inscribed each night.
Ah, how proud I walked the city,
   Conscious of my purity,
And I felt how great the pity
   Every man was not like me!
But, although the spirit's willing
   Human flesh is mighty weak,
And instead of quite fulfilling
   The ambitions did I seek,
Scarce a week has now departed
   And--I shame the truth to tell--
Yesterday I grew faint-hearted;
   My resolves are paving hades!

Children’s Verse

Dan’l

WHEN Dan’l takes his fiddle down
   And deftly tunes the strings
And rubs the rosin on his bow,
   The sound around him brings
A score of village children,
   Who know the fun begins
When Dan’l takes his fiddle down
   And deftly tunes the strings.
When Dan’l takes the fiddle tuned
   He plays a lively air,
Whereat his many listeners
   Most solemnly declare
There ain’t a fiddler in the land
   That with him can compare--
When Dan’l gets his fiddle tuned
   And plays a lively air.
When Dan’l hangs his fiddle up
   His list’ners feel aggrieved;
Regretful sighs betray how much
   Of pleasure they ‘re bereaved.
Indeed, unless you’ve heard him play
   You ‘d never have believed
When Dan’l hangs his fiddle up
   How much the crowd is grieved!

The Tramp

THE tramp is coming up the road;
    Tramp, tramp, tramp!
His coat is torn, his step is free,
He whistles very merrily,
His face is soiled--a sight to see!--
    Tramp, tramp tramp!
Up the hill and down again;
    Tramp, tramp, tramp!
By the meadow, through the lane;
    Tramp, tramp, tramp!
Begs his food from door to door,
Eats between meals--eats before;
Sleep at night upon the floor--
    Poor old tramp!

The Big Black Bear

NOW, once there came to our town a big black bear;
You could n't find his equal if you hunted everywhere.
His eyes were very big and fierce, and shaggy was his hair,
   And his teeth shone white and sharp between his jaws.
He stood upon his big rear legs, and people all did stare;
To keep a proper distance they took the greatest care,
For you had but to see him to make you well beware
   Of getting near those dreadful, pointed claws.
He stood upon the sidewalk, did this big black bear,
Before Andrew McFarlan's store, as if it were his lair;
And at the people passing by he wickedly did glare--
   A fact which all the children did deplore.
But never once he left his post, in weather foul or fair,
And though this might surprise you, it won't when I declare
This awful brute was *stuffed*, and McFarlan put him there
   To serve as a sign before his clothing store!

A Romance of a Broken Window

I

A LITTLE kit
On end did sit
To watch for mouse or sparrow;
A little boy
Played with a toy
Known as a bow and arrow.

II

Intent on game
Near puss he came
And slyly raised his weapon,
And drew the bow
And then let go,
And wondered what would happen.

III

The little cat
No longer sat
In dreamy contemplation--
The arrow sped
Straight for her head,
To her intense frustration.

IV

Roused from her dream
Puss gave a scream
And out of danger fled,
While through the glass
The stick did pass
And wounded that instead!

My Little Maid

I’M afraid
There’s a maid
Who’s set my heart a fluttering;
Her praise I ‘m alwaysuttering,
I can ‘t resist her charm.
She’s so pretty
It’s a pity
For I fear I can ‘t resist her,
And, indeed, last night I kissed her--
Never thinking any harm.
She ‘s a love
Far above
Other girls so ordinary,
And her dimpled hand is very
Nice to hold, as well I know;
And it best
Be confessed
In my arms I ‘ve often caught her,
For she ‘s Ward’s and Clara’s daughter
And was born three years ago.

Where Do They Go?

WHERE do the chickens go at night--
  Heigh-ho! where do they go?
Under the breast of their mother they rest,
Finding her feathers a soft fluffy nest;
And there ‘s where the chicks go at night,
        Heigh-ho!
Yes, there ‘s where the chicks go at night.
Where does the kitten go at night--
  Heigh-ho! where does it go?
Under the stove in the kitchen it goes
And cuddles up warm for a sweet repose,
And there ‘s where our puss goes at night,
        Heigh-ho!
Yes, there ‘s where our puss goes at night.
Where does our little dog go at night--
  Heigh-ho! where does he go?
Why, papa has made him a nice little bed
In a snug little corner outside the shed,
And that ‘s where our dog goes at night,
        Heigh-ho!
Yes, there ‘s where our dog goes at night.
Where does our baby boy go at night--
  Heigh-ho! where does he go?
Into his little white cradle he goes
Bundled up warm from his chin to his toes;
And that’s where our boy goes at night,
        Heigh-ho!
Yes, there ‘s where our boy goes at night.

The Greedy Gold-fish

WITHIN the sparkling water
  Of a pretty crystal dish
There lived and swam together
  Three tiny golden fish,
Whose lives were quite as happy
  As any fish could wish.
No cat could ever harm them,
  So high their mansion stood,
And mamma kept the water fresh
  And gave them for their food
All of those little dainties
  That fishes think so good.
Yet two were thin and delicate
  While one was big and strong
Because he ate the fish that to
  The others did belong
Before they could get at it--
  'T was surely very wrong!
The little fishes grumbled
  At such a naughty trick,
And when the food was thrown them
  They tried their share to pick,
But scarcely got a nibble,
  The big one was so quick.
And so, one rainy morning,
  When mamma was away
And Johnny wondered how he
  Could pass away the day,
He stood beside the gold-fish
  And watched them at their play.
He 'd just been playing "doctor"
  With mamma's box of pills;
He 'd saved the cook from fever,
  He 'd cured the nurse of pills;
And now he thought the fishes
  Should be dosed for their ills.
"Dose tunnin' 'ittle fisses,"
  He said, "seems awful bad!

An’ dis de bestest med’cin’
‘At mamma ever had.
I dess I’ll div’ ‘em one dose--
Dey look so very sad!”
So down in the water
He softly dropped a pill,
And that big, greedy gold-fish
With open mouth and gill,
Swallowed it, as if, indeed,
He were really ill.
But very soon this fish felt
An awful pain inside;
“This serves me right for eating
So greedily!” he cried.
Then he turned upon his back
And flopped his tail, and died!
The other little fishes
Since he has gone away
Now are growing big and fat
As in the dish they play,
For Johnny has n’t “doctored”
Since that one rainy day.

Who’s Afraid?

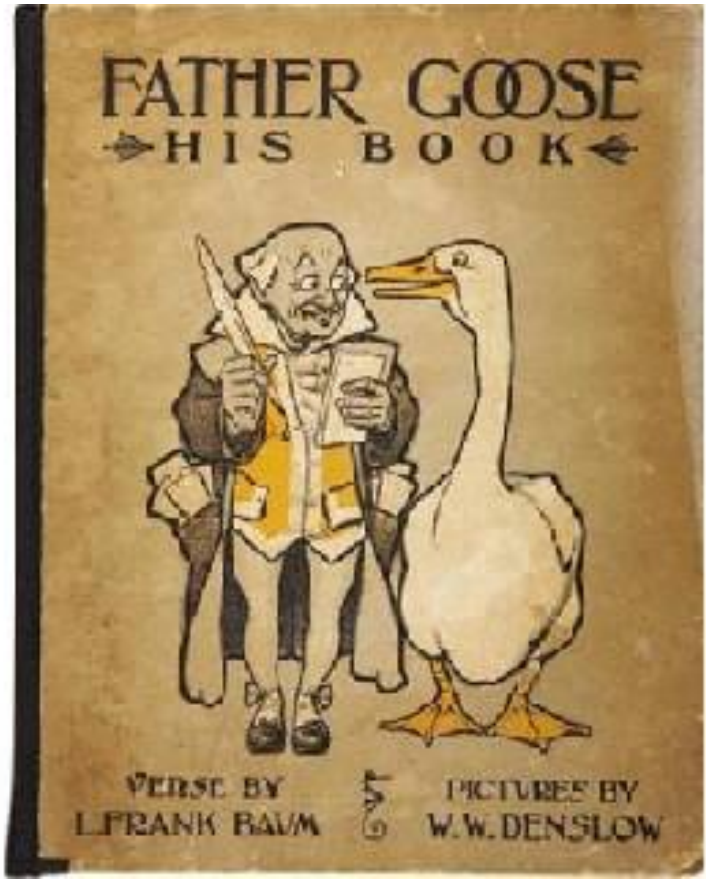
Who’s afraid?
EV’RY Giant now is dead--
Jack has cut off ev’ry head.
Ev’ry Goblin, known of old,
Perished years ago, I’m told.
Ev’ry Witch, on broomstick riding,
Has been burned or is in hiding.
Every Dragon, seeking gore,
Died an age ago--or more.
Ev’ry horrid Bogie Man
Lives in far-off Yucatan.
Burglars dare not venture near
When they know that papa’s here.
Lions now you only see
Caged in the menagerie.
And the Grizzly Bear can’t hug
When he’s made into a rug--
Who’s Afraid?

Young America

PAPA, tan I do to war
  ‘N’ have a lot of fun,
‘N’ wear a sodjer’s uniform
  ‘N’ make de Spanyids run?
My Uncle Hal says Spanyid mans
  Is naughty mans, an’ so
I deas I’ll tut off all der heads--
  Please, papa, tan I do?
I’s dot a sword--it’s awful bent
  But you tan make it dood,
An’ den I’ll ride my rocking-horse,
  Like any sodjer would.
I’s dot a drum, I’s dot a horn--
  De drum has dot one head.
An’--papa, I is s’eepy now;
  I dess I’ll do to bed!

FATHER GOOSE: HIS BOOK

Father Goose: His Book was L. Frank Baum's first great success as an author. George M. Hill Company published it in 1899. The illustrator was W. W. Denslow, best known at that time as a poster artist. Baum and Denslow would go on to spectacular success with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* the following year. Baum's first book of verse, *By the Candelabra's Glare*, published in 1898, included a section of poetry for children and helped inspire the nonsense poetry of *Father Goose: His Book.* Released in plenty of time for the Christmas season, buyers snapped up the book and marveled over its lavish illustrations, unlike anything in children's literature up to that time. Authors Mark Twain and William Dean Howells praised Baum's verse. After many lean years, Baum used his newly acquired wealth to build a lakeside cottage in Macatawa, Michigan, which he dubbed, "the Sign of the Goose."



A first edition copy of Father Goose: His Book

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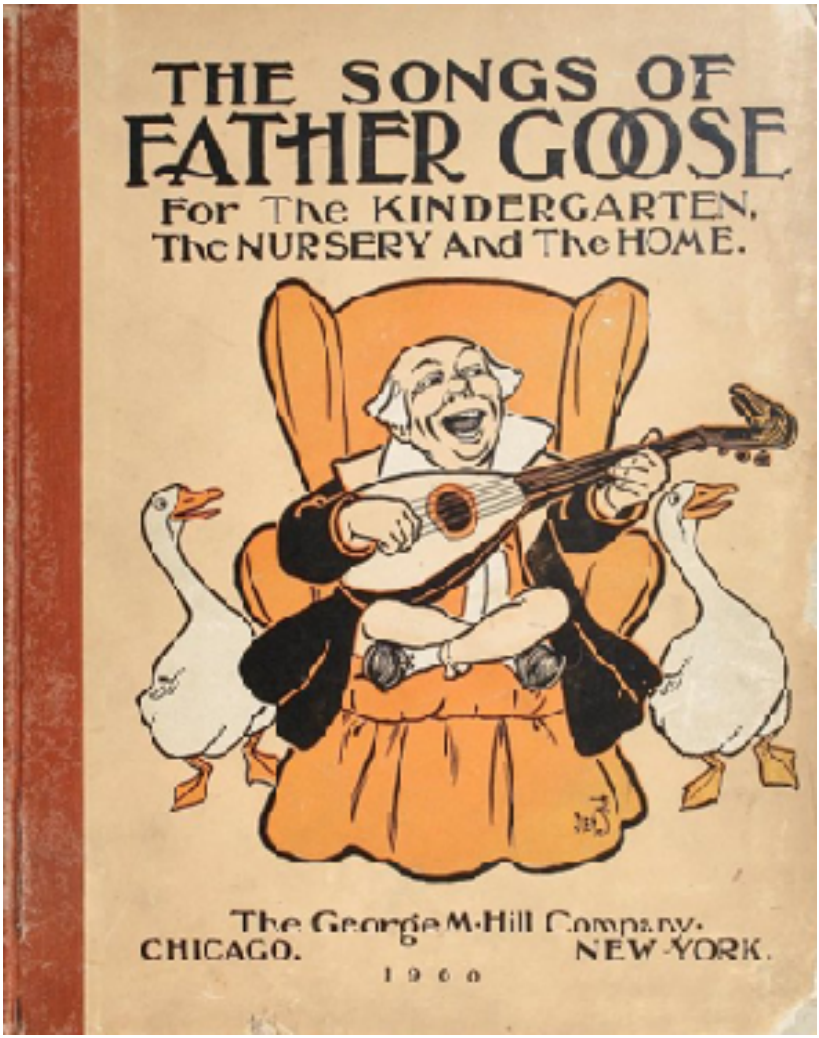


An early edition of Father Goose: His Book, with music added

Introduction.

THERE is a fascination in the combination of jingling verse and bright pictures that always appeals strongly to children. The ancient "Mother Goose Book" had these qualities, and for nearly two centuries the cadences of its rhymes have lingered in the memories of men and women who learned them in childhood.

The author and illustrator of "Father Goose" have had no intent to imitate or parody the famous verse and pictures of "Mother Goose." They own to having followed, in modern fashion, the plan of the book that pleased children ages ago--and still pleases them. These are newer jingles and pictures for children of to-day, and intended solely to supplement the nursery rhymes of our ancestors.

Father Goose

Old Mother Goose became quite new,
And joined a Woman's Club;
She left poor Father Goose at home
To care for Sis and Bub.
They called for stories by the score,
And laughed and cried to hear
All of the queer and merry songs
That in this book appear.
When Mother Goose at last returned
For her there was no use;
The goslings much preferred to hear
The tales of FATHER GOOSE.

Why?

Why does the doggy bark, papa,
  Why does the doggy bark?
The reason why,
  if you must know,
Is that the little
  dog can't crow,
And so he has to bark.
Why does the rooster crow, papa?
  Why does the rooster crow?
The reason why
  I'll tell to you;
Because the rooster
  cannot mew,
And so he has to crow.
Why does the kitten mew, papa,
  Why does the kitten mew?
The reason why
  I'm forced to say
Is that the kitten
  Can not bray,
And so she has to mew.
Why does the donkey bray, papa,
  Why does the donkey bray?
The reason for
  the donkey's bray
Is that the beast
  was born that way,
And so, he has to bray.

Did You Ever See a Rabbit?

Did you ever see a rabbit climb a tree?
Did you ever see a lobster ride a flea?
Did you ever?
No, you never!
For they simply couldn't do it, don't you see!
Did you ever see a fire burn with snow?
Did you ever climb a ladder down below?
Did you ever?
No, you never!
For these things cannot happen, don't you know?
Did you ever see a ship sail on the land?
Did you ever hold a mountain in your hand?
Did you ever?
No, you never!
For it really can't be done, you understand.

To Walk Jim Jones

To walk Jim Jones was not contented,
And so an air-ship he invented;
    He sailed away
    One Summer day
    And people say
He won’t return very soon,
For Jim Jones sailed up to the moon.

Clockwork Man

Now, once I owned a funny man,
A clockwork was inside him;
You'd be surprised how fast he ran
When I was there beside him.
He was the pride of all the boys
Who lived within our town;
But when this man ran up a hill
He always would run down!

Tick Tock

"Tick-Tock!
Tick-Tock!"
Don't you hear our friend
the clock?
With his pendulum so swinging
All the day he's softly singing
"Tick-Tock!"
Tick-Tock!"
Can't you hear our friend
the clock?

This Bold Boy

This bold boy had done no wrong;
His hair had simply grown too long.
So Auntie placed the bowl just so
To see how far the shears could go.
Now the boy is full of glee;
His hair is nicely cut, you see;
And Auntie gives her head a bob,
To see how well she did the job.

There Was a Goose

There was a Goose in Syracuse
  And full of fun was he;
He met a Clown and bought his gown
  And thought a clown he'd be.
But for his jokes the little folks
  Had very little use:
And when the Clown
  danced up and down
They thought he was a Goose!

Mister Jinks

Have you seen Mister Jinks, Mister Jinks, Mister Jinks,
Have you seen him when he's walking down the street?
  He nods and then he winks
  And most everybody thinks
That is smile is really beautiful and sweet.
Have you seen Mister Jinks, Mister Jinks, Mister Jinks,
Have you seen him when he's walking down the lane?
  He's full of fun and folly,
  He's round and fat and jolly,
And we're always glad to see his face again.

Little Barelegs Runs

Little Barelegs runs
  and races all the day;
Birds and butterflies
  she chases far away.
In the brook she wades, and wishes
  She could hook the little fishes
Just to cook them in her dishes while at play.

Who’s Afraid?

Who’s afraid?
Ev’ry Goblin, known of old,
Perished years ago, I’m told.
Ev’ry Witch, on broomstick riding,
Has been burned or is in hiding.
Burglars dare not venture near
When they know that papa’s here.
Lions you now only see
Caged in the menagerie.
And the Grizzly Bear can’t hug
When he’s made into a rug--
Who’s afraid?

The Cats They Sit

The cats they sit upon the fence
At night,
And show they hav’n’t any sense
Of right,
By making such a noise
They wake the girls and boys
And caterwaul till they commence
To fight.

A Sailor from China

There once came a sailor from China,
And he fell in love with Aunt Dinah.
    And he laughed till he cried
    And he cried till he sighed:
“Oh , why wont you have me, Aunt Dinah?”
Then you should have heard old Aunt Dinah
Reply to this sailor from China,
            Saying “Sir don’t you see
I could never agree
With a sailor that once
                lived in China.”

If Johnny Had No Eye

If our Johnny had no eye
Not a single thing he'd spy;
If our Johnny had no nose
He could never smell the rose;
If our Johnny had no ear
Not a thing could Johnny hear;
    And his mouth is made to talk,
    And his feet are made to walk
'Tis no wonder that I say
        Johnny's made a funny way!

Sally Dance

Have you seen little Sally
   Dance the Ostrich Dance?
The dainty way she does it
   Will surely you entrance.
With the left foot here,
   And the right foot there,
And the ostrich feathers waving
   In her golden hair:
She’s Surely very charming--
   You’ll see it at a glance--
When little Sally dances
   In the Ostrich dance.

Old Mister Micklejohn

Old Mister Micklejohn
Had a leg of hickory on;
    He went hippity,
    He went hoppity,
    Hip,
            hip,
                hop,
    To the baker's shop.
Bought a loaf and ate it up,
Bought some tea and drank a cup.
Then went hippity,
Hip,
        hip,
                hoppity,
Home again from the
                baker's shop.

Baby Found a Feather

Baby found a feather in the hall;
Baby saw the masks upon the wall;
    She tickled first a chin
    Till it began to grin,
And wondered why the other one did bawl.

Jack Lantern

A pumpkin in pies
We all of us prize;
And surely
no pumpkin
a boy would
affright.
But a jack-lantern light
Is a terrible sight
And scares all the children
that walk out at night.

A Bumble Bee

A Bumble-Bee was buzzing
   On a yellow holly-hock
When came along a turtle
   Who at the be did mock.
Saying, “prithee, Mr. Bumble,”
   Why make that horrid noise?
It’s really distracting,
   And every one annoys.”
“I’m sorry,” said, quite humble,
   The buzzing, droning Bee,
“The noise is just my bumble,
   And natural, you see.
And if I didn’t buzz so,
   I’m sure that you’ll agree
I’d only be a big fly,
   And not a Bumble-Bee.”

Grandpa’s Head

Grandpa’s head is rather bald,
  Bald the baby’s too;
Grandpa has n’t many teeth,
  Baby has a few.
Grandpa sits within his chair
  All the live-long day,
Watching baby sitting there
  Busy at his play.

Uncle Dick Gave Me a Dolly

Uncle Dick gave me a dolly,
Funny doll, as you can see;
‘Twas an Injun, so he called my
Dolly “Ab-or-rig-i-ne.”
Dolly’s made of rags and
patches,
Can’t be broke by girls
like me;
So I think he’ll last
Forever--
Funny “Ab-o-rig-i-ne.”

Captain Bing

Captain Bing was a Pirate King,
   And sailed the broad seas o'er;
On many a lark he sailed his bark
   Where none had sailed before,
And filled his hold so full of gold
   That it would hold no more.
The sea was smooth, and so, forsooth,
   They took a bit of leisure,
And all the crew. good men and true
   A hornpipe dance for pleasure
And had their fling, while Captain Bing
   Kept watch above the treasure.
The wind it blew, and all the crew
   Were sorry that it blew so;
If they were wrecked they might expect
   To share the fate of Crusoe,
And ride the spars like jolly tars--
   All shipwrecked men must do so.
The gale it roared, and all on board
   Began to say their prayers,
And Captain Bing commenced to sing,
   To drown his many cares
But when he found that he had drowned,
   It took him unawares.

I Had a Dog

I had a dog
whose head was red.
He always slept
upon his bed.
He always ate
what he was fed
And barked when-e'er
a word was said.

Little Tommy Toddlekin

Little Tommy Toddlekin,
He fell Down and bumped his shin;
Hurt him sadly.
Cried quite badly,
Now his shin is well again.

Organ Grinder

Have you seen the
Organ Grinder
With a monkey
on a string?
He stands upon the sidewalk
And makes the music ring.
And all the little children
Around him dance and play
And have a merry time
Before he goes away.
The monkey climbs the houses
To windows everywhere,
And gathers all the pennies
The children have to spare.

Master Bunny

Master Bunny
looks so funny
When he’s sitting at his ease.
Little Dick
declares the trick
Any audience will please.

Mr. Green

Oh, have you seen Mr. Green?
He is neither fat nor lean,
Laughs and cries
Smiles and sighs
Eats and drinks
Reads and thinks.
Coughs and sneezes
When he pleases
Walks and ambles,
Skips and gambols,
Slumbers deep
When asleep,
Tears his clothes
Where ‘ere he goes,
Always found where he is seen--
Funny man is Mr. Green!

Elephant

An elephant to a city went--
Poor old elephant!
And lived his life beneath a tent,
Eating, drinking, thinking, blinking,
With his trunk chain a-clinking,
Dreaming of the jungle cool,
Juicy leaves and rippling pool--
Poor old elephant!

Kitty Klymer

Kitty Klymer had a dress.
Gingham dress, all white and blue;
Tried to pick a water-cress,
Tore her dress an inch or two!
Home she ran, and in distress
Took a thread and needle, too,
Neatly mended her torn dress--
Now it is as good as new.

Lee-Hi-Lung-Whan

Lee-Hi-Lung-Whan
Was a little Chinaman.
Wooden shoes with pointed toes,
Almond eyes and tiny nose.
Pig-tail long and slick and black,
Clothes the same both front and back.
Funny little Chinaman,
Le*-Hi-Lung-Whan.
*Corrected in the sixth edition, but remains in *The Songs of Father Goose*.

Little Nigger Boy

There was a little nigger boy
Hadn't any shoes;
He heard his mammy shoo the hens
And saved the shoos to use.
There was a little nigger boy
Hadn't any hat;
He wore instead a cabbage leaf,
It was so big and flat.
There was a little nigger boy
Hadn't any collar;
And when the copper collared him
Nigger boy did holler.
There was a little nigger boy
Hadn't any hose;
He bought a pear, but couldn't wear
*It as you may suppose.**
There was a little nigger boy
Hadn't any coat;
So he tried to borrow one
From a nanny goat.
*This stanza replaces the original third in the sixth edition.

John Harrison Hoy

John Harrison Hoy
Was a cute Yankee boy,
With a face that was freckled and red;
"Each American boy
Is a King," said young Hoy,
"For a crown always grows on his head."

Polly Wants a Cracker

“Polly wants a cracker!”
The parrot loud did shout.
“Here’s a cracker, Polly,”
Said little Dickey Stout.
Poll took the cracker quickly,
Not knowing it was loaded,
But while she held it tightly
It suddenly exploded.
Polly gave an awful cry
Of mingled pain and rage.
She flew away from Dickey
And hid within her cage.

Baby Pulled the Pussy’s Tail

Baby pulled the pussy’s tail--
Naughty boy!
Pussy gave a painful wail
Struggle hard without avail;
Still the baby pulled her tail--
Naughty boy!
Pussy raised her little paw--
Angry cat!
Gave the baby’s face a claw!
Scratched his cheek till it was raw--
Awf’lest scratch you ever saw--
Think of that!

Patsy Bedad

Patsy Bedad
Was a bright Irish lad
Who loved to work hard at his ease;
“When I grow up,” said he,
“I’ll a gentleman be,
For then I shall join the Police.”

Caterpillar

I knew a Caterpillar
Which crawled to see a miller,
To ask if he would deign
To sell a load of grain.
But when he came to buy
He became a Butterfly,
So he couldn't use the grain
And he flew away again.

Ding a Ling

Ding-a-ling-a-ling-ling!
Can’t you hear the bell ring?
First the man who sells the milk,
Then a lady dressed in silk,
Next a beggar asking bread,
Glad to work when he is fed;
Ting-a-ling-a-ling-ling!
Can’t you hear the bell ring?
Now the gas man after money,
Then a peddlar peddling honey;
Then a plumber, then a drummer,
Selling books to read in summer,
Ting-a-ling-a-ling-ling!
Can’t you hear the bell ring?

Quite a Trick

It’s quite a trick
ball to kick
And very hard to catch it:
Yet children say
they love to play.
And nothing else can match it.

Come Into Our Store

Will you come into our store
and spend your money?
Will you come into our store
and buy some honey?
We have gingerbread and pies,
And a host of naughty flies
Think that eating up our stock is very funny!

The Bandit

The Bandit is a handsome man,
In operas he sings;
He wears a wig and fierce moustache
And many other things.
He looks just like a robber bold,
When on the stage he stands:
Real bandits lived in times of old
In distant, foreign lands.

Miss Nancy Puts on Airs

Miss Nancy puts on airs
When her sister's dress she wears.
And thinks a grown up woman
            she can be.
She courtesies and bows
    And struts in furbelows
        As fine
            as any
                lady you
                may see.

The Bossie-Cow

The Bossie-Cow is big and red,
   Her eyes are round and bright,--
And those great horns upon her head
   Are quite a horrid site.
And yet the Bossie's very kind
   And good to us, I think:
She's full of beefsteaks, you will find,
   And gives us milk to drink.

Standing on the Sidewalk

Standing on the sidewalk,
As if it were his lair,
Before McFarlan's window,
Was a big black Bear,
His eyes were very small and fierce
And wickedly did glare,
A fact which all the children did deplore.
But never once
he left his post,
In weather foul or fair,
And though this may surprise you,
It won't when I declare
This awful brute was stuffed,
And McFarlan put him there
To serve
as sign before his
clothing store!

A Man Last Tuesday

A man last Tuesday
built a house
Without a window in it;
It had no roof,
it had no floor,
No doorway to go in it.
It had no chimney,
had no walls,
Nor stairs of
any kind;
Because the man had
built this house
Entirely in his mind.

Goodness Me!

Goodness me!
Into the baby's mouth there goes
A fat little tootsie with five little toes!
Why baby does it, nobody knows.
Thinks they are good to eat, I suppose--
Goodness me!

Civilized Boy

Pray, what can a civilized
boy do now,
When all the Dragons all
are dead,
And the Giants stout,
that we have read about,
Have never one a head?
Now, wasn't it mean that Jack o'the
Bean
Should slay these monsters fast,
And the other Jack should cut and hack
When there weren't enough to last?
The boys today are as bold as they say,
As ever they were of yore;
And they'd spill a flood
of Dragon's Blood
If Dragons lived
any more.

Babies’ Serenade

Hear the babies’ serenade:
Tink-
a-
Tink-
a-
Tink!
Sweetest music ever made,
So the babies think.
Johnny-boy will twang the string:
Tum-
te-
tum-
tum-
tum!
To the music’s joyous swing,
Lullabies he’ll hum.

Dolly’s Run Away

Dolly’s run away today,
Dolly’s run away!
Gone from home abroad to roam
And with the Gnome to play.
Dolly’s such a naughty girl
When she does appear
I am sure she must endure
A scolding quite severe!

Annie Waters

When Annie Waters lies asleep
She's very fair to see,
And mama thinks no little girl
Could any sweeter be.
When Annie Waters wakens up
She romps with such a noise
That mamma thinks she's really worse
Than six or seven boys!

A Bee Flew Down

A bee flew down and ate an ant,
  A bug he ate the bee;
A hen then gobbled down the bug
  But failed the hawk to see.
The hawk had eaten up the hen
  Before he saw the cat
Which ate him up, but then a dog
  Ate pussy quick as scat!
A wolf now sprang upon the dog
  And ate him in a trice,
And then a lion ate the wolf
  And found him very nice.
But when the lion fell asleep
        He said, “I really can’t
Imagine why that wolf should taste
        Exactly like an ant!

There Was a Whale

There was a whale
Who had no tail.
And he was full of sorrow;
He swam around
Long Island Sound
And tried a tail to borrow.
"Your tale is sad
And quite too bad,"
The fishes all confided
"But while our fins
Are in our skins
We'll never be divided."
But still his tail
He did bewail
To one fish or the other,
'Til they said "Oh
Why don't you go
And try to grow another!"

A Little Man

Once there was a little man
Who stepped upon my toes.
He would not apologise
And so I pulled his nose.

Buy a Goose

Don’t you want to buy a goose
or else a gander?
I’ve one to sell that could’nt
well be grander;
For his voice is loud and sweet
And his meat is good to eat--
To refuse to buy would surely
be a slander.

Miss Nancy Brown

Miss Nancy Brown
she came to town,
A basket by her side,
All filled with mud-pies
neat and round
That in the sun she'd dried.
She wandered up and wandered down
And tried to sell her pies,
But only met with sneer and frown,
To her intense surprise.
Miss Nancy Brown
she left the town
And carried home her pies.
And on the ground
she threw them down,
Which showed that she was wise.

Cootchie Cooloo

Cootchie Cooloo
Was a girl of Hindoo,
Who was rather too
large for her size;
Her teeth were
quite white
And her nose
was all right,
But she had a bad squint
to her eyes.

Here Is Paddy Geegan

Here is Paddy Geegan, digging,
Trying hard to make a well.
Here is Paddy's billy goat, and
Looking cross, I grieve to tell.
With bowed head and eye that flashes
Quickly at poor Pat he dashes.
Now there's nothing more to tell--
Both have fallen in the well.

Tim Jenkins Tried

Tim Jenkins tried
A horse to ride
Which was so fond of shying
That I declare
High in the air
The boy was quickly flying.

Rough Riders

Rough Riders are
The pride of war.
But bucking bronchos truly
Make riding rough
And tough enough
When they become unruly.

The Coogie Bird

Oh have you heard the Coogie Bird?
It sings a song that's quite absurd.
It sings a song that is n't long,
And the song that it sings at it flaps its wings
  Is "Qwee-wee-wee" and "Qwee-wee-wird!"
Now isn't that song quite absurd,
  That's sung by the foolish Coogie Bird?

The Ship Will Go

When breezes blow the ship will go
A sailing o’er the sea;
A flag apeak, she’ll sail to seek
Her country’s enemy
And win a name of glorious fame
Ere she
returns
to me.

Donnegan

There was a man named Donnegan
Who wandered up and down,
And always in the country stayed
Unless he came to town.
The people to him kindly said
"What to you want, my man?"
"'Tis work I want, oh, give me work!"
Replied bold Donnegan.
But though he wandered north and south,
And traveled east and west,
No work came to brave Donnegan
Who passed his days at rest.

Chickens at Night

Where do the chickens go at night--
  Heigh-ho! Where do they go?
Under the breast of their mother they rest,
Finding her feathers a soft fluffy nest;
And that's where the chicks go at night,
                Heigh-ho!
Yes, there's where the chicks go at night.

Cats Babies Have

These are the cats the babies have
In China, far away;
They carry them where e're they go
And love with them to play.
When baby pulls their heads way down
The cats will say "mie-ew,"
As if they really were alive
And knew the baby, too.

Sun Bear Dances

The Sun-Bear dances merrily
  Upon the ball so round,
And has to balance warily
  Or fall upon the ground.
To emulate a juggler great
  No better bear is found.

The Soldier

The soldier is a splendid man
  When marching on parade;
And when he meets the enemy
  He never is afraid.
And when he fires his musket off
  He loads it up again;
And when he charges on the foe
  Resistance is in vain.
The soldier is a fearless man
  When he to war does go;
He faces guns and never runs
  Unless ‘tis at the foe.
And when he marches home again
  He’s called a hero bold.
And many very wondrous tales
  Are by the soldier told.

Betsy Baker

Once a girl named Betsy Baker
Thought she'd like to be a Quaker;
On her head she put a shaker
Thinking that the shaker 'd make her
        Very like a real Quaker.

One Old Cat!

One Old Cat!
Batter's at the bat.
Pitch and catch--the batter's out!
Laugh and run and slide and shout--
A very merry game is that.
And they call it
One old Cat!

Boy from Kalamazoo

There was a boy
from Kalamazoo
Who ate too much hot
celery stew.
He felt quite ill
But took a pill
And now he feels
as good
as new.

Boy, A Tiny Mite

There was a boy, a tiny mite,
Who tried to fly a mighty kite,
And then, alas!
It came to pass
Both boy and kite flew out of sight.

George Washington

When George Washington was young
And full of energy,
He took his little hatchet
And chopped a cherry tree.
His father grew quite angry,
This sorry sight to see,
For he was very fond indeed
Of that same cherry tree.
And so he questioned Georgie:
"Who did this thing?" said he.
"I cannot tell a lie," said George,
"I chopped the cherry tree."
The father then wept tears of joy,
At such brave honesty;
"Your truthfulness is worth far more
Than one small cherry tree."
And when his father walked away
Georgie seized the ax with glee
And hacked away 'till he had felled
Another cherry tree.
His father now returned in hast,
took Georgie on his knee,
And said "I'll teach you to destroy
My pretty cherry tree!"
"Don't spank!" cried George; "I'll tell the truth,
For still I'll honest be;
'Twas I, dear father, took the ax
And chopped the cherry tree."
"Oh, ho!" Said Mr Washington
"Unless I punish thee
Thy truth will cost to me the loss
Of every cherry tree!"
'Twas full a week before poor George
Sat down with any ease,
His father sold the hatchet
And saved his cherry-trees.

Sammy Simpson

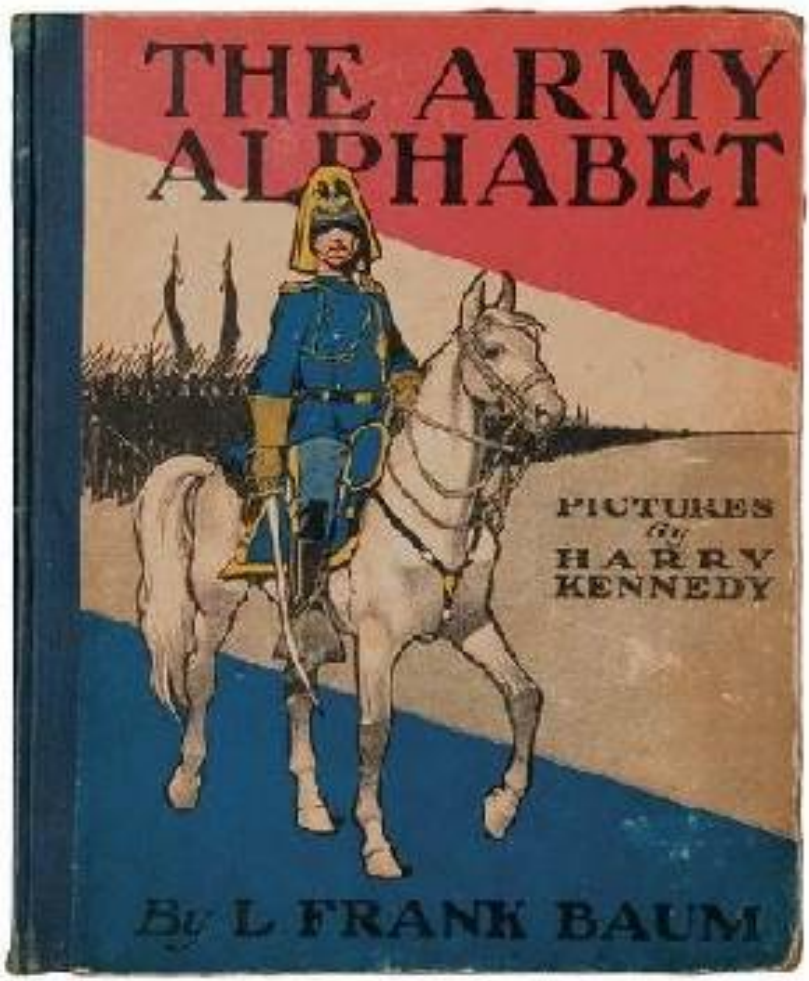
Sammy Simpson
all the day
Loves at “Soldier Boy”
to play.
When it comes to
candle-light
He is glad to say
“good night.”

Seymour Credit

All of the pages of verse in
Father Goose, His Book
have been hand-lettered
by
Ralph Fletcher Seymour

THE ARMY ALPHABET

George M. Hill Company published Baum's, *The Army Alphabet*, in 1900, illustrated in color by Harry Kennedy. Baum's primer for teaching the alphabet featured patriotic rhymes and illustrations depicting scenes from the Spanish-American War.



A first edition copy of The Army Alphabet

One of the poetry book's illustrations

The Army Alphabet

A represents the Army great,
The safeguard of our nation.
Whene'er our country goes to war
It fights with desperation;
And when we do not care to fight
It forces arbitration.
B represents the Bayonet,
Tis useful in a fight;
For when tis pointed at the foe
He takes to instant flight,
Or else is pricked quite full of holes
Which spoils his appetite.
C represents the tin Canteen,
A water bottle quaint.
It cheers the worn and weary, and
The wounded when they faint.
When soldiers have their canteens full
They seldom make complaint.
D represents the Drummer boys,
They're young and frolicsome;
Drum majors drill the boys with skill
To beat and roll the drum,
And soldiers march in better time
Behind the drum's "tum tum!"
E represents the Enemy,
He's also called the foe.
In war he's a necessity;
We could not fight, you know,
Unless an enemy stood near
In waiting for the blow.
F represents the starry Flag,
For which our soldiers fight.
When on the battle field it waves
It is a glorious sight,
And every one who sees it knows
Our cause is surely right.
G represents the General
Who issues the command

To march into the awful fray
And all repulse withstand,
Until the battle's fairly won
And victory's at hand.
H represents the Helmet worn
By brave artillerymen;
It shades their eyes so they can see
The foemen now and then,
And pop a shot, well aimed and hot,
To thin their ranks again.
I represents the Indian Scout
Employed to slyly creep
Upon the army of the foe,
And at its movements peep.
He's full of cunning and of guile,
And harmless, when asleep.
J represents the Journalist,
He's always in the van,
And wires his paper all the news
With truth, whene're he can.
He's very brave, and full of fun,
And quite a useful man.
K represents the big Knapsack
Each soldier has to bear.
It is his trunk, and cupboard too;
He packs it with great care.
For it contains his spare wardrobe,
And oft his bill of fare.
L stands for the Lieutenant,
Each company has two.
The Captain orders them around,
And bullies them, tis true;
But they in turn, can nag the men,
And so of course they do.
M represents the Medal won
By heroes brave and true;
Tis pinned upon the soldier's breast
For all the world to view.
A mark of manly courage,
But worn by very few.

N represents the Red Cross Nurse,
Her name all soldiers bless;
Mid shot and shell she bravely walks
With skill their wounds to dress.
Gentle alike to friend or foe,
All love and tenderness.
O represents the Orderly,
Who dashes to and fro
And swiftly carries the command
To charge upon the foe.
He's quite a useful fellow, but
Is scolded if he's slow.
P represents the Prisoner,
A luckless man is he;
For he is seized and marched away
Into captivity,
And cannot fight again until
His captor sets him free.
Q stands for the Quartermaster
Tis he who deals our food
And medicines and clothing
And many things as good.
He's very kind to soldiers,
When he is in the mood.
R represents the Rifle grim
Which all the soldiers shoot.
When they are marching on parade
The rifles voice is mute.
When war is rife, the rifle's strife
Will make the cowards scoot.
S represents the glist'ning Sword
That every Captain wears.
Tis in its sheath in times of peace
In war aloft he bears
The gleaming blade, and sore afraid
Is every foe he scares.
T represents the Tent so white
In which the soldier sleeps,
While just outside throughout the night,
A watch the sentry keeps,

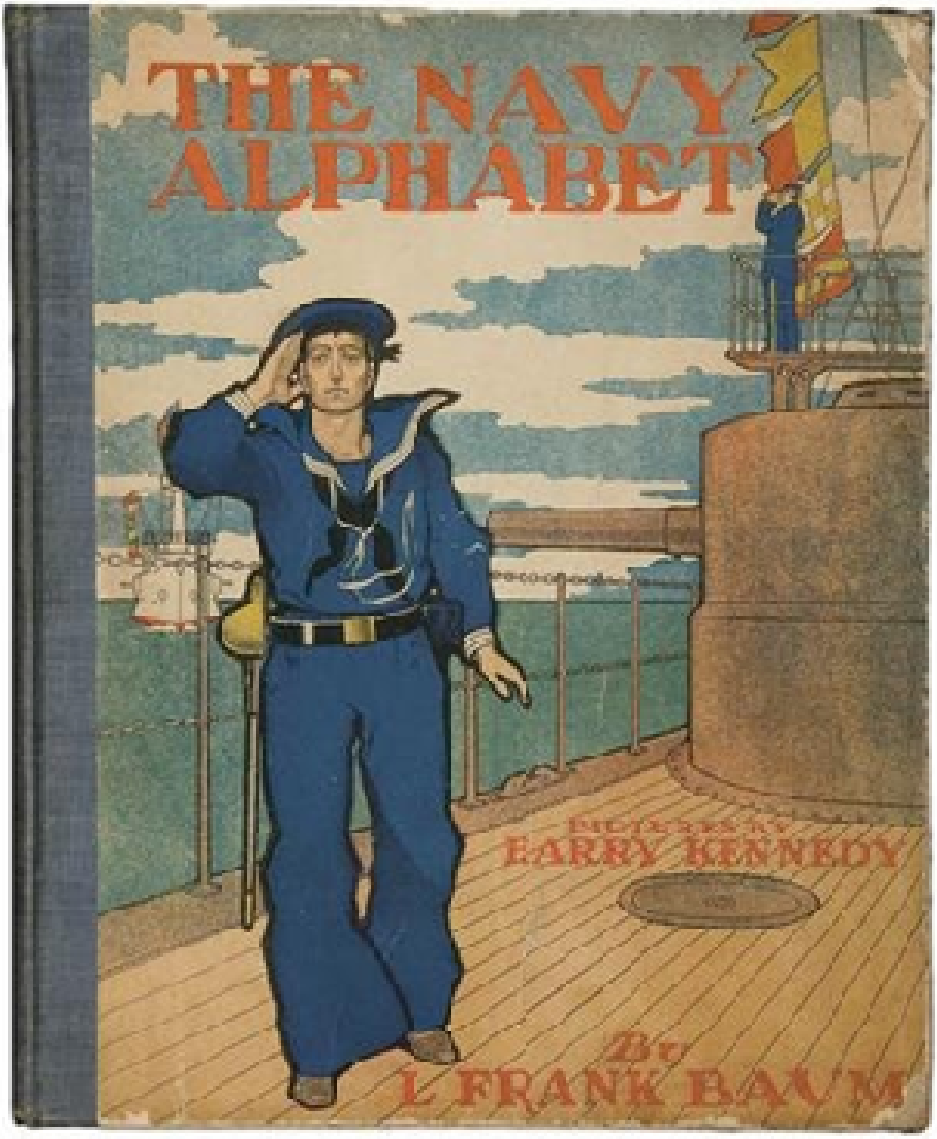
To see no prowling enemy
Upon the sleeper creeps.
U represents the Uniform
So handsome and so gay,
That ev'ry dashing soldier wears
In his own jaunty way.
No wonder ev'ry maiden's eyes
Upon the soldier stray.
V represents the Volunteer,
In front you'll always find him,
Defending well his country's cause,
For every day reminds him
Of mother, home and oftentimes,
"The girl he left behind him."
W is the Wagon train
That carries the supplies
Of food and ammunition
To where the army lies.
Sometimes tis captured by the foe
When taken by surprise.
X represents the Xalatin,
A trumpeter is he;
He wakes the soldier in the morn
With tuneful reveille,
Or calls to arms,
Or sounds the charge,
Or toots the jubilee.
Y represents the Yankee-yell
That stands for victory.
On ev'ry foe it works a spell
Which causes him to flee
Before the might of those who dwell
In this land of the free.
Z represents the fierce Zouvave,
No power can him withstand.
The way he rushes on the foe
Is wonderful and grand;
And, ev'ry time he fights, his life
He carries in his hand.
And now we hope all boys and girls,

And men and women too,
Will look with love and reverence
Upon our boys in blue,
For nation never army had
Of men more brave or true.

THE NAVY ALPHABET

A companion to *The Army Alphabet* also published by George M. Hill in 1900, *The Navy Alphabet* combines full-color illustrations by Harry Kennedy, depicting Navy life aboard ship with L. Frank Baum's patriotic rhymes.

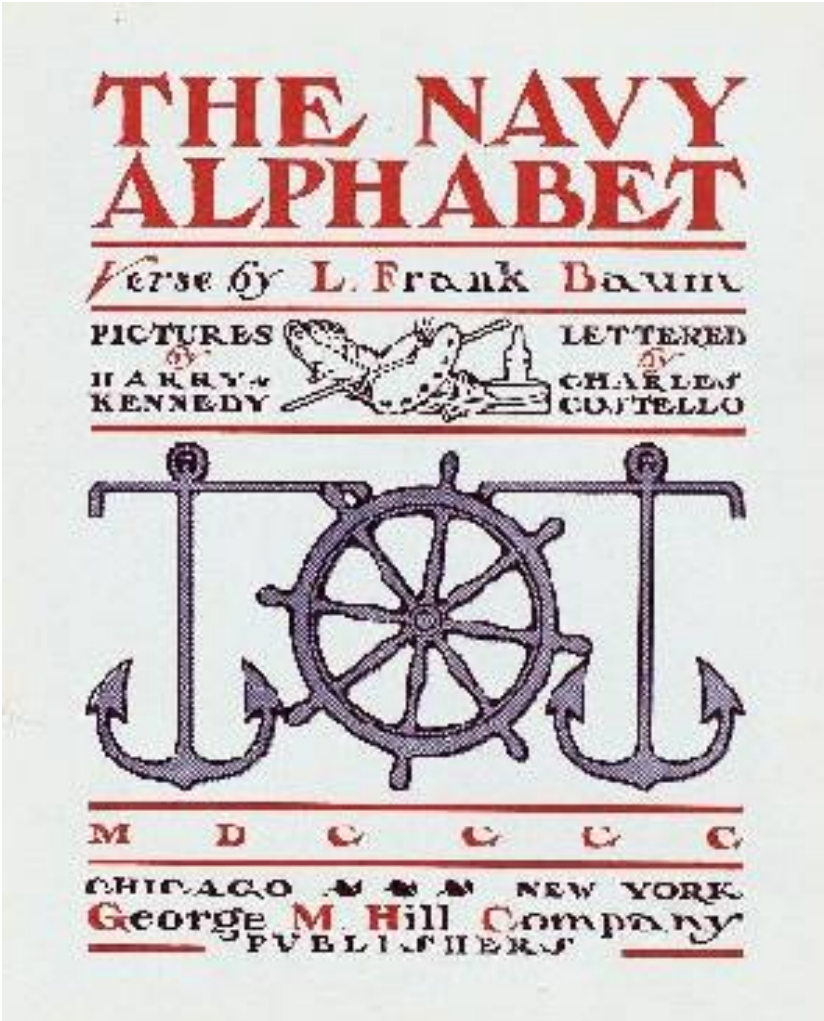
THE NAVY ALPHABET



ILLUSTRATED BY
BARRY KENNEDY

By
L. FRANK BAUM

A first edition copy of The Navy Alphabet



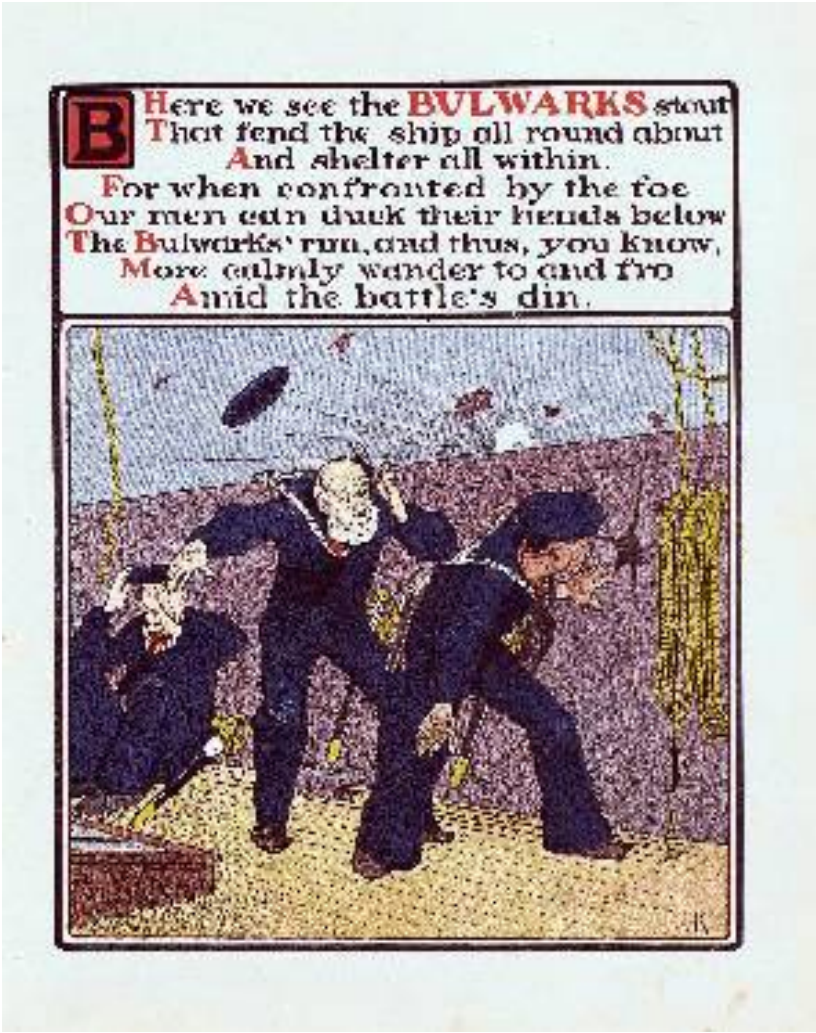
The original title page

The Navy Alphabet

A. Here is the ADMIRAL, gallant and true,
Lord of the Navy in peace or in war;
Warrior, sailor and diplomat, too;
Winning our battles in countries afar.
Grand is the Admiral, great is his fame.
Favors and riches are his to command.
Ev'ry American honors his name —
Victor at sea and a hero on land!

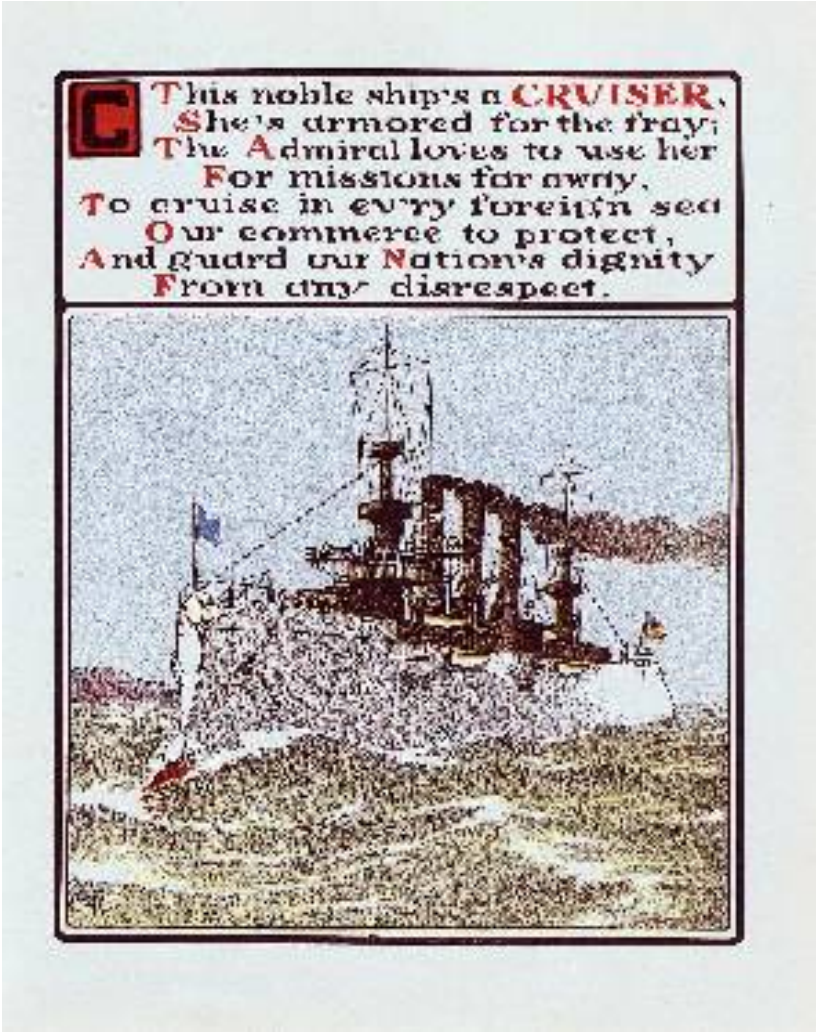
B. Here we see the BULWARKS stout

That fend the ship all round about
And shelter all within.
For when confronted by the foe
Our men can duck their heads below
The Bulwarks' rim, and thus, you know.
More calmly wander to and fro
Amid the battle's din.



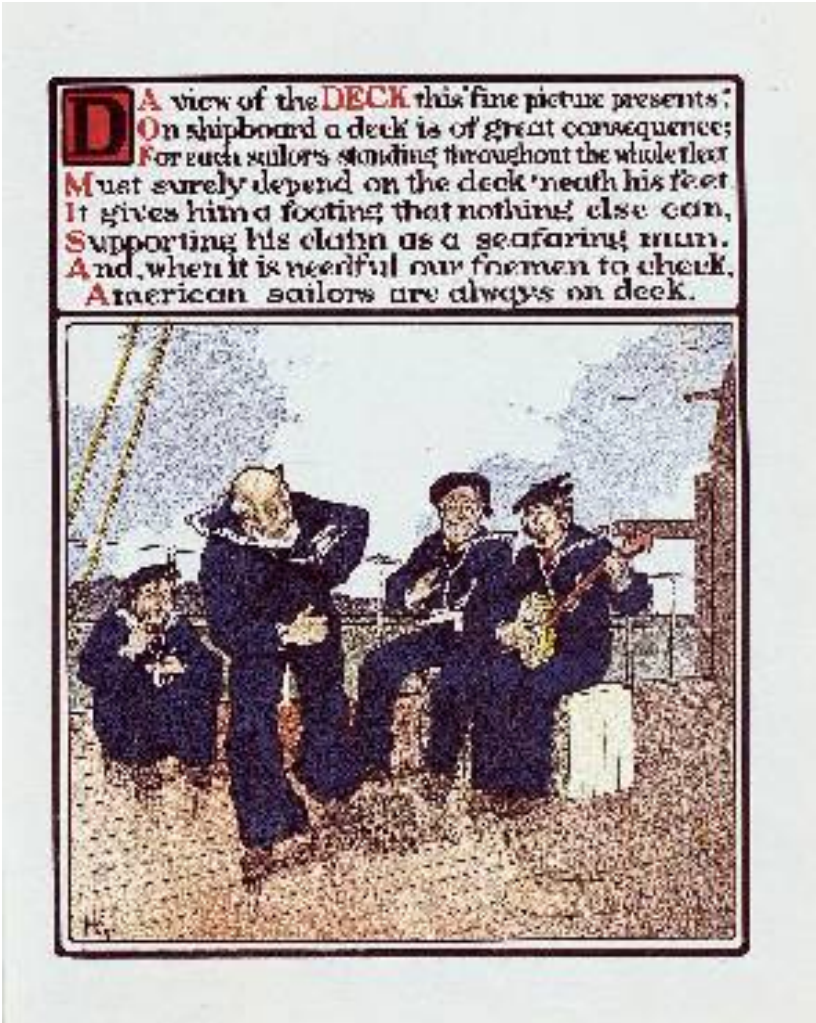
C. This noble ship's a CRUISER.
She's armored for the fray;
The Admiral loves to use her
For missions far away,

To cruise in ev'ry foreign sea
Our commerce to protect,
And guard our Nations dignity
From any disrespect.



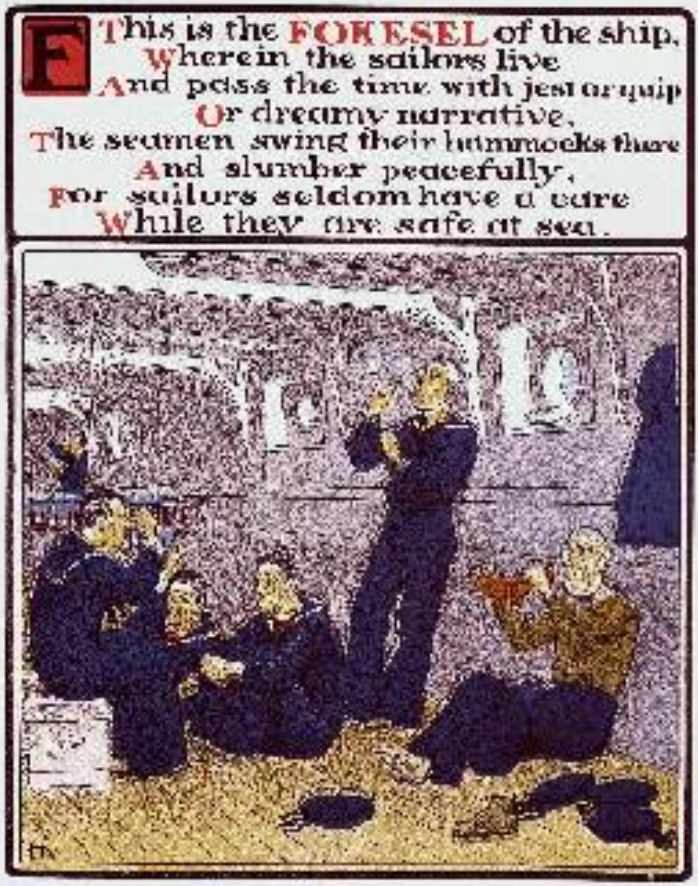
D. A View of the DECK this fine picture presents;
On shipboard a deck is of great consequence;
For each sailors standing throughout the whole fleet
Must surely depend on the deck 'neath his feet.
It gives him a footing that nothing else can,
Supporting his claim as a seafaring man.
And, when it is needful our foemen to cheek,

American sailors are always on deck.



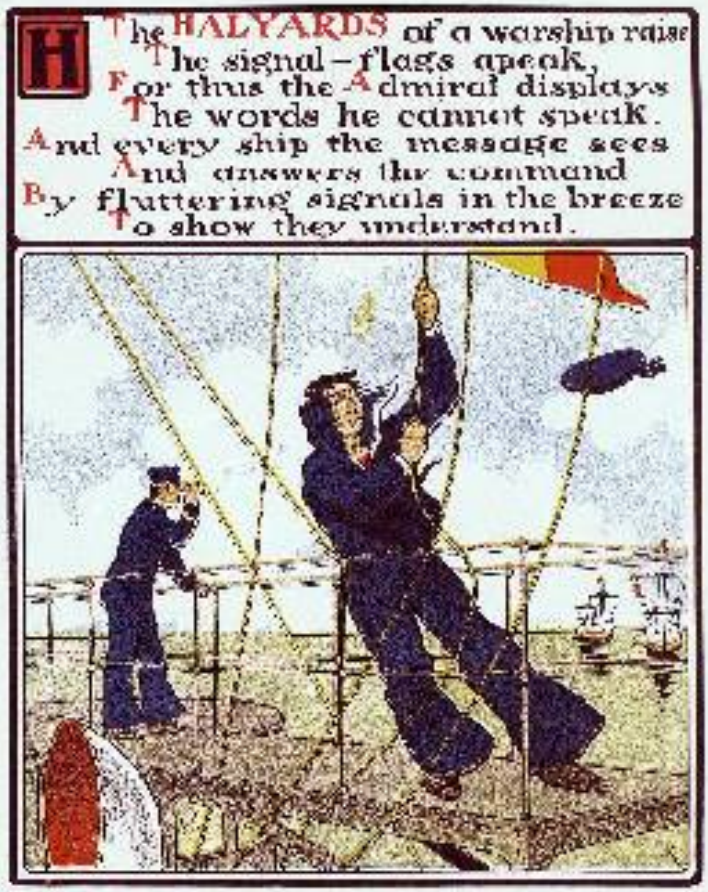
E. Now gaze on the ENSIGN so charming
Don't notice his frown so alarming;
He's really as mild as a well behaved child,
And none would be willingly harming.
His uniform gladdens his heart.
For he Knows it's becoming and smart;
The ladies all pet him, and straightway forget him
As soon as he's forced to depart.

F. This is the FOKESEL of the ship,
Wherein the sailors live
And pass the time with jest or quip
Or dreamy narrative.
The seamen swing their hammocks there
And slumber peacefully,
For sailors seldom have a care
While they are safe at sea.

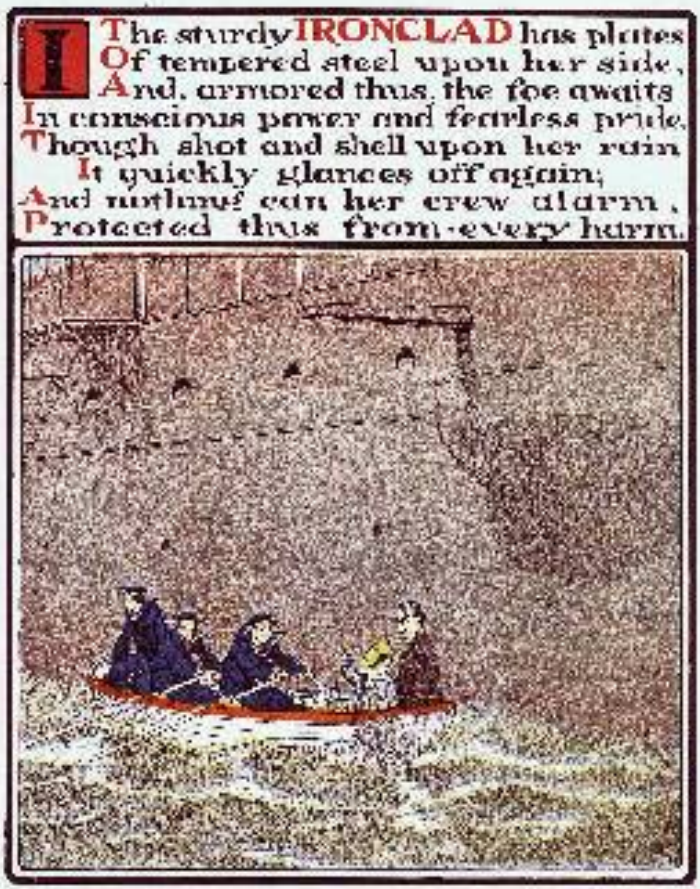


G. Hurrah for the GUNNER! the Navy's pride
Stalwart and faithful when wars betide.
Before his calm and deadly aim
Warships crumble or burst aflame
Or, foundering, soon find their graves
Beneath the cold, engulfing waves.
Trains he the cannon, which belch and thunder,
Filling our foemen with fear and wonder.

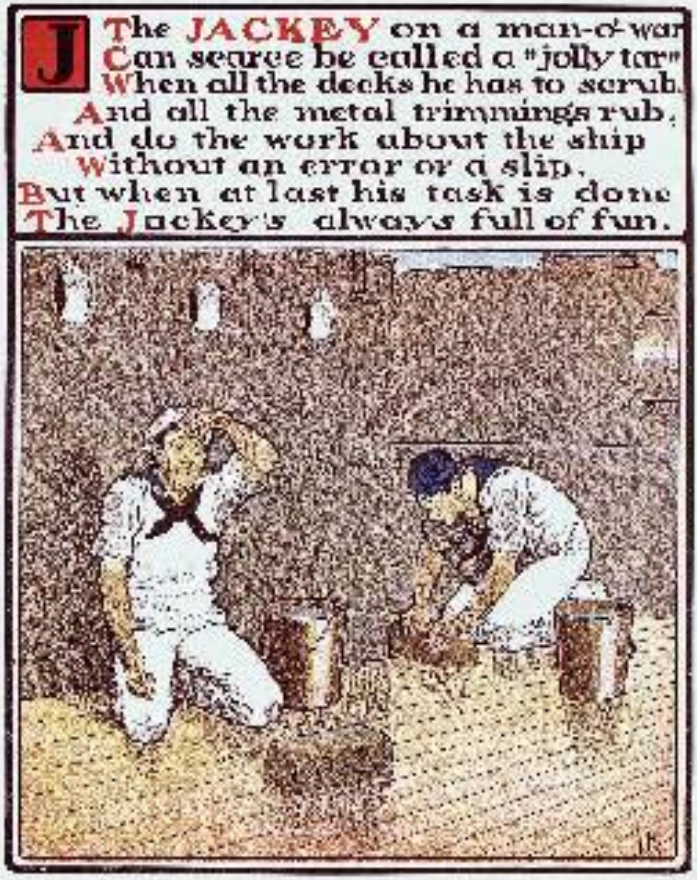
H. The HALYARDS of a warship raise
The signal — flags apeak,
For thus the Admiral displays
The words he cannot speak.
And every ship the message sees
And answers the command
By fluttering signals in the breeze
To show they understand.



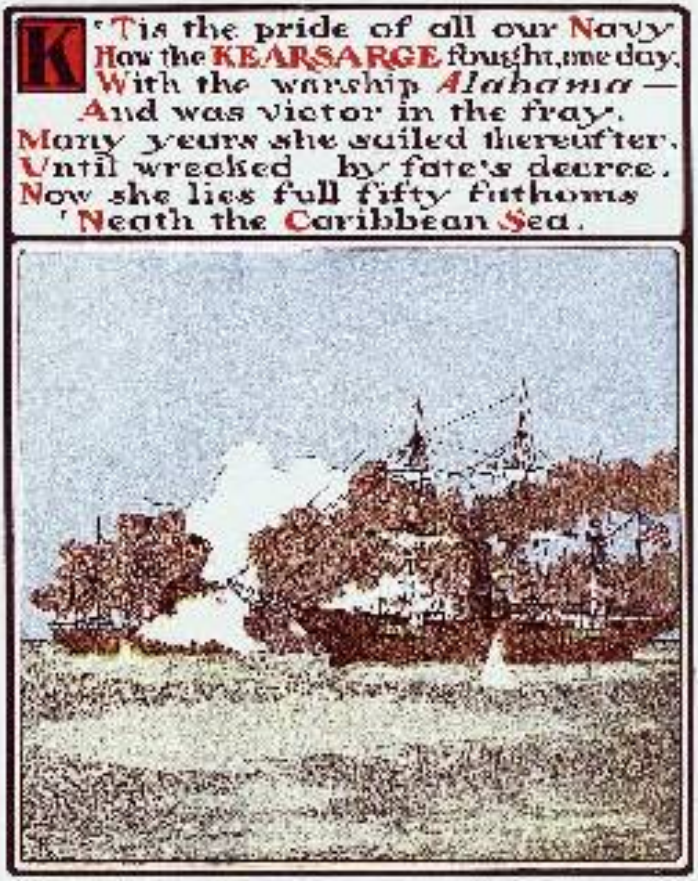
I. The sturdy IRONCLAD has plates
Of tempered steel upon her side,
And, armored thus, the foe awaits
In conscious power and fearless pride.
Though shot and shell upon her rain
It quickly glances off again;
And nothing can her crew alarm,
Protected thus from every harm.



J. The JACKEY on a man-o-war
Can scarce be called a “jolly tar.”
When all the decks he has to scrub,
And all the metal trimmings rub,
And do the work about the ship
Without an error or a slip.
But when at last his task is done
The Jackey’s always full of fun.

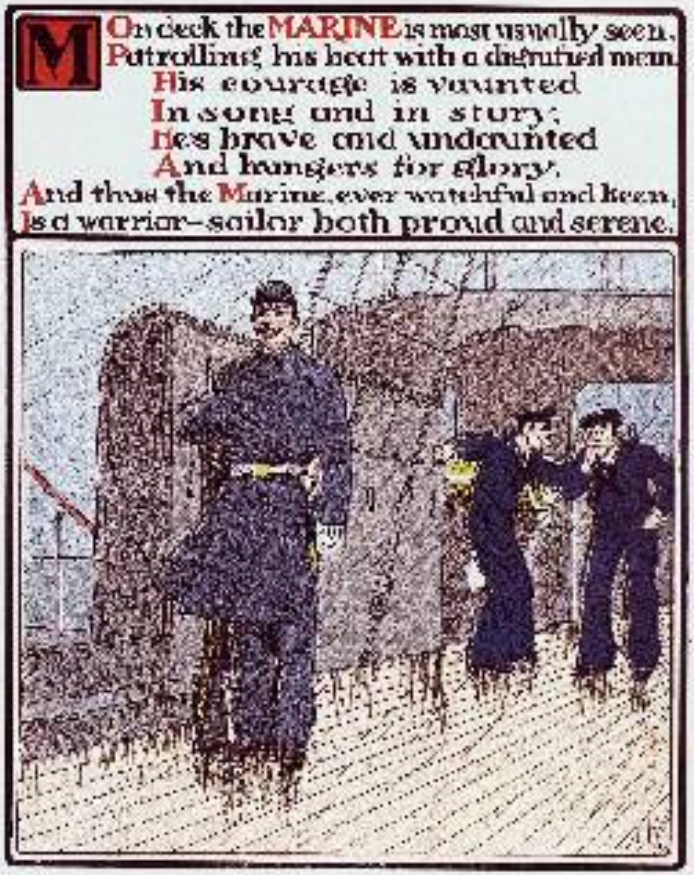


K. Tis the pride of all our Navy
How the KEARSARGE fought, one day.
With the warship Alabama —
And was victor in the fray.
Many years she sailed thereafter,
Until wrecked by fate's decree
Now she lies full fifty fathoms
'Neath the Caribbean Sea.

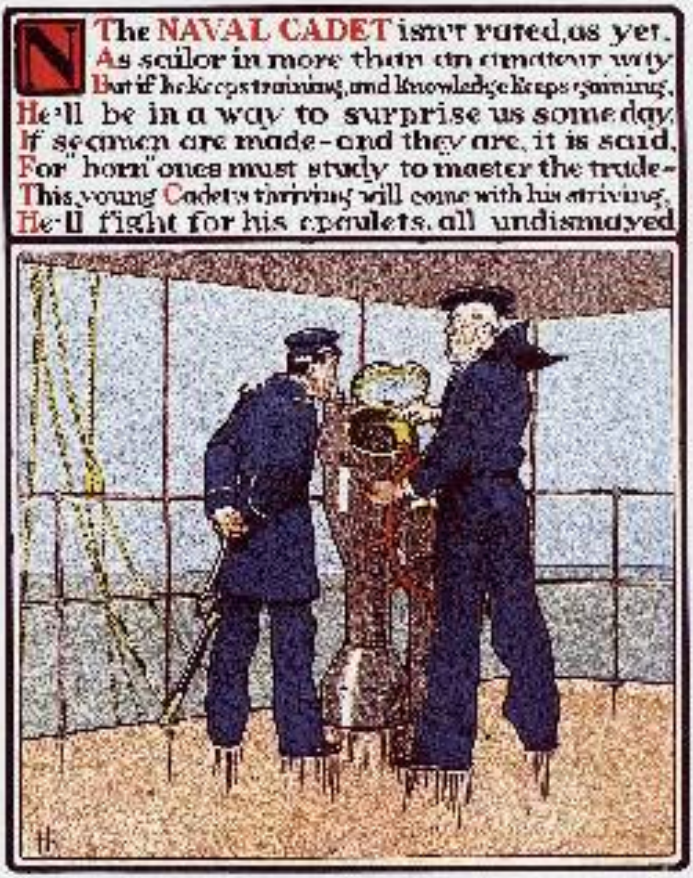


L. The LIGHTHOUSE throws its piercing ray
Across the sea for miles away,
Warning all ships upon the deep
From treach'rous shoals and reefs to keep.
It guides them into harbor fair
By reason of its steady glare,
And so the Lighthouse proves a friend
Our ships and sailors to defend.

M. On deck the MARINE is most visually seen,
Patrolling his beat with a dignified mein.
His courage is vaulted
In song and in story,
He’s brave and undaunted
And hungers for glory.
And thus the Marine, ever watchful and keen,
Is a warrior-sailor both proud and serene.

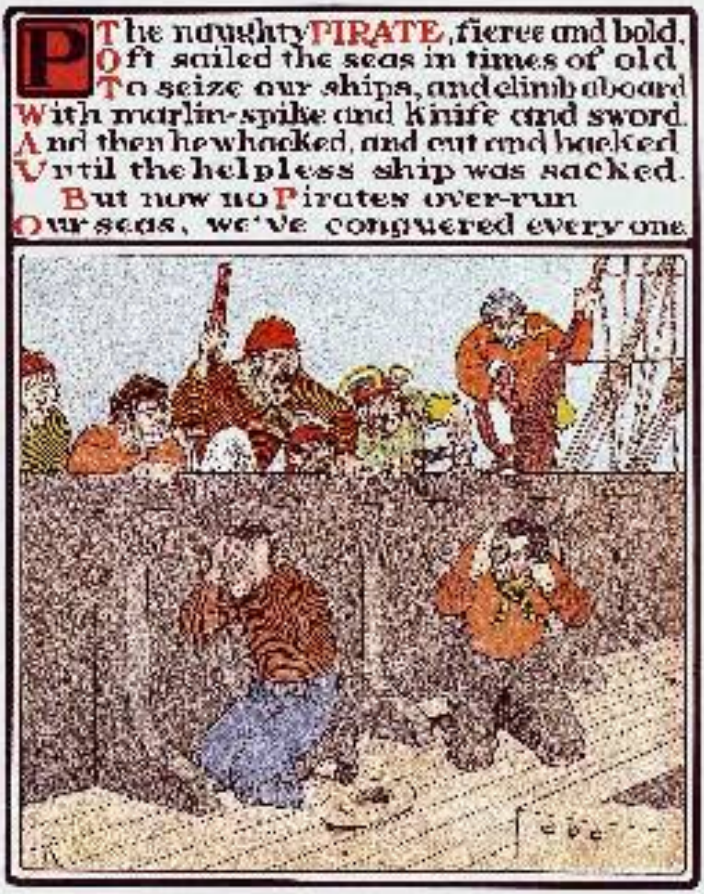


N. The NAVAL CADET isn't rated, as yet,
As sailor in more than an amateur way
But if he Keeps training, and knowledge keeps gaining
He'll be in a way to surprise us someday.
If seamen are made--and they are, it is said,
For "born" ones must study to master the trade-
This young Cadet's thriving will come with his striving,
He'll fight for his epaulets, all undismayed.



O. Across the OCEAN vast and blue
Our warships plow the billows through
To guard our Colonies afar
And carry aid in time of war
They sail to fair Manila from
The sunny little Isle of Guam,
And then from Porto Rican blooms
To where Hawaii grandly looms.

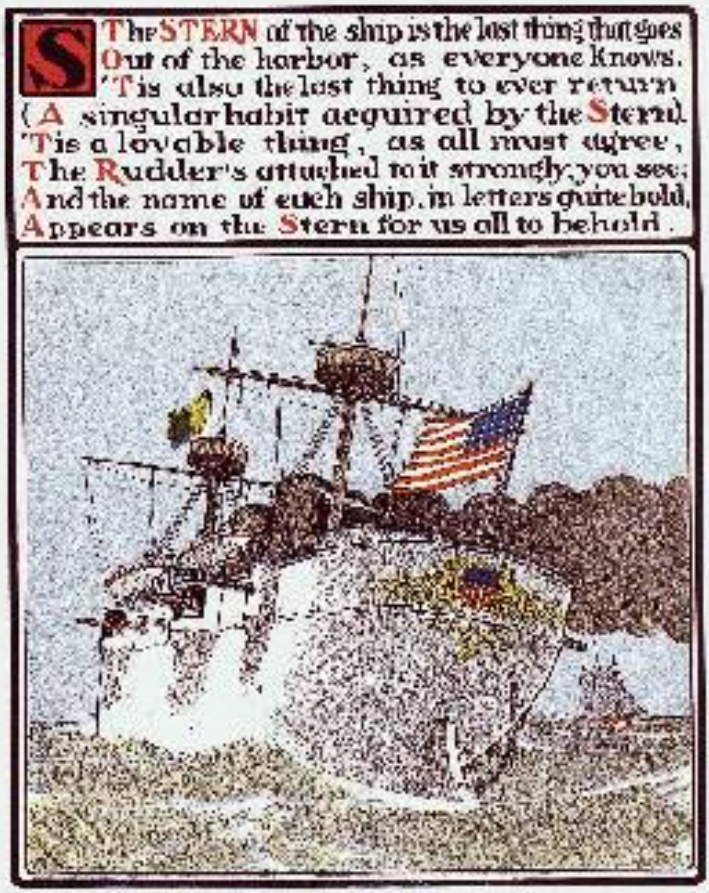
P. The naughty PIRATE, fierce and bold.
Oft sailed the seas in times of old
To seize our ships, and climb aboard
With marlin-spike and Knife and sword.
And then he whacked, and cut and hacked
Until the helpless ship was sacked.
But now no Pirates over-run
Our seas, we've conquered everyone,



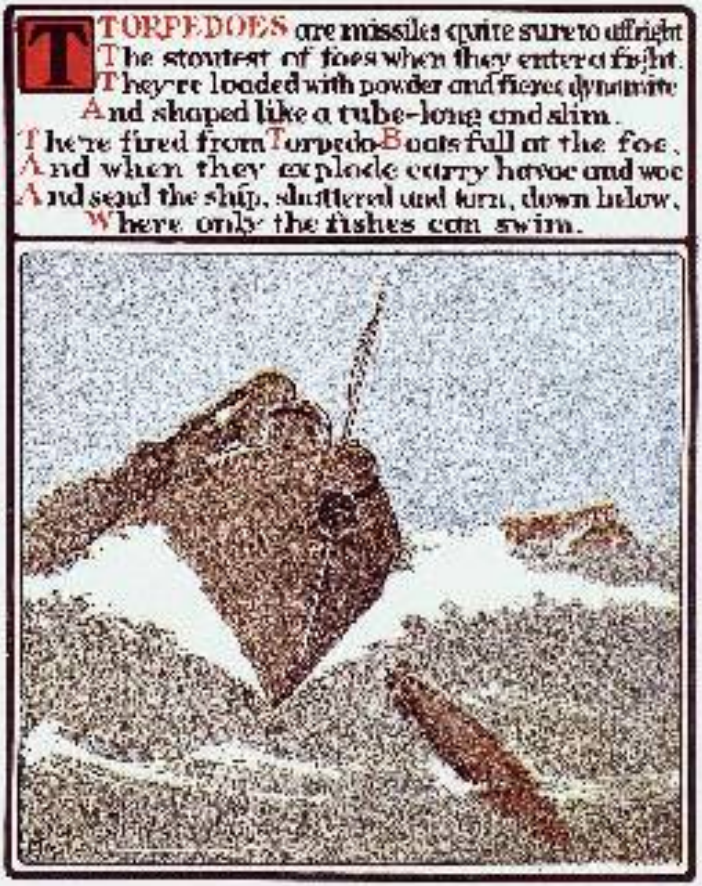
Q. The QUARTER-DECK is sacred to
The officers, but not the crew
And even'mid a fight or wreck
The captain walks the Quarter-deck
And yells his orders to the men,
Who cry "aye, aye, sir!" back again.
And so the place of dignity —
Is on the Quarter-deck, you see.

R. This is the RUDDER that steers the ship
And makes it go this way and that.
It guides the Keel with never a slip
And points out the course quick as scat.
Woe to the ship if the Rudder breaks!
The vessel is then “all at sea”,
Rolling and hitching, tossing and -pitching
In manner both awkward and free.

S. The STERN of the ship is the last thing that goes
Out of the harbor, as everyone knows.
'Tis also the last thing to ever return
(A singular habit acquired by the Stern).
'Tis a lovable thing, as all must agree,
The Rudder's attached to it strongly, you see;
And the name of each ship, in letters quite bold,
Appears on the Stern for us to behold.

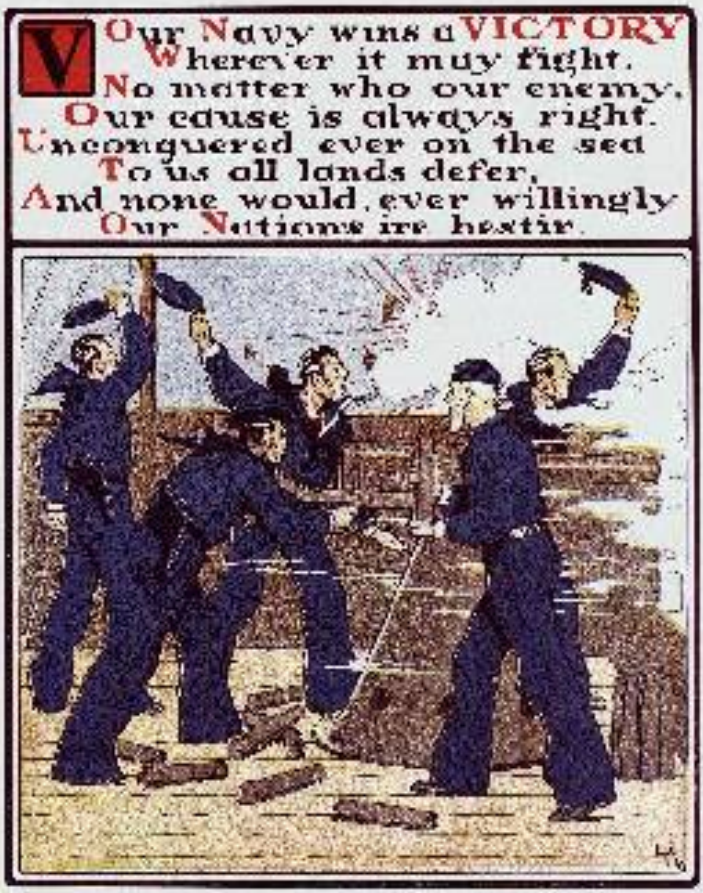


T. TORPEDOES arc missiles quite sure to affright
The stoutest of foes when they enter a fight.
They're loaded with powder and fierce dynamite
And shaped like a tube-long and slim.
They're fired from Torpedo-Boats full at the foe,
And when they explode carry havoc and woe
And send the ship, shattered and torn, down below,
Where only the fishes can swim.



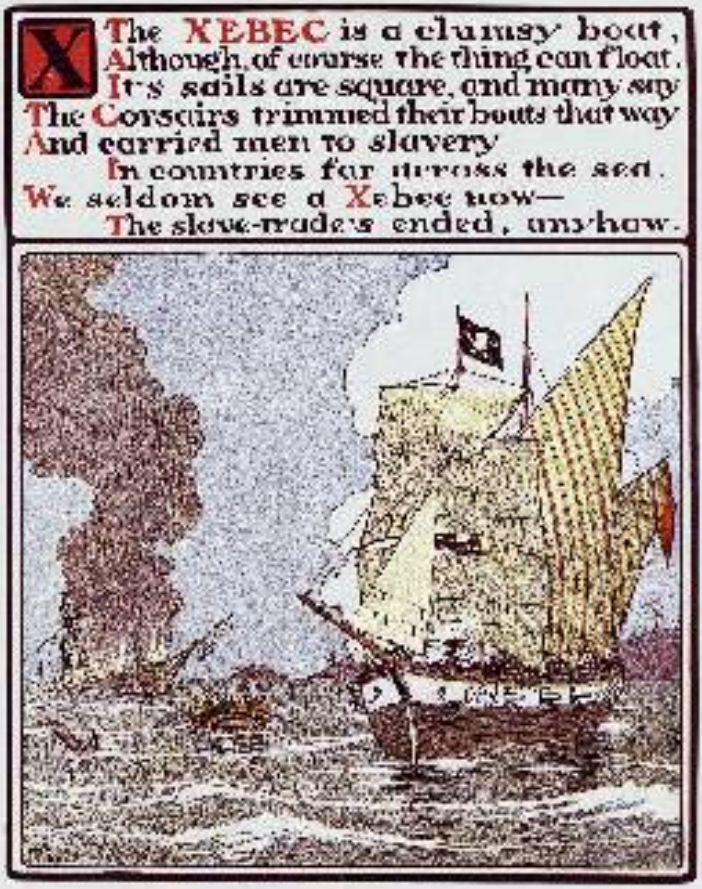
U. The Navy's flag is the UNION JACK,
It flies from the bow of the boat;
While high at the stern, and farther back,
Our Stars and Stripes must float
The Union Jack is of royal blue
With a star for ev'ry State,
And when these clustered stars we view
We Know why we are great.

V. Our Navy wins a VICTORY
Wherever it may fight.
No matter who our enemy,
Our cause is always right.
Unconquered ever on the sea
To us all lands defer.
And none would ever willingly
Our Nations ire bestir.

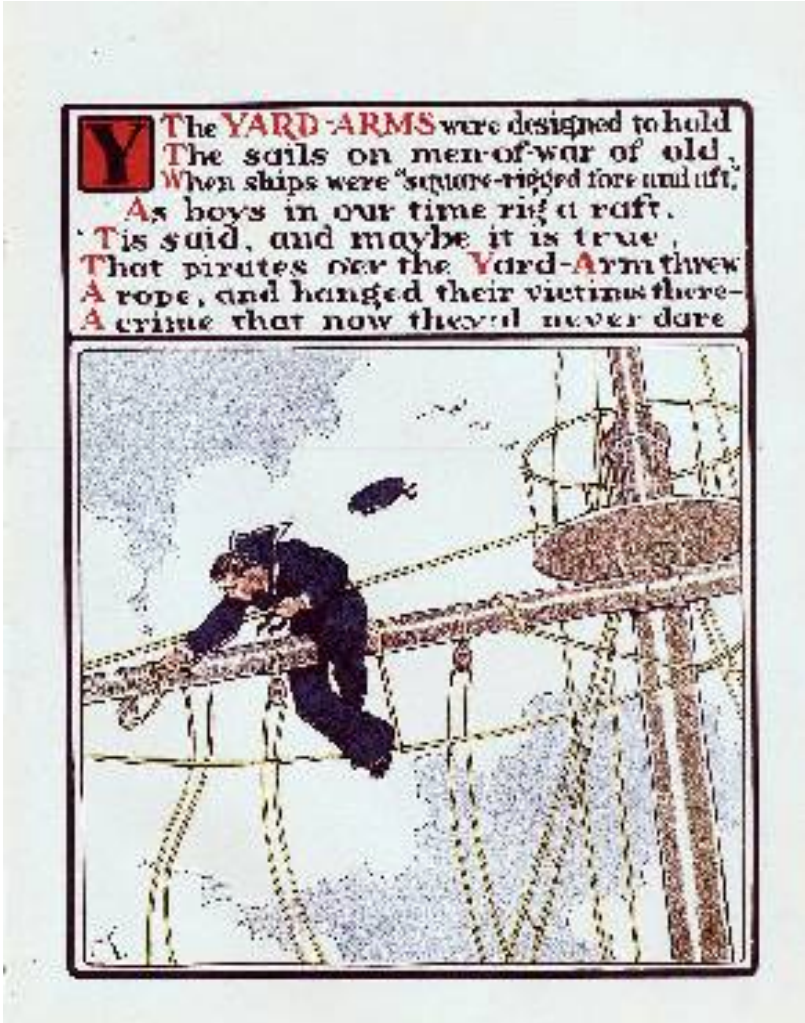


W. Did you ever see a sailor-man WIG-WAGGING?
You'd think that he some railway train was flagging;
For he waves a flag' in air
And wig-wags it here and there.
Yet making ev'ry movement with the greatest care.
He's waving secret signals to the ships near by,
And captains with their telescopes his signals spy;
For well they know what all the movements signify

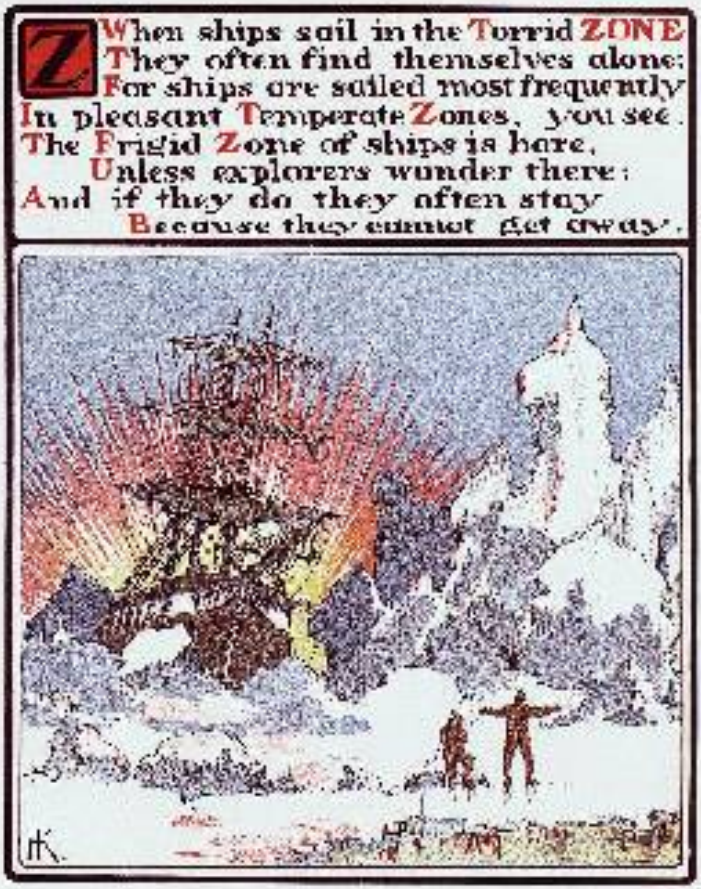
X. The XEBEC is a clumsy boat,
Although, of course the thing can float.
Its sails are square, and many say
The Corsairs trimmed their boats that way
And carried men to slavery
In countries far across the sea.
We seldom see a Xebec now —
The slave-trade's ended, anyhow.



Y. The YARD-ARMS were designed to hold
The sails on men-of-war of old,
When ships were “square-rigged fore and aft’’
As boys in our time rig a raft.
‘Tis said, and maybe it is true,
That pirates o’er the Yard-Arm threw
A rope, and hanged their victims there--
A crime that now they’d never dare.

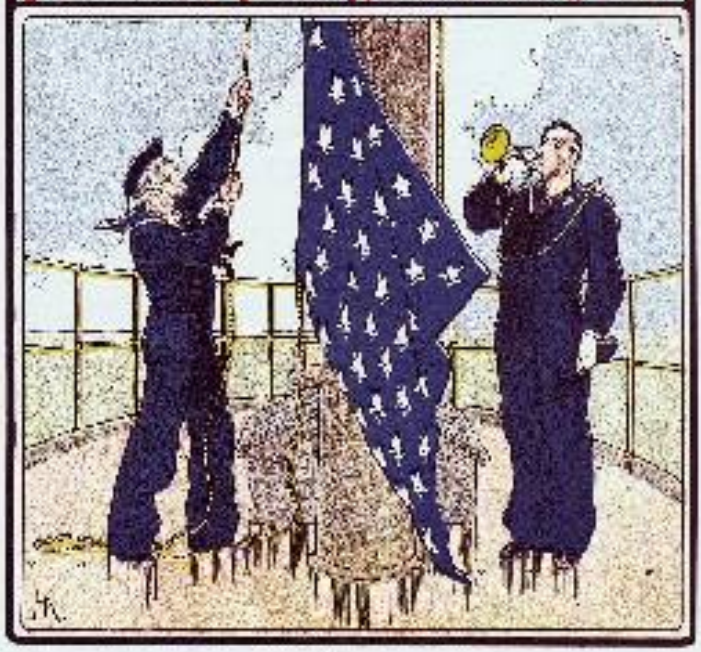


Z. When ships sail in the Torrid ZONE
They often find themselves alone;
For ships are sailed most frequently
In pleasant Temperate Zones, you see.
The Frigid Zone of ships is bare.
Unless exploiters wander there;
And if they do they often stay
Because they cannot get away.



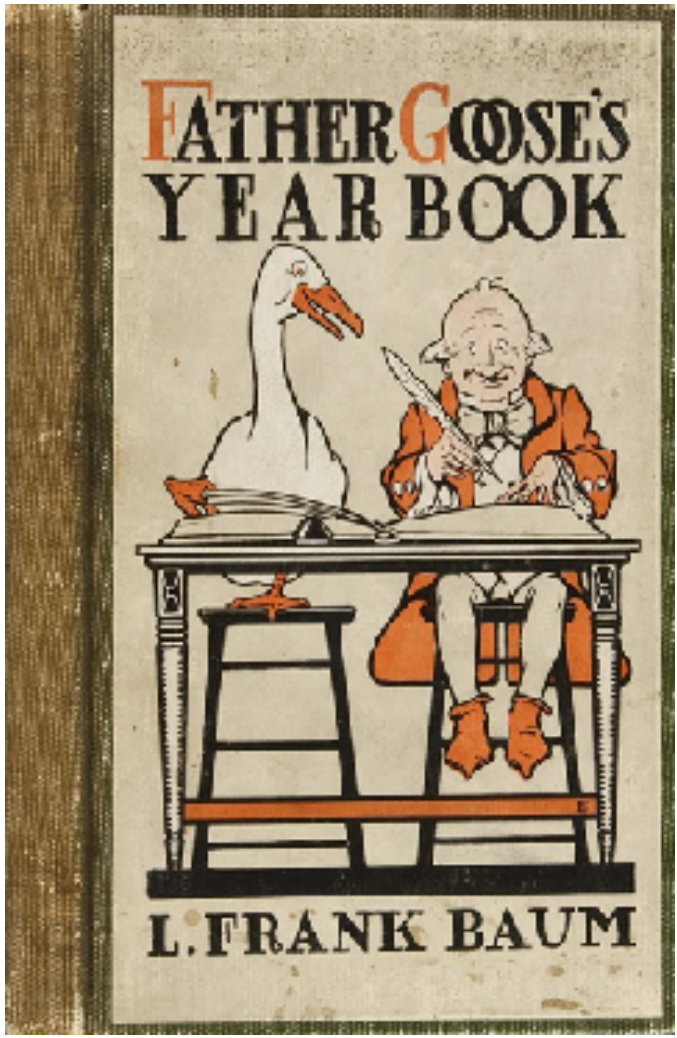
&. AND now although our book is nearly done,
And all the Verse and all the sober fun
Is written down for you to plainly read,
We hope this final sentiment you'll heed;
Americans may feel a loyal pride
In Army, Statesmen, Trade, and much beside;
But when on high our Union jack's unfurled
It marks the Finest Navy in the World!

AND now, although our book is nearly done,
And all the verse and all the sober fun
Is written down for you to plainly read,
We hope this final sentiment you'll heed;
Americans may feel a loyal pride
In Army, Statesmen, Trade, and much beside;
But when on high our Union Jacks unfurled
It marks the Finest Navy in the World!



FATHER GOOSE'S YEAR BOOK

Father Goose's Year Book: Quaint Quacks and Feathered Shafts for Mature Children, published by Reilly & Britton in 1907, tried to capitalize on Baum's success with his earlier collection, *Father Goose: His Book*. Although in a similar vein, Baum aimed these humorous nonsense poems at adult readers, not children. Walter J. Enright provided the illustrations. He was the husband of Maginel Wright Enright, who illustrated a few other works by Baum, and father of Elizabeth Enright, illustrator and popular children's author.



A first edition copy of 'Father Goose's Year Book'

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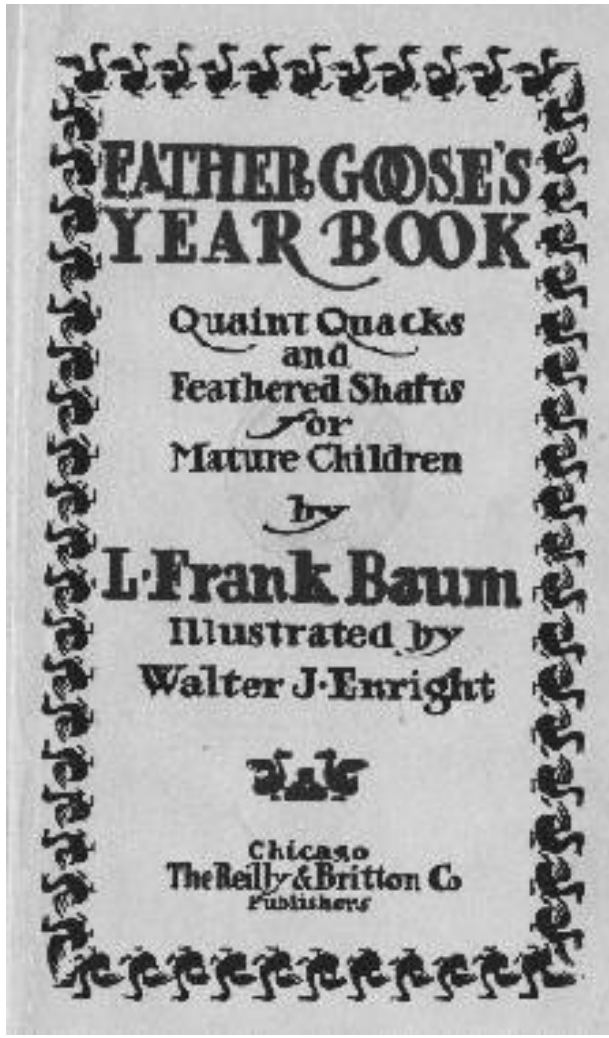


FATHER GOOSE'S
YEAR BOOK

Quaint Quacks
and
Feathered Shafts
for
Mature Children

by

L. Frank Baum

Illustrated by
Walter J. Enright

Chicago
The Reilly & Britton Co
Publishers

The original title page

PREFACE

The author disclaims any endeavor to be sensible — or even clever — in this book. You'll understand why, when you read it. The cleverest people I know of are my readers, so I have only usurped about half of the book for my own cackle and left the other half blank, that the proud possessor of it may indite his or her own effusions on the nice clean paper and then discover how much better those paragraphs read than my own do. The contrast should make you very proud.

This is a Year Book. It is good for any year that happens. If you fill up the pages in your own way, the book will positively be all write. If you don't, half of it will be all right, anyhow; but I won't say which half it will be. Father Goose is supposed to be jolly and irresponsible. He insists on being happy himself and wants the world to be happy with him. If anything at all cynical has crept into these verses he declares that he is innocent of intentional pessimism.

Yours for fun,

L. F. B. Goose.

JANUARY

This is the month the skaters glide —
Yo, ho! they merrily go!
Over the glistening ice they slide
Skimming the ponds both far and wide
  With shouts — yo, ho!
  With cheeks aglow,
Heedless of wind, or storm or snow —
  Yo, ho! they merrily go!
Tom, Tom, the piper's son,
Stole a pig and away he run;
Which is proof enough, 'tis true,
Tommy couldn't be a Jew.
If a Coon, I'm sure that then
He'd have gone and stole a hen;
If in politics, you'd find
He'd have stole the people blind;
If a Parson, on my soul
I believe he'd *wear* the stole!
The man who does things by halves may
expect no quarter. There's some cents
in this.
He:
"Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
What'll your luncheon be?
  Is it to beans
  Thy fancy leans?"
She:
"Some quail on toast for me."
He:
"Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
What'll you have to drink?
  Some beer, my dear?"
She:
"Oh, no; how queer!
I'll take champagne, I think."
  The Benedict may now be seen
  Protesting to his Benedictine.
He's Cornin' thro' the Rye, "that's all — "

Just listen to his loud, high bawl.
  Of Bourbon ancestry is she;
  She shakes him for the drinks, you see.
Many a good housemaid is sacrificed to
make a poor stenographer, while many
a good stenographer becomes a poor
actress. Ambition should be made of
sterner stuff.
Now doth the master of the house
   With trembling fingers ope'
The bills for wifey's Christmas gifts--
   For he's plumb out of soap.
"Everything comes to him who waits" —
Which means the man who juggles the plates
And thrusts the finger-bowl under your nose
And then assumes a haughty pose.
Pompous and dignified, graceful and flip
He eyes you with scorn as you feel for his tip.
Give him your all — appease the fates —
Everything goes to him who waits!

FEBRUARY

THIS is the month the bashful youth
Invests in valentines, forsooth —
All decked with cupids, hearts and lyres
To send the girl he most admires.
She gives the precious things a glance
Of scorn — perhaps of arrogance —
And hands them to her little brother
To send some school-girl friend or other.
The valentine does double duty —
Or triple, if it is a beauty;
So lovers, heed this wise advice:
Don't buy the things at any price.
The Father of his Country
This very month, they say,
Was born, by some rare streak of luck,
On Washington's birthday.
Abe Lincoln, too, that famous man,
(It's quite extraordinary!)
Decided to be also born
The month of February!
So, children, don't forget the dates-
This is the way they're reckoned:
The fourteenth day for Abraham,
For George the twenty-second.
Shoe the wild colt
And shoo the wild hen;
But how in the world
Can you shoe eight or ten
Stubby-toed children
When poor daddy's fate
Is to earn 12 a week
And the grocer won't wait?
If someone would invent a speedometer to
attach to the modern female, we'd find
a good many of them are exceeding the
limit. This is a fine point to consider.
A skate is a fish;
But a "cheap skate" is not;

And to “get a skate on.”
Is the thirsty man’s lot.
There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,
She had so many children she didn’t know what to do.
She went to our Teddy, who cried: “You are it!
It’s a *kid* shoe, of course; when it’s full, it’s a fit.”
Uneasy lies the man that meets a creditor.
A dear Christian lady
Played bridge for a prize;
The way she reneged
Would cause you surprise.
When asked if she didn’t
Think “bridge” was a sin
She answered: “Oh, no;
For I prayed I would win!”
Give your old clothes to the Salvation
Army. Such charity covers a multitude of shins.

MARCH

This is the month old Boreas
Salutes the people as they pass.
His temper's breezy now, you know;
He bores us with his constant blow.
The month comes like a lion grim
And fades away resembling him.
The wind's not tempered to the shorn;
The ancient lamb-like days we mourn.
To keep gas bills from running up
I've found the nicest way
Is locking up the house at night
And going to the play.
"Curly Locks, Curly Locks, wilt thou be mine?
I'll dine you on squab and a bottle of wine."
Said the fair chorus girl: "Go propose to some other;
At home I've nine children awaiting their mother."
Tramp, tramp, tramp, the month is
Marching,
Cheer up, folks, it cannot last;
All the drizzle, sleet and hail
They will vanish, without fail,
When the dreary, weary days have wildly passed.
Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top;
Ma's at the club, and so is your pop;
Nursey must get the policeman a lunch —
Hush-a-bye, baby, the tree-top's *your* hunch!
Imitation is the life of trade.
March Seventeenth the Emerald Isle
Sends out her sons to march in style
In honor of St. Patrick, who
Was death on snakes and sinners too.
With shamrock pinned upon each breast
They tramp all day without a rest
And work much harder, sure, than they
Are sometimes known to do for pay.
Scientists, it is said, have discovered that
the girls with the prettiest faces have
the most corns on their toes. This may

be a slander, and if so any pretty girl
has the right to prove it.
Now Lent begins, and appetites
Should modulated be.
Deny yourself those dainty bits
That with you don't agree.
Allow your friends to go to church,
And fast between-meals, too,
For if you're wise, then you'll keep Lent —
All good umbrellas do.
There's a difference between Sousa's
march air and the mad March hare. The
latter ought to go to a barber.

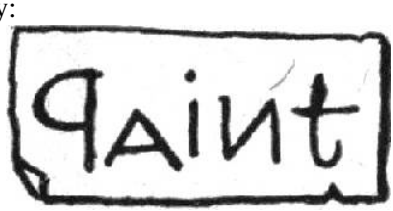
APRIL

ST. Fool's Day comes but once a year —
We note with grief that now it's here.
This is the day you dare not kick
The hat that hides the solid brick;
When salt is in the sugar-bowl
To fool us in a manner droll;
When imps pin signs upon your back
With "April Fool!" in letters black.
Perhaps the joke you fail to see;
If so, a fool you're sure to be;
And every fool is at his worst
Upon this awful April first.
One misty, moisty morning,
When cloudy was the weather,
She wore her forty-dollar hat
And spoiled the ostrich feather.
Filosify.
The man who spends his all has fun;
The man who saves his all has none;
  Yet it is best, the wise ones say,
  To save some for a rainy day.
  But, if 'tis hard to save a bit,
And easy to spend all of it,
Just let' er slide — the fun you'll gain,
And like as not 'twill never rain.
    Fee, faw, fum!
  The girls are chewing gum;
But never mind, when they are through
It's probable the rag they'll chew,
  And I prefer the gum, don't you?
    Yum, yum, yum!
When the dentist extracted his nerve
He must have infused him with verve,
  For he gave a great yell,
  On his torturer fell,
And at the hospital they say Doc is
  improving slowly.
"The girl I love is all my own!"

I heard a lover cry;
‘Tis sad that he could not have known
The girl he loved was all *her* own
And not composed of the rag and bone
And hank o’ hair that girls are prone
Of specialists to buy.
“April showers bring forth May flowers”;
But just depend upon it
The flowery things that April brings
Appear upon a bonnet.
Now doth the star, all broken down,
In vaudeville seek fresh renown.
The manager will advertise
He has secured a splendid prize —
Six hundred dollars every week
Is what he pays — to hear him speak.
The patrons swear that six would be
A bit of cruel robbery.
A poet is born, not made; but this fact may
not be wholly responsible for the prev-
alence of race suicide.

MAY

GREAT Cæsar! Moving-Day is here!
So from this flat we disappear
Into another, while from that
Our neighbors move into our flat.
We haven't gained a blessed thing
By breaking up and taking wing,
And no one profits but the man
Who owns the costly moving-van.
(P. S. This janitor is somewhat worse
Than that one whom we used to curse.)
See, saw, Margery Daw,
Wanted to act on the stage.
She took elocution
At some institution —
At 5c. shows she's now the rage.
She was the idol of my heart;
But since we've married been
She is the idle of our flat
And I've turned kitchen-queen!
Don't judge a man by his clothes. Many a
cheap picture has an expensive frame.
There was a sign upon the fence.
The sign read this way:



And every person passing thence
Would pause, with manner quaint,
And touch a finger to the place —
Then wisely wag his head —
And as he journeyed on apace
"It's paint, all right!" he said.
A word to the wise is unnecessary.

A SPRING TRAGEDY

Lovely, limber Lady Rake
Had the gardener's bed to make
When at morning she'd arise —
'Twas her daily exercise.
As she picked her way o'er the grass so gay
The tools all loved her, and they say
That the hammer lost his head,
And the anvil colored red,
Augur got to be a bore,
While the lawn adored her mower;
She refused the prying pick —
Made him dig out mighty quick Î
Hatchet was too sharp, by far,
So she gave his edge a jar;
But the spade, as you might guess,
Won from her a gracious "yes,"

A SPRING TRAGEDY. *(Concluded.)*

And the tweezers, passing by,
Bound them with a railway tie.
'But though wed they say Lady Rake got gay
And conducted herself in an indiscreet way:
Scraped acquaintance with a file,
On a shovel dared to smile,
Danced around with sickle keen
Cutting capers on the green!
So the spade soon got divorce —
From the tennis-court, of course;
She's a widow, now, alas!
Moral is: Keep off the Grass.

JUNE

This is the month the blushing bride
Before the altar stands with pride —
Her gown the sweetest ever seen,
Her girl friends all with envy green.
The groom as “model man” now poses;
The wedding feast is banked with roses;
Her pictures all the papers print,
And friends a thousand cautions hint.
Her papa thrills with nervous chills
To think that he must foot the bills;
And in another year, of course
He’ll have to pay for her divorce.
And now with manly resignation
The clerk goes on his long vacation
And “loafs” with such tremendous zest
He has to go to work to rest.
He’ll graduate now from Harvard or
Yale,
But there is n’t a thing he can do;
Though wisdom scholastic from him doth exhale
All labor he’ll proudly eschew.
With chin in the air he will strut here and there
And flirt with the girls and at business men stare,
But how he can live only Dad is aware
For there isn’t a thing he can do.
List, darling, to the auto’s toot —
It’s time for little ones to scoot.
The chauffeur fiend is after you
And loves to make you all skidoo;
He craves an arm, or leg, or head,
And smiles to think he’s got you dead.
The world was only made, they say,
For automobiles and chauffeurs gay.
The rich who ride demand our praises.
The poor who walk can go to blazes.
A treat in time saves wine.

A TERRIBLE TALE

A maiden once sailed on the briny deep —
A wide-awake girl when she wasn't asleep;
The sea acted roughly, 'twas rude and 'twas wet,
And took a wild notion to fume and to fret
Till the ship and the girl were completely upset.
She floated ashore on a cannibal isle,
And the Cannibal King smole an amiable smile.
"I'll give you your choice," the savage one said,
"To be instantly married, or eaten, instead."
"I reckon," said she, "I prefer to be wed."

A TERRIBLE TALE. (*Concluded*.)

Now the cannibal planned, when he tire of his bride,
To serve her for luncheon, sliced thin and then fried;
But the girl had a far better scheme in her head:
She baked him a batch of her Cooking-
School bread
And the cannibal's spirit immediately fled —
He was dead.
All the world's a stage, yet some folks
claim they have no show.

JULY

HUZZAH! Hurroo! Hip, hip, hooray!
The 4th is Independence Day.
The small boy now is much elated;
The population's decimated;
Toes, fingers, eye-balls, scattered wide
Proclaim the day our Nation's pride.
The Queen was tart;
She lost her heart
All on a summer's day.
The thing, I'm told,
Was hard and cold
And worthless, anyway.
Hey, diddle, diddle,
If Ysaye would fiddle
While Rockefeller captured the moon
The people would say:
"It's only his way;
He'll have the sun, too, pretty soon."
The proof of the printing has nothing
to do with the case.
Good morning, merry sunshine!
  What makes you come so soon?
You lure us to the picnic grounds
  And then it rains by noon.
And now restrain your envy when you find your neighbor can
Go riding in an auto that is stylish, spick and span.
It doesn't mean excessive wealth — in these days any man
May buy a great big auto on the small instalment plan.
Distance lends enchantment to the ball game.
Sing a song o' ten cents,
A bottle full of rye,
A glass that holds a nickle's worth,
A ball that's rather high.
When the nozzle gurgles
The barkeep gives a frown —
Isn't that a foolish drink
For any man to down?
It seems queer that an old bachelor would

buy a talking-machine. But then, he isn’t obliged to wind it up.

THE OLD, OLD STORY

Now doth the busy little she
Employ each shining minute,
For at the sea-shore she can be
A star, and strictly in it.
Nor doth her bathing-togs disguise
The fact she seeks a chance
To flirt; and thus her soulful eyes
Some yearning youth entrance.
On moonlit sands they sit to rest
In dreamy satisfaction;
‘Tis sweet to hear the youth protest
He loves her to distraction.
To end this fond, idyllic spree
They both go home to work;
For she’s a lovely sales-ladye
And he’s a drug-store clerk.

AUGUST

THIS is the month so scorching hot
That even autos scorch a lot;
The boys all seek the swimming hole,
The girls to soda fountains stroll;
The merry ‘skeeters softly hum;
The ice-man’s not exactly glum;
The summer gardens all entice
You with a small admission price
And fleece you while inside you roam
Until you’re forced ta “hoof it” home.
‘Tis now the merry iceman
Is in a melting mood;
His frosty wares are full of glares
Which proves the ice is good.
His deals are always on the square,
He chips in constantly,
And every weight is what he’ll state
It is cracked up to be.
If a little learning is a dangerous thing,
more must be an automobile.
Silence is golden, so it takes money to keep
Mumm.

Sail-boat;
Boy afloat;
Sudden squall;
That’s all.

The Child:
“Why does our Teddy hunt bear, papa?
Why does our Teddy hunt bear?”
The Papa:
“Because, dear boy, as everyone knows,
He has to hunt bare ‘til he puts on his
clothes;
And that’s why our Teddy hunts bare, I
suppose —
Sure! that’s why our Teddy hunts
bare.”

SONG OF A SAILOR

The yachtsman is a sailor, for he wears a sailor hat
And greets a cat-o'-nine-tails with a very nervous "scat!"
Whene'er in need of exercise he'll box the compass o'er
And when he's half-seas-over you will find
Perchance he meets a Summer Girl and yells out "Ship ahoy!"
Enquiring if she wouldn't like to anchor to a buoy.
But if she thinks him naughtycal and scoots before the breeze
The yachtsman reefs his reefer while he — tacks with tactful ease.
Hickory, dickory, dock;
The mouse ran up the clock
Of the maiden's stocking —
'Twas really shocking!
They heard her half a block.

FARM HINTS

If you plant just one banana-peel
In August, you will raise
A quart, at least, of slippery-elm,
And that's a crop that pays.
Now thresh the frosty pumpkin
And the sweet-potato mow;
And if you find you're in a boat
Be sure to hoe your row.

SEPTEMBER

THE oyster now deserts his shell
To feed the folk that love him well;
The theatres throw wide their doors
To greet us with these well-known bores
A tune we've heard somewhere before,
A girl in tights and little more
A sad comedian, a plot
That's only rot as like as not;
The same old show, the same old beat,
The same old price to get a seat.
Little Miss Gobble
She made her jaws wobble
By eating an ice-cream cone;
Her fond mother caught her
And robbed her dear daughter
And finished the cone all alone.
Mary had a little lamb,
She fleeced him on the go;
And yet he didn't care a slam —
For papa paid, you know.
Faint heart ne'er won fair lady, but it's
often saddled with a homely one.
Once a fly with graceful flutter
Stopped to rest upon some butter —
    It was soft,
    As 'tis oft.
There he floundered, struggled madly,
Wanted to escape so badly,
    But was stuck —
    Horrid luck!
Cook reached over, threw the butter
In the frying-pan to splutter —
    Fly was fried
    Till he died.
Underneath the steak he rested
And by some one was digested —
    How unkind!
    Never mind.

When papa snores the baby's eyes
Are opened wide in grieved surprise.
A moment later baby's roars
Are keeping time to papa's snores.
Simple Simon met a pieman
Going to the fair;
He ate a slice, had not the price,
But said, with modest air:
"This simple life, as Wagner says,
Is the only kind of graft that pays."
A theatrical manager is known by the
company he keeps.
A grateful draught he daily quaffed,
A draughtsman fair was he;
And then he stood within a draught
A game of draughts to see.
He made a draught upon the bank
To buy draught-horses fast;
But as a final draughty prank
Death draughted him at last.
Americans love to blow their own horns.
Sometimes one of our rich girls will
blow herself for her own cor'net.

OCTOBER

This is the month the fishes bite
Because they have an appetite;
And children, with bent pins and twine
Instead of any hook or line,
A-fishing go in pond and brook
And many little fishes hook.
Then of their sport they tell with pride
And eat the fishes when they're fried.
There was a man in our town
And he was wondrous wise;
He bought his wife a tailor-gown
With all the hooks and eyes
Upon the front — a clever scheme,
For he don't have to hook her.
That gown is certainly a dream
And quite a stylish looker.
(Chorus of Lady Readers: "Ugh!")
Figures won't lie, but don't imagine the
chorus girl has to stand up when she gets home.
"Baa, baa, hand-me-down,
Have you any wool?"
"Every fifteen-dollar suit,
When it's on, is full."
"Baa, baa, hand-me-down,
Aren't you telling lies?"
"No, for all my wool I pull
Over the customer's eyes."
Give the devil his due, but don't imagine
you owe him your entire salary.

THINK IT OVER

When a girl admits she loves you and declares she will be true,
Think it over.
If you're living up your income, how can you provide for two"?
Think it over.
It's nice to have a pretty wife to cook and pour your tea;
It's nice to have some little ones to clamber on your knee;
But such luxuries are costly, all the married men agree —
Think it over.
Care will kill a cat — but the cat won't care.
Did you ever see a man defeat a trust
Just because the trusty trust was so unjust?
    Did you ever?
    No, you never!
For the man that fights a trust is sure to bust.

OCT 31st

Future husbands may be seen
On the night of Hallowe'en;
Also front gates may be found
In the back yard on the ground.
When the door-bell rings don't worry
For the boys are in a hurry.
Ghosts are seen both fat and lean
On this frisky "hallowed" e'en.

NOVEMBER

This is the month the football game
Puts wars and rioting to shame,
And moral mortals sink so low
They bet which way the game will go!
Our gentle maidens all adore
The champion who sheds most gore,
And laugh with innocent delight
To see the long-haired fellows fight.
And if a shudder you behold
It's 'cause the weather's beastly cold;
To freeze and shiver every one
With joy submits, to see "the fun."
The North wind doth blow
And we shall have snow
And what will the robber do then,
poor thing?
He'll "hold up" a few,
And the whole police, too,
And relieve you of your diamond
ring — poor thing!
There was a crooked man
Who was crooked all the while.
He beat his crooked neighbors
In an easy, crooked style.
He delved in crooked politics
And cast a crooked vote,
And now the crooks respect him
As a man of crooked note.
The lady gave a wail
For a man walked up her trail;
Said he: "Great Scott!
As like as not
There's no moral to this tale!"
The perfume on a lady's gown
Suggests the darling meant
No matter whether asked or not
She'd surely give a-scent.
Many a true word is spoken in disgust.

“Pease porridge hot,
Pease porridge cold;
Here’s wifey’s letter I forgot--
It’s three days old!”
There was a little man, and he had a little gun,
And its bullets were mischievous sneers, sneers, sneers —
He thought it good luck when he hit a little duck
And brought to her pretty eyes tears, tears, tears.
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of snake-bite.
“Race suicide,” said Mr. Jinks,
“I’m guilty of, I know;
For I bet my money on a nag
That never had a show.
‘Twas sure a matter of disgrace
To squander money so:
You’d hardly call the thing a *race* —
‘Twas *suicidal*, though!”
The man who gets a chauffeur seldom gets
a show for his money.
Rolling billiard-balls gather no salary.

DECEMBER

HERE is the last month of the year —
The month of Christmas joy and cheer;
And papa dons disguise because
The kids expect old Santa Claus.
With fur-trimmed robe and whiskers white
This hand-made Santa is a sight,
And every tiny lass and lad
Knows very well it's "only Dad!"
  Old King Coal
  Was a merry old soul,
For the kind janitor never used him;
  All worry he spurned
  For he couldn't be burned
And the swear words of tenants amused him.
I had a little poodle-dog
Who always said "bow-wow!"
He couldn't say another thing,
But said that, anyhow.
He always wagged his little tail
Whenever he was glad,
And wagged it in the same old way
Whenever he was sad.

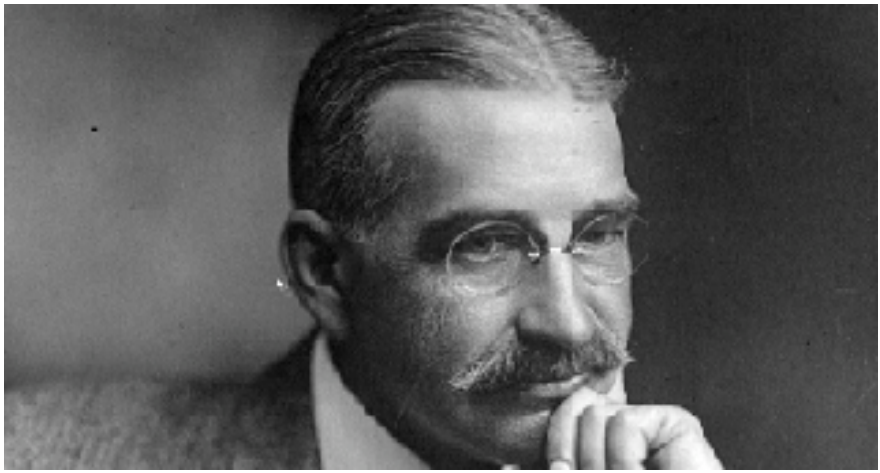
HARD TO SUIT

Once a maiden loved a fireman,
But to wed she didn't dare,
For of such a hose-supporter
Any maiden might beware.
Then she turned to a policeman
Who was awful big and sweet,
But her love was soon arrested
When she found him on the beat.
So a lawyer caught her fancy,
But it gave her heart a jar
When she found the gay deceiver
Was all day before the bar.
Next a baker sent her kisses
And he kneaded her, we know,
For he straightway bought a license
After he had raised the dough.
Bye, baby bunting,
Father's gone a-hunting.
Mother knows the kind of game —
Rather wild, but always tame.
Little man blue, come blow your pile,
You've purchased on margin, now tremble awhile.
But where is the broker that fleeces the sheep?
He's at the Grand Opera, fast asleep!
Haste, man, and sell without delay,
Or *you* may be broker another day.
Ignorance of the law excuses no one — except the judges.

RECKLESS NOAH

When Noah built the ark,
Of good old Hick'ry bark,
He saved the whale, the high-priced quail,
The June-bug and the shark.
He saved the soft gazelle,
The gentle college-yell,
The museum freak from Mozambique
And Continuous Vaudeville.
He saved the slot-machine,
The noodle-soup tureen,
The sardine box and the blondine locks
Of the maid of sweet sixteen.
The jokes of dear Mark Twain,
The woman's-rights campaign —
He saved 'em all, both great and small,
And they can't get lost again!

The Poems



LIST OF POEMS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

SEMI-SENTIMENTAL VERSE BY THE CANDELABRA'S GLARE
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RIGHT AT LAST
TIME'S VAGARIES
HER ANSWER
MY QUANDARY
MY FIRST LOVE
THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER
JESSIE, MY QUEEN!
A SONNET TO MY LADY'S EYE
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THE GREEDY GOLD-FISH
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DID YOU EVER SEE A RABBIT?
TO WALK JIM JONES
CLOCKWORK MAN
TICK TOCK
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THE CATS THEY SIT
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OLD MISTER MICKLEJOHN
BABY FOUND A FEATHER
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A BUMBLE BEE
GRANDPA’S HEAD
UNCLE DICK GAVE ME A DOLLY
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I HAD A DOG
LITTLE TOMMY TODDLEKIN
ORGAN GRINDER
MASTER BUNNY
MR. GREEN
ELEPHANT
KITTY KLYMER
LEE-HI-LUNG-WHAN
LITTLE NIGGER BOY

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POLLY WANTS A CRACKER
BABY PULLED THE PUSSY'S TAIL
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COOTCHIE COOLOO
HERE IS PADDY GEEGAN
TIM JENKINS TRIED
ROUGH RIDERS
THE COOGIE BIRD
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DONNEGAN
CHICKENS AT NIGHT
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THE SOLDIER
BETSY BAKER
ONE OLD CAT!
BOY FROM KALAMAZOO
BOY, A TINY MITE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
SAMMY SIMPSON

SEYMOUR CREDIT
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THE NAVY ALPHABET
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A SPRING TRAGEDY
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RECKLESS NOAH

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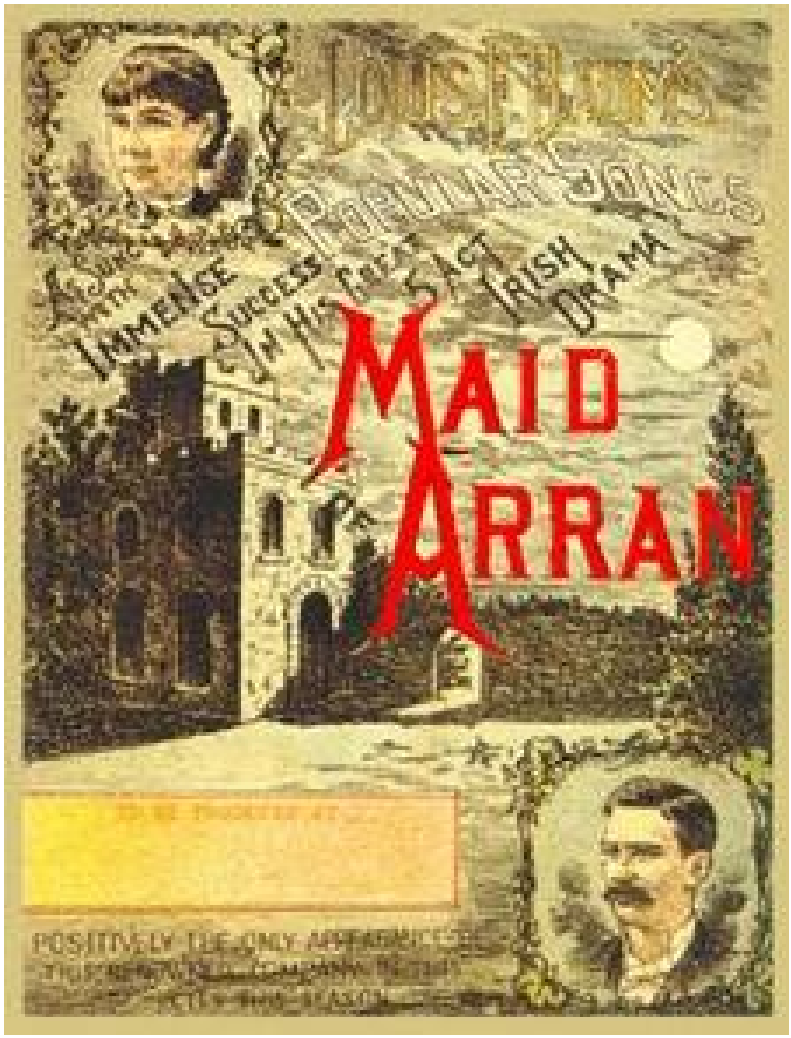
WHERE DO THEY GO?
WHO’S AFRAID?
WHO’S AFRAID?
WHY?
YE WARMING PAN
YOUNG AMERICA

The Plays

The Los Angeles Athletic Club, where Baum established The Oz Film Manufacturing Company, his own independent film studio from 1914 to 1915

THE MAID OF ARRAN

This 1882 musical play, written under the pseudonym, “Louis F. Baum”, is based on the novel *A Princess of Thule* by William Black. *The Maid of Arran* was advertised at the time as “A Play to Ensnare All Hearts and Leave an Impress of Beauty and Nobility Within the Sordid Mind of Man.” The play resets the novel from Scotland’s Outer Hebrides to Ireland, although Arran is actually located in Scotland. It was a successful melodrama, featuring elaborate stage effects, including a storm on a ship, as well as an original score by Baum himself. Unfortunately, only the songbook survives, which omits two of the songs referenced in the script. Baum played the main character and later played Con. O’Mara, the heroine’s father, in a community theatre revival.



The cover of the original song book

THE MAID OF ARRAN

An Irish Idyl

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

SHIELA O'MARA, The Maid of Arran Agnes Hallock
OONA MAVOURNEEN, "A girl that's Irish from top to toe" Genevieve Rogers
Marie Frances
MRS. HARRIET HOLCOMB, a disciple of Marcus Aurelius Antonius Katharine Gray
GRAY, her maid and "well broken to the harness" Cordie Aiken
THE PROPHETESS, "a relic of Arran's greatness" Katharine Gray
CAPT. JOHN INGRAM, commanding the H.M.S. Firefly, afterwards the Malabar Frank E. Aiken; J.L. Morgan
HUGH HOLCOMB, "the fair-haired stranger," nephew of Harriet L. Frank Baum
CON. O'MARA, with "the blood of the O'Maras in his veins" John F. Ryan
(in the world community theatre premiere) L. Frank Baum
PHADRIG O' THE PIPES, a follower of O'Mara's John H. Nicholson
DENNIE, a waif "with the luck of a bad penny" Mike J. Gallagher
THE BOATSWAIN OF THE MALABAR C.F. Edwards
FETCHU *A*, a valet C.H. Dennison

ACT I

INVOCATION
Music: "The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls."

THE PROPHETESS
The picture lives, breathing ruin where once was magnificence and kingly splendor. And this fair-haired stranger comes not to paint Arran in her palmy days, but in desolation. Aye! And more than this. He comes to woo our last treasure whose soul is centered in all the sweetness and honor of a kingly race. Would I could save her. But I cannot.* The Hand of Fate is here, and we must bow to her will.
*Frank Joslyn Baum adds to the melodrama by quoting this sentence as "But I can not!" (Baum, 38).

Following this invocation, we are introduced to a young Irish couple, Oona Mavourneen (last name reported in Act 5th.) and Dennie, as well is to their friend Phadrig, who plays the Uilleann pipes. The next scene introduces us to Hugh Holcomb, a painter from London, and his friend, John Ingram. Heavily condensing the events of the novel until shortly before the leaving, Hugh tells Ingram he intends to marry Shiela O'Mara (the novel depicted a long courtship between Lavender and Sheila--here it is only implied), the daughter of the island's king. Ingram (referred to above his lines as "Capt.") confesses to Hugh that he loves Shiela as well. (In the novel, Ingram loved her more like a niece, and scoffed at the idea of marrying her, though it seems it may have crossed his mind more than once.) The next scene introduces Shiela, and brings Ingram, Hugh, Shiela, Phadrig, Oona, and Dennie together on stage. Phadrig asks Shiela to sing of the legend of the castle.

"The Legend of Castle Arran"

SHIELA
In the days when our Isle was a kingdom
And O'Mara was lord of it all,
Then the fairest of Arran's fair daughters
Reign'd a princess in this Castle Hall.
Oh, her eyes were the brightest, her hand was the whitest, and heart of the tightest had she.
And she had a lover, and he was a rover, and sailed the blue seas o'er did he.
CHORUS
Sail'd the seas o'er,

Sail'd the seas o'er
Sail'd the sea over did he...
SHIELA
And she had a lover, and he was a rover, and

CHORUS
Sail'd the seas over did he.

SHIELA
But the day came when he had to leave her
And sail to far Africa's shore
And he vow'd that he'd never deceive her
But tho' absent would love her the more,
With a kiss on her lips, then he row'd to his ship, she cable did slip and away,
And she utter'd no moan of the grief he had sown when he left her alone, on that day.
CHORUS
Left her alone,
Left her alone,
Left her alone on that day...
SHIELA
She utter'd no moan of the grief he had sown when he
CHORUS
Left her alone, on that day.
SHIELA
Then she sat herself down at her window
To watch for his coming again
With her eyes gazing far o'er the waters
On her sweet face a look as of pain,
Though her fond heart was burning, she stifled its yearning, her eyes were turning astray,
But he came back no more from far Africa's shore until Death came and bore her away.
CHORUS
Bore her away,
Bore her away,
Death came and bore her away...
SHIELA
He came back no more from far Africa's shore Until

CHORUS
Death came and bore her away.

After this, Hugh tells Shiela he would like her to consider marrying him. Much of the rest of the act uses dialogue straight out of the novel, names changed where appropriate. O'Mara expects Shiela to marry, and he wants her to marry the man of her choice. She chooses Hugh. Ingram admits Hugh has won her. In the evening, Phadrig asks Con. to sing an old highland song. Con. detests these old tunes. (In the novel, Mackenzie expresses contempt for Gaelic, despite it being his native tongue. He disdains the language's lack of a present tense, and favors English songs about the present. Gaelic songs are all about sad partings of the past or uncertain futures. He likes English songs about people in love.) Phadrig prods Con. some more, so he sings.

"When O'Mara Is King Once Again"
CON.
(*Bravura.*)
Arran is me home,
And the pride of Ireland's coast,
And her kings of old,
As we're often told,
Of their riches and power could boast,
So the legends say:
High above the sea
Stands O'Mara's Castle so grand,
And tho' waves have dash'd, and the lightning's flashed,
And its shores been lash'd by the storms of ten centuries.
Firm, undaunted, stands she still, and so, thro' time forever will
Our pride, our hope, and emblem, 'til the O'Mara is King once again,
'Til O'Mara is King once again!
Ruin'd tho' it stands,
And now crumbling to decay,
Ev'ry stone that's here,
To our mem'ry's dear,
As a relic of some better day,
When our country was
Free as Heaven's sun
And throng'd with warrier's bold
Men who fought for right in the battle's fight

And whose pow'r and might were the wonder of nations.
And
still our boys can bravely fight, and soon the world will see a sight,
When Ireland's sons her wrongs shall right, and O'Mara is king once again,
And O'Mara is King once again!

Phadrig explains that this is a mere metaphor. Con. O'Mara is the king of Arran, but Arran is in decline, and his title less meaningful. Ingram asks Con. about Dennie. He is a waif who was washed up on the shores, so he was taken in and raised. To prove that Dennie is well-educated, Con. asks him to perform a song and dance.

"A Rollicking Irish Boy"
DENNIE
I'm a lad that's always glad to fling me foot and I'm never sad,
The mountains ring whene'er I sing for I am blithe and gay.
The girls all think whene'er I blink that at their ways I had meant to wink
Which makes their hearts all a jump wid joy
I'm a rollicking Irish boy.
There's just one little lass who smiles whene'er I pass,
And makes my heart go bumpety bump,
A rollicking Irish lass.
The girls know I love her,
It's my belief they're mad wid grief,
They snub me now and, and never bow
To this rollicking Irish boy!
[Dance.]
Not long ago I'd have ye know I was ask'd to McGinneses ball to go,
I polish'd up me Sunday suit and started for to see
What I could find to suit me mind in the fashion of sensible womankind
To go wid me and dance wid me
A rollicking Irish girl.
It's aisy for to look for fishes in a brook,
But if they havn't a mind to bite,
Its divil a man will ye hook
First Katy she refused me,
And Biddy McCree said she'd go wid me,
But Oona went wid much content
Wid this rollicking Irish boy!
[Dance.]

And so, Shiela and Hugh leave to get married, Dennie joins Ingram's crew on the H.M.S. Firefly, and the others remain on the island.

The Prophetess appears once more. Hugh asks her who she is, but she merely proceeds with her prophecy, stepping between him and Shiela. It seems Baum took the prophetic, irritating aspects of John the Piper and placed them on this character to make Phadrig, who has a much bigger role in the play than John the Piper had in the book, more likeable.

ACT II

As the second and longest act begins, Shiela and Hugh have been married six months, and the marriage is in serious trouble. Hugh is disappointed with Shiela because she has failed to acclimate herself to England. She does not enjoy the same things Hugh enjoys, such as going to Mrs. Lorraine's parties.

They go to meet Hugh's Aunt Harriet, and using Black's dialogue almost exclusively, Shiela and Harriet take a disliking to one another, and Harriet insists Shiela cannot wear her hair down as she always had in Ireland. She has Gray take her scales and measure out appropriate portions for Shiela to eat, despite Hugh's protests. Most importantly, she insists on quoting from Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (misspelled Antonius throughout the play, but correctly spelled in the novel), telling Shiela his advice is the way to live, and insisting Shiela ask Hugh to buy a copy of the book Ingram gave to her.

Back home, Shiela dreams of being back on Arran with Oona and Phadrig. Oona sings a reprise of a chorus from "The Legend of Castle Arran." Then Oona and Phadrig arrive to visit Shiela. (In the novel, Mairi came accompanied by a valet named M'Alpine, but he soon left--he probably became Fetchu *A* in the productions that note said character in the programs.) They have brought natural gifts for her.

"Oona's Gift"

OONA

It's a basket of rubbish from Arran I've brought,
As a gift to our darling Colleen.
It would be a reminder of home-life I thought,
And its no place beside it is seen.
Sure ye live in a city of wonders I know,
In the land of the English the mist and the fog
But here's a wee treasure all England can't show,
It's a bit of the old Irish sod.
Sure ye live in a city of wonders I know,
In the land of the mist and the fog,
But I've brought you a present all England can't show,
It's a tuft of the old Irish bog.
Sure your new London home is a palace so grand,
And you in your silks are its queen.
But you've not yet forgotten your dear native land,
And you're still our old Shiela, I ween.
Then welcome these mosses of Arran so green,
And a bunch of dried seaweed I found on the shore.

The loveliest bunch of our wild flow'rs ere seen,
They're a gift to our Shiela galore.
Sure ye live in a city of wonders I know,
Many grand sights have you seen,
But here are some gems that all England can't show,
All the way from old Arran so green.

Phadrig pins a shamrock on Shiela's dress. Hugh discovers them in his house and expresses contempt for the Irish, despite having appeared to like them while on Arran. Ingram also appears. He confesses to Shiela his love for her, and she asks him to leave. Unsurprisingly fickle, she never wants to see him again. Hugh orders him to never again set foot in the house. (In the novel, Lavender forbids Sheila from seeing him. She interprets it as meaning she cannot even acknowledge him on the street, which Frank regrets when he learns it, but is pleased with her obedience to him.)

ACT III

This act begins with Mrs. Holcomb on her deathbed. Shiela takes in with her. Not that Mrs. Holcomb likes her anymore, but is trying to make up for her good-for-nothing nephew's abuses of her. Oona and Phadrig come with her, and Mrs. Holcomb acts just as contemptuously to the Irish as Hugh had.

Mrs. H.
(contemputously)
Oona, where did you get such an outlandish name as that?

OONA
I-I don't know.

Mrs. Holcomb proceeds to insult Oona's dress, pronunciation (maroon for marine, etc,), and status. (In the novel, Mrs. Lavender attacks Sheila for having a servant-girl for a guest, despite the fact that Mairi is her cousin. When Mackenzie comes to visit, he agrees with Mrs. Lavender, in keeping with the customs of the English.)

Mrs. H.
Gray, write* my signature.

*The prompt book, in writing not in Baum's hand, has this crossed out and replaces it with "forge" in order to spoon-feed the audience. Here she is signing her fortune away to Ingram. Hugh arrives in time to protest.

HUGH
The seeds of discord which separated me from the woman I love were sown by this man under the guise of friendship. Behind that quiet smile is a heart that all hell cannot match for falsehood and deceit. Watch him, and he is harmless. Trust him and he will bury his fangs into the deepest recesses of your heart.*

*This line has no precedent in the novel, and really not even the play. Although Ingram proves the villain in Act 4th, and hints at it in the end of Act 3rd, the only thing he seems to have done is give Mrs. Holcomb the Marcus Aurelius book, which he did to no ill effect in the novel. Frank Joslyn Baum, in *To Please a Child*, erroneously places this statement in Act 4th. The line here is quoted from that source (40), which has many punctuation errors and slight misquotes, though I was not able to compare them side by side without going up to the tenth floor and getting it, which I did not do to avoid potential theft of my materials.

Near the end of the act, Ingram arrives and Mrs. Holcomb dies. Ingram insists on having the forged codicil held by Phadrig. Phadrig pulls a gun out in response and Ingram flees.

ACT IV

The act begins with the Boatswain of the *H.M.S. Malabar* calling for a song, "Sailing" which is not printed in the promptbook and has been lost. When the song ends, he greets Hugh, aboard the ship. The Boatswain informs Hugh that the captain of the ship is none other than John Ingram. Hugh understands that the the trip is to India. Ingram appears and tells Hugh about his "evil genius" plot in an excruciatingly bad speech. Hugh is to be chained up in the prison hold, and abandoned in India upon arrival. Dennie, the Boatswain, and the sailors begrudgingly follow orders and chain him up.

A stowaway appears and Dennie confronts him and asks him for the password. Phadrig is shocked that Dennie has failed to recognize him, but Dennie eventually lets him proceed. Phadrig visits Hugh in the prison hold and tells him the story of Tim Mulligan, who was in a similar situation. Though Hugh interrupts him several times, he eventually allows Phadrig to complete the story. It seems this Tim Mulligan was chained up in the prison hold of some other ship, but unbeknownst to his captors, he had a saw that could cut through iron. Realizing that the noise would alert them to what he was doing, he sang as loud as he could to drown out the noise, expecting the others aboard would not try to put a stop to the racket, as he was a good singer. Phadrig gives Hugh such a saw, and Hugh provides the song.

"Waiting for the Tide to Turn" Instrumental Vocal

HUGH

When the tide comes in, in the dying sunset glow,
And the waves dash high upon the strand,
Then the sailor thinks of his sweetheart,
Who is waiting in some distant land.
And he sees her afar, in her home beside the sea,
Only waiting for the turning of the tide... of the tide.
Waiting for the tide to turn,
Waiting for the tide to turn,
Waiting,
Waiting,
Waiting for the tide to turn.
When the tide comes in, with its wealth of treasures brought
From the wreck of some gallant ship at sea;
Each a message from some dying seaman,
To the loved ones he ne'er more will see.
Then the heart grows sad, and our eyes with pity fill,
At the story of the turning of the tide... of the tide.

Waiting for the tide to turn,
Waiting for the tide to turn,
Waiting,
Waiting,
Waiting for the tide to turn.
Hugh and Phadrig emerge from the prison and confront Ingram. Ingram commands Dennie to fire upon Hugh.
DENNIE
I'll fire, but not at him.
[Dennie fires in air. Capt. takes knife and jumps over board. Phadrig strikes him with the oar. He sinks. Phadrig pulls Hugh into boat.]

This scene has a very vague homologue in the novel. At this point, unlike Hugh in the play, Frank is not aware where Sheila has gone. His initial reaction is that she has returned to her homeland. He takes a steamer hoping to find her on it. He doesn't. Eventually he encounters a young boatman in Tyrol named Johnny Eyre, whom Frank saves from drowning, and he and a young Jewish composer named Mosenberg, who fell in love with Sheila while in London, bring Frank on a leisurely trip back to Borvapost. The character Dennie seems to be a composite of Johnny Eyre and Duncan Macdonald. Duncan and his wife Scarlett are a traditional old Irish couple, and though Mackenzie gets so exasperated with Duncan he frequently takes the name of the Lord in vain when dealing with him, Duncan is perhaps Mackenzie's closest friend. He is a foil for Mackenzie's distancing himself from Scottish ways for ways of the English.

This act trivializes the novel and sounds like a teenager writing, inspired by cheap adventure novels, while the first three acts were a sincere effort at adapting the novel to the stage, albeit highly diluted (the play, not including lyrics, contains only 38 pages of text). The special effects in this scene were highly appreciated by critics, however. The next act is a talky and somewhat redundant one that brings the play to a conclusion, even if it severely lacks the depth of the novel. Even so, it is not hard to see Ingram influencing the kindness and generosity displayed by the Nome King when he first appears taking shape in this perverse alteration of Black's character.

ACT V

Once more at Arran, we find Oona now home. The ship arrives, and she is delighted once more to see Dennie, and hem her. He asks her to sing a favorite song for him.

"A Pair of Blue Eyes"

OONA

I'm a gay Irish girl from the county Killarney,
Me mother's a Murphy, me father's a Kearney,
I'm proud of me country and chock full of blarney,
Which is not a fact to surprise.
I never get tired of singing and dancing and any fine ev'ning you'll find me a prancing,
I'm fond of a joke and there's fun always glancing straight out from a pair o' blue eyes.
Eyes of blue are always true,
Admire them you can't fail to do,
The saints above would fall in love wid eyes of blue.
[Dance.]
Ev'ry boy says me eyes put his heart in a flurry,
And then wid his love makes a bother and worry,
Get married at liesure, repent in a hurry's
A maxim I'll never despise.
Be me faith then I'll think that I'll let them kape trying, I'm sure wid their love they will never be dying,
What matters to me if the whole world is sighing wid love for a pair o' blue eyes.
Eyes of blue are always true,
Admire them you can't fail to do,
The saints above would fall in love wid eyes of blue.
[Dance.]

Hugh and Shiela are reunited. Despite having wanted to leave him, Shiela wants Hugh back. Con. is opposed, having been cruel to her before. He wants to flog Hugh with a stick. Phadrig stops him, and convinces Con. that Hugh deserves another chance. Hugh and Shiela embraces, and Oona announces that Shiela will never more leave home on Arran.

In the novel, Hugh, Johnny, and Mosenberg find that Hugh has fathered a son that Mairi sneaks through windows. Ingram marries Mrs. Lorraine, who was never really married, except in name. A dying old man was so fond of her that he wanted her to have his name and fortune, so they married on his

deathbed, and Cecelia became one of the idle rich, having nothing but parties. Ingram visited her more and more. She complains that artists and writers mock the rich for being decadent and make the problems of the poor their virtues. She is offended that even though rich people buy books and play tickets, they are always getting maligned, and feels that there are good people among the rich. Ingram is one. The two take a steamer to visit the Lavenders on their island home. They ascend the Butt of Lewis and watch the sunset, which they had not done since before the marriage, and Shiela promises Mackenzie that she will never more go out in boats alone. Black seems to be mocking the concessions a woman has to make in a marriage, yet in Mackenzie's advice to Ingram about marrying Mrs. Lorraine, he makes fun of those a man has to make, too. Like in the play, Sheila and Hugh will live upon the island. The Ingrams prove faithful friends, not Baum's false friends, and make regular visits.

The largely forgotten novel, no longer in print, is quite good. The play's first three acts are on par with William S. Gilbert's *Engaged*, which was reviled when it appeared by those who found its social commentary offensive, but still plays today. Had Baum not tried to appeal to the lowest common denominator, as he did in such later works as *Daughters of Destiny*, *The Maid of Arran*, had it been published, might well continue to be performed today, with some playing with Ingram's lines to make them sound less juvenile. Apart from this speech, if the play were handled in a realistic tone rather than obvious melodrama (Baum's performances as Hugh were seen as very sincere and a highlight of the show), it could very well be embraced by a new audience. At the time the play was written, Irish-Americans were the most persecuted group in the American North, and here was a non-Irish voice (Baum's father was half German, half English; his mother half English, half Scots-Irish*) writing about Irish pride, something quite in vogue in the 1990s. Oddly, Arran is in the Scottish county of North Ayrshire. Perhaps Baum was thinking of Aran, and never bothered to check.
*Scottish living in Ireland, who generally found themselves superior to their hosts.

The work of William Black, or at least this particular novel, seems to have been highly influential on Baum's writing style. It is much easier to get a sense of Baum from reading this than Dickens or Shakespeare, said to be Baum's greatest influences. Perhaps this early success in Baum's career was more of a milestone than it has heretofore been treated.

THE WIZARD OF OZ

First performed in 1902, this musical extravaganza was based on Baum's famous novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which was published two years previously. The play featured original music by Paul Tietjens, though sadly much of it has been forgotten or lost, although it was still well-remembered at MGM in the late 1930s, when the film version was made. Although Baum is the credited bookwriter, Glen MacDonough was hired on as jokewriter, after Baum had finished the script.

The show premiered in Chicago and due to its instant appeal and great success, it was moved to Broadway in 1903, where it ran for 293 performances from January 21, 1903 to December 31, 1904, followed by travelling tours of the original cast. *The Wizard of Oz* starred Anna Laughlin as Dorothy Gale, Fred Stone as The Scarecrow, David C. Montgomery as the Tin Woodman and Arthur Hill as the Cowardly Lion.

One of the original promotional posters for the show

THE WIZARD OF OZ

A Musical Comedy A Dramatic Composition in Three Acts

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Arthur Hill as the Lion and Anna Laughlin as Dorothy

CAST OF CHARACTERS

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The Wizard of Oz
King Pastoria II
Tryxie Tryfle
Cynthia Cynch
Lady Lunatic
Sir Dashemoff Daily
Sir Wylie Gyle

ACT I

At the rise of the curtain farm hands discovered. House servants are busy performing their various duties. One man on a wheat rack, Servants cleaning pans, etc in front of the house. Several girls enter carrying apples. They pelt the man on the wheat stack. Farm wagon with horse enters. Suddenly old man reading paper, rises and points to the approaching cyclone. Connection on part of everyone. They all excitedly and frantically rush off stage. The cyclone effect is worked upon the gauze. The scene then changes. When the lights go up Chorus discovered all dressed in blue and posed about a Maypole. A Maypole dance follows. Then the entrance of the Wicked Witch. She drives them about the stage until someone calls her attention to the approaching cyclone. All rush about wildly. Lights gradually go out. When they go up again, a house similar to the farmhouse of the Kansas Scene is discovered E. It is in a dilapidated condition.

SCENE I:- Descriptive Tableau, showing Kansas Prairie Farm, the cyclone, ascent
of the house with Dorothy, and transformation to SCENE II:- The Munchkin country – Land of Oz followed by the descent of the house crushing of the wicked witch, etc.
DISCOVERED: Chorus of Munchkins.

1st Girl
Here's a catastrophe!

2nd Girl
What a dreadful storm.

3rd Girl
Never in the land of Oz has there been
one like it.

4th Girl
I wonder from what unknown country the
storm blew this house.

5th
Such a strange dwelling - so different
from ours.

6th Girl
The same storm that brought this shouse
has blown half of our home away.
(Noise off stage, shouts, cries, etc. Voice off stage. Reuben's)

Reuben
Bring her along.
8th Girl
What's that?
9th Girl
Somebody under arrest. A strange
looking girl.
1st Girl
A witch, perhaps.
2nd Girl
The storm may have been her work.
(Enter Reuben and Simon with Cynthia. R. #3. Cynthia suggests madness in her costume and make-up.)
Reuben
Here's an enchantress. Do any of you
know her?
All
No!
Girl
(To Cynthia)
Who are you, and where do you come
from?
Cynthia
My name is Cynthia, and I am a lady
lunatic.
(All recoil from her)
2nd Girl
Does the asylum know you are out?
Cynthia
Fear nothing. I am not dangerous.
Girl
Your reason?
Cynthia
I've lost my reason.
1st Girl
She's a sorceress. To the river with her.
Cynthia
That's no way to treat a perfect lady
lunatic.

2nd Girl
If you sink we'll believe you.
Cynthia
But I will not sink. I've been taking swimming lessons from a banker.
1st Girl
Swimming lessons from a banker?
Cynthia
Yes he told taught me how to float a loan.
1st Girl
To the river.
(They advance to her. Witch of the North enters and halts them)
Witch
(Locusta)
Halt! What would you do with this girl?
1st Girl
She's a sorceress, and her spells produced the recent cyclone.
Witch
Then you should thank her on your knees. The storm has made you free.
All
Free?
Witch
It dropped that house upon your cruel tyrant, the Wicked Witch. Her cruel spells and wicked enchantments have caused you endless misery. She hated love and happiness, and while she lived would not permit you to know them.
(To Cynthia)
If you are a member of the Sorceress' Union show your card.
Cynthia
I haven't one. I have never sorcered. I am only a sweet girl maniac. Listen, and I will tell you my story.
(Crowd gather around her)
I was once a saleslady in one of our

largest department stores.

1st Girl

Ah, yes, I have seen your open face at an opening sale of umbrellas that wouldn't open.

Cynthia

No, I was at the alligator counter in the animal department. I was engaged to a young musician named Niccolo Chopper who played the piccolo.

1st Girl

Poor girl!

Cynthia

He was so generous. As soon as our wedding day was fixed he gave me my alimony in advance.

6th Girl

Where is he now?

Cynthia

The Wicked Witch enchanted him. He never returned.

2nd Girl

How do you hope to find him?

Cynthia

By whistling his favorite tune. No matter what the witch may have made of him, if he hears the tune he will answer.

1st Girl

Did he play it often?

Cynthia

For hours at a time. You can't imagine how he objected to a change of air.

1st Girl

You doubtless learned to love it?

Cynthia

True. And on moonlight nights he would always play it in the vegetable garden back of my semi-Queen Anne suburban boarding house.

Witch of the North exits.

NICCOLO'S PICCOLO
Not with the twinkling lute
Sought he to press his suit
Nor with the sighing flute
Came he zum-zumming
Nor on, the gay guitar
Under the twilight star,
Could he be heard afar
Softly a strumming.
Chorus
But, on the piercing piccolo, my highlygifted
Niccolo
Could charm with much celerity, a
melody divine.
Defying fell malaria, He'd execute his
aria
With marvelous dexterity, each night at
half past nine.
(Whistling chorus)
II.
Not with a slide trombone, were his soft
pleadings blown
Lacking were they in tune, blatant and
blaring
Nor with the violin, sought he, my heart
to win
Playing that garden in, his love declaring.
Chorus same as 1st verse.
Cynthia and Chorus, all exeunt at end of
whistling refrain. [HANDWRITTEN:
Using Piccolos]
Enter Witch of the North and Girl, L.2.
Witch
Pointing to a house, R.2.
Where did you say this house came from?
3d Girl
From the skies, your highness.
Witch
A strange abode from some unknown
land.

Sir Dashemoff Daily, enters hurriedly, L.3.

Dash.

News! Wonderful news!

3d Girl

Of whom?

Crowd enters R.3.

Dash.

Pastoria, the rightful king of Oz, has returned on the wings of the wind.

3d Girl

Are you sure of that, Sir Dashemoff?

Dash.

The cyclone blew Pastoria home again. Aided by General Riskitt he has started a revolution already.

3d Girl

Where's Pastoria going to find the money for his revolution?

Dash.

He's selling reserved seats for his own coronation.

1st Girl

How came King Pastoria to leave the land of Oz?

Witch

One day, years ago, a balloon brought to the Emerald City a mysterious man from a mysterious place they call the earth.

1st Girl

I've read about it in our children's books.

Witch

The stranger lured Pastoria into the balloon and cut the ropes. It bore Pastoria through the clouds. The stranger remained and, because of his mystic arts, was crowned King of Oz.

(Exit Witch)

Dash.

If Pastoria gets his throne away from the

Wizard of Oz, it will be hard luck for me.
I'll have to grind out a new royal anthem.
(Cheers off stage R.)
1st Girl
Pastoria approaches.
(Crowd retire up stage. Enter TIMOTHY, followed by RISKITT, L.3.E.)
Riskitt
Halt! His Majesty would address the army.
(Pastoria enters in motorman's coat and hat. He carries in one hand a large sceptre and a shawl strap. In the other a gilded hat box with crown inside.)
Pastoria
(C.)
My faithful soldiers. As I gaze upon your faces it gives me great pleasure to know that you all may die for me.
(Timothy cheers.)
Men with faces like yours ought to die for somebody. - and I'm as good an excuse as you'll ever get.
(Timothy cheers.)
When you face the enemy, chanting your battle hymn, -- where's that battle hymn?
Dash.
All ready, sire.
(Hands him paper.)
Pastoria
This ought to make heroes of you all.
(Chanting.)
"When we were children we cried for Pastoria, -
When we were young we sighed for Pastoria, -
When we grew up we died for Pastoria. -
Oria, oria, peerless Pastoria."
(Aside)
When we were children we cried for

Pastoria! Now, wouldn't that wilt the feathers on Maud's new boa!
(To Soldiers.)
You shall restore me to my rights. As for the cheap swindler who has stolen my throne - The Wizard of Oz, --
Riskitt
Where will you find a greater scoundrel, a more contemptible being, than that Wizard of Oz?
Pastoria
Hear! Hear!
(A pause.)
No, - no! I mean, where?
(Crowd snickers, quietly.)
As for your pay, have no fear. As we approach the capitol I will dispose of reserved seats for my coronation at speculator's rates.
Riskitt
S-sh --! A customer approaches.
(Pastoria and Riskitt quickly produce box office diagrams and bunches of tickets from their pockets as SOPHRONIA and PETER enter R.1.E. they rush upon them in the manner of ticket speculators.)
Riskitt
Tickets for Pastoria's coronation?
(Use sign, "Tickets bought from speculators,etc".)
Pastoria
Two on the center aisle, four rows from the front.
Simon
He's a speculator.
All
Down with him.
(All rush at Pastoria.)
(Enter CYNTHIA, R.3. Come down through crowd, C.)

Cynthia
Wait. He may be my long-lost Niccolo.
Pastoria
I'm nobody but the King. For years I ruled the Land of Oz and was the best dressed little king that ever tied a four in hand. The people loved me then, and called me their Tony Pastoria.
Cynthia
I pray thee, play upon this piccolo.
(Offering piccolo to Pastoria.)
The wicked witch may have changed my sweetheart into you; How perfectly awful!
(Shudders.)
Pastoria
I'm not your sweetheart.
Cynthia
Then prove it by playing "The Carnival of Venice" with variations.
(Offers piccolo)
There was a bum note in the crescendo that Niccolo could never avoid.
(Retires up stage.)
Pastoria
The idea! Open that box.
(Points to hat box. Riskitt opens it.)
What's the name in the crown of that crown?
Riskitt
(Looking in crown.)
Pastoria II.
(Hands it to Pastoria)
Pastoria
It was on my head when that confounded balloon carried me away. It fitted me then, and it fits me now.
(Puts it on his head triumphantly. Movement of surprise in crowd.)
Cynthia

What's the meaning of that queer costume?

Pastoria

When the cyclone picked me up I was working as a motorman in Kansas.

Cynthia

What's a motorman?

Pastoria

Well, a motorman is a fellow that takes life easy. He's a regular lady killer, and a sort of business agent for the Undertakers' Union. When I reached the earth I had to do something for a living.

Cynthia

Your Majesty had to work? Terrible!

Pastoria

Yes. Your Majesty had to eat. I grew so desperate I decided to stop at nothing, so I became a motorman. It's a merry life, and all day long the jingling of the bells. A fellow- motorman tried to get me to go with him to Michigan and motor there.

Cynthia

Why?

Pastoria

He said the girls were more sociable. He used to sing a beautiful song about one of them.

Cynthia

Was it soulful?

Pastoria

Well, you can judge for yourself.

-- "

IN MICHIGAN" --

Pastoria and Chorus.

I'm fond of the girls from Tennessee,
For they are extremely coy,
But there's another girl for me, she's the girl from Illinois.
With the damsel fair from gay Delaware

I'd giddily coquette.
But the girl for me beyond compare, in
old Michigan is met.
Cho.
In Michigan, In Michigan, I would that I
were rich again.
A ticket I'd buy, and away I'd fly
To the far-off fields of Michigan.
In Michigan, In Michigan, my tent I'd
like to pitch again.
I've a sweetheart true in Kalamazoo
And that's what I've got in Michigan.
II.
The Georgia girl is a perfect peach,
The Maine girl takes the bun
Of the Oregon girl I love to preach
For she second stands to none.
Oh the Texas girl is a downright pearl,
And a dainty dream besides,
But the girl that can give them all a twirl,
In old Michigan resides.
Cho.
I've a sweetheart true in Kalamazoo,
I've a mother-in-law in Saginaw, etc.
(and exit Chorus R. and L.)
Cynthia
You are not like my Niccolo, and yet
seem to be he. If I could see you make
love to someone else -- my Niccolo
would never do that in my presence.
Tryxie
(Outside L.2)
Pasty! Pasty! Where are you, darling?
Pastoria
You'll have a chance, for here comes my
fiancee.
Cynthia
A woman!
Pastoria
Yes. She was a waitress in the railroad

station at Topeka. Her name is Tryxie.

Cynthia

Tryxie?

Pastoria

Yes. We were blown out of Kansas at the same time. When the cyclone struck town I was standing on the front platform of my car and had just yelled, “Hold fast for a sharp curve”. As we sailed over the roofs a beautiful girl suddenly shot out of a neighboring cloud and hit my dashboard. She was carrying a plate of beans. She said she was going my way and before the cyclone dropped us through yonder chestnut trees we were engaged.

Tryxie

(Entering, L.2. and going to Pastoria)

Darling, I hope you won’t think me gross, but I wish you would take me by the hand and lead me to a large porterhouse steak.

Pastoria

Girl, the stake that I am fighting for is not a porterhouse. I may be slain. Then what would lovey do if dovey died?

Tryxie

Why lovey would die too.

Pastoria

(With arm about her.)

Do you remember, I met you as a motorman.

Tryxie

I was struck by you at our first meeting.

Pastoria

You were carrying a book.

Tryxie

Roosevelt’s Memoirs.

Pastoria

I ran over them without asking you.

Tryxie

Because you got the bell to go ahead.
Pastoria
Then I went ahead to get the belle.
Tryxie
You couldn't have offered me a palace then.
Pastoria
No. About all you could expect from a street car man is "a little room up front."
Tryxie
What were your prospects then?
Pastoria
Same as the conductors' - only fare.
Tryxie
And yet you loved me then.
Pastoria
I yearned for you.
Tryxie
And you love me now?
Pastoria
With all the heart a motorman is allowed to have.
Tryxie
Pasty, you are just too awful!
Pastoria
To resume -- how much does oo love oosey?
Tryxie
OO's OOsey?
Pastoria
OOS.
Cynthia
Enough. I am convinced. My Niccolo could never hand out such a tart line of wedding march conversation.
Tryxie
Is this a lady detective?
Pastoria
No. This is a lady lunatic.
Cynthia

Yes; mad through with blighted love.
Now will I to the vegetable garden where
I last saw him.
(Taking objects from basket on arm.)
Here are young spring onions - they're for
insomnia; here's celery for remembrance,
- and here are March strawberries - for --
a dollar a box!
"Oh, he never more will come,
And I wonder where he's went.
Hey nonney, hey nonney hey!"
(Exit a la Ophelia, L.I.)
Tryxie
Poor thing -how she loved him! Niccolo
must have been very handsome.
Pastoria
Yes. I reminded her strongly of him.
Tryxie
But, she is a lunatic. That explains a lot
of things.
Pastoria
Tryxie, you see what it is to lose a fond
lover. Now suppose, suppose you were to
lose me?
Tryxie
Pastoria, you know I never was lucky.
Pastoria
I know. But, what would you do?
Tryxie
Why, someone else, I suppose.
Pastoria
But tell me, what do you think of the
country you're to reign over as my
queen?
Tryxie
Oh, well enough as far as I've gone. But
it was a bad time to leave Kansas.
Pastoria
Why?
Tryxie

Barnum's circus was billed for our town for the 13th, and next to a Boston cream puff I love a circus.

-- "

WHEN THE CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN" --

Tryxie and Pastoria

and exit, L.I.E.)

(Enter DOROTHY and IMOGEN (the cow) R.2.)

Dorothy

Well, where am I at?

(Xing L. and looking around.)

Surely, this isn't Kansas?

(To Cow)

Imogen, we are lost, and we'll never see home again. How poor Father will miss us.

(Cow nods)

You were the only thing to prove he ran a dairy. Now he won't be able to mix up any more milk until I get back with the key to the plaster of Paris barrel. I wish we could run into another cyclone going the way we came from.

(Cow weeps)

What are you crying for?

(Crying, herself.)

Be brave, like me. Will somebody tell me the way back to Kansas.

(Xing R. looking at house.)

My! but our house is bent. Well, if the cyclone hasn't blown Carrie Barry's front door right on our porch. There's her name on the doorplate. Hello! what's this?

(Takes folded paper from door. Reads it.)

"To the Princess within." Here's a joke, Imogen.

(Cow looks over her shouler.)

Why it's a love song from a perfect

stranger.
(Resumes reading.)
(Enter WITCH of the North, and SIR DASHEMOFF DAILY, L.2.)
Dashemoff
(Pointing to Dorothy.)
There she is, your Highness.
Witch
Whence comes this maiden?
Dash.
I know not. I only know I love her.
Dorothy
(Slapping Cow's nose.)
Go away, Imogen! Where are your manners! Keep your nose out of my correspondence hereafter.
Witch
Her name?
(Chorus begins to enter, R. and L.)
Dash.
Caroline Barry. That's the name on the doorplate of the cottage she arrived in.
Dorothy
(Still reading)
How sweet.
Dash.
Do you refer to my poor poem?
Dorothy
(Surprised)
Did you send me this, sir?
Dash.
I did. And may her Highness present me?
Dorothy
If her Highness pleases.
Witch
(Xing to Dorothy)
Little girl, this is Sir Dashemoff Daily, our Poet Laureate, And I am Locusta, the Witch of the North.
Dorothy

(Recoiling)
A witch?
Witch
Ah, don't be afraid - I'm not one of the black cat and broomstick kind.
Dorothy
Then tell me - am I far from Kansas?
Witch
Kansas? Where is Kansas?
Dorothy
Imogen, do you hear that? She'll ask us next where Topeka is.
Witch
Listen, ye Munchkins; this pretty stranger is under my special protection.
Dash.
(To Dorothy)
You are a lucky girl.
Witch
In proof of that I will bestow this magic ring upon her.
(Putting ring on Dorothy's finger, who has Xed to her.)
Whoever wears this ring may have two wishes gratified.
Dorothy
Then I wish Imogen and me back to Kansas?
(Pause)
What's the matter? Why don't we arrive?
Witch
I'm sorry, but my wishes have no power beyond the land in which they are granted. They can only aid you here.
Dorothy
But I want to go home. Tell me, what am I to do?
Witch
You must go to the wonderful Wizard of Oz. He alone has the power to transport

you across the burning desert. As a
member of the Witches' Union I have
business elsewhere. When danger
threatens, remember your ring.
(Exits L.1.)
Dash.
Now Mistress Barry ----
Dorothy
I'm not Mistress Barry. I'm Dorothy Gale.
Dash.
But, the name on the door?
Dorothy
Oh, that door belongs to the cottage of an
old maid who lived just below our farm.
Dash.
But I've made my song to Mistress Barry,
and if you are not she --
(Turns away, disconsolate.)
Dorothy
Oh, the song's not wasted. I like it very
much. I wish I knew it. How odd -- I DO
know it. Why, it's a miracle.
Dash.
No, it's the ring. Your first wish has been
granted.
Dorothy
We'll see.
-- "
CARRIE BARRY" --
*(Dorothy and Chorus, with Dashemoff.
During song the Scarecrow is carried on
by two farmers and set up at stile. At end
of song Chorus exits R. and L.)*
I dare not call her Caroline, I think of her
as Carrie,
Her eyes like stars at twilight shine,
And they have won this heart of mine.
With glances none could parry.
And when she smiles a smile divine,
With cruelty I task her, The dainty maid

knows I'm afraid
To bravely up and ask her.
Chorus
Airy, fairy, Carrie Barry, will you marry me
I'm as much in love with you as a many can be.
Night and day for you alway, I pine, and pine, and pine,
Airy, fairy, Carrie Barry, say you will be mine.
II.
Though yet untold this love of mine,
This love will never vary. I'm longing for some little sign
One spoken word, one written line.
That I may hope and tarry.
For truth it is that I opine, she looks upon me coldly.
That's why I fear when she is near
To turn and tell her boldly:
Chorus:
Dorothy
Is that what you think of Carrie Barry?
Dash.
That's what I think of Dorothy Gale.
Dorothy
I don't believe it.
Dash.
I'll tell you why you must.
(Takes her hand as sound of hoofs is heard, off stage, rapidly approaching.)
Dorothy
It's a runaway.
Dash.
No, it's General Riskitt.
(Bus. of Riskitt entering L.3. in manner of a flying messenger.)
Riskitt
Report to his Majesty at once.

Dash.
For what service?
Riskitt
His Majesty is writing a temperance
poem and he's stuck for a rhyme to
Saraparilla.
(Exits L.2.E.)
Dash.
(To Dorothy)
That's what I get for hiring out as a Poet
Laureate. Excuse me till I find the rhyme.
(Exits L.2.)
Dorothy
Alone again. Well this is cheerful.
Nothing in sight to talk to but this
Scarecrow.
(Xes L.)
Well, as queer as he looks, I feel so
lonely I wish he were alive.
*(COW enters and begins biting at
Scarecrow's legs.)*
Scarecrow
Help! Help!
(Dorothy screams.)
Good morning.
(Dorothy Xes up R.)
Is this your cow?
Dorothy
Yes-es.
Scarecrow
Well, if you don't want me to lose a leg,
call him off.
*(Dorothy motions to Cow and Cow exits
R.3.)*
Thanks, awfully, for bringing me to life.
Isn't this lovely weather for July?
Dorothy
The ring! Another wish wasted.
Scarecrow
Would you mind taking this golf ball out

of my ear?
(Dorothy goes to Scarecrow and looks for golf ball.)
My ear is on the other side.
(Dorothy removes golf ball and throws it down on stage.)
That makes me one down.
Dorothy
You seem well posted.
Scarecrow
If I wasn't well posted I couldn't stand up.
Dorothy
I mean, you know what's in fashion.
Scarecrow
For a long time I've been just behind the stile.
(Points to stile.)
Dorothy
Don't you think you're smart!
Scarecrow
I don't think at all. I haven't any brains.
Dorothy
No brains?
Scarecrow
(Tapping head)
There is nothing there but a handful of excelsior covered with a dishrag. When the farmer was filling me with straw yesterday he said, "I guess I'll shake him". When I saw the size of his hand I knew it was on me. Then he jabbed this pole into my back and said, "You're stuck". That put me up in the air, where I've been for the last twenty-four hours.
Dorothy
But you're alive now, and how are you going to earn your living without brains?
Scarecrow
I won't be lonely. Will you help me down?

Dorothy
Certainly.
Scarecrow
I'm getting a bad pain in my polar regions, from lack of exercise.
Dorothy
(Helps him down from post. Bus.)
Can't you walk?
Scarecrow
No. But I'll take steps to learn.
(Walks awkwardly.)
Dorothy
Oh, - but you're a loose character. What's you name?
Scarecrow
Haven't any.
Dorothy
No name? But, you've a family of some sort, haven't you?
(COW enters.)
Scarecrow
Judging from what I'm stuffed with I am related to Secretary Hay.
(Bus. with Cow.)
How about yourself? Who are you? - where did you drop from? Where are you going, and why do you go there? Tell me all about it, while I see which way the wind blows.
(Bus. with straws.)
Dorothy
My name is Dorothy, and I am one of the Kansas Gales.
Scarecrow
That accounts for your breezy manner.
Dorothy
When I am at home I live in Kansas. Just now I am lost, and I am going to the Emerald City to ask the wonderful Wizard of Oz to help me.

Scarecrow
What, to get back to Kansas? Dottie, why trifle with your luck?
Dorothy
Behave. You are old enough to know better.
Scarecrow
No, I'm not! I was just born, and it will be three hundred and sixty-four days before I have a birthday.
(Cows begins to nibble at Scarecrow's legs.)
Dorothy
How long do you think you'll live?
Scarecrow
If I can escape that cow of yours, until I'm used to stuff a summer boarder's mattress. Do you think the Wizard would have a set of brains knocking around his place that would fit me?
Dorothy
He might.
Scarecrow
If I thought he could fix me up I'd go with you.
Dorothy
Come along. Even if he is out of your size you'll be no worse off than you are now.
(Both start to go L.)
Scarecrow
We're a nice looking couple. Suppose we're arrested for vagrancy?
Dorothy
You could give straw bail. Do you know, I can hardly believe that you have no brains? How careless the farmer was to leave them out.
Scarecrow
Wasn't he? I wouldn't treat a dog that

way.
-
SCARECROW'S SONG -
Though I appear a handsome man,
I'm only stuffed with straw.
'Tis difficult a man to plan without a
single flaw.
Though you may think my lovely head
A store of law contains
The farmer lack of skill displayed and
quite forgot my brains.
When brains are lacking in a head, it's
usually the rule,
That wisdom from the man has fled and
he remains a fool.
So, though my charms are very great, as I
am well assured
I'll never reach my full estate, 'till brains I
have secured.
CHORUS:
A-las for the man who has little in his
noodle that he knows
He's under a man, and is called a rattle
pate, wherever he goes.
He always does the very thing he never
ought to do
He stumbles and he fumbles and is
aimless.
A lobster, is he, as anyone with half an
eye can see.
You can beat him sneer or jeer
for his wheels are out of gear
And it's plain he'll remain quite brainless.
(Exeunt.)
CHANGE TO
SCENE III:- The road through the forest.
DASHEMOFF enters R.I. SIR WILEY GYLE enters L.I. They enter backwards, and collide near C.

Dash
Are you one of us?
Gyle
No. Are you?
Dash.
Would you like to join a revolution?
Gyle
That's my specialty. I'm Sir Wiley Gyle,
at your services. Revolutions to order.
Kings dethroned while you wait.
Dash.
Then join our plot to put Pastoria II on
the throne again.
Gyle
(Xing R.)
What! has that fried oyster returned?
Dash.
(Indicating proclamation.)
There's the Wizard's proclamation against
him.
Gyle
(Glancing at proclamation.)
Help Pastoria? Not I. I'm next in line for
that throne, my boy.
Dash.
But how are you going to overthrow the
wizard?
Gyle
Ever since his balloon landed here the
people have been in dread of his magic,
and of him. He's made 'em think he has
unearthly powers. But, I'll show 'em!
(Xing L.)
Dash.
Going to expose him?
Gyle
Expose him, or blow him up.
Dash.
Blow him up - what with?
Gyle

(Showing a small bomb.)
One of the bargain-sale bombs. - If I can ever get one to work.
Dash.
Anything the matter with that one?
Gyle
I'll bet it's no good. They had a bargain sale of infernal machines and bombs at one of our big stores last month; they'd bought out the stock of an anarchist factory. I got a hundred bombs for five ninety-eight, -- and not one of the darned things has worked yet.
Dash.
Won't they take 'em back?
Gyle
No. They won't exchange bargains.
(Xing R.)
I'm sure this one is no good, too.
(Suddenly throws bomb on stage L. It bounces off stage L.)
Dash.
(Frightened)
Don't take a chance like that!
Gyle
Every time I throw one of those bombs at the wizard I get arrested for playing baseball in the streets.
Cynthia
(Enters, R.I. Xes to Gyle C.)
I beg your pardon. Could you direct me to a small piece of toast?
Gyle
Toast?
Cynthia
Yes, toast. I am a sweet girl maniac, and to-day it is my fancy that I am a poached egg. If I could only find a piece of toast I'd rest myself on it.
Dash.

(Aside to Gyle.)
I've heard a young man named Niccolo
was the cause of this.
Gyle
Jilted her?
Dash.
No. He was turned into somebody else by
a witch, and she can't find him.
Cynthia
(Offering piccolo to Gyle.)
Prithee, play upon this.
Gyle
Listen, girl. Would you know your
Niccolo if you met him?
Cynthia
Ah, you're not he, are you?
Gyle
No. But I think I can lead you to him.
Cynthia
Quickly, then.
Gyle
If Niccolo in his new form fails to
recognize you, would you still yearn for
him?
Cynthia
Aye! more than ever.
Gyle
Listen! your lost lover is here. The witch
has turned him into a wizard, - the wizard
of Oz, - and he rules the Emerald City.
Nobody knows it but me. The wizard
don't know it. Go to him when no one is
about, and grab and gag him. And when
you have got him far away say to him
that Sir Wiley put you on.
(Xing L.)
Don't forget -- Sir Wiley.
(Exits L.2.)
Cynthia
Ye Gods! My Nick a wizard! If he should

fail to recognize me, and turn me into a sponge cake - what would be my finish? I pray thee, come and plead the cause of crime. A lady lunatic.
(Exits.)
Dash.
(Looking after her.)
Her reason lost because she lost her lover. Would I go mad if I should lose my Dorothy? Perhaps, because I already love her madly. I know that, for I know what love is.
-- "
THAT IS LOVE " --
Dashemoff
And exit L.I.E.)
(Enter TIMOTHY, followed by RISKITT R.I.)
Riskitt
Halt! Your precious monarch will make a final speech before the campaign opens.
Pastoria
(Enters R.I. to Timothy)
Before this awful war begins I want you to understand one thing. You are the soldiers of a free and glorious country; if you win victory you will be roasted. If you are defeated you will be roasted also.
Timothy
We understand.
Pastoria
Then you may take my final photograph for the illustrated papers.
(Poses. Riskitt points camera at him. Lion is heard roaring off stage L.I. Everybody shows alarm.)
Riskitt
What is it?
Pastoria
It sounds like dinner time in a menagerie.

(Roaring sounds closer)
(Riskitt and Timothy rush off R.I.)
Come back! Come back! you cowards -- come back!
(Lions enters. Bus.)
(Pastoria turns, sees him. Bus. frightened. Hides behind camera. Lion sees camera. Pauses.)
Lie down, Bruno. Nice lion, good lion, sweet lion, dandelion, lie down.
(Etc. ad lib. and Bus. Both.)
(Lion sits up on haunches. Poses.)
Very well then, sit up, if you prefer.
(Bus.)
Do you mean that you want your picture taken?
(Lion nods.)
Something nice for the family album?
(Lion nods.)
Well, you can have an appointment next Wednesday afternoon.
(Starts away. Bus. lion angry.)
Or, right away, if you prefer it.
(Lion resumes pose.)
Now look pleasant, please.
(Lion shakes head.)
How am I going to make that beast look pleasant? Shall I tell him to watch for the little birdie? No, I have it.
(To Lion.)
Look for the nice little fat boy.
(Lion turns head quickly toward Pastoria.)
No, no! Not here. Right out there.
(Bus. Lion looking into audience.)
That's it. Don't move.
(Lion slaps at mosquito on jaw.)
Mosquitos, bothering you? Yes, there are more than usual this summer. 'Round the corner, in the next jungle there aren't any.

(Bus. Lion displeased.)
Now ready, again. Steady!
(Bus.)
That will be all, thank you. How do you like your photos done, - plenty of gloss, or domestic finish?
(Lion nods.)
All right. We'll do them both ways. You needn't call for the proof, I'll send them.
(Bus. Lion waving paw. Knocks camera over, etc, Bus. ad lib and exit Lion R.I. Pastoria collapsed, and prostrate R.I. Riskitt enters, cautiously R. behind the leg of drop. Bus. as they discover and startle each other.)
Riskitt
Is your Majesty alone?
Pastoria
Where is my army?
Riskitt
He's in the top of the tallest tree, and he won't come down.
Pastoria
Have they deserted my banner so soon?
Riskitt
Yes. Here's a notice just sent from police headquarters in the Emerald City.
(Hands notice to Pastoria.)
Pastoria
(Reading)
"To our beloved police: Wanted, for treason, a small creature with slate pencil legs, an eye like a halibut, and a face like a cold flaxseed poultice, calling itself Pastoria II." After that description how can I escape?
Riskitt
We'll both need disguises.
Pastoria
And the sooner we get them the better.

See to it at once.
(Exit Riskitt.)
Tryxie
(Enter L.I.)
I am so hungry I could eat a fifty cent table d'hote and think it was food.
Pastoria
Alas! that I should have chosen for a Queen one whose appetite is so stenuous.
Tryxie
Pasty, when you invited me to become your Queen did you think I lived on air?
Pastoria
I saw only your face - your lovely face.
Tryxie
Yes; but even the loveliest face has to be fed.
Pastoria
Another fond delusion shattered. Now I know that woman is but a hollow mockery. Come, let us on to my kingdom.
(Exit Pastoria and Tryxie, L.I.)
(Dorothy and Scarecrow enter R.I.)
Dorothy
Come along, I'll help you get a position. Now, what field have you been in?
Scarecrow
All of them. I began in the pasture lot, and was moved up to the potato patch.
Dorothy
Do you know beans?
Scarecrow
I should say I do. A bean vine grew up my right leg once.
(Dorothy sits on ground and begins to eat cakes from basket.)
What are you doing?
Dorothy
Eating.

Scarecrow
What do you do that for?
Dorothy
Because I'm hungry. Don't you ever eat?
Scarecrow
No. I'm stuffed full now. Pretty soon
you'll be stuffed full and you won't be
able to eat either.
Dorothy
I eat three or four times a day.
Scarecrow
Is it necessary?
Dorothy
Of course.
Scarecrow
How I pity you. You people of flesh must
waste a lot of time trying to keep alive.
Dorothy
Haven't you any taste?
Scarecrow
I admire you.
Dorothy
You're a strange creature. That farmer
might have taken more pains in your
manufacture in more ways than one.
Scarecrow
Yes. Think of his starting me in life with
so few advantages.
(A groan heard back of drop.)
Dorothy
What's that?
Scarecrow
It sounds like a carette horse passing a
stable at dinner time.
Dorothy
It comes from behind these bushes. Dare
you look and see what it is?
Scarecrow
I fear nothing, but a lighted match, or a
cigarette smoker. If ever I bump up

against either of those two -- peace to my ashes.
(Pushes bushes aside.)
I've got it.
(Brings Tin-man out.)
(Tin-man stands, rigid, with fife in position for playing.)
Dorothy
Is that a man, or a hardware store?
Scarecrow
He's been married tin years and this is his tin wedding.
Dorothy
Did you play, sir?
Tin-man
Did I play? I've been practicing that lovely tune for over a year.
Dorothy
Why do you stand so still?
Tin-man
I'm rusted.
Dorothy
Where?
Tin-man
In my joints.
Dorothy
Must you stay there forever?
Tin-man
Not if you will help me. Get the oil can from behind that stump and oil me up a bit and then I'll be oil right.
Scarecrow
I'll rush the can.
(Gets oil can from behind out drop and begins to oil Tin-man's joints. Bus. ad lib.)
Tin-man
What a blessed relief. Accept my thanks. Nick Chopper is at last himself again.
Dorothy

I'm so glad we heard you. What a dangerous position you were in.

Tin-man

Wasn't I? If a hold-up man had come along with a can opener he might have gone through me with ease.

(To Scarecrow)

Here, oil my neck a little more. It doesn't turn smoothly.

Scarecrow

(Oiling Nick's neck.)

Some of these tough joints ought to be pulled.

Tin-man

(To Dorothy)

Your friend seems to be one of the light fingered gentry. I hope he's not as bad as he's painted.

Dorothy

What a horrid thing for you to say, after his helping you out of your trouble.

Tin-man

I beg your pardon, Miss; it's a long time since I've been in polite society and I'm still a bit rusty.

(To Scarecrow)

Much obliged for the grease. Ah, I was not always made of tin. Once I was made of flesh and blood, as you two are.

Scarecrow

(Taking handful of straw from breast.)

Cut me out, please.

Dorothy

How did it happen.

Tin-man

A pretty Munchkin girl loved me devotedly. Often she came and held the trees while I chopped them down, and then gently lowered them to the ground. But the wicked witch had forbidden any

love-making in her domains, and one day Cynthia and I were caught holding hands. She enchanted my axe so that it slipped and cut off my leg. I went to the tinsmith and had a new one made. Then, one by one, I lost my arms, head, and body, but the tinsmith replaced each missing member. I kept on chopping wood, though, and said nothing. I was happy, notwithstanding, until I discovered that I no longer loved Cynthia.

Dorothy

No longer loved her? Why?

Tin-man

The tinsmith had forgotten to give me a heart.

Scarecrow

That probably came extra.

Dorothy

Come along with us to Oz, perhaps you can get a heart.

Tin-man

Who is Oz - a butcher?

Dorothy

No, no! It's city, where a wonderful wizard rules.

Tin-man

(Sings, dancing to time.)

"Oh, Cynthia, Cynthia, I've been thinking -

What an awful thing it was -

To be without a heart, but now

I'll get it from the Wizard of Oz."

(Break and bus. Scarecrow.)

-- "

WHEN YOU LOVE, LOVE, LOVE." --

Trio -- Tin-man, Dorothy, and Scarecrow, and exit.)

Oh! Love's the thing, that poets sing

Their sweetest lays regarding.
And none say nay, to love's gay sway
Which wounds when not rewarding.
Naught can allure the heart so sure
As one swift dart from Cupid
And none, I know would dodge his blow,
Unless exceeding stupid.
For love's the thing, that poet's sing
Their sweetest lays regarding,
And all are gay, neath Cupid's sway
All worldly cares discarding.

Chorus

When you love, love, love in mad
delirium,
When you love, love, love is quite sincere
you come.
there is nothing so divine there is nothing
half so fine,
As the gladness of your madness when
you love, love, love.

II.

I've heard it said that Love is fed
On gifts of costly treasure,
But it's so nice, I'm sure the price,
No lover cares to measure.
All other things are quite forgot
When once your heart is captured
You guess if you're alive or not
So madly you're enraptured.
But though of love you gaily sing
'Twill turn your heart quite stony,
To end the whirl and find the girl
Is seeking "Alimony."

- CHANGE TO -SCENE IV-

SCENE:- The Poppy Field. The scene shows an extensive field of poppies, 30 or 40 young ladies dressed in costumes representing the poppy flower. They are so arranged that they practically fill the entire stage. Stage in total darkness at the

beginning of this scene. Light effect is thrown upon the gauze drop. Gradually the lights are raised on the stage beginning red and gradually working up to a pale white light. All the girls stand with their heads bent forward so as to hide faces, their poppy heads alone showing. As they sing they sway their bodies and pantomine with their heads. (Chorus of Poppy flowers.)

POPPY CHORUS.

Should a wandering mortal lucklessly
appear in our field
Needlessly our sweet perfume inhaling
Each sense with joy regaling
Who can blame us if all our soporific
powers are revealed.
While unto our sway he gives way
And must helplessly yield.
For Death, like a breath comes to all soon
or late
And mortals are the sport of a
mischevious fate.
So welcome the peace that we bring to
mankind.
It is happiness to dream on, with care left
behind.
We are poppies in fairest splendour,
blooming fragrant alway.
Through the mosses and the grasses
looming
Fascinations rare assuming
We delight when alone, to pass the
moments are play
Every petal graciously nods
Our many charms to display.

(After Chorus, DASHEMOFF enters, hurriedly R.I.)

Dash.

Oh, Dorothy! Dorothy!

Dorothy
Here I am. I'm so glad to meet you again. I've lost my way.
Dash.
These poppy fields are pathless.
Dorothy
The Tin-man punctured himself with a rusty nail, and I had to send for a plumber to solder up his wound.
Dash.
The Tin-man?
Dorothy
A new friend of mine.
Dash.
I found a rhyme for "Sarsaparilla", but now I can't find the king.
(Enter PASTORIA, TRYXIE, COW and LION at back. Pastoria is dressed as a lion tamer, Tryxie as a bareback rider. Pastoria leads the Lion, Tryxie leads the Cow.)
Pastoria
(Coming down.)
S-sh! the Wizard's police are after us and we are disguised as a one ring circus.
Dash.
(To Dorothy)
This is Pastoria II, the rightful king of Oz.
Tryxie
I am Signiorina Bouncerino, premiere equestrienne.
Pastoria
And I am Signor Gonzabo, premier lion tamer.
(Striking pose with Lion.)
Sit up, Bruno, Kiss your paw.
(Bus. lion.)
No, no! Kiss your paw to the ladies.
(Bus. lion.)

But come, we must not tarry here. On to the Emerald City.
(Xes R. Poppies shake their heads. All characters yawn.)
Dorothy
(To Dash.)
Are you sleepy?
Dash.
Very. It's the perfume of these flowers.
Dorothy
(Yawning)
Yes; they make opium of them, I've read.
(Poppies shake their heads.)
Pastoria
I feel like forty winks and a couple of naps.
(Cow lies down.)
Tryxie
(Yawning)
Not a bad idea. I think I'll use you as a sofa pillow. You're not much as a mattress, but you'd make an awful hit with me, served rare, with mashed potatoes.
(Lies down L. with head on Cow's side.)
Pastoria
(Sleepily.)
Bruno, kindly give me an imitation of a folding bed.
(Lion lies down.)
Will somebody bring me my shaving water and a poached egg some time next week?
(Lies with head on Lion. Falls asleep. Poppies shake their heads.)
Dorothy
(Drowsily)
What does this mean? My head reels. My eyes must close. The perfume stifles me. There's danger in this sleep I'm sure.

(Falls asleep.)
(Dashemoff retires up stage.) (Scarecrow and Tin-man enter from platform at back.)
Tin-man
Where are you, Hay?
Scarecrow
(Coming down.)
Did the plumber fix you up all right?
Tin-man
Oh, yes. I'm now a soldered, but wiser man.
Scarecrow
Hello! I'm wounded too.
(Shows tear in leg.)
Got a few pins?
Tin-man
What for?
Scarecrow
(Pointing to tear)
I want to collect my rent.
(Poppies shake heads.)
(All on stage yawn.)
Tin-man
(Looking around.)
Asleep - all of them.
Scarecrow
Let's wake them up.
Tin-man
You can't. Before I turned to tin I didn't dare to cross these fields.
(Poppies shake.)
Their perfume brings an endless sleep.
Scarecrow
I don't feel sleepy.
Tin-man
Of course not. It's the brains that go to sleep, and you haven't got any.
Scarecrow
But we can't leave little Dottie here.

Tin-man
How can we wake her.
Scarecrow
I don't know, but we must.
Tin-man
Suppose we shake her?
Scarecrow
No; it isn't polite to shake a lady.
(All characters asleep snore.)
Tin-man
What will we do?
Scarecrow
I think she has a ring that will bring one
of our leading witches to her aid.
Tin-man
(Taking her hand.)
Here it is.
Scarecrow
But we don't know how it works.
Tin-man
Who can tell us?
Dorothy
(In sleep.)
Oh, Locusta!
(WITCH of the North enters L.3. coming to Dorothy.)
Witch
Who calls me!
(Sees Dorothy)
The child to whom I promised my
friendship. She and her companions in
the deadly grasp of these treacherous
blossoms. Heartless and poisonous
flowers, dare you defy the power of the
Witch of the North
(Poppies raise their heads.)
Defy me, who rules the North Wind and
holds the Frost King as a willing subject?
for this you shall die. For this shall I
cloud the sunshine, which is your breath,

and chill the warmth which gives you
life.
(Poppies raise heads.)
Hail, winds of the frozen North! Come to
my aid! Embrace these false blossoms,
and wither them with your cold caresses!
King of the Fronst, you do I invoke in
this, my hour of vengeance. Hurl your
glittering atoms upon these cruel flowers
--
(Poppies kneel.)
Congeal their sap of life, and set upon
them the icy seal of your freezing kiss,
which kills as surely as does their own
treacherous breath. Thus shall my
enemies perish! Thus shall I restore to
life these mortals who now sleep, and
rescue the maiden I have sworn to
protect!
(Poppies shrink away, droop and fall to the ground, as the snow descends and the scene change to Scene 5: Winter Scene. [HANDWRITTEN: The dimmer effect (elective) is worked on gauge, hung behind proscenium. Lights are lowered and when out scene changes to Poppy Field in Winter.] Several snow boys and girls discovered at the back of platform. Snow Queen on high platform C. holding her hands out towards the audience. Snow falls from her hands. Characters are posed R. and L. with Dorothy in C. of stage. When lights have worked up to a light blue she slowly rises, turns and sees the Snow Queen and drops on her knee.
Curtain

ACT II

SCENE:- House and Stage all dark. THE PHANTOM MARCH. Change to Throne
Scene. CHORUS discovered, THE WIZARD OF OZ enters C.

Bardo
All hail to the wonderful Wizard of Oz.
(All salaam.)

Wizard
(to Crowd)
Friends, an attempt has been made to
assassinate your King. As I was about to
enter the Emerald City a pistol shot was
fired and struck me in the chest. After this
I must have a protector.
(To Bardo)
Have we a good chest protector?

Sir Wiley Gyle
(Pointing to Guard L.)
Here's a good man.

Wizard
(To Guard)
This way, if you please.
(Guard approaches)
What is your business?

Guard
To watch.

Wizard
Antyhing else?

Guard
To guard.

Wizard
Then you are a watch-guard?

Guard
I am.

Wizard
You are? Good. How much?

Guard
How much what, sire?

Wizard

To protect.
Guard
Three dollars a week.
Wizard
I can get a man with whiskers for four.
Guard
But think, sire, I would protect you against an army. Aye, a thousand. Aye, ten thousand! If they came upon us I would run my sword through them, one by one.
(Suiting action to word)
Wizard
Good boy! And if it came to a show-down I'd help you run.
(Goes to throne - to crowd)
Friends, I'll begin my performance with the magic egg and handkerchief trick.
Gyle
(Aside to others)
Watch!
Wizard
(Bus)
I have here a tame egg and a fresh laid handkerchief. Now what I propose to do is to place the egg within the handkerchief and have it disappear, and re-appear in the mouth of some innocent spectator.
Gyle
Bah!
Wizard
I wish it to be understood that I have no confederate. And as I have no confederate will some gentleman please step forward and kindly assist me?
----Anyone at all ----no matter who.
(Bus)
Thank you, I'll take this gentleman.
(Bus)

Watch me closely now, for you'll find that
my hands are quicker than your eyes. I
place the egg within the handkerchief
---so!
(Bus)
and with a few magic passes --- is gone.
Presto! Change!
(Bus)
Gyle
It's a fake -- fake -- fake. He's a faker!
Wizard
Now for the marvels of marvels - my
famous magic basket.
(Bus)
I have here a basket which contains
nothing but gleamerin' blades which go
round and round. To satisfy yourselves
you can all step up and examine the
inside of the basket.
(Bus)
Now, I'm pleased to know that you're all
satisfied that the basket contains nothing
but gleamerin' knives, and as I have no
confederate will some gentleman kindly
step forward and assist me? Anyone at
all. You can select whoever you like.
(Bus)
Thank you, I'll take this gentleman.
(Bus)
Now he's in the basket. We immediately
turn the basket over.
(Bus)
Then we secure the dangerous burning
acid. Fire in the liquid.
(Bus)
The burning acid I pour all over the
basket.
(Bus)
Don't be alarmed. I'm here. Then we
secure the sword,--

(Bus)
The poison tipped sword, piercing the basket through and through
(Bus)
Opening the basket, he's gone.
(Bus)
Closing the basket, and back to its original place and opening up the basket, and out he jumps, as lively and hearty as ever.
(Bus)
Gyle
That's nothing. I can do it. I can do it.
Wizard
You can?
Gyle
Yes, me or any other fraud.
Wizard
I have to laugh in my sleeve.
(Ha ha's in his sleeve)
(To crowd)
Laugh at him.
(They laugh "HA".)
Again!
(They laugh again "Ha.")
You see, they give you the ha-ha.
Gyle
(To Crowd)
Can't you see that he's no wizard? Just a plain human humbug! If I prove that, and save the country from a tyrant will you make me king?
Guard
Prove it.
Gyle
If he's a Wizard let him defy this bomb.
(Throws bomb at Oz's feet. It bounces off stage - he throws a second with the same result)
Wizard

(Smilingly)
I'm a regular bomb charmer. Merely by a glance of the eye I hypnotize the dynamite.
Bardo
(Seizing Gyle)
What shall we do with him?
Wizard
Throw him out of the palace. He's not worth taking seriously.
Gyle
(Waving third bomb)
Some day one of these will work.
Wizard
That's more than you'll do.
(Two guards remove Gyle C.)
Now, Bardo, the royal entertainment being over you may pass the royal hat.
(Crowd starts)
Here, come back. Don't run away.
(Bus. Bardo passing hat. Crowd does not respond with contributions. Bardo returns)
What's the matter, Bardo?
Bardo
They're very sorry, but they won't have anything to spare till pay-day.
"PAY-DAY" SONG.
(Oz and full chorus)
(Chorus exits on the refrain. Bardo exits)
(Oz Xes R. and sits on throne chair)
Cynthia
(Enters C.)
Ah, there sits my Niccolo, brooding over his love for me. Beneath that awful mask beats the heart of my own true lover.
(Coming down C.)
Good morrow, most noble king!
Wizard

Good morning, Carrie.
Cynthia
Will you come rowing me with in my garden?
Wizard
Rown' in the garden? I'll have to disappoint you; I'm just going out for a walk on the lake.
Cynthia
'Tis a deep sea garden the soft shell crabs are all in bloom, and as we row we'll dredge for oyster plants. And we'll build us a beautiful house of tinted pearls and butterflies to wait on us - and June bugs---
Wizard
She's bug house.
Cynthia
Come with me to the bottom of the sea and be my king-fish.
Wizard
No, I'd sooner stay here and stick to my perch.
Cynthia
Ah, sneer if you will; you cannot turn me from my purpose. Think, my darling think---
(Bus)
Wizard
I think I'll think up here.
(Jumping up on chair)
Cynthia
My head is full of thoughts; they go round and round---
Wizard
Those are not thoughts - they are roller skates.
(Aloud)
The lady has hallucinations.
Cynthia

My brain is on fire.
Wizard
Yes, and I'm getting a little hot-headed myself.
(Comes down from throne)
Cynthia
(Lovingly)
Oh, Niccolo! Bewitched and transformed as you are, you must recognize your old sweetheart. Don't you remember we used to wander together.
Wizard
And now you're wandering alone. Dinny open the gate - open the gate.
Bynthia
But I have found you. Come, fly with me.
Wizard
I will as soon as my wings come back from the laundry.
Cynthia
Niccolo - Niccolo. Don't you remember your old sweetheart? Your little Cinnie, whom you swore to love forever? Think Think! You were younger then and your hair was parted in the middle. And Nick, ---you had another face.
Wizard
That's a hard one - that's a hard one. I beg pardon, but from childhood up this face grew on me. Now, see here, my good lady, we had better come to an understanding. Your ideas are all right in a way, but even at that you're wrong. You think you're speaking to the party that you are, but you're not - you're talking to me.
Cynthia
Do you spurn the heart I lay at your feet? Alas, alas! I am undone.
(Bus)

Wizard
You're all right behind.
Cynthia
Monster! If I cannot have my Nick I'll have revenge!
(Fires pistol at Oz)
(Bell rings off stage)
(Oz takes large bullet from mouth, throws it on floor and exits R.)
(Bus. for Cynthia)
He's made of asbestos. Would that all lovers were fireproof.
CYNTHIA (Exit)
(Captain at Guard enters C. with Dorothy, Tin Woodman and Scarecrow)
Scarecrow
Is this where the Wizard does his principal wizzing?
Captain
Can't you see it's his palace? Haven't you got any brains?
Scarecrow
That's just what I came here to get.
Dorothy
(To Captain)
He'd like a few brains and I'd like a pass to Kansas.
Capt.
(To Tin-man)
And what do YOU want of the Wizard?
Tin-man
I'll take a heart.
Capt.
I'll announce you wants. But, be warned. Don't make light of aught in his presence.
Scarecrow
If I made light of anything they'd cancel my fire insurance.
Dor.
(To Capt)

We've come a long way to get the Wizard
to help us. Do you think he can?
Captain
I cannot tell. He alone knows.
Scarecrow
Don't worry, Dottie. If you have to stay
here we'll take care of you.
(To Tin-man)
You're in on that, Pie-plates?
Tin-man
That's right, Dottie. With all my heart -
when I get it.
(Flourish of trumpets heard off)
Capt.
His Majesty approaches!
*(Flourish of trumpets and enter Oz, R
followed by Bardo)*
Tin-man
Here comes the Wizard!
Wizard
(Seeing Dottie)
What! Strangers here!
Scarecrow
Yes; little Dottie.
Wizard
You all look a little Dottie.
Dorothy
Oh no, I'm Dorothy Gale. Are you the
great Magician?
Wizard
Am I? Watch!
*(Bus. Thunder each time he makes a pass
with his hands.)*
All done by the passes of the hand.
Dor.
Then you can send me back to Kansas
with a pass.
Wizard
I am not a Congressman.
Scarecrow

(Coming C.)
Brains, please.
Wizard
How will you have your brains, plain or sizzled?
(Bus. for Scarecrow)
Dorothy
(To Scarecrow)
Have them scrambled, by all means.
Tin-man
Yes, have them strangled.
Wizard
How would you like a Russell Sage thinker with just a Dash of Hetty Green.
Scarecrow
You're the doctor.
Wizard
Bardo - my book, please.
(Bus. and Oz reads from book)
"One pound of Angustora Phosphorus plant-tissue lyonised with tincture of fundamental and double distilled extract of Graphohoneical essence." Now, as far as I've got, how does that suit you?
Tin-man
When you get it tuned up, play something.
Wizard
Tuned up?
Tin-man
Say, Wiz, never mind that blended brain; just mix him up a little of that straight Mark Hanna brand.
Wizard
Correct. How would you like to have a Mark Hanna brain?
(Bus. for Scarecrow)
Tin-man
That's it - take it.
Scarecrow

I'll take it.
Wizard
That's it. Take the best, it's the cheapest. The other would make you daffy. Brains, the real genuine Mark Hanna grey matter. Now, for the oraments. Would you like to have a dash of orange bitters?
Bus
Tin-man
Take all you can get.
Scarecrow
Take all I can get?
Wizard
That's right. This way, please.
(Scarecrow goes towards him, warbling)
Oho! So you're a warbler, eh?
Scarecrow
I'm so happy.
Wizard
Well, you'll be happier by the time I'm through with you. Now do you know where you want your brains?
(Bus)
On the roof. Correct. Over here, please.
(Bus)
We start in by making a small incision.

Tin-man
Say, Wiz, that's no watermelon.
Wizard
Certainly not. No watermelon.
(Bus)
Ah, I see he's troubled with a little hay fever -- and an over-abundance, too, at that. I'll remove---
(Bus)
Now, we'll see further.
(Bus)
Well, what have we here? In all my experiences in trephining I never saw

anything to equal the likes of this.
(Bus)
And the further you go the better they get
- a regular squirrel's nest.
(Taking peanuts from Scarecrow's head and handing them to Tin-man and others)
Search that. I don't think there's a blank among any of them. The real genuine article.
(Bus)
This feller is nutty.
(Bus. to Scarecrow)
The first thing you know you'll have rubber brains. Keep quiet if you can't keep still.
(Bus)
We'll start in---
(With knife)
at the frontal bone, passing along the seam of imagination, crossing over to the pocket containing paroties of thought---
(To Bardo)
The Gridoler----
(Bus)
Now----
(Bus)
Well, brains---
(Bus)
Steady - steady!
(Bus. Scarecrow)
Man dear, yer losin' yer senses. Couldn't you see?
(Bus)
The mucilage!
(Bus)
A few layers of the phrenological salve, and you're all right.
(Bus)
There you are. Your Mark Hanna roof is well shingled.

Scarecrow
(Rising, coming down feeling his head)
Oh, oh, how I love the poor workingman!
Wizard
How do you feel now?
Scarecrow
Like making speeches to the intelligent voter. I'll write one.
(Retires up, produces pad and pencil and writes)
Tin-man
(Going to Oz) (Bus)
One heart haben.
Wizard
What size heart do you wear?
Tin-man
Six-seven eights.
Dorothy
Wouldn't you like to be considered a big-hearted man?
Tin-man
I couldn't afford it Dottie. I've got lots of tin, but I hate to part with it.
Wizard
Would you like to have your heart hot or cold?
Tin-man
Warm.
Wizard
Warm?
Tin-man
Luke?
Wizard
Here's one, left by a young lady named Sapho.
Tin-man
Then it's second handed. Very expensive?
Wizard
Well, it used to be a dear heart, but this being bargain day I'll give it to you

cheap. A dollar thirty-eight.
Tin-man
(Taking heart)
There's a flaw in it. I'll give you sixtyeight.
Wizard
It's yours.
Tin-man
That's a bargain.
Wizard
Will you have it wrapped or sent?
Tin-man
I'll take it wth me.
Wizard
Where will you have it?
Tin-man
(Pointing to head)
Don't put it in there.
Wizard
Certainly not.
Tin-man
Sink it in those.
(Putting hand on breast)
Wizard
What do you want, a sink, or a ---Bardo,
my surgical instruments.
(Bardo throws tools at foot of throne)
Tin-man
Say, what are you? A plumber?
Wizard
No. I think I'm a tinsmith.
(Bus)
Tin-man
I think you're a----wait a minute.
(Bus)
Wizard
What's the matter? Nervous?
Tin-man
Just a little excited, that's all.
Wizard
I'll stop that.

(Bus. with mallet)
Tin-man
Wait a minute. There's no hurry about this.
Wizard
Oh, yes there is, there's others waiting.
Tin-man
Well, let them wait. I guess I'll call in to-morrow.
Wizard
Now, don't be heartless. Have a heart.
(Bus)
What's the matter with you?
Tin-man
Oh, Wizzie, ---nice little Wizzie -- will you do me a favor?
Wizard
Certainly I will - what's the matter? What are you shaking about?
Tin-man
Just a little case of nervous prosperity.
(Bus. of Oz putting heart into Tin-man)
Wizard
I'll fix that.
(Bus)
Tin-man
That didn't hurt. Shine!
Wizard
I'm going to put a little absinthe on your heart.
(Bus. of putting absinthe on heart and putting it into Tin-man)
There, your heart will beat in two minutes!
Tin-man
It's working already.
(Bus. and going L.)
Wizard
(To Dorothy)
Don't be alarmed. I suppose you want a

pair of feet.
Dorothy
No, I want a pass to Kansas.
Wizard
I'm afraid my Kansas passes are all cancelled.
Dorothy
Must I stay forever in this awful country?
Wizard
How can you call anything awful after Topeka?
Dorothy
I'm so mad, I could cry.
(Goes C. and cries)
Tin-man
(Going to her)
Don't cry, Dottie. Look at what he did for me.
(Showing heart - drops it)
Don't step on it.
(Bus. and exit Dottie R.L)
Oh! Broke my brand new heart!
(Exits R.L.)
Scarecrow
(Coming down)
How's this for stampeding a Convention? "The time has come to cripple the money octopus. We'll pull his leg. No, we'll clip his wings, and you'll all be happy when you vote for me."
(Exits R.)
(Enter Chorus)
Wizard
(Proudly)
There go the most successful miracles I ever performed, and I'm going to give a ball to-night in honor of my triumph. The last one I attended was in Topeka.
THE DANCE OF ALL NATIONS:
WIZARD - SCARECROW - Tin-man -

DOROTHY - AND CHORUS.
(Exeunt)
(Bardo enters, followed by Pastoria, Tryxie, Cow and Lion. Bus)
Bardo
Where is your license for this company?
Tryxie
We had a dramatic license, but we lost it. We're only a moral one ring circus.
Bardo
Is there all there is of you?
Tryxie
We had a stage-struck pig when we started.
Bardo
What happened to the stagestruck pig?
Tryxie
He was cured in the last town.
Pastoria
And we had a happy family, too, -- that lion and a lamb.
Bardo
Lost the lamb.
Pastoria
No. The lamb is still with us, - but beneath the surface.
(Lion pats his stomach appreciatively)
Bardo
I'll report your arrest to his wizziness.
(Exits)
Tryxie
(To Pastoria)
And if His Wizziness recognizes you, it's into the cart with Du Barry!
Pastoria
Ugh! Stop putting ice down my back.
Tryxie
Where is your army? Where is your revolution?
Pastoria

Be patient, my Empress of Biscuit Shooters. Feast your eyes upon that throne whereon you and I will sit together as soon as we get a chance to prove Oz a humbug.

Tryxie

But is Oz a humbug?

Pastoria

Is he? Well, I should say he issie, Ozzie, izzie. On the earth you came from his feats of magic were chestnuts at all the church fairs fifty years ago.

(Scarecrow and Tin-man enter R.3)

Tin-man

Say, Hay, is this the place?

Scarecrow

That's where we're at.

(To Pastoria and Tryxie)

Why so sad, comrades?

Tryxie

Why do our faces look pinched?

Tin-man

Yes. Who did it?

Pastoria

The myrmidons of the usurper. Even the show business isn't safe in this pea-green town.

Scarecrow

What show business?

Pastoria

Signor Gonzabo's only original one ring circus.

Tin-man

Where is it?

Pastoria and Tryxie

WE are it! Ta, ta.

(They strike pose, Lion and Cow also. Chord. Bus of Cow nibbling at Scarecrow)

Scarecrow

(Bus)
Have the animals been fed lately?
Pastoria
Why?
Scarecrow
(Pointing to Cow)
Because if that beast remains hungry I'm liable to join the menagerie against my will.
(Bus. feeling cow's side)
Oh, yes, she's been fed.
Tryxie
Why, she's perfectly amiable.
(Xing to Cow - bus)
Come here, and I'll introduce you.
Scarecrow
Thanks, we've met before.
Cynthia
(Enters L.1 carry an axe)
Hold! Stand all apart.
(All spread arms and legs)
(She points to Pastoria)
I would speak with yonder wicked giant. It is my pleasure to think I am Jack-the-Giant-Killer. Come with me to yonder bean stalk, 'Tis but a mile high and when thou hast reached the top I will cut it down. I fain would see thee tumble.
(Bus for Lion at throne)
Pastoria
Excuse me, I'm not good at tumbling.
Cynthia
Now that I look upon thee again I can believe that.
Tryxie
Will the Lady Lunatic kindly cut it short?
Cynthia
What are thou?
Tryxie
Oh, back to the padded cell with you.

Cynthia
(To Pastoria)
Have you brought home a new cook? I prithee wash the potatoes.
Tryxie
(Starting towards Pastoria)
Now, Pasty---
(Cynthia seizes Tryxie by arm, pulls her L. then pushes Pastoria who falls R. near throne. Tryxie exits L.1.)
Cynthia
(Starting towards Pastoria)
Abide thee there awhile
(Turns, sees Scarecrow)
Thou cream-faced loon!
(Bus)
Where getst thou that goose look?
(Swings axe in front of Scarecrow's face)
(Scarecrow falls)
(Cynthia exits L.1.)
(Bus for Lion)
(Flourish of trumpets and enter Bardo R.1. Crowd enters L.)
Bardo
His Majesty commands your presence at once.
Pastoria
(Alarmed)
What for?
Bardo
You're not to ask questions, but obey orders.
Pastoria
If I don't know, I don't go.
Bardo
Your circus will give a special performance by royal command.
Pastoria
(Aside)
Ah, I breathe again.

(Bus)
(Pastoria, Bardo, Cow and Tim-man Lion and Scarecrow exit)
(Tryxie enters L.1)
1st Girl
(To Tryxie)
Don't you belong to the circus?
Tryxie
No, indeed. Oh, yes, of course I do.
1st Girl
Do you have to act?
Tryxie
Oh, no, of course not. I don't have to act, but I love art.
2nd Girl
What is your speciality?
Tryxie
I'm a bare-faced equestrienne, and I sing serio comics.
1st Girl
Whare are serio comics?
Tryxie
Haven't you ever heard one?
1st Girl
Never.
Tryxie
Some people are born lucky. Here's where your luck ends.
SAMMY SONG (Tryxie and Chorus)
(Tryxie exits after song)
(Chorus sing refrain and exit)
(Confederate enters C. Bus. Pastoria and Tryxie enter C. Pastoria throws a large green cloth over Confederate's head - bus)
Pastoria
Quick, quick, my queen! The knock-out drops!
(Tryxie places bottle to Confederate's nose, Bus. Pastoria counting)

1---- 2---- 6---- 8----- 10 ----out. The rest is easy. Disguised in this fellow's clothes, I shall take his place. When the time comes Oz will put me in the trunk, then he will close the lid, turn the thing over and open it, and when he tells the people to look again they will see this trunk empty. Then I will rise at the back and denounce him as a fraud.

Tryxie

And they'll make you King again.

Pastoria

(Tenderly)

Then I shall lead you to a palace.

Tryxie

I'd rather be led to a restaurant.

Pastoria

Queens don't talk that way.

Tryxie

But I'm not a Queen. Listen, Pasty, I dreamed last night that I was in Heaven, eating ice cream and sauer kraut.

Pastoria

Go back to bed. But first help me carry this man where I can secure his clothes.

(Lifts Confederate on his shoulder)

Tryxie

Is he heavy? He must have had his dinner. I could help you lift him if I had had mine.

(They exit L.2)

(Sir Wiley enters with Guard and several girls)

Gyle

The coast is clear. Come in - come in. Don't be afraid. I'm not. Come in, and look at his wonderful tricks. you haven't changed your minds? You'll let me prove to you that your ruler is no wizard? Then watch me. Here's his wonderful egg trick.

See, a pocket in the handkerchief. And see the magic basket. Place this inside, turn it over so, --- and behold, the false bottom. Stupid, people, he has made a fool of you all for years. Rebel! Drive him from Oz. ----and make Sir Wiley your savior - king!

Guard

It shall be done.

Others

Down with the Wizard! Down with the Wizard!

(Exit Crowd)

(Gyle starts up stage, stops, looks around)

Gyle

Yes, I'll do it. His confederate has lived long enough.

(Begins to nail up bottom of basket.)

One good turn deserved another. I will nail it up. And tries to open it he will have a picnic. A basket picnic. The Wizard will wiz for the last time to-day.

(Bus. Exit)

SPECIALTY.

(Scarecrow and Tin-man)

(Pastoria and Trixie enter after Scarecrow and Tin-man exit. Pastoria disguised as the confederate, and wears long cloak)

Pastoria

(Cautiously)

H'st - would you know your king?

Tryxie

No, I'm too hungry to see straight.

(Enter entire court, Sir Wiley Gyle and Oz. Oz goes to throne)

Wizard

Welcome, my faithful subjects, to our second daily exhibition.

Gyle
This is the last he'll ever give.
Wizard
We will proceed as usual with our marvelous magic basket.
Gyle
Now then Citizens, watch him. I will prove how you have been tricked for years by this imposter. Watch! Watch him! Watch him!
(Ad lib scene)
Wizard
You all know that the basket contains nothing but glimmering knives --if there's any doubt step forward and examine the basket.
(Bus)
You all know that I have no confederate. Now will some gentleman kindly step forward and assist me. Anyone at all. Anyone at all. I don't give a---- I don't care who it is.
(Bus)
Dinny!
(Bus with Pastoria. Shoving him down towards basket. Bus of Guard offering to assist. Ignore him)
Thank you - a little bit slow. I'll have to take this man. What's the matter Dinny, have ye been indulgin'?
(Forcing Pastoria into basket)
in the basket. Now he's in the basket... We immediately turn the basket over.
(Bus)
Gyle
(Chuckling)
He, he!
Wizard
We take our time in turning the basket over.

(Bus. Turns it over with assistance)
(Laughs)
Now we secure the dangerous burnin' acid.
(bus. Sees basket is nailed)
Gyle
Go on! Go on!
Wizard
(Aside)
Somethin' doin'.
Gyle
Go on.
Wizard
Just a minute. I think one of the glimmering knives is broke.
Gyle
Watch the faker.
Wizard
(At basket)
(To Pastoria inside)
Dinny, you're late.
Gyle
Go on, don't stop.
Wizard
As before
Dinny, we're up against it.
Gyle
Go on, we're just dying to see you do the trick again.
Wizard
Yes, and Dinny will be dead if I DO do it again.
Gyle
Watch him, it's WONDERFUL. Go on, pour it, pour it, pour it.
Wizard
I refuse to reign and pour at the same time.
Guard
Do you refuse?

Wizard
Yes, I do.
Guard
Then drive him out of Oz!
Chorus
Down with him.
Gyle
Wait! Wait! He'll do it.
(Bus)
Go on! Go on!
Wizard
(Bus with sword)
Dinny, watch yourself! Watch yourself.
(Drives sword into basket. Basket is turned up and Pastoria falls out. Commotion in crowd.)
Gyle
This is not the Confederate. Who is this man?
Pastoria
I am Pastoria the Second.
Gyle
Pastoria in that dress?
Pastoria
It's the costume of the man who guarded that imposter's tricks. You all know me now. I am Pastoria II - returned to denounce that man and claim the throne!
(Bus. Gyle.)

FINALE STAR OF MY NATIVE LAND.
Curtain

ACT III

SCENE:- Edge of the domain of Oz. Draw bridge L.U.E. Large tree R. The roots of tree have turned upward and form a cage. The scene is a study in purple.

AT RISE:- SOLDIERS led by OFFICERS enter L.1 E. and X. Sentry is left at bridge Soldiers march off up R. Officer enter guard house over R. Cooks and Waitresses enter across bridge

COOKS' AND WAITRESSES' NUMBER.

(Officers enter from guard house R. at end of Number)

Officer

Who are you, and where do you come from?

1st Cook

We are cooks and waitresses and maids of all work.

2nd Cook

And we're looking for an intelligence office.

Officer

In your travels have you met any suspicious characters?

Waitress

Oh, everybody *WE* meet is suspicious.

1st Cook

Why the last people I worked for wouldn't believe that one mouse could steal a cold boiled ham.

Officer

I'm talking of escaped prisoners - enemies of King Pastoria. They broke out of the jail at Oz.

Waitress

When did they escape?

Officer

Yesterday. There's a big reward for them.

2nd Cook

What do they look like?

Officer
Read the royal proclamation over there.
(Points to Bulletin board up L.C. with proclamation on it.)
You'll find their full description.
(Girls rush up to bulletin board)
(Officers exit down L.
(Sentry faces up stage and watches girls)
1st Girl
(Mounting on stool beside bulletin)
Oh, girls, it's a thousand gold pieces for the one who catches them.
(Tin-man and Scarecrow enter down R. Music for entrance. Tin-man is disguised as a burlesque chaffeur. Scarecrow in costume of various light colored articles which might be stolen from a clothes' line. They see the group up stage and draw back to cover of guard house)
Tin-man
Once across that bridge and we win. Do you think we've been missed at the prison?
Scarecrow
Missed? My boy, when we left that prison all the cells were in tiers.
1st Cook
(Studying proclamation)
From this description we ought to know this prisoner if we meet him.
(Scarecrow and Tin-man listen)
Waitress
What does he look like?
1st cook
(Reading)
"He has folding bed knees, and a face like a fightened buckwheat cake."
Tin-man
(Aside to Scarecrow)
That's you.

Scarecrow
(Aside to Tin-man)
Did you ever see a frightened buckwheat cake?
Tin-man
Yes; while the cream was being whipped.
Scarecrow
Come, Harold, it's over the river with us.
(They go up to bridge. Sentry halts them)
Tin-man
What's the matter?
Sentry
Don't you know.
Scarecrow
We haven't been told.
Sentry
That's it.
Tin-man
What's it?
Sentry
You're it.
Scarecrow
I've got it. This is a toll bridge and we can't go over until we've been told.
Tin-man
(Sadly)
Oh!
Scarecrow
'Tis a merry jest, but I see no change in you.
Tin-man
You see no change in me, because I'm broke.
(Xing to Sentry)
What's the toll?
Sentry
One fong.
Scarecrow
One fong? This must be Chinese money.
(Tin-man Xes to c. Scarecrow Xes to

Sentry)
Do you charge for anybody under five.
Sentry
No.
Scarecrow
That fixes me. I'm just nine days' old.
Sentry
Nine days?
Scarecrow
Yes, but I'm large for my age. You may not believe it, but I was born just nine days ago.
Sentry
(With evident suspicious)
That don't go. And neither do you.
Tin-man
Can't you trust us for two measly fongs?
Sentry
Not unless you leave your auto for security.
Tin-man
I haven't got one.
Sentry
Haven't got an auto, with that hat?
Tin-man
Oh, every man who wears a sailor cap don't own a yacht.
(Rejoins Scarecrow)
Sentry
(Goes C. to them)
What are you fellers, anyway?
Scarecrow
MUST you know?
Sentry
Yes; or I'm likely to arrest you.
Scarecrow
I'm a smoke inspector in a painless dental parlor.
Tin-man
And I'm a switchman in a ladies' hair

emporium.
Sentry
(Distrustfully)
You don't seem to be telling the truth.
(Goes back to bridge)
Tin-man
(Aside to Scarecrow)
If I could find Little Dottie and the others
they might help us.
Scarecrow
Take a look for them.
(Pushes Tin-man R.)
I'll wait for you here.
(Tin-man exits E. Scarecrow motions to him after he is off. Girls turn down stage)
1st Cook
Better leave these runaway prisoners to
the police and spend OUR time getting
places.
Waitress
Shall we advertise first? Here are our ads,
all ready for the want columns.
Scarecrow
(Aside R.)
Here's a chance to turn the toll.
(Slapping forehead)
This is where my brains come in.
(Aloud, advancing C.)
Excuse me, ladies, but why advertise?
2nd Cook
We all need positions.
1st cook
Here are the ads we are going to publish.
(Hands paper to Scarecrow)
Scarecrow
I know, you want everything - except
work.
Waitress
You must have kept an agency.
Scarecrow

Right!
(Reads)
"A young German girl would like to give Russian lessons to a Swedish deaf mute in a refined Italian family."
(Reads)
"A neat and willing girl would like a position as a laundress in a family where the washing is sent out."
(Reads)
"A refined brunette will give good advice in exchange for a happy home."
(Reads)
"An epileptic French dressmaker would like employment. Fits guaranteed."
(Reads)
"A tired blonde will teach the rest cure to a wealthy aged couple. No objection to being adopted."
(Reads)
"An experienced worker would like to work an inexperienced young married couple."
1st Cook
Don't know of a few families who want girls like these?
Scarecrow
I don't know of any that WANT them, but a good many may have to have them.
1st Cook
But you can surely place a first class cook like me.
Scarecrow
What's your specialty?
1st Cook
My pies are something to be remembered.
Scarecrow
Some pies can never be forgotten. I'll tell you about one.

THE TRAVELLER AND THE PIE.
(Scarecrow and girls)
One day a weary traveller walked down a village street,
Did he? I think he did.
He thought he stop and ask a lady for a bite to eat.
Did he? I think he did.
He knocked upon a door and said in accents so polite,
I'm very hungry and I hope you'll let me have a bite,
Oh, you shall have my pie the young wife answered in delight.
Did she? I think she did.
Chorus.
Oh, the weary, hungry traveller,
The hungry luckless traveller
He took one little bite and next minute took to flight
Oh, the weary hungry luckless traveller.
II.
A travelling man once told his wife he on the road must go.
Did he? I think he did.
And then he stayed in town and took a lady to the show.
Did he? I think he did.
He did it out of charity,
His heart was very kind
But when the usher showed his seat
He was surprised to find
His wife, with another chap,
Was seated just behind.
Was she? Oh, joy!
Chorus.
Oh, the weary, hungry traveller,
The hungry luckless traveller,
She murmered "You're untrue"
But he answered "So are you."

Oh, the weary hungry luckless traveller.
(At end of song girls exit)
Scarecrow
There! They've gone and I'm still shy the toll.
(Tin-man enters R.)
Find anybody?
Tin-man
No. Didn't find anything but a book.
(Shows book)
Scarecrow
What is the book?
Tin-man
"A Happy Home". In six parts.
Scarecrow
Who broke it up?
Tin-man
What's a happy home got to do with a flat?
Tin-man
The woman who owns this book can find out anything she wants to know.
(Officer enters with Sentry who points to both. Officer watches them suspiciously)
Scarecrow
I'd hate to be her husband.
Tin-man
(Turning leaves)
For example - Chapter 9 - how to fry eggs. Chapter 12, The married woman's pocket book.
Scarecrow
There's nothing in it. Go on.
Tin-man
Chapter 14. How to make ice water last.
Scarecrow
That's easy. Make everything else first. Brains.
Tin-man
Chapter 20. What to do when Baby

swallows an alarm clock.
Scarecrow
(Takes book)
I might try to sell it for enough to pay this toll.
(Turns L.)
Officer
Who are you?
Scarecrow
We are book agents. I have here a book that no hungry man should be without.
Officer
No hungry man?
Tin-man
It has four plates and a canvas back.
Officer
I think you're two of the rebels names in that proclamation.
(Pointing to proclamation)
Tin-man
Not at all.
Officer
You tell your story with a straight front.
Scarecrow
A straight front? Excuse me, my figure is all my own.
Officer
I'll arrest you both on suspicion.
(To Soldiers)
Take them in.
(Soldiers step to each side of Scarecrow and Tin-man)
Tin-man
This is all a mistake.
Officer
To the cage with them.
(Scarecrow is marched to steps of cage with Tin-man)
Scarecrow
(Struggling)

Get me a handwriting expert; he can prove by my signature that I'm somebody else, and that I died last year.

(They are put into cage or guardhouse. Sentry and soliders exit C. Officer remains.)

Tin-man

I say, this is wrong. We are not poll parrots.

Scarecrow

If I was a swearing man I'd say, "Dash it all; we're up in the air!"

Tin-man

What a glorious chance to study the language of the birds and monkeys.

Officer

It's certain we've caught two of the rebels. The others are not far off. Let no one pass that bridge.

(Jingling of chains as drawbridge is let down. Enter Sentry and a file of soldiers, escorting The Wizard and Sir Wiley, who are dressed as convicts with ball and chain at ankles. Pastoria follows them dressed in royal purple robes, but with plasters across his face and one black eye)

Pastoria

Halt! Let me enjoy their misery a moment longer.

(To Wizard and Sir Wiley)

My, but you look good.

Wizard

If I wasn't a stickler for the truth I'd say "Ditto."

Pastoria

(To Officer)

Have any of the other escaped prisoners been captured?

Officer

(Pointing to cage)
We've got the What-was-it, and the What-is-it in the cage.
Pastoria
(Going to cage)
Good! My joy increases.
Scarecrow
Isn't he easily pleased?
(Pastoria returns to the Wizard)
Pastoria
So you're a wizard, eh? Come, - let me show you a trick. How to make the dust fly. Ha, ha, ha, give them brooms, men. Give them brooms, and let them perform the trick.
(Soldiers bring street brooms for Wizard and Sir Wiley Gyle)
Gyle
(Throwing down broom)
I'm no housemaid. I don't want your broom!
Pastoria
Pick that up, or I'll have you flogged. Pick it up, Sir Wiley, pick it up! Pick it up!
(Gyle picks up broom reluctantly)
Wizard
Of the two evils he chooses the broom.
Pastoria
My, my but you look funny. Ha, ha, ha.
(Enter Tryxie in riding habit)
Tryxie
Why so merry, dear Pasty?
Pastoria
Look at my new street cleaning gang. Ha, ha, ha, Aren't they a sight for sore eyes?
Tryxie
I hate to see that old chap punished.
Pastoria
Why?

Tryxie
Because he gave me the best laugh of my life. It was he Pasty dear, it was he that---
(Laughs)
Oh, my, that nailed up the bottom of the Wizard's basket just before you got in it.
(Sir Wiley laughs.)
Pastoria
Bruno take that laughing hyena away. Put him to work on the sewer.
(Soldiers exit across bridge with Sir Wiley and the Wizard. They carry the brooms on their shoulders)
Soldier
Right face - forward - march!
(Scarecrow and Tin-man wave their hands from cage to them as they exit and exit Officer)
Tryxie
And now, Pasty, my boy.
Pastoria
Please cut the word "Pasty" out of your vocabulary. Remember if you please, that I am a King. His Majesty, Pastoria Rex.
Tryxie
(Xing L.)
That's all right for laying stones and opening expositions. But none of "Your Majesty" in mine, Pasty.
Pastoria
And don't you want to be a queen?
Tryxie
Pasty, you were one of the sweetest motormen I ever knew, but as a King you won't do at all.
(Xes R.C.)
Pastoria
Why not?
Tryxie
Your blue blood gives me the blues. For

my part, I don't even know who my grandfather was, so I've nothing to be ashamed of.

Pastoria

Tryxie, if you desert me now my life will be as empty as a Summer resort at Christmas.

Tryxie

Can't help it. I'm not crochetting any worsted ties for you just now.

Pastoria

Won't you kiss and make up?

Tryxie

No.

Pastoria

Then don't kiss, just make up. You do that so well.

Tryxie

(Stamping her foot)

Brute!

Pastoria

To me, your King? Very well, we part here. I'll go back to my throne, and you can go back to your dairy kitchen, once more a biscuit shooter - and you might have been a queen.

Tryxie

That's nothing. If I had stayed at home I might have been head waitress at a lunch counter by this time.

(Exits R.1.)

Tin-man

My, but isn't she sassy! I'll bet she's a regular Must You.

2nd Waitress

For Goodness sake, what's a Must you?

Tin-man

I'm afraid to tell you, you might get the habit.

2nd Waitress

We'll try not to.
Tin-man
Well here's a yarn about one.
MUST YOU?
Tin-man AND GIRL -
(Exit Girls)
(Enter Dashemoff and Dorothy R.2.)
Dash.
Here we are at last. See, there's the drawbridge. This is the frontier of Pastoria's dominion. Once over that bridge and we'll be free from him, and in another day we'll be safe in the land of Galinda, the Good.
Dorothy
See, a big reward is offered for our capture. Pastoria is doing his best to get us again.
Dash.
They've caught Oz and Wiley Gyle and they're working on the street-cleaning chain gang. But come on, it's dangerous to linger.
Dorothy
I wish we could find our old friends the Scarecrow and the Tin-man and take them with us.
Scarecrow
(At window in cage)
Hi there somebody. I can't sleep in this room. The mice are stealing my filling.
Dash.
The Scarecrow!
Dorothy
(Below window)
What are you doing in there?
Tin-man
You can't do anything in here but time.
Dash.
(To Dor.)

And the Tin-man! Here's a fix.
Dorothy
We can't go away and leave them in prison.
Scarecrow
I'd like to put myself out to help you.
Dash.
Don't worry. We'll stand by you.
Dor.
How were you taken?
Scarecrow
After being well shaken.
Dor.
I'm awfully sorry. If we can't get you out we'll stay here and go back to Oz with you.
Tin-man
Ah, Dottie that touches my heart. If Sir Daily hadn't spoken first I'd fall dead in love with you.
Dash.
If we're to attempt a rescue let's get at it.
Tin-man
We can set the Scarecrow free to begin with.
Scarecrow
But, you ---
Tin-man
Oh, never mind about me. Dottie, if you have a pair of scissors with you send 'em up on the elevator.
Dor.
(Looking in reticule)
Scissors? Yes, here they are.
Tin-man
Here's a paper of pins, and a needle and thread.
(Drops them from window)
Dor.
What have these to do with setting the

Scarecrow free?
Tin-man
I'm going to cut him to pieces and pass him through these bars.
Dor.
Can he stand it?
Scarecrow
Wouldn't think any more of it than a cold in my head. He can drop my pieces out of the window - you hide them in that wash basket and carry 'em off and pin 'em together again.
Dor.
But won't that be seriously fatal?
Scarecrow
Not unless you lose some of me.
Tin-man
He ought to be done over like a mattress once a year anyway.
Dor.
It's an awful risk, and I'm so fond of the Scarecrow. He owes his life to me. If I hadn't wished him into existence he'd still be scaring the birdies.
Dash
How about the sentries?
(Nodding toward L.U.)
Tin-man
Are you good at sprinting?
Dash.
Pretty good.
Tin-man
Then dash across that bridge withou† paying your toll, and lead them a chase. Now get to work.
(Dash. saunters up L. and talks to Sentry while Dor. ties scissors to a string lowered from window of cage by Tin-man and arranges wash basket beneath window. Dash. suddenly pushes by Sentry

and runs off across bridge. Sentry pursues calling: "Help, Stop thief.")
(Cooks and waitresses run on R. and watch the pursuit.)

1st Waitress
I wonder who's escaping?

Waitress
Maybe one of those rebels.

1st Cook
He has a fine lead, they'll never catch him now.

Dor.
I hope they don't.

Waitress
Do you know him?

Dor.
(Mysteriously)
He's my sweetheart. We're wandering minstrels. He writes the songs and I sing them.

1st Cook
Love songs, of course?

Dor.
Yes. Here's one.
"
HONEY MY SWEET."
Dorothy & Chorus.
(Exit Chorus)
(Tin-man whistles from window. Dor. Xes to guardhouse.)

Dor.
I'm here.

Tin-man
The Scarecrow is all carved, and ready to serve.

Dor.
Go ahead.

Tin-man
Will you have some wing, or some second joint?

Dor.
Both.
(Tin-man drops a leg and an arm out of window. Dor. puts them in basket. Cynthia enters L.1.)
Cynthia
What are you doing there?
(Tin-man continues to hand down pieces of Scarecrow)
Dor.
S-sh--! We're rescuing the Scarecrow. It was a hard problem to solve.
Cynthia
You seem to be doing it in fractions.
Tin-man
Who's that?
Cynthia
'Tis I, the Lady Lunatic. How does the Scarecrow feel about this?
Tin-man
Oh, he's all broke up. That'll be about all, Dottie.
(Dor. covers basket)
Dor.
Are you sure I've got all of him?
Tin-man
I think so. Wait - well, I'll be hanged.
Dor.
What's the matter?
Tin-man
I forgot his head. Here it is.
Dor.
How careless of you. Had we lost that he would have had to go through life without a head.
Cynthia
(Taking Dor. aside)
Have you known that tin gentleman long?
Dor.
Not very.

Cynthia
There's something about him that reminds me of my long lost Niccolo.
Dor.
(Xing to basket)
Help me, Cynthia.
(They start to L. carrying basket between them. Officer enters, looks at them. Stops)
Officer
Where are you going with that basket?
Cynthia
To yonder garden, to gather geese berries for a plum pudding.
Officer
That basket isn't yours. Put it down - Put it down.
(They drop basket)
(Officer Xes to it, picks up cover)
What's all this rubbish? Officer, take it and dump it in the river.
(Soldier steps forward, picks up basket, carries it up to bridge and throws it and contents into river) (Bus. for Tin-man during this bus.)
Dorothy
(Falling into Cynthia's arms)
He is lost!
Officer
(Going up L.)
By George! What does this mean? Where are the sentries? Where is the guardian of the bridge and the cage? There is some mischief afoot. What ho! Guards!
(Rushes off, over bridge L.U.)
Cynthia
He is gone, and has left the key in the door. Come down quick!
(Tin-man comes down out of cage and rushes to bridge)
Dor.

What a calamity! What a calamity!
Cynthia
Has any of him drifted away?
Tin-man
(Looking)
There goes his leg. Quick, give me a crab net.
Dor.
This will give him an awful cold.
Tin-man
(Throwing body of dummy on stage)
There's his body. Put that near the fire to dry.
Dorothy
Oh, don't do that.
Cynthia
I wonder if he would mind being run through a clothes wringer.
(Tin-man, who has thrown on Scarecrow's arms and legs enters coming down stage with Scarecrow's head)
Tin-man
And here's his brains. Soaked, but otherwise intact. My! But you're pretty. Quick, let's put him together.
Dor.
Where? We'll be seen here.
Tin-man
Hide him in the Sentry box.
(Moves Sentry box to L.C.)
What will we start with - his legs?
Cynthia
No, let us put his head up first, then he can tell us if we are putting him together right.
Tin-man
That's so. I can't tell his arms from his legs anyway.
(Bus. putting head in place in cabinet)
There! Right in line again.

Scarecrow
Will you take the water out of my ear?
Tin-man
(Offering hand)
Shake?
Scarecrow
I can't yet.
Dor.
Oh, I'm so glad to hear you speak again.
Cynthia
Hurry, you're wasting time.
Scarecrow
Let me have an arm next, I want to
scratch my nose.
Tin-man
(Showing a leg)
What is that - right or left?
Scarecrow
Let me see. Put that in the left corner.
Cynthia
Look out. Here come the soldiers.
Tin-man
(With right leg under his arm)
Stay here. Don't run away.
*(Exit Tin-man and Cynthia. Exit Dorothy
L. Soldiers cross from R. to L. Tin-man
re-enters L. still holding leg of Dummy)*
Tin-man
Now then, I'll throw the rest at you -
quick!
*(Fixes remainder of dummy) (When
complete, Scarecrow steps forward. Bus.)*
How do you feel now?
Scarecrow
Like a wet scrambled egg. Is my face on
straight?
Tin-man
Yes. Wasn't you frightened?
Scarecrow
A trifle. I tried to stay collected, but I

couldn't. Unless you put a few more pins in my neck, I'm liable to lose my head.

Tin-man

Old friend, welcome back to me. I'm so happy I could sing for---- well, I'm not going to frighten you by telling you how long.

SPECIALTY

(Scarecrow and Tin-man and exit)

(Enter Sentry and Sir Wiley and Oz. Oz and Sir Wiley with ball and chain,. and still in convict suits and wearing burlesque "White wing" helmets and carrying street brooms on shoulders)

Sentry

Halt!

(Bus. They stop suddenly)

Get to work there you rascals.

Wizard

That's good. What next?

Sentry

You can polish up this square for a few hours.

(Exits)

Wizard

Here's a fine finish for a King.

Gyle

A nice job! Manicuring boulevards.

Wizard

And me massaging side-walks.

Gyle

A nice come-down for both of us.

Wizard

If anybody asks me what I'm doing I'll tell 'em I'm in business on the street.

Gyle

But just now we're working on the square.

Wizard

If I ran for King now I could sweep the

country without any trouble.
Gyle
Wouldn't this be a lovely thing to give up for Lent?
(Tin-man enters R. followed by Cynthia)
Cynthia
(Presenting piccolo to him)
One moment. Would you oblige me with a short selection?
Tin-man
What's that?
Cynthia
A piccolo. With that one Niccolo Chopper won my heart long long ago.
(Tin-man blows a note or two of "Niccolo's Piccolo")
Tin-man
Is that the way it works?
Cynthia
Go on - go on.
Tin-man
I seem to have done this before.
(Blows a few stray notes, then plays refrain of "Niccolo's Piccolo")
Cynthia
'Tis he! My Niccolo!
Tin-man
Ah, it all comes back to me, now. My heart beats madly and tells me you are my former fiancee - the beauteous Cynthia, who kept the alligator counter in the department store.
Cynthia
Right! Take me to your copper fastened bosom.
(They embrace)
Tin-man
At last, my new heart has a chance to work.
Scarecrow

(Enters L.1. Sees Wizard and Gyle sweeping)
Sporty boys, aren't they? Going out for a brush on the speedway.
Wizard
You'd better raise a little dust yourself or you'll get into this business, too.
Tin-man
Why didn't you follow us?
Wizard
We couldn't. We met Pastoria and he invited us to a ball; and now we've got something on foot that we can't get rid of.
(Bus. swinging ball on chain over arm)
(Dor. enters R.)
(Dash. enters over bridge L.U.)
Dash.
I gave them the slip in the woods on the other side of the river. Come on - the way is clear, and it's now or never.
(Soldiers enter with Pastoria and form up near bridge L.U.)
Pastoria
Aha, once more my prisoners!
(General start)
This time I'll take no chances. What ho! Me headsman!
(Headsman with axe, and two attendants bearing block, enter up L. All in crimson)
The men to the block! The women to the prison!
Dor.
Have you no mercy?
Pastoria
I'm all out of that. May have some to-morrow; none to-day. Go on with the execution.
Dor.
Can no one help us?
Scarecrow

Good bye, Dottie.

Tin-man

Good bye, little girl.

Dor.

There's only one hope. They witch who saved us once may do so again. Locusta, aid us!

Pastoria

(To headsman)

Proceed.

(Attendants seize Dashemoff)

Dor.

Locusta! Locusta!

Locusta

Halt! The child who calls me shall be answered. For her do I invoke the aid of those mysterious powers who rule this mystic clime. Mighty Galinda, ruler of Storm and Calm, grant me, thy humble servant, one more boon -- spread infinite darkness o'er the land so that the victims of this tyrant may escape beneath its sheltering cloak; and send the spirits of the air to bear this child, my ward and charge, back to the far-off home from which they brought her.

Pastoria

What! Another cyclone? My country could never stand that. You and your companions are at liberty to depart whenever you wish.

FINALE

Curtain.

THE MAID OF ATHENS

A MUSICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

This comedy concerns a college student at “Illiana University” named Spartacus Smith, who learns that he will marry the heires “— ora Jones from a town called Athens”. However, confusion arises when he discovers that there happens to be a Dora Jones from Athens, Ohio, a Flora Jones from Athens, Georgia, and a Norah Jones from Athens, Texas, and so he does not know which is the heiress he is to marry.

Unfortunately, the play was never completed and it only survives in the form of a list of characters and synopsis, although a detailed understanding of events is provided from this information.

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THE MAID OF ATHENS
LIST OF MODERN CHARACTERS

DORA JONES, of Athens, Ohio; a Coed with an intense admiration for athletic sports.

FLORA JONES, of Athens, Ga.; a Coed with a distinctive feminine love of fashionable attire.

NORAH JONES, of Athens, Texas; a Coed with a cowboy training and a thorough knowledge of the intrinsic value of cattle.

MRS. VALENTINE DeRUYTER SEDGEWICKE, Willie's devoted mother.

GERALDINE FITZGERALD, called' Jerry" by the Coeds; a time- honored College perennial; former sweetheart of Daniel Webster Smith.

SPARTACUS SMITH, of Battle Creek; a Sophomore with a penchant for "pipes," who becomes an athlete to oblige "the Gov'ner" and, incidentally, to win an heiress.

NAPOLEON BUCK; Athletic Coach of the Illiana University; the hero of the Coeds.

WILLIE SEDGEWICKE, a freshman; commended by his anxious mamma to the loving care of the sophomores.

DANIEL WEBSTER SMITH, Yale '71; paternal ancestor of Spartacus; a firm adherent to the dignified traditions of College life.

DR. N. DOWE, President of Illiana University.

A BILL-POSTER, Professor of Literature.

THE FOOTBALL ELEVEN OF ILLIANA.

THE FOOTBALL ELEVEN OF MASSAJERSEY.

ILLIANA GLEE AND MANDOLIN CLUB.

COEDS. (Female Chorus.)

STUDENTS. (Male Chorus.)

CHARACTERS OF ANCIENT ATHENS

SPARTACUS THE GLADIATOR; acting Janitor of the College of Vestals, who kindly assists his namesake to win the great Inter-
Collegiate Football Game, in return for equally valuable instruction.

HERA; high-priestess of the College of Vestals — but yet a woman.

PULCHRA, a Vestal; the Original Maid of Athens; quite ignorant of love but willing to learn. (This character doubles with "Dora Jones.")

CHORUS OF VESTALS.

CHORUS OF GLADIATORS.

STRUCTURE

ACT I. --Campus of the University of Illiana.

ACT II. --Temple of the College of Vestals, Ancient Athens.

ACT III. --Athletic Field of the Great Inter-Collegiate Football Game of 1904

LIST OF PROPOSED MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

(1) — Opening Chorus: “Glorious Illiana.”--Students and Coeds.
(2) — Song and Refrain: “Cowboy Culture in the Far Southwest.” — Nora and female chorus.
(3) — Solo: “The Modern Maid of Athens.” — Spartacus Smith.
(4) — Song and Chorus: “Youth’s Golden Hours.” --Mrs. Sedgewicke and Glee and Mandolin Clubs.
(5) — Song and Dance: “Camping on the Campus.” --Flora and Willie.
(6) — Solo: “Who could be a Hero without Hair?”--Buck.
(7) — Trio: “When Love Implores a Willing Maid.” --Dora, Flora, Nora.
(8) — Duet: “A Fighter isn’t Fit till he has Fought.” --Buck and Spartacus.
(9) — Chorus and Glee Club: “Our Noble Benefactor.”
(10) — Distant Refrain: “Maid of Athens!”--Glee Club.

ACT II

(11) — Song and Refrain: “Nothing Doing!”--Pulchra and Vestals.
(12) — Song: “Love’s Humble Janitor am I.” --Spartacus the Gladiator.
(13) — Song and Chorus: “It’s Dreadfully Nice!”--Heraandthe Vestals.
(14) — Character Song: “Just Like This!”--Spartacus Smith.
(15) — March and Chorus of the Gladiators.
(16) — Chorus: “Let us Love before To-morrow Comes.” --Vestals.
(17) — Finale: “Hail and Farewell!” --Gladiators, Vestals and Principals.

ACT III

(18) — Sobbing Song: “Oh, Uncle Obadiah!”--Dora.
(19) — Song: “Sometimes I’m really Devilish, Don’tye Know!”--Willie.
(20) — College Medley: “U-pi-dee!” --Students and Coeds.
(21) — Sextette: “Amo--Amas--Amat!” --Dora, Flora, Nora, Spartacus, Buck and Willie.
(22) — Finale: Principals and Chorus.

SYNOPSIS: ACT I

Campus of the Illiana University. --Wall with Gateway Running from R. 1E. to Back Center.--At L.C. College Buildings Shown Upon Background, in Distance. --At L. lE. is Shown Front of the "D. K. E." Chapter House, Before Which is Placed a Lawn Bench. - -At Back is a Huge Statue of Spartacus upon a Square Pedestal.--At Extreme R. 1E., Forming the End of the Wall, is a Small Booth With an Electric Sign: "Cigarettes Sold Here."

At Rise, Chorus of Students and Coeds Discovered, the boys seated upon the wall and the girls standing beside it. The opening chorus is a glorification of the superiority of Illiana over all other universities.

The students salute the girls and disappear over the wall. A porter enters with Norah's baggage, she having obtained permission to move her quarters in dormitory. Among her belongings are a lariat, six-shooter, cartridge-belt, etc. The girls discuss her wardrobe and she explains that she is from a Texas ranch. Coach Buck enters, overhears her, and as the girls exit he tells Norah that she is the first girl who has ever aroused his interest. While they are engaged in earnest conversation Flora and Dora enter, and decide to take the coach away from Norah. Flora exercises her feminine arts to lure him, while Dora expresses her intense admira- tion for all athletic sports in order to attract his attention.

Spartacus Smith enters languidly in time to overhear this speech of Dora's, and as the three girls exit, devoting their united attentions to the Coach, Spartacus seats himself upon the bench, deliberately lights a cigarette, and drawls out a soliloquy in which he declares he would not have suspected Dora of such toadyism, as he had imagined she was "a very decent sort." He then decides to read a letter from "the Gov'ner," and, opening it, finds the following:

"In my legal researches I have accidentally discovered a hitherto unknown will of the late Obadiah Jones, in which he bequeathes the great Centipede Copper Mine of Montana to his niece and only surviving relative, Miss--ora Jones of Athens." (The Gov'ner has made a plot in this. I can't tell what comes before that "--ora." But never mind.) "The mine is worth four million dollars at the lowest estimate. I find by enquiry that the girl herself is in no way objectionable, and, without desiring in the least to coerce you, I recommend to your business judgment an immediate acquaint- ance with the young lady in question, with a view to matrimony if possible. I need hardly point out to you that, in the present condi- tion of our family fortunes, such an arrangement would be highly felicitous.

"P. S.--Prompt action is necessary. There are others who could use four

millions, and the secret may leak out."

Spartacus decides it is his duty to obey his father's injunc- tions; but reproaches "the Gov'ner" for not giving the heiress' full name--Miss "--ora" jones being so indefinite. However, as she is from Athens, Spartacus believes he will have no trouble in tracing her, and Dora at that moment recrossing the campus, he springs up and questions her, letting the letter slip to the ground. Dora says she is from Athens, Ohio; so he decides she is the heiress, and expresses his intense admiration for her. She informs him there is but one sort of man she could ever love, and that is an all-around athlete. If, for instance, he were on the football team, she might consider him; but not otherwise. He protests that he will join the football team at once, as they are short a half-back. She then says he must win the game in order to win her, and he swears he will do so. They exit.

Willie and his mother now enter, attended by the chorus of students and coeds, among them being the glee and mandolin club.

The latter surround Willie and sing to him a love song, at which Mrs. Sedgewicke is delighted, and places her darling in the care of the dear "sophs," who promise to be gentle with him and protect him from all harm. The girls also all declare they will be mothers and sisters to him. Mrs. Sedgewicke picks up the letter Spartacus has dropped and reads it. At once she asks which is Miss Jones of Athens, and Flora says she is the one. Then Mrs. S. commends her boy especially to Flora's care, and drawing Willie aside commands him to make instant and desperate love to Flora and win her for his wife, as she is the heiress to the greatest copper mine in the world. She then kisses her son good-bye, and as soon as she is gone the students begin hazing Willie and have much fun at the expense of his innocence. Flora finally sends them away and takes Willie under her wing. He frankly makes love to her, urging that his mother has commanded him to do so.

Coach Buck now enters, surrounded by a bevy of admiring girls. While trying to shake them off he picks up the letter, which

Mrs. Sedgewicke had dropped, and reads it. At once he turns to the girls, and drawing Norah aside, asks her if she is from Athens. She answers that she is from Athens, Texas, whereupon Buck declares he can only escape the persecutions of the fair sex by getting mar- ried, and asks Norah to be his bride. She becomes suspicious at this sudden proposal, but says she will marry him if Illiana wins the coming football contest with Massajersey. She also slips the letter from Buck's belt, where he has placed it, and when he has made his exit, she reads it. Dora and Flora enter, silently approach her, and read the letter over her shoulder. Norah exclaims: "So, that is the reason he wants to marry me!" Dora and Flora repeat the exclamation, and then they

compare notes and find that all three are Misses “--ora” Jones of Athens, and that one of them is doubt- less the heiress, but neither one remembers having had an Uncle Obadiah. Having each had an offer of marriage, doubtless on the strength of the letter, they conspire to keep the young men in tow until they discover which is the heiress, when the others will accept and the heiress can discard her lover for something better--a lord, for instance.

The girls exit, and Buck and Spartacus enter, the latter implor- ing the coach to let him be half-back. Buck pommels him severely but finally decides he is as fit as any one, and reluctantly consents.

Buck exits and the full chorus, headed by the glee and mandolin club, is heard in the distance, softly singing.

Spartacus seats himself upon the bench and lights cigarette after cigarette, wondering how he can manage to win the football game and so win Dora for his wife. If he was only, like the great Spartacus of old, his namesake, nothing could oppose him. He wonders what the secret was that enabled the ancient athletes to overcome all obstacles.

The chorus grows louder, and enters. As they cease singing Dr. N. Dowe, President of Illiana, rushes in with a telegram, and informs the students that the great benefactor of the university has just donated two million dollars for the promotion of classical foot- ball. All applaud and cry the college yell, while a bill-poster enters and silently posts a bill, upon the pedestal of the statue of Spartacus, which reads: “Kerosene, 19 cents a gal.” But, Dr. Dowe informs them, this is not all. Their noble benefactor has also presented the sum of fifty thousand dollars toward a new building of fine arts. The students more faintly applaud, and the bill-poster reenters and posts upon the pedestal a bill reading: “Kerosene 21 cents a gal.”

President N. Dowe and the bill-poster are now seized and car- ried off upon the shoulders of the students, who shout the college yell.

Spartacus Smith, whom no one has noticed, has continued to smoke furiously and consume a vast quantity of cigarettes. He is now enveloped in a cloud of smoke. As the yells die away he lifts his head and addresses the statue, saying: “Help me, Spartacus, old boy! Help me!”

His head then drops upon his breast, while the stage slowly darkens and the glee club is heard softly singing in the distance.

CURTAIN

SYNOPSIS: ACT II

Temple of the College of Vestals, Ancient Athens. Chorus of vestals grouped upon the floor. In an opening chorus they bemoan their unhappy fate, being forbidden to see any sort of a man except the janitor, and having absolutely nothing to do of any interest.

Pulchra sings a song called "Nothing Doing" and the vestals all join mournfully in the refrain.

Spartacus the Gladiator, who is the acting janitor, now enters and enquires if they want more heat. They ask him why he, the greatest athlete in the world, has become an humble janitor, and after declaring no janitor is humble he acknowledges that his love for Hera, their high priestess, has induced him to take the job, so he can be near to respectfully adore her. Hera now enters, and Spartacus begs her to allow him to touch his lips to the hem of her robe. At first she refuses, but upon the vestals all imploring her, she shyly consents. Thereupon Spartacus kneels and kisses the hem of her robe, while Hera warns her maidens that such levity is greatly to be avoided, and she only permits it as an example to them of an evil they must never encourage — love.

A door-keeper announces that a stranger demands an instant interview with Spartacus, and while the gladiator is wondering how he can escape being found in the presence of the vestal, Spartacus Smith of Battle Creek enters, smoking his cigarette, and seizes the gladiator's hand, saying he has been searching for him everywhere.

He explains that he is a namesake of the famous Spartacus, and won't be born for three thousand years yet. This statement reassures them all, and Spartacus expresses his relief, confiding to Smith that he was illegally making love to the high priestess. When asked what he did, he confesses he kissed the hem of her robe. This convulses Spartacus Smith, who offers to show Spartacus Primus the proper way to make love if he will agree to divulge to him, in return, the secret of his athletic powers. The bargain being struck, Smith picks out Pulchra, the Maid of Athens (who is Dora Jones of the first act) and explains how to artistically slip your arm around a girl's waist; then the pressure denoting comfort, admiration and ecstasy. The vestals are greatly interested, and Pulchra declares it is all right.

Then Smith teaches her how to pucker her lips, and gives her the different kisses--brotherly, admiring and loving. The ancients become still more interested. Then he shows the kiss and hug in combination, completing their delight. Smith now suggests estab- lishing in the College of Vestals a Chair of Sociology, so that here- after they may be more sociable. Spartacus speaks

for the Chair at once, and to prove his fitness offers to demonstrate his qualifications to the high priestess. After some demur she consents, merely to show the girls what they must never allow.

Here is a song and refrain called “The Object Lesson,” ending in this way:

Hera (after the kiss):

This is the way the naughty folks do:
Remember, my dears, that it isn’t for you;
You never will kiss if you take my advice--
It’s dreadful, my darlings!

Vestals:

Yes, dreadfully nice!

They now retire, leaving the two Spartacuses alone, and Smith demands the secret of the Gladiator’s health food. They discuss the respective merits of ancient and modern athletics, and Smith offers Spartacus a “pipe,” which is indignantly spurned. Smith explains the athletics (of 2000 years to come) in a song. In the refrain of the verse on pugilism he gives an imitation of a pugilist playing upon a typewriter with boxing gloves. In the refrain to the verse on base- ball he imitates a pitcher catching a foul off the bat and a quarrel with the umpire over calling balls. In the refrain to the verse on golf he shows how to “address” a ball and afterward drive without hitting it, etc., etc.

Spartacus claims he and his gladiators are much finer athletes than their descendants will ever be, and regrets it is unlawful for him to summon his men and show them off to Smith. The high priestess, Hera, now enters, and Spartacus wants to practice again, fearing he has already forgotten the newly acquired art of love- making. Hera consenting, Spartacus makes love to her furiously, and the vestals, stealing on silently, observe this, to Hera’s great confusion. They promise not to tell if Hera will only allow them to practice with the gladiators, and being forced to consent Spartacus summons his men.

Here occurs the March of the Gladiators. They bear sword and shield, and after the march mingle with the vestals, who, being apt students, begin teaching the gladiators the arts of love-making of 2000 years to come. This is interrupted by a trumpet blast sum- moning all the gladiators to the arena for mortal combat.

Spartacus hastily gives to Smith a box of golden pills, which he declares, taken one each ten minutes, an hour before the football game, will enable him to overcome all opposition.

Then the gladiators march and form a picture at back of stage, the vestals being ranged at the sides. A splendid three-horse chariot enters at center, into which Spartacus mounts.

In a grand finale they all draw their swords and shout a fare- well to the vestals; while Smith, smoking his last cigarette and with his arm still around Pulchra, looks carelessly on.

CURTAIN

SYNOPSIS: ACT III

Athletic Field of the Inter-Collegiate Football Game of 1904. –The Grand-Stand Appears Located at Extreme Right of Stage. –At Back is a Fence, from Which Banners of the College Colors are Flying. --At Extreme Left is a Dressing Room, the Interior Visible to the Audience.

Enter Dora, Flora and Norah. Their fate is about to be decided by the great game, as each has promised to wed if the Illiana win.

Yet neither of them has been able to learn if she ever possessed an Uncle Obediah. The Coach enters and assures them his team will win hands down if only the half-back proves fit; Spartacus Smith has so doped himself with cigarettes that he appears dazed, and Buck advises the girls, confidentially, not to bet on the side of the Ulianas.

He begs Norah not to refuse him if Spartacus loses the game, as he has done the best he can. She appears undecided, so Buck takes her arm and leads her off, arguing his cause.

Willie now enters, and tells Flora that he has bet his bottom dollar on their team, for if they lose, and he loses her and her cop- per mine, he will be ruined anyhow, and mamma will cast him off.

Flora, however, does not intend to lose him, and gives him hope, at the same time advising him to hedge by betting on the other side.

This he rushes away to do, carrying Flora with him.

Dora is seated despondently upon the lower step of the grand- stand, when Spartacus enters, rubbing his eyes and still dazed by vague recollections of his dream. Seeing Dorahe starts, in surprise, recognizing in her the Maid of Athens. She does not understand his rambling remarks, and fears he has gone crazy. But Spartacus, pulling himself together, tells her that since he hugged and kissed her in Athens, 2000 years ago, he has become desperately in love with her, and now wants her for herself alone, regardless of her copper mine. He tells her of his father's letter, and then learns that there are three Misses Jones of Athens at the university. This staggers him, and he feels in his pocket for a cigarette. While Dora is declaring that she will abide by her promise, and marry him only in case he wins the football game, Spartacus draws out the box of golden pills and begins wondering what they are and where he got them. Dora, seeing him again dazed, declares he will never become an athlete, and runs off sobbing. Smith enters the dressing-room.

Buck enters and confides to Spartacus that on his efforts depends the Coach's future happiness. Willie also enters and implores Spartacus to win the game and save him from ruin.

During this scene the grand-stand fills with spectators, the coeds and students

being in the front rows, profusely decorated with the college colors. They break into a chorus, varied with the college yell, during which Spartacus seems to suddenly remember where he got the box of pills. He takes a pill, throws off his coat, appearing in football costume. His hair has grown longer and bushier, and when he tests the muscles of his arm they rise in a huge bunch, to the bewilderment of Buck and Willie.

The Massajersey football team now appears in the arena, and is wildly cheered and hooted. Spartacus, in the dressing-room, takes another pill, and finds his hair grow still longer and his muscles rising to enormous proportions. Buck slaps him on the back, cries “We will win!” and rushes out upon the field, where he is enthusiastically applauded. Willie also rushes upon the field, getting in the way of the entering

Illiana team, which the students and coeds greet with rousing cheers, and waving of flags and handkerchiefs. Spartacus, in the dressing- room, takes the third pill, with great results, and then goes out and joins his team.

Here occurs The Great Football Game.

(Note. - -It is the intention of the authors that this should be a genuine football game--”for blood”--showing kick-off, scrimmage, etc. The plot will not require either side to win. This will add the element of uncertainty to every contest, which must be earnestly and fairly conducted, and is sure to arouse enthusiastic interest in the audience. Skilled players may easily be secured from the ranks of college students, and a slight premium offered by the management to the winners would ensure their best ef- forts. To avoid accidents, protecting metal framework may be worn by the players, concealed beneath their uniforms.)

At the conclusion of game the teams exit, and while the audience is leaving the grand-stand, the three Misses Jones surround Spartacus and congratulate him on his magnificent playing. Willie has been caught by a flying wedge, and is brought in much bruised and delapi- dated. But he has succeeded in hedging, and is sure to win anyhow.

Buck now hands Spartacus a letter which he had forgotten to deliver. It is from Smith’s father, and says that he made a slight error in his former statement. The copper mine belongs to Miss Cora Jones of Athens, N. Y., but she is not at the Illiana University, but at Wellesley, so Spartacus need not bother to win her hand.

Hearing this, the three girls decide to accept their lovers, who are thereupon made happy. The students, coeds and Glee Club now march in, singing the glories of the famous game, Buck announces the three engagements, and each kisses his girl to seal the bargain. Spartacus astonishes them by declaring he kissed Dora two thousand years ago, and the Finale follows.

THE KING OF GEE-WHIZ

A MUSICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

This show was intended to feature music by Paul Tietjens, which was probably never composed. It deals with the arrival of the Lieutenant Arthur Wainwright, who falls like a projectile onto the Island of Gee-Whiz, where the residents are sun worshippers and recognize their king, Goo-Goo, as Son of the Sun. Goo-Goo wants to obtain precious metals from the High Priestess Princess Itla of Radiant Valley to build a doghouse, because precious metals are common and functional there, but mostly found only in Itla's part pf the island, from which they are barred.

This musical extravaganza was never completed and exists only as a scenario and general synopsis.

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SYNOPSIS: ACT I

SCENE: THE ISLE OF GEE-WHIZ, showing entrance to the Temple of the Oracle at L. — Background shows the sea at R. C., washing the shore of the Isle. --A rock at R. --Palms and tropical foliage at wings.

AT RISE the two priests of the Oracle, Tomocatl and Jerocatl, are discovered sweeping the approaches to the temple, as this is a feast day. They comment on the fact that Goo-Goo, ruler of the realm of Gee-Whiz, is annoyed at the parsimony of the priestess Itla, guard- ian of the Radiant Valley. Goo-Goo needs gold, radium etc. to build a new dog-house, and is having difficulty in securing same. Their attention is attracted to the sea--there is a distant explosion--a water spout is seen--and then their gaze follows a flying object until a body shoots downward and falls behind the set rock. Approaching to see what it is, they are startled to discover Lieut. Arthur Wain- right, who sticks his head above the rock and addresses them. He explains that he was in command of a submarine boat, which has met with an accident. Without stopping to think, he has landed upon this unknown isle. The priests inform him that this is the island of the Radiant Valley of Gee-Whiz, that the inhabitants are sun wor- shippers and are ruled by King Goo-Goo, the legitimate Son of the Sun. They explain to Wainright that the Radiant Valley is filled with precious metals, and that it is controlled by a High Priestess, the Princess Itla, and her band of virgin guardians. The secret of the entrance to the Radiant Valley is known to Itla alone and not to any mortal on the island. Conversation follows regarding the extreme abundance and relative uselessness of the precious metals in the land of Gee-Whiz. For instance, one may have gold door knobs on his doors, and still be unable to buy a cigar or cocktail. Wainright is both elated and depressed at this news.

The two priests now invite Wainright to come into the Temple of the Oracle, explaining its virtues to him. In return he declines, explaining that in the explosion his trousers have been blown away, and that, though his uniform is intact, he does not, under the cir- cumstances, feel like leaving the shelter he has found. Tomacatl assures him that in Gee-Whiz no gentleman wears pants. Now enter King Goo-Goo, the jovial monarch of the land, with chorus of natives, courtiers and many native beauties.

After the Goo-Goo song and chorus, King Goo-Goo asks Wain- right to come forth. The girls, who have been pleased with his features, and who have been inviting him to approach, join in the appeal, but Wainright refuses. Goo-Goo commands Jerocatl to go and consult the Oracle. Jerocatl off stage, and presently returns, stating that the Oracle has counseled a flour sack instead of trousers for Lieut. Wainright, there being no fashionable skirt

available for him at the time, so that he may be clad as the natives of that land.

Goo-Goo declares that no man's past life shall be held against him in the land of Gee-Whiz. He states that in the royal palace of Gee-Whiz everything goes but the clock.

Now enter Itla and her maidens, who are greeted with great respect by the natives, who consider her semi-divine. Wainright considers her altogether so, and falls madly in love, forgetting his somewhat novel costume. Goo-Goo warns him that Itla may not be loved, but only worshipped; that, for instance, to kiss her would be a crime surely punishable with death. In spite of this, the ardor of Wainright leads him suddenly to kiss Itla. Itla is filled with surprise and other and mingled emotions. A general consternation seizes upon all others. Goo-Goo orders Wainright to be seized and taken away to the prison gardens. He is ultimately to be offered up as a sacrifice to the offended deities of the land.

The captors search Wainright and find in his pocket a pipe, a bar of soap and a novel by Marie Corelli, all of which are curios- ities to the natives. Goo-Goo demands information as to these articles, and Wainright explains. Seized with a sudden idea, Wainright calls for a bowl of water, and begins to blow a series of soap bubbles.

Goo-Goo prostrates himself in delight, his followers imitating him. Goo-Goo orders the Priests of the Oracle to consult the Oracle. They return and declare that so long as the stranger can produce these objects, which far out-shine anything in the experience of Gee-Whiz, he shall not be executed as a sacrifice to the gods, but preserved as Lord High Entertainer to the King. Goo-Goo orders that Wainright, newly erected to this estate, shall now be honored by all his subjects. He commands his attendants to take him to the orange groves of the palace, and to surround him with every courtesy and kindness, to render him every attention and to gratify every wish he may express. This situation is to endure so long as he is able to blow the bubbles. Wainright, looking at his diminishing bar of soap, regrets that ablutions are necessary, wishes that he had more soap, and departs under his escort, relieved but not wholly happy. Turning to Exit, he waves good-bye to Itla, who returns his salute.

Finale,"Bubbles", for curtain: Wainright, Itla, Goo-Goo and full chorus.

SYNOPSIS: ACT II

SCENE 1: — THE ORANGE GROVES OF THE ROYAL PALACE.

--Wainright discovered surrounded by a bevy of beautiful damsels, to whom has been assigned the duty of making his life as pleasant as possible while it lasts. Song, “The Brides of the Sacrifice”.

Flowers, musical instruments, dainties et cetera, are shown in abundance, and the setting is one of tropical splendor. At L. two palm trees arise, extending above the level of the orange trees.

Enter a messenger, who notifies Wainright that King Goo-Goo is approaching for his daily amusement treatment. Wainright expresses despair, as his soap is reduced to very small proportions, and as he must die when all his soap is gone. He explains carefully that while there is soap there is life, but not otherwise. Enter Itla, whom he greets joyously. He resumes his education of Itla in the art of loving, and both bemoan the cruel fate which may presently put an end to the education. Wainright reasons that he must pres- ently die for the first kiss, and can only die once, whereas he may kiss her many times; so proceeds logically to do the latter. Itla can see no wrong in this, since her lover is soon to be put to death for his presumption.

Goo-Goo enters and chides Itla for niggardliness with the precious metals in her care, likewise accusing Wainright of stin- giness with his soap bubbles. In anger, Goo-Goo betakes himself to his favorite tree, from which he has been wont at will to extract an intoxicating draught of palm wine, which he calls by the name of wood alochol. In his excitement he chops into the wrong tree, and in error takes a deep drink from the sap of a rubber tree, which presently produces upon him the most curious effects. When he stamps his foot in indignation, he bounds from the earth. His arms stretch out in singular fashion, as well as his neck, legs et cetera.

When he ascends his throne, he turns a somersault, a hidden spring - plank being inserted into the foot of the throne. Even his head distends, and Goo-Goo announces that he is afraid his conscience will also presently become elastic, and then no one can tell what might happen. In anger, he would separate Wainright and Itla, but is unable to do so by reason of his unnatural resiliency, which keeps him hopping from one point to another.

In a song “Unhappy King”, Itla explains that she has brought this punishment upon Goo-Goo for his own cruelty.

Alarm: Enter an officer, the Protector of the Coast, who guards Morgenstern, a retired soap maker, who has had a yacht and dyspepsia, but who has lost everything but the dyspepsia; Lady Sophie Morgenstern, his daughter; Augusta Eckerstrom, her maid; Buljose, a pirate; Ardenta, his jealous

sweetheart, a Flaming Soul. Enter later, under guard, Willie Cook, a fat missionary. Enter later, also under guard, the Inca widow, nee Hanson, who comes from Peru (where the Perunes come from.) With the latter are her seven Inca kids, or pickaninnies, of graduated sizes.

Sir Isaac Morgenstern, being a British subject, would take over the country in the name of His British Majesty. Lieut. Wainright points out to him that this is impossible, as Uncle Sam has seen it first. The Inca widow, asking some one to take care of her kids, assails the Pirate, charging him with abandonment and desertion.

This inflames the jealousy of Ardenta, his sweetheart. The widow turns to Wainright for consolation, explaining that she very much needs a father for her seven Inca kids.

The Pirate admits that he took the widow prisoner, or endeav- ored to do so; which creates a greater difficulty with Ardenta. The Pirate explains that he is willing to do anything that is right to clear up the existing difficulty, and offers to barbecue Willie Cook, the Missionary. This pleases the Priests, Tomocatl and Jerocatl. The Widow thinks it is a shame, as very possibly the Missionary would make an agreeable father for the seven Inca kids. Goo-Goo insists that some one, under the circumstances, must be barbecued, as he is feeling very nervous. Morgenstern, in fright, orders Lady Sophie, and her maid, Augusta, to spread the table for the barbecue, which they would proceed to do.

Augusta Eckerstrom says there will be more of the Missionary than is necessary to go around, but points out that the guests can take home some with them to have cold for their Sunday supper. At this the Missionary is not happy. Goo-Goo is also much disturbed and uneasy, as he is unable to sit down without bouncing up. Wainright accuses him with having the manners of a regular bounder. Goo-Goo retorts that if his spirits were not so elastic, he would insist on his daily entertainment of bubble blowing. Wainright unguardedly refers to his scarcity of soap. Morgenstern hears this, and learning that so great a value is attached to soap in that country, which he discovers to be abounding in precious metals, falls prostrate in grief. He is a retired soap maker, with no immediate way of producing soap.

Wainright, who still remains dissatisfied with his native costume, offers to give Morgenstern Five Thousand Dollars for the pair of trousers he is wearing. Morgenstern dislikes to part with them, but, under the circumstances, feels obliged to do so. Itla offers Morgenstern priceless wealth if he will tell how soap can be made, but the latter, distracted, is unable to reply. Goo-Goo, still bound- ing about, manages to suggest that the Oracle should be consulted.

Tomocatl, Priest of the Oracle departs, presently returns and announces that a very excellent quality of soap can be made of Missionaries. All eyes turn upon Willie Cook. The latter wildly objects. He promises to marry the Inca Widow if spared.

As Buljose, the Pirate, would approach to prepare the Mis- sionary for his fate, he is interrupted by Ardenta, who drags him away from the Widow, who is now clinging to the Missionary.

Augusta Eckerstrom expresses her practical contempt for a meal so much interrupted. She now insists that Morgenstern, according to his agreement, shall take his money and convey his trousers to Wainright. This is done. Morgenstern, by force, presently compels the Pirate to exchange his trousers for the flour sack, which he has received from Wainright. The Pirate, in turn, robs the Missionary of his trousers. Eventually the Inca Widow compels Morgenstern to resume the flour sack, which he received from Wainright, and he is thus clad for the remainder of the scene. Meantime, Morgenstern's cupidity is much aroused by the sights about him. He has never heard of so much wealth as is here to be found everywhere. He hears of the Radiant Valley and offers his daughter, the Lady Sophie, in marriage to Wainright, thinking the latter has access to the Valley.

Learning that the Priestess Itla is the real key to the situation, he finally enters into a partnership with Goo-Goo, looking to the even- tual joint partnership of the Radiant Valley.

The Pirate also inflamed with greed of gold, determines that if he can shake the Widow, he will capture and carry off Itla, in order to learn the secret of the Valley. This still further inflames the jealousy of Ardenta. The whole situation is now much involved.

Goo-Goo declares himself as being very nervous and scarcely able to keep still. Meantime, Augusta Eckerstrom has stolen a drink from the rubber tree, with the same effects noticed as on Goo-Goo.

In this act she is followed by Buljose, Ardenta, the Lady Sophie, Morgenstern and the Inca Widow. Sextet and eccentric dance, "The Gee-Whiz Ballet."

As soon as matters have become somewhat quieted, it is agreed that a solution must be found for these difficulties. This is afforded by Augusta Eckerstrom, the Swedish handmaid, who, in a very prac- tical fashion, states that in her opinion, if an Oracle was ever of any value, it should be now. This suggestion is accepted by Goo-Goo, and all matters are referred to the Oracle. Exit all, those who have been drinking at the rubber tree still showing the effects.

SCENE 2. — INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF THE ORACLE OF THE SACRED DRAGON.

In the center of the stage is a sort of cabinet, black in color, with double doors, opening outward. From the rear of this cabinet trails a long, dragon-like body covered with greenish scales, circling around to the front of the stage, where it ends in a golden spear point. This is the body of the Oracle, the head being in the cabinet, which is opened by slipping a coin in the slot, when one desires to consult the Oracle.

At opening of scene the two priests of the Oracle, Tomacatl and Jerocatl, are preparing the dragon for work. They oil the joints, polish the scales, et cetera. They open the cabinet, draw out the head, light the lamps in the eyes, test the flaming breath and in various ways display the absurd imposition of the supposed Oracle.

Hearing footsteps approaching, one Priest gets inside the body and lashes the tail, the other goes into the cabinet to operate the head.

The Oracle is now visited by the several characters above introduced. These have their different problems for solution. Goo-Goo wishes to know how he can get this rubber out of his system; Morgenstern wants to know whether he ought to demand a pair of trousers or the secret of the Radiant Valley; the Missionary asks how he can escape being made into soap; Ardenta wishes to know how she may be avenged upon the Pirate for his faithlessness; the Inca Widow wishes to know where she can find a father for her seven kids; Lady Sophie is undecided whether to go into the chorus or to marry a Lord; Augusta Eckerstrom asks the Oracle when her wages are going to be raised from three fifty to four dollars per week. At length enter Itla and Wainright, and these implore the Oracle to tell them how Wainright may escape death, so that they may live and love one another. In his perturbation, Wainright drops the precious remnant of his bar of soap. This is noticed by Goo-Goo, who endeavors to approach it, but cannot do so, on account of his elas- ticity. The Pirate, the Missionary and Morgenstern all notice it, pretend to be unconscious and edge towards it. Augusta Eckerstrom secures the piece of soap and refuses to surrender possession until after she has scrubbed the parlor floor with it. Thus there is no soap left in the land of Gee-Whiz.

The Oracle now advises that soap shall be made of the Mis- sionary and the Corelli novel. The Pirate and Sir Isaac proceed to put the Missionary in a Kettle. A flame appears under the kettle.

Presently a large quantity of very excellent soap is drawn off from the kettle and cut into bars. Unfortunately, there is now so much soap that it loses all value, as did the gold originally. King Goo-Goo no longer has interest in

soap bubbles, and insists upon his sacrifice.

To save her lover, the Priestess Itla now determines to fly with him to the Radiant Valley and to secrete him, where they may live hap- pily, since no one knows the entrance to the Valley. Sir Isaac, bemoaning the fact that the Missionary has proved so great a commercial disappointment, overhears Itla and Wainright making their plans. He informs Goo-Goo, and they too agree to follow, undiscovered, and to secure entrance into the Radiant Valley, which, of course, means all the wealth they could ask.

The two Priests of the Oracle have now made so much money that they proclaim their independence from further work. Every one believes a solution of his difficulties to be at hand. The Inca Widow mourns for the Missionary. Ardenta takes charge of Buljose, the Pirate; Augusta Eckerstrom, being haughty at her promised raise of wages, commands the Lady Sophie to carry her wraps for her, etc., etc.

Finale number, “On to the Radiant Valley”.

SYNOPSIS: ACT III

SCENE I.--A ROCKY PASS LEADING TO THE GOLDEN VALLEY. Along this path appear the characters in turn--first, Itla and Wainright; cautiously following them, Morgenstern and Goo-Goo.

Next appears the Inca Widow and her seven kids. The Pirate appears, chased across the path by Ardenta. The Lady Sophie appears, car- rying the personal belongings of her maid, Augusta Eckerstrom, who gives her advice in waiting on a lady. Tomocatl and Jerocatl lead natives, chorus etc. Augusta Eckerstrom instructs two of these natives to be careful of the kettle, which they are carrying, as she explains this is the warmed-over Missionary, or such of him as was not used in making the soap.

Dissolving transformation to:

SCENE 2.--THE RADIANT VALLEY OF GEE-WHIZ.

Cascade of natural water L.C., falling from near borders into a pool C. and running off as a brook L. - -The brook is spanned by a small bridge of gold. The vale itself is a semi-grotto, open to the sky at top. The background, of a dull color, is streaked with great veins of pure gold, while golden nuggets are scattered everywhere. The lighting should be by concealed lamps. — The gleam of diamonds is seen at several points. --The setting is one of as great magnificence as the management may see fit to establish.

Two heaps of golden nuggets are placed on either side of the brook, one at R. 1 E. and the other at L. 4 E. By a light effect from proscenium, a rainbow is thrown upon gauze, so that the end appears to rest upon the heaps of nuggets.

At opening a chorus of nymphs arise from the pool and dance underneath the rainbow. They are joined by the Golden Girls, guard- ians of the Radiant Valley, who appear from rocky nooks. The ballet scene here should be rich and of a distinguished splendor.

Enter Itla, leading Wainright by the hand. She introduces him to her possessions, and tells him that they will here be happy ever after. Itla explains to Wainright that should a profane hand touch the gold in this valley, it will at once be transmuted into lead, and all the splendor of the precious stones will vanish. She explains that only under the touch of true love can the quality of the Radiant Valley endure. Enter now the others of the cast in turn. Morgenstern at once falls upon the nuggets of gold. As he does so, a bolt of light- ning, by electrical device, controlled by this production, strikes him upon the head and he falls prostrate. Goo-Goo attempts the same profane act and is also struck by lightning several times. He explains that he is so full of rubber that he cannot be called a cheap street-car employe, but is strictly a non-conductor; all the lightning can do to him is to give him a headache, and he has that already.

He lights a cigarette on the lightning, carelessly.

Augusta Eckerstrom, faithful to her employer, Sir Isaac, now puts liniment upon his head and revives him. The lights now quick- change, and at this time the scene shows in leaden hue, although the luminous rainbow remains, with Itla and Wainright standing close at its foot. At this moment of disappointment, Lady Sophie declares her intention of joining the chorus. “Unmarried forever, She’ll Always Endeavor”, etc.

At this moment, the kettle, borne by two servants, is violently agitated. There emerges from it Willie Cook, who bows and declares he is none other than Sherlock Holmes, and has not been dead at all.

The Inca Widow falls upon the Missionary’s neck; the kids group about his

legs, calling “Papa! Papa!” Ardenta and Buljose are now united and declare their intention of sailing the Spanish Main. King Goo-Goo, who is feeling better since he has been struck by lightning, now announces his intention of laying suit for the hand of the Lady Sophie Morgenstern, member of the chorus. Wainright and Itla now join hands. Unconsciously they stoop and touch the golden nuggets.

At once up-lights, and the full illumination shows the Golden Valley in its original splendor; the transformation at the touch of true love.

Finale, “The Rainbow’s End.”

THE PIPES O' PAN

A MUSICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

Written in 1909, this show was never produced and survives only in fragmentary form, containing what appears to be the majority of the first Act. It is based on the Greek myth of King Midas, who judges a music contest between Apollo and Pan, ultimately preferring the latter.

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ACT I.

CHARACTERS IN ACT I.

(As they appear)

WOOD SPRITE CHORUS

SPLINTER, A Woodsman. Becoming an eaves-dropper he overhears an important secret which forces him to become the barber and body-servant of King Midas.

RAMONA, A Gypsy Girl. Poor, but ambitious; ready of wit; pretty and winning. About 18 years of age; brunette type; vivacious.

PAN, The God of Mischief. An amateur musician, inventor of the Pipes, and who makes mortals his sport.

THE SATYRS.

APOLLO, The God of Music. Inventor of the Lyre; a firm defender of classical compositions; somewhat conceited; prone to anger.

THE NYMPHS.

MIDAS, King of Phrygia. A youthful, irresponsible but merry monarch, under the influence of his tutor, Silenus, and nagged by his mother-in-law, Raspina. Midas is rash, impetuous, but loveable.

SILENUS, The Aged Tutor of Midas. A man of wisdom, but a disciple of Bacchus, and usually under his influence.

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

1. — CHORUS — The Sprites: “The Wood Sprites.”
2. — SONG-- Splinter: “The Heart of the Ancient Wood.”
3. — SONG-- Ramona: “The Army of Broken Hearts.”
4. — CONCERTED NUMBER-- Pan, Apollo, Nymphs and Satyrs: “A Mortal Shall Decide.”
5. — DRINKING SONG-- Midas and Silenus: “I’ve Never Had Enough.”
6. — DUET-- Midas and Ramona: “The Little Gypsy Girl.”
7. — MUSICAL DIVERSION:

(a) — ”The Lyre of Apollo, “Dance of the Nymphs.
(b) — ”The Pipes o’ Pan, “Dance of the Satyrs.
(c) — SOLO-- Midas:” Music That’s Music.”

8. — FINALE-- Apollo, Pan, Ramona, Nymphs and Satyrs: “Ramona.”

ACT I.

Scene: A Woodland Glade in the Forests of Phrygia.

Set trees, garlanded with flowers, opposite R and LI, 2 and 3E. Mossy banks placed irregularly, converge and form a glade with Exit at C. Several small stumps; one large stump opposite R 3 E; log of wood on ground opposite large stump; chopped wood and chips in vicinity of large stump.

DISCOVERED: CHORUS of Wood Sprites distributed throughout the stage; some are seated on the ground; some standing against trees; some lying at length; some perched on rocks; several standing watching SPLINTER, the Woodsman, who is engaged in chopping on the log, oblivious of the presence of the Sprites. He does not hear their Chorus song, in which all join.

"THE WOOD SPRITES"

SPRITES: (Singing)

We are the children of the dell,
  Where shade with sunbeam fights:
The fairy babes of Nature,
  The woodland's dainty sprites.
Companions of the katydid
  And scolding locust, too,
Of butter-fly and humming bee,
  That sips the honey dew.
While daylight holds the curtain back
We haunt the mossy glade,
  And listen to the music of
Canary serenade.
When twilight laughs at fleeting day
And gloom begins to creep
We join the cricket chorus, then,
  And put the birds to sleep.
To sleep, to sleep —
  And put the birds to sleep.

At the conclusion of the Chrous song, Splinter ceases chopping. The manner in which he has been laboriously swinging the axe and letting it fall indicates that he is sore and stiff. He puts his hand to his hip and grimaces.

SPLIN: (Grimacing) Oh — that rheumatism!

The sound of Splinter's voice frightens the Sprites, and instantly they disappear in silence through the various EXITS.

A WOODPECKER appears on the tree opposite L 1 E, and begins industriously to peck. Another Woodpecker appears on the tree opposite R 1

E and begins to peck. Splinter hums the air of the curtain-raiser and leans his axe against the stump, sits on the log and sings:

THE HEART OF THE ANCIENT WOOD

(Singing)
A woodsman's life is the life for me;
I hew my bread from the sturdy tree
And revel in solitudes wild and free
  As a merry woodsman should.
The breezes whisper amid the leaves;
The sunlight glints on the axe that cleaves
Its dogged way through the rugged sheathes
  To the heart of the ancient wood.
  Chorus:
  Chop, chop, chop, chop!
From morning until night;
  The axe bites deep,
  The big chips leap
To prove my stroke is right.
The woodpecker pecks at his tree all day--
A right good woodsman is he, I say!--
  For the woodpecker, too,
  His bread must hew
    And chop, chop, chop!

Splinter begins to whistle the tune of the Chorus, and his whistle is instantly joined in by the WOODPECKER CHORUS.

NOTE: The Woodpeckers appear on the various set trees, as cuckoos do from cuckoo clocks, and by mechanically pecking upon xylophone bars concealed just back of the trees, they play the air accompanying the whistle. These mechanical birds are all connected by electric wires, so that the air may be played by a person in the wings who presses electric buttons on a key-board. Splinter, as he begins to whistle the Chorus, rises, lifts his axe and prepares to resume his chopping. His surprise is very great when his whistling is joined in by the Woodpecker Xylophone Chorus. He pauses in wonderment, his axe uplifted, and is very puzzled and frightened. He moves cautiously about the stage, carrying his axe and searches for the disturbers. Finding nothing, he pauses in the centre of the stage and scratches his head.

SPLIN: (Ejaculation) It must have been some of the Gods from Olympus. (He peers about again, and reassured, begins to sing the Second Verse:

(Singing)
The forest kingdom is my domain

And a livelihood from its trees I gain;
Full many a giant grim I've slain
  That in my pathway stood.
As my keen axe swings with joyous strokes
The woodland echoes its song invokes
While I vanquish the maples, the elms and oaks,
  In the heart of the ancient wood.
  Chorus:
  Chop, chop, chop, chop!
From morning until night;
  Then a couch of ease,
  'Neath spreading trees
With star-eyes watching bright.
At dawn's first light the woodpecker's flight
Is straight to the trees, where they peck with might,
  For they never shirk
  Their daily work,
    But chop, chop, chop!

Again Splinter begins to whistle the refrain, which is at once joined in the Woodpecker Xylophone chorus. Splinter stops whistling instantly. Again he is very frightened and moves cautiously about searching for the cause of the Chorus. He discovers nothing. He tiptoes to the stump and secures his coat and cautiously puts it on and shows preparation for flight. As the Chorus ceases he puts on a bolder front, and with assumed courage, faces L 2 E:

SPLIN: (Speaking off-stage L 2 E) I see you behind that tree! Come out! (he vainly waits for a response) Huh! Come in, then! (No response, and he becomes frightened again.) Splinter, (speaking to himself) You'd better avaunt.

A WOODPECKER appears on the tree opposite R 2 E, and speaks in a grave and parrot-like voice.

WOOD: Avaunt, Splinter! At the sound of the Woodpecker's voice coming from an unknown quarter, Splinter becomes too terrified to run. He grasps his axe and holds it firmly as a defensive weapon.

NOTE: During the dialogue which ensues between Splinter and the Woodpecker, the birds appear on the trees and move mechanically. Persons in the wings, imitating parrot-tones speak their lines. Invariably, the Woodpeckers appear immediately before, and disappear immediately after speaking. Splinter never discovers the birds, though his search for them continues throughout the ACT. No person or character on the stage, other than Splinter, ever hears the Woodpeckers or pays any attention to them.

WOOD'S: (On various set trees) Hello, Splinter!
SPLIN: (Thoroughly terrified, begins to retreat, moving backward) He--hello--(he trips on the log and falls heavily on his back)--o! — (he hastily scrambles to his feet and almost falls a second time.
WOOD: (On tree opposite R 2 E) Don't step on yourself!
SPLIN: (Trying to be brave) Good — good-morning — it's a nice plump day —
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw! (Splinter is now thoroughly frightened and drops to his knees in a beseeching attitude.)
SPLIN: (Beseechingly) If you are a god, I pray you not to harm me —
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw!
SPLIN: — And — and — (grasping his axe firmly) if — if you are the Devil — you — you'd better not try!
WOOD: (On tree L 2 E) Splinter's afraid!
SPLIN: I — I'm not afraid! I'm — I'm not afraid of anything that walks —
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw!
SPLIN: Why — I'm not even afraid of--of — my wife!
WOOD'S: Splinter's afraid of his wife!
SPLIN: I'm not! (searching vainly for his tormentors) Your-- your voice sounds familiar — but I — I--don't just catch — your face —
WOOD: (On tree R 2 E) Knock the spider off your nose! (Splinter starts backward and violently strikes at an imaginary spider on his nose several times, almost falling in his efforts)
WOOD: (On tree L 2 E) Look out for the snake! (Splinter terrified jumps aside and makes ready to strike at the snake, which he supposes to be on the ground at his feet, with the axe.)
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw!
SPLIN: (Chagrined) Don't laugh at me that way!
WOOD: (On tree R 2 E) Here comes your wife! (Splinter jumps violently, turns and assumes a cringing attitude).
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw! Haw!
WOOD: (On tree L 2 E) Splinter, you're nutty!
SPLIN: (Angry) Who says I'm nutty?
WOOD'S: Everybody! Haw! Haw!
SPLIN: (Aggrieved) — Well, I'm not going to stay here and be abused! (Prepared to depart)
WOOD: (On tree R 2 E) Dance, Splinter!
SPLIN: Dance? I can't dance — I've got the rheumatism.
WOOD: (On tree L 2 E) Dance, or the Devil will get you!
SPLIN: (Frightened) Oh — ow--oh! (Begins to dance; his movements are

ludicrous on account of his rheumatism, but he dances with all his might!
NOTE: This ejaculation is Splinter's stock fright phrase. Its comedy value will depend entirely upon its accent and emphasis.
ENTER RAMONA, the Gypsy Girl, through the glade at C. She sees Splinter's grotesque dancing and laughs merrily.
RAM: — (Coming down) What's the matter with the funny old man?
He must be fighting bees. (She comes up behind Splinter)
Good-morning — (Splinter jumps aside, terrified and ceases dancing abruptly. He brandishes his axe, but when he sees that it is only a girl he lowers the axe, very relieved).
SPLIN: (Astonished) It--it's a woman — oh! (angry) You are the one who has been playing pranks on me, and I thought it was the gods —
RAM: — (In wonderment) I haven't done anything —
SPLIN: (unbelieving) Didn't you say I was nutty?
RAM: — (Shaking her head) No. (inquiring) Are you?
SPLIN: (Disgusted) Am I? No! No! No!! (Ramona laughs merrily. Splinter, struck with an idea, suddenly points to the ground at her feet). Look out for the snake!
RAM: — (Frightened) Oh! oh! (she jumps quickly and retreats, looking at the ground where Splinter points. He laughs hilariously)
SPLIN: Caught with your own joke! Ha! Ha!
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw! Haw! (Splinter is dumbfounded)
SPLIN: Oh — ow--oh!! (moves toward Ramona for protection)
RAM: — (Not hearing Woodpeckers) What's the matter?
SPLIN: Didn't you hear it?
RAM: — No — I heard nothing.
SPLIN: That--(imitating)--haw, haw?
RAM: — I don't know what you are talking about. I haven't heard anything, and I never saw you before, and I haven't been playing any pranks on you.
SPLIN: (Fearfully) Are you a goddess or a mortal?
RAM: — I am a gypsy —
SPLIN: Huh!
RAM: And I'll tell your fortune if you'll cross my palm with a coin —
SPLIN: (Disgusted) Do you think I'd be out here chopping wood where those (imitating) haw-haws are if I had any money?
RAM: Just a small coin —
SPLIN: No. I don't believe you are a gypsy, anyhow. I think you are one of those princesses who are coming before
King Midas today — you are just disguised as a gypsy —
RAM: — (Interested) Midas — Midas — tell me about him! Oh, he is the

finest man in the world!
SPLIN: If that's so, there's nothing much to tell then except that he's going to select a wife today —
RAM: — (Pained) Oh--you don't mean that?
SPLIN: Yes — he has invited all the unmarried princesses of the neighboring kingdoms to come to his Palace and display their charms so that he may make a choice —
RAM: — Oh — if--if I could only go, too, and appear before him!
SPLIN: You? They wouldn't even let a gypsy fortune teller in the palace grounds —
RAM: — But Midas would see me if he only knew I was there. Oh, he has seen me before. He passed me in his chariot one day and tossed me a coin and some kisses, and I've never forgotten them — and — and I'll wager he hasn't forgotten the smiles I gave him in return. He wanted to stop his chariot then and come back to me, but an old man forced him to go on.
SPLIN: (Chuckling) That was old Silenus, his tutor.
RAM: — (Determined) But I will go to the Palace--I will! (Splinter laughs and shakes his head)
SPLIN: It's no use, gypsy —
RAM: — But I have as much right to appear before the king as any princess — for I am a princess of Romany —
SPLING Perhaps--but that's a check you can't cash — . And I doubt if any of the princesses could hold a candle to you when you get the joy raiment on-- but Midas isn't marrying for beauty. He's marrying for the same reason that I chop wood and you gypsies tell fortunes-- he needs the money.
RAM: (Positive) But Midas won't marry for money--he'll marry only for love —
SPLIN: He might if he had his way, but he owes heavy debts to the King of Sparta who threatens war unless he is paid at once — and Midas' only chance to pay is to marry a princess with a large dowry.
RAM: — (Determined) But he shan't do it! He shan't do it! I love him with all my heart, and I'm not going to keep silent and let him marry another woman! I'm not going to join the army of broken hearts if I can prevent it!

"THE ARMY OF BROKEN HEARTS"

(Singing)
A boy and a girl from their childhood had played
Together as comrades so true:
She crowned him as king in her innocent heart,
A fact which the boy never knew.
The years galloped on--the boy was a man;

Another love drew him away:
Though, true to the dream of her youth, the girl
Made Hope fight Despair every day.
The blow fell at last: “I am marrying, Bess,
Wish me good fortune, old chum.”
“I do, Tom, I do,” as she chokes back a sob,
Tries to smile, but her dimples are dumb.
The castle she’d lived-in for years was a ruin,
But in ignorance Tom, then, departs,
And she joins, brave and silent, that numberless host:
The Army of Broken Hearts.
Chorus:
  The Army of Broken Hearts,
  The Army of Broken Hearts --
Of women who’ve heard Hope’s last call,
Who loving once have loved their all;
Who counted not nor cared the cost,
Whose world went dark when Love had lost:
  The Army of Broken Hearts.
A man of the world once — a cynic who sees
A comedy in women’s tears —
Laid siege ‘gainst the heart of a beautiful girl,
Youthful in wisdom and years.
The man whispered subtly his words to the maid,
And swore that he loved her alone:
Beguiled her with rapturous phrases intense,
And promised his name for her own.
A month or two later the reckoning came:
All haggard and pale, drawn in face,
The girl wept and pleaded, the man was of stone,
And laughed at plight and disgrace.
Unblamed by the world he then went on his way,
But wounded by Conscience’s darts
The girl struggles on, just another recruit
To the Army of Broken Hearts.
RAM: — I am going to the palace with the other princesses, and, if necessary make King Midas think I’m rich, and after he marries me he will love me and forgive me. Then I will help him manage the affairs of his kingdom so that he can pay his debts to Sparta.
SPLIN: He needs a business manager, all right, but I’m afraid a woman

won't do.
RAM: — But I can help him! I can, and I'm going to!
SPLIN: But he's not the sort of husband you want, after all.
RAM: — He's handsome —
SPLIN: Yes — handsome enough to give Apollo a hemorrhage and make Adonis cry himself to death with envy —
RAM: Yes, and he's good —
SPLIN: Kings don't have to be good —
RAM: — And I know he will be kind —
SPLIN: (Shaking his head) No — no — He looks upon the wine while it is red entirely too often. In fact, I may say that he's the original wine agent's delight.
RAM: — But he must be under the evil influence of some person —
SPLIN: (Chuckling) Old Silenus — both of them are drunk all of the time. Silenus drinks because he likes it, and Midas drinks so as to forget his mother-in-law —
RAM: — (Surprised) Mother-in-law?
SPLIN: Yes — one left over from his first offense. Midas' father, the old King, made him marry when he was eight years old. The King needed Midas' child-wife's dowery. But she died with the measles within a month, and Midas forgot all about it until Raspina, his mother-in-law, turned up at the Palace last year. He hasn't been sober since then.
RAM: — I don't care — I'll reform him and banish her.
SPLIN; You are not the first woman who tried marrying a man to reform him. But usually it is a case of back to home and mother — with half a dozen little coupons clipped off the bond of matrimony tagging along behind —
Sounds of music on the Pipes is heard off-stage at the Left, accompanied by shouts of satiric laughter. Both
Splinter and Ramona are frightened.
RAM: What is it?
SPLIN: It's Pan, the God of Mischief, and his Satyrs — they are in search of some mortal to make sport of.
RAM: — (Frightened) Let's run away — oh —
SPLIN: I've got the rheumatism and can't run! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?
RAM: — Climb a tree, why don't you, and hide in the leaves?
SPLIN: Up a tree for Splinter! (Splinter runs to the set tree opposite L 2 E and begins laboriously to climb it; the sound of music and laughter grows louder; Ramona looks about for a moment, frightened, then starts to run up glade toward C.

RAM: — (Running away) Goodbye, Splinter!
EXIT RAMONA through glade at C, as PAN and the SATYRS ENTER R 2 and 3 E. Splinter conceals himself in the foliage of the tree. Pan is playing on his Pipes, and the Satyrs are laughing hilariously, and caper about the stage. Pan notices the fallen log and Splinter's axe.
PAN: — (Indignant) Some mortal has invaded our haunt! If I could find him I'd turn him into a monkey! (Splinter groans frightened; Pan continues his playing and the
Satyrs dance. A Satyr in dancing by Pan accidentally touches his Pipes).
PAN: — (Reproving Satyr) I told you not to hit the pipe!
SPLIN: (Aside) Rotten joke!
WOOD'S: Joke! Haw! Haw!
SPLIN: Oh--ow--oh!
ENTER APOLLO and NYMPHS at L 2 and 3 E.
AP: — (Disgusted and angry) Cease such discordant sounds in this beautiful forest!
PAN: — Discordant? (sarcastic) Whoareyou? (The Satyrs laugh satirically and grimace at the Nymphs, who regard them scornfully).
AP: — I, Apollo, command it!
PAN: — (Sarcastic) Well — I like that, Polly!
AP: — (Enraged) Don't call me Polly! (The Satyrs laugh and the Nymphs gather protectingly about Apollo).
PAN: — Angel-child, then —
AP: — (Outraged) Address me with the dignity due a God, or I will report you to the Council of Olympus!
PAN: Aw, hire a glade, why don't you, and start a concert of your own —
AP: — Insulter!
PAN: — I'll bet my wooden-leg against a half-grown weinerwurst that I'll outdraw you at the box-office!
AP: — With my Lyre I'll put your Pipes to shame!
PAN: — Never in a thousand years--my Pipes make the only music!
AP: — (Scornfully) Music? Ha! Your Pipes sound like the squealing of hungry pigs!
PAN: — And your Lyre sounds like the whine of an orphan mosquito with the cholera infantum!
AP: — (Fiercely) How dare you!
NYMPHS: Shame! Shame!
SATYRS: Meow!
PAN: — Look here, Mister Artist Model: I think your music is only fit for funeral marches — mine is the music for the live ones —

AP: — Absurd!
PAN: — Well, suppose we capture a mortal and let him judge as to which one can deliver the real musical article?
AP: — (Enthusiastic) Agreed! A mortal shall decide!
NYM&SAT: A mortal shall decide!
WOOD: (On tree R 2 E) Let Splinter decide!
SPLIN: Oh--ow--oh! Oh, Lord no!
AP: — (Singing) I am the great musician —
PAN: — (Singing) Not on your life, old man!
AP: — My Lyre's the only instrument,
PAN: — Not so — the Pipes O' Pan!
AP: — Your Pipes are most discordant,
PAN: — Your Lyre is on the bum!
AP: — Your Satyrs are too noisy!
PAN: — Your Nymphs are far from dumb!
AP & PAN: (Singing)
Instead of disagreeing, though,
We'll let our quarrel rest,
And leave it for some mortal
To say which is the best!
AP: — (To Pan) You search for a mortal in the forest yonder
(indicating off R) and I will search in this direction —
(indicating off L)
PAN: — Right you are!
EXIT PAN and SATYRS at R 2 and 3 E; EXIT also
APOLLO and NYMPHS at L 2 and 3 E. All are in good humor, laughing.
SPLIN: (Peering out of tree) Splinter, Splinter, here's where you execute an elaborately planned escape--
WOOD: (On tree R 2 E) Hit the grit, Splinter!
SPLIN: Oh--ow--oh! (Descends tree awkwardly) Voices of approaching revellers are heard in the direction of glade at C. ENTER MIDAS and SILENUS at C, each supporting the other. Both seem to be in a partial state of intoxication, and are somewhat boisterous, Midas the more. Silenus carries, by means of a strap around his neck, a wine-skin, the size of a small goat. The skin is very inflated. A hollow tube is attached to the skin. Splinter sees them and is frightened.
SPLIN: Oh, Lord — more of them! (begins to re-climb the tree, and again conceals himself in the foliage.
WOOD'S: Haw! Haw!
SPLIN: Oh--ow--oh!

As Midas and Silenus come down, arm in arm, they sing the Drinking Song:

"I'VE NEVER HAD ENOUGH."

MID & SIL: (Singing)
Don't talk to me of temperance,
It won't do any good:
For I believe in drinking just
As every boozer should!
The trickle of the liquid
As it leaps into the glass
Is the only sort of music, now,
That's got a bit of class!
It don't make any difference
The kind of booze it is:
If whiskey, wine or brandy,
A foamy stein or phizz;
A cock-tail or a high-ball —
I'll not get in a huff —
I'll drink it down and yell for more:
I've never had enough!
Chorus:
I've never had enough, I've never had enough!
I drink it by the barrel, but I've never had enough!
Get busy. Mister Waiter, bring on the liquid stuff,
Or I will fight
Because tonight
I'm going to get enough!

MID: — (Laughing) Ha! Ha! Silenus, you never will get enough!

SIL: — (Gravely) Wine does not affect me, sic, in the slightest degree, Your Highness. (Midas laughs; he seems to have a jolly jag, while Silenus' intoxication tends toward gravity).

MID: — Not in the slightest degree, but in the greatest!

SIL: — Sic, not at all! But I fear Your Majesty has had a, sic, sufficiency. As your tutor, sic, and the one accountable for your moral welfare, I think it advisable for me to drink, sic, the balance of the wine in the skin in order to save you, sic, from the horrible temptation of, sic, intemperance.

MID: — It isn't desire, Silenus, that makes me drink. It's Raspina, my mother-in-law. I dreamed last night that she was drowned in a hogshead of wine.

SIL: — Oh, it would be a fearful crime to spoil, sic, so much wine in that way.

MID: — I'm all right as long as I can stay out of Raspina's sight, but when I've got to face her I need the false courage of the cups. (Silenus surreptitiously takes a drink of wine through the tube leading into the wine-skin, and conceals his act from Midas).
SIL: — (Hastily) Quite right, quite right!
MID: — She demanded an audience of me this morning. Ordered me, the King, to come to her at once in her chamber. Think of that, Silenus. (Silenus is taking another drink).
SIL: — I'm thinking, your Highness.
MID: — I was just sipping my first and only glass of wine for the day when her summons came, and it so unnerved me that I drank another. Then I drank a glass of wine.
SIL: — Proper, your Highness, quite proper.
NOTE: During the ensuing "wine speech"of Midas, Silenus at frequent intervals takes drinks from the wine-skin which he carries. Every time Midas refers to wine Silenus takes a drink through the tube. Silenus, by crafty comedy business conceals his drinking. The wine-skin is very inflated when he begins to draw the wine from it, but it rapidly decreases in size under his repeated assaults, and at the conclusion of the "wine speech" is flabby and empty. The skin should be air-tight, and when inflated capable of holding, apparently, about twenty or thirty gallons. Silenus lets the air out of the skin through the tube as he "drinks".
MID: — After which, I drank a glass of wine to brace my nerves. I called a lackey to bring my coat and a glass of wine, and while I was waiting for him to return I drank some wine. When he returned with the wine and the coat I drank the coat and put on the wine, and started for Raspina's chamber with my mind firmly made up to tell her what I thought of her if she gave me any more impertinence.
SIL: — Correct, Your Highness, absolutely correct!
MID: — I'm glad you think so, Silenus. I boldly knocked at her door. I wanted a glass of wine, but there wasn't any — so I went back and got one — also another — than a third — which I drank — and then I returned and boldly knocked on the room and walked right into the door and looked Raspina straight in the eye-ball--
SIL: — You say you had a high-ball, your Majesty?
MID: — And she said "Well?" — (imitating loud and rough tones) just that way — soft and low — and I told her that I was sick, and asked for a glass of wine and Raspina jumped up and slapped me in the face! Yes--slapped me, the
King, in the midst of my features!

SIL: — How thoughtless!
MID: — And she said that I was drunk — drunk! What do you think of that?
SIL: — (Gravely) I'm constrained to think, sic, (sadly contemplating the now empty wine-skin) that perhaps your Highness, sic, was a trifle--just a trifle — intossicated, sic —
MID: — Not a bit! I was just mad — mad all over — and under. I was so mad, Silenus, that I laid right down there in the middle of the floor and went sound to sleep!
SIL: — (Chuckling) I'll wager Raspina waked you up?
MID: — Yes — and told me that I've got to marry one of those princesses today to get money for the King of Sparta —
SIL: — (Gravely) That's true, your Highness.
MID: — But I'd rather be dead than married —
SIL: — (Sympathetic) It is bad.
MID: — Another marriage means another mother-in-law. Think of that, Silenus! Oh, how, how can I stand a pair of them? I'll resign as king!
SIL: — No — your Majesty must marry and save your people from slavery to Sparta —
MID: — And make a slave of myself?
SIL: Perhaps the new wife also will quickly die with the measles —
MID: — Do you think there's any chance — ? — And--(hopefully) maybe — maybe the two mothers-in-law will get the measles, too! (sadly shakes his head) No--no--old women can't catch the measles —
SIL: — Drown them, then, your Majesty — (earnestly) but don't use wine — use water!
MID: — (Sorrowfully) Two mothers-in-law and a wife — oh--
Silenus, my cross is greater than I can bear!
SIL: — But it must be done, your Highness — even now the emissaries of Sparta are within the borders to demand the money or declare war — but, cheer up! Do not select the most beautiful princess — select one who is Amazonie and husky — one who can manage Raspina, and at the same time manage the affairs of the kingdom —
MID: — Oh I'm miserable —
SIL: But then you will be free from debt and free from war and care — and you and I will be happy —
MID: — (Sorrowfully) No, Silenus, I'll never be happy with any princess. I might as well tell you the truth now — I'll never find happiness with any woman in the world but the little gypsy girl we passed in the chariot that day. Her beauty and her smiles haunt me day and night. Oh, Silenus, Silenus, why did you prevent me from going back to her then and claiming her? I've

cursed myself a thousand times. She would have made me happy — but now — (disheartened) — now--she's gone — gone — and I cannot find —
SIL: — Forget the gypsy girl, your Majesty — she is beneath your station.
MID: — (Positive) I'll not forget her! I'll never forget her, for I love her — and her me, Silenus: I tell you that I'll never marry anybody but the little gypsy girl!

"THE LITTLE GYPSY GIRL."

(Singing)
One day I met a maiden
So beautiful and rare;
With floating raven tresses
And eyes that gave a dare.
I tossed her all my kisses,
She smiled and vanished then,
And though I've vainly hunted, still,
I can't find her again.
I'll roam the whole world over, for
She is a priceless pearl:
And save my love until I find
The Little Gypsy Girl!
As Midas begins to sing RAMONA ENTERS at C, and stands at the entrance of the glade and listens enraptured. Cautiously during the song she makes her way down, taking advantage of rock and shrub to hide from Midas and Silenus. Neither is aware of her presence.
Chorus:
My Little Gypsy Girl!
My Little Gypsy Girl!
Where did you go? Where did you go?
My anguish you will never know!
Come back!
Come back!
And smile again,
My Little Gypsy Girl!
RAMONA conceals herself behind the foliage of a shrub and sings.
RAM: — (Singing)
The Gypsy Girl remembers
The kisses that you threw.
The smiles she sent were payment:
Her smiles are all for you.
She thought, though, you'd forgotten,

And her smiles were turned to tears;
But tear-drops back to dimples turn
Your voice again she hears.
She'll trade you smile for kiss again
For kisses warm and true.
She'll have no other lover, for
The Gypsy Girl loves you!
At the sound of Ramona's voice, Midas stands entranced; he moves about and vainly searches for her.

Chorus:
Your Little Gypsy Girl,
Your Little Gypsy Girl
Has never gone, and if you' re kind
She never will. Hunt, if you'd find!
Come on!
Come on!
And kiss again
Your Little Gypsy Girl!

MID: — (Unable to locate Ramona — entreating) Where are you,
My Little Gypsy Girl? Where are you? (She gives a merry laugh).
PAN and the SATYRS ENTER hilariously at R 2 and 3 E, and simultaneously APOLLO and the NYMPHS
ENTER laughing at L 2 and 3 E. MIDAS and SILENUS, frightened, start to flee, but they are quickly surrounded by the Nymphs and Saytrs and detained. RAMONA, unseen, glides from her hiding-place and runs up and
EXITS at C.
PAN: — Here are mortal who shall decide between us! (indicates Midas and Silenus)
AP: — They shall judge! Mortals, I am Apollo, inventor of the Lyre, and yonder is Pan, the inventor of the Pipes. You shall listen to the Lyre and the Pipes and decide which makes the most beautiful music!
SIL: — (Fearfully) Excuse me — a mortal has no business mixing in the quarrels of the gods —
MID: — I'll be your judge!
PAN: — Good!
AP: — You shall!
SIL: — (Entreating) Your Highness, I implore you not to do it! You will offend one or the other of the Gods!
MID: — Go to the bench, Silenus — I'm umpiring this game! (To Silenus) Fetch me yon wooden wart (indicating large stump opposite L 3 E) for a

seat! (Silenus goes to the stump and tries in vain to move it)
SIL: — It seems to be fastened to the ground, Your Highness —
AP: — (Waving toward stump) Move! (the stump instantly glides away from Silenus, to his great amazement)
SIL: — (To stump) Good — good-bye! (The stump slides over to Midas, who promptly sits upon it). Thank you. (To Pan and Apollo) Have you agreed upon the batting order —
PAN: — Apollo plays first —
MID: — Then play ball — that is music!
APOLLO begins to play softly upon the Lyre. The Satyrs, with Pan at their head, mass opposite R 1, 2 and 3 E, while the Nymphs hold the centre of the stage and execute a fantastic and rhythmic Dance. The Satyrs continually grimace and gesture at them. During the music and dance, Midas becomes drowsy and npds; finally he goes to sleep sitting on the stump. At the conclusion Pan and the Satyrs laugh loudly and derisively. Midas falls off the stump and strikes the ground heavily; he awakens with a start.
MID: — Time! (he applauds) Fine business, Apollo! (To Pan) Your bat, now! Apollo and the Nymphs mass against 1, 2 and 3E, while Pan plays on the Pipes and the Satyrs execute a ludicrous Dance. Apollo appears bored, and the Nymphs regard the Satyrs scornfully. The tune Pan plays is jolly, and Midas jumps from his seat on the stump and joins the Satyrs in their dance. He laughs loudly and happily, and hums the tune Pan is playing. Atthe conclusion of the music, Midas is almost exhausted by his efforts, and sits on the stump.
PAN & AP: (Singing)
And now, mortal Midas, you've listened
To music heard never by man:
Melodious Lyre of Apollo,
The Pipes O' the mischievous Pan.
Now tell us which one is the better,
That all his just praises may sing:
Decide between Pan and Apollo:
Say which is the musical king!
PAN, AP, (Singing)
NYM & — Tell us, Tell us!
SAT: — Which is the Musical King!
Tell us, Tell us!
Which is the Musical King!
MID: — Ahem! — -
SIL: — (Fearfully) Oh, your Majesty — I beseech you not to make a

decision between the gods —
MID: — (To Silenus) Silence, Silenus! (The Nymphs and Satyrs applaud) Now, Gods, (to Pan and Apollo) If you'll play a little slow music with hot tempo, I'll pronounce the sentence. (Music begins)
(Singing)
There are two kinds of music —
Now, my frankness do not mind —
The warm and jolly melody,
The cold and classic kind.
Each has its own admirers
As have the Pipes and Lyre,
For mortals are as different
As freezing ice and fire.
Some like the stately classical,
And say it's simply grand!
And cranks and silly women rave
But do not understand.
But music that is music,
Is the sort that casts a trance,
That tickles at your knee-caps
And makes you want to dance.
And if I'm forced to answer,
Just Speaking as a man:
The classic Lyre's not in it
With the jolly Pipes O' Pan!
PAN & SAT: (Singing, meanwhile dancing wildly about the stage and grimacing at the Satyrs and Apollo, who stand dumb-founded).
And now you have his answer,
Just spoken like a man:
He says the Lyre's not in it
With the Jolly Pipes O' Pan!
The amazement of Apollo and the Nymphs gives way to anger as the Satyrs caper wildly about them, and for an instant it appears as though the Nymphs might attack Midas and the Satyrs.
AP: — (Wrathfully, to Midas) None but the ears of an ass could prefer the Pipes to the Lyre! (Pan and the Satyrs laugh hilariously)
PAN: — (To Apollo) Keep your kimono on, Polly!
AP: — (To Midas) And I condemn you henceforth to wear the ears of an ass! Instantly enormous ass' ears appear on the head of Midas, whereat the Satyrs and Nymphs break into gleeful laughter; they dance about Midas and Silenus

for a moment, then PAN and the SATYRS EXIT hurriedly at R 2 and 3 E, and APOLLO and the NYMPHS EXIT at L 2 and 3 E. Midas is dumbfounded at first, as is Silenus; they look at each other, speechless. Midas flaps his ears, then cautiously knocks one about with his hand; pulls it down and tries to look at it; contemplates it gravely.

MID: — (Looking at his ear) Oh mores, oh tempora, oh hell!

SIL: — J told you so, your Majesty! I told you so!

MID: — (Grieving) Oh — oh — oh —

SIL: (In despair) None of the foreign princesses will marry you when they see those ears, and the kingdom will be devasted by war--

MID: — What shall I do? What shall I do?

SIL: The only thing to do, your Majesty, is to wrap the ears in your sash and cover them with your biggest crown, so as to conceal them from everybody. After you've married one of the princesses and gotten the money, suppose she does quit you —

MID: — (Musing) And maybe lean drive the mothers-in law away with them, too — (works his ears and stoops and moves forward toward Silenus as though trying to frighten him;
Silenus retreats)

SIL: — Don't your Majesty, don't — my heart is weak!

WOOD: (Appearing on tree wherein Splinter is concealed) Haw! Haw!

SPLIN: Oh--ow — oh! (terrified at the proximity of the Woodpecker, releases his hold and falls from the tree. Midas and Silenus are startled. Splinter hobbles to his feet, looks at Midas, gives a roar of laughter and starts to run away, but he is seized by Silenus and led to Midas.

SIL: — (Ominously) An eaves-dropper!

SPLIN: No--a tree-dropper! (Looking at Midas, who is working his ears, breaks into an uncontrolable fit of laughter. Midas is amused and continues to work his ears. Silenus is incensed and roughly handles Splinter.)

SIL: — (Commanding) Cease your laughing!

SPLIN: (Unable to control himself) I'm not laughing--(roaring) It's just laughing itself —

SIL: — (To Midas) He knows the secret of the ears, your Majesty, and if he is released every one will know it. He must be put to death!

SPLIN: (Terrified) Oh--ow--oh! If it's just the same to you — I'm — I'm too young to die! Please don't kill me!

MID: — We will take him to the palace and he shall serve as my barber and body-servant. But if he dares to inform anybody of my (flaps his ears with his hand) fly-catchers, he shall be beheaded!

SPLIN: But I'm no barber, your Uphighness —

MID: — But you've got to be a barber! Wrap my ears up and conceal them in this sash, (hands him sash; Splinter begins to wrap the ears in the sash and conceal them, meanwhile making desperate efforts to control his laughter).
SIL: — (Incensed) Cease that laughing, fool!
SPLIN: I'm not laughing — I'm crying, (referring to the ears and addressing Midas) They are not mates, your Majestic. (He has concealed the ears in the sash).
MID: — Now, to the Palace! (Takes Splinter by the arm)
SIL: — He must not escape! (takes Splinter's other arm, and all EXIT at L 2 E, Splinter roaring with laughter and Silenus upbraiding him.
WOOD'S: Goodbye, Splinter!
SPLIN: (Disappearing) Oh--ow--oh!
PAN and the SATYRS ENTER at C, dragging RAMONA, whom they have captured in the forest.
1st SAT: Another mortal!
PAN: — A girl! (Ramona is very frightened at the grimaces of the Satyrs) Why are you in this forest?
2nd SAT: She was listening to the music.
RAM: — (Fearfully) Yes--yes--I was listening to the music. I ran away when you came at first, because the laughter frightened me, but I was ashamed to leave Midas there to face you alone, and I crept back to see that no harm came to him.
PAN: — You heard the musical contest?
RAM: Yes--and King Midas did right in deciding for the pipes.
SATYRS: (Singing and dancing)
Midas did right! Midas did right!
Pan's the Musician, and
Midas did right!
PAN: — (To Ramona) I like your taste. Who are you?
RAM: — I am Ramona, a gypsy.
PAN: — Well, gypsy, what do you long for the most?
RAM: I long most for a beautiful robe and jewels in which to appear before King Midas as a princess —
PAN: — Clothes! Clothes! A woman always wants clothes! I might have known!
RAM: — (Earnestly) But I must have them or I cannot go to the palace. I love Midas with all my heart, and he is going to marry one of the princesses just for her dowry. If I can appear before him arrayed as a princess I know that he will choose me for his wife instead of another.
PAN: — (Laughing) It will be a capital joke on Midas! (To Satyr) Bring a

robe and crown! (SATYR instantly EXIT at R 2 E) We will make this gypsy girl a princess!
RAM: — (Delighted) Oh! (dances about)
ENTER SATYR R 2 E bringing robe and jewelled crown, which he and other Satyrs put on Ramona; the Satyrs make mock obeisance to her, as though she were a queen.
RAM: — (Delighted) Oh — oh — oh! How lovely, how lovely!
APOLLO and NYMPHS ENTER L 2 and 3 E.
AP: — (Seeing Satyrs bowing down before Ramona, and noting the robe and crown) What is the meaning of this mummery?
PAN: — Hello, Polly, you back?
AP: — Yes, I am!
PAN: — This is Ramona, a gypsy girl — (introducing) Ramona — Apollo--EX-musician! (The Satyrs laugh and Apollo frowns)
PAN: — Ramona is going to deceive Midas into believing that she is a Princess, so that he will marry her.
AP: — (Taken with the idea) And he deserves it! On account of his outrageous decision (the Satyrs laugh) you shall have my assistance in the deception!
RAM: — (Curtseying) Oh, thank you, thank you!
AP: — A princess should have attendants —
RAM: — (Sadly) But I have none —
AP: — I will furnish Nymphs to attend you to the Palace. Cleo, my favorite shall be your guide and companion.
RAM: — Then I'll win him! I'll win him!
AP: — (To Cleo) Cleo!
CLEO: (Approaching) Master —
AP: — Choose three Nymphs, the fairest, and accompany Ramona to the King's Palace. See that she appears before Midas on an equality with any princess of Christendom!
CLEO: I will obey you, master. (Cleo gestures toward a group of Nymphs, and the three most beautiful step forth, and with Cleo take their places on either side of Ramona.
RAM: — (Enraptured) Oh — oh--I'm so happy--happy, happy!
(To Apollo) How can I thank you? How? How? How?
AP: — By making a bigger fool of Midas! (Pan and the Satyrs laugh derisively; the Nymphs laugh happily. Pan plays on the Pipes, Apollo plays on the Lyre. The Nymphs and Satyrs dance before Ramona, making obeisance.)

"FINALE."

ALL: — (Singing)
Hail! Hail! Hail!
The sylvan Princess Ramona!
  Gypsy once, now Princess free,
  Midas' loving bride-to-be,
  Nymphs and Satyrs serving thee,
Success be with Ramona!

CURTAIN

The End of the fragment.

Baumiana

LIST OF BAUM RELATED ARTICLES AND PIECES

Review: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1)
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The Origin of the Name ‘Oz’
Obituary

Review: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1)

From: *The Canadian Bookseller and Library Journal* V. 13 No.7 October 1900

But the book that is the best of the lot, and one that any live bookseller can sell by the dozen, even though it is not cheap by any means, is that most fascinating story, "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," by L. Frank Baum, with pictures by W. W. Denslow (the creators of Father Goose: His Book). This book is peculiarly novel and unique. In size it is about 9x7 inches, with 275 pages. The binding is of cloth of a peculiar light green, stamped with a grotesque design in dark green and red. The pictures surpass anything of the kind hitherto attempted. There are twenty-four full-page illustrations, inserts on enamel paper, in many colors, and 150 text illustrations printed in six different colors, in accordance with a color plan set forth in the story. Mr. Denslow has shown surprising fertility of invention and his pictures and decorations "set a pace" which will embarrass other artists to follow. Some of the effects are decidedly original and the color-scheme adds greatly to the book.

The principal character in "The Wonderful Wizard" is a little girl named Dorothy, who with her dog, Toto, is carried by a cyclone from Kansas to the strange and beautiful land of Oz. Here she decides to visit the Emerald City to ask its ruler, the Wonderful Wizard Oz, to send her back home again. On the way she meets a Scarecrow, who is in search of brains, a Tin Woodman, who wishes a heart, and a Cowardly Lion, whose one desire is to possess courage.

The little party encounters many dangers and marvellous adventures on the way, but reach the Emerald City in safety, their success being due to the thoughtfulness of the Scarecrow, the tender care of the Tin Woodman and the fearlessness of the Cowardly Lion.

Delightful humor, rare philosophy, and beautiful pictures combine to ensure a large and steady sale for this book.

Review: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (2)

Excerpted from *Book News*, October 1900, from *Philadelphia Times*

"The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," described by its publishers as a modern fairy story, fairly sustains the claim put forth for it that it is something new. Besides this it is very attractive, not only by reason of the story, which is by L. Frank Baum, but also through its profuse illustrations in color by W. W. Denslow. These gentlemen will be remembered as the author and illustrator respectively of "Father Goose," and Mr. Denslow has managed to maintain the reputation for originality that he earned in his former pictures. Besides originality, the drawings have life, action, and humor. The story tells the adventures of a little girl who is carried by a cyclone from her home on the Kansas prairie to a strange country. On the way she meets a cowardly lion, a tin woodman, and a scarecrow, and the conversations maintained by these four comrades and their curious experiences constitute the tale. It is not lacking in philosophy and satire which will furnish amusement to the adult and cause the juvenile to think some new and healthy thoughts. At the same time it is not objectionable in being too knowing and cannot be fairly charged with unduly encouraging precocity. The average modern child will understand that it is not a true or a possible story without at all losing interest in it. 259 pp. Square 8vo. — *Philadelphia Times.*

Article about Baum: The Theatre, 1909

From: *The Theatre*, V.X No.102, August 1909

L. Frank Baum of "Wizard of Oz" fame, and author of a most delightful series of children's books and fairy tales, does not look the part of overworked author and playwright, but in the quiet depths of his dark eyes, the square-cut jaw and firm mouth, are revealed the capacity for sustained effort and the ability to make every whit of that effort count.

The morning sunshine painted dancing yellow patches across the floor of the pleasant room, a room at once typically Southern Californian, and reflective of the artistic temperament of its owner. Lounging chairs, and tables covered with books and magazines, invited repose and entertainment, photographs banked the mantel, and on the piano, piled high with automatic records of the best and latest music, a jolly "Billikens" image grinned the spirit of good cheer that pervaded the place. And everywhere that a vase could perch were bouquets of the California wild flowers in all the vivid glory of their pink and purple and gold.

Winter home of L. Frank Baum, Coronado Beach, Southern California

"Yes, my workshop is a busy place these days. My orders have piled up so during my absence the early part of the winter on a lecture tour, that I am fairly swamped. Not only are the three pieces on which I am working for the coming season approaching completion, but the new fairy book, the fifth of the Oz books, is now reaching its final chapters.

"The new operas will all be put on early in the season. The one that I may say is practically finished is 'The Pipes o' Pan.' Paul Tietjens is writing the score for this, and it is a true comic opera. Tietjens did the music for the 'Wizard of Oz,' you will remember. This opera will be presented by the Shuberts at the Lyric, in New York, early in the fall.

"I am not neglecting the musical comedy idea. An extravaganza that will go either by the name of 'Ozma of Oz' or 'The Rainbow's Daughter,' will be put on the first week in October by Montgomery and Stone at the Studebaker Theatre in Chicago. This is going to be a big thing scenically, something on the order of Bailey and Austin's big hit, 'The Top of the World.' You can tell that the mechanical effects will be remarkable, for we have working with us Arthur Voegtlin, who is without a doubt the greatest scenic painter in America. His 'Battle in the Air' is probably the most wonderful thing ever produced in this line. The music for this play is being written by Manuel

Klein, composer of ‘The Land of Nod,’ and several other musical successes.

“I am particularly engaged just now, though, with an opera I am doing for Mr. Dillingham, that will be put on by Montgomery and Stone, succeeding ‘The Red Mill.’ Their ideas are being largely worked out in the plot in order to bring out their specialties. During the play they will represent nine different characters. That means many quick changes for them. This play will be very scenic also. The exact date of this production is not decided yet, and neither is the title, though we are thinking favorably of ‘Peter, and Paul.’ One of the big things in it is the music. Arthur Pryor has written it, and it is going to make a great hit. It is the first musical play he has ever written, his efforts having been confined principally to band music. He is the greatest trombone player in the world, you know, and it is pretty well conceded that the success of the Sousa marches was largely due to him. He would play out the heavy trombone airs, and Sousa would write around them. Have you heard a Sousa march that amounted to anything since they separated? I was up at Pryor’s country place last summer, and he has stacks of the same kind of music, music that sticks in your mind, full of melody, that is in the score of this new opera of ours.

“In all this talk of coming operas, I would like to say a word for ‘The Wizard of Oz.’ It never grows old. It is just as bright and fresh and popular to-day as it was at its first performance eight years ago. The ‘Wizard’ is an extraordinary thing. It is the only musical comedy that has lived for eight years. One reason is, it has an original idea. A manager will pay fifty times as much for an idea as he will for a whole written opera that is not original. And that is precisely the cause of the many failures we see on the boards to-day — they are imitations. The ‘Wizard’ makes good because it is good. It has the idea.

Georgina Caine as Dorothy Dare and chorus in “The Motor Girl” at the Lyric

Final scene in Act II in “The Motor Girl” at the Lyric

“It isn’t through opera, though, that I hope to live that I base any hopes I may have of having my name written in bronze. My important work I consider to be my fairy tales, not my plays. The ‘Wizard’ was written as a child’s book three years before it was put on as a play. My fairy stories are a radical departure from the old regulation fairy tale about princesses and princes, and so on. But there is not one transplanted idea either in the Oz

series or any of my fairy books. Of the twenty-two books of fairy tales I have written, five, counting the one I am working on now, are Oz books. That one which will soon be finished will be called 'The Road to Oz.' I will write one more next year, and that will close the series of the chronicles of Oz.

"The bulk of these books have been written right here in Coronado, and are so signed, so you see Coronado comes in for a little fame in connection with them. I have turned out more books at Coronado than any other writer. In fact, I am often called a California writer.

"My books have been translated into almost every language, including Japanese, and in my travels abroad I have found them cherished by children, from Egypt, in Nubia on the edge of darkest Africa, to the interior of the Philippines, and a friend said he saw one in a house at Hongkong, in China. The children are all friends of 'The Gingerbread Man,' 'John Dough,' 'The Hungry Tiger,' 'The Cowardly Lion,' 'Dorothy,' 'The Scare-crow,' 'Tiktok,' and the 'Mischievous Mifkets,' and all my queer people, and I am a friend of the children."

Interested as he is in his work, and heavy as are its demands on him, Mr. Baum does not allow it to interfere with his enjoyment of the California out-of-door life. Every morning and until half-past two in the afternoon he spends in his "workshop," and then he plays golf until half-past four.

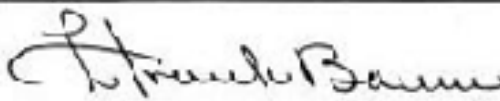
"My one recreation is golf, and conditions here are ideal for the game. Every afternoon sees me out on the Coronado links."

An article on Mr. Baum's work would be incomplete without mention of his pet enterprise, the Children's Theatre, the only playhouse of its kind in the world. The theatre is being built in New York, on West Fifty-seventh Street, near Carnegie Hall, and will probably be opened early in the coming season. It is for the production of fairy plays, suitable for children, and actively interested with Mr. Baum are Mrs. Carter Harrison, of Chicago, and a number of other prominent eastern society women.

D. E. Kessler.

Biographical account about Baum

From: *Los Angeles from the Mountains to the Sea*, *V.III*, by John Steven McGroarty. The American Historical Society, 1921



Although the career of a literary or professional man seldom exhibits any of those striking incidents that seize upon public feelings and fix attention upon himself, the late Lyman Frank Baum proved an exception to the rule. From maturity until his death his career was one of laborious yet enjoyable and contented literary effort, and the high distinction which he attained was evidence that he possessed genius of an extraordinary quality. There never

has been an author of juvenile stories who attained wider popularity among children or who found his way into the hearts and affections of readers of all ages, as did Mr. Baum. For, although his work was almost exclusively dedicated to children, there were many of more mature years among his readers who found keen enjoyment in his delightful whimsicalities, which enabled them to live over again their own happy childhood, while following the adventures of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" and his many mythical, amusing and entertaining associates.

L. Frank Baum was born at Chittenango, New York, May 15, 1856, a son of Benjamin Ward and Cynthia (Stanton) Baum. His father, one of the earliest oil men, owned rich possessions in the Pennsylvania fields, and both John D. Rockefeller and John Archbold were at one time in his employ. Mr. Baum received an academic education at Syracuse, New York, which was later supplemented by instruction from a private English tutor.

When the "Wizard of Oz Man" (as he was for many years affectionately called) was but twelve years of age, his father presented him with a printing press, upon which, for some time, he indulged his literary tendencies by publishing a paper known as "The Roselawn Home Journal," "Roselawn" being the name of his father's estate near Syracuse. His first public writings were in the line of newspaper work in New York, Pennsylvania and Chicago. From 1888 to 1890 he was owner and editor of the "Saturday Pioneer," at Aberdeen, South Dakota, and from 1897 to 1902 he owned and edited "The Show Window" at Chicago.

Mr. Baum became a playwright early in life, his "Maid of Arran" having been produced in New York in 1881. In the following year, in the same city, appeared "Matches," which was followed in 1884 by "Kilmorne," produced at Syracuse; in 1885 by "The Queen of Killarney," produced at Rochester; in 1902 by "The Wizard of Oz," produced in Chicago; in 1905 by "The Woggle Bug," produced in Chicago; in 1908 and 1909 by the "The Radio Play" (motion pictures of Baum's Fairy Tales), produced at Chicago and New York, and in 1913 by "The Tik Tok Man of Oz," produced in Los Angeles. ,

It was as a writer, however, more than as a playwright, that Mr. Baum is best known. For more than twenty years he wrote children's and other stories for various magazines, including St. Nicholas, Youth's Companion and others. The possessor of a rare whimsical style that was of preeminent appeal to children, during his life he took place in the front rank of writers of juvenile fiction. His first published book was "Mother Goose in Prose," which appeared in 1897, and the drawings for this story were the first book illustrations done by Maxfield Parrish. Its success encouraged Mr. Baum to further effort, and the next work to appear from his own pen was "By the

Candelabria's Glare," a book of poems. This work was compiled while the Baums were living in Chicago. He installed a small printing press in his home, upon which he printed the hook entirely without assistance, and each one of a coterie of intimate friends contributed to the manufacture of the book, donating paper, ink, book ends and even the thread used in binding. Later he wrote another decidedly entertaining volume, "Tamawaca Folks," woven around friends surrounding his family at a Michigan summer resort. This was followed by "Father Goose — His Book," and then by the most famous of all his works, "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz."

He married, in Fayettville, New York, November 9, 1882, Maud Gage, whose mother, Matilda Joslyn Gage, wrote considerable woman's suffrage literature and who was a co-worker with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in the editing of "The History of Woman's Suffrage." Four sons were born of this union: Frank Joslyn, who served in France as an officer of Heavy Artillery; Robert Stanton, an officer in the Engineer Corps; Harry Neal, a resident of Chicago, and Kenneth Gage of Los Angeles. It was while these sons were still lads that Mr. Baum conceived the idea which lead to the creation of the Oz characters. He had been in the habit of telling stories to his children and those of his neighbors, his favorite tales being fancifully woven around a wonderful cast-iron man, which later became the famous Tin Woodman of Oz. From this start the stories grew and developed, and Mr. Baum occasionally wove in a "scarecrow" or some other odd character as his prolific fancy dictated. These stories eventually came to the ears of his friends, who urged him to place them into connected form and publish them; and thus came into being the famous series of Oz stories.

"The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" took the country, as represented by its juvenile readers, literally by storm. It was followed in chronological order by "A New Wonderland," "The Songs of Father Goose," "The Army Alphabet," "The Navy Alphabet," "American Fairy Tales," "Dot and Tot of Merryland," "The Art of Decorating" (a technical work for window trimmers), "The Master Key," "The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus," "The Enchanted Island of Yew," "The Magical Monarch of MO," "The Marvelous Land of Oz," "The Woggle Bug book," "Queen Zixi of Ix," "Animal Fairy Tales," "John Dough and the Cherub," "Ozma of Oz," "Dorothy and the Wizard," "Baum's Fairy Tales," "The Road to Oz," "The Emerald City of Oz," "Baum's Juvenile Speaker," "The Sea Fairies," "The Daring Twins," "Phoebe Daring, Conspirator," "Sky Island,' "Little Wizard Series," "Patchwork Girl of Oz," "Baum's Snuggle Tales," "Tik Tok Man of Oz," "Scarecrow of Oz," "Rinkitink in Oz," "Babes in Birdland," "The Lost Princess of Oz," "The Tin Woodman of Oz" and "The Magic of Oz." Upon

his death Mr. Baum left some completed manuscripts which his publishers will announce as posthumous works for the future.

During his career Mr. Baum also wrote under several noms de plume, the "Mary Louise" books, and the "Flying Girl" and "Aunt Jane Nieces" series under the name of "Edith Van Dyne," the "Boy Fortune Hunters" series under the name of "Floyd Akers," the "Sam Steele" series under the name of "Captain Hugh Fitzgerald," the "Twinkle Tales" and the "Babes in Birdland" under the name of "Laura Bancroft," and various other books under the name of "Suzanne Metcalf" and "Schuyler Stanton." He left a book dedicated to each one of his children and grandchildren, while the most popular of all his works, the "Wonderful Wizard of Oz," is dedicated to his wife.

Having spent many winters in Southern California, about 1909, Mr. Baum decided to live here permanently and built a residence at 1749 Cherokee Avenue, Hollywood, where he made his home. "Ozcot" as it is known, is one of the attractive and unique dwellings in Hollywood, surrounded by a beautiful garden in which Mr. Baum delighted to work. He became known as the amateur king of chrysanthemums of Southern California, his dahlias and chrysanthemums in which he specialized, having taken over twenty silver cups at numerous flower shows. A well stocked aviary and fish pond, both of which Mr. Baum built, and a summer house in which many of the Oz books were written, are also in this enclosed garden.

While living at Macatawa, on Lake Michigan, he owned a summer home which he named the "Sign of the Goose." For this house he made all the furniture, the brads used in the manufacture thereof being in the form of brass geese. The border trimmings in the rooms were stenciled geese, and a large glass window portrayed an immense goose in colors.

Mr. Baum was a man who was conversant with many subjects, was appreciative of good music and had a highly developed artistic sense. In politics he never allowed himself to be bound by party ties, but gave his vote to the candidate whom he deemed best suited for the office.

His social connections included membership in the Los Angeles Athletic Club, and the Uplifters of Los Angeles, the Chicago Athletic Association and the Players Club of New York. After having suffered severely for fifteen months with a serious illness, Mr. Baum quietly passed to his final rest May 6, 1919.

Newspaper Interview, 1905

From: *The Syracuse Post Standard*, June 28, 1905

Love in Children for Fairy Tales Is Natural, Says L. Frank Baum

To a Milwaukee Sentinel reporter a few days ago L. Frank Baum, the brother of Dr. H. C. Baum of this city, talked interestingly about children's stories, The Sentinel says.

"L. Frank Baum of Chicago, author of the most fanciful and pleasing fairy tales for childhood since the days when Hans Christian Andersen used to charm readers, both young and old, with his great tales, is in Milwaukee on a business trip, and is registered at the Hotel Pfister. Mr. Baum talked interestingly yesterday about his work and the fascination that folk lore and fairy tales have always had for readers of every age and condition of life.

'The love for fairy tales seems to be a natural inheritance of childhood,' said Mr. Baum. 'The reason for this has been debated by students of psychology and teachers of the young with frequency, and the only plausible explanation they have been able to reach is that the mind of a child, which unfolds with great rapidity during the first few years of life, is conscious of so much of the happenings of the real world it can only wonder at, that any story not containing a great deal of exaggeration and wonderful happenings seems tame to them.

'In other words, children crave fairy characters and prefer their adventures to any other sort of a story.

'Childhood seems to be perennial in the human race. Although we adopt grave and sedate airs, we are all children at heart, with the same love for the miraculous and the wonderful as in the days when as tiny tots we listened in round-eyed amazement while mother or nurse read us of the adventures that Jack had with the beanstalk. For that reason adults read my books with the same interest that characterizes the most youthful readers.

'The recognized authors of fairy tales are few indeed. The Grimm brothers were simply collectors and compilers of tales and old folk lore. This is also true of Andrew Lang who has published so many entertaining books. These men have done work of inestimable value to the world in that they have preserved numerous legends which otherwise must have been lost or forgotten.

'Hans Christian Andersen was the first author to be recognized as a producer of fairy tales, and he became famous in consequence as there was considerable satisfaction in being able to trace a fairy tale to its legitimate source. After him came Lewis Carroll, the famed author of "Alice in Wonderland," who was the next author to create a distinct class in fairy

literature, and so the list really ends as far as the Old World is concerned.

'I think I was the first author of fairy tales in America to win recognition. My most famous book is the "Wonderful Wizard of Oz." The "Scare Crow," the "Tin Woodman" and the "Cowardly Lion" have all become famous in their way. All of my stories have some sort of a central figure, around which the somewhat gauzy plot is woven.'

"Mr. Baum has published no less than sixteen books of fairy tales."

Advertisement

Advertisement from: *The Publisher's Weekly*, June 23, 1900

GEORGE M. HILL COMPANY'S

Special Juvenile Publications.

FATHER GOOSE: HIS BOOK.

Rhymes by L. Frank Baum. Pictures by W. W. Denslow. The juvenile sensation of 1899.

The fastest selling children's book of recent years. Five editions — 15,000 each — in three months. Written for children, it makes "grown ups" laugh.

Size 11 ½ x9 ½ inches; 112 pages; printed in three colors; decorated board covers; fancy wrapper ; $1.25.

A NOVELTY.

THE SONGS OF FATHER GOOSE.

Rhymes by L. Frank Baum. Pictures by W. W. Denslow. Music by Alberta N. Hall.

This book contains twenty-six of the Father Goose rhymes set to delightful music, and accompanied by the appropriate pictures from the earlier publication. The music is inspiring, melodious, and written within the range of children's voices. Published June 9; first edition 5000 ; more than half sold in one week.

Uniform in size with "Father Goose." Bound in boards with cloth back; special cover and title-page designs by Denslow; fancy wrapper ; $1.00.

READY SEPTEMBER l.

THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ.

By L. Frank Baum. Illustrated by W. W. Denslow.

An original departure in children's literature. A "wonderbook" along new lines, containing characters never before conceived in a series of fascinating adventures. "The Wonderful Wizard" is in every way unique. The text is charming, and will prove highly entertaining to both young and old. Denslow's pictures surpass anything of the kind hitherto attempted. The text-illustrations – 150 – are printed in six different colors in accordance with a color-plan set forth in the story. There are twenty-four full-page pictures, inserts on enamelled paper, in eight colors. The cover, of specially made cloth, is elaborately stamped, and the edges are stained to harmonize with the binding.

Size 8 ¾ x 7 inches; 261 + 24 pages; $1.50

Already, more than 60 days in advance of publication, we have booked orders for over 5000 copies of "The Wonderful Wizard."

THE ARMY ALPHABET. THE NAVY ALPHABET.

Rhymes by L. Frank Baum. Illustrations by Harry Kennedy. Hand lettering by C. J. Costello.

These two books, to be published September 1st, will be exceedingly handsome and attractive. Of uniform size, 10 ½ x 12 ½ inches, printed in four colors on heavy paper and strongly bound in ornamental boards, they will appeal especially to youngsters. Mr. Baum's rhymes are up to the standard set by himself in "Father Goose." Mr. Kennedy's pictures are of the highest merit, being both spirited and full of fun, while correct in all details of military and naval uniforms, equipments, etc.

Price, $1.00 per volume.

The Origin of the Name ‘Oz’

From: *The Publisher’s Weekly,* April 18, 1903

NOTES ON AUTHORS.

L. Frank Baum, author of "The Wizard of Oz," thus explains how he found the title for his very popular book: "I have a little cabinet letter file on my desk that is just in front of me. I was thinking and wondering about a title for the story, and had settled on 'Wizard' as part of it. My gaze was caught by the gilt letters on the three drawers of the cabinet. The first was A-G; the next drawer was labelled H-N, and on the last were the letters O-Z. And 'Oz' it at once became." A new edition of "The Wizard of Oz" will shortly be issued by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Obituary

From: *Holly Leaves* V. VII No. 44 May 10, 1919

FRANK BAUM IS DEAD

Author of "Wizard of Oz" and Other Books and Plays Passes Away at Hollywood Home

The funeral of L. Frank Baum, famous author of books for children, was held Friday morning at 10:30 at the "Little Church of the Flowers" at Forest Lawn. Rev. E. P. Ryland of the Mt. Hollywood Congregational church officiated and the "Uplifters" quartet of the Los Angeles Athletic club, all warm personal friends of Mr. Baum, sang several selections. Many of the club and literary friends of the deceased were present.

Mr. Baum died Tuesday night at his home, 1749 Cherokee avenue, where he has lived for the last eight years, and where he has been bedridden for fifteen months with an affection of the heart. He leaves four sons, two of whom served in the United States Army during the war. Kenneth, the younger of the two, having received his discharge, was at his father's death bed, as was Robert, but Capt. Frank J. Baum of the Coast Artillery is still in France. The remaining son, Harry, is a resident of Chicago.

Mr. Baum leaves a book dedicated to every one of his children and grandchildren. The "Wizard of Oz," perhaps the most liked of all his juvenile stories, was dedicated to his wife. For more than twenty years he had written children's and other stories for various magazines, including Harper's, Youth's Companion and others, as well as plays.

He was born in Chittenango, N. Y., on May 15, 1856, and received an academic education at Syracuse. In 1882 he married Miss Maud Gage of Fayetteville, N.Y., at which time he had been engaged for two years in newspaper work. He edited the Dakota Pioneer, of Aberdeen, S. D., from 1888 to 1890 and the Show Window, Chicago, from 1897 to 1902.

His first book was "Mother Goose in Prose," which appeared in 1897. His other books, in chronological order, were: "By the Candelabra's Glare" (poems): "Father Goose — His Book," "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," "A New Wonderland." "The Songs of Father Goose," "The Army Alphabet." "The Navy Alphabet," "American Fairy Tales," "Dot and Tot of Merryland." "The Art of Decorating," "The Master Key," "The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus," "Enchanted Isle of Yew," "The Magical Monarch of Mo." "The Marvelous Land of Oz," "The Woggle-Bug Book," "Queen Zixi of Ix," 'Animal Fairy Tales," "John Dough and the Cherub," "Ozma of Oz," "Dorothy and the Wizard," "Baum's Fairy Tales," "The Road to Oz," "The Emerald City of Oz," "Baum's Juvenile Speaker," "The Sea Fairies," "The

Darling Twins," "Phoebe Daring," "Conspirator," "Sky Island," "Little Wizard Series," "Patchwork Girl of Oz," "Tik-Tok Man of Oz," "Scarecrow of Oz," "Rinkitink in Oz," "Babes in Birland," "The Lost Princess of Oz," "The Tin Woodman of Oz."

His plays included "The Maid of Arran," produced in New York in 1881; "'Matches," produced in New York in 1882; "Kilmore," produced in Syracuse in 1884; "The Queen of Killarney," produced in Rochester in 1885; "The Wizard of Oz," a musical extravaganza, produced in Chicago in 1902; "The Woggle-Bug," produced in Chicago in 1905; "The Radio-Play" (motion pictures of "Baum's Fairy Tales"), produced in Chicago and New York in 1908 and 1909; "Tik-Tok Man of Oz," produced in Los Angeles in 1913.

Mr. Baum was a member of the Los Angeles Athletic club, the Chicago Athletic club and the Lambs club of New York, and was greatly beloved by a large circle of friends.

The Biography

Maud on her wedding day, 1882

IN OTHER LANDS THAN OURS by Maud Gage-Baum

A SERIES OF LETTERS FROM ABROAD

Edited by L. Frank Baum

The famous author's wife, Maud Gage Baum (1861-1953), was the daughter of the suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage. She was a headstrong and dependable young lady, who lived in Fayetteville, New York, with her aging parents until she married Baum in 1882, sacrificing her college education at Cornell University. At the beginning of their marriage, she accompanied her husband's acting troupe throughout the United States. After she became pregnant, Maud and Frank settled down in a rented house, where she gave birth to Frank Joslyn in 1883. Due to complications with the birth of her second son Robert Stanton, Maud suffered from peritonitis. Unwell for two years, she recovered following a visit to her mother and siblings.

Described by her children as a no-nonsense mother, Maud took charge of the family finances and the disciplining of her children. Following the success of the picture book *Father Goose: His Book*, the family enjoyed financial security for the first time. They began spending their summers at a cottage in Macatawa Park, Michigan. In November of that year, Frank transferred to Maud the literary rights of his most recent books, including *Father Goose* and *From Kansas to Fairyland* (destined to be called *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*).

Due to Frank's literary success and profitable royalties from the 1902 musical *Wizard of Oz*, Maud and Frank were financially secure enough to tour Egypt, Greece, Italy, North Africa, Switzerland and France for six months. Maud was fascinated by Egypt, where she explored a harem and enthusiastically climbed the Great Pyramid of Giza. As Frank was frequently occupied with writing stories for his publishers, Maud was left to write the numerous letters home. These letters were published a year later under the title *In Other Lands Than Ours*. Released in a modest quantity, the book was originally intended for friends and family, revealing an intimate portrayal of the couple's extraordinary adventures.

Maud Gage, 1880

Maud Gage Baum and her four sons, Robert, Harry, Kenneth and Frank, 1900

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L. Frank and Maud Gage Baum in Egypt, 1906

A NOTE BY THE EDITOR

Here is no book of travel to be studied critically by the blasé globe-trotter, but a simple record of a first trip abroad, wherein the sights and scenes are described for the benefit of personal friends who were involuntary stay-at-homes.

While we were away my dear wife deemed it a duty as well as a pleasure to write home a series of "general letters" which were passed from one to another of the family circle and read with interest. They have all clamored for copies of some of the letters, which no individual could claim to own; so I decided to have them privately printed, that all members of the family might have a copy "for keeps."

My lady has asked me to "edit" her letters, since I have had more experience in writing for publication; but on looking over her simple, straightforward and expressive language I find little chance to improve it. In her enthusiasm she sometimes got a sentence a bit involved, and in a few instances I have straightened out these places; but practically the entire story remains as it should remain — in her own words.

Her observation of details is to me remarkable, and her artistic instinct rings positive and true. No bit of natural beauty escaped her eager eyes, and much that I had myself forgotten or overlooked comes back to me as I read her letters.

Others have perhaps written of these things and places in a more scholarly way, but her vivid descriptions of what her own eyes beheld will, I am sure, be treasured by those near and dear friends who love her and rejoice that she had such opportunity to witness these old world scenes, which so evidently delighted her generous and appreciative heart.

L. FRANK BAUM

LETTER I. OUTWARD BOUND — THE AZORES

On Board the "Princess Irene."

We delayed our sailing a little to take passage on the steamer "Princess Irene," of the North German Lloyd Line, because Dr. Harry Baum had praised it so much that we were anxious to test his judgment. So far his judgment is all right. This being our first trip we know nothing about ocean steamers, but this trim craft of some ten thousand tons ought to get us across very comfortably and safely. We have one of the two best staterooms on the ship and seats at a small table in the dining hall.

Mr. Ellsworth, of the "Century Company," Dr. Harry and Rob saw us off at the pier, and instead of watching the harbor we went into the writing room as soon as we lost sight of our friends and wrote hasty letters to the folks to be sent back by the pilot. By the time we had finished them and lunched, the shore line was a hazy mist and we realized that our voyage had really begun.

This is our sixth day at sea, and notwithstanding the fact that we have had stormy weather and high seas neither L. F. nor I have been sea-sick. It was sunny and pleasant when we left New York, but we ran into NorthEast gales and big waves immediately. Sunday was our worst day. Today the sun shines for the first time, but the ocean is still rough — and very beautiful. A large share of the passengers have been ill, and many still have their meals served on deck; so I congratulate myself upon having taken every meal in the dining room and enjoyed them all, too.

"Life on the ocean wave" is a very lazy existence. A bugle blows at eight to waken us. It gives us half an hour to prepare for breakfast, but generally we don't get up until the second bugle, which announces breakfast at nine. After eating we go on deck to walk, read or doze, as the mood strikes us. At ten o'clock there is a band concert; at eleven we are served bouillon, crackers, cheese and tongue sandwiches; at one o'clock luncheon is ready, and strange as it may seem we are ready for it. Again we lounge around, reading, writing or chatting with fellow passengers, until afternoon tea overtakes us at four thirty. Then we dress leisurely for a ten or twelve course dinner at seven o'clock, which we devour eagerly because we feel we are nearly famished. Afterward they serve us coffee in the smoking-room, a pleasant place where many of the ladies go with their husbands or escorts to play cards until bed-time.

That is the way one day follows another. The salt breeze makes us lazy and hungry, and no one is ashamed because we are all in the same boat, so to speak.

We are due at the Azores tomorrow, but the "Irene" doesn't stop there.

Owing to persistent “head winds” we are behind time, and if we are unable to make it up, we shall only stop at Gibraltar long enough to deliver mail. Otherwise we are scheduled to stay there four or five hours, which would give everyone a chance to go ashore.

The voyage has rested me and so restored my strength that I am feeling quite myself again. L. F. is thoroughly enjoying himself. We are due to reach Naples February 8th, and leave on the ninth for Alexandria on another boat of the same line. It is a three days’ trip across the end of the Mediterranean, after which we take rail from Alexandria to Cairo. I shall not write again until we get there, but will probably add to this letter from time to time.

Just now we are fourteen hours late, and the head winds still continue; so we do not yet know whether we shall stop at Gibraltar or not.

We have now been more than a week on the ocean, and it will be a week longer before we set eyes on Cairo. If we are on time we may stop a day in Naples, but it now looks as though we would just be able to catch our boat there.

Yesterday we sailed past the Azores, to the enjoyment of every one on board. Part of the time we were so near the land that we were able to see the people distinctly.

I have learned some very interesting things about these islands, which may entertain you as much as they did me. They have a total population of 259,790. San Miguel is the largest island, but we did not get very near to that one. First we passed Fayal, its principal town being Hutre, which showed plainly, lying as it does close to the shore. Most of the houses are white, with square windows — such as the children draw. Every inch of ground is cultivated, even to the tops of the mountains. The farms are divided into small patches surrounded by hedges, and from the boat the effect is unique. The tiny squares reminded me of a crazy-quilt — all in browns and greens — but it seemed very Picturesque and beautiful, and restful to the eyes after so many days of “watery landscape.”

The Azores are doubtless of volcanic origin, and the craters must have been active up to a comparatively recent date. There are also evidences of the Glacial Epoch in their wonderful rocks. Near Fayal, for example, was a most peculiar rock — an immense round grey mass with a hollow or dent in the top which must have been at one time a crater. It was separate from the island and stood alone in the water. L. F. took some snap shots of the islands, which I hope will prove good.

We passed quite near to the island of Pico, which has the highest mountain in all the group. The clouds rested upon its top while the slanting sun brightened the white houses scattered upon its slopes. Another island we

saw plainly was San Jorge, and here the mail was thrown overboard, after being placed in a tin box tightly enclosed in a wooden one to allow it to float. A boat is supposed to put out from San Jorge and pick up this odd mail box; but sometimes the boat fails to find it. On account of the postal service being so uncertain at this point we merely entrusted it with some postals for the boys.

The climate of the Azores is delightful; the air is clear and brisk and the soil very fertile. Both European and tropical fruits flourish there, and the oranges of San Miguel are considered the finest in all the world. Grain is harvested twice a year, in May and October. We found the fields already a beautiful green, and the islands were certainly very charming to the view. They seem to fit our dreamy mood, and we would like to land and wander for a few days amid the hedge-rows and fields, and forget the busy world we have just left and the famous one for which we are bound.

LETTER II. GIBRALTAR

L. F. and I, half reclining in our comfortable deck chairs, are sailing on the bosom of the Mediterranean, with the band playing gaily and the bright sunshine all around us. But my thoughts are flown to all the dear ones at home, and especially to my boys, from whom it will be some time before I can hear. I find myself wondering what you are all doing, and it seems strange that I should be so far away and removed from the life with which we are all so familiar.

We should have been in Naples this morning, but are over twenty-four hours late; so when we reach there we will not land at all, but get aboard a lighter and be transferred with our baggage to the "Hohenzollern," which is the steamer that will carry us to Alexandria. It will be waiting, and at once start on the three or four days' trip across the stormiest end of the Mediterranean. We shall not stop at Alexandria now, but board a train for a few hours' run to Cairo.

Monday night we left the Atlantic and entered the Straits of Gibraltar. We are glad we arrived there at night, for it was a pretty sight to watch the two or three lighthouses on either side of us — Spain on the left and Africa with its mountains on the right. A full moon was over us, and the effect was beautiful.

We reached Gibraltar at midnight, and anchored until morning. We were up early, you may be sure, and saw the sun rise on the great Rock. It was an imposing sight, for then the Rock of Gibraltar impresses you with its majesty and vastness. I do not wonder the ancients thought it was the end of the world.

A lighter left our steamer at eight o'clock and took nearly every passenger over to "Gib." L. F. and I were the first to enter the town. It was our first step upon the soil of the old world. We found the place very quaint and "foreign" in appearance. The streets were wonderfully narrow. One little girl told her father the streets were "thin," which expressed it very neatly, I think. Two of the funny little carts they have there can barely pass each other. We walked through the town, stopped at the post-office and shopped a little. Then we took a carriage and drove all over the town. The carriage was yellow and had two seats with a queer hood over them. It is so low and open that one can easily step out upon the pavement. In front is the driver's seat, and our jehu was a very accommodating Englishman who pointed out everything of interest and explained it to us. We drove an hour and a half for one dollar. We were allowed to enter only a bit of the fortress and were forbidden to take pictures of it or any part of the fortifications. The Rock is pierced from

top to bottom on all sides, and a gun placed in each opening. It does not seem to me that it could possibly be taken by an enemy, and while England holds it, it holds the key to the Mediterranean. Inside the rock are tunnels so that the soldiers can pass from one part of it to another without showing themselves.

During our drive we came to Europa Point, from which we could see Gibraltar and Spain, Algecirus, where the Peace Conference was held, the blue and hazy Atlas Mountains of Africa, the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean and, in the distance, the sweep of the broad Atlantic. The sight was beautiful beyond description, and more varied than it is often the privilege of humans to witness.

In the town were soldiers everywhere, mostly wearing red coats although some were clothed in khaki. Whichever way we turned were barracks, guns, ammunition and such things as pertain to war. Among the curiosities were a thousand-pound gun and the largest dry-docks in the world. In the bay lay the English squadron and many foreign men-of-war, one floating the Stars and Stripes and looking very homelike. Besides these the water was sprinkled with a collection of curious craft such as we never dream of at home.

While I write this some one says: "Land in sight!" so I must get up a moment to investigate. I find we are nearing the Island of Sardinia.

Returning to the subject of Gibraltar, I want to tell you how funny the street scenes are. Every step you meet one of the wee, solemn donkeys bearing immense baskets slung on each side of him, which are filled with coal, vegetables, and even milk cans. Then you bump into a drove of goats, standing idly while one of them is being milked to supply some customer. Flower women are numerous, and men with baskets of cakes, while peddlers of every sort are in evidence. The "shops" (English, you know,) are small and mostly kept by Moors and Spaniards. We visited the markets in the lower end of town. On one side the street are the English/Spanish markets, where are sold flowers, fruits, vegetables, dried dates and meats. The purchasers are mostly women and carry their goods home in quaint open-work baskets. I bought one of these baskets, filled with fine oranges and tangerines. Across the street is the Moorish market, where are sold eggs, birds and poultry (mostly alive), and baskets and mats. The market men here are Moors, and all over the town these queer people may be seen. They appear just as the pictures of them we have seen led us to imagine they would. They are barelegged, ragged, and dirty beyond comprehension, but the meanest wear red leather slippers and voluminous robes with hoods. The Moors come across the bay in swarms every day, and many remain and sleep upon the streets at night. Africa is only a step distant. After we left Gibraltar

we had the coast line of Africa, with its glorious Atlas Mountains — snow-capped but with many shifting hues outlining their rugged slopes — in full view all the afternoon. Where the sun touched the snow it lent it lovely pink and red hues that were as beautiful as they were gorgeous.

Tonight is the night of the "Captain's Dinner," a formal ceremony that occurs near the end of every trip. The dining-room is being elaborately trimmed and the waiters will wear fancy costumes. I will write you about this event later on. Just now we are all eagerness to see the Bay of Naples, which we should enter early tomorrow morning. It is needless to say that I shall be up in time to catch the first glimpse of what I am told is one of the most beautiful bays in the world.

By the way, I forgot to tell you of the Moorish Castle at Gibraltar. It has been there since the Moors conquered Spain, and it looks it. It stands on a high bluff overlooking the sea, and its sides resemble a checkerboard. Some one says Gibraltar is peeling; but we didn't notice it. Anyhow, there's a good deal of peel left yet. It seems as solid as the Rock of Ages.

This letter may ramble some, but I can't get my subjects to stand in a straight line, so I can introduce them one at a time. They've broken ranks, and I have to grab them as I come to them.

LETTER III. FROM ITALY TO EGYPT

Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo

In my last letter I promised to tell you about the Captain's Dinner, which is always given the last night aboard an ocean liner. The dining-room was beautifully decorated with Italian, German and American flags, with shields of the different countries between them. The dome in the center was festooned with greens and the pillars covered with bunting. On the three long tables were three tall lighthouses, one with a white light and the other two with red lights. On the small tables were wonderful concoctions of cake surmounted by the Goddess of Liberty, mermaids, fish, and so forth. They were also trimmed with small paper flags of all nations, as well as with those bonbons that snap and have caps in them. We were served an extra good dinner and had extra music. Just before dessert all the lights were turned off and the lighthouses were lighted up. Then the waiters appeared marching in single file with illuminated ice creams. First came some carrying Jap lanterns and banners, then the platter-bearers with round moulds of colored ices — green, white, pink and blue. The effect was obtained by freezing ice in the shape of an inverted bowl, coloring it before freezing, of course, and in the hollow placing a lighted candle. The frozen creams were arranged around this illuminated center, and were figures of Japs holding parasols, fans, etcetera. As the room was all in darkness save for these brilliant desserts, they made a pretty sight. The crowd was a jolly one, and we all opened our bonbons and wore the paper caps, as children do at a party.

Well, next morning we entered Naples. The bay is no doubt beautiful, but it was foggy, so at this time we could not get a proper idea of it. The top of Vesuvius was enveloped in clouds. While we lay at quarantine many natives came around the steamer in small boats, calling the names of friends they hoped would be in the steerage. Other boatmen offered violets to the first-class passengers by fastening bunches of the flowers to long poles and reaching these up to the deck so that you could take your choice of them. Attached to the pole was a small basket in which you could place your money. No one was allowed on board until the quarantine inspectors had been through the ship and given us a clean bill of health. When this ceremony was over, though, it seemed as if bedlam had been let loose, for everyone was rushing here and there after baggage and trying to get a boat to go ashore. We were soon transferred from the "Irene" to the "Hohenzollern," without getting a chance to put our feet on the shores of Italy. Once in our new quarters we clung to the deck to watch the sights, for this steamer was also surrounded by native boats. Baskets of oranges "velly cheap" were

offered by some, while from others expert divers leaped into the water to grasp a coin in their mouths tossed overboard by some passenger on our deck. Groups of musicians filled some of the boats, playing mandolins and violins and singing the Neapolitan songs. Fortunately, just before we sailed the sun came out and gave us a chance to see how really beautiful the Bay of Naples is.

We sailed at 12:30 and began a very stormy and rough trip to Alexandria. I had never dreamed any boat could roll so, but neither of us was sick. All the way over we had racks on the tables and lifelines on the decks. It was a frightful voyage, and in no way enjoyable.

Leaving the Bay of Naples we passed Capri, the beautiful island most famous as the residence of Tiberius. We could see his ancient castle and the rocky cliffs over which he tossed his prisoners — a little diversion to cheer him up on a gloomy day. These rocks look much more imposing than Gibraltar. We expect to visit Capri on our way back from Egypt.

Friday morning we reached historic Alexandria, and the first thing I saw in the famous city of Alexander, Antony and Cleopatra was a Standard Oil tank. My next vision was a line of automobiles on the quay, and these things were as disappointing as they were unexpected. I'd forgotten that if you visit Alexandria today you find the Alexandria of our civilization, and not the one we have read about. However, the scene on the quay was very gay, with Turks in their red fezes, the Arabs in their burnous, soldiers, sailors and citizens of all nations. We were promptly transferred by "Cook" from the boat to the train, so we could see nothing of the city; but that, too, is a sight reserved for the return trip. The railway journey to Cairo was intensely interesting, each station at which we stopped teeming with native life. The Egyptians wear a variety of colors, but principally favor the different shades of blue. The women, though, are clad all in black; only the men are gorgeous. We passed many camels with their riders and burdens — the packs being immense in every case. Even the small donkeys were heavily loaded. All the villages and towns seemed made of mud, and had queerly shaped domes for roofs, the houses being round. In each town is a mosque of more or less imposing construction. The land is well irrigated and the crops appeared to be in a flourishing condition. Just now the Nile is gradually falling in volume, and the rule is to plant crops as soon as the water begins to recede. The stock consists of small brown sheep, buffalo-cows, camels, oxen and donkeys. I saw but one or two horses. In this part of the Delta the irrigation is obtained by means of water-wheels, which are turned by buffalo-cows which have been blindfolded, or by children. We crossed several branches of the Nile, passed through one city which was called Horus in ancient times, and

many villages that looked like they had escaped the flood. Near Horus was found the Rosetta Stone, which has enabled Egyptologists to decipher the hieroglyphics.

Arriving at Cairo we were dumped into a station filled with howling, shrieking maniacs. There were hundreds of Turks, Arabs and Fellahin Egyptians, all wearing red fezes and gowns of every color (dirt-color predominating) who grabbed every one at our luggage and yelled their foreign lingo at the top of their voices. At first I thought it was a free fight, and indeed it was wildly exciting for a while. But we were finally captured by two robbers who claimed to be a dragoman and a porter and driven in high style to our hotel. All three of our hirelings — driver, dragoman and porter — hustled us and our hand luggage into the hotel lobby, and then L. F. prepared to separate himself from his hard-earned savings. The bill was five piasters, or twenty-five cents.

Perhaps Shepherd's is the most famous hotel in all the world. Although the most ancient one in Egypt, it is now quite modernized, and has been decorated in royal Egyptian style, which seems appropriate and enticing. We secured a nice room and busied ourselves getting unpacked and settled. In the evening we rushed to the dining-room, where I could easily imagine myself on the stage of a comic opera. The chairs are high-backed and upholstered all in red morocco leather. The waiters are Turks and Arabs. They wear white, baggy trousers, scarlet embroidered jackets and red fezes. I haven't seen a native yet without his red fez. Perhaps he sleeps in it. The head waiters, or "directors" wear elaborate braided and embroidered costumes that are wonderful and awe-inspiring. And the guests have brought along their gladdest rags to show off in, so that the scene is fairly entitled to be called magnificent. A Hungarian Gypsy Band of sixty pieces, all in red and gold, was perched in a bower of ferns and saluted our entrance with selections from the *Wizard of Oz*. It was a decidedly novel experience, as you can imagine; but I thoroughly enjoyed it all.

After dinner we wandered into the streets and had coffee at a native restaurant, sitting at a little table on the sidewalk. We enjoyed that, too, for the street scenes are bewildering to plain American folks. Such color and such life! The people here — or many of them, anyway — eat, sleep and live in the streets, and here is peddled everything imaginable, from cake to cloth-of-gold. The minute a stranger steps out a dozen vendors are after him. There are the water-carriers with their queer-shaped jars, flower boys, men with souvenir postals, flywhips, strawberries and rolls of oilcloth. No women or girls sell goods. The females are all veiled, perhaps to hide their ugliness.

Before the carriages of the wealthy, men run to whip the horses and clear

the way. Men of all ranks wear gowns — and these remind me of night-gowns more than anything else.

Cairo is the City of the Pyramids, and I forgot to mention that nine miles before we reached Cairo I could see the Libyan hills and the group of pyramids, in the distance. As yet we have not seen them much nearer. This morning we roamed around the streets, and this afternoon we visited the Museum, where we saw many of the wonderful works of this most ancient people. The carving on some of these monuments is wonderful, and those of red granite are exquisite in coloring and massive beyond compare. We think the work of the earlier dynasties better than the work of later ones, and especially is the proportion of the statuary better. There was an especially fine work from the period of the Third Dynasty, a group consisting of Prince Rahotep and his wife Nefert. Their features are colored to represent life, and the coloring is now as fresh as if it had been done yesterday. The eyes are made of white quartz, with dark pupils and colored iris, giving them depth and expression very lifelike. These quartz eyes are to be found in many of the earlier statues. The bodies of the Prince and his wife were a light copper color, giving us a clue to their complexions.

We saw the mummy of the Second Ramses, who is called "the Great." His hair is bright red, he had high cheek bones, and a nose that is shaped like a Jew's. To think that he should be here to be stared at by the public — he who had such a magnificent career and considered himself equal to a god! And the man himself seems so puny when compared to the mighty works that live after him and arouse our admiration to this day. His mummy case is beautifully decorated, inside and out, and he stares back at us, haughty and indifferent.

This is a great museum, and has many treasures of rare antiquity. We saw plans of ancient reservoirs, many statues in copper, beautifully executed, others in wood most skillfully carved, and numberless granite sphinxes. The wood statues are in a good state of preservation, and one of them has jointed limbs, like a modern doll. The steles, or stellae, used as doors before tombs, are interesting. They bear inscriptions relating the deeds and works which the occupants of the tombs accomplished in life. Alabaster sarcophagi are plentiful, and there are sacrificial tables and statutes of the same precious stone. Tablets bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions make one long to be able to read them. On one is depicted the wars of an unknown king, and finally his leave-taking of all the good things he has gained on earth to begin his journey to the Unknown World. This inscription is carved and colored, and still very fresh and bright.

But we have been only one day in Cairo, as yet. If the place proves as

interesting as it promises, there will be much more to tell you later.

LETTER IV. CAIRO

Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo

Wednesday we hired a guide — one of the native Egyptians whose blood is still pure and not contaminated by Arabic or Turkish infusions — and proceeded to "see Cairo" in a methodical fashion. The guide is a "dragoman" in Egypt, you know, and a person of much dignity and importance. He takes you wholly in charge, hires your carriages, pays your admittance fees to all the mosques and other places, plans your program in his own way, takes a paternal care of you wherever you may be, and each evening settles with you for the day's expenses. He speaks good English and is chock full of information concerning everything that has happened or existed for the last six thousand years. You sometimes suspect he is not quite accurate, but it will require a lot of study to prove it. If your dragoman differs from the guide books or the historians and Egyptologists, you will find it most comfortable to decide that they are all wrong and he is right. As a matter of fact, his information is usually reliable and of vast assistance to the uninformed tourist.

On this Wednesday we saw most of the famous mosques of Cairo. That of Sultan Hassan was built in 1356 of huge blocks of stone taken from the pyramids. In the center of the court is a fountain, such as all mosques have, where the devotees wash their feet, hands and faces before they venture to pray. The Mohammedan must be clean before he addresses God or the Prophet. In a corner of the courtyard stands the tomb of Hassan. Napoleon's army partially destroyed this mosque, one of the most important in Cairo; but just now it is being restored. A more magnificent and stately edifice is the mosque of Mohammed Ali, known as "the alabaster mosque," because it is built throughout of that rare material. It took about all the alabaster there is in Egypt, and an attendant holds a candle behind a four-foot wall and lets you see that the stone is clear and transparent. Indeed, this mosque is very beautiful and impressive. It is in perfect condition and in daily use. The fountain of the court is also alabaster, and resembles in shape an octagonal summer house. On each of the sides is a place for the votary to perform his ablutions. When he raises a bronze ring, that reminds one of an old-fashioned knocker, the water issues forth in a stream. All mosques contain pulpits placed high above the heads of the people and reached by an ornamental flight of steps. Here the priest stands to read the Koran every Friday. Each mosque also provides a handsome chair for the use of the Sultan or the Khedive. There are no other chairs. The men kneel on the stone floor, facing the east (where Mecca lies) and the women are huddled into the galleries.

There is always an arched altar, built of ornamental colored stones, where the Sultan is supposed to kneel to offer up his prayers.

The mosque of Mohammed Ali is lighted by hundreds of glass lamps suspended by means of chains from the high-domed ceiling. The lamp itself is shaped like a fish-globe and filled with water and oil. The oil rises to the top and a wick floats upon it. These lamps are lighted but once every year. There are many elaborate stained glass windows, in which green, the holy color, predominates. Handsome and almost priceless rugs cover the floor, and the Christian dogs are only allowed to enter a mosque after covering their feet with consecrated slippers provided for that purpose and paying a fee to assist in the support of the faithful.

Cairo is full of mosques, all similar in construction, and the above general remarks apply to all alike. But each mosque of course has its peculiarities and its history. That of the Sultan Hassan boasts magnificent doors of bronze, gold and silver, most beautifully and skillfully worked. There is also a vast deal of carved inlaid work of ebony, ivory, mother of pearl and silver in every mosque that claims the least importance. In a tower of the mosque of Mohammed Ali is a clock presented to the great Sultan by King Louis Philippe of France.

The mosque of Tulan is the oldest in Cairo. It is said to have been built on the spot where the ark rested, and where Abraham offered to God the ram in sacrifice instead of his son. Around the minaret is a spiral staircase of ancient and unusual design, and this I ascended to get a view that is considered the finest in the city. The wooden pulpit of the Tulan mosque dates from the Thirteenth Century, and is famous for its wonderful carvings. Around the top is a frieze of carved wood, exhibiting an old Arabic inscription. This wood was taken from the ark itself, it is said, and has been preserved from the time of Noah.

We visited one beautiful mosque that had originally been built for the private use of a sultan, but now is devoted to the public. The columns were all of red granite and the decorations were in ebony, ivory, gold, turquoise and other precious stones, quantities of mother-of-pearl being inlaid in the woods. The walls were largely of black and white marble, and granite blocks of red, grey, white and black. The effect of such combinations can be nothing less than gorgeous.

Mohammed Ali was the founder of the present Khedivial family, and his name is greatly revered throughout Egypt. Connected with his mosque is the Citadel, which was constructed of stones taken from the Gizeh pyramids. It is situated on an elevation and commands a view of the entire city. Wherever you may be in Cairo you can see the Citadel and the spires of the Alabaster

Mosque. It was in this citadel that the Mamelukes were murdered by order of Mohammed Ali in 1811. Three hundred and sixty perished, and the legends relate that but one escaped. He leaped his horse over a parapet seventy-five feet above the pavement below, and although the horse was crushed the Mameluke escaped and fled into Upper Egypt, where his daring courage availed him nothing, for he was captured and killed.

The Khedivial Library is one of the most interesting sights in the city. It contains the oldest manuscript copies of the Koran in existence, and all that could be collected in the East since printing came into fashion. Huge parchment tomes are some of these works, so exquisitely illumined that we wonder at the dexterity of the ancient penmen. The first book cover — hand-worked, of course — that is known to have been made is in this famous collection, and the volumes range from the great unwieldy parchments down to the tiniest manuscript books. In one manuscript, containing the Koran complete, is an inscription stating that one person worked steadily for thirty years in preparing it. Most of the collection dates from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, and the library is generally acknowledged to possess the finest existing specimens of Arabian art. The colors employed in the initials and decoration of the pages are pigments procured by crushing precious stones to a powder. Rubies, emeralds and turquoise are generally used, and the colors are today as brilliant as those of the gems themselves. Quantities of the purest gold, hammered into thin sheets, was also used, and does not seem to tarnish with time.

One of our experiences in Cairo was visiting a native theatre in company with some friends we had made who were stopping at our hotel. The American women were the only females in the audience, and we sat at tables and drank coffee during the performance, while the men smoked. To the throng of natives surrounding us we were naturally the center of attraction, and divided such honors with the "ladies" on the stage.

The stage was a barren looking place, the back and sides occupied by a line of men musicians who produced unearthly, discordant sounds that would put to shame the drone of a cracked bagpipe. The performers were women who sang and danced, but their performances were not as interesting as their appearance. For here we saw the Turkish and Arabian girls without their veils, and they were gorgeously dressed in velvets, satins and silks of vivid hues. Golden bangles were in their hair, which was plaited into many small braids. The natives applauded them by uttering long drawn "Ah-h-h-h's" instead of clapping their hands.

One evening our dragoman secured us an invitation to a high-class Egyptian wedding. It was the third day of the ceremony, so we wore our very

best clothes and carried elaborate bouquets to present to the bride. In our party were two ladies from Pittsburg besides L. F. and myself. The streets leading to the place were all elaborately decorated. When our carriage drew up before the great canvas pavilion that had been erected next to the house of the bride's father, a brass band saluted us with an American air. We found inside the pavilion rows of men seated in easy chairs and smoking or drinking Turkish coffee. All were very grave and sedate and conversed only in low tones. Dozens of cut-glass chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling, while marvelous rugs covered the ground. L. F. was given a seat beside the famous Araby Pasha, who was the leader of the great rebellion against the English, and had just been allowed to return from exile. The bridegroom and his brother, who had welcomed us elaborately, now escorted us three ladies to the house, where we were placed in charge of the eunuchs and taken to the harem to be introduced to the bride. The lady was sixteen years of age and dressed much as an American girl would have been, in white satin and a bridal veil. Her prospective husband has not yet seen her, and she is to be "Wife Number Two."

This was the harem of the bride's father, and we saw all the inmates, as well as all the visiting ladies who were attending the wedding ceremonies. Some were very magnificently clothed and wore splendid diamonds of enormous size, as well as a profusion of other jewelry. The rooms of the harem were furnished luxuriously with handsome embroidered draperies and gift furniture. The bride displayed many fine presents of gold and silver and jewels. She was gracious to us, but could speak no English. To amuse her guests were troops of dancing and singing girls, jugglers, snake charmers, etcetera. Every second minute Turkish coffee in dainty cups was offered us, and cigarettes, which to their surprise, we didn't indulge in. After an hour or so we returned to the pavilion where the men were gathered, and heard Arabian songs and music. A special dinner had been prepared for us, and besides our party were three Arabian gentlemen of position who could speak a very little English and French. We were ushered into a small room of the palace and served at a round table, in true Arabian style. Excepting the soup, all of the elaborate courses were eaten with our fingers, there being no knives or forks. A big platter was placed in the center of the table and we grabbed the food with our fists. There was a waiter for each guest, however, and the dishes were of gold and silver, finely worked. Afterward these slaves poured water over our hands from silver jugs, the drops falling into an enormous silver basin set upon a pedestal, around which we all thronged. Then we wiped our hands upon our napkins and separated — the men to the pavilion, the women to the harem again. We found the women eating there, too, but

not so elaborately as we had done. Black slaves waited on them, and big eunuchs ordered the native women around in rough voices. One of the bejeweled haremites, for some slight misdemeanor, received a severe blow or cuff on the side of her head that nearly knocked her over. Neither she nor anyone else resented it. I was glad when L. F., having had enough of the entertainment, sent for us to go home.

We have visited the Island of Rhoda, where Pharaoh's daughter found Moses in the bulrushes. The imperial harem is still standing, but is deserted. On this island is the Nileometer, by means of which the overflow of the Nile, or rather the height to which it rises, has been measured and recorded since A.D. 617. The "well of the Nileometer" has been constantly repaired, but the carven marble pillar is the same that was originally placed there.

In Old Cairo is the first Coptic or Christian church in Egypt. In was erected over the spot where Joseph and Mary, with the Christ child, were supposed to have rested during the flight into Egypt to escape Herod's edict. We were even shown the identical stones upon which the wanderers sat, and the stone couch where Joseph slept. In this ancient church — which you enter through an old Roman gateway, heavily studded with brass and iron — are many paintings of great antiquity and many rare carvings, collected during nine-hundred and fifty years of constant use. Among other things are three queer pulpits, one carved to represent Christ, and the others on either side of it the two thieves, crucified with him.

We have seen the ancient Roman wall that formerly encircled Babylon, with its inner and outer gates, and visited the tombs of the Mamelukes and of the former Sultan and the Khedives. The tombs last mentioned are splendid with gold work, precious stones and rare woods. One of their characteristics is that above the tombs of the rulers are carved marble fezes, while above the tombs of the royal women are carven crowns with long braids of hair hanging down from them. These emblems are covered with gold leaf except in the cases of those men who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, when the fezes or turbans were colored green.

When tired with regular "sight seeing" we have spent quite a little time among the native bazaars — principally those situated in the famous Mouski. The shops are all small, and at every one they entreat you to buy. It is not considered good form to pay what is asked; you are expected always to haggle and bargain, and in the end get the article for about half what is first demanded. The Egyptian merchant would be more grieved if you refused to "bargain" than if you refused to buy. To pay his price deprives him of half the pleasure of doing business. The bazaars are really fascinating, and we see many curious things there and buy many that we do not care for and can

never use.

Saturday we devoted to another visit to the Museum. One department is devoted to exquisite specimens of papyrus, the writing on which is painted and finely embellished. The papyrus is so jealously guarded that it is kept covered with heavy cloths, which are removed by attendants long enough for the visitor to examine the writing and then recovered. This method prevents the colors from fading and also renders theft impossible.

From the tombs discovered and opened have been taken and brought to the museum many ancient articles of household use, such as kitchen utensils, beds, chairs and stools, baskets, water bottles, rings, funeral statues, small but exquisitely carved figures and busts, mirrors of copper and gold; bronze images of the gods; scarabs formed of precious stones, and even chariots and harness for the war horses. These are from different periods or dynasties and depict the progress of Egyptian civilization.

One of the most interesting collections is that of jewelry — especially that which has been found in a pyramid at Dashur. This belonged to two princesses and consists of gems set in gold of most wonderful workmanship, showing the marvelous art of the goldsmiths two-thousdand years before the Christian era. Some of it would shame the most expert workmen of today. The best specimens include chains with delicate and dainty links, bracelets with double hinges, rings of many novel designs, gold toilet boxes, breast plates of gold inlaid with precious stones, small gold and silver Nile barges with perfectly formed rowers and passengers, and similar ornaments. The most beautiful chain was one with pliable links that was thirty-six inches in length and ended in heads of geese. This method of chain making is in use today. I noticed a golden fan with small hollows on the points where ostrich feathers had once been set. There are many daggers, and chased golden bowls for the table and the toilet.

The mummy-cases from the later dynasties are painted with the features of the occupant, done in life-like colors, with the hair heavily gilded. These paints seem as fresh as the day they were applied, and the portraits are far better preserved than are the mummies themselves. These turn to a dark leathern hue when exposed to the air.

There is enough in this museum to keep one busy many months, as well as to repay one for a trip to Egypt. But so numerous are the treasures garnered from the past in this land of mystery and fascination that I doubt if anyone ever gives the museum the full amount of attention it deserves.

Of course we have put in a day at the Pyramids. The weather was perfect and we had a very delightful trip, taking our luncheon at the Mena House, which is a fine hotel built almost in the shadow of the pyramids. In awed

wonder we walked around the huge monuments and the time-defying Sphinx, and then descended to the granite Temple of the Sphinx that is near to it. Campbell's tomb is not far away — named after an English discoverer. The Pyramids of Gizeb are built on a rocky plateau, and were originally nine in number, although but three now remain. They are named Cheops, Kephren and Mycerinus, from the kings who built them. The six that are missing were all smaller and their stones were lugged to Cairo to be used in constructing other buildings with, only the rubbish of their foundations remaining to mark their location. Also in the neighborhood are ruins of several temples or dwellings where the priests and care-takers of the Pyramids originally lived. The Pyramid of Cheops is the largest and oldest, dating from 3733 B.C. It is called the Great Pyramid. Kephren is next in size and Mycerinus third. The sides of all were once smooth, the "steps" being covered with dressed red granite slabs toward the bottom, and limestone slabs toward the top, forming regular slopes. But the fine granite was also carried away to be used in other buildings, and but traces of it now remain. Cheops and Kephren were brothers, whose joint reigns extended one-hundred and six years. The names of all these kings were discovered inside the pyramids.

As for the Sphinx, it looks just as you would imagine it might, from pictures and descriptions. The lion's body with the man's face, grand and majestic as ever in spite of the centuries it has watched come and go, lies facing the rising sun with a countenance calm and commanding in spite of the mutilations caused by the wanton cannonball practice of Napoleon's despoiling army. Records show that the Sphinx was old when the pyramid of Cheops was built. It is carved from the solid rock and is supposed to typify the strength and courage of a lion united with human wisdom. In the temple of the Sphinx (made from the largest blocks of granite ever quarried) were found nine black marble statues of King Kephren. I saw these in the Museum, but only one was perfect, the others being more or less broken. This temple has excited the wonder of modern architects, not alone because of the enormous size of the blocks of granite used, but because they were all put together with keystones, no mortar or cement being used.

In the afternoon we rode donkeys all around the pyramids, in order to get a general idea of their size and grandeur. I feel that it is an accomplishment to have seen these marvelous monuments. The largest was thirty years in building, ten years of this time being occupied in building roads over which to haul the blocks of stone and getting the material upon the ground. They were the tombs of their builders, but were broken open and robbed as early as the Twentieth dynasty. Moderns are not the only vandals the world has known.

The Sphinx was long the place where the kings of Egypt came to worship the sun. Between its paws was found an altar bearing pictures of Thotmes IV sacrificing to the sun, which the ancient Egyptians considered the author of life.

In the afternoon I ascended to the top of the Great Pyramid — five-hundred and sixteen feet above the ground. Three Bedouins accompanied me, one holding fast to each hand while the other "boosted" from behind. The steps are from three to four feet in height, and the ascent so strenuous that I rested several times on the way up. The view from the top is considered the finest in the world, and I believe it. To the west, as far as the eye can reach, lies the yellow-brown desert; southward, in the distance, you see the pyramids of Dashur and Sakkhara, other groups similar to these of Gizeh. In the east is the Delta with its waving fields of grain, and the City of Cairo, with its teeming life, its thousand minarets and its mighty Citadel. The Nile winds below you like a ribbon carelessly cast to the winds, and over all is the glorious African sun and the turquoise sky. Around you cluster the Sphinx and the lesser pyramids. Standing here, at the apex of the most wonderful monument ever erected by the hand of man, one is bound to pause and reflect. I had a feeling that I was linked to all the centuries of the dead and gone civilization of this mystic land, and my impression of awe I shall never forget.

L. F. did not venture to climb the pyramid with me. He and our dragoman remained below to watch my ascent. Few women, and those mostly Americans, undertake the feat, but I feel amply repaid in spite of the fact that I have been very lame since my climb.

Tomorrow morning we leave Cairo for a three weeks' trip up the Nile.

LETTER V. UP THE NILE

On Board the S. S. "Ramses,"

Ascending the Nile Nile traffic is controlled by "Cook's," that enterprising firm having made such voyages as ours possible by building dahabeahs and river steamers especially adapted for the purpose, and training a superior class of dragomen to explain the wonders of the great temples and palaces to the tourists. The most satisfactory way to visit the Nile country is to take passage on one of the three great floating hotels — of which the "Ramses" is the largest and finest — and travel through this vast cemetery of a dead civilization surrounded by the same luxuries and comforts you would find in Paris. L. F. has always scorned Cook's Tourist Parties or any other "personally conducted" trips, preferring to travel independently; but if he wants to see the Nile he must use Cook, and having made up his mind to the ordeal he finds it very charming indeed. We have seventy passengers, almost all people of culture and position in the world. Fully two-thirds are American, for it is an expensive trip and Europeans as a rule travel where they can live cheaply.

We steamed away from Cairo at ten o'clock this morning and at one o'clock, after an early luncheon, we stopped at Sakkhara, the site of ancient Memphis. It requires a donkey ride, however, to travel from the Nile bank to the olden Egyptian metropolis, of which the only visible remaining traces are the two colossal statues of Ramses the Great, both in reclining positions. The first is a granite figure now twenty-five feet long, about six and a half feet of the towering crown of Upper and Lower Egypt having been broken off. In order to see the face, which is a remarkably fine one, we climbed upon the huge body and literally "walked over him." The features of Ramses, here depicted, are kindly, handsome and dignified. His inordinate vanity is typified by his name appearing carved upon both shoulders, breast, and the kingly belt and bracelet. On one of his sides is engraved the figure of his favorite daughter, Bent-Anat. Near this statue is a stele of the god Apris dating from the Twenty-Sixth dynasty.

The second immense statue of Ramses is made of limestone, and has the false beard attached to the chin, while the first is smooth faced. Both these statues originally stood before the temple of Ptah.

Besides these solitary relics of the past, nothing marks the site of ancient Memphis save a stately grove of date palms. Yet there is a certain fascination in standing upon the historic spot.

Another donkey ride took us to the tomb of Mereruka. On either side the entrance is an immense bas-relief of this personage, beside him being a very

small one of his wife. The walls of this tomb are covered with bas-reliefs portraying the daily life of Mereruka, and in studying them we begin to realize that there is nothing new under the sun. In one place the gentleman is at his toilet table, with his greyhounds crouched under his chair and a pet ape perched upon his shoulder. In another picture his wife is seated beside him on a bed showing springs and mattresses and playing a harp to amuse her lord. Other scenes represent boys wrestling; men with cages containing lions; men and women dancing, with the females posing while the men keep time with their hands; boats upon the Nile; fishermen, cattle feeding, etcetera. The execution is beautiful and the proportions wonderfully perfect. In this tomb are thirty-one rooms, and Mereruka was buried in a central chamber where a large statue of him occupies a niche with an altar in front and a historic stele behind. Figures of his wife and son adorn the sides of the niche.

Next we visited the tomb of Thi, a royal personage famous as the architect and manager of the pyramids. The bas-reliefs in this tomb are considered the finest in all Egypt, as well as the best preserved. They faithfully depict life among the Egyptians five-thousand years ago. It is interesting to note Thi and his wife superintending the fattening of geese, feeding flocks of cranes and watching herds of goats browsing. The pictures also describe the method of slaughtering the cattle, cutting them up, etcetera; and a remarkable scene is one where men are building a boat, and using the same tools we are today familiar with. One is sawing a board, another boring a hole with an augur, and hammers and chisels are also in use. Among the animals depicted are antelope, gazelles, stags, mountain goats and cattle, each being named in the inscription above it. A statue of Thi which was found in this tomb is now in the Museum at Cairo.

A peculiar fact is that the women in these bas-reliefs are always colored yellow, while the men are colored red. The tomb is of historic value because its hieroglyphics so faithfully depict the manners and customs of the ancients, and they show that agricultural conditions have not greatly changed on the Nile bank in five thousand years. We see men plowing the ground about as they do now, sowing seed broadcast, rams treading in the seed, cutting and harvesting of grain, binding sheaves, etc.

After an all too brief inspection of the tombs we rode to the Serepeum, the great tombs of the sacred bulls. They consist of caverns carved out of solid limestone and connected by a narrow passage. It was so dark that we were all obliged to carry lighted candles. Twenty-four of the sacred bulls were buried here, and each was encased in an enormous granite sarcophagus after being carefully embalmed. These huge granite sarcophagi seem larger than the passage that admitted them, and as they are formed of one solid block of

granite brought from Aswan it puzzles us to imagine how they were ever placed in these caves. Inscriptions show that the Serapeum cost an immense amount of labor and many human lives, but such sacrifice was deemed small by the bull worshippers, who not only buried these sacred cattle with all the honors accorded to their rulers and other gods, but built a great avenue of sphinxes leading up to the important tomb.

We stopped at Marietta Bey's house for a time — Marietta being highly honored for his services as one of the earlier discoverers in Egypt. Afterwards we rode around the celebrated Step Pyramid of Sakkhara. It is the only one of its kind in existence, and dates from the third dynasty, so that it is older than the Gizeh pyramids. There are but six steps between the bottom and the top, and the pyramid itself is oblong in shape.

We reached our steamer after having ridden seventeen miles on donkey-back, and we found it an exhausting trip because we were so unused to this mode of locomotion. Next day I slept until noon, while our boat slowly stemmed the current of the river.

te The Nile is a beautiful stream, exceedingly picturesque for every foot of its winding length. The native boats, which we constantly pass, have sails resembling the wings of birds when in flight, and the banks in this section are alive with people herding their sheep, irrigating the land and traveling from village to village on camels and donkeys. The villages are either Coptic or Arabian, and all have mud houses and sheltering groups of tall palms. At our left lies the Arabian desert and its ranges of wonderful mountains; on our right are the cultivated fields, beyond which stretches the Libyan desert. The Nile sunsets are perfectly gorgeous, and I realize that it is impossible to describe them. The sun goes down in a golden ball behind the tracery of the palms, tinting the sky opposite with hues of beautiful pinks, violets and reds. A violet haze hangs over the mountains and permeates the atmosphere. Someone has called it "the violet Nile," but it is not always so, by any means. One night everything was silver grey, even to the river itself. During the day the highlights on the mountains are superb. How I wish I had the power to describe it all to you! I sometimes wonder if I am fully appreciating all the beauties of this glorious country; but I think I am, so far as I am capable.

This morning the boat stopped at Beni Hassan, and we visited a grotto carved out of the solid rock. The place had a vestibule with eight pillars placed like those of a verandah. The chamber beyond was used as a place of prayer by those about to cross the desert, in which they implored the gods to grant them safe journey. Those returning came here to thank the gods for preserving them. The bas-reliefs are very poor here, although the prayer cavern was built by Queen Makere. A cemetery of mummified cats has been

discovered near here.

Mounting our donkeys again we rode to a series of tombs cut from the solid rock. Here reposed many high dignitaries of the early dynasties. Before one of these we found six columns of closed lotus buds, not set in, but carved out of the rock in which the tomb had been excavated. They are richly colored. In these tombs were several mummy shafts, some said to be one hundred feet in length. At the bottom of the shafts were rooms in which the mummies were placed, after which the openings were filled up with blocks of stone. The upper chambers have walls covered thickly with paintings and inscriptions, and from these we find that our civilization has brought us little that was then unknown, except steam and electricity. We have improved upon Egyptian methods in many ways; but to realize how much we owe to this land of tombs you must come here and read these fadeless records of thousands of years gone by.

In one tomb we found the earliest known "Doric" column — sixteen-sided and fluted. The Greeks copied their architecture from the Egyptians, and these columns have come down to our own times, for they are similar to the ones on my old Fayetteville home. Even the cross of the Christians was taken from the Egyptian symbol of Life. The rounded top of the Egyptian cross was afterward used for a halo above the head of Christ, and it is at first hard to realize that this halo above the cross antedates the Christian era. The early Christians, who were Copts, (i e., Egyptians who accepted the religion of Christ) used some of these tombs as school-houses, and wantonly mutilated many of the inscriptions where reference was made to the earlier gods. But some of the pictures remain, and they are intensely interesting. In one place is depicted a delegation of foreigners, probably visitors from Palestine. The women are beautifully dressed, and ride in boats with cabins and canopies. An amusing scene is that of a barber shaving a man, while another is getting a shampoo that is ridiculously modern. Criminals are seen hung by their feet for punishment, and in domestic scenes women are found weaving and spinning much as they do today in these Eastern countries. The occupant of the tomb is usually depicted seated at a sacrificial table, while men and women bring to him wine, grain and cattle. A scribe is often seen writing down a list of the things thus brought. In two of the tombs at Beni Hassan the roofs are divided into three arched sections, which are elaborately decorated.

We returned to the steamer very well pleased with our day's excursion. Today is Washington's Birthday, and at dinner L. F. made a neat speech in which he asked all Americans present in this land of tombs to rise and drink a toast to that simple tomb at Mount Vernon so sacred to us all. Every American was on his feet in a second, and the speech made quite a hit.

LETTER VI. THE TEMPLES OF EGYPT

On Board the "Ramses."

Egypt is the land of tombs and temples, for these solid and imperishable monuments of the world's first civilization alone remain to mark the days when the Nile bank boasted the most populous, the wealthiest and the most intelligent nation in existence. So a description of the long dead but now awakening Egypt of today must be largely a description of the works of its former era of prosperity.

Since I wrote my last letter we have visited Assuit, one of the most important of the Nile cities. In one of two important tombs there which date from 2500 B.C., I noticed the arched ceiling decorated with the design we call the "Greek Border." From the fact that the Greek nation did not exist when this border was painted upon this tomb it is clear that the Greeks borrowed it — as they did many other things now called "Greek" — from the ancient Egyptians. The second tomb was remarkable in being called the "Soldiers' Tomb," the walls and ceiling being covered with paintings and carvings of companies of soldiers going through maneuvers very similar to those employed by our military of today. They had no fire arms, but they were uniformed and well drilled. Assuit has a fine hospital and is an important commercial town.

For the past two days we have done no "sight seeing," but steamed lazily up the Nile, which in itself is the most fascinating thing in Egypt. To drink in the glorious sunshine and watch the quaint scenes glide by is a veritable lotus-eating existence. The mountains and the desert follow us always. Sometimes the desert creeps down to the water's edge; again it leaves a strip of vivid green between it and the Nile to mark the cultivated land; but for great stretches the irrigated fields have pushed the desert many miles toward the mountains, and here lies the wonderful wealth of Egypt.

A busy week is ahead of us, they say. Tomorrow we visit Dendarah, where is the famous temple dedicated to Hathor, the Egyptian Venus. It was in this temple that the zodiac was discovered. By the way, you must understand that Egyptian temples were not places of worship, but store-houses or treasuries for sacred things, and schools and dwellings for the priests. Aside from the priests, no one but the reigning king and important members of the royal family was ever allowed to enter the inner chambers. The Egyptian religion was essentially one of processions, rather than concourses. The bas-reliefs and paintings prove this conclusively.

Here's another "by the way": To the Egyptian the Sphinx is the transformed Horus, the avenger of his father Osiris. He is facing the East and

awaiting his father's return from the netherworld, where he has gone to judge the dead. In front of the Sphinx is an inscription to Osiris dating from the era of Horns himself — long before Mena, who is the first known king of Egypt.

After an early breakfast we mounted our donkeys to visit Dendarah, which lies several miles inland. The day was beautiful and we found the temple wonderfully interesting. First you enter the Great Vestibule, supported by twenty-four Hathor-headed columns. The ceiling is tinted to represent heaven's own blue, and on it are many winged suns, as well as the signs of the zodiac, the twelve hours of the day and the twelve hours of the night. Each hour of the day is surmounted by a sun, while each hour of the night has a star above it. Every hour has its separate guardian in attendance. The Egyptian year was three-hundred and sixty days, and every one of these days is pictured. The walls of the temple proper are covered with figures illustrating the preparations of the king to celebrate the great New Year's festival, which was held on the twenty-first day of June, the longest day of the year and the one which marked the beginning of summer. Beyond the vestibule is the entrance hall, the assembly hall, and the hall of the Sacred Boat, or Ark of the Covenant. The king was the only one ever admitted into this last apartment, and then but once each year and only after he had purified himself and sacrificed to the gods.

The Temple of Dendarah has twenty-one separate chambers, each one sculptured with elaborate descriptions of the uses for which it was intended. Below the temple were crypts where were stored the statues of gold and silver and other paraphernalia used in the festivals and processions held in honor of Hathor. We descended into these crypts, bearing lighted candles, and found the bas-reliefs covering the walls very beautiful, their coloring being unimpaired in freshness since the ages in which they were executed. The complexion of Hathor's skin is light buff, that of all the kings is red, and that of Osiris is blue. The workmanship of these sculptures is exceedingly fine. Hathor's face expressed purity and love divine. She was the daughter of the Sun.

Along the wall of the stairway leading to the roof of the temple is depicted a procession of priests, headed by the king. They are on their way to the roof with the sacred boat or covenant, and are carrying banners and offerings of many sorts. The wall on the other side of the staircase represents the procession coming down again. On the lower roof is erected a small temple devoted to the worship of the slain and risen Osiris. The bas-reliefs covering the walls show (1) Osiris lying dead; (2) lying in his tomb with his two sisters kneeling besides him; (3) being conducted by Anubis to the netherworld; (4) a scribe recording his good deeds; (5) a dove perching upon

his body to give him renewed life; (6) Osiris rising from his tomb. There are appropriate inscriptions upon the walls describing how he was slain by his enemies but triumphed over them and arose from the dead.

In one of the rooms of the temple is a curious relief of the goddess Nut standing upon the water. This figure is so enormous in size that it reaches up one wall, across the ceiling and down the opposite wall. Her legs occupy all of the first wall, her body the ceiling, her head and outstretched arms the other wall, so that her hands nearly touch the floor. From her mouth issues the sun, depicting life; from her lap rises another sun, with its rays shining on the head of Hathor. It was in this room, a really beautiful and impressive place, that the services of the priests were held.

The outer walls of the temple are carved with many pictures of the Roman emperors in the costumes of Egyptian kings, offering sacrifice to Hathor. Our attention was especially called to a picture of Cleopatra and her son Cœsarion, which in her lifetime was carved upon the rear wall of the Dendarah temple by her own orders. The face of the famous queen is crafty, subtle and voluptuous. A description of it is said to have inspired Shakespeare to immortalize her in his play. The inscription is one of the few marks of her era that Cleopatra left in Egypt. She was by no means one of Egypt's greatest queens.

The columns of Hathor supporting the vestibule, to which I have referred, are fifty-eight feet in heighth and very massive. At the top of each column is carved the face of Hathor. Although important, the temple of Dendarah is comparatively modern, dating from only fifty-seven years before the Christian era. Yet it is built on the foundations of a very ancient Egyptian temple destroyed by the Persians in the time of Cambyses' invasion. The present structure is remarkable in that neither iron, wood nor plaster is used. Each stone was marked at the quarry and numbered, and they are all fitted by means of keystones. Before the temple stands the ruin of the pylon, but the obelisks and avenues of sphinxes which belonged to every ancient temple have entirely disappeared.

We have been very busy since I wrote my last installment. The weather is hotter than our summer days at home, yet some days we have traveled fifteen miles on donkey-back. Fortunately we are both well and full of enthusiasm and interest, so that we don't mind such slight discomforts — a small price to pay for our glorious experiences.

Tuesday we reached Luxor, and at once started to visit the noblest architectural monument ever designed and executed by human endeavor — the great Temple of Karnak.

Although it still remains the most immense structure in the world, it

makes one shudder to remember that every stone assembled there cost at least one human life.

The Temple of Karnak was constructed through many generations by successive kings of Egypt, one vying with another to outdo the accomplishments of his predecessors. For instance, the Hall of Pillars, having one-hundred and thirty-four gigantic columns, was begun by Seti I, who erected seventy-nine of them during his lifetime. Ramses I set up but one, but the remainder were installed by Ramses II. The central pillars are seventy-eight feet in heighth and forty-six feet in circumference. Formerly this vast hall was completely roofed, but only a few stones of the roof now remain in place, the others having fallen. Near the top of the walls horizontal slits were cut for windows. The columns are of red sandstone, set up in drums or sections. The great monoliths are in other parts of the temple. These pillars, however, are richly carved and colored.

The Temple of Karnak was built facing the Nile, and from the pylon an avenue of immense ram-headed sphinxes led to the river. At the foot of the avenue a bridge of boats spanned the river, where began the great road to the Tombs of the Kings. This avenue of sphinxes still remains in an excellent state of preservation.

The temple itself covered more than a thousand acres, but many of the walls are now in ruins and debris clutters many of the superb halls. Between the Hall of Pillars and the second pylon are two obelisks of Thotmes I, only one now standing; but by far the largest and most beautiful obelisk at Karnak is that erected by Queen Hatasu, a monolith of pink granite. The Sanctuary is in ruins, but beyond this is a court built by Thotmes III, in which was found the famous Tablet of Ancestors, by means of which we learned the names and length of reigns of all the Egyptian kings since the time of Menes. The outer wall of the Great Hall is covered with reliefs showing the battles of King Seti I. Holding a number of his enemies suspended by the hair of their heads from his left hand, with his right this valorous king calmly chops their heads off. Returning from his wars he always brings his captives and spoils to Karnak to lay at the feet of Amon-Ra, the Supreme God to whom this vast temple was dedicated.

Thotmes III made upon the walls inscriptions of his beautiful botanical gardens, in which are represented many kinds of rare plants, and many strange animals brought from foreign lands he had conquered. That most persistent builder of all the Egyptians, Ramses II, is much in evidence in the temple of Karnak, and broken statues of him are to be seen scattered on every side. Most of the columns represent the papyrus or the lotus-bud, the latter being especially graceful and beautiful.

At the east of the temple is the Sacred Lake, which, without any visible supply of water, has never been known to dry up. Many think that in time of invasion by the Persians, Saracens and others, the priests cast their treasures into this lake, the bottom of which is yet strewn with precious metals and jewels; but all attempts to exhaust the water have proved futile. The vast treasures of Karnak have never been accounted for, and were doubtless buried.

On every side stand pylons which marked the original boundaries of the temple, and all the buildings were surrounded by a great wall. The best preserved portion of the edifice is the really fine temple of Ramses III, who received his Sword of Victory directly from the hands of Amon-Ra, and so erected this temple in his honor. There is also a splendid temple erected to Khonsu, the Moon God, and you must remember that this thousand-acre temple consisted of many small temples built at different periods by different kings; yet so closely were they grouped that it appeared to be one vast temple. The temple of Khonsu dates from fifteen-hundred years before Christ, and from its pylon an avenue of sphinxes led to the temple of Luxor, connecting the two together.

The inscriptions at Karnak are interesting as showing the development of art during the different reigns. Those of Seti I, for example, are in high relief, and much more artistic than those executed under the direction of his son and successor, Ramses II, who employed bas-relief.

The Temple of Luxor loses much of its charm by standing in the center of the modern town of Luxor, the buildings of which crowd close to its ancient walls. Also it is but a fifteen minute journey from Karnak. But Luxor excels in beauty, as Karnak does in massive grandeur, and its fame is scarcely less.

The Temple of Luxor was built by the combined efforts of Amenophis III and Ramses II. It is dedicated to the Theban Triad — Amon-Ra (the Sun), Khonsu (the Moon), and Mut (the Goddess of Nature). The inscriptions on the inner walls are sacrificial, and on the outer walls records of great battles. There are many statues of Ramses, who during his lifetime is said to have erected ten thousand statues to himself, and beside one of these he permitted his wife to be sculptured. The lady may have appreciated the honor, but although perfectly proportioned she is so exceedingly small that you have to look closely to see her at all, and her lord might easily have put her in his pocket if she had really been as tiny as she is represented.

At Luxor are two beautiful red granite statues of Ramses seated, and in front of them is the immense obelisk covered with hieroglyphics relating how he built the temple. He certainly intended the world to know what a great man he was, for although he was the greatest builder Egypt or any other

country has ever known his vanity was so great as to render him almost ridiculous. During his reign of nearly sixty-seven years he restored many of the ancient temples built by his predecessors, but he always took occasion to carve his own cartouche on every possible place and to set up statues to himself. He was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, and at the Ramesseum are storehouses made of the "bricks without straw" which the captive Hebrews found so grievous a task to manufacture. Each one is stamped with the cartouche of Ramses II.

Every temple has its "birth-house." The one at Luxor records the marvelous birth of Amenhotep III. We see the god Khonsu — watched by Isis — molding two infants on a potter's wheel. One of these is Amenhotep, the other his double, or Ka, a spiritual companion necessary to every Egyptian. The balance of the inscriptions depict in detail the birth of the child.

It is a deplorable fact that most of the faces on the inscriptions carved upon the great Egyptian temples were mutilated by the early Christians, while Cambyses the Persian, who successfully invaded Egypt, had a trick of breaking the nose off of every statue he could find. The destruction of the Christians was inspired by ignorance and bigotry; Cambyses explained his vandalism by saying the noses of all the statues were "turned up in pride" and could not be endured by the nation's conqueror. Earthquakes are also responsible for much destruction in Egypt. But in this dry climate the monuments of the great builders can never crumble or decay, and much still remains in our age to inspire us with awe and wonder and to teach us accurately the manner of life and the historical deeds of the actual founders of our civilization.

Having now visited both Karnak and Luxor, on Wednesday morning we crossed the Nile in small boats and then mounted donkeys for a fifteen-mile jaunt to the Tombs of the Kings. We were now on the site of Thebes of the Hundred Gates, but the most famous city of ancient days has disappeared almost as completely as has Memphis. Some of its temples and the Colossi we saw later, but practically the great city has become a desert.

After stopping for a brief visit to the unimportant temple of Kurna, we mounted the hills and rode through the somber Death Valley, a trail over the mountains of the wildest character. For miles not a particle of vegetation was visible and the earth and stones were a dull, cheerless red. There are forty royal tombs in the mountains back of Thebes. Twenty-nine of them have been opened, but in visiting four of these we obtained a fair idea of the character of all. They are built on an incline descending far into the heart of the mountains, and each has twelve distinct portals, representing the twelve

hours of the night — symbolic of the trials and temptations one must overcome in order to reach eternal life. A huge snake guards each portal, and on the walls are depicted the terrors of hell and the evils that beset the human soul. The demons and evil spirits are always painted black. The inner chambers of the tombs bear inscriptions of hymns to the sunrise, and many extracts from the Book of the Dead — the earliest religious treatise of the Egyptians.

In the tomb of Ramses IX we went down fully two-hundred feet to where the sarcophagus rested. It was, of course, empty. In the tomb of Mer-em-ptah, who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, we found in the mummy chamber the elaborate sarcophagus which Cambyses smashed into bits. In a chamber one-hundred feet farther down we came upon a white marble image of this king, which is in perfect condition. In the tomb of Amenophis III that great king — or his mummy — still lies within its case, which is strewn with flowers and other offerings placed there more than three thousand years ago. In a separate chamber of this tomb we found the mummies of three royal princesses. There were no decorations except on four beautiful square pillars set up in the mummy chamber of the king.

The fourth tomb visited was that of Seti I. Its many chambers were very artistically inscribed with extracts from the Book of the Dead, for whatever was done in the reign of Seti I represents the best of Egyptian art. In the colorings we find lapis lazuli and malachite used, neither of which were found in Egypt, but must have been brought from foreign lands. This tomb penetrates fully five-hundred feet into the mountain.

All of the Tombs of the Kings which have been excavated are now lighted by electric lights and cared for by the Egyptian government, which seems to realize the importance of preserving these treasures of the past. To mutilate a temple or tomb, or chip off a bit of rock for a souvenir is a crime very severely punished.

Climbing the crest of the mountains we now descended into a valley on the other side, where we had luncheon at Cook's Rest House. A camel loaded with ice and other camels bearing provisions had been sent on from the river, and we lunched as well as if we had been aboard our palatial steamer.

Near the Rest House is the Temple of Queen Hatasu, one of the few women that ever reigned over Egypt. However, it is related of her that she was dressed in male apparel from the day of her birth, and affected the manners and ways of a man. The most interesting inscriptions in Hatasu's temple are those describing the relief of her expedition into the Land of Punt, where she went to procure fragrant trees and shrubs for incense. Her temple

was never finished, but it is called "Der-el-bahi," which means "the most splendid of all."

This day's excursion was very fatiguing, and we were glad to reach the boat late in the afternoon and get a little rest. The next morning, Thursday, we resumed our explorations and crossed the river to Thebes again, First we visited the Ramesseum, the palace built by Ramses II. Before it is the ten-thousand-ton sitting statue overthrown by Cambyses. The invader drilled holes into the figure and then drove wooden wedges into the holes and soaked them with water. When the wedges swelled they cracked the great statue in two, and the upper half toppled to the ground, killing fifty Persians in its fall. The Ramesseum is greatly ruined. One of the best inscriptions remaining is the famous epic of Pentaurt, the Egyptian poet. The vast storehouses back of the Ramesseum were, as I have said, built by the Israelites, and each brick bears the cartouche of Ramses the Great.

Next we visited the Tombs of the Queens — a perfect little temple dedicated to Hathor. Over the door are carved seven heads of Hathor, and the columns are all Hathor-headed. The picture-writing in one of the rooms shows Osiris judging the dead. Beside Osiris is shown a lotus on which stand four genii; then comes the Devourer of the Wicked — part lion and part hippopotamus, but with the head of a crocodile. Anubis and Horus stand by the scales in which the heart is weighed against the feather, and Truth makes the record. Ranged about are forty-two figures representing the forty-two questions the dead must answer, and near the deceased are two figures of Mast (or Truth) waiting to conduct the judged to the nether world.

We now come to Medinet Habu, formerly a palace and temple of Ramses III. Both L. F. and I consider this one of the best and most interesting ruins we have yet seen. It consists of a pylon, first court, second pylon, second court, hypostyle hall and the sanctuary. The rooms of the palace were at one side. The reliefs on the walls are cut three or four inches in depth, and are exceedingly symmetrical and beautiful. They show the king in battle, with his trained lion running beside his chariot; his rare skill with the bow and arrow; a pile of hands and a pile of tongues cut from prisoners, and the processions of the priests welcoming him on his return.

A donkey ride brought us to the Colossi of Memnon, two gigantic statues now quite ruined. The vocal one has never sung since it was rebuilt after having been overthrown by an earthquake. Once a gateway to Thebes, with an immense temple behind them, the Colossi now stand in cultivated fields, solitary reminders of a glorious past.

We returned to the steamer for luncheon, and in the afternoon I went sailing on the Nile with a company of friends. The native boatmen sang; a

boy played on reeds while another danced in Eastern fashion. We floated on the same water-way, between the same banks, that were familiar to Antony and Cœsar and Cleopatra — yes, even to the great Ramses himself — and it seemed easy to bridge the ages between then and now.

Donkeys are important cattle in Egypt. Without them we could never manage to see the relics of antiquity half so well. They are swift, docile, and rugged, with immense heads and slender legs. Some of the names given them by the donkey-boys are remarkable. Mine at Luxor was called "Lovely Sweet," and I liked him so well that I kept the same donkey and the same donkey-boy the three days I was there. George Ade told me he had the same outfit afterward. The donkeys all belong to the sheik, and the donkey-boys run beside them all day for the sake of the backshish to be gained.

Today, March 3rd, we passed from Upper Egypt into Nubia.

LETTER VII. NUBIA AND THE CATARACT

On Board the "Ramses."

To those who have never been under the spell of the Nile country I fear my descriptions of its many ancient temples may prove tedious; but present-day Egypt is a land preserved from antiquity, and bordering the Nile are nearly all the famous shrines that the first civilization has bequeathed us. When you have done with Egypt you have done with the most valuable records of the past, so each of the temples seems to me worthy of notice.

On Friday, March 2nd, we reached Esna and visited its temple, which was built during the Roman period. Only the hypostyle hall has been excavated as yet, and we were obliged to go down a flight of thirty or more stone steps to get into it. The twenty-four columns are unique because each capital is carved to represent a certain tree, and scarcely two are alike. The roof is intact and covered with astronomical designs. Native mud houses have covered the site of this temple for ages, and do today except for those parts that have been excavated.

The traveler often wonders how so much rubbish could have accumulated on the sites of these temples, in many cases covering them so completely that cities have been built above them. But when you consider that the Egyptians and Arabs never sweep, but allow the dirt to accumulate, it is easy to understand that a few centuries will create quite a litter. When one of the native houses fills up they consider it easier to build a new one than to clean it out.

The same afternoon we reached Edfu, where we took donkeys to the temple of Horns. This temple is a duplicate of the one at Dendarah, but is considered the better of the two. It was built only about two-thousand years ago, or 272 B.C., and that seems to me quite modern after visiting Thebes and Karnak. The pylon is elaborately decorated and an inner court runs all around the main temple — a plan quite unusual. On each side of the pylon is a colossal figure of the king holding his enemies by the hair of their heads. In the court before the hypostyle hall stands the great altar where offerings were made to the gods. A small room at one side was used as a library, and on the walls is inscribed a catalogue of the books preserved there. In the sanctuary still remains the shrine where the holy boat was kept — the only one now to be seen in any of the temples. It was constructed of granite and had a pointed roof supported on pillars. It reminded me somewhat of a huge modern safe without a door. The granite was exquisitely polished and of a dark, rich color. Of similar stone is the altar standing just before the shrine, where votive offerings were made by the people of Edfu to Horus. The inscriptions

of the temple are much like those described on other edifices.

We mounted two-hundred and forty-two steps to the top of the temple, the steps being in relays of fourteen; and at each landing a chamber is cut in the solid masonry and lighted by small windows. Two immense hawks of black granite are preserved in the temple, representing Horus, who was often depicted hawk-headed. Workmen are now repairing parts of the temple of Edfu, which is one of the best preserved in Egypt.

Saturday morning found us at Kom Ombos, which is over the edge of Upper Egypt in Nubia. The temple stands on the bank of the Nile facing the east, and is remarkable in being duplex, it having been jointly dedicated to Sebek, the crocodile god, and Heru-ur, or Horus the Elder, sometimes called Haraeris. The entrance to the shrines is through three chambers, each having two doors. Some of the reliefs at Kom-Ombos are very skillfully executed, and they are the first I saw in which the curve of a woman's hips is shown. Upon the wall is a scene showing a throng of prisoners who have but one arm, the other arm having been cut off and fed to the crocodiles to concilate Sebek. Another relief showed a huge lion being fed on human hands.

The situation of the temple is one of the most beautiful in Egypt. It faces the Nile, with a stretch of fertile country opposite and the desert and mountains in the distance.

Saturday afternoon the "Ramses" came to anchor off the quaint town of Aswan, which lies at the edge of the First Cataract, some seven-hundred miles from Cairo. The temperature was here ninety-two degrees in the shade; but when we found ourselves face to face with the world-famed Island of Elephantine — " The Key to Egypt" of the ancients — we could not resist the temptation of landing. We clambered over boulders of granite still bearing the cartouches of the Great Ramses, executed thousands of years ago, and wandered through groves and orchards so antique in appearance that it was hard to realize we were living in the year 1906, and not in the time of the Pharaohs.

The native boatmen then ran us across to the town, where we visited the bazaars, unique at this point in being stocked mainly with Sudanese articles.

All day Sunday we lounged aboard the steamer, watching the groups of Bishareens or native gypsies who always flock to the bank as soon as a tourist boat appears. In the evening, in company with three or four friends, we went ashore and dined at the Cataract House, a house that would do credit to London or New York. And we sailed back by moonlight over the beautiful Nile, with native Nubians singing their weird chants to the accompaniment of tomtoms and others dancing a slow and graceful muscle dance to entertain us. These Nubians are black as coal and are like children in their

dispositions. They are easily pleased and very lighthearted, but grow sullen and unresponsive if treated with arrogance. This moonlight ride was more like a dream than a reality, and I shall never forget its charm. If the ancient Egyptians were lotus-eaters they should not be blamed. I do not see how they could have been anything else. And the Egypt of today is the Egypt of yesterday. The centuries have scarcely left a mark here.

Monday morning we started bright and early for Philae, seven miles above Aswan. Until the great dam was built Philae must have been exceedingly beautiful, but now the island is entirely covered with water, and only the upper parts of the temples and the kiosk are to be seen — apparently rising from the bosom of a placid lake. We entered the temples in boats, and afterward mounted to the top of the great temple of Isis.

The famous Osiris room is near the roof and easily accessible. The inscriptions represent the assembling of the fourteen pieces of the god Osiris, which had been scattered throughout the kingdom, and their burial.

Long after the ancient Egyptian religion had passed from the land the worship of Isis was still continued here at Philae. The legend of Philae is to be found in the Arabian Nights. L. F. took a picture of me standing on the roof of this temple.

In about two years the extension to the dam will raise the water twelve feet more above the present level. It is said that ten years from now, if the temples are not removed, no trace of them will remain. It is the sacrifice demanded for the modern redemption of Egypt and its conversion into the most fertile and productive land on earth.

We crossed the barrage, or great dam of Aswan, which is a mile and a quarter in length, and had luncheon at a rest house. Afterward we floated down the Nile in boats and rejoined our steamer at its anchorage.

At Aswan are the vast granite quarries from which all the material was taken to build the monuments and cities of Lower and Upper Egypt. The immense obelisks and the numerous colossal statues of Ramses and other kings were doubtless floated down the Nile on rafts to their destination. Also from this locality came the stones used in building the Pyramids of Gizeh, and especially the enormous blocks of granite contained in the Temple of the Sphinx, which in size have never been equaled in the construction of any modern building.

From the river banks at Aswan rise huge boulders of black granite, while red, blue and grey granite quarries are nearby in sufficient quantities to rebuild Egypt as it was in all its former glory.

Tuesday morning, as we started on our homeward trip, we encountered a terrible sand storm, which blotted out the landscape all day but did not affect

us disagreeably where we steamed down the river. The temperature dropped forty-two degrees, so that the change from the extreme heat was very marked.

We reached Luxor Thursday morning and remained there a few hours, giving L. F. and me an opportunity of making another visit to the temple. The next morning we arrived at Al-Balyana, on the west bank of the Nile, which is the port from which Abydos is reached. The ancient city and the temples are ten miles from this place, and that meant a twenty-mile donkey ride, but not a soul refused to take the journey.

The day was perfect, the sunshine being brilliant but the air cool and agreeable. Over the desert and mountains hung a soft violet haze. The country we traversed was very fertile and covered with herds of cattle, for this is the butter and milk market for lower Egypt. It happened to be market-day in Al-Balyana, so we met many people going to town on foot, donkey-back or perched upon tall camels. Some carried lambs in their arms, others led a calf or balanced a crock of butter on their heads, for their method is to exchange the goods and chattels they have for others which they desire, and little real money changes hands on the market days.

Ancient Abydos was one of the most renowned cities of Egypt, and its temple is considered by many the most beautiful that now remains. At the time of the Persian invasion, when Cambyses mutilated every statue and bas-relief he could find, this temple lay buried in rubbish and so escaped. It also escaped the vandalism of the early Christians, so that when in modern times the great temple was discovered and excavated it had suffered merely from the ravages of time, and most of the reliefs were excellently preserved. It was the second religious center in Egypt; Thebes, Abydos and Heliopolis being the three seats of religious thought and learning. It was the home of Menes, the first historical king of Egypt.

The great temple was built by Seti I, and has seven shrines dedicated to Horus, Isis, Osiris, Amen, Harmachis, Ptah, and Seti I. The colorings of the decorations are remarkably preserved, even the gold beads around the king's neck still showing the gold leaf. The ceilings are all arched, painted blue and studded with five-pointed stars.

The most famous discovery in this temple was the Tablet of Abydos, carved upon the wall of a hallway and setting forth the list of seventy-six kings of Egypt, from Mena (or Menes) to Seti I. To Egyptologists this tablet has been the most important discovery ever made. There is a copy in the British Museum, but the original still remains and L. F. got a fair photograph of it.

Many of the reliefs seem like carvings of old ivory, being as smooth and

colored only by time. Egyptian art was at its best when this temple was constructed, and Seti was certainly the most artistic builder Egypt ever has known. It is said that the profiles of the king to be seen here are faithful likenesses. If so he had a beautiful face, and his son, the Great Ramses, bears a resemblance to him. In one picture we see Seti lassoing a bull — in modern "Wild West" fashion — while Ramses, then a child, grasps the bull by the tail, an evidence that he has arrived at an age when he can grapple with life.

We had our luncheon in this old temple, the supplies having been brought from the boat on the backs of camels. The long journey tired us, so that we were willing to rest when we finally returned to our floating hotel. Today we are at Assuit, where we shall remain several hours. Tomorrow is our last day of sight-seeing on the Nile, and I will finish my letter when that is over.

We visited the former palace of Amenophis this morning, or what is left of the palace, which consists mainly of the wonderful frescoed floor. The walls are gone, but singularly enough, the floors remain in all their beauty. In the center of each room is represented a pond, with water plants and fishes, the latter perfect as a photograph and showing the smallest scale and natural coloring. Around the ponds were marsh plants, with birds flying over them and animals coming to drink. Other sections of the floor showed lotus, poppies and papyrus, and around the outer edge was a border of vases holding flowers. The most elaborate floors were those of the harem, and in aisles where the king was accustomed to walk were pictures of captured tribes, they being literally beneath the feet of their conqueror. Fragments show that the original palace was of alabaster and limestone. Amenophis IV was called the "heretic king," because he preferred to worship the sun's disc rather than the established gods. The remains of his palace at Khut-aten was the last item of interest on our Nile program, and we are now headed for Cairo, which we shall reach Sunday afternoon. We plan to spend three days in the museum and the native shops and start for Alexandria Thursday morning. On the fifteenth we sail for Sicily, and I will not write again until we reach there. Both of us are sorry this delightful trip is over, for never have we enjoyed anything more or been so intensely interested. It has been such a treat to start our trip at the beginning of civilization — as far as we know — for next we visit the land of Hiero and Dionysius and then follow up the Grecian and Roman civilizations.

Shepherd's Hotel, Sunday Evening.

Our holiday on the Nile is over, and we are back at the hotel. Never in my life do I again expect to enjoy anything so much. Every moment was one of joy, and I hated to have the voyage end. The desert has a fascination for me greater than any towns or cultivated fields, and I can readily understand why

people in this part of the world refuse to leave it. The great wastes are always beautiful, but the colorings in early morning and at sunset defy description. Last night we saw the full moon rise from behind the eastern mountains and mount into a sky exquisitely tinted in blue and pink hues, which tinged all the desert and mountains beneath. At the same moment on the west side of the river was the setting sun — a glowing ball of golden red set in a sky of flaming clouds edged with gorgeous yellows. There they were, the sun and the moon, with only the arch of sky between them, and while we gazed enraptured an Arab on his camel was silhouetted against the silver light of the moon, while a group of men and donkeys were clear-cut against the sun's rosy disc. I shall never see another sunset to equal this until I return to Egypt and the Nile again.

LETTER VIII. TAORMINA AND MT. ETNA

Grand Hotel Castello a Mare Taormina, Sicily

First I must tell you how we left Egypt. Our three days in Cairo were consumed in the Mouski, or native markets, which are very fascinating to Americans, and in visits to the Museum. In some respects the Museum at Cairo is the most wonderful in the world, and as we were fresh from our visit to the Nile country we reviewed with eager interest the relics preserved from the various temples and cities we had seen. Especially interested were we in gazing at the mummies of Seti I and his great son Ramses II. Remembering their vast works, these dried bits of flesh inspired us with a certain awe.

One of the most interesting rooms in the museum contains the collection discovered by the American excavator, Davis. He has been wonderfully successful in unearthing antiquities, and Americans may well be proud of his record. In this collection is a chariot from the period of one of the early dynasties. It is in excellent condition, has two wheels elaborately carved and colored, a body rich in gold leaf ornamentation and — think of it — the wheels are rubber-tired.

It was full-moon on Monday evening, and we drove in a carriage to see the Sphinx and the Pyramids by moonlight. The effect was astonishingly beautiful, for the soft light disguised the blemishes of the grand old Sphinx and lent the face a rare dignity. We sat in the desert sands for hours, breathing the soft, fragrant breeze and lost in dreams of empires long since vanished and forgotten.

Wednesday morning we took the train down to Alexandria and spent the day in this rather uninteresting town, driving to Pompey's Pillar and the Catacombs and then along the Nile bank, taking our last adieu of the river we love. Alexandria is still a French town, and after Cairo cannot impress one as being especially attractive.

On Thursday, the 15th, we sailed for Messina on a small Italian boat and had a smooth voyage, a bright sky overhead and blue seas below us. The boat was a funny little tub, not very clean, and served the craziest meals you can imagine. Breakfast at 7:00, luncheon at 10:30, tea at 3:00, dinner at 6:30 and supper at 9:00. And the bill-of-fare consisted of such wild Italian messes that it upset me completely and I had indigestion for several days afterward.

We spent Sunday and most of Monday in Messina, which is a pleasant city with many quaint palaces. It is situated directly on the Straits of Messina and our window overlooked the Marina, where ships were loading with lemons for foreign ports. Sunday afternoon we drove out to the lighthouse to view the whirlpool of Charybdis, where a life boat is still kept to rescue

small craft drawn by the strong current into the dangerous whirlpool. Across the straits stands the rock of Scylla — plainly visible from where we stood. The day was so clear we could easily see Mt. Stromboli, on the Lipari Island, and the blue mountains of Calabria. I never before saw such bluey blue water or such various shades of blue. They range from delicate sky-blue to deep indigo blue; but they are never grey-blue or green-blue or yellow-blue — only just blue.

We left for Taormina Monday afternoon, and on our three-hours' ride in the dumpy Italian train had the mountains on one side of us and the glorious Mediterranean on the other. We left the train at Giardini, for the town of Taormina is three miles up the straight side of a mountain; at least the road leading up is three miles, but it makes many twists and turns, so that the town is about eight-hundred feet above the level of the sea. But the road is smooth as a boulevard, and the views at every turn are so delightful that no one wants to urge the creeping carriage horses to a faster gait.

Our hotel is perched upon an enormous rock rising sheer from the sea seven-hundred and fifty-eight feet below. Indeed, the rock is built right into the hotel. Our room faces south, and has a small iron balcony outside the French windows from which we can see across the Mediterranean to the Calabrian coast. At our right towers mighty Aetna, or Etna, as they call it here, capped by its eternal snows and crowned with the clouds of smoke that constantly issue from its crater. Green fields and orchards spread to the left, while below us are two pretty capes and the exquisite island gem known as Isola Bella. Such beauty and grandeur is seldom (if ever) united in one spot. The guide books say that Taormina is the most beautiful spot in Italy or Sicily, and one of the most beautiful in the world. If they would tell us where to find its equal we would go there; but concerning a peer to Taormina they maintain a discreet silence.

We plan to stay here three weeks, for L. F. must finish a book in order to save his publishers the expense of a cable every few days demanding the manuscript. He is writing in the terraced gardens of the hotel, where every flower you have ever heard of seems to be represented. There are many leafy bowers that are ideal spots for literary grinds.

Taormina was settled 700 B.C., but that seems like yesterday to me, remembering the antiquity of Egypt Yet they think it is old here, and when you approach a relic from the time of Christ they will say: "This is modern; it is no older than the Christian era." So all things remain, now as ever, comparative. The town was first Phoenician, then Greek, then the capital of the Slave Kings, and later a Roman settlement. The remains of a famous Greek theatre are here remarkably well preserved. It was built of brick, and

the stage and proscenium still stand, as well as a part of the arena. There are stone steps leading up to the seats which are worn half through by the feet of the ancients, and two of the seats still bear the names of their noble owners. There are spacious dressing-rooms on each side of the stage and large rooms where the wild beasts were kept. For here were not only presented tragedies, dramas and comedies, but the arena was the scene of many bloody fights between the gladiators and the wild beasts. The site is wonderful, for from the higher tiers of seats one can look over the proscenium and see majestic Etna and the distant blue seas. Also one may turn and observe the heights of Mola, two-thousand and eighty feet above the sea, with its old castle mantling the summit, and the ruined citadel upon a neighboring peak called Mt. Venere.

The town of Taormina is quaint and picturesque, abounding in side streets reached by flights of stone steps, queer archways, and buildings representing several different eras. The Messina Gate and the Catania Gate, at opposite ends of the town, are very old indeed, and part of the Roman wall connecting them still exists. The Normans at one time occupied Taormina, and some interesting bits of architecture remain to prove their skill as builders.

Baron Von Gloeden, who is a celebrated artist of Taormina, claims that the Greek type of physique remains today more perfect in Sicily than it does in Greece, since here there has been practically no intermarrying with other races. It was only after the conquest of Sicily and the magnificent empire established here, that the Greeks became a great nation, and the flower of their nobility always remained in this island.

Etna fascinates the dweller at Taormina. Sometimes she is entirely enveloped in clouds; at other times the mountain seems so near and is so distinct in every outline, that I almost believe I could put out my hand and touch it. It is 10,758 feet high: the highest volcano in Europe. The last rays of our golden sunsets always touch the crater of Etna and paint its smoke a flaming red. It is easy then to believe the volcano is belching fire, until the glow slowly fades, the brief twilight dies away and against the dark background of sky the venerable mountain sends its pillar of curling white smoke to join the cloud that always hovers above it.

LETTER IX. ANCIENT SYRACUSE

Hotel Villa Politi, Latomia di Cappuccini, Siracusa, Sicily

We made a brief stop at Catania, which lies at the foot of Mt. Etna, but found the place rather uninteresting. If one cares to climb the mountain he starts at Catania, but we did not wish to undertake the task and so came on here.

Modem Syracuse is beautifully located on the small island of Ortygia; now connected with the coast by a narrow neck of land. In former years, when this city was the center of the world's civilization, Syracuse also covered a large promontory to the north, having five districts which were called the five cities of Syracuse. Each had its own wall, traces of which still remain.

The sweep of the blue sea, which is guarded by distant, snowcapped Etna, is from this point indescribably beautiful. We are staying at a hotel situated on the edge of one of the latomie. These latomie were the former quarries from which all the stone to build ancient Syracuse was taken. They are several hundred feet in depth and today their sides are covered with masses of vines and shrubbery — even small trees growing out of some of the crevices. Our latomia, close by the Villa Politi, is the Cappuccini and has beautiful gardens at the bottom of it where flowers and fruit trees of all kinds flourish. It was here that seven-thousand Athenian captives were imprisoned and left to die.

We have visited the church of San Giovanni, founded in 1182. It has an exquisite rose window on one side and its porches are very picturesque. This edifice was built upon another church which was one of the most ancient in Sicily, for here St. Paul preached when he came to Syracuse. Here also St. Marcian suffered martyrdom, bound to one of the granite pillars which are still standing. Indeed the foundations and lower rooms of the older church are well preserved, and it was built in the form of a Greek cross. The frescoes are dim but still may be clearly traced.

Opening out of this church are the Catacombs, the largest in the world. The main passage is ten feet wide and eight feet high, and at intervals are large circular chambers, one containing an altar. The large excavations letting out of the passages had niches cut in them to contain the bodies of entire families. Sometimes these rock-hewn tombs were in perpendicular rows; then they would be cut horizontally around the excavation. Above some of the tombs are carved crosses, or pictures of the Saints, these last having little of the original coloring remaining. The Catacombs of Syracuse date from the fourth century A.D.

The Greek theatre at Syracuse is the largest of its kind extant. Forty-six

tiers of seats still remain, and it is estimated there were at least fifteen more. The eleven lower rows were covered with marble slabs, on which in some instances we can still decipher the names of their owners — such as King Hiero, Queen Philistis, and Nereis.

Near here is the Street of the Tombs, cut in the solid rock. On the rock passage between the rows of tombs are ruts worn by the wheels of passing chariots, and these ruts are worn much deeper than those at Pompeii. The imposing tombs that lined both sides of this street were rifled of their contents long ago. Reaching the top of the inclined street we obtained a view of all of the ruins of Syracuse. From here the Ionian Sea is superbly beautiful.

We also visited the Amphitheatre, a Roman structure of the time of Augustus. Many blocks of marble from the seats, still bearing the names of the proprietors, here also lie scattered about. This was the arena famed for gladiatorial fights and battles between captives and wild beasts. A short walk takes us to Hiero's Altar, a raised stone platform so vast in extent that upon it the king each year sacrificed four-hundred and fifty oxen at the same time.

The Latomia del Paradiso is considered the most beautiful of all the latomie on account of its luxuriant vegetation. The Ear of Dionysius is in this latomia, the shape of the grotto, which resembles an ear, being doubtless due to the rounding of the theatre which adjoins it. In this grotto the tearing of a piece of paper sounded like sawing wood, and when the attendant dropped to the earth an iron bar from the gate the noise was like a clap of thunder. I went up into the chamber, at the top of the "ear," where Dionysius used to station his spies that they might overhear what the prisoners said who were confined in the grotto below. I could understand what L. F. whispered a thousand feet distant.

On the island of Ortygia, where the main town now lies, we found the famed Fountain of Arethusa. Mythology states that here Diana turned the flying Arethusa into a fountain to save her from her pursuers. It is a pretty little pool, and here we first saw the papyrus plant growing. There is no longer any papyrus in Egypt, but here in Sicily, especially along the banks of the river Anapus, grow today the plants that were presented to the Romans by the king of Egypt, many centuries ago.

A former temple of Minerva is now a cathedral, but eleven of the old pillars of the temple still show in the walls. In his speech against Verres, Cicero described this temple as containing costly treasures. The ruins of a temple to Apollo, which must have been very beautiful, consist of many broken columns and the floor, with an interesting inscription on one of the steps. The modern city had been built on top of this temple, which has

recently been excavated.

The museum at Syracuse is an important one and contains many of the antiquities discovered on the island. It has a wonderful collection of coins, including the first piece of money ever minted, bearing the profile of Arethusa. One of the five famous Venuses of the world — the Venus Aphrodite — is in this museum. It is an exquisite work and second in beauty only to the Milo.

I forgot to mention one thing that interested me greatly in the Latomia del Paradisio. This was the "Roper's Grotto," where in the days of Siracusa's glory the ropemakers lived and worked. We found them there today, making rope in the same manner and in the same place. They claim they are the lineal descendants of the ropemakers of Dionysius, but we are inclined to doubt it. The acoustic properties of the Roper's Grotto are extraordinary. It adjoins the Ear of Dionysius.

LETTER X. THROUGH SICILY TO PALERMO

Palermo, Sicily

We left Siracusa at 8:30 in the morning and rode until 7:30 p m. to reach Girgenti, really crossing straight through the island at its center. It is a very mountainous country, and very beautiful. Every inch seems cultivated that could possibly be made fertile. The ground was covered with wild flowers of brilliant colors, red and yellow poppies appearing in great quantities. There were also many blue, white and purple flowers mingled with these, so that the effect was gorgeous, combined with the green of the fields and the purples and blues of the mountains. The mountains are frequently tipped with snowy clouds.

L. F. and I both were disappointed in the Temples at Girgenti. Although they are said to be the best Greek temples extant, and only rivaled by those at Paestum, they appear insignificant when compared with the great temples of Egypt which we have so lately seen. They are built of a soft limestone called tufa, which time, rain and sciroccos have disintegrated until the pillars and blocks of stone are full of holes like worm holes, and scarcely seem strong enough to hold together. Although fine examples of the Doric style, they not only fall behind the Egyptian temples in the matter of material used in construction, but also in dignity of design, in size and in workmanship.

Girgenti was the Greek city of Acragas, the Roman city of Agrigentum, in the middle ages a flourishing metropolis. The Temple of Juno Lacinia was built in the fifth century before Christ. All Greek temples are of similar construction and vary only in details. First is a vestibule, supported by fluted pillars five times as high as their diameter; then the pronoas, the cell or middle hall, and generally a pillared hall running around the three sides. In front of the temple is an altar where sacrifice is offered. Temples always face the east.

There are several ruined temples at Girgenti, the best preserved being the Temple of Concord, which afterward came into use as an early Christian church. The structures are most impressively located on a high bluff overlooking the sea. Today they are surrounded by green fields and wild flowers, and their delicate outlines, white from a distance, inspire us with a feeling that they are the ghosts of a bygone age and an obsolete religion.

Leaving Girgenti after twenty-four hours, which is ample time to examine the temples, an afternoon's ride by rail brought us to Palermo, the "City of the Golden Shell."

For some three thousand years Palermo has been called "the beautiful," and well deserves the name. It is surrounded on three sides by mountains, the

fourth side being the spacious shell-shaped harbor. From the balcony outside my window I can see Mt. Pellegrino, tinted soft blues at morning and evening, but golden hued in the light of the noonday sun.

Palermo remained always a Phoenician city until captured by the Romans 254 B.C. From them it passed to the Arabs, the Normans, the Byzantines, and then the Italians. Each people seems to have left its mark in architecture, and the town boasts monuments erected in all ages. The Palazzo Reale, or royal palace, still shows traces of its Saracen and Norman builders. Its many rooms are simply gorgeous and did not appeal to me at all, although L. F. insisted they were handsomely decorated. The rooms are all hung with bright colored silks, which the furniture matches. One room in Pompeiian style was the most attractive, but the glaring yellow, green, red, blue, purple and other rooms made my eyes ache. The palace has a Chinese room, a superb dance hall, a rose and ebony bedroom for the queen, which is filled with massive gilt furniture, and some elaborately decorated ante-rooms. The most enjoyable thing was the succession of magnificent views from the upper windows.

Connected with the Palazzo Reale is the wonderful Palatine Chapel, acknowledged the most beautiful chapel in all the world. It was built in 1132 by King Roger II and the walls are decorated on every inch with mosaics. These pictured mosaics are designed from Bible texts, and all the backgrounds are gold. The dome is seventy-five feet high and pierced by a row of narrow windows, through which the sun comes to glorify the decorations. The main ceiling of the chapel is in the style of the pointed Norman arch, and the wooden beams supporting it are carved and brilliantly colored. The most famous mosaics here are the picture of the Madonna over the altar and the figures of St. Peter and St. Paul on either side. It was Holy Week and we attended High Mass in this historic chapel. There were multitudes of priests and choir boys in full regalia and the ceremonies and music were very impressive. One noticeable thing in the chapel was a wonderful Norman candle-stick of the twelfth century, made of white marble and fifteen feet tall.

Around this chapel once ran a gallery supported by pillars of Egyptian granite, six of which remain. The wall of the gallery was covered with mosaics.

The Cathedral at Palermo was built in 1425 and boasts some remarkable bronze doors. Through constant restorations but little of the original building remains, but here are still the tombs of the great kings. We saw the sarcophagi of King Roger I, his daughter Constance, wife of Henry VI, Frederick II, William, his son, and Henry VI. Some are constructed of

porphyry and others of marble, but all are finely carved. There is some good statuary in this cathedral.

The Martorana is a church erected in 1143. The interior was formerly covered with glass mosaics, but after it was given in charge of the nuns in 1433 they had most of the pictures picked out. Two curious pictures remain, examples of the earliest mosaic work. One is of King Roger receiving his crown from Christ, instead of the Pope. The other shows an Admiral of King Roger's groveling at the feet of the Virgin. His body is more like that of a turtle than of a man. The floor dates from 1143 and is all of marble mosaics. The exterior of a Martorana shows Norman towers and arches, and the Saracens, who doubtless used it for other purposes, added a gallery supported by pillars of Egyptian granite.

San Giovanni is a little older, being erected in 1132. It was once a mosque, and still rears its five domes toward the sky. The interior is in the form of the Egyptian cross — a T-cross — and its frescoes are of the twelfth century. Many noble Normans were here burned to death. Connected with it are charmingly pretty cloisters, with slender, graceful columns.

The public park called Villa Giulia is one of the city's sights. It runs along the edge of the sea and contains many fine statues, the most famous being that of the brothers Canaris, the Greek naval heroes. This is a remarkably fine piece. The brothers are in their boat, peering ahead, while the wind blows their hair streaming back from their expressive faces. In the botanical gardens adjoining the park are specimens from every part of the world. Palermo has the smallest donkeys in the world — no bigger than good-sized dogs. They draw huge two-wheeled carts which hide the animals entirely, when viewed from the rear, and make you wonder for an instant if the moving carts are automobiles.

La Favorita was the villa of Ferdinand IV, built in the Chinese style, and is famous for its fine views and beautiful grounds.

A thing that impressed us was our visit to the catacombs connected with the Cappucini Convent. It was here that, after being embalmed for a year, the nobility and priests of Palermo were laid on shelves or suspended from the walls or ceiling during the period between 1557 and 1885. After that the government put a stop to the gruesome practice. My, what a sight they were! The mummified bodies were dressed in gorgeous clothing and grinned at you from every side. Imagine how horrible it must have been for their friends to visit them and find them thus! To see this awful sight is to become a convert to cremation, for such dead bodies are disgusting. Some of the women's grinning skulls were set off by laces and furbelows. One of the most natural bodies was that of a general of Garibaldi's, whose face was composed and

dignified; but usually the flesh is shrunken and clings to the bones. They did not know the Egyptian process of embalming.

The splendid cathedral of Monreale is situated about five miles from the city, right up in the mountains, and the drive there was delightful. The building is in the form of a Latin cross and was built in 1186. The beautiful bronze doors are world renowned, and bear reliefs by famous artists depicting scenes in sacred history. The interior is in the Arabian style, with a pointed roof supported by eighteen columns of granite and a floor of solid marble mosaic. But the glass mosaics of the walls, the pulpit and choir are really wonderful, and stand today unrivaled. The mosaics cover an area of 70,400 square feet, and every inch is the work of a master of the art. The picture of Christ, over the pulpit, has been copied so extensively that it is well known to everyone. Aside from the bewildering array of pictured mosaics, the decorations show artistic scrolls and geometrical designs, circles, etc. And the wood carving is beautiful, especially the scenes depicting the history of the Passion, done in 1690. One of the small rooms is lined with Sicilian marble, exquisitely carved in relief with angels and sacred scenes.

I know well my inability to describe this wonderful place to you, for it bewilders the eye and stuns the mind with its magnificence and wealth of detail, and words are poor tools with which to reproduce it all. Even the guide books halt in describing Monreale, but those who see it never forget its marvels.

The cloisters connected with this cathedral are considered the largest and finest in existence. There are two hundred and sixteen pairs of columns supporting the arches, and the capital of every column is different. Many are adorned with mosaics, many beautifully carved, others gain distinction from their very simplicity. The view of Palermo and the sea from Monreale is fine.

We have visited La Cuba, a former Arabian palace now used for barracks, and the Villa Tosca, known for its ponds and fountains and its lovely gardens. The museum at Palermo is very interesting and contains a rare collection of antiques. It excels in wood carvings, bronzes and some exquisite altar pieces and other paintings by old masters.

LETTER XI. NAPLES AND VESUVIUS

Naples, Italy

We arrived at Naples from Palermo this morning, entering the bay just as another eruption of Vesuvius occurred. The mountain has been acting badly for some weeks, and people are worried when the wind blows the ashes and scoria over the city. We don't know whether this is the last of the eruption or only the beginning, and people seem to look on it as we would a heavy rain or an early frost — something disagreeable but inevitable.

As we landed the sun was shining brilliantly upon a city covered in ashes. Over everything the ashes lie four inches deep, and that is a good deal. Great piles of ashes, many feet high, are being swept into the sides of the road, where they will be carted away in time. The city is in sunshine today, because the wind is blowing the smoke from Vesuvius in another direction; but we can only see the mountain itself at night, when the fires light it up, because it is enveloped in its own clouds.

Everything is so very dirty here that we intend to remain but a few days and then go to Sorrento, just across the bay. We walked in the park today — ankle deep in ashes, and the trees droop under their weight as snow-covered pines do in mid-winter. They try to keep the statuary dusted off, but it's hard work. In the park is the Aquarium, which is one of the sights of Naples because it is considered the finest in the world. The rare fishes displayed there are interesting and beautiful. I noticed a number of electric rays, which emitted electric flashes of delicate rainbow tints. They are themselves perfectly transparent, and you can see the electricity run around them. Other curious things were blue eels that resembled snakes, pinkish-white "angel fish" with wings, which swim backward or forward at will; octopi, which are awful looking things; fish that looked like plants in blossom, and could draw the blossoms back into the upright stalks; fish like blown-up bladders, pure white and orange-yellow in color, and many other swimming things that I had never even heard of. And then the corals growing in these tanks were very lovely, being varieties of red, pink, white and yellow coral built in branches like trees by tiny insects.

We tried to drive along the Pasilipo this afternoon, but the ashes were so deep that the fashionable driveway was almost deserted, and shortly we abandoned the attempt.

Naples is built on a hillside running down to its beautiful circular bay, and the streets are in tiers, one above the other, so that the views are fine. But now the smoke from Vesuvius is coming our way again, and great roars, caused by explosions of gases, come booming from the volcano at intervals;

so it is impossible for us to see much of the city or even to "hear ourselves think."

Last night Vesuvius shot up flames hundreds of feet high, which lighted up everything for miles and miles around. We could also see the hot lava flowing from its sides. Today it has poured out heavy clouds of black smoke, but late this afternoon the wind shifted and we could see the mountain. The white ash makes it look as if covered with snow. Tomorrow we are to go with Colonel and Mrs. Angeli, to whom we had letters of introduction, to visit some towns reported destroyed by the eruption. The Colonel's regiment occupies the military barracks at Naples. I expect to enjoy the excursion and there is little danger. This is said to be the worst eruption since Pompeii was destroyed. The shape of the mountain has changed and it has lost nearly a quarter its height. Yesterday there were terrible explosions like the firing of a cannon, but today only one explosion has been heard.

With three strong horses in a row drawing our carriage, we rode from nine in the morning until nine at night, visiting the towns destroyed by the eruption. Colonel Angeli did not go officially, but his uniform was a passport everywhere, and we saw things denied to ordinary tourists. On our way to Torre Annunziata we passed through small villages where the dust and ashes reached the second-story windows, being shoveled in banks from the center of the street, as we shovel snow. The nearer we drew to the volcano the more beautiful it became, with its columns of white, grey and black smoke rising from many fissures in its sides; and also it became more menacing and grand.

The town of Bosco Trecase, which was overwhelmed by a stream of lava, looked as if a cyclone had struck it. The lava would go a certain distance, then turn abruptly aside and make unaccountable twists and turns, for it seems any irregularity of the ground affects the direction of its flow. We walked on lava so hot that it burned my shoes, and it was still glowing and smoking in places, although the general surface looked like lumps of pumice stone. Nearly all the buildings in the town were destroyed. In one place the lava flowed into a cellar and covered many casks of wine that were aging there, but did little damage to the house itself. In another place burned away the doors of a church and stopped its flow just within the entrance. The Italians claim the Madonna arrested the threatened destruction. Houses went down like paper before the lava stream, and vineyards, gardens and fields were covered deep. Wherever the lava lies no vegetation will ever grow again.

From this town we went to San Giuseppe, where one-hundred and twenty-five people were killed in a church by its roof falling. They had assembled there to pray for deliverance from the rain of small stones that descended

upon them, and perished instantly. This rain of stones came in one night, and so weighted down the roofs of the houses that ninety percent of them fell in. At seven in the morning it was like midnight; the people could not go out because the descending stones cut their faces; so they huddled in their dwellings until the roofs crashed down upon them. All the vegetation is gone around here, ashes and scoria covering the ground many feet in depth. It was such a rain of ashes that destroyed Pompeii, only of course much more fell at that time. The dust is suffocating. I cannot imagine how those poor people can stay there; but they huddle around the wreck of their homes, miserable but seemingly resigned. Soldiers are everywhere engaged in tearing down the tottering walls of houses which are a menace to life if left standing.

We found it difficult to get to this town, because the roads were so heavy with ashes. We are very near the foot of the volcano. The streets are filled with Red Cross tents where the injured are being cared for.

We pushed on a way to the town of Ottajano, which is in the same plight as San Giuseppe. Cook's cog-wheel railway that led up the mountain to the crater has been totally destroyed.

Yesterday we spent the day at Pompeii, but I am going to describe that in another letter. Today I am staying in the hotel, because I am so tired. We shopped a little this morning and are to dine with Mrs. Angeli this evening. By the way, I must speak of a wonderful modern church we stopped to visit at Pompeii, on our way to San Giuseppe. Near it an ancient painting of the Madonna was excavated which was found to possess remarkable healing powers, so the church was built around the Madonna. Those who have been cured by the portrait have brought their offerings to this church, which is built of marble. The interior has a frieze around it two feet deep, of silver, and also boasts many silver panels of great size. The old painting has a halo of diamonds above it, and many more precious stones are scattered over the figure, all votive offerings from the people. The Madonna is suspended over the pulpit, and is under glass.

Yesterday and today we spent at the National Museum, which contains one of the finest exhibits of marble statuary in the world, and the very best collection of bronze statues and utensils in existence. All the bronze masterpieces of the world are here, and to me they are exceedingly beautiful, having a warmth that marble cannot rival. But I love the marbles, too. The Greeks were certainly marvelous sculptors, for they were able to reproduce every muscle and vein of the human body to perfection. Here is Praxiteles' bust of Psyche, called the masterpiece of Greek art, and the famous Venus Victrix. Some fine figures of gladiators attracted me; one, the Dying Gladiator, is so perfectly executed that it is easy to read the agony upon his

face. I admired a superb bust of Homer, and noticed that the celebrated bust of Nero had a weak mouth and chin, such as you would expect in the tyrant. The statue of Tiberius has a cruel mouth, too, and you may see here the reproductions of all the famous Roman Emperors and read their characters in their faces.

Several beautiful figures and busts of Isis prove how extensive was the worship of Isis in Greece and Rome. Most of the bronzes came from Herculaneum and Pompeii, and those of Herculaneum may be distinguished from their darker color. What magnificent cities these must have been in their prime, with all their wealth of art! A great bronze statue of Nero on horseback was found on top a triumphal arch in Pompeii. Other exceptional bronzes are the Dancing Faun and the Drunken Faun, Narcissus, and Mercury in Repose. This last is said to be the most perfect bronze of antiquity. The Drunken Faun lies on an empty wine skin with a merry look on his face. There are many odd figures for fountains, and bronze busts of famous men, such as Demosthenes. The defect in the orator's speech is clearly indicated by the artist.

The museum has a fine collection of frescoes taken from Pompeii. Many are in perfect condition, and are really wonderful. The subjects are mythological, or pictures of gods and goddesses; but we find birds, dogs, chickens, cats, etcetera, represented. Also many flowers, which they were fond of depicting. An important and very beautiful mosaic was taken from the House of the Faun, at Pompeii, and represents the battle between Alexander the Great and Darius the Persian. There are sixteen horses and 26 men in this piece, the color of the stones so exquisitely blended that they seem like an oil painting. In many mosaics are shown the lotus flower and papyrus of Egypt. One beautiful statue of Isis with the cistern was taken from the Temple of Isis at Pompeii.

Comparing the Roman statuary with the Grecian you can at once distinguish it by its bulkiness and bigness, Grecian art being more dainty and graceful. The important Roman statuary was mostly found in the Baths of Carracala at Rome.

For several hours today we examined the collection of household utensils and ornaments from Pompeii. Practically everything is of bronze, and even the commonest utensil is artistically designed. Whatever was worthy of use, was to them worthy of being beautiful. Their sauce-pans, spoons, etcetera, were often inlaid with silver; there is a superb figure of Venus inlaid in silver in the center of a colander. Their lamps and candelabra were exquisitely designed. We noticed ivory theatre tickets, dice, knuckle-bones; a wealth of glassware with iridescent tints and delicate shapes; some that had raised

work, like cameos; stoves, arranged to heat water and cook at the same time; bedsteads inlaid with silver; exquisite marble tables, some with mosaic tops; scales and weights of all kinds; musical instruments, including flutes and bagpipes; ink-stands — one with ink still in it — and pens such as we use today; many surgical instruments, a large collection being taken from one house in Pompeii now called "The House of the Surgeon," and including forceps, speculum, catheters, knives and lancets; bronze dental instruments for filling teeth; folding tables; richly engraved silver cups, plates, bowls, spoons, forks, knives; ladies' toilet articles in bronze and silver and glass, including mirrors and a pot with some rouge still in it; rings of gold set with precious stones (three that were excavated still have the finger-bones inside the rings, showing they were worn at the time of the city's destruction), elegant gold necklaces, bracelets and earrings set with pearls; moulds for shaping jellies and sixteen large saucepans of solid silver handsomely worked. They must have had more reliable servants than we have today.

I enumerate this list to prove that "there is nothing new under the sun." Pompeii was buried on the 24th of August, 79 A.D., but two thousand years later we find we have few conveniences they did not possess, and their households were much more artistically furnished than are ours. Taken from the ruined city are garden tools, including a hoe such as is used in Naples today; parts of harness, the buckles and ornaments being often magnificent; fishing tackle of many sorts — in fact, the ancients must have lived much as we do, if we may judge from these evidences. Take their food-stuffs, which are in a separate room of the museum. Eighty-six loaves of bread were found in one bake-oven in Pompeii, and it looks yet as if it might have been good when twenty centuries fresher. The loaves are round and marked with lines like the spokes of a wheel. Also there are olives, wine, oil — these in bottles or jugs — nuts, figs, grain of all kinds, flour, pepper and other spices; beans, candies, etcetera.

There are some beautiful silver baskets taken from Pompeii, and many small busts and figures in bronze and marble that are simply exquisite. I can well imagine how elegant their houses must have been, and how fine it is that these things have been discovered and preserved to teach us the life of a people almost coincident with the time of Christ.

The Naples Museum would entertain us for a month, and we feel that the examination of its treasures has been a liberal education to us.

The ashes from Vesuvius still fall. In the morning we leave by boat for Sorrento.

LETTER XII. POMPEII

Sorrento

Pompeii originally covered a spot two miles in circumference. It was surrounded by two walls fourteen feet thick and twenty-five feet high. It had eight gates. Only about one-third of the buried city has been excavated, but this seems to be the most important part, for it has uncovered the Forum and the temples. The streets are narrow, the widest being twenty-four feet while the narrow ones average fourteen feet. They are well paved with heavy blocks of lava and the wheels of wagons or chariots have worn deep ruts in them. Next to the buildings were narrow sidewalks raised ten inches above the pavement, to protect foot passengers from reckless drivers, and nearly every intersection of streets had its public fountain. These last were fed with lead pipes, which also conveyed water into the houses, and in some places the pipes and their bronze faucets still remain. High stepping-stones were used for crossings, as in case of a heavy rain the narrow streets would be converted into water-courses. As I walked over these stepping-stones, worn smooth by the passage of many feet, I could not help reflecting upon the unwritten history of the people who had once used them, and wondering what it might be, and what had become of all those who once thronged this voluptuous and pleasure-loving city. The water of the fountains generally flowed from the mouth of a mask. Masks of gods and animals were much affected by the Pompeiians. The houses were freely decorated with frescoes and mosaics, the red and yellow colors predominating. Concrete or brick was the building material, with large stones at the corners, and the exteriors as well as interiors were often surfaced with veneers of marble or staff, the latter being painted and decorated.

The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 63, and had not been entirely rebuilt when the ashes from Vesuvius entombed it in 79. The houses were usually two-storied, the servants being quartered above, and there is little variety of architecture shown. The houses of the people were all small, those of the nobles very large and built around a central court. Every house, however, had separate apartments for men and women. A reservoir was placed in the center of each court, and the roofs sloped toward it and extended so that the rain-water fed the pool. Stone or marble pillars supported the roof. Many small rooms, including bed chambers, opened upon this court, and here the master of the house received his guests. The rooms had no windows, light and air coming from the doorways. Facing the entrance was generally the shrine of the household gods. Back of the first court and connected with it by a hall was the inner court, rich in flower beds

and bronze and marble statuary, with many terms of gods and goddesses. A favorite decoration of these courts was a row of grinning masks, made of marble or staff. Off from the inner court were the drawing rooms, dining and banquet rooms, kitchens and cellars. The family lived here, mostly occupying the beautiful uncovered court.

The friezes and decorations of all the rooms were elaborate and brilliant, yet in excellent taste. The dining rooms were decorated with fish, fowl and fruits, the chambers with flowers or dancing Bacchantes, the halls and reception rooms with mythological subjects and revelries of the gods and goddesses. Excellent art is often displayed, and also much that is coarse and sensual. The most beautiful house yet excavated is the House of the Vettei, which has been restored so that it fairly resembles the condition in which it formerly existed. Here the paintings and marbles are exquisite. In the kitchen the bronze utensils still remain upon the stove or hanging upon the walls — just as they were two-thousand years ago. The House of the Golden Cupids has lately been excavated, so called because the prevailing color of the decorations was golden yellow and the subjects mostly cupids. Here are many beautiful marbles and fine mosaic floors. The Mosaic floor I saw in the museum, depicting the battle between Darius and Alexander, was taken from the House of the Faun — named from the bronze statue of the Dancing Faun, which was found there. Frequently the word “Have” or “Salve” is inlaid in mosaics at the entrance, and in the case of the House of the Tragic Poet (which Bulwer made famous) the vestibule has a fine mosaic of a black dog, with the legend “Cave Canem.”

We entered Pompeii from the Sea Gate, which is still standing but divested of its marble. The museum is near the entrance, and here are the twisted and revolting forms of many who perished when the city was buried. It appears that when they fell in an open place the ashes hardened around them and made a mold of their bodies. In time the bodies themselves disintegrated, but the mold remained, as did the bones inside them. The excavators, when they came across these natural molds, poured plaster of paris into them, and so obtained a perfect cast of those ancient ones who thus miserably perished. Many were lying on their faces, and usually their limbs are contorted with agony.

We next entered the Basilica, which was the Hall of justice and the market place in rainy days, being roofed. It was undergoing repairs from the earthquake of 63, and being improved, as marble columns were replacing those of tufa. The Temple of Apollo has a court of forty-eight columns, back of which is a raised platform approached by steps, with the altar before it. There is a sun-dial in the court, which is decorated with plaster casts of the

gods. We visited the Forum next, which impressed me with its size and beauty. It is in the exact center of the town. To the right is a temple to Jupiter, to the left a colonnade. At one end is the large platform, approached by a flight of stairs, where the public debates and addresses were made. There were twenty-two pedestals for statuary, five of which bear inscriptions of dedication. In a niche was found a table upon which were standard weights and measures. Passing two large triumphal arches, formerly covered with marble, we came to the Baths of the Forum, where there is a large court for the bathers to exercise. The bath was one of the most popular luxuries of this people, it seems. There were cold and hot pools, showers and private tubs, barber rooms, rest rooms with reclining benches, rooms for anointing and perfuming the body. One room had lockers for clothing. All the walls were elaborately decorated.

The Temple of Mercury has a marble altar with beautiful reliefs carved upon it. Other interesting sights were the Herculaneum Gate, erected in the time of Augustus; the small but beautiful Temple of Isis; the House of the Surgeon; the great theatre, divided into three sections for persons of different ranks and capable of seating five-thousand people; the barracks for the gladiators, back of the theatre, and the prison. In this prison were found three bodies with their feet in iron stocks. Many gladiatorial weapons were found near the barracks. It is said all the performances at the theatres took place in the daytime. A small theatre, seating 1,500, is much better preserved than the large one.

I think I neglected to say that many of the dwelling houses had shops located in the part facing the street, those of the wealthier nobles being no exception; but these shops had no connection with the residence part. Many marble counters and huge jars of oil and wine were found in these shops, which are very numerous. In the bakeries they ground the grain to flour as well as baked it, and the mills and ovens are still intact. Also there were laundries, with tubs and racks for drying clothes.

The large amphitheatre seated twenty-thousand people, and has three series of seats and a gallery.

All the while we were in Pompeii the ashes from Vesuvius fell steadily upon it, and while this lent a certain historic charm to the place that a similar rain of ashes had once destroyed, it made dirty walking and cast a haze over the landscape. We could not see the volcano at all — only thick clouds of smoke.

I will close this rambling description of Pompeii by pointing out where modern politicians got their electioneering methods. On many of the walls facing the streets are big signs in red letters advising the people to vote for

this or that man and recounting his merits and public services. One says: “Marcellus loves the poor; the poor will vote for Marcellus.” I suppose Marcellus loved the poor until after election.

LETTER XIII. SORRENTO AND AMALFI

Sorrento

In the gardens of the Hotel Victoria, filled with avenues of noble trees, good statuary, flowers and climbing vines of wisteria, I have been resting from my recent energetic sightseeing and L. F. has been finishing a book. We have some busy weeks ahead of us, and must renew our strength now or not at all.

They dance the tarantella here in the old-fashioned way, a troupe of peasants being trained especially for the performance. We have seen them twice, in a hall in the basement of the hotel, where they dance every night in the season, accompanied by a fine mandolin orchestra of twenty pieces. The tarantella is a graceful, pretty dance, and the peasants in native costume are laughing and gay and seem to enjoy it as much as the spectators. Sorrento is famous for its inlaid wood work, some specimens of which are really wonderful in execution. It is a quaint, delightful town, extending about a mile along the bluff that overhangs the sea. In the square is a fine statue of Tasso, whose birthplace was Sorrento.

The drive to Amalfi has been our greatest pleasure. We made it in one day, rolling along the smooth road that winds in and out the cliffs and overhangs the sea from one hundred to five hundred feet. The road is on the very edge, being cut from the cliff itself and protected only by a low stone parapet from the terrible gulf below. The way is one succession of beautiful pictures; towns clinging to the mountain side, or perched on little peaks, or clustered in deep coves at the edge of the sea; old Saracen ruins, watch-towers erected to prevent the landing of pirates; orange and lemon groves; vineyards that overhang the road on trellises, and below us always the bright blue sea. Never for more than a few moments is the road straight; point after point juts out toward the sea, and we have to follow its outline.

We reached Amalfi about noon and lunched in an old Cappuccini convent which has now become a hotel. The chapel connected with it and the cloisters — dating from the 11th century — are still intact and very interesting. We had to walk up two-hundred steps to get to this place, and from the vine covered cloisters is obtained one of the most beautiful views in Italy.

Amalfi was an old Saracen town and its fine cathedral was formerly a mosque. It is built on the side of the mountain and in a little hollow by the sea. Some of its streets are mere flights of steps, where only goats and humans can travel. We returned home in time for a late dinner, greatly delighted by the day's excursion.

Many famous authors, among them F. Marion Crawford, have villas in

Sorrento, and it seems an ideal place to write — or to do anything, or nothing, for that matter. We shall be sorry when our quiet days here are over and Rome forces us to get busy again.

LETTER XIV. ROME

Rome

It is five hours from Naples to Rome, over a not very interesting route. We got here at 3 p m. and after settling at the hotel went for a long walk to get a small idea of the village of Romulus and Remus. We got a small one. Visited one of the great parks and saw a bit of the old Roman wall and the royal palace. We have engaged a reliable guide to "sic" us at the sights tomorrow morning.

The population of the town is now a half million — it was a million and a half in the fourth century — and of these ten thousand are priests and ten thousand soldiers. There are 365 churches, probably erected to accommodate the priestly population and to make tourists nervous.

Having doubtless heard that Rome was not built in a day you may imagine it takes several days to inspect the relics of its past greatness. I shall take it for granted you've never read about Rome, because I want to tell you what I've seen.

The Pantheon is the best preserved of the ancient Roman buildings, and its massive bronze doors still remain. The walls are twenty feet thick and the great dome is one-hundred and forty feet in diameter. It has a thirty-foot opening in the top, admitting light and rain impartially. The walls are circular, being made to support the dome, and in front of it is a portico with massive pillars, built by the Emperor Hadrian. The dome of St. Peter's was copied from that of the Pantheon by Michelangelo. Inside, just beneath the dome, are seven large niches in which formerly stood the statues of the gods. The place is now used for a church. In its walls are the tombs of Humbert, Victor Emmanuel II, and Raphael. All the bronze, marble and porphyry of the Pantheon was taken away to assist in building other churches.

In Rome are sixteen obelisks brought from Egypt by Augustus Cœsar. Near the Pantheon is a small one perched upon the back of a bronze elephant. The largest obelisk stands in front of St. Peter's, and there is only one that is larger remaining in Egypt. This of St. Peter's came from Karnak, and it must have been a great task to lug it here.

The Coliseum impressed me more than anything I have seen out of Egypt. It was four tiers in height, but only one side still has the four stories. The first three tiers consist of arches supported by pillars of Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Roman design, the Doric occupying the lower floor. The highest wall has windows. An immense awning used to cover the entire enclosure. The emperors sat on a raised platform in the lower circle, opposite them being placed the Vestal Virgins on a similar elevation. Between and around them

were the seats for the senators and the nobility. The second circle was occupied by the middle class men, the third by the women, and the top was devoted to the common people. There are two entrances to the arena, one called the gate of life and the other the gate of death. The gladiator entered at the life gate, paused before the emperor and said: "Cœsar, being about to die, I salute you." They carried his body out at the other gate. The Coliseum seated eighty-thousand people. Beneath the arena are rooms wherein were kept the wild beasts and theatrical apparatus. This enormous building was constructed in three and a half years, fifty-thousand Jewish slaves accomplishing the task. It was completed in the year 80.

Near the Coliseum is the triumphal Arch of Constantine, which has three archways and is faced with marble beautifully carved. Near, also, are the Baths of Titus and the Golden House of Nero. The frescoes of the latter were liberally copied by Raphael, and it is an interesting place. Nero's dining-room still has marble mosaics on a portion of the floor, and part of the walls are yet faced with marble. This room had an immense fountain in it, and back of that a stage where dancing girls amused him as he ate. In the kitchen may be seen the great oven, and in the bedroom of Mrs. Nero is the pedestal on which was found the statue of Apollo Belvidere. Traces of the elaborate frescoes still remain. The baths of Titus were built on top of this house, so the two are now badly mixed.

The much ruined Temple of Venus is in this neighborhood, and so is the triumphal Arch of Titus Vespatian, built to commemorate his defeat of the Jews in A.D. 70. The reliefs on the arch depict his battles. From the Arch of Titus we could see the Forum and part of the pavement of the Sacred Way, which is made of lava blocks. The principal feature of the Forum of Trajan is Trajan's great Column, erected in 114. Around it and extending from bottom to top is a spiral band of bas-reliefs illustrating scenes in the Dacian war. Two-thousand five-hundred people are represented, besides horses and other animals, gun-machines and military equipment. The figures of the men are two and a half feet high. Once a statue of Trajan stood on top of this column, but now a saint occupies his place. We afterward saw a similar column, that of Marcus Aurelius, bearing reliefs depicting the German wars of that emperor. But Marcus Aurelius has had to descend from his perch on its summit to make way for St. Paul, who now monopolizes the view. There are inside stairways to the top of both these lofty columns.

At the church of St. Peter in Chains we viewed the identical chains St. Peter wore while in prison, but more important than those was Michael Angelo's "last work," the superb statue of Moses, which stands within the nave. It is related of the sculptor that when he had finished this figure he

found it so life-like that he slapped its knee with his hand and cried: “Now speak!” Indeed, every vein and muscle is clearly indicated by the chisel and the pose is perfect.

The old Roman ruins were despoiled to furnish columns for nearly all the more modern churches. The church of St. Mary Maggiore has forty Ionic columns, thirty-six of marble and four of granite. They are ranged twenty on each side. The ceiling and floor have fine mosaics of the fifth century. The high altar consists of a basin of porphyry, and the canopy is upheld by four porphyry pillars.

The ceiling is gilded with the first gold brought to Rome from South America. It is built in the form of a Latin cross and in the wings are two exquisite chapels. In one is a beautiful and ancient baptismal font and ten pillars — all of porphyry — with many finely executed marbles of saints and popes. The other chapel is beautiful in colored marbles, with quantities of lapis lazuli and rare agates.

St. Mary the Greater owes its existence to a miracle. While the country was suffering from lack of rain the pope prayed to St. Mary for relief and in a vision she told him he would find snow in a certain place next morning. He found it, all right, and built this church on the spot. I don’t know what finding snow had to do with a lack of rain; but, anyhow, we saw the church. Each year, at the date of the miracle, mass is celebrated here, accompanied by an imitation snowfall of cotton.

The churches of Italy have no seats, so there is nothing to detract from the beauty of the interiors.

The cathedral of St. Peter’s, considered the largest and most beautiful in the world, dates in its present form from the fifteenth century. Its bronze doors belonged to the original edifice which stood in the same spot and was erected in the time of Constantine. It faces a square in which is the huge obelisk, with fountains on either side, and elliptical pillared porticoes stretch out great arms from either wing. The church itself I shall not attempt to describe, but I must mention that the huge size of everything about it, even to the statues inside, is so admirably proportioned that one cannot fully appreciate the immensity of the structure until you compare it with the size of a human being standing beside a column. The interior mosaics are so beautiful that you can scarcely believe they are not paintings; eighty-thousand shades of color are employed. The wealth of statuary includes masterpieces of Michelangelo, Bernini and Canova. Here is also the “first work” of Michelangelo, executed when he was but eighteen years old. It represents the Madonna holding the dead Christ on her lap. The thirteenth century bronze statue of “St. Peter” has a toe worn smooth by the kisses of

the people. Once a year they dress this statue in magnificent raiment, and the faithful come to adore it. St. Peter, by the way, reposes beneath the great dome. One curious thing about the church is that it maintains confessionals attended by priests who speak every language known on earth, so that here every human being may confess in his own language and receive an absolution he can understand. Here are the tombs of all the popes. In the floor near the entrance is set a round slab of porphyry on which many emperors have stood to be crowned. At the ends of the pillared porticoes are fine statues of Constantine and Charlemagne, the two pagan emperors converted to Christianity.

We went into a room and saw all the gorgeous vestments of the Cardinals, many in cloth of gold or silver elaborately embroidered and with precious stones sewn on them. We also saw many of the late Pope's jubilee presents — much gold and silver and precious stones. In a crypt underneath the cathedral we were shown a casket containing St. Peter's clothing, now only valuable through association. In this crypt is some of the original floor with its old mosaics. St. Peter's wooden chair is on the bronze altar, and ninety-five lamps are kept constantly burning around it.

The Capitoline Hill is the highest of the seven hills of Rome. It was here that Romulus established the altar of refuge for outlaws, who if they managed to reach the altar, were forgiven their crimes. The ancient buildings have all disappeared, and facing the square are now the two museums and the palace, designed by Michelangelo. Before the palace is a fountain flanked with the river gods of the Tiber and the Nile, while in the center is the statue of Roma. The prominent figure in the piazza is the huge bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, the same to which Otto the Great hung the murdered form of Peter the Perfect by the hair of his head. It was preserved from destruction by the early Christians because they supposed it to be a statue of Constantine. The museums contain a rich collection of fragments of sculpture taken from old Roman ruins, and also some remarkable bits of statuary. Here is the Dying Gladiator, the Dancing Faun, two fine black marble Centaurs, and a room containing the busts of the emperors of Rome — the most complete collection in existence. Another room contains busts of celebrated characters of antiquity. Also I must mention that here is the Capitoline Venus, which was found on the Quirinal — undoubtedly a Greek work, from its fineness of execution — and the group called Cupid and Psyche. An interesting relic is the marble plan of ancient Rome, which has been of great value to scholars. The bronze Capitoline Wolf dates from the sixth century, the figures of Romulus and Remus suckling it being added at a later date and rather detracting from its beauty. Another marble of note is the

much copied Thorn Extractor — the boy picking a thorn out of his foot.

In paintings the Capitoline Museum contains several masterpieces by Van Dyck and Titian, the "St. Sabastian" by Guido Reni, Rubens' "Romulus and Remus," and "St. John the Baptist," a beautiful creation. But the majority of the pictures here are uninteresting.

I am not attempting to put our wanderings into proper order, and you must not imagine many of these things can be properly seen in one day; but they've all been seen at one time or another during our stay at Rome. Our guide, who is something of a scholar himself, makes it a point to disagree with everyone who has written about ancient Rome, and he scorns the guide books utterly; still we find him useful as a "guide post."

The Tiber of today is just as yellow and muddy as history declaims it. On its further bank, where Cincinnatus once ploughed his fields, stands the Tomb of Hadrian, an immense round structure eighty yards in diameter. Once it was covered with marble, with rows of statuary on the top, and here were buried the emperors and their families from Hadrian to Caracalla. To get back to town we cross the Bridge of the Angels, built by Hadrian in 139 A.D. Later Bernini, whose taste as a sculptor is considered doubtful, erected upon it the ten colossal angels which gave it its name, in 1688.

As we drive down the Corso, past Hilda's Tower, and come again to St. Peter's, I remember a couple of things about the cathedral that I neglected to mention. The original St. Peter's was founded by Constantine on the site of Nero's Circus, where three-thousand Christians perished in three days. The bronze statue of St. Peter — that with the much kissed toe — was (and is) a statue of Jupiter, having Jupiter's head and his keys. For Jupiter, being the chief god of the pagan pantheon, held the keys to Olympus, and the keys being a part of the figure, they named it "St. Peter of the Keys" and added a halo, which has made old Jove quite complacent ever since.

And now we come to the Vatican, the largest palace in the world and the home of countless treasures of art and antiquity. Among its famous marbles are "Venus at the Bath,"

"Apollo Belvidere," and the "Mercury" of Praxiteles, the father of Greek sculpture. In the "animal room" are some magnificent dogs executed by Praxiteles. Indeed, the Vatican museum is one vast treasure-house, and to describe its beautiful contents is to me an impossibility and would require a lot of stationery. San Raphael's wonderful tapestries, depicting the history of the New Testament, impressed me greatly. The colorings and shadings are simply marvelous.

In the Sistine chapel we admired Michelangelo's great paintings, which occupied him for seven years. He allowed no one to assist him, as he wished

to preserve his secret for mixing colors. The ceiling is a series of pictures representing The Creation. You examine these by holding a mirror in your hand and looking down at the reflection in it of the paintings above it. It is said the artist copied his idea of the Creation from the mosaics at Monreale, which were done in the eleventh century, while Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel in the fifteenth century. On the wall behind the altar is the famous "Last Judgment," sixty-four by thirty-two feet in size. It is a queer mingling of Christian and Pagan ideas. Christ is the central figure, surrounded by His apostles and the saints. On one side are the saints being pulled back by devils and supported by angels. On the other side are the sinners trying to ascend to Christ. Lower down are shown those in purgatory on the one side, and in hell on the other. There is a legend that the Pope's master of ceremonies, one Biagio of Cesena, censured this picture, which so incensed the artist that he made a portrait of the master of ceremonies among those who were in hell. Biagio appealed to the Pope to have the portrait blotted out, but the prelate replied that if Michelangelo had put the man in purgatory there might be some help for him, but as he had put him in hell even the Pope could not release him. So the portrait remains to this day. Paul IV later disapproved of the nudeness of many of the figures in this masterpiece, and had clothes painted on some of the figures! Poor Michelangelo. Of all the artists the world has ever known, he was the giant and the one great master. His versatility and his accomplishments were marvelous. To think that the same hand painted the marvelous "Creation" on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, and executed the exquisite "Pieta" (the Mary with the dead Christ) and the noble figure of Moses! By the way, the "Pieta" is the only piece of marble that the artist ever signed, and this was done merely because the authenticity of the work was questioned in his own lifetime. He carved his name on the girdle of the Virgin. Pictures were signed in the old days by the artist putting his own portrait on one of the figures. In "The Last Judgment" Michelangelo has put his face on one of those in purgatory.

Raphael's Stanze is a series of rooms frescoed by that great artist, and contains some of his best work, executed in his youth. The "Liberation of St. Peter" from prison is a masterpiece, and is painted in three sections. But the "Transfiguration" is Raphael's greatest work, and a most marvelous creation. It was also his last work, for the master of all painters died at thirty-six and left his "Transfiguration" unfinished. Others completed the lower portion, but it is mostly Raphael's.

Michelangelo and Raphael were rivals. While one was painting the ceiling of the Sistine chapel the other was at work in the Stanze. The work of

Michelangelo was grand and magnificent; that of Raphael beautiful and appealing. Merely as a painter, Raphael excelled; as an all-around artist — architect, sculptor and painter — Michelangelo had no peer.

In the Sistine chapel are also some good paintings by Botticeli. Other admirable pictures we saw were "The Communion of St. Jerome," by Domeninchino, and "The Madonna of the Rosary," by Sassoferati — the latter excelling in sweetness of conception. The angels surrounding the central group have beautiful childish faces. There is, indeed, a bewildering array of superb pictures in the Vatican, yet for some reason the statuary appeals to me more than the paintings. I can appreciate both, but the statuary seems to me nearer to life.

In the spot where St. Paul was supposed to have been beheaded stands the church of "St. Paul without the Walls." It was founded in 388 but destroyed by fire with the exception of the choir and the campanile. The present church, built in 1823, is modeled after the lines of the old one. The side walls contain the pictures of all the Popes of Rome, from St. Peter to Leo. The collection of marbles and rare stones used in the pillars and decorations is considered the richest in existence. The 5th century mosaics preserved from the old church are very beautiful. The church stands ten feet from the bank of the Tiber, which it faces. Over the portico are immense modern mosaics.

To reach this church we passed through the old Ostian Gate in the ancient Roman Wall, beside which stands the quaint pyramid of Caius Cestius, built in the twelfth century B.C., and copied from the Egyptian pyramids. Our ride this day took us to the spot upon the Tiber where was once the bridge on which Horatius stood. It was a wooden bridge, and has long since disappeared. Also we saw the house Rienzi was supposed to have lived in, and nearby the little round Temple of Hercules, and the Temple of Fortuna — which in the year 880 was converted into a church.

Revisiting the Forum, which we did more than once, it is interesting to remember that this mass of ruins, occupying only a space of some five-hundred and fifty feet long and one-hundred and fifty feet wide, was once the center of great Rome in her palmiest days, and occupies more pages of history than any other similar spot of ground in the world. Since the Forum has been excavated it is much below the level of modern Rome, and we look down into it as into a pit. An archway at one side is all that remains of the imperial Capitol. A small colonnade of pillars supporting statues of the twelve principal gods once stood before this. Then we see, bordering the Forum, parts of the temples of Concordia and of Vespatian. The Basilica Julia was a colonnade running around four sides of the Forum, and there still remains a little of the original pavement, of variegated African and Phrygian

marble, and at the upper end a few marble columns. The Basilica faced the Sacred Way, the original pavement of which is still observable. The remains of the Temple of Saturn, dating from B.C. 497, show eight immense marble columns set on a high platform. The rostrum, formerly covered with marble, is now a long, bare platform. Its huge size allowed the speaker to walk up and down as he addressed the people. The two sides showed reliefs of a cow, a pig and a sheep, the animals used for the sacrifice. In front were reliefs of the gods, and also one depicting the people burning their records of back taxes in the presence of Trajan, whose edict relieved them of the payment. I am sure this was a relief. Nearby is the supposed tomb of Romulus. Then we come to the arch of Septimus Severus, erected in honor of that emperor and his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, in 203 A.D. It is carved with the story of their victory over the Parthenons. It used to be surmounted by a bronze chariot and six horses, with Severus, crowned by Victory, standing in the chariot.

In the Forum is an immense single column of tufa called the column of Phocae, which formerly had a statue of the tyrant at its summit. Facing the rostrum was the temple of Cœsar, but only the base now remains. His tomb is very near here, marked by three large circular blocks of tufa, one above the other. The beautiful pillars of the Temple of Castor and Pollux are well known, and quite dominate the Forum.

The house of the six Vestal Virgins is one of the impressive sights of the Forum. Here the Vestals kept the sacred fire burning for centuries, and they were secluded from the sight of men by a wall enclosing a beautiful garden. The house itself was formerly covered with marble, but now only the brick walls remain. It was heated by furnaces and the kitchens were large and well appointed. In the garden was a great water tank, and around the court were many statues on pedestals representing the most pious of the Virgins. Eleven of these still remain. Three of the bed-rooms may still be seen. They were small but beautifully frescoed and the pavements are of mosaic. The Vestals served until they were thirty-five years old, when they were permitted to quit the temple and marry; but if they had a love affair before this time they were buried alive. Twelve sacred fires were constantly kept burning in Rome, and each had its separate temple and vestals. This of the Forum was the most important. Beyond the house of the Vestal Virgins we come to the Temple of Faustina, dedicated in 114 A.D. by Antoninus to his wife. The portico, with an inscription and ten marble columns, still remains.

Many fragments of columns, capitals, reliefs, etcetera, are scattered all about, and all these I suppose archaeologists are able to identify. At the lower end of the Forum stands the triumphal Arch of Titus (A.D. 70) the most

beautiful arch in Rome. It is carved with scenes of his conquest of Jerusalem. One of them shows the captive Jews bearing the sacred candlestick taken from their temple. And this candlestick, seven branched and very big, had a curious history. Four centuries after Titus brought it to Rome it was captured by the Vandals and taken to Carthage; a hundred years later Belisarius seized it and took it to Constantinople; two hundred years afterward it was restored to Rome, where a pious Jew stole it and threw it into the Tiber. There it is yet, and when the Jews return to Jerusalem they will dig this candlestick from the mud of the Tiber and take it with them.

The Baths of Caracalla are yet one of Rome's greatest sights. They were the most magnificent baths of ancient days, and contained when excavated a wealth of statuary which is now preserved in the various museums. One-thousand six-hundred people could bathe at one time within the walls, there being large pools for hot, tepid and cold baths on the ground floor and on the upper floors many private rooms with splendid tubs of marble and porphyry. The brick walls which now show in the interior were once covered with marble slabs, and the elaborate mosaic floor still shows so largely that we can well imagine its former beauty. There were dressing rooms, an immense conversation room, rooms for perfuming and anointing and halls where the athletes performed. Also there were libraries and a fine garden. In the emperor's personal suite is a beautiful marble pool and elaborately decorated dressing and lounging rooms. The bath program in those days was as follows: First, the tepid bath, with anointing and gentle massage; next the hot bath in a different room; then a cold plunge, a brisk rubbing down, and anointing and perfuming. All the Roman buildings of this period were of brick faced with marble; but the marble was long since taken away to construct churches and other buildings.

Constantine when converted was baptized in the church of San Giovanni in the Lateran. The baptistry is a small chapel in the center of which is a green basalt tub which is absurdly ancient. This is the font, and it is surrounded by eight large columns of porphyry. It stands just as it was in the days of Constantine. The Lateran boasts some fine mosaics of the second, third and fifth centuries. It has an old bronze dome adorned with garlands, and a bronze statue of Constantine which was found in his baths. Further, this church is said to contain the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul, and we are shown a wooden table once used by St. Peter. One of its features is a group of twelve huge statues of the apostles. Connected with it are the sacred stairs from the house of Pilate, once trod by the feet of Jesus. Sinners may mount these stairs on their knees, and each ascent, if made with a contrite heart, wins nine years of indulgence for each of the twenty-eight steps. The climb is

awkward, but popular. At the foot of the stairs are two splendid statues: one of Pilate showing Jesus to the multitude, the other of Judas in the act of kissing his Master. The Empress Helena brought Pilate's stairs to Rome in 326; they are of marble, but covered with wood to preserve them. We watched a short, fat woman ascending on her knees and decided she earned her indulgence. In the plaza before the church stands the fine obelisk of Thotmes III.

A pretty drive is along the Appian Way, with the Sabine Hills and Alban mountains showing in the distance. Tombs lined the way, from which were taken many of the beautiful sarcophagi we have admired. On the Appian Way we visited the Catacombs of St. Calixtus, the best of the early Christian burial places. Here are the tombs of some of the Popes of the 4th-6th centuries, and of St. Cecilia, although her body reposes in the church dedicated to her. The walls bear some good paintings from the second century, such as the Raising of Lazarus from the dead, the Last Supper, the Deliverance of Jonah from the whale's belly and similar Bible scenes.

Perhaps nothing interested us more in Rome than our visit to the Palatine Hill. We are both more interested in Imperial Rome than in Ecclesiastical Rome, and on the Palatine we can almost imagine ourselves back in the days of the Cœsars. We start to ascend the Hill by the Street of Victory, still paved in part with the original blocks. We first come to the palace of Caligula, and see a bit of the bridge which he caused to be built over the Forum to the Capitol, that he might converse with the Capitoline Jupiter, whose representative on earth he claimed to be. (You see there were Dowies in those days, too.) From here through a covered passage we enter the Palace of Tiberius, the passage Caligula built in order to visit his friend. In it Caligula was assassinated and Tiberius made emperor. The ceilings of the palace have some fine stucco work. We saw the remains of the fish pond into which Tiberius is said to have thrown fat babies to feed his fish, since the babies gave the fish an especially fine flavor. Next we visited the house of Lydia, mother of Nero, the vestibulum of which has a fine mosaic floor and the walls some excellent Greek frescoes.

And now we are in the splendid palace of Augustus Cœsar, with its Basilica, where justice was administered, the Colonnade where the emperor was accustomed to walk with his guard (he always feared assassination) and the great throne room — one-hundred twenty by one-hundred fifty feet. A few columns and parts of the pavement alone remain, but the walls still mark the plan of the rooms. Especially in the dining room is a fine remnant of mosaic pavement, of green, white, yellow and red marbles. A smaller dining room has a fountain, and connected with the palace were large gardens

surrounded by a colonnade. Only a part of the palace of Augustus has been excavated.

There is not much left of the palace of Septimus Severus except the stadium and three small rooms opening off it, where are some good frescoes. On the Palatine they show you a heap of stones which is said to be the ruins of the house of Romulus.

It is by no means impossible to recognize the grandeur and wealth of imperial Rome from these ruins, but it sobers us to reflect that all the magnificence and power of these Masters of the World has vanished so utterly.

The Fountain of Trevi is the most beautiful in the city. Drop a coin into it at midnight and some day you are certain to return to Rome. That is the legend, anyway.

The National museum is built on the site of the Baths of Diocletian, and contains some good marbles and bronzes. In the Gallery Barberini is the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, by Guido Reni, and Del Sarto's Holy Family, as well as the famous picture of "The Temptation of Joseph." The Barberini has but three small rooms, but is full of art treasures.

So now I have mentioned some of the interesting things I saw in Rome. I could not say less and say anything at all, and to say more might bore you. Yet I feel I have given you a very slight idea of the wonders of the eternal city, the recollection of which will abide with me all the days of my life. "See Rome and die" is a silly phrase, because the world holds much more than Rome. But if you can see it and live, it is worth while.

LETTER XV. FLORENCE

Florence, Italy

To our notion Florence is more beautiful than any other Italian city we have yet seen. It combines the modern and the medieval, and this is the time of roses, which bloom everywhere and cover the walls of the lanes and houses with thick masses of flowers. Beside me as I write stands a bunch of fifty-four great roses which I purchased on the street for the equivalent of ten cents. Through the window I look into the Piazzo Victor Emmanuel, with its great bronze equestrian statue of the king and his triumphal arch in the background.

From Florence, more than any other city, has emanated the peerless art of Italy. Also the language and the best literature of the Italians comes from here. In no other spot on earth is there such a collection of paintings by the masters. We do not expect to see, in the limited time we are here, all the art treasures of this famous city, but we will "do" the principal galleries to the best of our ability.

In a small room of the Uffizi Gallery, which is called "the Tribuna," are assembled more art treasures than Any similar space contains. Here are five ancient sculptures, all masterpieces: the Venus de Medici, the Wrestlers, the Dancing Faun, the Grinder, and the Young Apollo, known as Apollino. Around the walls are hung many famous paintings: Titian's two Venuses in the nude, Raphael's "Madonna and Child with Goldfinch," his "St. John the Baptist," a portrait by Rembrandt, "Madonna and Saints" by Perregino, Corregio's exquisite "Madonna Worshipping the Child," and others. In Corregio's Madonna both mother and child were life-like and charming; many of the "great masters" make them both dreadfully ugly. Aside from the Tribuna the Uffizi is rich in gems of art, but I shall only mention those in which I was most interested, or that appealed most to me. Some bronzes representing two dogs and a wild boar and a statue of Silenus holding the infant Baccus in his arms, were mighty good. In one room, devoted to the work of Rubens, I shall skip the paintings to mention five exquisite mosaic tables, in which are inlaid pearls, rubies, diamonds and other precious stones, and on which the workmanship is magnificent. One depicts a battle scene, where the perspective is superbly executed. The paintings in this gallery that I especially liked were as follows: A head of Medusa by Leonardo da Vinci, horrible in its conception yet fascinating in its perfection. A small study in the nude called "The Three Graces," and unsigned, is a perfect gem, for the women were grace personified and rarely beautiful. Titian's head of "Flora" is bound to attract anyone, and the portraits of Madam Le Brun are charming.

A strong picture is the Beheading of John the Baptist, and a marvelous one is called "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian."

The old masters were limited in their range of subjects, and for this reason even their superb coloring and execution cannot relieve the monotony of the galleries devoted to their work. They painted Madonnas without end, Christ and the saints, shepherds and the Magi — and there they generally halted. Raphael painted only about ninety Madonnas because he died young, but some of the "old masters" were old when they died, and what an industrious lot they were! Four rooms of the Uffizi are devoted to portraits of the painters, executed by themselves, dating from the fifteenth century to the present day. It is a very interesting collection.

The room of the Medici contains a collection of gems, crystal and articles of gold and silver once the property of that famous family. We saw there many exquisite things, such as a bowl carved from a single garnet and a crystal dish of unique design harnessed with bands of solid gold and encrusted with precious stones. Also there were marvelous lamps set with precious gems. This gallery was founded by the Medici family.

Near the Uffizi Galleria is the famous Loggia dei Lanzi, or Loggia dell Orgagna, a vaulted hall open to the street and built in the fourteenth century. The Loggia is beautiful in itself and contains some fine pieces of statuary. "The Rape of the Sabines" and "the Rape of Polyxena" are both celebrated pieces, and there is a bronze Perseus holding the head of Medusa, Hercules slaying the Centaur, and five antique portrait statues.

A few steps away is the Pallazo Vecchio, the former residence of Cosmo I. It was begun in 1298 and is a fine example of Florentine castles in the middle ages. The building contains some fine tapestries, portrait statues of the Medici family and a wonderful painted ceiling, besides a great hall painted with scenes of the battle between Pisa and Sienna. It was near this palace that Savonarola was burned at the stake; a bronze slab marks the place.

In the Galleria Antica a Moderna is the famous statue of David by Michelangelo. It was one of the artist's earliest works and served to establish his genius. The paintings in this gallery are mostly religious, but the collection excels in brilliance of coloring. There is one very interesting canvas called the "Adoration of the Magi," by Gentile da Fabriano, a large picture showing many figures and horses. The robes and turbans of the Magi were originally adorned with diamonds and precious stones, set in the thick paint, but most of these have since been picked out. A funny picture here is called "The Last Judgment," and was painted by a monk. Our Lord stands in the center judging the dead, and the righteous are placed in a garden and

beautifully dressed, while the wicked are not only placed in hell but occupy kettles suspended over blazing fires. I was glad to observe there were no women in hell — only men.

The Florentine pictures are mostly framed in massive gold, highly ornamented frames.

I must not fail to mention the Hospital of the Innocents, on the front of which are set, between the arches, twelve exquisite Della Robbia placques of babies in swaddling clothes. They are in blue and white terra cotta reliefs, the placques being about three feet in diameter and the babies all different. Perhaps nothing in Florence attracts more universal attention than the Della Robbia babies, which are so sweet and charming that everyone loves them at first sight.

The river Arno runs through Florence, adding much to the beauty and picturesqueness of the place, and the famous Ponte Vecchio, the bridge of the shops, crosses it near the center. While strolling there the other day I saw a curious funeral. The corpse was in a two-wheeled cart drawn by two men, and following it were ten men in black dominoes that shrouded them from head to foot and had two holes for the eyes and came to a peak above the head. They were followed by a single priest, and the procession resembled a circus more than a funeral.

The National Museum is located in the Bargello, a prison built in 1255. Here is a fine collection of ancient armor, arms and weapons, many showing by their dents that they have been in active service. There is also a fine collection of glazed terra-cottas, such as we call today majolicas, and the workmanship and size of some of these is extraordinary. It includes the best of Della Robbia's work. The collection of carved ivories is the best I have ever seen, and there are some excellent carvings in amber. One room has some superb Gobelin tapestries of the time of Louis XV.

Florence has an immense cathedral, begun in 1226, but it is more beautiful outside than in. There are some good rose windows and the statuary at the entrance is worth seeing. The Campanile, or bell-tower, was built in 1334, and is two-hundred ninety-two feet high and liberally ornamented with sculptures and statues. The Battistero, just opposite, was built in the seventh century, and was the cathedral of Florence until 1128. It is octagonal in shape and is celebrated for its ancient bronze doors. Another old church — of the 12th century — is San Michele in Orto.

The Pitti Galleria was founded in 1440 and occupies a part of the Pitti Palace, the residence of the king when he is in Florence. It contains five hundred pictures, many of them masterpieces. The gallery is a series of small rooms known as the Salon of the Iliad, of Saturn, Jupiter, Apollo, Venus,

etcetera, each taking its name from the design on the painted ceiling. These ceilings are splendid, the pictures being framed in heavy gilt woodwork, with stuccoed designs — as of flowers — in relief of gold and white. The rooms contain many handsome vases, statuary and tables, and I noted especially one table of lapis-lazuli and mother-of-pearl, and another formed of a single slab of malachite which is said to be the largest piece of this precous stone in existence. Here is Canova's statue of Venus and the bronzes of Cain and Abel.

Raphael has two Madonnas in the Pitti Galleria, one being his Madonna of the Chair, perhaps his most famous work. The expression of maternal tenderness on the face of the Madonna has never been equalled by any other artist. Murillo has also two Madonnas in the collection, that of "La Vergine col figlio" being exquisite in conception and coloring. Rubens' great canvas, "The Consequences of War," is something that holds one a long time, so bold and strong is it. Then there is Van Dyck's "Rest in Egypt" and Christofano Alleri's "Judith" to add to the widespread fame of this wonderful gallery.

L. F. grieves me. He says "he can tell one old master from another as soon as he reads the name on the frame," and makes other slighting remarks when I grow enthusiastic; but he seems as eager to study the picture as I am, and so surely are we being educated by observation that we can both detect now the peculiarities of style and color effects of most of the great masters.

We have had many beautiful walks and drives here, and feel we could spend a whole year in Florence and enjoy every minute. The royal gardens, called the Boboli Gardens, are extremely beautiful and have some wonderful avenues of old trees. There is a musical festival here at present, and we have seen Leoncavalli lead an orchestra of eighty masters at the production of one of his operas, and Mascagni direct the orchestra at the production of his latest opera. L. F. says that Americans would not tolerate such shabby costuming or crude stage settings; but the music was grand and inspiring.

LETTER XVI. VENICE

Venice, Italy

Venice is dreamy and beautiful. There is nothing real about it whatever. It is like stepping into Fairyland, and wondering when you're going to be dragged out again. The other cities of Italy, however old, wear a modern garb; but Venice is today the Venice of Bulwer and Browning, of Desdemona and Lorenzi, of all who have ever loved it or written about it. You can't modernize Venice, and so it is the one old world city that is not disappointing.

In such a fascinating place I don't know how I am going to compose myself to write a letter. I am perched in my window, looking down at the Grand Canal with its flotilla of quaint water craft, and the soft cries of the boatmen, the distant strains of mandolin music and the happy laughter of those who glide by in their gondolas are quite distracting.

We reached here Saturday night at ten o'clock, and at the station embarked in a gondola and by the light of a glorious moon were paddled a half hour or more through winding waterways to the Grand Canal and our hotel. Such an introduction to Venice won our hearts completely.

The city covers one-hundred twenty islands which are connected by four-hundred and three bridges. The Grand Canal runs through Venice in the shape of the letter S and is, so to speak, the Broadway of the town. Along the edges of all the canals are foot paths, so that walking is easy although you have to go roundabout to get from one point to another. It is better to take a boat if you are in a hurry or not in need of exercise. Besides, a stranger is often lost in Venice, and after wandering aimlessly for a time has to call a gondolier to take him home.

Sunday we took a gasoline launch and rode to the fishing village of Chiugga, on a little island where the first settlement of the Venetians was built. The route took us out of the Grand Canal into the port of Lido, and finally into the Adriatic Sea. It was a perfect summer day and a delightful ride. In the evening we hired a gondola and floated for an hour on the Grand Canal. It is very wide at this end, and anchored in various places were large barges decorated with colored lanterns on which concerts are given. A band of some twenty men and women constitutes the orchestra and songsters on each barge, and they sing everything from grand opera to comic songs, in solos, duets, quartettes and choruses. Some of the voices are remarkably good, and the Venetians patronize these floating concerts liberally. Gondolas point their slender ends in a close circle all around these barges, while their passengers listen to the concerts. We stopped at several of the barges and

enjoyed the novelty of the scene very much. The buildings at the water's edge were all brilliantly lighted by electricity, which was reflected in every eddy and ripple of the water, while every gondola bears its own lights. The scene was positively enchanting.

Next morning we started out to see the city, and of course made straight for the Piazza San Marco, a big oblong square paved with marble. Here stands the famous cathedral of St. Mark's, which occupies one end, while the sides are flanked by the former royal palaces — now occupied by private individuals. There are several arcades leading from the square to the side streets, and around three sides are covered colonnades with shops and innumerable restaurants. These latter set their tables far out into the square in the afternoon and evenings when the daily band concerts are held.

The Piazza San Marco is the heart of Venice. The first thing I did on arriving there was to buy some corn and feed the pigeons, which are almost as famous as the cathedral itself. The birds are so tame that three of them perched upon my hand at once in their eagerness to get at the corn.

The cathedral was built in 976. It has five domes and is decorated most lavishly with mosaics both inside and out. The splendor of its appearance is distinctly oriental and its beauty appeals to me more than does that of any other cathedral I have seen. It is built entirely of marble, as are all the buildings facing the square, the surface blackened by age but still rich in its effects. Over the door of the cathedral is the quadriga, or four bronze horses which Constantine took from Rome to Constantinople and which Zeno brought back to Venice. The mosaics in the vestibule are of the thirteenth century, the figures in colors and the background in gold. One series depicts the manner in which St. Mark's body was brought here from Constantinople. The Saracens refused to allow it to pass their lines, so the pious Christians encased St. Mark in a covering of pork, and passed it over the border in that way. The Muslims would not examine it carefully, but held their noses when they saw the offensive pork; therefore the saint landed in Venice in good shape.

The mosaics of the central dome represent the Ascension and the Passion. Over the central altar is a marble screen surmounted by statues of the twelve apostles, the Virgin and St. Mark, with a crucifix in the center. These marbles are brown with age. The high altar is of green marble, upheld by four pillars bearing chiseled reliefs of Bible scenes, all of which date from the eleventh century. The bones of St. Mark lie underneath this altar. The wealth of exquisite mosaics here fascinated me, for although I have seen mosaics without end, these are so harmoniously placed and so interesting and beautiful that they seem to overshadow and surpass even Monreale. They

were designed by Titian and other great masters.

The clock tower at the left of St. Mark's is surmounted by two immense bronze figures bearing hammers, with which they pound out the hours an a bell that rests between them. This was built in 1496. Beside the Ducal Palace, on the water front, we saw the two fine granite columns brought here in 1180, one surmounted by the Winged Lion of St. Mark and the other by a figure of St. Theodore standing on the back of a crocodile. St. Theodore was the patron saint of the early republic.

Much of the material used in the construction of the cathedral was donated by Christian knights who brought it from the four corners of the world. Pagan temples and mosques were rifled of their pillars and rich marbles and the architects are said to have been guided in their plans by the class of material furnished. It is the fashion for some modern architects to sneer at the architecture of St. Mark's, but they can't get away from the fact that it is the most beautiful and appealing of all the cathedrals of the world.

The Palace of the Doges stands just as it did ages ago, when it was the scene of countless tragedies. After the Republic was destroyed the people tried to burn it, but there was nothing to burn. Unlike our modern hotels, it was fire-proof. But on the outer wall was a lion's head which had caused the death of many an honest man, for a written accusation, placed in the lion's mouth, was equivalent to a condemnation. So they smashed this head and went away satisfied. The slit through which the accusing letters dropped into the chamber of the Council of Ten still remains.

This chamber still has the seats of the Doge and the infamous Council of Ten and the original decorations remain on the walls. Adjoining it is the Senate chamber, where the condemned was allowed to plead for his life. Out of it is a small chapel of the Doge and an ante-room. From the ante-room is a small passage leading directly to the chamber of the Council of Ten, the ceiling and walls of the passage being exquisitely painted. There are rooms for the servitors of the Council and their chief of police, and then the room of the Chief Inquisitor. Here the walls are hung with black. From this dread place opened two secret doors, one leading to the dark cells and death, the other to the Bridge of Sighs — which also meant a living death or assassination.

On the lower floor is the big hall called the Hall of the Grand Council, reserved for the use of those of legitimate noble descent whose names were in the Golden Book. They were eligible at twenty years of age and were elected by ballot. Here, on the walls, are the largest paintings I have ever seen. One called "The Glory of Paradise" is seventy-eight feet long by thirty-two feet high, and contains hundreds of figures. The portraits of the seventy-

six Doges of Venice form a frieze around the hall. Adjoining this room was the Balloting Room and many other suites magnificently decorated and containing a wealth of paintings. Many of the doors of the palace were brought from Constantinople, and are of precious woods richly carved. They are in two sections, opening in a way similar to that which we call a "Dutch door."

We next visited the prison. The dungeons are black holes, having a small aperture through which food was passed to the prisoners, but they are of good size and lined with wood. The beds consisted of four stones covered with wood, and there was a stone table in each cell. I went into many of the dungeons, each of which must have had its own terrible history; and also saw the place where the condemned were guillotined and their bodies thrust through an opening to the canal, where a boat received them and carried them to the open sea for burial. The torture chambers were grim looking places. We passed through the original stone doors, covered with iron, to the Bridge of Sighs, and thence to the State Prison on the other side. The bridge is divided by a partition into two separate passages, one for those summoned before the three inquisitors, the other for those brought before the regular court for judgment. The Bridge of Sighs is not an official name, but one derived from Thomas Hood's poem.

The Carceri, or prisons, connected by this bridge with the palace, are still in use, and are not so terrible or dismal as those of the ducal palace. The sight of the latter made me fairly miserable when I thought of all the unwritten tragedies that had been enacted there. Yet the experience was interesting.

The best paintings of Paul Veronese and Tintoretti are in the Doge's Palace. Also here are some of Titian's masterpieces. The canvasses are all enormous, and when Napoleon rifled Venice he cut many of these pictures from their frames and carried them to Paris. Most of them have been returned to their original places, but a few never found their way back again and their spaces are now filled with copies.

The Porte della Carta, or main entrance doors, are famed for their rare beauty, and the Giants' Staircase, with its enormous statues of Mars and Neptune, is the most impressive feature of the exterior of the Doge's Palace.

We visited one of the lace factories for which Venice is celebrated and saw hundreds of young girls at work. They are specialists at the trade, for one bastes on the pattern, another sews the braid, another works only flowers, another only leaves, and so on, each being trained to a certain detail. They are all uniformed in white aprons or slips with high necks and long sleeves, and the lace is made upon a cushion held in the lap or resting upon a table. The fine work is very trying to the eyes, and the woman who conducted us

said, “Only young eyes can do this work, so after a few years the lace-workers all retire, put on spectacles, and marry.”

A fine gondola ride took us to the island of Murano, where the glass factories are located. One of the workmen made me a dolphin vase, the creation of which I watched with interest, and he was certainly very skillful and quick.

We love the gondolas, and have ridden through all the various canals and into the quaintest, queerest places, enjoying it all immensely. The Grand Canal is lined with palaces of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, mostly ornamented in the curiously elaborate Venetian way, which seems quite harmonious here but would be objectionable elsewhere. Some of the palaces date back to the eleventh century. The Rialto Bridge, which until 1854 was the only bridge connecting the east and west sides of Venice, is a single marble arch seventy-four feet long and thirty-two feet high, resting on two-hundred and forty piles. The tombs of all the Doges are in the church of St. John and St. Paul, which boasts some exquisite stained glass and many fine marbles and paintings. Another old church, highly ornamented with statuary but dingy with age, is the church of Moses.

Venice is a dream, but every dream has its awakening and we must move on. But we do it regretfully. In no other place has our craving for romance, for beauty, for idle enjoyment been so thoroughly satisfied. Every traveler who boards the train with us hopes, as we do, to see Venice again.

LETTER XVII. THROUGH SWITZERLAND

Lucerne

On leaving Venice we went to Milan for a couple of days, and as the World's Fair was then in progress we visited it and found some charming buildings, a rare collection of paintings and statuary and beautiful grounds. As we entered the Cairo exhibit a tall Egyptian prostrated himself before us and said he had waited upon us at the wedding ceremony we had attended in Cairo, and told his companions that L. F. was a friend of the great Araby Pasha. We were greatly amused, but refused to accept the presents the fellow pressed upon us. The Milanese built their Fair upon two separate sides of the city, and connected them by an elevated railway. The fare is which is the usual street-car fare in Europe.

The Cathedral of Milan is so familiar to everyone that I need not describe it. It is all of marble, and with its ninety-eight minarets and two thousand status resembles a fairy castle more than a church. It was built in 1386 and is one of the largest cathedrals in the world, being second only to St. Peter's in all Italy. The interior is majestically impressive and has many beautiful stained glass windows, those of the apse representing three-hundred and fifty Biblical scenes, mostly copied from famous paintings. Among the objects of interest are a fine bronze candlestick of the 13 th century with seven branches like those of a tree; an old wooden crucifix that was borne in processions during the plague of 1576; a beautiful monument to the two Medici, with excellent bronze statues; a sarcophagus of 1018; and some 13th century statues of eight of the Apostles.

The church is Gothic and has a fine marble mosaic pavement and a beautiful vaulted roof; but they tell me its architecture has been severely condemned. That is not especially startling, for I cannot remember a single thing we have seen that some modern wisacre has not found fault with. What a grand thing the old world might have been if the moderns could have constructed it!

The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele of Milan is the largest gallery of its kind in the world, built in the form of a Latin cross with a huge dome in the center, and all roofed with glass. The best shops of the town and many restaurants are located here, and in the evenings the place teems with life. La Scala, where many great operas have been produced, is one of the largest and most famous theatres of Europe.

From Milan we journeyed to Como, where we took a steamer for Bellagio, enjoying a perfectly delightful three-hour ride over Lake Como. The outline of this famous lake is very irregular, as it is surrounded by the

Italian Alps and winds in and out the mountains for thirty miles; so that sometimes we seem to be floating in a pool with no outlet, and then skirt a cliff and see a new and marvelous scene before us.

We are in love with Bellagio, which is charmingly situated on a rocky promontory. Our excellent hotel — the Grand Hotel et de Bellagio — sits high above the lake, the gardens being protected from the cliff by a marble parapet. Splendid flowers bloom in the extensive grounds and there is an ancient grove with lonely and mysterious walks.

Just across, at a little village called Cadenabbia, is the Villa Carlotta, whose art treasures are freely displayed to visitors by its noble owner. Here are many of Canova's masterpieces, chiefly his "Cupid and Psyche." The grounds of the Villa, centuries old, are magnificent. Wonderful roses climb up the ancient trees and fill them with masses of bloom, and the vistas between the avenues of the lake and the snow-capped Alps are extremely fascinating.

On leaving Bellagio we crossed by boat to Menaggio, took a train that climbed the mountains like a cat to Porlezza at the edge of Lake Lugano, and then boarded a steamer for Lugano. This lake is also very pretty, but not so beautiful as Como.

We have now crossed the border into Switzerland, and here we are in the midst of the Swiss Alps. Lugano occupies a crescent shaped bay and its main feature is a walk at the edge of the lake shaded by avenues of splendid trees. The heights of Mt. Salvador and Mt. Rosa look down upon the little town, and may both be reached by funicular railways. There are hotels on the summits, and fine views, as may be imagined. Lugano is a favorite watering-place for Europeans, and has many good hotels. But Bellagio is much more beautiful in every way, although I must admit if there was no Bellagio then Lugano would be delightful.

We took the St. Gotthard railroad from Lugano to Lucerne, and found the ride wonderfully interesting. It conquers the Alps by winding in and out of the cliffs, tunneling hundreds of spurs and finally plunging straight through the heart of Mt. St. Gotthard. At times we could see a series of three tracks below us, over which we had come to reach our present point of observation. The scenery is gorgeous, many waterfalls lending their charm to the rugged, snow-capped mountains. Emerging from the great tunnel after our fast express train had rattled through it in eighteen minutes, we found ourselves literally among the clouds, and from there on we gazed spellbound at the glimpses of roaring rivers, dizzy precipices, pretty Swiss chalets perched here and there in seemingly inaccessible places, and everywhere the green firs lending their soft coloring to the landscape. I am helpless to describe the

grandeur and beauty of this mountain scenery; unless one can see it and feel it in person it must remain only a vague impression.

Lucerne is fascinating, and its lake is a gem. The River Reuss, which runs through the town, has a beautiful green color and a very rapid current. Seven bridges, more or less ancient, cross the stream, the oldest two being covered. These last are constructed of wood and one has one-hundred fifty-four quaint paintings depicting scenes in the lives of St. Leodegar and St. Mauritius, while the other has a series called "The Dance of Death."

The town is surrounded by walls, on which are nine watch towers. Its fine old cathedral, with two slender towers, was erected in 1506. The interior has some fine wood carvings and forged iron work. Thorwaldsen's famous sculpture of "The Lion of Lucerne," carved to commemorate the Swiss Guards who fell defending the Tuilleries on August 10, 1792, is a little way from town and cut in the side of a rock cliff. Underneath it are carved in the sandstone the names of the forty-two officers who fell. The surrounding scenery is rugged and picturesque, contrasting vividly with the artistic beauty of the sculpture. It is a fine tribute to those who, although mercenaries, were faithful unto death.

Taking a wheezy little steamer we made a lake trip to the place where William Tell shot the tyrant Gessler — only they say now he didn't. A chapel marks the spot, and however much others may disbelieve the legend of William and his feats of archery the Swiss certainly maintain their steadfast faith in their hero.

This ride on Lake Lucerne is a unique and delightful experience. The shores are marvelously beautiful whichever way you turn, and you get a superb view of the town with its towers and battlements, the Rigo on one side and on the other Mt. Pilatus frowning down upon the ages from beneath his hood of perpetual snow. Mountains crowd and jostle one another all around Lucerne, but Pilatus dominates all the others. Around the lake, nestling at the foot of the mountains, are many small villages or beautiful villas with finely kept grounds. The greenery is simply gorgeous at this season, and the waters of the lake seem to borrow the same emerald hues. You almost feel that you are gazing at a finely executed picture, instead of upon a natural landscape.

In Lucerne is a grand Casino, with band concerts every day at 4:30 and 8:30. The music is exceptionally good; but we have noticed that nearly all European music is good. The masses understand music better than they do at home, and won't stand for anything but a good performance. The Casino is subsidized by the town and the hotels, and the admission is only a franc.

At the edge of the lake is a broad promenade shaded by two rows of great

horse-chestnut trees that entwine their branches overhead. Comfortable seats are supplied at intervals, and here is the fashionable promenade of the town.

We go directly from here to Paris. There are many more places we might visit, but we are both beginning to tire of sight-seeing and to long for home and a glimpse of our loved ones. It is true that one cannot see too much at a time and retain a clear recollection of it. We have not hurried, and have avoided fixing a time to leave a place until we felt we had exhausted its attractions; but nevertheless a constant succession of scenes grows bewildering, and we would like to rest up for a time and digest the experiences we have swallowed so hungrily.

LETTER XVIII. PARIS

Hotel Normandy, Paris

Our first sight of Paris is a distinct disappointment. If we were dropped into the center of any one of a dozen American cities I might mention, we would find practically the same surroundings. In other words, Paris is very modern and very commonplace — on the surface. It is only when you begin to dig under the crust that you come to a realization that this is really the Paris with a History, and one of the most fascinating histories that any city on earth can boast. Then the tangible and intangible evidences of by-gone ages which you unearth begin to reach out and grip you, and once in their grasp Paris has enslaved you, and you will never again escape its charms.

As for the life and gaiety of Paris of today, that must forever remain a disappointment, if you have believed the tales so persistently dinned in your ears. It is no more alluringly wicked than New York or Chicago, and exhibits no more of dissipation or reckless extravagance. There are more beautifully dressed women, more picturesque costumes, more life and gaiety, more jewels and champagne and music in Cairo in one day than you can find in Paris in a week. Indeed, we have discovered that Cairo is what we have always imagined Paris to be — and what it isn't. In Paris they will acknowledge that Cairo is today the gayest capital in the world, and that Vienna comes next. But this is by the way — another illusion shattered, but pleasantly so, for we are not hunting for dissipation or even high-life.

Historic Paris is a land of marvels, with a fascinating history. Perhaps you will enjoy a rambling story of countless interesting things I have seen, so I'll do my best to tell you all about them.

You can't help admiring modern Paris for its wide, clean streets and its many large open squares. Fine examples of these are the Place de la Concorde and the Place de la Madelaine. These squares or "places" are usually named from some statue or building in or near them. The Place de la Concorde is considered one of the finest in the world. It lies between the Tuilleries Garden, where once stood the palace of the Tuilleries, burned and razed by the revolutionists, and the beautiful driveway known as the Champs-Elysee. In the center is the huge obelisk of Ramses II, brought from Luxor by Napoleon I. It occupies the exact spot where the guillotine stood during the Reign of Terror. On each side are two fine fountains that throw sprays to an immense height, and around the square are monuments representing the chief cities of France. That representing Strasbourg has always been covered with funeral wreaths since it was lost to France in the Franco-German war.

On the Champs-Elysee are situated the Grand et Petit Palais erected for the exhibition of 1900, now used as galleries for art treasures of all kinds. Nearby the magnificent bridge of Alexander III crosses the Seine, each end being flanked on either side with gilded bronze eagles. The entire bridge is decorated with fine bronze reliefs.

The Church de la Madelaine is the most beautiful in Paris, built in the form of a Corinthian temple with a fine colonnade around it. The south façade shows a superb group in sculpture representing Christ judging the world. The interior is rich in marbles and Corinthian columns and is all lighted from above, as there are no windows. The effect is very impressive. The paintings represent events in the life of Mary Magdalene.

There are two fine arches in Paris. The Arc de Triomphe was begun by Napoleon in 1805 to commemorate the victories of the French in the Austerlitz campaign. It is the largest triumphal arch in the world, and is covered with sculptures representing historical events from 1792 to 1815. There are six-hundred and fifty names of officers of Napoleon engraved upon it.

The other arch is called the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, and is modeled after that of Septimus Severus in Rome. The arch was at first surmounted by the famous quadriga stolen by Napoleon from St. Mark's in Venice, but when forced to return that a copy was substituted. Nearby is a fine statue of Gambetta. In a small side square is a bronze equestrian statue of Joan d'Arc. From the Arc de Triomphe eighteen avenues diverge, and cannons placed around the arch would sweep the entire city.

The Palais de Trocadero is an immense building filled with reproductions in miniature of all the cathedrals in France, which are both beautiful and curious. From here we obtained a fine view of the Champs de Mars and the Eiffel Tower.

The Tomb of Napoleon was formerly a church. It has a beautiful gilded dome that may be seen from all over Paris, and a marble mosaic pavement dating from Louis XV. The tomb is in an open crypt twenty feet deep and thirty-six feet in diameter. The sarcophagus is of red Finland granite, the gift of Emperor Nicholas of Russia. Twelve large figures, representing the chief victories of Napoleon, surround it, and between these figures are fifty-four flags taken at Austerlitz. The mosaics of the floor of the crypt represent a huge laurel wreath. The crypt is entered through two beautiful bronze doors cast from cannons captured by the emperor. It was Napoleon's wish to be buried in Paris. He said: "I desire that my ashes repose on the banks of the Seine, in the midst of the French people whom I have loved so well." This quotation is carved over the bronze entrance to the crypt.

From the tomb you enter the Hotel des Invalides, founded by Louis XIV to shelter soldiers grown old or wounded in the service of the country. Part of this is occupied as a museum of arms, armor and artillery. There are suits of armor worn by the kings of France from Francis I to Louis XIV. In connection is the fine chapel of St. Louis in which many French generals are buried. It is liberally decorated with flags captured in war from other nations.

The Palais Royale was built by Louis XIII for Cardinal Richelieu, and many younger brothers of kings have had their residence there. It is built around a central garden. The palace is now let out in apartments for cheap stores and indifferent restaurants.

The Bourse is modeled after the Temple of Vespatian at Rome. It forms a parallelogram two-hundred twenty feet long, one-hundred thirty-five feet broad and one-hundred feet high, and has sixty-six Corinthian columns about it. It is a very beautiful building.

The Louvre was originally built for a fortress by Philip Augustus, who was contemporary with Richard Coeur de Leon, and has since been added to by many kings of France. From one of its windows Charles IX fired on the flying Huguenots during the Bartholomew massacre. It is an enormous building in the form of a hollow square, and represents the best French architecture of various epochs. In places you see the monograms of Henry II and Catherine de Medicis, of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, of Louis XIV and Maria Therese, and of many others.

The Louvre is now the repository of one of the greatest if not the greatest collection of art treasures in existence. Here is the home of the Venus de Milo, acknowledged by critic and layman alike the greatest piece of sculpture the world has ever known — yes, or ever will know. The Milo is not only beautiful; it is winning, and compels both your admiration and your love. The expression of the face is wonderfully appealing and sympathetic, and one can gaze upon it for hours and never tire. When you leave this almost living and breathing bit of marble it is with real regret; whenever you are near the Louvre you hasten eagerly for another glimpse at the sweet face and the divine form. They have placed the priceless statue in a circular room, all by itself, and the walls are hung with heavy plush of a deep, dull red. Down the length of a long passage this silent, lovely triumph of art stands revealed to the eye long before you arrive at the shrine itself, and the effect of this arrangement is admirable. Soldiers guard the statue night and day, and it is so arranged that at any alarm of war, fire or pillage the figure is lowered by means of a windlass into an underground vault and automatically locked in. The Venus de Milo dates about 400 B.C. It was found in 1820 in the island of Melos.

The galleries of the Louvre contain many masterpieces by Van Dyck, Rubens, Titian, Delacroix, Guido-Reni, Madam Le Brun — the court painter of Marie Antoinette — Millet, David (who always painted his figures in the nude and dressed them afterward, to get the right proportions), and many other great painters. Months might be spent in these galleries without exhausting their interest. But there are other interesting treasures, too. We saw a sceptre and sword once belonging to Charlemagne, the famous Regent diamond, a beautiful ruby once belonging to Pompadour, and many other rare jewels. There is a great collection of tapestries and of Empire furniture, many Egyptian and Syrian sculptures, art fragments from the middle ages, and indeed enough that is rare and curious to keep one gazing open-mouthed for years.

We entered the room Henry IV died in, and did not wonder he died if it was always as stuffy. We touched (with awe, I admit) many things the historic great had handled in their lifetime. I suppose it's human nature to be impressed by such things, although there is a great deal that is only saved from being rubbish by being historic.

Facing the Louvre is the church of St. Germain, dating from the twelfth century. From its tower was given the signal for the massacre of the Hugenots in 1572. The interior is subdued, rich and beautiful. We attended Vespers there and enjoyed some excellent music.

On the spot where the Bastille once stood is now the Colonne de Juillet, erected to commemorate the revolution of 1830. The Bastille was torn down in 1789. Only a few stones, piled together and fenced in with iron railings, remain of the original prison. A white marble line set in the pavement of the square marks the outlines of the famous building.

The house of Madame la Marquise de Sevigne is now turned into a museum of French war relics, principally those of the Revolution. It contains also the collections of the personal property of Napoleon, Louis XV and Marie Antoinette, a display of rare Sevres china, and the historic relics from the Conciergerie, the prison where the Queen and so many of the nobility were confined prior to their journey to the guillotine. The museum is very interesting. The house was built in the time of Louis XIV and in the courtyard is a fine bronze of that king on horseback. The Conciergerie is still used as a prison, but the cell where Marie Antoinette was Confined has been turned into a chapel.

We spent an interesting afternoon in the house of Victor Hugo, the place where all his important books were writen. The author was also something of an artist, and a wood carver and cabinetmaker. He had a fancy for painting queer characters upon the walls of his rooms — both imaginary and those he

met in life. The carved wood in the dining-room is all his own handiwork, and it is not bad, either. He built a tall desk on which to work, for he preferred to stand when he wrote, and there are many tables and chairs of his own design and workmanship. When he died he lived in a single room in another house, but they brought his bedroom furniture back to this house, as well as all his other belongings, for this was his home during most of his lifetime. Here are all his personal belongings and the gifts from his friends and admirers. The Victor Hugo Society has placed everything just as he used it in his lifetime. It is interesting to examine his pictures, his favorite books, and to see his velvet coat hanging on a peg beside his desk and his pipes lying on a shelf.

I'd mention the Opera House, except that you know I couldn't go to Paris without seeing it. So many streets branch off from the square in which it stands that one stumbles upon the Opera House at all times, and uses it as a sort of land-mark to guide his straying steps.

The Place Vendome dates from Louis XIV's time, and is marked by a column made from cannon captured from the enemy. It is an imitation of Trajan's Column in Rome, and has a statue of Napoleon on its top.

We visited one of the French Markets early in the morning. Here you see women of many classes buying their daily supplies and carrying them away in baskets. The fish market is interesting, for you see live fish in tanks, snails in baskets, and other fish dressed, cooked and ready for the table. All over Paris are women pushing two-wheeled carts filled with vegetables, fruit or flowers — or all three combined, and many people buy one or two cents' worth of a thing. There is very little fruit, except oranges, to be found in Italy or Switzerland, but a good variety may be had in Paris. On the other hand, there is no candy fit to eat in Paris, but excellent chocolates may be obtained in Switzerland and fair bonbons in Naples. America excels them all in confectionery and fruits.

The fine Gothic Tower of St. Jacques is all that remains of the church of that name which the revolutionists destroyed, and they let it stand so they could use it as a watch tower. It was erected in the 16th century.

The justly famed Cathedral of Notre Dame is beautiful both inside and out. Erected in 1163, it is medieval Gothic, with flying buttresses and gargoyles, two huge towers and a magnificent entrance. The interior has a principal nave and double aisles, with thirty-seven chapels around the walls. The kings of France were always married in this cathedral, and in niches over the entrance doors are twenty-eight statues of French kings. The royal program was to be baptized in the chapel of the palace, crowned at Rheims, married in Notre Dame and buried from St. Denis.

The Palais de Luxembourg was built in 1620 for the mother of Louis XIII and used by members of the royal family until the revolution, when it was converted into a prison. It is now a gallery for the works of modern artists. Nearby is the statue of Marshal Ney, Napoleon's most famous general, killed upon this spot in 1815.

The boulevards of Paris are carefully tended and furnish delightful drives, the most popular being the Bois de Boulogne. Along the boulevards are many restaurants which serve refreshments at tables in pretty gardens and groves.

The restaurants of Paris are not what they are cracked up to be. Parisians deplore the fact that their best chefs have all gone to America. Some are employed in the private homes of our millionaires, the others in our restaurants. We ate in various places and found the best to be Durand's, the Café de Paris, the Amenonville and the Café Pousse. Paillard's and Voisin's are expensive and elegant but no place for hungry people, while the after-theatre resorts of Maxime's and the Café Americaine are not worth while under any circumstances. In the Quartier Latin the Café d'Harcourt is a popular Bohemienne resort, while near the Moulin Rouge is the famous Dead Rat restaurant, the first allowed to serve rats at the time of the siege. We had an excellent luncheon there. The Café de la Paix is a famous after-theatre resort, and one may see real Parisian life there better than almost anyplace else.

Both grand and comic opera flourish in Paris, where you may hear splendid voices and excellent orchestras. The good theatres are devoted to problem plays and light comedy, both of which are apt to bore you unless you fully understand French, which we did not. The acting is good, though. Cheaper theatres are on the variety order, and these seem quite what we call "Parisian." I will describe one for example. You first enter a long room with a fountain in the center, beyond which is the door to the theatre proper (liable, alas! to be improper), which is much like our own theatres. Between the acts, which are fifteen or twenty minutes in duration, everyone goes into the foyer, a big room with a gallery where there is a female orchestra and a bar both upstairs and down. Here are also booths of fortune tellers, jugglers, Egyptian dancing girls, a shooting gallery, punching-bags, a Japanese bazaar, etcetera. People amuse themselves here and drink until a bell calls them to the next act. In the vaudeville theatres half the house is devoted to seats and the rear to tables where refreshments are served. Here and in the concert gardens you encounter the elaborately painted and gowned demi-monde, distinct products of Paris, which remind you of the wax models in the show windows at home. In the open air concert gardens an elaborate stage is

erected and vaudeville stars perform while you sit at a table and dull your anguish with absinthe. You pay no admission fee but your first order includes the price.

The cafe chantants or cabarets of the Quartier Latin are the most interesting places of amusement in Paris We attended one where composers played their own music and sang their own songs, where poets recited their own verses and dramatists acted in their own little plays. They were all people of some note in Paris. It was a dingy little place, patronized mostly by its special habitues, and on the walls were painted many charming sketches and water colors by well known artists, who esteem highly the privilege of contributing such work to a famous cabaret. Just above me was a fine drawing by Mucha. No admission is charged in these places, but your first glass of wine or beer costs you 2 francs. After that you pay a half franc. There is no scenery used, and no costuming. The little scenes are enacted on a raised platform in the center.

I am saving my description of Versailles and Fontainebleau for my next letter, but by that time I expect we will be on the steamer, homeward bound.

LETTER XIX. SOMEWHERE AT SEA

Steamer Kaiserin Augusta Victoria Somewhere at Sea

One of the most enjoyable days of our trip was spent at Fontainebleau, a place rich in historic romance. The palace was erected by Francis I. in the sixteenth century, but for six hundred years this was the favorite hunting seat of the kings of France.

We enter the building by the famous horseshoe staircase built by Louis XIII, who was born here. The entire palace is maintained exactly as it was in the days of the royalists. In the chapel Louis XV was married and the King of Rome, Napoleon's only child, was baptized. Box-like pews are partitioned off for members of the royal family, and each of these has its own altar and confessional. Over one I noticed a crown with the monogram "A. A.," which meant Anne of Austria. Another had "M. A." for Marie Antoinette, and there were many others. The chapel contains beautiful paintings, stained glass windows and a marble pavement.

The apartments of Napoleon I consist of a bedroom, work room, bathroom, council room and throne room. The table where he signed his abdication before he went to Elba is still here. The emperor's bed is heavily gilt, ornamented with bees, and has an "N" surmounted by a crown at the head. We saw the writing table which he carried in all his campaigns and which formerly was the property of Marie Antoinette. Also he occupied Marie Antoinette's bedroom and bathroom at Fontainebleau. The walls of the bathroom are covered with mirrors, on which are painted dainty cupids and flowers. The floors are covered with exquisite Gobelin rugs and the walls hung with Gobelin tapestries. The chairs and other furniture were upholstered in Beauvais tapestry. All the ceilings are beautifully painted and have heavy gilt ornamentation in stucco or wood relief.

The throne room contains the only throne used by Napoleon that is now extant. It is a small arm chair, heavily gilded and covered with tapestry, and above it is the "N" and crown.

All the chandeliers of the palace are rock crystal. In the apartments of Marie Antoinette the bed chamber was hung with handsome silks woven for her at the time of her marriage and presented to her by the city of Lyons. The gilding in all her rooms is gorgeous. Her music room contains her piano, some Sevres vases, a handsome table, and much delicate furniture, besides the hangings.

The library of the palace contains thirty-five thousand books, and on a table under glass we found displayed the prayer books of Madame de Maintenon, du Barry, Pompadour, Louis XIV and XV, and of Marie

Antoinette. The room is two-hundred sixty-four feet in length and very magnificent. The State Apartments consist of the Tapestry Chamber, the Salon of Francis I, and the Salon of Louis XIII, the latter being the room in which the monarch was born. It contains the first mirror brought to France. Beyond this we come to the Ball Room of Henry II, the most splendid room in all Europe. The decorations are exceedingly elaborate and bear everywhere the monogram of Henry II, while the polished floor of inlaid woods is a masterpiece of art.

The private apartments of Madame de Maintenon are quite plainly furnished and decorated in white and gold. A private passage connected these rooms with those of the king. The apartments of the "white queens," or widows of Kings of France, so called because they always dressed in white, were used by Napoleon as the prison for Pope Pius II, confined here for eighteen months because he refused to grant the emperor a divorce from Josephine. They point out the spot where Napoleon once boxed the Pope's ears. The beds and furniture used by the queens and the pope, and afterward by Queen Victoria, are still in these rooms. All the bedrooms of the palace have exquisite wash bowls and pitchers of china, of graceful shapes but holding scarcely a pint of water. The most precious tapestries are in the rooms of Anne of Austria, said to be the finest examples of Gobelin in existence.

The theater of the palace, built by Eugenie on the birth of her son, is a gem of a place, hung in rich colored silks and beautifully painted. The royal box contains three golden chairs, that for the child being very small. The theater was never used more than a dozen times.

We saw the famous carp pond and fed the fishes, some of which are over a hundred years old. On an island in the center of the pond is a small glass house where Napoleon held his secret conferences. It could only be approached by boat and the occupants could detect any spy through the glass sides. Napoleon had a horror of being overheard and would often exclaim: "Walls have ears." But here he was perfectly safe from intrusion.

The Forest of Fontainebleau covers forty-two-thousand acres and has splendid roads running through it in all directions. The vistas obtained when driving along these avenues are certainly charming, and the forest itself contains much of interest. During our two hours' drive we saw the oldest tree in the forest, the brigand's cave, the moving rock and an especially beautiful group of trees called "the king's bouquet."

And now I must tell you something of Versailles, which was to me intensely interesting. We first visited the Grand Trianon, which was built for Maintenon by Louis XIV. It has also been occupied by Louis XV, Marie

Antoinette, Napoleon and Josephine and Louis Philippe. It consists of but one story, with a grand entrance facing the canal down which the king was accustomed to row from the palace to visit Maintenon. Very little of the original furniture remains, but we saw a bath, bed and table of Napoleon and some statuary and vases of Louis XV.

The gardens all about the Trianons are beautiful, being laid out in stately fashion, with much statuary, and trees clipped into odd shapes. The Petit Trianon was built by Louis XV for du Barry and afterward given by Louis XVI to Marie Antoinette. The wall decorations are from the time of du Barry, but the furniture remaining is all Marie Antoinette's. You may see her bedroom just as she left it, the cradle of her son, many home-like relics of this boy, and the Queen's favorite piano. Everything is exquisite and dainty, as you would imagine the belongings of this dainty queen must be.

Between the two Trianons is a dining pavilion where the king and queen used to meet for dinner. The grounds here are rarely beautiful and the gardens are less artificial and more enjoyable. There is also a pretty little theater where Marie Antoinette's favorite orchestra was wont to play. It has a music room built on a rocky knoll, which is reached by means of a rustic bridge. The Temple of Love is built on the lines of a Greek temple and is as large as a good sized summerhouse.

All of the queen's Swiss Village remains, the mill with its water-wheel, the large farm house with its smaller buildings, the butter and milk house and poultry house. It was here the queen and court amused themselves playing farmers, and they sold their eggs, butter and produce and gave the money to the poor.

I believe there are two hundred fountains at Versailles, which on occasion are made to play at one time. The grounds surrounding the palace are the most beautiful in France, which gives them an edge on most other countries. There is a display of state carriages used by the two Napoleons, Charles X and, others, and sleighs used by du Barry and Marie Antoinette. Once du Barry wanted a sleigh ride in July, so they froze a place for her with salt and in consequence Paris was without any saline flavoring for several days. But the king didn't mind, so long as du Barry got her sleigh ride. These things made the royalists very popular with the people, but it may have been a mistake to allow the cannaille to get fresh.

The palace is an immense and very imposing structure. It was first a hunting lodge for Louis XIII, and afterward made into a palace by Louis XIV, and added to and beautified by Louis XV and Louis XVI. It was to me interesting to stand in the court where the market women assembled to clamor for the life of Marie Antoinette, and to look up at the balcony where

the queen appeared with her baby in her arms and appealed to them for mercy. There is another balcony where a king's death was always announced and his successor acclaimed with cheers. In the room of Louis XIV is the bed in which he died, supported in Maintenon's arms. The ante-room where the king's favorites waited is just off this. All the royal beds are protected from too close examination by gold and velvet cord railings.

The Coronation room has pictures of Napoleon as First Consul, grouped with Josephine, as crowned king, grouped with Louise, presenting the Roman Eagles to the guard, and one of the emperor at the battle of Aboukir. These paintings represent Napoleon in the glory of his power. But in the center of the room is a statue of Napoleon during his last days at St. Helena, and we find him a weary, disappointed man with a pitiful, cowed expression. "What's the use?" Fortune exaggerated both her favors and her frowns in the case of the little Corsican; but the memory of his greatness will outlive his disgrace.

The Gallery of Battles is a room four-hundred feet in length, the walls covered with big canvasses representing the famous battles in the history of France. The queen's rooms are merely interesting because they were used by Marie Antoinette. But the State Ball Room is magnificent, and runs the entire length of the main palace. The pictures on the wall depict the glory of Louis XIV, the greatest king of France. There is a wonderful collection of clocks in the Palace of Versailles, there being one of a different design in each prominent room. One was the work of Louis XVI himself. It stopped on the hour he was guillotined, and no one has been able to make it go since.

Most of the palace is now a picture gallery, works depicting incidents in the history of France being congregated and preserved in this manner.

The theater of the palace is now used for the election of French presidents, and has been entirely remodeled since the Empire. From the windows are fine views of the gardens, statuary, fountains and canal.

LETTER XX. FINAL WORDS AT HOME

We sailed from Cherbourg on the largest passenger steamer afloat, a very luxurious boat which carried us home in a steady, comfortable manner that fitly ended our very delightful trip abroad. And you can imagine how eager we were, after five long months, to see the dear ones at home.

Also we were mighty glad to see the shores of America. L. F. said the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor was the most beautiful sight he had seen since he left home. He thinks too much of his comforts, for Europe is not very comfortable. We live better and more sensibly in America.

I have had a rare treat, for which I am grateful. I shall never forget the majesty of Egypt's peerless monuments, the fascination of the desert, the charm of the blue Mediterranean, the restrained but menacing power of mighty Vesuvius, the grandeur of Etna, the unearthed treasures of Pompeii, the glory of Florence, the enchantments of Venice, the beauty of the Swiss Alps and lakes, or the delights of Paris. It is good to know these places. It broadens one and sharpens the intellect.

But I thank God I am an American and live in the United States.

Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery, Glendale, California — Baum's final resting place

Baum's grave